



Mendocino County Tourism Commission, Inc.
DBA: Visit Mendocino County:
Fiscal Year 2022–2023

SUBMITTED TO MENDOCINO COUNTY TOURISM COMMISSION & COUNTY OF MENDOCINO

MARCH 11, 2024

A photograph of a wooden fence made of weathered logs and posts, with a wire mesh fence in front of it. The fence is set in a field of green grass and shrubs. The fence runs across the middle of the page, separating the top section from the bottom section.

visitmendocino.com

VMC Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2022-2023:

Executive Summary

The 2022-2023 fiscal year (FY) continued to be an incredibly strong year with further growth in tourism in Mendocino County (MC). The pent-up demand for travel continued to lead consumers to visit Mendocino County at greater than “normal” levels. The Visit Mendocino County (VMC) team continued to push forward with cross-platform Brand Awareness marketing to ensure that MC was top-of-mind for potential visitors as Northern California’s premiere road-trip destination. This program was three pronged: first: focus on brand awareness, second: target A-list media who wrote for multiple publications to gain extra coverage from each press visit and third: redevelop the brand of VMC to cement the brand’s placement in the marketplace as the top rural road trip destination on the California Coast. As part of the re-brand of the organization, the team took a deep dive into building a new website. The desire of the team was to create a cutting-edge destination website that is content driven. We noted financial growth in Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) and Business Improvement District (BID) assessment. However, due to budgetary restrictions at the County of Mendocino (CoM), the organization accepted a partnership arrangement with the CoM and our BID match was reduced to a flat rate of \$150,000 total for FY 22/23. The BoD, CEO and steering committee continued to negotiate with the CoM staff to move forward in organizing and converting VMC to the BID law of 1994.

This report will outline the strong placement of Mendocino County as a tourism destination and other necessary highlights for the fiscal year.

- While the organization remains financially strong, the current state of Mendocino County’s finances no longer provides the ability to continue to support tourism promotion in the long-term, putting VMC’s annual contract and 50% match in jeopardy. This led the BoD to direct the ED to consult with Civitas Advisors as to potential avenues for long-term funding stability. However, in June 2022 the County BoS approved the annual contract. At the time of writing, the ED is exploring funding options under the advisement of Civitas Advisors. The BID Advisory Board will address this further in their 2023-2024 report.
- The organization undertook a complete rebrand initiative, including its website. The new brand is designed to elevate the presence and value of Mendocino County as a destination. This new generation of VMC is scheduled to launch in spring 2023.
- Continued engagement with Cultivar Strategies to further the initiative of bringing tourism-facing cannabis businesses into the marketing fold of VMC.
- Launched a video podcast series under production and using the talent of Bay Area TV Personality Roberta Gonzales. This series showed 9 episodes with an average per episode viewership of 4,389.
- The expansion of the “Room to Roam” campaign into the television and radio markets.
- Undertook the development of a festival and event funding program designed to assist local organization in launching new tourism-facing events geared to bringing visitors to MC.
- VMC welcomed Festival Coordinator (contractor) Janis MacDonald to the team.
- Continued its massively successful Public Relations program, reaching and exceeding its set goals just 5 months into the FY.
- The team attended Visit California’s annual Outlook Forum in February with Visit California noting in several sessions the successes of VMC as leader in rural tourism marketing.

- As required by our county contract VMC engaged with JJACPA, Inc. for the organization's annual financial audit that, again, closed with no recommendations.
- The Executive Director (ED) working in collaboration with the Business Improvement District (BID) Advisory Board completed the annual BID report and submitted it to the Board of Supervisors (BoS) for acceptance and approval at their May 17, 2022 meeting.

Despite the financial challenges presented to the organization, the VMC 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, makers, and artists and of course 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 our residents.

Thank you for the opportunity to promote our beautiful county.

Respectfully,



Travis Scott
Executive Consultant

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 2021. The purpose of the plan was to realign the core strategies of the organization. (The Strategic Plan may be viewed at <https://www.mendocinotourism.org/wp-content/uploads/Final-VMC-2021-2023-Strategic-Plan.pdf>). This report directly relates the VMC Marketing, PR, Sales and other VMC staff activities during the year to the Imperatives, Objectives and Initiatives contained in the Strategic Plan.

VISION:

A diversified and thriving economy supported by our community, offering enriching experiences for our guests.

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 culture and landscapes.

IMPERATIVE: Optimize and demonstrate our impact through relationships and collaborations.

The PR team (Koli Communications, CEO, MM and PRCM and DM) communicate with partners and stakeholders on a monthly basis informing them of media stories. The team also requests partners and stakeholders to submit content and information to VMC for dissemination by Visit California. An example of pitches made during the year and published by Visit CA on their site features the Point Arena Lighthouse, Harbor House Inn and Pacific Star Winery.

The CEO continues as Administrator and Treasurer of the NCTC/NOO and attends quarterly meetings with Visit Redwoods (Humboldt), the Lake County Tourism Improvement District and Visit Del Norte County.

MCTC staff currently hold seats on the Destination Hopland, Anderson Valley Winegrowers, Visit Fort Bragg, Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens, Visit Ukiah, and the Point Arena Merchants Association. At the request of CoM Supervisors Gjerde and Williams, the CEO worked in partnership with Marin and Sonoma counties and Leave No Trace to develop the Cleaner California Coast initiative. The initiative launched its website and social media marketing assets in early summer and Mendocino County (VMC) has been the greatest source of referrals to the program's website.

For the third year, CORO Mendocino approached the marketing team to partner with their organization on a campaign that would continue work into the 2023-2024 FY. Specific deliverables for that campaign would be placement of a billboard on HWY 101 in Hopland promoting all CORO participating producers county-wide, co-branded with VMC. The program will also include a press release focused on a CORO specific visit to Mendocino County, in Micro-Trip format.

