

VISIT MENDOCINO COUNTY, INC.

**2009 – 2010
RESEARCH
BASED
STRATEGIC
MARKETING
PLAN**



MAY 11, 2009

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MISSION

Market Mendocino County to potential visitors in order to increase the economic impact of the travel and tourism industry throughout Mendocino County

GOALS

- ❖ Increase overall visitation to Mendocino County, specifically in the shoulder seasons of Spring and Fall
- ❖ Increase length of stay per visitation
- ❖ Increase overnight visitor spending per day

OBJECTIVES

- ❖ Place the Mendocino County message at least 150,000,000 times in front of potential customers through paid and unpaid advertising, articles, and direct sales – mostly in the San Francisco Bay Area and Sacramento Valley
- ❖ Publish a high quality visitor guide, website and other necessary materials providing the customer the tools needed in planning a multi-day stay in Mendocino County
- ❖ Assist community organizations with the promotion of the hundreds of events held throughout Mendocino County annually
- ❖ Assist local Chambers of Commerce, as appropriate, with visitor centers, signage and way finding to encourage the customer to extend their stay by at least one day and to have a more fulfilling visit
- ❖ Provide training to local businesses and organizations helping to improve overall customer satisfaction
- ❖ Continue strong partnerships with surrounding Counties, various initiatives such as Geotourism and the National Heritage Area and the State of California
- ❖ Evaluate and measure return on investment

OVERVIEW & BACKGROUND

The travel and tourism industry is vital to Mendocino County's economic stability. Particularly during these strenuous economic times, Mendocino County needs to have its message disseminated.

- ❖ As of 2007, Tourism efforts generate over \$592 in tax relief per household – a 4% increase over 2006
- ❖ Currently \$326M in Travel spending generated within Mendocino County – a 3% increase over 2006
- ❖ Represents .38% of all travel spending in California
- ❖ 5,290 jobs generated by Mendocino's travel industry with \$120M in earnings
- ❖ Represents 10% of total County Employment
- ❖ Represents 7.2% of total County Earnings
- ❖ \$7.6m in local taxes (T.O.T. and Sales tax) generated within Mendocino County
- ❖ 38.8% of total local taxes generated

Over the past few years, both the Mendocino County Lodging Association (MCLA) and the Mendocino County Promotional Alliance (MCPA) have worked hard marketing Mendocino County regionally, nationally and internationally. With our combined efforts, we have successfully been able to measure a 17:1 return on investment. However, there is much more to be done to create a more positive impact on our economic engine.

In early 2008, the Joint Marketing Committee consisting of MCLA, MCPA, and the Winegrape and Wine Commission (MWWC), retained Randall Travel Marketing to conduct a comprehensive travel research study for Mendocino County. Randall Travel Marketing is nationally recognized for their research and strategic planning for destinations. Research was conducted during the five-month period from June 2008 through October 2008. The results and recommendations of the County-wide marketing study were published in October 2008. Randall submitted a detailed Mendocino County Travel Research Study ("Study") outlining recommended strategic initiatives for the short term (two years) and long term (five years). The plan includes tracking and return-on-investment benchmarks to measure success.

The Study concluded that MCLA, MCPA and MWWC "have established a good foundation/partnership and the time is right for strategic tourism growth going forward." Among the ten (10) "Strategic Direction" recommendations was the need to "Refine/streamline the successful marketing partnership between MCLA and MCPA". The Study confirmed the "marketing and fulfillment program has been successful and is ready to move to the next level to drive increased return on investment." While the current Board structure and funding of the two organizations was considered adequate, specifically the Study recommended:

- ❖ Realignment of staff and streamlining the organizational structure so that work assignments and goals are clearly defined and aggressive deadlines are met
- ❖ Improve staff efficiency and communication

- ❖ Replace the Joint Marketing Committee with a new organization titled “Visit Mendocino County, Inc.”

The Study contains detailed recommendations on how to market Mendocino County.

The establishment of Visit Mendocino County, Inc. will enable MCLA and MCPA to work together more closely to create a structure where one group is responsible for all aspects of marketing the County. Combining staff and other resources enables those making day-to-day decisions to become more efficient in their activities; decrease duplication of effort; and create a comprehensive approach to achieve key programs and activities for marketing the County.

The primary function of Visit Mendocino County, Inc. is to prepare and carry out the annual Marketing Plan as approved by the MCLA and MCPA Board of Directors. Visit Mendocino County, Inc. and its staff will be responsible for implementing that plan. The annual marketing plan will include a budget allocating funds to specific activities. A quarterly review of the plan will take place to ensure its relevancy and effectiveness.

Visit Mendocino County, Inc. will consist of ten (10) individuals – five 5 from the MCLA Board and five 5 from the MCPA Board. Members of MCLA’s Executive Committee will serve on the Board as well as one other appointed Board Member. MCPA will have two 2 members representing the wine industry, one representing the art industry, one representing the Chambers, and one member-at-large to be appointed by the MCPA Board. The membership will result in experienced individuals, who are knowledgeable in the Promotion of our County making promotion decisions.

According to Randall Travel Marketing, the vast majority of destinations have one organization as the primary marketing organization for that destination. Therefore, it is their strong recommendation for us to market with, essentially, one organization – Visit Mendocino County, Inc.

Both the MCLA and MCPA approved the recommended strategies of the Study. As a result, this Marketing Plan is a first step in implementing those recommendations.

OVERALL STRATEGY

- ❖ Implement the recommended positioning statement promoting our:
 - Coastal Villages and Quaint Towns
 - Unique and Intimate Wineries
 - Towering Redwood Forests
- ❖ Stay focused on our target audience in our target areas. This includes travelers in the 35-60 age groups in the San Francisco Bay Area and Sacramento Valley
- ❖ Explore niche markets such as Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual Transgender (LGBT), nature lovers, wedding and reunion travel
- ❖ Extend our reach nationally and internationally through public relations/partnerships and taking a leadership role in the North Coast Tourism Council
- ❖ Establish a hospitality training program for businesses throughout the County
- ❖ Improve way finding and signage by assisting in placements of directional signage leading to local visitor centers as well as producing gateway signage
- ❖ Attend trade and consumer shows selling our product directly
- ❖ Mastering e-marketing and social networking media
- ❖ Redesign of gomendo.com (possibly visitmendocino.com) making it an essential “cruise ship on land” for planning and informational purposes
- ❖ Maintain a year round public relations effort aimed at gaining media coverage in the primary target market areas, California and beyond
- ❖ Advertise using both online and print media primarily in our target market areas maintaining a diverse advertising schedule to create awareness in the leisure travel market
- ❖ Create a new County-wide visitor guide to assist with travel planning trips and encourage multiple day visits. Distribute 75,000 copies to regional visitor centers, California Welcome Centers, AAA offices, sales and media kits, informational kits, trade shows and community events. Create a downloadable PDF version for website
- ❖ Encourage businesses to establish “outstanding specials and /or packages” to be promoted through promotional e-mails and on websites
- ❖ Track inquiries to determine which marketing avenues are most effective
- ❖ Meet with local partners and industry specialists to develop promotional opportunities such as co-op promotions, event sponsorships, collateral sponsorships, etc.

