

**2015-16 Strategic Plan: A Working Draft
Rutherford County Tourism Development Authority
June 29, 2015**

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Situation Analysis

(What's happening now by county, municipality, and region)

County:

- Wayfinding signage and info stand implementation
- Investor interest in hotel and amenity development
- New hospitality program at ICC
- New county leadership
- Talk of improvements at Rutherford County Airport
- Hometown Holidays cross-county connection

Bostic:

- Expansion of Bostic Lincoln Center
- New law allowing sales at distilleries
- Purchase and development of Camp Golden Valley by Blue Ridge Distillery

Chimney Rock:

- Operation of Chimney Rock elevator is inconsistent

Ellenboro and Northeastern Rutherford County

- Potential vineyard on Cherry Mountain

Forest City:

- New downtown development planner
- New wayfinding signage designed and awaiting implementation plan
- Building new town website
- Sidewalk beautification plan
- Partnership with the Gorge to build impact of Hometown Holidays and PolarFest
- Created Thursday night singer/songwriter series
- Approved to continue development of rail trail through Forest City

Lake Lure:

- Additions to Buffalo Creek Park
- Increased activity by Chamber of Hickory Nut Gorge
- Created new Lake Lure event, Lake Lurau
- Cycle North Carolina coming back for 2nd annual Mountain Ride; small festival on Morse Park being produced by Chamber of Hickory Nut Gorge and McConnell Group PR
- Lodge on Lake Lure now owned by Tryon Intl Equestrian Center managing partner; upgrades made
- New Lake Lure Grille in Arcade Building

Rutherfordton:

- New town manager
- Developed new brand: A Minted Original
- Designing new wayfinding signage and other marketing tools
- Created new FUNC Fridays Unplugged on Central acoustic music series for first Fridays in summer

Spindale:

- Rail-trail paved, more improvements in planning, and vastly increased usage and popularity
- New town manager

Surrounding Region:

- Grand opening of Tryon International Equestrian Center in April 2015
- Projected influx of 2,000 – 5,000 equestrian-related visitors per week during show season of April – October
- Blue Ridge Parkway anniversary
- Construction of five new hotels at airport exit in Asheville (Arden)
- Growing commercial interest in Rutherford County because of equestrian center

SWOT Analysis

(Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats)

Strengths

- Vision and programs of organization
- Innovation setting the pace for information services, wayfinding, governance, and website enhancements/partnerships across the state
- Newly-appropriate TDA staff levels to carry out administration and programs
- Marketing and PR team and leadership
- ROI reporting and research to come
- Wayfinding team and leadership
- Municipalities and chambers interested in partnerships and teamwork
- Relationship with Tryon International Equestrian Center (TIEC)
- Relationships with VisitNC tourism, NC Travel & Tourism Coalition and NC Restaurant and Lodging Association
- Brand recognition
- Tourism assets across the county
- Strong visitor loyalty and base
- First-class and ever-evolving welcome center to engage with visitors and market all assets
- Award-winning travel guide
- Rapidly improving website

Weaknesses

- Effects of former budget constraints limiting proper TDA staffing until FY 2015-16 on organizational responsiveness, administration, and ability to perform strategically rather than reactively
- Organizational perception, partner connection-building and educational efforts need continued attention
- Understanding of stakeholder issues
- Lack of clarification and shared understanding of the role of a TDA
- Unresolved concerns about the county occupancy tax dollars collected and how those dollars are utilized
- Collaboration with county staff and leaders
- Under-utilization of lesser-known, niche tourism assets and stories in order to build a stronger base for and connection with both our iconic and developing assets
- Research data
- Website limitations due to current site build
- Awareness of competition market efforts
- Under-utilization of marketing opportunities via welcome center
- Effective capacity-building programs

Opportunities

- Outdoor recreational assets with enormous potential to expand
- To engage visitors coming to TIEC
- To further engage visitors coming to participate in our extreme sports
- To define the Hickory Nut Gorge as a premier outdoors destination
- Possible collaborations between Polk and Spartanburg Counties in regards to TIEC
- Welcome Center presence at TIEC
- Potential rapidly increasing visitor base to further enable all TDA efforts
- Utilize local residents and stakeholders to tell our stories in first-person
- Reporting relationship of lodging and restaurant openings, closings and vacancies

Threats

- Lack of broad-based and active support for outdoor activity and other tourism asset development
- Sectors lacking understanding and support of TDA programs and effectiveness and the related diversion from goals and programs.
- Activity and marketing of surrounding counties
- Integrity of brand identity in face of TIEC
- Rapidly growing TDA budget still not enough to fully meet the needs of new visitor base
- Unregistered and delinquent occupancy tax collecting entities
- Low room and restaurant inventory and age
- Customer service to all visitors
- Lack of citizens and hospitality industry understanding of all Rutherford County assets
- Unreliable response by TIEC
- Evolving travel journalist landscape requiring many more hours to create engagement

Governance

Goal: Successful Participation in UNC School of Government (SOG) - North Carolina Travel and Tourism Coalition (NCTTC) Occupancy Tax Law Interpretation Project

Strategies:

- Participate in *ad hoc* NCTTC Committee
- Identify legislation issues in common for NC occupancy tax collecting bodies
- Committee works with UNC SOG for clarifying interpretation

Outcomes:

- Produce and present at North Carolina's Governor's Conference a definitive document that interprets occupancy tax collecting legislation
- Document clarifies and eliminates confusion over roles in, and duties, responsibilities and liabilities for all governmental parties associated with NC occupancy tax collecting bodies.

Means of Measurement:

- Involved parties adopt policies and best practices reflective of the clarification

Resources Required:

- Leadership from/Partnership with NCTTC and SOG
 - Staff: TDA Executive Director and Project Manager
 - Board Members
 - RC Commissioners, Manager, and other Elected Officials
 - Associated Budget Line Items: Staff Salaries and Travel
-

Goal: Complete Current Bylaw Revision

Strategies:

- Complete review with county attorney

Outcomes:

- Long-standing bylaws which maintain clarity to RCTDA operations

Means of Measurement

- Length of time the bylaws serve the organization, especially during time of rapid evolution

Resources required:

- Board and Executive Committee
 - Staff, particularly Executive Director
 - Legal Counsel
 - Associated Budget Line Items: Salary, County
-

Goal: Successful RCTDA Participation in UNC School of Government (SOG) Already-Applicable Local Government Law Interpretation Educational Offerings

Strategies:

- RCTDA Executive Director, Administrative Assistant and RCTDA Board Chair (and any other interested parties) attend UNC SOG webinar on Open Meetings Laws (<http://www.sog.unc.edu/node/30586>)
- RCTDA Administrative Staff (and any other interested parties) attend UNC SOG webinar on Records Retention (<https://www.sog.unc.edu/Node/2207>)
- RCTDA Executive Director and Administrative Assistant (and any other interested parties) attend UNC SOG webinar on Citizen Participation in Local Government Budgeting Webinar (<https://www.sog.unc.edu/Node/1088>) in relation to “Communication for Strategic Planning” goals, below.
- RCTDA Executive Director, Administrative Assistant, and Executive Committee (and any other interested parties attend UNC SOG Webinar on Fund Balances (<https://www.sog.unc.edu/Node/31596>))
- RCTDA Executive Director, Other Staff (and other interest parties) review other courses to implement as part of regular administrative work

Outcomes:

- Information added to ongoing development of RCTDA Board and Staff Handbooks, complete with definitive answers on commonly asked questions to assist both current and future RCTDA board and staff.
- Handbooks to incorporate a “best practices” section as informed by courses.
- Ongoing program of course review and participation.
- Successful and full self-monitoring programs in place.

