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A Blueprint of Recommendations

Greene County Tourism Marketing Enhancement and Resulting Performance Success

October 2010

“To fulfill its mission, today’s successful tourism agencies serve as a coordinating entity, effectively bringing together diverse community stakeholders — from local government to trade and civic associations to individual businesses –to attract visitors to their area. It consolidates community wide disparate marketing efforts under one integrated “umbrella” program for stronger impact.

“During the last decade a veritable sea change has occurred in the culture of domestic tourism advertising, according to most industry experts. Traditional advertising, which in past decades had been a mainstay for building destination brand awareness, is now on the wane-- and being replaced by new aggressive public relations and media publicity initiatives, particularly social media tools.”



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About Marshall Murdaugh Marketing

Marshall Murdaugh Marketing is regarded as an industry leader in the development of destination marketing performance planning for local tourism offices, Convention and Visitor Bureaus (CVB) and Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs).

He authored the chapter on Destination Marketing for the recent industry textbook, *Fundamentals of Destination Management and Marketing* for the CVB industry. He was a developer for the Convention and Visitor Bureau industry's performance reporting and return-on-investment criteria for the Destination Marketing Association International. And his *Performance Assessment Manual* for destinations has become a major industry auditing resource.

Murdaugh was President & CEO for some of America's most successful destination programs, including the Memphis Convention and Visitor Bureau (1983–88), New York City CVB (1988–94) and Atlantic City Convention and Visitors Authority (1994-2000). He is also well known for developing numerous destination brand development programs including the successful, award-winning "Virginia is for Lovers" and "New York, the Big Apple" campaigns that brought multi-billion dollar tourism business to those destinations.

Since forming Marshall Murdaugh Marketing ten years ago, his client list has included many of America's top destinations, with more than seventy strategic assignments produced for large and small tourism programs (including Oneida County, Niagara Falls, Steuben County, the Pocono Mountains and Central Pennsylvania), along with state and local government programs and national tourism corporations.

He is the recipient of the prestigious Lifetime Career Achievement Award from the Association of Travel Marketing Executives, served on the board of the International Association of Convention and Visitor Bureaus and is a former member of the Association of Travel Marketing Executives and the Travel Research Association. He was also the recipient of the US Department of Commerce's first Special Citation for Distinguished Service to that Agency and served as a consultant to the Visit USA Program.

Murdaugh's quarterly "E-Murdaugh Marketing Newsletter" is read globally by international tourism executives (on the web at: MMTourismMarketing.com).

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This edited version of the Performance Blueprint for the Greene County Planning and Economic Development’s Tourism Office program excludes vendor and operational information. The initial Blueprint was developed as an independent and impartial report by Marshall Murdaugh Marketing, with support from Tourism Economics. All findings and recommendations are solely those of the consultants. Marshall Murdaugh Marketing, 1231 Byrd Avenue, Suite 1A, Richmond, VA 23226, ph. 804.658.4401, email: MMurdaughMktg@aol.com Website: www.MMTourismMarketing.com



1. Introduction

This document is one of several major deliverables of the Greene County Tourism Action Plan.

We have referred to it as a blueprint of recommendations because it is designed to serve as a framework in delivery of a more vibrant future of marketing performance success on behalf of the county.

Priority recommendations provided in this report can be implemented through adjustments of some existing Tourism Office programs and resources.

Using This Blueprint

Principal recommendations focus on agency management, marketing and operational areas with the objective of providing fundamental requirements now in place with many successful local tourism marketing offices. We have provided the full report in a PDF format as well as in a Word document, allowing for ease of editing and modification to provide sectional parts to various constituents as desired.

With implementation of recommendations contained herein, we are confident that Greene County Tourism will be well equipped and positioned to achieve long-range optimum performance and resulting success.

Our recommendations are highlighted by these initiatives and topics:

- An organizational mission statement and program objectives that frame the work of the Tourism Office.
- Current Destination management and marketing policies and practices.
- A model for delivering cooperative marketing programs for stakeholder participation.
- Performance management standards and requirements, return on investment criteria and a value statement for the Tourism Office.
- Reporting procedures and methodologies--additional community relations processes and communications requirements; an annual report, roundtable stakeholder meetings, etc.
- New marketing and market research.
- A model for annual Market Planning.
- Staff training, professional accreditation.

To accomplish this assignment, we have undertaken a number of diagnostic processes to assess the marketplace and current Greene Tourism programming. Then we have recommended a plan of best business practices and state of the art marketing initiatives that can be pragmatically applied to produce higher volumes of performance success for the office.

The Focus on Marketing

Because the Greene County Tourism office is first and foremost the community's destination marketing organization, it is in the discipline of marketing that we have been requested to focus.



Also incorporated are management and operational recommendations to help assure the successful ongoing delivery of the marketing function.

Additional Resource Support

We have also made available to senior management a number of ancillary documents and reports including:

- *The American Lodging Institute's 2008 Study on Room Taxes and their Impact on Destination Tourism Economies.*
- The textbook, *Fundamentals of Destination Management and Marketing*, an important review of the current culture and work of the DMO Industry.
- *Standard CVB Performance: A Handbook for CVB's from the Destination Marketing Association International (DMAI).*
- The Destination Marketing Accreditation Program requirements from DMAI.
- Smith Travel Research future analysis options for Greene Tourism.

Notes: Throughout this report, the terms Destination Marketing Organization (DMO), Greene Tourism, and Greene County Tourism marketing are all intended to be synonymous with the operational work of the County Office of Tourism that is a part of the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Planning.

The term "tourism" is generally defined as the business of serving travelers or visitors. Travelers or visitors are usually defined as those taking a trip 50 or more miles away from home, except for the purpose of commuting to and from work, as well as those spending the night.

2. Scope of work, development steps, methodology

Blueprint development process

Here are the major steps taken in developing this Blueprint.

- **At the outset, a review was made of all major Greene Tourism Office operational and marketing materials**, including organizational chart, staff job objectives and priority work assignments, planning documents, annual report, current productivity deliverables, budget and funding sources, etc.
- **Next, we reviewed all available market and marketing research**, including information from the Empire State Development Corporation, D.K. Shiflett, summer and winter county visitor studies, and current Greene Tourism website metrics and measurements.
- **Once onsite, we conducted, with staff assistance, a drive-by car familiarization of Greene County** to review the inventory of major visitor facilities, event sites and services.
- **Ongoing meetings with stakeholders provided recommendations and general observations** regarding tourism management and marketing as well as recommendations for catalytic projects.



- **An analysis of major marketing, sales and services programs and processes** was made, including advertising, collateral materials, stakeholder programming, communications, and web site.

Throughout this assignment, we applied diagnostic approaches to determine the current effectiveness of both qualitative and quantitative efforts, analyzing results based on current industry standards and best business practices.

We also relied on local DMO/convention and visitor bureau industry business standards and return on investment criteria that we initially helped develop under the auspices of the Destination Marketing Association International, along with our prior findings from more than seventy comparative performance assessments for other destination tourism offices throughout the industry.

Finally, with new intelligence and findings, we prepared this Blueprint. Numerous specific recommendations are italicized and noted throughout. Major recommendations have also been grouped at the conclusion of this report.

Special Thanks to All Participants

Finally, we wish to express sincere thanks to everyone who participated in meetings and shared their candid beliefs, concerns, interests and recommendations that were intended for the greater good of the community's tourism industry and the Greene County Office of Tourism.

We are particularly appreciative for the ongoing time, guidance and administrative support provided on this project by members of the Greene County Economic Development, Tourism and Planning Department: Warren Hart, Director; Karl Heck, Community Development Specialist. Thanks also to Greene Economic Development and Tourism Office staffers Nancy Petramale, Sales & Marketing Manager; Teri Weiss, Business Marketing Coordinator; and Patty Austin, Tourism Information Assistant.

3. Executive Summary: Primary Recommended Action Steps

If the Greene Tourism Office is to garner greater long-term success and a more robust economic vitality for County tourism, including increased overnight visitors, visitor spending, resulting taxes and job generation, the following issues should be addressed:

- **Current professional industry standards for destination management and marketing** should be implemented.
- **An expanded focus on a program of consolidated marketing** will produce increased tourism business for the county.
- **Greene County's brand positioning should consistently incorporate identification with the Catskills and the Hudson Valley.** Also, "hub and spoke" tourism that incorporates major regional appeals should be initiated, as well as new co-op community



partnerships by the county to stretch resources. All these efforts will positively impact overnight visitation.

- **The County, through the Legislature, has demonstrated strong interest and commitment to tourism.** However, with limited and decreasing funding for Greene Tourism, it has less ability to increase or sustain the market share of tourism benefits for the county.
- **Through the introduction of recommended new performance plans outlined in this report,** Greene County can produce higher Tourism Office performance results for the community—and deliver at least a 20-to-1 return on investment in terms of consumer spending in the County.
- **Establish a new performance based marketing plan approach for Greene Tourism that incorporates comprehensive return on investment (ROI) criteria** and quantifiable dollar results to be achieved for all major Tourism Office marketing initiatives.

Major marketing initiatives of this program should include:

- **Building a program of expanded media publicity** to reach millions of additional potential customers and producing heightened destination brand awareness, interest and desire to take action and visit.
- **The harnessing of the power of the Internet** through Web technology that enhances the Tourism Office website with a new and expanded internet marketing plan that will bring thousands of new visitors.
- **Creative, state-of-the-art online advertising** that will more effectively motivate thousands of new visitor parties to the destination and provide millions of dollars more in positive economic returns.
- **Consideration of an effective, integrated network of visitor welcome centers, through grant funding and a coordinated training program** that can enhance the true value of the visitor's experience in Greene County, increase visitor length of stay and boost overnight visitation.
- **Finally, to assure marketing success, the Tourism Office should also address other management and operational issues;** embracing industry market planning standards, tourism infrastructure development, new signage, development of a Greene Tourism Industry Advisory Board and roundtables or task forces to produce other countywide tourism marketing programs.



4. Stakeholder Comments and Recommendations

To help frame issues for review and resolution, we addressed the views and recommendations of community stakeholders.

Through a series of meetings established by Economic Development, Tourism and Planning, a cross-section of community tourism industry stakeholder leaders provided guidance and recommendations regarding county tourism development, marketing and management. We are very appreciative for their shared insights and recommendations.

Industry group meetings included:

Lodging industry--Chuck Tomajko, Owner, Fairlawn Inn, Hunter; Rick Rasmussen, Owner, Hotel Vienna, Windham; Suzanne Oldakowski, Owner, Bavarian Manor Country Inn, Purling; Lee McGunnigle, Manager, Villa Vosilla Resort, Tannersville; Michael & Christine Clark, Owners, Clark House Bed & Breakfast, Palenville; Stefania Jozic, Owner, Washington Irving Inn Bed & Breakfast, Hunter; Patty Handel, family-owned, Blackthorne Resort, East Durham; Gary & Gail Nichol森, Owners, Sunny Hill Resort, Greenville.

Hunter & Windham Mountains--Russ Coloton, President, Hunter Mountain; Kirt Zimmer, Director of Marketing, Windham Mountain.

Attractions & Golf-- Ed Kerrigan, Owner, Zoom Flume Water Park & Country Place Resort; Gene McGrath, Executive Director, Greene International Golf Association; Walt Birmann, Owner, Rainbow Golf Course & Motel; Russell Parry, Board of Directors, Windham Country Club.

Chambers of Commerce--Tracy McNally, Executive Director, Greene County Chamber; Mike McCrary, President, Hunter Chamber; Jane Pierson, President, Windham Chamber; Claudia Zucker, President, Cairo Chamber; Daniel Quigley, Board Member, Cocksackie Area Chamber.

Arts, Culture and Entertainment-- Casey Biggs, Greene Arts Foundation; Carolyn Bennett, Pratt Museum; Beth & Peter Barker, Catskill Mountain Foundation; Betsy Jacks, Thomas Cole House National Historic Site; Kay Stamer, Greene County Council on the Arts; Hudson Talbott, Catskill Community Center.

Individual meetings were held with: Alexander "Sandy" Mathes, Executive Director, Greene County Industrial Development Agency; Jennifer Campbell, General Manager and Renee Chirico, Sales Manager, Kaatskill Mountain Club; Charlie Serro, co-proprietor, Pollace's Resort, and current Chairman, Greene County Resort and Hospitality Association.

The participant's numerous observations and recommendations--including many recurring ones—are categorized below. Some comments were later expanded by the consultant, and many of the noted issues and suggestions are addressed in this document.



Delivering Performance

We applaud Greene County's ongoing commitment to grow the area's tourism industry.

However, if tourism is to reach its full economic development potential for Greene County, we must have appropriate new government funding to build higher customer top of mind awareness and resulting visitation that can more effectively compete against so many other regional competitive destinations that take visitors away from us.

The number one need is to determine and report the positive return on investment (ROI) from the Tourism Office's ongoing marketing efforts.

Quantifying the successes of the arts and culture community is very important, as well as working with for-profit operators such as the golf and ski areas.

Community Stakeholder Support

One of the best ways the Greene Tourism office can help the tourism economy is to offer marketing support/education/co-op opportunities to the individuals that are responsible for marketing individual properties.

The Internet is so important, but many of us need directional guidance to enhance our knowledge and marketing savvy.

We need an "all for one" attitude to work more cooperatively and bring greater success to Greene County Tourism.

We can increase tourism by attracting corporate sponsorship for events that would be larger and more broad-based.

Marketing Greene County

With all the regional competitors that are vying for visitor attention—the Berkshires, the Adirondacks, Lake George, Saratoga—we need a bigger and stronger marketing effort.

By getting creative, I'm sure that we can increase the awareness of Greene County as a vacation destination to the stream of travelers coming from the New York City metropolitan area and New Jersey.

The Thruway is packed each weekend with NYC Metro area folks that are driving by our community when we likely have everything that they are looking for right here, hours closer than their final destination. We just need to tell them what we have.

Explore new visitor centers and welcome signage such as way finding signage and billboards.

A Blueprint of Recommendations for Greene County Tourism



Don't overlook the need for ongoing technology advances to help sell our destination. Many properties are not keeping pace.

Our cost/value relationship for visitors is positive--Sell the concept more.

Go after the short term, impulse travel market that is within two hours drive.

It's difficult to brand counties as destinations. But the Catskills and the Hudson Valley are certainly an important part of our brand identification and can be "brand annexed."

Build new productive partnership efforts that can produce new business for everyone.

The history of landscape painting and putting art in nature is truly unique to Greene County and the Hudson River School and the birthplace of American landscape painting should be more prominently incorporated in the County's tourism promotion effort.

A stronger collective focus for the arts, culture and entertainment events should be implemented, along with specific campaigns for the arts and culture, pending additional funding.

Greater coordination of events: development of a package including several events with a theme, such as a literary festival focused on one or more writers with Catskill roots or themes.

