



**Tourism
Midwest**
Victoria

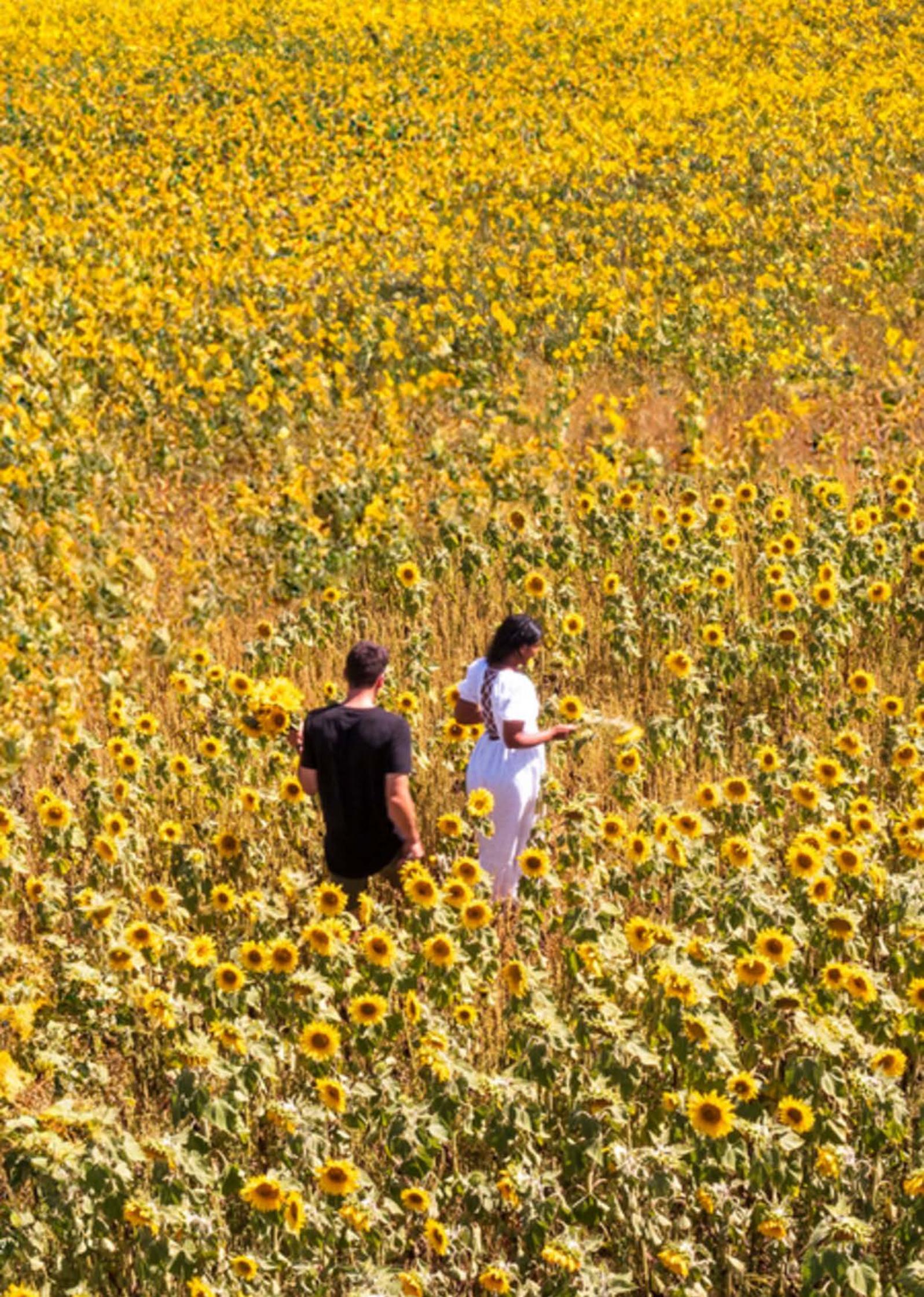
Tourism Midwest Victoria Annual Action Plan 2025/26

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

In Victoria's Midwest, we acknowledge that we travel across the ancient landscapes and communities of the First Peoples. These lands have been nurtured and cared for by Traditional Custodians for thousands of years and we respect their ongoing protection.

We acknowledge past injustices against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. As our knowledge grows, we hope to learn from their resilience and creativity.

