

# Branson/Lakes Area Tourism Community Enhancement District

AGREED-UPON PROCEDURES ENGAGEMENT  
for the Year Ended December 31, 2018

**KPM**  
CPAS & ADVISORS



## **INDEPENDENT ACCOUNTANTS' REPORT ON APPLYING AGREED-UPON PROCEDURES**

Board of Directors  
Branson/Lakes Area Tourism Community Enhancement District  
Branson, Missouri

We have performed the procedures enumerated below, which were agreed to by Branson/Lakes Area Tourism Community Enhancement District (The District) of Branson, Missouri, solely to assist you with evaluating compliance with your contract for tourism marketing services (the Contract) with Explore Branson Tourism (the EBT), for the year ended December 31, 2018. The District's management is responsible for compliance with the tourism marketing services contract. The sufficiency of these procedures is solely the responsibility of those parties specified in the report. Consequently, we make no representation regarding the sufficiency of the procedures described below either for the purpose for which this report has been requested or for any other purpose.

Our procedures and findings are as follows:

1. *Procedure* – Verify consistency of calculation methods and measures used compared with prior years.  
*Finding* – The CVB utilizes Smith Travel and H2R Market Research to obtain visitation and spending statistics; this is consistent with prior years. Procedure completed without exception.
  
2. *Procedure* – Obtain a CVB list of resources used to fulfill visitor inquiries.  
*Finding* – Procedure completed without exception.
  
3. *Procedure* – Obtain listing of contracts between the CVB and advertisers in its Vacation Guide and on its websites. Representatively select 25 Vacation Guide and 10 website contracts. Ensure that each vendor advertisement appears in the Vacation Guide per the contract. Confirm that advertising policies and procedures exist. Report any differences.  
*Finding* – Procedure completed without exception.

[www.kpmcpa.com](http://www.kpmcpa.com)

1445 E. Republic Road Springfield, MO 65804 | 417-882-4300 | fax 417-882-4343  
500 W. Main Street, Suite 200 Branson, MO 65616 | 417-334-2987 | fax 417-336-3403

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4. *Procedure* – Obtain quarterly marketing reports.

- a) Note date of quarterly marketing reports on *Attachment A* to demonstrate timeliness.

*Finding* – Procedure completed without exception.

- b) Trace data reported in quarterly marketing reports for “results of measurable objectives” to research and other sources to confirm accuracy of reported:

- 1) Visitation trends
- 2) Visitor spending
- 3) Tax receipts
- 4) Website visits
- 5) Marketing Opportunity Fund recap sheet information

*Finding #1* – Quarterly statistical information within the quarterly marketing reports are not always based off of quarterly-ended reports. The second quarter marketing report is based off of statistical research through the month of May rather than June 2018. The third quarter marketing report is based off of statistical research through the month of August rather than September 2018. However, the quarterly reports do reference the true research dates.

*District response* – The District understands that EBT/CVB reports are based on the most recent research available, which may not coincide with end-of-quarter dates. This approach is consistent with prior years and is not of major concern to the District.

*Finding #2* – Visitation trends were not properly reported in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter marketing report as follows:

	<u>Reported</u>	<u>Correct</u>
2018 - % of visitors are families	42%	58%
2018 - Average age of adult visitor	58.0 years	58.3 years
2017 - Average age of adult visitor	58.2 years	56.9 years
2018 - % of visitors seeing shows	57%	69%
2017 - % of visitors seeing shows	54%	71%

*District response* – Additional research by the vendor involved showed that their staff input the wrong data and the error was not caught on review. They will take steps to improve their review process before sending future reports to the EBT/CVB.

*Finding #3* – Visitation trends were not properly reported in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter (annual) marketing report as follows:

	<u>Reported</u>	<u>Correct</u>
% change in first time visitors	-1.7%	-2.1%
% of visitors seeing shows	71%	70%

*District response* – The first-time visitation variance reported was an input error by a new staff member of a different vendor. That vendor will take steps to better supervise the work product of new staff.

The live shows percentage difference was due to rounding and no action is required.

*Finding #4* – Website visit information was not properly reported in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter marketing report as follows:

	<u>Reported</u>	<u>Correct</u>
Number of site visits	667,885	666,885
Number of page views	1,819,729	1,810,729

Additionally, the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter (annual) marketing report did not contain website visit or page view information.

*District response* – The 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter website differences are also vendor input errors not caught on review.

The 4<sup>th</sup> quarter/annual website information was received late and a one-sheet update was provided separately at the Board meeting.

*Recommendation* – The year-to-date percentage of change for tax receipts from all sources were not reported in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter marketing report. Although this is not a requirement, it has been consistently presented in past quarters. The information is also useful to compare tax receipts between years.

5. *Procedure* – Obtain a copy of the Vacation Guide and confirm that the following legend is included in the publication: “*Made possible with funds provided by the Branson/Lakes Area Tourism District.*”

*Finding* – Procedure completed without exception.

6. *Procedure* – For media payments billed in months specified on *Attachment A*, verify CVB receipts of related tear sheets or publication/broadcast affidavits (or electronic equivalents).  
*Finding* – Procedure completed without exception.  
*Recommendation* – There are no tear sheet or affidavit information for electronic media. In these instances, the invoice providing media information was reviewed. If possible, the CVB should screen print or, otherwise, provide details on how the media requirement was carried out.
7. *Procedure* – Review all copyrights and logos to ensure they are registered in the District’s name. Provide dates related paperwork was submitted to the District on *Attachment A*.  
*Finding* – Procedure completed without exception. The “Branson: America’s Christmas Tree City” word logo was applied for trademark with the US Patent and Trade Office (USPTO) on July 14, 2017 and became registered on February 27, 2018 in the name of the Branson Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce. In April 2019, steps were completed by an attorney to assign the trademark. The Trademark Transfer Agreement was signed and received by the United States Patent and Trademark Office.  
*District response* – The Trademark Transfer Agreement dated June 26, 2019 signed by the owner, Branson Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce, was received by the District on July 18, 2019.
8. *Procedure* – Verify that the EBT accounting books and records are segregated from those of other Chamber entities by obtaining a copy of the EBT segregated income statement, trial balance and chart of accounts for the year ended December 31, 2018. Confirm with EBT management that these do not contain any Chamber-related activity or accounts.  
*Finding* – Procedure completed without exception.
9. *Procedure* – Provide the EBT audit completion date on *Attachment A* and attach copy if available. *Finding* – Audit was not available at the report date. Approval of the report is expected by August 31, 2019.
10. *Procedure* – Report any restrictions to records access by either party in findings.  
*Finding* – Procedure completed without exception.
11. *Procedure* – For the months selected on *Attachment A*, verify that District reimbursement deposits were made into the segregated, non-interest-bearing EBT account pending disbursement to vendors.  
*Finding* – Procedure completed without exception.

