



Annual Workplan & Budget Request

FY25

March 26, 2024

PRESENTED BY THE GREATER SITKA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
104 Lake Street, Sitka, Ak 99835

Introduction

The Greater Sitka Chamber of Commerce is currently in contract with the City of Sitka to provide Convention & Visitor Services. The initial contract began Oct. 2015; current contract began Jan. 1, 2019, and we are in our three of five one-year renewals. The Sitka Chamber as Visit Sitka will undertake the process to create a 3-year Strategic Marketing Plan 2025-2027 to include industry and community input. The Annual Marketing Workplan FY25 is prepared for the Assembly and presented in a work-session on March 26, 2024.

Exhibit B CVS Contract: “The annual contract amount shall be a minimum of \$300,000. Annual budget to be determined by the Sitka Assembly following an annual work session, with first payment in next fiscal year. If the contribution is increased by Assembly action, the annual contract amount will be adjusted accordingly. The Contractor is encouraged to request additional funding for specific projects above and beyond those included in this contract, pursuant to approval by the Assembly.”

The Sitka Chamber has prepared the Visit Sitka program based on the contracted deliverables with consideration of the requests of the Assembly. The items detailed in the following document provide a framework for how Visit Sitka will carry out the scope of services including visitor information, convention sales and services, and marketing to reach the independent travel market.

Highlights

In 2023 tourism accounted for 15% of SE AK’s jobs, and in non-pandemic years tourists spent \$800 million in Alaska.

Sitka hosted the largest number of cruise ship passengers we have seen to date, which brought new challenges and opportunities within the industry and community.

Transient Lodging Tax collected its largest ever amount with \$798,000 brought into the fund!

FY25-Q1-Q4

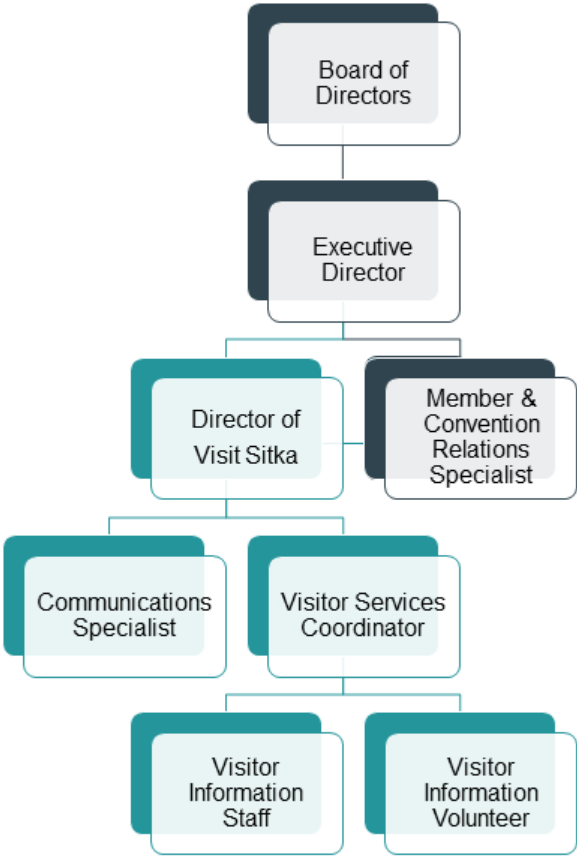
Budget request \$575,000

Base \$300,000 Supplemental \$275,000

FY24 request \$676,180 | funding level \$525,000
FY23 request \$575,000 | funding level \$525,000
FY22 request \$458,600 | funding level \$458,600
FY21 request \$500,200 | funding level \$500,200

Organization Chart

Visit Sitka’s team is partially funded with the funding requested in this annual submission. There are four full-time year-round positions and a team of 10 employees who join the program during the summer months. Below is the staffing structure. The Greater Sitka Chamber of Commerce’s Board of Directors provide policy and fiscal oversight throughout the year. More information about the Board and staff can be found [here](#). At this time, the Director of Visit Sitka position is vacant and the Executive Director is serving in that capacity while recruitment efforts are underway.



Marketing & Promotion

Tourism Promotion

Following the contract, Visit Sitka’s primary focus remains serving independent travelers and the meetings & conventions market. This is accomplished through a number of ways, primarily the following:

- **Official Visitor’s Guide:** Visit Sitka conceptualizes, designs, and prints an Official Visitor’s Guide every year, with the new versions becoming available every February. The 2024-25 Visitor’s Guide is focused on Sitka year-round. More information about the Visitor’s Guide is available in sections to follow.
- **Meetings & Conventions Guide:** Visit Sitka has a digital Meetings & Conventions Guide available

online. This collateral piece, designed to be updated every two years, sells Sitka as a premier destination to hold a meeting, event, conference, or staff retreat. The Meetings & Conventions Guide is undergoing an update for 2024, and the goal is to produce a small print run to mail out to convention planners across the state. More information on the Meetings & Conventions Guide is available in sections to follow.

