

MT. HOOD
& THE GORGE



Regional Plan 2017-19



Regional Cooperative Tourism Program

Research & writing:

Clackamas County Tourism and Cultural Affairs

Organized by:

Travel Portland

For more regional information visit:

<http://www.hood-gorge.com/>

traveloregon.com/mt-hood-columbia-river-gorge/

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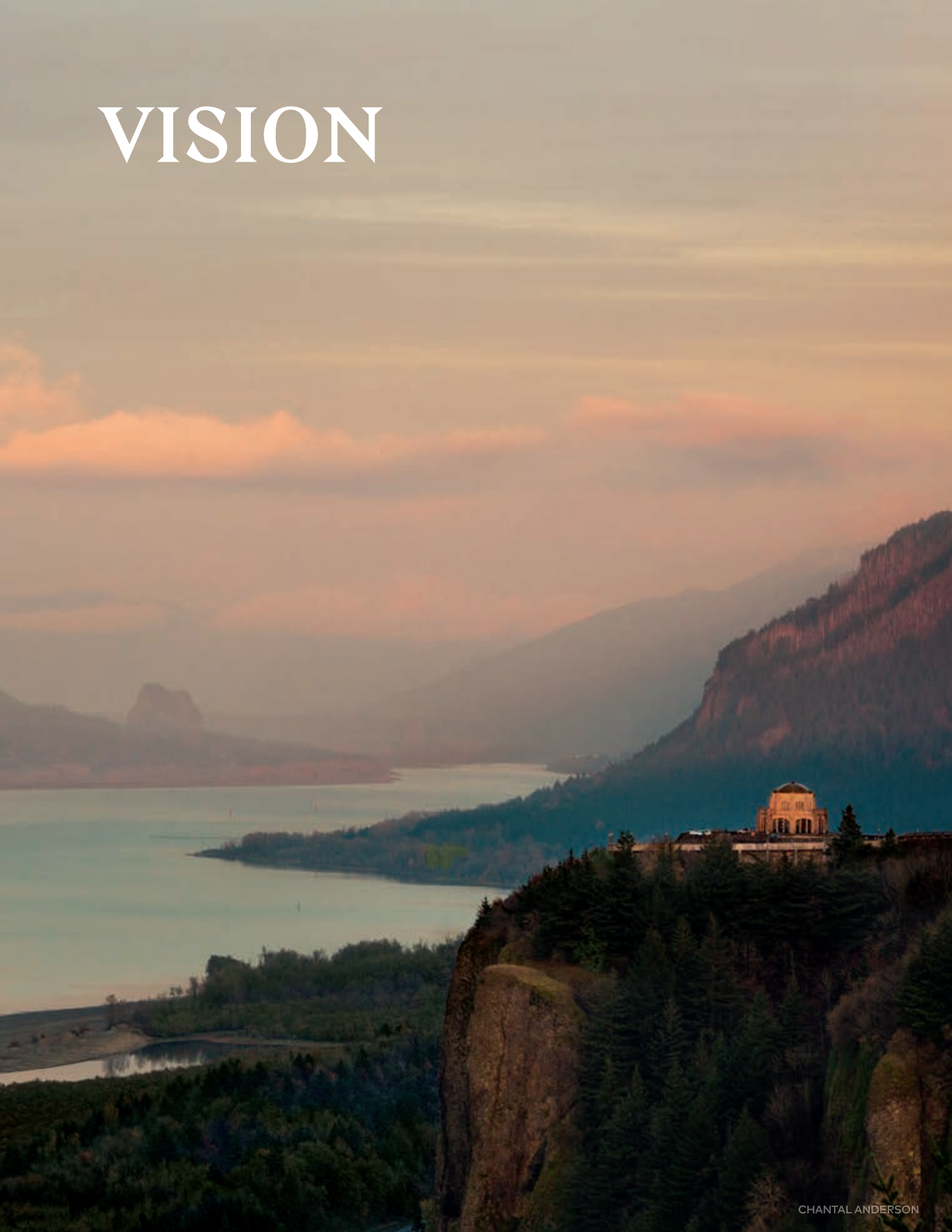
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VISION





MISSION

The Mt. Hood/Columbia River Gorge RDMO seeks to build awareness for the region as a premier, multi-day, and year-round travel destination that benefits all communities in the region through global marketing, PR and sales. Our region faces common challenges for a mature destination, such as congested roads and over-visited sites.

