

VISIT FORT BRAGG

Strategic Marketing Plan & Budget Allocation

A unified annual plan translating Visit Fort Bragg's thirteen strategic initiatives into specific actions, budget allocations, and measurable outcomes.

Budget Overview

Funding Source	Annual Amount
City of Fort Bragg — current marketing investment	\$380,000
Visit Mendocino County — proposed partnership contribution	\$300,000
Total working budget	~\$680,000

Percentages throughout this plan reflect shares of the combined ~\$680,000 annual working budget. Dollar figures are modeled estimates rounded for planning purposes; final amounts are set through the annual budget process.

Allocation Summary — Reference Guide

#	Initiative	Share	Est. Budget
01	Locally Based Nonprofit DMO Structure	10%	~\$68,000
02	Destination Data & Insights (Pre-Campaign)	5%	~\$34,000
03	Website Conversion & User Experience	TBD	via reserve
04	Comprehensive Marketing Plan & Paid Media	30%	~\$204,000
05	Expanded VMC Strategic Partnership	5%	~\$34,000
06	TOT Investment Alignment	0%	no direct cost
07	Visitor Experience Improvement Program	10%	~\$68,000
08	Visitor Email Database & Trade Show Program	6%	~\$41,000
09	Lodging Partnerships & Off-Season Packages	8%	~\$54,000
10	Signature Events & Activation Strategies	8%	~\$54,000
11	PR & Earned Media Program	5%	~\$34,000
12	Content Engine	2%	~\$12,000
13	Reporting, Accountability & ROI Tracking	2%	~\$12,000
+	Flexible Reserve & Website Implementation	9%	~\$61,000

	Total	100%	~\$680,000
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01 Establish a Locally Based Nonprofit DMO Structure

Budget Allocation: 10% | ~\$68,000

Fort Bragg would benefit from moving toward a locally based nonprofit DMO structure for Visit Fort Bragg, providing more strategic control, transparency, accountability, and continuity than the current contractor model. With the existing Visit Fort Bragg committee positioned to serve as the founding board, much of the groundwork is already in place. A local DMO structure gives the City, lodging community, tourism stakeholders, and marketing professionals a clearer framework for setting priorities, measuring outcomes, and directing funds toward the highest-value opportunities.

- Transition the existing Visit Fort Bragg committee into the formal nonprofit board, preserving institutional knowledge and accelerating the launch timeline
- Fund a paid part-time destination coordinator plus administration, insurance, and legal costs
- Adopt bylaws, a conflict-of-interest policy, and an annual independent audit commitment (supports Initiative 13)
- Provide the City, lodging community, and tourism stakeholders a clear framework for setting priorities and directing funds

Milestone: *Formalized entity operational within 4–6 months*

02 Utilize Modern Destination Data & Insights (Pre-Campaign)

Budget Allocation: 5% | ~\$34,000

Before launching campaigns, the comprehensive marketing plan must be grounded in actual visitor behavior rather than guesswork. Fort Bragg has a meaningful cost advantage here: occupancy and booking data can be sourced directly from participating local lodging properties, supplemented by modern geolocation tools that reveal where visitors actually come from. Together these sources accurately identify the most valuable feeder markets, ensuring targeted campaigns are built on facts instead of assumptions.

- Source occupancy, ADR, and booking-window data directly from participating Fort Bragg lodging properties at low or no cost
- Layer in one geolocation platform (Datafy or Placer.ai) to identify true feeder markets from actual visitor movement
- Run one visitor intercept survey wave (QR-code based) covering peak and shoulder seasons
- Build campaigns on facts instead of assumptions: every paid dollar in Initiative 04 targets a proven market

Deliverable: *Feeder market report and seasonal demand baseline before major campaign launch*

03 Maximize Website Conversion & User Experience

Budget Allocation: Budget TBD | funded via flexible reserve

As investment drives more targeted traffic to Fort Bragg, the website must be primed to capture that interest and convert it into booked overnight stays. The current digital hub provides a strong foundation, so this initiative focuses on a light conversion audit and targeted refinements rather than a rebuild. Budget is intentionally held as TBD and drawn from the flexible reserve, scaled to what the audit actually finds.

- The current site provides a strong foundation; a light conversion audit will identify targeted refinements only
- Any implementation work is funded from the flexible reserve and scaled to audit findings
- Priority additions regardless of audit outcome: lead magnets, trip-planning tools, and email capture supporting Initiative 08
- Confirm analytics and event tracking so campaign performance flows cleanly into Initiative 13 reporting

KPI: Lodging referral clicks and email capture rate, measured monthly

04 Redesign the Comprehensive Marketing Plan & Paid Media

Budget Allocation: 30% | ~\$204,000

Fort Bragg needs a complete destination marketing plan that goes beyond basic advertising and incorporates advanced, modern strategies: targeted digital campaigns, retargeting, direct push to proven feeder markets, and rigorous results tracking. As the single largest allocation in this plan, it is built specifically around Fort Bragg's highest-opportunity visitor segments, with clear objectives, performance metrics, and shoulder-season timing that prioritizes demand when it carries the most value.

