

# CITY of LA GRANDE

## City Council Work Session

Monday, April 19, 2021  
6:00 p.m.

You can view the Work Session on Facebook Live at the following link:  
[www.facebook.com/CityofLaGrande](http://www.facebook.com/CityofLaGrande)

## AGENDA

*The purpose of a Council Work Session is to provide the Council with an opportunity to informally discuss topics of common concern and interest and to exchange ideas with Staff, not to make decisions or to direct Staff toward a specific action or conclusion beyond identifying additional information the Council would like to have presented at a later date. As no decisions are made, there will be no voting by the Council at the Work Session. The City Manager or members of the Staff may confirm any additional information the Council requires as part of any future discussions regarding the presented topic(s). If a Work Session topic subsequently requires official action, it will become an action (voting) item on a following Regular Session Agenda. Per ORS 192.670(1), Councilors will be participating in this Work Session by electronic communication. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic this City Council Work Session is for the sole purpose of conducting business on the agenda. No public comments will be entertained at this Work Session.*

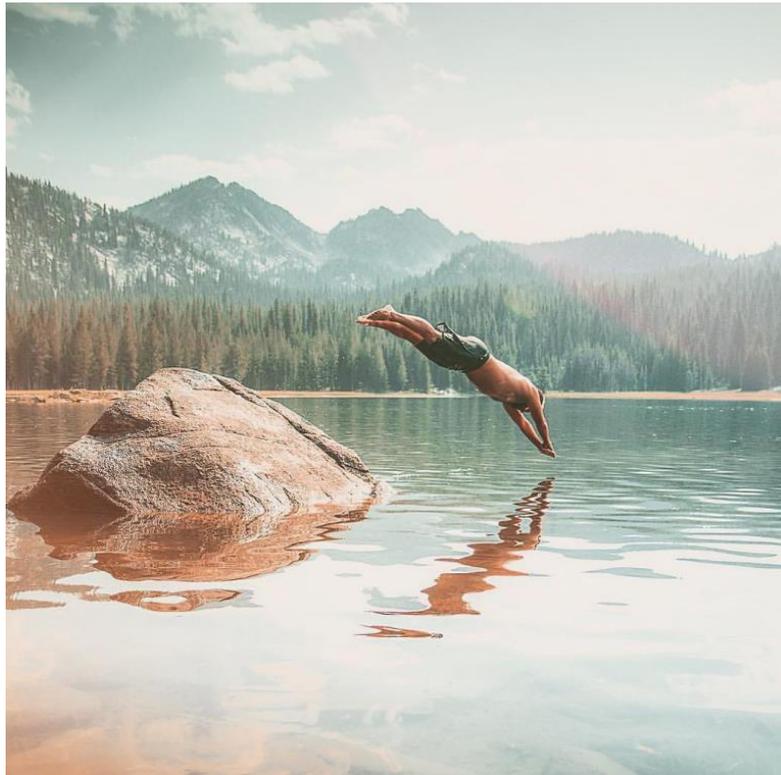
1. **CALL to ORDER** 6:00 p.m.  
~ Stephen E. Clements, Mayor
2. **ANNUAL REPORT ON TOURISM PROMOTION AND BUDGET PROPOSAL**  
~ Suzannah Moore-Hemann, Union County Chamber of Commerce Director
  - a. Summary of written report on Marketing and Promotion Program (Program of Work)
  - b. Tourism Budget Proposal
3. **ADJOURN** 7:00 p.m.

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Kayla M. Rock  
City Recorder

*Persons requiring special accommodations who wish to attend the Work Session are encouraged to make arrangements prior to the meeting by calling 541-962-1309. The City of La Grande does not discriminate against individuals with disabilities*

# PROGRAM OF WORK – TOURISM PROMOTION CITY OF LA GRANDE & UNION COUNTY



FY 2021-2022

Program of Work: Tourism Promotion

Union County Chamber of Commerce  
Local Destination Marketing Organization (DMO)  
207 Depot Street La Grande, OR 97850  
541.963.8588  
[www.VisitUnionCounty.org](http://www.VisitUnionCounty.org)



**To: La Grande City Council  
Union County Commissioners**  
**From: Union County Chamber of Commerce**  
**Date: Monday, April 19, 2021 and Wednesday, April 21, 2021**  
**RE: Changes to the FY 2021-2022 Tourism Program of Work**

Please find enclosed the FY 2021-2022 Union County Chamber of Commerce Tourism Program of Work proposal. There are many similarities between this proposal and the FY 2020-2020 Program of Work; however, we have made some changes to our proposed strategic plan for promoting tourism in La Grande and Union County, which are highlighted here:

- You will note many of the projects of FY 20-21 are significantly lower than our anticipated budget (Budget Line Total 5100, "Tourism Marketing Promotion," 5600, "Administrative," and 5706 and 5706.1 "TRT Mini Grants"), which were reduced throughout the current fiscal year. As we watched the COVID-19 Pandemic bring about shutdowns and heavily restricted travel guidelines which eliminated all but the most essential travel, we shifted our anticipated course of actions. We scaled back promotions (except pre-authorized contractual print advertising), reduced TRT Grant funding for the calendar year, as well as implemented rolling partial staff furloughs in order to buffer our budget in the event of significant reductions to hotel tax dollars (TRT revenues).
  - Reduction of tourism promotion in terms of Online Advertising (5130) and Print Advertising (5132) not only allowed us to maintain our presence in important publications including the Travel Oregon Visitors Guide and the Eastern Oregon Visitors Guide, but also allowed us to prepare and launch the new VisitUnionCounty.org website and our focus is to ensure we have a landing page and online presence ready to attract visitors, when the time is right to promote travel. We followed the guidance and direction of the Oregon Tourism Commission regarding promotional efforts throughout the pandemic.
  - TRT Grants operate on a calendar year: we announced the TRT Mini Grant Program in January 2020 and awarded seven organizations with grant funding. Of these, six organizations held these awards to apply to events and projects in this calendar year (2021), as they postponed/canceled their events due to the pandemic. Because we are assured the majority of these projects are funded this year from last year's award, we felt comfortable taking this opportunity to reduce spending this year, as well as use this time to restructure our grant programs to maximize effectiveness of dollars spent. The new TRT Grant Program is outlined in the Program of Work (Budget Line Items 5124 "Cooperative Advertising," 5706 "Mini Tourism Grants – TRT Grants," and 5706.1 "TRT Discretionary Funds").
  - In May 2020, the Union County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors gathered in a special meeting of the Board and implemented reduced hours for all Chamber Staff in an effort to reduce payroll cost impacts to the budget. While office hours are still maintained as per the MOA between the City of La Grande, Union County Board of Commissioners, and Union County Chamber of Commerce to the maximum extent possible, staff hours were reduced to match projects and the reduction of in-office walk-in visitors. While we have *budgeted* in FY 2021-2022 two full time staff, we continue operating on partial hourly reductions to continue payroll savings until workflow requires the return to full time work.
- We are in the process of restructuring the TRT Grant Programs. Because we are testing the effectiveness of a new TRT Cooperative Advertising Grant Program, we reduced this area of the budget slightly as we test and readjust as needed. It is our goal to increase awareness of these funds to the community; however, we may readjust the grant guidelines next year.
- In FY 20-21 we removed funds for a Marketing Consulting Firm (5114), as this project was pursued and Phase I completed in FYE2020, specifically to reviewing current marketing materials and channels of promotion (magazines, ad content, marketing plan, etc.) to maximize effectiveness of promotional efforts.
- Online (5130) and Print (5132) Advertising have maintained a similar [combined] budget as FY 19-20 and FY 20-21; however, there is some reduction in Online Advertising to maintain in the budget Special Projects (5700) to pursue more open-ended projects including community-wide hospitality training and a contract with a professional photographer/videographer to ensure La Grande and Union County have a professional-grade portfolio of visual assets, based on the marketing research and newly-created brand/style guide. We continue our shift towards increased advertising within the digital realm and less reliance than what has been previously on Print Advertising for the upcoming fiscal year. We continue to plan on maintaining some level of advertising with specific publications (i.e., the Eastern Oregon Visitors Association Guide, etc.). Additionally, we also plan to scale back advertising opportunities if there is continued shutdowns or restrictions of nonessential travel – it is more advantageous to bolster



heavy advertising once restrictions are eased and have a larger availability in the budget for those times, then a constant stream of spending when there is a discouragement of travel due to pandemic restrictions. Some online advertising will also take shape in targeted social media campaigns for visitor guide fulfillment interest generation as well as acquiring email addresses for future travel-based newsletter marketing.

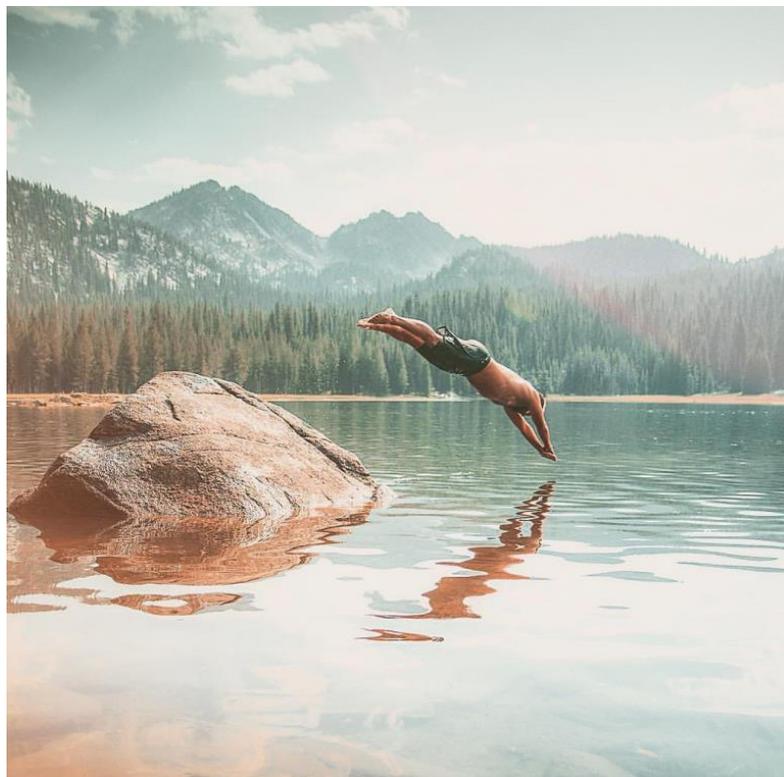
- Adjusted membership to other organizations (5145 and associated sub-categories) to reflect actual costs more accurately: increased “Misc. Memberships” budget due to the average costs of membership. Additionally, the Budget Line for HCSB (Hells Canyon Scenic Byway, 5145.03) has been reduced. The Program of Work outlines this as a tri-county partnership with Union-Baker-Wallowa Counties, as opposed to a traditional ‘membership.’ At this point, with new staff in Wallowa County and no readily identified projects for HCSB promotion at this time, this Budget Line Item was able to sustain a larger reduction this year than in other years.
- Maintained funding (\$9,000 total) for TRT mini grants (\$7,500 line 5706) and TRT discretionary funds (\$1,500 line 5706.06). Please see the Program of Work for updated information on TRT Grant structures. The UCTPAC is shifting from numerous smaller grants to a more open grant structure to allow for continued support of smaller, ongoing festivals, while maintaining the ability of larger awards to fund, as “Seed Money” project demonstrated strong capacity for large-scale projects and events to positively impact tourism to La Grande and Union County.
- We budgeted \$10,000 for professional print/online content development (5700) – to continue supporting implementation of Phase I and II of the plan outlined in FY 18-19 and 19-20. As mentioned previously, this funding is reserved to support contracting with professional photographers and videographers to develop a professional portfolio of visual assets for use in promotional efforts, based on the style/brand guide.
- Due to continued lack of use and amount of Cash on Hand, maintained the Contingency budget (5900) of \$5,000.
- Administrative (Total – 5600): In an effort focused on increased transparency and specificity, we have broken out each Budget Line Item individually, rather than a single global “5600 Administrative” Line. Specifically, 5600 included all items (5601, 5602, 5605, 5606, 5608, 5609, 5650.05, 5650.1); however, we have broken out each of these items into specific Budget Line Items to match the budget more accurately to financials.
  - Additionally, after shifting away from providing contractual services for management of the Blue Mountain Conference, we are at this time not budgeting or hiring for a third position, “Marketing Assistant,” (5606) until we can ensure adequate workflow necessitates a third Chamber staff.
- Administrative (5600) from \$65,000 to \$62,200. With the Chamber discontinuing the contract to provide management services for the Blue Mountain Conference Center (BMCC) in June 2020, a significant part of payroll – both cost and job function/tasks – was absorbed by the Tourism and Chamber entities. In FY 20-21, the Executive Director payroll allocation is as follows: 30% Chamber and 70% Tourism; the Office Coordinator payroll allocation is as follows: 80% Chamber and 20% Tourism, and the PR Coordinator was evenly allocated at 50% to both Chamber and Tourism. In the FY 21-22 fiscal year, the budget allocation for the Executive Director remains at 30% Chamber and 70% Tourism; similarly, the Office Coordinator will shift to 25% Tourism and 75% Chamber, while also removing the PR Coordinator. With this shift, Tourism is seeing a larger increase to Administrative costs to help absorb the salaries as well as will see an increased focus on staff time and energy without having dilution between three entities. The change in this allocation is to more accurately reflect the time of the Executive Director overseeing projects and contracts, as well as to pursue new opportunities for increased tourism promotion, based on the research of the consulting firm. Beginning in FYE2021 all staff has been responsible for more detailed tracking of hours – and to which projects and entities these hours will be charged – in order to document a more accurate picture of time breakdown. This will aid in future efforts of accurate payroll allocations.
  - The budget for Administrative, specifically Payroll, costs include a 10% merit increase and COLA (combined) increase from the previous two years. This has not been awarded but was factored in for budgeting purposes. The Chamber Board of Directors is actively working to develop a policy governing the administrative of merit increases and cost of living adjustments (COLA); however, until a policy is developed, no increases to any Chamber Staff salaries has been granted since prior to January 2019.

