

Marketing and Communications Plan



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TOP 10 HIGHLIGHTS OF THIS PLAN

1. Start brand building with a big splash.

We need people, including people in Waco and the partner cities, to recognize the Waco & the Heart of Texas brand and have a sense of what it means so that we can use it for all it's worth. We've included some ambitious launch events, such as a new Waco & the Heart of Texas Soul Series community event, to quickly build awareness.

2. Answer the right question.

The question we need to answer is "Why should I come to Waco?" It's not "What should I do when I'm in Waco?" Every single piece of material or encounter with a potential (or actual) visitor is an opportunity to answer that question.

3. Tell stories and sell experiences.

Waco & the Heart of Texas is a place with stories to tell and experiences to offer, not just a collection of attractions and services that happen to be near each other. We want to build emotional connections to motivate the behaviors we want and we will use communications to convey our narrative and the information.

4. Focus on making the Waco & the Heart of Texas online experience first class.

Peer cities and regions across the nation show how to handle lots of information online while still putting the emphasis where it counts — on the user experience and the brand promise.

5. Move from categories to themes.

Our information will be organized, not by what kind of attraction or service it is, but by whom it appeals to the most. Thematic, experience-based travel gives structure and reinforces the Waco & the Heart of Texas' sense of place.

6. Help people find themselves in Waco & The Heart of Texas.

Wayfinding tools, interactive trip planning and themes will help to make that sense of place manifest and reinforce Waco's accessibility and ease.

TOP 10 HIGHLIGHTS OF THIS PLAN (CON'T.)

7. Spend our media money where the people are.

This plan calls for a significant investment in media dollars in outlets and sponsorships that reach our most likely travelers in their home markets.

8. Spend money online, not on paper.

This is our opportunity to streamline the amount of printed material used to market Waco and instead lead with digital and social media. It costs less, is more convenient, and is more in line with how travelers are learning about places and experiences today.

9. Become the brand we wish to see.

The emphasis here is on strategies for sharing the brand and relying on peer-to-peer engagement. The most sustainable way to deliver on the promise of the Waco & the Heart of Texas brand is to allow as many residents as possible to be part of selling the region to the world.

10. This is only the beginning.

The future will allow us to expand on this start. From TV buys and sophisticated customer relationship management with visitors once they leave, to a region-wide wayfinding system and a traveling Waco & the Heart of Texas trailer, this plan includes recommendations that will allow us to begin to build this brand now so that it will be able to come to full fruition in future years.

INTRODUCTION

What is Waco & the Heart of Texas?

It is a place like no other. It embodies and encapsulates the essence of Texas, but it's a region with a distinct identity and is a bona fide destination. It's more than Waco, and it's also more than "Waco" — that is, the place that people from outside (and even inside) think Waco is. It's also a place where neighboring communities can be far, far more than "outside Waco."

It's a place with stories to tell and experiences to offer. It's rich with attractions, amenities and services, including many that completely defy stereotyped notions of either "Waco" or "Texas." But it's a place where those components add up to something more than just a collection of "things-to-do" and "places-to-go" that happen to be near each other.

All of that thinking goes into the conception of Waco & the Heart of Texas. This is a brand that can tell and sell a story, and this plan aims to bring that brand to life and build on Waco's existing successes to help Waco & the Heart of Texas take its rightful place among America's great destinations.

What This Plan Is:

- A comprehensive suite of strategies and tactics that address identified needs and the creative development of the brand, all built on the findings of credible and detailed research from Hahn, Texas, a well-known and respected marketing and communications firm.
- A realistic program that can be implemented by Waco CVB and its partners.
- A roadmap for launching and building the Waco & the Heart of Texas brand that takes as its guideposts key objectives, with traditional activities and outputs put into context.

What This Plan Is Not:

- A replacement for the existing sales strategies used by the CVB, particularly in the meeting and convention space, although those will be influenced and transformed by this new brand.
- A final budget. Far too many variables remain unknown to cost out all of the individual strategies and tactics.
- A document that's set in stone. The contours of the final brand, creative development of other materials, opportunities for cooperation with partners, content needs for particular themes, and the future events calendar will all help shape implementation of this plan.

ASSESSMENT

Research Summary

The strategies and tactics in this plan are intrinsically informed by the research and discovery conducted at the outset of this initiative by the professionals at Hahn, Texas, including:

- Site visit and needs assessment
- In-person and online in-depth interviews
- Online public survey
- Peer city benchmarking
- Brand and media audit

Some of the key findings from that research that have informed this plan include:

- A widespread feeling that people don't know Waco — that its image beyond the confines of Waco & the Heart of Texas is much lower than it should be, that it has more and different amenities and attractions than people think, and that it can see real growth as a visitor destination.
- Appreciation for Waco's natural beauty, historic and cultural attractions, and other attributes that aren't necessarily top-of-mind for potential visitors.
- Acknowledgement that Waco's ease, accessibility, affordability, family-friendliness, welcoming attitude, and "improving" community character are part of its value proposition.
- The national peer cities benchmarked provide examples of strategies Waco can use to sharpen its message, organize its materials more coherently, and make the most of its online presence.

SWOT Analysis

Our preliminary assessment of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats included some items that, over the course of our work, have revealed themselves to be less important to the Heart of Texas's brand promise than we expected. Other elements of this analysis, though, are reflected in and addressed by this plan, including:

- **Strengths:** Easy, relaxed atmosphere; first-class attractions; convenient access to 80% of Texas
- **Weaknesses:** Suboptimal wayfinding and connectivity
- **Opportunities:** Thematic travel; bringing people to the water; highlighting "local flavor"
- **Threats:** Continued fragmentation; lack of refreshed, dynamic experiences that make the region new

BRAND SCHEMATIC

LOGO



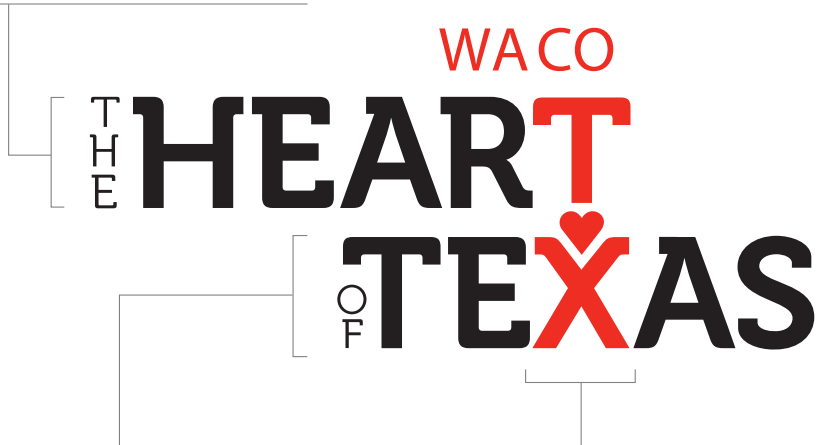
PROMISE/PURPOSE

The Heart of Texas region is a surprisingly rich destination with one-of-a-kind people, places, events and stories that reflect the essence of the Lone Star State.

