



**AMARILLO**  
CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

*Strategic Plan*



**2021 - 2022**

**PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY**

**KASHION SMITH  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**



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# Meet the team

PEOPLE BEHIND THE BRAND



KASHION SMITH  
EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR



BRALEY HAND  
TOURISM  
MANAGER



MARY RAMIREZ  
EXECUTIVE  
ASSISTANT



HOPE STOKES  
DIRECTOR OF  
MARKETING



STEPHANIE ANDREWS  
DIRECTOR OF CLIENT  
SERVICES



AMY TARR  
DIRECTOR OF  
SALES



# Executive SUMMARY

In the Panhandle of Texas, you'll find a community with true strength. When times are hard, we come together, we aren't afraid to make the tough choices, and we persevere. This is just one of the things that makes me proud to call Amarillo my hometown.

When the COVID-19 pandemic began in early 2020, it brought with it a lot of uncertainty. In true Panhandle spirit, the community came together with a smile and showed an amazing amount of support to those in need. The strength shown by Amarillo citizens gave our office the courage to make the scary decisions -decisions that we weren't sure what the outcome would be- but that we knew needed to be made to help us move forward and continue serving the community that we love. Amarillo, we are your boots on the ground.

When I became the CVB (Convention & Visitors Bureau) Executive Director in January 2021, I asked our staff to create a strategic plan for our future in light of our changing world. We took a hard look at programs we had managed or been a part of in the past and determined what made sense, what didn't, and how they fit in our vision for the future of Amarillo tourism. COVID-19 may have changed the way we travel and come together, but we do still come together. The CVB is committed to ensuring that Amarillo -with its wide-open spaces, amazingly talented artists, western heritage and Americana treasures, and unexpected culinary masterpieces- is showcased to the world as a place where people can create lasting memories together.



EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR

KASHION SMITH

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# Department Summaries



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## TRAVEL & TOURISM

Leisure travel provides the highest opportunity for local growth in our industry. With this in mind, the CVB will be highly focused on increasing the average length of stay for leisure travelers. Amarillo should become the destination, not just a step in the journey. Pass-through travel, comprised of one-night stops as people travel to and from other locations on I-40, has always supported the Amarillo economy during declines in the tourism industry. Our location and distance from other major markets make us an obvious waypoint when traveling between DFW and western destinations. COVID-19 has changed the way people travel. We must take advantage of the opportunity that presents and let everyone know Amarillo is so much more than a place to stay on your way to another city.

To achieve this, we are creating new ways to disperse information about the exciting attractions and events Amarillo and the surrounding Panhandle have to offer. These include our Digital Visitor Guide and Door Cling program. Throughout this year we will focus on creating events that showcase our community and can be enjoyed by citizens of Amarillo and out-of-town visitors. Packaging between hotels, attractions and restaurants is critical to create and support these events. The CVB will help find the right partners and work with them to secure attractive packages that we can then market to our neighbors outside the Panhandle. We will accompany these tourism efforts with outreach and education programs to show our local citizens how important tourism, especially its effect on direct spending and sales tax collection, is to our local economy.

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## MEETINGS & CONVENTIONS

When voters did not approve the proposed renovations to the Amarillo Civic Center Complex the sales department was forced to redirect its efforts to attract meetings and conventions. The CVB has always been creative in finding ways to attract large conventions. Without the updates to the Civic Center, we will place increased emphasis on the Leaders Program. The Leaders Program is an opportunity for Amarilloans to provide the CVB with information about the organizations they participate in so the CVB can approach those organizations with a plan for how Amarillo is the perfect location for their conventions, trade shows, and events. This renewed effort will identify and attract conventions and events that fit within our existing infrastructure. is an opportunity for Amarilloans to provide the CVB with information about the organizations they participate in so the CVB can approach those organizations with a plan for how Amarillo is the perfect location for their conventions, trade shows, and events. This renewed effort will identify and attract conventions and events that fit within our existing infrastructure.

The ability of our sales and servicing department to book meetings and conventions during the pandemic is an incredible feat. There is no doubt that as the local and national economies reopen, they will continue to innovate and adapt as they bring more events to Amarillo.

## ARTS

The CVB is a strong supporter of the arts. Because we are a vital showcase of our community, we strive to include them in every CVB project and campaign. Amarillo's non-profit art organizations need our support more than ever to ensure a healthy recovery from the pandemic. They will be included in CVB marketing efforts, and future budgets will reinstate the arts grant program that has been so successful in helping to sustain our local artists.

