



LTAC Funding 2020 for Bloedel Reserve

Updated: 1/25/2021

Project Summary & Plan Revisions Due to COVID

In the fall of 2019, Bloedel Reserve applied for and received an LTAC grant in the amount of \$10,000 for the calendar year 2020. The Bloedel Reserve proposal included several initiatives specifically designed to help attract overnight visitors to Bainbridge Island, as well as to broadly increase awareness of Bloedel Reserve among prospects who would be likely to visit Bainbridge Island from outside a 50-mile radius of the island.

At the time the proposal was submitted, COVID-19 was not a factor. But as the global pandemic spread and health and safety closures and restrictions were put in place, our plans for tourist-oriented promotions had to change. Specifically, Bloedel Reserve had to close from March through May, 2020. The Reserve reopened in June with a new timed ticketing system and new protocols that require strict limits to the number of people (staff and guests included) who can be on the grounds at any one time.

That said, we were able to reach out to the tourist market with print advertising, broadcast advertising, and a special onsite lodging promotion, all of which were included in our initial LTAC 2020 proposal.

What follows is a recap of our initial grant proposal and a description of how our plans changed due to circumstances well beyond our control.

Part One -- The Cascadia Media Plan

Our intention was to purchase targeted advertising on TV, radio, and through electronic media channels in markets we had been unable to afford in order to reach audiences who met the following criteria:

- They live within driving distance of Bloedel Reserve and Bainbridge Island
- They have an interest in arts, culture, and travel.
- They have the resources to make weekend trips or extend business travel in and around Western Washington.

Based on the demographics of the audiences we wanted to reach, we believed we could raise awareness among the prospects who were most likely to spend time not only at Bloedel Reserve but also visiting other Bainbridge Island cultural organizations, shopping in Bainbridge Island stores, and staying overnight in Bainbridge Island lodging of all types, especially during slow seasons.

But our closures in the early part of the year changed our overall approach to advertising, especially since traveling was being sharply curtailed due to COVID-19 restrictions.

In Quarter One of 2020, we elected to make one print advertising purchase in what we felt was a significant publication for tourist and business travelers who would likely continue to travel the Cascadian corridor all year long.

2020 – Year-long

Half-page ad in *OnTrak* Magazine

Cost: \$4,455

This publication is published by Statehood Media and distributed by Amtrak. It specifically serves the trains running the Cascadian Corridor – from Vancouver, BC to Portland, OR. The Bloedel Reserve ad has been seen all year long by travelers who are passing directly through the Puget Sound region and who are likely prospects for an overnight stay on Bainbridge Island.

Results: An estimated 80,000 audience riders are reached annually

In Quarter Four of 2020, we had the opportunity to sponsor the *Age of Nature* series airing on KCTS9 TV. This gave us the chance to use broadcast advertising and a virtual kick-off event to reach a large viewership of nature-minded prospects.

2020 – Q4 – October-December

Broadcast campaign: KCTS9, Sponsorship of *The Age of Nature*

Cost: \$3,500

Bloedel Reserve was a name sponsor for *The Age of Nature*, a three-part PBS series that aired on KCTS9 TV. TV spots ran between mid-September and 10/31/20 both during the series broadcasts and during the broadcasts of *NOVA* and *Nature* during the same time period.

Our LTAC proposal called for broadcast advertising to raise awareness among highly qualified prospects around our region. We looked to public television for those prospects and sponsoring *The Age of Nature* series during October 2020 was a logical fit. It was the first time Bloedel Reserve had run spot television advertising.

Results:

- **Virtual Kick-off Event:** Nearly 400 online participants attended the kick-off for the series
- **Series Viewership:** 44,237 households reached over the three-episode series, with additional households reached, thanks to spots on *NOVA* and *Nature*

Part Two -- The Overnight Visitor Discount Admission Program

We initially envisioned offering discounted admission to the Reserve during two time periods to anyone who brought in an overnight visitor discount coupon from their lodging or used a special discount code to book their tickets online. Those periods were to be January-March, 2020 and October-December 2020. Our plan was to partner with lodging establishments all across

Bainbridge Island, by providing rack cards with discount codes to give to their guests during their stay. There would be no cost to the lodging establishments to participate, simply their willingness to give their guests one of our discount flyers .

