

MEMBERS

Cleveland County

Belwood

Boiling
Springs

Earl

Fallston

Grover

Kings
Mountain

Kingstown

Lawndale

Polkville

Shelby

McDowell County

Marion

Old Fort

Polk County

Columbus

Saluda

Tryon

Rutherford County

Bostic

Chimney Rock

Ellenboro

Forest City

Lake Lure

Ruth

Rutherfordton

Spindale



IPDC

Isothermal Planning and Development Commission Executive Committee Board of Directors Agenda

Thursday, February 13, 2020, 12:00 p.m.

IPDC Rutherfordton Office, 111 West Court Street, Rutherfordton, NC

<u>Item</u>	<u>Presenter</u>
A. 12:00p.m. Call to Order, Welcome, Moment of Silence and Pledge of Allegiance	Fred Baisden <i>Chairman</i>
B. Request for Approval of November 14, 2019 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes (attachment)	Fred Baisden
C. Web Page and Branding Audit (attachment)	Erica Allison <i>Formation PR Brand</i> Steve Lockett <i>Economic, Community & Workforce Development Director</i>
D. Housing Task Force Update	Scott Dadson <i>Executive Director</i>
E. Budget Review - Performance Merit System	Scott Dadson
F. Housing Update - Director and Transition	Scott Dadson
G. Amendment to Housing Choice Voucher Program Admin Plan - Section XVI Utility Allowance (attachment)	Pam Hall <i>Interim Housing Director</i>
H. Approve Resolution to support designation of US74 Between I-26 and I-85 to a Future Interstate Quality Corridor	Scott Dadson
H. Discussion to reschedule next Full Board meeting Current: March 10 Proposed: April 14	Scott Dadson
I. Announcements - Next Full Board meeting: Time and location to be announced - Next Executive Committee meeting is May 14, 2020 12 noon at IPDC	Fred Baisden
J. Adjourn	Fred Baisden

Isothermal Planning and Development Commission
Executive Committee BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
November 14, 2019
Minutes

Committee Members Present

Fred Baisden, City of Saluda
Dean Buff, McDowell County
Jimmy Dancy, Town of Rutherfordton
Max Hopper, Town of Earl
Ted Owens, Polk County
Jack Shytle, Town of Polkville
Ashley Wooten, McDowell County

Committee Members Absent

Bryan King, Rutherford County

Others Present

David Hill, Piedmont Triad Regional Council

IPDC Staff Present

Scott Dadson
Becky Evans
Judy Lynch

The Executive Committee meeting was held in the Hughes Conference Room of the IPDC Rutherfordton office. Chair Fred Baisden called the meeting to order at 12:00p.m., welcomed all those in attendance and led a moment of silence and the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Jimmy Dancy made a motion to approve the August 29, 2019 Executive Committee meeting minutes, Mr. Jack Shytle seconded and the Committee vote was unanimous in favor.

Chair Baisden asked for a motion to approve the appointment of Mr. Ted Owens of Polk County to the Executive Committee to replace Jake Johnson. Mr. Dancy made a motion, Vice Chair Max Hopper seconded, and the Committee voted unanimously in favor.

Mr. Scott Dadson reported on the recent Housing Summit held on November 7th in Rutherfordton. A web page was created for Housing. Committee members discussed creating a Housing Task Force with four members per county. A motion was made by Mr. Ted Owens to authorize the creation of the task force, Mr. Dancy seconded, and the Committee voted unanimously in favor.

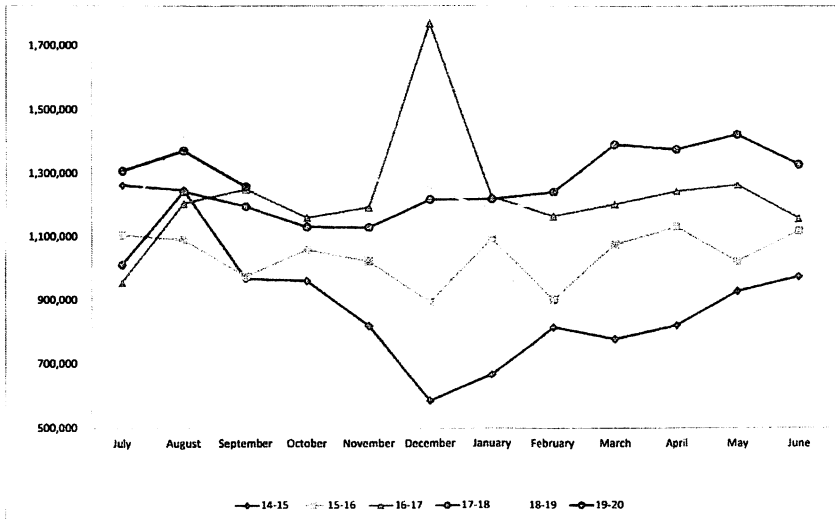
Ms. Becky Evans presented financials which included a summary for the quarter ending September 30, 2019 and a working cash report:

**Isothermal Planning & Development Commission
Financial Summary
For the quarter ending 9/30/2019**

	Amended Budget	Expenditures to 9/30/2019	Percent of Budget
HOUSING	6,824,244	1,638,989	24.02%
AGING	3,884,704	589,783	16.45%
WIOA	2,228,800	325,967	14.62%
LOCAL	119,941	16,078	13.40%
Economic Planning & Community Development	214,600	27,887	13.00%
Rural Transportation Planning (RPO)	217,969	41,370	18.98%
Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)	160,605	30,418	20.21%
Grant Administration KBR Grants	247,000	33,134	13.41%
Total Budgeted Expenditures	\$13,587,663	\$2,703,606	19.90%
Indirect Expenses	\$ 639,707	\$ 145,173	22.69%
Expected percentage for three months	25%		

Presented 11/14/2019

IPDC Working Cash Balance



Thursday, November 14, 2019
For year ending 6/30/2020

Ms. Evans then presented the expected budget revisions to be presented to the Full Board in January:

**ISOTHERMAL PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
BUDGET REVISIONS 2019 - 2020**

PROGRAM	APPROVED BUDGET	9/10/19	1/14/20	AMENDED BUDGET
		FIRST REVISION	SECOND REVISION	
Housing (Section B)	6,824,244			6,824,244
Aging	3,694,704			3,694,704
Workforce (WIOA)	2,228,800		62,046	2,290,845
Local	118,941			118,941
Economic, Planning & Community Development	214,500			214,500
Rural Transportation Planning (RPO)	132,889	85,000	100,000	317,889
Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)	150,505			150,505
Grant Administration - KBR Foundation	247,000			247,000
Total Revision #1		85,000	162,046	
				13,749,708
Original Budget Total	13,502,883			
Revision #1	85,000			
Revision #2	162,046			
Revised Budget 1/14/2020	13,749,708			

PREPARED BY: REBECCA EVANS, FINANCE DIRECTOR

PRESENTED BY: SCOTT DADSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

To Be presented at Board Meeting 1/14/2020

Expected Revision

**ISOTHERMAL PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
BUDGET REVISIONS 2019 - 2020**

Second Revision Details 1/14/2020

Rural Planning Organization (RPO)

Safe Routes to School Program - Rutherford County

Federal	\$	80,000	
Local		20,000	100,000
			\$ 100,000

Workforce (WIOA)

Grant Enhancement -
New funding to Provide Rutherford & Polk Counties with Edge Factor.
Edge factor is an online program to create Manufacturing Career awareness

Federal	\$	62,045	
			62,045
			\$ 62,045

Mr. Dadson presented the Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation documents created for the Community Development Corporation (CDC) by IPDC attorney Beth Miller. Ms. Miller joined the Committee meeting via conference call for this discussion. A motion was made by Vice Chair Max Hopper to adopt the Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation as written, Mr. Dean Buff seconded, and the Committee voted unanimously in favor. Ms. Miller agreed to find out whether to get a 501(c)(3) tax exempt status before filing the documents. It was agreed by the Board to name the Executive Committee as the interim Board as they work to name a permanent Board.

Mr. Dadson gave an update on activities of the Facility Committee. He told the Executive Committee members they have a PAR draft and that USDA required a 3rd party financial analysis. A firm was located to do the analysis for a cost of \$5,000 - \$7,500. Vice Chair Hopper made a motion to proceed with the analysis, Mr. Ted Owens seconded, and the Committee voted unanimously in favor.

Mr. Buff was excused at 2:00p.m.

Mr. Jimmy Dancy was excused at 2:07p.m.

Mr. Dadson introduced Mr. David Hill from Piedmont Triad Regional Council who presented the Market Rate Study Pay Plan. After discussion it was agreed by a unanimous vote of the Committee to implement option II on a motion by Mr. Owens and a second by Vice Chair Hopper. Option II places employees in their appropriate market-based salary grade either at the minimum salary of the recommended pay grade, or retain their current salary, whichever is greater, and implement a market adjustment to ensure each employee receives, at minimum, a 2.5% adjustment. A full year cost would be \$80,312.69, with the first adjustment on January 1, 2020 (already in the current budget) and the next adjustment on July 1, 2020, after looking at the FY 2020-2021 budget. Mr. Hill agreed to return for a short presentation to the Full Board.

Mr. Dadson presented the Committee with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Housing Assistance Corporation, Inc. (HAC), a non-governmental organization (NGO) based in Henderson County

NC. The agreement creates a partnership between IPDC and HAC to assist in developing affordable housing projects with our membership around the four-county area. On a motion from Vice Chair Hopper and a second by Mr. Scott Webber the Committee voted unanimously to authorize the MOU.

Chair Baisden made the following announcements:

Next Full Board meeting is **January 14, 2020** with time and location to be announced.

Next Executive Committee meeting is **February 13, 2020** at 12: 00 p.m.at IPDC Rutherfordton office.

With no further business Chair Baisden adjourned the meeting at 2:21p.m. on a motion by Mr. Owens.

Respectfully submitted,

Chairman Fred Baisden

Secretary Bryan King

uIPDC Board of Directors IPDC BOD minutes 2019 November 14, 2019 BOD minutes

February 10, 2020

To: Executive Committee, Isothermal Regional Commission

From: Scott Dadson, Executive Director

Re: Isothermal as a Brand

The Isothermal Board held a lunch and learn to learn about the Branding and Communication Audit conducted by Formation PR of Hendersonville, NC. The audit of the Isothermal Commissions communication strategy and current platforms was presented, and a full question and answer period ensued.

Next steps in our effort to communicate more effectively include an overhaul of our website and integrated communication platform and a branding process. Both efforts will be offered to the Board of Directors and others in our membership. Look for further details on this in future communications.

Staff and Erica Allison will make a brief presentation and answer questions via Skype at our meeting on Thursday. I would encourage you to read the full report on our Communication Strategy and Branding Process. The full audit can be accessed [here](#).

