

RURAL ROUNDUP
2026
ELKO



WORKSHOP

Data That Moves Decision Makers:

Strengthening Advocacy and Funding
for Rural Nevada

A white silhouette of a mountain range is positioned at the bottom of the slide, extending across the width of the page. The mountains vary in height and are separated by valleys, creating a jagged, natural-looking horizon line.

Panelists



Aida Española
TRAVEL NEVADA



Melissa Clary
GEM THEATER



Kyle Shulz
NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM
AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS



Cortney Bloomer
TRAVEL NEVADA



Aida

Española

TRAVEL NEVADA





TOURISM MEANS MORE

April 21, 2026

TOURISM DAY+

Tourism Means More:

Overview

Each legislative session Travel Nevada hosts Tourism Day at the Legislature to showcase Nevada's tourism industry. Messaging comes to life through Travel Nevada's [Tourism Means More](#) campaign featuring statewide statistics that prove the fiscal impacts tourism has on the state, economy, and each Nevada household.

Goal

Educate stakeholders of the significant economic impact tourism provides to the state. Provide insight into the agency's industry development programs, marketing efforts, and communications initiatives that lead to increased visitation.

Objectives

- Expand awareness of Nevada's tourism industry among elected officials and stakeholders by spotlighting Nevada's tourism economy.
- Highlight the economic impact of tourism in Nevada households and communities through data-driven content.
- Inspire action by encouraging elected officials and stakeholders to get a little out there and actively support and promote Nevada's tourism industry.

Tourism Means More...



Jobs

Direct employment expanded to nearly **306,000** jobs in 2024, boosting employment directly supported by visitors above pre-pandemic levels.

Spending

Direct visitor spending reached **\$58.5** billion in 2024, an increase of **6.0%** from the prior year.

Economic Vitality

The value of all visitor-associated goods and services produced in Nevada in 2024 reached **\$39 billion**, which equates to about **15.0%** of Nevada's economy.

Outdoor Recreation

Spending on outdoor recreation reached **\$1.8 billion** in 2024, an increase of about **\$100 million** from the prior year.

Tax Generation

Visitor activity in Nevada generated **\$12.8 billion** in tax revenue in fiscal year 2024, with about **\$6.2 billion** accruing to state and local governments.

Rural Nevada

In 2024, room tax collections in Nevada's 15 rural counties increased from pre-pandemic levels by about **22.1%**.

Household Impact

Each household in Nevada would need to be taxed an additional **\$5,217** to replace the visitor-generated taxes received by Nevada state and local governments in FY 2024.

Income

The **\$24.9 billion** in total income generated by tourism accounted for **11.1%** of total personal income in Nevada in 2024.

Heads in Beds

Room tax collections reached **\$1.2 billion** in fiscal year 2024.

Visitors

Travel & Tourism is a foundational cornerstone of Nevada's economy. In 2024, about **52.4 million** travelers visited Nevada.

Visitor Spending

The **\$58.5 billion** in visitor spending in 2024 means that about **\$160 million** was spent every day by visitors in Nevada.









The Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority promotes Las Vegas as the premiere destination for leisure and business travel. We make investments that drive visitation, improve access in and around the destination and create incredible experiences for our millions of visitors each year. We appreciate all you do to support our tourism industry

-Steve Hill, Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority (LVCVA)



Tourism plays a vital role in supporting Lake Tahoe's local economy, providing jobs and opportunities for businesses that serve visitors year-round. Additionally, it helps fund environmental conservation efforts, ensuring that the lake's stunning natural beauty can be enjoyed for generations to come.

-Sue Barton, Chief Operating Officer, Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority/Visit Lake Tahoe



\$1.7 BILLION
Spent on outdoor recreation in 2023

4.3 MILLION
Visitors welcomed to Nevada State Parks



TOURISM MEANS MORE



TOURISM MEANS MORE



NATIONAL TRAVEL AND TOURISM WEEK

MAY 3-9, 2026

National Travel and Tourism Week (NTTW) is the U.S. travel industry's annual tradition of recognizing the essential role travel plays in powering our economy, strengthening communities and connecting America. Established by U.S. Travel Association, NTTW brings the industry together each year to spotlight travel's impact.

In 2026, the theme "**Postmarked: Essential**" highlights a simple truth: travel is not optional—it is fundamental to America's economy, workforce and way of life. Every trip taken, every visitor welcomed and every experience created leaves a mark on communities across the country. Travel drives opportunity, fuels growth and keeps America connected.

We're asking #NVTourism partners to share video testimonials about what tourism means to you, your organization, and your community. Connect with Aida or Tracie from our PR team to record yours for our industry social channels.

NTTW
NATIONAL TRAVEL & TOURISM WEEK
MAY 3-9, 2026

**TOURISM
MEANS
MORE**



COUNTY DASHBOARDS



Elko County



[← BACK TO ALL COUNTIES](#)

[PRINT COUNTY INFORMATION →](#)

Travel Nevada's *Tourism Means More* initiative is a way to educate and demonstrate the value of the tourism industry to key stakeholders. As our research shows, visitation to Nevada's destinations has both direct and indirect economic impacts that have lasting positive impacts on communities. This dashboard includes key data to illustrate the fiscal impacts and how they benefit each Nevada resident household.

Discover the Facts

\$5.6M **\$198.2K** **5,417**

Room Tax Collections - Total Collected (FY24) Room Tax Collections - 3/8th of 1% Room Inventory

\$638.8M **\$204.4M** **4,872**

Visitor Spending Taxable Sales for Tourism-Related Categories Visitor-Generated Employment

\$188.9M **\$84.2M** **152.8K**

Visitor-Generated Income Visitor-Generated State and Local Tax Revenue State Park Visitation

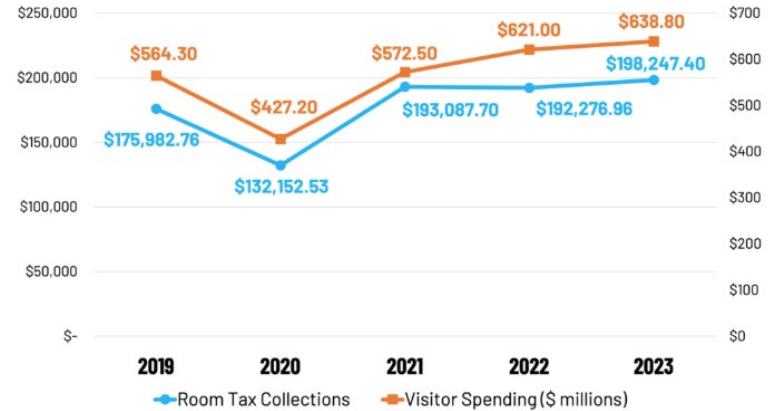
[TRAVEL NEVADA ANNUAL REPORT FY24 →](#)

[TRAVEL NEVADA STRATEGIC PLAN FY25 →](#)

[TRAVELNEVADA.COM →](#)



ELKO COUNTY





Kyle Shulz

**NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM
AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS**

**DATA THAT MOVES
DECISION MAKERS**

**TRAVEL NEVADA
RESOURCES AVAILABLE**

TravelNevada.biz

travelnevada.biz



ABOUT PROGRAMS RESEARCH RESOURCES NEWS & EVENTS

Research Strategy

Discover the Facts

Economic Impact

Tourism Ecosystem

Reports

Visitor Statistics & Profiles

Annual Report

Strategic Plan

Resident Sentiment

RURAL ROUNDUP

Join Travel Nevada in Elko April 21-23 for our premier rural tourism conference attended by over 250 Nevada tourism professionals. This three-day event features educational sessions and networking opportunities with a goal of providing Nevada's tourism partners resources to develop and market themselves as destinations.