12. *Procedure* – Obtain Missouri Division of Tourism grant letters and related documents to verify total grants available. Compare actual amounts received and transmitted to the District to amounts available. Report any differences.

*Finding* – Procedure completed without exception.

13. *Procedure* – Obtain financial reports from the District and the EBT.

- a) Obtain and review revenue sources reported on the EBT's Enhancement Tax Group ("ET") financial statements. Compare to revenue received from the EBT on the District's financial statements and report on any differences.

*Finding* – Procedure completed without exception.

- b) Compare Accounts Receivable from the District on the EBT books to Accounts Payable to the EBT on District books and report any differences. Obtain reconciliations from the District when different and include them in report.

*Finding* – Procedure completed without exception.

- c) Obtain the EBT's final ET Marketing Budget and trace to the final budget approved by the District. Compare to the District's final budget. ET budget lines should equal the District's budget lines. Report on any differences.

*Finding* – Procedure completed without exception.

- d) Compare ET consolidated financial statement trial balance actual totals to those in the annual audited financial statements. Report on any differences.

*Finding* – Audit was not available at the report date. Approval of the report is expected by August 31, 2019.

- e) Compare ET consolidated financial statement trial balance actual totals to the District's actual financial statements for the same period. Report on any differences.

*Finding* – Procedure completed without exception.

- f) Inspect all invoices to the District for the months specified on *Attachment A* and verify that the EBT payments were made pursuant to Sections 5.7 and 5.8, as follows:

- 1) Services were contracted for or provided before the reimbursement request to the District, except for multi-year contract vendor payments and staff professional dues.

*Finding* – Procedure completed without exception.

- 2) No advance payments were made by the EBT except for Marketing Fund expenses, as previously approved by the District Treasurer. Verify that invoices were not reimbursements for required prepayments to subcontractors by review of subcontractor payment schedule and invoices.

*Finding* – Procedure completed without exception.

- 3) District denial of invoices was accompanied by written documentation (including electronic) within 15 days of receipt, stating the reasons for such denial and remedies available to cure, if any.

*Finding* – Procedure completed without exception.

- 4) Invoices were posted to the approved code classification and that classification is consistent with generally accepted accounting principles and the EBT budget line item descriptions.

*Finding* – Procedure completed without exception.

14. Obtain and read the insurance policy for the year to verify minimum coverage amounts. Provide date and term of current insurance coverage on *Attachment A*.

*Finding* – Procedure completed without exception.

15. Confirm existence of signed Conflict of Interest policies to verify that officers and employees act independently with vendors and are restricted from acting in their own personal interests or for their own gain by reason of their employment with the EBT.

*Finding* – Procedure completed without exception.

*Recommendation* – The CVB maintains signed Conflict of Interest forms for employees. However, the CVB may want to update that understanding with newly signed forms on a yearly basis to confirm no changes in conflicts.

16. Obtain Marketing Plan

- a) Obtain Marketing Plan for the year and attach as a supplemental schedule.

*Finding* – Procedure completed without exception.

- b) Provide dates of District Marketing Council’s approval of the original Marketing Plan and all amendments or adjustments on *Attachment A*.

*Finding* – Procedure completed without exception.

This agreed-upon procedures engagement was conducted in accordance with attestation standards established by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. We were not engaged to, and did not conduct an audit, examination, or review, the objective of which would be the expression of an opinion, on the compliance with the tourism marketing services contract. Accordingly, we do not express such an opinion or conclusion. Had we performed additional procedures, other matters might have come to our attention that would have been reported to you.

Board of Directors  
Branson/Lakes Area Tourism Community Enhancement District  
Branson, Missouri  
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This report is intended solely for the information and use of the Branson/Lakes Area Tourism Community Enhancement District, and is not intended to be, and should not be, used by anyone other than those specified parties.

*KPM CPAs, PC*

KPM CPAs, PC  
July 22, 2019

## **SUPPLEMENTAL**

## Attachment A

Documentation for Selected Months: February, May, December

### Quarterly Marketing Reports

1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter 2018	May 24, 2018
2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2018	August 22, 2018
3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2018	November 14, 2018
4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter 2018	February 28, 2019

Date(s) of copyright/logo/trademark registration in District name and date(s) documentation delivered to District

Registered to Chamber: February 27, 2018  
Assigned to District on June 26, 2019

EBT/CVB audit completion date

Expected by August 31, 2019

Current Certificate of Liability Insurance

October 1, 2018 – October 1, 2019 – 10/30/2018

District Marketing Council (DMC) approvals of 2018

Marketing Plan and each amendment or adjustment  
DMC Plan Adjustment Approval(s)

September 13, 2017  
N/A



## **2018 MARKETING PLAN**

**[IN PROGRESS -- V. 3-29-18]**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Branson Convention & Visitors Bureau markets the Branson/Lakes Area, positioning Branson as a family-focused, wholesome tourist destination. While constantly evolving, the 2018 Marketing Plan represents the strategic direction of the CVB. The CVB seeks professional and community input and monitors and responds to changing media, economic, and tourism trends throughout the execution of this plan.

As directed by the CVB's contracts with the City of Branson and the Tourism Community Enhancement District (TCED), the CVB is required to market and promote Branson as a tourist destination through strategies and tactics which produce measurable success for the City and District as a whole.

This plan encompasses key program areas of the Branson CVB, and provides actionable tactics designed to deliver the highest level of success. The process behind its creation includes the review of recent, Branson-specific research, national and regional trends analysis, and the input and advice of numerous committees, including the District Marketing Council.

While the Branson/Lakes Area has begun to diversify its business base, tourism is, and for the foreseeable future will continue to be, the economic driver for the area. This plan is developed for and centered on tourism marketing, and will evolve as changes in that discipline dictate new courses of action.

The 2018 Marketing Plan will guide the decisions and direction of the organization. This plan provides a clear path for the staff and constituents of the CVB to make the most effective and efficient choices in marketing Branson as a unique, best-in-class, nationally recognized tourist destination.

## **2018 TRAVEL OUTLOOK FOR U.S. & BRANSON**

Travel and tourism continues to grow across the United States. But, that growth has begun to slow and travel patterns have started changing.

Nationwide, the U.S. Travel Association forecasts domestic leisure trips will grow by 1.8% in 2018 with person-trips increasing to 1.82 billion. But, the rate of growth has been slowing in recent years. While this year's growth at 1.8% would be slightly better than last year's 2.0% increase, it still remains short of the 2.7% average recorded between 2010-2015.

International travel has been the subject of much speculation this year. The U.S. Department of Commerce's National Travel and Tourism Office recently reported that the U.S. welcomed 75.6 million international visitors in 2016, 2% fewer than in 2015 which marks the first decrease the U.S. has experienced its international visitor numbers fell in 2009<sup>1</sup>.

The U.S. Department of Commerce reported that international visitors spent \$149 billion in the U.S. last year, down from \$154 billion in 2016. Data show spend was down from January to October but began to rise in November and December (\$12.4 and \$12.5 billion, respectively).

