

# **TOURIST DEVELOPMENT**

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
OKALOOSA COUNTY, FLORIDA**

**SERVICE AREA:** CULTURE/RECREATION

**DEPARTMENT/PROGRAM:** TOURIST DEVELOPMENT - MARKETING

**PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:** Okaloosa Tourist Development is responsible for a unified marketing strategy and visitor service program that promotes awareness of the Emerald Coast as a tourist destination to increase overall visitation and lodging facility occupancy in the southern Okaloosa County areas of Destin, Fort Walton Beach, Okaloosa Island, Mary Esther, and Cinco Bayou.

**REVENUE:** Tourist Development is funded by the Tourist Development Trust Fund, specifically the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> cents of the Tourist Development Tax on short term rentals.

**MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS LAST YEAR:**

- The Emerald Coast Visitors Welcome Center qualified as Florida's 1<sup>st</sup> new Official Certified Tourist Information Center meeting all of Visit Florida's validation criteria.
- Assisted 24,792 travelers from Canada, Europe and Asia and the top U.S. states of Texas, Tennessee, Florida, Georgia, and Michigan.
- Visitors Center building roofing, siding and interior meeting room renovations completed.
- "Beaches to Baseball" joint marketing event with ECCC & Aramark at Turner Field in Atlanta targeting meeting planners.
- Conducted several media familiarization tours.
- EBMS: Began processes for a more streamlined-shared data system to include increased/reliable detailed sales reports, immediate access to past, present and future client information and an overall movement towards data retrieval processes concurrent with today's sales force systems administration.
- Launched Gulf-to-Table branding campaign.
- Began transition to internalize marketing activities.
- Film Commissioner served as the Film Florida State Film Commission Council Chair and on the Legislative Committee.
- 8 National Television Network Series filmed in Okaloosa County, i.e. Bravo, TLC, Lifetime, HGTV.

**PROGRAM GOAL:** Conduct proactive and productive sales, marketing, advertising, public relations, communications, and social networking initiatives to enhance economic growth for the area through increased visitation and tourism.

**KEY OBJECTIVES:**

1. Provide visitors with access to Emerald Coast tourist information in a clean, comfortable, and modern environment with access to print and digital tourist information 7-days a week and select holidays.
2. Increase the monthly bed tax collections revenue and monthly lodging occupancy percentages each month over previous years.
3. Regain market share.
4. Position Okaloosa County as a year-round destination for group travel.
5. Promote and market Okaloosa County as a premier location for production and entertainment companies to shoot or film their projects.

**PERFORMANCE MEASURES:**

<b>Performance Measures</b>		<b>Actual FY2015</b>	<b>Estimated FY2016</b>	<b>Approved FY2017</b>
<b>Output</b>	Booked Groups	281	325	350
	Number of Trade Shows Attended by Sales Staff	15	15	21
	Number of Sales Missions and Familiarization Tours*	4	2	12
<b>Effectiveness</b>	Annual Tourist Development Tax Revenues	\$16.6M	\$18.5M	\$19.6M
	Social Media Fans/Followers – Facebook	445,766	475,000	500,000
	Social Media Fans/Followers – Twitter	7,230	8,100	9,500
	Social Media Fans/Followers – Pinterest	2,969	3,200	3,500
	Social Media Fans/Followers – Instagram	2,819	3,200	3,500
<b>Reserves</b>	Operations (target = 35%)	n/a	35%	35%
	Promotional Activities (target = 25%)	n/a	33%	25%

\*A familiarization tour is a trip offered to travel media, tour operators, meeting planners, and other persons connected with the tourist industry to acquaint them first-hand with what the destination has to offer.

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
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**SERVICE AREA:** CULTURE/RECREATION

**DEPARTMENT/PROGRAM:** TOURIST DEVELOPMENT - BEACHES & PARKS

**PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:** Maintenance, restoration, and improvements of beaches and beach facilities; maintenance and improvements of waterfront parks within the taxing district; and support for an artificial reef program and ecotourism opportunities.

