

Washington State Tourism Strategic Direction

A Blueprint For Our Future



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Introduction

The Washington State Tourism Office strengthens the state's economy through promotion of Washington as a year-round travel destination. The office implements domestic and international marketing and tourism development programs with a particular emphasis on increasing off-season travel to rural and under-visited areas of the state.

Effective in summer 2004, Community, Trade and Economic

Washington State Tourism Industry Facts:

- Achieved an estimated \$11.6 billion in traveler spending during 2004.
- Supported 140,000 tourism-related jobs.
- Generated \$617 million in state travel tax revenue and \$221 million in local travel taxes.

Washington State Tourism Office Facts:

- Generated more than \$58 million in free editorial coverage, focusing on Washington State as a travel destination.
- \$648,949 raised by Belo in television co-op support from industry partners to promote travel to and in Washington via King 5 and its affiliate properties.
- Generated 65 new Northwest Backroads television segments during the 2003 and 2004 campaigns.
- Achieved a 63 percent increase in Web visits (*year-to-date*).

Development made the decision to separate Business Development and Tourism resulting in closer ties between the Office of Tourism and the Film Office with a focus on marketing and branding.

The Tourism Office is organized into the following program areas:

Media Relations and Travel Trade Program

The Tourism Office's public relations program has a

robust structure, with public relations and Travel Trade representatives covering the region, the nation, and key international markets. Along with our overseas contractors, the Office works with domestic contractors located in Washington, California, and New York to provide services including consulting, media pitching, press trip promotions, media blitzes, and general support where necessary. The objectives of our Program include:

- Gathering information and developing press materials;
- Updating and publicizing the ExperienceWashington.com Press Room;
- Distributing press materials and story ideas to the public relations team and constituents for use in media pitching and media blitz development;

- Developing media action plans and pitching the media;
- Reporting on media plans on a monthly basis;
- Creating and arranging itineraries for tour operator familiarization, press group and individual press tours, and escort tours as needed;
- Securing media and tour operator participation in tours;
- Negotiating compensations/reduced rates from vendors to offset media hosting costs;
- Arranging press and travel trade Media Blitzes/Washington Showcase Events in targeted domestic markets and British Columbia;
- Tracking press exposure and drafting an annual report of results;
- Conducting training sessions and workshops for industry representatives around the state; and
- Participating in Travel Trade and Media tradeshow and meetings to ensure Washington State is represented as a premier travel destination in domestic and international tour brochures and press articles.

In addition, positive relationships with tourism constituents are cultivated through the development of media tools, such as Fact Sheets and StoryLine Press Releases, educational and training workshops, and regional seminars. All program communications heavily promote www.experiencewashington.com and the online Press Room.

Marketing Program

The Tourism Office's marketing and advertising program is directed and measured by annual market research. Our activities include promoting Washington State to potential travelers who live in the Northwest and the surrounding western states to encourage them to visit the Tourism Office website at www.experiencewashington.com. From the Website, visitors can link directly to businesses and communities throughout the state. We utilize the Internet, print media, and a television co-op program with co-op tourism industry partners to reach our target audiences. Our remaining 2004/05 marketing strategies include:

- Creating and implementing a "drive market" ad effort to market the Lewis & Clark Trail as a destination for the 2005 Bicentennial;
- Creating and implementing an interim umbrella ad campaign for spring/summer that drives consumers to www.experiencewashington.com for travel information;
- Adding Washington State's 1-800 number and reader response to all print ads;
- Continuing to evaluate, evolve, and track the www.experiencewashington.com Website;
- Moving from a regionally organized Website to an attraction-focused site;

- Continuing to drive consumers to community DMO's and tourism businesses;

- Continuing the Belo content television contract, extending coverage beyond Northwest Backroads to Northwest Cable News;
- Completing the two Visitor Profile studies for Northeast Washington counties and King County;
- Completing the Statewide Preliminary 2004 Travel Impact Study;
- Continuing to seek other co-op advertising opportunities; and
- Continuing to provide opportunity for communities to market their area on www.experiencewashington.com via content management tool.