Means of Measurement

- Sustainable program of best practices put into place.
- Review of Handbooks by RCTDA Board and any other interested parties

Resources required:

- Board, particularly Executive Committee
- Staff, particularly Executive Director
- Associated Budget Line Items: Salary, Subscriptions

Goal: Board Member Education/Training

Strategies:

- Hold a RCTDA board member training session-retreat supported by a TDA/board duty expert-consultant(s). Include the Executive Director and other RCTDA staff as appropriate.
- Board review of research once completed.
- Utilize the forthcoming SOG-NCTTC document to assist
- Utilize the 2015-16 Strategic Plan document as basis of discussion

Outcomes:

- Create understanding and consensus of the RCTDA goals, mission and the means to achieve them.

- Board and Executive Director prepared with defined collective and individual roles and/or tasks in carrying out the goals of the RCTDA
- Prepare board for future strategic planning

Means of Measurement

- Engaged board members provide end-of-retreat feedback at end of training session-retreat
- Board members share activities surrounding their collective and individual roles and/or tasks
- 2016-17 Strategic Plan completed in conjunction with the 2016-17 budget
- Executive Director further able to refine RCTDA Administrative Organization

Resources required:

- TDA/Board Duty Expert-Consultant
 - Every RCTDA Board member
 - RCTDA Executive Director and other appropriate staff
 - Associated Budget Line Items: Salaries and Travel
-

Goal: Committee Engagement and Review

Strategies:

- During or after RCTDA training session-retreat:
 - Review define the types, number, and needs for and of committees
 - Strategically align committee members to their individual roles and/or tasks and interests with RC tourism
 - Have individual committees meet to formulate and/or finalize their goals for the coming year
 - Identify non-TDA board member individuals to become active and engaged committees
- Utilize the 2015-16 Strategic Plan document as basis of discussion as much as possible

Outcomes:

- Energized committees dedicated to achieving the goals of the RCTDA.
- Streamlined workload for board members: time and/or efforts concentrated in the committees, reported on in full board meetings

Means of Measurement

- Committee strategic plans created as appendices to main plan
- Goals achieved
- Community feedback

Resources required:

- TDA/Board Duty Expert-Consultant
- Every RCTDA Board member
- Community Members
- RCTDA Executive Director and other appropriate staff
- Associated Budget Line Items: Salaries and Travel

Core Administrative Policies and Development

Goal: Use Current Strategic Plan as Active Lead Document in 2015-16 RCTDA Program and Operational Guide

Strategies:

- Develop detailed tasks and timelines for staff and contracted professionals to meet goals from the broader strategic plan
- Continually review viability of goal timelines.
- Use as framework for weekly staff meetings
- Semi-Annual staff and contracted professionals planning sessions to review goals
- Dedicated regular strategy and program review, data analysis, and conceptualizing time for Executive Director
- Reviewed at least quarterly by board for completion and effectiveness (*See Goal: Board Member Education/Training*)

Outcomes:

- Use of Strategic Plan as an active part of daily work
- Measurable achievement of goals
- Recognition of goal changes needed in future plans

Means of Measurement

- Strategic Goals Reached
- Effective Future Plans

Resources required:

- Staff
 - Associated Budget Line Items: Salary
-

Goal: Complete Daily Communication and Response Protocols Currently Under Implementation

Strategies:

- Continue to refine internal email and phone call procedures and channels to ensure the most rapid response to all incoming needs and requests, regardless of nature.
- Further continue to structure all work calendars to allow staff independent work time, team projects, and outside meeting times
- Improve policies and reporting protocols for staff and contracted professionals

Outcomes:

- Reduced wait time for stakeholders
- Better relationships and communication key to many goals (*See "Communication for Strategic Planning"*)
- Efficiency and productivity further increased

Means of Measurement

- Utilize followup surveys (See “Communication for Strategic Planning”)
- Informal feedback

Resources required:

- Staff
 - Associated Budget Line Items: Salary
-

Goal: Enhanced Protocols for Contracted Professionals**Strategies:**

- Finalize near-complete protocols for invoicing, reporting, and contracting with the RCTDA
- Utilize “Goal: Successful RCTDA Participation in UNC School of Government (SOG) Already-Applicable Local Government Law Interpretation Educational Offerings” for any required information

Outcomes:

- Seamless administrative work with contractors

Means of Measurement

- Feedback from Finance Officer

Resources required:

- Staff
 - Associated Budget Line Items: Salary, County, Subscriptions
-

Goal: Review/Organize Functions for IT, HR, Finance, and Legal**Strategies:**

- Understand UNC SOG occupancy tax clarification
- Discuss with all related parties the most optimal partnerships for providing these services
- Develop any related and/or required protocols

Outcomes:

- Effective, law compliant service relationships which are amenable to all parties

Means of Measurement

- Written partnership contracts with service providers

Resources required:

- Leadership from/Partnerships with Local and State entities
 - Staff
 - Associated Budget Line Items: Salaries and Professional Services
-

See Also: Goal: Successful RCTDA Participation in UNC School of Government (SOG) Already-Applicable Local Government Law Interpretation Educational Offerings

Research and Communication for Strategic Planning

Goal: RCTDA Board and Staff Share Regular Feedback Regarding Effectiveness of Strategic Plan

Strategies:

- RCTDA board meetings place as part of regular agenda and board packet a means for discussion of current strategic plan success rates.
- Current Strategic Plan thoroughly reviewed mid-year by staff and by board for effectiveness

Outcomes:

- Clear understanding by all parties of plan usefulness, effectiveness, and places for change.

Means of Measurement

- Feedback to inform 2016-17 plan

Resources required:

- Staff
 - Board Review of Results
 - Associated Budget Line Items: Salaries
-

Goal: Collect Deliberate, Formal Feedback on Perception and Goals of RCTDA to Assist in Formulating Future Strategic Goals and Plans

See FY 2016 RUTHERFORD COUNTY TDA MARKET AND ORGANIZATIONAL RESEARCH PLAN

Goals: Continually Collect and Utilize Informal Feedback on Perception and Goals of RCTDA to Inform Strategic Goals and Plans

Strategies:

- Develop simple means for all staff (and board members so interested) to notate and collect informal feedback as discovered in routine efforts

Outcomes:

- Better understanding of the general public's: interest in and perception of the RCTDA, and their needs, and wants from us.
- Utilize data to gauge current and formulate future annual strategic plans
- Utilize information to revise and/or create RCTDA Programs

Means of Measurement

- Follow-up Interviews and Surveys
- RCTDA programs revised or created from these opportunities

Resources required:

- Stakeholders
 - Staff
 - Associated Budget Line Items: Salary
-

Goal: Maximize use and effectiveness of RCTDA Information-Sharing, Listening and Education Opportunitites**Strategies:**

- Develop Calendar of Community Events and Programs to Attend and/or Participate in
- Continuing use of E-Newsletter, Board Packet, RCTDA Governance Site and TDA Facebook
- Plan Coffee Schedule
 - Plan and hold 4-6 coffees on key topics for stakeholders in part as determined by survey, for example social media analytics or 5 easy things to do to improve your visitorship or customer service
 - Coffees may also be held for key groups, for example, new lodging property owners
- Alliance Conference
 - Determine if conference is still a viable annual event - or if the smaller-scale coffees fill the needs and are more appropriate