The CEO continues to hold a seat on and work closely with the Visit California (VCA) Rural Regional Committee. The partnership with Visit California provides strong name recognition for VMC with Visit California, with VMC often being used in VCA presentations as following best DMO practices.

• **OBJECTIVE: Increase participation rate in VMC Programs**

- ↳ VMC renewed its contract with Festival Coordinator (FC) Janis MacDonald to expand VMC’s umbrella festivals: Harvest Festival Mendocino and Seafood & Sips Mendocino, Mendocino Sparkling Wine Celebration and develop new event offerings as partners express interest in growing local event offerings.
- ↳ Partner Relations & Communications Manager (PRCM) worked with Mendocino County Lodging Association (MCLA) to host quarterly industry mixers to engage partners and stakeholders in the work of VMC.
- ↳ Following a successful first year “event grant program” the PRCM and FC continued to identify and support new tourism-facing events ultimately granting \$31,700 to support the growth of community events.
- ↳ VMC team continued to meet with partners and stakeholders one-on-one as frequently as possible under the Hospitality Outreach Program allowing the team to introduce programs and initiatives directly to partners and stakeholders. These meetings are specifically helpful in attracting business participation in VMC sponsored festivals.
- ↳ The PR team continued to highlight the outdoor wonders of Mendocino County, to appeal to a wider variety of consumers in our target markets.
- ↳ The organization in its third year of engagement with Brian Applegarth continued to build the County’s tourism-facing cannabis marketing program to integrate with existing campaigns and communication pillars. The focus was direct engagement with cannabis stakeholders to gain participation in VMC programs.

GOOGLE ANALYTICS: VMC SITE TOP TEN	
OUTBOUND REFERRALS 2022/2023	
July 2022 - June 2023	
Property	Opens
Total Page Views	34,205
Glass Beach	10,494
Skunk Train - Fort Bragg	4,844
Bowling Ball Beach	3,080
Little River Inn	2,619
SCP Mendocino Coast Lodge	2,420
Montgomery Woods State Reserve	2,314
Chandelier Drive-Thru Tree	2,295
Skunk Train - Willits	2,194
Vichy Springs Resort & Inn	2,069
Noyo Harbor	1,876

- ↳ The website (Hit Report) continues to be a useful tool for both VMC and partners & stakeholders. The report is sent monthly to every stakeholder and partner for whom VMC has an email address associated with their online listing, and informs them of:
 - » Total number of visitors to VMC website
 - » Number of referrals from VMC website to stakeholder’s website
 - » Number of click-throughs from the VMC website to the stakeholder’s website.

This information provided monthly to both partners, stakeholders, and VMC staff allows deeper interaction between the organization and businesses. The team communicates this information regularly.

- **OBJECTIVE: Increase VMC Communication Engagement Rate**

- ↳ To deepen engagement with VMC’s extensive consumer email list of 34,168 (time of writing), the team expanded upon its email campaign program which previously engaged 2.25 times monthly, to an average frequency of 4.5 emails monthly.
- ↳ The organization received the final Travel Analytics Group (TAG) visitor and resident perspective studies giving VMC a baseline to grow programs and communications based on the needs outlined in the survey. See the link for the full results of the study: www.mendocinotourism.org/wp-content/uploads/Visit-Mendocino_Res-Vis-Study_Summary-Presentation-1.pdf
- ↳ With continued success, the team continued working in collaboration with Roberta Gonzales Productions (RoGoPro) to finish the first season (10 episodes) of the Visit Mendocino County Room to Roam podcast series. The program launched in February 2022 and was released monthly to an average of 5,361 views per episode during the season run (February 21/22 through December 22/23).

- **OBJECTIVE: Boost community’s support of the tourism industry**

- ↳ As mentioned above, under the contract with TAG the organization sought community input about the organization, its effectiveness, and shortcomings to understand the community’s views and needs surrounding tourism in Mendocino County. The organization takes the input from the community very seriously and works to continually address community needs through each individual program: www.mendocinotourism.org/wp-content/uploads/Visit-Mendocino_Res-Vis-Study_Summary-Presentation-1.pdf

- **INITIATIVE: Create a campaign to promote the value of VMC in driving positive results to local businesses**

- To address this initiative, at the direction of the BoD, VMC contracted again with TAG to create a website influence return on investment study (ROI) in FY 21/22. The final report was delivered in February 2023 and the results show per-party trip spending of \$1,666 per stay, annual direct visitor spend of \$54,690,281 and an additional indirect (supply chain spending) of \$11.3 million plus an induced (labor income spending) of \$10.5 million for a total economic activity attributed to VMC of \$77 million with a total annual tax impact of \$9,444,000 for a total ROI of \$86 per dollar spent. With the delivery of the final report from TAG in January 2023, the team shifted programming and took a whole new approach to building the new website. Leveraging this data with partners, stakeholders, and the community to maximize the benefit of the information gathered. To view the final results of the study view this link: www.mendocinotourism.org/wp-content/uploads/Mendocino-County-Influence-and-ROI-Presentation-ResultsPRELIM.pdf

- **INITIATIVE: Perform a needs assessment of our stakeholders and partners**

- This initiative has been addressed by the team and with the results of the community and visitor perspective studies by TAG, the team addresses each “community” based on their respective needs. Currently the team is working with each incorporated city to develop their “voice” through VMC marketing.

- **INITIATIVE: Enhance VMC’s portfolio of stakeholder offerings and resources**

- As addressed above, the organization strives to continue to address this initiative as part of daily organizational development.

IMPERATIVE: Raise visitor awareness of Mendocino County and strengthen tourism’s contribution to County vitality.

In 2017 TheorySF (TSF), then agency of record for Visit Mendocino County, conducted a brand awareness study. The results were that Mendocino County as a destination was virtually unknown to our target markets leading TSF to deliver a verbal report of no awareness. In FY 21/22, under the engagement of TAG for a website/program ROI study, the CEO requested that the completed ROI report include baseline awareness statistics of the use of www.visitmendocino.com. Results of the study place consumer awareness far above that of five years ago, 57.66% of respondents knew of and had already decided to visit Mendocino County. As work continues with Agency Xi further brand awareness baselines will be delivered in FY 23/24.