## MARKETING

The CVB marketing department is Amarillo tourism's advertising agency. It lets people know the incredible travel opportunities and memorable leisure activities we have to offer. For our current fiscal year, CVB staff is focused on strengthening our brand awareness both locally and outside the Panhandle region. When people see our trademarked red boots, we want them to immediately think of Amarillo. Our incredible staff works tirelessly to come up with new and creative ideas to spread the word about local tourism.

One of the CVB's major marketing priorities this year is to boost partnerships between hotels, attractions, restaurants, and other tourism organizations throughout our community. These partnerships will allow organizations of all sizes to better spread their message so visitors put Amarillo destinations on their itinerary. Creating these partnerships allows for mutual marketing opportunities and tourism packaging. These packages help entice longer stays from visitors and make planning their vacation easier.



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# Goals & Tactics

*Year*

ONE

2021-2022

*Year*

TWO

2022-2023



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# Goals & Tactics

OFFICE • YEAR 1

## Improve partner relations

- Restart CVB Staff visits to hotels and attractions so we can keep a current list of tourism partner contacts and provide a clear view of all improvements and upcoming events. Each staff member will visit 5 hotels and 5 attractions/venues per month.
- Report quarterly to hotel and attraction owners and the City Councils. Report to the CVB Board of Directors at each monthly meeting.
- Support tourism partner events through staff attendance and marketing assistance. (See discussion in Marketing Department Goals & Tactics).
- CVB staff will take a leadership role in conversations that encourage partner to partner relationships. Each staff member will create 2 opportunities per year for hotels and attractions to partner on tourism packages or events.
- Strengthen relationships within the CVB committees. (Create a film committee).
- Utilize active committee members to act as Ambassadors within their profession and throughout the community.

## Advocacy with local, state and national leaders.

- Continued conversations with our elected leaders to ensure the CVB has a voice in tourism policy.
- Retain memberships that give the CVB legislative updates and access so we may act to protect and strengthen the tourism industry.

## Work with the City of Amarillo to set a collection system for short-term rental property occupancy taxes.

## ONGOING

- Keep CVB and Amarillo brand recognition top of mind.
- Ensure all efforts, locally and to the visitor, tie back to the brand.
- Work with the Tourism Public Improvement District board, if created, to ensure a unified brand and marketing for Amarillo.
- Take advantage of local groups to market the CVB within the community.
- Minimize memberships, keeping only those that allow the CVB staff mentorship and educational opportunities that position the CVB to outperform its competitors.



