



## **mendocino county tourism commission 2016/17 marketing plan**





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# 2016–17 marketing plan



This Marketing Plan is our collective, community vision of tourism promotion for Mendocino County. We are the Inspiration Highway. We encourage visitors to go farther... around the corner and off the grid to discover our authentic destination.

# Welcome to the Mendocino County Tourism Commission!

On behalf of the Board of Directors, current staff and contractors, I am excited and honored to present the 2016/2017 marketing plan. While only a year has passed since the introduction of the last plan, much has transpired to get us to where we are today.

Through the tireless work of so many volunteers including past Visit Mendocino County board members, staff and committee members, as well as business owners, the County Board of Supervisors and others, we are able to present this plan as a new organization — created and organized from your feedback and support.

*We are a new organization – here to work for you!*

While we are still working through many transitional facets of our organization, committees, contractors and staff have continued to focus on the primary task at hand – marketing Mendocino County. And, it's working. Tourism numbers are at their highest levels ever on record.

It is vital for Mendocino County to continue to be a “top of mind” destination in today's highly competitive marketing environment. With so many beautiful, unique destinations for visitors to choose from, we must stand out with all we have to offer the traveler.

In the next fiscal year, we continue to highlight our “wines, waves and wilderness” targeting Northern California with online, radio, outdoor and print advertising. Also included is a one-time spend of up to \$200,000 piggybacking on Visit California and their \$100,000,000 budget. The programs initiated from this “extra money” will enhance our marketing efforts and results not just this year, but for years to come.

Our robust public relations campaign will continue to reach markets across the U.S. Sales, visitor services, and partnerships will round out our robust and comprehensive programming and efforts. We will continue to enhance our website and social media efforts including new video production and even an online interactive gaming experience.

Our sales efforts, mostly through the North Coast Tourism Council, will continue to focus on both the domestic and international markets. Similarly, we will, once again, produce our Mushroom & Crab festivals in November and January (hopefully with crab this year!).

Staffing will continue to transition as we get closer to hiring MCTC's first Executive Director. We look forward to the many opportunities as we reshape the future of tourism in Mendocino County.

As always, we appreciate the opportunity to work with all of you in promoting our communities. Our door is always open and your thoughts, feedback, and ideas are always welcome. Let's work together to make 2016/2017 the best year yet with continued increase in visitation and the resulting tax dollars helping our county's economy and culture thrive!

Kind Regards,  
John Kuhry, Chair of the Board  
Mendocino County Tourism Commission



# mission & values

Establish Mendocino County as a premier destination featuring quaint and charming villages, towering redwood forests and intimate and unique wineries resulting in high return on investment and increased room nights.

**Innovation:** Seek out and implement new strategies and tactics to further advance the Mendocino County brand.

**Teamwork:** Respect diverse opinions and work together to find strategic, quantifiable solutions to achieve shared goals.

**Enthusiasm:** Apply the passion we have for our region's fierce beauty, independent spirit, and natural lifestyles to each project we undertake.

**Accountability:** Strategically plan our program of work, track our progress, and make necessary adjustments to programs in order to realize the best value possible from our tourism marketing investment.

**Communication:** Share information about processes, programs, and progress within our organization and the greater Mendocino County community.

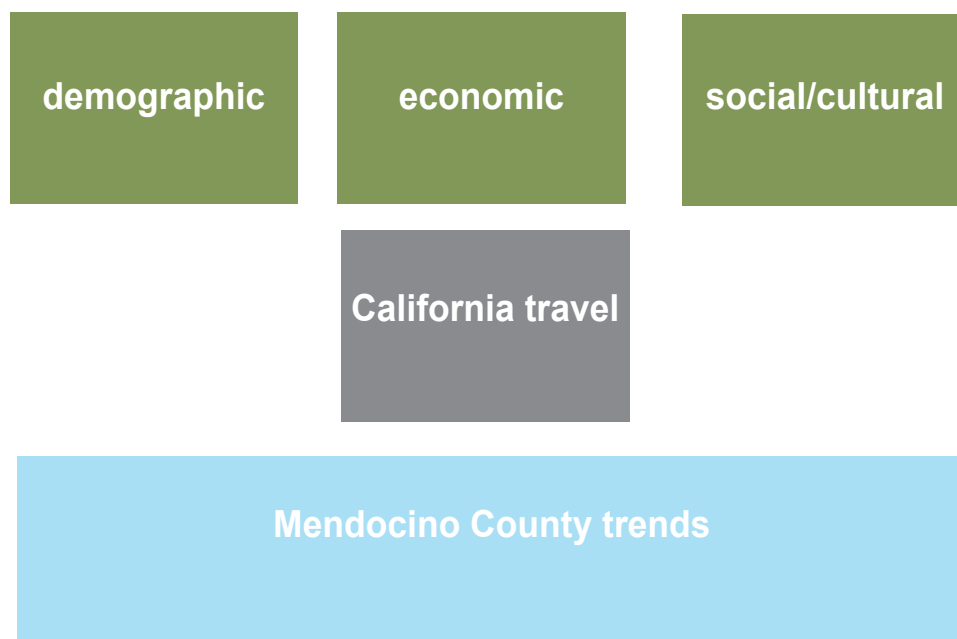


# situation analysis

## part 1: key trends impacting mendocino county tourism

There can be no doubt that Mendocino County, like every tourism destination, does not operate in a vacuum, but rather, is subject to a variety of market influences, including economic, travel, social, cultural, and demographic trends. As such, it is important to understand the changing environment in which the organization is operating.

Significant changes are occurring in the California marketplace that impact tourism destinations like Mendocino County. These shifts are primarily the result of a dramatically changed economic environment, though there are also changes in demographics, travel, socio-cultural, and consumer value trends of which tourism decision-makers should be aware. For the purposes of background and context, **the following is a summary of the key tourism, economic, and demographic trends that will help provide a comprehensive context for the development of the Mendocino County strategic marketing direction.**



# level 1 trends – situation

## A. Economic Trends

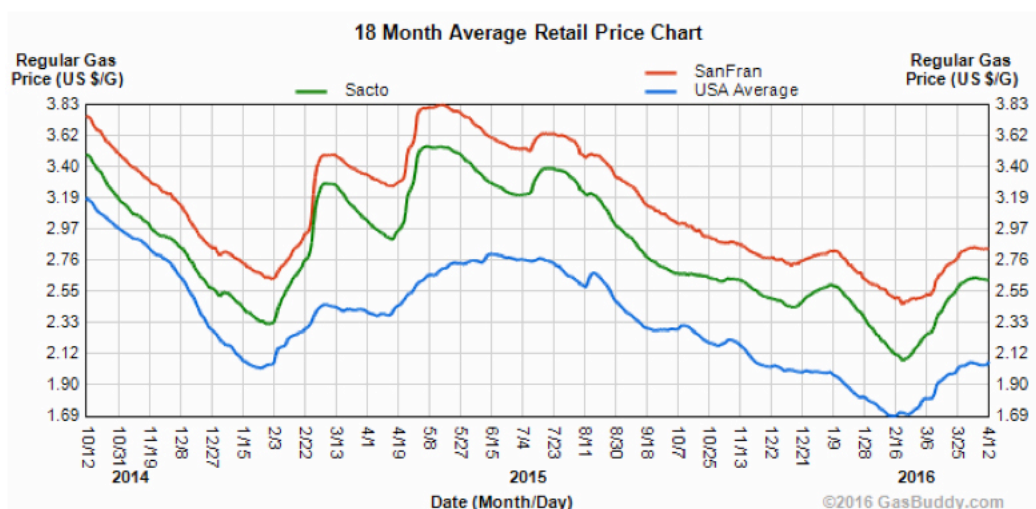
The U.S. and California economies really serve as the backdrop for understanding the direction of tourism, and both continue to be strong performers. As you can see in the table below **both the U.S. and California economies have improved significantly**, which has created the environment for an increase in consumer spending that includes leisure and hospitality.

Key U.S. and California Economic Indicators   % Change						
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
U.S. Gross Domestic Product	2.2%	2.3%	2.8%	3.0%	3.4%	2.7%
Unemployment CA	10.2%	8.8%	7.5%	6.5%	6.0%	5.8%
Unemployment U.S.	8.1%	7.4%	6.2%	5.9%	5.2%	5.2%
Personal Income Growth CA	5.2%	2.2%	5.7%	5.3%	5.4%	5.1%
Personal Income Growth U.S.	5.2%	2.0%	4.0%	3.9%	4.5%	5.3%
Consumer Price Index CA	2.2%	1.9%	2.0%	2.1%	1.9%	
Consumer Price Index U.S.	2.1%	1.5%	1.6%	0.0%	2.2%	2.1%

Source: State of California, Department of Finance

Given that Mendocino County is in close proximity to its core Northern California market, low gas prices are also a positive indicator for travel. As can be seen in the chart below, the price of gas continues to be favorable for regional drive travel, providing consumers with more available funding to spend while in the destination. Gas prices are well below previous high levels.

