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**TACOMA+**  
PIERCE COUNTY, WA

# ANNUAL REPORT 2014



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RETREATS • MEETINGS • EVENTS • CONFERENCES

# A PLACE FOR FEARLESS EXPLORATION



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PIERCE COUNTY, WA

DuPont | Fife | Gig Harbor | Lakewood | Mount Rainier | Puyallup | Sumner

**TRAVELTACOMA.COM**

Home of Chambers Bay Golf Course,  
site of the 2015 U.S. Open Championship.

# ABOUT US

## Role of the Destination Marketing Organization

Travel Tacoma, a private, non-profit marketing organization, has served as Pierce County's official destination marketing organization [DMO] for more than 20 years. The goals of these marketing efforts are to improve the visitor experience, bring visitors to the region and enhance economic prosperity in the region.

## Mission Statement: To Deliver Tourism to Pierce County

Travel Tacoma increases visitor expenditures and overnight stays through strategic sales and marketing initiatives in partnership with our customers, partners and funding communities. We promote and package our destination to attract and meet the needs of meetings + conventions, group tours, special interest groups and leisure travelers.

# 2014 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dan O'Leary, <i>Chair</i>	Silver Cloud Inn	Tacoma
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Matt Allen	Chambers Bay	University Place
Mike Gommi	Courtyard Marriott	Tacoma
Ralph Pease	Argosy Cruises	Seattle
Shon Sylvia	Metro Parks Tacoma	Tacoma
Stan Kott	Hotel Murano	Tacoma
Stephanie Walsh	Lakewold Gardens	Lakewood
Trudy Cofchin	LeMay Family Collection	Spanaway

# LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT + CEO

Dear Tourism Partners,

Travel Tacoma + Pierce County continued to build on its success in 2014. We streamlined staff roles to be more effective, hosted a national summit that attracted record-breaking attendance and saw firsthand how success comes from a community that works together. It has been a phenomenal year for tourism in Pierce County with tourism tipping the scales to become a \$1 billion dollar industry.

In 2014 we restructured our organization, and streamlined staff and department roles to better align with our mission: to deliver tourism to Pierce County. This has resulted in a greater focus on marketing and selling the destination and maintaining an emphasis on “visitors first.”

2014 was a year for breaking records. Go West Summit brought record-breaking numbers to Tacoma + Pierce County – more than 600 attendees, 10,000 meetings and \$19,982,857 booked-business on the floor of the Greater Tacoma Convention & Trade Center. Additionally, we brought international and domestic travel writers and tour groups to the region, hosted industry events and traveled across the United States, all to provide greater awareness and exposure of our amazing destination.

We know that we are only successful when we work together. In 2014 we implemented our partnership model, replacing the outdated membership model in order to more broadly represent our local tourism industry, and to be an unbiased source for visitors and customers. Thank you to our amazing partners, at every level, for collaboratively working with us to positively impact our economy. We truly could not do it without you.

The success of Go West Summit put us on the international stage – preparing us for our role in the upcoming 2015 U.S. Open at Chambers Bay.

This is truly a special time in Pierce County. We’ve ended a phenomenal year, and have set ourselves up to tee-off another spectacular year for tourism. The work we do together this year will pay dividends for years to come.

With funding and support from the Tourism Promotion Area [TPA], Pierce County, our funding cities and our partners, Travel Tacoma + Pierce County will continue to build on the success of 2014 as we head into a year filled with opportunity.



*Bennish D. Brown*

Bennish Brown  
President + CEO  
Travel Tacoma + Pierce County

#### Credits

Cover image: Chihuly Bridge of Glass, photo by: Will Austin Photography  
Editors: Grace Reid and Jaime Vogt  
Graphic designer: Jenny Curtiss

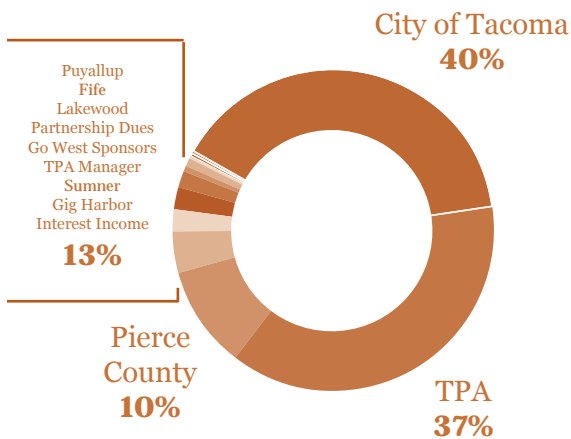
# TOURISM IMPACT

Direct visitor spending benefits hotels, retailers, restaurants, attractions, transportation services, and supports jobs in Tacoma, Pierce County and the region. Tourism is a powerful economic generator for Pierce County. Few investments can provide a return on investment as strong as tourism promotion.

