City of Sonora
"Queen of the Southern Mines"
94 North Washington Street
Sonora, California 95370

Area Code 209
Administrator 532-6115
Administration 532-4541
Finance 532-4541
Building/Planning . . 532-3508
Police 532-8143
Fire 532-7432
Public Works 532-2922
Cemetery 532-4492
Opera Hall 532-7725
Special Programs . . 532-7725
Redevelopment 532-7725
www.sonoraca.com

DATE: April 15, 2019

TO: Honorable Mayor and Council Members

FROM: Timothy A. Miller, City Administrator

SUBJECT: Tuolumne County Visitor's Bureau

In 1983, members of the Tuolumne County Lodging Association proposed and supported an increase in the transient occupancy tax (TOT) from 6% to 8%. The TOT was subsequently increased and the County of Tuolumne and City of Sonora entered into an agreement with the Tuolumne County Visitor's Bureau (TCVB). That agreement called for 25% of the 8% total TOT to go to the TCVB for the purpose of increasing tourism throughout all areas of the unincorporated County of Tuolumne and within the City of Sonora.

On June 8, 2010, the voters of both the County and City approved another increase in the TOT from 8% to 10% to ensure that visitors to the community helped pay a greater share of the costs associated with the governmental services they utilize. Since 2010, 25% of the 10% total TOT has been provided to the TCVB by the County and City consistent with the original tourism agreement

The original Agreement was amended in 2018 and updated in order to: 1) reflect that the TOT rate was increased from 8% to 10% in 2010; 2) memorialize the current practice of transferring 25% of the current 10% TOT collected to the TCVB; and 3) add provisions that provide greater input from and accountability to the City and County.

Applicable provisions include City and County input on TCVB's draft 2-year marketing plan; and, annual financial reports by the TCVB submitted to the City and County within two months of the end of the TCVB's fiscal year. Lisa Mayo, President and Chief Executive Officer of the TCVB will be presenting the 2-year preliminary budget summary and 2-year Destination Marketing Plan.

TUOLUMNE COUNTY VISITORS BUREAU BUDGET		
	2019/2020	2020/2021
Income		
Partnership Co-ops	18,500	18,500
Partnership Dues	37,750	40,000
Retail Sales	3,000	3,000
TOT Income - City of Sonora	135,000	150,000
TOT Income - County	1,175,000	1,280,750
Vacation Planner	30,000	34,000
Total Income	**$ 1,399,250**	**$ 1,526,250**
Cost of Goods Sold	1,550	1,850
Gross Income	**$ 1,397,700**	**$ 1,524,400**
Expenses		
Automobile	4,800	6,050
Conference & Education	14,780	14,300
Insurance	3,500	4,100
Marketing		
Community Relations	75,000	75,000
Digital Content Development	32,500	27,500
Dues	12,125	15,900
E-Newsletter	750	750
Film Commission Expenses	7,500	7,500
Internet Marketing	72,700	74,700
Print Ads	81,000	80,125
Public Relations	92,650	105,200
Radio	21,000	21,000
Regional Co-op Marketing	22,500	22,500
Research	200	36,200
Special Promotions	10,000	15,000
Strategic Partnerships	75,000	75,000
Television	131,000	139,200
Travel Shows & Conventions	40,800	40,450
Travel Trade	50,000	60,000
Vacation Planner & Other Collateral Assets	84,000	88,000
Website & Mobile Technology	30,050	26,050
Total Marketing	**$ 838,775**	**$ 910,075**
Office Expense	89,650	92,950
Partnership Expense	12,550	14,800
Payroll	433,645	482,125
Total Expenses	**$ 1,397,700**	**$ 1,524,400**
Net Income	**$ -**	**$ -**

Tuolumne County Visitors Bureau
Destination Marketing Plan 2019/2020 - 2020/2021

The Tuolumne County Visitors Bureau

The Tuolumne County Visitors Bureau (TCVB) is a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) whose primary role is to position and market Tuolumne County as an easily accessible year-round visitor destination for leisure travelers and the meetings industry. The TCVB is the advocacy and promotional voice for Tuolumne County's tourism industry for both large and small businesses whose existence depends on tourism.

