

**Utah Board of Tourism Development**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
Friday, October 11, 2024

---

Board Members Present	Kym Buttschardt, Lesha Coltharp, Kaitlin Eskelson, Joan Hammer, Jason Murray, Graydon Pearson, Melva Sine, Jordan Smith, Jennifer Wesselhoff, Shayne Wittwer
-----------------------	--

Board Members Excused	Jared Berrett, Commissioner Victor Iverson, Nathan Rafferty, Kevin Smith, CJ Wade
-----------------------	---

---

Tourism & Film Staff	Tera Atwood, Rachel Bremer, Ben Cook, Rachel Creer, Lorraine Daly, Zach Fyne, Sorell Grow, Kim Heys, Camille Johnson, Denise Jordan, Becky Keeney, Anna Loughridge, Carli Mahas, Christina Martin, Virginia Pearce, Natalie Randall, Dave Williams, Liz Wilson, Heather Zang, Stacey Zoller
----------------------	---

---

Public	Kevin Christensen, Elliot Clark, Julie Comstock, Kamron Dalton, Megan DeAngelis, Annie Francel, Ben Fredregill, Sydney Furton, Colin Greenberg, Slone Jensen-Vail, Dallin Koecher, Brittany McMichael, Shanna Memmott, Dallas Miller, Valerie Rasmussen, Chris Reed, Rachel Roberson, Emily Rovello, Celina Sinclair, Jonathan Smithgall, Sara Toliver, Maria Twitchell, Allison Yamamoto-Sparks
--------	--

---

### **WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS**

**Board Chair Kym Buttschardt** called the meeting to order, welcomed everyone and asked for board member introductions.

### **MEETING MINUTES**

**MOTION: Joan Hammer** motioned to approve the **September 25, 2024 board meeting minutes**. **Jason Murray** seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

### **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

**Natalie Randall**, Managing Director, Utah Office of Tourism

- Congratulated UTIA executive director and tourism conference committee members for a very successful tourism conference. Also congratulated Discover Davis's Jessica Merrill and team for showing off their area so successfully.
- At the conference, hosted a leadership table at the DMO 1:1 appointments, which was new. Opportunity to discuss strategies and plans with the county tourism and economic development leaders.
- Ongoing stewardship efforts and messaging with town hall style meetings throughout the state. Held meetings in Layton, Salt Lake City, Green River and Cedar City. Productive to meet in person, be in the market and listen to stakeholders.
- Rural Matters group, formed by Gov. Cox during his transition from Lt. Gov., met on the first day of One Utah Summit.

- Team members attended the One Utah Summit in Cedar City and tourism had a little bit of main stage time and shared the success of the *In Love, In Utah*. campaign. Very well received and many people approached afterward to compliment it.
- The launch of the NHL, Utah Hockey Club, has generated a lot of excitement in Salt Lake City. Ran our Ski Campaign ad during the opening night broadcast.
- Congratulations to Greater Zion as hosting the PGA and Huntsman Senior Games.
- Shared Todd Tanner on the CaPR team has recently left the UOT.
- Speaking at USU's Basecamp conference on Oct. 17 and participating on a panel at the Urban Land Institute trends conference.

## **MARKETING REPORT**

**Ben Cook**, Director of Marketing and Communications, Utah Office of Tourism

**Julie Comstock**, Creative Director, Love Communications

**Jonathan Smithgall**, Managing Director, Love Communications

Parks & Beyond Winter Campaign

- Campaign goals are to inspire awareness and interest to visit national and state parks in the winter; increase winter visitors' average length of stay and spend; and, educate visitors on responsible and prepared travel practices.
- Key performance indicators (how to measure campaign success) are maintaining brand awareness of *The Mighty 5*®, maintaining the number of impressions and increasing the engagement time.
- Also measure post impression rate (see banner ad and then go to website) and length of stay and spend. Will report numbers back to board.
- Regional campaign focusing on audiences that will come in the winter: explorers, achievers and families.
- Key creative messages will remain Love & Connection - *In Love, In Utah*; and Breathtaking Scenery & *The Mighty 5*®.
- Testing new music track and alternate winter clips in 15-second spot and may incorporate into the spring campaign based on results.
- Adding new banner displays - not replacing any - to broaden the story. Show the ski opportunities in southern Utah and lean into an explorer audience that wants a getaway to see beauty and spend time together.
- Budget for this media campaign is \$650k, which is down from 2023-24, and campaign flight dates are 10/1/2024-1/30/2025. Flight dates continue to be adjusted as we review performance yearly.
- Integrated new, native vendor - inPowered. Tested them in the spring campaign and performed very well. Also testing vendors (inPowered and storygize) against each other during the first 30 days of the campaign.
- Viant remains the connected TV partner and Tripadvisor and Adara perform well year after year.
- Reduced the flight dates for connected TV as more expensive to run.
- Want to maintain the success of our campaigns so advocating for funding is important. Ad services are getting more expensive and more fragmented, so want to be in more places.

