

Montana Ambassadors

Strategic Plan

Prepared by the Governor's Office of Economic Development

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Approved by the MT Ambassador Board March 2017

Strategic Plan for 2017-2021

The Governor's Office of Economic Development in cooperation with the Montana Ambassador Board of Directors has created the following multi-faceted strategy for the Montana Ambassadors.

1. Montana Ambassador By-Laws Amendments

First and foremost, a Board resolution to change the organizational by-laws to allow for removal of non-dues paying members is recommended. This change must be made in order to eliminate members who are not and will not be active but are occupying a seat nonetheless. It would also have a tremendous effect in stabilizing the Montana Ambassadors' financial situation. This Board resolution and resulting bylaw change should specify the term after which a non-paying member is removed and specify that removal from the organization would require re-appointment to reverse. These actions would not include those designated as life members.

Second, a clarification to the organizational by-laws should be made to clearly set the expectations for being an Ambassador. That should include an expectation of being active in the organization, as members are able. As Montana Ambassadors serve at the pleasure of the Governor and serve as official ambassadors of the State, all directional stances on policy *while acting in an official Montana Ambassador capacity* must be in conformance with the Administration's official stance, if there is one. The Administration's official stance on issues will be clearly stated during regular meetings of GOED/Montana Ambassadors.

2. Chapter Goals

In terms of activities for which the organization would be responsible, the determination was made by the Governor's Office of Economic Development in cooperation with the Montana Ambassador Board of Directors to separate the activities of in-state versus out-of-state Ambassadors. This is due to the obvious strengths and weaknesses that are inherent to both groups. For example, out-of-state Ambassadors can be more effective in leading business attraction efforts in co-operation with their in-state counterparts due to their constant exposure to prospects. Conversely, in-state Ambassadors can be much more effective serving as mentors to young Montana companies than their out-of-state counterparts due to their geographic proximity.

Following that logic, the Governor's Office of Economic Development in cooperation with the Montana Ambassador Board of Directors, has identified the following strategic goals for both groups of Ambassadors. These goals are intentionally very specific and limited in number in order to allow for easy focus and measurement against them. *They are also intended to be optional* – any Ambassador not able to or not comfortable engaging in any activity can choose to not be engaged with that particular initiative and add value in another area.

For those Ambassadors who are in-state, the following high-level strategic initiatives were identified:

1. Provide Mentorship to Montana Businesses

According to the Kauffman Foundation, Montana leads the country in new business startup activity and has for the last three years. This statistic in itself is an outstanding measure of Montana's can-do attitude and indicative of a surge of interest in entrepreneurship.

Unfortunately, Montana's startups do not also lead in longevity. Less than 52% of all startups last longer than 5 years, as of 2015 data. Since startup activity means little if those companies don't ultimately grow and create jobs, the Governor's Office of Economic Development would like the Montana Ambassadors to tackle this problem head on. With dozens of talented, successful business people included in the Ambassadors' ranks, this is the perfect opportunity to substantially and positively impact new and small businesses in the state.

2. Networking Opportunities

One of the most valuable contributions that the Montana Ambassadors can provide is opportunities for connection among business owners, leaders in local and state government, leaders in education and other interested parties. The value of the networking opportunities with these groups cannot be overstated and numerous cases of new partnerships, businesses and investments can be identified from the creation of networking groups like this in the State. By being the impetus of these networking opportunities, the Montana Ambassadors stands to benefit from increased name recognition and opportunities to engage its membership. It is the desire of the Governor's Office of Economic Development that Ambassadors at these events work to introduce new attendees and get to know everyone. It's vital that a positive experience for all attendees be maintained and that new connections are actively fostered to achieve the full value that these events can provide. The Governor's Office of Economic Development will provide information regarding the Governor's in-state travel schedule as is possible so that area Ambassadors can best utilize his or her presence at these events.

3. Advocacy

One of the persistent needs that the Governor's Office of Economic Development in cooperation with the Montana Ambassador Board of Directors has identified is a group of interested and dedicated individuals that will help influence policy issues. This would include working with the Montana Ambassador membership to evaluate the need for as well as any opportunity for well-constructed and impactful policy that furthers the economic development of the State. This group will have the opportunity to recommend policy to the Governor's Office on a regular basis. The group will also have the opportunity to work with the Governor's Office to advance relevant policy in a way that aligns with the Governor's official policy stances. That includes testifying, both in favor of and in opposition to, proposed legislation during the legislative session and working in channels not commonly available to the Governor's office to achieve the desired outcome. Directional stances adopted by the Montana Ambassadors on advocacy related issues must be explicitly approved by the Governor's Office of Economic Development prior to advocacy activities taking place on behalf of the organization.

