



Thurston County Hotel & Motel Commission Meeting Agenda
Monday, March 2, 2026, 3:30 pm
Hilton Garden Inn Olympia

AGENDA

1. Welcome, Introductions & Call to Order
2. Consent Calendar
 - a. Minutes: November 24, 2025
 - b. Financials: December 2025
3. Board Administration
 - a. Commissioner update:
 - I. Results of search for vacant seat; ask for any motions to send for approval
 - II. Verify access to platform
 - III. Property updates/Occupancy
 - b. Update of May 2026 location
 - c. Contract Amendment TPA
 - d. CEO takeaways
4. WSDMO
 - a. 2026 Legislative update: TPA Sunset, Statewide industry assessment
5. Organizational and Marketing Update
 - a. CEO search
 - b. Sales position
 - c. Review 2026 Business & Marketing Plan
6. FIFA Fan Zone 2026 update
7. Review Scorecard: December 2025
9. Items from the Floor
10. Adjournment

Next Meeting: May 18, 2026, at 3:30 pm



**Thurston County Hotel & Motel Commission Meeting
Monday, November 24, 2025, at 3:30 pm
DoubleTree by Hilton Olympia**

MINUTES

1. Welcome & Call to Order

TPA Directors in Attendance: Gabby Schoolcraft, Janine Phillips, Kasee Palmer, Andres Domiguez, Christy LeGeer attended virtually until 4:13 pm arrival

Absent: Nancy Lopez, Rose Ponzoha, Leonard Hernandez

VCB Staff in Attendance: Kelly Campbell

A quorum was established, and Janine called the meeting to order the meeting at 3:34 p.m.

2. Consent Calendar

a./b. Approval of Consent Calendar: Michael asked the Directors if they had a chance to review the Consent Calendar with August 25, 2025, meeting minutes and the September 2025 financials as presented. There were no additional questions or discussion. **Andres motioned to approve the consent calendar as presented. Kasee seconded. All directors present in person and by phone voted and the motion passed unanimously.**

3. **Interim CEO Announcement** Janine serves on both the Interim Hiring and the Hiring Committee. She shared that Shauna Stewart, previous CEO of Experience Olympia & Beyond, was recently offered and accepted a 9-month contract as Interim leader of the organization. Her start date is December 1, 2025.

4. Board Administration

a. Commissioner update:

- I. Roster – the current Board roster was shared and is on Board effect
- II. Terms of service extensions of positions 6, 2 and 3* Andres motioned to approve the positions with recently expired or about to expire terms or for another term. Gabby seconded. There were no further discussion and the motion passed as presented, unanimously.
 - i. Nancy has not attended a meeting for the last year and has not responded to emails. Janine motioned to remove Nancy from the Board and Andres seconded. All members voted in favor of the motion, and it passed unanimously.
- III. Property updates/Occupancy: All members gave a brief update about their property. Discussion ensued.

b. Approval of 2026 calendar and meeting locations: the calendar was shared and discussion took place around meeting locations. For 2026 Andres will host the March meeting, Janine will take May, Christy agreed to August and Rose volunteered for November. Janine made a motion to approve the 2026 calendar and meeting locations as presented. Andres seconded. All members voted in favor and the motion passed.

c. TPA Contract Amendment: Discussion around the pending renewal of the County contract with the Visitor & Convention Bureau and Thurston County. Discussion took place the proposed



one-year extension versus the regular three-year amendment took place. Members felt the County did not understand that this is a self-assessed funding model and that the Hotels have the control to stop the funding. Members expressed they are happy with the work the VCB is doing to market the region and reviewed a resolution prepared stating their support for a three-year amendment. All members signed the resolution for presentation to demonstrate their support to the County.

d. Sponsorship 2026: Kelly shared confirmation was received last week at the EOB Board of Directors meeting that the annual County sponsorship is \$40,000 for 2026.

e. Key takeaways: Kelly reviewed the CEO takeaways and gave a brief description of each project as listed in the meeting packet. General questions and discussion took place.

5. WSDMO

a. 2026 Legislative update was shared around the Tourism related bills that will be presented in the upcoming session. There will be a bill around the removal of a sunset clause for TPA's that currently have up to a \$3 additional assessment in place through June 30, 2027. There are 8 destinations around the state that have this increase and are preparing a detailed study of the economic impact to share with elected officials. Additionally, State of WA Tourism funding drastically decreased from 4.5 million per year in the current biennium to 1.5 million. WA remains the lowest funded state tourism program in the nation. Nationwide the average budget is 35.1 million and median budget is 28.3 million. SWT is continuing the work they started in 2024, of proposing a self-funded industry assessment that will enable the association to thrive without being reliant on legislative support. DMO's and SWT have expressed concern about possible confusion of the two proposed bills. The plan is to communicate and educate.

6. State of Tourism presentation

a. Ongoing municipal education and updates. Kelly shared a Power Point recently shared with the County. Emily and/or Kelly have been attending municipal work sessions and meetings giving an update of the work EOB does to drive economic impact through tourism to our community.. Presentations have been well received and will continue with Shauna presenting to councils as well.

7. 2026 FIFA Fan Zone

a. Kelly shared the status of municipal funding commitments for the Fan Zone in Thurston County. EOB is in contact with the Chamber, and all other Fan Zones throughout the state. Currently we are awaiting the team draws set for early December and confirmation on a co-op digital advertising campaign through Expedia. Members discussed room blocks, rates and visitation fluctuation for Summer 2026 and forecasting the peak season.

8. Review Scorecard: September 2025

Members present will review the scorecard independently.

