

# WELCOME

**November 19, 2025**

**Joint Meeting of the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority  
and Explore Asheville**

**EXPLORE  
ASHEVILLE**

POWERED BY | Buncombe County Tourism  
Development Authority

# CALL TO ORDER

Chair Matthew Lehman

- Call to order the Joint Meeting of the BCTDA, Public Authority and Explore Asheville



POWERED BY | Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority

## Board Meeting

Wednesday, November 19, 2025 | 9:00 a.m.

Explore Asheville | 27 College Place | Board Room (1st Floor)

Members of the public may attend in person or [register here](#) to view a livestream of the meeting.

### AGENDA

9:00 a.m.	Call to Order the Joint Meeting of the BCTDA, Public Authority and Explore Asheville	Matthew Lehman
9:05 a.m.	Approval of October 29, 2025 Meeting Minutes	Matthew Lehman
9:10 a.m.	October 2025 Financial Reports	Jennifer Kass-Green
9:15 a.m.	Administrative Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Approval of BCTDA Bylaws</li><li>b. Approval of Explore Asheville Bylaws</li></ul>	Sabrina Rockoff, McGuire Wood & Bissette Law Firm, BCTDA Legal Counsel
9:20 a.m.	President & CEO Report	Vic Isley
9:30 a.m.	Sports Updates	Jay Curwen, Vic Isley
9:50 a.m.	Partnership and Destination Management Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Workforce Development Program</li><li>b. Festivals and Cultural Events Grants Recommendations</li></ul>	Tiffany Thacker, Kimberly Puryear
10:15 a.m.	Buncombe County Commission Update	Commissioner Terri Wells
10:20 a.m.	Miscellaneous Business	Matthew Lehman
10:25 a.m.	Comments from the General Public	Matthew Lehman
10:30 a.m.	Adjournment	Matthew Lehman

The next joint BCTDA monthly meeting is **Wednesday, January 28, 2026**, at 9:00 a.m., in the Board Room of Explore Asheville, located at 27 College Place. Please contact Sarah Myers at [smyers@ExploreAsheville.com](mailto:smyers@ExploreAsheville.com) or call 828.333.5831 with questions.

#### BCTDA Mission Statement

*To be a leader in the economic development of Buncombe County by attracting and servicing visitors, generating income, jobs and tax revenues which make the community a better place to live and visit.*



# FOR OUR REMOTE VIEWERS

Chair Matthew Lehman

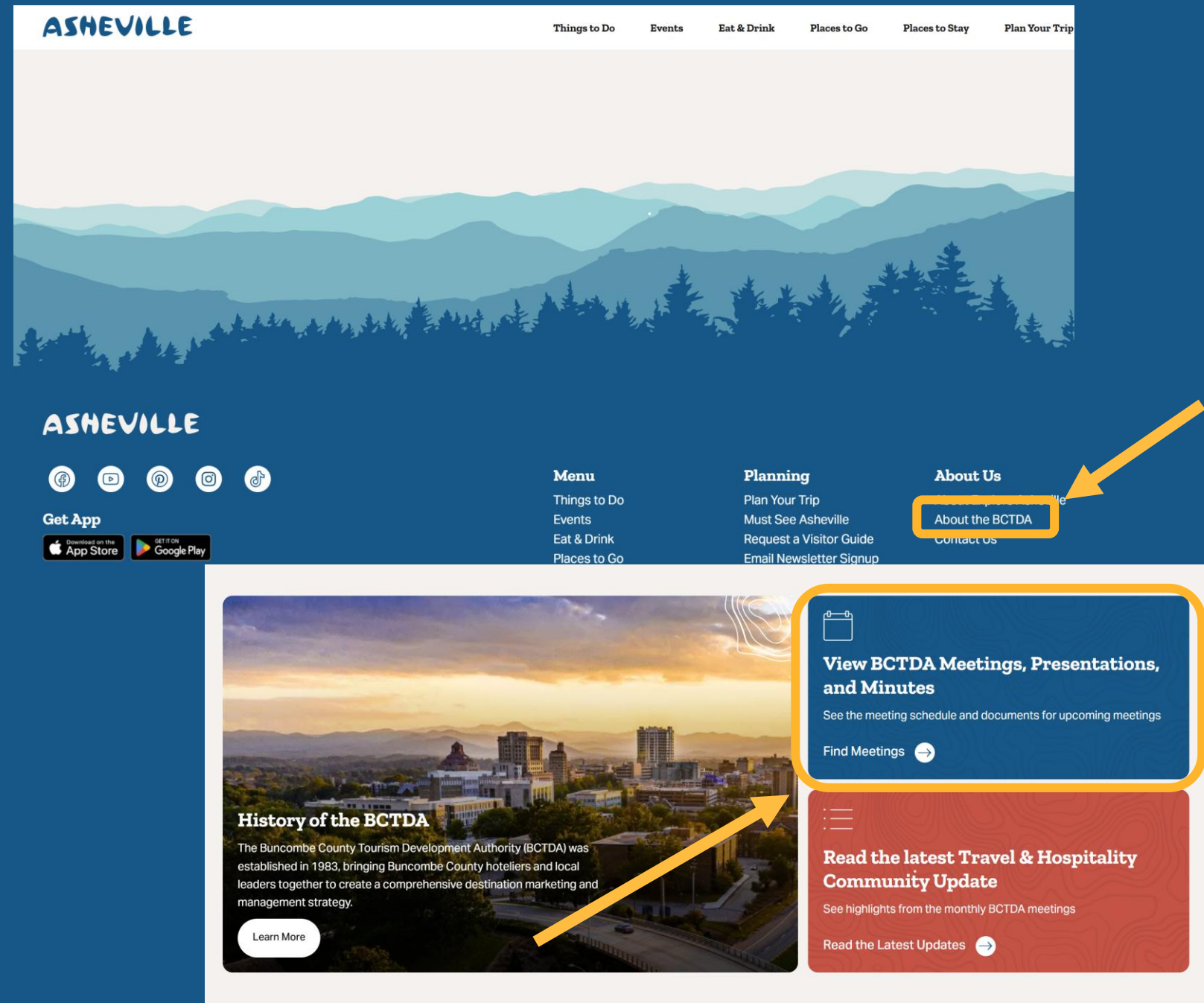
For our viewers watching remotely, documents were emailed to everyone who registered on Zoom by 8:00 this morning.

The agenda and meeting documents are also available online.

Additional materials, including the PowerPoint presentation, will be posted later today.

Go to:

- [ExploreAsheville.com](https://www.exploreasheville.com)
- About the BCTDA section
- View BCTDA meetings, presentations, and minutes



# WELCOME BOARD & GUESTS

Chair Matthew Lehman

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- Welcome board members and guests who are in attendance
- Introductions around the room



# OCTOBER 29 MINUTES

Chair Matthew Lehman

## Questions/ Comments

## Suggested Motion:

Motion to approve the October 29, 2025,  
BCTDA Board meeting minutes.

## Motion Second

## Additional Discussion

## Vote



POWERED BY | Buncombe County Tourism  
Development Authority

Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority  
A Joint Meeting of the Public Authority and Explore Asheville  
Explore Asheville – 27 College Place, Asheville

Board Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, October 29, 2025

<b>Present (Voting):</b>	Matthew Lehman, Chair; HP Patel, Vice Chair; Amy Kelly, Michael Lusick, Lucious Wilson, Elizabeth Putnam, Himanshu Karvir, Brenda Durden, Tim Rosebrock
<b>Absent (Voting):</b>	None
<b>Present (Ex-Officio):</b>	Asheville Vice Mayor Antanette Mosley, Buncombe County Commissioner Terri Wells
<b>Absent (Ex-Officio):</b>	None
<b>Staff:</b>	Vic Isley, Dodie Stephens, Ed Silver, Jennifer Kass-Green, Tiffany Thacker, Josh Jones, Jay Curwen, Shawn Boone, Ashley Greenstein, Allison Bashford, McKenzie Provost, Payton Byrnes, Sarah Myers
<b>BC Finance:</b>	Melissa Moore
<b>Legal Counsel:</b>	Sabrina Rockoff, McGuire, Wood & Bisette
<b>In-Person Attendees:</b>	John Ellis, prior BCTDA Board Member Casey Gilbert, Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce Meghan Rogers, Asheville Independent Restaurants Justin McGuire, Mountain Xpress Randy Claybrook, Asheville B&B Association
<b>Online Attendees:</b>	Shelby Pearsall, Khal Koury, Kristen Childers, Emilie Soffe, Emily Crosby, Kyle McCurry; Explore Asheville Diane Rogers, Pinecrest Bed & Breakfast Olivia Ward, OnWard Digital Media Jim Muth, TPDF Committee Will Hofmann, Asheville Citizen Times Christopher Corl, Harrah's Cherokee Center Asheville Kit Cramer, Blythe Edwards; Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce Rick Bell, Asheville Buncombe Hotel Association Chris Smith, Asheville Buncombe Regional Sports Commission Brian Johnson, Naventure (Lake Powhatan Campground) Lucy Dozier, Megan Shields; MMGY Global Dean Hensley, WLOS News 13 Nichole Silver, Freuenberg





