

Utah Board of Tourism Development
Meeting Minutes
Mountain Creek Lodge, Morgan
Friday, April 11, 2025

Board Members Present	Kym Buttschardt, Lesha Coltharp, Joan Hammer, Jason Murray, Graydon Pearson, Kevin Smith, Shayne Wittwer
Board Members Virtual	Melva Sine, Jordan Smith
Board Members Excused	Jared Berret, Kaitlin Eskelson, Com. Victor Iverson, Nathan Rafferty, CJ Wade, Jennifer Wesselhoff

Tourism & Film Staff	Tera Atwood, Jenica Barber, Rachel Bremer, Rachel Creer, Lorraine Daly, Kim Heys, Melissa Jackson, Camille Johnson, Denise Jordan, Becky Keeney, Emma Kwanin, Anna Loughridge, Carli Mahas, Ben Mangelsdorf, Christina Martin, Derek Mellus, Virginia Pearce, Liz Peck, Natalie Randall, Arianna Rees, Laici Shumway, Dave Williams, Heather Zang
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Public	Rep. Tiara Auxier, Julie Comstock, Machel Devin, Com. Blaine Fackrell, Ben Fredregill, Terra Girvin, August Granath, Tina Grange, Todd K. Jenson, Ryan Lundstrom, Jill McIntyre, Debra McKee, Brittany McMichael, Amy Myers, Com. Vaughn Nickerson, Mike Roe, Kevin Rosen, Angie Rothen, Bridget Siebert, Celina Sinclair, Jonathan Smithgill, Sherry Stevens, Forest Turner, Matthew Watson, Allison Yamamoto-Sparks
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WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Board Chair Kym Buttschardt welcomed everyone and asked for board members and public introductions.

MEETING MINUTES

MOTION: Lesha Coltharp motioned to approve the March 14, 2025, board meeting minutes. Joan Hammer seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

MANAGING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Natalie Randall, Managing Director, Utah Office of Tourism

- Last week in Washington, DC, with a Utah delegation of industry partners, for U.S. Travel's Destination Capitol Hill. Thanks to UTIA for organizing and arranging meetings with representatives and senate members and their staff.
- Joined tourism directors from Idaho, Alaska, North Dakota and Washington to meet with staff at Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee, and House Committee on Natural Resources. Talked about public land priorities, and the importance of public lands to our state and the state's economy.
- SB-2 is around the state resource management plan (SRMP). It is housed at the Public Land Policy Coordinating Office (PLPCO). That plan has traditionally focused on gas, oil, extraction, logging and

agriculture industries. Tourism and outdoor recreation have not been prioritized in the plan and this bill does that. It calls out coordination with UOT, state parks, outdoor recreation and PLPCO to identify 10 priority outdoor infrastructure projects to be listed on the SRMP. This is elevating the importance of outdoor recreation and tourism in the state's public land conversations.

- Working closely with the Western Governor's Association, where Gov. Cox is the Vice Chair this year, and will be chair next year. The WGA has a resolution around recreation and tourism and it is being updated. Working closely with the Governor's office and the Western States Policy Council.
- Sundance's announcement to leave Utah has brought up a lot of questions of what is next. Jennifer Wesselhoff said it best with "this is just a slip, not a fall." Opportunity to look at ways to broadly showcase the creative economy in the state. Continue to elevate the film, art and culture industries in Utah.
- Ryan Starks is stepping down May 1 as GOEO executive director. He has been a great advocate for our industry.

COMMUNITY AND PARTNER RELATIONS

Camille Johnson, Community and Partner Relations Director, Utah Office of Tourism

Team Update

- Laici Shumway joined the CAPR team recently as the Partner Outreach & Collaboration Coordinator.
- In the process of hiring a grant specialist.
- Community and Partner Relations works in a "three gear process" – partner relations, resources and education. Engage, assess, support and activate to keep the gears working.
- The strategic priority to provide support to DMOs is being accomplished with regular and digital communication. This fiscal year have started DMO connect calls, visits to DMOs throughout the state, implemented a tracking system to ensure community needs are being met.
- Conducted stakeholder survey and 84% feel they are receiving timely and relevant information about changes or new initiatives.
- Plans in Q4 for additional partner tours and support to the southeast region DMOs.
- Connected communities to resources with 2024 co-op marketing grants awarded, the EDA ARPA destination development grant GAP approved and revamped the industry website, newsletter and LinkedIn presence.
- Preliminary outcomes from 2023 co-op marketing grants:
 - \$4.7M awarded
 - 55 applications received funding and 53 projects completed
 - \$71K available to rollover to co-op 2025
- Project examples include Millard County that did a billboard project to direct visitors from the interstate, Uintah Co. promoted Phenomecon with grant money, many counties put funds toward ongoing events and to grow tourism events that already exist.
- Upcoming resource projects include 2025 co-op, make progress with seven EDA ARPA grant projects, subscription drive for newsletter and build toolkits for agrotourism and astrotourism.
- This year's co-op committee includes Lesha Coltharp, chair; Kym Buttschardt, Joan Hammer, Jordan Smith, and Kevin Smith.
- Planning more than \$4.1M available for the grant program and the application opens on May 19 and closes June 27.
- Strategic priority to provide stakeholder education through speaker bureau opportunities, grant webinars, co-op whiteboard animation and marketing workshop.
- Planning Tourism Business Development (TBD) workshop, Aug. 11-12 in Cedar City, and finalizing contract with Joe Veneto for ELEV8 Utah product development.
- Pilot the ELEV8 Utah program with three counties – Sevier, Piute and Iron.

