



# visit mendocino county

2015–2016 annual report



# from the Chair of the Board

With the close of its first fiscal year, the Mendocino County Tourism Commission (MCTC) looks forward to the 2016/17 fiscal year to continue to market the county to millions of potential visitors from around the globe.

On January 1, 2016 Visit Mendocino County (VMC) transitioned to a new organization and Board of Directors. This transformation simplifies the complex legacy structure and creates the foundation for the next phase of marketing Mendocino County in a growing and competitive destination marketplace

Former Executive Director, Scott Schneider, resigned his position at the end of June 2015, but helped the new MCTC Board of Directors transition to the new organization and usher in the 2016/17 Marketing Plan. A key milestone for the fledgling organization was to hire a new executive director.

With the help of a professional executive recruitment firm, a national search yielded many very qualified applicants, and the position was offered to Brent Haugen, former ED for Morro Bay Tourism, to steer the MCTC ship. Brent's first day was July 11, 2016.

In addition to the challenges of starting a new organization without an executive director we had a Crab, Wine & Beer Festival without crab! However, MCTC's staff and contractors continued in their mission to market the county, scoring successes with a strong public relations campaign, group sales, and advertising.

Mendocino County Tourism Commission is dedicated to continuing the mission of uniting the travel and tourism community behind a solid message to bring the number of visitors to our county to an all-time high. We thank you for your support through these challenging times and by working together, we look forward to a continued bright future for tourism in Mendocino County.

With gratitude,

John Kuhry  
Chair of the MCTC Board of Directors

# 2015 –16 marketing plan

## goals

Increase overall demand for overnight visitation (leisure and group) during key times of the year in an effort to raise revenues, employment, and taxes in Mendocino County

## objectives

1. Continue to effectively position Mendocino County as one of California's premier leisure destinations.
2. Educate consumers on the different coastal and inland experiences that can be found within the county.
3. Increase marketing focus to key lifestyle and passion segments including outdoor/recreation, wine, food, and romance.
4. Increase the role of technology and digital marketing efforts in order to broaden the reach and increase effectiveness.
5. Implement a marketing dashboard that tracks key indicators for the destination and VMC, and distribute that information in an effort to educate and support the tourism industry.
6. Implement research that tracks the effectiveness of the VMC website and the influence it has on persuading visitors to visit Mendocino County.



# advertising & paid media

## KPI (key performance indicators)

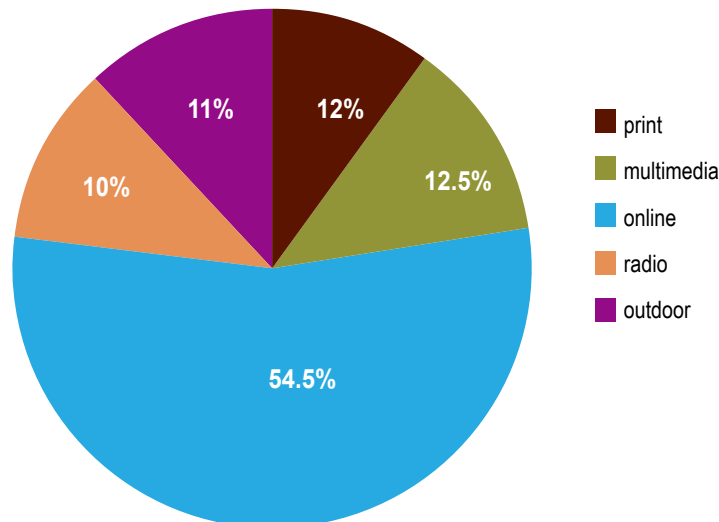
Drive traffic to new website through targeted paid online advertising, SEO, and viral sharing of editorial pieces

## outcomes

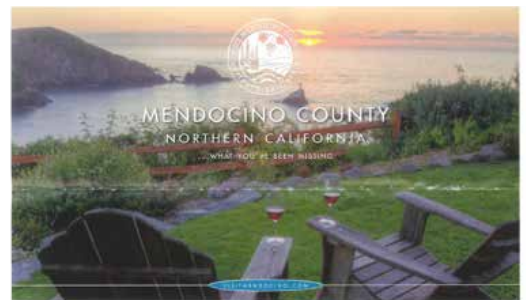
Working with CC Media, VMC placed ads across the media spectrum, from print to outdoor billboards. The total investment was \$212,552 but added and promotions values brought the total campaign value to twice the investment, ie., \$427,270.