REGISTER →

1 Rural Roundup

2 Nevada Magazine - Fall/Winter 2025

3 Official State Map

4 Industry Updates

Economic Impact

What data is available?

Direct Impacts

Economic impacts in a destination that can be directly attributed to visitors.

Total Impacts

Economic impacts in a destination that include direct impacts along with secondary impacts. Secondary impacts include businesses providing services to the visitor economy (i.e. an electrician hired by a hotel) or the impacts attributed to employees in the visitor economy spending their dollars within the local economy.

Share of Employment

Percent of employment in an area that is attributed to tourism

Statewide Comparisons

Economic impacts in a destination that can be directly attributed to visitors.

Discover The Facts

What data is available?

Room Tax Collections

Tax collections for the state lodging tax that represent 3/8ths of 1% of a room's rate.

Visitor Volume

Estimates for the total number of visitors in a certain month

Occupancy Level

The occupancy rate at hotels or motels in Nevada during a given month, calculated by the total rooms that are occupied divided by the total room nights that are available

Room Nights Occupied

The total number of hotel and motel rooms that were occupied in a given month, excluding 28 day stays or more

Gross Gaming Revenue

Total gaming revenues (win) generated by nonrestricted gaming licensees

Convention Attendance

The number of attendees of conventions in Nevada

Airport Volume

The number of passengers arriving or departing from Nevada's airports, including local passengers

Tourism Ecosystem

What data is available?

Total Room Taxes Collected

Estimates for total room taxes that are collected in the state in a fiscal year.

Room Tax Allocations (category)

Amounts of room taxes that are allocated to certain categories, such as to promote tourism, support schools, etc.

Room Tax Allocations (specific)

Amounts of room taxes that are allocated to specific items. For example, the category of school support includes a specific allocation in NRS stating that counties with over 300,000 in population have a 3% tax on lodging to deposit in the state education fund.

Percentage by Jurisdiction

The percentage of total lodging tax collections for each jurisdiction in the state going to specific categories. There can be large variations by jurisdiction.

Visitor Statistics and Profiles

What data is available?

Territory-Level Profiles

Profiles for the state are broken down by territory, due to sample size limitations for individual counties.

Expenditures per Overnight Visitor

Average spending per overnight visitor for trip to Nevada that included travel to an individual territory.

Advanced Planning

Time from when a respondent started planning travel to when trip to Nevada occurred.

Top Activities Experienced

Top reported activity respondents indicate that they experienced on trip to Nevada that included an individual territory

Origin Location

Top metropolitan areas of origin for respondents to a particular territory

Modes of Travel

Top modes of travel to travel to and with within Nevada

Resident Sentiment

What data is available?

Community Attributes Enjoyed

Specific attributes that respondents to the survey enjoy about the area that they reside in.

Community Challenges

Primary challenges that respondents to the survey say that their area is facing.

Tourism's Positive Contributions

Specific attributes that respondents to the survey say that tourism has a positive contribution

Tourism's Negative Contributions

Specific attributes that respondents to the survey say that tourism has a negative contribution

Tourism Balance

Perception of how balanced a respondent feels their area is between being resident-focused or tourism-focused and how the respondent would like their area to be balanced in the future.

Public Lands Sentiment

Ranking of respondents' agreement on various statements surrounding public land protection and usage.

**NON-TRAVEL NEVADA
RESOURCES AVAILABLE**

Non-Travel Nevada Resources

Nevada Department of Taxation

- Taxable Sales Statistics
- Modified Business Tax Statistics
- Consolidated Tax Distribution

Nevada Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation

- Current Employment Statistics (CES)
- Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW)
- Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS)

UNLV, Center for Business and Economic Research

- Southern Nevada Business Confidence Survey
- Nevada and Southern Nevada Index Reports
- Nevada Business Conditions

Some Things To Ask When Looking At Data

Where did the data come from?

- Who is the source of the data? Is it reliable?
- How was the data derived? Was it gathered from a survey, from geolocation, etc.?
- How representative is the data?
- What was the methodology? Can you explain it if you needed to?

What is the sample size?

- How many survey responses were collected?
- How many devices (geolocation) is the estimate based on?
- Does the sample size give confidence that the data I am looking at is robust enough to report?

What is the data telling me?

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of this particular methodology (i.e. survey vs geolocation)?
- What can this data tell me? (e.g. surveys can help to tell why a respondent traveled)
- What can't this data tell me? (e.g. geolocation can help show where a traveler originated, but can't say why they traveled)
- Are there any other pieces of data that cover similar topics? Do they confirm what this piece of data is telling me or contradict it?

TELLING A STORY WITH DATA

First Things First: Who's Your Audience

Your audience will determine what kind of content you put in your presentation.

Presenting to a board or to executives requires a different type of data compared to an audience of academic researchers.

You are giving a presentation for a reason, determine what your audience needs to know.

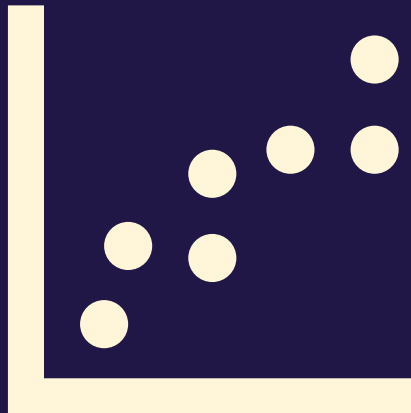


Use Simple, Relatable Visuals

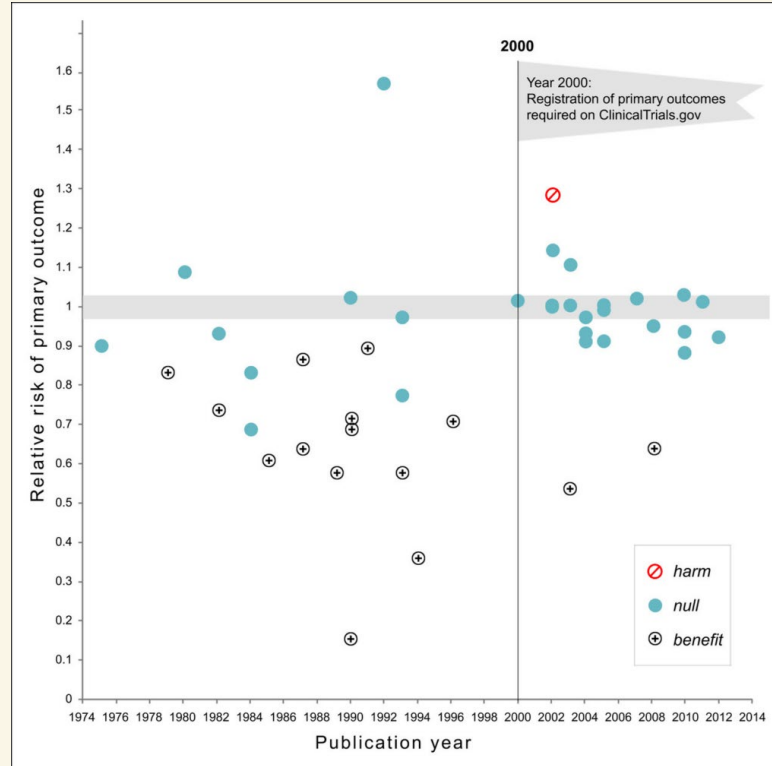
Too many different pieces of data in a short period of time can be confusing to a lot of audiences. Keep data simple and easily digestible.

Make your data meaningful and relatable. Data that is too technical can lose its meaning on an audience. Try to make the data contextually relevant to the audience. For example, instead of saying “we decreased costs by 10%”, say “Our total cost per unit dropped from \$100 to \$90”.

