

Inland Mendocino Tourism Council (IMTC)

Inland Destination Investment Fund Framework

Executive Summary

The **Inland Mendocino Tourism Council (IMTC)** proposes the creation of an Inland Destination Investment Fund supported by an annual allocation equal to twenty-five percent (25%) of gross BID revenues received by **Visit Mendocino County (VMC)**.

Funds would be deposited on a quarterly basis directly into the Inland Destination Investment Fund and administered by the **Greater Ukiah Business & Tourism Alliance (GUBTA)** on behalf of IMTC for the benefit of inland Mendocino County communities including, but not limited to, Hopland, Ukiah, Calpella, Redwood Valley, Potter Valley, Willits, Laytonville, Leggett and Covelo.

A dedicated investment fund will help ensure visitors experience the full diversity of Mendocino County, including its wine country, small towns, recreational assets, cultural attractions, festivals, and inland gateway communities.

The Fund would support destination marketing, visitor infrastructure, tourism-related signage and wayfinding, visitor services, community events, recreation assets, and destination development projects that strengthen inland communities and contribute to the success of Mendocino County as a whole.

Inland Mendocino County currently possesses the destination assets, visitor services, lodging infrastructure, community partnerships, and organizational capacity needed to maximize the impact of tourism investment. Additionally, Inland Mendocino is anchored by the county's only California Welcome Center. This proposal builds on these existing strengths while creating a dedicated funding structure for priorities inland.

About the Inland Mendocino Tourism Council

The Inland Mendocino Tourism Council (IMTC) is a collaborative partnership of lodging operators, tourism organizations, businesses, and community stakeholders working to strengthen the visitor economy throughout inland Mendocino County.

The Council includes representatives from lodging properties, wine industry, economic development, local businesses, visitor attractions, arts and cultural organizations, recreation partners, local governments, chambers of commerce, and community organizations.

Recognizing that lodging businesses are the primary contributors to BID funding, IMTC works to identify priorities, coordinate investments, and advance projects that increase overnight visitation, support local businesses, and strengthen communities.

IMTC will function as the inland division of VMC, providing local leadership, project development, destination stewardship, and investment guidance while remaining aligned with Visit Mendocino County's countywide mission.

Working in partnership with VMC, Visit California, the North Coast Tourism Council, the California Welcome Center Ukiah, and other regional and state partners, IMTC will ensure inland communities have a coordinated voice in advancing tourism and economic development goals.

While collaboration with Visit Mendocino remains essential, IMTC's role extends beyond advisory recommendations. To be effective, IMTC must play an active role in directing and stewarding resources dedicated to inland Mendocino County. Additionally, dedicated funding, local oversight, and implementation authority will provide transparency, accountability, and responsiveness to local priorities while ensuring community-driven recommendations are translated into measurable outcomes.

The Request

The Inland Mendocino Tourism Council respectfully requests:

- Creation of an Inland Destination Investment Fund administered by GUBTA as fiscal agent on behalf of IMTC.
- A quarterly allocation equal to twenty-five percent (25%) of gross BID revenues received by Visit Mendocino.
- Quarterly direct deposit of those funds into the Inland Destination Investment Fund.
- Expenditures directed by IMTC and administered through established financial controls, bookkeeping, and reporting systems already utilized by GUBTA.
- Recognition of IMTC as the primary inland advisory and implementation body for tourism-related investments benefiting inland Mendocino County.
- Subcontract with VMC for providing services with terms outlined.

Collaboration and Contract with Visit Mendocino County (VMC)

IMTC will serve as the recognized inland advisory and implementation body for tourism-related initiatives benefiting inland Mendocino County communities.

IMTC will work on projects with VMC leadership and staff to support priorities identified in VMC's strategic plan, develop destination stewardship initiatives, advance tourism

development projects, and identify investment opportunities aligned with countywide goals.

Designated inland tourism funding will include a defined process for local oversight and implementation through IMTC, ensuring inland priorities can move efficiently from recommendation to action.

IMTC will provide quarterly reports to the BID Advisory Board and VMC Executive Committee outlining expenditures, project status, marketing activities, destination development efforts, and measurable outcomes.

IMTC and VMC will maintain a collaborative working relationship that promotes transparency, coordinated messaging, shared accountability to Mendocino County lodging partners, and alignment between countywide tourism objectives and the unique opportunities of inland communities.

Why This Investment Makes Sense

According to Visit Mendocino County's BID revenue data, inland lodging properties generate approximately 30% of annual BID assessments. The proposed allocation of 25% of gross BID revenues reflects a conservative reinvestment formula that remains below the inland region's contribution while providing dedicated funding to strengthen tourism assets, visitation, and economic activity throughout inland Mendocino County.

The Inland Destination Investment Fund does not create a new tourism system. Instead, it invests in destination assets, partnerships, and organizations that already exist and have demonstrated their ability to attract visitors, support businesses, and strengthen communities.

Inland Mendocino County is home to many of the county's most significant visitor assets, including wine country, the Skunk Train, Grace Hudson Museum, Seabiscuit Ranch, Lake Mendocino, the California Welcome Center Ukiah, historic downtown districts, outdoor recreation opportunities, festivals, and community events.

The region also benefits from organizations already providing visitor services, destination promotion, event production, economic development support, grant administration, and tourism programming.

This proposal allows tourism investments to be leveraged through existing partnerships while generating greater returns for visitors, businesses, and communities.

