

**1. 3,800**

Updated at Oct 29, 2021

Submission Date

Oct 17, 2021

Name of Initiative

Blue Ridge Craft Trails in Jackson County

Contact Person

Angie Chandler

Title

Executive Director

Address

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City

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State

NC

Zip Code

28803

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Organization Type

Non-Profit

Organization Tax ID

REDACTED

## Time of Year of Initiative

Off Peak (Dec - March) preferred

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Describe the timing of the initiative in as much detail as possible (please list key project dates, mi...

### Timeline:

September 2021 – Shoot B Roll

December 2021 – Video Artists

January 2022 – Complete Videos and Prepare PR and Social Media Campaign

Feb-March 2022 – Launch Press Release and Social Media Campaign for Jackson County

April – Launch Regional Social Media and PR Campaign including Jackson County Assets

July – Conduct Surveys

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## Describe your initiative

The Blue Ridge National Heritage Area (BRNHA) is requesting a \$3,800 grant from the Jackson County TDA to support the creation of videos and photography featuring four to six craft artists in Jackson County to bolster the marketing and content development of a regional initiative, the Blue Ridge Craft Trails. We will shoot four videos (one 1:30 video and three :30 sec. videos) and provide 20 professional still images of these artists highlighting the Blue Ridge Craft Trails experience in Jackson County, plus b-roll of scenic nature and small town locations. The goal of this effort is not only to connect makers and buyers but to highlight the hospitality and many experiences a visitor can find in Jackson County. We will focus on two towns as the backdrop of the videos, Sylva and Dillsboro, highlighting why each is so special.

The artists will be selected from among 17 craft artists, galleries, cultural sites and craft events in Jackson County that have been identified as sites on the Blue Ridge Craft Trails. An extensive, heavily curated process has identified these sites as meeting the qualifications of the Blue Ridge Craft Trails guidelines. These artists profiles are currently located on [blueridgecrafttrails.com](http://blueridgecrafttrails.com), they have been notified their selection and have had an opportunity to participate in a Meet and Greet webinar to learn more about the Craft Trails and how it can benefit their business.

The Blue Ridge Craft Trails is branding and marketing 25 Western North Carolina counties as a top craft destination in the U.S. directing visitors to more than 300 craft artisans and galleries in the region to increase artists' incomes and boost local economies. Funds from the Jackson County TDA Council will be used exclusively to benefit Jackson County artists and galleries and promote heritage tourism in Jackson County.

Funds from the Jackson County TDA will specifically match a \$1,200 grant from the Jackson County Arts Council for videos, photography and a social media campaign for Jackson County.

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## Describe what previous experience applicant has in successful execution of similar endeavors

The Blue Ridge National Heritage Area has previously launched the Blue Ridge Music Trails involving 29 counties and more than 250 traditional music venues and festivals across the NC Mountains and Foothills.

We have launched Craft Trails videos and social media campaigns in Henderson, Alleghany, Ashe, Wilkes, and Surry Counties with plans to launch in Haywood and Polk Counties and Qualla Boundary in early 2022.

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Website

blueridgecrafttrails.com

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Social Media Channels - paste URLs below

facebook.com/BlueRidgeNationalHeritageArea, instagram.com/blueridgeheritage

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Amount of Funds Requested?

3,800

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Date Funds Needed

Dec 15, 2021

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Give a narrative description of how this project will increase tourism and visitation in Jackson Co...

Western North Carolina is known as one of the leading centers of craft production and education in the United States. However, in the last 10 years there has been no strategic region-wide marketing of crafts to visitors. The Blue Ridge Craft Trails aims to strengthen the craft sector of the WNC economy by creating a compelling and coordinated regional craft brand and trail infrastructure to guide consumers to craft artists and experiences and better align the marketing efforts of the region's craft institutions and businesses.

By packaging Jackson County Tourism offerings through the lens of craft, the Blue Ridge Craft Trails program will increase overall visitation to Jackson County and will directly or indirectly increase overnight visits. Research shows that cultural tourists stay longer and spend more than general tourists. One study in the Southeast revealed that cultural tourists spend 38% more per day and stay 22% longer than the average traveler. They put money back into the local economy by staying overnight at local hotels and patronizing local businesses and cultural sites. Cultural tourism is a real economic driver that spreads economic benefits to local merchants, artists, and people who are not included in traditional destination marketing.

As part of the Phase 1 planning to determine return on investment, BRNHA commissioned a market study of travelers from the Southeastern US and their interest in craft while traveling conducted by Magellan Strategy Group and Appalachian State University Department of Tourism Research. The study gathered more than 2,400 responses from partner databases and purchased lists of general and Millennial-age travelers. The survey revealed surprisingly high levels of interest in the activities the Blue Ridge Craft Trails will encompass. When presented with a set of possible travel activities, 47% said they would take an overnight trip to attend a craft show, exhibit, or festival in a scenic mountain location, 51% said they would be interested in a craft demonstration, and 47% said they enjoyed visiting artist studios when traveling. The percentages for the Millennials surveyed were roughly comparable to the percentages in the overall age sample. When we surveyed the audiences of our regional craft and tourism partners (essentially, audiences who have already visited Western North Carolina), we found even higher levels of interest in Craft Trails activities.

