

# YOU'RE OUR PEOPLE.



**FY23-24 STRATEGIC PLAN | JUNE 2023**



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# INTRODUCTION

Today's Destination Organizations are charged with much more than simply bringing visitors to the their destination. The DO needs to be directly involved in the sustainability of the destination and maintaining, or often improving, the quality of life for the residents and the service workers on the front lines facing the visitors. The DO is taking on more responsibility for individual business success. And in today's social climate, the DO plays a role in how its community addresses diversity, equity, and inclusion, and how the community is perceived by the outside world. Add a never-ending and unpredictable pandemic, as well as chaotic political and economic climates to the list, and we find ourselves in a place where a strategic marketing plan must address a much broader territory than it ever did in the past.

As a DO and Chamber, Visit Hood River is well positioned to be involved in and in some cases drive conversation as it pertains to the issues noted above. The following plan showcases the positioning and tactics across various audiences (including internal) that will be required to make progress in every area. At its core, this plan supports the primary reason for the existence of Visit Hood River in the first place:

**Build and sustain the quality of life for the residents and businesses who call Hood River home.**



**Grow visitation, resulting in increased room tax collections, occupancy, ADR, and RevPAR.**

**Attract visitors during less visited midweek, shoulder, and off-seasons.**

**Utilize promotion efforts to direct traffic to individual businesses throughout the region.**

**Position Hood River as a place worthy of respect and protection.**

**Drive community initiatives around diversity, equity, and inclusion.**

# MEASUREMENT

With one year of work behind us, we have clear benchmarks for future performance evaluation on metrics including earned media value, digital advertising performance, website traffic, organic social engagement, and clicks from the website to book or visit a stakeholder site. However, the real metrics that will measure our success against the goals listed above will come from the following sources. While many of these are directly impacted by the marketing work, some metrics (such as ADR and RevPAR) may be influenced, but not directly impacted. Still, we'll report on them as the data is available for reference.

- ➔ Report on and compare year-over-year lodging tax collections, ADR and RevPar, including seasonal trends
- ➔ Report on and compare year-over-year visitor numbers, origination, length of stay, and activities
- ➔ Report on and compare year-over-year mentions of individual businesses, and clicks to business sites from VisitHoodRiver.com
- ➔ Survey stakeholder satisfaction with VHR efforts annually and report on those results year-over-year
- ➔ Survey in-market visitors, as well as potential visitors as to their awareness and perception of the destination, including recall of sustainability and DEI messaging on a biannual basis (recommend alternating in-market and out-of-market research so there is always one study in progress each year)

# WORK PLAN OVERVIEW

The measurement goals noted previously will be achieved through five primary categories of work:

## Drive consumer visitation

- Grow visitation ideally resulting in increased room tax collections and occupancy
- Attract visitors during less visited shoulder and off-seasons

## Promote local businesses

- Grow visitation resulting in increased room tax collections and occupancy
- Attract visitors during less ideally visited shoulder and off-seasons
- Utilize promotion efforts to direct traffic to individual businesses throughout the region

## Support group/event sales

- Grow visitation ideally resulting in increased room tax collections and occupancy
- Attract visitors during less visited shoulder and off-seasons

## Build a sustainable destination

- Position Hood River as a place worthy of respect and protection

## Participate in and promote a welcoming community

- Drive community initiatives around diversity, equity and inclusion



# DRIVE CONSUMER VISITATION

**The core of VHR's marketing program is aimed at driving consumer visitation, both overnight and day trip, throughout the year, with a special focus on shoulder and off seasons, as well as midweek.**

## TACTICS

### Creative campaign

- In 2023, VHR developed and introduced the You're Our People campaign. This creative campaign is exactly right for Hood River because it showcases all the wonderful reasons to visit, but also states right up front that Hood River seeks a visitor that shares the values of the residents and business owners of Hood River.
- The You're Our People campaign will continue to grow in visibility across paid advertising, owned media, email and website.

### Content plan

- The bulk of our ongoing communications efforts, executed across paid channels, owned organic channels, email and website, as well as public relations, are driven by a content plan and a Go-to-Market (GTM) strategy.
- The Go-to-Market strategy is described in more detail on page 9, but basically, it involves planning, coordination, and timely execution to ensure messaging meets consumers ahead of decision points in their path to purchase.
- We've already built out a content calendar that outlines more than a year in advance the messaging and channels we'll be utilizing so we can prepare assets and buys accordingly.

### Paid media

- The paid media strategy, primarily digital, is guided by a sales funnel approach more completely described on pages 10 and 11 below. We utilize a range of channels to ensure we address targeted audiences at appropriate stages in their exploratory and planning stages, then follow them through booking and subsequently bringing them back to the destination again.
- This entire strategy is informed by data obtained through VHR's Google Analytics, but now also by data that shows us a five-year lookback at visitation patterns so we can specifically target people and lookalikes that visit midweek, during key seasons, participating in most desired activities and originating from identified markets that provide the most value to Hood River.
- Targeting is based primarily on behaviors and geographic location, secondarily on demographics. Behaviorally, Hood River is looking for individuals, groups and families who are interested in exploration, travel, food and wine/beer/spirits, outdoor recreation and have a history of searching for and physically participating in those things. Data specific to Hood River website and physical visitation will give us precise information on the types of people most likely to visit in a manner we prefer (shoulder/off season, midweek, staying in a lodging property, or spending in local businesses if a day guest, etc. The same data will help us hone our geographic targeting spends, as well.
- The digital strategy currently in place incorporates paid social as well as programmatic native and display campaigns, and an aggressive paid search effort that has been extremely effective in driving conversions.