## **GLOBAL MARKETS REPORT**

**Rachel Bremer**, Global Markets Director, Utah Office of Tourism

Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Annual Plan

- Forecasted spending by international visitors to increase 93% from 2023 to 2028 and forecasted visits to increase 45% from 2023 to 2028. Utah is higher than the national average spend (58%).
- Strategic priorities remain to increase Utah's share of focused global markets; increase awareness and consideration of Utah as an exceptional outdoor vacation destination; and, educate visitors on responsible and prepared travel.
- Two goals for FY25 are to increase length of stay and visitor spend; and maximize return on investment (ROI) and create international marketing avenues for stakeholders.
- Primary inbound, international markets: Canada, China, Australia, India, France, UK and Germany.

- Secondary markets: Ireland, Belgium, Netherlands, Switzerland, Austria and Mexico.
- Will do extra work in Korea with the announcement of the flight launch for Salt Lake Airport.
- Three pillars are travel trade, consumer and public and media relations.
- Travel trade to increase ROI to reach targeted audiences. Includes cooperative marketing campaigns with trade partners, education and strategic partnerships or multi-state partners.
- For the consumer, targeted campaigns for brand awareness and engagement. Utilize brand partnerships, leverage Brand USA for additional funding and partner cooperative marketing.
- Public relations efforts include working with J/PR, attending media missions, hosting individual media visits and a featured press conference at IPW this year. Efforts result in media coverage in top international print and online publications.
- Plans for FY25 include Nordic expansion and Brand USA Travel week (Oct. 21-24); Benelux mission (Nov. 3-8); expand work in Mexico and launch Spanish agent training; and, the launch of daily, year round Seoul to SLC direct flight in June.
- Visit Salt Lake is hosting the International Inbound Tour Association (IITA) in early 2025. Host FAMs before and after this event.

## **COMMUNITY AND PARTNER RELATIONS REPORT**

**Rachel Creer**, Partner Resources Manager, Utah Office of Tourism

EDA Grant Update

- The Economic Development Agency (EDA) established the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to help the tourism industry build economic resiliency in a post-pandemic world. The State, who asked the Utah Office of Tourism to manage, was awarded \$3.8M.
- Have used grant for seven major development projects:
  - Niche audience studies
  - Responsible visitation messaging
  - Sentiment surveys
  - Tourism exchange
  - Tourism resiliency training
  - Utah Film Trail
  - Subgrants
- Almost 33 percent of funding was allocated to partners through subgrants. Subgrant categories are feasibility & economic impact studies, implementation projects and product development studies.
- Rewarded 32 subgrants.
- Discussion about the Tourism Exchange:
  - Jason Murray asked about the tourism exchange program and the ongoing costs. Rachel Bremer clarified:
    - After the initial setup and onboarding resources cost, there are no additional costs and UOT would have access to the platform in perpetuity.
    - The State of Utah would not include a bookable tool from the tourism exchange on UOT & Film websites.
  - Kaitlin Eskelson asked who would be targeted to use the exchange and who would be managing the product, and emphasized it needs to be almost full time. Rachel Bremer responded that:
    - Tourism exchange is for smaller, independent industry partners that want to start an online booking system, or need a way to manage multiple booking tools, or streamline and make it easier.
    - To be determined as far as what it will look like as far as managing the exchange.
    - Look to learn from state's that are already using tourism exchange tools - Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado.
    - Large distributors are using this tool (Viator, Tripadvisor, Google, etc.) in response to Kaitlin asking which of the larger conglomerates are utilizing tourism exchange.
    - Tourism exchange is creating connectivity but not serving as the booking tool.
    - Also have a travel trade portal which serves as an inventory resource.

