

Impact of Tourism Marketing Authority

JANUARY 2020 JLARC BRIEFING REPORT

In 2018, the Legislature created the Washington Tourism Marketing Authority and directed it to promote statewide tourism (RCW 43.384.900). The Legislature also directed JLARC to assess the impact of the Authority on the tourism industry and the state's economy by December 2023.

Washington's new Tourism Marketing Authority is funded with public and private dollars

The Authority's funding can total \$4.5 million per fiscal year, contingent on a two-to-one industry-to-state match.

\$1.5 M \$1.5 million comes from sales tax revenue

\$3.0 M \$3.0 million comes from matching funds (e.g., in-kind contributions, cash)

Local tourism marketing is funded separately. Cities, towns, and counties reported spending \$21.5 million on local tourism marketing in fiscal year 2018.

The Authority has contracted with the Washington Tourism Alliance (WTA) to develop and implement a statewide marketing plan

The WTA's work began in January 2019. Current efforts include:

- Identifying needs and gaps.
- Working with regional marketing organizations.
- Updating the state's tourism web site.
- Hiring experts to develop a new brand for the state.

The Legislature specified five focus areas for statewide tourism marketing:



Rural tourism-dependent counties.



Natural wonders and outdoor recreation opportunities.



Attraction of international tourists.



Identification of local offerings for tourists.



Assistance for tourism areas adversely impacted by natural disasters.

Once the Authority identifies specific marketing strategies, JLARC staff can identify study options for evaluating the Authority's impact

The study must control for other factors affecting travel and tourism spending and measure the extent to which the Authority's marketing efforts:

- Address the five focus areas identified in statute.
- Increase demand for travel to Washington.
- Impact the tourism industry and economic development in the state.

JLARC staff planned to provide the Legislature with study design options in this briefing report. However, the Authority is still developing its marketing plan and working to identify detailed strategies and metrics.

JLARC staff worked with an economist who specializes in travel and tourism. He identified metrics that may be of use to the Authority as it proceeds with its planning efforts.

Assuming the Authority has developed strategies and identified metrics by early 2020, JLARC staff will provide the Legislature with a second briefing report by December 2020 outlining study options, the amount of time needed to complete each, and estimated costs.

The complete report is on the JLARC web site: www.leg.wa.gov/jlarc

For more information, contact: Keenan Konopaski, Washington State Legislative Auditor
keenan.konopaski@leg.wa.gov • (360) 786-5187

Follow us on Twitter
[@WaLegAuditor](https://twitter.com/WaLegAuditor)
January 2020