Looking forward, the rate of growth in leisure person-trips is expected to remain below 2% per year for the foreseeable future. The U.S. Travel Association forecasts that after the +1.8% expected in 2017, growth will increase slightly in 2018 to +2.0% before falling off gain to +1.8% in 2019f and +1.7% in 2020f.<sup>iii</sup>

Like leisure travel, the rate of growth among business travel is expected to increase moderately over the next two years. Instead of losing volume this year, the US Travel Association is projecting a growth rate of +1.1% in 2018.

Overall, total person-trips are expected to increase by +1.8% in 2017 with domestic travel expenditures increasing by 3.5%. The variance is fueled by a 3.6% increase in travel prices this year which is considerably higher than we have seen in several years. From 2012-2016, travel prices averaged only a +0.7% compounded annual growth rate (cagr) per year so by comparison, a 3.6% increase will be relatively robust. And, experts predict that travel inflation will remain a bit higher for the foreseeable future. Travel prices are projected to increase at a cagr of 3.0% from 2018-2020.<sup>iiii</sup>

Branson's situation is still evolving. Visitation increased at a brisk pace from 2012-2016, but slowed in 2017. While the market enjoyed a fairly strong start to the year, increasing by an estimated +2.9% in the first quarter of 2017, April was unusually slow and despite small increases in both May and June the area is down slightly this year.

Official measurements indicate that Branson's estimated visitation was down 0.9% year-to-date through the end of the second quarter (June 2017), and STR reports that overnight hotel/motel room demand was down -0.3% for that same 6-month period.<sup>iv</sup>

Likewise, sales tax receipts through June indicate that Branson's tourism tax revenues were up 0.8% and that Taney County sales tax revenues were up 0.07%. However, Tourism Community Enhancement District Tax revenues posted a 5.6% decline and Branson's 1% City Sales Tax revenues were down 0.3%.<sup>v</sup>

Year-to-date through May (the most recent reporting cycle available as of this writing), the Branson CVB's intercept research showed that self-reported visitor spending was up 17% per party growing from \$779 to \$917, which is favorable news.

Likewise, both Branson's length of stay and number of shows seen had both recorded increases through May, the most recent report available as of this writing. Length of stay stood at 4.2, or +0.3 nights from last year. And, visitors reported seeing an average of 3.3 shows which was up 0.3 shows compared to the 3.0 reported during the same

timeframe of 2016. A new updated report will be published after August visitor intercept survey results are posted.<sup>vi</sup>

Assuming similar results in July and August, H2R estimates that Branson's visitation will be down around 1% by the end of August. Therefore, Branson will need the second half of 2017 to pick up some of the slack for the area to record any measurable growth in 2017. At this point, it is estimated that Branson's visitation will be flat for 2017, or will remain at or around 9.0 million visits.<sup>vii</sup>

Moving forward there remain a variety of micro and macro-economic issues that will make it challenging for Branson to continue to generate as strong of growth as was recorded from 2012-2016.

U.S. economic growth has been slow and steady the past 30 months and gasoline prices have remained comparatively low, but there are still a number of uncertainties that remain. Given that many Branson visitors are retired, any type of volatility or uncertainty in the marketplace could have a negative impact on the destination. Hence, similar to the national forecast, H2R forecasts Branson's growth in 2018 to look similar to what we are experiencing in 2017.

Assuming there are no major economic or environmental surprises beyond the norm, projections from H2R Market Research are that Branson's visitation will post a 0.4% increase in 2018<sup>viii</sup>.

## **MEASURING RESULTS**

The CVB marketing programs are research-driven. Research provides data to substantiate important trends within our region and industry and serves as a valuable tool in decision-making. Research provides facts on a market-wide basis, rather than individual perspective.

Four measurements are used within the CVB to monitor the success of the organization's marketing efforts:

1. **Tax Revenues:** Tourism Tax and Sales Tax revenues from the City of Branson, Taney and Stone counties, and the Tourism Community Enhancement District provide a standard to measure the success of our district businesses and give an objective basis of comparison for measuring our ultimate success in growing Branson's economic strength.
2. **Responses to Advertising:** This measurement utilizes digital benchmarks and, to a lesser extent, 800 number phone call volume as a basis of comparison of response to media advertising.

3. Ad Effectiveness Study: This annual study measures the awareness of our advertising and public relations efforts and their effect on intent to travel.
4. Visitor Profile: Direct in-market intercept surveys measure attendance by market via zip code comparison.

### **MARKETING APPROACH**

Branson has a loyal and committed group of guests who know and love the Branson experience and visit frequently. However, focusing our marketing on this group alone would yield diminishing returns and does not provide the basis for sustained and significant growth.

The key to long-term growth is diversifying the audience base we invite to Branson, while maintaining strong relationships with returning customers. An important component to extending the invitation further, is positioning the most relevant tourism product to the most receptive audience for that product, at the right time.

### **KEY APPEALS**

- Friends and family can celebrate each other in a wholesome and authentic environment.
- Branson celebrates American values.
- Branson offers a variety of live shows.
- Branson offers a quality vacation experience for a reasonable price.
- Branson is surrounded by three spectacular lakes and exciting outdoor recreation opportunities.
- Branson is located within a day's drive of one-third of the country's population.
- Branson is home to a world-class theme park- Silver Dollar City.

This marketing plan provides an integrated, comprehensive marketing and communications approach, leveraging Branson's key appeals to drive increased visitation and improve overall perception of the brand.

### **Goal A:**

*Position Branson as the top choice in consumer consideration set for wholesome vacations.*

### **Objectives:**

1. Generate an advertising ROI that outperforms industry norms for CVBs with similarly sized budgets.
2. Maintain "intent to visit" across all tiers.
3. Increase Advertising Awareness across paid and earned media channels.

### **Tactics:**

1. **Grow quality and continuity of re-positioned brand messages.**

In 2016 the Branson CVB launched an effort to re-position Branson’s brand to improve consumer perception of the destination, and ultimately lay the foundation for Branson’s future visitors and brand ambassadors. During the process, the position that resonated most with consumers, included the following attributes:

- a. Family - Branson offers a variety of activities that appeal to everyone in the family.
- b. Reconnection – Branson is a place where you can “get away” from every day activities/technology, and focus on what’s truly important.
- c. Freedom – Free to do as much or as little as you want – it’s YOUR vacation.

In 2015, in partnership with Strategic Marketing and Research Insights (SMARI), the CVB conducted qualitative research to arrive at a logo design. Creative concepts, an extension of the brand repositioning, were tested next, to provide direction for the 2016-2018 advertising campaign.

The more “thoughtful” or “emotional” concepts rose to the top as consumers’ favorites. Blending emotion and energy, these concepts provide an umbrella for the reintroduction of Branson to travelers.

“Be Together” was the chosen concept that was used in all 2016 marketing messaging, and will continue throughout 2018. This concept scored highest on influencing interest in visiting Branson and likelihood to seek more information on the destination. It also evoked the highest ratings for presenting Branson as welcoming, wholesome, beautiful and charming.

