



**March 25, 2022**

Norman City Council  
201 West Gray St.  
Norman, OK 73069

Dear Mayor and Council Members,

I am happy to present the Fiscal Year 2023 budget and strategic plan of work for VisitNorman. The last two years have brought unprecedented chaos and change to the hospitality industry. Although we are not completely clear of Covid-19, we do see a much more prosperous year ahead for travel and tourism. The dollars spent by visitors in Norman improve our citizens quality of life by supporting the shops and restaurants that we all love to frequent. They also contribute to sales tax collection without the need for many services that Norman citizens use. We are excited for the upcoming year and plan to do some great things!

## **Fiscal Year 2023 Strategic Plan of Work**

### **Marketing Plan:**

#### **SWOT analysis**

Among the marketing strengths for VisitNorman is the inherited brand awareness that many years of quality earned media impressions and hearty social media followings along with search-engine optimization that have made search-engine marketing, digital campaigns and sponsored social media posts more credible and effective. In the most recent annual report, FY21, the marketing impressions totaled 15,285,076 against a budget of \$182,250.

Areas of weakness that our marketing budget seeks to address is being able to reach out of our vertical market that we have created in the past decade to be able to communicate our messaging to younger demographics through the platforms they use. Staffing a videographer and digital media specialist in the past fiscal year has enabled VisitNorman to grow its Instagram and YouTube audiences primarily along with the establishment of a TikTok brand.

Opportunities that VisitNorman has in the FY23 budget are to take advantage of a new digital platforms while moving away from traditional print advertising. Additionally, using the Moore Norman Technology Center's graphic design program, VisitNorman has an opportunity to use a student on a project basis to create graphics for campaigns. That expenditure may be addressed in the staffing portion of the budget but represents an opportunity to reallocate an outsourced expenditure from marketing.

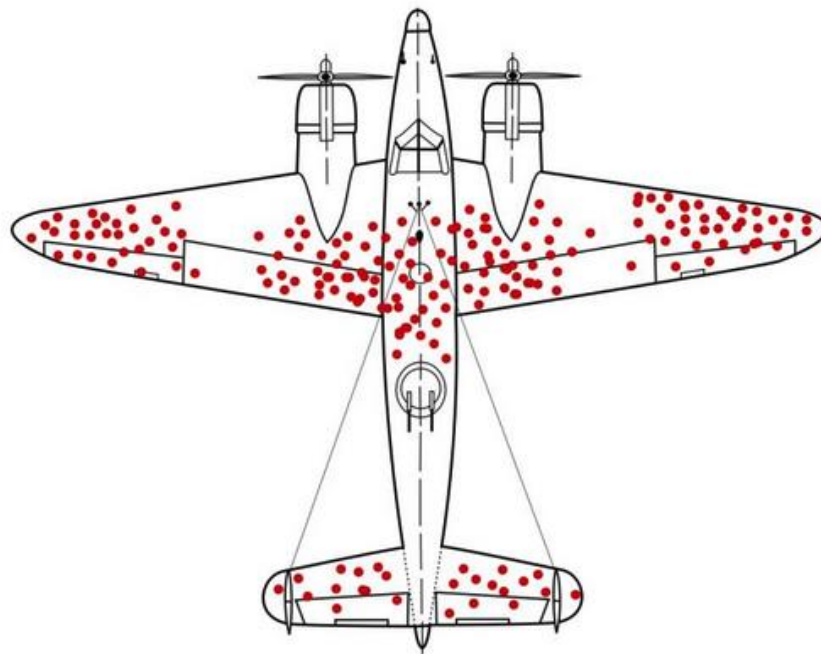
Threats to VisitNorman's marketing efforts could be in the mix. Are there platforms that we have not considered or are not optimizing? Are the assessment tools leading us to solid conclusions? *(See below graphic for an example of analysis.)*

# VISIT NORMAN

During World War II, fighter planes would come back from battle with bullet holes. The Allies found the areas that were most commonly hit by enemy fire. They sought to strengthen the most commonly damaged parts of the planes to reduce the number that was shot down.

A mathematician, Abraham Wald, pointed out that perhaps there was another way to look at the data. Perhaps the reason certain areas of the planes weren't covered in bullet holes was that planes that were shot in those areas did not return. This insight led to the armor being re-enforced on the parts of the plane where there were no bullet holes.

The story behind the data is arguably more important than the data itself. Or more precisely, the reason behind why we are missing certain pieces of data may be more meaningful than the data we have.



Additionally, new privacy policies may make it harder to collect data from our visitors through their cell phones.

## **Goal**

In FY23, the marketing budget will provide an improvement on the ratio of dollars spent to resulting impressions from the most recent reported figures in FY21.