According to Visit Mendocino County's BID revenue reporting, inland lodging properties generate approximately 30% of annual BID assessments. The proposed allocation of 25% of gross BID revenues reflects a conservative reinvestment formula that remains below the inland region's contribution while providing dedicated funding to strengthen tourism assets, visitation, and economic activity throughout inland Mendocino County.

Region	BID Contribution	Proposed Allocation
Inland Mendocino	30%	25%
Coast	70%	0

Five Anchor Destination Assets

Wine Country & Agricultural Experiences

Mendocino County wine country remains one of the region's strongest visitor attractions and economic drivers. Through partnerships with Mendocino Winegrowers and hospitality businesses, the region benefits from a network of wineries, events, and marketing opportunities that support visitation and overnight stays.

Skunk Train & Heritage Tourism

The Skunk Train is one of Northern California's most recognizable tourism attractions. Continued investment in experiences such as the RailCoaster, Highball Express, and Presidential Car creates compelling reasons for visitors to travel to inland Mendocino County and extend their stay.

Lake Mendocino & Outdoor Recreation

Lake Mendocino is a year-round recreation asset supporting boating, camping, fishing, hiking, cycling, paddling, wildlife viewing, and special events.

Through GUBTA's partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, inland stakeholders are already engaged in visitor services, recreation promotion, destination development, and long-term planning efforts that enhance visitor experiences and support local communities.

California Welcome Center Ukiah

The California Welcome Center Ukiah serves as the official gateway to the North Coast and an important connection point within the Visit California network. It provides visitor information, trip planning, event promotion, and destination referrals that benefit communities throughout Mendocino County.

Festivals, Events & Community Experiences

Music festivals, wine events, fairs, farmers markets, cultural celebrations, and community gatherings are among the region's strongest drivers of overnight visitation and visitor spending. These experiences support local businesses, strengthen community identity, and create memorable visitor experiences.

Existing Capacity & Partnerships

IMTC is built upon organizations, partnerships, and programs already serving visitors and supporting local communities.

Key partners include:

- Inland Lodging Stakeholders
- Greater Ukiah Business & Tourism Alliance (Visit Ukiah, Ukiah Chamber of Commerce, and Ukiah Main Street Program)
- California Welcome Center Ukiah
- Mendocino Winegrowers
- Economic Development and Financing Corporation
- Visit Mendocino
- Visit California
- North Coast Tourism Council
- Redwood Region RISE / California Jobs First
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Arts, cultural, recreation, and community organizations

Together, these partners provide visitor services, destination promotion, event production, economic development support, recreation programming, grant administration, and community engagement throughout the region.

Fund Administration & Accountability

One hundred percent (100%) of the annual allocation shall be deposited directly into the Inland Destination Investment Fund and administered by GUBTA on behalf of IMTC. The allocation shall be calculated using gross quarterly BID revenues received by Visit Mendocino prior to any deductions.

As the fiduciary organization, GUBTA will work with the IMTC steering committee to create a budget. GUBTA will recover the costs for the accounting, supplies, etc. This can be done as a reimbursement or as a percentage not to exceed 5% of the overall working budget.

The primary objective of this initiative is to ensure that the greatest possible share of funding is invested directly into projects, programs, and services that benefit inland communities, rather than being consumed by administrative overhead.

GUBTA is serving as a fiscal agent and lead organization to provide efficient administration, established financial oversight, and full transparency in the management of funds and project implementation.

These funds will be distributed quarterly from VMC.

No portion of the allocation shall be withheld for administrative purposes by Visit Mendocino.

Financial reporting, project reporting, and performance updates will be provided quarterly to the Visit Mendocino BID Advisory Board and Executive Committee.

The twenty-five percent (25%) allocation formula shall remain in effect for the term of Visit Mendocino's tourism promotion agreement and continue through any renewal, extension, or successor agreement unless modified through a formal amendment process.

Governance

IMTC shall provide strategic direction for the Fund through an advisory committee representing:

- Lodging operators
- Mendocino Winegrowers Inc.
- Economic Development and Financing Corporation
- Local businesses (including wineries, restaurants, retail, and banking)
- Chambers of Commerce
- Arts and cultural organizations
- Recreation partners
- Event producers
- Local governments
- California Welcome Center Ukiah

Strong lodging industry participation will remain central to the work of IMTC, recognizing the lodging community's role in funding and benefiting from tourism promotion efforts.

Eligible Investments

The Fund may support:

- Tourism marketing and advertising
- Destination storytelling and content development
- Tourism signage and wayfinding
- Visitor services and information programs
- Community events and festivals

- Recreation and destination development projects
 - Arts and cultural programming
 - Tourism infrastructure improvements
 - Research and visitor data
 - Grant matching opportunities
 - Collaborative countywide tourism initiatives
-

Expected Outcomes

The Inland Destination Investment Fund will:

- Increase overnight stays and lodging revenue
 - Grow visitor spending in inland communities
 - Improve tourism infrastructure, signage, and visitor services
 - Support events, recreation, arts, culture, and destination development
 - Strengthen local businesses and downtown districts
 - Generate stronger returns on tourism investments throughout Mendocino County
-

Conclusion

Inland Mendocino County possesses the destination assets, visitor infrastructure, partnerships, and organizational capacity needed to deliver measurable results from tourism investment.

A dedicated annual allocation equal to twenty-five percent (25%) of gross BID revenues will support overnight visitation, strengthen local businesses, improve visitor experiences, and create economic opportunities throughout inland Mendocino County.

This framework strengthens countywide tourism efforts while ensuring dedicated investment in communities that already contribute significantly to Mendocino County's visitor economy.

A stronger inland economy contributes directly to a stronger Mendocino County.

Together, we are strong!