



ANNUAL REPORT

2017





Within the pages of this document are the quantified and qualitative results of the dedicated work of our destination marketing organization. During Fiscal Year 2017 our staff at Visit Jackson has worked hard to responsibly capitalize on tax receipts, as well as maximize a positive return-on-investments for Jackson and the tourism industry.

The Mission of Visit Jackson is to attract, promote and facilitate tourism to and with our market. The agency's goal is to cause a major economic impact for Jackson through programs designed to identify, attract and service conventions and meetings, trade shows, group tours and consumer travelers while impacting the quality of life of local citizens. It is my privilege to report to our stakeholders that during Fiscal Year 2017, Visit Jackson realized its objective.

It is my honor to serve beside other committed and dedicated professionals on the Board of Directors providing oversight in the development of Visit Jackson's policy, vision, and strategic approach. We honor, and take seriously the fiduciary responsibilities the citizens of Jackson entrust to us. Integrity and ethics continue to drive all of our decisions as we encourage the management and staff of this agency to execute bold, innovative and effective tactics. We remain focused and diligent in the execution of traditional and non traditional destination marketing strategies that increase the propensity to achieve our goals, objectives, fulfillment of our mission and to uplift the Jackson Community.

Robert Gibbs, Esq.
Board Chairman

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Robert Gibbs".



2017 was an eventful year for Visit Jackson! Your Destination Marketing Organization continues to work extremely hard in our efforts to promote the City of Jackson's tourism products. Our relationships with the many partners in Jackson makes the realization of our goals more achievable.

I am proud of the new programs that were implemented over the past year. We expanded outside of the usual box and explored innovative methods to provide additional assistance to our many restaurant partners to push the excellent culinary tourism that abounds in Jackson. The continued funding assistance provided to events, activities and attractions through our matching grants program, group underwriting program and the quality of life program, generated economic impact and allowed many organizations the ability to prosper and thrive.

During Fiscal Year 2017, I was blessed with a 19 member staff who are dedicated to tourism development in Jackson and are working diligently to improve Visit Jackson's mark on the industry. More than half of the current staffers have developed into lifers, having served at the Bureau for 10+ years. Their passion for their vocation is evident as they interact with our clients and partners.

The support of our Board of Directors is invaluable and very much appreciated. Their vision allows us the flexibility to produce opportunities that create new and exciting ventures. I am proud of all our efforts.

As President/CEO, I pledge to strive upwards and onward in creating measures to thrust the City of Jackson's tourism product into the world. We are rapidly gaining recognition as a true tourism destination and Visit Jackson will push, pull and drag if necessary, to ensure our position is solidified. I respectfully request that you continue to hold me accountable for my actions and I stand firmly by each and every decision. True transparency is the backbone and stronghold of Visit Jackson and its leadership, today and tomorrow.

Let's work together to make 2018 even better than ever!

Yours in Tourism,
Wanda C. Wilson
President & CEO

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Wanda C. Wilson".

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WHO WE ARE

OVERVIEW

In 1983 the state legislature established the Jackson Convention & Visitors Bureau dba Visit Jackson. Senate Bill #3080 authorized the creation of the Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau, identified its purpose, and provided for funding through the levying of a 1% sales tax upon hotels/motels and restaurants. These funds form the foundation on which the Bureau promotes Jackson as a tourist, group tour, trade show, and convention/meeting destination.

MISSION

To attract, promote and facilitate tourism to and with our market.

GOALS

To cause major economic impact for Jackson through programs designed to identify, attract and service conventions and meetings, tradeshow, group tours and consumer travelers, while impacting the quality of life of local citizens.



Visit Jackson's staff travels to other destinations to solicit conventions, meetings and group tour business for Jackson. In partnership with the State Department of Tourism (Mississippi Development Authority), Visit Jackson and other Mississippi destination marketing organizations work in collaboration to promote visitation to Mississippi and to Jackson on an international level.