The organization continues its two-prong approach to direct marketing, the first being brand awareness, with the goal of placing Mendocino County top-of-mind with potential and returning visitors (see the next data set for additional information). The second, focuses on and promotes tourism-facing events designed to bolster shoulder season visitation and Business Improvement District (BID) collections.

Public relations (PR) is a major driver of visitor awareness. Our PR team strategically plans annual communication pillars that are designed to partner with our direct marketing efforts. During the fiscal year the team realized their goals early with an overwhelming amount of media attention.

One of the shifts made during COVID-19 that continues post-pandemic is to maximize media pitches and placements along with decreasing the number of press visits by pitching to media with a broader reach and access to multiple publications because the team realized this approach maximized VMC’s public relations resources. By welcoming media to experience a broader view of Mendocino County they could use one trip for various works/publications. This direction allows staff and partners to host fewer in-person visits to the county while ensuring our goals were exceeded.

The PR team was pleased to introduce a string of A-list features that hit throughout the year in publications and on stations such as: Forbes, 7x7, The Wall Street Journal, MSN, Travel + Leisure, Yahoo!, Sunset, Wine Enthusiast, USA Today, Conde Nast Traveler, AARP, AMEX Departures, Thrillist, VIA, SF Chronicle, LA Times, Smart Meetings, AFAR, NBC Bay Area, Los Angeles, and San Diego. The data below shows the PR team’s direct impressions, advertising equivalency, and familiarization program data for the year.

COVERAGE	2022/2023 GOAL	2022/23 TOTAL	2021/22 TOTAL
Placements	500	908	958
Impressions	250 Million	2.419 Billion	2.604 Billion
Advertising Equivalency	\$10 Million	\$422.5 Million	\$717.065 Million

MEDIA RELEASES	GOAL	TOTAL
	11	13

DATE	NAME	OUTLET
8/12-8/13	Alexis Mills	Locale
8/21-8/23	Amber Turpin	7x7
9/8/23	James Stewart	Which Travel/UK
9/10-9/12	Eric Hiss	Marin Living
9/14-9/16	Neil Davey	Media Influencer/UK
10/15-10/17	Allison Tibaldi	USA Today
10/17-10/18	Steve LaRosa	KFBK AM
11/5-11/8	Clara Hogan	TimeOut!
11/4-11/5	Kathleen Messmer	IndieSpirit!
11/4-11/6	Kim Westerman	Forbes
11/10-11/12	Shoshi Parks	7x7
11/11-11/12	Tina Caputo	Sonoma Magazine
11/14/23	Amber Gibson	Chicago Tribune
2/2-2/4	Matt Villano	Freelance
2/2-2/4	Chelsea Davis	Forbes
3/2-3/4	Noah Lederman	Barrons
3/27-3/29	Julien Carpentier	La Voix du Nord/France
3/27-3/29	Michel Fonovich	A/R Magazine/France
3/27-3/29	Guillaume Soularue	Gala Magazine/France
3/30-3/31	Fiona Hardingham	Go Gently Television/France
4/26-4/29	Sharon McConnell	Punch Magazine
4/28-5/1	Fiona Chandra	Los Angeles Times
5/26/23	John Bartell	ABC News/10
5/27-5/29	Brandon Schultz	Out There/UK
6/16-6/19	Jennifer Parker	Huge! Magazine
6/16-6/19	Fiona Chandra	PureWow

• OBJECTIVE: Increase website traffic

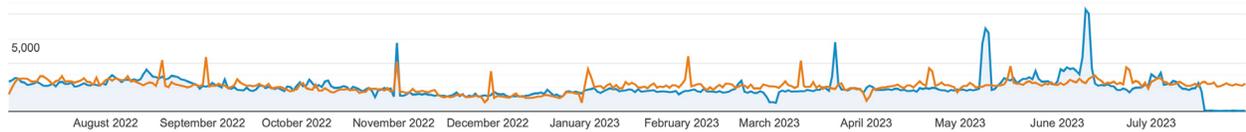
Audience Overview

All Users
+0.00% Users

Jul 1, 2022 - Jul 31, 2023
Compare to: Jul 1, 2021 - Jul 31, 2022

Overview

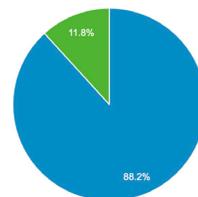
Jul 1, 2022 - Jul 31, 2023: ● Users
Jul 1, 2021 - Jul 31, 2022: ● Users



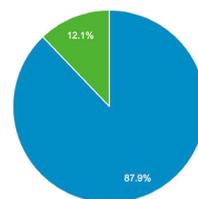
Users -4.39% 586,047 vs 612,966	New Users -4.49% 580,647 vs 607,953	Sessions -6.33% 718,904 vs 767,461	Number of Sessions per User -2.02% 1.23 vs 1.25
Pageviews 2.99% 1,370,495 vs 1,330,723	Pages / Session 9.94% 1.91 vs 1.73	Avg. Session Duration -9.39% 00:01:01 vs 00:01:07	Bounce Rate -15.51% 62.74% vs 74.25%