Executive Summary

Ongoing Process

It is important to note that this blueprint is a working document and will be evolving as part of the ongoing strategic planning process. Other initiatives outlined in this summary are intended to be reviewed over the coming two to five years for feasibility of implementation based on budget and available funding, the shifts in the industry and determination of critical annual needs.

Keep this summary to use as your personal strategic blueprint reference. Look for continual updates and changes (reflecting the shifting market climate), progress, and results. View updates, as well as activities of the Branding Committee and Coalition team, online at www.experiencewashington.com/industry.

Immediate Initiatives

Initiatives that have been immediately activated and will be the focus for the 2005 calendar year include the establishment of the **Experience Washington Coalition** and a **Branding Advisory Committee**. These two groups, comprised of state tourism industry representatives, will help develop the foundation for implementing the defined objectives.

In addition, a **State Interagency Tourism Committee** will be organized to review and determine key projects for implementation. The projects will be incorporated into the Tourism Office's budget requests for the next fiscal year.

The **Tourism Director** will also go "**on the road**" beginning in January 2005. The focus of the trips will be an outreach to Washington's tourism regions, to meet with industry representatives and provide information to tourism constituents on Washington's tourism program and opportunities.

Our Commitment To You

The Tourism Office is committed to the principals of the strategic blueprint and is dedicated to moving Washington's tourism industry forward in new directions, providing visitors with a distinctive, high quality, and best experience.

Because of the nature of the evolving tourism industry and outside factors such as newly elected state and federal officials, uncertainty with the nation's economy, and continued threats of terrorism, this plan should be seen as a fluid and changeable document. The future is bright, but we must be flexible in our thinking and accommodation of the ever-shifting statewide and national environments.

The following provides a brief summary of the state's tourism industry, its evolution, and our strategic process over the last year, and details how the Tourism Office worked with the industry to construct this blueprint and define the aforementioned initiatives.

This Is Your Future!

If you are a part of Washington State's tourism industry, promoting travel to your community or operating a tourism-related business or attraction, we encourage your participation in this strategic process. This is an investment in your future.

Through our collaborative efforts, we will develop a solid direction for our industry, maximize the impact of our resources and be a top performer against our competition. Together, our team will build Washington and we will see the visitors come.

This working blueprint will serve as a guideline to assist the Tourism Office and the industry in filtering and pursuing appropriate initiatives on an annual basis – strategies and tactics that are viable, attainable and financially feasible – obtaining outcomes that will continue to move Washington's tourism industry forward.

tourism industry and partners to develop a new strategic direction – one that will accommodate the changing tourism landscape while continuing to build upon the successes achieved over the past years.

Building The Foundation

Washington's tourism industry plays a vital role within the state's economy and is an important economic driver for many communities throughout the state. The current tourism program and its partnerships continue to strengthen year to year and the results indicate that visitors are coming to Washington.

According to the *Washington State Statewide Travel Impacts and Visitor Volume 2004p* report prepared by Dean Runyan Associates, travel spending in Washington State in 2003 is estimated at \$11.5 billion, generating \$3.6 billion in earnings, and 139,000 jobs. This economic data demonstrates that tourism is on the rebound after the economic downturn and the aftermath of September 11.

Current figures also indicate that tourism is the second largest Washington industry in payroll stability and indirect taxes, next to the aerospace and software markets. And although studies have indicated that Washington State has lost market share within the region, the good news is that Washington offers the type of diversity that visitors are seeking to have, a "best experience."

Capitalizing on this continuing rise in tourism along with the state's potential for attracting an increasing number of visitors, Washington State Tourism, in early 2004, engaged with the state's

The process of defining a solid mission, vision, goals, and objectives began in late April of this year. Hank Todd from Carlson Destination Marketing in Minnesota was retained to facilitate the effort. The Tourism Office began with a series of personal face-to-face meetings with key industry leadership, focusing on learning about challenges facing the industry and the Office, and gathering input on suggested solutions and improvements.

