

# 2026-27 BUSINESS PLAN





# Introduction

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Explore Sisters (ES) is a 501(c)6 nonprofit Destination Management Organization (DMO), which is funded through a portion of the local Transient Lodging Tax. ES strives to increase community livability and economic vitality through the development of intelligent management and stewardship of the Sisters' local community, natural and cultural resources, tourism, and outdoor recreation.

ES incorporated in June 2022, with an initial five-member Board of Directors. ES hired its first Executive Director in December 2022, and has since expanded to a nine-member Board with seven voting directors. ES was established to address broader destination needs in addition to attracting visitors in alignment with state statute.

Operating in an ever-evolving and increasingly competitive tourism industry, ES must be strategic, nimble and able to build partnerships within the local community to be successful. ES' primary strategies will ensure that Sisters is positioned as a sustainable destination that respects the livability of the community balanced with a first-class guest experience.

The goal of the 2026-27 Business Plan is to guide the organization through the next phase of its growth, transitioning from a focus on organizational health and fundamental building blocks to an emphasis on more robust marketing and long-term strategy.

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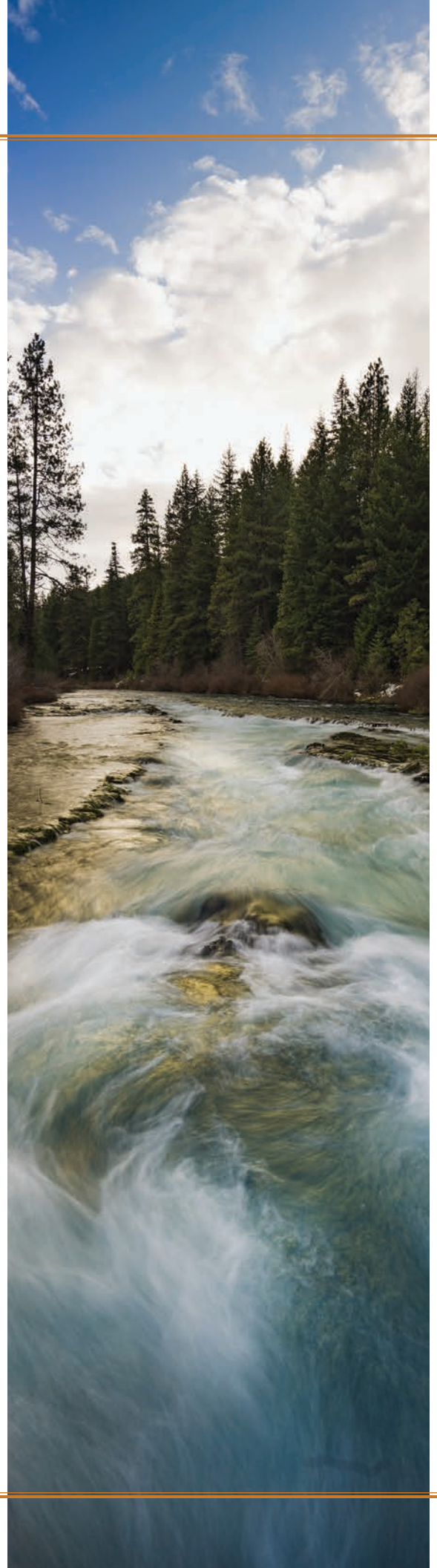
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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



# Executive Summary

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ES' vision, mission and values center around the balance of the economic prosperity and local livability. Organizational strategy uses economic, social and environmental lenses to carry out the work that supports the mission.

The roles and responsibilities of ES are primarily focused on economic development, brand stewardship, destination management, and insights and impacts. These responsibilities will be carried out through four key Strategic Priorities:

1. Destination Marketing
2. Stakeholder & Community Engagement
3. Data & Research
4. Sustainable Operation

Tourism promotion and marketing is the primary objective of ES. Tourism promotion not only enhances the industry's economic impact by increasing visitor spending, it also enhances the total destination experience.

Strategic Priorities are high-level goals that provide direction to ES and its partners in prioritizing work to achieve its mission. Because of the high-level nature of these objectives, they are written to be directional while not being overly prescriptive. Within the sections covering these priorities, success is found through the identified objectives that should be achieved, leaving the exact path up to ES to navigate in real time. ES and its stakeholders should measure the organization's success in meeting these Strategic Priorities.

# **VISION, MISSION & VALUES**



# Vision, Mission & Values

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What guides ES? ES' vision, mission and values must be in alignment with those of the community. These principles are being refined through a strategic planning process, which includes community and stakeholder input.

## VISION

A thriving community through a robust tourism industry balanced with local livability.

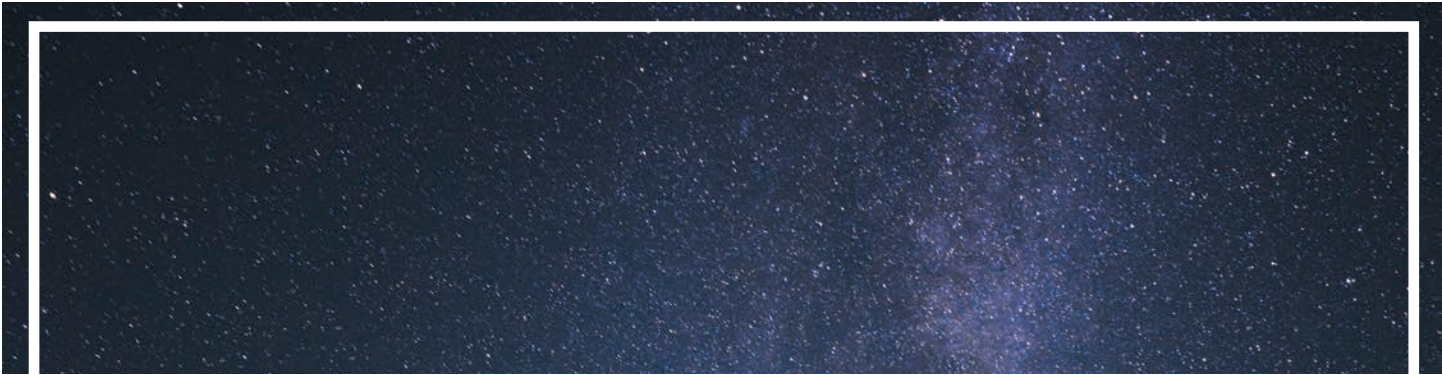
## MISSION

Guide intentional stewardship of the unique character of the greater Sisters area to enhance economic, social and environmental vitality.