■ New Visitor ■ Returning Visitor

Jul 1, 2022 - Jul 31, 2023



Jul 1, 2021 - Jul 31, 2022



City	Users	% Users
1. (not set)		
Jul 1, 2022 - Jul 31, 2023	70,966	11.24%
Jul 1, 2021 - Jul 31, 2022	25,803	4.06%
% Change	175.03%	177.19%
2. San Jose		
Jul 1, 2022 - Jul 31, 2023	63,599	10.08%
Jul 1, 2021 - Jul 31, 2022	43,463	6.83%
% Change	46.33%	47.48%
3. San Francisco		
Jul 1, 2022 - Jul 31, 2023	46,782	7.41%
Jul 1, 2021 - Jul 31, 2022	83,831	13.18%
% Change	-44.19%	-43.76%
4. Los Angeles		
Jul 1, 2022 - Jul 31, 2023	28,304	4.48%
Jul 1, 2021 - Jul 31, 2022	29,565	4.65%
% Change	-4.27%	-3.51%
5. Sacramento		
Jul 1, 2022 - Jul 31, 2023	27,062	4.29%
Jul 1, 2021 - Jul 31, 2022	39,359	6.19%
% Change	-31.24%	-30.70%
6. Ashburn		
Jul 1, 2022 - Jul 31, 2023	18,260	2.89%
Jul 1, 2021 - Jul 31, 2022	2,693	0.42%
% Change	578.05%	583.39%
7. Santa Rosa		

- ↳ The topline data for FY 22/23 website analytics reveal:
 - » Most traffic is from Northern California: San Jose, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Sacramento are among the top 5.
 - » Demographics are holding to the 25-54 age range
 - » For the third year the Room to Roam campaign drove the most page views (123,361)

Social Media Results YOY FY 2021/2022 vs FY 2022/2023					
FACEBOOK			INSTAGRAM		
	FY 2021/2022	FY 2022/2023		FY 2021/2022	FY 2022/2023
Impressions	33,538,268 Total (32,691,066 Paid / 847,202 Organic+Viral)	24,879,903 Total (23,582,749 Paid / 1,297,154 Organic+Viral)	Impressions	4,944,443	4,915,705
Engagement	337,271	341,553	Likes Received	58,451	42,118
Link Clicks	266,207	285,636	Comments	763	411
Posts	106	95	Posts	110	134
Impressions/Post	316,398	261,893	Likes/Post	531	314
Engagement/Post	3,282	3,595	Comments/Post	6.9	3
Fan Base	61,008	62,051	Followers	25,353	33,037

↳ The role of social media in driving visitors to www.visitmendocino.com is fundamental in not only increasing website users, but in raising brand awareness. The above dataset shows the YoY metrics. The total number includes paid impressions and organic and viral impressions. Impressions/posts are based on the latter number to avoid skewing the figures

• **OBJECTIVE: Grow BID Fund 5% over 3 years**

TREASURER - TAX COLLECTOR
COUNTY OF MENDOCINO
(Data as of 1/30/2024)

Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) Collections by Calendar Quarter						
Fiscal Year	1st Quarter (July-Sept.)	2nd Quarter (Oct.-Dec.)	3rd Quarter (Jan.-March)	4th Quarter (April-June)	Fiscal Year Collections	
2015-16	\$ 1,651,009.69	\$ 1,074,781.45	\$ 835,844.53	\$ 1,299,992.81	\$ 4,861,628.48	
2016-17	\$ 1,780,216.37	\$ 1,167,144.03	\$ 829,814.09	\$ 1,468,462.17	\$ 5,245,636.66	
2017-18	\$ 2,019,644.14	\$ 1,227,713.38	\$ 1,026,731.35	\$ 1,463,623.39	\$ 5,737,712.26	
2018-19	\$ 1,977,385.88	\$ 1,280,880.02	\$ 961,022.83	\$ 1,575,991.66	\$ 5,795,280.39	
2019-20	\$ 2,147,423.50	\$ 1,384,005.43	\$ 802,609.14	\$ 316,554.17	\$ 4,650,592.24	
2020-21	\$ 2,024,631.64	\$ 1,665,875.86	\$ 1,305,497.08	\$ 2,265,156.69	\$ 7,261,161.27	
2021-22	\$ 2,888,831.93	\$ 1,925,364.42	\$ 1,457,063.23	\$ 2,175,686.89	\$ 8,446,946.47	
2022-23	\$ 3,129,958.41	\$ 1,804,616.58	\$ 1,237,715.34	\$ 2,190,545.22	\$ 8,362,835.55	

Business Improvement District (BID) Assessment Collections by Calendar Quarter						
Fiscal Year	1st Quarter (July-Sept.)	2nd Quarter (Oct.-Dec.)	3rd Quarter (Jan.-March)	4th Quarter (April-June)	Fiscal Year Collections	
2015-16	\$ 273,600.95	\$ 178,894.32	\$ 147,456.87	\$ 222,164.94	\$ 822,117.08	
2016-17	\$ 306,111.45	\$ 192,168.41	\$ 149,161.15	\$ 249,550.90	\$ 896,991.91	
2017-18	\$ 336,333.39	\$ 214,398.57	\$ 172,188.75	\$ 252,939.31	\$ 975,860.02	
2018-19	\$ 345,414.74	\$ 208,182.17	\$ 169,013.36	\$ 266,870.80	\$ 989,481.07	
2019-20	\$ 356,681.19	\$ 228,223.25	\$ 151,009.41	\$ 79,074.22	\$ 814,988.07	
2020-21	\$ 345,912.88	\$ 258,702.54	\$ 215,421.63	\$ 367,722.16	\$ 1,187,759.21	
2021-22	\$ 455,894.60	\$ 297,723.80	\$ 228,586.87	\$ 344,553.64	\$ 1,326,758.91	
2022-23	\$ 716,817.62	\$ 274,547.16	\$ 217,310.82	\$ 574,315.90	\$ 1,782,991.50	

PLEASE NOTE: The collections reflected above represent the actual quarters in which the lodging establishments collected the taxes and assessments. If applicable, penalties and interest collected by the County are also included in the above totals.

↳ In January 2024 the Mendocino County Treasurer-Tax Collector Office published their annual TOT/BID collections report. The report shows that revenue from lodging businesses increased 34.4% YoY with a total growth of 50.11% since the inception of this strategic plan in July 2021.

