

# 2014

VISIT ESTES PARK  
ANNUAL REPORT





FROM THE  
PRESIDENT  
& CEO  
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**DEAR TOURISM  
PARTNERS AND  
COMMUNITY:**

Transitions marked 2014. The community united together to rebuild from the September 2013 flood quickly and admirably. The mantra, “Mountain Strong,” proved just how fiercely devoted we are as a community when faced with challenges that, at the time, seemed insurmountable. Resilient, we are!

Peggy Campbell announced her retirement in November 2013 and an extensive search for a new CEO ensued, ending in my accepting the position which began in June 2014. We thank Peggy for her dedication to Visit Estes Park (VEP) and establishing the foundation that is a large part of our success today. Through this year of transition, we made solid progress on many fronts, including building on existing strategies, while establishing exciting new programs to lead us boldly into 2015.

**Partnerships...**

Our partnerships with local, county, state and federal agencies have become more active and participatory. We are very fortunate to have a strong local government with talented staff who takes great pride in our community. We appreciate the town’s partnership and investment in Visit Estes Park. The fruits of this partnership are certainly evident in the sales tax dollar data for 2014. Sitting on the Colorado Tourism Office (CTO) Travel Resources Committee allows VEP the ability to leverage the state’s marketing strategy, enabling us to enter new markets more efficiently and successfully. VEP’s partnerships with our regional neighbors, including Grand Lake, are also providing new tourism opportunities that will generate continued year-round growth for our community. We appreciate Rocky Mountain National Park’s efforts in assisting us with being responsible stewards of our natural assets and helping us educate guests, on how to do the same.

As we look to provide our guests new and memorable experiences, we began discussion with the community regarding Destination Product Development (DPD). Part of the opportunity within DPD is the wellness tourism industry. We began a partnership with the Estes Park Medical Center, University of Colorado, and local businesses, together aspiring to be a leader in the \$439 billion dollar wellness industry.

**Areas of focus for Visit Estes Park that will help ensure robust growth and a successful future:**

- Visit Estes Park’s commitment to create value and make sure we are delivering a high return on investment for every dollar our lodging partners collect, benefiting the entire community. We will have a constant flow of new ideas and different approaches to meet the challenges and opportunities of the future.
- Bring our global reach to life with a local focus, a focus that puts critical decision-making where the needs are and where our resources live, including the arts, history, music, wildlife, landscape, Estes-made products, and the talents and expertise of our community partners.
- We will have a laser focus on excellence in execution. Across all channels, we are building greater accountability and quality of work with all of our agency partners. This has already strengthened our results at every level.
- We will continue to foster a purpose-driven organization and develop leadership within our organization and community. This is essential for us to deliver on the responsibilities that come with working alongside you, our local partners.

**My commitment to you...**

Visit Estes Park will continue to stay true to our values of being a transparent organization that will lead this community through research and data-based decision making. We look forward to advancing our marketing strategies while always being extremely accountable for our budget. We look forward to enhancing our partnerships with each of you, not only to drive this destination toward a strong future, but also support you with education, collaboration and opportunities that assist your own specific areas of business and profit.

Visit Estes Park is not only the marketing arm of the community, promoting inspirational and memorable experiences for guests. We also work to cultivate a quality of life for our residents that will always strike a balance between preservation and responsible growth.

**Thank you...**

2014 was a year of many rewarding moments, not the least of which was your vote of confidence in my leadership to preserve this beautiful mountain village that we all enjoy as residents while helping businesses prosper. I can also attest with the utmost confidence, that the entire Visit Estes Park team is dedicated and committed to each and every one of you and your accomplishments. Thank you for your support, encouragement and effort in making Estes Park a wonderful place to live and work. You all inspire me to give 100 percent each and every day.

Warm Regards,

**Elizabeth Fogarty**, *Visit Estes Park President & CEO*

**KEY INDICATORS**

## KEY INDICATORS

<b>Overall Performance</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>% Increase</b>
Visit Estes Park Lodging Tax	\$1,365,383	\$1,596,347	16.92%
Town of Estes Park Lodging Tax	\$2,083,848	\$2,871,340	37.79%
Media Impressions	466,435,426	537,483,543	15.23%

### VisitEstesPark.com Website Performance

Sessions	1,259,741	1,327,876	5.41%
Users	784,783	940,156	19.80%
Page Views	3,998,649	4,432,706	10.86%
Pages per Session (Average)	3.08	3.28	6.49%
Average Session Duration (Minutes)	3.48	4.56	31.05%
Jackrabbit Lodging Referrals (June–December)	162,409	292,763	80.26%

