

**SONOMA COUNTY TOURISM
FISCAL YEAR 2026-2027 ANNUAL REPORT**

TO BE FILED WITH THE OFFICE OF THE CLERK OF SONOMA COUNTY
PURSUANT TO STREETS AND HIGHWAYS CODE SECTION 36533
SUBMITTED: MARCH 27, 2026

I.
BACKGROUND

A. Sonoma County Tourism Business Improvement Area

On November 2, 2004, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors (“Board”) adopted Ordinance No. 5525 (“Ordinance”) creating the Sonoma County Tourism Business Improvement Area (“SCTB BIA”). Under the Ordinance, lodging establishments generating annual room revenue of \$350,000 or more during the preceding fiscal year must pay an assessment equal to 2% of such revenue. Proceeds from assessments are used to pay for activities designed to increase the number of overnight visitors to the area.

In January 2005, the Board appointed five members to the Sonoma County Tourism Business Improvement Area Advisory Board (“Advisory Board”), a body established pursuant to the Parking and Business Improvement Area Law of 1989 (Streets & Highways Code section 36500 et seq., the “Act”) which is charged with advising the Board on the amount of the SCTBBIA assessments and on the services, programs and activities to be funded by the assessments. In 2011, the Board amended the Ordinance, appointing the board of directors of Sonoma County Tourism Bureau, Inc. (“SCTBB”) to serve as the Advisory Board for the SCTBBIA. This decision was based on recommendations of a 2010 County audit of the organization.

B. Sonoma County Tourism Bureau, Inc.

The Ordinance authorized the County to enter into an agreement with a contractor to carry out the services, activities, and programs to be funded from the assessments, and designated SCTB to serve as the initial contractor. In June of 2005, the Board executed an agreement with SCTB to carry out services, activities and programs promoting tourism to Sonoma County, with funding from both SCTB BIA assessments and from transient occupant tax (TOT) revenue allocated to SCTB by the Board. As noted above, in 2011, the SCTB Board of Directors also was appointed to serve as the Advisory Board. The Ordinance requires a 22-member Board of Directors for SCTB, the composition of which must comply with a matrix that provides representation from each supervisorial district, and from each size category of lodging establishment. Appointments to the SCTB board are made on a pro rata basis in accordance with the respective contributions made to the SCTBB budget by SCTB BIA assessments and by County TOT allocations. The Sonoma lodging industry appoints the number of directors resulting from SCTB BIA assessments, and the Board appoints the number of directors resulting from TOT allocations.

C. Boundaries

The SCTB BIA was the first county-wide tourism Business Improvement Area formed in California. For assessments to be collected from lodging establishments within the incorporated cities in the County, the councils of each City had to consent to formation of the SCTB BIA. Consent was given by the Cities of Santa Rosa, Petaluma, Rohnert Park, Sebastopol, Cloverdale and Cotati, and the Town of Windsor. Accordingly, the boundaries of the SCTB BIA include the territory within the boundaries of those seven cities plus all of the unincorporated territory within the County. These boundaries have remained unchanged since the SCTB BIA was formed, and SCTB does not recommend any changes to the boundaries in the upcoming year.

D. Assessment

Lodging establishments within the boundaries of the SCTB BIA generating annual room revenue of \$350,000 or more during the preceding fiscal year must pay an assessment equal to 2% of such revenue. Lodging establishments in the unincorporated territory of the County forward the assessment to the County tax collector. Lodging establishments in the municipalities that consented to formation of the SCTB BIA allocate the assessments to the collecting entities within their respective municipalities. Those collecting

entities, in turn, remit the collected assessments to the County in accordance with written agreements between the County and each municipality.

E. Purpose and Specific Benefit

The Ordinance requires that revenues from assessments must be used to conduct marketing activities designed to increase overnight visits to the area. The term “area” is defined as the territory within the boundaries of the SCTB BIA, and the term “marketing activities” is defined as activities designed to market the area as a tourist destination, including the expenditure of funds to place advertising across any media channels, conduct public relations campaigns, perform marketing research, promote business and leisure group visitation, encourage international visitation, and foster improved contacts within the travel industry, for the purpose of promoting tourism within the area. Revenues from assessments may be used for programs, services, and activities outside the area, if such programs, services, and activities are designed to promote and encourage overnight visits to the area. Revenues from assessments may also be used to pay the ongoing administrative costs associated with the marketing activities.

The focus on increasing overnight visits to the area constitutes a specific benefit to the lodging establishments that pay the assessments. This specific benefit is what distinguishes the assessments from taxes that are subject to voter approval requirements. The fact that others may receive incidental benefits from the expenditure of assessments, such as restaurants, attractions, wineries, retailers and parks, does not change the characterization of assessments as a specific benefit to lodging establishments because no additional cost is imposed on the lodging establishments to provide those incidental benefits.

F. Annual Report

Pursuant to Ordinance, and in accordance with section 36533 of the Act, the SCTB must present an Annual Report to the Board for its approval that includes a program of activities intended to be implemented within the SCTB BIA during the upcoming fiscal year, together with an estimate of related expenditures. The SCTB must also include in the Annual Report an outline of the previous year’s revenues and how those revenues were spent. The SCTB obtains annual audits from independent auditors each year. The most recent annual audit is submitted as part of this Annual Report, providing a detailed analysis of the sources and uses of funds. Looking forward, the annual budget for the upcoming year submitted herewith describes the anticipated revenues and expenditures. The balance of this Annual Report will provide additional information concerning programs and activities completed in the prior year, as well as those planned for the upcoming year. The Board’s consideration and requested approval of this Annual Report is the act which constitutes the levy of the assessment for the upcoming year.

While this report is primarily focused on the activities that fall within the BIA structure, additional notes regarding the use of transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) are included for the purpose of better understanding SCTB’s total budget allocation.

II.

ANTICIPATED USE OF REVENUE FOR FY26-27

A. Fiscal Year 2026-2027 BIA Revenue (forecast): \$5,886,452

B. Fiscal Year 2026-2027 TOT Revenue (forecast): \$3,198,403

C. Total Budget (forecast) (including additional revenue – see budget page): \$9,365,815

D. Recommendation

SCTB, in its capacity as the Advisory Board, recommends that the Board confirm this Annual Report and continue to levy the SCTB BIA annual assessment for Fiscal Year 2026-2027 pursuant to the Parking and Business Improvement Area Law of 1989 (California Streets and Highways Code section 36500 et seq.), subject to the following findings and recommendations:

- 1) That the boundaries of the SCTB BIA should remain the same, with the recognition that the properties within the cities of Santa Rosa, Petaluma, Rohnert Park, Sebastopol, Cloverdale and Cotati, and the Town of Windsor, continue to participate in the SCTB BIA with support from each of the cities;
- 2) that SCTB continue to serve as the Advisory Board for the SCTB BIA;
- 3) that the method and basis of levying the assessment remain unchanged, and in accordance with the terms of the Ordinance in Fiscal Year 2026 – 2027 (July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027);
- 4) that the revenues generated by the assessment be used in accordance with the requirements of the Ordinance to conduct marketing activities designed to increase the number of overnight visits to the County; and
- 5) that SCTB retained the services of an independent certified public accounting firm, Sorren, and has audited the SCTB financial statements for the 2024-25 fiscal year (July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025). Their findings continue to show a “clean” report - no material weaknesses or significant audit findings were found in relation to SCTB’s books and records. This report is included with this document. SCT will continue to conduct annual audits with County-approved firms.

E. Activities and Program Expenditures

Sonoma County Tourism launched its Destination Stewardship and Resiliency Master Plan May 11, 2023. This plan, coupled with the biennial strategic plan charts the course of work for the organization.

Mission: Inspire travel to Sonoma County that strengthens our economy, reflects our diversity and encourages stewardship of our community’s resources.

Vision: Sonoma County will be the leading destination for responsible travelers who enjoy, protect and preserve our community’s bountiful natural and cultural resources.

Organization Values:

- **Trusted** – SCT maintains the confidence of local stakeholders and residents by implementing programs founded on research, driven by best-in-class execution and with results conveyed through partner communications.
- **Transparent** – All budgets and programs administered by SCT are created within an environment of openness and accuracy. SCT’s goal is for all stakeholders to trust its operational effectiveness and believe the organization is an efficient steward of the funding provided.

- **Community-Centric** – As a steward of the region, SCT is committed to ensuring local businesses and residents are engaged in the organization’s programming and support its direction. SCT understands its is predicated on the success of its partners.
- **Inclusive** – SCT is committed to ensuring persons of all backgrounds are included and welcomed throughout its internal operations and external audience outreach. A strong dedication to diversity, inclusion and equity guides the organization.
- **Entrepreneurial** – SCT operates as an ambitious and nimble business seeking new opportunities for revenue and growth. SCT works to find business development opportunities that drive revenue for partner businesses and generate new revenue for the region and the organization.
- **Creative** – Representing the Life Opens Up brand and a “progressive community of artisans”, SCT develops programming with a strategically creative approach. The organization actively seeks innovative ideas and strives to be a “first to market” organization.

