



**VISIT MENDOCINO COUNTY**  
Annual Report ~ Fiscal Year 2017/18

Submitted to Mendocino County Tourism Commission, Inc. & County of Mendocino  
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# VMC Annual Report: Fiscal Year 2017/18

## Executive Summary

The 2017/18 fiscal year proved to be both exciting and challenging for the Visit Mendocino County (VMC) team. On the exciting front:

- Visit Mendocino County continued to work closely with marketing consultants, TheorySF (TSF), to raise awareness of Mendocino County as a top-of-mind tourism destination, developing new branding for the organization, and a new website with appeal to our target audience.
- The team launched a Hotel Adoption Program (HAP) whereby VMC staff undertake to personally meet with lodging owners throughout the county to explain VMC's role and resources and to gather pertinent information about each property.
- Staff mapped their work throughout the year to the three-year Strategic Plan.
- PR continued to hit home runs with a record number of media visits to the county and high profile coverage in A-list publications.
- The Sales arm of the organization made progress in bringing new hotels into group sales initiatives.
- Two long-time contractors for the organization, Alison de Grassi and Richard Strom, became full-time employees.

The organization faced two significant challenges:

- First, the wildfire that struck the communities of Redwood Valley and Potter Valley in the early hours of Monday October 9, 2017 created a public misperception that the entire county was on fire. Along with tourism partners in Sonoma, Napa, and Lake Counties, the PR team faced an extraordinary battle to change the narrative.
- Second, the loss of the Executive Director at the end of January 2018 put the team, once again, in a trying situation. The MCTC Board rapidly stepped up to the plate and appointed former Mendo-Lake Credit Union CEO, Richard Cooper, as Interim Executive Director. The Board appointed Travis Scott as the new Executive Director; he began with the organization in mid-June 2018.

Financially, MCTC emerged in a very strong position; revenues exceeded expectations and expenses were kept in check. As a result, the team will be able to dedicate more resources for marketing and promotional efforts in the coming year.

**Our mission:** To steward and amplify the total Mendocino County experience.

**Our vision:** Enriching experiences for our guests, enhanced lifestyle for our residents, and diversity for our economy.

The MCTC future is bright! The team is dedicated to inspiring visitors to experience our miles of pristine coastline, the acres of old-growth redwoods and verdant inland valleys, the unique attractions and our hospitable welcome.

By working together and with our larger community, we can raise visitation numbers, add to economic development, and improve the lives of County residents.

Thank you for the opportunity to promote our beautiful county

Respectfully,

Travis Scott

Executive Director, Visit Mendocino County

## Strategic Plan

The activities in this report relate to the initiatives set forth in the three-year Visit Mendocino County Strategic Plan that was put into action in 2017. The purpose of the plan was to realign the core strategies of the organization. (The Strategic Plan may viewed [here](#) and is attached as Appendix 3.) This report directly relates the VMC, Marketing, PR, sales, and other VMC staff activities during the fiscal year directly to the Imperatives, Objectives, and Initiatives contained in the Strategic Plan. As staff undertook an analysis of their activities and the objectives of the Plan throughout the year, they noted areas of the Plan where refinements to objectives are recommended. Those are noted herein.

### Vision:

Enriching experiences for our guests, enhanced lifestyle for our residents, and stability and diversity for our economy.

### Mission:

Visit Mendocino County stewards and amplifies the total Mendocino County experience.

### Values:

- Transparency: We foster trust through openness and integrity.
- Accountability: We are outcome-oriented and professional.
- Partnership: We create alignment through inclusive and meaningful relationships.
- Community: We contribute to the fabric of Mendocino County.
- Innovation: Our creativity reflects the uniqueness of our cultures and landscapes.

### **IMPERATIVE: Demonstrate and strengthen VMC's contribution to county economic and community vitality**

- **OBJECTIVE: Bid assessment growth at 5% over average of top 3 competitors**

The [2018 California Travel Impacts](#) report (Dean Runyan), which is an annual report commissioned by Visit California and undertaken by Dean Runyan Associates, is the reference used for data reported by Mendocino and competitor counties. The report is issued at the end of May each year and data contained within is for the prior fiscal year.

A review of Northern California counties reporting data to Dean Runyan reveals that Mendocino County's top three competitors in terms of travel spending, tax revenue, and TOT receipts are: Humboldt, Shasta, and Yolo Counties. Sonoma County, while a neighbor to Mendocino, is not comparable as tax revenue for that county in FY 2017 was \$177.7 million, far outstripping that of Mendocino County (\$39.9M). Data reflecting County TOT receipts and travel-related spending are shown in the tables that follow.

**California Transient Occupancy Tax by County (Amount in \$000s)**

County	2014	2015	2016	2017	Avg Growth YOY	YOY %Gain/Loss		
<b>Mendocino</b>	\$6,748	\$7,907	\$8,215	\$8,627	8.69%	17.17%	3.89%	5.01%
<b>Humboldt</b>	\$5,625	\$6,183	\$6,930	\$6,800	6.68%	9.92%	12.00%	-1.87%
<b>Shasta</b>	\$5,384	\$5,714	\$6,010	\$6,230	4.99%	6.12%	5.18%	3.66%
<b>Yolo</b>	\$2,737	\$4,330	\$4,961	\$5,301	26.54%	58.20%	14.57%	6.85%

As indicated, Mendocino County outstrips Humboldt and Shasta (the most comparable counties) in terms of tourism revenue growth, tax revenue growth, and the number of people employed directly and indirectly by the tourism industry. The next nearest Northern California competitor, Yolo County, shows remarkable growth of more than 20% in all three areas, due to a realignment of TOT and BID collection in the county.

In terms of BID growth, it should be noted that Mendocino has a BID assessment of one percent (1%) while

**Travel-related Spending, Tax Revenue, Employment**

County	Travel Related Spending		% Increase / Decrease YOY	Tax Revenue		% Increase / Decrease Yoy	Employment (Travel Sector)		% Increase / Decrease YOY
	2016	2017		2016	2017		2016	2017	
<b>Mendocino</b>	\$386.1M	\$456.0M	18.00%	\$34.7M	\$39.9M	14.98%	6.16K	7.1K	15.25%
<b>Humboldt</b>	\$415.5M	\$448.2M	7.87%	\$32.6M	\$36.6M	12.26%	5.27K	5.5K	4.36%
<b>Shasta</b>	\$422.2M	\$462.8M	9.61%	\$32.8M	\$35.9M	9.45%	4.53K	4.8K	5.96%
<b>Yolo</b>	\$319.7M	\$385.9M	20.70%	\$25.7M	\$31.4M	22.17%	3.99K	4.8K	20.30%

Humboldt and Yolo Counties' assessment is two percent (2%). This means that a straight across comparison is impossible to make. Shasta County does not have a BID but the City of Redding does. At time of writing, it is unknown what impact this may or may not have on revenue to Shasta County.

Shown below are BID collection data over time for Humboldt and Mendocino Counties. At this time, VMC is unable to discern the reason for the 45% increase in Humboldt County's BID revenue for FY 2016. Anecdotally, it may be due to increased vigilance in collections on VRBO-type rentals and/or adjustments in tardy payments. Dividing Humboldt's collection number in half (to represent a 1% collection rate) shows the two counties track closely to 2017, when Mendocino shows a healthy increase and Humboldt an almost 6% decrease in collections.

