



Final Report on Execution of Services

2021 LODGING TAX/ TOURISM FUND (CIVIC IMPROVEMENT FUND)

Project Name:

VISIT BAINBRIDGE ISLAND MULTI-MEDIA DESTINATION MARKETING CAMPAIGN

Name of Applicant Organization: VISIT BAINBRIDGE ISLAND (VBI)

VBI is a 501 (c) 6 Tax ID# 83-4290465

Date of Incorporation as a Washington State Corporation and UBI Number: 2019 UBI # 604 419 884

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Scope: The main objective of Visit Bainbridge Island is to function as the official Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) for the Island. Its primary focus is to attract visitors for the purpose of enhancing the local economy through visitor bookings of overnight accommodations, food and beverage purchases, retail, transportation, and visitor services.

In keeping with this objective, VBI has developed a strong scope of work for the Island with a tactical focus on COVID-19 tourism recovery and our "shoulder season" periods of October 1st until Memorial Day. VBI has served as the gateway to the Island, fostering a unified and collaborative approach to marketing Bainbridge Island with its many tourism partners. A vibrant tourism community will result in economic vitality for restaurants, attractions, retail stores, festivals, cultural, and sporting events.

Project Objective A: Administrative Expenses

Continue building on the infrastructure and administration of VBI to include support for CPA, insurance, office supplies, postage, post office box, mailing fees, industry publications and business licenses.

Results: In VBI's second year as a 501(c)(6) DMO, administration expenses included CPA, insurance, mailing fees, post office box, business licensing and transportation costs. Budget variance of negative - \$6,078 was due to additional fees for CPA and staff time for various administrative activities.

Project Objective B: Wayfinding Visitor Experience

Without exception, most modern cities face common problems around wayfinding. This typically leads to poor navigation by visitors and residents alike, however developments in new technology have sparked numerous innovations in this space. In 2021, VBI will adopt and deploy a digital end-user application aimed at providing visitors with a navigational tool to explore Bainbridge on their mobile device. By adopting a curated, digital approach, we will highlight local restaurants, attractions, tasting rooms, retailers and lodging establishments with content accessed by a unique QR code.

Results: After a thorough review of wayfinding solution, VBI was set to build upon the TouchStay platform started by the Bainbridge Island Lodging Association. It was then discovered Arts and Humanities Bainbridge had deployed a wayfinding app called OtoCast for the Arts community as well as the local business directory. The tourism partners agreed it would be a duplication of effort to launch yet another wayfinding solution when one had already been deployed and adopted by businesses. The budget for this project of \$2,600 was reallocated to other areas such as Advertising & Promotion.

Project Objective C: Advertising and Promotion

Advertising and Promotion: The overall goal of VBI is to market Bainbridge to the regional drive markets through digital and print campaigns, focusing on the "shoulder season". Examples of target markets include the Olympic Peninsula, I-5 corridor, greater Seattle, Tacoma, Olympia, Portland, etc.

Aimed at tourism recovery efforts, VBI will deploy a targeted **Bainbridge Island Tourism Advertising and Promotion Campaign**. This partner campaign aims to amplify and reinforce Bainbridge's most appealing features to increase overnight visitors. With a coordinated approach, the multi-channel brand awareness campaign will inclusively strengthen our marketing efforts while ensuring the Bainbridge narrative is consistently communicated. The expected result will be measurable awareness in Bainbridge Island's recognition as a destination of choice in target markets.

Results: As COVID travel restrictions eased, VBI secured several print advertising opportunities in both the fly and drive markets to promote Bainbridge as an appealing destination to visit and spend the night. The criteria for all advertising is based on the primary readership being >50 miles away and placed in publications that run during our shoulder season.

Here is a listing of those publications:

- **Washington State Annual Official Visitor Guide** – Circulation 375,000, target audience Out of State
- **Seattle Official Winter Visitor Guide** – Co-Op Ad with Bloedel, Gig Harbor, Visit Kitsap. Circulation 200,000, special placement in Portland Monthly. Target Audience Out of State
- **Seattle Magazine June Road Trip Issue** – Co-Op Ad with Bloedel, BIMA, BILA and the Wine Alliance, circulation 58,000. Target Audience WA Drive Market
- **1889 Magazine February/March Best Places Issues** – Circulation 800,000, target audience WA/OR
- **1889 Magazine September/October Winery Issue** - Circulation 800,000, target audience WA/OR
- **GSBA Perspectives Winter/Spring Magazine** – Circulation 100,000, target audience WA/OR
- **Pacific Publishing Quarterly Annual Manual** – Circulation 26,000, target audience WA drive market.