It is our goal to continue strengthening our current partnerships to further enhance the work we do to support tourism and commerce in Union County. Thank you again for this opportunity to represent La Grande and Union County as a tourism destination. We appreciate and look forward to continuing this long-term, positive relationship with you.

*Suzannah Moore-Hemann*

Union County Chamber of Commerce Executive Director

# PROGRAM OF WORK – TOURISM PROMOTION CITY OF LA GRANDE & UNION COUNTY



FY 2021-2022

FY 2020-2021 Results &  
FY 2021-2022 Strategic Plan

Union County Chamber of Commerce  
Local Destination Marketing Organization (DMO)  
207 Depot Street La Grande, OR 97850  
541.963.8588  
[www.VisitUnionCounty.org](http://www.VisitUnionCounty.org)

# UNION COUNTY TOURISM STRATEGIC PLAN

## FY 2021-2022

FY 2020-2021 RESULTS &  
FY 2021-2022 STRATEGIC PLAN

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### ADMINISTRATION

Suzannah Moore-Hemann,	Executive Director
Vacant,	Office Coordinator

### 2021 UNION COUNTY TOURISM PROMOTION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Donna Beverage,	Union County Commissioner Appointee
Krystie Davidson,	Large Lodging Appointee
Nicole Howard,	City of La Grande Councilor Appointee
Sean Learner,	Retail/Restaurant Appointee
Mike Rysavy,	Small Lodging Appointee
Caleb Sampson,	Union County Chamber of Commerce Appointee

Vacant,	Business/Attraction Appointee
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Suzannah Moore-Hemann,	Staff Support
Robert Strobe,	Staff Support, La Grande City Manager



## FOREWORD

I have had the unique opportunity to serve as the Executive Director of the Union County Chamber of Commerce for over two years now...and quite the experience has it been. I am a born-and-raised La Grande – Island City native and three-time graduate from Eastern Oregon University...but I have never experienced La Grande and Union County quite like I have since stepping into this position. I have shopped and dined at just about every business and restaurant throughout the County; I have climbed the highest peaks of the Grande Ronde Valley (of course, when I had much younger knees!); I have swum the rivers and sunbathed in the lush parks; I have enjoyed musical and multicultural shows and performances.

Since accepting this position all of those experiences seemed to have changed, like a distant memory of reading a magazine. Every day, every week, every month, and every season has brought new learning opportunities, people, challenges, businesses, and appreciation for what Union County is – and what it can be.

Take a day and drive the roads between communities; I guarantee, no matter how long you have lived and worked in this valley, you will still be awestruck with its magnitudinous beauty. Stand outside and enjoy the quietness or breathe deeply the clean, crisp air. We all do it. And it is exactly why we all work so hard for the betterment of this area.

Before we begin, I want to take a moment to thank the many individuals, organizations, businesses, and our assets for making possible and contributing to this effort – to sharing how special Union County is as a place to live and work or to visit. It has been such a rewarding journey getting to learn and explore my home each and every day – and for being in a position to explore all it has to offer.

I want to thank everyone for the work they do each day – and to say how much I look forward to our continued efforts together. The travel and tourism industry in Union County may seem small; however, it is not only truly a tool for economic development and job creation, but also a positive impact on the quality of life for our residents. For you. For me. For all of us.

Each year I, along with so many others, take a moment to breathe a sigh of relief when annual budgeting and work program drafts are complete and adopted. But the ‘end’ is only the beginning. It is only the plan. Now the real work begins – and I hope all of us, from the travel and tourism professionals to government and nonprofit agencies and officials, to the boards, committees, businesses, and community members will come together to continue building – in collaboration – to help achieve this year’s vision. And next year’s. And the following after that. Union County is truly well-poised to deliver exceptional travel experiences. Following in a post-pandemic world, Union County has the wide-open spaces to warmly – and safely – welcome travelers from near and afar. We can only hope to accomplish this to enhance our position, enhance our economy, and enhance how we ‘do us’ best as a reality every day when we do it together.

Warmest regards,

*Suzannah Moore Hemann,*

Executive Director

Union County Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Information Center



# INTRODUCTION

## FY 2020-2021 SUMMARY OF RESULTS & FY 2021-2022 STRATEGIC PLAN

It is a unique honor and privilege to have the opportunity to represent and promote the City of La Grande and Union County via a strong, impactful, and ongoing tourism promotion campaign. As such, we are deeply committed to producing a high-quality, carefully curated Program of Work to guide us in our continued efforts to attract and increase the number of visitors to this area each year. As the Union County Chamber of Commerce and the Local Destination Marketing Organization, it is our goal to promote positive economic impact and increased tourism to La Grande and Union County (see Appendix I for organizational structure of LDMO in relation to Travel Oregon and other tourism-related entities). Specifically, we aim to increase visitation to La Grande and Union County, increase the length, number, and quality of trips, develop points-of-interest destinations, all while contributing to positive economic impact. As we continue to perfect our marketing strategies and develop for our local partners a menu of investment opportunities in which we are able to work together to further elevate our community, we look forward to even more meaningful, targeted projects to exceed performance metrics.

The past nearly two years of work under the current administration included a holistic marketing research project to answer questions to hone our tourism promotion efforts more deliberately; thereby, maximizing efficiency and effectiveness of dollars spent. This marketing research project, augmented by a grant awarded to the Chamber from the Eastern Oregon Visitors Association to aid in production costs, led to the development of a cohesive style and brand guide. This guide, informed by marketing research, outlines how our image presents to the community and external world, and has the ability to expand to include the vast majority of assets throughout La Grande and Union County as we continue expanding this vision and image. We are now further empowered to know who our target demographic is, how to reach them, and the experiences and memories they are seeking when considering travel to this area.

It may go without saying, but when the world was turned upside down due to the unprecedented events of the COVID-19 pandemic throughout 2020, we continued along – pulling back certain tourism promotion efforts, but moving forward with others, to ensure as best we can, La Grande and Union County will be well positioned to take advantage of a post-pandemic world of tourism. We drastically scaled back on print and online marketing plans as well as cooperative advertising to save these marketing dollars while travel guidelines deterred anything considered ‘nonessential’ and instead focused on creating a fresh, vibrant, and image-centric destination website.

Not surprisingly, we experienced a significant reduction to walk-in visitors, callers, and inquiries for visitors guides and relocations packets than what has typically been experienced in the past. Our digital (website and social media) presence was most heavily utilized by residents needing COVID-19 information and resources. Additionally, overnight lodging stays from La Grande, Union County, and beyond, as reported by Travel Oregon have seen a 30%+ drop in stays from the same reporting period as last year. Because of these significant changes, this Program of Work for FY 2021-2022 will not only



maintain significant information from the prior year (FY 2020-2021) for “normal” reference, but also will include information from the current year to highlight where we see the most potential to positively pivot and respond to the post-pandemic world. We anticipate travelers will still exercise high degrees of caution, thus seeking areas with increased physical distancing, less crowds, and a high percentage of independent, outdoor-based activities.

As you will note in the Program of Work to follow, we highlighted the most critical components of the budget which must be maintained in order to propagate some visibility to potential travelers, though we will continue to maximize our promotional efforts for increased overnight stays. Additionally, Chamber staff have been partially furloughed on an ongoing basis to further aid in the reduction and control of payroll costs while the office and other projects have slowed. Chamber staff have been working via a combination of staggered shift schedules and remote work to adhere to State of Oregon Executive Orders while still serving the community and visitors.

Over the past four years, the Chamber has accumulated a larger amount of reserve funds balance. Some of this carry-forward will be used to backfill budget line items (in the event of reduced funding); therefore, we identified a number of mid- and long-range priorities with which we can achieve tangible results with use of these reserves. We included project options for proposed uses of the unused funds, including new grant programs to aid in business development, the use of recruiting a RARE program participant to specifically focus on our destination development opportunities and placemaking and wayfinding signage projects.

We have our work cut out for us – and after the year we have had, we are looking forward to the opportunity get back to work, stronger and better positioned than ever before. We all know the expression: When life gives you lemons...

We’ll be ready to welcome them, when visitors are ready to travel.

Thank you for your continued commitment, investment, and partnership with the Union County Chamber of Commerce.



## KEY PERFORMANCE METRICS OF FY 2020-2021

Below is a summary of key performance metrics, defined and periodically reviewed in concert with the Union County Tourism Promotion Advisory Committee. Data collected on each metric further guides efforts to focus on a diverse composition of promotional strategies in order to maximize engagement and impact on the visitor experiences. La Grande and Union County offer a wide range of visitor experiences, from outdoor recreation including hiking, camping, backpacking, etc., to a growing arts and cultural scene, rich in agritourism and small businesses. The data collected serves as a benchmark for program success. As we continue progress towards short-, mid-, and long-range goals, we will also strive to develop additional key performance indicators to monitor progress more readily towards these goals and objectives. These metrics include, but are not limited to:

- Transient Room Tax revenues;
- Utilization of website analytics and social media engagement;
- Requests for information, including mailed and/or electronic packets;
- Awarding and utilization of the TRT Mini Grants;
- Cross-promotional efforts of county-wide events and projects;
- New and innovative project ideas to increase county-wide engagement for County and regional tourism (i.e., partnering to create new events, targeted promotions, etc.);
- Increased representation and engagement with entities including Eastern Oregon Visitors Association, Oregon Tour and Travel Alliance, Oregon Restaurant and Lodging Association, Travel Oregon and beyond.

Additionally, throughout the past year, we implemented strategies identified in the marketing research from the previous year (see Appendix II) and began rolling out a cohesive, polished, professional online campaign and focused on situation-responsive near-term (3-15 mo.) tactics:

- Launched new destination website;
- OTIS training (Oregon Travel Information System) for integration into new website and higher visibility of Union County asset listings on [www.TravelOregon.com](http://www.TravelOregon.com);
- Secured *@NortheasternOregon* handle on social media platforms and conducted early-launch conversations with Wallowa and Baker Counties for a regional presence via shared cooperative strategies on social media;
- Utilized electronic ad space through Travel Oregon (one-time free of charge) to increase online presence with new landing page;
- Refocused social media platforms for residents (Chamber) and tourism (Travel Union County) specific audiences;
- Reviewed and restructured the TRT Mini Grants, including cooperative advertising opportunities, to maximize program impact, product, and destination development support, and focus efforts based on marketing research for targeted impact.



# VISION FOR 2021 – AND BEYOND

There were a number of projects and activities throughout the County temporarily paused as we adjusted our tactics and outputs during the 2020 shutdown and subsequent freezes. Some of the forthcoming information will be rolled over from last year’s originally identified plans.

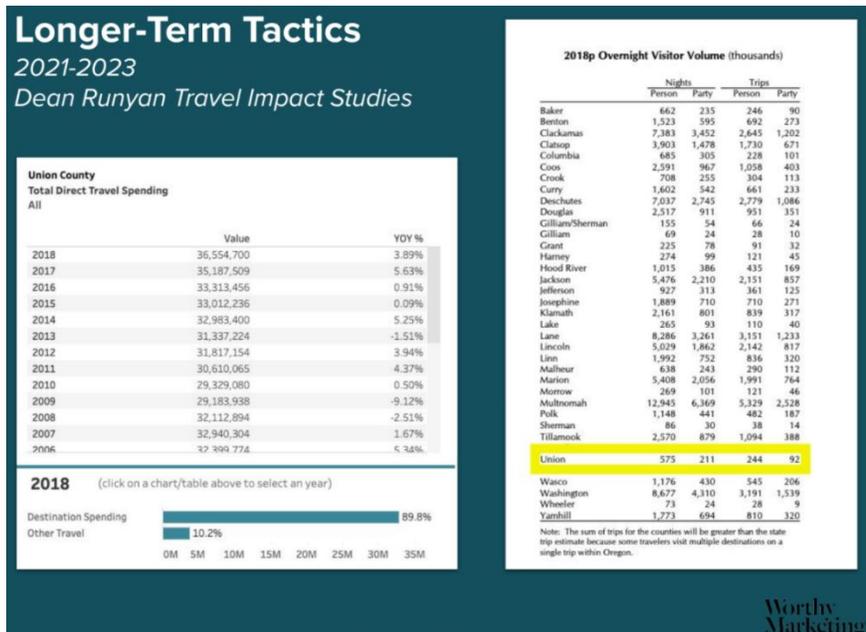
After hiring and working closely with a marketing consulting firm, specializing in destination development, the UCTPAC and Chamber will continue working towards developing a robust strategic marketing plan complete with strategies and methods to test performance metrics. This has and continues to be an ongoing undertaking of FY 2020-21; however, the findings and implications of this project will continue to be implemented in FY 2021-2022 and beyond.