When you visit Victoria's Midwest, we kindly request that you also respect the stories, living culture, and ancestral ties to the land of our First Peoples



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About Tourism Midwest Victoria

Tourism Midwest Victoria (TMV) is a peak tourism industry body designed to strengthen and grow Midwest Victoria's visitor economy.

A partnership between local and state government, and the tourism industry, TMV's focus is to support visitation to the City of Ballarat, and the shires of Pyrenees, Moorabool, Golden Plains (south of Ballarat to Rokewood) and Hepburn (Creswick and Clunes).

TMV is the conduit between the five local government areas, the state government and the tourism industry. It will support its industry partners through business initiatives, creation of visitor economy experiences and tourism products, and marketing and industry development.

Executive Summary

IGNITE: Our focus for 2025/26

As we enter our third year as a Visitor Economy Partnership, we have chosen the theme IGNITE to reflect our ambition, momentum, and commitment to driving growth across the region. With a solid foundation in place, Tourism Midwest Victoria (TMV) will continue to deliver on the 2024–2033 Sustainable Destination Management Plan (SDMP), with this Annual Action Plan outlining TMV’s contribution for the 2025/26 financial year.

Our work begins with strong governance. The TMV Board is committed to transparent, accountable leadership in the delivery of the SDMP. TMV’s Independent Chair, the Hon. John Pandazopoulos, continues to ensure that our region maintains a prominent voice in state-wide tourism advocacy, representing the interests of our industry at the highest levels.

We also acknowledge the ongoing challenges facing our region’s visitor economy operators. These realities have informed the design of our priority projects and guided how we continue to support and strengthen the sector.

The SDMP outlines our focus across both supply and demand.

On the supply side:

We will continue to develop new experiences and enhance existing offerings in line with our product pillars: First Peoples, People and Place, Creative Energy, Nature at Your Fingertips, and Signature Experiences, all under the regional positioning of Brilliantly Unexpected.

TMV will work closely with the region’s five Traditional Owner (TO) organisations to support the development and implementation of their own tourism plans. At the same time, we will support non-TO operators to appropriately and respectfully integrate First Peoples content into their offerings.

To ensure quality and resilience across the region’s tourism product, we will invest in industry development programs that empower businesses and entrepreneurs to deliver exceptional visitor experiences. By doing so, we aim to amplify the economic and social benefits of tourism, while managing its impacts in a way that sustains what makes Midwest Victoria special.

On the demand side:

Building on the launch of the Brilliantly Unexpected brand for Ballarat and following recent work in audience segmentation and sub-destination branding, we will continue to sharpen the region’s market positioning and increase the effectiveness of marketing efforts across all local government partners.

The Ballarat In The Know campaign will continue to grow the visiting friends and relatives (VFR) market by activating local pride and advocacy.

The year ahead will be busy—but it is also full of opportunity. This action plan sets a clear path for supporting our partners and igniting momentum to grow Midwest Victoria into one of the state’s premier visitor destinations.

