

USTOA PRESENTS 2024 FUTURE LIGHTS OF THE TOUR INDUSTRY

This Year's USTOA "Rising Stars" Honored for Contributions to Sustainability and DEI Efforts



*Alison Atkinson
Avanti Destinations*



*B Lavernia
WorldStrides*

NEW YORK (August 12, 2024) – The [United States Tour Operators Association](#) (USTOA) has announced the recipients of the 2024 USTOA Future Lights of the Tour Industry. This year's honorees are recognized by the association as champions of sustainability and DEI (diversity, equity, inclusion) for contributions to these initiatives within their companies.

The USTOA Future Lights of the Tour Industry was launched in 2022 during USTOA's 50th anniversary. Tour operator members are invited to nominate coworkers who have made meaningful differences in their companies and the communities they interact with to embrace and address critical sustainability and DEI issues.

The [2024 Future Lights](#) are Alison Atkinson, commercial director and executive team member, Avanti Destinations, and B Lavernia, senior region and account manager, WorldStrides.

"It is such an honor to welcome Alison and B as USTOA Future Lights of the Tour Industry," said USTOA President and CEO Terry Dale. "These two individuals are outstanding examples of the kind of creative drive and initiative needed to guide our industry to a more sustainable and equitable future for us all."

Dale continued, "We are so grateful for the truly noteworthy nominations from our Active Tour Operator Members this year. While there is much to be done, we can be proud of the proactive way our members have embraced and supported USTOA's efforts to move us towards a responsible future for travel. Alison and B as shining examples of that commitment."

Meet the USTOA Future Lights

Alison Atkinson, Commercial Director and Executive team member at Avanti Destinations, has spearheaded introducing sustainability into Avanti business practices by focusing on the people and the places that drive the business. Collaborating with ownership and stakeholders, Alison is driving the Avanti Footprint. This initiative highlights their sustainable products as well as shaping the Avanti Footprint Foundation, a charitable fund that supports local endeavors to better the circular economy. Alison has also worked on evolving Avanti's partnerships with product suppliers to include select Business Impact Assessment requirements. Alison's next goals involve working with stakeholders to achieve company certification.

As the **Senior Region and Account Manager for WorldStrides**, **B Lavornia** oversees participant enrollment in Higher Education programs and co-chairs the DEI Higher Education Committee. B designed training courses on diversity, equity, accessibility, justice, and belonging. They identified relevant DEI resources and created a learning framework for cultural competency. Their DEI advocacy has been voluntary within the organization, and for the past nine years, they have become a founding member of WorldStrides' PRIDE Employee Resource Groups focusing on the interests of the company's LGBTQ2SIA+ community and allies, and guided others as a subject matter expert on WorldStrides' Accessibilities Team.

"The Future Lights of the Tour Industry couldn't happen without the time, thought, and care of our tireless judges," continued Dale. "On behalf of our members, I'd like to thank them for their continued support, along with that of our program sponsor, Trip Mate."

The judging panel for the USTOA Future Lights of the Tour Industry included Emma Cottis, general manager of Business Systems, Goway Travel; Derek Hydon, president, MaCher, Greg Takehara, CEO, Tourism Cares, and Kelly P. Sahner, chief commercial officer, Trip Mate.

"Congratulations to the honorees," said Sahner. "Once again, we had an outstanding cohort of USTOA members who submitted their colleagues' work for the committee's consideration. It's exciting to see that each year more organizations are investing in sustainability and DEI initiatives. These programs and the efforts of our industry colleagues will make a significant difference as we adapt to a changing world. It is a privilege for me to represent Trip Mate as the sponsor of this program."

The 2024 USTOA Future Lights will be welcomed and acknowledged during the USTOA Annual Conference and Marketplace in Marco Island, FL December 9-13, 2024.

For more information on the 2024 Future Lights of the Tour Industry and to see past recipients, visit [USTOA.com/future-lights](https://ustoa.com/future-lights).

About USTOA:

Representing \$16 billion in revenue, the member companies of U.S. Tour Operators Association provide tours, packages and custom arrangements that allow six million travelers annually unparalleled access, insider knowledge, peace-of-mind, value, and freedom to enjoy destinations and experiences across the entire globe. Each member company has met the travel industry's highest standards, including participation in the USTOA's Travelers Assistance Program, which protects consumer payments up to \$1 million if the company goes out of business. As a voice for the tour operator industry for more than 50 years, USTOA also provides education and assistance for consumers and travel advisors.

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