



Convention & Visitors Bureau

## 2021/2022 Marketing Plan

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## About the Convention & Visitors Bureau

### The Bureau Is...

- A non-profit 501 (c) 6 organization
- Committed to promoting and elevating Springfield's status for conventions, meetings, tour groups, sporting events and leisure travel
- Directed by a volunteer board comprised of 14 civic and business leaders
- Supported by a full-time staff of 18, part-time staff of one and nearly 25 volunteers

### History

The Springfield Convention & Visitors Bureau was formed in 1979 as the Chamber of Commerce's hospitality arm. The Bureau was incorporated independently as a not-for-profit corporation under the State of Missouri laws in 1989. The CVB is a marketing and service organization that contracts annually with the City of Springfield to promote economic development through travel and tourism.

### Mission Statement

The Springfield Convention & Visitors Bureau is dedicated to improving the economic vitality and livability of our community by encouraging the development and growth of the region's visitor and hospitality industry through marketing and advocacy.

### Vision Statement

Springfield will be a universally recognized destination, welcoming people to visit, explore, and experience the quality of life we enjoy every day.

### Brand Promise

As the heart and soul of the Ozarks, our true nature is to help people celebrate friends, family, and all of life's simple pleasures.

### Core Values

The CVB promotes being collaborative, visionary, loyal, and inclusive in all we do. We uphold integrity as we operate with a sense of trust and accountability.

### CVB Contact Information

[www.SpringfieldMO.org](http://www.SpringfieldMO.org)  
(800) 678-8767; (417) 881-5300  
(417) 881-2231 – fax

Route 66 Springfield Visitor Center - 815 E. St. Louis Street Springfield, Missouri 65806  
Airport Information Center - Springfield-Branson National Airport, Springfield, Missouri

## **CVB Staff Members**

### **Administration**

Tracy Kimberlin, CDME, President/CEO  
Tonia Castaneda, Director of Finance/Human Resources  
Pamela Girardot, Administrative Marketing Assistant  
Shelly Grauberger, Visitor Services Manager  
Jennifer Holt, Executive Assistant  
Barbara Bartels, Visitor Center Associate

### **Marketing**

Megan Buchbinder, Director of Marketing  
Steve Ross, Assistant Director of Marketing  
Susan Wade, Public Relations Manager  
Madison Yohn, Content Coordinator  
Jane Rips, Partner Development Manager  
Erin Carleton, Digital Marketing Specialist

### **Group Sales**

Dana Maugans, CDME, Director of Sales  
Melissa Evans, CHSE, Sales Manager  
Lisa Perez, CMP, Sales Manager  
Lance Kettering, CSEE, Sports Sales Manager & Executive Director, Springfield Sports Commission  
Carrie Chavez, Event Services Manager  
Lori Casey, CTIS, Sales and Group Tour Coordinator  
Katie Johnson, Assistant Director/Membership Development, Springfield Sports Commission

## **CVB Board of Directors**

### **Executive Committee**

Amy Austin, Chair - SVN/Rankin Company  
Bill Hobbs, Vice-Chair - Elliott Lodging  
Stephanie Hein, Past Chair - Missouri State University  
Joe Wadkins, Treasurer - DoubleTree by Hilton Springfield  
Martina Sally, Assistant Treasurer - MSRG Real Estate Group

### **Board Members**

Brad Beattie, Springfield Cardinals  
Bob Belote - Springfield-Greene County Park Board  
Missy Handyside, Oasis Hotel & Convention Center  
Laura Head Elliott - Bass Pro Hospitality  
Matt Morrow - Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce  
Mary Kromrey - Ozark Greenways  
John Oke-Thomas - Oke-Thomas & Associates, Inc.  
Zackary Oxley - Hotel Vandivort  
Collin Quigley - City of Springfield

## Executive Summary

The objectives and action plans that follow illustrate planned marketing activities for the 2021/2022 fiscal year. This is by no means a complete list of CVB activities and does not address administrative or many day-to-day responsibilities of CVB staff.

Although not included in this document, various marketing plan statistics and other information used to help determine marketing efforts are updated continuously and are available upon request.

New and/or major projects included or planned for the 2021/2022 fiscal year are listed below.

- The staff worked closely with industry partners to develop an effective marketing program for group business and leisure travel to stimulate room demand as much as possible following the coronavirus pandemic.
- Eligibility for stimulus programs through the American Recovery Plan Act will be determined and if eligible, the CVB board will apply. If possible, the CVB will partner with the city and/or county to use a portion of the Coronavirus Fiscal Recovery Funds or Economic Development Agency Grants to help fund capital investment in an indoor sports facility.
- Staff will continue pursuing advertising sales and sponsorships to increase private revenue to fund marketing programs. Advertising opportunities will include print publications, website, social media, digital marketing and displays at the Route 66 Springfield Visitor Center, Springfield Expo Center, and other area attractions.
- Advertising efforts will again encourage partnerships with the local travel industry and the Missouri Division of Tourism's Marketing Matching Grants program to leverage the CVB's advertising dollars.
- The CVB will continue to invest financial and staff resources into producing branded marketing campaigns for the leisure, convention, and sports markets in partnership with advertising agencies Madden Media, Osborn Barr and Revel Advertising.
- Continued efforts will be made to include more diversity in CVB marketing materials and within the staff and board. This includes recruiting diverse applicants, hiring more diverse models for photo/video shoots, and conducting ongoing staff sensitivity and diversity training.
- Consumer advertising partnerships with Bass Pro Shops® Outdoor World®, Wonders of Wildlife, Springfield Cardinals, the Missouri Division of Tourism, and others will be continued and expanded. An area partnership with Bass Pro/WOW, Herschend Family Entertainment, and the Branson CVB will be developed and expanded under the umbrella of the Ozark Mountains.
- With the anticipated expansion of the Bass Pro Shops "Granddaddy" complex, staff will work with Bass Pro Shops, Wonders of Wildlife and other hospitality representatives to develop a series of public relations, marketing and promotional opportunities to target interest in the facility from media, tour operators, meeting planners and leisure visitors. Additionally, the sales department

will solicit outdoor writer groups and invite other meeting planners on familiarization tours in conjunction with the opening of new facilities.

- The use of online advertising, streaming video and audio content, social networking sites (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, etc.) and other websites, such as TripAdvisor and Expedia, will be utilized to enhance the CVB's online presence and increase awareness of Springfield as a travel destination.
- Local, regional, and national public relations will continue as a high priority to supplement the CVB's advertising efforts. These efforts will be complemented with familiarization tours with travel writers, bloggers, and other media as needed.
- Other public relations efforts will include conducting press conferences to announce the booking of major conventions and events and using CISION public relations software to the fullest extent by providing press release distribution, maintaining media contacts, and monitoring clippings.
- The CVB will build on the local popularity of the recent branding efforts by using logos and other creative assets on apparel and other items internally and in partnership with third-party outlets.
- CVB staff will inform the local legislative delegation of tourism issues and work with them, the Missouri Association of Convention & Visitor Bureaus and the Missouri Travel Alliance to increase the budget of the Missouri Division of Tourism, protect funding for the Cooperative Marketing Program and lobby for other travel and tourism initiatives.
- If efforts to pass state enabling legislation that would allow Springfield to ask voters to increase the hotel tax from 5.0 percent to up to 7.5 percent are not successful in FY21, efforts will continue in FY22.
- Tourism attractions and businesses in Greene, Christian, and Polk counties will continue to be included in CVB marketing efforts and fulfillment materials as required by the Cooperative Marketing Program countywide designation.
- The CVB's Annual Salute to Travel & Tourism Awards Banquet will be continued in 2022 with a focus on the travel industry and CVB marketing efforts.
- Market research efforts have increased over the past several years and will continue to guide the CVB's marketing efforts. Most research is conducted online or through focus groups.
- The CVB will subscribe to the STR Reports from Smith Travel Research and AirDNA reports to assess Springfield's overnight travel performance.
- Other convention sales efforts include providing financial incentives for major groups to influence their decisions to convene in Springfield, continuing an incentive plan for new convention and sports bookings, increasing trade journal advertising to promote Springfield, subscribing to online meeting and sporting event planner databases and attending and sponsoring meeting and convention industry trade shows.