4. Outreach and Marketing

The Montana Ambassadors represents a well-connected and diverse group of individuals who are dedicated to the success of Montana. A major component of that charge is to improve the perception of the State on a national stage as an inclusive, forward thinking and business friendly one. The Governor's Office of Economic Development would like to enlist the Montana Ambassadors in proactive outreach and opportunistic marketing on behalf of the State. This will

include identifying and performing initial due diligence and having initial conversations with companies, events and individuals that would be a good fit for the State and provide outsized value to its economy. Outreach may also include fundraising and providing support services for events as needed. Marketing may include verbal or written advocacy for Montana, publishing articles and opinion pieces in target markets, feeding news to the Governor's Office on behalf of events or other successes from the Montana Ambassadors, providing assistance with event marketing and perhaps some targeted advertising.

For those Ambassadors who are out-of-state, the following high-level strategic initiatives were identified:

1. Identify and Recruit Top Quality Talent and Businesses to Montana

Montana is facing a dearth of talent that, if left unrectified, will cause stagnation in the State's economy in the next ten years. While there are many efforts afoot to address that shortage within state government, the Montana Ambassadors can provide significant value by serving as recruiters of interested and highly qualified individuals. By showcasing select opportunities to these people, Montana will gain exposure and, hopefully, ultimately people who are exceptional in their field. Similarly, all businesses but particularly knowledge-based businesses are of substantial value to the State. The Governor's Office of Economic Development would like the assistance of the Montana Ambassadors in identifying, vetting and contacting businesses that might be interested in expanding operations in the state, open an office in the state, or otherwise collaborate with Montana. Specific industries of interest and geographic areas of interest will be discussed on an ad hoc basis.

2. Networking Opportunities

As has been stated above, networking opportunities are extremely high value and a common connection to Montana for those who are out of state has been proven to be a powerful unifying force. While these events have already been happening with some regularity, the Governor's Office of Economic Development would like to see them be expanded and formalized to attract more disciplines/industries and provide even more opportunities to attendees. As is possible, details of the Governor's travel plans will also be provided so that Montana Ambassadors in the area can best utilize his or her presence.

3. Outreach and Marketing

The opportunity for out-of-state Montana Ambassadors to perform outreach and marketing on behalf of the State is significant. Since local, on the ground knowledge will allow for marketing efforts to be of higher impact and more demographically appropriate, the Governor's Office of Economic Development in cooperation with the Department of Commerce and appropriate local and regional Economic Development Officers would like to formalize a marketing team and strategy for each major market that the out-of-state Montana Ambassador Chapters have a presence in. This team should work with the out-of-state Montana Ambassador Chapters to perform local activities that will advance the brand of Montana. Similarly, this group should work to proactively identify and involve people who previously lived in Montana via alumni lists

and any other means possible. Including those people in networking opportunities and identifying which of them are likely candidates for relocation would be of immense value.

Part III

Implementation:

The following tactics are designed to support the strategic initiatives described in Part II. These will undoubtedly be expanded upon as tactics are experimented with and other ideas come to the surface. All tactics are designed to be specific and measurable so individuals have clear direction and their engagement can be defined.

In-State Ambassadors shall have the opportunity to engage in one or more of the following manners:

Provide Mentorship to Montana Businesses

- Create an application form on the website for prospective businesses needing mentorship to fill out. They will then be matched with a mentor based on their needs and the skills of the mentor.
- Matchmaking for mentorship will initially be provided by the Montana Ambassador management team, but could be transitioned to a technology solution if demand from businesses needing mentorship rises to a point at which it becomes difficult to manage.
- Update the skills matrix for the Montana Ambassadors with mentorship in mind.
- Poll the membership at large to find out who has time to provide mentorship and how much time they can dedicate. If they don't personally have the time, solicit recommendations for business people in the area who might.