IPDC:: DIGITAL AUDIT



DECEMBER 6, 2019





OVERVIEW & METHODOLOGY

DIGITAL AUDIT OVERVIEW

The Isothermal Planning and Development Commission (IPDC) is the Council of Governments for the Isothermal Region which includes Cleveland, McDowell, Polk and Rutherford Counties in Western North Carolina. The membership of IPDC consists of local governments within the Isothermal region. IPDC serves its members and their communities by fostering regional collaboration and providing professional and technical expertise. IPDC also serves as the region's Area Agency on Aging, Rural Planning Organization and Workforce Development Board. IPDC provides services through its Housing programs, Economic, Community and Workforce Development programs and Technical Assistance programs.

IPDC has recognized the need to have an outside branding consultant perform an audit of their website, social media platforms, newsletter, and any other existing communication tools.

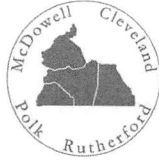
The goal of the audit provided by Formation PR + Brand (Formation) will result in a clear direction on where IPDC needs to focus their communication strategies.

RESEARCH OVERVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

Primary research consisted of a combination of perception surveys and a thorough review of all client public facing materials, including website and digital platforms, and collateral items.

Surveys were conducted with both Board Members as well as regional community partners. Both surveys were conducted in an effort to gain valuable insight into how IPDC's brand is currently perceived throughout the region. Survey questions focused on thoughts and opinions about IPDC, their work, and how well IPDC's services are known - or not - among stakeholders. Survey results are both synthesized in this report as well as included in their entirety in the report appendix





OVERVIEW & METHODOLOGY

As part of Formation's digital audit, comprehensive primary research was conducted on the following client-provided owned media and marketing assets:

1. IPDC website
2. IPDC social media platforms: Facebook | Twitter
3. IPDC email marketing newsletter (served through MailChimp)
4. Additional communication tools: logos, letterhead, slide deck template, survey template, and other print collateral.

Secondary research was conducted to help identify the most appropriate and relevant updates to be made in owned assets, strategy, and communication style and tools. The research included a comparative analysis of other Councils of Government/Planning and Development Commissions in the western half of North Carolina.

The digital research analysis process included:

- Market landscape messaging and marketing analysis;
- Market research into the homepage design, structural layout, appearance, user-experience (UX) impressions, features, inspiring strategies, and keywords; and,
- Market research into use and strategy of social media platforms.



PRIMARY RESEARCH

SURVEY: BOARD MEMBERS

Formation surveyed IPDC board members regarding brand perception and perceived value. A survey was sent to 35 board members on October 28, 2019. By November 6, 2019, 22 had responded, resulting in an almost 63% response rate. A brief summary of the results is included here with complete survey results provided in Appendix A.

Roughly 85% of IPDC Board Members who responded said that they are “very” or “extremely” familiar with IPDC. They described IPDC as a partner and collaborator, a source of information and expertise, an aid or resource, and helpful.

While board members clearly understand who IPDC is and what the organization represents to the region, they also understand the tension that might exist between what they know and understand the organization to be and the perception associated with the logo. When asked what comes to mind for them when they see the IPDC logo, most clearly understood the organization and its brand as representing the region, as a service provider and as an economic development partner. One board member had this to say about the logo: “Most people in the community would have no clue as to what organization the logo is representing”

When asked what services and resources they were most familiar with at IPDC, more board members noted the RPO, IPDC’s work in Economic Development Opportunity Zones, and the weekly regional newsletters (half of respondents noted the newsletter). Only five of the respondents noted familiarity with the Area Agency on Aging and none were familiar with the AAA’s Family Caregiver Support Program.

When asked what programs they believed the community was familiar with, the top answers were Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program, Region C Workforce Development Board, and Isothermal Rural Planning Organization (RPO).



PRIMARY RESEARCH

Most board members said that IPDC is “relevant” or “extremely relevant,” while some said it was “somewhat relevant,” and one even replied it was “not very relevant.” When asked about the most important services provided, regional planning and RPO management were the top responses along with grant writing, expertise/information, and housing.

When delving deeper into the staff and community that interact with these board members, we started to see a different picture. The farther away from the board member a relationship ventured - staff then community member - the less that group seemed to know or understand about IPDC. For example, 13 of the board member respondents said their staff understand IPDC “a moderate amount” or “a lot” and over 75% responded that their community does not know what IPDC does. When asked how IPDC could improve community perception, most board members suggested improvements in awareness and engagement in addition to connecting with local governments and municipalities.

SURVEY: COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Formation surveyed community members regarding brand perception and perceived value. A survey was sent to 405 community members on October 28, 2019. By November 6, 2019, a total of 59 had responded, resulting in an almost 15% response rate. While that percentage is much lower than the board member response rate, it is right on target for average response rates for an external survey. Recipients had various affiliations with municipalities, nonprofits, and organizations throughout the region. The following summary reflects response generalizations as well as specific stand-out responses. A complete survey summary is included in Appendix B.

Community Partners are overall very knowledgeable about IPDC, with almost half of respondents having had some sort of affiliation or relationship with IPDC for more than 10 years. Like board members, community partners describe IPDC very positively, using words like: supportive/helpful, collaborator/partner, informative/knowledgeable, regional, and asset.

When asked what comes to mind when they see the IPDC logo, more than half of respondents perceive IPDC as regional, an economic development partner and a service provider. However 27% of respondents also noted that the logo itself is “old or outdated” and specifically noted:

- “Does not convey in my mind what IPDC truly represents and supports. What it does convey is something that covers/involves four counties”





PRIMARY RESEARCH

Community partners were overwhelmingly familiar with top level services like the Economic Development Opportunity Zone, Workforce Development Board, RPO, and Area Agency on Aging. Community Partners are least familiar with AAA's Evidence-Based Disease Prevention and Health Promotions Program and HUD-VASH Program. Overall, community partners find IPDC to be "relevant" or "extremely relevant/crucial." Additionally, IPDC community partners find value in IPDC as "a trusted resource" for funding, collaboration, support, connecting to other partners in the region, leadership and guidance, and overall assistance in accessing data and information. As is often the case with this type of work, community partners surveyed perceive that citizens likely do not know and understand what a planning and development commission is and what it does.

Community partners call on IPDC for resources or assistance frequently, some less than once a month, some daily, and all others in between. Some, however, have decreased or halted connection due to "lack of response from IPDC staff" or inability to find anything with which to collaborate.



PRIMARY RESEARCH



WEBSITE AUDIT AND REVIEW

When developing a website, it's important to consider your goals when it comes to maintaining the website, communicating with your audience, and overall user interface and experience (UI and UX, respectively). User interface focuses on how a website looks and user experience focuses on how easy a website is to use.

IPDC's website seeks to communicate credibility, relevance, and community impact, while providing key information and data to their primary audiences. Their primary audience includes regional and state political leaders, community partners, local colleges, and local nonprofits with a secondary audience of regional residents.

The IPDC website url could present an identity challenge; it is regionc.org rather than an address with Isothermal or Regional in its name. In fact, if one were to google and quickly try to access this website, they might find themselves on Isothermal RPO instead and never land on the actual IPDC site. While the other website (RPO) is related, it is not clear how, nor does it offer a clear path back to IPDC. A quick GoDaddy domain search found IsothermalPlanning.org (and .com) and IsothermalPDC.org available. Given the context in which



PRIMARY RESEARCH

the organization operates and geographic location, either one of these domain names would be a smart step towards improving both the user interface (looks) and user experience (ease of use).

Additionally, the current design and navigation of the site could be enhanced to improve both interface and experience. To illustrate this point, we reviewed for key areas: design, imagery, functionality and content and have provided brief summaries for each.

PAGES & LINKS

- Total pages: 27
- Site word count: nearly 10,000 words
- Average page word count: 366
- Total links (excluding navigation): 302
- Average link count per page: 11
- Downloadable PDF links: 84
- Broken/Outdated links: 12

DESIGN

The current theme was likely implemented years ago when it was common to have a long, narrow layout. As web design has evolved over time, more sites are going to full frame viewing with intuitional navigation features like scrolling imagery and text, anchor links, or calls to action that guide users to relevant content.

A long, narrow layout affects users' ability to read and digest page content effectively. With a narrow theme, even minimal content requires extensive scrolling. It is imperative to guide the eye of the user to different sections, important information, and calls to action.

The website is also mostly the same color green. While we believe green is the right direction as it symbolizes growth, it might be time for an update to the color so that it appears more modern and relevant to today's context. A complementary color for calls to action would also be a smart step. Current mobile compatibility is functional, however it emphasizes the issue of too much scrolling to find information.



PRIMARY RESEARCH

IMAGERY

Imagery is a useful tool in visually breaking up larger pages, guiding users' eyes, and providing a visual representation of the region, work, and purpose of the organization. Graphic representations and infographics are great ways to convey numbers and data, although they should not be used to replace text entirely as this can impact Search Engine Optimization (SEO).

There are minimal graphics and photos found on the site. At the time of the review, the homepage featured photos of meetings which can communicate keywords like partner and collaborator (noted consistently in the survey responses); however, they do little to communicate the actual work or aspirational relevance of IPDC within the region. For example, economic development came up for both partners and board members as an identifiable association or program for IPDC; imagery that denotes this as a feature of the IPDC work should feature prominently on the site.

A different layout with an image gallery that rotates could quickly accomplish this. Additionally, email newsletter featured prominently for the board respondents; placing it as an easy sign up via a Call to Action button higher up the page would be an easy way to broaden the audience.

FUNCTIONALITY

A website's functionality relies on successful and easy to use navigation. If pages are difficult to find or users are unable to get the information they need, they will turn to other sources. Modern site designs typically include the main menu horizontally along the top of the page. All sub-pages are then organized in a drop-down menu under their respective category. The footer contains a simplified version of the menu, a secondary menu, or a link to a sitemap. Footers also include contact information, social media links, and email marketing sign up.

Links throughout the website should be used to supplement information, provide relevant documents, or redirect users to the appropriate page. When creating links, it's important to always set link target to "new" so that it opens in a new tab or window. Internal linking and external linking helps improve SEO; however, use internal linking sparingly within articles, and only link to immediately relevant content.





IPDC's main menu is located vertically along the left-hand sidebar of the website, and copied again in the footer of the website. Currently there are some sub-pages that users can only access through visiting another page first (ie: Economic Development Programs leads to additional pages, not accounted for on the menu, including Rural Food Business Assistance, Broadband Resources, Regional Tourism, etc.). Links are not overly abundant and are often used to round out information. Additionally, some pages are linked numerous times (like the Regional Economic Development Strategy). This results in visiting the same pages multiple times in an effort to find new content.

CONTENT

As a Planning and Development Commission, it is imperative that content be informative, accurate, professional and relevant. Text should be written with all of those elements in mind in addition to being easy to read and understand.

IPDC's website maintains a professional tone and page copy is easy to understand. Industry-specific jargon is used appropriately. The website follows the structure of the most important information being at the top of the page and the least important information being at the bottom. This is a particularly useful rule when creating any additional pages. The content is on brand although word count can vary, and in our research, we found no errors in spelling and grammar.