## Revenue Sources

The Travel Tacoma 2014 annual operation budget broken down by funding source.\*

\*We are funded by seven municipalities via lodging tax dollars  
 \*\*TPA – Pierce County Tourism Promotion Area



## Economic Impact

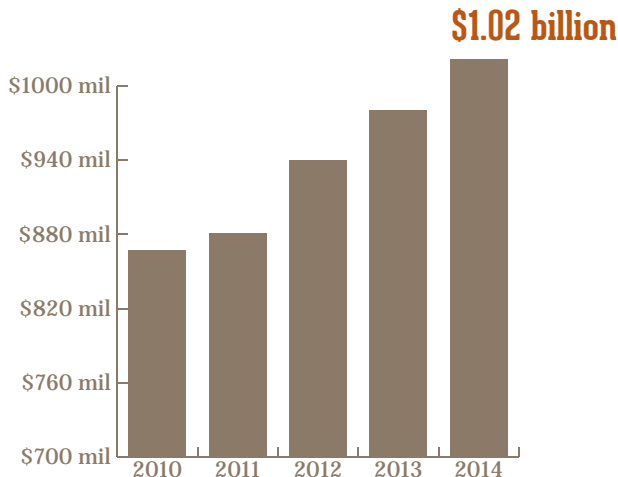
This is the third consecutive year of strong growth in travel spending and related travel impacts.

**\$1.02** billion in spending

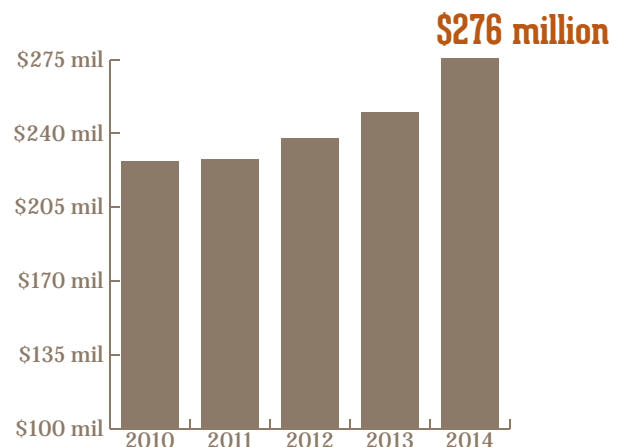
It's not a surprise that 2014 was a year of steady growth. Key activities that brought visitors here included hosting international tour operators during the Go West Summit, publicity during the 2014 U.S. Open in North Carolina, and the build-up to the opening of the \$15.5 million Haub Family Galleries wing at the Tacoma Art Museum. - Bennish Brown