MAPPING

THE HEART

Invites people to the spiritual center of Texas where the legends of the region - past and present - are celebrated.



OF TEXAS

No other state excites people's imaginations like Texas. Its position in the brand unlocks the lore of the state and opens the traveler's mind to possibilities ranging from cattle and cotton to Bears, bass fishing and big ideas.

THE TOTEM "T-HEART-X"

A short-hand illumination of the entire brand concept capable of creating an instant, friendly recognition of the region to the prospective visitor.

MESSAGING

AT THE INTERSECTION OF TEXAS

Eighty percent of Texas is within two hours of this region — for centuries we have been the crossroads of the area connecting people to the land, to their traditions and history, to opportunities and to one another.

EXPLORE INSIDE AND OUT

Our region offers surprising adventures and experiences — whether you are looking for a week outdoors or a weekend of entertainment. This place feels the most like Texas.

MEMORABLE CHARACTER

Welcome! is a big word in this big part of Texas. It is easy to meet people here — whether settling in or passing through — and we hope every visitor stays and connects to our area.



PRIMARY DIRECTIVES

- 1 Increase future room night bookings in the Heart of Texas lodging properties for conventions, meetings, tourism and sporting events.
- 2 Grow leisure visitation and group travel to Waco & the Heart of Texas
- 3 Increase exposure of Waco & the Heart of Texas as a visitors and convention destination through paid advertising, promotions and public relations-generated media exposure
- 4 Increase the utilization of the Waco Convention Center and referred business to the ExtraCo Events Center, Ferrell Center and other area facilities

PRIMARY FUNCTIONS

Advertising, Promotions and Public Relations

- Billboards, internet, publications, print literature, travel writers, promotional items

Convention & Tourism Sales & Service

- Trade shows, direct sales calls, sales events, promotional events, convention bids

Waco Tourist Information Center

- 7 day/week operation, gift shop

Waco Convention Center Operation

- WCC Catering

OBJECTIVES

1

Launch.

Introduce the new Waco & the Heart of Texas destination marketing brand and build awareness of the Waco & the Heart of Texas narrative among residents.

2

Partner.

Integrate new branding cooperatively with existing Waco-area tourism marketing efforts to position Waco & the Heart of Texas and its multiple assets as a value-rich visitor destination.

3

Upsell.

Implement marketing strategies and tactics designed to extend stays for current Waco visitors, including event attendees.

4

Engage.

Introduce the Waco & the Heart of Texas region as a unique and asset-rich leisure travel destination and meeting venue for major Texas and regional markets.

5

Themes.

Develop and implement marketing strategies to engage thematic (special-interest and niche) travelers and events from regional, national and international markets.

6

Public Relations.

Continue to build relations with the local, regional and national media in order to garner free publicity. Develop and implement social media strategies to engage visitors and entice them to visit the Heart of Texas.

COMPARISON WITH PREVIOUS WACO CVB MARKETING

Because of its role in implementing a new brand, this plan includes a range of one-time activities that have no equivalent in the previous Waco CVB marketing plan, including:

- Brand launch activities (events, premiums, environmental graphics)
- Community/stakeholder outreach to establish use of the Waco & the Heart of Texas brand by partners
- Revision of materials and resources as needed to include attractions and services in the partner cities

With that in mind, existing activities will continue along previous lines include:

- Tourism and convention sales
- Public Relations efforts with travel writers
- Memberships in professional and trade groups
- Customer service training (Wild about Waco)

Current activities that will be expanded and enhanced include:

- Development of packages and promotions and other value-added offers to include a broader range of thematic travel
- Direct marketing to niche and special market travelers
- Targeted advanced media to likely Waco visitors
- Development of point-of-sale collateral

Current activities that will be reconceived in fundamental ways include:

- Website and social media development and deployment
- Creative concepts and placements for paid media
- Public Relations with outlets other than travel writers
- Direct marketing (instead of advertising) to the travel trade

New activities to be added to the existing marketing plan include:

- Extensive online advertising in origin markets
- Development of virtual wayfinding and a mobile app
- Itinerary development for thematic travel
- Peer-to-peer community based marketing (“sharing the brand”)

TARGET AUDIENCES

Current Waco visitors

- Pass-through travelers (e.g., on I-35; primarily people stopping for gas/food)
- Meeting/convention attendees and planners
- Sports and cultural event attendees
- Baylor guests and visitors
- Leisure travelers
- Tour groups (travel trade)

Major Texas and regional markets

- Dallas/Fort Worth
- Austin/San Antonio
- Houston
- Other metros within driving distance
- Children and families (all markets)
- Latino and African-American (all markets)
- Sports and recreation (all markets)
- Winter Texans
- National/international visitors to/in Texas

Thematic (special interest and niche) travelers and planners

- Texana/heritage
- Nature/outdoor recreation
- Sports
- Culture/education
- Shopping/lifestyle

Community stakeholders

- Key attractions
- Hotel/motel industry
- Restaurants and retailers
- Elected officials and staff in Waco and partner cities
- Surrounding communities
- Educational institutions and major employers
- Residents

Launch



OBJECTIVE 1: LAUNCH

Introduce the new Heart of Texas destination marketing brand and build awareness of the Waco & the Heart of Texas narrative among residents themselves.

“If your identity is going to convince anyone outside the area, it has to be believed by the people living in it The basic message needs to be continually reinforced using different media in different contexts.”

— British author and academic Mark Leonard

In order to leverage the new Waco & the Heart of Texas brand as the anchor of a destination marketing campaign, Waco and the partner cities need to invest time and effort in building the brand itself — launching it, making it familiar to both locals and current visitors, and telling its story (what makes this different from the old Waco brand) through various media.

TARGET AUDIENCES:

1. Community stakeholders
2. Current Waco visitors
3. Major Texas and regional markets (via web and social media)

STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

1.1 WacoHeartofTexas.com — a new web and social media platform

Measured in terms of its pervasive impact on the success of the rest of this plan's objectives, strategies and tactics, this is the most important item in this plan.