The tourism industry is Tuolumne County's economic powerhouse. According to Dean Runyan Associates, in 2017 direct travel spending in Tuolumne County was over $253 million. In that same year, local tax revenue generated by travel spending was $8.7 million. Nearly 3700 people are employed by the tourism industry in Tuolumne County. Tourism is essential for the economic health of Tuolumne County.

Mission Statement

To enhance economic growth by increasing tourism to Tuolumne County.

Community Statement: The TCVB supports the community through sponsorships. The TCVB team members take pride in being part of Tuolumne County by taking an active role in making the community vibrant and successful.

Strategic Statement: As an effort to align with DMO trends, the TCVB takes an active role in industry conferences, continued education, multi-year planning, and strategic partnerships.

Vision Statement: The TCVB is the premiere authority for marketing Tuolumne County's tourism assets.

Inspiration Statement: The TCVB team is passionate about and inspired by High Sierra Adventures, Yosemite Explorations, and Gold Country Discoveries.

TCVB Team

The TCVB is a private, non-profit 501(c)6 Mutual Benefit Corporation and is led by a Board of Directors.

2018-2019 Board of Directors:

Chair – Margaret Davis, The Junction Shopping Center
Vice Chair – Mark Truppner, Clarke Broadcasting
Treasurer – Katie Fromm, Dodge Ridge Ski Resort
Secretary – Amelia Harrison, Tuolumne County Chamber of Commerce

Lodging Directors:

District 1 - Katie Dunn, Airbnb
District 2 - Launa Valente, Lazy Z Resort
District 3 - Ronaldo Pascual, Black Oak Casino Resort
District 3 - Stephanie McCaffrey, McCaffrey House Bed & Breakfast

District 4 - Teri Marshall, Evergreen Lodge and Rush Creek Lodge
District 4 - Kathy Hakl, Best Western PLUS Sonora Oaks Hotel & Conference Center
District 5 - Stephen Willey, National Hotel and Restaurant
At Large Directors:
Betsy Hurst-Younger, Century 21 Wildwood Properties
Judy Grossman, Brush and Cork

The TCVB Team currently has four full-time staff and eight part-time and/or seasonal staff:
Full-time:
President/CEO, Lisa Mayo
Marketing Manager, Jennifer Lopez
Communications & Tourism Manager, Katie Kirkland
Office & Membership Manager, Debbe Pallante
Part-time:
Digital Content Coordinator, Mackenzie Rodgers
Film Liaison, Bethany Wilkinson
Special Projects Coordinator, Anna Davies
Visitor Services Team: Diane Rock, Richard Haratani, Dave Gookin, Kate Greene, Jim O'Neal

Marketing

***Current Tag Line*:** Tuolumne County - One Destination, Three Incredible Vacations

This tag line has been used for the last two years and continues to be a strategic and straightforward way to promote the vastness of Tuolumne County's geography and offerings. Each vacation correlates with one of Tuolumne County's major highways: Highway 49 and the Gold Country, Highway 120 and Yosemite, Highway 108 and the High Sierra.