### Other Digital Engagement

Visitor Guide Unique Readers	9,816	17,174	42.84%
Visitor Guide Page Views	412,875	823,751	99.52%
Facebook Followers	53,085	79,231	49.25%

### Other Community Parameters

Town of Estes Park Sales Tax	\$7,628,200	\$10,080,420	32.15%
Town of Estes Park Dining Sales Tax	\$1,305,762	\$1,747,681	33.84%
Town of Estes Park Retail Sales Tax	\$1,347,111	\$1,933,269	43.51%
Estes Park Visitor Center Visitor Count	336,674	391,367	16.25%
RMNP Recreational Visitor Counts	2,991,140	3,434,753	14.83%

### Rocky Mountain Lodging Report

Daily Average Rate	\$155.95	\$159.36	2.19%
Occupancy Percentage	47.80%	50.70%	6.07%



## WHAT IS DESTINATION PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT?

A continuous process of coordination and development of amenities, facilities, products and services that supports a community, delivering quality experiences for guests and enhancing the well-being of residents.

Managing destination development is fundamental to successful implementation of tourism management, where destination managers and stakeholders put into action their priority strategies and plans.

## WHO WE ARE

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### About Us

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Attracting guests to the district through effective and efficient destination marketing and management in order to drive year-round economic growth is Visit Estes Park's mission as the official Destination Marketing Organization for the area. Now in its sixth year, the special governmental district, funded primarily by a two percent lodging tax on short term lodging, is responsible for progressively marketing the area through competitive and dynamic earned, owned and paid media that promotes the area as a favorite Colorado vacation destination.

### President & CEO

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Following an extensive nation-wide search, Estes Park resident Elizabeth Fogarty was named Visit Estes Park's second President & CEO in May.

She was selected from a field of more than 50 who originally applied for the position and was one of four candidates who were interviewed in public and executive sessions, including a 20-minute presentation on their vision for Estes Park. A nine-year resident of Estes Park, she has been deeply involved in the community since moving here.

Her association with Visit Estes Park began when she was selected to be one of the original board members of the Local Marketing District. In the intervening years, she served on several committees, including the brand strategy team and selection committees for Visit Estes Park's website and ad agencies. As a member of the board, she created what has become the Association Forum where various associations in town have the ability to share information during quarterly meetings and collaborate on projects they can achieve together on behalf of the community. Fogarty serves on the Board of Directors of the Estes Park Economic Development Corp., and is Vice-President of the Estes Area Lodging Association.

Previously, she was employed as Vice President of Operations and General Manager of Estes Park Condos. A native of New York whose career began with Delaware North Companies, Fogarty came to Colorado in the mid-90s and was employed by several organizations, including The Broadmoor Hotel, Interstate Hotels & Resorts, and Sceptre Hospitality.

Elizabeth succeeded Peggy Campbell who retired in June 2014.

THE VISIT ESTES PARK VISION: CONTINUE TO BE A YEAR-ROUND TOURISM, GROUP AND EVENT DESTINATION THAT SUPPORTS OUR HEALTHY MOUNTAIN VILLAGE WITH A BALANCE OF FINANCIAL SUCCESS, POSITIVE AND MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES FOR GUESTS AND QUALITY OF LIFE FOR OUR COMMUNITY.

## 2014 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Visit Estes Park Board is focused on a long term vision for the Estes Park area—a vision that includes Destination Product Development, Wellness Tourism, and Regional Tourism that includes our foothills partners, Grand Lake and the State of Colorado. Along with the staff, we are committed to ongoing and dynamic marketing efforts that distinguish our unique and wonderful village in a highly competitive marketplace.

**Bill Almond**, *Chair*

*YMCA of the Rockies*

**Jon Nicholas**, *Vice Chair*

*Estes Park Economic Development Corp.*

**Scott Webermeier**, *Secretary-Treasurer*

*National Park Village*

**Lindsay Lamson**

*Rocky Mountain Resorts*

**Lynette Lott**

*Rocky Mountain Resorts; EALA President*

**Adam Shake**

*Neanderthal Productions*

**Chris Wood**

*McGregor Mountain Lodge*



## 2014 STAFF

**Peggy Campbell**, *President & CEO*,

*January–June*

**Elizabeth Fogarty**, *President & CEO*,

*June–December*,

*efogarty@visitestespark.com*

**Suzy Blackhurst**, *Finance & Operations*,

*sblackhurst@visitestespark.com*

**Brooke Burnham**, *Public Relations*

*& Communications*,

*bburnham@visitestespark.com*

**Kellen Toulouse**, *Digital & Social Media*

*Communications*,

*ktoulouse@visitestespark.com*

**Kirby Hazelton**, *Partnership Development*

**Regional & National Advocacy and Professional Development**  
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Being involved professionally and financially with regional and national tourism industry organizations helps keep Visit Estes Park marketing efforts competitive, on target and relevant. In 2014 some of the most significant efforts included:

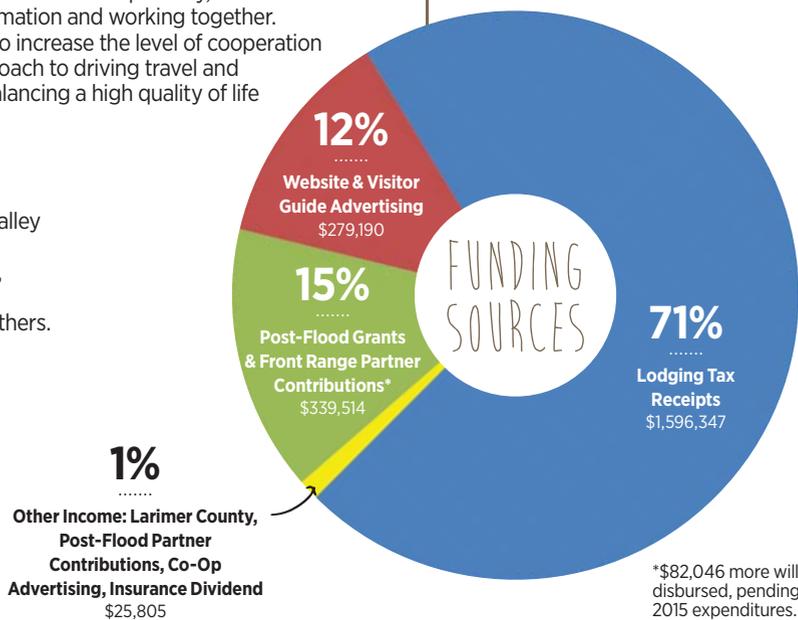
- Colorado Tourism Office Travel Resources Committee
- Formal media training
- Attendance at the Destination Marketing Association International (DMAI) Convention
- Attended and financially supported the Tourism Industry Association of Colorado (TIAC) annual legislative reception in Denver
- Participated in “The Assembly—Year Round Mountain Tourism Symposium”
- Attended the simpleview Summit, an annual conference for online tourism marketing and sales
- Participated in community key initiatives including Economic Development Corporation, Town of Estes Park Master Planning, Performing Arts Center, Creative Arts District, America in Bloom, Visitor Center Parking Garage Structure, Community Center, and others
- Attended the Colorado Association of Destination Marketing Organizations (CADMO) annual meeting
- Certified Destination Management Executive Training

**Partnership Development**  
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From its inception, Visit Estes Park has advocated that the many civic and professional organizations fostering business development in the community can more successfully meet their individual and collective goals through active collaboration. Today, the Association Forum, which meets quarterly, continues to be a strong, positive voice for sharing information and working together. Visit Estes Park continues to lead the Forum to increase the level of cooperation and collaboration for a destination-wide approach to driving travel and tourism in Estes Park, while cultivating and balancing a high quality of life for our community.

Participation includes the Town of Estes Park, Rocky Mountain National Park, Estes Park Economic Development Corporation, Estes Valley Partners for Commerce, Estes Area Lodging Association, Estes Park Wedding Association, Estes Park Non Profit Resource Center, Arts District, Estes Park Medical Center and others.

Our strong recovery was supported by the State of Colorado Recover Colorado Tourism Marketing grant and legislation that enabled VEP to receive tax receipts monthly rather than quarterly.



OWNED  
MEDIA

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### Official Visitor Guide

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The September 2013 flood touched every aspect of promoting Estes Park as a destination, including production of the Official Visitor Guide. When the devastating flood cut off all traffic to Estes Park, it became apparent that adjustments were needed and within the week, a decision was made to present the 2014 Official Visitor Guide as a digital-only publication.

Production partners Moore + Beckman revised the planned layout and added more content to the publication. All advertising purchased for the 2013 Visitor Guide was positioned throughout the 2014 Guide and the guide was posted on VisitEstesPark.com in January 2014.

The digital guide proved to be successful. In 2014, digital readers doubled the number of pages that they viewed when compared to the page view counts of 2013, and they spent nearly seven minutes reading the digital guide on each visit.

While the digital guide remains integral to engaging our guests, having a digital-only guide was a one-year emergency measure. Throughout the summer, Visit Estes Park staff worked with businesses to lay the foundation for the 2015 edition, an effort that was completely successful. The 2015 edition of the Official Visitor Guide rolled off the press on December 11, 2014 and distribution began.

