

Fremont County Tourism Council 2016 Destination Marketing Report

Record Lodging Tax Collection

The budgeted state remittance of \$145,000 was exceeded by \$58,771 to total \$203,771. This is an increase of \$13,474 over 2015. So, for a second consecutive year, lodging tax revenue hit a new high.

Strong Financials

Additional revenue totaled \$108,771 (\$58,771 additional tax revenue, \$25,000 from the CTO, \$25,000 from the City). After accounting for expenses, we ended the year with a fund balance of \$129,215.50. The positive end-of-year balance has enabled the FCTC to proceed with the process of updating and redesigning the website, and development of a new logo; completion of both is expected soon.

CTO Grant Recipient

On behalf of the region, VistaWorks compiled and submitted an application for the Colorado Tourism Office grant in 2016. For the **3rd consecutive year**, the FCTC was successful in obtaining a \$25,000 grant, which we matched with \$25,000 from the FCTC budget. This money is invaluable and was used for the following:

- VisitCOS.com Email Broadcasts
- VisitCOS.com Leads Program
- Social Media Promotion
- Search Engine Advertising
- Colorado.com Email Broadcasts
- Colorado.com Web and Print Listings
- Colorado.com Leads Program
- Colorado.com Sponsored Content Article
- Royal Gorge Region Visitor's Guide Fulfillment
- Royal Gorge Region Heritage Tour Development
- Royal Gorge Region Graphic Design

Economic Benefits

Research conducted for the Colorado Tourism Office by Dean Runyon Associates reported the latest figures on the economic benefit of tourism to Fremont County.

- Travel spending - \$64.2 million (+ 4.5)
- Earnings - \$16.3 million (+2.7)
- 855 tourism-related jobs (+99)
- Local taxes - \$1.7 million (+.3)
- State taxes \$1.9 million (+.2)

Increases over 2015 shown in parentheses. Complete Report: [Colorado Travel Impacts](#)

Royal Gorge Vacation Guide

2016 production was 120,000 copies. Magazines were distributed to tourist information racks and Colorado’s ten visitor centers under contract with Certified Folder Display Service, Inc., with additional copies distributed through our publisher’s network, local sites and the Chamber of Commerce.

Colorado Activity Centers mailed 9,675 copies of the Royal Gorge Vacation Guide. \$25,417

was invested in postage, handling and supplies, or \$2.63 per guide. These represent fulfillment of direct requests reaching us through our website, and from leads obtained through the Colorado Tourism Office and Colorado Springs Convention & Visitor’s Bureau.

Overall in 2016, the FCTC budget allowed \$26,680 for distribution of 110,000 guides, at an average cost of \$0.24/guide. **Research shows that 62% of travelers use guides while on vacation as a decision-making tool. 82% of travelers using guides plan to visit attractions highlighted in the guides.**

ZIP Code Visitor Analysis

In late 2016, with the cooperation of Echo Canyon River Expeditions, Raft Masters, and the Royal Gorge Bridge & Park, Colorado Activity Centers conducted an analysis of visitor ZIP Code data. Results, shown in the spreadsheet below, were useful in refining our fulfillment strategy for 2017. Slightly more than 77% of our visitors, according to this study, originate in just 12 states.

	Private Visitors	2016		Bridge Visitors	2016 % tkts		Visitors	2016	Req's	Totals	Top 11 Visitors	Totals	
1	CO	1483	1	CO	40.83%	1	CO	TX	2722	9,993	CO	1232	
2	TX	1315	2	TX	12.12%	2	TX	MO	1478		TX	2722	
3	KS	472	3	KS	4.31%	3	KS	CO	1232		KS	886	
4	MO	446	4	MO	3.88%	4	MO	IL	1108		MO	1478	
5	IL	379	5	OK	3.21%	5	IL	OK	965		IL	1108	
6	OK	329	6	IL	2.39%	6	OK	KS	900		OK	965	
7	IA	260	7	NE	1.94%	7	IA	FL	802		IA	786	
8	FL	238	8	CA	1.93%	8	NE	IA	786		NE	490	
9	NE	206	9	IA	1.89%	9	CA	WI	686		CA	479	
10	CA	193	10	MN	1.80%	10	FL	MN	608		FL	802	
11	MN	190	11	FL	1.60%	11	MN	OH	512		11,799	MN	608
12	WI	149	12	WI	1.19%	12	WI	IN	497		WI	686	12,242
	IN	114		AR	1.11%			NE	490				
	AR	108		OH	1.02%			CA	479				

MI	104	IN	0.99%	PA	480
OH	99	NM	0.90%	AR	422
LA	91	PA	0.83%	MI	411
PA	84	MI	0.74%	LA	407

Destination Marketing Partners

As the only all-volunteer Destination Marketing Organization in Colorado, the Fremont County Tourism Council relies on its marketing partners to reach and influence prospective visitors. Integral to those efforts are:

- VistaWorks, marketing communications & advertising coordinator, webmaster
- Colorado Activity Centers, publishes, distributes and fulfills direct requests for Visitor Guides
- Cañon City Chamber of Commerce, the FCTC’s defacto office and voice on the telephone
- Certified Folder, distributes 50,000 Visitor Guides to racks and CTO Visitor Centers over a wide area of the state.