### Organic social media

- A key component to building and maintaining a relationship with visitors, as well as businesses and residents, is through organic social media efforts, currently playing out on Facebook and Instagram.
- Our social media plan follows the content plan described above, and involves regular posts, responses to comments and constant evaluation of reach and engagement.

# DRIVE CONSUMER VISITATION - CONT.

## Email marketing

- VHR will continue to build and send a monthly consumer email incorporating timely content identified in the content plan.
- The purpose of email is to provide actionable inspiration for return visits from our opted in travelers. As noted below, both email and organic social are also prime territory for promoting individual local businesses.
- Email success is gauged by opens and clicks versus industry benchmarks.

## Website optimization

- As the primary call to action for our digital marketing efforts, the website requires constant updating and optimization.
- We'll continue to build out additional long-form content in the form of blogs and sample itineraries, as well as adding more photography and video.
- We'll continue to build out specific campaign landing pages that will serve as more specific and appropriate pages to drive potential visitors from ad campaigns, but will also allow us to more effectively retarget and evaluate the effectiveness of individual campaigns.
- In 2023 we added Simpleview, also known as Book Direct, to better capture booking intent from website visitors, allowing them to search dates and costs for lodging in and around Hood River, which provides a better user experience, but also gives us a better picture of the booking planning and intent of website visitors.

## Public relations

- The PR strategy around consumer visitation will be focused on generating interest, awareness, and visitation among targeted media and influencers.
- In addition to proactive outreach efforts, DVA will manage the review, vetting, and management of inbound inquiries based on timing, story angle, audience, and reach.
- Through a combination of press releases, proactive outreach, media invitations, pitches, media visit coordination, and more, Hood River will maintain a steady presence in front of key media and influencer audiences, and ultimately their readers, viewers, listeners, and followers.





# DRIVE CONSUMER VISITATION - CONT.

## FY22-23 DELIVERABLES

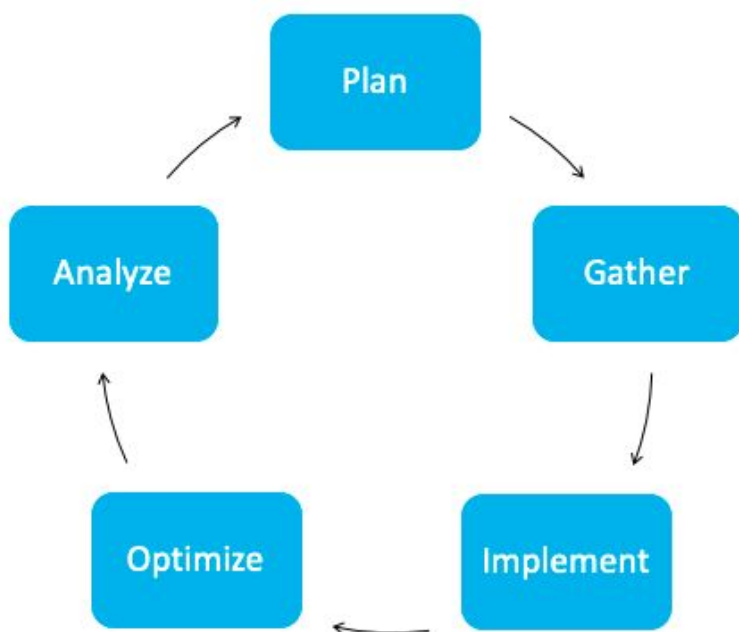
- You're Our People creative campaign ongoing asset updates, new executions
- Content/Go-To-Market plan
- Media plan & buy
- 3-5 weekly organic social media posts on both Facebook and Instagram, including weekly Instagram stories
- Monthly consumer email
- Website blog posts
- Website landing pages
- PR-specific deliverables:
  - **Media kit/press room** – Continue to update the media kit and website press room.
  - **PR editorial calendar** – Develop and execute a 12-month proactive calendar for drafting and distribution of press releases, invitations, and themed pitches to regional and national media.
  - **Media invitations & hosted visits** – Develop and distribute fall/winter and spring/summer themed invitations encouraging select media and influencers to visit. Host media on an ongoing basis for the purpose of generating feature editorial coverage.
  - **Virtual media event** – Plan and execute one virtual media event during FY23-24 to test the success of targeting media/influencers in a niche audience or market.
  - **Proactive media/influencer outreach** – Leverage Hood River's many assets to actively recruit editorial coverage and individual visits from travel and lifestyle media and influencers.



# GO-TO-MARKET CAMPAIGN PLANNING

Management of major consumer facing tactics requires planning, coordination, and timely execution to ensure messaging meets consumers ahead of decision points in their path to purchase.

To deliver an optimized plan, DVA utilizes a Go-To-Market process that brings transparency, fosters collaboration, and builds consensus among all stakeholders. Our GTM process typically works 6-12 months ahead of launch dates, and identifies key deliverables to execute a campaign across all sections of the sales funnel.