- **Destination Marketing Website:** Visit Sitka developed and currently maintains our website, visitsitka.org. The website acts as an informative guide for potential travelers, with focus on local business through highlighting available things to do and places to stay. General visitor information and a Sitka blog is also available for visitors. Additionally, each of our collateral pieces including our library of digital interactive Official Visitor's Guides are available. There is also a form for visitors to request a printed and mailed visitor's guide. More information on the website, including metrics, is available in sections to follow.
- **Social Media:** Visit Sitka believes social media is a critical source to engage visitors and collect feedback in real-time. Visit Sitka is active on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Pinterest. More information on social media is available in sections to follow.
- **Media Relations:** Visit Sitka works closely with the State of Alaska's PR firm, Thompson & Co. to host media throughout the year. Visit Sitka's doors also remain open to assisting independent media as appropriate. More information on media relations, including metrics and media hosting counts for 2023 is available in sections to follow.
- **Blog:** Visit Sitka staff has been actively working towards publishing two blog posts on visitsitka.org per month. Blog posts are a great way to answer frequently asked questions, give insider tips, and promote independent travel and convention interest. Blog posts are shared on Social Media and loaded to the website resulting in increased search engine optimization (SEO). More information about the Visit Sitka blog is available in sections to follow.
- **Consumer Shows:** Following feedback from City & Borough of Sitka Assembly members, Visit Sitka will be reducing the number of consumer shows attended going forward. In 2025, Visit Sitka will not attend Travel & Adventure Consumer Shows, or Holland America's Travel Show. Visit Sitka will instead seek out different opportunities to partner regionally and reach independent travelers.

Cruise/Yacht

Maintaining relationships with cruise line partners is key to keeping cruise market share and Sitka's economic health. Visit Sitka will continue to maintain positive relationships with existing cruise lines by attending inaugural ship visits, ensuring cruise staff have accurate information on Sitka and the things to do, and maintaining the live cruise ship calendar.

Cruise Line Agencies International (CLIA) hosted its first Pacific Northwest Cruise Symposium in Seattle in February. Visit Sitka attended, along with 300 others, to have a regionally focused discussion on cruise tourism. This event allowed Alaska to be one of the primary destinations and a more intimate connection with the cruise industry leadership. With the success of this event, Visit Sitka will not attend Seatrade Cruise Global as we have in previous years.

Services for cruise ship passengers are limited to serving information verbally in-person, through email/phone calls, and through printed information materials, as Visit Sitka's primary focus remains on independent travelers.

Visit Sitka will continue to increase engagement with the independent yacht market, including membership with the US Superyacht Association. Visit Sitka will offer visitor guides to be distributed through the Yacht Services of Alaska and the Sitka Harbormasters office, and actively supply service information to encourage yacht staff to shop for their needs in Sitka.

Local & State Tourism Partners

Visit Sitka's participation in the Alaska Travel Industry Association annual conference gives the team access to hundreds of travel industry professionals, advocates, and vendors for Alaska's Tourism Industry. Networking with other Alaska tourism professionals creates a strong network of advocates for Sitka for referrals. Attending both meetings at Southeast Conference is an important tool for keeping abreast of economic issues in southeast Alaska and develops important partnerships for economic growth in Sitka and across the region. Participation with the Southeast Alaska Tourism Council allows us to connect as a region and strategically plan for marketing with focus on independent travelers.

Visitor's Guide

Visit Sitka's 2024-25 Official Visitors' Guide has a very intentional theme focused on Sitka year-round. The magazine-style format allows us to tell Sitka's stories and this year, readers will learn about "Sitka year-round". This underlying theme is reflected throughout in editorial content, imagery, and highlighted by the herring spawn displayed in the cover is intended to inform potential independent travelers that there are reasons to visit Sitka in all four seasons.

Visit Sitka is proud that our magazine design layout has inspired other DMO's across the state, and each year we receive compliments on our layout, stories, and content. In 2022, Element Agency, our partner in creating the guide, was awarded best in category and a gold award for our publication at the American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA) Big One design awards.

This year, we have ordered 20,000 guides to be distributed to independent travelers across the country. Approximate metrics of guide distribution can be seen here:

- ~6,000 mailed directly to prospective visitors (*through request form on visitsitka.org and phone call/email requests for mailed copies*)
- ~ 4,000 mailed to other visitor centers across the state, mailed to travel agents, and distributed at trade shows
- ~10,000 distributed locally to independent travelers through hotels, Visit Sitka and Harrigan Centennial Hall visitor centers, ferry terminal, and taken to trade show events by Visit Sitka and tourism business partners

The interactive digital, online version includes video inserts, scrolling photo galleries and direct website links. The current issue and prior five year's issues are available for readers on the Digital Visitors' Guide Library and can be viewed [here](#).