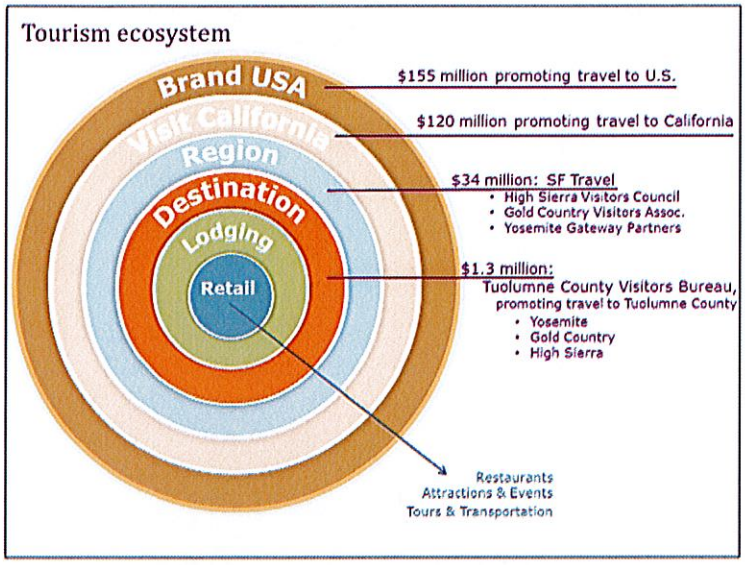
Key Initiatives for 2019/20 and 2020/21:

- Develop a stewardship and sustainable travel platform that minimizes negative impact of over-tourism to the County's natural, historical and cultural resources.
- Create programs that will increase visitation during times when there is low occupancy. Meetings continue to be a key component of working towards increasing occupancy midweek and at off-peak times.
- Continue to work with media on key messaging about visiting all areas of Tuolumne County during off-peak times and midweek. This includes October through May and mid-week year-round.

The Plan

The TCVB Team has developed a two-year budget outlining various marketing programs to invite visitors to come to Tuolumne County for multi-day stays. Marketing is at the very core of the role of the TCVB. How we market our destination changes on a regular basis and an allowance to keep up with those changes is incorporated into the two-year budget. At the same time, there are traditional marketing programs that the TCVB continues to embrace and those, too, are reflected in the budget. The TCVB leverages marketing dollars at every relevant opportunity. An illustration of this can be seen in the Tourism Ecosystem graphic as the TCVB partners with each entity outlined, taking advantage of their much larger budgets and industry tested marketing programs.

It is especially noteworthy that the TCVB is now able to be more competitive by marketing internationally. International visitors are important as they stay longer and spend more money at the



destination. The goal with international marketing is to focus in on two to three international markets that are attainable and prime to increase visitation. The TCVB will make decisions based on airlift and Visit California's noted trends and opportunities. The TCVB has retained representation in the UK to help establish Tuolumne County as a new product and add-on to Yosemite travelers.

Of Note: The TCVB Budget for 2018-2019 shifted partway through the year to allow for tourism recovery efforts post Ferguson and Donnell Fires. The TCVB Board quickly voted to reallocate $40,000 in marketing funds specifically to a new marketing plan with urgency for gaining back summertime visitors. This plan included Visit California digital banners and sponsorships, Sunset Magazine print and digital ads, strategic Search Engine Marketing spend, additional Facebook Advertising spend, Central Valley and Tri-Valley radio spots, increased spend with Yosemite Journal, a social media influencer campaign, participation in San Francisco Travel's New York Media Reception, and a press release put out on PR Newswire for information that Tuolumne County is open for visitors. Additional funds for tourism recovery were obtained through two grants from Visit California and supported additional programs.

The following information is outlined in the order it falls within the marketing section of the 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 Tuolumne County Visitors Bureau budget.

Community Relations: The TCVB has developed an official Community Sponsorship program that encourages event planners and other organizations to apply for funds to help with marketing events, promoting campaigns or other aspects of marketing. The Community Sponsorship program encourages community groups to partner with the TCVB benefitting both the group and the TCVB's mission. This benefit may include TCVB banners and/or booths at events, TCVB logo on event posters and websites, etc. One project that falls under Community Relations is the Tuolumne Adventure Trolley, a free trolley service provided on Saturdays May through September in partnership with Tuolumne County Transit Agency.

