

City of Isle of Palms

BRANDING RFP RESPONSE

BLUEION



Thank you for including us in this conversation.

Having partnered with the Charleston Area Visitors Bureau for over two decades, we have been more than observers of our region's growth—we have been its architects. We're excited to bring our 26-years in mastery of tourism marketing to the Isle of Palms, ensuring the island's new brand direction **honors its heritage while setting the stakes for a bright future.**



Our unique perspective.

Throughout our 25 years in business, we've been fortunate to partner with a variety of brands focused on place-making, community development, visitor outreach, and tourism marketing. Through these collaborations, we've built a unique process that's led to successful launches of marketing campaigns, digital platforms, and brands.

During our two decades-long partnership with the Charleston Area Visitors and Convention Bureau, we've helped elevate the area during its ascent to a top international destination. In addition to building and supporting the official travel website, we have developed unique microsites and campaigns for a variety of visitor segments, including the development of custom itinerary, mapping, and other trip planning tools. **These projects require working closely alongside local government and municipalities, digging deep to ensure their unique needs are represented within the larger Charleston brand.**

More recently, we've collaborated with a variety of organizations throughout the Southeast (and beyond) that are focused on utilizing outdoor and recreation-focused assets to strengthen their communities, promote a desire to protect and conserve what makes these places unique, and build stronger, more connected citizens.

No matter how different all the places we've worked with since have been—urban or rural, regional or local, historic or burgeoning—our approach has stayed rooted in the same guiding principle:

Every exceptional place has a deep, resonant story—a unique narrative that's rooted in its landscape, culture, and people. And it's our job and joy to reveal that true essence.

We're excited to bring this experience to the Isle of Palms branding project, exploring and revealing the magic that's inherent to the town—a charm that draws new visitors and residents year after year.

Thanks again for reaching out.

BLUEION



BLUE ION HAS 26 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE DEVELOPING:

Brand strategy, storytelling, design, marketing, and interactive platforms for destinations, regions, and cities.

Our proposal is organized in the following sections:

Project Management & Stakeholder Engagement

Our Approach

- 01 Discovery, Research, and Insights
- 02 Brand Messaging and Storytelling
- 03 Brand Identity and Visual Direction
- 04 Strategic Brand Implementation

Proposed Budget and Timeline

Relevant Clients and Case Studies

Firm Background and Project Team

Client References



ISLE OF PALMS | RFP RESPONSE

Project Management & Stakeholder Engagement



Our Experience

We pride ourselves on fostering engagement and collaboration among diverse voices to find common ground. Our brand strategy work often requires collaborating closely with our client's communities, ranging from team members, customers, donors, boards and trustees, and other stakeholder groups. We've navigated complex stakeholder groups to deliver transformational branding and marketing initiatives in many recent projects including:

01

COUNTIES AND MUNICIPALITIES

Our ongoing work with Explore Charleston requires deft relationship building with business owners, city leaders, and legislators, while our recent development of a visitation brand for 18 counties across South-Southeastern Ohio required large scale collaboration with each county CVB, key hospitality figures, and regional subject matter experts.

02

LARGE BOARDS AND MISSION CHANGE

Whether shepherding a complete rebrand for a lowcountry conservation nonprofit alongside its 30+ trustees, or guiding an undersung arts foundation through a strategic re-positioning, we're skilled in working with the passionate boards behind mission-driven brands.

03

HIGH-PROFILE BRANDING AND COMMUNICATIONS LAUNCHES

When Charleston's biggest cultural institutions went through major launches, renovations, and rebrands, they turned to us to help tell stories of how art, creativity, and history have shaped our city and our nation. From the Gibbes to The International African American Museum, and a current project to rebrand the old Citadel property in the heart of downtown, our firm has been trusted to shepherd local heavy-hitters through this soul-searching process.

Engagement Best Practices

These projects (and others) have led us to establish several best practices that we will bring to the table if selected for the project:

Based on two decades of collaboration with the Explore Charleston team, multiple meetings and presentations to the ATAX committee and city leadership, we have a firm understanding of the different perspectives and opinions of the various stakeholders.

This allows us to tailor our approach to each group, and move quickly to recommend the best engagement format.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR UNIQUE STAKEHOLDER DYNAMICS

Early definition of who has a voice vs a vote at key decision-making moments will help streamline the process—from presenting concepts to gaining approvals, to launching into execution in the most efficient and effective way.

ALIGNMENT ON “VOICE” VS “VOTE”

The process of a rebrand is typically very exciting for stakeholder groups—and they’re usually eager to see progress. We will help educate your stakeholders on the value of branding and our process, and share intended outcomes and timeline considerations. Putting early expectations in place is essential for building trust in the process, and helping each stakeholder realize their own role in advancing the project.

EARLY EXPECTATIONS & EDUCATION



Proposed Roles & Responsibilities

Project Leader / Champion

We recommend nominating an energetic and engaged project manager to serve as our main point of contact. This person will be the in-house expert on the project and keep things running smoothly. They'll coordinate any meetings, reviews, gathering of materials, etc., and be the main recipient of our regular status updates (over email and in our project management tool, Collab).

Project Executive Team

While the ATAX committee will serve as the first official review and signoff of the brand direction, we also recommend organizing a small group of individuals to serve as an internal project executive team.

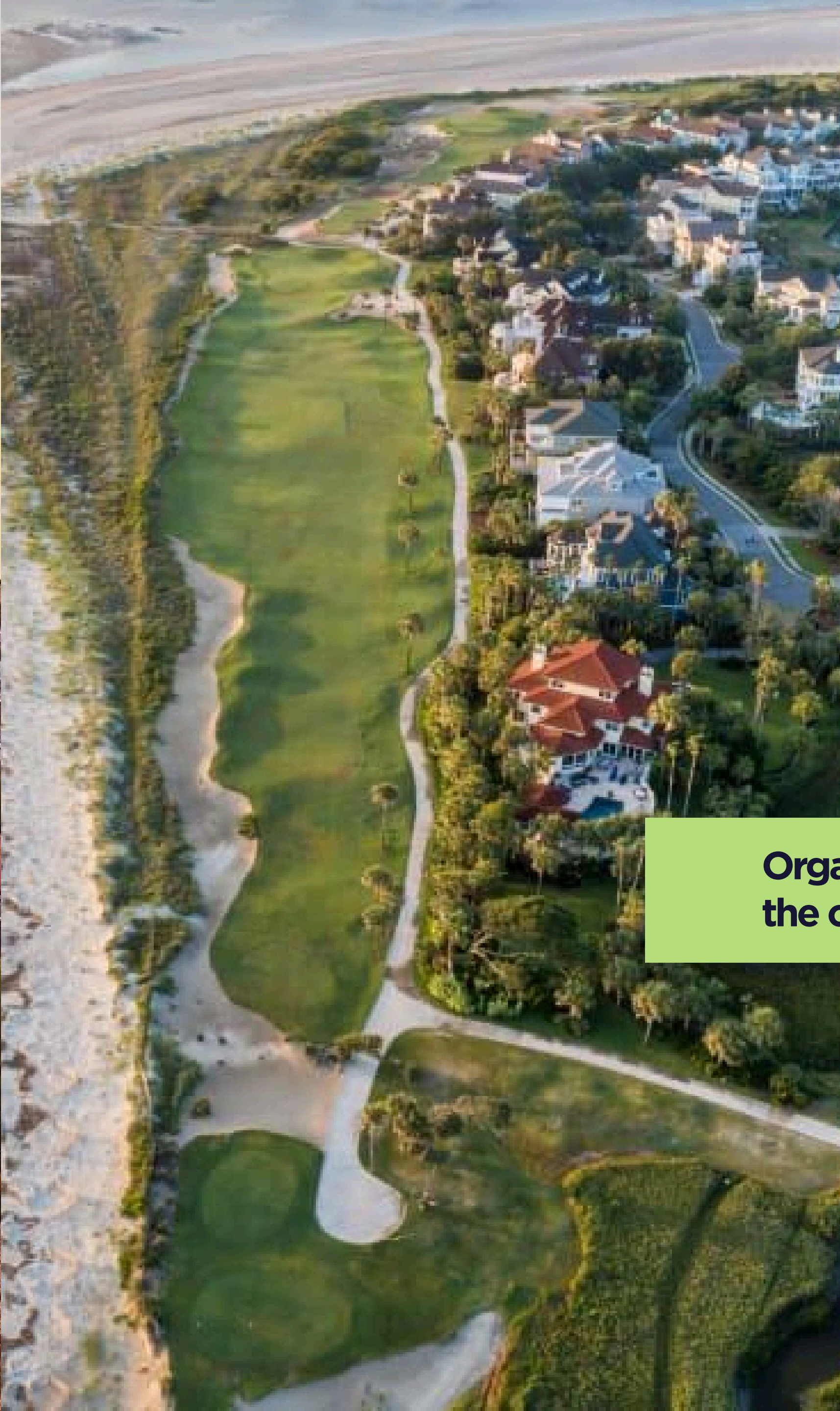
This group should have vested interest in the new brand and intimate knowledge of the current brand.

These individuals will have a critical role in shaping the brand, offering unique insights, and fresh ideas. They'll also help champion the branding work and the final product within the larger stakeholder group.

Project Stakeholder Groups

We'll look to engage a large cross section of your community in our discovery phase, likely spanning property owners / executive team, condo owners, longtime guests, local community leaders (real estate, hospitality, city agencies), and team members.

These voices will help steer the project, but are not all required in blessing incremental progress—or the final outcome. Together, we'll decide who among these stakeholders needs to give those important approvals along the way versus simply sharing their unique insights early-on.



STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Communication & Project Management

We are big believers in frequent and thorough communication, and you can expect to hear from us often—especially during the early days. We track our progress via weekly statuses, and keep tabs on the project at large via Collab (our project management platform).

Blue Ion will be the lead project manager for this initiative: taking responsibility to ensure the project is done on time and on budget. We will lead throughout the project and help with:

Project Management

Ongoing weekly project management: reporting on projects, status, scheduling, collaboration, and communication.

Organizing and leading key meetings and gatherings for the core team, stakeholders, and partners.

Budget and Scope

Keeping track of budget and working through scope changes when applicable.



ISLE OF PALMS | RFP RESPONSE

Our Approach



OUR PROCESS

Revealing the Brand

01

Discovery,
Research, and
Insights

02

Brand
Messaging and
Storytelling

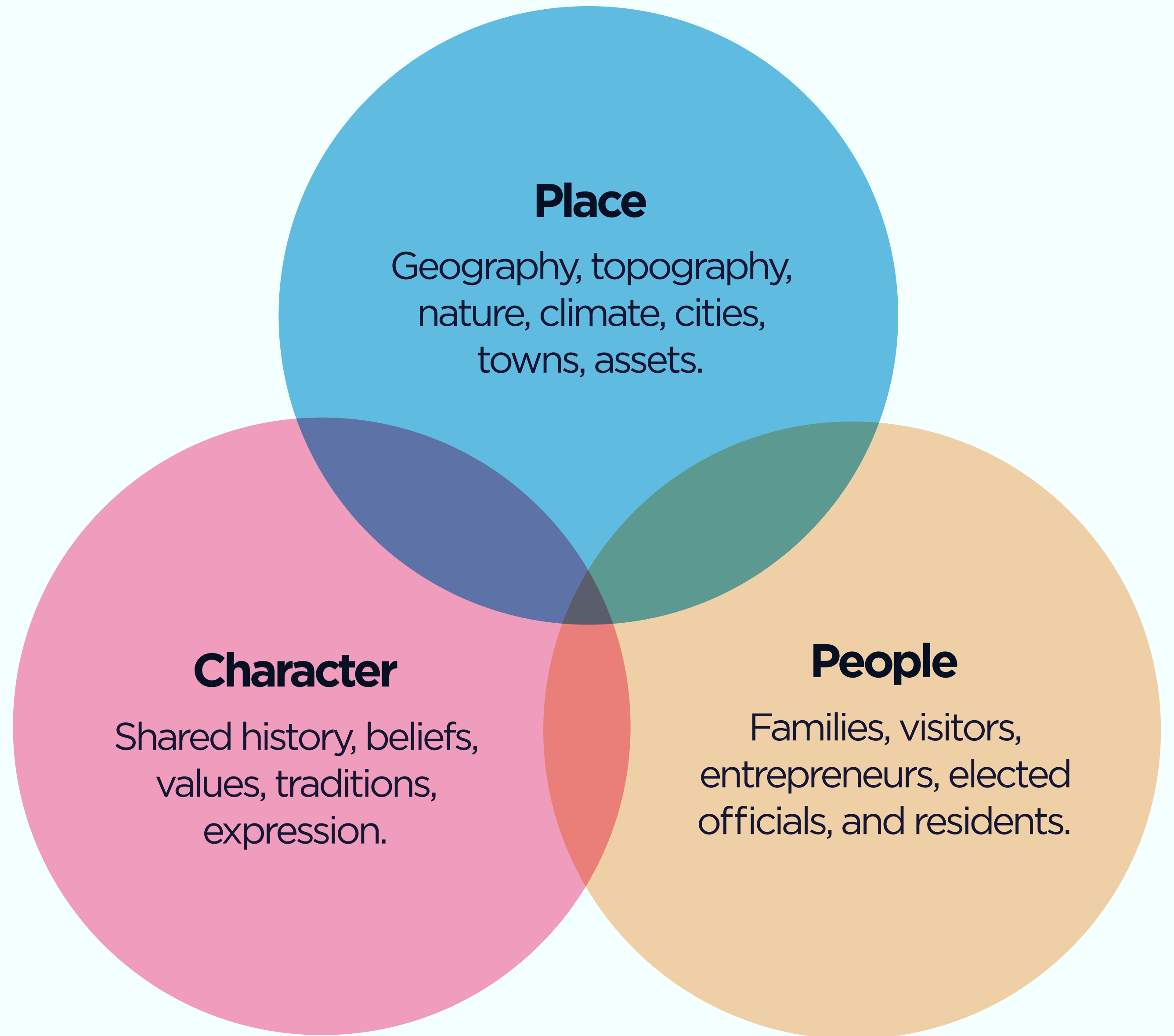
03

Brand Identity
and Visual
Direction

04

Brand
Launch
Guidance

Branding Place



ISLE OF PALMS | RFP RESPONSE

Discovery, Research & Insights



Discovery, Research, and Insights

Collaborating on your brand direction.

