

Visit Brainerd

Baxter Visitor Bureau Services Agreement
2026 Marketing Plan & Budget
Presentation

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Presented by:

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INSIGHTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Challenges for All DMOs

- Changing landscape of what it means to be 21st century marketers:
 - Adapting to using first-party data
 - Defining the role of AI in marketing
 - Tracking and usage guidelines for digital tools change daily.
- Pressure from state and national DMOs and government to develop advocacy plans, champion sustainability initiatives, and include DEI in tourism marketing and actual visitor experiences.
- Changing funding models / competing interest in lodging tax funds.

INSIGHTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Challenges for Small DMOs Like Visit Brainerd

- Balancing marketing and partnership demands with small budgets and teams.
- Expense of purchasing tools to assess ROI.
- Domestic travel is experiencing slow recovery post-COVID plus the current economic uncertainty but anticipate 3-5% growth in 2026.
- Determining the best growth strategies utilizing the assets we currently have.

INSIGHTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Where We're Headed / Results of 2025 Strategic Planning

- Re-branding to Visit Brainerd Baxter; goal to go live January 2026.
- Implementing digital kiosks for visitor information services at three test sites in 2026 with a goal to have as many as 10-13 in-market by 2027.
- Focusing on website content and feeding digital, app, and AI-assisted tools for trip planning and in-market visitor services.
- Implementing data science tools to measure local economic impact.
- Focusing on new events, partnerships with local businesses, and finding sponsorship opportunities.
- Revising our advertising strategy to focus more on video.

BAXTER SERVICES AGREEMENT

Scope of Services

- 1 Develop and manage City's destination marketing program.
- 2 Provide visitor information services.
- 3 Manage website and social media platforms.
- 4 Implement annual marketing program including advertising and promotions.
- 5 Conduct economic impact analysis every two years.
- 6 Promote and support local festivals and special events.
- 7 Promote the City at trade shows and conventions in alignment with strategic goals of the Bureau.

2026 PRELIMINARY BUDGET

OVERVIEW

Category	Name	Description	Amount	%
Income	Lodging Tax	Baxter	\$485,000	85%
Income	Lodging Tax	Brainerd	\$20,000	3.5%
Income	Non-tax Revenue	Brainerd EDA Contract	\$53,000	9.25%
Income	Non-tax Revenue	Gift Store Sales, Sponsors, Misc.	\$12,000	2.25%
Expenses	VBB Operations		\$230,000	40%
Expenses	VBB Advertising & Promotions		\$300,000	52%
Expenses	Brainerd EDA Advertising	Cost of ads and services	\$48,000	8%

DEFINING THE MARKET

- **Utilize Google Analytics Data & Agency Consumer Behavior Data**

- Who is engaging with us?
- Where are they coming from?
- What travel and consumer habits do they likely share?

