



STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION REPORT

APRIL 2018

COMPLETED BY:



MORRISON & COMPANY

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OVERVIEW

Explore Butte County (EBC) engaged Morrison & Company in early 2018 to assist with the organization's strategic planning efforts.

Over the course of several weeks, Morrison & Company interviewed the now Executive Director of EBC, reviewed key organizational documents (2016 Annual Report, 2016/17-2018/19 Tourism Marketing Plan, etc.) and surveyed all board members to gain critical insights on the current state of EBC, perceived strengths and weaknesses of EBC, and general opportunities individuals saw for the organization. This contributed to a one-day strategic planning session facilitated by Morrison & Company and conducted among board members and the EBC Executive Director to outline the main strategic objectives of the organization over a one year period.

Attendees included:

Bruce Spangler

Brooke Smith

Dori Franklin

Scott Stoller

Haroon Saddique

Kiran Piragji

Mohammad Billah

Nicole Johansson

Heather Johnson

Jovanni Tricerri

Melissa Schuster

Jennifer Macarthy

Betsy Yarbrough

Debbie Collins

Kelsey Torres

Evie Cameron

Heather MacDonald

Carolyn Denero

The following report is a summary of the work completed during the one-day session.

MISSION, VISION, AND GOALS

The board had defined EBC's mission, vision, and goals in recent years. Given this, and the general alignment of the organization with these developed statements, these were not altered during the strategic planning process. They are defined as:

Mission

The mission of Explore Butte County is to promote Butte County as a visitor destination through a variety of marketing programs that generate room nights, hotel revenues, and TOT taxes for the properties participating in the TBID.

Vision

To develop and implement county-wide tourism programs that position Butte County as a year-round travel destination that provides a quality visitor experience while working in harmony with the values of the community.

Goals

Increase tourism spending and hotel revenue in Butte County by effectively promoting tourism that optimizes Butte County's assets, including its location, recreation, agriculture and history while contributing to economic prosperity and regional development and supporting the attributes of the four communities participating in the TBID (Chico, Oroville, Paradise, Biggs).

CURRENT STATE

Statements on the Current State of Explore Butte County were gathered during the survey process. Statements that were agreed upon by the attendees of the strategic planning process were retained and are captured below. Additional comments were added as well and reflected below:

- All but two of the board members are hoteliers.
- Explore Butte County is in the process of building marketing materials and branding. Initial marketing materials have been developed.
- The only revenue stream for the organization is from the TBID.
- Other businesses receive the benefits of the TBID but they do not financially contribute to TBID.
- Have one newly appointed staff member.
- Half the board is very engaged, the other half is not as engaged.
- There is not a representative from Biggs on the board.
- All current efforts influence/impact hotels
- TBID applies to all short-term lodging (less than 30 days). Camping and VRBO/Air B&B assessment should be collected.
- There are broader benefits of the work of Explore Butte County to whole community.
- Restaurants, recreation, and amenities bring people to Butte County.
- Every community is included in the TBID except Gridley.
- Explore Butte County is an all-volunteer board. All board members have full-time jobs.
- Explore Butte County is in the process of evolving its administrative function and processes.
- Advisory Board is growing.
- Have both a Board and an Advisory Board.

CURRENT STATE

CONTINUED

- Do not have a physical location for the organization.
- Seeking more involvement on Board, Committees.
- Have a working Board.
- Some duties of the Board need to transition to staff.
- Have a set of Bylaws to govern the organization which were last reviewed in March 2018.
- Meetings of the Board are subject to the Brown Act.
- Organization is governed by a Management District Plan.
- Organization is at the discretion of jurisdictions approving the TBID again. Currently in operation until 2020.
- There are a lot of small businesses in the County that cannot contribute to marketing efforts.
- Representatives have been making presentations to community groups to increase exposure of organization.
- Lacking formal community outreach program.
- Organization is not leading strategic partnerships with other group.
- Communities have very small businesses.
- Partnership in organization is not defined/benefits to partners are not defined.

