



TRAVEL
TACOMA +
PIERCE COUNTY, WA



STRATEGIC PLAN FOR SALES + MARKETING
2015-2017



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The previous two years [2013-14] have been years of evaluation and analysis for Travel Tacoma + Pierce County. They have been years of milestones, and years of making hard decisions to prepare our organization and destination for future success. This plan is the result of setting our sights on the opportunities that lie ahead of us. This is a working document that will be updated annually through 2017.

We have changed our business model to a Partnership model, and realigned our organizational staff structure and priorities in order to achieve our mission and vision. We have assumed the sales responsibility for our county's primary convention asset – the Greater Tacoma Convention & Trade Center – while remaining committed to overall regional sales efforts. Our two primary pillars are marketing – expanding destination awareness and encouraging consumers to visit, and sales – events and activities that create interest in buying, and generating revenue for the local economy.

Our strategic focus for 2015-2017 will be on the growth of high-performing marketing and sales programs and activities while working within the framework of available financial resources. Ultimately, we will aim for sustainability and greatness in all we do. This requires desire, vision and focus.

Our marketing efforts will be focused on building momentum for the new brand rolled out in 2013, including the “Fearless Exploration” campaign. We will conduct campaigns in targeted drive-market areas to encourage one-to-two-night stays. Destination advertising will be directed at those with an interest in Northwest travel, with ads in publications like **Western Journey Magazine** [AAA] and **Alaska Airlines**. We are excited to branch out more into search engine marketing through **Google, Yahoo** and **Bing**, and upgrade our destination's presence on **TripAdvisor** where we will direct prospective visitors to our new responsive-design website. Our website will be formatted for the best experience on mobile, tablet and PC, which is becoming the dominant way people access travel information. Finally, our marketing will be focused on leveraging all the opportunities for national and global destination awareness as we host the **2015 U.S. Open Championship**.

Our sales efforts are breaking new ground to garner interest in the destination for increased sales and profitability. One new marketing and sales tool that we're investing in for the first time is **CVENT**. It is the leading online resource to review RFPs for meetings and events. **CVENT** is used primarily by meeting procurement and site selection agencies such as **HelmsBriscoe** and **ConferenceDirect**, who have over 600 meeting planners combined. We are continuing our involvement with the **Meet in Washington State** [MIWS] partnership comprised of Seattle, Bellevue, Spokane and Tulalip Resort. This partnership increases the exposure of Tacoma + Pierce County to more than 10,000 association executives and meeting planners each year. MIWS tradeshows have been a fantastic way to start the engagement, and now we have a team in place that is continuing to dig for the business. We will continue to attend the **Go West Summit**, an event that we hosted in 2014, as it introduces the world's top international tour operators to destinations like Tacoma + Pierce County in the Pacific Northwest.

We desire to be a great organization, delivering a return on investment, and winning awards and recognition for ourselves and our destination. We are committed to earning respect as the leader in destination marketing and sales within Tacoma + Pierce County. Finally, we will focus solely on those activities that move us to our chosen outcome. We look forward to an amazing 2015 and beyond, and I hope you will review this document to see more of our plans.

Sincerely,

Bennish D. Brown
President/CEO

STRUCTURE TO SUPPORT OUR TOP PRIORITIES

PRIORITIES: Financial and organizational stability; Board relations; community relations; partnership development; collaboration; alternative revenue generation

EXECUTIVE + ADMINISTRATIVE

- President + CEO
- Executive Assistant + Special Projects
- Finance + Benefits
- Business Development Manager [Partnerships]

*Product Development recommendations will be evaluated and assessed by the Leadership Team.

PRIORITIES: Destination Marketing and Branding - increase awareness of Tacoma + Pierce County and help visitors connect emotionally to our brand; packaging; leisure visitor information; collaboration

MARKETING

- Vice President
- Marketing Manager
- Communications Manager
- Visitor Information Center Coordinator
- Contract: Public Relations/Media Relations Services
- Contract: Visitor Research

PRIORITIES: Generate economic impact through sales activities that provide a consistent return on investment for funders by delivering revenue and room nights; stakeholder relationships; collaboration

SALES + SERVICING

- Vice President
- Convention Sales Manager
- Convention Sales Manager
- Convention Center Sales Manager - Short Term
- Regional Sales Manager
- Regional Sales Manager
- Administrative Assistant

ABOUT THE BRAND

Destination brand

Our brand is who we are. It's not a logo. It's not a slogan. It's the total sum of words, images and associations that form the customer's perception and helps us distinguish our destination from other cities. It is our story that is told. It is our story that is lived. It is our story that inspires.