- The CVB will work with hotel partners to develop and execute a local convention cooperative marketing campaign targeting meeting planners.
- Continued emphasis will be placed on attracting amateur sporting events to the city. The CVB will manage and work closely with the Greater Springfield Area Sports Commission to attract events to Springfield and develop “owned” events to attract out-of-town teams. The CVB’s sports sales manager also serves as executive director for the Sports Commission.
- The CVB, Sports Commission, and the Springfield-Greene County Park Board will partner to implement the recommendations of the Huddle Up Group, including the recommendation for a new tournament-grade, multi-purpose, indoor sports facility. A feasibility study will be conducted on converting the Expo Center to a multi-purpose facility with an emphasis on indoor sporting events.
- The CVB will continue to advocate for the development of a convention complex. Possible locations include the lot adjacent to the Expo Center and Jordan Valley Car Park and the Bass Pro complex.
- As an outcome of a June 2021 board retreat, an interim strategic plan for 2022 through 2023 will be developed by the staff and board.
- Staff will work with city staff and the City Council to determine when a change in the definition of what facilities must collect the hotel tax can be brought before voters. Short-term rentals are currently not required to collect and pay the hotel tax.
- The CVB will work in partnership with the board of directors to develop a system for managing advocacy-related issues such as major local news stories or local issues that could help or damage CVB efforts to increase overnight travel.
- The CVB will continue to operate a visitor information center at the Springfield-Branson National Airport and the Route 66 Springfield Visitor Center in the Jordan Valley Car Park. The center will continue to be themed “Route 66” and will be updated to include interactive displays and other improvements. The CVB will also look at other possible locations for additional visitor intercept points, such as Bass Pro Shops.
- The CVB will maintain accreditation through Destinations International’s Accreditation Program. In addition, all staff will be encouraged or required to obtain certification in their field of expertise.
- The CVB will continue to invest in technology by continuing to use the Simpleview CRM and CMS platforms, replacing equipment on a rotating basis, and utilizing industry-specific marketing and administrative software where appropriate.
- Other marketing programs and projects may also be developed during the course of the year as opportunities arise. These programs and projects will be addressed in Quarterly Reports.

# Marketing

## Branding

In FY15, the CVB conducted a comprehensive branding effort. The purpose of that effort was to craft a compelling new identity for the city of Springfield that establishes a distinctive and relevant brand personality, articulates a compelling and sustainable value proposition for visitors, and serves as a powerful filter for all investment, operational and marketing decisions for the CVB for years to come.

As a result of the branding development process, a positioning statement was created to act as a differentiator between Springfield and other travel destinations.

### Positioning Statement:

For those who embrace the virtues of a life well-lived, Springfield, Missouri is the pulse of the Ozarks; a thriving, regional hub for commerce and culture that celebrates hard work, freedom, and homegrown values.

### Brand Architecture:

Brand Essence	Brand Values	Brand Promise	Brand Experience	Brand Voice
Life's Simple Pleasures	Genuine	As the heart and soul of the Ozarks, our true nature is to help people celebrate friends, family, and all of Life's Simple Pleasures.	Pulse of the Ozarks	Honest
	Hardworking		Gateway to the Great Outdoors	Thoughtful
	Traditional		Classic Americana	Casual
	Family-Friendly		Homegrown Innovation	Warm
	Natural			Virtuous



The logo that was developed in 2015 and released in 2016 will continue to be used in all CVB marketing efforts. All marketing pieces, including all advertisements, have been transitioned to the new brand messaging, logo, and color palette.

## **Public Relations**

### **Objective A:**

Generate at least 225 regional, national and international media placements featuring Springfield as a travel destination with an ad value equivalency of at least \$400,000 and 40,000,000 impressions.

- Maintain an online media center that includes information for local, regional, and national media.
- Organize and expand the photo and video library for use on the website, by journalists, and in collateral materials.
- Maintain a press pass to allow free access and discounts to local attractions and events to be given to media for press visits and familiarization tours.
- Distribute news releases and calendar of events and pitch stories to keep media informed of developments and events in the area.
- Host site visits for at least 15 qualified journalists to generate articles and awareness of the Springfield area as a travel and convention destination.
- Conduct travel writer familiarization tours with organizations such as the Association of Great Lakes Outdoor Writers, North American Travel Writers Association, etc.
- Increase the Missouri Division of Tourism and its advertising/public relations agency's knowledge of the Springfield area by hosting a familiarization tour for key staff. CVB staff will also be encouraged to become more involved with the division by serving on committees, engaging their peers on the division staff, and participating in division functions.
- Partner with the Branson Convention & Visitors Bureau to identify opportunities to collaborate, including story pitches, hosting a familiarization tour for travel media, etc.
- Participate in appropriate travel journalist associations and attend conferences to establish relationships with journalists with the intent of generating regional and national articles about Springfield.

### **Objective B:**

Work with the public relations staff at Bass Pro Shops and Wonders of Wildlife to develop a series of campaigns to generate interest in the facility from media.

- Identify media and related associations that would be interested in Springfield's outdoor destination assets and become members of the associations, as appropriate.
- Work with the convention sales department to identify outdoor and travel media conferences that could meet in Springfield and assist with the proposal by offering pre/post familiarization tours, story ideas, etc.
- Attend media trade shows or have a representative attend on our behalf to pitch stories about the complex.

### **Objective C:**

Maintain a local advocacy plan to increase awareness of the CVB and its impact on the community.

- Host the Annual Salute to Travel & Tourism Awards Banquet with travel and tourism as the primary focus of the event. The event will highlight tourism statistics, key events booked/hosted, CVB major projects, etc.
- Produce and edit content for CVB News, a monthly newsletter-style blog distributed to local media, the travel industry, and other interested parties via email.
- Seek opportunities to speak to local media to promote awareness of the CVB and tourism in Springfield.



- Increase efforts to inform the area travel industry, media, and state/local officials and their staff on the CVB's role in developing travel and tourism in Springfield and about planned marketing efforts.
- Meet with local public relations professionals to collaborate on local positive messaging strategies.
- Work with CVB sales staff to provide support and services for conventions and events by assisting with press releases, media lists, and other public relations needs.
- Conduct press conferences when select conventions and sporting events are booked, or major advertising campaigns are initiated.
- Increase local promotion of the CVB and travel industry during National Travel & Tourism Week and Meetings Industry Day.
- Work with local colleges and universities to promote the CVB website, coupons, and Visitors Guide.

**Objective D:**

Support travel industry efforts to increase the budget of the Missouri Division of Tourism in order to provide more promotion of Missouri and protect the Cooperative Marketing Program.

- Maintain a legislative plan to educate new and existing legislators of the impact of tourism and other key industry issues and assist constituents in contacting legislators to inform them of pertinent issues.
- Increase communication with legislators while they are in Springfield.
- Monitor changes in the state legislature that could affect issues affecting tourism, including the Missouri Division of Tourism funding, and respond appropriately.
- Work with the Missouri Association of Convention & Visitor Bureaus, Missouri Travel Alliance and the Missouri Hotel Lodging Association to develop a strategy for increasing the FY23 budget.
- Arrange a meeting in early December and prior to the start of the legislative session with the area legislative delegation to communicate the legislative strategy.
- Communicate the strategy to the Salute to Missouri Legislators coalition and incorporate it into legislative priorities.
- Participate in the planning and execution of the Salute to Missouri Legislators.
- Participate in legislative activities offered by other organizations such as the Chamber's Legislative Breakfasts and Capitol Day for Tourism with Missouri Travel Alliance and strongly encourage board members and other constituents to attend.
- Conduct legislative visits in Jefferson City as appropriate to the legislative strategy and the current legislative climate.

**Objective E:**

Continue efforts to increase city and county government understanding of what the CVB is and does and why it is important.

- Conduct CVB orientations for new city council members, county commissioners, and appropriate city and county leadership.
- Develop a printed leave-behind piece explaining what the CVB does and why it is important.
- Conduct regular meetings with appropriate city and county staff on CVB activities and priorities.
- Encourage the use of CVB staff as an expert resource in all matters pertaining to the travel industry.

- Present an annual “State of the Industry” press event to inform the community about key priorities of the travel industry, recent successes, and how they can assist in the future development of tourism resources. This should happen during National Travel & Tourism Week.

**Objective F:**

Build awareness of the CVB mission and activities and advocate for tourism developments through increased involvement and membership in appropriate organizations and on local boards or committees.

