



#626
November 27, 2018

Report to the Mississippi Legislature

A Review of the Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau

PEER: The Mississippi Legislature's Oversight Agency

The Mississippi Legislature created the Joint Legislative Committee on Performance Evaluation and Expenditure Review (PEER Committee) by statute in 1973. A joint committee, the PEER Committee is composed of seven members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker and seven members of the Senate appointed by the Lieutenant Governor. Appointments are made for four-year terms, with one Senator and one Representative appointed from each of the U.S. Congressional Districts and three at-large members appointed from each house. Committee officers are elected by the membership, with officers alternating annually between the two houses. All Committee actions by statute require a majority vote of four Representatives and four Senators voting in the affirmative.

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The Committee assigns top priority to written requests from individual legislators and legislative committees. The Committee also considers PEER staff proposals and written requests from state officials and others.

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The Mississippi Legislature

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November 27, 2018

Honorable Phil Bryant, Governor
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Members of the Mississippi State Legislature

On November 27, 2018, the PEER Committee authorized release of the report titled *A Review of the Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau*.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Videt Carmichael".

Senator Videt Carmichael, Chair

This report does not recommend increased funding or additional staff.

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A Review of the Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau

Executive Summary

Introduction

House Bill 1637, 2018 Regular Session, authorized PEER to conduct “a review of the [Jackson Convention and Visitor’s Bureau (a.k.a. Visit Jackson)], which shall include, but not be limited to, accounting practices, office operations, administration, staffing, resource utilization and other best practices of facility management.”

PEER limited its review to those items specified in House Bill 1637. Particularly, concerns were raised about the timeliness of appointments to the JCVB Board of Directors; the proportion of the JCVB budget allocated to staffing costs; whether the JCVB is best utilizing its resources to promote tourism in Jackson; and whether the JCVB Board of Directors exercises adequate oversight over JCVB operations.

Section 14(1)(b) of H.B. 1637 provides that the PEER Committee may contract with a private contractor or contractors to conduct the review of the Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau mandated by the bill. PEER developed and advertised a request for proposal (RFP) that included a scope of work to address the areas of JCVB’s operations included in H.B. 1637. In response to the RFP, PEER received written proposals from three consultants and determined Destination Services submitted the best proposal, which was also lowest cost.

Background

The Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau is Jackson’s official destination marketing organization, responsible for attracting, promoting, and facilitating tourism to and within the Jackson market with the goal of causing a positive economic impact. It is authorized by H.B. 1637, which also provided for its funding through the levying of a 1% sales tax on hotels/motels and restaurants.

The JCVB functions to generate major economic impact for the city through programs that identify, attract, and service conventions and meetings, trade shows, group tours, and consumer travelers, while having an impact on the quality of life of local citizens.

The JCVB is governed by a nine-member board of directors, and as of April 2018, employed 18 full-time individuals and four part-time staff. Its departmental organization consists of administration, marketing, and sales and services.

Operations of the Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau

The Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau operates multiple programs in Marketing, Sales and Services, Funding Support, and Signature Events. Programs and services of the JCVB range from purchasing and placing promotional advertising to providing financial support in the form of grants or sponsorships to various tourism stakeholders (Jackson restaurants, hotels, attractions, local government, etc.).

Programs and Services

Marketing

The JCVB marketing program includes efforts and services to promote Jackson as a travel destination and promote increased patronage of Jackson restaurants and attractions. Marketing efforts include print media advertising, digital media advertising, production of sales videos, and advertising packets designed toward target markets.

The JCVB also develops sales videos and marketing materials and other brochures, which are provided to the Jackson Convention Complex, Jackson hotels, and event space coordinators to utilize in sales efforts.

Sales and Services

Sales and services programs work with various meeting planners, market segments, the community, and other stakeholders to sell Jackson as a destination. Staff procure sales in the following market segments:

- religious, education, and government;
- association and corporate;
- sports, equine, and medical;
- national, fraternal, ethnic, and Jackson State University;
- reunions (military/family) and group tours.

Services offered for conventions and meetings vary based on the level of event/hotel nights brought to Jackson. These services may include research of available meeting space, promotional materials, and publicity.

The JCVB provides local tourism entities such services as JCVB-created sales leads, access to the JCVB database, training classes, sales videos/marketing materials, and brochures.

Funding Support

The JCVB provides funding support, by application or sponsorship, to stimulate tourism or enhance quality of life in Jackson through its Convention & Meeting Support Grant Program; Marketing Match Grant Program; Restaurant Advertising Match Program; and quality of life initiatives and

Mini-Grant program in partnership with the Greater Jackson Arts Council.

Signature Events

The JCVB organizes and promotes several “signature” projects and/or events annually, such as National Travel and Tourism Week, hospitality training, and other hospitality events, such as the Miss Jackson Hospitality pageant.

Strategic Planning

The JCVB utilizes two formal documents in its strategic planning efforts: an overall strategic plan and an annual marketing plan. The strategic plan’s essential purpose is to identify broad goals and direction and overall methodology for accomplishing the goals. The marketing plan is developed at the programmatic level to achieve the strategic plan’s goals and objectives. However, PEER determined that most of the JCVB’s goals and objectives did not include specific measurable and timely performance measures by which to assess the JCVB’s performance in implementing the plans. Additionally, neither plan included a clear path to implement the defined strategies and objectives (e.g., a plan for allocation of resources).

Performance Measurement

The JCVB collects various performance data and measures, but determination could not be made through those performance metrics of how it utilizes these data to steer operations in order to meet the objectives of its strategic plan. Furthermore, outdated or inconsistent measures impede determination of whether the JCVB is utilizing its resources in the most efficient and effective manner.

Measuring Overall Economic Impact

According to the JCVB Board, it primarily utilizes two measures to track overall JCVB performance: annual change in the 1% restaurant and hotel sales tax collections and estimated economic impact of JCVB conventions, meetings, events, etc.

Although the annual change in these sales tax collections is an indicator of overall restaurant sales and hotel bookings in Jackson, such are, in part, affected by environmental factors beyond the JCVB’s control, particularly fluctuations in the economy. Given such, JCVB performance—any one or combination of implemented strategies—may not be directly related to the annual change in the 1% restaurant and hotel sales tax collections. In addition, the formula to calculate estimated economic impact has not been reevaluated in 20-plus years.

Marketing Performance Measures

The JCVB primarily relies upon measurement of the number of tourists traveling to Jackson, and their points of origin, and social media metrics to gauge marketing performance.

Sales and Services Performance Measures

For sales and services, the JCVB primarily measures the number and types of events booked, total revenue from sales compared to targets, quantity of sales leads, and hotel metrics, such as occupancy rate.

Funding Support Performance Measures

The JCVB does not have consistent performance metrics in place to determine the impact of its various funding support programs, which may require information to be provided before receipt of funding or require no actual verification of economic development.

Signature Event Performance Measures

The JCVB has no formal performance metrics in place to determine the impact of or continued need for signature projects to promote the tourism assets and resources in Jackson. It has instead relied upon limited anecdotal feedback in making decisions regarding whether to repeat an event annually.

Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau Revenues and Expenditures

The JCVB staff develops the agency's annual budget, which is approved by the board. However, there is no formal in-house operating budget, and the JCVB President/CEO approves spending authority on an as-needed basis.

Funding

The JCVB predominantly derives its funding from tourism taxes on restaurant and hotel sales. Tourism tax revenues increased from \$3.1 million in FY 2012 to more than \$3.5 million in FY 2015 but have since plateaued at approximately \$3.5 million per year through FY 2017 (see Exhibit A, page xiv).

In addition to tax revenue, the JCVB received revenue from festival income, grant funding, advertising sales, and interest on the JCVB reserve fund.

Exhibit A: JCVB Revenues, by Source, for FY 2012 through FY 2017

Revenues	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017
Tourism tax	\$3,148,858	\$3,266,677	\$3,381,246	\$3,583,372	\$3,587,300	\$3,539,564
Festival income*	N/A	\$132,539	\$316,958	\$234,943	\$177,856	\$227,370
State grant	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$50,000	\$0
Investment income**	\$6,912	\$4,746	\$3,177	\$1,934	\$2,108	\$1,718
Other***	\$505	\$4,114	\$16,658	\$17,031	\$412	\$363
Total	\$3,156,275	\$3,408,076	\$3,718,039	\$3,837,280	\$3,817,676	\$3,769,015

*Revenue from Jackson Rhythm and Blues Festival, which began in 2013 and ended in 2017.

**Interest income generated from JCVB's reserve fund.

***Advertising revenue, from sale of ads for JCVB Visitors Guide in FY 2014 and FY 2015. JCVB contracted for production of the visitors guide beginning in FY 2016.

SOURCE: PEER compilation of JCVB annual audits for FY 2012 through FY 2017.

Expenditures

As shown in Exhibit B, Personnel, Programs, and Other constitute the JCVB's primary spending areas. Over the period FY 2012 through FY 2017, JCVB expenditures increased \$1.3 million, from \$2.8 million to \$4.1 million.

Exhibit B: JCVB Total Expenditures by Major Category, for FY 2012 through FY 2017

Major Category	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017
Personnel (\$)	\$1,329,452	\$1,327,813	\$1,399,386	\$1,467,000	\$1,449,250	\$1,544,503
Personnel (%)	48%	39%	35%	39%	36%	37%
Programs (\$)	\$1,038,276	\$1,629,272	\$2,132,861	\$1,806,185	\$2,034,893	\$2,117,090
Programs* (%)	38%	48%	53%	48%	51%	51%
Other** (\$)	\$398,845	\$436,217	\$472,006	\$509,760	\$515,098	\$492,165
Other (%)	14%	13%	12%	13%	13%	12%
Total Expenditures	\$2,766,573	\$3,393,302	\$4,004,253	\$3,782,945	\$3,999,241	\$4,153,758

*JCVB funding support, signature events, quality of life initiatives, and advertising and marketing efforts.

**Miscellaneous charges, e.g., supplies, capital outlay, maintenance, rent, professional services, etc.

SOURCE: PEER compilation of JCVB annual audits for FY 2012 through FY 2017.

Current Financial Status

Since FY 2013, the JCVB fund balance (reserve fund) has decreased by approximately \$800,000. The decrease is due in part to increased expenditures for personnel, sponsorships, and a now-defunct music festival. As of fiscal year-end September 30, 2017, the JCVB had a fund balance of approximately \$1.8 million.

Stakeholder Assessment of Tourism in Jackson and JCVB Operations

To obtain stakeholders' impressions of the Jackson tourism environment and their interaction with the Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau, PEER conducted in-person interviews with 29 stakeholders and the JCVB Board of Directors.

Stakeholders' Impressions of the Jackson Tourism Environment

Stakeholders identified Jackson's history and culture, growing food scene, and plethora of museums and attractions as its strengths. However, stakeholders observed that Jackson does not have an entertainment district, is not walkable, has infrastructure challenges, and locally is hindered by a heightened perception of crime.

Stakeholders' Impressions of the JCVB

Stakeholders contend that the Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau should be more proactive in developing a comprehensive tourism plan for the city, improving its communication with stakeholders, and providing training and technical assistance for them.

Opportunities for Improvement Provided by Stakeholders

Stakeholders also believe there are opportunities for the JCVB to improve its operations to be a more effective tourism entity for Jackson, specifically as follows:

- *The JCVB, as the destination marketing and tourism entity for the city, should take the lead in developing a comprehensive tourism plan for Jackson.*
- *The JCVB should partner with stakeholders to develop collaborative marketing campaigns to promote Jackson as a destination and to promote particular aspects of the Jackson tourism industry.*
- *The JCVB should reassess how it tracks its performance and develop programmatic performance measures that will aid the JCVB in assessing its own performance and communicating such to stakeholders.*
- *The JCVB should collaborate with and develop relationships with stakeholders, including establishing avenues for constructive communication.*
- *The JCVB should develop strategies to support and enhance existing events. In contrast, the JCVB should not devote significant resources to developing its own events in-house.*
- *The JCVB should consider revising its funding support process to require all funding support recipients to initially submit an application to the JCVB, or, if applicable, the Greater Jackson Arts Council, and submit documentation*

demonstrating the funding support was utilized to generate an economic impact for Jackson. In addition, the JCVB should consider reviewing its policies for funding support in regard to when to allocate funding (i.e., either through reimbursement or prior to event).

Recommendations

1. In view of the fact that H.B. 1637 (2018 Regular Session) changed representation and qualification requirements for two of the JCVB Board member positions—i.e., an individual representing the Capital City Convention Center Commission and an individual representing the attractions industry nominated by the Metro Jackson Attractions Association—the Mayor of the City of Jackson should immediately comply with the provisions of this act by making appointments to these positions, which should have occurred within 90 days of the effective date of the bill. In addition, the JCVB CEO should advise the JCVB Board Chair that the member whose position was eliminated by H.B. 1637 should no longer actively participate as a board member by attending meetings and casting votes.

Regarding all future board appointments, including those for which past appointees are lawfully holding over, the JCVB CEO should advise the Mayor and applicable nominating associations regarding pending board vacancies to ensure that board positions are filled in a timely manner. In instances in which the Mayor chooses to retain a member of the board after the member's term has expired, the JCVB CEO should request that the Mayor make the reappointment in writing rather than allowing the board member to hold over by operation of law. If the member to be reappointed is required to be nominated by an association, the JCVB CEO should coordinate with the relevant association regarding the reappointment.

2. With regard to the JCVB's governance, the board of directors should
 - a. conduct a self-assessment to compare its practices to benchmarks and then prioritize its own development. A self-assessment can help identify issues needing clarification, gaps in skills that board members need for the board to be successful, and topics for future board education;
 - b. comply with its bylaws by annually electing its officers each October and annually conducting a performance review of the JCVB President/CEO;
 - c. reevaluate the current utilization and need of its standing committees and, where applicable, update its bylaws accordingly;
 - d. activate the JCVB Board's Community Relations Committee to actively seek measurable feedback from stakeholders on the operations and impact of the JCVB, as well as input on the current and future direction of the JCVB; and

- e. reevaluate its sponsorship process to include establishing a maximum amount in its annual operating budget for such sponsorship that will not be exceeded during the board's fiscal year. In addition, the board should require recipients of sponsorship funds to meet established performance requirements for the receipt of such funds.
3. The Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau should reevaluate its organizational structure and its allocation of resources. The reevaluation should include adjustments in work activities to lower the time expended on administrative tasks, reallocating staff functions, assessing current JCVB programs, and determining if such programs should continue or whether funding could be better reallocated toward other alternatives.
4. To enhance the JCVB's communication with stakeholders and its own performance monitoring, the Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau should develop goals and action plans, with defined performance measures and a plan for allocation of resources, to include in its strategic plan and marketing plan. The JCVB should also consider conducting research that will support and enhance the tourism market, such as visitor profile studies and economic impact studies (including reassessing and updating how the JCVB calculates economic impact).
5. The Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau should reassess its sales strategy, including seeking stronger partnerships with the Jackson Convention Complex, the Mississippi State Fairgrounds, the Mississippi Hotel and Lodging Association, and the Mississippi Hospitality and Restaurant Association. JCVB managers should conduct regular sales meetings and coordinated sales strategies/partnerships with tourism-related stakeholders in the Jackson area.
6. As the Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau moves forward to promote tourism and seek to enhance the tourism market in Jackson, it is incumbent that the bureau formally reach out to and seek feedback from its stakeholders, at both the board level and staff level.
7. The Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau should take the lead in working with stakeholders to develop a comprehensive tourism plan for the Jackson area. The plan should address transportation gateways into the city, coordinated signage, city ordinances to promote tourism, infrastructure improvements, coordinated marketing and sales efforts, a tourism branding campaign, and other strategies to enhance the tourism sector.

For more information or clarification, contact:

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A Review of the Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau

Introduction

Authority

The PEER Committee conducted this review pursuant to the authority granted by MISS. CODE ANN. Section 5-3-51 et seq. (1972).

House Bill 1637, 2018 Regular Session, authorized PEER to conduct “a review of the [Jackson Convention and Visitor’s Bureau (a.k.a. Visit Jackson)], which shall include, but not be limited to, accounting practices, office operations, administration, staffing, resource utilization and other best practices of facility management.”

Scope and Purpose

PEER limited its review of the Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau to the items specified in House Bill 1637: accounting practices, office operations, administration, staffing, and resource utilization. Particularly, concerns were raised about the timeliness of appointments to the JCVB Board of Directors; the proportion of the JCVB budget allocated to staffing costs; whether the JCVB is best utilizing its resources to promote tourism in Jackson; and whether the JCVB Board of Directors exercises adequate oversight over JCVB operations.

In conducting this review, PEER sought to

- describe the Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau, including its current mission, functions, board, funding sources, etc.;
- assess the role of the JCVB Board of Directors in effectively planning for and operating the Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau;
- evaluate the organizational structure and administration of Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau’s programs, including staffing levels, staff functions, and effectiveness regarding promotion of the tourism assets/resources of Jackson;
- evaluate the JCVB’s utilization of resources, including a review of the revenues and expenditures from FY 2012 through FY 2017; and
- assess the level of key stakeholders’ satisfaction with JCVB operations and promotion of tourism in Jackson.

Scope Limitations

The JCVB does not directly manage or operate any facilities, nor does it oversee operations of the Jackson Convention Complex (JCC), which is governed by the Capital City Convention Center Commission. Therefore, PEER excluded reviewing best practices for facilities management and management of the JCC from the project scope.

Method

In conducting fieldwork, PEER

- reviewed JCVB's history, including past legislation authorizing the JCVB and its taxing authority;
- interviewed JCVB staff concerning the JCVB's operations, its programs, how it utilizes its resources, its planning processes, and how they interact with stakeholders;
- obtained and analyzed JCVB planning documents, including the JCVB's 2012-2015 strategic plan, the JCVB's 2018-2022 strategic plan, and the JCVB's 2018 marketing plan;
- obtained and analyzed JCVB financials from FY 2012 through FY 2017;
- reviewed audits of the JCVB conducted since FY 2017;
- interviewed members of the JCVB Board of Directors concerning the role of the board, board oversight, their impressions of JCVB and its staff, their impressions of the Jackson tourism market, and their interaction with stakeholders; and
- interviewed key stakeholders, including representatives from Jackson restaurants, hotels, attractions, local government, and other tourism entities concerning the Jackson tourism environment and their working relationship with the JCVB.

Consultant Selection

House Bill 1637 (2018 Regular Session) Section 14(1)(b) provides that the PEER Committee may contract with a private contractor or contractors to conduct the review of the Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau mandated by the bill. In the event that PEER chooses to use a contractor for the review, H.B. 1637 requires PEER to seek competitive proposals for such services and to select the lowest and best proposal, and includes a maximum payment of \$100,000.

PEER determined that a portion of the JCVB review mandated by H.B. 1637 would best be accomplished by contracting with a consultant with documented expertise in the tourism industry. PEER developed and advertised a request for proposal (RFP) that included a scope of work to address the areas of JCVB's operations included in H.B. 1637. In response to the RFP, PEER received written proposals from the following consultants:

- Destination Services, LLP: Steve Powell, CEO of Destination Services, previously served as Director of the Greater St. Charles (Missouri) Convention and Visitors Bureau and as CEO of the Peoria Area (Illinois) Convention and Visitors Bureau.
- Johnson Consulting: Charles H. Johnson, President and CEO of Johnson Consulting, has nearly 30 years of experience in the general real estate, hospitality, convention, and sports consulting fields.
- Zeitgeist Consulting: Prior to forming Zeitgeist Consulting, Bill Geist served as the President/CEO of the Greater Madison (Wisconsin) Convention & Visitors Bureau. Geist also previously served in a leadership position with the Kankakee County (Illinois) Convention and Visitors Bureau.

In accordance with the evaluation criteria listed in the RFP, a team consisting of two PEER staff, two JCVB staff, and a legislative employee with experience in competitive procurements evaluated the three proposals and concluded that the proposal submitted by Destination Services represented the best proposal. Destination Services also submitted the lowest cost proposal, \$48,000. PEER entered into contract with Destination Services to provide the scope of work described in the RFP. The consultant's report is presented in Appendix H of this report, beginning on page 44.

Background

The Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau is Jackson's official destination marketing organization, responsible for attracting, promoting, and facilitating tourism to and within the Jackson market with the goal of causing a positive economic impact.

This chapter will provide an overview of the Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau's functions and structure.

The JCVB's overall goal, as adopted by its board of directors, is to cause major economic impact for Jackson through programs designed to identify, attract, and service conventions and meetings, trade shows, group tours, and consumer travelers, while having an impact on the quality of life of local citizens.

Authorizing Legislation

In 1984 the Legislature passed House Bill 216, which authorized the JCVB's creation and identified its purpose:

The bureau shall have jurisdiction and authority over all matters relating to the establishment, promotion and development of tourism and conventions and related matters within the City of Jackson, Mississippi.

House Bill 216 also provided for funding of the JCVB through the levying of a 0.5% sales tax on hotels/motels and restaurants.

Exhibit 1, page 5, presents a brief summary of legislative actions since the establishment of the JCVB.

Core Functions

The JCVB's mission is to "attract, promote, and facilitate tourism to and within" the Jackson market. It has the goal of generating economic growth. To accomplish these ends, the JCVB currently performs four core functions:

- marketing Jackson as a travel and tourist destination, both locally and to its target market(s);
- selling Jackson as a travel and tourist destination for individuals, families, or groups; as a convention and meeting destination; and as a sporting and equine event destination;
- providing funding support to attract events to Jackson, support local events, and/or enhance quality of life for people in the Jackson area; and
- organizing and promoting JCVB signature events or JCVB-supported programs that support tourism in Jackson.

Exhibit 1: Legislative Actions Related to the Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau

1984	1991	1997
House Bill 216 authorized the JCVB's creation and provides for its funding through the levying of a 0.5% sales tax upon hotels/motels, and restaurants.	Senate Bill 3161 created the Jackson Metro Convention and Visitors Bureau to include the City of Ridgeland and the City of Jackson. It also provided for the levying of a 1.0% sales tax upon hotels/motels, and restaurants.	S.B. 3236 extended the repealer and removed the Ridgeland references from the JCVB. Senate Bill 3123 established a stand-alone Ridgeland Tourism Commission.
1998	1999	2018
The Legislature did not reauthorize JCVB's taxing authority, effectively defunding it. The JCVB Board and taxing authority were repealed May 31, 1998. JCVB staff continued to market the city as part of a city department.	Senate Bill 3080 recreated the JCVB and reestablished its taxing authority. The Legislature has reauthorized JCVB's taxing authority five additional times since 1999: H.B. 1778 (2004); H.B. 1713 (2008); H.B. 1461 (2011); S.B. 2910 (2015); and H.B. 1637 (2018).	House Bill 1637 extended the JCVB taxing authority by only one year.

SOURCE: House and Senate bills.

Governance

The JCVB is governed by a nine-member board of directors, appointed by the Mayor of Jackson and confirmed by the Jackson City Council. Those who are representing the hotel, restaurant, and attractions industries must first be nominated by their local industry associations.

Furthermore, House Bill 1637 (which was signed by the Governor April 12, 2018) specified that JCVB Board members "shall be appointed, qualify, and take office within ninety (90) days of the enactment of this act." Given such, JCVB Board member representation should have complied with House Bill 1637 by July 12, 2018. However, as of September 30, 2018, the following positions had not been appointed to comply with House Bill 1637:

- the attractions representative;
- the Capital City Convention Center Commission representative;
- both hotel/motel representatives; and
- both restaurant representatives.

For full board qualifications and composition by industry, see Appendix A, page 37.

According to the JCVB's authorizing legislation, appointees should serve four-year terms, subject to reappointment every four years, with terms staggered so as to reduce the number of board appointments made in the same year. In the instance in which a vacancy occurs, the Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau's enabling legislation and reauthorization legislation states "each member of the bureau shall serve until his or her successor is appointed and qualified." Additionally, "any vacancy which may occur shall be filled by the mayor within ninety (90) days after such vacancy occurs in the same manner as the original appointment and shall be made for the unexpired term."

In conducting this review, PEER determined that appointments to the JCVB Board of Directors have not been timely. Although the JCVB's enabling statute permits a board member to serve until such time his or her position is filled, prior to May 2018 at least five board members served more than a year past their expired term. As of September 30, 2018, there are three board members who continue to serve on the board beyond their respective initial appointment terms through this carryover authority in statute. Primary contributing factors for untimely appointments include inaction by previous Jackson mayors and dormant nominating associations. Furthermore, there is currently one board member who continues to serve on the JCVB Board of Directors whose position was abolished by H.B. 1637 (2018 Regular Session), effective April 12, 2018.

The JCVB Board of Directors' bylaws list the following board responsibilities, among others:

- hiring and overseeing the work of the JCVB President/CEO, who is then responsible for day-to-day operations of the JCVB;
- authorizing bureau expenditures of more than \$10,000;
- approving an annual marketing plan covering all activities of the bureau;
- approving a schedule of salaries for all paid employees; and
- examining and approving policies and procedures adopted by the board and staff for such items as human resources and for approving grants and convention and meeting support.

Although not specified within the enabling legislation or the bylaws, the board also approves the JCVB strategic plan.

The JCVB Board currently functions in a limited role overseeing the Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau, generally in an advisory capacity, not involved JCVB's day-to-day operations.

Staffing

The JCVB employed 18 full-time individuals and four part-time individuals as of April 2018. This includes the President/CEO, the Executive Vice President, three administrative staff, four marketing staff, and 13 sales and services staff (including four part-time registrants to assist meeting planners at

conventions/meetings). See Appendix B, page 38, for an organizational chart.

The JCVB President/CEO is responsible for day-to-day operations, including such responsibilities as aiding in the development and implementation of the strategic plan, annual budget, and annual marketing plan. The JCVB President/CEO also oversees aspects of operations, such as organizational structure, staffing, and resource utilization.

Departmental Structure

The three-person JCVB Administration Department and the Executive Vice President provide office support for JCVB's operations; develop and support JCVB-led events; support the enhancement of quality of life in the community; and engage governmental and community stakeholders. The department is also responsible for visitor inquiries and, if necessary, routing visitor requests to the appropriate contact person. In addition, all departmental vice presidents assist with planning for the bureau's operations.

The four-person JCVB Marketing Department provides in-house marketing-related and public relations services; administers the JCVB marketing match grant; and assists with JCVB special projects. Additionally, the department assists the JCVB Sales and Services Department with developing its request for proposal submittals and providing marketing materials, such as reunion guides, sports guides, and hotel guides.

The JCVB Sales and Services Department, which is composed of nine full-time staff and four part-time registration assistants, seeks to establish relationships with potential clients; present bid proposals; and book and service meetings, conventions, group tours, reunions, and sporting events. The department conducts bid and welcome presentations; administers the JCVB Convention and Meeting Support Grant Program for meetings, conferences/conventions, trade shows, equine events, sporting events, and reunions; and, if applicable, provides registration assistance at events.

Operations of the Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau

This chapter seeks to address the following JCVB operations:

- programs and services,
- strategic planning efforts, and
- performance measures.

Programs and Services

The Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau operates multiple programs in the following four areas: Marketing, Sales and Services, Funding Support, and Signature Events.

Programs and services of the JCVB range from purchasing and placing promotional advertising to providing financial support in the form of grants or sponsorships to various tourism stakeholders (Jackson restaurants, hotels, attractions, local government, and other tourism entities).

Marketing

The JCVB marketing program includes efforts and services to promote Jackson as a travel destination and promote increased patronage of Jackson restaurants and attractions. Marketing efforts include print media advertising, digital media advertising, production of sales videos, and advertising packets designed toward target markets (e.g., group tours, sports, and civil rights tourism).

The JCVB also develops sales videos and marketing materials and other brochures, which are provided to the Jackson Convention Complex, Jackson hotels, and event space coordinators to utilize in sales efforts. In 2018 the JCVB produced its first sales video since 2009.

