



CRAFT Mentor FY 2020

A business membership incentive plan

Prepared for
Gold Belt Tour Scenic Byway

Prepared by CRAFT Mentor
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THIS REPORT WAS CREATED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE COLORADO TOURISM OFFICE
AS PART OF THE COLORADO RURAL ACADEMY FOR TOURISM (CRAFT) AND GOLD BELT TOUR SCENIC BYWAY.

Executive Summary

Colorado's Scenic Byways are managed by boards or teams of volunteers, funding for projects and programs is limited, and each byway identifies priorities and goals to support their communities, historic preservation, conservation, outdoor recreation, and safety and roadway concerns. The Gold Belt Tour Scenic Byway requested a CRAFT Mentor to help review their current membership structure, recommend visitor engagement and incentive programs. We designed a survey for existing and potential members to prioritize benefits, researched various loyalty, engagement and incentive programs for consideration, updated the membership structure with options to increase funding for the byway projects, and created a membership recruitment presentation. Additionally, due to the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic situation, short-term and long-term marketing strategies have been included in the final report. The mentor met with the Gold Belt Tour programming committee on two occasions, first to discuss the survey and their initial ideas for membership and visitor engagement programs. The second meeting was held to discuss all recommendations and determine the best use of the CRAFT Mentor Implementation Funding.

The Gold Belt Tour Scenic Byway team was very receptive, engaged and willing to consider many options. Their community champion was an efficient communicator with the mentor and the byway stakeholders. There is a strong feeling of dedication and a passion for conserving and preserving the intrinsic values that make the Gold Belt Tour a scenic byway gem in Colorado. It has been a pleasure working with this team.



About CRAFT MENTOR

The Colorado Rural Academy for Tourism (CRAFT) was founded in 2018 to offer training and support for rural economic development through creation and branding of new or enhanced traveler experiences. The CRAFT Mentor program provides up to 50 hours of mentoring to organizations or businesses wishing to advance specific tourism-related goals or strategies. Upon successful completion of CRAFT Mentor, projects are eligible to apply for up to \$1,000 in implementation funding towards the goals defined during the project.

Gold Belt Tour Scenic Byway Description

The Gold Belt Tour is a Colorado Scenic and Historic Byway and a National Scenic Byway. Drive the Gold Belt Tour and retrace the historic travel routes connecting Cripple Creek and Victor Mining District, site of the world's largest gold rush, to the communities of Florence, Cañon City and Florissant.

Today, the communities of the Gold Belt Tour invite you to experience the rich local heritage as you follow the "Roads to Riches"...

The Gold Belt Tour is located in southern Colorado, just one hour from Colorado Springs or Pueblo and two hours from Denver.

You can reach the northern end of the Byway from U.S. Highway 24 and the southern end via U.S. Highway 50.

Each of the roads offers distinct scenery ranging from rolling mountain parklands to deep rocky canyons. Each of the communities offers its unique character and convenient services including a variety of restaurants, lodging, shops, attractions, entertainment, and events.



CRAFT Mentor Project Description

Gold Belt Byway is looking for assistance with enhancing their current membership program in order to recruit additional business members and establish a visitor loyalty/incentive program.

Specific Project Deliverables:

Mentor will provide the following in a final report format:

- Review current member program and provide feedback
 - Provide membership program levels
- Survey current (14) business members to determine why they keep renewing, what new incentives would they like to see, what would attract them to participate
- Recommend a visitor benefits/incentives/loyalty program
- Support itinerary development along the byway
 - Review existing itineraries and provide input
 - Provide examples of visitor engagement options to be rotated during the year/modeled
- Create template presentation to share new membership rollout in front of critical groups



Survey and Results

A survey was created to share with current byway business members and non-members. Questions were crafted to learn about members, find out which membership benefits are the most valuable, a chance for non-members to request information, and more. 9 responses were recorded and the following gives a snapshot of the membership benefit questions and results.