- Continue to advocate for the development of a convention complex and an indoor sports facility.
- Continue participating in discussions regarding the reallocation of the hotel tax previously provided to Wonders of Wildlife.
- Attend meetings with the city, county, Chamber of Commerce, Minorities in Business, and other local organizations to seek partnership opportunities and advocate for tourism-related developments and policies.

**Objective G:**

Manage major local news stories or local issues that could help or damage CVB efforts to increase overnight travel.

- Work with the board of directors to determine how aggressive the CVB should be in managing major local news stories or local issues and the CVB’s position on each issue.
- Where appropriate, encourage the city, chamber, and county public information/public relations offices to assist.
- Measure negative publicity in terms of ad value and adjust paid advertising as needed.
- Review the Crisis Communications plan annually with staff.

**Collateral Production/Advertising Sales**

The Marketing Department is responsible for the production of all CVB collateral materials for the purpose of informing potential visitors about Springfield and creating revenue to be used to generate inquiries and visitors.

**Objective A:**

Produce collateral materials for the purposes of informing potential visitors about Springfield and generate at least \$200,000 in revenue. Produce the following collateral pieces:

- 2022 Springfield Guide (approx. 100k quantity) by December 1, 2021. The 2022 guide will continue to be designed as an 8.5” x 11” magazine-style book. The guide will include listing grids, display ads, editorial, and coupons for attractions, restaurants, retail, and lodging facilities. In an effort to be more of an all-encompassing guide to Springfield, content themes will be expanded to include other types of businesses within Springfield that might appeal to local and regional audiences. The guide will be distributed by mail to visitor inquiries, in local and state information centers, local businesses, and convention/event attendees.
- Guide inserts are available for partners to purchase and are included with the mailing of the guide to visitors who inquire.
- The 2022 Ozarks Tap & Pour Craft Beverage Tour promoting the region’s breweries, wineries, and distilleries. This program is available online but will include a tagalong printed promotional piece that will be made available in area food and drink establishments and other retail locations. This piece will include the stops on the tour and various advertisers. The tour will still need to be completed digitally using a smartphone to check-in at participating locations.

**Objective B:**

Generate at least \$100,000 in revenue through the CVB website and other advertising sales.

- Obtain advertising commitments for website enhanced listings, links, coupons and sponsored content.
- Obtain advertising commitments for social media and email marketing content.
- Obtain commitments for advertising displays in the Route 66 Springfield Visitor Center and partner attractions such as the Springfield Expo Center, Jordan Valley Ice Park, Ozark Empire Fairgrounds, and other locations as needed.
- Pursue new private funding sources and sponsorships with the goal of becoming less dependent on the lodging tax.

**Objective C:**

Produce promotional materials for the purpose of informing local residents, business owners, and government agencies about what the Springfield CVB is and does for the Springfield community.

Produce the following promotional pieces in-house:

- Produce the “2021 Tourism by the Numbers” (400 quantity) by February 1, 2022. This piece is designed to highlight results from the previous year’s marketing and sales efforts and is produced for distribution at the CVB’s annual banquet in February 2022.
- Produce the 2022 Annual Banquet Invitations (750 quantity) by January 2022.
- Continue to partner with local businesses and agencies to collaborate on marketing efforts to the local and regional community on the resources available at the CVB and how they can be utilized.
- Develop a digital campaign to reach local constituents and keep them informed of advertising opportunities, groups coming to the city, and other pertinent information.

**Objective D:**

Conduct an annual internal Brand Audit to ensure brand standards are met across the CVB’s marketing mix.

- Review all print, digital, and broadcast marketing materials to ensure logo usage, color palette, and font treatments are consistent.
- Review marketing content to ensure alignment with the organization’s mission, vision, and standards of diversity and inclusion.
- Update the Brand Style Guide document as appropriate to meet changing demands for new promotional materials.

**Regionalism & Partnership**

**Objective A:**

Develop relationships with area and state travel industry peers to explore partnership opportunities.

- Meet regularly with staff from the Branson/Lakes Area Convention & Visitors Bureau and other area chambers of commerce and convention and visitor bureaus to investigate research, marketing, and other partnership opportunities and implement as appropriate.
- Attend the Governor’s Conference on Tourism and Missouri Association of Convention & Visitors Bureau’s annual conference and other industry events, as appropriate, to network with and learn from industry peers.

**Objective B:**

Encourage attraction and destination marketing organization partnerships.

- Work with the Branson CVB and private partners to market the area under the umbrella of the Ozark Mountains.
- Determine initial partners and levels of investment.
- Craft and create a branded campaign for late summer and fall promoting tourism in the Ozark Mountains and featuring partnership members.
- Plan and determine funding for a 2022 campaign in the spring or early summer.
- Identify additional partners if appropriate.

## **Market Research**

Market Research is developed through ongoing programs, including zip code analysis generated from direct inquiries. The CVB also contracts with research firms to conduct specific market research projects. In addition, research conducted by the Missouri Division of Tourism and others is used in the development of the CVB's marketing strategy.

### **Objective A:**

Continue to refine and improve all research efforts.

- Continue to contract with a market research consultant to review existing primary and secondary research and recommend additions and revisions.
- Conduct a Brand Effectiveness Study for the 2020/21 advertising campaign.
- Utilize traveler intelligence software data to make informed decisions on marketing and media placements.
- Implement a research dashboard on our website to showcase the latest research findings for the CVB's partners to access.
- Utilize travel research libraries available through Destinations International, USTA, Travel & Tourism Research Association, Missouri Division of Tourism, Missouri Association of CVBs, and others to supplement CVB research.
- Utilize the Event Impact Calculator from Destinations International to track and determine the estimated economic impact of groups meeting in Springfield.
- Use USTA's Travel and Tourism Economic Impact Calculator to estimate increases or decreases in Springfield's economy because of the addition of significant traffic generators, economic downturns, etc.
- Partner with the Branson/Lakes Area Convention & Visitors Bureau, Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce, and other local partners on research projects, as appropriate.

### **Objective B:**

Obtain the Springfield hotel market mix information from a representative sample of Springfield hotels on a monthly basis to help determine the primary reason for visiting Springfield.

- Identify at least a 40% sample of rooms (as representative and consistent as possible) who will track and report market mix statistics.
- Add or subtract participating properties as appropriate.
- Collect and report monthly and year-to-date statistics.

### **Objective C:**

Obtain Springfield hotel performance statistics through subscription to appropriate Smith Travel Research STR Reports.

- Subscribe to appropriate reports showing daily, weekly, monthly, and year-to-date hotel demand, supply occupancy, ADR, RevPAR, and revenue.
- Maintain membership in the Missouri Hotel Lodging Association to obtain comparative statistics from other Missouri destinations.
- Obtain quarterly “pipeline” reports showing prospective new hotels.

**Objective D:**

Obtain appropriate AirDNA reports and assess the impact of short-term rentals on Springfield’s travel industry.

- Subscribe to appropriate reports showing the number of local listings on short-term rental websites.
- Report statistics as appropriate.

**Objective E:**

Obtain website statistics for niche markets and advertising effectiveness utilizing Google Analytics.

- Place tracking codes on each CVB URL used to track specific campaigns.
- Measure total website traffic, time on site, bounce rates, geographic origin of traffic, and other website statistics.
- Using information gathered in the Brand Effectiveness Study, assign a potential visitor spend for each inquiry received through the website and digital marketing efforts.
- Generate monthly reports to guide the development of new marketing campaigns.

**Objective F:**

Conduct research in FY22 and every two years thereafter of CVB constituents to assess perceptions of the CVB, its current marketing efforts, and overall performance and utilize this information in conjunction with the CVB’s Strategic Plan update.

- Design the survey instrument and select recipients.
- Incorporate appropriate results and/or recommended action from the survey into the CVB’s marketing efforts, operations, and Strategic Plan.

**Objective G:**

Continue to update and use dashboards to create and distribute real-time reporting for the board, senior staff, stakeholders, and other constituents.

- Update the Simpleview Dashboard as appropriate.
- Update the research dashboard as appropriate.
- Post links to the dashboards in board reports and quarterly reports.