## PLAN

- Review business goals, past performance
- Identify new products/services
- Evaluate tactics, identify asset needs and KPIs

## GATHER

- Develop assets, assemble media plan and budget allocations

## IMPLEMENT

- Launch campaigns

## OPTIMIZE

- Review campaign performance across channels, adjust where needed

## ANALYSIS

- Review KPIs against business goals

## STRATEGY SESSIONS

At regular intervals across the calendar, DVA and Visit Hood River will meet to review performance and strategize for future campaigns including but not limited to:

- **Consumer-facing efforts intended to drive visitation**
- **Meetings, groups, conferences & conventions**
- **In-market diversity, equity, & inclusion**
- **Tourism advocacy & industry/stakeholder support**
- **Sustainability & sustainable tourism initiatives**

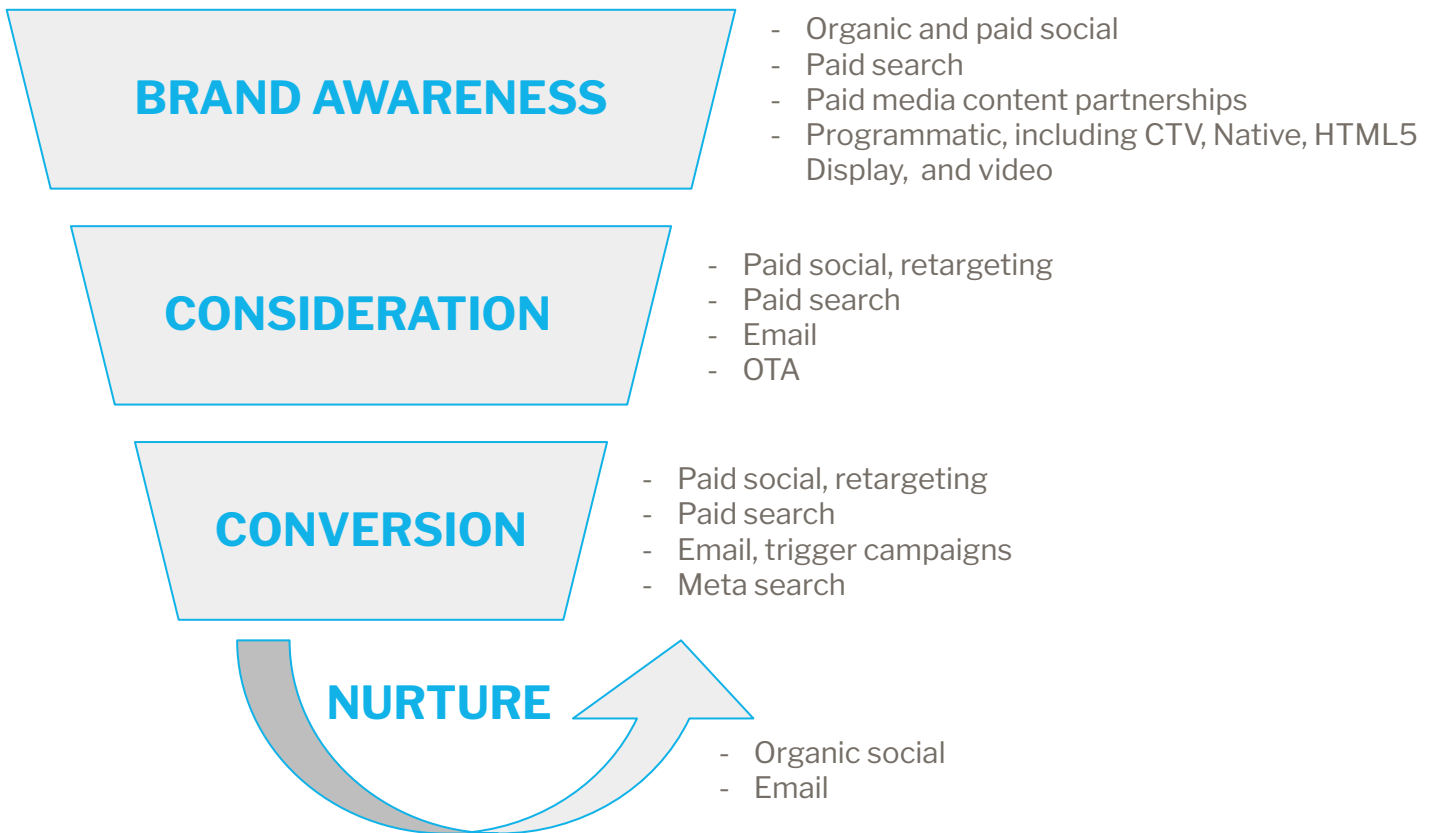
The recommended cadence for strategy sessions would be semi-annually.

# THE SALES FUNNEL

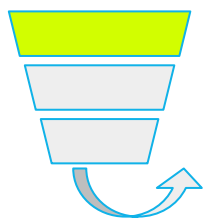
## THE SALES FUNNEL

With a solid understanding of key business goals and KPIs, DVA moves into building an optimal media plan, with a thorough Go-To-Market plan as our roadmap.

To help illustrate how DVA puts the various elements of the marketing toolbox to work, we've outlined the sales funnel and the channel/tactics within each stage. At each stage we measure different elements, all in an effort to naturally and intuitively guide the customer through the funnel.



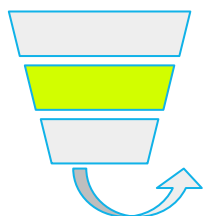
# THE SALES FUNNEL - CONT.



## TOP OF FUNNEL (ToF) - BRAND AWARENESS

DVA takes a content-forward advertising approach to help engage and drive awareness on owned and third-party channels. A content marketing strategy is built from key brand messaging pillars to be value-additive for the audience; building awareness, demand, and intent, while also building brand/industry authority which can lead to better SEO, improved customer retention, and greater Lifetime Value (LTV).