Rank the importance of each of the following current membership benefits. 6 - most important. 1 - least important.	1	2	3	4	5	6
Free listing on the Gold Belt Byway's website, www.goldbeltbyway.com .	42.86%	14.29%	0.00%	14.29%	28.57%	0.00%
Window decal designating your business as a Byway Booster.	12.50%	25.00%	12.50%	12.50%	12.50%	25.00%
Listing in our newsletter.	12.50%	0.00%	62.50%	12.50%	12.50%	0.00%
Connected posts on Facebook.	11.11%	33.33%	0.00%	11.11%	0.00%	44.44%
The opportunity to attend Advisory Board meetings to help shape the future of the Gold Belt region.	11.11%	0.00%	11.11%	44.44%	33.33%	0.00%
Limited edition poster of Steel Bridge - suitable for framing.	22.22%	22.22%	11.11%	0.00%	11.11%	33.33%

Choose the top five reasons you are a member or what would be important in becoming a member of the Gold Belt Byway.	
I receive direct business by being a member of the byway.	44.44%
I like to have my business name attached to the byway.	55.56%
I believe in financially supporting the byway.	44.44%
I believe in the preservation and conservation work of the byway committee.	88.89%
The benefits of membership are valuable.	11.11%
The byway website directs potential customers to my website.	55.56%
The marketing efforts of the byway committee brings visitors to my business or organization.	33.33%
The byway materials help visitors find things to do in my area.	33.33%
The byway materials support responsible and sustainable visitor behavior (e.g. Leave No Trace, Stay the Trail).	66.67%
I just like the byway.	22.22%

Choose the top 3 potential new benefits that would enhance your membership.	
Visitor incentive program for visiting multiple attractions and way points along the byway.	33.33%

Visitor incentive program to reward visitors for spending money with participating members.	44.44%
Opportunity to be featured as our business of the week/month on website, Facebook, and other social media sites.	44.44%
Inclusion on itineraries currently linked and promoted on at least 3 websites and at Chamber offices.	55.56%
Ability to have your information included in our event handout bags.	44.44%
Byway maps and materials to distribute at my business.	33.33%
Other promotional opportunities that you would like to see offered. Please specify.	11.11%

Membership Structure

The following is the current membership structure with new benefits highlighted in green. Recommendations are based on similar membership structures and Gold Belt Tour member survey results.

- Free listing on the Gold Belt Byway's website, www.goldbeltbyway.com. This listing includes a free link to your website, email address and a 25 word description of your business or organization. Website use is tracked and will be reported to you annually.
- Window decal designating your business as a Byway Booster
- Listing in our newsletter and quarterly correspondence
- The opportunity to attend Advisory Board meetings to help shape the future of the Gold Belt region
- Limited Edition poster of Steel Bridge, suitable for framing
- Inclusion in published itineraries posted on the website, Colorado.com and promoted through social media.
- Inclusion in the visitor incentive program for visiting attractions and way points
- Inclusion in the visitor incentive program for spending money with participating members
- Opportunity to be the Member Spotlight on the website, social media and newsletter at least once per year
- Opportunity to provide business information to be included in special event handout bags
- Opportunity to have Byway maps, itineraries, and materials to distribute at your business

Benefit	Business Benefit	Benefactor Benefit
Free listing on the Gold Belt Byway's website, www.goldbeltbyway.com .	X	X
Window decal designating your business as a Byway Booster	X	X
Listing in our newsletter and quarterly correspondence	X	X
The opportunity to attend Advisory Board meetings to help shape the future of the Gold Belt region	X	X
Limited Edition poster of Steel Bridge, suitable for framing	X	X
Inclusion in published itineraries posted on the website, Colorado.com and promoted through social media	X	X
Inclusion in the visitor incentive program for visiting attractions and way points	X	X
Inclusion in the visitor incentive program for spending money with participating members	X	X
Opportunity to have Byway maps, itineraries, and materials to distribute at your business	X	X
Opportunity to be the Member Spotlight on the website, social media and newsletter at least once per year	X	X
Opportunity to provide business information to be included in special event handout bags		X
One yearly event sponsorship, a \$xxx value		X

Membership Fee Options:

Current	Suggested	
Benefactor.....\$500.00	Benefactor	\$500
Business.....\$150.00	Business	\$200
Family.....\$50.00	Family	\$50
Individual.....\$20.00	Individual	\$25

For Family and Individual memberships, I recommend creating a sticker, bumper sticker or similar item that families and individuals can receive to show support. Examples would be “I love the Gold Belt Tour Scenic Byway” or “I Treasure the Gold Belt Tour Scenic Byway.” Additionally, they would receive a subscription to the byway newsletter/e-newsletter. Invitations to special events, volunteer opportunities, openings of new businesses or attractions could be a benefit as well.



