

Southeast Arizona Economic Development Group (SAEDG)
TOURISM CONCIERGE SERVICE BUSINESS VISION
JANUARY, 2017

Southeast Arizona Economic Development Group (SAEDG) brought together a Tourism Work Group on January 10, 2017 to begin discussions regarding SAEDG's grant application for a Rural Small Business Development Project. The project is to establish a Concierge Tourism Service Business, designed to look at the entire region and create a **regionally recognized Brand: Stay and Play In Cochise County.**

SAEDG is proposing a "seed-grant" opportunity to take action, which builds on the hard work, already being done by exiting tourism councils and committees. SAEDG realizes that these groups, typically comprised of individuals employed in varying occupations, either have an intense interest/passion to work toward the expansion and growth in visitor spending or they were assigned to the group. Committee/Councils members are often pulled in multiple directions and often compartmentalize and prioritize tasks they need to accomplish in various areas. **As an economic development entity, in a rural economic development region, SAEDG considers all businesses, cities and counties in the southeast corner of Arizona its priority.**

Clearly committees, councils, or work groups are capable of taking immediate action. SAEDG proposes a small business entity that will work with the multiple agencies, committees, councils, groups, and businesses to build on the brand: Stay and Play in Cochise County. This proposed Concierge Service concept will be charged with developing and marketing this brand, not in competition with what is already being done, but collaboratively. Cooperation and Partnership are key to the Concierge Tourism Service Business we are proposing.

SAEDG GRANT APPLICATION AND VISION IN A NUTSHELL

SAEDG will be applying for a USDA Rural Business Development Grant:

- SAEDG's vision is to bolster regional economic activities by taking tactical measures to fill the tourism gap in the region.
- The project is to provide a small business opportunity to develop the capabilities of implementing centralized tourism services.

PROJECT GOAL: Creation of a Targeted/Tactical Tourism Concierge Service, building on the strength of linked resources, to support small towns and businesses by providing services, such as:

1. Space, internet access and fundamental services at SAEDG Headquarters for one year (in-kind match)
2. Assist and support efforts to understand consumers and entice visitors to the region (leadership/grant guidance)
3. Investigate financial resources available for small businesses, dependent on visitor spending, to ensure their growth and expansion (leadership/grant goal)
4. Technical assistances, leadership training and seminars (grant goal)

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IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS

tour-ism¹ /'toor,izəm/ *noun*

the commercial organization and operation of vacations and visits to places of interest.

mar-ket-ing¹ /'mārkədiNG/ *noun*

the action or business of promoting and selling products or services, including market research and advertising.

Marketing is based on thinking about business in terms of customer needs and their satisfaction. Marketing differs from selling. Selling concerns itself with the tricks and techniques of getting people to exchange their cash for your product. It does not, as marketing invariably does, view the entire business process as consisting of tightly integrated effort to discover, create, arouse and satisfy customer needs. (Theodore C. Levitt, retired, Harvard Business School).

Brand /brand/ *verb*

the marketing practice of creating a name, symbol or design that identifies and differentiates a product from other products . A brand is the idea or image of a specific product or service that consumers connect with....

Branding is also a way to build an important company asset, which is a good reputation. **Branding is as vital to the success of a business or nonprofit as having financial coherence and having a vision for the future.**

con-cierge \kōn-'syerzh, ,kän-sē-'erzh\ *noun*

broadly : a person employed (as by a business) to make arrangements or run errands.

The concierge industry itself is only about 25 years old and started with a few brave pioneers who took the hotel concierge idea and decided to offer it to the corporate world. You can now find concierge everywhere, in hospitals, malls, corporations, apartment buildings, office buildings, airports, colleges, associations, churches, etc. You could sum up the state of the industry in two words ... "extraordinary growth." Why? Simple. People are trying to squeeze 36 hours into a 24-hour day. Travel Agencies and Meeting Planners are all adding to their list of services. . Concierge services are skyrocketing, as is the customer demand for such businesses. (Katharine Giovanni <http://srinjalconcierge.com/2016/12/what-exactly-is-a-concierge-depends-who-you-ask/>)

The goal of this project is to not only cater to time-starved people, but also discover ways to connect the visitor to existing events, services and spending opportunities, as well as, create events and spending opportunities that will attract new visitors. The final component is providing personalized services to ensure a full spectrum of the visitor experiences to encourage staying and playing in the region.

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Example of the types of services currently offered by concierge around the country:

- Search for tickets to concerts and special events
- Transportation Services
- Business Referral Service
- Restaurant Recommendations and Reservations
- Pet services
- Senior & Child care
- Travel and Vacation Planning
- Meeting and Event Planning

Major obstacles we see at this point:

- Considering Tourism as an Industry is critical to this project.
- Why not encourage visitors to get info from local visitor centers?
- Will this cause confusion – another website/phone#/center to locate?
- Sustainability, how to keep the business going over time, and the challenges of fee-for-service, how to keep people interested over time?
- Who do we pass the cost of doing business on to? Small business or cities, already strapped for funds, and already paying for their own marketing? Will a profit sharing model work, are there other viable business models?
- Will it limit representation to only those businesses/cities that have paid a fee?
- Does the modern traveler need a service like this?
- What will be the disconnect with the community?
- Will businesses want to partner?
- Project leadership with the skill-set to implement the goals and negotiate contracts/services/partnerships necessary for success and to eventually become sustainable.

Meeting with community leaders, such as yourselves, is a tactical step SAEDG must take in order to succeed with this grant application. There are several requirements that we must meet, and we need your help:

- Commitments to gather letters of support from small business, demonstrating how this project will assist their current business, as well as, and what they anticipate in growth with this support.
- Commitments to gather letters of support from cities and chambers of commerce, demonstrating the potential economic development of their communities.
- Commitments to provide in-kind or cash grant match.
- Assistance with ensuring we have accurate and applicable regional data.
- Assistance in developing meaningful project goals and performance criteria.
- Assistance in reviewing and submitting the application.