Changes/differences in new website:

- **Site architecture.** The new WacoHeartofTexas.com website is being built using WordPress, a content management system that allows for direct updating by authorized users. A careful audit has been conducted to determine which of the current pages of content needed to be brought into the new site. The new site will be responsive to all types of mobile, tablet and desktop devices.
- **Site design and imagery.** The design, look and feel of WacoHeartofTexas.com incorporates the new logo, color palette and typography specifications of the new brand as well as fresh imagery. Overall, the presentation of content is streamlined and better organized than on the previous Waco CVB site. WacoHeartofTexas.com incorporates simpler page designs and gives



higher prominence and priority to resources people use more frequently. The new site is flattened so that related resources are grouped more cohesively and the lists and static content are more dynamic and responsive to user preferences.

- **Integration.** Google Maps integration has been improved and enhanced, allowing users to view map locations on the same page as information about individual attractions. Other tools and services, i.e. Facebook, Twitter and YouTube button links are integrated on the site.
- **New content types.** One opportunity for Waco & the Heart of Texas to enhance brand-building and respond to contemporary expectations of web users is in the deployment of videos and/or slideshows in addition to, or instead of, all text-based content. In a future phase of the project, a new video with some aerial shots will be created to show off the natural beauty and water features that may surprise potential visitors who've only seen Waco & the Heart of Texas from the interstate.
- **Themes.** Several main themes were identified – nature, culture, heritage, sports and lifestyle – as well as other special interests or niches that are appropriate and indicative of the destination (ethnic, active adult, young children, Baylor families, etc.). These themes will be used throughout the site in various ways including featured content areas, itineraries and special offers.
- **New Blog.** see section 6.1
- **Twitter and Facebook.** see section 6.1

1.2 Other premiums and promotional items

IA limited set of useful, durable, appropriate items to use as premiums deploying the Waco & the Heart of Texas brand and logo is being produced. A robust premiums campaign will be useful in quickly establishing familiarity with the Waco & the Heart of Texas brand and logo.



1.3 New Waco & the Heart of Texas media kit and image library

The existing Waco CVB media kit is being revised along with other materials and collateral both to deploy the new Waco & the Heart of Texas brand and to include information from the partner cities. It includes material about the Waco & the Heart of Texas brand – a fact sheet, brand schematic, and reproducible graphics. The media kit will continue to be distributed via pre-loaded USB flash drive and via WacoHeartofTexas.com in a logical and prominent place, presented alongside aggregated news releases and positive media hits.



As part of this strategy, a complete suite of new photographic images will be produced to reinforce the freshness and promise of the new Waco & the Heart of Texas brand and regional identity. This new image library will include appropriate representation of regional attractions and amenities in the partner cities, as well as beauty shots and other imagery to express Waco & the Heart of Texas’s personality and range of themes and experiences, not simply its better-known destinations. While some new imagery can and will be produced as part of the creative development of paid media (see section 4.1), production of the core image library should be undertaken independently and as part of the launch phase. An image library with current Waco CVB images, new photography and partner imagery will be maintained with access and use restrictions to prevent dilution and overexposure.



Electronic Heart of Texas Media Kit

1.4 Revised and renewed Waco & the Heart of Texas collateral

A careful triage is occurring to reduce the amount of printed collateral produced by the Waco CVB – allowing many pieces to become obsolete when supplies run out – and instead to make the Waco & the Heart of Texas web, social media platforms and other electronic resources the go-to source for that information. Monthly events calendars, newsletters and guides for tour planners will, at a minimum, be exclusively distributed electronically as PDF files, and integrated into WacoHeartofTexas.com site content.

A tear-off map and a visitor guide brochure will remain as primary print products, along with pieces for City of Waco-owned destinations that are currently included in the Waco CVB marketing budget (e.g., Cameron Park Zoo map/rack card, Texas Ranger Hall of Fame brochure and Texas Sports Hall of Fame brochure).

METRICS AND EVALUATION

- Uptake of premiums, new materials or promotional offers
- Social media mentions and new social media followers
- Earned media mentions and publicity value
- Web traffic statistics

BUDGET AND PRICING STRATEGY

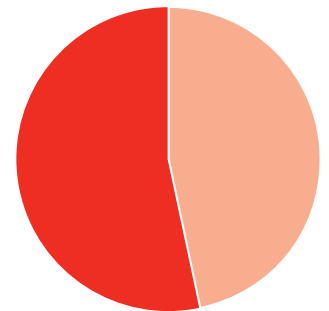
\$64,000

Creative and professional services: \$30,000

Includes WacoHeartofTexas.com site design/creative and audience testing; new photography for image library; new marketing kit materials and collateral.

Website coding/premium development/collateral: \$44,000

Primarily for wacoheartoftexas.com site development (coding). Also covers production of premiums, signs/banners and new collateral



Total allocation:
\$74,000

Partner



OBJECTIVE 2: PARTNER

New branding will cooperatively be integrated with existing Waco-area tourism marketing efforts to position Waco & the Heart of Texas and its multiple assets as a value-rich visitor destination.

“Successful marketing partnerships are crystal-clear about their partnership objectives. If they do marketing communications together, they will have jointly agreed target markets, key messages, words and images.”

— David Lewis, South West Tourism (UK), quoted in *Tourism Insights’ Destination Manager’s Toolkit*

The Waco & the Heart of Texas brand, and the implementation of this marketing plan, will depend on meaningful partnership and collaboration between Waco, the partner cities, and an expanding circle of community partners — destinations large and small, institutions that bring people to Waco & the Heart of Texas, civic organizations and entities whose goals are furthered by successful destination marketing, and visitor-serving businesses of all kinds. Combining resources, developing a common vocabulary and marketing guidelines, and collaborating on shared support systems — from wayfinding to the web — are important enough to the success of this effort to merit consideration here as a distinct objective. The continued legitimacy and credibility of Waco CVB’s role as a primary Destination Management Organization (DMO) for the entire region will be sustained by this effort.

TARGET AUDIENCES

- Community stakeholders
- Current Waco visitors (including the travel trade)
- Thematic and special interest travelers and planners

STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

2.1 Marketing guidelines and strategy for Waco partners

To implement the Waco & the Heart of Texas brand, Waco and its partners will need to establish and share a common set of guidelines and expectations for its use. We also need to ensure common understanding of the narrative behind the brand — the story of Waco & the Heart of Texas — and how conceiving of the region as a diverse, integrated, value-rich destination can augment and supplement continuing individual marketing efforts.