## VALUES

- **Transparency** - We want what we do to be visible to our stakeholders
- **Collaboration** - We want people to work together easily and reduce friction and barriers between teams
- **Quality** - We want our work to meet a very high standard and have low tolerance for errors
- **Innovation** - We want to consistently cultivate new ideas and intentionally evolve
- **Agility** - We want to be able to respond nimbly to shocks and setbacks





# **BOARD & STAFF**



# Board of Directors

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Chair - Brady Rhodes | Ski Inn Taphouse & Hotel

Vice Chair - Kris Rodgers | GrandStay Hotel & Suites

Treasurer - Nancy Connolly | Resident At-large

Secretary - Jesse Durham | Sisters Coffee Co

Board Member - Dawn Boyd | Sisters Outdoor Quilt Show

Board Member - Ryan Lane | Best Western Ponderosa Lodge

Board Member - Spencer Hamiga | Sisters Bakery

Board Member - Michael Preedin | Sisters City Council (non-voting)

Board Member - Kerry Prosser | Sisters City Staff (non-voting)



## Staff

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Executive Director - Scott Humpert

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# ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES



# Roles & Responsibilities

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The lenses through which ES executes its work reflect the organization's values and goals while guiding decisions, programming, and actions. This three-pronged approach seeks to balance and meet the economic, environmental, and social/cultural needs of the destination while working in close partnership with the destination's tourism industry and residents. ES will employ three lenses to guide decisions, programming, and actions:

**ECONOMIC** - Prosperity and impact contributions of tourism

**SOCIAL** - Equity and community livability

**ENVIRONMENTAL** - Sustainability and regenerative tourism

## Economic Development

- Nurture a sustainable year-round economy
- Grow Transient Lodging Tax revenue
- Support local workforce
- Enhance area assets for guests and locals alike

## Brand Stewardship

- Reputation and perception management of the Sisters community brand
- Destination marketing promoting Sisters area assets
- Integrated marketing producing content and managing owned media platforms

## Destination Management

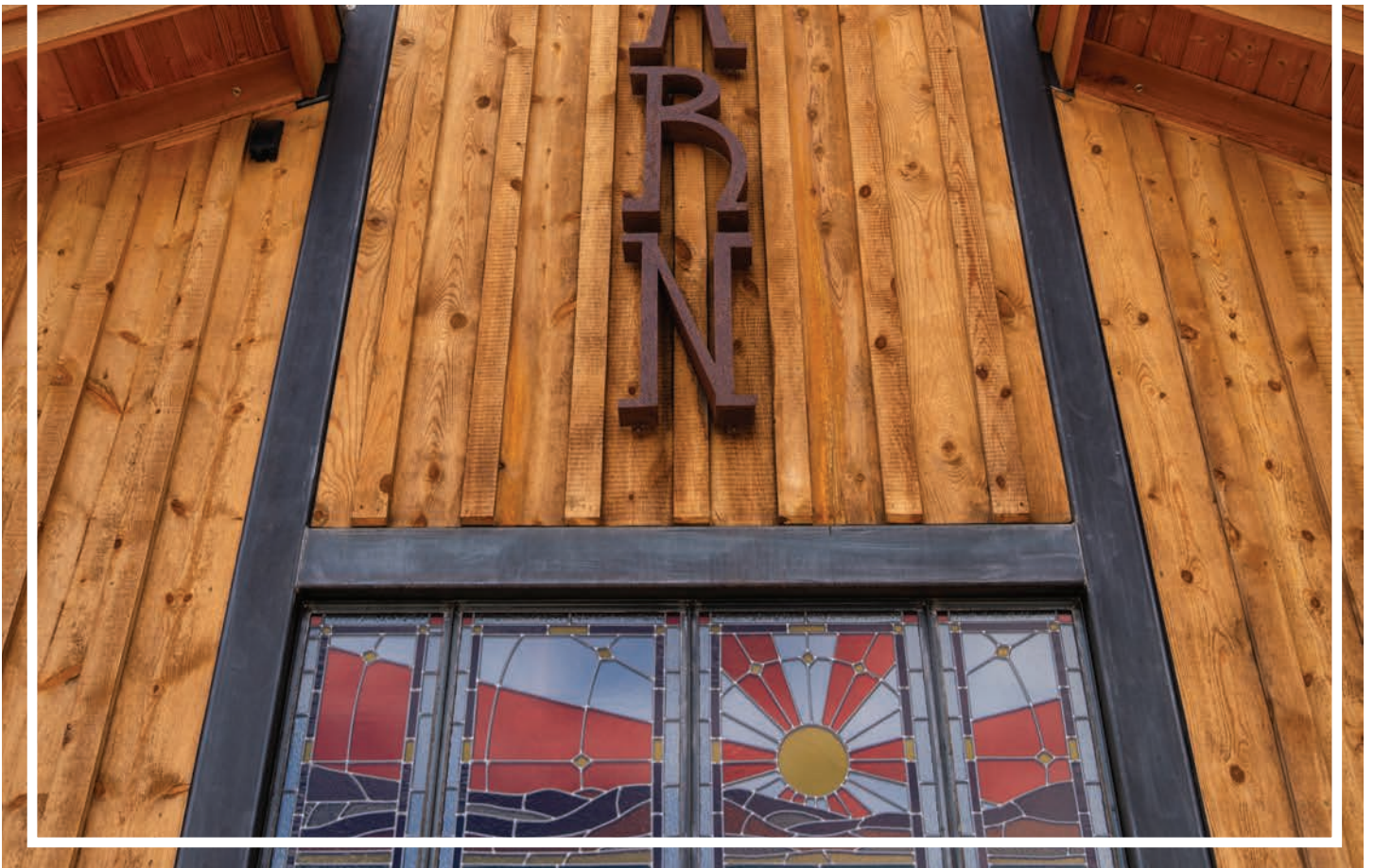
- Foster community livability
- Execute sustainable and regenerative practices
- Embrace diversity, equity, inclusion, and access

## Insights & Impacts

- Data and analytics to inform decisions and indicate performance
  - Industry advocacy and engagement
  - Internal and external communications
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# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



# Strategic Priorities

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Stakeholders often have varying ideas regarding the roles and responsibilities of a DMO. These strategic priorities are derived from central themes for local stakeholders, the community and the best interests of the organization.