BookDirect Referrals	
OUTBOUND REFERRALS 2022/2023	
July 2022 - June 2023	
	Total
Month	10,038
July	1,961
August	1,510
September	1,390
October	916
November	715
December	600
January	783
February	764
March	686
April	713

↳ With the addition of the Simpleview lodging booking system on www.visitmendocino.com potential visitors book lodging reservations via the VMC website. While there is no exact way to know how many visitors booked through the platform, we can show that the widget pushed 10,038 potential visitors as far as the Book Now button on stakeholder web reservation systems. This information provides another point of contact between staff and partners.

Spending Category	Amount
Lodging (Room Night(s) Paid):	\$24,734,298
Food and Beverage:	\$12,641,975
Entertainment:	\$2,583,360
Retail Shopping:	\$5,496,511
Daily Transportation (Gas/Car Rental/Bus/Tax. Uber etc.):	\$2,968,116
Other Recreation (lift tickets, admission fees, rental equipment or gear, tour guides):	\$3,133,011
Other:	\$3,133,011
Total:	\$54,690,281

Efficiency and ROI Measures

Notes:

- Cost per Unique Visitor = Total Visit Mendocino County Total Budget \$631,417 / Unique Visitors
- Cost per Trip Party = Total Visit Mendocino County Total Budget \$631,417 / visitors influenced to visit
- Program ROI = Total Economic Impact / Visit Mendocino County budget \$631,417

	Amount
Cost per user to the website	\$1.17
Cost per trip party	\$30.33
Program ROI	\$86:\$1

↳ As part of the TAG ROI Study conducted in FY 21/22, the organization received the above data showing direct annual visitor spending attributed to VMC programs. This information provides the BoD and staff with baseline consumer spending by category. This data assists in the development of spending growth strategies for the industry and business segments. The report also validates VMC's programming by reporting a return on investment of \$86 per marketing dollar spent. Further scenario analysis offers the organization areas of improvement and growth that advance this objective. These areas of improvement are under advisement and programming will be set forth in FY 22/23.

- **OBJECTIVE: Increase shoulder season visitation rates**

- ↳ According to the Treasurer-Tax Collector TOT report above, we can see that Q2 and Q3 TOT collections have increased with a total growth of 3% since the inception of this strategic plan in July 2021.

- **INITIATIVE: Evaluate and diversify visitor target market segment and competitive set**

- In January 2023, the delivery of Travel Analytics Group Visitor and Resident Perspective Study outlined several key West Coast markets that are currently under-advertised by destinations. This research comes with other data that must be analyzed for the team to make market recommendations to the marketing committee. This data could allow VMC to retarget its marketing efforts to a new demographic, if necessary to capture the largest share of marketing attention.

- **INITIATIVE: Refresh our brand identity to align with target segments and competitive advantage.**

- The BoD and public were offered a preview of the new Visit Mendocino County brand sporting the tagline “Magic is Real”. The new branding allows the organization to lean into the natural assets of Mendocino County in a more cohesive manner. This new brand will allow the VMC team to expand on the successful “Room to Roam” branding that the organization has been promoting. The focus groups presented with this brand concept found that this new generation of branding will resonate more with potential travelers to further capture the attention of the markets and demographics identified in our Visitor Study by TAG. The “Magic is Real” brand will include a newly crafted website that optimizes the user experience to extend the length of time spent on the site. This brand platform relies heavily on photo and video assets designed to engage the user from the moment VMC’s website is displayed on their device. The new site is also optimized FIRST for mobile use, as the TAG data showed that 2/3 of our site users are viewing on a mobile device.

- **INITIATIVE: Create process and framework for the evaluation and investment in event promotion with an emphasis on shoulder season.**

- The VMC Team considers this initiative complete.

- ▶ At the February 2022 meeting of the Festival Committee a discussion was held to look at current local events, identify their success and strategy and outline a “grading” system to assist in the identification of successful events (tourism drivers). This system will allow the committees and team to partner with the appropriate organizations to better market successful events, year-round.
- ▶ The Festival Coordinator and PRM worked to create an “event grant” program framework. This framework was approved by the Marketing, Festival, and Visitor Services committees at their August and September 2022 meetings.
- ▶ The “event grant” program officially launched on January 12, 2023. The program sponsored a total of \$31,700 to 15 non-profit agencies hosting visitor-facing events during the shoulder seasons.

IMPERATIVE: Steward and advocate for the Mendocino County Experience

As a steward and advocate for the Mendocino County Experience, it is important for VMC to promote the natural beauty, cultural heritage, and unique character of the region. This means working to encourage protection of the environment and support sustainable practices that benefit the local community and economy. It also means showcasing the diverse array of activities, events, and attractions that Mendocino County has to offer visitors and residents alike. By emphasizing the county’s natural assets, rich history, and welcoming community, we can create a memorable and authentic experience that encourages visitors to return and fosters a sense of pride among residents. Ultimately, by stewarding and advocating for the Mendocino County Experience, we can ensure that Mendocino County continues to thrive and evolve in a way that benefits everyone.

• **OBJECTIVE: Increase County investment in Tourism products and infrastructure**

- ↳ The current state of Mendocino County’s finances no longer provides the ability to continue to support tourism promotion in the long-term, putting VMC’s annual contract and 50% match in jeopardy. This led the BoD to direct the CEO to consult with Civitas Advisors as to potential avenues for long-term funding stability. However, in June 2022 the County BoS approved the annual contract. At the time of writing, the CEO is exploring funding options under the advisement of Civitas Advisors.
- ↳ Due to the fiscal state of the County of Mendocino (CoM), it was necessary for the county to remove its 50% match on funding toward tourism promotion. The CEO at the direction of the BID Advisory Board negotiated a flat rate of \$150,000 with the CoM as their last contribution to tourism marketing and promotion. It should be noted in this report that top leadership at the CoM do not seem to understand the importance of the Lodging Business Improvement District and/or the efforts of Visit Mendocino County. The organization has been in contract with Civitas Advisors since August 2022 at a total of \$96,300, spent as of writing this report. There is no direction from top county leadership directing county admin staff to move the process forward in an expeditious manner that respects the ROI of \$86/\$1 the organization has achieved. Due to the above circumstances this objective will not be addressed until the County of Mendocino has a firm grasp on their finances.