# FINANCIAL UPDATES

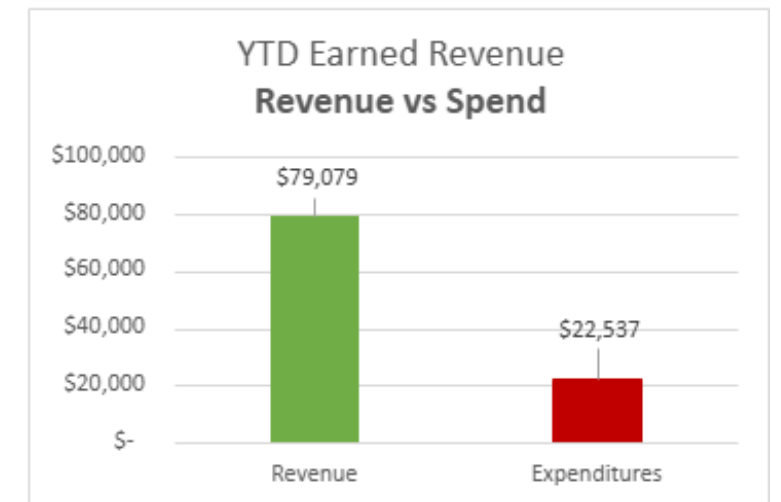
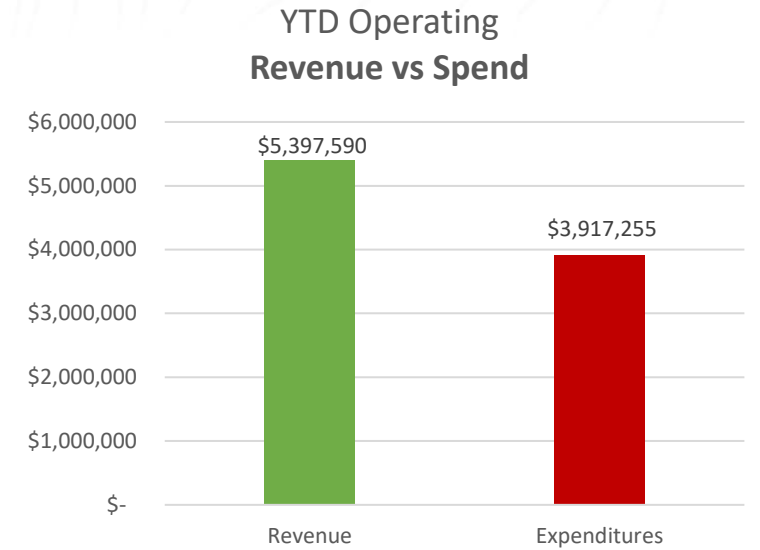
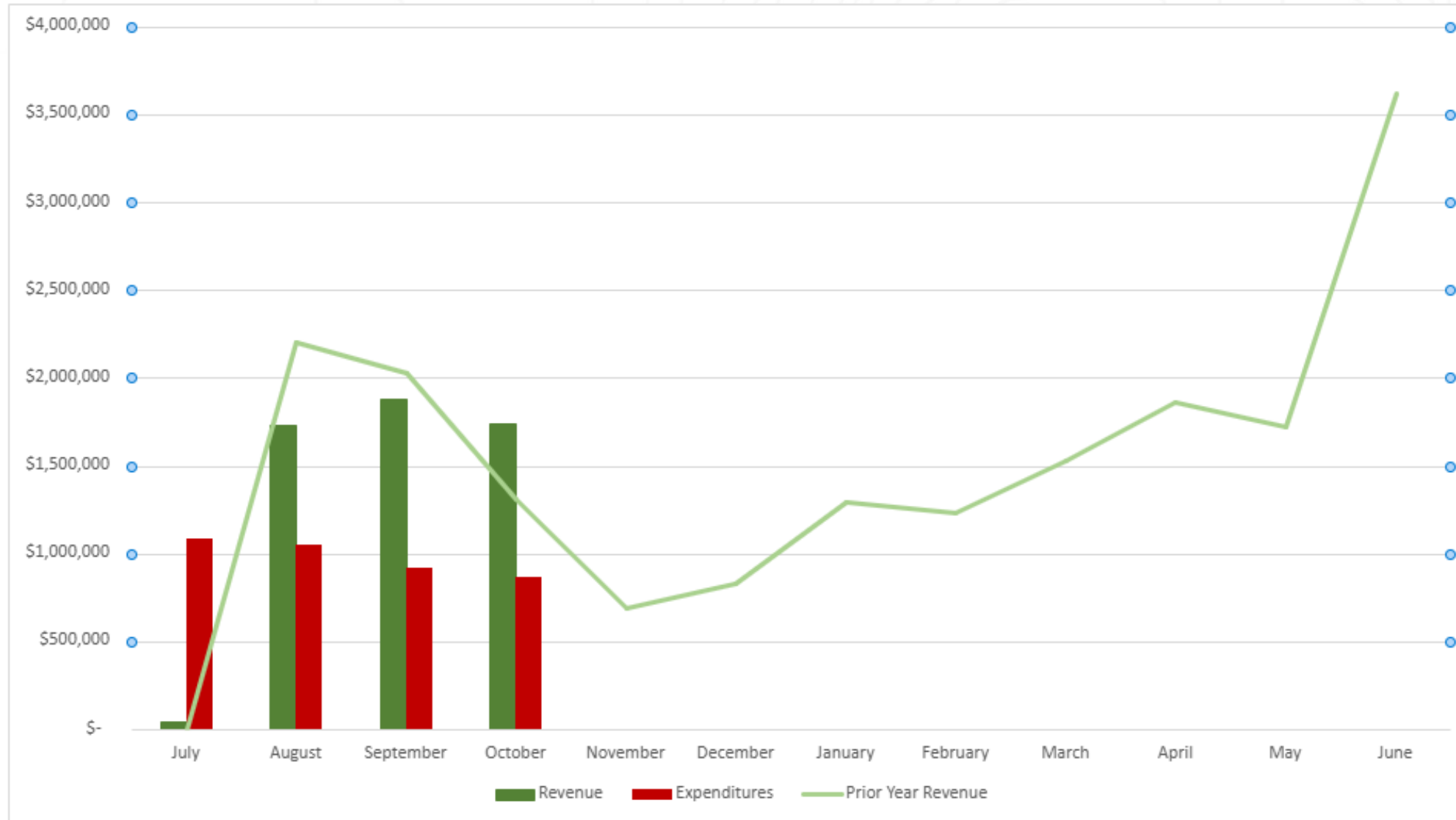
Jennifer Kass-Green

Explore Asheville | VP of Culture & Business Affairs

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ASHEVILLE  
POWERED BY | Buncombe County Tourism  
Development Authority

# OPERATING AND EARNED REVENUE FUNDS

Revenues (Current and Prior-year) vs Expenditures (current year), October 2025



For more information, see financial and sales statements pages 1-3, and 7

# OPERATING AND EARNED REVENUE FUNDS

Monthly Summary of Activities, October 2025

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Operating Fund	Budget	Current Month Actual	Year to Date Actual	(%) Budget Collected/Used
Total revenues	\$25,915,000	\$1,739,989	\$5,397,590	20.8%
Total expenditures		\$867,105	\$3,917,256	15.1%

Earned Revenue Fund	Budget	Current Month Actual	Year to Date Actual	(%) Budget Collected/Used
Total revenues	\$55,000	\$18,870	\$79,079	>100%
Total expenditures		\$-	\$22,537	41.0%

For more information, see financial and sales statements pages 1-2

# PROJECT FUNDS: TPDF AND LIFT FUNDS

Monthly Summary of Activities, October 2025

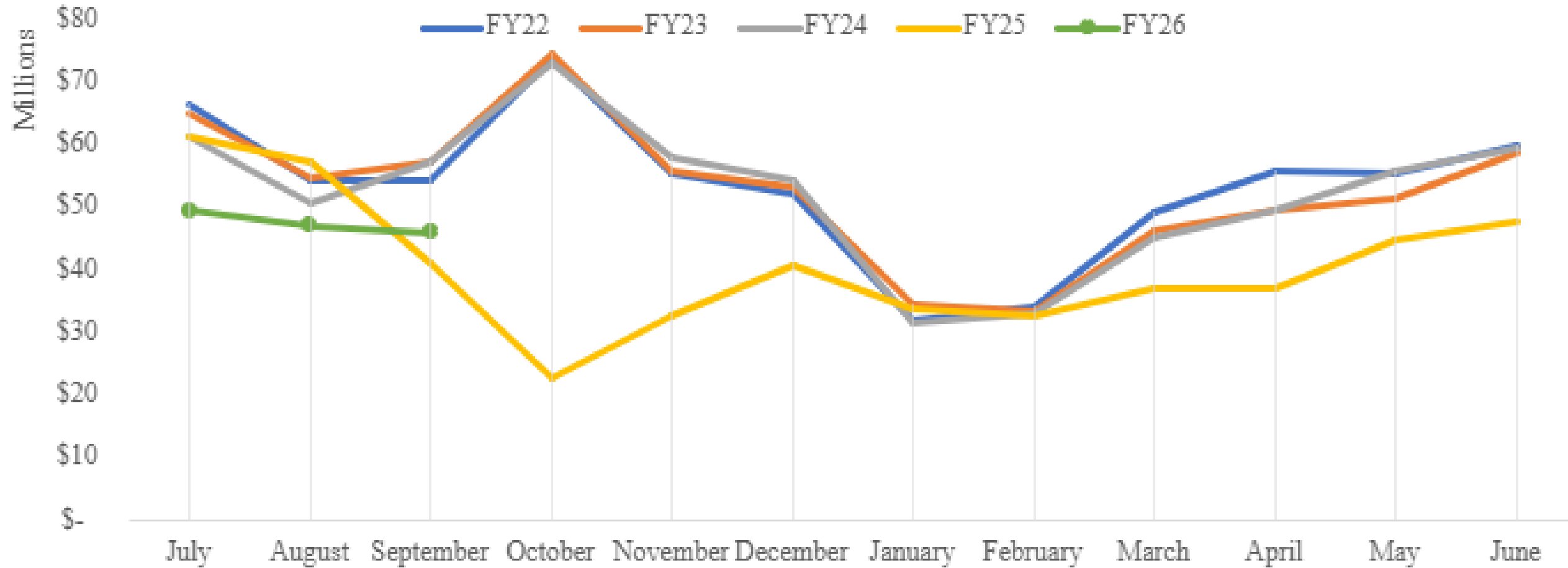
Tourism Product Development Fund	Budget	Current Month Actual	Life to Date Actual	(%) Budget Collected/Used
Total revenues	\$34,737,985	\$434,932	\$49,611,797	>100%
Total expenditures		\$0	\$9,050,976	26.1%
Active projects		21		
Funding available for future grants		\$14,873,813		

Legacy Investment From Tourism Fund	Budget	Current Month Actual	Life to Date Actual	(%) Budget Collected/Used
Total revenues	\$10,379,903	\$434,932	\$18,239,687	>100%
Total expenditures		\$0	\$121,250	1%
Active projects		13		
Funding available for future grants		\$7,859,783		

