

Updated 4/10/2024



Annual Workplan & Budget Request

FY25

April 10, 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 CBS 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.

Following the March 26th annual work session, this document has been updated to include the following:

- **Proposed budget allocations for convention and promotional activities from the Visitor Enhancement Fund (VEF) and direct cruise related expenses from Cruise Vessel Passenger Funds (CPV)**
- **Comprehensive budget**
- **Updated 3-Year Marketing Plan**

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

Special Projects \$

FY24 request \$676,180 | funding level \$525,000

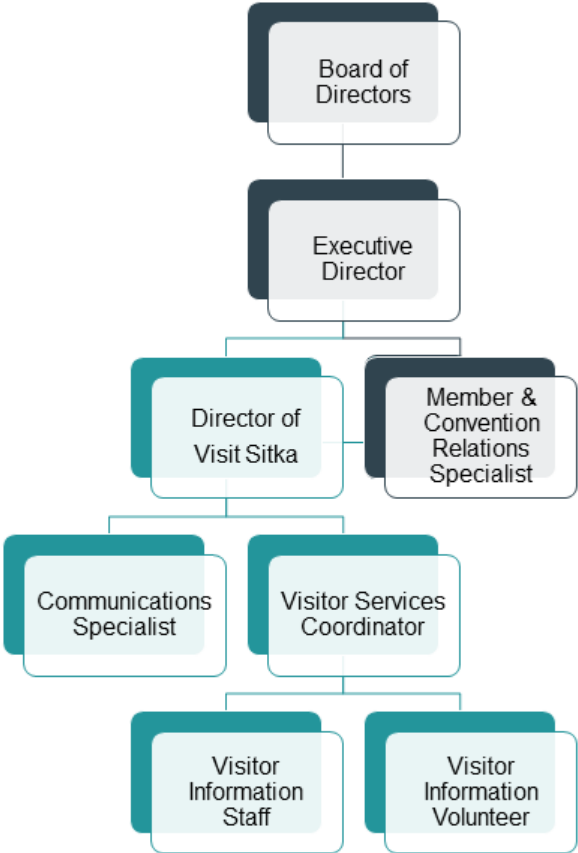
FY23 request \$575,000 | funding level \$525,000

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.



Visitor Information Services – Staffing breakdown

Providing visitor services is an integral part of the Visit Sitka program. Ensuring that visitors have the information that they need prior to visiting the community allows them to plan ahead, schedule excursions and these tools help visitors set expectations for what their experience may be in Sitka. These expenses are generally the same as visitor numbers grow as they are primarily using digital assets and communication campaigns that are able to be available electronically 24/7 with the exception of emails and phone calls made to Visit Sitka’s office. When

visitors arrive to Sitka, they use more physical means of getting information in the form of signs, maps, and by visiting the Visitor Information Center in person. Post-pandemic, in 2022, Sitka saw large growth in cruise visitors and Visit Sitka’s visitor information services provided as part of the contract increased accordingly

Visitor Information Staff

Visit Sitka provides information services with a team of staff both year-round and seasonally. The Communications Specialist provides email and telephone support year-round to both independent and cruise passengers contacting the office for support in planning their visit. The Visitor Services Coordinator is a 6-month full-time position that supports the direct services and coordinates the Visitor Information Center and Kiosk staffing. The Visitor Information Staff serve at both the Visitor Information Center and the Sitka Sound Cruise Terminal during the cruise season. Full job descriptions for each position can be found at the end of this document. The below graph shows the percentage of time that each position provides information to independent and cruise visitors for purposes of budgeting and reflected in the Comprehensive budget.

Staff Position	Convention & Visitor Services (VEF)	Visitor Services (Large Cruise Related CPV)	Total
Director of Visit Sitka	75%	25%	100%
Communications Specialist	75%	25%	100%
Visitor Services Coordinator	25%	75%	100%
Visitor Information Staff	10%	90%	100%

Special Projects

The following Special Projects can be supported with funding if chosen to by the Assembly as part of the Convention & Visitors Services Contract. The budget lists these additional costs under special projects.

Tourism Best Management Practices (TBMP)

FY24: \$40,000 CPV Fund

Key areas include:

- Development of database for tracking community input and online submission forms
- Brand development and design
- Initial season beta testing Summer 24

Tourism Best Management Practices is an industry driven program developed over 25 years ago in Juneau to minimize the impacts to the community made by large scale tourism activities. The program’s framework has been shared and communities are encouraged to implement programs to allow the industry to hear and respond to the concerns of the local community. The Tourism Task Force was tasked with supporting the development of the initial TBMP and with their submission to the Assembly on April 23rd, this document can serve as a starting point for the program. Visit Sitka participated in this effort by engaging tourism businesses in review and recommendations for inclusions and collaborating with the task force members during the editing process.

As a part of the Convention & Visitor Services Contract- Special projects, Visit Sitka can serve as the lead organization to ensure the program is implemented. This may include development of database for tracking community input, online submission forms, phone system for telephonic feedback, brand development and design. There will be opportunities for community input prior to the establishment of the first set of best practices and outreach to tourism industry businesses to get buy in and commitment to the program. Monitoring of the input and communication to businesses will ensure that concerns are relayed throughout the season and an end of season meeting will be held to discuss need for additional best practices to be implemented the following visitor season.