Given our 26 years of collaboration with Explore Charleston and its municipal partners, we will be able to quickly move from project kickoff to engaging key stakeholders in our initial discovery process. Proposed tasks as part of this initial phase include:

Project Kickoff and Insight Gathering

Kickoff meeting with relevant Isle of Palms project executives and Blue Ion project team. We'll have an in-depth discussion about tasks, timeline, and early branding instincts.

Interviews, Surveys, and Perception Analysis

Blue Ion will lead up to 10 1:1 interviews and surveys across a variety of internal and external stakeholders, partners, and City employees. Early ideas for interviewees include:

- Members of the City Council or ATAX committee
- Frequent family visitors or repeat guests to relevant resort, hotel, and vacation rental properties
- Local business owners or community leaders
- Relevant Charleston Area CVB marketing staff
- Relevant Wild Dunes marketing staff

Market Research, Audits, and Competitive Analysis

Marketing and Materials Audits

Audit and review all existing programs, strategic/comprehensive plans provided by the City, primary and secondary market research, previous marketing campaigns, OTA and review data, and more.

Benchmarking

Review compelling brand visuals and messaging from your existing competitive set and aspirational destinations.

Data Analysis

Blue Ion will use its connections with the Charleston Area CVB and the College of Charleston Office of Tourism Analysis to avail itself of all relevant data related to short- and long-term visitation data, vacation rental trends, aggregate-level STR analysis, and more.



Key Deliverable: The Strategy Brief

We'll synthesize our audits and discovery work into a set of initial insights, indicating their implications on the city's updated brand position and premise. This is delivered in a collaborative workshop discussion and a reporting document we call the *Strategy Brief*.

Key components of this deliverable include:

A report summarizing all insights and detailing all aspects of our discovery, audits, and insights, which we'll also discuss in a working meeting.

- High level brand audit findings
- Key discovery insights and implications
- Analysis of internal discovery and external research

The most critical component of this deliverable?

We'll share an early central theme (the Brand Premise) that sets the direction for all positioning, storytelling, and marketing.

A brand strategy workshop (ideally with the ATAX committee) where we will review:

- Discovery implications on the brand's evolved direction.
- Target audience definition.
- Redefined brand position and purpose.
- An early theme for the brand's core premise, key message points, and brand voice.
- Strategic recommendations for complementary marketing & communications.

An executive summary will accompany this review to satisfy the stated RFP requirements.



ISLE OF PALMS | RFP RESPONSE

Brand Messaging & Storytelling



Brand Messaging and Story Development

Bringing your story to life.

One of the most important steps in our process is crafting the brand story. This is a conceptual piece of writing that brings the brand premise and positioning to life, sets the tone for all creative and marketing efforts that follow, and serves as the foundation of all brand extensions. Key deliverables for this phase of the project will include:

The Brand Story

Delivered in a creative writing format, this is the story of the brand and a statement of purpose and belief. The brand story sets the tone for all marketing materials and efforts that follow.

Check-in moment: The review of the brand messaging direction is a critical moment to get buy-in before moving into the identity stage. We recommend a presentation to at least the project executive team.

Messaging Toolkit

Building on the brand story, we'll develop an additional suite of messaging (the "toolkit") for your internal teams and regional stakeholders to use across various touchpoints. Toolkit deliverables include:

For internal purposes: an updated organization vision statement and "about us" messaging. This would be a more creative and concise version of any current "elevator speech" typically found in topline messaging materials.

For external purposes: Destination marketing messaging points to creatively highlight key community assets, character, and preferred family-friendly positioning.



ISLE OF PALMS | RFP RESPONSE

Brand Identity



Brand Identity

Developing the visual articulation of your brand platform.

Our collaborative creative process is informed by the approved brand research, strategy, and story. The brand identity is a visual articulation of the brand positioning, and provides a structure that serves as a guide for all visual municipal and destination communications.

Key steps and deliverables in this phase include:

Development of the Isle of Palms Visual Identity

Development of a new core brand identity (logo), official city seal, palette (textures and patterns, graphics, illustration style), and overall visual approach for the brand.

Blue Ion will prepare a minimum of three (3) distinct creative paths for discussion and collaborate with the project team to choose and refine a final version.

The process includes initial sketches / vector review, final vector review, and color review.

Designing for Multiple Departments and Uses

We will ensure that the new brand system is flexible, allowing for usage across all municipal departments. Throughout our process, we will show and consider:

- Potential applications for use in various municipal departments.
- Potential applications for use in city-specific communications vs DMO usage and external marketing channels.

Check-in moment: Blue Ion recommends a version of the branding presentation be prepared as a workshop with the city council to share the short list of options.



Key Deliverable: Brand Creative Direction

We'll work through a conceptual design exercise to show the new brand brought to life through marketing platforms, collateral, photography recommendations, and more.

Creative concepts in this presentation typically include:

- Direction for a new destination website, including potential UI elements, interactive modules, type and photography pairings, and navigation structure.
- Suggested updates to official city documents, vehicles, signage, and wayfinding elements.
- Marketing materials such as social media posts, newsletter templates, and other campaign concepts.
- Animation ideas that bring the brand to life with dynamic movement for usage in video, interactive applications, advertising, and displays.

Note that these are conceptual designs meant to provide inspiration and direction. They do not include detailed mechanical files for specific elements.

Wrapping Up the Creative Phase: Your Brand Toolkit

Once the core identity and conceptual brand direction has been approved, Blue Ion will provide a final brand toolkit and guidelines document for all internal and external use.

In addition to the creative guidelines, this document will incorporate all approved positioning, story, messaging, and an organized repository of all vector assets, colors, fonts, etc.



ISLE OF PALMS | RFP RESPONSE

Launch and Implementation



Launching the Brand

Supporting the brand rollout and marketing strategy.

A key step in the creation of a new brand is bringing it to life through the platforms and channels where your target audiences spend their time. We'll help set foundational pieces of the rollout strategy in place and work collaboratively with your stakeholders to consider all core components of creatively and strategically launching the brand.

In place of a long, sprawling text document delivered at the close of the project, Blue Ion will lead focused discussions and working sessions to develop a comprehensive strategy and assign clear responsibilities for the rollout.

These sessions and plan modules will include:

- Crafting an overall launch strategy.
- Considerations for an internal launch, local community launch, and external destination marketing launch.
- Alignment on usage of core story and key messages.
- Develop core Owned, Earned, Paid Media & Experience tactics.
- Set realistic measures in place for reporting and measuring rollout reception.
- Create an overall rollout timeline, expectations, and assignments for the project team.

Collaboration With Explore Charleston

As part of this working plan, we'll ensure that your destination marketing strategy complements - rather than competes with - the Explore Charleston marketing approach.



ISLE OF PALMS | RFP RESPONSE

Proposed Budget and Timeline



Proposed Project Budget

KICKOFF & STRATEGIC DIRECTION	BUDGET
Pre-project Discovery and Project Kickoff	\$4,000
Up to 10 1:1 Interviews With Relevant Stakeholders	\$4,000
Strategy Brief Development and Presentation to Committee	\$6,000
SUBTOTAL	\$14,000

BRAND MESSAGING	BUDGET
Central Copy / Brand Story	\$6,000
Vision, About, and Campaign Messaging	\$4,000
SUBTOTAL	\$10,000

BRAND IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT	BUDGET
Full Identity Process	\$9,000
Materials Direction	\$5,000
Brand Guidelines	\$1,500
SUBTOTAL	\$15,500

BRAND LAUNCH & IMPLEMENTATION	BUDGET
Lead Overall Project, Coordination	\$2,500
Final Council / Committee Presentations	\$2,000
SUBTOTAL	\$4,500

PROJECT MANAGEMENT / PROJECT LEADERSHIP	BUDGET
Lead Overall Project, Coordination	\$2,500
Final Council / Committee Presentations	\$2,000
SUBTOTAL	\$4,500

PROJECT TOTAL	\$50,000
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Draft Project Timeline

The below chart reflects a vendor selection by late May, with a project kickoff no later than mid-June, 2026. We recommend allocating at least 6 months to go through the full strategy, writing, and branding process. This accounts for stakeholder inputs, several rounds of reviews, and gives everyone breathing room to produce their best work. We've included some buffer to account for any delays, additional presentations or stakeholder reviews.

This schedule allows for an official brand launch in the early 2027, assuming new marketing campaigns and materials are ready to support both local community rollouts and any regional campaigns.

PROJECT TASKS	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Discovery and Strategy Direction	Active	Active	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed
Brand Messaging and Storytelling	Completed	Active	Active	Active	Completed	Completed	Completed
Brand Visual Identity	Completed	Completed	Active	Active	Active	Completed	Completed
Brand Launch Plan Development	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	Active	Active	Completed
Initial Project Completion	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	Active	Active

OUR WORK

Placemaking and Storytelling Is In Our DNA



ABOUT BLUE ION

Relevant Client Partnerships



Currently engaged in a project to elevate the visibility and sustainability of WNC's creative economy through a new regional brand, creative assets, and comprehensive promotional strategy.

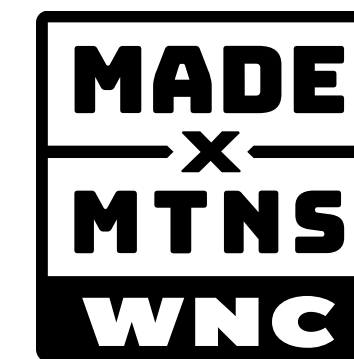


Over two decades of branding, storytelling, marketing, and web development for America's #1 small city.



A complete revamp of a nonprofit conservancy organization, including their name, mission, and visual identity.

OTHER RELEVANT CLIENTS





CASE STUDY

Explore Charleston

Explore *Charleston*

Bringing visitors to Charleston and supporting the region's robust hospitality industry through a wide array of marketing platforms and engagement strategies.

Project Scope

Brand strategy, brand story and messaging, brand design, ongoing digital marketing, website and application development.

CASE STUDY

Explore Charleston

THE NEED

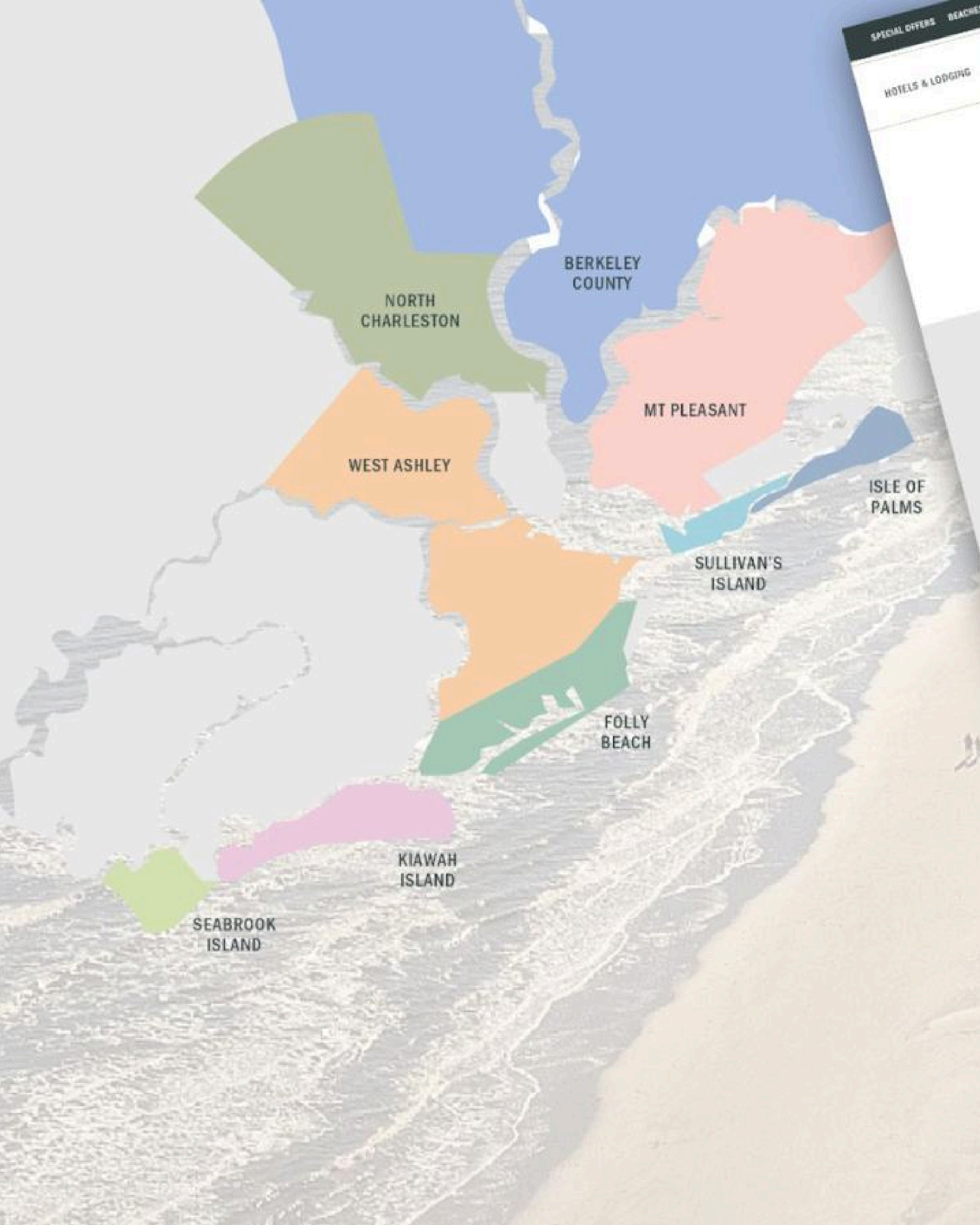
Across our 20+ year partnership, our role supporting the CACVB has grown right alongside the DMO—and the region. What began as an exercise in branding and developing the core travel website has evolved into a strategic relationship where we act as an extension of the organization to support its marketing, sales, and promotional activities for visitors, members, and the local community.

