CURRY COUNTY PROMOTIONAL ALLIANCE STRATEGIC MARKETING PLAN

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Curry County Economic Development

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PREFACE

The Plan, a strategic framework, has been designed to provide both short and long range approaches to assist in producing successful economic development impact from Curry County's livability, products, services and tourism.

The purpose for developing a Curry County Promotional Alliance Strategic Marketing Plan is twofold in nature:

- Develop, implement and sustain a marketing plan to promote the quality of Curry County tourism, products, services and livability.
- Create a singular distinction, strategic awareness, and differentiation in the mind of the target markets to increase business activity benefitting the Curry County economy.

The proposed Curry County Promotional alliance (CCPA) can be an "umbrella" effort and does not seek to compete with any existing efforts. Building on existing efforts and developing new coordinated promotional activities will benefit the stakeholders in and out of Curry County (i.e., residents, businesses, consumers, visitors and others). Curry has much to build on.

This Plan is based in rigorous data research. John Adams pointed out that "facts are stubborn things." He is right in that through careful and objective examination of facts we often derive conclusions not based on anecdotal information or emotional responses. A very large body of facts, data, was discovered in the course of research for this Plan development (see Appendices). Much is included herein but it would take many more pages to compile all the findings.

Many dozens of strategic planning efforts from other areas across the U.S. were reviewed. Where it makes good sense, we "borrowed" ideas as appropriate for Curry County. The takeaway here is that we found a demonstrable increase in the creation and execution of these plans across the American landscape. We need to do the same in Curry.

Derivation of this Plan also benefits from face-to-face meetings with a variety of county groups and stakeholders to hear their thoughts and ideas. Every attempt was made to include many of these into the recommendations.

We urge a thorough review of this Plan and the supporting materials with an open mind regarding the findings and recommendations. And we encourage continued discussion, deliberation and collaboration with Curry County's economic development partners in livability, products, services and tourism to achieve the long-term success that the county deserves.

Introduction

Research in support of this Plan, a strategic framework, is rooted in the proposition that countywide coordination of promotional resources can and should be leveraged; fostering additional dollars to flow into the economy and raising the awareness of the many opportunities afforded to travelers and residents in Curry County. Those dollars will change hands frequently in the regional economy due to spending by residents and others. Jobs will be created and the overall opportunity for achieving a higher quality of living across the entire county will be realized. Economic development efforts will be strengthened by bringing together and providing a level of comprehensive planning and coordination of the various promotional efforts that now exist. Further, there is a great opportunity to capitalize on the array of quality products and services not covered under existing efforts.

Tourism is a source of revenue for individuals and businesses in the county but not the only source. Indeed, some may be surprised to find just exactly where tourism stands in relation to other revenue sources (i.e., 2.2% of overall personal income, 8% of wages, annual average wages of $12,618 vs. $ 29,186 for all wages in the county). We need to grow tourism along with other revenue sources to provide an even higher level of average wages for county residents and to introduce greater counter-cyclical business activity. Given the nature and draw of tourism, it can help to foster opportunities to bolster sales of products, services and livability aspects of this county.

Assessment Overview

Curry is a county of great diversity. We see all the highs and the lows experienced in many other areas of America. Examination of data shows us Curry's strengths and weaknesses. The growth in population of seniors and retired people has brought considerable income to that segment of the county's population; or perhaps it is more accurate to say they brought it with them. Dividends, Interest and Rent and Personal Current Transfer Receipts account for nearly 60% of income in the county. Private Earnings account for 37% of total Personal Income in the county. Tourism accounts for 8% of earned income or 2% of all sources of income in the county.

We also see that unemployment is very high and that there are issues of poverty and homelessness. The county is rated as "distressed." The decline in revenues from natural resources extraction over time has reduced the opportunities for earning a decent wage. Even manufacturing has slipped by 6% since 2000. We see the shift to more and more lower paid service industry jobs. The average wage for someone working in tourism is below the living wage standards. The downturn in the economy due to the recession certainly has taken its toll.

However, Curry stands out in a very positive way simply by its natural beauty. It's that natural beauty that provides the backdrop for a growing eco-tourism opportunity. Even though tourism does not lead in revenue production for the county's residents, it does provide a particularly solid launch point to build up tourism and to have an impact on sales of products, use of services and a great place to live. Indeed, the growing number of eco-tourists tends to be more financially upscale and willing to spend more for the right set of experiences. Many are seeking a higher quality of life that the region provides.

Worth noting is that eco-tourism has a large knowledge-worker component. Servicing the eco-tourist requires more than a hot dog stand and a rack of brochures at the side of the road. These are sophisticated travelers that demand and expect professional treatment, high levels of

knowledge about an area's experiences and a solid base of website usage in support of their wants and needs. Expanded skill sets include management, research and writing, IT, construction, public speaking, public safety, art and other unexpected implications for nurturing this new approach to travel.

As more folks "discover" Curry (for example, eco-tourists), there is an opportunity to attract and retain these folks as residents. This is particularly true of professionals that can work from home using the internet. It is already happening and we know this based on anecdotal information (these positions are not tracked by the Employment Development Department).

