

**DRAFT**

Mendocino County Tourism Commission, Inc.  
DBA: Visit Mendocino County  
Annual Report:  
Fiscal Year: 2023-2024

Submitted to Mendocino County Tourism Commission & County of Mendocino

January 23, 2025

## Executive Summary:

The 2023-2024 fiscal year proved to be a dynamic period for Visit Mendocino County (VMC), marked by continued progress in tourism growth and the implementation of strategic initiatives designed to enhance Mendocino County's positioning as a premier travel destination. With sustained interest in domestic travel, the VMC team capitalized on this momentum, reinforcing the county's appeal as Northern California's quintessential rural road trip destination. The organization employed a multi-faceted approach to marketing and outreach, anchored by the successful launch of the "Magic is Real" rebrand. This initiative included a state-of-the-art content-driven website, fresh brand assets, and a robust digital and traditional marketing campaign suite. Key efforts included targeted programmatic advertising, commercials throughout Northern California, partnerships with media influencers, and high-profile collaborations with Visit California, securing extensive coverage in outlets such as *Travel + Leisure*, *Forbes*, and *National Geographic*. These efforts helped grow website traffic by 12.8% and email engagement by 14.92%, solidifying Mendocino County's presence in the tourism market.

VMC also prioritized community collaboration and event development, successfully collaborating with Mendocino County Winegrowers to recreate *Taste Mendocino* and expanding its festival participation with Harvest Festival Mendocino and Seafood & Sips, aimed at driving shoulder-season visitation. The grant sponsorship program supported 14 local events with \$29,500 in funding, fostering community involvement and promoting local businesses.

Despite financial challenges stemming from the County of Mendocino's reduced support, VMC maintained financial stability. The organization, under the advisement of Civitas Advisors, began updating its Business Improvement District (BID) structure to ensure long-term funding sustainability. While BID collections saw a minor decline year-over-year, they have increased 41.35% compared to the year prior to the strategic plan's implementation.

Other notable achievements include:

- **Podcast Series:** Partnered with Roberta Gonzales Productions to release the second season of the *Magic is Real* video podcast, garnering significant engagement with over 38,000 views.
- **PR Success:** Exceeded public relations goals early in the fiscal year, leveraging high-impact media placements to drive visitor interest.
- **Resident & Visitor Studies:** Conducted community perception studies to align tourism strategies with stakeholder needs, enhancing VMC's community-focused approach.
- **Cannabis Tourism:** Continued collaboration with Cultivar Strategies, Visit Redwoods (Humboldt) and Visit Oakland to integrate cannabis experiences into VMC marketing campaigns.

While the discontinuation of Mendocino County's BID matching funds remains a challenge, VMC's commitment to transparency, innovation, and collaboration ensures its resilience. By

promoting the county's natural beauty, cultural heritage, and unique attractions, the organization remains steadfast in its mission to inspire visitors and support the local economy.

The future of VMC is bright thanks to its dedicated team, strong community partnerships, and a clear vision for sustainable growth. Together, we can continue to showcase Mendocino County's unparalleled charm while contributing to the well-being of our residents and the vitality of our local economy.

Thank you for the privilege of promoting our extraordinary destination.

Respectfully,



Ramon Jimenez  
Executive Director

### **Strategic Plan**

The activities in this report relate to the initiatives set forth in the 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, ED, PRCM, MM and DM) communicate with partners and stakeholders on a monthly basis informing them of media stories. The team also requests partners and stakeholders submit content and information to VMC for dissemination by Visit California. Some examples of PR pitches picked up by Visit CA on their website include our anchor festivals, Harvest Mendocino and Seafood & Sips as well as Point Arena Lighthouse, Skunk Train, MacKerricher State Park, Schooner Gulch State Park, MacCallum House and Stanford Inn.

The ED 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, Point Arena Merchant Association and Mendocino College Foundation. At the request of CoM Supervisors Gjerde and Williams, the ED continued to work in partnership with Marin and Sonoma counties and Leave No Trace to develop the Cleaner California Coast initiative. Since the initiative launched its website and social media marketing assets, Mendocino County (VMC) has been the greatest source of referrals to the program's website.