Workforce Development and Recruitment Campaign

FY25: \$25,000-\$40,000

Workforce is essential to support the Visitor Industry in Sitka and a special campaign develop and implement strategy to attract workforce to Sitka. Visitor Industry jobs are in all sectors and include everything from management to frontline to bookkeepers. These year-round positions will be the focus of the campaign will develop new collateral utilizing Visit Sitka assets and brand. Digital marketing with paid ads will put Sitka based jobs in front of potential employees through visuals showing the lifestyle found in the Sitka community.

Wayfinding Phase II

FY24: \$10,000

Planning & Scoping

In 2015-17, Sitka's Branding and Wayfinding programs were implemented which included the framework for the initial Visit Sitka brand, 36 wayfinding signs and one kiosk. During the planning process, the scope of the project was limited to the downtown core communicating with pedestrians walking distances to key points of interest and information. The destination assessment and community feedback has brought forward need for additional signs and scope to the pedestrian wayfinding as well as the need for vehicular wayfinding. Vehicular wayfinding not only will serve summer visitors but also help business travelers and new residents. This initial special project will be planning and scoping for Sitka's wayfinding needs. Activities will include research, public meetings, and meetings with property owners and stakeholders.

Street Signage Planning & Development

FY25: \$10,000

Planning & Scoping

In 2022, Roger Brooks from completed a destination assessment for Sitka presenting us with suggestions to help improve experiences in the community for independent travelers. As a special project, Visit Sitka will work through the suggestions and create a plan for implantation keeping in mind the timeline and associated costs for each of the tracks of projects. Tracks include downtown beautification, visitor information distribution - grab and go locations, airport visitor information, and assessing locations for public art. The assessment worked to answer the question: "What can we do locally to become a stronger more successful destination for investment, as a place to live, and that will attract increased visitor spending?" This phase of the project will take it to the next step by assessing the feasibility of the recommendations and creating a plan for next steps. The full destination assessment can be viewed [here](#).

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 phonemarket 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 lines 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 watch 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 and full days for the Norwegian Bliss every other Sunday.

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 SAF Annual Meeting

April 25-27, 2024, 50+ attendees

Alaska Telecom Association Annual Conference

May 20-22, 2024, 150 attendees

Shee Atika Annual Meeting

June 15, 2024, 50+ attendees

Sealaska Annual Meeting

June 29, 2024, 100 attendees

Sharing Our Knowledge Conference

September 11-15, 2024, 150 attendees

Sitka Whalefest

November 1-3, 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. Surveys will 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 to report more comprehensive numbers 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, can purchase reports to better understand trends in hotel bookings. Currently, none of the Sitka based hotels are reporting to this agency so the goal 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 number 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, and 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:

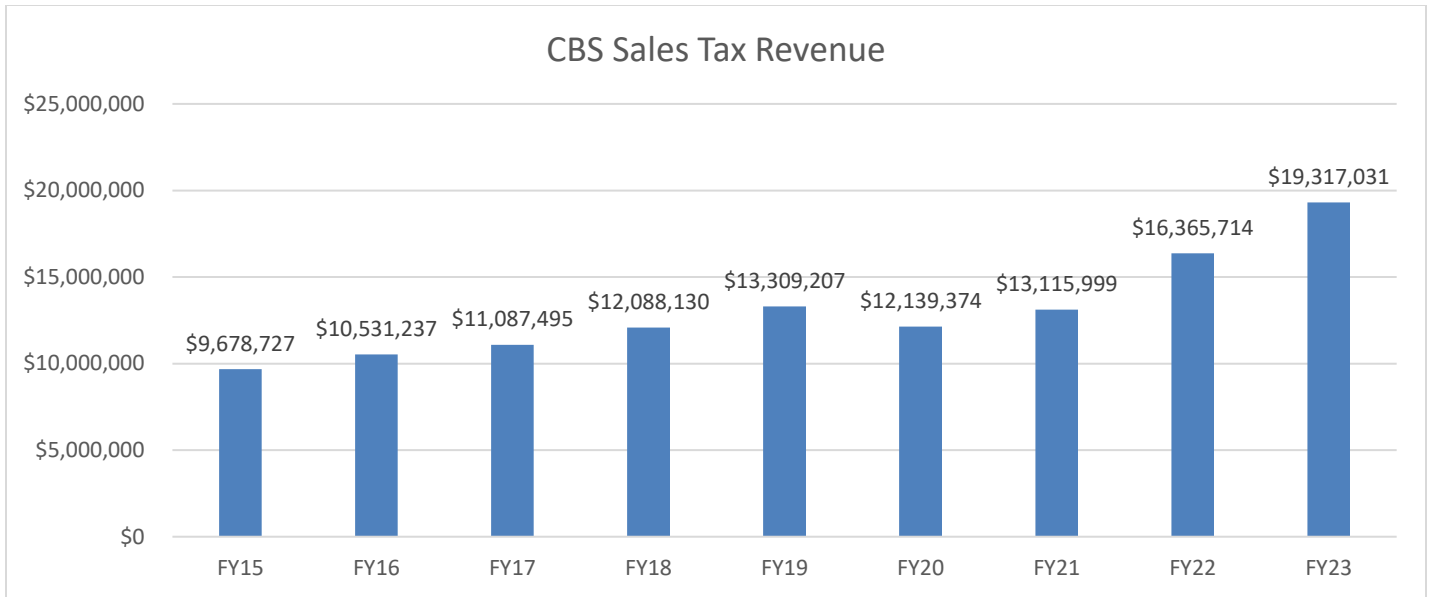
- 123,032 sessions (website visits)
- 389,569 page views
- 54% engagement rate

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 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: $\$917 (Cv) \times 4.51\% (Ci) \times 16,000 \text{ followers (Mq)} = \$661,707$
Facebook: $\$917 (Cv) \times 2.21\% (Ci) \times 68,109 \text{ followers (Mq)} = \$1,341,388$

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.