Sixty-one percent of the Southeast traveler sample said they associated Asheville with handmade crafts, a higher ranking than any other listed destinations (including Santa Fe, Seagrave, Gatlinburg, and Paducah). This result suggests both a respectable level of existing awareness and room to grow. Respondents also reported high levels of interest in non-craft activities (e.g., historic sites, museums, live music, and outdoor adventure) and of pairing craft experiences with other heritage experiences. This pairing experience would be of value to visitors and strengthen the audiences' interest in craft by positioning crafts as integral to a complete visitor experience. This could result in reaching wider audiences. The Blue Ridge Craft Trails website itinerary builder, which will feature a curated itinerary for Jackson County, will connect cultural attractions, restaurants, breweries, music venues and recreational sites, and offer cross promotional possibilities that may not have been explored.

The Blue Ridge Craft Trails is an extensive website backed by a coordinated marketing initiative that will connect visitors with local craft artists and businesses in Jackson County. Visitors will be guided to small towns, where they can recreate, shop, eat and sleep, thus boosting both the craft community and the tourism industry in Jackson County and the surrounding region.

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If this initiative has occurred before, what is new that differentiates it from prior years?

N/A

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What is your advertising and marketing plan for your initiative?

A Marketing Plan for the Blue Ridge Craft Trails was developed in conjunction with the research

A marketing plan for the Blue Ridge Craft Trails was developed in conjunction with the research study. This multi-year program will start in 2022 with the launch of a public relations campaign. We have contracted Susan Dosier with DK Communications to launch this campaign. As part of this overall plan, we are working with county tourism organizations and arts councils to create specific assets that will be beneficial to promoting their area. Here are the specific strategies and tactics the Jackson County TDA funds will support:

#### Strategy 1

Build assets library to support marketing of Jackson County for the Blue Ridge Craft Trails.

#### Tactics

1. Shoot and produce four videos (one 1:30 video and three: 30 videos) highlighting the Jackson County / Blue Ridge Craft Trails experience.
2. Produce b-roll for TV/PR usage.
3. Provide 20 professional still images of four participating artists/galleries for Blue Ridge Craft Trails.

#### Strategy 2

Provide detailed and useful marketing content that is relevant to potential Jackson County/Blue Ridge Craft Trails visitors.

#### Tactics

1. Create a specific social media campaign to amplify Jackson County on BRNHA Facebook and Instagram accounts through organic and paid efforts (includes four boosted posts plus ad campaign using Jackson County Blue Ridge Craft Trails videos and stills).
2. Create and publish online profiles for each Craft Trails site in Jackson County and a suggested itinerary showcasing Craft Trails' sites and other "must-see" experiences in the area. Lives on BlueRidgeCraftTrails.com.
3. Online presence on BlueRidgeCraftTrails.com will be supported through a Google grant to maximize search engine optimization for the craft trails and profiles.
4. Request cross-posting of the Blue Ridge Craft Trails social media content whenever possible from organizations tagged in content to stimulate awareness of the initiative. We will ask for links to the Craft Trails website from artists and tourism partner sites and the prominent posting of the Craft Trails logo. We will also follow artists and galleries on Facebook and Instagram.

#### Strategy 3

Build awareness of Jackson County Blue Ridge Craft Trails sites in key markets.

#### Tactics

- 1 Public Relations: Craft and distribute Press Release to key local, state (North Carolina) and regional (Western North Carolina) markets announcing the BRCT launch in Jackson County with an overview of trails in region. BRNHA will also work with a Public Relations firm to maximize press release reach with follow-ups and pitches to regional and national media for the entire Craft Trails initiative in Western North Carolina, upon completion of the full Blue Ridge Craft Trails initiative
- 2 Collaborate with Jackson County Tourism Partnership on their promotional efforts.
- 3 Create and distribute an e-newsletter targeting potential visitors who are interested in craft and other heritage assets of our region and feature Jackson County craft sites and galleries. This email will be sent to the BRNHA visitor list (16,000 subscribers). BRNHA will work with arts organizations in Jackson County, craft artists and galleries, the Jackson County TDA, and other organizations to forward the e-newsletter to their constituencies.

4 Provide simple, easy-to-read signage for partners' place of business in rural areas.

#### Strategy

Provide BRNHA partners with the tools they need to promote the Craft Trails and demonstrate the benefit to their communities. (This strategy and tactics were completed in early October with a Craft Trails Meet and Greet webinar).

#### Tactics

1. Conduct a "Blue Ridge Craft Trails 101" convening online to encourage grassroots marketing efforts in support of the Craft Trails
2. Offer an online partner toolkit with logos, messaging, imagery, and tips on grassroots marketing.
3. Distribute Blue Ridge Craft Trails window stickers to craft sites.

In addition, an exhibit focused on eight counties in the Far West will be available for touring in 2022. The exhibit is currently on display at the I-26 NC Welcome Center north of Mars Hill.

Funding from the Cherokee Preservation Foundation is supporting our work for the build-out of the Craft Trails website in the far west counties, training session, as well as supporting a map brochure and regional public relations/social media campaign.

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Do you agree to acknowledge the 'Jackson County TDA' in materials as required? Any releases o...

Yes

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Total anticipated cost of initiative

97000

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Total funds your organization will provide toward total cost?

250,000 from BRNHA and several other major grantors

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Detail funds requested from other sources and note commitments or anticipated receipt of funds...

\$1200 – Jackson County Arts Council -awarded

\$67,000 – Cherokee Preservation Foundation -awarded

\$20,000 – support from other county organizations requested

\$5,000 -Haywood County TDA - awarded

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Please upload your detailed budget, including event or initiative expenses and revenue. You can ...



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Anticipated Attendees from Jackson County:

Info not available

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Anticipated Attendees from outside Jackson County:

1% increase in visitation over 2 years

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Anticipated overnight stays generated:

1% increase over two years

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How did you determine audience/attendance numbers and where do they come from?