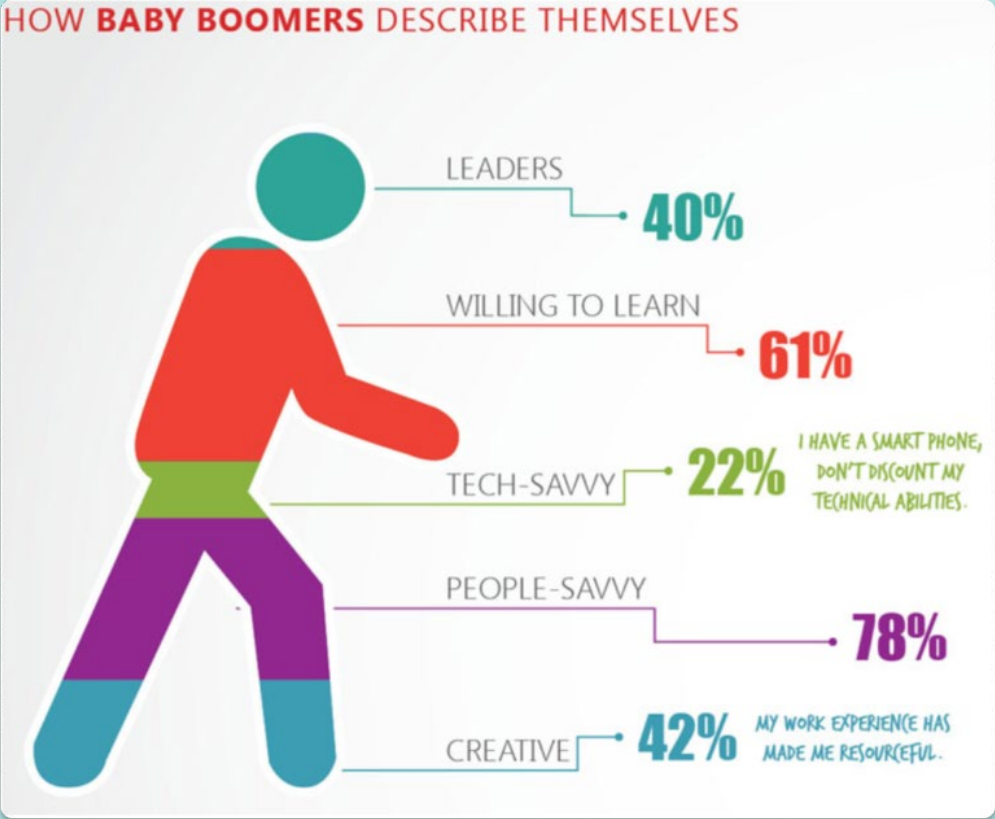
The main objective of visualization should be to make it easy to understand a pattern, trend, or outlier in your data in order to draw a proper conclusion.



