

Chair

Sec/Treas.

Date:

**July 14, 2014 – 10am to noon
Holiday Inn**

Facilitated by: Mark Willmarth

In attendance:

TBID: Malissa Hollan, Scott Arensmeyer, David Buckingham, Sandi Thares, Becky Amaral Miller and Karen Venetz

CVB: Lara Tait, Shane Etzwiler, Marshall Brunner, Theresa Lobaugh and Carol Lindseth

Chamber of Commerce: Steve Malicott and Tom Alfrey

GF Development Authority: Brett Doney

Meeting objective: To discuss and explore the possibility of the TBID, CVB and Chamber working more cohesively together

What would be the purpose of a tourism alliance?

- Combining efforts would make selling the community easier because prospective visitors are more likely to act when presented with one voice/source.
- More bang for the buck
 - Would allow us to leverage available funds for advertising, public relations services, photo libraries and quality website development.
- Grow tourism in Great Falls.
- Eliminate duplication of efforts.
- Increase continuity in marketing efforts.
- Build a stronger community brand.

Why would we want to combine our efforts differently than we do now?

- We could be more successful if we collaborated more.
- More resources together as partners.
- Go after the bigger picture.
- One tourism voice/source would be helpful to our visitors.
- Combine all organizations efforts to share goals and vision.
- Be more creative.
- Compete more effectively.
- Streamline the process.
- You can work harder so smarter.
- Smarter could be putting together an alliance and leveraging all talents.
- Combine efforts to market on a national level.
- Develop annual events in Great Falls during the downtime.

- Be able to showcase Great Falls in the best possible light for the Chamber and the GFDA business efforts.
- We are working for our own efforts but not effectively as could be.

What is missing?

- More tourism growth.
- Cohesiveness between organizations on how we take care of the visitor.
- Cohesive message.
- Strength in numbers – other communities are much more visible.
- Long range plans developed together and individually.
- Time lines/ structure/ deadlines.
 - Many, many meetings to get the VIC center moving forward.

What currently is working well?

- All organizations have done a good job of bringing everything together.
- Independence brings talent to the top, if joined together we may not be recognized.
- Great Falls has a lot of quality.
- A great base and foundation exists.
- Things we have partnered on have been successful.
 - Past challenges between organizations are in the past and will remain in the past. Can't change the past, just move forward.
- Each organization has grown independently.
 - More people have amplified their thoughts and actions.
 - Created energy.
- Strong independent organizations.

What needs work?

- GF Tourism needs an actual destination for our visitors.
- Combined websites.
- More cohesive marketing plans – write them at the same time under board's direction.
- Timing/ duplication.
- It takes an extraordinary amount of time to get things approved/ in front of boards.
- Working with the restrictions of budgets/ compliance of each entity.
- The tourism message is not cohesive between the organizations.
- Need a community message.
- We need to figure out a new way to work more effectively and efficiently together.

What advantages are there for your organization to combine efforts?

- Work with an "Alliance" form.
- Invert how the organizational pyramid works at this time.
 - Now – all of the organizations work on one level and then meet with each group to move forward on projects/ ideas. It takes a long time to move forward.
 - Instead have all three organizations meet and make a plan(s) and then move to the separate organizations.
 - Each organization selects what they are going to work on.
 - The decisions have been made and the work can begin much faster.

What barriers/challenges do you see for your organization in combining efforts?

- If an alliance works does it make our reputations better?
- Needs to be done so everyone benefits in the investment.

What questions do we need to answer?

- Look at other communities and see what is working. Don't recreate the wheel.
- Need to develop a true alliance.
- Identify who would be invited to participate.
 - At this time the three entities invited to participate are:
 - TBID, CVB and Chamber of Commerce
- Who will be the leader? – someone who truly gets things done.
- Will we need to hire additional staff?
- What are the advantages of being co-located?
 - Still work independently
- Conscience and intentional desire to move forward.
 - Define purpose of alliance
 - Structure
- Form and function
- What areas of duplication are there?
- What can be eliminated?
- What could be done better?
- What impact would this have on growing tourism?
- What is our shared vision with measurable goals?
- What does growing tourism mean to each group?
 - How would success be measured in each group?
- How do we gain clarity and alignment about what we are here to do?
- Where and how do we cross over?
- When would we have board meetings? – hold board meeting so decisions can be made more efficiently.
 - Maybe quarterly meeting between all three organizations.
- What will we call it?
- How will it be structured?
- What principles would we use for discussions?
- What is the time line for moving forward?

Discomfort:

- Figuring out the partnership.
- All organizations have discussion between themselves – what control does each group give up?
- What authority would the leader have?
- Each organization has to feel its contributions are valued?

Next steps:

1. Go back to each organization board for buy in.
2. What would we see the alliance as?
 - a. What would each organization hope to accomplish?
3. Time line for consensus is September 2, 2014 – are you in?
4. Each organization selects two people to represent them at on-gong meetings.
5. Identify 3 or 4 goals your organization would like to see with the alliance.
6. Set up next meeting. A date in September will be selected to meet.

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