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION (SEO)

When and where possible, Search Engine Optimization (SEO) tactics should be employed. We find it useful to begin with a strong content marketing strategy: writing content that your users actually want to read, but that also produces strong results in a Google Search. A brief summary is provided here, but there are countless articles and SEO partners that can really boost your presence when you're ready.

- Make your content longer (1,500+ words). Longer copy increases search engine rank, and converts better than short copy.
- Use images and infographics. 65% of people are visual learners and articles with images get 94% more views.
- Organize and structure your content in a clear manner for readers, as well as for Google spiders that crawl your pages.
- Use subheads and proper tag hierarchy when tagging headlines (H1 and H2) to maintain good structure and allow faster crawling.





PRIMARY RESEARCH

- Try, try and try again! Test your content, CTAs and headlines with A/B testing to see what language users respond to most and to maximize engagement.
- Start link building. Linking to relevant pages on your site or other sites improves SEO, as Google gives extra weight to keywords and phrases that include a clickable link. Furthermore, linking to sites with authority (online clout) and trustworthy content also builds your overall trustworthiness!
- And while we're on the topic, don't forget to check broken links in your articles and on your pages. Too many broken links increase redirect requests and results in a search engine drop.
- To help readers share your content more easily, place social media share buttons in convenient spots on your page.

WEBSITE ANALYTICS

Formation asked IPDC to implement Google Analytics on their website at least one month prior to the audit's start. When Formation initially began diving in to IPDC's site analytics, it was discovered that the raw data measurement included internal site visitors. Around the same time, IPDC was actively recruiting for multiple open positions, which may have skewed site data. To account for this anomaly, we recorded analytics with the initial raw data, but also implemented a "Master View" filter to exclude internal site traffic. Formation revisited the site analytics a month later in order to get a more accurate picture of user traffic and behavior. The following analysis is representative of both sets of data and are noted as Phase One and Phase Two measurements (October 3, 2019 and October 31, 2019).

USER DEMOGRAPHICS: GENDER



FEMALES VISIT THE SITE MOST AND MAKE UP THE
**LARGEST SEGMENT
OF NEW USERS.**

MALE SITE VISITORS
SPEND MORE TIME
ON THE SITE: AVERAGE SESSION DURATION
OF 1:53 VS. 0:43, RESPECTIVELY.





PRIMARY RESEARCH

USER DEMOGRAPHICS: AGE

LARGEST PERCENTAGE OF USERS:

35-54 YEARS OLD

HIGHEST BOUNCE RATE:

55-64 YEARS OLD

LOWEST BOUNCE RATE:

(most engaged site visitors overall)

60+ YEARS OLD

USER DEMOGRAPHICS: GEOGRAPHY
(COUNTRIES, STATES & REGIONS)

As expected, a large majority of site visitors are from the United States (95%), predominantly North Carolina (66.4%). Specific North Carolina user locations include Charlotte, Forest City, Rutherfordton, Shelby, Monroe, Raleigh, Asheville, Marion, Spindale, and Boiling Springs.



USER DEMOGRAPHICS: TECHNOLOGY

PHASE ONE:



DESKTOP

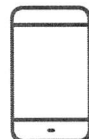
65%



MOBILE

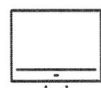
32%

PHASE TWO:



MOBILE

67.7%



DESKTOP

30.3%





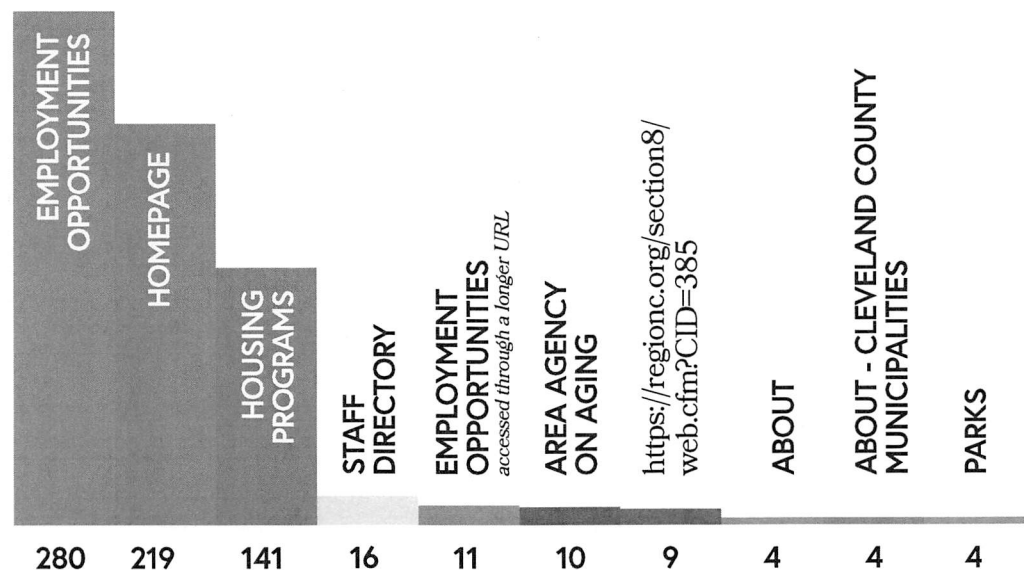
PRIMARY RESEARCH

USER BEHAVIOR

Site visitors are predominantly new visitors who spend less than 10 seconds per session on IPDC's website. Of those visitors, a large majority are only viewing one page per session. This could be a result of the user not finding the content they're looking for or a lack of content related to their search. Excluding the visitors who land on the Employment Opportunities page (a top landing page during this audit), a majority of users who land on the homepage are most often clicking through to **Housing Programs**, **Employment Opportunities**, **Contact**, and **Staff Directory** pages. Unfortunately, most visitors who land on the Housing Program page bounce.

LANDING PAGES

Landing pages are the pages that a user is beginning their session with IPDC's website. Consistent with the above, the Employment Opportunities page is the top landing page, likely due to employment ads currently running on IPDC's Facebook. It should also be noted that <https://regionc.org/section8/web.cfm?CID=385> sees 31% of initial site traffic, but it is a broken link. This link is referring visitors externally. Below are the top ten landing pages with the number of sessions respectively.

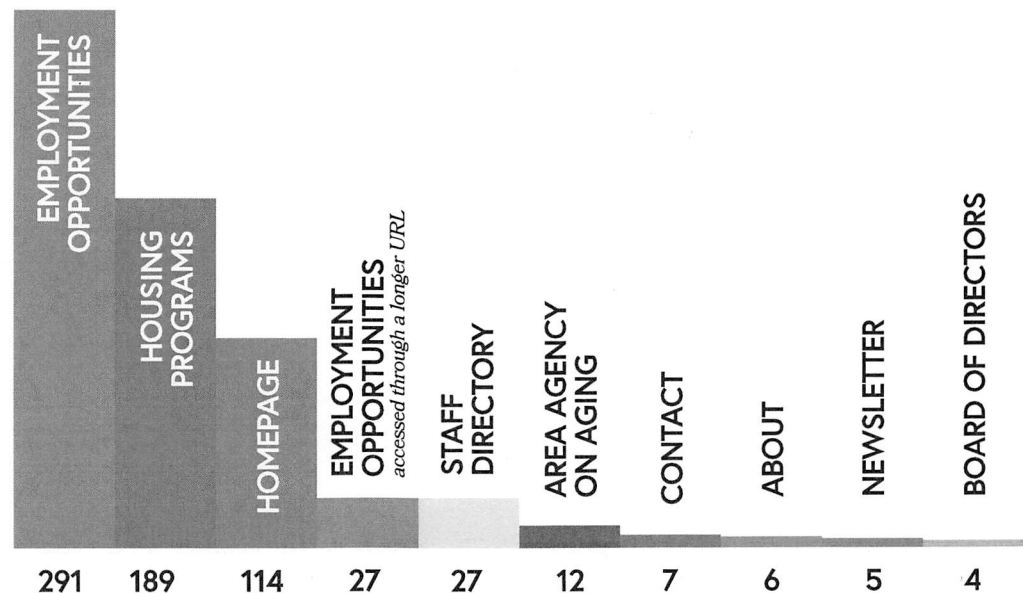




PRIMARY RESEARCH

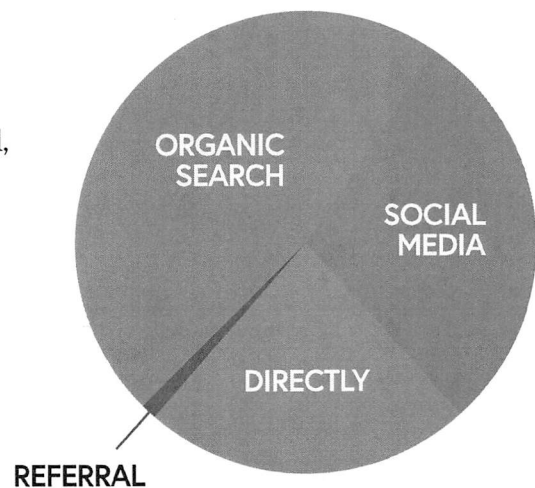
EXIT PAGES

Exit pages, or pages where a site visitor literally exits the website, are the pages where most organizations might get the most bang for their buck when evaluating content changes. The top ten exist pages are as follows:



USER ACQUISITION

There are four main groups or channels by which a user will find your website: organic search, social, direct, and referral. For IPDC, **289 users (46.9%)** were acquired through organic search. **178 (28.9%)** were acquired through social media. **141 (22.9%)** users were acquired directly. **8** were acquired through referral.





PRIMARY RESEARCH

ORGANIC SEARCH

As the largest percentage of users acquired, we looked at the terms used that led users to IPDC's website. It should be noted that Google is able to "hide" keywords based on user privacy preferences. For IPDC, 271 organic search keywords were not provided. To aid in discovering potential keywords or topics, viewing "not provided" with the resulting landing pages is helpful. Below is the list of keywords that were not hidden along with the list of landing pages under the "not provided" keywords.