Our audience and attendance numbers were derived from reviewing Visit NC annual data reports from previous years and in reviewing data from our consumer research study. In addition, surveys and other feedback from artists and galleries where we have launched the videos through social media have indicated that the Blue Ridge Craft Trails has been good for their business and their community and has resulted increased interest in their business and increased sales.

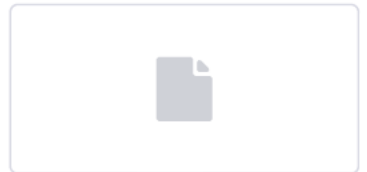
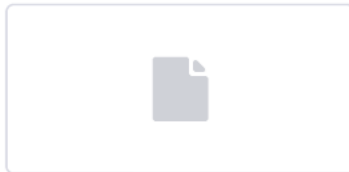
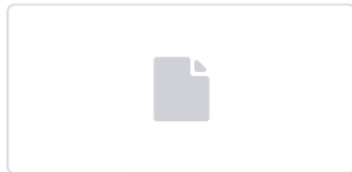
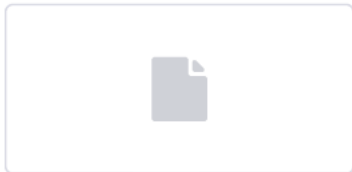
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How will you measure success of your initiative?

Ongoing Surveys to artists and galleries  
website, social media and google analytics reports  
earned media garnered  
work with Jackson TDA to determine other measures

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Upload any supporting documentation for your application here:



Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Jackson County is rich in craft artistry and cultural traditions. Our goals are to, over time, raise awareness of Jackson County craft treasures and the artists who make them; increase incomes for artists and galleries; and increase visitation to Jackson County and directly or indirectly increase overnight visits. At this time, there are now more than 250 Craft Trails sites profiled on the Blue Ridge Craft Trails.

As a result of this project, Jackson County will join other Western North Carolina communities engaging and partnering together to help package and uplift Western North Carolina as a center for craft in the United States.

In light of the fact that so many of Western North Carolina's natural resources and outdoor experiences are possibly facing overuse during the pandemic, we are looking at creating messaging incorporating craft as another way to connect with the natural surroundings because many of the Blue Ridge Craft Trails artists use natural materials to make their art, and they derive their inspiration from the natural world.

In addition to conducting Consumer Research before launching the initiative, we surveyed more than 340 artists and galleries and held listening sessions across the region.

Sample Video and Itinerary:

<https://www.blueridgeheritage.com/itineraries/a-craft-experience-for-all-in-allegany->

Jackson County Craft Artist Profile Page:

<https://www.blueridgeheritage.com/destinations/tunnel-mountain-crafts/>

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Signature:



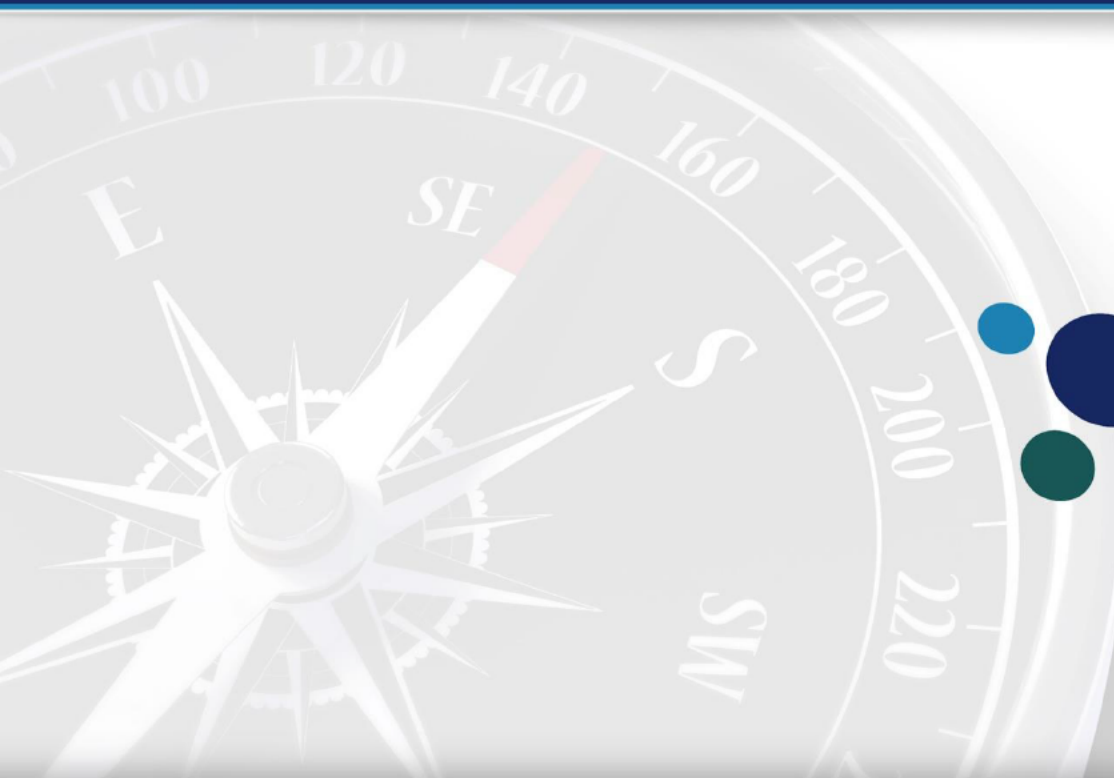


Blue Ridge National Heritage Area Budget for Craft Trails

Status

67,000	Cherokee Preservation Foundation to Server 7 Far West Counties	Awarded
\$25,000	Staffing and Contractors	
3,000	Training/Marketing Toolkit	
35,000	Marketing Campaign including Advertising, Social Media, PR and SEO	
1500	Travel	
2500	Research/Surveys	
\$67,000		
\$1,200	Jackson County Arts Council for Jackson County Video	Awarded
\$3,800	Jackson County TDA for Video, Social Media, PR	Requested
\$5,000	Haywood TDA	Awarded
20,000	Additional Requests from Arts Councils and TDAs in Far West	Requested
97,000	Total	

