

BCTDA Annual Report

2016-2017



Presented by
Explore **ASHEVILLE**

BUNCOMBE COUNTY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

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Beaufort House Inn

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The Omni Grove Park Inn

Leah Wong Ashburn
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Grand Bohemian Hotel Asheville

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Aloft Asheville Downtown

Ken Stamps
Navitat Canopy Adventures

Ruth Summers
Grove Arcade

A Message for our Tourism Partners

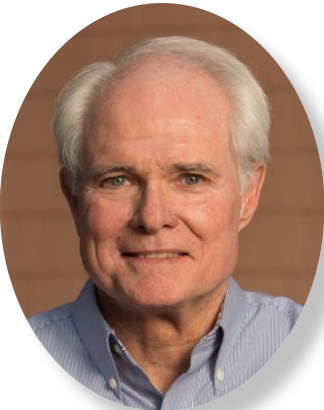
The BCTDA and the staff of Explore Asheville are honored to represent you as we work together to attract visitors to Buncombe County and welcome them to experience the beauty, vibrancy and unique spirit that we all enjoy as residents of this special place.

When the BCTDA was created more than 30 years ago, it was a bold idea to propose a tax that singled out one group of businesses. And, it was a big responsibility to take on overseeing that revenue to make sure it would be invested wisely. Three decades of focused investment in destination promotion have created a vibrant tourism economy that generates nearly \$3 billion of economic activity in Buncombe County.

The past year has ushered in a new era with the creation of the Explore Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau, an independent organization representing more than 1,200 local tourism businesses. The CVB relocated to a new office space with the Asheville Independent Restaurant Association and the Asheville Buncombe Regional Sports Commission, and will soon welcome the Asheville Symphony in our new hub for tourism.

The success of the tourism sector has been a big part of the economic vitality of Asheville, fostering new businesses of all kinds – including many new hotels that will generate additional customers, jobs, and millions of dollars of property and sales taxes.

We are proud of the progress that has been made and look forward to working with you to overcome future challenges. And, together, we thank the Explore Asheville team for their endless flexibility during the transition and their tireless efforts as they work to promote and sustain the authenticity of our very special destination.



Jim Muth
BCTDA Chair
Beaufort House Inn



Stephanie Pace Brown
President & CEO
Explore Asheville

BCTDA MISSION

To be a leader in the economic development of Buncombe County by attracting and servicing visitors, generating income, jobs and tax revenues which make the community a better place to live.



