



**ROWAN COUNTY TOURISM
PROPOSED BUDGET AND PROGRAM OF WORK**

FISCAL YEAR 2026-2027



2026-2027 ROWAN COUNTY TOURISM BUDGET MESSAGE: MAY 20, 2026

Rowan County Tourism Board of Directors:

The Rowan County Tourism team respectfully submits the proposed program of work, strategic direction, and operating budgets for the Rowan County Tourism Authority and the Salisbury-Rowan County Convention and Visitors Bureau for Fiscal Year 2026–2027. The plan and budgets are designed to sustain momentum and implement strategies that support continued growth and development within Rowan County’s tourism and hospitality sector.

Rowan County Tourism operates countywide, with efforts focused on strengthening the visitor economy through the development and promotion of tourism assets, businesses, organizations, and communities across Rowan County. Strategic initiatives are implemented to increase visitation, enhance tourism infrastructure, and drive visitor spending.

Tourism efforts center on organizing and communicating Rowan County’s unique story, supporting tourism-related events and activities, promoting visitor engagement, and developing tourism assets. These initiatives are complemented by the collection and distribution of tourism information to strengthen Rowan County’s market position and encourage increased visitation and tourism expenditures.

For Fiscal Year 2026–2027, Rowan County Tourism will continue advancing product development and capital investment in alignment with the Rowan Tourism Capital Plan. Emphasis will be placed on efficient sales and marketing strategies that attract overnight visitors and reinforce the County’s brand message, “Be an Original.” The proposed budget supports the Tourism Board’s priorities, including sustained capital investment, effective marketing, partner engagement, visitor attraction, and economic growth.

The upcoming fiscal year is expected to present sustained economic challenges, particularly related to inflation and rising fuel and transportation costs, which historically correlate with reduced leisure and transient travel. Following the onset of conflict with Iran in February 2026

and the resulting increase in gas prices, transient travel declined significantly. This trend contributed to a 5% decrease in occupancy tax revenues compared to the prior year. Accordingly, the proposed FY 2026–2027 budget reflects a projected reduction in occupancy tax revenues, along with decreased Trolley program revenue due to the loss of one trolley.

Key areas of focus in FY 2026-27:

- Sales and marketing to support increased economic activity, overnight stays, recurring and growing group business and continued engagement with tourism partners.
- Impactful brand storytelling that seeks to attract visitors to experience Rowan County.
- Tourism product development and capital investments through a continuation of the Rowan County Tourism Industry Master Plan and Capital Plan.
- Continued commitment to human capital and high-quality tourism professionals.
- Further emphasis on technology advancements, utilization of AI, digital marketing, packages, and incentive travel to drive overnight stays and increase marketing and operational efficiencies.
- Resources to support tourism partners and community relations.



James Meacham
Chief Executive Officer
Rowan County Tourism
204 E. Innes St. | Salisbury, NC 28144
[p] 704.638.3100 [c] 704.433.8468
visitrowancountync.com

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The FY 2026–2027 Rowan County Tourism Program of Work outlines a strategic approach to strengthening the visitor economy through focused marketing, destination development, partner engagement, and operational excellence. Guided by the “Be an Original™” brand, the plan prioritizes overnight visitation, economic impact, authentic storytelling, and long-term tourism growth.

Despite projected economic challenges impacting travel and occupancy tax revenues, Rowan County Tourism will continue investing in initiatives designed to maximize return on investment, enhance visitor experiences, and support sustainable tourism development across the county.

Key Priorities for FY 2026–2027:

- Increase overnight visitation through strategic marketing, group travel, and Stay & Play packages.
- Execute high-impact storytelling campaigns that highlight authentic Rowan County experiences.
- Strengthen the Be an Original™ brand through cohesive messaging and partner collaboration.
- Support tourism infrastructure and destination development projects that enhance visitor experiences.
- Expand the use of technology and digital tools to improve engagement and operational efficiency.
- Maintain high-quality visitor services and promote the F&M Bank Trolley System as a signature tourism experience.
- Strengthen organizational efficiency, financial stewardship, and operational accountability.

Through intentional planning, strategic investment, and focused execution, Rowan County Tourism will continue positioning Rowan County as a distinctive, experience-driven destination while supporting economic growth and community impact.