Visitor Engagement/Loyalty Programs

1. Gold Belt Tour Treasure Hunt: Create a fold out “treasure map” of the Gold Belt Scenic Byway listing attractions, historic sites, scenic overlooks and viewpoints, trails and walks, museums, archeological or geological sites, wildlife and bird sighting areas, etc. Include a place for children and adults to fill in what they’ve found, encourage sharing photos of the “treasures” found on social media with hashtags #goldbelttreasure, #COgoldbelttreasure and #goldbelttour. Create a prize such as a poster, postcards, collectors pin or badge, photo gift cards, to be given out for completion of the treasure hunt.
2. Postcard campaign: When the next map or brochure of the Gold Belt Tour is created, include a tear off postcard for visitors to fill out sharing their favorite site, activity or memory of their visit to mail back to the Gold Belt Tour and share the messages on the website and social media.
3. Purchase reward card: Create a small stamp card with a square for each member business to stamp when a visitor makes a purchase. Qualifying purchases could be set at a specific price point: \$5 or \$10 minimum to receive the stamp. Once the card has been filled to a 50%, the

bearer would receive a small gift representing the byway ie. magnet, postcard. A card filled to 100% would receive a larger gift ie. commemorative photo, poster, pin.

Photos of purchase receipts could be accepted in lieu of a stamp card for redemption of gifts. A QR scan code provided by the businesses after purchase could also be utilized. A submission email address could be set up to collect the QR code scans and phot submissions and the gift could be mailed out to those who qualify.

4. Mystery gifts: I recently visited a museum that offered a “mystery” gift with purchase at the point of sale. A visitor could opt to add the mystery gift to their qualifying purchase and there were three gift options - \$2.95, \$5.95 and \$10.95. The gifts were wrapped and were branded items from the museum – ie. photos, pens, collector pins, t-shirts, etc. It appeared to be a brilliant way to move older merchandise rather than throwing it out or giving it away. Proceeds from the mystery gifts could support conservations or preservation projects.
5. Alternatively, an electronic loyalty check-in at each business could be used. Discounts on future purchases, special offers, and Gold Belt Tour souvenirs could be earned by checking in. If zip codes of the visitors could be collected, this would allow the byway board to see specific areas to concentrate marketing efforts for future campaigns and events. If byway businesses are currently using an electronic loyalty system they may be able to be aligned amongst all businesses.
6. Round Up to support the Gold Belt Tour Scenic Byway: Many visitors are looking for ways to “do good” or make a positive contribution to the places they like to travel. A “donate a dollar” or “round up to the nearest dollar” campaign could generate a steady stream of donations to the byway to use toward conservation and preservation projects. A small card sharing what current projects the donation would go to could be given out to customers at the point of sale. Businesses would have to track and report on those donations, this could be done by month or season. Results of the campaign, updates on projects, could be shared on social media, the website and in newsletters. It is also recommended that a “donate button” be activated on social media and the website to support projects.
7. Volunteer: Creating a list of volunteer projects and needs and inviting visitors to return to participate is a great way to engage your visitors and locals. Volunteers for events, cleanup projects, beautification projects, are a perfect for giving multi-age groups to work together and can build annual participation and affinity for the byway. I recently toured a scenic byway in Hokkaido Japan that hosts summer and winter beautification projects and now have multi-generational families returning year after year to plant flowers and create and place ice sculpture luminaries along the byway. Interest groups such as mining buffs, driving and car clubs, can be invited to participate in activities to protect or preserve the places they love to visit. School groups traveling on field trips to visit historical sites could be invited.
8. For visitors who may not have time to engage in an event or project they could be invited to make a positive difference by giving them a scenic byway branded trash collection bag to fill while they visit the stops along the byway. This trash bag could be attached to the treasure map (see #1) or regular byway map at visitor centers and attractions along the byway. A group photo with them and their collected trash could be posted on social media, thanking them for making the byway a cleaner place.