9. Items from the Floor: None

10. Adjournment: There being no additional business, Janine adjourned the meeting at 4:51 p.m.

NEXT MEETING: Monday, March 2, 2026, at 3:30 pm

Visitor and Convention Bureau of Thurston County

Profit & Loss Budget Performance

Accrual Basis

December 2025

	Dec 25	Budget	Jan - Dec 25	YTD Budget	Annual Bud...
Ordinary Income/Expense					
Income					
40000 · LTAC					
40110 · LTAC-Lacey	25,000.00	25,000.00	100,000.00	100,000.00	100,000.00
40120 · LTAC-Olympia	59,080.24	41,635.00	168,635.00	168,635.00	168,635.00
40130 · LTAC-Tumwater	0.00	0.00	43,825.00	43,825.00	43,825.00
40140 · LTAC-Yelm	0.00	0.00	4,000.00	4,000.00	4,000.00
Total 40000 · LTAC	84,080.24	66,635.00	316,460.00	316,460.00	316,460.00
40300 · Private Funds	16,368.00	0.00	153,565.00	149,150.00	149,150.00
40390 · Grant Income	0.00	0.00	20,250.00	20,250.00	20,250.00
40400 · TPA Income	71,506.08	72,140.75	873,731.69	834,140.75	834,140.75
Total Income	171,954.32	138,775.75	1,364,006.69	1,320,000.75	1,320,000.75
Gross Profit	171,954.32	138,775.75	1,364,006.69	1,320,000.75	1,320,000.75
Expense					
50100 · Marketing					
50110 · Advertising	70,562.69	30,650.00	200,871.86	179,432.50	179,432.50
50115 · Promotions	1,508.57	2,750.00	3,556.34	4,250.00	4,250.00
50120 · External Public Relations	0.00	0.00	19,603.99	21,572.50	21,572.50
51000 · Community Public Relations	313.50	250.00	16,632.68	19,625.00	19,625.00
51800 · Products	12,465.83	4,125.00	152,718.60	148,499.73	148,499.73
51900 · Memberships & Affiliations	0.00	0.00	18,367.98	18,329.00	18,329.00
51925 · Research	2,734.02	40,000.00	99,067.26	95,100.00	95,100.00
Total 50100 · Marketing	87,584.61	77,775.00	510,818.71	486,808.73	486,808.73
52000 · Sales	5,000.00	0.00	44,568.42	53,650.00	53,650.00
60000 · Operations					
60100 · Personnel Expense	59,304.24	63,890.20	564,238.88	599,780.98	599,780.98
60200 · Internet and Technology	1,657.83	2,020.33	27,621.60	27,874.00	27,874.00
60310 · Rent & Facility Charges	3,248.75	3,280.00	39,450.08	39,250.00	39,250.00
60320 · Equipment	1,093.37	0.00	3,762.00	4,500.00	4,500.00
60340 · Insurance	0.00	0.00	4,859.68	4,825.00	4,825.00
60360 · Licenses & Fees	0.00	0.00	253.05	300.00	300.00
60380 · Postage and Shipping	407.00	200.00	1,692.40	2,200.00	2,200.00
60400 · Professional Development	0.00	1,340.00	5,858.91	10,040.00	10,040.00
60410 · Printing	221.16	225.00	2,723.89	2,700.00	2,700.00
60500 · Professional Fees	3,575.50	1,000.00	61,907.56	66,500.00	66,500.00
60570 · Supplies	260.94	700.00	2,763.05	3,000.00	3,000.00
60580 · Travel Expenses	0.00	600.00	7,421.37	14,905.00	14,905.00
60600 · Bank Charges	4.11	0.00	563.87	750.00	750.00
Total 60000 · Operations	69,772.90	73,255.53	723,116.34	776,624.98	776,624.98
61000 · TPA Administration					
61105 · Marketing & Operations	0.00	0.00	4,657.18	5,650.00	5,650.00
61200 · Professional Fees	1,330.58	883.04	11,307.96	10,561.46	10,561.46
Total 61000 · TPA Administration	1,330.58	883.04	15,965.14	16,211.46	16,211.46
Total Expense	163,688.09	151,913.57	1,294,468.61	1,333,295.17	1,333,295.17
Net Ordinary Income	8,266.23	-13,137.82	69,538.08	-13,294.42	-13,294.42

Visitor and Convention Bureau of Thurston County

Profit & Loss Budget Performance

Accrual Basis

December 2025

	Dec 25	Budget	Jan - Dec 25	YTD Budget	Annual Bud...
Other Income/Expense					
Other Income	2,610.46	1,700.00	32,163.19	20,000.00	20,000.00
Net Other Income	2,610.46	1,700.00	32,163.19	20,000.00	20,000.00
Net Income	10,876.69	-11,437.82	101,701.27	6,705.58	6,705.58

Visitor and Convention Bureau of Thurston County

Balance Sheet

Accrual Basis

As of December 31, 2025

	Dec 31, 25
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	
VCB Accounts	
10100 · Heritage Checking	121,276.85
10300 · TwinStar Checking	467.00
10350 · TwinStar - HRA	4,062.34
10400 · TwinStar Money Market	207,619.83 ¹
10500 · TwinStar Savings	30.00
10600 · Petty Cash	75.00
Total VCB Accounts	333,531.02
10700 · WSECU - MM - Operating	51,140.72 ²
10725 · WSECU - Checking	5.00
10750 · WESCU - Savings	5.00
Total Checking/Savings	384,681.74
Accounts Receivable	
11100 · Accounts Receivable	41,388.00
Total Accounts Receivable	41,388.00
Other Current Assets	
12075 · Prepaid Income Tax	10,445.45
13000 · Prepaid Expenses	59,746.23
14000 · Inventory	343.02
Total Other Current Assets	70,534.70
Total Current Assets	496,604.44
Fixed Assets	
15000 · Furniture and Equipment	16,837.99
17100 · Accum Depr - Furn and Equip	-9,780.56
Total Fixed Assets	7,057.43
Other Assets	
16000 · LPL Financial	
16010 · Accrued Interest	9,228.01
16000 · LPL Financial - Other	668,645.89 ³
Total 16000 · LPL Financial	677,873.90
16100 · Right of use under lease	94,921.00
Total Other Assets	772,794.90
TOTAL ASSETS	1,276,456.77
LIABILITIES & EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	
20100 · Accounts Payable	-18,862.35
Total Accounts Payable	-18,862.35
Credit Cards	
20200 · MC Control Account	467.33
Total Credit Cards	467.33