Brand promise [what customers can expect]

Pierce County inspires transformation. It is a place to fearlessly explore a fusion of natural beauty and an accessible art culture. Experiencing this place leaves those who come different from when they came. Perspectives changed. Challenges accomplished. Stories created.

Brand standouts

Our iconic images: Glass Art, Collector Vehicles and Mount Rainier National Park.

OUR VALUES AND CORE FUNCTIONS

Core values:

Visitor First

We will always consider the primary reason we exist – to be a resource and voice for the visitor.

Accountability

We hold ourselves accountable to each other and our community.

Collaboration

We actively collaborate with our strongest resources – each other, our community and our destination.

Creativity

We strive to be creative dreamers who are not satisfied with following the crowd, and will have fun as we work outside the box.

Innovation

We don't accept the status quo but look to what will come, or what *can* come next.

Core functions:

Destination Awareness – Promote the region and generate interest and awareness for Tacoma + Pierce County as a destination through branded messages to targeted audiences.

Familiarization Tours – The best way to have top-influencers connected and enthusiastic about our destination is to have them experience it first hand. That's why we bring media, meeting planners and tour operators to Tacoma + Pierce County to touch, see and taste all this destination has to offer.

Direct Marketing – Direct marketing helps turn casual interest in the destination into a booked trip. This is done through Search Engine Marketing and Social Media Marketing. The Travel Tacoma + Pierce

County website provides comprehensive information for customers and is the core driver in our direct marketing efforts.

Visitor Information – Influence visitor spending, regional visitor distribution and lengthen stays by providing visitors with reservation services, recommendations, visitor guides, brochures and maps of the region.

Convention Center Sales – Proactively sell the Greater Tacoma Convention & Trade Center as a location for meetings, conventions and tradeshow to generate revenue, room nights and increased economic impact throughout the community. Goals will be achieved through advertising and marketing, proactively prospecting, tradeshow participation, industry memberships, networking, site visits, hosting client events, community relationships and partnering with other CVBs.

Regional Sales – Proactively sell Pierce County as a destination for meetings and events, and to generate leads for members and book business in the region. Through proactive sales calls, tradeshow participation, industry networking, client site visits and FAM tours, the sales team connects key decision makers with partnering businesses.

SHORT TERM AND LONG TERM OBJECTIVES

Destination Objectives

- Increase brand awareness of Tacoma + Pierce County as a destination and resulting visitation from meetings and events and individual and group travelers.
- Become a recognized destination to host meetings and events.
- Secure resources to achieve the mission and objectives.
- Build community support for tourism and the CVB.
- Encourage product development and infrastructure improvements that help continue to enrich a destination that people want to visit.

Short-term focus

- Capitalize on 2015 U.S. Open opportunities, partnering and supporting the USGA and Pierce County to drive attendance and prepare the destination. Expand public relations efforts to bring in golf media for pre and post championship media FAMs.
- Secure business that maximizes occupancy and rates, and influence compression.
- Invest in consumer research so we can determine key audiences and interests of current and potential customer bases, allowing us to be more focused and strategic with marketing and sales initiatives.
- Expand our social media efforts to fully optimize our brand voice, and evaluate ROI metrics.
- Continue roll-out of “Fearless Exploration” campaign to communicate the story of our destination.
- Expand public relations efforts.
- Strengthen connections with visitors.
- Emphasis on marketing the shoulder and off-seasons especially in the leisure market segments.
- Have Travel Tacoma + Pierce County recognized as an industry leader in Pierce County.

Long-term focus

- Strong identification of target audiences leading to multifaceted campaigns.
- Funding – grow destination marketing funds; explore opportunities to develop new funding sources.
- Destination valued for the quality and quantity of meetings and events that are held throughout Pierce County.
- Tourism Product Development and Packaging – destination engagement in working with attractions to bundle and package experiences that differentiate and sell the destination to group as well as leisure segments, both domestically and internationally.
- Continue to enhance traveltacoma.com to better meet customer needs and stay current with industry trends.

