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November 12, 2013—reviewed by Travel Salem Executive Committee
December 4, 2013—approved by Travel Salem Board of Directors
March 24, 2014—adopted by Salem City Council



2014-17 Strategic Plan

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Historic Deepwood Estate/Ron Cooper



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

Travel Salem's three-year strategic plan continues to build on the progress made in previous years with a clear emphasis on bold innovation, leveraged partnerships and integrated communications strategies. The plan reflects input and direction from the region's leaders and business community.

Travel Salem actively engaged with industry partners to get their input on where they want to see Travel Salem focus its efforts over the next few years. Meetings with the Salem Area Lodging Association directly influenced the direction of the plan, as well as dialogue with Travel Salem members, cultural heritage partners, wine and culinary businesses, political leaders, economic development professionals, and a host of other key stakeholders.

Travel Salem's Board of Directors reviewed progress and outcomes from the previous strategic plan and participated in a facilitated work session with Randy Harrington of Extreme Arts & Sciences. The work session featured robust dialogue around Travel Salem's core competencies, with an emphasis on stable funding and product development (a new direction for the organization).

Travel Salem will continue to market the Salem area and Mid-Willamette Valley as a premier destination using integrated marketing and communication channels with a focus on strategic partnerships. The Convention program will expand to add capacity for securing sports and recreation groups and events.

A large majority of the Board believes Travel Salem should lead efforts in destination development, with programs and services geared toward identifying opportunities and orchestrating implementation. Travel Salem would focus on increasing existing events, and seeking new opportunities to enhance regional offerings. Travel Salem wouldn't be putting on events, but would be bringing together the partners to make it happen. In addition, emphasis was placed on Travel Salem leading efforts to create "one voice" messaging for the region to better position the Salem area and Mid-Willamette Valley as a branded destination.

The marketing and communications strategies reflected in this plan are geared to drive economic impact and job creation for the communities we serve. Utilizing everything from fresh interpretations of existing programs to ground-breaking initiatives, Travel Salem works to attract both leisure visitors and convention/event delegates to the region, which results in enhanced quality of life for the residents that live, work and play here.

Travel Salem will continue to support local businesses and advocate on behalf of the visitor experience, and will seek funding mechanisms that ensure a healthy and vibrant tourism economy.

Thank you for your ongoing support of your regional destination marketing organization, proudly serving the Salem area and Mid-Willamette Valley.

Warmest regards,

Angie Morris, President & CEO

TRAVEL SALEM'S DNA

Mission

Travel Salem markets and promotes the Salem area & the Mid-Willamette Valley as a premier, year-round destination for conventions, events and leisure travelers. Serve as the official destination marketing organization and a vital tourism economic development generator for the region.

Vision

Through bold innovation and integrated partnerships, Travel Salem's programs and services heighten the visitor experience and drive economic impact, which supports local businesses, job creation and an enhanced quality of life.

Values

We are committed to service, integrity and excellence that provide tangible results and strengthen the businesses and communities we serve.



Riverfront Park Movies in the Park/Ron Cooper



Objectives & Strategic Initiatives

COMMUNITY RELATIONS & ENGAGEMENT

Bird's Eye View

The objectives and strategic initiatives outlined in this plan are broad in nature, taking a high-level approach to opportunities and challenges facing the organization and the industry.

The strategic initiatives are general in scope to allow the organization to be nimble and flexible with its tactical approach. The Strategic Plan will be executed through annual business plans that utilize specific tactics to achieve results.

Create partnerships & resources to influence community dialogue and decision-making that impacts tourism, quality of life and the Salem area's & Mid-Willamette Valley's viability as a travel destination. Support local businesses by providing opportunities and solutions to open doors, address challenges and harness best practices. Create broader understanding of tourism as an economic development generator with the community at large.

- a) Actively engage with local & regional partners & create opportunities for innovation & collaboration (e.g. cultural heritage, downtown Salem marketing, "listening tours")
- b) Facilitate strategy to develop a "one voice" messaging platform around the region's identity
- c) Develop dynamic tools & resources that facilitate regional planning efforts & forecasting (e.g. master calendar featuring major events & conventions/groups)
- d) Redefine who sits at the region's tourism "table," creating broad engagement to help shape industry dialogue and outcomes
- e) Develop key defining principles that are embraced by stakeholders and used to help establish a unified industry platform; incorporate into communication strategies
- f) Utilize data dashboards that tell the tourism story in accessible and meaningful terms; incorporate into communication strategies
- g) Engage with key stakeholders, and work synergistically with other industries (e.g. commodities, manufacturing, healthcare, education), on issues that impact the Salem area & Mid-Willamette Valley's appeal as a premier destination
- h) Enhance partnerships to leverage influence & resources



Objectives & Strategic Initiatives

CAPACITY BUILDING



Travel Salem's foundation, Cultivating Communities, is a year-round, charitable, education-based organization dedicated to the travel and hospitality industry in the Salem area & Mid-Willamette Valley.

Cultivating Communities mission is to provide education and information about the visitor industry; provide educational scholarships to enhance tourism workforce development; make grants to nonprofits whose work bolsters the tourism industry; and create education outreach opportunities that strengthen partnerships between nonprofit organizations and the visitor industry.

Develop long-term stable funding, strategic staffing levels, and the technology and tools necessary for organizational growth. Note: Travel Salem receives funding from various sources both public & private. Each source may have different parameters & scope of service.

