

Rural Tourism Marketing Program
Funding Proposal
2022

Submitted by

McKenzie River Chamber of Commerce

Submitted to

Jenna Cusimano
Community and Economic Development
Lane County Public Service Building
125 East Eighth Avenue
Eugene, Oregon 97401

November 12, 2021

Overview

McKenzie River Chamber of Commerce will apply and distribute RTMP funds for the McKenzie River to promote the selling, packaging, and advertising of the McKenzie River focusing on objectives and criteria to maximize the following:

1. Attraction of visitors to the McKenzie River
2. Length of stay by visitors
3. County-wide visitation
4. Return visits to the McKenzie River and surrounding communities

The McKenzie River Chamber of Commerce will facilitate proposal ideas to encourage growth in overnight lodging and visitors to the McKenzie River area from Cedar Flat to Belknap Hot Springs.

RTMP Funding Request

Goal: To promote increased tourism and overnight stays in the McKenzie River area.

Proposed Projects

Travel Lane County Visitor Guide	\$4,520.00
Wayfinding Implementation	8,200.00
Co-ordinate & Promote McKenzie Events	6,500.00
McKenzie River Discovery Center Support	5,000.00
Shoulder Season Marketing	3,900.00
Local Ads, PR & On-line Marketing	2,050.00
MRCC Website Improvement	2,952.00
Frontline Training	500.00
Opportunity Fund	2,000.00
Total Expense	\$35,622.00

McKenzie River Chamber of Commerce Managed Projects

Applicant: McKenzie River Chamber of Commerce

PO Box 297, Walterville, OR 97489

Contact: Carol Tannenbaum

Signature _____

Date: November 12, 2021

1. Describe the projects and activities included in the plan. Who will conduct these activities and complete the projects? Are there any contingencies on readiness to proceed? If this is an ongoing project or marketing effort, please describe how it will be maintained / funded in the future.

A. Advertising - Overview

- a. Travel Lane County Visitor Guide
- b. Wayfinding Plan Implementation
- c. Co-ordinate & Promote McKenzie Events
- d. McKenzie River Discovery Center Support
- e. Shoulder Season Marketing
- f. Local Ads, PR Materials & Online Marketing
- g. MRCC Website Improvement
- h. Frontline Training
- i. Opportunity Fund

The Tourism Committee of the McKenzie River Chamber of Commerce (MRCC/TC) will direct and oversee the completion of the proposed projects. The MRCC/TC is composed mostly of Chamber members who own tourism related businesses. The Chamber continues to improve upon its organization, team building, and community outreach. New members are being added and are participating in the goals of the Chamber. These new members bring many new talents and experience to the Chamber.

In the past, the Chamber has received US Forest Service funding to revitalize the Old McKenzie Fish Hatchery at Leaburg Lake. The Chamber has also been awarded contracts for McKenzie Marketing Plans as well as Special Projects Tourism Grants and Travel Oregon Grants.

The Chamber has been successful in disseminating information to visitors with two 24/7 kiosks, located at the Walterville Shopping Center and the Old McKenzie Fish Hatchery, and a Chamber annex at Meyer's General Store. These displays also provide space for the publications of other Chambers of rural Lane County in exchange for displaying our information in their locations.

The proposed projects should proceed with no delay and therefore no contingencies are set in place. All activities will continue through December of 2021

2. In what specific way do projects support Lane County's Rural Tourism Marketing Program mission and project criteria?

Providing information about the history, events, attractions, and activities available in the McKenzie area will influence people to come, return, and extend planned stays in the McKenzie River area. Utilization of print and electronic media will make the advertising message more available.

Advertising will focus on Oregon, Washington, and Northern California by placing the Chamber's message regarding the McKenzie River in publications and electronic media that reach out to residents of these target markets. Education in the local market to the events, attractions, and activities available in the McKenzie River will increase 'mini-vacations' during peak and off seasons from the local area as well.

We work to expand the knowledge in the local area of McKenzie River area offerings through print, online, and promotional items the Chamber can increase the appeal of both day trips and overnight stays.

The McKenzie River Chamber of Commerce will continue its existing cooperative arrangements with tourism related organizations for providing space for the publications of other Chambers. It is our plan to partner with Oakridge and Sisters to build cooperation and reinforce branding among the Chambers.