VBI implemented a monthly marketing meeting with a key Bainbridge tourism partners. As noted above, VBI in collaboration with this marketing group, launched a first of it's kind Bainbridge Destination campaign "Find your Island, there's always the next boat". Work included creative assets designed specifically for this campaign and these themes were carried into the Holiday Marketing Campaign. Through LTAC funding digital advertising was secured on both Q13 and King5 to promote all the Island has to offer during the holidays and encourage off island visitors to come spend the weekend. Results were impressive anecdotally from business stakeholders to VBI Website traffic which peaked at 1,500 unique visits a week, compared to 350 visits for the same week the year prior.

Overall advertising budget was \$31,000, but with the costs for creative assets and digital advertising costs for the Holiday campaign, we exceeded budget by \$2,310.

Social Media: Branded social media is a controlled advocacy message that spurs engagement among followers and cultivates new ones. This will in turn increase awareness and exposure of Bainbridge Island as the ideal travel destination. Launching Instagram and Facebook accounts on April 28, 2020, VBI has steadily grown its followers (IG 0-455 followers, FB 0-200). In 2021, we will continue to focus on frequency of content posting, paid promotion and brand persona. We will host select PNW and travel-inspired influencers to boost exposure and engagement for Bainbridge and its partners. Reposting from our local partners will also help to amplify their efforts with shared hashtags.

Results: We have also organically grown our social presence on both Facebook (FB) and Instagram (IG) growing to 1,300 followers and 2,000 impressions each week for our stories on IG and 625 followers on Facebook. We utilized our new advertising campaign Find Your Island campaign assets to amplify our reach. Budget was \$3,200, we went over by \$1,738 due to labor needed for consistent posting and planning of content and the beginning of paid promotion on Facebook.

Photography/Videography: In 2020, VBI purchased rights to an image from local BI photographer, Pete Saloutos to be used as our official destination image. To fulfill media inquiries, advertising opportunities and campaigns, VBI must begin to develop a robust library of additional professional images and

possibly video. Through thoughtful curated images, we will begin to establish visual communication standards for Bainbridge. This library of images would be available to partners as a community asset for use as noted above.

Results: To supplement this effort, VBI applied for a Port of Seattle tourism grant to develop a photography library and video. VBI was awarded the grant, which helped hire island photographer Keith Brofsky to curate a photo and video database for our use. In addition, Brofsky created VBI's first official tourism video that we can share with audiences off-island. We used these new images for advertising, website refresh and press kits for media inquiries. Due to the support of funds from the POS, we redirected half of the budget for this category to administration and social media.

Website: In 2020, VBI launched its refreshed website with a new domain and partner integrations for a more robust visitor experience. New features to VisitBainbridgeIsland.org include a master calendar of events and a robust tourism business directory through innovation and partnership with Arts & Humanities Bainbridge. All lodging is now showcased through a seamless integration with Destination Bainbridge's website. Moving forward, 2021 VBI website costs include: annual hosting and maintenance fees, updates to content, Google key word placement, Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and directory/calendar syndication fees.

Results: We are pleased to report VisitBainbridgeIsland.org has grown in content and use. In conjunction with local Bainbridge web designer Artsopolis, we have added new content, incorporated better user-design and dialed in our SEO. This, in tandem with marketing efforts, led to VBI earning first-place, organic Google search presence in many queried terms and elevated our website traffic (2,000 UPM to 4,000 UPM January to December) Added/updated sections of content include "Getting Here" and "Getting Around" pages about VBI's mission, vision, and goals, better user-designed experiences for "Things to Do" and "Dining." Budget \$5,500, actualized was \$7,600 which was tied to labor to refresh user content and the Holiday Campaign landing page.

Industry Affiliations and Memberships: Partnering with organizations who promote and advocate for tourism on both a local and national level is critical for networking and keeping current with industry innovation. VBI will maintain memberships with Visit Seattle, Greater Seattle Business Association (GSBA), Washington Tourism Alliance (WTA), Washington State Destination Marketing Organizations (WSDMO) and Meeting Professionals International (MPI). Local Bainbridge memberships to include BIDA and BICC.

Results: Visit Bainbridge Island has maintained its memberships in the following organization to support its core mission of destination marketing: Washington State Destination Marketing Organizations (WSDMO), Greater Seattle Business Association (GSBA), Washington Tourism Alliance (WTA) and Visit Seattle. We opted to not join Meeting Planners International (MPI) due to the absence of in person meeting and conventions due to the ongoing pandemic.