2026-2027 GOALS & OBJECTIVES

- Drive increased overnight visitation and engagement by executing high-impact, story-driven messaging that strengthen the Be an Original™ brand, deepen partner collaboration, and deliver measurable growth in audience and awareness.
- Increase overnight visitation and economic impact by strategically targeting and securing high-value group business through intentional partnerships, curated experience-driven offerings and with a focus on higher-impact bookings.
- Drive measurable growth in engagement, audience, and overnight visitation by executing a focused, high-impact marketing strategy centered on intentional storytelling, targeted audiences, and continuous performance optimization.
- Foster relationships between Rowan County tourism partners and their events to drive destination awareness, strengthen existing success, and expand the local tourism market.
- Provide integrated, high-quality visitor services at the Rowan County Visitors Center by prioritizing digital tools, quick fulfillment, excellent guest support, and well-maintained facilities to drive overnight stays and enhance the overall visitor experience.
- Make continued investments in targeted physical and digital infrastructure that improves visitor experience, supports overnight travel, and strengthens partner engagement while increasing marketing and operational efficiencies.
- Continuing an intentional, impact-driven approach to destination development by prioritizing high value projects and ROI-focused partnerships that strengthen community identity, enhance the visitor experience, and support long-term tourism growth.
- Manage the Paul E. Fisher Gateway Building with an emphasis on efficiency and sustainability through strategic vendor and lease oversight, proactive maintenance, efficient meeting space coordination, and consistent communication with partners.
- Sustain trolley ridership and revenue by maximizing the trolley's role as a signature experience.
- Strengthen internal operations by streamlining workflows, aligning staff time to high-impact work, implementing performance-based vendor management, sharpening roles and communication, and utilizing systems that support agility and quick adaptation.
- Execute financial management with strong fiscal discipline and transparency by aligning the budget to high-impact priorities, continue modernizing payment systems through increased digital applications, strengthening insurance and grant oversight, and enhancing forecasting and reporting.

DESTINATION AWARENESS

Rowan County Tourism will execute a focused, year-round destination awareness strategy designed to increase overnight stays, drive economic impact, and strengthen Rowan County's identity as an original, experience-driven destination. Efforts will prioritize high-impact storytelling, strategic partnerships, and proven demand drivers - ensuring resources are invested where they generate the greatest return.

- **Quarterly Campaign Structure:** Marketing efforts will be guided by a quarterly campaign structure that aligns all content, advertising, and partnerships under a unified theme. Each campaign will be built around one emotional driver (e.g., nostalgia, connection, discovery), supported by key narratives and partner-driven stories that bring Rowan County's identity to life. Success will be measured through consistent growth in engagement, audience, and visitation, with a target of at least a 5% annual increase in digital engagement and following.
- **High-Quality, Story-Driven Content:** Campaigns will prioritize high-quality, story-driven content that sells the experience rather than individual assets. Visual storytelling - including video and short-form content - will remain a primary tool for inspiring travel and deepening audience connection.
- **Fewer, Higher-Impact Campaigns:** Marketing investment will shift toward fewer, higher-impact campaigns centered on key demand drivers (such as major attractions, festivals, and proven experiences), while maintaining consistent visibility for additional destination partners whose stories strengthen Rowan County's authenticity.
- **Intentional Partnership Model:** Destination co-op marketing will evolve into a more intentional partnership model, integrating partner stories into campaign narratives rather than only promoting isolated events. This approach will deepen collaboration, expand reach, and continue Rowan Tourism's role as a strategic resource for partners.
- **Overnight Visitation & Conversions:** Rowan County will continue to be promoted as a destination for both leisure and business travel, with a strong focus on overnight visitation and conversion strategies, including Stay & Play packages and targeted campaign integration.
- **Stay & Play Packages:** will be refined and aligned with campaign themes to drive bookings through key travel windows, with continued goals of increasing reservations and room nights while improving the booking experience and partner participation.
- **Prioritizing Events & Overnight Stay Initiatives:** The Tourism Support Program will continue to prioritize events and initiatives that demonstrate clear overnight stay potential, ensuring alignment with broader goals and maximizing economic impact.
- **Influencer Partnerships:** will be more selectively pursued, focusing on value-aligned creators who can deliver authentic storytelling and measurable engagement. Emphasis

will be placed on long-term relationships and content that can be repurposed across multiple channels and timeframes.

- **Increasing Marketing Assets:** Rowan County Tourism will maintain and grow its library of visual assets, with a focus on high-quality, evergreen content that supports ongoing storytelling and campaign needs.

DESTINATION MARKETING

Destination Marketing will support the broader Destination Awareness strategy through an intentional, performance-driven approach - prioritizing high-impact content, platform optimization, and measurable outcomes over volume.

- **Website and SEO** (*Search Engine Optimization*) efforts will focus on quality over quantity, ensuring VisitRowanCountyNC.com serves as a high-performing conversion tool. Blog content will be strategic and campaign-aligned, supporting seasonal storytelling, search visibility, and visitor planning. Success will be measured through sustained growth in users, engagement, and time on site in addition to volume.
- **Social Media** strategy will prioritize platforms with the strongest engagement, with an emphasis on short-form video and storytelling that drives emotional connection. Growth goals will focus on achieving at least a 5% annual increase in both audience and engagement, supported by consistent analysis and optimization.
- **Content Strategy** will shift to a more balanced approach, with a target of approximately 50% of content for small businesses and “smaller stories” that differentiate Rowan County, while concentrating the remaining efforts on high-impact attractions, events and campaigns driving overnight visitation.
- **Influencer Marketing** will be refined to emphasize strategic partnerships over volume, focusing on creators who align with the brand and can deliver meaningful reach, engagement, and reusable content to drive visitors to Rowan County.
- **Blog Production** will be streamlined to prioritize high-value, evergreen, and campaign-supporting content, reducing overall volume while increasing relevance, performance, and storytelling depth.
- **Email Marketing** will continue to serve as a key engagement tool, with a focus on clear, concise, and value-driven communication that supports campaigns, partner visibility, and visitor planning while driving traffic to partners.
- **Paid Media Strategy** will become more targeted and performance-driven, with investment directed toward proven, high-performing content and campaigns. Budget allocation will remain flexible and responsive to performance, avoiding any