## **Strategies**

Looking forward to FY23, continuing to grow impressions (with an emphasis on the Public Relations efforts to grow engagement) will be the top priority. Emphasizing impressions,



imagining a wind tunnel, will allow secondary efforts like the digital banners and retargeting campaigns to sweep up with overall visibility.

Madden Media has been our long-term outsource partner for SEO, SEM and social media sponsorship with Multiview as our long-term digital retargeting campaign partner. These work in concert as a user searches for Norman and is then directed to our website by Madden and after arrival will be served VisitNorman banners to reinforce the visibility.

The Sooner Sports campaign is multifaceted and is led by the Game Day Central page on SoonerSports.com and social media posts that tag and/or identify VisitNorman. Direct referrals to VisitNorman.com is the main goal while adding followers to our social media channels who will year-round follow our messages is the secondary goal.

Similarly, the digital campaign with TravelOK.com not only increases VisitNorman's visibility on the state's tourism website but also allows for a direct click-through to our website. The display print placement in the state travel guide allows for Norman to be represented at international, national and regional consumer travel shows when we are not able to be present.

In FY21, our marketing budget reflected a priority to support our local events and festivals. Being able to provide support to newer initiatives like restaurant week, Brewtoberfest, holiday carriages between Campus Corner and Downtown can provide the seed money. Being able to provide additional cash investments in more established festivals and events (especially during the pandemic) can provide the kind of catalyst to ensure endurance.

Long-standing marketing pieces remain in the marketing budget. The state travel bag sponsorship means that VisitNorman has our logo alongside other destination marketing organizations on the recyclable bag that is distributed to various audiences by the state travel office. Our email marketing investment is intended to reach the contacts we have been collecting for more than 20 years and serving them with marketing messages throughout each year. Constant Contact is the supplier we have been using for the last several years and one advantage is that we are able to remain compliant with the evolving legislation regarding privacy, spam, etc.

In previous budgets, the visitors guide has been a cash-in, cash-out expenditure in which we have solicited print ad placements to cover the printing cost. In FY22, VisitNorman used a portion of the grant provided by the Norman City Council to print the guide without placements. The guide is a collaboration with The University of Oklahoma with them providing about a third of the pages and distribution points at the OU Visitors Center along with satellite recruiting offices located out of state. A portion of the printed guides are also warehoused by the state travel office to send out to users who have requested our guide on their website, the visitor guide fulfillment. Guides are also very popular to be added to welcome bags for conferences, conventions, meetings and other gatherings at our meeting places.



For the past several years, we have also invested in an app that duplicates most of the information from our visitors guide and our website. This app is especially important to the younger demographic in our audience.

## **Sales Strategy**

In FY'23 the VisitNorman sales team will ramp our conference and convention efforts back up as business travel rebounds back to pre-pandemic levels. Local interaction will continue to be important as we work to engage partners and community members looking for meeting and event prospects. We will also work on state level to continue to build relationships with our Oklahoma state associations. This will include sales blitz's targeted at local and regional planners.

### **Sales blitz goal of \*one\* per quarter (two examples below):**

- **Theme: Road Trip**
  - Highlight: hotels, unique meeting space, outdoor offerings and upcoming festivals
  - Client gift ideas: Norman-themed car BINGO, gas card, MIO snacks, VN ice scraper, luggage tag, etc.
  - Potential contacts/clients: Oklahoma-based associations/government/hobby (and north Texas?)
- **Theme: 1889**
  - Nod to Yellowstone/1883
  - Highlight: hotels and meeting space, of course—but emphasize Western/Native culture and flair offered in Norman (from the Sam and Fred to BBQ and live music venues)
  - Client gift ideas: embroidered bandana, Mason's peanuts, Ray's BBQ sauce (or similar), Toby Keith "something or other," 6-pack local beer, etc.
  - Potential contacts/clients: ABA (or similar *leisure* group tours); work with Angel/Morgan/Chickasaw Nation for potential contacts

After a two-year hiatus, the sales team will begin going back to tradeshow to meet with planners on a one-on-one basis.

### **Trade shows:**

- OSAE – Duncan
  - July 2022
- Connect Southeast – Little Rock
  - October 2022
  - Typically, Connect is EXPENSIVE. But, this is a *regional* show (not national), plus, it provides a great opportunity for us to start flexing our future in the SEC
- PCMA EduCon
  - Spring 2023
- SGMP NEC - Pittsburgh



