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Plan of Action FY 2017 Central Iowa Tourism Region

Mission Statement

To enhance tourism in Central Iowa through information, education, and promotion in cooperation with government and business.

Executive Summary

The Central Iowa Tourism Region, also known as CITER, is a nonprofit organization that was incorporated in 1987. CITER is one of three tourism regions in the state of Iowa, and the only organization devoted exclusively to enhancing and developing the tourism industry in central Iowa.

The region encompasses a 35 county area between the Minnesota and Missouri borders. Membership in the region is available to the 35 counties and to businesses and organizations within these counties. A multi-property membership is available to businesses with multiple locations in the region. Organizations and businesses located in adjoining counties outside of the region are eligible to join as a neighbor member, but are required to have membership in their own regional organization before becoming a CITER member. Varying benefits are associated with each membership level.

The mission of the Central Iowa Tourism Region is to enhance tourism in Central Iowa through information, education and promotion in cooperation with government and business. The activities to achieve this mission are carried out by the membership of the region through project committees, the board of directors and region staff.

The FY 2017 Action Plan is intended to guide the board of directors, committees and region staff by providing a blueprint for activities to accomplish the goals of the organization for 2016-2017.

General Goals

- Increase the number of visitors and dollars spent by visitors in Central Iowa.
- Increase awareness among attractions, events and businesses about the services provided by the region.
- Increase industry participation and membership in CITER.
- Provide outstanding continuing educational opportunities to the membership.
- Maintain a strong and effective organization.
- Utilize public/private partnerships to accomplish region projects.
- Raise the profile of the tourism industry and build support of the industry by elected officials.
- Support initiatives outlined in the Iowa Tourism Industry Sector Plan and take a lead role where identified.

Membership

Goal: Retain current members and continue to recruit new members to the region.

Objectives:

A. Work with the membership committee to continue recruitment and retention program activities.

Action Steps

1. Evaluate current membership benefits and explore potential new opportunities.
2. Hold member orientation/refresher sessions at region meetings at key times of the year. These sessions provide current and potential members the opportunity to learn more about region programs and the benefits of membership.
3. Communicate membership benefits and region policies through programs to be determined by the membership committee.
4. Offer members the opportunity to receive free meeting registrations by bringing a member prospect to CITR meetings.
5. Make personal contact with new members including a welcome email or phone call and new member orientation packet. Continue to recognize new members and member prospects attending their first meeting at region meetings.
6. Send orientation materials and make personal contact with new staff members at member organizations when staff changes occur.
7. Solicit leads for potential new members from contact lists available from the Iowa Tourism Office, members and other sources.
8. Encourage members to provide membership information and recruitment packets to potential members in their community or area.
9. Produce membership materials including membership application form, benefits summary and membership orientation materials.
10. Encourage members to become involved with region committees.
11. Work to increase private memberships and retain existing members.

Budget: \$250

Responsibility: Region Staff, Membership Committee and Members

B. Work with county representatives and boards of supervisors to maintain involvement of all 35 counties within the region.

Action Steps

1. Provide resource information to county appointed representatives so they can communicate the benefits of county participation to their boards of supervisors, along with regular membership communications.
2. Send regular updates to county boards of supervisors including annual report, travel guide, meeting schedule, availability of the Iowa Tourism Grant Program, and county benefits summary sheet.
3. Provide county representatives a copy of the invoice sent to their county auditor each year, along with supporting materials they can share with their board of supervisors.
4. Send annual allocation requests to those counties that require this information in advance for their budgeting process. Make in-person presentations by request.

Responsibility: Region Staff and County Representatives

Education

Goal: Provide quality educational opportunities for CITR members.

Objectives:

A. Determine educational needs of members.

Action Steps

1. Continue to solicit input from members at region meetings, and explore additional opportunities to survey members about potential topics and speakers.
2. Work with education committee to select topics and speakers for seminars held in conjunction with region meetings.
3. Utilize technology to deliver/enhance educational opportunities.
4. Communicate with the other regions, state staff and other resource providers to share speaker ideas.

B. Provide quality educational seminars at CITR meetings.

Action Steps

1. Continue to offer two-part sessions, when possible to maximize the level of training offered at region meetings, budget and travel by members.
2. Encourage members to take what they learn at region meetings to the next level. Create opportunities for members to share how they are utilizing or implementing strategies from region meetings.
3. Host a Tourism Town Meeting with the Iowa Tourism Office.
4. Hold Annual Meeting to conduct election of board members, recognition of region volunteers and launch programs for the coming year.
5. Work in partnership with other organizations including the Iowa Group Travel Association to hold joint meetings and seminars to maximize resources.
6. Investigate additional partnerships to supplement resources for training opportunities.

