



April 1, 2026

TO: Corrina Ruffieux, Executive Director
Haywood County Tourism Development Authority

FROM: Sarah Raynor, Vice President
Robyn Domber, Senior Vice President
Development Counsellors International

RE: Visit Haywood Research Proposed Scope of Work: January 1, 2027 – June 30, 2027

Dear Corrina and Visit Haywood Team,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this research proposal for the next fiscal year. As discussed, we see extreme value in conducting a refresh to our brand health perception study research.

Since our work began together in 2024, we have made meaningful progress to build and activate your new destination brand, launching the new visual and messaging platform and deploying our aggressive paid advertising campaign. Much of this work has been grounded in our initial perception study research conducted in Q1 of 2024, which provided a critical baseline for understanding how Haywood County was viewed by visitors, travel media and internal stakeholders.

Now, almost three years later, we recommend refreshing our research.

Below, we've outlined our proposed scope of work for conducting an updated set of perception study brand health research that will allow Visit Haywood to take an apples-to-apples look at how awareness, perceptions and motivations have evolved since the brand's introduction. We'll analyze what has shifted, what has strengthened and where there is still opportunity to move the needle.

The refreshed brand health research and analysis will enable us to strengthen our marketing efforts, ensuring that our campaign is informed by current realities and resonating with target visitors. Along those lines, in addition to a refresh of the research conducted in 2024, we're also recommending adding a Visitor Segmentation Study, which will allow us to validate our target audiences.

In the pages that follow, we've outlined the proposed research scope of work to begin on January 1, 2027 and conclude on June 30, 2027. There is an opportunity to start the research sooner (e.g. late summer or autumn) with proper advance planning and discussion between Visit Haywood and DCI.



Development Counsellors International
600 5th Ave. 2nd Floor / New York, NY 10020 / aboutdci.com



SCOPE OF WORK

I. **Perception Studies: A Deep Dive into Visit Haywood's Brand Health**

Understanding current perceptions – and misperceptions – of Haywood County are an essential piece to our current and future marketing efforts, in particular as it relates to refining campaign messaging that resonates with your target audiences.

DCI conducted a robust set of brand health perception studies at the outset of our work together, in 2024.

DCI recommends conducting a refresh of the perception studies in 2027, at the three-year mark, in order to gain an updated understanding of perceptions and build an “apples-to-apples” trends over time analysis.

DCI will use the same question set in 2027 as we did in 2024, to ensure we're able to provide the apples-to-apples comparison and will also include any new queries that reflect current conditions. This will ensure our team gains a clear understanding of the motivations, interests and values that will continue to drive visitors to Haywood County.

a. **Current/Past Visitor Perception Study**

DCI will conduct an online survey of past and potential visitors, using the same question set deployed in 2024 and new queries to reflect current trends and conditions. We'll additionally test updated campaign concepts, headlines and messaging and better understand impressions and perceptions of Haywood County. Should an internal database of past/potential visitors be available, we can use this database for survey distribution but can also identify qualified survey respondents. We will target a minimum of 1,000 valid responses.

b. **Travel Media Perception Study**

DCI will conduct a media perception study to gauge perceptions of Haywood County and its competitive set. DCI's analysis will highlight differences in perceptions among media who have and who have not visited the region, gain insights into editorial interest in covering the region and topics of most interest. We'll also analyze how responses compare between 2027 and 2024.

c. **Internal Stakeholder Perception Study**

DCI will conduct an online survey to gather insights from internal stakeholders, assessing perceptions of strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities. Haywood County would distribute an online survey link to key internal stakeholders.

II. **Market & Visitor Segmentation Study**

DCI will analyze the visitor research outputs to determine your “best bet” visitor markets and segments to target over the next five years. Understanding and connecting with your target audience through personalized communications is vital for success and this market segmentation study will allow the DCI team to better personalize your marketing efforts to the unique needs and preferences of each segment, create more relevant and engaging



campaigns, and ultimately drive higher visitor engagement.

While DCI/Visit Haywood have outlined target visitor personas for our campaign, we recommend conducting this research to validate our audiences and prioritize your top visitor segments. Our proprietary model will deliver a comprehensive profile of your visitor priority segments and target markets, including:

- a. **Target Visitor Personas:** Using the visitor survey data and our proprietary model, DCI will recommend and profile two to three priority target audiences for Haywood County so that marketing and messaging efforts are highly focused and will provide the greatest return on investment. Our final recommended targets will be based on demographic (age, income), behavioral (past buying trends), psychographic (values, interests), and geographic (location) indicators and our final deliverables will highlight the motivations, behaviors, perceptions, media habits, and other key insights among these priority visitor segments. An example of a target audience could potentially be the “passive outdoor explorer” or the “family road tripper”.
- b. **Customer Journeys:** DCI will provide a description of the stages and the various touch points and experiences the target visitor audiences could have with the Visit Haywood brand.
- c. **Content Maps:** As part of the journey map, DCI will provide a high-level analysis of each audience’s content and messaging needs at each stage of their journey, including the content channels and information that are most influential during the trip-planning process.

