



**Town of Edenton  
Strategic Communications Recommendations  
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## INSIGHTS & THEMES

For two days in December 2017, Eckel & Vaughan had the opportunity to listen to some of the more engaged citizens in Edenton react to and provide perspective on key questions we posed about Edenton's community and its future. These small focus groups came after our review and assessment of several strategic plans dealing with municipal goals, economic development, tourism, education, healthcare and the arts.

The focus group exercise was particularly helpful as we work to favorably position Edenton in a way that will attract new visitors and persuade some of them to stay. We made several observations during the process and in our examination of what we heard afterwards. The following points are the insights that stood above the rest and are worthy of further consideration. These will serve as the foundation for our messaging and communications recommendations.

Some of these may be familiar, and it's good news to know each were validated through our conversations and review of the town's materials. We believe they are important and worth including as a part of the foundation of our plan. Some themes will be new, and we hope they provide insight for your team. Most importantly, we want to ensure that we are all aligned as we move forward with the next steps in our work together.

### **"Historic Small Town" is Only Part of the Story**

- People are drawn to Edenton by its history. Once they arrive, they discover the charm of a small town: the slower pace, the time-honored values, the quaint downtown. Yet these characteristics can be found in many small towns across the country and, by themselves, are not enough to differentiate Edenton from other historic small towns. To truly distinguish itself, Edenton should not rely on generic small-town attributes, but instead focus on promoting the characteristics that truly make the town unique.

### **It's the Feeling That's the Difference**

- Edenton is a picturesque, naturally beautiful town with a rich, living history. The town is thriving with a bustling main street not found in the surrounding areas. These attributes draw visitors to Edenton. However, it is the "feeling" these visitors experience while visiting Edenton that drives them to return. This is an intangible element that we must look for ways to capture, and/or encourage people to discover for themselves.

### **Four Key Ingredients Create a Unique Feeling**

There are four primary characteristics that define what it's like to "experience" Edenton, creating that unique "feeling" for visitors and residents.

- **"Choice"**  
Edenton is a town with a noticeable number of people who have chosen to be there: to visit, to live, to return, to stay, to retire, or to do business. That affirmative choice creates a sense of commitment and dedication among residents, driving a passion to support the community, embrace it, get involved, and show it off. This creates a real spirit of pride in the community that is evident to visitors.
- **"Creativity"**  
Creativity abounds in Edenton. Visually and musically talented people are a vibrant part of the community. Exceptional cooks and event planners keep busy. Festivals and events regularly draw in visitors and residents to explore the town's talent. But creativity is more than the arts. Beyond that, it's abundantly apparent in the way members of the community rise to challenges and develop effective solutions. Passionate community members keep Edenton's history alive and its future promising.
- **"Authenticity"**  
A true sense of authenticity exists within the town itself and the people who live there. The history is real, and living, not prepackaged like a Williamsburg or Disney experience. And the present is real as well. Edenton is willing to making room for new people, new ideas, new ways of doing things. Many of the businesses are locally-owned, from those that have remained for generations to the new storefronts created by today's entrepreneurs. The people in Edenton are genuine. They welcome visitors and newcomers. Among residents, neighbors are friends who become family.
- **"Engagement"**  
Edenton is an active community with many ways to get involved. It is welcoming and encourages people new to town to take part and engage in the many organizations that help the community prosper. Decision makers are easily accessible. Volunteer organizations abound and involvement in them brings new friendships.

- It's the combination of these four characteristics that make Edenton different from other small towns. All four spring from the place: the unique blend of the people that have chosen to live there. Together, these characteristics lead to a great deal of creative problem solving in the town. Engaged community members have led efforts to save the movie theater, to forge cooperation between law enforcement and the faith-based community to end violence and rebuild trust, and to preserve historic landmarks. Because residents are choosing to actively participate in the community, these are but a few ways creative minds have come together to make life better in the town. They are authentically proud to call themselves "Edentonians."