Curry would be a great place for development of green businesses and is another reason to entice the eco-tourist traveler to live in Curry and to invest in green technologies, creating jobs in a fast growing industry. This could reverse the significant decline in manufacturing jobs seen since 2000. Many financial incentives are now available for green industry development.

Timber extraction and processing are not likely to return to the heyday of the past. Fisheries have the potential to rebound due natural cycles, growing awareness and management. Sport fishing, is likely to remain as a source for attracting tourists; so, too, with hunting. Fishermen and hunters spend fairly liberally when here. We need to make sure they know we're open for business.

Curry sits on some of the most beautiful coast and forest land on the west coast. We can exploit and share this resource without destroying it (i.e., eco-tourism). It is a new form of natural resource extraction. In this approach the natural resource remains and can be "extracted" over and over.

Stakeholders
It might fairly be said that everyone in Curry County, who visits the county or purchases something in or from the county is a stakeholder. We offer the following as primary beneficiaries of the economic development that will be derived from applying the Strategic Plan.

- Curry County Promotional Alliance (CCPA) Leadership Group
- Strategic plan implementation participants
- Chambers of Commerce and Other Promotional Organizations
- Tourist Attractions—Culture & Arts, Outdoor Activities
- Lodging—Bread & Breakfast, Rental Home or Condominium, Hotel/Motel/RV
- Government (state, county and city)
- Restaurants
- Retail Shops
- Product Manufacturers
- Service Providers
- Real Estate
- County Residents
- Education
- Healthcare providers
- Tourists
- Consumers

Vision Statement
Curry County Economic Development provided the following vision statements pertinent to the interrelated segments of this Plan.

Vision for Tourism	To work proactively to grow the destination travel component of the county economy, setting out to become a premier destinations experience-combining nature, adventure, heritage, and culture-and to attract high value visitors.
Vision for Quality Products	To develop comprehensive standards awareness for accommodations, guides, attractions, dining establishments, services and Curry County made products.
Vision for Services	To build awareness for opportunities to establish new and unique services in the county. To partner and collaborate with existing service providers to enhance the quality of those services and those who are being served.
Vision for Livability	To work with local governments, non-profits and organizations that will effectively raise the social quality of Curry County.
Vision for Partnerships	To collaborate, support and nurture relationships with local, regional and state tourism partners. To build effective communications with county and regional stakeholders, businesses and the public.

Goal 1: Countywide coordination of promotional efforts
The concept of "consolidated promotion" recognizes that a stronger promotional program—including counties and regions—results when all interests, market segments and business interests are coordinated under one collaborative umbrella program to effectively leverage results.

Successful countywide promotional efforts today seek to produce regional marketing partnerships that can deliver more motivational attractions and visitor attributes to entice the visitor/consumer. This is the principal benefit of strong, aligned and integrated relationships between the chambers of commerce, America's Wild Rivers Coast and other promotional organizations working together under a collaborative promotional effort.

Rather than the stand-alone efforts of one community or one market segment, such as cultural tourism and the arts, restaurants, nightlife, or special leisure markets, the strengths of Curry County's collective diversity will offer multiple opportunities for today's tourists, products, services and livability; and at the same time provide greater funding resources to reach multiple, mutual objectives. Each entity can still provide their unique way of delivering a message but all would benefit from having a targeted and coordinated message to share.

Curry County residents already have formed an ad hoc alliance, the CCPA. The CCPA would benefit from a more formal organizational structure and official recognition by local governments and promotional organizations.

Strategy 1.1   Obtain resolutions of support for the CCPA

By being "duly sanctioned" the CCPA gains another level of authority and recognition for its intended purpose.

- ✓ Work with local governments and existing promotional organizations to gain official recognition of the CCPA. Create positive awareness, support and participation in the Chambers, Visitors Center and other marketing programs by attending their board, council or commissioner meetings with the explicit purpose of gaining a resolution of support and cooperation.

Strategy 1.2   Adopt a formal organizational status for the CCPA

By taking a next step to create a more formal structure for the CCPA, several things are likely to be more readily accomplished. For example, raising revenue to support the organization's programs (grants), establishing a set of rules for and orderly governance process (bylaws) and a "more sanctioned" and, therefore, official status in the community.

Several organizational approaches are suggested:

Advisory Committee

The Curry County Promotional Advisory Committee (CPAC) would be responsible for monitoring and making recommendations in developing countywide promotional programs, research funding, identify & submit grant requests, develop fundraising opportunities & support advocacy for dependent children. Initially, the CCPA would be chaired by the Curry County Economic Executive Director. Semi-annually the CPAC would report on the its status and plans to the Board of Commissioners.

Charitable/Educational Organization 501(c)(3)[1]

To be tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, an organization must be organized and operated exclusively for exempt purposes set forth in section 501(c)(3), and none of its earnings may inure to any private shareholder or individual. In addition, it may not be an *action organization*, i.e., it may not attempt to influence legislation as a substantial part of its activities and it may not participate in any campaign activity for or against political candidates. Organizations described in section 501(c)(3) are commonly referred to as *charitable organizations*. Organizations described in section 501(c)(3), other than testing for public safety organizations, are eligible to receive tax-deductible contributions in accordance with Code section 170.