underperforming tactics and focusing on channels that consistently deliver engagement and conversions.

- **Stay & Play Package** booking platform will continue to be optimized to improve user experience and conversion rates, with a focus on further simplification of the booking process and aligning promotions with campaign strategies to foster overnight stays.
- **Digital Platform** will remain a priority, with streamlined processes to ensure partner listings, events, and content are consistently up to date and reliable.

BRANDING / PR

Rowan County Tourism will continue to advance the Be an Original™ brand as the foundation of all marketing and communications, with a refined focus on intentional, story-driven efforts that build momentum, deepen partnerships, and drive visitation. Through a structured quarterly campaign approach, we will position Rowan County as a distinctive, experience-driven destination while maximizing impact through focused, high-quality execution.

- All promotional materials, traditional and digital, will adhere to established Be an Original™ brand guidelines to ensure consistency, clarity, and long-term brand integrity across all channels.
- The Be an Original™ brand will anchor a quarterly campaign structure built around emotional themes, core narratives, and supporting stories. This approach will prioritize storytelling that highlights experiences, connection, and authenticity, reinforcing a cohesive and recognizable destination identity.
- Messaging efforts will shift from high-volume output to high-impact storytelling, with an emphasis on quality content, especially video, that showcases the experience of Rowan County. Campaigns will focus on key demand drivers while maintaining space to elevate smaller, authentic stories that define the destination.
- Rowan County Tourism will strengthen partner relationships through structured and intentional engagement, including regular onsite visits, content collection, and brand integration opportunities. The goal is to maintain consistent touchpoints while positioning Tourism as a proactive and accessible partner resource.
- Quarterly stakeholder communications will be enhanced to provide concise, relevant updates on tourism initiatives, economic impact, and opportunities for collaboration, supporting transparency and ongoing engagement with the local tourism community.
- Media and public relations efforts will prioritize compelling, story-driven narratives that align with quarterly campaigns, focusing on experiences rather than announcements alone. This will support stronger media relationships and generate more meaningful, tourism-focused coverage.

- A coordinated digital strategy, including social media, email marketing, and short-form video, will support all branding and PR efforts, with targeted growth goals for engagement and audience. Paid support will be used strategically to amplify proven, high-performing content while maintaining visibility for partners who contribute to the destination's story.
- Rowan County Tourism will continue to champion the local tourism and hospitality industry by elevating partners, recognizing industry contributions, and fostering community pride. This will be achieved through consistent storytelling, collaborative campaigns, and intentional brand integration that feels supportive and partner-driven.
- Implement the Be an Original brand across key tourism development projects to strengthen recognition and cohesion.

GROUP SALES

Rowan County Tourism will adopt an intentional and strategic approach to group sales, prioritizing high-impact opportunities that align with the destination's strengths and drive overnight visitation. Efforts will focus on cultivating meaningful partnerships, aligning group recruitment efforts and delivering experience-driven offerings that reflect Rowan County's identity.

- Tourism staff will strengthen existing group relationships while proactively targeting new partnerships that align with Rowan County's core demand drivers, focusing on groups with strong overnight stay potential and long-term value to the destination.
- Outreach efforts will be more focused and strategic, emphasizing market segments that best match Rowan County's authentic assets—such as sports tournaments, rail-related experiences, festivals, and niche interest groups. Messaging will highlight curated, experience-driven itineraries rather than one-size-fits-all offerings.
- Staff will collaborate closely with lodging partners and key stakeholders through a structured communication approach, including advance planning, coordinated execution, and post-event follow-up to strengthen relationships and improve future group experiences.
- Customized, high-quality support will be prioritized for targeted group opportunities, including itinerary development, venue recommendations, and on-the-ground coordination.
- Group success will be evaluated based on key outcomes such as overnight stays, economic impact, and repeat bookings, ensuring alignment with overall tourism goals and long-term momentum.

VISITOR SERVICES

Rowan County Tourism will provide visitor services through the Rowan County Visitors Center while intentionally enhancing digital and in-person touchpoints that support overnight stays and high-impact experiences. The Visitors Center will remain a key resource for both in-person and online inquiries, with a focus on timely responses, integrated digital tools, and consistent, brand-aligned storytelling at every guest interaction.