### **Four Key Targets Must Be Pursued with Gusto**

#### **Entrepreneurs**

These primary characteristics are appealing to entrepreneurs, an important audience Edenton needs to reach and attract. In fact, entrepreneurs already abound in Edenton, creating an environment attractive to other entrepreneurs—especially those seeking to remain active while enjoying a slower pace and who are ready to create a relationship with, and create a lasting impact on, the community in which they live. The new "mobile" or "gig" worker also fits well in this entrepreneurial environment, as does the professional who can work from anywhere (and would be happy to trade in the hustle and bustle of an urban setting for the feeling of Edenton).

#### **Retired Military**

There are many opportunities for Edenton to target potential new residents, but another key audience stands out: retired military. Edenton is already home to an unusually large proportion of veterans—they make up 13% of Edenton's population, compared to an 8% average nationwide. This makes sense, since veterans are typically engaged in their communities and have an interest in and appreciation for U.S. history—two things that help set Edenton apart. Edenton is in an ideal location to attract this audience, with a large base of retired military coming out of DC, Maryland, and Virginia to the north, and North Carolina military bases to the south.

#### **Retired Federal Government Employees**

Like retired military, D.C.-based federal government employees who are looking for a permanent home or a second home after retirement are a key target for Edenton. Edenton is well-positioned to attract this group—it's just four hours from D.C., making it an easy trip for these retirees to travel back to DC to visit friends and family, and vice

versa. Edenton should take advantage of growing retirement numbers by targeting this audience.

### **RDU & the Tidewater**

To continue to attract tourists and new residents, Edenton should proactively prepare for the development of I-87. While the Tidewater and the Triangle are already easily accessible for Edenton residents (and vice versa), the opening of I-87 will only increase this accessibility. Edenton will be perfectly positioned as the midpoint destination between two urban centers and distinctly different from either end. There is opportunity to capitalize on this positioning.

### **Make Sure Your Best Citizens are Informed**

- There were a number of concerns expressed by current residents, many of which are not new issues or unusual in many small towns. With authenticity comes the good and the bad of small town living, making the experience of living in Edenton not for everyone. Modern conveniences of choice, selection, arts and entertainment are lacking compared to urban centers, but such is the case for small towns everywhere.
- Among the concerns voiced by residents were education, public safety, healthcare, affordable housing, and jobs. It is clear there are remarkable strategic plans in place to address many of these areas, and several noteworthy successes to date. Yet there isn't widespread awareness among some of the most engaged members of the community of these plans and the progress being made.
- To help address these concerns and increase awareness for the work being done to address them, Edenton would benefit from an internal communications campaign designed to showcase the strategic plans in place for the high impact organizations within the community. The internal campaign will feed into the external campaign as messages are internalized by the community. Your most engaged citizens are the best ambassadors for the community to newcomers. As these engaged citizens become more aware of the good plans in place and progress being made, good news will travel farther in your recruiting efforts.
- Of note: in more than one focus group session, several participants freely thanked us for offering them an opportunity to participate because they felt they had learned so much about the town and its many plans in place. Already, there is early evidence that a more informed public is desired and welcomed.

## GOAL, STRATEGIES & OBJECTIVES

### Goal

Generate long-term interest, investment, and impact in Edenton and Chowan County

### Strategies

- **Differentiate** Edenton by showcasing its unique attributes through a message platform and content strategy
- **Educate** community leaders about Edenton's messaging strategy and the strategic plans of the municipality and key organizations
- **Build** awareness among target audiences by utilizing focused communications to increase inquiries and new visitors

### Objectives

Within one year, Edenton will:

- **Establish** 100%:
  - Adoption of the new Edenton message strategy by key organizations
  - Understanding of the strategic plans of key organizations among key organization leadership boards
- **Increase** target audience engagement on tourism and economic development websites and social channels by X percent
- **Generate** new qualified inquiries and qualified visits by X percent through paid, earned, shared, and owned content

