

**NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources  
Report on Attractions Marketing for FY 2019 – FY 2020**

The N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR) oversees the state’s resources for the arts, history, libraries and nature. DNCR is home to the state’s 27 historic sites, seven history museums, two art museums, two science museums, three aquariums and Jennette's Pier, 39 state parks and recreation areas, the N.C. Zoo, the N.C. Symphony, the State Library, the State Archives, the N.C. Arts Council, State Preservation Office, Office of State Archaeology, the African American Heritage Commission, and the NC Land and Water Fund.

Pursuant to Section 8.5 of S.L. 2020-78 (S681), we provide the following Report on Attractions Marketing covering the state attractions within North Carolina’s Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

There is no appropriated marketing budget assigned for the DNCR, making it difficult to build a strategic marketing plan that is as efficient and effective as it could be. All the state attractions depend heavily on non-profit support groups, ticket sales and grants in order to promote their facilities and many of those funding sources are unknown until after media buying cycles have completed. Our state’s tourism marketing division at the EDPNC and Visit NC have marketing investments that are focused on driving visitation from out-of-state visitors, largely to NC State Parks. However, each DNCR state attraction is charged with using a variety of means within their resources to drive attendance and engagement in-state and within North Carolina’s local and regional markets, which are vital to their success. Additionally, many of our sites are located in rural counties, requiring increased effort to build and attract new audiences independent of state tourism partners. Without a marketing budget or even marketing staff in the majority of sites, the agency’s state attractions are limited in their ability to grow visitation and revenue.

For all sites within DNCR, the bulk of marketing investments are around programs, exhibits and special events, as many of those are revenue-driven via ticket sales. Many sites do not have marketing budgets and rely solely on website, social media and local partnerships to communicate their programs. This makes it difficult to build new audiences or increase awareness beyond a known audience.

**A summary of public and private funds spent on marketing for FY 2019 and FY 2020 is below:**

<b>State Attraction</b>	<b>FY19 private</b>	<b>FY19 public</b>	<b>FY20 private</b>	<b>FY20 public</b>
NC Museum of Art	\$ 267,000.00	\$ -	\$ 300,000.00	\$ 1,000.00
NC Museum of Natural Sciences	\$ 55,000.00	\$ -	\$ 60,000.00	\$ -
NC Zoo	\$ 49,248.00	\$ 175,000.00	\$ 120,498.00	\$ 100,000.00
NC Aquariums	\$ 263,950.00	\$ -	\$ 170,950.00	\$ -
Fort Fisher	\$ -	\$ 30,180.00	\$ -	\$ -
Pine Knoll Shores	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 20,989.00	\$ 40,000.00	\$ -
Roanoke Island	\$ 12,213.15	\$ 5,820.57	\$ 40,000.00	\$ -
Jennette's Pier	\$ 47,000.00	\$ -	\$ 25,000.00	\$ -
NC Museum of History	\$ 21,893.00	\$ -	\$ 24,145.00	\$ -
NC Maritime Museums	\$ 5,120.00	\$ -		\$ -

NC Historic Sites	\$ 247,386.00	\$ 29,731.00	\$ -	\$ -
NC Arts Council	\$ 35,000.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
NC State Parks	\$ 7,545.00	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ -
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$ 1,051,355.15</b>	<b>\$ 263,720.57</b>	<b>\$ 785,593.00</b>	<b>\$ 101,000.00</b>

Private funding for marketing is significantly larger than public funding, and overall marketing budgets are minimal for the size and reach of DNCR’s institutions and the citizens they serve. Across the agency, we have achieved audience reach of 13 million people with less than \$1.5 million spent annually, with minimal public funding. As an agency, our reach has increased 44% in 2020 alone with 100% improvement on engagement, with video content showing a 46% increase from the past two years. This data informs future planning efforts for how to best maximize media dollars.

Through a media analysis completed in FY 2019, several intersections of media investments were identified across the agency and in an effort to become more efficient and effective, an outside agency was hired to analyze and combine media investments across shared target markets and audiences for the NC Zoo and Aquarium, specifically. Through that experience, we learned that outside creative production costs and commissions on media buying were infringing on the budget allocations for media placement. Therefore, the creative production work was absorbed internally through DNCR’s production team. Through our internal purchasing positions, we are able to consolidate media buying across the agency and leverage those investments through state contracts for lower rates where more sites can benefit. Additionally, marketing demands and diversity will increase, as many sites expect a slow increase in visitation as health and safety considerations shift operating procedures at public sites.

**USE OF MARKETING FUNDS**

The use of funds for DNCR marketing includes Paid Search advertising, Paid Social media advertising, Digital Display, Print advertising, local Radio and TV, Billboards and Giveaways. The bulk of advertising is being spent online to promote specific programs or events locally, as those are often the only affordable option. Of these, the most effective have been paid search and social media advertising.

