

**VISIT
ROWAN COUNTY**

SALISBURY, NORTH CAROLINA

Be an original.

**2021-2022 ROWAN COUNTY TOURISM
PROPOSED BUDGET AND PROGRAM OF WORK**

2021-2022 ROWAN COUNTY TOURISM BUDGET MESSAGE MAY 20, 2021

Rowan County Tourism Board of Directors:

The Rowan County Tourism staff in partnership and coordination with the Tourism Budget and Finance Committee are honored to submit a proposed program of work, strategic direction and operating budgets for the Tourism Authority and Convention and Visitors Bureau for fiscal year 2021-2022. The work plan and budgets are focused on supporting Rowan County Tourism and Hospitality Sector as it continues to recover from the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. As of May 2021 the local tourism economy is rebounding but not recovered to pre pandemic levels. Rowan County Tourism will dedicate resources to continuing economic recovery.

Rowan County Tourism is County-wide in scope, its efforts are directed towards the development and promotion of Rowan County's tourism-related businesses and organizations including all sections and communities of the County through strategies and programs that seek to increase visitation and grow annual visitor expenditures in Rowan County.

County tourism efforts are organized to tell Rowan County's original story, promote and encourage visitor expenditures and to assemble and disseminate information designed to further develop Rowan County's position with visitors.

For fiscal year 2021-2022 the Tourism Board identified strategies, goals and scopes of work for the organization to focus on in 2021-2022. The proposed budget seeks to provide capacity to manage and implement the expectations and goals of the Tourism Board.

Key areas identified by the Tourism Board:

- Sales and marketing to support increased economic activity and recovery from the impacts of COVID-19 on the local tourism economy.
- Allocate resources to continuing Tourism's existing program of work and resources for tourism-related businesses and organizations.
- Further emphasis on digital marketing, packages and incentive travel.
- Resources to support tourism staff and general operations.
- Flexible approach to future tourism related capital projects.



James Meacham
Chief Executive Officer
Rowan County Tourism
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2021-2022 STRATEGIC MARKETING GOALS

2021-2022 OBJECTIVES AND GOALS

- Promote COVID-19 safe travel to Rowan County based on current executive orders/restrictions and monitor local health conditions.
- Continue to promote the Rowan County brand through destination marketing and digital avenues to reach a regional audience.
- Emphasize Rowan County key attractions and activities as developed to boost and promote overnight visitation.
- Foster relationships between key Rowan County tourism partners and their activities to create destination awareness.
- Develop consistent regional marketing through strategic traditional and digital advertising.
- Promote and grow tours and programming of the F&M Bank Historic Trolley System through visitor services and digital avenues.
- Manage and maintain relationships with existing and potential groups hosting events and making group accommodations in Rowan County lodging properties.
- Continue to increase engagement within the destination and expand communication with partners and communities

*****Programs will be implemented as COVID-19 restrictions and market demand develop.**

*****Continue to support local tourism businesses and their efforts to recover from COVID-19.**

DESTINATION AWARENESS MARKETING

Destination Awareness Marketing will be completed throughout the year to attract new and returning visitors to Rowan County. Marketing will be done through numerous avenues in order to keep Rowan County top of mind and encourage overnight stays.

- Play a central role in advocacy in promoting Rowan County as a destination for overnight travel, as well as business travel to promote community growth.
- Promote Rowan County as a destination with a rich array of original destination experiences with personalized options for our visitors and overnight travelers.
- Stay and Play Packages will be offered in conjunction with tourism partners to promote overnight stays in Rowan County in exchange for various incentive options related to their stay.
- Continue offering support to partners and their activities through the Tourism Support Program that fosters hospitality, lodging and overnight event packages.
- Develop up-to-date video and photo assets that promote the destination.

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DIGITAL MARKETING

Digital Marketing will continue to support and enhance the larger Destination Marketing Plan for Rowan County. Digital Marketing will be accomplished through the use of VisitSalisburyNC.com website and blog, Visit Rowan County social media platforms, e-Newsletters and Google Ads.