Gold Belt Tour Scenic Byways Itineraries

The Gold Belt Tour Scenic Byway website currently has 9 itineraries ranging from 1 to 2 days. They are excellent itineraries; I have included some suggestions below to make them stronger and more versatile to use in multiple print and online channels.

- Create two 4-5 day itineraries that travel the entire byway and highlight a full immersion into the local experience – one for summer/fall and one for winter/spring
- Add member businesses and website links where appropriate on the itinerary. This is a benefit for membership and should be a selling point for additional businesses to become members – ie. hotels, restaurants, local craft food/beverage/arts makers
- Include “local tips,” “local’s favorite,” “don’t miss” highlights within each itinerary. Be careful not to include overvisited or “sacred” spots. This is a great way to get people to spread out along byways to see less visited spots
- Create a Fall Foliage itinerary highlighting specifically advantageous photography spots, best times of day for photos, etc. This could be a great way to bring on tour companies as members ie. jeep tours, photography or history tours, so they can get a link to their business
- Indicate “free” or “ticket/admission required” so visitors can plan accordingly
- The posted maps indicate a starting point. I recommend creating a “route map” on Google that shows the full route of the itinerary with important stops highlighted. This could be a link that users send to their phones to use for guidance
- Include seasonal tips or specific recommendations for all itineraries – weather, driving conditions
- Create individual itinerary brochures (either a pdf to provide to partners, visitor centers, downloadable) or professional printed that can be given to visitors looking for something to do – “stay longer” brochures. Include more outdoor activities in these more detailed itineraries – ie. hikes, fishing, birding, climbing, skiing, rafting, etc.
- Make sure to include seasonal farmer’s markets, craft fairs, annual events and celebrations when possible
- Share updated itineraries with Colorado.com for Colo-Road trips marketing materials
- Highlight an itinerary each month on social media and newsletters – focus on photos and special stops to inspire visitors to explore
- Give members access to itineraries to post on their websites or encourage them to link to the itineraries from their websites. Share with local Chambers, Tourism Boards, Newspapers, municipal and county governments, arts organizations and ask them to share links to the Gold Belt Tour itineraries
- Set a goal to become an “Electrified Byway” or Electric Vehicle friendly byway by working with Colorado Department of Transportation, Colorado Energy Office, Dola, local utility companies, municipalities and businesses to increase the number of electric vehicle charging stations. The Colorado Tourism Office will be highlighting these itineraries in future marketing campaigns.

Additional Marketing Strategies for Consideration

Due to unexpected and unprecedented changes to travel in response to the COVID 19 pandemic, these strategies are proposed as immediate and future recommendations.

Immediate strategies:

- Engage with local cities, towns, chambers, public health agencies, tourism boards and businesses to determine the appropriate timing and stages to welcome visitors to your area.
- Review the Colorado Tourism Office “Waiting to CO” toolkit
<https://industry.colorado.com/waiting-co-toolkit>
- Share health and safety resourced developed locally to support local efforts to keep locals and visitors safe.
- Local, regional and in-state road trips will be the first types of travel expected and scenic byways are the perfect routes to share with instate travelers. Use targeted paid social media posts to share itinerary suggestions, photos, highlight member businesses, and natural social distancing locations along the byway. Start by targeting Pueblo, Colorado Springs, then add Denver and the rest of the state. Small investments on Facebook as low as \$30 - \$100 can effectively reach your target markets and generate engagement.
- Look for ways to share itineraries with RV and camping equipment sales outlets, RV rental companies, area campgrounds, state parks, national forest campgrounds. Give people looking for more natural getaways reasons to visit your byway. Include family friendly activities and outdoor recreation options found along the byway.
- Begin reaching out to in-state media and publications to set up individual media visits specifically highlighting the itineraries. Give them the maps, specific attractions and sites to find and check in points in the local communities and have them explore. Powerful stories about exploring Colorado are already in demand, don't miss this opportunity to share your story.