- a) Maximize & leverage resources and seek new funding streams through partnerships & innovation (e.g. stable TOT funding, Wine Country Plate, grants)
- b) Support scope of services using a strategic staffing methodology:
 - 1. Expand Convention resources with a focus on sports & recreation
 - 2. Augment operational infrastructure to support organizational demands
- c) Create a comprehensive product development program ("retention & expansion") with an emphasis on coordinating & growing existing product & recruiting new events & amenities to the Salem area & Mid-Willamette Valley
- d) Maintain Membership participation to represent the diverse business community in the Salem area & Mid-Willamette Valley
- e) Create a supportive environment for growth & development of Cultivating Communities, Travel Salem's nonprofit foundation



Objectives & Strategic Initiatives

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Kaleidoscope of Opportunity

Market research shows the primary draws for visitors to the Salem area & Mid-Willamette Valley are culinary, recreation and cultural heritage experiences.

While these three pillars are central to Travel Salem's marketing efforts, there are many other assets and experiences that create a healthy and vibrant tourism ecosystem for the Salem-bound visitor (e.g. sports events, shopping, gaming, family fun).

Travel Salem leverages the three primary drivers and packages up other assets to create a broad range of experiences and options for the visitor.

This kaleidoscope of opportunity makes the region a compelling and distinctive destination.

Position the region as a desirable travel destination for convention & leisure travelers utilizing vertically integrated marketing & communication strategies. Leverage the regional travel experience by connecting visitors to the unique people, products, and stories that will lengthen the visitor's stay. Drive Travel Salem's key performance measurements.

- a) Emphasize Travel Salem's central pillars (culinary, recreation and cultural/heritage) to position the Salem area & Mid-Willamette Valley area as a premier leisure & convention destination
- b) Leverage key partnerships and strategies to explore points of intersection that expand Travel Salem's reach and effectiveness (e.g. Travel Oregon, Willamette Valley Visitors Association, Travel Portland, SEDCOR, Chambers of Commerce, and groups representing Travel Salem's central pillars)
- c) Maintain & enhance a strong and dynamic Travel Café & Visitor Information Network focusing on personal and customized assistance; provide platform for innovative connections between local businesses and the consumer
- d) Leverage online strategies to promote the Salem area & Mid-Willamette Valley as a preferred destination (e.g. Interactive Online Map)
- e) Execute a vigorous public relations and communications strategy to increase exposure, build credibility with target markets and the community, and drive consumers to action
- f) Update the Salem area & Mid-Willamette Valley visitor profile to leverage travel trends, preferences and brand opportunities
- g) Provide recruitment & relocation support, education & outreach opportunities to Salem area & Mid-Willamette Valley businesses



Objectives & Strategic Initiatives

CONVENTIONS & EVENTS

Contribute to the overall economic health of the region by booking conventions and events through direct sales efforts, cooperative promotional efforts and innovative marketing strategies. Drive Travel Salem's key performance measurements.

- a) Drive "shoulder season" & weekend business
- b) Focus on high-yield citywide business opportunities, and develop reciprocal partnerships to support & drive regional benefit
- c) Continue to engage with the Salem Area Lodging Association, Oregon Restaurant & Lodging Association, Oregon Sports Authority, and other industry partners
- d) Work with event organizers to expand offerings & create effective tracking mechanisms
- e) Develop a regional sports committee
- f) Evaluate housing bureau options
- g) Utilize a wide variety of sports venues and opportunities to capture events & tournaments
- h) Utilize online strategies to engage meeting planners
- i) Research creative niches (e.g. chess tournaments, robotics, tattoo) as well as primary feeder markets
- j) Leverage cooperative marketing opportunities (e.g. trade shows, familiarization tours, advertising, sales missions)



Objectives & Strategic Initiatives

SERVICES

Provide the information, resources and support necessary to enhance the travel experience of the convention & group delegate and bolster repeat visitation.

- a) Leverage the Salem area & Mid-Willamette Valley's "service" brand: a strategic and thoughtful approach to high-level customer service which will enhance recruitment & retention of group business
- b) Secure first-time & repeat business utilizing proactive communication & outreach strategies & by providing superior customer service
- c) Continue to develop partnerships with local businesses & marketing entities in an effort to recruit new opportunities, enhance client experiences and streamline efforts
- d) Utilize industry partners as "champions" to increase awareness of services offered, and recruitment of new opportunities

KEY PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENTS

Travel Salem’s programs and services are designed to deliver tangible results for the communities and businesses we serve. There are several key performance indicators that can provide a sense of the overall economic health of the region’s tourism industry. When evaluating progress, these indicators must be considered alongside other measurements such as financial resources and membership support. Add into the mix environmental influences and other economic trends to gain better insight into the health of the industry. Specific tourism-based activities also provide context for evaluating the big picture, and can reveal trends and key market factors that influence how the organization makes adjustments in program initiatives. Travel Salem is not the sole contributor to or driver of the region’s tourism economic outcomes. However, the organization takes a leadership role in tourism promotion to help shape industry results.

Key Performance Measurements:

Estimated Economic Impact2012 = \$511.3 million

Measures results in travel spending, employment and tax revenues. Additional detail is provided to break out how those travel dollars are spent in terms of accommodations, arts & entertainment, recreation, retail, transportation and more. This data is reported annually and is provided by Dean Runyan Associates through Travel Oregon.

Transient Occupancy Tax.....2012 = \$2.6 million

Room tax revenues collected from Salem lodging facilities. This data is reported quarterly and is acquired from the City of Salem.

LeverageFY 2012 = \$1.9 million

Leverage is comprised of donated products and services that are secured to increase organizational capacity (e.g. volunteers, media, in-kind, WVVA). This data is reported quarterly and is provided by Travel Salem.



Union Railroad Bridge/Ron Cooper

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