An analysis of BID data for the 2017-18 fiscal year shows that revenue collections are divided between inland (Highway 101 and Highway 128) and coastal communities at a rate of 38% vs. 62%, respectively.

BID Collections by County YOY								
	2014	2015	2016	2017	Avg Growth YOY	%Gain/Loss		
<b>Mendocino</b>	\$695,092	\$769,383	\$817,772	\$880,238	8.20%	10.68%	6.28%	7.63%
<b>Humboldt</b>	\$1,287,917	\$1,139,397	\$1,660,572	\$1,561,388	17.10%	11.53%	45.74%	-5.97%

- OBJECTIVE: Year-over-year increase of sales tax receipts in Mendocino County**

The Dean Runyan report shows a positive YOY trend in sales tax receipts for the county.

**Tax Receipts Generated by Travel Spending (\$Million)**

	2000	2005	2007	2011	2014	2015	2016	2017
Local Tax Receipts	9.9	11.3	13.6	12.8	16.2	17.5	18.6	19.5
Loc. Visitor	6.9	7.8	8.9	8.4	10.6	11.7	12.2	13.0
Loc. Business or Emp.	2.9	3.6	4.7	4.4	5.7	5.8	6.4	6.5
State Tax Receipts	13.7	16.6	17.9	17.6	19.5	19.7	20.5	20.7
St. Visitor	10.1	12.3	13.4	13.4	13.7	13.7	14.1	14.3
St. Business or Emp.	3.5	4.3	4.5	4.2	5.8	6.0	6.4	6.3
Local & State Tax Receipts	23.5	28.0	31.5	30.3	35.7	37.2	39.0	40.1

- OBJECTIVE: Year-over-year increase in stakeholder survey response rate**

It has been VMC's practice to poll stakeholders who have participated in each of VMC's three umbrella festivals following the end of the survey. Several different methods have been utilized from sending survey forms via hard copy, via email, and sending surveys via SurveyMonkey. Over the years, surveys have been sent to all participants and to a random selection in order to gauge whether response rates vary. In all instances, response rates have been underwhelming. In order to increase response rate to surveys, staff needs to educate stakeholders about the importance of feedback so that VMC can evaluate the responses and better serve its stakeholder population. When meeting with stakeholders, VMC staff need to ask for quantifiable information.

Staff will research a standardized method to be adopted and develop a standard set of questions, which can provide year to year metrics for comparison purposes. The table below shows survey response rates over time and festivals.<sup>1</sup>

YOY Stakeholder Survey Response Rate										
	2018		2017		2016		2015		2014	
	# Sent	# Rec'd	# Sent	# Rec'd	# Sent	# Rec'd	# Sent	# Rec'd	# Sent	# Rec'd
Crab, Wine & Beer	21	5	28	2	86	11	104	20	140	18
Mushroom, Wine & Beer	N/A*	N/A	72	19	86	?	83	15	111	30
Almost Fringe	83	34	71	13	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Party for the Planet	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	?	7	22	4	25	5

<sup>1</sup> N/A refers to surveys for which no responses have been located or festivals for which surveys do not exist due to the festival being discontinued.

**INITIATIVE: Increase tourism revenue through the development and implementation of the annual integrated marketing, public relations, and sales plan.**

Activities during FY 2017/18 were based on: 1) the annual [Marketing Plan](#); and 2) the three-year [Strategic Plan](#).

The Director of Marketing & Media (DMM) worked closely with the Public Relations agency of record, KOLI Communications, and marketing consultants, TheorySF to achieve the goals described in the Marketing Plan.

TheorySF worked closely with the DMM and other Marketing team members to develop a new brand for Visit Mendocino County, a new website, and create the material for a brand launch campaign: elements all designed to raise awareness of Mendocino County as a tourism destination among target audiences of millennials and gen-Xers in VMC's top target markets of the greater Bay Area and Sacramento/Central Valley.

**INITIATIVE: Improve data-driven decision making through increased participation & “buy in” from all of our partners.**

**A.** When determining the elements of the website build, the marketing team (TSF and DMM) concluded that a reporting mechanism for stakeholders would be essential for building VMC's awareness of the impact of the site on stakeholders' businesses. As of the end of the 2017/18 fiscal year, the marketing team is finalizing a monthly report to stakeholders for whom VMC has an email address that will inform them of:

1. The total number of visitors to the VMC website
2. The number of referrals from the VMC site to the stakeholder's website
3. The number of click-throughs made from the VMC site to the stakeholder's site

This reporting will provide VMC with solid metrics and a basis to develop an educational forum for stakeholders to educate about how to improve their site visitation, referral traffic, and brand messaging.

**B.** The PR team (Koleen Hamblin and DMM) continues to communicate with stakeholders on a monthly basis informing them of high profile media stories. The PR team also offers stakeholders the opportunity to submit content and information for Visit California's dissemination.

**C.** In the second quarter of the fiscal year, the DMM, working with a Filemaker consultant, established a customized Filemaker database in which the VMC team can record details of stakeholder properties, businesses, contacts, Hotel Adoption Program visits, facilities, and more. Working with the VMC team, the DMM created three distinct areas in which to record information that will create a record for the future.

**D.** In an effort to inform partners and stakeholders about ways in which they can work with VMC, the DMM developed a “stakeholder one-sheet” (see Appendix 2) to act as a talking point when visiting new and existing partners. The VMC team uses the one-sheet on Hotel Adoption Program visits. The VMC team actively identifies new businesses opening in the county making a point to visit properties, meet the owners, and record the information in the team's FileMaker database and MailChimp email resource.

The Director of Tourism Development (DTD) has facilitated bringing four new county hotels into the travel trade fold. The Noyo Harbor Inn has entered into contracts with at least one tour operator to market the hotel internationally. Mendocino Grove has had more success, entering into three contracts and are already getting reservations. The property is also being featured in both the internal and external newsletters prepared by the

French office of Visit CA. They also hosted a Belgium tour operator. The Inn at Newport Ranch is likewise now working with some receptives and the Harbor House is establishing contacts.

#### **INITIATIVE: Develop a data sharing process that offers context and insights for partners**

During the FY, the PR team sends a monthly “PR Update” to stakeholders that highlights some of the top media hits for the month. The newsletter gets consistent engagement and has proved to be a good vehicle to communicate actions and successes with partners.

VMC sends out a monthly newsletter to consumers and those partners on the mailing list to inform them of upcoming events and other visitor-worthy news. In addition, the VMC team sends a bi-monthly round-up of upcoming inland and coastal events to partners. This has proved to be very popular.

Additionally, VMC staff regularly attends Chamber and other events around the county allowing for personal interaction with stakeholders.

The DTD sends out periodic requests alerting stakeholders concerning upcoming travel trade and consumer events with opportunities to participate to promote their individual businesses.