# Strategic Priorities: 2026-27

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## **DESTINATION MARKETING ~**

Tourism promotion and marketing is a primary goal of ES. Tourism promotion not only enhances the industry's economic impact by increasing visitor spending, it also enhances the total destination experience. ES will focus on the following objectives for successful marketing.

### ***Brand Stewardship***

As an ongoing course of business, ES will manage the Sisters destination brand and its reputation. The brand will inspire visitation, represent the unique positioning of the community and support key destination assets.

Objectives:

- Continued stewardship of a cohesive brand for the community that is unique, easily identifiable and authentically reflects community voice and experience
- Maintain brand consistency across all of ES' marketing channels and resources
- Expansion of secondary brand elements to meet future needs
- Exploration of dark sky sub-brand to support astrotourism promotion

### ***Marketing & Promotions***

With the destination brand at its core, the ES marketing and promotions efforts must be as comprehensive as possible within available resources. Individual activities will be guided by strategy and delivered to identified target audiences, markets and interests, deployed at the appropriate time.

Objectives:

- Expand content offered on the ES website
  - Update and employ Search Engine Optimization and Generative Engine Optimization
  - Execute branded paid advertising campaign utilizing an efficient and effective media mix
  - Delivery of consumer email marketing content on a bi-monthly basis
  - Robust social content delivery and engagement consistently across all utilized channels
  - Expand the ES photo and video content library
  - Onboard a cloud-based digital asset management platform
  - Seek out marketing partnerships and co-op opportunities with local partners
  - Partner with influencers to amplify content delivery
  - Develop an Explore Sisters travel magazine and other relevant printed materials
  - Create giveaways to promote that highlight local businesses
  - Sponsor local events to support economic impact
-

# Strategic Priorities: 2026-27

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## **DESTINATION MARKETING** *(continued)* ~

### ***Communications & Public Relations***

Communications and public relations can be useful tools in destination marketing. Leveraging partnerships with the media, influencers, travel writers and other resources can enhance ES' overall marketing programs.

#### Objectives:

- Partner with professional public relations agency to increase communications capacity
- Generate and inspire earned media highlighting the greater Sisters area
- Track results of all earned media by calendar year
- Host media site visits and familiarization tours
- Leverage relationship with Visit Central Oregon for additional media reach

### ***Visitor Services***

Visitors require a variety of resources during their planning process and when they arrive in the destination. ES will help potential visitors throughout their trip planning journey from inspiration, to consideration, to planning and booking, and eventually support them during their actual visit.

#### Objectives:

- Provide visitors access to digital, phone and traditional printed resources at all stages of the planning cycle
- Operation of a seasonal brick and mortar Visitor Information Center in the City of Sisters
- Installation of visitor information kiosk at the Hoodoo Ski Area lodge
- Installation of visitor information kiosks at additional city locations

### ***Strategy & Performance***

An informed strategy is crucial to the success of ES' marketing programs. Strategic investments will be made based on highest return and will be made at critical times that support a sustainable year-round economy.

#### Objectives:

- Development of a formal marketing plan and strategy that will be used to guide and measure all destination marketing efforts
  - Measure results against defined key performance indicators
  - Create a quarterly dashboard reporting system for ongoing performance updates
  - Produce annual report summarizing performance, successes and initiatives
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# Strategic Priorities: 2026-27

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## **STAKEHOLDER & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ~**

By prioritizing community engagement and that of external partners through collaborative partnerships and business opportunities, ES can thrive as a Destination Management Organization. As the primary tourism-focused organization that encompasses the greater community, ES is positioned to assist its partners in building a connected and cohesive tourism industry while aligning with community values and vision.

### ***Communicate***

ES will strongly emphasize communication with all stakeholders by utilizing channels that meet partners where they are.

#### Objectives:

- Create trust from community and partners through regular communications
- Reinforce understanding of ES's role and that of tourism in the community
- Solicit partner feedback regarding needs and concerns
- Coordinate ES outreach forums to explain mission and ways to partner

### ***Collaborate***

ES will work closely with its partners to steward the Sisters brand, align marketing efforts, address community needs, and enhance the destination experience.

#### Objectives:

- Amplify resources to increase reach and present a united destination experience
  - Develop and execute collaborative marketing initiatives with local partners
  - Partner with Sisters Trails Alliance to execute Travel Oregon's Recreation Ready Program
  - Continue to participate in the Central Oregon Destination Management Studio
  - Partner with Visit Central Oregon to pilot Leave No Trace messaging
  - Collaborate with Meet in Central Oregon via Visit Central Oregon to support group travel
  - Coordinate co-op advertising program with Visit Central Oregon
  - Participate in the Sisters Dark Sky Committee
  - Participate in the Sisters Vision Implementation Team
  - Continued partnership with Hoodoo Ski Area
  - Leverage additional opportunities with Visit Central Oregon and Travel Oregon
  - Exploration of partnership opportunities with Black Butte Ranch
  - Exploration of partnership opportunities with Discover the Metolius River Association
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# Strategic Priorities: 2026-27

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## STAKEHOLDER & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT *(continued)* ~

### *Convene*

A robust visitor industry requires conversations that cross traditional business, geographic boundaries and political silos. ES will participate in visitor-related opportunities with partners and assist in facilitating, or securing a seat at the table for larger conversations to benefit partners.

