



# **FEBRUARY 2025 BOARD REPORT**





The objective of the ECCVB tourism marketing, sales & services strategy is to drive the destination brand awareness and visitor conversion among broader and more diverse target audiences that include the niche markets identified by Destination Think! There are three targeted strategies for the leisure travel market and three for the group travel market.

# **DIVERSIFY PILLAR GOAL**

Diversify the destination visitor base to better integrate multiple generations and interests. We expect to achieve higher travel conversion and extend stays by increasing the county's brand awareness and aligning experiences with an expanded market.

# **DIVERSIFY PILLAR TARGET MARKETS OF FOCUS**

- Arts and cultural heritage travel
- Outdoor recreation and adventure travel
- Visiting friends & relatives and pass-thru travel
- · Group meeting and social/reunion travel
- Youth sports travel
- · Group tour travel

#### WELL CRAFTED ELKHART COUNTY DESTINATION

Strategy: Elevate awareness and engagement with Elkhart County's Well Crafted brand by implementing a cohesive marketing plan that integrates content creation, media campaigns, and promotions, targeting various audiences through digital, print, and influencer partnerships, while showcasing local attractions and unique experiences.

#### **Tactics**

- Create and manage a content plan integrating website content, social media actions, paid media campaigns, eNewsletter initiatives, and digital content (January - December) - Ongoing
- Manage photo and video shoots highlighting Elkhart County assets and activities (January December) Ongoing
- Produce and place print ads in publications targeting the external visitor and internal resident (January December)
   (YTD 1)
- Refresh existing and create new suggested leisure and group itineraries aligning with niche audiences (January December) Ongoing
- Produce and distribute Leisure eNewsletters to promote Elkhart County assets (January December) (YTD 2)
- Host travel journalists on FAM tours highlighting the destination (January December) (YTD 2)
- Produce and distribute press releases and story pitches highlighting the destination to local, regional, national and travel media (January December) (YTD 4)
- Manage and promote a Well Crafted Champions campaign (January December) Ongoing
- · Manage and promote a Well Crafted foodie campaign (January December) Ongoing
- Manage and promote Elkhart County Restaurant Weeks campaign (January March) Ongoing
- Distribute Well Crafted promotional kits for regional and national travel journalists (April December)
- Manage and promote a Roadtrippers influencer campaign focused on the RV audience (April December)
- · Manage and promote a Well Crafted campaign to cross-promote partner brands (May December)
- · Manage and promote a Well Crafted Brewery campaign in partnership with local stakeholders (September October)

#### Metrics

- Track Well Crafted paid and organic digital promotions (January December) (YTD Profile Performance Summary: Impressions 23,978; Engagement 845; Post Link Clicks 171; Video Views 49,580; Fans 27, 492)
- Track qualified media inquiries, generating media placements in print, broadcast, online and blog through impressions and advertising value equivalents (January December) (YTD 147 Placements; 1,106,806,400 Reach; \$10,237,959.21 AVE)
- Track Media website analytics (January December) (YTD Views 275; Users 188)
- Track RV website analytics (January December) (YTD Views 2,709; Users 1,397; RV Tour Sheet download 125)
- Track Users and Views of Leisure Itineraries (January December) YTD Views 624; Users 474)
- Track Blog Post analytics (January December) (YTD Top 5 Blog Posts: Top Places for Amish Dining, Free Things to Do, Weekends Worth the Trip, Family Fun, 36 Hours along the Heritage Trail)
- Track Well Crafted Champions campaign results (January December) (YTD campaign starts in April)
- Track Elkhart County Well Crafted partner brand campaign results (January December) Ongoing
- Track Google PPC ad campaign (March, June, September, December)
- Track Elkhart County Restaurant Weeks campaign results (February March) YTD Facebook Organic: Impressions 2,969; Engagements 163; Link Clicks 73; QR Code Scans 281; Website Views 13,546; Users 8,383)
- Track Well Crafted Elkhart County promotional kit campaign to regional and national travel journalists (April - December)
- Track Roadtrippers influencer campaign results focused on the RV audience (April December)
- Track Elkhart County Brewery campaign results (October December)

## HERITAGE TRAIL

Strategy: Enhance and promote the Heritage Trail experience through wayfinding tools and custom digital content that highlights the trail's unique assets and attractions throughout the year.