- Brand Standards Guide. The Waco & the Heart of Texas brand schematic included in this marketing plan is the preliminary component of a brand standards guide that includes rules for the effective and consistent use of the brand and its elements, as well as the message architecture that supports

the Waco & the Heart of Texas story. This electronic document is intended to be widely available to partners who may want to use the Waco & the Heart of Texas brand in their own marketing efforts.



- **Stakeholder Outreach.** In addition to providing the brand standards guide as a reference, the Waco CVB will take the lead in outreach to key stakeholders and communicators to secure buy-in, get feedback and build consensus around the Waco & the Heart of Texas brand narrative and the purpose and goals of the Waco & the Heart of Texas campaign. Some of these stakeholder groups, such as the hotel/motel association and the leadership of key attractions, are already participating in this initiative.
 - Civic leadership — staff and elected officials of Waco and the partner cities
 - Business leadership — chambers of commerce, ED entities, etc.
 - Colleges and universities — both leadership/administration and personnel responsible for external relations, alumni relations, marketing, communications and related areas
 - Recreation and culture facilities and organizations — not just destinations, but also clubs, leagues, etc.
 - Destination retailers and business or community associations in areas with high visitor traffic
 - Civic organizations, such as 1000 Friends of Waco, local service clubs, etc.

A companion effort to introduce and promote the new brand among front-line hospitality and travel employees, by revising and expanding Wild about Waco!, can be found in section 3.2.

2.2 Waco & the Heart of Texas Soul Series

A Heart of Texas Soul Series will be created to engage citizens in Waco, its partner cities and the surrounding region. It will reinforce the new Waco & the Heart of Texas brand — and the story behind it — to the community itself and form a focus for partnership efforts. By helping local residents and businesses recognize the value and diversity of assets Waco & the Heart of Texas offers as a travel destination, the Series helps equip residents to be brand ambassadors and understand and believe in the Waco & the Heart of Texas brand identity.

The Series will consist of smaller events conducted at various times of the year, ex: HOT Summer Days & Nights, HOT Holidays, HOT Hop. During each event a contest would be conducted encouraging locals to get out and about and enjoy the same experiences in and around the HOT that are available to visitors. Participants could pick-up a “brand board” at the Tourist Information Center along with a suggested list of sites and activities. Then the fun commences as they roam the HOT exploring and experiencing, all the while capturing these moments, along with their brand board, in video or still photography.

As submissions are made, they would be posted to all HOT Social media outlets, WacoHeartofTexas.com, WCCC-10 as well as made available to the media. After completing five visits/activities, participants would earn a Waco & the Heart of Texas

t-shirt or cap. The t-shirt/cap could be used in lieu of the brand board in subsequent photos/videos. Badges may be given away as certain sections are completed (i.e. Bellmead badge, attractions badge, heritage badge).

A drawing would be held at the conclusion of each event and a substantial award would be issued for the person collecting the most badges. At the Series' year-end a Grand Prize would be awarded with much fanfare and media attention.

An additional component of the Series could be the "Traveling Heart" where photos are taken of individuals/groups wearing Waco & the Heart of Texas merchandise as they travel. The photos would be uploaded to social media for voting, and prizes given. This would not only promote the brand, but would build and engage the social media audience. There are many other ideas that can be incorporated into this concept down the line.

2.3 Virtual wayfinding – Waco & the Heart of Texas mobile app and QR code strategy

The need for better wayfinding was identified early and often in the assessment of current Waco conditions and conversations with stakeholders. This need will only grow as Waco & the Heart of Texas encompasses a larger geographic area and a more extensive and diverse collection of attractions and services.

An obvious starting point is a responsive website (one that is optimized for use on mobile devices), and perhaps a Waco & the Heart of Texas mobile app as funds become available. Although QR codes have been on the wane in recent months, they may be used sparingly as a way to link mobile device users quickly to web resources that can help orient and inform them as they make their way around Waco & the Heart of Texas.



HEART OF TEXAS



METRICS AND EVALUATION

- Agreements and/or applications of the new brand in partner marketing materials
- Web traffic statistics.
- Use of mobile app, mobile website and QR codes, if deployed.
- Mentions and publicity value.
- Establish a regional tourism report card and five-year goals. Grade performance and release a report each year to update the community on progress and invite input and assistance.

BUDGET AND PRICING STRATEGY

\$14,000

Creative and professional services: \$3,000

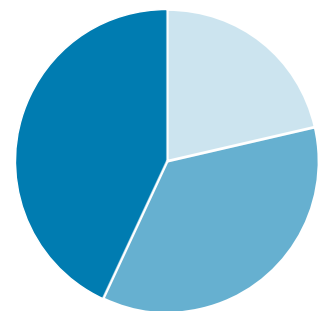
Includes creative development of mobile apps and wayfinding and to support The Soul Series.

Collateral: \$5,000

Includes materials for stakeholder outreach and Waco & the Heart of Texas Soul Series

Events: \$6,000

Waco & the Heart of Texas Soul Series event costs.



Total allocation:
\$14,000

Upsell



OBJECTIVE 3: UPSELL

Implement marketing strategies and tactics designed to extend stays for current Waco & the Heart of Texas visitors, including event attendees.



“Extending a stay can be crucial in an industry where even an hour added onto a trip can mean big returns.”

— Jan Kostner, Illinois Office of Tourism

Extending lengths of stay — converting pass-throughs to stopovers to day trips to weekends and more — is a key objective that will help fulfill the potential of the Waco & the Heart of Texas brand. Indeed, the brand itself is intended to convey that there is more to do in and around Waco than people may think, and more reason for them to make their visit into a bona fide trip. The travelers who are already coming to Waco for various reasons — meetings and conventions, Baylor events and more — provide the target audience for this objective, which encourages them to both extend their current visits and to make future visits.

TARGET AUDIENCES:

- Current Waco visitors

STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

3.1 Point-of-sale collateral products at key contact points

As part of the triage and revision of existing Waco CVB collateral (see section 1.8), some materials can be repurposed to be used exclusively at “points of sale” — key contact points for visitors, including the Waco Tourist Info Center and Waco Convention Center, but also points where visitors can be “caught in the act” of being tourists — at attractions, popular restaurants, hotels, etc. These will be supplemented with new materials and products that support the thematic-travel approach of Waco & the Heart of Texas.