# Goals & Tactics

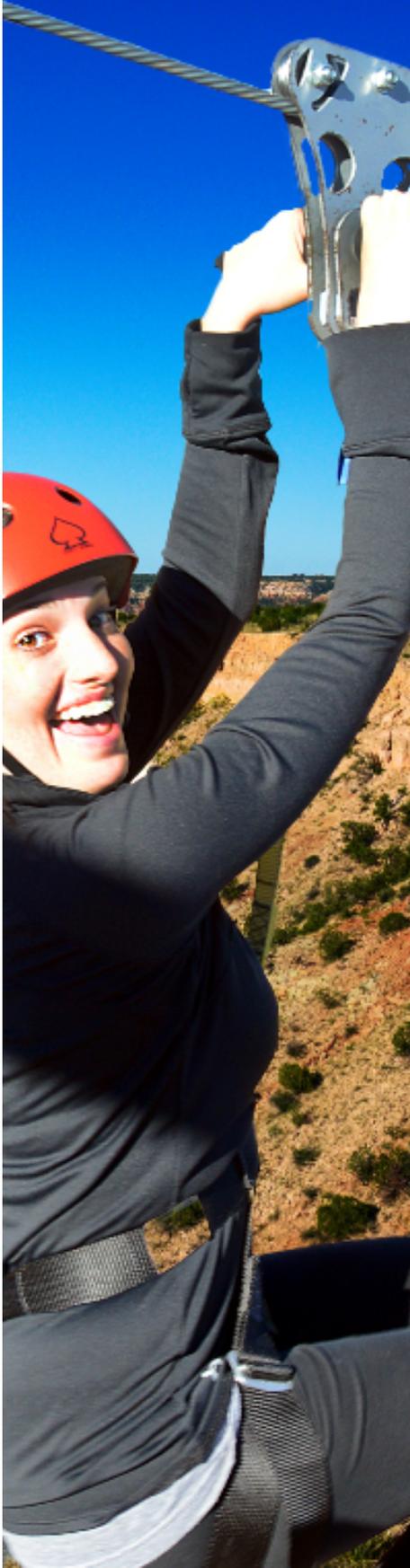
## OFFICE • YEAR 2

- Position the CVB as an imperative, cost-effective resource through collective marketing. (See discussion in Marketing Department Goals & Tactics).
- Create packages that fit our tourism partners' services in a way that highlights our heritage and the strengths of our community.
- Create co-op opportunities that highlight multiple partners, such as billboards, digital campaigns, and print material.
- Utilize 501(c)3 status to obtain grants that will help our budget recovery efforts and kick start events.
- Work with the City and Arts organizations to implement a plan for welcome signage.

## YEAR 2 - 5

### Rebuild CVB staff

- Build a strong tourism department focused on leisure travel, event building, volunteer programs and partner engagement.
- Focus our convention sales efforts on the Leader Program, utilizing our local leaders to gain leads and definite bookings.
- Create a finance position to ensure proper oversight of the budget and revenue gained through events and grants.
- Create an intern program utilizing local colleges.
- Work with local colleges to create integrated marketing programs into the curriculum.

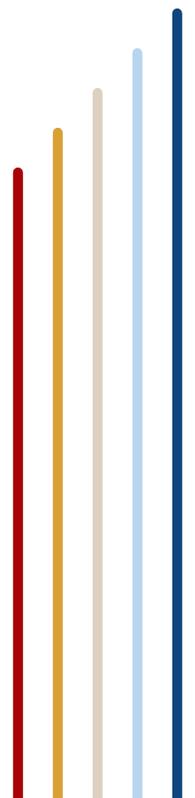


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# Goals & Tactics

## MARKETING

All goals based on final budget.  
Comp sets and pop-up opportunities may change strategy.

- Co-ops – send out opportunity overview on a fiscal year calendar.
    - Quarterly opportunities – opt-in for seasonal promotions:
      - Opportunities will be sent out in the first week of each quarter for the following season/quarter. Co-ops will have guaranteed impressions.
      - Winter: Build Ski Amarillo Co-op with 6 partners (hotel focus).
      - Spring: Video, search engine marketing, Social, Story (Continue into Summer).
      - Summer: Add new search engine marketing opportunity, display, social.
      - Fall: Arts focus – Social campaign.
  - Billboard Co-op's – offered to attractions only. Two partners per billboard plus the boot logo, with the cost split between the two partners and the CVB. We will place four billboards in this first fiscal year.
  - In-town digital billboards – these will focus on events and attractions. One partner will be highlighted per month for \$75 per month.
  - Complete marketing content for each campaign in the quarter before the campaign begins.
  - Optimize four pages of the website per month.
  - Schedule social media posts one month ahead of time.
    - Five posts per week for Facebook. Seven posts per week on Instagram.
  - Meet with 5 attractions and 5 hotels per month.
  - All digital marketing campaign goals for 2021 and 2022 fiscal years will be measured by website metrics. The primary goal metric is to increase users year over year. Key Performance Indicators (KPI) may fluctuate month over month based on campaign strategy, i.e., prospecting and retargeting.
    - Prospecting KPIs:
      - Users.
      - New Users.
      - Sessions.
    - Retargeting KPIs:
      - Number of sessions per user.
      - Average Session Duration.
      - Bounce rate.
  - Take advantage of 2 educational opportunities per month.
  - Increase advertising partner referrals for promotions each month.
  - Propose a marketing program to West Texas A&M University and Amarillo College that allows students to earn class credit for work on CVB marketing efforts.
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# Goals & Tactics

## TOURISM

- Add 5 events per week to the events calendar.
- Meet with 5 hotels and 5 attractions per month.
- Update 5 website listings per week.
- Perform daily review of site traffic and responses needed.
- Build out traces to better ensure an organized calendar.
- Take advantage of 2 educational opportunities per month.
- Write newsletters 2 weeks in advance with a final event check 3 days before.
- Clean distribution list once per month.
- Talk to 5 partners per month about Bandwango passes.
- Implement the Door Cling program.
- Make contact with 10 group tour operators per month.
- One suggested group itinerary sent out every quarter in newsletter form.
- Follow up with all groups after their tour.
- Set up hotel trainings on greeting groups twice a year.
- Evaluate the Yellow City Certified program, including ways to provide partner buy-in and whether to hold virtual or in-person sessions.
- Re-initiate West Texas Trips and Team Texas Partnerships to build extra overnight stays with all groups.
- Start building partnerships with Oklahoma City and Albuquerque for group tour itineraries.

