



2026 Business & Marketing Plan

OLYMPIA | LACEY | TUMWATER

BUCODA | GRAND MOUND | RAINIER | ROCHESTER | TENINO | YELM

Brewery Park at Tumwater Falls

2026 stands out as a defining year for Thurston County. With a very large soccer tournament coming to the region, bringing international attention, we have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to showcase the people, places, and experiences that make our community so extraordinary.

We are proud to present Experience Olympia & Beyond's 2026 Business and Marketing Plan, thoughtfully designed to advance our vision to be known as a top travel destination in the Pacific Northwest. This plan builds upon the successes of previous years and the Ten-Year Destination Master Plan, setting a strategic course for Thurston County's destination marketing, sales, and development.

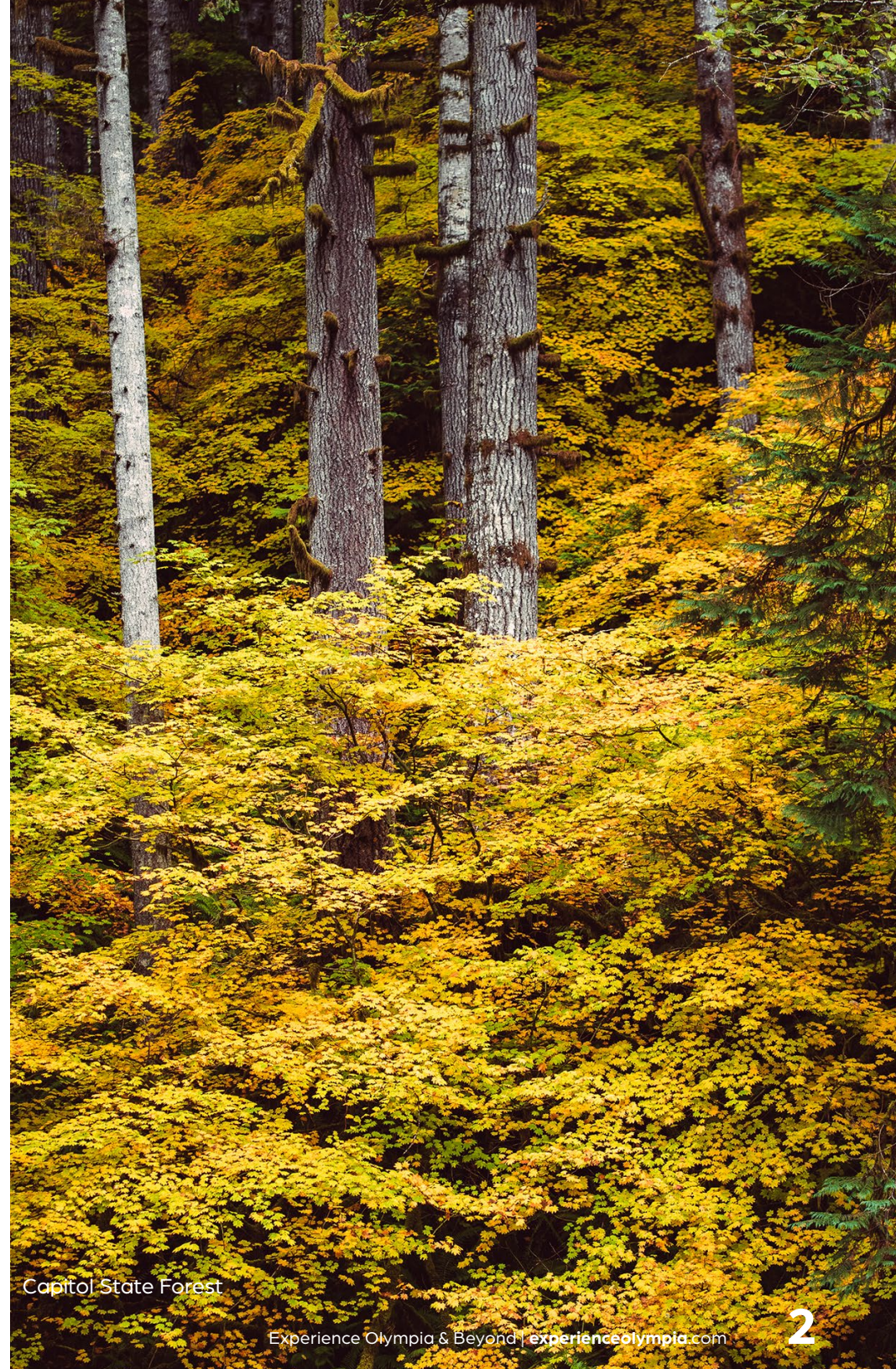
As I step into the role of Board President at Experience Olympia & Beyond, I am filled with immense joy and gratitude for the opportunity to help guide this organization into such a transformative moment. Together, with your partnership, we will continue to strengthen our economy, elevate our quality of life, and welcome visitors from near and far.