#### **IMPERATIVE: Cultivate VMC’s relationships & collaborations**

- **OBJECTIVE: YOY increase in number of events launched and reaching self sufficiency**

Since creating the Strategic Plan, the Board has altered the mechanism by which it supports events. It has ceased granting funds to individual events and instead VMC actively supports the launch of new events by the County’s “Visit” organizations, Chambers of Commerce, wine associations by the dissemination of monies to support new visitor-facing events as well as in-kind publicity, inclusion in press releases when appropriate, and volunteering at events. Twice annually, benefiting organizations will be required to report on how monies have been spent and VMC will then make a determination about the continuation of the funding.

Staff recommends that the Board rewrite this objective to reflect its new strategy for implementing this Imperative.

The ‘Grant Fund’ program was started in 2016 by then Executive Director Brent Haugen. The program awarded up to \$2500 to qualifying applicants who were creating or growing events geared toward attracting tourists into Mendocino County for multi-day stays. Grant Fund applications were processed through the Festival Committee and details on the committee’s decision are available in the minutes for the review date shown in the table. Of the fifteen applications submitted, eleven events received funding (seven inland and four on the coast). Many of the events funded through program occurred once.

Regarding YOY performance for recurring events funded by this program:

- The Ukiah Homebrew festival, which received funds in 2017, its inaugural year, is now in its second year.
- This fund provided continued support for Taste of Mendocino, a San Francisco event at which county businesses have a presence and promote their businesses, and the county, directly to consumers.

- Support was provided for the Anderson Valley Winegrowers Association as it moved the popular Pinot Noir Festival to a larger venue geared towards a younger demographic and increased offerings.
- The Dystopian Prom, an anchor event for the Almost Fringe festival, received funding to increase the scope of their event. Event organizer, Blaze Birge of the Flynn Creek Circus contacted staff after the event emailing, “...Thank you [VMC] for all you do to support economic and community growth in the county. The

2017-18 Grant Fund Spreadsheet					
starting balance \$25,815 (\$25,450 spent)					
A	B	C	D	E	F
		2017-18 Fund		Spent to date	Balance
	This year's balance (20K 2017-8) (5.815K 2016-17)	\$25,815		(\$25,450)	\$365
App Rec'd	From	Comm. Review	Awarded	Amount	For
8/5/2017	UC Hopland	8/22/2017 3/5/18	Yes	2,500.00	UC Hopland Mushroom Events of Nov 4- MWB
8/14/2017	Good Farm Fund/Homebrew Fest	8/22/2017	Yes	2,500.00	Inaugural Homebrew Festival in Ukiah- MWB
8/22/2017	Mendocino Art Center	8/22/2017	Yes	2,000.00	Mendocino Art Center, Talk by Phil Ross- MWB
10/20/2017	Ukiah Fundraiser for fire relief		yes	2,500.00	November 4 fundraiser at Ukiah Fairgrounds*
10/27/2017	Mendocino Winegrowers Inc	11/21/2017	yes	2,500.00	Taste of Mendocino, in SF
11/20/2017	Anderson Valley Winegrowers Inc	11/21/2017	yes	1,250.00	Promotional Video AVPNF
11/21/2017	Near & Arnold School of Performing Arts	11/21/2017	no		Holly Near & Friends concert 12-16-17
1/21/2018	Circus Mecca & Flynn Creek Circus	3/5/2018	yes	2,200.00	Fringe Fest Ball, dinner show and prom
1/26/2018	Alleyway Art Project	3/5/2018	yes	2,500.00	Ft Bragg alleyway beautification/social media prj
2/16/2018	Redwood Metalfest	3/5/2018	yes	2,500.00	August music festival in Ukiah
3/4/2018	First Friday Artwalk Ukiah	3/5/2018	no		Art walk app and promo
2/16/2018	Women's Empowerment Summit	3/5/2018	no		Seminar aimed at promoting women
5/10/2018	Highway 101	5/15/2018	no		Creation of website and printed collateral
5/7/2018	Kelley House Emporium	5/15/2018	yes	2,500.00	Fundraising 'Speakeasy' event geared to Bay Area and Sac Visotors
5/10/2018	Taste of Redwood Valley	5/15/2018	yes	2,500.00	Advertising for Taste of Redwood Valley event
	<b>Breakdown:</b>				
	<b>15 apps rec'd; 11 awarded (7 inland, 4 coast)</b>				

support of the festival was crucial to launching what looks like a new annual event that supports tourism, community and business collaborations. Good work!”

- **OBJECTIVE: YOY increase in “opportunities” page visitation on VMC website**

MCTC’s internal website, [MendocinoTourism.org](http://MendocinoTourism.org), is the repository for information, agendas, minutes, reports, plans, and research relating to the Mendocino County Tourism Commission. One of the site pages is “Opportunities,” where notifications about MCTC Board of Directors and BID Advisory Board seat openings are posted, among other notices. The VMC ED will ensure that stakeholders are made aware of the page in the monthly report to stakeholders, which will be implemented in the fall of 2018. Going forward, staff will monitor page visitation with Google Analytics; add opportunities such as calls for festival events; trade show opportunities; and more; and also use the page as a talking point during HAP visits.

- **OBJECTIVE: YOY increase in new applicants for BID and MCTC Board positions and committee membership**

Under direction of the Board of Directors, the Executive Director initiated the search process in order to meet the Mendocino County deadline of September 15 for lodging seat applicants. VMC staff recommends this Objective be reworded to change “YOY increase” verbiage to “Solicit new applicants....”



**INITIATIVE: Foster collaboration and county-wide alignment by creating and developing the “go to” website for all tourism stakeholders.**

Prior to any work on branding, collateral, or website, TSF undertook a series of research studies to ascertain awareness of Mendocino County among the target audience in the greater SF Bay Area. Once the results were in, with the determination that awareness was very low, the Marketing team embarked on the development of a creative approach for advertising and marketing collateral designed with the target audience and geo-locations in mind. The Board approved the creative look and feel on October 25, 2017, and following this watershed moment, the Marketing team began the preliminary work to completely rebuild the VMC website. TSF developed website page tables, a sitemap, and timeline, which served as roadmaps for the design and development of the site. Website development began in December 2017.

Over the course of the next quarter (Q3), the Marketing team worked to create a new Wordpress site on a testing platform, developed custom code, transferred data and checked all content for errant code. By the end of the quarter, the site was at Alpha stage of development.

The Marketing team announced the launch of the new VMC website on May 9, 2018. During the quarter (Q4) and prior to the launch, the DMM and VMC’s Social Media Coordinator worked closely with TSF’s technical team to:

- alpha/beta test the site
- curate images and apply to listings and site pages
- add and update business listings
- review formatting for consistency
- roll blog posts into MendoMoments
- curate social media posts for the home page
- create sharable social media videos, which are also posted on the home page

Following launch, the VMC team took an active role in reviewing the site and providing/suggesting updates. The Marketing team is closely monitoring website performance and adjusting home page content to reflect seasonality and trends. The Marketing team is establishing a benchmark set of analytic goals to assess site performance, demographics, and psychographics of users. Metrics from these analytics will be reported on a regular basis. The team is finalizing a stakeholder report to be launched in August 2018 that VMC will use to assess site effectiveness, traffic flow, and outbound referrals to stakeholders.