- Encourage two-way conversation and engagement through Visit Rowan County social media platforms to connect with customers through all stages of their experiences in Rowan County.
- Maintain and increase various styles of blogs for distribution through VisitSalisburyNC.com and Visit Rowan County social media platforms to inform visitors of original attractions and experiences awaiting them in Rowan County. These blogs present highly customized content about the destination to potential audiences.
- Redesign and update VisitSalisburyNC.com to meet post pandemic digital marketing trends and demands, while maintaining a visitor friendly experience in finding information about attractions, restaurants, special offers, lodging accommodations and more.
- Continue to promote Rowan County attractions and special events through the use of Google Pay Per Click and GeoFencing in order to reach a larger audience on multiple websites who may be searching for destinations or activities similar to what can be found in Rowan County.
- Digital Marketing efforts will focus on presenting consistent, compelling content that displays an original destination experience. This will be accomplished through the use of user generated content and testimonials to display a first-hand view of Rowan County as a destination.
- Place greater emphasis on market segmentation in order to attract distinct groups to our destination. Avoid promotion that suggests Rowan County has something for everyone, but rather promote what distinct experience it has for individual groups. This will allow for highly curated and customized destination content.
- Encourage visitors, locals and other destination stakeholders to promote and share the destination brand and experience through their own eyes through social media platforms
- Develop a partnership with regional tourism influencers to promote travel to Rowan County to a larger audience

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BRANDING

The Convention and Visitors Bureau will continue to promote and foster the countywide branding initiative. We will continue to support our community partners with the Be an Original branding. The Convention and Visitors Bureau will continue to promote our own brand, as well as our key assets that make our county a destination for travelers and overnight guests.

- All promotional materials, traditional and digital, will follow brand guidelines and stand as good representation of the Visit Rowan County brand. The Be an Original tagline will serve as the basis of all marketing and branding.
- Protect Rowan County's assets by presenting a cohesive look and feel, promoting an original experience. Presenting an original brand image will influence travel decisions and help attract visitors seeking a deep and transformative experience in Rowan County.

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GROUP SALES

Continuous efforts will be made to work with groups and organizations wishing to make large group arrangements in Rowan County lodging properties. Rowan County CVB staff will work alongside groups to support and help them make preparations for their event and assist with implementation.

- Staff will maintain and protect current group relationships, as well as foster new group relationships to attract tournaments, conferences, events and more to Rowan County in order to be catalysts for economic development.
- Continue to place emphasis on market segmentation in order to attract distinct groups to our destination. Avoid promotion that suggests Rowan County has something for everyone, but rather promote what original experiences it has to offer for individual groups. This will allow for highly curated and customized destination content.
- Staff will maintain communication between Rowan County lodging properties to make them aware of groups visiting the county.
- Staff will maintain follow-up communication after groups visit Rowan County.

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VISITOR SERVICES

Traditional visitor services will continue to be offered through the Rowan County Visitors Center. Visitors can request brochures to be mailed, or stop in for additional information on attractions.

- Continue to accommodate visitor requests for materials to be mailed.
- Provide a visitor friendly atmosphere by assisting with questions about attractions, directions, events and more.
- New collateral pieces will be designed and produced as needed to promote the destination.
- Visitor Center will continue to serve as central hub for F&M Bank Trolley System

*****Programs will be implemented as COVID-19 restrictions and market demand develop.**

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TROLLEYS

The F&M Bank Trolley System will continue to be used as a destination experience for tours, weddings, groups and more.

- Maintain and increase F&M Bank Trolley System programming and Historic Salisbury tours.
- Continue communication and relationships between the Trolley System and partners, such as: F&M Bank and Novant Health.
- Explore new holiday specific trolley tours.

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OVERARCHING MARKETING TRENDS

CVB marketing team will stay abreast to current overarching marketing trends in the tourism industry.