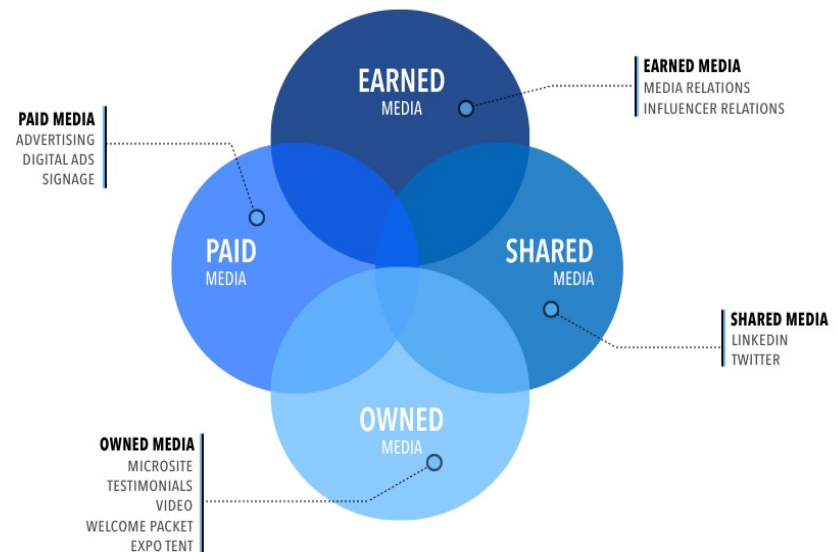
## INTEGRATED COMMUNICATIONS APPROACH

Modern communication strategies require an integrated marketing ecosystem to reach varied audiences where they are likely to see, read and hear the messages we want to deliver. An integrated approach for the Cape Fear region—with its wide range of audiences—will be most successful when communications activities leverage the four key channels of media: Paid, Owned, Earned and Shared.

- **Paid** media (e.g., digital and print advertising, billboards, etc.) will build awareness of the Cape Fear region and its offerings.
- **Owned** efforts (e.g., microsite, possible event) will pull audiences into overarching messages and information, and then push prospects to more details with specific economic development websites and personnel.
- **Earned** media (e.g., business and trade media) will create top-of-mind awareness and interest by leveraging the third-party credibility that comes with coverage of local business stories and successes.
- **Shared** media will leverage social channels of regional economic developers to amplify all other messages.

### PESO MEDIA INTEGRATION

PAID | EARNED | SHARED | OWNED





## AUDIENCES

### Professionals

- *Entrepreneurs*

The combination of characteristics that “define” Edenton’s culture—choice, creativity, authenticity, and engagement—are typical characteristics of most entrepreneurs, making Edenton the perfect setting for them to call home. In fact, entrepreneurs already abound in Edenton, creating an environment attractive to other entrepreneurs.

Target Environment: Online sources, such as social media and Google

- *Mobile workers*

Today, there is an increased shift in the workforce toward mobile workers. Thanks to email, video conferencing, and online file sharing, professionals in many industries have the ability to work from anywhere. Given the opportunity to choose their home base, mobile workers are likely to consider the unique characteristics they can find in Edenton rather than a faster-paced urban setting.

Target Environment: Online sources, such as social media and Google

- *Business owners*

When business owners are choosing to relocate or open a first or second location, one aspect for consideration is the quality of life it provides for the business’s owner and its employees. The unique lifestyle Edenton offers business owners will stand out. Edenton is also home to a creative, practical workforce well-equipped to fill the company’s new jobs.

Target environments: Business publications and social channels targeted to key geographical areas, such as Business North Carolina

- *Developers*

Developers are looking for an attractive, appropriate location to create residential and commercial opportunities. Edenton was poised to grow substantially from planned developments that fell through after the economic downturn of 2008. Ten years later, the economy is in a much better place, and advertising Edenton’s entrepreneurial, creative environment could drive significant interest in the area among developers.

Target Environment: Regional and statewide business publications

- *Site selectors*

Site selectors help businesses determine a company's ideal location for the headquarters or facilities. For the same reasons business owners will be interested in Edenton, site selectors are an important target audience.