III. **Final Research Analysis and Report:**

DCI will synthesize all research findings and recommendations into a concise PowerPoint presentation for your team, to be held via a virtual 90-minute Teams meeting.

IV. **Establish a Brand Health Dashboard**

We understand how important it is for Visit Haywood to report out to your board and stakeholders on the success of our program. In order to aide Visit Haywood in reporting and metrics tracking, DCI will design a data-rich Brand Health Dashboard. The Dashboard will be updated monthly.

We will work closely with Visit Haywood to identify the specific metrics to include in the Dashboard. While not all metrics can be included without an economic impact study, we will take all reasonable measures to include the following data points. Where data is limited, we will use reasonable proxies and models based on third-party data, visitor survey data and specific event metrics:

- Estimated visitor spending
- Estimated tourism jobs supported
- Room nights generated (or influenced) via campaigns and partnerships.
- ROI on DMO investment (e.g., “for every \$1 invested, \$X in visitor spending”).

**Please note we’ve budgeted for initial set up and monthly maintenance of the dashboard. Moving forward into FY2027-2028, the brand health dashboard will require an ongoing monthly maintenance fee of \$400/month.*

V. **Timeline**

The research program will begin on January 1, 2027 and run through June 30, 2027. Should it be decided to commence the study sooner, this decision would need to be made 6 weeks out.

VI. Staffing

Robyn Domber, Senior Vice President of Research, will lead the project. Sarah Raynor, Vice President, Brand Management, will continue to serve as lead strategist. Robyn and Sarah will be supported by a deep bench of digital specialists at DCI.

VII. Budget

This campaign has been designed as a 6-month program to begin January 1, 2027 and continue through June 30, 2027.

The budget outlined below is divided into two elements: professional fees and projected out-of-pocket expenses. The latter item involves variation but represents our current estimates.

For your convenience, DCI will bill our professional fees in equal installments of \$5,357.50 a month, billed at the beginning of each month starting January 1, 2027.

A communications and technology fee of \$124 a month will cover ongoing communication expenses, survey software, telephone, stock imagery and databases.

Out-of-pocket travel expenses will be billed separately with appropriate documentation. Valerie Wilson Travel (VWT) will book all transportation, and a VWT booking fee of \$55 will appear on invoices involving travel purchases. Client payment is requested within 15 days of billing.

If either time needed or client requests for deliverables increase significantly beyond the scope of work outlined above, DCI's hourly blended rate of \$195/hour will be used to calculate the additional hours needed to complete the work. DCI will request Haywood County Tourism Development Authority approval prior to increasing hours toward the program of work. If for any reason the project is cancelled, or the dates for the project are changed, DCI will invoice the Haywood County Tourism Development Authority for all hours expended on the project to date at a rate of \$195/hour.

This agreement may be canceled by either party, Haywood County Tourism Development Authority or DCI, for any reason upon 30 days written notice to the other. Both parties agree that they will not offer employment or consulting opportunities to staff members of the other party.

Budget

Visit Haywood Research Budget Fiscal Year 2026-2027 January 1, 2027 - June, 30, 2027	
Research	
Current/Past Visitor Perception Study	\$9,855
Travel Media Perception Study	\$7,855
Internal Stakeholder Perception Study	\$6,205
Visitor Segmentation Study	\$3,355
Analytics	
Brand Health Dashboard & Monitoring	\$5,000
PROFESSIONAL FEES SUBTOTAL	\$32,270
Expenses	
Current/Past Visitor Perception Study Recruitment/Incentives	\$6,500
Travel Media Incentives	\$750
Communications/Technology Fee (\$124/month X 6 months) Phone, Technology, Survey Software, etc.	\$744
EXPENSES SUBTOTAL	\$7,994
PROGRAM TOTAL BUDGET	\$40,264

VIII. Offer of Service

Thank you for the opportunity to extend our engagement with your team. Signing below and returning to our attention will acknowledge acceptance of this contract and all the terms herein. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Robyn Domber
SVP, Research



Sarah Raynor
Vice President, Brand Management

Accepted for Haywood County Tourism Development Authority

Name

Date