

MAIN STREET MONTANA PROJECT

A BUSINESS PLAN *For Montana by Montanans*

Tourism KIN Meeting
October 14, 2014
Helena, Montana
Prepared by Jeri Duran, Mary Craigle, Julia Bryant

Co-Chairs

Rhonda Fitzgerald—Garden Wall Inn

Taylor Middleton—Big Sky Resort

Facilitators

Jeri Duran—MT Office of Tourism

Carmen Levick – MT Office of Tourism

Mary Craigle – MT Depart. of Commerce

KIN Members

Andrew Wilcox—National/Alamo *

Bill Berg—CoolWorks **

Bill McGladdery—Town Pump **

Cindy Ognjanov—Glacier Park, Inc.

Colin Davis—Chico Hot Springs

Cris Coughlin—Glacier Guides

Dan Vermillion—Sweetwater Travel

Darrel Norman—Lodgepole Gallery & Tipi Village *

Eric Becker—Geysir Whitewater *

Evan Bowser—Bowser Brewing *

Hillary Folkvord—Sacajawea Hotel *

Kelli Hart — Freeheel & Wheel *
(substitute attendee)

Jim Devine—Beaver Creek Brewery *

Marc Ducharme—Xanterra Glacier **

Melissa Alder —Freeheel & Wheel

Mike Scholz—Buck's T-4 *

Nick Polumbus—Whitefish Mountain Resort *

Pat Carloss—Tupelo Grille/Haskill Station *

Pete Donau—Delaware North *

Sharon Walker—Canyon Ferry KOA *

Sheila Matt—KwaTaqNuk Resort

Stacey Schnebel—Stonefly Lounge *

Stephen Wahrlich—Best Western Plus Clocktower Inn *

* Those in attendance at 10/13/14 meeting. Megan Vincent from OPI also attended.

** Those in attendance on 2/4/15 conference call

Co-Chairs Fitzgerald and Middleton welcomed the KIN members and thanked them for agreeing to serve. Each KIN member introduced his or herself, told a little about their business, and provided ONE BIG THING that would make a big difference for their business within the industry.

The members of the Committee then engaged in a SWOT analysis of the Tourism Industry.

One Big Thing:

Increase Intra-state Travel (resident)

Tort Reform

More Local Development to Encourage Year-round Visitation

Lift Restrictions on Brewery

Promote Native Tourism

Promote Resident Travel (have locals informed)

More Employee Housing

Align Small Businesses with Montana Brand and advertising markets

Increase Value Season Travel

More Bike-friendly Roadways

More Destination Weddings

People Without kids Expand Shoulder Season Tourism

Credit for Tips

New marketing funding source

Extended Glacier National Park Season and Awareness as Destination

Adjust University Schedule to Allow Workforce to Extend Season

Strengthen Relationship between Tourism and Montana Public

Improve collaboration between tourism boards; Better align goals

More cohesive effort by MTOT and regions to reduce duplication of effort and be more effective in marketing efforts

Convert seasonal to year round by employment by several resorts

SWOT Analysis:

Strengths:

Geo-travel market

- Likes what we (MT residents) like
- Irresistible
- Wide open spaces (unspoiled nature)
- History and culture
- Scenery
- Small town experience
- Natural beauty to experience
- Unique wonders

7 reservations/ 8 tribes offering a unique experience

“Fun” /Hospitable

Ease of access to recreational opportunities

Affordable

Year-round season experience

Small businesses that are Montana

Progressive industry thinkers

Art / cultural Assets

Romance

Quiet/ uncrowded

Cooperation with other states

National Parks / Other Public Lands

Geographic diversity

Nostalgia

Weaknesses:

Available and entry-level workforce is low

Infrastructure

- Connectivity access issues

- Airline

- Data connectivity for visitors to use digital way-finding

- Rail access issues due to the Bakken

- Workforce support

Interstate access

75% of tourists come within 5 months (short season for most)

Weather that isn't fun (perception)

MT residents not aware and not tapped in as promoters

Insufficient collaboration across multitude of tourism and small businesses

Funding and incentives for tax climate regulations and laws

Need more tourism attractions

University schedule is not in sync with a productive tourist season

Attracting directors, CEO level employees due to limited # of positions at that level

Public don't view tourism sector for viable career and MT economic driver

Opportunities:

Grow wages
Influence legislation
Develop / spur railroad touring and other attractions
Better funding returns
Extend tourist seasons
Reach out to high school and younger for potential workforce
Collaborate! We are nimble and progressive and talented.
We love Montana
Improve interstate and international access
Work to increase and improve workforce availability
Educate on mid-level jobs and career opportunities
Urbanization of U.S. makes MT more unique
Expand foreign market visitations
Educating communities on what they have to offer the traveler
Natural amenities unique to MT
Emphasizing western history & romance

Threats:

Weather and other natural disasters (fire)
Workforce shortage and skilled trade workers/ volunteers
Funding and funding mechanism
Supportive local governments/ regional/ populace in some areas
Being too competitive as communities; not sharing knowledge/ not cooperating
Low wages; jobs; rely too much on volunteers
Market challenges to reach wider audience
Difficulty differentiating MT from other choices by using established brand pillars
Protecting the natural amenities
Protecting the uniqueness / appeal of Montana