The creative campaign features three distinct activity genres: Live Shows, Outdoor Recreation, and Family Fun.

The creative will be strategically delivered to each target market based on research that helps define which markets/demographics are most receptive to which specific activity message.

## **2. Employ media strategies maximizing effectiveness and relevance to current markets and targets.**

Camelot will place TV media, and Miles Partnership will place digital media. The CVB will collaborate with all media partners, and consolidate media buying where appropriate to build maximum effectiveness and efficiency.

The advertising plan is designed to enhance consumer perception of Branson, keep Branson top-of-mind as a destination in priority markets, and drive traffic to

ExploreBranson.com. In 2018, the CVB's media messaging will include specific calls-to-action to drive consumers deeper into the decision-making funnel. These activities include ordering a vacation guide, visiting the Official Branson website, signing up for e-newsletters and following Explore Branson on social media.

Research results show that advertising in multiple mediums is critical to achieve maximum effectiveness. A blend of the following advertising elements will be used:

- Television
- Online Banner ads
- Search Text ads
- Online video advertising
- Social Media advertising (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat)
- Content Distribution

Target Audience: Media will be extended across two main target audiences: Women 35-54 and Women 55+.

The CVB will advertise Branson in priority markets. Due to expenditure restrictions, the Core markets of Springfield and Joplin will not receive TV advertising in 2018. Digital media in these markets will also be limited. Several significant additions to Branson's tourism product in 2018, including the new Time Traveler rollercoaster at Silver Dollar City and the launch of "Samson" at Sight & Sound theater, will provide "new news" to share with this important audience mainly through earned and owned media efforts. National cable will be used to extend reach and connect with potential first-time visitors.

While the market mix used in recent years has successfully delivered more visitors, additional media markets were investigated in 2016 to determine if new DMAs could deliver an increased volume of high-value visitors to the Branson area. Working with H2R Market Research, A three-year database (2013-2015) of 50 markets was created from Branson's intercept surveys. Each market was assigned a value based on criteria such as visitation, compound annual growth rate, intent to return, per person spending, etc.

The focused geography of these markets was 301-700 miles – honing in on those markets which have a larger population base but are within a reasonable drive distance to Branson. These markets have been dubbed "super regional markets." Seven super regional markets rose to the top. In discussions with Camelot Communications and the District Marketing Council, Memphis and Des Moines were deemed the two most valuable new markets that would be added to the media plan for 2017 and will continue to be targeted in 2018. To meet budgets, Dallas and

Topeka were eliminated as spot markets, but will continue receiving national cable TV as well as digital media.

2018 market segments include:

- **Primary** (101-300 miles) Regional drive markets– Kansas City, St. Louis, Little Rock, Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Ft. Smith, Paducah, Wichita and Memphis
- **Outer** (301-650 miles) – Des Moines
- **National** (650+ miles)

Scheduled media will be concentrated during peak travel planning times, with the heaviest activity in the spring and summer.

**Goal B:**

*Improve consumer perception of Branson.*

**Objectives:**

1. Increase brand attribute ratings and post-ad traveler intentions.
2. Activate refreshed brand identity across all Branson CVB touchpoints, both local and consumer-facing.
3. Maintain Net Promoter Score of at least 55%.
4. Explore licensing opportunities with key partners to enhance the reach of Branson's brand.

**Tactics:**

1. Monitor intercept visitor profile survey results.

The multi-month visitor profile surveys are the most consistent method of tracking consumer sentiment as well as seasonal trends. H2R will continue executing these surveys in 2018, and the CVB will monitor the results to track key performance indicators such as the Net Promoter Score.

2. Redesign internal and external creative brand marks to ensure consistency and effectiveness.

Throughout 2018, Explore Branson touchpoints will continue to be redesigned to feature the new brand identity. Both internal (within the CVB and Branson community), and external (consumer-facing) opportunities will be identified and refreshed. Specifically, the CVB will seek more opportunities to install artwork and touchpoints that provide opportunities to create shareable content, to help deliver our message further.

3. Build on success of existing creative campaign to develop the next generation of creative messaging for 2019 and beyond.

The current creative campaign has successfully moved the needle in improving consumer perceptions about Branson. Working with Cultivator and Strategic Marketing and Research, the CVB will develop a research-based campaign that will build on the effectiveness of the “Be Together” campaign, and continue telling Branson’s story, featuring the diverse tourism product in our destination: Live Shows, Outdoor Adventure, and Family Fun. Creative development will take place in 2018, with a scheduled launch of new creative in 2019.

#### 4. Continue growing and improving library of professional photo and video assets.

Branson’s photo and video assets are one of the most critical components to success in re-positioning Explore Branson’s brand. Consumers rely heavily on visual cues to persuade them to visit a destination. The CVB will continue investing in high quality, professional still photography and video footage that can be used throughout our marketing messages both online and offline.

#### **Goal C:**

*Grow Branson’s position as a multi-season vacation destination.*

#### **Objectives:**

1. Enhance shoulder season opportunities and extend the invitation further.
2. Leverage special events and limited engagements to drive visitation from inactives.

#### **Tactics:**

1. Reallocate media investment as recommended by media partners, to focus additional dollars on a concentrated spring marketing effort.

To further grow the opportunity to capture spring break travelers (including families and multigenerational travel parties); the CVB will continue appropriating funds to February, March and April to make a sizable impact on the awareness of Branson as a spring-time destination.

2. Promote Branson as a fall getaway destination.

Run fall-themed creative messaging across all mediums, promoting live shows and the scenic Ozark Mountains during this time of year.

3. Promote Ozark Mountain Christmas and “America’s Christmas Tree City” as a robust holiday season featuring live shows, a Christmas Tree Trail, and special events that can only be found in Branson.

**Goal D:**

*Convert consumers with a casual interest in Branson to overnight Branson visitors.*

**Objectives:**

1. Implement organization-wide initiatives to “close the deal” with audiences including leisure visitors, meeting planners, sports organizers, tour operators and travel journalists.
2. Focus key creative messaging, specifically digital media, with strong calls to action that will drive consumers deeper into the trip planning funnel.
3. Investigate opportunities to more accurately track consumer engagement with the Explore Branson brand that leads to conversion.

**Tactics:**

1. Explore opportunities to further enhance the Branson Vacation Guide.

The Branson CVB produces several publications throughout the year, providing requested and necessary information to consumers and trade partners. These publications allow the CVB to collate the vast amount of data and travel options available to individuals and groups seeking trip planning assistance.

The annual Vacation Guide offers industry partners the opportunity to advertise their product to potential customers. It is the primary fulfillment piece through our inquiry fulfillment program. It is also used as a fulfillment piece at special events, trade shows, and in the Chamber of Commerce/CVB information center.

The CVB will continue evaluating the effectiveness of the Vacation Guide, seeking opportunities to enhance the publication in areas of editorial and trip ideas.