External Advertising

Digital

Digital marketing spans content creation, social media marketing (video & image creation, paid promotion, and ads) including online advertising with search & display ads plus email marketing. Precise targeting of sponsored content on the web gives Visit Sitka the ability to quickly respond to changes in market conditions and other data. This will also give us access to the mobile phone market where a multitude of leisure travelers continue to use their mobile phones to plan their adventures. 96% of leisure travelers regularly use a mobile phone and the use of mobile phones in trip planning before leaving home has become consumers' preferred method of research.

Print

Print advertising continues to be a pricier investment across the market. With fluctuating advertising prices and changing times, Visit Sitka continues to prefer digital marketing over print. Print marketing presents ROI tracking challenges and is often difficult to track audiences. Visit Sitka will continue to search out the best publications for our potential visitors and ensure that those ad buys also include a strong digital component. We will continue to advertise in the Alaska Map and the Alaska Milepost, as these are iconic publications that visitors consider to be reliable sources of information.

Social Media

Visit Sitka is currently active on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Pinterest, and our social media presence continues to reach large audiences worldwide. Consistency on social media and interacting with comments and messages establishes Visit Sitka as the expert for both visitors and partners, and allows us to improve customer service with real-time feedback. Visit Sitka works with the PR firm Element Agency to contract out consistent, branded social media content. Visit Sitka works closely with Element Agency to create an annual calendar of must-post topics, primarily surrounding prominent year-round events and holidays, as well as sharing our Digital Official Visitor's Guide- a great resource for pre-trip planning and visitor education.

Current social media "wins":

- Instagram followers – 16,000
- Facebook followers – 69,000
- On 8/25/2023, a post featuring Sitka's airport runway went viral with over 10,000 likes and a reach of over 6 million Facebook users.

Branded Content

Branded content is content that does not involve traditional advertising. It can include articles, videos, podcasts, and even live elements that bring relevant value to the consumer. It is not advertising in the way most people think of advertising (commercials, banner ads, social media ads, etc...). Branded content can work better than traditional advertising because it feels organic and authentic rather than ads that are in our face. When a consumer watches branded content, their brand recall is up to 59% higher than it is with display ads. Visit Sitka will continue to maintain relationships with media and influencers to remain open to opportunities for branded content.

Visit Sitka plans to complete a project started in 2024 for an educational video to be played on cruise ships and at the Sitka Sound Cruise Terminal, intended to set visitor expectations and foster a deeper understanding of how to honor and respect the community and culture.

Website

Destination Marketing Organization websites are trusted and valuable resources for travel planning. Visit Sitka continues to maintain our website to include the most up-to-date information, and act as a trustworthy and educational resource for incoming visitors. visitsitka.org has continued to gain traction through analytics, showing that visitors are recognizing Visit Sitka as the reliable resource for planning out their days in our community.

In 2023:

- 123,032 sessions (website visits)
- 389,569 page views
- 54% engagement rate

Moving forward, Visit Sitka will continue updating visitsitka.org with the latest information on traveling to Sitka. We continue to develop fresh content from professional photoshoots and through our annual photo contest. Goals for 2024-25 include building out each directory section with a welcoming narrative, expanding the yacht and wedding sections to gear towards independent travelers, and continuing to expand the Sitka blog with frequently asked questions and hot topics.

For the website to maintain functionality it is necessary to invest in maintenance, including software updates and bug fixes, security scans, minor modifications, and maintaining overall site health. Included in this cost are annual costs such as domain hosting, database support, and online support services.

Driftscape – Interactive Mobile App

Visit Sitka has partnered with the web app developer Driftscape to bring Sitka to visitor's fingertips. The app is free for users to download on iOS and Android, and has an internet-free option for those without connection in Sitka, and to cut down on bandwidth usage. A mobile app for Sitka has been a long-requested item by the CBS Assembly, and we are excited to bring this option to the table to cut down on printed map costs and paper waste.

Visit Sitka supplies printed promotional materials to interested businesses, including printed signage ranging from sandwich board size, all the way to business card-sized QR codes to download the app. We expect interest in Driftscape to rise in 2024 through additional promotion, resulting in additional need for printed promotional materials, outside of the cost of participating on the platform and maintaining the app's content.

Media Hosting

Connecting and working with media outlets and public relations allows us to maintain control in the message spread about Sitka. It is important to continue to build and maintain relationships over time with journalists, influencers, and other media to ensure Sitka is displayed in an accurate and consistent manner throughout media platforms. Visit Sitka will attend Alaska Media Roadshow, held by the Alaska PR firm Thompson & Co. This event is a fantastic opportunity to meet with up to 25 of the most influential travel media in the United States who are working on Alaska projects. This event is a great opportunity to meet face-to-face with these media and tell them about important Sitka updates and begin forming relationships.

Visit Sitka also hosts visiting travel writers in Sitka throughout the year through partnerships with Thompson & Co. Last year Visit Sitka hosted 10 unique journalists, which included hotel nights, guided tours, meals in

local restaurants, and logistical support. Many more media members were supported via telephone and email. Visit Sitka will continue to open its doors to media and journalists to continue the consistency of messaging surrounding Sitka as a destination.

