



Tourism Advisory Council Meeting
Monday, August 2, 2021
12:00 PM – 2:00 PM
JW Marriott Scottsdale Camelback Inn
5402 E. Lincoln Drive, Scottsdale, AZ 85253

MINUTES

TAC Members Present: César Chávez, Brent DeRaad, Heidi Hansen, Lonnie Lillie, Phil Lovas, Jeff Meyer, Cal Sheehy, Ben Stewart **Members Absent:** Kelly Bostock, Terry Gorton, Robert Uribe, Deborah Ostreicher

AOT Staff Present: Debbie Johnson, Becky Blaine, Josh Coddington, Jamie Daer, Colleen Floyd, Alix Skelpsa Ridgway, Pamela Shand **Guests:** Angie Briggs, US Travel Association, Trever Cartwright, Coraggio Group

Welcome and Call to Order - *Debbie Johnson, Director*

Debbie Johnson welcomed council members, guests and staff and called for a brief introduction by meeting attendees.

Motion was made to approve meeting minutes from June 22, 2020 virtual TAC meeting. Motion was seconded and approved.

US Travel Association Update - *Angie Briggs, Vice President Industry Relations, US Travel Association*

Angie thanked the council members for their time and highlighted how the USTA continues to promote the Hospitality and Commerce Jobs Recovery Act which includes temporary tax incentives to help restore business travel. Angie outlined top priorities in connecting tourism entities with relief resources. With the support of major hotel CEOs, USTA continues to work with the Biden administration to reopen the Canada and Mexico borders. USTA is planning a webinar for state tourism and DMO on [Assessing Recovery](#).

AOT Strategic Plan Update - *Trever Cartwright, Founder/Partner, Coraggio Group*

Trever highlighted AOT's one-year recovery plan, three-year strategic plan, and ten-year destination management plan. The one-page strategic plan handout is a blueprint for 2021-2024. Trever recapped the five areas that are being emphasized as AOT priorities:

- strengthening local economies;
- honoring culture and heritage statewide;
- protecting and preserving the environment;
- engaging residence and community; and
- enlisting industry stakeholders as stewards of the destination's future.

Trever indicated that a culture shift has occurred and the AOT strategic plan is up for the challenge.

Arizona Office of Tourism Update

AOT Audit: Debbie Johnson

Debbie reported that AOT has concluded a mandatory agency audit by the Auditor General office. The audit will include input from DMOs and a 10 year look back. As a result of initial conversations with the auditors, AOT has already initiated annual conflict of interest agreements for all staff and council members and a 10 year sustainability and destination management plan. AOT will share the final audit report once it is received.

AOT FY2022 Budget - Debbie Johnson

Debbie reported the FY2022 projected budget for AOT is \$12,995.829. Division allocations are 50% marketing; 21% payroll; 7.9% trade/media; 4.8% public affairs/executive office; 4% research; 3.9% fulfillment; and 3.3% admin/IT.

Visit Arizona Initiative - Debbie Johnson

Debbie outlined the recent announcement of the Visit Arizona Initiative (VAI) from Governor Ducey using American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding. The plan responds to negative economic impacts to tourism, travel and hospitality industries. Debbie advised that grant applicants must be able to:

- demonstrate negative impact from the pandemic
- provide scope of work
- provide a project budget
- provide metrics

More information, including webinar details and FAQs, can be found at [Visit Arizona Initiative Grants Program](#). Email questions to grants@tourism.az.gov.

Appreciate AZ Toolkit - Debbie Johnson

AOT partnership with Leave No Trace has led to the development of [Appreciate AZ Toolkit](#) which includes brochures, posters, social media assets and talking points. The LNT educational digital courses provide meaningful connections and conversation scenarios created to protect Arizona's natural wonders. These iconic posters are available during the conference.