The exempt purposes set forth in section 501(c)(3) are charitable, religious, educational, scientific, literary, testing for public safety, fostering national or international amateur sports competition, and preventing cruelty to children or animals. The term *charitable* is used in its generally accepted legal sense and includes relief of the poor, the distressed, or the underprivileged; advancement of religion; advancement of education or science; erecting or maintaining public buildings, monuments, or works; lessening the burdens of government; lessening neighborhood tensions; eliminating prejudice and discrimination; defending human and civil rights secured by law; and combating community deterioration and juvenile delinquency.

The organization must not be organized or operated for the benefit of private interests, and no part of a section 501(c)(3) organization's net earnings may inure to the benefit of any private

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[1] IRS 501(c)(3), http://www.irs.gov/charities/charitable/article/0,,id=96099,00.html, January 2009

shareholder or individual. If the organization engages in an excess benefit transaction with a person having substantial influence over the organization, an excise tax may be imposed on the person and any organization managers agreeing to the transaction. Section 501(c)(3) organizations are restricted in how much political and legislative (*lobbying*) activities they may conduct.

Social Welfare Organization 501(c)(4)[2]
To be tax-exempt as a social welfare organization described in Internal Revenue Code (IRC) section 501(c)(4), an organization must not be organized for profit and must be operated exclusively to promote social welfare. Pursuant to changes enacted as part of the Taxpayer Bill of Rights 2, the earnings of a section 501(c)(4) organization may not inure to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual. If the organization engages in an excess benefit transaction with a person having substantial influence over the organization, an excise tax may be imposed on the person and any managers agreeing to the transaction. See Introduction to IRC 4958 for more information about this excise tax. For a more detailed discussion of the exemption requirements for section 501(c)(4) organizations, see IRC 501(c)(4) Organizations.

To be operated exclusively to promote social welfare, an organization must operate primarily to further the common good and general welfare of the people of the community (such as by bringing about civic betterment and social improvements). For example, an organization that restricts the use of its facilities to employees of selected corporations and their guests is primarily benefiting a private group rather than the community and, therefore, does not qualify as a section 501(c)(4) organization. Similarly, an organization formed to represent member-tenants of an apartment complex does not qualify, since its activities benefit the member-tenants and not all tenants in the community, while an organization formed to promote the legal rights of all tenants in a particular community may qualify under section 501(c)(4) as a social welfare organization. An organization is not operated primarily for the promotion of social welfare if its primary activity is operating a social club for the benefit, pleasure, or recreation of its members, or is carrying on a business with the general public in a manner similar to organizations operated for profit.

Seeking legislation germane to the organization's programs is a permissible means of attaining social welfare purposes. Thus, a section 501(c)(4) social welfare organization may further its exempt purposes through lobbying as its primary activity without jeopardizing its exempt status. An organization that has lost its section 501(c)(3) status due to substantial attempts to influence legislation may not thereafter qualify as a section 501(c)(4) organization. In addition, a section 501(c)(4) organization that engages in lobbying may be required to either provide notice to its members regarding the percentage of dues paid that are applicable to lobbying activities or pay a proxy tax.

The promotion of social welfare does not include direct or indirect participation or intervention in political campaigns on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office. However, a section 501(c)(4) social welfare organization may engage in some political activities, so long as that is not its primary activity. However, any expenditure it makes for political activities may be subject to tax under section 527(f).

Business Leagues 501(c)(6)[3]
Section 501(c)(6) of the Internal Revenue Code provides for the exemption of business leagues, chambers of commerce, real estate boards, boards of trade, and professional football leagues,

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which are not organized for profit and no part of the net earnings of which inures to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual.

A business league is an association of persons having some common business interest, the purpose of which is to promote such common interest and not to engage in a regular business of a kind ordinarily carried on for profit. Trade associations and professional associations are business leagues. To be exempt, a business league's activities must be devoted to improving business conditions of one or more lines of business as distinguished from performing particular services for individual persons. No part of a business league's net earnings may inure to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual and it may not be organized for profit to engage in an activity ordinarily carried on for profit (even if the business is operated on a cooperative basis or produces only enough income to be self-sustaining). The term *line of business* generally refers either to an entire industry or to all components of an industry within a geographic area. It does not include a group composed of businesses that market a particular brand within an industry.

Chambers of commerce and boards of trade are organizations of the same general type as business leagues. They direct their efforts at promoting the common economic interests of all commercial enterprises in a trade or community, however.

Cooperatives 501(c)(12)[4]
IRC 501(c)(12) exempts the following organizations from federal income tax:

- benevolent life insurance associations of a purely local character
- mutual ditch or irrigation companies
- mutual or cooperative telephone companies
- mutual or cooperative electric companies
- "like organizations"

The phrase "of a purely local character" applies only to benevolent life insurance associations and organizations like them. To qualify for and maintain exemption under IRC 501(c)(12), all of the organizations described in above must receive 85 percent or more of their income from members for the sole purpose of meeting losses and expenses each year. Organizations that meet the requirements of IRC 501(c)(12) may apply for exemption from federal income tax on Form 1024.

Contributions to organizations that are exempt under IRC 501(c)(12) are not deductible as charitable contributions on the donor's income tax return.