For more information, see financial and sales statements pages 3, 5, & 6

# LODGING SALES

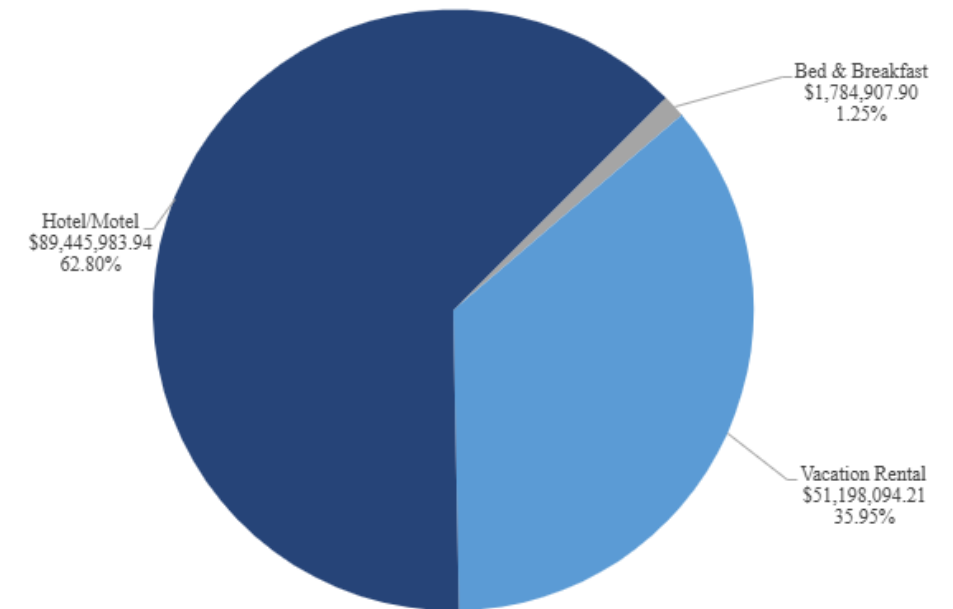
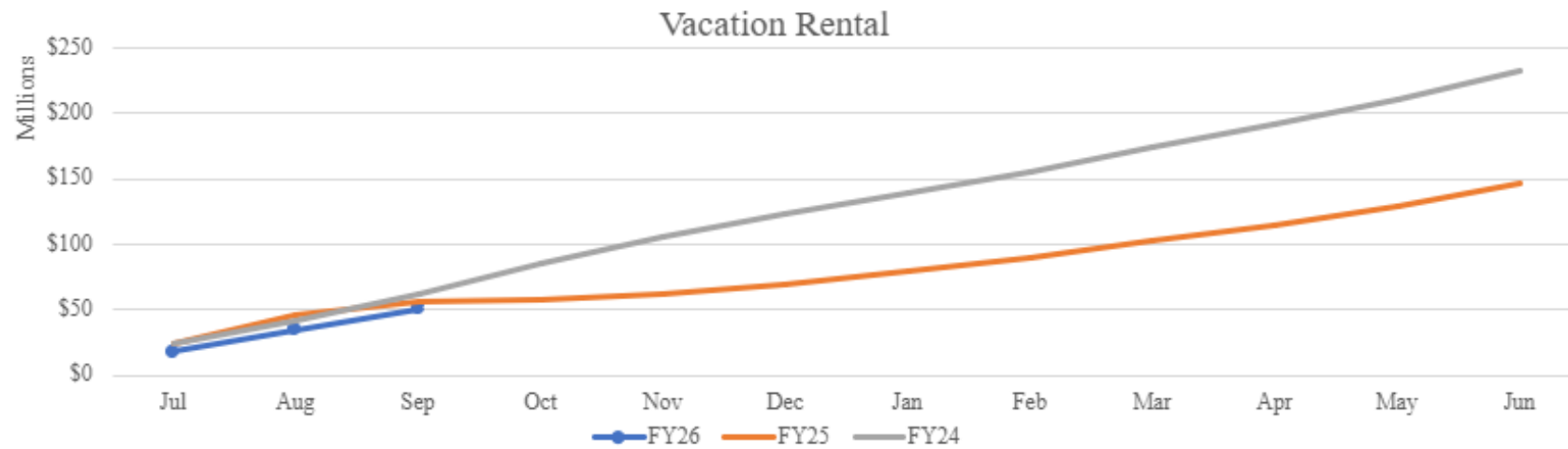
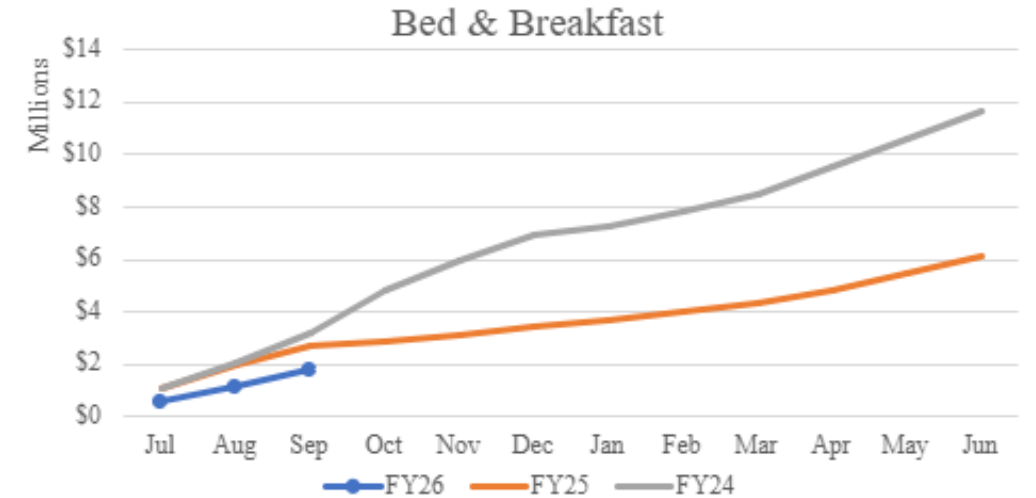
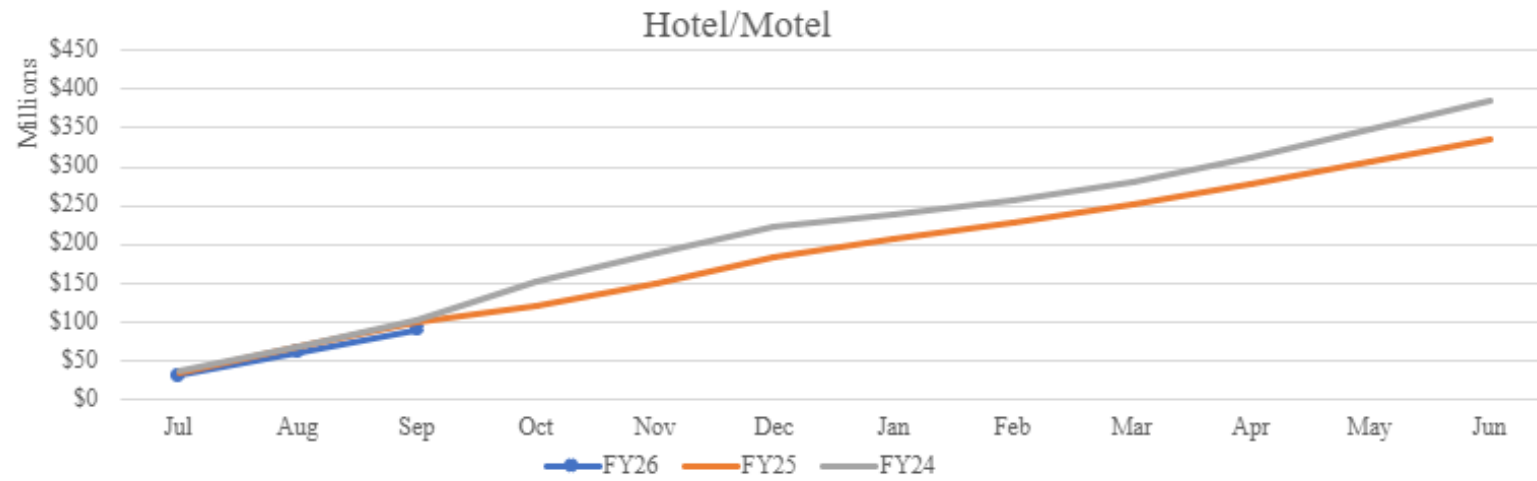
Shown by Month of Sales, Year-to-Date (5 years), October 2025



For more information, see financial and sales statements page 9

# LODGING SALES

Activity by type and month, shown for 3 years, October 2025



For more information, see financial and sales statements pages 9 - 10

# OCTOBER PRELIMINARY FINANCIAL REPORTS

Chair Matthew Lehman

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## Questions/Comments

### Suggested Motion:

Motion to approve the October 2025 preliminary financial reports as presented.

## Motion Second

## Additional Discussion

## Vote





# ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATE

**Sabrina Rockoff**  
**McGuire Wood & Bissette Law Firm |**  
**BCTDA Legal Counsel**



# BCTDA BYLAWS UPDATE

Chair Matthew Lehman

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## Questions/Comments

### Suggested Motion:

Motion to approve the updated BCTDA Bylaws as presented.

### Motion Second

### Additional Discussion

### Vote



# EXPLORE ASHEVILLE BYLAWS UPDATE

Chair Matthew Lehman

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## Questions/Comments

### Suggested Motion:

Motion to approve the updated Explore Asheville Bylaws as presented.

### Motion Second

### Additional Discussion

### Vote

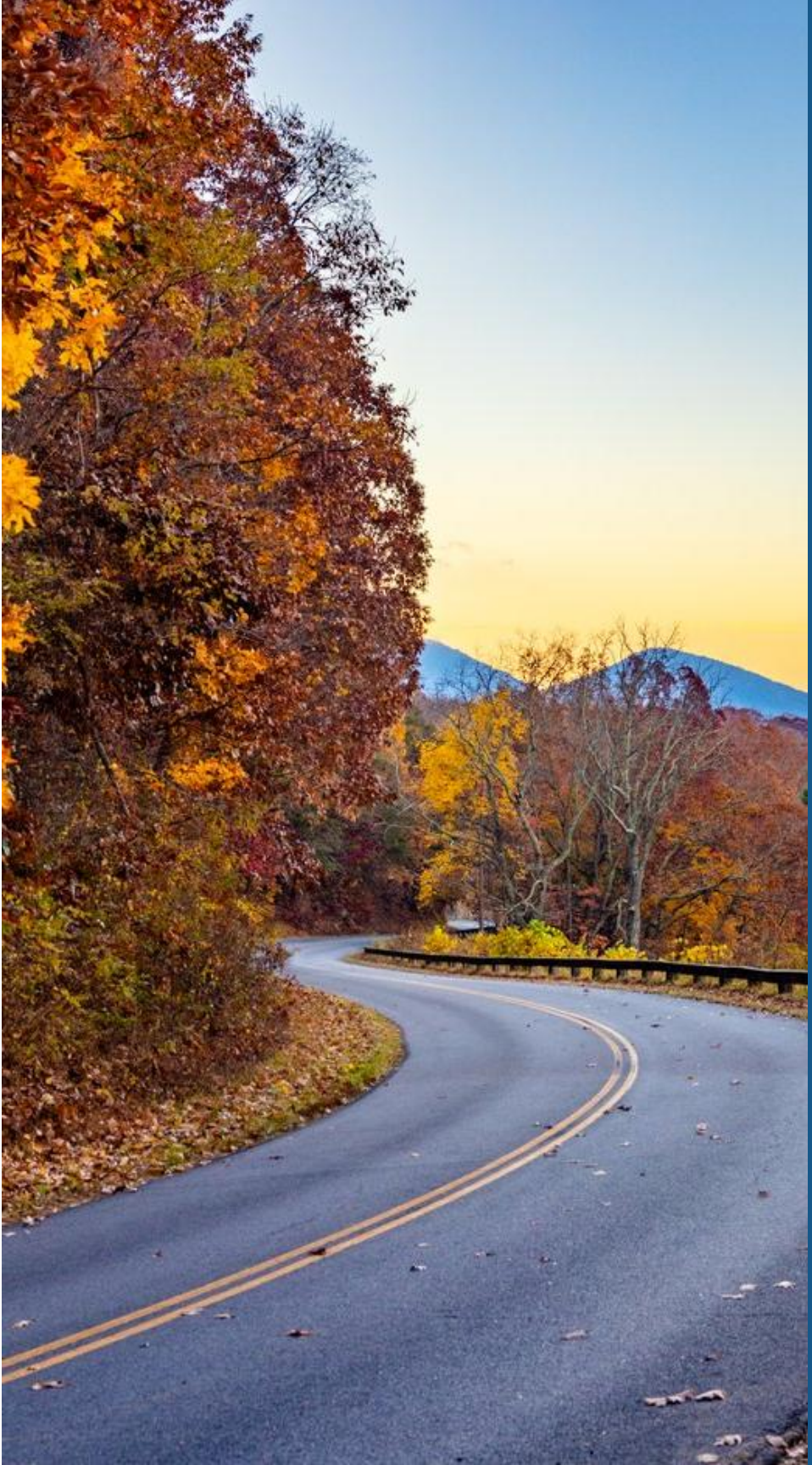




# PRESIDENT & CEO REPORT

**Vic Isley**  
Explore Asheville | President & CEO

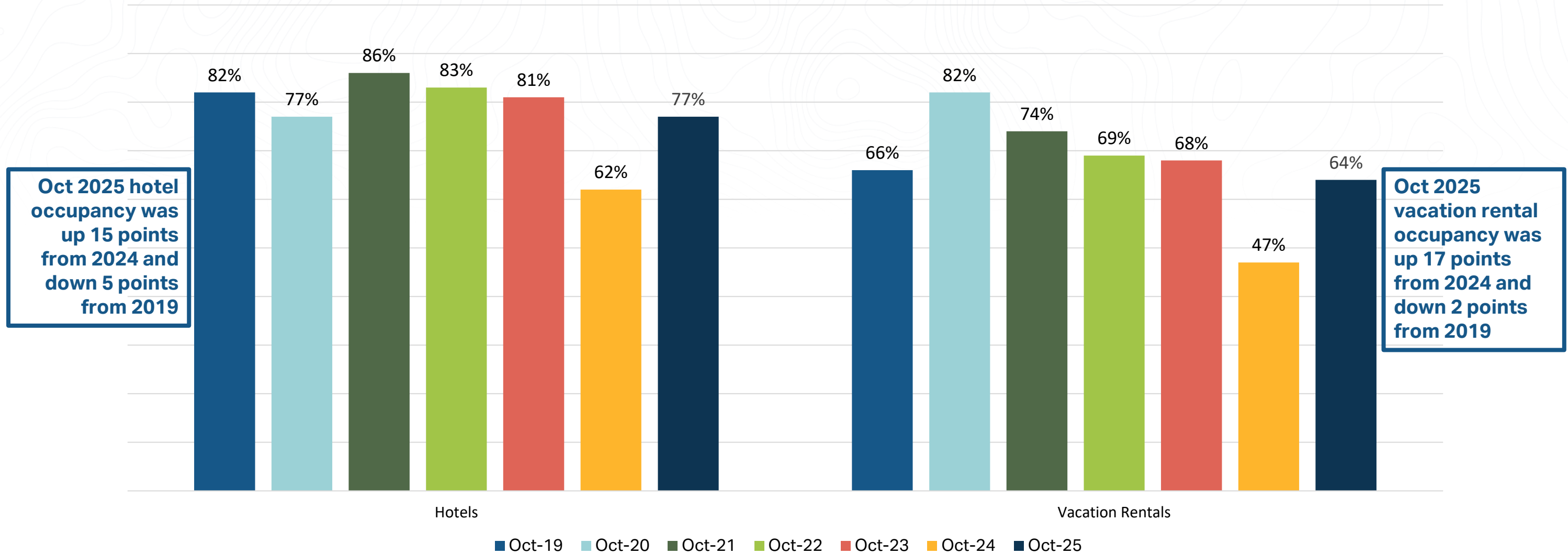
**EXPLORE  
ASHEVILLE**  
POWERED BY | Buncombe County Tourism  
Development Authority



# INDUSTRY METRICS

EXPLORE  
**ASHEVILLE**  
POWERED BY | Buncombe County Tourism  
Development Authority