- Produce Heritage Trail maps (January) Complete
- Promote Heritage Trail audio driving tour (January December) Ongoing
- Manage Heritage Trail wayfinding signage and inventory (January December) Ongoing
- Produce and promote custom digital content highlighting Heritage Trail assets and experiences (January December)
  - Ongoing

## HERITAGE TRAIL (cont)

#### Metrics

- Track Heritage Trail audio driving tours distribution via CD, USB, and streaming (January December) (YTD 88)
- Track Heritage Trail printed map distribution (January December) (YTD 0)
- Track PDF downloads of Heritage Trail map (January December) (YTD 221)
- Track Heritage Trail page website analytics (January December) (YTD Views 601; Users 422)

# QUILT GARDENS ALONG THE HERITAGE TRAIL

Strategy: Revitalize, elevate and sustain the Quilt Gardens and Quilt Murals experience by updating creative concepts and expanding marketing efforts through targeted ads and specialized itineraries.

#### **Tactics**

- Update creative concept for print and digital media (January March) Ongoing
- · Update and create copy for production of Quilt Gardens and Quilt Murals signs (January April) Ongoing
- Update partner brand management guide and promotion guidelines (January April) Ongoing
- Coordinate and facilitate new Quilt Mural materials and production for murals in Bristol, Wakarusa and Nappanee (January - May) - Ongoing
- Produce and distribute Quilt Gardens rack cards (January September) Ongoing
- Confirm and maintain rack card distribution at Indiana Toll Road and Ohio Turnpike plazas (January September)
   Ongoing
- Produce and place ads in publications targeting the quilting and/or gardening market (January December) (YTD 1)
- Create and promote Quilt Gardens specialized itinerary (January December) Ongoing

#### Metrics

- Track qualified media inquiries, generating media placements in print, broadcast, online and blog through impressions and advertising value equivalents (January December) (YTD 147 Placements; 1,106,806,400 Reach; \$10,237,959.21 AVE)
- Track Quilt Gardens website analytics (January December) (YTD Views 1,777; Users; 840; Blog Views 307)
- Track PDF downloads of Quilt Gardens map (January December) (YTD 384)
- Track paid and organic analytics (April December)
- Track rack card distribution (May September)

# **ELKHART COUNTY AREA GUIDE**

Strategy: Maximize the reach and impact of the Elkhart County Area Guide through comprehensive production, distribution, and digital integration, ensuring broad visibility and engagement across regional and digital platforms.

#### Tactics

- Develop and produce electronic version of 2025 Elkhart County Area Guide for digital distribution (January)
   Complete
- Update creative concept for digital media (January February) Complete
- Confirm and place Elkhart County Area Guide with regional publication distribution (January May) (YTD 3)
- Oversee distribution of 150,000 printed copies of 2025 Elkhart County Area Guide (January December) Ongoing
- Confirm and maintain distribution at Indiana Toll Road and Ohio Turnpike plazas (January December) Ongoing
- Coordinate and collaborate design of 2026 Elkhart County Area Guide (April June)
- · Manage sales, content and production of the 2026 Elkhart County Area Guide (June December)

#### Metrics

- Track distribution of 2025 Elkhart County Area Guide (January December) (YTD 61,830)
- Track digital distribution of 2025 electronic version of Elkhart County Area Guide (January December)
  - (YTD 310)

#### ELKHART COUNTY EVENT CALENDAR

Strategy: Increase awareness among residents and visitors about diverse activities and events happening in the area, encouraging community engagement and participation.

#### **Tactics**

- · Develop, produce, and distribute event calendar direct mail postcard (January March) Ongoing
- · Create and manage a campaign integrating billboards, print, media, and digital promotion (January December)
  - Ongoing

#### Metrics

- Track Event Calendar website analytics (January December) (YTD Views 8,608; Users 3,876)
- Track paid and organic analytics (January December) (YTD Impressions 32,561; Engagements 1,081;
   Post Link Clicks 174)
- · Track postcard distribution (April)

## **ELKHART COUNTY CO-OP CAMPAIGNS**

Strategy: Leverage advertising opportunities by collaborating with various partners at a local, regional and state level, enhancing visibility and driving tourism and engagement to the Elkhart County area.

