

Mitchell County Heritage Development Plan

Produced for the
Citizens of Mitchell County
*In conjunction with the
Blue Ridge National Heritage Area*

**Prepared by the
Mitchell County Heritage Council**



Heritage Areas

National Park Service
U.S. Department of Interior

Blue Ridge National Heritage Area Strategic Planning Tools

NARRATIVE SUMMARY

History and Recent Trends

Mitchell County was formed in 1861 from Yancey, Watauga, Caldwell, Burke and McDowell counties. It was named in honor of Dr. Elisha Mitchell, a professor of botany at the University of North Carolina who was buried at the top of Mt. Mitchell, the highest peak east of the Mississippi River, which also bears his name. Mitchell County is bounded by the state of Tennessee and Avery, McDowell and Yancey counties in North Carolina. Bakersville is the county seat.

The county is well-known for its scenery. It is home to Roan Mountain, the site of the largest naturally-occurring rhododendron gardens in the world. Bakersville pays homage to the blooming of those gardens each June during the North Carolina Rhododendron Festival. The Blue Ridge Parkway skirts the southern sections of the county and features many places to stop off and admire the beautiful scenery of the area. Mitchell County is also bounded by one of the oldest mountains in the world, Grandfather Mountain. The North Toe River flows through the county and joins the South Toe at Toecane to form the Nolichucky River, one of the best whitewater rafting rivers in the eastern U.S.

Mitchell County is also known for its rich trove of gems and minerals. The world famous North Carolina Mineral & Gem Festival, one of the oldest festivals of its kind, makes Spruce Pine and Mitchell County its home each August. Rockhounds from around the world descend on the region to explore the vast treasures stored underground.

One of the main industries in the region is mining. Mitchell County is home to the famous Spruce Pine Mineral District, which has one of the richest distributions of gem and minerals on earth. The manufacture of furniture has also been a traditional industry in Mitchell County for many years.

However, Mitchell County has become one of the most economically distressed counties in North Carolina. Over the past three years, multiple announcements of layoffs or plant closings from major industries within the county have resulted in the loss of over one thousand jobs. Consequently, Mitchell County recorded the highest unemployment rate in the state in July of 2002 at 14.79% and has been consistently ranked near the top of the state's list of counties with high unemployment rates since that time. Unfortunately for the area, because of globalization and the ever-growing trend of moving manufacturing industries overseas, most of these jobs and the subsequent income for citizens of Mitchell County will probably never be recovered. Because of the extreme challenges to industrial development that the county faces, the future for Mitchell County lies in heritage tourism.

Heritage Tourism

Heritage tourism is a job generator and a prominent economic component of the Mitchell County community; therefore, there is a need to identify new tourism products that will complement the existing product as well as to find improved means for marketing the region's tourism resources.



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MITCHELL COUNTY HERITAGE COUNCIL 2006-2007

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SUMMARY CHART

Initiative Name	Estimated Costs
Mitchell –Yancey Arts & Crafts Trail	\$ 65,000.00
Spruce Pine Main Street River Project Feasibility Study	\$ 24,100.00
Mitchell County Hiking and Biking Trails	\$ 10,000.00
County-wide Signage	\$ 30,000.00
Maintenance and Beautification	\$ 34,000.00
Carolina Theatre Restoration	\$ 800,000.00
Working Art Museum and Studio	\$ 5,500,000.00
<i>The Home of the Perfect Christmas Tree</i> Marketing *UPDATED*	\$ 162,400.00
<i>The Home of the Perfect Christmas Tree</i> Retail Store *UPDATED*	\$ 441,500.00
Festival Promotion	\$ 30,000.00
Completion of Bakersville Creekwalk	\$ 5,000.00
Satellite Chamber for Bakersville, NC	\$ 2,000.00
History/Heritage Education	\$ 16,000.00
Rhododendron Festival Amphitheatre	\$ 75,000.00
Preservation of Sunny Brook Store	\$ 20,000.00
Penland School of Crafts Gallery & Visitors Center *UPDATED*	\$ 1,500,000.00
Penland School of Crafts Marketing Initiative *NEW*	\$ 100,000.00

GRAND TOTAL	\$ 8,815,000.00
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Blue Ridge National Heritage Area PRIORITY INITIATIVE WORKSHEET

Initiative Title:	Mitchell -Yancey Arts & Crafts Trail
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Project Narrative:	<p>To develop a brand/logo for artists/craftsmen/studios/galleries that are open to the public in the area.</p> <p>To develop a marketing campaign for the area that would include maps, brochures and other printed materials as well as TV ads and magazine publications.</p> <p>To create signage featuring the new brand/logo to identify locations on the arts and crafts trail.</p>
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Goal:	<p>Yancey and Mitchell Counties are home to a large concentration of artists/ craftsmen as well as major centers for arts and crafts education like the Toe River Arts Council and Penland School of Crafts. Since tourists and visitors don't recognize county lines, the two counties would like to develop a common brand and marketing materials for the area. This project would be an extension of the already established Mitchell—Yancey Tour of Studios.</p>
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Person/Organization Responsible:	Cost to Implement:	Estimated Time to Complete:
Mitchell & Yancey County Chambers of Commerce	\$65,000.00	9 months

Action Items:	Resources Required:	Who's Responsible:
Get Cost Estimates before hiring a marketing and design firm	In progress	Mitchell & Yancey County Chambers of Commerce
Brand Development Estimate	\$5,000.00	
Signage Estimates—Design and production of approximately 100 signs	\$20,000.00	
Marketing Estimates—Print Ads in national and regional publications	\$30,000.00	
Design and printing of maps, brochures, printed pieces	\$10,000.00	