VMC collaborated extensively with Mendocino Winegrowers Inc. and their newly appointed Executive Director to successfully organize and host Taste Mendocino in Hopland during the summer. Despite having less than three months to plan and market the event, the team's efforts yielded impressive results. The event was well-received, with positive feedback from participating wineries and attendees, highlighting its success and impact on the local community.

VMC also worked on a Cannabis Trail cooperative marketing campaign with Visit Oakland, Visit Redwoods (Humboldt) and Applegarth Strategies to elevate cultural cannabis experiences in the county which launched in the spring.

The ED continues to serve on the Visit California (VCA) Rural Regional Committee, collaborating closely with its members. This partnership significantly enhances VMC's visibility and reputation, as VMC is frequently highlighted in Visit California presentations as an example of best practices for Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs).

- **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.
  - VMC worked with Mendocino County Lodging Association (MCLA) to host industry mixers throughout the county to engage partners and stakeholders in the work of VMC.
  - Following a successful second year of our Grant Sponsorship Program, the PRCM and FC continued to identify and support new tourism-facing events ultimately granting \$29,500 to support the growth of 14 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 magic of Mendocino County, to appeal to a wider variety of consumers in our target markets.
  - The organization in its fourth 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.
  
- **OBJECTIVE: Increase VMC Communication Engagement Rate**
  - To deepen engagement with VMC's extensive consumer email list grew from 34,168 to 39,265 (time of writing), reflecting a 14.92% increase YoY. The team also expanded its email campaign program and sent a total of 40 marketing emails during the fiscal year, with an average frequency of 3.33 emails monthly.
  - The organization began work on a Brand Research Study to give VMC a baseline to grow in four target markets – Sacramento, Bay Area, Southern Oregon, and Los Angeles. See the link for the full results of the study:  
<https://www.mendocinotourism.org/wp-content/uploads/2024-Visit-Mendocino-County-Brand-Research-Survey-1.pdf>
  - With continued success, the team continued working in collaboration with Roberta Gonzales Productions (RoGoPro) to finish the second season (6 episodes) of the Visit Mendocino County Magic is Real podcast series. The new season began production in Fall of 2023 with episodes released every other month with over 38,000 views for the season to date.
  
- **OBJECTIVE: Boost community's support of the tourism industry**

- VMC collaborated with Travel Analytics Group (TAG) to develop a Resident & Visitor Profile and Perception Study, gathering community feedback on the organization's performance, effectiveness, and areas for improvement. This study aimed to understand community perspectives and needs related to tourism in Mendocino County. VMC values community input and continues to address these needs through its programs, while also leveraging the study's findings to enhance its marketing efforts: [www.mendocinotourism.org/wp-content/uploads/Visit-Mendocino\\_Res-Vis-Study\\_Summary-Presentation-1.pdf](http://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**
  - VMC rebranded and launched a new website, incorporating insights from the Travel Analytics Group's findings. The new "Magic is Real" campaign features social media and programmatic advertisements, television commercials, collateral distribution throughout Northern California, and a complete public relations strategy. As part of the rebranding effort, VMC also expanded its marketing presence to include the Sonoma County Airport and partnered with Carvertise, a mobile billboard company, to market in the Bay Area.
- **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 region based on their respective needs.
- **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.***

The organization continues a two-pronged approach to direct marketing. The first focuses on brand awareness, aiming to keep Mendocino County top-of-mind for potential and returning visitors (see the next data set for more details). The second promotes tourism-facing events to bolster shoulder season visitation and Business Improvement District (BID) collections.

Public relations (PR) plays a crucial role in driving visitor awareness. Our PR team carefully plans annual communication strategies to align with and enhance our direct marketing efforts. During the fiscal year, the team achieved their goals ahead of schedule, thanks to an exceptional amount of media attention.

During COVID-19, VMC adopted a strategy to maximize media pitches and placements while reducing the number of press visits by targeting media outlets with broader reach and access to

multiple publications. This approach proved effective in optimizing VMC’s public relations resources. Post-pandemic, media is once again visiting Mendocino County and publishing positive stories that highlight its unique appeal. These stories not only enhance the county’s reputation but also contribute significantly to its economic development, showcasing the enduring value of welcoming media to experience Mendocino County firsthand.