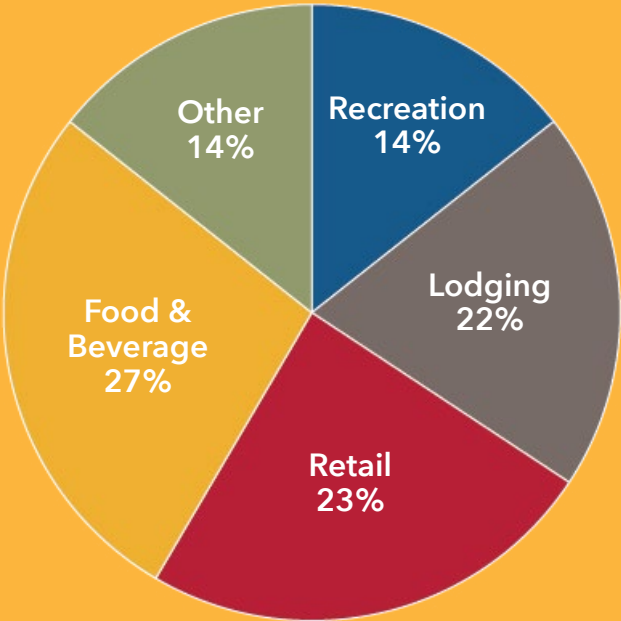
HISTORY OF THE BCTDA

| | | |
|------|--|--|
| 1983 | The occupancy tax was established by state law, and the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority was formed to invest the tax revenue in tourism promotion to attract and sustain overnight visitation. | Few industries voluntarily tax themselves. The hoteliers in Buncombe County were among the first in North Carolina to do so, creating a source of funding to stimulate visitation to the Asheville area and enhance the economy. |
| 1985 | An additional one percent was added and the tourism promotion effort gained traction. | |
| 2001 | An additional one percent was added to create the Tourism Product Development Fund. | In 1983, the North Carolina General Assembly ratified a bill that established the first hotel occupancy taxes in the state. The revenue would be dedicated to promoting Asheville as a destination – attracting overnight visitors and expanding the customer base for local businesses. |
| 2015 | The occupancy tax was increased from four to six percent maintaining 25 percent dedicated to the Tourism Product Development Fund. | In 2016, following a strategic review of its administrative infrastructure, BCTDA's Fiduciary Task Force recommended the creation of an independent entity to represent the \$3 billion visitor economy in Buncombe County; a structure that is consistent with national best practices. |
| 2016 | A Fiduciary Task Force was created to modernize the administrative structure of the CVB. | |
| 2017 | Based on the recommendation of the Fiduciary Task Force, an independent organization was established as Explore Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau. | The Explore Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau was established in 2017 and relocated to new office space at 27 College Place with two partner organizations, the Asheville Independent Restaurant Association (AIR) and the Asheville Buncombe Regional Sports Commission (ABRSC). |

VISITOR SPENDING IN BUNCOMBE COUNTY

“Destination promotion is funded 100 percent by commercial lodging, but every tourism-related business in Buncombe County is represented by the BCTDA's marketing efforts free-of-charge. Reinvestment of this collective source of promotion has helped create and sustain independent businesses by expanding the Asheville customer base and providing free marketing to connect visitors to local shops, restaurants, cultural experiences, events, attractions and accommodations.

~ Stephanie Pace Brown, President & CEO
Explore Asheville



Visitor Spending by Industry



| | HOTEL SALES | % CHANGE | OCCUPANCY | % CHANGE | ROOMS SOLD | % CHANGE |
|----------|-------------|----------|-----------|----------|------------|----------|
| FY 14-15 | \$264M | 16.2% | 72.6 | 7.5% | 1.77M | 6.3% |
| FY 15-16 | \$311M | 17.6% | 73.3 | 1.0% | 1.83M | 3.6% |
| FY 16-17 | \$352M | 13% | 72.7 | -0.8% | 1.9M | 3.8% |



10.9 MILLION

VISITORS TO THE ASHEVILLE AREA IN 2016

3.8M
OVERNIGHT
GUESTS

CENSUS REFERENCE:
BUNCOMBE COUNTY
POPULATION
~ 256,088 ~

VISITORS SPENT
\$1.9 BILLION

GENERATING
\$2.9 BILLION
IN ECONOMIC IMPACT

That's
\$5.2 million
daily

\$203 MILLION
GENERATED IN STATE AND
LOCAL TAXES

\$1,800
PER
HOUSEHOLD

26,700
JOBS SUPPORTED
That's 1-in-7

Source: The Economic Impact of Tourism in Asheville, 2016 by Tourism Economics

BUILDING BRAND AWARENESS

ADVERTISING CAMPAIGNS

Each year, Explore Asheville manages an extensive advertising plan designed to create awareness and inspire overnight visitation. In FY 16-17, the \$9.2 million media plan featured expansive broadcast and streaming video coverage in 15 markets as well as new print and digital assets that were seen throughout the year by a target audience of more than 626 million.



PROACTIVE PUBLIC RELATIONS SUPPORT

Advertising is complemented by a proactive media relations program that influences media coverage and generates national unpaid editorial coverage. Over the course of the year, the team executed 879 significant media touchpoints and generated 716 targeted pitches. This outreach contributed to an editorial reach of 4.95 billion. Additionally, the Explore Asheville PR team supported 106 media site visits, including ten of the nation's top craft beer and beverage writers for the first ever Beer Marketing & Tourism Conference in Asheville.

Photo: Public Relations Manager Landis Taylor (left) and Director of Communications Dodie Stephens pitch NYC media at a VisitNC tourism partner reception.

ONLINE CONTENT HIGHLIGHT

Live from Facebook, it's Asheville, N.C. Sharing #AshevilleMagic with Fans & Followers

Asheville's residents and repeat visitors have long understood that a true "Asheville experience" is often intangible—the product of a unique city vibe, serendipitous encounters and self-discovery. When Facebook launched its live broadcast capability in early 2016, the Explore Asheville content team saw an opportunity to convey some of these experiences to fans and followers in real time.