- ***Collateral Distribution & Evaluation:*** Distribute print and digital promotional materials that market Rowan County as a travel destination, with emphasis on experiences that drive visitation and overnight stays. Continue to evaluate all print and digital collateral to streamline low-impact pieces, consolidate where possible, and prioritize digital offerings. Integrate and regularly test digital access tools (*QR codes, landing pages, digital guides*) to ensure a user-friendly experience, capture engagement data, and inform future content and distribution decisions.
- ***Tour Digitization:*** Promote the launch of fully digital tour experiences that highlight authentic local stories, history, and small businesses. Encourage visitors to utilize new lobby displays that feature access to tours, itineraries, and events, reinforcing the broader storytelling strategy and improving access for visitors.
- ***Material Fulfillment:*** Maintain quick, consistent fulfillment of visitor requests by mail and email, prioritizing responsiveness for high-value visitor segments and package leads. Prioritize the promotion of digital tools, including visitor guides and tours.
- ***Guest Services & Information:*** Provide excellent, visitor-focused service by delivering accurate and helpful information on attractions, directions, events, and lodging, with an emphasis on experiences that match current campaign themes. Foster a cohesive team culture that encourages staff to share visitor feedback, identify experience gaps, and elevate partner and community voices in the stories they share at the Visitors Center.
- ***Facility Management:*** Staff will support the operational oversight of the Rowan County Visitors Center and the Paul E. Fisher Gateway Building through daily inspections, prompt reporting of maintenance needs, and coordination with facility partners. Staff will support the needs of all guests, including leisure travelers, meeting and event attendees, and local partners, to maintain a positive reputation for Rowan County as a welcoming, well-cared-for destination.

TROLLEYS

The F&M Bank Trolley System will continue to be promoted and utilized as a premier destination experience for tours, weddings, private groups, and special events.

- Maintain F&M Bank Trolley System programming including private rentals, themed rentals, and community partner tours. This includes theatrical, history, holiday, and urban-themed tours in collaboration with local organizations, artists, and historians.
- Foster strong, collaborative relationships with key partners, such as: F&M Bank and Novant Health with a goal of consistent, transparent communication and mutually beneficial engagement.
- Continue to emphasize the F&M Bank Trolley System for private group rentals through targeted digital marketing efforts—such as social media campaigns and features in online magazine platforms.

OVERARCHING MARKETING TRENDS

Rowan County Tourism will align its marketing approach with an intentional, focused strategy that prioritizes high-impact storytelling, authentic experiences, and measurable results. By concentrating on what drives engagement and visitation, the team will refine how marketing efforts are executed, maximizing impact through quality over quantity, strengthening partnerships, and maintaining flexibility to adapt to emerging trends.

- **Marketing** efforts will be guided by a structured quarterly campaign framework built around emotional themes, core narratives, and supporting stories. This approach ensures consistency across channels while creating sustained momentum and deeper audience connection.
- **Storytelling** will remain the foundation of all marketing, with an increased emphasis on experience-driven, emotionally resonant content, particularly high-quality video, that showcases what it feels like to visit Rowan County rather than simply what to do.
- **Content** strategy will shift toward fewer, higher-impact initiatives, prioritizing proven demand drivers and high-performing platforms while reserving space to elevate smaller, authentic stories that differentiate the destination.
- **Influencer and Content Creator** partnerships will be strategically aligned, focusing on individuals who authentically connect with Rowan County’s brand and can contribute to meaningful, story-driven campaigns rather than one-off promotions.
- **Targeted Messaging** rather than broad, general messaging, will focus on specific audiences most likely to connect with Rowan County’s unique character. Efforts will highlight authentic experiences and niche offerings that foster stronger emotional connections, visitor satisfaction, and repeat visitation.
- **Digital Platforms** will continue to serve as the primary driver of engagement, with a coordinated strategy across social media, email marketing, and web content. Emphasis will be placed on growing engagement and audience through consistent, high-quality output and targeted amplification of top-performing content.

- **VisitRowanCountyNC.com** will function as a streamlined planning tool and conversion point, integrating lodging, experiences, and itineraries to support a seamless visitor journey and encourage overnight stays.
- **Collaboration** with tourism partners will be structured and intentional, integrating partner stories into campaigns, increasing touchpoints, and ensuring Rowan Tourism serves as an accessible, proactive resource.
- **Marketing** efforts will be adaptable, with ongoing evaluation of performance, emerging trends, and new tools. Strategies that demonstrate clear impact will be scaled, while lower-performing efforts will be refined or phased out to maintain focus and efficiency.
- **Success** will be measured through defined metrics such as engagement growth, audience expansion, and contribution to overnight visitation, ensuring all marketing activity supports long-term momentum and destination growth.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Rowan County Tourism will continue to evaluate and invest in physical and digital infrastructure that strengthens the visitor experience, supports overnight travel, and reflects Rowan County's identity. Infrastructure priorities will focus on systems and spaces that multiply the impact of marketing, deepen partner engagement, and close gaps in the visitor journey rather than adding disconnected projects.