The PR team was proud to secure a series of high-profile features throughout the year in prominent publications and media outlets, including *Travel + Leisure*, *Forbes*, *Sunset*, *USA Today*, *MSN*, *Wine Enthusiast*, *National Geographic*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Fodor’s Travel*, *AFAR*, *7x7*, *ABC 10*, *Adventure Sports Journal*, *The Points Guy*, *Locale*, *Diablo Magazine*, *NBC Los Angeles*, *NBC Bay Area*, *Fox 2*, and *Visit California*. The data below highlights the PR team’s direct impressions, advertising equivalency, and familiarization program results for the year.

COVERAGE	2023/2024 GOAL	2023/24 TOTAL	2022/23 TOTAL
Placements	550	550	908
Impressions	350 Million	1.26 Billion	2.419 Billion
Advertising Equivalency	\$12 Million	352.1 Million	\$422.5 Million

MEDIA RELEASES	GOAL	TOTAL
	11	12

2023-2024 Familiarization Trips (FAMs)

Date Visited	Media Guest(s)	Outlet
7/6 - 9/2023	James Miurran	MTBeer; Adventures Sports Journal
7/12 - 14/2023	Robert Kaufman	NCGA Magazine
8/10 - 12/2023	Carey Sweet	Sonoma Magazine; Press Democrat
10/16 - 18/2023	Adam Tshorn	Los Angeles Times
10/17 - 20/2023	Virginia Prior	Diablo Magazine
10/26 - 30/2023	Sue & Jim Collins	City Lifestyle Magazine
11/3 - 5/2023	Kristin Conard	7 x 7 Magazine, Travel + Leisure, Islands
11/3 - 5/2023	Preethi Chandrasekhar	The Eager Traveler
11/9 - 10/2023	Patrick Monatsberger	Influencer
11/12/23	Roxane Vergught / French FAM	Multiple
12/17 - 19/2023	Chelsee Lowe	Travel + Leisure, LA Parent
1/13 - 16/2024	Katherine McMahon	Vineyards & Voyages
1/26 - 28/2024	Mark Anderson	Edible Monterey
1/30 - 2/4/2024	Betsy Andrews	Saveur & Vintner Project
2/2 - 4/2024	Kim Westerman	Forbes
2/23 - 25/2024	Shoshi Parks	7 x 7 Magazine
3/19 - 21/2024	Darla Hoffman	Luxe Beat Magazine
3/30/24	Ema Koedagoto / Japanese FAM	Multiple
5/5 - 8/2024	Ken Whiting	Facing Waves
5/9 - 10/2024	Lucas Mittenentzwei	Fora Travel
5/10 - 12/2024	Cindy Cruz	COE Magazine



- **OBJECTIVE: Increase website traffic**

Page	Filter results...	Views ▼	Visitors	Avg time	Total time	Exit
☆ / Visit Mendocino County - Visit Mendocino County		225,658	32.4%	188,480	01:13	190d 83% 0%
☆ /seafood-sips-2024/ Page not found - Visit Mendocino County		42,741	6.1%	40,559	00:41	20d 95% 0%
☆ /4-magical-spots-to-explore-the-redwoods-in-mendocino-county/ 4 Magical Spots to Explore the Redwoods in Mendocino County - Visit Mendocino County		36,065	5.2%	33,958	00:47	19d 96% 0%
☆ /mendocino-coast-whale-fest-2024/ Page not found - Visit Mendocino County		25,829	3.7%	24,222	01:15	22d 74% 0%
☆ /mendocino-county-bucket-list/ Mendocino County Bucket List - Visit Mendocino County		18,898	2.7%	17,237	02:27	32d 79% 0%
☆ /harvestmendocino2023/ Page not found - Visit Mendocino County		12,695	1.8%	11,915	01:26	12d 84% 0%
☆ /play/ Play in Mendocino County - Visit Mendocino County		10,592	1.5%	8,678	01:05	7d 31% 0%
☆ /events/ Events from January 23 - January 25 - Visit Mendocino County		10,536	1.5%	9,737	01:02	7d 34% 0%
☆ /event/almost-fringe-festival/ Upcoming Events - Visit Mendocino County		8,387	1.2%	7,763	00:52	5d 97% 0%
☆ /inside-the-magic-mushroom-hunting/ Inside the Magic: Mushroom Hunting - Visit Mendocino County		6,579	0.9%	5,898	01:27	6d 65% 0%
☆ /feast/ Feast in Mendocino County - Visit Mendocino County		5,843	0.8%	4,663	00:58	94:08:14 31% 0%
☆ /sip/ Sip in Mendocino County - Visit Mendocino County		5,665	0.8%	5,167	01:00	94:25:00 60% 0%
☆ /listing/glass-beach/ Glass Beach - Visit Mendocino County		5,233	0.8%	4,755	01:01	88:40:13 77% 0%
☆ /wellness-2024/ Wellness 2024 - Visit Mendocino County		4,841	0.7%	4,326	01:41	5d 46% 0%
☆ /webcams-of-mendocino-county/ Webcams of Mendocino County - Visit Mendocino County		4,797	0.7%	4,101	00:39	51:58:03 46% 0%
☆ /harvestmendocino2023/ Harvest Mendocino 2023 - Visit Mendocino County		4,642	0.7%	4,197	00:53	68:20:26 79% 0%
☆ /3-unbelievable-hot-springs-and-spas-in-mendocino-county/ 3 Unbelievable Hot Springs and Spas in Mendocino County - Visit Mendocino County		4,626	0.7%	4,259	01:29	4d 58% 0%