**Intercept Marketing**

The Route 66 Springfield Visitor Center continues serving visitors to Springfield, many of which are specifically interested in Route 66 travel. In addition, the CVB continues operating the information kiosk at the Springfield-Branson National Airport in the baggage claim area of the terminal and maintains an interactive kiosk at the airport to assist visitors with travel planning. These centers allow the CVB to intercept visitors traveling in Springfield and those headed to other destinations or those traveling Route 66 to encourage incremental travel to Springfield. Volunteers assist with visitor information packet fulfillment, staffing hospitality tables for convention and sports groups, and greeting visitors at the information centers.

**Objective A:**

Assist and provide Springfield area information to travelers at both CVB information centers.

- Integrate new technology and displays in the Route 66 Visitor Center to enhance visitor awareness and experience.
- Maintain an interactive kiosk at the Springfield-Branson National Airport to assist visitors when the center is not staffed by CVB part-time workers or volunteers.
- Maintain Missouri Welcome Center Affiliate status through the Missouri Division of Tourism.
- Distribute a regional brochure with a detailed map highlighting Route 66 destinations in southwest Missouri.
- Hire two additional part-time workers to oversee the Airport Information Center during peak times and for expanded weekend hours at the Route 66 Visitor Center. Utilize volunteers to support paid staff at both centers.
- Work with the Missouri Division of Tourism and Missouri Life Magazine to produce a statewide Route 66 map and publication for distribution at points along the Missouri route and in other states along Route 66.
- Continue selling souvenirs with CVB and Route 66 branding. Work with partners to feature and sell local products in the Route 66 Visitor Center.

**Objective B:**

Implement marketing efforts designed to intercept travelers visiting Missouri.

- Distribute at least 30,000 visitor guides for rack display to advertisers, partners, and visitor centers throughout Springfield, southwest Missouri, state visitor centers, and key cities in bordering states.
- Subject to available budget, utilize CTM Brochure Distribution to distribute visitors guides in Kansas City, St. Louis, and Lake of the Ozarks at various hotels and attractions.
- Promote the Route 66 Springfield Visitor Center and Springfield's other assets at information centers throughout Missouri and bordering states.
- Encourage the Springfield travel industry to increase listing submissions for the Missouri Vacation Planner and advertise in the publication.

**Digital Marketing**

Marketing efforts to attract the consumer travel market include digital programs through search engine marketing, online banner and rich media advertising, content creation, and the CVB's website, blog, and social media channels. Active participation in social media sites makes Springfield more visible when people search the internet for things to do and places to travel. A redesign to the CVB website that was finalized in February 2021 will enhance the visitor experience and continue to give area businesses and attractions exposure in a more content-driven way.

**Objective A:**

Maintain the CVB's websites utilizing updated technology and online marketing to generate more than 1.2 million visitor sessions and attract visitors to Springfield.

- Continue a mobile-first approach (design for mobile and tablet before designing for desktop applications) when designing CVB websites and other digital assets.
- Maintain a fully responsive design for the CVB website, including utilizing the brand standards.
- Continue working with Simpleview to maintain the newly redesigned website for SpringfieldMO.org.
- Stay engaged in emerging website trends and apply them to the site when appropriate.
- Continue to support the Springfield Area Sports Commission website and partner with a third-party vendor to make aesthetic and functional changes as necessary.

- Maintain the online calendar of events while ensuring the calendar is accurate, up-to-date, and thorough with all partner events.
- Utilize Google Analytics to track website traffic and advertising effectiveness by campaign.
- Increase participation in the Missouri Division of Tourism Search Engine Marketing (SEO) Campaign utilizing Google Adwords.
- Register new website addresses and renew current ones to use in advertising campaigns to track individual advertising responses to the website.
- Continue providing an opportunity for meeting/event planners to submit RFPs online directly to group sales staff.
- Send e-blasts promoting activities and attractions to convention/sports attendees via the Meetingmax email platform.
- Enhance website advertiser listings with photo galleries, interactive maps, and/or video options.
- Continue to discuss and recommend additional changes and improvements to the website and other technology issues during staff meetings and meetings with the local travel industry.
- Create category-specific content for all areas of the site, focusing particular attention on the blog, coupons, itineraries, partner listings, and calendar of events.
- Develop new sections of the site for local advocacy, international visitors, minority-owned businesses, the wedding industry and volunteer recruitment.
- Utilize third-party website developers to assist in the implementation of website projects and ideas throughout the year.

**Objective B:**

Create an email marketing campaign targeting potential and return visitors to Springfield and maintain an open rate average of at least 15%.

- Encourage subscription to email promotions and execute at least 52 seasonal email campaigns.
- Develop remarketing funnels through the CVB's email marketing communication tool, AutoPilot, to maximize the messaging to our own database.
- Distribute events and niche market promotions as appropriate.

**Objective C:**

Develop a comprehensive content strategy, utilizing research from an outside vendor, in an effort to obtain large amounts of multipurpose content (i.e., articles, photos, videos, podcasts, etc.) that can be used across a variety of channels.

- Promote original content through a cross-platform approach to reach more potential visitors.
- Work with guest bloggers to develop new content for the blog, diversifying our voice and audience.
- Continue to improve the online photo gallery to be more user-friendly and easier for staff to maintain.
- Update professional videos for the leisure, sports, and convention markets with new branding. The videos will be used in sales presentations, online advertising pre-roll, on the CVB website, and on YouTube.
- Create video b-roll reels for media and develop an online video library to organize video content.
- Create a photo/video asset co-op program with CVB advertisers/partners to obtain new quality images featuring diverse people enjoying Springfield's tourism assets.
- Create campaign materials emphasizing meeting options near major attractions or other activities appealing to meeting delegates and attendees.

### **Objective D:**

Utilize a variety of social media services to maintain relationships with constituents, encourage overnight travel, increase repeat visits to Springfield, and drive traffic to the CVB's main website. Social efforts should generate at least 3 million engagements and 25% organic reach.

- A social media plan will be developed to integrate all social messaging and provide a framework for outlining goals to provide a clear return on investment (ROI).
- Continue developing a solid branding for the CVB industry blog and social channels (formerly Issues & Info, now CVB News) and continue using the platform to share tourism-related issues important to the community, CVB projects, and upcoming conventions and events and encourage constituents to read and/or subscribe to the blog.
- Refer at least 8% of traffic to SpringfieldMO.org from social media postings.
- Merge all leisure social channels under a unified brand. Increase following to over 125,000 for Facebook, 17,000 for Twitter, and 30,000 for Instagram. For Pinterest, a goal of 200,000 monthly views has been set.
- Achieve a 10% engagement rate across all social channels.
- Work with the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce and other partners to develop an integrated social strategy highlighting interesting local stories and photos.
- Monitor mentions of Springfield on various social media and reply as appropriate to questions or comments from visitors.
- Utilize TripAdvisor and Expedia, as well as other user-generated content websites to monitor Springfield's position and respond to negative comments and questions.
- The CVB will monitor and share news stories and blog posts about local attractions, events, and tourism-related issues on all social channels.
- Continue utilizing the CVB's digital channels to reach incoming meeting/event social media channels to promote attendance, welcome the groups to Springfield, and inform them about all that Springfield has to offer while they are in the city.

## **Advertising Campaigns & Cooperative Marketing**

CVB advertising efforts are significantly focused on the consumer travel market segment. A small campaign targeting meeting, convention, and sports planners is used primarily for branding purposes and to keep Springfield in the minds of planners, while the majority of resources targeting these markets are focused on trade show participation and direct sales.

With the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus in early 2020, travel will remain a difficult target well into FY21 and FY22. All plans outlined in the following sections are subject to change and adjustment based on federal, state, and local guidelines, along with other consumer data and considerations.

Each year the CVB applies for matching funds for marketing projects through the Missouri Division of Tourism. The Promote Missouri Fund provides cooperative marketing opportunities for destination marketing organizations in Missouri. For FY22, the CVB has plans to apply for the maximum amount for our designated category which is currently set at \$185,000 from the Marketing Matching Grant Program that provides funds for up to 75% of the total cost of the approved project. Each submitted project is graded by evaluators and projects are assigned a pass/fail grade.



If awarded the funds, the CVB plans to conduct a more than \$1 million multi-channel media advertising campaign with partners MDT, Bass Pro Shops/Wonders of Wildlife, and the Springfield Cardinals. These partners allow the CVB to stretch its advertising dollars for both the CVB and its partners, providing Springfield a stronger impact on tourism advertising than the CVB could make by acting alone. Project implementation is contingent upon approval and subsequent state funding.