ADVERTISING & MEDIA

Objective:

- ❖ Develop a media plan which will generate consumer requests, leads, visitation to website and drive an increase in room nights booked throughout Mendocino County

ADVERTISEMENT - KEY PLACEMENT SCHEDULE

<i>GREATER CALIFORNIA</i>
2010 CA Visitor Guide & 2010 CA Road Trips- ½ page
2010 AAA TourBook – ½ page
VIA Magazine – Bi-Monthly – Various Sizes November – June
Sunset Magazine – 3” ad in all issues except July – September
<i>SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA</i>
San Francisco Magazine – ¼ page in Oct, Nov, March, April, May
San Francisco CVB – LGBT Map guide 2010 & Official Visitor’s Map – full panel
101 Things To Do – 1/3 page in Marin edition
ON Magazine – ¼ page in all issues except November – May
Bay Nature Magazine – Quarterly – 1/3 page - Oct - June
Diablo Magazine – ¼ page – Oct, Nov, Feb, Mar, Apr
South Bay Accent – Bi-Monthly - ¼ page Oct/Nov, Feb/Mar
Marin Magazine – 1/3 page – Nov, Dec, March, April, May
Napa/Sonoma Magazine – Semi-Annual - ¼ page – Oct, Apr
Petaluma and Santa Rosa Magazine – ¼ page – Fall 2009 & Spring 2010
Solano Magazine – ¼ page – November, Feb/March and April
<i>SACRAMENTO VALLEY</i>
101 Things To Do – 1/3 page in Shasta Edition
Sacramento Magazine – 1/3 page – Oct, Nov, Feb, Mar, Apr, May
<i>ON-LINE ADVERTISING</i>
Comcast.net – if ROI on Spring 2009 program is significant – to be determined in late summer 2009
facebook.com (PPC)
sanfranmag.com – added value
sunsetgetaways.com – added value
viamagazine.com/info – added value
<i>E-MAIL BLASTS</i>
Opportunistic – strategize specific email lists throughout year targeting specific areas and times
Marin Magazine Travel Newsletter E-blast – added value
SF Magazine E-blast – 3 blasts – added value
<i>TELEVISION – if grant is available and ROI is significant – to be determined summer 2009</i>
<i>RADIO – if ROI on Television is not significant – to be determined late summer 2009</i>

Goal:

- ❖ Initiate approximately 35,000,000 impressions in our target areas
- ❖ Produce 8,000 leads through reader response, website hits, phone calls, email, etc.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Objective:

- ❖ Use the latest in social media platforms to market and brand Mendocino County as a unique vacation destination; with the goal of increasing web traffic to goMendo.com
- ❖ Generate and create a consistent image/message within the social media platform that appeals to our broad target audiences. This includes travelers in the 35-60 age groups in the San Francisco Bay Area and Sacramento Valley

Strategy:

- ❖ Visit Mendocino County, Inc. will continue to research, develop and implement a strategy for engaging in Social Media platforms that target our ideal customer profile effectively creating a ‘buzz’ by introducing consumer generated content to our website, such as uploading photos, enhanced blog and RSS feeds

Tactics:

- ❖ Produce publications and collateral materials that provide detailed information for our target audiences
- ❖ Continue to develop and improve Visit Mendocino County, Inc. profiles on Myspace.com, Facebook.com, Twitter.com, Yelp.com, Utube.com, and Tripadvisor.com. Content to be in collaboration with PR agency and VMC Staff
- ❖ Update the Visit Mendocino County, Inc. blog on a bi-weekly basis. Link Mendocino County blogs to the redesigned goMendo.com
- ❖ Implement a “Positive Feedback” campaign encouraging lodgers and restaurants to ask visitors/customers to share their positive experiences online at sites such as

- Tripadvisor.com and Yelp.com in an effort to populate social media sites with Mendocino County content
- ❖ Monitor consumer ratings and feedback on social media sites and work with businesses in staying up to date with their individual social media feedback. Sites allow for vendor responses to postings which can be used to balance out negative feedback
 - ❖ Organize and implement a “Mendo Moments” YouTube campaign promoting Mendocino County. Staff will produce short promotional videos to post on goMendo.com, YouTube.com and other relevant websites
 - ❖ Link all social media platforms to our website to encourage conversions, contact development and membership on social media sites
 - ❖ Make a consistent effort to highlight upcoming events and specials on social media websites

Goal:

- ❖ The Visit Mendocino County, Inc. will track campaign success through page views, fans, followers, telephone inquiries and Google Analytics
- ❖ Receive 250 direct inquiries and 2,000 fans and followers as a result of Social Media efforts

EMAIL MARKETING

Objective:

- ❖ Drive traffic to goMendo.com through the use of visitor e-newsletters promoting county events, activities, specials and packages

Strategy:

- ❖ Visit Mendocino County, Inc. staff will continue to capture email addresses at tradeshow, festivals and events, via the goMendo.com website and 1-800 numbers. Contacts to be loaded into email marketing program for monthly email promotions and analysis

Tactics:

- ❖ Distribute scheduled e-blast promotions promoting festivals, events and specials a month in advance to allow potential tourists time for travel planning
- ❖ Propose 2009-2010 schedule of e-blasts and corresponding promotional banners on gomendo.com:

- ❖ July - Pet-Friendly Travel in Mendocino County
- ❖ August – Wine Events and Overall Winery Promotion
- ❖ September – Day of the Dead and other Halloween Events
- ❖ October – Wine & Mushroom Festival
- ❖ November – Thanksgiving & Christmas in Mendocino County
- ❖ December – Crab & Wine Days Festival
- ❖ January – Valentine’s Day & Romance Packages; Alsace Festival
- ❖ February – Whale Migration & Festivals
- ❖ March – Earth Day – Kids & Nature Promotion - Wildflowers in Mendocino County
- ❖ April – Festival Spotlight – Beer Fest, Pinot Noir Festival, Film Festival
- ❖ May – Getting Married in Mendocino – Renewing Romance
- ❖ June – July 4th events in Mendocino County
- ❖ Maintain up to date contact lists by performing monthly email database “cleaning” to remove emails that are undeliverable
- ❖ Encourage development of “outstanding specials and packages” with County businesses to increase visitation and length of stay to include in Email marketing
- ❖ Utilize A/B split testing – to evaluate email campaign optimization by measuring click thru rates as a result of subject line, topic, time of day and day of the week sent
- ❖ Link email campaigns to other social media platforms to increase overall social media efforts: “Follow us on Twitter, Facebook, etc.”

Goal:

- ❖ Produce 2,500 leads through generation of emails. Email campaign open rates and click thru rates will be evaluated to gauge monthly promotional email content and success
- ❖ Produce emails with an open rate of 26% and above with a click thru rate of 5% and above
- ❖ Limit opt-out rate to between 5-10% per email sent
- ❖ Increase subscriptions from 2500 (March 2009) to 4000 in June 2010

WEBSITE ADVERTISING

Objective:

- ❖ Have www.gomendo.com appear at the top of search engine results, both organic search and paid search, on key search engines such as Google, Yahoo, etc.