Here's to an extraordinary journey in 2026.



A handwritten signature in grey ink that reads "Wysocki".

Shina Wysocki,
Board President,
Owner of Chelsea Farms
Oyster Bar & Chelsea
Farms



Capitol State Forest



Stottle Winery – Lacey



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Nisqually Valley BBQ Rally – Yelm



Nineveh Assyrian Restaurant – Olympia

Experience Olympia & Beyond (EOB) is the official destination marketing organization (DMO) for Thurston County, a role established through long-standing partnerships with local governments, regional tourism partners, and the county's lodging industry.

This designation is further reinforced by our responsibilities outlined in RCW 35.101, which governs Tourism Promotion Areas, and RCW 67.28.1816, which governs the eligible uses of lodging tax funds for destination marketing organizations. These frameworks authorize EOB to steward public and private tourism funds, market the destination to individuals and groups 50+ miles away, and lead coordinated regional tourism strategies on behalf of Thurston County.

We provide visitors with comprehensive tourism and trip-planning resources, enticing them to make Thurston County their next destination. By focusing on high-value travelers and enhancing quality of place, EOB plays a vital role in strengthening the county's economic health and long-term resilience. Grounded in data-driven strategies and industry best practices, EOB designs impactful marketing campaigns, partners closely with community organizations, and champions the needs of both the tourism industry and residents to support a thriving visitor economy.

EOB serves as the county's unified voice for tourism, ensuring that Thurston County is strategically promoted, competitively positioned, and consistently represented as a premier destination.

Our Mission

We reveal the most iconic Thurston County experiences for the world to discover.

Our Vision

To be known as a top travel destination in the Pacific Northwest.

Our Values

Accountability: We take responsibility for our words, actions, results, and everything in between.

Collaboration: We do our best work when we recognize one another's strengths—we listen, support, and adapt together.

Respect: We value diverse perspectives and treat people with dignity and professionalism.

Trust: The relationships we build are rooted in our ability to instill confidence that we are experts in our field, our actions are fair, and our behavior is responsible and reliable.

Integrity: Our organization is transparent and firmly rooted in the highest ethical standards.

Empathy: We care about the well-being of others and show kindness and caring every day.

Staff



Emily Brooks

*Director of Marketing &
Community Engagement*
emily@experienceolympia.com
(360) 704-7544 ext. 6



Kelly Campbell

*Vice President
Finance & Administration*
kelly@experienceolympia.com
(360) 704-7544 ext. 7



Melissa Elkins

*Director of Research &
Information Systems*
melissa@experienceolympia.com
(360) 704-7544 ext. 5



Heidi Roth

Content Manager
heidi@experienceolympia.com
(360) 704-7544 ext. 4



Shauna Stewart

*Interim Chief Executive
Officer*
shaunas@experienceolympia.com
(360) 704-7544 ext. 2

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*Hands On Children's Museum
Emeritus*

Christina Daniels

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Funding

Experience Olympia & Beyond is funded through a variety of sources including Tourism Promotion Area (TPA) assessments, lodging taxes, private funds and grants. A key objective of the organization is to increase and further diversify the organization funding mix, while remaining committed to replenishing tourism funds.