• **OBJECTIVE: Increase Mendocino County sales tax receipts over 3 years**

Mendocino County / Detail Trend

Direct Travel Impacts 2013-2022p

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2021-2022
Tax Receipts Generated by Travel Spending (\$Millions)											
Local Tax Receipts	15.0	16.2	17.5	18.5	20.1	22.3	24.3	19.6	28.8	26.5	▼ -8.1%
State Tax Receipts	18.6	19.5	19.5	20.3	20.9	20.5	22.2	14.7	21.9	20.8	▼ -5.1%
TOTAL	33.6	35.7	37.0	38.8	41.0	42.7	46.4	34.3	50.7	47.3	▼ -6.8%
Local Tax Receipts Generated by Travel Spending (\$Millions)											
Visitor	9.7	10.6	11.6	12.2	13.5	15.6	17.0	12.4	20.0	17.9	▼ -10.3%
Business or Employee	5.4	5.7	5.8	6.3	6.6	6.7	7.3	7.2	8.8	8.5	▼ -3.2%
TOTAL	15.0	16.2	17.5	18.5	20.1	22.3	24.3	19.6	28.8	26.5	▼ -8.1%
State Tax Receipts Generated by Travel Spending (\$Millions)											
Visitor	13.2	13.7	13.6	14.0	14.6	15.2	16.4	9.1	14.9	13.9	▼ -6.7%
Business or Employee	5.4	5.8	5.9	6.3	6.3	5.3	5.8	5.5	7.0	6.9	▼ -1.9%
TOTAL	18.6	19.5	19.5	20.3	20.9	20.5	22.2	14.7	21.9	20.8	▼ -5.1%

The table above shows a side-by-side analysis of direct visitor spending and tax receipts generated by visitor spending for both California and Mendocino County. These figures are taken from the [Economic Impact of Travel in California 2011-2021p](#) report, commissioned by Visit California.

- ↳ Visit Mendocino County aims to increase Mendocino County sales tax receipts since the implementation of the current strategic plan. In 2019, the county generated \$24.3 million in sales tax receipts, but this figure dropped to \$19.6 million in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic’s impact on businesses and consumer spending. However, in 2021, the sales tax receipts increased to \$28.8 million, indicating that the county’s economy recovered. This represents a 5.6% increase from 2019 to 2021. Visit Mendocino County played an active role in achieving this goal by utilizing digital, social, television, and radio marketing, as well as its website, to promote Mendocino County as a destination of choice for visitors. Through targeted marketing efforts, Visit Mendocino County aims to drive increased tourism, resulting in a boost in consumer spending and sales tax receipts in the county. However, in FY 22/23 Mendocino County realized a decrease in visitor spending over the previous fiscal year to \$26.5 million. The CA tourism industry noted this trend and are calling this the post-pandemic plateau or market correction. With the world re-open and pent-up demand for travel dissipated we are back to 2019 marketing conditions leading us to compare FY 22/23 to pre-pandemic FY 19/20 leaving us at a total increase of 9.05% YOY.

➤ **INITIATIVE: Advocate for the development of pro-business county regulations**

- As the needs assessment of partners and stakeholders is completed, it will become clearer to the BoD as to the direction of the organization under this initiative. Once we understand where the advocacy of the organization is best utilized with the county, the BoD will direct staff in its efforts toward accomplishing this goal.
- Since the organization engaged with Civitas Advisors, it's seen little to no help from the top-level administration of the CoM in advancing MCTC/VMC's conversion from the '89 to '94 BID law along with an increase in the assessment rate from 1% to 2%. With the removal of the CoM's support for tourism marketing and promotion, this increase is necessary in continuing the work of generating tourism dollars for Mendocino County business partners and stakeholders and sales tax receipts to the CoM. The BoS speaks often from the dais as to its desire to be welcoming to businesses and become a business-friendly community. It is clear to MCTC and its BoD that a major disconnect exists between top-level county administration/department leads and the needs to the community as communicated by the Board of Supervisors.

➤ **INITIATIVE: Advocate for County investment and development of sustainable tourism infrastructure**

- The organization will work together with the BID Advisory Board toward identification of infrastructure projects and place those recommendations in this report moving forward. This will allow the BoS to review and understand the long-term sustainability goals and needs of the tourism community and visitors to Mendocino County.

➤ **INITIATIVE: Align destination development activities to Visit California's Stewardship objectives**

- As the organization moves forward with marketing the brand of Mendocino County, it remains top-of-mind with staff, committees, and the BoD through our strategic plan to embrace and practice Visit California's Destination Stewardship and Sustainable Travel Plan. This plan identifies 5 key points that should be addressed in all VMC programs. Those points are:
 - ▶ Expand: Sustainable Practices Through the Mendocino County Tourism Industry
 - ▶ Encourage: Responsible Tourism
 - ▶ Develop: Approaches to Shape Visitation Patterns
 - ▶ Infuse: the Mendocino County brand with Stewardship Ethics
 - ▶ Amplify: the sense of pride Mendocino County residents have in their county
- In FY 21/22 The BoS directed the CEO to engage with Marin & Sonoma Counties along with the Leave No Trace organization to build out a first of its kind multi-jurisdictional program with an emphasis on keeping the California Coastline pristine for the generations of visitors and community members behind us. The CEO sat on the steering committee of the Cleaner California Coast initiative which activated programming in June 2023. The launch was widely successful and has generated the attention of coastal and inland communities across the state for participation. VMC carries the program forward through its social media and programmatic marketing channels.

