

**Utah Office of Tourism  
Board Meeting  
Friday, September 10, 2021  
Bryce Canyon Grand Hotel – Ponderosa Conference Room**

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**Members Present:** Lance Syrett, Kym Buttschardt, Mike Taylor, Shayne Wittwer, Glen Overton, Elaine Gizler, Sara Toliver, Brian Merrill, Nathan Rafferty, Greg Miller

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**Members Excused:**

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**Staff:** Vicki Varela, Julia Barnhouse, Dave Williams, Celina Sinclair, Becky Keeney, Rachel Bremer, Denise Jordan, Bianca Lyon, Anna Loughridge, Flint Timmins, Kelly Day

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**Visitors:** Sydnie Furton, Jared Berrett, Jennifer Wesselhoff, Brent Chamberlain, Bill Scoffield, Falyn Owens, Natalie Randall, Christopher Wehri, Jean Seiler, Gayle Pollock, Cary Decco, Jamie Skidmore, Jonathan Smithgall, Kylie Kullack, Jenae Westhoff, David Tebbs, Brad Cowan, Ryan Cotam, Terry Cotam, Brad Cowan, Jim Ireland, Brian Cambria, Ethan Koehler, Robert Stephenson

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## **WELCOME**

Lance Syrett called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone to the Bryce Canyon Grand Hotel.

## **MINUTES**

**MOTION: MIKE TAYLOR MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE AUGUST 11, 2021 MEETING THAT WAS HELD IN OGDEN. SARA TOLIVER SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

## **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Vicki Varela, Managing Director, Utah Office of Tourism (UOT), reported on the following items:

- Thanked Falyn for her leadership and good work for the State.
- Governor's Workforce Roundtable – we are one of many industries in the state with a poor workforce. No update currently, but working to show this critical need to Governor Cox. Some of the items that we are looking to target are childcare for women, military spouses and immigration reform.
- Tourism Hall of Fame – It was a privilege to honor and recognize Sara Toliver and Dave Williams at the Tourism Conference.
- UOT Awards:
  - Our office received various Mercury Awards, sponsored by the U.S. Travel Association.
  - VisitUtah.com won an award. Thanked Rosie Serago, Andrew Gillman, Hanson Dodge and Love Communications.
  - We received various recognitions for our COVID communication strategy. Thanked Dave Williams, Becky Keeney, Rosie Serago, Andrew Gillman, Denise

Jordan, Lorraine Daly, Sandra Salvas, Melissa Kinney, Love Communications and Struck.

- \$700,000 is being allocated to traditional and Forever Mighty® grant programs. The money is a result from a previous effort to build a St. George welcome center. In 2017, the project was stopped because the state did not support the welcome center. Big thanks to Dan Hemmert, Bianca Lyon, Co-Op Committee, and Kelly Day for their creativity on this.
- Outdoor Recreation Commission – Vicki is serving on the new commission to help build an outdoor recreation infrastructure and economy.
- Securing \$3.7M ARPA funds directly to UOT. Will report more at the October board meeting.
- Diversity, equity, inclusion and access – We need to improve. UOT’s content and creative team has updated our messaging but we can step up in other ways. Dave Williams is leading that effort.
- Jennifer Wesselhoff, Jared Berrett, and Kane County Commissioner Brent Chamberlain have been recommended to the Governor to fill the three vacant seats on the Tourism Board. If approved, the Governor will then forward to the Senate for review and approval. Elaine Gizler has accepted a new position with San Juan County and will vacate her seat on the board, but will serve until her replacement is named.

## **CO-OP MARKETING COMMITTEE UPDATE**

Kym Buttschart, Chair of the Cooperative Marketing Committee, shared the following update:

The Utah Office of Tourism secured \$700,000 for the potential build of a welcome center in St. George. In 2017 the project was stopped because the state decided that our office should not be responsible for managing welcome centers. The additional \$700,000 allowed us to fully fund all of the traditional applications that received a score of 80 or more and all of the Forever Mighty® applications that scored 75 or higher. A copy of the updated amounts is included in the minutes, and a summary of both grants is provided below.

### **Traditional Co-op Marketing Summary:**

A total of 72 applications were received from 22 counties requesting \$5,819,072. Fifteen of those applications came in asking for \$10,000 or less and were reviewed and scored by staff. The committee held oral interviews over two- and one-half days with the remaining 57 applicants via in-person and ZOOM. The Co-op Committee met following the interviews to review the scores and budget and recommends funding 66 of the applications. None of the applications received full funding due to being oversubscribed right from the beginning. Funding was determined by using the cumulative score as a percentage, minus 1%.

