

## **Kittitas County Tourism: Promotions and Marketing 2014 Contract for Services**

### **Overview:**

A comprehensive tourism promotion strategy (i.e. not tied to specific events) is recognized as essential to hotel/motel occupancy and continued growth of lodging tax revenue. Such a “big canvas” campaign includes:

- Destination marketing and advertising
- Strategic branding and messaging
- Electronic media
- Visitor information services

In recent years Kittitas County has made a significant investment in comprehensive strategies. However, branding the county as a tourism destination is a long-term undertaking. This proposal builds upon the investment of the previous 3 years. Highlights include professional branding services by Arnett Muldrow & Associates, a much-needed replacement of the Visitkittitas.com web site, and an even greater emphasis on web-based promotions.

### **1. Strategic Branding**

Arnett Muldrow & Associates of South Carolina have earned a reputation for tourism consulting that is creative, thorough and adept at distilling an area’s essence into unique taglines and graphics. In 2013 they delivered excellent results and value for Ellensburg, and their recommendations have been incorporated into Myellensburg.com and the new Ellensburg Downtown Association logo, among others.

Arnett Muldrow will be retained for messaging, graphics and branding for Kittitas County tourism in general and specifically for the communities of Snoqualmie Pass, Roslyn, Cle Elum, Liberty and Kittitas. Arnett Muldrow will also provide recommendations for the revision/replacement of the Visitkittitas web site (below).

Coordination of this strategic process will require staff to schedule and host roundtables and community forums, give educational presentations, undertake research and, of course, travel.

### **2. Visitkittitas.com Website**

Because the internet is today’s initial point of contact for travel, the quality of Kittitas County’s web presence is essential. The dedicated county tourism site, Visitkittitas.com, contains quality information and was expanded in 2013 to be more community-specific. Also, its online recreation maps are virtually unique in Washington and highly popular. However, the site is tired and visually dated with a long-running tagline – “Warning! Danger Ahead” – that targets an important but narrow demographic, motorized recreation.

Clearly the site requires more than revision. It needs complete re-conception. Perhaps “visitkittitas” is not the most effective URL since it assumes the customer already knows the location of small, hard-to-pronounce Kittitas County. Perhaps another brand for the area would be more effective. And should the brand promote everything for everyone or instead focus on the communities? On outdoor recreation? On proximity to Puget Sound? On climate?

Answering these important questions – “getting it right” – will follow a process that will 1) examine tourism sites accepted as industry standouts, 2) mine focus group results in the 2013 PRR study, and 3) use the services of Arnett Muldrow & Associates (above). With the best strategy and messages determined, the site will either be extensively revised or, more likely, replaced with an entirely new site.

### **3. Marketing and Promotions**

The marketing of events is not enough. A comprehensive tourism campaign promotes the larger Kittitas County experience: quaint communities, diverse climate, Suncadia, a thriving arts community, rivers, trails and much more. This is the essential foundation that attracts non-event visitors and makes event promotions even more effective.

The following promotional media will be used in 2014:

#### **Online Marketing**

Online marketing, which delivers promotional messages through email, search engines, social media, internet display advertising (such as web banners) and mobile advertising is now a core element of any comprehensive promotional campaign, and in many instances it is displacing conventional media.

Online marketing tends to be highly targetable (able to reach a particular demographic) and provides a high return on investment. What’s more, it also generally provides more performance data than other forms of marketing.

In 2014, “retargeting ads” (key words that trigger ads) will be purchased with:

- Facebook
- Google Ad Word
- YouTube
- Bing

Ads will cover Washington, Oregon, the northern cities in Idaho, and Montana as far east as Kalispell. This potential audience represents over 8 million viewers per month. Ads will target activities specific to each area, which will allow for the tracking of viewer behavior. New ads based on the Arnett Muldrow recommendations will run November and December.

## **TV**

Television has proven effective for Kittitas County tourism despite the 2013 spot running unchanged for over a year. In 2014, ads will run on:

- Fox Seattle
- KIRO
- KING
- KONG
- KOMO

A new ad will be produced based on the Arnett Muldow recommendations and will begin running in November, targeting winter outdoor recreation.

## **2. Visitor Information Services & Administration Fee**

### **Visitor Information Centers**

If marketing invites tourists, visitor information centers answer questions and give directions when they arrive. Existing VIC in Cle Elum, Ellensburg, and at the Wild Horse Wind Renewable Energy Center serve thousands of visitors each year. These centers must be staffed, provided with utilities and supplied with equipment, racks, signage and a myriad other supplies. VIC are expensive undertakings, but essential.

### **Distribution of Materials**

A second key aspect of visitor services is the placement of brochures, maps and other printed information in motels, restaurants and businesses. This too requires staffing and storage.

### **Administration Fee**

As is customary in the industry, the Chamber charges a 10% administration fee for expenses relating to contract administration and oversight.