- Travel safety Information
- Inspiration Tactics
- Amazing Digital Experiences
- Influencers
- Outdoor Focused Keywords
- Paid Google Searches
- Context Aware Marketing
- Emphasis on Local Destinations
- User generated content
- Video and Photo
- Promote the experience instead of the benefits
- Family travel

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**Rowan County Tourism Development Authority
2021-2022 Proposed Budget**

Revenues

Budget Notes

	FY19-20	FY20-21	FY21-22	
Occupancy Tax Revenue	1,175,000	800,000	925,000	Projected increase of 15.6% from the 2020-21 budget as revenues to the market are returning from the impacts of COVID-19. FY21-22 is projected to be 21.2% less than pre pandemic budget levels for the 2019-20 budget.
Partner Services	33,000	57,000	57,000	Revenues from partners in the Gateway building specifically for shared services provided through the TDA and CVB in the Gateway Building. Services include phone, data, server and Gateway front desk staff support, no projected change
Holiday Caravan Parade	30,000	40,000	40,000	Revenues from the Holiday Caravan Parade. Rowan Tourism will continue to support the Parade by processing the parade's fiscal transactions. No occupancy tax revenues will be utilized for supporting the Parade, only Parade revenues and Parade funds to be used to cover Parade expenses
Misc. and Ticket Sales	3,000	600	1,000	Annually TDA averages \$1,000 to \$2,000 in misc. revenues and processing ticket sales for partners
Gateway Building	90,000	110,000	110,000	Revenues from office space leases and meeting space rentals in the TDA owned Gateway building
COVID Rescue Funds				Once final funds are determined TDA Board would be required to amend the budget based on timing and receipt of funds. Staff will present a supplemental budget for rescue funds.
Trolley	60,000	6,000	33,000	Revenues from trolley tours, rentals, sponsorships & ticketed events. Projecting revenues to be less than FY19-20 budget with an increase from 20-21 based on current booking schedule and a reduction in COVID restrictions.
Total Revenue	1,391,000	1,013,600	1,166,000	

Expenses

Budget Notes

Marketing & Visitor Services

CVB: Marketing, Branding/Visitors Services'	900,000	700,000	865,000	Tourism funding to the CVB (501c6). Funding for marketing, communications, public relations, visitor services, tourism staff, branding, Trolley programming and CVB operations; per the TDA-CVB Memorandum of Understanding and operating structure since FY2016-17
Tourism Capital Projects	190,000	77,500	70,000	Capital budget Railwalk Interlocal to County
Holiday Caravan Parade	30,000	60,000	40,000	Expenses associated with the Holiday Caravan Parade, expenditures are approved by the Parade Committee/Organizers. Rowan Tourism will continue to support the Parade by processing the parade's fiscal transactions. No occupancy tax revenues will be utilized for supporting the Parade, only Parade revenues and funds to be used to cover Parade expenses
Gateway Building	80,000	80,000	90,000	Operational costs for Gateway (maintenance, janitorial, utilities, repairs, service agreements, property and liability insurance)
Partner Services	24,000	10,000	10,000	Expenses paid on behalf of partners in the Gateway building specifically for shared services provided just through the TDA (expenses coded to CVB are included in CVB operating budget)
Trolley	24,000	5,000	10,000	Trolley related expenses specific to ownership costs related to the Trolley (maintenance, repairs, tags, insurance)
Supplies & Equipment	6,500	4,000	4,000	Office supplies and materials for the TDA and copier usage
Miscellaneous	5,000	4,100	4,000	
Total Marketing & Visitor Services	1,259,500	940,600	1,093,000	

Operations & Administration

Rowan County TDA Operations Staff	72,500	38,000	38,000	Funding for TDA staff, Tourism Services Coordinator position. TDA required to maintain an employee in the NCLGERS Pension system per initial membership.
Payroll Taxes	5,400	3,000	3,000	
TDA Employee Retirement	11,600	5,000	5,000	LGERS pension and NC457 contributions
NCACC Insurance	12,000	12,000	12,000	Annual insurance for TDA properties and liability insurances
Professional Services	30,000	15,000	15,000	Accounting, legal and audit services for TDA
Total Operations & Admin.	131,500	73,000	73,000	
Total Expenses	1,391,000	1,013,600	1,166,000	
Difference	0	0	0	

Rowan County CVB Fiscal Year 2021-22 Proposed Budget

Revenue	Budget Notes			
	FY19-20	FY20-21	FY21-22	
Tourism Support, Marketing-Visitors Services	900,000.00	700,000.00	865,000.00	Tourism funding from Rowan County TDA (Public Authority) to the CVB (501c6). Funding for marketing, communications, public relations, visitor services, tourism staff, branding, Trolley programming and CVB operations; per the TDA-CVB Memorandum of Understanding
Cooperative Marketing Partnerships	57,000.00	0.00	0.00	Currently no plans for cooperative marketing programs due to budget constraints from COVID and impacts to partner budgets. Staff will explore opportunities as the fiscal year unfolds.
Misc.	1,000.00	0.00	1,200.00	
Total Revenue	958,000.00	700,000.00	866,200.00	