Visitor and Convention Bureau of Thurston County
Balance Sheet

Accrual Basis

As of December 31, 2025

	Dec 31, 25
Other Current Liabilities	
20310 · Accrued Liabilities	22,540.46
20400 · Lease obligation	94,921.00
Total Other Current Liabilities	117,461.46
Total Current Liabilities	99,066.44
Total Liabilities	99,066.44
Equity	
32000 · Reserve from prior years	1,075,589.06
Net Income	101,801.27
Total Equity	1,177,390.33
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	1,276,456.77

Visitor and Convention Bureau of Thurston County
Balance Sheet

Accrual Basis

As of December 31, 2025

1. TwinStar/Peak CU rate is 1.4%

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2. WSECU interest rate is .15%

.....

3. JP Morgan Chase \$113K @ 3.875%
Bank of New England \$108K @ 4.15%
Morgan Stanley \$107k @ 4.0%
Bank of America \$102k @ 4.25%
CFG \$124K @ 4.0%
Morgan Stanley \$110k @ 4.3%

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Visitor and Convention Bureau of Thurston County
A/R Aging Summary
As of December 31, 2025

	Current	1 - 30	31 - 60	61 - 90	> 90	TOTAL
Capital Mall	0.00	4,368.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4,368.00
Destination Signals by Tempest	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
LTAC Lacey	0.00	25,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	25,000.00
Paul Dean	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	45.00	45.00 ¹
Port of Olympia	0.00	12,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	12,000.00
Whitewood Cider	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-25.00	-25.00 ²
TOTAL	0.00	41,368.00	0.00	0.00	20.00	41,388.00

Visitor and Convention Bureau of Thurston County
A/R Aging Summary
As of December 31, 2025

1. Paid January 2026

.....

2. Credit applied to Business listing for 2026 ad

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BOARD BRIEFING – CEO UPDATE

Leadership & Organizational Update

- 2026 Business & Marketing Plan is now available on website. 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.
- Group Sales Manager – Phone interviews complete, in person interviews next
- Positive feedback from Port of Olympia and City of Yelm Presentations
- Thurston County LTAC Funding – recommended \$45,360

Marketing Updates

- Website unique visits more than doubled for the month of January compared to two years ago
- GPT Personalities – 1st GPT in test mode week of 2/16
- FIFA – continued regional collaboration, ad campaigns placed
- Northwest Travel & Life Magazine (See below)



Public Relations

As a result of hosting freelance journalist Lori Rackl in Thurston County, she has written the article, "Olympia, Washington: Nature and Nurture in the State Capital," for [Northwest Travel & Life Magazine](#).

The article appears in the January/February print issue of the magazine, which has a print distribution of 120,500. Businesses and attractions featured in the article include Wolf Haven International, Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge, Brewery Park at Tumwater Falls, Olympia Arts Walk, Procession of the Species, SLURP!, Chelsea Farms Oyster Bar, Sofie's Scoops, The Bread Peddler, Mi Luna Cuban Caf?, Bar C'est L'eau, and the Olympia Farmers Market.

Public Relations

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Please refer to monthly scorecards for more details. These are emailed regularly and can be found at <https://www.experienceolympia.com/industry/reports/>

Questions? Please contact Interim CEO Shauna Stewart at shaunas@experienceolympia.com.



2026 Business & Marketing Plan

OLYMPIA | LACEY | TUMWATER

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

Brewery Park at Tumwater Falls

Letter From Our President

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.