- Jason noted his concern that the tourism exchange platform in the US is still being built out. Exists in Australia, Japan and the UK, but the functionality and cost specifics are not established.
  - Rachel Bremer explained that the value proposition is that suppliers that have little or no online presence, will now have it with ease of management.
- Jason noted that everything that tourism exchange offers can be found with every other reservation distribution system. There are over 50 on the market. Much of the connectivity already exists. Concerned the state is funding a private entity to bring a product to market that already exists. Recognizes trying to help the smaller businesses but for existing businesses does not see benefits.
- Kaitlin recommended a sub-committee for this platform and believes it is an industry gamechanger. Information is still missing and it is different from the State's previous take on monetization. This isn't direct bookings on UOT websites but it is creating a funding mechanism.
- Camille Johnson, UOT Community and Partner Relations Director, noted UOT would provide outreach with statewide partners to onboard this tool.
- Jason noted that although he has concerns about tourism exchange, he acknowledged that the team has done a ton of other work and he really appreciates all that is being done to promote the State of Utah.
- Kym acknowledged that all that was done with the \$3.8 million is a lot of work and the team's effort is impressive.

## **UTAH FILM COMMISSION**

### **Virginia Pearce, Utah Film Commissioner**

- Recent projects include *Halloween Wars Season 14* airing on Food Network. It was shot at the Utah Film Studio. They do not ask for film incentives but they love working in Utah.
- *Studio C: Season 19* on BYUtv. Also a program we don't give funding assistance to but it is a great job creator and makes an economic impact in Utah County.
- *Finding Mr. Christmas* premieres October 31 on the Hallmark Channel and was shot in Summit and Wasatch counties.
- *The Graduates* premieres Nov. 1 in theaters. Shot in and around Ogden.
- Film incentive program was allocated \$20M for FY25. The rural film program is \$12M, the motion picture program is \$6.79M in tax credit and \$1.5M in cash rebate. Currently have almost \$13M to allocate with the majority of the funds being in the rural program.
- Have approved 8 projects so far in FY25 - 4 in the rural program, 3 in motion picture tax credit and 1 in motion picture cash rebate.
- The incentive program has awarded approximately \$3.5M this fiscal year which has resulted in \$16.1M in economic impact.
- One incentive program application for the Community Film Incentive Program (CFIP), which is set up for local projects. Support emerging filmmakers.

**MOTION: Jason Murray motioned to approve \$39,300 for an incentive for the following production which have met the criteria defined by statute. Kaitlin Eskelson seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.**

Production	Estimated Utah Spend	Incentive Amount Per Production
<i>Edie Arnold is a Loser</i>	\$196,500	\$39,300
	\$196,500 TOTAL Spend	\$39,300 TOTAL Incentives

## **UTIA UPDATE**

**Joan Hammer**, board member representing UTIA

- Thanked everyone for attending, sponsoring and supporting the tourism conference.
- Silent auction was the most successful ever - both the quality of donations and funds raised.
- Transient Room Tax (TRT) was an interim study item. UTIA has been working very hard to be at the table for all conversations.
- Tourism Day on the Hill is January 31, 2025.
- Partnering with the University of Utah hospitality leadership initiative to host the first Spring Hospitality Summit in April. Will be an annual event.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- Kaitlin shared that Salt Lake is now a hockey town! Opening night was very exciting and well done. Almost 10,000 people stayed outside and watched the entire game on large video screens. News on the entertainment district, six acres around the Delta Center, sales tax increase went through on the city side. Efforts to get a referendum on the ballot did not happen and the next step will be to go to the legislature and close the funding gap, as needed. VSL is excited as the Salt Palace Convention Center has a backlog of capital improvements and this is one way for improvements. Abravanel Hall is staying.
- Kaitlin also shared that with the Olympics returning, the state is going to experience infrastructure improvements that will benefit our industry and a lot coming from federal funding.
- Shayne Wittwer shared the excitement around the PGA event at Black Desert and everything has come together. Feedback has all been positive.
- Lesha Coltharp shared the next episode on Small Town Comeback Series features economic impact of film in communities. Skinwalker Ranch utilized 16,000 hotel nights in their five years working in Vernal.
- Graydon Pearson shared that the hotel at Black Desert opens to the public in November and Asher Adams at the Gateway in Salt Lake City opens soon, too.
- State mountain biking championships are Oct. 16-20 in Cedar City and Olympic medalist Haley Batten will be in attendance.

**MEETING ADJOURNED**