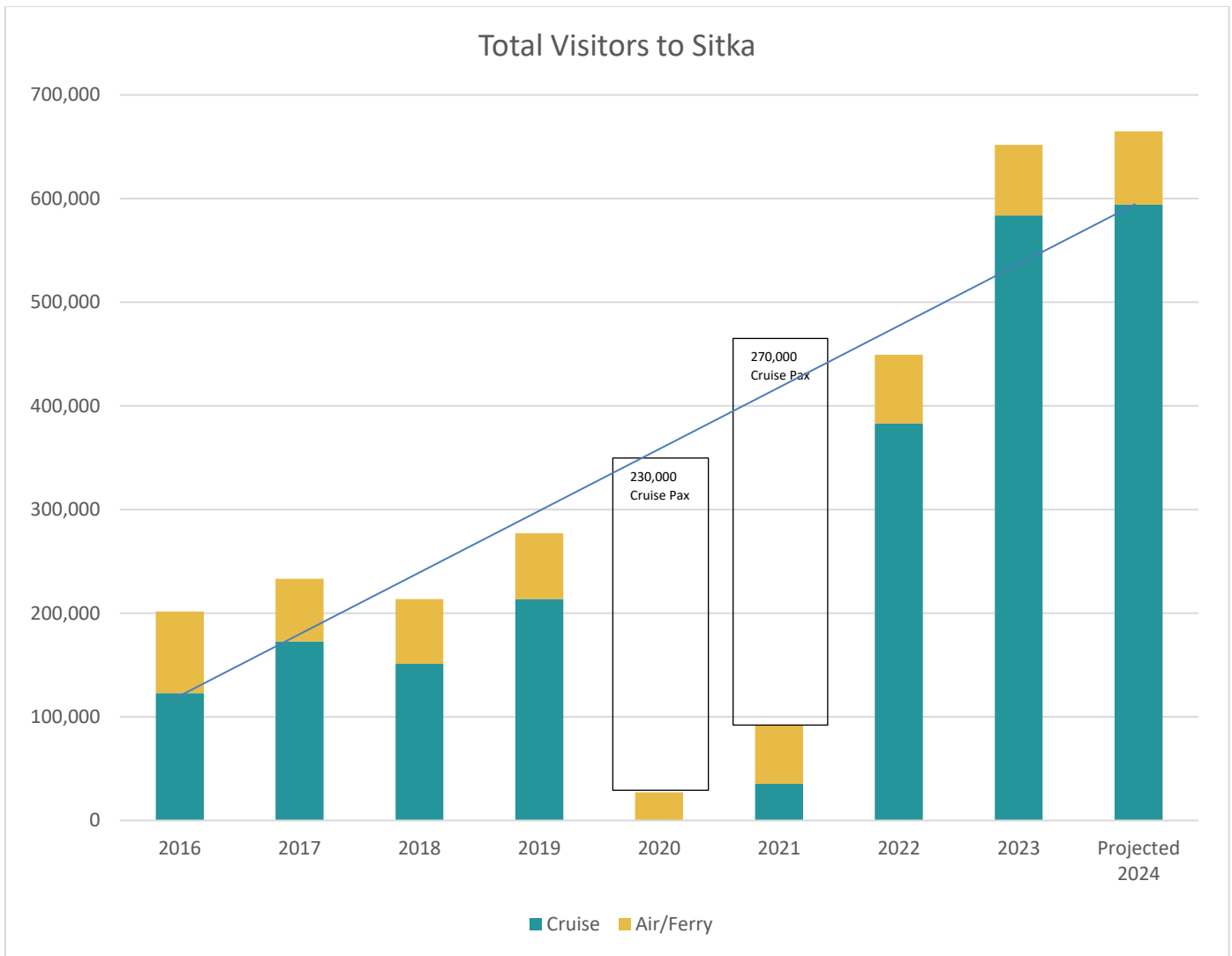
Net Promoter Score is calculated by: **Subtracting the percentage of detractors from the percentage of promoters.** (The percentage of passives is not used in the formula.) For example, if 10% of respondents are detractors, 20% are passives and 70% are promoters, your NPS score would be $70 - 10 = 60$.

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 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.



