

# RIO BLANCO COUNTY

## TOURISM WORK PLAN



*Photo Credit: Tami Williams*



June 2017

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# **VISION & MISSION STATEMENTS**

## VISION STATEMENT

*Our assets are our people, our Western heritage and our natural resources. These assets are what will strongly attract visitors when actively promoted.*

## MISSION STATEMENT

*To strengthen Rio Blanco County's economy through the development of tourism-related opportunities that will promote the county as a sustainable tourism destination.*



# CORE COMPETENCIES



## CORE COMPETENCIES

*Two towns, Meeker and Rangely - provide the basis for outdoor recreation and activities in this rural county in Northwest Colorado, including the largest Off-Highway Vehicle trail system in the state and access to the best hang-gliding launch in the U.S.. The White River runs through the county offering exceptional fishing, rafting and kayaking opportunities. Rio Blanco County also has an abundance of historic sites and unique cultural offerings.*

# BRAND POSITIONING



## MEEKER, COLORADO

*Nestled in the White River Valley at the doorstep to the Flat Tops Wilderness and White River National Forest, Meeker, Colorado is a quiet town off the beaten path. With its numerous outdoor amenities, annual sheep dog trials and charming downtown, Meeker attracts visitors from around the globe. It is a place where bright minds can spend the morning developing the latest innovations in technology and the afternoons wading in first-class fly fishing streams.*



*Photo Credit: Michelle Cox Photography*



## RANGELY , COLORADO

*A town traditionally know for its strength in oil and gas, there's more to Rangely than oil rigs. With its small town character, trophy big-game hunting, water tank recording studio, as well as miles of slickrock terrain ideal for hiking, mountain biking and rock crawling, there's more than meets the eye in Rangely.*

# SUMMARY

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## WORK PLAN SUMMARY

*The following Work Plan has been developed to move Rio Blanco County forward with a detailed action plan for tourism promotion. Three areas of focus (OHV, Marketing, Grazer, a.k.a. OMG) are separately addressed with a specific plan for each.*

## LEADERSHIP

*Rio Blanco County Economic Development, along with the Chambers of Commerce and Towns, are taking the lead in the tourism promotion initiative. They will develop and maintain collaborative relationships with community stakeholders to ensure a seamless and successful project.*

*Step One - Conduct a work session for each focus area (OMG) to discuss roles, expectations, timeline, budget, goals and outcomes.*

*Leaders identified:*

*OHV - Rio Blanco County*

*Marketing - Chambers of Commerce*

*Grazer - Brock Campbell*

*Step Two - Appropriate individuals from government and the private sector will discuss the budgetary needs and the resources available for funding to implement the tourism initiative.*

*Step Three - Schedule monthly meetings with the three groups (OMG) for accountability and to ensure the Work Plan is on track, as well as provide feedback and input to each group.*

# OBJECTIVES

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- 1. Increase the quantity of tourism business opportunities, producing positive economic development impact to Rio Blanco County.*
- 2. Increase the quality and quantity of consistently-offered activities, events and experiences to attract visitors.*
- 3. Increase the workforce participation rate in Rio Blanco County and provide new job creation generated through tourism.*
- 4. Lower commercial property vacancy rates in the business districts of Rangely and Meeker.*
- 5. Increase the economic impact generated from tourism to enhance the quality of life, draw new residents, and create a more stable economic base.*

# OHV PLAN

## **OHV WORK PLAN**

*Overall goal: Rio Blanco County to be known for the “Best in the West” OHV trail system which will eventually link the communities of Meeker and Rangely.*

### **SHORT TERM GOALS (OVER THE NEXT 6 MONTHS TO 1 YEAR)**

- 1. Complete OHV Tourism Plan*
- 2. Conduct a market/gap analysis to determine additional services needed*
- 3. Create marketing materials for Meeker and Rangely Trails to capitalize on being “OHV Friendly” Communities*
- 4. Establish a volunteer base to promote trail sustainability*
- 5. Conduct two OHV events in 2017*

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# ACTIONS TO ACCOMPLISH SHORT TERM GOALS