Pillar I: Train and Educate Tomorrow's Workforce Today

#1. Work with school's K-16 –Montana Education Community

Uniqueness ;

Attractors and failures

Entrepreneur programs and curriculum

Needed degree programs

Develop soft skills

Pathway to tourism in Montana

Alignment of college schedule to support longer season

Private and public collaborative tourism offer to assist education

Retain youth post-graduation

Jobs Training:

Intern/Apprenticeships with local colleges

How tourism fits into your career plan; familiarize with businesses

Misemployed and underemployed-seasonal workers in other seasons for year round

Joint student and engineers/ other professions

Breakout group: Stacey Schnebel, Nick Polumbus, Evan Bowser, Megan Vincent (OPI), Eric Becker, Stephen Wahrlich, Andrew Wilcox, Bill Berg

Pillar II: Create a Climate that Attracts, Retains, and Grows Businesses

#2. Rules, Regulations, Infrastructure and other policy matters:

Regulations, torts, restrictions

Examples: Microbrew limits, Resort Tax limits, Commercial construction permit, Alcohol license structure, TIF “qualified” areas, No sales tax/ local option

Public/Private partnerships in State parks

Government assists in economic development success as a partner

Start-ups

Continuing businesses

Growth / smart development

Create incentives

Local funding mechanisms

Grants thru state

Infrastructure related to government run assets (parks, historical sites)

Gardiner Gateway

Breakout Group: Nick Polumbus, Pat Carloss, Bill Berg, Hillary Folkvord, Evan Bowser, Jeff Welch, Stacey Schnebel

Pillar III: Build Upon Montana's Economic Foundation

#3. Sustainable Tourism:

- Protect the authenticity of Montana (unspoiled nature, wildlife)
- Sustainable business practices
- Growth / smart development
- Infrastructure that promotes quality of life and tourism opportunities
- Communities more efficient with funding (co-ops, grants)
- Conservation easements
- Support for wildlife
- Protect our irresistibility
- Protect view sheds
- Natural beauty
- Infrastructure development - paving the way; broadband
- Highlight attractions (way-finding, geoaware apps, ..)

Breakout Group: Andrew Wilcox, Kelli Hart, Jim Devine, Darrel Norman, Hillary Folkvord

Pillar IV: Market Montana

#4 Leverage Brand (Authentic MT) to Increase Start-ups; Improve Communications:

- Recruit employees and grow population in ways that synergize with KINs
- High tech, tech savvy
- Increase foreign investment
- Entrepreneurs / workers that love the Montana experience
- Enhance experience through luxury companies
- Promote all Montana experience
- Increase resident travel

Create communication opportunities

- Quantify what tourism means to the economy
- Reach out /Voices of tourism
- Community events orchestrated by Chambers of Commerce and other organizations that highlight tourism

Authentic Montana:

- Made in Montana Products
 - (Native Products, Food and Beverage, Agritourism, Farm-to-Table)
 - Montana Artists, Writers etc. that add to sense of place

Breakout Group: Pete Donau , Pat Carloss, Hillary Folkvord, Nick Polumbus, Bill Berg, Jeff Welch, Kelli Hart, Steve Wahrlich, Darrel Norman

#5. More Marketing Resources:

Small businesses

Support resources for tourism

Signage and directives

Successful businesses

Promoting them

Mentoring

Business students

New types of appeal (e.g. tourism TV channel)

Breakout Group: Bill Berg, Sharon Walker, Pat Carloss, Stephen Wahrlich, Mike Scholz, Eric Becker

Pillar V: Nurture Emerging Industries and Encourage Innovation

#6 Financing for growth and start-up for innovative tourism related businesses

Business kit hub for resources

Emphasize life style opportunities in recruiting high tech companies

Research

High paying jobs

Bring youth back to Montana

Innovation; emerging trends; niche markets

Economic research on what businesses would be successful

Where to expand seasons; ways to change from seasonal to fulltime by employing at complementary businesses (e.g. lake & ski resorts)

Spending opportunities for visitors (match visitor interest with business start-up/expansion opportunities)

Breakout Group: Stacey Schnebel, Pete Donau, Bill Berg, Jeff Welch

SUMMARY TOURISM KIN – Recommended Breakout Groups by Pillar

Pillar I: Train and Education Tomorrow's Workforce Today

- Working Group #1 Work with MT PK-20 Education System

Pillar II: Create a Climate that Attracts, Retains, Grows Businesses

- Working Group #2 Rules, Regulations, Infrastructure and other policy matters

Pillar III: Build Upon Montana's Economic Foundation

- Working Group #3 Sustainable Tourism

Pillar IV: Market Montana

- Working Group #4 Leverage Brand (Authentic MT) to Increase Start-ups; Improve Communications
- Working Group #5 More Marketing Resources

Pillar V: Nurture Emerging Industries and Encourage Innovation

- Working Group #6: Financing for growth and start-up for innovative tourism-related businesses; Research