Options for new materials include:

- Customized QR Code Point-of-sale (POS) displays, table toppers, etc. that lead with “while you’re here” content tailored to the contact point where it’s provided. For example, a POS available at the Mayborn Museum could lead with other historical/cultural attractions, or other Baylor attractions; one available at Cameron Park or Lake Waco or an outfitter on the Bosque should lead with other natural experiences; etc. Obviously, the number of different versions should be limited by practicality, but we can easily see at least five different products finding sufficient use to be worth doing — following the five themes we’ve identified (nature, culture, heritage, sports and lifestyle).

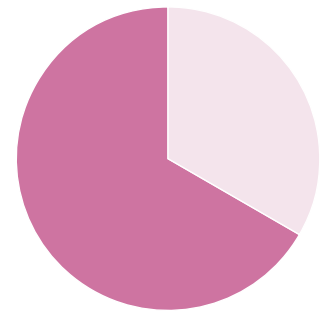
- POS including the same “while you’re here” content as discussed above, although these could also be organized geographically to highlight nearby attractions and visitor-serving businesses.

3.2 Message development and training for customer service at key contact points

This would primarily involve a rebranding, revision and expansion of the current Wild About Waco! program, with special efforts made to reach out to customer service staffs at locations within the partner cities as well as in Waco. Materials used in or provided to attendees of Wild About Waco will reflect the Waco & the Heart of Texas brand – the images, messages, narrative, purpose and goals of the integrated campaign. In addition to the tourist-friendly best practices that Wild About Waco! already conveys, this is an opportunity to educate front-line staffs about how the Waco & the Heart of Texas brand, and the story behind it – the positioning of the region as a vibrant, complete, diverse destination – can be used to increase traveler spending and length of stay.

METRICS AND EVALUATION

- Uptake and use (in the case of a punch or offer card) of point-of-sale products
- Attendees in Wild About Waco! classes
- Media hits and publicity value
- Web traffic and click-throughs for online advertising
- Uptake of “stay longer” promotions
- Room nights and HOT receipts
- Customer research – intercept surveys



Total allocation:
\$3,000

BUDGET AND PRICING STRATEGY

\$3,000

Creative and professional services: \$1,000

Development of point-of-sale materials and Wild About Waco class materials.

Point-of-purchase: \$2,000

Production of point-of-sale materials and, as needed, Wild About Waco! class materials/take-aways.

Engage



OBJECTIVE 4: ENGAGE

Introduce Waco & the Heart of Texas as a unique and asset-rich leisure travel destination and meeting venue for major Texas and regional markets.

“Creating a destination brand requires a strategic approach, because the effort should focus on generating business and not only on creating awareness ... A strategic approach allows destination marketers to “do more with less” by focusing the brand building efforts on those consumers which are most likely to visit and are most attractive financially for the destination.”

— Luis Rodriguez Baptista, Galleon Blue (Madrid)

This objective represents the largest budget allocation in this plan because it contains the lion's share of recommendations for paid media. The amount of money available simply is not enough to support a high-cost media plan that garners enough impressions to build the brand. This plan endeavors instead to provide a balanced approach that increases exposure to the highest-potential origin markets and sources of business for the “general-interest” traveler while providing opportunities (either directly or via traffic driven to the Waco & the Heart of Texas web/social media presence) to build the brand and tell its story — to address why people should come to Waco & the Heart of Texas, and not just what they can do when they get there.

TARGET AUDIENCES:

- Major Texas and regional markets

STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

4.1 Paid media serving origin markets

Opportunities should be explored in any major metro area that's easily accessible to Waco by car, but for the sake of prioritization we think this means concentrating on travelers in/from (in this order):

- Dallas/Fort Worth
- Austin/San Antonio
- Houston/Southeast Texas
- Oklahoma City/Tulsa
- Louisiana and Arkansas
- National and international markets

The paid media plan outlined here is intended to establish a template that, with additional funding in subsequent years, can be built upon to reach directly into these origin markets. This plan combines the Waco CVB's existing outdoor



program, print placements that reach high-value statewide audiences, and online advertising that reaches into major Texas metros. If additional funding is secured, limited broadcast advertising in the Dallas/Fort Worth and Houston markets is recommended.

4.1.a Outdoor

This plan recommends maintaining but not expanding the current number of placements and spends in the Waco & the Heart of Texas's outdoor program, for now. With cooperation and understanding by the attraction partners, consideration will be given in the future to shifting the content of these boards so that each one is primarily an advertisement for Waco & the Heart of Texas, not for a specific Waco attraction. For example, instead of a billboard for the Texas Ranger Museum that may not even mention "Waco," use a Ranger image to illustrate a Texana-focused appeal (e.g., in sepiatone) for all of Waco & the Heart of Texas.

4.1.b Print

Our recommended core print media plan for deploying the Waco & the Heart of Texas brand to prospective leisure travelers in origin markets includes:

Waco & the Heart of Texas

- *Texas Monthly*: 1/3 page, April and May issues, full page \$17,650
June issue (coop)
A strong brand that lends strength through association with the new Waco & the Heart of Texas brand; a desirable (mature, affluent) audience including sizable penetration in major urban origin markets; some reach (both print and online) outside of Texas. The June issue will have a designated space for the Heart of Texas complete with editorial. Special rates will be negotiated to allow tourism partners to participate in this cooperative effort.
- *Texas Highways*: 1/2 page, March/April issue (co-op) \$3,100
This is the official travel magazine of Texas. **Highways** readers are proven travelers, and 62% of them traveled to a destination in Texas that was advertised/written about in the magazine.
- TTIA: "See Texas First" Newspaper Insert: 1/4 page, Fall issue \$7,600
This insert is distributed in major Texas newspapers well as the *NW Arkansas Morning News*, *Baton Rouge Advocate*, *Shreveport Times*, *Albuquerque Journal*, *Oklahoma City Oklahoman* and *Tulsa World*
- *SATW Directory*: Full page \$2,200
This is the annual directory of the Society of American Travel Writers.

- *Dallas/Ft. Worth Drive Guide*: ½ page, Winter & Spring \$1,000
This publication is distributed at Dallas-area car rental companies, kiosks at the DFW International Airport as well as military bases in the area.
- *Texas Parks & Wildlife*: ½ page, April and June issues. \$3,919
The Heart of Texas is rich in natural attributes and recreational sites that appeal to nature-loving travelers.
- *Good Housekeeping, Woman's Day* and *Redbook* \$6,660
Dallas-area distribution, full page, April and June issues.