**11,160** jobs generated by travel spending

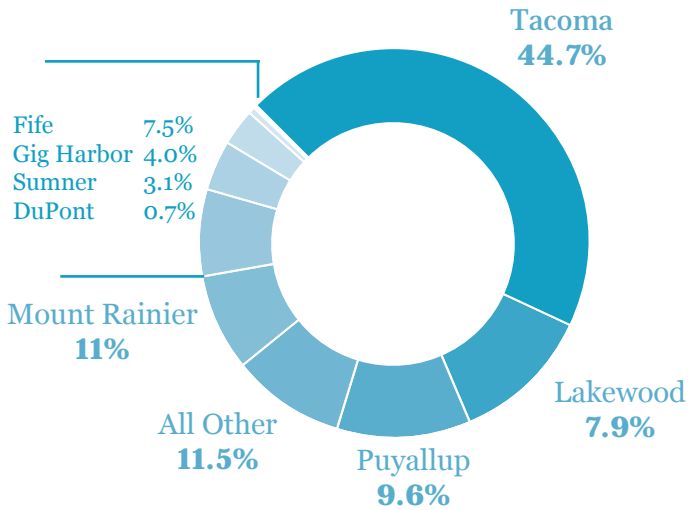
## Visitor Spending in Pierce County



## Tourism Earnings in Pierce County



## Where Visitors Spent Their Money in Pierce County

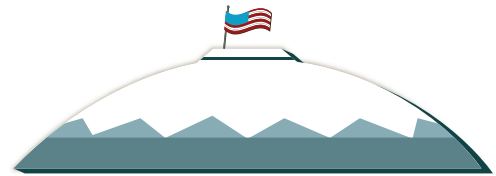


## Visitors to Pierce County in 2014

**10.8** million visitors



filling the Tacoma Dome every day for 15 months



## A Look at the Average Visitor

Party size: **2.1**  
 Length of stay [nights]: **2.1**  
 Spends: **\$742**

## Who Our Visitors Are



**Adventure Seekers**  
 25-35 years old  
 Moving up in career  
 HHI \$100K +  
 6+ trips a year



**Young Free Spirits**  
 18-24 years old  
 College or recent grad  
 Budget traveler  
 4+ trips a year



**Bucket Listers**  
 66+ years old  
 Retired  
 HHI \$100K +  
 2+ trips a year



**Self Seekers**  
 25-35 years old  
 Multiple jobs  
 HHI \$75K +  
 4+ trips a year



**Frugal Boomers**  
 66+ years old  
 Retired  
 Deal seekers  
 4+ trips a year

\*Data is based on online bookings from more than 5,000 Online Travel Agencies via nSight for Travel.

\*\*HHI - Household Income

# SALES

Travel Tacoma + Pierce County increases the economic impact throughout the county by improving destination awareness and delivering room nights. The sales team reaches meeting planners through destination advertising, event websites, tradeshows, conferences, sales calls, client events and familiarization site tours. This allows the team to secure meetings and events for the area.

## Estimated Economic Impact

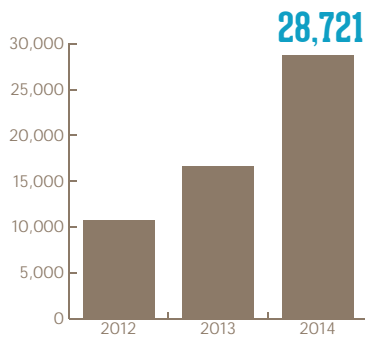
**\$12,200,725**

### By the Numbers

8900 Meeting planners, association executives, industry partners exposed to the destination and/or convention center

- 599 Networking hours
- 129 Sales appointments
- 63 Industry Events
- 56 Site tours [destination or convention center]
- 22 Industry tradeshows + conferences
- 4 Hosted client events

## Booked Room Nights



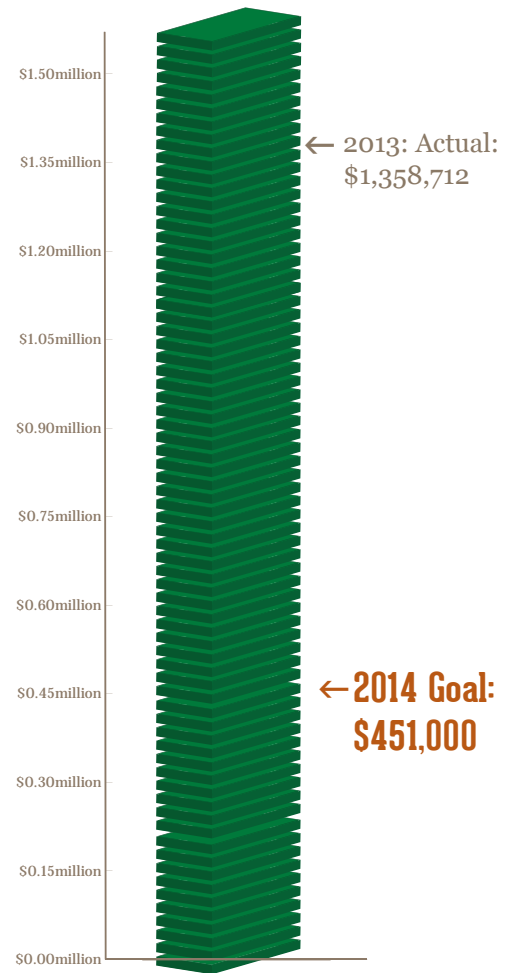
## Booked Business into the Future

2015	27
2016	11
2017	5
2018	4
2019	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>

## Convention Center Revenue

372% of goal

**\$1,676,439**



## Meetings + Events Exposure

Tradeshows presence in major markets.