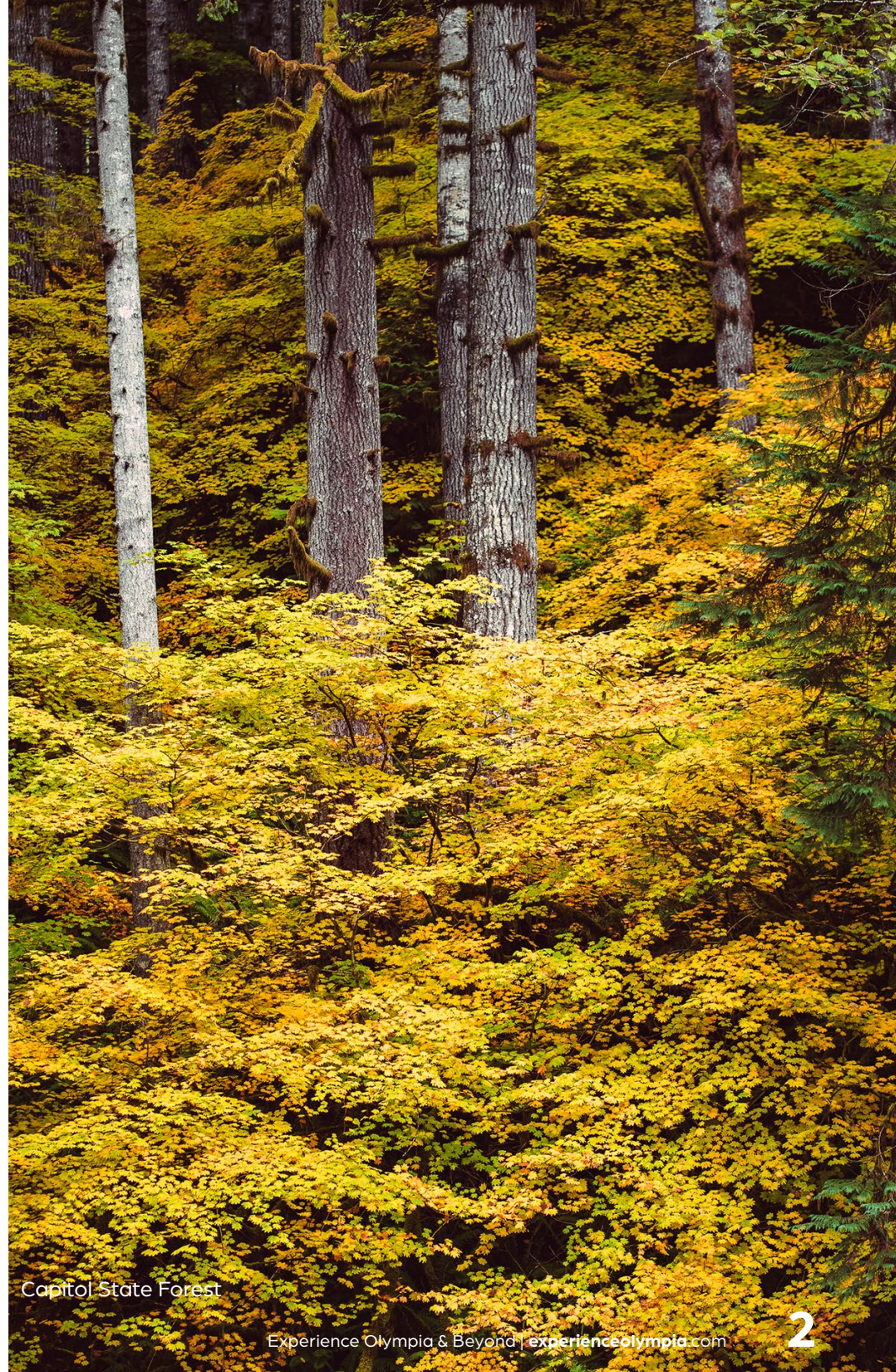
As I step into the role of Board President at Experience Olympia & Beyond, I am filled with immense joy and gratitude for the opportunity to help guide this organization into such a transformative moment. Together, with your partnership, we will continue to strengthen our economy, elevate our quality 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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Strategies & Tactics	12
Conclusion	16



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



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Board of Directors

Patty Belmonte

*Hands On Children's Museum
Emeritus*

Christina Daniels

*Huber's Gasthaus
Emeritus*

Chuck Denney

City of Tumwater

Nic Dunning

City of Lacey

Sue Falash

Regional Athletic Complex

Wayne Fournier

Thurston County

Amy Harding

Kidder Mathews

Yến Huỳnh

City of Olympia

Hanford McCloud

Nisqually Tribe

Aslan Meade

*Thurston Economic Development Council
Vice President*

Sarah Montano

Port of Olympia

Jill Nelson

Nelson Ranch

Kyle Ann Radanovic

Anthony's Restaurants

Line Roy

*City of Yelm
At Large*

Satpal Sohal

*Tumwater LaQuinta Inn and Suites
Treasurer*

Brandon Staff

*Hands On Children's Museum
Secretary*

Greg Taylor

DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Olympia

Brandon Weedon

City of Tumwater

Shina Wysocki

*Chelsea Farms & Chelsea Farms Oyster Bar
President*

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

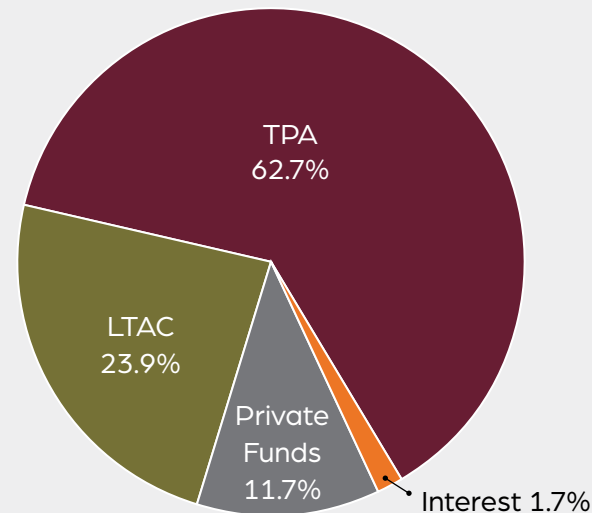
Experience Olympia & Beyond staff raise supplemental revenue from a variety of sources—paid advertising memberships from local tourism-related businesses and organizations, paid sponsorships from various local organizations, and event revenue garnered from ticket sales and in-kind contributions. These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

Sustainable Tourism Funding

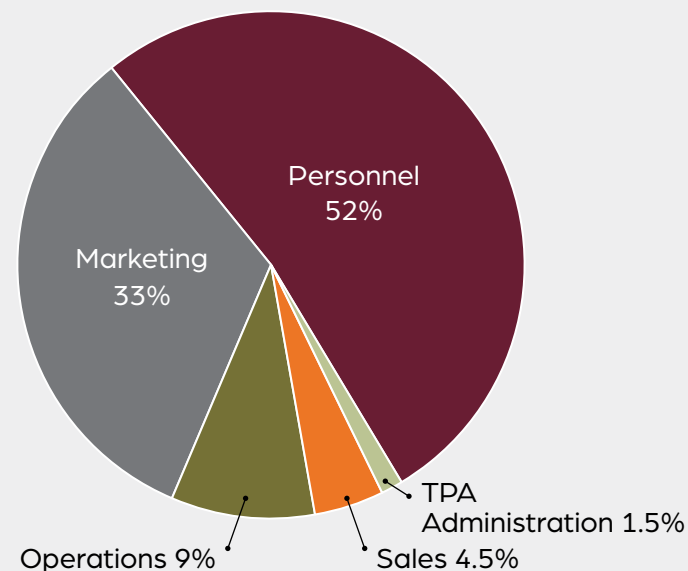
Tourism funding is essential to maintaining Thurston County's presence in a highly competitive tourism landscape. These funds allow us to reach new audiences, promote the region's most compelling experiences, support local businesses, and attract overnight visitors who contribute directly to lodging 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.