- **Digital Infrastructure & Wayfinding:** will be supported to enhance digital platforms (website, interactive maps, QR-enabled guides, digital lobby displays) and to provide clear and mobile-friendly pathways from interest to visit. Such efforts will also align digital tools with quarterly campaign themes and key demand drivers (e.g., major attractions, festivals, small businesses) so that infrastructure actively supports high-impact storytelling and overnight-stay potential.
- **Visitor Center & Facility Infrastructure:** Foster strong stewardship of the Paul E. Fisher Gateway Building as front-door assets for the destination, ensuring that layout, signage, and technology support a welcoming and efficient guest experience. Coordinate with technology partners to keep meeting and event spaces visitor-ready.
- **Community-Based Tourism Infrastructure:** Work to align tourism infrastructure efforts with community-based development priorities by supporting projects that visibly reflect Rowan County's identity and move the needle on visitation (e.g., park enhancements, historic assets, signature attractions). Prioritize investments and advocacy for projects that meet clear filters: overnight stay potential, strategic fit, partner leverage, and staff capacity.
- **Systems, Technology, and Operational Tools:** Support streamlined internal systems (CRM, fulfillment tracking, content and asset management) that reduce duplication, automate routine tasks, and free staff capacity for partner-facing and strategic work.

Regularly review technology tools against performance and usability benchmarks, removing low-impact platforms and consolidating where possible to maintain a focused, high-ROI infrastructure.

- **Partner & Access Infrastructure:** Support an environment with clear, simple entry points for partners to engage with Tourism’s infrastructure (event submission forms, content-sharing processes, listing updates) so collaboration is easy and aligned with brand standards. Use existing infrastructure investment. such as shared displays, collateral, and online calendars, to highlight partner stories and demonstrate Tourism’s role as a connector and resource.

DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

Rowan County Tourism will take an intentional and impact-driven approach to destination development by prioritizing projects and investments that strengthen community identity, enhance the visitor experience, and support long-term tourism growth. Efforts will focus on high-impact initiatives, strategic partnerships, and improvements that align with overall organizational priorities. Key areas of focus will include:

- **Strategic Infrastructure & Experience Development:** Prioritize and support key development projects that enhance Rowan County’s tourism assets and community impact, including initiatives such as the Dan Nicholas Park revitalization, Granite Civic Park expansion, Spencer Park enhancements, and others as they arise. Focus will remain on projects that elevate authentic experiences and contribute to overnight visitation.
- **Digital Experience Optimization:** Complete a full redesign of the Visit Rowan County website to improve user experience, accessibility, and functionality. Emphasis will be placed on connecting visitors to relevant, experience-driven content while streamlining backend systems to improve efficiency, booking trips and long-term sustainability.
- **Operational Efficiency & Resource Alignment:** Conduct annual reviews of vendors, contracts, and systems to identify opportunities for cost savings, improved performance, and streamlined operations. Emphasis will be placed on eliminating any redundancies, optimizing tools, and aligning resources with high-impact priorities.
- **Visitor Experience Gap Identification & Enhancement:** Identify and address gaps in the visitor experience using surveys, partner feedback, and review monitoring. Insights will be used to refine existing offerings, improve visitor satisfaction, and inform future development opportunities.
- **ROI-Driven Decision Making:** Collaboration with leadership to evaluate return on investment for major initiatives (campaigns, partnerships, development projects), ensuring financial resources are tied directly to measurable tourism outcomes.

PAUL E. FISHER GATEWAY BUILDING OPERATIONS

Rowan County Tourism will manage the Paul E. Fisher Gateway Building with a focus on operational excellence, efficiency, and tenant experience. Efforts will prioritize streamlined processes, proactive communication, and long-term sustainability to ensure the building remains a functional, professional, and welcoming space for partners and visitors. Key priorities include:

- **Vendor & Contract Oversight:** Conduct annual reviews of all vendor contracts to ensure quality of service, cost-effectiveness, and alignment with organizational priorities. Identify opportunities to streamline services, reduce redundancies, and improve overall operational efficiency.
- **Tenant Lease Management:** Oversee Gateway Building operations and partner lease management by evaluating all tenant leases annually and provide updated agreements, with the goal of timely communication and compliance with lease terms.
- **Facility Maintenance & Upkeep:** Perform facility operations and asset management by adhering to preventative maintenance by completing quarterly and annual service tasks. Service tasks include, but are not limited to HVAC inspections, pressure washing, window cleaning, landscaping, and pest control, with the goal of providing a clean, safe, and professional environment.
- **Meeting Space Coordination:** Ensure the scheduling of meeting spaces is efficient and user-friendly, with clear visibility and booking options available through the Visit Rowan County, NC website with the goal of providing community access to meeting spaces.
- **Capital Asset Stewardship:** Maintain capital project management and fiscal accountability by conducting annual inventory and evaluation of assets within the building with the goal of ensuring long-term asset life cycle with functionality and proper appearance.
- **Communication & Partner Engagement:** Maintain consistent internal communication regarding building operations and provide timely updates to tenants and partners. Facilitate regular touchpoints, including biannual partner meetings, foster strong relationships, share updates, and ensure alignment on building needs and expectations.