A. All the following RTMP criteria are included in this proposal:

1. Increase transient room tax revenues countywide, as measured by increasing overall revenues from room tax from visitor stays, and by increasing room tax revenues during the tourism 'shoulder season' in the fall/early spring months.
2. Increase the number of visits and the amount of time spent by visitors in *rural* Lane County by improving the attractiveness of rural communities. The variety of such activities may include: expanded attractions, beautification, and property enhancement projects on public property.
3. Focus general marketing on visitors from surrounding states and 'peak season' marketing to attract visitors from Oregon.
4. Continue the development of regional marketing with local, State, and private agencies. This includes increased involvement of the rural tourism organization in the existing network.
5. Monitor potential targets in western Canada and other international markets, maintaining flexibility for action.
6. Develop, advertise, and package rural Lane County attractions and group tour business that encourage overnight stays and extended visits by: (a.) Developing group travel opportunities; i.e. recreational vehicle, bicycle, parks, and campground activities, and (b.) Fostering coordination between Travel Lane County and rural tourism organizations to develop and package group travel tours, particularly as an extension of metro convention gatherings. (c.) Providing incentives for return visits; i.e. discount on room rate for next year, mail schedule of activities for next year, mail post card with thank you and welcome note.
7. Assist with rural area tourism staffing needs, and provide training on hospitality and service excellence. The objective is to maintain a reputation for excellence in hospitality and service.

3. What are your criteria for success in this project? How will you evaluate the effectiveness and measure the success of your project? In what measurable way will you be able to demonstrate that your project is designed to meet the tourism needs of your rural community? Please list at least one specific outcome you expect for each project activity.

- A. **Travel Lane County Visitor Guide:** The MRCC has traditionally partnered with Travel Lane County to support a shared McKenzie River business ad in the annual Travel Lane County Visitor Guide. Due to the COVID-19 influence on TLC's 2021 printed guide plans, the MRCC redirected the usual funding to the resiliency and recovery of our fire-damaged region in 2021. Much recovery work has occurred in 2021 and supporting the viability of tourism facing businesses is paramount at this time for the area's continued recovery. Local businesses sign up to be a part of the advertisement which will feature local events and natural attractions that will draw visitors. Participation generates great exposure for the area where the guide is distributed, and participation helps to support TLC's work. Success will be measured by visitor's reference to the guide during their visit and feedback at tourist related businesses. Supports Criterion 4.

- B. **Wayfinding Plan Implementation:** In 2019 the Chamber partnered with Travel Lane County to develop a McKenzie Wayfinding Plan. The Plan was completed in July 2019 and implementation began in late 2019 with the receipt of a \$20,000 Grant from the Willamette Valley Visitor Association to supplement the RTMP funding to design and establish prominent signs for the western and eastern entrances to the area. The design work is now complete with cost estimates for sign building and permitting approval work clearly defined. Permission to erect the signs on both ends of the corridor is in hand as well. We are seeking construction funds through Grants. In addition, we will work to improve signage for events, attractions, trails, and tourism businesses with a focus on incorporating the region's cultural heritage in any new signage. Coordination with the opening of the new McKenzie River Scenic Byway is central to the effort. Criterion 2 is supported by this effort.
- C. **Coordinate & Support McKenzie Events:** This project supports Criteria 1, 2, 3, and 6. Promotion of the area's six McKenzie Events (Wooden Boat Show, Lavender Festival, July Fireworks, Chainsaw & Arts Festival, Walterville Fair & Waddle, and Christmas Bazaar) to a larger area will provide for greater visibility of these events to potential visitors coming from outside of the McKenzie River corridor. Traditionally these events start in April and continue into December and occur in locales along the corridor from Walterville to Rainbow. Recent COVID-19 protocols have required significant modifications to the events. In 2020 the Lavender Festival was the only event to occur. The Walterville Fair & Waddle and the McKenzie Christmas Bazaar were both canceled because of the Holiday Farm wildfire. All but the Wooden Boat Festival returned in some form in 2021. We are optimistic that all of the events will return in full in 2022. Our events calendar will be available to visitors at each event to encourage return visits to our river valley. A major goal is to create successful events that will be repeated regularly bringing in multiday overnight lodging. A special visitor survey was developed and applied in 2018 and continued in 2019 providing new tourist information to support our planning. More advanced marketing through electronic media is an important aspect of the advertising effort. The McKenzie Tourism outcomes for all the promotions include increased nightly stays at local lodges, generating business at local restaurants and stores and providing high quality activities for lodging guests.
- D. **McKenzie River Discovery Center Support:** The McKenzie River Chamber continues to support work to develop the McKenzie River Discovery Center as a state-of-the-art destination attraction offering transformational experiences through educational displays of historic artifacts, interactive exhibits, interpretive nature trails and more focused on three central themes: Hydrology/Geology, Fish and Cultural History. Evolving content will be developed via traditional displays as well as digital interactive technology making the Center a one-of-a-kind attraction in Oregon and a gateway to the McKenzie River, a place where families want to return year after year. Studies project the facility will attract approximately 50,000 visitors annually contributing as much as \$7M to the local economy when complete in 2024. The McKenzie Chamber's financial contribution in 2022 supports historical restoration of the existing infrastructure as well as site development and planning to support the \$18.5M capital campaign to build the Discovery Center of which \$2M is secured. Supports Criteria 2.
- E. **Shoulder Season Marketing Campaign:** The Chamber is committed to bolstering the shoulder season as it continues working towards building a year-round tourism economy. In preparation for these efforts, the tourism committee will convene a special meeting with lodging and activity businesses that will be open during the shoulder season. A plan will be built in a phased approach that allows us to be respectful of the community and responsive to changing phases of reopening. Emphasis will be placed on retaining nightly stays at local lodges, supporting business opportunities at local restaurants and stores, and promoting high quality activities for lodging guests. Criteria 1, 3, 4, 6 and 7 are supported by this project.