That is why it is our mission to build awareness for the lesser-served communities in the region and support efforts for sustainable destination development programs and training opportunities.

RCTP GOALS

The goals of the region correspond with the state of tourism in the region, stakeholder feedback on priorities for the region, and our measurements for success. The tactics to achieve these goals are illustrated in the tactics to follow within the Mt. Hood/Gorge RDMO strategy.



Goal 1

Increase human capacity staffing resource for the Mt. Hood/Gorge RDMO to deliver on the program of work for the 17/19 biennium.



Goal 2

Promote lesser visited communities and sites in the region.



Goal 3

Increase shoulder season (winter and spring for the Gorge and fall and spring for Mt. Hood) and weekday occupancy.



Goal 4

Increase alignment between the Gorge and Mt. Hood communities through regional programs.



Goal 5

Increase messaging and communications about alternative forms of transportation throughout the region.



Goal 6

Leverage marketing and development opportunities with Travel Oregon and industry partners.

ORGANIZATION

Clackamas County Tourism and Cultural Affairs (CCTCA) administers the Regional Destination Management Organization (RDMO) for the Mt. Hood and Columbia River Gorge region. They work in close collaboration with the members of the Mt. Hood/Columbia River Gorge Regional Tourism Alliance which includes representatives from the West Columbia Gorge Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Center, Hood River County Chamber of Commerce, and The Dalles Area Chamber of Commerce.

This alliance meets approximately once every 2-3 months in person, and holds additional phone meetings as needed.

Our RDMO serves tourism stakeholders across four counties of Oregon, from the Wood Village/Troutdale Area to The Dalles, up to Dufur, back east over the mountain, and all the way down to Estacada.

The RDMO meets regularly with stakeholders in the region during our biannual engagement sessions, at regional committee and alliance meetings like the Columbia Gorge Tourism Alliance, Ready, Set, GOrge! committee, and One Gorge, and on one-on-one sessions.

OVERALL SUCCESS MEASURES

Success for the Mt. Hood/Gorge RDMO is evaluated and measured in a number of ways. To best understand economic impact, visitation spread, and international trends, the RDMO invests in and reviews [Dean Runyan](#) economic impact estimates, [Longwoods](#) travel research, and tourism economics international regional research.

This data is combined with an annual stakeholder survey and new quarterly lodging survey. Collectively, this data will help us measure our success in the following goal areas:

- » Alleviate and spread out the congestion issues in the Gorge and on the mountain.
- » Increase shoulder season and mid-week visitation.
- » Increase international visitation.
- » Increase alignment between the Gorge and Mountain communities.



OPPORTUNITY



REGIONAL TOURISM

Tourism is a crucial industry for the Mt. Hood/Gorge region of Oregon. Direct tourism spending was estimated at \$383 million in 2016, of which 34% is accounted for from day visitors, the remaining 66% from overnight visitors. [\(2016, Dean Runyan\)](#)

Year over year, the industry continues to bring more tax revenue to state and local taxes, while now supporting over 4,800 jobs, a 6% increase from 2015. The most current estimates report 3.4 million overnight person-visits to the region in 2016.

The top domestic source markets for the Mt. Hood/Gorge region:

- » Oregon 37%
- » Washington 19%
- » California 10%
- » Idaho 4%
- » New York 3%

[\(2015, Longwoods\)](#)

Our top international source markets, in terms of spend are Canada, China, the UK, Germany, Australia, and Scandinavia.

[\(2017, Oregon Dashboard\)](#)

Why do they come? The Mt. Hood/Gorge region is home to one of Oregon’s most diverse outdoor playgrounds. From the waterfall corridor to the high desert, the rushing Columbia River to the top of Mt. Hood, we have recreation opportunities for all skill and interest levels. But the region offers so much more. A thriving arts and culture scene in many of the communities, compliments the rich agricultural and heritage of the region. According to Longwoods data, the top two drivers for visiting the region are recreation (29%) and touring (28%).

While our region’s tourism assets are seen as iconic, they also pose a threat to the longevity of the region. The pressure of overcrowding and congestion is impacting local communities and the visitor experience. While some areas are welcoming too many visitors, others see very few.



