

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Visit Mendocino County (VMC) is entering its ninth year as the destination marketing organization for the County of Mendocino. Building on strong tourism growth and the successful launch of a new brand and website, VMC will shift toward a content-first, creator-driven strategy that reflects evolving traveler behaviors.

In FY 2025–2026, VMC will prioritize storytelling through influencer collaborations, user-generated content (UGC), and TikTok-style short-form video across digital channels. Our goal is to elevate awareness, drive direct bookings, and inspire longer stays through authentic, modern, and emotionally resonant marketing. We will also maintain strong public relations and partnership programs while investing in festivals and local initiatives to boost shoulder-season travel.

## 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 cultures and landscapes

### Position

Visit Mendocino County:

- Markets the Mendocino experience to regional, domestic, and niche markets
- Builds brand identity and storytelling across modern platforms
- Connects travelers with authentic local experiences
- Drives economic value while being fiscally responsible

# INTEGRATED CONTENT-FIRST STRATEGY

*Current analytics indicate significantly higher engagement from organic search users compared to paid ads (2:47 vs. 1:25 average time on site), but organic traffic is lower in volume. This strategy is built to amplify the most valuable traffic sources—organic and social—through authentic storytelling, SEO optimization, and direct user engagement.*

## Influencer Engagement Strategy

*Influencer-generated content can lift engagement metrics across social channels and website entry points. We aim to increase Instagram and TikTok referral and improve session duration by per visit, building from current average actions per session.*

- Partner with micro and mid-tier influencers in travel, food, wine, and outdoor categories.
- Develop influencer-hosted itineraries such as “Sip & Stay” or “48 Hours in Mendocino.”
- Encourage cross-platform sharing through all social media platforms (TikTok, Instagram Reels, Facebook Stories and YouTube Shorts).

## User-Generated Content (UGC)

*UGC campaigns like #MyMendoMoment are expected to increase organic sessions and improve social referral volume with call to action. UGC tends to perform higher in engagement and dwell time based on existing campaign benchmarks.*

- Launch campaign hashtags (e.g., #MyMendoMoment, #MendoMagic).
- Feature visitor content on homepage, event pages, and social channels.
- Incentivize locals and visitors to share experiences through giveaways and content contests.

## Short-Form Video Integration

*Current video content yields high engagement. By embedding Reels and Shorts directly into the site (via Juicer Social), we aim to increase homepage dwell time and reduce bounce rate, particularly supporting pages like the 'Redwoods' and 'Bucket List' posts which already see high traffic.*

- Embed TikTok-style videos across visitmendocino.com.
- Create “What’s Hot Now” content hubs/landing pages showcasing current happenings.
- Use short-form clips for seasonal promotion and event marketing.

## Paid Media Optimization

*Paid ads currently drive high volume but low depth. With integrated influencer and UGC assets, we expect to increase click-through and interaction rates, aiming to raise average actions per session..*

- Run retargeting campaigns using influencer and UGC videos.
- Integrate short video CTAs in social ads (e.g., “Book Your Winter Escape Today!”).

## Partner Support and Community Activation

*Expanding participation in content creation and amplification is projected to increase social reach and improve visibility for regional pages. Goals include more referral traffic from partner-owned platforms.*

- Offer content creation resources for local stakeholders.
- Equip partners with tools to generate and promote UGC.
- Promote a co-op influencer program for collaborative visibility.

## Analytics-Driven Insights

The tactics outlined in this plan are specifically designed to improve engagement and lift core website performance metrics. Here is how the strategic executions map directly to the analytics:

- **Summer UGC Contest + Hashtag Campaigns** will boost time on site and repeat visits by prompting deeper exploration of highlighted content and encouraging social sharing that drives referral traffic.
  - *Goal: Increase organic sessions by 10% through socially-driven discovery and shared links.*
- **Seasonal Landing Pages + SEO Refresh** will address the gap in generic keyword traffic by creating content optimized for non-branded searches (e.g., “summer in Mendocino,” “redwoods hikes”)
  - *Goal: Increase first-page rankings for non-branded keywords by 20%; improve SEO conversion pages’ bounce rate and dwell time.*
- **Email Campaigns (Adventure Series + Welcome Refresh)** will improve return user rates and guide high-value users directly to thematic content, increasing engagement.
  - *Goal: Lift average pages per session to 2.5 among returning visitors; increase CTR from email to site by 15%.*
- **Short-Form Reels & Ambassador Takeovers** leverage influencer and local authenticity to drive high engagement on social platforms and boost session duration.
  - *Goal: Increase Instagram and TikTok referral traffic by 30%; increase average session duration by 15 seconds per visit.*
- **Drone Footage & “What’s Hot Now” Features** on the homepage will extend site engagement through immersive content, increasing session depth and lowering bounce rate.