- June 2023

**Additional opportunities to connect with clients (frequent and ongoing; see below):**

- **Site visit of The Well**
  - Inspiration/theme: Destination Meditation
  - Highlight: The Well, the Commerce Building, and other Downtown-based meeting venues, group dining options and entertainment
  - Client gift ideas: yoga mats or water bottles (in fact, START the day with optional yoga/stretch class at The Well—followed by tour and ending with a chef demo)...then progressive lunch and/or pub crawl along Main Street (with intermittent stops to tour off-site venue and unique meeting space options)
  - Other considerations: opportunity to collaborate with County
- **Hard Hat Tour of the NOUN**
  - Highlight: NOUN, Campus Corner and OU campus (meeting space, restaurants, entertainment, etc.)
  - Client gift ideas: customized hard hat and OU swag
  - Other considerations: opportunity to collaborate with Jeff(?) and Shailaina at the NOUN as well as Campus Corner merchants (like Balfour and The Baked Bear) and even OU Outreach potentially
- **#NTTW**
  - Inspiration/theme: #NTTW and/or May 7, specifically
  - Highlight: General overview + relevant updates about Norman
  - Client “gift” ideas: Simple e-newsletter to any past/current/potential groups
  - Other considerations: could potentially also include links to register for a site visit of The Well and/or hard hat tour of the NOUN
- **National Chocolate Chip Cookie Day**
  - Inspiration/theme: May 15 (^ enough said, but, really, ANY similar holiday throughout the year that presents “opportunity” to connect)
  - Client Gift Ideas: 6-pack of chocolate chip cookies from Dara Marie’s
  - Potential contacts/clients: NEW (albeit pre-qualified) planners *only*
- **CVB Exchange Trips**
  - Idea: Less sales-based and more of an opportunity for overnight/2-night trips to put *our* best foot forward and boast Norman’s offerings while also learning from other, similarly sized cities

While we always believed youth sports were recession proof, we have now seen they are also pandemic proof. Throughout this past two years, sports tournaments helped keep the lights on at our hotels and drove occupancy. The Norman Forward projects are progressing and VisitNorman is working to create a sports commission that will work with the local operators to attract tournaments, meets and events at the facilities when not being used by our local leagues.



### **Norman Sports July '22-June '23**

#### **Sales Blitz goal of 2 per year (examples below)**

- **Theme: SEC campaign**
  - Highlight Norman's sporting complex's, unique meeting space, upcoming Norman tournaments.
  - Client gift ideas; signed football/basketball by coaches or premier OU athletes.
  - Potential contacts/clients: visit SEC opponents cities, meet with the following youth programs soccer/basketball/cheer/baseball/softball.
- **Theme: Big-12 Farewell Tour (Texas specific) Waco, Lubbock, Austin, Fort Worth**
  - Highlight Norman's sporting complex's, unique meeting space, upcoming Norman tournaments.
  - Client gift ideas: Rays BBQ sauce, local brews, Dara Marie cookies. Signed picture from Toby Keith or other "Oklahoma" artists.
  - Potential clients: Partner with Mickey Mantle & Perfect Game to meet with their client base to encourage additional play-in tournaments throughout the year, or leisure travel.

#### **Upcoming shows:**

- **TEAMS- Oklahoma City**
  - October 24-27<sup>th</sup> 2022
- **Sports ETA-TBD**
  - April/May 2023
- **Sports ETA 4S Summit Sarasota, FL**
  - Oct. 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> 2022
- **Sports Relationships Savannah, GA** \*Contingent upon sports commission
  - September 19-22<sup>nd</sup>

#### **Additional opportunities to connect with clients (frequent and ongoing; see below):**

- **Site Visit for all Norman Parks & Rec facilities along with OU offerings**
  - Depending on the group, tailor to their respective sport. Goal to have OU coaches or players say a few inspirational words to the group, or have a pre-recorded video specialized to the participating group.
  - Followed up with a brew tour of Norman, finished up with a local dining experience.
  - Partner with OU to do stadium tours etc.





- **Hard Hat Tour of Young Family Athletic Center**
  - Highlight YAC facility, get extensive tour of the benefits of having onsite Sports Medicine (Norman Regional Hospital)
  - Gift ideas: OU apparel/swag, signed Trae Young basketballs.

**Other ideas to consider (July 2022 – June 2023):**

- **Partner Mixers with OU & Norman Parks & Recreation**
  - Strengthen VisitNorman relationship with OU & Parks and rec, by hosting quarterly social hours.
- **Quarterly sports committee meetings**
  - With or without sports commission, goal is to meet with our local sports directors on more consistent basis.
  - I would like to create a sport community calendar for sporting events that take place in Norman (surrounding areas)
- **Develop a landing page on VisitNorman website**
  - Goal is to have place where tournament directors can explore all of our sport venues in Norman and get all specs of each field/facility.

There is a renewed energy within the travel and tourism industry and VisitNorman is overjoyed to be marketing Norman to visitors with some semblance of normalcy. Our city and our hospitality industry has been resilient over the past two years and we're ready to come back better than ever!

Sincerely,

Dan Schemm, Executive Director