- Google Performance Max and paid search targeting proven feeder markets (Sacramento, Bay Area, Central Valley)
- Meta and YouTube campaigns weighted toward shoulder season with October–April flighting
- Retargeting pool built from website traffic and email engagement
- Reserve 10–15% of this line for channel testing: CTV, streaming audio, travel endemic sites
- Every campaign tagged and tracked to feed Initiative 13 reporting

Role: The engine of the plan — the single largest investment, aimed directly at overnight stays

05 Expanded Strategic Partnership with Visit Mendocino County

Budget Allocation: 5% | ~\$34,000

VMC has broader countywide reach and established vendor relationships, while VFB has the ability to be more locally focused and nimble. This initiative proposes elevating that natural fit into a formalized,

funded partnership: a multi-year cooperative agreement in which VMC contributes approximately \$300,000 toward Fort Bragg-focused marketing, managed within this unified plan. The result is stronger Fort Bragg exposure, better advertising rates at scale, and no wasted spend on overlapping campaigns.

- Formalize an expanded multi-year cooperative agreement in which VMC contributes approximately \$300,000 toward Fort Bragg-focused marketing, managed within this unified plan
- This budget line funds joint media buys, coordinated vendor negotiation, and shared campaign management
- Align feeder-market calendars across both organizations to eliminate duplicated spend
- Secure named Fort Bragg placement within VMC's countywide PR, content, and media distribution
- Leverage VMC's established vendor relationships for stronger advertising rates at scale

Structure: Multi-year agreement to support planning continuity for both organizations

06 Align TOT Investment with Peer Benchmarks & Measurable Return

Budget Allocation: 0% | no direct budget — advocacy workstream

Fort Bragg's lodging tax has generated substantial revenue for the City, which has thoughtfully directed those funds across a range of community priorities. Because tourism remains one of Fort Bragg's most important economic drivers, it is worth a structured look at whether the portion reinvested into destination marketing is sized to protect and grow that revenue base long term. The intent is not simply to advocate for more funding, but to propose a defined, formula-based TOT allocation paired with the governance and accountability framework in this plan, giving VFB a real planning horizon and the City clear visibility into what the investment produces.

- Staff time covered under Initiative 01; no separate spend category
- The supporting report Investing in Fort Bragg's Future: Visit Fort Bragg carries the benchmark data and modeled funding scenarios
- Pursue a defined, formula-based TOT allocation paired with the governance and accountability framework in Initiatives 01 and 13

Milestone: Multi-year services agreement presented to City Council

07 Create a Visitor Experience Improvement Program

Budget Allocation: 10% | ~\$68,000

Marketing should not only drive awareness; it should improve the visitor experience once people arrive. This initiative funds a pipeline of high-impact visitor engagement projects, from public art and photo-op installations to wayfinding and coastal trail enhancements, prioritized through the visitor engagement matrix that scores each proposal on strategic fit, visitor impact, feasibility, and budget tier. The highest-scoring projects move first.

- Fund the highest-scoring projects from the visitor engagement matrix first: Vehicle-Friendly Coastal Access Signage (12.00), Sunset Spotting Stations (12.00), Photo Backdrops & Step-In Murals (11.67), Little Mini Mural Project (11.50)
- Sequence by matrix score, balancing one larger capital project with smaller quick wins each year
- Maintain the scoring matrix (strategic fit, visitor impact, feasibility, budget tier) as the standing intake and prioritization tool for new ideas
- Marketing should not only drive awareness; it should improve the experience once visitors arrive

Framework: Objective matrix scoring keeps project selection transparent

08 Build a Visitor Email Database & Regional Trade Show Program

Budget Allocation: 6% | ~\$41,000

A qualified visitor email database is one of the highest-ROI opportunities available to VFB, powering direct campaigns, seasonal promotions, event marketing, lodging packages, and return visitation. This initiative pairs database building with a regional trade show program: booth presence at consumer travel and outdoor shows in key drive markets generates direct Fort Bragg exposure while collecting qualified emails at the source. Combined with VMC subscriber access and website capture, the program targets an aggressive but achievable first-year list.

- Establish a booth presence at 2–3 consumer travel and outdoor shows in Sacramento and Bay Area markets (within roughly a four-hour drive of Fort Bragg) for direct exposure and email capture
- Email platform with automation: welcome series, seasonal sends, re-engagement flows
- Additional acquisition via website lead magnets, contests, event signups, and lodging partner check-in capture
- Negotiate segmented access to VMC's existing qualified subscriber base

Year 1 target: 15,000–20,000 qualified subscribers

09 Develop Lodging Partnerships & Off-Season Packages

Budget Allocation: 8% | ~\$54,000

Generating demand during the summer peak offers very low marginal value; the town is likely already full. The true economic value of a DMO is its ability to flatten the seasonality curve and fill the troughs, and compelling off-season packages are where VFB will prove its worth to the lodging community. To build partner confidence, VFB fully funds the first year of promotion and documents the results, transitioning to shared investment only after the ROI case has been demonstrated to lodging partners.

