

Outreach and Recruitment: Your Airport as an Asset

The following is a sequence of suggested steps for working with stakeholders in your community to make sure adequate information about your airport and its services is available as part of general outreach and marketing materials. The tool addresses both business recruitment (left-hand column) and destination marketing (right-hand column). The goal for this process is to rally the economic development community to see your airport as a catalyst for job creation through strategic recruitment.

(The material presented is based in part on Table 4-3 of [ACRP Report 44 A Guidebook for the Preservation of Public-Use Airports](#)).

BUSINESS RECRUITMENT

TOURISM (DESTINATION MARKETING)

Step 1: Define Objectives for Outreach

Describe the current role of your airport within the business community. What kind of businesses does your airport support? How? (Draw on information you gathered for the ***“You don’t have to take my word for it”*** topic).

Define how you would like your airport to be viewed by a company considering a location in your region. What does your airport offer? What are its advantages? What information should be made available as part of outreach and marketing materials? Are there particular types of businesses or industries that you wish to target, based on your airport’s current or planned services?

Describe the current role of your airport in supporting tourism. What are the major tourist attractions in your region? How close and accessible are they from your airport? Are visitors arriving for recreational or business purposes? Where do they stay?

Define how you would like your airport to be viewed by an event planner, travel agent, or tourist considering your region as a destination. What does your airport offer? What are its advantages? What information do visitors need when planning trips? What about when they arrive? Are there particular types of tourism you wish to target?

Step 2: Do Background Homework. Identify Potential Partners.

There are a variety of stakeholders within the economic development community who may publish marketing materials targeted at business recruitment or otherwise participate in the economic development process:

- City, county and state economic development departments or authorities
- City, county, and regional planning departments or commissions
- Economic development organizations

There are a variety of stakeholders within the tourism community who may publish marketing materials targeted at visitors or event planners or otherwise participate in destination marketing:

- City, county and state tourism offices
- Convention and Visitors Bureaus (CVBs) /Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs)
- Chambers of commerce and business associations
- Convention centers

Step 2: Do Background Homework. Identify Potential Partners. (cont'd)

- Chambers of commerce and industry associations
- Councils of government and other multi-jurisdictional organizations
- Other non-profit economic development organizations
- Site finder services
- Business leaders and large employers
- Colleges and universities
- Industrial parks
- Ports or railroads
- Real estate developers

- Hotels and resorts
- Major sports and entertainment venues
- National or state parks
- Colleges and universities
- Special event organizers
- Destination management companies (DMCs)

Conduct a preliminary online search for marketing material about your region. Who publishes the material? Is your airport already presented as a regional asset? Is there additional information you could add? Are there specific groups reaching out to particular industries or segments of the tourism market that your airport currently serves or would like to serve?

Step 3: Reach Out to a First Point of Contact. Build Understanding.

Because each community will have its own set of relevant stakeholders, it is often most useful to reach out to one known and well-connected entity, and to build a network from there.

The U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) maintains an [economic development directory](#), by state, with links to local resources in each state including EDA regional offices, state government offices, regional Economic Development Districts, and other relevant groups involved with economic development planning efforts and the implementation of federally-funded programs. Reaching out to your Economic Development District can be a helpful first step in understanding who is involved in marketing your region to companies, and how you might best coordinate on these efforts.

Convention and Visitors Bureaus (also sometimes called Destination Marketing Organizations) are not-for-profit organizations generally funded by local government to promote a region as a destination for individual travelers as well as for conferences, conventions, and events.

Reaching out to your CVB/DMO can be a helpful first step in understanding who is involved in marketing your region to visitors and event planners, and how you might best coordinate on these efforts.

When you speak to your first point of contact, come prepared to explain your objectives and what you are looking to get out of the discussion. The most important outcome of the meeting will likely be points of contact for follow up discussion, but your first contact will also have useful insights about current and potential future recruitment strategies for your region.

You can set the stage by describing, in brief:

- Your understanding of the value of your airport to businesses, offering specific examples wherever possible.
- What you've found so far in your research regarding the marketing of your region and your airport as an asset.
- Any gaps you see in the current outreach approach.

You may also want to come prepared with a few examples of airport-related marketing and outreach techniques from other regions. Invite their opinion and begin a dialogue.

Step 4: Expand the Circle. Create a Plan and Take Action.

Given the information learned in your first discussion, you can now broaden the circle. Always come prepared to describe your goals and prior findings. Gradually build a plan for action. It may be as simple as providing additional information about your airport on a variety of existing websites and marketing materials. Alternately, you may find potential partners interested in broadening their own understanding of how your airport can serve a particular set of industries or tourism markets. Be prepared to offer your own knowledge and support the efforts of economic development practitioners in your region.

Step 5: Stay Relevant and Current.

The economy, like everything else, will continue to evolve and change. Try to stay abreast of major changes in your region, such as planned conferences, events, or conventions, as well as the arrival of new employers or changes in your region's industry mix. Invite your new contacts to share success stories when new businesses or events are recruited to your region. If your airport was a significant location factor in the decision, consider building "success stories" into ongoing marketing material. Similarly, keep your contacts informed of service and facility changes at your airport that may be relevant to their target audiences.