



2014-2016 Lake County Tourism

MARKETING PLAN

ABOUT

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About Lake County Economic Development and Tourism

Mission: Mission: To promote travel, drive visitation and generate hotel room nights in Lake County for the purpose of facilitating on-going, economic benefits for Lake County residents, the business community and its fourteen municipalities.

About: Lake County Economic Development and Tourism (*Lake County EDT*) serves as Lake County's official tourism marketing organization. Lake County EDT operates as a Department under the direction of the Lake County Board of County Commissioners. Lake County EDT receives funding via Lake County's Tourist Development Tax (*TDT*), which was enacted into law in 1984. The Lake County TDT is levied on all short-term (*less than 180 days*) rentals of accommodations. The Lake County TDT is currently 4 percent. Lake County EDT reports to a nine person Tourist

Development Council (*TDC*) that serves as a recommending body to the Lake County Board of County Commissioners on the usage of TDT funds within the guidelines set by state statute.

Lake County EDT works with all tourism related businesses in Lake County, and partners with Lake County municipalities, chambers of commerce and other entities or organizations that serve or are involved in the Lake County tourism industry. Usage of TDT funds is restricted to initiatives which advance or improve Lake County's tourism industry through the generation of room nights or incremental tourist visitation.

Learn more about Lake County EDT: www.visitlakefl.com

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Lake County Commissioners

ABOUT

- ♦ [LAKE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS](#)
- ♦ TDC Council Members



Jimmy Conner
Vice Chairman, District 3

Welton Cadwell
District 5

Sean Parks
District 2

Timothy Sullivan
District 1

Leslie Campione
Chairman, District 4

ABOUT

- ♦ Lake County Commissioners
- ♦ TDC COUNCIL MEMBERS

Tourist Development Council Members

COUNTY COMMISSIONER VOTING MEMBER

Welton G. Cadwell *Commissioner, District 5*

OWNERS/OPERATORS

Bud Beucher *Mission Inn Resort & Club*

Paul M. Caldwell *Summer Bay Resort*

Terry March *Fairfield Inn & Suites*

Jim Gunderson *Lakeside Inn*

RESIDENTS INVOLVED IN THE TOURIST INDUSTRY

Dr. Kasey C. Kesselring *Montverde Academy*

John D. Brandeburg *Leesburg Lightning*

ELECTED MUNICIPAL OFFICERS

Commissioner Ray Goodgame. *City of Clermont*

Robert Wolfe. *Mayor, City of Tavares*

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Objectives

Lake County EDT has set out the following metric based objectives as a guide for evaluating the performance and success of the 2014-2016 Marketing Plan:

- 1. Increase annual Tourist Development Tax revenue to \$2.5 million by 2016**
 - a. 2013 = \$2.14 million
 - b. 2012 = \$1.98 million
- 3. Average year round occupancy rate of 60 percent by 2016**
 - a. 2013 = 56%
 - b. 2012 = 54%
- 3. Add a minimum of at least one (1) and preferably two “Upper Midscale Class” hotels to the Lake County inventory by 2016**
- 4. Increase countywide Average Daily Rate (ADR) to \$75 by 2016**

OVERVIEW

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Goals

Ideally located in the center of Florida, and just 30 minutes from Orlando's theme parks and one hour to either coastline, Lake County's unparalleled natural resources, including some of the only rolling hills in Florida, 1,400 named lakes and rivers and burgeoning ecotourism and sports industries, make it primed to be a major player in the Central Florida tourism industry. Lake County EDT is tasked with expanding awareness of Lake County's unique positioning and driving visitors and overnight guests to Lake County businesses and attractions.

The following goals will guide Lake County EDT's tourism strategy in 2014-2016:

- 1. Build the Lake County Brand** – establish and expand Lake County's new branding message: "Real Florida. Real Close." Lake County's natural resources and small town charm make it the perfect tourism alternative to the theme parks of Orlando and urbanized coastal areas. Additionally, Lake County's close proximity to these internationally-known destinations and major urban areas make it easily accessible to non-Floridians and Floridians alike. The "Real Florida. Real Close." branding initiative must be fully implemented across all Lake County tourism marketing strategies.
- 2. Focus on Targeted and Measurable Initiatives** – it is vital that Lake County's marketing and advertising efforts reflect and compliment the organization's goals and resources. The path to reaching those goals is through carefully selected strategies that directly target the desired consumers. Further, with limited resources, it is critically important that all selected strategies have the ability to be tracked and measured to ensure that they are achieving the desired results.
- 3. Launch and Grow Co-Op Program** – adopted in January 2014, Lake County's Cooperative Marketing Program allows Lake County EDT to share costs with local tourism partners on specific marketing and advertising initiatives. The program's success will ultimately depend on Lake County EDT's ability to actively recruit tourism partners who desire to register as official co-op partners as well as to identify and implement attractive marketing and advertising programs that fit the co-op marketing model.
- 4. Expand Digital Experience** – develop and launch Lake County's sports and tourism websites, while continuing to evolve Lake County's social media platforms. As technology and media consumption patterns evolve, Lake County EDT must adapt and evolve the entire Lake County digital marketing platform to ensure that proper engagement is occurring with Lake County's consumers.

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Goals (continued)

5. **Engage Local Tourism Partners in the Process** – the goal of transforming Lake County into a premiere tourist destination cannot be accomplished solely by one entity. It is imperative that Lake County EDT maintain frequent and on-going communication with all tourism partners in Lake County. Each of the various tourism partners in Lake County (*attractions, event organizers, accommodations, dining establishments, municipalities, chambers, etc.*) must be aware of, and engaged in, the process. Each partner must be aware of the goals and the strategies for achieving those goals. Collaboration and cooperation are key to the success of Lake County's tourism efforts.
6. **Continuous Analysis and Evolution** – change in the marketplace is inevitable. Consumer planning habits and technology, amongst many other factors, are constantly in flux requiring continuous and on- going analysis, so that the marketing plan can evolve with the changing trends.
7. **Sustain Program Balance** – budgetary and strategy diversification is critical to the success of Lake County's tourism marketing plan. Marketing dollars must be allocated to a wide-range of marketing initiatives that span multiple strategies and consumer segments.
8. **Prioritize and Target** – Lake County is endowed with a multitude of unique marketable assets. The ultimate success of Lake County's marketing efforts requires Lake County EDT to strategically identify those assets with the greatest potential for driving visitation and room nights and to relentlessly target those segments.
9. **Maintain Regional Communication and Representation** – Lake County EDT serves as the Destination Marketing Organization (*DMO*) for all of Lake County and its many tourism partners. As such, Lake County EDT must maintain frequent communication with those tourism partners to ensure that Lake County EDT's marketing efforts adequately represent and are aligned with the needs of the tourism partners.
10. **Support Local Events and Event Organizers** – local events and festivals are the lifeblood of Lake County's tourism industry. It is essential that Lake County provide continued support for these events and their organizers to ensure their on-going success and growth.
11. **Drive Year-Round Visitation** – Lake County's tourism visitation patterns are highly seasonal with the peak period running from January through May. Lake County EDT should pay special attention to marketing initiatives that drive tourism activity during non-peak periods, thus ensuring more consistent impacts to the local economy throughout the year.

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Goals (continued)

12. Build Foundation as Sports Destination – sporting events are a major driver of visitation and room nights in Lake County. Lake County EDT must contribute significant resources and effort towards building Lake County’s sports infrastructure, and marketing Lake County as a destination for sports.

13. Enhance Partnership with VISIT Florida – VISIT Florida is the destination marketing organization for the State of Florida. It is imperative that Lake County better utilize the existing marketing platforms and co-op opportunities offered by VISIT Florida. Maintaining frequent and on-going communication with VISIT Florida will ensure that Lake County has continuous awareness of and can take advantage of the new and innovative programs frequently launched by VISIT Florida.