Roundtable discussions and work sessions should be produced with various stakeholder groups (including accommodations, attractions and PR interests) to build support for other county marketing needs.

The ecological interests and benefits of Greene County are welcomed by visitors and need to be incorporated in the overall tourism campaigns.

To help diversify ways to experience Greene County, develop a variety of new auto drive itineraries, such as special interest and circle tours, and new visitor packages.

The "hub and spoke" concept of encouraging visitors to stay overnight here in the county, while taking side trips to see regional major sites (such as Cooperstown and Saratoga) has great merit and should be utilized.

Incorporate a four-season approach to tourism for Greene County.

Greene County's history and folklore are popular touristic inclusions. Employ the legend of "Rip Van Winkle" more as part of our marketing effort.

New signage, planned itineraries and the packaging of events will make it easier to get traffic to flow through the County from the valley to the mountain and vice versa.

CD or MP3 audio narratives could be developed for these trails for self-guided tours.



Second home development is a major opportunity that needs addressing.

Tourism Infrastructure Development

New attractions and amenities such as shopping and dining are needed here that will deliver a better, more diverse visitor product for the county that will allow us to attract more visitors and produce longer lengths of stay.

Gateways to the County should meet the promise of its marketing with new, appropriate facilities (such as a high-end hotel or inn on Main Street Catskill) to service the attendees of arts and cultural events.

Our identity as a family vacation destination may require more attractions, as well as continuing to build on what we now offer through better packaging and itinerary development.

Our accommodations need to be progressive and invest in their infrastructure and special marketing requirements. Those that don't will likely find themselves the victim of natural selection.

There is a general lack of facilities that cater to the arts and cultural events visitor markets. Restaurants, upscale inns and B&B's, and more art galleries and venues such as the forthcoming art studio tour, will appeal to this consumer market.

New way-finding signage throughout the county for attractions and visitor sites would identify our facilities and stimulate interest and visitation.

The maintenance of pristine beauty, through cleanup and community beautification, are requirements to deliver the product.

Appropriate tourist-oriented services, such as public restrooms on major Main Streets and useful way finding signage, should be in place in these areas.

If cell service signal is a consumer problem issue in the County, then let's identify ways to do something about it and then implement them.

Community Needs

We should encourage local understanding of the tourism industry and the significant contributions it makes in jobs and revenue for the county that residents don't have to pay. In fact, residents benefit so much from tourism. Building community pride should also be a byproduct.

Other Principal Stakeholder Concerns

We are also mindful of the concerns previously listed by Greene County tourism leaders in the county's recent comprehensive economic development plan. They are highlighted by:



The comprehensive branding of Greene County for greater impact to change consumer attitudes—through new awareness, interest and desire that produces more visitations.

Build market share against nearby competitors of Ulster County for Catskill visitors, and the Poconos and the Berkshires for those seeking a mountain travel experience.

Produce reliable research information on the value of the industry and its significant growth and benefits to all residents of Greene County.

Support for our industry in education training involving the Internet, the number one travel resource for consumer planning.

There is a need to make it easier to get traffic to flow through the County from the valley to the mountain and vice versa through signage, planned itineraries and packaging of events.

Recommendation: Now that we have received this extensive stakeholder input, the next step should be addressing all of these comments and recommendations. This may involve strategic planning sessions or can be addressed through an annual public Tourism Summit forum—a meeting to celebrate the annual success of tourism. One methodology would be in-depth group discussions including those who may have a role in affecting positive change. After a review of issues, positive steps may be identified and prioritized, along with the resources required to further ameliorate concerns and strengthen opportunities. Timelines for implementation would be addressed. Minutes of meetings should be recorded, and future meetings should be scheduled until completion of work. We review this opportunity under the Operational/Management Recommendations section.

5. The DMO Industry Today: Models and Mission

Tourism Marketing Models and Mission: Where Greene County Tourism Fits

America’s history of tourism and convention programs and visitor associations dates back to the 1800’s--during the time when a new wave of overnight accommodations began here in the Catskills. But it was during the last 100 years that local tourism offices and convention/visitor programs began to more rapidly be developed across the country to promote their visitor attributes and resulting economic and social benefits.

Most jurisdictions worldwide now have some sort of tourism development, promotion or marketing organization. Here in the U.S, they range from county, city, regional and state offices—some with emphasis on both convention and visitor development; hence the traditional popular name, “Convention and Visitor” Bureaus. Most of today’s tourism offices, including Greene Tourism, lead the development of their community’s hospitality and tourism sector and are often a driving force in the local economy.

These organizations are found in many forms. Some are divisions of city and county government. Others are aligned with economic development organizations, developed as government authorities, are independent not-for-profit 501 c (3) or 501 c (6) entities or are affiliated with Chambers of Commerce.



In most cases, these tourism programs have slowly transitioned over the past few decades from less effective general service tourism promotion agencies that focused primarily on activity, to more sophisticated destination marketing organizations, whose principal business is marketing on behalf of the public and private sector; that is, determining customer needs and then filling them through a variety of tactical programs (research, advertising, direct sales, customer service programs, collateral development, media publicity, the Internet, etc.) These initiatives are also being designed to provide more measurable, incremental economic returns for communities through the delivery of additional visitors, including new visitor expenditures, tax revenue and resulting jobs that are generated and sustained through this visitor spending.

Today, a variety of tourism offices and CVB's are now officially regarded and recognized as "Destination Marketing Organizations" or "DMO's". The most successful of them--more than 500 in number and of disparate size and resources-- belong to the international trade association in Washington, D.C., known as the Destination Marketing Association International (DMAI).

To fulfill its mission, today's successful DMO serves as a coordinating entity, effectively bringing together diverse community stakeholders — from local government to trade and civic associations to individual businesses —to attract visitors to their area. It consolidates community wide disparate marketing efforts under one integrated "umbrella" program for stronger impact.

6. Profile of Successful DMO: Comparing Greene County Tourism

Greene County Tourism: Matching the Optimum Destination Marketing Model

With regard to organizational profile:

- The Greene Tourism Office has four full-time employees and one seasonal part-time worker employed at the Historic Catskill Point in the summer. Compared to the size of the average DMO staff of 14 employees (11 full-time and three regular part-time employees).
- The average destination tourism office budget is \$4.8 million (excluding the factoring of Las Vegas with its \$200 million dollar budget). For Greene County, and others with more limited marketing budgets, the principal liability is that it places the community in an unfavorable competitive position when it comes to purchasing traditional marketing tactics/programs (such as advertising, sales initiatives, media publicity, direct mail, trade show booth space, etc.) to vie for consumer and customer attention. We address this funding issue in detail later in this report and offer recommendations to deal with its challenges.
- A destination operates on average, two official year-round visitor centers. Greene County has one center and that facility experiences limited annual traffic due to significant signage and marketing challenges that are later addressed in this report. For like-sized communities, 80% of centers are operated by the local Tourism Office. About half of them have a store inside their centers, offering merchandise and ticket sales, restaurant and lodging reservations and/or internet service.



- About nine out of ten tourism offices receive the majority of their marketing funds from local accommodations room occupancy tax revenue.
- About half of all DMO's have membership programs. In either case, most tourism offices develop strong, ongoing cooperative partnership opportunities with participating stakeholders to stretch resources and increase program marketing weight. This is a recommended important future initiative for Greene County.
- For comparable communities with Greene County, where the DMO annual budget is between \$500,000 and \$999,999, 36.4% of these communities have a conference/convention center.

Requisites for Greene Tourism Office Success

The more important question we should ask here is: how does the Greene Tourism Office compare to the DMO industry model for excellence?

In order for a tourism destination to achieve optimal success, an important requisite must be an effective, business-standard destination marketing organization in place which effectively operates on behalf of the community.

The effective organization should deliver a successful, consolidated umbrella program for their tourism business constituents that collaboratively assist them in enhancing their profit potential through the production of incremental or new visitor business to the destination.

How, then, should we interpret success? What is the profile of today's successful DMO, and how can Greene County Tourism mirror this model for business excellence?

There are basically three major areas or success criteria, which when taken collectively, provide generally recognized standards for evaluating today's successful tourism DMO-- regardless of its size and budget.

Criterion I:

The DMO delivers performance of economic development benefits in fulfilling its core mission.

First, DMO productivity results, or "economic impacts", are based on the attraction of incremental visitors through various market segments. These results are:

- Quantifiable;
- Forecast whenever feasible in advance as a series of goals;
- Reportable to business leadership, stakeholders and other community constituents.

In other words, the DMO forecasts its future successful achievements and provides them in advance to its constituent community.

We have recommended a detailed model for new performance measurement. With it, the



Tourism Office can soon begin benchmarking these results, and following year one, begin forecasting estimated future goal-based results for the year ahead. Other recommendations in this regard include a more comprehensive ongoing reporting format and annual market planning model, which we have provided later in this document.

When addressed and modified in the future, we are confident that the Greene Tourism Office can fully match this success criterion.

Criterion II:

The DMO provides marketing, management and operational excellence through its financial oversight, market research and market planning, business execution and evaluation steps.

As such, the agency strives to deliver the highest standards of performance in the areas of:

- Economic impact results against market segments.
- Successfully planned, designed and executed marketing initiatives and a business standard marketing plan.
- Reporting and accountability systems.
- Long and short-term planning.
- Goal-setting, tracking and delivery.
- Staff and program performance evaluation, professional staff development and employee compensation and recognition.
- Community partnership and alliance-building to galvanize tourism industry interests, stretch resources and leverage success.

This is really the core work of the successful Tourism DMO under the direction of its executive, and the most well regarded employ state of the art management systems found throughout the industry today.

Current fundamental challenges with the Tourism Office include the lack of traditional ongoing marketing analyses or management planning reports, staff DMO training or best practices for management and marketing, including co-op partnerships.

However, pending successful implementation of recommendations in this report, we believe Greene Tourism can more than adequately fulfill this criterion.

Criterion III:

The DMO is the recognized leader in the community for effective tourism development.

On the surface, this last criterion appears to be extremely subjective. In the future, the organization's assessment should be impartially made by asking all of its diverse stakeholders to address and evaluate the agency and the mission it fulfills on their behalf.



Without question, today's tourism DMO should be well regarded for its local leadership position. Stakeholders (i.e. accommodations, attractions, art and cultural institutions, restaurants, retail, related businesses and other associations, government agencies, etc.) should look to the Greene Tourism Office, under the aegis of economic development, as the focal point for destination tourism marketing, planning, coordinating community stakeholder efforts, research and long-range visioning.

In other words, through leadership of the executive, and leadership of Economic Development, Tourism and Planning, the tourism office's role is that of the voice of the industry, the inspiration, the visionary, the chief lobbying organization and the chief cheerleading organization.

Leadership should also assist in closely monitoring and managing key long-range strategic planning issues affecting the destination such as the need for competitive market funding, infrastructure requirements, visitor amenities and service issues.

How well is Greene County doing in matching these criteria for excellence? Based on past support of the local legislature, along with local businesses who now partner with the office, and the new leadership of Greene County Economic Development, Tourism and Planning, this appears to be very positive.

What are needed are additional opportunities for private sector joint planning and cooperative marketing. Other recommendations in this document for stakeholder support and customer assessment, along with new marketing, governance and operational enhancements, will assure greater compliance with this criterion.

Tourism Office Performance and Impact for the County's Tourism Industry

Before we begin to outline current marketing initiatives and offer general directions for enhancement, it's important to recognize the following generally accepted Tourism DMO marketing axiom:

When a local tourism economy is strong, as measured by industry indicators and economic impact studies, that is certainly not the effective measurement of the tourism office's efforts—any more than a weak tourism economy should conclude that the tourism office's efforts are unsatisfactory.

We conclude that Greene County's ongoing marketing efforts are now producing, in some various degrees, positive incremental results in new visitors and resulting economic impacts for the county. The question is: specifically, how much actual benefit is delivered from each program initiative? The challenge, and future requirement, is best stated in the new destination performance standard handbook from the Destination Marketing Association International:

"In a perfect world, a DMO would know exactly how many of its destination's visitors were motivated to come solely by its own efforts. And further, the DMO would be able to pinpoint exactly which of its marketing efforts were responsible for attracting that visitor. However, the



Tourism Office and its local tourism industry do not function in a perfect world...potential visitors are constantly bombarded by a myriad of stimuli (including the tourism office, its industry partners, the media, and so on) that it becomes impossible to say that a visitor was motivated 100% by the DMO—and ONLY by the DMO.

In practice, when addressing the issue of visitors generated, destination tourism organizations can, at the very least, set into place monitoring and research programs that identify visitors and visitor spending that were clearly and significantly generated by its efforts.”

In summary, delivering and quantifying performance is critically important for local tourism offices—and never more so than for the vast majority of community DMO’s that are supported by public funding.

Recommendation: *Going forward, we recommend a Performance Management System for tracking, evaluating, reporting and goal setting that is detailed later in this document.*

7. DMO Marketing Review and Future Needs

Next, this section of the Blueprint offers strategic and tactical recommendations for the Tourism DMO’s primary marketing programs and recommended initiatives, including brand development, PR and Publicity, advertising, the Internet, group travel, stakeholder support, visitor services, and regional development.

7.1 The DMO Consolidated Marketing Process

Today, the most successful Destination Marketing Organizations—particularly county, city or state programs-- fulfill the role of “umbrella” marketing agencies, under which stand the extensive collection of businesses that promote their own products and services and are involved in the front-line servicing of travelers.

Many refer to this process as the “consolidated approach” to tourism marketing. Business partners under this umbrella include transportation, accommodations, food service, retail, attractions, outdoor and cultural heritage agencies, just to name a few.

Consolidated marketing efforts on behalf of all stakeholders provide greater strength, unity and leveraged results for everyone, rather than segmented, fragmented program efforts, such as for advertising, which provides less impact and success. For this reason, most DMO’s are responsible for crafting ongoing cooperative marketing programs with business partners, such as accommodations, attractions and others that share and ultimately leverage more resources for joint marketing. (We review co-op partnership development opportunities later).

The concept of “consolidated marketing” also recognizes that a stronger, more effective marketing program for a destination results when all visitor interests, market segments and regional interests are combined to leverage an expanded program.

In most cases, stand-alone marketing by individual market segments, such as for cultural tourism and the arts, restaurants, nightlife, events or even special leisure markets such as skiing and golf, are rarely as effective in producing significant results as when they are collectively consolidated through “umbrella programs.”



By combining these various elements in united initiatives—advertising, publicity, collateral, sales and other programs—they offer multiple consumer decision-making opportunities and a far greater chance of achieving optimum efficiency.