Waco Convention Center:

- *Meetings Focus Texas*: ½ page, October issue \$4,000
Distributed with Meetings Focus South, 100% of this publications' readership is guaranteed to hold or plan meetings/conventions in Texas
- *TSAE Directory*: ½ page, 2013 issue \$1,500
Annual directory for the Texas Society of Assn. Executives
- *Texas Sports Facility Guide*: Full page, October \$2,500
This guide highlights all sporting facilities of city members of the Texas Assn. of Convention & Visitors Bureaus
- *Convention South*: ½ page, December issue \$2,600
This publication focuses on trends and insights for meeting planners organizing group-based travel in the South.
- *Texas Meetings & Events*: ⅓ page, Spring issue \$2,050
Readership consists of industry experts & planners looking for competitive venues to hold meetings
- *Meeting Planners Guide* \$1,485
The reach of this publication is planners in Texas and the Southwest region.
- SGMP – *Lone Star Chapter Newsletter*: ½ page, \$600
four quarterly issues

If additional funds are available (either initially or in future years), we recommend expanding this print media plan to include weekend travel section placements in major-market newspapers, or at least in specific zones, neighborhoods or ZIP codes of those circulation areas.

4.1.c Online and search

Recommend: A mix of search (Google AdWords) and social (Facebook)

advertisements, with some online banner (news sites) advertising as appropriate. Purpose is to establish the brand, reach directly into origin markets, drive traffic to WacoHeartofTexas.com, and touch demographic segments less likely to be exposed to print media.

- In future years, once the Waco & the Heart of Texas brand is established, spending may be shifted away from news-site banner ads and toward search and social media.

Each of the recommendations below presumes that spending would be earmarked to correspond to prime travel seasons (e.g., February-March, May-June, October-November).

Waco & the Heart of Texas:

- Austin: statesman.com \$14,400
200K impressions per month for 4 months
- Dallas/Fort Worth: dallasnews.com, dfw.com and star-telegram.com \$25,000
200K impressions per month for 4 months
- Houston: chron.com \$18,000
300K impressions per month for 4 months
- San Antonio: mysanantonio.com \$14,400
200K impressions per month for 4 months
- Search: Budget depends on selected keywords \$25,000
targeted keywords (e.g., historical, nature, Central Texas) are recommended rather than a broad term like "Texas vacations." Estimate of \$5,000/month for 5 months.
- Facebook \$5,000
Primarily designed to build the brand and drive traffic to WacoHeartofTexas.com and the companion Facebook page.
- Tour Texas Website \$2,750

Waco Convention Center:

- Texas Meetings & Events website \$500
Leaderboard or large square ad for one quarter
- Meeting Planners International website \$395
Online Buyer's Guide Listing
- MPI – Texas Hill Country Chapter \$675
Banner ad on Chapter website
- Facebook & Google \$2,000
Placements will coincide with sales efforts/specials

4.1.d Broadcast

A major obstacle to accommodating broadcast in this media plan is the cost of producing a spot itself. The City of Waco's WCCC-10 will be able to help reduce these costs and will allow us to produce a high quality HD-compatible spot for minimal dollars. Creative services and placement costs will still need to be budgeted, but will be significantly less than the amount originally recommended (\$60,000).



Redesign billboard space



Place print ads

With that said, a zoned, targeted cable media buy of \$5,000/week in D/FW and Houston could effectively reach likely travelers, especially when tailored with ZIP code data on current Waco travelers. An initial recommendation is a minimum of \$30,000 per market, and ideally twice that, for ad flights that garner sufficient exposure to build the brand. Developing a TV campaign would itself provide a potential earned media hook (see section 4.2), and the spot itself could be repurposed as web video, distributed through social media and linked to online ad placements.

Although funds are not immediately available for this media buy, future consideration should be given for this, combined with a public relations and social media blitz in these targeted metro.

4.2 Direct marketing to travel trade and meeting planners

A direct electronic marketing effort to the travel trade and meeting planners to the degree feasible within the allocated budget is recommended. The CVB's membership in relevant trade organizations may help facilitate this. E-marketing allows us to drive traffic directly to WacoHeartofTexas.com and its brand-building resources, or even to distribute web videos and slidecasts as part of e-blast content, rather than relying on those audiences to take the extra step of making contact (via phone or email) required by a print ad placement or print postcard mailing.

WacoHeartofTexas.com would then be the venue for arranging site tours or taking requests for premiums and promotional items for travel-trade customers and meeting planners. A particular target to focus on here will be meeting planners (such as for SMERF events) who could also be served by smaller meeting facilities and locations in the partner cities.

METRICS AND EVALUATION

- Standard media-buy performance metrics (tracked to ensure compliance with commitments and support make-goods if needed)
- Click-throughs on online advertising
- Reader-response tracking, if appropriate; recipient-response tracking for direct marketing
- Media hits and publicity value
- Web traffic, contacts to CVB
- Convention center sales
- Room nights and HOT receipts
- Customer awareness of Waco as a destination and of campaign (this would likely require pre-and post-test surveying, which is not currently included in this plan and budget)

BUDGET AND PRICING STRATEGY **\$467,097**

Creative and professional services: \$52,000
 Creative development of paid media.

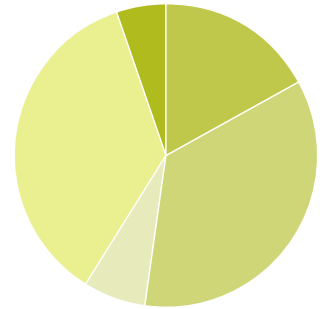
Paid media: \$286,988
 Outdoor: \$106,000
 HOT print: \$42,129
 WCC print: \$14,739
 HOT online: \$104,550
 WCC online: \$3,570

This budget allocation does not include funds for the broadcast media strategy described in section 4.1.d.

Collateral/Premiums – WCC: \$20,000
 Supports content development, list procurement as necessary, and follow-up contact (including potential familiarization tours) with travel trade and meeting planners.

Direct Marketing: \$108,644
 Convention/Sports Marketing: \$50,000
 Group Tour/Consumer Tradeshow Marketing: \$21,111
 Tradeshow Displays: \$2,500
 Misc. WCC: \$35,033

Miscellaneous: \$15,465
 Funds set aside for unforeseen opportunities that arise throughout the year



Total allocation:
\$467,097

Themes



OBJECTIVE 5: THEMES

Develop and implement marketing strategies to engage thematic (special-interest and niche) travelers and events from regional, national and international markets.

“Focusing on special interest travel and marketing to niche groups is one of the surest ways to make a profit in today’s marketplace, but only if you know the details.”