The CVB has retained Madden Media as its digital agency of record. Madden Media is responsible for media planning, placement, and strategy for all digital advertising for the CVB.

The CVB will continue putting an increased effort into recruiting diverse talent to showcase in its marketing materials. Staff will work with the marketing committee of the board and the Division of Diversity and Inclusion at Missouri State University to periodically review marketing materials to ensure they are featuring diverse talent and showcasing Springfield as a welcoming community to visitors from diverse backgrounds.

The branding initiative that launched in FY15 will guide the development of future advertising campaigns. “Life’s Simple Pleasures” was identified as the brand essence. During FY21 and moving forward into FY22, the messaging for campaigns will morph from this statement to a message focused on the local culture and spirit of Springfield. This is not a complete departure from “Life’s Simple Pleasures” but more of a graduation to the next phase of the campaign. The campaign slogan will read: “Come see us in Springfield. We’ll show you around.”

## **Leisure Advertising**

### **Objective A:**

Develop and execute a special consumer-focused campaign designed to continue the work started in FY21 to kickstart regional leisure travel as a recovery to the outbreak of COVID-19.

- Work with area hotels to offer booking specials for multi-day visitors.
- Incentivize visitors with offers, specials, reimbursements, and rebates for area attractions, retailers, and restaurants.
- Work with state and local officials to create a set of safety guidelines for the hospitality industry and clearly explain them to potential visitors.
- Coordinate execution of the plan with other marketing efforts described in Group Sales, Objective B.

### **Objective B:**

Generate at least 40,000 tourist inquiries and more than 1.2 million website visitor sessions through consumer market advertising efforts.

- Develop a multi-channel marketing campaign to include traditional and new media that includes print, digital, broadcast, out of home, streaming, etc.
- Work with partners to develop and implement a promotional campaign in select target cities.
- Continue targeting St. Louis Cardinals baseball fans on the Cardinals Radio Network or other identified avenues based on the CVB’s partnership with the Springfield Cardinals.
- Continue the rapid growth of digital marketing programs with an emphasis on social media content and email marketing.
- Utilize a targeted email marketing campaign to support the consumer market advertising campaign.

- Make a concerted effort to include more diverse photos and videos in all marketing materials.
- Track inquiry responses utilizing the Simpleview database.
- Incorporate tourism attractions and businesses in Greene, Christian, and Polk counties in CVB marketing efforts and fulfillment materials as required by the Missouri Division of Tourism's Promote Missouri Fund countywide designation.
- Measure the results of the project quarterly and annually as required by the Missouri Division of Tourism.

**Objective C:**

Develop partnerships to assist with CVB advertising efforts, generating at least \$645,000 from partners.

- Generate \$165,000 in cooperative advertising partnerships with local hotels and attractions.
- Generate \$295,000 in advertising sales and partnerships with local attractions, restaurants, hotels, and retail shops.
- Apply for \$185,000 in the Missouri Division of Tourism Promote Missouri Fund Marketing Matching Grant program.

**Objective D:**

Investigate the potential for a marketing campaign in partnership with the Springfield-Branson National Airport to reach potential visitors in cities where Springfield has non-stop flights.

- Work with the airport, advertising agency, and other partners, as appropriate, to create an advertising campaign.
- Implement the program and track results.

**Objective E:**

Consider partnership with Brand USA and the Missouri Division of Tourism to develop targeted international marketing campaigns.

- Work with Brand USA to identify Springfield points of interest to international visitors.
- Identify other available international marketing opportunities available through partnerships and participate, where appropriate.

**Convention/Sports Advertising**

**Objective A:**

Build awareness of Springfield as a convention and sporting event destination by placing at least \$80,000 in advertising.

- Develop a media plan targeting the meeting, convention and sports markets.
- Create new print and digital advertisements utilizing new CVB branding and featuring Springfield meeting facilities.
- Submit advertising creative to publications and websites for the meeting, convention and sports markets, including a mechanism for tracking responses.

# Group Sales

## Market Segments

The 2021/2022 group room night booking goal is 62,000 room nights (individual market segment goals are listed below). In order for a group to count toward the group room night goal, the Sales Department must be responsible for generating the sales lead. The goal is based on business booked but not necessarily consumed during the fiscal year.

### **State Association Market**

This market includes Missouri-based associations and focuses on maintaining relationships and involvement with key industry-related organizations such as Missouri Society of Association Executives, Society of Government Meeting Planners, Missouri Travel Council, Missouri Division of Tourism, and assisting with legislative activities as directed.

### **Regional and National Association Market**

This market includes all associations that are not Missouri-based. Segments include agriculture, cultural, fine arts, conservation, environmental, medical, technical, trade, commercial, and business.

### **Religious Market**

Because of Springfield's central location, affordability, community atmosphere, and close proximity to Branson, this is a niche market for Springfield. The Assemblies of God National Headquarters in Springfield continues providing the community with numerous meetings and overnight travel.

### **Sports Market**

Springfield is a top location for amateur sporting events due to its central location, affordability, and abundance of sporting venues. New and improved sports venues are planned. Beginning in 2020, the convention sales staff began assisting with selling to the sports market.

The CVB sports sales manager serves as executive director for the Springfield Area Sports Commission (managed by the CVB) and supervises an assistant director employed by the Sports Commission. Both organizations work together to develop and secure amateur sporting events. The Sports Commission began hosting an awards event in 2013 to increase the visibility of the Sports Commission within the sports community, raise money for the association and acknowledge area high school athletes and teams and will continue to do so in 2021. In 2020, the CVB sales staff began assisting with Sports Commission membership sales.

### **Social, Fraternal, Hobby and Avocational Market**

This market continues to be strong for Springfield because of the city's location and area attractions. Attendees typically pay for their own expenses to events in this market and often take vacation time to attend.

### **Group Tour and F.I.T. Market**

Branson continues to rank as one of the top group tour destinations according to the National Tour Association and the American Bus Association. Efforts have increased in this market due to the opening of Wonders of Wildlife and Bass Pro developments.

### **Government Market**

This market includes group business generated by state or federal government. Many state government events occur at Lake of the Ozarks during shoulder seasons and receive heavily discounted hotel rates, making it difficult for Springfield to compete effectively in this market.

### **Corporate Market**

Most corporate meetings are booked directly with local hotels; however, many local corporations are booking meetings and conventions in cities other than Springfield. In response to this trend, the CVB will increase emphasis on this market segment.

### **Education Market**

Increased emphasis on the education market will be made because of the number of colleges and universities in Springfield.

### **Conservation, Wildlife, Outdoor and Similar Groups**

The CVB has focused on this market for the past several years but will place more emphasis on conservation-related groups because of Wonders of Wildlife, Bass Pro, and future developments.

## **Group Sales Efforts**

### **Objective A:**

Through efforts initiated by the CVB group sales staff, book 35,000 room nights from the meetings and conventions market during FY22.

#### **Action Plans:**

- Research and solicit meetings, conventions, and sporting events targeting key market segments.
- Maintain membership in industry-related organizations such as PCMA, ASAE, MSAE, SGMP, and RCMA.
- Attend industry trade shows (depending on budget) as outlined in the Proposed Trade Show & Sales Projects Schedule (see page 23 for a list of trade shows and projects).
- Utilize MINT database subscription services to generate new leads.
- Work with convention hotel partners and key venues to create a solid action plan for a Top-25 Hit List of prospecting accounts and determine action steps needed for each account on what it will take to bring these groups to Springfield. Create a seven-step action list with a completion date.
- Host quarterly Sales Awareness Committee meetings with hotel and venue sales representatives.
- Develop a meeting planners' advisory group to seek input on sales activities conducted by the sales department. Invite local and non-local planners to participate in group discussions.
- Conduct an in-person and a virtual familiarization tour to showcase Springfield.
- Conduct in-person and virtual site visits as needed.
- Refresh meeting planner email templates every six months to showcase what is new in Springfield.
- Update the meetings section of the website as needed.
- Continue to use SendSites electronic bid proposal services.
- Solicit outdoor writer and conservation groups in conjunction with Bass Pro Shops and Wonders of Wildlife.