Performance Measures:	Brochures, Maps, Print Materials, TV Ads
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Status:	Two Counties have formed a committee and are pricing an ad campaign.
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Blue Ridge National Heritage Area PRIORITY INITIATIVE WORKSHEET

Initiative Title:	Spruce Pine Main Street River Project Feasibility Study
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Project Narrative:	<p>Spruce Pine Main Street has the unique opportunity to spearhead the utilization and appreciation of one of Spruce Pine's greatest assets, the Toe River. The Toe River winds all the way through Mitchell County and through the heart of downtown Spruce Pine. A proposed feasibility study considering the recreational use of the river could bring family-oriented tourism to Avery, Yancey and Mitchell counties. A partnership between the three counties would be of optimal economic benefit to each county. Equally important is the potential to partner with the local mining industry to address the preservation and improvement of the ecosystem formed by the river itself and the adjoining forests, soil and air. The coordinator of this study will examine many crucial issues, with the ultimate goal of making the Toe River a vital part of a thriving mountain community.</p> <p>The feasibility study would allow for research of the following items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Oversee water quality testing and develop plan for publicity to dispel myths about river pollutionResearch property ownership issuesAssess the probability of rafting/tubing recreationDevelop partnerships with other mines and businessesResearch the audience for this class of waterFacilitate design of entry/exit points and parkingResearch insurance/liability issuesConduct community meetingsResearch historical connectionsResearch similar projects in other townsBegin development of plan to attract visitors
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Goal:	To turn the river in Spruce Pine into a community and tourism asset
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Person/Organization Responsible:	Cost to Implement:	Estimated Time to Complete:
Spruce Pine Main Street	\$24,100	6 months

Action Items:	Resources Required:	Who's Responsible:
Funding of Coordinator (20 hours/week for 6 months at 20 dollars/hour)	\$9,600.00	Spruce Pine Main Street
Feasibility Study Budget:		
Water Testing	\$2,000.00	
Engineering/Rafting Feasibility	\$5,000.00	
Architecture	\$5,000.00	

Administrative	\$1,000.00	
Community Meetings	\$1,500.00	

Performance Measures:	Increased recreational use of the Toe River in Spruce Pine.
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Status:	Proposal available.
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Blue Ridge National Heritage Area PRIORITY INITIATIVE WORKSHEET

Initiative Title:	Mitchell County Hiking and Biking Trails Feasibility Study
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Project Narrative:	<p>To conduct a feasibility study on the possibility for development of two hiking and biking trails in Mitchell County:</p> <p>1) a hiking and biking trail to connect the two major recreation parks in Spruce Pine, Brad Ragan Park and Riverside Park</p> <p>2) a <i>Rails to Trails</i> hiking and biking path, following existing path of rail road, to connect Spruce Pine and Penland</p> <p>The feasibility study would provide information about:</p> <p>Target audience for hiking/biking in Mitchell County and surrounding counties</p> <p>Ownership of trail lands</p> <p>Mapping/design of trail routes</p>
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Goal:	To discern the feasibility of developing hiking and biking trails in Mitchell Co.
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Person/Organization Responsible:	Cost to Implement:	Estimated Time to Complete:
Mitchell County Chamber of Commerce	\$10,000.00	6 months

Action Items:	Resources Required:	Who's Responsible:
Feasibility Study/Coordinator	\$10,000.00	Mitchell County Chamber of Commerce

Performance Measures:	
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Status:	Conceptual stage
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Blue Ridge National Heritage Area PRIORITY INITIATIVE WORKSHEET

Initiative Title:	County-wide Signage
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Project Narrative:	<p>Mitchell County needs a comprehensive signage program that helps travelers and newcomers locate businesses and services with ease. Furthermore, the county is exceptional in that it is unified around its support of individuality, creative thinking and a celebration of that which is handmade. Proposed is a two-tier signage program that will identify Mitchell County as a unique and creative community. One tier of signage will relate to the system established by the federal and state highway signage programs for easy, clear directional signage. It will be graphically consistent, and categories will address the traveler's need to find businesses, services, churches, nonprofit organizations and county attractions. The location and graphic design of these signs will be carefully considered under the guidance of a design firm specializing in this area of expertise. Furthermore, for primary or main roads leading into Mitchell County, it is recommended that new signage bearing the new "Hand Made Hospitality" brand be posted to help visitors realize when they've entered the county itself. These signs may be handcrafted by local artisans.</p> <p>A second tier of signage will be that of individual businesses and organizations. The county will encourage all businesses to develop signs that reflect the distinctiveness of their particular companies. Signs that are clever, handmade, quirky or unique in any way will be encouraged. We want our county to be known for being unlike any other. The distinct branding identity that these signs will create will be of immeasurable value to the county's travel and tourism industries.</p> <p>There are many signs throughout the county today that reflect these characteristics, that could be used as models. Moreover, we would like the county to consider a signage ordinance that would restrict the size and placement of commercially produced signs to enable the county to have a comprehensive look.</p> <p>A planning consultant and graphic design firm will be hired to conduct community meetings to develop and build support for and then to implement the approved program.</p>
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Goal:	To develop a county-wide signage system that is clear, distinctive and original.
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Person/Organization Responsible:	Cost to Implement:	Estimated Time to Complete:
Mitchell Co. Chamber of Commerce in collaboration with local government, business associations and nonprofit organizations.	\$30,000.00	One year to plan, another year to design, build and install tier one.