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Dave Williams, Associate Managing Director, Utah Office of Tourism

Urban and Outdoors Campaign Plan

- UOT marketing efforts have the biggest impact in the awareness, consideration and evaluation phases of the customer journey.
- Primary marketing goal is to enhance the economic impact of leisure travel in Utah, and the secondary goal is to strengthen brand awareness associations.
- Strategic initiatives
 - Inspire awareness and interest in Utah travel
 - Increase visitor length of stay and spend.
 - Encourage visitor planning and preparation.
- Research shows that when visitors see our advertising they do come and participate in more activities.
- Continuing “*In Love, In Utah*” campaign for urban and outdoors.
- When thinking about ways to promote our urban areas, find what differentiates us from everybody else. It is the proximity to outdoor adventures.
- Campaign goals are to promote travel to Utah’s urban and outdoor destinations and promote adequate planning and preparation.
- A variety of key performance indicators (KPIs) for the campaign including advertising awareness, increased impressions and visits to the website, and more engagement with the website.
- Look at the post impression rate which is when people have seen the ad, then come back and visit the website and track length of stay and how much visitors spend.
- The campaign shows the unique Utah opportunity of urban amenities just minutes from world-class outdoor adventures, and helps travelers understand there is more to love in Utah’s urban and outdoor environments – “think, feel and do”.
- Focus on western United States and regional audiences. The target audience is diverse – Venturistas drawn to art and music; Adventurers want to explore natural and urban experiences that may be off the beaten path, and family travelers who want to make memories with their children.
- Key messages of the campaign include urban - great restaurants, concerts, parks, museums, etc. – minutes away from the outdoors – forests, resorts, state parks, etc.
- Secondary messages of change of pace, road trips, *Forever Mighty®* and visit like a local.
- Campaign elements include different length videos, banner ads and display ads. Also a lot of native advertising, articles, social media and public relations efforts.
- Begins 4/15/25 and ends 6/30/25, with a budget of \$715K. It will target regionally (western US) with CTV, preroll, native and retargeting display ads.
- Testing budget split of urban/outdoors 70/30. Focus advertising around people planning to come to smaller cities.
- Jonathan Smithgill added with the amount of data collected able to focus campaign specific to this targeted group.
- Leveraging the Parks & Beyond campaign with a digital partner to get a custom activation that our budget wouldn’t previously allow and have a lot of video heavy placements highlighting the new assets.
- Track partner performance for a limited amount of time, and the highest performer gets the rest of the media buys for the campaign. With partner competition campaign is working faster and more efficiently.
- Testing this with connected TV, native and programmatic.
- The \$715K budget is up \$100K from FY25.
- Spend a little more than \$100K on paid search and it runs March through October of 2025. Spend quite a bit of time on the search terms and how it is set up to make sure it is optimized for the best results.
- Paid social media is another element of the campaign and has the same run dates. Be on Facebook, Instagram and Audience Network, which adds additional applications.
- The objective with the campaign’s social media is to increase website traffic and video views. Forecasting increases in impressions, link clicks and video views.

UTAH FILM COMMISSION

Virginia Pearce, Utah Film Commissioner

Incentive Program Allocation

- Derek Mellus was recently in Morgan scouting with a crew for an upcoming project that is looking for ranches and Morgan is a great match.
- Utah Film Trail marker is up at Antelope Island State Park. The very first film shot in Utah, *The Covered Wagon*, was filmed there in 1928. It is a beautiful spot.
- *Mountainhead* was a project approved a few months ago that was filmed in Park City. It is being released on HBO May 31 and stars Steve Carell.
- *Thunderbolts*, which was shot in Emery and Grand counties, will be released May 2 in theatres nationwide.
- Film incentive program was allocated \$20M for FY25. The rural film program is \$12M, the motion picture program is \$6.79M in tax credit and \$1.5M in cash rebate.
- Have approved 28 projects so far in FY25 - 11 in the rural program, 10 in motion picture tax credit and 7 in motion picture cash rebate.
- The incentive program has awarded more than \$17.3M this fiscal year which has resulted in almost \$75M in economic impact.