Organizational Priorities

1. Drive the Sonoma County Economy – Programs developed and administered through Sonoma County Tourism will be focused on ensuring a vibrant economy for Sonoma County and a stellar quality of life for the businesses and employees within the tourism and hospitality industry. Through consistent and compelling sales and marketing efforts, SCT will bolster the revenue generated through travel and tourism activities.

Driving the economy requires both a short- and long-term effort.

1. Short-term: Develop a compelling invitation for leisure travelers to visit the region with “Always On” robust consumer marketing and media relations programs that work to drive immediate and short-term visitation and elevate overall brand awareness and interest. This is coupled with the need to continue to bolster the wine industry through more salient messaging and meeting the needs of travelers seeking destinations close to home continues to drive SCT’s paid, earned and owned media.
2. Long-term visitation is addressed through the sales efforts that help to secure future meeting and group business travel bookings at BIA lodging properties. While the booking window for meetings is decreasing, securing business further out than the typical leisure travel visit is the hallmark of the destination sales program.
3. Demand drivers have become an important component of raising awareness and creating excitement for both short- and long-term interest in Sonoma County. SCT will work with partners to develop, create, and promote these opportunities.

2. Create a Resilient Organization and Destination – Resiliency has several facets and it’s important that Sonoma County Tourism realize the responsibilities and opportunities it has within each.

1. Resiliency against crises. With a history of managing natural, health and financial crises, Sonoma County Tourism is committed to having the foundation needed to ensure it is fortified against all potential impacts.
2. Financial resiliency. Programs and services will center around building a financially secure organization, ensuring the capacity to prepare for and manage a crisis, building a high-performing and satisfied team, and maintaining full organizational transparency.
3. Resiliency against traveler impacts through destination stewardship. Focusing on responsible and sustainable travel, the organization works to mitigate damage resulting from visitor behavior and creates programming and associated messaging to protect and preserve the area’s fragile natural and cultural resources.
4. Cultural resiliency. To help ensure Sonoma County retains its DNA of being a welcoming and open destination, Wine Country for All of Us will continue to elevate the social inclusion of visitors to and residents within the destination.

3. Engage the Community – Sonoma County Tourism and the stakeholders, industry partners, and local residents it serves are integral members of the Sonoma County community. Through a thoughtful Community Engagement program and as a focus of

all marketing and sales initiatives, SCT is dedicated to ensuring the community it represents is integrated into, and benefits from, the organization’s programming.

2026-27 Programming

The programs listed herein are fundamental to the success of a destination organization. As the environment in which tourism organizations evolves, so too does the types of programming and channels required to compel responsible travel and manage the organization. Below is an outline of the current categories of work for the FY26-27 year, the programs contained therein and the associated budget. These program overviews differ from those in previous reports, but represent a greater alignment with the current programming conducted by Sonoma County Tourism’s programming and operations areas:

1. Marketing/Communications
2. Destination Sales/Travel Trade
3. Business Development
4. Community Engagement
5. Research
6. Labor
7. Administrative Expenses
8. Capital Expenses
9. Reserves

Budget projections for this plan are based on forecasted FLAT year-over-year revenue for FY26-27. This forecast is based on five key factors:

1. General economic pressures facing travelers/consumers. The consumer confidence index shows continued declines in consumers’ expectations about the future. High consumer debt, continued high interest rates and a volatile stock market has and may continue to impact consumer’s desire to purchase travel. SCT will continue to watch this environment very closely;
2. Slowdown in the Wine Industry - A variety of generational, cultural, and health-related shifts are impacting the wine industry;
3. Ongoing recovery of visitation to San Francisco - most especially for groups/meetings and international travelers;
4. Global political tensions impacting inbound international travel, especially from top international markets: Canada and Mexico; and
5. A lack of new development – business drivers - in Sonoma County (new Southwest Airlines routes may provide some infusion of new customers).

1. Marketing Communications

In 2026, all marketing programming is impacted by AI. In 2025, SCT launched its AI tool, LOU (short for Life Opens Up), to help visitors plan itineraries and find customized experiences. We anticipate this use of this proprietary tool and other AI tools will only increase in the foreseeable future. SCT will continue to work with its digital marketing vendor, Noble Studios, to ensure we stay in front of AI opportunities.

1a. Paid Advertising (all paid consumer marketing including digital, print, television, social media; website development; content development; photo/video; professional services fees). Sonoma County Tourism works with its agency of record (Idea Peddler), to craft both a seasonal intent marketing campaign (November – April) and an “always on” strategy. The paid media campaign is run incorporating the following elements:

- Paid advertising in key California markets, including San Francisco, Sacramento, Los Angeles, Orange County and San Diego. This may include a television commercial, paid inserts into streaming services, segments on lifestyle programming, etc. Additional buys in direct flight and key markets including Phoenix, Dallas, Seattle, Denver, Chicago and New York.

- Digital and search buys with aggregators such as Adara, Sojern, and partnerships with Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) including Expedia and TripAdvisor. This is viewed in key growth and retention markets throughout the country.
- Social media advertising on Facebook/Meta, Instagram, LinkedIn and on social components of media groups such as Afar and Atlas Obscura.

1b. Partner Marketing Programs (all platforms for partner co-op marketing including the annual printed visitor guide, printed map, SonomaCounty.com website, consumer e-newsletter) will be offered to partners as the timing requires. Additional marketing programs occur with various cooperative marketing partners as identified.

1c. Media Relations/Earned Media. Programming for outreach to the consumer, travel trade and meetings traditional and social media and influencers. Activities include in-market press trips, deskside visits, media missions to large media-centric markets, trade shows, professional services fees – PR agency efforts. For FY26-27, the PR team will engage in the following initiatives:

- In-market press trips – hosting media in Sonoma County
- Media missions – trips to major media markets such as New York, Dallas and Los Angeles to introduce Sonoma County through deskside visits, media events and other activities
- Ongoing media outreach – the SCT and AOR (FINN Partners) team work collectively to pitch stories to local, national and international media
- Influencer visits – these generally come at a cost, so this effort is often shared with paid marketing. Influencers can be powerful contributors to the editorial content for Sonoma County.

1d. Consumer Event Sponsorships. Thorough a competitive process, SCT sponsors events that occur in Sonoma County designed to drive out-of-market visitation. For FY26-27, we anticipate the allocation will be \$75,000 allocated once per year.

2. Destination Sales/Travel Trade

2a. Destination Sales. Programs for this department include participating in meeting planner trade shows, association memberships and participation, prospecting, promotions, familiarization (“FAM”) trips, client events, client booking incentives, BIA lodging support programs, and professional services (including marketing/design vendors). The goal is to inspire meeting and event planners to book meetings, incentive trips and business groups into Sonoma County’s lodging properties.

2b. Travel Trade (domestic). SCT works to promote the destination to leisure groups and free independent travelers (FIT) through the travel trade, including travel agents, advisors, tour operators, and online travel agencies (OTA’s). The focus for FY26-27 is to enhance Sonoma County product knowledge among domestic travel advisors, strengthen relationships, and identify opportunities to incorporate Sonoma County into their offerings.

2c. Travel Trade (international). SCT retains in-market contract representation with sales/marketing and public relations firms in three key international markets:

- United Kingdom – Rocket Travel Marketing & NeoLux PR
- Germany – MSi
- Australia – Gate 7 (project basis only)

The goals of this initiative are to include Sonoma County in the offerings of tour operators, travel agents and wholesalers in international markets and to raise awareness of Sonoma County as a destination through robust media outreach and promotions.

2d. Industry Marketing. The team supports the in-person sales efforts through a variety of marketing initiatives and promotions that drive awareness of Sonoma County as a meetings/group and leisure destination. Programs include the Ultimate Sales Guide, a comprehensive booklet that provides destination information and suggestions for booking business in Sonoma County, lodging pitch videos, client webinar hosting, promotional microsites, OTA campaigns, and hosting of major industry events and tradeshow.

3. **Community Engagement** (programs that reach local residents and stakeholders, Accredited Hospitality Professional (AHP) program, community event sponsorships)

3a. Stakeholder Outreach. The Community Engagement team works to forge positive relationships with stakeholders including elected officials, city and county staff, chamber of commerce/visitor center teams and influential organizations throughout the county. For FY26-27, SCT will continue to host mixers, meetings and opportunities that allow the industry to convey the issues and opportunities inherent in tourism.

- Visitor Center Connectivity – With SCT providing and administering the granting process to distribute \$500,000 annually toward the operating costs for the visitor centers, the staff position will continue to work with each Center to help elevate the experience of visitors and the staff.
- Rapid Connections – Partnership development event at which properties meet with others interested in forging partnerships and creating special collaborative offers for guests.
- Partner Education Sessions – SCT offers tourism industry partners opportunities to elevate their understanding regarding a number of topics all designed to help them drive business and integrate best practices.