SALES

Core functions

The Sales team is responsible for securing meetings and events [local, regional, state and national conventions, conferences, tradeshows, and other event business] for Tacoma + Pierce County. The Sales team reaches out to a wide variety of markets to support our range of unique meeting facilities, Convention Center, hotels and attractions throughout cities in Pierce County [Tacoma, Mount Rainier, Puyallup, Fife, Lakewood, Gig Harbor and Sumner]. The sales team is dedicated to improving destination awareness, delivering room nights and increasing economic impact throughout Tacoma + Pierce County.

2015 Benchmarks

Estimated Future Convention Center Revenue [Rental + Food & Beverage Revenue] – \$2,600,000

Estimated Booked Meetings + Events, Non Convention Center [no room nights] – 15

Estimated Booked Room Nights – 19,000

Estimated Economic Impact – *Estimated Impact for Booked Business*

Market Research [Identify Specific Target Markets] – *Data Shared*

Customer Service/Planner Surveys – *85% of all surveys are rated Good or Excellent*

Group Sales Results [Regional + Convention Center]	2012 Actual	2013 Actual	2014 YTD Actual [10/31/2014]	2015 Goal
Booked Room Nights	10,778	19,610	24,914	19,000
Booked Meetings & Events	13	13	7	15
Convention Center Revenue	0	1,358,712	1,622,075	2,600,000
Estimated Economic Impact	3,350,464	9,175,963	11,954,450	-

Note: 2013 and beyond goals are reflective of convention center sales beginning on April 1, 2013. Results and goals are combined destination and convention center sales. Booked meetings & events have no room nights and are booked throughout Pierce County. 2015 revenue goals are increased due to short term market being added to the destination and convention center City of Tacoma contract.

Primary Markets

Association	Corporate	Education	Fraternal
Government	Hobby	Military	Religious
Social	Society		

Key Strategies

- Commit to the Destination Marketing Association International’s mandatory standards for destination sales services and organization reaccreditation.
- Leverage destination and convention center awareness through the leading global event venue directory [CVENT] and web planning portals [EmpowerMint]. The destination will brand itself through regional and state banner ads and the convention center will brand itself through Seattle/Tacoma preferred placement to drive opportunity from 3rd party, independent and organization planners.
- Commit to the Meet in Washington State - ASAE Corporate Partnership to increase destination awareness, collective marketing through online and print ads, showcase destination and partners at ASAE tradeshows, etc.
- Promote destination and convention center at industry tradeshows and conferences to generate leads, and build contacts to increase opportunities to book business.
- Increase customer “touches” with local and destination sales calls, client events, site inspections, familiarization tours, promotions, social media and interactive engagements to keep the destination and convention center at front of mind with planners.
- Engage in industry memberships and attend regularly to build rapport, develop strong relationships with planners, industry partners for referral opportunities and build destination and convention center awareness.
- Commit to destination summits and attending community events to build stronger relationships with industry partners to ensure positive results during all stages of sales and events; and increase referral opportunities.
- Participate on local industry sponsorships to increase awareness of destination and convention center, sales team and dedication to meetings and events.

SALES PROGRAMS

Marketing

Budget: '\$120,449

**Travel, Ancillary and Operational Expenses not included in estimates.*

In addition to informing others of Tacoma + Pierce County and the convention center; the marketing budget is being used multi-dimensionally to gain interest in the destination, increase sales and profitability. Campaigns [online and print] will continue to be leveraged by investments in research, industry associations, familiarization tours, client events, sales calls, tradeshows, conferences, site visits, relationship development, etc. to support the scope of work and benchmarks. Here are a few highlights:

- CVENT + EmpowerMint Destination and Event Venue Directories [Online]
- Meetings + Convention Magazine Ads [Print/Online]
- Travel Tacoma + Pierce County Meeting Planner Guide
- Event Sponsorships
- Market Tradeshows [Wedding Shows, Military Shows, etc.]
- Client Site Visits/Familiarization Tours/Sales Appointments, etc.
- Outbound Client Development [Sales Calls/DC Client Event/etc.]