Coalition[5]
A coalition is an alliance among individuals or groups, during which they cooperate in joint action, each in his/her own self-interest, joining forces together for a common cause. This alliance may be temporary or a matter of convenience. A coalition thus differs from a more formal covenant. A coalition may possibly described as a joining of 'factions', usually those with overlapping interests rather than opposing.

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[3] IRS 501(c)(6), http://www.irs.gov/charities/nonprofits/article/0,,id=96107,00.html, January 2009
[4] IRS 501(c)(12), http://www.irs.gov/irm/part7/ch10s14.html, August 2006
[5] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coalition

- ✓ The current CCPA group will need to make a decision as to which of the organizational approaches best suits the purpose. Today the group is operating as an alliance. A 501(c)(6) or a County Advisory Committee may very well be best choices.

Strategy 1.3   Adopt a CCPA governance structure (bylaws)

The CCPA effort will benefit from a more formal organizational structure. Governance is the action of developing and managing consistent, cohesive policies, processes and decision rights for a given area of responsibility. Governance along with professional organizational structures provides a formal mechanism for participative decision-making and increased accountability.

- ✓ Identify and adopt an organizational/governance structure of the CCPA to provide a formal governance structure (bylaws) and selection of the board directors. A sample set of bylaws can be found in Appendix 6—Sample Bylaws for a Not For Profit Organization.
- ✓ Implicit in this approach is the identification of members and a subsequent election of a board of directors and officers of the board.

Strategy 1.4   Implement jointly agreed to priorities for the CCPA

Priorities of the CCPA need to be set using the recommendations of the Plan. It will not be possible to implement all recommendations at one time. An estimated duration of 3 to 5 years will be required for implementation of the recommended strategies and actions of this Plan. Accomplishing these will require staff (volunteer and paid) and an estimate of time and dollars required for each.

- ✓ Develop a set of priorities and a resource plan to carry out the CCPA mission.
- ✓ Identify a jointly conducted pilot project under the auspices of the CCPA.

Goal 2: Tourism is a strategic component of an economic development strategy.

Organized properly, tourism activities can reinforce efforts to recruit new businesses and entrepreneurs to the Curry County by making them aware of community amenities that can also improve business operations. Tourism increases the tax base that helps pay for county and community amenities and services. It creates jobs and business opportunities for entry level people and entrepreneurs. Tourism helps to diversify the economy so that communities are no longer dependent on one or two industries.

Today's visitor may just be tomorrow's investor or resident. Sometimes business managers and owners first discover an area as a location for one of their business operations through a recreational visit to an area for golf, hunting, fishing or participation in local fairs and other events. Tourism development can be especially important to downtown revitalization efforts. The CCPA should look for these types of synergies between its tourism, products, services and livability promotional efforts.

The marketplace is full of choices for visitors and consumers creating a competition among cities, communities and states for their dollars. Our competitors are other counties that also have a significant amount of attractions such as amusement parks, beaches and mountains. However, we can compete with our small town appeal, abundant natural beauty and value-added pricing. In addition, we should collaborate within the county to package trips that are attractive to empty nesters, families and individuals planning reunions.

To ensure that our promotional attempts are as successful as possible, we need to continuously ask ourselves:

- What is Our Strategic Position?
- What are the industry trends that are impacting us?
- What is our competition for attracting visitors?
- Are we gaining or losing our share of corporate and leisure travel market share?
- Are our services emerging or maturing?
- Is, and how often is, our message reaching our potential customers?

Strategy 2.1   Curry County as a destination of choice for travelers.

The CCPA will work to ensure the success of its purpose by using seven guiding principles: Positioning, Credibility, Communications, Quality, Internal Marketing, Long-term Perspective and Repositioning. These seven principles are critical to building and promoting value. Taken together these principles will also stimulate interest and desire on the part of consumers to take action and visit.

- **Position** Curry County to be seen as the premiere place to acquire products and services; to vacation and live.

  - ✓ Continue to share the message of the many traveler experiences in the region. These opportunities reside within the county's borders but are also within short drives of the county. For example, look for opportunities to join with the promotion of the region's casinos/lodges (Elk and Smith River), Rogue River Creamery, Harry & David and nearby viticulture/wineries
  - ✓ Develop and promote more guided tours. Encourage local producers to offer tours of their facilities. Increase interpretive signage to appeal to the self-guided tourist.
  - ✓ Pursue promoting Curry County to seniors with disposable income that live here. Too often we find that residents of one part of the county have no understanding of the offerings found throughout the county.
  - ✓ Use print media, TV, radio, websites and web 2.0 to carry the message.

- **Credibility:** If it says Curry County, you can count on it being presented fairly and clearly: our businesses stand behind their promises. Our business leaders are key to building credibility, especially with those we want to come into our midst and spend money.

  Building credibility is a fundamental aspect of the leadership process. Themes of trust, honesty, sensitivity to diversity, sustaining hope, and engendering community are skills for anyone who works with people. With employees, with bosses, with customers, with vendors, with business partners, with family and friends ... we need to be credible with all the people in our lives to accomplish almost any objective we set for ourselves.

  - ✓ Build credibility as a daily activity that relies on each of us to do their part in every aspect of the chain of events that supports a quality tourism experience.