Visit Jackson became the first Accredited Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) in the State of Mississippi through Destination Internationals, Destination Marketing Accreditation Program (DMAP) in 2012. As of February 2018, Visit Jackson was one of only two accredited DMO's in the entire State.

HUMAN CAPITAL

THE MANAGEMENT AND FULL-TIME STAFF OF VISIT JACKSON HAS AN AGGREGATED TOTAL OF OVER 356 YEARS OF TOURISM EXPERIENCE, PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE AND PROFICIENCY

 FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES <i>Management & Staff</i> 19	 PART-TIME EMPLOYEES <i>Convention Registration Assistants</i> 4	 BOARD OF DIRECTORS <i>Constituency Representatives</i> 9
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STRUCTURE OF THE BUREAU

ADMINISTRATIVE DEPARTMENT:

The Administrative Department provides the Bureau with operational support systems. This department is also responsible for financial reporting and control, human resources, inventory control, policies and general management issues. This department is also responsible for the Bureau-wide signature events and activities, quality of life initiatives, governmental & community engagement.

MARKETING DEPARTMENT:

The Marketing Department is responsible for research, advertising, grant development, and promotion. This department is also responsible for in-house services; public relations and special projects of the Bureau.

SALES & SERVICES DEPARTMENT:

- *Sales* - plans and implements programs to affect market growth and development. These programs create awareness and increase sales of the Jackson area as a quality meeting, convention, group tour and visitors destination.
- *Services* - develops, strengthens, and promotes the many services provided by the Bureau to conventions and meetings, tour operators, and casual visitors.

Visit Jackson is governed by a nine-member Board of Directors representing segments of the Jackson community, including:

(2) **Hotel/Motel Representatives**, (2) **Restaurant Representatives**,
(1) **Business/Chamber Representative**, (1) **At-Large Representative**,
(1) **Education Representative**, (1) **Attractions Representative**, and
(1) **Arts Representative**



Wanda C. Wilson, *President & CEO*;
Rickey Thigpen, *Executive VP*;
Jennifer R. Chance, *CPA, VP of Finance & Administration*;
Shun Hatten, *VP of Sales*;
Jonathan Pettus, *VP of Marketing*;
Amy Dillard, *Office Manager*; (not pictured)
Laura Taylor, *Visitors Information Coordinator*;
Shana Smith, *Sales & Services Coordinator*;
Brian Wilks, *Partner Relations Coordinator*; (not pictured)
Sherri Ratliff, *Convention Sales Manager*;
Kim Lewis, *Convention Sales Manager*;
Jennifer Byrd, *Convention Sales Manager*;
Floyd Williams Jr., *Director of National Accounts*;
Mary Current, *Group Tour & Reunion Manager*;
Michael Hogg, *Director of IT & Production*;
Wanda Watts, *Marketing Coordinator*;
Yolanda Clay-Moore, *PR Manager*;
Christine Blackmon-McInnis, *Services Director*;
Jamye Horton, *Services Manager*

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY AND REPORTING

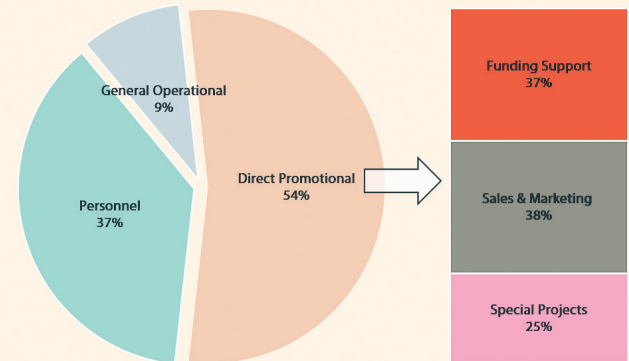
FINANCIAL RECAP

STATEMENT OF REVENUE AND EXPENDITURES - CASH BASIS FOR THE YEAR ENDED SEPTEMBER 30, 2017

Total Revenues		\$ 4,057,678
Expenditures:		
Personnel Services (see pg 4)	1,544,501	
General Operational	384,508	
Direct Promotional:		
Funding Support (see pg 7)	824,825	
Sales & Marketing (see pg 9)	825,599	
Special Projects (see pg 14)	556,217	
Other Program	15,193	
	<u>2,221,834</u>	
Total Expenditures		<u>4,150,843</u>
EXCESS EXPENDITURES OVER REVENUES		<u>(93,165)</u>