One of the most noticeable outcomes of 2020 is a new branding and style guide for Union County Tourism (see Appendix III), based on the information provided in the marketing research (see Appendix II). We will continue to expand this style guide to include sample sketches for all assets in the coming years. This style guide is not exclusive, and it is encouraged to further build a county-wide image based on this guide. The more cohesive image, messaging, and experiences, the more polished Union County’s overall image. The style guide was the key informant of the new website development and will continue to inform and permeate all digital and print messaging and advertisements implemented for a cross-medium cohesive strategy. We will continue to pursue a well-rounded marketing matrix, complete with full strategic planning in the future to greater build on destination development strategies and tactics.

Worthy Marketing created an outline for our marketing; however, it also will be valuable to launch a full-scale analysis and creation of one, three, five- and ten-year strategic plans to identify areas to pursue, improve and the level of commitment and involvement necessary to tangibly increase tourism to Union County. Suggestions for beginning this conversation can be found under the Long-Term Strategic Planning section. Additionally, in the “Other Activities” section, a number of short- and mid-range projects are identified to further augment current projects and enhance efficacy of tourism to Union County.

Additionally, we aim to build a greater understanding of the positive impact tourism in and to Union County can have – in 2019, over \$34 million in direct travel spending was made in Union County alone<sup>1</sup>. Not only do we appreciate day and overnight visits which generate this spending, but also the “stay-cationers” who opt to explore the treasures in their own backyards, who positively contribute to supporting local.

Our goal is to set clear paths with broad goals and tangible performance metrics in the upcoming year and beyond for increased travel to this region – to recognize what sets us apart from our neighbors to truly attract new and returning visitors. While we have yet to draft a comprehensive long-term strategic plan, we can



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.travelstats.com/impacts>



recognize the advantages and positive attributes which make Union County a destination worth developing:

- Backdrop: Union County is rich with mountainous landscaping and backdrops and a patchwork of valley farmlands and forest scenery. We are fortunate to experience four vivid seasons and a plethora of activities to promote with each changing season.
- Recreation: Union County offers a diverse array of world class outdoor recreation activities for residents and visitors alike, with natural distancing and isolation to be well-poised for a post-pandemic world.
- Engagement: Union County is home to diverse historic, cultural, and artistic activities, as well as events and festivals with capacity for a larger draw of residents and visitors for year-round entertainment.
- Hospitality: La Grande and the surrounding communities of Union County boast friendly, small-town charm, ready to welcome all travelers from near and far.
- Effort: The Union County Chamber of Commerce, in conjunction with increased strength and collaboration of public and private sector partnerships, grows in experience, education, and sophistication of its tourism promotion efforts. Through years of trial and error, we have focused our efforts to share the inspiring stories of the people and places of Union County – and all the experiences and adventures awaiting those bold enough to call this their destination.

As we continue our work in tourism promotion, we will shift our focus towards maximizing direct impact on overnight stays in Union County, positive economic impact, increased partnerships with a wide variety of local stakeholders, and increased appreciation for image perception by those wishing to travel to this region. We aim to increase and drive visitation to this region, while paying homage to the local flair which makes this area so unique. It is our goal to reinvigorate interest in local offerings, while simultaneously inspiring interest in culture, history, hospitality, and characteristics.

The goal of tourism in Union County is not only to increase economic impact via direct travel spending, but also to enhance the quality of life for residents of Union County. We will work to attract product development through a business-friendly jurisdiction in which tourism-related business may thrive. We will also tirelessly work to promote county-wide partnerships and regional collaboration in order to shift and develop Union County as a premier tourism destination.

The following report represents activities from Fiscal Year 2020-2021, and what we aim to accomplish in FY 2021-2022.



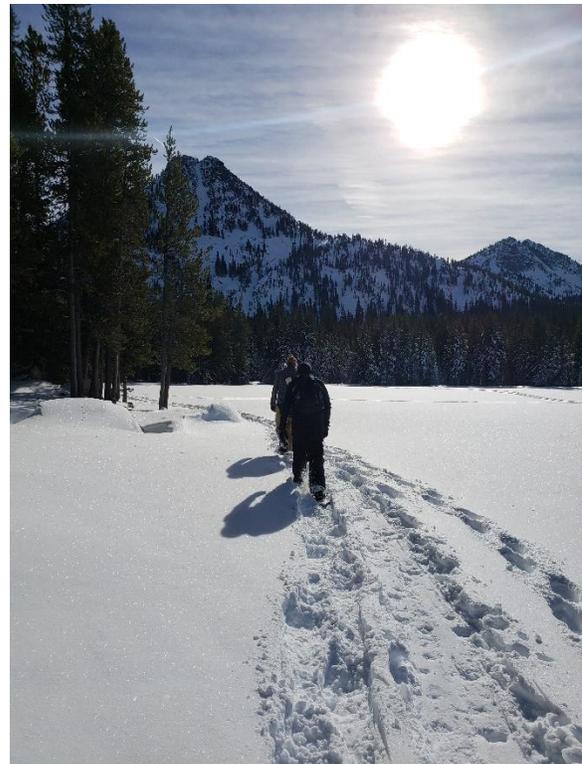
## TRANSIENT ROOM TAX RATES & LODGING OCCUPANCY RATES

In 2016/2017 the City of La Grande reported \$338,459 was collected in Transient Room Tax dollars. Union County collected \$178,136 in the same period, totaling \$516,595. In 2019/2020, the City of La Grande reported collecting \$371,698.41 and Union County reported collecting \$185,849.21, totaling \$557,547.62. Compared to recent reports for 2020/2021, the City of La Grande and Union County are indicating significant reductions in Transient Room Tax collections, close to \$130,000 less than the same reporting period last year, due to the unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Transient Room Tax Comparison				
	2016- 2017	2017- 2018	2018- 2019	2019- 2020
<b>City of La Grande</b>	\$338,459	\$364,490	\$371,392	\$371,698
<b>Union County</b>	\$178,136	\$191,836	\$195,470	\$185,849
<b>Totals</b>	\$516,595	\$556,326	\$566,862	\$557,547

In conjunction with the Oregon Tourism Commission, dba Travel Oregon, and the Smith Travel Research reports the latest occupancy rates for Union County dropped from 57.1% in 2019 to 41.5% in 2020<sup>2</sup>.

Additionally, the Smith Travel Research (STR) Reports in February 2021 reflect an 18% reduction in occupancy based on year-over-year change and nearly 56% decrease in direct travel spending losses in Oregon for calendar year 2020<sup>3</sup>. Calendar year reports for Union County are located in the appendix in addition to visitor volume rates by county.



<sup>2</sup>Based on calendar year and does not include campgrounds, RV parks and vacation homes. The report does not drill down to city-level. Occupancy information is provided voluntarily and there is not mandatory reporting. According to a report from the Eastern Oregon Visitors Association, the Greenwell Motel, Royal Motor Inn,

and La Grande Inn opt out of participation regarding lodging properties who opt out of reporting within Zip Code 97850.

<sup>3</sup>[https://industry.traveloregon.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/COVID-Impacts\\_Feb-1\\_Industry.pdf](https://industry.traveloregon.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/COVID-Impacts_Feb-1_Industry.pdf)

## FULLFILLMENT REQUESTS

The Union County Chamber of Commerce receives requests for visitor information via email, telephone, in-person, and website inquiries. The most current records reflect walk-in and telephone requests from July 2020 through March 2021. Data from website inquiries was not included due to launching in a January and low volume of requests received, noting 2021 is the baseline for future years.

Visitor Requests Comparison				
	FYE18	FYE19	FYE20	FYE21
<b>Walk-In</b>	1,267	3,566	2,417	244*
<b>Telephone</b>	1,145	1,915	1,661	441*
<b>Maps Distributed</b>	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000**
<b>Magazines Distributed</b>	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000**

*\*This data represents walk-in visitors and telephone calls July 2020 through March 2021 (noting a significant decrease due to the COVID-19 Coronavirus Pandemic). The Chamber Office was closed to walk-in visitors due to COVID-19 State Guidelines. There is a significant increase in walk-in visitors from 2018 to 2019, which may be attributed to the Cycle Oregon, drawing a large increase in out-of-town visitors. It is the goal of the Chamber to define and denote large spikes in traffic.*

*\*\*We currently contract to distribute all maps and magazines ordered while maintaining a small supply in the Visitor Information Center for walk-in visitors as well for mailing requests.*

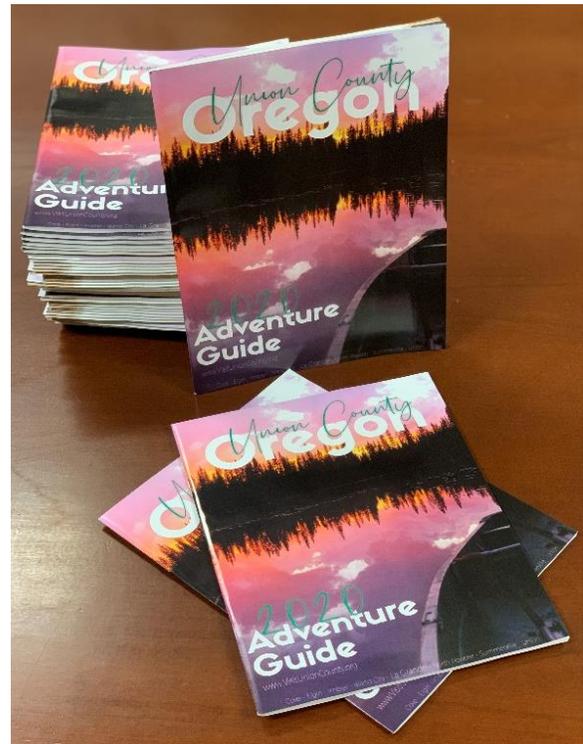


### **Magazine Distribution (5110)\***

\*Please note Budget Line Item 5123.02 “Relocation & Tourism Mailings” is now budgeted into Line 5110. There has been minimal specific use of 5132.02 over the past four years. The detailed financials reviewed by the UCTPAC provides a breakdown of contracted fulfillment services and fulfillment requests

received at the Chamber office, via telephone, email, website, and in-person requests. The past fiscal year budgeted \$3,000 for 5110 and \$500 for 5132.02; in FY 2021-22 funding of 5110 is \$3,500, a combination of the two.

Frequent requests for information on La Grande and the surrounding area is common as tourists show interest in visiting the region. Additionally, individuals request relocation packets when they are interested in moving to La Grande; therefore, our goal is to create attractive relocation and visitor packets with information on local assets



to entice and drive as many visitors as possible. Local businesses and organizations consistently request travel and tourism materials, including the annual visitors guide magazine and community map, along with a variety of other resources. We contract with a fulfillment organization (Certified Folder) to aid in delivery of materials throughout Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Northern California. We are committed to keeping local and regional motels/hotels, restaurants, airports and gathering places throughout Northeast Oregon



stocked with appropriate and updated literature. It is our ongoing goal to have 100% fulfillment and distribution of materials, reserving a minimal supply at the Union County Chamber of Commerce office in between receiving the next year's supply.

There are increased fulfillment opportunities via the Hells Canyon Scenic Byway (HCSB). Currently, there is an independent contractor who forwards fulfillment requests to Baker, Union, and Wallowa Counties to mail information; however, this function could be housed within the Union County Chamber to take a more active role in fulfillment to further encourage La Grande and Union County as the starting point of this experience. Because our target demographic travels more exclusively for touring and outdoors activities, focusing on fulfillment packages more specifically including information on landmarks and historic sites, State and National Parks, as well as different outdoors activities has the potential to appeal to this audience more broadly.

- FY 19/20 Actual: \$2,363
- FY 20/21 Budget: \$3,000
- FY 20/21 YTD: \$93.60\*\*
- FY 21/22 Request: \$3,500

*\*\*\*The Certified Folder contract is for a calendar year and invoices are typically received in June and are not reflected during the time of Program of Work preparation (see Appendix IV for additional information on Certified Folder fulfillment).*

We opt for targeted locations throughout Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and some areas of Northern California to maximize regional reach and distribution to our target audiences.



## WEBSITE DATA (5116)\* \*\*

*\*Website data was not available prior to April 2017.*

*\*\*Data from Google Analytics is not included in this Program of Work. Because the new website was recently launched, the UCTPAC felt any data included is unmeaningful and considering 2021 the baseline year for collecting website data.*

As previously mentioned, the Union County Chamber of Commerce is thrilled to announce the launch of a new website, complete with travel-centric imagery and seasonally relevant content. Our continued goal is to develop relevant, activity- and event-oriented itineraries and continue to infuse the website with fresh, vibrant images, videos, and content.

Our target market prioritizes the use of destination websites and social media when planning trips; therefore, our website was built with this in mind. The website will soon include a one-stop shopping experience with gift cards and merchandise from local businesses to further promote economic vitality. It is also our goal to partner closely with the economic development professionals and agencies of La Grande and Union County partners to ensure a relevant “Living Local” section further supports economic growth. The website will serve as a comprehensive resource to potential new and relocating businesses and serve as a tool and mechanism in this recruitment process. There is also an increased strategic focus on publishing engaging, up-to-date content with tangible information directly appealing to tourists, residents, and businesses.

One of the ongoing goals in FY 2021-2022 is to focus on continued content creation for a fresh, relevant social media campaign, including growing the followership base and creating campaigns with tangible calls to action driving increased visitation to the website and comprehensive analytics research to further target and promote successful campaigns.