The TCVB has proactively promoted Community Relations program by sending information to potential recipients, discussing it on local radio, in the newspaper and on Facebook's Tourism Industry Partners group page. The program is also promoted when the TCVB gives presentations to local groups.

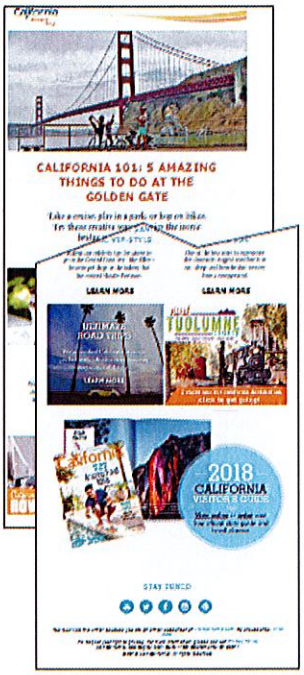
Digital Content Development: Content remains king and the TCVB has been creating libraries of professional photography including 360-degree, video, virtual reality and blogging to share out through social media, on our website and other industry sites such as Visit California. Content is constantly and consistently being uploaded to our media platforms where thousands of journalists can see and read uploaded content. Digital content development is ongoing. We have had incredible success in hosting bloggers and social media influencers and the budget will allow us to continue to invite and host these influencers. Video continues to grow in popularity and is becoming increasingly important to expand our video content to stay relevant.

Dues: The TCVB relies on many industry organizations to further the growth of the organization and to stay informed on the latest marketing trends and technology. Some associations provide direct industry

trade leads that enable us to grow our database and outreach. Some associations provide an advocacy benefit while others give us a direct platform for promoting Tuolumne County. We are actively involved in all associations we belong to or subscriptions that we maintain.

E-Newsletter: The TCVB website invites visitors to the site to sign up for a TCVB monthly e-newsletter. The e-newsletter informs them of the latest happenings and visitor opportunities. It is a great, cost-effective way to directly reach those potential visitors who have already shown an interest in Tuolumne County. It is also a perfect platform for inviting visitors with a specific call to action.

Film Commission: The TCVB houses the Tuolumne County Film Commission and has a part-time Film Liaison. Participating in film industry events is important in order to keep Tuolumne County's name out there in the industry. It is also important to advertise in publications identified by the California Film Commission as key industry resources. We would like to have a familiarization ("fam") trip for a select group of film location scouts and/or producers. It is easiest to sell our locations when decision-makers have seen the area for themselves. The Film Liaison now serves on the Access Tuolumne Board.

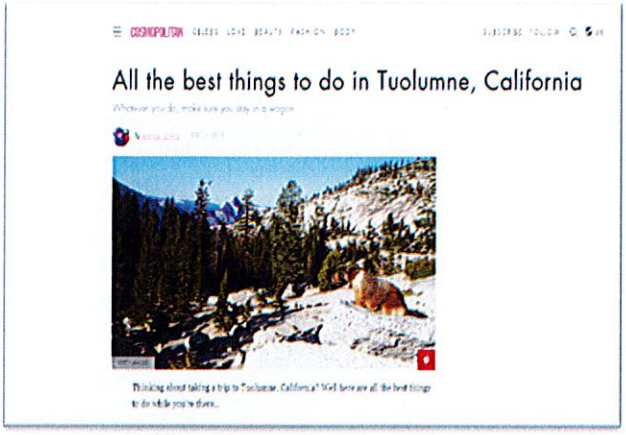


Internet Marketing: This two-year budget reflects the continuing shift of marketing dollars from print advertising to digital advertising. Digital advertising includes advertising on partner websites such as Visit California and San Francisco Travel as well as on niche market sites such as DogTrekker.com or Sunset.com. Advertising on Visit California platforms outperforms all other platforms. In 2019 through 2021 we will align our marketing efforts more with Visit California by increasing sponsorships of their newsletters and running display ads on their website. Also included in internet marketing is social media marketing with Facebook and Instagram. There has been limited advertising on Facebook in the past and Instagram followers have been completely organic. By advertising we can secure more followers, thereby getting more people to VisitTuolumne.com where they are exposed to all the County has to offer visitors. On the website, visitors are invited to book lodging. While we have in-house design capabilities there are instances where we can be more productive and efficient by working with a graphics designer. This has been taken into consideration for both internet marketing and for print ads.

