

Bellingham Tourism Commission Strategic Plan 2011 - 2016

Value of Tourism

The cultural, recreational and scenic amenities in the Bellingham area make tourism an excellent economic development opportunity -- generating employment, supporting business, and contributing to a vibrant economy.

Commission Responsibilities

It shall be the responsibility of the Tourism Commission to prepare recommendations for the Mayor and City Council regarding policies, programs and activities which enhance the tourism and visitor industry within the city and the surrounding area, and to report annually on progress. Members of the Bellingham Tourism Commission are appointed by the Mayor and approved by a vote of the Bellingham City Council. The Commission meets monthly, approximately 9 times per year.

Lodging Tax Advisory Committee (LTAC) Responsibilities

The Commission through the subcommittee serving as the LTAC (whose make up is determined by RCW) shall advise the Mayor and City Council on the appropriation of the annual investment of lodging tax revenues. LTAC members are designated annually by rotation and agreement among the Commission members, and includes three representatives from the hotel industry, three representatives of agencies that qualify to use lodging tax, and is Chaired by the City Council Finance Committee Chair. The LTAC meets as needed.

Commission Membership

In order to develop and maintain a Tourism Commission comprised of diversely skilled and informed individuals, the Commission Chair provides the Mayor and City Council with recommendations for appointments when vacancies occur. A Chair and Vice-Chair are appointed annually.

Commission Goals

1. Community Development:

The Commission meets as needed to discuss and make recommendations to the City to advocate for the protection and enhancement of tourism assets in various City planning documents that address issues within the Bellingham city limits (e.g. master plans, neighborhood plans, economic development plans, waterfront/shoreline plans, etc.). The Commission should receive drafts of relevant planning documents to review for tourism issues and impacts, and should invite these policymakers to attend meetings to explain tourism-related elements of these plans.

2. Economic Development

The Commission encourages and advocates for the growth and development of diverse tourism businesses that reflect the community's values and assets.

3. Legislative Advocacy.

The Commission works to assure that the best interests of Bellingham's tourism industry are represented in the consideration of any legislation that could directly or indirectly affect that industry.

4. Funding Sustainability.

The Commission recommends and supports programs that ensure the continued sustainability of the lodging tax revenues.

Commission Policies

- Support the natural, historic and cultural features and facilities of the Bellingham area as part of our economy and quality of life.
- Support and encourage outdoor recreation as a prime community asset and tourism draw.
- Support regional and national attractions such as events & festivals, performing and visual arts, and the unique qualities of Bellingham's historic districts, shopping areas and neighborhoods.
- Identify and encourage public and/or private development of new products, services and infrastructure that attract and serve visitors.
- Support ongoing destination marketing and the development of tools that facilitate tourists' explorations of the Bellingham area.

Allocation of Resources

The Commission strives to achieve a balance between tourism promotion and marketing activities and product development and support. The Commission recognizes that products which contribute to a positive visitor experience are a necessary component to tourism marketing. Likewise, implementation of coordinated, consistent and comprehensive tourism marketing is a necessary component to attracting the visitors who contribute to the success of the products. The Commission supports contracts and funding decisions that protect the long-term viability of both the Tourism Fund and key tourism.

Strategic Planning, Measurements and Reporting

Organizations and departments receiving a specified line item allocation of resources shall annually provide the Tourism Commission with a strategic marketing plan and scope of work for the coming year. Included in the strategic marketing plan shall be identifiable measurements of success, data analysis, budget, research, and documentation of relevance to tourism development. Of

special note shall be opportunities or programs which can be leveraged to enhance the success of the promotional grants*.

The Promotional Grants program applicants will provide the Tourism Commission with a fully executed grant application with all documentation requested.

In addition to the requirements identified above, annual reporting --as required by law -- must be filed by all funding recipients. The Tourism Commission will review final report data to ensure accountability and responsible use of lodging tax funding.

*a community grants program that strategically utilizes lodging taxes to help promote economic development through key community events and organizations that generate increased tourism in the Bellingham area.