The Chamber will continue to promote a shared site, for both local residents (the Chamber and its Membership) as well as a strong focus on travelers and tourism (Union County Tourism); current data indicates there is not enough separate traffic to justify two separate websites. Similarly, the current social media platforms will transition to travel-centric images and campaigns on Instagram (Union County Tourism) and local promotions on Facebook (Chamber).





Demographic analytics indicate most of our site visits originate in the United States, with China a distant second. The Chamber’s website shows audience captures with a high bounce rate of 19.39% - alarmingly up from 1.84% last year. The “bounce rate” indicates the number of users who enter a website and leave (bounce) without exploring additional pages throughout the website. This is likely to be the result of automated (nonhuman) visits to the website to generate skewed data in the form of robotic page views (based on the low page sessions). It is important to note, with the launch of the new website, there may be some analytical errors during the transition. It is also important to note there has been an increase in “Bot Visits,” or, automated web traffic from “TrafficBot.Life” which mimics human users but is actually automated visits. It will be a continued effort to ensure the website is protected and free from robotic visits, as well as increased specificity in data mining to eliminate further data skewing.

Further website development will see increased efforts to serve both the needs of the local business and economic environment, as well as increase the usability for visitors and potential travelers. As in previous years (for as long as we have had Google Analytics on this website), we see a noticeable increase in website traffic during the summer months (April through August) with a decline during the shoulder and winter months.

It will be important to maximize online content during the busiest months, as well as increase interesting content for engagement throughout the year, with a specific focus on shoulder season months (Feb., Mar., Sept., Oct., Nov.) and winter recreation opportunities. Further use of analytics indicates we should tailor the creation of in-depth content based on popular searches. Over the coming year, we will carefully monitor analytics data and social media engagement to



increase targeted campaigns based on the performance of content. Content with high positive engagement and search returns will float to the forefront of the website, Search Engine Optimization (SEO), and social media promotion. Which brings the Chamber to our next opportunity for growth: SEO.

There have been conversations with the current consulting firm, Worthy Marketing, regarding the searchability of “Visit Union County,” “Travel Union County,” or even the difference between “Union County” and the individual towns/communities and assets. The most intuitive search terms may be those individuals are seeking to visit, such as specific cities and landmarks (i.e., Anthony lakes, La Grande, Elgin Opera House, etc.), rather than the more generic term, such as Union County. Further research is required regarding the most effective Search Engine Optimization (SEO) to ensure potential travelers will find Union County.

The majority of website visitors stay on a page for almost two minutes and visit nearly four pages per session. Looking at future website strategy, the Chamber plans to incorporate a comprehensive events calendar for visitors and residents. This tool will be used to highlight events and activities and will augment trip itineraries and community profiles. The Chamber will create seasonally specific itineraries, interest-based itineraries, as well as community profile sheets to provide relevant information to visitors, residents, and those considering relocation to the area. (See Appendix VIII for screenshots and information on previous website.)



Website Visits & Views			
	Page (Sessions)	Visits	Page Views
Jul '20 – Mar 21	23,283	65,429	
Jul '19 – Jun '20	18,789	71,492	
Jul '18 – Jun '19	14,547	58,075	
Jul '17 – Jun '18	12,574	59,281	



Because this is the first year with the new website, developed based on marketing research, it is critical to maintain a robust budget for the maintenance and ongoing development of this component of our marketing matrix and general tourism promotion. The FY 2021-22 budget is for \$5,000 to incorporate continued contracting with an external organization for content creation and rotation<sup>4</sup>.

The website enables us the highest degree of visibility and is the most cost-effective manner, in conjunction with targeted social media campaigns, to promote Union County to our intended audience, based on the market research. The continued contract with Worthy Marketing to provide content creation and image curation will also help better tailor promotional campaigns in the future once TRT dollars generated have recovered. Additionally, this contract will be entered in March/April of 2021, therefore the total balance of the contract (\$3,500) will span across two fiscal years.

Use of this contract with Worthy Marketing enables staff to continue learning and developing website content while working with an external agency – building experience so as not necessarily needing to rely on this in the future.

The new website will rotate content and imagery three times per year: Spring/Summer, Autumn, and Winter. At full funding, the Chamber will once again contract with Worthy Marketing for content creation and imagery curation to best align with the marketing research in a unified voice and seamless integration. This work will also allow the Chamber to further integrate website content into the Travel Oregon’s *Oregon Travel Information System (OTIS)* for enhanced web presence on multiple channels (see “Other Activities” section for OTIS explanation). The

<sup>4</sup> “Shoulder Season” is defined as the periods between peaks (highs) and off (lows) seasons of a vacation/travel destination:

year-to-date expense of FY 2020-2021 is lower than budgeted, as expenses relating to the website redesign were incorporated into Line Item 5700 as a global project of research, content creation, and graphic design. We anticipate an expense much closer to \$2,500, which covers the essential expenses of the website including hosting and plugins (shared evenly between the Chamber and Tourism entities). The goal for use of funding in the next fiscal year is allocated towards accurate, fresh, and timely content and imagery.

We would also like to explore other mechanisms to reach visitors, including podcasts and mobile applications to ‘ping’ information to geofenced visitors for personalized travel experiences.

- FY 19/20 Actual: \$756
- FY 20/21 Budget: \$5,000
- FY 20/21 YTD: \$615.60
- FY 21/22 Request: \$5,000



<https://www.businessinsider.com/what-is-shoulder-season-2017-8>.



## ADVERTISING & PROMOTION

### **Cooperative Advertising (5124)**

After extensive research into other city and county-funded tourism programs and TRT grant structures, the Chamber is incredibly excited to announce the launch of a newly structured grant program for 2021. Line Items 5124, 5706, and 5706.1 (Cooperative Advertising, Mini Tourism TRT Grants, and TRT Discretionary Grant funds, respectively) have been, historically, underutilized, or annual repetitive funding of the same events and venues without demonstrating significant increase in overnight stays year after year. The Chamber intends to continue partnering with organizations who assist and contribute to promote tourism in La Grande and Union County; however, these programs will be restructured to significantly demonstrate a positive impact on tourism.

The new Cooperative Advertising Grant program will shift its purpose with the goal of increasing La Grande and Union County's presence in the digital sphere by leveraging travel writers, familiarization tours ("FAM" tours), and other 'influencers' to the area. When approached by travel writers, tour operators, and other similar entities, lodging partners, asset operators, restaurants, retailers, etc., are often asked for complimentary services or goods (i.e., a comped room or meal) in exchange for writing articles or featuring locations on their social channels (blogs, articles, social media, etc.). The purpose of this new grant aims to mitigate some of the expenses of comped goods/services in exchange for having access to the content for future purposes. These grants, up to \$200 to cover comped expenses, will give priority to multi-entity applications (i.e., lodging partner, one or two restaurants, and one or two asset operators, such as equipment rentals, tickets to a show or operations, etc.). This positions us to have demonstrated increase in online presence.

Grant applications must demonstrate a high degree of legitimacy of the leveraged travel writer, as well as demonstrate alignment with our target demographic, based on the marketing plan.

In FY 2018-2019, the budget line *Local Business Marketing* (5135) was combined with Cooperative Advertising, and we continued this same combination in FYE2020 and FYE2021. Because the goal of tourism is not to promote business-to-business activities, it is more effective to increase Cooperative Advertising opportunities through this combination. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it should be noted very little of this budget item has been used; once it became apparent shutdowns and travel restrictions would last longer than initially expected, significant cuts to advertising were made preemptively. We anticipate greater use of this budget line in the near future.

- FY 19/20 Actual: \$4,917
- FY 20/21 Budget: \$6,500
- FY 20/21 YTD: \$0
- FY 21/22 Request: \$3,500



## Online Advertising (5130)

(See sample in Appendix V)

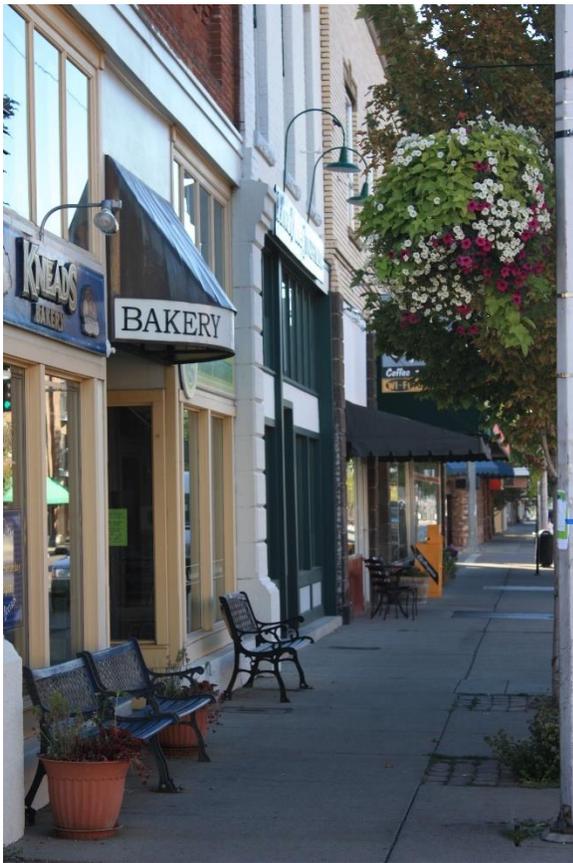
The Chamber has accounts with most major social media outlets and focuses on Facebook, as it has the largest following. With close to 6,000 Likes and Follows, the Chamber Facebook page is a critical tool of communication with the community and beyond. On average, we see nearly 1,000 post engagements and thousands reached per post. Facebook informs our community of events and happenings which appeal to locals and tourists. Additionally, the Chamber also has nearly 900 followers on Instagram and close to 300 followers on the newly acquired Instagram handle, @NortheasternOregon, with zero posts made to date. Following the research of the marketing plan, the Chamber will shift focuses of the different social media channels, with a high degree of travel-centric imagery for Instagram, using this account primarily as a travel and destination tool, and use Facebook for community-centric information and highlights.

Online advertising, similar to Print and Cooperative Advertising, did not experience large use this year. Following suit of Travel Oregon, with limited use of travel promotion during the pandemic when all nonessential travel was suggested restricted, we took the opportunity to scale back this advertising to save funding for future efforts. Due to the open, expansiveness of our surroundings, promoting safe travel activities naturally positions La Grande and Union County to take advantage of a post-pandemic world.

The budget for Online Advertising (5130) this year significantly highlights our range of projects based on funding levels. With a budget of \$10,000, we will aim to pursue larger online advertising platforms including “Your Story, Everywhere” (YSE) with Travel Oregon, to promote targeted narratives we have direct

influence in creating, including outdoor recreation, culinary interests, and agritourism.





The YSE is delivered to over 110,000 e-subscribers each month and the content is live on Travel Oregon’s website for at least one year following the immediate promotion. Additionally, content created for the YSE may also be housed on our own website, thus further increasing our SEO capabilities through a single campaign. YSE campaigns may highlight our signature events and outdoor activities including MERA, Anthony Lakes, the byways, as well as events ranking high on our marketing audit, which our target demographic seek. We will increase specificity in exact Online Advertising campaigns beyond the YSE as we glean more from the marketing research in addition to the changing climate and landscape of recovery efforts from COVID-19.

We intend to research campaign performance metrics to maximize the impact of online promotion. In the past there has been a dabbling in online banner advertisements; however, with a revamped website, in conjunction with a strategic marketing plan, we anticipate seeing higher effectiveness as we place heavier reliance on digital marketing. We have taken advantage of smaller, less expensive digital ad space with Travel Oregon and will closely follow performance metrics to maximize impact of these advertising dollars.

- FY 19/20 Actual: \$0
- FY 20/21 Budget: \$15,000
- FY 20/21 YTD: \$0
- FY 21/22 Request: \$10,000



**Print Advertising Projects and Goals (5132)**

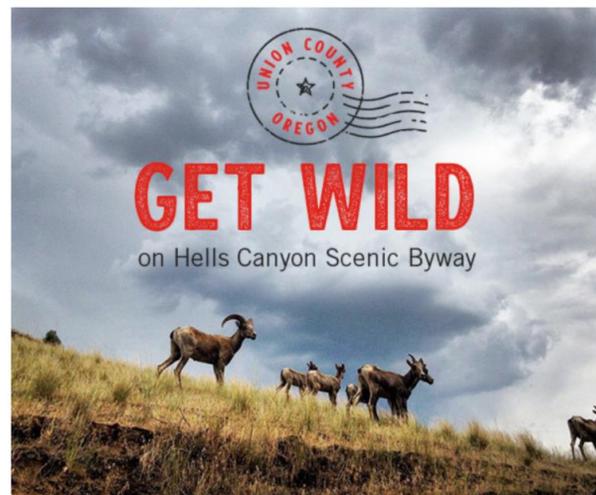
This year, it is our goal to create a cohesive, well-coordinated marketing plan to maximize the effectiveness of our advertising campaign strategies. By employing a variety of methods for a comprehensive marketing composition matrix, we are confident our messaging will be well-tailored for the demographic we are trying to reach. We will increase our focus on earned advertising in a variety of publications to supplement our paid print advertising. As previously mentioned, we are increasing the emphasis placed on the digital realm and reducing reliance on as much print advertising we had in the past.