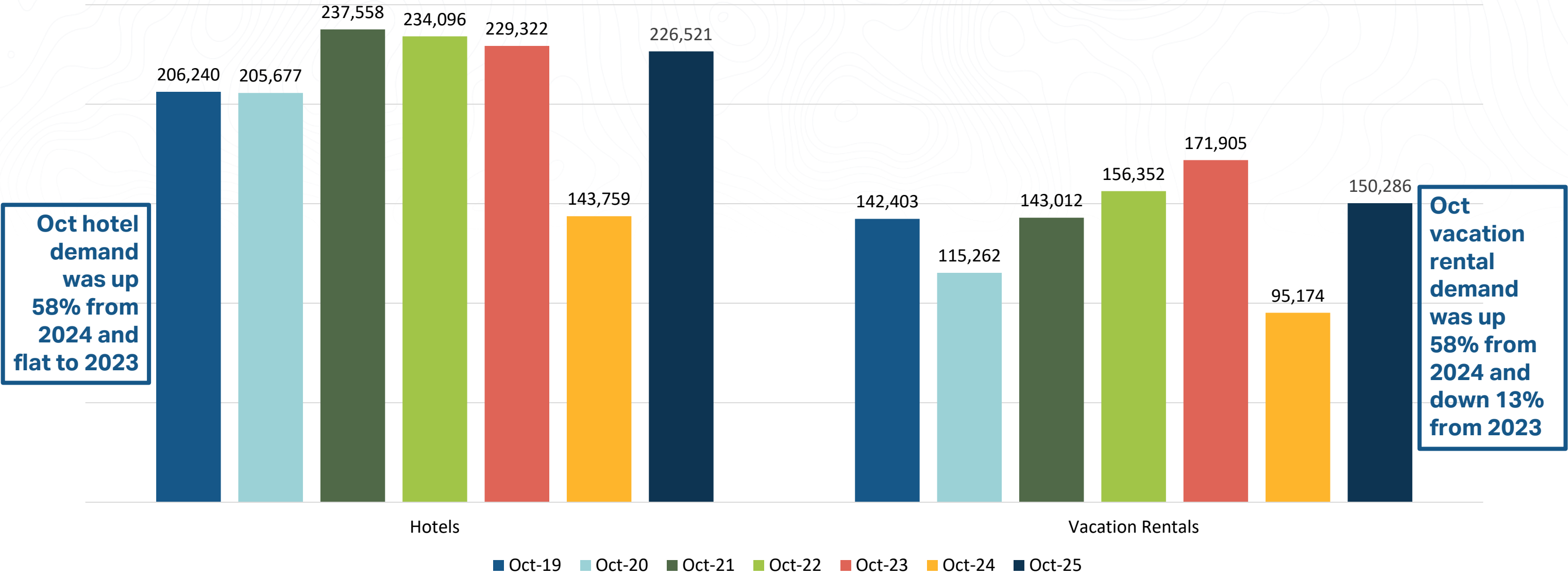
# OCTOBER LODGING OCCUPANCY



Sources: Smith Travel Research (STR) & AirDNA



# OCTOBER DEMAND



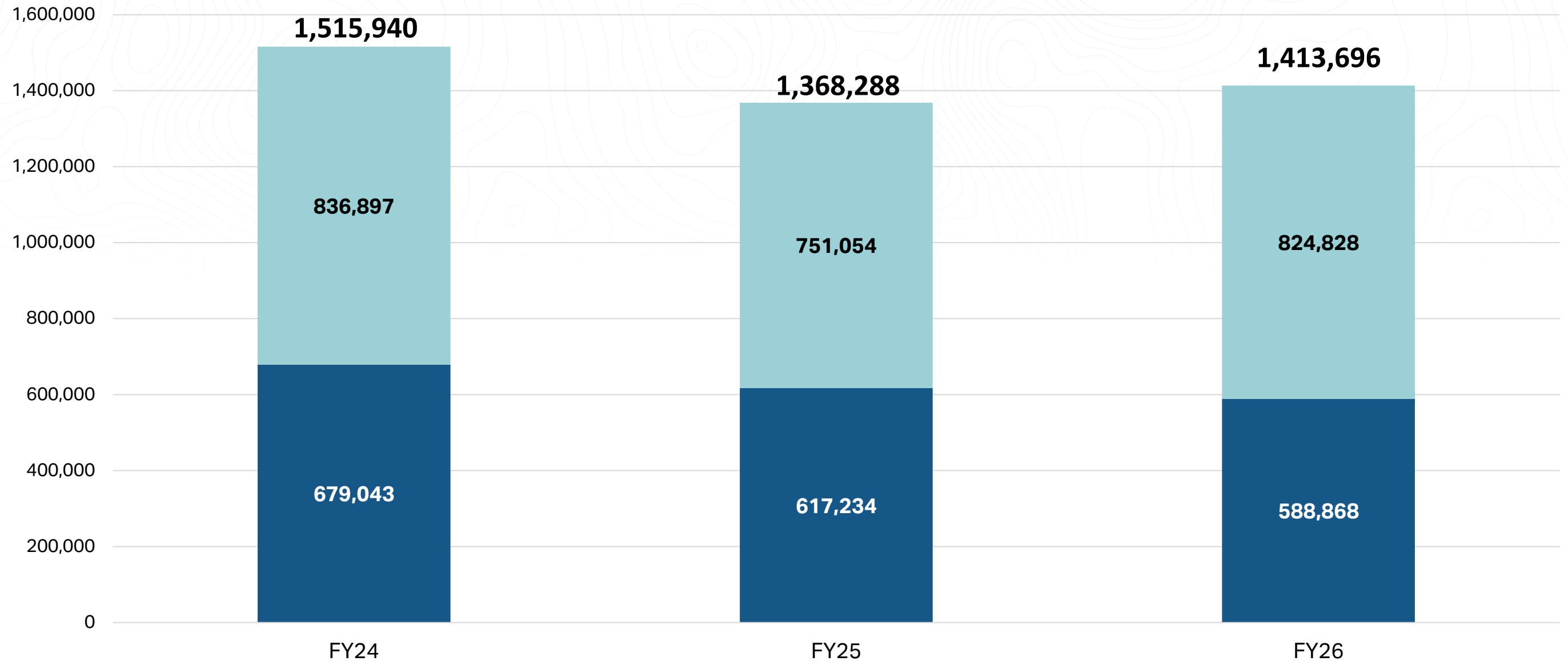
Oct hotel demand was up 58% from 2024 and flat to 2023

Oct vacation rental demand was up 58% from 2024 and down 13% from 2023

Sources: Smith Travel Research (STR) & AirDNA

# TOTAL ROOMNIGHT DEMAND

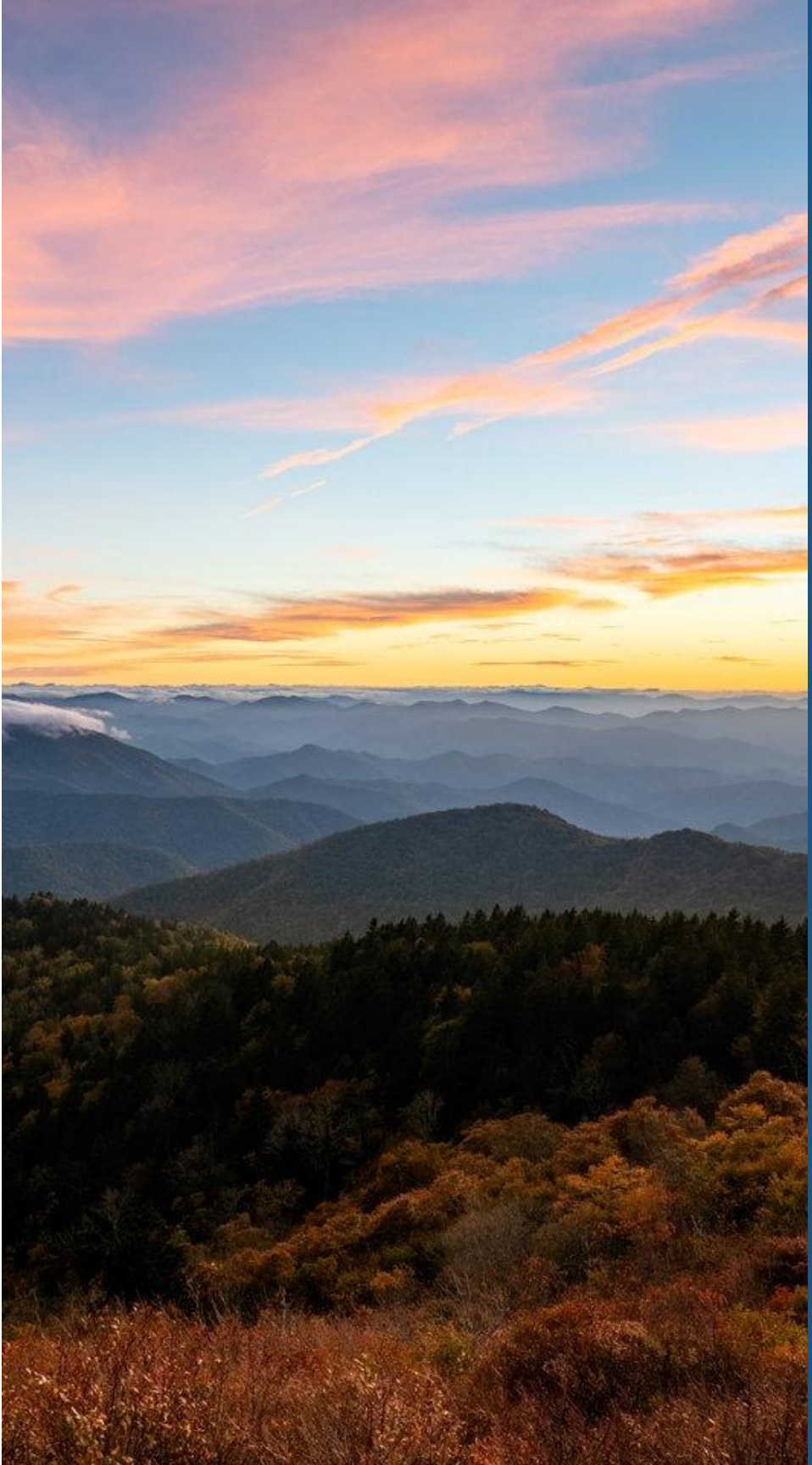
Down 7% (July – October 2025 Compared to 2023); up 3% FYTD (July – October 2025)



Sources: Smith Travel Research & AirDNA

■ Vacation Rental Demand ■ Hotel Demand ■ Total





# OTHER UPDATES

**EXPLORE  
ASHEVILLE**  
POWERED BY | Buncombe County Tourism  
Development Authority

# 100 YEARS OF AMERICANA & APPALACHIA

The Asheville Sessions coverage recap



## Rolling Stone

### HOW ASHEVILLE'S 100-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE 'ASHEVILLE SESSIONS' MAKES IT THE COUNTRY MUSIC DESTINATION OF APPALACHIA

By ROLLING STONE  
OCTOBER 22, 2025



## GARDEN&GUN

### A Remastered Album and New Festival Pay Tribute to the Pivotal Asheville Sessions

The 1925 recordings captured the Appalachian sound for the first time—and they're still influencing artists today

BY LINDSEY LILES  
October 23, 2025



## StyleBlueprint

FOR A LIFE OF STYLE + SUBSTANCE delivered daily

### Asheville, NC Celebrates 100 Years of Appalachian Music

Celebrate 100 years of Asheville's musical legacy! "The Asheville Sessions" centennial weekend offers concerts, panels, and the remastering of a historic album honoring the 1925 recordings that helped shape Americana and country music. Image:

Facebook / Visit Asheville

by BRIANNA GOEBEL

Published on September 22, 2025



The Asheville Sessions – celebrating a forgotten first

# 776.5M

Potential Media Reach

# 71

Media Mentions

# \$12K

Raised for the Always Asheville Fund



# THOMAS DAMBO TROLLS: A FIELD STUDY

US premier of new exhibition debuts at NC Arboretum

## Background

- In August 2024, Explore Asheville executive team met to discuss the stall of visitor spending and ways we might collaborate to attract values aligned experiences. Thomas Dambo's trolls were on the short list.
- Following the storm, we met with the NC Arboretum about this opportunity and collectively learned there was a new traveling exhibit of Dambo trolls in planning.
- Together, we secured the US premier of Thomas Dambo Trolls: A Field Study, with Explore Asheville committing as presenting sponsor.