In May, we surveyed the industry at large to introduce the concept of building a new strategic direction and to query the industry on key priorities. In June, 80 industry representatives attended an interactive industry strategic planning session to hone our messages and strategies.

We continued in August with collaborative regional meetings to discuss the strategies in detail and to determine preliminary tactics. Throughout September and October, we again surveyed the industry on the developed framework. Our work culminated with the formation of an initial blueprint, which was presented to more than 60 state tourism industry representatives on November 10, 2004.

This blueprint outlines a series of strategic objectives and tactics that will drive Washington's tourism industry for the next 2-5 years. These objectives have been targeted for either immediate action or extended planning based on available resources.

Over the long-term, tactical implementation of programs to meet these objectives will build the foundation upon which the state will structure and grow the tourism program, taking advantage of emerging trends and new opportunities. We are excited to be building this new tourism program that will attract a greater number of visitors to come, stay, and invest in Washington.

Washington State's tourism industry defined its primary goal to establish the state as one of the top and most desirable year-round travel destinations in the United States, attracting customers with a broad variety of interests to Washington's diverse regions. *A customer is identified as a potential visitor who travels in the state of Washington more than fifty miles and/or stays overnight in a paid accommodation.*

Key to realizing this vision is developing and leveraging resources and customer-focused programs to attract and maximize traveler spending throughout the state of Washington. Through the growth of tourism, the industry will increase its financial revenues and be seen as an important economic contributor to the state's economy. Four principal areas of focus were identified through the strategic planning process and are outlined in detail throughout this plan. The following page provides a brief at-a-glance overview of the key elements as they were defined.

Key Elements of the Strategic Blueprint

Mission

To develop and leverage resources and customer-focused programs to attract and maximize traveler spending throughout the state of Washington.

Goal

For Washington State to be one of the top and most desirable year-round travel destinations in the United States.

Our Customer

Washington state's customer is a potential visitor who travels in the state of Washington more than 50 miles and/or stays overnight in a paid accommodation.

Strategic Objectives

- To support the travel industry in generating at least \$15 billion in traveler expenditures annually;
- To have a clear majority of travelers aware of Washington State's brand and brand promise;
- To have a clear majority of Washington's federal, state, and local officials be aware of the economic impact and importance of the travel and tourism industry; and
- To develop "Best in Class" programs and services (best practices) with stakeholders and partners.

Measures and Indicators (*preliminary listing*)

- Ad equivalency value of editorial coverage
- Airport arrivals
- Amount of additional funds generated
- Average return on investment
- Border crossings
- Brand awareness measures
- Brand utilization (# of orgs. using)
- Car rental receipts
- Fishing licenses sold (non resident)
- Hosted agent/operators (number)
- Hosted media (number)
- Hunting licenses sold (non resident)
- Number of 800 calls
- Number of inquiries
- Number of partnerships created
- Number of visitors
- Regional visitor centers' reports
- Sales by SIC code
- Smith Travel Report of lodging rate and occupancy
- Stakeholder satisfaction measures
- State park usage fees
- Taxes collected
- Total Revenue
- Traffic counts on selected routes
- Train passengers
- Travel industry employment
- Website hits

Objective 1

To support the industry in generating at least \$15 billion annually in traveler expenditures

Create an Innovative Public/Private Commission to Oversee Tourism Programs

In order to support the economic growth of Washington State's tourism industry, an innovative public/private commission will be created to oversee tourism programs. The Experience Washington Coalition will explore and review the feasibility of creating a Washington State Tourism Commission. Coalition member's primary responsibilities include:

- Engaging in research, planning, and strategic development activities that will help to determine the viability of developing a state Commission.
- Reviewing other comparable state commissions/committees for sound structure and funding models.
- Developing an industry supported plan to present to the administration and Legislature.