Tactics:

- ❖ SEM (Search Engine Marketing) – Secure independent contractor(s) to maintain an aggressive 12-month pay per click campaign
- ❖ SEO (Search Engine Optimization) – Secure independent contractor(s) to perform search engine optimization based on the redesigned website

Goal:

- ❖ Produce 10,000,000 impressions through Search Engine Marketing
- ❖ Produce 25,000 leads to www.gomendo.com through SEM
- ❖ Produce 35,000 leads to www.gomendo.com through SEO

WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT & MAINTENANCE

Objective:

- ❖ The www.goMendo.com website will be redesigned in 2009-2010 to reflect the updated Visit Mendocino County, Inc. positioning and marketing materials
- ❖ Website to become a “cruise ship on land” providing a more user friendly site to current and potential visitors
- ❖ Through website use, encourage visitors to visit Mendocino County more often and stay longer

Strategy:

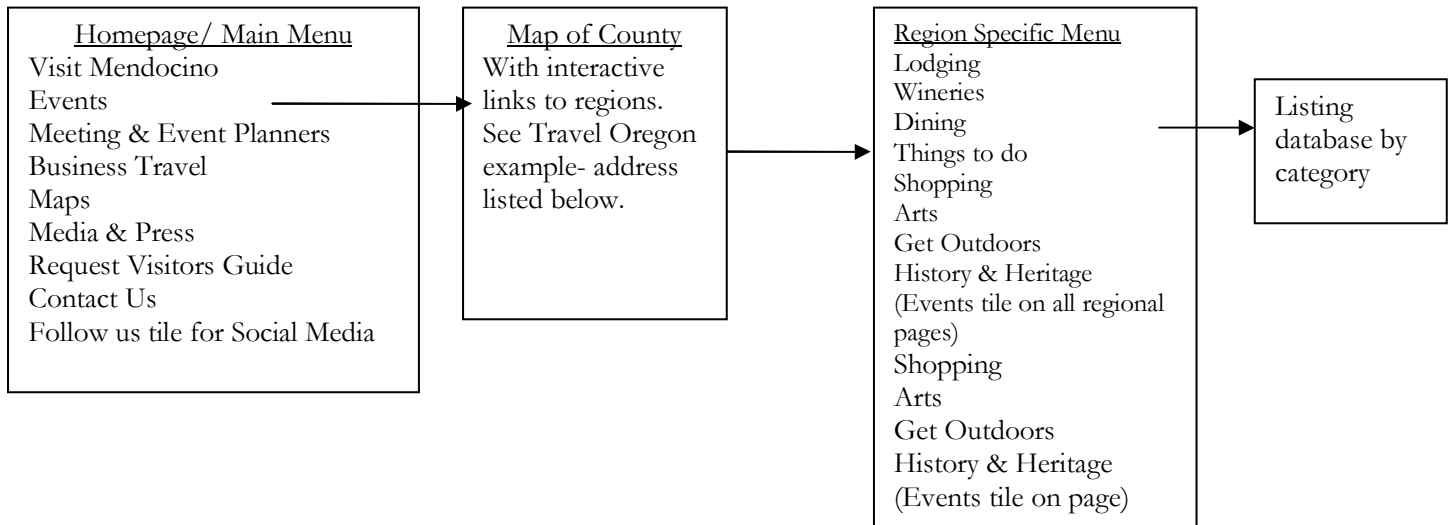
- ❖ Visit Mendocino County, Inc. will work with a board appointed committee to redesign and maintain the gomendo.com website

Tactics:

- ❖ Database redesign- Redesign database with non-proprietary software to allow staff to easily update content and move it to an independent server without affecting functionality. Our current database was created by Dobay Design using proprietary software. This software limits our database’s versatility because we are dependent on a single individual to do database work and resolve problems
- ❖ Project manage a complete redesign of the website layout and overall design using a bidding process
- ❖ Have a site map developed to maximize search engine optimization

- ❖ Send out a request for proposal for a designer to use suggested site map and current database (moved over to a more user friendly format as mentioned above) to design the site based on the Study's recommendations to ensure ease of use for visitor as well as functionality
- ❖ .mobi version of goMendo.com- Redesign website so it is available in an easy to use mobile device format through .mobi technology. .mobi sites must be optimized for viewing on a mobile phone. The main advantage of .mobi, from the users' perspective, is that they are theoretically guaranteed a site optimized for usage on the go
- ❖ Site specific recommendations:
 - ❖ Homepage- The homepage needs to reflect the look and feel of the new fulfillment piece and its messaging. The location of Mendocino County in California needs to be clearly identified and compelling pictures and content provided that invites the user to delve deeper into the website
 - ❖ Content- The website should be reorganized into searchable regions. Within those regions the visitor can search accommodations, services, attractions, events and activities relevant to that region
 - ❖ Website Imagery/ Design – The design of gomendo.com needs to be updated to reflect the new fulfillment piece and its design elements
 - ❖ Photography- Add more photos of people having fun as well as landscape shots throughout Mendocino County need to be included
 - ❖ Visitor testimonials- The Study recommends that we scatter visitor testimonials throughout the site
 - ❖ Homepage buttons- The main menu buttons should be reorganized in the following fashion:
 - ❖ Media & Press button- link to page listing PR agencies, links to press releases, press kit, story ideas, news headlines (link to database of reviews and articles) and downloadable photo gallery similar to Sonoma Valley's at <http://www.sonomavalley.com/index.php/Table/media/>
 - ❖ Request Visitors Guide (RVG) button- the RVG button will link to a short survey to obtain visitor data and contact information similar to Sonoma Valley's survey at http://www.sonomavalley.com/index.php/component/option,com_forme/Itemid,198/. Data will be analyzed annually. The RVG button should be a tile on all the Visit Mendocino results pages
 - ❖ Follow Us Tile- this should be a tile that lists clickable social media logos which lead the visitor to follow pages for the various social media platforms
 - ❖ Meeting & Event Planners button- should lead to a results page linked to the database that is similar to Sonoma Valley's event planning page located at <http://www.sonomavalley.com/index.php/Table/event/meeting-planning-weddings/>
 - ❖ Business Travel button- a directory of services available to business travelers in Mendocino County. Button would link to a directory of office supply retailers, printers, meeting spaces, etc.

- ❖ Maps button- on the homepage we will need to identify the location of Mendocino County relative to the rest of California. It is recommend to use a map similar to the one found on Sonoma Valley’s homepage at <http://www.sonomavalley.com/>. There will be a map button in the menu as well as a link to the same page from the map tile on the homepage. The map page should have downloadable/printable maps similar to Sonoma Valley’s at <http://www.sonomavalley.com/index.php/Table/map-pdfs/>



Goal:

- ❖ A completely redesigned website launched by December 2009
- ❖ Maintain a bounce rate of below 20%
- ❖ Increase the current unique visitors up to 175,000 from its current 155, 000 annually

PUBLIC & MEDIA RELATIONS

Objective:

- ❖ Build the overall Mendocino County message in key target areas, including:
 - Media, (includes editors and producers in print and broadcast)
 - Key VIP travel opinion leaders
 - Internet media, including bloggers and industry buzz makers
 - Key government leaders
 - Internal audiences, including board members and County leaders/decision makers
 - By reaching these publics, this campaign will ultimately reach and motivate consumer audiences to County businesses—increasing the overall economic impact created by the travel and tourism industry

Strategy:

- ❖ Recruit editors and media leaders to include coverage of Mendocino County's lodging, events, attractions, latest news and stories in articles, news stories, broadcast news shows and Internet communications
- ❖ Use media relations, public relations and marketing tactics to recruit consumers to book rooms and attend Mendocino County activities, attractions and events
- ❖ Build partnerships and alliances to achieve these goals

Tactics:

- ❖ External Key Actions
 - ❖ HypeHouse, Inc. will plan, direct and execute a complete media relations and public relations campaign designed to achieve the goals and objectives of VISIT MENDOCINO COUNTY, INC.
 - ❖ Conduct verbal and written pitches to editors and industry leaders (based on custom calendar)
 - ❖ Research, write and distribute at least two press releases per month
 - ❖ Provide assistance with MCLA's annual meeting as it relates to marketing and Public Relations (PR) and any other VISIT MENDOCINO COUNTY, INC. sponsored promotional events throughout the year
 - ❖ Provide copy for MCLA's quarterly newsletter and other relevant internal communication pieces informing members and the community of the public relations efforts and successes
 - ❖ Provide PR media training as directed by the CEO/President

- ❖ Coordinate and execute quarterly County business showcases in different areas of the County to enhance communication and knowledge between HypeHouse and County businesses
- ❖ Provide advance press kits and follow up information , as appropriate, to businesses who host journalists
- ❖ Assist with and attend consumer trade shows in:
 - ❖ Los Angeles
 - ❖ SF Bay Area (includes Bay Area Travel Show and Sunset Celebration Days)
 - ❖ Sacramento
 - ❖ Research other show markets
 - ❖ Support all shows with complete marketing and event management planning
- ❖ Set up media “desk sides” in:
 - ❖ New York City
 - ❖ SF Bay Area
 - ❖ Sacramento
 - ❖ Los Angeles
 - ❖ And other key cities as opportunities, time and budget permit
- ❖ Attend California Travel and Tourism Commission (CTTC) Media events in New York and San Francisco
- ❖ Plan and coordinate a special Mendocino County showcase event in the Bay Area and Sacramento, to be attended by editors, producers, travel VIPs and industry opinion leaders

- ❖ Internal Key Actions
 - ❖ Build and update the overall activity and launch calendar
 - ❖ Write and coordinate all components necessary to pitch editor and media targets. Includes releases, fact sheets, media lists and more. Update the official press kit and support materials. Outline new online press room for www.gomendo.com. Maintain site as key journalist resource
 - ❖ Create and update the Visit Mendocino County, Inc. Question and Answer (Q&A) and conduct consultation and follow-through for media interviews
 - ❖ The HypeHouse team will participate in a weekly conference call with staff to review actions, timelines and campaign details—and will provide monthly written updates
 - ❖ Assist, as appropriate, marketing elements and marketing actions
 - ❖ HypeHouse will provide a compilation of all articles, press releases and any other relevant data/documents resulting from the campaign, including a chart with all media who has visited, where they stayed, what they did, etc. Quarterly reports will be developed and this information will be included in a “PR bible” for the contracted year
 - ❖ HypeHouse will provide a comprehensive clipping service for all Mendocino County articles relative to promotion

Goal:

- ❖ Increase overall impressions by at least five percent – an estimated \$3.5 Million and 100,000,000 impressions in ad equivalency and public relations coverage

SALES – GROUP & LEISURE

Leisure Sales:

Objective:

- ❖ Drive visitors to Mendocino County by direct promotion to leisure travel decision makers

Strategy:

- ❖ Direct face to face contacts with travel professionals and consumers in a position to recommend leisure travel destinations. The Study indicates that in excess of 90 % of Mendocino visitors are not affiliated with groups
- ❖ Personal visits to all AAA offices in the San Francisco and Sacramento metro areas. Provide visitor guides and establish face to face contacts. Follow up at least twice. Offer comp stays to managerial personnel
- ❖ Personal visits to all other major travel agencies specializing in leisure sales. Follow the same pattern
- ❖ Personal visits to all Convention and Visitor Bureaus (CVB), Chambers of Commerce and Destination Marketing Organizations. Follow same patterns as above. Consider joining membership CVB's if return on investment is significant
- ❖ Sell Mendocino County directly to our target audience at consumer travel shows in our target markets
- ❖ Consumer shows include Bay Area Travel Show, Los Angeles Times Adventure & Travel Expo and Sunset Celebration Days
- ❖ Research and identify other trade show opportunities with significant return on investment possibilities. These include niche travel and trade shows such as weddings, nature, "green", etc.
- ❖ Develop pay-to-play opportunities at consumer shows with County businesses
- ❖ Encourage development of "outstanding specials and packages" with County businesses to increase visitation and length of stay when selling Mendocino County
- ❖ Evaluate each show attended and provide recommendations for subsequent years based on return on investment

Goal:

- ❖ Obtain 10,000 direct consumer leads

Group Sales:

Objective:

- ❖ Increase small group business to Mendocino County by creating a small group infrastructure and establishing an awareness of options among those who provide group business

Strategy:

- ❖ Pursue dual strategy of contacting convention and meeting event planners and CVBs to encourage group business in connection with target area conventions. In addition, attend trade shows where event and meeting planners are exposed to destination marketing

Tactics:

- ❖ Personally visit, and join where possible, all major CVBs in our target areas. Continue active membership with the San Francisco and Sacramento CVBs
- ❖ Attend, with key tourism players on a pay to play basis, conventions where event and meeting planners meet to explore destinations
- ❖ Attend seminars with San Francisco CVB to be trained in the most effective way to market to groups
- ❖ Develop group packages for spousal side trips, business meetings, Board of Director/executive meetings and retreats; packages which can be sold to planners
- ❖ Contact County convention venues such as the Ukiah Convention Center to obtain meeting specifications. Possible development of County-wide meetings guide
- ❖ Personally contact identified event planners for conventions in target areas
- ❖ Facilitate the development and production of a Mendocino County meeting services brochure

Goal:

- ❖ Obtain up to 50 small group leads

VISITOR SERVICES & FULFILLMENT

VISITOR CENTERS & SIGNAGE

Objective:

- ❖ Make it seamlessly easy for visitors to find tourist information when traveling to or within the County

Strategy:

- ❖ Pursue a two prong strategy of enhancing existing visitor centers and establishing new ones at County gateways and high traffic areas

Tactics:

- ❖ Meet with existing visitor centers in Fort Bragg, Mendocino, Ukiah, Willits and the Redwood Coast to ascertain their needs and the extent to which we can assist in fulfilling those needs. Examples include extending hours, providing bathroom facilities, signage, etc.
- ❖ Establish permanent attractive County gateway signage on both Highway 101 going North from Cloverdale and on Highway 1 in the Gualala area
- ❖ Establish new gateway visitor centers in both Boonville and Hopland. Assist in their creation and augmentation
- ❖ Continue work on planning for Confusion Hill visitor services including signage
- ❖ Develop consistent visitor information signage which will lead travelers to visitor centers
- ❖ Plan for unmanned kiosks for both in County and out of County locations. Develop prototypes and do preliminary location planning
- ❖ Explore consistent way finding signage. This is necessary to direct visitors to major attractions and locations throughout the County
- ❖ Explore with Humboldt and Del Norte Counties whether the proposed National Heritage Area or Northern California Geotourism area can improve signage to all three counties

Goal:

- ❖ Installation of one gateway sign and three to five directional signs to visitor centers. Establishment of two gateway visitor centers/kiosks

PROMOTIONAL DISPLAYS

Objective:

- ❖ Update and benefit from display opportunities through State of California

State Fair Display:

- ❖ Host a booth at the California State Fair as required in MCPA contract with County
- ❖ Partner with local businesses to host the booth throughout the two weeks of the Fair
- ❖ Design the booth to incorporate current branding and design creating a portion of the display that will be interactive

Capitol Display:

- ❖ Collaborate with the Arts Council of Mendocino County in obtaining a local artist to redesign the display
- ❖ Assist local artist with development, production and installation of new display
- ❖ Coordinate an installation ceremony at the capitol building
- ❖ Distribute press releases and photos to local and regional papers promoting the new display, designing artist and Visit Mendocino County, Inc.

REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Objective:

- ❖ To maximize and leverage our resources and reach in the promotion of Mendocino County through the involvement and leadership in regional and statewide organizations, partnerships and initiatives

Strategy and Tactics:

- ❖ Chair and administer the North Coast Tourism Council, including collaboration and strategizing with neighboring Counties
- ❖ Join the California Travel Industry Association Board of Directors (CalTIA)
- ❖ Be a regional Ambassador of CalTIA
- ❖ Be a member on the California Travel & Tourism Commission's Rural Advisory Committee
- ❖ Continue to be a leader in the North Coast Geotourism Initiative. Attempt to maximize Mendocino County exposure to project:
 - ❖ Project to be completed in 2010

- ❖ House the Geotourism website and serve as database manager
- ❖ Work with partners on website development and launch
- ❖ Continue to be a leader in the Redwoods National Heritage Area:
 - ❖ Project should be complete in 2011
 - ❖ Seek grant funds, when appropriate, capitalizing on designation
 - ❖ Actively lobby with local, regional, state and national officials
- ❖ Assist in the establishment and development of the Preserve America program:
 - ❖ Work with Fort Bragg and any other city interesting in becoming a “Preserve America” community
 - ❖ Assist in seeking matching fund grants to capitalize on Mendocino designation
- ❖ Assist in the development and coordination of the “Confusion Hill” visitor center/kiosk:
 - ❖ If grant is obtained, work with consultant in developing a plan for a gateway visitor center, scenic vista, County Park and/or interpretive trails at Confusion Hill
 - ❖ Coordinate with County and State agencies in maximizing the new bridges and new “open space”
- ❖ Continue to partner with the Nature Tourism Coalition in the production of maps and other informative materials:
 - ❖ Assist in the development of a Countywide Nature Tourism Map
 - ❖ Assist in the development of the Nature Tourism database. Goal is to make it a useful tool for potential and current visitors to Mendocino County
- ❖ Begin the development of the Mendocino County Promotional Foundation; establish a budget, mission, objectives and a funding plan:
 - ❖ Apply for grants on behalf of the Foundation for educational and promotional activities for the Mendocino County Community and its guests
- ❖ Explore unknown and yet to be determined local, regional, state and national partnerships with the mission of enhancing the Mendocino County visitor experience (i.e. “questing”)

Goal:

- ❖ Leverage our promotional funds to create a Northern California travel destination which is nationally known and respected

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Objective:

- ❖ Continue to work with organizations, businesses and individuals involved in the travel industry throughout Mendocino County in order to maximize efforts and resources

- ❖ Work with others to better promote all Mendocino County has to offer

Strategy:

Promotional Organization Relations

- ❖ Attend one regional Chamber mixer per quarter to promote goMendo.com business and event listings as well as Visit Mendocino County, Inc. initiatives
- ❖ Continue to partner closely with the Arts Council of Mendocino County in making the arts a compelling reason for a multiple day stay
- ❖ Continue to partner closely with the MWWC in promoting the uniqueness and “greenness” of Mendocino County’s wine country

Hospitality Training

- ❖ Develop, support and partner to produce community conferences, and/or seminars that benefit economic development and tourism
- ❖ Begin development of a County-wide hospitality program training individuals working directly with visitors on proper customer service as well as the many assets of Mendocino County
- ❖ Examples of programs could be “I Am Mendocino County” based on the “I Am Santa Monica” program and/or “Hospitality 101” training program

Community Showcases

- ❖ Host quarterly meetings with HypeHouse to showcase businesses in all regions of the County. This event gives HypeHouse the opportunity to learn in more detail about each community and its businesses. It also provides the opportunity for the community to learn about Visit Mendocino County, Inc. marketing efforts and how they can benefit and partner to promote their area/business

Event Partnership & Coordination

- ❖ Contract with a part-time year-round event coordinator to assist with the coordination, promotion and participation of the Crab & Wine and Mushroom & Wine festivals and other approved County-wide festivals
- ❖ Encourage businesses to offer event-related specials/promotions to increase the viability of events and visitor opportunities
- ❖ Manage the design, printing and distribution of promotional materials for the festivals
- ❖ Assist other events and festivals as appropriate with the goal of improving promotion and attendance of out-of-County visitors in the Spring and Fall seasons
- ❖ Collaborate with event planners to establish new event opportunities and partnerships
- ❖ Maintain communications with other agencies to distribute event announcements to member mailing lists
- ❖ Continue to work in making gomendo.com the go-to event calendar for Mendocino County
- ❖ List events on relevant regional, state and national web-based calendars
- ❖ Attend other festival events as a representative of Visit Mendocino County, Inc.

Goal:

- ❖ Continue development of relations with other promotional groups within Mendocino County
- ❖ Increase visitation to festivals by increasing number of events and improving promotion of events

VISITOR GUIDE & FULFILLMENT

Objective:

- ❖ To provide the visitor with high-quality, easy to use visitor information and travel planning guides to be distributed in our target areas

Strategy:

- ❖ Visit Mendocino County, Inc. and goMendo.com will be the centralized source for Mendocino County visitor information
- ❖ Produce collateral materials with a consistent, uniform look that reflects the Visit Mendocino County, Inc. brand that provides up to date, accurate information to potential visitors

Tactics:

Tear Off Maps

- ❖ Research and develop an inexpensive tear off county map to help with visitor way finding and promotion. Maps will be regional with the intention of producing two to three the first year
- ❖ Map design will be similar to other County promotional materials
- ❖ Finished map pads will be distributed County-wide to hotels, attractions, restaurants, etc.

Official Visitors Guide

- ❖ Distribute 75,000 guides to regional visitor centers, California Welcome Centers, CVBs, AAA offices, consumer and trade shows, media requests, consumer inquiries, local and regional events and other travel outlets
- ❖ Produce the 2nd annual Official Mendocino County Visitors Guide, improving upon the first edition. Guide to be completed by June 2010

Other Promotional Materials

- ❖ Produce an annual events guide promoting the multitude of events throughout Mendocino County
- ❖ Encourage specific industries to produce County-wide maps highlighting their industry. Examples are: Art, Culture and Gallery, Nature Tourism, Wine

Photo Library

- ❖ Maintain and add to the Visit Mendocino County, Inc. digital photo and video library of Mendocino County attractions, events, landscapes, etc. This will include the organization of a photo/model release database and photographer contracts
- ❖ Staff will start to photograph events and activities as well for use in promotional efforts
- ❖ A master database of photos will be created, maintained and distributed to staff and designers annually

Fulfillment Services & Inquiry Database

- ❖ Coordinate the Official Mendocino County Visitor Information fulfillment program through the use of existing 1-800 numbers, goMendo.com, advertising and article leads and tradeshow inquiries
- ❖ Maintain an in-house, query based database to house all of the visitor inquiries and leads we receive. Visitor inquiries and leads will be organized to provide inquiry statistics by ad type, inquiry location, date, source, etc. The information gathered in this database will be used to generate query reports to better focus advertising and marketing efforts