Action Items:	Resources Required:	Who's Responsible:
Develop Partnerships	Nominal	Mitchell Co. Chamber of Commerce
Research and hire consultants and design firms		
Complete study		

Funding for signage at entrances to county Sandblasted and painted signs with landscaping and lighting	\$30,000.00	Mitchell Co. COC
Seek approval of all governmental bodies	Nominal	Mitchell Co. COC

Performance Measures:	
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Status:	Conceptual stage
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Blue Ridge National Heritage Area PRIORITY INITIATIVE WORKSHEET

Initiative Title:	Maintenance & Beautification
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Project Narrative:	<p>Tourism has been identified as a new major industry for Mitchell County. The goal of the county and the Chamber is to encourage more tourism: to have travelers stay longer, return more often and spend more money in the area. However, litter has become a major obstacle to increasing tourism in our area. Tourists and newcomers are becoming increasingly aware of the disregard for the environment and scenic beauty throughout the community.</p> <p>The plan for beautification will be an integral part of the plan to make Mitchell County attractive to tourists as well as locals. The focus will be on education as well as community involvement. Schools, churches, clubs, businesses and local government will work independently and collectively, with each entity finding a way to contribute their unique expertise as a team effort. The program will involve everyone simultaneously in a concentrated effort, and the plan will have proposed starting date and time period for completion.</p>
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Goal:	To launch a public relations campaign to combat the litter problem in Mitchell County, thereby encouraging both tourism and community pride.
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Person/Organization Responsible:	Cost to Implement:	Estimated Time to Complete:
Mitchell Co. Chamber of Commerce	\$34,000.00	One year

Action Items:	Resources Required:	Who's Responsible:
Advertising Campaign	\$4,800.00	Mitchell Co Chamber of Commerce
Direct Mail Campaign		
Postage	\$5,200.00	Mitchell Co Chamber of Commerce
Printing	\$3,000.00	
Design	\$4,000.00	
School Literature Packet	\$9,000.00	Mitchell Co Chamber of Commerce
Signage	\$8,000.00	Mitchell Co Chamber of Commerce

Performance Measures:	
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Status:	Proposal available
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Blue Ridge National Heritage Area PRIORITY INITIATIVE WORKSHEET

Initiative Title:	Carolina Theater Restoration
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Project Narrative:	<p>CBD Enterprise, LLC recently purchased the Carolina Theatre in Spruce Pine with the goal of renovating the facility to serve the community. It was built in 1937 and served the area as a movie and performing arts theatre up until about ten years ago. For the last few years, however, it has sat neglected, abandoned and has fallen into extreme disrepair. The overall condition of the building indicates little or no real attention has been given to aesthetics or function since its original completion; however, structurally the building is in good shape and the original stage is still intact.</p> <p>From 1949 to 1954 every Friday night, the theatre sponsored a music program called "The Carolina Barn Dance". The program was broadcasted on national radio, and featured some of the top names in country music of the era as well as several local artists. The "Barn Dance" put a small town on a national map. We think it can again.</p> <p>Construction details are currently being organized. A building permit has been acquired, and the renovations are now beginning. We are also in the process of forming a nonprofit corporation, Carolina Theatre Preservation Association, LLC. This organization would help us raise the necessary funds for construction and would also help promote the theatre. Additionally, we plan to employ a theatre planning firm to help design the interior décor, the sound, video and lighting systems and the stage and curtain equipment.</p> <p>The Carolina Theatre could provide a place to showcase music of all kinds and other performing arts as well as art auctions, banquets, seminars, dinner theatre, DVD presentations and innumerable other community-oriented functions.</p>
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Goal:	To restore the old Carolina Theatre in downtown Spruce Pine with modern upgrades with the purpose of promoting commerce and cultural activity in Mitchell County.
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Person/Organization Responsible:	Cost to Implement:	Estimated Time to Complete:
CBD Enterprise, LLC	\$800,000.00	6-8 months

Action Items:	Resources Required:	Who's Responsible:
Acquire building permit	Completed	CBD Enterprise, LLC
Construction/renovation of facility	\$600,000	CBD Enterprise, LLC
Form nonprofit corporation Carolina Theatre Preservation Association, LLC	Nominal	CBD Enterprise, LLC
Hire theatre planning firm		CBD Enterprise, LLC
Theatre design and equipment	\$200,000	CBD Enterprise, LLC

Performance Measures:	
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Status:	Under construction
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Blue Ridge National Heritage Area PRIORITY INITIATIVE WORKSHEET

Initiative Title:	Working Art Studio
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Project Narrative:	<p>Located in Mitchell County is Penland School of Crafts, a national center for craft education which attracts thousands of students each year . In addition, the county is home to four renowned artisans of various craftworks who have been named North Carolina Living Treasures, along with numerous other artists and craftspeople with independent studios throughout the county. The goal of the Chamber/EDC is to partner with the arts community to create a Working Art Museum and Studio to display the work of local artists, provide live art demonstrations to visitors and generally provide an overview of the unique and varied arts and crafts resources available in Mitchell County.</p> <p>The Working Art Museum and Studio would serve several purposes. First, it would become a major hub for tourism. The facility would also foster greater interaction between the arts population and other community members, thereby educating the county about the benefits of the arts as well as boosting the overall sense of pride in community.</p> <p>Currently, the Mitchell Co. Chamber/EDC is exploring the possibility of purchasing land near the county's Visitor Information Center and the Blue Ridge Parkway, with the intent of beginning construction on the museum/studio facility.</p> <p>Located in Mitchell County is Penland School of Crafts, a national center for craft education which attracts thousands of students each year . In addition, the county is home to four renowned artisans of various craftworks who have been named North Carolina Living Treasures, along with numerous other artists and craftspeople with independent studios throughout the county. The goal of the Chamber/EDC is to partner with the arts community to create a Working Art Museum and Studio to display the work of local artists, provide live art demonstrations to visitors and generally provide an overview of the unique and varied arts and crafts resources available in Mitchell County.</p> <p>The Working Art Museum and Studio would serve several purposes. First, it would become a major hub for tourism. The facility would also foster greater interaction between the arts population and other community members, thereby educating the county about the benefits of the arts as well as boosting the overall sense of pride in community.</p> <p>Currently, the Mitchell Co. Chamber/EDC is exploring the possibility of purchasing land near the county's Visitor Information Center and the Blue Ridge Parkway, with the intent of beginning construction on the museum/studio facility.</p>
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Goal:	To utilize the wealth of arts programs and artists in Mitchell County through construction and promotion of a Working Art Museum and Studio.
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Person/Organization Responsible:	Cost to Implement:	Estimated Time to Complete:
Mitchell Co. Chamber of Commerce/EDC	\$5,500,000.00	