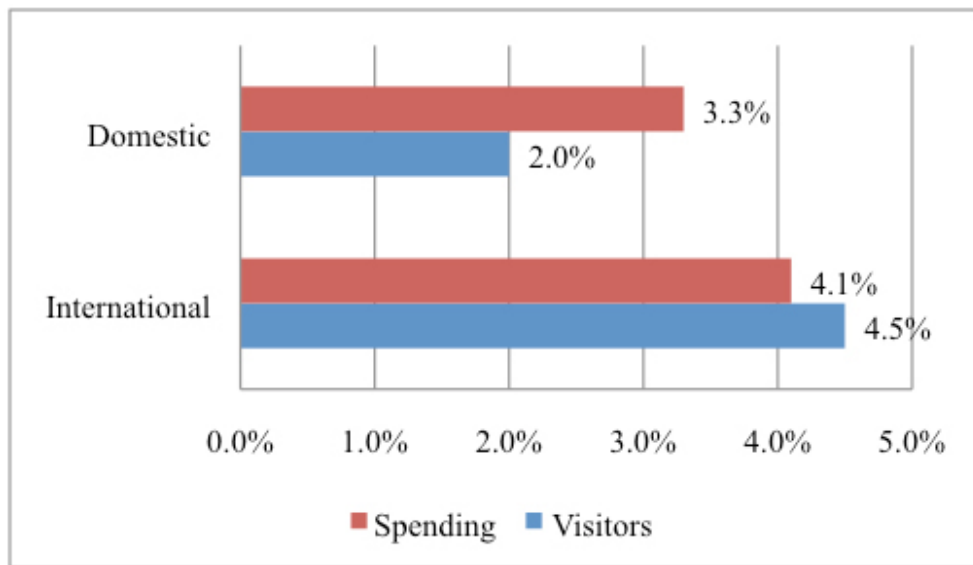
**Figure 2: Gas Price Trend 2014-2016** (Source: Gas Buddy.com)



## B. Domestic & International Travel

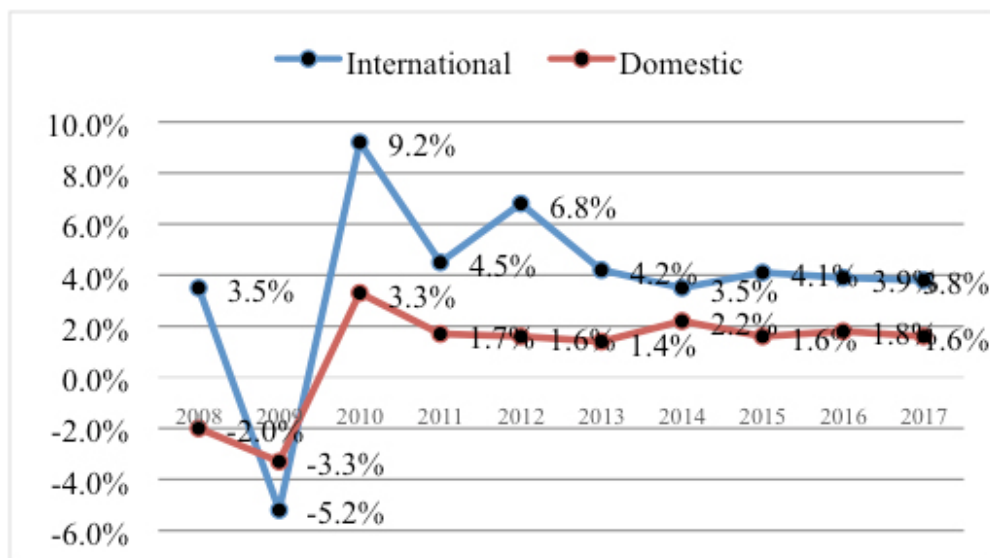
International travel will continue its strong growth, especially from China. Overseas arrivals or **inbound travel is projected to increase 5.7% in 2016 over 2015 levels**. Travel spending by all international visitors is projected to increase by 4.5% to \$37.9 billion.

**Total Domestic and International Travel 2016 Projections | % Change**



Source: U.S. Travel Association

**International Visitors vs. Domestic Person Trips 2008-2017 | % Change**



Source: U.S. Travel Association



Following the sharp decline in total visitations during 2008-2009, international travel spiked in 2010. According to the U.S. Travel Association, international visitations will continue to outpace domestic visitations pending global economics. This steady growth can be attributed to changes in the Visa waiver program and the formation of Brand USA in 2010, which has aggressively promoted travel to the United States with the Visit USA campaign.

## **C. California Demographic Trends – The Face of California Continues to Change**

The California population continues to change in two key areas:

### **1. A shift in age demographics by 2018<sup>1</sup>**

Millennials and Baby Boomers will continue to be important segments today and in the future. In California, the following trends will help to shape Visit Mendocino County marketing efforts.

- a. The Millennial market (20-34) is the largest generation alive today, representing 1.8 billion globally, and will see an increase of just under 1 million. They will further outpace Boomer earnings by 2018.
- b. Children (ages 0-14) will see an increase of just over 1 million
- c. An increase of 2.5 million in the 55+ market.

### **2. A continuing shift in ethnicity**

California boasts the largest minority population in the United States among Latino and Asian populations, which will continue to grow. Latinos will become the single largest ethnic group within the next decade, and by 2040 will comprise the majority of the population. Currently Latinos represent the single largest ethnic group among the under 35-year-old category in the state.<sup>2</sup>

This ethnic shift represents an opportunity to attract potential visitors through a range of cultural activities, events and interests available in Mendocino County.

Both of these shifts will continue to impact California tourism and potentially create opportunities for Mendocino County in the years to come.

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<sup>1</sup> Center for the Continuing Study of the California Economy

<sup>2</sup> Johnson, Hans, "California's Future", Public Policy Institute of California, February 2015

## **D. Social + Cultural Trends = Lots of Change**

The following consumer lifestyle trends are important to increase awareness and demand for the destination.

### **Consumer Lifestyle Trends**

- **People are seeking a deeper connection to travel brands and destinations**  
Travelers today are looking to align with brands and destinations that have similar values and beliefs.
- **Technology is going real time**  
As one-to-one marketing continues, new apps are being developed to make relevant suggestions to visitors no matter where they are in a destination, e.g., dining, shopping, and other suggestions wherever a visitor is located.
- **Alternative travel – the shared economy**  
The shared economy has gone mainstream. Transactions are easier, discovering shared economy suppliers is faster, and feedback is transparent. This continuing trend will especially impact the property rental market.
- **“Welltality” is the new hospitality**  
Destinations and hotels are adding wellness features to accommodate changing consumer tastes.
- **Luxury travel**  
Consumers today are more willing to open their wallets and invest in unique and memorable experiences.
- **Multi-generational aspirational travel**  
Families today are looking for vacations that are transformative for the entire family.
- **A shorter travel planning timeframe**  
Mobile technology is shifting the traveler’s timeframe, allowing them to be more open to same day/ next day last-minute offers. There is an opportunity for destinations and local attractions to leverage this segment.
- **Book anywhere**  
Thanks to flexible mobile technology, booking transactions for travel can now be made just about anywhere.

## Destination Trends

- **Hipster holidays are hip**

A new breed of traveler is looking to not just find a great destination but also find places within a destination that are cool and hip before everyone else does.

- **Choosing a destination for culture**

According to TripAdvisor, 47% of travelers say they have visited somewhere because of local culture and the people of a specific country. The same can be true for a destination.

- **Rise of the boutique destination**

Visitors are looking for emphasis on local unique experiences. Destinations need to focus on what truly differentiates them, and not what they think consumers want them to be.

- **Local experiences will make memories**

As destinations become more and more similar (“Something for everyone!”) the smart ones will look to connect visitors with local experiences. The more authentic you are, the less you have to spend marketing dollars to differentiate your destination. It’s the local experiences like the cool place to eat, or the best place to walk the beach or best place to see a sunset that make the difference for many visitors.

- **Destination celebrations**

As Boomers age and think about life celebrations (birthdays, anniversaries), more and more of those are taking place in-destination.

- **Increasing focus on Millennial travel**

With the aging of the Boomer generation, more focus is on Gen Xers and Millennials. Many destinations are making that transition with messaging, themes, and communication channels.

## Marketing and Communications Trends

- **Virtual reality is coming**

Remember the days when you produced a brochure for your destination or hotel or attraction? Those days are fading as virtual reality enters the fray. As video games have become more sophisticated, with lifelike and real animation, and as technology becomes better and cheaper, it makes virtual reality a reality. Destinations need to be ready to embrace this as a potentially powerful marketing tool.

- **Visual imagery continues to be important in tourism marketing**

As social media has become augmented with visual apps like Instagram and Snapchat, destinations are looking to more fully integrate this visual format into their marketing efforts. Visit California now has over



100 videos potential visitors can access in finding out about California. Likewise, visitors are using this format more and more to share their vacation experiences.

- **Traveler flexibility and control – research everything**

With the continued growth of online and mobile resources, consumers looking for flexibility and control of their vacation decisions have the ability to research everything and often do it not only in pre-trip planning but once a trip is underway.

- **Greater degree of personalization**

Facilitated by increased data mining capabilities, marketing efforts will lead to customization for each consumer. Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) will focus more and more on customized targeting and the speed of using that data will continue to increase.

## level 2 trends

### **A. California Travel Trends – California Travel Spending Breaks a New Record**

One of the most significant tourism impacts will be the growth of Visit California's tourism promotion budget, **which will exceed \$100 million**, making it one of the biggest state tourism budgets in the country. Below are domestic travel trends that impact Mendocino County.