This means that the Tourism Office’s primary marketing campaign should not attempt to be all things to all people. Many constituent groups such as the arts, are now calling for individual campaigns, but instead, they and all other sector constituents will receive far greater returns *through one strong, ongoing collective Greene Tourism campaign.*

Year-round messages should prioritize and list the county’s major appeals, selling to the motivational strengths of such attributes as outdoor recreation, spectacular scenery, the fabled heritage of Rip Van Winkle, great skiing, golf, undiscovered special attractions, cultural and art offerings, family fun and year-round festivals and events.

And when planning seasonal campaigns, such as the winter program, when skiing is a prime motivator—the message should not leave out other supportive visitor appeals but rather include them to deliver this more effective consolidated approach.

Recommendation: *The Tourism Office should follow this best business principle, directing its resources for the greater good of the community through Consolidated Marketing, supported by co-operative partnership programming, instead of grants and sponsorships that do not provide reciprocal leveraged resources. This will minimize the dilution of the county’s marketing resources and maximize the performance return of new visitors produced, plus additional visitor receipts, tax revenue and job generation.*

7.2 Market and Marketing Research

Market Research — More detailed economic impact results for Greene County tourism spending, along with the relative size and scope of the entire industry that affects us, will be of significant interest to our stakeholder constituents.

This new information is now provided by Tourism Economics in a companion study for this Tourism Action Plan. In addition, annual visitor economic impact studies produced by the State of New York further clarify Greene County’s role and place in the State and regional tourism economy. Over time, it can continue to show Greene County’s relative tourism health through market share analysis for regional and state tourism economy impact results.

Recommendation: *This information should be disseminated by the Tourism Office whenever appropriate: In its quarterly newsletter to stakeholders, in press releases that provide awareness of the significant contributions of tourism here, for use by all agencies and organizations who work to stimulate new touristic investment opportunities in the county, and in its marketing plans and annual reports.*

Future needs: *The health of the Greene County accommodations industry can later be provided as part of a county-commissioned Destination Multi-segment Report that could include monthly reports on county and competitive destination comparison, hotel occupancy, room supply and demand (nights generated) revenue produced.*



Marketing Research – Provides consumer demographic and psychographic information that helps us best deliver our ongoing marketing program. It is also of significant interest to the rank and file stakeholders who can corroborate or support their own planning efforts with this important information. As they apply it for their own programs, the entire Greene County tourism industry will strengthen its collective consumer targeting.

Although recent analyses have been provided by the County for summer and winter travel, we recommend a supportive future study that provides projectable information heretofore not available that also lays the foundation for destination brand assessment and development.

Laying the Foundation: A Recommended Greene County Visitor Market Analysis

A comprehensive consumer travel market study for Greene County, as outlined below, will effectively build on prior studies and findings and guide the Tourism Office’s future marketing efforts through professional analysis and resulting expert recommendations for strategic planning. It differs in its projectability for the prime visitor market, its inclusion of important information regarding both non-visitors and day trippers, probes the specific reasons why people were actually motivated to visit Greene County (not just what activities they enjoyed)—and provides a detailed strategic analysis of recommendations gleaned from the study for future implementation to produce both repeat and first time visitation.

Various firms can be queried for proposals. The study would provide a full demographic and behavioral profile of prime leisure prospects; assess consumer knowledge about the destination from both the visitor and non-visitor’s perspectives and also address a comprehensive array of market issues for future customer identification and market planning.

Online Survey Panel Description

For this survey, we recommend surveying potential visitors who live within a 200-300 miles radius from Greene County—generally considered the prime drive market that provides more than 80% of ongoing visitors. Research study participant recipients would be those in the US and Canada that have previously agreed to participate in online research “panels” to complete online research surveys.

The completed Greene County Visitor Market Study would then be provided to the Tourism Office as a separate written document, as well as in a Power Point presentation format.

Market Study Summary Findings would include:

- Prospective visitor market age ranges;
- Annual household income and earning power;
- How often Greene County travel prospects travel for leisure;
- The strongest visitor prospects by categories and percentages, such as couples, families, etc.;
- Seasonality;
- Length of stay;
- Planning ahead by percentages-2-4 weeks in advance, 1-2 months before, 2-4 months for planning, 2 weeks in advance (a strong check for impulse short-term travel that might be responsive to short-term promotional offers);



- Vacation planning tools used by percentage-- the Internet; friends, family and colleagues for suggestions and feedback; local or state tourism offices, directly e-mail or call hotels, activities or attractions, seasonal visitors guides or brochures, the travel section of their newspaper, etc.;
- What people look for in both familiar and new vacation destinations, and new places;
- Where and how travel arrangements are increasingly booked;
- Greene County's potentials for short-stay vacations;
- Average vacation spending by market segment;
- The primary things that matter most for an ideal vacation destination including: Good value for money, beautiful scenery, safe and friendly place, attractive climate, easy to get around, etc.;
- The most important things Greene County prospects like to do on vacation including relax and unwind, go somewhere with unique attractions, soak up the flavor of the destination, enjoy family time, etc.;
- The number of primary prospects who have previously visited Greene County and other regional destinations by percentage;
- How Greene County ranks regionally as a considered destination to visit;
- The most important reasons past visitors chose Greene County;
- The Profile for Greene County Visitors;
- Length of visitor stay in Greene County;
- What past visitors say Greene County is best known for;
- What percentage of past visitors will return to Greene County within one year, two years, etc.;
- How often past visitors will return to Greene County;
- What new visitor attractions and services they'd like to see here;
- Consumer level of awareness of specific county attributes and attractions.

Following this comprehensive analysis, key findings, their implications for market planning and strategic recommendations are provided.

Recommendation: *This Visitor Market Study would prove to be a very important and effective market planning resource for the Greene Tourism Office, as well as for county tourism stakeholders and business partners. Copies of this study could be disseminated via email, findings included in the quarterly newsletter, and presentations of its major findings should be made available to county leaders.*

We envision that this could be developed as a cooperative sponsorship project, solely or partially funded by an area banking institution along with the County. Because most tourism businesses are small businesses that are also the customers of local banks, this may have merit for exploring.

7.3 Destination Brand Development

What Is Destination Branding?

In our judgment, tourism branding or brand identity is the total sum of the words, images and associations that form the customer's perception of the destination.



“The brand,” therefore, is the conveyed personality of the visitor’s experience. It is the promise, the link, or the bridge between the customer and the visitor product.

The Brand Promise

Today, many destinations seek to create what some now refer to as a “brand promise,” the essence of the destination’s benefits-- both functional and emotional—that the visitor can expect to receive there.

For example, the brand promise for the Palm Springs Desert Resorts is: *“The Palm Springs Desert Resorts provides the visitor the opportunity to enjoy the fun, glamour and beauty of an authentic, relaxing California resort experience while escaping from the worries and pace of everyday life.”*

During our discussions and meetings with stakeholders, some observed that it’s rather difficult to brand a county-and sometimes even cities. This is certainly true. Years ago, Gertrude Stein made a telling remark about community branding when she was asked to describe the City of Oakland, California. “Oakland?” she responded, “There’s no there there.”

Several years ago, the tourism leadership of Steuben County, New York came to that same conclusion; branding Steuben was a challenge. In response, they strategically incorporated the two best recognized geographic names of Corning and the Finger Lakes—and in so doing, “market annexed” the entire Finger Lakes region as a major attribute of Steuben County. Now the brand identification for the county that is marketed by the Steuben County CVB is simply: “Corning and the Finger Lakes.” It has proved to be quite effective in attracting visitor attention and interest. Lake George does the same thing with its tag line, “Lake George and the Adirondacks.”

Whatever the destination, we believe that first and foremost, a genuine brand promise must reflect the destination’s inherent character and distinctive experiences through the key attributes it shares with visitors. Then it should be shared with all stakeholders to create a strong brand culturization process that supports the total countywide branding effort.

Destination Positioning Considerations for Greene County

It could be argued that the most effective marketing approach for Greene County would be to further galvanize its efforts with the three neighboring counties to form a much larger and powerful regional DMO under the aegis of the Catskill Mountains, modeled after the successful multi-million dollar program of the Pocono’s Vacation Bureau. However, that doesn’t seem to be a pragmatically realistic expectation.

Instead, for Greene County today, we subscribe to continued participation in the modest regional marketing efforts of the Catskills and Hudson Valley Regional programs (this is discussed later under the regional marketing section).

Recommendations: *We also recommend development of a new county destination “positioning statement”, which seeks to separate the county from other competitors by incorporating its collection of selling propositions, major motivational attributes and regional appeals that are gleaned from customer/potential customer research. This process, which may lead to a logo and destination theme line, is fundamentally driven by the insights of the visitor*



market and not local destination officials. We would recommend testing what we perceive as the best direction for Greene County: incorporating the major recognized draws of the region and the principal appeals of its most popular and well known regional “big names”: The Catskill Mountains and the Hudson Valley, selling to its diverse collection of motivational strengths-- outdoor recreation highlighted by skiing and golf, culture and arts and historical heritage, just to name a few. We also subscribe to the stakeholder recommendation of implementing the “hub and spoke concept” of encouraging visitors to stay overnight in the county, while taking side trips to see major regional sites such as Cooperstown and Saratoga.

Providing a Call to Action--In our experience, tourism destination logos and theme lines are best designed when they convey a call to action, enlisting consumers to explore, discover and experience. Even greater value is provided when the consumer has instant identification with the geographic area, and that the destination is perceived capable of delivering a world of new memories.

As just one example, these needs are answered in the following simple logo and supportive line:

Greene County. Discover the Wonder

Where the Catskills meet the Hudson

Or

Discover the Wonder of Greene County

Where the Catskills meet the Hudson

This concept plays off and builds on the current use of “DiscoverGreene.com.” We believe that variations on the theme could then be incorporated for each publication and primary appeal, such as:

Greene County Skiing. Discover the Wonder

Where the Catskills meet the Hudson

Recommendation: For further analysis, we recommend the book, “Destination BrandScience” by Duane Knapp and Gary Sherwin for staff follow-up review--particularly the process for brand culturization that is designed to achieve community buy-in and synergistic collective usage and ongoing support for the destination’s brand promise.

If the County later decides to pursue brand development, one potential approach would be to contract with a recognized and qualified destination brand development firm.

The Emerging Trend for Experiential and Enrichment Travel

Travel for leisure has dramatically changed in the past thirty years. The traditional pastime of sightseeing and visitation to attractions is now being repositioned and re-packaged based on current traveler needs, interests and expectations.



Increasingly, travelers are seeking trips which provide new value experiences that raise their consciousness and develop new skills. The US Travel Association calls it “enrichment travel” and it confirms that there’s a trend on the rise with these recent research findings:

More than half of the visitors recently polled by them expressed interest in taking an educational trip, and nearly a quarter said they were more interested in this kind of vacation than they were five years ago.

The travel industry is responding to this growing trend with new visitor product opportunities for its consumer target audiences. “We’re evolving and developing product to meet the demands of a brand new market of seasoned, educated, well-heeled travelers who demand and desire more than stopping, standing and staring,” says Randy Julian, of the National Tourism Association. Examples include ethnic cooking in Mexico, hiking from Waldenesque ponds during New England’s fall foliage season and teaching teens about the fashion industry in New York City.

Travel writer Pam Grout calls these trips “before and after vacations”; “because, after one of them, you’re probably going to be a little bit different,” she says.

Recommendation: *This new trend of enrichment travel appears to be a perfect fit for Greene County. The trend certainly affords the Tourism Office with an excellent opportunity through its rich, powerful experiential product content and strong customer opportunities.*

The benefits are diverse: for potential visitors to perceive this area as an important place of personal renewal—through outdoor recreation, communion with friends and relatives, and where visitors can step back in time through historical content and hands-on art and gallery experiences.

This concept of experiential travel also suggests that for Greene County, visitors can become explorers, that this area is rich in diverse visitor experiences, that the destination is exciting, and of significant value—still yet another important requirement for today’s traveler.

7.4 Brand Product Signage for Greene Tourism

High on our list for productive destination brand development programs is this recommended comprehensive brand product signage initiative for Greene County—but it is much more than just signage; it effectively brands Greene County as a major new visitor product.

Its overriding program objective is to deliver a flexible, personal driving tour that enhances the value of the visitor experience in Greene County. It provides an excellent way to introduce both area residents and visitors to the wealth of the community’s leisure travel amenities and resources. In fact, this program makes the very powerful statement that all of Greene County is a valued place of major visitor interests. We currently estimate that this program could encompass some 40 attractions and points of interest, examples of which are listed below in four categories: all major attractions, major shopping sites, sports and outdoor recreation and visitor centers.

Over time, this initiative will also have a positive impact in extending customer length of stay in the area, thus increasing visitor expenditures as well. In addition, it will provide a stronger



brand identify for Greene tourism: an enhanced reputation as the home of so many visitor amenities that attract travelers on a four-season basis.

There are three required components that synergistically work together to achieve optimum benefits:

1. Discover Greene County signage—A comprehensive new system of trailblazer signs on secondary roads, each headed by the active headline: *“Greene County. Discover the Wonder”*. Each sign then features up to four major attractions, one above the other (each with directional arrows) that direct visitors throughout the county. This exciting signage synergistically ties together diverse tourism attractions and areas under one branded, countywide program. As many as 150-200 signs may potentially be required to effectively provide wayfinding in the County. Participants should include all identified facilities under these categories:

- **All major attractions**-- including museums, historic homes and parks. Examples include scenic views such as Point Lookout, Pratt Rock and Catskill Point; Zoom Flume Water Park, the Bronck House, the Pratt Museum, Thomas Cole House Historic Site, the Piano Museum.
- **Major shopping sites.**
- **Sports and outdoor recreation**, including the two major skiing resorts, the nine public golf resorts, major hiking trails and North/South Lake.
- **Visitor centers**—currently, Greene County Tourism Center and the Mountaintop Historical Society in Haines Falls.

2. Brochure distribution—Next, each participating attraction/site should agree to cross-distribute the brochures of other “Tour Greene County” attraction participants. For this purpose, the Tourism Office should coordinate development of a special brochure rack, (potentially paid for by a major sponsor such as a local purveyor, bank or other business). Again, the rack should be identified with the “Discover Greene” logo/type face identification, and be placed at each participating venue.

3. “Discover Greene” product collateral --To complete the program, a dedicated brochure-- or a designated special section in Tourism Office materials-- should highlight the drive-it-yourself program and list all attractions/sites/areas. Motor coach tour companies will also appreciate the invaluable directional guidance afforded by this program and they should be notified of its development.

In addition, the DMO should support this important marketing initiative on an ongoing basis through its website, in media publicity and other distribution channels. This new initiative not only strengthens a great brand identity program for Greene County. It will also constitute a new “visitor product” for the tourism industry, as well as providing support for local residents who are hosts to the burgeoning friends and relatives visitor market of the county. It should be unveiled, as a major new public/private initiative that seeks to assist travelers to the community and aids them in enjoying what Greene County has to offer.