- **Communications:** All promotions will be provided in clear, easy to understand language. We encourage better and clearer communication between stakeholders, residents, operators

and travelers to bring a heightened understanding of issues, awareness of our high quality tourism experiences, increased support from local communities

Some examples might include:

- ✓ Produce a Curry County online e-zine (magazine) to leverage the growing power of the internet (e.g., www.visitcurrycounty.com). Use carefully selected images accompanied by language that focuses on "the experience" and not a hodge-podge of lists and unfocused language. Move away from "me too" websites that resemble a carnival-like atmosphere (unless it's actually a carnival).
- ✓ Develop a 365 day event online calendar—A comprehensive marketing calendar should list all major strategies by month, containing trade shows, sales forums and sales missions to be undertaken, media relations /advertising and direct mail placed, publications /collateral to be produced, major membership development initiatives, etc. This component will offer numerous opportunities for stakeholder participation and participation from other marketing alliances.
- ✓ Expand the use of interpretive signage to provide the opportunity for self-guided tours.
- ✓ Communications will reach beyond English-only. We are seeing more and more travelers from non-English speaking countries.

- **Quality:** If it says Curry County, you can count on it being of the highest quality. Quality is defined by the value a customer derives from a product or service. It is not defined by conformance to specification. Aristotle defined it as "quality is not an act, it is a habit."

  The list of answers to "what is quality?" obtained through the listening sessions is comprehensive and indicative of the many dimensions of this concept (see Appendix 3—Liatening Sessions).

  - ✓ Quality is at the heart of a successful promotional process. Quality must be built into each experience. Quality is the responsibility of each individual.

- **Internal marketing:** Every resident, shopkeeper, manufacturer and tour guide will act as a representative of Curry County because they will be educated on the many offerings of the county. Cross market Curry County offerings.

  - ✓ Encourage local restaurants, motels, resorts to carry locally produced products.
  - ✓ Provide a "Buy Local" shopping guide.

- **Long-term perspective:** Good things sometimes take time to plan, to put into action and to see the results. Whatever is done will be with an eye to how it impacts the future. This is one of the reasons we need to develop and use a set of metrics beyond what is currently available. More on this later.

  - ✓ Establish benchmarks for performance. Evaluate efforts over time using a set of metrics.

- **Repositioning:** Change is a fact of life. Periodic evaluation using data is critical and may lead to changes. This will be a learning organization and change will be embraced.

✓ Utilize an honest evaluation process so that we have a basis on which to make changes.

The art of setting yourself apart
Welcome to the *Era of the Brand*: The art of setting yourself apart from everyone else, making Curry County worth a special trip, an extended stay and a repeat visit.

Things have changed dramatically in how we now go about promoting our county. What used to work, no longer does. Here is what does work:

✓ Jettison the generic in all marketing efforts. Sell the sizzle not the steak.
✓ Don't be all things to all people (market segmentation).
✓ Find a niche and promote it (market differentiation).
✓ Focus on the experience. Success revolves around experiences based on activities NOT things to look at. The days of marketing lists are over. The usual list of historic downtown, fine restaurants, variety of lodging options, theater and/or music, specialty shops, antiques, galleries, museums, lakes, rivers or beach nearby, trails and trail systems, hiking and biking, special events, state parks nearby, camping, fishing, golf, kayaking, outdoor recreation, unique shops, etc. These could apply to tens of thousands of communities throughout North America.

   Note: The same list rule applies to economic development marketing: available land, work force training, educated work force, eager work force, available work force, inexpensive permitting, incentive programs, great quality of life, good place to live, work and play, good schools, close to major highways, broadband services, excellent recreation, inexpensive housing, close to major markets, available buildings, quality infrastructure. This list, once again, can apply to virtually any community anywhere.
✓ Separate your primary lure (what the customer can't get or do closer to home) from your diversionary activities (things we can do closer to home, but will do while visiting the area). The average visitor is active 14 hours a day, yet they only spend four to six hours on the primary lure that brought them to town. Then they spend 8 to 10 hours on diversionary activities. These are NOT primary lures:
   o Your location (geography-based marketing)
   o Historic downtowns
   o Scenic vistas. These are all part of the ambiance. Success revolves around activities (experiences).
✓ Increase focus on diversionary experiences. 80% of visitor spending takes place on diversionary activities. The top diversionary activity in the world is shopping, dining and entertainment in a pedestrian-friendly setting.
✓ Always promote the anchor tenant—the primary lure, then the diversions. Remember: lures cannot succeed without diversionary activities.
✓ Build promotional efforts on quality of the product, not marketing. Destination marketing organizations are now being forced into the product development arena.
✓ Ensure that a website is good enough to "close the sale." 71% of all Americans now have immediate internet access (216+ million people). 94% of web-enable people use the web to plan their travel. 70% are frustrated because they are looking for activities (experiences), and too many are marketing cities and counties.

