business plan

2026-2027

This plan aligns with the 2025-30 Strategic Plan
and drives the imperative to
increase visitor-related economic impact

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Enchanted Forest

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Core Areas of Focus

Silver Falls Tree Climbing

staff

Executive & Administration

Angie Villery, President & CEO

Irene Bernards, EVP & Chief Strategy Officer

Jennifer Miller, Operations Manager

Yvonne Nguyen, Executive Support Coordinator

Marketing & Communications

Kara Kuh, Chief Marketing Officer

Emily Lauer, Marketing Manager

Marissa Brown, Digital Marketing Specialist

Sara Germann, Marketing & Development Coordinator

Sierra Langford, Visitor Center Coordinator

Conventions & Sports

Joey Jewell, Chief Sales Officer & Exec. Dir. of Salem Area Sports Commission

Greg Heinze, VP of Meetings & Conventions

Tom Garlock, Sports Development Manager

Alex Trevino, Sales & Services Coordinator

Xicha Brewing

board of directors

OFFICERS

Chair . . . . .John Pataccoli, Retired, Redhawk Vineyard & Winery

Vice Chair . . . . .Greg Leo, The Leo Company

Past Chair . . . . .Austin McGuigan, Polk County Community Development

Secretary . . . . Yvonne Putze, Lord & Schryver Conservancy

Treasurer . . . . .Jason Brandt, Oregon Restaurant & Lodging Association

STPA Committee . . Matt Smith, The Holman Hotel

DIRECTORS

Nancy Ayala, Telemundo

Chrissie Bertsch, Salem Convention Center

Jordan Bohlander, Dean Runyan Associates

Courtney Knox Busch, City of Salem

Commissioner Kevin Cameron, Marion County

Michelle Cordova, Willamette Heritage Center

Jose Gonzalez, Latino Business Alliance / La Familia

Christopher Holland, Taproot Café & Lounge

Shawn Irvine, City of Independence

Councilor Shane Matthews, City of Salem

Chris Neider, City of Salem

Toby Olsen, Elevara Hospitality

Stacy Palmer, Silverton Chamber of Commerce

Mallory Phelan, Oregon AgLink

Kim Grewe-Powell, Oregon State Fair & Expo Center

Rochelle Rafn, Salem Orchestra

T.J. Sullivan, Hagan Hamilton & Salem Mainstreet

Jason Unruh, Hoopla Association

our mission

Inspire growth in travel and drive economic prosperity by harnessing our destination's unique value proposition through partnership, innovation, and responsible development that enhances the visitor experience and enriches the lives of residents.

Many of the strategies outlined in this 2026-2027 Business Plan continue forward the work from the 2025-2026 Business Plan.

key performance measurements

Objectives relate back to one or more of Travel Salem's 9 key performance measurements (KPM), noted with each objective.

Key

1. Estimated Economic Impact
2. Salem Transient Occupancy Tax
3. Leverage
4. Consumer Engagement
5. Visitor Information Network Attendance
6. Earned Media Impressions
7. Social Media Reach
8. Online Visits
9. Convention & Sports Actual Room Nights

core areas of focus

Strategic Imperative: INCREASE VISITOR-RELATED ECONOMIC IMPACT

EXTERNALLY FOCUSED

DESTINATION MARKETING

Blaze the Most Oregon Part of Oregon brand and promote the region as a premier destination to create demand for group and leisure travelers and connect visitors with the people and the place.

OBJECTIVE	MEASUREMENT
1. Implement dynamic communications & industry relations programs to enhance the perception of the region with consumers & residents KPM: 1,2,6,7,8	• Annual visitor & resident sentiment surveys • Social media sentiment • Media engagement & impressions • In-person visitor comment • Speakers bureau impact
2. Implement strategic sales & marketing initiatives to drive more group & sports business KPM: 1,2,9	• Sales pipeline reports • ROI (Estimated Economic impact calculator) • Post trade show reports • Post group surveys
3. Refresh Travel Salem brand to celebrate the unique character of the region KPM: 1,7,8	Survey brand resonance with visitors, residents & stakeholder
4. Drive shoulder season visitation (Nov-Mar) KPM: 1,2,4,6,7,8,9	Advertising calendar, geo-tracking, hotel data, Avelo passengers & sales pipeline report
5. Highlight regional EDI experiences to meet all consumer needs KPM: 1,2,4,6,7,8	Apply an EDI lens to all strategies & initiatives
6. Identify & engage with strong & emerging consumer target audiences (e.g., Latino/ Hispanic, generational travelers) to increase reach & visitation KPM: 1,2,4,6,7,8,9	Partner with Mid-Willamette Valley leaders & organizations (e.g., Latino Business Alliance, AARP, Center 50+); increased visitation from target audiences

DESTINATION MANAGEMENT

Enhance destination appeal & create transformative experiences utilizing deep industry expertise, partnerships, advocacy, sustainable tourism initiatives & strategic product development.

