



EXPLORE BUTTE COUNTY

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2026 BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING

~~December 5, 2025~~

December 9, 2025

~~Time: 10:30 am - 12:00 pm~~

Time: 3:30 pm - 4:30 pm

BCAG Board Room
326 Huss Dr, Board Room, Chico, CA 95928

Agenda

Public Notice Information: In accordance with the Ralph M. Brown Act, EBC agendas are available for public review outside the BCAG Board Room at 326 Huss Dr, Building Et at least 72 hours prior to each meeting. The agendas are also posted on the EBC website at explorebuttecounty.com. Questions on agenda items may be directed to Nichole Farley, EBC Executive Direction, at nichole@explorebuttecounty.com.

MISSION: Explore Butte County inspires people to discover Butte County, creates tourism opportunities that contribute to economic vitality, and builds community through partnerships.

VISION: Explore Butte County champions a diverse and flourishing tourism industry, making it THE must-visit destination in the North State.

VALUES: Authenticity. Innovation. Stewardship. Equity. Fun.

BRAND POSITION: The Explorer - Adventurer, Pioneer, Seeker, Open-minded, Resourceful, Tolerant, Ambitious, Down to Earth, Authentic, Determined, Outdoorsy

1. OPEN MEETING

Attendees: Jason Oliveras, Matt Reed, Sareena Merchant

Absent: Megan Gaddis

2. OBJECTIVE 3: ADVOCATE FOR INVESTMENTS IN BUTTE COUNTY'S VISITOR ECONOMY

2.1. 2026 PROPOSED BUDGET (Nichole Farley)

A draft of the [2026 Proposed Budget](#) is attached for discussion and alignment with our [2026 - 2028 proposed Strategic Plan](#)

- 2026 Budget Approval and Contracts The primary purpose of the meeting was to review the proposed 2026 budget to make a recommendation for its adoption by the full board on January 15th.
- Nichole Farley requested approval for three integrated contracts to be executed by the end of the year to lock in rates, with services starting in January.
- Jason Olivares requested an explanation of what services were being removed in lieu of the new contracts being added.

- **Revenue:** Nichole Farley reported that program income is projected to be \$1.2 million, flat from 2024, without projected growth in occupancy or ADR.
- **Advertising Budget:** The advertising budget includes spending through Madden Media, the agency of record, with \$14,000 budgeted for SEM. Digital advertising is split between \$12,000 in-house and \$24,000 through Madden Media, with \$12,000 projected for Adara, which includes a match and a Visit California co-op, increasing the actual media buying to around \$25,000. A total of \$25,000 is set aside for "out of home activations and storytelling partnerships," with plans to leverage momentum from a partnership with Wild Sam for a second year and initiate a first-year activation with All Gears focused on mountain biking, trails, and hiking.
- **Creative Budget:** Nichole Farley proposed decreasing the creative budget by holding off on new video and photography assets, instead leveraging existing assets for a year while pursuing a brand audit and refresh with Madden, estimated at \$50,000. Nichole Farley also mentioned plans to replace the previous large visitors guide with smaller, more niche 'pocket guides' for mountain biking and hiking trails after the brand refresh.
- **Shifting Research and Data Strategy** Nichole Farley detailed a change in research and data strategy, noting that the organization will stop using Zardico due to their inability to accurately track hotel data and because Butte County does not have enough cell phone traffic for accurate data extrapolation. The new focus will be on actual visitor spending using a Visa View contract and gathering hotel/Airbnb data through AirDNA, Calibri, and CoStar. The AirDNA data, which includes latitude and longitude for short-term rental homes, will be used to help jurisdictions achieve compliance with TOT and TBID payments.
- **Marketing and Digital Technology Investments:** The organization plans to invest \$25,000 in website updates to move from Craft 4 to Craft 5, with an additional \$5,000 needed for CCPA (California Privacy Act) compliance, and plans for European privacy standards compliance in 2027. A new AI scraping tool, to be built by Daniel, will help identify new content, events, and travel/tourism-related information in Butte County. A new contract with HubSpot, totaling \$30,000 yearly, will create a CRM, eliminate other platforms like Mailchimp and HootSuite, and allow for tracking the consumer journey through all digital platforms.
- **Destination Management and Co-op Programming:** Nichole Farley outlined destination management planning, including a \$50,000 project to update the designation status at the state level and explore federal designation of the Feather River Byway. A \$10,000 investment in a business education program called Destination Uplift, which includes monthly webinars on marketing and Google profiles, was suggested for sharing with downtown associations and chambers, funded through the co-op program.
- **Administrative Expenses and Financial Status:** Matt Reed and Nichole Farley discussed the conservative nature of the budgeting, with Matt Reed approving of the approach to ensure financial readiness. Nichole Farley

reported that the co-op programming total expenses are about \$37,000, and Lucia is outlining opportunities for community partners and event planners to meet that goal. Nichole Farley is pursuing increased funding from the City of Chico for Travel Chico, suggesting a raise from \$40,000 to \$100,000 to encourage people to fly into Chico, especially since the city is planning to spend more than \$40,000 on airport promotion to leave Chico.

- **Strategic Planning and Madden Media Contract:** Nichole Farley provided an update on the strategic plan, which will tie into programming and includes continued focus on sports tourism development and increasing brand visibility with the outdoor audience through efforts like Wild Sam and All Gears partnerships. The Madden Media contract is the largest, totaling \$275,000, which is an increase of \$25,000 from 2024 and is primarily due to the brand workshop audit. Sareena Merchant voiced concerns about potential fraud related to the Adara media spend and planned to review the data, with Nichole Farley offering to connect them with the representative, Charlie, if needed.
- **Contract and Budget Approval:** The three contracts for approval to lock in rates were with Madden, AirDNA/Calibri Hotel data (\$18,000 a year), and HubSpot. The HubSpot contract is billed quarterly at \$6,000, totaling \$24,000 yearly, plus \$5,000 for contingency and extra training.

Motion: Jason Oliveras

Approve the 2026 Proposed Budget and the Madden Media, AirDNA/Calibri, and Hubspot contracts for signature for Full Board Ratification on January 15, 2026.

Second: Matt Reed

Discussion: None

Vote: 3-0-0

3. BOARD UPDATES & PUBLIC COMMENT

The public is invited to address the Board regarding any non-agenda items at this time. Time is limited to three (3) minutes per speaker. The Board may not take any action on public comment.

4. ADJOURNMENT