## Opening Weekend

- Opening weekend was the highest recorded attendance in the Arboretum's 40-year history.
- When benchmarked against the previous years in this general timeframe, visitation is 130% above normal.
- Out of town and locals alike are taking advantage of experiencing the Trolls and Winter Lights.
- In the first couple of weekdays, early signs show visitation trends are continuing, with weekday performance feeling like a weekend day.



# TRAVEL + LEISURE: THE 50 BEST PLACES TO TRAVEL IN 2026

Asheville Named a Destination for Nature Lovers



DESTINATIONS FOR

**NATURE LOVERS**

**TRAVEL+  
LEISURE**



The River Arts District in Asheville, North Carolina. Photo: Stephan Pruitt/Visit Asheville

ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA



# THE YEAR AHEAD

First partner convening of 2026

Please join us Monday, January 12 at The Orange Peel for The Year Ahead.

- Five Superstars will be awarded for their contributions to our community
- 2025 TPDF Awards will be recognized
- Three panel presentations will shine on a spotlight on upcoming major events, cultural experiences, and opportunities in 2025



Save the date for  
**The Year Ahead 2026**

Monday, January 12 | 9am-12pm |  
The Orange Peel

- 3 panels covering major events, conferences, and experiences in 2026
- Presentation of the 2025 Explore Asheville Superstar Awards
- 2025 TPDF Award recognition
- Networking, seasonal bites, and local beverages

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Development Authority



# "BILTMORE CHAMPIONSHIP IN ASHEVILLE" OVERVIEW

Four-year co-title sponsorship commitment from Biltmore and Explore Asheville

## Inaugural event set for Sept. 17-20, 2026 during the FedExCup Fall

- Four-year agreement through 2029
- Biltmore Estate and Explore Asheville to serve as co-title sponsors
- First PGA TOUR event in Asheville in more than 80 years
- Anticipated field of 120+ professional men golfers plus caddies and families

## Contested at The Cliffs at Walnut Cove

- Designed by Jack Nicklaus and ranked among the top courses in the state
- 7,167-yard venue sits in a valley bordering the Pisgah National Forest and the Blue Ridge Parkway – only course in Buncombe County deemed long enough for PGA TOUR professional play

## PGA TOUR legacy in Asheville

- Last event in the area was the Asheville "Land of the Sky Open"
- First contested in the early 1920s and an official TOUR event from 1939 to 1942
- Ben Hogan won the final three in succession beginning in 1940



# PGA TOUR & ASHEVILLE AUDIENCE ALIGNMENT

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- PGA TOUR audiences are 72% more likely than average to spend over \$3,000 per year on domestic travel, making it more likely they can contribute quality visits to Asheville and Buncombe County.
- PGA TOUR audiences are more than 70% more likely than average to influence others in where to vacation, making it more likely that they will recommend Asheville.
- 52% of Myrtle Beach Classic attendees visited from areas located across the U.S. and 12 countries (Zartico, a U.S.-based data science company).



# BILTMORE CHAMPIONSHIP IN ASHEVILLE ESTIMATED POSITIVE COMMUNITY IMPACT

Explore Asheville \$2.45 million in co-title sponsorship investment from marketing/operating budget

## DIRECT SPENDING IN COMMUNITY

**\$15-30M**

ESTIMATED IN DIRECT  
SPENDING FOR  
AREA BUSINESSES

10,000 estimated daily attendance  
2,000 estimated from out of state  
120 + field size plus caddies  
250 amateur golfers for Pro-Am

## DESTINATION PROMOTION

**\$84M**

ESTIMATED MEDIA VALUE  
4 DAYS LIVE COVERAGE

4 days of live coverage on the Golf Channel (Thurs to Sun) in the US.  
Live coverage plus 3 re-airings will produce more than 50 hours of total TV time on Golf Channel alone.  
Coverage throughout the world due to the TOUR's international broadcast agreements in 226 countries and territories (ie Sky TV in UK).  
TV spots and bumpers

## COMMUNITY INCLUSION

**\$100K+**

ESTIMATED PROCEEDS FOR  
AREA NONPROFITS

Community inclusion programs  
Volunteer opportunities  
Charity components  
Sponsor exemption opportunity for a promising local, regional golfer to qualify to play in the tournament



# STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA GRANT SUPPORTS LANDING EVENT

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## NORTH CAROLINA GRANT

**\$3.17M**

NC DEPT OF COMMERCE  
MAJOR EVENTS, GAMES, &  
ATTRACTIONS FUND

“ PGA TOUR events draw national attention and excitement to a community, and western North Carolina deserves the spotlight as it recovers from Hurricane Helene. I’m pleased we are helping bring professional golf back to Asheville. ”  
- Governor Josh Stein

- One of the first six events to receive a grant from the Major Events, Games and Attractions Fund, and the first to be awarded for Western North Carolina.
- The one time \$3.17 million grant is based upon a portion of the forecasted in-state spend by event organizers, and is dispersed following the event and an audit of applicable expenditures.
- The North Carolina General Assembly created the fund to stimulate economic activity and support jobs by attracting high-impact events that draw visitors to the state. The fund is derived from taxes generated by sports betting in the state.



# "BILTMORE CHAMPIONSHIP IN ASHEVILLE"

PGA TOUR announcement coverage recap



## PGA Tour returns to Asheville for first time in 86 years with fall event

Associated Press

Nov 10, 2025, 02:16 PM ET

## PGA TOUR announces historic return to Asheville after 80+ years

Inaugural tournament set for September 2026

Sport > Golf

PGA Tour adds another new tournament to its calendar in a location that's a nod to its past

## The Biltmore Championship: A Beacon of Hope for Asheville's Remarkable Recovery

## PGA Tour Announces New FedEx Cup Fall Event In North Carolina For 2026

341M

Potential Media Reach

406

Media Mentions



AP

Golf Digest

GOLF MONTHLY

Golfweek

Forbes

ESPN

yahoo! sports

Daily Mail



**QUESTIONS**  
**INPUT**  
**COMMENTS**



# SPORTS UPDATE

**Vic Isley**

Explore Asheville | President & CEO

**Jay Curwen**

Explore Asheville | Director of Sports, Film & Entertainment

EXPLORE  
**ASHEVILLE**

POWERED BY

Buncombe County Tourism  
Development Authority

# EXPLORE ASHEVILLE'S EVENT EVALUATION CRITERIA

Determining community value and alignment



**Direct Spending Impact:** What's the revenue potential from a tourism perspective? Additionally, what revenue potential is there for local sponsors alongside the BCTDA?



**Value of Brand Exposure:** What's the potential value of media exposure (advertising and earned media) and is the audience on-brand for Asheville?



**Engagement/Incentive:** What's the potential opportunity for client/customer engagement and entertainment for sponsors/partners (BCTDA as well as other partners)?



**Environment/Sustainability:** Is there a potential environmental opportunity or risk to consider?



**Infrastructure/Legacy:** Are there legacy benefits associated with the event?



**Inclusivity:** Is our diverse community likely to engage in the event as suppliers, spectators, participants, etc.?

# INVESTING IN COMMUNITY SPORTS FACILITIES

The BCTDA has committed nearly \$70 million in TPDF & LIFT Fund grants to sports facilities in the county

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1. Asheville Municipal Golf Course: \$1.6 million
2. Aston Park Tennis Center: \$40,000
3. Beacon Park: \$4.5 million
4. Bob Lewis Ballpark: \$2.72 million
5. Enka Recreation Destination (Buncombe County Sports Park): \$12.8 million
6. Harrah's Cherokee Center - Asheville: \$7.9 million
7. John B. Lewis Soccer Complex: \$4.6 million
8. McCormick Field: \$22.9 million
9. Montreat College Pulliam Stadium: \$350,000
10. UNC Asheville Karl Straus Track: \$1.5 million
11. UNC Asheville On-Campus Tennis Complex: \$500,000
12. UNC Asheville Sportsfield Lighting: \$500,000
13. Warren Wilson Aquatics Center: \$1.6 million
14. Woodfin Greenway & Blueway: \$8.14 million



# TOURISM PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT FUND CAPITAL INVESTMENTS

## Remediation and Renovation



**John B. Lewis Soccer Complex**

August 30 – 31, 2025  
Beer City Cup Soccer Tournament

Direct Spend: \$1.2M



**Bob Lewis Ballpark**

Spring, Summer, Fall 2025  
Top Gun Baseball Events

Direct Spend: \$1.6M



**McCormick Field**

May 20 – 23, 2026  
Big South Baseball Championships

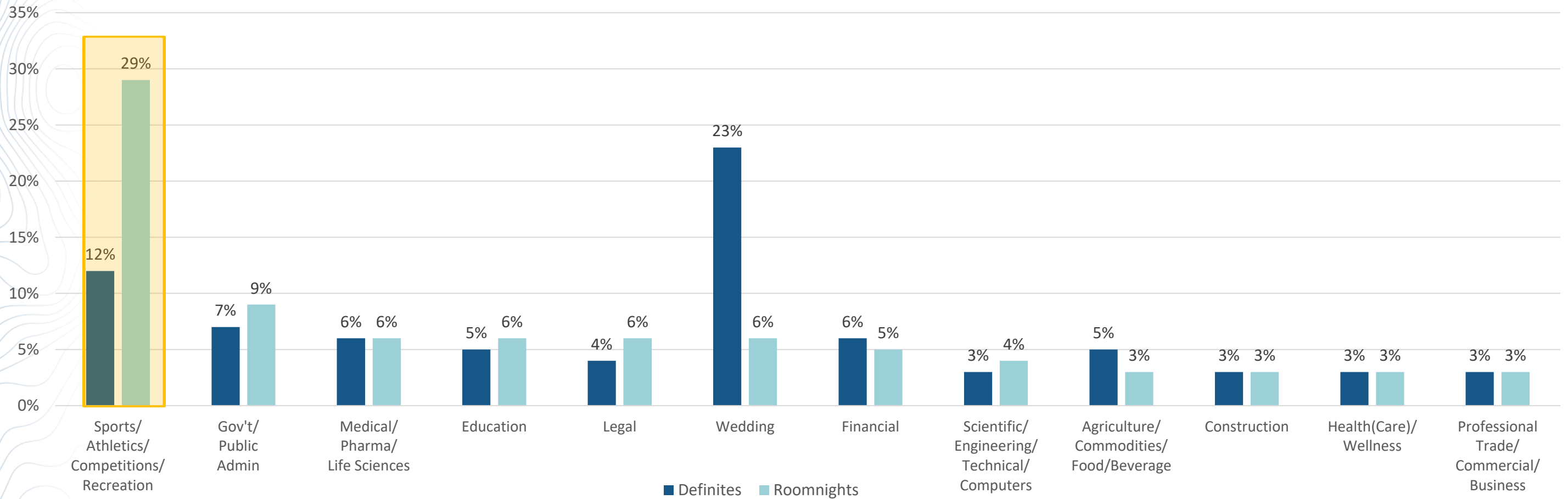
Direct Spend: \$750,000





# MARKET SEGMENTS

## FY 2026 Arrivals Definites (Contracted)



Many different Market Segments coming into Asheville in FY2026 with sports groups booked by Explore Asheville continuing to be the key definite room night driving segment followed by Government/Public Administration - Medical/Pharma/Life Sciences- Education and Legal rounding out the top 5 producing segments. Healthy variety of segments making impact. Weddings are the key *quantity* of definites driver.