In 2016 service agreements with VistaWorks, the Cañon City Chamber of Commerce and Certified Folder were all reviewed, updated, renewed. A comprehensive Request for Proposal was prepared for publication services, and released to three qualified bidders. Following the bidding process, a new 3-year contract was signed with Colorado Activity Centers.

As part of the new publishing contract, Colorado Activity Centers (CAC) was responsible for substantially updating the Royal Gorge Vacation Guide. A new, more contemporary, cleaner design was developed. All editorial copy was revised, updated and rewritten, and new photography was incorporated into the magazine. Notably, the contract with CAC makes it possible for the FCTC to design and produce 100,000 copies of the Visitor Guide at no cost! Investments in distribution, fulfillment and printing an additional 20,000 copies in 2016 were authorized by the FCTC.

YearOne Marketing & Branding Study

In 2016, YearOne, a marketing and advertising agency based in Louisville, Colorado conducted a pro-bono marketing and branding study on behalf of the FCTC. A small stipend of \$2,500 was supported by donors and Fremont County. YearOne’s study which began in June, and concluded in September included several visits to the community, interviews, and recommendations for a marketing & advertising campaign using multiple channels, and design concepts.

Results of the study were shared with several other groups including Cañon City, Florence and the FEDC. Concepts developed by YearOne were incorporated into the 2017 Vacation Guide, and will continue to influence the direction of our future marketing and advertising campaigns.

Google Search and Re-Targeting campaigns

Using funds from the FCTC budget, the City of Canon City, and from the CTO grant, VistaWorks implemented several ongoing paid search campaigns. These resulted in highly targeted and qualified people visiting the FCTC's official website: www.RoyalGorgeTravel.com . Paid Search campaigns led to approximately 30,000 unique people visiting the website.

Facebook

Using funds from the FCTC budget, the City of Canon City, and from the CTO grant, VistaWorks implemented several ongoing Facebook campaigns, as well as consistently posting new material 2-3 times weekly. **These efforts allowed us to Reach over two million people**. In addition, we were able to grow our following from 39,000 people to over 50,000 people. These people continue to interact with us through social media, planning trips and visiting our region.

Website Traffic

Traffic to the website continues to be impressive. In 2016, over 175,000 people viewed the website, resulting in 500,000 page views.

CTO Social Media Coops

The Colorado Tourism Office offers social media coop program from destination marketing organizations (DMOs) across the state, **matching their contribution up to \$2,000**. In 2016, the FCTC participated twice, and plans to continue participating in this extremely successful program in the future.

3/10/2016 Coop Activity

- Total Reach: 317,459
- Likes: 9,165
- Comments: 748
- Shares: 1,623
- Website clicks: *6,170
- CTR: 3.99%
- Frequency: 1.63

6/23/2016 Coop Activity

- Total Reach: 382,719
- Likes: 2,988
- Comments: 267
- Shares: 581
- Video Views 195,210
- Link Clicks 928
- CTR: 1.56%

- Frequency: 1.76

16th St. Mall Digital Billboards

VistaWorks, with support from AHRA (Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area) created videos that ran in 10 second spots on the 16th St Mall in downtown Denver, CO. Bryan Jordan with VistaWorks personally visited the digital billboard location and witnessed patrons stopping to watch, and in many cases film the ads that were highlighting the Royal Gorge Region. This was a way to reach the Front Range market and Denver destination travelers. The ads ran from approximately June through August, 2016.

National Parks Trips Road Trip Sweepstakes

Promoted both online and in print, this sweepstakes featured a grand prize that included a vacation in the Royal Gorge Region. Here are the results:

Itinerary web page views - 9,247

Facebook

64,286 views > 2,282 likes > 1,046 clicks

Community Grants

The FCTC is required as part of their bylaws to distribute at least 5% of lodging tax revenue to local community organizations. VistaWorks organized the applications, and informed recipients of their obligations for reporting and usage of the funds. The Council awarded \$7,250 in grants for community events, an increase of \$750 over 2015.