# HOSTED EVENTS



## Collaborate FAM

15 meeting planners, representing companies such as HarperCollins, Under Armour and TESCO Technologies descended upon Tacoma in June 2014. The group — who will organize 184 meetings combined in 2015, toured several hotels and conference centers, as well as attractions like the Museum of Glass, Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium and Washington State Fairgrounds.



## WSAE Annual Convention

The sales team hosted the WSAE Annual Convention and sponsored the networking session and reception events. Over 80 association executives, meeting planners and industry partners were in attendance. The attendees were able to explore the convention center space and learn about hosting future events for their organizations.



## D.C. Client Event

The sales team hosted a client event in Washington D.C. The event was attended by third-party meeting planners and professional meeting planners that represent over 100 organizations. Hosting this event increased destination awareness, developed knowledge of the convention center and surrounding areas and fueled networking.

## Go West Summit

Go West Summit brings together the world's top international tour operators to specialty suppliers offering tourism-related products or services in the Western United States and Canada. Travel Tacoma + Pierce County partnered with Go West to bring the summit to Tacoma for the very first time in 2014. The conference brought 600 Attendees, 175 Tour Operators, Suppliers and Media into Pierce County.



## By the Numbers:

**\$63,178,414** projected business generated over 18 months

**\$19,982,857** business booked at Go West Summit

**1,894,289** visitors to the US expected due to Go West Summit

**10,406** individual meetings

**600+** total attendees

**361** suppliers

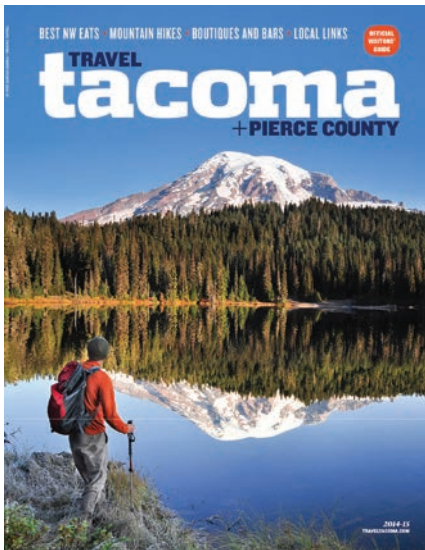
**322** countries represented

**172** buyer delegates

# MARKETING

Travel Tacoma + Pierce County markets the destination to the visitor through maintaining a strong print and web presence. Marketing activities include direct marketing, brand marketing, social media marketing, media relations and visitor information all with the intention of bringing destination awareness to Tacoma + Pierce County.

## Visitor Guide



## Distribution

- Hotels, tourist activities + information centers in Tacoma, Olympia, and South Seattle at 290 sites
- Tacoma + Partner visitor information centers
- Portland Metro area visitor information centers
- Seattle-Tacoma International Airport
- Seattle ferry terminals
- Seattle cruise ship terminals
- Boeing Tour Center
- By request through website and ad leads
- Web downloads at [TravelTacoma.com](http://TravelTacoma.com)
- Conference services

A 2013 study done by the Western Association of Convention and Visitor Bureaus found that the economic impact of a single visitor guide in someone's hand is worth **\$48** in direct visitor spending.

## Meeting Planner Guide



## Distribution

- Tradeshows
- Mailings
- Web downloads at [TravelTacoma.com](http://TravelTacoma.com)
- Thumbdrives

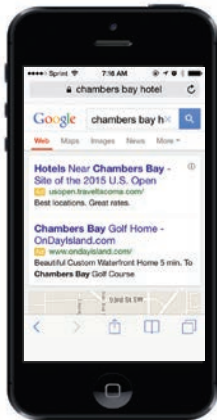
# PROMOTING THE U.S. OPEN



USOpen.TravelTacoma.com

**5,850**  
total page views

## Marketing on Google, Bing + Yahoo



**1,592**  
Clicks

**520,520**  
Impressions

## Joined Pierce County at the Washington State Fair

Travel Tacoma + Pierce County helped to bring the U.S. Open to the Washington State Fair in 2014, by staffing the Pierce County Chambers Bay and U.S. Open exhibit.