Outcomes:

- Share capacity-building, educational information with local businesses.
- Better understanding of the public's interest in, perception of and needs, and wants from the TDA.
- Utilize data to gauge current and formulate annual strategic plans
- Utilize information to revise and/or create RCTDA Programs

Means of Measurement

- Public Engagement RCTDA Events
- Analytical Data of Digital Efforts
- RCTDA programs revised or created from these opportunities

Resources required:

- Partners
 - Staff
 - Contracted Professionals
 - Associated Budget Line Items: Salary, Contracted Professionals
-

See Also: "Goal: Successful RCTDA Participation in UNC School of Government (SOG) Already-Applicable Local Government Law Interpretation Educational Offerings" and "Goal: Improved Communication and Response Protocols Implemented"

Marketing and Public Relations (PR)

Goal: Implement Marketing Plan

Strategies:

- Work with marketing team and RCTDA team to implement all components of marketing plan
- Partner with county chambers and partners to collaborate on marketing plan components and avoid duplicating efforts

Outcomes:

- Increase visitor traffic to Rutherford County
- Improve communication and collaboration efforts between RCTDA and partners/stakeholders

Means of Measurement

- Accomplishments of measurements included in marketing plan

Resources required:

- Leadership from RCTDA's marketing team and collaboration with partners and stakeholders
- Staff: Use of RCTDA marketing team and staff to manage implementation and management of marketing plan
- Associated Budget Line Items:

Goal: Develop Marketing Research Program

Strategies:

- Plan with/from Magellan Strategy Group to survey potential leisure visitors in regional drive markets, to evaluate their perceptions and attitudes towards the destination and their current behaviors; survey an audience of around 500-600 leisure travelers from a 60-mile drive radius from Rutherford County
- Utilize Welcome Center and Mobile Unit for marketing questionnaires
- Utilize data counts from Welcome Center in tandem with other data (local jet fuel sales, occupancy tax collection, events) to better discern visitorship
- Potential Visitor intercept study
- Pilot postcard visitor feedback program
- Utilize social and web analytics

Outcomes:

- Determine what potential and actual visitors to Rutherford County would/do come here to experience; what is their perception of our area; what they are interested in doing; how they view our brand; how they receive their information; what is the best way to target them
- Provide insight into how to best adjust the overall RCTDA marketing plan to better target our audiences
- Identify more direct ways of attracting visitors to Rutherford County
- Determine effectiveness of the RCTDA brand and what revisions, if any, are needed and recommended as a result of the visitor research study

Means of Measurement

- 12-14 minute survey consisting of around 30 questions plus interpretation of results
- Feedback from marketing questionnaires and surveys
- Changes in social and web analytics

Resources required:

- Contract with research firm to execute visitor intercept study
- Staff: to manage needs of research firm
- Associated Budget Line Items:

Goal: Innovatively Enhance Web Presence to Produce Stronger Measurable and Real-Time Results for Tourism Businesses**Strategies:**

- Work with VisitNC to explore partnerships on following strategies.
- Rebuild website using a Content Management System to enable more internal management and updating of website, thus eliminating multiple “middle-men” and enabling more real-time updates; incorporate the ability to offer advertising to partners; incorporate VisitNC event widget; create automated email reminders to partners to encourage them review and update their listing after a one-year period; implement more interactive components that encourage click-through engagement from the user.
- Create a “Web Garden” – offer partners very affordable template-based websites that are connected to the RCTDA website, but allow partners to use their own brand; gives partners a cost-effective means to having a quality website product without the huge price tag.
- Develop an “Around Me” feature for the website to allow an easy way for partners to indicate in real time whether they have vacancies/no vacancies, are open/closed, while giving visitors real-time access this info, plus the option to book or make reservations directly if partners sign up for that feature.
- Feature walking tours on the RCTDA website using the audio/video/imagery content created for the three different walking tours; the tours would use geo-locating technology to automatically share information about each destination on the tour as guests approach each one; offer downloadable versions.

Outcomes:

- Give visitors more accurate and up-to-date information, thus making the trip planning and reservation process much simpler.
- Create deeper experiences with visitors by sharing more interactive information online, such as tours
- Enhance existing partner websites or enable the existence of more partner websites, which in turn, provides better experiences for the visitor

Means of Measurement

- Track visitors to website, the pages they access and how much time they spend exploring the RCTDA website
- Track number of tour downloads
- Track number of visitors using the “Around Me” technology
- Track number of partners using the web garden option

Resources required:

- Leadership and partnership with county chambers to help facilitate RCTDA benefits to partners
 - Staff: management of website program development and implementation, plus staff to track and measure effectiveness
 - Associated Budget Line Items:
-

Visitor Information Network (VIN) - Information

Goal: Encourage community groups and local tourism businesses to participate in programs at the Welcome Center

Strategies:

- Develop Rotating Art Display Programs
- Welcome Center Saturdays

Outcomes:

- Active Programs engaging both the business community and visitor, alike

Means of Measurement

- A full calendar of programs and roster of participants

Resources required:

- Staff
 - Associated Budget Line Items: Salary
-

Goal: Fully-staffed Administration For the Welcome Center in Lake Lure, able to effectively:

- Screen Set up, maintenance, periodic changes to what's displayed
- Assist with VIN Information meetings
- Engage with local tourism businesses
- Draft employee schedules
- Establish a cleaning schedule
- Order and track office and maintenance supplies
- Assist in financial tracking of the allotted WC budget
- Establish and maintain an Intern/Volunteer Program and schedule
- General safety and management of the facility
- Responsible for staff training and policy creation and adherence
- Maintain brochure and document inventories
- Interact with visitors and stakeholders and evaluate their needs

Outcomes:

- Leadership at Welcome Center ensuring smooth operations, visitor satisfaction and an opportunity to fully engage visitors in-depth with our many tourism opportunities.

Means of Measurement

- Formal feedback from visitors and stakeholders
- Informal discussions

Resources required:

- Staff
- Associated Budget Line Items: Staff, Facilities

Goal: Online Customer Service Training for Staff — offered also to Public

Strategies:

- Complete Video Training and Related Quizzes
- Add to from existing videos
- Partner with other customer service programs
- Develop requirements for staff training completion
- Offer to public

Outcomes:

- Deeply Trained Staff
- Increased Partnership

Means of Measurement

- Training completion rates

Resources required:

- Staff
 - Business Partners
 - Contracted Professionals
 - Related Line Items: Salary, Professional Services
-

Goal: Fully Utilized Capacity of Mobile Welcome Center

Strategies:

- Upfit Mobile Unit (Capital Expenses Largely Dependent on Grant Funding)
 - Truck/Vehicle with adequate capacity to tow the Mobile Unit
 - Digital information screens
 - Satellite dish
 - Solar power panels
 - More efficient/quieter generator
 - Establishment of an up to the minute app for room/dining accommodations
- Encourage use and develop program of having Mobile Welcome Center at businesses and events

Outcomes:

- Usage Plans
- Maintenance/Tech Improvements

Means of Measurement

- Mobile Unit at many locations

Resources required:

- Grants
- Staff
- Associated Budget Line Items: Salary, Travel, Facilities

Goal: Outdoor Information Stands In-Ground

Strategies:

- Complete current signs in next two months
- Continue discussions re: potential partners with rail-trail related signs
- Work with designer to complete appropriate maps

Outcomes:

- Four signs in ground this year
- Create agreements with other sites

Means of Measurement

- Signs completed

Resources required:

- Staff
 - Civic and Community Partners
 - Associated Budget Line Items: Professional Services Salary, Printing, Facilities
-

Goal: Travel Guide and Brochure Distribution

Strategies:

- Make large print run
- Create distribution plan throughout county
- Track use of them for future

Outcomes:

- Widespread guides at lodging, restaurants and attractions

Means of Measurement

- Print run tracking
- Smooth delivery services

Resources required:

- Staff
- Community partners
- Associated Budget Line Items: Salary, Professional Services

Visitor Information Network (VIN) - Wayfinding

Goal: Continue Process of Improving NCDOT signage to and in Rutherford County and its municipalities and destinations

Strategies:

- Continue in the ongoing process, to ask for and follow up repeatedly on signage requests with NCDOT
- Continue engagement with the Tryon International Equestrian Center for signage partnerships

Outcomes:

- 5 new signs to be in place by 2016-17

Means of Measurement

- Number of new signs in place, particularly ones at I-85 and 74 and those relating to the Tryon International Equestrian Center

Resources required:

- Wayfinding Committee
 - Mark Teague and Associates
 - Staff: Executive Director
 - Associated Budget Line Items: Salary, Professional Services
-

Goal: Implement RCTDA's Current Wayfinding Master Plan

Strategies and Outcomes:

- Signs Constructed and In-Ground
- Municipal Grants Made
- Upkeep Prepared
- Consider Larger Regional Master Plan

Means of Measurement

- Number of signs in ground, particularly RCTDA and several Municipal
- Upkeep agreements finalized
- Draft plan of Larger Regional Master Plann

Resources required:

- Wayfinding Committee
- JM Teague Engineering and Associates
- Rutherford County Government
- Municipal Leaders
- Staff: Executive Director
- Associated Budget Line Items: Salary, Professional Services

Goal: Consider Future Sign Programs

Strategies:

- Begin a conversation with the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area
- Begin preliminary thought-gathering on State Park-to-Park Program

Outcomes:

- Feasibility understood and documented regarding future programs

Means of Measurement

- Feasibility documents completed and reported upon

Resources required:

- Wayfinding Committee
- JM Teague and Associates
- Staff: Executive Director
- Blue Ridge National Heritage Area
- NC State Parks and NC Fish and Wildlife: Gamelands
- Associated Budget Line Items: Salary, Professional Services

Capacity Building

Goal: Develop Tourism-Related Economic Development Projects

Strategies:

- Continue to work with from approaching prospects
- Explore outside funding sources to aid in development in strategic locations
- Work above groups as allowed via confidentiality agreements from prospects
- Initiate renewed monthly (and as needed) information-sharing group meetings of the County Manager, Chair of Commissioners, EDC Director, Rutherford County Chamber of Commerce Leadership and Hickory Nut Gorge Chamber Leadership
- Find successful examples of above partnerships
- Continue relationship with the Tryon International Equestrian Center
- Continue relationship with area counties, particularly Polk
- Updated research performed as needed

Outcomes:

- Partners working together effectively for the strategic growth of the hospitality industry as rapidly energized by the Tryon International Equestrian Center.
- Funding sources for development support secured
- Unified growth support and management
- Research documents produced if needed

Means of Measurement

- Regular cross-partner information sharing
- Cross-partner information as appropriate to specific projects
- Any needed research completed
- Funding and development support projects underway

Resources required:

- County Manager
- Chair of Commissioners
- EDC Director
- Rutherford County Chamber of Commerce Leadership
- Chamber of Hickory Nut Gorge Leadership
- Prospects
- Regional TDA Partnerships
- NC Partnerships
- (Potential) Service Professionals
- Associated Line Items: RCTDA Salaries, Professional Services, Travel

Goal: Support the Sustainable Growth and Impact of the Rutherford County Tourism Asset Foundation (TAF)

Strategies:

- Continue current level of RCTDA support
- Preliminary conversations about need for, viability of, and support for more sustainable support
- Further TAF advocacy, both formal and informal

Outcomes:

- Understanding of sustainable support possibilities

Means of Measurement

- Above conversations complete
- Report on sustainability of TAF

Resources required:

- TAF Board and Staff
 - RCTDA Staff
 - RCTDA Board
 - County Government
 - Donors
 - Other NC occupancy tax collecting authorities
 - North Carolina Tourism and Travel Coalition
-

Goal: Support and Grow Hospitality Education Programs

Strategies:

- Put in place possible Isothermal Community College (ICC) partnerships
- Assist local tourism businesses to partner with ICC hospitality programs
- Effectively utilize current customer training online program (*See: "Goal: Online Customer Service Training for Staff — offered also to Public"*)
- Explore other education partnerships

Outcomes:

- Participation in ICC hospitality programs
- Interns from programs
- Internal and external use of implemented online training programs

Means of Measurement

- Courses taught in conjunction with ICC and/or other local programs
- Interns in place
- Analytics of online training programs

Resources required:

- Staff
- Partnerships with ICC and/or other programs

- Local tourism businesses
 - Interested Interns
 - Professional Services
 - Associated Budget Line Items: Salaries, Professional Services
-

Goal: Explore Grants Program to Support RCTDA Projects and Programs

Strategies:

- Research financial supportability of grants program
- Research potential ROI from a grants program
- Apply for Appalachian Resource Commission Grant as a study case

Outcomes:

- Understanding of importance and/or supportability for grant research and application process

Means of Measurement

- Feasibility document
- Decision made to fund (or not) and at what level

Resources required:

- Staff
 - Board
 - Potential Contracted Professional
 - Line items affected: Salaries, (Potentially) Professional Services
-

Goal: Continue to Offer Tourism Business and Educational Opportunities (See “Goal: Maximize use and effectiveness of RCTDA Information-Sharing, Listening and Education Opportunites”)

Goal: Municipal Wayfinding Grants Program Implemented (See “Goal: Implement RCTDA’s Current Wayfinding Master Plan”)

**FY 2016 RUTHERFORD COUNTY TDA MARKET
AND ORGANIZATIONAL RESEARCH PLAN**

OBJECTIVES

1. Provide greater clarity of the destination's target audiences and the destination marketing messaging that is most likely to resonate with them.
2. Understand the current perceptions and attitudes of leisure travelers towards the destination.
3. Help the county's tourism sector partners better market themselves through a greater understanding of the destination's visitors and non-visitors.
4. Be able to measure the online activity generated by the TDA website for its partners.

INITIATIVE #1

BRAND PERCEPTION AND MARKET STUDY

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Rutherford County Brand Perception & Market Assessment is to provide decision makers with a better understanding of Rutherford County's current brand image in the marketplace, and serve as a baseline from which to measure future perceptions. Rutherford County decision makers and marketing partners will be able to use the information and insights gathered in this study to make informed decisions about the brand, its positioning and/or other consumer-centric decisions.

OBJECTIVES

The primary objectives of the Rutherford County Brand Perception Study are:

Brand Awareness. Measure Rutherford County's aided and unaided brand awareness and preference as a leisure destination among leisure travelers to provide a benchmark to other surrounding destinations.

Image/Perception. Evaluate Rutherford County's brand perception and the relative appeal of the destination across key consumer segments including gender, household composition and other segments as defined by the Rutherford County.

Hurdles to Visitation. Assess why some travelers have not visited Rutherford County (or not visited recently) and determine which issues create the biggest hurdles or barriers to future visitation and what, if anything might motivate or inspire them to visit in the future.

Usage/Drivers. Assess activities visited in area and which activities drove visitation.