OUR APPROACH

While continuing to support the official travel website, we've developed microsites and campaigns for unique segments including Families, Weddings, Black Charleston, and more. We manage \$1M+ in digital media spend across platforms and conversion types.

Most recently, we've led the CACVB team on a corporate messaging exercise to better articulate its true purpose and significant local impact, which we'll soon share on a new corporate website.





UNIQUE AREAS TO EXPLORE

The Charleston area is home to a handful of unique places nestled in and around the peninsula. Varied in sights and style, and each offering special things to see and do, these are destinations in their own right. Get to know some of the lovely little communities that make up this special destination here.



North Charleston

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet. Vestibulum eu augue leo. Phasellus aliquet cumsum mi sed porta gravida.

[VIEW DETAILS](#)

- NEIGHBORHOODS
- Park Circle
 - London Square
 - Dollar Six Acres
 - Navarro Lake



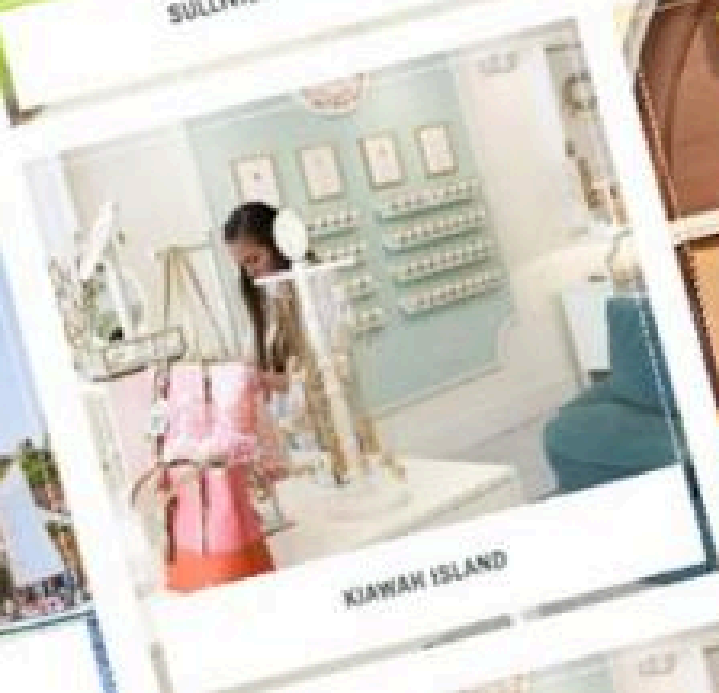
ISLE OF PALMS



SULLIVAN'S ISLAND



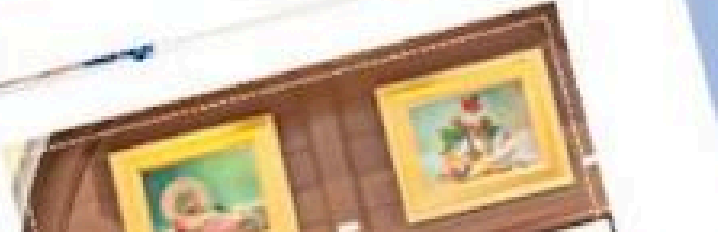
SEABROOK ISLAND



KIAWAH ISLAND



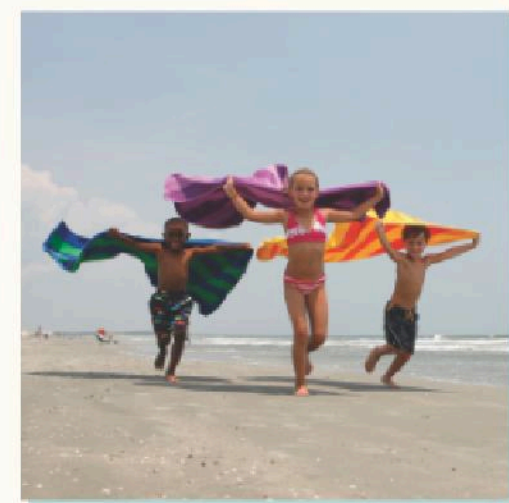
MT. PLEASANT



PLAN YOUR CHARLESTON BEACH TRIP

FLIGHTS NATURE & WILDLIFE EVENTS & FESTIVALS BEACH RULES ACCESSIBILITY

It's time to kick back and relax – not get bogged down in the details. As your coastal getaway approaches, we'll make the planning easy.



Itineraries For Every Traveler

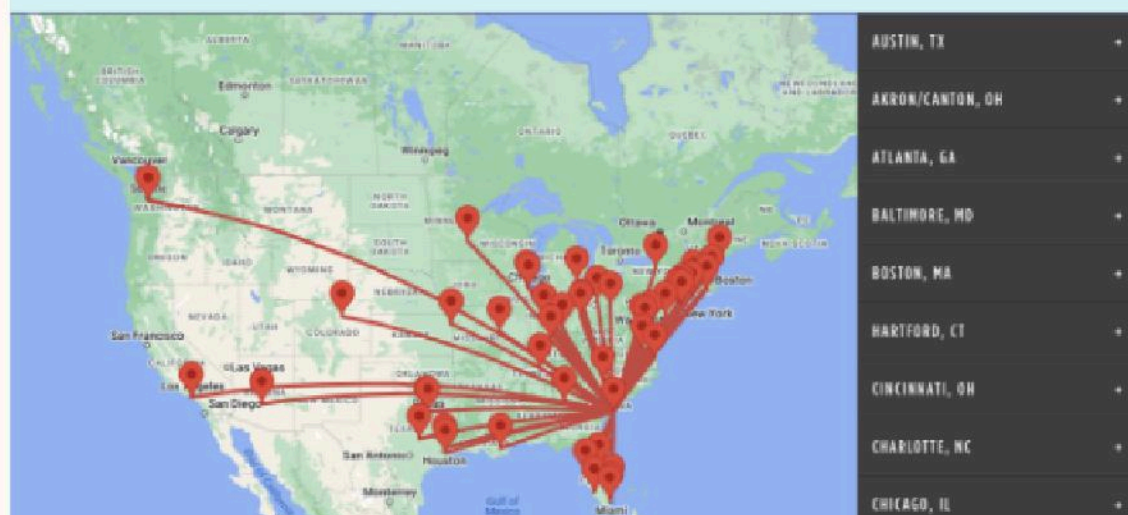
Whether your crew is full of sunbathers or adventure seekers, shell hunters or seafood fanatics, follow these plans to get started.

START PLANNING



JUST ONE FLIGHT AWAY

With direct air service from many major cities, arriving in Charleston is a breeze.



- AUSTIN, TX
- AKRON/CANTON, OH
- ATLANTA, GA
- BALTIMORE, MD
- BOSTON, MA
- HARTFORD, CT
- CINCINNATI, OH
- CHARLOTTE, NC
- CHICAGO, IL

SOUTH CAROLINA'S BEST BEACH RESORTS

Our beach resorts have it all.

VIEW BEACH RESORTS ON: [Isle of Palms](#) [Kiawah Island](#)



FEATURED BEACH VACATION OFFERS

The Cottages on Charleston Harbor

2 Bedroom Waterfront Cottage with Hammock

1/2

LEARN MORE

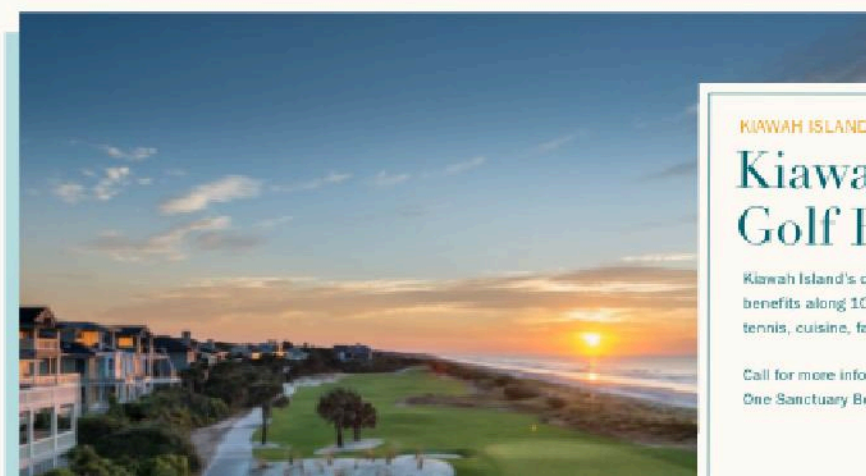
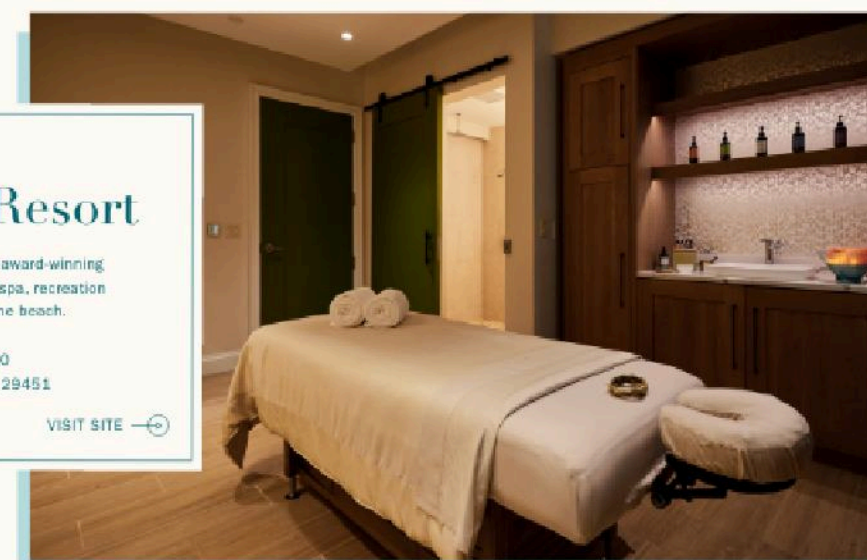
ISLE OF PALMS BEACH RESORTS

Wild Dunes Resort

Experience Charleston's island resort, an award-winning oceanfront paradise offering golf, tennis, spa, recreation programs, restaurants and miles of pristine beach.

Call for more information: (888) 845-8920
5757 Palm Boulevard | Isle of Palms, SC 29451

VISIT SITE



KIAWAH ISLAND BEACH RESORTS

Kiawah Island Golf Resort

Kiawah Island's official resort. Resort guests enjoy exclusive benefits along 10 miles of beach and award winning golf, tennis, cuisine, family activities. Call for free guide.

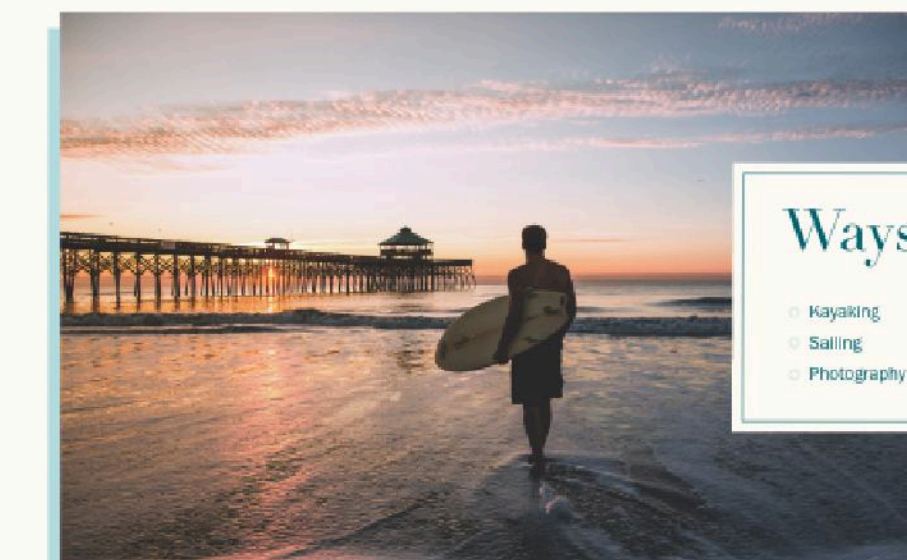
Call for more information: (843) 768-2121
One Sanctuary Beach Dr. | Kiawah Island, SC 29455

VISIT SITE

FOLLY BEACH

Discover a carefree escape that runs on surf, sand, and soul

Affectionately known as "The Edge of America," this eclectic community is full of personality. Home to the East Coast's second-largest fishing pier, the best waves on the South Carolina coast and colorful local establishments, Folly Beach has won the hearts of both locals and visitors alike.