OBJECTIVE	MEASUREMENT
1. Develop & implement a sports master plan to maximize destination potential KPM: 1,2,3,4,6,7,8,9	Annual venue capacity, quality & footprint of existing events, new business recruitment, improvements to venue inventory
2. Engage with partners to retain & recruit commercial air service KPM: 1,2,3,4,6,7,8,9	Grow existing service & secure new service
3. Research & identify regional EDI experiences to broaden demographic reach & improve destination accessibility KPM: 1,2,4,6,7,8	Increase EDI assets & experiences
4. Advocate on behalf of the industry to promote key priorities that enhance livability & destination experience KPM: 1,2,4,9	Annual visitor & resident sentiment surveys
5. Unite Mid-Willamette Valley partners through shared vision, advocacy & collaboration KPM: 1,2,3,6,7,8,9	Implement a unified messaging strategy with economic development partners

INTERNALLY FOCUSED

ORGANIZATIONAL OPTIMIZATION

Develop long-term stable funding, strategic staffing levels & the technology & tools to support a robust Destination Marketing & Management Organization.

OBJECTIVE	MEASUREMENT
1. Leverage complex & dynamic funding streams to maximize economic impact KPM: 1,2,3	Maintain diversified revenue streams
2. Adapt human resources to meet industry demands KPM: 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9	Ensure adequate resources through a mix of in-house staffing & contractors
3. Hone communication & strategic collaboration across program areas to efficiently & seamlessly execute initiatives KPM: 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9	Utilize streamlined & effective communication systems
4. Utilize technology to streamline productivity & spur innovation KPM: 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9	Adopt new technology as needed
5. Ensure detailed reporting, research & stakeholder communication to educate, engage & empower the industry KPM: 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9	Deliver meaningful, user-friendly reports & industry communications

CORE AREA OF FOCUS

destination marketing

Blaze The Most Oregon Part of Oregon brand and promote the region as a premier destination to create demand for group & leisure travelers.

1. Implement dynamic communications & industry relations programs to enhance the perception of the region with consumers & residents

a. Craft messaging that differentiates the region's unique attributes & identities through inspirational & actionable content.

b. Market the region's key themes (e.g., history, culture, agriculture, recreation, wine) with packages combining top visitor assets & unique local gems to bolster tourism appeal & experience.

c. Leverage key partnerships & strategies to amplify reach & effectiveness of marketing.

d. Utilize data & research to anticipate & capitalize on marketing opportunities.

e. Leverage the Visitor Center & HQ facility to foster community engagement through curated programming & communications (e.g., open house, community networking).

Measurement

Annual visitor & resident sentiment surveys; social media sentiment; media engagement & impressions; in-person visitor comments; speakers bureau impact; website & PR analytics; Visitors Guide distribution; educational offerings; newsletter subscribers; product development; group outreach; HQ & other Travel Salem event attendance.

KPM: 1,2,6,7,8

Salem Art Association

2. Implement strategic sales & marketing initiatives to drive more group & sports business

a. Utilize local professional & community member connections & sphere of influence.

b. Utilize technology platforms that provide information for prospecting, target marketing, surveys, evaluation and overarching data related to group & event planners and tour operators.

c. Leverage Agility Funds to incentivize group & sports business.

d. Launch online Planner Toolkit containing content & resources for pre-promoting the destination.

e. Increase awareness of Salem among local group and sports planners and residents through targeted PR, site visits and FAM tours.

f. Develop sports, convention and meeting venue visual content.

Measurement

Sales pipeline reports; EEI calculator; post tradeshow reports & group surveys; number of volunteers; spectator & participation growth.

KPM: 1,2,9

Oregon State Fair

3. Refresh Travel Salem brand to celebrate unique character of the region

a. Update brand to align with EDI accessibility requirements (e.g., colors).

b. Create Brand Anthem videos (e.g., sports).