Motivators vs. Satisfiers. Assess which activities/attributes motivate visitation versus those activities/attributes that satisfy visitors during their stay.

Competitive Set. Assess key attributes of Rutherford County compared to competitors in the region.

Identify Key Characteristics. Assess key characteristics of visitors to both regions of the county to better leverage marketing efforts – western (Lake Lure and Chimney Rock) and eastern (Forest City, Spindale, and Rutherfordton).

Profile of Visitors, Prospects and Non-Visitors. To collect demographic, attitudinal and behavioral information to help better understand the profile, intentions and behavior of Rutherford County visitors, prospects and non-visitors.

METHODOLOGY

Magellan Strategy Group will work with its research partner H2R Market Research to employ an online survey methodology to conduct the Brand Perception & Market

Assessment among travelers using a professionally managed email panel representative of travelers across the region.

We recommend interviewing 600 travelers using a professionally managed third party panel (Survey Sampling International or SSI) that represents the targeted travelers in the Rutherford County tourism marketing area. These travelers would inherently represent a broad cross-section of recent visitors, inactive visitors, prospects, and non-visitors of Rutherford County commensurate with their incidence of occurrence among the general population. This size of sample would provide for a maximum margin of error of +/- 4.0% at a 95% confidence interval. This would ensure an accurate evaluation of the results and enable explorations by key consumer niche with greater confidence provided by smaller margins of sampling error.

Professionally managed email panel. Panel members who have been recruited to participate in the research panel are familiar with the survey taking process and are incentivized for their time by the panel company. This ensures that panelists complete the entire survey without rushing through the answers and give thoughtful answers. The panel company regulates how often the panelists can take surveys in order to provide quality insights.

Additionally, we recommend oversampling Rutherford County visitors using a similar survey that would be distributed to the 6,000 email addresses from the Rutherford County TDA house list. Our objective would be to interview an additional 150, or more, visitors through this source. There is no additional cost for this component so we recommend providing as many emails as possible.

Screening. Survey respondents would be screened to include only those individuals who have taken leisure trip overnight and/or consisted of traveling 50 miles or more from home in the past 12 months, or plan to take an overnight trip for leisure in the next 12

months and are one of the principal travel planners in their household. They must also live within 50-300 miles of Rutherford County. The exclusion of 0-50 miles will ensure that only respondents with the potential to stay overnight are reached.

It is envisioned that the survey instrument used to interview respondents would take the average person no longer than 12-14 minutes to complete which typically translates into 30-35 questions, with 2-3 of those being open-ended.

Key areas of exploration would be:

- Brand awareness (unaided and aided), level of familiarity, and opinion.
- Visitor profile including demographics, attitudes, geographic origin, satisfaction, spending, activity participation, net promoter score, intent to return, etc.
- Key characteristics of visitors to both regions – western and eastern.
- Brand perception, persona, characteristics and positioning insight.
- Destination differentiators.
- Traveler needs that are most desirable.
- Brand beliefs regarding Rutherford County.
- Activities considered most appealing.
- Intent to visit.
- Hurdles to visiting.
- Association with the Tyron International Equestrian Center.

Pre-Testing. Prior to launching the questionnaire(s) among official screened email panelists, the survey would first go through a rigorous preliminary evaluation including a pre-test conducted among a sampling of respondents. The purpose of this pre-test is to ensure all of the questions are being asked and that the software is processing all data appropriately and as intended. Once the test is completed, and any applicable revisions have been made, the study would commence with the remaining target respondents.

RESEARCH PROCESS

Upon approval of the research contract, we will schedule a project kick-off conference call. The kick-off meeting would ensure everyone from Rutherford County TDA, Magellan Strategy Group, and H2R have the same objectives for the Brand Perception & Market Study.

Following the kick-off meeting we will send the first draft of the questionnaire for client review. If necessary, a teleconference can be scheduled to review the questionnaire draft and make any final revisions. Upon approval of the questionnaire, we will need approximately 1 week to program the questionnaire and test the survey system for functionality. Once the system has been deemed to be working properly, the survey data collection will begin.

The survey will be sent to the professionally managed email panel of respondents. Upon completion of the data collection, we will tabulate and analyze the data. This data will be used to prepare a summary report. The analysis phase of research generally takes 3-4 weeks.

DELIVERABLES

The deliverable products would consist of a comprehensive evaluation of the results in a PowerPoint summary, a copy of the final questionnaire, verbatim comments, and any data tables. Magellan will make a presentation of the results to the TDA.

INITIATIVE #2

Survey of Rutherford County TDA Partners and Stakeholders

PURPOSES

1. Evaluate current opinions about the state of the tourism sector in Rutherford County among tourism partners and stakeholders.
2. Collect feedback on perception and of Rutherford County TDA, its effectiveness and its programs.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this research survey is to use a neutral third party to perform the following:

- Assess partner and stakeholder understanding and thoughts about Rutherford County TDA, its work, effectiveness, programs and policies in order to inform future goals, plans, and operations.
- Benchmark current business conditions for future comparison.
- Assess the areas which represent current strengths of the local tourism sector, and segments which could be market opportunities.
- Identify audiences and markets being targeted in their own marketing, and the media being used to reach them.
- Assess what, if any, initiatives are being implemented to target TIEC guests.
- Evaluate what impacts TIEC has generated thus far, and determine if there are strategies and tactics that should be implemented in response.

METHODOLOGY

Magellan Strategy Group will implement an online survey using an email database provided by the TDA to perform the research. Responses will be reported only in the aggregate, and the specific responses of individuals will only be viewed by Magellan staff.

RESEARCH PROCESS AND TIMING

Magellan will provide a draft copy of the survey for approval by the TDA. Once approved, the survey will then be programmed and implemented online to the TDA database. We will tabulate the results and provide a detailed analysis to the client. Total time for completion is estimated to be 4-5 weeks.

DELIVERABLES

The deliverable products would consist of a comprehensive evaluation of the results in a PowerPoint summary, a copy of the final questionnaire, verbatim comments, and any data tables. Magellan will make a presentation of the results to the TDA.



Rutherford County Tourism Development Authority

Marketing Plan for

Lake Lure & the Blue Ridge Foothills

FY15-16



MARKETING STRATEGIES

Marketing Strategies:

Placeholder text consisting of multiple lines of question marks, likely representing redacted content or a placeholder for a list of marketing strategies.

Travel Guide:

- Continue print and online version
- Use more affordable paper and print exponentially higher quantity to distribute to more merchants in the county and to welcome centers in the state/region
- Work beginning of fiscal year and plan for a January 2016 release of new versions of both
- Collect and take new photography
- Recycle some content; build some new content and add sections that were omitted last year due to budget restraints
- Sell advertising space



Marketing Strategies cont.:

Visitor e-newsletters

Photography

- Take new photos to populate marketing materials

Partnerships

- Determine ways to maximize marketing dollars by partnerships with stakeholders

Packages

- Work with chambers to create visitor packages

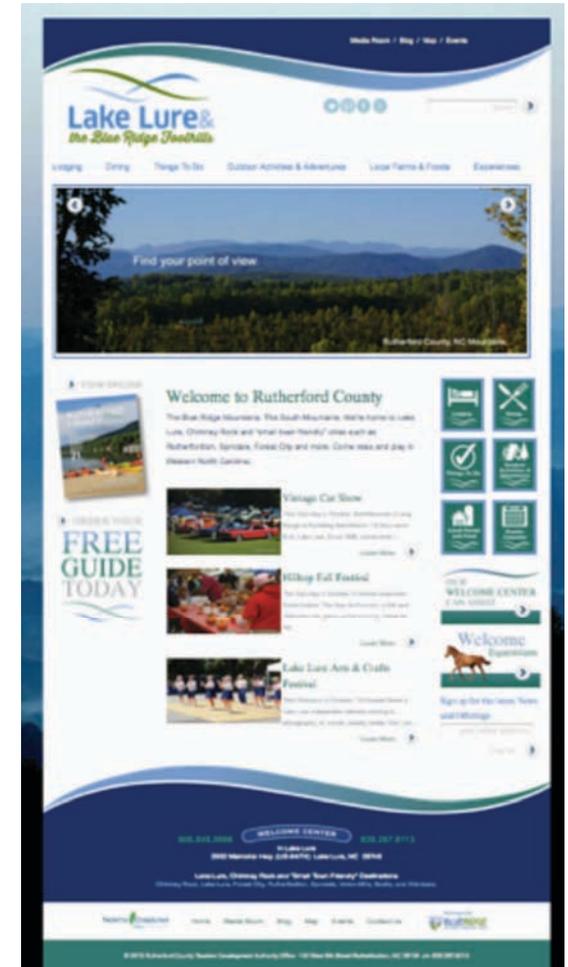
Design

- Improve consistency of branding throughout all media & marketing
- Create a set of images to be streamlined across all marketing materials (ie: social media banners, e-newsletter headers, website slideshows, etc.)

Marketing Strategies cont.:

Website

- Need to rebuild a user-friendly, mobile-optimized website and rapidly upgrade content management system and website design
- Include ability to measure traffic on outbound links to partners
- Create more interactive components to drive visitor engagement
- Showcase a more balanced presentation of towns located within “Lake Lure & the Blue Ridge Foothills”
- Add more detailed content to describe sections, municipalities, more area info
- Currently, the website is more search data than compelling info



Marketing Strategies cont.:

Website cont.

- Add more blog, SEO-driven content
- Ability for visitors to gain real-time and mobile information regarding lodging and restaurant openings, closings and vacancies
- More itineraries
- Landing page for each town that features content and contact details; give each custom URL of www.RCNC.com/TOWNNAME that redirects to a landing page on the www.RutherfordTourism.com site to use in marketing and on VIN info stand signage to both track website hits from those signs and to keep consistent branding
- Incorporate the VisitNC event widget to improve the quality and audience reach of our online event posts

Marketing Strategies cont.:

Print/Online Advertising

- Work with stakeholders to offer more, strong TDA ad co-ops
- Place ads in more affordable regional media outlets
- Suggested media include:
 - TIEC Prize Books
 - WEF Prize Book
 - Blue Ridge Outdoors
 - Our State Magazine
 - Blue Ridge Mountain Host media partnerships with Raleigh News & Observer, Atlanta Journal Constitution, and Creative Loafing Magazine *(Done)*
 - Travel and Adventure Guides (WNC Adventure Guide – *Done*)
 - Travel websites – ie: TripAdvisor
 - Living Social/Groupon
 - VisitNC Co-ops
 - Social Media Boosts, Google AdWords

Marketing Strategies cont.:

Print/Online Advertising cont.

- Implementation example:
 - Create ad about outdoor adventure on the water
 - Create travel package or sweepstakes to win a pontoon boat tour on Lake Lure
 - Draft compelling blog about pontoon boat tour on Lake Lure for website and media outreach
 - Buy Google AdWords to match
 - Create landing page on website for sweepstakes; use link in ad to direct people to landing page and have them answer 1-3 questions to enter sweepstakes (which gives us visitor data)
 - Do one per campaign

Marketing Strategies cont.:

Video/Photography

- Invest more funds into video production
- Vlogs – video blogs
- Promo video(s) – at least one video to cover “Scenic Lake Lure & the Blue Ridge Foothills of Rutherford County, NC” - from the Hickory Nut Gorge to the Cherry Bounce Trail, we are scenic Lake Lure & the Blue Ridge Foothills. Welcome to Rutherford County, NC
- Get more video footage of visitor testimonials
- Use local photographer who can take photos at their discretion all year long based on a pre-constructed shot list; will allow them to get the photo at the more perfect time versus trying to get photos in just one weekend or one time of year

Marketing Strategies cont.:

Welcome Center

- Continue Welcome Center Pergola Programs (Saturday afternoon events that highlight experiences around the county)
- Instagram Frame
- Scavenger Hunts
 - Create 3-4 different scavenger hunts where visitors have to go around the county to answer questions; visitors can bring the completed hunt sheet back to The Welcome Center for a small prize (ie: Dirty Dancing Festival backpack, koozie, etc.); activity will give visitors a reason to explore the county in a fun way

Marketing Strategies cont.:

Rutherford County Airport

- Create ways to intercept visitors traveling to the Rutherford County Airport
- Encourage more visitor usage of airport
- Promote unique features of the airport, like \$100 burger, to media and visitors
- VIN Info Stand to serve as a “You Are Here” indicator to help visitors familiarize themselves with Rutherford County
- Travel guides on site



PUBLIC RELATIONS

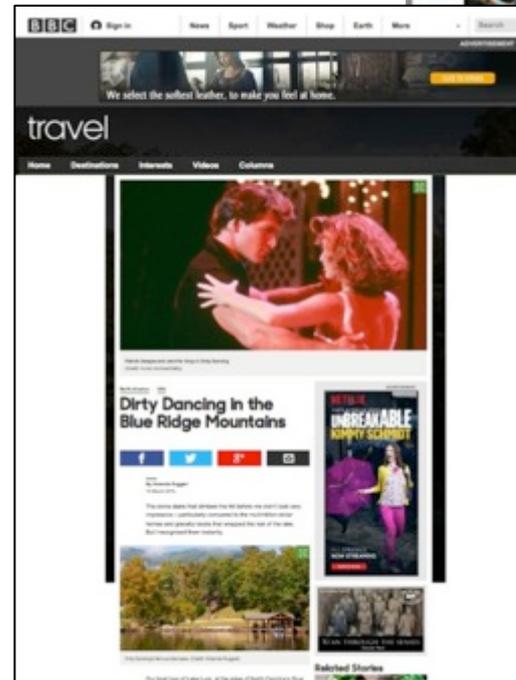
Public Relations:

The following public relations strategies will be implemented to build stronger relationships with media and visitors through more meaningful engagement and richer stories about our area through:

- Custom pitching regional, national and niche media
- Compelling content for press releases, blogs, etc. that will be used across multiple channels of communication
- Continued employment of media tours, which have proven very successful for garnering media coverage
- Increased communication with stakeholders via PR Liaisons to keep them aware of TDA and visitor information, updates, news and activity

Public Relations cont.:

- Attendance at VisitNC state-led media missions, which gives us in-person exposure to regional/national media contacts
- Liaisoning
 - Cycle North Carolina
 - Other visiting groups to the county
 - Chambers
 - Regional and state tourism organizations



Public Relations cont.:

Social Media Strategy



Facebook

- Share campaign theme highlights, upcoming events, media coverage and Rutherford County tourism-related news and updates as they happen
- A catch all source for sharing to audiences mostly 30-years-old and older
- Boost more posts

Instagram

- Increase activity
- Focus on photos that boast adventure, action, scenic beauty and other incredible photography
- Cater to a younger to middle-aged audience

Pinterest

- More beauty and action images reflecting our mission and tying into our themes
- Frequency of posting/pinning needs to stay high to ensure consistency and effectiveness over a long period of time.