Target Environments: Industry-specific publications and social channels, such as Site Selector Magazine

- *Event & excursion planners*

Event and excursion hosts are in search of a welcoming environment to host weddings, corporate retreats, or scenic group getaways. They are looking for authentic indoor and outdoor spaces to reconnect with family, friends, and colleagues. By bringing new events to town, Edenton will have the opportunity to introduce new visitors to your unique lifestyle and beautiful downtown.

Target Environments: Industry-specific publications and online sources, such as ConventionSouth and wedding blogs

## **Residents**

- *Young families*

Young families are looking for a safe, friendly, and down-to-earth place to raise their children. They may be considering leaving their current city to find a slower pace of life centered around the community. They want to settle down in a unique town where they can get involved and truly make a difference.

Target Environment: Online sources, such as social media and lifestyle/parenting blogs

- *Empty Nesters*

Empty nesters have more free time now that their children have moved out of the house, and they want to invest in a property—permanent or secondary—where their extended family can gather for years to come. They may be close to retirement and have more disposable income than younger families. As they begin to slow down, they are looking for a place that reflects a more laidback lifestyle than where they currently live.

Target Environments: Lifestyle publications and social media

- *Retirees*

Edenton is already home to many retirees settling into their next stage of life. They are actively involved in the community, where they're able to explore new interests thanks to a slower pace of life. There are a few groups who are nearing retirement where Edenton should concentrate their focus: retiring military and retiring federal government workers.

- *Retiring Military:* Edenton is already home to an unusually large proportion of veterans. They make up 13% of Edenton's population, compared to an 8% average nationwide. And this makes sense, since veterans are typically engaged in their communities and have an interest in and appreciation for U.S. history — two characteristics that help set Edenton apart. Edenton is in an ideal location to attract this audience, with a large base of retired military coming out of DC, Maryland, and Virginia to the north, and North Carolina military bases to the south. Target Environment: Retirement sites and online outlets such as social media and Google
- *Retiring Federal Government Workers:* Like retired military, D.C.-based federal government employees who are looking for a permanent home or a second home after retirement are a key target for Edenton. Edenton is well-positioned to attract this group—it's just four hours from D.C., making it an easy trip for these retirees to travel back to DC to visit friends and family and vice versa. Edenton should take advantage of growing retirement numbers by targeting this audience. Target Environment: Retirement sites and lifestyle publications (print, digital, and social)

## MESSAGE PLATFORM

“For people and business owners in mid-Atlantic states looking to relocate, Edenton is the one historic coastal town that is *a real and interesting place open to new people and new ideas* — enabling them to lead fulfilling lives, and make a difference in their community.”



## KEY MESSAGE

People who choose to be a part of and make a positive difference in their community will feel right at home in this historic, authentic town that welcomes new ideas.

## CORE TENETS

- **Choice:** being intentional about how we live and what we do
- **Creativity:** finding new ways to meet existing and emerging challenges
- **Authenticity:** respecting history while remaining real and open
- **Engagement:** encouraging individual initiative in civic and business arenas

## PERSONALITY

- **Friendly:** approachable, responsive, and happy to welcome new neighbors
- **Practical:** focused on dealing with real-world issues and making tangible progress
- **Curious:** interested in what’s happening in town and around the world
- **Inventive:** always looking for new ways to meet challenges and improve quality of life

## SUPPORTING MESSAGES

### **Choice**

*Edenton is a place where you can be intentional about how you live and what you do.*

In fact, it's a town with a noticeable number of people who have chosen to be here: to visit, to live, to retire or to do business. And, in turn, Edentonians choose to welcome them with open arms, appreciating their energy, enthusiasm and local pride. This affirmative choice on both sides creates a sense of commitment and dedication, and fuels a passion to embrace the community and get involved.

