

**2012-2017 Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan
Research and Technical Assistance (RTA) Committee Meeting
East Lansing, December 2, 2013**

Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions – All
2. Consent Items
 - a) Notes from July 29 meeting (attached)
 - b) Minutes from September 20 and November 8 Travel Commission Meetings – available at <http://ref.michigan.org/mtr/travelcommission/>
 - c) Notes from other Implementation Committees – from PPGS September 12 and November 1 (attached)
 - d) Requests for Preliminary Research/Funding – from PMC (attached)
3. Presentation on the former MSU Travel, Tourism, and Recreation Resource Center – Dr. Don Holecek , Professor Emeritus, MSU
4. Review of Tourism Research Centers in US – All
5. Next Steps and Next Meeting – Sarah Nicholls

**2012-2017 Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan
Research and Technical Assistance (RTA) Committee Meeting
East Lansing, 10am - 1:30pm, December 2, 2013**

Meeting Notes

In attendance: Susan Sherer (Co-Chair), Dan Sippel, Scott Watkins, Sarah Nicholls, Louise Smith. Also present for first half of meeting: Professor Emeritus Don Holecek, Michigan State University.

Absent: Linda Freybler, Heather Khan, Melisa Thom-Brown.

Welcome and Introductions – Made by all.

Consent Items –

- a) Notes from July 29 meeting – reviewed and approved.
- b) Minutes from September 20 and November 8 Travel Commission Meetings – available at <http://ref.michigan.org/mtr/travelcommission/> – reviewed, no discussion.
- c) Notes from other Implementation Committees – from PPGS September 12 and November 1 – reviewed, no discussion.
- d) Requests for Preliminary Research/Funding – from PMC – reviewed and approved.

Presentation on the former MSU Travel, Tourism, and Recreation Resource Center (TTRRC) – Provided by Dr. Don Holecek, Professor Emeritus, MSU.

Don provided a history of the TTRRC (<http://tourismcenter.msu.edu>). Formed in 1985 with a general fund appropriation (see The Origin of the Travel, Tourism and Recreation Resource Center <http://tourismcenter.msu.edu/buttons/Origin.htm>). Collated and collected a huge volume of data, served as an information clearing house for the industry. Primarily paper based – hard copy reports, etc. – any new version would need to incorporate web-based technology. Listings of activities, publications, etc. available at <http://tourismcenter.msu.edu/buttons/ResearchPrograms.htm>

As a reminder, from the July 29 2013 notes: “Key elements of good research – timely, reliable, accurate, at an appropriate spatial resolution, and market (place + activity) specific. Travel Michigan purchases three major datasets/reports [D.K. Shifflet (spending, volume, satisfaction, value), Longwoods (awareness, ROI), Smith Travel (hotel occupancy, ADR, RevPAR)]. But these are primarily at the state level; even when county level numbers are available, the sample size is usually too small to be of use. The industry has indicated a desire for finer scale data that can be of use at the level of the individual entity or community.” Also recall that much of the data that TM buys is proprietary – it cannot share anything other than the key, state-level numbers such as spending, ROI on Pure Michigan.

Don also reported on the PPGS meeting attended by Michigan House Tourism Committee Chair Peter Pettalia and Minority Vice Chair Robert Kosowski, at which tourism research and the funding thereof was discussed. Auto manufacturing and agriculture both receive substantial state funding to finance critical industry research – why not tourism too? As is the case for agriculture, many tourism enterprises are very small, family-owned/operated businesses. They are too small to fund their research needs and often lack the skills to effectively use any data or research that may be accessible to them. Unlike agriculture, however, there is no tourism equivalent to USDA or MDARD to support the tourism industry – this could/should be the role of a state-wide tourism center.

Review of Tourism Research Centers in US – Sarah and Louise prepared a listing/summary of the centers similar to TTRRC throughout the US. Those most similar to TTRRC in terms of function and funding include Arizona, Minnesota, Florida, South Carolina and Montana. Stable funding = critical to long term success. Centers at land grant institutions such as MSU depend on a mix of public funding via the university, the acquisition of grants from agencies and organizations, and consulting contracts. Land grant schools also benefit from the existence of extension offices/agents whose role it is to disseminate information from the university to the community, provide training, etc. This is especially critical for the smaller entities in terms of an effective delivery system to get the data/information/research findings to the entities that could use them most to make better/more effective business and investment decisions.

General discussion of funding mechanisms – Dependence on public funding versus establishment as the go-to place for data/information/research that the industry is willing to pay for (or a mix). Need to establish the value of a research entity to the industry – what is in it for them?

General discussion of (perceptions of) value of tourism – (How) Do other industries that are positively impacted by tourism perceive the tourism industry and its value/importance? Relates to broader positioning of the industry, as an economic driver, a creator of income and jobs. Noted that CCP committee is in the process of identifying most relevant associations with which tourism industry should better communicate/could partner.

Next Meeting – Keep to 2-3 hours, before or after lunch.

Next Steps –

- Re. Objective Two (*Develop a financially sustainable online information system to capture and share relevant industry research*)
 - Survey of CVBs (and then full industry?) re. their current and potential data/information/research needs.
 - Interviews with key industry members re. their data/research needs – e.g., Mike Finney, Mike Busley, Annie Rummel.

- Comparison with other organizations in MI, e.g., the Center for Automotive Research, Talent 2025, the MI University Research Corridor, Ann Arbor SPARK, LEAP, Grand Action.
 - Determine who the customer of the center/system would be.
 - Develop a value statement/proposition for the potential research center/system.
 - Suggest a name for the potential research center/system.
- Preparation for presentation by Co-Chairs at MTSP session at Governor's Conference (2-5pm, March 11, Grand Traverse Resort).