What doesn't work also is now very clear. So… *why keep doing it?* For example, fruits and vegetables are not a brand: they are part of the ambiance and the phrase "something for everyone" results in mediocrity and ultimate failure. Avoid these words and phrases:

Explore	Right around the corner
Discover	Your playground
Outdoor recreation	So much history
Unlike anywhere else	Purely natural
So much to see and do	The place for all ages
The four season destination	...and so much more!
Where the seasons come to life	Home away from home
Historic downtown	A slice of heaven
Center of it all	It's all right here
Best kept secret	Life pure and simple
We have it all	The perfect getaway
Visit (name of town)	The place for families
Beauty and heritage	Start your vacation here
Naturally fun	Recreational paradise
Gateway	Take a look!
Close to everywhere	

Let us face it. The fact is that these could fit virtually any community anywhere. Like the word "unique," they are so overused they mean nothing anymore.

Strategy 2.2   Apply the principles of sustainable nature-based tourism

Increase the business volume of Curry County's tourism business partners and constituents. Focus on the rapidly growing eco-tourism market.

No city, county, state or federal government can sustain this effort on its own, although the effort must be approached in full recognition of all laws and regulations and benefits from official sanction. This approach is best-served by an organized grass-roots type of effort and may mean creation of a new entity solely for this purpose. Existing entities can be allies in the process but sometimes you simply have to start anew.

It is also noteworthy that the skill sets required for implementation of the new tourism elevate this to the knowledge industry category. Many of the jobs in the new tourism require advanced knowledge of marketing system development, communications, organization, information technology (IT), customer relationship marketing (CRM), leadership, culinary arts, biology, geology, and many other related skill sets.

The regional community and governmental entities can work together to:

- ✓ Craft a strategic framework to guide the development of this eco-tourism.
- ✓ Identify and mobilize funding for potential private eco-tourism investments. Eco-tourism enterprises, like most business ventures, need operating capital.
- ✓ Formulate fiscal policies to promote eco-tourism and to maximize its economic and environmental benefits. Governmental entities in conjunction with area community representatives can encourage public policies (such as visitor fees, regulations for tourism operations, and investment incentives and land-use zones for tourist facilities) that promote environmentally sound tourism as well as

community involvement in providing services and products such as guides, lodging, transport, and arts/crafts.
- ✓ Encourage exchange of information and know-how about eco-tourism opportunities and operations.
- ✓ Monitor and certify the performance of eco-tourism activities. Green tourism takes eco-tourism a step further, promoting environmentally responsible tourist operations that conserve energy, recycle waste, and instruct staff and tourists on proper behavior in parks and protected areas.
- ✓ Identify funds to do research on eco-tourism's developmental and environmental impact. Information is needed to demonstrate to decision-makers the economic contributions eco-tourism can make. Better understanding of the impact of eco-tourism is needed to regulate and enforce against environmentally damaging investments.[6]

Eco-tourism has the potential to touch many aspects of Curry and its residents in a positive way, if implemented in a holistic manner. This means addressing the complete cycle or chain of events related to eco-tourism. There is also the potential to develop a light manufacturing opportunity associated with branded ecotourism-related products from the area.

Tourism should CONTRIBUTE POSITIVELY to local communities and resources. Businesses should commit to excellence in eco-tourism quality. By adopting or reaffirming an environmental stewardship ethic for the business, owners will meet the expectations of their customers. Studies of eco-tourists confirm that these travelers care about the environment and support a number of conservation organizations. Businesses should focus on the importance of conserving both natural and cultural resources and enabling a greater harmony between human activities and nature. Some examples:

- ✓ Practice "green" purchasing. For example, favor vendors who offer recycled or recyclable products and minimal packaging.
- ✓ Reduce, Reuse, Recycle... and strive to "leave no trace."
- ✓ Train staff to lead by example. Be good environmental stewards and guide your customers toward low impact behaviors which contribute to resource conservation.
- ✓ Employ qualified and capable leaders for guided, interpretive programs. Knowing how to tell your story well is important. Eco-tourists are well educated and they want to learn by being immersed in a natural or cultural experience.
- ✓ Provide Nature Guide Training so that guides will be knowledgeable in discovering and identifying plants, area geology, animals and habitats.
- ✓ Contribute to the local economy by hiring people from the local area and "doing-business" with local businesses.
- ✓ Provide your staff with opportunities for training to upgrade their interpersonal, communications, interpretative and other professional skills.
- ✓ Provide Wilderness First Responder Training to instruct the guides on how to respond to emergencies in remote settings.
- ✓ Be actively involved in and contribute time, energy and resources to local, regional and statewide conservation efforts.
- ✓ Provide and patronize environmentally sensitive accommodations which, for example:
    - o Employ energy and water saving devices;

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[6] ibid, The Untamed Path

- o Provide interpretative information on local plants, animals, historic and other natural and cultural features; and
- o Maintain grounds using environmentally-friendly plant and pest management practices.
- ✓ Work cooperatively with other eco-tourism businesses in the area to ensure the sustainability of natural and cultural resources.
- ✓ Prepare visitors for nature experiences by providing them with information and educational materials about the environment, natural history and cultural characteristics of their destination and its people, so that when they leave eco-tourists will have a greater understanding and awareness of the places, people and environments they visit.
- ✓ Make sure your customers understand and obey all rules and regulations established by landowners and local resource managers. Manage tour groups in a manner consistent with environmental conditions. For example, a single guide is probably adequate for a group of 40 on a tour bus, but would be inadequate for the same group on a canoe trip in a sensitive area or under dangerous conditions.
- ✓ Travel in small groups to avoid adverse impact on the environment. Eco-tour operators should carefully match activities with appropriate resources. Sensitive areas, for example, should be used by small groups or individuals for low intensity, low impact activities. Spread tour activity over a wide area to avoid adverse environmental impact, maintain the quality of the experience for the visitor and distribute the economic benefits of tourism throughout the region.
- ✓ Enable a process of monitoring environmental impacts of eco-tourists and communicate problems to appropriate resource managers.
- ✓ Instill in visitors a sense of personal responsibility for the environment by creating visitor experiences that preserve the hospitality of Curry and encourage respect of traditions, customs and local regulations.