Action Items:	Resources	Who's Responsible:
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	Required:	
Purchase 6.14 acres of available land	\$1,500,000	Mitchell Co. Chamber/EDC
Hire contractor, construction on facility	\$4,000,000	Mitchell Co. Chamber/EDC
Form partnerships with Penland School of Crafts and local artisans		Mitchell Co. Chamber/EDC
Employ artists to perform live demonstrations of craftwork		Mitchell Co. Chamber/EDC
Purchase equipment for live craftwork exhibitions		Mitchell Co. Chamber/EDC
Acquire art from local artists for display in museum		Mitchell Co. Chamber/EDC
County, state and national promotion		

Performance Measures:	
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Status:	Concept/Planning
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Blue Ridge National Heritage Area PRIORITY INITIATIVE WORKSHEET

Initiative Title:	<i>The Home of the Perfect Christmas Tree Marketing Plan</i>
Goal:	To market Mitchell County, NC as <i>The Home of the Perfect Christmas Tree</i> to local, regional and national audiences, in order to increase tourism and economic development in the community.

Project Narrative:	<p>For many years, the children's book <i>The Year of the Perfect Christmas Tree</i>, by Dr. Gloria Houston, based on the life of her mother, a native of Mitchell County who grew up in the early twentieth century, has drawn tourists to the area. The Mitchell County Development Foundation, Inc. has developed a plan for Mitchell County to aggressively market itself as <i>The Home of the Perfect Christmas Tree</i> in local, state and national print publications and other media outlets.</p> <p>Marketing the county as <i>The Home of the Perfect Christmas Tree</i> will intensify interest in Mitchell County's Christmas tree production as well as create public relations opportunities to offer a wider scope for the county's cultural tourism. Additionally, this marketing plan will allow for the development of a program to combat unemployment in Mitchell County. Textile, furniture and other workers who have been laid-off in the wake of the county's recent economic devastation will be involved in the creation of a new product line centered around the book <i>The Year of the Perfect Christmas Tree</i> and based on the strong crafts traditions of the area. Textile-comprised, home-made dolls and high-quality children's furniture are just two of the projected products.</p> <p>With the aid of a grant from the Z. Smith Reynolds Corporation, the Mitchell County Development Foundation secured Mitchell County's designation as <i>The Home of the Perfect Christmas Tree</i>. During the 2005 holiday season and beyond, the Foundation used ZSRF and Golden LEAF Foundation grant funds to begin its local and limited regional product launch. In 2006, with aid from the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area and the NC Dept of Commerce, the Foundation has worked to produce a product catalog/features magazine to be used as a marketing tool for the project. We will continue to seek funding to implement expanded marketing strategies geared toward state and national audiences.</p>
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Person/Organization Responsible:	Cost:	Estimated Time to Complete
Mitchell County Development Foundation, Inc.	\$162,400.00	Ongoing

Action Items:	Resources:	Who is Responsible:
Fund and secure exclusive copyrights and patents necessary to identify the county as <i>The Home of the Perfect Christmas Tree</i>	Completed/ \$20,000.00	Mitchell Co. Dev. Foundation/ Mitchell Co. EDC
Fund and design a logo for licensing and quality control purposes which will accompany each product, denoting its authenticity	Completed/ \$2,400.00	Mitchell Co. Dev. Foundation/ ZSR Grant
Establish a <i>Home of the Perfect Christmas Tree</i> Governing Board	Completed	Mitchell Co. Dev. Foundation
Hire and fund development/support staff	Completed/ \$35,000.00	Mitchell Co. Dev. Foundation/ ZSR Grant/CFWNC Grant

Action Items:	Resources:	Who is Responsible:
Phase I (local/regional) Marketing for <i>The Home of the Perfect Christmas Tree</i> brand	Completed/\$38,000	Mitchell Co. Dev. Foundation/ ZSR Grant/ GLF Grant
Phase II (expanded regional) Marketing — Catalog and website	In progress/ \$39,000	Mitchell Co. Dev. Foundation/ BRNHA grant/NC DOC/private donation
Phase III (expanded state and southeast) Marketing strategies	\$28,000.00	Mitchell Co. Dev. Foundation

Status Update	Plans are being made to launch the <i>Home of the Perfect Christmas Tree</i> mail-order catalogue/features magazine as well as the project website in early October 2006. The Foundation is currently working with Design One to produce both the catalogue and website. The Foundation is also developing a contract with a locally-based photographer for work on both the catalogue and website. With the help of marketing consultant Jen Mead, the Foundation has identified a target market, including second home owners in the WNC region, for the catalogue and other publicity mail-outs. Ongoing marketing strategies
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Blue Ridge National Heritage Area PRIORITY INITIATIVE WORKSHEET

Initiative Title:	<i>The Home of the Perfect Christmas Tree Retail Store</i>
Goal:	To develop a retail outlet for locally-made products relating to the designation of Mitchell County as the <i>Home of the Perfect Christmas Tree</i> .