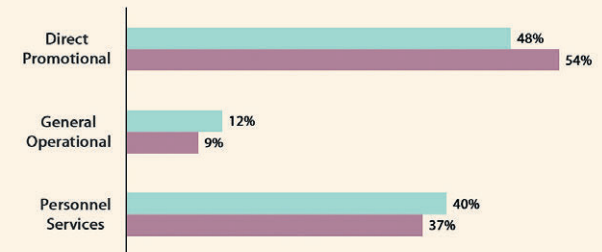
During Fiscal Year 2017, Visit Jackson responsibly managed resources entrusted to it by the citizens of Jackson, Mississippi. The 1% sales tax levied on hotels and restaurants within the city of Jackson generated total reported revenues of \$3.8 Million.

Expense Allocation by Category



Industry Benchmark

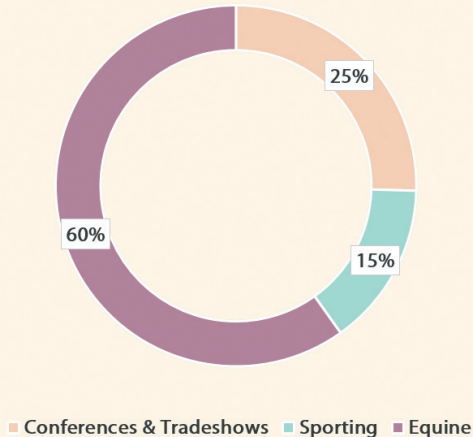
Industry* Visit Jackson



*Data obtained from Destination International's 2017 Organizational & Financial Profile Study based on DMO's with a median operation budget of \$3.3M.

FUNDING SUPPORT

Convention & Meeting Support



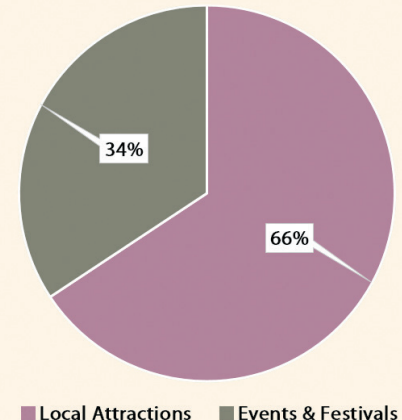
Convention & Meeting Support - \$159,723

The Convention & Meeting Support program is designed to provide assistance to meetings, conferences/conventions, tradeshows, reunions, equine and sporting events within the City of Jackson. Applicants must use Jackson venues and hotels to be eligible to receive Visit Jackson funding. During Fiscal Year 2017, Visit Jackson provided support to over 50 groups.

Marketing Match Grant Program - \$122,202

The Marketing Match Grant assists festivals & events, attractions and organizations that promote inbound tourism through public events within the City of Jackson. Applicants may apply for funding up to 50% of total qualified advertising expenses and up to 25% of total marketing expenses. During Fiscal Year 2017, Visit Jackson provided matching grant support to 13 organizations.

Marketing Grant Funding Allocation



Sponsorships - \$242,900

Visit Jackson provides sponsorship to non-profit organizations promoting activities that will cause local economic impact, especially by filling hotel/motel rooms and restaurants. By the end of Fiscal Year 2017, Visit Jackson provided sponsorship support in the amount of \$42,900 to 13 organizations. Additionally, we continued to support the Museum of Mississippi History and the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum by providing marketing support in the amount of \$200,000.

