

# OREGON TOURISM COMMISSION MEETING

January 29, 2026

Virtual Meeting

**Tourism Commissioners present included:** Chair Greg Willitts, Vice Chair Patel, and Commissioners Travis Hill, Lucinda DiNovo, Jenifer Roe, David Gremmels, Heather Miller and Nick Pearson.

## **Welcome and Introductions (starts at 0:05 on the meeting [recording](#))**

Chair Willitts opens the meeting at 9:30 a.m. and welcomes everyone to the January 29, 2026, Oregon Tourism Commission virtual meeting.

Chair Willitts thanks everyone for joining virtually, noting the agenda can be found on the Travel Oregon Industry website.

Chair Willitts states that in holding a meeting today, all Public Meeting notice requirements required by state law were met.

The members of the Oregon Tourism Commission introduce themselves.

Department of Justice representative Sylvia Cramond also joins the meeting and introduces herself.

## **Chair Remarks (starts at 5:06 on the meeting [recording](#))**

Chair Willitts acknowledges the work to get to this meeting including executive search firm Heidrick & Struggles' presentation today on the hiring standards, policy directives, and hiring plan for the next executive leader of Travel Oregon. Conversations with Commissioners and industry partners have informed the documents. The Commission will utilize its public meeting to deliberate on the documents and receive public comments. An independent firm completed a compensation analysis.

## **Considerations of executive search materials (starts at 8:41 on the meeting [recording](#))**

Chair Willitts welcomes the team from Heidrick & Struggles (dba Heidrick): Jackie Zavitz, Mollie Moore and Alissa Fernandez and asks them to present the executive search materials.

The Heidrick team introduce themselves and the agenda for the presentation (Exhibit A).

The Heidrick team shares that they have connected with senior leadership at Travel Oregon, the Oregon Tourism Commission, and various industry partners (including representatives from outdoor recreation, tourism and hospitality trade associations, Tribal Tourism Leadership Group, Regional Destination Management Organizations, and arts and cultural institutions) to inform the hiring standards, policy directives and hiring plan.

The Heidrick team shares themes that are important for the next leader including community impacts, economic development components, recovery from the COVID pandemic, and internal restructuring to align with 10-Year Strategic Vision.

The Heidrick team also shares areas of opportunity for the organization including micro and macroeconomics, international visitation, Portland's reputation, internal operations, and stakeholder engagement.

Commissioner DiNovo shares that the themes encapsulate all of the work that Travel Oregon does.

Commissioner Gremmels agrees with Commissioner DiNovo comments and asks how the Governor's Office will be involved. Alissa answers that Heidrick stays in touch with the Travel Oregon team to keep the Governor involved and informed. Chair Willitts affirms that communication with the Governor's Office is ongoing.

Commissioner Hill asks about the Executive Director title. Chair Willitts shares that the title will be discussed after Heidrick's presentation.

Commissioner Roe appreciates that there is thematic alignment.

Heidrick shares the policy directives under the following categories: strategy, governance & policy; financial stewardship & operations; organizational leadership & culture; external relations & partnerships; performance, learning & accountability. The policy directives will be copied to the job specification.

Heidrick shares the hiring standards for the position. The first category is leadership experience that includes organization and team management, stakeholder engagement, strategic vision and industry experience.

Commissioner Gremmels asks where public relations and communications components of the job are reflected in the document. Alissa answers that more intentional language can be added in the stakeholder engagement area.

Heidrick shares that the minimum qualifications guide the candidate assessment process and ties back to the hiring standards language.

Commissioner Gremmels asks if a broader description of the minimum qualifications of the bachelor's degree can be considered. Jackie answers that the language can be refined to be broader. Vice Chair Patel states that bullet point five includes more economic aspects of the role. Commissioner Roe states that the bachelor's degree qualification includes the option for equivalent coursework and education.

Heidrick shares the hiring plan with recruitment (application deadline of March 30, 2026) and candidate screening, qualified candidates presented to the Commission, search sub-committee interviews, and finalist interviews.

Jackie shares that the application window is intentionally open through March 30 to build a better pool of candidates. The candidates will be screened against the criteria shared previously.

Mollie shares that [traveloregon@heidrick.com](mailto:traveloregon@heidrick.com) is available for applications, inquiries, and questions and will work with Travel Oregon staff to ensure the job posting adheres to state standards.

Vice Chair Patel asks what the timeline would be to get to final interviews. Jackie answers that it generally takes 6-8 weeks to build the candidate pool and interviews will build off of that.

Chair Willitts thanks the Heidrick team for the presentation and asks for Commissioner feedback.

Commissioner DiNovo supports the proposed application window to ensure the best pool of candidates. She invites more conversation about the executive director title including noting that state statute uses Executive Director. She notes that Todd Davidson was granted the CEO title following seven years of service as executive director and his current compensation notes the years of service.

Commissioner DiNovo supports the executive director title and believes that the compensation range reflects the balance of public sector accountability and private sector industry.