[illegible]



# Summary of Craft-Related Market Research for BRNHA Craft Trails Initiative (DRAFT)

May 2018

# Research Objectives

**Participants in the research study were asked several questions about the following:**

- **Recent leisure travel incidence**
- **Destination preferences and activities**
- **Perceptions of craft-related activities and destinations**
- **Importance of craft-related activities when planning travel**
- **Appeal of various craft experiences**
- **Recent visit experiences in western North Carolina**
- **Demographics**

# How attractive do you find each of the following characteristics when thinking about destinations you would like to visit? (Top 3 Box Response)

Destination Characteristics	Partner (n=2,209)	General (n=355)	Millennials (n=146)
Somewhere I've never visited before	<b>98%</b>	<b>97%</b>	<b>99%</b>
Historical/cultural attractions	<b>97%</b>	91%	86%
A variety of local food and beverage options	<b>96%</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>98%</b>
Off the beaten path	95%	77%	72%
Unique - something to tell my friends about	93%	89%	94%
Relaxing, laid back	93%	<b>94%</b>	<b>97%</b>

# How attractive do you find each of the following characteristics when thinking about destinations you would like to visit?

Importance of Craft-Related Activities/Attractions	Partner (n=2,039)	General (n=302)	Millennials (n=126)
Extremely important	15%	5%	6%
Very important	<b>34%</b>	10%	6%
Somewhat important	<b>41%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>32%</b>
Not so important	9%	<b>31%</b>	<b>39%</b>
Not at all important	1%	21%	18%

Please rate your level of personal agreement with each of the following statements. (Top 2 Box Responses)

Craft-Related Statements	Partner (n=2,037)	General (n=302)	Millennials (n=125)
I would take an overnight trip to attend a craft show, exhibit, or festival in a mountain location.	90%	47%	57%
I have interest in watching a craft demonstration.	90%	51%	53%
I have attended craft classes in the past.	88%	47%	58%
I enjoy visiting the studios of craftspeople when I travel.	85%	47%	41%

## Please rate your level of personal agreement with each of the following statements. (Top 2 Box Responses)

Craft-Related Statements	Partner (n=2,037)	General (n=302)	Millennials (n=125)
I would enjoy a half-day workshop with an artist.	84%	38%	48%
I would be interested in attending an immersive experience in a craft school.	84%	27%	27%
A driveable “craft trail” with varied craft experiences in a region would be appealing.	84%	42%	36%



## Please rate your level of personal agreement with each of the following statements. (Top 2 Box Responses)

Craft-Related Statements	Partner (n=2,037)	General (n=302)	Millennials (n=125)
I seek out galleries selling local crafts when I travel.	84%	40%	36%
I am interested in taking craft classes during an overnight trip.	80%	24%	28%
I would like to listen to an artist talk about his or her process	80%	39%	40%
I would find dinner and a lecture with an artist very appealing.	70%	42%	33%

## Please rate your level of personal agreement with each of the following statements. (Top 2 Box Responses)

Craft-Related Statements	Partner (n=2,037)	General (n=302)	Millennials (n=125)
I would be interested in a package that combines easy guided hikes and craft classes.	69%	29%	42%
I subscribe to craft-related publications.	63%	15%	23%
I would enjoy cooking classes as part of an overnight trip.	56%	50%	<b>70%</b>
I would like to combine handmade craft experiences and craft beverage tastings.	54%	38%	<b>60%</b>

# What would you be willing to pay for a craft-based experience such as the ones listed in the question above?

Price Willing to Pay: Experiences	Partner (n=2,031)	General (n=302)	Millennials (n=125)
<\$25	2%	<b>20%</b>	17%
\$26-\$50	5%	14%	<b>32%</b>
\$51-75	5%	9%	11%
\$76-100	10%	9%	11%
\$101-200	19%	12%	9%
>\$200	<b>29%</b>	2%	2%
I'm not sure	<b>31%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>19%</b>

# How much would you be willing to pay for a piece of handmade craft that you like?

Price Willing to Pay: Craft	Partner (n=2,031)	General (n=302)	Millennials (n=125)
<\$25	2%	22%	23%
\$26-\$50	10%	<b>24%</b>	<b>30%</b>
\$51-75	11%	10%	13%
\$76-100	16%	9%	7%
\$101-200	20%	5%	6%
>\$200	<b>19%</b>	6%	2%
I'm not sure	<b>22%</b>	<b>25%</b>	19%

Which of the following American destinations do you associate with handmade craft? Please select all that apply.

Destination	Partner (n=2,029)	General (n=301)	Millennials (n=125)
Asheville, North Carolina	89%	61%	55%
Other areas NC Mountains	85%	50%	37%
Santa Fe and Taos, New Mexico	69%	49%	41%
Seagrove, North Carolina	30%	11%	6%
Sedona, Arizona	37%	30%	24%
Gatlinburg, Tennessee	38%	49%	43%
Green Mountains of Vermont	29%	21%	15%

# How often have you visited a gallery/studio or had a craft-related experience during a trip within the last three years?