3.4 million
overnight person-visits
in 2016

2016 direct visitor spending
\$383 million

Recreation & Touring
top drivers for visiting

4,800 jobs
generated by tourism economy

Top source markets
in terms of spending:

- Canada
- China
- UK
- Germany
- Australia
- Scandinavia

Overcrowding & Congestion
impacting local communities



CHANTAL ANDERSON

STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

After completing a stakeholder survey and leading an in-person stakeholder gathering in 2017, the following themes and objectives for our region were identified by local stakeholders:

- » Focus on marketing, communication, and development that supports shoulder season, mid-week, and multi-day travel
- » Target marketing and communications toward lesser known communities and sites throughout the region and away from congested areas
- » Support and communicate alternative forms of transportation for the region
- » Offer training for regional partners in areas such as customer service, destination knowledge, and travel trade
- » Increase alignment between the Gorge and Mt. Hood communities

Additionally, our regional stakeholders identified marketing as the most important area for us to prioritize in our plan, specifically through social media content and leveraging Travel Oregon marketing opportunities.

The second most important focus area was destination development around alleviating congestion and improving tourism during shoulder seasons.

All of this feedback was incorporated into the development of this biennial plan, much of which was shared with stakeholders in draft format at our in-person stakeholder meeting in April 2016 with support. The following is the RDMO response to the feedback.

1. Feedback:

Focus on marketing, communication, and development that supports shoulder season, mid-week, and multi-day travel.

Mt. Hood/Gorge RDMO Response:

We have laid out very clear tactics in our plan to address the congestion and “day trip” issues that the region faces by focusing content creation and promotion on the target areas of shoulder season, mid-week, and multi-day travel.

Global sales is one of the investments that we hope will address these issues as a long-term solution. We are also creating a new lodging survey that will go out on a quarterly basis to allow us to measure our success in increasing mid-week stays, a KPI that the region has never been able to track previously.

2. Feedback:

Target marketing and communications toward lesser known communities and sites throughout the region and away from congested areas.

Mt. Hood/Gorge RDMO Response:

It’s clear through the congestion heat mapping activity completed at the in-person stakeholder meeting that some of our communities are being over loved and others not loved enough. The imbalance of economic benefits from tourism are felt and heard clearly.

The RDMO is targeting this biennium’s content and PR almost entirely around lesser visited communities and sites to draw attention to our ‘hidden gems’. Our Trail Ambassador program will also help to encourage people away from heavily trafficked trails on to lesser visited ones to relieve congestion.

Further promotion of the Ready, Set, GOrge! communications platform, both locally and in Portland, will also help alleviate congestion issues.

STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

3. Feedback:

Support and communicate alternative forms of transportation for the region.

Mt. Hood/Gorge RDMO Response:

The RDMO recognized that there is no core location for hosting information about alternate forms of transportation in the region.

Since our greatest strength is as a communication platform, we will host a transportation section on our website that will house various forms of alternative transportation resources and additionally promote them in itineraries and through PR. This includes the Gorge and Mt. Hood Bike Hub networks, electric vehicle charging stations, and shuttle services.

4. Feedback:

Offer training for regional partners in areas such as customer service, destination knowledge, and travel trade.

Mt. Hood/Gorge RDMO Response:

The RDMO will bring training opportunities to the region to set up our stakeholders with the tools and training they need to succeed in the tourism industry.

We will also train frontline staff in neighboring regions, like Greater Portland, on how to best communicate to their visitors about the Mt. Hood/Gorge region. These opportunities and resources will be shared with partners on a newly created industry resources website for all to access and benefit from in the region.

