

HUMBOLDT LODGING ALLIANCE MARKETING CAMPAIGN EXTENTION

February 2026

For more than a decade, Misfit has had the privilege of partnering with the Humboldt Lodging Alliance (HLA) to drive overnight visitation from outside Humboldt County. Together, we have positioned Humboldt as something increasingly rare in today's tourism landscape — a place that feels magical, authentic, and discoverable for families, couples, outdoor enthusiasts, and travelers seeking meaningful experiences.

The Follow the Magic platform has allowed Humboldt to stand apart in a crowded market while staying true to what makes the destination special. This positioning has created consistency, recognition, and long-term brand equity that continues to support lodging partners and the broader local economy.

The most recent iteration of the campaign focused on audiences within a four- to five-hour drive of Humboldt County. A balanced media mix combined broad reach tactics such as live sports television with highly targeted digital video, display, paid social, search, and organic content. Throughout 2025, campaign performance met or exceeded benchmark goals across channels. Web traffic increased consistently while the campaign was active and declined during dark periods, reinforcing the direct relationship between sustained marketing activity and visitor interest.

While the campaign concluded at the end of last year, the need to drive overnight visitation has only intensified. Overnight visitors generate significant impact not only for lodging partners but also for restaurants, retailers, arts organizations, attractions, and the broader Humboldt economy. Maintaining visibility in competitive feeder markets remains essential.

To support this continued momentum, Misfit recommends two planning pathways for the Humboldt Lodging Alliance (HLA) to consider.

Option 1: Short-Term Campaign Extension (March – June 2026)

This option extends the existing Follow the Magic campaign using current creative assets and proven media tactics to ensure Humboldt remains visible heading into peak travel season.

Media strategy would include:

- **Live sports television** placements across Golden State Warriors, Sacramento Kings, San Francisco Giants, Athletics, and San Jose Sharks broadcasts
- **Digital video** (15- and 30-second spots) delivering more than 700,000 impressions to high-intent travelers
- **Digital display** delivering more than 3.5 million impressions

- **Paid social media**, primarily Instagram, delivering more than 2.5 million impressions
- **Paid search** capturing active travel demand
- **Ongoing optimization** through contextual and behavioral targeting and other audience segmentation
- Continuous monitoring, reporting, and minor creative adjustments to maintain performance

This extension would run March through June 2026 with a total investment of \$220,000, including \$200,000 in paid media and \$20,000 for account management, reporting, and creative refreshes along the way. The budget level is consistent with prior campaigns during this timeframe and allows HLA to maintain continuity while evaluating longer-term direction.

Option 2: Full Campaign Continuation Through June 2027

This option builds on the same March launch described above while reestablishing a longer planning horizon that aligns with HLA's previous multi-year marketing commitment.

Sustained destination marketing performs best when it is consistent, predictable, and strategically paced. A year-long continuation allows HLA and Misfit to move beyond short planning cycles and instead focus on maintaining momentum, strengthening market presence, and maximizing the value of each media investment.

Operating within a longer timeframe creates several advantages. Media placements can be negotiated more effectively, creative updates can be planned rather than reactive, and messaging can be tailored to seasonal travel motivations. Importantly, it also allows HLA to place intentional emphasis on shoulder and off-peak travel periods, where incremental overnight stays can deliver meaningful economic benefit across the community.

Under this approach, Misfit would:

- Launch the campaign in March using existing creative and media strategy
- Maintain consistent year-round visibility across priority feeder markets
- Introduce new creative assets to prevent campaign fatigue
- Negotiate longer-term media placements to improve efficiency and value
- Expand social and content strategies that deepen engagement with prospective visitors
- Align messaging with seasonal travel behavior, regional events, and lodging availability

This option provides HLA with the stability needed to plan proactively rather than reactively. It also reinforces a key insight from prior campaign performance: when marketing activity remains visible, traveler interest and web engagement follow.

The investment for this option includes the same \$220,000 for March through June 2026, plus \$495,000 to support July 2026 through June 2027. This funding level enables sustained visibility,

targeted off-season activation, and measured creative refreshes that ensure the campaign remains effective over time while protecting the brand equity already built.

In short, this pathway positions HLA to maintain momentum, maximize prior investment, and approach destination marketing with a longer-term strategy that reflects how travel decisions are actually made.

Recommendation and Next Steps

Both options maintain the integrity of the Follow the Magic brand while continuing to drive measurable visitation. The key difference is the planning horizon and strategic flexibility.

A short-term extension ensures continuity in the immediate future. A year-long continuation provides stability, stronger negotiating power, and the ability to evolve the campaign in ways that maximize long-term return.

Misfit recommends HLA consider the broader economic impact of sustained visibility when determining the appropriate path forward. Tourism markets are increasingly competitive, and consistency remains one of the strongest predictors of performance.