# EXPLORE ASHEVILLE SPORTS GROUPS & EVENTS IMPACT

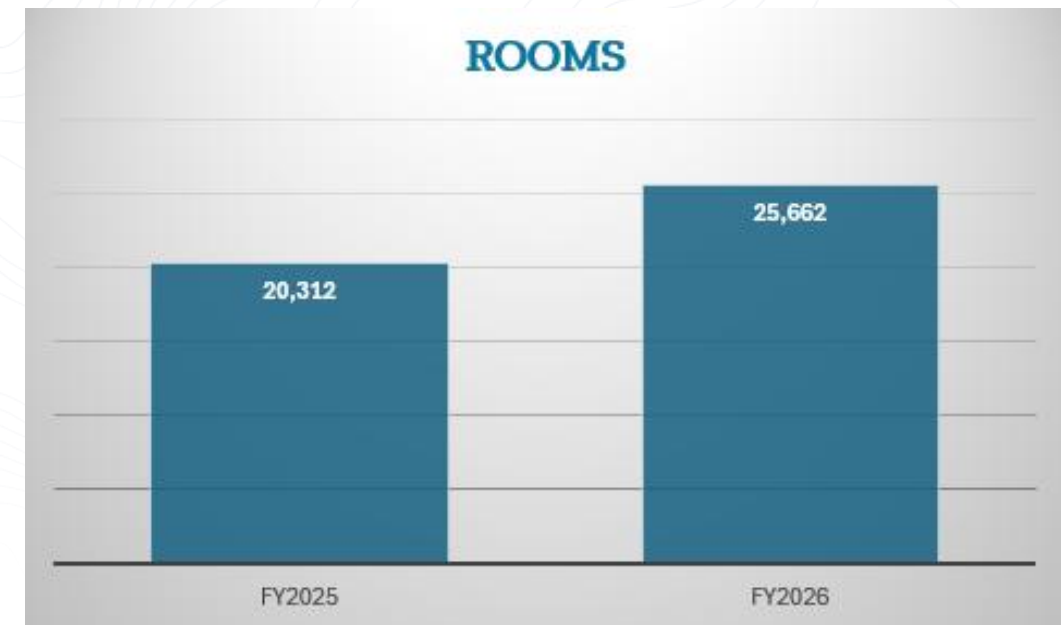
## Year Over Year Impact From Sports

### Focus Areas for Sports

- Expand existing relationships
- Establish new multi-year events
- Bookings throughout the year and county

### Year Over Year Growth FY25 / FY26

- 25% growth in roomnights
- 12% growth in direct spend



# EXPANDING EXISTING AND ESTABLISHING NEW COLLEGIATE EVENTS

Explore Asheville and the BCTDA sponsored sporting events in 2025 and 2026



2025 Southern  
Conference Volleyball  
Championship

2026 Southern  
Conference Basketball  
Championship

2026 Southern  
Conference Wrestling  
Championship

NAIA Outdoor Track &  
Field National  
Championship

2026 Big South Baseball  
Championship

November 20 – 23, 2025

March 6 – 9, 2026

March 7 – 8, 2025

May 20 – 22, 2026

May 20 – 23, 2026

ExploreAsheville.com  
Arena

ExploreAsheville.com  
Arena

UNC Asheville's Kimmel  
Arena

UNCA's Karl Strauss  
Track

McCormick Field

\$500,000

\$8M

\$195,000

\$1.35M

\$750,000

420 roomnights

6,500 roomnights

300 roomnights

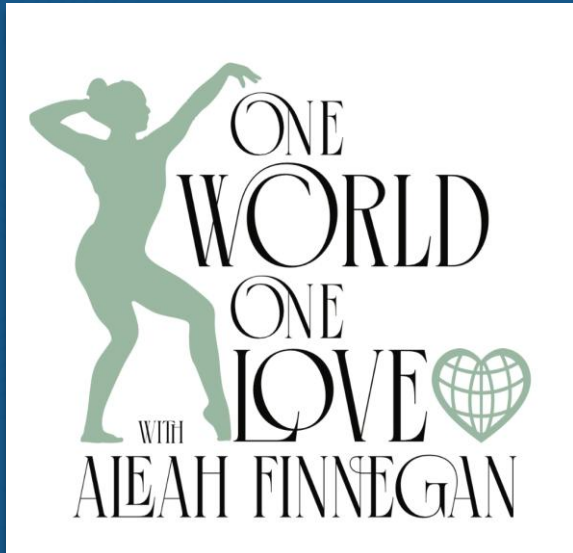
1,600 roomnights

600 roomnights



# OTHER UPCOMING PROMINENT EVENTS

## Youth and Adult Sports Events



**One World One Love**

January 2026  
ExploreAsheville.com  
Arena  
\$2M  
879 roomnights



**HFC Spring Kickoff**

January – February 2026  
John B. Lewis Soccer  
Complex  
\$1.2M  
750 roomnights



**Asheville Marathon**

March 2026  
Downtown Asheville  
\$1.3M  
650 roomnights



**Spring Dinger**

April 2026  
Bob Lewis Ballpark  
\$2.4M  
1850 roomnights



**Carpetbagger  
Lacrosse**

June 2026  
John B. Lewis Soccer  
Complex  
\$1.03M  
1900 roomnights

# OUTDOOR MEDIA SUMMIT IN ASHEVILLE

September 28 – 30, 2026

- A high-profile professional conference in the outdoor industry for thought leaders and brands
- Expect to draw more than 400 media, marketing professionals and CEOs to the region
- Anticipate 500 roomnights generated and \$500K in direct spending



## MORE TO COME

Join us in the Jan Davis Lobby at the Harrah's Cherokee Center - Asheville

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STAY TUNED FOR  
NOON ANNOUNCEMENT



**QUESTIONS**

**INPUT**

**COMMENTS**



# PARTNERSHIP AND DESTINATION MANAGEMENT UPDATES

**Tiffany Thacker**

Explore Asheville | VP of Partnership and  
Destination Management

**Kimberly Puryear**

Explore Asheville | Destination Project Manager



# FESTIVALS AND CULTURAL EVENTS RECOMMENDATIONS

# FESTIVALS & CULTURAL EVENTS SUPPORT FUND

## Background

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The Festivals & Cultural Events Support Fund and is designed to **provide financial support for events that both serve the residents of Buncombe County and the visitors who travel to the Asheville area** for the sense of authenticity and welcoming spirit that the destination exudes.

### **The primary purposes of the fund are to:**

- Support and preserve cultural identity within Buncombe County;
- Stimulate the creation of new, or expansion of existing, festivals and cultural events; and
- Contribute to the financial viability and long-term sustainability of the area's festivals and cultural events

### **Application Process:**

- Competitive application process with all applications evaluated by a Committee
- Grants range from \$1,000 to a maximum of \$5,000. The funding level may not exceed a 50% match of the total event budget

# FESTIVALS & CULTURAL EVENTS SUPPORT FUND

## Submission & Recommendation Summary

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### Submission Summary

- 35 applications received for a total ask of \$195,550
- \$100,000 available to award in this grant cycle
- For events occurring between January 1, 2026 – December 31, 2026

### Committee Recommendation

- Committee recommends awarding 26 out of the 35 applications received, for a total amount awarded of \$92,000.
- Investment was recommended for the applications that met eligibility requirements and most closely aligned with the evaluation criteria

# FESTIVALS & CULTURAL EVENTS SUPPORT FUND

## Submission Summary

	Organization	Event	Amount
1	Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP)	ASAP Farm Tour	\$5,000
2	Arts 2 People	Surreal Sirkus Arts Festival	\$5,000
3	Asheville Creative Arts	Asheville Legacy Neighborhood History & Culture Festival	\$3,000
4	Asheville Downtown Association	Holi 2026	\$2,000
5	Asheville Makers Inc.	Maker Faire Asheville	\$1,500
6	Asheville Mardi Gras, Inc	Asheville Mardi Gras Parade and Queen's Ball	\$5,000
7	Black Mountain Blues Society (BMBS)	Black Mountain Blues Festival	\$5,000
8	Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center	{Re}HAPPENING 14	\$4,000
9	Black Wall Street AVL	GRINDfest	\$5,000
10	Buncombe County Parks and Recreation	Lake Julian Festival of Lights	\$5,000
11	Community Betterment Foundation of the Asheville	Shindig on the Green®	\$2,500
12	Community Betterment Foundation of the Asheville	Mountain Dance and Folk Festival®	\$2,500
13	Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Association of Asheville & Buncombe County Inc.	The City of Asheville celebrates Juneteenth and community healing	\$3,000



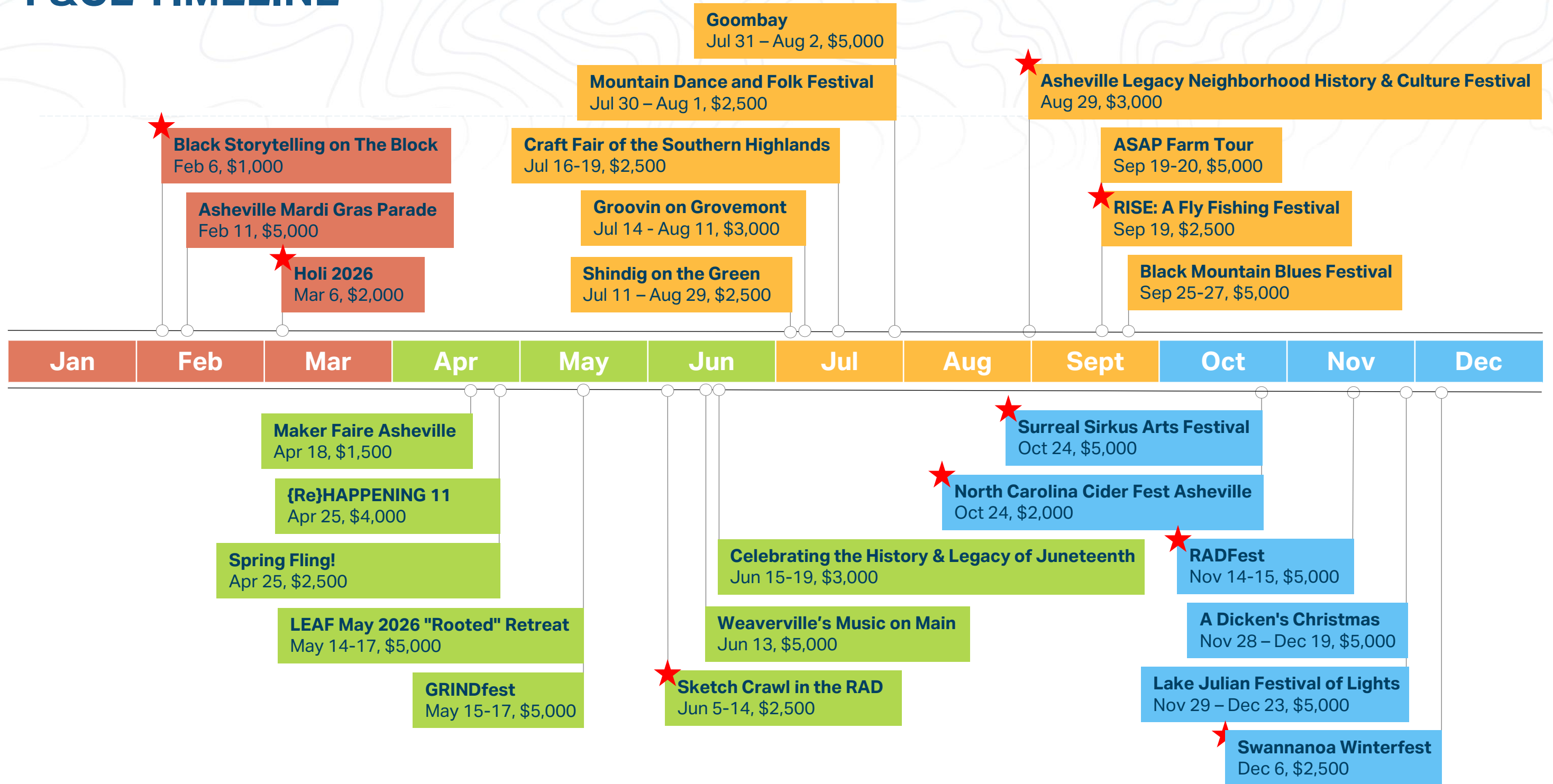
# FESTIVALS & CULTURAL EVENTS SUPPORT FUND

## Submission Summary

	Organization	Event	Amount
14	Hood Huggers Foundation	Spring Fling!	\$2,500
15	LEAF Global Arts	LEAF May 2026 "Rooted" Retreat	\$5,000
16	North Carolina Cider Association	North Carolina Cider Fest Asheville	\$2,000
17	RADA Foundation, Inc.	RADfest 2026	\$5,000
18	RADA Foundation, Inc.	Sketch Crawl and Sketch Club in the RAD	\$2,500
19	Riverlink	RISE: A Fly-Fishing Festival	\$2,500
20	Southern Highland Craft Guild	Craft Fair of the Southern Highlands	\$2,500
21	Swannanoa Community Council	Swannanoa Winterfest	\$2,500
22	Swannanoa Community Council	Groovin' on Grovemont	\$3,000
23	The Block Collaborative	Black Storytelling on The Block	\$1,000
24	The Cathedral of All Souls	A Dicken's Christmas	\$5,000
25	Weaverville Business Association, Inc.	Weaverville's Music on Main	\$5,000
26	YMI Cultural Center	Goombay Festival 2026	\$5,000
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>\$92,000</b>