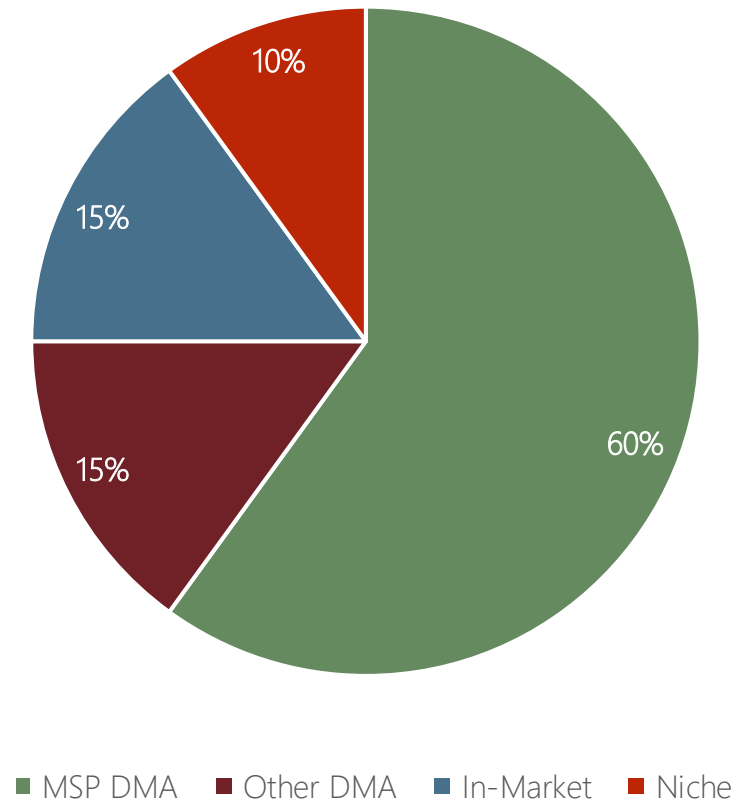
- **Geographic Targets:**

- MSP DMA
- Other Metros in Upper Midwest (6-12 hr. Drive)
- In-Market Visitors
- Niche Experiences (Find & Target Them)

- **Personas:**

- Families with Children
- Multi-generational Travelers
- Millennial & Gen Z Weekenders
- Young Baby Boomers 60+
- Outdoor Enthusiasts

Percent of Advertising \$ by Market



LEISURE MARKETING

Leisure Marketing Focus Areas

- Renewed focus on hotel stays
- Highlighting top visitor experiences Baxter has to offer:
 - Staying Overnight
 - Shopping
 - Eating & Drinking
 - Parks, Trails, Lakes & River
- Road Trip marketing >>>
- The Minnesota Experience marketing >>>
- In-Market Marketing >>>



ROAD TRIP MARKETING

Marketing Messages

- It's a Short Drive to Experience Your Own Tall Tales . . .
- Explore Our Neighborhoods
- Exit to Explore Our Community
- Find Unexpectedly Great Dining & Drinks
- Stay Overnight & Find Lots to Do
- Shop Till You Drop
- Get Outdoors, Minnesota!

Geo Targets

- MSP DMA
- In-Market Visitors



THE MINNESOTA EXPERIENCE MARKETING

Marketing Messages

- The Land of Tall Tales
- Lots to Love Outdoors
- Slower Pace & Minnesota Nice
- Guys Getaways
- Girls Getaways
- Water, Fishing, Golfing, Winter Sports

Geo Targets

- Other Metros in Upper Midwest (6-12 hr. Drive)
- Niche Experiences



IN-MARKET MARKETING

Marketing Messages

- Best of Baxter . . .
- Things to Do Here
- Things to Do In Town
- Shopping
- Eating & Drinking
- Arts & Culture



MARKETING STRATEGY

TRADITIONAL ADVERTISING

Broadcast Radio
Broadcast Television
Targeted Print

DIGITAL MARKETING

Email Marketing
Keyword Search
Online Display Ads
Social Media Ads
Streaming TV
Website

CONTENT MARKETING

Articles
Blog Posts
Influencers
Videos
YouTube Channel

EVENT & PARTNER MARKETING

Advertise Events
Partner Promotions
Support New Events

VISITOR INFORMATION

Brochures
Itineraries
Information Center
One-on-One Help
Maps
Visitor/Hotel Guides
Information Kiosks
Visit Brainerd App