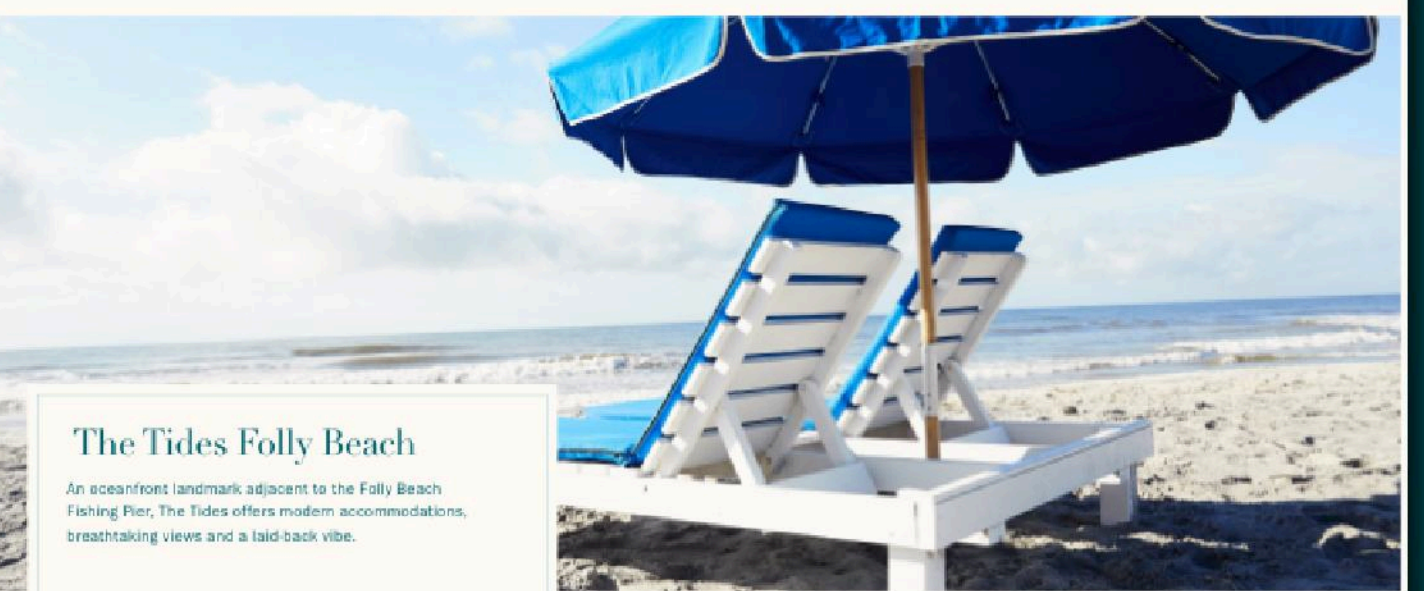


Ways to Explore

- Kayaking
- Sailing
- Photography
- Fishing
- Surfing
- Paddleboarding

WHERE TO STAY

From the iconic Tides resort to charming cottages full of character, Folly has the perfect place for every surf and sun worshiper.



The Tides Folly Beach

An oceanfront landmark adjacent to the Folly Beach Fishing Pier, The Tides offers modern accommodations, breathtaking views and a laid-back vibe.

HISTORY loves COMPANY

See Charleston through the eyes of people who love to call our city home.

WHAT MAKES CHARLESTON GREAT? ▶

CHECK-IN
11/07/2019

CHECK-OUT
SELECT A DATE

TYPE
ALL LODGING

FIND HOTEL RATES ▶

Discover Charleston's African American Heritage

Hear the evolving narratives of those who share their ancestral legacies as evidence of their determination to claim their rightful place in the annals of the region.

VISIT THE SITE ▶

Hotels

Choose from a menu of Charleston's best historic inns, beachside resorts, hotels, beach rentals and more. All perfectly situated to help you explore the wonderful sights and...



Luxurious Hotel Lobbies



Top 18 Sunset Views from Charleston's Award-Winning Hotels



7 Best Beach Hotels in Charleston

Things to See & Do

Whether you're looking to immerse yourself in a rich coastal culture, hop on a tour, splash in the waves or find your bliss in a spa oasis, you'll find what you are looking for here in Charleston.

LEARN MORE ▶



9 Secret Alleyways in Charleston

LEARN MORE ▶



Discover Your Ideal Guided Charleston Tour

LEARN MORE ▶



9 Local Items to Savor in Charleston

LEARN MORE ▶

Featured Itineraries



FEATURED ITINERARY
Family Playcation

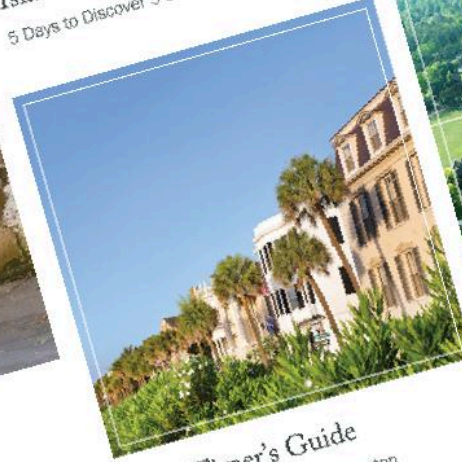
Embark on adventures of historic proportions. Come face to face with birds of prey. Splash and play in a pool with spectacular waterfront views. Make long-lasting family memories with this family-friendly getaway.



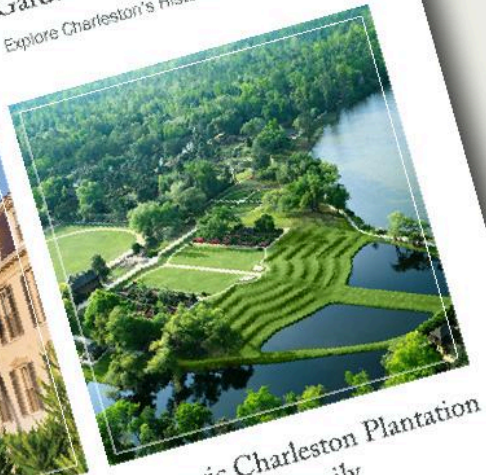
Island Hopping Adventure
5 Days to Discover 5 Beautiful Beach Towns



Garden Party
Explore Charleston's Historic Hidden Gardens



First Timer's Guide
A Newcomer's Guide to Charleston



Historic Charleston Plantation Trip for the Family
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur

Current Charleston Area Openings

Our thoughts and prayers are with everyone affected by COVID-19. We are very thankful for your ongoing support, and we are especially grateful to the public officials throughout the state of South Carolina for their hard work and guidance.

READ ARTICLE ▶



Travelers Guide

EXPLORE BLACK CHARLESTON

INTERACTIVE MAP PLAN YOUR TRIP HISTORY & CULTURE

Local RESOURCES

We're grateful to these organizations for their time, talents, and vision in helping us share the story of Charleston's Black experience. Explore these resources for more on local history and ongoing efforts to strengthen and celebrate the Black community.

ATLANTIC WORLDS

INTERNATIONAL AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM

EVERY INSTITUTE OF AFRO-AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

GULLAH GEECHEE CULTURAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR

BARBADOS AND THE CAROLINAS LEGACY FOUNDATION

THE SLAVE DWELLING PROJECT

CHARLESTON HERITAGE FEDERATION

AFRICAN AMERICAN SETTLEMENT COMMUNITY HISTORIC COMMISSION

THE GREEN BOOK OF SOUTH CAROLINA

SOUTH CAROLINA AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY CALENDAR

GETTING HERE

Making travel arrangements? The Charleston International Airport offers direct flights from several major cities.

LEARN MORE

REQUEST A BLACK CHARLESTON GUIDE EXPLORE CHARLESTON

EXPLORE BLACK CHARLESTON

INTERACTIVE MAP PLAN YOUR TRIP HISTORY & CULTURE

EXPERIENCE the SOUL of Charleston

Constantly evolving, Charleston is a living, breathing testament to the stories, landmarks, and lived experiences of the Black community. This rich tapestry and its full, unabridged history account for much of the area's singular character. After all, the story of Charleston truly comes alive through its people—the ways they've shaped the city's past and continue to inspire its future.

Today, Charleston's Black community continues to transform our cultural landscape. Here, you'll find countless ways to experience these vibrant and vital contributions, from the stage to the table to the steeple and beyond.

REQUEST A BLACK CHARLESTON GUIDE EXPLORE CHARLESTON

Unforgettable ADVENTURES AWAIT

Black-owned businesses and cultural landmarks populate every corner of the Charleston area. Use our interactive map to plot your itinerary.

EXPLORE THE MAP

PLAN YOUR TRIP

Tours & ATTRACTIONS

Ready to dive in? Organized tours and experiences offer some of the best opportunities to take in the city's history, culture, and character. As you plan your trip, consider booking a guided excursion or adding visits to some of the city's countless significant sites to your itinerary.

Find A HOTEL

Find the right homebase for your stay. From the downtown historic district to North Charleston, our beach communities, and beyond, Charleston has no shortage of inviting accommodations. Peruse this list to find the right fit for you or your family.

EXPLORE BLACK CHARLESTON

INTERACTIVE MAP PLAN YOUR TRIP HISTORY & CULTURE

Black Owned CHARLESTON

We're shining a spotlight on our city's extraordinary range of Black-owned businesses. These shops, restaurants, and experiences are drivers of Charleston's growth, vital to our character, and constant catalysts for social change.

EXPLORE

Order Online menufy

Black Owned CHARLESTON

Whether you follow these guides or use them as inspiration, our curated itineraries can help make the most of your visit. Immerse yourself in Charleston's Black experience, from soul-stirring music and iconic cuisine to landmarks and cultural sites alive with history and heritage.

EXPLORE THE MAP

Charleston ITINERARIES

LOOKING FOR MORE?

Request an Explore Black Charleston Guide

REQUEST A GUIDE

EXPLORE CHARLESTON

KING STREET Flower Baskets

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Mauris consequat, nisi et enim pretium viverra. Quis ac interdum justo, vitae gravida erat.

SPONSOR A BASKET

SELECT A BLOCK TO VIEW SPONSORSHIPS

KING STREET

CANNON ST

MORRIS ST

RADCLIFF ST

WARREN ST

VANDERHORST ST

CALHOUN ST

GEORGE ST

LIBERTY ST

WENTWORTH ST

BEAUFAIN ST

SPONSORED BY
M. Dumas and Sons, Inc.

BASKET 1



IN HONOR OF
The Ladies of Wentworth (Ann A.,
Dahl D., Angela D., Kathleen E.,
Carolyn H., Angela K., Carolyn M.,
Martha M., Georgia M., Jackie M.,
Miranda M., Maria P., Therese S.,
Kim S., Laurie T.)

BASKET 2



1022088

This Basket is Available.

SPONSOR THIS BASKET

BASKET 1



This Basket is Available.

SPONSOR THIS BASKET

BASKET 2



1022088

BASKET 1



This Basket is Available.

SPONSOR THIS BASKET

BASKET 2



This Basket is Available.

SPONSOR THIS BASKET

1022061

BASKET 1



IN HONOR OF
Andrew, Ann, Cara & Grace Barrett

BASKET 2



IN HONOR OF
Andrew, Ann, Cara & Grace Barrett

1022060

MARKET ST

CLIFFORD ST

QUEEN ST



CASE STUDY

Ohio's Rolling Hills

Building a visitation brand for 18 counties across Appalachian Ohio.

Project Scope

18-county stakeholder engagement, brand naming, brand story, identity development, marketing strategy and action plan, brand guidelines development.

CASE STUDY

Ohio's Rolling Hills

THE NEED

With a grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission's Arise program, the 18-County COG team at the Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia (ORCA) charged us with [creating a visitation brand for this special swath of the country](#), giving us the freedom to explore all that makes it unique and worth visiting.

OUR APPROACH

In addition to the ORCA team, we engaged locals, area experts, special interest brands, and each of the 18 county's visitors bureaus. The entire brand was built with these folks, their communities and needs in mind.

Ultimately, the region's essence—the sense of place only felt here—comes down to two key elements: the special nature of the land (its geography, natural resources, and built environment) and its people (who are proud, connected, and resourceful).





Ohio's
**ROLLING
HILLS**

**Wander Where
You Belong**



Memories Made Together

in Monroe County



Find Your Nature Break

in Athens County



Discover Southern Ohio's Family Favorites

in Washington County

History & Culture



OHIO'S ROLLING HILLS

Explore Southern Ohio's rich history and culture.

Family Fun



OHIO'S ROLLING HILLS

From parks to museums and more, explore Southern Ohio's vast family-friendly destinations.
OHIOSROLLINGHILLS.COM

Great Outdoors



OHIO'S ROLLING HILLS

Uncover the best of Southern Ohio's great outdoors and let every path lead to something new to explore.
OHIOSROLLINGHILLS.COM

OHIO'S ROLLING HILLS



Explorer Guide

Discover Ohio's Rolling Hills and collect a stamp to commemorate each adventure along the way.





CASE STUDY

Conservancy of The Sea Islands



CONSERVANCY
OF THE
SEA ISLANDS

Our two year collaboration was rooted in helping the organization better reflect their impressive growth and showcase their work to protect some of Charleston's most beloved places.

Project Scope

Brand identity development, nonprofit mission and vision development, brand strategy, brand messaging, creative direction, website design and development.conceptual design.

CASE STUDY

Conservancy of the Sea Islands

THE NEED

Our two year collaboration with Conservancy of the Sea Islands (formerly Kiawah Conservancy) called for a complete rebrand—meaning a new name, identity, story, website, and fresh approach to messaging and marketing. [The conservancy's rebrand was rooted in a desire to better reflect their impressive success and geographical growth.](#)

OUR APPROACH

Ultimately, we were charged with building a brand that reflected the conservancy's depth, breadth, and expertise in protecting some of Charleston's most beloved and recognizable places—Kiawah, Seabrook, and Johns Islands.