The topline data for FY 23/24 website analytics reveal:

- 23/24 visitors have increased 12.8% from the previous FY 22/23 (691,558 vs 612,966)
- Los Angeles continues to grow traffic share, with 46,844 visitors in 23/24 vs 28,305 in 22/23
- Highest interest website segments for visitors are: Arts & Entertainment/Celebrities & Entertainment News, Food & Dining, Media & Entertainment/Movie Lovers, Shoppers/Value Shoppers, Travel/Travel Buffs.
- Top content includes Seafood & Sips (6.1%), 4 Spots to Explore the Redwoods (5.2%), Whale Fest (3.7%), Bucket List (2.7%), and Harvest Mendocino (1.8%)

Social Media Results YOY FY 2021/2022 vs FY 2022/2023					
FACEBOOK			INSTAGRAM		
	FY 2022/2023	FY 2023/2024		FY 2022/2023	FY 2023/2024
Impressions	24,879,903 Total (23,582,749 Paid / 1,297,154 Organic+Viral)	32,763,714 Total (31,558,396 Paid / 1,205,318 Organic+Viral)	Impressions	4,915,705	1,724,454
Engagement	341,553	496,212	Likes Received	42,118	47,496
Link Clicks	285,636	435,390	Comments	411	558
Posts	95	112	Posts	134	236
Impressions/Post	261,893	292,533	Likes/Post	314	201
Engagement/Post	3,595	4,430	Comments/Post	3	2.3
Fan Base	62,051	64,212	Followers	33,037	39,865

Social media plays a crucial role in driving traffic to [www.visitmendocino.com](http://www.visitmendocino.com), not only by increasing website visitors but also by enhancing brand awareness. The dataset provided outlines year-over-year (YoY) metrics. The total impressions include paid, organic, and viral impressions, but impressions per post are calculated based on organic and viral impressions to ensure accuracy. Over the year, Facebook's fan base grew by 3.42%, while Instagram followers saw a significant 18.73% increase.

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

**TREASURER - TAX COLLECTOR  
COUNTY OF MENDOCINO  
(Data as of 10/24/2024)**

<b>Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) Collections by Calendar Quarter</b>					
Fiscal Year	1st Quarter (July-Sept.)	2nd Quarter (Oct.-Dec.)	3rd Quarter (Jan.-March)	4th Quarter (April-June)	Fiscal Year Collections
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	\$ 3,028,129.98	\$ 1,787,197.61	\$ 1,223,110.17	\$ 2,230,197.08	\$ 8,268,631.84
2023-24	\$ 2,998,353.81	\$ 1,737,861.23	\$ 1,232,442.35	\$ 2,176,440.00	\$ 8,145,097.39