## **Goal #1 - Complete OHV Tourism Plan**

**Completion Date:** June, 2017

**Lead Agency:** Rio Blanco County

- *Rio Blanco County will take the lead and identify key stakeholders and community members to form a working committee*
- *Schedule first meeting and form a working committee*
- *Assign other roles and establish a timeline to meet the goals*

## **Goal #2 - Conduct a market/gap analysis to determine additional services needed**

**Completion Date:** December, 2017

**Lead Agency:** Rio Blanco County

- *Identify current services available and assess the gaps of what is lacking, such as RV camping, lodging options, rental services, etc.*
- *Utilize OHV event surveys to develop a report assessing the information and determine options to fill service gaps*
- *Create opportunities and incentives for local businesses to fill service gaps*
- *Create a market/gap analysis report*
- *Develop a plan to increase infrastructure to enhance the OHV visitor experience*
  - » *Interested Partners: OHV Club, Chambers of Commerce, Towns of Meeker and Rangely, and Rio Blanco County Herald Times/Adventure Colorado Magazine*

## **Goal #5 - Create marketing materials for Meeker and Rangely Trails to capitalize on being OHV Friendly Communities**

**Completion Date:** July, 2017

**Lead Agency:** Rio Blanco County

- *Determine marketing materials needed to provide comprehensive information for OHV tourists*
- *Update current, or create new, website to promote trail system and events*
- *Promote as “OHV Friendly Communities” and use as a competitive edge over other popular OHV areas in Colorado, Utah and surrounding states*
  - » *Interested Partners: BLM, USFS, Carly Thomson (Identity Graphics), OHV Club, Chambers of Commerce, and Towns of Meeker and Rangely*



#### **Goal #4 - Establish a volunteer base to promote trail sustainability**

**Completion Date:** September, 2017

**Lead Agency:** Rio Blanco County

- Create a volunteer base to ensure sustainability of the trail system and an ongoing effort to maintain trails
- Promote responsible OHV usage throughout Rio Blanco County
- Explore developing an OHV club to serve Rangely
- Seek out community members/businesses with vested interest in trail system maintenance
- Identify a key person or “ambassador” to take the lead on volunteer coordination

» Interested Partners: RBC, BLM, USFS, CNCC Outdoor Education Program

#### **Goal #5 - Conduct two OHV Events in 2017**

**Completion Date:** August, 2017

**Lead Agency:** Rio Blanco County

- Apply and receive all necessary Federal permits
- Develop a comprehensive list of all event logistics
- Marketing and promotion of events
- Determine a competitive advantage, or event niche, to make each event “stand out”

## **MID-RANGE GOALS (OVER THE NEXT 1-2 YEARS)**

1. Receive BLM approval of Wagon Wheel OHV Trails expansion in the Rangely area
2. Overhaul Wagon Wheel Trails website
3. Create a mobile app for trail promotion
4. Include GPS download capabilities on website
5. Establish sustainable funding and maintenance plans
6. Collaborate and form partnership with CPW/USFS/BLM for future trail options

## **LONG-RANGE GOALS (OVER THE NEXT 2-4 YEARS)**

1. Connect Meeker and Rangely trail systems
2. Build out additional services needed

# MARKETING PLAN

# MARKETING WORK PLAN

*Overall goal: Market Rio Blanco County as a desirable tourism destination*

## SHORT TERM GOALS (OVER THE NEXT 6 MONTHS TO 1 YEAR)

- 1. Complete Marketing Tourism Plan*
- 2. Develop Rio Blanco County tourism marketing materials*
- 3. Increase tour bus and group travel opportunities*
- 4. Enhance tourism promotion and collaboration with the Colorado Tourism Office*

# ACTIONS TO ACCOMPLISH SHORT TERM GOALS

## **Goal #1: Complete Marketing Tourism Plan**

**Completion Date:** June, 2017

**Lead Agency:** Rio Blanco County

- Assign a lead person, schedule first committee meeting and form a working committee
- Assign other roles and establish a timeline to meet the goals

» Interested Partners: Rio Blanco County Herald Times/Adventure Colorado Magazine, Recreation Districts, Historical Society, USFS, Town of Rangely, Brock Campbell, Chambers of Commerce, Rio Blanco County, Special Event Planning Committees