- Work with attractions on hosting complimentary site visits (in-person or virtual) for convention planners and package deals for convention attendees.
- Solicit groups that meet during shoulder period months - November, December, January, and February. Offer additional incentives to these groups.
- Host a meeting planner/industry workshop, networking event, or other activity on Global Meetings Industry Day. Utilize social media to showcase the importance of the meetings and convention sector of the tourism industry.
- Use LinkedIn as a solicitation tool by updating content weekly, posting industry articles, and staying active on the social media platform.

**Objective B:**

Continue to promote the Zero Attrition & Financial Incentive program through December 31, 2021, to generate bookings during the reopening phases of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Partner with convention hotels on COVID-19 recovery promotional ideas.
- Work with hotel partners to offer a “No Attrition” promotion.
- Offer additional financial incentives to qualified groups.
- Offer ways to conduct virtual/hybrid meetings and events.
- Offer a “Show Your Badge” program with attraction discounts for conference attendees.
- Work with hotels and venues to ensure meeting planners are comfortable with new COVID-19 mitigation cleaning and sanitation practices and include this information with bid proposals.
- Promote the new digital version of the Meeting Planners’ Guide, postcards, and recovery phase Simpleview templates.
- Conduct a local sales blitz using the Chamber of Commerce, “417 Magazine,” Springfield Business Journal, local universities, and influencers to encourage booking meetings in Springfield.
- With hotel partners, conduct a sales blitz in Jefferson City to promote the program.
- Offer virtual site visits and conduct in-person site visits for qualified convention and event planners.

**Objective C:**

Through CVB sports sales efforts, book 27,000 room nights in the sports market.

- Research and solicit sporting events that can utilize Springfield and area sports venues.
- Maintain membership in industry-related organizations, such as Sports ETA.
- Attend industry trade shows (based on the budget) as outlined in the Proposed Trade Show & Sales Projects Schedule.
- Work in partnership with the Springfield Sports Commission to secure new amateur sporting events.
- Utilize the CVB’s SCOUT subscription, a destination and event matchmaking platform, to generate new leads.
- Continue a local organizing committee and procedures for MSHSAA Basketball Championships and other events to ensure the event is a success and future bookings result.
- Continue soliciting emerging sports (i.e., pickleball) and target sports (i.e., archery and rifle).
- Utilize convention sales staff to identify and solicit sporting events.
- Continue providing exceptional service to existing sporting events to ensure rebooking.
- Assist the Sports Commission in developing booking incentives.
- Assist the Sports Commission in developing a comprehensive advertising/cooperative marketing plan.

**Objective D:**

Monitor the return of group business and work toward the goal of increasing the number of group rooms as a percentage of total rooms compared to non-pandemic years.

- Review CVB hotel statistics for trends and ensure participation in market segment statistics from designated hotels.
- Utilize STR's Destination Report Day Trend Report to help assess group room demand.
- Educate planners on the importance of encouraging delegates to book inside the block; offer financial incentives as appropriate.
- Consider the ROI when offering a group incentive based on time of year, existing booked groups during that time, budget, etc.
- Work with hotel and facility partners to offer financial incentives to single-property pieces of business as necessary.
- Partner with the Springfield Hotel Lodging Association to identify annual events that produce a large number of overnight rooms.
- Utilize the "Meet in Missouri" legislation (if funds become available) to attract out-of-state conventions and work with the Missouri Association of Convention & Visitor Bureaus to develop additional state incentives.

**Objective E:**

Pursue the group tour market to book overnight stops and attraction visits within the city.

- Attend travel-related events (when budget allows) as outlined on the Proposed Trade Show & Sales Projects Schedule (see page 23 for a list of trade shows and projects).
- Consider hosting the Missouri Bank Travel Exchange or another tour-related event, such as TravelSouth, to promote Springfield and increase overnight group tour travel.
- Develop new and unique group travel itineraries and escort notes as new attractions open.
- Promote virtual site visits.
- Utilize new marketing templates when needed.
- Partner with Branson on group travel events and familiarization tours.
- Update the group section of the new website as needed.
- Identify and retain existing group tours.
- Work with tour operators on new COVID-19 mitigation practices and keep them abreast of related ordinances in Springfield.
- Work with local attractions to encourage group tour travel.

## Trade Shows and Special Projects

<b>Event</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>
MU Conference Planning Office-Presentation	Columbia	August 2021
Missouri Society of Association Executives and Sales Blitz	Jefferson City	August 2021
Missouri Event Summit (MSAE, SGMP, MO Travel Council)	Jefferson City	August 2021
Telemarketing Sales Blitz	Springfield	August 2021
Connect Marketplace	Tampa	August 2021
Connect Sports	Tampa	August 2021
Connect Faith	Round Rock	October 2021
Society of Government Meeting Planners Extravaganza	Jefferson City	November 2021
TravelSouth USA International Showcase	New Orleans,	November 2021
Missouri Society of Association Executives Holiday Party	Jefferson City	December 2021
American Bus Association	Grapevine	January 2022
Professional Conference Management Association	Las Vegas	January 2022
Missouri Natural Resources Conference	Lake of the Ozarks	February 2022
TravelSouth Domestic	Virginia Beach	February 2022
Christian Meetings & Conventions Association	TBD	Spring 2022
Missouri Bank Travel	TBD	TBD
Kansas City Chapter of Meeting Planners International	Kansas City	April 2022
Convention Planner Familiarization Tour	Springfield	May 2022
Military Reunion Network	TBD	Summer 2022
SGMP National Education Conference	TBD	May 2022
Client Night at Hammons Field	Springfield	June 2022
Sports Commission Awards	Springfield	June 2022
SportsETA	Fort Worth	Spring 2022

## Event Services

The CVB provides support services for groups meeting in Springfield, including pre-convention planning and providing area information, registration assistance, promotional materials, news releases, convention alerts, website access, city dignitary welcomes, name badges, shuttle service, centralized housing, and other services as outlined in the bid proposal package. These services are designed to assist and promote a positive experience for the meeting planner when conducting meetings, conventions, and events in the city, thus generating repeat bookings. Services are offered to groups booked by the CVB and groups booked by hotels.

### **Objective A:**

Exceed the expectations of meeting planners by providing exceptional event services tailored to groups working with the CVB.

- Send convention alerts to media, hotels, attractions, and restaurants to notify partners of upcoming large conventions and events so they can adequately staff their facilities. Encourage businesses to welcome groups on marquees, offer discounts, etc.
- Assist groups with resources when requesting virtual and hybrid meetings.
- Utilize the CVB's social media channels (i.e., Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, etc.) to welcome groups to the city.
- Provide attendance-building and publicity assistance for groups meeting in Springfield by sending out email messages with the CVB's website video link, posting welcome messages on Facebook and other social media pages, and encouraging convention and sports groups to post about the city and events.
- Offer the Springfield promotional video and other promotional tools in advance to groups that will meet in Springfield.
- Continue utilizing the online meeting planning toolkit and update and add resources as they become available, such as green initiatives, corporate social responsibility, and a speakers' bureau.
- Promote attractions and restaurants through the Bandwango - Show Your Badge program to convention and event attendees.
- Promote advertisers and partners at hospitality tables and for business referrals.
- Provide a training session for hospitality booth workers prior to peak convention/event months.
- Offer a local professional speakers' bureau to groups and create a promotional piece highlighting this service in bid proposals.
- Promote the CVB's responsive website at hospitality tables and encourage attendees to use it to locate local restaurants, attractions, and other businesses.
- When appropriate, attend events booked in Springfield one year in advance to promote Springfield and build attendance for the conference.
- Maintain membership in the Event Services Professional Association.

### **Objective B:**

Provide housing bureau services to qualified groups.

- Utilize Meetingmax for all housing groups, providing training to CVB staff and meeting planners as needed.
- Host informational meetings about Meetingmax for front desk employees, reservation managers, and sales managers for upcoming groups as needed.



- Utilize Meetingmax pre- and post-activity email capabilities to provide welcome emails to event attendees and encourage extended stays to enjoy all of Springfield's amenities.

**Objective C:**

To assess the satisfaction of meeting planners hosting events in Springfield, the CVB will utilize a new survey through Survey Monkey to all meeting planners and obtain at least a 75 percent return rate on questionnaires.

- Utilize Survey Monkey to create and distribute surveys to all meeting planners one day following the conclusion of the event.
- Review surveys annually and adjust to increase the response rate.
- Track responses and report results to appropriate facilities.