As a 12-month travel destination, the JCVB must spread its resources out rather than targeting them toward a given time frame or around a given set of activities (e.g., skiing, college sports, pro sports, etc.). The JCVB has defined Jackson as a “drive market” for most leisure travelers and considers the primary leisure travel target market to include the 100-250 mile, four-hour drive market, particularly eastern Alabama, western Tennessee, southeastern Arkansas, and Louisiana.

In one marketing effort, the JCVB has partnered with Maris West and Baker¹ in targeting certain types of millennials (identified as individuals ages 21 to 35) within the drive markets. The JCVB and Maris West and Baker are particularly directing efforts toward five types of millennials identified as most likely to visit the Jackson market: professionally focused female millennials; travel

¹A Jackson, Mississippi-based firm that provides advertising, digital media, graphic design, and marketing services.

enthusiasts; culinary explorers; millennials who like live music venues and downtown areas; and artisans or craftsmen.

Sales and Services

Sales and services programs work with various meeting planners, market segments, the community, and other stakeholders to sell Jackson as a destination. For the JCVB FY 2018 projected market mix for sales and services, see Appendix C on page 39.

According to the JCVB Vice President of Sales, each sales staff member is assigned a market segment in which to procure sales:

- Sales Person 1 - religious, education, and government;
- Sales Person 2 - association and corporate;
- Sales Person 3 - sports, equine, and medical;
- Sales Person 4 - national, fraternal, ethnic, and Jackson State University sports; and
- Sales Person 5 - reunions (military/family) and group tours.

For the period October 1, 2013, through July 9, 2018, JCVB staff booked 1,420 events. These included equine events, sporting events, family and class reunions, military reunions, trade shows, group tours, meetings, and special events/festivals, etc. The JCVB classifies meetings as corporate, government, religious, etc., as applicable.

Services JCVB Provides for Conventions and Meetings

Services offered vary based on the level of event/hotel nights brought to Jackson (i.e., by booking a number of hotel nights that meets or exceeds a certain threshold and based on projected economic impact).

Services, as applicable, may include the following:

- providing official invitation, including letters from the JCVB, the Mayor, and the Governor, as applicable;
- JCVB staff canvassing of hotels and restaurants to research available meeting space, gauge hotel rates, and send out leads on planner's behalf;
- providing points of contact to assist with program coordination;
- providing attendance-promotion materials (e.g., hotel and restaurant information, tour guide brochures, area maps) for registration packets; and
- publicity, as applicable, to include press releases, social media posts, etc.

For conventions or other large-scale meetings/events that meet certain size criteria, the JCVB will offer the following:

- assistance with event registration, including providing free name badges and paid JCVB registration assistants;

- official welcome of convention delegates at the opening of the convention; and
- complimentary Visit Jackson welcome gifts (subject to event size/projected impact).

The JCVB will offer assistance with transportation (generally bus service) for the event, which is usually paid for as part of the financial support process.

Services JCVB Provides Local Tourism Entities

The JCVB provides local tourism entities (e.g., hotels, convention center, restaurants, attractions, venues, meeting space locations, etc.) the following services: (1) JCVB-created sales leads; (2) access to the JCVB database; (3) quarterly hospitality training classes, with free attendance for their staff; (4) JCVB-created sales videos/marketing materials; (5) monthly Director of Sales meetings; and (6) brochures.

As applicable, the JCVB provides leads to local tourism entities. In addition, according to the JCVB, all Jackson hotel sales managers and sales staff and event space coordinators have access to the JCVB database.

The JCVB hosts quarterly hospitality training classes, with attendance free for hotel, restaurant, and other tourism-related staff. These classes are designed for frontline tourism industry staff, including cab drivers (for whom the classes are mandated).²

Funding Support

The JCVB provides funding support, either by application or sponsorship, to stimulate tourism or enhance quality of life in Jackson through the following:

- **Convention & Meeting Support Grant Program** — This program is designed to provide assistance to meetings, conferences/conventions, trade shows, reunions, equine, and sporting events within Jackson. Applicants must use Jackson venues and hotels to be eligible to receive JCVB funding.
- **Marketing Match Grant Program** — This program assists festivals and events, attractions, and organizations that promote inbound tourism through public events within Jackson. Applicants may apply for funding up to 50% of total qualified advertising expenses and up to 25% of total marketing expenses.
- **Restaurant Advertising Match Program** — The JCVB, in partnership with local television station WLBT, provides matching funds to restaurants to advertise on television and/or digitally through one of eight advertising packages ranging from \$250 to \$10,000.

²All cab drivers are required to renew their Jackson hospitality training certification via this program biennially.

- Sponsorships — The JCVB provides sponsorships to nonprofit organizations promoting activities that will have an economic impact, particularly through filling hotel/motel rooms and restaurants.
- Quality of Life Series — The JCVB partners with the Greater Jackson Arts Council to implement programs intended to enhance the quality of life of Jackson’s citizens. The goal of the program is to stimulate the general economy of Jackson. This series includes ArtsTribe, Food Truck Fridays, the Creative Empowerment Lecture Series, Public Art Now! mural program, Music First event sponsorships, and High Note Jam Concert Series. Additionally, the JCVB provides funding to the Greater Jackson Arts Council Mini-Grant Program, which provides funding for nontraditional tourism-related organizations³ to develop, enhance, or continue their programs.

To apply for convention and meeting support and marketing match grants, vendors must submit an application to the JCVB prior to the upcoming fiscal year. To request reimbursement for convention and meeting support and marketing match grant expenditures, vendors must submit a final report to the JCVB documenting expenditures and event impact.

Signature Events

The JCVB organizes and promotes several “signature” projects and/or events annually. According to the JCVB Executive Vice President, the bureau organizes and/or allocates funding to such events as the following:

- Legislative Welcome;⁴
- National Travel and Tourism Week each May;
- Hometown Heroes and Superlative Merit in Travel and Tourism (SUMITT) Awards⁵ each June;
- Tourism Oriented Policing Strategies (TOPS);
- Hospitality training (held quarterly); and
- Miss Jackson Hospitality pageant, which is part of Miss Mississippi Hospitality, each July.

The JCVB’s signature events generally occur during similar time periods each year, although the amount of funding allocated to each event may vary by year.

³Entities whose primary function is not hospitality, for example, neighborhood associations or art education programs.

⁴Includes legislative activities conducted during the legislative session in partnership with Visit Mississippi and Mississippi Tourism Association.

⁵An initiative to recognize excellence in the hospitality industry.

Strategic Planning

The JCVB utilizes two formal documents in its strategic planning efforts: an overall JCVB strategic plan and an annual marketing plan.

The JCVB strategic plan's essential purpose is to identify broad goals and direction and overall methodology for accomplishing the goals. JCVB's current strategic plan addresses a four-year period; it is developed at the executive level.

The JCVB annually develops its marketing plan at the programmatic level to achieve the strategic plan's goals and objectives. In addition, the JCVB reported using other more informal efforts, such as the use of various tactical plans developed by vice president-level staff.

As stated on page 6, the JCVB board approves both the strategic plan and the annual marketing plan.

JCVB Strategic Plan

From FY 2012 through FY 2018, the JCVB operated under the *JCVB 2012-2015 Strategic Plan*. Although the JCVB approved this strategic plan in 2011, the JCVB did not utilize it as a working document. For example, the JCVB did not update its strategic plan to reflect changes in the environment or progress toward achieving goals or objectives. However, the JCVB staff did produce a *2018-2022 JCVB Strategic Plan*, which the JCVB board approved in July 2018.

In assessing the JCVB's strategic plans, PEER found that both the *JCVB 2012-2015 Strategic Plan* and *JCVB 2018-2022 Strategic Plan* include core components of mission statement, vision statement, and overall goal statement. Both strategic plans also include a SWOT⁶ analysis identifying the JCVB's internal strengths and weaknesses, opportunities for growth, and external threats. Areas noted within the SWOT analysis include transportation, location, hotels/motels, restaurants, meeting facilities, athletic facilities, attractions, entertainment and recreation, culture, and environment.

However, neither strategic plan included a clear path to implement the defined strategies and objectives, e.g., prioritization, time frame for implementation, or allocation of resources (i.e., cost). Furthermore, the JCVB utilized limited market-specific data in describing the existing tourism market, assessing the internal or external environment, and in supporting its SWOT analysis. In addition, JCVB staff reported that the JCVB did not maintain progress reports supporting the JCVB's progress in implementing the *JCVB 2012-2015 Strategic Plan*.

⁶Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats.

JCVB Marketing Plan

The JCVB develops a marketing plan annually, including action plans for each department for the upcoming year. The JCVB's FY 2018 Marketing Plan included five goals, seven objectives, and 20 strategies. PEER determined that most of JCVB's goals and objectives did not include specific measurable and timely performance measures by which to assess its performance in implementing the plan. For example, one FY 2018 objective was to "increase the demand in the Jackson, Mississippi, area for hotel rooms, attraction visits, package tours, retail sales, restaurant receipts, local transportation and other events and activities that positively affect the economic impact of the local tourism industry." Without such performance measures, it is unknown whether the JCVB achieved its goal.

Additionally, although the JCVB's FY 2018 Marketing Plan includes action plans for each department for the upcoming year, it does not include a plan to allocate resources toward achieving such goals, objectives, or strategies. To supplement the marketing plan, JCVB Vice Presidents may develop tactical plans, which are informal, in-house documents that include various tasks for the upcoming year for their respective departments. These tactical plans may also include such things as proposed training or procurement options, sales plans, and marketing projections, dependent upon potential resource adjustments throughout the year.

Performance Measurement

The JCVB collects various performance data and measures, but PEER could not determine through the JCVB's performance metrics how it utilizes these data to steer operations in order to meet the objectives of its strategic plan. Furthermore, outdated or inconsistent measures impede determination of whether the JCVB is utilizing its resources in the most efficient and effective manner.

Ideally, the JCVB would have specific and measurable performance measures by programmatic area that are directly supportive of the JCVB mission and are linked to the objectives and strategies within both the strategic and marketing plans. Although the JCVB has significant amounts of various performance data and measures regarding programs or aspects of operations (as discussed in the following sections), PEER could not determine a clear linkage between each performance measure and how it was utilized by the JCVB staff in its operations. Furthermore, PEER identified several outdated measures, as many as 20-plus years old, or inconsistent measures based on different programs with a similar goal. These circumstances result in JCVB Board authorization of legacy programs without clear data identifying the programs most beneficial to the tourism market. Performance measures should be in place that would allow the JCVB Board and staff the ability to assess the effectiveness of programs or services and eliminate those that do not yield positive results.

Measuring Overall Economic Impact

According to the JCVB Board, it primarily utilizes two measures to track overall JCVB performance: annual change in the 1% restaurant and hotel sales tax collections and estimated economic impact of JCVB conventions, meetings, events, etc.

Although the annual change in these sales tax collections is an indicator of overall restaurant sales and hotel bookings in Jackson, such are, in part, affected by environmental factors beyond JCVB control, particularly fluctuations in the economy. Given such, JCVB performance—any one or combination of implemented strategies—may not be directly related to the annual change in the 1% restaurant and hotel sales tax collections.

PEER reviewed the information provided to calculate the estimated economic impact of JCVB conventions, meetings, events, etc., and determined that the formula is dated—the early 1990s formula has not been reevaluated in 20-plus years. Additionally, the JCVB no longer retains the supporting data to support how the formula was developed. According to the JCVB, it lost the supporting data in a flood.

An annual report currently serves as the JCVB's main method of conveying results/outcomes to stakeholders, generally describing the role and mission of the bureau, summarizing use of funding, and providing a review of activities for the year. Regarding sales, the JCVB's annual report generally provides the number of conventions serviced by the JCVB, actual delegates, and economic impact, as well as projections based on conventions currently booked.

Marketing Performance Measures

Regarding marketing efforts, the JCVB primarily measures the number and points of origin for tourists coming into Jackson and social media metrics (e.g., number of web content views).

Identification of the Jackson Market and Number of Tourists

The JCVB relies predominantly on data culled from the JCVB website and historical data to assess the Jackson market. Excluding metropolitan areas not within a 250-mile radius of Jackson, JCVB's website analytics identified the following top markets (point of origin), listed in order:

- 2015 - Memphis, New Orleans, and Columbus/Tupelo/West Point;
- 2016 - Memphis, New Orleans, Columbus/Tupelo/West Point, Birmingham, Baton Rouge, Monroe (Louisiana), Mobile, and Biloxi/Gulfport;
- 2017 - New Orleans, Memphis, Birmingham, Columbus/Tupelo/West Point, Mobile, and Baton Rouge.

The JCVB also partnered with AirSage⁷ to triangulate cellphone and other mobile device (e.g., tablets) usage data. AirSage collected and reported data pertaining to visitors' point of origin, length of stay, and income. The study identified the following top markets, listed in order, based on the number of total unique visitors to Jackson:

- March 2016: 35,032 total unique visitors originating from Memphis, New Orleans, Birmingham, Monroe, Baton Rouge, and Montgomery;
- October 2016: 57,700 total unique visitors originating from Memphis, New Orleans, Birmingham, Monroe, Baton Rouge, and Montgomery.

For more information on the results of the AirSage study, see Appendix D on page 40.

Measuring Social Media

The JCVB reports and tracks its social media metrics pertaining to YouTube campaigns, Facebook, Instagram, etc. For example, after launching the *My City* music video, the JCVB utilized YouTube analytics to track results from the campaign. In FY 2016 the *My City* music video received 9,500 views, 20,000 minutes of view time, 140 “likes,” and 190 shares, and was predominantly viewed in Mississippi (59%), Georgia (12%), and Louisiana (5%) by individuals ages 18 to 44 (66%).

In FY 2015 the JCVB promoted Jackson via nontraditional media outlets (i.e., Pinterest and LinkedIn). Combined with other social media promotions, the JCVB reported the following social media engagement in FY 2015:

- Facebook
 - Total “likes” - 14,444
 - Pages engaged - 74,142⁸
 - Total reach - 1,164,756⁹
 - Reach of page posts - 902,679¹⁰
- Twitter followers - 6,558
- Pinterest average monthly viewers - 1,412
- YouTube views - 9,751
- Website views - 309,656

In FY 2017 the JCVB developed the SippJackson.com local food and restaurant blog, which has an estimated 2,875 page views per month. In FY 2016 the JCVB developed the *City with Soul* documentary series, which was distributed via JCVB social media outlets throughout FY 2018.

⁷AirSage is a mobile data analytics company, headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia, which collects, reports, and analyzes real-time mobile user data for any specified geographic area.

⁸Total number of actions that people took on JCVB's Facebook page and its posts, attributed to JCVB ads.

⁹Number of unique people who have seen any content associated with JCVB's Facebook page.

¹⁰Number of people who saw JCVB's Facebook ads at least once.

Sales and Services Performance Measures

Regarding sales and services, the JCVB primarily measures number and types of events booked, total revenue generated from sales in comparison to sales targets, quantity of sales leads, and various hotel stay metrics.

Total Number and Types of Events Booked

JCVB staff booked 1,420 events from October 1, 2013, through July 9, 2018. These include equine events, sporting events, family and class reunions, military reunions, trade shows, group tours, meetings, and special events or festivals, including, for example, the Mississippi Railroad Association Board Meeting and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs 2016 National Veterans creative arts festival.

Total Sales Amounts and Sales Targets

As shown in Exhibit 2, page 17, the JCVB Sales and Services Department reported \$37,054,220 in sales in FY 2018. The department missed its FY 2018 sales goal of \$43,875,000, in part because of missed sales targets for association events, equine events, and fraternal events. In contrast, it more than doubled its targeted performance in attracting national events in FY 2018.

The JCVB also assigns each individual JCVB sales staff member sales goals (also shown in Exhibit 2) based on past sales projections and past JCVB product mix, with adjustments based on environmental changes.

Associations and religious groups generally perform as the JCVB's top sales markets, followed by sporting events or meetings, equine events (due to the Mississippi State Fairgrounds), Jackson State University sports, national conferences, and fraternal groups. JCVB staff noted that, with the addition of a Westin hotel to downtown Jackson in August 2017, they hope to grow the lucrative medical and corporate mix, which are not currently significant JCVB sales markets.

Number of Sales Leads

The JCVB currently obtains sales leads through a variety of methods. According to the JCVB Vice President of Sales, attending trade shows is the optimal method for obtaining leads because the JCVB can obtain RFPs for upcoming events and a current list of meeting planners. With access to these RFPs, the JCVB can better target its sales pitch to the needs outlined in the proposal.

JCVB sales staff may travel with local hotels and other applicable entities to conduct sales calls on a case-by-case basis as funds are available in the JCVB sales budget. Examples include traveling to Memphis to secure a religious convention and the Mississippi Gulf Coast to secure an association convention/meeting. However, in FY 2018, the JCVB opted to allocate a portion of its budget (including a portion of the sales budget) to fund a Jackson FAM (familiarization) Tour in September 2018, including providing

lodging, flight, and food and beverage for meeting planners, familiarization tour writers, and other tourism specialists.

A FAM tour is an organized trip targeting travel agents, tour operators, meeting planners, tour wholesalers or other members of the travel trade. The FAM tour educates and “familiarizes” members of the travel trade with the amenities of an area. The JCVB hosted 38 individuals in 2018. In addition, the JCVB partnered with the Mississippi Development Authority to host international FAM tours for Germany (early 2018) and Australia and New Zealand (July 2018).

Other methods for obtaining sales leads include follow-up with past leads, reviews of events held by comparable convention and visitors bureaus, and event management software.

The JCVB also uses lead-generating services. The JCVB currently pays Walter Bernard Integrated Marketing approximately \$5,800 per year for this service. However, because the data may be outdated (i.e., point of contact may have changed), according to JCVB staff, the bureau typically only contracts with a lead-generating service every three years.

Exhibit 2: Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau Sales Goals, FY 2018

Name	Sales Category	Percentage of Total Goal	FY 2018 Sales Goal (\$)	Percentage of Total Sales	FY 2018 Actual Sales
Sales Person 1	Religious	18%	\$7,830,000	14%	\$5,298,156
	Government	4%	\$1,740,000	2%	\$888,946
	Education	2%	\$870,000	5%	\$1,953,069
Sales Person 2	Association	20%	\$9,135,000	14%	\$5,210,476
	Corporate	4%	\$1,740,000	5%	\$1,906,454
Sales Person 3	Sports*	13%	\$5,655,000	16%	\$6,086,221
	Equine	10%	\$4,350,000	2%	\$730,172
	Medical	1%	\$435,000	1%	\$10,488
Sales Person 4	Jackson State University Sports**	9%	\$3,915,000	11%	\$4,127,343
	National	8%	\$3,480,000	23%	\$8,503,578
	Fraternal	8%	\$3,480,000	4%	\$1,525,361
Sales Person 5	Family Reunion	2%	\$870,000	2%	\$576,124
	Group Tour	1%	\$375,000	1%	\$237,832
	Total	100%	\$43,875,000	100%	\$37,054,220

*Sports include all sports not affiliated with Jackson State University sports or equine events. Sports would also include sports association meetings.

**Includes any sport affiliated with Jackson State University.

SOURCE: PEER compilation of information provided by the Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Average Daily Rate and Occupancy Rate

The JCVB utilizes Jackson's Smith Travel Research Inc. (STR) data monthly, particularly hotel occupancy percentage, and average daily rate (ADR), to compare the performance of the market's hotels to the same time period of the previous year.

For example, the Jackson ADR for the weekend of the Jackson Rhythm and Blues Festival increased from \$62.81 the Friday-Saturday in 2011 (no festival existed at the time) to \$77.61 in 2017 for the Friday-Saturday of the festival. Similarly, the Jackson hotel occupancy rate increased from 47.5% the Friday-Saturday the weekend the festival potentially would have occurred in 2011 to 66.6% the Friday-Saturday the weekend the festival was held in 2017. PEER notes that changes in the economy, weather, or other Jackson area events could also impact occupancy for the same period.

Exhibit 3 illustrates an example of Jackson's Smith Travel Research Inc. (STR) data utilized to compare ADR and hotel occupancy rates for the same time period in various years.

Exhibit 3: Example of Jackson's Smith Travel Research Inc. (STR) Data Utilized To Determine Average Daily Rate and Hotel Occupancy Impact, 2011 to 2017

Average Per Day of Festival Friday through Saturday

Measure	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Occupancy (%)	47.45	51.45	60.60	63.50	68.50	70.35	66.60
Average Daily Rate (\$)	62.81	62.83	68.44	70.55	71.78	75.95	77.61
Demand	4,971	5,202	6,178	6,614	7,120	7,363	7,132
Revenue (\$)	312,233	326,777	422,819	466,649	511,043	559,185	553,534
Census (%)	69.70	73.30	72.40	75.10	76.00	75.90	74.30

NOTE: The Jackson Rhythm and Blues Festival began in 2013. The festival generally took place on Friday and Saturday the third week in August.

SOURCE: PEER compilation of hotel occupancy data for the week of the Jackson Rhythm and Blues Festival, as obtained from Smith Travel Research Inc. through the Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau for years 2011 through 2017.

Funding Support Performance Measures

The JCVB does not have consistent performance metrics in place to determine the impact of its various funding support programs. Some of the programs require information to be provided before receipt of funding while other programs do not require any actual verification of economic development.

As mentioned earlier, the primary JCVB funding support programs include grant awards, sponsorships, and quality of life initiatives. The following discussion highlights how the JCVB determines the performance of each of these program categories.

Grants

The JCVB requires applicants seeking convention and meeting support or marketing match grants to submit post-event information and expenditure data to obtain reimbursement. The JCVB utilizes these data to report the economic impact of events funded with convention and meeting support or marketing match grants. The JCVB also requests hotel data for events booking in Jackson, where guests book their rooms utilizing the meeting or event hotel block discount.

Sponsorships

Unlike grant applicants, sponsorship funding recipients are not required to go through the formal application or reimbursement process. Given such, sponsorship applicants are not required to submit the event's information and expenditure data to the JCVB. Sponsorship recipients and amounts are determined on a case-by-case basis, based on JCVB staff recommendation and ultimately as approved by the JCVB Board members. Therefore, all the information provided regarding the event or activity would be provided on the front-end of the process based on estimates, without actual outcome information after the event or activity has concluded.

Quality of Life Initiatives

The Greater Jackson Arts Council requests grant recipients submit event performance data after the conclusion of their event. However, it does not track and report this information or require such information be submitted in order to obtain funding.

Through the ArtsTribe component, the Greater Jackson Arts Council has produced 12 three- to four-minute videos on aspects of Jackson, including "Building Lego Jackson" and "Skate Jackson," as well as a photojournalism series. However, according to the Council, the content is linked from the Greater Jackson Arts Council website and posted on its Facebook page, as well as the ArtsTribe website, which has a limited audience.

Signature Events Performance Measures

The JCVB does not have formal performance metrics in place to determine the impact of or continued need for JCVB signature projects in promoting the tourism assets/resources in Jackson. Rather, the JCVB has relied on limited anecdotal feedback to repeat these events annually.

Although the JCVB intends its signature programs to strengthen the Jackson product, recognize its accomplishments, and provide resources to accomplish its goals, PEER determined that the JCVB does not take active steps to ascertain the impact or continued need for JCVB signature projects. According to JCVB staff, the JCVB receives anecdotal feedback only.

Without formal performance metrics, the JCVB board and staff cannot consistently and routinely evaluate the return on investment of these signature events. By operating the same public signature events year after year, the JCVB is obligating staff time and financial resources that may or may not be better reallocated elsewhere simply as a matter of course.

Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau Revenues and Expenditures

This chapter seeks to address the following:

- JCVB budgeting process,
- JCVB funding,
- JCVB expenditures, and
- JCVB current financial status.

Budgeting Process

The JCVB staff develops the agency's annual budget, which is approved by the board. However, there is no formal in-house operating budget, and the JCVB President/CEO approves spending authority on an as-needed basis.

The JCVB operates on a fiscal year of October 1 through September 30. JCVB staff develops the agency's annual budget, which the board must approve prior to expenditure of funds for the next fiscal year. According to JCVB staff, each JCVB Vice President annually submits a proposed budget for his or her division (i.e., Marketing, Sales and Services, Administration, Executive Vice President). Although the board approves the budget for the JCVB, all vice presidents reported not having spending authority for their respective departments. Instead, the President/CEO approved spending as individual requests were submitted.

The JCVB's enabling legislation mandates that each fiscal year the bureau must hire an independent certified public accountant to conduct an audit reflecting the bureau's revenues (receipts) and expenditures. The auditor must make a written report to the City Clerk of Jackson and to the JCVB. For FY 2012 through FY 2017, JCVB contracted with Haddox Reid Eubanks Betts PLLC (previously Haddox Reid Burkes & Calhoun PLLC) to conduct the audits.

From FY 2012 through FY 2017, Haddox Reid issued unqualified opinions regarding the JCVB's financial statements and did not report any major findings. PEER reviewed these audits and used the audited financial statements to report the JCVB's revenue and expenditures for this time, discussed on pages 21-23.

Funding

The JCVB predominantly derives its funding from tourism taxes on restaurant and hotel sales. Tourism tax revenues increased from \$3.1 million in FY 2012 to more than \$3.5 million in FY 2015 but have since plateaued at approximately \$3.5 million per year through FY 2017.

The JCVB is funded predominantly through a "tourist and convention tax," which places a tax on 1% of the gross proceeds of sales of restaurants, hotels, and motels. The bureau generally receives approximately 85% of its tax receipts from restaurants and the remaining 15% from hotel collections.

In addition to tax revenue, the JCVB received revenue from festival income, grant funding, advertising sales, and interest on the JCVB reserve fund. Exhibit 4 shows JCVB revenues for FY 2012 through FY 2017.

Exhibit 4: JCVB Revenues, by Source, for FY 2012 through FY 2017

Revenues	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017
Tourism tax	\$3,148,858	\$3,266,677	\$3,381,246	\$3,583,372	\$3,587,300	\$3,539,564
Festival income*	N/A	\$132,539	\$316,958	\$234,943	\$177,856	\$227,370
State grant	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$50,000	\$0
Investment income**	\$6,912	\$4,746	\$3,177	\$1,934	\$2,108	\$1,718
Other***	\$505	\$4,114	\$16,658	\$17,031	\$412	\$363
Total	\$3,156,275	\$3,408,076	\$3,718,039	\$3,837,280	\$3,817,676	\$3,769,015

*Revenue from Jackson Rhythm and Blues Festival, which began in 2013 and ended in 2017.

**Interest income generated from JCVB's reserve fund.

***Advertising revenue, from sale of ads for JCVB Visitors Guide in FY 2014 and FY 2015. JCVB contracted for production of the visitors guide beginning in FY 2016.

SOURCE: PEER compilation of JCVB annual audits for FY 2012 through FY 2017.

For the period FY 2012 through FY 2015, tourism revenues grew from \$3.1 million to more than \$3.5 million. Since FY 2015, tourism revenues have plateaued but have exceeded \$3.5 million per year. For fiscal years 2012 through 2017, tax revenue averaged approximately 95% of total JCVB revenue.

Expenditures

Personnel, Programs, and Other categories constitute the JCVB's primary spending areas. Over the period FY 2012 through FY 2017, JCVB expenditures increased \$1.3 million, from \$2.8 million to \$4.1 million.

The JCVB's primary expenditures occurred in the Personnel, Programs, and Other categories. The "Personnel" category primarily includes expenditures for staffing and benefits. "Programs" includes marketing efforts, advertising, signature events, and funding support. "Other" includes the remaining JCVB

expenditures, such as office operations, maintenance, and travel expenses. Exhibit 5 shows the JCVB total expenditures by category for fiscal years 2012 through 2017.

Exhibit 5: JCVB Total Expenditures, by Major Category, for FY 2012 through FY 2017

Major Category	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017
Personnel (\$)	\$1,329,452	\$1,327,813	\$1,399,386	\$1,467,000	\$1,449,250	\$1,544,503
Personnel (%)	48%	39%	35%	39%	36%	37%
Programs* (\$)	\$1,038,276	\$1,629,272	\$2,132,861	\$1,806,185	\$2,034,893	\$2,117,090
Programs (%)	38%	48%	53%	48%	51%	51%
Other* (\$)	\$398,845	\$436,217	\$472,006	\$509,760	\$515,098	\$492,165
Other (%)	14%	13%	12%	13%	13%	12%
Total Expenditures	\$2,766,573	\$3,393,302	\$4,004,253	\$3,782,945	\$3,999,241	\$4,153,758

*JCVB funding support, signature events, quality of life initiatives, and advertising and marketing efforts.