### Website

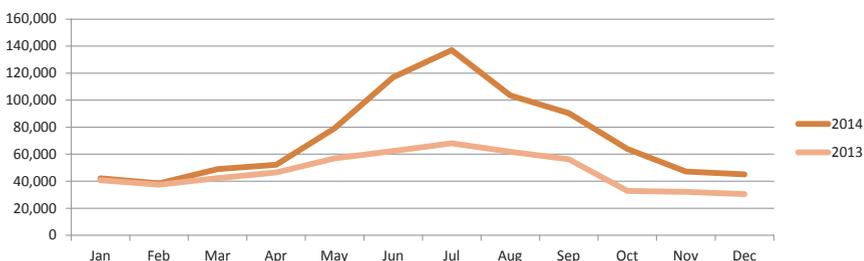
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The VisitEstesPark.com website continued to see a sustained increase in traffic throughout 2014, especially in the area of organic traffic. More people are visiting the site, staying for a longer period of time, checking lodging availability through Jackrabbit and visiting more website pages than in 2013. More of these visits are from users experiencing the website for the first time, 65.2 % of the sessions to the site were new users.

2014 saw tremendous gains in organic traffic. A standout period is:

July 2014: 136,960 organic sessions as compared to  
July 2013: 68,026 sessions for a 101.31% increase

Increase in organic search engine traffic is detailed below:



2014 Website Updates:

- Addition of accurate, live weather feed and extended forecast widget
- Improved calendar functionality and search bar relevance
- Updated links design to a more clear and engaging style to increase click throughs
- Increased amount of new photography throughout the site and in galleries, showcasing local photographers' images displaying the beauty of Estes Park
- Updated image galleries for business listings to be more user friendly

As online consumers are looking for more content-rich information about a destination, Visit Estes Park has focused on creating valuable and entertaining blog posts that are linked throughout the website and shared on social media and in social advertising.