— Robin Fetsch, on the American Society of Travel Agents website



The interest in developing travel themes for Waco & the Heart of Texas originated as a way to organize the region’s numerous attractions into experiences that encouraged storytelling — answering the question “Why should I go there?” rather than “What should I do when I get there?” Special interest travel is a fruitful source of potential visitors who may never even have considered Waco and the partner cities as a destination that was uniquely suited to their niche. Special-interest and niche travel represents the easiest pathway for the region to reach and attract visitors from beyond Texas and its neighboring states.

TARGET AUDIENCES

1. Thematic (special interest and niche) travelers
2. Current Waco visitors
3. Major Texas and regional markets

STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

5.1 Itineraries and value-added offers for special-interest targets

Itineraries and value-added offers or packages will be developed as appropriate, which match identified niche/special-interest targets to the thematic travel opportunities provided by Waco & the Heart of Texas. These itineraries will be made available in several different prominent ways — via collateral, via the Waco & the Heart of Texas web portal, which is mobile friendly for further saturation and eventually through physical wayfinding, all of which are referenced earlier in this plan.

The recommendation is to focus on five special-interest targets for thematic travel:

- Nature (including outdoor recreation)
- Culture (including the arts)
- Heritage (including Texana)
- Sports (both fans and participants)
- Lifestyle (shopping and dining)

Itineraries developed for these themes starts with organizing and coding as many attractions and visitor-serving businesses as possible into the relevant thematic

categories. This allows Waco & the Heart of Texas to go beyond a simple set of pre-packaged tours and routes into the kind of dynamic customization being sought by visitors today and tomorrow and allows for real interactive trip planning.

In terms of value-added offers tailored specifically to these themes, some of the existing promotions (coupons) and packages available through the Waco CVB meet some of these needs and will be rebranded and repositioned. Others, particularly in the nature/outdoor recreation theme still need to be developed.

5.2 Cooperative direct marketing and shared communications and outreach

This tactic includes identifying potential marketing and outreach partners (associations, clubs, etc.) for co-op marketing and shared communications to niche/special-interest targets, and developing content for direct marketing that can be executed in collaboration with these partners.

The Waco CVB will identify and respond to opportunities for trade show visits, site tours, etc. that can reach tour planners, meeting planners and other decision-makers serving these niche/special-interest targets.

5.3 Paid and social media in niche/special-interest outlets

Public relations to outlets serving defined niche/special-interest targets can be conducted both independently, as the fourth wave of this overall campaign, and in coordination with direct-marketing and advertorial/paid-media opportunities.

Narrowly targeted paid media in print and online outlets that reach the identified targets is recommended. Outlets for targeted paid media are numerous and will be carefully analyzed before making specific recommendations for media planning, particularly given the small size of the proposed media buy. These dollars will be used to leverage advertorial content and support cooperative marketing when possible.

A proactive social media strategy will help these efforts and dollars go farther. For example, using the lifestyle theme, the food community is extremely active on social media, always discussing new restaurants and notable chefs.

METRICS AND EVALUATION

- Uptake of collateral products highlighting niche-travel themes/itineraries
- Uptake of promotions/packages tailored to thematic travel
- Web traffic to thematic-travel sections of the web portal
- Standard paid-media performance metrics, where appropriate
- Earned media hits and publicity value
- Direct marketing response tracking and rates; contacts to the CVB

BUDGET AND PRICING STRATEGY

\$10,000

Creative and professional services: \$4,000

Supports development of special collateral pieces, wayfinding components, web content, etc.

Paid media—print: \$3,000

Paid media—online: \$3,000

Primarily used for leverage of advertorial/direct marketing efforts



Total allocation:
\$10,000

Public Relations



OBJECTIVE 6: PUBLIC RELATIONS

Continue to build relations with the local, regional and national media in order to garner free publicity. Develop and implement social media strategies to engage visitors and entice them to visit the Heart of Texas.



“Public-relations specialists make flower arrangements of the facts, placing them so that the wilted and less attractive petals are hidden by sturdy blooms.”

— Allen Harrington

TARGET AUDIENCES

1. Travel Writers
2. Social Media Users
3. Local, Regional and National Media

STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

6.1 Send the message

Waco & the Heart of Texas has a great story to tell. The message needs to be crafted and packaged with facts, and hooks to create media interest and social media buzz. The message should be clear, and uniformly used by partners, staff and ambassadors of the Heart of Texas.

- Develop talking points about Waco & the Heart of Texas
- Compile statistics about the impact of tourism on the Heart of Texas
- Produce a PowerPoint presentation containing information about Waco & the Heart of Texas
- Develop a bank of story ideas/articles about the HOT. Stories would be written by CVB staff as well as cultivated from other tourism-related entities, guest bloggers, etc.
 - One set of promising story angles and ideas would focus on the value Waco & the Heart of Texas offers as an alternative to leisure activities in the origin markets themselves — e.g., “Tired of Austin traffic? The Waco & the Heart of Texas is made for you and your bike!” or “Grab your golf clubs and hit the road! The Waco & the Heart of Texas has great courses and plenty of things to do.”
 - Tap into the familiar list of famous to tell their own Waco & the Heart of Texas stories. Such stories would also offer potential of building buzz via web and social media by associating Waco and the partner cities with these subjects’ own media profiles.

- Develop and publish periodic Waco & the Heart of Texas Top 10 lists hidden treasures, restaurants, outdoor activities, etc. List entries should be nominated by the public and voted on via social media.

6.2 Create a robust presence on Social Media

Social Media provides the opportunity to communicate with and engage citizens, partners and travelers while discreetly delivering our marketing messages. New social media outlets are introduced regularly, making it virtually impossible maintain a presence on every one. Waco & the Heart of Texas should concentrate initial efforts on the larger outlets, mastering them, then moving to the secondary in subsequent phases. The initial phase of the social media strategy will focus on Blog, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube.

- A new blog is being developed as a component of wacoheartoftexas.com. The blog, From the Heart, will provide travelers an insider's take on the best that Waco & the Heart of Texas has to offer. Potential bloggers throughout the Heart of Texas will be sought out and secured based on their specific area of specialty (ie. Foodies, cyclists, museum directors). Schedules will be loosely coordinated to maintain a balanced flow of posts.
- Facebook/Twitter—Waco & the Heart of Texas currently has over 1,000 Facebook friends. Compared to sister cities' pages this number is at the high end, but specific efforts will be taken to increase the number by at least half. The strategies we will employ include:
 - Post relevant material at least three times weekly, but not more than seven times weekly
 - Encourage interaction by conducting contests, holding discussions, etc.
 - Post flip-cam video clips from various attractions or events a minimum of once monthly
 - Provide links to positive stories written about Waco & the Heart of Texas
 - Provide links to great videos about Waco & the Heart of Texas
- A specific YouTube channel will be developed for Waco & the Heart of Texas. The channel will contain playlists titled with the five themes that are being deployed in the marketing efforts. Professional videos produced by WCCC-10 as well as amateur footage captured by CVB staff will be uploaded to the channel at least twice monthly. Following the upload, the links will be promoted on wacoheartoftexas.com, Facebook and Twitter.