**Miscellaneous charges, e.g., supplies, capital outlay, maintenance, rent, professional services, etc.

SOURCE: PEER compilation of JCVB annual audits for FY 2012 through FY 2017.

As shown in Exhibit 5, Programs accounted for the largest percentage of total JCVB expenditures (ranging from 38% to 53%), followed by Personnel (ranging from 35% to 48%) for each fiscal year except FY 2012. Other expenditures remained somewhat level over this same period (12% to 14%).

From FY 2012 through FY 2017, JCVB expenditures increased \$1.3 million, from \$2.8 million to \$4.1 million, primarily the result of the following:

- additional expenditures for personnel services - \$200,000;
- additional advertising expenditures - \$50,000 to \$220,000;
- additional grants - \$100,000;
- additional sponsorships - \$65,000 to \$385,000.

The following sections highlight some of the JCVB's major expenditures within the Personnel and Programs categories. For a full accounting of JCVB expenditures for fiscal years 2012 through 2017, see Appendix E on page 41.

Personnel Expenditures

Over the period FY 2012 through FY 2017, JCVB expenditures for personnel services increased 16.17% from \$1.33 million to \$1.54 million.

The JCVB expended 48% (approximately \$1.33 million) of its total expenditures on personnel in FY 2012, as presented in Exhibit 5. This was primarily due to a focus on utilizing staff resources to conduct sales calls, service conventions and meetings, and market the destination.

The JCVB expended 37% (approximately \$1.54 million) of its total expenditures on personnel in FY 2017 (see Exhibit 5). However, this decline in personnel expenditures as a percentage of total expenditures can be largely attributed to the increase in JCVB overall total expenditures from FY 2012 through FY 2017. The actual dollar amounts the JCVB expended on personnel increased 16.17% (\$215,051) over the same period.

Programs

Expenditures in the Programs category include JCVB funding support (Convention and Meeting Support Grant, Marketing Match Grant, restaurant advertising support, sponsorships), signature events, quality of life initiatives, and advertising and marketing efforts. These expenditures have fluctuated from FY 2012 through FY 2017 from approximately \$1 million to \$2.1 million.

The JCVB Program expenditures category includes various activities and efforts to carry out the JCVB mission. These can also be interpreted as those expenditures that go back to the community by both attracting tourists to Jackson and promoting events and activities that improve the quality of life for residents and locals. The following sections briefly highlight some of the expenditures for these JCVB programs.

Convention & Meeting Support Grant

JCVB Convention and Meeting Support Grant Program expenditures fluctuated yearly over the period FY 2012 through FY 2017, ranging from a low of \$159,724 in FY 2017 to a high of \$269,325 in FY 2015. Due to midyear reductions in grant funding and JCVB grant reimbursement requirements, grant recipients have, on average, been reimbursed 71% to 94% of the amount initially awarded over the same period.

Appendix F on page 42 provides an accounting of JCVB Convention and Meeting Support grant expenditures for FY 2013 through FY 2017. The JCVB initial budget funding for conventions, sporting events, and equine ranged from \$278,562 to \$350,000; whereas the JCVB final budget for such events ranged from \$242,000 to \$310,000.

The JCVB reimburses the vendor up to the grant award amount after the conclusion of an event and after JCVB reviews the vendor's submittal of final report documents supporting event impact, in compliance with the Convention and Meeting Support Grant guidelines. Because JCVB may reduce grant funding or grant recipients may fail to submit reimbursement documentation necessary for approval, it typically reimburses grantees significantly less funding than initially allocated in the budget. Given such, as shown in Appendix F on page 42, grant recipients have on average been reimbursed 71% to 94% of the amount initially awarded over the period FY 2013 to FY 2017.

Marketing Match Grant Program

JCVB Marketing Match Grants expenditures fluctuated yearly over the period FY 2012 through FY 2017, ranging from a low of \$74,525 in FY 2016 to a high of \$155,899 in FY 2014. Due to midyear reductions in grant funding and JCVB grant reimbursement requirements, grant recipients have on average been reimbursed 53% to 90% of the amount initially awarded over the same period.

Generally, applicants must submit Marketing Match Grant requests to the JCVB prior to the start of the fiscal year, unless granted a waiver (i.e., board approval to apply for a Marketing Match grant in lieu of JCVB sponsorship). JCVB's Marketing Match Grants must be approved by the JCVB Board of Directors Grant Committee, which is composed of three board members and the JCVB Vice President of Marketing.

The JCVB awards Marketing Match Grant funds as follows:

- If the grantee's marketing/advertising is beyond the 90-mile¹¹ radius specified in grant guidelines, grantees receive up to a 50% match of qualified marketing/advertising expenses.
- If the grantee's marketing/advertising is inside the 90-mile radius, grantees receive up to a 25% match for every \$1 spent, up to the amount granted.

Exhibit 6 provides data for the JCVB Marketing Match Grant Program for FY 2013 through FY 2017.

Exhibit 6: Marketing Match Grant Program

Fiscal Year	Grants Requests	Grants Funded	Initial Budget	Final Budget	Amount Paid to Grantee	Amount Paid to Grantee as Percentage of Initial Budget
2013	19	14	\$150,150	\$90,430	\$90,230	60%
2014	17	15	\$172,269	\$167,665	\$155,899	90%
2015	19	No data	\$185,900	No data	\$120,178	65%
2016	19	11	\$141,400	\$75,100	\$74,525	53%
2017	14	13	\$159,907	\$122,202	\$122,202	76%

SOURCE: JCVB Funding Summary, FY 2013 through FY 2017, as provided by JCVB Vice President of Finance and Administration.

¹¹The marketing radius map can be found at https://www.visitjackson.com/static/img/Grants_PDF/Marketing_Match_Grant_Radius_Map_7.pdf.

Over the period FY 2013 through FY 2017, the JCVB reimbursed grantees amounts ranging from a low of \$74,525 in FY 2016 to a high of \$155,899 in FY 2014. Due to midyear reductions in grant funding and JCVB grant reimbursement requirements, the JCVB has, on average, reimbursed grant recipients 53% to 90% of the amount initially awarded over the same period.

Restaurant Advertising Support Fund

In FY 2018 the Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau implemented a \$50,000 Restaurant Advertising Support Fund in conjuncture with a local television station. Six Jackson restaurants received a combined \$23,250 in matching funds.

In FY 2018 the Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau implemented the \$50,000 Restaurant Advertising Support Fund in conjuncture with local station WLBT, a new initiative intended to provide Jackson area restaurants matching funds for advertising on air or digitally. JCVB/WLBT offered seven advertising package tiers ranging from \$250 to \$10,000. Six Jackson restaurants committed a combined \$23,250, with amounts ranging from \$250 to \$10,000.

Sponsorships

The amount the JCVB Board authorized to expend for sponsorships has increased from \$35,000 in FY 2013 to more than \$500,000 in FY 2018.

As presented in Exhibit 7, both the number of JCVB sponsorships and JCVB expenditures for sponsorships have increased significantly since FY 2013. In FY 2013 the JVCB board approved two sponsorships totaling \$35,000. In FY 2017 the JVCB Board approved 22 sponsorships totaling \$245,400. Based on financials submitted by the JCVB, FY 2018 board-approved sponsorships will exceed \$500,000.

Exhibit 7: JCVB Sponsorships

Fiscal Year	Sponsorships Approved	Initial Budget	Final Budget	Amount Paid to Sponsor
2013	2	\$0	\$35,000	\$35,000
2014	11	\$40,000	\$384,900	\$384,900
2015	14	\$40,000	\$65,000	\$65,000
2016	21	\$75,000	\$249,000	\$248,875
2017	22	\$45,000	\$245,400	\$245,400
2018	20	\$285,000	\$531,550	TBD

SOURCE: JCVB Funding Summary, FY 2013 through FY 2018, as provided by JCVB Vice President of Finance and Administration.

PEER determined that the JVCB board generally allocates more sponsorship funding than initially approved in its total annual budget, as shown in Exhibit 7. Examples of JCVB sponsorships include \$525,000 for the Two Museums Project (FY 2016-FY 2018); \$150,000 for the Jackson Convention Center (FY 2018); \$80,000 for the Sanderson Farms Golf Championship (FY 2016, FY 2018); \$75,000 for the Farish Street Heritage Festival (FY 2018); \$28,000 for the Jackson Music Awards (FY 2016-FY 2018); and \$25,000 for the Mississippi Blues Marathon (FY 2018).

Signature Events

Excluding costs in connection with the Jackson Rhythm and Blues Festival from FY 2013 through FY 2017, the JCVB expended amounts ranging from approximately \$35,000 in FY 2013 to approximately \$119,000 in FY 2016 to organize and promote signature projects intended to support tourism.

Excluding the costs expended for the Jackson Rhythm and Blues Festival from FY 2013 through FY 2017 and the costs expended for the Chicago Blues Festival, the JCVB expended the following for signature projects and/or special events from FY 2013–FY 2017:

- FY 2013 - \$35,324.69,
- FY 2014 - \$13,204.91,
- FY 2015 - \$73,579.80,
- FY 2016 - \$118,939.57,
- FY 2017 - \$53,223.95.

For a list of JCVB signature events, see page 11.

Quality of Life Initiatives

The JCVB increased expenditures for quality of life initiatives from \$100,000 to \$300,000. The JCVB currently contracts its quality of life initiatives programming with the Greater Jackson Arts Council.

Exhibit 8 presents the expenditures for the JCVB quality of life initiatives in partnership with the Greater Jackson Arts Council, which includes the Mini-Grant Program and Quality of Life Series.

Exhibit 8: JCVB Quality of Life Initiative Funding, FY 2013 through FY 2018

Greater Jackson Arts Council	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
Mini-Grant Program	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000
Quality of Life Series	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$260,000	\$200,000	\$200,000
Total	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$360,000	\$300,000	\$300,000

SOURCE: PEER compilation of JCVB financials provided by JCVB Vice President of Finance and Administration.

Since FY 2013, the JCVB board has allocated \$100,000 per year to the Greater Jackson Arts Council Mini-Grant Program, which provides funding for nontraditional tourism-related organizations to develop, enhance, or continue their programs.

In fiscal year 2017, the Greater Jackson Arts Council provided mini-grants to 112 recipients. According to its staff, the Greater Jackson Arts Council utilizes \$15,000 (15%) to cover administrative costs to disburse the grant and disburses \$85,000 (85%) in grants funds. Of the \$85,000, grant funds were allocated as follows:

- Major Cultural Grants - 30%
- Micro Grants - 28%

- Arts Therapy Grants - 17%
- Creative Artist Grants - 15%
- Neighborhood Grants - 10%

See Appendix G on page 43 for detailed information about the Greater Jackson Arts Council Mini-Grant Program awards.

In FY 2016 the JCVB board allocated \$260,000 to the Greater Jackson Arts Council to assist with the Greater Jackson Arts Council Quality of Life Series (see page 11 for a list of the programs funded through this series). In FY 2017 and FY 2018 the JCVB board reduced the amount allocated to the Greater Jackson Arts Council Quality of Life Series to \$200,000 per year.

Advertising and Marketing Efforts

Total advertising and marketing expenditures fluctuated yearly over the period FY 2012 through FY 2017, ranging from a low of \$432,488 in FY 2016 to a high of \$701,763 in FY 2017.

Over the period FY 2012 through FY 2017, JCVB expenditures for advertising ranged from approximately \$349,888 to \$622,413. Expenditures for marketing ranged from approximately \$79,350 to \$144,825 over this same period. See Appendix E, page 41, for JCVB advertising and marketing expenditures by fiscal year.

From FY 2013 through FY 2017 the JCVB additionally invested significant resources to market Jackson through the promotion of the Jackson Rhythm and Blues Festival. These expenditures, which ranged from approximately \$540,000 to \$663,000, are reflected as Marketing - Public Relations in Appendix E, page 41.

According to the JCVB executive team, the JCVB also utilizes its Marketing Match Grant Program to augment its other advertising and marketing efforts, through requirements to utilize the grant funds to promote the funded event/activity in addition to promoting the JCVB.

JCVB Current Financial Status

Since FY 2012, the JCVB fund balance (reserve fund) has decreased by \$783,413. As of fiscal year-end September 30, 2017, the JCVB had a fund balance of approximately \$1.8 million.

Although tourism revenues increased by approximately \$400,000 from FY 2012 through FY 2017, JCVB expenditures increased \$1.4 million over the same period (see Appendix E on page 41 for total revenues and expenditures). Given such, the JCVB fund balance (reserve fund) decreased \$783,413 over the period September 30, 2012, to September 30, 2017, declining from \$2.6 million to \$1.8 million, respectively. Exhibit 9 on page 28 lists the NET change in the JCVB fund balance.

Exhibit 9: Net Change in JCVB's Fund Balance

	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017
Fund Balance at beginning of year	\$2,178,991	\$2,568,693	\$2,583,467	\$2,297,253	\$2,351,588	\$2,170,023
Plus: Revenues	\$3,156,275	\$3,408,076	\$3,718,039	\$3,837,280	\$3,817,676	\$3,769,015
Less: Expenditures	\$2,766,573	\$3,393,302	\$4,004,253	\$3,782,945	\$3,999,241	\$4,153,758
Fund Balance at end of year	\$2,568,693	\$2,583,467	\$2,297,253	\$2,351,888	\$2,170,023	\$1,785,280
Net Change in Fund Balance	\$389,702	\$14,774	(\$286,214)	\$54,635	(\$181,565)	(\$384,743)

SOURCE: PEER compilation of JCVB annual audits for FY 2012 through FY 2017.

This decrease in the fund balance is in part due to the JCVB's increased expenditures for personnel, for the now-defunct Jackson Rhythm and Blues Festival, which operated from FY 2013 through FY 2017, and for sponsorships.

JCVB Board members reported past discussion of setting a board policy requiring a JCVB reserve fund equal to either six months or one year of JCVB operating expenses. This was, in part, to sustain operations for a year in case the JCVB did not receive reauthorization until such time reauthorization could occur or a new destination marketing organization could be established. To date, the board has not established a policy requiring a reserve fund.

Stakeholder Assessment of Tourism in Jackson and JCVB Operations

This section will address the following:

- stakeholders' impressions of the Jackson tourism environment;
- stakeholders' impressions of the Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau; and
- opportunities for improvement provided by stakeholders.

Tourism Promotion and Stakeholder Interest

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, the direct contribution of travel and tourism in the United States during 2016 was \$503.7 billion or 2.7% of the country's gross domestic product. This contribution reflected the economic activity generated by such industries as hotel, travel agents, airlines, and other passenger transportation services. The contribution also included the activities of the restaurant and leisure industries directly supported by tourists. In 2016, travel and tourism generated 5,486,000 jobs directly.

Within Mississippi, the Mississippi Development Authority reports that an estimated 23.15 million people visited destinations in Mississippi in FY 2017, generating \$398.7 million for the state's General Fund. According to MDA's Executive Director, travel and tourism is Mississippi's fourth-largest employer, accounting for \$3 billion in total labor income for Mississippians annually. Travel and tourism in Mississippi continues to have a positive economic impact by providing authentic, engaging visitor experiences.

Tourism promotion does not occur in a vacuum, but requires the collaboration of many stakeholders with a vested interest in the success of the tourism industry. Stakeholders have a choice of going alone and attaining limited success or working with others to achieve positive economic results. The effects of working together are always greater than the sum of individual efforts.

To obtain stakeholders' impressions of the Jackson tourism environment and their interaction with the Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau, PEER conducted in-person interviews with 29 stakeholders and the JCVB Board of Directors. The stakeholders interviewed by PEER represented the hotel industry, attractions industry, restaurant industry, tourism associations, event and entertainment coordinators, state tourism entities, and City of Jackson administrative and tourism-related staff. Because many of these stakeholders work directly with, or receive funding from, the JCVB, PEER agreed not to report their comments individually.

Stakeholders' Impressions of the Jackson Tourism Environment

Stakeholders identified Jackson's history and culture, growing food scene, and plethora of museums and attractions as its strengths. However, stakeholders observed that Jackson does not have an entertainment district, is not walkable, has infrastructure challenges, and locally is hindered by a heightened perception of crime.

As the state capital, stakeholders observed that Jackson has a rich historical heritage of interest to visitors as well as local citizens. Located within Jackson are many historical buildings, such as the "old" and "new" capitol buildings, the Medgar Evers historical home, and the Eudora Welty home. Jackson is also the home to three institutions of higher learning—Belhaven University, Jackson State University, and Millsaps College—that provide educational and cultural offerings. The city has several entertainment venues, such as the Mississippi Fairgrounds and Coliseum, the Kirk Fordice Equine Center, Thalia Mara Hall, and the Alamo Theatre.

Stakeholders identified Jackson's growing food scene as a positive aspect, with restaurants offering a wide variety of traditional and ethnic cuisine. The stakeholders also noted that Jackson has a plethora of museums, such as the Mississippi Museum of History, the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum, the Smith Robertson Museum, and the Mississippi Children's Museum.

Despite its many tourism-related positives, stakeholders observed that Jackson does not have an entertainment district that could foster a more vibrant nightlife in the city. In addition, outside of the compact restaurant and arts-friendly Fondren area, Jackson is not considered a "walkable" city for tourists who seek convenient entertainment opportunities. Stakeholders also stated that the city's infrastructure issues continue to be a concern, particularly with regard to frequent water outages and crumbling city streets and roads.

Stakeholders identified the perception of crime as a significant local and regional issue impacting tourism, although they stated that its impact diminished when attracting tourists or meeting planners from outside of the state. Stakeholders generally thought the perception of crime was worse than it is, particularly in tourism-related areas, such as downtown Jackson, Belhaven (historic district), Fondren (arts district), and northeast Jackson. They also stated that it was a difficult perception to overcome, particularly given local metro news coverage of criminal activity.

Stakeholders' Impressions of the Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau

Stakeholders contend that the Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau should be more proactive in developing a comprehensive tourism plan for the city, improving its communication with stakeholders, and providing training and technical assistance for them.

Stakeholders contend that the JCVB is underperforming as the lead entity for tourism in Jackson. Particularly, stakeholders believe that the JCVB should take a more active role in coordinating stakeholders to develop a comprehensive tourism plan for Jackson, including defining what Jackson is and developing a long-range plan with strategies, objectives, and targets. Stakeholders noted that the Metro Jackson Attractions Association and the LeFleur Museum District (Mississippi Sports Hall of Fame and Museum, Mississippi Children's Museum, Mississippi Agriculture and

Forestry Museum, and Mississippi Museum of Natural Science), which the JCVB played an active role in creating, are positive steps toward coordinating tourism in Jackson, and other such districts should be developed.

Stakeholders have the perception that JCVB's communication with stakeholders is one-way, with the bureau providing information about its accomplishments and performance without seeking constructive feedback from stakeholders, who make up the frontline of Jackson's tourism environment.

Stakeholders noted that the JCVB did not place emphasis on growing and enhancing existing events. Stakeholders did not believe that the JCVB should divert significant financial and staff resources to operate and develop JCVB-created events, such as the Jackson Rhythm and Blues Festival. Additionally, stakeholders stated that the JCVB's current annual signature events/programs should be carefully evaluated to determine to what extent and in what form they should continue, if at all.

Although the JCVB has offered limited training for stakeholders in the past, such as TripAdvisor^{®12} training, stakeholders believe that the bureau should provide more technical assistance/training opportunities for stakeholders, specifically training regarding emerging trends and technologies in the attraction, hotel, and restaurant industries.

Stakeholders observed the JCVB's lack of cross-promoting and marketing of local events and attractions, specifically those relating to civil rights, arts history, food culture, music, family attractions, business traveler, romantic getaway, literary history, Mississippi culture, and the outdoors. Stakeholders also wanted the JCVB to increase utilization of the family entertainment assets of the Greater Jackson area—the Ross Barnett Reservoir, the Pearl River, the Natchez Trace, Mississippi Crafts Center, and Trustmark Park—to promote Jackson tourism when applicable.

Opportunities for Improvement Provided by Stakeholders

Tourism-related stakeholders believe that there are opportunities for the JCVB to improve its operations to be a more effective tourism entity for Jackson.

In interviews with PEER, Jackson's tourism-related stakeholders identified six opportunities for improvement that the JCVB should consider to enhance its effectiveness.

The JCVB, as the destination marketing and tourism entity for the city, should take the lead in developing a comprehensive tourism plan for Jackson.

Jackson does not have a comprehensive tourism plan through which stakeholders can combine their resources and efforts to promote tourism in Jackson. The JCVB, as the city's marketing and tourism entity, should coordinate with local tourism and governmental entities to develop a comprehensive tourism plan for Jackson. Such a plan would, at a minimum, identify strategies for

¹²TripAdvisor is a travel website providing hotel and restaurant reviews, flight and lodging search and booking functions, and a "things to do" search forum by destination.

branding, event development, unified signage, and infrastructure improvement. In addition, the plan would identify tourism-related roles and responsibilities for the JCVB and its stakeholders.

The JCVB should partner with stakeholders to develop collaborative marketing campaigns to promote Jackson as a destination and to promote particular aspects of the Jackson tourism industry.

Although the JCVB executes marketing initiatives to promote the destination and particular tourism products (i.e., USA International Ballet Competition, Hal's St. Paddy's Parade and Festival, Smith Robertson Museum and Cultural Center, Jackson State University events), stakeholders voiced the opinion that the JCVB, as the tourism lead, should take a more active role in developing collaborative marketing campaigns to promote particular aspects of the tourism industry and to drive overnight tourism.

Based on stakeholder feedback and PEER's analysis of the JCVB website and promotional materials, it is apparent that there is limited cross-promotion of tourism opportunities. Given that the JCVB has an incentive to attract visitors to visit Jackson, dine in restaurants, and stay overnight at Jackson-area hotels, the bureau should partner with stakeholders to promote events that would result in such activity. Stakeholders agreed that it was JCVB's primary responsibility to entice people to visit Jackson and the stakeholders' responsibility to market and sell their particular attractions and events.

The JCVB should reassess how it tracks its performance and develop programmatic performance measures that will aid the JCVB in assessing its own performance and communicating such to stakeholders.

The JCVB should develop performance measures with which to assess its programmatic and overall performance. Such measures would be useful in determining whether or not existing JCVB programs are generating a return on investment, as well as communicating JCVB's success tied to a specific program.

Without such information, it is difficult for the JCVB to communicate to stakeholders which programs worked and which did not. Although the JCVB can track the change in hotel tax collections and restaurant tax collections, given its operating revenue is generated from the 1% tourism tax on hotels and restaurants, it has limited data with which to track and communicate its performance related to a particular aspect of its programmatic operations.

The JCVB previously has opted not to invest funding toward research, particularly allocating staff time to conduct market surveys or contracting for research, such as visitor profile studies, economic impact studies, or brand recognition studies. Although contracting for or conducting in-house research adds an extra expense or diverts staff resources, such research activities may be useful in developing marketing or sales programs; assessing the JCVB's marketing strategy, including its brand penetration; and reevaluating and assessing the JCVB's economic impact.

The JCVB could obtain consumer feedback from tourists, meeting planners, leisure travelers, local families, stakeholders, etc., concerning how each consumes the Jackson tourism product; their concerns about the Jackson tourism product; and, as applicable, how they want the future Jackson tourism product to look. Although the JCVB would be the primary user of such research, the research could also be utilized by other local tourism entities and businesses.

The JCVB should collaborate with and develop relationships with stakeholders, including establishing avenues for constructive communication.

Based on information PEER obtained from JCVB stakeholders and JCVB staff, the bureau should seek to improve its relationship with its stakeholders. Particularly, the JCVB should be more proactive in communicating its performance results, but also more proactive in seeking and accepting stakeholder feedback concerning its performance, its operations, and tourism events.

In the past, the JCVB's Board of Directors and executive staff have not proactively communicated with stakeholders, generally only interacting with stakeholders at events or on an as-needed basis. For example, although the JCVB conducts monthly Director of Sales meetings in which it communicates and discusses current leads, stakeholders stated they thought the Director of Sales meetings could be more productive and that JCVB should be providing more analytical-level data (e.g., what business is new business and what business is repeat business by market segment). Additionally, the JCVB could provide a summary report on lost business, including the type of business lost, when, and for what reasons. Additionally, stakeholders stated they would like to see the Director of Sales meetings more interactive, with discussion on how to enhance JCVB sales strategies and partner together, where applicable, to increase sales.

Given the collaborative nature of tourism promotion, it is imperative that the JCVB Board of Directors and staff maintain an active line of two-way communication with the industry it supports, and other applicable stakeholders in the community.

The JCVB should develop strategies to support and enhance existing events. In contrast, the JCVB should not devote significant resources to developing its own events in-house.

In interviewing stakeholders and reviewing JCVB operations, PEER found there are potential opportunities for the JCVB to take a more proactive role in promoting, growing, and nurturing existing events and activities. This could be accomplished through one of two ways. One option is to provide targeted funding support. This might include JCVB amending the marketing match grant process to permit funding for JCVB. As the city's tourism leader, this might also include the JCVB providing or hosting training for event coordinators, including marketing, social media, logistics, event development, event budgeting, event planning, etc.

Although there may be opportunities for the JCVB to contract to develop pop-up events to support and attract existing tourism

entities (e.g., the Jackson Convention Complex), stakeholders did not want the JCVB to devote significant resources to developing its own events in-house. Particularly, stakeholders did not believe it was JCVB's role to create its own events, particularly diverting significant JCVB financial and staff resources to operate and develop JCVB created events, such as the Jackson Rhythm and Blues Festival.

The JCVB should consider revising its funding support process to require all funding support recipients to initially submit an application to the JCVB, or, if applicable, the Greater Jackson Arts Council, and submit documentation demonstrating the funding support was utilized to generate an economic impact for Jackson. In addition, the JCVB should consider reviewing its policies for funding support in regard to when to allocate funding (i.e., either through reimbursement or prior to event).

In recent years, applicants have begun bypassing the grant process and requesting a board sponsorship. As noted previously, this has led to a significant increase in board sponsorships.

Although providing a sponsorship may be beneficial, funding for sponsorships is done on an individual basis as they come to the board and outside the normal budgetary process or planning process. Further, while grantees must apply for grants a year in advance and submit financial documentation and event data in order to get reimbursed for expenditures, sponsors (a) are not required to go through an application process, (b) are awarded the funds upon approval by the board (not reimbursed), and (c) are not mandated to submit expense reimbursement and event data in order to obtain their funding. Given such, sponsorship recipients generally receive more JCVB funding without the requirement to submit performance and expenditure documentation.

Given such, the JCVB should consider revising its funding support process to require all funding support recipients to initially submit an application to the JCVB, or, if applicable, the Greater Jackson Arts Council, and submit documentation demonstrating the funding support was utilized to generate an economic impact for Jackson and funds were expended.

Additionally, because the Greater Jackson Arts Council sets the guidelines for its grant recipients, which are funded by the JCVB, grant recipients receive funding up front and do not have to submit expense documentation. JCVB sponsorship recipients also are not mandated to submit performance or financial expenditure information.

The JCVB should review its policies for funding support in regard to when to allocate funding (i.e., either through reimbursement or prior to event). For example, if the JCVB opts to allocate grant funding up front (while the event is taking place)—instead of allocating funding upon submission of documentation of expenses, as the JCVB does for marketing match grants and convention and meeting support grants—the JCVB could consider establishing a policy in which all funding recipients must submit financial documentation and event documentation at the conclusion of their events in order for the event, event applicant, and event coordinator to remain in good standing and eligible when applying for future funding support.