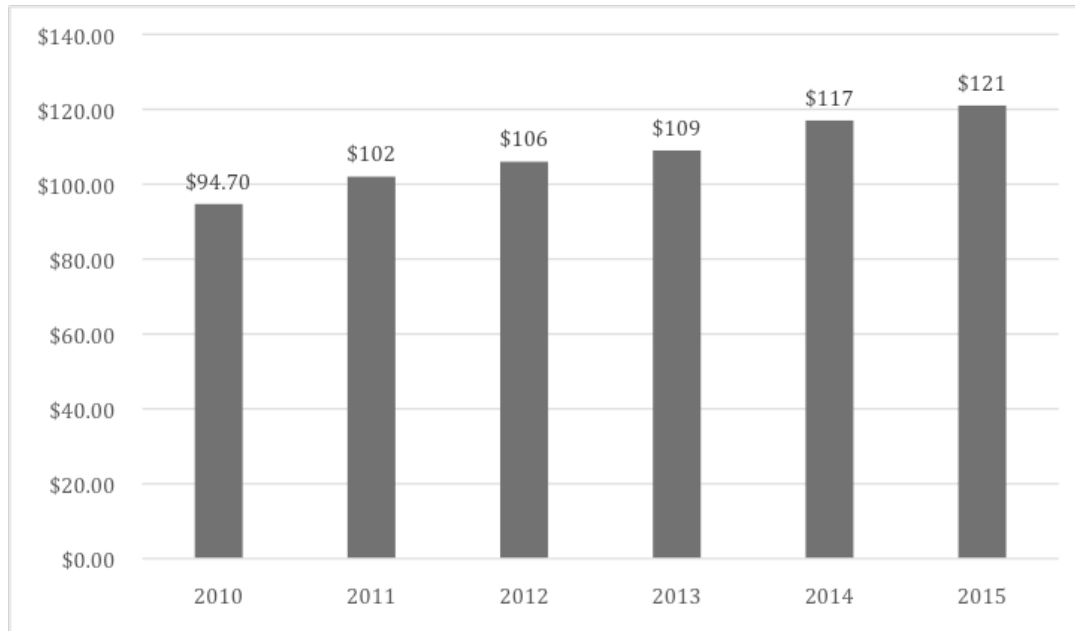
#### **Domestic**

Each year, California residents and visitors travel within the state to experience its variety of attractions, scenic beauty and local culture. According to the most recently released data by Visit California<sup>3</sup>, **the state generated \$121 billion in direct travel spending in 2015, a 3% increase over the preceding year.**

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<sup>3</sup> Dean Runyan & Associates, "Visit California Economic Impact of Travel 2015", <http://industry.visitcalifornia.com/Find-Research/California-Statistics-Trends/>

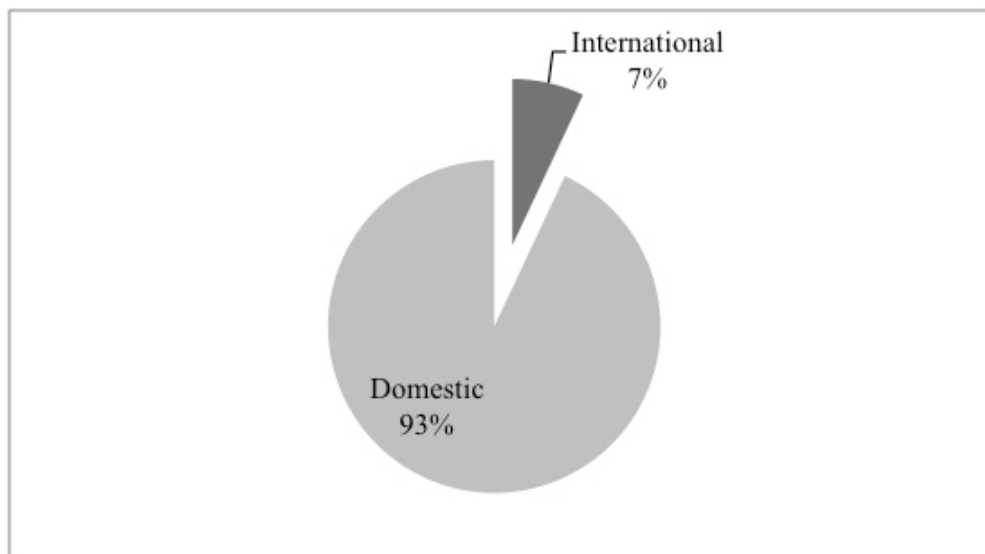
### California Travel Spending | 2010-2015 (\$ Billions)



Source: Visit California

Approximately 7% of visitors to California are international, however, overall visitation and travel spending continues to increase.

### 2013 Total California Travel Visitors



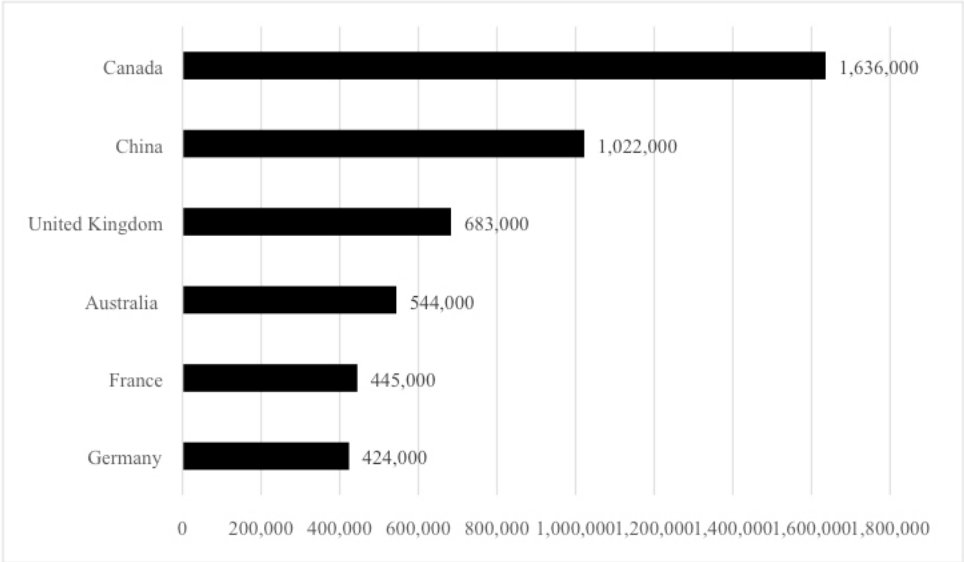
Source: California Travel Outlook 2014

**International**

Given Mendocino County’s unique assets and proximity to San Francisco, **efforts should focus on attracting a share of international visitors which should continue to grow over time.**

Primary international visitation data by markets of importance to Mendocino can be found below.

**Selected International Market Visitors to California Annually**



Source: Visit California 2014 Forecast



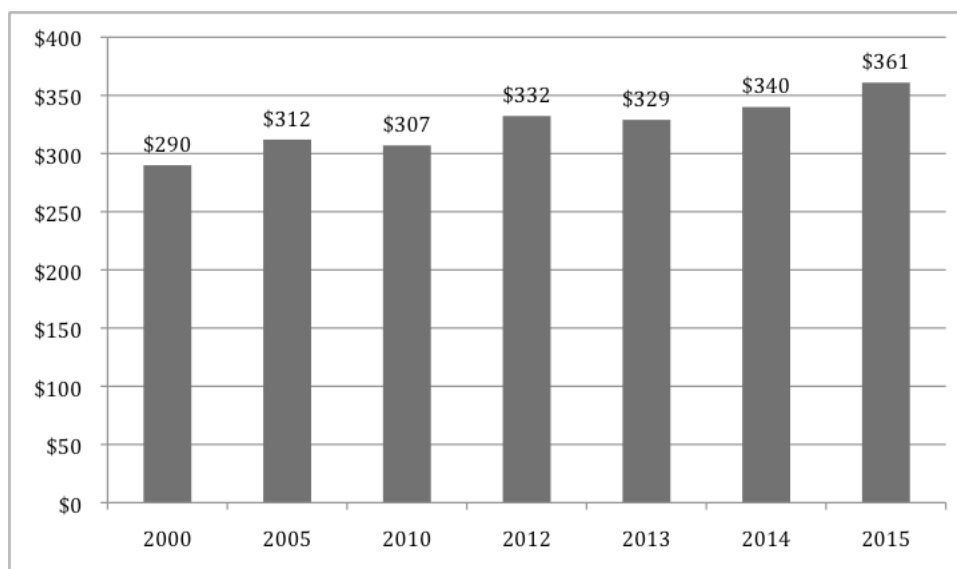


## part 2: the Mendocino County market

### A. Size and Scope of the Mendocino County Market in Perspective

Within the State of California, **Mendocino County as a whole generates approximately \$361 million in travel spending**<sup>4</sup>. The 2000 through 2015 trend is found below.