### **Creativity**

*From the arts to strategic planning to everyday life, the people of Edenton are known for finding ingenious ways to meet existing needs and emerging challenges.*

Visual artists, musicians and performers of all kinds are a vibrant and welcome part of the community. Eagerly anticipated annual festivals and special events draw in visitors throughout the year. But it's more than the arts — our creativity encompasses everyone from exceptional cooks to event planners to store owners. And it shows up in the way our community rises to challenges and develops effective solutions.

### **Authenticity**

*The people of Edenton respect our interesting and illustrious history — while remaining real and open and focused on the future.*

A true sense of authenticity exists in Edenton; our history is living, not prepackaged. Which means that the present is real as well; you'll find genuine, practical people ready to deal with important issues, and open to new ideas and new ways of doing things. You can see it in our downtown streets — a mix of shops handed down from generation to generation, and new storefronts opened by today's entrepreneurs — and the ease with which neighbors become friends and family.

**Engagement**

*The people who thrive in Edenton are the ones who get involved — the ones who take the initiative to shape civic life and the business community.*

Edenton is an active, growing community that offers many ways to get involved. We know that we become a stronger, more interesting place when new people take part and engage with the many organizations that help the community prosper. So decision makers are easily accessible. Opportunities to contribute are widely shared. And people often find that with increased involvement comes new and valuable friendships.

**When these things come together, amazing things can happen.**

*It's the combination of these four characteristics that make Edenton different, and special.*

All four spring from the same place: the unique blend of the people that have chosen to live here. Together, these characteristics lead to creative and effective problem solving; engaged community members have, for example, led efforts to save our movie theater, reduce crime by forging cooperation between law enforcement and the faith-based community, and preserve historic landmarks. We look forward to seeing what you can add to Edenton.

## AUDIENCE-SPECIFIC MESSAGES

### Professionals

- *Entrepreneurs*  
Edenton is open to new ideas and new ways of doing things; new businesses and new business models. We're already home to myriad entrepreneurs and innovators — a readymade cohort of likeminded thinkers and doers who, along with supportive civic and business leaders, create a welcoming and supportive environment for people with vision.
- *Mobile workers*  
When you can work from anywhere, why wouldn't you want to love where you live? In addition to its unmatched quality of life, Edenton has the infrastructure, mindset and supportive culture to make doing your job — or even running a virtual business — possible, practical and enjoyable.
- *Business owners*  
When you can choose to set up shop anywhere, why wouldn't you want to love where you live? In addition to its unmatched quality of life, Edenton has the infrastructure, mindset and supportive business culture to make running a successful business — and attracting a top-notch workforce — possible, practical and enjoyable.
- *Developers*  
Edenton offers a range of attractive opportunities for developers. From housing and retirement communities, to business and light industrials parks, to retail and commercial clusters, Edenton is actively pursuing investments that will help our area grow in sustained and mutually beneficial ways.
- *Site selectors*  
In addition to its unmatched quality of life, Edenton has the infrastructure, mindset and supportive business culture to make running a successful business both possible and practical. And we're fully prepared to support your due diligence efforts as you choose the best option for an expansion or relocation.

- *Event & excursion planners*

Edenton is a welcoming place — and gracious host — for music and arts, family celebrations and historic tours, corporate retreats and scenic group getaways. With attractive indoor and outdoor spaces, an active creative and culinary community and supportive local planners, our beautiful bayside town is the ideal backdrop for events of all kinds.

## **Residents**

- *Young families*

Edenton is a safe, friendly, interesting place to raise a family. Improving schools; friendly down-to-earth people; and countless opportunities to get involved in civic life and volunteer groups make this community ideal for making a difference, putting down roots and making life-long friends.

- *Empty nesters / Retiring federal workers*

Edenton is a safe, friendly, interesting place to start your next chapter. Friendly down-to-earth people; an infrastructure conducive to mobile and virtual businesses; and countless opportunities to get involved in civic life and volunteer groups make this community ideal for shifting gears, making a difference and putting down new roots.

- *Retirees*

Edenton is a safe, friendly, interesting place to start your next chapter. A beautiful location; friendly down-to-earth people; and countless opportunities to get involved in civic life and volunteer groups make this community ideal for shifting gears, discovering new interests and making a real difference.