#### Objectives:

- Attend regular meetings in the community and regionally to represent tourism
- Fill a leadership role in relevant initiatives pertaining to local and regional tourism

## DATA & RESEARCH ~

Understanding the “why” behind what ES does is critical to success. Collecting visitor data through traditional, digital, and non-traditional methods will help identify markets and make informed strategic business decisions with the understanding that localized data is not always available.

### *Visitor Data*

Better understanding the Sisters’ visitor makes marketing efforts more effective. ES will research and monitor evolving visitor data to inform future decision making. ES will also assess and select key metrics for visitor data and interpret findings.

#### Objectives:

- Aggregate existing ES and partner data and research
- Develop a Sisters Visitor Profile to guide targeted marketing

### *Impacts & Insights*

The understanding of available data is what makes it useful and actionable. ES will educate itself and its partners on how to explore the available data for useful decision-making and identify missing or unavailable data for future inclusion.

#### Objectives:

- Maintain working knowledge of current and emerging data sets and sources
  - Identify immediate and future data needs, sources and potential partnerships
  - Provide partners access to educational opportunities and resources as available
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# Strategic Priorities: 2026-27

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## **DATA & RESEARCH** *(continued)* ~

### ***Access to Data***

ES will provide easy access to tourism industry data and research to stakeholders and the community to ensure information is available to make decisions.

#### Objectives:

- Data and research will be made available on demand through the ES website
- Intentionally share data and research through stakeholder engagements
- ES will be positioned as a trusted source of reliable and actionable information

## **SUSTAINABLE OPERATION** ~

It's crucial that ES commits itself to continuing to build a strong organization. As important as it is for ES staff and board of directors to focus on this, it is instrumental for partners to understand that building and maintaining a healthy organization is key to fulfilling the mission.

### ***Strengthen Governance***

The ES Board of Directors will maintain practices to maximize and perpetuate the organization's leadership to be successful in implementing the mission.

#### Objectives:

- Provide direction to staff to support the established mission, vision and values
- Maintain board integrity to match vision
- Create alignment of Explore Sisters' work with mission, vision and values

### ***Build Financial Stability***

ES continues to utilize Transient Lodging Tax (TLT) as the foundation of its operations and programs through continued partnership with the City of Sisters but also pursue supplemental funding opportunities.

#### Objectives:

- Increase TLT collections and maximize its use
  - Identify possible additional sustainable funding sources
  - Research and apply for grant funding
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# Strategic Priorities: 2026-27

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## **SUSTAINABLE OPERATION** *(continued)* ~

### ***Staff Capacity***

To be most effective, ES must explore options to maintain and increase capacity. ES will ensure staff has the tools and resources to execute everything the organization is responsible for within a sustainable budget.

#### Objectives:

- Employ adequate staffing levels to ensure execution of contracted and expected services
- Hire one additional FTE to support marketing related services
- Create work-life balance for staff to avoid burnout
- Identify specialized contractors to amplify capacity where needed
- Utilize volunteers that serve the needs of ES

### ***Strategic Planning***

Developing a long-term strategic plan is paramount to ES' success. This plan will be developed with ES' mission and values as its framework and will help the organization stay on track and monitor progress toward achieving its vision. The strategies prioritized in this plan will support organizational goals and recognize the aspirational work needed to fully attain a community vision. ES will continue to engage, listen and respond to the needs of its partners, stakeholders and the industry as it develops and implements the specific action plans needed to make strategies a reality.

#### Objectives:

- Create a formal strategic planning document to guide success
- Engage ES staff and board for internal planning perspective
- Conduct outreach and engagement with community and its stakeholders to enhance planning

### ***Transparency***

As a community-based nonprofit, success is based in part on stakeholder and community sentiment towards the organization. ES will build and maintain practices that help everyone stay informed, ensure the organization is responsive to emerging needs and act as good stewards of TLT funds.

#### Objectives:

- Trust is built with stakeholders and funding partners as a good steward of TLT funds
  - Work is visible to all stakeholders and ES remains accountable
  - Submit semi-annual progress reports
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# BUDGET