In 2023, Visit Sitka began working with the service Critical Mention, which allows us to see any article, tv show, or radio service that mentions Sitka. Visit Sitka has created a monthly internal Media & Mentions Report of monthly tourism-related mentions, estimated publicity value, and mentions by sentiment.

A comprehensive document of all Media & Mentions Reports with an explanatory introduction page can be viewed by [clicking here](#). Some quick metrics:

Since August 2023, Sitka has:

- Been mentioned in 5,308 tourism-related articles, TV productions, and radio shows
- Received an estimated publicity value of \$146,279,420

Visitor Services

Public Inquiries & Visitor Information Center Operations

Visit Sitka keeps our doors open to the public through walk-ins, phone calls, and emails. Visit Sitka keeps the Visitor Center open from 9:00 am – 4:00 pm Monday through Friday, as well as additional weekend hours throughout the heavy visitor season.

Visit Sitka hires a seasonal, full-time Visitor Services Coordinator and approximately 10-12 part-time, seasonal Visitor Information Staff to keep a healthy rotation of personnel ready to provide quality information to visitors. Visit Sitka keeps at least one Visitor Information Staff (in addition to the Visitor Services Coordinator) at the Visitor Center during all open business hours to ensure each visitor receives a quality experience, and leaves feeling that their needs were met. The Visitor Services Coordinator schedules and manages all Visitor Information Staff, is the first point-of-contact for all visitor calls and emails, maintains the live cruise ship calendar, and maintains a level of organization and order in the Visitor Center throughout the season.

Additional stats and metrics on visitor walk-ins, emails, and calls can be found in sections to follow.

• Visitor Information at Cruise Terminal

As part of the contract deliverable, Visit Sitka staff provides at the visitor information shed at the Sitka Sound Cruise Terminal every day that a ship with over 1,000 berth capacity is in port. Depending on needs, this can be anywhere from 1 – 3 staff members to ensure all passengers receive a quality experience. Staff tasks include distributing attractions maps, directing to shore excursions, connecting visitors with the Driftscape App, and answering general questions.

Visit Sitka staff make contact with at least half of all cruise ship passengers exiting ships at the Sitka Sound Cruise Terminal, with the other half heading directly to shore excursions. Visit Sitka goes through anywhere from 500 – 1500 attractions maps per day at the cruise terminal. Also displayed at the terminal are two sandwich boards and a pop-up sign advertising Driftscape, Visit Sitka's mobile app platform. Important to note: Visit Sitka utilized unrestricted funds to both increase the staff at the terminal and the increased printing costs related to this increase in cruise visitors. In 2024, we expect to see more visitors utilizing Driftscape, slightly reducing the need for printed maps at the terminal.

Collateral Supply

Visit Sitka supplies collateral on an as-needed basis for Harrigan Centennial Hall, including attractions maps, pocket guides, hiking guides, visitor guides, and Driftscape promotional materials. In addition to this, Visit Sitka also supplies a reasonable amount of collateral as-needed for various high-traffic businesses in town, such as e-bike companies, hotels, restaurants, Fortress of the Bear, Alaska Raptor Center, and more.

In addition to primary collateral pieces, Visit Sitka also developed and maintains a restaurant guide. The guide is displayed in a flip-stand at high-traffic hotels, Harrigan Centennial Hall, and at the Visitor Information Center. Visit Sitka also keeps a rack card system with flyers for local businesses at the Visitor Information Center.

It is important for Visit Sitka to continue to supply collateral items around Sitka to provide a sense of consistency in visitor services throughout the community.

Directory of Tourism Related Business

Each year, Visit Sitka advertises an opportunity for tourism-related businesses to be listed on a directory that is then published on visitsitka.org. The advertising for businesses is run for 30 days through Visit Sitka newsletters and an advertisement in the Daily Sitka Sentinel. In addition to being available on the website, a printed copy of the directory is available at the Visitor Information Center, the Sitka Sound Cruise Terminal information shed, and delivered to Harrigan Centennial Hall for usage at their visitor desk.

Convention Sales & Services

Meetings & Conventions Supported in 2023 & 2024:

Heritage & Cultural Tourism Conference

April 11-13, 2023, 120 attendees

Yaaw Koo.eex

April 15, 2023, 200 attendees

Sustainable Southeast Partnership Annual Spring Retreat

April 26-28, 2023, 75 attendees

North Pacific Fishery Management Council Meeting

April 5-11, 2023, 50+ attendees

Southeast Conference Annual Meeting

Sept. 19-21, 2023, 275 attendees

Region V Basketball Championships

March 6-10, 2024, 1,000 attendees

Heritage & Cultural Tourism Conference

March 19-21, 2024, 120 attendees

Lowell Wakefield Fisheries Symposium

April 16-18, 2024, 100 attendees

Alaska Telecom Association Annual Conference

May 20-22, 2024, 150 attendees

Meetings & Conventions Strategy:

Relationship building and face-to-face interactions with decision makers is essential to building our Meeting & Convention business in Sitka. Visit Sitka has identified incentive travel and C-suite retreats as the best fit for Sitka's strengths and location along with in-state trade, government, and school travel. Projects to complement this strategy include advertising to business-to-business (B2B) meeting planners and

maintaining a physical and digital meeting planner to offer easy access to information and tools for planners.