There has been an upward trend in air passengers into Sitka since 2009. While the pandemic hit the travel

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/DataElements.aspx?Data=1>

FY25 Visit Sitka Comprehensive Budget- Draft 4/24

July 1 , 2024-June 30, 2025	Total Contract Budget to maintain VS programs	Base Contract VEF	Supplemental Budget VEF	SUGGESTED: CPV Fund for Direct Cruise Support	VS DMO Unrestricted Revenue
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Revenue					
Contract Revenue- Requested <small>(FY24 \$525,000, FY23 \$525,000, FY22 \$458,600)</small>	\$575,000	\$300,000	\$275,000	-	\$157,250
Unrestricted Revenue					
Revenue Total	\$575,000	\$300,000	\$275,000		\$157,250

Operating Expenses					
Personnel <small>3.5 FTE year-round, 10 Seasonal positions, payroll taxes, worker's comp insurance</small>	\$231,775	\$110,475		\$121,300	\$49,830
Market/Industry Promotion <small>2 consumer travel shows, SE Conference</small>	\$16,940	-	-		
Occupancy <small>Rent, utilities, phone, internet, insurance</small>	\$41,350	\$41,350	-		
Advertising <small>Social media contract, TravelAlaska, Milepost, Alaska map + more</small>	\$42,315	\$2,000	\$40,315	\$3,000	\$2,400
Website, internet services <small>Website maintenance & development, required subscription services</small>	\$29,220	\$10,000	\$19,220	\$1,000	
Promotion <small>Branded collateral, hosting for meetings, VIPS, familiarization trips</small>	\$31,000	-	\$12,750	\$18,250	\$15,000
Contracted Services <small>Contracts for visitor guide design, photo & video, graphic design, accounting, dues/subscriptions</small>	\$89,015	-	\$89,015	\$0	-\$23,000
Supplies, Printing & Postage <small>Office supplies, visitor staff support, collateral printing, shipping & postage +</small>	\$64,196	\$27,695	\$36,501		\$30,670
Professional Development <small>Staff attendance at industry & business trainings in-person & via web</small>	\$3,129	-	\$3,129	-	\$3,850
Media & Public Relations <small>On-site hosting of visiting journalists & media</small>	\$11,500	-	\$11,500	-	\$2,500
	\$575,000	\$191,520	\$212,430	\$143,550	\$127,250

Revenue	\$575,000				\$157,250
Allocation from Visitor Enhancement Fund	\$143,550				
Allocation from CPV Fund	\$431,450				
Expense	\$575,000				\$127,250
Profit (Loss)- Contingency*	\$0				\$30,000
Total Profit (Loss)	\$0				

*Contingency to cover unexpected program expenses.

Visit Sitka Unrestricted Revenue \$157,250



Sitka^{VISIT}

2022 | 2023 | 2024

3-YEAR Strategic Marketing Plan

March 22, 2022

VISIT SITKA

104 Lake Street, Sitka, Ak 99835

Background

The Greater Sitka Chamber of Commerce has been contracted by the City and Borough of Sitka to promote Sitka as a travel destination supporting an important local economic driver since 2015. Visit Sitka currently represents 200 businesses within the community and across southeast Alaska. The Visitor Industry is SE largest private sector in terms of both jobs and wages - accounting for 11% of all employment earnings and has the strongest outlook of all Southeast Alaska industries. (Southeast Conference. Southeast Alaska by the Numbers 2020).

With its role as a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO), Sitka Chamber launched Visit Sitka utilizing industry trends and best practices. DMOs look at the whole tourism industry in a place, facilitate private/public sector and stakeholder collaboration, care for the tourism value chain. They develop programs for telling a unique destination story while becoming warm hosts for visitors no matter the purpose of their journey. Visit Sitka has a growing audience, which will continue to increase with a strong approach to telling the Sitka story. We are the best source of inspiration for travelers and planners looking to discover the magic of a Sitka getaway.

This three-year strategic marketing document will guide Visit Sitka's work scope and investments. It builds on the previous 3-Year Strategic Marketing Plan 2019-2021 and serves as a blueprint for staff and committees developing specific annual work plans. This strategic marketing plan aims to boost Sitka tourism brand awareness and visitation revenues while maintaining and increasing non-resident travel to and spending in Sitka. It is responsive to the travel environment specific to Sitka including demographics and modes of transportation as well as changes in technology, consumer travel trends, demographics and unique place challenges.

Guiding Principles

Do what the community cannot do for itself: Visit Sitka will provide a promotional and visitor education platform to promote the Sitka brand. Tourism businesses have limited funds and Visit Sitka provides an efficient way to extend the reach of marketing efforts.

1. **Grow the platform for promoting Sitka as a year-round visitor destination.**

Increase independent travelers visitor numbers and individual spend per visitor as well as support members and the community promoting Sitka as a year-round destination by building an integrated multi-channel marketing platform.

2. Increase brand impact.

Increase the visibility and appeal of Sitka as a visitor destination, as well as promote a clear understanding of its offer with specific target audiences, by developing and promoting an effective, high-impact brand presence.

3. Expand engagement.

Convert visitors into ambassadors and leverage the enormous potential of user-generated content and word-of-mouth recommendations by engaging with visitors and potential visitors at all stages of the customer journey.

4. Target effectively.

Using a cost/benefit approach Visit Sitka programs work towards enhancing economic vitality and quality of life for residents of Sitka. Marketing efforts prioritize effective targeting over broad reach, utilizing content designed to connect with specific high-potential niches rather than for general appeal. Maximize the return on investment (ROI) of Visit Sitka's marketing activities and reach potential visitors by focusing efforts on specific high-growth potential visitor audiences.