OPERATIONS & ADMINISTRATION

Operational goals for 2026-2027 will prioritize internal efficiency, clarity, and alignment of internal systems to support high-impact work and enhancing communication within the organization. These objectives are designed to support high-impact storytelling, partner engagement, and tourism development initiatives. Priorities will include:

- **Drive Operational Speed & Accountability:** Support streamlined internal workflows to ensure timely and accurate processing of administrative documents.

- **Align Staff Time to High-Impact Work:** Audit internal processes and meetings quarterly to eliminate low-value tasks and redundant workflows. Reallocate staff time when applicable toward high-impact initiatives such as partner engagement, storytelling support, and tourism development priorities.
- **Implement Strategic Vendor Management System:** Transition from routine vendor review to a performance-based vendor management model, conducting quarterly evaluations focused on ROI, service relevance, and alignment with organizational priorities. Renegotiate or consolidate services where inefficiencies are identified.
- **Strong Internal Communication & Role Clarity:** Emphasize structured weekly and monthly internal check-ins tied to momentum priorities. Support clear roles and responsibilities across all functions to eliminate overlap and improve execution, directly supporting the plan's emphasis on reducing confusion and duplication.
- **Support Organizational Agility & Adaptability:** Support processes that allow rapid adoption of new tools, technologies, and trends, ensuring operations can pivot quickly in response to economic shifts, tourism trends, and emerging opportunities.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Finance goals for 2026-2027 will focus on strategic financial leadership, ensuring resources are allocated efficiently to support momentum-driving initiatives, while maintaining strong fiscal discipline and transparency.

- **Annual Review:** of all insurance policies and benefit providers with the goal of identifying potential cost savings and ensuring adequate coverage is established.
- **Align Financial Management with Strategic Priorities:** Oversee the annual budget in alignment with momentum plan priorities, ensuring financial resources are directed toward high-impact initiatives (storytelling, partner engagement, tourism development).
- **Financial Reporting:** Sound reporting by preparing and submitting monthly, quarterly, and year-end financial summaries, with an objective of 100% on-time report submission.
- **Modernize Payment & Financial Systems:** Audit payment systems and processes for opportunities to automate and reduce processing time and increase ACH and digital payments across all applicable vendors and partners to streamline outgoing payments.
- **Grant & Sponsorship Financial Oversight:** Manage and support the financial side of grants and sponsorships, including tracking, deadline adherence, and reporting to ensure compliance and funding continuation.
- **Cash Flow & Revenue Awareness:** Provide sound forecasting and financial analysis to support informed decision-making for strategic growth, including developing mid-year financial performance projections.

Rowan County Tourism Development Authority: 2026-2027 Proposed Budget

Revenues	FY22-23	FY23-24	FY24-25	FY25-26	FY26-27	Budget Notes
Occupancy Tax	1,280,000	1,400,000	1,400,000	1,590,000	1,550,000	Occupancy tax figure based on FY25-26 actuals with a 2.5% deduction
Partner Services	40,000	60,000	66,500	70,000	60,000	Revenues from partners for shared services and programs provided through Tourism in the Gateway and other cooperative partner programs. Services include phone, data, server and Gateway front desk staff support.
Holiday Caravan Parade	50,000	56,500	56,500	65,000	0	No longer under TDA Administrative support, pass through removed
Miscellaneous	1,000	1,000	1,000	2,500	1,500	Based on historical amount of miscellaneous revenues received annually.
Gateway Building	110,000	134,000	142,500	168,500	173,500	Revenues from leases and meeting space rentals in the TDA owned Gateway building. Lease increases of \$2.00 per square foot scheduled for 7-1-25.
Tourism ARPA Funding	0	0	500,000	0	0	ARPA funds approved for wayfinding utilization occurred in 24-25
Interest Income		6,000	12,000	12,000	10,000	
Trolley	55,000	60,000	80,000	95,000	70,000	Revenues from trolley tours, rentals, sponsorships & ticketed events.
Total Revenue	1,536,000	1,717,500	2,258,500	2,003,000	1,865,000	