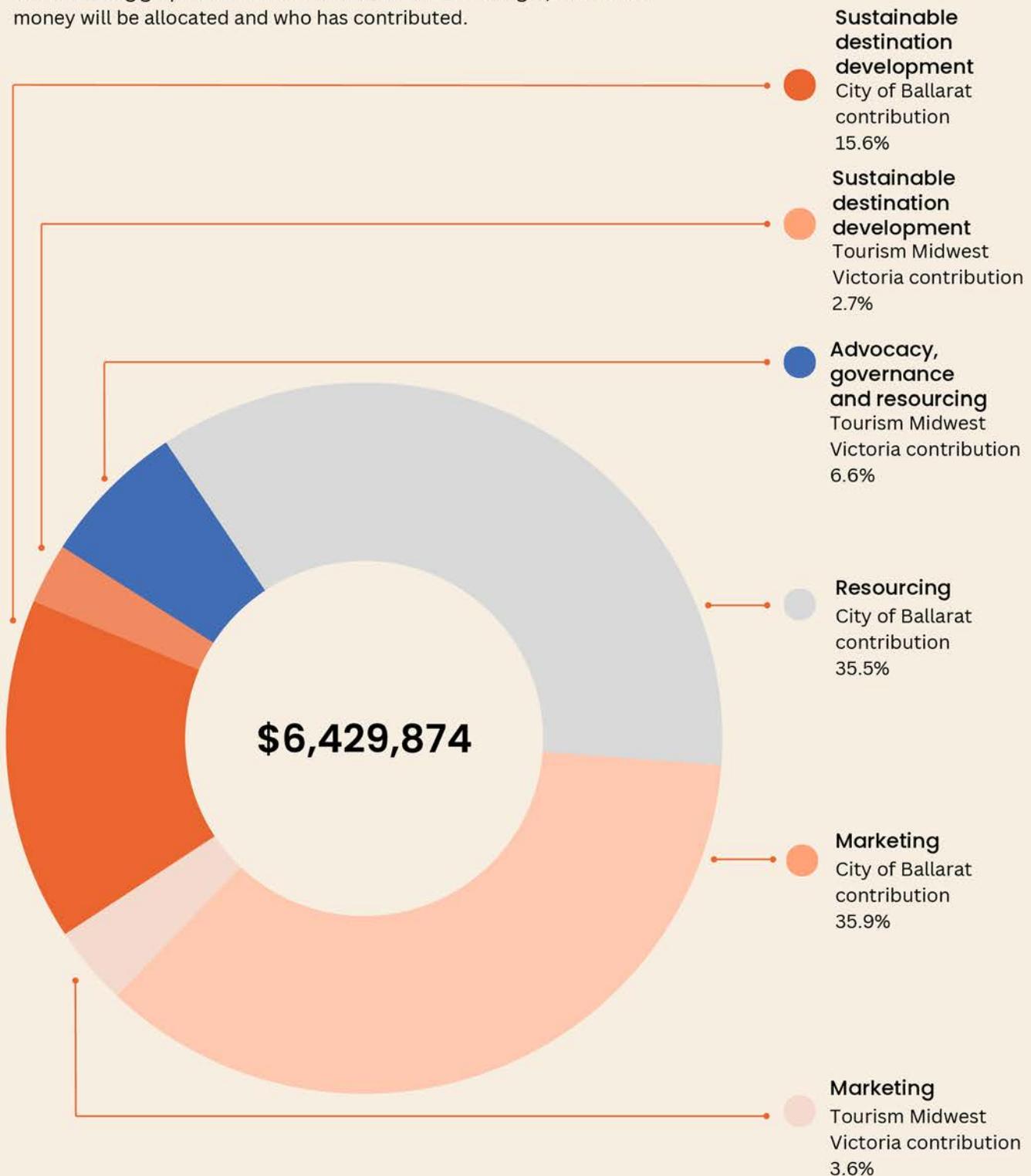
Sarah Pilgrim

Tourism Midwest Victoria
Executive Manager

2025/26 budget breakdown

This Visitor Economy Partnership is funded by the Victorian Government, City of Ballarat, Golden Plains Shire Council, Hepburn Shire Council, Moorabool Shire Council, Pyrenees Shire Council, and Tourism Midwest Victoria Industry Partners.

The following graphic outlines TMV's total 2025/26 budget, where the money will be allocated and who has contributed.



Priority projects

Advocacy, governance and resourcing

We're eager to continue to build a strong, resilient and thriving visitor economy ecosystem by laying the foundations of an organised and resourced Visitor Economy Partnership.

Total spend: \$366,698

Focus areas	Recommended actions	Tourism Midwest Victoria contribution	City of Ballarat contribution
Ensure an efficient and effective entity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board operation - Ensure robust governance of TMV Board, including scheduling a minimum of six board meetings per annum together with appropriate subcommittees TMV operation - Enable the operation of TMV as an independent entity, including securing appropriate offices that maximise industry engagement, and interaction, coordinating corporate communications, and ensuring financial and legal obligations are met Provide additional resources to allow for administration and board support, communications and operator support to service the broader region Report on all activities in a timely fashion, including publishing a quarterly and annual report 	\$366,698	\$0
Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure TMV is represented at all state and national forums to establish opportunities for information sharing and advocacy Continue to support and advocate for various major master plan projects Continue to advocate for support for the region, including in response to the cancellation of the 2026 Commonwealth Games and the 2024 Pyrenees bushfires 	N/A	N/A
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide support to TMV Industry Partners and stakeholders to pursue state and federal funding opportunities, including appropriate training, project development support and providing letters of support Maintain an updated list of funding priorities for project identification and advocacy 	N/A	N/A
Industry Partner program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and refresh annual TMV Industry Partner program to maximise membership and benefits 	N/A	N/A
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver support to enable the functioning of the TMV board Ensure efficient and transparent management of Visitor Economy Partnership funding 	N/A	N/A

Sustainable destination development

Our objective is to cultivate the region as a sustainable and thriving destination by focussing on:

- supporting businesses and entrepreneurs with industry programs to ensure visitors have an unforgettable experience and continue to return
- amplifying the economic and social benefits that tourism brings while proactively managing its potential impacts
- empowering our industry, investors and broader community to embrace the benefits of tourism and contribute to making the region an exceptional place to visit, live, work and share with others.