The Commission, when established, will develop a geographically balanced membership from each region that will include the Tourism Director. It will reflect both public and private sectors, be appointed by the Governor, have staggered and limited terms, and be a manageable size. The Commission will have primary responsibility for new funds, program branding efforts, and strategic direction for the Tourism Office and the industry.

The initial Coalition body would remain as an active independent body that may, if deemed necessary and helpful to the overall efforts, continue to support the activities of the new Commission and the Tourism Office.

Develop a Public/Private Investment Plan to Secure Necessary Resources; Achieve High Expenditure Ranking

With a public/private investment plan, Washington State can achieve ranking among the top 15 states for travel expenditures and obtain a dedicated and integrated revenue source for marketing at both the state and local levels.

The plan will be created and developed with industry support and will be presented to the administration and Legislature for approval. Elements of the plan development will include:

- Review of other states' funding mechanisms to benchmark a sound structure
- Review, modification (*if needed*), and implementation of 1998 legislation – a funding model previously identified and designed.
- Development of a partnership program with stakeholders.
- Development of a state-merchandising plan.
- Development of cooperative interagency funding processes.

Develop and Implement a Comprehensive Marketing Plan

The marketing plan will include partners and co-op opportunities and center around driving traffic to a rich and developed Website. The plan will incorporate:

- Clearly established goals and measurements.
- A 2010 Olympics strategy.
- Promotion of Washington's "state pride."
- A partnership program with state corporations.
- A brand promise that is more than just a logo – infiltrating into all communications, programs, attitudes, and actions.
- A comprehensive advertising program to introduce the new brand and brand promise.

Objective 2

To have a clear majority of travelers aware of Washington's brand and brand promise

Research, Develop, Implement, and Measure a Brand and Brand Promise for the State of Washington

In developing Washington State's brand and brand promise, a comprehensive brand audit and qualitative research will be performed in order to develop the essence that is distinctively Washington. A brand manual will be constructed to ensure consistency in messaging and imagery. The brand will be utilized by all state agencies and the industry. A concrete brand and guidelines for usage will establish:

- A solid consumer promise and visitor expectations.
- A high preference rate among consumers to come and visit Washington.

Provide Market and Traveler Research

To be top in class in the area of market and travel research, all current market research mechanisms will be reevaluated for validity and utilization. State agencies' databases will be accessed for demographic and other information and the Tourism Office will become a clearinghouse for all travel research conducted by state agencies, destination marketing organizations (DMO), and businesses. Primary and secondary Internet research will be increased to ensure a comprehensive collection of data. Finally, a research dissemination and use plan will be developed and distributed, which will encourage increased interaction with the industry and more effective usage of collected data.

Set Priorities for Markets and Market Segments

Based on research data and partners, priorities for markets and market segments will be determined. They will be organized and prioritized based on market categories and segments to ensure a maximum return on investment. The core markets identified are as follows:

- Western US Markets
- Other Domestic Markets
- Western Canadian Markets
- Other International Markets
- Niche Markets

Objective 3

To have a clear majority of Washington’s federal, state and local officials and residents be aware of the economic impact and importance of the travel and tourism industry in the state of Washington

Review Opportunity for Continuation of the “Experience Washington Coalition”

We will explore the continuation of the Experience Washington Coalition as an active, independent body. We will review the Coalition’s potential to remain an effective force in the advocacy arena and determine if the Coalition may serve in a supportive role to the Commission and the Tourism Office.

Secure State Agency Involvement and Support for the Travel and Tourism Industry

Strong partnerships are a vital element to moving the industry forward in the governmental arena. We will increase the awareness of Washington’s tourism industry and the value it brings to the state through education and collaboration within our state departments. Steps will be taken to educate and ally with key agencies including CTED, the Department’s of Transportation, Fish and Wildlife, Natural Resources, Health, Agriculture, Parks and Recreation, and others to gain support. A review of staffing needs and resources will be conducted to ensure that relationships are cultivated and advanced. An agency resource manual, along with a method to garner industry input and increase communications will also be developed to support the effort.