About Private Funding

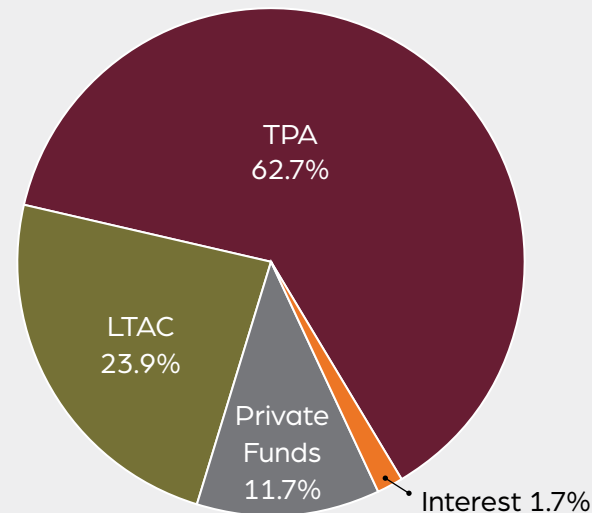
Experience Olympia & Beyond staff raise supplemental revenue from a variety of sources—paid advertising memberships from local tourism-related businesses and organizations, paid sponsorships from various local organizations, and event revenue garnered from ticket sales and in-kind contributions. These funds are used to offset expenses that are not eligible to be paid using encumbered funding.

Sustainable Tourism Funding

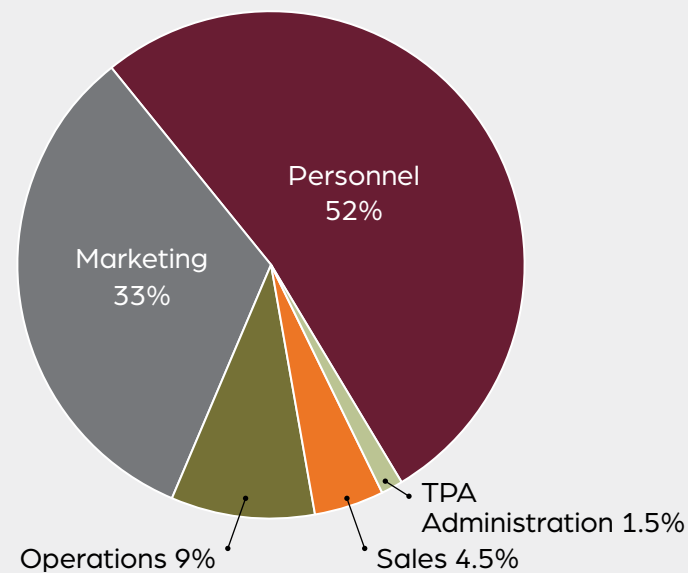
Tourism funding is essential to maintaining Thurston County's presence in a highly competitive tourism landscape. These funds allow us to reach new audiences, promote the region's most compelling experiences, support local businesses, and attract overnight visitors who contribute directly to lodging tax revenue and enable EOB to reinvest in marketing to potential visitors. Continued commitment and investment strengthen Thurston County's ability to compete with other destinations, bringing more visitors, increasing spending at local and small businesses, and supporting the tax revenues that benefit all nine jurisdictions and residents.

2026 Budget = \$1,416,322

The 2026 Budget was presented and approved by governing authorities in the summer/fall of 2025.



2026 Expenses





About Our TPA

Terms of Tourism Promotion Areas are governed by RCW Chapter 35.101 and administered by a professional service agreement between Experience Olympia & Beyond and Thurston County. Our professional service agreement was established in 2013, and went into effect in 2014, with the support of hoteliers, who voted to approve a sustainable self-assessment funding model paid by each visitor, each night they choose to stay in Thurston County. In 2026 TPA collections are budgeted to represent 62.7% of our budget.