Project Narrative:	<p>This plan is designed to capitalize on Mitchell County's designation as the <i>Home of the Perfect Christmas Tree</i>. As the recipients of a grant from the Z. Smith Reynolds Corporation, Mitchell County has been able to foster product development from cottage industries based on local author and educator Dr. Gloria Houston's book <i>The Year of the Perfect Christmas Tree</i>. Now the county must develop an outlet for the sale of these products.</p> <p>The project's ancillary product lines are concentrated around high-quality children's furniture, textile-comprised dolls, Christmas tree sales, and other handmade items. An official logo has been developed as the emblem for all <i>Home of the Perfect Christmas Tree</i> products and the <i>Christmas Tree Board</i> is responsible for assuring that all related products conform to a high standard of excellence.</p>
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Person/Organization Responsible:	Cost:	Estimated Time to Complete
Mitchell County Development Foundation, Inc.	\$441,500.00	ongoing

Action Items:	Resources:	Who is Responsible:
Lease of retail space in downtown Spruce Pine (1 year lease)	\$6,000.00	COMPLETE
Design of retail space by professional retail designer	\$5,000.00	COMPLETE
Staff for one year	\$30,000.00	COMPLETE
Construction of model rooms based on scenes from the book, <i>The Year of the Perfect Christmas Tree</i>	\$50,000.00	Mitchell Co. Dev. Foundation
Equipment	\$23,000.00	Mitchell Co. Dev. Foundation
Point of Purchase Supplies	\$2,500.00	COMPLETE
Building Purchase	\$300,000.00	COMPLETE
Building Renovation	\$25,000.00	Mitchell Co. Dev. Foundation

Status

The project opened its flagship retail store in November 2005. Using grant funds received from the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, the Foundation rented and renovated the store facility in downtown Spruce Pine, a process that involved extensive planning, painting and other improvements, including the purchase of state-of-the-art computer equipment for efficient product sales and aprons and shirts for a cohesive store staff appearance. Marketing consultant Jennifer Mead and her visual merchandiser also planned the layout of the *Home of the Perfect Christmas Tree* store. The Foundation printed over 1000 invitations for a grand opening/open house to send out to contacts all over the state, including government officials and school teachers.

The *Home of the Perfect Christmas Tree* store Grand Opening and Open House was held Thursday evening, November 3, 2005. This event featured a ribbon cutting ceremony, a performance by the cast of the Blue Ridge Community Theatre's production of *The Year of the Perfect Christmas Tree* and a book signing by Dr. Gloria Houston. Over three hundred people attended the celebration. Store sales in the first week totaled over \$5,000.00.

The store has continued with success in target regional markets. Ads were placed in print publications in Raleigh, Charlotte and Greensboro, and product sales in the first two months came to nearly \$50,000.00. The *Home of the Perfect Christmas Tree* store was added to the itinerary of the Toe River Arts Council's Tour of Studios, a program held two times a year and designed to attract attention to area craftspeople. Spruce Pine was recognized by the NC Rural Center as one of six small towns in North Carolina with innovative ideas for economic development. The project was also featured in the December edition of *North Carolina* magazine, the publication for North Carolina Citizens for Business and Industry, and was also the lead story in a December edition of the *Winston-Salem Journal*.

In September 2006, the Foundation acquired the building in which the *Home of the Perfect Christmas Tree* retail store is housed. Plans include renovating the building to include a shipping facility on the lower floor, which will accommodate for upcoming web and catalogue orders, as well as a business incubator project on the upper floor.



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Blue Ridge National Heritage Area PRIORITY INITIATIVE WORKSHEET

Initiative Title:	Festival Promotion
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Project Narrative:	<p>Annual festivals and events have long provided a tremendous boost to the economy in Mitchell County. Mainstay festivals in the county include the NC Mineral & Gem Festival, the oldest gem festival in the state, which celebrates our region's rich mining history and culture. Additionally, the NC Rhododendron Festival, held for over fifty years in Bakersville, provides visitors with the chance to experience the phenomenon of the largest naturally occurring Catawba rhododendron gardens in the world. These two festivals provide a one million dollar plus boost to Mitchell County's economy annually and play a vital role in our community.</p> <p>In recent years, events such as the Storytelling Festival in Spruce Pine, the Hillbilly Heritage Festival, the Creekwalk Arts Festival and Hammerin' by the Toe have been developed in order to celebrate many of Mitchell County's other varied cultural assets. These events can only grow with the aid of increased marketing.</p> <p>Funding is requested to further promote all festivals primarily in area markets and also to regional and national publications such as <i>Our State</i> and <i>Southern Living</i> magazines. The goal is to capitalize on the great success of our two primary festivals as well as to make our newer festival more recognizable to a larger regional and national market.</p>
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Goal:	<p>To create a direct marketing campaign for Mitchell County Festivals to target</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Visitors within a two hour drive of the area• National attention
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Person/Organization Responsible:	Cost to Implement:	Estimated Time to Complete:
Mitchell Co. Chamber of Commerce	\$30,000.00	Ongoing

Action Items:	Resources Required:	Who's Responsible:
Promotion of Festivals	\$30,000.00	Mitchell Co. Chamber of Commerce

Performance Measures:	
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Status:	Ongoing
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Blue Ridge National Heritage Area PRIORITY INITIATIVE WORKSHEET