#### INDIANA TRAVEL GUIDE & VISITINDIANA.COM

#### Tactics

- · Develop and produce brochure lead generation ad and listing ads (January) Complete
- Develop and produce eNewsletter (January) Complete

#### Metrics

Track Elkhart County Area Guide requests received (January - December) - (YTD 640)

## INDIANA FESTIVAL GUIDE

#### Tactics

• Produce and place full page ad (January) - Complete

# INDIANA'S COOL NORTH

## Tactics

- Produce and place Toll Road Exit-by-Exit Guide ad (January March) Ongoing
- · Produce and place Toll Road Exit-by-Exit Guide map ad (January March) Ongoing

#### Metrics

• Track Elkhart County Area Guide requests received (January - December) - (YTD 36)

## ELKHART COUNTY CO-OP CAMPAIGNS (cont)

#### DOWNTOWN ELKHART PROMOTIONS

#### Tactics

 Manage a campaign using digital, print, and media promoting Downtown Elkhart assets and experiences (January - December) - Ongoing

#### Metrics

• Track digital campaign analytics (March, June, September, December)

#### **EXIT 92 PROMOTIONS**

#### Tactics

- · Refine and develop messaging for I-80/90 Exit 92 assets (January December) Ongoing
- Produce and distribute general Exit 92 rack card (January December) Ongoing
- Produce and distribute fold out Exit 92 lodging map (January December) Ongoing
- Produce and distribute commercial trucking specific Exit 92 rack card (January December) Ongoing
- Confirm and maintain outdoor billboards along I-80/90 Toll Road (January December) (YTD 15)
- Confirm and maintain collateral distribution at Indiana Toll Road and Ohio Turnpike plazas (January December)
   Ongoing
- Update website pages (February) Complete
- Confirm and place full page ad in University of Notre Dame Football Program (April)
- Promote I-80/90 Exit 92 and its high density of assets and experiences through in-app ads (April November)

#### Metrics

- Track general rack card distribution (January December) (YTD 500)
- Track commercial trucking rack card distribution (January December) (YTD 0)
- Track website page analytics (January December) (YTD Views 134; Users 107)
- Track lodging map distribution (January December) (YTD 0)
- Track in-app ad impressions received (May December)

## SMALL MEETINGS MARKET

Strategy: Engage small meeting and event planners by leveraging targeted content, media promotion, partnership programs, and direct communication to drive awareness, site visits, and meeting opportunities in Elkhart County.

#### Tactics

- Produce and place content in print and digital publications targeting small meeting and event planners (January December) (YTD 1)
- · Identify and promote relevant small meetings events to local and regional media (January December) Ongoing
- · Provide services, information and assistance to meeting and event planners (January December) Ongoing
- Update and distribute Meeting Planner Guide (January December) Ongoing
- Update and distribute RV Rally Planner Guide (January December) Ongoing
- Update website pages (January December) Ongoing

#### Metrics

- Track Meetings website analytics (January December) (YTD Views 798; Users 271)
- Track PDF downloads of Meeting Planner Guide (January December) (YTD 9)
- Track PDF downloads of RV Rally Planner Guide (January December) (YTD 0)
- Track meeting market contacts, leads, and RFPs (January December) (YTD 0)
- Track direct mail postcard (April May)

## YOUTH SPORTS MARKET

Strategy: Promote Elkhart County as a premier destination for youth sports through ad placements, collaboration and comprehensive support to sporting event organizers.

#### Tactics

- Place print ad in publications targeting sports rights holders and sports event planners (January December)
   (YTD 1)
- Create and distribute press releases or story pitches to local, regional and travel media for the Elkhart County sports market (January - December) - (YTD 2)
- Collaborate with Team Indiana on sporting event initiatives and promotions aligning with Elkhart County assets (January December) Ongoing
- Provide services, information, promotional assets, and assistance to sporting event organizers (January December)
   Ongoing (YTD 1, GLVC)

#### Metrics

- Track PDF downloads of the Sports Facilities Profile Sheet (January December) (YTD 0)
- Track website page analytics (January December) (YTD Views 63; Users 47)

#### TRAVEL TRADE MARKET

Strategy: Actively engage and attract tour operators and group planners by leveraging targeted print and digital content, FAM tours, trade shows, and tailored itineraries while providing ongoing support and follow-up.