# Training

## Staff & Volunteers

In addition to normal and ongoing staff training, the CVB encourages staff members to expand their knowledge throughout their careers. Where appropriate, the staff is encouraged, and may eventually be required, to become certified by professional organizations in their specific area of responsibility. All department heads have received or are currently pursuing the Certified Destination Management Executive designation through Destinations International.

### Objective A:

Continue increasing staff and volunteer knowledge by making available learning opportunities.

- Identify software training needs for staff members and utilize classes offered at area colleges and universities, the Springfield-Greene County Library District and online courses through LinkedIn Learning.
- Continue participation in the City of Springfield's Life Save program to ensure that a minimum of 75% of the staff is CPR certified and trained on the AED use.
- Participate in appropriate group webinars offered by Destinations International, Simpleview, Missouri Division of Tourism, and other industry organizations.
- Provide sales training for the group sales staff, partner development manager, and marketing sales coordinator.
- Continue training on diversity and inclusion through the Missouri State University Office of Diversity and Inclusion and utilizing other diversity experts.
  - Meet with community leaders to improve efforts to highlight the diverse communities of the Ozarks.
  - Assist MSU's Office of Diversity and Inclusion, Chamber of Commerce, and the city in developing diversity and inclusion training for management and frontline staff in the hospitality and retail industries.
- Conduct a CVB orientation for new staff, board, City Council, County Commission, and key city and county staff.
- Send staff to appropriate training conferences and sessions throughout the year.
  - Send four staff members to the Governor's Conference on Tourism.
  - Send two people to the Destinations International annual convention.
  - Send four staff members to the Missouri Association of Convention & Visitor Bureaus Annual Educational Conference.
  - Send one person to the Simpleview Users Conference.
  - Send one person through Leadership Springfield.
  - Send one person to the Destinations International Convention Sales Summit.
  - Staff will enroll in various educational sessions while at conventions and trade shows.
- Staff is encouraged to obtain or maintain industry certifications.
  - The president/CEO and sales director will maintain requirements to continue Certified Destination Management Executive (CDME) status from Destinations International.
  - The marketing director and the director of finance and administration will begin classes to obtain Certified Destination Management Executive status from Destinations International.
  - Sales Managers will continue coursework to maintain Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International (HSMAI) Hospitality Sales Executive Certification, Certified

Travel Industry Specialist, and Convention Industry Council Certified Meeting Planner designation.

- The Sports Sales Manager will maintain the Sports ETA Certified Sports Event Executive Certification.
- Determine and address training needs for other staff members as needed.

**Objective B:**

Identify and provide appropriate management and skills training for management.

- Determine training needs and address them as appropriate (Excel training, Simpleview, etc.)
- Identify and provide personnel management and human resources training for all management through People Centric Consulting Group as needed.
- Provide appropriate required reading (books, articles, etc.) for personnel management.
- All department heads will identify other CVBs that have developed considerable expertise in various areas of CVB operations and marketing and, after approval by the president, utilize them as mentors.

**Objective C:**

Develop a training program specifically for part-time employees to ensure they have the necessary information and resources to be effective in their positions.

- Part-time employees will visit with each staff member to gain a better understanding of what each person does for the CVB and how to direct phone inquiries.
- Maintain manuals for the information center desks with a staff directory, phone instructions, standard operating procedures, and other relevant information.
- Conduct refresher training for employees as needed.
- Part-time Airport Center staff will cross-train at the Route 66 Visitor Center.

**Objective D:**

Increase staff and partner knowledge and use of the Simpleview CRM.

- Work closely with the account team at Simpleview to ensure staff and partners are using the capabilities of the system to the fullest and most efficient extent.
- Utilize the Connect SGF extranet to distribute and respond to sales and leisure tourism leads, update partner business information updates, update the online calendar of events, sign up for advertising and sponsorship packages, and RSVP for CVB events.
- Conduct bi-annual member/partner training sessions to ensure partners are fully utilizing the Connect SGF extranet.
- Assign staff key areas of responsibilities for optimal use of the Simpleview CRM and develop a core staff team of experts on all sections of the system.
- Be involved in the Simpleview user group and attend meetings as appropriate.
- Conduct follow-up training with CVB staff as appropriate.

**Objective E:**

Secure and train an adequate number of volunteers to assist at information centers, convention, and event hospitality booths and with other tasks as necessary.

- Assess volunteer needs at information centers and align schedules with flight arrivals and as needed.
- Secure an appropriate pool of qualified and capable volunteers through sources such as referrals and local volunteer sites.
- Provide appropriate training for volunteers.
- Obtain coordinated and appropriate logo-branded clothing for volunteers to wear while on duty.

- Keep volunteers updated on CVB activities via a monthly volunteer newsletter.

## **Hospitality Industry & Advertisers**

The CVB encourages frontline employees in the travel industry to become familiar with area attractions and other things to see and do while in the Springfield area. We will encourage them to utilize CVB resources such as the visitor centers, social media, market research and CVB News. A video-based training program will be developed for CVB advertisers, encouraging them to take advantage of member benefits and better promote their business to travelers through CVB marketing efforts.

### **Objective A:**

Develop a plan for educating CVB partners about the benefits of membership.

- Send a welcome email to new partners to introduce the CVB staff, explain partner benefits, and the directions for logging in to Connect SGF (extranet).
- Conduct regular Connect SGF training sessions for advertisers/partners to encourage full usage of that system.
- Record a series of training videos for partners explaining how to take full advantage of partnership benefits.

### **Objective B:**

Offer free or inexpensive training opportunities for Springfield's travel industry employees to help increase knowledge and professionalism.

- Invite appropriate travel industry personnel to webinars hosted at CVB offices.
- Use CVB partners and vendors as guest speakers for industry training sessions.
- Use Connect SGF to share educational articles and other training resources with partners.

## Administrative

### **Objective A:**

Maintain accreditation through Destinations International by submitting the required annual reports in December 2021.

- Update processes to comply with other standards as required by the Destinations International Accreditation Program.
- Update the Standard Operating Procedures Manual for key functions of each CVB position as necessary.

### **Objective B:**

Assess new and existing CRM system enhancements and improvements and incorporate those that are appropriate.

- Review improvements and enhancements presented at the 2021 Simpleview Users Conference.
- Continue using the Gmail integration, Destination Dashboard, and Event Impact Calculator.
- Investigate the use of other vendors integrated with the Simpleview CRM to improve officewide efficiency.
- Determine appropriate enhancements and improvements to incorporate into the CRM.
- If necessary, add funds to cover the costs of enhancements and improvements to a mid-year budget revision.
- Continue upgrading the CRM as appropriate and attend the 2022 Simpleview Conference.

### **Objective C:**

Work with the city and appropriate private developers to advance the possibilities of a convention center and tournament-grade sports facilities in Springfield.

- If not secured in FY21, continue efforts to obtain enabling state legislation to increase the hotel tax up to 7.5 percent with the proceeds of any increase used for “capital improvements that can be demonstrated to increase overnight travel.”
- Investigate and identify incentives that may be offered to developers interested in a public/private partnership.
- Determine the public cost associated with the project(s).
- Identify public funding sources that could be used for the public portion of both projects.
- Consider the development of a Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID) is one alternative.
- Obtain support for both projects from the Springfield Hotel Lodging Association.
- Determine if Atrium Hotels will continue management of the Expo Center in its current configuration or as an indoor sports facility.
  - If so, revise the contract as appropriate.
  - If not, determine future management.
- Identify competing cities with convention centers and indoor sports complexes and consider hosting appropriate Springfield community leaders for on-site visits to those cities.

**Objective D:**

The CVB and Sports Commission will work with the city, county, Springfield-Greene County Park Board and other organizations to implement recommendations contained in the Huddle Up Group report on long-term goals for sports facility construction, sports marketing, sporting events development and funding for the Sports Commission.

- Assign Sports Commission committees to address operational issues addressed in the report, such as bylaws, membership, staffing, and funding.
- The CVB and the Sports Commission will work with the Springfield-Greene County Park Board and other appropriate entities to identify needed sporting venues identified in the report.
- The CVB and Sports Commission will fund a feasibility study on converting the Expo Center into a multi-purpose facility designed to accommodate amateur sporting events in addition to serving as exhibit space for meetings and conventions.
- Once identified, the CVB and the Sports Commission will work with the city, county, and others to determine how to finance the improvement of existing facilities and the development of new facilities.
- Investigate whether American Rescue Plan Act Coronavirus Fiscal Recovery Funds or Economic Development Administration Grants can be used for sports facilities to aid in the recovery of the travel industry.
- If possible, include funding for the Sports Commission in the financing mechanism.

