

**Staff Report**  
Overview Of Sedona Visitor Center



**City of Sedona**  
**Tourism Program**  
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**Meeting Date:** August 7, 2024  
**Board:** Tourism Advisory Board  
**Project Summary:** Background information presentation on the Sedona Visitor Center  
**Action Requested:** Provide feedback on materials listed above.  
**Staff Recommendation:** n/a  
**Report Prepared By:** Andrew Grossmann, Tourism Manager

<b>Attachments:</b>	<b>Page</b>
1. <a href="#">Exhibit A: Visitor Center Case Studies</a> .....	<a href="#">Attachment 1</a>
2. <a href="#">Exhibit B: Sedona Visitor Center Engagement Report</a> .....	<a href="#">Attachment 2</a>



## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Provide background information on the history of the Sedona Visitor Center, learn case studies about visitor centers in other destinations, receive an update on the current utilization of the Sedona Visitor Center, and brainstorm ideas to help shape the future of the Sedona Visitor Center.

## BACKGROUND AND EXPLANATION

Visitor Centers provide a critical role in providing access to information about a destination. Destinations across the United States utilize them; however, their overall structure and strategy can vary. The City of Sedona is interested in receiving feedback from the TAB on the Sedona Visitor Center that will set the stage for future discussions about this topic.

In preparation for the upcoming discussion with the TAB, the city conducted desk research on the strategy and structure of visitor centers in other Arizona destinations and neighboring states. The city also reviewed research conducted by the Colorado Tourism Office related to innovative ways to leverage visitor centers as a community asset that also benefits local business and residents.

A 2023 report by Destinations International identified that visitor centers:

- Need to be accessible
- Embrace technology, digital signage, and QR codes
- 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)

Two key findings from the desk research the city conducted on visitor centers included:

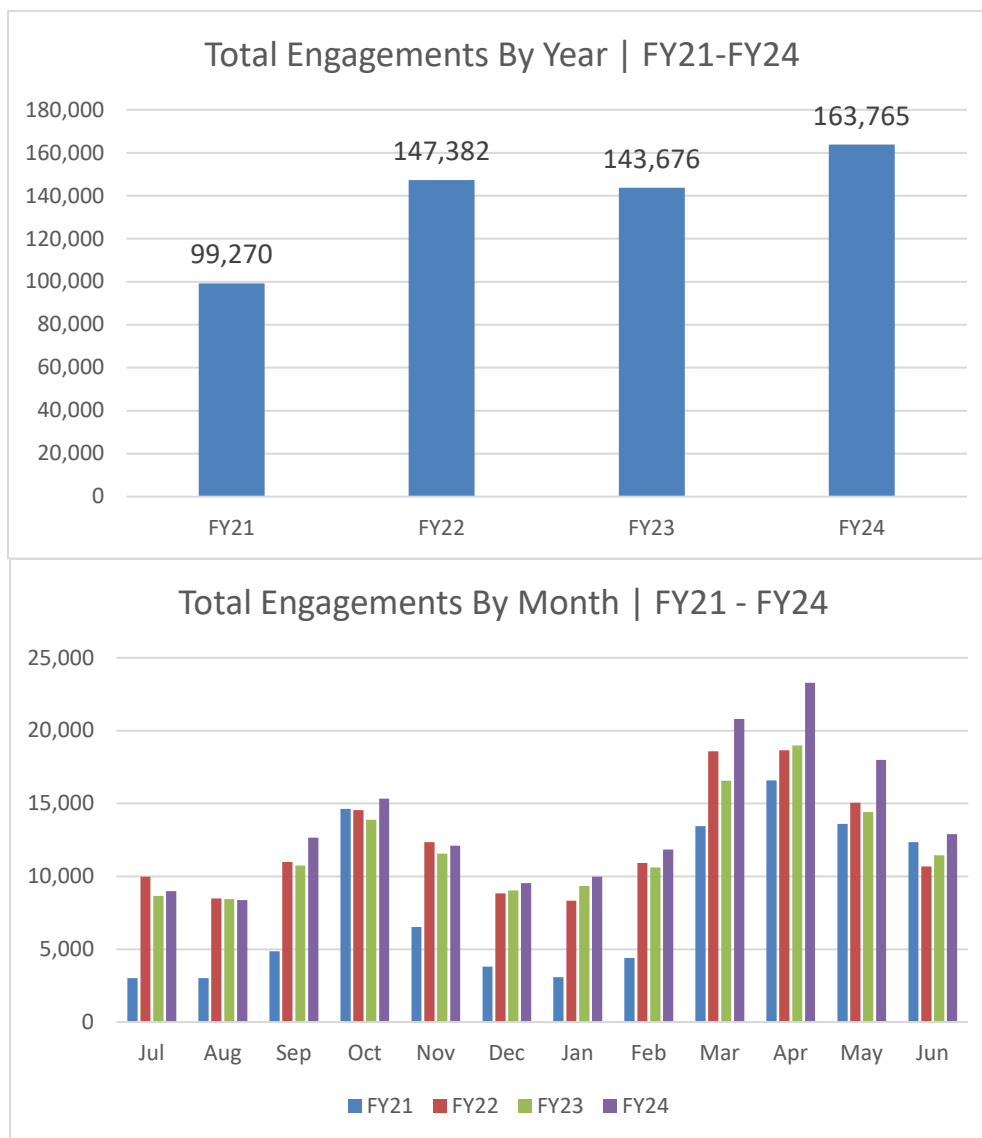
- Visitor centers are typically paid for using funds generated through local lodging/bed taxes
- Visitor centers are typically operated as an extension of the local Destination Marketing & Management Organization
- The Sedona Visitor Center is performing well in terms of engagement with visitors when compared to other visitor centers in Arizona

Findings from the Colorado Tourism Office research on utilization focused on ways to enhance visitor, local business, and resident utilization of the investments in visitor centers. Ideas included:

- Offer a locally sourced showcase or local art exhibit that the visitor center volunteers are trained to provide information about where visitors can learn more purchase them
- Partner with local tour operators to start and/or end tours at the visitor center
- Offer self-guided tours, such as a public art crawl, that start and end from the visitor center
- Combine the concept of a visitor center with an interactive museum with displays that showcases the natural and geological history of Sedona
- Install interactive kiosks that include photo booths with backdrops of Sedona, example itineraries, and opportunities to purchase activities, make reservations, and purchase public land passes

## VISITOR CENTER ENGAGEMENT METRICS

The Sedona Chamber of Commerce maintains records on the engagement with the Sedona Visitor Center that includes in-person engagements, phone engagements, and email engagements. A breakdown of total engagements between FY21-FY24 are provided below:



*\*NOTE: COVID-19 impacts on visitor center engagement occurred throughout the first half of FY21*

## NEXT STEPS

The goal of the August 7, 2024, TAB meeting is to conduct the first of several TAB member discussions about the Sedona Visitor Center. For purpose of this initial meeting is provide background information related to the Sedona Visitor Center and to allow TAB members to share ideas on ways to shape the future of the Sedona Visitor Center. The input from the TAB will be documented and brought forward into future discussions.