**INITIATIVE: Strengthen regional tourism relationships to leverage broader marketing opportunities**

On a regular basis, the PR team develops and submits content on a variety of topics to Visit California as part of Visit California’s Media Relations program. Content submissions fall under a diverse array of subjects: some examples include unusual ice cream, top selfie stops, and clear night skies. This is an ongoing project.

The North Coast Tourism Council (NCTC) is one of the eight rural regions, fully funded by Visit CA and regional matches, to encourage tourism “Beyond the Gateways”. It is composed of Mendocino, Humboldt, Del Norte and Lake Counties. Mendocino County contributes \$11,000 out of a budget of about \$135,000 or about 12 % of the total. For that investment Mendocino County gets extensive international marketing and literally hundreds of leads from travel professionals and the Visit CA international offices. Leads represent inquiries from tour operators, receptives, travel agents, and the general public about vacationing in Mendocino County.

Since the Director of Tourism Development is the sole sales representative for the NCTC, Mendocino County receives a presence far in excess of its investment. Mendocino County does not have any budget for international marketing and its investment in the NCTC enables it to market to the countries represented by Visit California. Visit CA has a budget of more than \$150 million and its primary mission is marketing to the international and out of state visitor. They have offices in 14 countries.

Mendocino County is not an isolated place. We realize tourists often visit more than one northern CA location and usually begin their journey at one of our main gateways of San Francisco, Oakland or Sacramento. It is therefore essential that we coordinate and cooperate with our regional friends.

Towards the goal of regional coordination and cooperation, two regional itineraries are currently on the newly developed and enhanced NCTC web site, [www.northcoastca.com](http://www.northcoastca.com). One is a beercation and the other is a one or two night excursion from Oakland to Mendocino. Additionally, a new package was just developed due to a personal visit with a German tour operator.

As an example of how regional relationships are entwined and provide synergistic benefits, the DTD, representing both the NCTC and Shasta Cascade (another of the eight rural regions created by Visit CA), participated in a sales mission to Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany with Explore Marketing in June.

The participants were a small group, designed to maximize interaction with important tour operators. Participants included San Mateo County/Silicon Valley, Lake Tahoe, the Red and White Fleet in SF, Hornblower Cruises, the SF Academy of Science, Monterey Bay Aquarium, Leisure Pass and Incredible Adventures.

Mendocino County has benefitted by the sales activities of the NCTC by 12 local hotels entering into over 35 contracts with receptives and tour operators to book several thousand hotel room nights in the county last year.

Other examples of Mendocino County exposure through NCTC include participating in a contract with a Canadian publication to be in an insert into the two Canadian national newspapers as well as video on 10 jumbo trons in downtown Toronto as well as on the ABC Jumbotron in Times Square in NY. There are also over 6,000 Facebook followers and every four posts is based on Mendocino County. Regular newsletters and blog posts also feature the county.

In addition to those mentioned above, outreach and coordination has also occurred with Sonoma and Napa Counties, Los Angeles, San Luis Obispo as well as the Visit CA Mexican, Canadian and French offices. The NCTC was featured in 10 China trainings in 10 Chinese cities. Visit CA conducted in-depth trainings to travel professionals in 10 Chinese cities. The purpose of the trainings was to familiarize the travel trade about the various regions in California. Each training involved a PowerPoint presentation and talk prepared by the DTD about the north coast, including Mendocino County.

During the year over 2,000 travel agents and over 200 tour operators were personally visited and trained by the DTD about the assets of the four counties. (Travel agents and promotional travel magazines are still the primary source of bookings in the international market)

This training is critical as international visitors tend to stay longer, spend more, book further out and don't necessarily arrive during peak periods. By familiarizing front line and other travel personnel with our area, they are more likely to recommend a visit to their clients.

#### **INITIATIVE: Proactively educate and communicate with all tourism stakeholders**

The PR team communicates with tourism stakeholders on a monthly basis, highlighting the top media coverage of the county in national and international press. The DMM uses the VMC Partners at Work Facebook group to also share media stories and other items of general interest. In addition, the DMM ensures stakeholders receive any articles that result from media FAM visits.

VMC staff has identified meeting schedules for other tourism-facing agencies and organizations in the county: "Visit" organizations and Chambers of Commerce. Staff attends the Ukiah Chamber of Commerce meetings.

#### **IMPERATIVE: Raise awareness of the Mendocino County experience**

- **OBJECTIVE: Year-over-year increase Mendocino County awareness score**

In 2017, research was undertaken by TSF to establish a baseline for awareness of the County as a tourism destination. Research revealed that awareness of the county was very low among target audience and location. In the second quarter, VMC worked with TheorySF to refine the proposed branding look and feel to be used in all future digital and print collateral. The rebranding effort will elevate awareness of Mendocino County as a destination worthy of visitation by the target audience of millennials and Gen-Xers.

In FY 2018/19, TSF will again undertake a research initiative to measure awareness against the baseline. Results will be reported to the Marketing Committee and Board of Directors.

To support the Mushroom Festival in the month following the wildfires in October 2017, TheorySF developed a digital ad campaign that produced more than 720,000 impressions, 60,234 clickthroughs, and 211 visitors digging down to lodging listings. The click-through cost (per click) for the campaign was \$47 with the industry average running between \$1-\$1.50/CTC. And, in January 2018, in support of the Crab Festival, TheorySF developed and ran a targeted psychographic and demographic online effort. The average click-through rate for this type of campaign is 1/10 of 1%. The CTR for the Crab campaign was 10% with the worst performing digital banner at 2%. The targeted ad buy was 17 cents per click. The campaign's positioning for festival attendance brought 70,000 people to the site with 922,000 impressions (SF and Sacramento); a 9.97% clickthrough rate on large creative and 2% on smaller digital. With a 7% conversion ratio, the cost per activity was \$2.

Social media also plays an important role in creating and raising brand awareness. The figure below indicates a rise in engagement per post on Facebook YOY and an impressive 250+% increase in Likes and Likes per Post on Instagram. Each of these metrics are impactful measurements of VMC's continued success in the employment of social media to raise brand awareness. For Facebook, the most important measurement of

success is Impressions per Post, because that indicates viewers are engaging with the content by either liking it, commenting on it, or sharing it. Similarly, with Instagram, Average Likes per Post is the key metric for the same reasons.

Social Media Results YOY FY 2016 v. FY 2017					
	FACEBOOK			INSTAGRAM	
	FY 2016	FY 2017		FY 2016	FY 2017
Impressions	2,220,871	1,405,990	Followers	Not tracked	10,240
Engagement	80,055	70,084	Comments	377	651
Posts	237	108	Likes	18,028	40,015
Impressions/Post	9,371	13,263	Posts	114	95
Engagements/Post	338	661	Avg Likes/Post	158	421
Fan Base	56,185	57,157			

During Q4, the Marketing team worked on a series of videos that were deployed on social media channels. The videos’ common theme is “This is How You Mendo” and they highlight iconic Mendocino County experiences such as driving through a tree, riding a horse on the beach, kissing a giraffe, and more. The videos may be viewed at [this link](https://mctc.box.com/s/dyhbznchf6m6ym5lw8zvwu6gu70ohnl7). (https://mctc.box.com/s/dyhbznchf6m6ym5lw8zvwu6gu70ohnl7)

- **OBJECTIVE: Year-over-year increases in impressions and ad equivalency**

The figure below indicates the picture for the entire fiscal year and showing a substantial increase in all PR-related areas for which goals were delineated. As noted, FY 2017 shows a 200% increase in FAM visits to the county.