CONSERVANCY
OF THE
SEA ISLANDS



CONSERVANCY
OF THE
SEA ISLANDS

WHAT WE DO WHERE WE WORK GET INVOLVED ABOUT US RESOURCE CENTER

DONATE VOLUNTEER | Q

CONTACT US

Magic unfolds in our corner of the Lowcountry every day.

A land trust and leader in conservation, education, and restoration, we forever safeguard the lands, waters, and wildlife that define our distinct way of life, and inspire all generations to become stewards of the place they love.

ABOUT US



VOLUNTEER | Q

CONTACT US



CONSERVANCY
OF THE
SEA ISLANDS

PRESERVING THE LEGACY OF THE SEA ISLANDS

Conservation
Protecting vital assets in perpetuity through conservation easements and direct ownership.
→

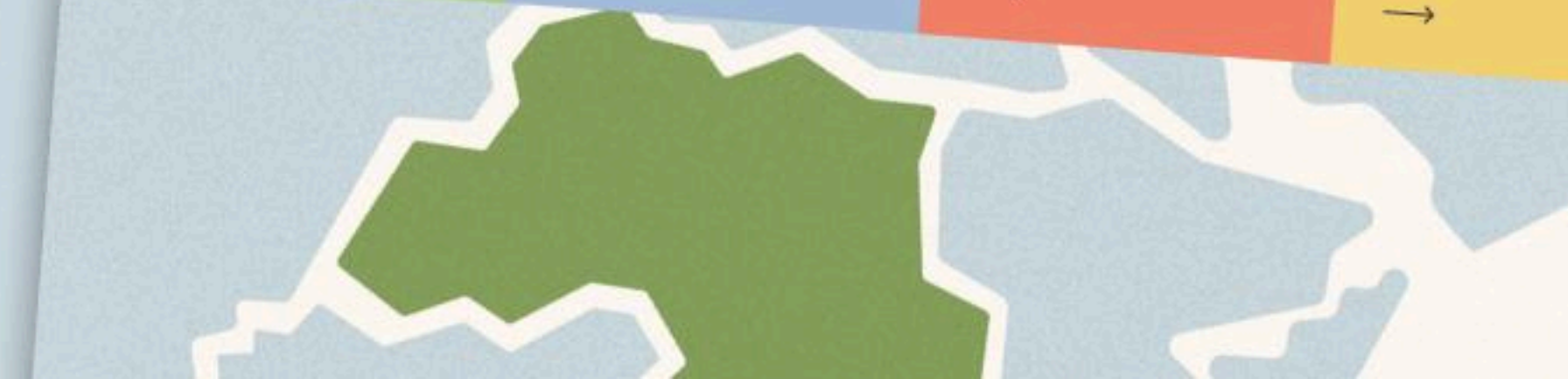
Education
Science-based learning for adults and youth on the delicate ecosystem we call home.
→

Restoration & Enhancement
Hands-on projects that strengthen the resilience of our sea island environment.
→

Research
Conducting and supporting critical environmental research to strategically inform our actions.
→



CONSERVANCY
OF THE
SEA ISLANDS





ABOUT THE CONSERVANCY SEA ISLANDS CONTACT

PRESERVING THE LEGACY OF THE SEA ISLANDS

What's at Stake?

The Latest

What can you do

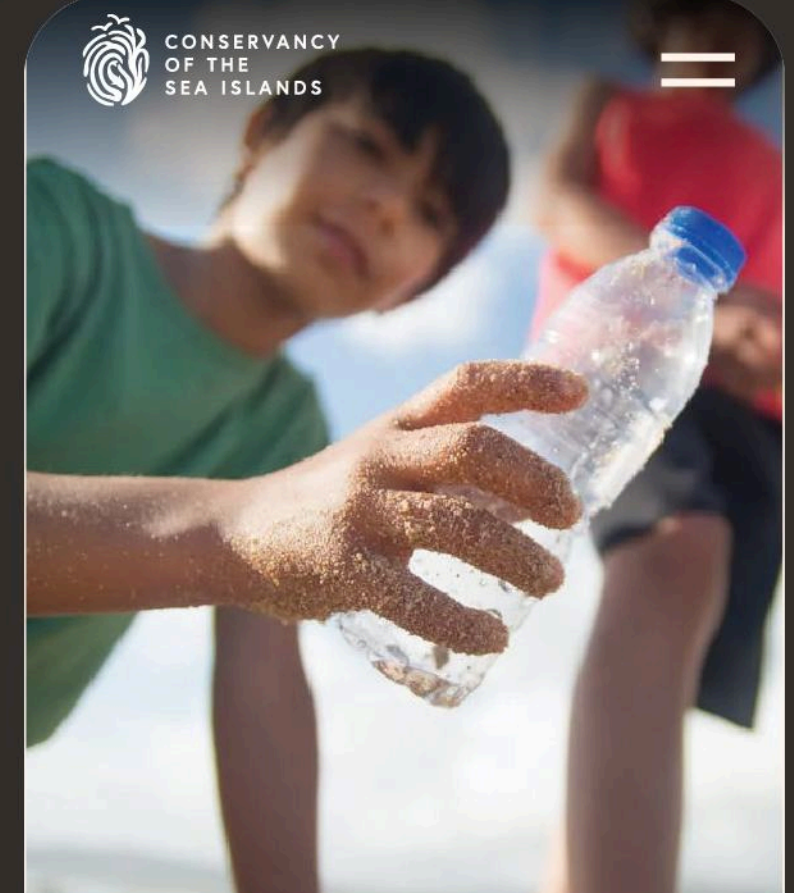
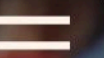


Be Part of the Sea Islands' Story

LEARN MORE

WHAT WE DO

The Sea Islands are more than beautiful – they're vital. Your generosity ensures that the land, water, and life here remain resilient, thriving, and protected.



Where Land and Water Breathe as One

WHAT WE DO

The Sea Islands are more than beautiful – they're vital. Your generosity ensures that the land, water, and life here remain resilient, thriving, and protected.


CONSERVANCY
OF THE
SEA ISLANDS



OUR ANTHEM

Magic unfolds in our corner of the Lowcountry every day.

Along our South Carolina Sea Islands, water doesn't just frame the land; it connects and defines it. As rivers course past on their final saunter to the ocean, they split into winding creeks and spill into tidal marsh, supporting so much life along the way.

While the water ambles by, oysters filter below the surface and egrets eat breakfast in a delicate ballet. Fiddler crabs scuttle across mudflats while ancient oaks stand as silent sentinels to generations. Their branches cast grand shadows over maritime forests where deer graze on underbrush and bobcats nurture their young.

This land comes alive with wild beauty and a slice of morning light: the ripe mingling of salt marsh and breeze, a chorus of croaking announcing a rainstorm's end, and evenings marked by songs of small singers and skies set ablaze by the sinking sun.



Life on these sea islands is set to a distinct natural harmony, and we too are a part of it. We are bound by this place—each community, every neighbor. And our role in its ecosystem is essential.

Stepping foot on this landscape asks something of us. To not merely marvel at its existence, but to join its rhythm.

To come together to protect the land and water's ability to sustain life. And to ensure the future retains this magic, forever.





CASE STUDY

Beacon Park

Transforming the historic Beacon Blanket factory site in Swannanoa, NC into a thriving community destination.

Project Scope

Brand identity development, brand strategy, interactive design and development, ongoing creative services.

The logo is contained within a double-lined oval border. The word "Beacon" is written in a large, black, cursive script that arches across the top. Below it, the word "PARK" is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font. A decorative swoosh underline is positioned between "Beacon" and "PARK".

Beacon
PARK

SWANNANOA
NORTH CAROLINA

CASE STUDY

Beacon Park

THE NEED

Some projects bring rewards that go way beyond the work itself. The Beacon Foundation team needed something truly special — transforming the historic Beacon Blanket factory site in Swannanoa, NC [into a thriving community destination](#). A place built for the people of Swannanoa — to connect, move, heal, and grow together.

OUR APPROACH

Our role has been developing the full creative ecosystem: brand identity and guidelines for the Beacon Foundation, Beacon Park, and Beacon Bike Park — logos, color systems, typography, print and web grids, merch, collateral, signage, and websites for each sub-brand.

From the hand-lettered Beacon script to the factory icon and coyote expressions, every element is crafted to honor the site's history while building toward an exciting opening. There's no more energizing work than putting our skills toward a community project this inspired. Big things coming for Swannanoa.



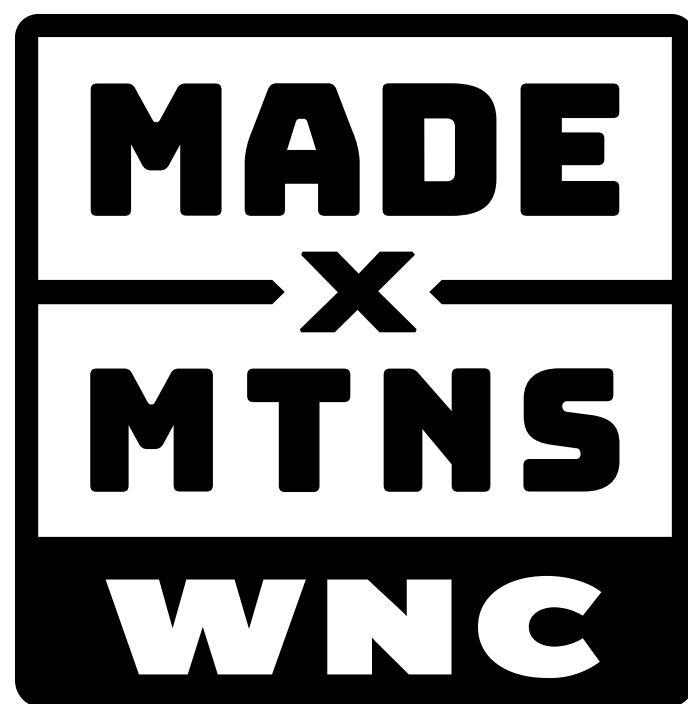




I'D RATHER BE AT THE BEACON PARK IN
SWANNASOMEWHERE NC







CASE STUDY

Made x Mountains

Sparking a movement that celebrates and grows Western North Carolina's outdoor industry across 25 counties and the Qualla Boundary.

Project Scope

25-county regional stakeholder engagement, grand strategy, brand story, brand identity development, website design & development, asset library research & implementation, campaign planning & launch.

CASE STUDY

Made x Mountains

THE NEED

Engage and motivate local communities while attracting new companies and individuals to inquire about joining the industry and movement.

OUR APPROACH

With the input of more than 40 regional leaders, we set out to capture the intimate relationship locals have with this unique outdoor landscape. The core brand premise of “Made By Mountains” inspired the final campaign name, central story, and visual approach.