Initiative Title:	Completion of Bakersville Creekwalk
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Project Narrative:	<p>The Bakersville Creekwalk, located along a subsidiary of the Toe River in downtown Bakersville, is a favorite attraction for both locals and visitors to the area. It features walking/jogging paths, picnic areas and art displays from artisans in Mitchell County. Additionally, the site hosts the annual Creekwalk Arts Festival.</p> <p>The Creekwalk has been an ongoing project for the past ten years. The project is nearing completion; however, funding is requested to build a final extension to the Creekwalk and to provide lighting for the newly constructed annex, thereby maximizing the Creekwalk's tourism opportunities.</p>
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Goal:	To construct an extension for the Bakersville Creekwalk.
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Person/Organization Responsible:	Cost to Implement:	Estimated Time to Complete:
Bakersville Improvement Group (B.I.G.)	\$5,000.00	Six months

Action Items:	Resources Required:	Who's Responsible:
Construction of Bakersville Creekwalk Extension	\$3,500.00	B.I.G.
Lighting for Extension	\$1,500.00	B.I.G.

Performance Measures:	
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Status:	Ongoing
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Heritage Areas

National Park Service
U.S. Department of Interior

Blue Ridge National Heritage Area PRIORITY INITIATIVE WORKSHEET

Initiative Title:	Satellite Chamber/Information Center for Bakersville, NC
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Project Narrative:	Currently, the Mitchell County Chamber of Commerce has staffed locations in downtown Spruce Pine and at the Visitors Center along the Blue Ridge Parkway. However, there is no site for a Chamber office or information center in Bakersville at this time. Bakersville is the county seat of Mitchell County, home to Roan Mountain, the Bakersville Creekwalk and the NC Rhododendron Festival. Further, Bakersville is the first major town encountered by visitors to Mitchell County who reach the area by traveling through Tennessee. The Chamber of Commerce and Bakersville Town Hall have partnered together in hopes of establishing a mini-information center in the Town Hall office, consisting of an information kiosk/rack that would supply maps, brochures and other valuable information about Mitchell County, along with a public access computer station to assist tourists in completing their online affairs as they travel.
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Goal:	To establish a "satellite Chamber" information kiosk inside the Town Hall office building in Bakersville, NC.
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Person/Organization Responsible:	Cost to Implement:	Estimated Time to Complete:
Mitchell Co. Chamber of Commerce/ Bakersville Town Hall	\$2,000.00	3 months

Action Items:	Resources Required:	Who's Responsible:
Establish partnership	Completed	Mitchell Co. COC/Bakersville Town Hall
Locate funding for information kiosk and public access computer station (including wireless internet for one year)	\$2,000.00	Mitchell Co. COC

Performance Measures:	
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Status:	In progress
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Heritage Areas

National Park Service
U.S. Department of Interior

Blue Ridge National Heritage Area PRIORITY INITIATIVE WORKSHEET

Initiative Title:	History/Heritage Education
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Project Narrative:	<p>To create a marketing campaign to Western and selected Central North Carolina schools for field trips. The marketing campaign would most likely be targeted towards primary age school children who are less than a two hour drive away from Mitchell County. Students studying topics in history, such as NC history or Revolutionary War history, or topics in science, such as geology or plant/animal life could benefit from these trips. Likely destinations for school trips include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Museum of North Carolina Minerals, gem mines• Dellinger's Grist Mill• Overmountain Victory Trail—Revolutionary War re-enactment• Roan Mountain• And others <p>Creative mailers could include pre-designed itineraries, complete with a syllabus and take-home quizzes. Also, kids could be encouraged to enter contests before or after their trips, which could range from art contests to essay writing. Prizes such as gems or handmade crafts could be awarded.</p>
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Goal:	To engage students in history and their heritage
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Person/Organization Responsible:	Cost to Implement:	Estimated Time to Complete:
Mitchell County Chamber of Commerce	\$16,000.00	Six months

Action Items:	Resources Required:	Who's Responsible:
Creative mailers with pre-designed itineraries, complete with syllabi and take-home quizzes	\$10,000.00	Mitchell Co Chamber of Commerce
Advertising in education and field trip resource Publications	\$5,000.00	Mitchell Co Chamber of Commerce
Postage	\$1,000.00	Mitchell Co Chamber of Commerce

Performance Measures:	
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Status:	Conceptual stage
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Heritage Areas

National Park Service
U.S. Department of Interior

Blue Ridge National Heritage Area PRIORITY INITIATIVE WORKSHEET

Initiative Title:	Rhododendron Festival Amphitheatre
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Project Narrative:	<p>The construction of an outdoor amphitheatre is part of a larger campaign by the Town of Bakersville and the Rhododendron Foundation, Inc. to develop tourism opportunities in Bakersville and the northern sector of Mitchell County.</p> <p>Bakersville is a town undergoing a revitalization because of its attention to the arts and its natural wonders. It is home to the NC Rhododendron Festival and the Bakersville Creekwalk Arts Festival. However, these events are limited because of the lack of a venue within the town to host major activities such as art auctions or performing arts shows during the Rhododendron Festival. The town courthouse, a historic venue, was recently destroyed during a devastating fire, and so the town currently relies on a school building that has not seen major renovation since the 1940s to host the limited events it can accommodate.</p>
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Goal:	To construct an outdoor amphitheatre in Bakersville to hold festivals, events and other tourism-centered activities.
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Person/Organization Responsible:	Cost to Implement:	Estimated Time to Complete:
Rhododendron Foundation, Inc.	\$75,000.00	Two years

Action Items:	Resources Required:	Who's Responsible:
Fundraising	\$5,000.00 received	Rhododendron Foundation, Inc.
Construction	Ongoing	Rhododendron Foundation, Inc.
Concentration A: Stage and Seating	\$30,000.00	Rhododendron Foundation, Inc.
Concentration B: Public Dining/Shelter Area	\$30,000.00	Rhododendron Foundation, Inc.
Concentration C: Public Restrooms	\$15,000.00	Rhododendron Foundation, Inc.