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Marketing Principles

Lake County EDT is relentlessly focused on transforming Lake County into one of the premiere tourism destinations in the state of Florida. Lake County's unique positioning in the market as a value-driven, ecotourism locale combined with a growing sports tourism industry and world-class antiquing venues make this an ambitious, but achievable goal.

To succeed, Lake County EDT must work diligently to align the collective interests of the many tourism partners in Lake County and must maximize the impact of its marketing resources (*time, money and relationships*). A set of marketing principles has been developed to guide Lake County EDT's strategic thinking:

Overnight Visitors Preferred, but Day Trips Equally as Important - Room nights are the ultimate driver for Lake County Tourism Development Tax revenues, and it is critical that Lake County pursue marketing initiatives that generate incremental room nights; however, the economic impact generated by non-lodging related visitor spending in the market is significant and should not be overlooked when determining the appropriate marketing strategies to implement.

Co-Op is King - With limited resources, it is imperative that marketing initiatives achieve the highest return on investment. This applies to both Lake County EDT and Lake County's many tourism partners. The co-op marketing program allows Lake County's tourism partners to leverage Lake County EDT's investment in marketing programs, maximizing the impact of their individual resources, and in so doing, provides a significantly enhanced return on investment for both the tourism partner and Lake County EDT.

Only Pursue Strategic and Measurable Initiatives - Marketing initiatives must be carefully planned and have the ability to be measured. If a program does not fit the plan in place, serious consideration should be given to whether the plan needs to be adjusted, if not, that initiative should not be pursued. If a program cannot be tracked and/or measured to ensure that it is achieving the desired results, it should not be pursued.

Discover Strengths, Market Strengths - Lake County is fortunate to have a multitude of marketable assets; however, not all of these assets represent a strength relative to Lake County's competition. It is critical that Lake County EDT identify those assets that offer a competitive advantage in the marketplace and focus resources on marketing those strengths. Lake County will not succeed with a blanket approach to marketing that appeals to everyone. Lake County EDT must discover its relative strengths and market those strengths.

Marketing Principles (continued)

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Embrace Role as Second Tier Tourism Destination - Lake County does not have, nor will it ever have, the draw of Orlando and the major Central Florida theme parks. Lake County cannot, nor should it, compete against Orlando and the Florida beaches, which are nationally and internationally recognized tourist destinations. Rather, Lake County should embrace its positioning as a second-tier tourism destination and market itself as a complementary alternative to those locations. Enticing consumers visiting these locations to enhance their vacation by visiting Lake County will significantly enhance the local tourism industry.

Quality Over Quantity - It is far more effective to choose a limited number of highly targeted programs, than it is to engage in a multitude of programs that are general in nature. An engaged, passionate consumer is far more likely to respond to a call to action. As such, Lake County EDT will only employ strategies that are targeted and strategically designed, even if it means that the total marketing plan for that segment is necessarily shallow.

Do It Right, or Don't Do it At All - Lake County EDT must remain good stewards of Lake County Tourism Development Tax revenues. As such, Lake County EDT will not sacrifice quality to save money, nor will it initiate a new program or continue an existing program without dedicating the necessary resources to make the program a success. If the funds or resources aren't available to do it right, it will not be done at all.

Partnerships Matter, Collaboration Required - Lake County EDT serves as the DMO for all of Lake County; therefore, it is important that it represents the needs and goals of all of Lake County's tourism partners. Lake County EDT must ensure that its strategies are always aligned with the needs of those that it represents.

Creativity Wins the Day - The travel and leisure marketplace is becoming increasingly crowded with the demand for tourism destinations and products lagging far behind the available supply. With that in mind, it is critical that Lake County's message is unique and distinctive from the noise. Highlighting those areas that offer a competitive advantage for Lake County is necessary, but highlighting those areas in a creative manner is ideal.

SWOT Analysis

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SWOT ANALYSIS

- ♦ **STRENGTHS**
- ♦ **Weaknesses**
- ♦ **Opportunities**
- ♦ **Threats**

Before determining the appropriate strategies for marketing Lake County, it was necessary to conduct a thorough analysis of Lake County's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This evaluation is commonly referred to as a SWOT Analysis. By analyzing Lake County through the SWOT Analysis framework, Lake County

EDT was able to craft a strategy that better distinguishes Lake County from its competitors. The analysis uncovered opportunities that it is well positioned to exploit, identified weaknesses that it can focus on managing and eliminating and provided a context that will allow Lake County to more successfully compete in the marketplace.

STRENGTHS

- Natural resources
 - ☐ Lakes, rivers and springs
 - ☐ Rolling hills
 - ☐ Ocala National Forest
 - ☐ North Lake Apopka Restoration Area
 - ☐ Scrub Jay Trail
 - ☐ Volume of public lands and open space
- Historic downtowns
- Multitude of events and festivals
- Low cost attractions
- Recreational and eco-tourism diversity

- Landmark Lodging Establishments
 - ☐ Mission Inn
 - ☐ Lakeside Inn
 - ☐ Mount Dora B&B's
- Experienced, well-connected staff
- Engaged TDC
- Birding hotspots
- Proximity to Disney and other amusement parks
- Equestrian Venues:
 - ☐ Grand Oaks Resort
 - ☐ Rocking Horse Ranch

- Sporting venues:
 - ☐ National Training Center
 - ☐ The Big House
 - ☐ Clermont Rowing Complex
 - ☐ Hickory Point Beach Sand Volleyball Complex
 - ☐ Sleep Hollow Sports Complex
 - ☐ Hickory Point Soccer Complex
 - ☐ North Lake Park Community Park
 - ☐ Minneola Athletic Complex
- Antique stores and venues

SWOT Analysis (continued)

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SWOT ANALYSIS

- ♦ Strengths
- ♦ WEAKNESSES
- ♦ Opportunities
- ♦ Threats

W E A K N E S S E S

- Destination attractions
- Retail and hotel establishments (*number, not quality*)
- Collaboration and communication between tourism partners
- Tourism website
- Nighttime entertainment
- Lack of meeting space
- Sophistication of local marketing programs
- Low tourism tax

SWOT Analysis (continued)

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SWOT ANALYSIS

- ♦ Strengths
- ♦ Weaknesses
- ♦ OPPORTUNITIES
- ♦ Threats

OPPORTUNITIES

- Proximity and access to Orlando and beaches
- Niche leisure travel
- Foreign visitors (*specifically South America and the United Kingdom*)
- The Villages
- Medical tourism
- Destination weddings
- Orlando theme parks

SWOT Analysis (continued)

OBJECTIVES

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- ♦ Strengths
- ♦ Weaknesses
- ♦ Opportunities
- ♦ THREATS

THREATS

- Reputation and recognition
- Regional competition (*Seminole County, Osceola County, Sumter County, etc.*)
- Location awareness
- Orlando theme parks
- Economic instability

**THREE
PILLARS**

EVENT
SPONSORSHIPSCAPITAL
PROJECTSMARKETING &
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STRATEGIC PLAN

Three Pillars

Lake County EDT's mission of promoting tourism and driving visitors and overnight guests to Lake County is based on a comprehensive set of three interconnected strategies. It is critical to Lake County EDT's mission that the promotion of Lake County tourism occurs in as comprehensive a manner as possible. As such, investment in the "Three Pillars" outlined below provides balance within the Lake County EDT tourism budget and ensures diversity amongst its tourism related investments.

1. **Event Sponsorships** – Provide financial assistance to Lake County events that generate room night

stays and an economic impact through the attraction of visitors from outside of Lake County.

