



Strategic Plan

2024-2026

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 49,800 jobs statewide and nearly \$1.4 billion in annual wages. Visitors to Idaho spend more than \$4.8 billion annually, which pays for essential services like education, transportation and public safety, and reduces the tax burden by \$872 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 2023, \$21.3 million was collected, resulting in over \$10.3 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, Vice-Chair



Vacant
Region II



Pat Morandi
Region III



Shawn Barigar
Region IV, Chair



Crystal Nelson
Region V



Vacant
Region VI



Mike Fitzpatrick
Region VII



Earl Sullivan
At-Large

Supported by Idaho Commerce staff:

Jeremy Chase, 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:

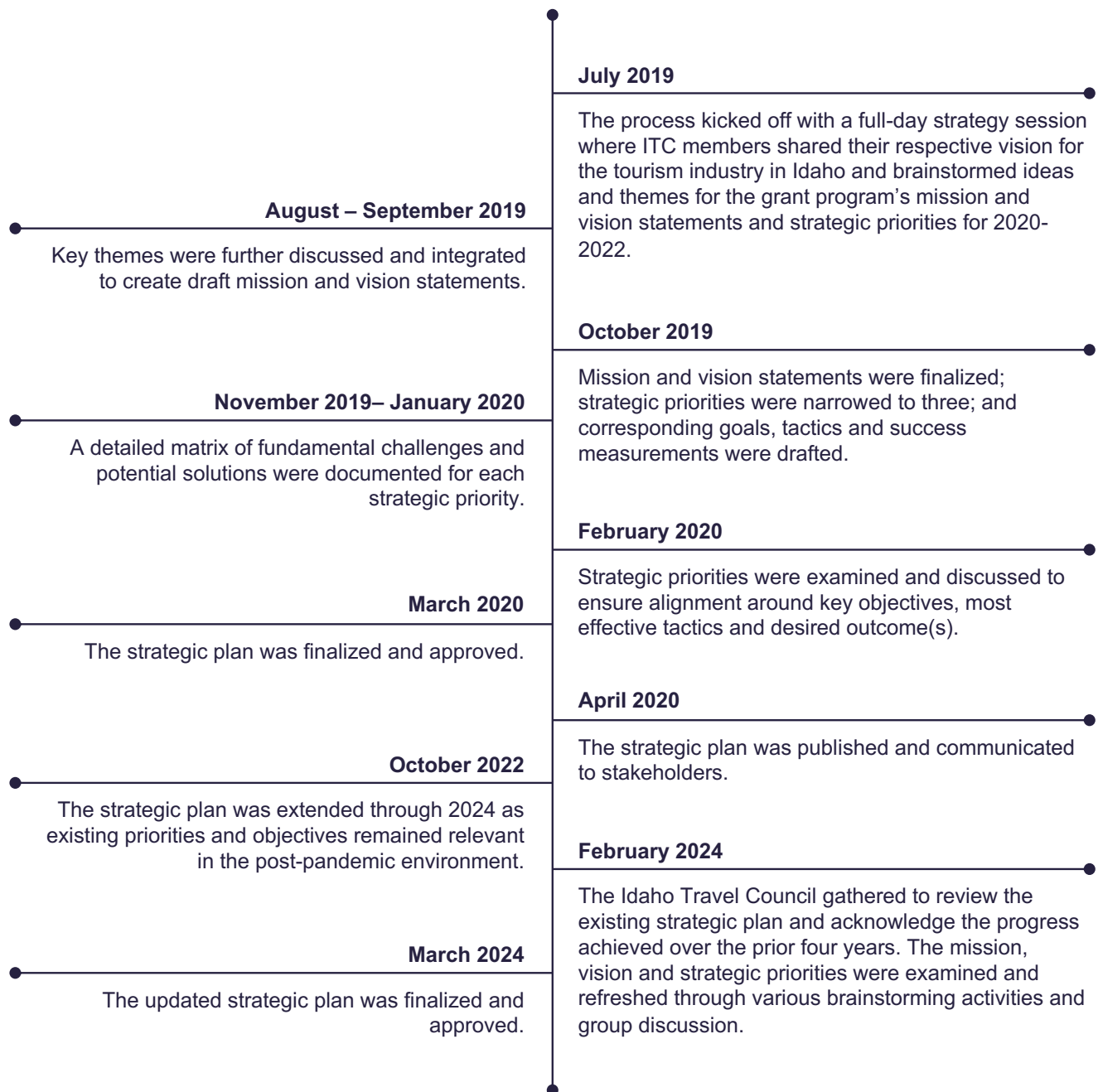
- Despite the program's tremendous growth, the ITC observed several untapped opportunities for improvement, including internal and external communication.
- From a funding perspective, Idaho is one of the smallest programs in the country; therefore, unifying all stakeholders behind a common mission and 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 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

The strategic plan is methodically created and updated through robust, interactive ITC strategic planning sessions, as outlined below.



