



**ROGUE VALLEY VINTNERS (RVV)**  
**History, Goals and Strategic Plan Summary**  
**April 2019**

**I. Who is RVV?**

The organization's original formative impulse grew out of a regional strategic planning session in Jacksonville, facilitated by Randy Harrington, and paid for with regional Wine Country License Plate funds. RVV would not exist were it not for the tourism industry's early support and encouragement. Led by a tight working group of industry leaders from across the Rogue Valley, RVV has developed a strong, non-profit association framework and an active board of directors; invested in strategic planning with Scion Advisors; engaged Full Glass Research and the University of Oregon in foundational research projects to guide our development; initiated community partnerships with tourism offices across the Rogue Valley; partnered with Asante Health Systems, lodging providers, restaurants, tour operators, and other local businesses.

RVV's most significant partnership will be with its member wineries and vineyards. By summer of 2019 RVV projects that it will receive membership commitments from 40 local wineries and vineyards. By 2021, the goal is 80 members. Member engagement is critical to the project's success. RVV is committed to identifying and

implementing the best organizational practices to foster member satisfaction. We strive to be transparent, inclusive, and consistent in our communications with members. We invite diverse perspectives to the table and encourage feedback. We are establishing procedures for conflict resolution and accountability. Our focus is always on what is best for the region, not just the individual winery.

## **II. RVV's Vision for the Future**

With distinctively crafted wines from vineyards among the best in the world, we are a community of accessible, craft-driven winegrowers fueled by the awe of our wild and scenic valley, who invite explorers, makers and inspiration-seekers to discover and connect with the natural wonders of Oregon's Rogue Valley.

By embodying our core values of transparency, working in alignment with regional and statewide destination management and wine industry organizations, and a strong impulse to make lasting beneficial connections with both consumers and industry partners, we believe we can carve out a leadership position in a competitive wine marketplace. We aspire to eventually becoming thought leaders and best practitioners in our space.

## **III. Why RVV?**

The Rogue Valley's wine industry faces a challenging time in its existence. Increased competition for market share, escalating costs, the recent environmental challenges posed by wildfires, and other issues have negatively impacted tourism to Southern Oregon, including visits to wineries. Wine consumption continues to grow in the United States, but at a slower rate than the last 10 years. The number of smaller, artisanal wine regions are on the rise and competing for consumer attention. Focusing on the short-term goals of establishing the Rogue Valley wine brand that aligns with our regional destination marketing efforts will amplify the region's current marketing messages in our favor, and ultimately lead to a strong

brand identity that will result long-term in greater economic viability for the region and greater distribution of Rogue Valley wines nationally and internationally.

#### **IV. High-Level Needs Statement**

##### Need #1: A Rogue Valley Brand

The Napa Valley is known for its cabernet sauvignon, the Willamette Valley for its pinot noir, but no single varietal defines the Rogue Valley AVA. The sheer diversity of local varietals and brands is confusing to the consumer and has complicated efforts to establish the region's viticultural identity. This diversity is also a strength. Develop a clear, powerful brand identity that embraces the region's diversity and leverages its eclecticism will be a powerful differentiator and draw.

##### Need #2: Regional Cooperation

There has been an historic lack of communication and coordination between Rogue Valley vintners and winemakers. Local producers are fiercely independent, which is part of the region's appeal but also contributes to its unfocused identity. RVV was founded to foster communication, set regional goals, and encourage coordination between regional wine producers. RVV creates opportunities to share information, identify common problems, and collaborate on collective solutions.

##### Need #3: New Tools and Messages

RVV needs to provide communication tools and branded messages for our regional wine industry that appeal to the next generation of wine consumers. 67% of visitors to Rogue Valley wineries are age 55 or older, an average age that skews significantly older than overall California wine region visitors. The percentage of visitors using other types of social media lagged national norms for wine-related communication. RVV will create a communications

plan that employs both dominant and emerging message platforms. It will connect local wineries to the Rogue Valley's abundant recreational activities, creating a tourism destination identity that appeals to younger consumers.