- *Goal: Reduce bounce rate on homepage by 5%; increase video interaction rate.*

Collectively, these initiatives aim to convert highly engaged organic and social audiences into deeper site explorers and qualified leads through an experience-forward lens.

- Annual site visits: 600,000
  - From advertising: 266,000 (avg. time on site 1:25, 1.2 actions per visit)
  - From organic search: 173,000 (avg. time on site 2:47, 2.0 actions per visit)
- 80% of all visitors take 1 action; 10.6% take 2 actions
- High-performing content includes Redwood trails, festivals, bucket lists, beaches and iconic landmarks
- SEO visibility: 3,313 first-page keyword rankings with monthly search volume totaling 317,000
- Top traffic cities: San Jose, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Sacramento, Oakland, Fort Bragg, Stockton, Seattle, Santa Rosa, Ukiah
- Significant opportunity to grow generic SEO keywords (e.g., “see the redwoods,” “whale watching”)

## **KPIs for FY 2025–2026**

- 10+ influencer partnerships
- 5,000+ campaign hashtag uses
- 15% increase in bookings driven from social content
- 300+ media placements with integrated visual storytelling
- Increase organic search sessions by 10% through expanded SEO content
- Improve average engagement per visit to 2+ actions

## **IMMEDIATE ACTION ITEMS: ORGANIC GROWTH PLAYBOOK (SUMMER FOCUS)**

### **Social Media: Build Excitement & Engagement**

#### **1. Summer Giveaway or Photo & Story Contest (UGC Campaign)**

- Theme: “My Mendocino Moment”
- Ask visitors to share their favorite hidden gems or summer moments using #MyMendoMoment
- Feature winners on Instagram, Facebook and TikTok
- Offer small incentives or prizes such as tastings, or attraction passes etc.

#### **2. Curated Instagram Reels & TikTok Series**

- “60-Second Local Secrets” featuring locals sharing favorite spots
- “Drone Footage Days” with sunrise/sunset over iconic locations

- Use trending audio to boost reach

### **3. Local Ambassador Takeovers**

- 1-day Instagram Story takeovers hosted by local business owners, artisans, or park rangers
- Establish a recurring “A Day in Mendocino” series
- Find locals who are already creating the content

## **Email Marketing: Story-Driven Campaigns**

*Current email-driven sessions can improve with targeted content and refreshed sequences are expected to lift CTR by and improve return visitation rates. Thematic content tied to SEO-optimized landing pages can also support site retention goals.*

### **1. Summer Adventure Series (Bi-Monthly)**

- Topics like: “Top 3 Coastal Hikes for July,” “Wineries with Hidden Gardens,” “Family Day Trips Under \$100”
- Include strong photos and clear CTAs

### **2. Welcome Email Sequence Refresh**

- Highlight top summer experiences
- Drive subscriptions and social follows

## **Website Optimization: Search & Content**

*Current SEO shows strength in branded keywords and select attractions. These enhancements aim to raise non-branded search visibility by 20%, reduce bounce rates on high-traffic pages, and grow total organic sessions beyond the current 173,000/year.*

### **1. Seasonal Landing Pages**

- Launch “Ultimate Mendocino County Summer Guide 2025”
- Optimize for terms like “Summer in Mendocino,” “Mendocino family vacations”

### **2. Top Page SEO Refresh**

- Update high-traffic pages with seasonal content, events, and internal links
- Integrate keywords like “best beaches in Mendocino this summer,” “2025 summer events”

### **3. Local Business Spotlights**

- Post feature blogs or profiles on small businesses with seasonal offers
- Include links business owners can use in their own channels

## Execution Checklist

Task	Owner	Frequency
Giveaway or Photo/Story Social Media Contest	Marketing Manager	One-time (Start of June)
Instagram/TikTok Content	Marketing Manager & Content Creators	2-3x per week
Email Adventure Series	Partner Relations & Communications Manager	Bi-Monthly
Update Top 5 SEO Landing Pages	Web Admin/Marketing Team	Monthly
Local Ambassador Takeovers	Marketing Manager	Bi-Monthly
Update Landing Page with CTA	Marketing Team	Monthly

Visit Mendocino County is well-positioned to lead Northern California destinations in influencer-led, community-powered marketing. Through a strategy grounded in storytelling, collaboration, and short-form content (informed by robust data and digital insights) Mendocino will strengthen its presence in a digital-first tourism economy while supporting local partners and enriching the visitor experience.