



# Strategic Plan 2020-2022

Idaho Travel &  
Convention Industry  
Grant Program

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# BACKGROUND

## History

The travel and tourism industry is the third largest in Idaho, contributing to more than 46,000 jobs statewide and nearly \$1 billion in annual wages. Visitors to Idaho spend more than \$3.7 billion annually, which pays for essential services like education, transportation and public safety, and reduces the tax burden by \$740 annually for Idaho households.

Recognizing the need to support this vital industry through statewide, regional and local marketing efforts, the Idaho Legislature enacted the Idaho Travel and Convention Industry Grant Program on July 1, 1982. This program is funded through a 2% tax on all hotel, motel, private campground, RV park and vacation rental stays in Idaho and then divided into three sections with specific purposes:

- 45% of total collections go to Idaho Commerce and Idaho Tourism to fund statewide tourism promotion efforts.
- 10% of total collections go to Idaho Commerce and Idaho Tourism to fund department administrative expenses in support of statewide tourism promotion efforts.
- 45% of total collections fund a grant program for statewide, regional and local nonprofit organizations (with the promotion of travel and tourism as their primary purpose) to use within their respective area.

The program has grown significantly since its creation. In fiscal year 2019, \$13.6 million was collected, resulting in over \$6.1 million being awarded to statewide, regional and local nonprofit travel and tourism programs.

Created in conjunction with the Idaho Travel and Convention Industry Grant Program, the Idaho Travel Council (ITC) was established to provide counsel to Idaho Commerce and Idaho Tourism regarding the promotion and marketing of travel and tourism in Idaho.

Appointed by the governor, the ITC is an eight-member council comprised of one representative from each of Idaho's seven planning regions and one member serving in an at-large, statewide capacity. Council members must be knowledgeable and actively involved in the state's travel and tourism industry and are responsible for reviewing and recommending grant application and funding requests submitted by eligible nonprofit organizations.

## Idaho Travel Council Members



Kayoko Magnus  
Region I



Arthur McIntosh  
Region II



Pat Morandi  
Region III



Shawn Barigar  
Region IV



Matthew Hunter  
Region V



Lonnie Allen  
Region IV



Mike Fitzpatrick  
Region VII  
Council Vice Chair



Richard Shaffer  
At-Large  
Council Chair

**Supported by Idaho Commerce staff:**  
 Matt Borud, Marketing & Innovation Administrator  
 Diane Norton, Tourism Manager  
 Ewa Szewczyk, Grants & Contracts Manager

## Purpose

With the rise in program tax collections, grant funding requests have increased with applicants becoming more diverse and sophisticated. In response, the ITC decided in May 2019 that strategic priorities were required to better define program expectations for grantees and to ensure continued success. This decision was multifaceted:

- Despite the program's tremendous growth, the ITC observed several untapped opportunities for improvement, including internal and external communication.
- From a funding perspective, Idaho is one of the smallest programs in the country; therefore, unifying all stakeholders behind a common mission and vision as well as strategic priorities is imperative to being focused and efficient with decision-making and resources.
- Creating a strategic plan and working to achieve its goals by 2022 better equips all stakeholders to advance future objectives.

The purpose of this strategic plan is to:

- Provide guidance to all program stakeholders – grantees, industry partners, community organizations and elected leadership.
- Articulate the ITC's priorities.
- Serve as an accountability measurement tool for future actions.



# Process

This plan was developed through a process consisting of three ITC strategic planning sessions intermixed with several partial group working sessions.



# **VISION + MISSION**

## **Vision for the tourism industry in Idaho**

To be the best place to live and visit.

## **Vision for the grant program**

A thriving travel industry supported by leveraged partnerships and resources.

## **Mission for the grant program**

Provide communities with information, inspiration and resources to promote authentic Idaho experiences.

# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

To maximize impact and ensure this plan directly connects to the grant program mission and vision, ITC members considered the following prompts when brainstorming strategic priorities for 2020-2022:

- What gaps exist between the grant program’s mission and its current status?
- What is most important to accomplish in the next two years as we advance the mission?
- What is needed to move the grant program closer to its long-term vision?

Through extensive ideation and discussion, three strategic priorities have been identified as the most critical and instrumental focus areas for advancing the mission and vision over the next two years.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES		
<p><b>Process and efficiency:</b> Improve processes and drive efficiency within the grant program.</p>	<p><b>Best practices and partnerships:</b> Leverage best practices and partnerships to increase impact and reduce redundancies.</p>	<p><b>Educate and increase awareness:</b> Communicate the value of the tourism industry to Idaho’s economy and the resources available to help communities attract visitors and support business growth.</p>
KEY OBJECTIVES		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase transparency.</li> <li>2. Bolster accountability.</li> <li>3. Identify and implement application and evaluation process improvements.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify, share and educate best practices, success stories and learning opportunities.</li> <li>2. Establish and reinforce impactful grantee partnerships to reduce redundancies.</li> <li>3. Establish and reinforce impactful industry partnerships to expand reach and value.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improve community and industry outreach.</li> <li>2. Identify and grow strategic industry and destination partnerships.</li> <li>3. Champion the travel and tourism industry.</li> </ol>

In addition to tracking actions addressing each priority quarterly, the plan’s success will be accomplished through the grant program’s transformation and modernization by 2022 — including enhanced detail and sophistication of grant applications and marketing campaigns, along with increased productive partnerships and widespread understanding of the vital role tourism plays in our state.

# PRIORITY 1: PROCESS AND EFFICIENCY

## Goal

Improve processes and drive efficiency within the grant program.

## Council Sponsor

Matt Hunter

## Staff Owner

Ewa Szewczyk

## Key Objectives

1. Increase transparency.
2. Bolster accountability.
3. Identify and implement application and evaluation process improvements.

