

Community Tourism Proj... ▾

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**Organization Name**

Kinetic Universe

**Contact Person**

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[Map It](#)

**Project Overview**

**Project/Event Title**

Kinetic Grand Championship

**Dates or Duration**

Memorial Day Weekend - May 23rd - 25th, 2026

**Amount of Funding Requested**

\$10,000.00

**Entry**   

Entry Id: 2385

Submitted on: 2026/02/20 at 4:23 am

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**What is the Return on Investment?**

The event attracts out-of-county spectators, though this segment was not fully captured in the 2025 survey due to survey limitations. In total, 145 individuals responded, offering a helpful snapshot of visitor patterns. In our 2025 survey sample, the most common length of stay fell between four and six nights.

Based on survey responses that specified lodging type, approximately 50% of visitors stayed in hotels or inns, about 29% stayed in campgrounds or RV accommodations, roughly 7% stayed in short-term rentals such as Airbnb/VRBO properties, and about 14% stayed with friends or family.

Even within this small sample, respondents specifically named the following Eureka properties:

- Redwood Coast Cabins + RV Resort (formerly KOA) : 8 respondents
- Eureka Inn : 7 respondents
- Best Western Plus Bayshore Inn : 6 respondents
- Ramada Eureka : 1 respondent
- Elks Lodge : 1 respondent

These Eureka businesses were named repeatedly across survey responses:

- Los Bagels
- Eureka Natural Foods
- North Coast Co-Op
- Lost Coast Brewery
- Ramone's
- Sequoia Park Zoo

Other businesses mentioned included Cafe Nooner, Annie's Cambodian, Fire & Brick Bistro, Humboldt Bay Bistro, Vista Del Mar, The Speakeasy, The Shanty, Madaket, Adel's, Speedy Taco, In-N-Out, Applebee's, Paul's Live from NY, Village Pantry, and Jitter Bean, along with retail and market stops such as Eureka Books, Toy Box, Costco, Booklegger, and Murphy's Market.

**Seasonal Impact**

In 2025, the Kinetic Grand Championship drew participants and volunteers from beyond Humboldt County:

- 176 racers and pit crew traveled from outside Humboldt County
- 57 volunteers traveled from outside the county

We were unable to confidently report on spectator traffic due to an insufficient number of survey responses last year. Last year was the first year we attempted to track any tourism info, and we did not have a fully-baked plan (but we have a great plan for this year).

**Feasibility & Track Record**

This year, we have developed a solid plan to measure attendance. Enhanced surveys for racers, volunteers, and spectators will capture origin, lodging choices, and length of stay so we can more accurately

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demonstrate the race's economic benefit to Humboldt County lodging businesses.

We have recognized that our previous survey approach created unnecessary barriers to participation that reduced response rates and data quality.

In 2026, we will implement three separate, targeted data collection strategies:

- Racers, Pit Crew, and Peons (approx. 400 people) will be surveyed through the Head Timer/Registrar
- Volunteers (approx. 200 people) will be surveyed through the Volunteer Director
- Spectators will be surveyed in person by Pollsters during Spectator Choice voting

Because the race is unticketed, spectators are the most difficult group to measure. In 2026, Pollsters, a team of volunteers whose role is to collect Spectator Choice votes at each main viewpoint along the race course, will also gather information about:

- Visitor origin
- Lodging type
- Length of stay

Not only will we learn where attendees stayed, we will learn how long they stayed and where they traveled from. To encourage participation, spectators will receive a commemorative sticker as a "thank you" for participating in the survey. We will expand the Pollster team to cover more ground, and we have a goal to capture information from at least 4,000 spectators.

Post race, we will also send out a survey through our newsletter, social media and mailing list in hopes to capture information from spectators our pollsters may have missed.

### **Innovation & Uniqueness**

In addition to the improved surveying methods listed above, we are hoping to expand our marketing reach with Lodging Alliance funding by running ads for longer, and through more channels.

We are also adding the Kinetic Fest event to Day 1 of the race, creating a massive Day 1 Finish Line party. This event will begin at 2 pm, inviting people to come to the Finish Line to cheer on racers as they finish Day 1 of the race. There will be live entertainment, a kid zone, art and craft vendors, food, drinks, and a fenced-in sculpture corral, where spectators can mingle with racers and get up-close-and-personal with the machines. The event will run until 8 pm, well after the finish line closes, allowing all racers and event volunteers the opportunity to enjoy the party! Kinetic Fest is produced in partnership with Ink People for Arts and Culture, who will be running the Kinetic Fest portion of the event, while KGC volunteers oversee the Finish Line portion of the event.