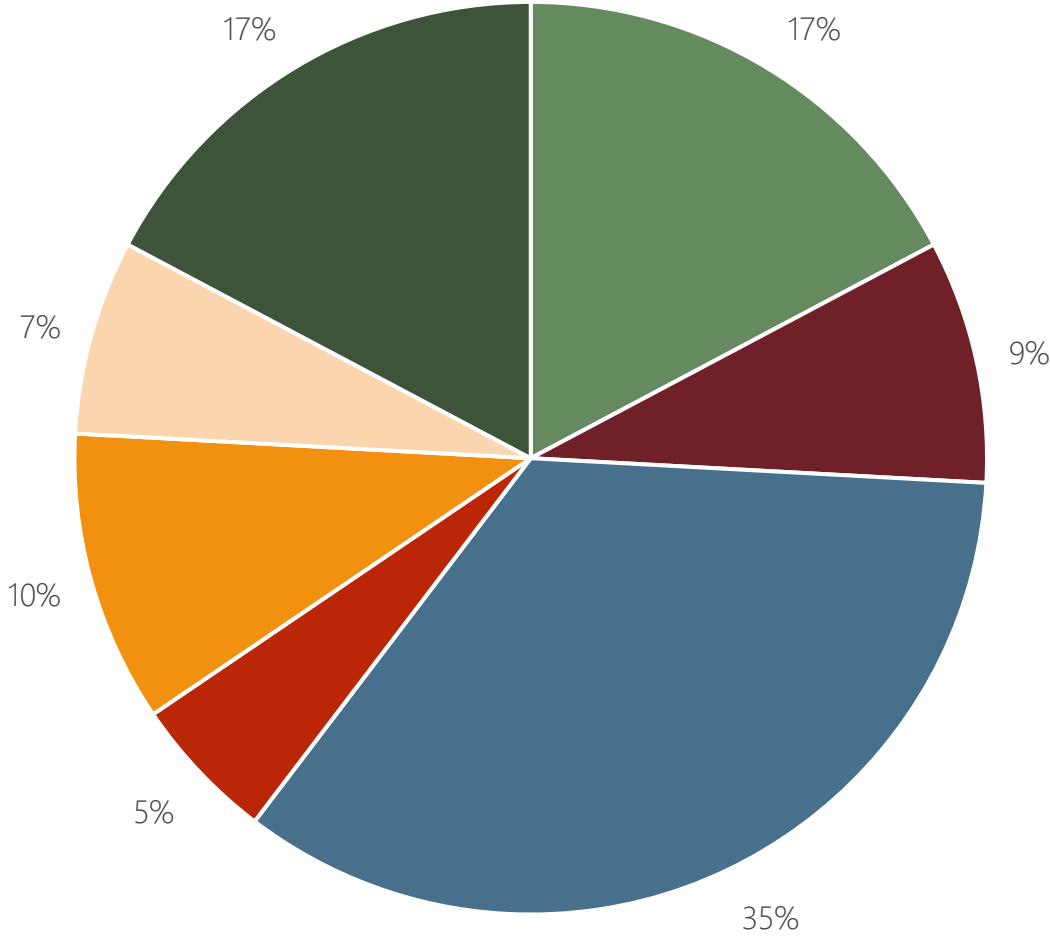
MEDIA MIX & DISTRIBUTION

Methodology

- Media mix is shifting toward more long-attention channels and channels with visual components.
- Increase in linear and streaming TV budget.
- Decrease in radio and print budgets.
- Move toward a unified brand campaign that works across all channels, activities and attractions.
- Overall goal to increase awareness, consideration, and intent to visit Brainerd Baxter.
- Overall goal to increase lodging tax and sales tax revenues.



Media Mix



■ Online Ads ■ Print Ads ■ TV Ads ■ Promotions/Events ■ Radio Ads ■ Maps/Guides ■ Web Services

2025-2035 IDEAS

RE-BRAND TO VISIT BRAINERD BAXTER

Continue to co-brand Brainerd/Baxter in marketing.

Identify Baxter brand assets in conjunction with city, staff, businesses and stakeholders, and promote appropriately.

PROMOTE A DIFFERENT EXPERIENCE

Continue to promote the Brainerd/Baxter experience which is different than the Brainerd Lakes Area experience.

Parks, public assets, Mississippi River, shopping, dining, arts.

DEVELOP MICRO MEETING & SPORTS MARKET

Develop a marketing strategy to attract small meetings, tradeshow, special events and sporting events with current offerings.

DEVELOP A TOURISM MASTER PLAN

Work with both cities to develop a comprehensive tourism master plan for the next 10- and 20-years.

EXPLORE THE FEASIBILITY OF NEW ASSETS

Convention Center
Sports Facilities
Campground
Transportation Needs

DEFINING SUCCESS

What does successful destination marketing look like to you?



INCREASED LODGING
TAX REVENUE



INCREASED SALES TAX
REVENUE FROM
VISITORS



INCREASED CITY NAME
RECOGNITION



INCREASED
PARTNERSHIPS WITH
BAXTER BUSINESSES



WHAT ELSE?

THANK YOU



Thank you for working with us for 30 years.



Thank you for taking the time to learn more and ask questions.



Thank you for sharing your thoughts and ideas.



Thank you for your ongoing support of our mission.



We look forward to what the future brings!