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Community Tourism Proj...

Edit Settings Entries

Preview

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Community Tourism Project Application : Entry # 2489

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Organization Name

County of Humboldt, Department of Aviation

Contact Person

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Map It

Project Overview

Project/Event Title

ACV to SEA Minimum Revenue Guarantee

Dates or Duration

April 2026-April 2028

Amount of Funding Requested

Entry

Entry Id: 2489

Submitted on: 2026/04/10 at 12:03 am

User IP: 24.32.26.249

Embed Url: .../community-funds-application

Move to Trash | Mark as Spam

Edit

Notifications

Admin Notification

User Confirmation Notification

Resend

Submission Speed (ms)

103939648

Community Tourism Project Application : Entry # 2489 show empty fields

$225,000.00

What is the Return on Investment?

The return on investment for this project is directly tied to increased overnight visitation driven by improved air access. The new ACV to Seattle route opens Humboldt County to a large and previously underserved market, making it significantly easier for travelers to plan multi-day visits that require lodging.
This project converts interest into overnight stays by removing a major travel barrier. Visitors from the Seattle and Puget Sound region, as well as passengers connecting through Seattle from national and international markets, will now be able to reach Humboldt County more efficiently. This increased accessibility supports longer stays, midweek travel, and shoulder season visitation, all of which directly benefit hotels, RV parks, and other lodging providers.

The Department of Aviation will participate in coordinated marketing with the Humboldt Lodging Alliance, Visit Humboldt, and local tourism partners to align efforts that promote Humboldt County as a fly-in destination. This includes digital campaigns, airline co-marketing opportunities, and regional promotion targeting Seattle and connecting markets. These efforts will highlight lodging options and encourage extended stays tied to outdoor recreation, events, and cultural tourism.

Return on investment will be measured through passenger volumes and load factors on the Seattle route, increases in Transient Occupancy Tax revenue and Humboldt Lodging Alliance assessment revenue.

Based on projected passenger volumes and visitor behavior, the ACV to Seattle route is expected to generate approximately 30,000 to 35,000 room nights annually, representing a significant return on investment for Humboldt County lodging providers.

Seasonal Impact

Seattle is a major West Coast hub with strong demand from leisure travelers, business travelers, and families. With a convenient midafternoon nonstop flight, Humboldt becomes much easier to reach for short stay travelers, event attendees, outdoor recreation visitors, and returning repeat visitors from the Puget Sound region and beyond. This improved access is expected to increase the overall number of visitors, especially during the shoulder seasons when many lodging properties have room to grow.

The new route will also help hotels, RV parks, and other accommodations maintain steadier year-round occupancy. Daily service supports predictable travel patterns and reduces sudden changes in demand, which is especially important for properties that rely on consistent bookings.

The flight strengthens Humboldt County's ability to attract conferences, trainings, university related travel, and corporate retreats, all of which create significant room night demand but depend on reliable air service.

Being listed as a nonstop destination in the Alaska Airlines route network also raises the county's visibility among travelers looking for coastal, cultural, and outdoor experiences. In addition, the flight supports visiting friends and relatives travel, which is a major part of local overnight stays, by making it easier and quicker for people to visit. And, because the service operates daily year-round, it supports consistent visitation outside of peak summer months and helps fill gaps in demand from September through June.

Feasibility & Track Record

The County of Humboldt Department of Aviation is well qualified to complete this project because it manages and oversees all commercial air service at California Redwood Coast Humboldt County Airport (ACV). The department has long standing experience working with airlines, federal and state agencies, and community partners to support reliable and successful air service for the region. This includes managing airport operations, maintaining safety and regulatory standards, coordinating with the Federal Aviation Administration, and supporting air service development efforts.

The department has successfully completed similar projects in the past, including securing new commercial routes, supporting airline transitions, and managing Minimum Revenue Guarantee agreements. Staff have the technical knowledge and professional relationships needed to work directly with Alaska Airlines and other stakeholders to ensure the launch and long-term success of the new ACV to SEA service. The department also has strong partnerships with local governments, regional tourism organizations, economic development groups, and the business community, all of whom play an important role in air service development.