Government & Community Affairs - Alix Skelpsa Ridgway, Director of Government & Community Affairs

Alix updated the council on recent legislative actions that AOT is tracking: Fantasy Sports betting (H2772); spirituous liquor delivery, off-sale permits (H2773); Peer-to-Peer car sharing (HS1720) and the general appropriation, of which AOT will receive over \$8.5 million.

Funding Opportunities

Alix reported that the Visit Arizona Initiative is in response to the negative economic impacts to the tourism, travel and hospitality industries. The VAI grants were announced to be administered by AOT, as follows:

- #1 Visit Arizona Partnership - \$25 Million;
- #2 Visit Arizona Marketing - \$20 million;
- #3A Outdoor Tourism Revitalization - \$8 million; and
- #3B Legacy Golf Course Revitalization - \$8 million.

Alix concluded that federal funding requires stringent processes in application and reporting. Grants will be awarded using equitable and geographical diverse methods.

Arizona Meetings Campaign - Becky Blaine, Deputy Director

Through CARES funding, Becky reported that last fall AOT launched the [Arizona Means Business](#) campaign to raise awareness among meeting planners of Arizona as a safe and responsible meeting and business destination. The campaign results included increased awareness with over 15 million impressions; over 113,000 combined clicks to the website; and just under 5,500 users to the ArizonaMeetings.com. In addition AOT presented at Skift and Event MB, positioning Arizona as a thought leader within the meetings industry. Over 3 million CTV impressions and over 80 email and e-newsletter inclusions highlighting content provided by AOT and partners.

Arizona Tourism Workforce Campaign

Becky announced the launch of the [AZ Tourism Jobs](#) website for tourism industry job seekers. AOT created a partnership with Pipeline AZ and Arizona@Work to actively recruit and promote jobs listings and resources. In June 2021, AOT hosted a live [virtual hiring event](#) with a broad outreach which resulted in 44 employers, 253 job seekers and 135 employment applications were received. Becky added the long term solution for connecting job seekers with career opportunities will be facilitated through a Visit Arizona Initiative grant to the Arizona Lodging and Tourism Association (AZLTA).

AOT Research - Colleen Floyd, Director of Research

Colleen reported that during AOT unprecedented year, staff relied on data from the corona virus travel sentiment index report, which allowed our team to study recovery data in real-time. Review of the data led to revisiting target persona, with the support of Destination Analysts, to identify travelers' motivation: e.g. shopping, warm weather, and luxury experiences. Colleen added that while the data is exciting and research is ongoing -- Arizona manages to still attract its tried-and-true visitors. [AOT Data and Trends](#)

Rediscover Arizona - Jamie Daer, Director of Advertising

Jamie reported that AOT advertising campaign strategies quickly pivoted messaging from pre-COVID campaign to our Rediscover Arizona inspiration campaign. Jamie added that during the pandemic, AOT took a proactive approach to "know before you go" by providing a comprehensive statewide opening and closing list of attractions, in addition to [COVID-19 Updates](#) for Arizona travelers.

Debbie, concluded that this was a unique year from an advertising perspective as travelers continued to come to Arizona during the pandemic. AOT's goal was to promote a message of safety and responsibility with our attention on economic recovery, stabilization, and rebuilding.

Year of the Road Trip - Josh Coddington, Director of Communications and PIO

Josh outlined the [Year of the Road Trip](#) campaign that launched January 2021 to promote responsible travel throughout Arizona. The campaign utilizes travelers' interest in the outdoors and small towns to support communities by suggesting multiple stops in several places, allowing travelers to choose trip length as well as easy access to AZDHS guidelines for safe travels.

Open Discussions & Closing - Debbie Johnson

Debbie concluded the business portion of the meeting and opened the meeting up for comments. Council member, Representative Chávez thanked Debbie and her team for their ongoing support and stewardship. Council member Phil Lovas praised AOT for its balanced marketing approach in response to the pandemic.

Next meeting date to be determined.

Meeting adjourned at 2:05 PM