<b>Business Improvement District (BID) Assessment Collections by Calendar Quarter</b>					
Fiscal Year	1st Quarter (July-Sept.)	2nd Quarter (Oct.-Dec.)	3rd Quarter (Jan.-March)	4th Quarter (April-June)	Fiscal Year Collections
2016-17	\$ 306,111.45	\$ 192,168.41	\$ 149,161.35	\$ 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	\$ 251,009.41	\$ 79,074.22	\$ 914,988.07
2020-21	\$ 345,912.88	\$ 258,702.54	\$ 315,421.63	\$ 367,722.16	\$ 1,287,759.21
2021-22	\$ 455,894.60	\$ 297,723.80	\$ 228,586.87	\$ 344,553.64	\$ 1,326,758.91
2022-23	\$ 436,854.94	\$ 259,777.62	\$ 199,400.22	\$ 322,077.23	\$ 1,218,160.01
2023-24	\$ 419,952.63	\$ 253,427.62	\$ 182,316.36	\$ 296,321.19	\$ 1,152,018.40

**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.

- The Mendocino County Treasurer-Tax Collector's Office released its annual TOT/BID collections report, revealing a 5.43% decline in revenue from lodging businesses between 2022/23 and 2023/24. However, since 2019/20, the year prior to the implementation of the strategic plan, BID collections have increased by 41.35% when compared to 2023/24.

BookDirect Referrals	
OUTBOUND REFERRALS 2023/2024	
July 2023 - June 2024	
	Total
Month	15,567
July	1,456
August	1,308
September	779
October	744
November	907
December	901
January	1,375
February	1,916
March	1,530
April	1,440
May	1,669
June	1,542

The implementation of the Simpleview lodging booking system on [www.visitmendocino.com](http://www.visitmendocino.com) enables potential visitors to make lodging reservations directly through the VMC website. Although it is not possible to track the exact number of bookings made through the platform, the system directed 15,567 potential visitors to the "book now" button on stakeholder web reservation systems. In 2022/23, 10,038 potential visitors were referred through the system, representing a 55.08% year-over-year increase.

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

- According to the Treasurer-Tax Collector's TOT/BID report, Q2 and Q3 BID collections declined by 5.11% year-over-year but have increased by 14.9% compared to 2019/2020, the year before the strategic plan was implemented.
- **INITIATIVE: Evaluate and diversify visitor target market segment and competitive set**
  - In January 2023, the Travel Analytics Group delivered the Visitor and Resident Perspective Study, highlighting several key West Coast markets that are currently under-advertised by destinations. In 2024, we conducted a Brand Research Survey in key markets to assess overall sentiment and refine our approach to each market accordingly.
- **INITIATIVE: Refresh our brand identity to align with target segments and competitive advantage.**

In the first quarter of the fiscal year 2023-2024, the organization introduced the next generation of Mendocino County tourism branding. This included launching Visit Mendocino County's (VMC) new tagline, "Magic is Real," along with an updated website, programmatic advertising, and social media marketing, all aligned with the refreshed brand assets. The launch followed the Board of Directors' (BoD) approval of the new marketing suite on July 17, 2023. The rebrand was rolled out across a wide range of consumer marketing channels, including television and radio networks in the Bay Area, Sacramento, and Central Valley, programmatic and social media advertisements, Uber and Lyft cars wrapped in branding throughout the Bay Area, and print media placements in *Condé Nast Traveler*. Additionally, preparations began for the next season of the *VMC Magic is Real* podcast, produced by RoGoPro, a firm led by Bay Area TV personality Roberta Gonzales. A key focus of the rebranding initiative was the development of a new, content-driven website designed to meet consumer preferences for scrolling and watching content while reducing the website's bounce rate.
- **INITIATIVE: Create process and framework for the evaluation and investment in event promotion with an emphasis on shoulder season.**

- When it first launched, the "Event Sponsorship/Grant" program provided \$31,700 in funding to 15 non-profit organizations hosting visitor-focused events during the shoulder seasons. This year, the program continued into its second year, awarding a total of \$29,500 to 14 non-profit organizations for similar events across the county. This investment, with a focus on the shoulder season, has enabled VMC to collaborate with non-profits and draw visitors to the county with new events and offerings.

***IMPERATIVE: Steward and advocate for the Mendocino County Experience***

As a steward and advocate for the Mendocino County experience, VMC is dedicated to promoting the region's natural beauty, cultural heritage, and unique character. This commitment involves encouraging environmental protection and supporting sustainable practices that benefit the local community and economy. It also includes highlighting the wide range of activities, events, and attractions that Mendocino County offers to both visitors and residents. By focusing on the county's natural assets, rich history, and welcoming community, VMC aims to create memorable and authentic experiences that inspire visitors to return and instill pride among residents. Through this stewardship and advocacy, we can ensure that Mendocino County continues to thrive and grow in ways that benefit everyone.