STRENGTHS

- Board is a passionate, engaged & committed
- Board has a lot of perspectives
- Organization is well funded (x3)
- Guaranteed revenue source through 2020
- Have something worth promoting
- Butte County has strong natural beauty and assets to promote.
- Shared desire for success and growth.
- Healthy vision for future
- Board is open to change and new ideas.
- New staff
- Institutional board knowledge
- Have City and County support
- Inclusiveness
- Organizational structure
- Humility
- Strong team
- Measured growth

OPPORTUNITIES

- Undiscovered opportunities to share Butte County's story
- New hotels being developed
- Become a regional leader in marketing
- Expand partnerships
- Collaboration with Visit California
- Build new revenue streams
- Build Ambassador Program
- Utilize college interns
- Inclusion of Air B&Bs, VRBO, etc.
- Being able to grow existing smaller events
- New marketing firm
- Define assets
- Marketing in hotel rooms
- Digital social influencers
- Brand Butte Region - don't have to just focus on cities
- Can invest more money into efforts

WEAKNESSES

- Administrative processes
- Young organization
- Lack of marketing experience on Board
- Not enough staff (x3)
- No marketing agency currently hired.
- Limited marketing efforts
- Board not as experienced with the development of a TBID
- Lack of familiarity with Butte County
- Board education, lack of defined roles
- Lack of awareness of organization
- No clear direction on who we serve
- Spread thin

THREATS

- Lack of awareness of Explore Butte County
- Local jurisdiction buy-in
- Could lose funding if do not prove value
- Economy
- Other TBIDS
- Competing organizations
- Impacted weekends for events
- Not enough hotels
- Air B&B and VRBO

Opportunities

- Ambassador Program
- Regional Leadership
- Define Partnerships
- Community Outreach
- Air B&B
- Increased Marketing Initiatives

FOCUSED OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

Threats:

- Jurisdictional Buy-In

Explore Butte County Strategic Objectives

Strategic Objectives were developed by the group after filtering through the focused opportunities and threats. The Lead identified is to act solely as the point person to report status to the Board and is not intended to execute all tasks.

Strategic Objective 1: Establish Explore Butte County as the recognized leader driving county tourism efforts to achieve 100% jurisdictional buy-in by 2020.
LEAD: CAROLYN

1. Create a value statement for partnership.
2. Develop and launch Ambassador Program.
3. Develop partnership model to engage businesses/partners outside of lodging.
4. Expand community outreach.
5. Tell Explore Butte County's story (include outreach to Gridley).

Strategic Objective 2: Establish Explore Butte County as the authority in tourism by developing and deploying creative assets that promote Butte County as the preferred travel destination.

LEAD: NICOLE

1. Hire a marketing firm.
2. Work with firm and board to develop creative assets (potential: expand digital media presence; photos and videos; content for in-room marketing; geofencing; itineraries).
3. Develop strategic partnerships outside of Butte County (i.e. Visit CA).

Strategic Objective 3: Solidify the administrative function of Explore Butte County.

LEAD: BRUCE

1. Lease office space in a central location.
2. Identify roles of staff, board members, and advisory board members.
3. Hire additional staff.
4. Brown Act training.
5. Redefine board committees.
6. Create board handbook.
7. Board member orientation held by April 2019.
8. Review bylaws.
9. Develop HR Manual.
10. Develop purchasing policy.

PARKING LOT

- Need clarity on what percentage of funds should be focused locally vs. outside Butte County to attract visitors.
- Need to determine as a board if the amount of funding spent is sufficient for efforts (i.e. too much vs, not enough).
- How EBC should support Every Body, Healthy Body.
- Determine what % of assessment comes from people who live in Butte County.

MORRISON & COMPANY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Strategic planning objectives should be at the top of the agenda for every board meeting agenda for at least the next year (April 2019).
- An annual review and pivot on strategies is encouraged.

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