2. **Capital Projects** – Utilize TDT funds in the development of capital projects that will generate significant room nights and economic impact through the creation of regionally significant attractions, venues and facilities.
3. **Marketing and Advertising** – Promote Lake County's unique assets and tourism opportunities to consumers who have the potential of visiting Lake County where they will generate room nights and an economic impact on the community.

THREE
PILLARSEVENT
SPONSORSHIPSCAPITAL
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Event Sponsorships

Festivals and events play a major role in Lake County's tourism industry. They attract thousands of visitors to Lake County and generate millions of dollars in economic impact for the Lake County economy. As such, it is critical that Lake County EDT promote and support these events and their event organizers. Lake County EDT's sponsorship program is designed to provide financial support to those events and festivals that produce overnight visitors and generate an economic impact in the community. The goal of the program is to provide supplementary income to the event organizers, so that they may enhance their events through improved promotion and marketing, increased event duration, additional features, etc. thus leading to incremental room night generation in the County.

- Funding for the program will be based on an in-house, economic impact model developed by Lake County EDT

staff. The model will ensure a fair and equitable means of awarding sponsorships to Lake County's many events.

The Lake County Sponsorship Program serves as a highly effective tourism initiative that produces a significant return on investment for Lake County tourism dollars. Providing financial support to local events and festivals ensures that Lake County is being promoted to those consumers with a high propensity to spend and stay in Lake County and hopefully return again. The Sponsorship Program is strategic and exceedingly targeted in that it attracts the passionate consumers who are typically champions of the segment and are likely to promote Lake County within their own social and professional networks.

THREE
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SPONSORSHIPSCAPITAL
PROJECTSMARKETING &
ADVERTISING

Capital Projects

While Lake County is fortunate to have an abundance of natural resources that attract visitors to the area, it is of the utmost importance that Lake County EDT supplement these resources with venues that will draw incremental visitation to Lake County through increased diversity and selection of tourism assets. For Lake County to advance its tourism industry, Lake County must focus on creating venues that provide a competitive advantage for Lake County when compared to the highly saturated Florida tourism marketplace.

Lake County EDT has a Capital Projects Funding Program that allows Lake County municipalities or other public entities in Lake County to receive Tourist Development Tax (*TDT*) funding to assist in the development of capital projects that will generate significant room nights and result in a positive economic impact in the community.

- By Florida Statute, Tourist Development Tax dollars are able to be spent on capital projects, if those projects advance the tourism industry in that community. Lake County's Capital Projects Funding Program was developed to encourage public entities in Lake County to invest in their capital infrastructure through the leveraging of TDT funding.
- Funding for the program will be based on an in-house, economic impact model developed by Lake County EDT staff. The model

was developed to ensure a fair and equitable means of awarding capital funding to those organizations interested in participating.

- The Capital Projects Impact Model (*CIM*) measures the net new room night generation and economic impact that will be created by the project, in addition to a number of other more minor variables, in determining a recommended funding amount. Participating organizations must share a minimum of 50% of the costs of the project.

In addition to allowing other public organizations to participate in the usage of TDT funds for capital projects through the Capital Projects Funding Program, Lake County EDT will continue to analyze the market and seek out opportunities for internally generated capital projects that could enhance Lake County's tourism industry. Given the high costs associated with most capital projects, it is imperative that any capital project under consideration for the usage of TDT funds create a significant competitive advantage and return on investment for Lake County.

All requests for the Capital Projects Funding Program will be reviewed by the TDC, who will make recommendations to the Lake County Board of County Commissioners for final approval.

THREE
PILLARSEVENT
SPONSORSHIPSCAPITAL
PROJECTS**MARKETING &
ADVERTISING**

- ♦ **Timing**
- ♦ **Channels
& Tactics**
- ♦ **Cross-channel
Opportunities**
- ♦ **Marketing
Strategies**

Marketing and Advertising

Marketing and advertising must form the core of Lake County EDT's promotional efforts. It is imperative that Lake County EDT actively promote Lake County's strengths and assets to potential consumers. The promotion of Lake County must be targeted and laser focused on those consumers with a high probability of being converted into a visitor or room night generator. The Florida tourism marketplace is incredibly saturated; therefore, it is critical that Lake County's EDT's marketing efforts are well-

designed with a focus on those segments that offer a relative competitive advantage.

Critical to Lake County's marketing and advertising efforts will be the comprehensiveness of the plan. Multiple marketing channels and strategies must be implemented and Lake County's marketing message must reach potential consumers at all stages of the vacation planning process.

THREE
PILLARSEVENT
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- ♦ **TIMING**
- ♦ **Channels & Tactics**
- ♦ **Cross-channel Opportunities**
- ♦ **Marketing Strategies**

Marketing and Advertising (continued)

TIMING

Vacation planning is a very complex and ever evolving process. At its most basic level, a typical traveler's planning can be broken down into five (5) stages, and a truly effective marketing campaign must focus on all five stages of the planning process. Lake County EDT engage in marketing strategies that focus on all five stages:

Pre-Planning - The Pre-Planning stage is the time before potential consumers realize that they are in need of a vacation or as they begin to think about a vacation, but have not yet committed to actually begin planning a trip. Whether a billboard on the highway, an ad in a magazine or a post on social media sparks their interest in a vacation, this is the stage where potential consumers begin to dream. Regardless of the impetus for the dream, the consumer will begin to contemplate the big picture decisions during this stage (*when, where, how, etc.*).

Almost all channels of advertising are effective at targeting consumers during this stage. The key is to ensure that the message is unique and compelling. The marketing must engage the consumer and must effectively convince the consumer that the product, in this case, Lake County, is the best vacation alternative to satisfy the dream. Email marketing, digital marketing, social media and print advertising are just a few of the effective marketing tactics for reaching customers before they truly begin to plan their vacation.

Planning - During the planning stage, the random consumer is now a potential visitor, because an interest has been sparked in a trip. They know they want to go somewhere, now they must make

the final decisions on when, where and how. On average, a traveler will visit over 20 different travel websites and engage in at least nine separate research sessions on the internet before finally deciding on a vacation plan. Further, studies show that over 62 percent of leisure travelers use the internet for researching their trip.

To adequately target consumers during this highly digital stage, Lake County must employ a diversified strategy that will provide a presence across multiple digital marketing channels. This includes traditional travel websites, regional DMO websites (*VISIT Florida, VISIT Orlando, etc.*) and a strong search engine marketing and search engine optimization campaign. This stage also requires that Lake County remain diligent in maintaining its online and digital reputation. Given the high propensity for online planning, the majority of Lake County's resources will be dedicated to targeting the online planning consumer.

Booking - At this point, the potential consumer has decided on a location and the majority of the decisions have been made. The key to the booking stage is to ensure that the consumer is not lost during the process. This stage is about convenience and efficiencies. While Lake County EDT will have limited involvement in the booking stage, it is important that Lake County's website be properly structured to easily connect consumers with Lake County tourism partners. The more seamless the process, the less chance Lake County has of losing the consumer. Further, Lake County EDT should work with the many tourism partners to ensure that their websites allow for easy navigation and efficient booking procedures.

Marketing and Advertising (continued)

THREE PILLARS

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- ♦ **TIMING**
- ♦ **Channels & Tactics**
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- ♦ **Marketing Strategies**

TIMING (continued)

In-Market - The in-market stage occurs when the traveler arrives in Central Florida. For many travelers, the majority of their vacation will have already been booked. If the target destination was somewhere other than Lake County, it is likely that the majority of their time will be spent in that market. The opportunities to reach these consumers will be limited, but they will exist. For those consumers whose itinerary is less defined upon arrival, there will be significantly greater opportunities to convince them to spend time in Lake County. Rack cards and other in-market print collateral and marketing are critical to reaching these consumers. Additionally, it is important to forge solid relationships with the hotel concierges and other tourism gatekeepers in the Central Florida market who have the ability to reach these consumers.