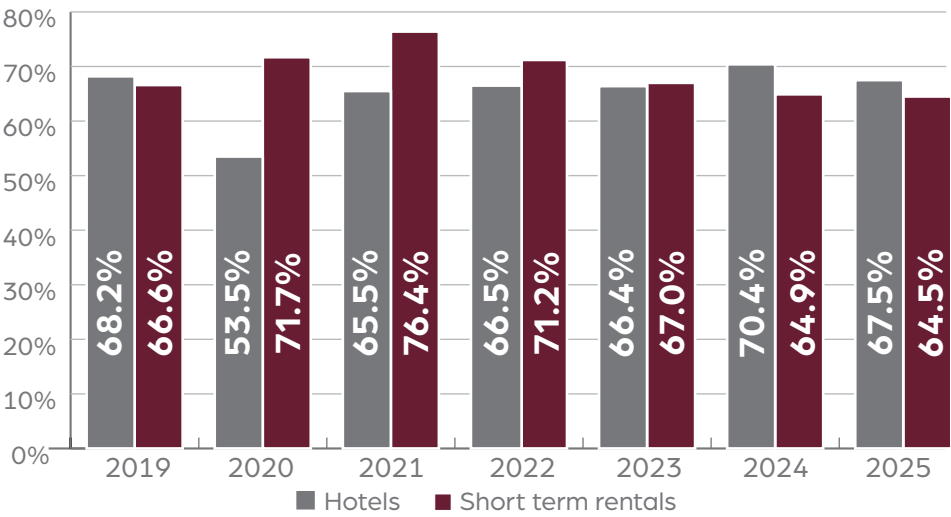
About Lodging Tax Funding

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

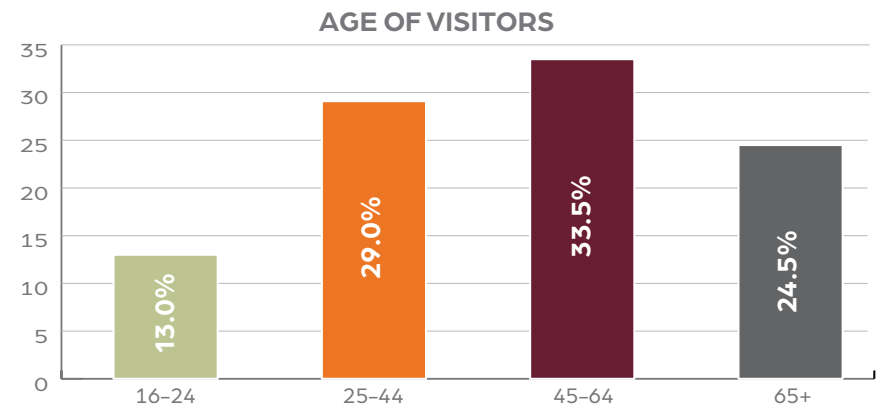
Source: Datafy (September 1, 2024 – August 31, 2025)



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)

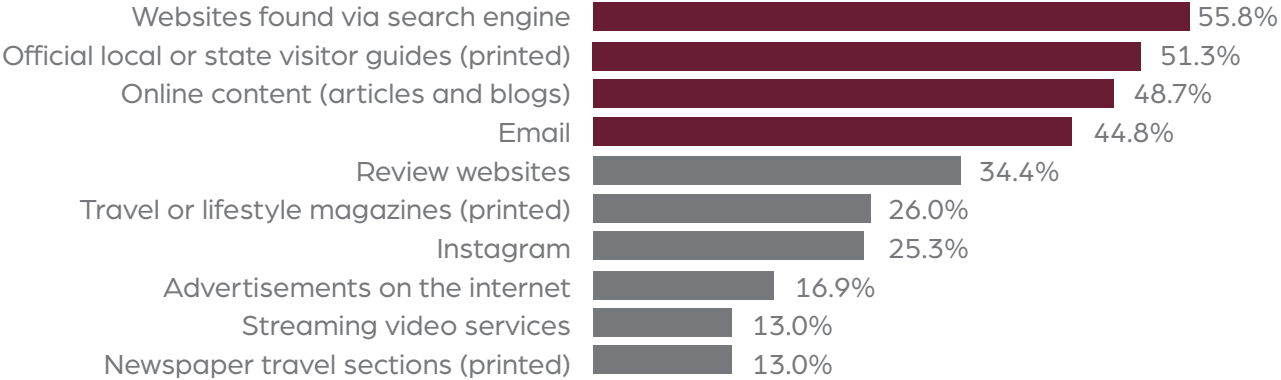


Swede Days – Rochester

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



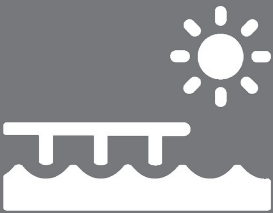
Source: 2025 Experience Olympia & Beyond Sentiment Study