Measurement
Brand meets EDI requirements.
KPM: 1,2,4,5

> *"Tourism is the purest form of economic development. People come, spend money, then go home. And if they like what they experienced, perhaps they will come back as permanent residents, or business owners."*
>
> *–Destination Development Association*

4. Drive shoulder season visitation (Nov-Mar)

a. Implement advertising campaigns that promote leisure, group, meeting & sports business during the shoulder season.

b. Contact groups, meeting & sports planners that hold Nov-Mar activities.

c. Create content that highlights indoor & holiday activities.

Measurement
Advertising calendar, geo-tracking; hotel data; sales pipeline report.
KPM: 1,2,4,6,7,8,9

5. Highlight regional EDI experiences to meet all consumer needs

a. Develop marketing, content and sales messaging and strategies utilizing an Equity Diversity & Inclusion lens to ensure all communities are invited and welcome.

b. Promote EDI events, attractions & opportunities currently underway & include in marketing & PR strategies.

c. Create an EDI best practices toolkit for partners to easily access & implement.

d. Ensure Visitor Center staff have the technology & procedures in place to enable communication with international visitors.

e. Promote destination capabilities for para-athlete and adaptive sport opportunities.

Measurement
Apply an EDI lens to all strategies & initiatives; EDI events promoted; toolkit created; Visitor Center foreign translation capability.
KPM: 1,2,4,6,7,8

destination marketing

6. Identify & engage with strong & emerging consumer target audiences (e.g., Latinx/Hispanic, generational travelers) to increase reach & visitation

a. Review visitor data to understand trip-planning needs, in-destination experience, interests, demographics, psychographic profiles & overall travel preferences.

b. Create an inventory of businesses to engage in marketing, sales & development initiatives.

Measurement

Partner with Mid-Willamette Valley leaders & organizations (e.g., Latino Business Alliance, AARP, Center 50+); increased visitation from target audiences; research findings; inventory of businesses.

KPM: 1,2,4,6,7,8,9

> *"Certainly, travel is more than the seeing of sights; it is a change that goes on, deep and permanent, in the ideas of living."*
>
> *– Miriam Beard*

Zak Stone

Willamette National Forest

CORE AREA OF FOCUS

destination management

Enhance destination appeal & create transformative experiences utilizing deep industry expertise, partnerships, advocacy, sustainable tourism initiatives & strategic product development.


CFC

1. Develop & implement a sports master plan to maximize destination potential

a. Showcase Salem venues & leverage centralized West Coast location, value & outstanding hospitality.

b. Investigate opportunities that support and advance the development of sports inventory by promoting the Facility Master Plan (e.g., turf, multi-sport facility).

c. Identify & develop opportunities in key focus areas: youth & club sports, college sports, Willamette Valley sporting events & new events.

Measurement

Annual venue capacity, quality & footprint of existing events, new business recruitment, improvements to venue inventory.

KPM: 1,2,3,4,6,7,8,9

2. Engage with partners to retain & recruit commercial air service

a. Continue to serve & lead efforts on Fly Salem focused on retaining, expanding & recruiting new commercial air service to the Salem-Willamette Valley Airport.

Measurement

Securing new service.

KPM: 1,2,3,4,6,7,8,9

3. Research & identify regional EDI experiences to broaden demographic reach & improve destination accessibility

a. Support regional Equity, Diversity & Inclusion work in order to foster an inclusive & equitable destination experience for visitors & residents.

b. Continue to add inventory of EDI events, attractions & opportunities in Salem and the Mid-Willamette Valley region.

c. Expand internal Standard Operating Procedures related to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

Measurement

Increase EDI assets & experiences.
KPM: 1,2,4,6,7,8

> *"Building a brand means knowing your story and building and sharing that story."*
>
> *—Tamara McCleary*

World Beat Festival

4. Advocate on behalf of the industry to promote key priorities that enhance livability & destination experience

a. Continue the development of resources & communication channels that assist the industry with education, marketing, planning, services, pricing & hospitality.

b. Identify & prioritize development opportunities that expand regional offerings (e.g., mountain biking, campaigns).

c. Raise awareness of Travel Salem & the impact of the industry through expanded communications & outreach.

d. Partner with Resilient Headwaters, Gooseneck & other established or start-up recreation development initiatives.

e. Work with regional partners, government agencies & industry sectors to improve connectivity & movement to & throughout the region (e.g., wayfinding systems, bikeways, trolley/train).

f. Participate in tourism initiatives throughout the Mid-Willamette Valley (e.g., WVVA, workforce development, main streets, chambers).

g. Promote tourism industry awareness & engage community ambassadors through locally targeted initiatives.

h. Engage downtown Salem businesses in tourism marketing opportunities, promotions & communications.

