

MONTANA TOURISM ADVISORY COUNCIL STRATEGIC OUTLINE

As of 01.18.12

“Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory. Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat.”

—*Sun Tzu*

OVERVIEW

In October 2011, the Tourism Advisory Council (TAC) held a retreat to discuss the Montana tourism industry’s ongoing challenges and its opportunities for the upcoming years.

THREE GUIDING GOALS

During the retreat, the TAC members and the Montana Office of Tourism (MTOT) identified three goals as it looks to support the Montana tourism industry – especially small businesses.

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Tourism success will result from these three guiding goals:

1. Product = Utilize the state’s geographical and seasonal assets.
2. Marketing = Pool resources and help communities work together as part of the overall Montana brand.
3. Respect = Increase support for the Montana tourism industry and preserve and enhance the lodging tax.

APPLICATION AND FRAMEWORK

These three goals will be used to guide and focus the Montana tourism industry as a whole, as well as TAC’s actions, initiatives and recommendations to industry partners and the Governor. Tourism success can be defined as increasing non-resident tourism revenues or spending.

So how do we accomplish these goals?

First, as noted, the overall goal is to increase non-resident tourism revenues and visitation to the state. That visitation comes from:

- + First-time visitors.
- + Repeat visitors.

Research shows that 67% of first-time visitors come to see Yellowstone and/or Glacier National Parks and typically come during the summer months. 86% of visitors return and are most likely to explore the lesser-known areas of the state including the eastern side of Montana. These repeat visitors are also more likely to come to Montana during the non-summer months than the first-time visitor.

In addition, research indicates that the type of person coming to Montana can be described as the Geotraveler. The Geotraveler is a target audience interested in Geotourism – a type of tourism, as defined by National Geographic, that sustains or enhances the geographic character of the place being visited including its environment, culture, heritage, landmarks and the well-being of its residents.

Geotravelers:

- + Have the desire to get off the beaten path.
- + Want to localize as much as possible.
- + Seek the authenticity of people and places.
- + Look to immerse themselves in the culture.
- + Use technology to plan and explore a destination before they arrive.
- + Are frequent and heavy Internet users.

And finally, it is critical to note the specific reasons why visitors are coming to Montana. Research consistently shows that they come for three reasons, no matter what part of the state they are visiting:

- + More spectacular, unspoiled nature than anywhere else in the lower 48.
- + Vibrant and charming small towns that serve as gateways to the natural wonders.
- + Breathtaking experiences by day and relaxing hospitality at night.

With these three parameters in mind, below is an outline of each guiding goal and recommendations of how to accomplish them.

Note: Responsibilities will need to be discussed and agreed upon by the responsible and supporting parties for the goals to be achieved. Ownership and collaboration will be the key to success.

PRODUCT

Goal: Utilize the state's geographical and seasonal assets.

Approach: Use the lens of the Montana brand to extend tourism across the state and seasons.

Top-Line Tactics and Responsibilities:

1. Restructure existing TAC committees and form a new Product Committee that helps evaluate and determine opportunities to support communities, keeping in mind the overall Product goal.

Restructure TAC agendas to provide a framework that supports this goal.

Choose TAC meeting locations based on opportunities to evaluate product available, i.e., hold meetings in small towns.

Responsibility:

Support:

Participants:

2. Work with communities to help them identify the products that they have that best align with the Montana brand pillars and are more likely to attract the Montana target audience.

Hold workshops and webinars to better educate communities on existing research and the brand.

Responsibility:

Support:

Participants:

3. Once communities have their products identified, help communities to deliver those products and the Montana brand experience to the target audience.

Provide educational seminars for assistance on how to deliver the community's right kind of experience to the Montana target audience.

Responsibility:

Support:

Participants:

4. Once communities have their products identified, encourage them to preserve and to enhance those products.

Responsibility:

Support:

Participants:

MARKETING

Goal: Pool resources and help communities work together as part of the overall Montana brand.

Approach: Leverage better cooperation and use best marketing practices to help tourism entities retain a competitive edge and achieve results.

Top-Line Tactics and Responsibilities:

1. Restructure existing TAC committees and form a new Marketing Committee that helps evaluate and determine opportunities to support tourism entities, keeping in mind the overall Marketing goal.

Restructure TAC agendas to provide a framework that supports this goal.

Responsibility:

Support:

Participants:

2. Develop a co-op marketing strategy with programs and initiatives that can be used by communities to effectively reach the consumer, based on what is known about the target audience and how they plan and experience travel.

Focus efforts online (before/after they arrive) as well as on the ground (after they arrive), evaluate VisitMT.com offerings and provide new opportunities for the tourism industry partners.

Responsibility:

Support:

Participants:

3. Work with communities to help them determine the best ways to engage the target audience.

Hold workshops and/or webinars to share and/or brainstorm marketing opportunities.

Responsibility:

Support:

Participants:

4. Hold collaborative, multi-organizational meetings to determine how to best work together and collaborate, eliminate redundancies and pool resources.

Responsibility:

Support:

Participants:

5. Host roundtable discussions for idea sharing and best practices based on hands-on experiences.

Responsibility:

Support:

Participants:

RESPECT

Goal: Increase support for the Montana tourism industry and preserve and enhance the lodging tax.

Approach: Coalesce the tourism industry to earn increased respect and better educate stakeholders on tourism's economic importance.

Top-Line Tactics and Responsibilities:

1. Restructure existing TAC committees and form a new Respect Committee that helps evaluate and determine opportunities to earn increased respect from stakeholders.

Restructure TAC agendas to provide a framework that supports this goal.

Responsibility:

Support:

Participants:

2. Outline new research projects and initiatives that will efficiently and effectively collect information to support the importance of the tourism industry and its viable economic impact.

Package those research results in terms that are tangible and irrefutable for constituents and elected officials.

Responsibility:

Support:

Participants:

3. Gather the success stories created from the Product and Marketing results and share them with the stakeholders and influencers, including constituents and elected officials.

Educate stakeholders through ongoing communication and highlight changes and economic results that have occurred due to collaboration and cooperation.

Responsibility:

Support:

Participants:

NEXT STEPS

- + Determine roles and responsibilities and potential participants.
- + Determine measurable objectives and who will be able to own them.