Commissioner Roe asks Heidrick if we are limiting the candidate pool because of the executive director title and compensation. Jackie answers that the role remains the same. Compensation is a big factor in any executive search, but she acknowledges the special role and balance in the industry.

Commissioner Pearson agrees with Commissioner DiNovo's comments on the executive director title. He asks what the scoring rubric looks like to screen candidates. Jackie answers the rubric comes from the hiring standards and their qualitative experience assessing candidates.

Vice Chair Patel shares optimism that Heidrick finds a quality candidate.

Commissioner DiNovo reasserts that communication is ongoing with elected officials and Governor's Office. She shares her confidence in the direction shared by Chair Willitts.

Chair Willitts appreciates the Commissioners contributions.

### **Public Comment and consideration (starts at 51:55 on the meeting [recording](#))**

Chair Willitts states that pursuant to the public process of the executive hiring, the public has the opportunity to share comments on the presented materials via written form due by 4 p.m., January 29, or live during the meeting. Further comments will be due by March 4 for review at the March 9 Oregon Tourism Commission Meeting.

Michelle Liberty of Attitude Marketing, shares via the meeting chat that "Going from CEO to Executive Director is a big deal. It looks like a step down."

Chair Willitts acknowledges the comment.

Sylvia Cramond shares that a break is possible but will need to reconvene at 11:00am for public comment as it was noted on the agenda.

Commissioner Roe asks for more context for the executive director title. Sylvia answers that the statutory term of executive director is the standard. Commissioner Roe asks if the title changes the hiring standards. Sylvia answers that the title does not change the compensation, position or hiring standards. Jackie acknowledges that the compensation range has more impact on the candidate pool than the position title.

Vice Chair Patel asks about the public comment period. Sylvia answers that the public comment period is open until 4:00pm today to give the public the opportunity.

Commissioner Gremmels appreciates the context of the title and compensation considerations. He agrees to align the title with the state statute. He asks when conversation about the compensation range can be discussed. Chair Willitts answers that conversation can happen today but public comment will be considered in tomorrow's meeting.

Commissioner Gremmels shares the consciousness of the compensation range and asks to discuss the range. Chair Willitts shares the compensation reflects an opportunity to meet the needs of the industry and appreciates the Commissioners' thoughts. The compensation range reflects the balance of public governance and private sector industries.

Commissioner Gremmels asks for a hybrid of the compensation range from \$230,000 to \$270,000. Vice Chair Patel shares that the compensation range has come from the compensation study analysis and conversations over the past months have informed the range.

Commissioner DiNovo seeks clarification that the proposed compensation range of \$235,000 to \$255,000 differs from Commissioner Gremmels proposal of a top amount of \$270,000. Commissioner Gremmels confirms that is his proposal.

Chair Willitts answers that space for negotiation is needed. Furthermore, the review of data from Business Oregon and Department of Agriculture executive director salaries has guided the analysis and range. He shares that \$270,000 would be above these agencies.

Commissioner DiNovo believes some negotiation will be needed.

Commissioner Hill asks if any compensation compression will happen on the Vice President and Director level positions at Travel Oregon. Chair Willitts shares that the same level of oversight and communication is required of the executive director. Sylvia answers that Travel Oregon is not cited within the general state compensation structure, but Oregon pay equity applies. She advocates for the public service role where the compensation may not match a private sector industry.

Commissioner Hill clarifies to ask if there will be enough wage variance between the executive director and their direct reports. Sylvia answers that pay compression is not one of the statutory factors of the pay equity law.

Commissioner DiNovo states the balance between public sector role and private sector industry plays into consideration.

Commissioner Pearson asks if the Commission will be bound to the range the Commission approves. Sylvia answers that the range must be adhered to and a separate vote would be required for any modification.

Commissioner Miller supports the proposed \$235,000 to \$255,000 compensation range as the right balance.

Commissioner Pearson supports the range as transparent to the candidates.

Chair Willitts appreciates the discussion and commissioner comments.

Commissioner Roe asks that if candidates do not apply as we hope, is there any chance to adjust the pay range? Sylvia acknowledges that the stated compensation range can affect a candidate pool but a public vote to modify the range would be required.

Mandy Morgan with the Portland Spirit, asks for the compensation range for other states including Visit Colorado at around \$100,000; Visit Florida around \$200,000, and Visit California at over \$1 million. Chair Willitts acknowledges the differences and how the presented compensation range is a balance of state agency and private sector (marketing or advertising agencies). Chair Willitts states that an independent third-party firm completed the compensation analysis. Jackie confirms that Heidrick did not complete the compensation analysis.

**Other Business (starts at 1:35:12 on the meeting [recording](#))**

Chair Willitts appreciates the conversation with the Commissioners and the public comments shared.

Chair Willitts states that the Commission will reconvene tomorrow, Friday, January 30 at 1 p.m. to deliberate and vote on the executive search materials.

Chair Willitts adjourns the meeting at 11:07 a.m.