**REVENUE:** Beaches and parks maintenance and improvements are funded by the Tourist Development Trust Fund, specifically the 1<sup>st</sup> cent of the Tourist Development Tax on short term rentals, as well as by a special assessment of certain properties.

**MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS LAST YEAR:**

- Submitted permit application for aquatic and upland phase of Veterans Park @ Baywalk project.
- Staff member elected as Vice-Chair of Florida Shore and Beach Preservation Association Executive Board.
- Met with Congressional delegation seeking support for a Federal Shore Protection project.
- Installed 5 dune walkovers on Okaloosa Island under FDEP grant.
- Assisted United States Army Corps of Engineers in submitting compliance package or Federal Shore Protection project.
- Deployed approximately 2,000 tons of repurposed concrete material under the “Concrete to Reefs” program.
- Continued design and permitting of artificial reefs.
- Developing bid packages for Beach Freeways 4,5 &6 improvements.
- Secured approximately \$1.2 million in “Pot 1” Restore Act funds for construction of multiple snorkel reefs offshore of Okaloosa County.
- Staff appointed as co-Chair of Eglin-County Environmental working group.
- Inventoried “eco-tourism” assets in Okaloosa County.
- Finalized and obtained BOCC approval for \$1.7 million in Natural Resource Damage Assessment funds for construction of fishing/diving/snorkel reefs.
- Partnered with the Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance for removal of invasive species in Veterans Park.
- Began permitting for a snorkel site in Choctawhatchee Bay.
- Secured funding for an economic and partnership building study for Fishing Buoy network.
- Garnered community support for an estuary program for the Choctawhatchee watershed.

**PROGRAM GOAL:**

Protect Okaloosa County and City of Destin beaches through regular cleaning and raking, periodic beach restoration, and sea turtle monitoring. Enhance these assets through improvements in the form of waterfront parks, public access, artificial reefs and other tourist related projects. Seek long-term beach restoration and Federal funding through the Federal Shore Protection Program.

**KEY OBJECTIVES:**

1. Provide clean, well-maintained, and quality beaches and waterfront parks that offer facilities, amenities, landscaping, and improvements that enhance the environmental experience for visitors.
2. Protect nesting sea turtles.
3. Secure Congressional/US Army Corp of Engineers funding for Feasibility Study phase of the Federal Hurricane & Storm Damage Reduction Project.

4. Expand and enhance artificial reef and ecotourism programs.

The following projects are planned for FY 2017:

- Improvements at beach access points 4, 5, and 6.
- Construct multiple artificial reefs to support the fishing and diving industry.
- Install snorkeling reef video camera.
- Beasley Park improvements.

**PERFORMANCE MEASURES:**

<b>Performance Measures</b>		<b>Actual FY2015</b>	<b>Estimated FY2016</b>	<b>Approved FY2017</b>
<b>Effectiveness</b>	Capital Improvements – Beaches	\$16K	\$500K	\$529K
	Capital Improvements – Parks	\$340K	\$115K	\$360K
	Capital Improvements – Reefs	\$22K	\$152K	\$225K
	Grant Funding Obtained for Improvements	\$249K	\$1.8M	\$100K
<b>Reserves</b>	Operations (target = 35%)	n/a	35%	35%
	Beach Restoration (target = \$14M)	n/a	\$9.1M	\$9.8M
	East Pass Dredging (target = \$2M)	n/a	\$2M	\$2M

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
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**SERVICE AREA:** CULTURE/RECREATION

**DEPARTMENT/PROGRAM:** TOURIST DEVELOPMENT - CONVENTION CENTER

**PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:** The Emerald Coast Convention Center (ECCC) provides economic impact to the tourism and general businesses of Okaloosa County. The convention center's mission is to provide a professional service team, exquisite food service, and a spotlessly clean and safe environment for meetings, conventions, trade shows, public entertainment and all types of special event activities.