Email Newsletters

VistaWorks publishes a monthly email newsletter for the FCTC with over 65,000 **opt-in subscribers**. The newsletter highlights events, attractions, activities, etc. In addition, we participate in paid email newsletters through Colorado Springs Visitor and Convention Bureau and Colorado.com. Each of these newsletters reach hundreds of thousands of visitors both in-state and out-of-state.

Sponsored Content Colorado.com

Colorado.com offers a premium service, producing an article that is promoted on the State's Official Visitor's Website. VistaWorks worked with Colorado.com to produce this article, and it has become a source of significant traffic to the FCTC website generating over 3,000 visitors to the website. <http://www.colorado.com/articles/family-adventures-royal-gorge-region>

Press Releases

VistaWorks is responsible for working with journalists and media outlets to produce press releases, and or pass on relevant news from organizations that we follow. Many times organizations like the Colorado Tourism Office have specific requests with tight deadlines that need to be filled. Here are a few from 2016:

- “Dinosaur Experience” - Denver Life Magazine
- “Farm Stands and Markets” - CTO
- Will Colon nominated for Frontline Tourism for the Royal Gorge Region
- Contacted all major media in Denver and Colorado Springs several times, sent Press Releases.
- REI Mountain Biking - CTO
- “Elevated Meetings” - CTO
- “What’s New for Winter” - CTO

Royal Gorge Whitewater Festival Video Project

VistaWorks worked in cooperation with several local videographers to shoot and assemble 3 days worth of video B-Roll that can be used by the FCTC in future advertisements.

Lodging Survey

Trying to obtain accurate data as it relates to overnight lodging is difficult. Since the entire FCTC budget relies on funds from lodging tax, the FCTC worked with the **Rocky Mountain Lodging Report**, and a survey was sent to all lodging property owners seeking information about occupancy rates, etc. In all, the survey was sent to 52 properties. The response was extremely poor, forcing the FCTC to abandon the project. The Council continues to search for ways to better obtain data.

Fremont County Heritage Commission

The Council continued to work with the Heritage Commission on self-guided tours, using a portion of the CTO grant to support their projects. In September, a 76-page booklet on the Cemeteries of Fremont County was published. Board Member Larry Hill donated his services to help with the layout.

Cañon City Chamber of Commerce

The Cañon City Chamber of Commerce is the defacto ‘OFFICE’ and public face for the virtual organization that is FCTC, answering the published telephone number and responding to inquiries from email and walk-in visitors. Inquiries, calls and visits increased.

- Tourism telephone inquiries: 1,563 calls received on three lines, including 800-704-6743, the ‘official’ number for Royal Gorge Travel. An increase over 2015.
- Tourism Walk-in’s to Chamber office: 1,469 – a 66% increase from 2015.
- Visitor Cabin in Veteran’s Park (May to September): 5,715 visitors, another increase over 2015. Of these, 3,847 were out-of-state guests, and 180 were International.

The Chamber is the local repository of Royal Gorge Vacation Guide. They are distributed to visitors from the main office and the cabin, and are made available to local businesses wishing to maintain their own supply for distribution.

Tourism Council ON THE ROAD

For the second consecutive year, FCTC meetings went ON THE ROAD. In an effort to increase public participation and visibility to what the Council does, one meeting each quarter was held at locations around the county, outside the Fremont County Administration Building. Unfortunately, the moves didn't markedly change attendance patterns, and in 2017 all FCTC meetings will be conducted in Cañon City.

Region 13 Tourism Sector Partnership

Efforts that were initiated in the fall of 2015 to pull together tourism-related business owners and managers, and supporting government partners in Fremont, Custer, Chaffee and Lake counties continued throughout 2016. These counties are all within Region 13, one of the state's Workforce Development Planning Regions. Peggy Gair and Steve Kaverman remained involved with the core group.

- A rack brochure is being developed and is expected to be ready for the 2017 tourist season.
- The Partnership supported a transportation study aimed identifying visitor transit needs in the four county region.
- The Partnership's Education Committee has released a Request for Proposals for Tourism & Hospitality Customer Service training, customized to the region's destination attractions & activities.

2016 Volunteer Board Appointees / Fremont County Tourism Council

Heidi Anderson, Treasurer (resigned September 2016). Blaine Heckart, was appointed to fill the vacancy on the Board.

Kristyn Econome, stepped into the Treasurer's role

Peggy Gair, Secretary

Larry Hill, Board

Beth Katchmar, Vice-Chair

Steve Kaverman, Chair

John Miller, Board

Council Appointments

Appointments of two Council members expired January 1, 2017. Steve Kaverman and Larry Hill both successfully sought reappointment.