Strategy 2.4 Maximize the length and frequency of stay

The longer someone remains in the county, the greater their spending. The more time we have with them, the greater the opportunity to enhance the value of the visitor's experience. Increased spending provides for even more economic generation.

- ✓ Promote tourism, products and services by bundling (packaging) activities in new and creative ways (e.g., themes-based historical activities—lighthouses, battlegrounds, traditional food gathering sites, food sampling, etc.).
- ✓ Provide a website where the traveler can assemble their own set of experiences based on a theme of their choosing. Then based on their selections offer up other activities. Let them save that package and return to it later to add to it or modify it.
- ✓ Increase use of interpretive signage in a fashion that leads the traveler to other related locations.
- ✓ Ensure that any stay is a quality experience, one that beckons the traveler to "stay just one more day" or to return soon.

Strategy 2.5   Develop and sustain a "Buy Curry" promotional campaign

Quite a variety of products are made in Curry. They range from food to textiles to machinery to… well, you name it. Today there is no one focal point for promoting Curry products.

- ✓ Promote Curry products using a one-stop website just for this purpose. Make it a part of the www.visitcurrycounty.com site.

- ✓ Ensure inclusion of the "Buy Curry" promotion with trade-shows attended by the chambers and economic development.

Strategy 2.6   Develop a Livability promotion that highlights Curry services.

Services availability in the county can be found in the Yellow Pages, chamber directories, and through advertisements. However, this is not the same as presenting a coherent listing and description of those services that might appeal to those persons interested in living in the county. But it has to be more than just a list or directory. We need to demonstrate through short vignettes just how when integrated together these services provide the necessary infrastructure for a quality living situation.

- ✓ Develop a section in the www.visitcurrycounty.com website that tells the story of livability in the county. Use language that targets entrepreneurs wishing to obtain a higher quality of life for their families. Paint the picture of livability through personal stories that talk to safety, schools, availability of services (such as healthcare, higher education, high-speed telecommunications and locations for businesses.
- ✓ Make sure this section of the website points to other resources that support economic investment in the county.
- ✓ Piggy-back with real estate promotions by having real estate agents link to this section of the website as part of their advertising.
- ✓ Craft guidelines for livability promotional activities.

Strategy 2.9   Use relationship marketing across all categories

Constructive relationships with select target customers are more important to long-term economic success than acquiring widespread public awareness. Relationship marketing is the process of attracting, maintaining, and enhancing relationships with these key people.

Sometimes, in our haste to gain media visibility, we sometimes overlook our most important marketing resource—relationships with people. This is ironic since the backbone of our success is based on commitments made by volunteers, legislators, lay leaders, and staff. Emerging marketing research indicates that heightened public awareness of the destination attractions is only the first step in the marketing process.

The most powerful marketing tools are effective programs that address real issues and needs of our customers. Without effective programs, marketing our county and developing relationships will not be effective. We must plan programs that include an evaluation that measures the specific impact that programs have on the lives of people. The questions "What differences will it and did it make?" must be asked before and after the program. The impact must then be communicated to target customers.

Relationship marketing is a five-part process which involves:

- ✓ Select target customers.
- ✓ Identify a specific message to deliver to the targeted group of customers.
- ✓ Identify obstacles or barriers that may hinder the delivery or positive reception of the messages.
- ✓ Deliver the promotional message using the communication channel(s) the shows the most impact with that selected target group.
- ✓ Evaluate the effectiveness of efforts.

Strategy 2.10 Everyone in Curry County is part of the promotional team effort

All too often we still hear, "There's nothing to do," especially for many of our younger residents or even hotel clerks. The Hospitality 101 program will help with this, especially for wait staff and front desk clerks. But there may also be an opportunity to bring younger residents into this part of the promotional activity (see Strategy 2.11).

- ✓ Educate residents and anyone that might interface with visitors on the marketable assets of Curry County. Do this through seminars (maybe even part of school or senior center activities), Hospitality 101, public service announcements, promotional videos, newspaper articles and reminding those around us of the many activities and experiences available.

Strategy 2.11 Leverage and use the energies and talents of youth

High school students must complete a community project as part of the requirement for graduation. Let us go into the schools and bring this opportunity to the students, perhaps as a competition. For example, they can help by taking oral histories and writing them up (post them on the www.visitcurrycounty.com website), documenting the historical significance of many sites in the county, preparing signage using a pre-defined set of attributes or participating in the creation of videos (YouTube).

- ✓ Get kids involved in understanding and promoting Curry County.
- ✓ Look to high school projects and community college students as possible interns for CCPA projects.