Recommendation: *We commend Economic Development, Tourism and Planning for previously identifying this initiative for future study and potential implementation. For signage design, we understand that the current thought is to also add the regional county designations of Mountain*



Top, Valley Towns and River Towns. That may be feasible and desirable, if there is sufficient room on all signs and that the consumer has sufficient read/comprehension time. We recommend drive-by testing to confirm consumer readability and retention of information. Regarding private sector participation: because this is a public service program for serving consumer interests, we recommend that all appropriate visitor sites be provided gratis listing participation.

7.5 Building Brand Awareness: Advertising vs. Media Publicity

During the last decade a veritable sea change has occurred in the culture of domestic tourism advertising, according to most industry experts.

Traditional advertising, which in past decades had been a mainstay for building destination brand awareness, is now on the wane-- and being replaced by new aggressive Public Relations/Media publicity initiatives of DMO's, particularly social media tools.

Today's great brands are built with PR, according to the bestselling book, "The Fall of Advertising and The Rise of PR" by Al and Laura Ries. Why? It is because of public relations high consumer acceptability as the most believable of all communications media.

This is because the messages that appear on editorial pages in stories—not purchased advertising—consistently get higher marks with consumers for credibility.

For these reasons, newspaper travel sections, consumer travel magazines and other travel media have a powerful influence over the way Americans plan and choose their vacation travel. And this influence continues to grow, according to recent research from the US Travel Association (formerly the Travel Industry Association of America).

There is also strong reliance and credibility with consumers in this media coverage. Sixty percent of travelers who relied on editorial media said that consumer travel magazines, for example, were extremely or very believable.

Recommendation: *For these reasons, we recommend much greater reliance on PR/Media Publicity for building brand awareness, and the use of advertising to produce "cost per customer" results, as outlined later in this report.*

7.6 Public Relations and Media Publicity

Having served as an associate member of the Society of American Travel Writers for more than thirty years, we've assisted many destinations in prospering from aggressive staff-driven publicity efforts. Without this marketing thrust, the self-fulfilling prophecy is that less awareness will be produced--and that is the first critical step in the stimulation of customer interest and desire to visit.

As one recent random example, the New York Times best-seller, "1,000 Places to See Before You Die" features two pages on the Catskills, reviewing facilities and services throughout Sullivan, Delaware and Ulster. Unfortunately, they provide no mention of Greene County. Those incidents are not likely to occur without a formalized Tourism Office PR and Publicity program in place.



Today, Greene County Tourism allocates just \$12,000 of its \$633,000 marketing program for PR.

Another significant advantage of PR/Publicity is its low delivery cost that allows market penetration throughout all four seasons—thus more effectively generating awareness of the diverse offerings of Greene County.

Recommendation: *We recommend a substantial redirection of resources to take advantage of this significant opportunity for building top of mind county tourism awareness and ultimately, new visitation. Estimated costs should be in the \$75,000 range.*

Here are the major responsibilities and opportunities for such a new program that matches, and in most cases, surpasses other DMO PR efforts:

- **A customer relationship management plan of ongoing staff sales calls to all key media**, including newspaper travel editors within a 300-mile radius and all North American freelance writers who are members of the Society of American Travel Writers. At five calls a day, it should be feasible to reach and evaluate the great majority of professional travel writers who have potential interest in Greene County.
- **Development of an inventory of materials:** photos and release information, including standardized press kits (major captioned photos of primary appeals, an omnibus release of historical information, seasonal tourism including special events, frequently asked questions, list of press services, etc.).
- **Dissemination of seasonal/monthly press releases**, special stories and photographs to help sell the allure of Greene County and its seasonal special offerings.
- **Hosting of pre-screened, qualified travel writers throughout the year.**
- **Monitoring and evaluating the annual success of this program** based on the numbers of media serviced, the number of favorable articles printed, the number of potential visitors reached, and the estimated value of the coverage in comparable advertising lineage rates.

In addition, periodic roundtables of county PR and attractions personnel will provide an excellent method for ongoing communications, planning and integrated PR delivery.

Employing Writer Testimonial Endorsements

There are no stronger motivational messages that stimulate consumer visits than third party articles by writers who have actually visited. Following familiarization visits by major writers to Greene County, their travel articles should soon produce positive comments such as “spectacular scenery...”, “a relaxing and convenient getaway...”, “great golf and skiing...”, and many other superlatives.

Recommendation: *When these third-party writer endorsements begin to appear in major newspapers, such as the Philadelphia Inquirer, Washington Post, NY Times and others, they should be collected, copied with attribution from the publication and then further merchandised center-stage in Greene Tourism Office publications, the website, etc.*



Assuring Long-Term PR Success

Destination Media Publicity generation has become an important new and quickly expanding initiative for many destination tourism offices.

Most of them send out press releases, but only the most effective of them can consistently persuade professional travel writers to actually visit, see the community first-hand and exponentially produce greater media coverage that can effectively change consumer attitudes and motivate travel decisions to visit.

Recommendation: *The long term key to communications success for Greene County, pending available funding, is to secure a public relations firm with a significant track record in delivering new writer tours and resulting press coverage for the county.*

The Office does not have a traditional planning process for advertising campaign development or for the function of media purchasing. As such, there isn't a consistent source of information readily available on program objectives, the ad program's reach (circulation achieved with consumers) or frequency (the number of times consumers see these advertising messages).

Recommendation: Contract with an Agency of Record to assist the tourism office with *the ad plan campaign and media buying function.*

We do believe, however, that in total, the county's current advertising and marketing did reap positive results for county visitation. However, the implementation of best practices for ad evaluation, planning and purchasing will reap far greater and specifically quantified returns.

7.7 The Internet and Website Development

Going Forward: The Shift to Online Advertising

Today the Internet is the number one marketing resource for travel information dissemination and the influencing of vacation travel decisions. It is also significantly more effective and cost efficient in tracking and producing new visitors through advertising.

Recommendation: *Therefore, we recommend that the Tourism Office begin to shift its principal ad resources from traditional print and current Internet programs, to more efficient and quantifiable online performance based programs that specifically deliver "Pay per Customer" results.*

We estimate that a new best business practice for online ad programming would allow Greene County to produce a much more robust visitor return on investment in the 40-to-1 range: a \$150,000 ad investment, for example, is anticipated to produce an estimated new \$6 million in direct visitor spending throughout the county. In comparison, a larger \$200,000 annual investment, due to economy of scale purchasing power, could achieve a 50-to-1 ROI, generating an estimated \$10 million dollar return in new visitor receipts.

Basically, here's how some methods would work for Greene County: web visitors would see a specific Greene Tourism branded travel offering on various websites. The DMO's message then appears and visitors are invited to inquire.



Consumers would opt-in to receive a specially produced and customized, full-color online destination publication about Greene County’s array of attractions, outdoor recreation, skiing, golf, events, accommodations and restaurant/retail offerings. Inquiries are also screened to assure that the Tourism Office only receives highly qualified, actionable inquiries. Furthermore, the consumer offers would be segmented into one that is attractive to a more affluent audience (such as, “sign up for our unique spa/culinary/upscale experience”) and one for a lower income level to match other lodging properties (affordable getaways).

At an investment of \$150,000, such programs may produce, according to current industry estimates:

- **62,500 guaranteed consumer travel leads.**
- **These leads are estimated to generate 7,500 visitor parties.**
- **4,500 of these 7,500 visitor parties would utilize an estimated 13,500 lodging room nights and expend an estimated \$1.2 million** in accommodations spending (based on the recent 20 independent conversion analyses for other destinations). The remaining other visitor parties would stay with friends and relatives, in second homes, or visit the county for day trips.
- **Finally, total visitors produced from this program are estimated at \$6 million in direct consumer spending** throughout the county—a 40-to-1 return on program marketing investment. In addition, the program should anticipate driving an estimated minimum of 15,000 new visitors to the DMO’s website. This would assist the Tourism Office in building a strong registered user program that can convert new website visitors for years to come. (This program is later discussed under website development).

Recommendation: *Conversion to actual visitors should be tracked for the DMO using a reputable market research firm.*

New Online Travel Videos

Television advertising in the metro New York City prime market was recommended by several stakeholders. But such a tactic is infeasible because of high ad time purchase costs that would deplete the entire Tourism Office ad budget within a week, not including TV commercial production costs. Even cost per inquiry cable TV is several times costlier than other forms of CPI advertising. However, we are aware of the evolving role that video distribution can play online—and there is merit in the application of new video coverage for the county program.

Film/video is a communication form that touches most of the senses and through one form--television commercials--has proven to connect strongly with consumers. With today’s distribution opportunities on the Internet, there is a great opportunity for Greene County to get its message out and reach millions of consumers online through video usage.

This option enables Greene County Tourism to have several 3 to 5 minute videos about Greene County created. The videos could then be distributed to about 40 different sites online including YouTube, Google Video and other major travel portals. Greene County Tourism could also place the videos on their website and websites of their industry partners. An evaluation of the



program's reported reach should also be secured. The cost of this program should be in the \$50,000 range and would also provide new video content for use by the destination and its partners as well as provide distribution at a lower cost per thousand price to reach consumers.

Recommendation: *We endorse these exceptionally effective Internet initiatives. They support the important mission of the Tourism Office and deliver tremendous quantifiable, incremental economic value for the tourism industry of Greene County.*

Technology: Web Development and Internet Marketing

As noted earlier, the Internet is the future.

It is also the fastest-growing communications tool ever devised. While it took radio broadcasters 38 years to reach an audience of 50 million, and the medium of television required 13 years, the Internet accomplished this significant milestone in just four years.

Today the Internet has surpassed all other media conduits as the consumer's most popular source for travel information and planning, and its relevance continues to exponentially grow.

Today's rapidly changing Internet technologies and consumer expectations dictate that the Greene Tourism website portal must become one of the organization's most critically important resources for motivating future travel decisions. At the outset, the site should be branded and recognized as "The Official Website for Greene County Tourism," both with header copy on the website's masthead, as well as with the search engines that direct traffic to the site.

A major requirement is that the Tourism Office site needs to transition from a dissemination model of providing consumer information to a more interactive and transactional model. Instead of focusing on establishing links that send Greene Tourism web shoppers to other sites, it must keep and build long-term relationships with new potential consumers by strengthening its own web program and marketing mission to cultivate, convert and measure new travelers and the positive economic returns they deliver for the county.

Initial issues include:

Delivering More Consumers to the site — this is a major requirement if the site is to be more effective in driving visitation to the County. It can be accomplished by a strategic, ongoing search engine optimization program that improves the ranking of Greene County tourism attributes on major search engines, such as Google and Yahoo. We recommend doing so with such messages that will send visitors to the Greene County's website with mentions for: "New York Tourism," "New York skiing," "New York Golf," as well as similar messages noted as "Catskills Golf," "Catskills skiing," "Hudson Valley golf," etc. Such an optimization plan over time should more than double the annual number of visitors to the site.

Site Design and Navigation — the Greene Tourism home page is the first impression that must brand the destination, so from what visitors see in style and imagery, they should immediately have an intuitive response to, sense of, and feeling about the destination. We perceive that the Greene Tourism home page is confusing, with dozens of small images, logos and photos rather than bright, compelling tourism related colors, well-chosen large branding images and a compelling, motivational approach. There is also a lack of a visual call to specific action or a



strong brand message that effectively positions Greene Tourism in relationship to other competitive destinations, and encourages consumers forward through the site in the travel consumer conversion process. The site also requires stronger content throughout, a more user friendly navigation bar, active copy and new techniques that will further encourage consumers to seek transactions and make them want to return to the site again and again.

Step 1: Website Assessment — for Greene Tourism to develop an optimum web-based program, it first requires a third party professional marketing evaluation of its site compared to the best destination websites in the industry. This should include examination of design, navigability, customer relationship management, search engine compliance, e-commerce for online booking and advertising, tracking, reporting and success metrics.

Step 2: Development of an Internet Marketing Plan that builds on recommendations provided in the step one website assessment. It should include plans for management, marketing and commerce that far transcend the current use of information display and dissemination. Onsite advertising and the booking of numerous transactions such as room nights, lift tickets and package tours should be evaluated.

A priority will be a strategic process to cultivate and deliver new visitors and measurable economic results. Here, the most critical component is determining how many actual visitors the site produces for the destination, along with economic impacts including visitor receipts and room night generation.

This is accomplished with a recommended specific new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) plan referred to as a Consumer Permission Marketing Program entitled, "My Greene County in the Catskills, " this new program would allow site consumers to become registered users, and they in turn can then tailor their future trips and receive information updates based on their personal requirements.

This program will track and build brand loyalty and repeat visitation. Then finally, over time, the economic impact and value of the DMO Website in actually producing visitation can be assessed through a visitor conversion analysis that is based on the universe of registered users to the site.

Recommendation: Following website assessment, contract with a qualified internet travel marketing firm to produce the ongoing marketing support plan. Costs should be about \$50,000 annually.

7.8 Cooperative Partnership Development

Most Destination Marketing Organizations are well-schooled, successful networking organizations. Through their synergistic planning, meeting and ongoing communications with stakeholders, they seek to gain consensus and build partnerships, establish common goals, plan supportive marketing initiatives together and stretch resources.

Recommendation: *This is the required role of the Greene Tourism Office: to strengthen its programming by receiving advance formalized input for its annual marketing program and to produce new cooperative initiatives that collectively benefit the county and its stakeholders.*



A fundamental planning model is annual Cooperative Marketing Opportunity Development that should be part of the annual marketing plan process. Here is how it should work:

Developing Co-op Partnership Opportunities

Following review by key tourism stakeholders who help guide and offer validation for direction, the tourism office may meet or send written notification to its constituents and a complete package of recommended marketing partnership activities. These marketing initiatives are usually initially developed by the Tourism Office as part of their annual marketing plan.

The program offered is intended to increase the successful reach of community stakeholder marketing programs through participation with the DMO. Programs should be listed in chronological order. Guidelines for participation are outlined.

They include: when reservations will be accepted, how program participation is billed, agreement to track results and share them, DMO responsibilities for layout, design, registration when required, participants agree to provide collateral, etc. also covered is professional appearance, what giveaways, door prizes, etc. may be offered.

Comparable sized DMO's to Greene County now provide more than 50 to 60 annual partnership opportunities to their stakeholders, in addition to a full menu of advertising co-op potentials.

Program areas may include:

- **Advertising opportunities** in publications that will carry Greene Tourism ads.
- **Internet promotions:** such as community website blog advertisements hosted by the county, special advertising to promote partners who have something special and unique to share, and featured listings on the county website.
- **Consumer marketing:** such as participation in consumer trade shows, direct mail programs for AAA and other groups.
- **Industry tradeshows,** such as motor coach, AAA or other group travel.
- **Sales blitzes** to communities, calling on group tour planners; familiarization tour planning and support for key travel writers and tour operators.
- **Special newsletter opportunities** targeted to key markets, such as golf and skiing.