FUNDING SUPPORT

Quality of Life - \$300,000

One goal of Visit Jackson is to cause major economic impact for Jackson; while, impacting the quality of life of local citizens. Visit Jackson partnered with the Greater Jackson Arts Council to implement programs which enhanced the quality of life of Jackson's citizens.

Greater Jackson Arts Council Mini-Grant Program: \$100,000

Visit Jackson provided funding to the Greater Jackson Arts Council for non-traditional tourism related organizations to develop, enhance or continue their programs. In Fiscal Year 2017, with the support of Visit Jackson, the Arts Council provided mini grants to over 113 organizations within the Jackson community.

Greater Jackson Arts Council Project, Program & Outreach: \$200,000

Visit Jackson also provided funding to the Greater Jackson Arts Council to assist with its Quality of Life Series. The goal of the program is to stimulate impact of the general economy of the City of Jackson. This series encompassed a revamp of the We Are Jackson Magazine, assistance with Food Truck Fridays, Public Art Now!, and the High Note Jam Concert/Music First Series.



Travel & Tourism Effect

Travel & Tourism is a major contributor to the quality of life for the citizens of Jackson. Jackson's tourism product of 27 museums and attractions, over 300 restaurants, music and entertainment venues, concert halls, sports, events, conventions, tradeshow and festivals attracted *3.1 Million visitors with an economic impact of *\$302 Million. **Source: 2016 Economic Contribution of Travel & Tourism in Mississippi (MDA)*

SALES & MARKETING REVIEW

Year in Review

There are multiple factors that contributed to Jackson's growth this past year and its potential for the future. Jackson has already seen a boost in attracting major hotel brands in the city. The most recent include, **The Westin Jackson** in downtown, **The Marriott Residence Inn** in the District at Eastover, and soon-to-come Homewood Suites in Fondren with talks of even more. The Marriott Residence Inn is in The District's prime community of eateries, which include Cantina Laredo and Chef Jesse Houston's Fine and Dandy, as well as new shopping opportunities. This growth attracts the attention of travelers looking for not just a property, but also an experience with a lot of amenities, food, entertainment and shopping within walking distance.

In addition, the opening of two new museums celebrated Mississippi's Bicentennial: the Museum of Mississippi History and the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum. These museums alone are expected to attract 180,000 new visitors in 2018! This paired with the culinary attention Jackson has received with Bully's recognition by the **James Beard Foundation** as an **American Classic**, and their feature on the **Travel Channel's Bizarre Foods Delicious Destinations**, alongside Walker's Drive-In and the iconic Big Apple Inn, has shone a culinary spotlight on all that Jackson has to offer.

Marketing at a Glance

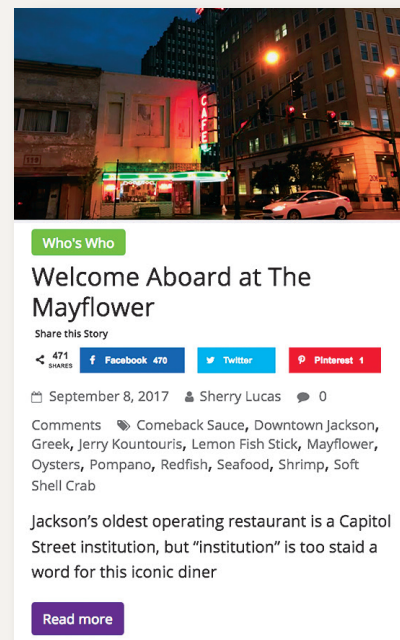
Marketing the "City with Soul" as a true culinary destination was the major initiative of 2017. Visit Jackson produced a multi-phased plan to communicate this to our audiences.