Promotional items are especially important for our emphasis on enhancing visitor experience and taking advantage of word-of-mouth marketing, which research shows is still the number one driver of travel. Event groups are supplied with items to support their meetings including pens, notepads, lanyards, maps, programs, and staff support to create successful events.

The amount of staff support varies with each event, but this may include in-person or virtual meetings with event planners to discuss the logistics, provide recommendations, and execute action plans. Our team will attend recurring meetings leading up to the event to ensure their experience is smooth and easy.

An important part of our strategy is making sure local businesses are being supported. We often act as a liaison for Sitka's business community and connect event planners with partners during the planning process. Our Show Your Badge program is offered to large events. The program lets local businesses offer special deals and discounts to event attendees. It encourages them to shop local while they're in town, and gives exposure to local businesses. We also keep local businesses informed when events are in town through word-of-mouth, email, and flyers.

Recent Meetings & Conventions Successes:

Southeast Conference (SEC) held their annual meeting in Sitka on September 19th-21st, 2023. The meeting brought over 250 business leaders, delegates, and elected officials to Sitka. The Visit Sitka team worked with SEC throughout the year leading up to the event. Visit Sitka provided support with lodging, catering, transportation and more. During the event Visit Sitka staff supported SEC with their event needs including set-up, recruiting volunteers, and on-site activities. As part of hosting SEC, Visit Sitka coordinated a community-sponsored reception (special project). This event gave Sitka the opportunity to sponsor an important networking event as well as showcase the community to the attendees. We held the reception at Halibut Point Crab & Chowder, located at the Cruise Ship Terminal. The reception included local artists, dancers, and businesses.

The Region V Basketball Championships were held in Sitka on March 6th-10th, 2024. The tournament brought in over 1,000 visitors from across the state. The economic impact the tournament had on our lodging, restaurant, and small business industries was tremendous. In November of 2023, the tournament coordinator reached out and asked Visit Sitka for support. The tournament was in jeopardy of being moved out of Sitka if more lodging was not secured. The Visit Sitka team offered support by working with our lodging partners to find solutions. Adequate lodging was secured, and Visit Sitka's efforts played a large role in keeping the tournament in Sitka. In addition to lodging support, Visit Sitka donated water bottles to tournament participants, visitor guides and maps, and distributed flyers for the tournament throughout town.

Reporting

Quarterly Reports

Visit Sitka meets quarterly with the CBS Municipal Administrator to provide updates on activities throughout the year and get feedback on activities Visit Sitka is undertaking that quarter. Meetings, emails, and phone conversations also provide an opportunity for collaboration with City staff on a regular basis.

Annual Scope of Service Report

As part of the contract renewal process, CBS Municipal Administrator has requested the Scope of Services report be provided by Visit Sitka. This report has been completed directly reporting on each of the deliverables in the contract.

Other Services

Maintaining Current Information & Collateral

Infrastructure projects help visitors and locals find the resources they need to fully experience Sitka. To continue to give excellent service Visit Sitka will maintain visitor information locations, update signage, maintain visitsitka.org, and to encourage visitation to local eateries with menu stands in high traffic areas.

With the significant increase in visitors, additional branded collateral including larger quantities of attractions maps, hiking guides, and downtown pocket guides will be needed. Visit Sitka also supplies maps and collateral for Harrigan Centennial Hall’s visitor desk, as well as local businesses as requested. Due to extremely popular demand, the Attractions Map was reordered 7 times throughout the season, at around 20,000 maps per order. Hiking Guides were reordered three times, and Downtown Pocket Guides were reordered twice. With another raise in anticipated visitor count for 2024, we anticipate printing needs and costs to rise again.

See chart below for what was budgeted for the 2023 season, the actual cost, the quantity ordered in 2023, and the projected need for 2024.

Collateral	2023 Budgeted	2023 Actual	Quantity ordered in 2023	Projected quantity needed for 2024
Attractions Map	5400	7,466	130,000	150,000
Pocket Guide	3960	6,912	18,000	20,000
Hiking Guide	4060	5,006	10,000	10,000

NEW Collateral Piece: Visit Sitka is partnering with Sitka Trail Works, Sitka Bike Club members, and local bike rental companies to develop a critically-needed new collateral piece, the Sitka Biking Map. The map is intended to help bikers and e-bikers learn the rules of the road and what trails/locations are best suited for biking. The goal of the piece is to cut down on undesirable behaviors on visiting bikers and e-bikers, educate users and protect local trails and users. The map will be a similar style to the attractions map, and will be ordered through the same printing platform, costing approximately 6¢/map. In previous years, local biking and e-biking companies relied on Visit Sitka’s Hiking Guide for their daily business operations. Moving forward, Visit Sitka intends to supply these companies with the Biking Map instead, and we anticipate

needing to order a few thousand of these new maps to start.