- *Retiring Military*

Edenton is a safe, friendly, interesting place to start your next chapter. A beautiful, historic town, it's also home to a high percentage of veterans — people who appreciate our friendly, down-to-earth people; strong business community; and countless opportunities to get involved in civic life and volunteer groups. All of which make this community ideal for shifting gears, putting down new roots and making a real difference.



## TAG LINES

Taglines are designed to convey a brand's unique market position in a simple, yet strategic way. The following taglines are options for consideration.

### Edenton & You

Could work with a series of headlines/headers:

*Edenton & the arts*

*Edenton & making a difference*

*Edenton & places to go*

*Edenton & things to do*

*Edenton & people to see*

*Edenton & the choices we make*

*Edenton & doing your thing*

etc.

Edenton

**Authentically yours.**

Edenton

**Ready when you are.**

Edenton

**You're more than welcome.**

Yours,

**Edenton**

Make Edenton an active part of the conversation;  
all messages have a sign-off from the town:

*Creatively yours*

*Sincerely yours*

*Historically yours*

*Actively yours*

*Engagingly yours*

*Authentically yours*

etc.

## **TACTICS**

The following tactics are recommended based on the evaluation of the strategic plans, our qualitative research, and good communications best practices.

### **Strategic Plan Sharing**

Early in our engagement with Edenton, Eckel & Vaughan had the opportunity to review a collection of strategic plans from important organizations in the community: the school system, the economic development team, tourism, the municipality, and the arts foundation. Individually they provided a deeper understanding of the commitments each organization has made to better the community. Collectively, they painted a picture of an active community tackling important challenges with commitment, creativity, and purpose.

We then sat down with a collection of engaged people from the community, representing various interests and organizations. These meetings served as mini focus groups of sorts, offering perspective on the community. It was during these sessions where we realized many of the most engaged citizens did not have a complete awareness of the remarkable work community organizations have completed to tackle some of the town and county's most important challenges. What's more, they didn't know of some of the significant progress made.

We recommend that the town and county host a strategy sharing event, inviting all of the boards and staff of important community organizations. The purpose of the event is to provide each organization to present their strategic plans. We recommend opening such an event to the public. The goal is to create a better understanding of the strategies already in place that are designed to improve the quality of life and economy locally. Should the first event become a success, consider hosting an annual event.

### **Leadership Edenton/North Carolina**

Leadership North Carolina is a nonprofit education organization designed to create a deeper understanding and appreciation for North Carolina and its economy among some of the brightest business leaders in the state. Each year, a class is formed from an applicant pool, and over six two-day sessions throughout the year, "students" learn and network.

Recently, Blue Cross Blue Shield granted LNC a \$250,000 fund to offer scholarships to deserving applicants from the 80 rural counties in North Carolina. We recommend identifying prospective Edenton and Chowan County applicants to apply for a seat in an upcoming class.

Should the experience go well, consider building a Leadership Edenton program designed to create a better understanding of Edenton and Chowan County, local issues, and the many organizations that contribute to its progress. The local version can be modeled after Leadership Raleigh and might be available for a grant for its administration. The goal of this program is to train future leaders and, at the very least, drive a better understanding and appreciation for local issues.

### **Social Audit**

Edenton should conduct a social media audit that analyzes the town's social channels and provides insight into its social content, audience engagement and demographics, and opportunities for improvement. The audit should include the following pages: Town of Edenton (FB), Visit Edenton (FB), Edenton-Chowan Partnership Inc. (FB), @TownofEdenton (Twitter), and visitedenton (Instagram).

When performing an audit on a social channel, tips to consider include:

- Pinpoint examples of content that have received the most shares, likes, comments, and impressions.
- Identify trends in top-performing posts. Consider these trends when creating new content.
- Research the practices of neighboring communities. This could inspire new ideas for Edenton's social content. New Bern and Little Washington both have a notable presence on Facebook and Instagram. We would encourage looking at other notable small towns as well.