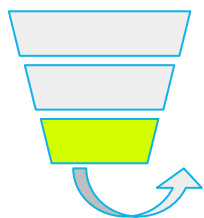
**ToF stage KPIs:** Reach, engagement, audience growth (both social and owned lists), and site traffic



## MID-FUNNEL - CONSIDERATION

As the user moves down the purchase funnel, messaging becomes more specific. Still leaning on content to drive user engagement, the focus shifts to specific destination activities, attractions, promotions, products, and services. Audience targeting narrows and the website becomes more important as user intent increases through site research, email messaging, and retargeting efforts.

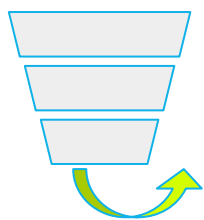
**Mid-Funnel state KPIs:** Engagement, owned list growth, on-site metrics, and on-site triggers/events



## LOW FUNNEL - CONVERSION

The ability to accurately track user intent and behavior is critical for all sections of the sales funnel, but is particularly important for the low funnel conversion-focused tactics. Here messaging will move from awareness and intent building to clear and direct calls to action. Outbound marketing tactics will lead with 'Book Now' CTAs, and inbound audiences land directly on booking pages. Email trigger campaigns will play a critical role in closing the gap for users whose 'shopping' experience ended before a conversion event that we've identified (cart abandonment).

**Funnel stage KPIs:** Conversion rates, occupancy, clicks to book, and other conversion-based indicators available across the digital ecosystem



## RETENTION - NURTURE

Once the conversion is complete, the user/customer moves into the nurture phase of the funnel. This phase is very important, as substantial Customer Acquisition Costs (CAC) have been spent and careful nurturing is required to retain customers and increase LTV.

**Retention stage KPIs:** Both top- and mid-funnel metrics, as well as conversion-based indicators

## OUTCOMES

Through careful management of a user through the entire customer journey, DVA has a proven track record of delivering results on both marketing and business goals:

### MARKETING

- Increased site traffic
- Growth across owned channels
- Increased brand authority, demand, and awareness

### BUSINESS

- Increased market share
- Increased occupancy during peak and shoulder seasons
- Increased LTV
- Shortened sales cycles

# PROMOTE LOCAL BUSINESSES

**All the visitation in the world won't matter if local businesses are not specifically benefitting from our efforts in the form of visibility in our marketing efforts resulting in clicks to their digital properties, and ultimately consistent in-person traffic and sales.**

## TACTICS

### Asset building

- Continue to build the photo and video library featuring individual businesses, owners, staff and products

### Creative/messaging

- Ensure individual, named and linked businesses, are incorporated into campaign creative

### Paid media

- Commit a portion of the paid media campaign to running assets that feature individual businesses, either in the ads themselves and/or in the content pieces and landing pages linked to the campaign assets

### Organic social media

- Continue to incorporate a constant stream of always changing businesses in our organic feed with links to the business' social media feed
- Monitor and share local business' social media posts

### Email marketing

- Incorporate individual businesses in stories, sample itineraries and other features

### Website optimization

- Maintain the business directory, but also link to individual businesses throughout the website within blogs, sample itineraries and landing pages

### Public relations

- Continue highlighting local businesses and business owners, featuring locally-owned or managed businesses in media and influencer visit itineraries, and spotlighting the makers, producers, growers, and operators who proudly call Hood River home

## FY 23-24 DELIVERABLES

- Photos/videos featuring local businesses and products
- A minimum of one weekly organic social media post featuring local businesses/products
- Mentions and/or links to website content containing direct links to local businesses
- Website blog posts and/or itineraries that link directly to local businesses
- Business mentions in press materials and business inclusion in PR-arranged media visit itineraries
- Public relations team is available to conduct quarterly outreach/communication targeting tourism partners, elected officials, and the greater Hood River community

# BUILD A SUSTAINABLE DESTINATION

The “other side” of destination marketing is guiding demand appropriately, and educating visitors, as well as locals, in positive ways to visit and treat the residents, businesses and natural resources found in the community.

## TACTICS

### Creative/messaging

- Continue to develop digital assets that can be utilized to raise awareness of responsible travel

### Paid media

- Specifically budget a portion of the media buy for locally geo-fenced sustainability messaging

### Organic social media

- The content plan will include environmental sustainability categories that will be incorporated into regular organic social media posts

### Email marketing

- Email is an optimal channel for environmental messaging since it speaks to an audience that is already familiar with and interested in Hood River
- As with organic social, email will incorporate sustainability messaging as per the content plan

### Website optimization

- We proposing building out blog posts that specifically speak to responsible visitation

### Public relations

- Build sustainable tourism messaging into the FY 23-24 editorial calendar.
- Implement a quarterly communication strategy in the form of media op eds or standalone stakeholder communications, to reinforce and remind locals, businesses, politicians, and others of what Visit Hood River is doing on the sustainability front.
- Develop itineraries that route visiting media and influencers to lesser-known and less crowded areas of the valley, including some of the ‘hidden gems’ that are waiting to be discovered

## FY23-24 DELIVERABLES

- Creative assets promoting responsible travel
- Locally geo-fenced digital ad buy conveying sustainability messaging
- A minimum of monthly organic social media posts that focus on sustainability
- Ensure that summer email themes focus first and foremost on responsible recreation
- See detailed Public Relations deliverables in the PR section below
- A minimum of two blog posts that focus on responsible recreation, fire safety, water safety, appropriate visitor behavior, etc.