Newsletters & Business Support

Visit Sitka sends out monthly newsletters to over 450 local business contacts that include updates and opportunities with Visit Sitka's programs, cruise schedule updates, and key tourism opportunities, such as upcoming conferences. Visit Sitka also sends e-blast email notifications in addition to the newsletters as-needed for important events and tourism updates. City news releases are included in these communications to help share important CBS updates and project development information directly to the business community.

Visit Sitka's partners are highly engaged with us and rely on the value of the content provided in email newsletters and e-blasts. Performance indicators for Visit Sitka newsletters over the previous calendar year:

- Average click-through rate: 47% (*industry average: 39%*)
- Average open rate: 5.2% (*industry average: 1.38%*)

Source: Constant Contact Email Performance Analytics

Visit Sitka is dedicated to not only the visitor experience but enhancing the overall tourism experience in Sitka. To reach this goal Visit Sitka continues to develop training and experiential events for locals and tourism businesses. This includes the Sitka Summer Expo, where locals are encouraged to learn about Sitka's tourism industry: Alaska Host trainings, and visitor industry meetings. Visit Sitka has encouraged community members and visitor industry professionals to engage with programs provided by the Sitka Chamber such as the Sitka's Emerging Leaders workforce development group and pertinent topics at their Speaker Series which include industry trends and community issues such as housing and childcare.

Cruise Calendar

Visit Sitka develops and maintains a live cruise ship calendar throughout each season. The calendar is managed through Google Calendar, allowing us to update it live for all viewers instantly when cruise ship changes arise. The calendar contains the ship, its arrival and departure time, its docking location, and its berth capacity. The calendar is widely used across the Sitka community due to its convenience of having real-time, updated information.

Visit Sitka monitors emails over the weekends throughout the cruise season to check for changes that may happen over off-days. For major changes such as docking locations or arrival/departure changes, Visit Sitka deploys e-blast email notifications on a timely basis to local businesses, city staff, and Harrigan Centennial Hall staff.

Additional Contracts

In the summers of 2022 and 2023, Visit Sitka bid on and received an additional contract to perform short-term operational and communication support for the cruise ship seasons. It is anticipated that Visit Sitka will provide communication support services during the 2024 season.

Metrics

Conventions

With the addition of a team member with focus on convention support and outreach, VS has begun working processes for gathering data and metrics to include convention bookings, total number of convention attendees, number of room nights, and estimated direct attendee spending. A survey be conducted to gather data directly from convention attendees on an on-going basis. It can be difficult to measure full impact because when convention attendees come to Sitka, they create economic activity that ripples throughout the community. We will provide an update in the next quarter with preliminary data points and trends found as part of the survey results.

There were 2,100 attendees for the conventions and meetings we directly supported in FY24. Information sharing on convention bookings at the Harrigan Centennial Hall has not been shared with Visit Sitka. We are working to establish a process for getting this information in order to report a more comprehensive number of overall convention bookings.

In an effort to provide the metric specifically on room bookings, Visit Sitka is in conversation with Smith Travel Report who work with national brand hotels to provide hotel occupancy rates. DMOs, such as Explore Fairbanks, are able to purchase reports to better understand trends in hotel bookings. Currently, none of the Sitka based hotels are reporting to this agency so our hope is to partner with them to work towards reporting. The feedback we have received from lodging partners for the upcoming summer season is that there is room for growth in early May with occupancies nearly sold out from Mid-May through August. This information helps us as we seek visitors and conference attendees to fill in the weeks with space available.

- Total # of meetings and conventions Visit Sitka supported since January 2023: 9
- Total # of meetings and conventions attendees since January 2023: 2,100
- Percentage of total meetings and conventions attendees that came during October-April: 79%
 - The majority of meetings and conventions attendees stay in hotels. Meetings and conventions that occur during non-peak season months provide significant economic benefit for hotels in Sitka.

Visitor Inquiries

Emails & Calls

Visit Sitka receives approximately 250 emails/year from visitors seeking additional information.

Visit Sitka receives a very large amount of calls from visitors. In the off-season, Visit Sitka receives anywhere from 5-7 calls per day. During peak visitor season, Visit Sitka can receive anywhere from 10-15+ calls per day.

Visitors to the Visitor Information Center

In 2023, approximately 3,000 visitors signed Visit Sitka's guestbook. Guestbook sign-in is not required, so it is estimated that approximately 1 in 5 visitors sign-in. For 2024 and beyond, Visit Sitka is investigating other ways to track visitor foot traffic to provide a more accurate count. Due to extremely busy days at the visitor center, using a clicker or tally system has proven to be an unviable method while still providing a pleasant experience to all guests.