Goal:

- ❖ Produce 2010-2011 Official Visitor's Guide, annual events calendar and tear off maps to enhance visitor experience
- ❖ Develop and maintain inquiry database to be used for measuring return on investment (ROI) and planning future marketing activities

STAFFING

Objective:

- ❖ Create and sustain a staffing structure which will be an efficient and effective marketing agency for Mendocino County
- ❖ Procure motivated, experienced individuals to successfully implement this plan

Staffing/Contractor Background:

- ❖ MCPA and MCLA are currently staffed by three full-time employees: one part-time employee, one full-time contractor and two part-time contractors. Full-time staff positions include:
 - ❖ General Manager, Alydia Atkins - provides project management and administrative support for all MCPA operations;
 - ❖ Executive Assistant/PR Coordinator, Aimee Hanson - provides project management and administrative support for all MCLA operations;
 - ❖ Web Master/Communications Coordinator, Robert Brothers - provides web management, information technology and customer service support;
 - ❖ Part-time Office Assistant, Rachelle Sanders – provides assistance with website management, mailings, data entry, etc.
- ❖ MCPA Contractor positions include:
 - ❖ Director of Special Projects, Richard Strom - coordinates all sales calls, partnership coordination, group sales, trade show activities, visitor services and other special projects;
 - ❖ Events Coordinator, Joyce Beard - provides local event promotion and coordination
- ❖ MCLA Contractor position include:
 - ❖ Executive Director, Scott Schneider - charged with overall leadership and responsibility for MCLA/MCPA staff supervision, budgeting and financial management, marketing and media relations, and partnership development
 - ❖ Much of MCLA/MCPA's work is conducted through the expert services of outside contractors. These include a public relations firm; a web hosting and site management contractor; bookkeeping and accounting services; contractors for development of partnership opportunities; and production of print collateral materials

Strategy:

- ❖ Visit Mendocino County, Inc. staff will work with a VMC Board appointed committee to implement and maintain the following structure and individuals for staffing:
- ❖ President/CEO, Scott Schneider
 - ❖ Reports to MCLA/MCPA/Visit Mendocino County, Inc. Board of Directors
 - ❖ Specific Duties:
 - ❖ Visitor Guide
 - ❖ Ad Design
 - ❖ Media Planning and Oversight
 - ❖ Direct PR Efforts
 - ❖ Regional and State Partnerships
 - ❖ Tear-Off Maps
 - ❖ Education for Local Population
 - ❖ Annual Update to Performance Review
 - ❖ Research Comparability with State of California
 - ❖ Executive Management and Leadership for Visit Mendocino County, Inc. marketing organization
 - ❖ Administrative Services to the MCLA and MCPA Boards
 - ❖ Attends all boards and committee meetings, as appropriate
 - ❖ Marketing Plan Development
 - ❖ Annual Budget Development
 - ❖ Quarterly and Annual Reports to County MCLA & MCPA, as appropriate
 - ❖ Community Relations
- ❖ Visitor Services Coordinator, IT Specialist, Robert Brothers
 - ❖ Reports to President/CEO
 - ❖ Specific Duties:
 - ❖ Inquiry Fulfillment, Database Management and Tracking of Inquiry Records
 - ❖ goMendo.com
 - ❖ Website Research Form Analysis
 - ❖ Ongoing Visitor Research
- ❖ Director of Communications and MCPA Administrator, Alydia Atkins
 - ❖ Reports to the President/CEO
 - ❖ Specific Duties:
 - ❖ Email Database for Future Marketing
 - ❖ goMendo.com
 - ❖ E-Marketing
 - ❖ Social Networking Media

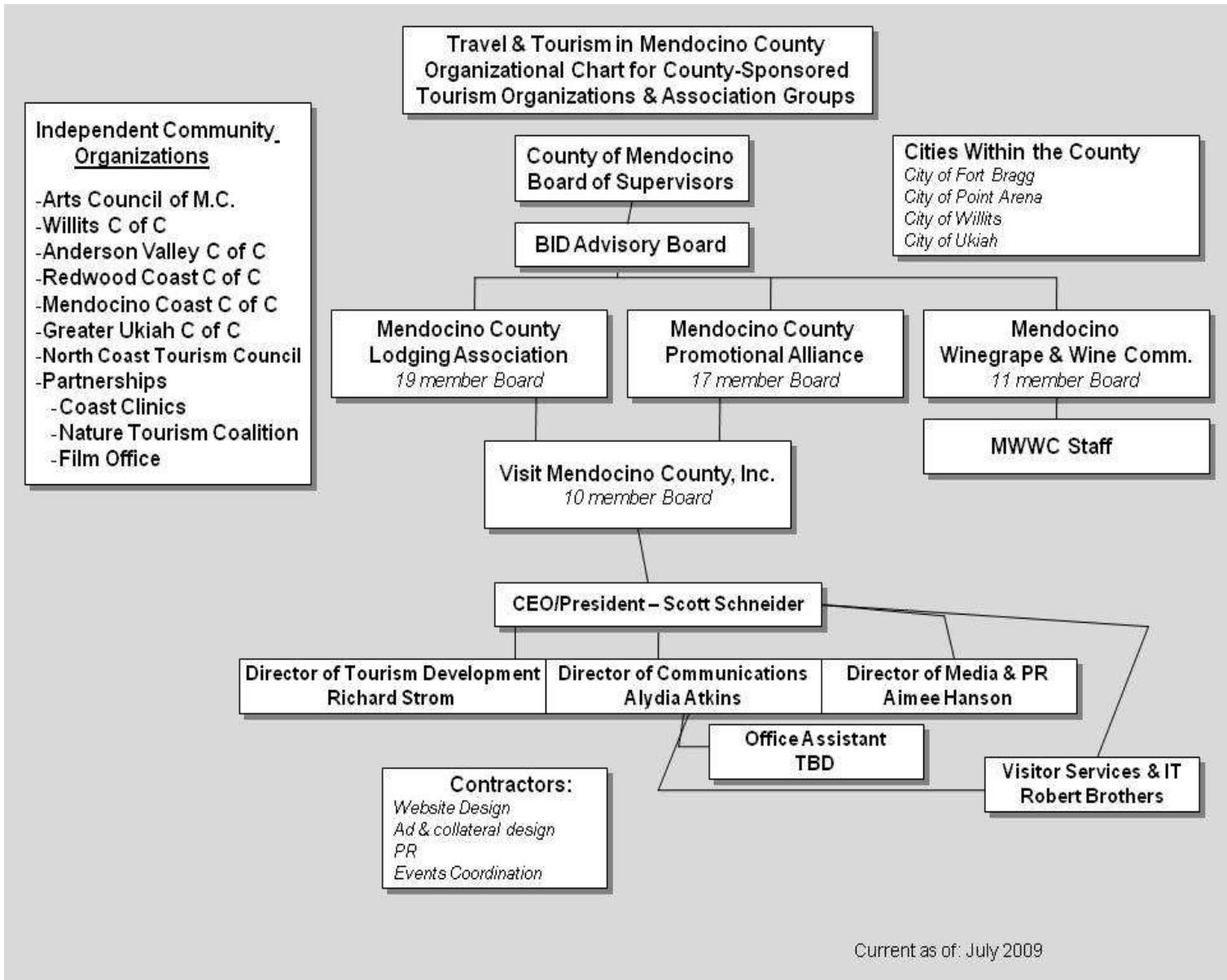
- ❖ Tear Off Maps
 - ❖ Inquiry Database
 - ❖ Annual Evaluation Point of Origin
 - ❖ MCPA Office Manager/Administrator
 - ❖ Assist CEO : Inland Chamber Relations
 - ❖ Assist CEO : MCPA Member Relations
 - ❖ Tourism Education, Festivals, State Fair, Capitol Display
-
- ❖ Director of Tourism Development, Richard Strom
 - ❖ Reports to the President/CEO
 - ❖ Specific Duties:
 - ❖ Pay as you Play Marketing
 - ❖ Leisure Tourism Sales
 - ❖ Group Sales
 - ❖ Consumer and Trade Shows
 - ❖ Place Information Kiosks
 - ❖ Gateways, Visitor Centers, Way finding, and Signage
 - ❖ Partner Project Coordination: National Heritage Area, Geo-Tourism, Preserve America
 - ❖ Nature Tourism Oversight
 - ❖ Mendocino County Promotional Foundation
 - ❖ Grants
-
- ❖ Public Relations Coordinator and Director of Media, Aimee Hanson
 - ❖ Reports to the President/CEO
 - ❖ Specific Duties:
 - ❖ Visitor Guide
 - ❖ Media Plan Execution/Ad Design Assistant
 - ❖ PR Plan, Report, Media Tours, etc.
 - ❖ Tear-Off Maps
 - ❖ Annual Market Mix Survey
 - ❖ Hospitality Training
 - ❖ MCLA Office Manager
 - ❖ Assist CEO : Coast Chamber Relations
 - ❖ Assist CEO : MCLA Member Relations
 - ❖ Assist Nature Tourism
 - ❖ Assists the President/CEO in the completion of assignments
 - ❖ Social Networking
-
- ❖ Office Assistant, Rachelle Sanders through September 2009
 - ❖ Reports to the Director of Communications and MCPA Administrator