Performance Measures:	
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Status:	Planning/fundraising
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Heritage Areas

National Park Service
U.S. Department of Interior

Blue Ridge National Heritage Area PRIORITY INITIATIVE WORKSHEET

Initiative Title:	Preservation of Sunny Brook Store
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Project Narrative:	<p>The portrayal of Sunny Brook Store in the books <i>But No Candy</i> and <i>The Year of the Perfect Christmas Tree</i>, along with its web page and mail order business, has provided international exposure to the building, thereby enhancing its value to Mitchell County as a marketing tool. The owners of the store, Ruthie Houston, Jerry Houston and Dr. Gloria Houston have offered the store and its contents to Mitchell County with the stipulation that it be used to the greatest advantage to <i>The Home of the Perfect Christmas Tree</i> project.</p> <p>In its current location, the store is in a neighboring county, although culturally closer to Spruce Pine than to the county of origin. Additionally, access to the store is via a blind curve at the bottom of a hill dangerous to visitors. To have its value to the region fully utilized, the store should be moved away from its current dangerous location.</p> <p>At its new location, the store in whole or in a new adaptation will continue its role as a museum of Gloria Houston's books set in the region, attracting visitors from every continent. The web page attached to the store will also be provided to the project in Mitchell County, so its reputation can be utilized to the advantage of the project. Finally, the building could offer artists additional sales space for their products under <i>The Home of the Perfect Christmas Tree</i> logo.</p>
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Goal:	To preserve and move the Sunny Brook Store building from its current location or to dismantle and move the parts having value to <i>The Home of the Perfect Christmas Tree</i> project to a new location in or near Spruce Pine.
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Person/Organization Responsible:	Cost to Implement:	Estimated Time to Complete:
Dr. Gloria Houston, Jerry Houston, Charles Shuffler, Mitchell County Chamber of Commerce	\$20,000.00	One year

Action Items:	Resources Required:	Who's Responsible:
Seek professional advice about the structural integrity of the building and the possibility of moving it	\$2,000.00	Gloria Houston, Jerry Houston, Charles Shuffler
Locate and purchase a new site for the building in Mitchell County	\$8,000.00	Gloria Houston, Jerry Houston, Charles Shuffler
Refurbish the building to make it accessible and accommodating to have the greatest value to Mitchell County	\$10,000.00	Gloria Houston, Jerry Houston, Charles Shuffler, Mitchell Co. Chamber of Commerce

Performance Measures:	
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Status:	Conceptual stage
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Heritage Areas

National Park Service
U.S. Department of Interior

Blue Ridge National Heritage Area PRIORITY INITIATIVE WORKSHEET

Initiative Title:	Penland School of Crafts Gallery and Visitors Center
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Project Narrative:	<p>Penland continues to promote the Gallery and Visitors Center through advertising, public relations and word of mouth. We expect visitation to increase, and the demand for services to increase as well. We want to Gallery and Visitors Center to continue to function as the gateway to Penland's campus and the surrounding craft communities. This will require facility and program improvements.</p> <p>The Penland Gallery and Visitors Center is not currently handicapped accessible. We are in the process of designing a new entryway and restroom facilities that will assure compliance with the highest standards of accessibility. The new entryway and restrooms, which form phase one of the Penland Gallery/Horner Hall project, are scheduled for construction in the fall of 2006. The construction documents for this phase will be completed by December 2005. Partial funds have been raised for this phase of the project.</p> <p>The next phase of the Penland Gallery and Visitor Center improvements will be a renovation of the building to accommodate an expanded sales gallery and support areas (offices, packing, storage), an addition for changing exhibitions (with higher ceilings, better light control, more wall space for hanging objects), an exterior courtyard for outdoor works of art, and expanded visitor services (more restrooms, food service facilities, a new permanent historical exhibition). The second floor of the building will be renovated for offices and meeting space and the entire building will be brought up to current building codes. Extensive site preparation, road work and parking will also be included in this phase. This project is currently in design development. No funds have been raised yet for this phase of the project.</p> <p>Programmatic improvements will include increased staff to provide educational and sales service to visitors, the development of campus walking maps and other materials that support an outstanding visitor experience for Penland, and the installation of a new permanent historical exhibition featuring a vehicular "Travelog". This is 1930's Ford truck with a small log cabin on the back that was taken to the 1933 World's Fair by Lucy Morgan, Penland's founder. Along with many other objects and photographs in the Penland archives, the "Travelog" tells the story of the craft revival movement in western North Carolina and the creation of Penland School of Crafts. We want to make this experience available to visitors to enhance their understanding of the region and the school.</p>
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Goal:	Support increased visitation to Mitchell County and the surrounding area with improved visitor experiences and service at the Penland Gallery and Visitors Center.
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Person/Organization Responsible:	Cost to Implement:	Estimated Time to Complete:
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Action Items:	Resources Required:	Who's Responsible:
<p>Complete design and construction of handicapped accessible bathrooms and new entrance to Horner Hall – phase one.</p> <p>Complete visitor experience materials and begin test marketing on campus – phase one.</p> <p>Complete planning process for use of second floor of Horner – phase two.</p> <p>Complete design process for first and second floor renovation of Horner – phase two.</p> <p>Identify funding to support all projects – phase one and two.</p> <p>Complete construction documents – phase one and two.</p> <p>Bid project, hire contractor, complete renovations – phase one and two.</p>		