Strategy 2.12 Increase involvement of seniors

Curry has a population of very active seniors. Many seek out opportunities to participate in community actives to both make a contribution as well as for the social aspects.

- ✓ Engage with seniors to take advantage of their experience and knowledge.
- ✓ Explore opportunities for youth and seniors to work together.

Strategy 2.13 Understand the relationship of fishing to the economy

Rural economies are suffering from the recession, as seen by rising unemployment rates. Rural economies historically go through very broad swings in their local economies. How might we use fishing (commercial and sport) to mitigate that swing and craft counter-cyclical revenue streams?

Rural economies are attracting more professionals due to area livability. How might we use fishing to further induce this category of inbound migration?

We need to develop strategies so we can help local people stay working where they want to be. Rural economies need to build businesses based on their unique assets (e.g., coastal and river fisheries) to attract/retain younger workers and to help keep families together. Managing natural resources (e.g., fisheries) and the watershed is an effective and efficient way to sustain the local economy and environmental health. Healthy watersheds are vital for a healthy environment and economy. Everything that is done in a watershed affects the watershed's system. The value of clean water and air, plentiful fish and wildlife, are ecosystem services of direct economic and social benefit to the community.

- ✓ Undertake a study to develop a set of recommendations for fostering sustainability and improvements to the fishing industry sector and its relationship to the local economy.
- ✓ Develop a promotional campaign that targets fishermen.

Goal 3: Innovative and integrated use of new technology and traditional media
The influence paradigm has changed… dramatically. We have moved from a linearity model to a networked model. This has occurred in a remarkably small timeframe. Curry's competition is already underway with use of this new way of doing promotion, and it is highly effective. It is much more effective per dollar expended than traditional promotional approaches. It truly takes advantage of the market segment with money and a desire to spend it.

Strategy 3.1   Take advantage of the new model of influence
Every day the use of email and websites is becoming more the norm. We already presented factors that lend themselves to more successful use of these technologies (see Strategy 2.1 Curry County as a destination of choice for travelers). Web 2.0 (social networking) is emerging as one of the most powerful promotional tools ever seen. The competition is using it. So should the CCPA.

- ✓ Leverage the power of the internet: email and websites
- ✓ Launch and use www.visitcurrycounty.com as a information portal.
- ✓ Establish a social networking site to increase ROI from promotional efforts.

Strategy 3.2   Targeted use of traditional media
There is still a place for traditional print media, although it is rapidly falling in the face of the use of internet technologies. Smaller runs of brochures and other print media, decreased use of newspaper advertisements and even moving promotional dollars away from radio and TV is becoming more widely accepted. Typically, these approaches are general in their targets and lack the specificity now required for targeting segmented market groups.

- ✓ Carefully examine the use of traditional media but don't *"put the baby out with the bath water."* There is still a role for traditional media, although it is diminishing in its ROI and the use of the internet now reaches more of the population and can be highly targeted.

Goal 4: Revenue to support CCPA actions
In kind support will likely be forthcoming but many activities will require financial support. Once the CCPA sets its priorities and creates a project plan, then we will know to what degree funding may be required.

Strategy 4.1   Understand CCPA priorities and establish funding needs
Prior to seeking funding, the CCPA needs to establish its priorities. It is also understood that any moves to increase a tax base to improve funding opportunities must be pursued in a most careful manner.

- ✓ Explore the value of a county area lodging tax (not to be imposed for areas already with such a tax mechanism in place)
- ✓ Explore financial contributions from CCPA members.
- ✓ Explore grant opportunities.

Goal 5: Continuous improvement
An ongoing and periodic Consolidated Marketing Analysis is recommended. This management report tracks all productivity categories, comparing the annual goal for each program, against monthly and year to date results. Evaluation of this nature requires establishment of a set of metrics and monitoring processes.

Strategy 5.1   Develop and apply a set of evaluation metrics
Develop a set of evaluation metrics to be used to validate success of marketing campaigns and to be used to identify additional or modified campaigns over time.

- ✓ The CCPA should measure its success by developing a set of metrics and consistently evaluating and reporting on: promotional activity, marketing productivity, monthly or more frequent web analytics, and CCPA Annual Performance Survey (see Appendix 5 for a sample evaluation survey)

Recommendation for a CCPA start-up project
Let us tap into the energies of youth and the wisdom/experience of seniors. A modest first project under the CCPA's auspices might be one that brings together students and seniors. A "My Curry County" project competition by students with seniors as advisors would develop a 2 minute video promoting Curry County. Even the naming of the project could be a competition held in advance of the video preparation.

Students would work with advisors (seniors) to produce this video to be posted on www.visitcurrycounty.com and on YouTube. This might also serve as a senior project. Newspaper articles could inform the community as to the project and its status, eventually reporting out the winners. The articles would contain the website link. The CCPA board of directors would choose 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners. Awards could be modest, say $75 for first place, $50 for second and $25 for third.

In addition, get youth involved in the creation of a "My Curry County" Facebook account with an emphasis on youth related activities in the county (relates to livability but also gets youth involved in understanding their county). This would need to be a supervised and directed undertaking. Once established, and monitored, it could be a valuable way for the youth of the county to have a virtual space to keep up with and participate in WSUP in the county (BTW -- that's "what's up" for the non-informed).