Another area of SIRC’s focus is the economic impact of events such as Philadelphia’s Hispanic Fiesta, the Blue Cross Broad Street Run and marathons and half-marathons in Miami, Georgia, Chicago and beyond.

For the Philadelphia Marathon and 2011 Wawa Welcome America series, SIRC partnered with Philadelphia’s Office of the City Representative for Ceremonial and Special Events to determine who came to the events, how many tourism dollars were generated and how the events can be optimized.

With the Welcome America study in particular, City Representative Melanie Johnson said she was surprised to see the number of attendees who came from outside the Philadelphia region—about 60 to 70 percent of the more than 500,000 spectators.

In addition to attracting non-local visitors, the event encouraged Philadelphia residents to remain in the city rather than travel elsewhere. These attendees (approximately 133,305 people) contributed to an estimated “retained expenditure” of more than $2 million.

This supports Johnson’s assertions that these events increase quality of life for Philadelphia residents, who may not spend money on hotels but still enjoy the events and infuse money into the local economy.

After the 2011 Philadelphia Marathon, SIRC reported that the event drew an estimated 33,846 non-local residents to Philadelphia, and the average per-person spending totaled $441.87. In all, the race events pumped $20.52 million into Philadelphia’s economy.

Overall event satisfaction was 90 percent. Nearly 88 percent of respondents said they would recommend the event, and 57 percent said they would suggest Philadelphia as a vacation destination.

Both studies broke down the age, gender and race demographics, and with these and other numbers, the city has been able to maximize its marketing approach, attract sponsors and determine how to improve future events.

“I think it’s important because we as a city need to promote ourselves,” Johnson said. “Having an economic impact study allows us to get the information out to the public that this event is important.”