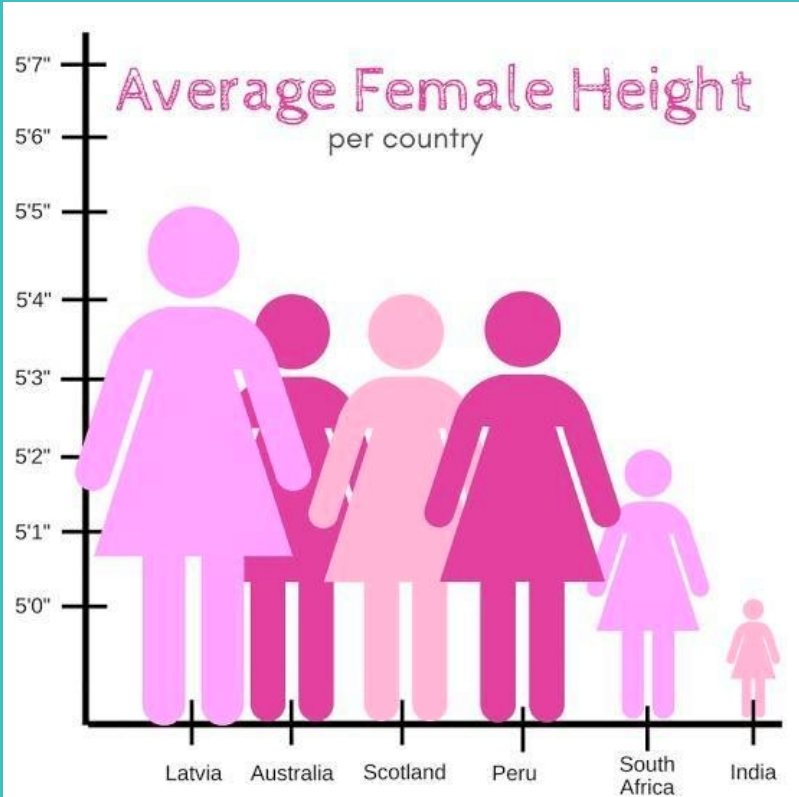
Bad Visualization Examples



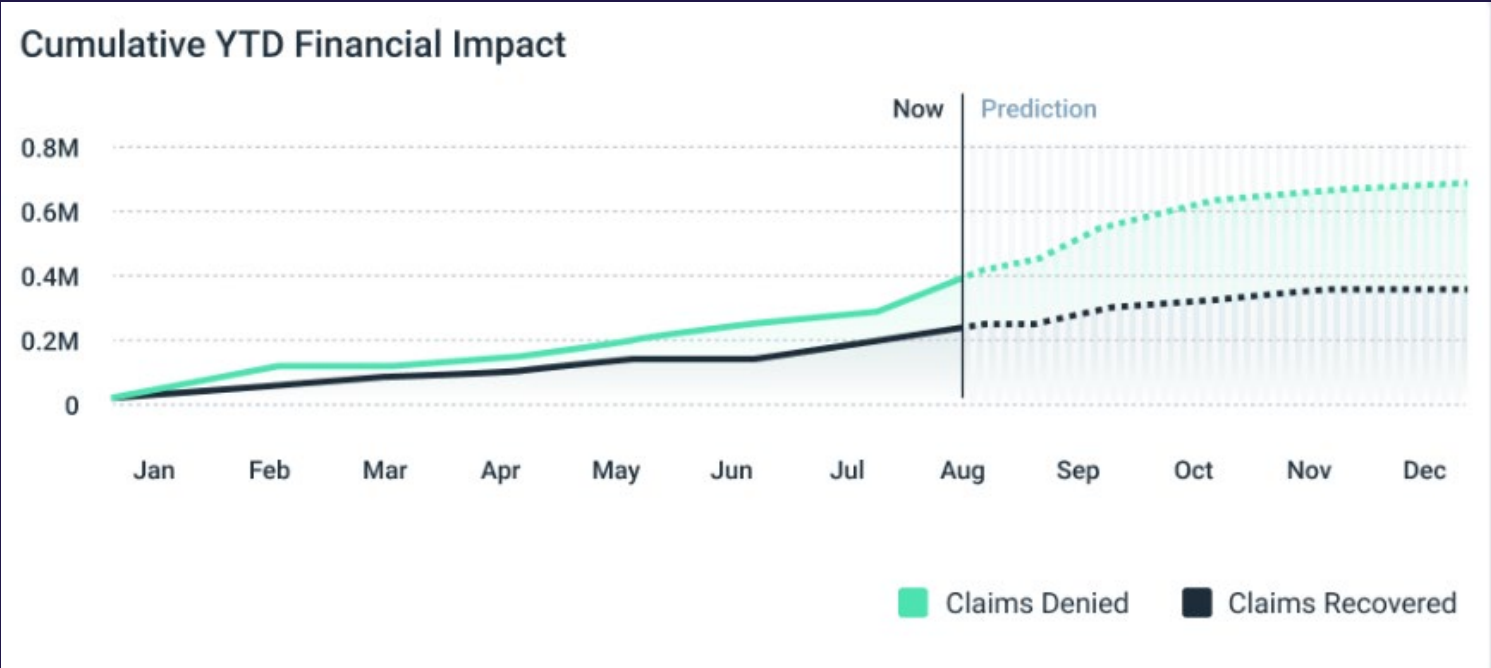
Bad Visualization Examples



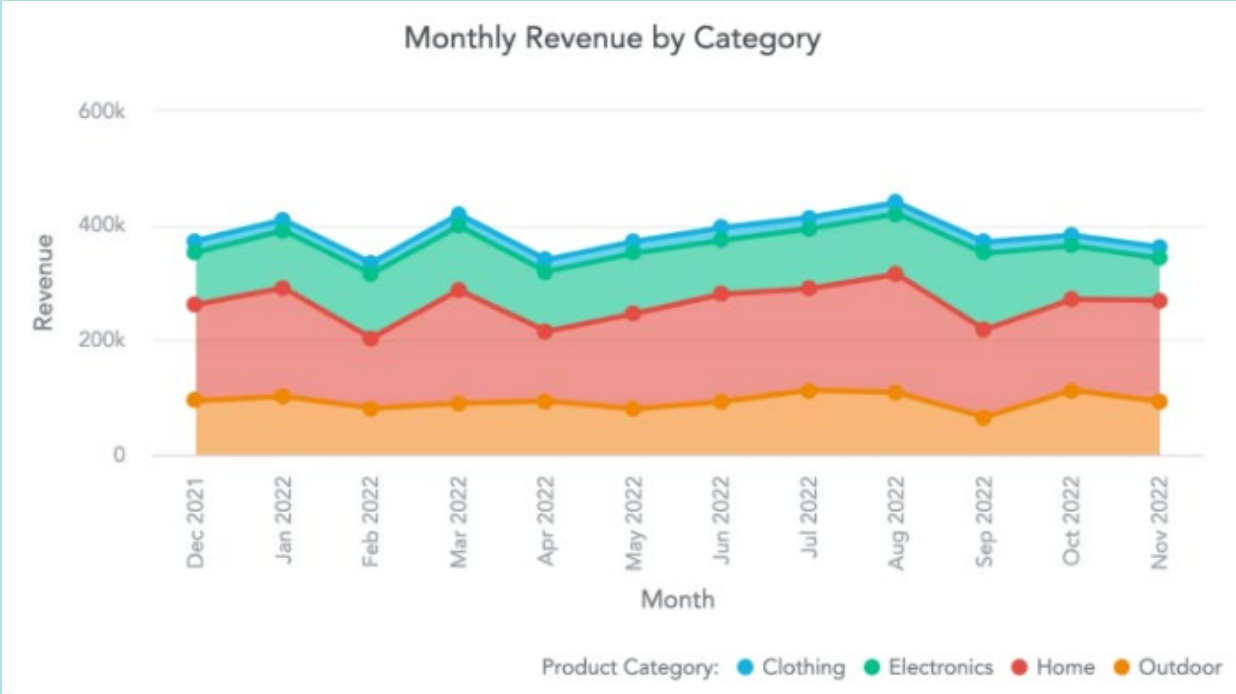
Bad Visualization Examples



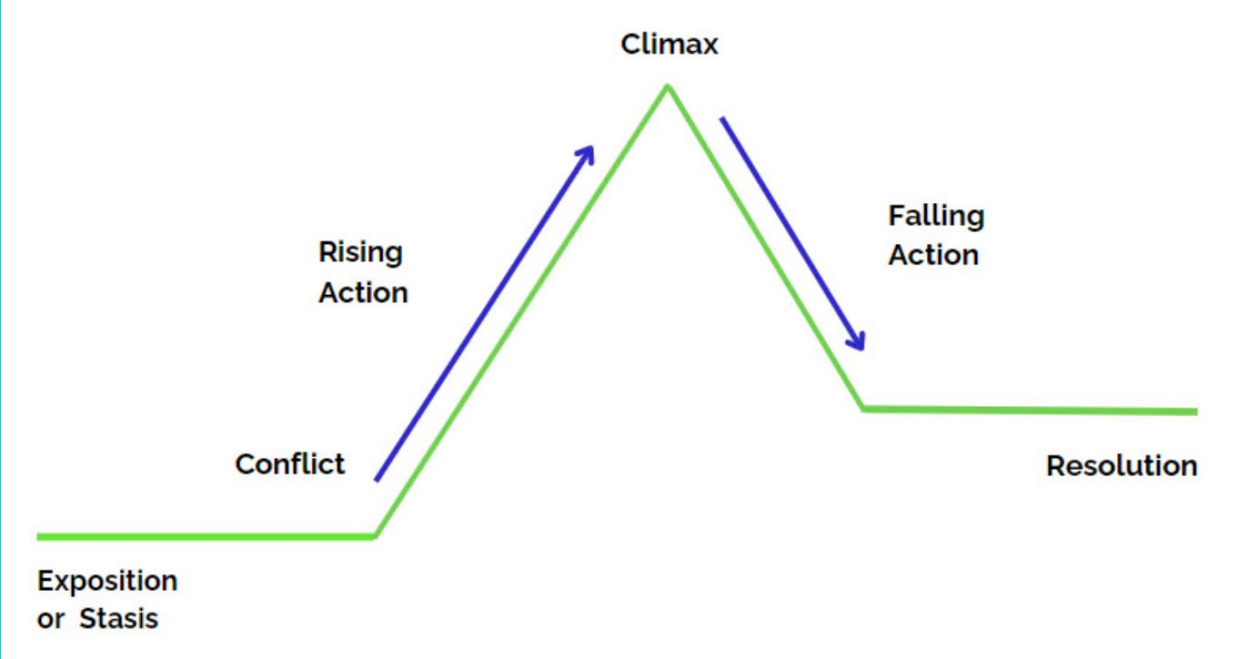
Good Visualization Examples



Good Visualization Examples



Develop A Narrative Arc



Develop A Narrative Arc

Exposition: Provide some background on the problem at hand or why what you are presenting matters. Why are you giving the presentation or submitting the proposal.

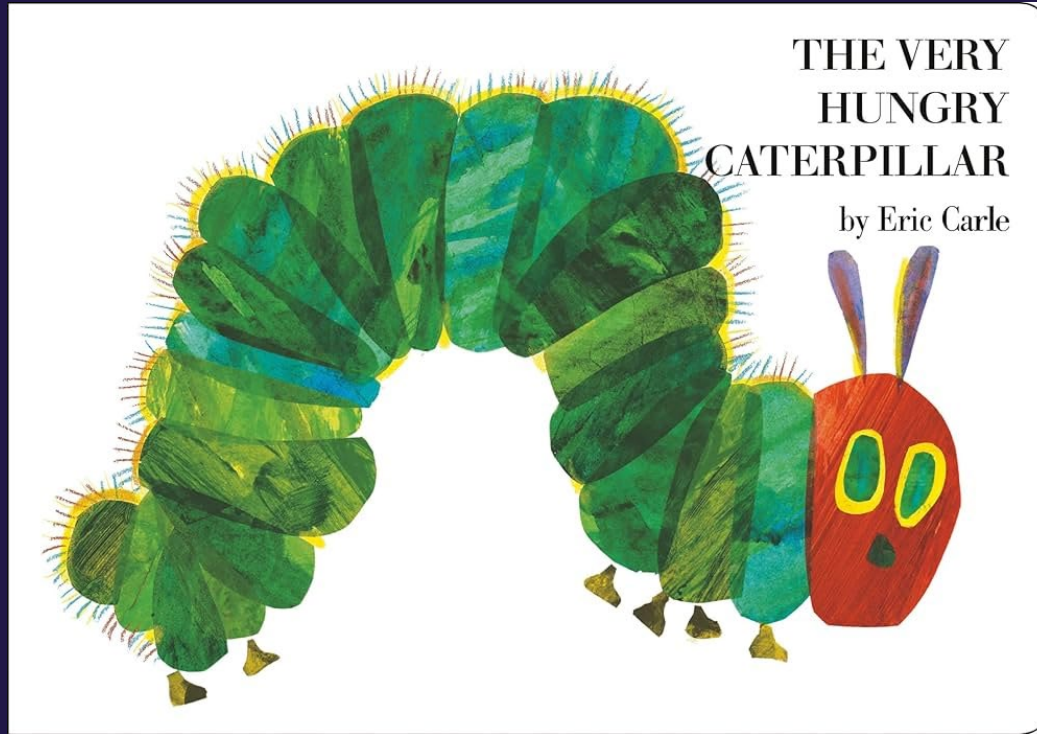
Rising Action: Provide some data that shows something meaningful to the audience. Highlight trends, show anomalies or give comparisons to give the reader an understanding of the landscape and that you are building to something.

