



VISIT MENDOCINO COUNTY

Annual Report ~ Fiscal Year 2017/18

Submitted to Mendocino County Tourism Commission, Inc. & County of Mendocino
xxxxxxxxx, 2018



VMC Annual Report: Fiscal Year 2017/18

Executive Summary

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Strategic Plan

The activities in this report relate to the initiatives set forth in the three-year Visit Mendocino County (VMC) 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 XX.) This report will directly relate 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 1: Demonstrate and strengthen VMC's contribution to county economic and community vitality

OBJECTIVES

- 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. 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	%Gain/Loss		
Mendocino	\$6,748	\$7,907	\$8,215	\$8,627	8.69%	17.17%	3.89%	5.01%
Humboldt	\$5,625	\$6,183	\$6,930	\$6,800	6.68%	9.92%	12.00%	-1.87%
Shasta	\$5,384	\$5,714	\$6,010	\$6,230	4.99%	6.12%	5.18%	3.66%
Yolo	\$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.

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	
Mendocino	\$386.1M	\$456.0M	18.00%	\$34.7M	\$39.9M	14.98%	6.16K	7.1K	15.25%
Humboldt	\$415.5M	\$448.2M	7.87%	\$32.6M	\$36.6M	12.26%	5.27K	5.5K	4.36%
Shasta	\$422.2M	\$462.8M	9.61%	\$32.8M	\$35.9M	9.45%	4.53K	4.8K	5.96%
Yolo	\$319.7M	\$385.9M	20.70%	\$25.7M	\$31.4M	22.17%	3.99K	4.8K	20.30%

In terms of BID growth, it should be noted that Mendocino has a BID assessment of one percent (1%) while 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. GET INFO ON THIS**

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.

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

- **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

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

INSERT DATA FROM STAKEHOLDER SURVEYS; EXPLAIN METHODOLOGY; EXAMINE REASONS FOR LACK OF RESPONSE

INITIATIVE 1: 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 two things: 1) the annual [Marketing Plan](#); and 2) the three-year [Strategic Plan](#).

During the year, the Director of Marketing & Media worked closely with the Public Relations agency of record, KOLI Communications, and the marketing company, TheorySF to achieve the goals described in the Marketing Plan.

During the fiscal year, 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 2: 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. The team continues to finesse 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

When implemented, 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 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.

SALES?

VISITOR SERVICES?

INITIATIVE 3: 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 events to partners. This has proved to be very popular.

WHAT ELSE?

IMPERATIVE 2: Cultivate VMC's relationships & collaborations

OBJECTIVES:

- **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. At the end of the fiscal year, 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 Imperative 2.

REPORT ON EVENTS THAT WERE CREATED DUE TO THE GRANT PROGRAM. HOW DOES THAT COMPARE YOY?

- **YOY increase in "opportunities" page visitation on VMC website**

MCTC's internal website, 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 bi-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.

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

DISCUSS PROCESS FOR LAST FY

VMC staff recommends this Objective be reworded to change "YOY increase" verbiage to "Solicit new applicants...."

INITIATIVE 4: Foster collaboration and county-wide alignment by creating and developing the “go to” website for all tourism stakeholders.

The process to rebuild the VMC website began with research undertaken 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.

At the same meeting, the Board also approved the proposal to completely rebuild the VMC website and allocated funds for the project. Over the course of the next few weeks, TSF developed website page tables, a sitemap, and timeline for the website rebuild. These documents would serve as roadmaps for the design and development of the site. TSF also developed a series of comps for “look and feel” and following approval, the 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 has established 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 that VMC will use to assess site effectiveness, traffic flow, and outbound referrals to stakeholders.

INITIATIVE 5: 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: unusual ice cream, top selfie stops, clear night skies, and more as appropriate. This is an ongoing project.

MUCH OF THE REST OF THIS SECTION IS RICHARD'S

INITIATIVE 6: 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 3: Raise awareness of the Mendocino County experience

OBJECTIVES:

- **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); 9.97% clickthrough on large creative; 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.

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](#).

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

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 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.

- **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 7: 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.

INITIATIVE 8: 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.

Luz Harvey: NEED TO REPORT ON ACTIVITIES DURING THE FY

INITIATIVE 9: 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.

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.

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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

