

Fremont County Tourism Council 2014 Recap Report

EDA Grant / Regional Marketing Campaign

In 2015, the FCTC thoughtfully and successfully invested a \$150,000 EDC grant for economic/tourism recovery to the benefit of the region. The grant was made to the City of Cañon City, and administered by the FCTC. Vistaworks, the FCTC and the City worked cooperatively to produce an effective marketing plan that used the EDA funds in an efficient manner. Funding for these campaigns ended 8/31/2014. A full assessment of the grant's impact on tourism, and the local economy in general is available for review. Here are some highlights.

- Nearly 71% of guests heard of the Royal Gorge Region through some type of online/digital activity. The effectiveness of online & digital advertising was not unexpected, and continues to be a primary area for investing the tourism marketing fund.
- With social media or email campaigns alone, the FCTC was able to reach out to 4.8 million people. (Nearly the population of the State of Colorado.)
 - Through EDA campaign efforts 1,358,059 total people were reached through Facebook and more than 3,478,000 emails were sent.
- A survey and analysis examining the effectiveness of investing the EDA grant indicated an economic benefit to the region of \$11,732,640.
 - That represents a return on investment (ROI) of \$78 for every \$1 spent on marketing and advertising. This result is reinforced by tourism studies done elsewhere, including a recent one conducted by the Colorado Tourism office for the period July 2013 – July 2014, that shows for every \$1 spent on marketing and advertising, \$344 was spent in the state by travelers & tourists. For the full report, follow this link:

<http://www.colorado.com/news/colorado-tourism-office-reports-all-time-records-visitation-and-visitor-spending>

Informed business owners and the public recognize the great return on investment represented by wise, effective spending on destination marketing & tourism promotion. While surveying area businesses on the effectiveness of the EDA campaign, the FCTC also learned that 93.75% of survey respondents would support indefinitely extending the collection of the Fremont County Lodging Tax (which sunsets 12/31/16). Moreover, there was unanimous support for raising the lodging tax, though as yet, no mechanism for doing so has been studied.

Royal Gorge Vacation Guide

100,000 Royal Gorge Region Visitor's Guides were published. All publication and printing costs were defrayed by advertising revenue. Of those, 8,033 were distributed through on-request, direct fulfillment. The remainder were distributed through arrangements with the Cañon City Chamber of Commerce, Colorado Activity Centers in Fremont County and their corridor routes, and Certified Distribution, 36,000 copies went to state and regional brochure and magazine

racks. By the end of 2014, only a few hundred remained, and some of those were distributed in early 2015.

Facebook

Total PAGE Likes 12,000

Total Reach (Unique Users): 9,383,126 people

In the fall, the FCTC entered into an agreement with the Colorado Tourism Office (CTO) to participate in a Facebook co-op, under which our investment in advertising is matched dollar-for-dollar, up to \$2000; with the potential to repeat campaign under the same agreement.

RoyalGorgeTravel.com Website

Unique visitors: 80,000

Page views: 311,624

Cañon City Chamber of Commerce

The Chamber reported making over 13,000 contacts with people seeking activity, destination attraction and area information related to tourism. Breakdown:

2,373 telephone calls

1,063 walk-in inquiries

433 email inquiries

10,382 guest contacts at the Veteran's Park tourist cabin

Financial Results

The budgeted state remittance of \$116,000 was exceeded by \$34,986 to total \$150,986 as of the most recent year-end reports. The budgeted expenses of \$118,100 were exceeded as well by \$38,778 and amounted to \$156,878. This difference takes into account a \$25,000 grant awarded for the second consecutive year from the Colorado Tourism Office for use in marketing the region, which was expended but not originally budgeted.

The largest expenses incurred were for the Royal Gorge Region Visitor Guide distribution, fulfillment, internet marketing, and management services. The council awarded \$6,750 in grants for community events. Although exceeding originally budgeted amounts, expenses coincided with revenues generated and resulted in a favorable variance of \$21,208.

Chairman Larry Oddo, and Treasurer Steve Kaverman were also successful in gaining a pledge from the City of Cañon City to support Council marketing and advertising efforts in the current year with \$25,000 in funding.

Royal Gorge Bridge and Park

The Royal Gorge Bridge and Park opened in March 2014 on weekends only, (weather and construction permitting), for guided tours through the first part of August, when it reopened on a daily basis. This was due, in large part, to prompting from tourism partners in the region who consistently heard from visitors that closure of the Bridge and Park created a perception that the entire region was closed, or was operating under restrictions.

Other Business

FCTC worked cooperatively throughout 2014 with the Fremont County Heritage Commission

Continued contractual agreements with Vista Works for management services, as webmaster and media buyer. Vista Works was instrumental in administering and investing the EDA Grant, and in reporting the impact of those investments at the conclusion of the campaign.

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Continued successful relationship with Colorado Activity Centers for production, publication and distribution of the Royal Gorge Visitor's Guide.

In November, Stickman Simple, under contract with the FCTC to provide tourism relations services opted not to renew their agreement. Rather than seek another vendor and incur the related expense, the council decided to participate in industry events, conference and meetings themselves.

During the course of the year, several positions on the FCTC turned over. Members Lloyd Harwood, Charlette Henager and Micah Cantley left the Council. John Miller, Steve Kaverman and Larry Hill were appointed. Larry Oddo's final FCTC meeting was December 2014. Heidi Anderson, appointed in December, joined the Council in January 2015.