# F&CE TIMELINE



# FESTIVALS & CULTURAL EVENTS SUPPORT FUND

Chair Matthew Lehman

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Questions/Comments

**Suggested Motion:**

**Motion to approve the grant investment funding for each event as recommended by the Festivals & Cultural Events Support Fund Committee.**

Motion Second

Additional Discussion

Vote





# WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM UPDATE

**Kimberly Puryear**

Explore Asheville | Destination Project Manager

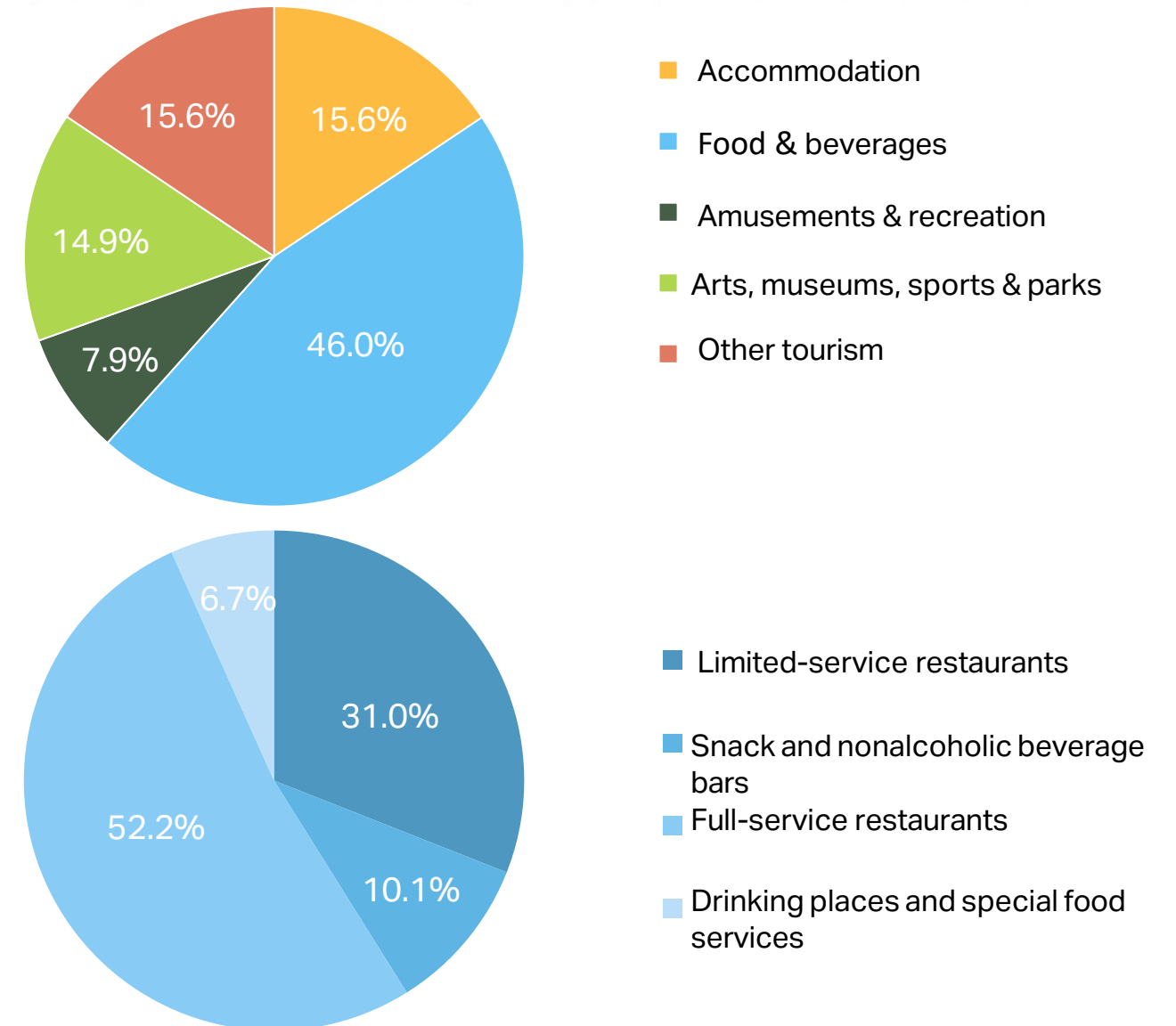
**EXPLORE  
ASHEVILLE**  
POWERED BY | Buncombe County Tourism  
Development Authority

# EXPLORE ASHEVILLE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

## 2022 Tourism Economics Workforce Development Report Findings

- A thriving workforce is essential for our community's livelihood; in 2022, 31,600 people were employed in the county's LHT industry of which 62% were in the accommodation and food services sub-sectors.
- The need has only become greater in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene.
- Explore Asheville, our 501(c)(6) nonprofit, established a Workforce Development Program, which aimed to cultivate the next generation of industry professionals and foster growth and advancement in the leisure and hospitality industry.
- Insight from our industry partners and educators from our academic institutions across the state informed what strategies were ultimately put into action.

Sub-sector share of LHT employment in 2022, %



# EXPLORE ASHEVILLE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Pathways to inspire the next generation of travel and hospitality workers

## Workforce Development Continuum

### Increasing Awareness & Aspirations

Hospitality Camp  
Career & job fairs  
Field trips & workplace tours

*Guest speakers*

**INSPIRE**

### Developing Skills & Confidence

Explore Asheville Tourism & Hospitality  
Internship Program

*Apprenticeships  
Job shadowing  
Hands-on Learning*

**TRAIN**

### Fostering Growth & Advancement

Explore Asheville Hospitality Scholarship  
Concierge Working Group

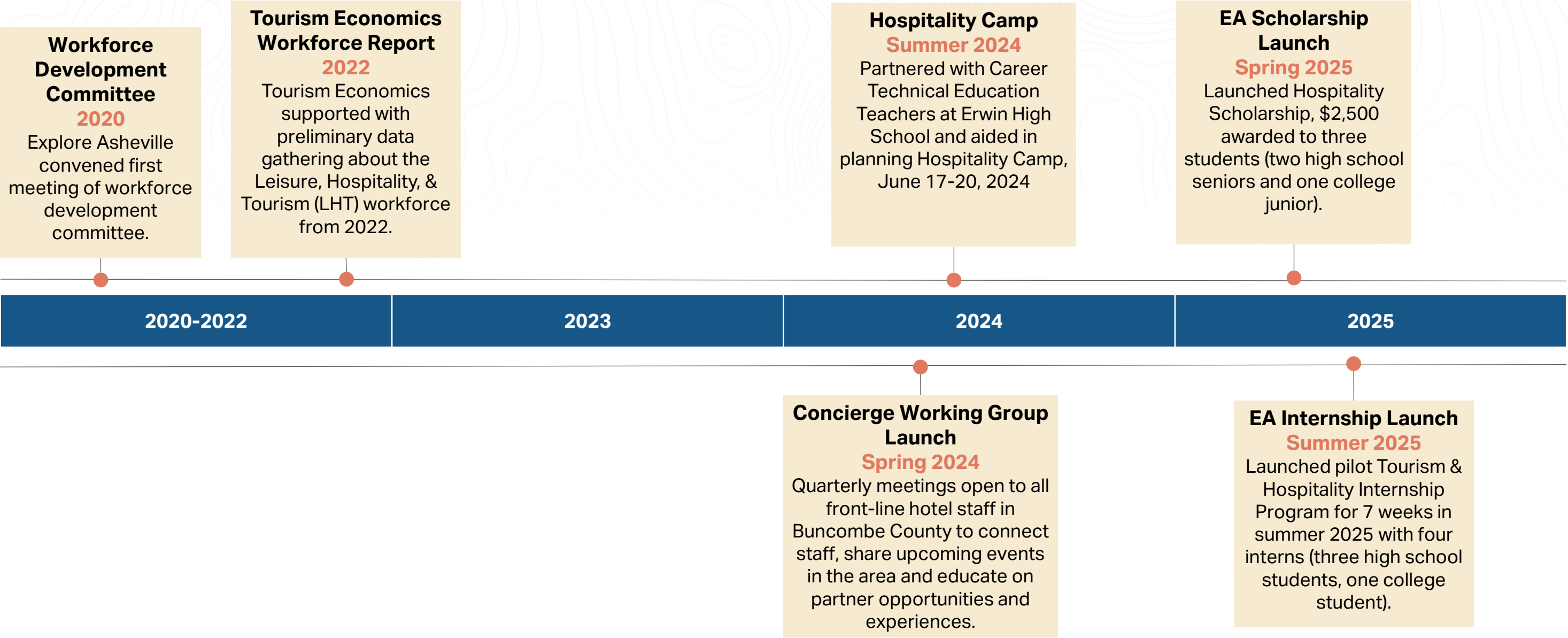
*Certification Programs  
Job / Career Connections*

**EDUCATE**



# EXPLORE ASHEVILLE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

## Program Development Timeline



# INSPIRE PATHWAY

Workplace Tours, Career Fairs, CTE Teacher Relationship Building

## Hospitality Camp:

- Coordinated hands-on experiences for 15 students, including visits to 12 Bones, French Broad Chocolate, Taco Billy, Well Played, and the Black Cultural Heritage Trail.
- Insights shared at the graduation celebration helped shape our Internship Program and next steps in the Inspire pathway.

## Career Fairs / Career Development Month:

- Participated in five career days across three high schools and two middle schools, engaging with more than 1,000 students.
- Created a custom "Build-A-Job" activity to highlight hospitality career pathways.
- Expanded relationships with teachers, counselors, and students countywide.

## Explore Asheville representation on Buncombe County Schools Business Advisory Council:

- Contributes to CTE curriculum recommendations and supports student activities, including judging skills competitions and scholarship efforts.
- Strengthens collaboration between CTE educators, business partners, and the broader community.



# TRAIN PATHWAY

Pilot Explore Asheville Tourism and Hospitality Internship Launched in Summer 2025

**Launched a seven-week pilot internship program in summer 2025 with four interns (three high school students and one college student).**

Designed to introduce students to the hospitality and tourism industry through hands-on learning and exposure to both Explore Asheville and partner organizations.

- Paid, 120-hour internship with weekly rotation between Explore Asheville and partner sites to build real-world skills.
- Skill development across: marketing, food & beverage, accommodations, attractions & recreation, and arts & culture.
- Assignments included PR research, a marketing workshop, and a capstone project on accessibility.
- Interns presented final recommendations to partners, board members, and staff.



# EDUCATE PATHWAY

## Inaugural Explore Asheville Hospitality Scholarship Awards

### Explore Asheville Hospitality Scholarship

Supports students pursuing tourism, hospitality, or related fields through educational opportunities and career advancement.

- Scholarships of up to \$2,500, renewable for four years with a 2.5+ GPA.
- Eligible for any North Carolina post-secondary program: certificates, 2–4 year degrees, or graduate study.
- May be used for tuition, room and board, fees, books, and other educational expenses.
- Three inaugural recipients recognized at Heroes of Hospitality: two high school seniors and one college junior.