PR Results YOY FY 2016 v. FY 2017					
	FY 2016 Goals	FY 2016 Actual	FY 2017 Goals	FY 2017 Actual	YOY % Gain/Loss
Press releases	11	11	11	17	54%
Impressions	110 million	592.4 million	150 million	1.401 billion	136%
Ad Equivalency	\$4.6 million	\$47.2 million	\$6.6 million	\$77.1 million	63%
FAM Programs	18	31	18	62	200%
Trade Shows	2	2	2	3	150%
Media Missions	2	1	0	0	-100%

The PR team is pleased to highlight the following media visits to the county for the fiscal year:

DATE	NAME	OUTLET	FOCUS
7/10-7/13	Abigail Tegnalia	Huffington Post	Coast/Inland
7/13-7/14	Katie O'Riley	Sierra Club Magazine	Inland
7/24-7/26	Sharon Boorstein	Los Angeles Times	Coast
8/1	Karen Kim	Visit Cal/Scandinavia	County
8/2-8/3	Ashwin Bhardwji	Daily Telegraph/UK	Coast
8/25-8/27	Carlos Gomez	Travel & Leisure/Mex.	Coast
9/7-9/8	Alexandria Wilkins	Liberty London/UK	Coast
9/10-9/11	John Sowerby	Manchester Conf./UK	Coast
9/14-9/15	Eva Bukuvec	Kronen Zeitung/Aust.	County
	Tina Milacek	TIP Verlag/Aust.	County
	Julie Wolak	Camping Review/Aust.	County
	Brigit Braunrath	Kurier/Aust.	County
9/19-9/20	Janel Andronico	Bay Area Life/ABC TV	County
9/25-9/27	Roshonda Russell	travelwiththereussels	Coast
9/28-9/30	Bob Howells	Westways	County
	Barbara Beckley	Freelance	County
	Paula Dao	Backpacker.com	County
	Jayne Lamm	Theculturemap.com	County
	Leslie Long	Time Out!	County
10/4-10/8	Colleen Kelly	Family Travel TV	County
10/17-10/19	Courtney Travin	Resident Magazine	Coast
	Frances Miller	Luxury Travel Mag	Coast
	Cristabel Milbanke	Spears 400 Travel/UK	Coast
	Lucille Howe	Freelance/UK	Coast
	Valerio Negril	Luxury Travel/Mex.	Coast
	Jonathan Perez	Robb Report/Mex.	Coast
10/23-10/25	Bill Tomicki	Entrée	Coast
11/11-11/12	Christine Camarello	Freelance	Inland
11/27-29	Jennie Nunn	Freelance	Coast
12/15-12/17	Jose Sosa	Radio Mexico	County
12/10-12/12	Angela Aiello	iyellow/Canada	County
12/10-12/12	Tee Go	thatsotee.com/CN	County
12/10-12/12	Joana Lourenco	Canadian Traveller/CN	County
12/10-12/12	Chelsea Broderick	Notable/Canada	County
12/15-12/16	Brandon Butler	Freelance	Coast
12/30-1/2	Leilani LaBong	7x7	Coast
1/3-1/4	Nancy Brown	Social Media Infl.	Coast
1/6-1/8	Gillian Houston	Social Media Infl.	County

1/11-1/15	Katie Loweth	Red Tricycle	Coast
1/16-1/18	Daniel Schleffler	Freelance/NY Times	County
1/24-128	Betsy Andrews	Food & Wine	County
1/26-128	Emma Krasov	Freelance	Coast
1/26-1/28	Sara Schneider	Sunset	Coast
1/26-1/28	Susan Ellicott	Freelance	Coast
2/18-2/19	Johnny Mizzilli	O Estado Sao Paulo	Inland
2/18-2/19	Clube Pladar	O Estado Sao Paulo	Inland
3/18-3/19	Eve O'Neill	Sunset	Coast
3/28-4/1	Nancy Bouchard	Backpacker/Alaska	Coast
4/17	Sean Hillen	Global Itineraries/UK	County
4/19-4/22	Alison Bailin	Uptown Magazine	Coast
4/25-4/27	Lindsay Smith	Modern Luxury Mag.	Coast
5/14-15	Tim Bentinck	Mail on Sunday/UK	Inland
5/18-20	Marylynn Schotland	Urban Bliss/BC	County
5/22-23	Gabrielle Jaffe	Boundless Magazine	Coast
6/8-20	Jorge Gallegos	mmanchat.com	Coast
6/10-12	Kristine Dworkin	Trekaroo	Coast
6/21-6/23	Sarah Barrell	Nat. Geo Traveler/UK	Coast
6/21-22	Huan Ko	Lonely Planet/Korea	Coast
6/21-22	Jeanne Cooper	San Francisco Chron.	Coast
6/21-24	Nathan Lump	Travel & Leisure	County
6/24-26	Shannon Smith	Sacramento Parent	Coast
6/27-28	Ruy Senderos	Aire Magazine/Mexico	Coast

- **OBJECTIVE: Year-over-year increase in experience perception score on in-market visitor survey**

At the time of creating the Strategic Plan, the determination was made that an in-market survey would be conducted every other year and is due to take place during the 2018/19 fiscal year. This item is separate from prospective visitor and awareness surveys undertaken by the Marketing team and falls under the purview of the Visitor Services Committee.

**INITIATIVE: Increase Mendocino County brand awareness and positive perception**

The Marketing team, working with the Marketing Committee, produced a set of brand standards and guidelines that have been instituted across visitor-, stakeholder-, and internal-facing collateral, trade and consumer show displays, and communications. As new collateral is developed, for example an updated visitor guide, the brand standards will be applied.

Following the website launch in May 2018, the Marketing team worked on a brand launch campaign kick-off in July 2018 around the greater SF Bay Area. Creative includes:

- strategic placement of branding on ten electronic billboards from Vallejo to San Jose
- bus wraps deployed on three SF Muni bus routes: along the Embarcadero to the Fisherman’s Wharf area; the 1 California line that runs from downtown through the city to the ocean; and a line on Market Street to the Upper Haight
- taxi toppers on vehicles that traverse the city and beyond (e.g., SFO)
- bus “kings” on the sides of SF Muni buses
- a robust online campaign designed to drive traffic to the website



In August 2018, the Marketing team and committee will determine marketing programs for the 2018/19 fiscal year. These will include online and offline (billboards, print advertising, and others) campaigns; marketing initiatives for Feast Mendocino to include website splash page, online campaign, rebranding; promotional campaigns; pop-up events; and other creative marketing outlets, all designed to raise brand awareness.