Visits to Website

In 2023:

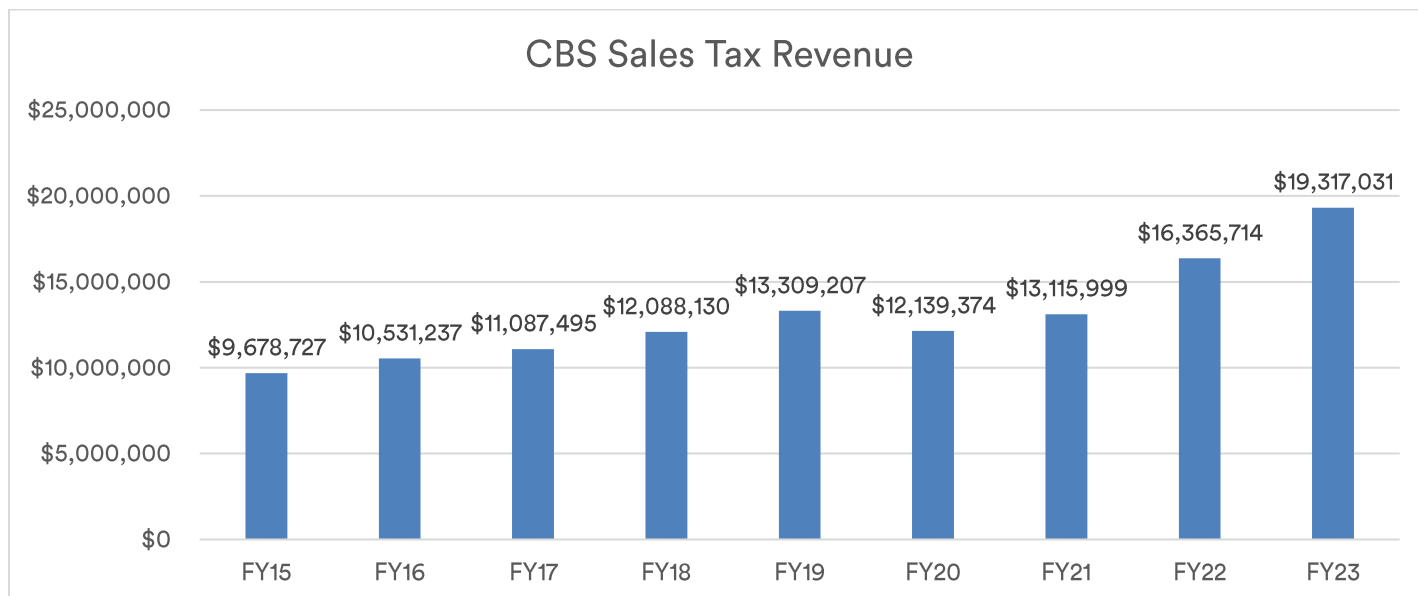
- 123,032 sessions (website visits)
- 389,569 page views
- 54% engagement rate

Economic Indicators

Sales Tax Revenue

The City and Borough of Sitka's sales tax revenues have seen consistent increases aligned with the growth in the visitor industry. These tax increases allow for additional funds to support city services, pay for projects and infrastructure improvements.

In FY19, sales tax receipts were \$13.3 million which fell to \$12.1 million in FY20. The approximate \$1 million of reduction of revenue that was seen in FY20 was nearly fully recovered in FY21 with revenues of \$13.1 million. In FY23, \$19.3 million was collected with Retail trade and services being the two highest industries.



Source: CBS 23 ACFR

Transient Lodging Tax Revenue

The Transient Lodging tax has also seen growth over the past several years with large increases in FY23 seen as a result of the increase of independent travelers and the 5-day ATIA Convention of over 500 attendees hosted in Sitka Oct. 2022. The Transient Lodging Tax Revenues are expected to have a full recovery in FY23 with the return of meetings and conventions and a strong independent traveler season.

Fiscal Year	Transient Lodging Tax Revenue
2023	792,950
2022	669,958
2021	458,600
2020	398,187

2019	557,048
2018	540,875
2017	503,439
2016	472,900
2015	411,916

Potential on Investment (POI)

Potential on Investment of a DMO's social media activities is one way to measure the effectiveness but should also keep in mind the economic factors that are outside the control of the DMO that can affect potential demand. Examples of these include the weather, economy, natural disasters, industry's ability to convert and pandemics (i.e., COVID-19). This metric is a new fluid concept and is still being explored by DMOs throughout the world. Below is a description of the equation and each of the factors that can be used in calculations.

The Formula:

$$POI = C_v \times C_i \times M_q$$

Calculation of POI

Instagram: \$917 (Cv) x 4.51% (Ci) x 16,000 followers (Mq) = \$661,707

Facebook: \$917 (Cv) x 2.21% (Ci) x 68,109 followers (Mq) = \$1,341,388

Net Promoter Score

Sitka has seen a positive rating in customer satisfaction over the past several years. Sitka was chosen as a Top 5 Alaskan Cruise Destination by Cruise Critic for the four years prior to the COVID-19 pandemic (2016 through 2019). Sitka's satisfaction rating, based on the results of the 2017 AVSP, was 78% Very Satisfied, 20% Satisfied.