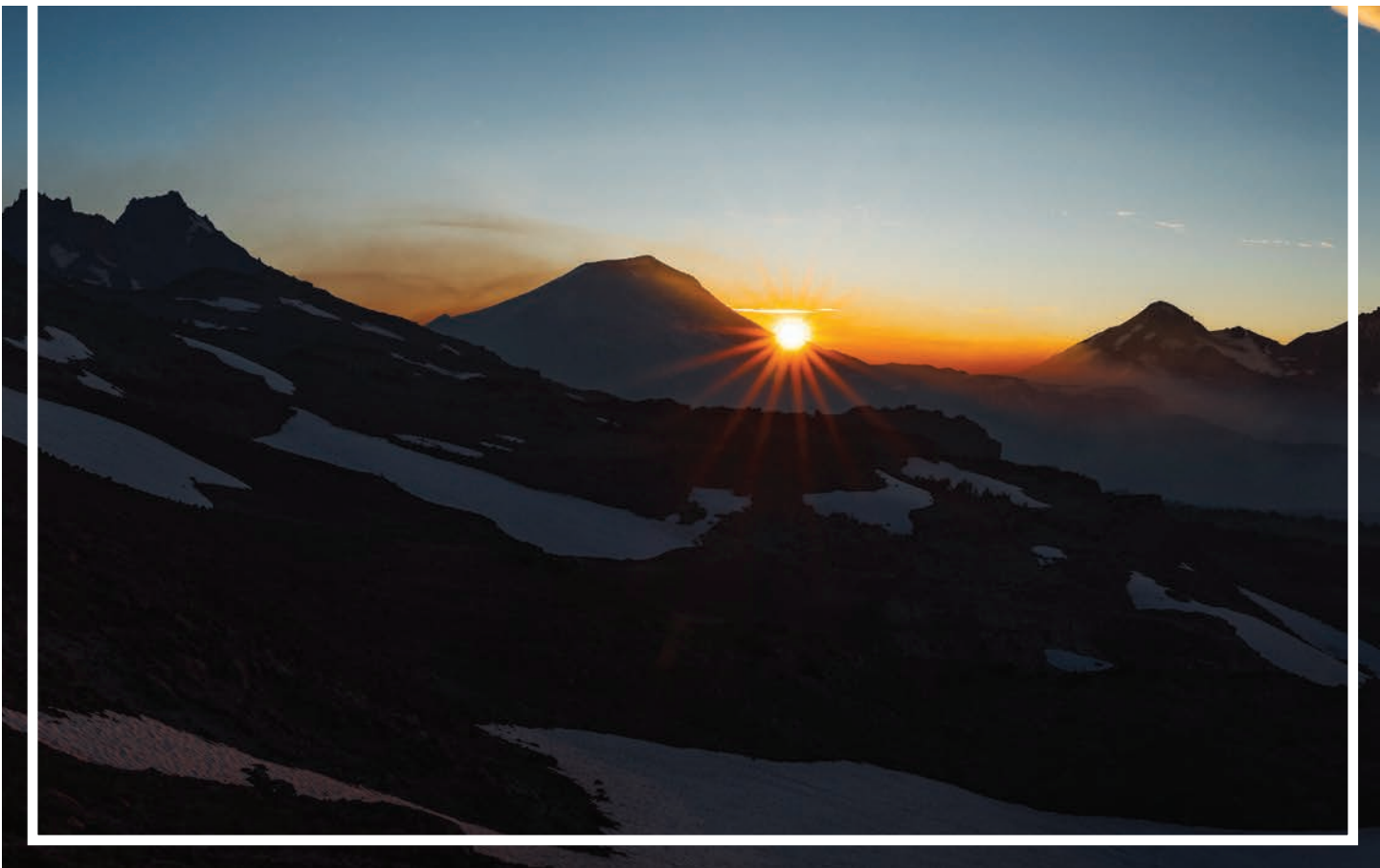
# Budget

## 2026 Adopted Budget

	2026 Budget		2026 Budget
Indirect Public Support	423,866	<b>Marketing &amp; Development</b>	
<b>TOTAL INFLOWS</b>	<b>423,866</b>	<b>Contractors</b>	
<b>Operations &amp; Administration</b>		Branding	2,000
<b>Wages, Taxes &amp; Benefits</b>		Website	2,000
Wages	120,249	Marketing Services	90,000
Payroll Taxes	10,822	Public Relations	10,000
Retirement Contributions	3,607	Graphic Design	3,000
		Content	24,000
<b>Facilities and Equipment</b>		Website Hosting & Maintenance	2,700
Rent - Facilities	5,400	Merchandising / Print Collateral	10,000
Telecommunications	1,800	Printing	15,000
Rent - Equipment	350	Paid Marketing	105,000
Sm Furnishings & Equipment	500	Email Marketing	3,800
		Shipping	500
<b>Business Expenses</b>		<b>Programs</b>	
Supplies	700	Dev Site / FAM Tours	1,000
Postage & Shipping	100	Visitor Information Center	5,000
Software Fees	1,600		
Printing and Reproduction	200	<b>Events</b>	
Dues	3,300	Sponsorship	7,000
Bank & Credit Card Fees	20	Materials & Supplies	2,000
Insurance	1,700	Paid Marketing	5,000
Business Registration Fees	50		
Board - Meetings & Consulting	2,400	Research & Data	6,000
		Opportunity Fund	5,000
<b>Contract Services</b>		<b>TOTAL MARKETING &amp; DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>299,000</b>
Accounting & Tax Fees	10,000	Depreciation & Amortization	0
Legal Fees	500	Interest Expense	0
Outside Contract Services	300		
<b>Travel and Meeting Expenses</b>		<b>TOTAL OUTFLOWS</b>	<b>(472,799)</b>
Travel	1,200		
Meals & Hospitality	2,000	<b>BALANCE</b>	<b>(48,933)</b>
Conference Expenses	7,000		
<b>TOTAL OPERATIONS &amp; ADMINISTRATION</b>	<b>173,799</b>		