The County of Humboldt Department of Aviation will dedicate key staff, partner support, and operational resources to ensure the success of this project. The project will be led by the Department of Aviation, with support from the County Administrative Office and Economic Development Division, who will oversee coordination with Alaska Airlines, the Federal Aviation Administration, and regional partners. The Department of Aviation staff, will support day to day communication, monitor operational needs, and track service performance once flights begin. Additional county staff will assist with data collection, reporting, and coordination of airport readiness for the start of service.

The department will also work closely with the County Administrative Office, the County of Humboldt Economic Development Division, the Humboldt Lodging Alliance, local tourism organizations, and economic development partners throughout the region. These groups will contribute support related to marketing, performance tracking, business outreach, and community engagement. Financial staff within the county will help manage the funding and reporting requirements tied to the Minimum Revenue Guarantee.

Innovation & Uniqueness

The introduction of daily year-round Alaska Airlines service between California Redwood Coast Humboldt County Airport (ACV) and Seattle-Tacoma (SEA) directly strengthens Humboldt County's lodging sector by improving access to our region, which has long been a barrier to visitor growth. The Small Community Air Service Development Program (SCASDP) is a federal grant program that allows small communities to identify their own air service gaps and propose solutions. In the SCASDP application submitted by the County of Humboldt Department of Aviation for federal fiscal year 2021, the county identified the lack of northbound service at the California Redwood Coast Humboldt County Airport. Because all existing airline routes required passengers to first travel south, even when their final destinations were north of Humboldt, the community faced a major limitation in attracting visitors and supporting local travel needs. The new nonstop ACV to Seattle service directly addresses this gap by providing the northbound connection the community has needed for years. This project is uniquely impactful because it addresses a long identified structural gap in air service and unlocks an entirely new northbound visitor market that has not previously been accessible through direct air service.

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

Success for this project will be defined by both air service performance and measurable increases in overnight visitation. Key performance indicators will include passenger enplanements and load factors on the ACV to Seattle route, increases in Transient Occupancy Tax revenue, and Humboldt Lodging Alliance assessment revenue, particularly during midweek and shoulder season periods.

Additional indicators of success could include growth in visitors originating from the Seattle and Puget Sound region, increased group and event related travel, and expanded use of Humboldt County lodging by business and leisure travelers who previously faced access barriers.

Sustainability is built into the Minimum Revenue Guarantee model. The purpose of the MRG is to reduce initial financial risk for the airline during the early phase of service. As demonstrated by the successful ACV to Denver route, once passenger demand reaches stable levels, the airline continues service without the need for ongoing subsidy. The ACV to Seattle route is expected to follow a similar trajectory.

The anticipated timeframe for sustainability is within the two-year MRG period. As awareness grows, travel patterns adjust, and demand strengthens, the route is expected to become self-supporting, with continued service driven by market demand rather than financial incentives. As stated prior, this expectation is supported by the strong performance of the ACV to Denver route, which achieved sustainable demand with minimal reliance on MRG funding.

Room Night Strategy

The room night strategy for this project focuses on converting improved air access into overnight stays through coordinated regional marketing and targeted outreach. The primary market is the Seattle and Puget Sound region, along with connecting passengers traveling through Seattle from national and international markets.

The Department of Aviation will work to support the efforts of the Humboldt Lodging Alliance, Visit Humboldt, and regional partners to align digital marketing campaigns and destination promotion that highlight Humboldt County as an accessible fly in destination. These efforts will promote lodging options, multi night itineraries, and seasonal travel opportunities.

The daily midafternoon arrival supports extended stays by allowing visitors to arrive and settle in the same day, making two-to-four-night trips more feasible. The route also supports midweek travel and group bookings, including conferences, trainings, and university related travel, all of which generate significant room nights for local lodging providers.

The ACV to Seattle route will operate daily using a 76-seat aircraft, generating approximately 27,700 inbound seats annually. Using a conservative average load factor of 72 percent, this results in approximately 19,900 arriving passengers per year.

Based on regional travel patterns, it is reasonable to estimate that approximately 60 percent of these passengers are visitors who require overnight accommodations, with the remainder consisting of local residents or day trip travel. This results in approximately 11,900 overnight visitors annually.