Industry Partnerships

Budget: *\$29,000

**Travel, Ancillary and Operational Expenses not included in all estimates.*

Meet in Washington State MIWS is a partnership comprised of Visit Seattle, Visit Bellevue, Visit Spokane, Tulalip Resort and Travel Tacoma that collectively invests as a Corporate Sponsor with the American Society of Association Executives. This corporate sponsorship allows representatives from each location to be marketed with preferential rights through print, online, tradeshow and conferences to more than 10,000 members. This partnership increases Washington State + Pierce County + Tacoma recognition.

Industry Memberships + Events

Budget: *\$8,876

**Travel, Ancillary and Operational Expenses not included in estimates.*

Commitment to the community, industry and members creates a business network designed to increase sales effectiveness. Industry memberships increases knowledge of industry issues, best practices, relationships, prospecting, referrals, etc.

- Air Force Association [AFA]
- Meetings Professionals International [MPI]
- Pierce County Chambers of Commerce
- Reunion Friendly
- Society of Government Meeting Planners [SGMP]
- Washington and Capital Chapters of Professional Convention Management Association [PCMA]
- Washington Chapter of American Society of Association Executives [WSAE]
- Your Military Reunion Connection [YMRC]

Tradeshows/Conferences

Budget: *\$69,450

**Travel, Ancillary and Operational Expenses not included in estimates.*

Third Party Procurement

ConferenceDirect [Annual Partner Meeting and Tradeshow] Acting as a single point of contact for planning events; ConferenceDirect is one of the world's leading event management and hospitality services firms. With 325 associates and representing over 8,700 events annually; the Annual Partner Meeting and Tradeshow provides the opportunity to meet one-on-one and discuss business opportunities with over 300 associates who are responsible for booking and representing thousands of organizations.

HelmsBriscoe [Annual Business Conference] A global leader in meetings procurement, HelmsBriscoe offers an easy alternative to the complexity and expense of planning events with a network of associates throughout 55 countries. Attended by professional meeting planners that deliver events throughout the world, this conference encourages destination awareness and allows Sales to introduce the capabilities to host meetings and events to hundreds of HelmsBriscoe associates in one location.

Association

American Society of Association Executives [Springtime Expo, Annual Conference and Washington Chapter Annual Conference] ASAE represents more than 21,000 association executives and industry partners representing 10,000 organizations; members manage leading trade associations, individual membership societies and voluntary organizations across the United States and in nearly 50 countries around the world. These events are annual conferences with tradeshow components.

Professional Convention Management Association [Convening Leaders] PCMA is defined by its more than 6,000 meetings industry membership. Leaders from every aspect of the industry join PCMA from trade shows, associations, corporations, suppliers, independent planners, students and faculty members. PCMA is a source for education, professional resources and advocacy for the meeting, convention and exhibition industry. Convening Leaders is an annual conference focused on industry education and networking.

Corporate

Meeting Professionals International [World Education Congress and Cascadia] MPI has more than 20,000 members, representing 86 countries, from 71 clubs and chapters. MPI provides members, chapters and the global meeting and event community with innovative and relevant education, networking opportunities and business exchanges, and acts as a prominent voice for the promotion and growth of the industry. These events have hosted buyer programs and industry education.

Diversity

Collinson Media Media produces publications and marketing for the corporate, hobby, sports, diversity, association and religious markets. The company hosts yearly marketplace conferences in their target markets that allow for one-on-one appointments and advertising in their magazines.

Military

Your Military Reunion Connection Your Military Reunion Connection [YRMC] is an association for military reunion planners. This association provides education for planners through conferences that also feature a familiarization tour. During the conferences they offer one-on-one appointments to destinations and suppliers.

Reunion Friendly Network Reunion Friendly Network ConFAMs are a great way for Planners and the Hospitality Industry to connect face to face. Events are held across the country provide an excellent opportunity to learn about a specific destination and reunion planning in general. The website also has listings for destinations.

Tour + Travel

Go West Summit Go West Summit introduces the world's top international tour operators to specialty suppliers offering tourism-related products or services in the Western United States and Canada.

Education

Budget: *\$6,725

**Travel, Ancillary and Operational Expenses not included in estimates.*

- Western Association of CVB's Annual Conference
- Professional Convention Management Association/Meeting Professionals International – Annual Industry Summit
- Professional Sales Training
- Team + Staff Development

MARKETING

Core functions

The Marketing team is responsible for brand and direct marketing efforts; visitor information and management of the visitor information centers; corporate communications; and media relations.