Public Relations cont.:

Social Media Strategy cont.



Twitter

- Will be used primarily to connect with media

YouTube

- Share videos of events; create more video blogs (vlogs) with first-hand commentary from visitors and stakeholders

Flickr

- Will be kept current and updated mostly for media use

Contests/Giveaways

- To complement placed advertising; stakeholders can partner and donate something to be given away, which gives them more exposure
- Host monthly giveaways that reflect theme of that month
- Create Facebook quizzes to engage visitors and help them “discover” activities in Rutherford County that match their interests



COMPETITOR ANALYSIS

Competitor Analysis:

A simple breakdown of strengths and weaknesses of surrounding TDAs:

Buncombe County:

- County Tourism Brand: *Explore Asheville – Discovery, inside and out.*
- Much bigger market and marketing budget with a plethora of activities to offer
- A market to leverage and not compete with
- Promote Rutherford County as a hub for activities both in the Asheville area and other surrounding destinations

Henderson County:

- County Tourism Brand: *Discover Historic Hendersonville, North Carolina*
- Cyclists in particular who are spending more on equipment
- People who participate in athletic events
- Can order or download a “vacation planner”
- Relocation packet available for purchase
- Dated website

Competitor Analysis:

A simple breakdown of strengths and weaknesses of surrounding TDAs:

Polk County:

- County Tourism Brand: *First Peak of the Blue Ridge – Historic Saluda, Tryon and Columbus, NC*
- Limited online travel guide (only seven pages)
- Suggested itineraries online
- Interactive map online
- Limited operating budget, but expected to increase with future equestrian center hotel development

Burke County:

- County Tourism Brand: *Discover Burke County, Morganton, NC: Nature's Playground*
- Mixed messaging of Burke County and Morganton, NC
- Promote the Morganton Trail Guide
- Offer a “Get Your Daily Fun Activity Report”

Competitor Analysis:

A simple breakdown of strengths and weaknesses of surrounding TDAs:

Other Counties:

- Transylvania County (Brevard): *Land of Waterfalls, Transylvania County, Brevard, NC*
- Watauga County: *Explore Boone, NC*
- Dare County: *Outer Banks Blue / The Outer Banks of North Carolina*



TARGET AUDIENCES

Target Audiences: General



Retirees

- Biggest spending audience
- More flex time
- Take longer trips



Outdoor Adventure Athletes

- Cyclists in particular who are spending more on equipment
- People who participate in athletic events
- Extreme athletes who compete in climbing or bouldering events



Couples

- Looking for romantic getaways
- Honeymoons, Anniversaries, Weddings



Families

- Focused on kids activities
- Looking for ways to plug kids into nature and unplug from technology

Target Audiences: Specific



Retirees Robert & Rita

Age: 60s-70s

Travel Distance: Near & far; by plane or car; mostly eastern US

Travel Interests: Leisure, shopping, walking, hiking, dining, sightseeing, driving tours, historic sites, charming downtowns, theater, tours, itineraries

Income Level: \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Length of Stay: 5-10 days

Travel Planning Resources: Combo of print and online; regional magazines and newspapers; Trip Advisor; TDA website; Facebook; Pinterest; will request travel guides from places of interest



Equestrian Ed & Emily

Age: 40s-50s

Travel Distance: Varies by state and country

Travel Interests: In town because of daughter who rides at TIEC; wants luxury and quality; short day trips to charming downtowns; wants to stay near expensive horse; boating, golfing, spas, water sports, etc.

Income Level: \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Length of Stay: 7-10 days

Travel Planning Resources: Internet, TIEC website, TIEC prize list, TIEC program and visitor info; TDA website; Facebook; Pinterest

Target Audiences: Specific



Mr. & Mrs. Couple

Age: 20s-50s

Travel Distance: 3-10 hours away

Travel Interests: Romantic getaway, leisure and activity; hiking; sightseeing; tours; boating; zip lines; distillery/wineries/breweries; charming downtowns; daytrips; itineraries; theater and live music; couples looking for wedding or honeymoon venues

Income Level: \$\$-\$\$\$

Length of Stay: 3-4 days

Travel Planning Resources: Primarily online; travel websites; TDA website; regional magazines; Living Social/Groupon sites; Pinterest; Facebook; wedding media and websites



Franklin Family

Age: 30s-50s

Travel Distance: 2-6 hours away

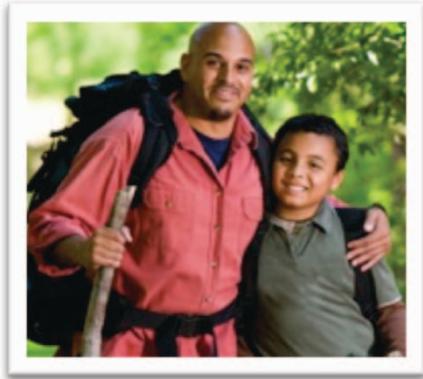
Travel Interests: Watersports; casual/in-home dining; hiking; zip lines; horseback riding; events; itineraries

Income Level: \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Length of Stay: 4-5 days

Travel Planning Resources: Internet; Facebook; Pinterest; Instagram; Trip Advisor; TDA website; travel websites; blogs

Target Audiences: Specific



Adventure Adam

Age: 30s – 40s

Travel Distance: 1-2 hours away

Travel Interests: Outdoors; hiking; cycling; kayaking; brewery/pub; casual dining; campgrounds; live music; festivals

Income Level: \$\$

Length of Stay: 1-2 days

Travel Planning Resources: Primarily online; destination websites and social media; regional niche magazines like Blue Ridge Outdoors, Mountain Xpress; forums, adventure guides; Trip Advisor; Yelp



TARGET MARKETS

Target Markets

Based on the audience personas created above and past visitor research and activity, the follow cities will be targeted in this marketing plan:

Mileage To Our Destination

From The Welcome Center at 2932 Memorial Hwy. in Lake Lure

Tryon, NC : 22 mi.	Greensboro, NC: 167 mi.
Asheville, NC: 26 mi.	Atlanta, GA: 210 mi.
Spartanburg, SC: 45 mi.	Raleigh, NC: 240 mi.
Greenville, SC: 55 mi.	Charleston, SC: 245 mi.
Charlotte, NC: 95 mi.	Cincinnati, OH: 385 mi.
Columbia, SC: 135 mi.	Orlando, FL: 561 mi.



TARGET MESSAGES

Target Messages



Scenic Lake Lure & the Blue Ridge Foothills of Rutherford County, NC

Home to:

Hickory Nut Gorge

Cherry Bounce Trail (or Blue Ridge Foothills)

Campaign Themes:

Faces Behind the Places

Choose Your Adventure

Relax or Recharge

Cozy, Mountain Getaways / Hometown Holidays

Splurge or Steal

Target Messages

Public Relations Editorial Calendar

Release/Blog Topic	Social Media & Hashtags	Long Lead Push	Short Lead Push	Hit
Faces Behind the Places	FB/T/P #RCfaces #facesofRC	Every quarter		Every quarter
Choose Your Adventure	I/FB/T/P #youradventure #RCadventure #choose #adventure	March	May	Summer – Jun, Jul, Aug
Relax or Recharge	I/FB/T/P #relax #recharge #R&R	September	November	Winter – Dec, Jan, Feb

Marketing Theme

Implementation Example 1: Choose Your Adventure

Campaign Timing:

Quarter: Summer (June/July/August)

Audience:

Adventures that interest all audiences

Purpose:

To generate enthusiasm for the abundant recreation and activities available in Lake Lure & the Blue Ridge Foothills

The logo for Lake Lure & the Blue Ridge Foothills features a stylized white wave graphic above the text. "Lake Lure &" is in a bold, white, sans-serif font, and "the Blue Ridge Foothills" is in a smaller, white, cursive font below it.