Net Promoter Score is calculated by: **Subtracting the percentage of detractors from the percentage of promoters.** (The percentage of passives is not used in the formula.) For example, if 10% of respondents are detractors, 20% are passives and 70% are promoters, your NPS score would be 70-10 = 60.

78% satisfaction is the benchmark set by Alaska Visitor Statistics Program 7 (Summer 2016) – Alaska Dept. of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development (DCCE). This is the last year that AVSP was funded by Alaska.

Visitors were asked how likely they were to recommend Alaska as a vacation destination. Virtually all visitors said they were or highly likely to recommend Alaska to others, **including 79 percent** who said they were highly likely, and 18 percent who said they were likely. Just 1 percent said they were unlikely to recommend Alaska. - AVSP 7 – Section 6: Visitor Profile - Satisfaction, Repeat Travel, and Trip Planning (2016).

Total Visitors to Sitka

The chart below displays total visitors to Sitka with distinctions for how they arrive. In the years before 2020, Sitka was seeing consistent growth in total visitors, topping 300,000 in 2019. In 2022, travel to Sitka made a

full recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic with more than 450,000 total visitors. By the end of 2023, Sitka saw more than 550,000 total visitors.

There has been an upward trend in air passengers into Sitka since 2009. While the pandemic hit the travel industry hard in 2020, air travel is back into full swing. In 2022, Sitka surpassed the highest total air travelers with 93,550 passengers and in 2023, growth was seen with over 95,000 passengers, 66,00 of which were visitors.


Number of passengers to SIT Airport

Year	Airport passengers	Independent Travelers
2023	95,794	66,673
2022	93,550	65,111
2021	79,604	55,404
2020	38,235	26,612
2019	89,518	62,305
2018	87,782	61,096
2017	85,375	59,421

*69.6% of Domestic Air passengers are visitors

Source: https://www.transtats.bts.gov/Data_Elements.aspx?Data=1

Personnel



3.5 FTE year-round, 10 Seasonal positions, payroll taxes, worker's comp insurance

Market/Industry Promotion

1 consumer travel show, SE Conference

Occupancy

Rent, utilities, phone, internet, insurance

Advertising

Social media contract, TravelAlaska, Milepost, Alaska map + more

Website, internet services

Website maintenance & development, required subscription services

Promotion

Branded collateral, hosting for meetings, VIPS, familiarization trips

Contracted Services

Contracts for visitor guide design, photo & video, graphic design, accounting, dues/subscriptions

Supplies, Printing & Postage

Office supplies, visitor staff support, collateral printing, shipping & postage +

Professional Development

Staff attendance at industry & business trainings in-person & via web

Media & Public Relations

On-site hosting of visiting journalists & media

Greater Sitka Chamber of Commerce
Proposed Budget
FY25

	<u>200 - Visit Sitka Contract</u>
Ordinary Income/Expense	
Income	
4200 - Contract Revenue	575,000.00
Total Income	<u>575,000.00</u>
Gross Profit	<u>575,000.00</u>
Expense	
5000 - Personnel Expenses	
5010 - Salaries & Wages	231,775.00
5015 - FUTA	1391.00
5020 - Social Security	14,370.00
5025 - Medicare	3,361.00
5030 - ESC	3013.00
5040 - Worker's Comp Insurance	1,043.00
Total 5000 - Personnel Expenses	<u>254,953.00</u>
6200 - Promotion	
6210 - Airfare	4,850.00
6220 - Travel	2,950.00
6230 - Industry/Market Promotion	1,900.00
Total 6200 - Promotion	<u>9,700.00</u>
6300 - Occupancy	
6310 - Rent	26,100.00
6320 - Utilities	6,000.00
6330 - Telephone & Internet	5,000.00
6300 - Occupancy - Other	0
Total 6300 - Occupancy	<u>37,100.00</u>
6400 - Professional Services	
6410 - Advertising	45,315.00
6420 - Accounting Fees	4,900.00
6435 - Internet Svcs & Web Maint	33,660.00
6440 - Promotion	9,750.00
6450 - Contracted Services	75,700.00
6400 - Professional Services - Other	0
Total 6400 - Professional Services	<u>169,325.00</u>
6500 - Supplies	
6510 - Office Supplies	7,896.00
6530 - Postage & Freight	11,240.00
6540 - Printing and Copying	43,560.00
6580 - Decorations/Other	1,500.00
Total 6500 - Supplies	<u>64,196.00</u>
6710 - Dues & Subscriptions	8,415.00
6720 - Professional Development	12,312.00
6730 - Catering	3,250.00
6740 - Media & PR	11,500.00
6780 - Bank Fees	0
6790 - Miscellaneous Expense	0
Total Expense	<u>575,000.00</u>
Net Ordinary Income	<u>0</u>
Other Income/Expense	
Other Expense	
8950 - Bad Debt Expense	0
Total Other Expense	<u>0</u>
Net Other Income	<u>0</u>
Net Income	<u>0</u>
Visit Sitka Unrestricted Revenue	157,250.00