Primary Audience

Leisure

2015 Benchmarks

New website visitors – 43,250

Published articles – 120

Social media activity – 52 relevant activities on social platforms [new metric]

Marketing results	2012 Actual	2013 Actual	2014 YTD Actual [10/31/2014]	2015 Goal
New website visitors	57,241	47,404	36,597	43,250
Published articles	199	219	169	120

Key strategies

Our approach to the marketing mix for 2015 will be three-tiered:

- Expose people to the destination [Brand Marketing]
- Once the destination is discovered, help potential visitors turn their interest into a planned trip [Direct Marketing]
- Equip visitors with the tools they need to have the best possible experience while here and encourage visitors to return [Visitor Information]

MARKETING PROGRAMS

Build destination awareness

Budget: \$372,105

To most people– even within driving distance of Pierce County, this area is an unknown. We need to do something bold to put Pierce County on the mental map of the traveling public. As a small non-profit, we don't have the Nike Budget to get our destination exposed nationally. Therefore, we are starting smaller tactical campaigns that will have an impact on a specific audience.

Geographically-targeted campaign – an aggressive campaign designed to encourage a one- to two-night stay in Pierce County, targeted at those who live and work in a metropolitan area.

Advertising at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport – Travel Tacoma + Pierce County will recruit a partner to join us in placing destination advertising at the airport. Ads will run the months leading up to the U.S. Open and during the championship.

Destination advertising to those with an interest in Northwest Travel: Full/ or Half Page Ads in Western Journey Magazine, Alaska Airlines Inflight Magazine, and the Washington State Visitor Guide.

Destination videos – Produce destination videos that showcase Tacoma + Pierce County. Promote the videos and the new website through web and television.

Earned media – Travel Tacoma + Pierce County will recruit travel writers by pitching tailored destination stories that fit their interest. In 2015 we will do this through working with a professional PR agency.

Media hosting – Travel Tacoma + Pierce County will host travel writers from print and electronic publications that we believe have an influence on travel decisions. We do this by working with them on itineraries, and providing them hotels, attractions, and occasionally meals. We count on our partners to help us minimize costs.

Search engine marketing through Google, Yahoo and Bing – Find people who are searching for what Pierce County has to offer, and direct them to our website.

Social media – Advertising on Facebook, You Tube, and Twitter – Find people who are interested in things that Pierce County offers, and build a relationship with them through social media.

Website redesign – A major focus of next year will be the launch of the new TravelTacoma.com website. The site will have responsive design, formatted for the best experience on mobile, tablet and PC. This is important as mobile use continues to grow and will soon become the predominate way people access our information – both when planning, and when here. Content will be created with direct marketing and search engine optimization in mind, making sure that there are strong landing pages for key market segments that we can promote through our other channels.

Tacoma + Pierce County Visitor Guide – Marketing International estimates that the distribution of one visitor guide equates to \$48 in visitor spending. The visitor guide is distributed through several channels, predominantly in information racks in the greater Seattle and South-sound areas, these include ferry and cruise ship terminals, as well as Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. In addition this year for U.S. Open, Travel Tacoma + Pierce County will hand distribute guides to all of its lodging partners. Other methods of distribution include mailing upon request, and distribution at visitor information centers. All together, 125,000 guides will be distributed.

Strengthen connections with visitors

Budget: \$42,800

Responsive design website – Laptop, tablet or phone, when visitors go to traveltacoma.com they will get full access to our website's content. Mobile phones account for 40% of our website traffic. Within two years it will likely overtake desktop use as people use mobile phones for all stages of their travel planning.

TripAdvisor pages – TripAdvisor is the #1 site for destination information for potential travelers. Currently our destination is not represented well. By investing in sponsored pages, we can give the best possible impression of Tacoma + Pierce County to those who are looking for destination information.

Visitor Information Centers – VICs add the personal touch for those who are exploring downtown Tacoma. Travel Tacoma + Pierce County has a volunteer-staffed information center positioned in the heart of the Greater Tacoma Convention & Trade Center. Starting fall 2014, Travel Tacoma also has a site at the Washington State History Museum that is staffed during the Third Thursday Art Walk. Our priority in 2015 will be building awareness of the centers.