**Objective E:**

Advance the need for a convention center and/or tournament-grade indoor sports facility through participation in the city's long-range planning process (Forward SGF).

- Encourage board members to be involved in the process.
- Actively participate in appropriate focus groups.
- Ensure the development of a convention center and/or tournament-grade indoor sports facility is included in recommendations.

**Objective F:**

Develop an interim 2022-2023 Strategic Plan.

- Work with the facilitator of the 2021 Board Retreat to update the 2020-2021 Strategic Plan based on current issues addressed in the retreat.
- Distribute the Strategic Plan to stakeholders and as appropriate.

**Objective G:**

Work with city staff to identify a referendum date to ask voters to change the definition of who must collect the hotel tax in order to require short-term rentals in Springfield to collect and pay the existing hotel tax.

- Monitor and attempt to influence, as necessary, state legislation legalizing and/or regulating short-term rentals.
- Obtain the support of the Springfield Hotel Lodging Association and encourage City Council to ask Springfield voters to change the definition of who must collect and pay the existing hotel tax to include short-term rentals.

**Objective H:**

Repurpose Destination Springfield to accept tax-deductible contributions for the CVB and/or the Sports Commission.

- Work with a CPA firm to establish the proper protocol for reporting tax-deductible contributions.

- Work with a CPA to determine whether cooperative advertising and other revenue could be considered tax-deductible by using Destination Springfield.

**Objective I:**

With board approval, investigate financial assistance through the American Rescue Plan Act and other current and future grant opportunities to fund major promotional or capital campaigns.

- Determine CVB eligibility for the different programs in the American Rescue Plan Act.
- Monitor city, county, and state grant opportunities offered as a result of American Rescue Plan Act funding.
- Research other current and future grant opportunities and apply as appropriate.

## **Future Marketing Efforts**

Financial and human resources will not allow the implementation of all marketing efforts the bureau would like to undertake during the 2021/2022 fiscal year. The following is an overview of long-range marketing efforts that will be implemented when resources are available. Some of these projects will be implemented during the fiscal year if possible. Due to the long-range nature of many of these projects and rapidly changing technology, they are subject to change.

### **Public Relations**

- A name change for the CVB will be considered in an effort to create a new identity for the organization that is more easily understood by constituents.
- Encourage and support qualified Springfield representatives to apply for a position on the Missouri Tourism Commission.
- Develop a comprehensive public relations and marketing plan to educate local officials and the public on the need for public funding for convention and sports facilities and continue to work with Forward SGF, the city and other organizations to identify needed convention and sports facilities.
- If not passed in FY21, enabling state legislation will be passed to allow the hotel tax in Springfield to be increased from 5 percent to up to 7.5 percent.
- Enabling state legislation will be passed to allow Tourism Business Improvement Districts (TBID) as a tool for tourism marketing and capital improvement projects.
- The city's definition of who must collect the lodging tax will be revised to include short-term rentals.
- Host the Midwest Travel Journalists Association Conference.

### **Collateral Production/Advertising Sales**

- Continue seeking advertising partnerships and innovative revenue streams to increase private funding and supplement the public hotel/motel tax funding.
- Explore the production, promotion, and distribution of additional publications, including a dining guide, a coffee guide, an online calendar of events and others.

### **Market Research**

- The use of focus groups and other market research will be conducted to measure advertising effectiveness, consumer insights, meeting planner satisfaction, brand awareness, etc.
- Opportunities for real-time data collection will be pursued to ensure marketing strategies are developed based on research and data.
- Additional surveys, such as creative focus groups, a PR effectiveness study, social media influence, and convention/sports satisfaction surveys, will be considered in annual CVB research plans.

### **Advertising**

- Advertising partnerships will be expanded to include secondary and regional attractions in niche marketing campaigns.
- Advertising production will be expanded to include the use of professional, diverse talent for all photo/video shoots.
- A new advertising campaign will be created using new photo/video assets and tested with consumer groups prior to launching.



### **Intercept, Digital, and Miscellaneous Marketing**

- Develop and produce branded video content for digital distribution (YouTube, podcast, etc.) and create third-party agreements for syndication (local media, SGF CityView, Mediacom, etc.).
- Utilize virtual reality or other emerging technology to communicate to media, tour operators, meeting planners, and leisure visitors about new attractions and facilities in Springfield.
- Remodel the downtown information center and install digital displays to promote area attractions and events.
- Conduct a local public relations and marketing campaign to increase awareness of the CVB and increase traffic to the Route 66 Springfield Visitor Center by promoting the center as a ticket pick-up location for local events, advertising on local TV, radio and print outlets using trade, when applicable, purchasing billboard advertising and promoting the visitor center as a resource on the CVB website and collateral materials.
- Develop partnerships with local media outlets such as the “The News-Leader,” “417 Magazine” and others to promote local deals and attractions.
- Expand international marketing through opportunities offered by Brand USA.
- Investigate opportunities to partner with local medical facilities to support medical tourism.
- Offer online attraction ticketing options and aggressively promote this on the website and through email marketing campaigns.
- Develop an online chat feature to enhance the visitor experience on the site.
- Develop a “Local Favorites” media campaign utilizing TV and social media outlets with online video to conduct short testimonial-type spots with people talking about why they love calling Springfield home. Partner with the chamber, city, universities, and other local organizations with interest in highlighting why residents call Springfield home.
- A mobile information center will be purchased for use at large, outdoor events and indoor events where appropriate.
- Virtual Information Centers will be placed at key area locations to allow visitors to speak with a live staff person utilizing Webcams and touch-screen technology.
- Work with the City of Springfield to design and develop a sidewalk kiosk near the Route 66 Springfield Visitor Center to distribute Visitors Guides, maps, and other printed materials when the center is closed. The kiosk will include space to promote downtown events.
- The use of new billboards will be investigated as a method of promoting Springfield to travelers in the area, increasing counts to the Route 66 Springfield Visitor Center.
- A “Staycation” program will be developed to encourage visitation from within a 100-mile radius of the city.
- Investigate digital and social attribution platforms to assess the impact of these marketing efforts on overnight travel and visitor spending.
- Investigate opportunities to market to niche and more diverse groups, including LGBT, African-American, Hispanic, and other groups for leisure and group sales.

### **Group Sales**

- Work with the Springfield Hotel Lodging Association to develop a pool of funds to use as an incentive to attract events.
- Expand partnership opportunities with the Branson/Lakes Area Convention & Visitors Bureau and identify areas to partner with their sales department to combine efforts of bringing convention groups and sporting events to southwest Missouri.
- Pursue regional partnerships with other CVBs to promote bringing new meetings, conventions, and sporting events to the area.
- Sports marketing efforts will be expanded in cooperation with the Springfield Sports Commission to make Springfield a recognized destination for quality amateur sporting events. Sporting events owned by the Sports Commission will be created and conducted annually.
- Develop a video-based sports promotion for use in sports sales efforts of the CVB and Sports Commission.
- Conduct sales blitzes in designated cities with a targeted client list, including cities where the CVB is advertising.
- Host an industry trade show or marketplaces such as Connect Missouri, TravelSouth, or SPORTS.
- Attend additional trade shows such as IMEX, ASAE and others not currently in the budget.
- Investigate eSports as a potential market segment.
- Assist the Sports Commission with networking events to generate and maintain Sports Commission memberships.
- Encourage sales managers to serve on boards for industry trade associations such as PCMA and RCMA.

### **Event Services**

- The ability for convention delegates to register for their convention and arrange all other details of their trip will be added to the website, providing a potential revenue source while eliminating the need to re-key information into the CVB's housing software.

### **Training**

- Implement a new version of the "Discover SGF" hospitality training course, which is outlined in previous years' marketing plans. This program will be designed for partners, staff, volunteers, and frontline industry workers.
- Diversity training will continue.
- Training will focus on rapidly changing technology and its impact on marketing.
- All staff will be encouraged or required to obtain appropriate certification in their field of expertise.

### **Administrative**

- The CVB will maintain accreditation through Destinations International's Destination Marketing Accreditation Program.
- The CVB will continue to upgrade and maintain equipment, hardware, and software to the most current versions and standards by following a technology plan.