Establish an Interagency Coordination Process Focused on Major Projects, Issues, and Policies

To further increase the collaborative efforts with Washington State agencies, an Interagency Coordination Process will be developed to focus on major projects, issues and policies. Once the appropriate agencies have been determined for involvement, areas of mutual interest and value will be established. Goals and priorities will be defined along with a structure and process for action.

Objective 4

To develop “Best in Class” programs and services (*best practices*) with stakeholders

The Tourism Office will work with the industry to collaborate and discuss feasibility and timing.

Develop a Comprehensive Stakeholder Communications Plan

To further enhance the interaction and relationship with tourism stakeholders, a comprehensive stakeholder communications plan will be constructed. Initially, a detailed stakeholder database will be populated and the frequency and types of communications will be determined. The industry’s needs and feedback will direct what information is communicated and how. Budget requirements to implement the plan will be decided. Primary channels of communication currently identified include:

- Annual and biennial reports provided to the Legislature, elected officials, and the industry.
- Via the Web, capturing the continued growth of the Internet as a dominant force in the travel industry with tourism constituents, partners, and the general consumer market.
- Video conferencing – allowing opportunities for personal interaction and engagement over long distances.

Conduct Benchmark and Ongoing Competitive Analysis of Other States and Provinces Program, Services, and Funding Levels

The first phase will identify the programs and services to be benchmarked, which will include educational familiarization trips to gather information and assess other programs. From that research and based on industry need, Learning Institute Best Practices will be created and metrics will be developed for the Tourism Office’s Website. Program reports will be issued on a regular basis to update the industry on successes and challenges.

Develop and Implement Ongoing Stakeholder Input and Feedback Program

Designed to enhance the relationships between the industry and the Tourism Office, the Stakeholder Input and Feedback Program will engage the industry as active participants in the discussions around the following activities:

- A decision calendar that would be designed to communicate core initiatives to the industry, solicit feedback, and set dates for approval of items.

- Regular “road show” visits to Washington State’s regions and communities.
- Established Tourism Partners meetings, rotated around the state.
- The Washington State Tourism Forum.
- Utilization of e-survey techniques; the feasibility and effectiveness.

Develop Performance Measures and Indicators for all Strategic Objectives and Tactics

The Tourism Office will regularly conduct thorough assessments of the strategic direction and related activities. All programs and services of the Office, outlined through the strategic process, will be identified and goals created in advance for each program and service. Measurements will be developed accordingly and conducted annually at minimum to ensure the return on investment of the overall program. Results will be communicated to the stakeholders and partners.