**REVENUE:** The Convention Center is funded by the Tourist Development Trust Fund, specifically the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> cents of the Tourist Development Tax on short term rentals, as well as by revenues generated by functions held at the convention center.

**MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS LAST YEAR:**

- Conducted and serviced 165 functions at the ECCC, generating an estimated economic impact of \$15M to the County.
- Generated a documented 3,728 and estimated 15,242 guest room nights in county hotels and condos.
- Hosted an estimated 85,000 guests for the year.
- The staff has continued its industry education and certification classes by attending the Event Services Professionals Assoc. Conference, Guest –X (experience), Safety and Security Conference and the International Ass. Of Venue Management School.
- Replaced all underbuilding lighting and show lighting with energy efficient and more durable longer lasting LED lighting fixtures.
- Updated and refreshed our sales collateral to include the Sales Kit, Inserts, and Profile Sheet.
- New business highlighted: Reinhardt Food Show, Emerald Coast Con, AmeriCheer Event, Dupree Dance, Shades Baptist Youth Group.

**PROGRAM GOAL:** Provide a clean, safe, and well-maintained conference and convention facility for visitors, local clients, and guests to create economic impact and opportunities for local functions. Provide necessary performance data to the Tourist Development Director, Tourist Development Council, and Board of County Commissioners.

**KEY OBJECTIVES:**

1. Ensure that all functions of the ECCC comply with county policies and procedures.
2. Improve sales for all revenue streams available to the center.
3. Provide all data necessary for a profitable and successful marketing campaign.
4. Provide exemplary service, facilities, food service, and technical services to all clients to promote re-bookings of existing clients and recommendation of the center by existing clients to new clients.

The following projects are planned for FY 2017:

- Replace carpeting in ballrooms.
- Replace/repair time worn roof structure in front of ECCC.
- Create Architectural documentation for the design and construction of Pavilion Structure for Bayview Plaza and additional restroom facilities to increase functionality during times of inclement weather and extreme heat.

**PERFORMANCE MEASURES:**

Performance Measures		Actual FY2015	Estimated FY2016	Approved FY2017
Output	Number of Trade Shows Attended by Sales Staff	34	34	10
	Regional Cities Sales Calls	n/a	n/a	8
	Revenue Generating Functions Held	160	150	138
	Non-Revenue Generating Functions Held (TDD-BOCC)	included above	included above	27
	Revenues Generated by Functions	\$850,000	\$810,250	\$810,250
Effectiveness	Revenue Per Function	\$4,056	\$5,402	\$5,871
Reserves	Operations (target = 35%)	n/a	35%	35%
	Promotional Activities (target = 25%)	n/a	25%	54%
	Insured Loss Deductible (target = \$1.5M)	n/a	\$1.5M	\$1.5M

**HISTORICAL STAFFING SUMMARY:**

Category	FY2014	FY2015	FY2016	FY2017
Full-time Administrative & Support	19	19	20	24
Full-time Management & Professional	12	12	12	12
Full-time Operations & Trades	5	5	5	5
Part-time	6	6	6	6
Total	42	42	43	47

**EXPENDITURES:**

Category	Expenditures		Budget		FY16/FY17 +/-	Increase/ Decrease
	FY2014 Actual	FY2015 Actual	FY2016 Approved	FY2017 Approved		
Personnel Services	\$1,648,131	\$1,915,132	\$2,265,996	\$2,627,254	\$361,258	15.9%
Operating Expenses	\$4,281,947	\$5,554,640	\$7,885,857	\$11,388,386	\$3,502,529	44.4%
Capital Outlay	\$29,969	\$65,862	\$4,322,840	\$2,522,000	(\$1,800,840)	-41.7%
Grants & Aids	\$778,477	\$763,789	\$1,244,157	\$1,221,821	(\$22,336)	-1.8%
Other Uses	\$1,868,282	\$1,917,291	\$29,740,964	\$37,014,989	\$7,274,025	24.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$8,606,806</b>	<b>\$10,216,714</b>	<b>\$45,459,814</b>	<b>\$54,774,450</b>	<b>\$9,314,636</b>	<b>20.5%</b>