5. Cohesive destination image.

Collaborate with the City and Borough of Sitka to support cohesive visual brand on new

Visit Sitka's Role

Visit Sitka has a presence and function at all stages of the **travel customer journey**, including enhancing the quality of visitor experiences and managing perceptions of Sitka as a destination across multiple channels. Visit Sitka can influence decisions of customers as they move along this journey by:

Showcase Sitka

- Visit Sitka will provide potential visitors with visual content for their inspiration moments. Content will evoke emotion by showing unique & authentic experiences Sitka offers visitors.
- Visit Sitka will know where people are looking for inspiration for their trips and be present and engage with their audience across a variety of platforms.
- Visit Sitka will monitor, respond to, and leverage user-generated content such as online reviews and hashtag adoption as part of their marketing efforts.
- Visit Sitka will consistently strive to identify and create new experiences to market to targets that fit within the unified vision of the Visit Sitka brand.

Support outstanding experiences for visitors

- Visit Sitka will support excellence in all aspects of the visitor experience, in order to nurture and improve word of mouth.

- Visit Sitka will capitalize on the enthusiasm of visitors by encouraging and harnessing the potential of user generated content.
- Visit Sitka will actively pursue engagement with visitors throughout the customer journey.
- Visit Sitka will educate members to understand the new approach to marketing and assist them in developing the tools they need to support this effort, e.g. social media skills, cross promotion, hashtag promotion, soliciting online reviews.

Cultivate on-going connections with previous visitors

- Visit Sitka will steward an ongoing relationship with visitors to remain front of mind and amplify word of mouth recommendations.
- Visit Sitka will use social media as a way to connect and engage with Sitka’s fans, deepening connections, fostering conversation, and benefiting from an active body of online ambassadors.
- Visit Sitka will encourage economic development by encouraging independent travel year-round by investing in travel promotion, creating demand, generating visitor spending, & tax revenues.

Strategies

1) Marketing resources should be focused on digital, and in particular, social media.

Online channels increasingly dominate the travel customer journey, with 90% of American travelers finding inspiration in some kind of online media (a significant increase since the last Visit Sitka 3-year plan) and only 11% finding it through traditional offline media (print and TV combined), a number which continues to fall.

Beyond the inspiration stage, 95% of travelers stated that they have used user-generated content while planning trips in the past year (particularly reviews) and 57% of travelers used social media to plan their trips. This stands in opposition to only 12% of travelers who used a travel specialist for information.

Combined with the opportunity to target audiences these numbers show that the advantages of dedicating resources to digital marketing opportunities vastly outweigh the potential benefits of offline marketing channels.

2) Prioritize effective targeting by creating content designed to connect with specific high-potential niches rather than for general appeal.

Tailoring your voice, content, and promotion strategy to the interests and aspirations of niche audiences is the only effective way to make an impact with a hyper-informed customer.

Content must be produced with both a purpose and target. Focusing on well-defined niche audiences will enable you to speak directly to their motivations, desires, and values. Not only is this approach more powerful than traditional messaging, but it enables you to reach better qualified travelers.

3) Reveal authentic experiences to potential visitors through compelling storytelling.

When it comes to travel and leisure, emotions drive demand. Visit Sitka's marketing effort will focus on sharing marketing experiences rather than attractions. To do this effectively, Sitka will deliver content specifically designed to harness the power of storytelling. High-impact visual storytelling will inspire the emotions which drive interest and subsequently visitor demand. To identify which experiences to promote, Visit Sitka will consider the aspirations and dreams of targeted niche audiences and identify where this intersects with Sitka's scenic beauty, wildlife, Native heritage, and adventure.

4) Promote word-of-mouth recommendations and engage with former, current, and potential visitors as part of Visit Sitka's core marketing activities.

Research tells us that when seeking inspiration, word-of-mouth recommendations are the preferred source of information. While what you tell people about Sitka is less valuable than what they tell each other, by orchestrating excellent experiences, fostering ongoing engagement with visitors, and encouraging them to share recommendations about their trip, Visit Sitka can sow the seeds for long-term visitor growth. Working with influencers also gives Visit Sitka credible word-of-mouth promotion to a large audience direct from a respected and aspirational source. This is particularly useful when trying to target new audiences who may not have personal connections to people who have previously visited.

Target Audiences

Meeting, conference, and convention visitors

Sitka has growth-potential as a meeting, conference, and convention destination: an outstanding natural setting; low-distraction, 'retreat' style environment; great facilities and service, as well as ample accommodation options; and is easily accessible from Seattle and Anchorage. Meetings and conferences offer Visit Sitka an opportunity to increase visitors in a segment that generates income, employment, and investment opportunities, in addition to producing higher spending levels than other visitor groups and offsetting seasonal reductions in visitor numbers. Sitka's offering is particularly suited to small-group executive, incentive travel and C-level events, a segment for which Sitka's higher access costs are less relevant.

As with cruise line visitors, end-users, or event attendees, are not the drivers of demand for this segment. Decision-makers and -influencers are found among meeting and events planners, as well as at the executive level within customer organizations. Marketing efforts and information resources should therefore be designed to respond directly to the needs and interests of these individuals.

2024: 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.

Independent Travelers

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 phonemarket 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.

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 watch 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.

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.

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.

Cruise and Yacht visitors

2024: 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.