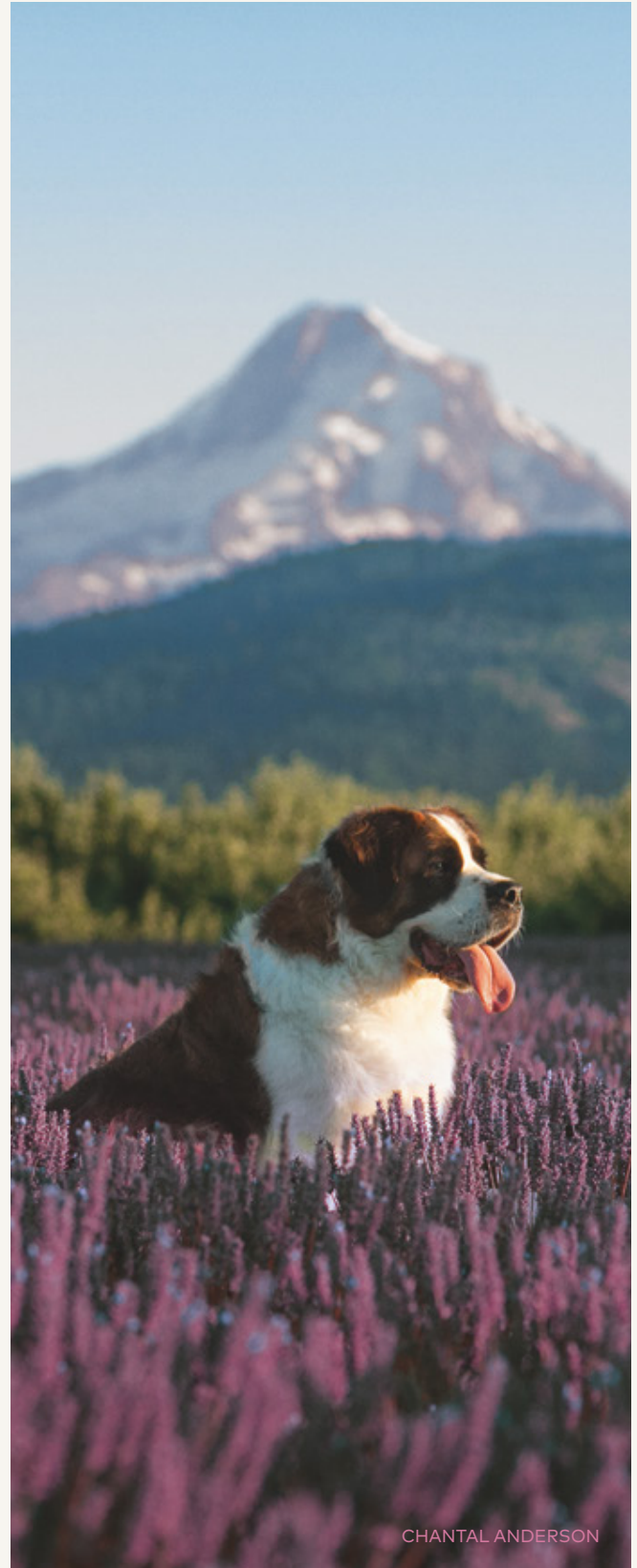
5. Feedback:

Increase alignment between the Gorge and Mt. Hood communities.

Mt. Hood/Gorge RDMO Response:

Throughout the plan one will see how we have focused on tactics that include and benefit both sides of our region.

When a visitor comes to stay in our region, they don't necessarily see the mountain as separate from the Gorge, they are both valuable assets that work in tandem with each other. Through our tactics and communications in this biennium, the RDMO hopes to continue to bring the two parts of our region together in a unified way that benefits all.