# COMMUNITY ADVOCACY

Diversity, equity and inclusion are important elements of a community we all want to be a part of, whether as residents or visitors. Visit Hood River has a responsibility to advocate for, bring visibility to, and engage in the narrative surrounding the importance of welcoming every individual who visits our town or interacts with our residents, and being open and good neighbors to every resident regardless of their beliefs, origins, economic status, upbringing, sexual orientation, political viewpoint, age, or appearance. More than ever, these attitudes, actions, and words are what truly reflect and define a destination, more so than any natural beauty, amenities, location, or history ever could.

## TACTICS

### Community activism

- Attend, participate in and engage with local efforts around DEI initiatives

### Asset building

- Continue to expand the photography and videography library with models who are representative of a broader swath of our residents, business owners and visitors

### Creative/messaging

- Develop digital assets that feature a more diverse audience

### Organic social media

- The content plan will include social issue categories that will be incorporated into regular organic social media posts

### Email marketing

- Email is an optimal channel for social messaging since it speaks to an audience that is already familiar with and interested in Hood River
- As with organic social, email will incorporate sustainability messaging as per the content plan

### Website optimization

- We propose building out blog posts that specifically speak to Hood River's stance on inclusivity



## TACTICS, CONT.

### Public relations

- As part of Visit Hood River's ongoing efforts to more deeply incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives and practices into the organization, the public relations plan will prioritize DEI into all PR tactics. These efforts will include, but are not limited to:
  - Identify and prioritize media outlets and influencers that reach a diverse audience that extends beyond what has been traditionally considered the core Visit Hood River demographic.
  - Invite and attract hosted visits from individuals representing the BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and other marginalized audiences to visit Hood River for the purpose of sharing their experiences with their readers, viewers, fans, and followers.
  - Feature women and minority owned businesses, individuals, products, and other services and activities in content developed for the purpose of promoting Hood River as a diverse, tolerant, accepting, progressive, and welcoming community.
  - Recognize the ancestral history, heritage, culture, and role of Indigenous People in Hood River and the Columbia River Gorge, and celebrate their continued presence and impacts today.

## FY23-24 DELIVERABLES

- VHR will seek out appropriate community partners in DEI advocacy
- Photos/videos showing a diversity of people in and around Hood River
- A minimum of monthly organic social media posts that feature someone from the community representing a diverse point of view or experience
- A minimum of one blog post that would likely be guest-written to discuss Hood River's approach to diversity, equity and inclusion
- Diverse media outlet targets, featured people and businesses, and recognition in PR tactics





# HOOD RIVER CHAMBER of COMMERCE

Hood River County Chamber of Commerce programs will continue to focus on community vitality, health, and well being for all of us fortunate enough to make Hood River our place to live and do business.

While our organization operates as Visit Hood River, the Chamber's priorities are at the heart and foundation of how we view our role in community stewardship and leadership. As Hood River and the nation look forward, our community-facing Chamber programs will continue to highlight and enhance the quality of life for Hood River businesses and residents with the following programs:

## Stewardship initiatives:

- Monthly meeting to collaborate with the City of Hood River, Hood River County, The Port of Hood River, MCCEDD and SBDC leadership to discuss our priorities, policies and vision to benefit Hood River as a whole

## Business Leadership and Education

- Downtown Business Committee
- Small Business Committee
  - Increase stakeholder engagement
  - Develop programming that is sustainable and beneficial to our stakeholders, in all industries
- Morning Brew
- First Thursdays - Business After Hours
- Trails support and management initiatives
- Quarterly Taste of Success

## Community Matching Grant Program

- VHR will award \$50,000 annually to key stakeholder program development projects
- Funding through our VHR Community Matching Grant Program

## Special Event production and promotion

- Hops Fest
- Harvest Festival
- Halloween Downtown
- Hood River Holidays
- Ciderfest
- Pride Celebration
- First Friday Celebrations

## Public Health and Safety Advocacy and Communications



**DVA will provide monthly, quarterly and annual recaps per the detail below outlining results measured and evaluated against key performance indicators, historical figures, and industry benchmarks.**

## **MONTHLY - reported month-over-month and year-over-year with industry and competitive destination comparisons as available**

- Occupancy - per the Smith Travel Report
- Average Daily Rate - per the Smith Travel Report
- Website visitation
- Social media engagement
- Email performance
- Clicks to stakeholder sites
- Clicks to book from the VHR site
- Economic and Hotel attribution to deliver a clear Return on Ad Spend (ROAS)
- Earned media value - per Cision Media Monitoring, measuring against PR goal noted below. Also included in PR reporting will be:
  - Total mentions
  - Audience reach
  - Coverage by media type
  - Sentiment (positive, neutral, negative)

## **QUARTERLY - reported quarter-over-quarter and year-over-year with industry and competitive destinations as available**

- Lodging tax collections
- Visitor origination - per Datafy data partner
- Digital advertising performance
- Groups/events - per VHR-provided reporting

## **ANNUAL - reported vs previous years and against competitive destinations as available**

- Stakeholder satisfaction results - per annual stakeholder survey
- Destination awareness & sentiment/perception - per bi-annual primary research

## **PUBLIC RELATIONS-SPECIFIC METRICS**

Specific to public relations, the plan is to generate, at a minimum, a 10:1 return on investment as measured by the advertising equivalency value of earned media coverage. With a proposed budget of \$60,000 for the 23-24 fiscal year, the public relations metrics would be as follows:

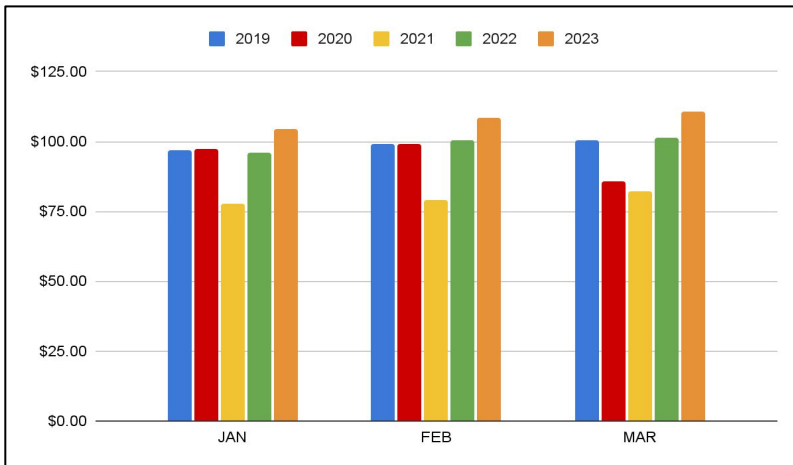
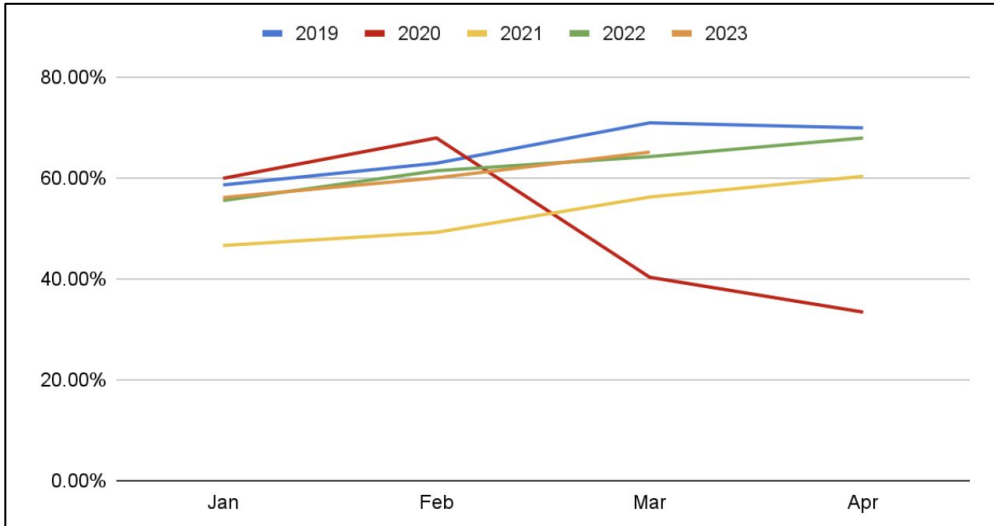
- Generate \$600,000 in editorial value
- Distribute 12 press releases & pitches
- Host 10 writer/influencer visits

# REPORTING - LODGING

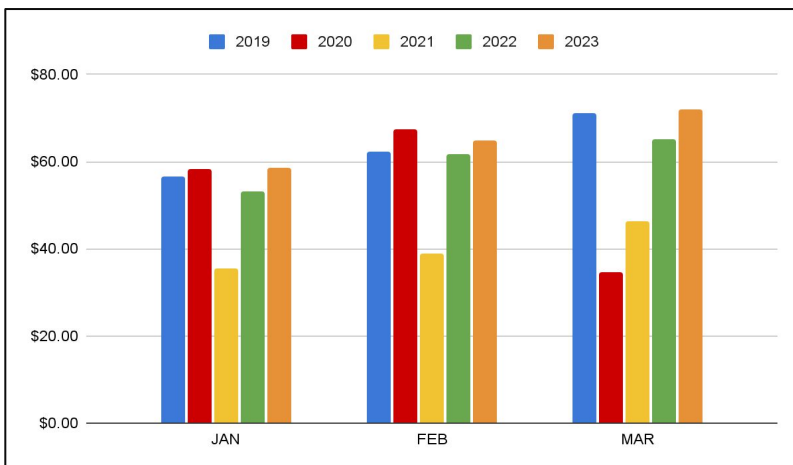
Examples of reporting going forward.

**LODGING - using occupancy, ADR, and RevPAR as primary metrics, Lodging provides a good barometer for tourism, broadly**

EXAMPLE: Hood River Hotel Occupancy



EXAMPLE: Hood River ADR tracked month over month, compared year over year



EXAMPLE: Hood River RevPAR tracked month over month, compared year over year

# REPORTING - VISITATION

Examples of reporting going forward.

VISITATION - Visitation data provided through Datafy is another great barometer for tourism health.