3b. Accredited Hospitality Professional (AHP) program. SCT sunset the Certified Tourism Ambassador program in 2021 and introduced its fully customized Accredited Hospitality Professional (AHP) program in 2021. The program offers a variety of training and information for employees in the tourism/hospitality industry as well as overall industry training for students considering a career in tourism.

3c. Sustainability Initiatives: SCT works in partnership with the Sonoma County Regional Parks on the Leave No Trace initiatives, has adopted five roads for clean-up activities, continues to hold Tourism Cares programs and will continue its partnership with Kind Traveler to communicate the region's commitment to destination stewardship. SCT will also continue to work collaboratively with neighborhood groups and Municipal Advisory Councils (MACs) to identify opportunities to amplify responsible travel messaging for visitors in market.

3d. Accessibility Initiatives: SCT is now "Destination Verified" by Wheel the World with 72 partner businesses included in this program. This initiative helps to broaden information on business accessibility for guests with disabilities through their destination verification program.

3e. Seven Secrets of Inclusive Hospitality Trainings: SCT launched "Wine Country for All of Us" in 2025 as an effort to help ensure a warm welcome for all people. To help the industry better serve the needs of our visitors, SCT is working with HospitableMe to offer a training curriculum designed to heighten awareness around how to interact with customers that may be different from the hospitality employee.

4. **Research** (all research ongoing and ad hoc programming): As an evidence-led sales and marketing organization, ensuring a solid foundation of research, program analytics and metrics-based performance programming is critical. This initiative was elevated during the past several years, so moving forward to ensure a highly focused and relevant program will continue to inform SCT's efforts. Current research providers include:

- Longwoods International - annual visitation, marketing return-on-investment
- NEAR – real time geotracking of visitors when they travel through the county.

- TravelClick – provides “pacing” information that shows booked business into the future. This allows both SCT and its partners to see where need periods exist.
- Smith Travel Research (STR) – weekly and monthly performance of lodging properties part of the STR program (doesn’t include many independent properties).
- Key Data – this is a new partner that shows performance of the vacation rental properties.
- Tourism Economics – monthly dashboard showing performance of the entirety of the tourism ecosystem.
- Dean Runyan Associates – annual economic impact model that shows overall revenue including visitor spending and tax generation as well as industry sector employment numbers.

5. Labor

Total FTEs for FY26-27 stands at 22. Staffing costs have risen as SCT works to remain competitive in the Sonoma County labor market. For FY26-27 SCT will provide its employees with a 3% COLA. Compensation is evaluated on an annual basis. For this fiscal year, SCT will share the salary of the Sonoma County Economic Development Collaboration’s Research Fellow.

7. Administrative Expenses

7a. Database: CRM database: SCT operates its database that houses all information for use across SCT marketing, sales and operational programming through Simpleview, a renowned tourism industry database provider.

7b. Technology: This includes the contract with SCT’s external IT vendor, licenses for the various platforms needed to conduct business, internet access fees and telephone bills,

7c. Office Supplies and Equipment: This includes repairs and maintenance of office equipment, equipment and small tools – smaller office equipment not included under capital expense, office supplies and the mailing and delivery services.

7d. Fees & Licenses: This area covers the majority of the services used by SCT to manage its business. Under this category are bank fees, insurance, professional fees including legal and HR contractor services, and other taxes and licenses.

7e. Rent: As of March 31, the date of this report, SCT is planning to move to 3558 Round Barn Boulevard, Santa Rosa during May 2026. In this new space, SCT will share a small portion with the Sonoma County Vintners. The move was done to save the organization leasing fees so that the funds can go into ROI-generating programming.

7f. Professional Services: SCT contracts with outside vendors in its Human Resources, Legal and Accounting/Audit roles.

8. Capital Expenditures

The SCTB will continue to replace outdated and end-of-life computers based on its 4-year replacement schedule. All other expenditures will be determined based on the office space situation and personnel needs.

9. Reserves

The SCTB has a 3-month (90-day) reserve level to provide funds for significant future cash demands arising from both planned and unplanned events or circumstances. This number has fluctuated during the past two years as revenues have been uncertain. The FY25-26 end of year reserves amount is \$2.1 million, providing SCT with a 90-day reserve at current staffing and programming levels.

FY26-27 BUDGET

**Fiscal Year
2026-2027**

Revenues

BIA Assessment	\$ 6,067,496
Transient Occupancy Tax	3,384,696
Interest and Other Income	148,145
Total Revenue	9,600,337

Expenditures

Advertising (domestic and int'l)	1,748,750
Cient Events, Fams and	
Entertainment	286,371
Tradeshows and Sales Missions	300,080
Digital Engagement	617,573
Research, Tools & Memberships	400,755
Contract Services	604,270
Professional Development	255,250
Destination & Industry Programming	964,875
Labor	3,522,916
Administrative Expenses	644,716
Total Uses:	\$ 9,365,556

TOTAL REVENUE LESS USES **259**

Reserve Usage Capital Items	
Depreciation	112,000

TOTAL SOURCES LESS USES **111,741**

III.

Annual Report (FY24-25)

Due to the timing of the delivery of this report, the most recent full annual report is for FY24-25. The full annual report can be found in the [Annual Reports](#) archive within the Industry portal at Sonomacounty.com.

Key Programming Highlights

During FY24-25, Sonoma County Tourism launched programs designed to reposition the destination and carve out a solid competitive advantage. These all reflect a full team, board of directors, and committee effort that brought them to fruition.

- **Signature Experiences:** These offerings showcase truly immersive experiences at nine area properties. The program participants: Bartholomew Estate Winery, Cartograph Wines, Dry Creek Vineyard, the Floathouse Petaluma, Relish Sonoma County, Safari West Wildlife Preserve, Sonoma Zipline Adventures, St. Francis Winery and Timber Cove Resort. To help market these experiences, SCT has distributed several press releases, created social media posts and developed a special section on the website.
- **Wine Country for All of Us:** To emphasize the region's historical commitment to welcoming everyone, SCT began its "Wine Country for All of Us" initiative. While we will continue to build this program into FY25-26, the kick-off occurred in FY24-25. The SCT team is working on partnerships with groups that offer inclusive hospitality training and customer experience insights.
- **THIS IS WINE COUNTRY Marketing Campaign:** The Marketing Committee and SCT team took a bold move to launch the THIS IS WINE COUNTRY campaign. The goal of the campaign is to disrupt the traditional ideas around a wine country visit and showcase the area's "wine +" messaging.
- **New Marketing/PR agency RFP and agency integration.** The team conducted an RFP process to determine the marketing and PR agencies that will shape future programming.
- **PR coverage continued to showcase the region's most compelling stories.** We also provided a trip giveaway for the Kelly Clarkson show that highlighted the destination on national TV as well as Kelly Clarkson Show social posts.
- **In collaboration with the Sonoma County Winegrowers, SCT participated in the Sonoma In the City event in Chicago.** We hosted a media lunch and meeting planner happy hour. We also had a table at the Sonoma In the City winery event. This was the first time in several years that SCT partnered with the Winegrowers on an event. We believe this is just the beginning of other partnership opportunities.
- **On the group travel side, the team launched the new Transportation Incentive program** offering complimentary transportation from any location in the Bay Area to Sonoma County for meetings that meet certain parameters.
- **SCT's 20th Anniversary:** SCT brought back the original signers of the articles of incorporation to celebrate the organization's 20th anniversary. A Gold Resolution by the Board of Supervisors recognized the great work of the organization through two decades of results-driven sales and marketing programming, industry growth, crisis mitigation and community integration.
- **Rapid Connections:** The Community Engagement team launched Rapid Connections - a speed dating format event designed to create new partnerships among the local industry members.
- **Black Cod Week:** In October 2024, Sonoma County Tourism partnered with the Economic Development Collaborative to host the first annual Black Cod Week, a countywide celebration designed to highlight one of Sonoma County's most

sustainable and prized local catches. Working in collaboration with local fishermen, restaurants, and hospitality partners, the program aimed to raise awareness of the importance of sustainable seafood while showcasing Sonoma County's vibrant culinary community.

The one key program that stalled this year was the convention center. As a pillar of the Destination Stewardship and Resiliency Master Plan, SCT will continue to explore options for development of this important economic driver.

Organizational Critical Business Objectives

Overarching Critical Business Objectives (CBOs) lay the foundation for all programs and create a shared vision for the organization. These are the metrics by which the success of the organization will be measured.

PRIORITY 1: Drive the Economy

- 1. Increase Revenue to Partner Businesses and the County.** To help increase revenue SCT will engage key strategies. While, depending on market conditions, these may shift slightly in year two of the plan, we anticipate these to continue throughout the plan time period (FY23-25).