CHANTAL ANDERSON

PLAN

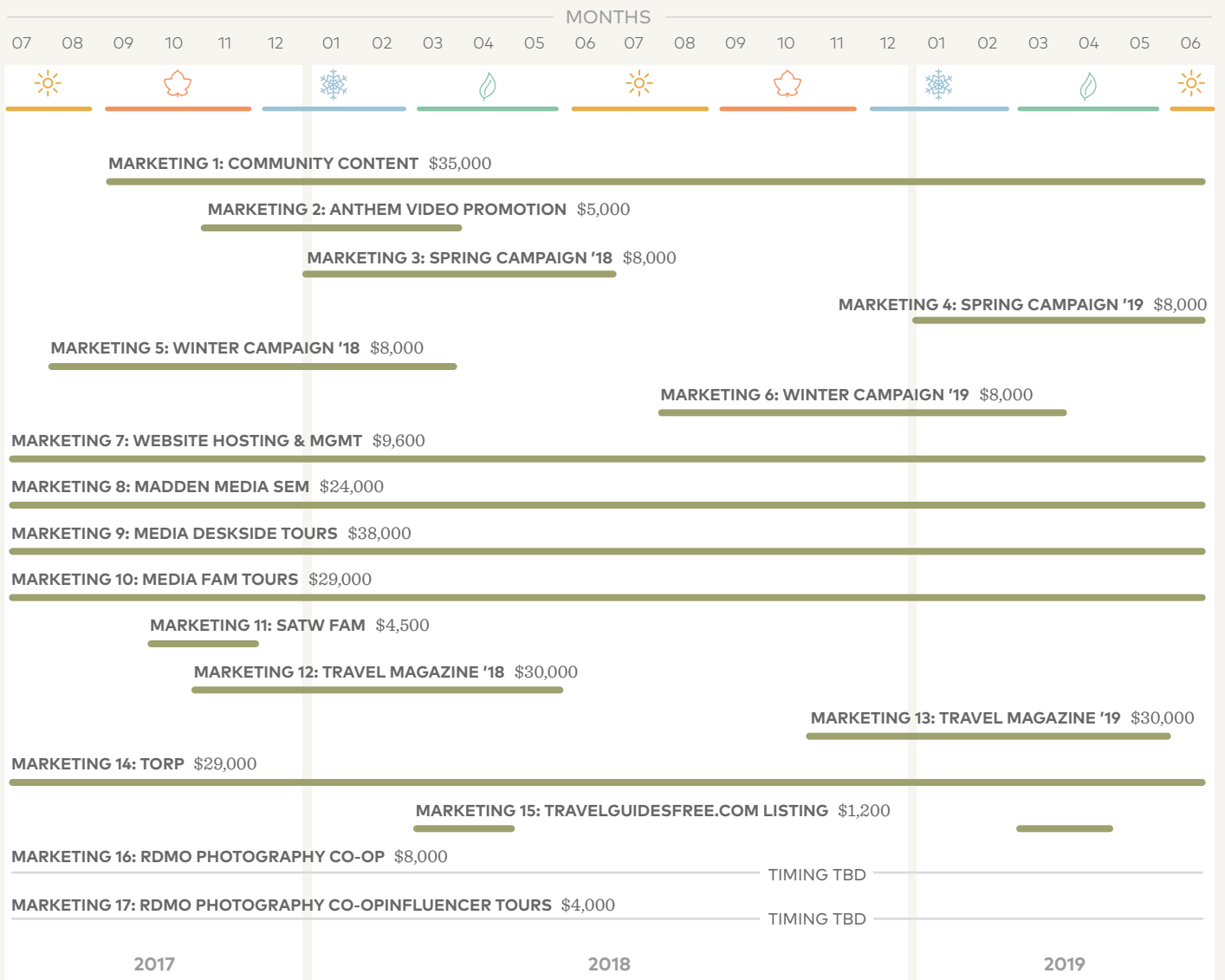


OVERALL BUDGET

DEPARTMENT/CATEGORY	FY 17-18 BUDGET	FY 18-19 BUDGET	BIENNIUM BUDGET	% OF BUDGET
Global Marketing	\$136,900	\$142,400	\$279,300	47%
Staffing	\$72,000	\$72,000	\$144,000	24%
Destination Development	\$45,000	\$25,000	\$70,000	12%
Global Sales	\$35,500	\$32,000	\$67,500	11%
Other	\$8,240	\$26,240	\$34,480	6%
Industry & Visitor Services	\$2,360	\$2,360	\$4,720	1%
Total	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$600,000	100%