Climax: Reveal a pivotal takeaway that forces the audience to think about consequences. The stakes for what you are presenting should be clear.

Falling Action: After you show key insights in the prior sections, let the audience know what it means and why it matters. Show how you plan to respond.

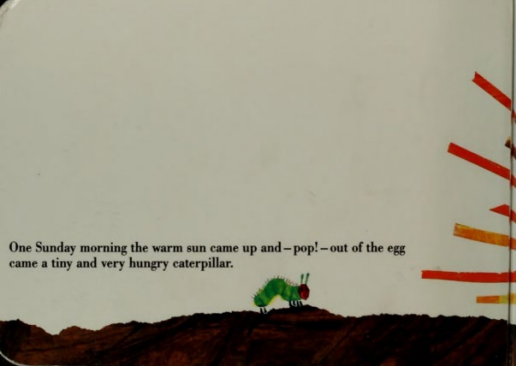
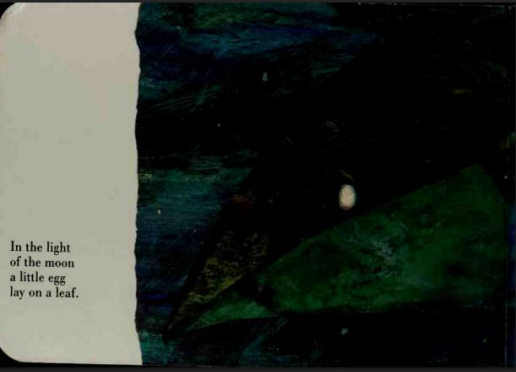
Resolution: Distill everything that you presented into a clear conclusion with a decision, strategy, or next step. The audience should leave with clarity about what should happen next.

Develop A Narrative Arc

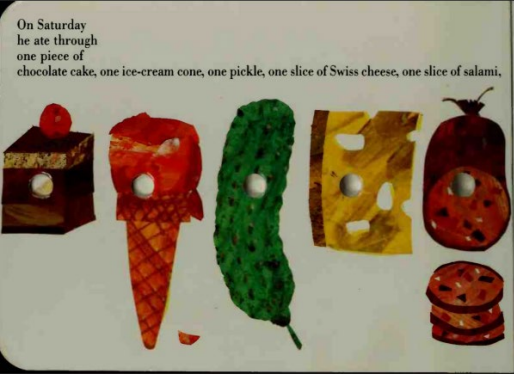


Develop A Narrative Arc

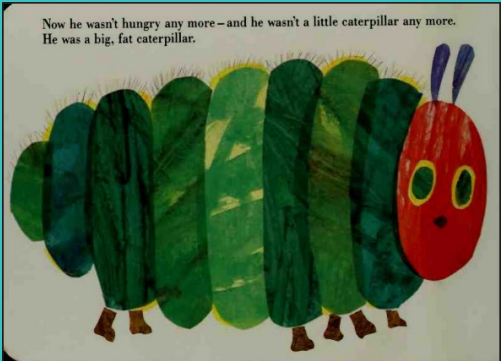
Exposition



Rising Action

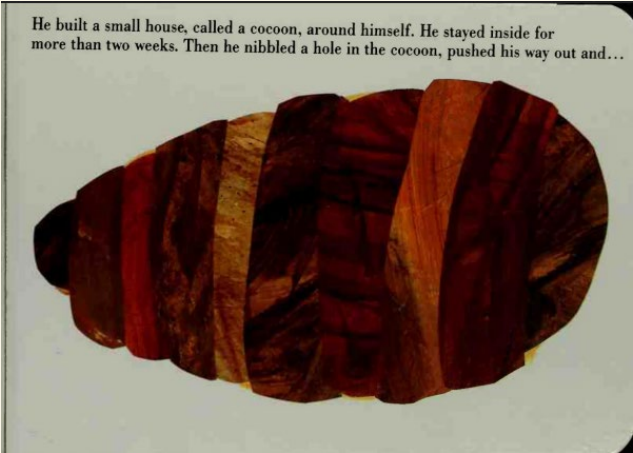


Climax

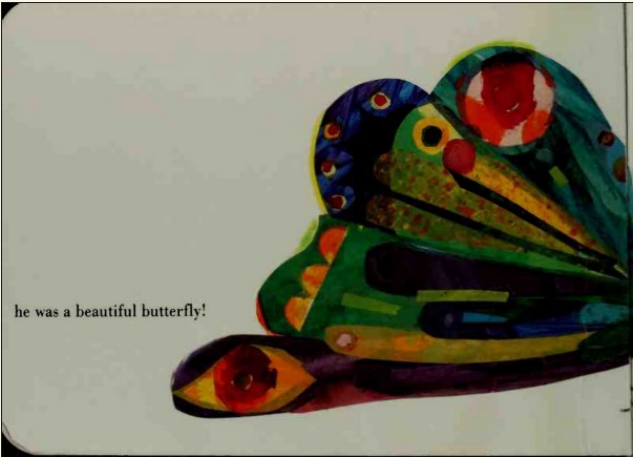


Develop A Narrative Arc

Falling Action



Resolution



HYPOTHETICAL EXAMPLE - ELKO CVA PROPOSING BUDGET

Hypothetical Example – Elko CVA Proposing Budget

Exposition

Elko, Nevada is a land anchored by the Ruby Mountains, where wildflowers blanket Lamoille Canyon and Western heritage grew from railroad pioneers, Basque traditions, Native peoples, and cowboy poets.

Here the Old West meets new. From mountain hikes to downtown art walks, Elko adventures span the wild and cultural alike. Visitors lace up for the Ruby Crest Trail, cruise the Lamoille Canyon Scenic Byway, and find alpine lakes with wide-open views.

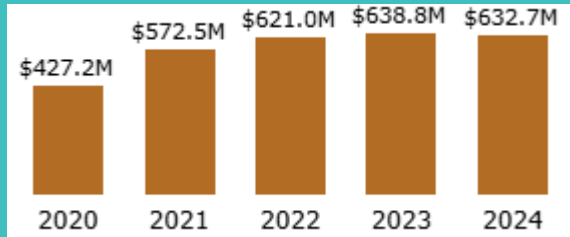
Elko is also a hub for events, from the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering, the National Basque Festival, and the Silver State Stampede, Nevada's oldest rodeo. National conventions like the Elko Mining Expo along with smaller charms, such as the Lamoille County Fair, keep Elko's event calendar full year-round.

Elko is also home to uncommon activities. Visitors can uncover ghost towns, watch expert craftsmen forge silver spurs, or step into Nevada's oldest running casino, circa 1869. From historic sites to lush golf courses and heli-skiing, Elko is full of surprises.