Print Ads: The TCVB has seen remarkable success in various print publications that we plan to continue for at least the next two years. One of the benefits of some publications such as Sunset Magazine, VIA and the Yosemite Journal is that they provide reader leads so we can fulfill requests from those readers who saw our ads and would like more information on visiting. Another area that has been successful is doing travel section "takeovers" with the Bay Area News Group and San Francisco Chronicle, often in partnership with neighboring destinations. We are allowing enough room in the budget to continue doing this once per year over the next two years.

Public Relations: Recognizing public relations as a vital component to marketing outreach, the TCVB has significantly increased PR efforts to amplify messaging to journalists who can best tell the Tuolumne County story to potential visitors. This includes enlisting the assistance of highly regarded and well-known global PR platforms that allow us to post press releases, interact with media and provide analytics to gauge return on investment. It is very helpful to engage media and take it a step further and get them to experience Tuolumne County for themselves. Over the past year, the media interest in Tuolumne County has increased exponentially and we are seeing this as a continuing trend. We attribute much of this interest to putting more effort towards various press release programs and attending more media events where quality one on one time with media provides an opportunity to engage them.

Another contribution to the growing media trips is the TCVB's partnership with Black Diamond, a UK based marketing and public relations agency. The UK continues to be an important market. The benefits of hiring Black Diamond continue to be seen through online articles as well as planned upcoming familiarization trips with journalists, travel trade (tour operators/travel agents) and various airline representatives. In this market new product is highly sought after and Tuolumne County provides the appealing aspect of "new" product to explore. As we have seen successful results over the past year, the TCVB will retain the services of Black Diamond. Last year the TCVB hired a full-time Communications and Tourism Manager who, among other things, manages the media fam trips, the Black Diamond partnership and individual journalist visits.



Radio: The TCVB continues to work with KGO radio in San Francisco on multi-platform marketing campaigns. It is noteworthy that KGO is a great partner as they continuously contribute added value beyond any contracts we have with them. During times of crisis, they proactively reach out to us and offer free air spots to distribute the most appropriate messaging for whatever the circumstances might be. In addition to working with KGO, the TCVB is researching alternative radio outlets with varying target market segments to cover a wider range of audiences.

Regional Co-Op Marketing: The TCVB continues to be active members of two Visit California-sanctioned regional marketing groups: The Gold Country Visitors Association (GCVA) and the High Sierra Visitors Council (HSVC). In addition, the TCVB is part of the Yosemite Gateway Destinations.

Gold Country Visitors Association (GCVA): Lisa Mayo, President/CEO of the TCVB is President of the GCVA and is involved in all aspects of the organization. The GCVA is constantly evolving but continues to have international outreach focused on Canada which Tuolumne County benefits from by having press visit the region. The GCVA is also looking to have increased video creation and distribution opportunities and recently began working with a Public Relations manager for more press opportunities for the region. Annually, members of GCVA partner together on a three-page ad for the Visit California Vacation Planner. Additionally, Lisa Mayo represents rural counties on Visit California's Rural Marketing Committee.

High Sierra Visitors Council (HSVC): The TCVB remains involved in the efforts of the HSVC. HSVC continues to retain international representation with Mn'Organisation, a public relations and marketing agency, in France that has given the TCVB several opportunities for hosting media and tour operators. The HSVC has also begun a partnership with Local Freshies which is a blogging site that encourages visitors to live like locals wherever they are visiting.