Percent Change 2005 vs 2024 (STR Report June 2025 – Running 12 months)

	Occ	ADR	RevPAR	Room Rev	Room Avail	Revenue
Sonoma County	-2.1	-1.3	-3.4	-2.3	1.1	-1.0
Full Service	0.3	0.0	0.3	-0.2	-0.4	-0.1
Unincorporated Sonoma County	-1.5	-3.3	-4.7	-4.7	0.0	-1.5
City of Santa Rosa	-8.0	-6.0	-13.5	-10.3	3.8	-4.5
Petaluma	2.2	-7.7	-5.7	-5.7	0.0	2.2
Rohnert Park	-4.5	-0.7	-5.2	-4.2	1.0	-3.5

- Elevate brand awareness primarily as it encompasses the key brand pillars of wine and food, sustainability, wellness and responsible travel;

In late 2023 and early 2024, Fahlgren Mortine embarked on a “Customer Core” profile study, designed to identify Sonoma County's most valuable potential visitors. The study stacked Sonoma County against destination and aspirational consumer product competitors to identify the customers that SCT can focus on to speak to both

The Hungry Hearted - Wine and food are always the way in and the number one reason for our travelers to believe.

The Insiders - Casual elegance, unique personalities and flavors make for intimate and lasting experiences.

The Outsiders - Casual elegance, unique personalities and flavors make for intimate and lasting experiences.

The Passionate Sharers - These experiences are all best shared with the ones we know and love best.

The Magic Makers - Event planners willing to experiment to get exceptional results.

THIS IS WINE COUNTRY Consumer Marketing Campaign

- Paid media efforts resulted in over 49.8 million impressions for FY 24/25

- TravelZoo Best Bets for 2025 - Only Wine Destination
- Total Campaign Hotel Bookings of 31,292
- Total Campaign Flight Bookings of 3,970
- Campaign drove over 80K observed visits to Sonoma County
- SCT incorporated NEAR technology that places a pixel on an ad viewer's phone that then tracks them as they enter Sonoma County. This allows us to understand where they visit and to see if the messages we conveyed in our paid media campaign are influencing where they visit.

Black Cod Week

SCT coordinated the first Black Cod Week promotion in October 2024 with the Economic Development Collaborative. The week was a great success – so much so that it will expand to a full month in 2025.

Signature Experiences

SCT began working with Veneto Collaboratory in FY23-24, but launched the Signature Experiences program in FY24-25. These opportunities are designed to meet the needs of travelers seeking more immersive and meaningful experiences. The partners involved in this program stepped up and did the work to create truly memorable and bookable experiences. The program launched in March and was included in a Signature Experiences Passport event during National Travel and Tourism Week.

Consumer Marketing

- Increase inquiries to SCT's key marketing channels – SonomaCounty.com and the Sonoma County app;

Sonoma County App

- 578,635 Total Sessions (+419% YOY)
- Avg Session Duration 5m 21s (+978% YOY)
- 3,002 New App Downloads

SonomaCounty.com

- Organic web sessions are down 17% year-over-year. This, however, can be expected due to the way search results are provided with the AI assistant. People get their questions answered through the AI summary, so the need to visit a website is lessened. This decrease is to be expected and will likely continue into next year.

Social Media Channels

- SCT worked throughout the year to elevate engagement across Sonoma County's social channels;
 - Facebook: Daily Average Clicks: 680 (+14% YOY)
 - Facebook: Posts and Engagements: 526,745 (+2% YOY)
 - Instagram: 162,144 Likes (+8% YOY)
 - Instagram: 303 IG Story Replies (+ 38% YOY)
 - Instagram: Engagement Rate .05% (+32% YOY)
 - TikTok: 2065 Followers (31% Increase)

B2B Social Media

SCT took a more aggressive approach to posting about the activities of the organization through a LinkedIn strategy that resulted in:

- 153,588 impressions
- 3,439 reactions

- 186 comments
- 97 reposts
- 1.4% YoY growth – now 5,325 followers

During the time the SCT organization posted content ranging from simple reposts of consumer PR stories including the Travel + Leisure “Find Dining” article to the Stars of the Industry winners, the Wine Country For All of Us initiative and others.

Business Development

The Business Development team leveraged LinkedIn’s Sales Navigator to identify and engage new client prospects. Using the tool, the team sourced potential clients for in-market events and expanded SCT’s client database. In addition, the team maintained a strong presence on SCT’s LinkedIn page by highlighting event participation (e.g. IMEX, U.S. Travel Association’s IPW, etc.), acknowledging partner programs, and showcasing the team’s work in action.

- Incentivize meeting planners to choose Sonoma County;

The Sales team partnered with BIA hotels to deliver key initiatives, including the Hotel Support Program, Master Account Incentive Program, and Additional Commission Program. A highlight of the year was the launch of the Bay Area Transportation Program, a first-of-its-kind initiative providing complimentary roundtrip transportation for groups originating within the Bay Area.

In FY 2024–25, SCT partners submitted 85 applications through these programs. The Destination Sales team worked closely with hotels and clients on each lead, providing end-to-end support in pursuit of contracted business. This effort resulted in 29 confirmed programs, generating 7,575 room nights for Sonoma County.

- Create business-building opportunities for partner properties;

SCT ran a Third Night Free program beginning in April 2025 (concluding August 31) to help bolster overnight visitation business into BIA lodging properties. This year’s program included not only traditional lodging partners, but vacation rentals as well. The offer included 21 lodging partners.

SCT created a partnership with TravelZoo to bolster awareness of this program. The email blast went out June 30.

The promotion had a dedicated web page to help elevate awareness and was promoted via owned, earned and paid channels.

The Destination Sales Team worked to elevate opportunities for BIA partner properties through several events that offered resources and opportunities to partners. Over the course of the year, the SCT destination sales team:

- Hosted 4 quarterly Sales Team Mixers, bringing together hotel, winery, venue, and service provider sales contacts for networking and education.
- Coordinated 8 client events, most which included participation opportunities for SCT partners.
- Attended 30 tradeshow, conferences, and industry events, providing additional partner co-op access to these events.
- Hosted 13 familiarization (FAM) tours, showcasing Sonoma County to current and prospective clients.

- Contracted with a professional hospitality sales trainer, delivering three days of training to more than 100 participants.
- Increase the number of Sonoma County trip offerings in international tour operator tariffs. Although international inbound travel is faced significant headwinds during FY24-25, SCT believes it's important to retain a presence in key markets and continue to raise destination awareness within these countries. SCT moved its Australian representation to a project-based relationship, but retained contracted representation in the United Kingdom (Rocket Travel Marketing) and Germany (MSi) to provide in-market support. During the year, the team successfully secured eight new programs, achieving nearly its goal of nine new programs. Programs include:
 - **Germany:** Fairflight, Canusa, CRD, Argus Reisen, America Unlimited,
 - **UK:** North America Travel Service, Discover North America, America As You Like It

Germany: Programming in partnership with MSI secured 2,956 room nights. 261 travel agents were trained on Sonoma County and the team hosted 112 client meetings.

UK: Rocket Travel Marketing conducted 55 sales calls, 12 training sessions – training 580 travel agents. The team surveyed over 40 tour operators, which showed 1) 80% of those operators currently promote Sonoma County to their clients; 2) 64 pre-set itineraries featuring Sonoma County, and 3) a drop of -17% of hotel offerings.

- Include the vacation rental product as a desirable lodging option.
 - SCT reconfigured the Lodging section of the website to ensure vacation rental units were displayed according to the suggestion of the Vacation Rental Committee members.
 - SCT also included vacation rentals in the 3rd Night Free promotion
 - Our on-going connectivity with this industry segment has provided several opportunities to highlight SCT's programming and gain a greater partnership with this community.

2. **Balance Travel Seasonality.** Sonoma County Tourism has been charged with intent marketing during the shoulder and off-season time period (November – April) since its inception in 2005. Because of the product offerings and regional nature of current visitation, driving visitation during this period continues to be a challenge. Both the consumer marketing and destination sales teams work to compel travel during this time period.

SCT worked with the Marketing Committee and the Fahlgren Mortine/Shipyard teams to develop and launch the THIS IS WINE COUNTRY campaign. This began in mid-February and ran through the end of June. We did not go silent during November through January, however. We continued paid SEO and SEM search as well as social media and PR outreach.

To further encourage year-round travel and most especially mid-week and off-season travel, the development of a convention center complex would help punctuate this goal.

This program came to a halt in 2024, however, SCT is hopeful a convention center can be built in a location that will benefit not only the immediate area, but the entire region.

PRIORITY 2: Create a Resilient Organization

Resiliency is the capacity of an organization to prepare for and respond to any impact. This can be a crisis, an incident that diminishes organizational reputation or a shows a lack of forward planning especially planning that prepares the organization for potential impact. Sonoma County Tourism will work to become more resilient in the face of all potential impacts through creating a structure and approach that will help alleviate potential risks.

1. **Increase Funding to SCT.** To create a high level of organizational resiliency, Sonoma County Tourism will work to increase its funding by 30% - to \$12 million or more through long-term reliable sources of revenue. This will give the organization the foundation needed to manage ongoing programming and respond to any impacts.

