



## Strategic Plan 2022-2027

### **Executive Summary**

On May 11, 2022, the Explore Fairbanks Board of Directors, President and CEO, and departmental directors held their annual strategic planning retreat at the Fairbanks Princess Riverside Lodge. Facilitated by the Foraker Group, the retreat discussed strategic priorities for the organization for the next five years as well identifying organizational core values and its envisioned future for both 2027 and 2032.

Over the course of the summer the management team reviewed, discussed and revised the draft document that came out of the retreat provided by Foraker. The revised document was sent to the board for review and input. The board discussed and approved the following plan at its meeting on August 24, 2022.

### **Mission Statement**

The mission of Explore Fairbanks is to be an economic driver in the Fairbanks region by marketing to potential visitors, optimizing the visitor experience, and advocating for a thriving year-round visitor industry.

### **Core Values**

Resiliency \* Innovation \* Opportunity \* Cooperation \* Diversity \* Quality \* Community \* Transparency

### **Core Programs**

Destination Marketing & Management \* Partner and Visitor Engagement \* Economic Development \* Industry Advocacy

## **Envisioned Future (2027)**

Explore Fairbanks is the number-one resource of visitor information for our destination, bringing visitors from around the world to Fairbanks and Interior Alaska year-round with strategic marketing based on reliable research data and consistent use of our brand pillars. Our organization and our industry are a shared community value thanks to our collaborative working relationships with key stakeholders and the general public, which helps ensure broad-based, consistent and reliable financial support. We lead the way in advocacy efforts for our industry, championing for product development and infrastructure improvements for the betterment of residents and visitors alike. Internally our organization thrives due to an engaged partnership, a dedicated governance, and a motivated and inspired staff that takes pride in their work and in the destination a whole.

## **Commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)**

Explore Fairbanks wholeheartedly embraces and celebrates diversity in all of its forms. We believe that our community's Golden Heart spirit lies in the rich mosaic of cultures, backgrounds, perspectives and experiences that make us truly exceptional. Through our inclusive marketing efforts, we attract travelers from diverse backgrounds. We have an environment where individuals can come together, share their stories, and form lasting connections. By embracing diversity, we enrich the fabric of our community with a goal of fostering an atmosphere of understanding, respect and unity.

*Approved by the EF Board of Directors on August 23, 2023*

## **Strategic Priorities 2022-2027**

The Explore Fairbanks Board of Directors and management team has identified four overriding strategies it will implement in its efforts to fulfill its mission, achieve its envisioned future, and gain and sustain competitive advantage as the Destination Marketing and Management Organization (DMMO) for the Fairbanks region, including Alaska's Interior and Arctic.

1. Focus marketing efforts on strategic opportunity markets specific to our region as well as identified by Alaska tourism
2. Champion continued strategic product development and infrastructure improvement necessary for a steady, balanced year-round visitor industry
3. Solidify the visitor industry as a community value
4. Maintain a strong, resilient, mission-focused organization with an engaged partnership, dedicated governance, and sustainable staffing.

**1. Focus marketing efforts on opportunity markets specific to the Fairbanks region as well as identified by Alaska tourism.**

Objectives	Areas of Emphasis
<p><b>Sustain and grow current key market segments</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Core domestic consumer and travel trade markets</li> <li>• Core domestic demographic markets</li> <li>• Small meeting markets</li> <li>• Proven media markets</li> <li>• German-speaking Europe and other strategic markets within Europe</li> <li>• Monitor forecast for prior core international markets to determine market return</li> <li>• Collaborate, when applicable, with statewide DMOs and ATIA, on marketing efforts</li> </ul>
<p><b>Identification and development of emerging market segments</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritize emerging international markets to include Latin American and India</li> <li>• Prioritize new domestic markets based upon expanded air service</li> <li>• Identification of, and promotion to, niche/diverse markets</li> </ul>
<p><b>Identification and investment in new marketing strategies and technologies</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilize research, performance metrics and data to drive new marketing decisions and opportunities</li> <li>• Monitor social media trends to determine which platforms best meet marketing strategies</li> <li>• Incorporate best practices into ongoing improvements to website, to include accessibility issues</li> </ul>
<p><b>Consistent use and refining of brand pillars in marketing endeavors</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Midnight Sun, Aurora, and Winter Season</li> <li>• Basecamp to Denali and the Arctic</li> <li>• Alaska Native Culture</li> <li>• Iconic Alaskan Experiences</li> <li>• Golden Heart City</li> </ul>