Marketing and Visitor Services

Marketing, Communications & Partner Services	360,000.00	184,000.00	267,000.00	Decrease from FY19-20 budget and pre pandemic levels with an increase in FY21-22 from FY20-21 as revenues have increased as the economic impacts of COVID have decreased. The Tourism Board prioritized marketing, partner services and support and returning staff to pre pandemic levels.
CVB Staff Wages	360,000.00	300,000.00	360,000.00	Staff hours and wages returned to pre pandemic levels after reductions were implemented at the end of FY19-20 and carried over into FY20-21.
Rowan County Branding/Dig. Inf. Loan	86,400.00	86,400.00	86,400.00	No changes from FY20-21, continuation of all scheduled payments.
Trolley	14,000.00	3,000.00	10,000.00	Decrease in expenses due to decrease in Trolley demand, ridership and usage compared to FY19-20 budget with an increase from FY20-21 based on current booking schedule and a reduction in COVID restrictions.
Visitor Center & Office Rent	27,000.00	27,000.00	19,200.00	Decrease in rent costs with the CVB relocating offices in the Gateway building to the second floor.
Professional Development	3,600.00	3,600.00	3,600.00	No changes from FY19-20 and FY20-21. Training and travel expenses for CVB staff and expenses for hosted CVB meetings
Miscellaneous	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	
Total Marketing & Visitor Services	852,000.00	605,000.00	747,200.00	

Administration

Office Supplies	4,000.00	4,000.00	4,000.00	Office supply expenses
Payroll Taxes	28,000.00	23,000.00	28,000.00	
Employee Retirement	12,000.00	5,000.00	12,000.00	(Matching contribution from the CVB for employees, budget based on full participation) Returning to plan to pre pandemic employer match level from FY19-20 budget).
Insurance (health, work comp,	60,000.00	46,000.00	60,000.00	(Includes health and ancillary benefit plan for CVB employees) Increase from FY20-21 budget due to reduction in force in FY20-21 from COVID-19 labor reductions.
Workers Comp, Liab. Ins.	2,000.00	2,000.00		Moved to insurance line item to consolidate line items
Professional Services	0.00	15,000.00	15,000.00	Accounting, legal and audit fees.
Total Operations	106,000.00	95,000.00	119,000.00	
Total Expenses	958,000.00	700,000.00	866,200.00	
Difference	0.00	0.00	0.00	

Rowan County Tourism
 Fiscal Year 2021-2022
 Destination Marketing Program Budget
 Appendix B

General Budget Allocation FY 2021-2022

		Budget Notes
Destination Marketing Program Funding	267,000.00	Appropriation from CVB General Budget

Program Revenue 267,000.00

Expenses		Year to Date	Budget Notes (Expenses)
Direct Support Programs	100,500.00		Marketing funds to support for Day out With Thomas and Polar Express
Tourism Partner Support Funds	12,000.00		Tourism support funds allocated by the Destination Marketing Committee (DMC) for tourism partner support requests and sponsorships that adhere to and meet funding requirements for support funds as outlined and adopted by the DMC.
Tourism Digital Infrastructure/ Marketing	124,500.00		Includes unallocated funds for utilization of general digital marketing, including: updated website, updated photography and video, social media paid promotion, influencer program, PPC, GeoFencing. All digital infrastructure, SimpleView (including: website, CMS, CRM, e-newsletters, blogs, database, server, cloud, server hosting cost, and data), telecommunication, Walser Technologies, and copier/postage
Tourism Marketing Programs	20,000.00		Unallocated funds for utilization by the Destination Marketing Committee and Tourism Staff for, but not limited to collateral production, brand marketing, community/partner engagement, fulfillment costs, trolley marketing and marketing supplies and production costs.
Marketing Reserves	10,000.00		Reserve funds for marketing opportunities and programs that may arise during FY 21-20 that were not initially identified at the start of the Fiscal Year and additional partner support requests

Total Marketing & Visitor Services 267,000.00

Difference 0.00