### **Forever Mighty® Pilot Program Summary:**

The Forever Mighty® pilot program was designed to encourage Utah destinations and organizations to support responsible travel campaigns and initiatives. The purpose of this program is to leverage state and partner funding to elevate Forever Mighty messages to travelers and encourage thoughtful behaviors that preserve our natural wonders and enrich our communities. We received a total of 25 applications requesting \$776,749. We interviewed 17 applicants that requested over \$10,000. With the limited budget for the new program, we were only able to fund 8 of the applications - again, with none of them receiving full funding. Funding was determined by using the cumulative score as a percentage.

## INTERNATIONAL UPDATE

Rachel Bremer, Tourism Global Markets Director, Utah Office of Tourism, gave the following update ([presentation](#)):

- FY22
  - National Forecasts
  - Flights/Industry Updates
  - Markets
  - Integrated marketing
    - Travel Trade
    - PR
    - Social
    - Consumer
- Upcoming Flight Route Resumptions
  - Aeromexico
    - Guadalajara (GDL): Daily service resumes Sep. 8
  - American
    - Miami (MIA): Seasonal service resumes Dec. 16
  - Delta
    - Calgary (YYC): Tentatively resumes Oct. 11
    - Paris (CDG): Tentatively Resumes Oct. 31
    - Vancouver (YVR): Tentatively resumes Dec. 18
    - London (LHR): Tentatively resumes March 26
    - Toronto (YYZ): Tentatively resumes May 5
  - KLM
    - Amsterdam (AMS): Tentatively resumes March 27
- Industry Reports and Restrictions
  - Canada has opened for travel from the EU effective September 7
  - EU removed the US from its “safe list”
  - TO’s have rescheduled fall ’21 travel to ’22
  - Waiting for US announcement of borders opening
  - Pre-selling ’22, EBB and pent-up-demand
- International Staff Update
  - UOT Global Markets Team
    - Rachel Bremer, Global Markets Director
    - Zach Fyne, Global Markets Specialist
    - Jody Blaney, Global Markets Specialist
    - TBA, Global Content & Tour Specialist
  - In market rep firms
    - Travel Link Marketing, China (b2b)
    - China Luxury Advisors, China (b2c)
    - Canuckiwi, AU/NZ, Canada
    - KBC, UK/Ireland
    - Rep & Co., France/Belgium
    - Harwardt Marketing, Germany/Switzerland/Austria India, Aviareps
  - Integrated Strategy
    - Travel Trade
      - IPW

- Brand USA Travel Week EU
- RTO Visitor Readiness Training Southern Utah
- Public Relations
  - Irish Daily Mail
  - Maryana Mijares MX
  - Marck Gutt- Don Viajes- MX
  - IPW
- Social Media
  - Always on organic
  - Paid social
  - Social listening
- Consumer
  - Brand partnerships
  - Activations
  - B2b/b2c
  - Global buy/Love Communications/Affinity/Programmatic/ Brand USA

## MARKETING COMMITTEE REPORT

- Traveler Sentiment Reporting Update
  - Jonathan Smithgall, Vice President Digital Marketing and Media, Love Communications, gave the following update ([presentation](#)):
    - 59.4% of travelers state that recent news about increasing “Delta” cases makes them less interested in traveling right now.
    - 33.9% of respondents have postponed an upcoming trip specifically due to the Delta variant, while 27.3% have cancelled an upcoming trip.
    - 68.6% of respondents said that if they thought a destination was not welcoming to people like themselves, they would be unlikely to visit.
    - Nearly 70% of domestic travel planned this week is for the month of September
    - 70.5% of travelers support cities reinstating indoor mask requirements.
    - 58.9% of residents would support an indoor vaccine mandate program in their home community.
    - Ski/Snowboard 2021/2022
      - Overnight ski vacations: perception of being safe
        - When asked: At this moment, how safe would you feel taking an overnight ski vacation this season....
          - 43.1% felt safe
          - 63.9% felt safe
      - Overnight Ski Vacations: Repeat Visitation
        - 64% of skiers who have traveled for an overnight vacation in the past three years plan to return to a previously visited destination.
      - Overnight Ski Vacations: Expected Travel
        - 51% of ski vacationers plan to take a road trip for their overnight vacation, with 40% planning to fly.