Measurement

Annual visitor & resident sentiment survey; product development; new transportation or connectivity systems; regional group participation, ensure adequate resources through a mix of in-house staffing, contractors; downtown communications underway.
KPM: 1,2,4,9

Mid-WV Tourism Summit

5. Unite Mid-Willamette partners through shared vision, advocacy & collaboration.

a. Meet with stakeholders to discuss their current messaging & how they promote their business/industry.

b. Use focus groups to vet ideas & directions & find alignment.

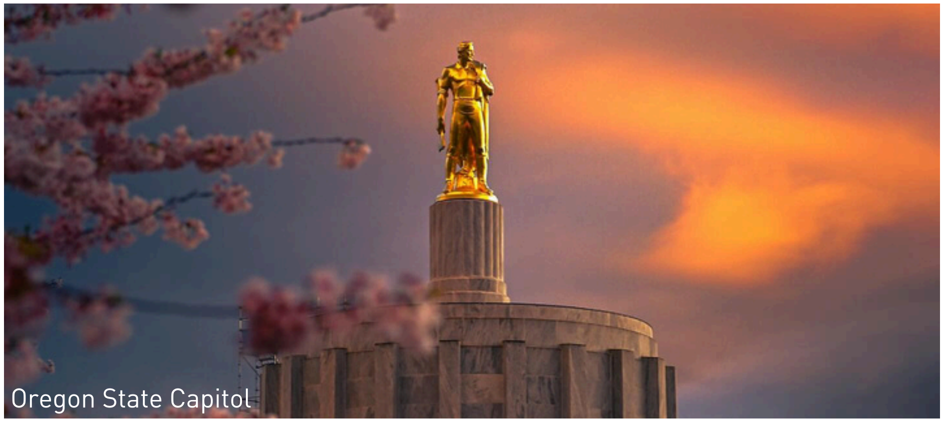
Measurement

Implement a unified messaging strategy with economic development partners.
KPM: 1,2,3,6,7,8,9

CORE AREA OF FOCUS

organization optimization

Develop long-term stable funding, strategic staffing levels and the technology & tools to support a robust Destination Marketing & Management Organization.



Oregon State Capitol

1. Leverage Complex & dynamic funding streams to maximize economic impact

a. Collaborate with the Salem Tourism Promotion Area (STPA) Committee to execute the priorities outlined in the STPA Marketing Plan.

b. Explore voluntary Tourism Promotion Areas for neighboring cities (e.g., Keizer, Woodburn, Independence, Dallas).

c. Produce revenue-generating Travel Salem Sports events (e.g., WVO).

d. Secure grants to supplement regional efforts.

Measurement

Maintain diversified revenue streams.
KPM: 1,2,3

2. Adapt human resources to meet industry demands

a. Monitor staffing levels for maximum efficiency in alignment with budget.

b. Leverage contractors & interns to assist with industry & organizational demands (e.g., content creation).

c. Implement ad hoc committees & task forces.

d. Develop an industry intern program that assists stakeholders with projects/programming.

Measurement

Ensure adequate resources through a mix of in-house staffing, contractors, interns & committees.
KPM: 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9

Oregon Farm Loop

> *"Ideally every citizen is an advocate for your place, not just because they're from there, but because they understand the strategy and motivations of the destination's marketing."*
>
> *—Glenn Jones*

3. Hone communications & strategic collaboration across program areas to efficiently & seamlessly execute initiatives

a. Create opportunities for staff integration & collaboration through

- Bi-weekly management team meetings (Discovery)
- Weekly management team meetings between CEO & Director (Trench)
- Weekly program meetings (MarCom staff meetings attended by other program directors)
- Weekly staff meetings
- Quarterly Upstream + Mini-Strategy Meetings (content planning sessions)
- Individual staff meetings
- Annual Staff Retreat
- Annual content planning meetings

b. Update & create new Standard Operation Procedures as needed to ensure organizational efficiency (e.g., IDSS, Basecamp, Sharepoint/ OneDrive, HR topics, reports).