In FY 2024–25, the team engaged with non-BIA hoteliers to explore individual contribution opportunities. While this approach was not embraced, it provided valuable insight into potential future partnerships and strengthened relationships with key stakeholders. Efforts continue to refine strategies that will expand participation among hotel partners.

Nominal funding came from partnership programs including:

- Participation in tradeshow, conferences, and client events.
- Inclusion in the Signature Experiences program
- Accredited Hospitality Professional program fees
- Annual Meeting registration fees
- Stars of the Industry registration fees

2. **Elevate Commitment to and Programming Around Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEI+A).** To help both SCT and its county-wide partner businesses recognize the importance and need to integrate DEI+A policies, SCT will work to lay the foundation for meaningful programming internally and for partners.

SCT launched the Wine Country for All of Us initiative in 2024 to help ensure the county is seen as a have for persons looking for an inclusive and welcoming destination. To help further this program, SCT created key partnerships including:

- a. Wheel the World, a global organization working to make travel more accessible. This program began in FY24-25 and will continue into the foreseeable future.
- b. A collaboration with J Winery's Love wine brand. This provided a values-driven brand alignment between the inclusive Love wine brand and the Wine Country for All of us program. SCT promoted this through social and media outreach.
- c. Seven Secrets of Inclusive Hospitality. SCT's partnership with this group began with a presentation to industry partners and will continue with the program launch at the 2025 Annual Meeting.

3. **Administer an Effective and Transparent Operation**

As a contributor to, and recipient of, public funds through the Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT), Sonoma County Tourism ensures its operational practices align with accounting and operational best practices. Through oversight of the Finance & Legal Committee and the Board of Directors, the budget and allocation of dollars are given careful scrutiny.

SCT continued its annual audit with Piscenti & Brinker, a County-approved auditing firm and reported all findings to the Finance & Legal Committee, Board of Directors and the County.

The audit was completed and presented to the County in April 2025. No exceptions of significance were found.

PRIORITY 3: Engage the Community

1. **Provide Greater Opportunities for Community Input.** Ensure ongoing opportunities for residents to provide input into Sonoma County Tourism's initiatives, including those outlined in the master plan. This will help ensure a higher level of understanding and potentially support, from residents.

SCT continues to work with each Supervisorial district to convey the value of tourism and gain input from residents (via Municipal Advisory Council/MAC) meetings, and presentations to other community focused organizations.

The annual Coffee + Collaborative was held in December 2024. The event was attended by elected officials and municipality staffers from across Sonoma County.

SCT provided presentations to various community groups throughout the community including:

- Lower Russian River Municipal Advisory Council (MAC)
- Better Together Emergency Preparedness Symposium
- Leadership Petaluma
- Russian River Chamber of Commerce
- Leadership Santa Rosa
- Sonoma County AirBNB Host Community
- NAACP Sonoma County Chapter

2. **Increase Engagement with Tourism Industry Partners.** SCT will continue to develop business-building opportunities for its partners and provide both financial and intellectual resources designed to create success.

Through the \$500,000 operational grants, SCT's work with the visitor centers is helping to ensure ongoing operation of these important visitor touchpoints. SCT continued to elevate this program throughout the year through hosting formal meetings and other gatherings.

SCT's quarterly industry collaboratives and mixers provide opportunities for the team and partners to foster a higher level of engagement and education about business building opportunities.

Travel and Tourism Week continues to be a highlight of the year. This year's celebration included new events and greater focus on partner recognition:

- Passport to Signature Experiences (May 6) - A mixer style event with approximately 80 registrants.
- Stars of the Industry (May 7) – The awards evening was attended by approximately 350 attendees and featured 15 awards to celebrate the tremendous work of the tourism industry in Sonoma County. The event also recognized the original signers of the SCT Articles of Incorporation and the organization's 20th anniversary.
- Rapid Connections (May 8) – A B2B networking event with approximately 30 businesses registered. Event feedback was very positive, and SCT will be launching this as a regular series in FY25-26.
- Gold Resolution from the Board of Supervisors was received on May 13 declaring May Travel and Tourism Month in Sonoma County.
- Nine Visitor Center Houses were held throughout the week in Santa Rosa, Petaluma, Russian River, Cloverdale, Bodega Bay, Sonoma Valley, Geyserville, Fort Ross and Windsor.

3. **Elevate Awareness of, and Discussions Around, Sonoma County's Culture and Heritage.**

Tourism has generally taken a Pollyanna approach to culture and heritage, framing this in a completely positive light. As identified in the Destination Stewardship and Resiliency Master Plan, spurring conversation around all aspects of our history, will move the destination forward in a more realistic way.

SCT created the Neighborhoods Project to celebrate the compelling personalities and aspects of each community. This program was suspended in 2024 due to a personnel change. But, the storytelling around the heritage and culture continue within social media posts, press outreach, the visitors guide and paid media materials.

PRIORITY 4: Solidify Commitment to Destination Stewardship

1. **Elevate the Position of Sonoma County Within the Sustainability Space.** Although Sonoma County has established itself as a leader in sustainable travel, SCT can continue to solidify this position and provide additional opportunities for its

partners. The creation of the Manager, Sustainability and Climate Change Initiatives has provided SCT with greater insights into this arena and opportunities to create first-to-market solutions and opportunities for partners.

Sonoma County Tourism continues to give back to our local community through its Tourism Cares program, maintaining 5 stretches of adopted road and participating in volunteer opportunities to meet the needs of our local community.

- Adopt-a-Road program. During FY24-25, 8 miles of roads were cleaned. Since joining the adopt-a-road program, SCT has cleaned 62 miles of Sonoma County roads.
- Tourism Cares:
 - Russian River Clean Up – September 6, 2024
 - Hygiene Product Drive – December 2024 – February 2025
 - Earth Day Clean Up – Steelhead Back – April 22, 2025

2. Enhance Partnerships with Sustainability Brands.

SCT has worked with organizations such as Leave No Trace and Kind Traveler for several years and developed foundational programming, more can be done to engage local partners and convey the programming to visitors.

As sustainability grows within the meeting sector, the opportunity to engage meeting planners with Sonoma County's commitment to sustainability is greater than ever. Helping ensure venues/hotel brands are aligned around the sustainability value will be critical for success.

SCT continues its partnership with Kind Traveler and Leave No Trace. SCT continued to work with the Cleaner California Coast to develop programming. During FY24-25, Kind Traveler expanded its Every Stay Gives Back program within Sonoma County.

3. Position Sonoma County as a Leader in the Climate Change Imperative. California is working to become a global leader in mitigating climate change. With the commitment of both the winegrowing and tourism industries, Sonoma County can become a partner with the state to move climate change initiatives forward.

Sonoma County Tourism has been recognized as a thought leader in the tourism industry for sustainable tourism and climate change initiatives. At this point, SCT will work to elevate more pressing issues, but we continue to be a destination stewardship organization committed to protecting and preserving the region.

SCT Budget Overview FY24-25

	FY24-25A		FY24-25B	
Advertising	\$1,779,326	19.7%	\$1,700,650	17.1%
Client Events, FAM and Entertainment	\$239,048	2.6%	\$551,690	5.6%
Travel and Tradeshow	\$280,876	3.1%	\$298,195	3.0%
Digital Engagement	\$507,035	5.6%	\$624,359	6.3%
Organization Tools	\$68,169	0.8%	\$47,596	0.5%
Research	\$170,178	1.9%	\$198,896	2.0%
Event and Organization Sponsorships	\$422,606	4.7%	\$464,546	4.7%
Memberships	\$64,158	0.7%	\$67,819	0.7%
Contract Services	\$719,521	7.9%	\$707,875	7.1%
Professional Development & Training	\$266,713	2.9%	\$242,550	2.5%
Destination Programming	\$751,449	8.3%	\$733,186	7.4%
Payroll and Human Resources	\$3,136,940	34.6%	\$3,543,425	35.8%
Technology	\$175,973	1.9%	\$165,440	1.7%
Office Supplies and Equipment	\$51,080	0.6%	\$82,501	0.8%
Fees and Licenses	\$135,866	1.5%	\$182,612	1.8%
Facilities Expense	\$284,453	3.2%	\$291,258	3.0%
	\$9,053,394		\$9,990,598	
Expense by Source Funding	TOT		BIA	
Advertising	\$5,574	0.3%	\$1,770,752	30.5%
Client Events, FAM and Entertainment	\$15,366	0.5%	\$223,682	3.9%
Travel and Tradeshow	\$0	0.0%	\$280,876	4.8%
Digital Engagement	\$10,838	0.3%	\$496,197	8.5%
Organization Tools	\$38,417	1.2%	\$29,752	0.5%
Research	\$1,365	0.1%	\$168,814	2.9%
Event and Organization Sponsorships	\$190,037	5.9%	\$232,569	4.0%
Memberships	\$45,222	1.4%	\$18,936	0.3%
Contract Services	\$54,324	1.7%	\$665,197	11.5%
Professional Development & Training	\$210,344	6.5%	\$56,369	1.0%
Destination Programming	\$601,621	18.5%	\$149,828	2.6%
Payroll and Human Resources	\$1,454,030	44.8%	\$1,682,910	29.0%
Technology	\$175,973	5.4%	\$0	0.0%
Office Supplies and Equipment	\$19,441	0.6%	\$31,640	0.5%
Fees and Licenses	\$135,866	4.2%	\$0	0.0%
Facilities Expense	\$284,453	8.6%	\$0	0.0%
	\$3,245,870	35.9%	\$5,807,524	64.1%