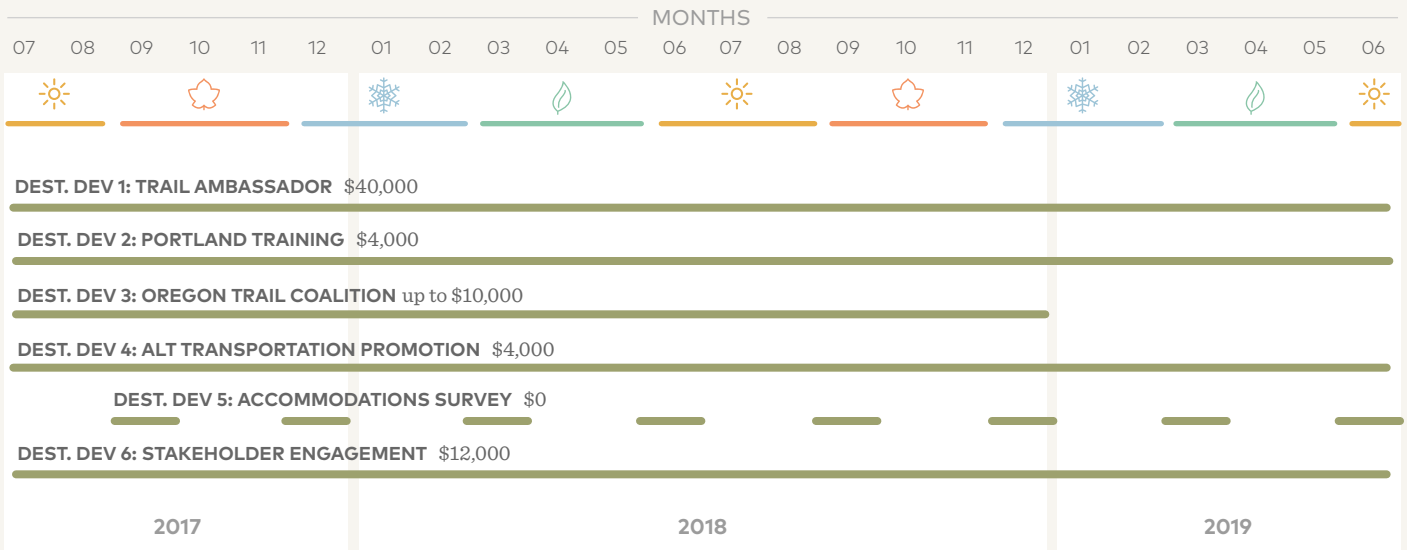
RCTP OVERALL PLAN

- GLOBAL MARKETING PLAN -

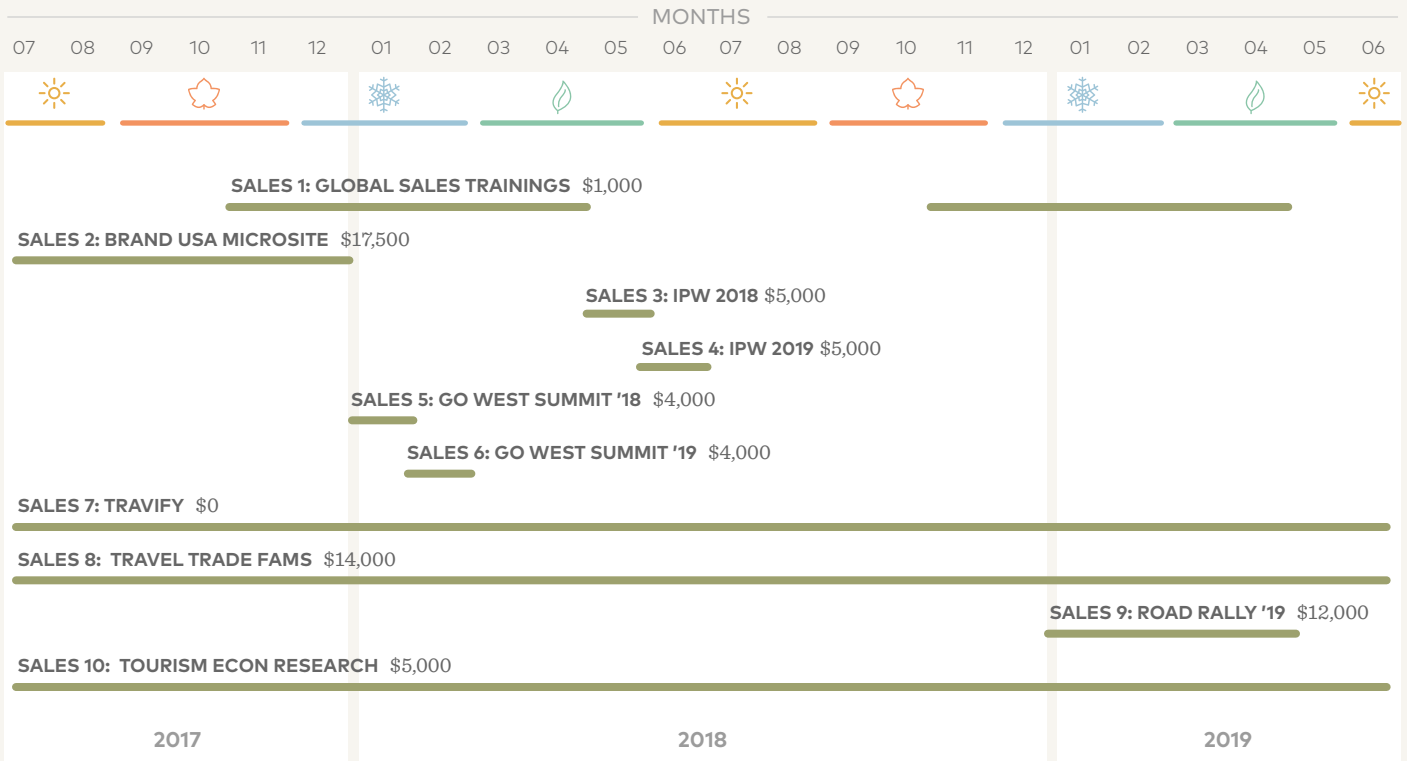


RCTP OVERALL PLAN

- DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN -

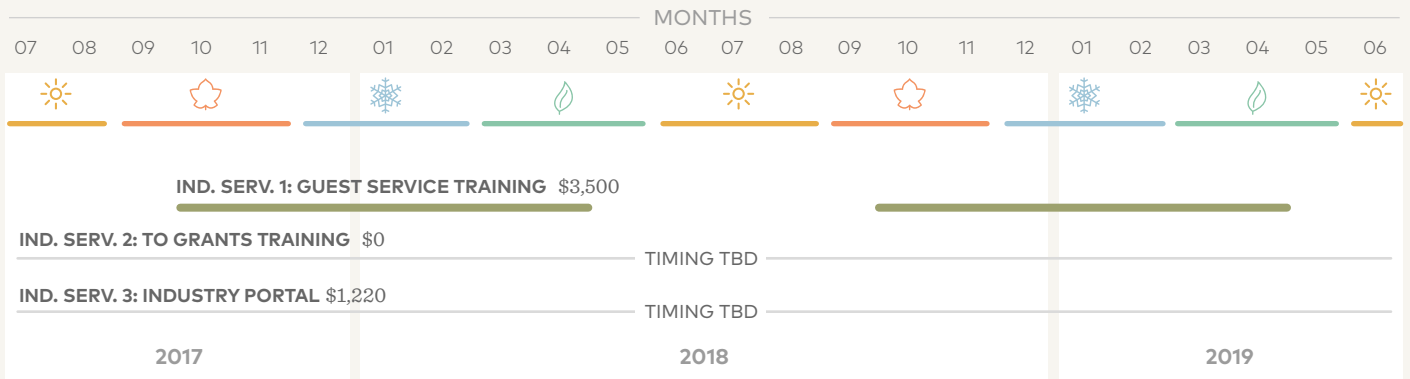


- GLOBAL SALES PLAN -

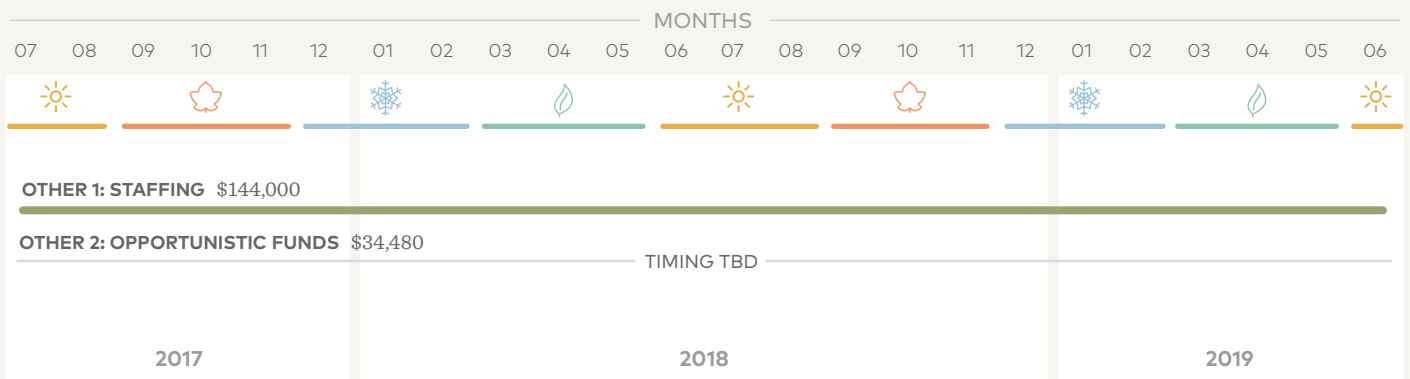


RCTP OVERALL PLAN

- INDUSTRY SERVICES PLAN -



- OTHER PLAN -



GLOBAL MARKETING

Visit the live RCTP Dashboard for full tactic details and progress.

The Mt. Hood/Gorge RDMO marketing strategy for the next biennium will focus on developing and sharing content with potential visitors that inspires shoulder season and multi-day visits while spreading the wealth of our visitors to the lesser-known communities and sites in the region.

The RDMO is strategically using our marketing tactics to address the region's destination and visitor management issues.

We will dedicate advertising dollars to begin brand penetration in our key Northern California and Portland markets, while exploring new ways to optimize sector marketing within that target market (ie. wine visitors, river rafters, cultural enthusiasts).