In August, the team launched a series of Facebook LIVE broadcasts that shared "Asheville Magic" moments from around the destination. Throughout the 2016-17 year, more than 40 broadcasts featured local tourism partners including the Drum Circle, downtown buskers, the Amazing Pubcycle, Asheville Restaurant Week and stand-up paddleboarding.



| | |
|------|--|
| 3.2M | TOTAL VIEWS |
| 15M | IMPRESSIONS |
| 40+ | FEATURED TOURISM PARTNERS |
| 1 | VIRAL VIDEO OUR BROADCAST OF ABBY THE SPOON LADY & THE FLY BY NIGHT ROUNDERS REACHED 2.6 MILLION VIEWS! |

SOCIAL METRICS

Social media referrals to ExploreAsheville.com were up 551 percent year-over-year compared to the previous fiscal year. Facebook was up 863 percent, Twitter was up 284 percent and Instagram was up 4,631 percent.



The **@VisitAsheville Instagram** account increased 133 percent in followers and currently totals 36,000. The number of engagements on Instagram posts increased 1,508 percent from the previous year with 395,200 engagements on 553 posts.



The **Visit Asheville Facebook** page audience grew in followers by 25 percent to total 256,550 followers. The page topped 1.3 million engagements (up 359%) and earned 462,000 clicks on links shared. The posts reached 49.9 million Facebook users. The 40+ Facebook Live videos produced during the year were viewed more than 3 million times.



Explore Asheville's Twitter accounts were consolidated this past year into three streamlined accounts. Total followers across the three accounts increased by 17 percent with the biggest increase on the main Visit Asheville account (33%). The account increased 78 percent in the number of mentions and messages received.

E-NEWSLETTER

Twenty-one editions of the Asheville Traveler e-newsletter were sent to a subscriber list of 120,000. Monthly newsletters posted an average open rate of 13.3 percent and a click-through rate of 2.8 percent.

626 MILLION
TOTAL
PAID ADVERTISING
REACH

4.3 MILLION
USER SESSIONS ON
EXPLOREASHEVILLE.COM

4.95 BILLION
TOTAL EDITORIAL
REACH

PRINT, BROADCAST
& ONLINE

786
SIGNIFICANT
PLACEMENTS

\$7.68 MILLION
TOTAL
PUBLICITY
VALUE

344,000
SOCIAL MEDIA
FOLLOWERS

3,056
TOTAL
MEDIA
PLACEMENTS

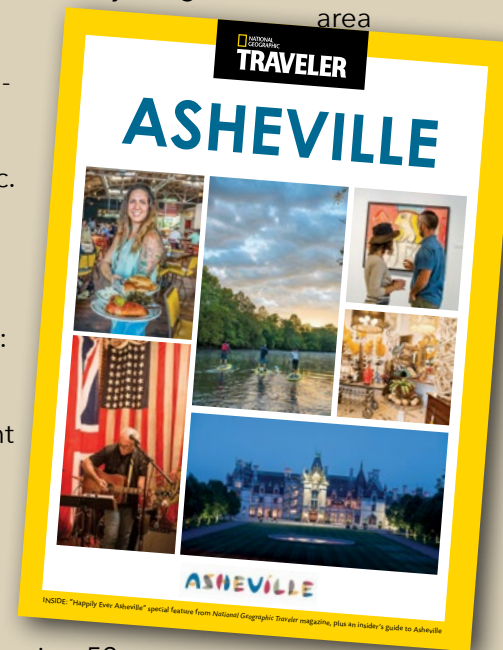
MARKETING HIGHLIGHTS

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TRAVELER SHARES PASSION FOR ASHEVILLE AREA

A National Geographic Traveler (NGT) crew shared its love of the Asheville area during a nine-month partnership which resulted in more than 45 million impressions during the 2016-2017 fiscal year.

The custom editorial program launched in September when three NGT journalists landed in Asheville for a seven-day assignment covering all aspects of the Asheville destination experience. The influencers promoted their experiences on their well-followed personal social accounts while in market, while also producing editorial content for NGT and NationalGeographic.com which was amplified through @natgeotravel social channels.

The content rich program spotlighted Asheville's unique experiences including: outdoor adventures, distinctive culinary experiences and the incredible music and arts scene. In total, the content rich partnership resulted in a six-page feature story in the April/May National Geographic Traveler, 10,000 copies of a NGT produced 20-page travel guide, eight custom digital features and blog posts on NationalGeographic.com, two Facebook live posts, two Instagram stories, 53 Facebook and Twitter posts, a day-long Instagram takeover with nearly one million likes and a consumer travel event for 250 guests at the National Geographic Museum in Washington, D.C. in April.