# EDUCATE PATHWAY

Explore Asheville Concierge Working Group

## Concierge Working Group

- Quarterly gatherings open to all front-line hotel and accommodation staff in Buncombe County.
- Connects front-line teams, shares upcoming events, and highlights partnership opportunities.
- Provides educational experiences through tours and interactions with local attractions.
- Meeting themes are based on staff feedback and have included:
  - **Food & Local Restaurants**
  - **Wellness** (tours, hikes, sound baths, auratherapy, tarot)
  - **History** (Black Cultural Heritage Trail, YMI Cultural Center)
  - **Arts & Culture** (Asheville Symphony, Wortham Center, Black Mountain Center for the Arts, RADA, local festivals and studios)



# WHAT'S NEXT?

## Workforce Development Programs in 2026

### INSPIRE

- **Workplace Tours & Guest Speakers:** Continue working with CTE teachers to coordinate tourism and hospitality workplace tours and guest speakers.
- **Career Fairs:** Expand presence at area Career days and application workshops.
- **CTE Teacher Relationship-Building:** Host CTE Teacher Appreciation Networking Event during Career Technical Education Month in February 2026

### TRAIN

- **Internship Program:** Open internship application in January 2026 for Summer 2026 cohort.

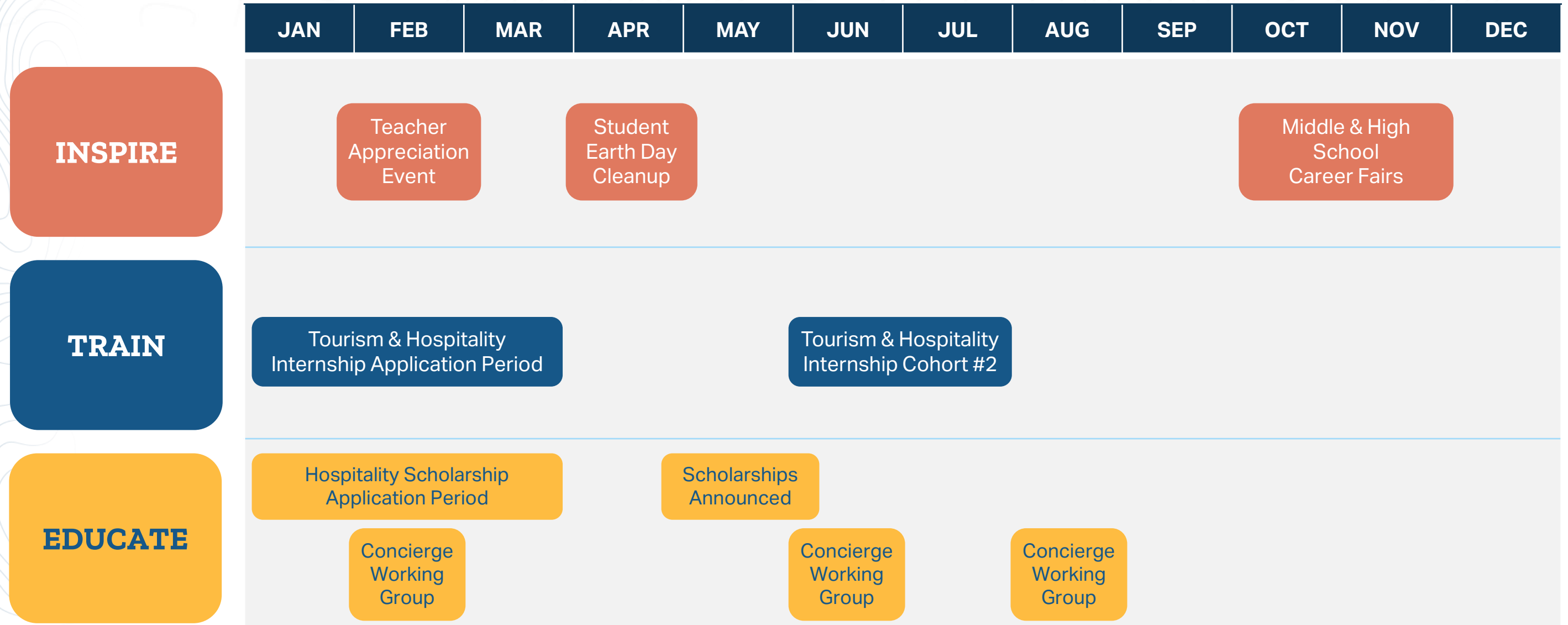
### EDUCATE

- **Scholarship Program:** Open application for scholarship program in January 2026, for up to 5 new scholarship awards in Spring 2026.
- **Concierge Certification Program:** Launch Concierge Certification Program in 2026



# EXPLORE ASHEVILLE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE

2026 Calendar Year



**QUESTIONS**  
**INPUT**  
**COMMENTS**



# COUNTY UPDATES

Commissioner Terri Wells

EXPLORE  
ASHEVILLE

POWERED BY | Buncombe County Tourism  
Development Authority



# MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

**Matthew Lehman**  
BCTDA | Chair

**EXPLORE  
ASHEVILLE**  
POWERED BY | Buncombe County Tourism  
Development Authority



# PUBLIC COMMENTS

**Matthew Lehman**  
BCTDA | Chair

**EXPLORE  
ASHEVILLE**  
POWERED BY | Buncombe County Tourism  
Development Authority

# LIVE VIRTUAL PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chair Matthew Lehman

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Members of the Public were invited to sign-up to virtually share live comments during today's in-person BCTDA meeting.

As of the 12:00 p.m. registration deadline on Tuesday, November 18, no requests to speak had been received.



# LIVE VIRTUAL PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chair Matthew Lehman

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Upon arrival to this morning's BCTDA meeting, anyone who indicated a desire to make public comments completed the Public Comment Sign-In Sheet, affirming they agree to abide by the Rules of Decorum.



# A FEW REMINDERS

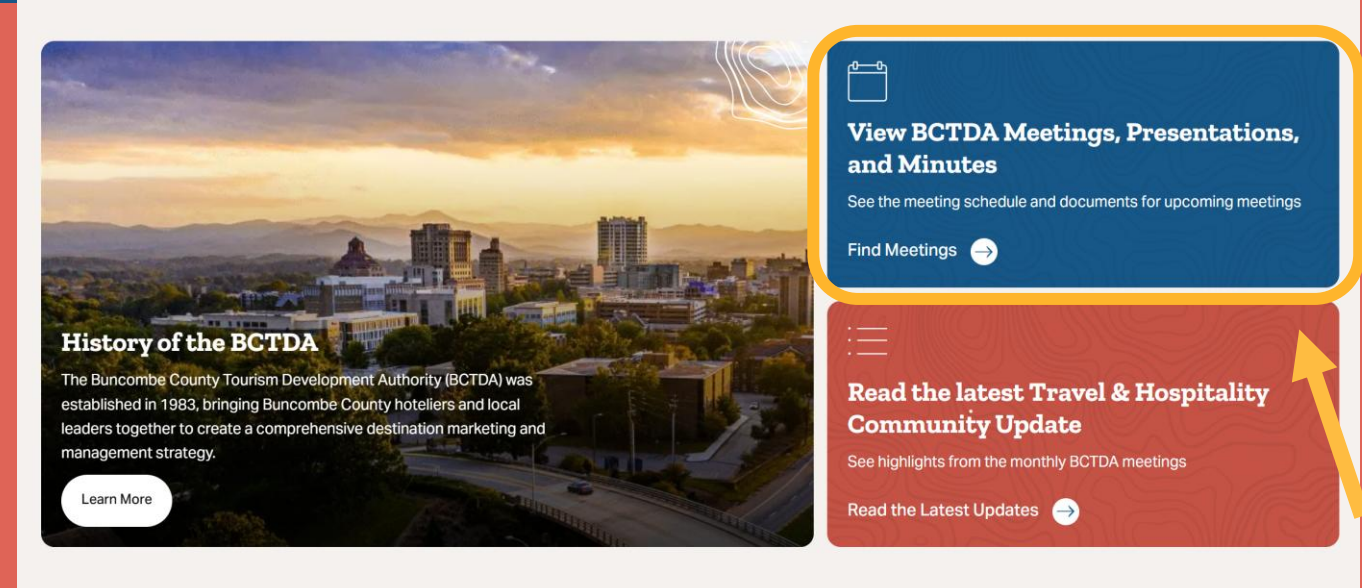
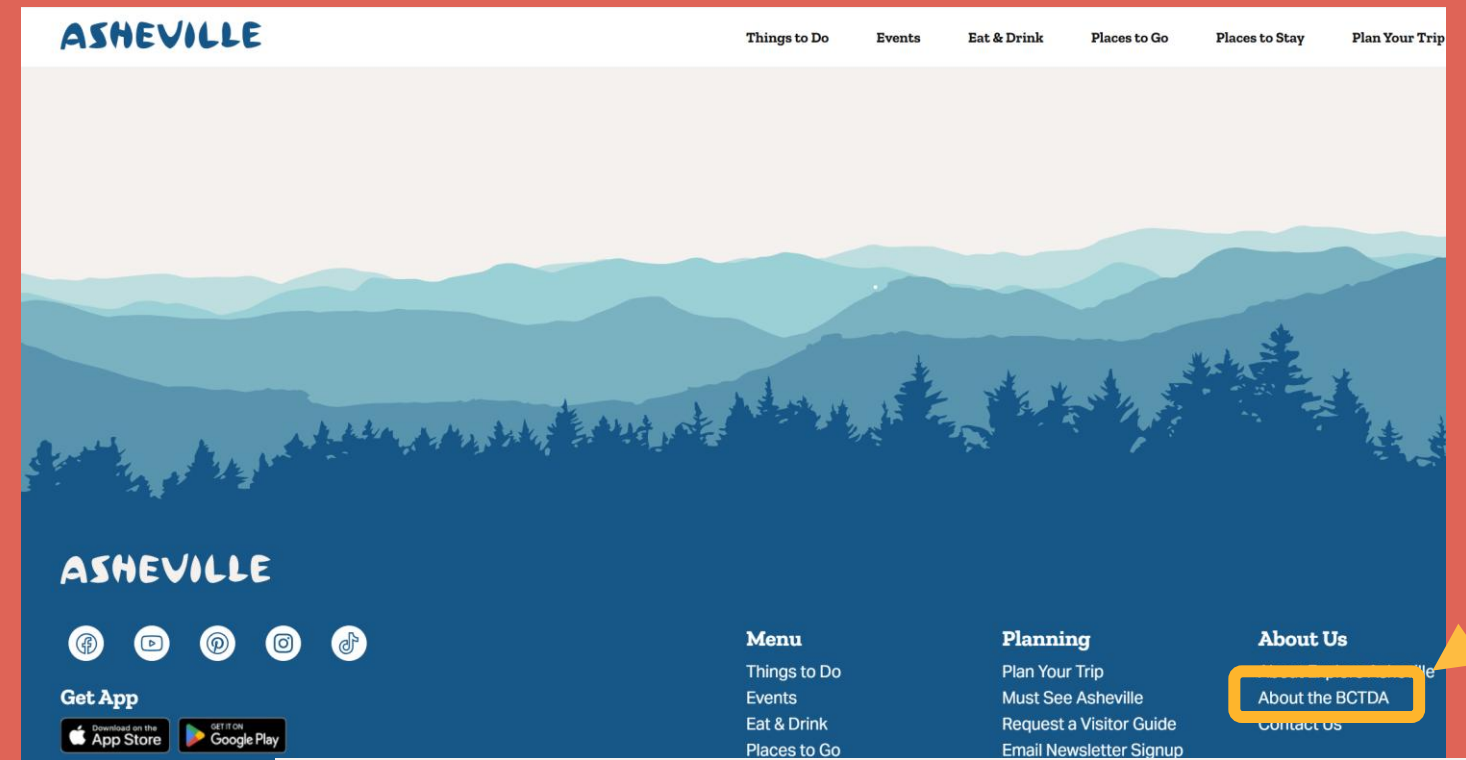
Chair Matthew Lehman

Additional materials, including the PowerPoint presentation, will be posted online later today.

The next BCTDA meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 28, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. in the Board Room at Explore Asheville.

For more information go to:

- [ExploreAsheville.com](https://ExploreAsheville.com)
- About the BCTDA section
- View BCTDA meetings, presentations, and minutes



# ADJOURNMENT

Chair Matthew Lehman

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Questions/Comments

**Suggested Motion:**

**Motion to adjourn the BCTDA Meeting.**

Motion Second

Discussion

Vote



# THANK YOU

*See you at the next BCTDA meeting!*

**Wednesday, January 28, 2026 | 9:00 a.m.**

Explore Asheville Board Room | 27 College Place