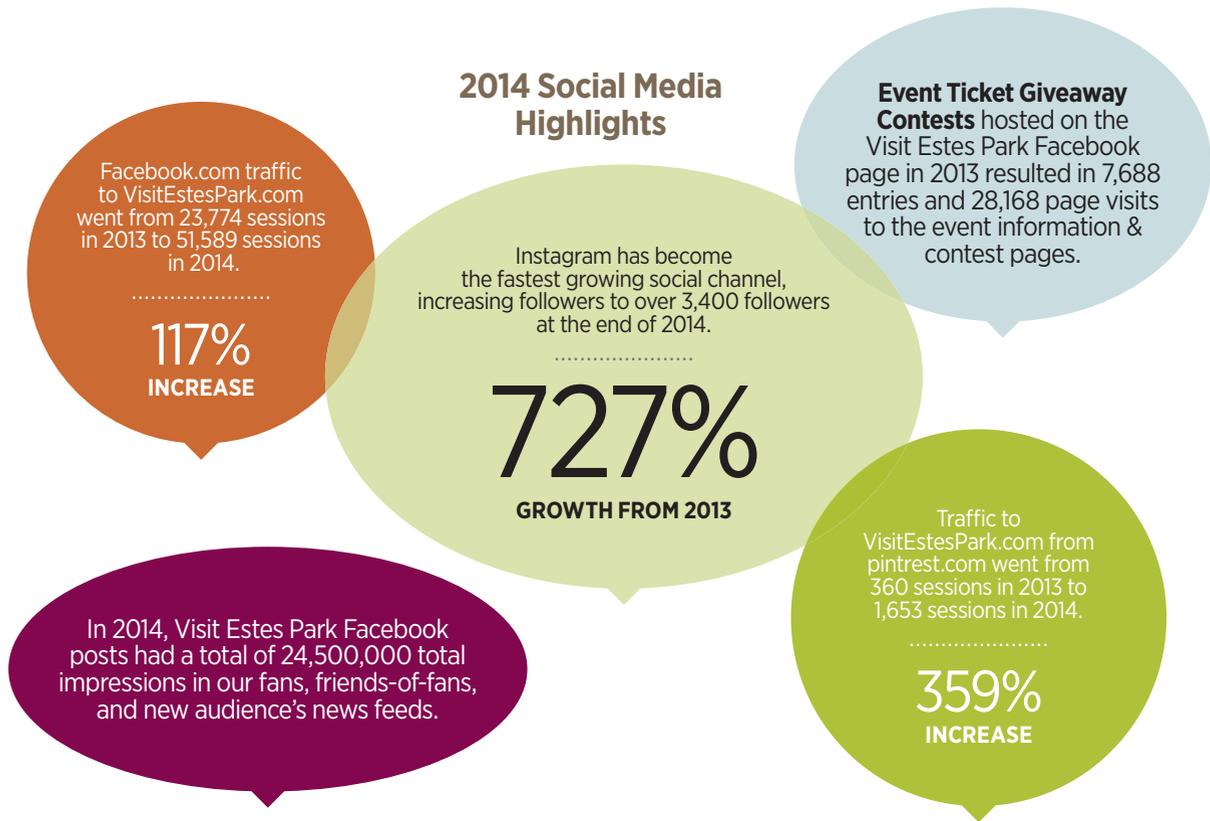


- The Visit Estes Park blog saw a 28% increase in users, 56% increase in organic sessions and 21% increase in page views in 2014 compared to 2013.
- Top viewed blog posts in 2014 included Top 10 Tips for Hiking in Rocky Mountain National Park, An Elk Moves Into a Local Resort and Traveling the Peak to Peak Scenic Byway.

We continue to focus on using the VisitEstesPark.com website to improve internal efficiencies, provide real value to our stakeholders, reflect the Estes Park brand promise, delight the consumer planning their trip, effectively compete with any other destination website, and ultimately increase visitor conversion.

**Social Media**

The growing popularity of Social Media and the great interest our fans have shown in engaging with our brand is expressed through social media key indicators in 2014, in which all social channels saw increases in their respective following. Focused on engagement and reach, we utilized our social media channels to host multiple ticket giveaway contests which increased awareness of specific Estes Park event experiences. These contests strategically promoted Estes Park events, gained new followers, engaged current followers and created an opportunity for viral sharing.



**Newsletters**

Email continues to be an important opportunity to communicate with past and potential guests about the Estes Park brand and relay important destination information. Newsletters are crafted with quality, dynamic content and highly attractive visuals to raise awareness of events, promote blogs and website content, and drive overnight visitation. A variety of tracking metrics for each newsletter are carefully monitored and analyzed, and adjustments are made accordingly to increase overall performance.

- In 2014, over 5,500 new consumers subscribed to the Visit Estes Park monthly email newsletter, totaling more than 21,000 email addresses who receive the newsletter each month.
- In 2014, the average open rate for the Visit Estes Park monthly email newsletter was 29.7%, over 8.17%\* the average open rate for travel industry email newsletters.

*\*Distribution Email Marketing, 2014.*

EARNED  
MEDIA

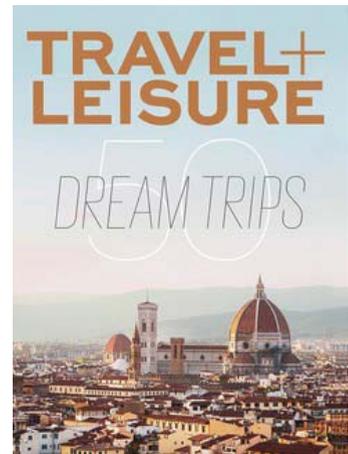
# PRSA

Public  
Relations  
Society of  
America

PRSA Silver Anvil Award of Excellence  
in Crisis Communication for our flood  
communication efforts

## AMERICA'S FAVORITE TOWNS

Being one of **T+L's favorite towns** means more than getting on one "best of" list, it means the chance to get onto several. Estes Park was included as one of America's Favorite Mountain Towns, Best Towns for Fall Colors and Best Towns for the 4th of July!



- Travel + Leisure's* "World's Creepiest Attractions" —October 2014
- USA Today's* "10 Best: Halloween Costume Parties" —September 2014
- Fox News' "Best Foodie & Brew Fall Festivals" —September 2014
- Travel + Leisure's* "America's Best Towns for July 4th" —June 2014
- Conde Nast Traveler's* "The Best Hotels for Whiskey Lovers" —September 2014
- Travel + Leisure's* "America's Best Towns for Fall Colors" —September 2014
- Travel + Leisure's* "America's Favorite Mountain Towns" —June 2014



## AMERICA'S COOLEST SMALL TOWNS

No surprise to those of us that live here! Voted by the public, this annual competition doesn't allow sequential nominations, but we will gladly accept the 2014 honor—and the press coverage that came with it!

**Public Relations & Crisis Communication**

In 2014, Visit Estes Park worked with our public relations firm, Turner PR, to engage both traditional and emerging media to grow awareness of Estes Park as a vacation destination, as well as to overcome negative media surrounding the 2013 flood coverage. This was done through a variety of tactics, including media outreach, hosting media in Estes Park, attending media events and conducting “desk-side tours” where we visit media to share information about Estes Park.