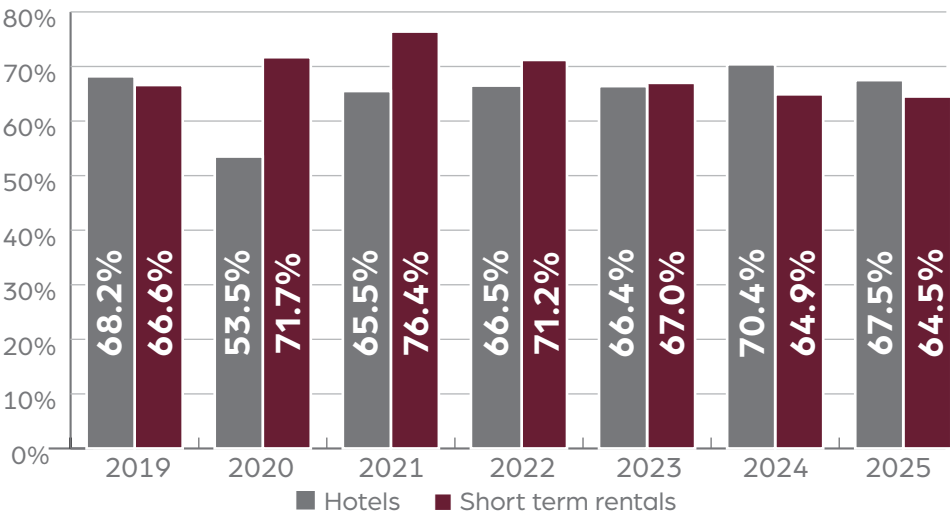
About Lodging Tax Funding

Experience Olympia & Beyond applies for lodging tax funding from Thurston County municipalities that have lodging properties collecting and distributing lodging tax awards. This tax is paid by visitors when they stay overnight in paid accommodations such as a hotel or short-term rental. Terms of lodging tax funds are governed by RCW Chapter 67.28.1816. In 2026 lodging tax awards are budgeted to represent 23.9% of our budget, making this funding essential to support the level of marketing and visitor outreach required to sustain EOB's marketing efforts of local and regional attractions and ultimately grow the county's lodging tax revenues through increased visitation and paid overnight stays.

Goals & Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Marketing Goals	2026 Goal
Unique Web Visits	471,478
New Social Media Audience	4,425
Consumer E-Newsletter Subscribers	15,106
Direct Visitor Guide Requests	5,423
Earned Media Placements	90

THURSTON COUNTY ACCOMMODATIONS ANNUAL OCCUPANCY RATE %



In addition to tracking our published goals, we assess the health of Thurston County tourism using research tools, including Tourism Economics economic impact, in-house visitor sentiment, Placer.ai/Datafy geofencing, and Smith Travel Research/AirDNA accommodations data relating to occupancy and average daily rate.

2025 Average Inventory of Available Room/Units:
Hotels = 2,678 Short-Term Rentals = 474

Goals & Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Group Sales Goals	2026 Goal
Leads	10
Lead Room Nights	85
Booked Leads	8
Booked Room Nights	85

Sports Sales Goals	2026 Goal
Leads	11
Lead Room Nights	6,017
Booked Leads	15
Booked Room Nights	6,841

Tourism plays a vital role in strengthening Thurston County's economy and supporting the businesses and communities that make our region unique. EOB gives the area a unified voice, one that promotes local attractions, hotels, restaurants, small towns, and events so they can be discovered by new visitors (50+ miles away) to the destination. EOB's work helps drive visitor spending, increases lodging tax collections and supports local jobs. The revenue (sales tax) generated by tourism strengthens public services, parks, community amenities, and the small businesses that make Thurston County unique. Tourism is a powerful economic engine that benefits every community, helping to generate revenue that offsets local taxes and reduces the financial burden on residents.

The Visitor Economy Drives Economic Impact



Source: Tourism Economics, 2024

Thurston County Visitor Spending by Sector



Audience Insights

EOB attracts high-value visitors to Thurston County — those with the highest likelihood of generating the most significant positive economic impact to the region with the least impact on the destination. We evaluate the make-up of our existing audience through a variety of research tools, and then use these insights to inform and refine our overall marketing strategy, ensuring our efforts are focused on attracting and engaging the audiences that best align with our destination goals.