FY24-25 Balance Sheet

**Sonoma County Tourism
Statement of Financial Position**

June 30,	2024	2025
Assets		
Current Assets		
Cash and equivalent	\$2,551,197	\$2,361,665
Accounts receivable, net	\$3,337,588	\$3,132,305
Inventory	\$19,110	\$25,394
Prepaid Expenses and other current assets	\$309,537	\$322,111
Total Current Assets	\$6,217,432	\$5,841,475
Property, equipment and improvements	\$216,825	\$257,958
Right of use operating lease assets, net	\$638,017	\$932,141
Deposits	\$26,122	\$26,122
Total Assets	\$7,098,396	\$7,057,696
Liabilities		
Current Liabilities		
Accounts payable	\$484,053	\$362,878
Accrued Expenses	\$600,112	\$465,884
Operating lease liability	\$298,561	\$289,865
Total Current Liabilities	\$1,382,726	\$1,118,627
Operating lease liability	\$392,308	\$690,868
Total Liabilities	\$1,775,034	\$1,809,495
Net assets without donor restrictions	\$5,323,362	\$5,248,201
Total Assets and Liabilities	\$7,098,396	\$7,057,696

IV. FY25-26 Update

This report shows the SCT programming against plan KPIs as of December 31, 2025.

Critical Business Objective: Drive the Sonoma County Economy

1. Drive Revenue to Partner Businesses

Sonoma County Tourism's (SCT) organizational mandate is to drive overnight visitation and revenue to partner businesses. For 20 years, SCT has worked to drive both visitation numbers and revenue in both the domestic and international leisure and business travel sectors. In 2025, the challenges noted require SCT to take a more intentional approach to solving these challenges through its paid, earned, and owned media efforts. The rise of AI technology and shifting consumer preferences make this more nuanced than ever.

SCT will meet this challenge through continuing its most salient existing programming and introducing new programming that meets these challenges head on.

Drive visitation by increasing targeted brand awareness through inspiring content, optimized digital tools, and enhanced visitor resources that guide travelers from inspiration to action.

- Annual economic impact from visitor spending increases 2% year-over-year – this will be provided in May 2026.
- The baseline of Paid Media ROI with NEAR and Adara to leverage data for future paid media planning is established.
 - Baseline ROI from Paid Media campaign established at 44:1. Paid campaign delivered over \$44,000,000 in visitor spending, to a paid advertising spend of \$1,000,000.
- Social media engagement increases by 15% YOY across all channels.
 - Post reactions on Facebook up 62% to 66,308. Instagram story engagement up 18% to .04% . TikTok engagement up 28% YOY.
- Website engagement and time on site increases by 10% YOY.
 - Website Engagement Rate: 90% (+30% YOY)
 - Page Views Per Session: 3.35 (+62% YOY)
 - Average Time on Site: 3 minutes 2 seconds
 - AI Referral Traffic 7,187 (+1094% YOY)
- Visitation to tasting rooms increases year-over-year.
 - Data not being collected – methodology has not been determined.
- Visitation to partner sites through the Signature Experiences page on the website increases 50% year-over-year.
 - Establishing baseline traffic through 6 months, traffic so far:
 - Signature Experiences Website Visits: 15,367
 - Signature Experiences App Ad
 - 11,268 impressions
 - 208 clicks
 - 1.80% CTR
 - Signature Experiences Meta Video Ad
 - 52,370 impressions
 - 1,324 clicks/5.11% CTR

Deploy cohesive, multi-platform content and tools that fuel trip planning, encourage in-market spending, and drive partner engagement.

- Annual economic impact from visitor spending increases 2% year-over-year

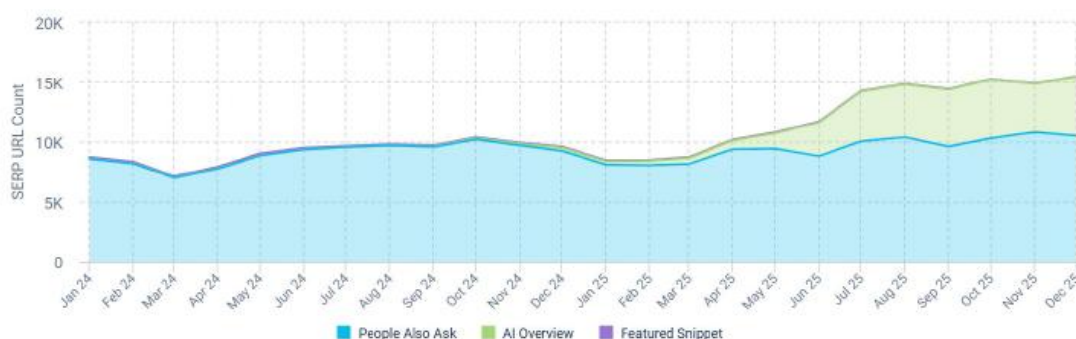
Sonoma County saw growth in 2024, **with spending increasing by 3.5%**, surpassing \$2.4 billion. Employment in the sector expanded by 2.4%, adding 526 new jobs, bringing industry job levels back to pre-pandemic numbers from 2019. Travel-generated earnings climbed 4.2% to \$1.1 billion, while tax revenue from tourism reached \$218.4 million, marking a 3.0% increase over 2023.

Sonoma County Direct Travel Impacts, 2019-2024

	Spending (\$Millions) Direct and Indirect	Earnings (\$Millions)	Employment	Local Taxes (\$Millions)	State Taxes (\$Millions)	Total Taxes (\$Millions)
2019	2,237	863	22,355	110	95	205
2020	1,248	653	16,287	74	61	135
2021	1,990	763	17,614	115	85	200
2022	2,298	935	21,185	126	93	219
2023	2,359	1,038	21,976	118	94	212
2024	2,442	1,081	22,502	121	98	218
2023-2024 Change	3.5%	+4.2%	+2.4%	+2.9%	+3.2%	+3.0%

- Sell over \$60,000 in partner advertising
 - Advertising handled through new Visitor Guide Partner Wonderlust Studios. They achieved over \$200,000 in advertising partners with over 100 SCT partners, taking out paid advertisements.
- Increase app engagement by 10% YOY
 - 169,685 total users
 - 3 minutes 55 seconds Average Session Duration (+16% YOY)
 - 822 new app downloads
- Identify baseline for new search behaviors (Zero-click Searches, etc.) – create and begin realizing incremental funding.
 - Below is a URL count for SCT rankings in AI Overviews as well as “People Also Ask” sections on Google:

SCT ranking in AIO or People Also Ask



- Create and begin realizing incremental funding from merchandising sales.
 - Working on drafting a merchandise strategy for implementation in second half of FY25-26

Support partner events through sponsorships and marketing partnerships

- SCT is recognized for showing its community support through assisting local events.
- Sponsored events drive incremental revenue to the destination during the event period (25-26 as an evaluation benchmark year).
 - Establishing benchmarks for identified events. New sponsorship process for identifying events established and implemented in first half of FY25-26.
- SCT gains additional marketing/brand awareness through the media bought as pre-event promotion or shown during/post event.

Amplify earned media coverage through creating storytelling that inspires writers and influencers to cover Sonoma County partner businesses.

PR Coverage Snapshot (July 2025-December 2025)

- Total stories secured: 81
- Domestic coverage: 56 stories
- International coverage: 25 stories
- Total impressions: Approximately 88.4 million

From July through January 2025, SCT delivered strong earned media results across top-tier national and international outlets, securing 41 placements and approximately 42.6 million impressions. Coverage in publications such as *Travel + Leisure*, *Time Out*, *Architectural Digest*, *Lonely Planet*, *Fodor's Travel*, and major broadcast affiliates reinforced Sonoma County's position as a compelling, multidimensional destination.

Editorial storytelling consistently aligned with strategic priorities, highlighting culinary and wine excellence, sustainability, inclusive travel, outdoor experiences, and the character of Sonoma County's small towns. International coverage expanded meaningfully, with 14 stories across the UK, Germany, and global travel media, extending reach into key overseas markets and supporting longer-term destination awareness.

Collectively, the breadth and quality of coverage reflect sustained editorial momentum and credible third-party validation at scale. Results met Barcelona Principles benchmarks (KPI < 9), underscoring effective reach, audience relevance, and measurable outcomes across regional, national, and international earned media efforts.