**Mendocino County Visitor Spending 2000-2015 (\$ Millions)**

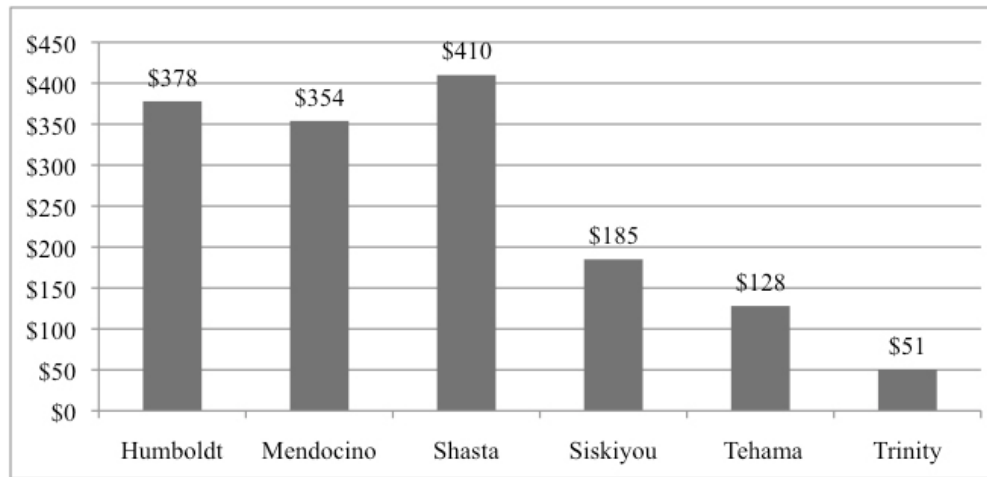


Source: California Travel Impacts by County, March 2016

In terms of overall tourism spending, as compared to neighboring counties, Mendocino and Humboldt counties are ranked closely but behind Shasta County.

<sup>4</sup> California Travel Impacts by County 2016

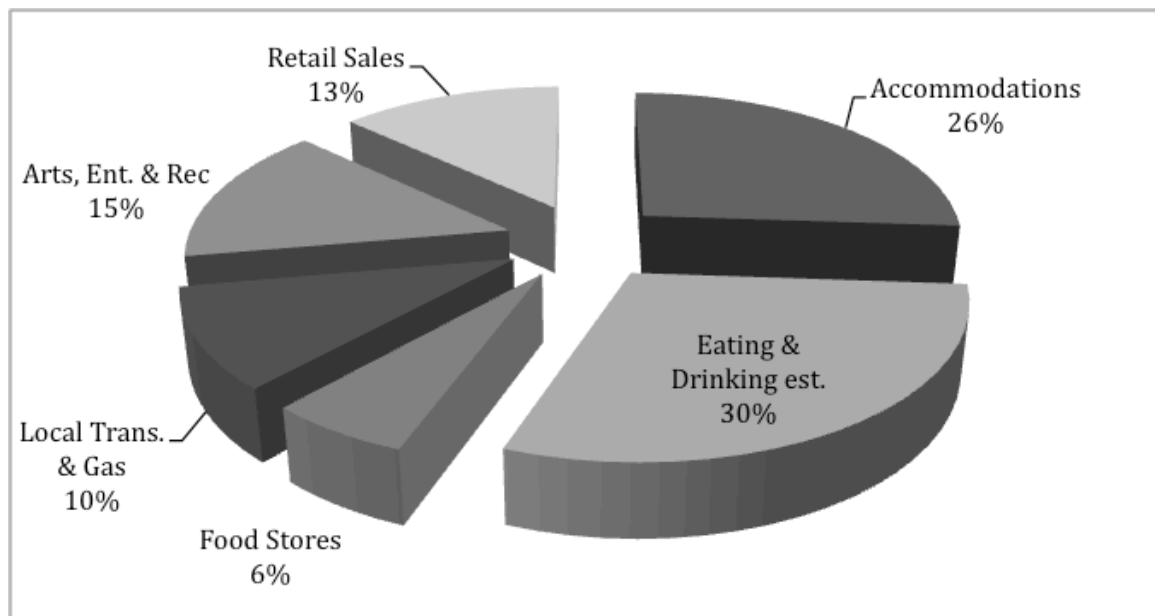
### Travel Spending By Selected County (\$ Millions)



Source: California Travel Impacts by County, 2015

With regard to how those travel dollars are spent, the figure below identifies travel spending by type of business service.

### Mendocino County Travel Spending by Type of Business Service (\$ Millions)



Source: California Travel Impacts by County, 2016

The table below illustrates the share of travel spending among Mendocino County and its key competitors.

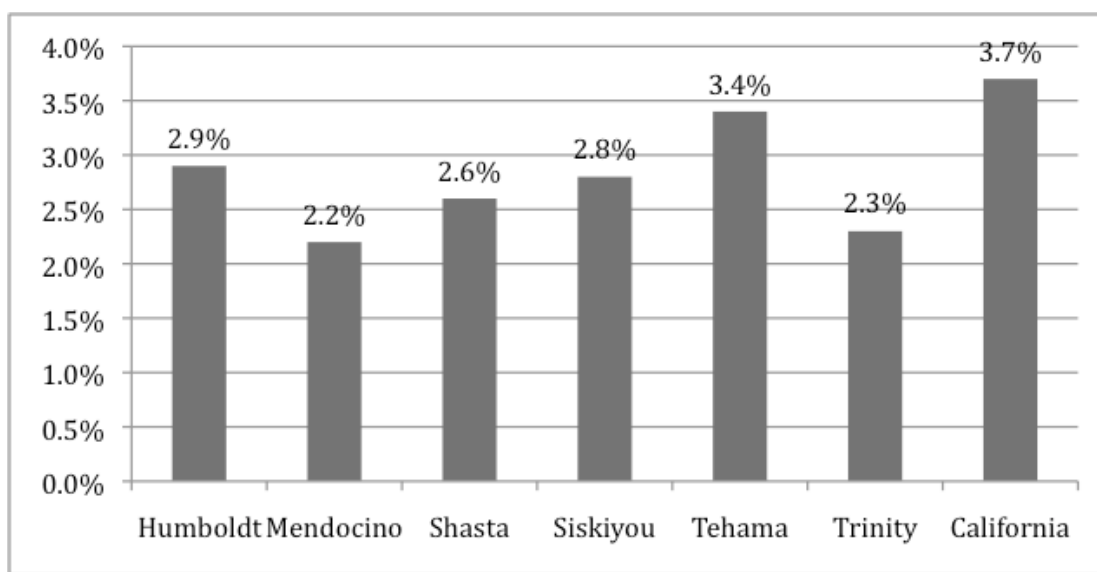
<b>2004 vs. 2014 Regional County Travel Spending</b>				
<b>County</b>	<b>2004 Spending (\$ millions)</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>2014 Spending (\$ millions)</b>	<b>%</b>
Humboldt	\$290.0	23.35	\$378.0	25.1
Mendocino	\$310.0	24.96	\$354.0	23.5
Shasta	\$340.0	27.38	\$410.0	27.2
Siskiyou	\$160.0	12.88	\$185.0	12.3
Tehama	\$94.0	7.57	\$128.0	8.5
Trinity	\$48.0	3.86	\$50.5	3.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,242.0</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$1,505.5</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: California Travel Impacts by County, March 2015

## B. Travel Spending Growth Rates

Over the long-term growth during 1992-2014, **travel spending in Mendocino County averaged 2.0% annually**. This average annual growth rate was below other regional counties as well as below the state average of 3.8%.

### 1992-2014 Average Annual Travel Spending Growth Rate by Mendocino County, Competitors & State of California<sup>5</sup>

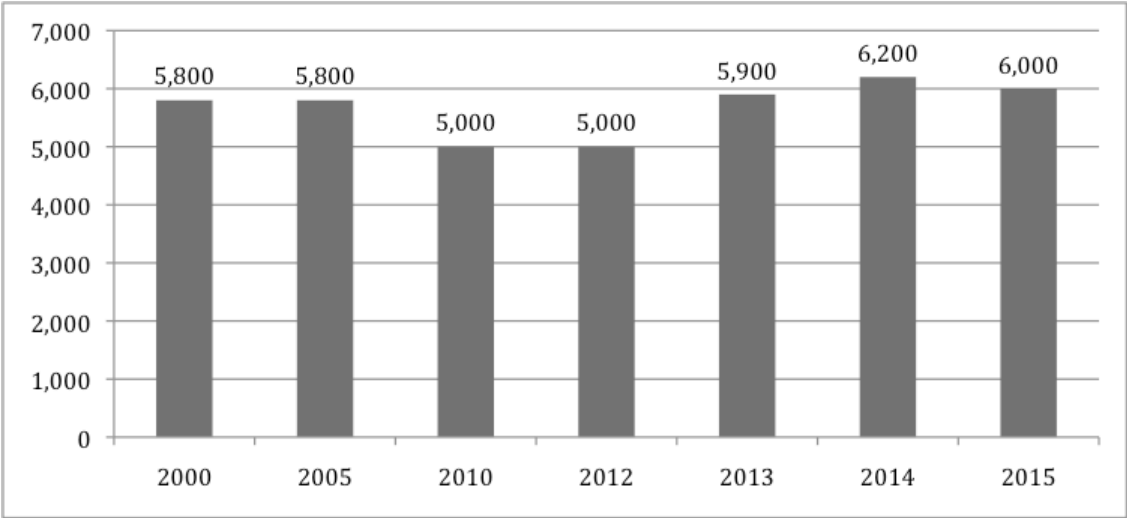


<sup>5</sup> California Travel Impacts by County 1992-2014



In terms of employment Mendocino County has seen tourism industry employment slightly fall from 2014 levels but still above the historical trend.