Working with the Director of Tourism Development, the DMM initiated the purchase of a variety of swag items for media giveaways in order to increase brand awareness among influencers (media). These include logoed key fobs, Chico™ bags, shot glasses, wine stoppers, pens, cosmetic bags, and license plate holders. Under consideration is a move to replace the green bags given out at consumer and trade shows with a branded orange bag. The Director of Tourism Development ordered branded displays, pull-ups, and other trade/consumer show items.

During the fiscal year the DTD and staff attended consumer and trade shows in San Diego, Santa Clara, Sacramento, San Jose, and others. Several thousand email addresses were obtained for VMC’s data base. Many stakeholders participated either by attending the event or donating prize packages.

**INITIATIVE: Work with partners to develop, promote and grow strong and beneficial tourism activities and events**

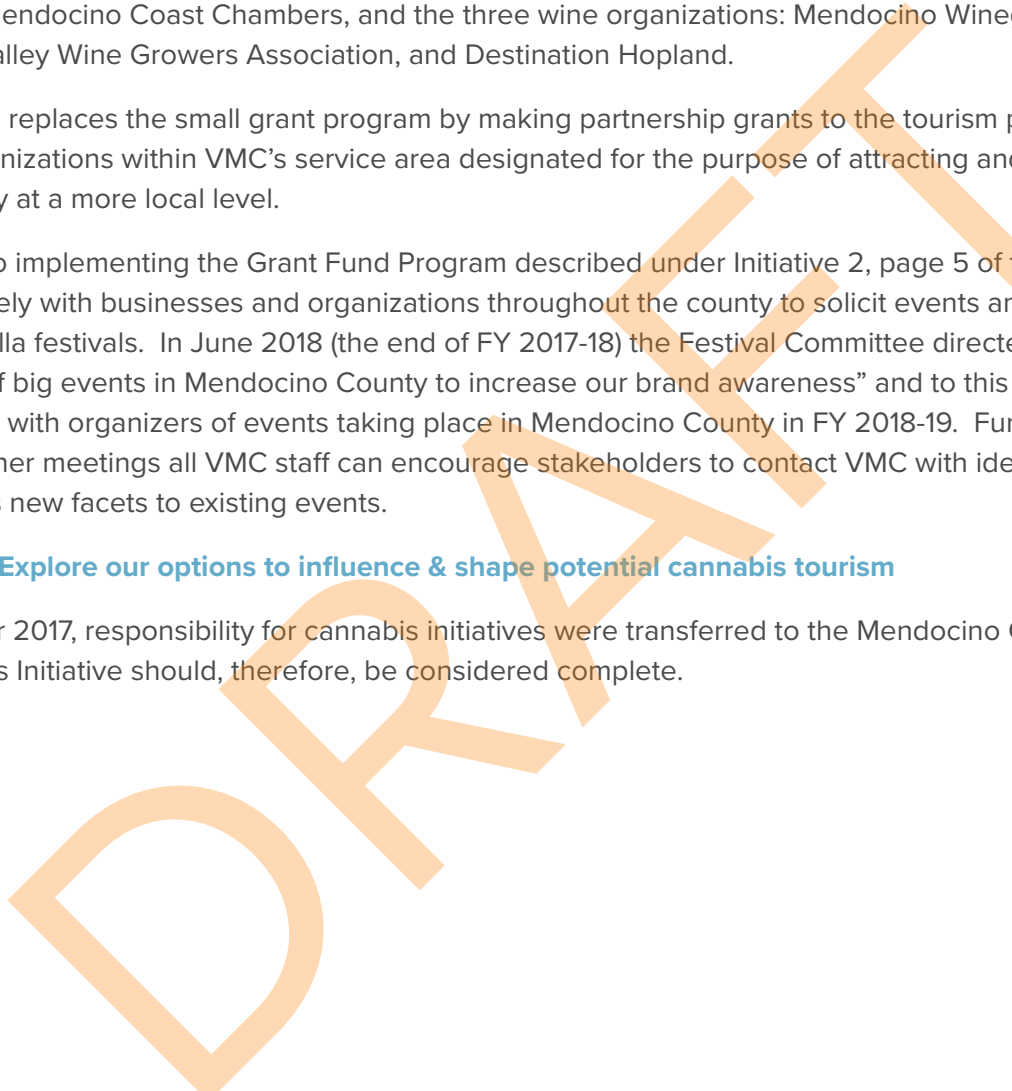
In Q4, the MCTC Board of Directors approved a change in the funding of events within the county. The budget of \$71,400 for funding requests for events and programs in FY 2018/19 will be allocated to visitor-serving organizations in the county that include the “Visit” organizations, the Mendocino Arts Council, the Redwood Coast and Mendocino Coast Chambers, and the three wine organizations: Mendocino Winegrowers Inc., Anderson Valley Wine Growers Association, and Destination Hopland.

This revision replaces the small grant program by making partnership grants to the tourism promotion and visitor serving organizations within VMC’s service area designated for the purpose of attracting and/or serving visitors to the county at a more local level.

In addition to implementing the Grant Fund Program described under Initiative 2, page 5 of this report, staff worked closely with businesses and organizations throughout the county to solicit events and specials for VMC’s three umbrella festivals. In June 2018 (the end of FY 2017-18) the Festival Committee directed staff to “leverage audiences of big events in Mendocino County to increase our brand awareness” and to this end staff will form partnerships with organizers of events taking place in Mendocino County in FY 2018-19. Further, during HAP visits and other meetings all VMC staff can encourage stakeholders to contact VMC with ideas for new events, or to discuss new facets to existing events.

**INITIATIVE: Explore our options to influence & shape potential cannabis tourism**

In December 2017, responsibility for cannabis initiatives were transferred to the Mendocino County Promotional Alliance. This Initiative should, therefore, be considered complete.





# Appendix 1

## **SUMMARY SALES PLAN FOR FY 18/19**

### **JULY 2018 – CA State Fair.**

The theme was Seabiscuit/Ridgewood Ranch/inland Mendocino. The Mendocino County booth was awarded both a gold medal and a special award for best consumer experience. An estimated 7000 – 10,000 people visited our booth.

### **AUGUST 2018– Visit CA sales mission to New Zealand and Australia.**

Visits to tour operators, travel agents and travel influencers in three cities. The Mendocino County Director of Tourism Development will represent the North Coast Tourism Council which is composed on the four northern counties, Mendocino, Humboldt, Lake and Del Norte Counties. Leads obtained will be pursued.

### **SEPTEMBER 2018- PET EXPO**

An event in Santa Clara which will focus on our pet friendliness.

### **SEPTEMBER 2018 – Ghirardelli Square Chocolate Festival**

A two -day event focusing on high income residents of San Francisco and tourists.

### **SEPEEMBER 2018 – VANCOUVER TRAVEL AND ADVENTURE SHOW**

Visit Mendocino is sharing a booth with Shasta. This will be the first consumer facing event ever done in BC. Canada is by far our number one international destination.

### **NOVEMBER 2018 – NATIONAL TOUR ASSOCIATION**

This is another North Coast Tourism Council paid for event designed to influence more group business to the region and Mendocino County.

### **JANUARY 2019 – SPORTSMEN SHOW IN SACRAMENTO**

This four- day event at Cal Expo is a partnership with Humboldt County. It attracts consumers who are interested in the outdoor experiences we offer.