2. Produce niche collateral material as needed.

In addition to the Vacation Guide, the CVB will produce several niche publications to deliver to various audiences who frequently request information above and beyond that which is provided in the Vacation Guide. These publications may include:

1. Bi-Annual Meeting/Convention & Sports Planner Guide
2. Group Tour & Reunion Planner
3. Travel Agent Commission Guide
4. Student Travel Planning Guide

**Goal E:**

*Convert consumers with a casual interest in Branson to overnight Branson visitors.*

**B. COMMUNICATIONS/PUBLIC RELATIONS**

In 2017, more than 250 media from a variety of press, radio, TV and social media outlets were invited to Branson by the CVB and given additional insight into our Midwest vacation destination. In 2017, the annual ad equivalency was tracking similarly to the \$19.3 million ad equivalency total for 2016.

In 2016-2017 the Branson community welcomed more than \$362 million in new investments. In 2018 and beyond, we are on a sales mission – closing the deal – and spreading the word about longtime favorites and new additions to Branson’s tourism product.

As it is increasingly more difficult to get “good news” stories published, the CVB will provide the media with even more compelling reasons to take a closer look at Branson.

When FOX & Friends replied to the CVB’s invitation to cover the SDC announcement in August 2017, Executive Producer Lauren Petterson wrote “I would love to keep it in consideration. This news cycle has been insane – so I can't honestly say if we will have the resources to do much out of the hard news realm.” This is a typical response from television producers in today’s media environment. It’s increasingly hard to cut through political news to get anything else on the media radar.

The following goals and objectives are designed to reach the CVB’s targeted media audiences and provide cost-effective, third-party, credible promotion of Branson.

**Goal A:**

*Generate positive coverage of the Branson area in regional and national media outlets.*

**Objective:**

1. Generate \$20 million in ad equivalency as evaluated by national monitoring services (Vocus/Cision, Meltwater and TVEyes), representing a 55:1 ROI.

**Tactics:**

1. Generate feature stories in newspapers, magazines, online and other media across the country using Geiger & Assoc. and Buffalo Agency FAM tours during springtime and fall, with focused, niche, individual FAMS.
2. Generate positive print, radio and TV coverage, both nationally and regionally working with Mindy Bianca PR, whose network of media contacts enables first-hand access to story placement in Branson’s primary market cities and media outlets in New York City, Los Angeles, Dallas and Chicago. Additionally, staff amplifies added value offerings from media buys through Camelot Communications.
3. Continue improving and expanding Branson’s brand image by pursuing ELLEN, CBS Sunday Morning, Hoda & Kathie Lee, The Weather Channel and other national TV shows.

4. Host A-list journalists by working with the CVB's PR Committee, Geiger & Associates, MBPR!, Buffalo Agency and others.
5. Invite journalists to Branson Live! events in Memphis and Dallas.
6. Maximize coverage from members of the Missouri Press Association, Texas Press Association, and Arkansas Press Association by attending and sponsoring association functions.
7. Continue working with NW Arkansas/SW Missouri destinations for a complete Ozarks tour de force (Eureka Springs, Bentonville and Springfield) to bring in topnotch journalists by touting the overall "Only in the Ozarks" story.

**Goal B:**

*Recruit professional media conferences to Branson.*

**Objectives:**

1. Offer a compelling reason for journalists who have never been to Branson to come and experience our authentic hospitality.

**Tactics:**

1. Host the North American Travel Journalists Association (NATJA) annual conference in Branson in 2018
2. Host the Mid-America Emmy Awards in Branson in 2019
3. Invite chapters of Society of American Travel Writers (SATW) to hold their annual conferences in Branson, i.e., editors or freelance national chapters.
4. Bid on upcoming conferences to host Outdoor Writers Association of America and Association of Great Lakes Outdoor Writers, with their members' support. Anticipate 2020 and 2021 conferences for these two organizations to be in Branson.
5. Plan strong offerings for continuing education seminars to further entice selection committees.
6. Maximize the value of first-hand experience by bringing editorial decision-makers and photographers to Branson for professional development offerings in conjunction with these conferences.
7. Capitalize on media interest in Bass Pro holdings, including PGA golf, the new Wonders of Wildlife Museum & Aquarium and the Outdoor Academy in addition to the area's pristine lakes, nationally recognized entertainers, longtime award-winning family attractions, Silver Dollar City's Time Traveler, and more to promote the plethora of travel stories in Branson.

### **C. DIGITAL MARKETING**

The CVB develops, operates and markets Branson’s official digital channels, including ExploreBranson.com, and manages active communities on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and Pinterest.

Consistent with industry best practices, the CVB uses in-house resources and outside consultants to create unique and compelling content for these channels. In addition, the CVB and its vendor experts take advantage of site optimization, inbound links, content and social promotion to maximize our investment in digital channels and reach as many potential visitors as possible at every step of the conversion funnel.

The CVB reaches consumers through year-round paid advertising that coincides with offline advertising, and takes advantage of opportunities unique to digital media. In many instances, these ads are geographically, demographically and behaviorally targeted and include rich-media display advertising, search engine marketing, contextual content distribution, retargeting and lead generation.

This comprehensive digital approach includes organic and paid components that speak to consumers at each of the following steps of the travel-planning process:

1. Branding/Awareness
2. Consideration/Inspiration
3. Planning
4. Booking
5. Follow-up and Loyalty

#### **Goal A:**

*Use digital media to inspire, inform and convert Branson visitors.*

#### **Objectives:**

1. Continue to refine and improve the user experience on ExploreBranson.com.
2. Optimize and maximize our investment of time and resources in social channels by analyzing engagement and reach.
3. Grow newsletter list by 10,000 subscribers.
4. Increase goal completions on ExploreBranson.com by 2% over 2017.
5. To maintain site traffic on ExploreBranson.com at 2017 level.
6. Optimize robust digital marketing dashboard that coordinates and integrates advertising across all digital media, including desktop, mobile and social channels.
7. Continue evaluating big data opportunities and how they apply to marketing efforts.

8. Continue seeking opportunities to overlay digital and traditional advertising.
9. Provide ongoing customer service and engagement through digital channels.
10. Continue to invest in content creation to inspire visitation.