Director of Visit Sitka

The Sitka Chamber and Visit Sitka office is looking for a leader who understands promoting local business, public relations, and community development. The Director of Visit Sitka is responsible for a comprehensive program of destination management and visitor experiences. We are a small and very busy collaborative office with many programs constantly in progress. This position works with the Executive Director to enhance and maintain Sitka's reputation as a premier year-round destination and desirable community to live and conduct business.

We are a small nonprofit organization located in Sitka, Alaska on the west coast of Baranof Island facing the Pacific Ocean. Our community of about 8,500 human residents shares the area with eagles, bears, all five species of salmon, whales, sea lions, sea otters and so many more species of animals. Located amid the Tongass National Forest, Sitka is only accessible by air and water – no roads reach us, but our main road in town stretches 14 miles from end to end. Sitka is a place of great natural beauty, a warm welcoming community, and instant access to nature steps from your front door. Our historic downtown offers locally owned shops and businesses that support Sitka's artists, makers, and eateries. Sitka's commercial airlines offer daily flights to Seattle, Juneau, and Anchorage, making Sitka easily accessible for visitors and for you to explore.

Priorities

- Manage and lead Sitka's visitor industry through effective use of strategic planning, leadership skills, community assets, financial acuity, industry knowledge and relationships, and evolving best practices.
- Build and develop strong relationships and open communication with partners, external stakeholders, community members and the City & Borough of Sitka (CBS).
- Manage, direct and train staff and volunteers ensuring Visit Sitka brand consistency and service excellence.

Destination Development & Promotion

- Along with the Executive Director, develop a multi-year strategic marketing plan and annual work plan with input from Visit Sitka (VS) partners and CBS.
- Implement destination marketing plan including placement of advertising, social media marketing, website development and collateral materials ensuring consistent brand message to targeted audiences.
- In coordination with contractors and VS staff, produce, curate, and distribute the annual Visit Sitka Magazine and destination collateral through a variety of mediums.
- Promote Sitka for year-round meetings, conventions and events and ensure VS programs are in place to provide services and support for these groups.
- With the Executive Director, serve as the 'voice and face' of Visit Sitka, through public appearances and one-on-one meetings with partners and general public such as serving on industry related task force and committees.
- Serve as liaison for media including media and image requests, press releases, media kits and visiting

media tours.

Industry Support

- Work with state, federal, and city legislators to communicate and lobby for the needs of the visitor industry and Visit Sitka partners.
- Cultivate relationships cruise sector business, convention planners, travel trade, and destination yacht travel.
- Represent Visit Sitka in industry and statewide organizations and related committees.
- Regularly attend community events and CBS Assembly and commission meetings.

Administrative & Supervisory

- Track benchmarks, measurement targets, marketing ROI, KPI, ongoing industry stats for economic development usage and other reporting metrics as directed.
- Assist with development and explanation of annual Visit Sitka program budget, quarterly financial reporting, and annual Scope of Services report to CBS.
- Direct administrative, operating, sales & marketing functions of Visit Sitka including training and professional development of staff and volunteers.
- Coordinate meetings and engage industry partners in various initiatives and programs.
- Attend Sitka Chamber Board Meetings as requested by Executive Director.
- Any other duties as assigned by the Executive Director in support of Visit Sitka and the Sitka Chamber.

Requirements

Education & Experience

- Minimum of a bachelor's degree in a related field, or a combination of education and progressively increased work responsibility in an office setting.
- Working knowledge of Alaska visitor industry; with ability to learn quickly about Sitka, Alaska visitor sector and businesses.
- Experience with destination marketing, public relations, and visitor management preferred.

Skills & Abilities

- Strong background in team leadership, relationship management, and possess top customer service and organization skills.
- Advanced software proficiency is required, but not limited to Microsoft Office, desktop publishing, Adobe, WordPress, and with the ability to learn software quickly.
- Willing and able to promote Visit Sitka at local, regional, state, national and possibly international travel industry specific meetings, conventions, sales missions, and tradeshow by various means of transportation.

- Possess knowledge of meeting, event, and conference planning procedures.
- Must be a self-starter who can function independently and lead a team environment, willing to “jump in” as needed to support the projects and deadlines of the organization.
- Ability to deal effectively with the public in a professional manner, with discretion and supporting the confidentiality of the organization and its members and partners.
- Excellent written, verbal, and interpersonal skills.
- Valid driver’s license; reliable use of dependable, insured vehicle; and good driving record.
- Ability to walk, reach, stoop, bend and lift/carry up to 35 lbs.
- Some weekends, additional hours, and public holiday work may be required based on meeting/convention/holiday schedules.

Reports to: Executive Director of Chamber of Commerce | Visit Sitka

Hours: Full-time, exempt, 40-hour work week. Flexible work possibilities, employee must reside in Sitka, Alaska.

Salary: \$70,000-80,000 DOE Benefits: 10 paid holidays + 15 paid days off accrued annually, prorated based on start date.

This job description is not intended to be all-inclusive. Employee may perform other related duties as directed to meet the ongoing needs of the organization.

Submission Information

Submit resume, three professional references and cover letter to:
Rachel Roy at director@sitkachamber.com
Position will remain open until filled.
For more information contact Sitka Chamber at (907) 747-8604.