- ❖ Specific Duties:
 - ❖ Assists with general office tasks – mailings, data entry
 - ❖ Assists with website review and editing
 - ❖ Performs other office related tasks as directed

Goal:

- ❖ Visit Mendocino County, Inc. staff will perform as a single cohesive team responsible for the development and implementation of the Marketing Plan

TRAVEL & TOURISM ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



ADMINISTRATION

Objective:

- ❖ Maintain functionality of organizations while keeping costs at a minimum

Strategy and Tactics:

Visit Mendocino County, Inc. Administration:

- ❖ Office Location and Hours:
 - ❖ Because of the size of Mendocino County as well as the location of existing offices, staff will conduct business from two locations. An office will be located in downtown Fort Bragg and one in downtown Ukiah
 - ❖ Inland Office – 525 S. Main Street; Phone: (707) 462-7417
 - ❖ Coastal Office – 120 S. Franklin Street; Phone: (707) 964-9010
 - ❖ Staff will be on duty Monday through Friday from 8:30am to 5:00pm
 - ❖ Usage of a new updated phone system linking the two offices and providing ready access to callers seeking county information
- ❖ Perform all tasks as directed by the Visit Mendocino County, Inc. Board of Directors, Committees and contracted entities including the implementation of this Plan

MCLA Administration:

- ❖ Provide Contracted Administrative Services to MCLA
 - ❖ Staff will perform administrative tasks as directed by the MCLA Board as well as tasks as outlined in MCLA's contract with the County and the BID Ordinance
 - ❖ Tasks to include newsletters, meeting preparation, member communication, accounting/bookkeeping, internal website maintenance, reporting, minutes, and others as requested

MCPA Administration:

- ❖ Provide Contracted Administrative Services to MCPA
 - ❖ Staff will perform administrative tasks as directed by the MCPA Board as well as tasks as outlined in MCPA's contract with the County
 - ❖ Tasks to include meeting preparation, member communication, accounting/bookkeeping, website maintenance, reporting minutes, and others as requested

Goal:

- ❖ Perform all administrative tasks ensuring all organizations perform optimally in their fulfillment of the specific missions following all By-Laws, policies, plans and procedures

RETURN ON INVESTMENT/ MEASUREMENT OF SUCCESS

Objective:

- ❖ Measure success of programs and initiatives, including implementation, to ensure significant return on investment for resources provided

Strategy & Tactics

- ❖ Annual Lodging Market Mix Survey
 - ❖ Annual tracking of lodging market mix to be completed by March 2010. Results will ONLY be shared with those lodging properties who participate
- ❖ Annual Update to Performance Review
 - ❖ An annual update will be performed in Summer 2010 and will include:
 - ❖ Increases/decreases in occupancy tax collections
 - ❖ Number of inquiries generated by outreach efforts
 - ❖ Changes in tourism product infrastructure (number of lodging properties and room counts, new attractions, etc.)
 - ❖ Attendance at attractions
 - ❖ Advertising, promotion and marketing budget for Mendocino County compared to standards established by Destination Marketing Association International (DMAI)
- ❖ Research Comparability with the State of California
 - ❖ Maintain regular contact with the state tourism division and compare current research findings to those available from the state
- ❖ Annual Evaluation point of origin
 - ❖ To better focus marketing dollars, Staff will perform an annual point of origin evaluation of our inquiry database by zip code. This data will help us determine where best to place our marketing and advertising dollars for the next fiscal year
- ❖ Leads Analysis
 - ❖ Analyze leads from advertising to measure return on investment. This includes specific Website URL's for all print ads, reader response card requests, banner ad click through rates, general inquiries. This data will help determine the effectiveness of the many different media where advertisements are placed and will assist in future planning

Goal:

- ❖ Obtain the required information to be able to measure success as well as to assist in the planning and development of the following year's Marketing Plan
- ❖ Obtain the necessary information in order to continue to be a research based marketing destination organization

INVESTMENT ANALYSIS

The following charts provide breakdowns of where monies are to be spent in the general categories as outlined in this plan.

Chart #1: Breakdown of Media, Visitor Services & Administration by percentage. This includes staffing and resources involved with respective categories (i.e. staff time spent on media is included in the media %)
TOTAL INVESTMENT = \$954,500 (100%)

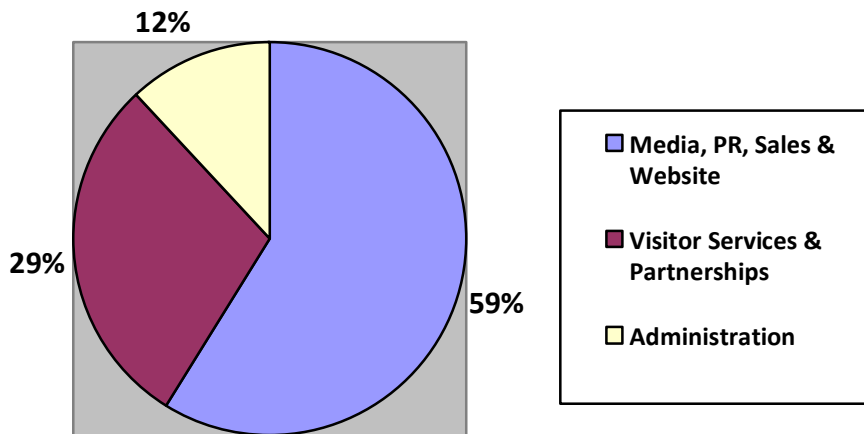


Chart #2: Breakdown of Staffing by percentage. This explains how much time all staff devotes to Media/PR, Visitor Services/Partnership & Administration. This includes all personnel related expenses (taxes, insurance, etc.)
TOTAL INVESTMENT = \$302,500 (32%)