### **How will you define success with your project and ensure sustainability?**

Ideally, the HLA and its chapters would be long-term partners. The Kinetic Grand Championship, with its spectators, racers, and volunteers

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contributing to Humboldt County's lodging industry for decades, would appear to be an ideal candidate for an ongoing partnership. Though we are just beginning to collect data to prove our claim that the race generates stays, it is known that the thousands who line up along the Eureka waterfront each year are not all locals. Even the out-of-town race organizers visit the area multiple times a year, bringing their families to plan or participate in the event, staying in hotels (this writer has already logged 7 days in Humboldt County hotels this year and it's only February). Kinetic Universe has reached a new phase of financial responsibility, thanks to the work of its new leadership, who began working toward the professionalization and sustainability of the organization five years ago. The organizational structure has improved, with experienced professionals running their departments including: a lawyer, a nonprofit development officer, a web developer/forensic analyst, an admin specialist, an insurance broker, a timer for the Olympic trials, and a teacher who runs our youth programming. In 2025 we adopted our first-ever comprehensive agency budget and built a strategic plan. In 2025, thanks to increased investments from sponsors such as the Lodging Alliances, increased merch sales, and careful budgeting, we ended the race with over 20k in the bank-a first for the Kinetic Grand Championship.

Funding comes from multiple fundraising campaigns, including a monthly membership program (kinetic racers even create a handmade member gift for each member), an end-of-year appeal, and the Invisible Ticket campaign during Kinetic Grand Championship season, which encourages people to purchase an "Invisible Ticket" to this free event. We also partner with volunteers to raise money at third party events, such as Six Rivers Brewery, where we host Kinetic Mixers, and where money from drink sales is donated to Kinetic Universe. Donors contributed approximately 20k in 2025.

In earned revenue, we made around 15k in racer fees in 2025 and we estimate it'll be similar in 2026. Thanks to our surplus at the end of our 2025 fiscal year, we are strategically reinvesting that surplus into generating more earned revenue in merch. Our plan has three components:

1. Offer a unique merch tshirt/sweatshirt, designed by a local artist, in three local stores where the race runs through (Arcata, Eureka, Ferndale). These shirts will be geared toward appealing to tourists, will say "Humboldt County" on them, and will be available year-round (though only in the shops, not at the race or on our website). This is already in motion, we have one store in Arcata committed, and the shirts are in production at this time. Once printed, we will approach stores in Eureka and Ferndale.
2. Revamp our merch store on our website. We now have a more intentional selection of merch on our website. They are all "evergreen" designs by local artists, with no year, and they are produced by a print-on-demand website. This is beneficial to us as we are a volunteer run organization with limited time to ship orders and no office space to store merch (we have a small storage unit). There are three designs available now, with two more coming soon. This effort has already generated around \$1,000, having launched in December/January with minimal advertising.
3. Improve the style of merch available at the Kinetic Grand Championship. In the past, the event shirt/hoodie design was simply the event poster printed on a tshirt. This was due to us being a volunteer run

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agency with little time to truly focus on design. This year, we are working with designers to create merch inspired by the event poster that looks like an intentional shirt design, making it much cooler than a rectangle poster plastered on a shirt. We are also increasing our merch budget to offer a wider array of items and working with a wider variety of artists to design merch that can be appealing to different tastes. This year we will be exploring 3-D postcards and potentially adding a stuffed "kinetic chicken" to the merch offerings to appeal to kids. Once the race is over, we will bring merch that has the year printed on it to tabling events and sell it at a discount. In the past, the old merch has sat in storage, taking up space and generating no revenue.

Our financial goal is to end the fiscal year with 40k in the bank, doubling last year's surplus. If we can continue this growth, we are hoping to hire an Executive Director in five years as it's becoming challenging to manage high-level partnerships, grow and train our volunteers, be fiscally responsible, and oversee the race as a team of volunteers with professional day jobs. Building long-term partnerships has also been an area where we've grown and will continue to grow. Kinetic Fest is presented in partnership with Ink People Center for Arts and Culture, we have begun to work more with Humboldt Made, we are in our third year of partnership with Jefferson Community Center to present the Kinetic Classic, a youth kinetic race in September, and we are on our third year of partnership with Recology for the race.

Other KPIs include: Number of teams racing: 45, Number of spectators surveyed: 4,000, Number of new members (donors) during our membership drive: 10, Amount raised in third party events: \$8,000 (we have already raised 5k this year), Number of new volunteers: 30, and Sales of merch through new website and in-store design: \$12,000.