Frequency of Craft-Related Experience While Traveling	Partner (n=2,035)	General (n=302)	Millennials (n=125)
0 times	4%	<b>31%</b>	33%
One time	7%	27%	<b>39%</b>
2-3 times	37%	27%	23%
More than 4 times	<b>52%</b>	14%	5%

**What downsides do you typically associate with handmade craft-related activities and attractions when traveling? Please select all that apply.**

<b>Downsides Associated with Craft Experiences</b>	<b>Partner (n=1,760)</b>	<b>General (n=285)</b>	<b>Millennials (n=122)</b>
Difficult to find information about craft-related activities and attractions before visiting	<b>45%</b>	25%	35%
Difficult to find information about craft-related activities and attractions while visiting	<b>34%</b>	18%	15%
Poor customer service or not made to feel welcome	8%	9%	11%
Inconsistent opening days/hours	<b>43%</b>	25%	30%

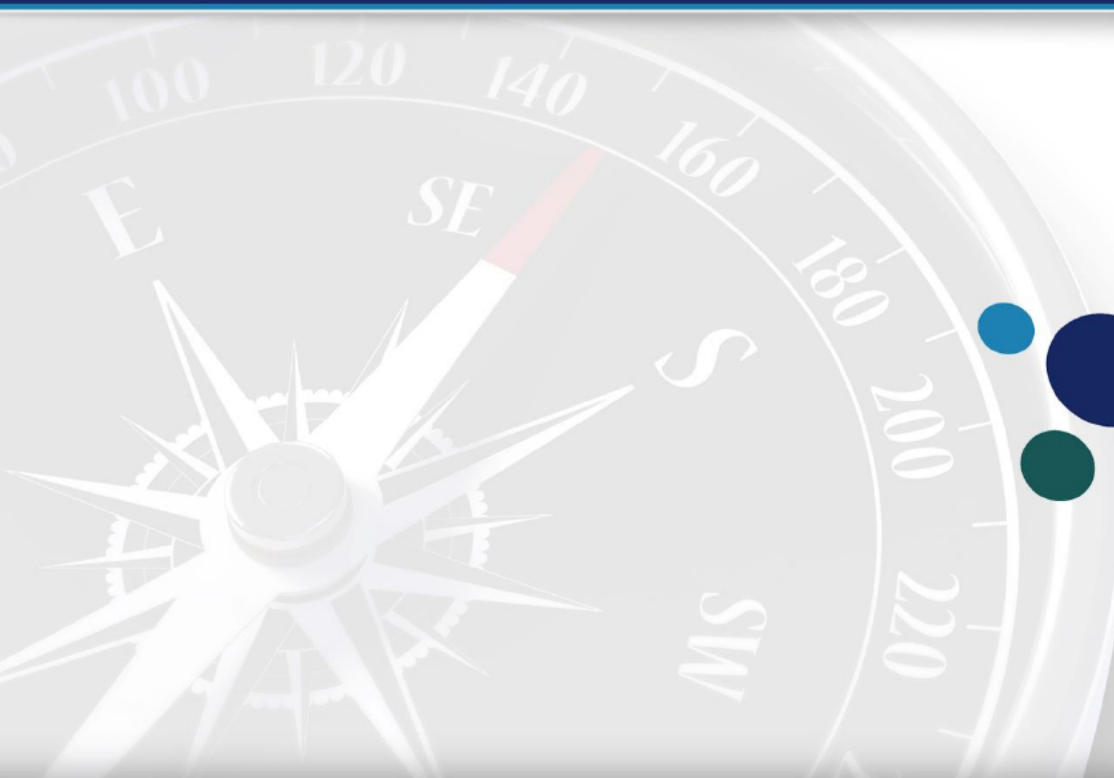
**What downsides do you typically associate with handmade craft-related activities and attractions when traveling? Please select all that apply.**

Downsides Associated with Craft Experiences	Partner (n=1,760)	General (n=285)	Millennials (n=122)
Lack of good signage	30%	16%	13%
Unsafe conditions in studios or galleries	1%	2%	0%
Studios are difficult to find	21%	14%	13%
Unappealing merchandise	16%	27%	25%
Craft is expensive to purchase	41%	<b>49%</b>	<b>53%</b>
Boring/ not interesting	6%	<b>32%</b>	<b>46%</b>



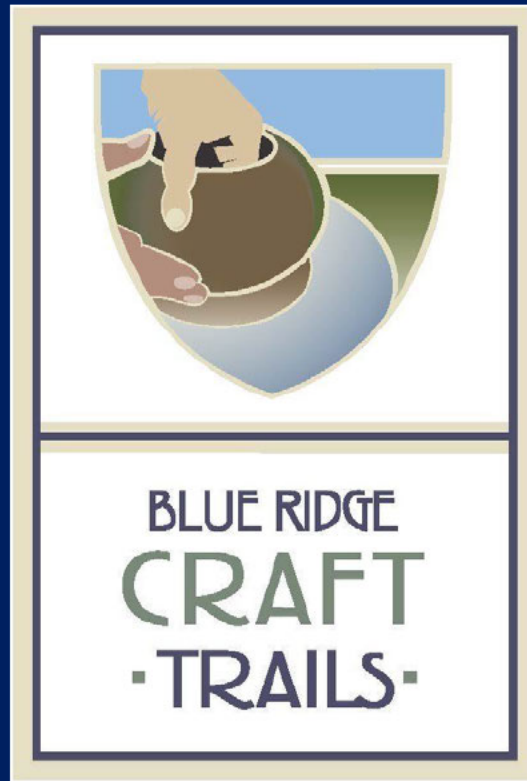
# What downsides do you typically associate with handmade craft-related activities and attractions when traveling? Please select all that apply.