Roundtables/Task Forces --Another method for implementation may be the establishment of roundtable discussions or specific Task Forces for planning of major identified issues that need supportive attention. They might include: County brand development, DMO hotel reservations service, welcome center development, package tours/itineraries, event evaluation requirements, and familiarization tour support for writers, tour operators, and other tourism drivers.

7.9 Event Marketing and Sponsorship

Of the numerous special events and celebrations held in Greene County annually, in 2009 the Tourism Office provided about \$133,000 in total direct sponsorship funding support for some 57 events, plus an additional \$25,000 in print and radio advertising support. Individual Tourism Office contributions to these events range in amount from \$100 to \$12,000, with 21 events receiving less than \$1,000 each.



The county contracts that are required for sponsorship state, “To be eligible for local event sponsorship... an event must be tourism-related and have attracted a substantial portion of its visitors from outside the County or, if it is the first time that the event is being held, it must have the potential to attract substantial visitors from outside the County.”

To date, however, evaluations have been limited to anecdotal evidence of their contributions to tourism. We offer recommendations for an effective evaluation methodology at the conclusion of this section.

The two overriding questions are: do events motivate visitor travel decisions? And even if they effectively do so, should they receive special government funding that now amounts to more than 25 percent of the County’s total annual \$633,000 tourism marketing budget?

While local festivals certainly add to the personality and diversity of destinations--and about half of annual visitors say they enjoy them—*events are not necessarily significant tourism motivators for destination marketing throughout the industry*. Recent research studies have shown that for both short-term three or four-day impulse travel trips to week-long stays, about three out of four visitors say that events had no bearing on their decision to visit. Still, some events are more motivational than others.

One thing is certain events are a part of the tourism fabric of Greene County. They add to the product personality and uniqueness of the community, build local pride, and should be aggressively incorporated into the Tourism Office’s consolidated campaign, including: strong web presence, advertising, an ongoing media publicity program, brochure development and other tactical programs for the greater good of all tourism markets and businesses.

This, however, may not conclude that all events--or even just a few of them -- should receive special ongoing earmarked funding. In some communities, DMO’s support start-up events with initial “seed money” from one to three years duration, and thereafter, they are required to be self-supporting.

However, ongoing special event funding from the Greene Tourism Office diminishes finite resources that can be best applied for the greater consolidated marketing effort of the County’s entire tourism industry. For these reasons, this direct funding program for special events is not a preferred model throughout the industry.

For example, if the \$154,000 financial contribution to events was instead applied to the consolidated advertising effort for the County that we have previously outlined, it could reliably produce 7,500 new visitor parties, more than 13,000 room nights, and an estimated direct return of more than \$6 million in new visitor expenditures for local lodging, food service, retail sales, entertainment, and outdoor recreation.

Recommendation: *An evaluation process should be developed and implemented for assessing event’s ability to produce positive tourism results. The optimum evaluation requires: 1) the development of a new intercept survey instrument that 2) can be administered on-site during the actual event by an independent third party and 3) who would provide the results directly to the*



event organizers/manager and Tourism Office. We suggest SUNY as a viable resource to both produce the survey as well as administer it onsite using student staffing who are familiar with business research and/or recreational tourism. The County should provide funds for creating the initial survey instrument. Survey implementation costs should be borne by the event organization.

The intercept survey would attempt to provide a projectable sampling of event attendees by interviewing a random sample of participants; say one of every ten persons onsite. Answers should be provided to determine:

- Estimated total number in attendance.
- Total projected number of estimated visitors and visitor parties (those from more than 50 miles away from home or who reside outside the county, and those planning overnight stays).
- Anticipated length of stay for this trip.
- Estimated visitor dollars expended.
- (Most significantly) Were these visitors motivated to come to Greene County because of this event?

Additional confirmation of accommodations usage can be validated by the Tourism Office staff through phone calls to area properties, and this anecdotal information can be added to the finished event visitor analysis.

7.10 Conference & Leisure Group Sales

Meetings and Conference Sales

This is a relatively limited but very lucrative state and regionally-based future market opportunity for the community and the County Tourism Office.

With the staff's sparse availability of manpower resources for customer marketing and prospecting, we suggest greater reliance on the Internet in developing trackable leads from small meetings market planners.

Here's how some programs work:

- Meeting Planners accessing national meetings websites--or what is referred to as a "private label program" on the Greene County website--would send their RFP (either directly to the Tourism Office, or to individual hotel properties and other local county meeting facilities).
- The Tourism Office or its community's individual properties respond directly to the planner's request.
- The Planner then confirms his booking directly with the individual property, and the Tourism Office is automatically copied for tracking and follow-up as required.

This type of program provides the following primary benefits:

- For Planners: One-stop-planning service saves time and money. Fast & easy to use service locates open dates and special value offers from major hotel and venue brands.



- For Hotel & Venue Partners: Free advertising that generates new group business for the short-term, low season, and distressed time periods.
- For DMO's: Places the Greene County destination in front of qualified meeting and event planners seeking to submit RFP's. Creates added value for tourism members/partners and positions the agency as the community's destination marketing leader.

Recommendation: *This initiative may prove to be a strong, supportive ROI tactic that helps Greene County level the playing field with competing DMO's. Annual cost should be in the \$3,000-\$5,000 range and we suggest a one-year test. We recommend that this program be developed through roundtable formatted meetings of community participants.*

Leisure Group Sales

Group motor coach business also offers much potential for Greene County. In early 2009, the Tourism Office conducted a survey of four county attractions and eleven accommodations, which provided these estimated results:

- **Day trip travel**--More than 12,000 group travelers came to Greene County last year as part of motor coach day trips, representing a direct economic impact of approximately \$240,000.
- **Overnight stays**--An estimated 400 motorcoach visitors came to Greene County that year for an overnight stay of 1-3 nights, generating a direct economic impact of approximately \$45,000.
- **Total annual economic impact** was estimated to be in excess of \$300,000.

There is much future promise for this market segment and we share the Tourism Office's enthusiasm for expansion of effort. In fact, had tour operators been queried for market analysis instead of Greene County property participants, we believe that program expenditure impacts would have been estimated to be far greater.

Of significant note, according to recent national industry estimates, a visit by a one-day motor coach group leaves from \$2,500 to \$4,500 in a destination's economy. An overnight motor coach tour group leaves from \$5,000 to \$11,000. And a visit by a two-night or more motor coach tour group leaves from \$9,000 to \$16,000 in a destination's economy.

Last year, Greene County Tourism estimated it received and disseminated about 100 business leads from tourism operators. Later in this report, we recommend and outline a methodology for estimating and capturing the resulting visitor receipts produced from new business booked from these leads.

As part of the earlier Greene County survey to hotels and attractions, participants suggested the following initiatives as ways of producing more business:

- More events and attractions for senior groups.
- Familiarization for group tour planners.



- A co-op marketing campaign.
- A think tank dinner with hotels/attractions/motorcoach tour operators.
- Internet links to attractions on Greene County hotels/restaurants.

However, to date, no further action or discussion has been taken to follow up on these suggestions.

Recommendation: *This provides another opportunity for Tourism Office roundtable issues-management, and the meeting should be scheduled to develop a feasible approach.*

Producing More Business: A Group Tour Market Assessment

As an initial step in developing plans to secure more leisure group business, we recommend assessing tour operator attitudes to determine their perceptions of Greene County as a destination attractor--and the current quality of service provided here.

The focus of the recommended survey is on very specific aspects of destination customer awareness and service, with the opportunity for narrative comments and responses to open-ended questions. This is extraordinarily effective for zeroing in on specific areas for improvement. Typical categories are as follows:

- Quality of product, service or program out of line.
- Quality of customer service from staff.
- Professionalism, competence.
- Other operational aspects for review and feedback.

Tour operators are asked to indicate:

- Number of Coaches owned, trips to the region per year.
- Day trips to the destination each year.
- Overnight trips there each year.
- Nature of Visit (coach, fly/drive, other form of organized tour).
- Length of stay at destination.
- If tour package included other destinations.
- Type of accommodation.

Tour operators are asked to rate the following categories, which include 5 to 10 detailed line items including:

- Quality of accommodation.
- Quality of attractions.
- Quality of restaurants.
- Experience at destination.
- Quality of DMO's service.
- Quality of DMO's promotional activities and services.

Tour operators are also asked the following:

- What the industry did really well.
- To comment on anything they were unhappy about.
- For suggestions to improve the quality of customer service.



Recommendation: Conduct such a survey using an industry recognized provider. Costs should be in the \$2,500-\$3,000 range.

7.11 Visitor Information Services

Greene County's visitor center at Exit 21, just off the NY Thruway, is seriously hampered in serving visitors because of inadequate directional state signage.

While about 1.3 million cars are annually estimated to leave the Thruway via Exit 21, the visitor center there hosts 6,000 people, or an average of just 16 people daily.

The major impediment is inadequate NY Thruway signage for the center on both the north and south exits, which contain only a question mark. Although this is indeed the appropriate international symbol for travel information, we perceive that most people simply don't recognize it. However, if new highway signage could incorporate this simple message, "Visitor Travel Information Center," Greene County's Visitor Center could welcome an estimated 20,000 visitors annually.

Recommendation: *We encourage major advocates for tourism to support the State's need for new, adequate Thruway signage. Doing so will stimulate more visitors to stop, allow them to explore the area, and increase their length of stay to help the local economy. In the meantime, we recommend that future County tourism billboards on the Thruway provide potential center visitors this brief message, "Visitor Information Exit 21." There may also be a need for installation of county directional signs that guide visitors from the Thruway exit to the center.*

A New Integrated System of Visitor Centers

Visitor Centers, first and foremost, should be developed and operated as economic development tools for tourism. In many cases, they serve as the initial contact point with travelers to the destination. Their mission should be: to provide counseling services and information that ultimately increases visitor length of stay and resulting dollar expenditures, and encourages repeat visitation that produces additional income to the community.

Localities in the County should be encouraged and supported to develop such a program of visitor information dissemination. Perhaps this could be considered as part of the county's ongoing infrastructural grant development plan.

We can envision a strategically located network of centers, perhaps in the three general regions of the county that support one another synergistically to serve new visitors and help acquaint them with new things to see and do. In this regard, it is the travel counselor's responsibility to manage the customer's experience there, and build new profits for the community by extending visitor's stay, while providing greater value to the customer. That effort will also go a long way towards encouraging repeat visitation.

Throughout the industry, many destination visitor centers usually welcome visitors with a quick hello and then either answer their questions or allow visitors to fend for themselves. Then the traveler may meander about to find brochures or other information and perhaps view an orientation film. Finally, as quickly as they arrived, they disappear.



If such a program as outlined above could gain traction, we would *recommend these guidelines below for a standardized training program that should be adhered to by all travel counselors.*

A New Training Model

Purpose: joint development of a county-wide center training plan with participation of all counselors who agree and help develop an Operations Manual for full-time and part-time employees.

An introductory section should include the DMO mission statement, and also a mission for the visitor center (which can be developed by program participants). This will set the stage for a disciplined process of successful operations.

Some guidelines might include the following:

- **First, how to capture the traveler**—Say hello, make eye contact, extend a warm welcome, then ask where they're from and if this is their first trip to the area; (now you're beginning to build rapport—a needed commodity to get the job done).
- **Begin by giving them what they want**—pull together the experiences and the places they want to visit...then its time to find out how you can really help (not just them, but your Tourism Office). Listen to not only what they say, but also what *they don't say*. For instance, they're interested in history and a particular site; perhaps they're also interested in other related places and things to see and do, but they just don't know about them because (as you just found out) it's their first trip to the area.
- **Follow the “supermarket shopping model”**—Now that you've discovered their principal interests, begin developing an itinerary for them with what's compatible from the nearby shelf of attractions that includes more of the same kinds of visual and sensory experiences—and don't forget to make room for lunch and dinner and the array of dining options you'll offer, from which they'll make their choices. Then it's time for overnight reservations.
- **Learn to read upside down**—so the consumer can follow right along. Here, you want to take the customer on a planned adventure by placing an area travel map between you and them. And as you plan and validate their interest, you can maintain eye contact while introducing your new guests to your destination through a personalized, planned tour route highlighted in yellow marker.

Recommendation: *After the operational plan is developed, we recommend a mechanism for evaluating each center's success in producing increased length of stay, additional room night generation and resulting revenue to the community. The analysis can be provided by a marketing firm or even initiated as a marketing or research class project by a nearby college or university.*

The process involves intercepting travelers after they've exited the center, asking them questions about their travel intentions before entering, and then after receiving travel counseling from your staff. Also to be considered would be a post card survey provided for them to fill out and return when they arrive home.



If administered properly, this method of operation can produce positive and surprising results: double-digit percentage increases in room night generation, and extended stays.

What usually occurs is that the more time each counselor has with each visitor, the longer will be the duration of his or her extended trip. So it stands to reason that we should also find new methods for holding visitors longer in the center -- perhaps by allowing them to linger around a well-placed brochure kiosk, or by enjoying a visual orientation.

7.12 Collateral Development, Creative Design

With limited funding and such an important Tourism Office mission, the destination consolidated marketing approach dictates that we can always achieve greater motivational impact by combining principal destination appeals whenever feasible, rather than stand-alone appeals. This communications approach stretches our consolidated message delivery and demonstrates the great diversity of what we have to offer.

Recommendations:

- ***Golf, Bird watching, Events and other special interest brochures should all incorporate an introductory section to the county's major broad-based motivational appeals. Then each brochure should add motivational copy that cross-sells the other specific appeals not included in each vertical brochure (golf, skiing, etc). This can be done either on the inside sleeve or the back page. Instead of just a listing of such opportunities, incorporate strong copy points; for events, point out the year-round diversity of wonderful festivals, celebrations and events that take place in every season; for golf, include the special scenic beauty and cost value benefits of playing here.***
- ***For all appropriate publications, highlight this Visitor Center message: "Make your first stop the Visitor Welcome Center(s) where travel counselors will help plan your trip and answer all your questions and needs." This should not be an afterthought, but rather appear in a special copy block, preferably as the final message for all consumer publications—including the visitor guide.***

7.13 Regional Marketing

The Traditional Role of Regional Tourism

Throughout the industry, regional tourism marketing is generally intended to deliver supportive programming for the destination that extends market reach and ultimately produces additional business.

The rationale is that as the distance from the potential consumer to the destination increases (in this case, Greene County), so does the relative lack of visitor awareness and interest to visit. But by combining secondary and non-duplicative marketing resources with other nearby communities, a regional marketing program can focus on supportive programming to further boost business for the greater good of all participants.

The Catskills and the Hudson Valley identification and sensory appeals are strong drivers for Greene County. We endorse both of these regional programs as generally identified.