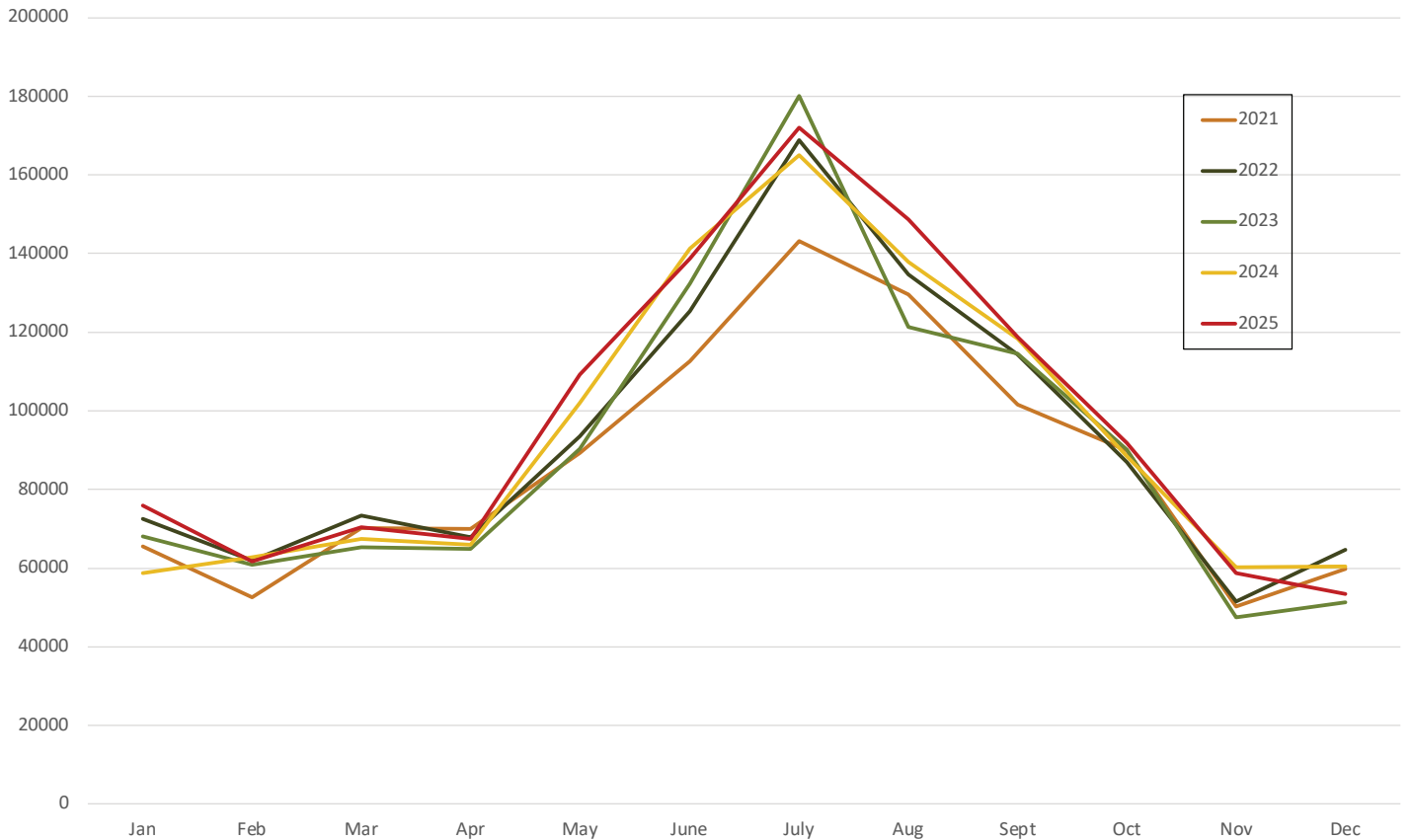
# TOURISM DATA



# Tourism Data

## SISTERS TLT COLLECTIONS ~

	2021	Change	2022	Change	2023	Change	2024	Change	2025	Change
Jan	\$65,459	49.22%	\$72,571	10.86%	\$68,133	-6.12%	\$58,794	-13.71%	\$76,017	29.29%
Feb	\$52,613	8.85%	\$61,843	17.54%	\$60,936	-1.47%	\$62,743	2.97%	\$61,736	-1.60%
Mar	\$70,110	292.07%	\$73,481	4.81%	\$65,279	-11.16%	\$67,463	3.35%	\$70,371	4.31%
Apr	\$69,994	1222.64%	\$67,832	-3.09%	\$64,801	-4.47%	\$65,962	1.79%	\$67,476	2.30%
May	\$89,292	380.89%	\$93,527	4.74%	\$90,285	-3.47%	\$102,014	12.99%	\$109,156	7.00%
June	\$112,609	73.93%	\$125,302	11.27%	\$132,364	5.64%	\$141,354	6.79%	\$138,735	-1.85%
July	\$143,086	35.61%	\$168,945	18.07%	\$180,018	6.55%	\$165,094	-8.29%	\$172,044	4.21%
Aug	\$129,661	13.48%	\$134,705	3.89%	\$121,391	-9.88%	\$137,787	13.51%	\$148,800	7.99%
Sept	\$101,686	52.87%	\$114,325	12.43%	\$114,610	0.25%	\$118,430	3.33%	\$118,787	0.30%
Oct	\$89,934	31.06%	\$86,920	-3.35%	\$90,110	3.67%	\$88,430	-1.86%	\$91,926	3.95%
Nov	\$50,301	28.96%	\$51,522	2.43%	\$47,462	-7.88%	\$60,310	27.07%	\$58,805	-2.50%
Dec	\$59,813	25.89%	\$64,727	8.22%	\$51,226	-20.86%	\$60,369	17.85%	\$53,553	-11.29%
<b>FYTD</b>	<b>\$1,034,558</b>		<b>\$1,115,700</b>		<b>\$1,086,615</b>		<b>\$1,128,750</b>		<b>\$1,167,406</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,034,558</b>		<b>\$1,115,700</b>	<b>7.84%</b>	<b>\$1,086,615</b>	<b>-2.61%</b>	<b>\$1,128,750</b>	<b>3.88%</b>	<b>\$1,167,406</b>	<b>3.42%</b>



# Tourism Data

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## VALUE OF TOURISM ~

Central Oregon Region (Deschutes, Jefferson, Crook & So. Wasco Counties)

Report data provided by Dean Runyan Associates via Oregon Tourism Commission (2024)



# 1.74 BILLION

Total Travel Economic Impact for Central Oregon

## 4.11M

Overnight Visitors

## 10.7K

Tourism Industry Jobs

## \$294

Average Trip Spend

## TRAVEL IMPACTS ~

Central Oregon Region (Deschutes, Jefferson, Crook & So. Wasco Counties)

Report data provided by Dean Runyan Associates via Oregon Tourism Commission (2024)

# \$1.31 BILLION

Total Impact from Travel Expenditures

## \$390M

Industry Earnings

## \$63M

Local & State Taxes

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# Tourism Data

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## VISITOR SPENDING ~

Central Oregon Region (Deschutes, Jefferson, Crook & So. Wasco Counties)

Report data provided by Smith Travel Research via Visit Central Oregon (2024)