- Increase stories in industry publications written about Sonoma County as a meeting, special event, and wedding destination.
 - **Meetings Today (64.5K UVPM):** Discover Your Next Meetings Destination: Sonoma County, California - 1.1.26
 - **Meetings Today (64.5K UVPM):** Napa Valley and Sonoma County Offer Variety for Meetings Agendas - 11.21.25
 - **U.S. News & World Report (15.3M UVPM):** Best Romantic Getaways in the USA for 2026 - 12.15.25
 - **The Group Travel Leader (30K Digital and 75K Print UVPM):** Bicycle Tours Bring New Perspectives - 10.6.25
- Increase stories in mainstream publications and periodicals that further promote Sonoma County as a business-driven destination (NYT-Business section).
 - **Fodors Travel (1.2M UVPM):** Which California Wine Region is the Very Best? - 10.17.25
 - **KHAO 11 – CBS (230,683 national views/2.6M regional views):** Ensuring Travel for All - 1.8.25
- Work with new agency to garner at least two feature stories in priority outlets.
 - **Travel + Leisure (10.2M UVPM):** Forget 'Fine Dining,' the Latest Food Trend Is All About 'Find Dining' - 8.12.25
 - **Via Magazine (1.5M UVPM and 3.2M mailed print issues):** Fall Road Trip Along the Sonoma Coast - 10.6.25
 - **Islands Magazine (2.3M UVM) and Flipboard (890K UVM):** Sonoma County's Hot Springs Getaway Promises Good Food And Wine Tastings In Ethereal Beauty - 11.20.25
 - **Architectural Digest (3M UVPM):** The 9 Most Beautiful Wineries in Napa and Sonoma - 7.2.25
 - **Fodors Travel (1.2M UVPM):** Which California Wine Region is the Very Best? - 10.17.25
- Reach an 8.5 Barcelona Principals score.
 - 7.7

25-Jul	7.2	20Two
25-Aug	8.3	20Two
25-Sep	7.6	20Two
25-Oct	8.0	20Two
25-Nov	7.0	20Two
25-Dec	8.0	FINN
Average	7.7	

Drive business and corporate travel through a focus on key markets (luxury, incentive, corporate, and associations)

- Develop and launch a unified luxury travel message.
 - SCT onboarding a new creative agency who is working toward a unified luxury message.
- Implement a training program for hotel sales team (meeting and tourism development)
 - The team has continued to offer training opportunities to our partners by attending hotel sales meetings, sponsoring hotel participation at industry events, hosting Cvent, Reposite, and Prism platform trainings, and local Sales Team Mixers, delivering a partner education program at SCT's offices focused on prospecting, site tours, and relationship building.
- Host 4 in-market sales activations.
 - Salesforce Travel Fair (October)
 - Associations West (formerly CalSAE) (December)
 - The team will be hosting the following in-market client events in Sonoma (January), Phoenix (February), Sacramento (February), Denver/Dallas (Spring).

- Achieve 50 leads from SCT prospecting programs.
 - To date, the SCT Destination Sales team has generated 36 direct RFP's/leads.
- 12,000 room nights influenced by SCT team.
 - As of December 31, 2025 = 7,949 influenced room nights.

PRODUCTION	Leads	Influenced Programs	Group Room Nights
July	73	5	1,244
August	56	2	458
September	55	5	1405
October	52	5	1197
November	69	2	595
December	27	9	2,635
YTD Production	365	30	7949

○

PROGRAMING	Incentive Applications	Hotel Referrals	Client 1:1 Meetings	Prospecting Calls	Sales Events	Site Tours	New Accounts	FAMs
July	9	29	168	205	0	2	37	0
August	13	21	250	150	9	2	67	2
September	7	12	124	110	4	4	16	0
October	5	8	411	240	2	2	153	3
November	10	13	143	84	2	0	14	2
December	5	11	342	36	5	0	27	0
YTD Production	49	94	1493	0	22	10	314	7

○

Promote inbound travel from key domestic and international markets (US, Canada, UK., Germany, Australia, Mexico).

- Increase campaign driven room nights by 5% or year over year.
 - Campaigns are currently underway, and production numbers will be shared once SCT receives them from our industry partners.
- Meet and network with 1,000 tourism professionals.
 - The team has engaged with 420 tourism professionals to date through tradeshow, client events, and FAM tours. A full winter and spring schedule is ahead, with client-facing opportunities expected to increase significantly.
- Generate a domestic luxury message and scope of work to drive business.
 - The Tourism Development team concentrated its efforts on the domestic market during the first six months of FY 25–26. Key activities included attending Northstar's GTM Luxury Tradeshow, co-hosting Signature Travel Network, ILGTA, Bay Area Travel Fair's, conducting online trainings and virtual tradeshow for travel advisors, and participating in Visit California's Luxury Forum.
- Assemble and retain a Travel Trade advisory council.
 - The team has discussed the opportunity to participate in an SCT Travel Trade Industry Council with numerous clients across the travel trade sector and will continue to do so until the council is formed.

2. Identify and Elevate Tourism Demand Drivers

Visitation to Sonoma County is hindered by limited "new" product development and significant demand drivers. While developing both properties and events is not in Sonoma County Tourism's scope, the lack of new initiatives is impacting opportunities for the organization to drive business. Establishing relationships with local development entities and working with partner agencies and businesses to identify opportunities presents an important step toward ensuring the destination is seen as vibrant and interesting for both leisure and business travelers.

Sonoma County has a unique opportunity to enhance its appeal by expanding new product development and increasing demand-driving initiatives. While the development of properties and events falls outside the direct scope of Sonoma County Tourism, the organization can play a vital role by fostering strong relationships with local developers, partner agencies, and businesses. By identifying and supporting opportunities for growth, SCT can help ensure the destination continues to be seen as dynamic and compelling for both leisure and business travelers.

Connect with county and municipal economic development and permitting agencies help ensure SCT is a contributing partner and resource when attracting or approving potential lodging property projects.

Claudia and Jonny met with most all incorporated cities through Sonoma County, and Jonny has met with the newly appointed Director of Permit Sonoma, discussing the challenges and opportunities to streamline the permitting process.

- Work with a developer to bring one new major development to Sonoma County.
 - The team has held conversations with developers, including local Tribes, USL representatives, and independent hotel companies. Jonny will attend the American Lodging Investment Summit in January to network with developers and investors and explore potential interest in new developments in Sonoma County.
- SCT is asked to participate in developer discussions with County and municipal permitting agencies on visitor-facing projects.
 - Nothing to report to date.
- Create research platform to show new development in similar destinations and development best practices.
 - SCT built the following “Development And Investment Opportunities” webpage on SonomaCounty.com to provide high-level information on the destination:
<https://www.sonomacounty.com/about/development-and-investment-opportunities/>
 - Additional research platforms to be unveiled that show development in similar destinations.

Identify partnerships that can become demand drivers (new developments, festivals, entertainment centers, special events, identified “weeks” such as Black Cod Week etc.).

- Identify two additional promotional “weeks.” Work to calendar and potentially execute the events.
 - SCT is working with event planner, Judy Walker on a new annual event that the organization would own. Details will be available once we’ve determined the best approach.
- The number of partners participating in Restaurant Week increases 5%.
 - Working with the EDC to help drive awareness and participation for Restaurant Week. Restaurant Week to happen Feb. 23-March 1.
- Number of partners participating in Black Cod Week increases 10%.
 - Black Cod Week shifted to Black Cod Month. Participation decreased with this change from 50 to 40.

Critical Business Objective: Create a Resilient Organization and Destination

1. Enhance SCT's Ability to Benefit Destination-wide Lodging Properties

Since its inception in 2005, SCT has had the responsibility of marketing lodging properties that participate in the BIA assessment areas. These are the unincorporated areas and countywide municipalities except for Healdsburg and Sonoma. With the growth of both of these areas, and by request from some of the lodging properties in those areas, SCT is identifying ways to help ensure the sales and marketing programming it offers the other properties also is available to those in the two non-BIA collecting communities.

Identify and integrate a sustainable funding model that enables lodging properties and tourism-related organizations outside the countywide Business Improvement Area (BIA) to financially participate in Sonoma County Tourism's sales and marketing programs.

- At least one new lodging property marketing partnership is finalized.
 - SCT has an outstanding and open marketing partnership proposal with Graton Resort & Casino, in lieu of BIA.
- Non-BIA community funding model is developed.
 - Discussions have occurred. Programming will happen during the second half of the fiscal year.

2. Run a High-Performing Organization

SCT is committed to running an organization that exemplifies its values and is seen as a well-run, effective organization. Whether in its day-to-day operations, ensuring its employees enjoy a productive and satisfying work environment or responding to a crisis, SCT has the foundation to address all of its operational needs at the highest possible level.

Ensure all SCT programming has a foundation of research.

- Research page on the website is updated monthly to reflect latest insights.
 - The page is updated on a monthly basis.