### Room Night Strategy

Funding from the Eureka Lodging Alliance will specifically support production and promotion of Kinetic Fest, our Day 1 Finish Line Party produced in partnership with the Ink People Center for the Arts and Culture:

- Event location: Halvorsen Park, 2–8 pm on Day 1 of the race
- Features food vendors, artisans, drinks, and live entertainment
- Provides a front-row view of kinetic machines crossing the Day 1 finish line
- Racers mingle with spectators afterward, with machines on display
- Designed to encourage overnight stays in Eureka by giving visitors an exciting Saturday experience

that leads into Sunday, Day Two of the race, which opens with machines crossing Humboldt Bay.

With support from the Lodging Alliances in 2025, and in direct response to your encouragement to invest more intentionally in advertising, we purchased paid regional marketing.

We invested over \$4,300 in advertising through paid TV ads, radio spots, social media advertising, and printing the annual Spectator Guide.

According to the ABC23/FOX28 marketing snapshot, advertising targeted both local and out-of-area audiences:

- Local reach: Humboldt and Del Norte Counties

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- Out-of-area reach: Mendocino, Sonoma, Napa, Marin, Contra Costa, Alameda, San Mateo, and Santa Clara Counties

- The campaign included broadcast television and digital streaming placements, generating approximately 25,000 impressions across platforms such as Hulu and Tubi

We also purchased radio airtime throughout the month of May with Lost Coast Communications to further increase regional awareness of the event.

This represented an important shift toward intentionally marketing the Kinetic Grand Championship as a "you have to see it to believe it" tourism experience while maintaining its reverence as a beloved local tradition. If we receive funding from Lodging Alliances again, we will again invest in paid advertising and we will increase our marketing budget by \$2,600. If funded, we plan to: grow our advertising budget to expand paid TV, radio, social media, and print promotion built last year to two months of promotion instead of one and: return the Spectator Guide to publication in The Journal. The race used to have its Spectator Guide included in The Journal edition that came out before the race but, due to price increases, we have opted to print elsewhere and self distribute, only reaching people already at the race. Without funding from Lodging Alliances, we will not be able to invest in any paid advertising. Additionally, we would appreciate marketing assistance via the HLA's marketing team.

If funded, we are open to using our communications to spread the word of a partnership with the Lodging Alliance in an attempt to persuade our followers to consider staying in hotels rather than AirBnb/Verbo properties to demonstrate how hotel stays benefit the Kinetic Grand Championship.

**Has this project or idea been successfully tried elsewhere?**

The sport of kinetic sculpture racing was created in Humboldt County in 1969 by local artist Hobart Brown; today there are at least four "sister" races inspired by the original, with the KGC being the largest and most challenging.

Sister races include: Baltimore Kinetic Sculpture Race, Baltimore, MD, with major support from American Visionary Art Museum

Lowell Kinetic Sculpture Race, Lowell, MA, with major support from Greater Lowell Community Foundation

Graand Kinetic Challenge, Corvallis, OR

The Great Port Townsend Bay Kinetic Sculpture Race, Port Townsend, WA

**Projected Room Nights**

In our 2025 survey sample, the most common length of stay fell between four and six nights. The survey also identified 4-5 unique hotels where visitors stayed. At this time, without better data, we are not confident in making a claim of how many nights of stay the event will generate. We are excited to improve our data collection this year and provide a clearer picture of the event's impact in our grant report, if funded.

**Proposed Budget**

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Item	Total	Cost	Amount	Requested	Category	Description
Spectator Guide printing	\$3,000	\$1,000			Marketing	Produce the Spectator Guide as an insert in The Journal
TV Ads	\$3,300	\$1,000			Marketing	Produce TV ads to drive tourism to the region
Graphic Artist Fees	\$2,300	\$750			Marketing	Goes toward artist fees for multiple merch artists
Radio/Social Media Ads	\$600	\$200			Marketing	Targeted ads
Fencing	\$2,500	\$2,500			Kinetic Fest	Fencing for Kinetic Fest and sculpture corral at Finish Line
Security	\$750	\$750			Safety	Overnight security at Halvorsen Park
Porta potties	\$2,000	\$1,000			Kinetic Fest	Toilets and handwashing stations for Kinetic Fest
Porta potties	\$2,000	\$2,000			Infrastructure	Toilets/handwashing stations water entry, exit, and Eureka waterfront
Misc Supplies	\$4,300	\$800			Misc.	Can include: volunteer supplies, Eka business license, signage, etc.
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$20,750</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>				

**Certification**

- Yes, I certify

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