Expenses

Marketing & Visitor Services

						Budget Notes
CVB Appropriation	1,045,000	1,050,000	1,095,500	1,144,000	1,087,000	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 Development	200,000	250,000	750,000	400,000	382,000	Reduction due to decrease in projected occupancy taxes, still fully funds Board's capital priorities but leaves no capacity for extra projects in FY26-27.
Holiday Caravan Parade	50,000	85,000	56,500	65,000	0	Rowan Tourism will continue to support the Parade by processing fiscal transactions. No occupancy tax will be utilized for supporting the Parade, only Parade revenues and existing funds to be used to cover Parade expenses.
Gateway Building	100,000	134,000	142,500	168,500	173,500	Operational costs for Gateway (maintenance, janitorial, utilities, repairs, service agreements, operating reserves and property & liability insurance).
Partner Services	25,000	20,000	25,000	26,500	25,000	Expenses paid on behalf of partners in the Gateway building specifically for shared services provided through the TDA (any expenses coded to CVB are included in CVB operating budget).
Trolley	10,000	10,500	11,500	12,000	10,000	Trolley related expenses specific to ownership costs related to the trolley (maintenance, repairs, tags, insurance)
Supplies & Equipment	5,000	4,000	4,500	4,500	3,500	
Miscellaneous	2,400	4,000	4,500	4,500	3,500	
Total Marketing & Visitor Services	1,437,400	1,557,500	2,090,000	1,825,000	1,684,500	

Operations & Administration

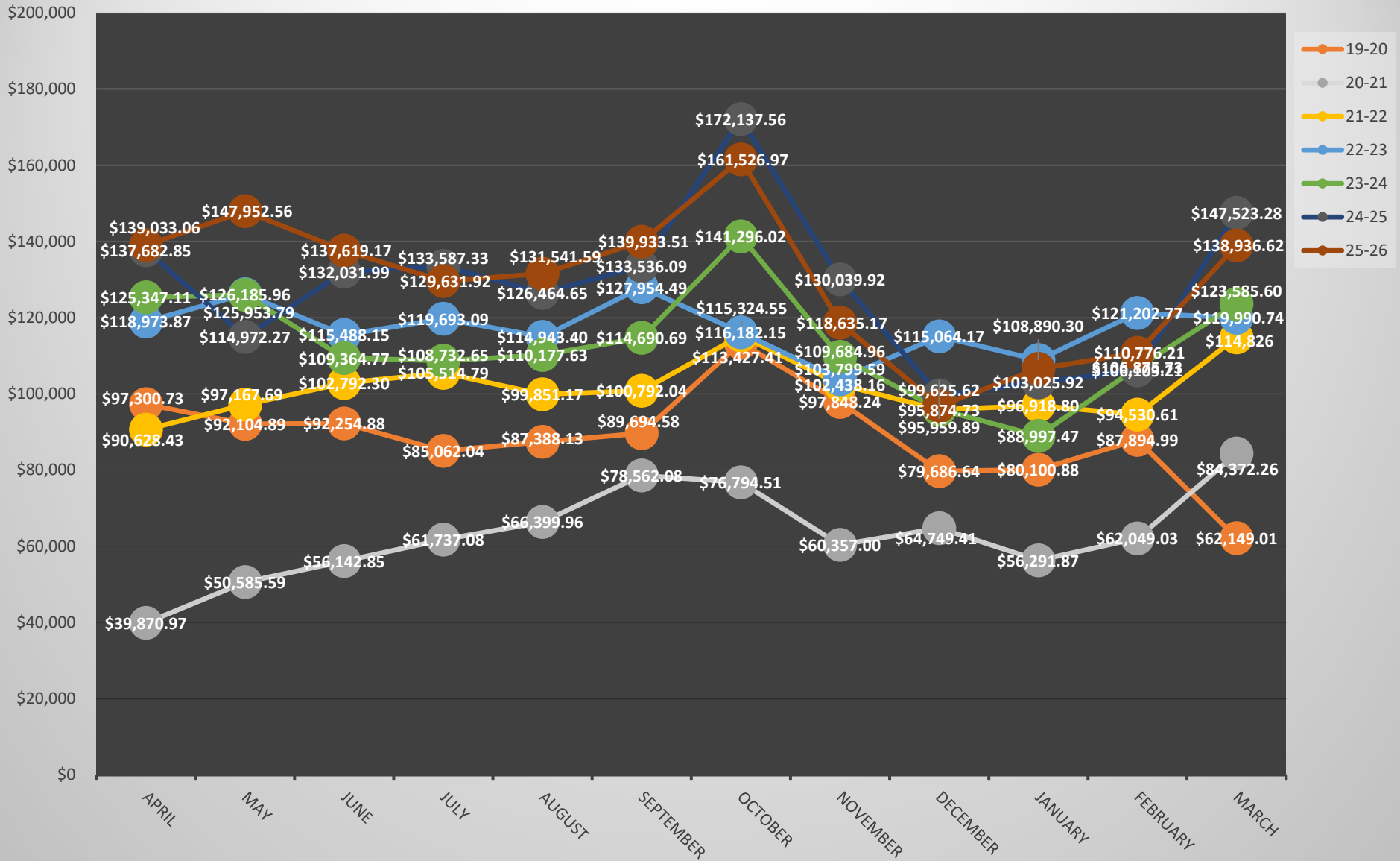
						Budget Notes
Staffing (payroll, taxes, benefits)	81,100	120,000	124,000	132,000	134,500	Includes wages, payroll taxes and benefits
Workers Comp and Liab. Ins.	2,500	8,000	8,500	9,000	9,000	Annual insurance premiums for workers comp. and board liability.
Professional Services	15,000	32,000	36,000	37,000	37,000	Accounting, legal and audit services for TDA.