- **OBJECTIVE: Increase County investment in Tourism products and infrastructure**
  - Previously, Mendocino County provided a 50% match for Business Improvement District (BID) collections. However, due to the county's fiscal challenges, this matching funding for tourism promotion was discontinued. In response, the Board of Directors (BoD) directed VMC to consult with Civitas Advisors to explore potential strategies for long-term funding stability. Under the guidance of the VMC Board of Directors, the former VMC CEO negotiated a flat contribution of \$150,000 from the County of Mendocino as their final financial commitment to tourism marketing and promotion. At this time, VMC is collaborating with Civitas Advisors and lodging owners to update the Business Improvement District structure.
- **OBJECTIVE: Increase Mendocino County sales tax receipts over 3 years**

## Mendocino / Impacts, Summary

Direct Travel Impacts, 2014-2023p

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	% Chg. 22-23
<b>Tax Receipts Generated by Travel Spending (\$Millions)</b>											
Local Tax Receipts	16.2	17.5	18.5	20.1	22.3	24.3	19.6	23.8	28.0	26.8	-4.3%
State Tax Receipts	19.5	19.5	20.3	20.9	20.5	22.2	14.7	18.4	22.6	22.4	-0.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>35.7</b>	<b>37.0</b>	<b>38.8</b>	<b>41.0</b>	<b>42.7</b>	<b>46.4</b>	<b>34.3</b>	<b>42.2</b>	<b>50.6</b>	<b>49.2</b>	<b>-2.7%</b>
<b>State Tax Receipts Generated by Travel Spending (\$Millions)</b>											
Visitor	13.7	13.6	14.0	14.6	15.2	16.4	9.1	14.6	16.0	15.7	-1.8%
Business & Employee	5.8	5.9	6.3	6.3	5.3	5.8	5.5	3.8	6.6	6.8	1.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>19.5</b>	<b>19.5</b>	<b>20.3</b>	<b>20.9</b>	<b>20.5</b>	<b>22.2</b>	<b>14.7</b>	<b>18.4</b>	<b>22.6</b>	<b>22.4</b>	<b>-0.8%</b>
<b>Local Tax Receipts Generated by Travel Spending (\$Millions)</b>											
Visitor	10.6	11.6	12.2	13.5	15.6	17.0	12.4	18.9	19.7	18.4	-6.4%
Business & Employee	5.7	5.8	6.3	6.6	6.7	7.3	7.2	4.9	8.3	8.3	0.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>16.2</b>	<b>17.5</b>	<b>18.5</b>	<b>20.1</b>	<b>22.3</b>	<b>24.3</b>	<b>19.6</b>	<b>23.8</b>	<b>28.0</b>	<b>26.8</b>	<b>-4.3%</b>

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 2011-2023p](#) report, commissioned by Visit California.

- Visit Mendocino County aims to boost the county's sales tax revenue as part of its strategic plan. In 2019, the county generated \$24.3 million in sales tax receipts. This figure fell to \$19.6 million in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on businesses and consumer spending. Sales tax receipts rebounded in 2021 to \$23.8 million and rose further to \$28.0 million in 2022. However, in 2023, receipts declined slightly to \$26.8 million. The California tourism industry describes this trend as a "post-pandemic plateau" or "market correction." Despite this recent decrease, sales tax revenue has increased by 11.86% since 2021.
- **INITIATIVE: Advocate for the development of pro-business county regulations**
  - Mendocino County staff and the Board of Directors have been collaborating with VMC and Civitas Advisors to transition from the 1989 BID law to the 1994 BID law, alongside an increase in the assessment rate from 1% to 2%. This updated assessment is essential to compensate for the absence of the County of Mendocino's 50% funding match and to sustain the generation of tourism revenue for Mendocino County's business partners, stakeholders, as well as the sales tax receipts of the county and its incorporated cities.
- **INITIATIVE: Advocate for County investment and development of sustainable tourism infrastructure**
  - The organization will collaborate with the BID Advisory Board to identify infrastructure projects and include their recommendations in this report going forward. This approach will enable the Board of Supervisors (BoS) to review and better understand the long-term sustainability goals and needs of Mendocino County's tourism community and visitors.