#### **Tactics**

- Produce and place print and digital insertions in publications targeting tour operators and group planners (January - December) - (YTD 12)
- Produce, promote, and host FAM tour (January December) Ongoing (YTD 1)
- Attend trade shows targeting tour operators and group planners (January December) (YTD 1, ABA)
- Produce and distribute Travel Trade eNewsletters to promote Elkhart County assets (January December) (YTD 2)
- Provide services, information and assistance to tour operators and group planners (January December) Ongoing (YTD 21)
- Produce and distribute customized daytrip and overnight itineraries (January December) Ongoing (YTD 12)
- Produce and send direct mail postcard (April December)
- Update and create group profile sheet for travel trade shows (December)

# Metrics

- Track Travel Trade website analytics (January December) (YTD Views 569; Users 316)
- Track PDF downloads of Travel Trade profile sheet (January December) (YTD 0)
- Track travel trade show leads and appointments (January December) (YTD 51)
- Track follow up to tradeshow attendees (January December) (YTD 8)



The ECCVB curate strategy aims to actively engage in product and community development activities that support the organization's role as a Destination Architect. This strategy approach will assist existing and new partners with developing and delivering more engaging experiences that align with the Well Crafted destination brand and targeted audiences while being synergistic with existing assets.

# **CURATE PILLAR GOAL**

To stimulate spending and economic growth, we will implement strategies that support tourism development in strategic areas through promotional and training activities. We aim to promote, support, and facilitate the creation of a broader range of engaging experiences across the county and its communities.

# **CURATE PILLAR TARGET MARKETS OF FOCUS**

- Event Support & Development
- Small Business Support
- · Outdoor Recreation
- RV Industry Engagement
- Youth Sports Market Engagement
- Vibrant Communities Implementation

# DESTINATION EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT

Strategy: Innovate and diversify Elkhart County's tourism offerings by researching and developing niche-aligned experiential campaigns, cross-promotions, and partnerships with both traditional and non-traditional stakeholders, while enhancing visitor engagement and feedback integration across seasonal, culinary, and cultural experiences.

#### **Tactics**

- · Develop Well Crafted promotional kits for regional and national travel journalists (January March) Ongoing
- · Research and develop a Well Crafted campaign to cross-promote partner brands (January April) Ongoing
- · Research and develop a Well Crafted farm-to-table food experience (January June) Ongoing
- Develop a Well Crafted brewery campaign in partnership with local stakeholders (January August) Ongoing
- Research and develop countywide seasonal experiential art exhibitions activating and aligning with niche segmentation (January - December) - Ongoing
- Research and develop immersive and engaging experiences aligning with niche segmentation (January December)
   Ongoing
- · Research new experiences in the Visitor Center aligning with niche segmentation (January December) Ongoing
- Develop and foster partnerships with both traditional tourism stakeholders and non-traditional ones to diversify the tourism offerings (January December) **Ongoing**
- Research and develop a feedback system to gather insights from stakeholders on ongoing experience development, ensuring their needs and expectations are met while remaining aligned with the ECCVB's strategic direction and brand messaging (January December) **Ongoing**
- Research the viability and implementation of a countywide music promotion program (January December) Ongoing
- · Research the viability and implementation of a tourism development fund (July December)
- · Research and develop a Well Crafted 2026 restaurant and dining-focused campaign (August December)
- Research and develop a Well Crafted 2026 brewery experience in partnership with local stakeholders (August - December)

#### GROUP EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT

Strategy: Create a collaborative framework among local stakeholders, hoteliers, and regional partners to enhance the destination's overall tourism ecosystem.

#### **Tactics**

 Research and develop a strategy for local stakeholders, hoteliers and regional partners to provide education, inspiration, and partner-sharing opportunities (January - December) - Ongoing

## **OUTDOOR RECREATION DEVELOPMENT**

Strategy: Collaborate with local stakeholders in developing and enhancing outdoor experiences, including improved park and trail wayfinding and activating blueways experiences that align with niche market segments.