For those travelers who have chosen Lake County as the ultimate destination, the goal will be to get them to extend or enhance their time in Lake County. This starts with ensuring that their time here is enjoyable. Everything from the website to the staff must be friendly and accommodating. Maintaining high customer service standards that exceed the consumers' expectations is critical to creating return visitors. With 53 percent of travelers using mobile devices to plan while in-market, it is important that both printed tourism guides and the Lake County tourism website be easily

accessible to ensure exposure to the tourism opportunities that are available in Lake County.

Post-Visit - The post-visit stage is often overlooked, but equally as important as the previous four stages. This is the point at which the visitor who just experienced a great vacation can help plant the seeds for another potential consumer to take their own vacation to Lake County. Whether a photo on Facebook, a post on Tripadvisor or a mention in a local blog, word of mouth marketing is crucial to creating additional visitors. 53 percent of leisure travelers indicate that they share photos of their vacations online. 49 percent of travelers say that they enjoy reading about others' online experiences. Lake County EDT and the local tourism partners must encourage the traveler to mention their vacation and give them opportunities to do so upon their return home. Finding creative ways to reward those travelers for mentioning Lake County in their social media posts can create substantial activity.

Further it is important that Lake County EDT and the local tourism partners utilize whatever resources are available to contact the traveler to ensure that they know their visit is appreciated and encourage them to return.

Marketing and Advertising (continued)

THREE PILLARS

EVENT SPONSORSHIPS

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- ♦ **Timing**
- ♦ **CHANNELS & TACTICS**
- ♦ **Cross-channel Opportunities**
- ♦ **Marketing Strategies**

MARKETING CHANNELS AND TACTICS

- **Lake County Tourism Website** – The Lake County tourism website will serve as the foundation of the entire Lake County tourism marketing program. In most cases, the tourism website will represent Lake County's first and best opportunity to convince a potential consumer that Lake County is a destination worth visiting. As such, the website must be comprehensive, user friendly and exceedingly efficient with respect to information access. The website must simultaneously meet the needs of all of Lake County's potential consumers, while serving as a portal for the promotion of Lake County's assets, events, etc.

As the DMO for all of Lake County and Lake County's many tourism partners, the tourism website must have the capability to successfully represent the needs of all of Lake County's tourism partners and a streamlined and efficient process must be developed to ensure that these needs can be reflected and updated, as needed, within the website.

Additionally, it is imperative that the Lake County tourism website be properly optimized for Search Engine Optimization (*SEO*). As trends in *SEO* are constantly changing, it is incumbent upon the website manager to ensure that the website meets the latest in technology and best practices with respect to *SEO*.

- **Social Media** – Social media now plays a critical role in every aspect of the travel and tourism industry. Consumers

are 71 percent more likely to respond to the marketing recommendations of a friend or contact on social media than they are a general marketing promotion. Further, some 50 percent of travelers will upload comments and photos of their trip on social media outlets using smart phones. Lake County must create a significant and far-reaching social media platform to ensure that all of Lake County's potential consumers are being reached through this medium.

Not all social media strategies are created equal, however. Therefore, it is critical that Lake County's social media initiatives be targeted and well designed. Defining the target group, the message, the social media channels to utilize and the process for distributing information is of vital importance to ensure that the desired results are achieved.

- **Digital Marketing** – Consumer websites, blogs, direct email and other forms of digital media represent some of the most effective tools for marketing and advertising in today's travel and leisure marketplace. Highly targeted and easily modified, digital marketing campaigns are a mainstay of any successful marketing campaign. Every tourism space has at least one, and sometimes multiple, industry leading websites. These websites attract the champions of the space, and are an excellent vehicle for targeting those consumers with the highest likelihood of being converted into a visitor. It is imperative that Lake County have a presence on these websites.

Marketing and Advertising (continued)

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MARKETING CHANNELS AND TACTICS (continued)

Driving traffic to Lake County's tourism website is the ultimate goal of any digital marketing campaign. As such, a strong search engine marketing (*SEM*) strategy must be employed that identifies and exploits consumer search patterns. Partnering with an expert in the fields of SEO and SEM may be necessary as this is a complicated and ever changing technology.

- **Print Media** – While print media is no longer the king of the advertising world, it remains an important component of successful marketing campaigns when used in a strategic manner. Lake County EDT will utilize print media whenever and wherever it is believed that a positive return on investment can be achieved. Only those publications and opportunities that have significant readership from Lake County's targeted audience will be considered for inclusion in the marketing and advertising budget.
- **Endorsements** – While common in other marketing spaces, the tourism industry has yet to fully embrace endorsements as a common marketing tactic for the promotion of tourism assets. Lake County EDT will be aggressive in its utilization of industry endorsements. Ideally, local champions of the space or non-local champions with a prior relationship to Lake County will be identified and utilized in the marketing of specific Lake County niches and tourism opportunities. The significant exposure generated by having these industry experts tout Lake County as a premiere destination for that specific space will result in substantial returns on investment.
- **Familiarization (FAM) Tours** – An increasingly important method for cutting through the noise in today's travel and leisure marketing landscape is to show the experts and champions of the space first-hand the unique assets that Lake County has to offer. Whether it be an event planner, travel writer or local hotel concierge, providing a FAM tour gives an up close and personal view of Lake County that will far surpass the impact any advertisement or marketing message could provide. FAM tours should include an educational component and should focus on topics that meet the specific needs or desires of the FAM participants. FAM tours can provide a significant return on investment; however, substantial research and planning must go into every FAM tour to ensure that the FAM tour participants are capable of generating visitation to Lake County and that the tour itself is handled in a first-class manner and meets the requirements of the various statutes and policies guiding County Department activities.
- **Tour organizers** – Tour organizers play a significant role in the Central Florida tourism industry. Both international and domestic visitors utilize tour organizers to help plan and organize their vacations in Central Florida. Lake County EDT will tap into this market to ensure that these visitors are given the opportunity to spend at least a part of their vacation in Lake County. Creating and maintaining relationships with the local tour organizers will result in significant opportunities to bring visitors to Lake County who otherwise would be unlikely to visit.

Marketing and Advertising (continued)

THREE PILLARS

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- ♦ **Timing**
- ♦ **CHANNELS & TACTICS**
- ♦ **Cross-channel Opportunities**
- ♦ **Marketing Strategies**

MARKETING CHANNELS AND TACTICS (continued)

- **Expos/Conferences** – Expos and conferences represent an excellent opportunity to promote Lake County’s unique assets and tourism opportunities to an engaged and highly targeted audience. Lake County EDT will identify those expos and conferences that attract the highest concentration of potential consumers and will be decidedly strategic in its approach to promoting Lake County at these events either through direct participation (*booth/space rental*) or through pre-planned engagements with those who are participating.
- **Press Releases** – The use of press releases, both locally, regionally and to industry and geographic specific media outlets can produce tremendous free promotional coverage. Lake County EDT should seek out these channels and utilize these opportunities as often as possible given the high return on investment that can be achieved.
- **Billboards/signage** – Billboards and signage represent an expensive, but oftentimes, effective means of reaching the target consumer. Single billboards rarely produce the desired results; therefore, consideration of billboard campaigns should only occur when sufficient funds are available to create a compelling multiple billboard campaign.
- **Print Collateral** – Like print media, print collateral has taken on less importance in the marketing of tourism locations with the increased efficiencies offered by digital media. Despite these recent developments, Lake County EDT will continue to produce print collateral for the purposes of promoting Lake County assets and tourism opportunities. Given the high costs associated with print collateral in relation to digital marketing, the volume and diversity of its print collateral will be limited, but when appropriate, print collateral will be utilized to further strengthen Lake County’s marketing efforts.
- **Event Creation** – Event management is not a core component of Lake County EDT’s mission; however, if the opportunity arises to create an event that the private sector would otherwise not embrace, and if that event will significantly enhance Lake County’s marketing efforts within that space, then serious consideration should be given to creating a County owned event to target that niche. The “Wings and Wildflowers Festival” is a prime example of when it is appropriate to engage in event management. This tactic should be used sparingly and only when substantial returns can be expected.