media	investment	bonus value	added value	promotions value	total
print	\$21,448	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$21,448
multimedia	\$26,471	\$0	\$60,578	\$0	\$87,049
online	\$116,101	\$0	\$1,795	\$0	\$117,896
outdoor	\$23,532	\$0	\$2,345	\$0	\$25,877
radio	\$25,000	\$45,000	\$0	\$105,000	\$175,000
<b>total</b>	<b>\$212,552</b>	<b>\$45,000</b>	<b>\$64,718</b>	<b>\$105,000</b>	<b>\$427,270</b>

MCTC advertising investment 2015–16



- **PRINT ADVERTISING** focused on the California Visitor Guide, produced by Visit California. Distribution is 500,000 print copies plus online. MCTC also placed an ad in the American Bus Association magazine featuring the Top 100 Events in North America.
- **MULTIMEDIA ADVERTISING** covered a print and video feature in the *San Francisco Chronicle* and SFGate.com. MCTC ran two features: in December 2015 and January 2016.
- **ONLINE ADVERTISING** had above average Click Through Rate of 0.33% (vs. tourism industry standard of 0.09%). Details of the online campaign are in the chart below. Cost per Click averaged \$3.07, above the tourism industry average of \$2.18.
- **OUTDOOR ADVERTISING** caught the attention of drivers at the Bay Bridge toll plaza and on the Nimitz Freeway I-880. VMC's investment was \$23,531 with an added value of \$2,345; estimated impressions are about 400,000.



site/network	ordered impressions	delivered impressions	clicks	investment	added value	total value
Google	Bid	392,470	10,345	\$16,535	N/A	\$16,535
Trip Advisor	639,6332	627,644	1,548	\$15,174	N/A	\$15,174
Sojern	4,166,667	4,280,437	7,906	\$31,250	\$683	\$31,933
Bay Area News Group	587,500	658,575	5,690	\$6,370	\$569	\$6,939
Pandora	2,307,690	2,385,374	2,029	\$19,062	\$544	\$19,606
Weekend Sherpa	Unlimited	38,507	1,671	\$20,126	N/A	\$20,126
Instagram	Bid	474,509	476	\$3,624	N/A	\$3,624
YouTube	Bid	69,015	120	\$2,004	N/A	\$2,004
<b>total</b>	<b>7,701,189</b>	<b>10,625,675</b>	<b>29,785</b>	<b>\$114,145</b>	<b>\$1,795</b>	<b>\$115,940</b>

- **RADIO PROMOTIONS** In October 2015 CCMedia switched radio stations to tap into another station's viable listenership.
- KOSI did not fulfill the Spring 2015 promotion. When called on it, they came back with a huge apology as well as a \$65,000 promotion that ran across all four of the Entercom Stations in San Francisco, generating FREE buzz in San Francisco. Along with the fall and spring radio schedule, a DJ endorsement was included. KMVQ's DJ went to Mendocino for both a fall and spring weekend to tour prime locations and talk about the tours on his show. He posted on social media to over 24,000 followers.
- KMVQ also ran a spring promotion and gave away a trip to Mendocino to a loyal KMVQ listener.

# public relations

## goals

- Generate \$4.6 million in measured advertising equivalency
- Reach an estimated audience of 110 million
- Achieve 170 media placements in key outlets
- Pitch/secure 26 media to visit the destination on an individual basis
- Attend 2 media missions and 2 trade shows
- Support VMC Marketing & Promotional objectives

## outcomes

	goal	achieved
<b>media placements</b>	170	516
<b>ad equivalency</b>	\$4.6 million	\$82+ million
<b>circulation</b>	110 million	967+ million
<b>media missions</b>	2	2
<b>media content (press releases)</b>	14	13
<b>event support</b>	2	2
<b>trade shows</b>	2	2
<b>FAM program</b>	26	32

- These figures represent a significant push forward on VMC's PR efforts to introduce the county to niche markets. The PR team scored 516 print and online features in publications and media outlets that include the following as well as many others:

*AFAR magazine, Conde Nast Traveler, Los Angeles Times, Outside magazine, Sunset, The New York Times, Atlanta Journal Constitution, Better Homes & Gardens, Budget Travel, California Home & Design, CBS San Francisco, Coastal Living, Day Spa Magazine, Examiner.com, 7x7.com, Frommer's, Globe & Mail, Hemispheres, Modern Luxury, Monterey Herald, Sacramento Bee, Sacramento Magazine, San Francisco Chronicle, San Jose Mercury News, SF Weekly Toronto Globe & Mail, Travel + Leisure, Thrillist.com, VIA Magazine, Wall Street Journal, Yankee Magazine*

- PR completed two successful media missions during the year: Los Angeles and San Diego area in November 2015, and to Vancouver BC in February/March 2016. Both missions resulted in media coverage of the county and visitation from media from Vancouver, an area that is critical to our fly/drive market.

- Attended two trade shows: CalTravel in May 2016 and IPW in June 2016.
- Directly recruited 32 members of the media (editors, producers, bloggers and freelancers) to visit Mendocino County:

Garrick Ramirez / <i>VIA Magazine</i>	Rudy Maxa / PBS Radio Remote/Rudy's World
Cathy Pollack / Noblepig.com	Derk Richardson / <i>AFAR Magazine</i>
Shintaro Mainka / Japan Life/Japan	Scott Mansfield / 7x7.com
Margie Goldsmith / Freelance	Peter Kane / <i>San Francisco Weekly</i>
Heather Cassell / <i>Bay Area Reporter</i>	Abby Tegnalia / <i>The Huffington Post</i>
Mike Osborne / Associated Press/Australia	Liza Zimmerman / Thewinechick.com
Maryanne Hammers / Freelance	Teresa Rodriguez / Tangodiva.com
Edwina Barthemelew / Sunrise TV/Australia	Sherry Ott / Ottstravel
Leigh McAdams / hikebiketrip.com/Canada	Michele Bigley / Bindu Media
Randy Yagi / CBSLocal.com	Megan McNee / Travelingninetofiver
Kim Westerman / <i>Forbes</i>	Katie Nanton / <i>NUVO Magazine/Canada</i>
Emma Buchan / <i>Daily Star/UK</i>	Jenny Miller / FoodRepublic.com
Jane Reynolds / Oyster.com	Eric Lindberg / Photographer*
Aaron Gagnon / Social Media Influencer	Kerrick James / Photographer*

- In April 2016, PR invited two professional photographers\* to the county for a “photo safari.” The four-day trip took the PR team and the photographers throughout the county. From the hundreds of images presented, the PR team selected 10 from each photographer. These images, along with those obtained from an Instagrammer trip to the county, will be used for public relations and media outreach purposes as well as for print and digital collateral.
- Distributed 13 press releases and hot sheets on various topics to local, regional, national, and international press, resulting in dozens of media placements:

Seabiscuit, Steampunk	Crab, Wine & Beer Alert
Liquid Assets	Spring Fling: Top 10 Treks
Power to the Porcini/Mushroom Season	Great Outdoors/Migration Season
Society of American Travel Writers Hot Sheet	Value Season in Mendocino County
Winter Hot Sheet/2015	Summer Hot Sheet/2016
Mendocino County on the Cheap/Winter Push	Have Trails, Will Travel; New Lost Coast Opening
	School's Out, Sun's Out

- Recruited two groups to serve on the judging panel at the 2015 Mushroom, Wine & Beer Festival and the 2016 Un-Crab, Wine & Beer Festival.
- Generated media awareness and coverage for the fifth annual “Taste of Mendocino” event in San Francisco.
- Live radio broadcast from the county by Rudy Maxa, host of the country's most widely syndicated travel radio show (to support the Un-Crab, Wine & Beer Festival).

# website & social media

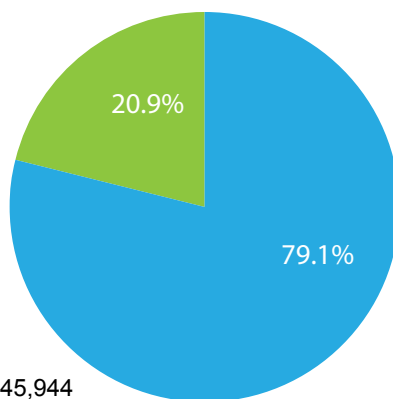
## KPI

- Increase visitor time on site and average pages visited
- Reduce bounce rate
- Increase SEO
- Continue to grow and engage with VMC social media and database of consumers
- Make use of targeted Facebook advertising to support partner events and promotions