Recommendations

1. In view of the fact that H.B. 1637 (2018 Regular Session) changed representation and qualification requirements for two of the JCVB Board member positions—i.e., an individual representing the Capital City Convention Center Commission and an individual representing the attractions industry nominated by the Metro Jackson Attractions Association—the Mayor of the City of Jackson should immediately comply with the provisions of this act by making appointments to these positions, which should have occurred within 90 days of the effective date of the bill. In addition, the JCVB CEO should advise the JCVB Board Chair that the member whose position was eliminated by H.B. 1637 should no longer actively participate as a board member by attending meetings and casting votes.

Regarding all future board appointments, including those for which past appointees are lawfully holding over, the JCVB CEO should advise the Mayor and applicable nominating associations regarding pending board vacancies to ensure that board positions are filled in a timely manner. In instances in which the Mayor chooses to retain a member of the board after the member's term has expired, the JCVB CEO should request that the Mayor make the reappointment in writing rather than allowing the board member to hold over by operation of law. If the member to be reappointed is required to be nominated by an association, the JCVB CEO should coordinate with the relevant association regarding the reappointment.

2. With regard to the JCVB's governance, the board of directors should
 - a. conduct a self-assessment to compare its practices to benchmarks and then prioritize its own development. A self-assessment can help identify issues needing clarification, gaps in skills that board members need for the board to be successful, and topics for future board education;
 - b. comply with its bylaws by annually electing its officers each October and annually conducting a performance review of the JCVB President/CEO;
 - c. reevaluate the current utilization and need of its standing committees and, where applicable, update its bylaws accordingly;
 - d. activate the JCVB Board's Community Relations Committee to actively seek measurable feedback from stakeholders on the operations and impact of the JCVB, as well as input on the current and future direction of the JCVB; and
 - e. reevaluate its sponsorship process to include establishing a maximum amount in its annual operating budget for such sponsorship that will not be exceeded during the board's fiscal year. In addition, the board should require recipients of sponsorship funds to meet established performance requirements for the receipt of such funds.

3. The Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau should reevaluate its organizational structure and its allocation of resources. The reevaluation should include adjustments in work activities to lower the time expended on administrative tasks, reallocating staff functions, assessing current JCVB programs, and determining if such programs should continue or whether funding could be better reallocated toward other alternatives.
4. To enhance the JCVB's communication with stakeholders and its own performance monitoring, the Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau should develop goals and action plans, with defined performance measures and a plan for allocation of resources, to include in its strategic plan and marketing plan. The JCVB should also consider conducting research that will support and enhance the tourism market, such as visitor profile studies and economic impact studies (including reassessing and updating how the JCVB calculates economic impact).
5. The Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau should reassess its sales strategy, including seeking stronger partnerships with the Jackson Convention Complex, the Mississippi State Fairgrounds, the Mississippi Hotel and Lodging Association, and the Mississippi Hospitality and Restaurant Association. JCVB managers should conduct regular sales meetings and coordinated sales strategies/partnerships with tourism-related stakeholders in the Jackson area.
6. As the Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau moves forward to promote tourism and seek to enhance the tourism market in Jackson, it is incumbent that the bureau formally reach out to and seek feedback from its stakeholders, at both the board level and staff level.
7. The Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau should take the lead in working with stakeholders to develop a comprehensive tourism plan for the Jackson area. The plan should address transportation gateways into the city, coordinated signage, city ordinances to promote tourism, infrastructure improvements, coordinated marketing and sales efforts, a tourism branding campaign, and other strategies to enhance the tourism sector.

Appendix A: Composition of the Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau Board of Directors

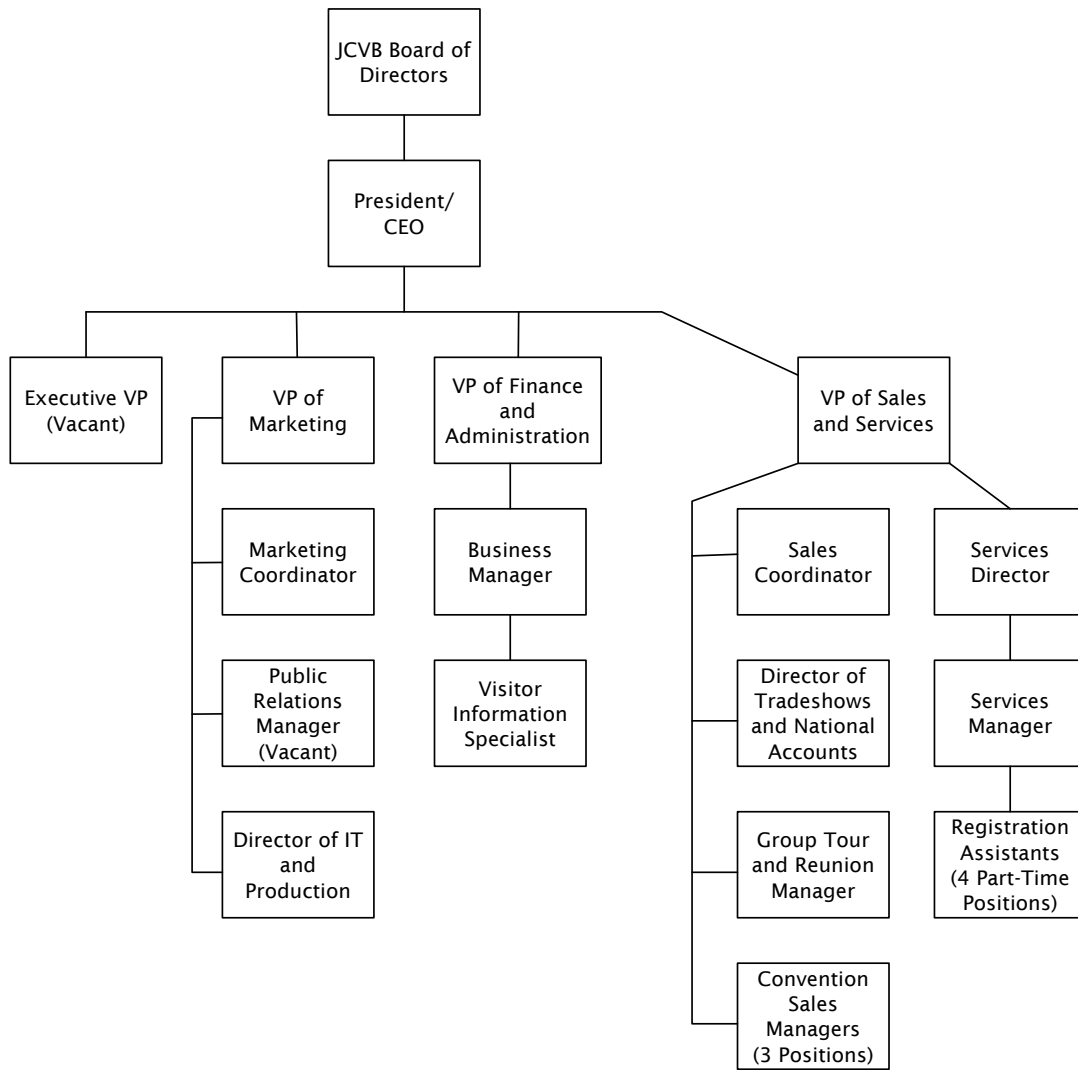
- Two hotel/motel members representing hotel or motel properties located within the city limits of Jackson, Mississippi. The mayor must select from a panel of two names for each membership position submitted by the Jackson Chapter of the Mississippi Hotel and Lodging Association.
- Two restaurant members. The Mayor must select from a panel of two names for each membership position submitted by the Jackson Chapter of the Mississippi Hospitality and Restaurant Association.
- One member who represents businesses located within the city limits of Jackson, Mississippi. The Mayor must select from a panel of two names submitted by the Jackson Chamber of Commerce.
- One member representing the attractions industry in Jackson. The Mayor must select from a panel of two names submitted by the Metro Jackson Attractions Association. This member and his or her successors shall be residents of the City of Jackson.
- One member representing the arts community.
- One member representing the Capital City Convention Center Commission. This member and his or her successors shall be the Administrator of the Capital City Convention Center Commission or a member of the Capital City Convention Center Commission.¹³
- One at-large member.

SOURCE: H.B. 1637, 2018 Regular Session.

¹³House Bill 1637, 2018 Regular Session, removed the education community representative position from the board and replaced the position with one (1) member representing the Capital City Convention Center Commission appointed by the mayor with confirmation by the council. This member and his or her successors shall be the Administrator of the Capital City Convention Center Commission or a member of the Capital City Convention Center Commission.

Appendix B: Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau Organizational Chart

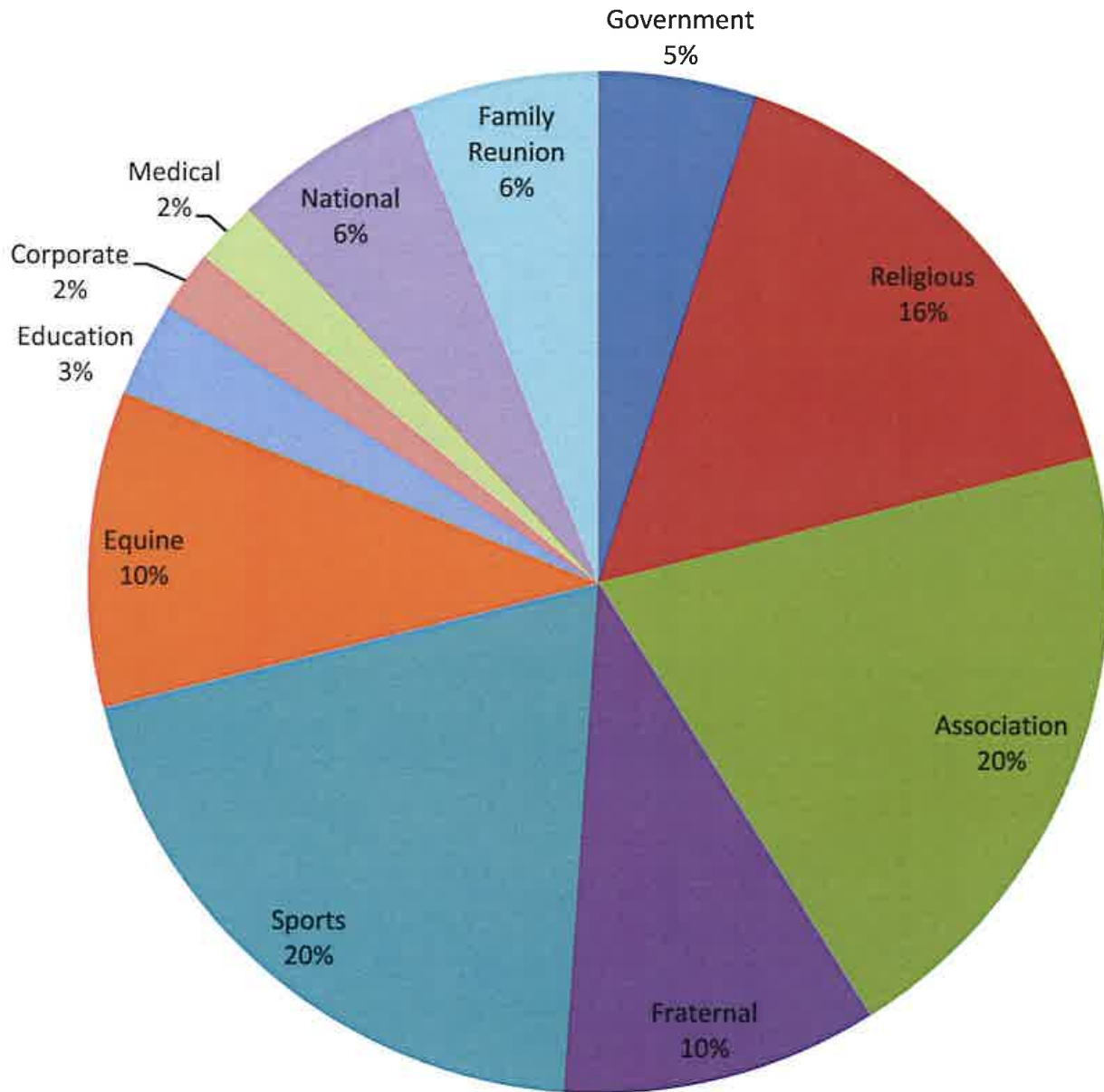
Governed by a nine-member board of directors, the Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau has 22 positions, including 18 full-time positions and four part-time positions (as of November 14, 2018).



NOTE: All staff positions are full-time, unless noted otherwise

SOURCE: Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Appendix C: Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau FY 2018 Projected Market Mix for Sales and Services



SOURCE: Information obtained from Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau Vice President of Sales.

Appendix D: AirSage Visitor Analytics for Jackson for March 2016 and October 2016

Category	March 2016		October 2016	
Total Unique Visitors*		35,032		57,700
Point of Origin				
	Mississippi	12,779	Mississippi	19,429
	Louisiana	3,636	Louisiana	7,870
	Texas	3,131	Texas	5,008
	Alabama	2,425	Alabama	3,784
	Tennessee	2,161	Tennessee	3,437
	Georgia	1,988	Georgia	2,907
	Florida	1,505	Florida	2,035
	Arkansas	809	Arkansas	1,699
	Illinois	671	North Carolina	1,088
	North Carolina	638	California	936
	Other States	5,289	Other States	9,507
Range of Visitor Arrivals by Day		Circa 300 to 1,600		Circa 500 to 3,300
Average Time Visitor Spends in Region		2 days		2 days
Range of Visitor Time Spent		1-14 days		1-10 days
Visitors Median Income		\$46,900		\$46,700
Visitors Mean Income		\$62,300		\$62,000
Income Categories				
	<\$10,000	1%	<\$10,000	1%
	\$10,000 to \$15,000	0%	\$10,000 to \$15,000	0%
	\$15,000 to \$25,000	2%	\$15,000 to \$25,000	2%
	\$25,000 to \$35,000	9%	\$25,000 to \$35,000	8%
	\$35,000 to \$50,000	28%	\$35,000 to \$50,000	27%
	\$50,000 to \$75,000	37%	\$50,000 to \$75,000	40%
	\$75,000 to \$100,000	14%	\$75,000 to \$100,000	13%
	>\$100,000	9%	>\$100,000	9%

*AirSage mobile user data excludes residents, that is, devices associated with a home location within a 50-mile radius of Jackson.

SOURCE: AirSage Visitor Analytics.

Appendix E: JCVB Total Revenues and Expenditures for FY 2012 through FY 2017

	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017
Revenues						
Tourism tax	\$3,148,858	\$3,266,677	\$3,381,246	\$3,583,372	\$3,587,300	\$3,539,564
Festival income ¹	N/A	\$132,539	\$316,958	\$234,943	\$177,856	\$227,370
State grant	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$50,000	\$0
Investment income ²	\$6,912	\$4,746	\$3,177	\$1,934	\$2,108	\$1,718
Other ³	\$505	\$4,114	\$16,658	\$17,031	\$412	\$363
Total Revenues	\$3,156,275	\$3,408,076	\$3,718,039	\$3,837,280	\$3,817,676	\$3,769,015
Expenditures						
Personnel	\$1,329,452	\$1,327,813	\$1,399,386	\$1,467,000	\$1,449,250	\$1,544,503
Supplies	\$5,624	\$7,407	\$5,848	\$7,484	\$5,479	\$5,357
Capital outlay	\$9,878	\$21,378	\$8,296	\$8,398	\$890	\$4,253
Other services/charges						
• <i>Maintenance</i>	\$41,678	\$39,494	\$40,635	\$35,856	\$42,555	\$34,098
• <i>Rents and leases</i>	\$161,759	\$160,577	\$147,898	\$160,467	\$155,787	\$155,157
• <i>Travel and entertainment</i>	\$59,024	\$61,306	\$72,305	\$62,009	\$81,182	\$74,901
• <i>Professional services</i>	\$65,967	\$93,210	\$138,030	\$170,983	\$165,457	\$165,147
• <i>Professional affiliations</i>	\$19,313	\$13,739	\$20,813	\$19,622	\$22,655	\$15,192
• <i>Advertising</i>	\$396,507	\$532,793	\$452,352	\$470,860	\$349,888	\$622,413
• <i>Promotion</i>	\$14,940	\$40,784	\$10,809	\$5,026	\$4,130	\$3,663
• <i>Promotion - sales</i>	\$13,110	\$16,275	\$19,373	\$25,613	\$28,951	\$21,394
• <i>Promotion - grant development⁴</i>	\$315,132	\$190,231	\$255,899	\$220,178	\$434,525	\$422,202
• <i>Promotion - convention and meeting support</i>	\$182,943	\$223,068	\$226,725	\$269,325	\$265,810	\$159,723
• <i>Promotion - sponsorship</i>	\$0	\$0	\$384,900	\$65,000	\$248,875	\$245,400
• <i>Marketing</i>	\$115,644	\$85,616	\$144,825	\$87,137	\$82,600	\$79,350
• <i>Marketing - PR⁵</i>	\$0	\$540,505	\$637,978	\$663,046	\$620,114	\$562,945
• <i>Miscellaneous services/charges⁶</i>	\$35,602	\$39,106	\$38,181	\$44,941	\$41,093	\$38,060
<i>Total other services and charges</i>	\$1,421,619	\$2,036,704	\$2,590,723	\$2,300,063	\$2,543,622	\$2,599,645
Total Expenditures	\$2,766,573	\$3,393,302	\$4,004,253	\$3,782,945	\$3,999,241	\$4,153,758
Excess of Revenues over Expenditures	\$389,702	\$14,774	(\$286,214)	\$54,335	(\$181,565)	(\$384,743)

¹Revenue from Jackson Rhythm and Blues Festival, which began in 2013 and ended in 2017.

²Interest income generated from JCVB's reserve fund.

³Advertising revenue, from sale of ads for JCVB Visitors Guide in FY 2014 and FY 2015. JCVB contracted production of the visitors guide beginning in FY 2016.

⁴Includes JCVB Marketing Match Grants and quality of life initiatives through the Greater Jackson Arts Council.

⁵Includes the Jackson Rhythm and Blues Festival marketing expenditures.

⁶Includes expenses for asset insurance, shipping, telephone, postage, licenses and permits, and other miscellaneous services and charges.

SOURCE: PEER compilation of JCVB annual audits for FY 2012 through FY 2017.

Appendix F: JCVB Convention and Meeting Support

Fiscal Year	Category	Initial Budget	Final Budget	Amount Paid to Grantee	Amount Paid to Grantee as % of Final Allocation
2013	Conventions	\$87,500	\$54,000	\$50,716	94%
	Sporting	\$118,988	\$118,988	\$107,613	90%
	Equine	\$106,097	\$105,667	\$64,739	61%
	FY 2013 Total	\$312,585	\$278,655	\$223,068	80%
2014	Conventions			\$36,500	
	Sporting			\$61,075	
	Equine			\$129,150	
	FY 2014 Total	\$278,562	\$242,000	\$226,725	94%
2015	Conventions			\$69,500	
	Sporting			\$69,656	
	Equine			\$130,169	
	FY 2015 Total	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$269,325	90%
2016	Conventions	\$64,950	\$68,450	\$53,418	78%
	Sporting	\$70,750	\$69,557	\$66,757	96%
	Equine	\$203,750	\$171,125	\$145,635	85%
	Unallocated ¹ /(Over budget) ²	\$550	\$868	\$0	
	FY 2016 Total	\$340,000	\$310,000	\$265,810	86%
2017	Conventions	\$96,250	\$46,000	\$40,627	88%
	Sporting	\$77,780	\$72,000	\$23,501	33%
	Equine	\$182,875	\$102,783	\$95,596	93%
	Unallocated ¹ /(Over budget) ²	(\$6,905)	\$4,217	\$0	
	FY 2017 Total	\$350,000	\$225,000	\$159,724	71%

¹Represents Convention and Meeting Support allocations that have not yet been allocated.

²Denotes Convention and Meeting Support allocations in excess of the initial budgeted amount.

SOURCE: JCVB Funding Summary, FY 2013 through FY 2017, as provided by JCVB Vice President of Finance and Administration.

Appendix G: Greater Jackson Arts Council Mini-Grant Program

Utilizing \$100,000 in funding from the JCVB, the Greater Jackson Arts Council operates a Mini-Grant Program. The Greater Jackson Arts Council retains \$15,000 for administrative expenses and allocates approximately \$85,000 in funding through several different types of mini-grants. All grant activities must take place in the City of Jackson or Hinds County.

Type of Grant	Application Period	Max Grant Award	Dollar Amount Awarded, FY 2016	Number of Grants Awarded, FY 2016	Dollar Amount Awarded, FY 2017	Number of Grants Awarded, FY 2017
Major Cultural	Fall & Spring	\$2,500	\$25,850	13	\$20,500	9
Ceiling Grant (Cultural)	Fall or Spring	\$5,000	N/A	N/A	\$5,000	1
Micro	Throughout Year	\$500	\$15,046	30	\$24,333	63
Arts Therapy	Fall & Spring	\$2,000	\$13,748	11	\$15,000	12
Creative Artist	Throughout Year	\$1,500	\$13,320	13	\$12,975	13
Neighborhood	Fall & Spring	\$500	\$6,500	12	\$8,250	15
Short Order ¹	Throughout Year	\$500	\$5,758	31	N/A	N/A
Music First ²		\$2,000	\$5,400	14	N/A	N/A
		Total	\$85,622	124	\$86,058	113

¹In FY 2017 the Greater Jackson Arts Council transferred funding for the Short Order grant into the Micro grant category.

²In FY 2017 the Greater Jackson Arts Council transferred funding for Music First grants to the Greater Jackson Arts Council Quality of Life Series to accommodate increased requests from local music festivals.

SOURCE: Greater Jackson Arts Council.

Appendix H: Consultant's Report

A Report to the Mississippi Legislative PEER Committee and Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau

By



DESTINATION SERVICES

October 29, 2018



Overall Conclusion:

The Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau, otherwise known as JCVB or Visit Jackson, has the resources and ability to move Jackson, Mississippi, forward as a destination, but this will require excellent leadership, a reallocation of resources, some degree of reorganization, destination research, training, and more precise data collection. The bureau must target markets that have a higher spend and thus a greater economic impact. The bureau should improve its image and credibility through more extensive stakeholder communication. Finally, the JCVB must focus its sales effort on the Jackson Convention Complex in order to achieve a higher return on investment and increase higher occupancy levels for the center and hotels.

Report Organization:

This report includes:

- an evaluation of the Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau's (JCVB's) operations, including:
 - strategic plan, including its development and potential for successful implementation;
 - budget, accountability, and transparency;
 - allocation of staff resources;
 - marketing plan and sales efforts, including whether they are consistent with best practices and current marketing concepts (such as branding and advertising, special events, adherence to industry trends, and sponsorships and grants);
 - methods for determining return on investment; and
 - interaction with metro area stakeholders and coordination with local venues;
- a discussion of how JCVB compares to similar tourism organizations and entities in neighboring states; and
- discussion of additional issues related to the future success of JCVB, including research, regional tourism, communication, destination management, and product development.

Evaluation of the Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau Operations

The JCVB's Strategic Plan and Its Potential for Implementation

Because the JCVB's executive staff created the bureau's strategic plan with little input from its own staff, stakeholders, business owners, clients, residents, city staff, or other public policymakers, the bureau's staff does not view elements of the plan as being directly integral to their work efforts. Also, the plan does not include performance measures, thus hindering the bureau's assessment of its own progress.

Typically, a destination strategic plan, as it relates to tourism, is based on an extensive visitor research effort and includes the following:

- an analysis of each market segment;
- direct sales efforts and/or incentives;
- marketing and promotions needed to target each segment;
- new product development/infrastructure anticipated and/or needed to remain competitive;
- specific recommendations and conclusions for improving the destination's competitive position, as well as the number of room nights booked;
- recommendations on specific actions to improve the effective and efficient use of limited resources and the sustainability of facilities over a five-year period; and
- ongoing research and tracking.

The bureau's strategic plan is not a true strategic plan. The JCVB's executive staff created the current strategic plan, approved by the board of directors in July 2018, with limited or no input from its own staff, stakeholders, business owners, clients, residents, city staff, or other public policymakers. To our knowledge, the plan has not been revised since it was developed. Although the plan includes valuable information on managing Jackson as a destination, it is generic, consisting of broad overviews and little strategic direction. For example, Goal 2 of the plan states that JCVB will "strengthen and broaden the strategic sales and marketing approach for Jackson." The objective is to "execute innovative strategies to enhance sales and marketing results." This will be accomplished through several strategic directions, one of which is "enhance educational opportunities for the sales team, exposing the human capital to innovative sales strategy best practices (within two years)." The measures of success are: "increased economic activity generated by visitors as measured by visitor related domestic product and Visit Jackson's estimated economic impact (EEI) formulas." The performance measures are several, but similar to the following: "evaluation of EEI change compared to previous years." The objective and strategic direction are good statements and the metric measure is appropriate. However, the performance is simply a generic measure of EEI increases. The plan does not

specifically state the level of increase or the timeline for the increase, nor is there any periodic analysis of the performance throughout the year.

According to the consulting team's observations and its interviews with JCVB staff members, the bureau's staff does not refer to the strategic plan nor do they seriously attempt its implementation. Thus, it cannot truly be considered a "living" document, which is one characteristic of a good strategic plan.

The ultimate goal of such a plan's strategies should be to drive increased economic impact to a destination, which would be evidenced by increased visitation and overnight bookings achieved through targeting markets and the demographic profiles that generate the highest return on investment (ROI). However, the bureau's strategic plan does not contain performance measures, action steps, or benchmarks and thus lacks mechanisms by which to assess actual progress. Because of this, the consulting team has concluded that it is not realistic to expect the bureau's strategic plan to be implemented in a way that actually "moves the needle" on visitor traffic, overnight lodging and ROI, especially when one considers the current organizational structure and deployment of resources, discussed later in this evaluation.

Recommendations

The JCVB should retain a professional tourism research firm to develop a new strategic plan for the JCVB based on appropriate research and input. Retention of such a firm should help to ensure that organizational bias is not incorporated into the plan. For example, JCVB may favor group sales, when in reality, research may indicate that there is a limited number of groups interested in the available tourism products. If the JCVB selected group sales as the target market, when in fact it provides a poor return on investment, the JCVB would not achieve performance targets or maximize economic impact. Development of the new strategic plan should involve representatives of those who are dependent upon JCVB, including all levels of JCVB staff, board, stakeholders, residents, visitors, businesses, the Jackson City Council, City of Jackson staff, and legislators.

The strategic plan should evolve from a destination study that determines trends, amenity needs, satisfaction levels, infrastructure requirements, price points, visitor profile, economic impacts, and market segments. This should be a living document that is referred to on all decisions, since it would be the research-based roadmap that should move Jackson forward.

The strategic plan should include an action plan with specific performance measures or benchmarks. For example, if the action plan states that the destination will increase group sales, the performance measure could be "the destination will increase group sales by 20 new groups to be secured for the destination by January 2019, generating 500 room nights with an economic impact of \$1 million."

Budget, Accountability, and Transparency

The JCVB should operate within its available financial resources. The FY 2018 budget allocated \$405,000 from the reserve to cover operating expenses. However, the reserve should only be used for emergency purposes or to cover revenue decreases during an economic downturn. The JCVB should not incur a deficit in order to fund other organizations via grants and sponsorships. Nearly 19% of the FY 2018 budget was allocated to outside entities, which represents more than the deficit incurred during FY 2018.

For FY 2018, the JCVB had a budget based on \$3.6 million in revenues. However, the bureau has budgeted a deficit of \$405,000 and has addressed the deficit by allocating funds from its reserve. Some key points impacting the JCVB's budget:

- personnel costs total \$1,558,500, which are 43.3% of revenues;
- matching grants total \$160,327, which represents 4% of revenues;
- convention/meeting support is \$103,000, which represents 2.8% of revenues;
- sponsorships are allocated at \$533,000, which represents 14.8% of revenues; and
- personnel expenses, combined with matching grants and sponsorships, equate to \$2,251,827, which represents 62% of revenues.