Marketing and Advertising (continued)

THREE PILLARS

EVENT SPONSORSHIPS

CAPITAL PROJECTS

MARKETING & ADVERTISING

- ♦ **Timing**
- ♦ **Channels & Tactics**
- ♦ **CROSS-CHANNEL OPPORTUNITIES**
- ♦ **Marketing Strategies**

CROSS - CHANNEL OPPORTUNITIES

- **Co-Op Marketing Program** – As the DMO for all of Lake County, it is important that Lake County EDT support the marketing efforts of its local tourism partners. As such, the Lake County Co-Op Marketing Program was designed to provide these partners with the opportunity to leverage TDT dollars in the marketing and promotion of their unique assets. From conference and expo booth rentals to event promotion to industry specific advertising, the Lake County Co-Op Marketing program enables Lake County EDT to provide much needed financial assistance to Lake County tourism partners for marketing and advertising initiatives that they otherwise may not have been able to or willing to engage in.

Further, because Lake County's tourism partners are experts in the spaces they represent, the Co-Op Program increases the likelihood that Lake County's marketing initiatives will be highly targeted and result in a significant return on investment.

- **Outside the Box** – Traditional marketing and advertising will always account for the majority of Lake County's marketing and advertising budget; however, it is important that Lake County EDT remain flexible and creative enough to adopt new innovative strategies that go beyond the limits of traditional advertising. Just as the external marketing environment is constantly evolving, so to must Lake County EDT evolve in order to ensure that Lake County's marketing message is being communicated as effectively as possible. Whether it be grassroots initiatives or gorilla marketing, there will always be a place for outside the box thinking at Lake County EDT, as long as those initiatives meet the needs of Lake County and its tourism partners.
- **VISIT Florida** – As the DMO for the entire state of Florida, VISIT Florida is constantly providing new and innovative methods to market Florida tourism opportunities. Lake County must be committed to fully utilizing the services and opportunities offered by VISIT Florida.

Marketing and Advertising (continued)

THREE PILLARS

EVENT SPONSORSHIPS

CAPITAL PROJECTS

MARKETING & ADVERTISING

- ♦ **Timing**
- ♦ **Channels & Tactics**
- ♦ **Cross-channel Opportunities**
- ♦ **MARKETING STRATEGIES**

MARKETING STRATEGIES

Lake County's unique assets and distinctive positioning within the Central Florida tourism market provide the ideal opportunity for Lake County to become a major player in Florida's tourism industry. The challenge for Lake County EDT is to identify and execute marketing strategies that will enable it to capitalize on these assets and positioning while adhering to the marketing goals and principles set forth in this document. After a detailed analysis of Lake County's strengths and weaknesses and a thorough evaluation of Lake County's varied targeted audiences, Lake County EDT has developed a set of four strategies that will be internally developed and executed. These internally generated marketing strategies will be coupled with a robust co-op program to produce a comprehensive marketing and advertising campaign that will produce substantial results for Lake County tourism and help to achieve the goals and objectives outlined in this document.

Lake County EDT will employ three programs for the execution of the four identified marketing strategies:

1. **Lake County EDT Solo:** strategies initiated, executed and funded solely by Lake County EDT
2. **Lake County EDT Co-op:** strategies initiated and executed by Lake County EDT, with funding shared by Lake County EDT and campaign specific co-op partners
3. **Partner Co-op:** strategies initiated and executed by Lake County tourism partners, with funding shared by Lake County EDT and campaign specific co-op partners

The three programs outlined above provide a multitude of alternatives for the execution of Lake County's desired marketing strategies, and will allow Lake County EDT to determine the most appropriate funding mechanisms to maximize the County's return on investment. Decisions on which program to use for any given campaign will be based on a combination of factors that will include, but are not limited to: available funds, segment diversity and composition, resource capacity, and partner capabilities, amongst others.

The four strategies outlined in the following sections represent a balanced approach to the marketing of Lake County. Due to limited resources, only those marketing strategies that target segments where Lake County holds a significant competitive advantage are included in the plan. For this reason, there will be certain spaces and segments that will not be a major focus of Lake County's internally generated marketing efforts. *It is important to note, however, that an omission from one of the four strategies does not indicate a lack of interest from Lake County EDT, as the Lake County co-op program will provide substantial opportunities for all tourism initiatives in Lake County to benefit from Lake County TDT marketing dollars.*

The four marketing strategies to be internally developed and executed by Lake County EDT are as follows:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Niche Segments | 3. Florida Residents |
| 2. Orlando Visitor Market | 4. Locals |

IMPORTANCE

SEGMENT
OVERVIEWSAPPROACH
& PLATFORM

NICHE SEGMENTS

Importance

Lake County has an abundance of natural resources and unique assets that are unrivaled in the region, state and in some cases, even the country. While Lake County will likely never become a primary destination for general tourism travel, for those niche segments where Lake County has a distinctive strength, the opportunity to become a primary destination within those specific niche segments must be the primary goal. Lake County EDT must be ultra-aggressive in attacking these segments to establish itself as a leader within the space. Key to this strategy is the identification of those segments where Lake County has a relative competitive advantage, and the selection of the appropriate marketing tactics to attack those spaces.

Some of the identified niche segments reflect naturally occurring assets in Lake County, while others are a function of segments that have developed and matured in Lake County over time. In each case, Lake County EDT believes that these segments represent a strength for Lake County in a space where, in most cases, there is also relatively limited competition, and thus, a space where Lake County holds a competitive advantage over other locations in Florida. By marketing to these specific segments, Lake County will be promoting itself to consumers with an interest, and in many cases, a passion, for something that Lake County is exceedingly good at offering. As such, the likelihood of converting these

consumers into visitors and the potential for a significant return on investment are both exceptionally high.

In addition to the niche marketing attributes mentioned above, there are a multitude of other advantages for utilizing a niche marketing strategy:

- **Limited Competition** – With limited competition it is much easier to become a leader and primary destination in the space.
- **Strong Relationships** – The nature of targeted niche marketing results in strong relationships with the consumer, which protects from competitive threats.
- **Improved Capabilities** – As experts in the space, the economies of scale associated with the existing knowledge base allow new capabilities to be assimilated quicker, thus enhancing the competitive position.
- **Focused Tactics** – The extreme focus on a narrow space results in no wasted time and/or resources allowing for more growth in the segment.
- **Consumer Loyalty** – When seen as a leader in the space, consumer loyalty (*and thus repeat visitation*) increases substantially.

