



Tourism Development Authority
North Carolina

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Commissioners, County Manager, County Attorney

FROM: Rowan County Tourism Development Authority

DATE: September 1, 2022

RE: Fiscal Year 2022-23 ARPA Tourism Funding Request: County Wayfinding Signage

On behalf of the businesses, organizations, and employees of the Rowan County tourism, arts, and hospitality industry, please accept our deepest thanks for your continued support and commitment to the health and economic well-being of Rowan County. The resources, time and energy allocated towards such efforts across the community are invaluable and greatly appreciated.

Past ARPA funding allocated specifically to Rowan County Tourism was vital in replacing lost tourism revenues, retiring funding obligations for the Farmers Market and providing for a COVID grant program for lodging and arts organizations who sustained significant fiscal losses from the pandemic. The resources approved by the Board of Commissioners are a testament to the County's leadership.

Rowan County Tourism respectfully requests additional ARPA funds for the growth and expansion of infrastructure that benefits all Rowan County municipalities, sites, businesses and the community at large. Additional ARPA funds would be utilized to support the development and implementation of community and tourism infrastructure in the form of a uniform and countywide directional wayfinding signage system.

The pandemic amplified the community's need for branded and recognizable directional support for its residents and visitors as they travel to key sites in Rowan County. These sites include, but are not limited to public institutions, government facilities, municipalities, parks, recreation, outdoor, culture, historical and agricultural sites. Wayfinding signage serves as a resource by supporting movement to and from community sites by travelers, while providing a regular and consistent welcoming message. Signage benefits also include:

1. **Location Association** – While a resident or visitor is following a path to a particular destination for the first time, they are more likely to stay the course when accompanied with clear and identifiable signage. Each sign gives them vital location-based information to help increase their knowledge about the area while also prompting opportunities to either extend their stay or return for future visits.
2. **Community Branding** – Brand recognition is one of the highest values attributed to wayfinding signage. A community's brand creates a solid impression that is visually identifiable and amplified regularly through wayfinding signage. Wayfinding further supports quality of life in communities by presenting the community as a welcoming place. Wayfinding signs tell each visitor and resident they are welcome. Due to the wayfinding function, departments of transportation allow for such signs to be placed within their right of way. This amount of brand positioning would be impossible otherwise and is a benefit to a community seeking to support residents, visitors and businesses.
3. **Community Development** – Communities have developed wayfinding and identity systems to enhance their brand, ease navigation and reinforce key sites and destinations. With the current climate, communities

have seen stronger wayfinding systems as a mechanism to sustain economic viability and recognition. Wayfinding further supports quality of life in communities by presenting it as a welcoming place.

4. **Safety Enhancements** – Wayfinding provides safety enhancements for motorists and pedestrians. When a community has an organized wayfinding system, it is an additional guide for motorists and visitors heading to their destination and decreases the need to utilize distracting devices. These important wayfinding projects have been developed and integrated into the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, (MUTCD), which is utilized by the North Carolina Department of Transportation.
5. **Decrease Sign Clutter** – A community-wide wayfinding signage system allows for consolidation of existing individual DOT signs to a more uniform system featuring multiple location points per sign. For example, a road may currently exhibit three DOT signs: for a courthouse, a library and a park. The three individual signs would be removed and replaced with one community specific wayfinding sign that lists all three locations. This eliminates three signs and adds one new sign for a net reduction of two signs.

Rowan County Tourism appreciates and is grateful for its sound working relationship with Rowan County. The partnership has ranged from community branding to economic development, and community development. Whether it is recruiting and supporting new hotel projects, constructing Farmers Markets or helping a local industry recover from a pandemic, the County has remained a steadfast and strong partner.

In seeking to further partner on community and economic development, Rowan County Tourism respectfully requests \$500,000 in ARPA funds for FY2022-23. These funds would be dedicated for Rowan Tourism to produce and install a uniform, countywide wayfinding signage system for Rowan County and its Municipalities.

Based on the number of sites, locations, current DOT signs, miles of road, and municipalities in Rowan County, it is estimated to take up to 90 directional signs and 11 gateway welcome signs to complete the project and include all communities. The total funding request is based on a draft system already developed for the County with an approximate cost of \$502,000. Rowan Tourism has already funded all design fees and development costs of approximately \$40,000 and will fund any production costs above the ARPA funding of \$500,000.

A draft wayfinding signage system is currently under staff review at the Tourism Office. The system designer has mapped out the County and developed a complete system. Following approval of ARPA funding and completion of tourism staff review, Rowan Tourism will present to County staff for input and consideration. After staff reviews are complete, the system would be presented to each municipality, and finally to the Board of Commissioners for consideration and request for adoption. Upon adoption by the Board of Commissioners, the system would then be submitted to DOT for review and approval. All municipality meetings, staff reviews and presentation to Commissioners have a target completion by the end of calendar year 2022/early 2023.

Completing this one-time community and tourism infrastructure project will better position visitors and residents of Rowan County to safely travel and explore the community's public sites, while fostering greater community and economic development opportunities. The project will directly support continued recovery and growth in the local tourism industry, while enhancing the community through greater location association, branding, development and safety. Lastly, it will continue to position Rowan County as a destination that welcomes both its current and future residents, visitors and businesses.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



James Meacham
Rowan County Tourism