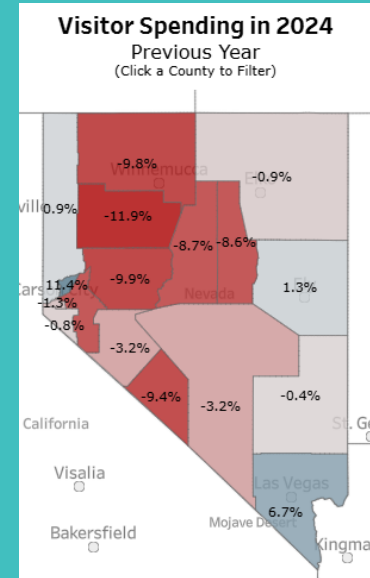
Hypothetical Example – Elko CVA Proposing Budget

Rising Action

Elko has seen robust visitor spending growth over the past five years. After a drop in spending in 2020 due to the pandemic, visitor spending has grown from \$427 million to nearly \$633 million, an increase of over 48%.



Though visitor spending dropped a bit in 2024, when compared to many other rural Nevada counties, Elko did comparatively well, dropping by less than 1% while some rural counties dropped by 8% or more in spending according to Travel Nevada’s economic impact estimates.



Hypothetical Example – Elko CVA Proposing Budget

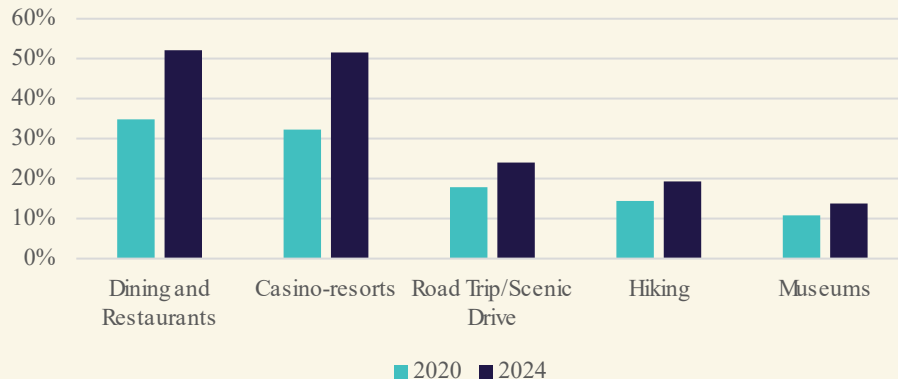
Rising Action

According to Travel Nevada’s Rural Nevada Visitor Profile, the percentage of respondents indicating that they experienced things such as dining and restaurants, road trips, hiking and museums were higher in 2024 compared to 2020, signaling increased importance for these experiences among travelers.

With only-in-Elko dining such as **Basque family-style dining at the Star Hotel**, world class hiking in the **Ruby Mountains**, inspiring road trip opportunities such as the **Angel Lake or Lamoille Canyon scenic byways**, and attractions for history buffs, such as the **Northeastern Nevada Museum** or the **Cowboy Arts and Gear Museum**, Elko is uniquely positioned to deliver on the activities that are important to rural travelers.

Top Nevada Activities and Attractions Experienced

Source: Travel Nevada, Rural Nevada Visitor Profile



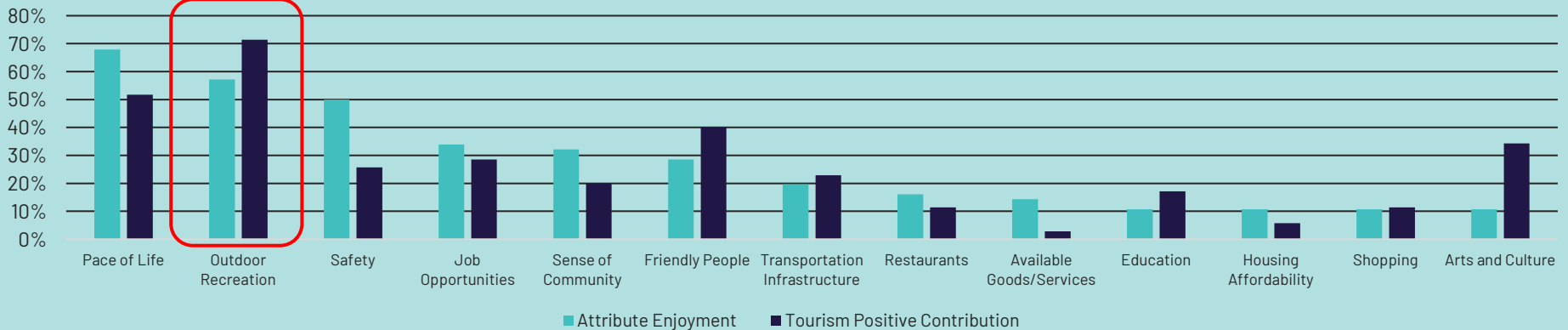
Hypothetical Example – Elko CVA Proposing Budget

Rising Action

It is also important to keep a pulse on residents of Elko. According to Travel Nevada’s Resident Sentiment Survey, outdoor recreation activities are one of the most cited attributes that respondents from Elko County appreciate about where they reside.

Similarly, over 71% of respondents from Elko County indicated that they feel the tourism industry has positively contributed to outdoor recreation activities in the community. These results are based on small sample sizes but directionally indicate the importance of outdoor recreation opportunities for residents of Elko and how respondents feel tourism contributes to an important aspect of resident’s lives.

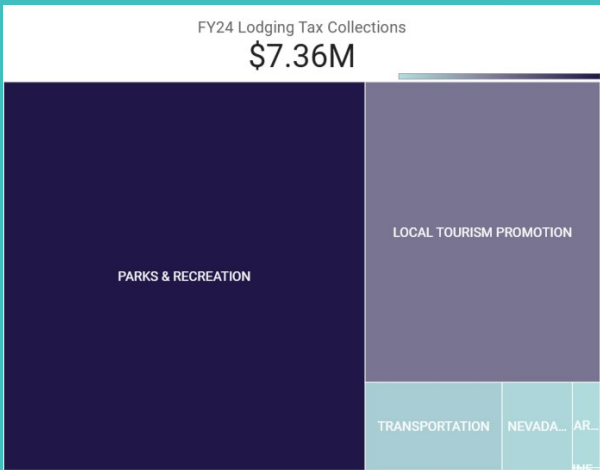
Community Attributes Enjoyed vs Tourism’s Positive Impact
Source: Travel Nevada Resident Sentiment Survey (caution: small sample)



Hypothetical Example – Elko CVA Proposing Budget

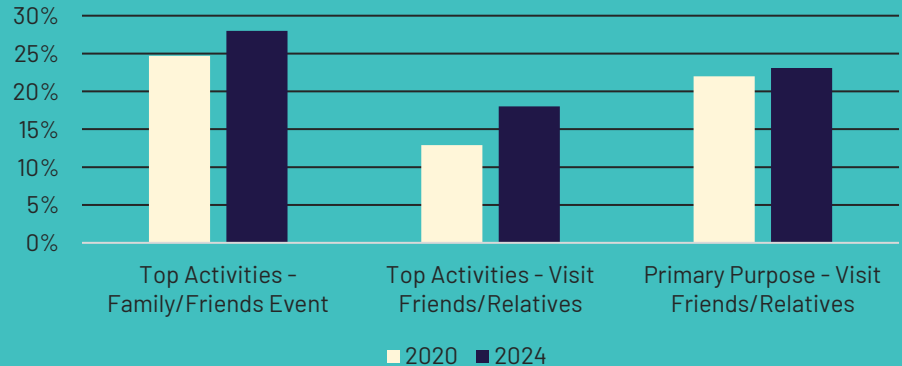
Rising Action

Further, according to Travel Nevada’s Ecosystem data, in Elko County in FY24, \$7.36 million in room taxes were collected in the fiscal year. The largest category of where those revenues were allocated were to parks and recreation. This shows that tourism directly contributes to outdoor recreation activities to benefit residents through the lodging tax.