MOTION: Jason Murray motioned to approve \$374,803 for an incentive for the following productions which have met the criteria defined by statute. Kevin Smith seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

Production	Estimated Utah Spend	Incentive Amount Per Production	Locations (counties)
<i>The Elijah Able Project</i>	\$457,722	\$91,544 - 20%	Utah
<i>Untitled Border Movie</i>	\$1,133,037	\$283,259 - 25%	Juab, Millard & Sanpete
	\$1,590,759 TOTAL Spend	\$374,803 TOTAL Incentives	

UTIA UPDATE

Joan Hammer, Utah Tourism Industry Association board representative

- Thanked partners for their assistance in navigating the legislative session.
- Tourism Conference planning is underway and submit content suggestions on the website. Looking for great speakers and great topics.
- The 2025 tourism conference will be in Bryce Canyon, Oct. 1-3.
- UTIA hired a new education cohort manager, Kim Thompson. She is tasked with running the hospitality and tourism CTE program.

BOARD MEMBER UPDATES

- Jason Murray shared information from international inbound tour operators. Met with five or six in Washington, D.C., and they said in the last month and a half, booking trends have decreased 30-35%. Because of the custom and border patrol changes and what can pass through there has been negative press in Germany and Norwegian countries and it has caused booking patterns to drop. Guides are seeing a lot of domestic travel bookings and it is up. Seeing a big trend in “romance travel” – couples celebrating anniversaries, marriages, etc.

- Graydon Pearson reported that Utah reports show that hotel business in 2025 Q1 has grown domestically. Concerns still exist with economic uncertainty and it is hard to anticipate what will happen.
- Kevin Smith reported that the Utah Division of Arts & Museums recently held a meeting for the leadership of all organizations throughout the state. Groups were organized geographically and also as similar facilities. Theatres, in general, are expecting numbers to be flat and not much growth. Cultural Arts are concerned about federal funding.
- Shayne Wittwer reached out to area DMOs. Sanpete, Beaver and Sevier counties said they are watching the tariffs and exchange rates, although they don't have as many international visitors. Sanpete is seeing slow growth with most of it being OHV, and said he would like to see a bigger off-roading campaign.
- Sevier has kept busy with a lot of events and is forecasting the same as last year, and they are excited about new trails near Pando. Feeling very encouraged with new events and a lot of activity in the county.
- Cedar City is reporting down and forecasting down but not in a drastic way. WalletHub named Cedar City the third-best small city to start a business in April. In spite of the poor snow season, southern ski resorts reported good results. Beaver County did not report any big changes.
- Washington county could be affected by fewer Canadian travelers and will be watching that.
- Kym Buttschardt shared that Davis and Weber counties rely heavily on federal defense spending. First quarter of 2025, lost 6,000 room nights.
- Lesha Coltharp reported Daggett County has a new tourism director and they are looking forward to a busy summer with big events. Carbon County is looking forward to upcoming events as well. Hotels are busy with a large solar project going on and in the next three to four years will be getting a new hotel.
- Uintah County is excited as Red Fleet State Park has reopened. It has a new campground, hiking trails and non-motorized launch area. Spring break numbers for the county were good. Phenomenon ticket sales are up from last year. Visitors from 43 states and five countries have registered for September.
- Joan Hammer reported Box Elder County's hotel partners reported 2024 was down but Q1 of 2025 looks pretty good. Visitor numbers to sites and activities have been good and looking forward to a fun summer of events.
- Willard Bay State Park has completed a renovation and plans to install the 48 foot golden spike at the park are moving forward. Hope to be completed by summer of 2026.
- Also it is the 100-year anniversary of the Box Elder Fair and Rodeo. Many events are planned around this and the PRCA rodeo is sold out.
- Melva Sine reported on the Utah restaurant industry. SB-91 did pass so counties should be getting a little more income from TRCC tax since grocery stores and convenience stores that operate restaurants on site will be collecting taxes. The state currently has 5062 eating establishments. More than 145,000 employees and this includes food distributors and related industries. This is more than 9% of employment in the state.
- Watching national issues closely including Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) as seeing recommendations that will impact our restaurants, and also watching no taxes on tips issues and discussions.
- Supporting our restaurants on immigration issues and how to help their employees who are concerned.

MEETING ADJOURNED