**2. Champion continued strategic product development and infrastructure improvement necessary for a steady, balanced year-round visitor industry**

Objectives	Areas of Emphasis
<b>Strategic product development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work closely with Fairbanks International Airport and airlines to maintain existing flights and pursue new service</li> <li>• Encourage product development that provides for more robust offerings during shoulder season and supports destination brand pillars</li> <li>• Promote development of products and programs pertaining to securing Fairbanks as the U.S. gateway to the Arctic</li> <li>• Champion for products and programs that develop greater awareness of Alaska Native culture tourism</li> <li>• Advocate for a shared industry philosophy focused on regenerative/sustainable tourism</li> </ul>
<b>Infrastructure improvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued discussion and collaboration on the potential reality of a convention center for Fairbanks</li> <li>• Partner with economic development entities to advocate for transportation and infrastructure improvements for visitors and residents</li> <li>• Champion for infrastructure projects to address capacity issues in the region</li> </ul>
<b>Workforce Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote employment opportunities within the leisure and hospitality industry</li> <li>• Provide front-line customer service training to help ensure for a more qualified workforce</li> <li>• Monitor state and national employment trends and research to determine best practices in workforce recruitment</li> <li>• Build awareness of the industry as a viable career opportunity</li> </ul>

### 3. Solidify the visitor industry as a shared community value

Objectives	Areas of Emphasis
<b>Educate and engage stakeholders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continually educate local and state elected officials on the importance of the visitor industry</li> <li>• Partner with economic development stakeholders (Chamber, FEDCO, Downtown Association, FNSB) on an ongoing proactive basis</li> </ul>
<b>Educate and engage the general public</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educate on the positive impact of the visitor industry to the region (economic and quality of life)</li> <li>• Conduct resident sentiment survey to better understand local community perception on the value of tourism</li> <li>• Pursue opportunities to partner with nonprofits and government entities to identify solutions for community-wide issues</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of a “Tourism Cares” program to communicate industry contribution and support to the community</li> </ul>
--	---

**4. Maintain a mission-focused transparent organization with an engaged partnership, dedicated governance, and sustainable staffing.**

<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Areas of Emphasis</b>
<b>Transparency in operations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular and accessible publishing of key performance metrics</li> <li>• Regular and accessible publishing of board minutes</li> <li>• Regular and accessible publishing of applicable financial information</li> </ul>
<b>Growing and engaged partnership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of an inclusive partnership model that better reflects the industry as a whole</li> <li>• Revitalized ATIA Fairbanks Chapter</li> <li>• Utilize aforementioned practice of transparency to better communicate to partners the ROI of their partnership</li> </ul>
<b>Robust and dedicated governance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruit board members to ensure a more diverse representation of the industry and community</li> <li>• Ongoing board training and mentoring to grow future board leaders</li> <li>• Restructure board meetings to allow for less reporting from staff and more strategic discussion</li> <li>• Provide board members with training and information necessary to be advocates for the organization</li> <li>• Ensure general governance operations are in line with DMAP standards</li> </ul>
<b>Stability in funding and financial management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successful completion of an annual audit each year</li> <li>• Continue following best practices in checks and balances system of accounting</li> <li>• Maintain reserve funding for needs as identified by organizational policy</li> <li>• Regular advocacy of local government to ensure continued reinvestment of bed tax dollars</li> </ul>
<b>Sustainable and motivated staffing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain a competitive salary and benefits package</li> <li>• Offer opportunities for staff training and promotion</li> <li>• Stabilize human resources policies and implement consistently</li> <li>• Develop succession plans for leadership positions</li> <li>• Foster a building-wide team environment built around a solid and agreed upon work culture</li> <li>• Ensure staff have the proper tools and technology to perform their jobs</li> </ul>