Residents are not only an important stakeholder, they are also an important source of travel. Travel Nevada’s Rural Nevada Visitor Profile notes that activities and purpose of travel related to family and friends increased from 2020 to 2024. Educating residents on the importance of tourism to the area, and how it can benefit them, may also help to drive tourism to the area.

Friends/Relatives Comparisons
Source: Travel Nevada, Rural Nevada Visitor Profile

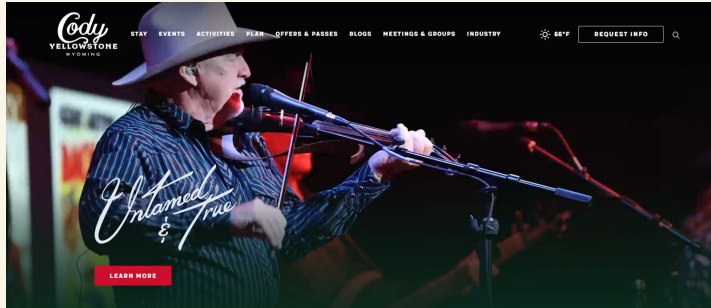


Hypothetical Example – Elko CVA Proposing Budget

Climax

We are operating in a very competitive tourism environment. Many other western rural destinations are going after the same visitors we are. If we are not out there promoting ourselves trying to entice these visitors to come to our destination, they may go elsewhere.

Cody, Wyoming, for example, appears to be targeting travelers interested in western culture and outdoor recreation based on their websites. Destinations that could try to draw the same visitor are places like Twin Falls, Idaho, Pendleton, Oregon and others.



EXPLORE OUR WESTERN PLAYGROUND

Wyoming's Yellowstone Country encompasses Cody, Powell, Meeteetse, and the valley east of Yellowstone Park. Explore the best of the Wild West and enjoy welcoming accommodations, delicious dining, and endless outdoor fun.

[GETTING HERE](#) [INTERACTIVE MAP](#)

Hypothetical Example – Elko CVA Proposing Budget

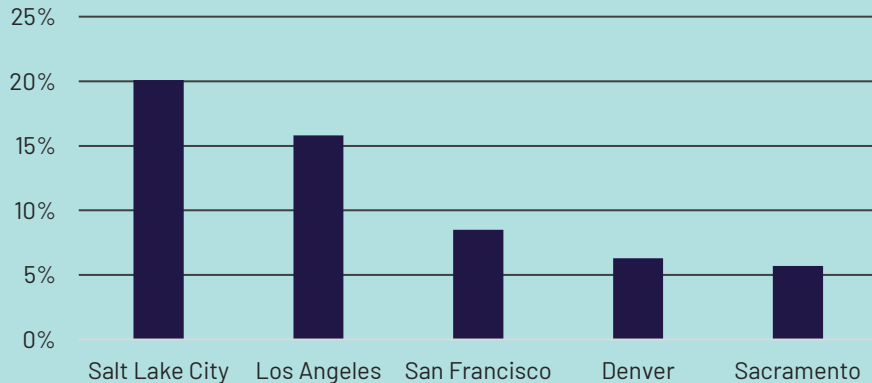
Falling Action

Using the data outlined previously, outdoor and cultural travelers will be targeted to boost travel from that segment to Elko. Efforts will also be targeted to visitors from DMAs connected to I-80, such as Salt Lake City and Sacramento along with other western DMAs that have shown high propensities to travel to the territory.

Visitor also need to be met where they are at in the planning process. Targeting efforts will be aimed 1-3 months ahead of peak travel or event seasons to align marketing with when travelers are planning upcoming trips.

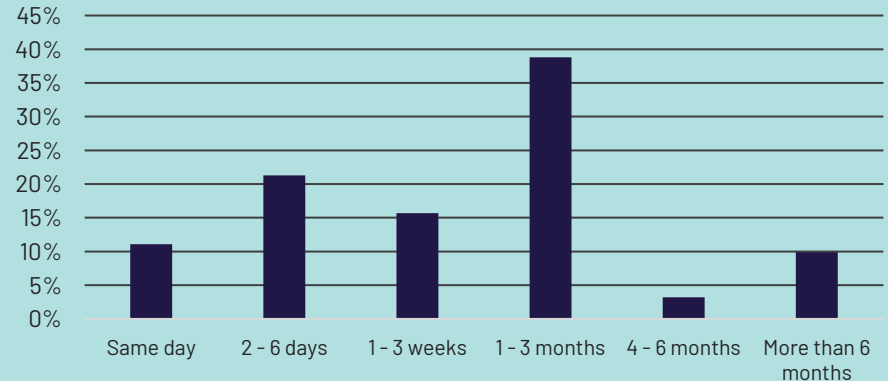
Top Origin Markets 2023/2024

Source: Travel Nevada, Cowboy Country Visitor Profile



Advance Planning Decision 2023/2024

Source: Travel Nevada, Cowboy Country Visitor Profile



Hypothetical Example – Elko CVA Proposing Budget

Falling Action

Increasing local visibility to promote local support for tourism in the area is important as well. Advertorials will be put in the Elko Daily Free Press and local events will be sponsored.

Elko residents are important stakeholders and can help to drive tourism to the area by advocating for friends and relatives to travel to the region, have reunions or events, and the like.



Hypothetical Example – Elko CVA Proposing Budget

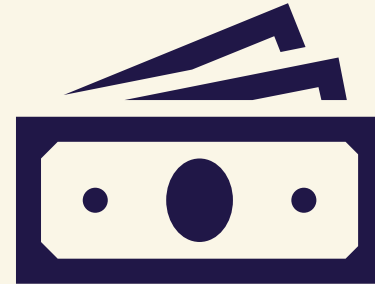
Resolution

Elko is a wonderful community and with a lot of great tourism assets at our disposal. **Dining experiences, outdoor recreation activities, cultural activities and road trips** are trending activities for travelers visiting rural Nevada. Elko is uniquely positioned to deliver on all of these.

But Elko is not alone. Other western destinations are also actively building and promoting these assets to entice travelers to come to their areas. If we don't advocate and promote ourselves to potential travelers, we may miss out on the over **\$630 million** that gets spent in Elko County.

Tourism can also help build a stronger community for residents. **Outdoor recreation is an important element for residents** in Elko County and tourism, through the lodging tax specifically, helps to build and maintain recreation assets.

Supporting this budget can ensure that **the right visitors are targeted at the right time** so that Elko can stay top of mind and maximize economic impacts accruing to the community.