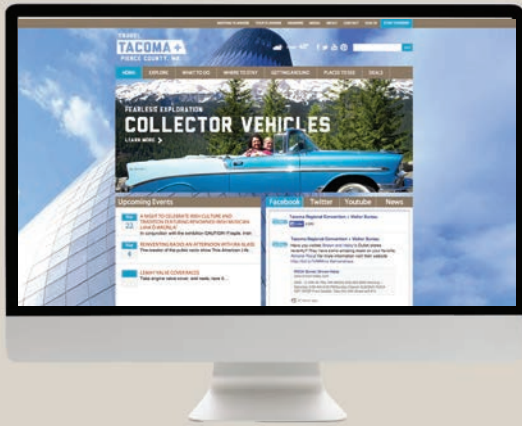
## Frontline Tour for Tourism Professionals



More than 60 frontline staff attended the Chambers Bay tour in October. General Manager of Chambers Bay, Matt Allen, hosted the event in partnership with Travel Tacoma + Pierce County. Participants were able to tour the site of the 2015 U.S. Open, as well as test out their swing with a short golf lesson.

Frontline training helps to make sure the visitor's key touch-points – front desk clerks, museum volunteers, bartenders and waiters – are engaged and knowledgeable about the cities they represent.

# DIGITAL PRESENCE

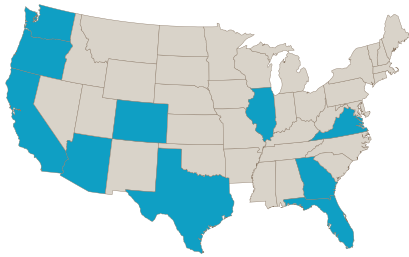


TravelTacoma.com

272,912

total page views

## Top 10 States with Web Traffic to TravelTacoma.com



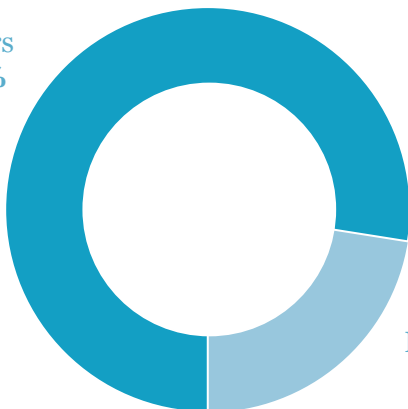
1. Washington
2. California
3. Oregon
4. Texas
5. Arizona
6. Florida
7. Illinois
8. Virginia
9. New York
10. Colorado

## Top 10 Pages

1. Home
2. Events calendar
3. What to do – Attractions
4. What to do
5. Where to stay – Hotels, motels, inns
6. What to do – Dining + Nightlife
7. What to do – Tacoma Museum District
8. Places to see
9. Places to see – Tacoma
10. Where to stay

## Visitors to TravelTacoma.com

New Visitors  
77.7%



Returning Visitors  
22.3%



2,285 fans

12% increase



4,035 followers

18% increase



309 followers

launched  
in 2014

# PRINT PRESENCE

## Leisure Market

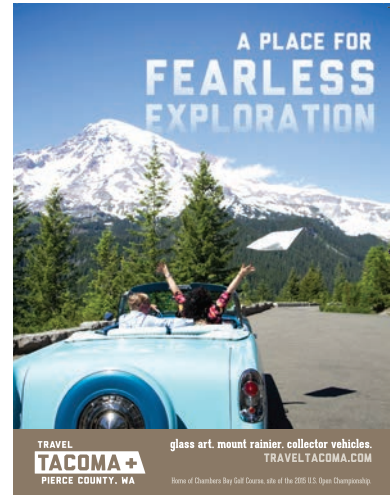
Alaska Airlines Magazine  
-2,000,000 readers



Washington State Visitor Guide  
- 375,000 circulation



Journey Magazine [March + September]  
- 644,000 circulation each run



Washington Scenic Byways Guide  
- 200,000 circulation



Scenic Byways Map  
- 200,000 circulation

Seattle Visitor Guide  
- 175,000 circulation



## Meetings Market

WSAE [WA Society of Assoc. Executives]  
- 1,000 circulation



Collaborate Magazine  
- 8,500 circulation



MPI [Meeting Planners International]



# PRESS TRIPS + FAM TOURS

Travel Tacoma + Pierce County brings travel writers from around the world and familiarizes them with a particular area such as Mount Rainier or the Tacoma Museum District.