Last year saw a large reduction in the Print Advertising budget (from \$25,800 to \$10,000) in order to bolster online advertising. This year is no exception as we continue to focus on increasing our online presence, with the added benefit of better performance tracking metrics than via print materials. It is critical to continue supporting the presence of La Grande and Union County in specific printed outlets, such as the Eastern Oregon Visitors Association (EOVA) Visitors Guide and the Travel Oregon Visitors Guide, in order to maintain visibility and access to these demographics. Our promotional efforts will be much more intentional and part of a larger marketing program, especially based on our new style/brand guide. In FY 19/20, FY 20/21 and into FY 21-22 we have pursued advertising contracts with print sources including: *Northwest Travel & Life Magazine*, *EOVA Visitors Guide*, *Travel Oregon Visitors Guide*, *The Entertainer*, *Outdoors NW*, *Oregon Golf*, *Statehood Media – OnTrack (1859 Magazine)*, as well as the Union County Visitors Guide and NE Oregon’s Magazine (both at no cost to the Union County Chamber). See Appendix VI for samples of the current fiscal year print advertising as well as our style/brand guide for upcoming advertising samples – applicable both for print and digital advertising.

Because print advertising typically reaches a different demographic than primarily our online

platforms are reaching, our advertising in these different print sources serves different purposes. When advertising in regional publications such as the *Eastern Oregon Visitors Guide* magazine and the *NE Oregon’s Magazine*, we focus on annual calendars of events, highlighting from the *Eastern Oregon Beer Festival* to *Elgin Stampede* and *Union Stock Show*, from the *Backcountry Festival* to the *Farm Crawl* – and everything in between. Our audiences for these purposes are those looking for the small-town Western Historic charm Union County offers. Similarly, when advertising in *Outdoors NW*, *Northwest Travel & Life Magazine*, and *1859*, we highlight specific assets and activities including the unique *Eagle Cap Excursion Train*, *Buffalo Peak Golf Course*, the *Grand Tour Scenic Byway*, *Elgin Opera House*, and a plethora of others, tailored to these target markets. While spending is reduced for print advertising, being intentional in our marketing matrix composition allows for meaningful presence and demographic-specific messaging in each placement.

- FY 19/20 Actual: \$22,425
- FY 20/21 Budget: \$10,000
- FY 20/21 YTD: \$2,793
- FY 21/22 Request: \$10,000



**Eastern Oregon Visitors Guide Magazine – \$4,000 full page ad.**

- This guide is contracted by EOVA to Oregon Media. The Union County Chamber historically purchases a half- to full-page advertisement and subsidizes the cost of two “Explore” pages for local organizations to advertise at a reduced rate. The distribution is handled in coordination between Oregon Media and EOVA to cover the following:
  - Distribution: 100,000 copies and e-magazines distributed to 11 counties in EOVA (25,000 per region) to all Chambers and Visitors Centers as well as featured at certified display racks throughout the Northwest:
    - All Oregon Welcome Centers and Portland Airport via Certified Folder (approximately 20,000)
    - Additional regional visitors’ centers and EOVA members (25,000)
    - Additional contracts providing fulfillment to:
      - Boise Airport (5,000)
      - Woodburn County (500)
      - Travel Portland Visitor Center (500)
      - Travel Portland Regional Program in conjunction with the fulfillment of Travel Oregon’s Visitors Guide (5,000)

**Annual Union County Tourism Visitors Guide – (supported by advertising partners – no cost)**

- Distribution: 6,000 to Portland, Boise and beyond (see Page 5) via fulfillment; 4,000 remainder for requests of information (i.e., relocation packets and visitor packets).
- Looking ahead: we intend to shift our contract from *Town Square Publishing* to the same publisher as our annual Visitors Guide with the goal of increased cohesion and greater local support for our advertising partners.

**N.E. Oregon’s Magazine - (supported by advertising partners – no cost)**

- Includes photographs of scenery and outdoor destinations only found in Northeast Oregon. The editorial content is dedicated to local people, events, and businesses. The distribution for this magazine is 30,000 copies within a 250-mile radius of Baker, Wallowa, and Union Counties).

**Other Advertising Opportunities (Misc.) – \$6,000**

- *Travel Oregon Visitors Guide*
  - 300,000 copy distribution with massive online readership including 100,000 e-newsletter subscribers.
  - Fulfillment contracts ensures distribution and rotation of stocks at visitors’ centers across Oregon, the Pacific Northwest, British Columbia, and beyond
- Throughout a calendar or fiscal year, advertising opportunities arise, as sales teams struggle to fill remaining ad spaces as print deadlines loom. Leaving a portion of the budget available for these opportunities allows flexibility in pursuing reduced-cost opportunities.



**Advertising – NE Oregon (5133)**

Key attractions which bring tourism to La Grande and Union County include the Mt. Emily Recreation Area (MERA), two golf courses, Eastern Oregon Film Festival (EOFF), Eastern Oregon Beer Festival (EOBF), Eagle Cap Excursion Train, NE Oregon Arts Trail and more. We will explore the possibility of partnering with key organizations for further promotion of MERA, including developing printed content to distribute at the Visitors Center. Past use of this budget item includes one third share for a travel writer project in conjunction with Baker County for mountain biking promotion at MERA and Anthony Lakes. We have maintained the budget for this specific line item (\$5,000) in FY 20/21 to further support the marketing plan by focusing on specifically highlighting tourism assets, as identified in the completed marketing project.

- FY 19/20 Actual: \$500
- FY 20/21 Budget: \$5,000
- FY 20/21 YTD: \$0
- FY 21/22 Request: \$2,500



**Special Projects (5700)**

Over the past two years, the Chamber has carved out part of the budget to use for special projects, including contracting with Worthy Marketing to conduct a marketing audit and analysis to answer questions regarding key demographics and how to best promote messaging to reach these audiences. Following, in conjunction with a project-specific grant awarded by the *Eastern Oregon Visitors Association (EOVA)*, the Chamber contracted again with Worthy Marketing and with Distill Creative Studio to create a professional brand/style guide, including elements of updated logos, social media avatars, website layout, and key design elements of print and digital ads.

This year, this budget item is intended to continue bolstering website design and development, further augmenting the current budget Line Item 5116, as well as increased targeted social media campaigns for the @NortheasternOregon handle and to boost followers and engagement on current channels.

Additionally, this budget line could be used for professional contracting to develop content for Travel Oregon’s OTIS, the website, and additional development of advertising messaging.

Another serious gap for proper and timely promotion is a comprehensive catalogue of professional photos throughout Union County, including seasonally specific imagery, photos capturing events and activities, as well as a combination of streetscapes and wilderness highlights. An important undertaking for future projects, especially in the development of advertising campaigns and continued updates to the website, include contracting with a local photographer(s) to develop this catalogue of photo assets consistent with our style guide and owned by the Chamber, for use in print and digital promotional campaigns.

A photography – and possibly videography – catalogue campaign would be based on the marketing research, highlighting activities ranked most appealing to the target demographic audience. Additionally, photos and

videos could be staged and serve as an opportunity for a diversity and inclusion project, for increased representation of women and minorities in outdoor recreation and events to appeal to a broader demographic than has been typical throughout the Eastern Oregon region.

- FY 19/20 Actual: \$0
- FY 20/21 Budget: \$10,000
- FY 20/21 YTD: \$15,950
- FY 21/22 Request: \$10,000



## MEMBERSHIP

Active membership and representation on a variety of tourism-focused organizations and boards across the State of Oregon is critical to ensure successful inclusion of La Grande and Union County in tourism promotion projects throughout Oregon and beyond. The more actively the Union County Chamber of Commerce engages with different organizations, the more readily we can access new and upcoming projects. Membership is most effective when full participation in these organizations is pursued. For example, the Oregon Tour and Travel Alliance (OTTA) features highlighted itineraries with input from the Board of Directors, leading to projects such as: <https://oregontourandtravelalliance.com/itinerary/east-to-west/>.



### **Oregon Destination Association - \$300 (5145.02)**

The Oregon Destination Association (ODA, formerly Oregon Destination Marketing Organization, ODMO) is a statewide network of convention, visitor bureaus and chamber of commerce directors who share a common interest in the vision and vitality of Oregon's travel industry. ODA members are the direct link between tourism-related business services, and other important entities such as the Oregon Tourism Commission, dba Travel Oregon. As such, ODA is the leading voice of the tourism industry in Oregon.



### **Hells Canyon Scenic Byway (HCSB) Membership - \$2,000 (5145.03)**

The HCSB membership is important with La Grande being the gateway to this scenic adventure and tourist destination. HCSB is featured by *Travel Oregon, America's Byways, Oregon Scenic Byways*, and the *Eastern Oregon Visitors Association Visitors Guide*, making this partnership an incredible opportunity to build relationships for cross promotion. To clarify this labeling: the "HCSB Membership" is not technically a membership; rather, it is a cooperative agreement, paid to EOVA for administration, matched by regional partners (Baker and Wallowa Counties) to pursue tri-county projects which are identified and agreed upon by the three neighboring counties.

In January/February 2020, the three counties pursued a social media campaign to promote "Winter on the Byway", yielding 773,400+ impressions, 697,300+ accounts reached, 397,000+ views, and nearly 24,000 likes, comments, and interactions. While this specific campaign may not be directly pursued in the future, this provides a good example of the three counties coming together to promote tourism to the Northeast Oregon region. Additionally, Union-Baker-Wallowa Counties have agreed a redesign of current printed materials and online presence of the HCSB needs updating and will be evaluated prior to the upcoming 'busy season'.



**Oregon Tour and Travel Alliance - \$225 (5145.04)**

The Oregon Tour and Travel Alliance (OTTA) is an independent nonprofit membership organization working in partnership with Travel Oregon to increase packaged travel to Oregon. OTTA is a professional association comprised of companies from across the state partnering together to ensure members are highly visible at annual conventions, marketplaces, and trade shows.



**Oregon Festivals & Events Association - \$500 (80%: \$500; 60%: \$0) (5145.06)**

Promotional assistance is provided to more than 1,200 Oregon events through the OFEA’s annual Oregon Events Calendar magazine. Free copies are distributed to more than 90,000 readers through visitor bureaus, chambers of commerce and other public outlets. Event listings from the calendar are also posted on Travel Oregon’s website. Membership to this organization is an extremely useful tool, if properly prioritized, as member organizations are responsible for inputting events into OFEA’s database for promotion and use.



**Eastern Oregon Visitor Association (EOVA) - \$2,000 (5145.08)**

As a member of EOVA and a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO), the Union County Chamber of Commerce works cooperatively with ten other counties in Eastern Oregon, enabling us to build vigorous regional relationships and robust promotions. This “Sustaining Level” membership fee increased from \$1,500 to \$2,000 in FYE2020; however, maintaining at the Sustaining Level allows the Union County Chamber Executive Director to serve as a DMO voting member on the Board of Directors, which allows for increased representation and inclusion in regional projects and promotions.



**Miscellaneous Memberships - \$1,000 (5145.14)**

If a new opportunity arises to join, support, and partner with other organizations which make sense and further aid us in our quest to increase tourism to Union County, there is a reserve in the budget for this. Though underutilized, this budget line has been increased for greater leveraging, if the need arises. Based on typical membership costs into the aforementioned organizations, \$200 has little capability to engage in membership opportunities. The budget for this Line Item is increased to \$1,000 for greater flexibility.



## OTHER ACTIVITIES

### **Email Blasts**

The Chamber emails a list of weekly events, announcements, resources, and business promotions happening in Union County. This is done via Constant Contact where we have nearly 1,000 subscribers, increased from just over 800 recipients last year. The community has expressed interest in these informative emails which highlight updated La Grande / Union County information and happenings.

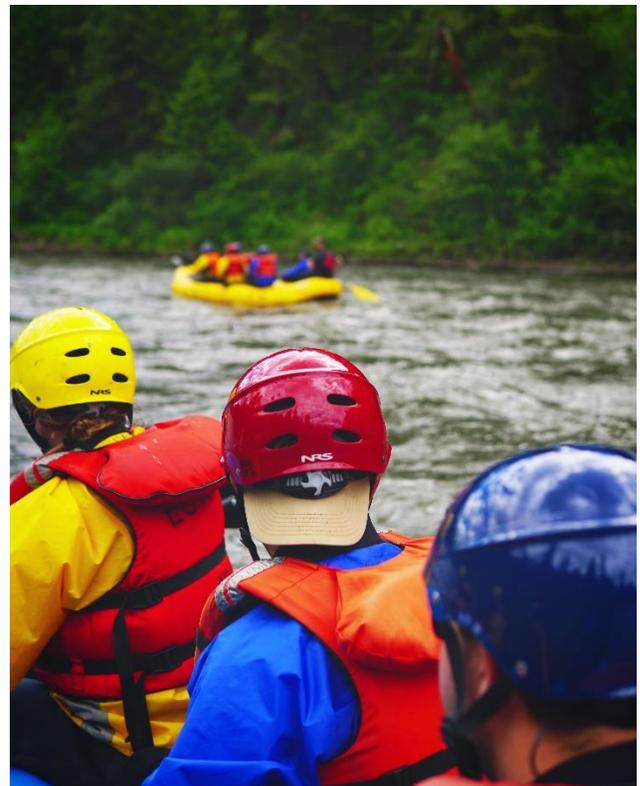
Based on the marketing research, we intend to pursue the implementation of travel and trip itinerary ideas for inquiries received via the website and social media. In order to receive a visitor guide via website fulfillment requests, users must input not only a mailing address, but also a legitimate email address. This enables the Chamber to build a travel-focused email listserv for targeted e-newsletters with compelling itineraries and travel-centric imagery, based on similar highlights as the website for greater audience engagement.