### **JANUARY 2019 – AMERICAN BUS ASSOCIATION**

The second trade show to encourage bus and group tours to Mendocino County. This is also a North Coast Tourism paid for event.

### **JANUARY 2019 – MID-ATLANTIC SUMMIT**

An opportunity to meet with international tour operators who usually do not come to the US. The North Coast pays for this opportunity.

### **FEBRUARY 2019 – OUTLOOK FORUM**

This Visit CA event enables interaction with Visit CA as well as representatives of their 14 international offices. The Director of Tourism Development attends on behalf of the North Coast Tourism Council.

### **FEBRUARY 2019 – RTO LOS ANGELES**

Another North Coast event designed to interact with mostly Asian tour operators located in SOCA.

**FEBRUARY 2019 – LOS ANGELES TRAVEL AND ADVENTURE SHOW**

SOCA is our third market and Mendocino County does a consumer show there annually, one year in San Diego and the next in Los Angeles. Several thousand potential visitors are reached.

**FEBRUARY 2019 – GO WEST**

This North Coast event focuses on international operators who are interested in sending visitors to the 14 Western states. The North Coast partners with Shasta at this event. Mendocino County greatly benefits from the leads generated.

**MARCH 2019 – BAY AREA TRAVEL AND ADVENTURE SHOW**

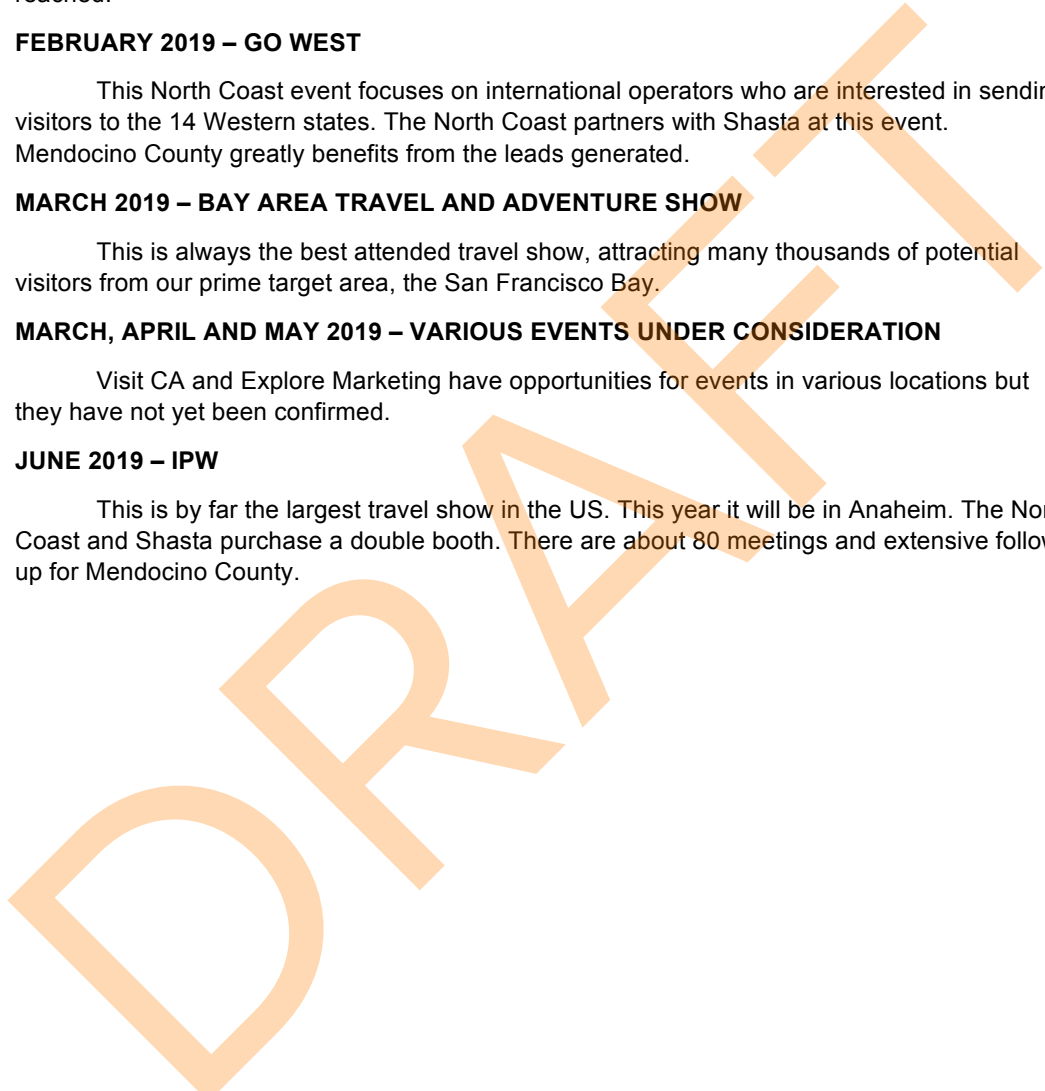
This is always the best attended travel show, attracting many thousands of potential visitors from our prime target area, the San Francisco Bay.

**MARCH, APRIL AND MAY 2019 – VARIOUS EVENTS UNDER CONSIDERATION**

Visit CA and Explore Marketing have opportunities for events in various locations but they have not yet been confirmed.

**JUNE 2019 – IPW**

This is by far the largest travel show in the US. This year it will be in Anaheim. The North Coast and Shasta purchase a double booth. There are about 80 meetings and extensive follow up for Mendocino County.



# Appendix 2

## VISIT MENDOCINO COUNTY

**Mission:** Visit Mendocino County stewards and amplifies the total Mendocino County experience.



### What VMC Does

- Promotes and markets Mendocino County to potential visitors
- Gets the word out via Public Relations and media visits
- Partners with trade organizations to build strength in numbers
- Brands Mendocino County as a destination

### Just the Facts

- In 2017, visitors to Mendocino County generated \$441.7 million in travel spending
- In Mendocino County, tourism generated \$40.1 million in local and state tax receipts
- Tourism is Mendocino County's number one employer providing more than 7,000 jobs in 2017

### Be Our Partner

- Take advantage of VMC's advertising opportunities
- Host visiting media so they can experience Mendocino County first-hand
- Take part in our annual festivals and join us at trade shows

### Tell the World

- More than 13,500 subscribers read our newsletter each month
- Spread your news to our growing audience of Facebook fans and Instagram followers
- Keep us up to date with events, photos and news about changes in your business