**Tactics:**

1. After reviewing the findings of the Website Conversion Study completed in late 2017, implement changes gleaned from the findings to improve conversion rates on ExploreBranson.com.
2. Evaluate and implement opportunities to use API data feeds to assist in maintaining up-to-date content on ExploreBranson.com
3. Reskin ExploreBranson.com in Q4 to match new brand creative to roll-out in Q1 2019.
4. Execute form optimization program on ExploreBranson.com to foster better conversions.
5. Conduct landing page A/B testing to increase conversions on paid media programs.
6. Continue working with staff and outside resources to identify and create 360-degree and Virtual Reality content.
7. Work with digital marketing agencies to make sure campaigns are structured to foster website goal completions, including, vacation guide requests and newsletter sign-ups.
8. Coordinate the efforts of the CVB's digital marketing and social agencies to better maximize the effectiveness of paid advertising and content creation efforts by having monthly status calls.
9. Continue investing in analytics, research and training for the fast-evolving social media marketplace, including webinars and conferences.
10. Implement and optimize unified data dashboard for use by CVB staff and vendors.
11. Investigate big data measurement programs.
12. Continue building upon the vibrant and active social media communities already created, working to expand and further engage these audiences.
13. Continue refining the CVB strategy for staff to respond to online questions, tweets and other direct communications with visitors by maintaining and improving on-call schedule.
14. Evaluate and improve social media community management strategy.
15. Evaluate new digital opportunities and implement new channels as is appropriate.
16. Continue existing monthly newsletter campaign and grow niche newsletter segments, including live shows, family fun, outdoor adventure and golf.
17. Overlay national cable and spot markets with digital and social ad buys.
18. Develop and execute a plan to bring video production in-house.

**Goal B:**

*Educate and empower community partners to better communicate and market via digital channels.*

**Objectives:**

1. Increase number of businesses controlling their data on ExploreBranson.com by 5%.
2. Continue to grow and evolve the iConnect Portal as the official channel for B2B tourism information for Branson.
3. Keep the Branson tourism industry abreast of changing digital landscape and best practices.

**Tactics:**

1. Continue refining user experience on iConnect Portal by launching a redesign in Q1 2018.
2. Continue promoting the iConnect Portal as the official channel for B2B tourism information for Branson by producing a monthly newsletter for industry partners that drives them back to the portal.
3. Make optimizations to the iConnect newsletter to increase partner engagement.
4. Create how-to videos and one seminar for partner businesses about the features of ExploreBranson.com and the business data-management tool.

**D. LEISURE GROUP TRAVEL**

Branson group visitor numbers have seen growth in the past four years. The CVB's group marketing efforts in 2018 could set the stage for future growth in an ever- changing industry business model, with an active outbound effort to increase group travel visitors.

The term "leisure groups" represents a broad definition of many group types. In 2018 we will target established leisure groups as well as numerous niche groups such as bank groups, faith-based, military and family reunions, representing multi-generation group travel, which is a growing trend. Professional travel planners such as tour operators and travel agents continue to be established leisure group travel buyers and are a proven way to generate group travel business and bookings within a 12 to 24-month cycle.

In 2017 Branson hosted Travel South Domestic Showcase in partnership with the Missouri Division of Tourism. This event drew approximately 550 total attendees from around the US to Branson. The Travel South leadership team reported Branson was the first host city ever to receive a perfect 5.0 score and for strong early results. Additional results from Travel South include:

- 124 print & digital articles published
- 65,674,433 media impressions

- \$2,979,72 estimated advertising value

Travel South will continue to follow the travel journalists with many more articles to come and will produce a final report in early March 2018. The benefits of hosting Travel South Domestic Showcase will be felt with more group travel business and bookings within the proven time frame of the 12 to 24-month cycle after hosting the conference. We'll continue our strong relationship with Travel South in 2018 by hosting a Branson dine-around during the domestic showcase in Biloxi, MS.

In January 2018, Branson will present a new sponsorship at the ABA Marketplace in Charlotte, NC: the Branson Ice Cream Social booth. This sponsorship partners area businesses with the CVB to promote Branson to key tour operators for four days to network and sell Branson while enjoying ice cream served by Branson suppliers. When activated, this sponsorship will include a customized Branson ice cream booth displaying Branson graphics, images, and logo. In addition, our efforts to market to ABA tour operators in Charlotte, NC includes a Branson Dine Around featuring Branson entertainment.

Branson will host three prominent group sales conferences in 2018. These niche market conferences continue to have a strong presence in the group travel industry. These conferences include: Heritage Club International (HCI), Missouri Bank Travel Exchange (MBTE), and Military Reunion Network (MRN) Regional Round Table Annual Conference for Military Reunion Planners.

New in 2018, the CVB will host two group sales events: "Branson Live in Memphis" in June and "Branson Live in Dallas" in September. These events were borne from a need to reach the next level of leisure group customers. By reaching tour operators' clients, Branson will educate a wider audience of buyers, who can influence new group travel to the destination.

The Branson Live sales event series was created in response to discussions with Branson CVB committees and the community. Both events will host buyers from all group sales industry categories that represent both leisure, meetings and sports markets. These invited buyers will be comprised of tour operators, travel agents, faith-based groups, student groups, bank travel, military reunions, affinity groups, meeting planners, sports event organizers and travel journalists.

The full day of sales activities includes a morning trade show, an afternoon lunch with Branson entertainment, and an evening event with special entertainment. These events have the potential to impact group business in 2018 and beyond, bringing together qualified group travel buyers and Branson sellers in a unique and exclusive setting that will be conducive to buying and selling group travel to Branson.

For Branson to maintain its strong share of the country's traditional senior adult motor coach travel, we'll continue to have a presence through national group travel associations including ABA, Travel South Domestic Showcase and TAP Dance.

The CVB's marketing efforts continue to focus on growing the student and youth market. These efforts include participation at the annual Student & Youth Travel Association (SYTA) and Texas Music Education Association (TMEA) annual conferences.

Our marketing efforts to attract and grow the military reunion market will be met through participation at Your Military Reunion Connection (YMRC) and Military Reunion Network (MRN) conferences.

Two FAMs scheduled in 2018 will round out the sales events hosted in Branson to reach tour operators and travel agents at the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Professional Travel Planner FAM and music teachers and educators at the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Music Director FAM.

The group travel industry continues to evolve in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Research and development remains the best tool and the key to staying relevant in the marketplace. To help us better understand the industry in today's changing world, the Branson CVB will host a Tour Operator Focus Group in 2018. The CVB will hire a moderator to facilitate the program and invite a panel of key tour operators. The goal is to assess emerging trends that customers are experiencing to help us to better serve them now and in the future.