The growing COVID crisis and our eventual closure from March to June, 2020, made running this visitor program during Quarter One impossible. However, once we reopened, we decided to revive the concept in Quarter Four, as described below.

2020 – Q4 – October-December, 2020

Stay-cation Lodging Offer: 50% Discount for BI Overnight Guest

Distribution: Through BILA

Cost: \$236.50 for printing 1,000 flyers at Sound Reprographics

Our initial LTAC proposal called for offering the lodging establishments on Bainbridge Island a special deal for their guests – a deep discount on admission to Bloedel Reserve – as a value-added reward for staying overnight on the Island. This would also be a vehicle for us to learn how many overnight lodging guests actually visit the Reserve, since we have had no way to track them specifically in the past. However, COVID closures and reduced visitor capacity made offering this discount impossible in the early part of 2020.

We activated this promotion for Q4 of 2020. Specifically, we designed a 50% admission discount that would be offered exclusively to lodging guests and would run through the end of December. We created discount offer flyers and partnered with Claire Donahue from BILA to distribute the flyers to lodging sites. We tracked the use of the promotion code to see what traction the offer had with visitors.

Results:

Claire Donahue reports that all 1,000 flyers were distributed to the major lodging locations (approximately 100 rooms) on the Island, as well as to some AirBnB locations.

We had hoped that the flyers would be placed in guest rooms. But we discovered that due to COVID protocols, they could only be given to guests at check-in. We don't know how many flyers actually made it into guests' hands.

What we do know is how many of tickets were purchased using our special Stay-cation discount code and our Timed Ticketing system. Between October and December of 2020:

- 11 people used the promotion code to purchase a total of 30 tickets
- Of those 11 purchasers, 7 are current Bloedel members

There is no way to know if those Bloedel members were purchasing additional tickets for their own use or for guests visiting from out of town.

We also tracked visitors to the Reserve who were coming from zip codes more than 50 miles away from Bainbridge Island during our “Stay-cation” promotional period, since this was a defining parameter for the LTAC 2020 Grant. Here’s what we discovered:

Attendance by Zip Code

	All of 2020	Oct-Dec	% of Total
Members within 50 miles	22,746	9,312	40%
Members outside 50 miles	673	297	44%
Non-members within 50 miles	11,894	3,259	27%
Non-members outside 50 miles	2,217	551	25%

We need to do more detailed, year-over-year zip code analysis to see if we are moving the needle on attendance by visitors who come from 50 miles or more away from Bainbridge Island.

Conclusions

The LTAC funds were extremely helpful in creating meaningful exposure for Bloedel Reserve to tourism prospects who we normally would not be able to reach due to our limited marketing resources.

However, the health and safety issues of 2020 could not have been predicted. The monumental impact that COVID-19 had on the entire tourism and travel industry and our necessary 3-month closure more than offset any tourism incentives we provided to entice visitors to Bainbridge Island and to Bloedel Reserve. As the travel and tourism industry is able to recover, so too we hope to encourage increased visitor engagement at Bloedel Reserve from travelers who are coming from 50 miles away or more.

Expenditures Summary

Our initial request was for \$23,000. We were awarded \$10,000 in LTAC funds. We spent those funds as follows:

- **Print Advertising / OnTrak Magazine: \$4,555**
- **TV Advertising / KCTS9 TV: \$3,000**
- **Stay-cation Flyer printing: \$236.50**

TOTAL LTAC-RELATED EXPENDITURES: \$8,191.50

We submitted copies of paid invoices when we submitted our progress report and LTAC invoice in December. We have no additional expenditures to report.