These allocations represent a significant impact on the budget and it is imperative that the bureau review its expenditures to assure that maximum return on investment is being obtained through both visitor expenditures within Jackson and increased hotel occupancy. Allocations to other organizations should include a contractual expectation for room nights to be generated with an expected EEI on the community. The data should be collected by the organization receiving a subsidy and should include email addresses, zip codes, a designation of day trip or overnight guest, and the number of people in a travel party. The JCVB's promotions/advertising should appear on every grant or sponsorship recipient's website, ad placement, collateral piece, and in the onsite facility. The JCVB should conduct a mandatory quarterly review of each grant or scholarship recipient's performance. If a recipient fails to meet performance standards, the grant or sponsorship should be withheld.

While the consulting team found no reason for concern about the appropriateness and legality of expenditures of funds or the accountability for those expenditures, the accountability and transparency as it applies to strategic actions, performance, and return on investment may require revisions. It is important for all to know what is working and what is not working. While the bureau has and does execute a huge number of programs, events, and marketing actions, the question is whether these are the most effective in securing additional market share at the highest possible level of return. As noted elsewhere in this report, the JCVB does not maximize the use of the convention center and other venues to secure higher expenditure business such as the business generated by the corporate, association, and medical markets. Most of the business pursued by the JCVB lies with the SMERF (Society, Military, Educational, Religious, and Fraternal), reunion, and government markets. These markets are typically lower spending business. The consulting

team does not recommend that the JCVB stop pursuing these markets, but there should be a healthy mix between these markets and the higher expenditure ones. The bureau should employ yield management so as to generate a 52-week strategy to capture business.

Recommendations

Deficit spending is not a healthy business plan. The JCVB should hold reserve funds for disbursements related to emergency issues. Currently, the bureau is overspending its annual revenues by 11%. It is imperative that the bureau eliminate the deficit and operate within the revenue available. Budget allocations should be made within the context of increasing ROI and securing more market share from those markets that generate a higher economic impact on the community.

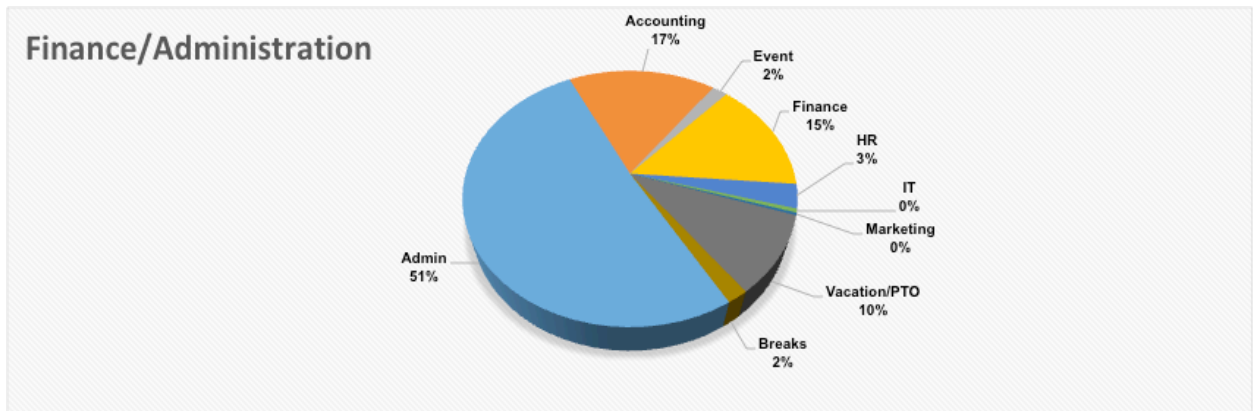
Allocation of Staff Resources

The JCVB budget allocation for personnel is approximately 7% higher than the norm when comparing expenses to revenues. Typically, personnel expenses should be within the 35% range of an organization's annual budget. In order to realign the personnel costs, the JCVB should not fill vacant positions and should freeze salary levels at current allocations, excepting cost-of-living raises. Furthermore, the JCVB should review personnel work allocations in order to ensure that tasks are being executed in the most efficient and effective manner. Administrative tasks are requiring too many labor hours from the line staff, which detracts from their primary responsibilities. Administrative activities for those not at the executive level should be reviewed and restructured. Finally, the JCVB should explore the possibility of outsourcing certain functions as a cost savings measure.

The consulting team reviewed JCVB's utilization of staff time over a two-week period from September 9–2, 2018. The review included all JCVB staff in the bureau's four departments (Finance/Administration, Sales, Marketing, and Executive VP) and assessed work activities in 30-minute increments. The charts on pages 50–52 graphically display what major functions each department of the bureau was engaged in during the two-week period. The consulting team then analyzed total JCVB staff time utilization. As could be expected, the bureau's workload and focus change frequently depending on activities, events, and client needs. This staff time utilization review serves as an indicator of how resources were deployed during the review period of September 9–22, 2018.

As shown in Exhibit 1, page 50, JCVB's Finance/Administration Department spent 83% of its time during the review period on administration, accounting, and finance, which would be expected.

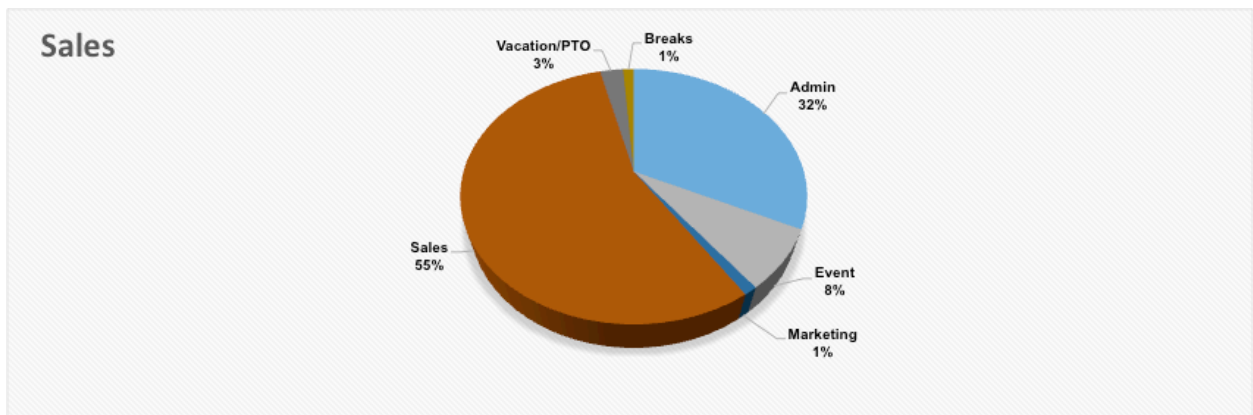
Exhibit 1: JCVB Staff Time Utilization, September 9–22, 2018, Finance/Administration



The Sales Department has nine staff persons, which makes it the largest department within the JCVB. These positions constitute one of the most important functions of the bureau, which is selling the destination and securing business. The process of selling in this industry involves a variety of tasks, including networking, yield management, research, and presentations/sales.

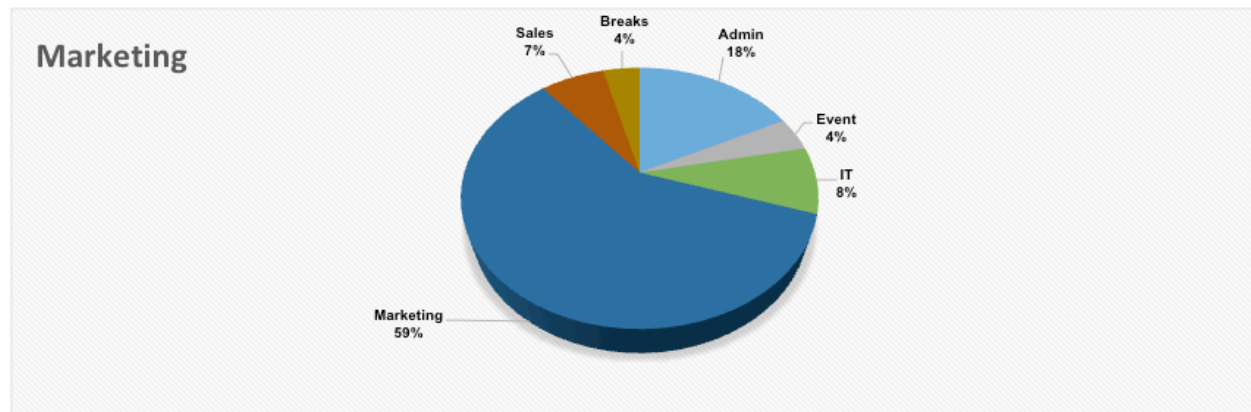
Best practices dictate that JCVB’s sales staff should be spending at least 80% of its time on actually selling Jackson tourism. As shown in Exhibit 2, 55% of the Sales Department’s time during the review period was spent on sales; administrative activities accounted for 32% of the department’s time. Thus approximately 24.8 hours of the 80 hours in the review period were spent on administrative tasks, which was more than any other department, except for the Executive Vice President.

Exhibit 2: JCVB Staff Time Utilization, September 9–22, 2018, Sales



As illustrated in Exhibit 3, page 51, JCVB’s Marketing Department spent 59% of its time during the review period on marketing activities, which is appropriate. The balance of time was expended in areas related to marketing, but involving information technology from a research, administrative, and sales perspective. The department devoted approximately 18% of its time during the review period to administration.

Exhibit 3: JCVB Staff Time Utilization, September 9–22, 2018, Marketing



The Executive Vice President is one individual who provides support to JCVB's President/CEO. As one would expect, as shown in Exhibit 4, the majority of the Executive Vice President's time during the review period was spent on administration, as well significant effort in marketing (28%). The consulting team notes that the Executive Vice President spent approximately a third of his time during the review period (34%) on events, which if not an anomaly, should be analyzed by JCVB in the future.

Exhibit 4: JCVB Staff Time Utilization, September 9–22, 2018, Executive Vice President

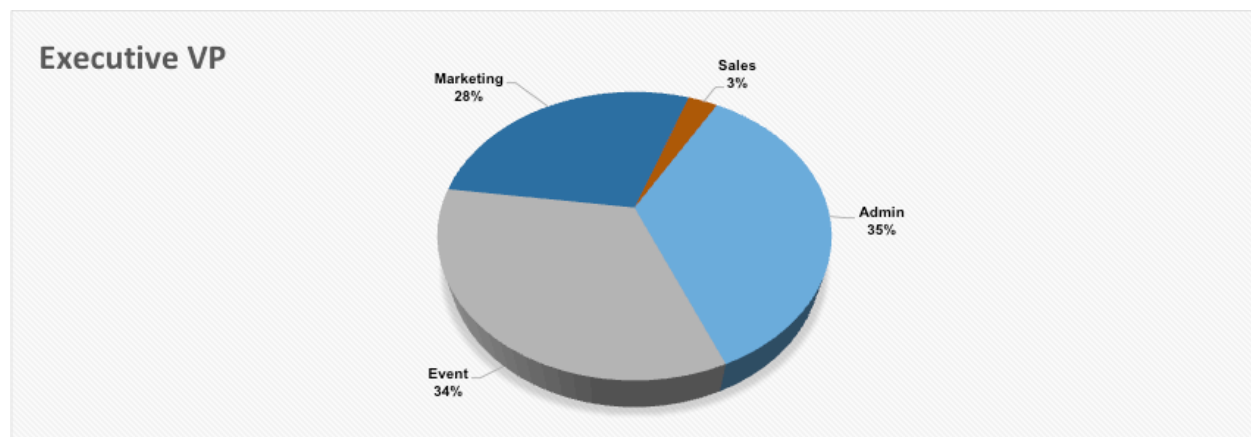
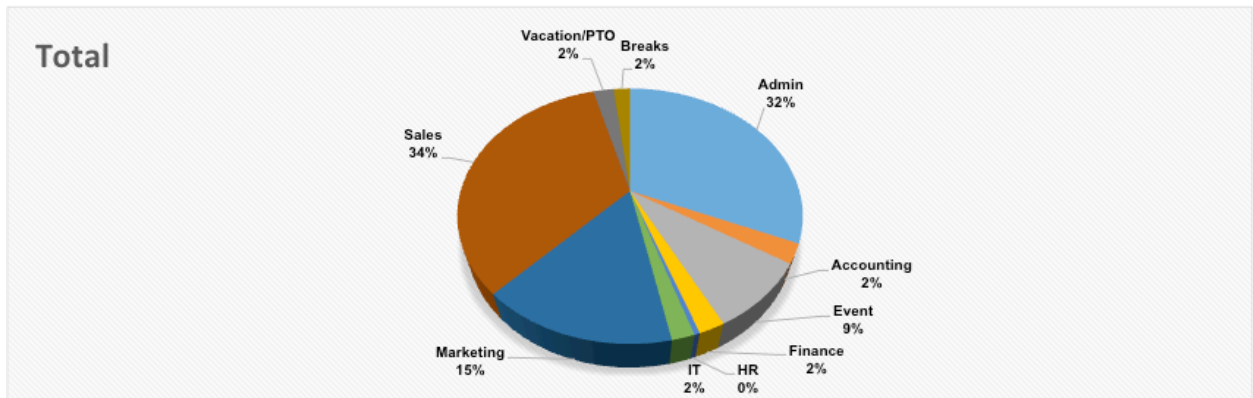


Exhibit 5, page 52, illustrates the JCVB's total staff time utilization for the review period. During that time, 34% of staff time was spent on sales, followed by administration at 32%, and marketing at 15%. Although for some positions, such as the Finance Director and the President/CEO, this amount of time spent on administrative duties is appropriate, the consulting team views this percentage as excessive for the line staff positions below the executive staff level for JCVB. It is interesting to note that the average destination marketing organization spends 19% of its budget on administrative costs according to Destinations International's financial and organizational profile study. The JCVB is allocating 15% of its budget to administrative costs. This metric assumes most of the administrative costs are related to personnel and the hours expended on administration, which represent 16 hours per week based on the staff time utilization study. The issue is not with the overall expenditure on administrative costs, but rather labor percentage for administrative tasks

being performed by the line staff. Obviously, when the line staff is performing administrative functions, they are not selling, servicing, or promoting the destination.

Exhibit 5: JCVB Staff Time Utilization, September 9–22, 2018, All Staff



The JCVB's personnel expenditures are 7% above industry norms. As noted elsewhere in this report, JCVB ranks above 75% of comparable bureaus as far as personnel expenditures for administration, as well as for sales and marketing.

The consulting team's staff time utilization study points to some inefficiencies and overlaps. The following recommendations detail suggested organizational restructuring that could address these inefficiencies and overlaps. These recommendations are not intended to eliminate personnel, but to refocus individual responsibilities, outsource specific tasks, and freeze some vacant positions until the performance levels warrant replacement. These changes could make the bureau more effective and yield a cost savings that could be applied to convention sales.

Recommendations

The JCVB should determine the activities that are responsible for the amount of time that staff has devoted to administration and make adjustments accordingly.

The JCVB should outsource public relations via the advertising agency, thereby eliminating the public relations position, which is currently vacant.

Human Resources is currently assigned to the Finance Director as an additional duty. This function should be separate from any other position, so as to protect confidentiality and to encourage trust between the employees and the Human Resources office. The consulting team recommends that the bureau outsource human resources responsibilities as much as possible. This will allow the Finance Director to focus on financial responsibilities.

The JCVB should combine the President/CEO and Executive Vice-President into one position under the President/CEO or restructure Executive Vice-President's position to focus specifically on improving the Jackson Convention Complex or leave that position vacant until JCVB reduces its administrative expenses.

The JCVB should assign a market to the Vice President of Sales.

The JCVB should group corporate, medical, and association business under one sales person.

The JCVB should add trade shows to national market sales responsibilities.

The JCVB should assign reunions, group tours, and government to one sales person.

The SMERF (social, military, educational, religious, and fraternal) market should be assigned to one sales position.

The JCVB should freeze all salaries at their current levels, except for cost-of-living increases.

The JCVB should establish performance measures for each staff position and conduct semi-annual performance reviews for each position.

The JCVB should explore the use of performance-based incentive pay for sales staff.

The JCVB should establish a maximum salary range for each position regardless of length of employment, except for cost-of-living raises.

The JCVB should evaluate each staff person to determine what training is required for that person in order for him or her to better perform his or her duties.

The JCVB should encourage staff to increase their professional knowledge through certification programs.

Staff confidence, performance, and productivity at the JCVB could be greatly improved through ongoing training programs and educational opportunities. During the consulting team's interviews with JCVB staff, nearly every employee indicated that there was a lack of training and limited educational opportunities. Training and ongoing educational programs offered through organizations such as Destinations International, the U. S. Travel Association, and the Southeast Tourism Society are excellent sources for professional development.

Marketing Plan and Sales Efforts

The JCVB's marketing plan lacks a primary focus and measures by which to gauge the bureau's success. The data in the JCVB's Lead Reports by Sent Date, Definite Bookings Sept. 2018-2023, and Lost Bookings 2015-2018 lacks credibility and therefore, the reports also lack credibility. In many cases, the omission of some of the data actually seems to discredit the JCVB's efforts.

Marketing Plan

The JCVB's 2018 Marketing Plan highlights most of the components typically executed by a convention and visitors bureau, such as goals, objectives, and strategies. The plan focuses heavily on the SMERF (social, military, educational, religious, fraternal) and group tour markets. The marketing plan mentions meetings, conventions, and the Jackson Convention Complex, but these are not a primary focus of the plan, even though they serve as the foundation to building long-term sustainable economic vitality from the meetings and hospitality industry.

A marketing plan can only be good if its effectiveness is measured. Similar to the JCVB's strategic plan, the bureau's marketing plan does not contain performance measures, timeline expectations, or action steps.

Recommendations

The JCVB should revise its marketing plan for 2019 to include specific performance measures with definitive timelines.

The JCVB should expand its marketing plan to address the Jackson Convention Complex's issues and infrastructure needs.

Sales Efforts

Convention and event leads are typically created by a convention and visitors bureau and distributed to the hotel and meeting space venues in an effort to obtain proposals from them that will be included as part of a comprehensive proposal from the convention and visitors bureau. Leads occur as a result of direct selling efforts and by inbound inquiries. Leads are opportunities for potential business and include information such as requested dates, total hotel rooms needed, peak night hotel rooms needed, gross and net square feet of meeting space required, etc.

Once a lead is issued, the convention and visitors bureau will traditionally collect all responses from the hotels and venues along with information about the destination, attractions, convention services, and submit to the meeting planners as a proposal. Typically, meeting planners will evaluate the proposals and begin to make site selection decisions based on a destination's ability to meet their needs. Once a proposal has been accepted by a meeting planner and destination/venues/hotels are selected and contracted, it becomes a booking.

The consulting team analyzed data on the number and quality of leads issued annually by the JCVB. The data analyzed came from reports submitted to PEER by the JCVB and included Lead Reports by Sent Date, Definite Bookings Sept. 2018-2023, and Lost Bookings 2015-2018. The number of leads issued by the JCVB and received by stakeholders was a consistent complaint among stakeholders. Both the Jackson Convention Complex and hotel properties reported receiving only about 12 leads annually.

The consulting team found that the biggest challenge in analyzing this data was the credibility of the data, with major inconsistencies in the data input of each of the sales team members. Data entries were found to be misclassified, miscoded, incomplete, or missing. Examples of this include:

- 11/24-11/25 2018

MS AAU Basketball 2018 Capital City Hoops

JCVB's Definite Bookings report shows "0" peak room nights and "0" total rooms and account quality as 500-999 rooms total. This event spanned at least one night in length and listed the account quality as 500-999 rooms. However, the peak room nights and total rooms were listed as "0."

- 12/8-12/9/2018

MS Quarter Horse MAQHA Holiday Classic

JCVB's Definite Bookings report shows 50 rooms on peak, 100 total rooms, and account quality of 500-999 room nights. This event spanned at least one night in length with 50 rooms peak and 100 total rooms implying 50 rooms per night for two nights. However, the report lists account quality as 500-999 room nights.

- 3/21/2019

Alpha Phi Alpha

JCVB's Definite Bookings report shows 650 peak rooms, 1,900 total requested, but the account quality has it classified as 50-199 rooms total. If it is a total of 1,900 rooms, the consulting team questions why the quality is listed as 50-199 rooms.

- 11/29/17-12/1/17

Southern Electric Corporation of MS Orientation

JCVB's Lead Report 2015-YTD shows 100 people with 55 peak rooms. The dates of the event indicate a 2-3 night stay with the report showing a 1,900 rooms total. By multiplying the 55 rooms on peak by a 3-night stay, the total rooms should be 165, not the 1,900 rooms total included in the report.

As an additional example, the Mississippi Association of Supervisors 2019 Mid-Winter Board meeting was a lead issued by JCVB that originated from a sales call. It shows the event to be held in Jackson for three nights, but no data was recorded for potential peak

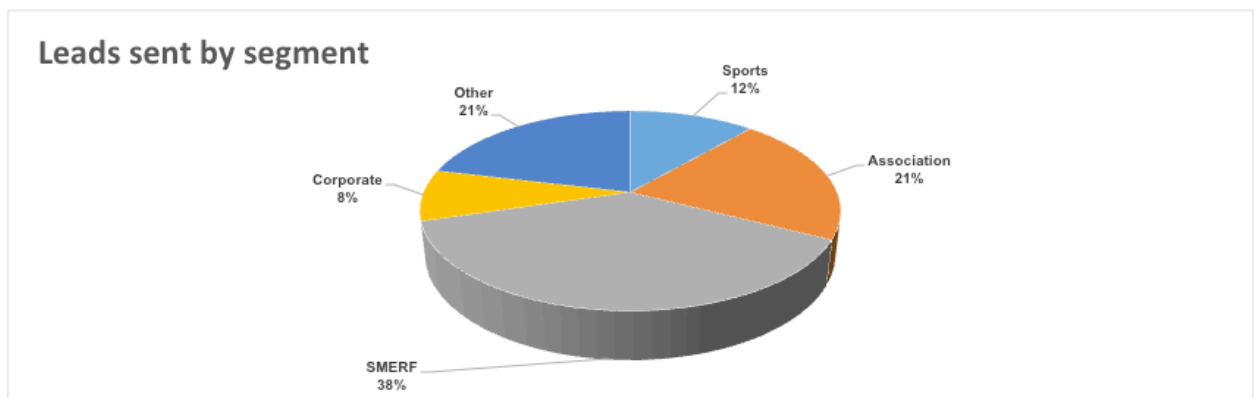
rooms and no rooms were reported for rooms requested. This shows that the JCVB is underreporting its success.

Generally speaking, the number of leads that the JCVB has issued annually since 2015 has remained relatively flat, with 104 being the most in any single year and a total of 348 showing a sent date between January 1, 2015, and September 19, 2018, with an additional 94 entries with no sent date recorded. Of those 348 leads issued, only 24 were first priority, using 300 room nights as the qualifier. The good news about the leads issued is that 74% of total leads issued were categorized as new vs. repeat, illustrating that the sales staff is constantly looking for new business opportunities. Of the total leads issued, 11% account for sports, 21% associations and 38% SMERF (social, military, educational, religious, and fraternal) with the remaining 30% made up of unidentified, corporate, festivals, and government. The 2015–2018 year-to-date breakdown was:

- CY 2015: 76 leads total, 3 first priority, 15 sports, 17 associations, and 30 SMERF
- CY 2016: 104 leads total, 13 first priority, 12 sports, 23 associations, and 37 SMERF
- CY 2017: 74 leads total, 3 first priority, 7 sports, 14 associations, and 35 SMERF
- CY 2018 YTD: 94 leads total, 5 first priority, 6 sports, 19 associations and 30 SMERF and 15 corporate

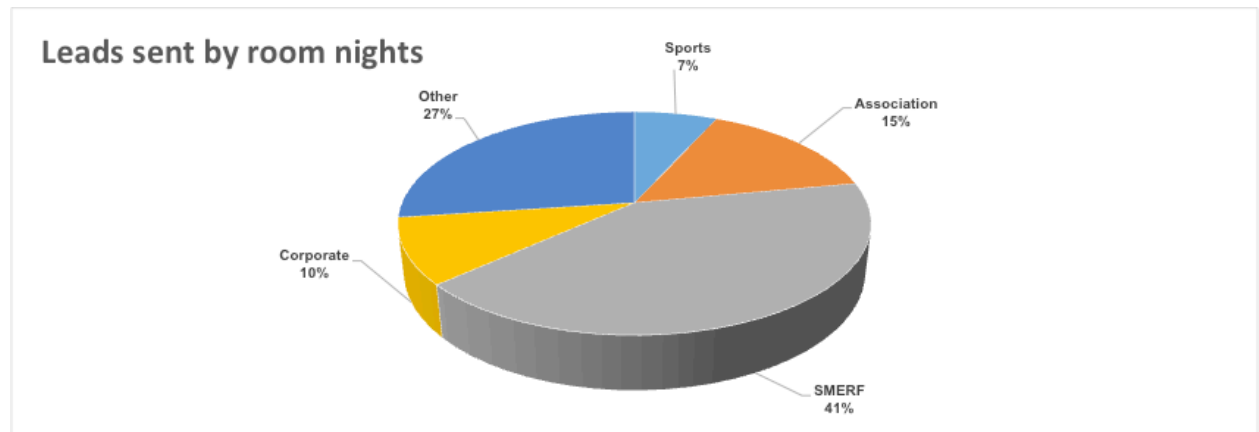
As shown in Exhibit 6, the largest market segment for the number of leads sent for 2015 through 2018 was the SMERF market with 38% (132 leads), followed by the association market with 21% (73 leads), sports market with 12% (40 leads), and corporate market with 8% (29 leads). The remainder of the leads comprises several smaller markets.

Exhibit 6: JCVB Leads Issued by Market Segment, 2015–2018



As shown in Exhibit 7, page 57, the largest market segment for room nights for 2015 through 2018 from the leads issued was the SMERF market (41%), with 47,923 potential room nights followed by the association market (15%), with 17,721 potential room nights, the corporate market (10%), with 11,053 potential room nights, and the sports market (7%), with 7,855 potential room nights. The remaining 31,449 potential room nights was made up of smaller markets.

Exhibit 7: JCVB Leads Issued by Room Nights, 2015–2018



Future bookings recorded for September 2018 through December 2023 were minimal, with only three years listed beyond 2019. The majority of the bookings were for 2018 and 2019, which shows that bookings for Jackson are mostly short-term, with little effort or success with the traditional long-term booking responsibility with which most convention and visitors bureaus are tasked. Typically, these entities target the 18-month and beyond booking cycle of the convention center and other meeting venues, while the local venue sales teams focus on the shorter-term business of 18 months or less.

The Definite Booking Report for September 8, 2018, through December 31, 2023, includes a total of 85 events, with 21,184 total rooms on the books for future business beyond September 8, 2019. Three of the events are considered first priority: National Baptists in 2019, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Southern Regional in 2019, and National Square Dance in 2021. These three events account for 7,724 room nights, nearly 37% of the total future room nights, which shows that focusing on first priority business is necessary. Of the 85 events, 38 are in calendar year 2018, 44 are scheduled in the calendar year 2019, and three are scheduled in calendar year 2021. The three 2021 events are the only ones of the total 85 booked beyond the 18-month long-term booking window.

Of the 21,184 room nights currently reported as requested on the Definite Booking Report for September 8, 2018, through December 31, 2023, the SMERF market accounts for 8,806 room nights, followed by 4,870 room nights from sports market, 3,570 room nights from equine events, 1,618 room nights from the associations market, 732 room nights from the corporate market, and 1,588 from miscellaneous categories. Ideally, the JCVB should focus more aggressively on the association market, corporate market, and other national events that typically have bigger budgets, require greater numbers of room nights, and book further in advance.