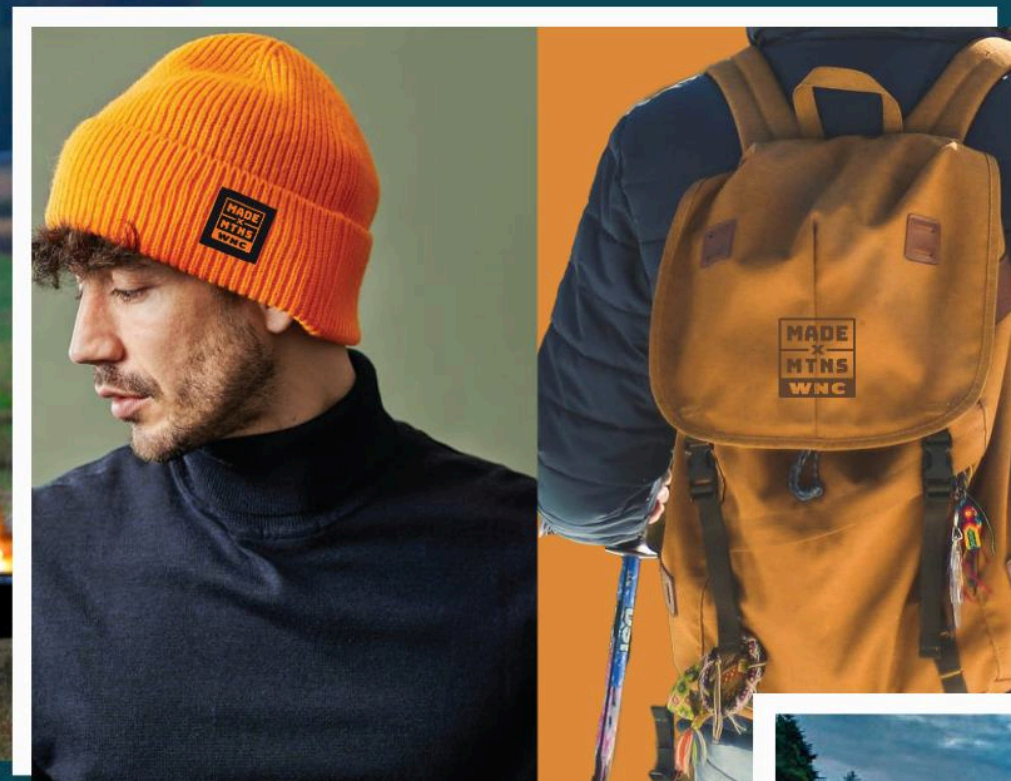
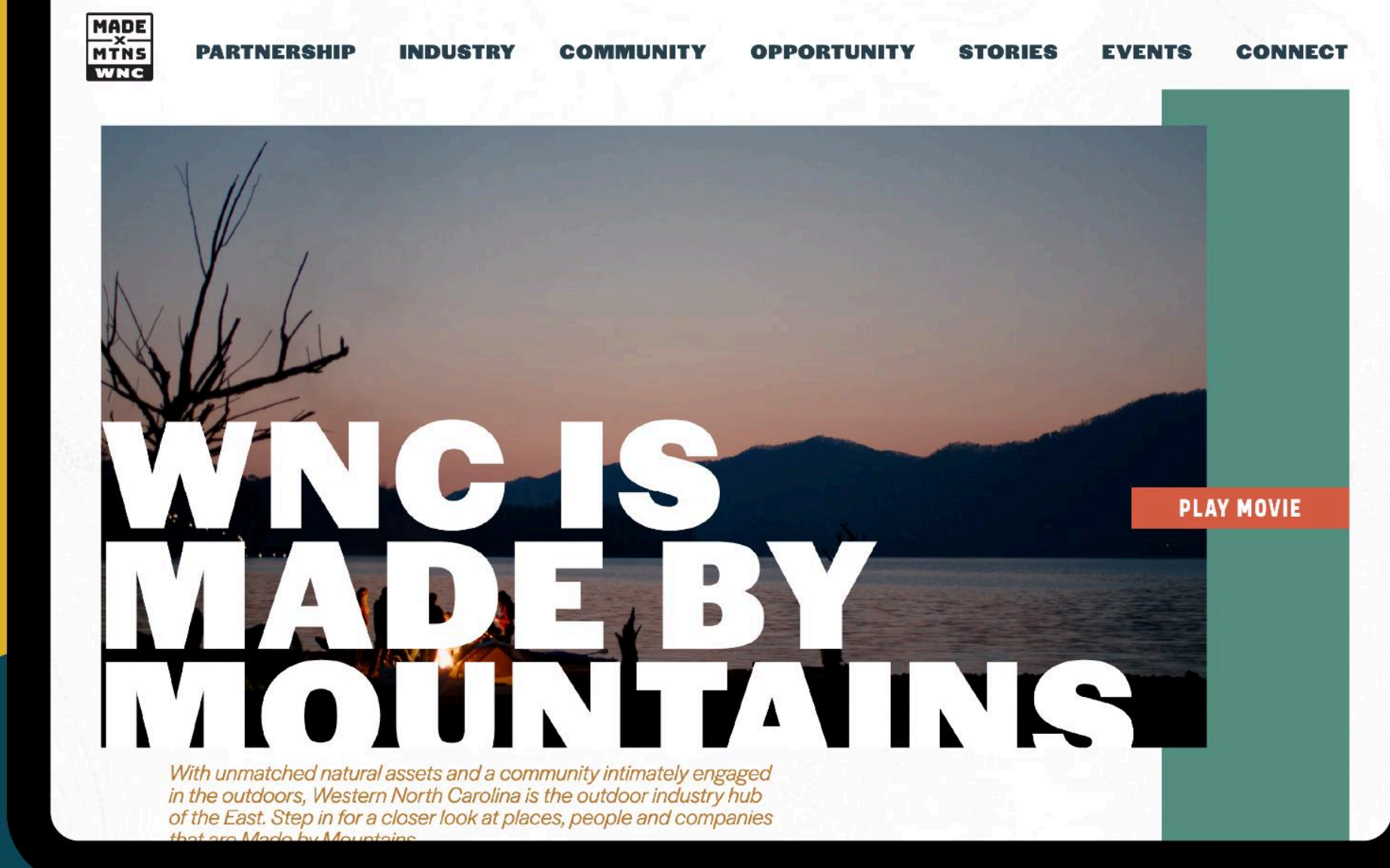
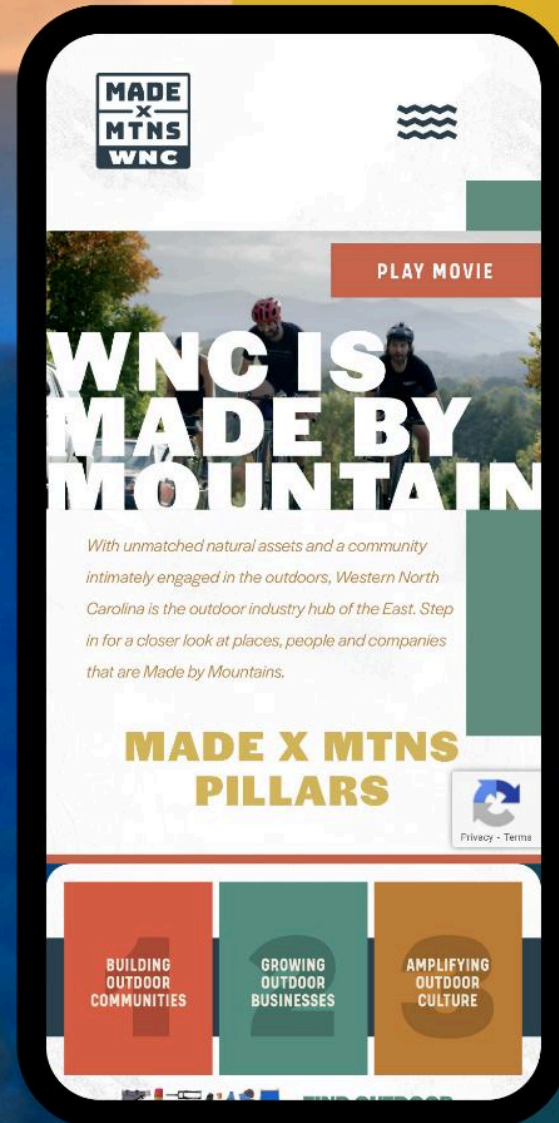

The campaign launched in May 2021 and continues to gather momentum across the region and beyond.





MADE
— X —
MTNS
WNC



THESE MOUNTAINS
WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

EXPLORE WHAT MAKES THESE MOUNTAINS SPECIAL

WNC OUTDOOR RECREATION PARTICIPATION SURVEY

THE FIRST REGIONAL SNAPSHOT OF ITS KIND TO ESTABLISH A FOUNDATIONAL DATASET SUPPORTING THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF OUTDOOR RECREATION PARTICIPATION IN THE WNC REGION.

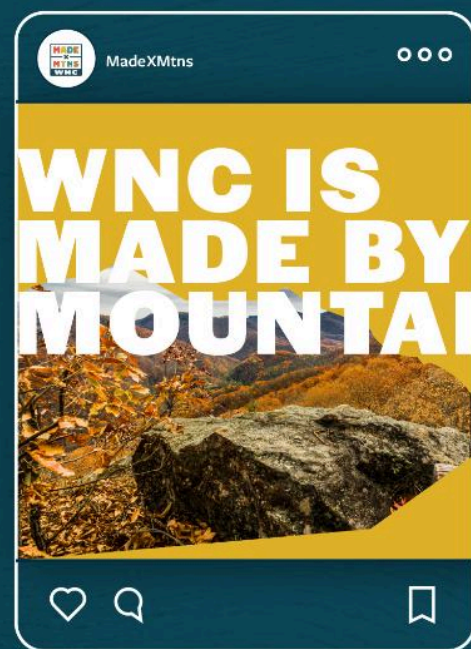
LEARN MORE

“

ANNUAL ECONOMIC OUTPUT FROM OUTDOOR RECREATION VISITOR SPENDING IN WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA:

- \$4.9 BILLION ECONOMIC OUTPUT**
- 48,000 FULL TIME JOBS**
- \$1.48 BILLION LABOR INCOME**
- \$197.5 MILLION REGIONAL COUNTY-LEVEL TAX REVENUE**

Source: madexmtns.com/wnc-outdoor-recreation-survey



IT'S IN

OUR NATURE



CASE STUDY

Transylvania Economic Alliance



The TEA engaged with our team to develop a marketing campaign to generate leads and interest among outdoor gear makers in relocating to Transylvania County, North Carolina.

CASE STUDY

Transylvania Economic Alliance

THE NEED

TEA wished to build a campaign to promote its outdoor recreation pillar—bolstered by **design, messaging, materials, and marketing** that would bring the county to life. The effort called for an accurate and energizing reflection of what it's like to live—and work—on Brevard's fertile ground.

OUR APPROACH

Transylvania County is the perfect encapsulation of all that makes Western North Carolina a uniquely amazing place to live, work, and play for outdoor rec entrepreneurs and their teams. Through conversations with 20+ business owners and community members, we uncovered the core of the campaign, "It's In Our Nature."

This simple truth about the area inspired a name for TEA's new campaign alongside a story, fresh design—and a highly targeted approach to marketing and connecting with target business owners.





This is not a place you casually **choose to live.**

That is, unless you're obsessed with being deep in the forest, communing with nature, high above life's relentless rhythm.

This is Brevard, the birthplace of forestry. Not near the woods—in the thick of it. A place carved by ancient mountains and storied rivers, shaped by generations who built their lives with drive and determination. Tucked into Pisgah National Forest, there's an unspoiled magic in our isolation—and in how close we can be when the real world calls us back.



Being way out there is in our nature. Layers of dense, deep greens. Inhales of fresh spruce and fir. The mist of cool falling water—they're the building blocks of our DNA. We feel it rolling down Black Mountain Trail, slicing paddles through the French Broad, casting for trout in miles of clear streams, watching rhododendron thickets burst to life. A muscle memory of mountains and waterways, of creating with our hands and building from scratch. We make this place our own. It's the heart of who we are in the pulsing heart of Western North Carolina.

Rich in grit, big vision, and collaborative spirit—we're your favorite mountain town's favorite mountain town.

To the trail junkies and dirtbags, preservers and pioneers, guides and innovators: come through the woods and chart your course with the rest of us.

YOUR FAVORITE MOUNTAIN TOWN'S

FAVORITE MOUNTAIN TOWN.

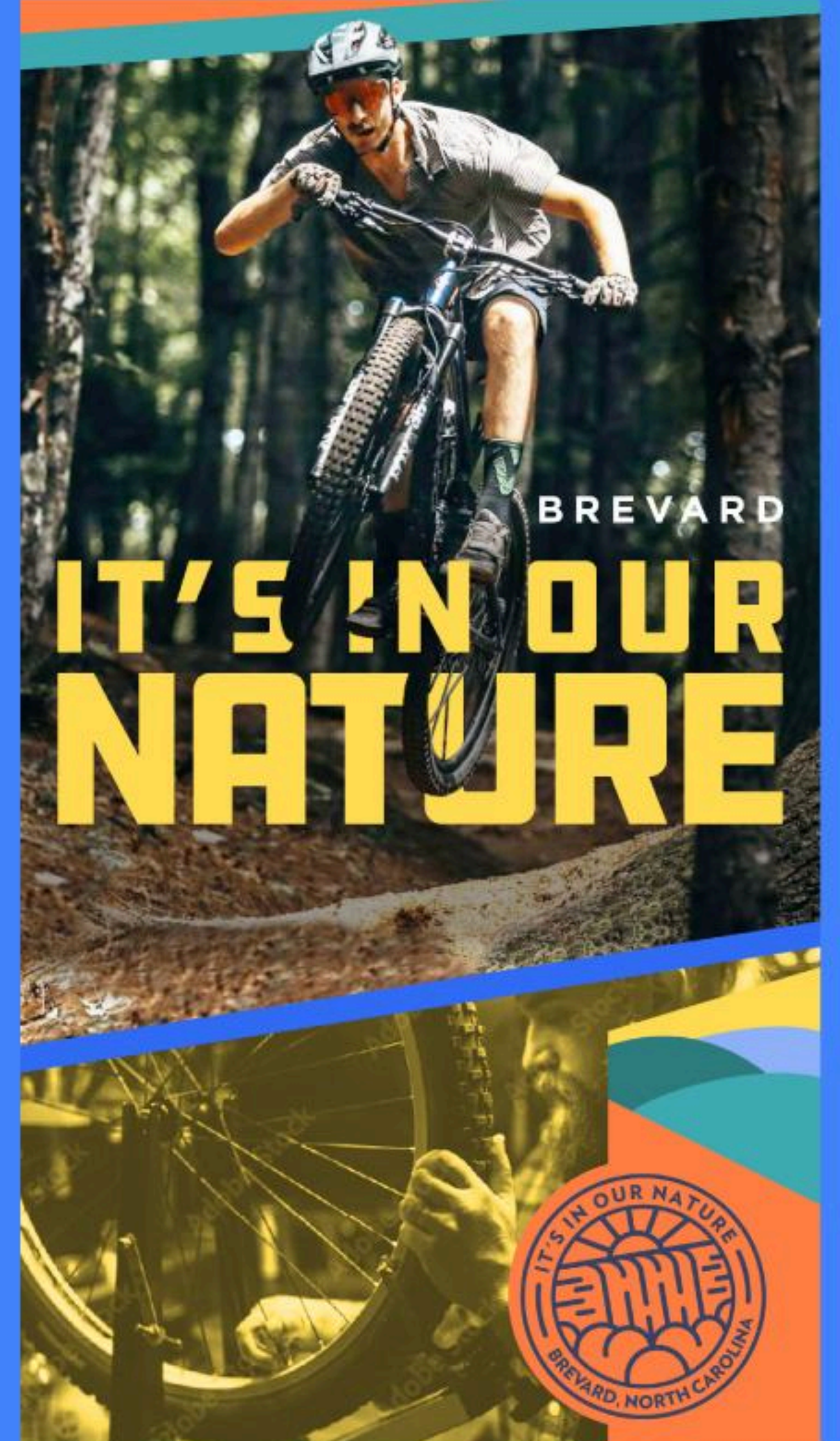


BREVARD IT'S IN OUR NATURE



PHOTO: THE FRENCH BROAD RIVER - BREVARD, NC

WHERE NATURE MEETS OPPORTUNITY



SULLY'S
STEAMERS

IT'S IN OUR

NATURE




BREVARD
WHERE NATURE MEETS
COMMUNITY

Downtown Brevard - Transylvania County



IT'S IN
OUR NATURE

BREVARD
IT'S IN OUR
NATURE



WHERE NATURE MEETS
OPPORTUNITY



YOUR FAVORITE MOUNTAIN TOWN

FAVORITE MOUNTAIN TOWN

BREVARD
IT'S IN OUR
NATURE

PHOTO: THE FRENCH BROAD RIVER - BREVARD, NC



WHERE NATURE MEETS OPPORTUNITY

NATURE'S PULSE



YOUR FAVORITE MOUNTAIN TOWN'S FAVORITE MOUNTAIN TOWN!