## Overview

While the Idaho travel experience is unlike any other, the Idaho Travel and Convention Industry Grant Program is equally unique. With 45% of lodging tax funds redistributed back to the hands of nonprofit tourism-related organizations, Idaho's redistribution rate is more than double that of any other state. As a result, the effectiveness and efficiency of the grant program directly and significantly impacts the overall Idaho tourism effort and its subsequent benefit to businesses and communities.

While various program and process improvements have been implemented over the past several years, it's time to take a more focused and intentional approach. Funds distributed through the program have increased substantially and new voices continue to enter the scene, making it more important than ever to strengthen processes, increase transparency and bolster accountability.

Do grantees have the tools and information needed to be successful? Do Idaho Travel Council (ITC) members have the tools and information needed to make informed, data-driven decisions? Does the current process foster communication and transparency and reinforce accountability and compliance? Is the current process efficient and streamlined, yet also comprehensive? Does the current process maximize the impact of reinvested funds?

This strategic priority will strive to answer "yes" to these questions by restructuring processes, upgrading templates, adjusting timelines, equipping grantees and ITC members, enhancing communication, setting clearer expectations and increasing accountability.

45% is a significant percentage. Improving processes will ensure the program is executed with excellence and funds are well used.



## Success Measurements

- 100% compliance with narrative and request-for-funds (RFF) submission guidelines
- Complete and timely information provided to the ITC to support well-informed funding decisions
- Grantee plans satisfy requirements
- Effective use of funds is more closely tracked and easily demonstrated

# PRIORITY 2: BEST PRACTICES AND PARTNERSHIPS

## Goal

Leverage best practices and partnerships to increase impact and reduce redundancies.

## Council Sponsor

Shawn Barigar

## Staff Owner

Diane Norton

## Key Objectives

1. Identify, share and educate on best practices, success stories and learning opportunities.
2. Establish and reinforce impactful grantee partnerships to reduce redundancies.
3. Establish and reinforce impactful industry partnerships to expand reach and value.

## Overview

Empowered by Idaho's grant program, there are numerous grantees leading highly creative, strategic and impactful efforts for tourism across the state. We want these great ideas and best practices to spread and support grantees in exploring and embracing new, innovative approaches. Through this strategic priority, ITC will focus on methods to identify, share and educate best practices across the program.

Though crucial to success, simply sharing these best practices isn't enough. To use funds effectively and maximize impact, strategic partnerships must be established and enhanced. These partnerships exist in two primary forms: between grantees and with industry partners.

In some instances, grantees have engaged in overlapping or duplicative efforts due to lack of communication and collaboration; while in other pockets, coordinated grantee collaboration produces exponential impact. For example, grantees in adjacent regions discovered they were attending the same trade shows and oftentimes speaking to interested parties about each other's region while promoting their own immediate areas. The grantees worked together to combine their intra-regional promotional efforts, share the cost of a single, unified show presence and reallocate funding for other important projects in their respective regions. This strategic priority will drive and reinforce impactful regional and intra-regional grantee partnerships to reduce redundancies, improve fund utilization and maximize impact.

Most importantly, establishing and strengthening industry partnerships is a critical component of this strategic priority — and of the grant program's overall success. With significant growth in funds, grantees have received more substantial distributions in recent years, potentially

making the need to leverage industry partnerships feel less urgent and essential. However, without effective industry engagement, the program is not realizing its full potential. This strategic priority will focus on establishing and reinforcing impactful industry partnerships to expand reach and value, benefiting both grantees and for-profit hospitality businesses.

The grant program vision is to create *a thriving travel industry supported by leveraged partnerships and resources*. Moving toward this vision is contingent upon successful execution of establishing, sharing and reinforcing best practices and strategic partnerships.

## **Success Measurements**

- Increased grantee collaboration
- Better regional and intra-regional fund utilization
- Stronger industry engagement and for-profit participation
- More effective and capable marketing and execution as a result of best practice sharing

# PRIORITY 3: EDUCATE AND INCREASE AWARENESS

## Goal

Communicate the value of the tourism industry to Idaho's economy and the resources available to help communities attract visitors and support business growth.

## Council Sponsor

Lonnie Allen

## Staff Owner

Matt Borud

## Key Objectives

1. Improve community and industry outreach.
2. Identify and grow strategic industry and destination partnerships.
3. Champion the travel and tourism industry.

## Overview

Most Idahoans — including elected officials, businesses and residents — are only minimally aware of Idaho's travel and tourism industry's economic impact. Travel to and through the state directly influences employment rates and salaries, local business revenue and tax receipts. Stronger awareness and education of the industry's impact and value are foundational to continued economic growth.

This strategic priority aims to cultivate more awareness and support through formal presentations, informal conversations and by empowering industry champions with resources needed to easily and actively share a consistent message.

The ITC's broader vision for the tourism industry is to make Idaho *the best place to live and visit*. "Live" comes first. Helping individuals and businesses across the state understand tourism's positive impact on Idaho's economy — and its impact on what it's like to live in Idaho — will fuel a cycle of industry success and statewide economic benefit.

## Success Measurements

- Presentations to state, city, county and chamber meetings throughout the year
- Ongoing research and communication of Idaho travel and tourism trends and impact
- Consistent, high-quality communication collateral provided
- Opportunities to champion awareness and advancement of the grant program are actively pursued by ITC members, Idaho Tourism and grantees

# EXECUTION PLAN

Detailed execution plans for the three strategic priorities are maintained by each priority owner. Implementation status will be reported and discussed at quarterly ITC meetings and summaries will be shared with stakeholders annually through the regional Tourism Tours and in the Idaho Commerce Annual Report.