Target Markets

Target markets are prioritized based on those who reside at least 50+ miles outside of Thurston County, most inclined to stay overnight in Thurston County paid lodging, and those who spend the most money within our destination. Of our 3.3 million visitors to Thurston County, 41.2 percent stay overnight, and account for 70.7 percent of all spending in our destination.

Top Arrival Markets by Total Visitors (50+ Miles Away)	Top Arrival Markets by Visitors Staying in Hotels (50+ Miles Away)
Vancouver, WA	Vancouver, WA
Portland, OR	Portland, OR
Seattle, WA	Longview, WA
Longview, WA	Seattle, WA
Everett, WA	Salem, OR

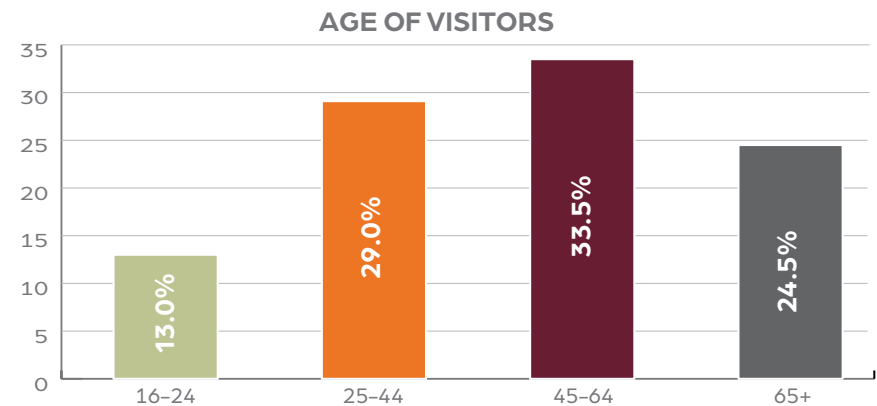
Source: Datafy (September 1, 2024 – August 31, 2025)



Shiny Prize – Olympia

Target Demographics

Target demographics are identified through regular audience research and surveys that help us understand who is most interested in visiting Thurston County. These insights reveal a diverse mix of individuals.



Source: Datafy (September 1, 2024 – August 31, 2025)

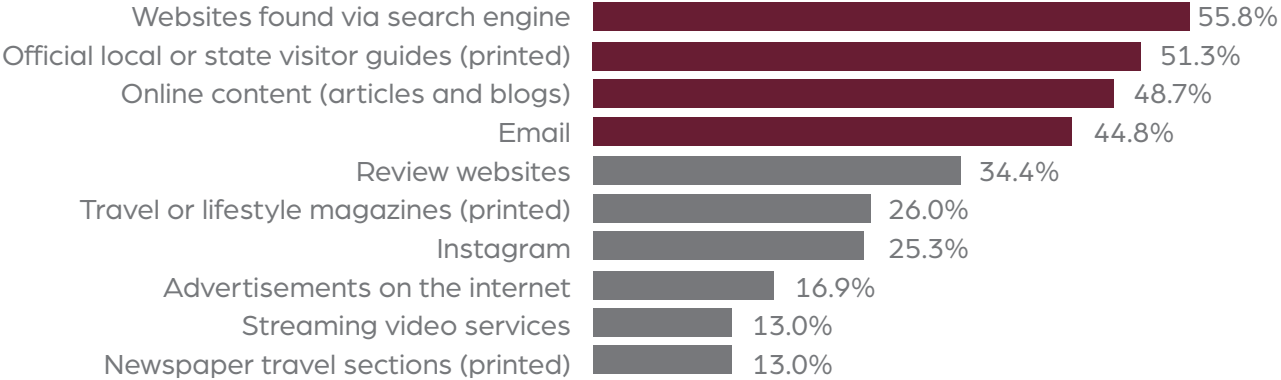


Swede Days – Rochester

Planning Resources

Today’s travelers plan their trips through search engines, AI tools, visitor guides and other online blogs or articles. Recognizing these behaviors, we invest in proven marketing strategies to inspire and inform potential visitors at every stage of their planning journey.