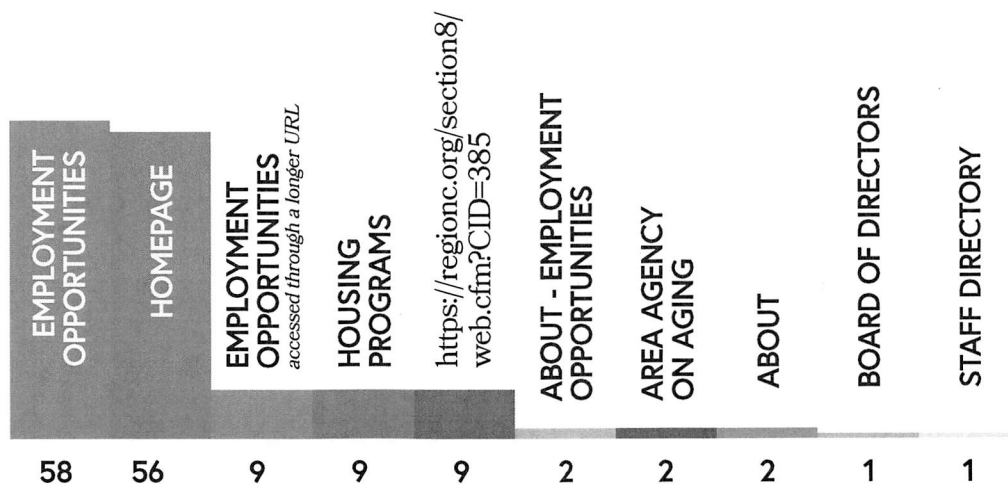
What we found were that more keywords included the term Isothermal and Housing than they did RegionC. Additionally, top landing pages were search terms were not provided included homepage, housing programs and employment opportunities. Interestingly, Housing was a top keyword and a top landing page but it was not a program that survey respondents seemed to associate with IPDC.

SOCIAL

As to be expected, a majority of social media acquisition derives from Facebook (99%), with only one referral via Twitter.

DIRECT

Direct acquisition occurs when a visitor lands on the site from typing a URL into the search bar or utilizing a browser bookmark. This list indicates which pages are visited through direct URL acquisition and how many users were acquired. Again <https://regionc.org/section8/web.cfm?CID=385> is a broken link. If we exclude the employment opportunities once again due to the campaign and duplicative links, we once again see Housing Program rise to the top of the list.





REFERRAL

Referrals are site visitors who land from a hyperlink on a different website or medium aside from Google and those accounted for in other acquisition methods (ie: social). Referral traffic is very low, and there are no referrals from Mailchimp, indicating that email marketing campaigns do not contain UTM codes, codes added to URLs to track traffic from sources like email newsletter, and/or site links.

SOCIAL MEDIA REVIEW

Facebook clearly has the most engagement and attention placed on it by IPDC staff. With well over 850 followers and 820 likes, this is a valuable communication platform for IPDC. We recommend including more Calls to Action (CTAs) that drive viewers from Facebook to a specific page on the IPDC website.

Conversely, Twitter has a lower number of followers and less activity. When there is an uptick in tweets, engagement and impressions go up. However, unless there is a clear strategy to align with this platform, these sorts of momentary upticks are not as valuable as they could be. We recommend utilizing Twitter for economic development focused activity and managing consistency so that followers know to expect updates and news.





EMAIL MARKETING REVIEW

IPDC uses Mailchimp for its email marketing and based on the responses in the board survey, does so with success. The respondents genuinely look forward to receiving their weekly email updates.

IPDC is currently subscribed to a free plan, which is limited to a total number of 2,000 contacts. Currently, nearly half of the contact total is made up of double contacts and those contacts who may have unsubscribed. As the list grows, it is important to remove those inactive or redundant contacts to make room for new contacts.

How you organize your contacts and lists within Mailchimp can make a difference in how you optimize your messaging and how it's received. With proper segmentation of audiences, campaigns will see a higher open and click-thru rate. Audiences are best for two completely different groups (ie: board members & community members) who may intersect, but need to remain in separate categories due to the nature of sending sensitive information (ie: internal information). Tags are best for efficiently and effectively organizing contacts based on interests and groups. For example, tags of housing programs or economic development may be ideal ways to segment information and content and cultivate key audiences. Tags can also be combined to create a Segment that can be used for a specific campaign.

WEEKLY NEWSLETTER CAMPAIGNS

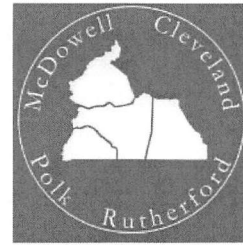
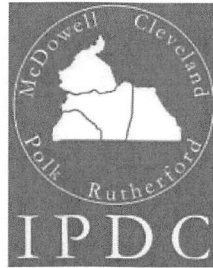
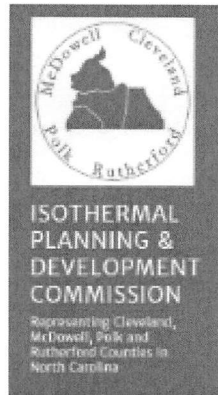
Formation sampled a weekly campaign from the Master List, as it has the largest audience and most campaign sends. In reviewing Weekly #158, we noticed that it contained a lot of copy. The text includes over 4,500 words, not including text overlay on some larger graphics, and 20 images.

The printable PDF of the email is 16 pages long. Formation recommends adjustments to template design, content, and size. Whenever possible, create a brief introduction or overview of a topic with a link to read more on the website. The lengthier content found on the website would not only increase visits to the site, but result in stronger SEO results overall.





PRIMARY RESEARCH



LOGO & COLLATERAL REVIEW

Formation reviewed the following branded elements of IPDC:

- IPDC logos (5 versions);
- Sub or partner program logos: Region C Workforce Development Board, Isothermal Rural Planning Organization;
- Letterhead;
- Slide template and an RSVP survey;
- Handouts: Regional Legislative Priorities and Economic Development Strategy; and,
- Meeting agendas.

Overall, the IPDC branded assets (logos, letterhead, and slide deck) are uniform in appearance but as a whole, give the impression of being dated or not in alignment with the forward thinking and progressive organization that is IPDC. Additionally, there are some departments that have their own branding (and websites) that makes them feel separate from IPDC.





SECONDARY RESEARCH

INDUSTRY MARKET RESEARCH: NORTH CAROLINA COGS/PDCS

**High Country Council of
Governments (Region D)**
(regiond.org/)

Top-level Messages

"The HCCOG is involved in the communities of northwestern North Carolina in many ways; from the care of older adults to water, sewer, GIS services, transportation planning and workforce development. The Council provides services and resources which might not otherwise be affordable or available to local governments."

Logo Colors

royal blues and white

Key Marketing Strategies and Tactics

- Providing access to information regarding member governments and opportunities for citizens
- Email newsletter (MailChimp)
- High Country Available Properties Web App

Homepage: The homepage features a visually-dated, narrow design with no real features aside from weekly e-newsletter sign-up.

Menu Structure: The website features three menu locations. The main menu is located horizontally across the top (no dropdowns). A secondary menu is located along the left sidebar and contains page-relevant links. Finally, a tertiary menu is located along the footer of the page and includes links to member counties.

- Top-level menu items: **Home, About Us, Executive Board, Aging** (external site link), **Planning, Workforce, Resources, Careers, and Contact Us.**
- Footer menu items include internal landing pages for: Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Mitchell, Watauga, Wilkes, and Yancey counties.

Page Design & Appearance, Features, Content, and Language & Tone: Page **design** and **appearance** is very plain. Page background is a gray-blue textured image, and main body background is white with black text (darker royal blue text for headers). Design is practical and navigation is easy. Pages are purely informational, and any photos, graphics, or additional features are included minimally, seemingly on an as-needed, practical basis. Page copy is appropriately separated with headers, differing text color, and horizontal rules. High Country Area Agency on Aging has its own website, but all other initiatives have landing pages, as do each county (which contains each member body's contact information).

Social Media: A Facebook page that is largely undeveloped and under utilized.





SECONDARY RESEARCH

**Land of Sky Regional Council
(Region B)**
(landofsky.org/)

Top-level Message

"Our mission is to provide creative regional solutions to relevant and emerging issues in Buncombe, Henderson, Madison and Transylvania counties while providing a standard of excellence in the delivery of federal, state, and regional services for our member communities."

Logo Colors

muted orange gradient and muted blue gradient

Key Marketing Strategies and Tactics

- Easy to find information on the website; content is extensive, but well-organized.
- Accessible information
- Community partnerships
- Issu subscription to house publications
- Event marketing (social media)

Homepage: The homepage features a narrow design, responsive "quick link" buttons, "recent news" updates, links to upcoming events, and a graphic showing the region. The page ends with a very simple footer that features contact information and social media tiles.

Menu Structure: There are main and secondary menus on all pages. The main menu lies horizontally across the top of the page and drops down as needed. A vertical sidebar secondary menu also appears on all pages. On the homepage, the vertical sidebar features responsive buttons that change colors when hovered over. On all other pages, the vertical sidebar secondary menu contains the "drop down" contents.

- Top-level menu items: **[Home icon]**, **About LOS**, **Departments** (dropdown), **Calendar** (dropdown), **Member Governments** (dropdown), **Resources** (dropdown), **Opportunities** (dropdown), and **Contact Us** (dropdown).

Page Design & Appearance, Features, Content, and Language

& Tone: Page count is extensive (based on menu structure) and the website design appears to be a "blog" template. Most pages, with few exceptions, keep text body length minimal. Design and appearance feel professional. The website appears vibrant and energizing featuring oranges and blues. All pages feature a header photo. Some stock photography, graphics (logos, tiles), and/or videos are used. Page copy is appropriately separated with differing text color and horizontal rules. Copy is informational, and very extensive. Pages are appropriately named so that specific content is easy to find. Copy is written in "layman's terms" so that it is easy to read and understand by any audience.

Social Media:

- Facebook: updated frequently with articles or member content, event promotion.
- Twitter: used infrequently.
- YouTube: used infrequently.

Email Marketing Sign-Up: Land of Sky has a branded newsletter signup form that asks users to "self-segment" into interested categories.





SECONDARY RESEARCH

Southwest Commission Council of Governments (Region A)
(regiona.org/)

Top-level Messages

We serve as a technical, economic, and planning resource to local towns and counties in our western region.

Logo Colors

light blue, gradient grey

Key Marketing Strategies and Tactics*

- Focus on telling and showing what Southwestern Commission COG does and why it is important, valuable, and relevant to the community today
- Accessible information
- Blog ("News and Updates")
- Community partnerships
- Research studies
- Social media (see below)
- Email marketing

Homepage: The homepage features an attractive design with modern graphics, an array of stock and regional photography depicting the work of the Commission (some contained in the homepage slider), a newsletter signup, graphic tile "quicklinks" to the Commission's agencies. The footer is concise and functional.

Menu Structure: The main menu (positioned horizontally at the top of the page) "floats" with the user as s/he scrolls down the page. Top-level menu items: **Home**, **About Us** (dropdown), **Departments** (dropdown), **Mountain West Partnership** (external link), **Member Governments**, [magnifying glass search icon].

Page Design & Appearance, Features, Content, and Language

& Tone: The page has a modern, functional, full-width, responsive design. A white background with light blue and light gray complementary colors make the site easy to read and professional. Each page **features** a wide photo (mix of local and stock photography) or collage at the top that appropriately depicting the agency or content. Additional photography and graphics are used throughout the body of most pages. **Graphics** are well-done and informational. Each page uses large, colored headers to logically separate content. **Copy** is informational, but not extensive. Content is limited to "need to know" and downloadable PDFs and links to additional resources are available for those who wish to learn more. Explanations of services are written in "layman's terms" so that anyone can find, read, and understand the information. The PDFs and additional resources are kept in a list of links listed at the bottom of each page.