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

- As the organization continues to promote the Mendocino County brand, its strategic plan prioritizes aligning with Visit California's Destination Stewardship and Sustainable Travel Plan. This commitment is emphasized by staff, committees, and the Board of Directors (BoD). The plan outlines five key focus areas to guide all Visit Mendocino County (VMC) programs:
  - **Expand:** Implement sustainable practices across the Mendocino County tourism industry.
  - **Encourage:** Foster responsible tourism among visitors.
  - **Develop:** Create strategies to influence and manage visitation patterns.
  - **Infuse:** Embed stewardship ethics into the Mendocino County brand.
  - **Amplify:** Strengthen residents' sense of pride in Mendocino County.
  - Since FY 2021-2022, Visit Mendocino County (VMC) has partnered with Marin and Sonoma Counties and the Leave No Trace organization to develop a groundbreaking multi-jurisdictional program focused on preserving the California coastline for future generations of visitors and residents. The VMC ED serves on the steering committee for the Cleaner California Coast initiative, which launched its programming in June 2023. The launch was highly successful, drawing significant attention from coastal and inland communities statewide interested in participating. VMC continues to support the program through its social media platforms and programmatic marketing efforts.



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

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



Appendix 2:

Visit Mendocino County

Balance Sheet

As of June 30, 2023

	TOTAL
<b>ASSETS</b>	
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
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$1,766,269.59</b>
<b>LIABILITIES AND EQUITY</b>	
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	
9100 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
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY</b>	<b>\$1,766,269.59</b>

Appendix 3:

## Mendocino / Impacts, Summary

### Direct Travel Impacts, 2014-2023p

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	% Chg. 22-23
<b>Direct Travel Spending (\$Millions)</b>											
Visitor Spending	365.9	384.3	421.8	451.6	435.2	466.8	294.1	464.5	513.0	500.8	-2.4%
Other Travel*	16.2	14.4	12.8	14.4	16.5	17.2	5.8	11.5	17.2	16.1	-6.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>382.1</b>	<b>398.7</b>	<b>434.6</b>	<b>465.9</b>	<b>451.7</b>	<b>484.0</b>	<b>299.8</b>	<b>476.0</b>	<b>530.2</b>	<b>516.9</b>	<b>-2.5%</b>
<b>Visitor Spending by Type of Traveler Accommodation (\$Millions)</b>											
Hotel, Motel, STVR	214.6	233.7	267.2	289.3	267.4	286.3	188.6	295.1	297.4	277.1	-6.8%
Hotel, Motel**								177.4	186.9	172.2	-7.9%
Short Term Vacation Rental**								117.7	110.5	104.9	-5.1%
Private Home (VFR)	46.6	43.6	44.1	46.8	49.0	54.2	17.8	58.8	63.3	65.6	3.6%
Seasonal Home (2nd Home)	13.7	14.1	14.4	15.2	16.6	17.0	28.1	25.2	31.7	32.5	2.5%
Campground	40.8	41.5	41.9	44.0	46.2	49.8	41.8	54.1	70.6	74.9	6.1%
Day Travel	50.2	51.4	54.1	56.2	56.1	59.5	17.7	31.2	49.9	50.7	1.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>365.9</b>	<b>384.3</b>	<b>421.8</b>	<b>451.6</b>	<b>435.2</b>	<b>466.8</b>	<b>294.1</b>	<b>464.5</b>	<b>513.0</b>	<b>500.8</b>	<b>-2.4%</b>
<b>Visitor Spending by Commodity Purchased (\$Millions)</b>											
Accommodations	93.9	104.2	121.4	130.6	123.0	134.3	109.2	166.2	171.9	158.2	-8.0%
Food Service	106.9	114.8	127.7	136.4	130.1	139.0	80.2	120.9	135.8	139.4	2.7%
Food Stores	21.4	22.4	23.0	23.3	22.8	24.1	16.2	34.1	38.7	40.4	4.6%
Arts, Ent. & Rec.	54.3	56.9	61.9	64.5	60.4	62.8	35.1	58.8	61.3	62.1	1.3%
Retail Sales	42.7	42.1	45.5	49.6	48.9	53.2	28.4	44.7	49.5	48.3	-2.5%
Local Tran. & Gas	46.8	43.8	42.2	47.1	50.0	53.4	25.0	39.8	55.8	52.3	-6.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>365.9</b>	<b>384.3</b>	<b>421.8</b>	<b>451.6</b>	<b>435.2</b>	<b>466.8</b>	<b>294.1</b>	<b>464.5</b>	<b>513.0</b>	<b>500.8</b>	<b>-2.4%</b>
<b>Direct Travel-Generated Earnings (\$Millions)</b>											
Accom. & Food Serv.	120.7	129.0	149.2	162.1	161.8	177.8	136.6	88.8	186.3	199.6	7.1%
Arts, Ent. & Rec.	36.9	34.4	35.6	37.8	26.5	28.4	15.9	17.3	24.7	28.1	14.0%
Retail**	9.9	10.2	11.1	11.6	11.3	12.0	12.5	6.9	14.5	14.9	2.8%
Ground Trans.	4.2	4.6	5.4	6.4	8.4	9.3	3.6	2.3	3.6	3.7	1.3%
Other Travel*	0.8	0.9	1.0	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.0	0.8	1.5	1.7	9.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>172.5</b>	<b>179.1</b>	<b>202.3</b>	<b>219.0</b>	<b>209.1</b>	<b>228.6</b>	<b>169.5</b>	<b>116.2</b>	<b>230.6</b>	<b>248.0</b>	<b>7.5%</b>
<b>Direct Travel-Generated Employment (Jobs)</b>											
Accom. & Food Serv.	3,570	3,560	3,880	4,120	3,920	4,160	3,210	3,620	3,900	3,890	-0.2%
Arts, Ent. & Rec.	2,670	2,480	2,680	2,590	1,740	1,700	860	960	1,290	1,530	18.1%
Retail**	310	310	320	330	310	320	310	310	320	320	-1.9%
Ground Trans.	110	120	130	140	160	190	170	160	190	200	5.2%
Other Travel*	30	30	30	30	30	30	20	30	30	30	3.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,690</b>	<b>6,490</b>	<b>7,040</b>	<b>7,200</b>	<b>6,170</b>	<b>6,400</b>	<b>4,570</b>	<b>5,090</b>	<b>5,740</b>	<b>5,970</b>	<b>4.0%</b>
<b>Tax Receipts Generated by Travel Spending (\$Millions)</b>											
Local Tax Receipts	16.2	17.5	18.5	20.1	22.3	24.3	19.6	23.8	28.0	26.8	-4.3%
State Tax Receipts	19.5	19.5	20.3	20.9	20.5	22.2	14.7	18.4	22.6	22.4	-0.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>35.7</b>	<b>37.0</b>	<b>38.8</b>	<b>41.0</b>	<b>42.7</b>	<b>46.4</b>	<b>34.3</b>	<b>42.2</b>	<b>50.6</b>	<b>49.2</b>	<b>-2.7%</b>
<b>State Tax Receipts Generated by Travel Spending (\$Millions)</b>											
Visitor	13.7	13.6	14.0	14.6	15.2	16.4	9.1	14.6	16.0	15.7	-1.8%
Business & Employee	5.8	5.9	6.3	6.3	5.3	5.8	5.5	3.8	6.6	6.8	1.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>19.5</b>	<b>19.5</b>	<b>20.3</b>	<b>20.9</b>	<b>20.5</b>	<b>22.2</b>	<b>14.7</b>	<b>18.4</b>	<b>22.6</b>	<b>22.4</b>	<b>-0.8%</b>
<b>Local Tax Receipts Generated by Travel Spending (\$Millions)</b>											
Visitor	10.6	11.6	12.2	13.5	15.6	17.0	12.4	18.9	19.7	18.4	-6.4%
Business & Employee	5.7	5.8	6.3	6.6	6.7	7.3	7.2	4.9	8.3	8.3	0.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>16.2</b>	<b>17.5</b>	<b>18.5</b>	<b>20.1</b>	<b>22.3</b>	<b>24.3</b>	<b>19.6</b>	<b>23.8</b>	<b>28.0</b>	<b>26.8</b>	<b>-4.3%</b>

## Appendix 4:

### Glossary of Terms

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

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