Updated August 2023

The Sitka Chamber | Visit Sitka is a small nonprofit organization serving as Sitka’s destination management organization. The Director of Visit Sitka is responsible for a comprehensive program of destination management and visitor experiences. We are looking for a leader who understands promoting local business, public relations, and community development. This full-time position is located in Sitka, Alaska and works with the Executive Director to enhance and maintain Sitka’s reputation as a premier year-round destination and desirable community to live and conduct business. Salary range is \$58,000 to 65,000 annually 15 days PT, DOE. Applicants should submit resume, 3 professional references and cover letter to director@sitkachamber.com. First review of applicants 10/2/23. Position starts 1/8/24. A full description can be found at sitkachamber.com.

Communications Specialist



The Sitka Chamber and Visit Sitka are looking for an enthusiastic self-starter that can take a job and run with it from idea to completion. We are a small and very busy collaborative office with many programs constantly in progress. We are looking for an up-beat, honest team member who is as comfortable working alone as they are on a big team project and is always willing to jump in and assist any other team member as needed. If you enjoy working on multiple projects, are friendly with excellent customer service, and have great communication skills, then you can be our Communications Specialist.

Basic Function

The Communications Specialist is responsible for promoting, shaping, and enhancing Sitka's image through accurate and effective communication strategies.

Responsibilities

- Assist Director of Visit Sitka (DVS) with implementation of marketing plan including creation and placement of advertising, social media marketing, website development and collateral materials
- Along with DVS contribute to the annual work plan and assist with budgets for Visit Sitka to meet City of Sitka contract requirements
- Provide regular progress reports as well as marketing analytics for reporting metrics
- Develop external company communication strategies and timelines (including a detailed editorial calendar)
- Create & manage external communications (including partner and consumer newsletters, press releases, announcements, signage)
- Maintain company websites including data entry and some webmaster duties
- Develop, prepare and publish regular online and email publications (e-Newsletters, Meeting & Planner Guide, Destination Wedding Guide, Arts & Gallery Guide, etc.)
- Along with DVS produce, curate and distribute the Visit Sitka Magazine, visitors' maps, branded content, blog posts, cruise ship calendar, meeting & conventions calendar, etc, through a variety of mediums.
- Use multiple media platforms (social, digital, print, video, personal appearances, etc.) to convey consistent brand message
- Manage consumer and travel trade leads program, working with fulfillment house to supply collateral to requestors
- Promote Sitka at local, regional, state and national industry specific meetings, conventions, sales missions and trade shows
- Act as point of contact for phone calls and visitor information center visitors when Visitor Information Staff and volunteers are not available

- Support company meetings and events, as well as community and special group events throughout the year (such as industry events, Visit Sitka luncheons, conferences in Sitka)
- Represent the Sitka Chamber and Visit Sitka with integrity to all members of the world community

Requirements

- ✓ Minimum of a bachelor's degree in public relations, communications or relevant field and proven work track record of communications projects
- ✓ Must be a creative, reliable self-starter
- ✓ Proven experience as a superior verbal and written communicator with public presentation skills
- ✓ Strong copywriting and editing experience
- ✓ Solid understanding of project management principles
- ✓ Advanced software proficiency required, but not limited to Microsoft Office, Desktop Publishing, Adobe, Wordpress, and with the ability to learn software quickly.
- ✓ Outstanding organizational, time management and planning abilities
- ✓ This is a full-time exempt position that requires 40 hours per week, and may include evenings and weekends as needed
- ✓ Willing and able to travel to trade shows and conferences by various means of transportation

Reports to: Director of Visit Sitka

Anticipated start date: Mid-March 2022

Hours: Full time, non-exempt, in-office 8-hour work days, 40 hour work week

Salary: \$45,000-\$50,000 annually, benefits: 10 paid holidays + 15 paid days off accrued annually, prorated based on start date and available after 120 days of satisfactory employment.

This job description is not intended to be all-inclusive. Employee may perform other related duties as directed to meet the ongoing needs of the organization.

Submission Information

Submit cover letter, resume, two professional references and at least two work samples no later than February 11 to:

Laurie Booyse at tourism@visitsitka.org

For more information contact the Sitka Chamber office at (907) 747-8604

About Us

The Greater Sitka Chamber of Commerce was established in 1903 and is a voluntary organization of business and community leaders who promote, support and facilitate commerce and economic growth in the community. Visit Sitka is a private, non-profit marketing organization serving Sitka under a city contract for destination marketing organization (DMO) services. With a combined year-round staff of 5 full-time employees, the team produces a wide variety of programs and projects to support Sitka's businesses and organizations, as well as improve the wider local economy.

Visitor Services Coordinator

Visit Sitka seeks a seasonal 40 hour per week Visitor Services Coordinator. This position will be responsible for welcoming and orienting visitors to the available activities and experiences in Sitka and providing on-site supervision of paid staff and volunteers to ensure a high-quality experience for all visitors. This is a temporary, 6-month position, starting in mid-April and concluding in late-September, and requires the successful candidate to commit at least one weekend workday per week, with alternate weekdays off.