DIGITAL INFLUENCERS IN ASHEVILLE

This year, Explore Asheville intensified its digital influencer relations with a paid partnership program that engaged a targeted group of social media heavy weights with an estimated potential reach of 1.1 billion across all social platforms. Adventurous Kate, Expert Vagabond, Anna Everywhere, Travel Freak and The Divergent Travelers were carefully vetted through a partnership with Development Counsellors International. The PR team tailored and hosted immersive and diverse destination experiences that crossed more than 50 local businesses. So far, the program has returned more than 100 pieces of dynamic visual and video coverage and delivered more than 28 million impressions across the influencers' blogs, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube channels.



LONELY PLANET "BEST IN THE U.S."

One of travel's most trusted brands endorsed Asheville in a big way in 2017. Lonely Planet, the largest travel guide publisher in the world, selected Asheville as its #1 Best in the U.S. destination. The story went international. More than 40 major outlets ran the accolade including Associated Press, TODAY, USA Today, MSN, the Guardian and ABC News with a reach of roughly 1.1 billion media impressions. The designation was the result of a guidebook research trip for Lonely Planet hosted by the PR team, resulting in a feature in their new glossy magazine.

Explore Asheville collaborated with Lonely Planet and Biltmore on an integrated publicity, content and social media campaign bolstered by a Lonely Planet produced feature video and a "Best in the U.S." Asheville getaway contest. The contest received nearly 25K entries and 10K of those opted-in to receive future news directly from Explore Asheville. The LP seal of approval was also leveraged across Explore Asheville's national advertising campaigns.



AND, THE BEAT GOES ON . . .

The Asheville area music initiative was expanded in 2017 with additional advertising investment, partnerships, and media relations outreach aimed at attracting broader awareness of the music scene and sustainability of musical artists and businesses.

A series of new partnerships and media relations outreach highlighted the CVB's commitment to generating visitors interested in the region's music scene to create a larger customer base for artists, buskers, venues and music-oriented businesses. In addition to its second year investment in the PBS series "David Holt's State of Music," the CVB was a lead sponsor of the new UNC Public-TV series "Echo Sessions," which features live recording sessions produced by IamAVL, an Asheville-based music production company.

A new partnership with the Steep Canyon Rangers band was also forged. The collaboration involved a variety of components, including a wrap of the band's tour motorcoach with a composite image that embeds a photo of the 2016 Steep Canyon performance in Pack Square Park by local photographer David Simshock into a mountain backdrop shot by Dave Allen (also a local photographer). In addition to the band's logo, the wrap features the Asheville destination brand and web site, ExploreAsheville.com. With more than 150 tour dates coast-to-coast, the wrapped motorcoach serves as a traveling billboard for the Asheville music scene. The two entities will also share social posts featuring Asheville's growing reputation as a music destination.

The CVB's in-house public relations team is working directly with music PR agency Mason Jar Media on media outreach to tell the music stories of the region.



ELEVATING ASHEVILLE'S REPUTATION AS A DESTINATION FOR GROUP BUSINESS

The addition of a new sales position this past fiscal year allowed group sales to expand its reach in the national marketplace. With attention focused on northeast-based finance, insurance, medical manufacturers and pharmaceutical buyers, we strengthened the client base in these sectors. Emphasis on building of the sales pipeline across all markets remained key. The team increased its number of direct client connections, added tradeshow and marketplaces targeting the desired planners, hosted four client events in key cities, and brought more than 140 buyers representing all market segments to experience the destination firsthand. We continued building awareness of Asheville as a national-level group destination through well-placed sponsorships with regional and national organizations. Efforts in promoting the destination to the sports, group tour, wedding and AAA markets continued. The department's initiatives were tied together through a strategic communications plan aimed at keeping buyers connected to the CVB throughout the year with e-newsletters, pre- and post-tradeshow correspondence, and more.

