

**2012-2017 Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan
Research and Technical Assistance (RTA) Committee Meeting
Kellogg Center, East Lansing, 9:30am-1pm, September 17, 2014**

Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions – All
2. Review of December 2 2013 Meeting Notes – All
3. Review of Plan Process and of RTA Goal/Objectives – Sarah Nicholls
4. Update from other Implementation Committees – Sarah Nicholls
5. Review/Discussion of Results of CVB Survey – All
6. Next Steps and Next Meeting – Sarah Nicholls

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Meeting Notes

In attendance: John Madigan (Co-Chair), Greg Ayers, Linda Freybler, Heather Khan, Dan Sippel, Sarah Nicholls.

Absent: Melisa Thom-Brown (Co-Chair).

Welcome and Introductions – The committee welcomed two new members: Travel Commissioner (as of August 2014) John Madigan, General Manager/Co-Owner, Pictured Rocks Cruises and Greg Ayers, President & CEO, Discover Kalamazoo. John will replace Susan Sherer as the TC Co-Chair of the RTA committee.

Review of December 2 2013 Meeting Notes – No additions or changes made.

Review of Plan Process and RTA Goal/Objectives – Since the committee has not met since December and given the addition of two new members, Sarah provided an overview of the MTSP plan process and the RTA goal/objectives. Noted that with the Travel Commission's development of a funding/governance structure for the implementation of the MTSP in spring 2014, the RTA committee's role relative to *Objective One Define and prioritize the research and technical needs of the other seven plan goals* has essentially been shifted to the TC. This leaves *Objective 2 Develop a financially sustainable online information system to capture and share relevant industry research*. Discussion of several items previously discussed on December 2, including:

The former MSU Travel, Tourism, and Recreation Resource Center (TTRRC) – (<http://tourismcenter.msu.edu>). Formed in 1985 with a general fund appropriation. 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>

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/Discussion of Results of CVB Survey –

Results/report reviewed. Twenty-eight responses received. Role of RTA is to make recommendations re. how CVBs (and ultimately other industry entities) can achieve their data and research goals. Noted again that Travel Michigan’s commissioned research is not available at the community level. Will be important to have new TM VP identify his/her approach to/opinions about data/research.

Discussion of replicating this survey with other types of tourism entity, especially Michigan’s major attractions, to assess their research activities and needs – Sarah did attempt this but response was minimal.

Discussion of developing a protocol for a visitor survey, for use by interested CVBs; protocol would contain suggested questions as well as information about how to conduct a random survey. Could be designed in paper and online/app-based form. Would be especially useful to have multiple CVBs employing the same instrument since would allow for comparison across different geographic areas if CVBs would be willing to share their results. Key questions would relate to visitor demographics, information sources, and satisfaction/intent to return and recommend.

Further discussion of TTRRC and similar still-existing centres around the nation.