



2021 ISHA AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE APPLICATION

Entries must be for projects completed by September 1, 2020 through August 31, 2021.

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Entry Category:

Education/Workforce Development – A program or project that introduces new employees, demonstrates an effective training mechanism, or otherwise enhances knowledge of our industry.

Events and Fundraising – A program or project that clearly raised significant funds for an industry related cause and/or an event that experienced a dramatic increase in attendance, industry visibility and/or net profitability.

Governmental Affairs – A program or project that effectively communicates the message of governmental activities, or demonstrates success in championing an industry cause.

Member Programs – A program or project that shows performance results through increases in members or retention of members.

Public Relations – A program or project that positively highlights the activities of the association to external audiences.

Communications – A program or project that positively impacts the association's communication to members and stakeholders.

Please respond to the following questions on a separate piece of paper.

1. Title of Program
2. Goals & Objectives of Program
3. Target Audience
4. Results of Program
5. Evaluation Measures
6. How was the program presented to the Target audience?
7. Addition information

ENTRIES MUST BE RECEIVED NO LATER THAN OCTOBER 8, 2021

ISHA Awards of Excellence Application for NCRLA's Count On Me NC Initiative

Title of Program: [Count On Me NC](#)

Goals & Objectives of Program

When COVID-19 cases began to rise dramatically in North Carolina (NC), restaurants were closed for in-dining service, a statewide stay-at-home order was put in place, and capacity restrictions limited groups that could gather in hotels and event venues. Even when restrictions began to ease, research showed that consumers were hesitant to travel, attend meetings and events, and dine in at restaurants for fear of contracting COVID-19.

The North Carolina Restaurant & Lodging Association (NCRLA) approached the NC Department of Health and Human Services (NC DHHS) with a proposal to develop and promote trainings for hospitality businesses and their employees across the state. The goals were to:

- Train NC restaurants and hotels and their employees on new COVID-19-related protocols and best practices for operating during the pandemic and prepare employees for re-opening on May 22, 2021,
- Garner support from restaurant and hotel owners and operators for embracing and pledging to operate in accordance with newly established COVID-19 protocols,
- Develop a public awareness campaign about the initiative designed to recognize the hospitality businesses that took the trainings and had signed the promise to operate responsibly during the pandemic,
- Develop and execute a \$5 million consumer facing promotional campaign, in partnership with the state's tourism office (Visit NC) and convention and visitors bureaus (CVBs) across the state, to help alleviate consumer hesitancy about traveling and dining in restaurants and to assure consumers that NC restaurants and hotels were safe,
- And position NCRLA and the NC hospitality community as partners (not adversaries) with NC DHHS and NC Governor Cooper during the pandemic.

Target Audience

The target audiences of the Count On Me NC (COMNC) initiative were:

- Hotels, restaurants, taverns, and other in-person businesses that serve guests,
- And consumers and potential travelers to help convey the message that restaurants and hotels are safe and prepared to embrace the highest standards of operation during COVID-19.

Results of Program

- NCRLA received and completed a contract in the amount of \$475,000 to develop and execute the Count On Me NC initiative. NCRLA established itself as partners with NC DHHS and Governor Cooper during the pandemic and enjoyed a positive and collaborative relationship as mandates and restrictions evolved during the public health crisis.
- NCRLA worked with NC DHHS to develop operating protocols for hospitality businesses during COVID-19. NCRLA also enlisted NC State University's Cooperative Extension Department to develop and host an online training platform that included five training modules offered in both English and Spanish and rolled trainings out to businesses and employees before the stay-at-home order was lifted and restaurants were allowed to open again.
- NCRLA established itself as partners with NC DHHS and Governor Cooper during the pandemic and enjoyed a positive and collaborative relationship as mandates and restrictions evolved during the public health crisis.
- The COMNC initiative launched May 2020 and ran through June 2021 and was a huge success. During that time, 68,089 courses were completed, 17,137 individuals took the trainings, and 14,978 unique businesses took the trainings. There were 511,448 visitors to the COMNC website, and the initiative

garnered over 2 billion media impressions. All 100 counties across the state of North Carolina participated in the initiative.

Evaluation Measures

The COMNC initiative had five evaluation metrics, which included:

- Number of trainings completed
- Number of businesses who took the trainings
- Number of individuals who took the trainings
- Number of website views
- Media impressions

How was the program presented to the Target audience?

When the initiative first launched in May 2020 before the Governor lifted the Stay-at-Home order, five training modules were developed and promoted to business owners and operators before the Governor lifted the stay-at-home order. These training modules included front of house, back of house, owner/operator, cleaning and sanitation, and general guest services. NCRLA actively promoted COMNC through various public relations vehicles, including NCRLA newsletters and TV and print media interviews on a weekly basis. NCRLA developed and executed materials to recognize those best-in-class businesses and their employees that were a part of the Count On Me NC initiative. The materials included printed certificates, window decals, marketing toolkits, and promotional items in English and Spanish to recognize participating businesses.

NCRLA partnered with VisitNC who committed \$5 million to execute the consumer facing awareness campaign. They broadcasted :30 and :60 second video promotions to CountOnMeNC.org and TV advertisements in major NC markets. They placed print ads in Our State Magazine monthly as part of a larger safety campaign targeted at 80% NC residents and 20% visitors from contiguous states. NCRLA and VisitNC also introduced a media campaign that announced Spanish language versions of training modules, website, and ad campaign. Finally, NCRLA launched NASCAR brand partnership with VisitNC and Richard Petty Motorsports to drive participation in both business participation and consumer pledge.

Additional Information

The COMNC initiative was recognized by the Out of Home Advertising Association of America with a Bronze Obie Award for Nonprofits & Public Service among 137 finalists nationally. The COMNC media campaign won eight awards, including Best of Show, at the Charlotte chapter of the American Advertising Federation Gala and it was recognized the best Advocacy and Grass Roots Campaign in 2021 by the US Travel Association.