Together with Turner PR, Visit Estes Park conducted three desk-side tour trips in 2014, meeting with members of the media to familiarize them with Estes, inform them of the flood recovery, and to pitch story ideas, including wellness and adventure travel, the national park centennial, family travel, and wedding/honeymoon travel. Visit Estes Park managed these three trips, going to New York City in April to meet with a variety of writers and editors; as part of the DMAI conference in July we met with online influencers (bloggers, social media, and online writers); and in October, we met with writers in Boulder, Denver and Golden. Through all of these efforts, Visit Estes Park met 52 influencers and media representatives during these three events.

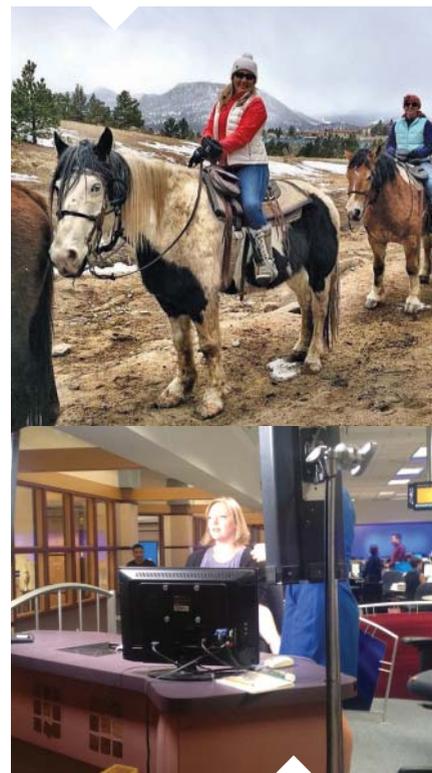
In addition to desk-side tours, Visit Estes Park hosted multiple group and individual familiarization (FAM) tours in Estes Park. Along with domestic travel media, we also hosted multiple international FAM trips, organized through the Colorado Tourism Office. The international media were from Germany, the UK, France, and Japan, which centered on the first nonstop flight from Denver to Tokyo. In all, Visit Estes Park, with the help of many stakeholders, hosted 17 domestic and 4 international members of the media.

Visit Estes Park’s media and PR efforts garnered over 538 million impressions and an ad equivalency (the amount the same exposure would have cost in advertising) of \$8.45 million. In 2014 we began utilizing the Barcelona Principles to better evaluate our PR efforts by assigning a point value to each media hit based on quality priorities, such as photo inclusion, links to VEP or partner websites, prominence of Estes Park in the story, etc. As accounting for ad value has become more difficult in the digital age, this method creates a uniform evaluation for stories. In 2014 our average article score was 56.9 out of 100, 62% of articles generated were in the top 100 target publications/outlets and 44% were in the top 50.

Luckily, in 2014 Visit Estes Park’s PR team was able to focus mostly on promotional public relations; however continued readiness for crises communications remained a priority. We used what we learned through the flood in 2013 to fine-tune our crisis communications plan, and continued to monitor recovery messaging, preempt and manage threats, such as the spring run-off flood stories, and managing relationships with partner organizations at the local, regional and state levels. These relationships are crucial in an emergency and continue to be important through the long-term flood recovery process.

**International**

In addition to efforts in international press relations, Visit Estes Park has made progress in representing the destination to international travel trade. Visit Estes Park has been a contributing participant in the Colorado Tourism Office’s International Promotion Committee throughout the year. With the help of local tourism partners, Brand USA and CTO, Visit Estes Park was able to participate in six international travel trade FAM tours during 2014, hosting about 60 members of the international travel industry from literally all over the world. Group trips included Germany, Japan, Panama, Mexico, the UK, and all of the CTO international representatives. We continue to see value in engaging international trade and press, and Visit Estes Park will further develop an international strategy over 2015.



Top to bottom: Jen Broome, KDVR Fox 31, and Visit Estes Park’s Brooke Burnham on a winter horseback shoot at Sombrero Stables in February. Visit Estes Park’s Brooke Burnham doing a flood anniversary interview at the 9News studios in Denver, August, 2014.

PAID  
MEDIA

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## Where Wild Meets Life

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From the beginning of 2014, Visit Estes Park was in full recovery mode, working to identify alternative funding sources, planning both short- and long-term recovery marketing, and working with partners at multiple levels to implement marketing strategies and tactics, evolving as additional funds were secured. In all, the Visit Estes Park advertising program was boosted by 48% over the original 2014 ad budget thanks to post-flood contributions from regional destination marketing partners in Loveland, Fort Collins, and Boulder, and the governments of Estes Park and Larimer County totaling \$145,000. The contributions were leveraged to obtain \$277,000 in grants for marketing Estes Park.