Additional page features to note:

The "Staff" page includes a headshot, title, and contact information for each person.

The "Contact" page includes the main office's address, phone number, and fax number, as well as an embedded contact form. There is a "pop up" email newsletter signup on homepage entry.

Social Media:

- Facebook: is used primarily for brand and cause awareness. Content is internally-curated and shared from other organizations. Photos also highlight regional events and videos, as well as the stakeholders.
- LinkedIn: profile exists but is not fully developed.
- Vimeo: Mountain West Partnership has an account that is used for hosting economic development video marketing assets.





SECONDARY RESEARCH

Western Piedmont Council of Governments (Region E)
(wpcog.org)

Top-level Message

[Mission] "The Western Piedmont Council of Governments shall serve all local government members in Alexander, Burke, Caldwell and Catawba Counties with professional, cost-effective assistance on a variety of local, regional, state and federal issues and programs."

Logo Colors

variety of blues, greens, and white

Key Marketing Strategies and Tactics

- To generate and share information that creates significant impact for citizens and member governments; primary strategy on all platforms is brand and cause awareness.
- Blog
- Social media (see below)
- Video marketing (limited)
- Print marketing (flyers)
- Email marketing
- Event marketing: "Lunch & Learn"
- Community partnerships

Homepage: The homepage features a narrow design, although the header area seems to extend full-width. The header contains a professionally-shot and -edited video about WPCOG. The body of the homepage features photo quicklinks to departments, a news roll of most recent blog updates, an internal advertising space (currently used for an upcoming event), and links to sign-up for the newsletter and view the most recent newsletter. The footer is minimal containing the logo, a small "about" blurb, contact information, social media tiles, a disclaimer, and a link to driving directions.

Menu Structure: Only a main menu is horizontally located at the top of the homepage (header). The main menu has two levels, and once you click into a page, a secondary menu appears in the body of the page on the right sidebar. Site is easily navigable.

Top-level menu items: Home, Our Services (dropdown), News, Contact Us (dropdown), and About Us (dropdown).

Page Design & Appearance, Features, Content, and Language &

Tone: Website design is slightly dated. Page background is light gray with black, blue, and green text. The site appears is professional, but lacks a perspective. All pages feature a page-appropriate header photo, which varies between internal and stock photography. Each department page communicates the department's mission, vision, goals, objectives with appropriate contact information for each staff person at the bottom. A secondary menu provides links to additional program information and resources. PDFs are available for download, indicated by a PDF tile graphic. Few, if any, graphics are used aside from the header images. Copy is informational, and becomes more extensive the farther a user dives into the menu. "Need to know" information is listed on main landing pages, and additional information and tips are in subsequent pages and sections. Pages are appropriately named so that specific content is easy to find. Copy is written in "layman's terms," with a helpful and informational tone, so that it is easy to read and understand by any audience.

Social Media:

- Facebook: updated regularly and used to share newsletters, promote events, show themselves out within the community, and to share relevant content. Strategy is brand and cause awareness.
- Twitter: updated regularly. Created content as well as re-tweets relevant content are used. They also utilize Twitter to promote events and workshops.
- LinkedIn: not utilized; not developed past the basic profile information.
- YouTube: used infrequently; account houses some video marketing assets.



RECOMMENDATIONS

WEBSITE

Formation recommends a new website and theme, but if that is not possible, then an update to the page content would improve functionality and user experience.

Design Recommendations:

- A full-width website that reflects current trends and technology;
- A color palette that identifies colors to be used for headers, links, and buttons; and
- A fully mobile-friendly website.

Imagery Recommendations:

- A mixture of stock photography as well as professional, high resolution photos of specific projects and activations relevant to the website content;
- Headshots for staff and the Board of Directors to make the directory more visually engaging and add a personal touch;
- Professional graphics and infographics that reflect the design of the website and create a visual representation of related text content

Functionality Recommendations:

- Update the menu so that it is at the top of the page for easy scrolling, reading, and navigating. If possible, a menu that “floats” while users are scrolling makes the navigation even easier to use;
- Update site footer to include only relevant information (ie contact information, hours, social media tiles, email newsletter sign-up, and a site-map link or minimal secondary menu);
- Review and updating broken links;
- Update any links that take users away from the IPDC website (partner webpages, PDFs, etc.), so they open in a new tab;
- Evaluate pages that are linked multiple times or appear on multiple pages (excluding navigation). Some pages are linked numerous times (like the Regional Economic Development Strategy); and
- Add links to keywords and phrases rather than the use of “click here” to give users a better idea of what they are clicking on and direct their attention.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Content Recommendations

- Review page content to ensure information is accurate and relevant;
- Avoid use of all caps and exclamation points to maintain professional tone;
- Remove redundant page copy (ie "About" page text in the overview seems to be the same as the first couple of paragraphs on the homepage with the same links);
- Ensure linked documents are PDF only - no Word documents - and do not automatically download;
- Remove the "Like this Page"/"Share this Page" feature;
- Create a "Resources" page for the list of links frequently found at the bottom of each page;

Additional website updates:

- Archive outdated content. It can still be available through a search, but will not appear on main pages and sub-pages. This will reduce page length and make relevant content easier to find and distill.
- Consider creating new pages to break up those with a lot of content, especially under "Regional Development" section. Make sure new pages are more easily recognizable as internal pages when calling users to click on them.
- Update the "Board of Directors" page to include information about the Board like how they support IPDC and their main responsibilities.
- Review the links on the "Employment Opportunities" page. As of now, the links take users to jobs in the city government as opposed to resources any job in that area. Consider re-wording and/or offering additional information about resources for job seekers.
- Regional Newsletter/Archives: Set up a Goal on Google Analytics to track how many people are clicking through the archives (to determine traffic and relevance). Consider removing newsletter archives if not heavily used. If you choose to maintain this content, the page may be easier to navigate if there are fewer links on the page. Consider the following content instead: a button to subscribe to the newsletter; a drop-down menu with current year's newsletters, and links to yearly archives.
- The "Isothermal Planning & Housing" page redirects to an application page that appears to be managed through a separate website. If this page is customizable, it could use a refresh that more clearly reflects IPDC's brand.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Analytics

- Based on our research and IPDC's Google Analytics, we recommend the following:
- Homepage, Employment Opportunities, and Housing Programs pages should be the first reviewed for updates to structure, content, and user experience.
- Ensure website is optimized for both desktop and mobile device technology (iPhone iOS and Android), as well as for viewing via Chrome, Safari, and Internet Explorer browsers.
- Use site links in emails and social media posts to drive traffic to the website. Additionally, integrate Google Analytics to MailChimp and utilize UTM code tracking in order to follow user flow and behavior.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook:

- Update cover photo to an overview video or image that is visually engaging and "evergreen." Cover and profile image can change on occasion with important campaigns or events, but they should return when the campaign/event is over.
- Make sure all fields are filled and relevant. For example: adding IPDC's mission, refreshing the "About" section and including a graphic with "Our Story."
- Consider organizing photos into labeled albums.
- Make sure all photos have a caption, even cover and profile pictures, so that they make sense when they show up in others' News Feeds.
- Aim for consistent use of tags and check-ins when visiting other locations or highlighting member or regional news.
- Make sure your photos, any of them, are worth posting as an extension of your professional organization. Twitter is a better space for lower quality photos to update on daily goings on.

Facebook Events

IPDC makes great use of Facebook event marketing. We recommend updating graphics to engage potential attendees and continue to utilize co-hosts to increase organic reach.

- Ensure that event photos are optimized for size. Consider creating a few templates that can be edited based on hosts and location (adding logos).
- Event description should include all pertinent information without requiring the user to go elsewhere.
- Engage with targets interested in attending leading up to the event. Make sure to share the event (and ask co-hosts to share) with a call-to-action as the event nears. Best practice is to post at least four weeks in advance of your event, with increased "sharing" and in-event engagement as event gets closer. "Hook" participants by highlighting the benefits of attending (free food, open jobs, free swag, etc.).



RECOMMENDATIONS

Messaging & Communication

The current posting frequency is more appropriate for a Twitter account. There appears to be multiple administrators posting to the Facebook page. Without an established structure, this can be difficult to manage and often results in post redundancy, inappropriate frequency, or brand tone/language inconsistency. Formation recommends cutting down on posts to 1 or 2 per day, max (it's even okay to skip a day or two), and maintaining a consistent, professional voice. The development of a content calendar that is shared among administrators can help focus their efforts and keep track of what is most important for IPDC to share. If possible, Formation recommends IPDC have a designated manager for the page to monitor posting and maintain the content calendar.

Currently, direct messages are turned off on IPDC's page. Direct messages are an effective way to manage communication, speak directly with community members, and answer questions quickly. Formation recommends turning on this feature, although another option could be to set up an auto-response. This auto-response would let the sender know that Facebook is not monitored for messages and could direct users to your website or preferred contact information.

It appears that while the "Jobs" tool is being used, applications are not being read. Formation recommends deactivating the tool if it is not able to be managed effectively.

Boosted Posts & Advertisement Recommendations

It appears IPDC boosts posts quite frequently for events and job postings. Although Formation is unable to view how the audience was targeted because we did not set up the ad, we encourage careful, specific targeting in order to set a foundation for an increase return on investment. Boosted posts and ads will reach outside your current followership, so it is important that graphics are professionally done, visually engaging, and include a clear call-to-action. Facebook provides a free service to speak with an ads professional to review your most recent ads. Formation recommends IPDC utilize this service to help optimize ads and boosted posts.

Twitter

Although IPDC's Twitter account is used sparingly and relatively inconsistently, IPDC does typically abide by Twitter's best practices. However, consistency is key with all social media platforms. If Twitter is a platform that IPDC would like to continue to utilize, we suggest the following:

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Utilize the platform for focused economic development posts and quick news updates.
- Update the profile with an appropriately-sized header image (1500x500px, accounting for “invisible area”).
- Curate more original, unique, concise content that continues to use appropriate visuals.
- Connect further and promote deeper engagement and increased followership with re-Tweets, replies, polls, questions, etc.
- Link to owned media (ie website) or relevant partner and community content, where appropriate.
- Continue incorporating relevant tags, add incorporation of relevant hashtags.

EMAIL MARKETING

MailChimp Recommendations

Formation recommends cleaning up and reorganizing audiences, so the contact list has more room to grow within the current plan. Contact organization will be easier to do while the contact list is smaller. It is crucial that IPDC maintains a single “master audience” and uses tags (primary) and, if appropriate, segments (secondary) to organize and target. Additional Audiences can be used strategically based on organizational needs. Formation recommends deleting unsubscribed contacts and cleaning unengaged contacts. Use this time to re-organize contact details to create consistency with first and last name; consider including organization and title if known.