## outcomes

- Mid-August 2015 brought a significant challenge for the VMC team. The VisitMendocino.com website, which had proved difficult to operate and keep stable, had a spectacular crash and could not be revived. VMC brought in the destination marketing specialists at Brandhound Inc. to assist with this critical issue. By early September, Brandhound designed and launched a simple Wordpress site with a continuation of look and feel from the crashed site. Over the course of the next few weeks, Brandhound added more functionality and content with a fully functional and operational site by October 2015. The website continues to evolve with a blog added in 2016, special offers, and high-impact photography.
- In addition to the visitor-facing website, MCTC launched an industry site in late 2015: [www.mendocinotourism.org](http://www.mendocinotourism.org). That platform holds information on the Board of Directors, committee meetings, agendas, minutes, reports, research, and more.
- The consumer database grew to 32,775.
- The consumer newsletter was updated to reflect the look and feel of the website.

**Audience Overview**  
**JULY 1, 2015 – JUNE 30, 2016**



Sessions: 145,944  
Users: 116,415  
Pageviews: 441,605  
Pages/Session: 3.03  
Avg. Duration: 00:02:44  
Bounce Rate: 43.47%

■ New Visitor  
■ Returning Visitor



- The website saw a trend towards a younger user audience with the largest share in the 25-34 age group (22.86%) followed by those in the 35-44 age category (20.47%).
- In terms of gender balance, the weight was towards female users with 59.5% of the share, supporting the theory that women are more likely to plan a vacation or trip.
- The United States had the most user sessions by far (91.61%), with the UK at 1.42%, and Canada in third place at 1.14%.

**Website Pageviews**  
**JULY 2015 – JUNE 2016**

Page	Pageviews	% Pageviews
1. / [home page}	131,621	29.81%
2. /mendocino-county-bucket-list/	15,446	3.50%
3. /event/mushroom-wine-and-beer-fest/	12,108	2.74%
4. /directory_category/lodging/	9,020	2.04%
5. /mendocino-county-events/list/	8,584	1.94%
6. /directory_category/things-to-do/	6,944	1.57%
7. /hidden-hikes-of-mendocino-county/	6,169	1.40%
8. /event/crab-wine-beer-festival-2/	5,100	1.15%
9. /directory_category/hotel-motel-inn/	4,382	0.99%
10. /event/festival-of-lights/	3,866	0.88%

**Data Dashboard**

Site Performance	July	August	September	October	November	December
Users	13,942	7,039	4,683	13,727	9,842	9,637
Time on Site	0:02:31	0:02:03	0:02:34	0:02:40	0:03:34	0:03:32
Sessions	16,325	7,972	5,305	16,803	9,842	9,637

Site Performance	January	February	March	April	May	June
Users	9,191	8,617	8,893	10,615	12,173	14,998
Time on Site	0:02:51	0:02:52	0:02:59	0:02:46	0:02:30	0:02:27
Sessions	11,021	10,623	11,418	13,118	15,552	18,418

- We continued to expand our Facebook fan base, gaining an impressive 18,556 fans over the fiscal year: a rise of 45%!
- The largest market share is in the 35-44 age group (23.6%) followed by those aged 45-54 (22.4%). The majority of fans are female (68.1%) leading to the conclusion that women between the ages of 35-44 appear to be our biggest FB fans.
- Total FB impressions for the July 2015 – June 2016 period were **3,565,395**, with **2,502,871** users reached and an audience engagement of **110,274**.

## Top 5 Performing Posts of 2015–2016 FY by Reactions

Post	Reactions	Comments	Engagement	Reach
The path on the edge of the world. March 21, 2016 8:52 pm	4,646	292	9.3%	61,982
Sometimes the ocean gives you the perfect scene. Do you have a favorite place to watch the tide come in? March 05, 2016 7:34 am	4,289	222	14.0%	36,969
We can't resist sharing one more from Montgomery Woods... this one from yesterday, where a light rain draped the towering redwoods in mist. March 14, 2016 10:22 am	3,738	186	9.2%	47,593
If you've visited the Lost Coast of Mendocino County, you know what a special place it is... May 13, 2016 12:23 pm	3,441	288	8.9%	67,921
Mendocino County in the rain is truly beautiful. The deep fern canyons with towering redwood trees feel primeval – like stepping back in time. Do you have a favorite place to hike in the rain? January 04, 2016 9:34 am	2,765	228	10.3%	35,629

## sales

### KPI

- Acquire 7,000 consumer leads
- Sell 1,200 room nights as a result of VMC sales efforts

## outcomes

- Met with over 1,000 retail travel agents to brand Mendocino County and inspire visitation.