- Research and develop outdoor experiences in collaboration with local stakeholder organizations (January - December) - Ongoing
- Facilitate discussions with park and trail stakeholders on amenity wayfinding signage (January December) Ongoing
- Continue development and activation of countywide blueways experiences aligning with niche segmentation (January December) **Ongoing**

# RV EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT

Strategy: Enhance and initiate engaging experiences for RV visitors in Elkhart County through collaboration with the RV industry and by communicating activities that resonate with the destination brand.

#### Tactics

- Develop an outreach strategy and facilitate discussions with RV industry stakeholders connecting RV travelers with Elkhart County assets (January December) **Ongoing**
- · Research and develop a Roadtrippers influencer campaign for the RV family audience (January December) Ongoing

# VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

Strategy: Partner with the Community Foundation of Elkhart County to manage and coordinate Vibrant Communities activities by fostering creative ideation and community stakeholder engagement.

- Facilitate community stakeholder discussions on amenity wayfinding and gateway signage (January - March) - Ongoing
- Manage and coordinate Vibrant Communities activities in cooperation with community partners (January December) **Ongoing**
- Foster and facilitate opportunities for creative ideation, innovation, and brainstorming conversations (January December) **Ongoing**
- Research, develop, and activate a new project implementation program for emerging communities (February - August) - Ongoing



The objective of the ECCVB Balance strategy is to engage in research that informs and guides development and promotion investment. Research findings will help guide a balanced approach between tourism promotion and development.

# **BALANCE PILLAR GOAL**

Balance the areas of focus of the ECCVB to optimize its potential and lead the visitor industry and communities. Operate as a fiscally responsible and highly performing destination organization through a highly effective team and leveraged partnerships.

# **BALANCE PILLAR TARGET MARKETS OF FOCUS**

- Elkhart County Innkeeper Tax Commission Members
- ECCVB Board of Directors
- ECCVB Staff
- Industry suppliers / vendors
- · Industry partners

#### DESTINATION RESEARCH

Strategy: Enhance informed decision-making and stakeholder engagement by collecting, analyzing, and reporting comprehensive tourism and economic impact data, while identifying opportunities to support strategic development initiatives.

#### **Tactics**

- · Develop research reporting parameters to stakeholders and partners (January April) Ongoing
- Explore tax-related funding opportunities to support new tourism development activities (January July) Ongoing
- Facilitate Certec Economic Impact Study (January December) Ongoing
- Collect and report findings of STR data (January December) (YTD 8 weekly/2 monthly)
- Analyze and communicate trends in Tourism Economics Symphony reports (January December) (YTD 1)
- Combine insights from multiple data streams into an Executive Summary (January December) (YTD 1)
- Identify and map local assets, including cultural, recreational, and historical sites, to create a comprehensive experience overview (January - December) - Ongoing
- Develop and implement a strategy to engage stakeholders in advancing youth sports facility investment (January - December) - Ongoing

#### FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Strategy: Achieve financial stability and operational efficiency while ensuring compliance with all financial obligations.

#### **Tactics**

- Develop a sound 2025 line-item budget (January) Complete
- Establish financial ratios and projections (January December) (YTD 2)
- Develop monthly financial reports and statements for the corporation (January December) (YTD 2)
- Perform all accounts receivable and payable for the corporation (January December) (YTD 2)
- Perform as the Commission's designated collections administrator for delinquencies (January December) (YTD 2)
- Develop monthly reports on collections activities and hotel occupancy trends (January December) (YTD 2)
- Complete all county, state and federal employee withholding obligations (January December) (YTD 2)
- Complete all grant financial requirements (January December) Ongoing
- Maintain a 95% collections rate of lodging tax receipts (January December) (YTD 2)
- Maintain a 95% collections rate of Elkhart County Area Guide contracts (January December) (YTD 2)

## **HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

Strategy: Enhance employee engagement and satisfaction by maintaining accurate personnel records, providing comprehensive benefits support, managing contributions, and evaluating development opportunities

#### Tactics

- Keep current all personnel records for each employee (January December) (YTD 2)
- Work with all employees to assist with interpretation of benefit plans and filing procedures (January December)
   (YTD 2)
- Oversee and report all employee personal time off (January December) (YTD 2)
- Manage the corporate / employee SRA contribution plans (January December) (YTD 2)
- Research benefit plans that best meet employee's needs and corporation budgetary requirements (January December)
   (YTD 2)
- Distribute Employee Professional Development Survey (December)

## VISITOR CENTER SERVICES

Strategy: Deliver exceptional customer experiences by offering friendly, personalized service and providing comprehensive, up-to-date resources at the Visitor Center.