**SUCCESS METRICS**

Metrics used to measure effectiveness/reach of current marketing programs for both FY19 and FY20 include:

- Ticket sales to sites, events and exhibitions
- General attendance numbers (when open)
- Online engagement via Google Analytics and eCommerce reports, where applicable
- Impressions through paid advertising on TV, radio, print newspapers and magazines, digital outlets, and social media
- Impressions through earned media from press coverage
- Social media reach and engagement, Facebook promotions for programs
- Email marketing reach and engagement
- Guest surveys

**STATE AGENCY PARTNERSHIPS**

The scope and effectiveness of cooperative and collaborative marketing activities with other State agencies, including EDPNC/Visit NC have been varied. DNCR sites have had some success with Visit NC

programs and their updates on tourism are helpful in planning campaigns. However, several DNCR sites cited difficulty finding links or promotions within the Visit NC website and inclusion in Visit NC’s media co-op is cost-prohibitive for their small budgets.

The best success with marketing efforts includes collaborative campaigns across the agency that all sites participate in, sharing media investments when possible. Partnerships between the NC Zoo and Transportation Museum, Museum of Natural Sciences and NC Aquariums have had great success and there is additional opportunity to develop new partnerships with the NC Museum of Art and NC State Parks. DNCR support with video/editing and social media and media promotion has increased tremendously and has received positive response with reinforcing data.

One area that continues to benefit all DNCR sites is regular presentation of our sites and programs to the staff of the Visit NC Call Center, which is effective in helping them understand and highlight our state attractions. Successful partnerships with the Department of Public Instruction and the NC Business Committee for Education are currently underway to promote and distribute virtual education programs across the state. There is continual brainstorming on shared marketing and outreach opportunities as all DNCR sites are converting their programs to virtual ones and supporting educational efforts around the state through NC Learn.

The pandemic has certainly accelerated this shift, but prior to 2020 there was a paradigm shift from ‘site attendance’ based on physical ticket sales to ‘site engagement’ which includes online programs, virtual educational series, content marketing and attendance. There is continued growth and opportunity online, which is a promising indicator for reopening plans:

**SUMMARY OF ONLINE TRAFFIC AND SUCCESSES:**

<b>Websites</b>	<b>FY 2019 Online Traffic</b>	<b>FY 2020 Online Traffic</b>
DNCR	587,092	776,169
State Libraries	272,941	322,779
Archives	126,639	151,643
African American Heritage Commission	16,446	12,183
Zoo	1,377,652	1,473,229
NCMA	1,584,730	1,183,575
History Museum	412,790	464,807
Science Museum	646,329	447,604
Historic Sites	169,709	313,629
Arts Council	160,822	224,531
NC Symphony	344,337	351,041
State Parks	3,813,699	4,960,004
Aquariums	1,562,159	1,356,034
Tryon Palace	160,561	143,384

Roanoke Island	74,645	28,395
NC Battleship	289,820	268,704
NC Land and Water Fund	14,307	15,288
NC Natural Heritage	24,511	25,351
Transportation museum	242,569	204,651
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,881,758</b>	<b>12,723,001</b>

### **Social Media Channels:**

Across social media networks, we continue to see strong growth from FY19-FY20:

- Facebook Followers: 64% increase
- Facebook Impressions: 47% increase
- Twitter Followers: 30% Increase
- Twitter Impressions: 17% Increase
- Instagram Followers: 49% Increase
- Instagram Impressions: 67% Increase
- YouTube: 146% increase

### **ADDITIONAL FUNDING NEEDS:**

Across all sites, marketing techniques that could be utilized but lack funding include the following:

- Technology upgrades, that would include website development with increased functionality around search and event calendar functions
- Development of mobile app(s)
- Podcasts and innovative, modernized content programming platforms
- YouTube video content (highest area of growth online)
- Equipment to consistently and regularly develop and distribute virtual education programs from all DNCR sites
- Geofencing capabilities
- Beacon and geo-location digital remarketing to visitors
- Statewide advertising and out of home engagement(OOH) like pop-up installations, community murals, storefront takeovers, etc. that go beyond the Triangle
- Airport and City Transit campaigns (in normal times)
- Expanded dynamic billboards targeted to drive market
- Expanded digital campaigns and streaming capabilities
- Increased access to “big data” with expert interpretation and analysis
- Development of a passport-style program that would reward those who visit multiple DNCR sites, as proven successful with NC State Parks
- Branded items for giveaways, contests and promotions
- Media diversity and multi-lingual advertising
- NextGen TV marketing investments

## **CONCLUSION**

In-state appropriated marketing budgets for each region, division or site would help promote many of the stay and “state-cation” travel itineraries being developed with local partners and would spur cross-promotion within DNCR sites that are geographically located in the same area or along similar travel routes. More importantly, a dedicated marketing budget would allow our state attractions to build sustainable audience engagement to increase audience reach and awareness around their trusted brands. With increased funding for marketing DNCR sites, many could increase and diversify their marketing capabilities to better serve and educate, expanding opportunities to utilize open spaces, connect with students and educators and work with additional partners for creative opportunities to serve new communities. Additionally, consolidating media purchases within DNCR administration with support from each site will increase cost-saving opportunities and improve reporting for effectiveness.

Sharing NC’s stories, places, and people is an important and integral function of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. Enriching the state’s cultural landscape and driving economic sustainability and growth from Murphy to Manteo is not only about marketing, but storytelling and contextualizing those stories in a way that builds emotional connections and state pride. North Carolina’s history and landscape continue to change, and DNCR appreciates the opportunity to serve the people of North Carolina, sharing their stories, preserving NC treasures, and contributing to a bright future for North Carolina.