- Build 3–4 packaged offers combining lodging with Skunk Train, harbor and dining, redwoods, or wellness experiences
- Dedicated paid and email promotion flighted October–April only, where new demand carries the highest marginal value

- Phased co-op model: VFB fully funds Year 1 promotion, documents the ROI for lodging partners, then ramps up partner cost-sharing once results demonstrate the value to their businesses
- Flatten the seasonality curve: this is where the DMO proves its worth to the lodging community

KPI: Package bookings and shoulder-season occupancy lift vs. market baseline

10 Create Signature Events & Activation Strategies

Budget Allocation: 8% | ~\$54,000

Fort Bragg should focus on events and activations specifically designed to generate lodging demand, from seasonal festivals and craft beverage events to coastal trail programming and smaller recurring experiences that give visitors a reason to plan a trip. Every event funded through this line is evaluated on its ability to drive overnight stays, extend length of stay, support local businesses, and strengthen the Fort Bragg brand.

- Anchor support for shoulder-season events designed specifically to generate lodging demand
- Smaller recurring activations (coastal trail programming, downtown events) on a quarterly cadence
- Evaluation gate: every funded event must project measurable overnight stays, extended length of stay, and local business impact
- Event proposals scored through the same matrix framework used in Initiative 07

Standard: Events earn funding by filling rooms, not just drawing crowds

11 Develop a Stronger PR & Earned Media Program

Budget Allocation: 5% | ~\$34,000

Fort Bragg has tremendous story potential, but it needs a more intentional PR strategy: pitching travel writers, hosting familiarization trips, working with influencers, and building media itineraries around the coast, Noyo Harbor, food, outdoor recreation, redwoods, and off-season escapes. This is also a natural area for shared resources; a joint PR manager or agency arrangement with VMC presents one coordinated voice for the Mendocino coast while stretching both organizations' budgets.

- Pursue a shared PR manager or agency arrangement with VMC, splitting costs and presenting one coordinated voice for the Mendocino coast
- Host 2–3 familiarization trips annually for travel writers and regional influencers
- Story angles: Noyo Harbor's working waterfront, the current wave of private investment, off-season coastal escapes, redwoods and rail
- Unified pitch calendar across VFB and VMC to maximize reach without duplication

Efficiency: Shared staffing model stretches both organizations' PR dollars

12 Strengthen the Content Engine

Budget Allocation: 2% | ~\$12,000

Fort Bragg needs a steady supply of strong photo, video, social, blog, itinerary, and email content, and this initiative delivers it through a deliberately lean, community-powered model. User-generated content contests, with prizes sponsored by local businesses, become the primary asset pipeline, keeping costs low while producing authentic imagery that polished campaigns cannot replicate. Every asset is then repurposed across the website, social media, email, PR, paid ads, lodging partners, and VMC channels.

- User-generated content photo and video contests as the primary asset pipeline, with prizes sponsored by local businesses
- Modest professional budget reserved for gap-filling shoots (off-season conditions, specific campaign needs)
- Refresh and expand the itinerary library: 48 Hours in Fort Bragg, dog-friendly, family, romantic coastal getaways
- Repurposing workflow: every asset deployed across web, social, email, paid, PR, and VMC channels

Approach: *Community-powered creative keeps costs low and authenticity high*

13 Improve Reporting, Accountability & ROI Tracking

Budget Allocation: 2% | ~\$12,000

VFB should adopt a transparent reporting model with clear KPIs spanning website traffic, email growth, campaign conversions, lodging partner participation, PR placements, package bookings, and estimated lodging impact. The Visit Sonoma Tourism Stats website offers a strong reference model. The goal is simple: make it easy for the City, committee, lodging community, and stakeholders to understand what is working and where funds are producing the most value.

- Build a public-facing performance dashboard modeled on Visit Sonoma’s research page, using low-cost tools
- Quarterly stakeholder reports: TOT trends, occupancy, campaign performance, email growth, PR placements, package bookings
- Annual report to City Council aligned with the accountability measures in the supporting investment brief
- Make it easy for the City, committee, lodging community, and stakeholders to see what is working

Standard: *Full transparency on where funds produce the most value*

+ Flexible Reserve & Website Implementation

Budget Allocation: 9% | ~\$61,000

The flexible reserve gives the program agility without compromising the discipline of the core allocations. It serves two purposes: funding website refinements at whatever scale the Initiative 03 audit

recommends, and providing contingency capacity for opportunistic media buys, event co-sponsorships, and mid-year pivots as market conditions change. Every reserve expenditure is reported with the same transparency as the core budget lines.

- Funds website refinements identified by the Initiative 03 conversion audit
- Contingency for opportunistic media buys, event co-sponsorships, and mid-year pivots as conditions change
- Unspent reserve rolls into the following year's paid media or visitor experience lines
- Gives the program agility without compromising the discipline of the core allocations

Principle: *Planned flexibility, with full transparency on every reserve expenditure*

Initiative 03 (Website) is funded from the flexible reserve as scoped by the conversion audit. Initiative 06 (TOT Alignment) carries no direct budget; supporting analysis is available in Investing in Fort Bragg's Future: Visit Fort Bragg.