## **Goal #2: Develop Rio Blanco County tourism marketing materials**

**Completion Date:** August, 2017

**Lead Agency:** Rangely Chamber

- Committee to assess, review, and update existing tourism marketing materials, including print and online products
- Determine marketing materials needed to enhance current marketing efforts
- Conduct an analysis of existing tourism related social media marketing platforms to identify sites, activity and effectiveness
- Assess online presence for lodging and tourism service providers
- Identify costs associated with options to increase online marketing presence
- Create marketing packages and itineraries for media and familiarization tours
- Identify relevant travel expo/trade shows for future attendance
- Create budget with line items for marketing to include:
  - » Graphic design
  - » Printing
  - » Web development/design and hosting
  - » Online advertising
  - » Familiarization trips
  - » Media tours
- Identify funding source and determine what marketing materials Meeker and Rangely can cost share

**Goal #3: Increase tour bus and group travel opportunities****Completion Date:** August, 2017**Lead Agency:** Meeker Chamber

- Create an asset list for the County that will be of interest to potential tour groups
- Research bus and tour groups, identifying primary agencies to contact
- Contact the CTO as a resource to provide contact information for tour operator familiarization tours

**Goal #4: Enhance tourism promotion and collaboration with the Colorado Tourism Office (CTO)****Completion Date:** July, 2017**Lead Agency:** Rio Blanco County

- Identify CTO opportunities the Chambers of Commerce are consistently utilizing
- Apply for a CHAMP grant, or Blueprint 2.0 Initiative, to align the Rio Blanco County marketing plan with CTO resources
- Develop a plan for distribution channels of marketing materials regionally and statewide, utilizing Colorado Welcome Centers, CTO social media, and other outlets provided by CTO
- Provide CTO marketing staff with stories, press releases, updates and announcements, videos/photos, Facebook posts, etc. on a consistent basis
- Work with CTO to conduct media familiarization trips

## MID-RANGE GOALS (OVER THE NEXT 1-2 YEARS)

1. Attract Road Scholar and similar type tour groups
2. Increase print media outreach (i.e. AAA En Compass Magazine, Colorado Life Magazine, CTO Coop marketing options, and Front Range newspapers)
3. Social media/blogger outreach to increase social media exposure
4. Contact universities to recruit education study trips
5. Local tourism website collaboration and development including mobile app development
6. Increase event tourism/annual events/event recruitment

## LONG-RANGE GOALS (OVER THE NEXT 2-4 YEARS)

1. Pursue paid and unpaid advertising
2. Create a local, paid marketing position
3. Assist small businesses with effective marketing opportunities utilizing a marketing coop as a cost effective solution
4. Pursue international markets and conduct familiarization tours

## “GRAZER” PLAN

*Grazers are those who are seeking a place only stumbled upon. A diamond in the rough. Much like the explorers of old, they live for the raw emotion that can only be attributed to genuine discovery and adventure. Entrapping their attention away from what is to be and what was, and experiencing life solely through the senses. Seeing only what you can see, hearing only what you hear, and feeling what only you can feel, you will then find a better understanding of humility and contentment. Stopping time, giving purpose and seeing the beauty in the thing we call Life. This is the life found off the beaten path. This is the life in Rio Blanco County.*

# GRAZERS WORK PLAN

*Overall goal: Develop products to engage visitors when traveling to various destinations throughout the County.*

## SHORT TERM GOALS (OVER THE NEXT 6 MONTHS TO 1 YEAR)

- 1. Complete Grazer Marketing Plan*
- 2. Determine how to market to the target demographic*
- 3. Improve visitor experiences through itineraries created to stimulate, educate and provide a “take-away” from their experience*
- 4. Distribute itinerary marketing materials*
- 5. Conduct a market/gap analysis to determine additional services needed for this market*
- 6. Create a budget and identify a sustainable funding source*

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# ACTIONS TO ACCOMPLISH SHORT TERM GOALS

## **Goal #1: Complete Grazer Marketing Plan**

**Completion Date:** June, 2017

**Lead Agent:** Brock Campbell

- Assign a lead person, schedule first committee meeting and form a working committee
- Committee will create tourism itineraries to attract and engage the Grazer type visitor
- Assign other roles and establish a timeline to meet the goals