**Goal A:**

*Increase the number of leisure groups to Branson.*

**Objectives:**

1. Increase RFI's by 3% over 2017
2. Increase the number of RFPs by 3% over 2017
3. 50% FAM attendees book Branson business within three years of FAM

**Tactics:**

1. Sponsor ABA Branson Ice Cream Social booth with area partners in January
2. Sponsor Branson ABA Dine Around in January
3. Attend the Texas Music Educators Association (TMEA) exhibitor trade show in San Antonio, TX in February
4. Sponsor Branson TMEA Dine Around in February
5. Host Heritage Club International (HCI) Sales Conference in March
6. Host 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Professional Travel Planner FAM Tour in April
7. Host Missouri Bank Travel Exchange sales conference (MBTE) in April
8. Host 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Music Director FAM Tour in July
9. Sponsor SYTA Branson Ice Cream Booth with area partners in August
10. Host Military Reunion Network (MRN) Regional Round Table conference in May

11. Produce “Branson Live in Memphis” sales event in June and “Branson Live in Dallas” sales event in September
12. Attend two “Your Military Reunion Connection” (YMRC) sales conferences
13. Attend two Military Reunion Network (MRN) sales conferences
14. Attend TAP Dance Sales Conference in June
15. Attend Travel South Domestic Showcase in March and host a Branson dine-around
16. Work with PR department to promote military reunions to Branson by submitting
17. Branson military reunion stories and images to military magazines.
18. Develop and distribute 2018 group publications
19. Secure travel trade advertisements thru print and web based media sources.
20. Attend industry group travel shows and marketplaces with the goal to maintain current group travel relationships, develop new ones, and generate RFIs, RFPs and qualified FAM attendees to meet our objectives
21. Maintain memberships in leisure group travel associations
22. Daily database management
23. Produce outbound post card mail campaigns
24. Direct mail (4,000) 2018 Student Guides to music educators in January that includes invitation to July 2018 Music Director FAM
25. Distribute sales leads to area businesses
26. Distribute travel show appointment notes via the industry portal
27. Promote Branson group travel to family reunions and travel agents through digital marketing. Measure engagement and report Google Analytics quarterly to determine benchmarks in 2018
28. Work with digital team to establish organic social media campaign through Facebook and Twitter and develop monthly content calendar, reflecting social media best practices that will measure activity through engagement
29. Quarterly outbound email blast campaigns to Travel Agents via Mailpound

**Goal B:**

Communicate and partner with area businesses to engage and encourage participation in CVB programs, projects, partnerships and publications to promote and facilitate group travel to Branson and ultimately to their businesses.

**Objectives:**

1. 50% or higher of Branson sponsors book business as a result of CVB FAMs.
2. 80% or higher of Branson sponsors positive overall satisfaction of FAMs.
3. 80% or higher of Branson sponsors positive overall satisfaction with Branson Live series and ABA and SYTA partnerships.

**Tactics:**

1. Maintain three leisure group committees: Groups & Travel Agents, Student & Youth and Reunion Market.
2. Maintain 10-15 committee members on each of the three committees

3. Schedule New Chair orientation in January to review marketing plan and budget
4. Present the 2018 calendar of events by first quarter to include dates and times for quarterly committee meetings
5. Distribute 2018 sales guides by email and mail
6. Send 30 and 10-day reminder emails for partnerships, programs and publications in the 2018 sales guide
7. Meet with committee chairs and committee members quarterly to review and report on 2018 goals & objectives, projects and partnerships.
8. Assign task forces for partnerships and sponsorships as needed
9. Communicate and post projects, meeting notes and reports through industry portal
10. Implement current policies on sales lead, RFI and RFP distribution
11. Develop and schedule an RFP 101 class for new sales persons in the community
12. Provide portal training and for new group sales and committee members.
13. Update 2018 Leisure Group Sales Department Guide Book 101 for new group sales training and orientation

#### **E. MEETINGS & CONVENTIONS**

The CVB will increase sales and marketing efforts in Washington DC and Chicago to gain more connections for national association groups, corporate groups and third-party planners.

We will shift efforts with MSAE, ASAE (Arkansas) and OSAE to focus on more advertising, sponsorship and key tradeshows to support the efforts of local partners. This shift will allow the CVB to focus sales efforts on new markets to find more new business.

We will continue efforts in the SMERF market – with special attention given to finding city-wide events including car clubs, motorcycle groups and niche groups (like Discover Santa) that also provide strong Public Relations opportunities.

#### **Goal A:**

*Increase the number of meetings and conventions in the Branson/Lakes area.*

#### **Objectives:**

1. Increase the number of qualified RFPs by 10% over 2017.
2. Increase definite room nights by 8% over 2017.
3. Increase awareness within the community about the importance of the meetings & convention market.
4. Increase PR exposure with editorial coverage in meeting & convention trade publications and track ad equivalency.
5. Increase web presence, search engine marketing and social media efforts to reach more meeting planners. Track page view traffic, keyword optimization, RFP production on website and Cvent and measure social engagement.

## **Tactics:**

1. Advertising and Marketing:
  - a. Develop an advertising plan utilizing findings from the 2016 meeting planner survey.
  - b. Analyze year-end results with Cvent and optimize advertising package.
  - c. Advertise through opportunities with Helms Briscoe and Conference Direct.
  
2. Sales Efforts (Tradeshows, Prospecting & Events)
  - a. Develop new business from administrative assistants utilizing our membership with the International Association of Administrative Professionals.
  - b. Continue partnering with Spinnaker DME, a Chicago-based destination rep firm, to gain more leads from the Chicago area. Sponsor MPI Next and attend Connect Chicago.
  - c. Actively pursue new business in the DC market when additional flights are added from the east coast. These efforts will include involvement in the MPI Potomac Chapter, PCMA Capital Chapter and the DC Destination Reps group. When we can locate a candidate, we plan to secure a part-time rep who can lead efforts with tradeshows, blitzes and client events.
  - d. Attend industry tradeshows, marketplaces and hosted buyer events that bring a substantial ROI (tradeshow ROI is measured by attending 2-3 years in a row and tracking RFPs). With the possibility of new airlift, we will revisit larger, national tradeshows and events like MPI World Education Congress, IMEX America and Destination Showcase. We will also continue our sponsorship at Connect Marketplace, maximizing exposure at this productive conference.
  - e. Continue prospecting with lost business reports, LinkedIn and through industry directories.
  - f. Increase grass roots sales efforts in Washington DC, Kansas City, Memphis, Tulsa, Oklahoma City and Dallas.
  - g. Support our local partner efforts in Arkansas Society of Association Executives with advertising, sponsorship and attending main events.
  - h. Support our local partner efforts in Missouri Society of Association Executives with advertising, sponsorship and attending main events.
  - i. Maintain a presence with Oklahoma Society of Association Executives with advertising.
  - j. Continue pursuing ground transportation options from SGF including Uber and other solutions.
  
3. Sponsorships
  - a. Become destination partners with third party planner organization Conference Direct and sponsor their conference.

- b. Continue sponsorship with the Senior Planners Industry Network (SPIN) to capitalize on opportunities to develop relationships with senior-level planners and Shawna Suckow.
  - c. Sponsor and host Connect Missouri.
- 4. Education
  - a. Plan and conduct educational events for the local community with Cvent and iDSS. This training helps Branson partners to provide better proposals and capture all leads available to them.
- 5. PR
  - a. Continue working with the Communications Department and Buffalo Communications to court travel writers and golf writers who publish articles for meeting & convention trade publications.
  - b. Identify groups, like Discover Santa, that provide strong PR opportunities.
- 6. Digital & Social
  - a. Create new content for ExploreBransonMeetings.com, including articles, site inspection videos and other video content.
  - b. Continue keyword and retargeting campaigns to drive planners to website and RFP form.
  - c. Establish a robust social media content calendar and feature testimonials, articles and short videos.
  - d. Continue relationship-building on LinkedIn through industry groups and connections.
  - e. Use Twitter for prospecting new meetings by following and researching event hashtags.