- Sales for 2015–16 were strong, with **8,192 NEW LEADS** added to the consumer database and at least **1,200 ROOM NIGHTS** directly attributed to sales efforts. Sales staff obtained contracts for local hotels with domestic and international tour operators.
- Met with over 200 tour operators and receptives to encourage FIT and group visitation and assist in creating tour packages which include Mendocino County.
- Branding initiatives benefit the entire county's economy as more hotel stays translate into increased restaurant, tasting room and retail visits. Branding is a continuous effort and includes participation at consumer trade shows such as the Travel and Adventure Shows in Santa Clara and San Diego, Sunset Celebration Weekend in Sonoma, and the Fillmore Jazz Festival in San Francisco.
- VMC sales hosted eight FAM groups sponsored by Visit California this year from five countries including China, France, Korea, Taiwan, and the UK.
- VMC continues to administer and lead the North Coast Tourism Council, a Visit California-created and -funded rural region. NCTC is a partnership of county marketing organizations from Mendocino to the Oregon border. NCTC leverages the efforts of Visit California — our states' marketing organization with a budget of over \$100 Million. NCTC received \$60,000 from Visit California, which was matched by the counties, to use for marketing and sales in key international markets. NCTC consists of a Board of Directors with seats from each county. The Board approves the annual sales and marketing plan and budget.
- International travelers spend more than domestic ones and the international market is growing at more than twice the rate of the domestic market. Key markets include Canada, the UK, Australia, Mexico and Germany.

## visitor services

### festivals: KPI

- Increase and lengthen overnight stays in Mendocino County
- Develop new events that both highlight the unique aspects of the County and utilize value partnerships
- Increase partner participation and visitor attendance for focal events
- Produce and distribute a countywide event calendar
- Continue to build on the established foundation for the Party for the Planet festival

### outcomes

- The Event & Partner Relations Manager gathered events for VMC's three countywide shoulder season festivals: Crab, Wine & Beer in January, Party for the Planet in April, and November's Mushroom, Wine & Beer Festival. The level of participation in the festivals was comparable to previous years with new businesses participating with events and specials.

- Staff worked closely with the Festival Committee on the festivals and presented new opportunities for discussion.
- Staff posts events and festivals on the VMC website and that data is used to compile the bi-monthly calendars distributed to County businesses to keep visitors updated on events. Staff also submits events to outlets such as the Visit California website, *VIA Magazine*, and other regional publications and websites.
- In an effort to foster cross-promotional partnerships, VMC's Event & Partner Relations Manager continued on the Boards of the Greater Ukiah Chamber of Commerce and Visit Ukiah.
- Completed the Mendocino County Annual Event Calendar with 10,000 copies distributed throughout the county and California Visitor Centers.

## signage & wayfinding: KPI

- Increase visitor satisfaction with improved wayfinding signage

## outcomes

- Distributed over 100,000 county materials including tear off maps, wine maps, event calendars, pet-friendly guides, visitor guides, and mini-visitor guides.

## marketplace: KPI

- Attract 3,500 Marketplace visitors
- Track annual sales of \$10,000 in local products

## outcomes

- A "Thank You" to all the artists who joined VMC in Fort Bragg for the very successful monthly First Friday event: Jo Anne Abreu, Jerry Murphy, Jeanne Kennedy, Alan Ahtow, Bruce Blondin, Jim Colling, Nicole Paisley Martensen, Maureen O'Hara, Marcia Plancon, Marcia Riwney, Katie Gibbs, and Sev Ickes.

# operations

## KPI

Operations is the engine that keeps MCTC running

## outcomes

- The fiscal year saw many changes within the organization. As of January 1, 2016 the organization became a new entity: Mendocino County Tourism Commission, with a new Board of Directors and standing committees. The public face of the organization remains “Visit Mendocino County.”
- Presented the 2016/17 Marketing Plan and Budget to the Board for approval.
- With the BID Ad Hoc Committee, VMC helped finalize the MCLA BID Advisory Board 2105/16 Annual Report, which was presented to the County Board of Supervisors.
- Worked on annual VMC non-profit audit.
- VMC met with the State Parks to explore how to increase visitation and to brainstorm marketing programs/partnerships.
- Sent out visitor guides in response to ongoing requests and captured contact information for VMC’s consumer mailing list.