Inbound FAMS, Site Inspections and Media Visits: The key focus of VBI is to bring the best quality overnight business to Bainbridge. Pre-COVID-19, VBI would work with its partners to coordinate in person media visits, prequalified meeting and event site inspections and quarterly Familiarization (FAM) trips for those unfamiliar with Bainbridge. VBI, will continue to coordinate these efforts shifting to online platforms for the time being. Depending upon how things begin to open up in Washington, there's a possibility for COVID-safe FAM trips for media.

Results: Interest and activity from media and sales partnerships has increased dramatically in 2021. VBI continues to coordinate these efforts with it's tourism partners, which we couldn't extend such a generous welcome to our travel media without. Below are a few of our high-touch media visits, which VBI coordinated. Due to the increased demand and the high touch, media require in preparing their visit, we exceeded our overall budget by \$678.

- **Parent Map / @SuitcasesinSeattle** - As part of our focus to ensure Bainbridge Island remains a premier destination for families, we hosted a local writer several times to cover various aspects of our island during different seasons and events. This resulted in coverage multiple times across the publication and her personal blog and social media accounts.
- **The Seattle Times** - Hosted travel writer for an article focusing on trips to take from Seattle by foot. The writer spent a day on Bainbridge Island and wrote a feature that covered all the things you can experience by foot.
- **Fabulous WA** - Hosted travel writer for a full weekend feature on Bainbridge Island, which will include a variety of cultural attractions, dining options, craft beverage producers and accommodations.
- **Parent Map, Seattle's Child, @suitcasesinseattle** - Hosted travel writer for Red Tricycle (family blog with an average monthly page views of 2.7M) for an article on family fun for the holidays and winter activities on Bainbridge. Collaboration with BILA.
- **IFWTWA** – In conjunction with Visit Kitsap Peninsula and Visit Gig Harbor, presented Visit Bainbridge Island as a premier destination to more than 20 national journalists and members of the International Food, Wine and Travel Writers Association. Efforts are ongoing to host members of this group for extended visits individually or as a group for 2022.
- **The New York Times** – Hosted travel writer in November for possible feature on Bainbridge Island in 2022 focused on places positively changing the world of travel.

Outbound Sales Missions and Event Representation: Although most industry trade shows and events were cancelled in 2020, once it's safe to resume in person meetings, VBI will seek opportunities to represent Bainbridge in outbound client events and sales missions, examples could include; Corporate Travel Industry Days with local employers, Go West Summit and regional Visit Seattle sales missions promoting to out of state visitors. VBI will also continue to organize Bainbridge tourism partner participation in local tradeshow such as the NW Event Show, Seattle Hotel Concierge Association Tradeshow, and Visit Seattle Customer and Partner events.

Results: Virtual meetings continued into 2021 as most in person industry tradeshows, events and meetings were cancelled. VBI also launched its Consumer e-newsletter in April, which falls into this category. Here are some of the events VBI participated in:

- **Greater Seattle Business Association (GSBA)** - VBI continues to represent Bainbridge in GSBA's Tourism Advisory Board, meets quarterly and focuses on LGBTQ travel. VBI is also often highlighted in its publications and on their FB page.
- **VBI Virtual Concierge Updates** - Bainbridge tourism update presentations hosted by VBI via Zoom on a quarterly basis to 40 regional concierges over the summer with participation from lodging, restaurants, retail businesses, BI parks, Winery Alliance, Tour Bainbridge and Bloedel Reserve.
- **Port of Seattle** - VBI represented Bainbridge in several Port of Seattle presentations and International Travel updates.

Objective D: Sustainable Funding

Membership Outreach: Due to the severe economic whiplash brought on by the pandemic, this planned 2020 goal was postponed. In 2021, VBI will introduce a membership program to support its long-term sustainability. Membership will have identified benefits and access to VBI assets, examples could include: social media channels, advertising opportunities, client events, listings in visitor guides, tourism leads, FAMs and tourism partner events. Costs to scale include creative content development, implementation of a simplified CRM for tracking purposes and staff time to deploy.

Results: Having postponed the launch of a membership program in 2020 due the pandemic, we were eager to begin the steps to launch a new effort to this end. But, as VBI leaned into it's partners to test the waters, it became clear many businesses were still operating on very tight budgets as they navigated year two of the pandemic. Although there was positive support for a VBI membership program, there were not enough partners able to contribute to make the program successful. Alternate sustainable funding options will be explored in 2022. Budget allocation of \$2,000 was moved to administration and website categories.