## Hong Kong Discovery

In the first week of October 2014, Travel Tacoma + Pierce County hosted a three-day media familiarization tour for a five-person film crew from Hong Kong, a part of the travel group Hong Kong Discovery. The group spent an afternoon in Gig Harbor, exploring the harbor with Captain Tom at Destiny Harbor Tours; learning about boat restoration and Gig Harbor history at the Harbor History Museum; and enjoying a classic seafood lunch at Tides Tavern. During their stay they explored Mt. Rainier, Tacoma, Gig Harbor and University Place. This media familiarization tour was a direct result of Go West Summit in February 2014. Hong Kong Discovery will showcase Pierce County and the Puget Sound region in a 13-episode travel series about the Northwest in the spring of 2015.



## Travel Writers on Social Media



Reach:  
119,000 people



Reach:  
7,000 people

## Earned Media

**203**  
published articles

In many major publications including:

- CNN Travel
- Spokesman Review
- The Oregonian
- Where to Retire Magazine
- Westworld Magazine [Canada]
- TripWant.com
- USA Today
- Forbes Travel Guide Blog
- Northwest Meetings and Events
- San Jose Mercury News
- About.com

# VISITOR INFORMATION CENTER

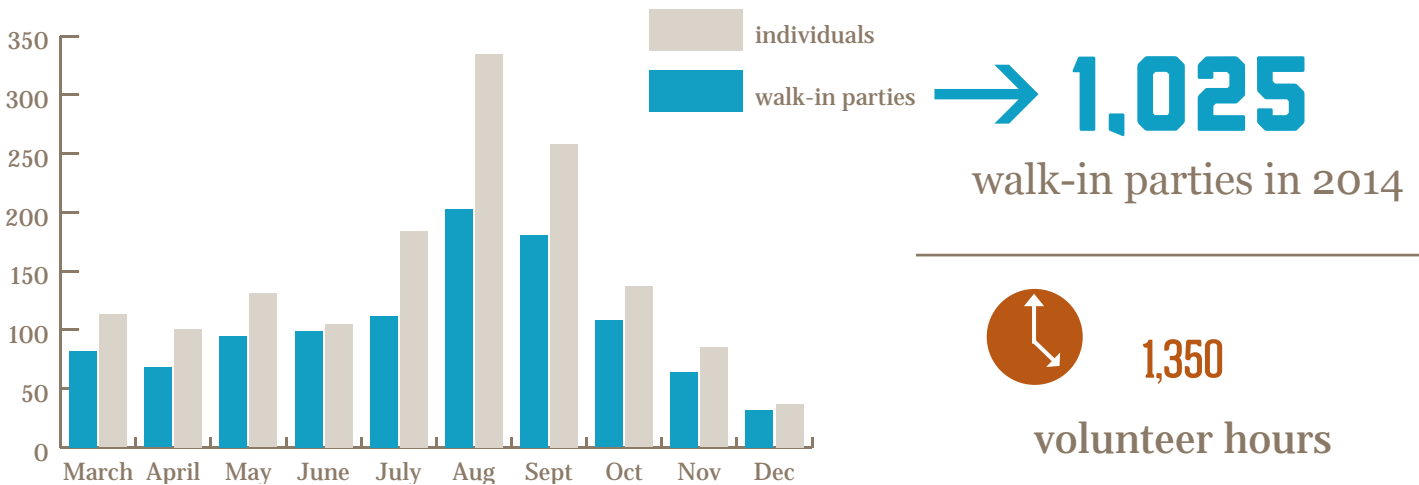
The Visitor Information Center is an integral part of serving the visitor. We have staffed the center with knowledgeable volunteers, mobile-phone charging stations and a welcoming rest area.

## New Location

Travel Tacoma + Pierce County held its grand opening celebration of the Visitor Information Center [VIC] on June 24 with a crowd of 150 to formally announce its new location in the Greater Tacoma Convention & Trade Center. The event was celebrated by showing off the best of Pierce County - welcoming baby goats, the Rainiers mascot Rhubarb, rhubarb pie and golfing with Chambers Bay Golf Course.