TACTICS

- | | |
|---|---|
| # 1 Community Content Program | # 11 Society of American Travel Writers (SATW) FAM |
| # 2 Community Content Program | # 12 Mt. Hood/Gorge Regional Travel Magazine 2018 |
| # 3 Community Content Program | # 13 Mt. Hood/Gorge Regional Travel Magazine 2019 |
| # 4 Travel Oregon Spring Campaign Co-Op 2019 | # 14 Travel Oregon Regional Pack (TORP) Program |
| # 5 Travel Oregon Winter Campaign Co-Op 2018 | # 15 Travel Oregon Regional Pack (TORP) Program |
| # 6 Travel Oregon Winter Campaign 2019 | # 16 TravelGuidesFree.com and NW Travel Magazine Listing |
| # 7 Website Hosting and Management | # 17 Influencer Marketing |
| # 8 Madden Media SEM (Search Engine Marketing) Program | |
| # 9 Media Deskside Tours | |
| # 10 Media Familiarization Tours | |

DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

Visit the live RCTP Dashboard for full tactic details and progress.

The Mt. Hood/Gorge RDMO destination development strategy for the next biennium will focus on the greatest issues facing the region: congestion, over-crowding, safety, and stress on natural resources.

We will address these areas by developing strategic partnerships with stakeholders in and around the region, developing and funding programs that will help move the needle on key focus areas, and offer training to stakeholders in the region to build their capacity to further develop tourism successfully in the destination.

We will work closely with the communities who have engaged in, or will soon engage in, rural tourism studio programs with Travel Oregon to support their on-going efforts. This includes the Columbia Gorge Tourism Alliance (Gorge Tourism Studio) and the towns of Sandy and Estacada.

TACTICS

1 Trail Ambassador Volunteer Program

2 Greater Portland Frontline Staff, Ask Oregon, and Welcome Center Training

3 Oregon Trail Marketing Coalition Projects

4 Alternative Transportation Promotion

5 Accommodations Survey

6 Stakeholder Engagement

GLOBAL SALES

Visit the live RCTP Dashboard for full tactic details and progress.

Historically, the Mt. Hood/Gorge region has not invested significantly in global sales opportunities, like attendance at international trade shows. With increased budget, the Mt.Hood/Gorge RDMO is now able to expand our global sales strategy for the next biennium.

One of the best strategies for bringing visitors to the region during shoulder seasons, for mid-week and multi-day stays is to target international markets.

By partnering with Brand USA and Travel Oregon on their global sales programs, we will be able to leverage the larger USA and Oregon messages to benefit our region.

Additionally, we will ensure training is available to partners in the region to share the value of international travel trade and teach them how to get involved and help put our region on the map in the international space.

TACTICS

1 Global Sales Educational Trainings

2 Brand USA Opportunities

3 IPW 2018

4 IPW 2019

5 Go West Summit 2018

6 Go West Summit 2019

7 Travefy

8 Travel Trade Familiarization Tours

9 Oregon Road Rally 2019

10 Tourism Economics International Regional Research

INDUSTRY & VISITOR SERVICES

Visit the live RCTP Dashboard for full tactic details and progress.

The Mt. Hood/Gorge RDMO industry and visitor services strategy for the next biennium is to focus on bringing customer service training and grant writing opportunities to the region.

We will accomplish this by bringing the Guest Service Gold/Tourism and Travel Oregon Grant training to the region.

We will further our region's unified message by creating a mechanism to share content, messaging, and creative assets with stakeholders throughout the Mt. Hood/Gorge.

TACTICS

1 Online and In-Person Tourism Guest Service (Customer Service) Training

2 Industry & Visitor Service Training Opportunities: Travel Oregon Grants

3 Online Industry Resources Portal

STAFFING & OTHER

Staffing Planned Budget: \$144,000

The Mt. Hood/Gorge RDMO is increasing human capacity to one full time staff for this biennium. This staff role will administer the body of work laid out in this plan, with support from the Mt. Hood/Columbia River Gorge Tourism Alliance as well as feedback from regional stakeholders.

Funding for the full time staff is directly targeting Goal 1 (increase human capacity resources). This budget includes salary and benefits for one full time staff for two years.

Other Planned Budget: \$34,480

These funds are earmarked for new opportunities that arise over the course of the next biennium. We have \$8,240 reserved for year 1, \$26,240 for year 2.

Potential projects and programs in which to invest could include: Brand USA programs, new Travel Oregon opportunities, destination development priorities and additional support for current programs already in the plan.



TRAVEL  **OREGON**