Employment Created by Travel Spending



Source: California Travel Impacts by County, 2015



# product experience

Spectacular scenery, a sense of isolation, an aesthetic sensibility, and a strong sense of community are the standout highlights of a trip to Mendocino County, an area that is well within a drive of the Bay Area and Sacramento.

No matter where visitors come from, their first impression of Mendocino County is one of outstanding natural beauty: redwood forests and rivers from the north, rolling hills and the promise of the ocean from the east, the blue and gold of distant mountains from the south. This is what we offer... a promise of awe at the foot of a redwood tree, a gasp at the sight of a breaching whale, a sigh of pleasure from a sip of wine hand-crafted from century-old vines... and our welcome.

The county's large geographical area is broadly divided into two separate, yet contiguous, parts: coastal and inland. And those areas are themselves subject to their own geo-partitions: north and south coast; north county, Anderson Valley, and the inland corridor. Each of the two major areas has their distinct attractions for the traveler, yet there are commonalities to be found in fine wining and dining, outdoor recreation, and experiences.



There are a myriad reasons why travelers go where they do, and these are almost impossible to quantify. However, what we can offer here is a broad spectrum of what brings visitors to the two major areas of Mendocino County.

Wild and scenic is an understated description of Mendocino County's pristine coastline. From the placid mouth of the Garcia River to the working harbor in Fort Bragg, from the towering mountains of the Lost Coast to the quaint Village of Mendocino, the coastal region invites visitors to become part of the landscape and its history.

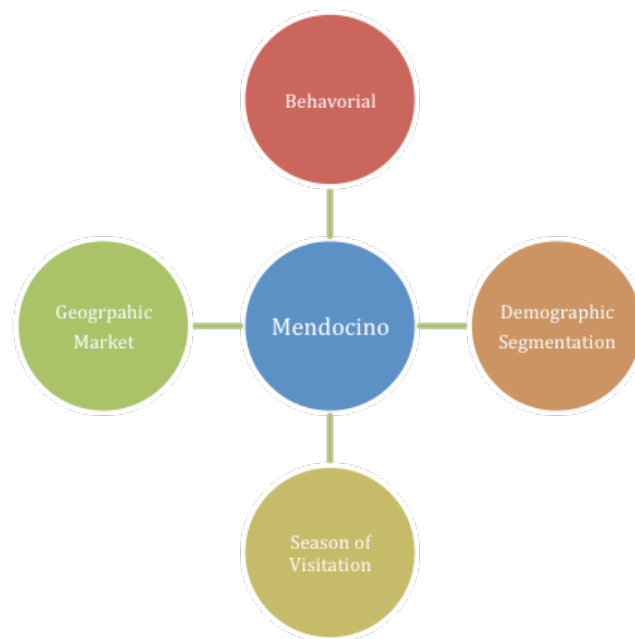


The majesty of the redwoods and vistas of lush vineyards are just two of the defining characteristics of inland Mendocino County that attract visitors. With two routes into the heart of the county, travelers can opt to wind along Highway 128 through the Yorkville Highlands to the Anderson Valley, or stay on Highway 101, passing through Hopland to the county's cultural center of Ukiah on to Willits and the forests and wilderness that await at the northern part of the county.

# goals & objectives

Increase overall demand for overnight visitation during key times of the year in an effort to increase revenues, employment and taxes in Mendocino County.

- Continue to effectively position Mendocino County as one of California's premier coastal destinations.
- Educate consumers on the different coastal and inland experiences that can be found within the county.
- Maintain marketing focus to key lifestyle and passion segments including outdoor/recreation, wine, food, and romance.
- Maintain the role of technology and digital marketing efforts in order to broaden the reach and increase effectiveness.

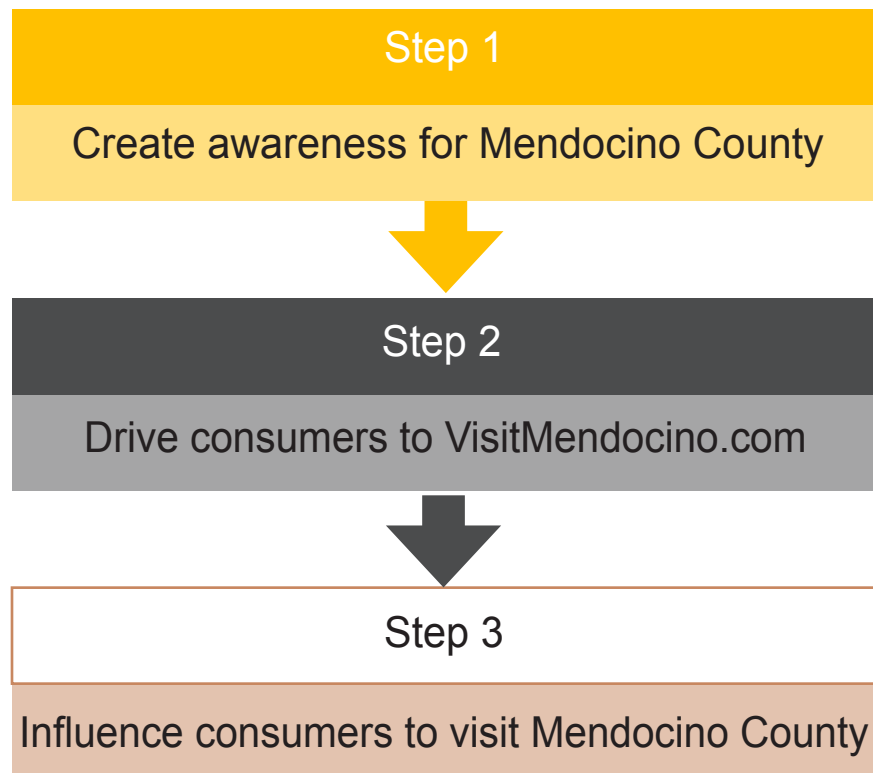


- Continue implementation of a marketing dashboard that tracks the destination and MCTC, and distribute that information in an effort to educate and support the tourism industry.
- Continue implementation of research that tracks the effectiveness of the MCTC website and the influence it has on persuading visitors to visit Mendocino County.
- Develop and implement board education and training as policymakers and advocates of the county's travel industry.

# marketing strategy

Given the prominent role that the Internet plays in travel planning, MCTC marketing efforts should continue to drive potential visitors to its website. Based on a six-month analysis of unique website visitors (Oct '15-April '16), MCTC's goal is to gradually increase website visitation to 240,000 per year. At the core of the strategy are two basic principles:

- The best organization to create awareness and brand positioning and influencing visitors to choose Mendocino County is MCTC.
- The best organization to book a room or make a sale is a lodging property or an online travel agency (OTA).

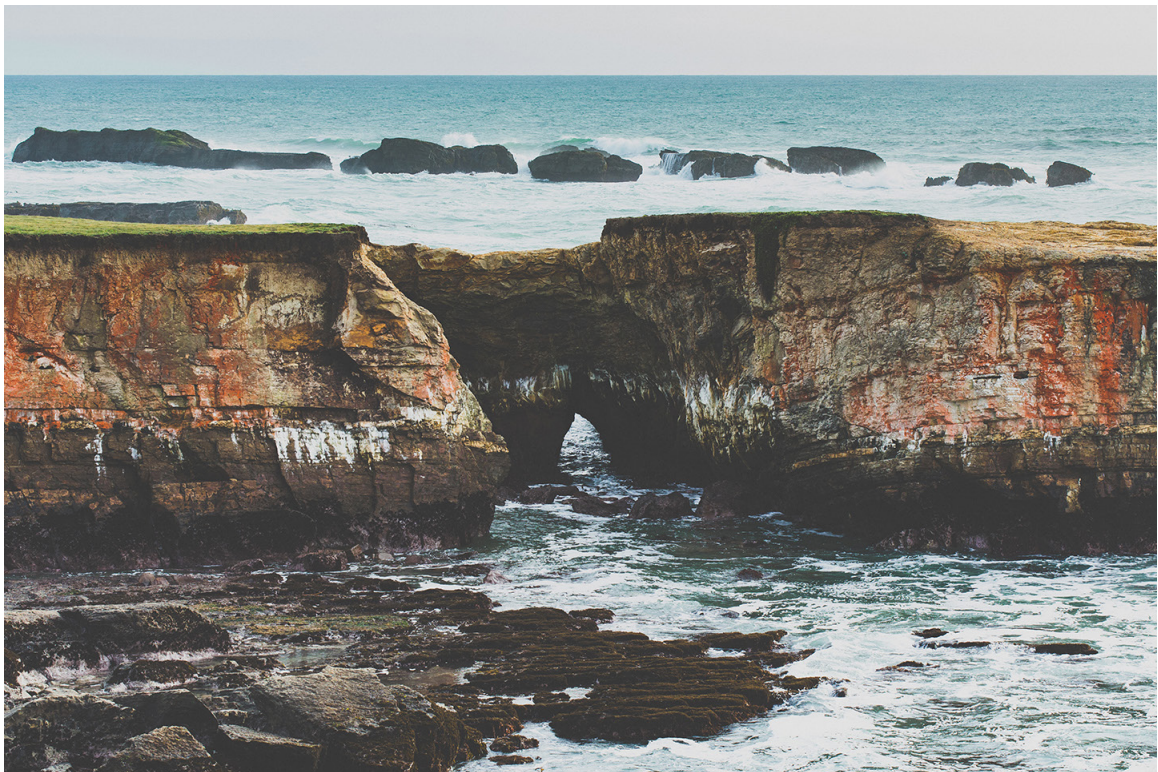




## How the strategy works

Marketing efforts (digital advertising, public relations, sales, etc.) are used to create awareness and attract target market segments to visit [www.visitmendocino.com](http://www.visitmendocino.com) and increase the existing database for future tourism marketing efforts. Once the target segment is attracted, they either show interest (go to the website) or not.