- Provide friendly, personal service in-person and digitally (January December) Ongoing
- Provide and distribute the Elkhart County Area Guide, up-to-date local business brochures, maps, regional travel guides
  and other materials in a contemporary Visitor Center (January December) Ongoing



The objective of the ECCVB is to build a better understanding of the tourism industry's contributions to economic vitality and resident quality of place.

# ADVOCATE PILLAR GOAL

Build relationships and advocate on behalf of the ECCVB and the tourism industry ensuring the recognized role of tourism and its economic impact. Inform and advocate on the importance and value of tourism and the ECCVB's vital role as the leader and expert of the destination's tourism development and promotion.

# ADVOCATE PILLAR TARGET MARKETS OF FOCUS

- Elkhart County Innkeeper Tax Commission Members
- ECCVB Board of Directors
- Elected and Appointed Officials
- Industry partners
- Trade associations
- Media
- · Residents

#### **ECCVB ADVOCACY**

Strategy: Strengthen relationships with key stakeholders and elected representatives by fostering collaboration, communicating the economic benefits of tourism, and supporting local partners through targeted engagement, recognition, and strategic messaging.

#### Tactics

- Communicate and collaborate ongoing promotion campaigns with partners (January December) Ongoing
- Assist event organizers to increase attendance and build their digital audience for re-targeting (January December) **Ongoing**
- Update and implement an advocacy meeting plan connecting the Elkhart County Innkeeper Tax Commission and ECCVB Board of Directors with key stakeholders/elected representatives (January December) **Ongoing**
- Distribute community Thank You Notes acknowledging Elkhart County partners, stakeholders and volunteer groups which support quality of place efforts (January - December) - Ongoing
- Facilitate meetings with Elkhart County stakeholders developing relationships and better understanding of partnership opportunities (January December) **(YTD 9)**
- Produce and distribute B2B eNewsletters (January December) (YTD 2)
- Update and distribute key messages on the value of quality of place (January December) (YTD 0)
- Implement a strategy engaging local stakeholders to integrate Well Crafted messaging (January December) Ongoing
- Develop, create, and distribute an annual report communicating the economic benefits of tourism to key stakeholders (January March) **Ongoing**
- Develop, create, and implement advocacy events communicating the economic benefits of tourism and facilitating connections between key stakeholders (January December) **Ongoing**
- Develop, create, and implement Well Crafted hospitality frontline worker campaign (March October)

#### **PUBLIC RELATIONS**

Strategy: Amplify the value and economic impact of tourism in Elkhart County by distributing targeted advocacy messages, participating in media events, and engaging with travel media.

## Tactics

- Develop and implement distribution plan for advocacy messages, including the annual report and handout, on the value of tourism and its economic impact on the destination (January December) **Ongoing**
- Attend regional and national media marketplace events representing the Elkhart County destination (January December) (YTD 0; Wellfield team represented at Media Marketplace)
- Produce and distribute a quarterly tourism eNewsletter for travel media (March, June, September, December)

# **ECCVB SPONSORSHIP PROGRAMS**

Strategy: Enhance community engagement by supporting quality of place events, increasing sponsorship program participation from underserved communities, and aligning sponsorship initiatives with the Well Crafted brand through updated practices and engagement tools.

- Support community-based quality of place events consistent with the ECCVB Sponsorship Program, Area Guide Assistance Fund, and Community Support & Engagement programs (January December) **Ongoing**
- Develop increased participation in sponsorship program from traditionally underserved communities of Elkhart County (January December) **Ongoing**
- Evaluate, develop, and implement engagement tools and programs to assist ECCVB sponsorship partners in aligning with Well Crafted destination brand (January December) **Ongoing**
- Update sponsorship practices and internal guidelines as necessary (October December)