Budget: \$8,500

Responsibility - Region Staff, CITR Education & Annual Meeting Committees, Attendees and Members

Grant Programs

Goal: Organizations and businesses are aware of opportunities to apply for funding through the Iowa Tourism Grant Program and Iowa Tourism Conference Scholarships.

Objectives:

A. Iowa Tourism Office Grant Program.

Action Steps

1. Promote availability of the grant program to region members and county representatives.
2. Provide list of possible grant review committee members or appointments to the Iowa grants committee, as needed/requested by the Iowa Tourism Office. Encourage members and representatives to participate in the grant committees, and to serve as leaders for the industry.

Responsibility: CITR Board, Grant Committee Members, Region Staff and Members

B. Iowa Tourism Conference Scholarship Program.

Action Steps

1. Develop timeframe, revise application and post new applications on the website.
2. Promote availability of scholarships to industry members.
3. Recruit review committee members as needed and facilitate review process and selection of applicants.
4. Administer the scholarship program including funding notifications, preparation of project agreements, project monitoring and reimbursement.

Responsibility: Grant Committee Members, Region Staff and Applicants

Budget: \$2,100

Legislative

Goal: Elected officials will support tourism programs in Iowa and the central region.

Objectives:

A. Support the legislative goals of the Travel Federation of Iowa.

Action Steps

1. Appoint four representatives from the region and the CITR Executive Director to serve on the TFI Board of Directors.
2. Provide financial support to TFI.
3. Assist with securing District Leaders from the region.
4. Work with the TFI lobbyists to schedule advocacy training for District Leaders and others from the region.
5. Serve on TFI related committees.
6. Inform region members about legislative issues.
7. Provide additional appointments to state boards and committees as requested or as opportunities arise.

Budget: \$5,000

Responsibility: Region Staff, CITR Board, TFI Board, District Leaders and Region Members

B. Provide assistance on local governmental issues as requested.

Action Steps

1. Provide resource materials and statistical information to local organizations, communities and areas.
2. Assist local tourism groups on an as-needed basis to develop funding streams for tourism and plans for tourism.

Responsibility: Region Staff and Members

Marketing

Goal: Increase visitation to Central Iowa and increase awareness by potential visitors.

Objectives:

A. Produce and distribute the annual CITR travel guide.

Action Steps:

1. Secure advertisers to support production of the 2017 guide.
2. Request updates for the travel guide from members and county representatives. Utilize information provided to prepare updates to the content of the guide so the publication is as up-to-date and accurate as possible for travelers.
3. Work with the brochure committee on the design of the guide, quantities to be printed, potential changes or improvements to the guide, etc.
4. Offer advertisers in the guide a reader response listing and forward leads when received.
5. Continued distribution of the travel guide. Distribution includes the Iowa Welcome Centers, inquiries from the web site, in-office requests by telephone and mail, fulfillment, tradeshow, and other special requests including quantities for meetings & conventions, new residents and employees, and other distribution points.

Budget: Project is self-funded through ad sales

Responsibility: Region Staff, Brochure Committee & Advertisers

B. Provide an opportunity for region members to meet one-on-one with tour planners at the Travel Iowa Marketplace.

Action Steps

1. Survey attendees annually to determine future needs of the marketplace.
2. Secure meeting space through a bid process.
3. Work with planning committee to determine budget, theme, schedule and policies for the marketplace.
4. Coordinate all planning and implementation of the show including exhibitor registration, tour planner registration, sponsorships, etc.

Budget: Marketplace is self-supporting.

Responsibility: Region Staff, Planning Committee appointed by the CTR Board of Directors and the Iowa Group Travel Association (IGTA) Board of Directors and Exhibitors

C. Increase travel to Central Iowa through participation in tradeshow.

Action Steps

1. Research potential participation in tradeshow as budget allows.
2. Communicate plans with the Iowa Tourism Office, Iowa Group Travel Association and region members so they are informed of CTR's participation and can determine plans accordingly.
3. Distribute lead information and encourage members to send additional follow up information.
4. Respond to leads and inquiries generated by the region's participation in IGTA.

Budget: to be determined.