With the additional funds, Visit Estes Park was able to implement three key grant-funded programs. The first, a grant secured in 2013 following the flood, was from the Northern Colorado Community Foundation, and funded a 2014 co-op ad program where Estes Park businesses paid a small amount to be listed on one of three landing pages. The second two programs, implemented with grant funds from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) and Community Development Block Grant—Disaster Recovery funds, began mid-June of 2014 and mid-July, respectively. These programs promoted the national park centennial, expanded fall and winter advertising programs, including events, and included public relations efforts resulting in media coverage for Estes Park and Rocky Mountain National Park. Three regional partners contributed matching funds for the EDA program, so a portion of the campaign drove traffic to a Northern Colorado landing page on VisitEstesPark.com.

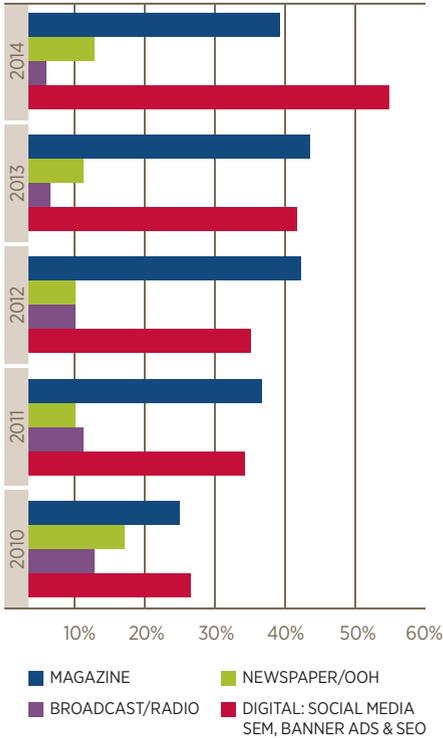
These three grant programs were implemented to complement the general fund advertising program that Visit Estes Park executed throughout 2014. The overarching strategy for all programs was to further penetrate tried-and-true regional markets, such as Colorado, Texas and Midwest states. This was done more efficiently by focusing on targeted print, such as regional travel publications, metro magazines, Colorado-only media and national park publications. Digitally, Visit Estes Park focused on both traditional markets for Estes Park and growing awareness of Estes Park to likely travelers to the west and to national parks.

In addition to general brand campaign ads, Visit Estes Park also invested significantly in marketing Estes Park events and the overall event calendar with multiple goals: increase event attendance, grow awareness of Estes Park as a fun place for events and attract guests by leveraging key events and festivals. Events were advertised in print, online, e-newsletter ads, radio and through paid social media.

The *Where Wild Meets Life* campaign continued to serve as the brand creative throughout 2014, with adjustments being made to promote the national park centennial. Tailored messaging was used for different markets and to utilize specific calls to action, such as “book early” and “extend your stay” offers. When paired with a targeted media plan, the targeted messages made the ad campaign effective and efficient, contributing to record visitation in 2014.