Of the 85 future bookings September 2018 through December 2023, 34 of those originated through a lead issued by the JCVB to the stakeholders. The remainder was composed of repeat business, such as the Gun and Knife Show and Mississippi Quarter Horse Association, grant applications for events, such as Capital City HAM Fest, Mississippi Play Sports, Mississippi Girl Choir concert, service requests, and referrals. Some of these events have few, if any, room nights listed on the report. The goal should always be to book room nights. Of the 34 leads resulting in future bookings, 14 were originally sourced as a result of a sales call/appointment by the JCVB and generated 12,682 of the total 21,184

room nights, or 60% of the total future room nights being reported. Sales calls resulting in booked room nights should be JCVB's focus.

Recommendations

Of the 85 bookings the JCVB recorded for September 2018 through December 2023, 34 were sourced through leads by the JCVB, with the remainder coming through referrals, service requests, grant applications, and repeat business. Of the total leads issued, SMERF was the largest market segment with regard to number of leads, as well as number of rooms booked. Of the 34 leads, 14 resulted from direct sales initiatives. The JCVB should increase direct sales initiatives, as these leads have been generating 60% of current future bookings.

The JCVB should establish clear written instructions for classifying criteria fields within its database and require that all fields be populated consistently by team members. The bureau should conduct training with all staff responsible for populating the data and running reports, including ongoing training for both existing and new staff members.

The Sales Department of the JCVB should develop a sales and marketing plan that includes the following:

- *annual goals based on number of leads, number of room nights, estimated economic impact (EEI), number of bookings, and conversion rates for each market segment of its business;*
- *annual goals based on number of outside sales calls, number of telephone solicitations, number of leads, and number of bookings by sales team member;*
- *clear identification of what tactics are to be used in soliciting each market segment (i.e., identify which trade shows to attend, with market penetration by show and anticipated return on investment);*
- *the total number of familiarization trips, sales missions, and sales blitzes to be hosted each year, with goals for leads generated from each;*
- *plans for joint sales calls between the JCVB, local hoteliers, and the Jackson Convention Complex to competitive markets;*
- *expectations for industry networking by all sales team members (i.e., Mississippi Society of Association Executives, Meeting Professionals International, Professional Convention Management Association); and*
- *expectations for all sales team members in building relationships with local and state meeting planners through frequent visits, light hospitality (e.g., coffee and cookies), and participation at events.*

The JCVB should conduct quarterly reviews of each sales team member with regard to progress toward clearly stated goals.

The JCVB should place greater emphasis on soliciting higher-rated association and corporate business, rather than the SMERF market, to increase both the return on investment, as well as the quality of bookings and associated room nights.

The JCVB currently uses 50 rooms on peak as the qualifier to be classified as a “convention.” This is a relatively low threshold, given the size of the market and size of the convention center. The JCVB should increase the peak threshold to 100 rooms on peak to be identified as a convention. This revision could help the sales team to focus on higher-rated business, yielding a greater number of total room nights.

The JCVB is issuing leads for events that account for approximately 15% of the combined sports and equine room nights. Of the total future booked room nights, these two markets are responsible for 40% of the rooms on the books for September 2018 through December 2023. Many of these events are not being generated by leads issued by the JCVB, but rather by the local sources themselves. To maximize the number of these types of events and the associated return on investment, the JCVB should:

- create a Sports Commission to focus on attracting, creating, and managing sporting events and tournaments that generate significant room nights to the Jackson area, thereby creating a positive economic impact and enhancing the quality of life for local residents. Objectives of the commission could include: bidding on events to host them locally; creating national, state, or regional awareness of the region and its sports facilities; encouraging sportsmanship, respect and inclusion in youth sports; enhancement of sports facilities; and creating awards and recognition.*
- create a bid fund to be used by the commission for securing events; and*
- divert some of the existing grant funds that do not generate significant room nights to be used for a sports commission bid fund that would generate room nights.*

Branding and Advertising

The JCVB has an excellent branding and advertising campaign. The campaign is highly creative, on trend, and resonates with major demographic group profiles. Benchmark research conducted by Destinations International indicates that the JCVB is spending 43% less on advertising when compared to the median expenditures on advertising by destination marketing organizations in the \$3 million to \$5 million budget category.

The consulting team found JCVB’s advertising creative to be extremely well thought-out and executed. The messaging is engaging and on trend. The “City with Soul” is a good campaign/brand for Jackson that resonates with millennials, Generation X, and baby boomers. The orientation toward music reflects the history of Jackson on many levels and is easily associated with the culinary experiences in Jackson. However, the destination must deliver on the brand via actual visitor experiences. This could be accomplished through live music venues, street musicians, special events, and culinary promotions.

JCVB’s advertising expenditures are allocated appropriately, as indicated in the media plan, between electronic and print per industry standards. The only issue with advertising is the amount of total money expended, which represents 13.6% of the bureau’s expenditures. Benchmarking these expenditures against destination marketing organizations in the \$3 million to \$5 million budget category establishes a median advertising expenditure of \$1,250,000. The JCVB has an advertising budget of \$545,000, which is approximately 43% below the median expenditure in this budget category. Jackson’s immediate competitors expend the following on advertising:

Entity	Advertising Budget	Total Operating Budget
Visit Mississippi Gulf Coast	\$2,167,000	\$4,476,000
Shreveport-Bossier Convention & Tourist Bureau	\$1,500,000	\$6,300,000
Visit Baton Rouge*	\$2,088,000	\$4,056,000

* Visit Baton Rouge combines sales/marketing/promotions/advertising.

Recommendation

The JCVB should accelerate the City With Soul campaign and continue to develop an experiential product that reflects the campaign. Furthermore, this campaign message should be integrated into the Jackson Convention Complex’s marketing and promotional efforts at a much higher level. As noted, JCVB has significantly lower advertising expenditures than other destination marketing organizations with comparable budgets. Therefore, the consulting team recommends that JCVB substantially increase its advertising expenditures in order to compete more effectively. Investing in advertising is the fertilizer that grows the tourism seed for economic development.

Special Events

Jackson does not have scheduled signature events similar to the Jubilee Jam previously held here annually. Such events would attract new visitors to Jackson.

Special events bring excitement and not only impact the locals' quality of life, but also attract new visitors to Jackson. A special event should have definitive marketing goals that relate to the strategic and marketing plans. Each special event should include overnight guest performance objectives that are measured as part of assessing the overall economic impact of an event.

The consulting team was repeatedly told about the Jubilee Jam event that was previously held in Jackson annually. It is unclear as to why this event, or one similar to it, is no longer being produced; the interest in this event points to a need for one or two signature events in Jackson. Signature events must be well planned and typically executed during months that have a need for more overnight visitors. In addition, they must be managed well so as not to burden JCVB's budget.

Recommendations

The JCVB should consider initiating a special event for Jackson similar to the former Jubilee Jam. The JCVB should plan and design the event to achieve the objectives stated in the strategic plan, as well as to focus on hotel room nights. Every special event should have:

- ***a business plan;***
- ***a budget that is strictly followed;***
- ***corporate and private financial support;***
- ***performance measures; and***
- ***collection of research data from attendees.***

JCVB should calculate the economic impact of each special event based on the research data collected and communicate the economic impact to stakeholders.

The Jackson Rhythm and Blues Festival was an event that the Jackson-area hoteliers welcomed, as it filled typical shoulder nights—i.e., nights of less occupancy on either side of peak nights—in August; however, the festival lost money on the net. The JCVB should consider a deeper analysis of this type of event and what its potential might look like by using a professional national event promoter to plan, promote, execute, and own the event.

Adherence to Trends

The JCVB is on target with current culinary and music trends related to the Southern persona. The JCVB's efforts to accent southern hospitality are exceptional. However, the bureau will need to accelerate the experiential component of the brand through new visitor products. The trend toward a more holistic approach to the destination from a community sustainability and development perspective will require more focus from the JCVB.

The JCVB has targeted the culinary trend and the Southern persona currently capturing the world's attention. The JCVB's marketing and strategic plan documents clearly point to a knowledge of current tourism trends. However, stating and practicing are two different courses of action. In terms of activities, the trend toward presenting local culture, music, special events, and the very essence of Jackson is practiced, but perhaps requires more aggressive actions. The trend is for convention and visitor bureaus to be more holistic via a focus on sustainability, product/community development, as well as transparent and communicative with those they serve.

These trends are addressed in JCVB's planning documents, but are not as well practiced as in other destination marketing organizations. Developing experiential product is a huge trend for destination marketing organizations across the United States. Jackson certainly has a major experience for visitors through the Museum of Mississippi History and Mississippi Civil Rights Museum. The JCVB is further enhancing its experiential components through culinary experiences and somewhat through music.

One area in which Jackson excels is hospitality. The front line service and southern hospitality are exceptional. This was evident to the consulting team from the Uber driver to the hotel desk to the restaurant service staff. Achieving this level of service is very difficult for many destinations, but Jackson has excelled and it is something that should be highlighted in promotional materials, blogs, and websites.

Recommendations

The consulting team recommends that music, food, civil rights history, and local culture be expanded experientially. Integrating various experiential products would further enhance visitor experiences. For example, consider locating a future Rhythm and Blues Festival within walking distance of the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum.

Sponsorships and Grants

According to its 2017 Annual Report, the JCVB awarded sponsorships in the amount of \$42,900 to 13 organizations. In addition, JCVB continued to support the Museum of Mississippi History and the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum by providing marketing support in the amount of \$200,000.

All sponsorships and grants awarded by the JCVB should tie back to the strategic plan for the bureau. The funding should require the recipient to achieve established performance measures based on room nights and visitors. The funding for an applicant should be limited

to a one-time allocation. Multiple year allocations should only be made if deemed necessary to achieve the objectives outlined in the strategic plan. Requests submitted on the basis of political agendas should not be awarded.

All marketing, advertising, collateral pieces, and event execution paid for through a bureau sponsorship or grant award should prominently recognize the bureau's support. If a recipient does not achieve established performance measures or obligations outlined in the award, they should not receive future funding and possibly be required to reimburse the funds to the bureau.

Recommendation

The JCVB should create a process similar to a buy down fund for scholarships and grants whereby an exact amount is budgeted each year for these types of expenditures. The awards should be based on very specific criteria or metric evaluation that assesses the number of room nights to be generated as a result of the award or the degree to which the award will fulfill JCVB's marketing and/or strategic goals. The awarding process should take into consideration the profile visibility and economic impact that would be generated and should define the funding period, making clear that JCVB's financial support will not be a continued source of funding.

Methods for Determining Return on Investment

The JCVB does not calculate the bureau's return on investment in a manner that conforms with the industry's best practices. The expenditure data is based on calculations developed more than 30 years ago and is not documented by current research. The JCVB does not segment the economic impact by various markets or even offer segmentation by broad categories, such as day trip visitors versus overnight visitors. The current return on investment methodology is totally inaccurate, inappropriate, and should not be used by the bureau.

Regarding JCVB's return on investment, the consulting team evaluated JCVB's methodology, the accuracy of its calculations, and the economic impact of visitors to the area.¹⁴

The Bureau's Return on Investment Methodology

Return on investment (ROI) is a performance measure used to evaluate the efficiency of an investment (public or private) or to compare the efficiency of a number of different investments. ROI measures the amount of return on an investment relative to the investment's cost. To calculate the ROI, the benefit (or return) of an investment is divided by the cost of the investment. The general ROI formula is

¹⁴ The ROI assessment in this report was developed by Steve Morse, Ph.D., Professor of Economics; Dean, McCamish School of Business, Reinhardt University, Waleska, GA.

$$(Gain\ from\ an\ investment - Cost\ of\ the\ investment) / Cost\ of\ the\ investment$$

To calculate the ROI from a financial investment of attracting visitors or a group of visitors, the ROI formula would be as follows:

ROI from new visitors = (A - B) / B; where:

A = the total dollars of economic gain from attracting new visitors or a group of new visitors (including estimates of direct spending, indirect spending, and induced spending from the new visitor activity in the community)

B = the total dollar cost of attracting new visitors or a group of new visitors (including marketing, financial incentives, and cost of in-kind incentives)

There is not an ROI formula used to find the efficiency of the investment in attracting visitors to Jackson since JCVB does not calculate the cost of attracting and servicing visitors versus the expenditures made by visitors within Jackson's economy. The following discussion describes how JCVB's economic model falls short in estimating "A" above in the ROI formula.

The Bureau's Methodology for Estimating Economic Impact

Best practices and industry standards for estimating economic impact would require complete annual surveys of visitors to the Jackson area that would measure:

- reason for visit (leisure or business);
- seasonality of visit;
- whether group or individual travel;
- demographics of visitor (e.g., age, education, income);
- number in party;
- length of stay;
- spending patterns to establish per-day spending (with updated prices);
- categories of spending (i.e., food, lodging, retail, transportation, entertainment); and
- transportation modes used and place of trip origin.

The economic impact models used by JCVB were developed in 1988, approximately 30 years ago, and do not reflect the latest best practices in the industry. The bureau's economic impact models are outdated in many areas, including the following:

- A. The JCVB's economic models do not include market segmentation (i.e., reason for visit) for the two basic categories of travelers: leisure travelers and business travelers. Most destination marketing organizations use up to seven different market segments for visitors in estimating visitor spending.

- B. The JCVB does not survey numbers of visitors in party or visitor spending. Visitor surveys designed by professionals are designed to estimate the spending of each visitor type. The JCVB states, “Considering we can never pinpoint exactly what each person spends, we used the average of some of the most common types of expenditures.” Also, best practices in the industry would never make assumptions about spending patterns of visitors without backing the assumption up with current research. Assuming a religious group or association group does not spend a certain amount of money is contrary to many updated visitor surveys in the industry. The JCVB states, “Another rationale (for using conservative estimates) is the caliber of groups tend to be more conservative in their spending patterns. They travel but do not generally spend a lot of money (i.e., religious and association groups).”
- C. The JCVB model does not account for day trippers versus overnight visitors. The JCVB’s assumption on day trips versus overnight visits is not supported by any ongoing or updated annual research from the last 30 years. Overnight visitors can spend up to four times as much per day as day trip visitors, so updating this distinction with current research is vital. The JCVB states, “If we do not know the exact number of attendees that spend the night, we say that 30% of the total number of attendees will spend the night and the other 70% will only be day event attendees.”
- D. The JCVB’s estimates of visitor spending are not current. Best practices in the industry include updating trends of visitor spending annually by surveying both leisure and business visitors to measure spending patterns and amounts. The JCVB’s methodology has no documentation to show that the visitor spending patterns originally used 30 years ago have been updated to reflect changing spending patterns, technology, and demographics of visitors.
- E. The JCVB’s economic models do not account for updated prices and inflation in spending. The JCVB states, “We have watched the inflation of prices and elected to remain at this most conservative level, we want our economic impact numbers to be believed by the public. We will continue to use this number until we determine it needs to either increase or decrease.” This assumes that the public would only believe a low amount of economic impact and that the public would not believe a number calculated correctly using best practices and standards. Tourism professionals should not use such a rationale to justify failure to update their economic impact models and failure to use current prices.
- F. The JCVB’s economic models report direct spending impacts, but do not include indirect or induced economic impacts of visitor spending. The industry’s tourist economic impact models typically report the total impact from visitor spending as the sum of three types of impacts on the community from visitor spending: direct, indirect, and induced spending impacts. Direct spending refers to the purchase of goods and services by the visitor, JCVB, the Jackson Convention Complex, event planners and vendors—essentially all expenditures directly related to the hospitality industry. Indirect spending refers to the purchase of goods and services that are not directly made by the JCVB, convention attendees, or tour groups. For example, this would include a restaurant that pays additional wages in order to service visitors. The third category of impact, induced spending, refers to economic activity generated as a result of the direct expenditure by

visitors. For example, a restaurant employee might make more wages because he/she is working more hours in order to service the visitor industry. This employee takes the “extra” money and buys a new car. This type of economic activity is “induced” by the fact that the visitor spending created a higher level of income for the employee. Because the economic models used by the JCVB report only direct spending and not indirect and induced spending, total economic impacts are not being reported.

Recommendations

The JCVB should use a contemporary economic impact model such as the IMPLAN input-output model to show direct spending, indirect spending, and induced spending. This model would also show the number of jobs generated by new visitor activity.

The JCVB should completely revise its calculation methodology before releasing any further tourism statistics. The revised methodology should be based on sound economic impact formulas and visitor impact metrics that are updated annually. The formula should include direct, indirect, and induced spending.

Interaction with Metro Area Stakeholders and Coordination with Local Venues

The JCVB’s stakeholders indicated dissatisfaction with JCVB’s performance and cited a lack of communication between JCVB and stakeholders.

Interaction with Metro Area Stakeholders

The consulting team conducted interviews with various stakeholders, both while on site and as telephone interviews. These interviews included hotel general managers, restaurant staff, hotel sales staff, elected officials, attraction managers, Jackson Convention Complex staff, and state tourism officials. The consulting team distributed a satisfaction survey to 181 of the JCVB’s stakeholders. The survey had a 12% return rate and the exhibits in this section illustrate the responses received. (A 12% return rate is very typical for this type of survey, considering a rather small distribution universe. Within industry standards, any response rate above 10% is a good indicator of the total population surveyed. The results of the consulting team’s survey should not be considered as definitive but as an indicator of stakeholders’ satisfaction with the JCVB’s performance.)

The consulting team noted that most stakeholders were concerned that their comments would cause retaliation from JCVB’s leadership. Furthermore, almost all of those interviewed in person indicated dissatisfaction with JCVB’s performance and cited a lack of communication between JCVB and its stakeholders. The most frequent highest ratings from the survey regarding JCVB’s performance were at the average and below average levels. A few of the categories did achieve an above-average rank (networking, educational opportunities, and the execution of special events). It is important to note that these above average rankings were indicated by 35% or less of the respondents.

JCVB must improve its communication and credibility with its stakeholders. The JCVB has an image issue and a lack of understanding by its stakeholders from a work product and performance perspective.

As shown in Exhibit 8, the top three types of respondents to the satisfaction survey were lodging properties, restaurants, and museums.

Exhibit 8: Components of Hospitality Industry Responding to Survey of JCVB Stakeholders

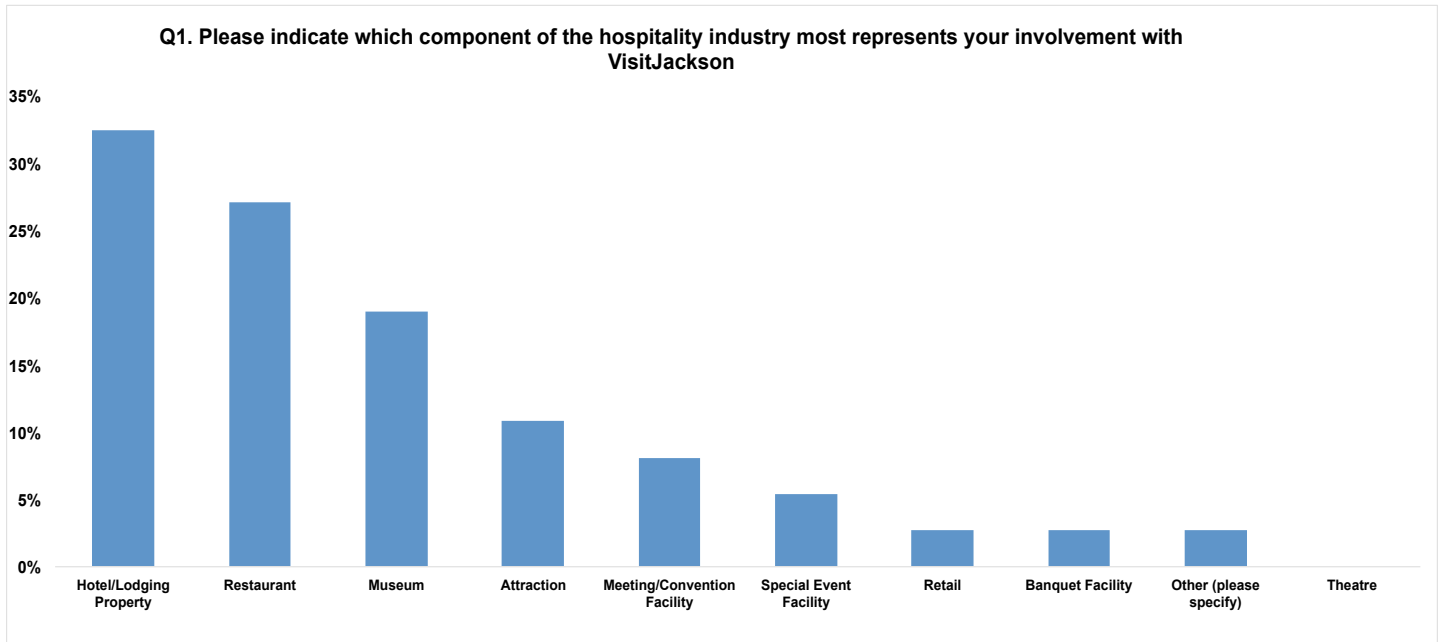


Exhibit 9, page 68, illustrates that leads and brochures were the top services received by 50% of the survey respondents. Cooperative marketing opportunities were indicated as a service received by slightly fewer than 50% of those completing the survey. This exhibit indicates a need to promote the other services offered by JCVB.

Exhibit 9: JCVB Services Received by Stakeholders, as Reported by Stakeholders Responding to Survey

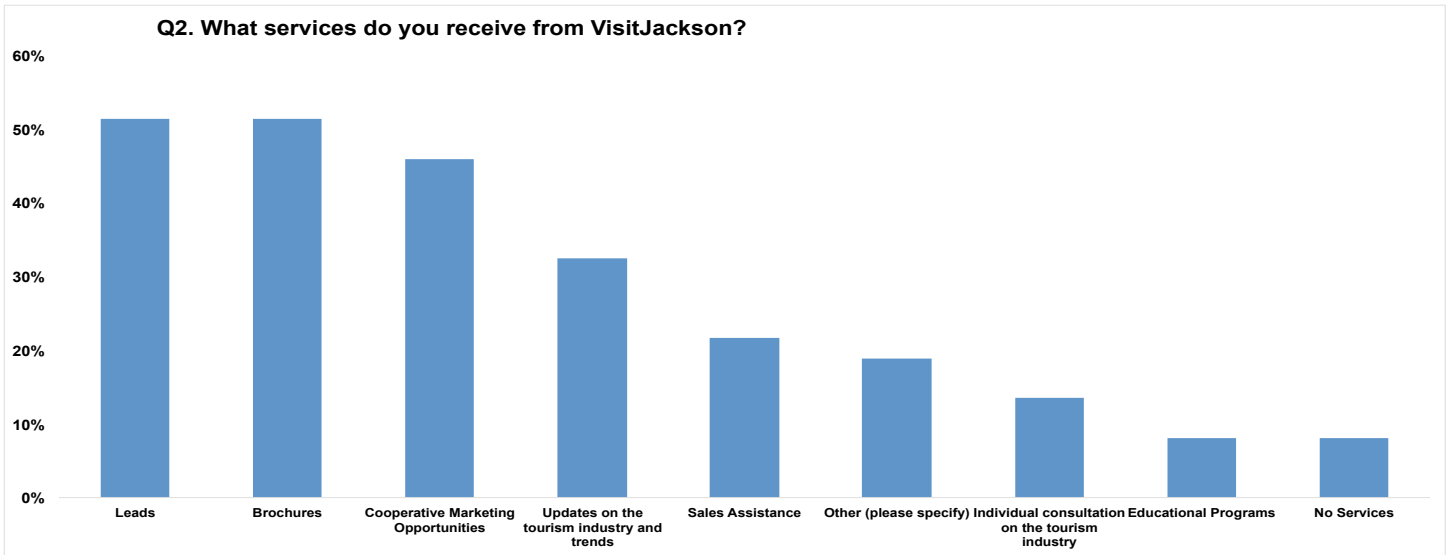
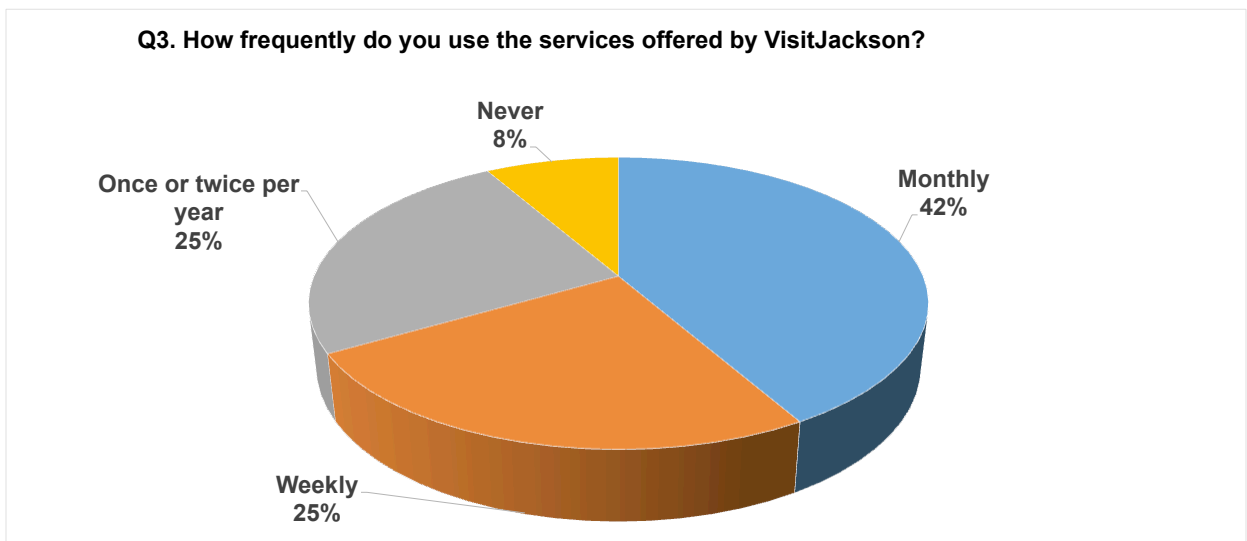


Exhibit 10 demonstrates that most of the survey respondents use the services offered by JCVB on a monthly basis. However, 25% stated that they only use the services once or twice a year, while another 25% stated that they use the services weekly.

Exhibit 10: Frequency of Stakeholders' Use of JCVB Services, as Reported by Stakeholders Responding to Survey



As shown in Exhibit 11, page 69, lead generation came in as a fourth priority for increasing services. The interpretation of this metric is that the respondents are more interested in generating their own leads through JCVB programs that subsidize the respondents' own marketing and promotional efforts.

Exhibit 11: Stakeholders' Prioritization of JCVB Services, as Reported by Stakeholders Responding to Survey

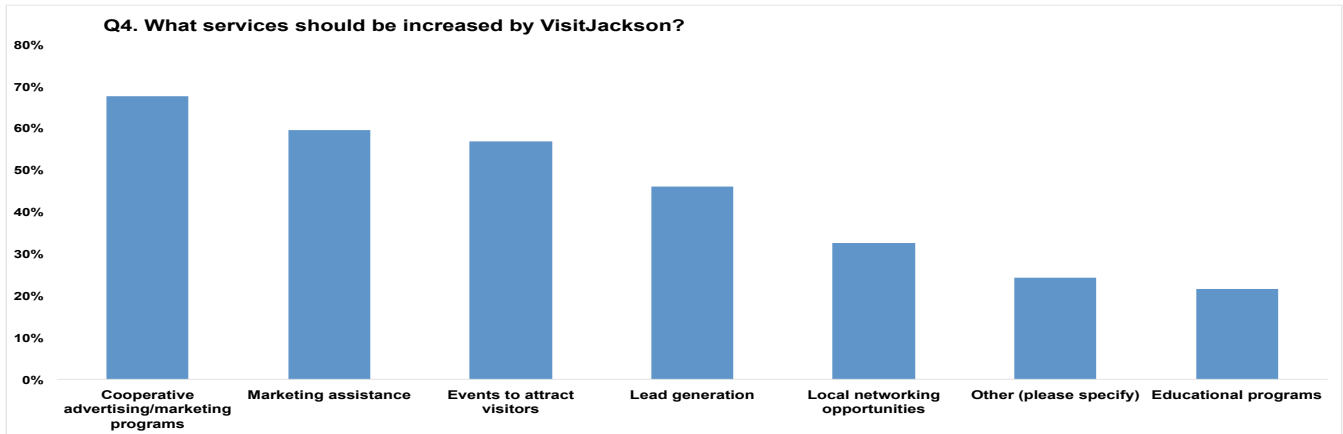


Exhibit 12 demonstrates that communication was a major concern expressed in the scope of this research. It appears from this survey that 62% of the respondents receive either weekly or monthly communication from the bureau. While communication can certainly be improved, JCVB is reaching out to its stakeholders on a fairly regular basis.