# staffing

## KPI

- Maintain a qualified, engaged and enthusiastic team of staff and contractors to carry out the programs and initiatives of VMC
- Continue to successfully administer the North Coast Tourism Council

## outcomes

- Joe Webb, Interim General Manager, began with VMC on November 24, 2015 and resigned his position to return to his primary role as winemaker at Foursight Wines as of May 31, 2016.
- Erin Placido resigned her position after 5+ years of service as of November 30, 2015. Following a diligent search, Jodi Smith was as the Office Manager starting February 24, 2016.

## 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

## staff

- Interim General Manager: Joe Webb
- Director of Tourism: Richard Strom
- Office Manager: Jodi Smith
- Events & Partner Relations Manager: Gracia Brown
- Tourism Development Associate: Donna Hannaford
- Administrative Assistant: Susan Peakall

## contractors

- DMO Consultant: Scott Schneider
- Marketing & Communications Coordinator: Alison de Grassi
- Public Relations: Koli/Cinch
- Online Marketing Consultant: Brendan McGuigan
- Website Management: Brandhound Marketing

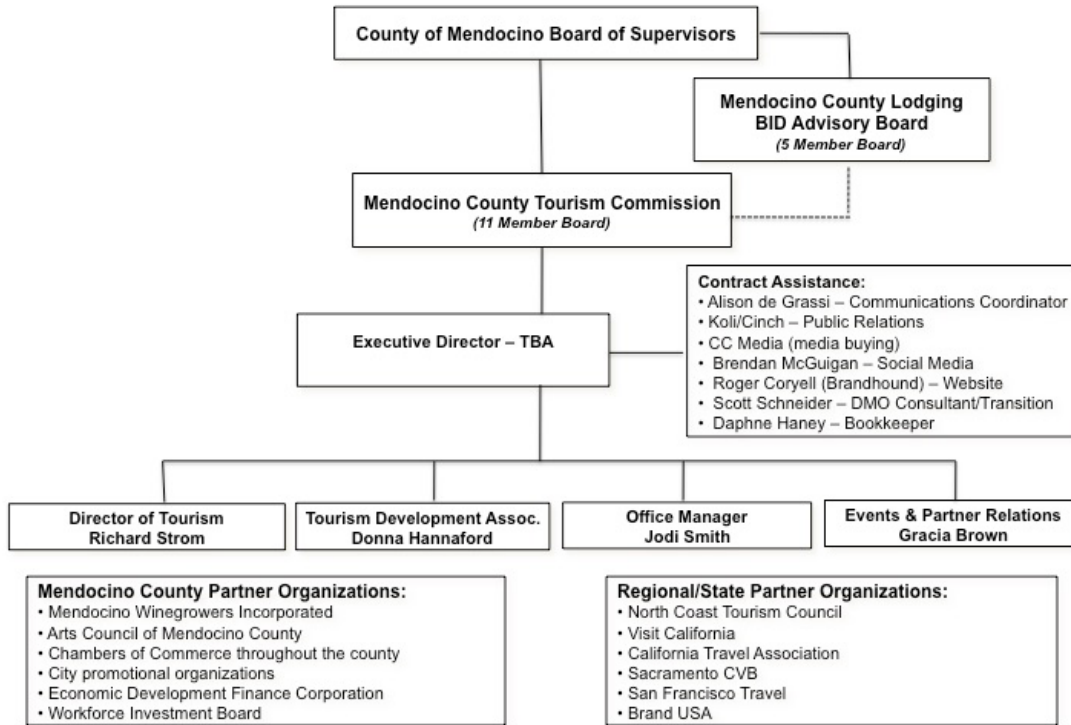
# MCTC offices

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

**Mendocino County Destination Marketing Organizational Chart**



Current as of: June 2016

visit  
**mendocino county**

345 N. Franklin Street  
Fort Bragg, CA 95437

**phone** 707.964.9010  
**toll free** 1.866.466.3636

[www.visitmendocino.com](http://www.visitmendocino.com)