8. Operational/Management Recommendations

8.1 Mission and Objectives

Recommended New DMO Tourism Office Mission Statement

A Tourism DMO Mission Statement's purpose is to provide the clear reason for the very existence of the organization —specifically why it is in business. Therefore, all business planning and developments that follow should subscribe to it as the foundation of purpose.

For Greene County, such a mission statement should be developed. It should include the following:

- It is the official marketing agency for Greene County. This is important in assuring consumer confidence. As such, this “official” designation should also appear on its website and other tourism collateral as earlier noted.
- The Tourism Office is responsible for producing new or incremental economic impacts through its ongoing efforts. This speaks to the issue of performance planning and the achievement of quantifiable results.

Thus, our recommended mission, which effectively clarifies the purpose and core responsibility of the Greene Tourism office is:

“The Greene County Tourism Office is the official public and private sector tourism destination marketing organization for the County, whose mission is to aggressively promote the positive attributes and businesses of Greene County’s tourism industry to potential travelers, and thus generate new economic growth through visitor receipts, tax revenue and local jobs that benefit all residents.”

New Greene County Tourism Core Objectives

Next, we suggest the adoption of the following seven broad-based core objectives that will clarify and support the parameters of all ongoing work of the Greene County program. (All information in parentheses is for staff review only and is not part of the actual objectives).

They are:

- **Generate positive awareness** of Greene County as a destination of choice for travelers. (This objective deals with developing brand awareness as an initial step in the marketing process and may include public travel shows, billboards, media publicity).
- **Stimulate interest and desire** on the part of consumers to take action and visit. (This headlines the next principal marketing objective of tactical work: advertising, PR, web development, direct sales, collateral, etc.).



- **Maximize visitor length and frequency of stay** throughout the year to increase economic generation and enhance the value of the visitor’s experience. (Visitor center services would be an important strategy under this objective).
- **Increase the business volume of Greene County’s tourism business partners** and constituents. (Stakeholder co-op partnership programs fit under this objective).
- **Proactively support the development of additional tourism products** and services to enhance the visitor experience. (Infrastructure considerations are fulfilled with this objective).
- **Maintain a research base** for Greene County’s tourism industry. (Helpful market and marketing research are covered here).
- **Create positive awareness, support and participation** in the Greene Tourism Office and its marketing programs. (A comprehensive stakeholder and community relations plan are deliverables of this objective).

Special note: In our review of current annual Tourism Office programming, the only component that does not appear to fall within these seven objectives—or is compatible with the proposed mission statement is the operation and management of the Historic Catskill Point.

Once approved, all future planning documents—including long range strategic plans, an industry standard annual marketing plan, and individual performance objectives—should flow from the mission statement and these broad-based objectives. They should also be memorialized consistently in writing.

Then each Tourism office objective can be carried out by a series of strategies, which are followed by specific work programs or tactics that can be modified over time, based on changing market conditions, available budgets and other evolving needs.

Memorializing the DMO Marketing Process

To support the Mission Statement and the organization’s principal objectives, we recommend that the following new Marketing Process be memorialized in writing to clarify how this work should be carried out:

“The Greene County Business Marketing Process is to consistently deliver a research-based, customer-focused, market-driven and brand- oriented program that produces quantifiable success. To this end, manpower and financial resources are deployed against those visitor markets and seasonal periods that are capable of generating the greatest economic results for Greene County. With the optimum return provided from those staying overnight in accommodations, efforts are focused there.

Supporting the above marketing process are the Tourism Office’s principal markets listed below. This information fits well when added to the above marketing process as follows:



“Principal markets are outside the county with emphasis on overnight visitation, which provide optimum expenditure impacts, and include the primary segments of leisure travel, group leisure tours and small meetings and conferences.”

This is not to suggest that the Tourism Office should not be actively involved in community marketing. For example, the friends and relatives market is a burgeoning one that relies heavily on local residents to provide the invitations to visit. Second home owners are very important, too. Media publicity services to tell the local story for residents/second homeowners can be provided. Other efforts, such as “Be a Tourist in your own Hometown,” have proven very effective elsewhere in developing positive community awareness and participation in local visitor programs. Pending available time, the Tourism Office can be a catalyst in local efforts for planning and delivering these low cost, productive efforts. (Successful case histories for “Hometown program development” are available from DMAI). Another avenue is a tour for front-line staff at local restaurants, hotels and attractions, so they are aware and can recommend local events and attractions to tourists while they are in the County.

We believe these collective recommendations best chart the course for the organization. They should be made available to all tourism community stakeholders, incorporated in an Annual Marketing Plan, Tourism Annual Report and other relevant documents.

8.2 Tourism Office Performance Management

Perhaps the most important questions asked today by community stakeholders of Tourism DMO’s including boards, elected officials, the media and others, are centered around: what does the organization actually deliver? What do we get for the money and what is the return on investment? This is particularly true for the nine out of ten offices throughout the industry that are funded by public resources.

In a broad-based way, today’s DMO is at the forefront of enhancing visitor support of quality of life issues and resulting amenities for residents as well – restaurants, retailers, attractions, arts and entertainment, cultural, historic and sports venues-- some of which could not exist without the business generated by visitors. In addition, through destination marketing initiatives such as advertising that delivers visitors, the DMO helps create local jobs at various income levels, and materially helps in keeping resident taxes low by bringing in more visitor taxes.

The answer to what DMO’s deliver also includes: the increased economic impact of visitors to the destination that would have gone elsewhere except for the sales and marketing efforts of the CVB.

As noted earlier, explicit in the mission statement of most DMO’s is the responsibility for tracking and producing quantifiable business for their communities. This is not a simple task-- and industry methodologies are being tested and are emerging on an ongoing basis.

New Tracking System

In referring to performance tracking, marketing expert Peter Drucker once noted, “What gets measured gets managed.” Obviously, without measurement, there is limited opportunity for effective destination management and planning.



We recommend a new, comprehensive Performance Tracking system for monitoring and managing productive results in the areas of:

- Advertising
- Conference and Group tour leisure bookings
- Website
- Media Publicity
- Cooperative Partnership Development programs
- Website
- Visitor Centers

Tracking and Customer Relationship Management Software

There are several industry endorsed software programs for DMO management use.

Recommendation: *A number of industry recognized software programs are available. Contact the Destination Marketing Association International in Washington, DC for additional assistance and information.*

The First Step: Benchmarking the Results

Once the first full year of results tracking is concluded, the Office can then benchmark major deliverables and then use them to help establish annual goals for the future. This matrix should be provided in the next annual report of the Office and in ongoing reports for the County and its principal constituents.

We may further refine performance measures into two categories:

- Promotional activity
- Marketing productivity

Promotional Activity includes such work as literature distributed, visitors serviced at the information center, sales calls made and leads issued, etc. The acceptable marketing axiom here is that as more promotional activity is produced and targeted appropriately, there should be corresponding increases, over time in marketing productivity.

Marketing productivity is the most important output for DMO's. These business measurements include conference business booked and resulting room night revenue, hotel reservations made and resulting economic impacts, as well as other important indicators of the organization's successful selling efforts on behalf of the community. Whenever feasible, productivity should be forecasted and stated as goals to be delivered. So should activity, such as sales leads generated, which can then convert to business booked.

Recommended Future DMO Performance Deliverables

In our judgment, the most important current and future productivity measurements for the Greene County Tourism Office are listed next --*and they should be tracked in monthly and year-to-date reports, also comparing against previous years, once the data has been benchmarked*



following year one. Many can later be provided as future goals, with the exception of resulting economic impact. These monthly reports should be formally delivered to staff and management.

All documentation of economic impact methodology should be thoroughly footnoted throughout all public reports.

1. TOTAL CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS BOOKED

Anticipated no. delegates

Est. room nights generated

Resulting economic impact (The estimated economic impact should be reported at year's end using reported formulas).

The DMAI Foundation has just produced extensive research guidelines to assist DMO's in developing direct spending profiles and we recommend them for considered future use. As an alternative, Greene County can develop a local report based on inputs from area hoteliers that house these clients. Following booking confirmation from the client, expenditure estimates for meeting delegate spending can be produced in-house in the following manner: hotel rate plus daily average for food, transportation, retail estimated spending, times avg. length of stay = estimated delegate expenditures, times number of days onsite as provided by each meeting planner client)= convention delegate average expenditures.

2. GROUP TOUR PROGRAMS BOOKED

No. of programs

Estimated participants

Attendant room nights

Estimated value of resulting bookings

Estimating the value of tour bookings requires ongoing follow up with tour operators who initially sent the leads to the DMO about their future program needs. With about 100 leads now handled annually by the Tourism Office, this does not seem problematic. In the future, if the market significantly grows, it may require an adjustment in evaluation by querying every other lead received.

3. LEISURE VISITORS PRODUCED THROUGH ADVERTISING

No. visitor inquiries

Converted no. of parties

Estimated room night generation

Estimated economic impact (reported annually with conversion study evaluation).

Future conversion analysis for the total annual ad program of traditional media can be reasonably obtained at an average cost of \$6,000-\$7,500 from well qualified academic institutions that produce this work for numerous DMO's. But instead of making this annual expenditure, it may instead consider conducting the analysis on an in-house basis every other year by extrapolating past conversion percentages and dollar estimate averages. Or it can produce its own conversion using Internet survey resources, such as through Survey Monkey—but this can be quite labor intensive.

For online Internet advertising, the conversion response is most often provided in the actual program cost.



4. WEBSITE VISITORS PRODUCED

- No. registered users
- Converted no. of visitor parties
- Estimated room night generation
- Estimated economic impact

We recommend a new “My Greene County and the Catskills” registered user program for the website that can aggressively solicit visitors and increases destination awareness, interest and desire to visit. Ultimately, conversion can then be conducted.

For example, with a registered user base of 20,000 participants developed over time, it would not be unusual to convert about 10,000 new visitor parties annually and deliver substantial new measurable dollar revenue for the county based on length of stay. Such an internet based study will require an expanded web development program, and we address that deliverable later in this report.

Additional public show conversion studies can also be implemented if the Tourism Office will retrieve the addresses—preferably email addresses—of all customers serviced.

5. POSITIVE MEDIA PUBLICITY IMPRESSIONS PRODUCED of travel stories to influence travel decisions

- Estimated readership (circulation)/viewers/listeners.
- Resulting \$ value in comparable advertising space costs (but not listed as a goal-based deliverable).
- This information is available from professional editorial clipping services that traditionally track media publicity coverage.

6. STAKEHOLDER COOPERATIVE PARTNERSHIPS PRODUCED

- No. Partnership programs produced
- No. of partners participating
- This category allows the DMO to clarify the growing number of participating marketing programs available and the stakeholders who have joined in the efforts. A recommended Stakeholder Assessment Survey should also provide guidance in increasing partner support. We review that process later in this document.

7. VISITOR WELCOME CENTER IMPACTS-pending development of new center training and analysis— Estimated no. of parties who extended their length of stay (based on counseling services provided) room nights generated economic impact.

Recommended New CVB Reporting Format

We now combine the principal performance deliverables above with other significant productivity and activity.



The following report format is an evolving one, which can be further segmented or produced in the outline provided. It should incorporate comparable tracking by month, year to date and compared to the same corresponding periods for the previous year. As noted earlier, all categories should include footnoting methodology. This information should be available to both staff and board as consistent monthly reports.

GREENE TOURISM OFFICE PERFORMANCE TRACKING REPORT

(Compiled monthly for quarterly and annual report delivery)

- **Total new meetings booked**
 - # of meetings
 - Anticipated delegates
 - Est. room nights generated
 - Resulting economic impact
- **New Group Tour Programs booked through leads generated**
 - No. of programs
 - Estimated participants
 - room nights
 - resulting est. economic impact
- **Leisure visitors produced through advertising and web based programs**
 - #Room nights
 - economic impact reported annually
- **Positive media publicity impressions produced**
 - Resulting \$ value in comparable advertising space costs
- **Co-op Marketing partnerships produced**
 - # of participants
- **Trade shows attended**
 - Conference and meeting planners
 - Tour operators
 - Travel writers
- **Public shows attended**
 - # Consumers counseled/serviced
- **General Marketing**
 - Advertising impressions produced
 - Consumer inquiries generated and serviced
 - Collateral publications distributed
 - Media Publicity Press releases issued
 - Media inquiries serviced
- **Website**
 - Unique visitors/user sessions
 - Page views



Registered users
Newsletter recipients

- **Visitor Services**

Visitors serviced at information centers
Inquiries processed (by category, including advertising, the web, etc.)

- **Conference leads**

Estimated room nights
Potential economic value
Convention Bid proposals produced
% Conversion of sales leads to business booked

- **Tour operator group sales leads:**

Estimated room nights
Potential economic value

- **Total sales leads generated:**

Total Estimated room nights
Potential economic value

- **Sales Calls/Client Contacts Made**

Meeting planners
Tour operators
Travel writers/media

- **Familiarization Tours Conducted**

Meeting planners, Clients participating
Tour operators, Clients participating
Travel Writers, Clients Participating
(Include potential value where available)

- **Site Inspections Hosted** (individual trips)

Meeting planners
Tour operators
AAA travel counselors
Travel writers
(Include potential value where available)



8.3 The DMO Value Statement

A New Value Statement for the Greene County Tourism Office

All of the aforementioned production categories help further answer the question: What is the true value of the work of the Greene County Tourism Office in fulfillment of its mission?

While it only covers the “tip of the iceberg” in marketing value for the community, and doesn’t address all of the important work of destination branding, collateral development and so many other marketing and operational needs, it can clarify quantifiable dollar performance accountability for the community through a simple statement that captures major annual return on investment for all stakeholders.

By adding up future estimated impacts for sales, advertising and media publicity outlined earlier, a new Value Statement for Greene County may later read this way:

“Last year, operating with a \$800,000 dollar marketing budget, the Greene County Tourism Office produced an estimated \$_____ in new visitor dollars to the County from (number)_____ leisure visitors and meeting delegates.

In addition, staff-generated media publicity valued at more than \$___ million dollars reached (number) ___ potential visitors (expressed in circulation/readership) who are now considering Greene County future visits.

Thus, on behalf of Greene County and its hundreds of business partners, the Tourism Office delivered a ___ to- 1 return on investment of marketing dollars expended.”

Recommendation: *This value statement should prove to be an important asset in clarifying the significant ongoing annual work benefits of the DMO and should be prominently featured in future reports and publications to its local constituency.*

8.4 Marketing Plan, Annual Reporting, Implementation Outlines

A new annual marketing plan is recommended to provide an industry standard model that flows from the mission and objectives of the Tourism Office, and ultimately delivers greater clarity of marketing purpose for staff and potential understanding and participation by its stakeholders.