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%



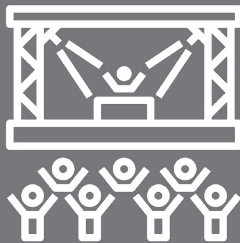
State Parks
87.4%



Dining
82.6%



Attractions / Museums
79.6%



Festivals / Events
73.9%



Heritage & Culture
71.5%



Rural Experiences
66.3%



The Arts
64.8%



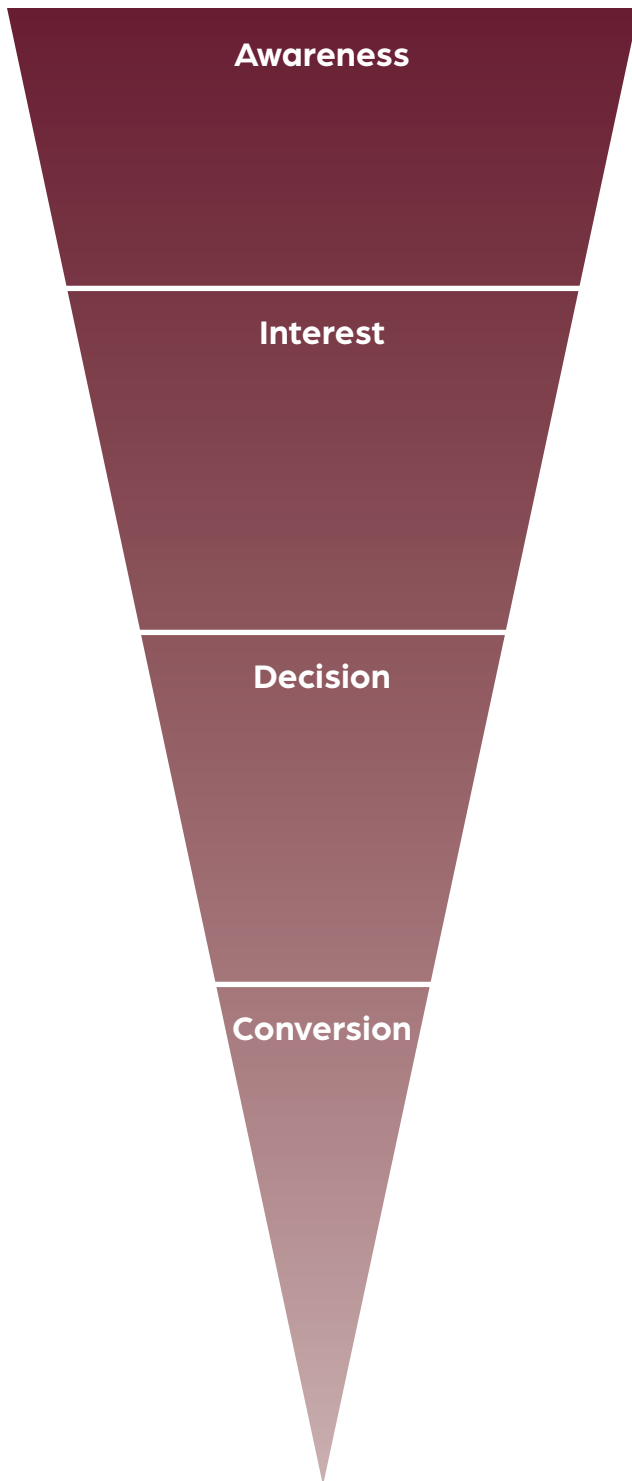
Cycling / Hiking
62.1%

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



Tumwater Tree Lighting Festival



SCORE CARD

December 2025

2025 was a year of transition. The year started out slowly due to a range of factors like the national political climate, inflation, travel costs, and changing algorithms. Therefore, our annual KPI goal performance saw mixed results over last year.

THE BIG 3

- **December hotel and motel performance showed positive year-over-year gains.** Both occupancy and average daily rate increased over last December, setting an optimistic tone for the start of the new year.
- **EOB's integrated marketing efforts delivered measurable growth in December.** These tactics contributed to increases in website visits (30.8%), social media likes and followers (12.6%), and consumer e-newsletter subscribers (8.2%).
- **2025 sports event bookings surged compared to last year.** Driven by events such as the 2025 USA Touch Rugby National Championships and American Junior Golf Association Championships (2026-2028), bookings increased 140%, generating 6,515 booked room nights.



Yelm Solstice Walk - Cochrane Memorial Park

THURSTON COUNTY ACCOMMODATIONS

HOTELS/MOTELS

Available Rooms ¹	December/YE Actual	
2025	2,575	
2024	2,698	
2025/2024 % Change	-4.6%	

Occupancy (%)	December Actual	YE Actual
2025	59.8%	67.5%
2024	58.3%	70.4%
2025/2024 % Change (Measurement towards goal)	2.6%	-4.1%

December YE Performance: 67.5%
Annual Goal: 68.2% (99% to Goal)

Average Daily Rate (\$)	December Actual	YE Actual
2025	\$157.57	\$151.53
2024	\$151.03	\$150.16
2025/2024 % Change	4.3%	0.9%

Revenue per Available Room (\$)	December Actual	YE Actual
2025	\$93.35	\$103.44
2024	\$87.74	\$106.93
2025/2024 % Change	6.4%	-3.3%

¹ Inventory change due to the Red Lion Inn & Suites closure at the end of October 2025 and rebranding to Hampton Inn by Hilton Olympia. At this time, it is unknown when this property will reopen.

HIGHLIGHTS

At 67.5%, our 2025 Year-End (YE) hotel occupancy for Thurston County was just shy of our annual goal (99%).