Total spend: \$1,015,811

Focus areas	Recommended actions	Tourism Midwest Victoria contribution	City of Ballarat contribution
Enhancing capacity to deliver meaningful experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate the development of a food and beverage roster for coordinated opening hours. • Deliver Ballarat's Best Pie activation. 	\$0	\$20,000
Industry engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an Annual Engagement Plan • Develop and deliver 12-month calendar of industry engagement events (eg. sector roundtables, industry briefings) • Review and refresh content on the TMV Industry Hub. Develop sections of industry resources where required. • Adopt and intergrate customer relationship management (CRM) system 	\$20,000	\$22,000
Industry strengthening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and evaluate 2024/25 Industry Strengthening Program • Map industry strengthening needs • Deliver an Annual Industry Development Plan for 2025/2026 • Deliver an annual TMV conference in 2026. 	\$100,000	\$186,081
Research and insights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular reporting on tourism visitation data - quarterly. • Report accommodation tracking insights. • Maintain an industry insights portal. • Continuation of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) research phase 2. • Expansion of visitor data collection and understand the value of visitor servicing. • Membership to Destination Think! The Collective. 	\$0	\$91,000
Stakeholder partnerships and collaborations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue partnerships and collaboration with Commerce Ballarat, Committee for Ballarat, Victorian Tourism Industry Council (VTIC), Visit Victoria (VV) and Business Events Victoria (BEV). • Support to enable event organisers to engage with local industry. 	N/A	N/A

Focus areas	Recommended actions	Tourism Midwest Victoria contribution	City of Ballarat contribution
Supporting First Peoples to pursue self-determined and self-sufficient opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support self-determined First Peoples plans and priorities • Partner with First Peoples to deliver product within the region • Maintain engagement and support with First Peoples across the region. • Build our relationships with First Peoples organisations. 	\$22,000	\$0
Arts, culture and heritage experience development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a people & place product plan for future planning and investment. 	\$0	\$20,000
Food and drink experience development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a creative energy product plan • Deliver an agritourism visitor ready program to support new and existing agritourism businesses. • Deliver a Cellar Door Experience Development Program. 	\$0	\$50,000
Destination driving events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support events aligned to the product positioning. • Support to enable event organisers to engage with local industry. 	\$0	\$10,000
Support for planning frameworks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a Tourism Planning Zone Study. 	\$0	\$50,000
Nature experience development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement year one actions of the Nature Product Implementation Plan. • Deliver a Cycle Experience Development Program. • Investigate the need for a Regional Tracks and Trails Network Master Plan. 	\$0	\$50,000
Unique quality accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a detailed regional accommodation audit including the supply of rooms/bookable units. • Prepare high level accommodation investment business cases. 	\$10,000	\$50,000
Placemaking, public realm, beautification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan for concept design stage of Lydiard Street Realm Revitalisation Project in 2026/27 financial year. • Complete Ballarat CBD lighting project detailed design (including laneways urban design). • Complete Roam Discovery Trail phase 1 and prepare business case for phase 2 of the project. • Advocate for the Ballarat Arts and Cultural Precinct business case development. 	\$0	\$75,000 (2024/25 budget)
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete a regional accessibility audit. • Deliver an Accessible Experience Accelerator Program. 	\$0	\$80,000