Downsides Associated with Craft Experiences	Partner (n=1,760)	General (n=285)	Millennials (n=122)
Not enough information about the craft process at the attraction	21%	13%	7%
Not enough info about artists	15%	9%	5%
Artists are not personable/ don't have good customer service	9%	8%	10%
The food options are not good	14%	9%	12%
The restrooms are lacking	21%	15%	6%
Not good for big groups	6%	9%	10%



# Summary of Craft-Related Market Research for BRNHA Craft Trails Initiative (DRAFT)

May 2018



# Prioritized Marketing Recommendations

Prepared for the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area  
November 2018

## **Blue Ridge Craft Trails Prioritized Marketing Tactics**

### **Year One**

#### **BRNHA Organizational Tactics**

1. Create a Blue Ridge Craft Trails-specific website that makes it easy for prospective visitors to find experiences that best match what they are seeking, by craft medium, passion, skill, geography, and level of immersion.
2. Because many attractions and activities are still planned and chosen by visitors once they are in-market, develop printed Craft Trails literature and make available to all craft-related sites and visitor centers throughout the region.
3. Recognize that many areas of the region do not have adequate mobile phone reception, and that visitors will be over-reliant upon their mobile devices. Make every effort to see that visitor centers, Craft Trails anchor sites, and other destination activity influencers have current Trails information and are prepared to assist visitors with their planning and questions.
4. Develop a Craft Trails logo window cling for distribution to partner sites.
5. Hire a Craft Trails marketing specialist to coordinate work across all Craft Trails and BRNHA partners and to maintain the Craft Trails' digital presence.
6. Develop a Craft Trails online marketing toolkit to make Craft Trails logos, imagery, video, banner ads, requests for window clings and brochures, and similar assets easily available to anchor sites and other local partners.
7. Implement an e-newsletter targeted specifically at craft enthusiasts (spectators and participants alike) to stay connected with visitors and encourage repeat visits and the sampling of other Craft Trails opportunities. Use content that is appealing to both the long-time craft enthusiast as well as those travelers who are more casual in their appreciation of craft and more oriented towards craft-related experiences that combine craft with complementary visitor activities.
8. Begin building awareness of the Craft Trails in key regional markets using a variety of tactics, including social media, social media advertising, search engine marketing, search engine optimization, and public relations.
9. Use the demise of HandMade in America as a means of sharing the story with the media that craft in WNC is indeed alive and well.
10. Use each social media channel favored by craft enthusiasts and Craft Trails target audiences to fulfill a different need and tailor content appropriately:
  - a. Facebook for reaching a broad audience, cross-posting of partner content, and event promotion
  - b. Instagram for reaching a younger audience with high impact visuals
  - c. YouTube as a medium for demonstrating activity and sharing unique, more in-depth stories
  - d. Pinterest for targeting craft enthusiasts

### **Year One**

## **BRNHA and Partner Tactics**

- Create an ongoing Craft Trails marketing council to review marketing, identify trends and changes in the marketplace, develop and support the execution of cross-marketing initiatives, and facilitate the regular sharing of information.
- Establish an internal communications or social network exclusively for Craft Trails sites to share information, ask questions, and seek advice from each other. This network could be as simple as a private Facebook page or e-mail newsletter.
- Display Craft Trails window clings and rack brochures, and use the assets made available in the Craft Trails marketing toolkit.
- Conduct “Blue Ridge Craft Trails 101” seminars across the region to encourage grassroots marketing efforts in support of the Craft Trails and invite non-traditional potential partners to attend and participate. Use as a means for launching the Craft Trails at the local level and securing commitments to partner.
- Request cross-posting of Craft Trails social media content whenever possible from organizations tagged in content to stimulate awareness of the initiative.
- Encourage the development of Blue Ridge Craft Trails pages and navigation on local arts council and destination marketing organization websites, with additional content provided for places that are not necessarily anchor sites but which are complementary attractions and activities in each community.
- Request links to the Craft Trails website from partner sites and the prominent posting of the Craft Trails logo on those sites.
- Request cross-posting of Craft Trails social media content whenever possible from organizations tagged in content to stimulate awareness of the initiative.
- Test shared promoted posts on social media for anchor sites and the Craft Trails.
- Encourage BRNHA partners to invite their own subscribers to join the Craft Trails e-newsletter list as a means of expanding the database and motivating future first-time and repeat visits.
- Ensure that the Craft Trails and all Craft Trails anchor sites are included on important attraction and activity planning websites such as TripAdvisor and state and local destination marketing organization sites.
- Encourage Craft Trails partners which offer classes, workshops, and other immersive kinds of activities to include promotional information about the Craft Trails in their advance pre-visit communication to registrants.
- Ask Craft Trails visitors to share their photos and experiences on social media using a consistent and promoted Craft Trails hashtag.
- Turn current BRNHA and partner organization fans into fans of the Craft Trails via e-newsletter signups and social media content sharing.
- Using feedback from local stakeholders, match every anchor site with at least one nearby outdoor activity, local dining experience, unique shopping opportunity, and independent lodging property on the Craft Trails website and in public relations tactics. Ensure that personnel at each anchor site are

knowledgeable about this cross-marketing so they can answer questions from guests.