Exhibit 12: Frequency of JCVB's Communication with Stakeholders, as Reported by Stakeholders Responding to Survey

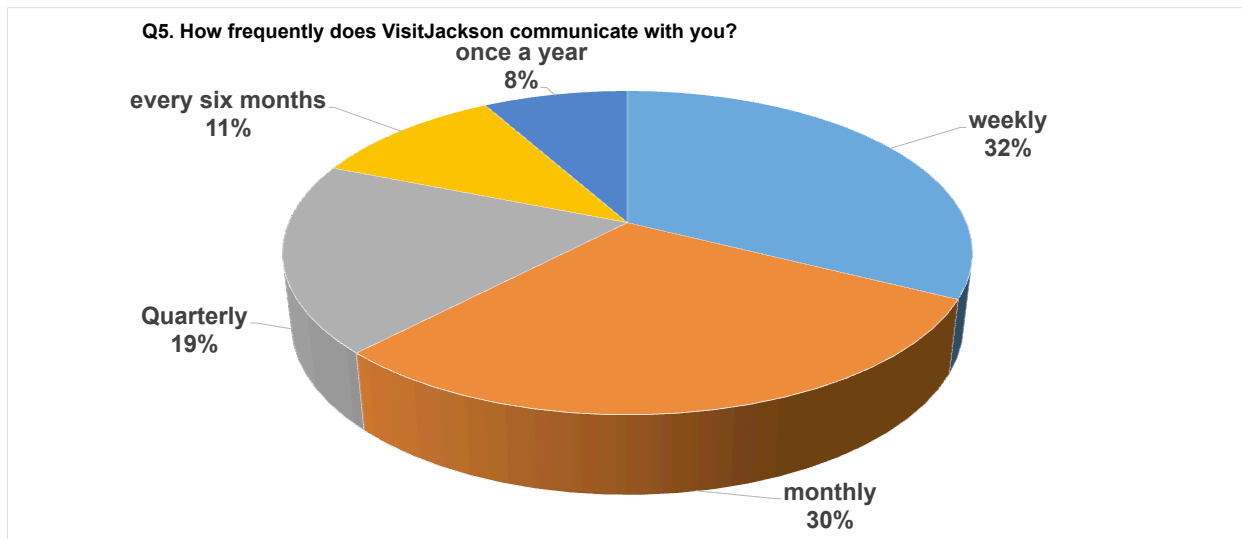
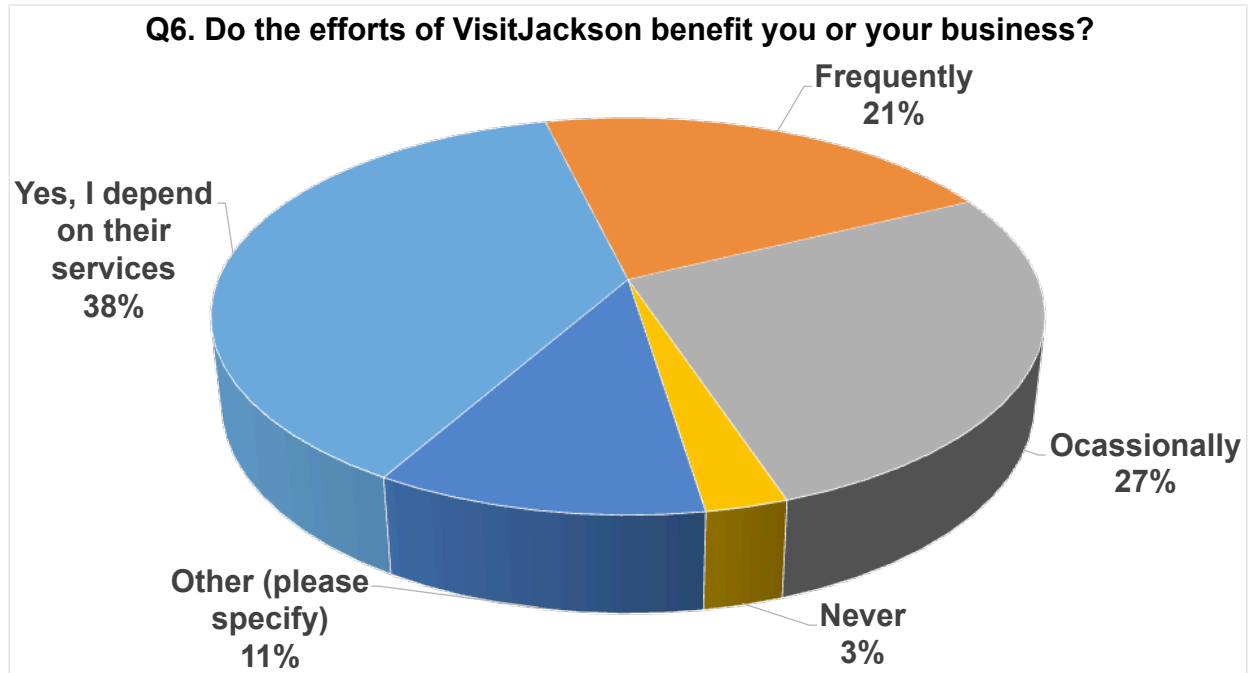


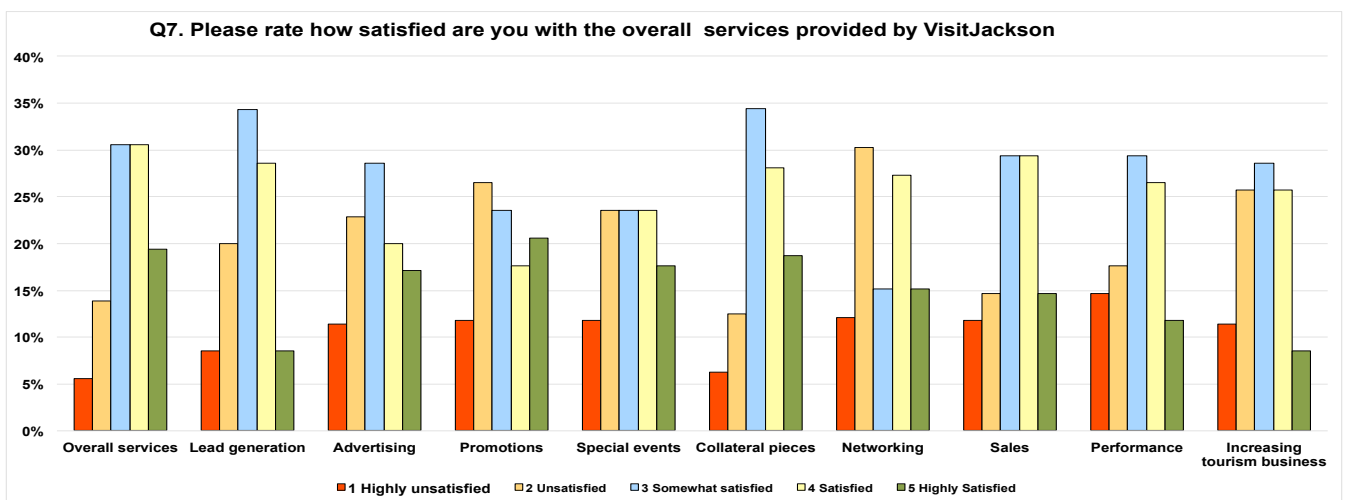
Exhibit 13, page 70, illustrates that a majority (59%) of stakeholder businesses either depend on JCVB services or frequently benefit from the bureau's services. Only 3% of the stakeholders indicated they receive no benefit.

Exhibit 13: Benefit of JCVB's Services to Stakeholders, as Reported by Stakeholders Responding to Survey



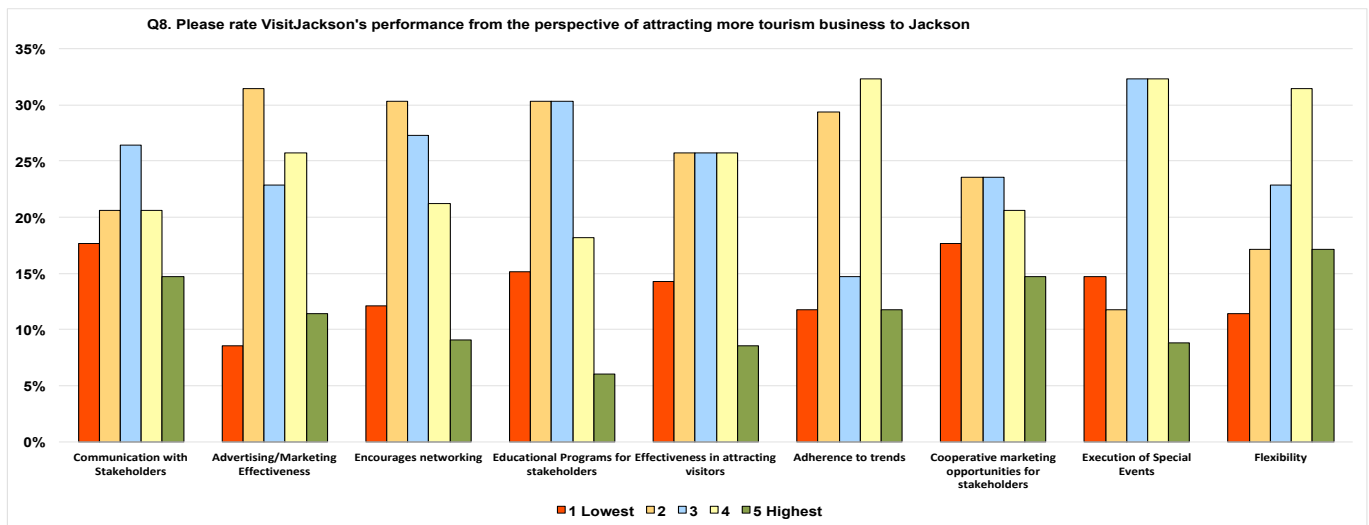
As Exhibit 14 shows, the respondents were highly satisfied with JCVB's promotions and overall services (20%), and somewhat satisfied with JCVB's lead generation and collateral pieces (35%). The respondents were unsatisfied with JCVB's networking (30%) and highly unsatisfied with JCVB's performance (15%). While the responses are mixed, they are an indication that JCVB needs to work on creating higher levels of stakeholder satisfaction with the work product.

Exhibit 14: Stakeholders' Satisfaction with Services Provided by JCVB, as Reported by Stakeholders Responding to Survey



In contrast to Exhibit 14, Exhibit 15 gives fairly high rankings to JCVB in its performance as it relates to attracting more tourism business. Execution of special events and educational programs receive the highest performance ratings. The lowest performance metrics in attracting more tourism business were indicated by approximately 18% as it relates to communication with stakeholders and cooperative marketing opportunities for stakeholders.

Exhibit 15: Stakeholders' Ratings of JCVB's Success in Attracting Tourism Business



Coordination with Local Venues

Jackson Convention Complex (JCC)

The most important relationship within the local hospitality industry exists between a destination marketing organization and a convention center. Convention centers are built to create an economic impact on the community by enticing and providing space for groups that utilize hotel rooms, dining establishments, retail establishments, and visit the local attractions, all stimulating retail sales and collection of tax dollars.

Committing to respect, trust, communication and collaboration between the two organizations (i.e., a destination marketing organization and a convention center) creates this relationship. Such a relationship should include joint marketing plans, collaborative sales trips, frequent joint sales meetings, collaborative approaches to trade shows, and advertising.

The consulting team spent a great deal of time studying the Jackson Convention Complex. It is an excellent facility, although significantly underperforming in comparison to its full potential and operating at less than peak performance. When the consulting team spoke with the staff of the Jackson Convention Complex and staff of the JCVB and reviewed lost and booked business reports, it became obvious that very little first priority business is being booked. (First priority groups are those generating 300 room nights on peak, multiple

days, and with three catered functions at the convention center.) Many of the events booked have significant attendance, but very low food and beverage spending.

A review and comparison of the booked business reports by the JCC and JCVB shows inconsistency in reporting between the two entities. For example, the JCC lists that January 2015 National Baptist Convention Mid-Winter Meeting as having 6,500 people in attendance, but the JCVB lists the same event as having 3,000 people in attendance on its Sales and Services report. In this case, the JCC realized \$51,825 total in food and beverage or an \$8 per person spend on such items. The JCVB reported 600 room nights over a two-day period. While the event may have been classified as a first tier event due to the room nights, the total generated in food and beverage for the JCC was relatively low for the attendance numbers.

Some of the reasons that the consulting team identified for the Jackson Convention Complex's performance level is that there is no attached hotel, rates are too high, and the JCVB does not sell the JCC sufficiently or provide adequate leads, particularly pertaining to first priority business. Consequently, this requires the JCC to depend on lower-rated business such as SMERF (social, military educational, religious, fraternal) business and local groups, thus not fulfilling the true mission and intent of the JCC.

In speaking with various stakeholders within the community, the consulting team was told repeatedly that the pricing was too high at the JCC and that the JCC staff did not work with the community or locals on more flexible pricing. According to the JCVB lost business report, the reasons most frequently listed for lost business were hotel rate and availability, the meeting room rental rate was high or should be waived, lack of convention center hotel, and different site picked. When the consulting team spoke with JCC staff about the rates and how they compared to their competitive set markets, they said that a comparison or survey had not been completed due to management of some of the competitive sets being managed by the same company as the JCC.

The convention center's lost business reports for 2015-17 showed:

- 2015 – Of 15 lost opportunities, no first tier business was lost and only one event was reported as lost due to JCC's pricing structure
- 2016 – Of 24 lost opportunities, one was reported as lost due to JCC's pricing structure. Other reasons given were the group's funding had been lost and the event was not taking place or the group chose other venues.
- 2017 – The number of lost opportunities climbed to 48. Of those, none were reported as having been lost due to JCC's pricing structure. The reasons given were client non-responsiveness, lack of funding, cancelled events, or other miscellaneous reasons.

According to the booked business report as it related to total attendance at each event and the per-person spend on food and beverage, lower rated business is averaging less than \$10 per person, second tier business is averaging between \$25-\$40 per person, and first tier business is averaging as high as \$100 per person.

A concerning finding of the consulting team was the low number of first priority bookings in JCC's future bookings. The only businesses of this type are three that appear to meet the criteria of being first tier:

- Mississippi Educational Computing Association Convention, February 2019, with 1,100 projected attendees;
- Alpha Phi Alpha, March 2019, with 2,000 projected attendees; and
- Alcorn National Alumni Meeting, February 2021, with 500 projected attendees.

Despite the projected number of attendees, two of these events do not appear to meet the room night criteria of 300 rooms peak, although the projected attendance numbers are large.

The JCVB and JCC should be working together to ensure the booking of events for the long-term future, so that during the year they are only booking local short-term business. Without a change in approach, the JCC can never expect to perform beyond how it is currently performing. Ideally, at the start of each operating year, the JCC would already have 50% or more of its budgeted operating revenues for the year confirmed, leaving 50% or less to find in the year for that year. Many centers enter the year with up to 75% of their revenues already confirmed at that time.

Since the consulting team did not focus primarily on the JCC, the consulting team did not explore the relationship between the JCC and its clients or the performance of the JCC and its staff. However, there are issues between the JCC and the JCVB at the staff, leadership, and board levels that need resolving, particularly pertaining to cooperative sales and marketing efforts. Those issues include:

- mistrust and lack of communication or collaboration between the two boards;
- divisiveness between the two boards and the two organizations, as well as between the community stakeholders and the JCC;
- stakeholders' perception of a lack of accountability;
- a definite "us against them" attitude between the organizations;
- negative perception regarding convention center pricing and competitiveness;
- few bookings, particularly quality first priority bookings, for the center;
- inconsistencies in reporting between the convention center and the JCVB; and
- the community has not taken ownership of the convention center.

Fairgrounds and Trade Mart

The plans for the new Trade Mart facility being constructed on the Mississippi Fairgrounds are outstanding and the facility should drive new business to Jackson. The consulting team was impressed by the amount and level of equine business at the fairgrounds. This is a market that is highly lucrative and could be considered a “well-kept secret.” The JCVB’s communication with the agency booking these facilities seems to be excellent. A new director has been hired and all parties appear to be cooperating to book as much business as possible.

Mississippi Civil Rights Museum and Mississippi History Museum

The internationally known Mississippi Civil Rights Museum is an excellent venue for JCVB. The consulting team did not review the business attracted by the museum; however, while it is receiving an adequate number of visitors, it appears that much more could be accomplished through additional and intense marketing. The Mississippi Civil Rights Museum should be a focus for JCVB. During the consulting team’s visits, there was no evidence of a motorcoach, special event, or group at the museum.

While the Mississippi History Museum is an important local and state attraction, it does not carry the same attraction persona as the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum. The same comments noted above apply to this museum as well. It will be important to integrate the marketing power of the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum while promoting the Mississippi History Museum.

The JCVB financially supports both the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum and the Mississippi History Museum through direct marketing dollars via sponsorship funding. Both museums should step up their fundraising and revenue generation activities and not be financially supported by the bureau, with the exception being special events and cooperative marketing dollars. Communications and relationships appear to be good between the museums and the JCVB.

Russell C. Davis Planetarium and Mississippi Children’s Museum

The consulting team did not encounter any direct marketing, mention, advertisement, or promotion of the planetarium or the Mississippi Children’s Museum. It appears that for the most part, these attractions are not on the radar screen for JCVB, except as a listed venue.

Recommendations

The Mississippi Legislature should consider eliminating the Jackson Convention Complex (JCC) Board. If the JCC Board cannot be eliminated, then the Legislature should reorganize both the JCVB and JCC boards to require each board to have one board member from the other board as a representative.

If the JCC Board is eliminated, the city should create a convention complex oversight committee comprising members of the two boards to make collaborative recommendations and decisions as they pertain to the cooperation of the two organizations (e.g., joint booking guidelines that clearly identify who is responsible for the solicitation of the various market segments and a joint marketing plan targeted at increasing the number of leads with potential for using the convention center).

The sales teams of the JCC and the JCVB should hold joint weekly meetings. These meetings should be aimed at discussing pipeline, pending, and recent booked business, with a focus on booking the business and jointly overcoming any obstacles to booking.

JCVB should consider creating a buy down fund that is budgeted by the JCVB with an intended use to buy down the rate at the JCC when necessary to book a quality first tier event. A buy down fund could also be used to buy down transportation or hotel room rates in order to secure the business. The JCVB should establish guidelines and an approval process that would require agreement from both parties on the use of the funds for specific business. This is an extremely effective sales tool, but it should only be used for business that meets certain parameters (e.g., large room blocks/citywide, significant economic impact, high media value, substantial expenditure at the center).

The Jackson Convention Complex should complete a price index survey of the JCC competitive market sets on rental rates, food and beverage pricing, equipment, labor, and all other ancillary expenses. Venues that are considered to be competitive would include:

- Shreveport Convention Center;*
- Mobile Convention Center;*
- Baton Rouge Convention Center;*
- Memphis Cook Convention Center; and*
- Knoxville Convention Center.*

The JCC currently has only one sales person on staff, with two vacant sales positions. The JCC should fill these positions immediately.

The consulting team did not see any JCVB material or acknowledgment of the bureau's support to the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum or Mississippi History Museum within public view. The JCVB should be acknowledged within the museum's public space, as well as in all advertising and promotional materials.

The JCVB should gradually eliminate financial support to the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum and Mississippi History Museum.

How JCVB Compares to Similar Entities in Surrounding States

The JCVB has similar funding and operational metrics to a comparable set of destination marketing organizations, which includes the cities of Baton Rouge, Shreveport, and Birmingham, as well as the Mississippi Gulf Coast region.

Entities Comparable to the JCVB in Surrounding States

In concert with the bureau’s administrative staff, the consulting team selected the following tourism bureaus as being most comparable with the JCVB: Baton Rouge, Shreveport/Bossier City, Mississippi Gulf Coast, and Birmingham.

As shown in Exhibit 16, JCVB has a competitive budget, comparable staff, and similar convention center space as tourism bureaus in these other cities, but Jackson’s visitation is lower compared to a couple of destinations.

Exhibit 16: Profile Data on JCVB and Comparable Entities in Surrounding States

Factor	Jackson	Baton Rouge	Shreveport/ Bossier City	Gulf Coast	Birmingham
Population	169,141	227,707	263,405	370,000	213,434
Budget	\$4,007,000	\$4,450,399	\$3,983,570	\$4,476,000	\$9,500,000
Staff	18 FT, 4 PT	17 FT, 11 PT	22 FT, 4 PT	15 FT, 12 PT	32 FT
Attractions	18	80	16	97	36
Restaurants	300	487	393	483	
Museums	19	24	15	14	16
Convention Centers	330,00 sqft	200,000 sqft	350,000 sqft	400,000 sqft	350,000 sqft
Auditoriums	800 seats	1,900 seats	2,500 seats	842 seats	4,500 seats
Arena	6,500 seats	12,000 seats	14,000 seats	20,066 seats	18,000 seats
Capital City	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Annual Visitors	3,100,000	Unknown	2,703,800	6,200,000	4,600,000

Key Performance Metrics of the JCVB and Comparable Entities

In the past, the JCVB participated in a financial and organizational profile study conducted by Destinations International, a national professional organization of convention and visitors bureaus that sets industry standards and provides educational opportunities for such professionals. The data from this study allows the comparison of the JCVB to the industry as a whole on a wide variety of key performance measures.

As noted in the following exhibits, the Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau exceeds the average convention and visitors bureau organization on personnel costs for the administrative level. Personnel expenditures for the leisure (consumer) market and visitor services are the lowest metrics. The expenditures by JCVB in these areas are lower than the amounts being spent on the average by other comparable convention and visitors bureaus. Additional research would be required in order to determine if these expenditures are sufficient and do indeed achieve the desired number of leisure visitors as well as the level of services expected by the visitors.

When one analyzes the data from a sales/marketing/promotions expense allocation perspective, conventions have the highest expense allocation, followed by administration/

human resources/community and public relations, with information technology and membership being the lowest. Again, the JCVB far exceeds the average convention and visitors bureau on the expense allocation for administration and ranks slightly higher than the median on convention sales expenses.

These metrics do not necessarily support the low occupancy rate at the Jackson Convention Complex or Jackson's hotel occupancy/rate levels. The key performance measures are for the most part similar to those of average convention and visitors bureau operations, with the exception of the administrative expenditures; however, those expenditures are not increasing the JCC metrics or the hotel occupancy/rate levels.

This analysis points to a need to reorganize JCVB's strategies so as to address those destination components that drive the highest return on investment—specifically, a need to target business with the highest spend. The JCVB appears to be securing lower expenditure business that demands lower hotel price points and is more SMERF (social, military, educational, religious, fraternal) oriented as opposed to a focus on association conventions and corporate business. The amount being expended on convention sales further points to the need for better target marketing. The following exhibits compare key performance metrics of the JCVB and comparable entities:

- Exhibit 17, page 78, reflects personnel expense allocations for administrative functions of the JCVB compared to the same type of allocations of other destination marketing organizations. The JCVB ranks well above 75% of other bureaus in this category.
- Exhibit 18, page 79, shows that personnel expense allocations for convention sales and marketing at the JCVB rank slightly above 75% of the other bureaus participating in this profile research.
- As shown in Exhibit 19, page 80, the JCVB's personnel expense allocation for sales and marketing for the travel trade component is slightly above 75% of the other bureaus evaluated in this study.
- The JCVB's expense allocation for sales/marketing/promotions as it relates to convention business is above median, but below the 75th percentile as compared to other bureaus (see Exhibit 20, page 81).
- Exhibit 21, page 82, shows the comparison between JCVB and other bureaus from the perspective of total sales/marketing/promotional allocations. The JCVB allocates 72% of its expenses for sales/marketing/promotions to administration and convention sales. Sports marketing is the next highest allocation, followed by much smaller percentages to other markets. Obviously the JCVB has placed most of its effort from a sales/marketing/promotion expense into one market, sports. The major question raised by this metric is: If this amount of effort and resources is being committed to conventions (37%), why is the JCC operating at a third of its capacity? The second question lies with the amount of resources (35%) being committed for administration/human resources/finance/public relations as related to sales and marketing, when the average allocation benchmark is 19%. These allocations raise a concern over targeted markets and resource efficiencies related to administration expenditures.