Focus areas	Recommended actions	Tourism Midwest Victoria contribution	City of Ballarat contribution
Visitor Servicing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Visitor Centre structure to support two Visitor Centre sites. Implement an engagement calendar to increase the connection between the visitor centre and industry. Review of the user experience within the Ballarat Visitor Information Centre. Conduct a review into Ballarat Pass and adopt a new approach with participating operators for attraction bookings. Undertake Fonto visitor servicing research to understand the value of visitor servicing to the community. Investigate a mobile interactive VR experience; to showcase at relevant tradeshow. i.e. Formula 1 Grand Prix. Uninstall physical stand presence at Ballarat Station. 	\$0	\$89,730
Business events attraction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement year one actions in the newly developed Business Product Implementation Plan. Photography and video allowance to continue to develop new business event marketing assets. Review of economic, social and environmental benefit of business events attraction to the region through planned research. Prepare business case for further business events resourcing. Offer Business Events Prospecting and Sales Training to venue operators. Investigate feasibility for further business events venues. across the TMV region. Partner with Business Events Victoria (BEV), Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC) and Melbourne Convention Bureau (MCB). 	\$0	\$50,000
International strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboratively market Great Southern Touring Route (GSTR) member products to more than 1,500 international travel trade members who continue to remain the primary provider of high-yield international bookings for Victoria, as well as targeted domestic marketing to culturally and linguistically diverse audiences to create dispersal into GSTR regions (particularly international VFVR) Implement year one actions of the International Strategy for the region (supply and demand). Deliver a Tourism Distribution Mentoring Program. 	\$0	\$95,000

Marketing

We're dedicated to promoting the region as a must-visit travel destination every day of the year. Through strategic and targeted marketing efforts, we aim to boost the region's visitor economy and reshape perceptions.

Total spend: \$2,190,000

Focus areas	Recommended actions	Tourism Midwest Victoria contribution	City of Ballarat contribution
Regional brand positioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop Annual Strategic Marketing Plan Produce monthly marketing report Create industry resources to bolster quality of industry-level marketing efforts 	\$170,000	\$0
Leveraging Visit Victoria marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in collaborative marketing partnership with Visit Victoria to leverage the <i>Every Bit Different</i> campaign including successful VVIP co-funded mega-influencer activity 	\$0	\$70,000
Tourism marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Execute a strategic mix of marketing channels year-round using new destination brand assets to reposition Ballarat as a destination of choice among key audience segments (i.e SEM and programmatic digital advertising, Spotify, BVOD, cinema/radio, OOH including street posters, billboards and onboard public transport advertising, and print) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital marketing agency retainer \$0 Promote Ballarat's Best Pies \$0 Publish twice-yearly magazine, distributed to broad audience via the Herald Sun or The Age. Additional copies to be distributed into cafes and restaurants in Melbourne CBD \$0 Visitor collateral including the regional Official Visitor Guide \$0 Photography and video allowance to continue to develop new campaign assets \$86,000 Public relations, famils and influencer allowance \$0 Promote Ballarat Pass \$0 Flag and entrance sign management retainer \$0 Conduct relevant research, including ongoing brand health tracking \$0 Enter relevant marketing awards to amplify the work of the marketing team, and promote Ballarat as a quality travel destination \$0 	\$0	\$600,000

Focus areas	Recommended actions	Tourism Midwest Victoria contribution	City of Ballarat contribution
Strategic partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with the Western Bulldogs to activate Marvel Stadium and promote attendance the city's AFL games, as well visitation more broadly 	\$0	\$20,000
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate and establish brand building content partnerships for multiple target markets including Culturally and Linguistically Diverse audiences i.e GAIBO, and partnership with Sovereign Hill as part of the VVIP 	\$0	\$80,000
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in multi-region VVIP <i>Australian Traveller</i> activation 	\$20,000	\$0
Maintain digital-ecosystem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website support retainer, hosting fees and subscriptions Continuously assess digital user experience and identify areas for improvements Develop a digital guide for LGBTIQA+ tourists Consider developing a digital guide to promote sustainable travel 	\$0	\$120,000
VFR marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Execute a strategic mix of marketing channels year-round to promote Ballarat In The Know among residents to leverage the city's visiting friends and visiting relatives market Consider activation to bolster brand awareness and increase database subscriptions 	\$0	\$250,000
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include broader Tourism Midwest Victoria product in Ballarat In The Know marketing activities 	\$10,000	\$0
Business events marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a tactical marketing plan based on recommendations outlined in the new Business Events Sector Plan Execute a strategic mix of marketing channels year-round to prompt business event organiser to choose Ballarat as their event destination of choice 	\$0	\$70,000



Got a question for the Tourism Midwest
Victoria Team?

Reach out to
hello@tourismmidwestvic.com.au

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