Responsibilities

- Assist Visit Sitka Director to recruit, train, schedule (keep an accurate calendar), and retain viable visitor information staff and volunteers to work at multiple visitor information distribution locations.
- Responsible for compiling daily reports and submitting monthly statistics to supervisor. Reports must be consistent, on-time, and accurate.
- Greet and help orient visitors while providing the level of customer service at downtown visitor information center as well as cruise ship terminal welcome desk.
- Be knowledgeable of and able to effectively communicate information to visitors about attractions, daily activities, and events.
- Supervise and staff the downtown information center and the cruise ship terminal welcome desk, including opening and closing, and maintaining and restocking inventory.
- Schedule, track attendance, and process timesheets.
- Assist in supervising and mentoring part-time staff and volunteers, including helping to plan training and appreciation events.
- Collect, track, and report visitation counts and feedback, work with staff to address complaints.
- Act as point of contact for phone calls and deliveries when Visit Sitka staff are not available.
- Represent the Sitka Chamber and Visit Sitka with integrity to all members of the world community.

Requirements

- ✓ Demonstrated supervisory experience and planning the work of others.
- ✓ Demonstrated experience in organizing workflow and coordinating activities.
- ✓ Demonstrated experience in the use of several software programs, including, but not limited to: Microsoft Word, Excel, Canva, Google Calendar. Must be able to communicate across multiple platforms and locations.
- ✓ Must be able to work some evenings and weekends.
- ✓ Must have a valid driver's license.

- ✓ Must be able to lift 50 lbs. with assistance while bending, twisting to lift items and to carry to storeroom.

Preferred experience

Three (3) plus years of tourism industry experience with an emphasis on tour operations and working with the public.

Experience working with volunteers and/or volunteer training.

An Associate's or Bachelor's Degree in a related field from an accredited institution.

COVID-19 Information

This position has constant contact with the public. Staff may be asked to take precautions such as wear a mask while at work. Due to the evolving workplace and governmental requirements for the Covid-19 pandemic, positions may be subject to Covid 19 testing, temperature checks, and other screening method.

Anticipated date range: Mid-April through September 30, 2022

Hours: Full-time, 8-hour workday, 40-hour work week

Salary: Starting at \$20 per hour DOE, end of season bonus for completion of contract in good standing

Submission information

Submit cover letter, resume and two professional references. Initial reviews will begin March 21 and will continue until position is filled.

Email to tourism@visitsitka.org

For more information contact the Visit Sitka office at (907) 747-8604

About Us

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Visitor Information Center Staff

Visit Sitka is looking for part-time staff members to work at the Visitor Information Center and the Sitka Sound Cruise Terminal Welcome Desk for this summer. If you love Sitka and want to share your passion with visitors, we want you! As visitor information staff you will meet and greet visitors and provide details on area activities, accommodations, events, and other information of interest to our visitors.

Requirements

- Good people skills: enthusiastic, friendly, and have a pleasant personality
- Customer service and sales skills
- Basic internet search abilities
- Comfortable working in a busy environment
- Commitment to working for the summer season
- Some weekend and holiday hours maybe necessary based on schedule
- Ability to participate in administrative support during less busy time periods
- Must participate in online and in-person training to increase your knowledge base

Your Benefits

- ✓ Meet people from around the country and world
- ✓ Familiarization trips to partner businesses
- ✓ Flexible schedule

Anticipated work dates: Early April through late September

Hours: Part-time minimum 20 hours per week depending on availability

Salary: \$18 per hour

Application Information

The staff recruiting process is selective. All candidates must fill out an application followed by an interview to determine their level of knowledge, enthusiasm, commitment, and passion for promoting Sitka as a visitor destination.

To apply fill out an application form and drop it off at the Visit Sitka Visitor Information Center or email it to tourism@visitsitka.org. For questions call (907) 747-8604.



Visitor Information Center Staff Application

Applicant information

Full Name: _____ Date: _____
Last First M.I.

Address: _____
Street Address Apartment/Unit #

_____ *City State ZIP Code*

Phone: _____ Email _____

Your availability

Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday		Saturday		Sunday	
AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM

Date Available: _____

Are you a citizen of the United States? YES NO If no, are you authorized to work in the U.S.? YES NO

Education

High School: _____ Address: _____

From: _____ To: _____ Did you graduate? YES NO Diploma: _____

College: _____ Address: _____

From: _____ To: _____ Did you graduate? YES NO Degree: _____

Other: _____ Address: _____

From: _____ To: _____ Did you graduate? YES NO Degree: _____

List three professional references

Full Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Company: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

Full Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Company: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

Full Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Company: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

Previous employment

Company: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ Supervisor: _____

Job Title: _____ Starting Salary:\$ _____ Ending Salary:\$ _____

Responsibilities: _____

From: _____ To: _____ Reason for Leaving: _____

YES NO

May we contact your previous supervisor for a reference?

Company: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ Supervisor: _____

Job Title: _____ Starting Salary:\$ _____ Ending Salary:\$ _____

Responsibilities: _____

From: _____ To: _____ Reason for Leaving: _____

YES NO

May we contact your previous supervisor for a reference?

Company: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ Supervisor: _____

Job Title: _____ Starting Salary:\$ _____ Ending Salary:\$ _____

Responsibilities: _____

From: _____ To: _____ Reason for Leaving: _____

YES NO

May we contact your previous supervisor for a reference?

Military Service

Branch: _____ From: _____ To: _____

Rank at Discharge: _____ Type of Discharge: _____

If other than honorable, explain: _____

Disclaimer and Signature

I certify that my answers are true and complete to the best of my knowledge.

If this application leads to employment, I understand that false or misleading information in my application or interview may result in my release.

Signature: _____ Date: _____