Exhibit 17: Personnel Expenses for Administration, JCVB and Comparable Entities

ORGANIZATION AND FINANCIAL PROFILE

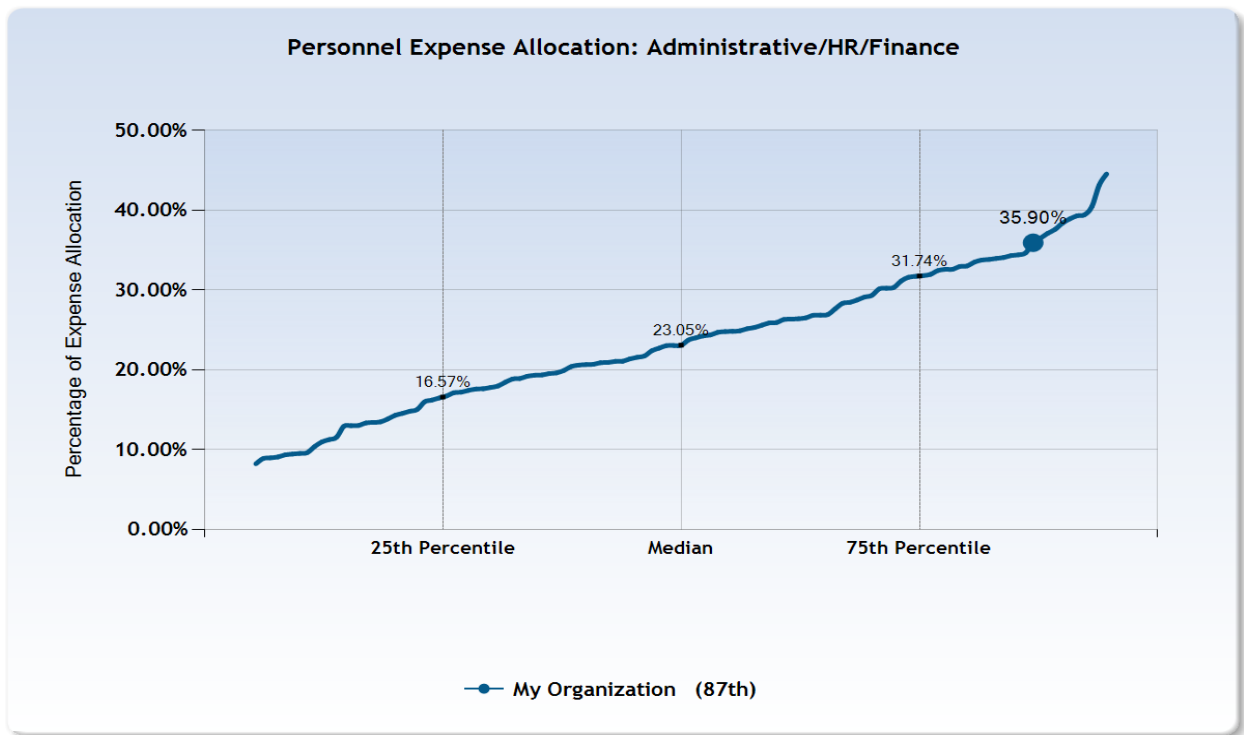


Exhibit 18: Personnel Expenses for Sales and Marketing, JCVB and Comparable Entities

ORGANIZATION AND FINANCIAL PROFILE

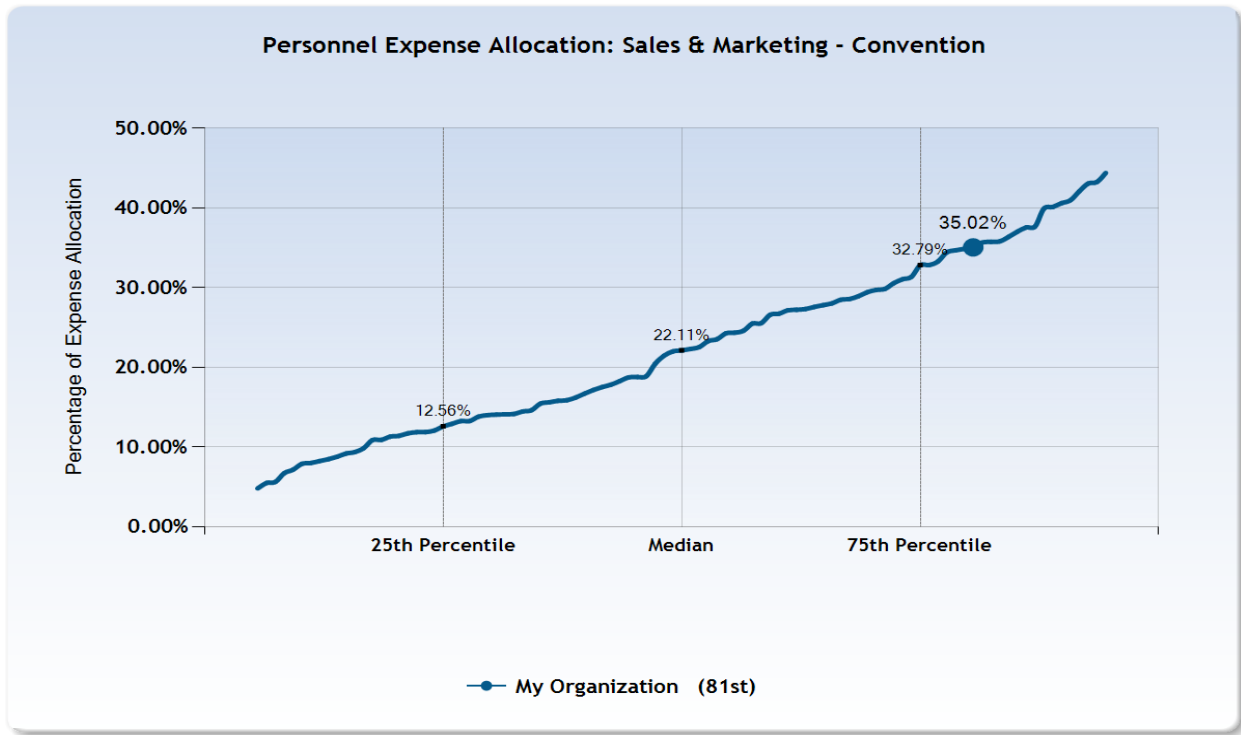


Exhibit 19: Personnel Expenses for Sales and Marketing—Travel Trade, JCVB and Comparable Entities

ORGANIZATION AND FINANCIAL PROFILE

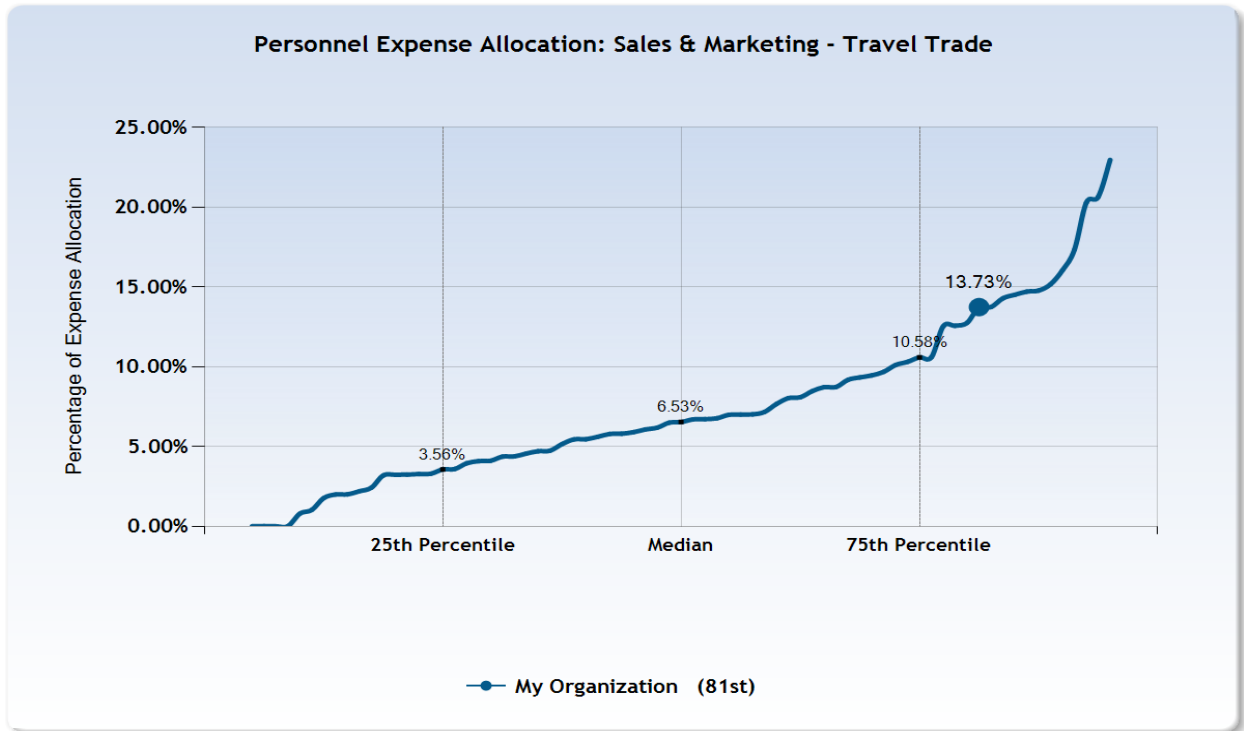


Exhibit 20: Personnel Expenses for Sales and Marketing—Conventions, JCVB and Comparable Entities

ORGANIZATION AND FINANCIAL PROFILE

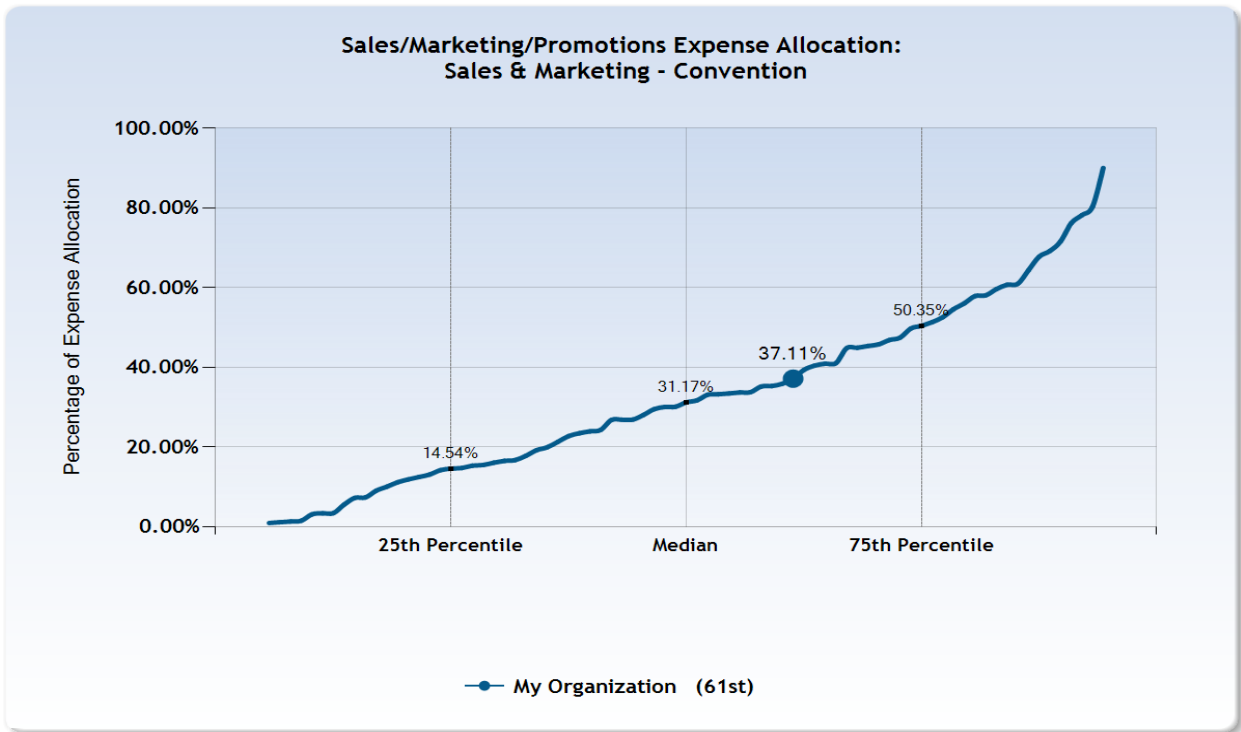
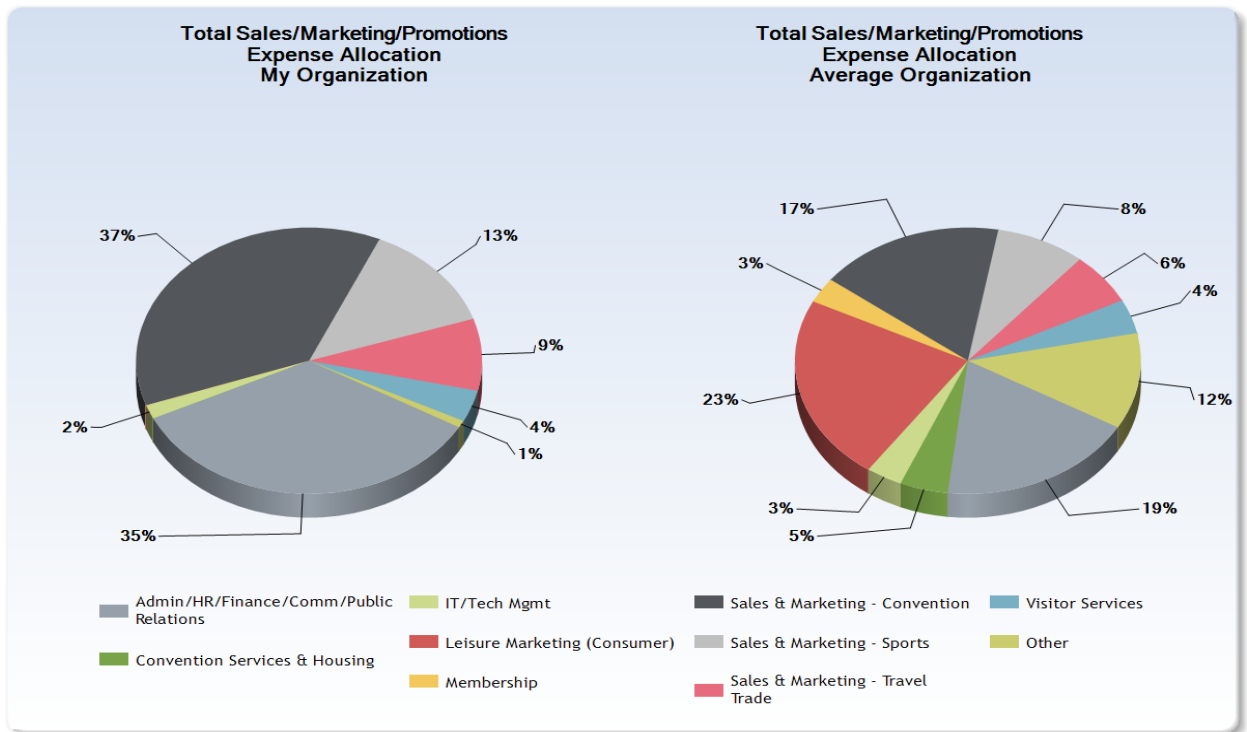


Exhibit 21: Total Sales/Marketing/Promotional Expenses, JCVB and Comparable Entities

ORGANIZATION AND FINANCIAL PROFILE



While convention sales are an important market, it is not the only market. The leisure and group markets are very significant for Jackson as well. It is the consulting team’s assessment that the current branding campaign, effective media placement, and the quality of the attractions are responsible for the level of leisure and group visitation enjoyed by Jackson. The primary issue is the level of visitor spending per party and length of stay. The JCVB must revisit these allocations after significant visitor research to ensure that resources are spent on those efforts that drive the highest return on investment.

Additional Issues Related to the Future Success of the JCVB

The JCVB has, in the past, operated with limited research and the research that was performed was mostly conducted with current staff. The level of research and the limited amount of research has impacted the effectiveness of decisions and the allocation of resources. The JCVB should retain a professional research firm to perform a destination vision/master plan as soon as possible. The communities surrounding Jackson are economically benefiting from JCVB's efforts. A regional cooperative effort should be explored. Communication platforms with stakeholders should be accelerated in order to secure support and ownership of JCVB's marketing and brand promotional efforts, as well as an understanding of achievements. Staff communication is essential and should occur via weekly staff meetings.

Research

Research allows a tourism bureau to identify target markets that will generate a higher return on investment as well as to direct the most effective allocation of resources. In today's world of ever-changing trends, credible research is a necessity if a bureau is to remain competitive.

While JCVB does conduct in-house research, which is important on a day-to-day basis, it conducts virtually no research outside of the bureau's staff. This presents an issue that will affect future success, since outsourced research by professional research firms would provide a highly credible view of the bureau's impacts and needs without any bias or staff influences. The current research orientation is not necessarily wrong, but it is not supported by research methodology that ensures high statistical confidence levels. Furthermore, the consulting team found that many stakeholders do not believe the data generated by the bureau and have little confidence in decisions based on the in-house data.

Recommendations

The JCVB should secure a professional research firm to develop a Destination Vision Plan with input not only from JCVB staff, but also from visitors, meeting/event planners, retail business owners, restaurants, hotels, stakeholders, residents, legislators, City of Jackson staff, and the Jackson City Council. Such a vision plan should identify the most lucrative target markets, need areas, amenities required, satisfaction levels, infrastructure deficiencies, brand effectiveness, expenditure levels by travel party, economic impacts, and other metrics. These metrics would allow creation of a strategic plan with measurable performance actions. Also, such plan would provide a research-based economic impact formula driven by specific performance measures that would accelerate the bureau's impact on the destination through effective deployment of resources.

Ongoing outsourced research should be conducted annually via a research plan in order to ensure that the JCVB is always on target with its efforts. This plan of action would assist the bureau with future reauthorizations required through the legislative process and allow the stakeholders to align their marketing efforts with the bureau's focus.

Regional Tourism

The consulting team noted that several of the surrounding communities are developing new sporting facility infrastructure and that the satellite cities are collecting hotel taxes to spend on tourism efforts. Thus, these communities are beginning to compete against Jackson, especially in the sports market. Often hotels outside the city, but within the metro, are being utilized for overflow needs. When this occurs, the City of Jackson's hotel tax collections are negatively affected, while Jackson is contributing to the outlying areas' economic impact.

Best practices would be to develop a regional approach to tourism, with all working to capture as much business as possible and sharing the tourism products available throughout the region. The Jackson metro area is too small for regional competition and more importantly, Jackson carries the name recognition and market value required to secure business outside of the city limits.

Recommendation

JCVB should consider becoming either a dues-based membership bureau or purchasing housing software that would allow the bureau to secure a fee from the hotels where tax is not collected. The JCVB should explore the possibility of expanding its service area to include the entire Hinds County area.

Communication

Communication concerning the JCVB's mission, achievements, and strategies should flow throughout the organization at every level, as well as to stakeholders, legislators, city officials, and residents. Transparency within the organizational network fosters creative thinking, positive interactions, and loyalty. However, the organization currently does not conduct bureau staff meetings, extensive in-house training, or any other source of dialogue that communicates the bureau's mission, strategies, or persona within its own operations.

JCVB does produce an excellent annual report that advocates achievements and mission. However, it appears to the consulting team that the annual report is the only report providing an overview of the bureau's efforts and unfortunately, the bureau suffers a credibility issue with its data. As noted, stakeholders do not have confidence in the metrics or how they are calculated and thus the bureau's efforts to set the direction, brand strategies, and provide destination leadership are minimized. The stakeholders interviewed by the consulting team truly believe that JCVB is not significantly contributing toward its business objectives.

Recommendations

The JCVB should hold a staff meeting at least on a weekly basis.

Constant communication of programs, events, marketing activities, and performance are necessary for the bureau to improve its image and credibility. Newsletters, email blasts,

social functions, personal networking, and lunchtime seminars could all be important activities to secure support for the bureau's mission from residents, stakeholders, and legislators.

- *internal communication should include:*
 - *a weekly sales meeting of all full-time staff; and*
 - *a weekly senior team meeting with the bureau's President/CEO;*
- *external communication should include:*
 - *creating a monthly stakeholder newsletter identifying upcoming events, upcoming cooperative sales opportunities, recent successes, new initiatives, and inviting programming feedback;*
 - *quarterly stakeholder meetings between the most senior level staff members (i.e., hotel general managers, the convention center's general manager, and the JCVB's President/CEO;*
 - *annual State of the State Hospitality Forum featuring state tourism officials, representatives from Destination International, and other regional or national tourism-related professionals; and*
 - *early distribution of the Sales/Marketing Plan and Playbook to allow stakeholders to budget and plan for participation.*

Destination Management

In the past, destination marketing organizations focused only on marketing the destination. One can only market products if they exist at a level that attracts visitors and competes against other destinations. Consequently, bureaus have now taken a holistic approach to destination management. Working hand in hand with city government and economic development agencies, tourism bureaus have begun assisting with new product development and making sure the destination maintains a competitive position in the marketplace.

Recommendations

The JCVB should consider relocating its offices to the Jackson Convention Complex. This would foster better working relationships and a combined sales network for the bureau and convention center. The physical location of the bureau within the convention center would place a focus on the facility from both operational and selling perspectives.

The JCVB should be involved in all economic development activities within the city that impact the tourism product, marketing, and brand positioning.

Product Development

For the most part, Jackson has plenty of attractions and amenities. The Mississippi Civil Rights Museum is a tremendous domestic and international tourism asset. Jackson's musical heritage and 300 culinary choices are exceptional. The service and Southern hospitality are excellent. Farish Street is a cultural diamond that simply needs to be polished. Further redevelopment of this most important component of Jackson's heritage will enhance Jackson's competitive edge. The District at Eastover and the Fondren District are both outstanding tourism products that give Jackson a "millennial" focal point and a "historic" brand positioning. These types of lifestyle areas can keep Jackson competitive.

One area of concern is that locals perceive there is a safety issue in Jackson. The City of Jackson is part of a metropolitan area and as with all metropolitan areas, crime exists. Jackson has addressed these concerns through the Tourism Oriented Policing Strategies (TOPS) program. Police vehicles display their presence throughout the tourism areas via blue lights on vehicles and courtesy individuals frequently patrol the downtown area on Segways. The consulting team observed that the downtown area during the week has less visitor traffic than other times, but the amount of police presence is exceptional. It is a concern that the locals tend to exacerbate the safety issue. This constant rhetoric is deployed via the Internet and subsequently affects visitor perceptions.

Recommendations

First impressions are extremely important. Gateways into the city establish a visitor's view of the destination product within less than a minute. Thus, public and private areas should be beautifully landscaped and inviting. Specifically, the areas around the Jackson Convention Complex need to be addressed. The vacant land across from the convention center should be developed into a retail lifestyle center with a focus on serving conventioners and residents. Finally, the City of Jackson should improve wayfinding signage directing visitors to attractions and points of interest.

The JCVB and Jackson Police Department should create communication products that promote the positive impacts of TOPS and visitor traffic via newsletters, local advertising, and community presentations.

Glossary

Brand Positioning

How a destination presents its brand in the marketplace via its advertising, creative, media placement and promotional efforts. The brand position will reflect how the destination is perceived and which target markets it attracts. A brand is the marketing persona for the destination.

Categorized as New vs. Repeat

Clients who are either new to the facility or have used the facility for past business.

Competitive Set Market

Destinations or convention centers with whom JCVB competes.

Direct Spending

Purchases of goods and services by the visitor, the JCVB, the Jackson Convention Complex, event planners and vendors—i.e., all expenditures directly related to the hospitality industry.

EEI

Estimated economic impact.

FAM trips

Trips provided by the facility or the Convention and Visitors Bureau that familiarize potential clients with the destination and the facility.

First Priority Business

Business that has achieved the level of peak room nights or expenditure levels required to be first priority business.

First Priority Using 300 Rooms Peak as the Qualifier

In order to qualify as first priority business, there must be 300 rooms booked on at least one night during the event.

Higher-Rated

Comparing one piece of business against another and determining which one is rated a better piece of business based on room nights generated and/or expenditure levels.

Indirect Spending

Purchase of goods and services that are not directly made by the visitor, convention attendee or tour group.

Induced Spending

Economic activity generated as a result of the direct expenditures by visitors. For example, a restaurant employee makes more wages because he or she is working more hours in order to service the visitor industry. This employee takes the extra money and buys a new car. This type of economic activity is “induced” by the fact that the visitor spending created a higher level of income for the employee.

Light Hospitality

Low cost engagement of clients or stakeholders using small snacks or beverages.

Lost Business

Business actively pursued by the facility that was not achieved due to the client not booking or facility unable to have desired space, calendar dates or amenities required.

Lower-Rated Business

Business that generates a limited number of room nights and/or expenditure levels.

Management of the Competitive Sets

Adjusting those destinations or convention centers with whom you compete based on the type of business. In other words, Jackson may compete with Baton Rouge for SMERF business, but with Shreveport for corporate business.

On Peak

Achieving the amount of rooms that were projected for the event.

Peak Room Nights

Highest amount of rooms during the course of an event in a room block.

Peak Threshold

Number of overnight guest rooms a place of business has to achieve in order to secure its projected highest number of overnight rooms on one day during the event.

Pending

Amount of business actively booked, but waiting to be finalized per contract.

Pipeline

Amount of future business that is currently definite.

Quality Classified

Preferred pieces of business that generate the highest return on investment.

Quality of Account

Account booked by facility that yields high revenue in either food and beverage or hotel room nights.

Return on Investment (ROI)

Amount of dollar return one receives when compared to the amount expended to achieve that return.

Room Nights

Individual rooms booked per night.

Sales Blitzes

Shorter period of time, typically one or two days where the CVB targets a specific city that is typically considered regional business and engages as many clients as possible during that time.

Sales Missions

Sales activity that typically involves multiple days and travel to a specific destination with very specific objectives and goals.

Saturate the Long-Term Book

Book as much business as possible in the future as defined by the long-term book, which is typically 18 months into the future.

SMERF

Tourism industry term for the markets that relate to society, military, educational religious or fraternal visitors.

Total Rooms

Amount of rooms booked by a specific piece of business.

Yield Management

Process of securing the highest revenue producing business for each day, week or month of the year depending on the market conditions on each day, week, or month.

Agency Response



November 20, 2018

Mr. James Barber, Executive Director
Joint Legislative Committee on Performance Evaluation and Expenditure Review
501 North West Street, Suite 301-A
Jackson, Mississippi 39201 United States

Dr. Mr. Barber,

OPPORTUNITY! That is our first reaction to the final report you have compiled in reference to the Jackson Convention and Visitor's Bureau *dba* Visit Jackson. The Board of Directors and Visit Jackson Executive Staff are in unanimous alignment in the belief that this report provides the impetus for much needed institutional change which will help the Bureau better evolve into a more efficient and effective destination marketing organization.

As you are aware, JCVB has undergone recent and significant changes in executive leadership, even as the PEER Committee report was being finalized. This marks the first steps in working toward deploying the recommendations set forth in the report.





Tactics implemented prior to receipt of the PEER Report:

- Interim President/CEO met with Mayor Chokwe A. Lumumba regarding board appointments;
- Streamlined human capital structure resulting in the reduction of the personnel services budget line within identified Destination International standards, reduction from 43% to 40% (currently).
Projected personnel services for FY 2020 is 38%.
 - Allocated human capital with research and stakeholder engagement focus;
 - Challenged staff, and provided resources, to attain professional certifications and continuing education;
- Implementation of a 360° vertical communication strategy;
- Re-evaluation of the sales market mix and goals;
- Redefined employee goals and departmental budgets accompanied with resources including training, performance-based employee evaluations and accountability;

Tactical opportunities that will be implemented by Visit Jackson:

- Engagement of a consultant to execute a revised Strategic Planning Process, March 2019;
 - Preparation and discussion with the industry regarding implementing a Jackson Tourism Master Plan;
 - Conduct destination research to provide framework for updated FY 2019 Marketing Plan;
 - Research to update Estimated Economic Impact (EEI) calculations;
 - Calculate and report Return on Investment (ROI) for all business operations;
 - Discussions with surrounding tourism officials to include Regional Tourism Partnerships and opportunities to attract larger conferences and events to the Greater Jackson Area;




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- Re-evaluate all Visit Jackson financial underwriting, grant, sponsorship, and quality of life participation protocols, June 2019;
- Development and adoption of a budget reserve policy, October 2019;
- Formation of Industry Advisory Committees & Focus Groups, January 2019;
 - Sales, Marketing, Signature Projects/Events, and Advocacy;
- Joint Staff Retreat with the Jackson Convention Complex, February 2019
- Development of a collaborative sales Strategic Plan with the Jackson Convention Complex to successfully identify “city-wide” conferences/meetings, October 2019;
- Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system training and adherence to national industry best practices, January 2019;
- Enhance partnerships with local event professionals/promoters;
 - The industry advisory committees will assist in grant and sponsorship policy;
- Execution of impactful partner support initiatives, January 2019;
- Visit Jackson President & CEO will, three months prior to the expiration of any Board appointment, submit in writing, a letter to the Mayor and the appropriate constituency group notifying them of such and advise them of appropriate actions, December 2018.

As you are aware, the manner in which travelers - business, leisure, group, or otherwise - approach the concept of “travel” has evolved radically over the last ten years. The proliferation of interactive tools and the democratization of information have been at the forefront of this “travel revolution.” Moreover, just in the past few years we have witnessed the proverbial passing of the torch regarding generational spending on travel and tourism. Millennials, the most significant American generation since the Baby Boomers, now accounts for the plurality of travel dollars spent. With a new generation comes a new set of decision drivers, new interests, and new expectations. Fortunately, the city of Jackson’s tourism assets align well with this new generation. Further developments - recently completed, underway, and planned - are also set to boost our tourism portfolio. Successful implementation of the recommendations outlined in the recent PEER Committee report will assist Visit Jackson in optimizing its marketing efforts, streamline its operations, and fully capitalize on the strengths of the City with Soul, making Jackson a true destination market.

Opportunity! The PEER Committee report recognized it. So, do we. **The Board of Directors and executive leadership of JCVB are committed to realizing it.**

Sincerely,

 Robert L. Gibbs, Esq.
 Chairman


 Rickey L. Thigpen, MLS
 Interim President & CEO

PEER Committee Staff

James A. Barber, Executive Director

Legal and Reapportionment

Ted Booth, General Counsel
Ben Collins
Barton Norfleet

Administration

Alicia Russell-Gilbert
Deborah Hardy
Gale Taylor

Quality Assurance and Reporting

Tracy Bobo
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Performance Evaluation

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David Pray, Principal Analyst
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Taylor Mullins
Sarah Williamson
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Meri Clare Steelman