IMPORTANCE

SEGMENT OVERVIEWS

APPROACH & PLATFORM

Importance (continued)

From eco-tourism related activities to competitive sports to antiquing and seaplanes, Lake County's niche segments are varied and wide-ranging. The target consumers within each of these segments are equally as varied. As such, a diverse portfolio of marketing tactics will be required to effectively target the consumers within each segment. The niche segments identified by Lake County EDT as having a competitive advantage in the marketplace, and thus, worthy of Lake County EDT focus are as follows:

- Antiquing
- Bird Watching
- Boating (*Paddle, Motor, Sail*)
- Bass Fishing
- Competitive Sports
- Golf
- Seaplanes
- Training & Endurance

Segment Overviews

IMPORTANCE

SEGMENT OVERVIEWS

- ♦ **ANTIQUING**
- ♦ **Bird Watching**
- ♦ **Boating**
- ♦ **Bass Fishing**
- ♦ **Competitive Sports**
- ♦ **Golf**
- ♦ **Seaplanes**
- ♦ **Training & Endurance**

APPROACH & PLATFORM

Antiquing

For many decades, Lake County has served as an important stop on the Florida Antique Trail with a multitude of nationally recognized antiquing venues and annual events. The expansive "Renninger's Twin Markets" Complex in Mount Dora, the largest of its kind in the southeast, houses over 800 dealers and provides over a dozen mega-antique events each year. Their Antique Extravanzas attract close to 20,000 shoppers and dealers per event, providing thousands of room nights and millions in economic impact every year. Unique special events taking place across Lake County along with diverse antique shops spread across Lake County's fourteen historic downtowns have helped to make Lake County a national destination for antique enthusiasts of all ages.

Lake County has proven to be valuable for those seeking collectables from retired military servicemen and women, now ready to part

with valuables brought back from travels to the Eastern hemisphere and European markets. Many northerners relocate to Florida and then decide to part with cherished heirlooms from colonial homes when they downsize here. Antique traders recognize that Central Florida has abundant "Estate Sales". For these reasons and many others, Lake County is a treasure seekers destination.

Today antiquing means big business for tourism. Social media has ignited the passion as dealers and shoppers share valuable tips, vintage memorabilia and unburied treasures. Trendy television shows such as 'American Pickers', 'Antique Roadshow' and others fuel the fervor. Lake County should capitalize on this by re-energizing its market with targeted advertising, co-op opportunities and an aggressive social media campaign.

IMPORTANCE

SEGMENT
OVERVIEWS

- Antiquing
- **BIRD WATCHING**
- Boating
- Bass Fishing
- Competitive Sports
- Golf
- Seaplanes
- Training & Endurance

APPROACH
& PLATFORM

Segment Overviews (continued)

Bird Watching

Bird watching is the fastest growing outdoor sport in the nation, and Lake County is quickly staking its claim as a major player in the bird watching community. Home to hundreds of exceptional birding locations and with over a dozen locations located along the “Great Florida Birding Trail,” Lake County is positioned to be one of the premiere bird watching locations in the entire nation. Emeralda Marsh, the Florida Scrub Jay Trail, the Lake Apopka Restoration Area and many other nationally known bird watching locations provide unique bird watching opportunities that are unrivaled in the nation.

- The Lake Apopka Restoration Area currently holds the record for the highest species total for an inland site in the 100-plus year history of the Christmas Bird Count. In total, well over 300 species have been documented at the Lake Apopka site.
- The Florida Scrub Jay Trail is a prize sighting for many bird watchers. The Florida Scrub Jay is found only in Florida and is limited to a number of small areas in the state. The Florida Scrub Jay Trail is one of the state’s premiere locations for viewing the Florida Scrub Jay.
- The 7,000-acre Emeralda Marsh Conservation Area is nationally recognized for its large and diverse bird population. Known for its varying habitats and sheer size, what separates the conservation area for other preserves is its 4.3-mile wildlife drive. The drive

provides unbelievable access to the interior of wetland habitats.

Equally as important as the unique and varied bird watching locations that can be found within Lake County is the passion and demographic profile of the bird watching enthusiasts. Birders are highly educated with average annual incomes much higher than the general population. Birders have a well-connected community and are willing to travel long distances and spend for the opportunity to see certain species that are on their check-off list. The birding community contains a highly desirable subset of potential consumers and Lake County must utilize every technique available to drive these visitors to the area. The “Wings and Wildflowers Festival” will continue to be Lake County’s premiere tactic for creating awareness within the bird watching community.

Segment Overviews (continued)

IMPORTANCE

SEGMENT OVERVIEWS

- Antiquing
- Bird Watching
- **BOATING**
- Bass Fishing
- Competitive Sports
- Golf
- Seaplanes
- Training & Endurance

APPROACH & PLATFORM

Boating (Paddle, Motor, Sail)

With more than 1,000 lakes and rivers, Lake County is without a doubt a boater's paradise. Lake County is not only home to hundreds of waterways, but the quality of freshwater fishing and boating amenities are unrivaled in the region. From Hickory Point Recreational Facility, a park that features 12 boat ramps with access to the eight-lake Harris Chain, to the tranquil and picturesque water trails and blueways, which offer canoeists and kayakers a myriad of outdoor adventures, Lake County is home to some of the region's premiere boating opportunities.

Lake County is a unique boating destination that is distinguished by two separate chain-of-lakes and multiple rivers. There are two navigable waterways in Lake County which allow boaters to access the Intercoastal Waterway and the Atlantic Ocean. This combination of interconnected lakes and rivers combines for a truly unique boating experience. Further, many of Lake County's historic downtowns have the added advantage of direct lake access allowing them to offer lakeside dining and

entertainment venues as well as a multitude of water related events and festivals.

Lake County's lakes and waterways offer boating opportunities for all types of watercraft including sail, paddle and gas electric powered crafts. Recreational boating in the United States has an annual economic value of \$121.5 billion; there are more than 12 million registered recreational boats in the United States. In 2012, there were 870,031 registered pleasure boats in the state of Florida. Recreational boaters are willing to travel to destinations that will support their hobbies and sport.

Of all the targeted niches identified in this marketing plan, boating represents the deepest, most varied niche with the highest potential for generating significant visitation. The diversity offered by the many lakes and interconnected waterways, boating related infrastructure, including over 60 boat ramps, and boating related support services have positioned Lake County to be a regional leader in the boating segment.

Segment Overviews (continued)

IMPORTANCE

SEGMENT OVERVIEWS

- Antiquing
- Bird Watching
- Boating
- **BASS FISHING**
- Competitive Sports
- Golf
- Seaplanes
- Training & Endurance

APPROACH & PLATFORM

Bass Fishing

Florida is often referred to as the “Fishing Capital of the World”, widely known for its abundant shoreline and tropical climate, and few areas in the state produce as many “big catch” prospects as Lake County. Two of the top-rated fisheries in Florida can be found within Lake County. The Harris Chain and the World Renowned St. Johns River are consistently ranked by Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission in the top 5 fisheries within the state. The beautiful and scenic Harris Chain of Lakes is comprised of eight interconnected lakes covering approximately 50,000 acres. The largest of the lakes is the 13,788-acre Lake Harris, which has been home to several nationally televised fishing tournaments.

The St. Johns River is the largest river in Florida and stretches west from Vero Beach north to Jacksonville. Lake George along the St. Johns River is accessible from Astor, the northernmost town in Lake County. Lake George is the second largest lake in the state and has topped the FWC list for Top Black Bass Fishing for many years. The lake is also renowned for its catfish, striped, sunshine, white bass, and crappie as well. The St. Johns River is consistently featured as a fishing destination for professional bass fishing organizations.

Bass anglers spend almost twice as much as the typical visitor due to their gear, supply and fuel needs making them a highly desirable target visitor for Lake County. With numerous boat ramps spanning from the Harris Chain to smaller secluded bass fishing

lakes, recreational bass fishing anglers have the opportunity for a once in a lifetime bass fishing vacation in Lake County where a multiple day fishing trip can be planned with a different excellent fishing locale each day.