# MEDIA BUYS

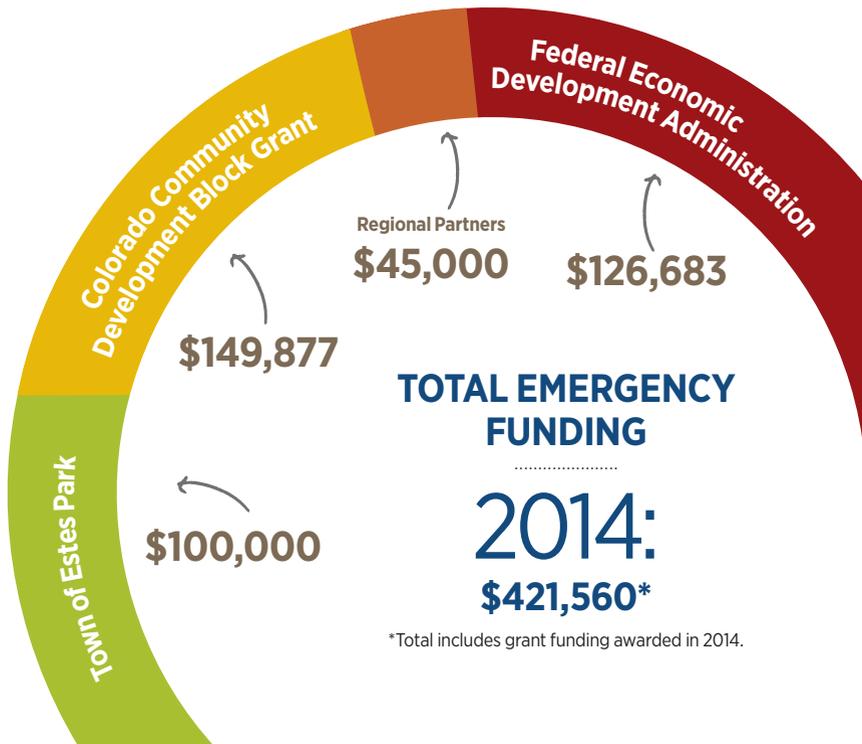


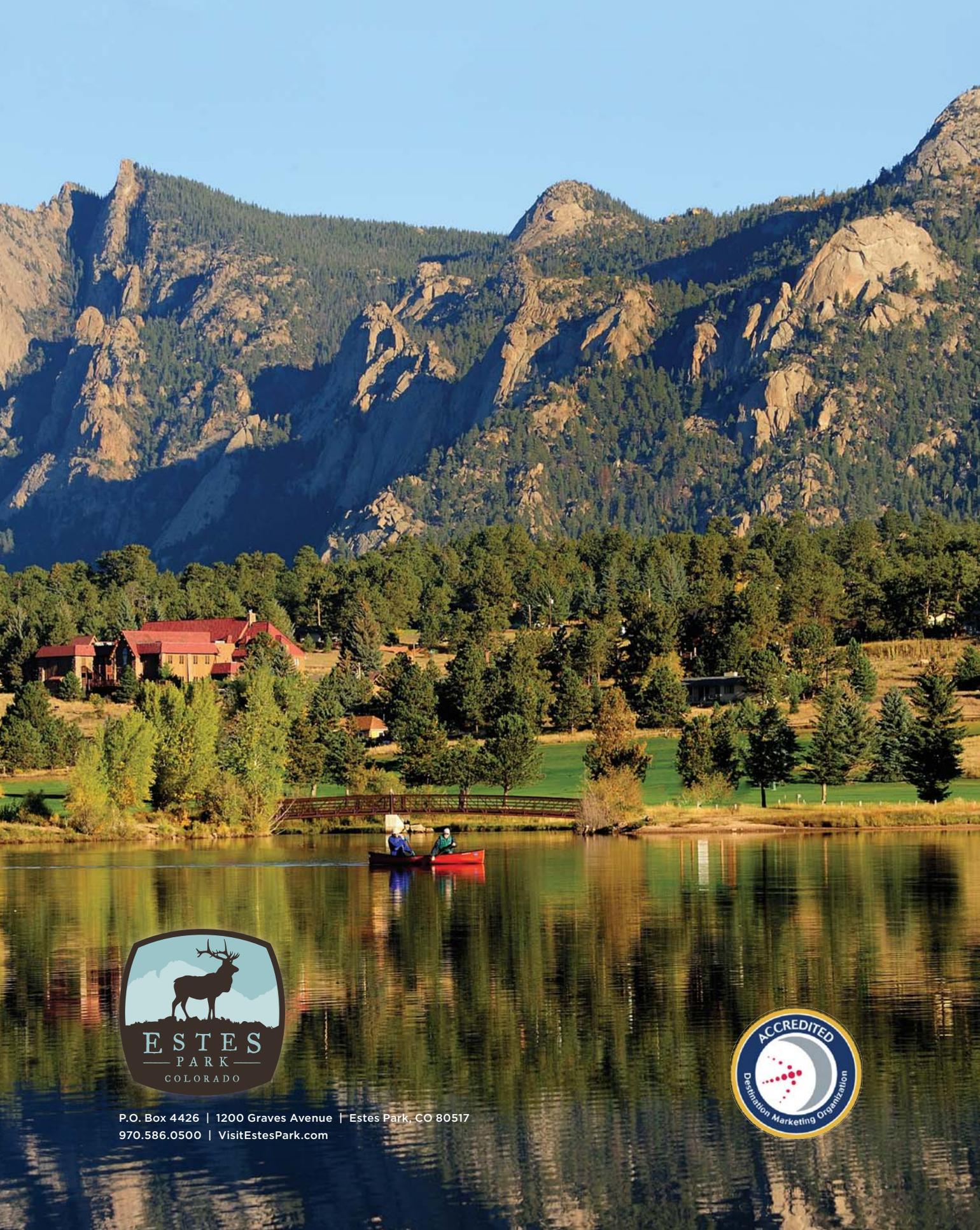
## Two Colorado Tourism Office Newsletters Feature Estes Park



**EARNED MEDIA**  
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## Digital Advertising in *The Denver Post*





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