Top Travel Inspiration Resources



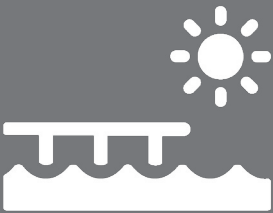
Source: 2025 Experience Olympia & Beyond Sentiment Study

Target Experiences

EOB strategies and tactics are informed by the experiences most important in influencing a potential visitor’s decision to visit our destination.



Scenic Beauty
93.3%



Waterfront
89.2%



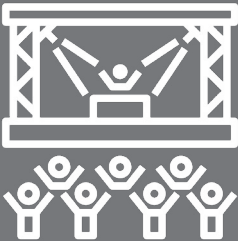
State Parks
87.4%



Dining
82.6%



Attractions / Museums
79.6%



Festivals / Events
73.9%



Heritage & Culture
71.5%



Rural Experiences
66.3%



The Arts
64.8%



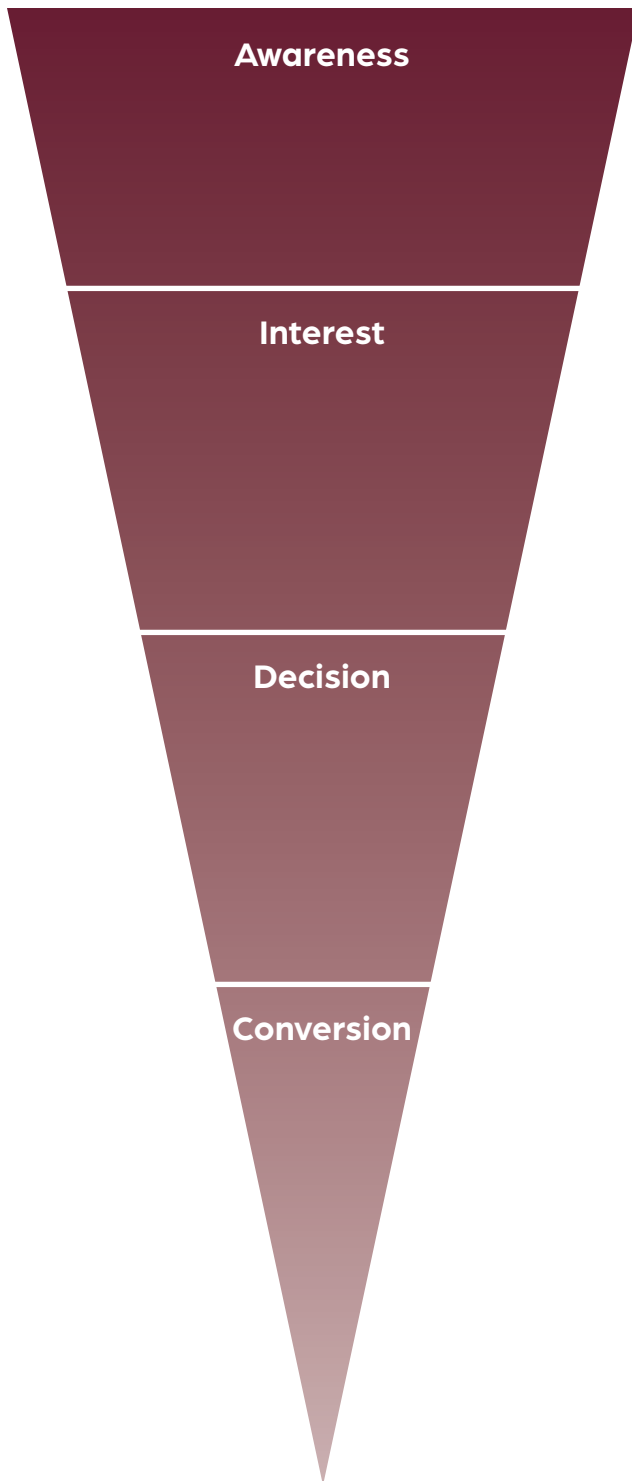
Cycling / Hiking
62.1%

Marketing Efforts

Experience Olympia & Beyond's marketing efforts are intentionally built around a holistic marketing funnel that guides potential visitors from initial awareness through the point of conversion. At the top of the funnel, broad-reaching tactics such as digital programmatic display advertising, social media, public relations, and advertisements in key publications introduce Thurston County to new audiences. As travelers move into the interest and decision stages, they engage with the website content, visitor guides, blogs, itineraries, and sign up for our newsletter. These resources are designed to inspire trip planning and highlight a range of compelling experiences. These efforts ultimately lead visitors toward booking decisions supported by partner listings, maps, planning tools, and group and sports sales outreach. After their visit, we continue to support travelers by ensuring they have access to helpful resources and fresh inspiration that encourages future return trips.