In addition to recreational bass fishing, competitive bass fishing means big business for Lake County. As described above Lake County is well positioned to be the premiere bass fishing location in all of Florida due to the multitude of fishing locations and quality of fisheries located here. Competitive bass fishing represents the most powerful method for generating exposure regarding Lake County’s bass fishing offerings. From local amateur weekend events to BASS National Championships lasting a week, bass fishing tournaments generate substantial economic benefits for Lake County.

Local organizations, including the City of Tavares, the Astor Chamber of Commerce, the Lake County Water Authority and the Harris Chain Bassmasters, amongst many others, are increasing their efforts to bring local, regional and national tournaments to Lake County. Further, Lake County EDT is consistently seeking new fishing tournaments to further enhance Lake County’s reputation as a bass fishing destination. The national tours, including BASS and FLW, have consistently stated that their tournaments held in Lake County are some of their most productive and exciting stops. Further, conversations with professional anglers support this perspective.

IMPORTANCE

SEGMENT
OVERVIEWS

- Antiquing
- Bird Watching
- Boating
- Bass Fishing
- **COMPETITIVE SPORTS**
- Golf
- Seaplanes
- Training & Endurance

APPROACH
& PLATFORM

Segment Overviews (continued)

Bass Fishing (continued)

It is critical that Lake County EDT capitalize on the momentum that currently exists within the bass fishing community regarding the productivity of Lake County's waterways. However, special attention must be paid to maintaining the integrity of the local

Competitive Sports

Lake County is the ideal location for both spectators and participants of outdoor sporting events. Gently rolling hills, clean lakes and its close proximity to Orlando-area attractions and amenities, draw athletes from throughout the country and around the world. From collegiate softball and lacrosse events at the National Training Center to amateur basketball and indoor volleyball tournaments at The Big House to equestrian events at the world class Grand Oaks Resort, Lake County has a diverse inventory of premiere sporting facilities and events. The soon to be completed Hickory Point Beach Sand Volleyball Complex in

fisheries. Too often over-fishing productive fisheries can cause a decline in the fish population. It is vital that Lake County EDT work with local fishing and wildlife partners to ensure that over-fishing of the lakes and waterways is not occurring.

Tavares and Clermont Rowing Complex in Clermont will further Lake County's sports venue offerings.

With the significant economic impact generated by sporting events and tremendous potential for future growth in the competitive sports segment coupled with Lake County's unique positioning in the space, both geographically and from an infrastructure perspective, it is imperative that Lake County continue to be aggressive in attracting sporting events and organizations to the area.

Segment Overviews (continued)

IMPORTANCE

SEGMENT OVERVIEWS

- Antiquing
- Bird Watching
- Boating
- Bass Fishing
- Competitive Sports
- **GOLF**
- Seaplanes
- Training & Endurance

APPROACH & PLATFORM

Golf

Lake County has a storied history of providing excellent golf opportunities for golfing enthusiasts. Golf courses in Lake County boast scenic vistas of “Real Florida” as well as the natural rolling hills unique to Lake County. With more than two dozen courses in the area, golfers have a multitude of options, many of which include dramatic fairway elevation changes and spectacular lake views. Lake County’s golf offerings include courses for both experienced and beginning golfers and for all income levels.

Lake County’s moderate climate allows for year-round golfing and given the sheer number of courses, Lake County has the potential to become a primary golfing destination for recreational golfers looking to plan a group, multi-day golf outing. Lake County EDT must partner with the local golf clubs and local golfing enthusiasts to ensure that Lake County is appropriately positioned to become a primary destination for regional and national golfers. Lake County EDT must be proactive in creating opportunities to generate exposure for golfing in Lake County.

While recreational golf provides a multitude of opportunities to increase visitation to Lake County, competitive golf may represent

a larger potential market for visitation. Lake County has a long history of hosting major golf championships. Mission Inn Resort and Club has hosted an NCAA Championship in golf for each of the last 18 years. Mission Inn’s two championship courses, Las Colinas and El Campeon, offer rare tee-to-green elevation changes and nationally revered layouts that are ideal for tournament golf. Additionally, Mission Inn is the home to the Gary Gilchrist Golf Academy, which trains junior golfers from around the world to become professional golfers.

Further, a plethora of other championship golf courses including Harbor Hills, Black Bear and Deer Island, amongst many others, provide multiple venues for tournament organizers looking for varied degrees of course difficulties. Golfers have a high spending profile and typically will spend multiple nights in market, making them a desirable demographic for the targeting of potential visitation to Lake County. Lake County EDT will work with the local courses and the Central Florida Sports Commission to ensure that everything from amateur tournaments to major golf championships continue to utilize Lake County’s courses for their events.

Segment Overviews (continued)

IMPORTANCE

SEGMENT OVERVIEWS

- Antiquing
- Bird Watching
- Boating
- Bass Fishing
- Competitive Sports
- Golf
- SEAPLANES
- TRAINING & ENDURANCE

APPROACH & PLATFORM

Seaplanes

Lead by the City of Tavares's recent transformation into "America's Seaplane City," Lake County is quickly becoming a preferred destination for seaplane enthusiasts from around the country. In its first two years, over 3,400 seaplanes landed at the Tavares Seaplane Base, which far exceeded the original expectations. The Tavares Seaplane base, with its FAA designated water runway, flight tower and terminal, has spurred multiple other seaplane projects in Lake County, and seaplane pilots, tourists and manufacturers have taken notice.

Training & Endurance

For over three decades, Lake County has served as a national destination for triathlons and is now becoming known as a leader in the larger endurance sports and sports training segment. With a multitude of nationally recognized endurance events, including triathlons, bike road races and now adventure racing, Lake County's place within the endurance sports segment is unquestioned. With a year round moderate climate, rolling hills and thousands of lakes, Lake County is a natural home for endurance and sports training and provides Lake County a natural competitive advantage within the segment that is unrivaled in the region. Further, the National Training Center is a world-renowned training facility that attracts thousands of endurance athletes, including multiple Olympic athletes, to Lake County each year.

Seaplane owners and pilots are generally affluent and are constantly looking for new adventures. The Tavares Seaplane base has put Lake County on the map for these adventurers, and it is critical that Lake County EDT support the regions efforts to continue to build the Lake County seaplane reputation and drive additional seaplane related tourism activities to Lake County.

The Endurance Sports segment, and training for endurance sports in particular, has experienced significant growth over the last 10 to 20 years. The sport experienced tremendous notoriety and an explosion in popularity after it was included the 2000 Olympic Games. Lake County has the history, the expertise and the infrastructure in place to become the premiere location for endurance and sports training and competition in the country. It is imperative that Lake County EDT work with the local endurance and sports training partners to continue to enhance Lake County's reputation as an endurance and sports training location. Embracing the long-standing traditions while contributing significant resources to the growth of the sport will be critical to continued growth in this segment in Lake County.

IMPORTANCE

SEGMENT
OVERVIEWSAPPROACH
& PLATFORM

Approach and Platform

Lake County EDT will develop a unique marketing strategy tailored specifically for each niche segment identified as a target market for Lake County. Lake County EDT will conduct substantial research and analysis on each niche segment to determine the appropriate marketing channels and tactics to be utilized in that space in order to ensure that each tactic is maximizing the value of the resources invested. The type and quantity of marketing channels and tactics selected for each niche may vary considerably depending on the target audience and the quality of opportunities available in that segment.

The specific tactics to be utilized within each niche segment can be found in the annual “Marketing Tactics, Budget and Timeline Report,” however, it is important to note that each tactic will adhere to all of the

marketing principles outlined in this plan, in addition to achieving the following three goals:

1. **Meet the Unique Needs of the Segment Consumer** – Identify the unique needs of the target segment and tailor the message to meet those needs.
2. **Use the Language of the Segment** – Ensure the message portrays Lake County as a natural member of the segment, not as an outsider trying to break in to the segment
3. **Assess the Market** – Test the competition in the market and determine the best way to position Lake County’s message against that competition.