Ensure SCT team is highly engaged, aligned around the approach to FY25-26 and embodies the organizational values.

- Overall employee engagement scores are 80 or above (Culture Amp scoring metrics)
 - 2025 Employee survey has been completed – results will be launched in February.
- Annual turnover rate less than 10% (2 people)
 - 2 people have left as of January 2026 but both to relocate to other cities/states for personal reasons

Elevate opportunities to create value for board members and offer opportunities to participate in SCT-sponsored activities and local events.

- Feedback from the annual board retreat is very positive.
 - Feedback from the Board Retreat with Bill Geist wasn't universally positive. The feedback from the session with Carl Ruibado regarding Blue Ocean Strategy was largely positive and has formed a direction for the organization.

- Results from the annual board survey show a satisfied and engaged board.
 - To be determined.
- The board is represented at 80% of the community mixers.
 - Not yet achieved.

Ensure SCT's budget is efficiently allocated and effectively managed.

- Monthly financials are completed and provided to the Finance & Legal Committee within 60 days of month-end.
 - This has mostly been accomplished to date.

Complete all county required documents as required by the agreement.

- SCT gains no notable exceptions on the annual audit.
 - Audit will be presented to the Board at the Jan. 28 meeting.
- Annual required documents provided to the County on or before the deadline required by the contract.
- SCT achieves at least a 3-year TOT renewal from the Board of Supervisors.

Ensure Sonoma County Tourism is prepared for a crisis and provides updated tools that help partners prepare for and mitigate crisis situations.

- Crisis communications plan is updated on a quarterly basis.
 - This has been largely accomplished.
- Three SCTers are trained as County Emergency Response team members.
 - As of Jan. 28 we have one person trained. We need to identify others.
- SCT responds to a crisis as outlined in the plan

3. Continue to Amplify Destination Stewardship

SCT became the nation's first official Destination Stewardship Organization in 2018. Since then, it has integrated programming and developed its Destination Stewardship and Resiliency Master Plan to help ensure the long-term sustainability of the destination's natural, cultural and intellectual resources. With this foundation solidly laid, it will continue to work with partners and other stakeholders to amplify the need for respectful travel and responsible protection of the region's resources.

Create opportunities and events for both SCT and partners that help mitigate visitor impacts.

- Adopt-a-Road cleanups are completed as required by the contract.
 - Adopt-a-Road cleanups have been conducted on each of SCT's 5 stretches of road, and our contracts have been renewed for an additional three-year period. Two clean-ups have been completed in the first six months of this fiscal year.
- SCT partners with a community organization to conduct two Tourism Cares programs (including hygiene drive)
 - The hygiene drive was completed in January 2026, with 359 pounds of product donated this year.
- SCT and Regional Parks continue to encourage visitors to abide by Leave No Trace Principles ensuring signage is accessible/readable.
 - Our partnership with Regional Parks and Leave No Trace continues.

SCT is included in coverage regarding destinations embracing stewardship

- SCT is included in four stories that showcase destinations engaged in stewardship/sustainability initiatives.
 - SCT has been included in two stories to date:
 - [From Vineyards to Family Farms: How Agritourism Is Transforming Sustainable Travel — GLP Films](#)
 - [5 US Destinations Leading the Sustainability Charge for 2026 | TravelPulse.](#)

Critical Business Objective: Engage the Community

While SCT was formed to drive overnight visitation through sales and marketing programming, the environment of destination marketing has dramatically changed, making engaging the community more important than ever. Through robust programming that creates intentional outreach to SCT's most critical communities, the opportunity to gain industry champions and initiative supporters becomes as critical as driving business to the long-term success of both the organization and the industry.

1. Engage Partners and Communities Critical to the Long-term Success of the Industry

SCT has established several programs that support the industry in ways that provide both financial and intellectual resources. But the opportunity to further develop the industry and engage key stakeholders has never been more important. As the tourism industry globally and locally faces significant headwinds that impact visitation, ensuring SCT not only informs but also trains its partners will help ensure the industry is prepared to face and overcome these issues.

Continue to partner with Sonoma County's tourism and hospitality industry to help ensure visitors gain extraordinary experiences

- Grow AHP program by 15% fully accredited participants
 - Fully accredited participants have grown this fiscal year from 564 to 687. This is a 23.5% increase. Program enrollment has grown from 678 to 839, a 23.7% increase.
- Revamp visitor center grant program
 - The visitor center grant application has been rewritten and is in review stages with the Community Engagement committee, with a goal to have the new application approved at the February 2026 committee meeting.

Continue Wine Country for All of Us initiative to create and administer social inclusion programming and messages

- 70 partners have been mapped by Wheel the World
 - Complete. 73 partners have been mapped.
- Sonoma County becomes "Destination Verified" by Wheel the World
 - Complete. Our public announcement will be made in March.
- "Seven Secrets of Inclusive Hospitality" has been integrated into the AHP program
 - The program is slated to launch in April 2026.

Provide opportunities for partners to participate in SCT programming to help drive business and amplify individual brands

- Hold a robust National Travel and Tourism Week
 - Scheduled for May 2026
- Host at least 6 Hospitality Collaboratives and 4 Industry Mixers across the County
 - Scheduled for Spring 2026.
- Hold Rapid Connections quarterly
 - Rapid Connections were held in September and November. The third event is scheduled for February 26. Post event surveys show a high-level of partner satisfaction with this event, with partners ranking their experience as “excellent” or “good.”

Create and distribute an annual partner survey.

- Partner survey is developed and distributed on or before May 1, 2026.
- Partner engagement is at least 20% of the number of surveys distributed.

2. Elevate SCT’s Partnership with Sonoma County’s Tourism and Hospitality Industry

SCT will work with partners to develop programming, a set of standards and an overall commitment to excellence that ensures the destination provides experiences to all potential customers that sets it apart as offering best-in-class experiences.

Conduct ongoing partner trainings to teach industry best practices, the need for stellar customer experiences and innovative problem solving solutions.

- Partner training curriculum is developed.
 - Partner training sessions have been developed and launched. The response has been tremendous. Curriculum continues to be developed as needs and partner requests are received and determined.
- Monthly partner trainings are held.
 - Monthly partner education sessions were launched in July 2025.
- “Secret shopper” visits are conducted with partners to ensure stellar customer experiences are being offered.

3. Engage Stakeholders to Elevate Industry and Organizational Perception

SCT is committed to ensuring tourism is perceived as a valuable economic driver among its key stakeholders, including residents, partners and elected officials. Maintaining a favorable relationship with each entity is critical for ensuring funding, program inclusion and development support.

Engage residents to monitor perception, pain points, and convey the value of tourism.

- Resident survey launched and baseline for future years established
 - The survey was launched on January 12 and has received over 900 responses, with the survey being held open through January 31.

Communicate industry performance and insights through targeted newsletters and partner communications

- Newsletters are sent in a timely manner

- SCT's newsletters are distributed on a consistent and timely cadence aligned with audience needs and content purposes. The Tourism Industry News & Resources (TINR) newsletter is delivered biweekly, Tourism Industry Performance & Insights (TIPI) and the Sales Newsletter are sent monthly, and additional partner communications are deployed as needed or on a quarterly basis. This structured approach ensures stakeholders receive relevant, timely information without over-communication, while maintaining predictability and trust across all partner-facing channels.
- From July 1, 2025, through January 21, 2026, Sonoma County Tourism's newsletter program continued to deliver timely, high-performing communications to partners and industry stakeholders.
- During this period, 183,503 emails were sent, an increase of 33,034 compared to the previous 205-day period, reflecting expanded reach and sustained demand for timely industry updates. Of those, **164,337 emails were successfully delivered**, up **27,227** over the prior period, indicating improved list health and delivery performance.
- Open rate exceeds 40% for all newsletters
 - Newsletters achieved an average open rate of 50%, significantly exceeding the KPI benchmark of 40% across all sends. This level of engagement underscores strong subject-line performance, relevant content, and continued trust in SCT as a reliable source of industry insight and partner-focused information.
 - Collectively, these results demonstrate that SCT is not only meeting but exceeding newsletter performance expectations while maintaining consistency and timeliness in partner communications.

Conduct regular meetings with county and local elected officials to educate regarding the issues and opportunities of the tourism and vertical (wine, outdoor recreation) industry.

- One Coffee + Collaboration held
 - Coffee + Collaboration was held on December 11th. 23 representatives from 8 various municipalities registered for the event.
- Quarterly enewsletters produced and distributed to Santa Rosa, Petaluma, Rohnert Park, Windsor and Sebastopol
 - Templates are in development for a launch this spring.

Align with the Sonoma County Hospitality Association on issues and activities that help ensure state and local policies are in the best interest of the industry.

- SCT continues to serve on the SCHA board.
 - Kelly continues to serve as a non-voting member of the SCHA board.
- An SCT team member attends each SCHA mixer
 - SCT team members have attended mixers as appropriate.