Assuming an average length of stay of 2.5 to 3 nights, which aligns with typical leisure and visiting friends and relatives travel in Humboldt County, the route is projected to generate between 29,750 and 35,700 room nights per year.

Because the flight operates daily year-round, these room nights are expected to be distributed across all seasons, with a significant portion occurring during shoulder and off-peak months. The availability of a midafternoon arrival also supports multi night stays and midweek visitation, which are especially valuable for increasing occupancy during lower demand periods.

These projections are intentionally conservative and are supported by the strong performance of similar routes at ACV, including the Denver service, which exceeded initial expectations and required minimal use of Minimum Revenue Guarantee funds.

Has this project or idea been successfully tried elsewhere?

Yes, this type of project has been successfully carried out in many small and rural communities across the country, and it has also been proven successful here in Humboldt County. Minimum Revenue Guarantee (MRG) agreements are a well-established tool used by airports, counties, and tourism organizations to secure new commercial air service. They help reduce the financial risk to airlines when they enter a new market, allowing new routes to launch and grow until they become self-sustaining.

Humboldt County has direct experience with this model. The Department of Aviation previously secured a Small Community Air Service Development Program (SCASDP) grant to support the development of the ACV to Denver (DEN) connection with United Airlines. The grant, originally awarded in 2012, was extended multiple times and ultimately used in 2019 to launch the ACV–DEN route. The 2012 SCASDP provided financial backing through a Minimum Revenue Guarantee, helping United Airlines begin service on this important new route. The ACV–DEN service has continued to show strong demand and solid performance ever since, aside from temporary impacts during the COVID 19 pandemic. Further, ACV has consistently met minimum revenue guarantee requirements without fully drawing on the funding, enabling significant portions of the match to be retained or returned. This local success demonstrates that MRG supported service can thrive in Humboldt County and mature into long term, stable air service.

Similar results have been seen in other communities such as Redding, Santa Rosa, Pasco, Medford, and Missoula, which have used MRG agreements to attract and sustain flights from Alaska Airlines, United Airlines, and American Airlines. Across the country, these projects have shown that early financial support helps airlines overcome initial risk. Once passenger traffic reaches consistent levels, airlines usually continue service without ongoing incentives.

Projected Room Nights

Projected room nights are based on aircraft capacity, expected load factors, and typical visitor stay patterns for Humboldt County.

The ACV to Seattle route will operate daily using a 76-seat aircraft, generating approximately 27,700 inbound seats annually. Using a conservative average load factor of 72 percent, this results in approximately 19,900 arriving passengers per year. This level of demand is expected to have a measurable impact on lodging occupancy, particularly during midweek and shoulder season periods when additional capacity is available.

Based on regional travel patterns, it is reasonable to estimate that approximately 60 percent of these passengers are visitors who require overnight accommodations, with the remainder consisting of local residents or day trip travel. This results in approximately 11,900 overnight visitors annually.
Assuming an average length of stay of 2.5 to 3 nights, which aligns with typical leisure and visiting friends and relatives travel in Humboldt County, the route is projected to generate between 29,750 and 35,700 room nights per year.

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These projections are intentionally conservative and are supported by the strong performance of similar routes at ACV, including the Denver service, which exceeded initial expectations and required minimal use of Minimum Revenue Guarantee funds.

Proposed Budget

The requested funding of $225,000 will be used as part of the local match requirement for the Minimum Revenue Guarantee supporting the ACV to Seattle route. These funds will directly contribute to reducing financial risk for Alaska Airlines during the initial launch and stabilization period of the service.
The total project funding includes $850,000 from the Department of Transportation Small Community Air Service Development Program and $175,000 in additional local match funding. The Humboldt Lodging Alliance contribution will be combined with these sources to meet the full MRG requirement.
Funds will not be used for administrative overhead but will instead be applied directly toward supporting the route’s financial performance during its early stages. This investment is expected to generate significant returns in the form of increased overnight stays, lodging revenue, and Transient Occupancy Tax growth.

Certification

- Yes, I certify

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Notes

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