## **V. RVV's Opportunity**

RVV's opportunity is to stand for something unique and meaningful that is economically viable. In the short term, RVV's board believes it can leverage the big, unclaimed local opportunity of converting more Rogue Valley travelers into including a wine experience in their visit. By increasing the number of winery visits from our 2 million marketable visitors from 9% to 12% will not only result in greater tasting room revenues but the creation of an ever-growing group of ambassadors for Rogue Valley wines nationwide. This approach will build winery customers at a faster rate, more profitably than launching regional and national distribution initiatives; and more effectively, in the short-term, than going after a whole new target audience and convincing them to come to our region.

## **VI. Three-Year Strategic Goal**

A 3% increase in visits to Rogue Valley wineries, from the current 9% of the two million marketable visitors who annually travel to Southern Oregon to 12% by December 2021.

## **VII. Three-Year Strategic Initiatives**

### **Initiative 1: Recognition**

Establish global recognition

- a) Develop a compelling, differentiated brand proposition and style guide that defines the Rogue Valley's wine destination experience.
- b) Create an impactful web and social media presence and plans for maintenance.

- c) Increase the promotion and impact of local vintner events.
- d) Develop a Rogue Valley consumer database.
- e) Develop a Rogue Valley content library of stories, images, and videos.
  - f) Partner with Travel Oregon and other Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) to increase the visibility of the Rogue Valley Vintners in their messages and marketing.

### **Initiative 2: Quality**

Engage RVV membership in efforts to increase quality

RVV will provide a platform for wineries, vintners, and community members to share their knowledge and collaborate with these activities:

- a) Schedule quarterly member meetings and other events to share information.
- b) Research practices adopted by other Oregon and California AVAs that will improve RV-AVA's product quality.
- c) Schedule annual RVV board of directors' retreats and conferences to exchange ideas.
- d) Establish a board technology committee.

### **Initiative 3: Training**

Develop a strong, well-trained workforce with training programs and activities that support local workers and attract new talent.

- a) Research available guest service training programs.
  - b) Provide grants or stipends to underwrite housing costs for winemaker interns.
  - c) Sponsor best-in-class trainings for direct-to-consumer sales.
  - d) Send a large contingent of RVV winery representatives to the annual Oregon Wine Symposium.

### **Initiative 4: Financial Health & Sustainability**

RVV will develop infrastructure and resources that expand membership and attract funding.

- a) Create a membership package with clear benefits.
  - b) Conduct a membership drive that attracts support from across the Rogue Valley AVA.
  - c) Hire an executive director who is skilled in cultivating new members and raising funds.
  - d) Hire a part-time grant writer to research grant opportunities and request funding.

## **VIII. Measuring Success**

At this point, early in RVV's creation, these will be our 3-year metrics for success:

- 1) Complete RVV brand development work with Lookout and roll out the new Rogue Valley brand.
- 2) Design and launch marketing and advertising programs built around the new brand.
- 3) Design and launch the branded RVV web site and social media pages and begin measuring unique visitors across all platforms.
- 4) Secure membership commitments from 40 local wineries.
- 5) Host at least one major membership cultivation event.
  - 6) Host at least two roundtables and/or trainings for RVV members and community partners.
  - 7) Increase 2019 visitation to Rogue Valley wineries over 2018, as measured by
    - a) attendance data collected by member wineries;
    - b) the annual Longwoods International Visitor Profile-Southern Oregon.

## **IX. Key Industry Alignments**

RVV seeks short-term wins by strategically aligning with our region's tourism strategy to drive increased visitation and prolonged overnight stays in the Rogue Valley. Travel Southern Oregon, our Regional Destination Management

Organization's (RDMO) tourism plan identifies five goals for the region. Four of these are directly supported by RVV's brand and marketing initiatives:

- 1) Increase regionally branded TSO and partner advertising opportunities.
- 2) Maximize PR impact with travel and destination marketing media.
- 3) Create best-in-industry front-line experience for visitors.
  - 4) Broaden destination development outreach, product and marketing of regional destination opportunities.

RVV's proposed project also directly relates to four strategic imperatives identified in the Strategic Plan for our state tourism office, Travel Oregon:

- 1) Optimize impact of visitor economy.
- 2) Support and empower Oregon's tourism industry.
- 3) Champion the value of tourism.
- 4) Run an effective business.

With key strategic investments by our regional tourism partners, including Wine Country License Plate funding, RVV will have the resources to fully pursue the initiatives laid out in its strategic plan.