APPENDIX 1

Visit Mendocino County

2021–2023 Strategic Plan



Vision	Mission	Position	Values	Reputation
A diversified and thriving economy supported by our community, offering enriching experiences for our guests.	Visit Mendocino County stewards and amplifies the total Mendocino County experience	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"> Markets the Mendocino County experience to key regional and domestic markets Creates, develops, and manages brand awareness for the county. Connects people and organizations to opportunities. Provides tourism resources and information to in-county partners. Optimizes return on investment through responsible fiscal management 	<p>Transparency: We foster trust through openness and integrity.</p> <p>Accountability: We are outcome-oriented and professional.</p> <p>Partnership: We create alignment through inclusive and meaningful relationships.</p> <p>Community: We contribute to the fabric of Mendocino County.</p> <p>Innovation: Our creativity reflects the uniqueness of our cultures and landscapes.</p>	<p>Leader: We motivate and facilitate the tourism community.</p> <p>Accessible: We welcome—and are responsive to—input from community members and stakeholders</p> <p>Collaborative: We actively seek engagement and collaboration with our stakeholders and partners.</p> <p>Bold: We deliver on smart, effective, and forward-thinking ideas.</p>
Imperatives	Objectives	Initiatives		
Optimize and demonstrate our impact through relationships and collaborations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase Participation Rate in VMC Programs Increase VMC Communication Engagement Rate Boost Community's Support of the Tourism Industry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a campaign to promote the value of VMC in driving positive results to local businesses Perform a needs assessment of our stakeholders and partners Enhance VMC's portfolio of stakeholder offerings and resources 		
Raise visitor awareness of Mendocino County and strengthen tourism's contribution to County vitality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase Website Traffic Grow the BID Fund 5% Over 3 Years Increase Shoulder Season Visitation Rates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate and diversify visitor target market segments and competitive set Refresh our brand identity to align with target segments and competitive advantage Create process and framework for the evaluation and investment in event promotion with an emphasis on shoulder seasons 		
Steward and Advocate for the Mendocino County Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase County Investment in Tourism Products and Infrastructure Increase Mendocino County Sales Tax Receipts Over 3 Years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate for the development of pro-business county regulations Advocate for County investment and development of sustainable tourism infrastructure Align destination development activities to Visit California's Stewardship Objectives 		

Visit Mendocino County

2021–2023 Strategic Plan



Part of Visit Mendocino's strategic plan calls for the alignment of VMC's destination development and stewardship activities to Visit California's Destination Stewardship and Sustainable Travel Plan. The five objectives outlined in this plan, listed below, focus on residents, visitors and industry partners via marketing, research, communication, education, public affairs, coalition building and destination management:

1	EXPAND Sustainable Practices Throughout the Mendocino County Tourism Industry
2	ENCOURAGE Responsible Tourism
3	DEVELOP Approaches to Shape Visitation Patterns
4	INFUSE the Mendocino County Brand with Stewardship Ethics
5	AMPLIFY the Sense of Pride Mendocino County Residents Have in Their County

Visit Mendocino County

Balance Sheet

As of June 30, 2023

	TOTAL
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Bank Accounts	
1005 SBMC Checking	649,650.57
1010 SBMC Contingency/Savings	1,000,245.31
1030 Cash drawer	100.00
Total Bank Accounts	\$1,649,995.88
Accounts Receivable	
1100 Accounts Receivable	94,868.52
Total Accounts Receivable	\$94,868.52
Other Current Assets	\$4,258.44
Total Current Assets	\$1,749,122.84
Fixed Assets	\$17,146.75
Other Assets	\$0.00
TOTAL ASSETS	\$1,766,269.59
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	
2000 Accounts Payable	80,035.70
Total Accounts Payable	\$80,035.70
Credit Cards	
Ramp Card	24,300.64
Total Credit Cards	\$24,300.64
Other Current Liabilities	\$42,459.39
Total Current Liabilities	\$146,795.73
Total Liabilities	\$146,795.73
Equity	
3100 Contingency-Restricted	187,622.35
3900 Unrestricted Net Assets (RE)	2,042,725.51
Opening Bal Equity	0.00
Net Income	-610,874.00
Total Equity	\$1,619,473.86
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	\$1,766,269.59