Create a content hub

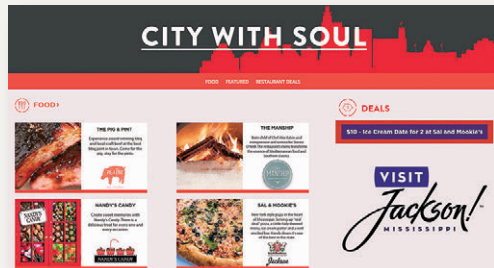
Visit Jackson partnered with Eat JXN, Jackson Free Press, and Jackson Foodies to create SippJackson.com. The site provides a third-party conduit for promoting sponsored-content type information about standout Jackson restaurants, culinary events, culinary cultural articles and chef/owner personalities.

Development of the Jackson Restaurant Support Fund

While out of town visitors are an important audience, it is also necessary to market to surrounding Jackson communities. Therefore, Visit Jackson created the tiered supplemental media grant program called the "Jackson Restaurant Support Fund." With the power of WLBT and Raycom Media, this program matches (dollar for dollar) restaurants advertising



campaigns and provides additional exposure in the marketplace. Visit Jackson allocated \$50,000 to fund this program for the upcoming fiscal year.



Promote our food culture across the South (and the U.S.)

Visit Jackson implemented a new print campaign focusing on Jackson's food heritage coupled with the skill set, talent and recognitions of local chefs.

The content of these ads include:

- "Soul" Food & James Beard Award winning chefs
- Seafood and related awards
- Greek/Mediterranean influence and related recognitions

The series appeared in culinary destination & lifestyle magazines such as **Southern Living**, **Taste of the South**, **The Local Palate**, and **Food Traveler Magazine**. In addition to these ads, written advertorials, and blog posts pushing Jackson across the country, Visit Jackson had its very first appearance at the **Atlanta Food & Wine Festival** in 2017.



All part of a larger strategy

Visit Jackson has consciously undertaken a strategy aimed at Millennial travelers. They are the nation's largest demographic group, and have just surpassed all others in terms of tourism spending power. To tap into decision drivers of Millennials, Visit Jackson is repositioning the city as a destination full of authentic experiences, different from other regions of our state and to an extent the greater Southeast.

Culinary culture and celebrity chefs are extremely popular among the Millennial audience. We believe the concept, content and platforms utilized in this culinary campaign highly compliment our over arching push and brand positioning strategy and will prove sustainable for a number of years to come.



Other Targeted Marketing Strategies

- Collaborated with the Matador Network on a feature story and social distribution strategy titled "9 Reasons everyone cool and creative is heading to Jackson, Mississippi"

- Partnered with NCC Media to advertise our “My City” video to cable viewers in large Southern markets



- Strategized with the MDAH to develop pre-opening messaging for the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum and the Museum of Mississippi History
- Participated in Oxford American’s “Visions of the Blues” issue as a major sponsor
- Partnered with Mississippi Development Authority on the Travel USA guide and Delta Sky Magazine



Accomplishments

- Placed \$379,000 in advertising with over 100 media outlets, publications, and social media platforms
- Developed the new **SippJackson.com** blog which now has an estimated 2,875 page views each month
- Produced the new **City with Soul: Documentary Series**
- Designed the new **Blue Lights Safe Nights** outdoor campaign
- Created the new culinary print ad series with an estimated exposure of over 1 million readers across the country
- Sponsored a TripAdvisor training session for our partners

SALES & MARKETING REVIEW

Convention & Group Tours





- The sales team conducted several local blitzes in Jackson and surrounding areas to educate our local planners on new hotel developments and the new Museum of Mississippi History and the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum.
- The sales team partnered with various hotels, industry partners and attractions throughout the fiscal year to conduct sales calls both locally and regionally. These calls were conducted in New Orleans, Shreveport, Birmingham, Mobile, Biloxi, Memphis, and other regional areas.
- The sales team assisted in promoting the 2 new museums to meeting planners and group tour operators throughout the U.S.
- The sales and group tour team attended 13 trade and group tour shows: Mississippi Society of Association Executives (MSAE), Connect Faith, Mississippi Technology Alliance, CMP Conclave, Travel South International, Event Service Professional Association (ESPA), Professional Conference Management Association (PCMA), American Bus Association (ABA), Travel South Showcase, National Association of Sports Commissions (NASC), Chicago Blues Festival, GMOA/AMA/SCMA (Motor Coach Associations), Connect Marketplace (Association, Corporate, Sports & Specialty), in various cities to promote our destination.
- Group Tours booked and serviced approximately 21 tours in Jackson. These tours represented individuals from countries such as Australia, China, Russia, Sweden and Canada.