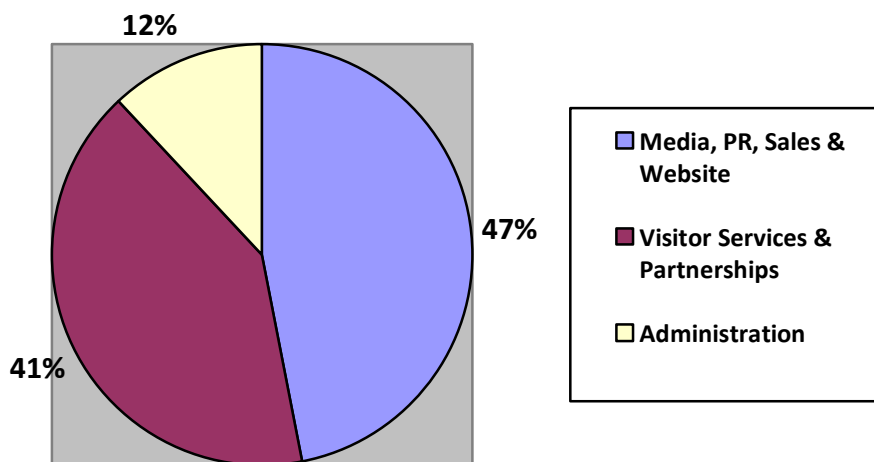


Chart #3: Breakdown of Marketing Activities by percentage. This explains actual costs spent on media, PR, Website, Sales, Visitor Services, and Partnerships and does not include staff time.

TOTAL INVESTMENT = \$578,500 (61%)

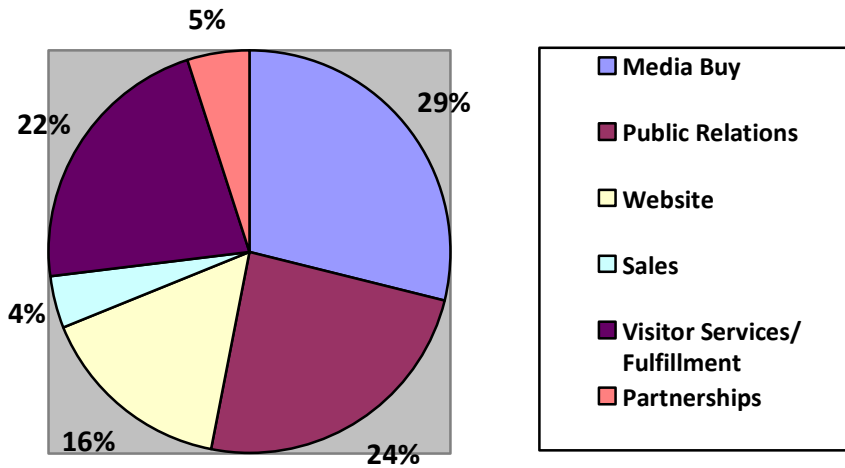
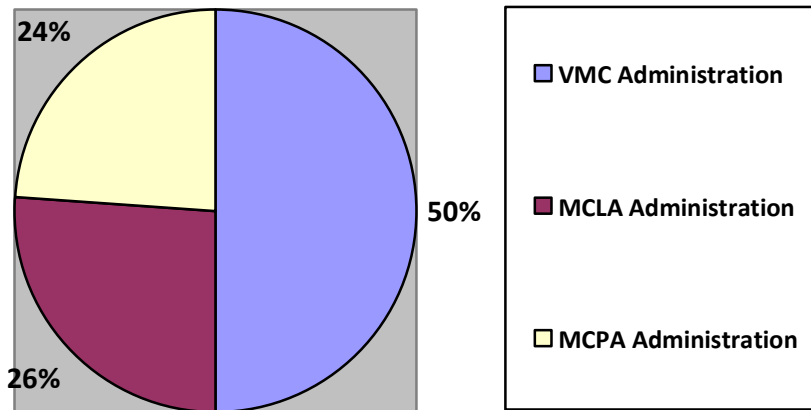


Chart #4: Breakdown of Administration Activities by percentage. This explains actual costs spent on MCLA, MCPA and Visit Mendocino County, Inc. Administration (rent, supplies, postage, insurance etc.). This does include staff time devoted to all administration.

TOTAL INVESTMENT = \$110,000 (12%)



GOALS – A SUMMARY

- ❖ **Paid Advertising** - Initiate approximately 35,000,000 impressions in our target areas producing 8,000 leads through reader response, website hits, phone calls, email, etc.
- ❖ **Social media** - Track campaign success through page views, fans, telephone inquiries and Google Analytics receiving 250 direct inquiries as a result of Social Media Efforts
- ❖ **Email Marketing** - Produce 2,500 leads with an open rate of 26% and click thru rate of 5%; and increase subscriptions 4000
- ❖ **Website Advertising** - Produce 20,000,000 impressions with 60,000 direct leads using both Search Engine Marketing and Search Engine Optimization
- ❖ **Website Development** - Redesign website by December 2009; maintain bounce rate below 20%; and increase unique visitors to 175,000 annually
- ❖ **Public and Media Relations** – Initiate \$3.5 Million in ad equivalency PR coverage
- ❖ **Group and Leisure Sales** – Obtain 10,000 direct consumer leads and up to 50 small group leads
- ❖ **Visitor Center and Signage** - Install one gateway sign and three to five directional signs to visitor centers; establish two gateway visitor centers/kiosks
- ❖ **Regional Partnerships** - Leverage our promotional funds to create a travel destination which is nationally known and respected
- ❖ **Community Relations** - Continue development of relations with other promotional groups within Mendocino County; and increase visitation to festivals by increasing number of events and improving promotion of events
- ❖ **Visitor Guide and Fulfillment** - Produce 2010-2011 Official Visitor’s Guide, annual events calendar and tear off maps to enhance visitor experience; develop and maintain inquiry database to be used for measuring ROI and planning future marketing activities
- ❖ **Staffing** - Staff will perform as a single cohesive team responsible for the development and implementation of the approved marketing plan
- ❖ **Administration** - Perform all administrative tasks ensuring all organizations perform optimally fulfilling their specific missions following all By-Laws, policies, plans and procedures
- ❖ **Return on Investment Measurement** - Obtain the required information to be able to measure success as well as to assist in the planning and development of the following fiscal year’s Marketing Plan; and have the necessary information in order to continue to be a research based marketing destination organization

CONCLUSION

Visit Mendocino County, Inc. takes pride in the role it will play in the prosperity, health and vitality of the County. The destination attitude fostered by Visit Mendocino County, Inc. serves as the catalyst to the travel industry within Mendocino County and as a magnet for visitors. Along with its hospitality industry partners, Visit Mendocino County, Inc. will strive to provide consistently excellent service for the visitor. Our strategic goals reflect this commitment to excellence as well as provide the framework for assuring Visit Mendocino County, Inc. will continue to be a worthy and effective steward of public funding and trust. Visit Mendocino County, Inc. is the point of convergence and principle source of information for visitors and residents seeking information about Mendocino County's tourism attractions and activities.