Yosemite Gateway Destinations: Not to be confused with Yosemite Gateway Partners, this group is made up of the Directors/CEOs of Tuolumne, Madera, Mariposa, and Mono County Visitor Bureaus. Yosemite National Park has funded the group to create ways to promote visiting the park at times when

visitors can have the best experience. Joint marketing projects include a video on how and when to visit Yosemite to get the most out of the visit.

Research: The TCVB would very much like to invest in research of our marketing programs. We have generally measured where we can such as transient occupancy tax growth or through reader leads but determining ROI is extremely challenging on many programs. This past year, funds were shifted to make a way for post-wildfire recovery efforts. However, we still feel that research is important to gauge the effectiveness of our marketing programs and we put it into the latter part of the two-year budget. There are several industry research agencies that we continue to research.

Special Promotions: Special promotions are generally those that come up during the year that may or may not be planned for.

Strategic Partnerships: The TCVB will continue to partner with San Francisco Travel. As the key gateway for international travel, it is important we remain closely partnered to take advantage of familiarization trip and media opportunities and stay top of mind with SF Travel staff who are helping to make decisions for incoming travelers. SF Travel continues to deliver opportunities to promote to China that the TCVB otherwise could not afford. They are also working with us to promote meetings. The TCVB will continue to work with Brand USA to strategically place Tuolumne County in front of key international markets (Canada and the UK) with top travel companies such as National Geographic and Expedia. The media assets we gain from Brand USA are exceptional and are curated for use on a variety of marketing platforms.

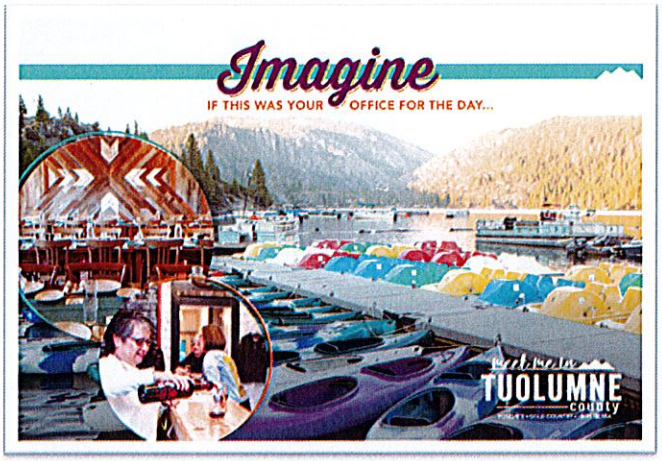
Television: For four years the TCVB has had television commercials in Sacramento and the Central Valley. In 2017/2018 the commercial coverage was expanded to include the Tri-Valley (Fremont, Livermore, etc.). We will look at expanding the commercial into other markets such as Los Angeles. We continue to get feedback from visitors who say they saw the commercial.

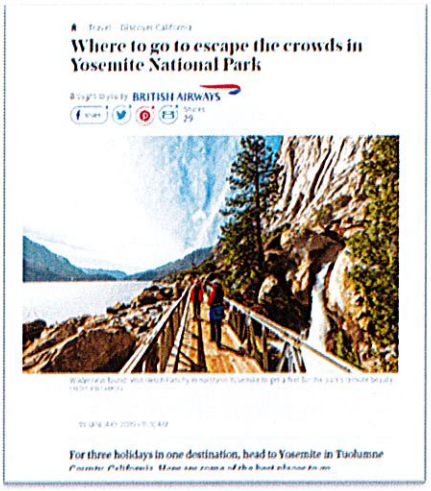
Travel Shows and Conventions: The TCVB continues to evaluate the effectiveness of travel shows for the consumer drive market. We will research other regional shows and festivals that may be exciting new alternatives, providing new audiences and potential new visitors. Other trade shows and conventions include those where the TCVB has direct access to media and/or tour operators and travel agents through prescheduled computer-generated appointments.