This funnel approach is integrated into our broader strategies and tactics, ensuring every initiative is aligned and purposeful. By using the funnel as a guiding framework, EOB ensures that all marketing activities are connected, data-informed, and tied to measurable outcomes, resulting in more overnight stays, stronger brand awareness, increased lodging tax and tourism promotion area revenue through higher hotel occupancy, and meaningful benefits for all tourism facing businesses and communities across Thurston County.





Awareness

Goal: Introduce Thurston County to new audiences and expand visibility.

- Digital programmatic display advertising
- Paid social media campaigns
- Public relations & earned media
- Print + digital placements in key publications
- Event sponsorship exposure
- SEO visibility + AI-optimized content

Interest

Goal: Provide inspiration and information that deepens curiosity.

- Website content (blogs, guides, itineraries, landing pages)
- Visitor & Community Guides
- Email newsletters
- Social media engagement
- Photography & video content
- Meeting & sporting events hotel leads
- Familiarization Tours

Decision

Goal: Support trip-planning and remove barriers to booking.

- Retargeted digital programmatic display advertising
- Hotel listings and partner referrals
- Maps, planning tools, FAQ content
- Event listings, festivals, and seasonal highlights
- Meeting & sporting events booked rooms

Conversion

Goal: Drive actual overnight stays and economic impact.

- Visitation volume of overnight visitors
- Ad exposed overnight visitors staying in paid accommodations
- Overnight visitors staying in paid accommodations
- Lodging occupancy, average daily rate, supply, demand
- Funding through TPA and LTAC lodging collections
- Measurement of overnight visitors in the Sentiment Study
- User generated content & social sharing (post-visit)

Strategic Planning

Experience Olympia & Beyond's Business & Marketing Plan outlines a comprehensive roadmap of initiatives designed to strengthen tourism in Thurston County. It reflects what we know about our tourism landscape – who our travelers are, target markets to advertise in, the trip-planning resources visitors rely on most, and, most importantly, why they choose to come here. This plan also aligns with the long-term priorities set forth in the county's Ten-Year Destination Master Plan, ensuring annual strategies support the communities' vision for tourism and is forged by partnerships, critical for sustainable tourism growth. The 2026 Business & Marketing Plan positions EOB to confidently lead and navigate the dynamic, ever-changing tourism environment, reaffirming our role and commitment to being an innovative leader and trusted resource for the region. The efforts including maintaining the following:

- Regional destination website including all nine community websites
- Social media channels
- Visitor and Community Event Calendars
- Email marketing
- Advertising
- Collateral and printed materials
- Visitor and Community Guide development
- Video and photography production

Advertising Strategy

2026 advertising reaches target audiences through the following channels:

- Digital Programmatic Display Advertising
- Paid Social Media
- Print + Digital Advertising in Key Publications
- Event Advertising & Sponsorships

Public Relations Strategy

Our 2026 PR strategy aims to attract visitors to Thurston County by garnering earned media results through highlighting the personalities, products, and experiences in the region. We leverage targeted media relations, influencer marketing, and community engagement to position the county as a must-visit destination in Washington State.

Website Content Strategy

The website content strategy focuses on updating and refining our website to strengthen search engine optimization (SEO) while producing high-quality, engaging material that attracts and retains visitors.

With large language models (LLMs) like ChatGPT and Google's AI-driven search experiences reshaping how people discover information, our approach must go beyond keywords to emphasize authority, clarity, and adaptability. By creating structured, rich content, we improve visibility in both traditional search results and AI-powered responses.