HOTEL, MOTEL & STR - \$698M



PRIVATE HOME - \$170M



OTHER OVERNIGHT - \$141M



DAY TRAVEL - \$166M



ACCOMMODATIONS - \$271M



FOOD & BEVERAGE - \$255M



FOOD STORES - \$108M



AIR & GROUND TRANSPORTATION - \$180M



RECREATION - \$97M



RETAIL SALES - \$109M



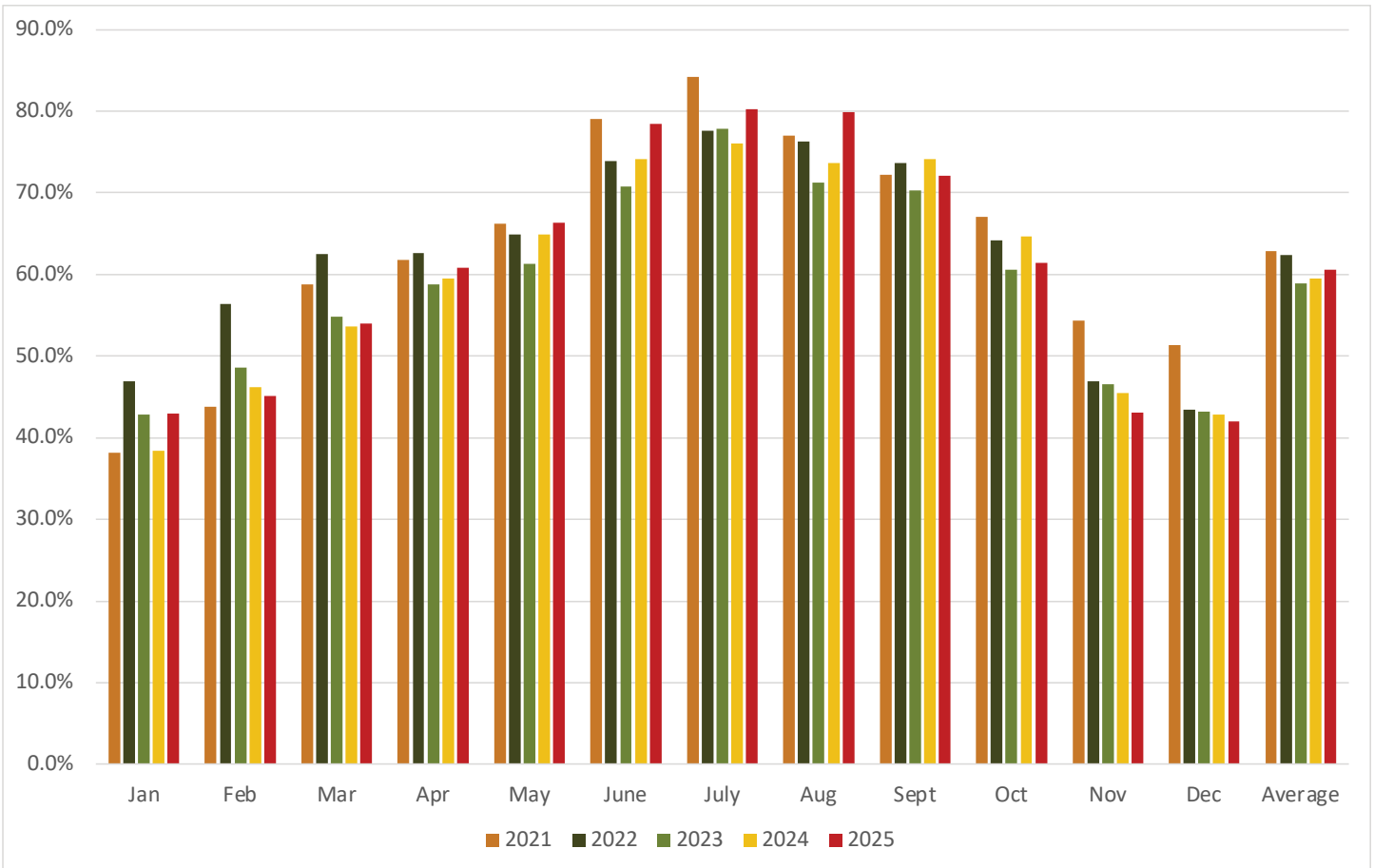
# Tourism Data

## HOTEL OCCUPANCY ~

Central Oregon Region (Deschutes, Jefferson, Crook & So. Wasco Counties)