Newsletter Recommendations

Formation recommends utilizing a consistent and concise newsletter template that includes branded header/footer graphics linking to the website’s homepage, contact information, and service area. When incorporating graphics, we recommend 700-800px to accommodate wider screen resolutions. Sections should be broken up with full width graphic headers like “What’s New,” “Regional News” and department-specific content.

The open rate and click rate are fairly strong compared to typical email marketing, but users are not increasing their engagement by visiting the website or social media channels. Currently, there is no way to measure how content and links sent in the emails are performing. Formation recommends reducing content in the weekly emails by choosing 3-5 stories and using a 100-word “hook” that directs them to the website to read more. These serve as introductions to the full blog posts to keep readers engaged. For remaining stories, copy should be kept to just a couple of sentences with prompts to read more at the appropriate page. Lastly for



RECOMMENDATIONS

layout, images should be used less frequently (this helps with loading the email), sizes should be consistent, and the images should be linked to relevant content/pages.

On the website, the newsletter sign-up should be included in the main menu or footer to encourage people to join. Additionally, Formation encourages IPDC to integrate Google Analytics to Mailchimp. The email marketer can set a campaign name (through UTM code tracking in Mailchimp settings) in order to track additional metrics through Google Analytics.

LOGO & COLLATERAL

In order to support IPDC's relevance and give a visual representation of their services and value, Formation recommends investing in a new logo that is rolled out with the updated website. Formation recommends a logo package that would allow for departmental sub-branding that is rooted in IPDC's brand. The logo update would also be a brand update for IPDC that translates to branded collateral, an engaging website, and consistent messaging and more - this is all to create a greater impact for IPDC.

If a logo update is not possible at this time, Formation recommends updating collateral to complement the refreshed website visually and with messaging. For the RSVP template, Formation recommends updating to ensure the copy is concise, readable, and clear. In regards to the additional handouts, Formation encourages IPDC to keep design layout simple and easy to follow and language easy for all audiences to comprehend.





RECOMMENDATIONS

FUTURE INVESTMENTS IN BRAND AND DIGITAL RECOMMENDATIONS

While most of the recommendations included in this report can be tackled by IPDC staff, there are a few for consideration that will require outside partners. An estimated investment plan is included here.

WEBSITE

If IPDC would like to pursue a new website, and we recommend that this be a priority for 2020, we suggest budgeting for an investment of \$11,000 - \$15,000. This budget would provide for an entirely new design and theme in keeping with the productive, relevant and innovative brand identity that we see for IPDC. Formation can serve as the web liaison and manage the process from start to finish, ensuring brand integrity throughout.

BRAND IDENTITY PACKAGE

We strongly recommend an update to the organization's brand, moving the logo from a dated, misunderstood representation of the work you do to an accurate and engaging icon for regional collaboration, economic development and improved quality of life. The brand story, key messaging and talking points that accompany that new logo, as well as associated brand collateral, equate to a complete **brand identity package**. We recommend a budget of \$8,000 - \$12,000 depending on the scope of associated items needed and to accommodate for some printing costs.



APPENDIX A: BOARD MEMBER SURVEY RESULTS

1. How familiar are you with Isothermal Planning and Development Commission (IPDC)?

- Very familiar - 13 (59.09%)
- Extremely familiar - 6 (27.27%)
- Somewhat familiar - 2 (9.09%)
- Not so familiar - 1 (4.55%)
- Not at all familiar - 0

2. What three words would you use to describe IPDC to your partners or citizens in the community or region?

- Partner/Collaborator (10)
- Informed/Expertise (9)
- Aid/Resource/Advocate (4)
- Helpful (4)
- Cooperation/Flexibility (3)
- Engaged/Involved (3)
- Housing (3)
- Planning, RPO (3)
- Approachable/Friendly (2)
- Commitment/Dedicated (2)
- Grants (2)
- Professional (2)
- Regional (2)
- Training/Workforce Training (2)
- Capacity (1)
- Certificates (1)
- Community (1)
- Data source (1)
- Efficient (1)
- Government (1)
- Rebuilding (1)
- Structured (1)

- Talented (1)
- Transportation, (1)
- Trustworthy (1)
- Unsure (1)

3. When you see the IPDC logo today, what comes to mind? Check all that apply.

- Service Provider - 10 (45.45%)
- Regional - 10 (45.45%)
- Economic Development Partner - 9 (40.91%)
- Old or Dated - 9 (40.91%)
- Respected - 8 (36.36%)
- Trusted - 8 (36.36%)
- Relevant - 4 (18.18%)
- Unnecessary - 2 (9.09%)
- Modern - 1 (4.55%)
- Other (please specify) - 1 (4.55%)
 - "Most people in the community would have no clue as to what organization the logo is representing"

4. In your work or interaction with IPDC, what resources and services are you most familiar with? Check all that apply.

- Isothermal Rural Planning Organization (RPO) - 16 (72.73%)
- Economic Development Opportunity Zones - 14 (63.64%)
- Weekly Regional Newsletters - 11 (50.00%)



APPENDIX A: BOARD MEMBER SURVEY RESULTS

- Region C Workforce Development Board - 9 (40.91%)
 - Membership Capacity and Technical Assistance (ie Finance, Office Support, Project Development, Project Management, Administrative Services, etc.) - 7 (31.82%)
 - Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program - 6 (27.27%)
 - Area Agency on Aging (AAA) - 5 (22.73%)
 - Broadband Resources - 5 (22.73%)
 - Western NC Housing Partnership - 5 (22.73%)
 - Rural Food Business Assistance Project - 4 (18.18%)
 - Parks and Recreation Planning - 4 (18.18%)
 - Employment Opportunities - 4 (18.18%)
 - Foothills Launch! for the Isothermal Region - 3 (13.64%)
 - Housing Choice Voucher Home Ownership Program - 3 (13.64%)
 - Other (please specify) - 3 (13.64%)
 - "Assistance with grant writing"
 - "Sewer"
 - "Newly appointed to the board not to familiar with all they do."
 - AAA's Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) - 2 (9.09%)
 - Agricultural Economic Development - 2 (9.09%)
 - AAA's Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program - 1 (4.55%)
 - AAA's Evidence-Based Disease Prevention and Health Promotions Program - 1 (4.55%)
 - Family Self-Sufficiency Program - 1 (4.55%)
 - HUD-VASH Program - 1 (4.55%)
 - AAA's Family Caregiver Support Program - 0
- 5. What is your general impression of the relevance of IPDC in your region?**
Average rating: 4 stars
- 1 star, Irrelevant/Unnecessary (0)
 - 2 stars, Not Very Relevant (1)
 - 3 stars, Somewhat Relevant (6)
 - 4 stars, Relevant (8)
 - 5 stars, Extremely Relevant/Crucial (7)
- 6. As an IPDC member, what do you view as the most important service or benefit of IPDC?**
- Regional Planning/RPO support and management (5)
 - Grant Writing/Administration (4)
 - Expertise, Information (3)
 - Housing (3)
 - Aging programs (2)
 - Transportation Planning/Assistance (2)
 - Resources/Services (4)
 - Affordable Housing Opportunities / Voucher System (1)
 - Census/Data (1)
 - Helping the community (1)
 - Unsure (1)
 - Workforce Development (1)
- 7. How well do your staff understand the role that IPDC plays in your region?**
- A lot - 7 (31.82%)
 - A moderate amount - 6 (27.27%)
 - A little - 6 (27.27%)
 - A great deal - 2 (9.09%)
 - None at all - 1 (4.55%)



APPENDIX A: BOARD MEMBER SURVEY RESULTS

8. Do you think people living within your region know and understand what a planning and development commission is and what it does?

- No - 17 (77.27%)
- Somewhat - 4 (18.18%)
- I don't know - 1 (4.55%)
- Yes - 0

9. What do you think IPDC is most known for in your community? Check all that apply.

- Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program - 14 (63.64%)
- Region C Workforce Development Board - 10 (45.45%)
- Isothermal Rural Planning Organization (RPO) - 7 (31.82%)
- Area Agency on Aging (AAA) - 5 (22.73%)
- Economic Development Opportunity Zones - 5 (22.73%)
- Western NC Housing Partnership - 3 (13.64%)
- Rural Food Business Assistance Project - 2 (9.09%)
- Other (please specify) - 2 (9.09%)
 - "I think the average citizen in my community have no idea what the IPDC does. I think the average citizen does not even know that COGs even exist in the state of NC."
 - Nothing
- AAA's Family Caregiver Support Program - 1 (4.55%)
- AAA's Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) 1 (4.55%)
- Agricultural Economic Development - 1 (4.55%)
- Membership Capacity and Technical Assistance (ie

Finance, Office Support, Project Development, Project Management, Administrative Services, etc.) - 1 (4.55%)

- Family Self-Sufficiency Program - 1 (4.55%)
- Housing Choice Voucher Home Ownership Program - 1 (4.55%)
- HUD-VASH Program - 1 (4.55%)
- AAA's Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program - 0
- AAA's Evidence-Based Disease Prevention and Health Promotions Program - 0
- Foothills Launch! for the Isothermal Region - 0
- Broadband Resources - 0
- Parks and Recreation Planning - 0
- Employment Opportunities - 0
- Weekly Regional Newsletters - 0

10. How often do you call on IPDC for resources or assistance?

- Less than once a month - 13 (59.09%)
- Once a month - 7 (31.82%)
- About once a week - 1 (4.55%)
- A few times a month - 1 (4.55%)
- A few times a week - 0
- Every day - 0

11. What is something IPDC could do to improve community perception around their brand and mission?

- Awareness and Engagement (12)
 - "I don't think it is an IPDC issue that folks don't know about their services- I think it falls back on members of other organizations to inform neighborhoods, such as church groups, senior groups etc..."



APPENDIX A: BOARD MEMBER SURVEY RESULTS

- “Engaging more than just stakeholders and informing stakeholders about the organization”
 - “The governments need to be aware. I’m not sure honestly it matters if the general public is aware.”
 - “Make sure that everyone is informed.”
 - “More program spotlight's, get the word out what resources are available, more social media”
 - “Having a representative at community festivals would be very helpful. Someone who can setup a booth with a big sign that says ‘We are your council of government! We help your city and community, ask us how.’”
 - “Citizen engagement”
 - “More education about the services that IPDC provides to the region and to local governments.”
 - “Marketing and education of elected officials about the mission of IPDC and how they benefit.”
 - “More p r”
 - “Visit community and civic groups to educate on the brand.”
 - “Planning is good but the community/public and participating members need to see deliverables/output.”
 - Nothing / No comment (4)
 - Municipalities (3)
 - “Meet with local municipalities and give a personal presentation.”
 - “Become involved with individual municipalities.”
 - “Work with small municipalities to assess one to three needs.”
 - Opportunities (1)
 - “Recommend opportunities directly to members that may benefit from them and then actively assist them in taking advantage of those opportunities.”
 - Partnerships (1)
 - “Partner with some of the non-profit community assistance groups to help target the areas of greatest need.”
 - Other (1)
 - “It is tough to do this within the current framework, given that many services are performed in support of another agency or simply a service that while extremely important, may be only utilized by a small population of the community. Facility improvements might also aid in improving this.”
- 12. Is there anything else you'd like to add about IPDC that we haven't asked or that you feel would assist in deepening our understanding about the current brand perception?**
- No / No Comment (18)
 - Yes
 - “IPDC in our region has employed a very efficient group of employees and such. We as members need to step up and get the word out to our communities...”