# Appendix 3

## Visit Mendocino County: Strategic Direction 2017/18-2019/20

<b>CLARITY</b>	<b>Vision</b> Enriching experiences for our guests, enhanced lifestyle for our residents, and stability and diversity for our economy	<b>Mission</b> Visit Mendocino County stewards and amplifies the total Mendocino County experience.	<b>Values</b> <b>Transparency</b> We foster trust through openness and integrity. <b>Accountability</b> We are outcome-oriented and professional. <b>Partnership</b> We create alignment through inclusive and meaningful relationships. <b>Community</b> We contribute to the fabric of Mendocino County. <b>Innovation</b> Our creativity reflects the uniqueness of our cultures and landscapes.	<b>Reputation Leader</b> We motivate and facilitate the tourism community. <b>Accessible</b> We welcome—and are responsive to—input from community members and stakeholders. <b>Collaborative</b> We actively seek engagement and collaboration with our stakeholders and partners. <b>Bold</b> We deliver on smart, effective, and forward-thinking ideas.	<b>Position</b> In order to support our stakeholders, generate economic activity for county residents through tourism, and inspire our visitors, Visit Mendocino County: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consistently markets the entire county and its assets.</li> <li>Creates, develops, and manages brand awareness for the county.</li> <li>Connects people and organizations to opportunities.</li> <li>Provides information to in-county partners and tourism resources to the industry.</li> <li>Delivers a robust and sustainable return on investment.</li> </ul>
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<b>FOCUS</b>	<b>Imperatives</b> Demonstrate and strengthen VMC's contribution to county economic and community vitality	<b>Objectives</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bid assessment growth at 5% over average of top 3 competitors</li> <li>Year-over-year increase of sales tax receipts in Mendocino County</li> <li>Year-over-year increase in stakeholder survey response rate</li> </ul>	<b>INITIATIVES</b>
	Cultivate VMC's relationships and collaborations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Year-over-year increase in number of events launched and reaching self-sufficiency</li> <li>Year-over-year increase in "opportunities" page visitation on VMC website</li> <li>Year-over-year increase in new applicants for BID and MCTC Board positions and committee membership</li> </ul>	
	Raise awareness of the Mendocino County experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Year-over-year increase Mendocino County awareness score</li> <li>Year-over-year increases in impressions and ad equivalency</li> <li>Year-over-year increase in experience perception score on in-market visitor survey</li> </ul>	
			<b>ACTION</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase tourism revenue through the development and implementation of the annual integrated marketing, public relations, and sales plan.</li> <li>Improve data-driven decision making through increased participation and "buy in" from all of our partners.</li> <li>Develop a data-sharing process that offers context and insights for partners.</li> <li>Foster collaboration and county-wide alignment by creating and developing the "go to" website for all tourism stakeholders.</li> <li>Strengthen regional tourism relationships to leverage broader marketing opportunities.</li> <li>Proactively educate and communicate with all tourism stakeholders.</li> <li>Increase Mendocino County brand awareness and positive perception.</li> <li>Work with partners to develop, promote and grow strong and beneficial tourism activities and events.</li> <li>Explore our options to influence and shape potential cannabis tourism.</li> </ul>

# Appendix 4

## Glossary of Terms

This glossary is included to explain terms used in this plan and in other reports and documents issued by Visit Mendocino County. While staff and contractors are familiar with the terminology, some of the terms need a brief explanation.

<b>Advertising equivalency</b>	This dollar figure represents the amount of money it would take to purchase the equivalent in advertising space in a print publication or digital equivalent. The VMC PR team uses a 1:1 ratio unlike many PR firms who use a multiplier to boost numbers.
<b>Impressions</b>	The number of views a print or digital article is estimated to reach based on circulation and subscription data.
<b>Media Placement</b>	A story (print or digital) about an aspect of Mendocino County that arises from PR efforts.
<b>Media Mission</b>	A trip by the PR team to a particular market, e.g., Vancouver BC, to meet local journalists and writers and inspire visitation to and coverage of Mendocino County.
<b>Releases</b>	This can either refer to a press release or a “hot sheet,” which is distributed to the press and highlights new and upcoming businesses and openings in the county.
<b>FAM</b>	Familiarization tour or trip. Media FAMs involve members of the media who are vetted by the PR team prior to a visit. Sales FAMs apply to tour group operators who are visiting the county with the aim of including Mendocino in tour packages.
<b>Millennials</b>	The segment of the population born between the early and the mid-1990s to early 2000s. Also known as Generation Y, they are the children of baby boomers and older Gen Xers.
<b>Gen-Xers</b>	The population segment born between the early-to-mid 1960s and ending birth years ranging from the late 1970s to early 1980s. Children of the Baby Boomers.
<b>Baby Boomers</b>	Those born between the early-to-mid 1940s up to about 1964.
<b>Content marketing</b>	Content marketing is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience — and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action.
<b>Google Analytics</b>	A reporting tool provided by Google that can be used to analyze traffic, ad words, digital marketing campaigns, demographics, etc. for VisitMendocino.com.
<b>Facebook Insights</b>	A reporting tool for analyzing traffic, advertising campaigns, and other activities on Facebook.
<b>Activity Provider</b>	A person located in a tourist destination who provides a unique, local activity for a visitor to do while on vacation. Examples of such activities include kayaking, bike riding or arts and crafts, among others.
<b>Free Independent Traveler (FIT)</b>	A person or a couple that is not traveling with a group; usually references foreign travelers out on their own (Foreign Independent Traveler).

<b>Inbound Tour Operator</b>	Someone specializing in providing tours to overseas travelers to a destination, either operating the tour themselves or working through established partnerships with local suppliers.
<b>Receptives</b>	In effect, “middle men” between tour operators and hotel/lodging owners, chiefly in overseas markets. Receptives obtain contracts with hotels for booking arrangements and offer these to tour operators looking to satisfy tourist demand.
<b>Search Engine Marketing</b>	A marketing tactic using paid advertising services so that interested clients and customers can reach a business quicker and easier while searching online.
<b>Block</b>	A number of rooms, seats, or spaces reserved in advance, usually by wholesalers, tour operators, or receptive operators who intend to sell them as components of tour packages.
<b>Conversion</b>	Getting “heads in beds” or otherwise closing the sale. Differs from “hospitality.” Hospitality is being warm, friendly and helpful. Conversion is active selling.
<b>Demand generators</b>	Strategies and programs developed by DMOs and suppliers to generate destination demand. Examples include festivals, events, cultural tours, and consumer promotion.
<b>Engagement</b>	On Facebook (and other social media platforms), engagement is when people perform actions on your Page. They may like a post, click on a link, or comment on an image for example. With Facebook Insights, engagement is measured as the number of times a post is clicked, liked, shared, or commented on.
<b>Reach</b>	A measure of the range of influence of any content; it is the measurement of how content is spread across various social media channels. Think of it as the number of eyeballs a piece of content is getting. On Facebook, for example, “total reach” is the number of people that have seen a particular post.
<b>Selected Key Industry Associations</b>	
<b>DMA West</b>	Destination Marketing Associations West, a membership organization of visitor bureaus throughout the western United States.
<b>Visit California</b>	The tourism marketing agency for the state.
<b>California Travel Association</b>	Membership organization offering education and advocacy for state tourism operators.
<b>U.S. Travel Association</b>	National, non-profit organization representing and advocating for all components of the travel industry.
<b>Destination International</b>	Global association of travel industry agencies and groups, offering education and advocacy for members. Visit Mendocino holds a certification from the globally recognized Destination Marketing Accreditation Program (DMAP); this serves as a visible industry distinction that defines quality and performance standards in destination marketing and management.
<b>Brand USA</b>	Agency chiefly responsible for marketing the USA as a destination to the rest of the world.