SCORE CARD

December 2025

MARKETING

Unique Web Visits ²	December Actual	YE Actual
2025	47,071	440,634
2024	35,986	409,107
2025/2024 % Change (Measurement towards goal)	30.8%	7.7%

December YE Performance: 440,634
Annual Goal: 413,507 (107% to Goal)

Consumer E-Newsletter Subscribers ³	December/ YE Actual
2025	13,733
2024	12,695
2025/2024 % Change (Measurement towards goal)	8.2%

December YE Performance: 13,733
Annual Goal: 15,681 (88% to Goal)

Earned Media Placements	December Actual	YE Actual
2025	2	83
2024	7	253
2025/2024 % Change (Measurement towards goal)	-71.4%	-67.2%

December YE Performance: 83
Annual Goal: 160 (52% to Goal)

Social Media Audience	December/YE Actual
2025	35,406
2024	31,442
2025/2024 % Change (Measurement towards goal)	12.6%

December YE Performance: 35,406
Annual Goal: 36,158 (98% to Goal)

Visitor Guides Distributed ⁴	December Actual	YE Actual
2025	382	4,716
2024	28	923
2025/2024 % Change (Measurement towards goal)	1,264.3%	410.9%

December YE Performance: 4,716
Annual Goal: 1,015 (465% to Goal)

PR Circulation/Viewership	December Actual	YE Actual
2025	144,218	31,980,844
2024	6,462,127	2,381,655,305
2025/2024 % Change (Measurement towards goal)	-97.8%	-98.7%

December YE Performance: 31,980,844
Annual Goal: 12,778,077 (250% to Goal)

² Due to Google's update on search algorithms, we have seen slight implications to website traffic. This update focused on the quality of search engine results (SERPs), and traffic decreases were seen across the majority of all websites.

³ As of July 2024, the Consumer E-Newsletter subscribers list was updated to remove bounced emails.

⁴ As of January 2025, Visitor Guides Distributed includes digital downloads from experienceolympia.com and individual bulk requests. Therefore, it is not directly comparable to 2024.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The following marketing metrics ranked above the annual goals for 2025: unique web visits (107%), visitor guides distributed (465%), and PR circulation/viewership (250%).
- However, social media audience (98%), consumer e-newsletter subscribers (88%) and earned media placements (52%) performed below our 2025 annual goals.

KEY ARTICLES PUBLISHED/INFLUENCER POSTS

Schilter Family Farm

Where: 141 Nisqually Cutoff Road SE, Olympia

When: 9 a.m. to dusk daily through Sunday, Dec. 14

A lighted nativity scene is part of the holiday fun at Schilter Family Farm.

[You can cut down](#) your own Christmas tree at the farm or choose from freshly-cut options, plus visit with Santa Claus, depending on the day and time you stop by.



Crowds gathered to watch the ceremonial tree lighting to conclude the Tumwater Christmas Tree Lighting Festival on Dec. 2, 2023 in Tumwater. Steve Bloom/The Olympian

TheOlympian.com
December 3, 2025

People news

Experience Olympia & Beyond, the area's visitor and convention bureau, has named former CEO Shauna Stewart to be the interim CEO, the organization announced.

Stewart previously served as CEO from 2015 to 2020. She started the interim role on Dec. 1.

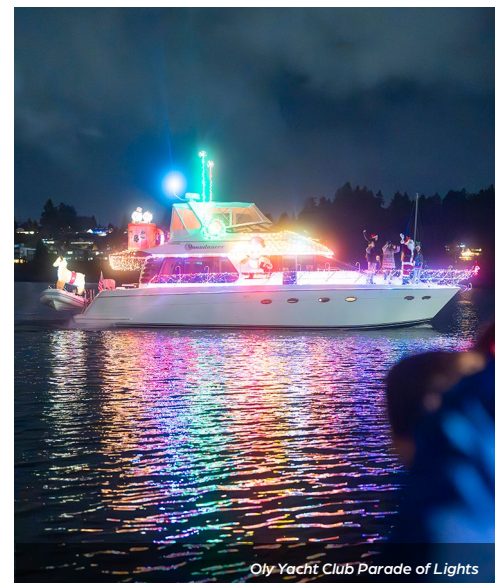
The organization needed an interim leader because the former CEO Michael Day was let go in late August — about two months after he was hired, The Olympian reported.

"This decision was made after thoughtful consideration and in recognition that the role was not the right fit for either Michael or Experience Olympia & Beyond," said Board President Sue Falash in a statement at the time. "We are grateful for Michael's contributions and wish him the very best in his future endeavors."



Experience Olympia & Beyond interim CEO Shauna Stewart addressed the Lacey City Council on Tuesday, Dec. 17, 2025. rboone@theolympian.com Rolf Boone

TheOlympian.com
December 18, 2025



Oly Yacht Club Parade of Lights

SCORE CARD

December 2025

SALES

MEETINGS/TOUR & TRAVEL⁵

Leads	December Actual	YE Actual
2025	0	6
2024	4	40
2025/2024 % Change (Measurement towards goal)	-100.0%	-85.0

December YE Performance: 6
Annual Goal: 64 (9% to Goal)

Lead Room Nights	December Actual	YE Actual
2025	0	0
2024	755	3,839
2025/2024 % Change (Measurement towards goal)	-100.0%	-100.0%

December YE Performance: 0
Annual Goal: 5,164 (0% to Goal)

Booked Leads	December Actual	YE Actual
2025	0	7
2024	1	22
2025/2024 % Change (Measurement towards goal)	-100.0%	-68.2%

December YE Performance: 7
Annual Goal: 25 (28% to Goal)

Booked Room Nights	December Actual	YE Actual
2025	0	77
2024	20	887
2025/2024 % Change (Measurement towards goal)	-100.0%	-91.3%

December YE Performance: 77
Annual Goal: 1,850 (4% to Goal)

SPORTS

Leads	December Actual	YE Actual
2025	0	9
2024	1	22
2025/2024 % Change (Measurement towards goal)	-100.0%	-59.1%

December YE Performance: 9
Annual Goal: 33 (27% to Goal)

Lead Room Nights	December Actual	YE Actual
2025	0	5,730
2024	300	3,950
2025/2024 % Change (Measurement towards goal)	-100.0%	45.1%

December YE Performance: 5,730
Annual Goal: 7,881 (73% to Goal)

Booked Leads	December Actual	YE Actual
2025	0	12
2024	0	5
2025/2024 % Change (Measurement towards goal)	0.0%	140.0%

December YE Performance: 12
Annual Goal: 9 (133% to Goal)

Booked Room Nights	December Actual	YE Actual
2025	0	6,515
2024	0	1,220
2025/2024 % Change (Measurement towards goal)	0.0%	434.0%

December YE Performance: 6,515
Annual Goal: 3,050 (214% to Goal)

⁵ Meeting leads and bookings are down due to changes in meeting space inventory.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Sports booked room nights saw a 214% increase in our annual goal in 2025. The remaining sales goals for 2025 were not met due to our changing market and available venue space, and realignment of sales strategies.

