

GUIDELINES FOR THE MONTANA TRAVEL RESEARCH PROGRAM

The Montana Travel Research Program was created in 1987 through legislation. The Legislation provides that 2.5 percent of annual bed tax collections be distributed "to the university system for the establishment and maintenance of a Montana travel research program" (section 15-65-121 (1)(b), MCA). The program is administered by the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research (ITRR) in the College of Forestry and Conservation at the University of Montana-Missoula.

ROLE AND SCOPE OF MONTANA TRAVEL RESEARCH PROGRAM

The role is to provide direction and information to assist the recreation and tourism industries and policy makers in making informed decisions about planning, marketing, and management of tourism and recreation in the state.

The scope is to conduct valid, reliable, and objective tourism and recreation research designed to assist businesses and public agencies that provide visitor services and decision makers who direct tourism and recreation policy.

GUIDELINES FOR SELECTION OF A RESEARCH PROGRAM

1. Research projects should implement at least one of the measurable objectives established in Montana's Tourism and Recreation Strategic Plan 2008-2012. **Currently, the following goals and measurable objectives identify ITRR within the 5-year plan:**

Goal 1: Increase the four-season tourism revenues statewide through effective marketing and promotions, focusing on high-value, low impact visitors.

1.1.b. Continue winter marketing, promoting Montana as a superb winter destination

1.1.d Continue marketing to international travelers

1.1.e. Enhance tracking/reporting and ROI from state, regional, and CVB advertising

Goal 7: Improve Montana's transportation system for both residents and visitors

7.2. Continue to implement Montana's rest area strategy.

Goal 8: Enhance the "curb appeal" of Montana communities to attract visitors.

8.1a. Continue the Montana Tourism Assessment Program to help communities.

Goal 10: Build an effective "team" to implement the Strategic Plan, and report results.

10.5.a. Continue to conduct research about resident/nonresident travelers in Montana.

10.5.b. Purchase research about national/international tourism and recreation trends.

10.5.c Continue regular monitoring of Montanans' opinions about tourism and recreation

10.5.d Disseminate tourism research reports to partners statewide.

2. The priority among projects funded by bed-tax dollars should be given to research projects that:

- Study the economic impact of travel and tourism in Montana.
- Study the attitudes of Montana residents and visitors regarding tourism.
- Study the impacts of tourism on Montana's resources.

3. Project reporting shall include:
 - project results
 - executive summary of the project
 - interpretation and explanation of written results by ITRR to the Tourism Advisory Council members prior to public release¹.
 - evaluation form for feedback to determine the use of the project information
4. ITRR shall solicit a list of research needs from the private industry, Montana residents, government agencies, and any other interested parties.
 - ITRR will provide a list of research needs to the Tourism Advisory Council Research Committee by the fall TAC meeting. Submitted needs will be reviewed and prioritized by the TAC Research Committee at the fall meeting.
 - Prior to the winter meeting, project descriptions (method, timeline, cost) recognizing prioritized needs, will be distributed to the full TAC.
 - At the winter meeting, the TAC Research Committee will review and rank proposed research projects and make a research program recommendation to the full TAC.
 - The full TAC will approve a research program for the coming fiscal year at the winter meeting.
 - The ITRR Director will submit the TAC approved program and project proposals for final approval by the Dean of the College of Forestry and Conservation².
5. An Opportunity Research Fund of up to 10 percent of the total available program budget may be maintained. The Dean of the College of Forestry and Conservation will approve Opportunity projects after notification to the chair of the Tourism Advisory Council.

¹ The following procedure will be utilized to implement this guideline. Prior to public release of a project report, the report will be sent to the TAC and the research committee. Questions about the report will be handled through email but if further clarification of the report is needed, ITRR will schedule a conference call with the research committee within 10 working days of receipt of a report for the purpose of gaining understanding of the results and what they might mean. The report will be publicly distributed as soon as is practical after the conference call.

² While section 2-15-1816, MCA provides the Tourism Advisory Council authority to “(e) direct the university system regarding Montana travel research” and “(f) approve all travel research programs prior to their being undertaken”; the Tourism Advisory Council acknowledges academic freedom pursuant to the MUS Board of Regents policy.

For a specific project on which agreement cannot be reached between ITRR and the TAC, it is agreed that the Dean of the College of Forestry and Conservation at The University of Montana-Missoula shall make the final decision on that project. Prior to making a decision, the Dean shall provide an opportunity for the Tourism Advisory Council to present information, in person, detailing its position. The Chair of the Council and the Chair of the Research Committee shall represent the Tourism Advisory Council in that meeting.

The Dean shall notify the Tourism Advisory Council in writing of the decision.