- Southern Utah+ Spring FY2021 Integrated Marketing Campaign Report
  - Jonathan Smithgall, Vice President Digital Marketing and Media, Love Communications, Kylie Kullack, Head of Client Engagement, Struck, and Becky Keeney, Tourism Director of Marketing and Operations, Utah Office of Tourism, gave the following update ([presentation](#)):
    - Digital Campaign Performance Overview
      - The Southern Utah + campaign delivered more than 328k pageviews for VisitUtah.com.
      - Our CTV campaign has driven more than 123k pageviews, with our custom audiences performing the most efficiently.
      - We tracked more than \$11.4M in hotel revenue for an estimated revenue of \$151.9M. This is a 32% increase compared to our 2019 campaign.
        - ADR: \$158.54
        - Observed Hotel Bookings: 35,481
      - People exposed to our campaign have been 204% more likely to arrive in market.
    - Ad exposed ADRs are 15% stronger than 2019.
    - We can also see that ad exposed travelers stay on average 8% longer than ad exposed travelers in 2019.
    - Our CTV campaign tracked more than \$10.3M in hotel revenue for this year's campaign, roughly 71K travelers.
    - TripAdvisor
      - 4 Trip Guides:
        - Off the I-70: Unforgettable
        - Scenery
        - Traverse Utah's GSE Region
        - The Other Zion
      - Explorer's Guide to S. Utah
      - Red Emerald POIs
      - 100% SOV
      - Tourism Sentiment Brand Study
      - 30,801 pageviews with ~1 min time.
      - Total Economic Impact: \$18,920,309
      - Hotel Economic Impact: \$4,289,110
      - Attractions Economic Impact: \$793,592
      - ADR: \$205 (7% higher than non-exposed)
    - AFAR
      - Interactive map hub
      - 4 regional journeys
      - Off-peak and lesser-known experiences
      - Responsible visitation
      - 30K pageviews

- Average 6:39 mins
- 3,805 hours
- Top post:10:31 mins | 930 clicks
- Outside Online
  - Custom Interactive Forever Mighty Experience
  - Dark Skies
  - Connect With Culture
  - Deep Travel\*
  - Inclusive, Accessible and Soul-Awakening\*
  - Adventure to Give
  - 5 Tips for Mindful Travel
  - Hub + Content 96K views
  - Top Articles: It Pays to Go Deep in Southern Utah & Ultimate Guide to Darkest Skies (+3:36)
- Paid Search
  - 25% better site engagement
  - Key Learnings
    - Campaigns and Ad Groups
      - Comparing against late last summer (July - October 2020), data shows a strong increase in impressions served for Utah's less trafficked destinations.
      - Articles have proven to be great landing pages
        - Opportunity to review article landing pages for conversion opportunities
    - Bookings Data
      - This Southern Utah+ campaign drove a similar ADR and length of stay to the rest of the media campaign.
    - Targeting
      - Custom Adara audiences, remarketing, and affinity audiences are all performing well, no clear leaders
      - LA, Phoenix, Vegas, Denver, San Fran., Dallas, New York are top markets. In-line with overall targeting
    - Next Steps
      - Capitalize on PPC audience engagement with new, purpose-made landing pages
      - Audit campaign for winter relevance
- VisitUtah.com
  - Takeaways
    - Organic search optimizations are paying off with YOY increases and continue to be our biggest traffic driver to the site. We need to look into replicating success of the 15 Must-do Adventures in Kanab article.

- We need to do more to encourage regional travel on VisitUtah.com, and drive traffic to this content.
- We should continue to improve internal linking to Forever Mighty pages and content. As part of EDA reflections, we should analyze success of /forever and /prepare in more details.
- Social Media
  - Influencer + Ambassador Learnings
    - Takeaways:
      - Partnering with a content creator active on multiple platforms allowed us to authentically connect with a wider audience
      - Paid support through branded content ads enabled us to extend the reach of our influencer's content beyond their organic audience, reaching new users interested in traveling to Southern Utah
      - Consider providing influencers with a unique promo code for partner accommodations and experiences to promote through their social content
    - Looking Ahead:
      - Now that Instagram has officially announced it is a video-first platform, we should continue to make short, vertical videos designed for mobile a top priority when collaborating with content creators.
      - We are rewarded when we test new platforms! Look to diversify spend and reach through emerging platform products to work directly with creators.
- Public Relations
  - Southern Utah+ Spring PR efforts generated ~22.4M total print / online and social impressions.
  - Coverage included 4 dedicated print placements, 14 digital placements.
  - 95% of all coverage was in a KPI outlet in key regional and national publications and media outlets
  - Hosted 4 media for first-hand Southern Utah+ experiences during Spring 2021
  - Coverage averaged a Barcelona Principles score of 94.
  - Coverage Highlight
    - 3-page article titled, "Surreal Landscapes: Exploring Utah's Impressive National and State Parks," in March issue of Denver Life Magazine
    - Result of hosting freelance writer Robin Soslow on an individual media visit (IMV) for 7 days in September of 2020