The Marketing Plan Process

The following recommended plan format for the Greene County DMO is a successful model employed throughout the industry. It provides strategic direction against target markets, outlines detailed plans for success, forecasts specific results by individual and market department/customer segment effort, and delivers a step-by-step series of action steps or work tactics that are required for implementation.

Developing this marketing plan will further aid prioritization of the Tourism Office’s work by analyzing market opportunities collectively, and based on anticipated returns and related costs. Its clearly defined outline of marketing work should also assist in forging stronger industry stakeholder alliances over time, foster team spirit and strengthen common purpose throughout the office and its many constituents.



This plan should also reach for success across all tactical programs through the use of an integrated approach that provides synergism of effort. Under direction of the executive, it should be actually produced with full staff team input—as well as advisory support from key marketing constituents including hoteliers, regional entities, attractions operators, etc. After all, the final plan should belong to everyone on the staff and to the local community of tourism industry interests.

Goal Delivery

We subscribe to a new description of goals for the Greene County Tourism office as “SMART goals” that are: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**ealistic and **T**imely.

The goal setting process initially involves the initial benchmarking of first year results. Then, the following year’s marketing plan can contain specific performance based goals to be sought for the year ahead.

For effective goal forecasting and delivery, after the first year of benchmarking, individual staff should be encouraged to initially develop measurable goals from the bottom up, using the benchmarking report and other market data, competitive information and funding parameters as guides. This approach provides staff members the opportunity to envision their own targets and commit to delivery. Then a collaborative effort should be conducted with management for any goal adjustments in relationship to current market support, market conditions, etc.

Goals, however, should never be set in stone. Weak market conditions during the year may require an ongoing periodic realistic reassessment and the lowering of annual goals. And correspondingly, reaching an intended annual goal early--say by the third quarter--should call for a readjustment upward.

Other Staff Qualitative Goals

In addition to the recommended principal Tourism Office quantitative performance deliverables, staff qualitative goals can be incorporated annually as part of each employee’s job description and then listed in the marketing plan.

They can be included as requisites for staff completion for the year ahead and should be referred to as “personal performance objectives”. This is because unlike traditional quantifiable goals, these come under the category of qualitative task-oriented work. Examples may include: program development, increasing contact lists, completion of special training programs, etc.

Timelines: We suggest developing the Tourism Office’s future Annual Marketing Plan as close to the September-October time period as feasible to coincide with budget planning and appropriations. When completed, the new annual document could then be disseminated during the fall to community leaders and stakeholders.

Marketing Plan Outline

The new marketing plan should include:

- **An Executive Summary**, including a detailed review of the implementation process, would also contain plan recommendations with constituent groups.
- **The Tourism Office’s Destination Marketing process** — how new visitor business will be



attracted to the community through consolidated marketing and integration of partnership efforts.

- **Plan Highlights** — including major quantifiable goals to be achieved (after year one).
- **Introduction** — Including the marketing mission and the business process that chart the course for success.
- **Major Objectives** — The cascading objectives that encompass the comprehensive response to the mission statement should be included here as parameters of the plan development. All programming of the bureau should fit within the parameters of these seven objectives as previously outlined.

The Marketing Plan's principal building blocks then follow:

- **Marketplace Complications** — All the impediments or roadblocks to success, including *perceived* complications. These can be drawn from Stakeholder assessments, lost business information, prior SWOT Analyses and Visitor Market Studies.
- **Major Challenges** — Competitive destination hotel inventories, other marketing budgets, economic conditions, decline in the State tourism program budget, etc. that unfavorably impact Greene County's ability to create customer share of mind and market.
- **Marketplace Opportunities** — Where the new doors to success can be opened. These may be developed in partnership with key members and constituent groups. The SWOC assessment is also a good source.
- **Departmental/Customer Segment Reports and Productivity Goals** — These comprehensive sections are the core of the plan.
- **Each Department or Individual responsible should produce their brief business plan** — including:
 - Specific customer/market segment mission.
 - Relevant regional/national trends.
 - Current year productivity/activity achievements (following the first year's benchmarking effort).
 - Planned highlights for the new year.
 - Projected sales goals in firm numbers, comparing them to work of the current year (again, this can be accomplished following the first year's results, and may be reported in the separate Annual Report document following release of this marketing plan).
 - Each market segment should be specifically addressed, incorporating each specific set of marketplace complications.
 - Their competitive analysis.
 - Major strategies to be undertaken.
 - Primary target audiences to be reached.



- Specific tactics or work programs to accomplish the strategies.

An Outline for Listing Objectives and Supportive Work

To illustrate how objectives are listed and work categorized throughout, next is a sample model that addresses the first objective for the PR/Publicity program.

Objective 1: Influence leisure consumer awareness, interest and desire to visit Greene County as a destination of choice.

Strategy 1: Review planning efforts with the existing PR firm to determine potentials for integrated effort with the county, focusing principally on programs that reach the 200-mile radius market. Work with the agency to redefine this plan's parameters and program of annual work.

Strategy 2: Develop an introductory program for Greene County to regional media, (which may include a "road-show" approach for major writers in New York City with the Catskills and Hudson Valley regional efforts, individual calls to selective writers followed by a press cocktail function).

Strategy 3: Deliver an ongoing schedule of telemarketing calls from the Greene County staff media officer to travel media, designed to introduce the New Greene County to writers who have the best potential opportunity to reach the consumer market.

- **Targets**
 - **Travel editors**, writers of major dailies and weeklies in the primary 200-mile drive market.
 - **Freelance travel writers** who are members of the Society of American Travel Writers (and other sources).
- **Tactics**
 - Cold Call introduces the writer to Greene County.
 - Determines level of interest based on destination attributes.
 - Assesses materials to be provided to the writer.
 - Decides what lists their names should be added for future dissemination, if they should be re-called, and determines their potential for a site visit/group familiarization.
- **Schedule**
 - Deliver five completed calls daily on average.
- **Evaluation**
 - Use one of the recommended DMAI software programs for tracking.
 - If not currently available, log information on a recommended media inquiry form.



- **Notes**

- Supplement this sales call system with calls made on behalf of Greene County from the PR Firm.
- Work with the PR firm to identify and pitch other key media and develop PR opportunities.
- Modify this plan to incorporate their outreach program.

Strategy 4. Develop an ongoing series of media publicity releases for the leisure market that provides constant information to meet diverse customer needs.

- **Targets:**

- **Travel editors**, writers of major dailies and weeklies in the primary 200-mile drive market.
- **Selected Freelance travel writers**, evaluated for ongoing interest through Strategy 1.
- **Tactic 1:** Provide monthly “What’s happening in Greene County” release, a detailed listing of special events, festivals and celebrations for the month ahead. The release incorporates a photo of a major event highlighting the month— or if unavailable a generic photo— a short one to three paragraph introduction of the three biggest events, followed by the detailed listing of all events, contact information, etc. The objective is to either have the publication provide an individual article, or incorporate into a more detailed regional piece on area events (usually the case with the magazine market).
- **Tactic 2:** Deliver a quarterly event summary, “This spring in Greene County”, for state, regional and national magazines (regional editions). Complete this concept for presenting on a seasonal basis: four releases for spring, summer, winter, fall.
- **Tactic 3.** Utilize press releases to highlight other positive travel trends, appropriate financial news, festival information and other news in a timely, accurate and targeted fashion. First priority: Issue a major release about the positive results of infrastructure development throughout the county.
- **Tactic 4.** Publicize exciting new construction developments in Greene County for visitors:
 - Identify the key person in each company for new developments and expansions.
 - Maintain a current resource file on all new developments.
 - Pitch key consumer media outlets in target markets.
 - Provide ongoing updates to key media on destination news and developments through a series of press releases and postcards which showcase Greene County’s economic development as well as diverse “slices” of the product, from mountain skiing, golfing, beaches to dining, shopping, spas and culture and arts.
 - Work with trade media in relation to retail development and financial issues.



- **Tactic 5.** Support signature events that result in positioning Greene County as a major event host and travel destination by:
 - Including information about such events in the regularly scheduled press releases.
 - Include information, links and hot buttons on the Greene County Website as warranted.
 - Provide press release services, graphics support and media lists to organizations that wish to disseminate their own press releases.

Strategy 5. Produce an annual outreach program for writer visits.

- **Tactic 1.** Invite and Host writers on a one-on-one basis throughout the year.
- **Tactic 2.** Employ small-group familiarization programs.

Strategy 6. Develop and disseminate a new Greene County Press Kit to writers.

- **Tactic1:** Incorporates an exciting new Kit featuring: new cover photography, brief cover copy in magazine format about what’s inside. Contents should include:
 - Five principal photos of major appeals as determined through consumer research results.
 - Omnibus article about the tourism heritage, weaving in Rip Van Winkle and its new aspects of development, thumbnail sections on major appeals, etc.
 - Frequently asked questions sheet.
 - Major destination testimonials provided by major newspapers and magazines.

Targets. Used as follow-up to the media call program under strategy 1, following “Greene County” on the road programs, direct mailed or provided during a kickoff campaign to major writers (to be coordinated with PR firm)..

Strategy 7. Develop and implement an online press kit.

- **Tactics:**
 - Work with IT sources to determine an appropriate format.
 - Determine the content to include online.

Strategy 8: Develop and implement a new photo CD and new system for providing photos to editors.

- **Tactics:**
 - Identify photos that are needed to supplement or build a current photo inventory.
 - Work with a photographer to obtain new shots.



- Compile a list of photos to be included in a new CD and have it professionally produced.
- Finalize and implement the mechanism to provide an online photo gallery for photo editors to view and obtain current photos for publication.
- **A comprehensive marketing calendar**-- This component will offer numerous opportunities for stakeholder participation and other marketing alliances as is currently being delivered. It should list all major strategies/work programs to be achieved by each month, containing special sections for trade shows, sales forums and sales missions to be undertaken, media relations /advertising and direct mail placed, publications /collateral to be produced, etc.
- **Finally, a one-page line item budget is included at the end of the marketing plan.**

A new Greene County Tourism Office annual report-- *should be produced for community release during the February-March period for the preceding calendar year. Its purpose is to report results for the previous year, galvanize community interests in the industry and DMO, and celebrate the past year's success.*

Delivered in a narrative format, and supported by graphs or charts, its priority should be highlighting and presenting programming for the previous year, reviewing Tourism Office accomplishments for the immediate past year, along with what the new goals are for the year ahead, industry trends, funding, cooperative partnerships, etc. It should also include the specific performance results of regional marketing efforts that were produced on behalf of the county and their identified new goals going forward.

Celebrating Greene County Tourism and the Role of the DMO

An ongoing need identified by many stakeholders, as well as by county management, is that of consistently building good will, planning and support for the important work of the Tourism Office.

One strategy that helps advance this important objective is an annual public meeting of tourism stakeholders. If held in February, it could announce the accomplishments of the Tourism Office for the past year, which would appear in the Annual Report, while also unveiling the new Marketing Plan for the year ahead.

It could be highlighted by a prominent luncheon tourism industry speaker, the presentation of an annual award for "Tourism Industry Host of the Year", or individual table discussions about issues of stakeholder concern and need. This Annual Meeting will further help galvanize cooperative efforts and thus work to guarantee ongoing support for Greene Tourism and its mission.

Identifying Greene County Stakeholder and Alliance Partners

Through discussion with staff management, we estimate that the universe of principal county stakeholders for the Tourism Office currently numbers in excess of four hundred people.



This would include front line business owners from accommodations, attractions, outdoor recreation, restaurants, events, retail, arts, cultural and historical sites, chambers of commerce and others. The total also should include elected officials and public bodies along with major alliance partners, such as associations, government departments, independent agencies and media, all having intertwined agendas or collective interests.

Recommendation: *Staff should review and validate these numbers and names of stakeholders/alliance partners to receive future communications and information (such as newsletters, releases, marketing plan, annual report, as well as invitations (such as for Annual meetings, planning sessions, roundtables, etc.)*

The Implementation Outline Process for Market Planning

In our review of Tourism Office programs, we found limited use of written manuals, policies, procedures or operational documents that usually guide the development of marketing initiatives at other destination tourism offices: their specific plans for achievement, program objectives, action steps and anticipated performance results to be achieved.

Such documentation is important for planning, for initial project approval, providing sign-offs for all participants and in memorializing each project's highlights for future staff reference.

Recommendation: *Going forward, those responsible for project and management planning should produce detailed written implementation outlines of the work to be achieved. The simple template that follows provides a useful guide for this suggested requirement.*

8.5 Stakeholder Assessment

Fulfilling Stakeholder Needs: An Assessment Process

How do we best assure that there are ongoing strong and productive relationships with our business constituents as well as with other government and industry leaders? Confirming effective, ongoing relationships with all constituents is the objective of a recommended plan that follows. Indeed, this is always a high priority for DMO's to assure the fulfillment of its mission to so many constituents. The initial questions to be answered are: where do we stand with stakeholders? How are we fulfilling our required leadership role, and how can we continue to be more effective for the benefit of the county and its diverse tourism industry? From our personal experience, answers to these questions are rarely found in public meetings or through one-on-one discussion.

Instead, we recommend assessing the DMO's relationships with all categories of constituents—government, other associations and each special segment of business serving travelers. In this way, we can gain better understandings of our constituency. Then armed with new information, the organization can begin to address and correct any and all potential deficiencies and continue its productive course for the future.

Recommendation: *The diverse opinions of business partners and other constituents are best assessed through an industry standard Stakeholder Assessment Survey. The process usually involves production of a third party, internet based instrument that collects and analyzes the opinions of stakeholders to:*

- *Provide respondents with the opportunity to express their opinions freely.*



- *Provide Greene County Tourism with essential feedback and information for problem-solving and planning.*
- *Identify areas that need to be addressed.*
- *Ultimately improve the quality of service to the County.*
- *Results should be broken out: by major constituent groups, such as government, key supportive associations, and by various member segments, such as attractions, lodging, restaurant and retail, and other sub groups, such as the three regional areas of the county, as required.*

Once the detailed Stakeholder Assessment is completed and received, the staff should meet to prioritize the most important issues and concerns. Then, following management review and concurrence, it should prepare recommended steps to address and resolve each issue.

8.6 Visioning Process

A New Vision for Greene Tourism

Following the Stakeholder Assessment, a major question that should be posed to management, and perhaps major stakeholders, is: What will the Greene County Tourism Office resemble in the future—and what values must everyone embrace to get us there? The answer to this question will help frame a new vision for the organization.

In a future strategic planning exercise, participants should be asked to think about it this way: It is five years from today's date and we have created the county's optimum Destination Marketing Organization. How do we describe it? What values did we foster and embrace in order to create it? In other words, what do we value and what would we like to see improved?