Lake Lure &
the Blue Ridge Foothills



Marketing Theme

Implementation Example 1: Choose Your Adventure
Cont.



Do You Like?

	Cars	Movies	Bikes
FUN ACTIVITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Cherry Bounce Driving Tour <i>\$ Dining</i>Bennetts Classic Car Museum <i>\$ Dining</i>Harris Speedway <i>\$ Dining</i>Hot Days, Cool Nights <i>\$ Dining</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Golf Bald Mountain <i>Lake Lure</i>Boat Tour <i>Lake Lure</i>Chimney Rock Park <i>Lake Lure</i>Dirty Dancing Festival <i>Lake Lure</i>Retro Cinema <i>Indoor Playground</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Rail Trail <i>Roads & Trails</i>Buffalo Creek Park <i>Mountains</i>Lake Lure Olympiad <i>Competitions/Date</i>
LODGING	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Carrier Houses <i>\$ Dining</i>Holiday Inn Express <i>\$ Dining</i>Firehouse Inn <i>\$ Dining</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Esmeralda Inn <i>Lake Lure</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Chimney Rock Village <i>\$ Dining</i>Rumbling Bald Resort <i>Rent Your Bike Here Too</i>
DINING	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Smith's Drug <i>Kid Friendly</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">La Strada <i>Stunning Patio</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Lakeview <i>Fine Dining</i>Legends <i>\$\$ Dining</i>Skylounge <i>Description</i>Old Rock Cafe <i>\$ Pet-Friendly</i>

Marketing Theme

Implementation Example 1: Choose Your Adventure Cont.



Concept: Develop three different itineraries starting with a choice between three components – a bicycle, film clapboard, and/or car. Create an infographic that depicts the “trail” for each of these components:

Graphic Design: Infographic: create a trail-map info graphic to connect activities to lodging and dining options for each “trail” and include a caption and photo for each stop along the trail

Social Media: create banners and “pins” to reflect campaign components and rotate each month

Website: Incorporate campaign design components into website design

Press release: “Choose Your Adventure in Lake Lure & the Blue Ridge Foothills – Three different paths for three unforgettable getaways in western North Carolina”

Marketing Theme

Implementation Example 1: Choose Your Adventure Cont.

Blog:

- Do one blog each month of the campaign to highlight the unique facts about each component in each category such as:
 - Lodging
 - Signature dishes
 - Background of owners
 - Special visitor experience

Social Media

- Develop social media posts to highlight these components and other similar ones
- Facebook: Continue promoting events and scenic beauty
- Twitter: Highlight points of interest, updates and special features while tagging media related to the post; live tweet from events
- Instagram: Focus on amazing photography that highlights action and/or scenic beauty, cool product shots, engaging people photos tied to campaign theme
- Pinterest: Create pins about adventures

Marketing Theme

Implementation Example 1: Choose Your Adventure Cont.



Website:

- Home page and landing page within website with dedicated URL like www.rutherfordtourism.com/adventure
- Customize home page photo gallery with images that reflect campaign theme
- Showcase packages and promos on website
- Add new, upcoming events to home page
- Add new blog to home page
- Load blog and press release content to corresponding area

Ad:

- See media buy plan
- Designs that invite people to “Choose Your Adventure” in Lake Lure & the Blue Ridge Foothills while tying in the adventure trail elements depending on space
- Ads can be exact or scaled down versions of the infographic
- All ads to push the travel guide for vacation planning

Marketing Theme

Implementation Example 1: Choose Your Adventure Cont.

Itineraries: Use the “Choose Your Adventure” infographic itineraries in the welcome center and on the website; make available as a PDF download; can create as many itineraries as time permits

Welcome Center:

- Either through website or printouts, invite visitors to experience a “Choose Your Adventure” itinerary/scavenger hunts
- Give prizes to those who bring back a completed itinerary, which will include answering key questions related to destinations on the different routes
- Encourage visitors to post photos from the different stops to Facebook and Instagram
- Those who return to the Welcome Center with their scavenger hunt filled out will receive a promo product

Packages/Sweepstakes: Work with county chambers to create packages with partners and promote via website, media relations, and social media

Marketing Theme

Implementation Example 1: Choose Your Adventure
Cont.

Co-Ops:

Such as:

- Media advertising (see media buy plan)
- Travel Guide advertising for 2016 travel guide
- Welcome Center events
- Social Media Takeover
- Co-op fees will be presented to stakeholders; chambers are encouraged to partner with TDA on co-op outreach to stakeholders



MEASUREMENT

Measurement

Campaign effectiveness will be measured by tracking:

- Website traffic (beyond Home page)
 - Measure activity on URLs used for advertisements, campaigns, press releases, blogs, event links, etc.
- Online travel guide activity
- Social media engagement (not just increase in “Likes,” but comments, shares and messages)
- Occupancy tax growth
- Lodging sales following major events to see if events drive overnight stays
- Collecting visitor feedback cards from key destinations around the county and online
- Including a visitor feedback card in the next version of the RCTDA Travel Guide
- Incorporating new measurement system for media impressions to give higher weight to featured placements versus mentions
- Number of media tours led
- Traffic at welcome center
- Number of mailed travel guides
- Growth in subscriptions to visitor e-newsletter (and stakeholder e-newsletter)
- Number of visitors participating in scavenger hunts



MARKETING BUDGET

FY15-16 TDA Marketing Budget: Expenses

Item	Budget	Notes
Advertising	\$23,100	Print, online, memberships, etc.
Media	\$7,900	Photos/Video/Interactive
Graphic Design	\$24,000	Includes travel guide, signage, welcome center graphics, general design, website, etc.
Events	\$6,000	Includes welcome center events, FAM & Media Tours, TDA Coffee Meetings, etc.
Printing	\$43,229	Travel guides, marketing materials, etc.
Website	\$50,600	Rebuild, Content Management System, maintenance, hosting, events calendar, etc.
Total Expenses:	\$154,829	

FY15-16 TDA Marketing Budget: PR & Marketing Retainer

Item	Budget
Marketing and PR department planning and management, Travel Guide planning and production management; advertising & media buys; graphic design coordination and management; custom media pitching; press release/web content creation; media tours; website management and rebuild; marketing research	56 hours/month
Social media content management/research/analytics (FB, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, Flickr, YouTube); PR research and content creation for blogs/releases/web content; media relations; press release distribution, media tours	41 hours/month
R/S/FC/B PR Rep; stakeholder events, FAM Tours, WC programs, extranet, online calendars; e-newsletters for stakeholders and visitors; TDA Board Packet reports	52 hours/month
LL/CR PR rep; marketing research (visitor surveys, post-event lodging surveys, etc)	16 hours/month
Admin for all; stakeholder events assistance; Schoox database management; delivery/collection of materials to/from stakeholders; website database updates	18 hours/month
Total PR & Marketing Retainer: <i>(McConnell Group PR hourly rate is \$70/hour)</i>	183 hours \$153,000

FY15-16 TDA Marketing Budget: Total Budget

Item	Budget
Total Expenses:	\$154,829
Total Retainer:	\$153,000
TOTAL FY15-16 Marketing Budget	\$307,829