APPENDIX 3

Mendocino County / Detail Trend
Direct Travel Impacts 2013-2022p

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2021-2022
Direct Travel Spending (\$Million)											
Destination Spending	349.0	365.9	384.3	421.8	451.6	435.2	466.8	294.1	496.7	455.0	▼ -8.4%
Other Travel*	16.1	16.2	14.4	12.8	14.4	16.5	17.2	6.2	9.9	14.0	▲ 41.2%
TOTAL	365.1	382.1	398.7	434.6	465.9	451.7	484.0	300.2	506.5	468.9	▼ -7.4%
Visitor Spending by Type of Traveler Accommodation (\$Million)											
Hotel, Motel, STVR	200.1	214.6	233.7	267.2	289.3	267.4	286.3	188.6	337.4	249.5	▼ -26.1%
Private Home	46.3	46.6	43.6	44.1	46.8	49.0	54.2	17.8	54.7	60.2	▲ 10.1%
Campground	40.0	40.8	41.5	41.9	44.0	46.2	49.8	41.8	52.1	66.8	▲ 28.1%
2nd Home	13.5	13.7	14.1	14.4	15.2	16.6	17.0	28.1	25.1	31.5	▲ 25.3%
Day Travel	49.1	50.2	51.4	54.1	56.2	56.1	59.5	17.7	27.3	47.0	▲ 72.3%
TOTAL	349.0	365.9	384.3	421.8	451.6	435.2	466.8	294.1	496.7	455.0	▼ -8.4%
Visitor Spending by Commodity Purchased (\$Million)											
Accommodations	85.1	93.9	104.2	121.4	130.6	123.0	134.3	109.2	170.2	156.9	▼ -7.8%
Food Service	103.5	106.9	114.8	127.7	136.4	130.1	139.0	80.2	144.2	121.1	▼ -16.0%
Food Stores	20.8	21.4	22.4	23.0	23.3	22.8	24.1	16.2	27.9	32.2	▲ 15.4%
Local Tran. & Gas	45.4	46.8	43.8	42.2	47.1	50.0	53.4	25.0	44.3	48.2	▲ 8.8%
Arts, Ent. & Rec.	52.5	54.3	56.9	61.9	64.5	60.4	62.8	35.1	59.3	50.2	▼ -15.3%
Retail Sales	41.6	42.7	42.1	45.5	49.6	48.9	53.2	28.4	50.8	46.4	▼ -8.7%
TOTAL	349.0	365.9	384.3	421.8	451.6	435.2	466.8	294.1	496.7	455.0	▼ -8.4%
Travel Industry Earnings (\$Million)											
Accom. & Food Serv.	111.8	120.7	129.0	149.2	162.1	161.8	177.8	136.6	169.5	187.5	▲ 10.6%
Arts, Ent. & Rec.	33.7	36.9	34.4	35.6	37.8	26.5	28.4	15.9	18.5	24.5	▲ 32.4%
Retail**	9.4	9.9	10.2	11.1	11.6	11.3	12.0	12.5	13.5	14.5	▲ 7.4%
Ground Tran.	4.0	4.2	4.6	5.4	6.4	8.4	9.3	3.6	3.7	2.9	▼ -23.6%
Other Travel*	0.8	0.8	0.9	1.0	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.0	1.0	1.5	▲ 48.8%
TOTAL	159.7	172.5	179.1	202.3	219.0	209.1	228.6	169.5	206.3	230.8	▲ 11.9%
Travel Industry Employment (Jobs)											
Accom. & Food Serv.	3,490	3,560	3,560	3,880	4,120	3,920	4,160	3,210	3,610	3,930	▲ 8.9%
Arts, Ent. & Rec.	2,430	2,670	2,480	2,680	2,590	1,740	1,700	860	970	1,290	▲ 33.5%
Retail**	300	310	310	320	330	310	320	310	320	330	▲ 3.4%
Ground Tran.	110	110	120	130	140	160	180	170	180	160	▼ -11.4%
Other Travel*	20	30	30	30	30	30	30	20	20	30	▲ 41.6%
TOTAL	6,360	6,690	6,490	7,040	7,200	6,170	6,400	4,570	5,100	5,740	▲ 12.6%
Tax Receipts Generated by Travel Spending (\$Millions)											
Local Tax Receipts	15.0	16.2	17.5	18.5	20.1	22.3	24.3	19.6	28.8	26.5	▼ -8.1%
State Tax Receipts	18.6	19.5	19.5	20.3	20.9	20.5	22.2	14.7	21.9	20.8	▼ -5.1%
TOTAL	33.6	35.7	37.0	38.8	41.0	42.7	46.4	34.3	50.7	47.3	▼ -6.8%
Local Tax Receipts Generated by Travel Spending (\$Millions)											
Visitor	9.7	10.6	11.6	12.2	13.5	15.6	17.0	12.4	20.0	17.9	▼ -10.3%
Business or Employee	5.4	5.7	5.8	6.3	6.6	6.7	7.3	7.2	8.8	8.5	▼ -3.2%
TOTAL	15.0	16.2	17.5	18.5	20.1	22.3	24.3	19.6	28.8	26.5	▼ -8.1%
State Tax Receipts Generated by Travel Spending (\$Millions)											
Visitor	13.2	13.7	13.6	14.0	14.6	15.2	16.4	9.1	14.9	13.9	▼ -6.7%
Business or Employee	5.4	5.8	5.9	6.3	6.3	5.3	5.8	5.5	7.0	6.9	▼ -1.9%
TOTAL	18.6	19.5	19.5	20.3	20.9	20.5	22.2	14.7	21.9	20.8	▼ -5.1%

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.

Advertising equivalency	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.
Impressions	The number of views a print or digital article is estimated to reach based on circulation and subscription data.
Media Placement	A story (print or digital) about an aspect of Mendocino County that arises from PR efforts.
Media Mission	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.
Releases	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.
FAM	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.
Millennials	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.
Gen-Xers	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.
Baby Boomers	Those born between the early-to-mid 1940s up to about 1964.
Content marketing	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.
Google Analytics	A reporting tool provided by Google that can be used to analyze traffic, ad words, digital marketing campaigns, demographics, etc. for VisitMendocino.com.
Facebook Insights	A reporting tool for analyzing traffic, advertising campaigns, and other activities on Facebook.
Activity Provider	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.
Free Independent Traveler (FIT)	A person or a couple that is not traveling with a group; usually references foreign travelers out on their own (Foreign Independent Traveler).
Inbound Tour Operator	Someone specializing in providing tours to overseas travelers to a destination, either operating the tour themselves or working through established partnerships with local suppliers.
Receptives	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.
Search Engine Marketing	A marketing tactic using paid advertising services so that interested clients and customers can reach a business quicker and easier while searching online.

Block	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.
Conversion	Getting “heads in beds” or otherwise closing the sale. Differs from “hospitality.” Hospitality is being warm, friendly and helpful. Conversion is active selling.
Demand generators	Strategies and programs developed by DMOs and suppliers to generate destination demand. Examples include festivals, events, cultural tours, and consumer promotion.
Engagement	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.
Reach	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.
Selected Key Industry Associations	
DMA West	Destination Marketing Associations West, a membership organization of visitor bureaus throughout the western United States.
Visit California	The tourism marketing agency for the state.
California Travel Association	Membership organization offering education and advocacy for state tourism operators.
U.S. Travel Association	National, non-profit organization representing and advocating for all components of the travel industry.
Destination International	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.
Brand USA	Agency chiefly responsible for marketing the USA as a destination to the rest of the world.