Report data provided by Smith Travel Research via Visit Central Oregon

### Hotel Occupancy by Month in Central Oregon



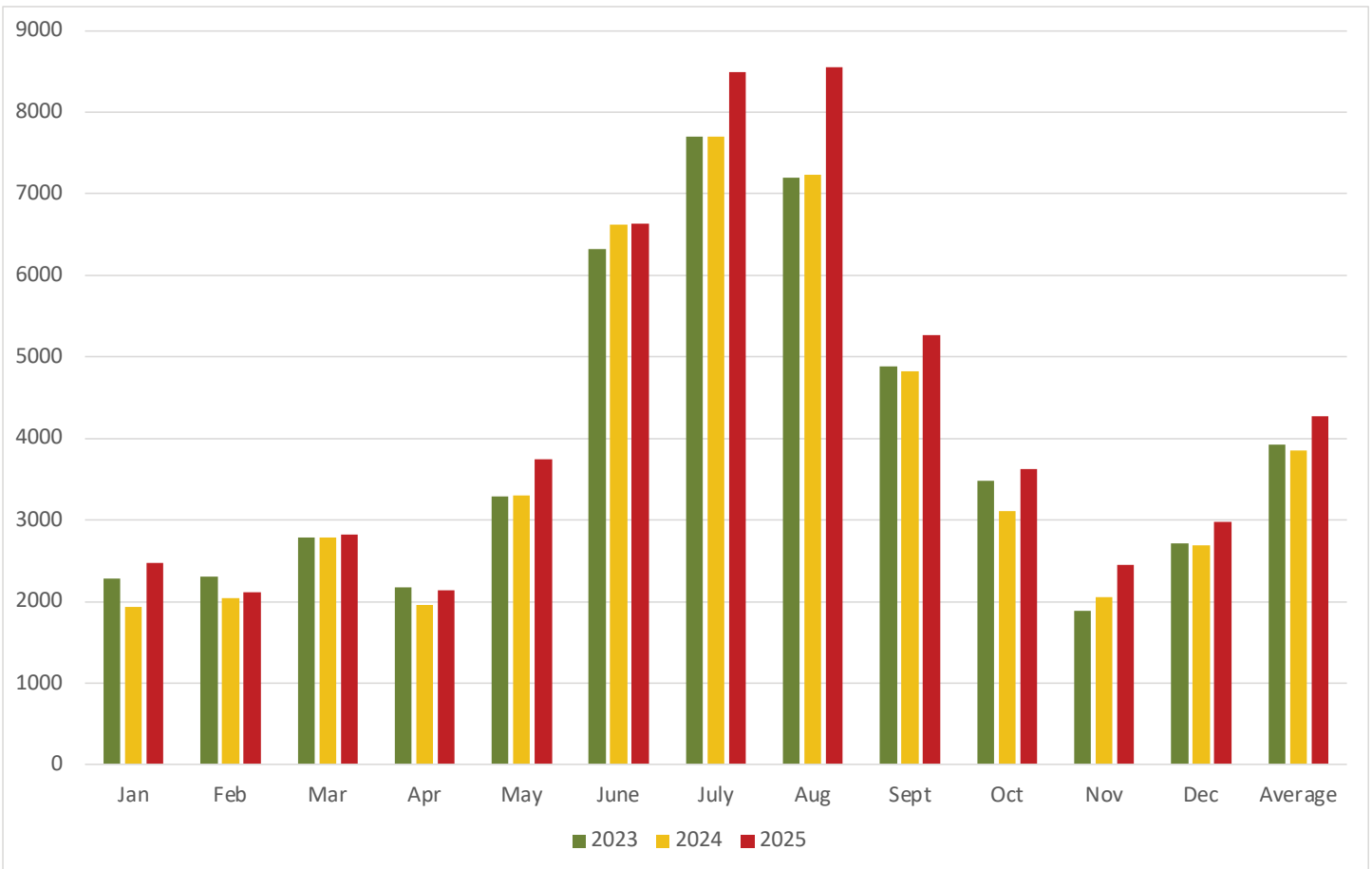
# Tourism Data

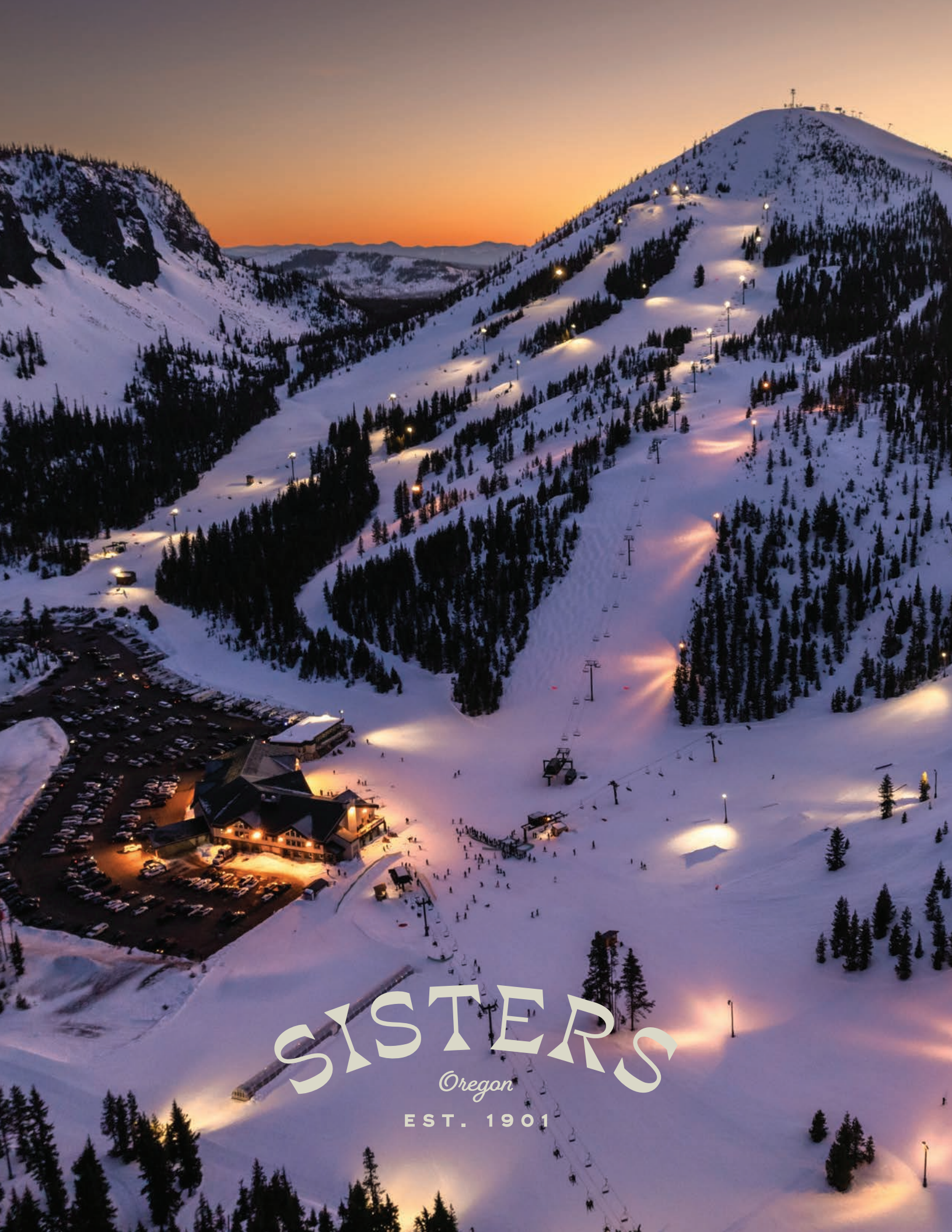
## SHORT TERM RENTAL DEMAND ~

### Sisters, Oregon Region

Report data provided by AirDNA via Visit Central Oregon

#### Short Term Rental Demand by Month in Sisters





# SISTERS

*Oregon*  
EST. 1901