787
SALES LEADS
ISSUED
UP 1%

376
MEETINGS AND
GROUPS BOOKED
- 4.1%

74,497
ROOM NIGHTS
BOOKED
UP 14.7%

\$17.6 M
IN ESTIMATED
REVENUE
UP 25.7%

424
GROUPS SERVICED
BY THE CVB
UP 3.7%

| | |
|--------|---|
| 11,895 | DIRECT CLIENT CONNECTIONS |
| 80,997 | INDIRECT CLIENT CONNECTIONS |
| 49 | INDEPENDENT CVB-HOSTED SITE VISITS |
| 4 | 48-HOUR MEETING PLANNER EXPERIENCES HELD |
| 29 | PLANNERS PARTICIPATED IN 48-HOUR EXPERIENCES |
| 4 | CLIENT EVENTS HELD IN ATLANTA, DALLAS AND CHICAGO |
| 67 | BUYERS ATTENDED THESE EVENTS |
| 32 | MOTORCOACH BUYERS ATTENDED "SPOTLIGHT ON THE SOUTHEAST" TRADE SHOW |
| 31 | MOTORCOACH BUYERS PARTICIPATED IN THE CHRISTMASVILLE FAMILIARIZATION TRIP |
| 30 | TRADESHOWS, MARKETPLACES AND MISSIONS |
| 4,000 | ATTRACTION VALUE CARDS DISTRIBUTED TO ATTENDEES |
| 220 | AAA STAFF PARTICPATED IN 13 DESTINATION TRAININGS AND THREE WEBINARS |

INDUSTRY RECOGNITION

2016 Prevue Visionary
Award Gold Winner: Best
Planner Support from
CVB, Southeast

2016 Smart
Meetings Platinum
Choice Award

REGIONAL & NATIONAL SPONSORSHIPS

An essential part of the sales strategy is to actively research and secure well-placed regional and national sponsorship opportunities to place Asheville in a new and wider consideration set among planners.

IMEX America 2016 - MPI Smart Monday Hosted Buyer Breakfast

The CVB partnered with Meeting Professionals International (MPI) to host the invitation only event held in conjunction with IMEX America, the premier corporate and incentive trade event in the U.S. Approximately 80 planners were in attendance.

ASAE Foundation - Chuck Fazio Executive HeadShot LOUNGE

More than 400 industry professionals visited the Chuck Fazio HeadShot LOUNGE sponsored, in part, by the CVB during the American Society of Association Executives' 2016 Annual Meeting & Exposition. This two-day trade show and networking event attracts more than 3,000 association executives.

Meeting Professionals International - Georgia Chapter

The MPI Georgia Chapter is the seventh largest chapter in the global MPI organization. The CVB sponsored the July 2016 and January 2017 MPI Georgia Chapter Educational luncheons. Attendance was 25 Atlanta-area planners in July and 40 in January.

Financial & Insurance Conference Planners Winter Symposium

FICP targets the financial services and insurance meeting planners market. The CVB was a sponsor of the Symposium allowing us full attendance benefits. Forty-four high level planners attended the winter symposium.

Smart Meetings - Texas

Approximately 50 corporate and independent meeting planners attended the Smart Meetings Texas luncheon sponsored by the CVB. Staff provided a welcome to the group, introduced Asheville as a meetings destination, and shared the "Not Just Meeting. Exceeding." video.

American Bus Association - 2017 Marketplace

The annual Marketplace brings together more than 3,500 motorcoach industry operators suppliers and exhibitors. In anticipation of hosting the 2018 ABA Marketplace in Charlotte, the CVB partnered with Visit Charlotte and other North Carolina destinations to sponsor the 2017 closing reception.

Destinations International - Destination Showcase 2017

DI represents destination organizations around the world. Approximately 600 corporate and association meeting planners attended the Showcase. Stephanie Brown was introduced during the luncheon and invited the audience to visit the Explore Asheville booth.

IBTM America 2017 - Chuck Fazio Executive HeadShot LOUNGE

Ninety planners visited the Chuck Fazio Executive HeadShot LOUNGE sponsored, in part, by the CVB during the IBTM North America Meeting.



GROUP PR/ADVERTISING

Full-page ads ran in three leading meeting publications throughout the year to generate awareness of Asheville.

Sixteen targeted pitches were made to a variety of publications, and approximately 10 articles were published.

The Asheville Meetings ad placed #1 for recall and readership in a February 2017 Signet Ad Study Report by Successful Meetings.



COMMUNITY INVESTMENT THROUGH TPDF

\$29 MILLION AWARDED TO 32 PROJECTS SINCE 2001

Designated as a funding source for the construction of capital development projects to attract overnight visitors, the Tourism Product Development Fund (TPDF) has developed a reputation as the gold standard among similar funding models. Hospitality industry leadership established the grant program in 2001 as an incentive pool to help projects that would serve as a destination driver.

The BCTDA has awarded \$29.6 million to 32 projects that not only serve to attract overnight visitors and generate spending at local businesses, jobs and tax revenue, but are also amenities enjoyed by Buncombe County citizens.