IMPORTANCE

APPROACH & PLATFORM

ORLANDO VISITOR MARKET

Importance

As a second tier destination, it is unlikely that Lake County will ever become a primary destination for general tourism travel. Orange County and the City of Orlando will likely always be a greater draw for tourist visitation within Central Florida. Understanding Lake County's unique positioning in relation to these international tourist destinations and implementing strategies to capitalize on their significant visitation will generate substantial economic benefits for Lake County.

It is estimated that between 50 and 60 million tourists visit Orlando each year. While many of these visitors will spend the entirety of their vacation on attraction property without ever leaving and/or have the entirety of their vacation already planned before arriving, the number of visitors who leave days unplanned or determine their plans after arriving remains considerable. If only a small portion of these visitors can be attracted to Lake County, the economic impacts would be substantial.

The "Real Florida. Real Close." marketing message will be key to this strategy. Lake County represents the perfect complement to an Orlando theme park vacation with its abundance of ecotourism related natural resources and charming historic downtowns (*"Real Florida"*). Equally as important, though, is the fact that Lake County is located at the doorstep to these tourism locations. Lake County is within an hours' drive of all of the Orlando theme parks, making Lake County an easily accessible day-trip or short overnight destination for Central Florida visitors (*"Real Close"*).

An important subset of the Orlando Visitor Market audience is international travelers, specifically those visitors coming from South America and the United Kingdom. The numbers of tourists visiting from these locations has increased substantially over the last decade, and it is imperative that Lake County EDT analyze and execute the appropriate strategies to capture this audience through all stages of the vacation process.

IMPORTANCE

APPROACH
& PLATFORM

Approach and Platform

The Orlando visitor market is one of the most saturated marketing environments in the world. The sheer magnitude of attractions, both in Orange County and in the surrounding areas, all of whom are attempting to gain exposure with these visitors, makes it incredibly difficult to reach the desired consumer. As such, it is critical that any marketing strategies aimed at targeted these visitors be diverse and well-conceived. Marketing strategies must attempt to target the Orlando tourists at all stages of the planning process and must include a variety of marketing channels in order to ensure the greatest opportunity for exposure.

Digital and point of sale marketing will play a large role in the attraction of Orlando visitors. Relationships with potential partners in the Orlando market (*hotel concierges, travel planners, tour organizers, visitor marketing groups, etc.*) will also need to be featured. Additionally, it will be imperative to target international visitors who account for a significant portion of the growth in Central Florida tourism that has occurred over the last decade.

The specific tactics to be utilized within to attract the Orlando Visitor Market can be found in the annual “Marketing Tactics, Budget and Timeline Report.”

IMPORTANCE

APPROACH & PLATFORM

FLORIDA RESIDENTS

Importance

With a population of over 19 million, the state of Florida represents a substantial marketing segment that should be pursued by Lake County. The in-state market brings in revenue that is crucial to maintaining year-round stability in Lake County's economy by generating economic activity during the stretches of time throughout the year when other segments are relatively slow.

Discussions with local hotel partners indicate that in-state travelers account for well over 60 percent of all booked room nights. Further, studies have shown that Floridians are more likely to take a vacation in-state than out of state, and the top destinations for these travelers are Orlando, Tampa, St. Petersburg and Clearwater. All are locations within close proximity of Lake County and with a seemingly high opportunity for visitor conversions. As with the Orlando Visitor segment, the "Real Florida. Real Close." message must be a key driver of any marketing campaign within this segment in order to convince these tourists that Lake County has

travel worthy destinations all within close proximity of either their home or another location that they would otherwise consider traveling to.

Couples and families make up the vast majority of this segment. They travel year round and can easily visit a variety of places within the state in any given year. This demographic is constantly looking for new places to go within the state of Florida for efficient travel and quick weekend getaways. This segment also frequently invites their out-of-state friends and family to join them on trips, as these friends and family are likely already planning to visit Florida at some point. In-state travelers also have greater spending habits while in market due to the limited spending requirements to get to their destination. The combination of these two factors creates a significant multiplier effect when targeting in-state travelers.

Efficiency, relaxation and cost effectiveness are the main goals of this demographic, which are features that Lake County excels at.

IMPORTANCE

APPROACH
& PLATFORM

Approach and Platform

Lake County must engage in an aggressive marketing campaign with high saturation in certain markets and for certain demographic groups within the state. Key to the marketing campaign will be Lake County's ability to convince Florida residents that Lake County has unique tourism offerings that cannot be found in other locations. The "Real Florida. Real Close." message should drive the marketing campaign with special attention paid to those areas that are truly unique to Lake County: rolling hills, lakes and waterways, eco-tourism, historic downtowns, etc.

The goal of the marketing campaign for this segment is to promote the different Lake County attractions that will enhance the appeal of in-state travel to Lake County. The marketing campaigns need to give residents the opportunity to experience something new and exciting while remaining in the state. The campaigns should

intrigue this group by promoting what Lake County has to offer, while also reinforcing the idea that this is a place not unlike their home. Lake County offers a cost-effective, efficient, value-driven locale that is easily accessible and can offer family friendly fun or outdoor adventures to all Floridian travelers.

With a high propensity to invite friends and relatives, the tactics utilized for this segment must encourage the in-state consumers to not only choose to visit Lake County, but to also invite their friends and relatives or encourage those friends and relatives to visit on a future vacation.

The specific tactics to be utilized within to attract the Florida Resident Visitor Market can be found in the annual "Marketing Tactics, Budget and Timeline Report."

IMPORTANCE

APPROACH & PLATFORM

LAKE COUNTY RESIDENTS

Importance

Lake County residents represent an important, yet underappreciated target market for the Lake County tourism industry. While the likelihood of this segment generating significant room nights within Lake County is slim, as the “Marketing Principles” section of this plan suggests, the economic impact that would be created by convincing Lake County residents to spend their vacation and entertainment dollars within Lake County would be substantial. With a countywide population of over 300,000, the potential for significant economic benefits to the Lake County tourism industry would be very high, if marketing programs were designed to expose Lake County residents to the unique offerings that exist in their own backyard.

Lake County EDT and Lake County’s tourism partners have historically done a poor job of promoting the attractions and

amenities which exist in Lake County to Lake County residents. These residents are under the impression that they must leave the County in order to have an enjoyable vacation. In some cases, it is not a lack of knowledge of the amenities, but rather the residents have lived amongst these attractions for so long that they have come to take the value of the attractions for granted. Designing and implementing marketing strategies to both inform and remind Lake County residents about the many potential entertainment options that exist should be of paramount importance, because not only will these “in-county tourists” generate a direct economic impact for its tourism partners, but they will also tell their out-of-county friends and relatives who could then visit and create a multiplier effect for the industry.

IMPORTANCE

**APPROACH
& PLATFORM**

Approach and Platform

Lake County EDT must design marketing strategies to encourage local residents to visit and patronize local establishments rather than spending their limited entertainment dollars outside of the County. Social media will play a significant role in this marketing strategy, as will relationship building with the local media partners. Constant exposure and frequent interaction with Lake County residents will be key. The more Lake County EDT can place a Lake County adventure on the top of mind of residents, the more likely these residents are to patronize local establishments.

Lake County EDT must create a robust tourism website that provides current event and attraction information. Further, Lake County EDT should actively promote the website to Lake County residents as THE online resource for finding adventures, entertainment and event information in Lake County. In addition, Lake County EDT should continue to print the small guides highlighting these attractions, events and entertainment options and distribute these to the local chambers and tourism partners to ensure visibility and exposure.