6.3 Increase awareness of Waco & the Heart of Texas' Tourism product

Travel Writers

Positive publicity is priceless to any travel destination. Anything penned from what is considered a "non-biased" source is given much more credence than an advertisement. Travel writers and press tours will remain a vital part of the overall Marketing & Communications plan for Waco & the Heart of Texas.

- Maintain a membership and remain active in the Society of American Travel Writers, and evaluate memberships in additional organizations
- Participate in Media Sales missions in media-rich areas
- Continue participation in the Texas Top to Bottom Press Tour with Amarillo and McAllen and seek out new partner opportunities
- Produce a quarterly e-newsletter announcing updates/changes and highlighting attractions

Regional Media

The regional market remains the strongest in terms of overnight visits to Waco and the Heart of Texas. The regional media will be targeted through direct sales efforts as well as continued electronic and direct mail communications in order to keep the Heart of Texas fresh in their minds, and bylines.

- Maintain membership and remain active in the Society of American Travel
- Conduct a sales blitz in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area
- Invite the Austin media to a luncheon in conjunction with the Meeting Planner Blitz
- Issue press releases for any relevant information/updates on Waco & the Heart of Texas, or anything that would be of interest to a visitor
- Produce a catchy/teaser direct mail enticing the media to visit the Heart of Texas

Local Media

Local media will play an important role in engaging citizens in the Heart of Texas experience. Thus, it will be important to partner with the media to highlight our hometown.

- Issue press releases for any relevant information/updates on Waco & the Heart of Texas, or anything that would be of interest to a citizen
- Continually provide information/news releases about the CVBs accomplishments, designations, or updates/changes to programs, sales efforts or strategies, staff or marketing materials
- A minimum of once annually provide an electronic press kit with the latest information, story ideas, etc.
- Produce a quarterly e-newsletter announcing updates/changes and highlighting attractions

METRICS AND EVALUATION

- Uptake of collateral products highlighting niche-travel themes/itineraries
- Uptake of promotions/packages tailored to thematic travel
- Web traffic to thematic-travel sections of the web portal
- Standard paid-media performance metrics, where appropriate
- Earned media hits and publicity value
- Direct marketing response tracking and rates; contacts to the CVB

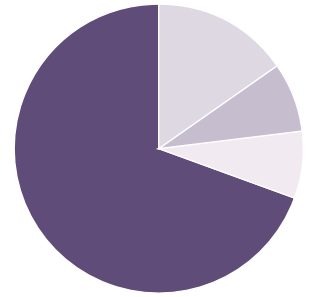
BUDGET AND PRICING STRATEGY \$13,000

Creative and professional services: \$2,000
Supports development of press kit

Launch promotions/local media support: \$1,000

Press kit & story bank development: \$1,000

Travel writer visits & sales blitzes: \$9,000



Total allocation:
\$13,000



BUDGET AND PRICING STRATEGY — SUMMARY

TOTAL: \$581,097

SOURCES¹:

Waco	76.35%	\$443,676
Bellmead	14.33%	\$83,243
Hewitt	2.51%	\$14,589
McGregor	2.51%	\$14,589
Other partners	18.5%	\$25,000

TOTAL \$581,097

USES²:

Creative and professional services	\$92,000
Paid media: Outdoor	\$106,000
Paid media: Print	\$59,868
Paid media: Online	\$111,120
Paid media total:	\$276,988
Web coding, collateral, premiums, etc.	\$70,000
Direct marketing, tradeshow displays, point-of-purchase	\$110,644
Travel Writer visits, events	\$16,000
Miscellaneous	\$15,465

ALLOCATION BY OBJECTIVE:

Objective 1: Launch	\$74,000
Objective 2: Partner	\$14,000
Objective 3: Upsell	\$3,000
Objective 4: Engage	\$467,097
Objective 5: Themes	\$10,000
Objective 6: Public Relations	\$13,000

¹ Percentage allocation based on estimated HOT collections. (Robinson does not report HOT receipts to Comptroller, so this may be a contribution from other funding sources.) * Other partners* include entities such as Baylor, non-City of Waco destinations, Chamber of Commerce/EDC, PID, etc.

² These figures do not include current staff costs for Waco CVB or other partners. They do, however, include the Waco CVB's current marketing and communications budget.

PROPOSED TIMELINE (P = planning; X = execution)

2013-2014	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
1.1 WacoHeartofTexas.com	P	P	P	X	X	X	X					
1.2 Premiums/promotional items					P	X						
1.3 Media Kit & Image Library								P	P	X		
1.4 Collateral		P	P	P	X	X	X	X	X			
2.1 Marketing guidelines/strategy for partners	P	P	X	X								
2.2 The Heart of Texas Soul Series					P	P	P	X	X	X	X	X
2.3 Virtual wayfinding										P	P	P
2.4 Cooperative Public Relations Campaign								P	P	P	X	X
3.1 POS collateral							P	P	X	X		
3.2 Customer service training							P	P	X			X
4.1 Paid media: outdoor	P	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Paid media: print	P	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	XP	XP	XP
Paid media: online	P	X	X	P	X	X	X	P	X	X	XP	P
4.2 Collateral/Premiums – WCC	P	X	X			P	X	X	X			P
4.3 Convention/Sports Marketing												
Tradeshows	X			X					X	P	X	X
Sales Blitzes/Customer Receptions/Events		X	X					X		X	P	P
4.4 Group Tour/Consumer Tradeshow Marketing												
Travel Trade Tradeshows				X				X			P	X
Consumer Tradeshows	X				X						P	P
5.1 Itineraries				P	P	X	X					
5.2 Co-op/Direct marketing					P	X	X					
6.1 Send the message	X	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
6.2 Social media presence	X	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
6.3 Increase awareness	X	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P

This timeline is intended to provide a general sequence of events in this plan, but actual work planning and scheduling will in many cases be influenced by currently unknown external variables, such as event calendars that drive earned media opportunities or event sponsorships. Paid media sequencing assumes staggered schedules for print media buys and online placements and quarterly cycles for outdoor board content.