2023



2022



Weekday vs. Weekend



**Avg Length of Stay**  
2.1

**Visitor Days**  
30,037

Trips

Visitor Days

● In-State ● Out-of-State



# REPORTING - VISITATION CONT.

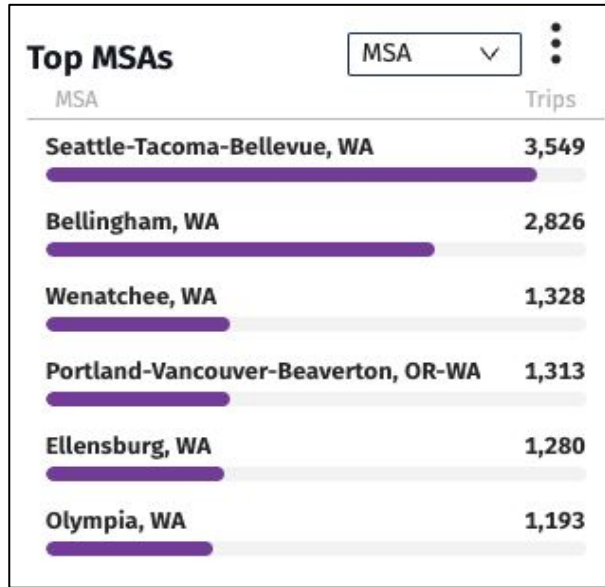
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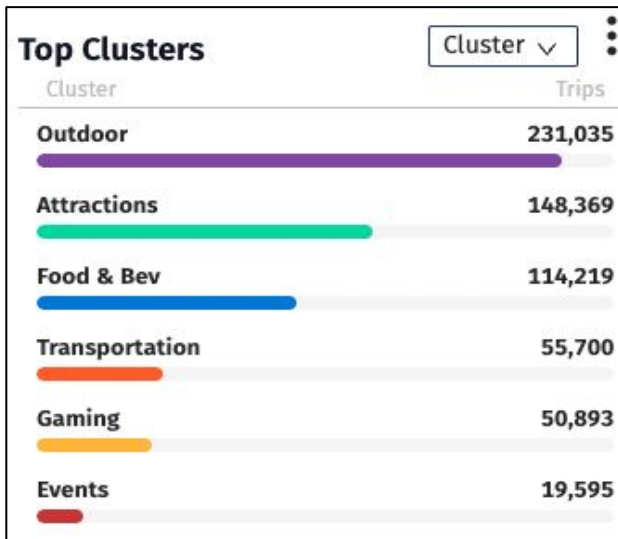
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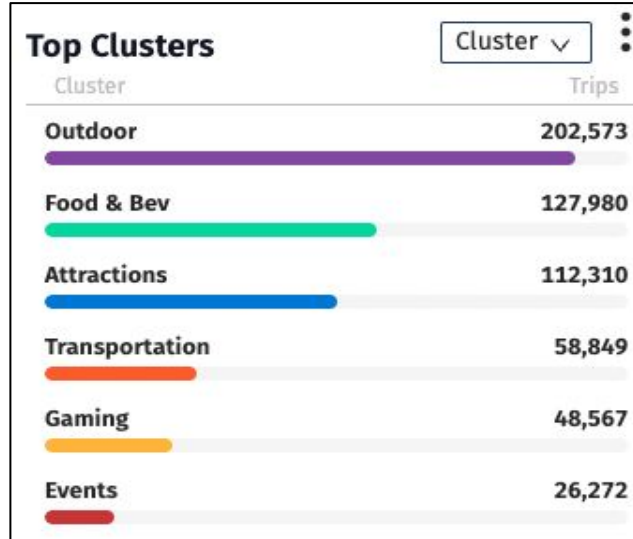
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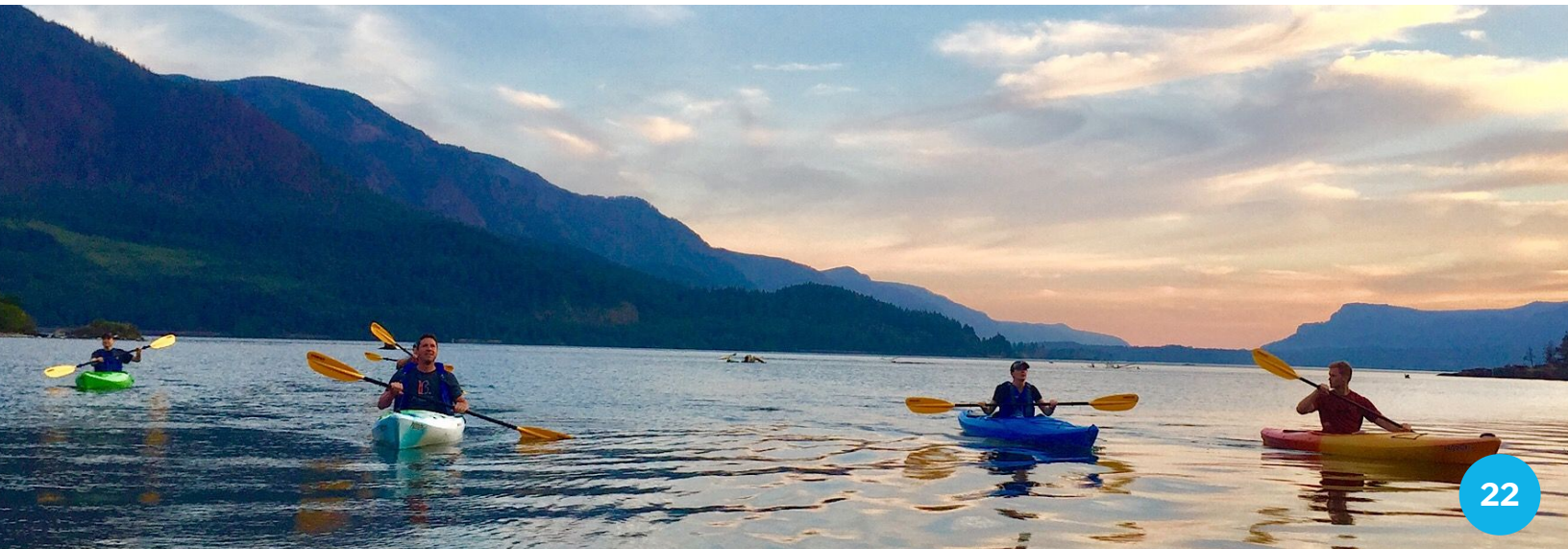
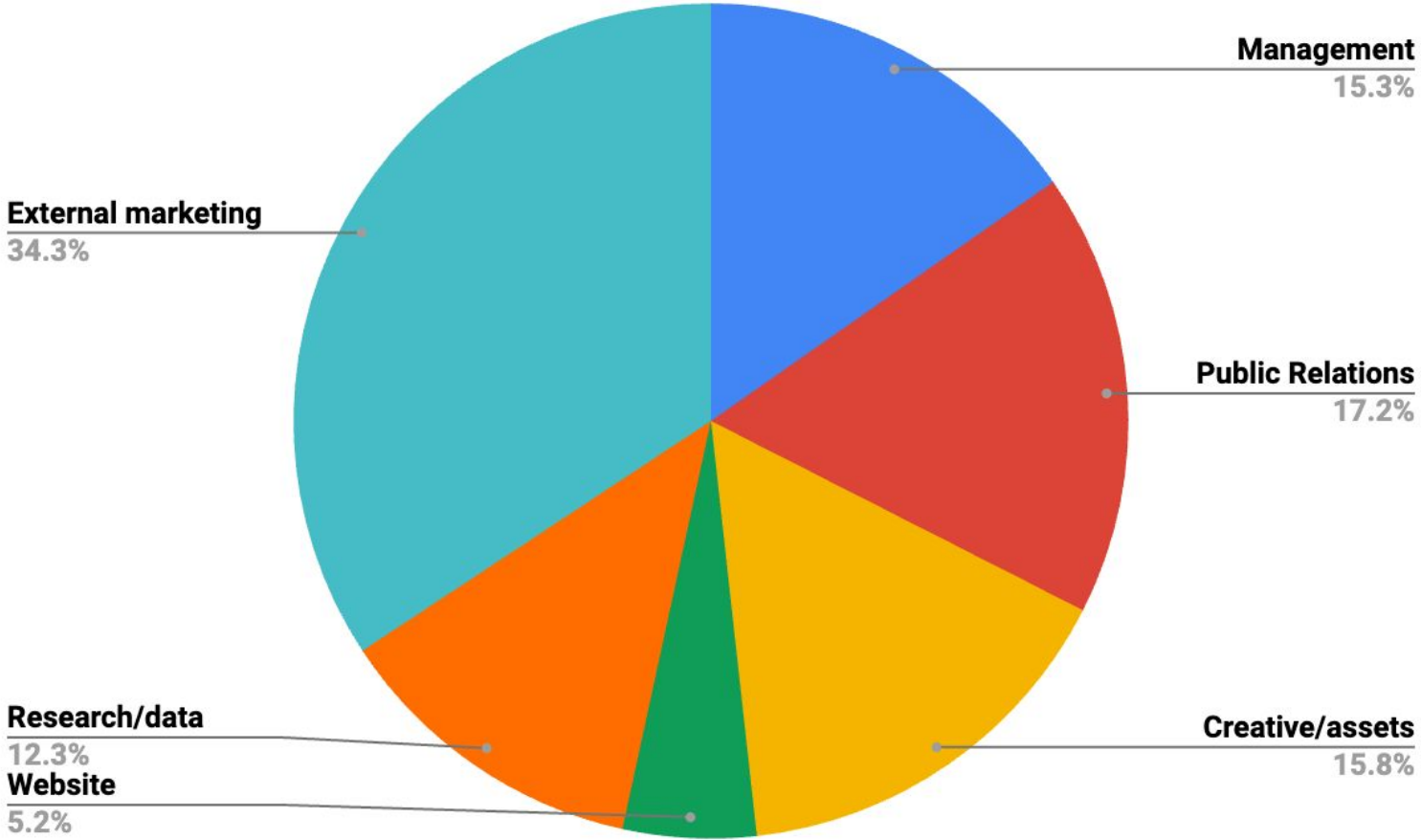