- Once they go to the website, it is important for the site to effectively influence consumers to visit the destination. At some point they may click on a lodging property or attraction. They may book directly or they may book through an online travel agency or some other channel. This sequence of events may happen all at once or over a period of time.
- Based upon their experience, new visitors either become repeat visitors going back to the lodging property/attraction directly, or back to MCTC's website to choose another lodging property or attraction.



## Performance

MCTC has developed a baseline measurement to track the influence its marketing efforts have in generating lodging revenue and total visitor spending. In terms of understanding what percent of the market increase can be attributed to MCTC vs. a rising economy, the following outlines the impact of integrated MCTC marketing efforts.

MCTC Lodging Rooms Generated	
	Base Year 2014/15 Actual
Unique Website Visitors	145,755
<b>Lodging Revenue Generated</b>	
Conversion Rate	12.00%
Estimated Bookings	17,491
Length of Stay	2.8
Rooms Generated	48,974
ADR	\$252
Lodging Revenue Generated	<b>\$12,341,367.36</b>
<b>Total County Lodging Revenue</b>	<b>\$84,000,000.00</b>
MCTC as % of Total	14.7%
<b>Total Visitor Spending</b>	
Per Party Daily Expenses	
Lodging	\$252
Food and Beverage	\$193
Entertainment	\$35
Retail Shopping	\$100
Daily Transportation	\$23
Recreation	\$15
Other	\$123
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$741</b>
<b>MCTC Generated Visitor Spending</b>	<b>\$36,289,496.88</b>

Source: SMG VMC Influence Conversion Study; MCTC Google Analytics; Visit California, California Travel Impacts 2015

In terms of how MCTC has performed, the previous table illustrates the following;

- In the base year of 2014/15 it is estimated that total lodging revenue generated in the market was \$84 million. Of that MCTC generated \$12+ million in lodging revenue through its marketing efforts (as measured by conversion of consumers using the VisitMendocino.com website). **This was equivalent to 14% of total lodging revenue generated.**

## target markets

MCTC's target markets follow the segmentation matrix set out below, which includes behavioral, demographic, geographic markets, seasonal and activity participation segmentations. The matrix is based on visitor profile data and input from the lodging industry.

From a psychographic perspective, Mendocino County appeals to the individual who appreciates its natural beauty and wants to participate in outdoor and cultural activities while at the same time enjoying the food and wine the area has to offer.

### Lifestyle Segmentation

FIT (individual traveler) Target Segments	Group Target Segment
Art & Culture	Tour & Travel
Outdoor Recreation	
Wine & Culinary	
Family	
Romance	
Weddings	

### Demographic Segmentation

In terms of target demographic segments, interviews, staff, and research have identified the following core segments:

1. Domestic

- Age: Millennials and Gen-Xers (core target market)

Secondary market: Baby Boomers

30-49 (emerging loyalty development market)

Secondary market: 75+ (growing senior market/intergenerational travel)

- HHI: \$100,000
- Families
- Couples

2. International

- Age: 35-65
- HHI: \$150,000
- Traveling for leisure
- Primary access through San Francisco working with the North Coast, San Francisco, and Visit California

**Geographic Segmentation – primary target markets include:**

Regional/Drive Markets	International Markets
<i>Northern California</i>	<i>Short – Mid Term</i>
Bay Area	Canada
Central Valley	United Kingdom
Southern Oregon	Australia
Other Northern CA rural	Mexico

Regional/Drive Markets	International Markets
<p>Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase overnight visitation and trip frequency</li> <li>• Increase length of stay</li> <li>• Develop incentives to attract short planning window visitors</li> </ul>	<p>Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work through regional and state tourism partners</li> <li>• Emerging market – increase overnight/longer stay/midweek visitation</li> </ul>

### Seasonality Segmentation

Priority seasons to focus marketing efforts on are the following, in order of priority:

- Quarter 1 – Fall
- Quarter 2 – Spring
- Quarter 3 – Winter

### Primary Activity Segmentation

- Hiking
- Road biking
- Mountain biking
- Water sports
- Special events
- Wine tasting
- Dining
- Art & Culture
- Motorcycle touring
- Photography



# action plans

For the 2016/17 fiscal year, it's both prudent and necessary that Mendocino County Tourism Commission analyze and review current marketing and public relations trends. With the advent of mobile and wearable technology, MCTC must be poised to respond to opportunities with agility.

## public relations & content

Mendocino County Tourism Commission has contracted with traditional public relations agencies to spread the word about the county. For fiscal year 2016/17, it's time to change up the public relations efforts in response to the constantly shifting public relations landscape.

Mendocino County will join the California Collective, a program of Development Counsellors International (DCI) that will bring our PR efforts to new heights. They are the PR firm of record for Visit California and many other highly successful destination marketing organizations (DMOs). The "California Collective" is a program developed exclusively for California-based DMOs. Led by DCI, this program provides California DMOs with a proactive scope of work that helps them increase their profile among target consumers. In addition, MCTC will continue working with KOLI Communications, following three successful years of collaboration.

## scope of work

- news bureau: research and respond to qualified media leads; draft/distribute press releases annually
- fam program: pitch/secure media visits
- programming/reporting
- conduct 2 media mission annually; pitch/secure 6 editorial meetings for each mission
- proactive pitching: 3 proactive pitches including 1 broadcast pitch
- content creation: 6 hours per month, including development of blog posts, newsletters, listicles or website editorial
- attend MCTC meetings as agreed upon
- attend one trade show annually
- PR toolkit
- media perception study
- website audit

## Measured Outcome

Fulfill the scope of work as presented by DCI and introduce Mendocino County's key messaging to an untapped source of media opportunities.

**Total PR & content investment: \$200,000**

# advertising & marketing

For the past two years, Mendocino County Tourism Commission has engaged a media buying company to purchase advertising including print, billboards, online banner ads, radio promotions, and more. Much can happen in two years and the marketing landscape has changed immensely. This "brave new world" moves rapidly and Mendocino County Tourism Commission must be poised to react with lightning speed to observed market trends.

## scope of work

- A comprehensive marketing campaign that will attract Millennials, Gen-Xers, and Boomers to access VisitMendocino.com and convert website visitations into destination visitations. Initiatives to include:
- Content marketing
- Production of ten high-quality, inspirational videos to be used throughout MCTC's online channels and website.
- Work with Instagrammers to produce high-impact photography in a series of campaigns that straddle the county and the seasons.
- A targeted appeal to Millennials via interactive media that includes YouTube and Facebook. MCTC will create a campaign that will directly target our audience at the times and with content they can engage with.
- Transit media that grabs the attention of transit riders, pedestrians, and motorists providing consistent daily views on city streets with high visibility.
- In order to leverage the marketing power of Visit California, MCTC will continue to place an advertisement in the annual official guide produced by Visit California.
- Building and maintaining an image library with up-to-date content is key to many of MCTC's marketing strategies. Today's editors for online content are looking for variety in the styles of images as well as breadth in content: from sunset shots to whitewater ocean kayaking and from bucolic landscapes to

action video. It's essential that MCTC continue to develop additional video and photographic content for website, social media, and promotional use.

- MCTC will take advantage of a one-time commitment of funds that will use up to \$200,000 to leverage our connection with Visit California to create a one-time campaign that will resonate for years to come.
- MCTC will be on the cutting edge by developing an advergame that will feature iconic Mendocino County destinations and scenes. An advergame is a digital game, played on a phone or a tablet that contains branding, most usually for a product, but in MCTC's case, for a destination. Advergames are designed to immerse the user within a brand's core values. The game will be offered as a free download on the visitmendocino.com website and will be available on the iOS and Android app stores. In addition, we believe that MCTC will be the first destination to have such a game in their marketing collateral — a media event in and of itself!
- Continue outreach program with long-time partner DogTrekker.
- Building on previous tourism research studies is essential to inform MCTC's future marketing efforts. In 2016/17, MCTC will invest in such a study.

