



Visit Bend Hires New CEO Jeff Knapp

The Former CEO/President of Visit McMinnville officially starts in Bend on June 10, 2024

For Immediate Release—May 16 2024; Bend, OR: The Visit Bend Board of Directors announced today that it has hired Jeff Knapp, former CEO and President of Visit McMinnville, as its new CEO after a national search. Knapp begins work in Bend on June 10, 2024.

Known for his emphasis on the promotion and development of McMinnville as a sustainable and profitable destination since starting the organization in 2015, Knapp actively serves on the Oregon Destination Association, served on the governing boards of the Yamhill County Tourism Partnership and Willamette Valley Visitors Association and is a founding board member of both TEDx McMinnville and Cycle Yamhill County.

In 2022, Knapp was awarded the McMinnville Mayor's Community Pillar Award. Also in 2022, at the Governor's Conference on Tourism, Travel Oregon lauded Knapp with the The Oregon Leadership Award, which "honors individuals championing the value of tourism, whose vision and commitment help make our communities, tourism regions and state stronger visitor destinations, and whose leadership behind the scenes contributes significantly to the recognition and impact of Oregon's travel and tourism industry." Travel Oregon said, "[Knapp] is the true embodiment of starting with 'why,' he stays authentic to himself and the regions he represents, and he consistently and constantly is a cheerleader at all levels for the power of the visitor economy in rural communities."

Before his time in McMinnville, Knapp spent eight years leading Direct to Consumer Sales at Sokol Blosser Winery, programming and developing next level hospitality and sales through relationships.

“My time in the tourism industry—and really in any business—has taught me that building trusting relationships and then examining how to best use tax dollars derived from tourism to improve the community will be the first orders of business,” said Knapp. “I’ve watched and worked with Visit Bend for years, so I am familiar with the assets and challenges that come with this position, and am very much looking forward to the opportunity to continue to examine the balance of economic, social and environmental sustainability for a healthy Bend now and in the future.”

The Visit Bend Board of Directors began a national search in January 2024, hiring professional recruiting firm Searchwide Global. Led by the firm’s Vice President, Nicole Newman, and overseen by the board’s five-person search committee, candidates from all over the country were interviewed.

“We were looking for a genuine, passionate, approachable and experienced leader and I know that we found that in Jeff,” said Visit Bend Board Chair Todd Montgomery. “We feel that Jeff will respect the hard work and thoughtfulness that has gone into the strategic planning around Visit Bend’s creative, and thoughtful initiatives to promote the area with a focus on community, sustainability, and respect for Bend’s natural resources and way of life. Jeff is the kind of leader who can take us to the next level in our industry.”

“Bend is clearly a desirable place to live and work, and we did not have a shortage of candidates from which to choose,” continued Montgomery. “Our process has been thorough and successful and we are really pleased with the results and excited about Jeff starting soon. His track record of success and the many ways he’s been recognized in his field in addition to his familiarity with our program make him such a great fit.”

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ABOUT VISIT BEND: Visit Bend is a non-membership, non-profit economic development organization dedicated to promoting tourism responsibly on behalf of the City of Bend. We’re a leading provider of information on Bend, Oregon hotels, restaurants, activities, and Oregon vacation planning. To learn more or to order a complimentary Official Visitor Guide to Bend, contact Visit Bend at 1-800-949-6086 or visit visitbend.com