HEED THE CALL





CASE STUDY

The Great Trails State

Creating a brand—and a movement—that celebrates North Carolina's vast and amazing trail system, stretching from the mountains to the coast and nearly everywhere in between.

CASE STUDY

The Great Trails State

THE NEED

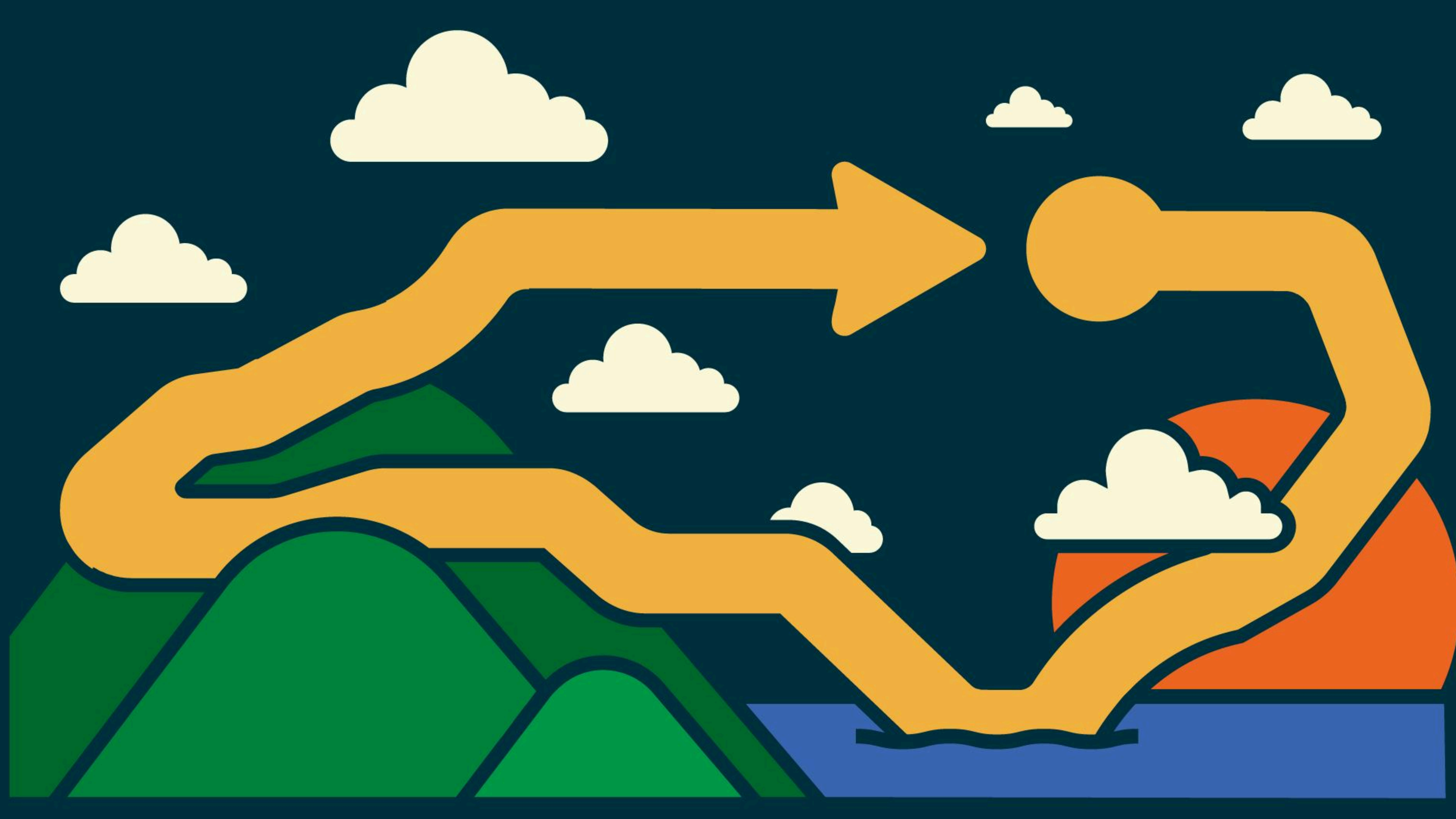
The Great Trails State Coalition is a broad-based group of diverse organizations, agencies, and supporters advocating for increased investment in all types of North Carolina trails: hiking, paddle, mountain bike, equestrian, paved. On the heels of the successful 2023 Year of the Trail campaign, the coalition asked Blue Ion to craft a new identity for the entire Great Trails State program.

OUR APPROACH

Embody the distinctive character and appeal of North Carolina's trails to engage residents while supporting the growing drive for trail development and upkeep.

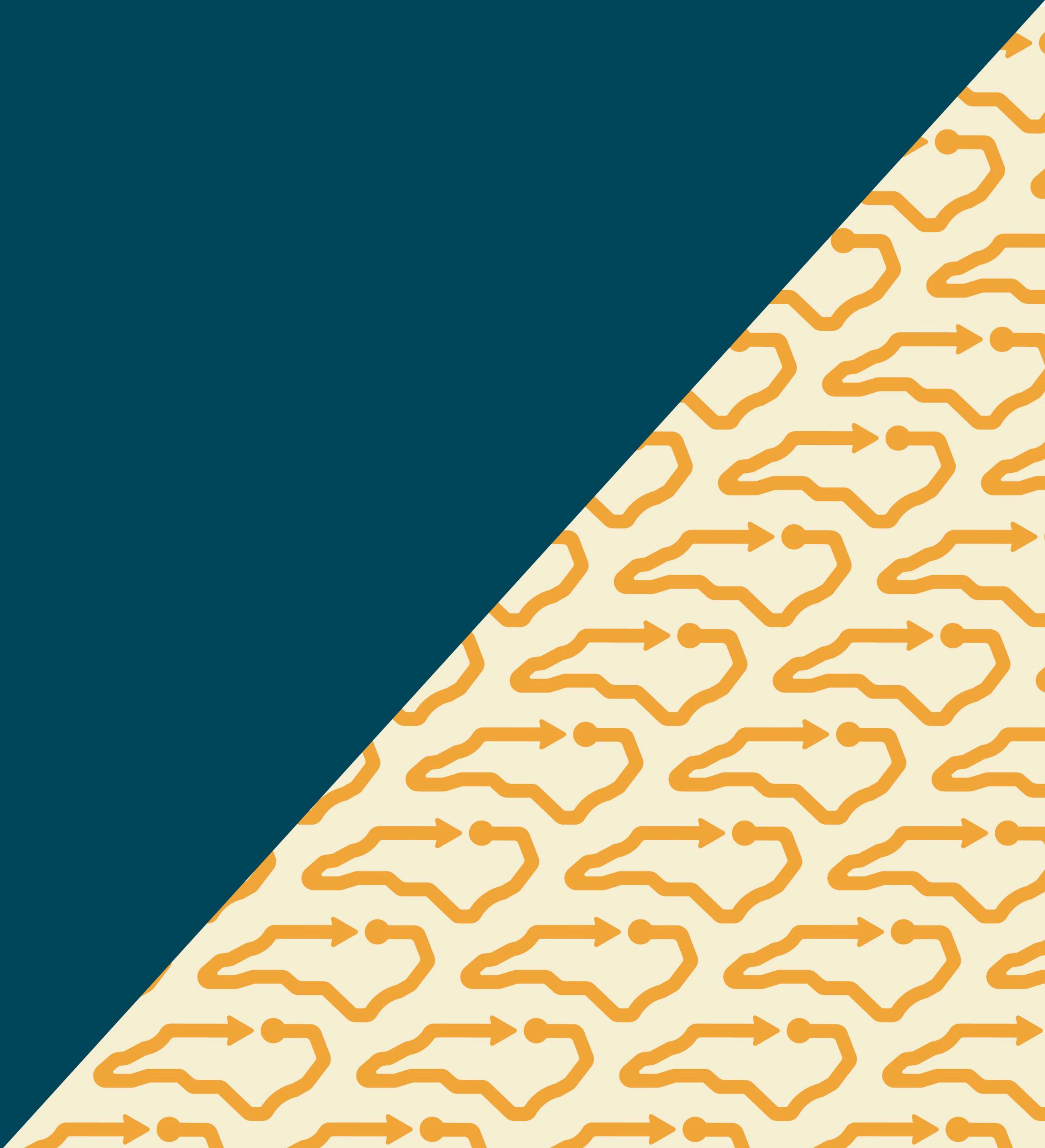
Develop an open-source brand that partner organizations and communities alike can adapt and use to promote their trails and demonstrate pride in The Great Trails State.