**ACCOUNTS:**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>FY2015 Approved</b>	<b>FY2016 Approved</b>	<b>FY2017 Approved</b>	<b>FY16/FY17 +/-</b>	<b>Increase/ Decrease</b>
10	Salaries & Wages	\$1,537,286	\$1,646,980	\$1,962,288	\$315,308	19.1%
	Increase is due to the additional marketing positions added.					
20	Benefits	\$499,454	\$619,016	\$664,966	\$45,950	7.4%
	Increase is due to the additional marketing positions added.					
31	Professional Services	\$323,224	\$362,092	\$980,314	\$618,222	170.7%
	Additional funding is for a number of items: Sand Trap Study, Estuary Program and the bridge to bridge feasibility study.					
32	Accounting & Auditing	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$0	0.0%
34	Contract Services	\$1,371,301	\$1,203,357	\$1,211,745	\$8,388	0.7%
40	Travel & Per Diem	\$109,695	\$100,443	\$116,428	\$15,985	15.9%
	Additional funding for marketing trade shows and sales missions.					
41	Communications Services	\$34,132	\$52,880	\$105,573	\$52,693	99.6%
	Provides funding for hosting emeraldcoastfl.com in house.					
42	Freight & Postage	\$77,560	\$67,820	\$72,820	\$5,000	7.4%
	Increase is for distribution of the visitors guide to Allegiant Air cities.					
43	Utility Services	\$399,300	\$402,000	\$402,000	\$0	0.0%
44	Rent & Leases	\$36,330	\$37,955	\$84,071	\$46,116	121.5%
	Provides additional funds for the Visit Florida mobile visitor center trailer.					
45	Risk Management Allocation	\$132,533	\$132,093	\$87,112	(\$44,981)	-34.1%
	Decrease is due to insurance costs.					
46	Repair & Maintenance	\$212,313	\$229,817	\$236,385	\$6,568	2.9%
47	Printing & Binding	\$119,520	\$86,211	\$87,741	\$1,530	1.8%
48	Promotional Activity	\$3,322,610	\$4,490,893	\$6,973,046	\$2,482,153	55.3%
	Increase is due to additional TDT collections and the Allegiant Air media campaign.					
49	Miscellaneous Charges	\$427,425	\$477,000	\$601,800	\$124,800	26.2%
	Provides additional funds for the Tax Collector due to higher tax collections.					
51	Office Supplies	\$15,500	\$10,100	\$10,600	\$500	5.0%
52	Operating Supplies	\$184,068	\$157,776	\$334,996	\$177,220	112.3%
	Provides for the replacement of banquet chairs.					
54	Books/Pubs/Subs & Memberships	\$41,374	\$41,690	\$42,020	\$330	0.8%
55	Training & Education Expenses	\$11,090	\$32,230	\$40,235	\$8,005	24.8%
	Increase is for tuition reimbursement.					
60	Capital Outlay	\$5,307,058	\$4,322,840	\$2,522,000	(\$1,800,840)	-41.7%
81	Aids to Government Agencies	\$957,687	\$1,202,157	\$1,156,576	(\$45,581)	-3.8%
	Reduction of funding is due to the end of the western Destin's beach restoration monitoring.					
82	Aids to Private Organizations	\$0	42,000	65,245	23,245	55.3%
	Provides new funding for the Emerald Coast Science Center.					
91	Intragovernmental Transfers	\$2,017,913	\$2,136,800	\$2,413,315	\$276,515	12.9%
	Provides additional funds for beach law enforcement and Western Destin's beach restoration debt payment.					
99	Reserves	\$17,778,627	\$27,604,164	\$34,601,674	\$6,997,510	25.3%
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$34,917,500</b>	<b>\$45,459,814</b>	<b>\$54,774,450</b>	<b>\$9,314,636</b>	<b>20.5%</b>