APPENDIX A: BOARD MEMBER SURVEY RESULTS

- “Thank you to all EMPLOYESS for their daily dedication to our region.”
- “Consider a mailer to every household in the region or visit organizations and share what IPDC does and how they can help the average citizen. This may help with municipality memberships as well.”
- “My sense is that the general population and participating members still lack a core understanding of what services IPDC provides nor do they fully comprehend the partnerships that could exist to improve quality of life in our communities.”



APPENDIX B: COMMUNITY PARTNER SURVEY RESULTS

1. Do you know what Isothermal Planning and Development Commission (IPDC) is?

- Yes - 58
- No - 1
- **Additional comments:** "Familiar with statewide Councils of Governments and their functions" and "I know that our mayor is very involved with the meetings though"

2. How long have you been an IPDC community partner?

- 10+ years - 29 (49.15%)
- Less than 2 years - 12 (20.34%)
- 3-5 years - 10 (16.95%)
- 5-10 years - 7 (11.86%)
- Other - 1 (1.69%)
 - "Not really a partner (how do you define); but a citizen in IPDC catchment area"

3. How familiar were you with IPDC before you became a community partner?

- Not so familiar - 22 (37.29%)
- Not at all familiar - 21 (35.59%)
- Somewhat familiar - 9 (15.25%)
- Very familiar - 4 (6.78%)
- Extremely familiar - 2 (3.39%)
- Other - 1 (1.69%)
 - NA

4. How familiar are you *now* with IPDC?

- Very familiar - 30 (50.85%)
- Somewhat familiar - 17 (28.81%)
- Extremely familiar - 10 (16.95%)
- Not so familiar - 2 (3.39%)
- Not at all familiar - 0

5. What three words would you use to describe IPDC to your community or region?

- Supportive/Helpful (13)
- Collaborator/Partner/Network (12)
- Informative/Knowledgeable (10)
- Regional (10)
 - "foothills to mountains"
 - "4 counties."
- Asset/Valuable (9)
 - "Potentially valuable"
- Resource (9)
- Forward-thinking, Progressive (7)
- Planning (7)
- Convener (6)
- Effective, Productive (5)
- Engaged/Involved (5)
- Housing (4)
- Caring/Friendly (3)
- DataGIS (3)
- Economic Development (3)
- Organization (3)
- "umbrella organization"
- Services (3)
- Advocate (2)



APPENDIX B: COMMUNITY PARTNER SURVEY RESULTS

- Communicative (2)
- Community Services/Development (2)
- Dedicated, Persistent (2)
- Development (2)
- Local Governments (2)
- Outreach (2)
 - “More Community Outreach”
- Reliable (2)
- Strategic (2)
- Accessible (1)
- Aging (1)
- Council of Governments (1)
- Creative solutions to regional issues (1)
- Cumbersome (1)
- Consultant (1)
- Don't know enough (1)
- Employment (1)
- Excellent (1)
- Funder (1)
- Governmental (1)
- Grants (1)
- Local (1)
- Need More Attention (1)
- None (1)
- Non-responsive (1)
- Overwhelmed (1)
- Success (1)
- Transportation (1)
- Understanding (1)
- Unnecessary (1)
- Well-represented (1)

6. When you see the IPDC logo today, what comes to mind? Check all that apply.

- Regional - 40 (67.80%)
- Economic Development Partner - 35 (59.32%)
- Service Provider - 31 (52.54%)
- Respected - 21 (35.59%)

- Trusted - 21 (35.59%)
- Relevant - 21 (35.59%)
- Old or Dated- 16 (27.12%)
- Other (please specify) - 4 (6.78%)
 - “Does not convey in my mind what IPDC truly represents and supports. What it does convey is something that covers/involves four counties”
 - “Unsure of what it represents”
 - “A cute puppy wearing a sweater!”
 - “Simple, which is nice; nice that the counties are clearly reflected”
- Modern - 3 (5.08%)
- Unnecessary - 1 (1.69%)

7. When you think of IPDC, what services and resources come to mind? Check all that apply.

- Economic Development Opportunity Zones - 43 (71.19%)
- Region C Workforce Development Board - 41 (69.49%)
- Isothermal Rural Planning Organization (RPO)- 38 (64.41%)
- Weekly Regional Newsletters - 34 (57.63%)
- Area Agency on Aging (AAA) - 33 (55.93%)
- Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program - 27 (45.76%)
- Membership Capacity and Technical Assistance (ie Finance, Office Support, Project Development, Project Management, Administrative Services, etc.) - 23 (38.98%)
- Agricultural Economic Development - 17 (28.81%)
- Western NC Housing Partnership -



APPENDIX B: COMMUNITY PARTNER SURVEY RESULTS

- 17 (28.81%)
- Employment Opportunities - 16 (27.12%)
- Rural Food Business Assistance Project - 15 (25.42%)
- Parks and Recreation Planning - 15 (25.42%)
- Housing Choice Voucher Home Ownership Program - 14 (23.73%)
- Broadband Resources - 13 (22.03%)
- AAA's Family Caregiver Support Program - 12 (20.34%)
- AAA's Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program - 11 (18.64%)
- AAA's Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) - 10 (16.95%)
- Foothills Launch! for the Isothermal Region - 9 (15.25%)
- Family Self-Sufficiency Program - 8 (13.56%)
- AAA's Evidence-Based Disease Prevention and Health Promotions Program - 6 (10.17%)
- HUD-VASH Program - 6 (10.17%)
- Other (please specify)
 - "Back-dooring Federal Rules and Regulations into Counties and Cities, bypassing the State Government"
 - "Planning Services"
 - "Grant Assistance in finding applicable funds for support and administrative participation"

8. What is your general impression of the relevance of IPDC in your region?

- Average rating: 4.2 stars
- 1 star, Irrelevant/Unnecessary - 0
- 2 stars, Not Very Relevant - 2
- 3 stars, Somewhat Relevant - 7

- 4 stars, Relevant - 28
- 5 stars, Extremely Relevant/Crucial - 22

9. As an IPDC community partner, what value does IPDC provide to your region?

- "Allows me to keep an eye on how our local and county governments are being subverted by bribery."
- **"Resource"**
- **"Connecting resources"**
- "As an **agricultural support** organization, I appreciate that the **IPDC makes food and farming a priority**. We have also directly benefitted from IPDC's **support** over the past two years. We have received two federal **grants** thanks to the letters of support that you have provided for us."
- "Strong **leadership** and **guidance**"
- **"Helps w projects"**
- **"Regional planning, transportation planning & assistance, grant administration assistance, legislative sessions, regional communications."**
- "Planning Services coordination"
- **"statistics, resource development, regional projects, vision"**
- **"Planning"**
- **"Helpful"**
- "Quarterly **Meetings**; HCCBG **Funding**; **Ombudsman Program**; Nursing Home and Rest Home Committees; **Educational Opportunities**"
- "coordination of **senior services, housing services, and housing development**"
- "I do not represent an organization,



APPENDIX B: COMMUNITY PARTNER SURVEY RESULTS

but instead a business in the region. I know I can count on them for **data** and **planning services** along with **advocacy for the region**"

- "Collaboration, Support."
- "a trusted resource"
- "Help for clients"
- "Communication and Regional/local support"
- "Connectivity to other partners and resources in the region"
- "resources, data and project management"
- "Assistance in grants, planning, municipal services."
- "IPDC connects resources for a strong partnership and potential resources."
- "Source of grant support, link to state and federal resources, strong partner in community and economic development initiatives, subject matter experts, best practice experts, big picture regional planning"
- "excellent knowledgeable resource"
- "credibility"
- "I am an individual who previously worked through and with another regional planning commission. I am an interested citizen in Polk County."
- "Area Agency on Aging is a funder of my program"
- "support for poor individuals and families in the counties covered."
- "Coordination, advocacy"
- "Professional innovation and the ability to navigate regional bureaucracy"
- "Excellent resource"
- "technical assistance provided is invaluable"
- "Perspective, local contacts, one-stop for the region, newsletter"
- "direction for economic impact for our region and insight to most relevant guides to maximizing that growth."
- "minimal"
- "A platform to efficiently deliver services to the region in a way aligned with local needs and priorities."
- "grant writing"
- "Connector to local, state, and federal resources."
- "Services"
- "Housing and Aging are the most prevalent. Assistance to small towns very important too."
- "RPO"
- "Partnership"
- "Offers a regional perspective on the work of food and agriculture in the communities across these counties. Offers a place to convene folks that is strategic and practical. I think of a group that is offering a strong example of working collaboratively, strategically, and applying the strengths of their community towards future planning"
- "Regional viewpoint"
- "Support"
- "we receive 2 grants from them each year to serve our elderly and caregivers Also provides support and assistance"
- "Information, contacts, advice"
- "Transportation Planning"
- "The weekly newsletters are



APPENDIX B: COMMUNITY PARTNER SURVEY RESULTS

extremely valuable - and I don't say that about most newsletters."

- **"Economic advice and assistance** for businesses."
- **"Advocacy and representation** for the region as a whole."
- "IPDC exposes my organization to **opportunities** we may not have otherwise. As a rural agency, **housing assistance, roadway help** and **general guidance** when it comes to grassroots programs is always helpful."
- "At present, minimal but see **great potential**."
- **"Resources, information, critical support"**
- "Relevant **partner** for projects"
- N/A (2)

10. Do you think people living within your region know and understand what a planning and development commission is and what it does?

- No - 35 (59.32%)
- Somewhat - 18 (30.51%)
- I don't know - 6 (10.17%)
- Yes - 0

11. As an IPDC community partner, what do you view as the most important service or benefit of IPDC?

- **Economic development** (13)
 - "Economic development connection to include workforce development and recruitment"
- **Information & Communication** (11)
 - "Keeping our municipality up to date with information that can assist us"
 - "They stay on top of critical

state issues, funding, and new opportunities."