## Visitors Through Our Doors

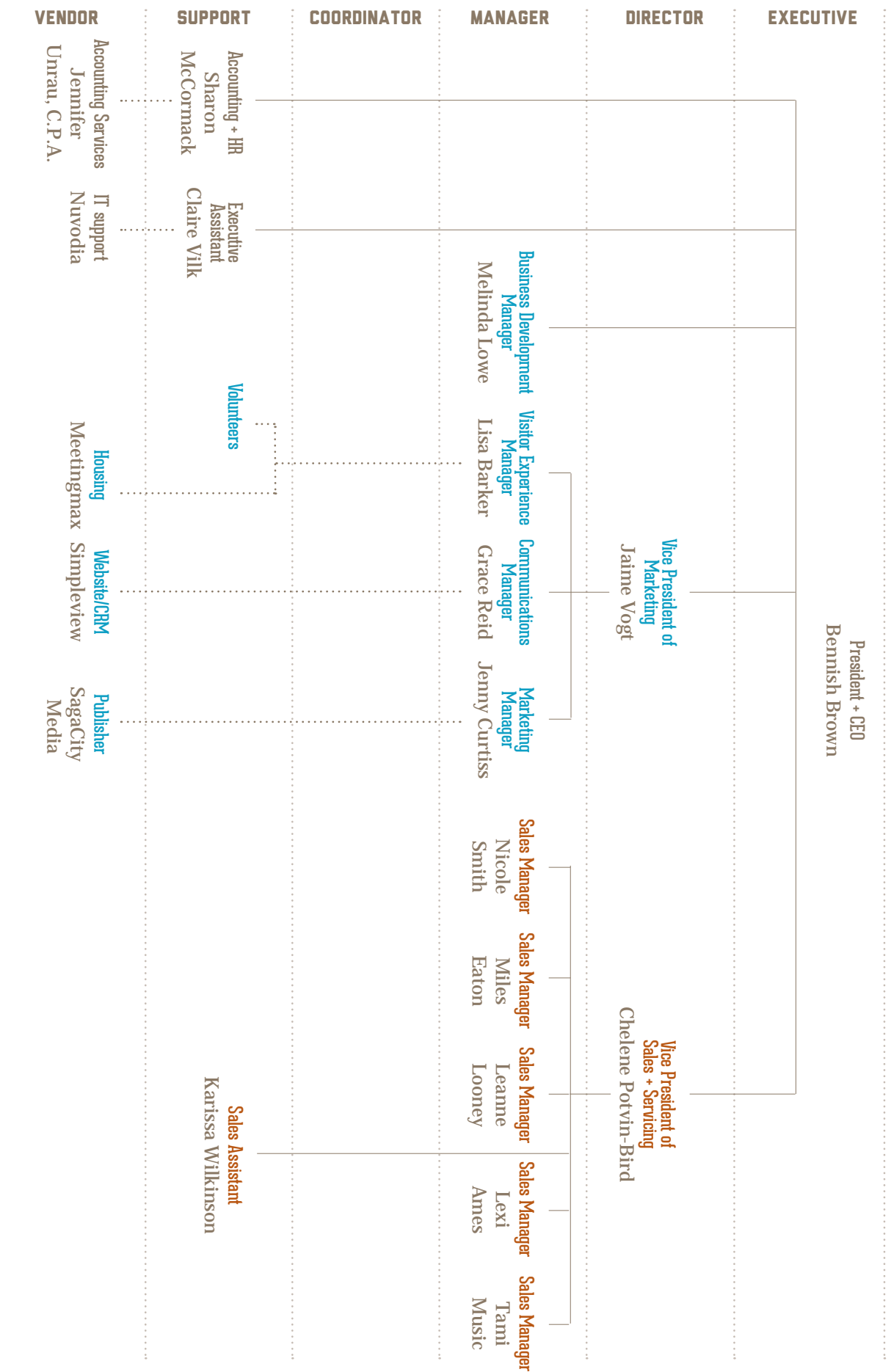


## Reaching the Visitor Where They Are

A second Visitor Information Center was opened in the lobby of the Washington State History Museum thanks to a partnership with the museum.



# TEAM ORGANIZATION CHART



Vendors are not on payroll





Play Chambers Bay, site of the 2015 U.S. Open.

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