Performance Measures:	
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Status:	As of September 1, 2006: Construction documents have been completed for Phase 1. New visitor materials have been drafted to accompany the lobby renovation. We are currently in the design development phase for Phase 2; funding sources are being identified to complete that portion of the project. Construction on Phase 1 will begin in October.
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Heritage Areas

National Park Service
U.S. Department of Interior

Blue Ridge National Heritage Area PRIORITY INITIATIVE WORKSHEET

Initiative Title: Penland School of Crafts Marketing Initiative

**Project
Narrative:**

Penland School of Crafts will undertake a multi-tiered marketing and communications campaign to increase our national visibility and support the growth of cultural tourism in Western North Carolina. Through this initiative, Penland will:

- Work with communications specialists to examine and refine Penland's marketing messages and strategies. The consultants will have extensive marketing experience and one we are involving is also a cultural policy scholar based in North Carolina. We will use our work with these consultants to guide the execution of numerous projects, including: identifying our targeted demographics and the media outlets that serve them; redesigning the Penland website to make it a more visually striking, interactive marketing tool; designing and producing an identity banner for the exterior front of the Penland Gallery; producing a visitor's guide and walking map of campus for visitors; developing and implementing a distribution plan for the general information brochure and annual calendar of events card; producing and monitoring the effectiveness of radio ads on North Carolina stations outside our region such as WUNC and WFAE; producing and monitoring the effectiveness of print ads in national publications such as *American Craft*.
- Develop a partnership advertising campaign to bring serious craft collectors and art enthusiasts to the region. Partner with organizations such as the Asheville Art Museum, the Turchin Center for the Visual Arts (ASU), and the Center for Craft Creativity and Design to create a large-scale joint ad that features and maintains the identity of each institution while promoting the region as a whole by providing web addresses for area chambers of commerce. Purchase full-page advertising in high-profile national arts publications such as the SOFA New York and SOFA Chicago catalogues, the Smithsonian Festival catalogue, the Philadelphia Craft Fair catalogue, and magazines researched to fit appropriate demographics (i.e. *Martha Stewart Living*, *Dwell*, *NY Times Magazine*, *Art and Antiques*).
- Work in an advisory role with area organizations such as TRAC and Spruce Pine Mainstreet to assist them in the marketing of events such as the TRAC studio tour and the Fire on the Mountain festival. Lend Penland's organizational skills to expand the resources of the tri-county area and coordinate efforts with the Mitchell and Yancey Chambers of Commerce to enable the county to benefit from a wider audience and visitor base.
- Invite craft based organizations in the regions to participate in a facilitated discussion to develop strategies for marketing the craft industry in our region. Learn what each group is planning for the next 2-3 years; create an annual joint calendar of events. Discuss ways to link websites and share information that will enable the region to grow its visitation and extend visits to reach the out of the way places. This process will include AAM, Handmade in America, CCCD, Southern Highland Guild, JCCFS, the Blue Ridge Host organization, Advantage West, TRAC, the Energy Xchange, Potters of the Roan, the Grove Arcade Gallery, and possibly other regional commercial galleries.

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Goal:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure a stable, financially secure anchor for the crafts industry in western NC by strengthening the visibility and positioning of Penland School of Crafts as a national leader in craft education. To develop marketing and communication strategies that will increase cultural tourism in the region through supporting the growth of Penland's student enrollment, Gallery sales, donor base, and attendance and sales at scholarship auctions and annual benefit auction.
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Person/Organization Responsible:	Cost to Implement:	Estimated Time to Complete:
Jean McLaughlin/Penland School of Crafts	\$100,000	One to three years

Action Items:	Resources Required:	Who's Responsible:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with marketing consultants to develop a plan for increasing Penland's national visibility 	\$30,000	Jean McLaughlin, Susan Klaffky, Robin Dreyer, Kathryn Gremley, Dana Moore, Stacey Lane
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a demographic analysis of Penland stakeholders, using surveys from students, donors, and gallery customers 	\$10,000	Jean McLaughlin, Susan Klaffky
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce and distribute print ads, radio ads, and brochure to support nationally-focused partnership advertising campaign with regional visual arts organizations (CCCR, Asheville Art Museum). 	\$20,000	Jean McLaughlin, Susan Klaffky, Robin Dreyer, Kathryn Gremley, Leslie Noell
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce and distribute visitor's guide brochure with map and self-guided walking tour 	\$10,000	Jean McLaughlin, Robin Dreyer, Leslie Noell, Kathryn Gremley
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design and produce an identity banner for the exterior front of the Penland Gallery to increase the gallery's visibility and enliven the exterior. 	\$20,000	Jean McLaughlin, Robin Dreyer, Leslie Noell, Kathryn Gremley
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redesign the Penland website, heightening the visual quality and interactive potential to increase its power as a marketing tool 	\$10,000	Jean McLaughlin, Susan Klaffky, Robin Dreyer, Leslie Noell
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek funding sources for new communications and marketing initiatives 	Staff time	Jean McLaughlin, Susan Klaffky, Wesley Middleton
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist in developing marketing initiatives with area organizations (TRAC, Spruce Pine Mainstreet). 	Staff time	Jean McLaughlin, Stacey Lane
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invite regional craft organizations to participate in a facilitated discussion to develop strategies for marketing the craft industry in our region. 	Staff time	Jean McLaughlin, Susan Klaffky, Robin Dreyer, Stacey Lane
Performance Measures:	We will measure the success of these marketing initiatives based on growth in the following areas at Penland School of Crafts and	

	other regional arts organizations, as applicable: student enrollment, number of gallery visitors, total amount of gallery sales, number of donors, total amount of donations.
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Status:	Planning and implementation
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