- "imparting knowledge with vision for best practices for sustainable growth"
- "As a state-level partner, the information I receive from IPDC helps me keep up-to-date with what's going on in the region"
- "Information resources about the region. Opportunities to learn more about issues affecting each community/county"
- **Housing** (8)
- **Aging Services/Programs** (7)
- **Resources** (5)
- **Convening** (4)
 - "Convening member govts. and organizations to address problems and opportunities together"
 - "Being the hub for the communities to leverage for innovative ideas to improve our four county area that we live in"
- **Coordination & Leadership** (4)
 - "Helping coordinate and cross-pollinate efforts across a region."
- **Support for Local Governments** (4)
- **Unsure** (4)
- **Workforce** (4)
- **Regional planning** (3)
- **Services** (3)
- **Technical Assistance** (3)
- **Partnerships, network** (2)
 - "Regional perspective and coordination, access to leadership network"
- **Innovation, Vision** (2)
- **Grants** (2)



APPENDIX B: COMMUNITY PARTNER SURVEY RESULTS

- **Partners** (2)
- **Regional awareness** (2)
- **Transportation** (2)
- **Advice** (1)
- **Community development** (1)
- **Investment** (1)
- **Newsletter** (1)
- **No comment** (1)
- **Organization** (1)
- **Relevant** (1)

12. How often do you call on IPDC for resources or assistance?

- Less than once a month - 31 (52.54%)
- Once a month - 12 (20.34%)
- A few times a month - 8 (13.56%)
- Other - 4 (6.78%)
 - "I don't"
 - "Our City Manager handles that, not me"
 - "I used to call more; stopped due to lack of response from IPDC staff"
 - "We just have not found anything to collaborate, so less and less have we sought out help"
 - Every day - 2 (3.39%)
- About once a week - 2 (3.39%)
- A few times a week - 0

13. What is something IPDC could do to improve community perception around their brand or mission?

- **Communication** (15)
 - "Clear, but brief mission statement that citizens can understand. Social media presence."
 - "Communication & outreach to general public on services &

what they can offer."

- "continued communication"
- "Tell more stories about your impact on our towns and communities, partnerships that had led to success, etc."
- "Continue the newsletter, add publicity and community involvement where appropriate."
- "They could respond to phone messages and emails from community partners and clients in a timely manner."
- "Facebook"
- "Publicity"
- "communicate more frequently the services they render to the community."
- "more information at the community level so people know what the services are"
- "Make more info available online or provide informational sessions in the region."
- "More proactive communication about what they do."
- "Increase awareness"
- "Educate citizens on IPDC."
- "Publish and advertise the mission, with examples."
- **Unsure** (10)
 - "I don't know. People are often not aware of what is available until they want or need services."
- **Community Engagement** (9)
 - "more active engagement in communities"
 - "Get more involved in community"
 - "Encourage more local government participation"



APPENDIX B: COMMUNITY PARTNER SURVEY RESULTS

- and publicity to their own constituents.”
- “Continue to be involved in all community activities”
- “Community Meetings presenting services and how to become a priority in the ongoing activities and agenda of the organization”
- “Engage the community in impactful projects”
- “Maybe have periodic informational sessions with the community partners to tell what they do.”
- “Engage at community events”
- “More quasi-government and non-profit leadership outreach in counties outside Rutherford County. Most organizations in my county do not know who or at what capacity IPDC serves.”
- **No / No comment (5)**
- **Presence (5)**
 - “Be more open in public meetings”
 - “stay relevant”
 - “Have more outreach events and open houses with stakeholders. The biggest issue now with IPDC is they have a great online presence, but they don’t hold enough in-person meet and greets to let individuals and agencies know of all their services.”
 - “Broader outreach and education on services. Offering planning and development training for local boards and contract services for plan review for small towns in the region.”
- “Public information on IPDC roles and activities”
- **Brand (4)**
 - “Update brand with new logo, update facilities, advertise and market the value of the organization.”
 - “Expand brand and mission awareness”
 - “Have a more memorable name than “IPDC”.”
 - “Update logo”
- **Other (4)**
 - “Have a nice meeting room and downtown facade with a bulletin board of goings-on/development schematics, etc. in the window.”
 - “Hire more women.”
 - “help organizations financially”
 - “Involvement in working programs”
- **Advertising (3)**
 - “All of the contact I have seen is through emails. I know it would be expensive, but what if they had a brief post in the local shopper - BRIEFLY identifying ways they could help the general public and a contact number.”
 - “TV and newspaper coverage”
- **Building Trust/Relationships (2)**
 - Focus on becoming a trusted resource and partner that understands importance of handling sensitive information and data while trying to encourage improvement in our area.
 - Buildings personal relationships with partners.
- **Collateral & Print Materials (2)**
 - “Comprehensive guides of



APPENDIX B: COMMUNITY PARTNER SURVEY RESULTS

what services are available and presentations to partners and other service providers and their clients.”

- “Handouts, brochures, posters”

14. Is there anything else you'd like to add about IPDC that we haven't asked or that you feel would assist in deepening our understanding about the current brand perception?

- No / No Comment (46)
- Yes (13)
 - “I have been studying Regional Councils of Governments for the last decade and I will say that Isothermal does seem to be less corrupted than most.”
 - “50+ years of service to local govts. and the region's citizens is no small thing. Build on it. History has value.
 - “Good leadership there; executive has really improved the organization”
 - “I believe people have to see how your agency helps “ME”. If they can see how they can be assisted successfully, then they'll get “on board”. If the process is too elaborate, requires too much technology or is not personal, I think you'll lose them. People in this area are good, trusting people... they need to be taken care of and to feel that you have THEIR best interest at heart.”
 - “I feel the leadership both on the board and the organization are excellent!”
- “continually meet and communicate with partners”
- “Create a tagline or byline with a very short statement communicating your mission or what you do that can go with your logo, on emails and other communications, etc.”
- “I'm glad IPDC exists!”
- “As in all relationships, communication is key. The problems in communication are detrimental to overall perception of the organization. After feedback has been provided on this issue multiple times over several years without improvement, partners will begin to feel as if there is a cultural issue within the organization. So, please address the lack of communication with clients and community partners and work to improve communication so that perception of IPDC will improve. Your organization is very important to the community and we need you at your best. Thank you.”
- “Well run.”
- “IPDC provides a variety of services to local communities, businesses, people and towns.”
- “Somehow feels stuffy and traditional even though the ideas are fresh-”
- “They have continued to improve and do a tremendous amount with limited resources”

SECTION XVI
UTILITY ALLOWANCE
AND
UTILITY REIMBURSEMENT PAYMENTS

A. Utility Allowance Schedule

A utility allowance schedule is used for the Housing Choice Voucher program. It is reviewed annually and, if there has been as much as ten percent (10%) overall change, either up or down, the schedule will be revised.

The utility allowances are based on actual rates and average consumption estimates by bedroom size, not on a family's actual energy consumption.

If a family pays for any utilities, they are given a utility allowance for utilities that are paid by the family. If the family provides the range and refrigerator, an allowance is given for the family to purchase or rent a range or refrigerator, even if they already own the appliances.

While an allowance is given for central air-conditioning, no allowance is given for window unit air-conditioners unless for verified medical reasons.

An approved utility allowance schedule will be provided to families in a Briefing Packet at the time of the required briefing session. The same schedule, unless revised in the interim, will be used by the Housing Counselors to calculate the actual allowance for the unit the family selects for all tenant-paid utilities.

The utility allowance total is added to the approved contract rent in determining gross rent. The HAP subsidy is determined by subtracting the Total Tenant (TTP which is 30% of the family's monthly adjusted income) from the lesser of the gross rent or the eligible Voucher Payment Standard. When the eligible subsidy is greater than the monthly rent to owner, the difference will be provided to a utility provider on behalf of the family for assistance with the utilities.

Change to: the difference will paid directly to the family (CFR 982.514(b))

B. Utility Reimbursement Payment

The utility reimbursement payment will be made directly to the utility company designated at the time a contract is initiated. **CHANGE TO:** The utility reimbursement

payment will be made directly to the family.

The PHA is responsible for verification that all utilities are in the tenant's name and to acquire applicable utility account numbers assigned. In the case where a tenant has more than one utility supplier (e.g. electricity, gas, oil, etc), the family may designate the account to which any eligible reimbursement is to be credited. Only one utility supplier will be designated as the major supplier.

If a large credit balance builds up with the specified utility company (due to the tenant having several different utility providers), the utility check may be changed to assist with payment of other utilities as needed. The family may request a change in payment of the utility allowance from one provider to another at any time. The change will be effective with the next scheduled payment following receipt of the request. (OMIT THIS SECTION in yellow)

If a family leaves the program and has a credit balance on a utility account, the utility company is authorized to pay the remaining balance to the family.

C. Tenant Responsibility for Utilities

The family is responsible for maintaining utilities (electricity, water, gas, etc.) in the unit at all times to ensure that the unit complies with Housing Quality Standards. The family is also responsible for fulfilling obligations to the utility companies for payment of utility bills in order to prevent the services from being disconnected.

It is acceptable for a utility service that is determined to be for the "heat source" only to be turned off during the summer months; however, it is the family's responsibility to ensure that the service is operable from October through May (months of the year when the temperatures generally require heat).

The family is required to be in good standing with the utility providers in order to be eligible for a Voucher to locate to another unit. (OMIT THIS SECTION in yellow)

D. Utility Allowance Revisions

Unless the PHA is required to revise utility allowances retroactively, revised utility allowances will be applied to a family's rent calculations at the first annual reexamination after the allowance is adopted. In the event of an approved rent increase prior to the annual re-certification and subsequent to adoption of the revised utility allowance, the revised utility allowance schedule will be applied in determining the eligible housing subsidy.



Isothermal Planning and Development Commission Executive Committee

Resolution to Support the Designation of US 74 between I-26 and I-85 to a Future Interstate Quality Corridor

Whereas, the need to improve US 74 to an Interstate status from Asheville to Wilmington to improve freight movement and in-state access through southern North Carolina has been identified in previous studies; and

Whereas, an Interstate quality US-74 Corridor will provide better connectivity, business planning, transportation safety, and resource efficiency from I-26 to I-85; and

Whereas, every county that borders Rutherford County (Polk, Henderson, Buncombe, McDowell, Burke, Cleveland, Cherokee SC and Spartanburg SC) has a federally designated Interstate corridor that traverses their counties; and

Whereas, local governments and businesses within the corridor collaboratively seek to build a responsive, regional economic development infrastructure to increase trade and industry and to promote opportunity recognizing that these efforts are hampered in Rutherford County due to the lack of a federal interstate designation along this corridor; and

WHEREAS, North Carolina's federal legislative delegation has the authority to submit legislation granting a Future US-74 Interstate status from I-26 to I-85; and

WHEREAS, because a section of Highway 74 east of Charlotte has a federal interstate designation, the section between I-26 and I-85 would require a different Interstate name.

Now, Therefore Be It Resolved that the Isothermal Planning and Development Commission Board of Directors requests that our North Carolina federal legislative delegation submit and support federal legislation to secure a Future Interstate designation for the section of US-74 from I-26 to I-85; and,

Be it Also Further Resolved that the Clerk provide a copy of this resolution to the NC Transportation Secretary and the Rutherford County State and Federal legislative delegations requesting their support; and

Be it Also Further Resolved that the Isothermal Planning and Development Commission Board of Directors requests the support of municipalities and businesses within the corridor between I-26 and I-85 in Polk, Rutherford, and Cleveland Counties.

Adopted this the 13rd day of February 2020.

Chairman, Board of Directors

ATTEST:

Clerk, Board of Directors