### **Social Media Blueprint/Content Strategy**

A social media blueprint (or content strategy) will ensure Edenton is developing content designed to drive reach, engagement, and/or sentiment. Social content strategy varies depending on the platform you are using, and content should be developed with that in mind.

- *Facebook*: users value community, connection, and relationship-driven posts
- *Twitter*: users are more interested in news and information
- *Instagram*: mostly for users' entertainment and aims to visually entice users to learn more about an organization

When creating a social strategy, Edenton should consider the following practices:

- Post 3-5 times per week, with each post providing at least one of the following:
  - *Utility*: Give me something I can use
  - *Entertainment*: Engage me emotionally
  - *Reciprocity*: Help me be recognized as an individual and feel as though I belong to something bigger
- Engage on social with relevant organizations like local restaurants and businesses
- Highlight recent events and encourage interested parties to inquire about hosting their own
- Host social contests, such as sharing a post or photo to win a prize
- Share other organizations' posts on social media, including directing interested parties to other Edenton-specific pages that they don't already follow

### **Content Calendar**

A content calendar is a tool that will allow Edenton to create and distribute engaging content efficiently across multiple communication channels—paid, earned, shared, and owned. An example of a content calendar can be found in Appendix A.

To create the content calendar template, Edenton should identify key content categories, such as:

- Upcoming Events
- Testimonials (quotes or personal stories from residents, visitors, business owners, etc.)
- News

Edenton should plan content quarterly. Each piece of content should live across multiple channels to ensure it is efficiently utilized. For example, when writing a newsletter article, be sure to add it to your website and drive to the content via social media.

Recommended channels include:

- Websites (Town of Edenton & Visit Edenton)
- Social media channels

- Visit Edenton email newsletter
- Media pitch

While content planned in advance is recommended, the content calendar should be flexible, and we recommend revisiting the calendar each month to revise and update planned content as needed.

### **Search Engine Optimization (SEO)**

SEO is the practice of increasing the quantity and quality of traffic to a website through organic, unpaid search results on websites like Google and Bing. We recommend an audit of the Town of Edenton's website to ensure that the site is showing up when audiences are searching for communities like Edenton online.

To elevate SEO on relevant websites, Edenton should:

- Improve/add relevant keywords;
- Edit/add/remove content;
- Ensure all pages are mobile-friendly; and
- Encourage current and future partners to link to your website.

### **Video Content**

Video can capture the “feeling” of Edenton in a way that written content can't. Video drives more engagement online, as seen through the North Carolina Weekend video in November that resulted in nearly 108,000 views. E&V recommends creating video content that can be utilized across the web and in promotional materials and sharing the video with town partners (Arts Council, restaurants, bed & breakfasts, etc.) for use on their owned channels. This will help tell Edenton's story and showcase Edenton's unique characteristics to capture the attention of potential visitors.

### **Paid Social Campaign**

Edenton has utilized paid social media campaigns in the past to drive visitors to local events. We recommend expanding on this and using this channel to help reach more people, increase engagement, and drive website visits. These campaigns allow organizations or companies of all sizes to drive their message without having to spend an exorbitant amount of time or money. This can be done in both the short- and long-term across all platforms.

Promoted post campaigns highlight one specific post that has performed well organically. They can be set up quickly using existing content and are normally active for a short period of time. Long-term campaigns allow users to select an objective such as “grow followers” or “increase link clicks,” and Facebook finds the most valuable leads at the lowest cost. These normally run for a long period of time.

We recommend the following:

- Identify the top-performing posts on Facebook and create promoted campaigns
- Create a paid Facebook campaign with the objective “raise awareness” to increase reach (note: when advertising through Facebook, you have the option to also advertise on Instagram)
- Create a paid Facebook campaign with the objective “grow followers” to increase engagement

### **Media Relations**

Coordinated media relations plays a critical role in educating and attracting target audiences to Edenton. Edenton has done an incredible job of telling the town’s story to key publications, resulting in media hits like the Southern Ladies, Our State, and UNC-TV pieces. Each of these ultimately led to increased inquiries and visitors to Edenton.