Responsibility: Region Staff and Members

D. Serve as a referral source for planners seeking meeting space in Central Iowa.

Action Steps

1. Forward leads and inquiries to region members from those planning meetings, conventions, reunions, etc.

Responsibility: Region Staff and Members

Special Projects

Goal: Identify and undertake special projects on behalf of CTR that further the goals of the Iowa Tourism Office and benefit the tourism industry.

Objectives:

A. Identify potential special projects and prioritize these

Action Steps:

1. Identify potential ideas for special projects.
2. Develop recommendations and select priority projects for the proposal development stage.

B. Develop special project proposals and submit to the Iowa Tourism Office/IEDA

Action Steps:

1. Research potential costs for special projects and develop a budget for each project.
2. Research potential cooperative projects with the other tourism regions.
3. Identify taskforce members from the board and membership to review and provide feedback regarding special projects.
4. Prepare and submit special project proposals to the Iowa Tourism Office/IEDA.

C. Implementation of special projects approved by the Iowa Tourism Office/IEDA

Action Steps:

1. Committee members for each special project will be recruited upon approval from the Iowa Tourism Office/IEDA.
2. Develop action steps and plans for identified special projects.
3. Special projects selected for 2016-2017
 - a. Iowa Tourism Leadership Institute
 - b. Customer Service/Hospitality Training
 - c. Power of Travel Day

Operations - CITR Board of Directors

Goal: Lead a strong organization that represents the interests of the members of the region.

Action Steps:

1. Board members will serve as leaders and advocates for the region.
2. The board of directors establishes region programs, sets policy, approves the annual budget & action plan and monthly financial statements.
3. Officers of the region serve as the finance/executive and nominating committees.
4. Assist with identifying and developing leaders within the organization.
5. Meet with staff at the Iowa Tourism Office, IEDA as needed.
6. Conduct the annual performance review of the executive director.

Responsibility: Board of Directors

Operations - Region Staff

Goal: Facilitate a strong and effective organization that assists region members, improves the tourism industry in the region and promotes visiting Central Iowa.

Action Steps:

1. Support region committees and assist all committees with achieving their missions.
2. Oversee all day-to-day operations of the region including lead fulfillment, membership & other communications, finances of the region, report preparation and maintain the records of the organization.
3. Represent the region at tradeshow and marketplaces as budget allows.
4. Represent the region to other state and regional associations and organizations.
5. Assist organizations with tourism planning and technical assistance.
6. Develop annual budget with monthly projections of income and expenses, preparation of monthly financial reports, quarterly and annual reports and all other financial reporting.
7. Ensure compliance with contracts for funding the region.
8. Support programs of the Iowa Tourism Office/IEDA.
9. Participate in monthly conference calls as scheduled by the Iowa Tourism Office/IEDA.
10. Assist the Iowa Tourism Office/IEDA by promoting the office's guest blog opportunity, and referring potential bloggers to the appropriate contacts at Iowa Tourism Office/IEDA.
11. Assist the Iowa Tourism Office/IEDA by referring industry members to the traveliowa.com database, and conveying the importance of keeping their event and attraction up-to-date on the Iowa Tourism Office/IEDA website.
12. Prepare and submit monthly reports to the Iowa Tourism Office/IEDA.
13. Prepare and submit annual report as required by the FY 17 contract.
14. Arrange for an independent annual review of the region's finances.

Budget: Operations

Responsibility: Region Staff

CITR Committee Mission Statements

FY 2017 • July 2016 - June 2017

Annual Meeting Committee

This committee selects the site, theme and assists with the region's annual meeting.

Brochure Committee

This committee makes recommendations for production of the CITR Travel Guide.

Education Committee

This committee determines topics and speakers for the seminars held in conjunction with region meetings.

CITR Scholarship Grant Review Committee

This committee reviews applications and awards scholarships to attend the Iowa Tourism Conference.

Membership Committee

This committee develops the membership recruitment and retention program including a CITR orientation program.

Travel Iowa Marketplace Committee

This committee works in partnership with the Iowa Group Travel Association to plan and implement the Travel Iowa Marketplace tradeshow.

Special Projects Committees

These committees will coordinate efforts undertaken through the special projects approved by the Iowa Tourism Office/IEDA.

Iowa Tourism Grant Program

CITR will encourage participation in the Iowa Tourism Office grants committee and review committees as requested.

Iowa Department of Transportation – Tourism Signage Committee

CITR will appoint one representative to the committee that reviews applications for tourism related signage programs coordinated by the Iowa Department of Transportation.

CITR bylaws require that you be a county appointed representative or private member to serve on region committees.