- Highlights dark sky parks, guided experiences, places to stay, road trip “must-do’s” and more throughout Goblin Valley State Park, Capitol Reef National Park, Kodachrome Basin State Park and Bryce Canyon National Park
- Denver Life Magazine maintains a print circulation of 40K readers
- Barcelona Principles score of 99
- Key Learnings
  - Trending Stories/Storylines:
    - The Return of the Great American Road Trip
    - Utah is Ready for Its Dark Sky Moment, Leading the World with 24 International Dark Sky Places
    - The Healing Power of the Great Outdoors
  - Media Sentiment:
    - Individual Media Visits > Group Familiarization Trips
    - Longer Stays = Longer Stories
    - Journalists are doing more with less. Leveraging our owned content channels (video, Utah U, website, etc.) gave us more control over storylines and allowed us to tease in-market itineraries
    - Safety, comfort and the guest experience are top-of-mind
  - Looking Ahead: Trends That Will Continue into 2022
    - Slow Travel: Travelers look to stay in destinations longer and support local communities; modes of transportation change
    - Regenerative Travel: Echoes agricultural practices meant to reverse climate change, not merely slow it down
    - The Great Outdoors: Wilderness destinations and mountain towns continue to be the most sought after for travel; bucket list travel included
- SMARI
  - Ad Effectiveness Research
    - Wave 1: awareness and impact of advertising
      - Ability to reach audience / generate recall
      - Assess cost per household reached
      - Ability to communicate key messages
      - Ability to build perceptions and generate visitation interest
      - Explore changes in performance from past campaigns
      - Provide insights and recommendations to guide / refine future campaigns



- Wave 2: subsequent travel / ROI (fielding late Sept. / early Oct.)
- Awareness: ~1/3 of consumers are aware of SU+ advertising (31%)
- Cost per ad aware household: \$0.16 (industry benchmark is \$0.31)
- Creative evaluation ratings
- Communication of attributes compared to industry benchmarks
- Top 10% for many - Excellent
- Top 25% for majority - Good
- Advertising effective at generating Utah travel interest
- Utah residents at 4.3 / 5! Regional and national ~3.8 / 5
- Utah Image
  - Ad-aware visitors and non-visitors rate attributes more highly than those unaware
- Information Gathering
- Ad-aware seek out more information about Utah leisure travel, 175% greater than unaware
- Likelihood to Visit Utah in the Next Year
  - Ad-aware visitors and non-visitors see huge boosts 72% / 217% greater than unaware
  - Strongest measured in the past four years for both recent visitors and non-visitors
  - Foreshadows strong impact on actual travel, ROI wave will confirm
- EDA Grant Forever Mighty Campaign Update
  - Jonathan Smithgall, Vice President Digital Marketing and Media, Love Communications, gave the following update ([presentation](#)):
    - EDA Grant Goal
      - Strike a balance between promoting visitation of the state to support local economies while also attracting the right type of traveler who will be a steward of what makes our state a wonderful destination.
        - Forever Mighty has been that initiative to message and educate travelers before they arrive on how to be sustainable travelers.
        - Provide economic value to our gateway communities
    - Changes to Original EDA Grant Application
      - New Flight Dates:
        - June, 2021 - September 30, 2022
      - Revised Campaign Objective: Inspire Utah and Regional travel to outlying communities and support local tourism in recovery from COVID-19.
      - Removed Out-of-Home in favor of more targeted and trackable CTV.
      - Salt Lake Tribune included as an additional local news partner

- How we will Measure Success
  - Adara Impact: (real time)
    - All partners in this campaign will be monitored by our hotel and air travel tracking partner to report out on campaign ROI's.
  - Epsilon Net Economic Impact (NEI): Mid/Post campaign
    - Our programmatic partner, Epsilon, will monitor all in market spend patterns from travelers who have been exposed to our advertising campaign. This will provide us with a campaign Net Economic Impact Report.
  - Google Surveys:
    - Monitor intent to visit our state during the campaign.
  - STR Data:
    - Utah Office of Tourism will track the origin markets of travelers into the state.
- The Audiences
  - Utah Residents
  - Regional (drive) markets

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Kym Buttschardt thanked Natalie Randall and Visit Ogden for the successful Tourism Conference.