We recommend continuing your media relations efforts and testing new tactics, such as:

- Outreach to publications beyond travel and lifestyle industries. This will allow you to reach new target audiences, such as business owners, entrepreneurs, and mobile workers; site selectors and developers; event hosts; and retirees. Some target publications could include:
  - Carolina Business
  - Business NC
  - Carolina Country
  - The Enterprisers Project
  - MetroMagazine
- Utilizing native content opportunities. Native content allows brands the opportunity to partner with editorial teams to create custom promotional content. While many native content opportunities will require one-on-one conversations, some publications offer standard opportunities. Some of these include:

- *Our State*: Sponsored stories are written for advertisers by the editorial team. A travel example includes A Weekend Guide to Washington (<https://www.ourstate.com/weekend-guide-to-washington/>)
  - *Garden and Gun*: Branded content is developed by their creative studios, and opportunities include City Guides, Custom Articles, Video, and more.
  - *Business Journals*: A series of sponsored content opportunities include Editorial Special Sections, Table of Experts, Digital Lists, and more.
  - *Business North Carolina*: A Sponsored Content Series offers native-style content through articles and video each month.
- Expand existing blogger/reporter weekend. We recommend continuing this event annually and targeting reporters outside of the lifestyle industry (see previous examples). We also recommend including lifestyle bloggers in your outreach, such as:
    - Bit & Grain
    - CityGirl Lost
    - Dixieland Reviews
    - Feast + West
    - Hines Sight
    - My Beautiful Adventures

### **Engage Relevant Websites**

To attract more of your target audiences to Edenton, Eckel & Vaughan recommends actively engaging with relevant websites, such as travel sites, retirement sites, event planning sites, etc. Edenton should regularly review the town's pages on key websites to see how users are interacting with the page. Edenton should respond to comments, react to posts, and thank visitors whenever possible. This will help users immediately see that Edenton is a friendly, welcoming, and authentic town.

To bolster user reviews, Edenton may consider a rewards program. For example, if a user leaves a review of their experience visiting Edenton, they could receive a gift card to a local restaurant or bed & breakfast. This will encourage additional user posts. Edenton may also consider utilizing social content or contests to encourage visitors to leave reviews on travel sites.

**Economic Development Briefing Meetings**

As Edenton launches its new brand message to relevant audiences, Eckel & Vaughan recommends hosting briefing meetings with key organizations to reach your target audiences — particularly within the economic development industry. Edenton must ensure the town is recognized as an opportunity for developers, site selectors, and business owners. To help tell this story, we recommend identifying key organizations and developing a short presentation that can be tailored to for each meeting.

Organizations should include:

- EDPNC
- NC East Alliance
- NCRR Invests
- Port Authority of Virginia
- NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
- Visit NC
- NC Department of Commerce
- The Golden Leaf Foundation
- Office of the Governor



## MEASUREMENT & REPORTING

The best communications are those that can be measured. E&V will work to finalize a metrics and reporting plan with you — one that provides regular reporting on activities and measures effectiveness of Edenton’s communications activities. While each tactic will have its own set of goals and metrics, we recommend — in general — looking at three key performance indicators.

<b>Reach</b>	How many people connect with communication activities?
<b>Sentiment</b>	How are audiences reacting to communications?
<b>Engagement</b>	How are audiences engaging with content?

Inputs that will provide the collective team this information include:

- Media coverage
- Website traffic and activity
- Digital ad campaign
- Social media engagement

APPENDIX A

Content Theme:										
	Intranet	Weekly Huddle Email	Closed FB Group	Social Media	Health Matters Blog	Lifeline Newsletter	News Release	Media Alert	Pitch	Graphic Notes
The Business										
Organization News										
Industry News										
The People										
Employee Engagement										
Employee Events										
The Community										
Events										
Service										
Fundraising/Donations										