EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The goals and objectives of this Joint Effort Marketing Year 1 Destination grant were to determine the economic impact of Ice Age Trail users and volunteers to the State’s economy on an annual basis; determine the estimated number of users enjoying the Trail annually; and review and revise the existing brand identity, positioning and brand promise based on market research conducted to better understand the Ice Age Trail users – in short, the customers.

The Ice Age Trail Alliance (IATA) is a non-profit, volunteer- and member-based organization headquartered in Cross Plains, Wisconsin. Its mission is to create, support and protect the Ice Age National Scenic Trail, a thousand-mile footpath tracing Ice Age formations across Wisconsin. More than 3,000 members nationwide support the IATA in the completion of its mission through on-the-ground work and financial gifts.

The Ice Age Trail, one of only 11 National Scenic Trails in the United States, is a thousand-mile footpath highlighting Wisconsin’s world-renowned glacial heritage and scenic beauty. It meanders through 31 counties and numerous communities across the State and provides all the vital elements that hikers, backpackers, trail runners, birders, and other outdoor recreation enthusiasts seek out when participating in their outdoor pursuits, including entertainment, heritage area attractions, natural beauty, diverse terrain, dining and the overall visitor experience. The Trail route takes visitors through some of Wisconsin’s most scenic landscapes, highlighting mature forests, expansive prairies and thousands of lakes and rivers. A variety of geological landforms, associated almost exclusively with glaciations, are better seen in Wisconsin than anywhere in the world.

The Ice Age Trail is designated for walking, hiking, backpacking, trail running and snowshoeing over a wide range of distances and landscapes. Much of the Trail offers solitude, but occasionally it takes adventurers right down the main streets of Wisconsin communities, both large and small. Whether a person is seeking a short stroll over gentle terrain or a multiday deep-woods adventure, there is a segment of the Ice Age Trail for all.

Responses collected from more than 1,010 trail users through online, mail, and field surveys at various access points along the Ice Age Trail were used to estimate current patterns of visitor spending as well as the total statewide and local economic impact of trail users, volunteers and outdoor enthusiasts. Surveys conducted and referenced in the study included the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater Fiscal and Economic Research Center (FERC), Tourism Economics and the 2011 Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). Visitor spending profiles used in the proprietary V2T model were developed for two visitor segments: trail users and IATA volunteers traveling on day trips and/or overnight trips involving stays in local hotels or lodging throughout the Ice Age Trail.

The culmination of these user surveys provides the economic model and findings used within this report. Results indicated that 71.2 percent of respondents are involved in outdoor recreation and silent sports on a daily or weekly basis and are highly motivated and committed.
individuals. Eighty-nine percent of users have some form of post-secondary education, 60 percent have a household income greater than $50,000, and finally, users spend an average of $50-100 on meals, etc. during their silent sport trip.

Based on the proprietary V2T Model, the estimated 2012 economic impact of the current 1,252,685 visitors to the Ice Age Trail region is 1,481 full-time equivalent jobs that tend toward the tourism industry. Estimated labor income of $35,413,364 contributes $113,961,357 in direct sales from Ice Age Trail visitors to statewide and local economies. These results highlight the significance of the tourism and subsequent economic impacts that Ice Age Trail users generate in the State of Wisconsin.

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