2022



# FY 23-24 BUDGET

Following is a breakdown of proposed budget allocation by category.



# FY 23-24 BUDGET - CONT.

| DELIVERABLE  | CADENCE  | COST PER OCCURRENCE | TOTAL            |
|--|----------|---------------------|------------------|
| <b>CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT AND EXECUTION</b>              |          |                     |                  |
| Campaign Creative, Post Building, Copywriting          | Ongoing  |                     | \$25,000         |
| Design Needs (Banners, Stickers, Etc.)                 | Ongoing  |                     | \$10,000         |
| Photography/Videography                                | Ongoing  |                     | \$20,000         |
| Organic Social   | Monthly  | \$1,470             | \$17,640         |
| Email  | Monthly  | \$1,000             | \$12,000         |
| Public Relations                                       | Monthly  | \$5,000             | \$60,000         |
| Account Management                                     | Monthly  | \$3,000             | \$36,000         |
| Website Maintenance & Updates                          | Ongoing  |                     | \$15,000         |
| <b>MEDIA</b>   |          |                     |                  |
| Paid Digital (Programmatic, Social, Data-Served, Etc.) | Monthly  | \$6,000             | \$72,000         |
| Paid Search  | Monthly  | \$1,500             | \$18,000         |
| <b>DATA, RESEARCH, AND PLANNING</b>                    |          |                     |                  |
| Reporting  | Monthly  | \$1,200             | \$14,400         |
| Data Service   | One-time |                     | \$13,000         |
| Research   | One-time | \$30,000            | \$30,000         |
| 2025 Strategic Plan                                    | One-time | \$3,000             | \$3,000          |
|  |          | <b>TOTAL</b>        | <b>\$346,440</b> |



THANK

YOU

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DVA ADVERTISING & PUBLIC RELATIONS