## EVENTS

- Get input from partners and other cities.
- Complete 501(c)3 process.
- Implement a volunteer program and set growth goals for the next fiscal year.
- Plan 2 revenue-generating events per year, starting with FY 2021.
- Site visit with city or county visitors bureaus that operate revenue-generating events (Examples: Grapevine or Tyler).
- Identify and implement goals to measure sponsorship and partnership impact for each event.
- Identify and implement revenue and expense goals.



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# Goals & Tactics



## FILM

- Strengthen CVB partnership with Sharpened Iron Studios.
- Attend one film festival tradeshow annually.
- Become actively involved with the Texas Film Association.
- Identify more service providers to add to our directory and website.
- Keep the film web page updated with relevant content.
- Start film incentive program with the City.
  - Study other cities' sales tax incentive programs as models.
- Identify and attend training opportunities.
- Utilize attractions to create marketing opportunities.

## CONTENT CURATORS

- Build a better way to pay for content curators' experience for those not wanting a host.
- Strengthen CVB relationship with tourism partners to obtain comps and discounts.
- Make sure all tourism partners are aware when they have been included in a story.
  - Check for updates monthly.
- Connect 5 content creator activities with marketing initiatives.
- Host 5 content curators over the summer/early fall.
- Create return on investment calculations for hosted outside of travel mindset.
- Utilize Travel Mindset to relieve pressure on staff.



# Goals & Tactics

## SALES

- This FY for this calendar year: Definite Bookings:
  - SMERF (Social, Military, Education, Religious, Fraternal) - 300 room nights.
  - Corporate and Association - 200 room nights.
  - Agriculture - 0 (due to facility availability).
- This FY for future years: definite bookings or bids that are out for board decision:
  - SMERF- 700.
  - Corporate and Association - 400 .
  - Agriculture - 400 (Not including Working Ranch Cowboys Association or US Custom Harvesters contract).
- Build sports directory.
- Leader Program.
- Gain 6 qualified leads from Leader Program.
- Work with servicing to present to 5 groups within this FY, the focus being the Leader Program.
- Build out Proposal Path to highlight attractions within proposals.
- Work with servicing to build excursions into bids that allow for nights before and after the event dates.
- Rebook 3 groups without offering future incentives.
- Take advantage of 2 educational opportunities per month.

Future goals will include utilizing Smith Travel Research to build an EOY goal ADR (Average Daily Rate) for SMERF and an EOY goal ADR for Corporate and Association. This will allow us to better monitor groups utilizing a variety of hotel rate structures. We will also set goals for new vs rebooked business and multi-year agreements with and without incentive from the activity fund.



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# Goals & Tactics

## SERVICING

- Retain 3 groups without offering future incentives.
- Work with Sales to build excursions into bids that allow for shoulder nights:
  - Offer again during servicing process when not already contracted.
- Take advantage of 2 educational opportunities per month:
  - March 30, 2021 - Event Service Professional Association Leadership Webinar: Inspiring Women in Hospitality.
- Rebook 3 more groups that were canceled due to COVID before the end of the FY:
  - Texas Crisis Intervention Team Annual Conference.
  - National Odom Assembly Annual Meeting.
  - Texas Travel Alliance, Travel Summit.
- Work with Sales to present to 5 groups within this FY, focus being the Leader Program.
- Recruit 2 attraction/offsite venue partners with each registration or welcome table:
  - TX Crisis Intervention Team Welcome Table: Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum & TEXAS Outdoor Musical.
- Utilize, and build on, digital welcome packets for convention attendees:
  - Use as a servicing tool for the meeting planner.
  - Example: add event schedules and other information they may have to help them communicate with attendees.



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# Closing

## REMARKS



We are forever grateful to the community that we serve, our Board of Directors, the City of Amarillo, the Amarillo Chamber of Commerce, and our many partners in the travel and tourism industry. Amarillo embodies West Texas Spirit, and without you, the Amarillo Convention and Visitors Bureau would not be able to share our beautiful home with the world.

*Kassian Smith*