### **Website Maintenance & Development**

VisitUnionCounty.org is a tool to increase tourism to La Grande and Union County. The general maintenance and improvements over time are important to attract increasing numbers of visitors. The more easily accessible information is to those not familiar with Union County, the higher the likelihood of increased website usage.

We also intend to research the possibility of a mobile app for La Grande and Union County, as well as the Chamber activities, for a much more direct and tailored visitor experience. Highlights of this technological implementation include geofenced promotion of events and activities to those who are within proximity to receive these 'pings' on mobile devices.

Although the new website is heavily weighted towards tourism, it remains a combined site which includes Chamber of Commerce content. Our marketing research indicated there is not enough independent traffic to justify the development, maintenance, and ongoing costs of hosting two separate websites.





**Visitors Information Center**

We continue to maintain the Visitor Information Center (Bureau) and Chamber office as a warm and inviting atmosphere for all visitors. It was brought to our attention there is a small cabin-style kiosk, sitting unused in Elgin, which may better serve travelers in a different location. See examples in Appendix VII – Walla Walla, WA has implemented a small visitors’ kiosk like this potential opportunity, as has Joseph, OR. We may be able to increase our service to visitors if we can add a secondary location kiosk, possibly closer to Highway 82, with easy access for those towing trailers, boats, and other large vehicles which experience difficulty or inconvenience when parking in Downtown La Grande. More research is required as to the structural integrity and possible locations of this kiosk.

**Event submissions**

We submit event submissions to media outlets including local, regional, and state websites and publications. Event submissions are often accepted as part of our membership or paid advertising (i.e., GO Magazine and Oregon Festivals & Events).

**Oregon Tourism Information System (OTIS)**

The Oregon Tourism Information System is “the central hub for maintaining points of interest such as attractions, trails, parks, museums, and events. Tourism partners can create and edit listing information in the platform...and then...pull them into their own website leveraging the free OTIS API”<sup>5</sup>. As the Local DMO, the Chamber is solely responsible for adding and maintaining all Union County listings and ensuring all listings are complete, accurate, and updated.

**Tradeshows**

A past undertaking of the Chamber has been attendance and presence in trade shows including Go West Summit<sup>6</sup>, Cowboy Christmas<sup>7</sup>, IPW<sup>8</sup>, the Oregon State Fair and other regional fairs as a way to promote La Grande and Union County. Engaging audiences of future travelers as well as travel and tour operators ensures Union County is included as a destination for packaged travel opportunities. Increasing focus and engagement in this avenue is a future goal once nonessential travel is reopened to travelers.

<sup>5</sup> <https://industry.traveloregon.com/opportunities/programs-initiatives/oregon-tourism-information-system/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gowestsummit.com/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://industry.traveloregon.com/resources/news-detail/travel-oregon-and-partners-attend-cowboy-christmas-tradeshaw-in-vegas/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.ipw.com/>



### **Community Trainings**

The Chamber currently serves as a hub for information and resource dissemination to the community. The Chamber’s website served as a key comprehensive resource for COVID-19 information and announcements and will continue to serve as the key authority for housing critical information. In addition to serving as regional representation and a community resource, the Chamber also seeks to provide training opportunities for the communities, businesses, interested stakeholders, and beyond in an effort to elevate our image. This training should enable all employees and residents to serve as community ambassadors – a recruiting campaign for those interested in relocating here, without even knowing they are recruiting. Recently, Chamber staff participated in a *Guest Service Gold* training and certification plan via the *Eastern Oregon Visitors Association* in conjunction with the *American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute* for premier hospitality training<sup>9</sup>.

In an effort to provide long-term investment in our communities, the Chamber aims to focus efforts on providing community-wide training on hospitality and customer service in order to attract repeat visitors (those returning for more than one visit) and high-quality workforce through esteemed service. Continuous quality improvement in customer service should be an ongoing tactic with the Chamber as a key resource. In the coming year, it is our goal to research interesting, engaging, and high-quality training and certification programs to invest in our business and stakeholders to contribute to building a destination-worthy visitor experience.

Additionally, we also plan to prioritize tourism-related training and conferences for staff in the upcoming year to maximize knowledge acquisition and spread. The most impactful programs will be explored including the Oregon Governor’s Conference on Tourism and the Oregon Restaurant and Lodging Association Tourism Leadership Academy. Cost coverage for this would come from the current carryforward balance.

### **RARE**

Given then number of tourism-related goals and upcoming projects, the Chamber ventures to embark on hosting a *Resource Assistance for Rural Environments (RARE)* placement, via the University of Oregon program in order to increase our capacity for effective project implementation. Through this

program, similar to other recently placed graduate-level members throughout La Grande and Eastern Oregon, the Chamber can conduct extensive research into hospitality training programs and implementation, placemaking recommendations, and generate community profile sheets, print collateral updates, and targeted itineraries for maximized representation of Union County.

Additionally, the RARE participant would have the opportunity to focus on product development in conjunction with Travel Oregon and increase destination development goals throughout grant-based development of new attractions and key features of this region. This placement would have the opportunity to develop targeted social media and digital campaigns to augment projects for critical visibility to our target demographic markets in Tri-Cities and Seattle, WA, Boise, ID, and Portland and Eugene, OR. Having a RARE placement would enable the Chamber to tangibly move forward in accomplishing the longer-term goals outlined below as well as throughout the marketing research.

Leveraging our current carry forward balance to apply to the 2021-2022 community match requirement (\$23,500) in order to be a RARE community would allow us to maximize resources for continued promotion while still enabling a task-specific (tourism promotion only) RARE participant to accomplish significant projects laid out in this plan.



<sup>9</sup> <https://www.ahlei.org/program/guest-service-gold/>



## LONG-TERM STRATEGIC PLANNING

The Chamber actively brainstorms different potential opportunities to pursue in order to further increase tourism, as well as implement long-term strategic planning processes. Below are short-, mid- and long-term objectives brainstormed to pursue.

In addition to the marketing plan developed in conjunction with Worthy Marketing, the Chamber will be developing a comprehensive strategic plan to incorporate building strategic partnerships, development of new attractions, installations of cohesive wayfinding signage, business support grant funding, and beyond. The marketing plan is the first step towards developing a broader scaled plan for truly driving visitations to La Grande and Union County.

### SHORT, MID-, AND LONG-TERM PRIORITIES OR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

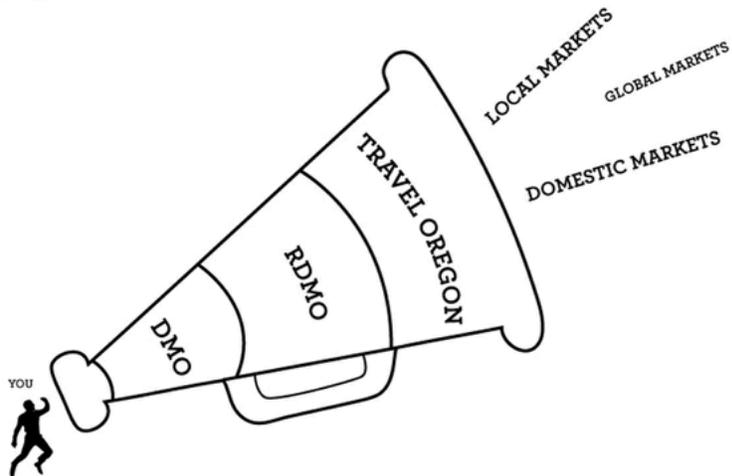
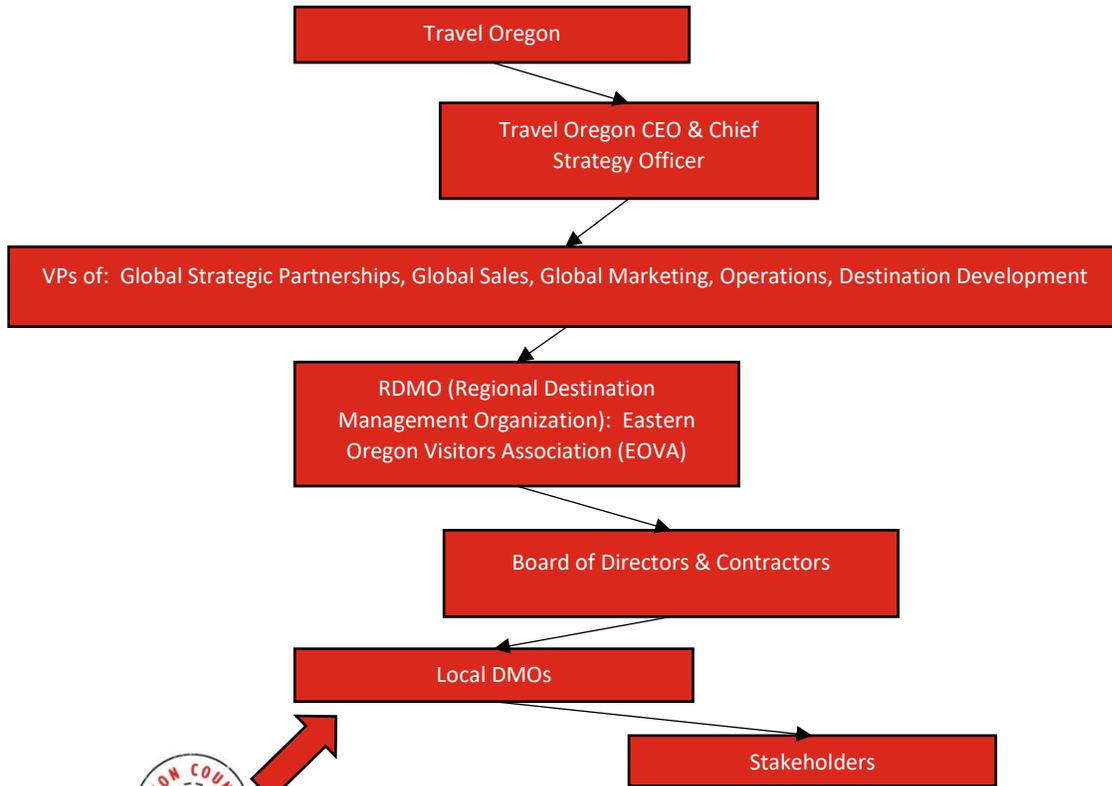
<b>SHORT RANGE PRIORITIES</b>	
<b>1-12 MONTHS</b>	Create & Implement Social Media Campaign
	Identify Key Entities to Pursue Representation
	Create Community Profile Sheets
	International Mountain Bicycling Association – elevate MERA as an “IMBA RIDE CENTER” ( <a href="https://www.imba.com/ride/where-to-ride/ride-centers/apply">https://www.imba.com/ride/where-to-ride/ride-centers/apply</a> )
	Develop OTIS
	Itinerary Development – multi-day events
	Strategic Partnerships (restaurant alliance, outdoor rec alliance)
<b>MID RANGE PRIORITIES</b>	
<b>12 MONTHS – 3 YEARS</b>	Product Development (alignment with Travel Oregon)
	Agritourism / Culinary / Food Trails
	Cycling
	Outdoor Rec
	Arts / Heritage / Cultural (Arts Trail)
	UCTPAC Develop Long-Term Strategic Plan with SWOT Analysis (contract with firm to conduct full planning and research)
	Representation with Primary Entities
	Trade Show Attendance & Representation (IAAF, Go West, etc.)
	Packaged Travel & Familiarization Tours (FAM)
	County-wide Wayfinding Signage Project Discussion (See Appendix IX) <sup>7</sup>
	County-wide grant support (i.e., Metallica Grant) opportunities
	Increase Destination Development (support new attractions, grants, events, etc.)
	Increase strategic partnerships (ODOT, Oregon Cultural Trust, Oregon Film, EOU, etc.)
<b>LONG TERM PRIORITIES</b>	
<b>3-5 YEARS &amp; BEYOND</b>	Partner with Key Stakeholders for Commercial Airport Research
	Installation of public restroom facilities
	Develop Wayfinding Signage Strategic Plan

# APPENDICES



**Appendix I**

Organizational Structure from Travel Oregon to local stakeholders and partners.



**TOURISM MARKETING MEGAPHONE**

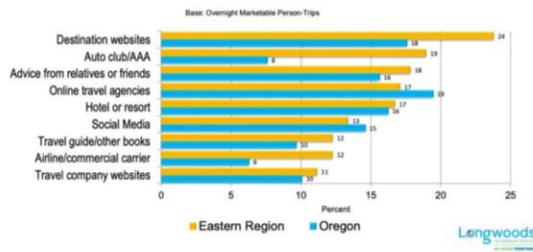


## Appendix II

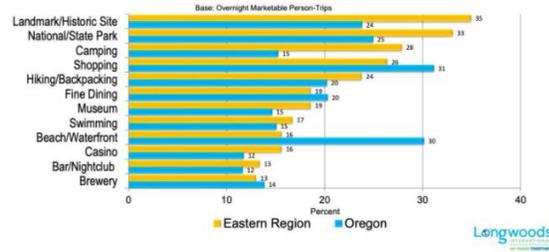
In FY 2020-2021, we contracted with Worthy Marketing Consulting to undergo an extensive marketing research and audit project to identify our target marketing audience, our highest-ranked assets to promote, and the most effective methods of marketing to ensure we reach these markets. Included below are highlights of information from this research project.