- Seek out co-op advertising opportunities in key markets with VisitNC, and partner with regional destination marketing organizations to implement Craft Trails co-op marketing in the Southeast.
- Ask Craft Trails partners to set up visits of their staff to other anchor sites to familiarize themselves and encourage referrals and cross-promotion.
- Produce display posters promoting the Craft Trails for installation at Craft Trails sites and visitor centers.

## **Year Two and Three**

### **BRNHA Organizational Tactics**

- Conduct “Group Sales 101” workshops targeted at Craft Trails sites as part of grassroots training. Many craft venues aren’t necessarily conducive to hosting groups due to limitations on size, accessibility, amenities, etc., but those that can host should be promoted. Provide pre-visit information to visitors for those venues capable of hosting motorcoaches and groups on the Craft Trails website.
- Engage in occasional in-market promotion within the BRNHA region of Craft Trails sites to encourage residents to share the experience with their visiting friends and relatives (VFR). Target periods when there is a high likelihood of VFR traffic in WNC, such as holiday weekends and the Christmas season. Utilize vehicles such as NPR, public relations, and targeted area publications.
- Recognizing that many younger travelers are now planning destination experiences based upon whether they can Instagram the location, identify and promote iconic exterior craft and design imagery across the region that will broaden the reach of the Craft Trails on social media. Social media imagery is a proven driver of destination consideration, and Millennials in particular are using it as a means for selecting destinations and activities they would like to showcase on their social media channels. Destinations and attractions are facilitating this sharing through tactics such as “selfie trails” and the creation of icons that lend themselves to photos and sharing.
- Work with regional universities to offer year-round unpaid internship positions to assist with the above.
- Execute public relations outreach in key media markets and to targeted national and regional bloggers and other media platforms.

## **Year Two and Three**

### **BRNHA and Partner Tactics**

- Develop Craft Trails logo retail merchandising for sale at visitor centers, anchor sites, and the website. Merchandising—even if limited to a handful of best-selling

items—provides a way to stay connected with the craft visitor following the visit, generates revenue, and enables Craft Trails ambassador promotion.

- Do the occasional marketing “deep dive” into immersive craft activities such as John C. Campbell Folk School, Penland School of Crafts, and others to provide a behind-the-scenes insider’s view of these experiences. Video showcasing both artisans and participants and the breadth of experiences available encourages travelers to seek more information and motivates longer stays.
- Share success stories of Craft Trail marketing and product development observed across WNC and in other parts of the U.S. with BRNHA partners on a regular basis so that local partners can share with their stakeholders.
- Provide an annual scholarship to a staff member at a Craft Trails anchor site to attend Southeast Tourism Society’s Marketing College.
- Develop and promote a “40 Under 40” juried list of craft artisans in the Craft Trails region as a way of showcasing up-and-coming talent to the world.
- Work with DMOs to develop and provide guided day tour experiences for meetings that come to the region.
- Promote unique event venues at Craft Trails sites that host meetings, weddings, and other events. The financial benefit of hosting these events can be substantial for a museum or other larger facility.
- Highlight the Craft Trails as a girlfriends’ getaway destination and ask partners to work together to create suitable packages to support.
- Identify and share at least one singular iconic story for each anchor site in public relations and online platforms.
- Promote the Craft Trails as a destination for “innovation tourism”: a place to learn about the creative process, what inspires artisans, and how the region has leveraged a legacy of handmade craft to benefit its residents and revitalize its small towns.
- “The Decade of WNC Craft”: Promote the many coming landmark anniversaries of numerous WNC craft icons tied to the Craft Trails, their unique stories, and their relevance today. These landmarks will mark their anniversaries with their own marketing efforts, and many attract national media attention. “Piggyback” on these one-time efforts and generate exposure for the entire Craft Trails program.
- Encourage the development of social media craft icons that are appropriate and representative of craft in the region. One significant example within the region is Burnsville’s ongoing Gateway project, with Toe River Arts Council as a partner.
- Bring Craft Trail artisans to key media markets for participation in fam trips as part of media blitzes with BRNHA partners.
- Test “pop-up destination shops” with Craft Trails craft on display and for sale in key markets as a medium for targeted and deep marketing outreach. Invite other regional partners such as local restaurants and outdoor activity providers to highlight the full appeal of the destination with complementary related activities.

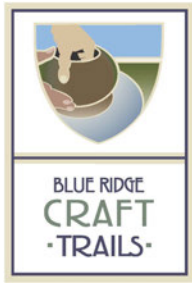
- Target formal gatherings of young professionals in key markets to attract college-educated Millennials and other affluent target audiences.
- Identify several high profile and willing Craft Trails ambassadors to represent the region and showcase the diversity of the craft experience when called upon for media appearances and other promotional opportunities.