Total Operations & Admin. 98,600 160,000 168,500 178,000 180,500

Total Expenses 1,536,000 1,717,500 2,258,500 2,003,000 1,865,000

Difference 0 0 0 0 0

Rowan County Occupancy Tax: Appendix A



Totals: 2020 - \$757,912.61 2021 - \$1,216,659.27 2022 - \$1,408,368.68 2023 - \$1,360,666.31 2024 - \$1,536,736.69 2025 - \$1,559,000.20

Rowan County Tourism
 5 Year Tourism Operations as a percentage of the budget
 Appendix B

	Fiscal Year 2022-23		Fiscal Year 2023-24		Fiscal Year 2024-25		Fiscal Year 2025-26		Fiscal Year 2026-27	
<i>Budget Category</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>Percent of Budget</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>Percent of Budget</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>Percent of Budget</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>Percent of Budget</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>Percent of Budget</i>
Core Budget	\$1,512,600		\$1,711,000		\$1,758,500		\$2,003,000		\$1,865,000	
<i>Tourism Staffing</i>	\$566,600	37.5%	\$706,500	41.3%	\$716,500	40.7%	\$732,000	36.5%	\$740,000	39.7%
<i>Sales & Marketing</i>	\$470,000	31.1%	\$437,000	25.5%	\$450,000	25.6%	\$460,000	23.0%	\$437,500	23.5%
<i>Programs & Services</i>	\$232,000	15.3%	\$269,000	15.7%	\$274,000	15.6%	\$314,000	15.7%	\$233,500	12.5%
<i>Tourism Development</i>	\$200,000	13.2%	\$250,000	14.6%	\$250,000	14.2%	\$400,000	20.0%	\$382,000	20.5%
<i>Administrative</i>	\$44,000	2.9%	\$48,500	2.8%	\$68,000	3.9%	\$97,000	4.8%	\$72,000	3.9%

Rowan County Tourism
Fiscal Year 2026-2027
Capital Budget
Appendix C

General Budget Allocation		FY 2026-27	Budget Notes
Capital Funding		382,000.00	Appropriation from TDA General Budget.
Total		382,000.00	
Expenses		Budget Notes	
Dan Nicholas Development		150,000.00	Year 1 of 10 of proposed Dan Nicholas Partnership
Railwalk Development		150,000.00	Year 2 of 5 year interlocal agreement with Rowan County
Agritourism Product Development		20,000.00	Agritourism development grants
New Website		13,500.00	Redesign of website and AI integration
Granite Quarry Civic Park		20,000.00	Year 1 of 5 for Granite Park Development
Directional Tourism Signage		12,000.00	Final portion of signage program; Spencer town park
Capital Operations		9,500.00	Maintenance and utilities for Railwalk and Farmer's Market
Miscellaneous		7,000.00	Unallocated funds
Total Marketing & Visitor Services		382,000.00	
Difference		0.00	

**Rowan County CVB Proposed Fiscal Year 2026-27 Budget
Appendix D**

Revenue	FY26-27
Tourism Support, Marketing-Visitors Services	1,087,000
Cooperative Marketing Partnerships	6,000
Miscellaneous	2,000
Total Income	1,095,000

Operating Expenses	
Destination Marketing	437,500
Wages-CVB Staff	436,000
Trolley	10,000
Visitor Center & Office Rent	28,000
Professional Development	5,000
Miscellaneous	2,500
Office Supplies	2,500
Payroll Taxes	33,500
Employee Benefits	120,000
Liab. Insurance Coverages	5,000
Professional Services	15,000
Total Operating Expenses	1,095,000

Difference	0
-------------------	----------

Rowan County Tourism
Fiscal Year 2026 - 2027
Destination Marketing Program Budget
Appendix E

General Budget Allocation		FY 2026 - 2027	Budget Notes
Destination Marketing Program Funding	437,500.00	Appropriation from CVB General Budget.	
Total	437,500.00		
Expenses		Budget Notes (Expenses)	
Tourism Partner Support	101,000.00	Tourism funds allocated for supporting local tourism events, partner events and individual towns and municipalities.	
Marketing & Group Sales	172,500.00	Tourism marketing funds allocated for marketing initiatives and group sales support. This includes social media, influencers, campaign support, printed materials, package reimbursements, and group sales funds.	
Marketing Programs and Support Services	164,000.00	Tourism funds allocated for supporting marketing programs. Includes Website, Hotel Booking Engine, Tourism/Visitor Apps, Communication Devices, Production support and Technology Support.	
Total Destination Marketing	437,500.00		
Difference	0.00		