FY 2017 ECONOMIC IMPACT

 <p>SERVED CONVENTIONS</p> <p>262</p>	 <p>ACTUAL DELEGATES</p> <p>516,617</p>	 <p>VISITOR EXPENDITURES</p> <p>\$79,246,208</p>
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FUTURE YEARS ECONOMIC IMPACT

 <p>BOOKED CONVENTIONS <i>For Future Years</i></p> <p>211</p>	 <p>ANTICIPATED DELEGATES <i>For Future Years</i></p> <p>559,474</p>	 <p>ANTICIPATED VISITOR SPENDING</p> <p>\$86,096,972</p>	 <p>SALES LEADS FOR FUTURE BUSINESS</p> <p>102</p>
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SPECIAL PROJECTS

Community Engagement Activities

Each year Visit Jackson participates in community-based activities creating opportunities to promote and introduce destination marketing organization functions and its value to the Jackson community at-large. These activities also provide an opportunity to tactically execute the quality-of-life component of Visit Jackson's mission. Examples of community engagement activities include, but are not limited to, grass-roots/community-centric and education involvement, local tradeshow, and Visit Jackson's Speakers Bureau.



Miss Jackson Hospitality

Miss Jackson Hospitality represents the citizens of Jackson during the Miss Mississippi Hospitality Scholarship Pageant each year. This unique ambassador also serves as the face and voice of the Jackson tourism community, by welcoming groups and conventions; and attending city special events and activities.

Hometown Hero & SUMITT Awards

The Jackson, Mississippi Hometown Hero program was created by Visit Jackson as an initiative to recognize excellence in the hospitality industry. Individuals and entities who are nominated are recognized for their contribution to the success of Mississippi capital city's tourism industry. The SUMITT AWARDS recognize Jackson's top tourism entities for their outstanding contribution to the advancement of travel and tourism in Jackson. "SUMITT" is an acronym for "Superlative Merit in Travel and Tourism." This year marked its 25th year of existence.



National Travel & Tourism Week

Established by a congressional resolution in 1983, the Jackson tourism community celebrates National Travel & Tourism Week with events that are identified to have the propensity to positively impact the Jackson, Mississippi marketplace.

Hospitality Training

Visit Jackson sponsors a Certified Jackson Hospitality Specialist Training initiative. The goal of this initiative is to heighten the skill level, image, perception and awareness of good customer service to those visiting our city and citizens enjoying our hotels, restaurants, attractions and special events.



Tourism Oriented Policing Strategies



Tourism Oriented Policing Strategies (TOPS)

The objective of the Tourism Oriented Policing Strategies Program (TOPS) is to promote the safety of visitors and citizens attending attractions, restaurants, hotels and events in Jackson, Mississippi.

Legislative Welcome

Annually, Visit Jackson executes a "welcome" for members of the Mississippi Legislature, their families, and staff. This initiative provides an opportunity to welcome members of the Mississippi Legislature to their capital city and introduce them to visitor services that may help facilitate their stay.



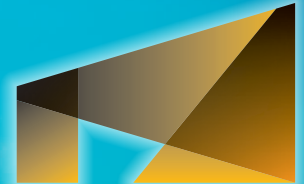
Jackson Rhythm & Blues Festival

The 2-day festival was created by Visit Jackson to celebrate and capitalize on the rich music heritage of Jackson, Mississippi. Festivalgoers experience over 30 performances on 5 stages satisfying diverse and discriminating palates in music genres.





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