## **Measured Outcome**

Increase VisitMendocino.com unique visitors to 240,000

**Total advertising & marketing investment: \$455,000**



## website & social media

[VisitMendocino.com](http://VisitMendocino.com) is MCTC's primary source of disbursing information about Mendocino County online and is the heartbeat of all of MCTC's efforts. In 2015, the website transitioned to an editorially rich, emotionally resonant portal to the Mendocino County experience. Our new site is built on contemporary technology, seamlessly integrating mobile- and tablet-based browsing, and offering a full suite of social sharing options. In fiscal year 2016/17, MCTC will:

- Conduct a strong and effective SEO campaign to raise awareness of the site among consumers and target audience.
- Use substantial editorial hooks and content marketing to increase time on the consumer-facing site and average pages visited for each user.
- Provide topical material and an easy-to-use interface to find relevant information with minimal friction.
- Continue to create rich editorial content with engaging imagery and video.
- Conduct SEM campaigns to boost site visitation.

Social media continues to grow in importance as a motivator for travel, spanning all demographics. People look to their friends and family for recommendations on travel destinations — increasingly more often than traditional media and advertising. Our social presence seeks not only to directly engage new potential visitors and remind previous visitors of the destination, but to excite our core visitor to share and spread the word about Mendocino County. To that end we will engage with key content producers via Instagram to generate dynamic, sticky visual content, with the aim of increasing overall reach.

- Coordinate three 'Instagram visits'; liaising with influencers that each have a unique vision and eye, to generate new visual material for future promotion;
- Continue to grow and engage our Facebook presence, achieving much higher total reach via Sharing and story creation by our Fans;
- Utilize targeted Facebook advertising to support partner events and regional attractors.

### Measured Outcomes

Total Facebook Fan Base: 55,000

Total Reach: 1,500,000

Total Unique Website Visitors: 240,000

**Total website & interactive media investment: \$85,000**

# sales

Sales is yet another spoke in the MCTC promotion wheel, whose object is to create a coordinated approach to put Mendocino County in the minds of travelers, incentivize them to visit, and show them what they can do once here.

MCTC's research-based sales efforts rely heavily on Visit California's extensive research and programs. Our group and international sales are conducted as part of our partnership with, and administration of, the North Coast Tourism Council. The San Francisco Bay area, including Oakland and San Jose, is MCTC's number one target market, with Sacramento and the Central Valley in the number two spot. Significant business also comes from the Los Angeles area, Portland, Seattle, and Reno. On the international front, Canada is easily number one with Germany, the U.K., Mexico, Japan, France, and Australia in the top tier.

For FY 2016/17 the integrated sales approach will include:

1. Consumer Trade Shows

The best way to contact thousands of potential visitors is to meet them personally at trade shows. We promote the county by handing out logoed green bags and promotional literature. We partner with local businesses by giving them an opportunity to participate directly by attending or indirectly, by offering giveaways. The typical show yields about 2,000 new names for our database, people who will receive newsletters reminding them to keep Mendocino County in their vacation plans. Though the locations vary, as we try to cover as much geographic territory as possible with limited resources, we always attend the Bay Area Travel and Adventure Show in Santa Clara and Sunset Celebration Weekend, now in Sonoma. In Southern California we alternate travel shows annually between San Diego and Los Angeles. We do a consumer event in Portland. We will participate in the Fillmore St. Jazz Festival in San Francisco. We also do niche marketing by attending pet, bridal and outdoor events. Every year we try to add something new to the mix to broaden our reach.

2. Regional partnerships

We partner and coordinate with other DMOs in the northern California area. We have developed a regional beer trail for example. Partners include San Francisco Travel, Sacramento Visitors and Convention Bureau, Shasta Cascade Wonderland Association, Southern OR Travel, and the DMOs in San Mateo, Oakland, Marin, Sonoma, Humboldt, Lake, and Del Norte Counties.

3. FAM (familiarization) trips

In addition to connecting with individual travelers, we also try to influence those who, in turn, influence



travelers: travel agents, receptives and tour operators and, to some extent, Online Travel Agencies. FAM participants are either domestic or international. They create packages and promotions that include Mendocino County as a result of their hotel site visits and overnight stays.

4. North Coast Tourism Council (NCTC)

MCTC benefits from its administration and chairmanship of NCTC, one of the eight rural regions designated by Visit California. The NCTC budget is for international sales efforts and is totally funded by Visit California with various matches.

5. Group Sales

The sales team attends events such as the American Bus Association and the National Tour Association in an attempt to obtain group business. We also work closely with tour operators to encourage groups to overnight in the county.

6. Hotel Contracts

The desired end result of group sales and our international efforts are hotel contracts. One of the main ways to obtain sales continuity and volume is to be the matchmaker between tour operators and local hotels. If the two enter into a contract, there is a likelihood of steady business. There are at least 30 such contracts in place.

For FY 2016/17, MCTC's sales goals are to:

- Increase names in Consumer Database by 1,500 per consumer show for a total of 9,000.
- Participate in at least six consumer events.
- Facilitate at least eight FAMs.
- Facilitate at least 12 new contracts between hotels and travel professionals.

**Total sales investment: \$40,000**

## visitor services

Getting visitors to come to the county is only part of the equation. The other part of the effort is to have them return for multiple nights. One way to encourage that is to ensure their Mendocino County experience is the best one possible. In support of this, MCTC will:

- Support numerous visitor centers throughout the county supplying them with collateral, and in the case

of the Redwood Coast Chamber, providing matching funds to ensure continuous operation of a visitor center on the South Coast.

- Continue production of tear-off maps consisting of both a countywide and a more localized map.
- Distribute event and festival guides.
- Continue to develop gateway signs in Gualala and on Highway 128 complementing the two existing signs on Hwys 101 and 20.
- Continue distribution of the pet guide - essential for those traveling with their four-legged friends.
- Investigate installation of restrooms in the Boonville area.

For FY 2016/17, Visitor Services goals are to assist in driving website visitation and increasing unique visitors.

**Total visitor services investment: \$60,000**

## festivals & events

With so many great destinations throughout California, unique and interesting festivals and events are a key component for the potential traveler choosing Mendocino County over other destinations. Due to unforeseen challenges with global warming and changes in the festival signature events, participation and attendance at the festivals have been on a downward trend. The main focus for festivals and events this year is to turn this trend around and ultimately exceed prior years in terms of participation of businesses and visitors.

Goals for FY 2016/17 include:

- Evaluate current festivals to reverse downward trend; increase attendance by visitors and participation by partners at existing festivals and events.
- Measure the success of each festival by evaluating the TOT results during the months the festivals occur (November 2016 and January 2017) as well as a personal phone call or email to each participating business to measure the success of individual events and specials.
- Work to develop a new signature event for the Mushroom, Wine & Beer Festival.

- Encourage lodging owners to offer specials or discounts for extended stays, package deals that include tickets to festival events, or discounts on local restaurants and spa packages.
- Work with local non-profits and wine regions to encourage larger tourist attracting events such as Pinot Fest and Winesong.
- Develop new ideas for festivals and events and pitch to partners.

**Total festivals/events investment: \$25,000**

## partner relations

MCTC works to advocate among lodging partners, organizations, businesses and government as to the benefits of the tourism industry/economy.

By developing relationships with partners, touring their properties and getting to know more about their business, we find many have unique stories that help to promote Mendocino County as a destination with character, history and charm that sets us apart from our neighboring counties.

It is important for MCTC to be on the pulse of new developments in the area that may pique the interest of visitors such as new hotels, restaurants, attractions, wineries, breweries, as well as additions and expansions on existing properties. Recent tourist attracting developments include the new Fort Bragg Coastal Trail and the Shady Dell Trail on the Lost Coast.

Goals for 2016/17 include:

- Assist in the development and implementation of the Annual Community Communications Plan.
- Conduct 10 site visits to lodging owners per week and supply tear-off maps, Visitor Guides, and other collateral to share with lodging guests.
- Complete design on partner brochure to help business owners and community members better understand the mission of MCTC.
- Attend at least two in-county meetings and events per month to gain and share ideas, and show community support.
- Hold quarterly meet-and-greets to which partners and other businesses are invited.
- Work closely with Chambers of Commerce throughout the County as well as city promotional groups

(Visit Ukiah and the Fort Bragg Promotions Committee).

- Work with new and existing partners to develop/enhance their business listings on [www.visitmendocino.com](http://www.visitmendocino.com).
- Communicate the work of MCTC, how trends in travel affect Mendocino County, significant events, and other items of interest to the community via a monthly article to partners and stakeholders and a column running in the Ukiah Daily Journal.
- Explore and research the future promotion of recreational marijuana use throughout the County and region by being a leading entity to capitalize on this new market should it become legalized.

## operations

Operations is the engine that keeps MCTC running. This category covers the day-to-day expenses of maintaining MCTC as well as the costs of mailings, office space, telephones, newsletters, etc.

The Fort Bragg office maintains a visitor center that serves the public by providing information, brochures, and assistance, as well as a retail outlet where visitors can purchase locally made products.