Measurement

Utilize streamlined and effective communication systems.

KPM: 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9

4. Utilize technology to streamline productivity & spur innovation

a. Integrate AI technology to improve organizational effectiveness (e.g., custom GPT).

b. Harness IDSS as the customer relationship management system (CRM) (e.g., leads, extranet portal, email campaigns, website integration, housing bureau & registration, metric management, report generation).

c. Utilize data platforms for insights on marketing & sales strategies to drive targeted results (e.g., Placer.ai, CoSTR).

d. Launch Data Strategy Committee to review & communicate key data.

Measurement

Adopt new technology as needed.

KPM: 1,2,4,5,6,7,8,9

organization optimization

5. Ensure detailed reporting, research & stakeholder communication to educate, engage & empower the industry

a. Create a communications strategy for content & disseminating easily digestible information, such as quarterly reports & data (e.g., policymakers, funders, industry stakeholders, Chambers, Main Street groups, city councils, residents) using a variety of channels (e.g., newsletters, email, in-person).

b. Create a video annual report to visually communicate the year's accomplishments.

c. Engage community in events (e.g., IRONMAN kick-off week).

d. Create content to engage & educate residents on how tourism is a significant contributor to quality of life & a vibrant community.

Measurement

Deliver meaningful, user-friendly reports, data & industry communications.
KPM: 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9

Ike Box

overview of methodologies

Economic Impact of Travel

Travel Salem utilizes data commissioned by Travel Oregon. Travel Oregon works with Dean Runyan Associates to estimate the economic significance of the travel industry in Oregon. The report describes the economic impacts of travel to and through the state, each of its seven tourism regions and all 36 counties, and includes detailed estimates of travel spending, the employment and earnings generated by this spending, and travel-generated tax receipts. A primary objective of the report is to provide reliable detailed figures that permit year-to-year comparisons at the state, regional and county levels.

Conventions & Sports Economic Impact

Travel Salem purchases an economic impact calculator module from Destinations International and Tourism Economics. The calculator is connected to Travel Salem's customer relationship management software and provides economic impact estimates for group business booked by Travel Salem.

Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT)

The City of Salem provides data on the actual collections of TOT by the lodging community in Salem, including collections reported by hotels, vacation rentals, campgrounds, etc.

Travel Salem Influence on TOT

Travel Salem utilizes data from the Travel Salem Visitor Profile Study (conducted every two years) and the Dean Runyan Economic Impact of Tourism in Oregon research, as well as other industry data (e.g., Phocuswright Global Travel Market Research, One West Tourism Alliance), to analyze visitor trip planning behavior and estimate the volume of TOT influenced by the work of Travel Salem. The 25-26 Travel Salem Influence on TOT was 70%.

Average Daily Rates (ADR) & Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR)

Travel Salem commissions monthly data from Smith Travel on ADR, RevPAR and occupancy. In addition, Travel Salem surveys Salem hoteliers monthly on ADR, occupancy, mix of business and long-term stays.

Occupancy

Travel Salem secures occupancy data from the City of Salem and Smith Travel. The data is used for Travel Salem budget forecasting and evaluating travel trends.

Staff Time Tracking & Allocation

2% of Travel Salem payroll, rent & utilities are paid by Flex funds to offset expenses related to regional program work. Staff time is tracked and allocated to the appropriate account as follows: any work that is exclusively City-related or leverages regional assets to promote the use of Salem is allocated as City staff time; any work that is exclusively regional is allocated as Flex staff time. In the last two fiscal years, total annual Regional staff time accounted for less than half of one percent.

Metrics

Travel Salem tracks 188 metrics across program areas in the following categories (data obtained from original sources). The data is used to evaluate program/initiative effectiveness and real-time consumer trends.

- Public Relations – advertising equivalency and circulation numbers from media rate sheets
- Social Media – analytics from Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube
- Online – Google Analytics
- e-Communications – number of subscribers and frequency of communications
- Advertising – reach and impression data provided by individual advertising channels
- Visitor Inquiries – tracked through Willamette Valley Visitors Association and Travel Salem's Visitor Center
- Visitor Information Network – tracked by network location partners and Travel Salem's Visitor Center
- Real-Time Conventions & Sports – data provided by meeting planners and hoteliers
- Sales Activities, Leads & Bookings – all data tracked by Travel Salem sales team