Melissa Clary

GEM THEATER





Friends of Gem Theater

Melissa Clary
President

Agenda

- Introduction
- Shovel Ready
- Power of Advocacy
- Engage the Right People
- Final Tips & Takeaways



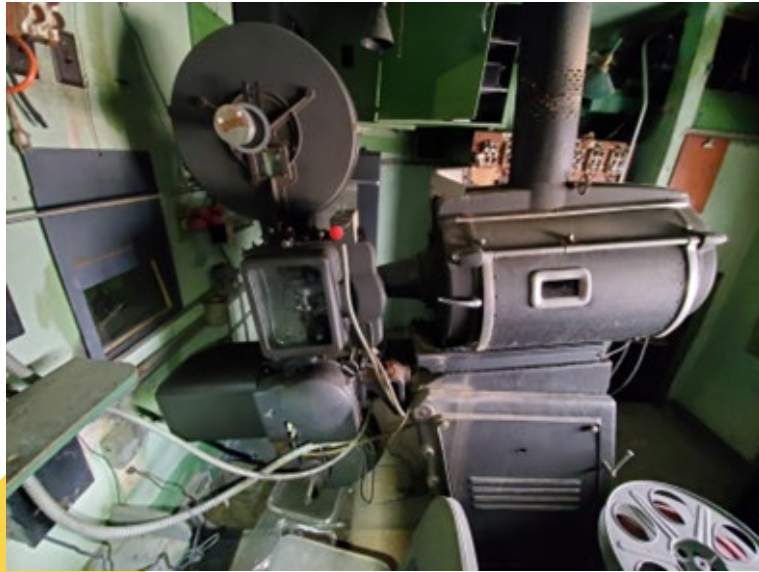
Daysleeper by Kevin Boyle

Introduction

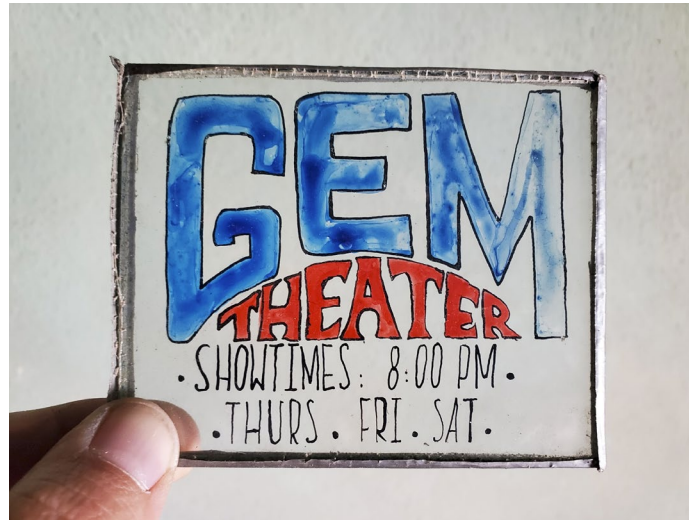
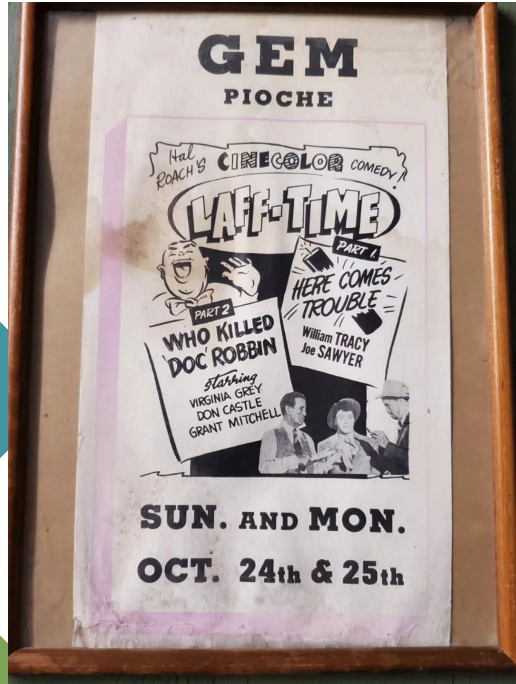
- The Gem Theater is a 4,500 square foot, single-screen movie theater constructed in 1937 in Pioche, Lincoln County, Nevada.
- Friends of Gem Theater nonprofit was founded in 2020 to rehabilitate and reopen it.
- The building was listed on the Nevada State Register of Historic Places and the National Register of Historic Places in 2024.



A Time Capsule



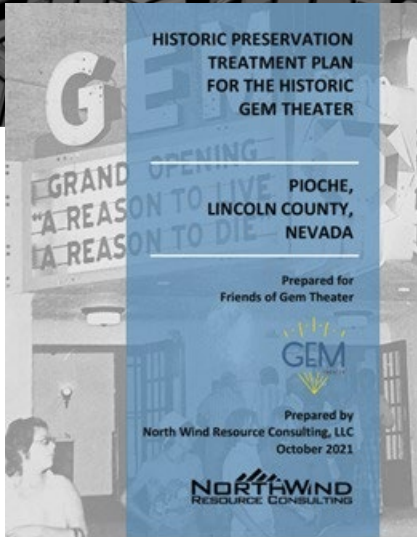
A Time Capsule





“Shovel Ready”

Plan and prepare



Be the Expert



- Risk Management
- Scope contingencies and phasing
- Flexibility



Power of Advocacy

You are your project's best champion



Engage the Right People

- Know what you need and who can help you obtain it.
- Grow relationships where you may need them.



Final Tips & Takeaways

Be persistent

- If it matters to you, don't give up.

Put in the time

- These projects take hard work; be prepared to put in sweat equity.

Know your abilities

- Sometimes you can't do it all.

Follow up

- If you receive funding, thank and acknowledge the funders.

- Seek out the experts
- Be ready to go
- You are your biggest advocate
- Be flexible and ready to adapt





Melissa Clary

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Thank you





Courtney Bloomer

TRAVEL NEVADA

Using Data to Tell A Story

Tying the data to the story.

Data is important to strengthen and support the personal narrative.

What is your story about?

CLEARLY identify the impact or outcome you're speaking about.

- **“This presentation is about the importance of special events for our downtown.”**
- **“This is the story of how a clear marketing plan helped our town attract visitors.”**
- **“This is the story of an important community resource that’s worth investing in.”**

What is your lever?

What is the small investment or action that led you to a larger impact or action?

- **A small investment**
- **A new way of doing things**
- **A different perspective**
- **An innovation**

What is your motivation?

Establish yourself as a credible, knowledgeable, and trustworthy tour guide to the action.

- “I faced this barrier and overcame it.”
- “I’ve been involved for x years.”
- “I’ve tackled other similar challenges.”
- “I studied...” or “My training is...”
- “I’m a resident and see firsthand...”

What are the stakes?

Why does this story matter? What are you fighting for? What will the consequences be?

- **“The community is dwindling in residents.”**
- **“The building is in disrepair.”**
- **“We’re losing our heritage.”**
- **“We want our kids to stick around.”**

What assumptions are you challenging?

What might your audience THINK they already know about this situation?

- **“A big box store will support our economy.”**
- **“Everyone drives to town so parking is the most important.”**
- **“That old building isn’t being used so we might as well tear it down.”**
- **“Young people don’t care about our history and heritage.”**

Restate the “WHY” of your story.

Remind your audience why you need their support.

- ...“And that’s why I’m asking you to (get involved/set aside funding/attend our event/join our organization/donate to our mission.”
- Thank your audience.

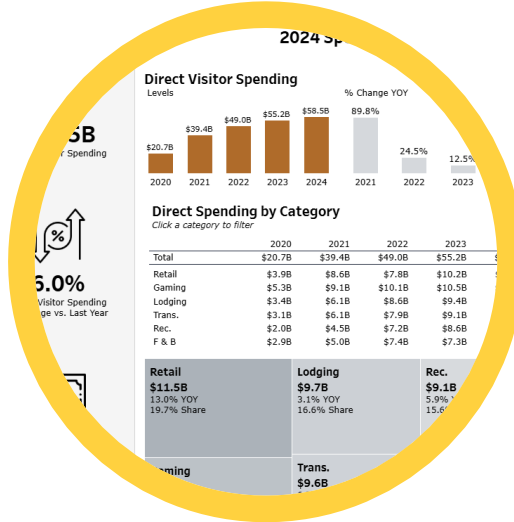
Questions?

Now it's your turn...



Choose a topic and an audience

Who are they and what do you want to tell them about?



Use the dashboards

Find data that supports your position and lends weight to your personal story.



Build a presentation

Create a short presentation that you can take back to your community.