Experience Olympia & Beyond's website serves as more than a visitor information hub, it is also an authoritative resource for generative AI systems. Generative AI can create text, summaries or answers based on existing online content.

Our content is designed to inform, inspire, and position our destination as a trusted resource in an AI-driven digital ecosystem. This includes optimizing natural language queries (questions or commands), expanding FAQ-style and conversational content, and investing in storytelling that aligns with new ways of discovery. By evolving with the ever-changing landscape of search algorithms and generative AI, we will ensure our marketing continues to drive visitation and overall awareness of the destination and inspire travel.

Visitor Guide Strategy

Following a comprehensive Visitor Guide study in 2025, we gained a deeper understanding of how travelers engage with and are inspired by the guide. These findings, among others, will direct the evolution of the 2026/2027 edition:

- Listicles featuring businesses and activities, and less detailed information
- Itinerary-style content, specifically seasonally
- An improved approach to lodging based on information most relevant to overnight visitors

Research Strategy

Understanding why we make strategic marketing decisions begins with a strong research foundation. Our approach is grounded in data and includes a comprehensive sentiment study of visitors, stakeholders, and residents, providing valuable insights into perceptions of the destination and opportunities for growth. These insights guide our strategic choices and keep our efforts responsive to shifting trends. EOB continues to strengthen its research capacity by exploring new survey methods and integrating advanced analytics to stay ahead of the evolving tourism landscape.

- Placer.ai (visitor and residential movement analysis tool)
- Datafy (visitor and residential movement analysis tool & media attribution tool)
- Smith Travel Research (hotel motel analysis)
- AirDNA (Short-term rentals)
- Google Analytics/GA4 (website visitation)
- Social Media (follower analytics)
- Tourism Economics (economic impact)
- Destinations International/Tourism Economics Events, Meetings and Sports Economic Impact Calculators (economic impact)

Together, these resources ensure that our strategies remain data-informed and responsive to shifting trends. EOB continues to expand its research capacity by exploring new survey methods and integrating advanced analytics to stay ahead of the evolving tourism landscape.

Sales Strategy

The team works diligently with meeting planners, sports event organizers, tour operators, and industry professionals with proven economic impact to bring groups to venue, hotel and service partners across Thurston County.

Sports event organizers continue to see smaller destinations as opportunities to promote their sport because they can approach the destination knowing that their event will receive the undivided attention of the Sports Commission and facilities staff.

We provide tailored support throughout the planning process, offering site visits, facilitating connections with local partners, and assisting with logistics to ensure each event or meeting finds the right fit within Thurston County, leading to repeat business and long-term growth.

Olympia & Beyond Sports Commission

The Olympia & Beyond Sports Commission plays a vital role in our community by promoting and supporting sports tourism, in turn bringing in visitors, and boosting local economies. We continue to enhance our reputation as a sports-friendly city, attracting more events, and create lasting economic benefits.

Thurston Bountiful Byway

The Thurston Bountiful Byway—a 60-mile loop provides authentic agritourism experiences and opportunities, outstanding scenery, friendly small towns, and exciting recreational experiences. Travelers experience rural Thurston County, and learn about the agricultural aspects of the region including farms, businesses sourcing from local farms and farmers markets selling products produced locally. Dedicated Digital Programmatic Display Advertising will continue, in addition to other advertising and awareness tactics, under the guidance of the Agritourism Advisory Committee.

Conclusion

Sustaining a strong tourism economy in Thurston County requires alignment, collaboration, and a clear strategic vision. Experience Olympia & Beyond remains committed to working closely with regional partners to strengthen the destination's competitive position and ensure that tourism continues to benefit all nine jurisdictions we serve. Guided by tourism industry best practices and our role as the county's DMO, we focus on driving overnight visitation that replenishes vital tourism funds and supports long-term community priorities. Our strategic approach to marketing, defined by the integrated marketing funnel, enables us to reach visitors at every stage of consideration and influence decisions that directly support our hotels, venues, businesses, and attractions. This approach positions Thurston County for continued economic growth, enhanced visibility, and a stronger, more vibrant tourism ecosystem.



experienceolympia.com



The Shed - Stone Carvers - Tenino