## **Goal #2: Determine how to market to the target demographic**

**Completion Date:** August, 2017

**Lead Agent:** Brock Campbell

- Identify market demographics through resources such as CTO and Adventure Travel Trade Association
- Identify communities similar to Rio Blanco County and perform a case study on their marketing efforts
- Outline appropriate marketing outlets

## **Goal #3: Improve visitor experiences through itineraries created to stimulate, educate and provide a “take-away” from their grazer experience**

**Completion Date:** August, 2017

**Lead Agent:** Brock Campbell

- Build an event calendar that is continually updated
- Develop itineraries based on all events, attractions, and activities to include:
  - » Day/weekend/week activities
  - » Event/Month/Season activities
  - » Community event activities
  - » Maps of towns and services
  - » Dining and Entertainment options
  - » Historical sites and information
- Identify photography needed
- Develop maps and visitor “checklists”

## **Goal #4: Distribute itinerary marketing materials**

**Completion Date:** December, 2017

**Lead Agent:** Brock Campbell

- Design and disseminate itineraries both in print and online
- Establish distribution strategy, including social media



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**Goal #5: Conduct a market/gap analysis to determine additional services needed for this market**

**Completion Date:** April, 2018

**Lead Agent:** Brock Campbell

- Review services needed for Grazer itineraries
- Identify current services available and assess lacking services
- Create a market/gap analysis report
- Create opportunities and incentives for local businesses to fill service gaps

**Goal #6: Create a budget and identify a funding source**

**Completion Date:** April, 2018

**Lead Agent:** Brock Campbell

- Create a budget to identify funds needed for design, printing and dissemination of marketing materials

**Interested Partners:**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Town of Meeker</li> <li>• Town of Rangely</li> <li>• Rio Blanco County</li> <li>• Historical Society</li> <li>• BLM</li> <li>• USFS</li> <li>• Chambers of Commerce</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CNCC Outdoor Education Program</li> <li>• Water Conservation District</li> <li>• Carly Thomson</li> <li>• Terri Reed</li> <li>• Recreation Districts</li> <li>• Meeker High School Community Improvement Group</li> </ul> |
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## MID-RANGE GOALS (OVER THE NEXT 1-2 YEARS)

1. Create a platform to host a comprehensive event calendar that can easily be updated
2. Perform service training to cross promote Rangely and Meeker “front-line” workers
3. Increase referrals/word of mouth/online reviews to reach target audience
4. Build out a public wifi network in the business districts of Meeker and Rangely

## LONG-RANGE GOALS (OVER THE NEXT 2-4 YEARS)

1. Conduct a marketing analytics/public broadband usage survey
2. Engage in cross-market promotions
3. Develop incentives to encourage longer visits to Rio Blanco County
4. Increase repeat visits
5. Comprehensive Mobile App Development/Website buildout

## CONCLUSION

*Rio Blanco County has a compelling story for tourism; it is a place with deep history and great expanses of backcountry, relatively unknown and untapped, for recreation.*

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## CONCLUSION

*Rio Blanco County is a hidden gem in Colorado poised to be discovered. In the Blueprint 2.0 application, Katelin Cook, Economic Development Coordinator for Rio Blanco County, summed it up by saying:*

*“Tourism offerings in Rio Blanco County are unknown to residents of Colorado. One primary target are Coloradoans, and offering them a new place to raft, hunt, fish, ride and recreate can be a statewide interest. Meeker is 3.5 hours from the I-25 corridor, 30 minutes from I-70, and both Meeker and Rangely are within easy traveling distance for a long weekend trip for Coloradoans. Rio Blanco County is untapped, undiscovered, and will provide less congested and more diverse tourism options than over utilized offerings closer to the Front Range. Rio Blanco County is a special place, with small town charm, and with marketing and promotion, can prove to be a true tourism destination.”*

*Tourism needs to become a larger economic engine for Rio Blanco County. It will help to generate jobs, revenue, taxes, diversify local economies, attract business, and contribute to preserving and celebrating the history, cultural, and natural assets.*

*The intent of the Tourism Promotion Work Plan is to strengthen the tourism sector in Rio Blanco County. It is a “call to action” to work as a team with businesses, nonprofit groups, municipalities, and government agencies throughout the County to achieve success. By taking these important steps, Rio Blanco County’s economy and communities will benefit enormously.*