<p>According to <a href="#">Longwoods 2017 Eastern Region Visitor Report</a>, the majority of our travelers are:</p> <p><b>25-44 years old</b>  <b>Married / Not families</b>  <b>Travel as a group of 2-3,</b>          esp. with spouse</p>	<p>They are coming from:</p> <p><b>Portland, OR</b>  <b>Yakima, WA</b>  <b>Seattle-Tacoma, WA</b>  <b>Eugene, OR</b>  <b>Boise, ID</b></p>	<p>They are coming for:</p> <p><b>Touring &amp; Outdoors</b></p> <p>And the following activities:</p> <p><b>Landmark/Historic Site</b>  <b>National/State Park</b>  <b>Camping</b>  <b>Shopping</b>  <b>Hiking/Backpacking</b></p>
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### Trip Planning Information Sources

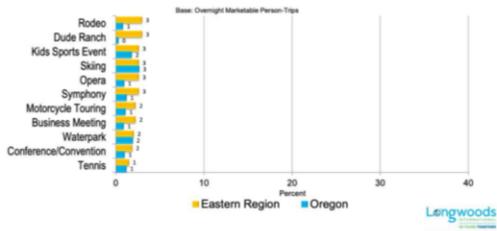


### Activities and Experiences

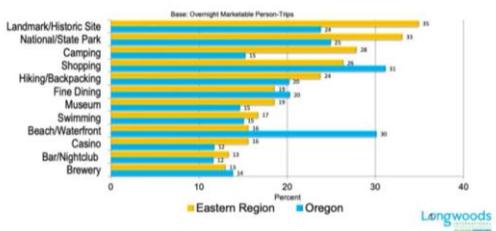


<p>Will most likely travel:</p> <p><b>July-September</b>  <b>April-June</b></p> <p>And will plan prior to traveling for:</p> <p><b>1 month or less</b>  <b>6-12 months</b></p>	<p>Trip planning sources:</p> <p><b>Destination websites</b>  <b>Word-of-mouth</b>  <b>Social media</b></p>	<p><b>Near-Term Tactics</b>          3-15 months</p> <p><b>Update VisitUnionCounty.org</b></p> <p><b>Navigation</b> needs to address residents and travelers on the website.</p> <p>At this time, there is not enough traffic to the website to merit a standalone tourism website.</p> <p>Additionally, most travelers do not search for destinations by county. Our job is to supply good information for those who do find us.</p>
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### Activities and Experiences (Cont'd)



### Activities and Experiences



**Near-Term Tactics**  
6-15 months

**Travel Oregon "Your Story, Everywhere"**

Two newsletters focusing on Union County features.

**Top events** from our audit – Eastern Oregon Beer Festival, Elkhorn Relay, Union County Farm Loop Crawl, Cove Cherry Fair

**Outdoor adventures** – MERA, Grande Scenic Tours Bikeway, Anthony Lakes, Hells Canyon



**Longer-Term Tactics**  
2021-2023

**Overall Tactics**

**SEO analysis** of top keywords for Union County attractions and activities. The findings inform website content, interests to promote, and **SEM campaigns**.

**Videos** promoting sub-region itineraries and assets.

**Evaluate web** performance: tourism vs. chamber.



**Develop a 3-tier strategy**

Travel Oregon presence, outreach to Oregon & Washington outdoor enthusiasts, maintain visibility to surrounding region communities

**Website & social media**

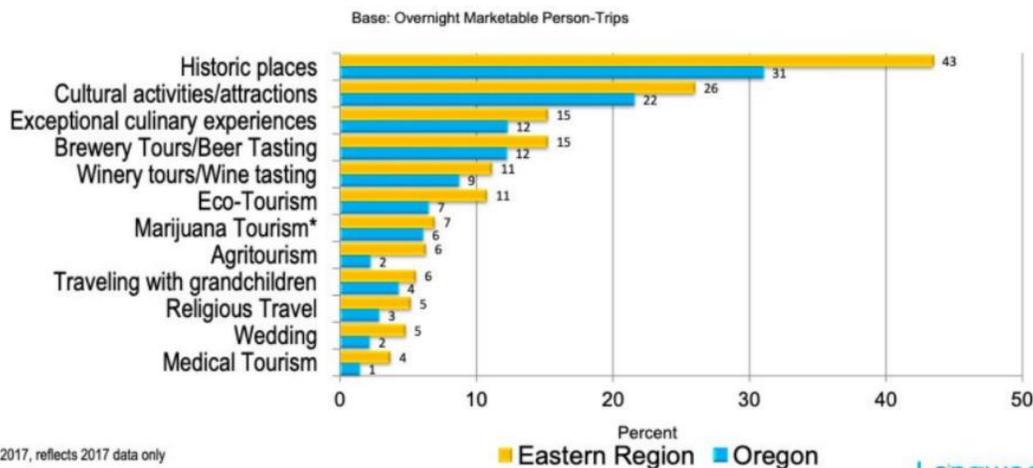
Determine where tourism content will live, how to direct the correct audience there, and if we engage partners in travel representation

**Minimize print advertising**

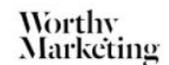
Focus on digital marketing – website, social media, Travel Oregon content Investigate FAM tours, travel writers and e-newsletters



## Activities of Special Interest



\*Added in 2017, reflects 2017 data only



**Develop a 3-tier strategy**

**Travel Oregon presence**

Add and update destination content on their website, elevate Union County events and attractions to be featured on Eastern Oregon regional page, two featured "Your Story, Everywhere" newsletters to Travel Oregon subscribers

**Outreach to OR & WA outdoor enthusiasts**

Create @NortheasternOregon social media presence and target top-performing posts to this audience, one "Your Story, Everywhere" newsletters should be focused on outdoor recreation in Union County

**Stay visible to surrounding communities**

Use event content, outdoor recreation, unique lodging and dining attractions via social media to target visitation and spend from the surrounding area



**Website & Social Media**

**Establish Union County positioning**

This informs imagery selection for all marketing efforts and how we write about the Union County and Northeastern Oregon experience

**Integrate OTIS**

As we update and evolve Union County offerings and determine its positioning, this tool is a one-stop-shop for updating our web content & Travel Oregon pages

**Claim @NortheasternOregon**

Use this handle to inspire visitation to Union County and share content creation costs with Baker & Willowa counties



**Minimize Print Advertising**

**Shift from print to digital newsletters**

Our younger audience finds inspiration more often in digital outreach, such as "Your Story, Everywhere" via Travel Oregon

**Focus on social media**

Instead of one ad trying to cover many topics, let social media content promote proven destination selling points and be targeted to our audience

**Add digital drivers**

Once there is new content on VisitUnionCounty.org, explore digital ad campaigns, SEO, and SEM as ways to funnel visitors to your website and stories



**Appendix III**

Below is information from the Destination Reports (publication of STR, Inc.) provided to Union County via Travel Oregon:

Current Month - January 2021 vs January 2020											
Occ %		ADR		RevPAR		Percent Change from January 2020					
2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020	Occ	ADR	RevPAR	Room Rev	Room Avail	Room Sold
<b>United States</b>											
39.3	54.9	90.79	125.74	35.72	68.99	(28.3)	(27.8)	(48.2)	(49.2)	(2.0)	(29.7)

<b>Pacific</b>											
39.6	63.7	103.89	168.34	41.14	107.18	(37.8)	(38.3)	(61.6)	(63.6)	(5.1)	(41.0)

<b>Union County, OR</b>											
33.0	34.5	69.95	70.37	23.11	24.29	(4.3)	(0.6)	(4.8)	(4.8)	0.0	(4.3)

Year to Date - January 2021 vs January 2020											
Occ %		ADR		RevPAR		Percent Change from YTD 2020					
2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020	Occ	ADR	RevPAR	Room Rev	Room Avail	Room Sold
<b>United States</b>											
39.3	54.9	90.79	125.74	35.72	68.99	(28.3)	(27.8)	(48.2)	(49.2)	(2.0)	(29.7)

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39.6	63.7	103.89	168.34	41.14	107.18	(37.8)	(38.3)	(61.6)	(63.6)	(5.1)	(41.0)

<b>Union County, OR</b>											
33.0	34.5	69.95	70.37	23.11	24.29	(4.3)	(0.6)	(4.8)	(4.8)	0.0	(4.3)

Participation			
Properties		Rooms	
Census	Sample	Census	Sample
<b>United States</b>			
58,603	35,354	#	3,968,679
<b>Pacific</b>			
8,840	4,475	#	561,706
<b>Union County, OR</b>			
10	5	#	290



**Current Month - January 2021 vs January 2020**

	Supply			Demand			Revenue		
	2021	2020	% Chg.	2021	2020	% Chg.	2021	2020	% Chg.
<b>United States</b>	\$ 163,619,364.00	\$ 166,904,589.00	(2.0)	\$ 64,369,130.00	\$ 91,577,051.00	(29.7)	\$ 5,843,844,703.45	\$ 11,514,811,013.67	(49.2)
<b>Pacific</b>	\$ 23,292,625.00	\$ 24,542,483.00	(5.1)	\$ 9,223,664.00	\$ 15,625,943.00	(41.0)	\$ 958,265,120.64	\$ 2,630,489,432.36	(63.6)
<b>Union County, OR</b>	\$ 16,492.00	\$ 16,492.00	0.0	\$ 5,449.00	\$ 5,692.00	(4.3)	\$ 381,171.60	\$ 400,539.39	(4.8)

**Year to Date - January 2021 vs January 2020**

	Supply			Demand			Revenue		
	2021	2020	% Chg.	2021	2020	% Chg.	2021	2020	% Chg.
<b>United States</b>	\$ 163,619,364.00	\$ 166,904,589.00	(2.0)	\$ 64,369,130.00	\$ 91,577,051.00	(29.7)	\$ 5,843,844,703.45	\$ 11,514,811,013.67	(49.2)
<b>Pacific</b>	\$ 23,292,625.00	\$ 24,542,483.00	(5.1)	\$ 9,223,664.00	\$ 15,625,943.00	(41.0)	\$ 958,265,120.64	\$ 2,630,489,432.36	(63.6)
<b>Union County, OR</b>	\$ 16,492.00	\$ 16,492.00	0.0	\$ 5,449.00	\$ 5,692.00	(4.3)	\$ 381,171.60	\$ 400,539.39	(4.8)





**Appendix V**

Samples of digital advertising submitted to Travel Oregon, taking advantage of free ad space on the monthly e-newsletter.

Across Oregon, counties are following the governor's **Risk and Safety Framework** in response to COVID-19. The framework provides health and safety guidance for activities in each risk level. Face coverings are still required in all indoor and outdoor public spaces statewide. Pay attention to **travel alerts** and find more state guidance at [coronavirus.oregon.gov](https://coronavirus.oregon.gov).

[view online](#)

**TRAVEL OREGON** Places to Go Things to Do Plan Your Trip

# TRAVEL OREGON

ADVERTISEMENTS

 <p>Never-before, never-to-happen-again, year-long <b>Seaside Prom Centennial!</b></p>	 <p>The perfect wine and dine experience begins at one of our beautiful outdoor spaces! <b>- DANCIN Vineyards</b></p>	 <p>Wide-open spaces, adventurous places. Explore <b>La Grande, Union Co.</b></p>	 <p><b>Mt. Hood Oregon Resort</b> An adventure for every season!</p>
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Instagram Facebook Twitter YouTube Pinterest

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**Appendix VI**

Samples of print advertising submitted throughout the current fiscal year.



**Appendix VII**

Images of sample kiosk setups, including images from the Union County Chamber's second kiosk, located currently behind the Eagle Cap Excursion Train Depot in Elgin.



Visitors Kiosk, Joseph, OR.



Visitors Kiosk, Walla Walla, WA.



Visitors Kiosk, Elgin, OR.