Future marketing strategies:

- Look for ways to collaborate with neighboring byways
 - Share itineraries
 - Share website links – if you enjoy the Gold Belt Tour check out these other Colorado Scenic Byways...
- The Colorado Scenic Byways are members of Tour Colorado which offers multiple ways to reach potential visitors in and out of state. Connect and plan ways to leverage this membership.
- Connect with the Colorado Tourism Office PR team and attend future media events, host media visits, share social media content, and press releases about anything happening on the byway. Press releases can be formal or a quick update about new businesses, attractions, conservation or preservation projects, anything that is happening. The CTO is always looking for information and connecting with journalists and the more you can share with them, the more they can promote you.
- Consider building a social media co-op program for your member businesses to pay for a boosted post that features them. Example: Business invests \$50, Byway contributes \$50 so post value is \$100. This could be an individual business or a co-op of members such as a byways hotel post featuring all member hotels and the \$50 match is split between them.

CRAFT Implementation Funding and Next Steps

Upon completion of the project and online evaluation, the business or community will be eligible to apply for up to \$1,000.00 in implementation funding to support tourism outcomes or next steps identified during the CRAFT Mentor project. Implementation award applications are due within 90 days of completion of CRAFT Mentor. A link to the online application will be sent when the project and evaluation are complete.



May 21, 2020 the Promotion and Education Committee met in person with the mentor to review the recommendations and determine what strategies they felt they could use immediately and what they would apply to use implementation funding for. The following outlines the outcomes of this meeting.

1. The committee feels that due to the current COVID-19 situation, increased business membership fees and a new member campaign would need to be put on hold until the future. They will recommend increasing the Individual annual membership fee from \$20 to \$25.
2. The committee was pleased with the recommendations for new membership benefits and will share with their full board of directors at their next meeting. We discussed ways to implement some of the recommendations and while not all will be used immediately, they have great ideas for implementing in the future.
3. The committee chose 3 recommended visitor engagement strategies to pursue this summer – a treasure map, a visitor purchase reward card, and a “Round Up to support the Gold Belt Tour Scenic Byway” program.
 - a. The Gold Belt Tour will apply to use the CRAFT implementation funding to design and print a visitor stamp card that is also a postcard and a reward token. Each qualifying purchase will receive a stamp from the member business and the completed postcard can be mailed into the Byway team to be redeemed for a token souvenir pin or patch. The names, emails and addresses will be captured to add the visitors to their newsletter list to receive periodic information from the byway.
 - b. The group will look into ways to create and distribute a treasure map for visitors to the byway, including but not limited to a page in a children’s history publication and a downloadable PDF available on the website for visitors who are planning a trip.
 - c. The committee will reach out to current members to discuss the logistics of a “Round Up” campaign to give visitors a chance to support the byway financially.
4. The committee will work on updating current itineraries for the byway website, Colorado.com, and look for other opportunities to share with potential visitor.

Mentor Recommended Timeline for Next Steps

May – June: Apply for and use CRAFT Implementation Funding

June - August: Membership Campaign – Byway team will delay until the COVID-19 crisis has passed

June – August: Update byway itineraries, including new seasonal options to be added to the website by end of summer

June – August: Visitor Incentive Program Creation and Roll out

Future –

- Consider applying for a CRAFT Workshop to engage byway stakeholders in strategic planning for future projects and improvements for the byway
- Consider neighboring byways to build collaborations and future projects to connect visitors with a multiple byway experience

New Membership Presentation Template

Attached separately is a New Membership Presentation Template that can be customized to use for presenting to potential businesses and groups.



CRAFT Mentor, Heidi Pankow

Heidi has worked in the tourism industry for most of her career, most recently for the Ouray Tourism Office with responsibilities in destination development, marketing and public relations. She has been actively involved with the Colorado Hot Springs Loop and Mountains and Mesas collaborative marketing grant programs. Heidi serves on the Colorado Scenic Byways Commission as the Western Colorado Byways representative. She is an alumnus of the Class of 2019 Colorado Tourism Leadership Journey. Heidi has recently started her own consulting company, HCP Consulting LLC to share her vast industry experience with other organizations and destinations. In her spare time, Heidi volunteers as a board member for the Ouray Mountain Air Music Series as the booking agent and band hospitality specialist. Heidi loves spending time with family hiking and exploring Colorado, traveling, and experimenting with local food.

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