- F. **Local Ads, PR & On-line Marketing Initiative:** Criteria 1, 3 and 4 are supported by this effort. In 2016 the Chamber established an on-line marketing presence. We make weekly posts across multiple social media platforms to promote the McKenzie area. Efforts in 2018 and 2019 successfully promoted the McKenzie Events and were proposed for 2020. COVID-19 changed to a “Stay Safe Message”. We encourage visitors to experience the McKenzie area and learn about all the outdoor recreational opportunities available to visitors. We will continue promoting mountain biking. Promotions will buy online advertising on websites that engage mountain bikers as well as those sites that target other outdoor recreational activities. We will integrate social media feeds into the website where possible. One measure of success will be to survey McKenzie River visitors about their experience and encourage them to write trip reviews.
- G. **MRCC Website Improvement:** Criteria 1, 2 and 6 are supported by this effort. A few years ago, the McKenzie Chamber of Commerce created a new website that successfully presents the McKenzie River to the traveling public as well as serving Chamber membership communication. It has links to both the Travel Lane County and Travel Oregon visitor platforms. New improvements will be added to refresh the website so that it meets the needs of the recovering area businesses. This project will keep the content of the website continually fresh. The more information we can provide travelers via the web, the better we serve and support businesses in the McKenzie River area.
- H. **Frontline Training:** Frontline staff, at businesses throughout the region, plays an important role in the recovery of the community. They have opportunities to improve the guest experience ultimately benefiting the guest, local economy, and our public assets. The Chamber will work with Travel Lane County to develop tools and an educational program to increase their local product knowledge, train them in Take Care Out There messaging and support the customer service training conducted by their employers. This effort supports Criteria 7.
- I. **Opportunity Fund:** The Chamber plans to set aside modest undedicated resources that can be applied quickly to respond to the coming of Oregon22 or other unanticipated opportunities to promote the area. Criteria 3 is supported by this effort.

4. Include a budget for your project. Include all resources and expenditures associated with the project.

Advertising Budget

Income	Cash	In-Kind
Tourism Marketing Funds	\$35,622.00	
Expenses:		
Travel Lane County Visitors Guide	4,520.00	
Wayfinding Plan Implementation	8,200.00	
Co-ordinate & Promote McKenzie Events	6,500.00	
Support McKenzie River Discovery Center	5,000.00	
Shoulder season Marketing Campaign	3,900.00	
Local Ads, PR & On-Line Marketing Initiative	2,050.00	1,000.00
MRCC Website Improvement	2,952.00	1,000.00
Frontline Training	500.00	500.00
Opportunity Fund	2,000.00	
Total Expenses	\$35,622.00	

Approval Page

President *Nadine Scott* 11-05-2021 9:25 AM PDT

Vice-President *Ken Engelman* 11-05-2021 9:50 AM PDT

Secretary *Judy Casad* 11-05-2021 10:18 AM PDT

Treasurer *Carol Tannenbaum* 11-05-2021 11:06 AM PDT

Board Members:

Christopher LaVoie 11-05-2021 3:50 PM PDT

Melanie Stanley 11-05-2021 9:29 AM PDT

Date Signed _____