BOOKINGS

- There was no sales activity during the month of December.

LOST BUSINESS

- N/A

Definitions: Key Performance Indicators

Available Rooms/Rentals (room/rental supply) –

The number of rooms/rentals multiplied by the number of days in a specific time period.

Average Daily Rate (ADR) – A measure of the average rate paid for rooms sold, calculated by dividing room revenue by rooms sold. Indicates average price that guests are willing to pay for their lodging, and overall value perception.

Booked Leads – A future event that is contracted by planner with a venue, hotel or service provider.

Booked Room Nights – Confirmed Hotel Room Nights from a sales booking at a Thurston County hotel.

Consumer E-Newsletter Subscribers – Individuals who signed up to receive Experience Olympia's monthly e-newsletter.

Earned Media Placements – Publicity or exposure gained from methods other than paid advertising.

Lead Room Nights – Estimated Hotel Room Nights for Thurston County hotels from a sales lead.

Leads – An inquiry for space (either sports or meetings) by a meeting planner or event organizer that the DMO has qualified to meet the planner's criteria and that requires at least 10 hotel guest rooms. Leads can also include conference services, such as catering or transportation.

Occupancy – Percentage of available rooms sold during a specified time period. Occupancy is calculated by dividing the number of rooms sold by rooms available. Indicates demand for lodging.

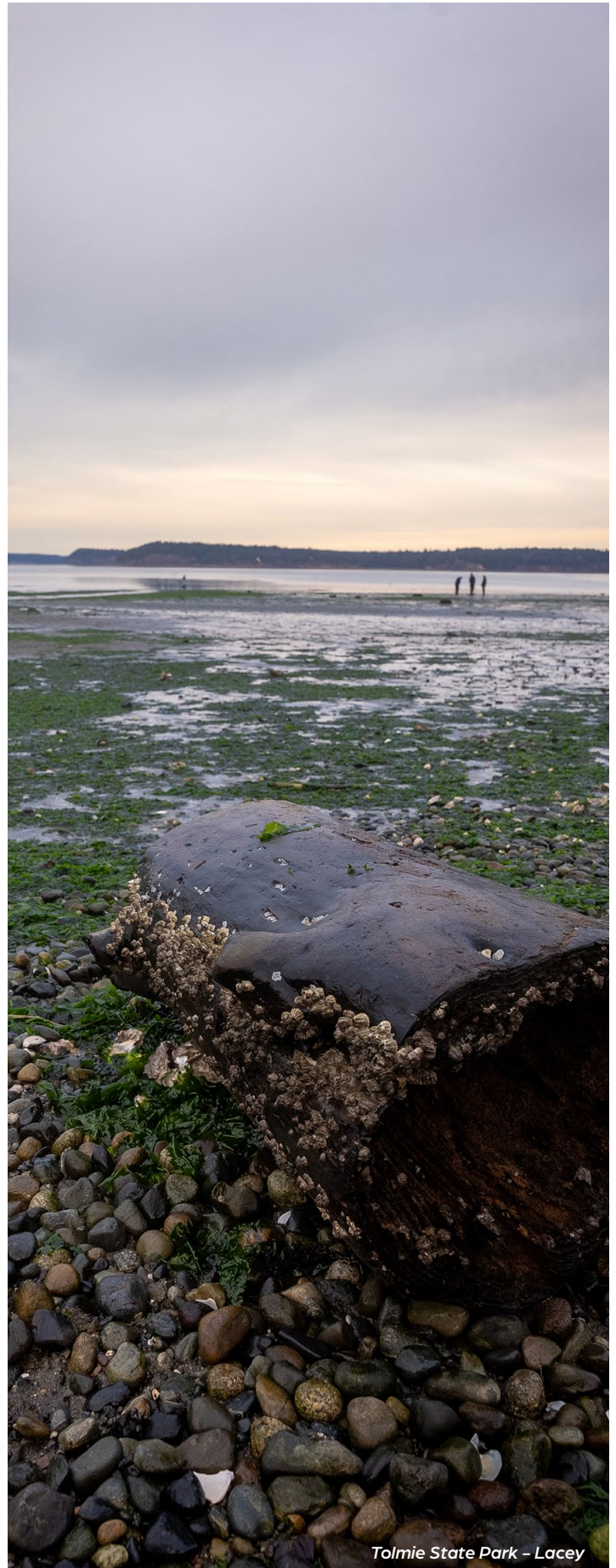
PR Circulation/Viewership – Interactions with Public Relations content for digital, print, and broadcast placements.

Revenue Per Available Room/Rental (RevPAR) – Total room/rental revenue divided by the total number of available rooms/rentals. Indicates ability to fill rooms/rentals at an average rate, and overall health of lodging.

Social Media Audiences – Individuals who follow/like Experience Olympia & Beyond related pages on Facebook, and Instagram.

Unique Web Visits – A person who has visited experienceolympia.com at least once and is counted only once in the reporting time period.

Visitor Guides Distributed – The number of visitor guides distributed either directly to consumers via the mail, digital downloads on experienceolympia.com and individual bulk requests.



Tolmie State Park - Lacey