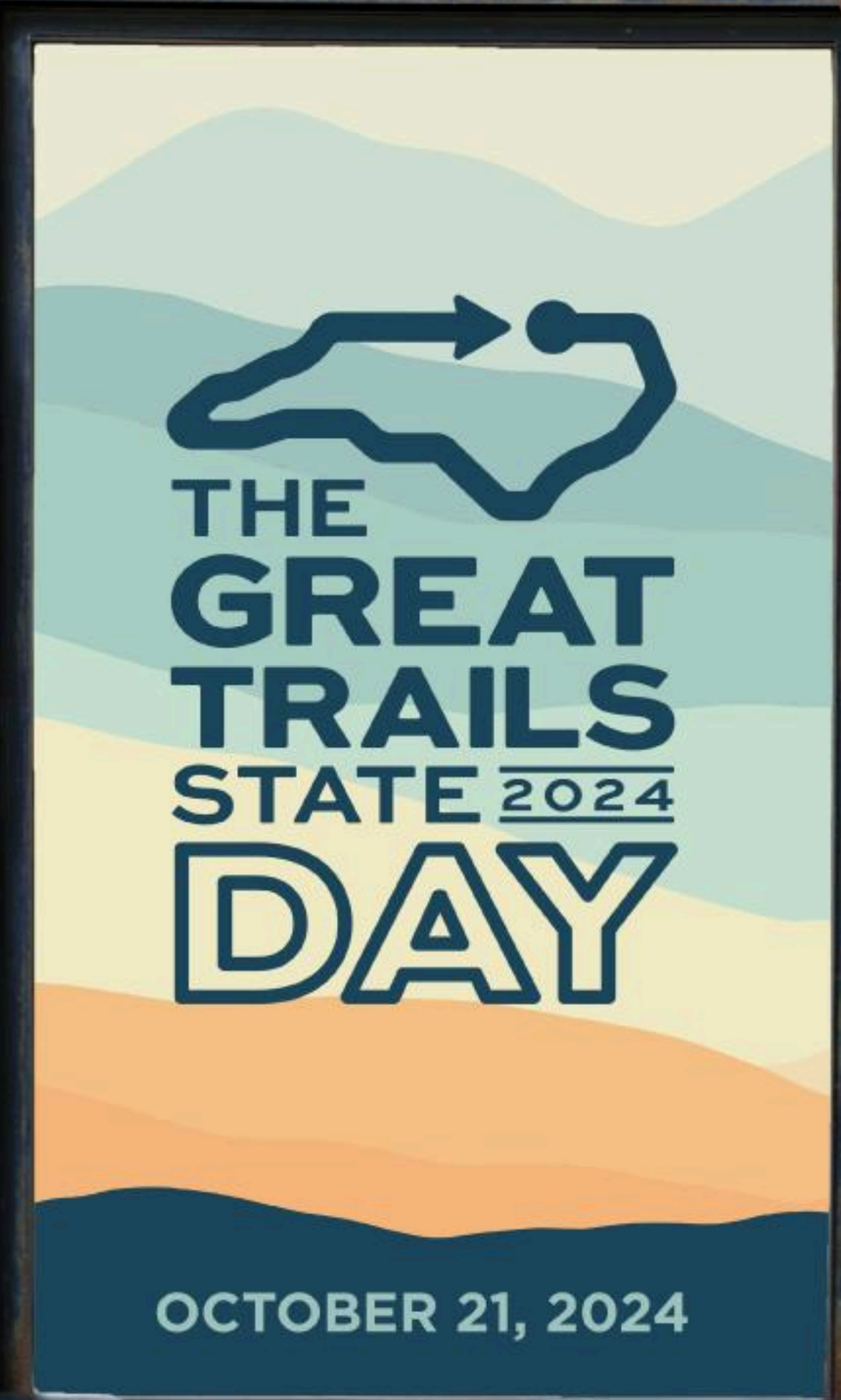


THE
GREAT
TRAILS
STATE NC★USA









ISLE OF PALMS | RFP RESPONSE

About Our Firm





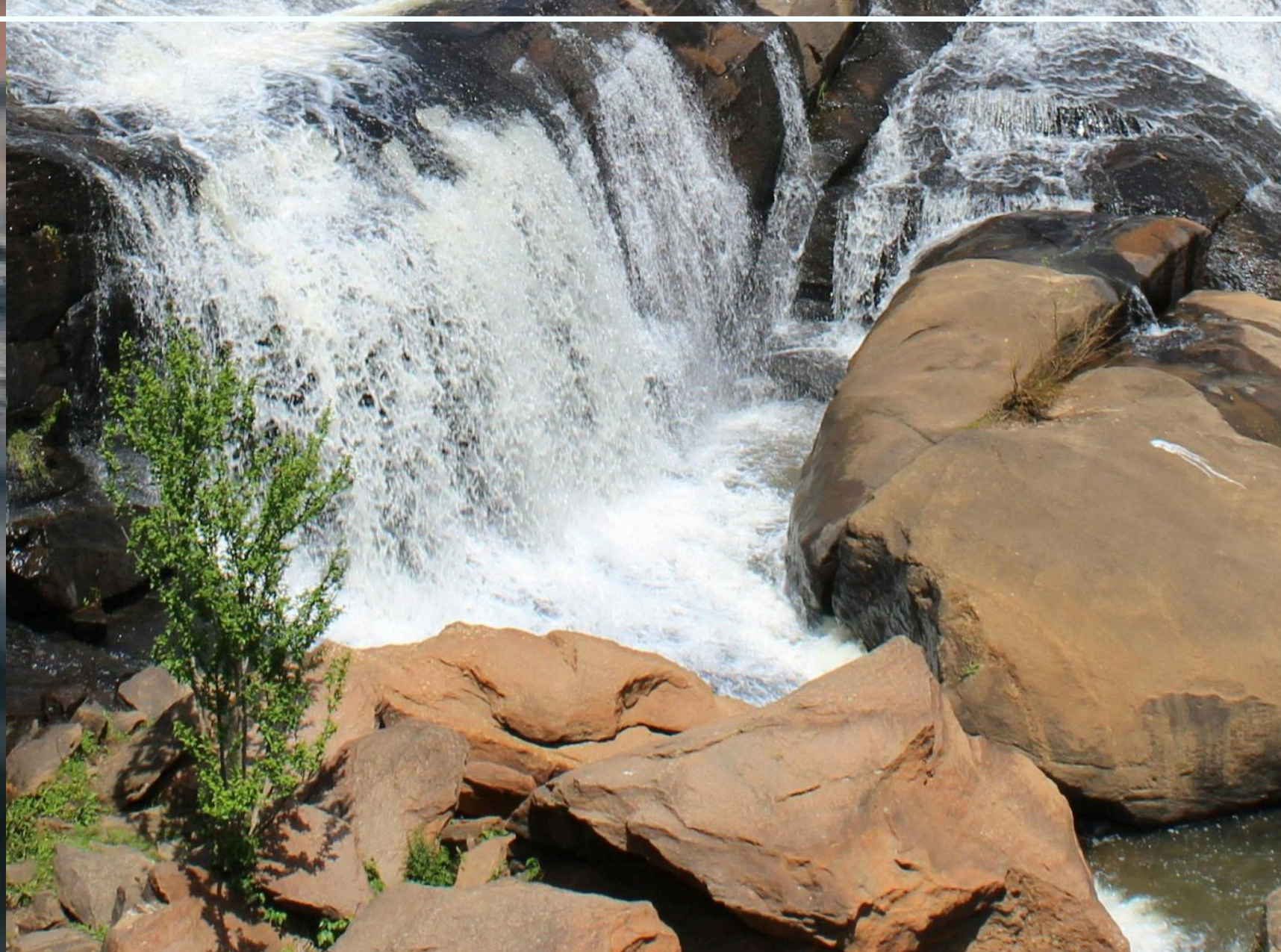
THE TEAM

Blue Ion is a full-service agency that combines marketing, strategy, technology, story and design to power brands that share the energy they're made of.





Our two-dozen full-time employees are fortunate enough to work in places that are just as inspiring as our clients.



CHARLESTON, SC

GREENVILLE, SC

ASHEVILLE, NC

ISLE OF PALMS | RFP RESPONSE

Project Team



Kyle Mensing

MARKETING SERVICES DIRECTOR



BACKGROUND & EXPERIENCE

Since joining Blue Ion in 2017, Kyle has embraced AI, automation, and strategy to elevate our clients' marketing initiatives. Currently overseeing our marketing services team, Kyle is responsible for management of our client marketing strategy and performance while overseeing a skilled group of digital marketers.

RELEVANT PROJECTS

Kyle has worked on a variety of economic development and place-making projects. Prior to Blue Ion, he built his digital marketing skill set at Greer Development Corporation, where he graduated from the South Carolina Economic Development Institute. During his time here, he's refined those skills with work for the Charleston Regional Development Alliance, Berlin Business Office, the Transylvania Economic Alliance, and more.



Adam Olejarczyk

DIGITAL BRAND MANAGER



BACKGROUND & EXPERIENCE

Adam joined Blue Ion in 2018 after spending a decade in the agency world in New York and Raleigh. While his earlier career was rooted in the technical side of SEO and performance marketing for national brands like Ruth's Chris, Servicemaster brands, and various Conde Nast titles, his work at Blue Ion is centered on growing regional tourism and destination marketing impact in an increasingly complex digital space.

RELEVANT PROJECTS

Since 2018, Adam has led the search and digital performance strategy for Explore Charleston (the Charleston Area CVB), overseeing the "always-on" marketing efforts that supported a record-breaking \$14 billion in total economic impact for the region in 2024. He continues to provide technical guidance for a diverse set of complex accounts.



Robert Prioleau

FOUNDING PARTNER, STRATEGY



BACKGROUND & EXPERIENCE

Robert leads the team's branding efforts from Asheville, where he applies his decades of expertise across a wide range of clients and industries. His role—equal parts shepherd, strategist, and therapist—is to bring out the best in clients, their brands, and their customers. Robert graduated from Vanderbilt University with a degree in Latin American history and received a MBA in marketing from the University of Texas at Austin.

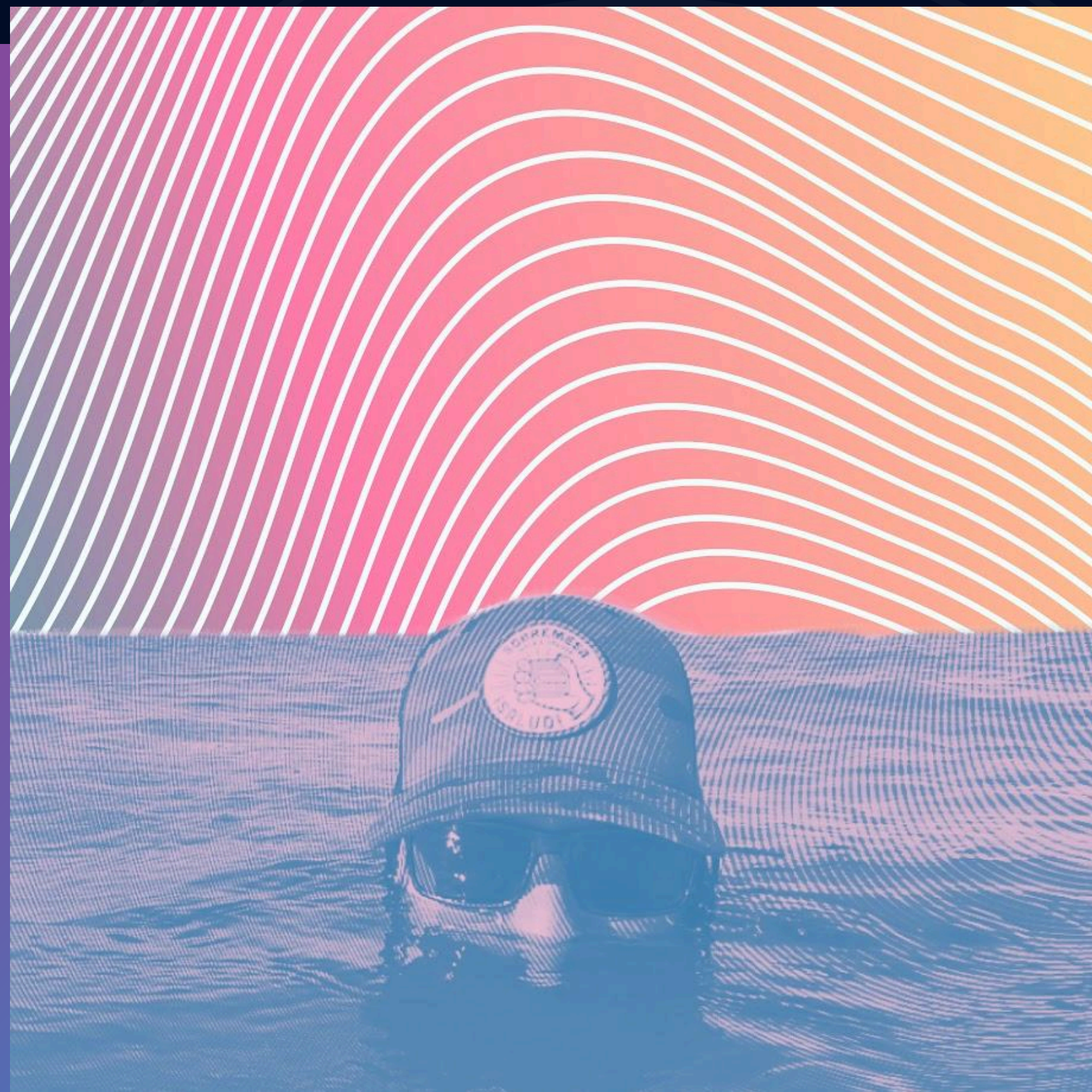
RELEVANT PROJECTS

Robert has spearheaded much of Blue Ion's cause-based and outdoor-focused work, spanning the Great Trails State, Made by Mountains, the American Chestnut Foundation, Lowcountry Land Trust, Coastal Conservation League, Charleston Moves, Preservation Society of Charleston, Charleston Waterkeeper, and many others. He is currently on the board of Brevard, NC-based outdoor education nonprofit Muddy Sneakers.



Nic Lauretano

CREATIVE DIRECTOR



BACKGROUND & EXPERIENCE

A graduate of NYC's School of Visual Arts and a native of Pawleys Island, South Carolina, Nic joined Blue Ion in 2014. As Creative Director, he brings an editorial approach to design, blending storytelling with strategy to create meaningful brand experiences. Beyond leading projects, Nic is deeply invested in mentoring and developing a team of talented designers.

RELEVANT PROJECTS

Nic has led many of Blue Ion's outdoor- and place-making branding projects, shaping identities that inspire action and connection. His branding work includes Explore Charleston, Made by Mountains, the Great Trails State Coalition, Turtle Survival Alliance, the American Chestnut Foundation, and Muddy Sneakers. Through these projects, Nic fosters collaboration, encourages creative exploration, and ensures each brand's story is told with clarity and impact.



Ellen Schmedinghoff

STRATEGY & COPY DIRECTOR



BACKGROUND & EXPERIENCE

A College of Charleston graduate, Ellen has nearly 15 years of experience in all things communications. She joined Blue Ion in 2016 after establishing a Charleston presence for a national public relations firm. She now leads all brand strategy and writing for the agency, and mentors an incredible team of creative thinkers and writers.

RELEVANT PROJECTS

Ellen has recently led strategic consulting, branding, and communications strategy projects with Turtle Survival Alliance and the American Chestnut Foundation, both of which had multiple boards and committee involvement that she helped to lead throughout. She also led content strategy and development for the Made by Mountains campaign, the Great Trails State Coalition, Transylvania Economic Alliance campaign, and recently finished leading ORCA in creating a regional brand for an 18-county swath of South-Southeast Ohio.

She and Emily Storrow are also currently engaged with the Land of Sky in a project to elevate the visibility and sustainability of WNC's creative economy through a new regional brand, creative assets, and comprehensive promotional strategy.



Emily Storrow

SENIOR BRAND STRATEGIST & WRITER



BACKGROUND & EXPERIENCE

Emily joined Blue Ion in 2020 from the Local Palate magazine, where she was an associate editor covering the food culture of the South. Her work spanned feature writing, editing, and social media management as well as moderating panels at food events including Atlanta Food & Wine Festival and Richmond's Fire, Flour, & Fork.

Emily taps her journalism roots every day as she immerses herself in a client's world, digging deep and thinking critically to better understand what their organization needs and how to help them get there.

RELEVANT PROJECTS

Emily has led a variety of strategic consulting, branding, and communications projects with our outdoor rec and tourism clients, including the Charleston Area CVB, the Kiawah Conservancy, and is currently leading the Land of Sky team through its creative economy project.



Client References

Palmer McIntyre

CONSERVATION PLANNER /
PIEDMONT LAND CONSERVANCY

PMcIntyre@piedmontland.org

Palmer is the point person for the NC Year of the Trail project. We worked closely with her and various stakeholders over several years to support the launch of the NC Year of the Trails initiative. While our original scope was limited to brand messaging, campaign strategy and rollout planning, she gradually gave us more responsibility and we have developed a great rapport with her and the entire regional working group. More recently, we've collaborated on the overall identity and approach for The Great Trails State Coalition.

Spencer Bowden

DIRECTOR OF MARKETING, CRU

spencer@crucatering.com

We recently completed a complete brand architecture and strategy project with Spencer and the team at Cru Catering. In addition to organizational strategy, we collaborated on the development of several new creative identity projects for their existing and new brands. These projects will begin to roll out in the fall of 2026.

Catherine Dority

DIRECTOR OF MARKETING,
EXPLORE CHARLESTON

cdority@explorecharleston.com

The Charleston CVB is a 25-year partner of ours. We've done countless branding and design projects with them, and manage their portfolio of 10-15 marketing websites, in addition to having built their entire ticketing system for the visitors center and other custom applications. We also manage all of their digital marketing efforts (~\$1M+ spend/year).



Thank you.

BLUEION