

May 20, 2021

Item no. 11a\_attach  
Meeting date: May 25, 2021

TO: Port of Seattle Commissioners, and ED Steve Metruck  
FROM: Ron Peck, Director Tourism Development  
David McFadden, Managing Director, Economic Development Division

### **Tourism Recovery Initiatives Update**

I wanted to provide you an update on the status of Tourism Recovery efforts in Washington state. This memo highlights recent efforts and actions that are unfolding to support this hard-hit industry

#### **Legislative Success**

We got good news from Olympia – the Legislature appropriated \$12 million to support tourism recovery. This funding augments our early investment and other resources from WA Tourism Alliance and regional Destination Marketing Organizations (DMO). We will keep a close tab on these new resources and work to further leverage our own resources with this new funding.

#### **Port of Seattle/WA Tourism Alliance Recovery Initiatives**

We have executed a contract with the Washington Tourism Alliance to support a multifaceted tourism recovery campaign across Washington State. This campaign to support tourism and travel is vital to the Port and the region's economic sustainability. As mentioned previously, the timing of a large part of this campaign is still subject to public health trends and related policies. We will not prematurely market destination or travel options before it is strategic.

#### Early WTA Investments (Approximately \$540,000 WTA investment)

WTA is already engaging in specific projects directed to assist in the recovery of travelers and visitor expenditures. Select areas of WTA marketing work and projects include:

- **Show WA Love:** Launched March 30, 2020, this ongoing campaign gives Washingtonians a chance to support their businesses through the purchase gift cards.
- **Branding Development:** WTA has deployed a brand development firm to drive the creation and launch of a needed new brand for Washington tourism.
- **Marketing Collateral Development:** WTA is deploying photographers to obtain a proprietary photo library of several hundred images and videos throughout the state.
- **Travel and Recreate Safely:** WTA is communicating the need to travel and recreate responsibly. WTA staff and board members are actively engaged in working with fellow travel organizations including the Recreate Responsibly coalition.

#### Destination Support and Development (\$400,000 budget with \$200,000 from Port)

WTA has already been implementing a series of initiatives to strengthen local and regional tourism entities so they can rebound quickly and help support an effective statewide tourism recovery initiative. The Tourism Alliance is working with the state's tourism regions as well as rural and ethnic communities to develop necessary capacities and strategies that link these local organizations into the overall tourism recovery campaign. Activities include:

- **Workshops** to help assess and develop local/regional tourism promotion strategies
- Development of a **Tourism Resource toolkit** with data, resources, visitor readiness checklists, and promotional tools
- **Grants** to help support initial implementation of these strategies
- **Complimentary ad spots** within WTA's consumer web site advertising program

#### Travel Publicity Campaign (\$200,000 budget with \$150,000 from Port)

WTA is starting to implement a travel publicity campaign to promote Washington destinations. Work will include:

- Develop messaging to impact travel trade and consumers
- Through ongoing outreach, drive earned travel media coverage for the destination; increase circulation and equivalent advertising value; track/report incrementally
- Work in tandem with DMO, the Port and industry PR practitioners to maximize coverage
- Host media familiarization (FAM) tours throughout the year. Work to be inclusive of shoulder seasons.

Messages will address, but are not limited to:

- Washington's outdoor, natural lands and unique culturally diverse destinations and attractions
- Responsible travel – define a new definition of travel, promote “responsible” state offerings, report traveler tips, trends and protocols that encourage and compel

#### Travel Trade Sales and Promotion (\$240,000 budget with \$120,000 from the Port)

WTA is also starting to implement marketing and sales efforts that are geared to stimulate new/expanded tour product for Washington State, increase consumer sales through the retail distribution systems (including travel agents, tour operators and travel suppliers), and working with travel partners and DMOs. Plans include:

- Develop a comprehensive travel trade sales and promotion plan
- Participate in a minimum of 4 travel trade shows attended/conducted by WTA.
- Host familiarization (FAM) tours throughout the year. Work to be inclusive of shoulder seasons.
- Highlight the unique aspects of Washington state (urban, rural, tribal, nature, cultures state and national parks) to travel trade while educating on evolving re-opening status, safety protocols and travel guidelines for individual and group travel

#### Paid Destination Advertising Campaign to Regenerate North American Air Markets (\$600,000 from WTA and \$1,080,000 from the Port)

WTA won't initiate this part of the recovery initiative until SEA enplanements further improve. It is, however, poised to start a multifaceted advertising campaign that focuses on consumers in the U.S./Canada and Pacific Northwest regional air markets audiences. The campaign will:

- Compel/remind residents and regional consumers of the wealth, diversity and affordability of Washington State travel experiences now re-opened to them
- Build consumer confidence for travel in Washington State
- Instill the importance of traveling again – with a new lens: safely, responsibly and by using new trip-planning resources

#### Tourism Marketing Support Program (Port of Seattle Tourism Grants)

We recently awarded 23 tourism marketing grants worth \$200,000 to organizations across the State. Ten of the organizations identified cultural / diversity projects representing \$80,000. Here is a [list of grant recipients](#). We look forward to working with these organizations and will also work to incorporate their initiatives into the broader WTA Tourism recovery initiatives.