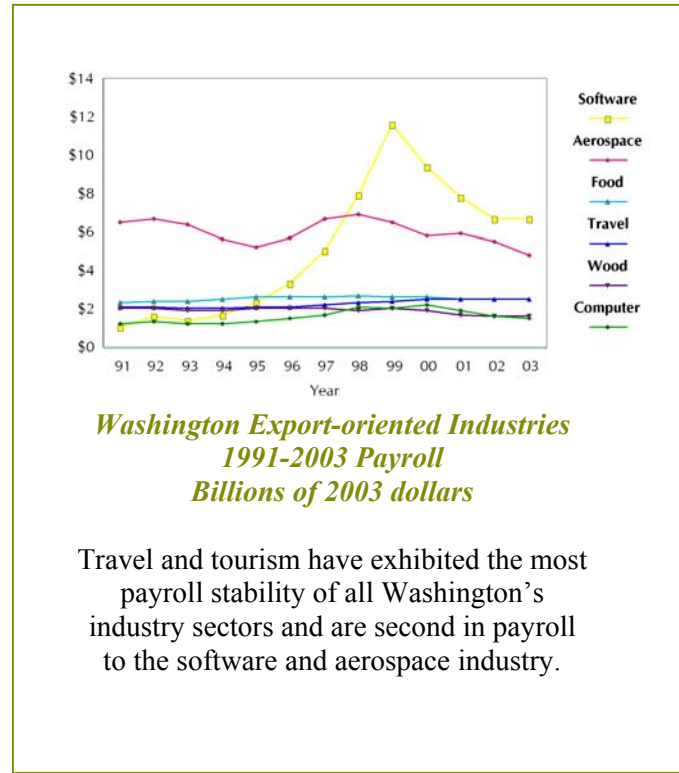
Appendix A

TOURISM FACTS *Fiscal Year 2003/2004*

- This year, travelers spent an estimated \$11.5 billion in Washington, a 6 percent increase over 2003.
- In 2004, state travel tax revenue generated an estimated \$610 million for the state general fund.
- In 2004, local travel taxes generated an estimated \$220 million for local communities.
- More than 2 million potential travelers visited the state's Website, an increase of 63 percent (*year-to-date*).
- 65 new Northwest Backroads television segments aired during the 2003 and 2004 campaigns.
- More than \$58 million was generated in free editorial coverage that focused on Washington State as a travel destination.
- The International Market Development Program staff brought more than 65 travel journalists to Washington. The program generated more than \$11 million in advertising equivalency for the state's tourism destinations over the last two years.



- A diversity print advertising campaign that ran in 9 different magazines and in a British Columbia newspaper reached over 7 million consumers during its annual run. Based on ad evaluation research, tracking consumers who connected with the ad campaign and who then decided to travel in Washington, the state's investment return was \$39 in visitor spending and \$2.80 in tax revenue generated for every \$1 spent on the ad campaign.
- \$648,949 raised by Belo in television co-op support from industry partners to promote travel to and in Washington via King 5 and its affiliate properties.
- Visitors to Washington ranked every major travel attribute of the state (except climate and swimming) substantially higher than did visitors to other states.
- The Tourism's Office training programs served more than 250 tourism-related businesses.
- Washington's travel industry consists of more than 28,000 businesses.
- Approximately 139,000 Washingtonians were directly employed in tourism-related jobs. Earnings for workers were more than \$3.6 billion with average wages from \$9.82 to \$16.08 per hour.
- Rural Washington counties have the highest number of travel-related jobs in relation to total employment.



Sources:

Dean Runyan: *Statewide Travel Impact Report 2004, Travel Industry Employment Report 2002, Statewide Visitor Profile 2003, The Economic Significance of the Washington State Travel Industry 2004*

Appendix B

TOURISM STAKEHOLDERS, PARTNERS AND INTERMEDIARIES

STAKEHOLDERS

- Arts, Entertainment, and Sporting Organizations
- Community, Trade and Economic Development
- Destination Marketing Organizations
- Elected Officials
- Employees of Travel Businesses and Organizations
- Film Industry Businesses
- Historical and Heritage Organizations and Museums
- Local Government/Communities
- National, State, and Local Parks Organizations
- Retail Businesses used by Travelers
- State and Federal Agencies
- Tourism Advisory Committee
- Travel Service Providers
- Tribal Organizations
- Washington State Taxpayers

PARTNERS

- Arts, Entertainment, and Sporting Organizations
- Destination Marketing Organizations
- Educational Institutions
- In-State Media
- Local Government/Communities
- Non-profit Attractions and Organizations
- Retail Businesses used by Travelers
- State and Federal Agencies
- Transportation Businesses and Organizations
- Travel Businesses and Organizations
- Tribal Organizations

INTERMEDIARIES

- Advertising Firms
- Consumer Media
- Destination Marketing Organizations
- Friends and Families
- Incentive Buyers
- Public Relations Firms
- Marketing Firms
- Meeting Planners
- Trade Media
- Travel Agents
- Tour Operators
- Web/Internet Firms