Natalie Randall gave a brief UTIA update:

The Tourism Conference had 403 attendees. 104 of them participated in service projects, 290 in the Taste of Ogden, and 290 in the destination discovery activities.

The 2022 Tourism Conference is scheduled in Vernal on September 27th – 30th.

Jamie Skidmore asked for guidance in managing poor parking lots and trail management in the popular state parks that don't have updated infrastructure.

## **MEETING ADJOURNED**

## Revised 2021 Co-op & Forever Mighty® Awards

Type	Round 2021 Applicant	6/30/2021 Amount Requested	8/11/2021 Original Allocation	9/7/2021 New Amount Awarded
Traditional	Alta Chamber & Visitors Bureau	\$7,500.00	\$6,263.00	\$7,500.00
Forever Mighty	Business Owners of Bluff	\$17,767.00	\$0.00	\$17,767.00
Forever Mighty	Carbon County Office of Tourism	\$8,333.00	\$7,816.35	\$8,333.00
Forever Mighty	Carbon County Office of Tourism	\$23,666.00	\$0.00	\$23,666.00
Forever Mighty	Emery County Tourism Office	\$50,000.00	\$0.00	\$50,000.00
Traditional	Emery County Tourism Office	\$19,095.00	\$15,161.00	\$19,095.00
Traditional	Escalante Canyon Art Festival	\$10,000.00	\$7,900.00	\$10,000.00
Traditional	Explore Utah Valley - Meetings	\$77,207.50	\$61,612.00	\$77,207.50
Traditional	Explore Utah Valley - Sundance	\$8,000.00	\$6,640.00	\$8,000.00
Traditional	Flaming Gorge Tourism	\$29,400.00	\$23,402.00	\$29,400.00
Forever Mighty	Garfield County Office of Tourism	\$50,000.00	\$40,875.00	\$50,000.00
Forever Mighty	Grand Staircase Escalante Partners	\$9,900.00	\$9,147.60	\$9,900.00
Traditional	Greater Zion Convention & Tourism - German	\$45,000.00	\$38,102.00	\$45,000.00
Traditional	Greater Zion Convention & Tourism - Meet	\$9,698.00	\$7,855.00	\$9,698.00
Forever Mighty	Greater Zion Convention & Tourism Office	\$50,000.00	\$0.00	\$50,000.00
Traditional	Greater Zion Convention & Tourism Office	\$250,000.00	\$203,000.00	\$250,000.00
Forever Mighty	Kane County Office of Tourism & Film Commission	49,333.00	\$0.00	49,333.00
Traditional	Kane County Office of Tourism & Film Commission	\$275,000.00	\$221,100.00	\$275,000.00
Forever Mighty	Loveland Living Planet Aquarium	\$4,000.00	\$0.00	\$4,000.00
Traditional	Moab Area Travel Council	\$150,000.00	\$122,625.00	\$150,000.00
Forever Mighty	National Ability Center	\$10,000.00	\$0.00	\$10,000.00
Forever Mighty	Park City Chamber/Convention & Visitors Bureau	\$50,000.00	\$0.00	\$50,000.00
Forever Mighty	Piute County	\$10,000.00	\$8,560.00	\$10,000.00
Forever Mighty	San Juan County/Econ Dev & Visitor Services	46,916.67	\$38,284.00	46,916.67
Forever Mighty	Ski Utah	\$50,000.00	\$41,300.00	\$50,000.00
Traditional	Ski Utah	\$275,000.00	\$227,150.00	\$275,000.00
Traditional	Uintah County Travel & Tourism	\$165,545.00	\$131,443.00	\$165,545.00
Forever Mighty	Visit Cedar City - Brian Head - Dest. Dev.	\$50,000.00	\$43,900.00	\$50,000.00
Forever Mighty	Visit Ogden	\$50,000.00	\$10,117.05	\$50,000.00
Traditional	Visit Ogden - Leisure	\$275,000.00	\$221,100.00	\$275,000.00
Traditional	Visit Salt Lake	\$275,000.00	\$232,100.00	\$275,000.00
Forever Mighty	Wayne County Office of Tourism	\$13,000.00	\$0.00	\$13,000.00