Recent Accomplishments

Significant progress has been made through the focused efforts guided by the strategic plan. Below are a few notable accomplishments achieved since the plan's inception in 2020.

Priority 1: Process and efficiency

- Timely grantee narrative and RFF submissions increased from 60% on time to 85%.
- Strategic updates made to the handbook and forms to foster compliance and consistency.
- Improved reporting and monitoring processes implemented.

Priority 2: Best practices and partnerships

- Enhanced commitment from grantees to pursue collaboration projects and reduce redundancies. Examples include YTT/Pocatello trade shows, SWITA, NCITA and Brand USA Road Trip.
- More engagement with for-profits, including Lewis Clark Valley and Nez Perce Tribal Tourism.

Priority 3: Educate, advocate and increase awareness

- During COVID, tourism conducted virtual weekly coffee talks incorporating regional and local topics that captured a broad audience.
- Completed Tourism Resident Sentiment Study.
- Quality collateral provided, including tourism infographics, online resources, a monthly industry newsletter (Travel Pulse) and VI consumer newsletter.
- Outstanding reviews from 2022 and 2023 ICORT attendees.

VISION + MISSION

Vision for the tourism industry in Idaho

To be the most responsible and sustainable recreation destination while loved by locals.

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

The following three strategic priorities have been identified as the most critical and instrumental focus areas for advancing the mission and vision over the next three years.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES		
Process and efficiency: Maintain efficiency within the grant program to grow the return on investment.	Best practices and partnerships: Leverage best practices and partnerships to increase impact and reduce redundancies.	Educate, advocate and increase awareness: Communicate and advocate the value of the tourism industry to Idaho's economy and the resources available to help communities attract visitors and support business growth.
KEY OBJECTIVES		
1. Maintain transparency. 2. Reward accountability through recognition. 3. Simplify resources.	1. Celebrate and share best practices, success stories and learning opportunities. 2. Encourage and reinforce impactful grantee partnerships to reduce redundancies. 3. Create clear mechanism for grantees to collaborate. 4. Encourage and reinforce impactful industry partnerships to expand reach and value.	1. Improve community and industry outreach. 2. Identify and grow strategic industry advocacy and engagement, and destination partnerships. 3. Actively champion the travel and tourism industry. 4. Identify potential challenges and create mitigation plans. 5. Identify key audiences.

PRIORITY 1: PROCESS AND EFFICIENCY

Goal

Maintain efficiency within the grant program to grow the return on investment.

Council Sponsor

Earl Sullivan

Staff Owner

Jeremy Chase

Key Objectives

1. Maintain transparency.
2. Reward accountability through recognition.
3. Simplify resources.

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.

Numerous program and process improvements have been implemented over the past several years, resulting in dramatically stronger transparency, alignment and compliance.

By simplifying resources and proactively reinforcing effective grantee accountability, these recent process improvements will be sustained and ensure the program continues to be executed with excellence.

Success Measurements

- Compliance with narrative and request-for-funds (RFF) submission guidelines
- Complete and timely information provided to the ITC to support well-informed funding decisions
- Identify and recognize best practices annually

PRIORITY 2: BEST PRACTICES AND PARTNERSHIPS

Goal

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

Council Sponsor

Kayoko Magnus

Staff Owner

Nancy Richardson

Key Objectives

1. Celebrate and share best practices, success stories and learning opportunities.
2. Encourage and reinforce impactful grantee partnerships to reduce redundancies.
3. Create clear mechanism for grantees to collaborate.
4. Encourage 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 celebrate and share 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

- Increase grantee collaboration
- Better regional and intra-regional fund utilization
- Stronger industry engagement with enhanced for-profit and community participation
- Leverage collaboration between state and regional initiatives

PRIORITY 3: EDUCATE, ADVOCATE AND INCREASE AWARENESS

Goal

Communicate and advocate 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

Mike Fitzpatrick

Staff Owner

Laurie McConnell

Key Objectives

1. Increase community and industry outreach.
2. Identify and grow strategic industry advocacy and engagement, and destination partnerships.
3. Actively champion the travel and tourism industry.
4. Identify potential challenges and create mitigation plans.
5. Identify key audiences.

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 most responsible and sustainable recreation destination while loved by locals*. 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

- Engage with state, city, county, chamber and other community-based meetings throughout the year

- Ongoing research and communication of Idaho travel and tourism trends and impact
- Provide consistent, high-quality communication collateral
- 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.