In the 2016 grant cycle, \$3,930,000 was awarded to three theater projects, a WNC Farmers Market revitalization project and additional features at Montreat College's Pulliam Stadium.



ASHEVILLE COMMUNITY THEATRE EXPANSION & RENOVATION | \$1,000,000

The renovation of the 44-year-old theater will encompass the current performance and backstage areas including seating, sound and lighting, and the black box theater.

THE WORTHAM CENTER | \$700,000

Pack Place Performing Arts will transform the Diana Wortham Theatre into The Wortham Center, a facility with three separate venues. The current theater will be refurbished with new sound and lighting and upgraded seats, and two new theatres will be created. The project also includes the revamping of the main entrance and courtyard area.

MONTREAT COLLEGE PULLIAM STADIUM | \$350,000

This project comes after the recently completed Phase I of the construction of a \$2-million athletic complex featuring a new soccer and lacrosse field, running track, restroom facilities and parking lot. Phase II focuses on additional features such as athletic field lighting, grandstand seating and expanded parking that would enable the complex to be used for evening games, invitational competitions and multi-day community events.

EXPLOREASHEVILLE.COM THEATER CREATION & MEETING ROOM CONVERSION | \$1,500,000

A project of the City of Asheville, improvements include the installation of a curtaining wall system, a sound and light package, and the conversion of a storage area into meeting space.

WNC FARMERS MARKET RETAIL REVITALIZATION PROJECT | \$380,000

Submitted by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, this project is part of a larger master plan that focuses on renovations and upgrades to the retail area, including commercial clear-view garage doors to provide natural lighting, and interior and exterior improvements that contribute to an overall enhanced visitor experience.

BUNCOMBE COUNTY AND TOWN OF WOODFIN RECEIVE \$2.25M GRANT

The BCTDA provided \$2.25 million in TPDF funding for the Woodfin Greenway & Blueway, an economic development project that includes five miles of new greenway, the new Silver-Line Park on the Riverfront, improvements to existing Town of Woodfin parks, and the Whitewater Wave recreational feature. The Woodfin Greenway & Blueway is a partnership project of the Town of Woodfin and Buncombe County.

The grant is the largest single award in the history of the Tourism Product Development Fund and is the first to utilize the BCTDA's new Major Works Pathway, a mechanism developed to facilitate municipal placemaking projects.

Robert Foster, chair of the TPDF, praised the collaboration. "We're very excited about the potential of this new outdoor experience to draw visitors to the northern part of the County," he said. "We appreciate the collaborative effort and vision of local government to generate projects that add to the fabric of the community while also adhering to the goals of the Tourism Product Development Fund."

PHOTOS (top to bottom): The Asheville Museum of Science, City of Asheville Riverfront Development Ribbon-cutting Ceremony, and the TPDF Committee on a site visit of the Woodfin Greenway & Blueway



FESTIVALS AND CULTURAL EVENTS SUPPORT FUND

With the redesign of ExploreAsheville.com, Explore Asheville CVB had an opportunity to introduce an advertising element that provided a new, unrestricted revenue source to assist in the development and support of events that enrich the community. In the 2016 cycle, the BCTDA awarded grants to support 14 community festivals and events.

- **Independence Day Celebration**
Asheville Downtown Association
- **Asheville BARNAROO**
Asheville Music School (fiscal agent)
- **Blue Ridge Pride Festival**
Blue Ridge Pride Center
- **LEAF Downtown AVL**
LEAF Community Arts
- **70th Annual Craft Fair of the Southern Highlands**
Southern Highland Craft Guild
- **Goombay Festival**
YMI Cultural Center (fiscal agent)
- **Monarch Butterfly Day**
North Carolina Arboretum
- **ASAP Farm Tour**
Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Program
- **Asheville Art in the Park**
Asheville Area Arts Council (fiscal agent)
- **Asheville Percussion Festival**
Odyssey Community School (fiscal agent)
- **{Re}HAPPENING**
Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center
- **Cycle to Farm @ Sandy Mush**
Friends of Connect Buncombe (fiscal agent)
- **Montford Music & Arts Festival**
Montford Neighborhood Association
- **Appalachian Heritage Festival**
Friends of the Vance Birthplace

"The collection of projects funded in this TPDF cycle holds significant community value while also being supported by the industry. Together, they will elevate the arts experience, expanding the frequency and capacity of offerings; contribute to Asheville's credibility as a culinary destination; build upon the area's offerings for the sports market; attract new visitors to the region and be valuable community assets."