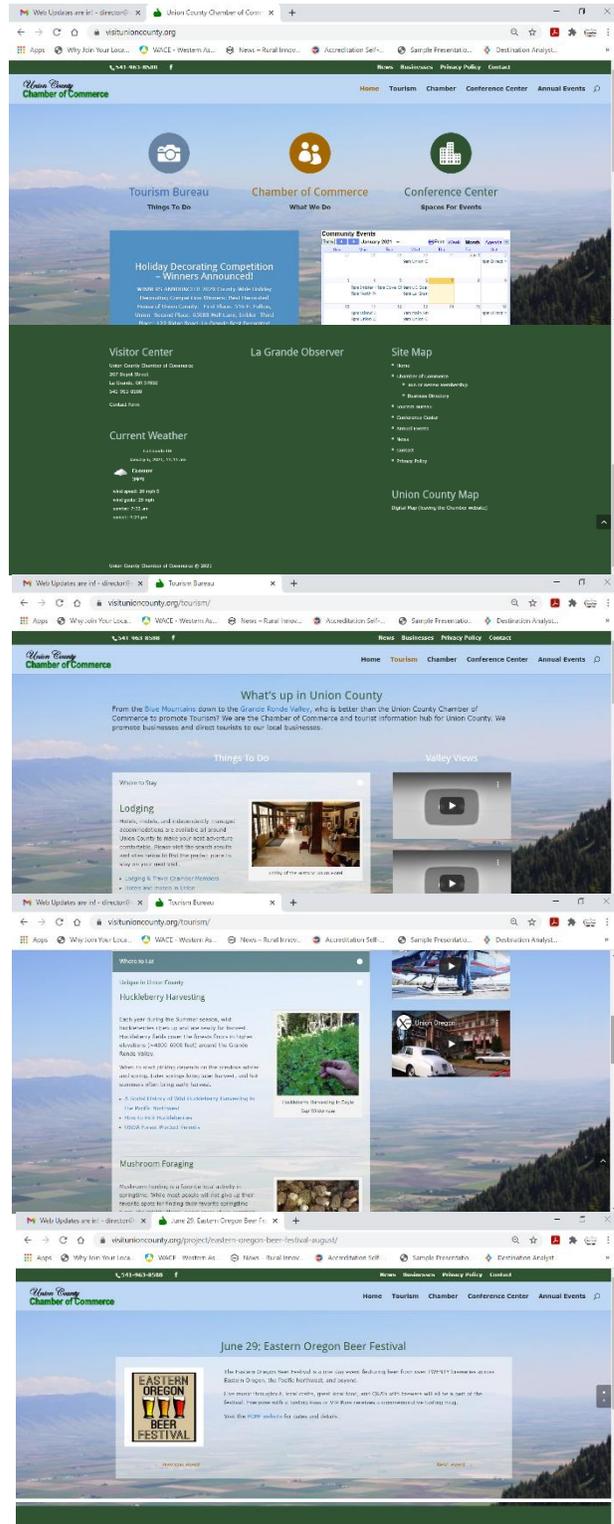
## Appendix VIII

The former website was shut down for the new website to launch and go live on Friday, January 8, 2021. The new website, as highlighted in the Program of Work, is image-centric with fresh, relevant content – and laid out in a way to intuitively highlight the assets our target demographic audience seek.

Recognizing Union County has greater likelihood to attract audiences looking for one-of-a-kind, world-class outdoor recreation, touring, and cultural activities and events, the new website eliminates the overly-text forward website and is intuitively organized with a focus on the user. Continued contracting with Worthy Marketing saves significant administrative dollars for the Chamber and allows “same voice” continuity in content creating and image curation, based on the marketing research.

By continuing the current contract with Worthy Marketing, starting in March 2021, throughout the next fiscal year, for only \$3,500, we are able to reduce the need for a third Chamber staff member and allows more support funding to be allocated towards tourism promotion, rather than tourism administration (payroll). While the previous website had an average annual cost of \$2,000 (with some of the actual costs being in-kind work), the previous website platform was too complicated, outdated, and cumbersome technology for Chamber Staff to maintain, let alone update content and imagery was not a task conducted by the previous vendor. With the new platform, Chamber staff are able to modify content and add updated images, as provided by Worthy Marketing, thus maximizing both time and resources spent.

As mentioned previously in the Program of Work, the website now features a direct form to request the visitors guide and additional information. This form has exponentially increased the Chamber’s ability and capacity, as well as requests for information. The Chamber has already mailed more visitor guides and relocations packets in 2021 than in all of the 2020 fiscal year. The visitors guide packets are extremely comprehensive and tailored to the requests (i.e., those requesting a visitor guide receive information on many other local attractions, including the Hells Canyon Scenic Byway, Elgin, and Union County Museums,



trails, and more; whereas those requesting relocation information or golf courses receive real estate guides and brochures from Buffalo Peak Golf Course, Riverside Greens, and the La Grande Country Club, respectively). The website has now become a true tool of fulfillment – and the information packets received are a compliment and total expansion on the information found on the website.

The image to the right is a sample of materials sent for a standard visitors guide request.



Below are sample images received, after the Chamber requested images from community members (amateur and non-photographers), versus professional photographers' image procured. While photos received are not all unusable, staff time required to sort through a majority of unusable images is largely not the best use of time. Rather, we aim



to develop a catalogue of visual assets, similar to the Baker County Tourism catalogue<sup>10</sup>, which authorizes use by any entity in Baker County in cohesive promotion.

The Letter of Support, on the next page, provided by the Publisher of EO Media Group in La Grande further supports the need for this project.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.flickr.com/photos/travelbakercounty/albums>





Karrine Brogoitti  
Publisher/Regional Revenue  
Director  
911 Jefferson Ave.  
La Grande, OR 97850  
(541) 624-6008 office  
(541) 910-5600 cell  
kbrogioitti@eomediagroup.com

#### Local Tourism Partners,

As former president of the Union County Chamber of Commerce and publisher of the La Grande Observer and Baker City Herald, I am well aware of the importance that tourism plays in our community and the impact it has on our local economy. One of the most effective ways in which to drive visitors to our beautiful county is to SHOW them what we have to offer.

I've always wanted to visit Grand Canyon National Park. I've heard people who've visited describe beautiful layered bands of rock and the unmatched vista views and tried to imagine them. But even the most gifted wordsmith couldn't put into words the beauty this geographical landmark has to offer. So you begin researching — seeking out printed and digital material so you can see images of this awe inspiring place. You have to SEE it.

For years I've struggled to find images and other visual assets that accurately capture the true beauty of our small towns, our county and the people who live here for various visitor and tourism geared publications and online platforms and communications. I've explored many different avenues and have oftentimes had to rely on La Grande Observer subscribers and local amateur photographers from time to time to submit photos from their personal collections. As you can imagine, the quality of those submissions is frequently hit-and-miss — poor resolution, out-of-focus, lack of subject diversity, etc. I would fully support the investment and development of a localized imagery asset catalog highlighting what we have to offer from a scenic/recreational/event point of view. Imagine how much better we could promote our area with the availability of impactful, inspiring visual assets that could be shared with stakeholders and key community partners to improve our branding and imagery efforts.

A picture is worth a thousand words — and even more tourism dollars. This is a proposal that is essential and long overdue to continue to move our visitor and tourism efforts and vision forward.

Karrine Brogoitti  
Publisher, La Grande Observer/Baker City Herald  
Former president, Union County Chamber of Commerce

East Oregonian • The Other Oregon • Oregon Capital Insider • Capital Press • The Astorian  
Bend Bulletin • Redmond Spokesman • La Grande Observer • Baker City Herald  
Hermiston Herald • Blue Mountain Eagle • Wallowa County Chieftain  
Chinook Observer • Coast River Business Journal  
Eastern Oregon Real Estate Guide • Eastern Oregon Marketplace • Coast Marketplace • Our Coast



# **JOINT MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT**



UNION COUNTY; CITY OF LA GRANDE; UNION COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
JOINT MEMORANDUM of AGREEMENT

This Memorandum of Agreement (hereinafter referred to as MOA), entered into this \_\_\_ Day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2020, by and between the City Council of the City of La Grande, an Oregon municipal corporation (hereinafter referred to as CITY), the Union County Board of Commissioners, (hereinafter referred to as COUNTY), and the Union County Chamber of Commerce, (hereinafter referred to as CHAMBER), for the purpose of agreeing on overall tourism activities and promotion efforts benefiting Union County and the City of La Grande:

WITNESSETH

Whereas, COUNTY and CITY desire to jointly fund tourism promotion for the City of La Grande and Union County; and,

Whereas, CHAMBER, a nonprofit organization under IRS Section 501(c) 6, is charged with promoting tourism for Union County and the City of La Grande; and,

Whereas, it is the mutual desire of the Parties to jointly pursue increased tourism activity in Union County and the City of La Grande; and,

Whereas, the Parties further desire to establish through this MOA specific goals and expectations in regard to the promotion and marketing of Union County and the City of La Grande.

NOW, THEREFORE, based on the mutual covenants set forth in this MOA, the Parties agree to the following terms and conditions:

Section 1. Term, Duration, and Termination.

This MOA shall be in effect from July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2023, with funding for the fiscal year beginning each July 1, to be determined during the budget hearing processes of COUNTY and CITY. Any Party, with or without cause, upon written notification presented to all other Parties on or before April 1, of any fiscal year, may terminate this agreement effective at 5:00 P.M. on June 30 of that same fiscal year.

Section 2. Duties and Responsibilities.

A. Union County Chamber of Commerce (CHAMBER) shall:

1. Perform Tourism Promotion Services as described in this MOA and the approved annual Program of Work FYE 2021. Said services shall include, but are not limited to:

i. Operating a visitors' center at least Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. year-round and during major events including but not limited to the following events:

1. EOU Week of Welcome
2. EOU Homecoming
3. EOU Graduation
4. Eastern Oregon Beer Festival
5. Union County Farm Crawl

ii. Producing and distributing promotional brochures and other printed information.

Tourism Promotion Services MOA



- iii. Maintaining at least one alternate offsite location in downtown La Grande for the placement of promotional brochures and other printed materials which is open on Saturdays and posting signage at the visitors' center to direct visitors to the alternate location(s) (currently Red Cross Drug Store and Blue Mountain Outfitters).
- iv. Operating a web site that promotes La Grande and Union County.
- v. Developing and implementing an annual Program of Work for the marketing and promotion of La Grande and Union County in consultation with the Union County Tourism Promotion Advisory Committee (UCTPAC). Such consultation shall include a formal recommendation from the UCTPAC regarding the program. The program shall provide promotional efforts for Chamber and non-Chamber members alike. Said program for each fiscal year beginning shall be submitted to the CITY and COUNTY not later than April 30 for review and approval.
- vi. Presenting to the CITY on or before April 30 and COUNTY on or before the first County Commissioners meeting in May of each year an operating budget in conjunction with the marketing and promotion program submission.
- vii. Providing measureable results for the investment made in tourism marketing and promotion. The following agreed upon measurements shall be used as a primary tool for determining funding for the duration of this agreement.
  - 1. Transient Room Tax Revenues.
  - 2. Cooperative Ad participation—dollars invested and partner participation.
  - 3. Website hits.
  - 4. Requests for information that require responses—mailed packets, e-mailed packets.
  - 5. Retail Sales. (a sub-group will work on a sample group to gather data from)
  - 6. Blue Mountain Conference events that include overnight stays to the extent the information is provided by the Oregon Military Department.
- viii. Serving as a liaison between the tourism stakeholders such as: Union County Board of Commissioners; the City of La Grande; local, regional, and state-level tourism organizations; lodging providers/operators in La Grande and throughout Union County; local tourism-related businesses such as restaurants, gas stations, and retail; local and regional economic development organization, La Grande Main Street Downtown. Working with the Oregon Military Department when appropriate to help attract and host larger events at the Blue Mountain Conference Center.
- ix. Implementing appropriate tourism elements of the currently adopted economic development plans of Union County and City of La Grande.
- x. Appoint one voting member and one alternate member of the UCTPAC. The voting member and alternate shall be members of the Union County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, normally the President or Vice President of the Chamber Board.

B. The City of La Grande (CITY) shall:

- 1. Appoint three voting members of the UCTPAC, including one City Councilor. The City may assign a second Councilor as an alternate voting member.
- 2. Assign the City Manager or his designee to provide staff support to UCTPAC.
- 3. Provide to CHAMBER funding for tourism promotion an amount to be determined by the Budget Committee and City Council during the normal budget adoption process.

Tourism Promotion Services MOA



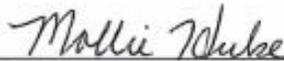
C. Union County Board of Commissioners (County) shall:

1. Appoint three voting members of the UCTPAC, including one County Commissioner. The County may assign a second Commissioner as an alternate voting member.
2. Provide to CHAMBER funding for tourism promotion an amount to be determined by the Budget Committee and Board of County Commissioners during the normal budget adoption process.

Section 4. Amendments and Assignments. Amendments to this Joint MOA must be mutually agreed upon by and between the Parties to this MOA and in a writing executed with the same formalities of this MOA. This MOA is binding on the heirs, successors and assigns of the Parties hereto and may only be assigned by any party by first obtaining the written consent of the other Party or Parties.

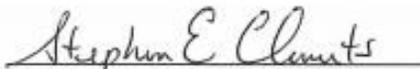
Section 5. Special Circumstances. The Chamber agrees to provide notice to the City and County within five (5) days of the Chamber being made aware of any allegations of fraud, financial misconduct, theft, embezzlement and/or any other claims of misuse of funds by its employees, agents and assigns that could lead to criminal charges involving the funds provided by the City and/or County under this Agreement. Notice shall be provided to the City Manager and County Administrator. The City and County agree to keep any information received from the Chamber confidential during the pendency of any law enforcement investigation.

UNION COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



Mollie Hulse  
Chamber President

CITY of LA GRANDE



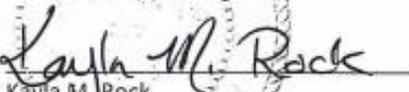
Stephen E. Clements  
Mayor

UNION COUNTY

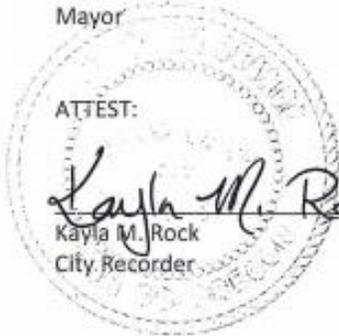


Paul Anderes  
Chair

ATTEST:



Kayla M. Rock  
City Recorder



Tourism Promotion Services MOA



# BUDGET