We suspect that participants would describe the new DMO of the future this way:

- *Provides a marketing program effort that produces new and more business results for all.*
- *Operates with candor, transparency and best business principles.*
- *Has well trained, dedicated and skilled employees.*
- *Delivers performance and management excellence that match or exceed the standards of today's optimum DMO.*
- *Delivers exceptional customer service.*
- *Is the community's primary leader for tourism development, which operates with a committed staff, the counsel of an engaged Tourism Advisory Board, and strong partnership support of stakeholders and other constituents.*

If this was the new organization of the future as described by stakeholders, then the resulting new Vision Statement for the Greene County Tourism Office would be:

The Greene County Tourism Office strives to achieve the greatest performance success results for the entire community through tourism marketing sales and service excellence for our clients and customers...

Operating with optimism, enthusiasm, candor and effective communications and providing ongoing positive business partnerships that inspire, involve and support our entire county.



Recommendation: *This new Visioning Process should be initiated by management at an appropriate time, then memorialized in appropriate publications such as the marketing plan, annual report, newsletter communications, and on the website.*

8.7 Organization, Advisory Support, Training and Accreditation

DMO Organizational Structures: What Works Best for Greene County?

Throughout the tourism industry, hundreds of Destination Marketing Organizations serve their communities as coordinating entities, bringing together diverse stakeholders—from government to trade and civic associations and individual businesses—to market and attract visitors to their areas.

The DMO is certainly an unusual business model in that it primarily functions as a business broker between business and the consumer, usually in the role of an independent non-profit agency, fueled by government public funding (principally through the hotel room tax) and with the mission of producing incremental economic impacts for local visitor businesses and the host community, through non-resident visitor receipts, resulting tax revenue and local jobs generated or sustained by this spending.

There are three basic DMO structures today—and there are also several variations on all three:

- The Tourism office, or DMO, as a county or city government department, or division.
- The DMO as a chamber division, or operating as the primary Chamber function.
- The DMO as an independent organization.

Throughout the industry, the preferred DMO operating models today are:

501 c 6 non-profits	55.6%
City Agency	7.1%
County Agency	4.0%
Authority	6.2%
Chamber/Div. of Chamber	5.3%
State/Provincial agency	1.8%
501 c3	7.6%
Non-Profit Member Association	5.8%
Other	6.7%

(Source: DMAI)

In the past fifty years, the local DMO model has transitioned from a government agency to a preferred non-profit model because of many reasons, including: its business orientation requirements, the need to quickly respond to changing market conditions, the requirement to provide travel and entertainment expenditures to motivate customer decision-making, and the ability to provide incentive compensation to its sales staff for performance deliverables, just to name a few reasons.



The chamber model also found itself in growing disfavor during this period, as the impacts of travel on community economies continued to increase, requiring specific marketing skills more associated with stand alone CVB's rather than the generic Chamber of Commerce organization.

As more local DMO's are formed in the future, it is anticipated that the non-profit model will continue to be the preferred model of choice.

The DMO as a Local Municipal Department

Some of the advantages for structuring the Tourism DMO or CVB as part of the city or county government include:

- Overhead costs (such as legal services, accounting services, and more) are covered by government.
- Employees share in the municipal government's insurance and benefit plans.
- The DMO is covered under the government's liability coverage.
- There is closer contact with other government departments that may share responsibilities for conducting business—parks, recreation, museum, police, fire, senior management, etc.
- There is closer contact with elected municipal officials.
- The Tourism Office is a high-profile organization in a community, generating positive attention to and about area attractions, events and activities.

Some disadvantages for structuring the DMO as part of municipal government include:

- The DMO must adhere to governmental bidding and purchasing requirements.
- Some bureaucratic systems may slow down the DMO's ability to respond to marketing changes and customer needs in an industry that is growing faster than most other industries.
- DMO's, because of their nature and purpose, are not like most other government agencies and can be perceived as extravagant or unnecessary.
- Tourism DMO programs are usually directed to target markets outside the community and are not always viewed as servicing the local citizenry.

The DMO as an Independent Organization

Some advantages for a separate, independent organization include:

- It allows for a clear focus on the business of tourism and tourism marketing.
- Independence allows for flexibility in business promotion and development than operating within a government structure with its inherent rules and regulations.
- The approach to marketing a destination for tourism may be quite different in theme and approach than marketing for economic development with a chamber of commerce of government structure.
- Tourism and meetings development is one of the fastest fields of business growth; therefore, this field deserves a specialized focus.

Opponents of stand-alone independent DMO's cite the following arguments:

- Tourism is economic development and, therefore, should be part of the overall economic development program.



- There should be a single leadership structure, rather than several different boards or organizations.
- Being part of government or a chamber allow for easier coordination with needed alliance partners.
- Marketing of destinations should have a consistent theme.

What is the Optimum Operational Model for Greene County?

There is no single answer or particular structure that will work best for all communities, because all destinations have great differences; particularly their priority of focus on local tourism as an industry, along with changing needs to fit evolving circumstances and community interests.

There are also numerous factors to be evaluated in providing this answer for Greene County.

First, there are issues of practicality in considering an independent organization when the tourism budget is limited and there is operational support provided by government that maximizes marketing resources.

In the final analysis, the most important consideration is whether the selected structure produces results for the county—and we view as extremely productive the recent merger of Tourism with Economic Development and Planning. Major highlights include:

- The recent Greene County Tourism Analysis, which was produced as a part of Economic Development's comprehensive plan, gave strong credence for the tourism industry as a significant contributor to the county's economy.
- The Grant Development work of the Department is a strong catalyst for new tourism and an incentive for future marketing.
- The strong ongoing quantification of tourism's economic sector contributions continues to build understanding and support for the marketing function.
- Planning's current Tourism Master Plan has produced this Blueprint to deliver long term performance results for the Tourism Office.

Recommendation: *In summary, we find this current integrated effort and operational structure to be quite supportive in depth of strategic thinking, leadership and assuring an even more productive future for Greene County's tourism industry and its positive impacts for all residents. We believe future developments will likely offer evolving new insights for organizational considerations in Greene County, with an abiding need to continue strengthening the public/private role of the DMO.*

For example, one of every ten DMO's are now funded by a dedicated hotel tax rather than through general fund appropriations. This allows the DMO to reinvest visitor taxes to expand its performance results in producing new visitor receipts and tax revenue to the county. As the DMO mission and results are expanded, the trend is transition to a more independent organization, with these requirements:

- A standard marketing contract, between the government and the DMO, to assure performance.
- Appointment by government, including elected officials, on a formalized board that establishes DMO policies, operational and management requirements and resulting performance.



DMO Name Designation Considerations for Greene County

“Greene Tourism” is the current name advanced for the general program of the Greene County Tourism Office that is now a part of Greene County’s Economic Development program.

We think a discussion would be helpful to review and consider other name designations that may give a heightened appropriate importance to the important mission of the Office.

For background, today’s majority of destination marketing organizations are known as convention and visitor bureaus or CVB’s. For those DMO’s without convention centers, they are identified as visitor bureaus. The traditional term “bureau” is considered old fashioned by many and is continuing to lose favor with many in the industry. A number are replacing the CVB designation with a whole smorgasbord of new designations: “Tourism Vancouver”, “LA, INC.”, “New York and Company”, “Positively Cleveland” and “Visit Denver”, just to name a few. However, in each of these particular cases, the DMO is a non-profit independent agency that operates through a public-private partnership that is usually funded primarily by dedicated hotel tax and an operating contract with its local government.

Today’s usage of the term “Tourism Promotion” Association, department or office is also an outmoded naming model, because the tactic of promotion is just one of many components of tourism marketing, as are advertising, PR, sales, collateral development, website, etc. “Marketing”, therefore, is the best descriptor.

Recommendation: *In the case of Greene Tourism, we suggest the name accorded to the DMO, as a subordinate agency of Economic Development, Tourism and Planning, should be Greene Tourism-- or Greene County Tourism Marketing Division. In our opinion, calling it an “Office” minimizes its importance to the county and the industry constituents it serves. In addition, “Greene Tourism” should solely relate to the organization—and not be construed to serve as a consumer identification for the visitor product it represents.*

Building Industry Support through a Greene County Tourism Advisory Board Throughout the DMO industry, oversight and advisory boards are the norm rather than the exception.

While the formal board/executive committee governance model is principally established for the non-profit DMO, the advisory board or committee model is found throughout county, city and state tourism program operations.

Tourism Advisory Boards fulfill important responsibilities: providing important industry counsel on development efforts, serving in a supportive role for the DMO, bringing special insights to the tourism management and market planning processes, and helping assure transparency for the organization.

Board Size, Meeting Schedules, Special Expertise Throughout the industry, the average size of a formalized DMO board that matches the funding level of Greene Tourism is twelve voting members and two non-voting members. This is a very manageable size, although we would instead recommend an odd total number of eleven voting members, plus two non-voting ex-officio members representing Tourism Office and Planning Office senior management. Three-four year limited terms are recommended to rotate members.



Quarterly meetings are recommended. Because of the County's large size, an option to having a central meeting location would be rotational meetings around the county where brief introductory presentations could be made by each meeting site host.

Board members are usually chosen for their special expertise and work in major representative segments of the tourism industry. We concur, and recommend the following member slots by categories:

- County Legislators-2
- Chamber of commerce-1
- Resort representatives-1
- Family resorts-1
- Outdoor attraction/recreation/agri-forest-1
- Golf-1
- Culture and arts-1
- Heritage/Museums-1
- Restaurants-1
- Retail-1
- Ex officio: Tourism Office and Planning/Economic Dev.-2

Recommendation: *the Greene County Tourism Advisory Board should be established by the Greene County Legislature, their parameters of Advisory Board responsibility developed, and key leaders invited and appointed to serve.*

Educational Training Needs

Today the execution of best business practices for destination management and marketing requires the enhancement of the Greene Tourism staff's core competencies. This is best accomplished by attending ongoing educational and destination marketing sessions that provide:

- The latest business techniques for program and management implementation, execution and evaluation.
- Case histories of other successful destination programs.
- Current suppliers of marketing services that can help optimize local programs.

This expertise for DMO development is not available through state or regional associations, or even with the other trade associations that offer general tracks in marketing. Instead, this educational enrichment for destination marketing is best delivered for the Tourism Office through the professional association of destination marketing organizations. Its membership comprises the top 500 destination industry organizations, including the most successful local tourism offices in the industry—and many that parallel the size and scope of the Greene County program. The opportunity for networking among friendly competitors is a significant plus.

Recommendation: *Greene County Tourism should become a member of the Destination Marketing Association International, which offers strong educational tracks at the annual convention, annual staff marketing convocation and ongoing member "shirtsleeve sessions." Educational materials can then be brought back to the staff for their review, appropriate*



endorsement and usage. In addition, ongoing resource materials and training guides are produced and made available throughout the year by DMAI to further support member marketing and management needs. Annual dues, \$1,100.

Assuring DMO Industry Standards through Professional Accreditation To assure that Greene County continues to match industry management and marketing program standards for the DMO Industry, we recommend that it later apply for the new accreditation program recently introduced by DMAI. Known as the Destination Marketing Accreditation Program, DMAP has now accredited a total of about 100 DMO's out of about 1,500.

The DMO accreditation includes 54 mandatory standards and 33 voluntary standards and we have provided an outline of them to management. The initial cost of the accreditation program is \$1,000 for members, \$2,000 for non DMAI members. A list of frequently asked questions and other detailed information regarding implementation are available from www.destinationmarketing.org.

8.8 Inventory of Major Recommendations, Strategic Planning Approach

More than fifty major recommendations are offered in this Blueprint, and we have grouped the principal ones below. As initial planning steps, we suggest that:

- **This Blueprint should be shared with the Tourism Office Staff**, along with the book, "Fundamentals of Destination Management and Marketing." Doing so will provide them with a new overview of the industry, the Office's significant importance and the roles that each of them fulfills.
- **Next, tourism office staff management should provide its Administration with a prioritized list of suggested recommendations**, including attendant costs and timelines for implementation.
- **As new initiatives and recommendations are agreed upon**, the tourism office should consistently use the creative brief and implementation outline processes, with sign-off from senior management.
- **All future implementation meetings with senior management** should follow a "3 P Reporting Format", reviewing: 1. Future Plans 2. The Progress of those plans 3. Any Problems or impediments that need to be addressed while offering recommendations for resolution.

Regarding Long-Range Funding

While this Blueprint primarily deals with marketing performance, the parallel requirement for funding to support the County's efforts is comprehensively addressed in a special companion report entitled, "Greene County Tourism Performance Plan: delivering long term economic success for the County."

Addressing Stakeholder Input for Action

Another strategic planning need is to finally address the numerous ongoing stakeholder recommendations that have been made by contributors to this Blueprint and in other meetings over the past two years. When feasible, the staff should review and prioritize these issues for management and private sector discussion, estimating the resources needed to address positive recommendations and ameliorate challenges and impediments to success.



Major recommendations listed throughout this Blueprint include:

MARKET AND MARKETING ASSESSMENT

The Tourism Office should consistently monitor and report updated economic analyses from the state to its constituents and stakeholders. Pending available data going forward, they should then provide their own analysis of Greene County visitor expenditures as market- share of: a) state totals, b) the Catskills and Hudson Valley regions.

An ongoing hotel tracking study should be developed to monitor trends in county and business tourism indicators.

A New Visitor Market Study is a very important and effective market planning resource for the Tourism Office as well as county tourism stakeholders and business partners.

The Tour Operator Market should be assessed to plan for development of this emerging business opportunity.

BRAND DEVELOPMENT

The feasibility of developing the “Greene Tourism” Signage Program should be explored for potential initiation.

The full scope of brand positioning recommendations should be explored for potential adoption.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Regional Marketing organizations, including the Catskills and Hudson Valley programs should be asked to provide annual specific quantifiable performance deliverables for Greene County.

“Hub and Spoke tourism” should be initiated pending principal stakeholder agreement.

TACTICAL AND STRATEGIC MARKETING

The full range of Tourism Office marketing recommendations should be prioritized for review and potential implementation. They include: PR and publicity development programming, the shift from traditional advertising to internet advertising, meeting and conference web support, Stakeholder Partnership development, roundtables and task forces for new programs, a new visitor center training program, a professional third-party Stakeholder assessment and annual marketing support for the website.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Implement:

- The new Greene County performance reporting program.
- New mission and objectives.
- New goal setting process.
- The new annual report format.
- The annual marketing plan format.
- Public annual meeting.

A Blueprint of Recommendations for Greene County Tourism



- New vision statement.

As part of the annual marketing plan, programs of the supportive regional marketing organizations should be analyzed for integration.

Stakeholder relations should be further assessed and then enhanced with an industry-standard Stakeholder Assessment Survey conducted by Greene Tourism--along with resulting follow-up strategies that seek to gain additional stakeholder support.

A new Greene Tourism Advisory Board should be developed to support the efforts of the agency.

To enhance staff education and expertise, the tourism office should apply for membership and professional accreditation from the Destination Marketing Association International.