~ Paula Wilber, Immediate Past BCTDA Chair, Biltmore

PARTNER ENGAGEMENT

Connecting with the Asheville area’s 1,200 tourism industry partners and ensuring they are optimizing the free sales and marketing offered through CVB channels is the primary goal of the Public Affairs Department. This is accomplished in a number of ways including hosting monthly Partner Forums and headliner events, regular e-newsletter publications, providing resources on the industry website, AshevilleCVB.com, and participating in community group meetings and discussions.

This year, the CVB hosted 19 events offering informational and networking opportunities for industry partners. Monthly Partner Forums included “Asheville Visitor Research Update,” “What’s New with You?,” “Social Media & PR Tips,” and “Portrait of An American Traveler.” Annual headliner events included the BCTDA Annual Meeting, the Asheville CVB Holiday Party, the Hospitality Outlook, and the first annual National Tourism Week Summit.

The CVB rolled out a new series of monthly CVB 101 Orientation Sessions that help partners get better acquainted with marketing and promotion initiatives, group sales efforts and meeting services, and provides Extranet troubleshooting support with listings and event calendar management training.

1,200
TOURISM INDUSTRY
PARTNERS

19
PARTNER EVENTS
PARTNER FORUMS,
HEADLINER EVENTS & CVB 101
ORIENTATION SESSIONS

1,327
ATTENDEES

45,142
PARTNER EMAIL
COMMUNICATIONS

National Tourism Week Summit 2017

The CVB celebrated the local travel industry during National Travel & Tourism Week by hosting the first annual National Tourism Week Summit, a half-day conference at the Omni Grove Park Inn. Steven Paganelli of TripAdvisor delivered the keynote presentation “Fueling Customer Loyalty,” and Stephanie Brown presented newly released economic impact data accompanied by a “Faces of Tourism” video featuring local industry partners illustrating the impact of the tourism industry on their businesses and the community.

The Summit offered a variety of breakouts including marketing and sales educational sessions, and a meet-and-greet with local elected officials. The event

culminated with a Tourism Industry Resource Expo featuring key groups who support tourism industry businesses, and a networking happy hour.



“I TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE CVB EVENTS BECAUSE I ALWAYS TAKE AWAY SOMETHING OF VALUE FOR MY BUSINESS. AT THE TOURISM SUMMIT THIS YEAR, I LEARNED NEW IDEAS ON HOW TO INCENTIVIZE REPEAT BUSINESS THAT I WAS ABLE TO PUT INTO PRACTICE RIGHT AWAY.”

~ Sarah Wells Rolland, The Village Potters, Owner and Ceramic Artist

The Explore Asheville CVB promotes and sustains a community that is both a top destination to visit and a thriving community in which to live. As part of Explore Asheville’s service efforts in 2016-17, staff volunteered with Green Opportunities – assisting with new student enrollments, organizing the construction shop, and preparing and serving lunch in the Go Ready Kitchen.

Additionally, industry partners have supported CVB service efforts including generously donating to a sock drive for Haywood Congregation during the 2016 BCTDA Annual Meeting, and to the Toys for Tots toy drive at the CVB Holiday Party.



Over the past three years, anywhere from 30 - 80 % of my business has come through ExploreAsheville.com. The CVB has been a pleasure to work with. It’s like having a high-power PR firm working for you – for free!

~ Alan Muskat, No Taste Like Home Food Foraging Tours



The CVB programs are so helpful for my business. It’s what allows me to stay in business and thrive as much as I have. The partnership between the CVB and RAD – bringing visitors to us as well as helping with the infrastructure – is vital to us being able to continue as an arts district.

~ Patti Torno, Curve Studios



I would jump at the opportunity to participate in any initiative that the CVB brings to us because I know from experience that it has great intentions, it’s well designed, and it’s funded with a purpose and that is to bring people here and that benefits us straight up.

~ Jael & Dan Rattigan, French Broad Chocolate Lounge



We rely on the CVB to get people to Asheville. Once they are in Asheville we market to those people that have come here as a result of the CVB’s marketing programs, and that is a perfect relationship for us to have. The CVB understands our business. They understand how to support us.

~ Ken Stamps, Navitat Canopy Tours



PRESENTED BY
Explore Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau
27 College Place | Asheville, NC | 28801
ExploreAshevilleCVB.com