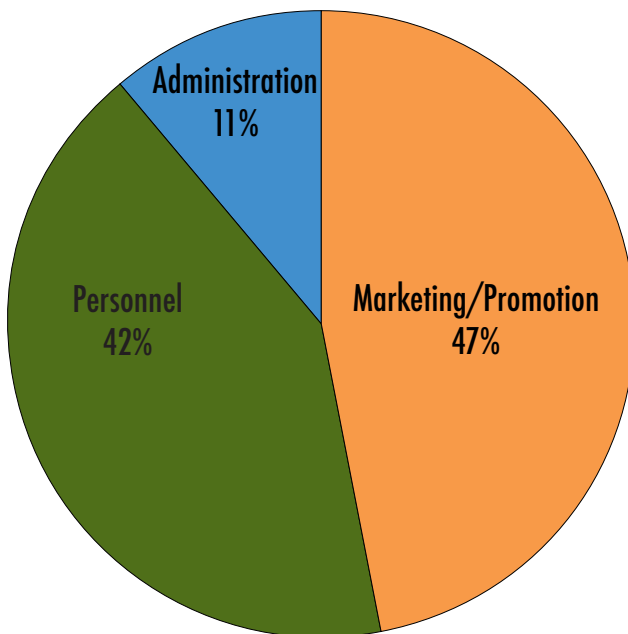
MCTC's Fort Bragg office participates in the monthly First Friday celebrations by opening its doors in the evening, displaying local artists' works, and meeting residents and visitors.

## budget

## dmo industry average

### DMO Industry Average

*Represented by a sample of DMOs that participated in DMAI 2015 DMO Organizational & Financial Profile Study*



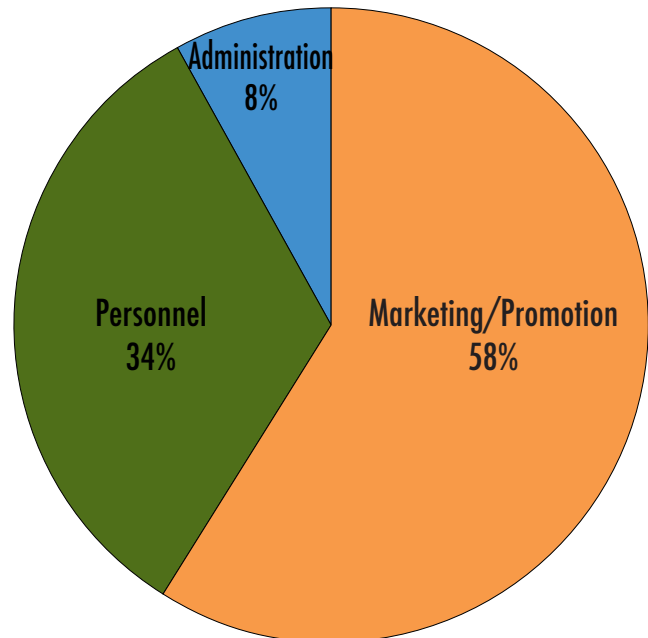
Categories defined as follows:

Administration: office supplies, computer expenses, rent/utilities, interest, etc.

Personnel: salaries & wages, payroll taxes, and employee benefits

Marketing/Promotion: all non-admin and non-personnel expenses

### Visit Mendocino County, Inc. 2014-2015 Budget Breakdown



Administration: \$79,258

Personnel: \$333,137

Marketing/Program Expenses: \$587,251

Total expenses: \$999,646

## mctc projected budget



<b>INCOME</b>	
MCLA BID Assessment	\$800,000
County of Mendocino Matching Funds	400,000
Other Income (Visitor Guide and calendar advertising)	30,000
Funds Transferred from MCLA	333,270
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$1,563,270</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>	
Advertising/Media	\$305,000
Website & Electronic Marketing	85,000
Cooperative Marketing with Visit California	150,000
Public Relations	200,000
Updated Market Research/Board Development	40,000
Visitor Guide Distribution, Signage, Visitor Services	60,000
Festivals & Events	25,000
Consumer & Group Sales	40,000
Arts Council Sponsorship	14,400
Partnership Investments	20,000
Searchwide ED Search	40,000
Operations	79,526
Personnel	350,000
Reserve/Contingency Account	130,344
County Administrative Fee	24,000
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$1,563,270</b>

# staffing

As a leadership organization in the Mendocino County community of businesses, Mendocino County Tourism Commission itself has become a stand-out asset. MCTC is served by a dedicated professional staff, which continues to innovate, seeks learning opportunities, and provides marketing and educational opportunities to its internal partners.

With the development of MCTC and its new director, the current staff structure, job descriptions, location of office(s), and other operational related activities will undergo a full review and analysis with the goal of developing a structure and team whose sole purpose and focus is the core strategy and goals as outlined in this plan, ultimately increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of promoting Mendocino County.

## Create an environment that inspires the best support, programs and ideas that continue to push the MCTC mission forward

- Attend key travel industry conferences to provide access to industry trends and successful examples of best practices, furthering internal knowledge and benefiting the MCTC program of work.
- Maintain accreditation from the Destination Marketing Accreditation Program, offered by Destination Marketing Association International.
- Maintain an environment that encourages an engaged, productive staff with the tools and knowledge to assist in creating success for as well as partner organizations and businesses.

## staff

**Executive Director** An executive search is underway

**Director of Tourism** Richard Strom

**Office Manager** Jodi Smith

**Event & Partner Relations Manager** Gracia Brown

**Tourism Development Associate** Donna Hannaford

## contractors

**Marketing & Communications Coordinator** Alison de Grassi

**Public Relations** DCI / KOLI Communications

**Advertising** CC Media

**Interactive Media Coordinator** Brendan McGuigan

**Website Maintenance** Brandhound Inc.

## MCTC board of directors

**Chair: John Kuhry**, 1 Year Term – At Large Member

**Vice Chair: Debra De Graw**, 1 Year Term – Food/Beverage Business Member

**Secretary: Sharon Davis**, 3 Year Term – Mendocino Coast Chamber of Commerce/Coastal Regional Promotional Organization Member

**Treasurer: Marcus Magdaleno**, 2 Year Term – Inland Chamber of Commerce/Inland Regional Promotional Organization Member

**Jo Bradley**, 2 Year Term – Medium Lodging Operator Member

**Bernadette Byrne**, 3 Year Term – Winery/Winegrower Member

**Jennifer Seward**, 2 Year Term – Arts Organization/Attractions Member

**Jitu Ishwar**, 3 Year Term – Large Lodging Operator Member

**Deborah Kettner**, 3 Year Term – Small Lodging Operator Member

**Susie Plocher**, 1 Year Term – Coastal Large Lodging Operator Member

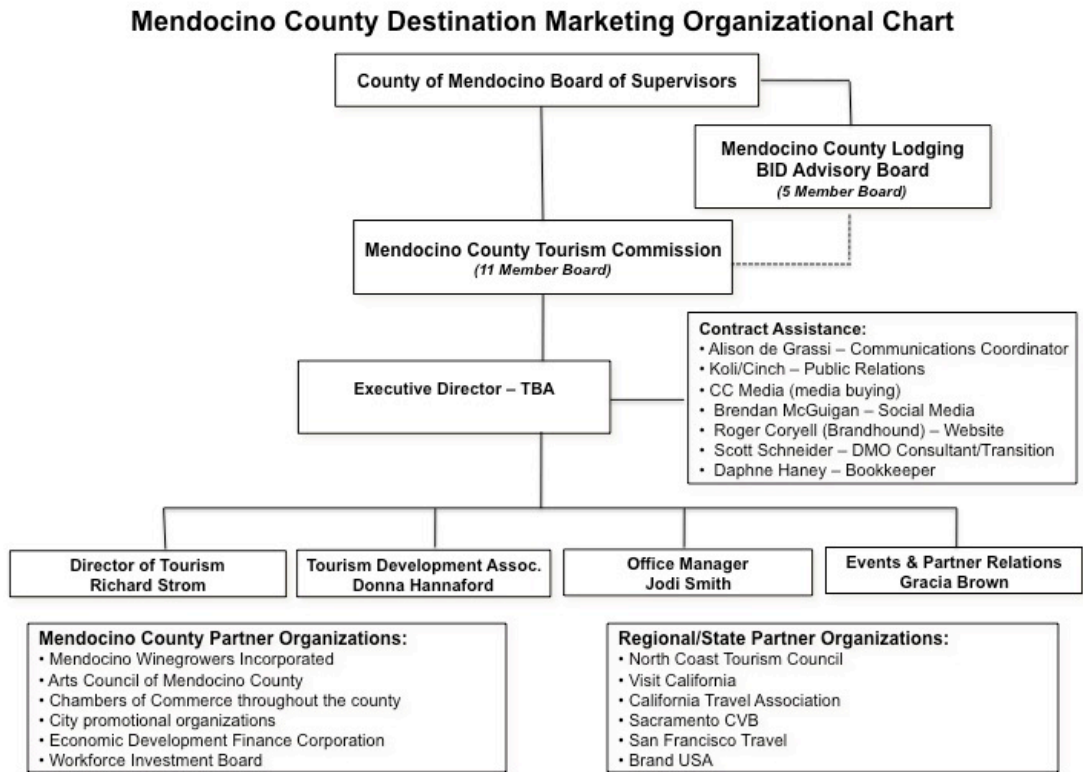
**Jan Rodriguez**, 2 Year Term – Inland Large Lodging Operator Member

# MCTC offices

345 North Franklin Street  
 Fort Bragg, CA 95437  
 707.964.9010 / 866.466.3636  
 8:30AM - 5:00PM, Monday through Saturday

390 West Standley Street  
 Ukiah, CA 95482  
 707.734.0177  
 8:30AM - 5:00PM, Monday through Friday

# organization chart



Current as of: June 2016