

SEDONA VISITOR CENTER

Research



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INDUSTRY INPUT

Destination Think has regular input and feedback on the visitor center decision.

Criteria they've published revolves around:

- What are the objectives of the DMO? Responsible visitation is a common theme in the strategic planning for Sedona. Can responsible visitation be successfully encouraged and behaviors modified if a center isn't available to provide tips and direction?
- Based on the identity of the brand and destination, can people build an experience that matches the need of the destination without a visitor center? If a visitor center is in place, how does it help shape the identity and brand of Sedona?
- What are the needs of the visitor? Does a visitor center provide what they need? Restrooms, maps, tips, ideas, parking information, etc.
- Can they visit without a human touch from a visitor center?

Destination Think: Do your visitors still need a visitor center?

Destinations International Visitor Services Summit in 2023 summarized the future of visitor centers:

- Centers need to be accessible, may mean moving to different areas
- Embrace technology and mobile services
- Leverage 24/7 technology (chat rooms, call centers, and training industry staff to have the answers at hotels, restaurants, and point them to one online location for answers)
- Digital signage and QR codes.

By embracing technology, fostering partnerships, and delivering consistent branding, visitor centers can remain relevant and continue to offer valuable services in the modern landscape. Next Visitor Services Summit, July 16, Tampa FL.

POPULAR COLORADO DESTINATION

Visitor Center

This Colorado Tourism Board executive director, Ms. S., answered questions and asked that their destination be kept off the record in the public discussions.



Budget

\$350,000 annually includes center and central reservations.

They do not own the building and pay rent out of this budget amount.

The Tourism Board has 7 full-time staff members, three are full time at the visitor center. During the summer they have an additional part time staff member at the center.

Funding

2% lodging tax. Tax is sent to 3 separate communities, then each destination sends the Tourism Board an agreed upon amount from each destination. They used to receive the funding directly, but switched to this investment model a couple of years ago.

Visitors: Approximately 625,000 visitors annually. Calculated by consumer analytics.

SANTA FE, NM

Visitor Center

Randall Randy, executive director of Tourism Santa Fe, provided his input regarding visitor centers, "We feel visitor centers are very important for the uses. Percentage is relatively low of the total visitation, however very high for first time visitors. I'm not sure how Sedona is spending so much on one center."



Budget

\$391,000 annually includes Plaza Visitor Center, and staffing at the Railyard, Convention Center, and Water Street locations. An additional \$50,000 is spent on lease space for the Plaza location and misc. operating expenses.

The budget supports 7 information specialists and one supervisor. Because these 7 employees are union workers, there are no volunteers.

Funding

Lodging tax and some earned revenue from the Tourism Santa Fe website, visitor guide advertising, and use fees at the convention center. They are not a membership based structure, but an extension of Santa Fe.

The Convention Center and Railyard spaces have been in operation for 12 years, the Plaza for 8, and the Water Street location was added last year.

Visitors: Approximately 3 million annually visit the destination. 120,000 visitors annually are served at all of their locations combined. Santa Fe sees repeat visitation of 70%. They feel their visitation is highest amongst first time visitors and their data reflects that.

FLAGSTAFF, AZ

Visitor Center

Flagstaff operates Discover Flagstaff as the destination marketing organization for the City of Flagstaff.



Budget

\$670,000 annually includes 6.15 personnel, and the Amtrak Train Station operations. They also operate a snow play hotline seasonally.

They sell an estimated \$364,000 in retail in the center annually.

Funding

Discover Flagstaff is charged with administering tourism programs for the City of Flagstaff and receives an allocation of 30 percent of the BBB tax collected.

Visitors: Approximately 5 million annually visit the destination. 125,000 visitors were served at the Center in the last fiscal year.

WILLIAMS, AZ

Visitor Center

The Williams Visitor Center is operated by the City of Williams. The Chamber of Commerce used to exist in Williams and staffed the center, rented the building, and handled destination marketing. The city ended the agreement nearly 8 years ago and the Chamber of Commerce closed its doors 3 months later.



Budget

\$368,000 annually includes 3 full-time and 4 part-time employees.

They sell an estimated \$137,000 in retail in the center annually.

The city owns the historic building they use for the center.

Funding

The City of Williams invests a portion of the BBB tax for the center and destination marketing each year. They recently voted to increase the lodging tax from 4.5% to 5.5% beginning April 1, to invest in infrastructure for the destination.

Visitors: Approximately 1.5 million annually visit the destination. 100,000 visitors served at the center in 2022, decreased visitation to nearly 80,000 last calendar year.

COTTONWOOD, AZ

Visitor Center

The Cottonwood Chamber of Commerce had been the official DMO until a change was made 4 years ago. Funding at a level of \$280,000 was switched to a creation of a DMO for the City of Cottonwood and an investment for the visitor centers for the Chamber of Commerce.



Budget

\$95,000 annually to help with expenses at the 2 visitor centers. The Chamber of Commerce has 3 full time employees, and approximately 15 volunteers.

Funding

The City of Cottonwood leases the Old Town space to the Chamber for \$1 per year. The funds to help with the maintenance of the centers comes from the bed tax.

The City of Cottonwood invests approximately \$480,000 in destination marketing each year, aside from the \$95,000 investment for the visitor centers.

Visitors: Approximately 1-1.75 million annually visit the destination. 10,000 visitors were served at the centers in the last calendar year.

TUCSON, AZ

Visitor Center

Pima County Attractions & Tourism partners with Visit Tucson to operate the Center. Ms. Vanessa Cabrera, VP of strategic initiatives shared that they help with staffing and Pima County runs and owns the gift shop.



Budget

\$1,291,557 annually, with 5 full-time, 8 part-time team members and 40+ volunteers. 2022 was the first year of operation in the space.

Funding

Generated from bed tax from Pima County. Visit Tucson assists with 2 full time employees, and the county covers the rest. Catherine Campbell is the deputy director of Pima County Attractions and Tourism.

Visitors: Approximately 4.9 million annually visit Tucson. 33,000 visitors were served at the center during its first year of operation in 2022.