Social media visitor engagement – Growing our one-to-one interactions with visitors through social media. Promoting and engaging with the #Ask253 hashtag, to give recommendations to visitors, and to build a network of social media partners who can also engage with #Ask253.

Electronic newsletters to past and potential visitors – We collect emails through our website, Visitor Information Centers, and marketing efforts.

Become recognized leaders in the tourism industry

Budget: \$22,270

Benchmarking – To get where we’re going, we need to first see where we are. Travel Tacoma + Pierce County will invest in research to discover who our competitors are and how we stack up against them.

External research – If we know what our audience is looking for, and how they make their travel decisions, we will be able to make smarter marketing decisions. We will work with nSight Travel to be able to do a deep data-dive into how travelers plan their trips, and what tools they are using to plan their trips.

In-house research – Travel Tacoma + Pierce County is uniquely positioned to collect visitor information. Travel Tacoma will collect key information that can benefit our marketing and sales efforts, as well as those of our partners.

Educating the community about what Travel Tacoma + Pierce County is doing to deliver tourism.

Business collateral – Professional, branded business materials.

Electronic newsletter to past and current boardmembers, hospitality industry professionals, and elected officials.

Entering work into award competitions - We are proud of the work we do at Travel Tacoma + Pierce County, and feel like it is competitive for regional and national award.

Building in flexibility for community partnership – Because most of our budget is planned out a year ahead, we don’t have much flexibility to respond to requests to help with co-op advertising. This year, we are reserving a small pool of advertising funds to enhance partner marketing efforts when it is a benefit to the destination.

Education

Budget: \$5,325

**Travel, Ancillary and Operational Expenses not included in estimates.*

- DMAI Conference
- Professional associations and training

U.S. OPEN ACTIVITIES

The approach for the U.S. Open will focus on direct marketing and visitor information, helping U.S. Open attendees find lodging in Pierce County, and equipping them with digital, print and face-to-face guidance to help them enjoy the area during their stay.

Visitor Information

- Printed map-based dining guide
- Golf-themed visitor guide
- Ambassador program
- Media concierge service

- Mobile friendly, searchable restaurant listings

Direct Marketing

- Search engine marketing
- Book Now – Facebook Campaign
- Pro golfer look-a-like photo competition
- Lodging – housing rental page

Brand Marketing

- Pierce County tip sheet story submittals
- Long-Form Story submittals from Destination Readiness group
- Supplying TV-Ready aerial B-roll to FOX

NATIONAL, REGIONAL, STATE + LOCAL INVOLVEMENT

Membership, Accreditation and Professional Development

Budget: *\$10,330

**Travel, Ancillary and Operational Expenses not included in estimates.*

Tremendous benefit to Travel Tacoma + Pierce County and the staff comes from being actively involved members in national, regional, state and local tourism industry organizations.

- **DMAI [Destination Marketing Association International]** – provides an annual international tourism convention for a global perspective on the industry, ongoing access to resources and research, tailored conferences that focus on specific aspects of DMO departments, and the only accreditation program that sets industry specific standards for DMO governance and operations.
- **Western Association of CVBs [WACVB]** - a regional professional association serving more than 140 member bureaus in the West. Benefits include an annual convention, access to industry resources and research, participating at education programs and use of services to assist in marketing our destination and managing our organization.
- **Washington Tourism Alliance [WTA]** - established by industry stakeholders with the mission to advocate, promote, develop and sustain the economic well-being of the Washington tourism industry. WTA provides several products to serve members and the state's tourism industry, including the official travel and tourism website for the state of Washington, www.experiencewa.com, and the Official Washington State Visitors' Guide in partnership with the Washington Lodging Association.
- **WSDMO [Washington State Destination Marketing Organizations Association]** - an independent, non-profit trade association advocating tourism investment and promotion as economic development. The mission of the WSDMO is to enhance the awareness and influence of the tourism industry and to serve as the single unifying voice for all of Washington State's destination marketing organizations and tourism industry.
- **Pierce County Lodging Association [PCLA]** – a membership organization that represents Pierce County as the third largest hotel room community in the State of Washington. PCLA provides hoteliers and other industry members a regular forum to meet and discuss issues that affect the individual cities as well as the unincorporated areas of Pierce County.