### **Ongoing Beginning in Year One**

- Showcase a variety of WNC craft media, price points, and craft-related experiences in Craft Trails marketing communications. This tactic directly targets the perception uncovered in the research that some travelers think craft is too expensive, and positions WNC as an expert in a variety of handmade craft.
- Make the Craft Trails feel accessible to even the most intimidated potential craft enthusiast. Show smiling faces, people having fun, and demographic diversity, in a variety of activities and settings, and emphasize messages of hospitality. The hardcore craft enthusiast is already a believer in craft and sees it as fun. More casual craft travelers may not see craft as welcoming or perceive craft as “old” and craft-related experiences as intimidating.
- Use testimonials from a variety of voices—experts, artisans, novices, minorities, visitors, residents—to talk about their craft-related personal experiences across the Craft Trails region.
- Always promote the totality of the visit experience when promoting handmade craft in WNC by communicating attributes and benefits of the destination beyond just craft-related experiences. Solicit images and information from destination partners as needed for all local craft sites.
- Use imagery of younger crafters, spectators, and older artisans sharing their talents with younger audiences in marketing communications.
- Include messaging that directly addresses some of the barriers to enjoying craft among casual or non-enthusiasts (old, passive, traditional, boring) by highlighting the variety of craft activities and attractions in the region and the many non-craft activities that can be done in the same area.
- Feature nearby unique and local shopping, dining, and lodging experiences near each anchor site. Give preference to those sites that also willing to work with Craft Trail sites on packaging, cross-promotion, weblinks, banner ads, etc.
- Leverage the demonstrated appeal that “local” and “handmade” possess as attractors to the region. Website listings should incorporate nearby unique local dining and shopping opportunities as well as other assets that are “handmade,” such as wineries, breweries and distilleries. Encourage the packaging of “handmade,” “crafted,” and local experiences wherever feasible.
- Always highlight the proximity of lesser-known or off-the-beaten-path Craft Trails anchor sites to other, better-known WNC landmarks and destinations.



- Package craft-related experiences with other activities and attractions that Millennials already seek out when traveling to the region, such as local food and beverage, music performances, and outdoor recreation opportunities.
- Showcase some of the many good storytelling opportunities associated with a craft-related visit to the region. Example: “I handmade this beer stein and the very next day was drinking from it a delicious Kolsch made by the brewery next door.”
- Transform spectators into participants by promoting the breadth of craft class and workshop experiences available in the region pre-, post-, and during the visit, and by eliminating perceived barriers to participation by using tactics such as FAQs and “If you like this, you’ll like...” cross-marketing and partnerships.
- Cross-promote nearby Craft Trails sites to those visitors coming for classes and other similar programming (“If you like this, you’ll also like...”). Most of these immersive craft-related activities require advance registration; leveraging the anticipation phase of the visit experience as an opportunity for cross-promotion benefits the community by encouraging longer stays and increased spending.
- Recognize that both participants and spectators are shoppers by suggesting to both unique retail opportunities within the region.
- Communicate WNC’s craft superlatives whenever feasible, including awards won by Craft Trails sites and artisans, the economic impact of handmade craft, and national media recognition, to rebuild credibility and awareness., cross-promotion, weblinks, etc.
- Use Craft Trails images in social media as vehicles for the introduction of storytelling and as an introduction to deeper, more comprehensive content that is available online. The focus should be upon the experience, not the item of craft itself. The objective is to motivate a visit to the Craft Trails. Even if the content is focused upon an item of handmade craft, the strategy should be to guide a potential visitor to additional content which builds interest in visiting.
- Promote opportunities for classes, workshops, and other programming that lend themselves to longer stays or repeat visits. Market research indicates there exists the prospect of transforming craft “spectators” into “participants” who desire more immersive craft-related experiences, but who may need a little more selling.



## **Blue Ridge Craft Trails Guidelines – May 2019**

To be considered for this Blue Ridge National Heritage Area initiative,

Be located within the 25 county project region:

- Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, McDowell, Macon, Madison, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Surry, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes, Yadkin, and Yancey counties.

Provide a quality experience relating to the region's craft heritage.

- Focus must be on authenticity and quality.
- Must feature American-made craft with an emphasis on craft from Western North Carolina.
- Historic designations should be craft, craft-architectural, or craftsperson related.
- All sites must be open to the public and provide interpretation.

Types of sites that are eligible:

- ECONOMY: Shops that sell local crafts
- EDUCATION: Schools and organizations that provide an educational craft experience
- EXHIBITION AND DISPLAY: Museums, galleries, and historical societies that display craft
- ADVOCACY: Arts Councils and membership organizations that promote and support craft artists
- MAKERS: Individual artists studios that can provide a craft experience to the visitor
- TIME-BASED: Studio tours, festivals, and demonstrations of craft
- Longevity of business will be taken into consideration for selection.

Be visitor ready

- Sites must be accessible, safe, clean, and hold regular business hours.
- Locations must be easy to access and visitor friendly.
- Signage should be clearly visible.
- Must be able to accept increased visitation.
- Have a working email and voice mail with clear information on hours of operation and/or availability.

Artist Studios

- Studios should be safe, clean and tidy (e.g., if there are pets in home business, artist need to be conscientious about visitor's sensitivities; if the craftsperson works in a material that can fly in one's face, they may want to section off work areas where injuries may occur or have safety goggles on hand).
- Locations must be easy to access and visitor friendly. If site is a residence, there should be a separate business entrance that is well-marked on door, mailbox, and/or sign visible from the road.
- Signage should be clearly visible to the visitor.
- Must be able to accept visitation.
- Must be responsive to inquiries and be able to make and keep appointments.

Events

- Events such as craft fairs, demonstrations, educational experiences, or cultural events must include a significant arts and crafts component.
- Events should be held on an annual basis, so that marketing materials are useful for a three-year period at minimum.

Agree to provide:

- A designated point of contact with contact information.
- A commitment to notify Blue Ridge National Heritage Area when a web listing needs to be updated.
- A commitment to display signage / logo at event / location.
- A commitment to provide a reciprocal link to the Blue Ridge Craft Trails website.
- Help promote the Craft Trails through communications channels currently using as well as current client/buyers.