Networking Opportunities

- Create a committee charged with producing at least one networking event per quarter, likely each in a different geographical location in the state. Local chapter VPs may choose to do more events
- Create marketing guidelines or a checklist to assist local Ambassador planning efforts to ensure that these events are well attended and fit the brand and goals of the Montana Ambassadors

Advocacy

- Create a committee charged with driving the Governor's priorities for economic development forward
- Compile policy recommendations from the membership at large for the Governor on a regular basis
- Work with the Governor's Office of Economic Development to identify and work on bills of interest during the legislative session (all policy direction for Montana Ambassadors

serving as such must be explicitly approved by the Governor's Office of Economic Development)

- Testify as Montana Ambassadors to legislative committees, meeting with both parties to attempt to sway opinion to align with the Governor's priorities and working with the Montana Ambassadors membership to move economic development priorities ahead

Outreach and Marketing

- Create a committee responsible for the attraction and retention of top quality talent and businesses to Montana
- Proactively perform initial outreach on behalf of the State with the identified talent and individuals
- Coordinate with the Montana Economic Developers Association to collectively build the state's economy without duplication of efforts
- Communicate regularly with the Governor's Office of Economic Development regarding the list of people and businesses being targeted for recruitment and engage the office as needed on high potential prospects
- Provide regular and timely news to Gloria O'Rourke for publishing on social media feeds

Out-of-State Ambassador Chapters will have the opportunity to engage in one or more of the following ways:

- Identify and Recruit Top Quality Talent and Businesses to Montana in co-operation with GOED, the MT Department of Commerce, and local and regional EDOs. Out-of-state Chapters will work to identify and encourage interested, top quality talent and businesses to consider new opportunities in Montana and to build mutually beneficial bridges from state to state to that end. The focus will be on building mutually beneficial business bridges from state to state. GOED will work closely with out-of-state chapters as well as Montana's Economic Development Community to identify solid opportunities.
- Develop and Formalize a list of prospects and share it with the Board of Directors and GOED in order to expedite event planning during regularly scheduled Board Meetings.
- Engage the Governor's Office of Economic Development to assist with high-value prospects on an as needed basis.

Networking Opportunities

- Out of state Chapters will be responsible for producing at least one annual networking event in their area
- Work with the Montana Ambassador Outreach and Marketing team to attract new individuals with a tie to or interest in Montana to networking events
- Work with in-state chapters to acquire access to or use of alumni lists from all universities and colleges, community colleges and technical schools for the purposes of outreach for networking activities

Outreach and Marketing

- Work locally to promote the brand of Montana as a great place to live and do business
- Identify local opportunities to showcase the Montana brand in an affordable and high-impact way
- Work with the networking team including in-state Montana Ambassador Chapters to obtain a list of local Alumni from each university, college and community college in Montana and perform outreach to them to engage in local networking opportunities
- Utilize highly targeted digital marketing techniques to attract attendees not on alumni lists to regional networking events and share best practices with other regional chapters

Part IV

Summary

The Montana Ambassadors is a group of exceptional individuals who are or have been appointed by the Governors of Montana and are charged with advancing the economic interests of the State. These individuals are chosen for their selfless dedication to Montana, personal network and success in their profession. Because the Montana Ambassadors are charged with acting as official Ambassadors to the State of Montana, it's extraordinarily important that the group act as a cohesive unit with a single plan to drive the aims of the State and the Governor forward. Similarly, it is expected that no standing Ambassador publicly adopt a policy stance that is in opposition to or in conflict with the official stance of the Governor when acting as a Montana Ambassador or on behalf of the organization.

Historically, there have been challenges with membership and strategic direction that must be rectified going forward to realize the potential of the Montana Ambassadors. This is imperative to the continued effectiveness and, ultimately, the existence of the organization.

This plan identifies a series of core strategies for the group as well as tactics to drive those strategies forward. The Governor's Office of Economic Development sees these as being the most important areas in which the Montana Ambassadors can provide definite positive impact. Through the efforts of the Ambassadors, outcomes for Montana's businesses can be improved, the policy aims of the Governor can be advanced through non-traditional and traditional channels, new interpersonal connections can be formed and the brand of Montana can be furthered.

The Governor's Office of Economic Development looks forward to working with the Board of Directors of the Montana Ambassadors to adopt this plan or a modified version of it. Through this specific, action oriented agreement, the Montana Ambassadors will serve the purpose they were intended for as well as perform a great service to the people of the Montana.