## **F. SPORTS MARKETING & DEVELOPMENT**

It is the goal of the Branson CVB Sports department to drive direct visitor spending and long-term interest in return visits while introducing new audiences to the Branson/Lakes Area through youth and amateur sports. Despite limited facilities, the Branson/Lakes Area has experienced noteworthy success from the sports travel market.

The Branson CVB is an important resource for identifying and recruiting visitor-heavy events to the facilities currently available in our community. In 2018 the focus will be on attracting sporting events and conventions that fit current facilities while working with experts in the industry, and community stakeholders to implement the sports facility and venue development strategic plan defined in 2017.

In addition, the sports department will continue enhancing volunteer programs (Local Organizing Committees--LOC's) while working with community businesses to actively

recruit, retain and grow sporting events while increasing recognition as a preferred market for sports event hosts and travelers.

**Goal A:**

*Attract sporting events and conventions that best fit the Branson/Lakes Area facilities; showcasing the indoor and outdoor offerings available in our community.*

**Objectives:**

1. Increase the number of qualified RFPs by 5% over 2017.
2. Increase definite room nights by 5% over 2017.
3. Educate community on the economic impact of sports events.

**Tactics:**

1. Focus sales efforts on cheer, dance, martial arts and other indoor athletic events that fit local theaters and current facilities.
2. Focus sales efforts on attracting sports conferences, tradeshow and conventions.
3. Maintain and build relationships with organizers of soft adventure/outdoor events that can be hosted on the lakes and trails (including Paddle Boarding, Fishing, Open Water Swimming, Running, Ragnar Trails, X-Terra, mud-runs).
4. Continue work with Branson Disc Golf Development group as they host tournaments annually (with the goal of hosting the PDGA Amateur and Junior Disc Golf World Championship in 2020) and expand Disc Golf product in the Branson/Lakes Area.
5. Support efforts of local event organizers as they implement and grow sporting events that showcase indoor and outdoor offerings.
6. While the Branson Rec Plex has very limited availability, we will support their efforts with baseball/softball, basketball and volleyball events when possible.
7. Work with the Branson Convention Center to add events that can utilize their facilities and new equipment during available and preferred timeframe(s).
8. Work with Ballparks of America to increase baseball/softball tournaments and other sports events that fit at their facility.
9. Sponsor industry events (i.e. NASC, SPORTS Relationship Conference) that provide optimum exposure to Sports Event Organizers.
10. Prospect and build relationships with event organizers from lost business reports, Linked In, past tradeshow/marketplace events and industry directories.
11. Sponsor events that provide national advertising opportunities and increase incremental travel (i.e. PGA, YBNNC, Cal Ripken, NAIA, etc.).
12. Host site inspections and/or FAM tours.
13. Inform and share information with the Branson community through the sports committee, portal.ExploreBranson.com and social media channels.
14. Work closely with Sports Committee Chair, Co-Chair and staff to define committee responsibilities.

**Goal B:**

*Increase awareness to build participation and spectator attendance at events, recognition of existing sports facilities & venues and our family friendly tourism destination.*

**Objective:**

1. Boost awareness of locally hosted and sponsored sporting events by running ads through social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) and distributing Press Releases.
2. Increase event and facility/venue photography.
3. Increase participation from community members, event participants and spectators.

**Tactics:**

1. Host local FAM tours and economic benefit education event(s) for community.
2. Hold ongoing outreach events with key community leaders (brown bags, coffee meetings, etc.).
3. Add a Facebook Page for the Sports Department, dedicated to promoting, sharing and recognizing Branson sports events and information.
4. Increase messaging via Twitter to promote and recognize Branson sports events.
5. Maintain and provide content for all aspects of ExploreBransonSports.com, social media and other technology-driven marketing initiatives.
6. Work with BCVB team to coordinate and facilitate event photo and video shoots for future marketing initiatives.
7. Work with digital marketing department to define and implement social media plan to reach participation-based sports event attendees on a personal level.
8. Showcase the variety of live shows, attractions, outdoor activities, dining and shopping available to sporting event participants and guests through mediums that directly connect with guests visiting and/or watching these events.
9. Add content by telling stories about the event participants, families and friends when they visit the area.
10. Evaluate mobile marketing applications that link event attendees to local merchants, partners and restaurants.
11. Increase content and sports event information available on ExploreBranson.com and ExploreBransonSports.com for participants and spectators.

**Goal C:**

*Implement the long-term strategic plan for sports facility and venue development.*

**Objective:**

1. Assist with growth in Branson's position as a multi-season vacation destination through sport tourism.
2. Provide evaluation and recommendation to CMO regarding future staffing needs for the Sports Marketing and Development department.

**Tactics:**

- a. Meet with community stakeholders to build on 2017 discussions and progress related to sports facility and venue development.
- b. Work with industry experts and college students to update Sports Facility Study completed in 2015.
- c. Host workshops with community stakeholders.
- d. Capitalize on solid relationships built within the sports tourism industry.
- e. Work with consultants focused on grants, sponsorships and other funding opportunities.
- f. Work with the National Association of Sports Commission and industry counterparts to clearly outline roles/needs and properly educate LOC members.

**Goal D:**

*Define and begin implementation of long-term strategic plan for golf tourism.*

**Objective:**

1. Support current efforts for increased recognition of Branson as a world-class golf destination.

**Tactics:**

- a. Work with Branson Area golf council members.
- b. Communicate with Huddle Up Group and industry counterparts to gain insight into best practices for attracting golf travelers.
- c. Attend conferences for Golf Travel Planners, Tour Operators and Writers.
- d. Work with representatives within Buffalo Agency, Billy Casper Golf and the GCSAA to gain industry specific insight for reaching golf travelers.
- e. Continue to grow Explore Branson Golf Facebook followers and Social Media reach.

**G. COMMUNITY PROGRAMS**

As directed by the Chamber/CVB's contract with the City of Branson, the CVB supports the Downtown Branson Mainstreet Association (Historic Downtown), and the Branson Veteran's Task Force through ear-marked funds. These dollars are allocated to funding programs within these organizations which are designed to ensure their success.

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<sup>i</sup> "International Travel to US Declined in 2016," [www.travelpulse.com/destinations](http://www.travelpulse.com/destinations), August 12, 2017.

<sup>ii</sup> U.S. Travel Forecast, U.S. Travel Association's Travel Forecast Model, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Department of Labor; OTTI, Department of Commerce, Tourism Economics, 8.11.17

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>iv</sup> STR, City of Branson, June 2017 Report

<sup>v</sup> City of Branson and TCED Tax Board, Official numbers YTD 2017 through June

<sup>vi</sup> H2R Market Research (Estimated, YTD May 2017)

<sup>vii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>viii</sup> Ibid.