Travel Trade & Meeting Planners: Travel trade targets tour operators, travel agents and meeting planners to increase group tourism. The meetings market initiative focuses on promoting and increasing midweek and off-peak season occupancy. To track meetings the TCVB is providing meeting planners with an incentive for using the TCVB for the planning of their first meeting. Meeting planners like working with destination marketing organizations (DMOs) to assist in booking their events due to the complete information that the DMO can provide on the area. The TCVB created a mailer that was distributed to businesses in the Silicon Valley and is waiting for results of that to determine if this marketing platform should be done again. Advertising in various meeting planner outlets, participating in meeting planner events and continuing to be a member of Meeting Planners International Northern California Chapter will help elevate the knowledge that meeting planners have about Tuolumne County. The TCVB has a dedicated Meet Me in Tuolumne Facebook page and Pinterest board. The TCVB continues to be aligned with successful practices of meeting planners.

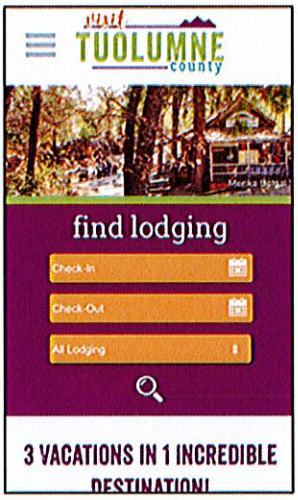
The Travel Trade category of the budget includes half of the Black Diamond contract that is dedicated to tour operator and travel agent outreach. This category also includes travel trade familiarization tours, advertisement opportunities with top tour companies and international travel agent trainings through Black Diamond. This past year Black Diamond has produced opportunities to promote Tuolumne County

through partners like British Airways and Virgin Holidays. These are things we can't do on our own and find immense value in by working with Black Diamond.





Vacation Planner and Other Collateral Assets: The Annual Vacation Planner continues to be in high demand and the TCVB will continue to create one each year according to demand. Graphic design and distribution are key components. The Vacation Planner is distributed at several locations throughout the Bay Area, at Oakland and San Jose International Airports, at Pier 39 Welcome Center, at member businesses and as fulfilment to ad responses. It is also in digital format on the TCVB website. We have allowed for reprinting a condensed vacation planner that has a longer shelf life than the Annual Vacation Planner. As we develop the meetings market more it will be important to produce a meeting planners brochure to convey resources available.



Website and Mobile Technology: The TCVB's online booking software (BookDirect) continues to be an effective tool to get visitors on www.VisitTuolumne.com to book their lodging while on the site. We will continue to use this system as it has verified results. Additional website costs include search engine optimization and search engine marketing. Regular maintenance of the website is also budgeted for.

The TCVB is currently researching mobile apps for both in and out of market use to encourage potential visitors and to keep in-destination visitors updated on events, attractions and other activities going on around them to inspire them to stay longer.

New to the TCVB is Flip.to, an online platform that introduces our destination to new visitors through the advocacy of current and past visitors. Visitors share real experiences with friends and family through online photo contests, which increase the TCVB's visibility on social media. We are excited to see how this new platform works out. This additional opportunity is budgeted through the end of the 2018-2019 fiscal year, and we will evaluate its effectiveness as a continuous promotional tool.

TUOLUMNE COUNTY TOURISM IMPACTS 2017*

Travel Spending: $253,000,000 spending

Government Revenue Generated by Travel Spending

Local Tax Receipts: $8,700,000

State Tax Receipts: $10,400,000

Transient Occupancy Tax:

County:	$4,040,000
City of Sonora:	$496,000

Employment: 3700 people employed by tourism

**According to Dean Runyan and Associates, hired by Visit California.*

Thank you to Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors and the Sonora City Council for continued support of Tuolumne County's tourism industry by continuing to fund the marketing programs of the Tuolumne County Visitors Bureau!