

NELA Film & Video Commission

I. Mission Statement

To market the northeast Louisiana locations, resources and personnel as a production center to motion picture and television production companies, thereby increasing the number of filmed entertainment projects produced in the region, generating jobs, increase tourism, and revenue in the local economy.

II. Background

Ouachita Parish serves as the hub parish of Region 8, which includes 11 northeast Louisiana parishes plus Lincoln Parish: Union, Jackson, Morehouse, Richland, Caldwell, Franklin, Madison, West Carroll, East Carroll, Tensas and Ouachita. It has been identified that Louisiana's second largest industry in the state is tourism. In Ouachita Parish, over \$153 million tourist dollars were brought into the parish in 2003. According to state economic development officials, the film industry investment in our state has grown from \$30 million to more than \$200 million in just two years.

Northeast Louisiana and Louisiana's competitors, Mississippi, North Carolina, Texas, and Canada, are thriving in a down economy as a result of sales and marketing efforts. The reason for their success is fundamental: they sell themselves as a community to decision makers in the entertainment industry. Now is the time for northeast Louisiana to answer the call of its production industry. The local production community is at a point where it must come together as a cooperative body and extend every effort necessary to attract some of the large scale projects that are being produced. Revenue is being lost because northeast Louisiana does not presently have a salesman dedicated to the purpose of marketing the region. The potential economic impact of a film project is tremendous – by most accounts a conservative factor of between three and five times the films budget will be invested in the local market during production, i.e. a film with a production budget of \$5,000,000 translates into \$15 to \$25 million dollars spent and invested into the local/regional economy.

Job creation and the retention of existing and the attraction of new business are at the top of the list for most northeast people in northeast Louisiana. The objective of the group is to identify local residents who have experience and skills in the film and video industry crafts, and to work to create job and business opportunities for these residents. In northeast Louisiana, we have the talent (more than 150 local residents have been identified as having experience and skills of benefit to the film and video industry). We plan to concentrate our efforts on attracting the production of documentaries, development of cable television shows, regional and national television commercials, and corporate training films.

III. Strategies and Objectives

To achieve the goals in the outlined Mission Statement we should:

- A. Immediately select a Board of Directors who will assist in staffing the NELA Film & Video Commission with a Commissioner. A qualified professional will be hired to be the area's representative to the production entertainment industry. A job description for the Commissioner should be written and selected based on the following attributes:
 - i. Proven sales and marketing experience.
 - ii. Leadership abilities in planning and implementing marketing strategies.
 - iii. A working knowledge of the terminology, technology and techniques employed in the production of motion pictures and television.
 - iv. Highly organized individual with excellent written and oral communication and computer and technology skills.
 - v. An understanding of the industry names, companies, personalities and schedules of proposed projects.
 - vi. Established contacts in markets outside of the region.
 - vii. Knowledge of architecture and geography in the region which may be used in production.
 - viii. Ability to photograph locations consistent with the style and format suitable for filmmakers.
 - ix. Effectively communicate with elected and civil service officials in Local and State Governments.
 - x. Serve as a liaison with the State Film Commission.

The Commissioner of the NELA Film & Video Commission will be in charge of the day to day operation of the office; however, the individual will have the support of the Board of Directors. ~~The Board will be comprised of a small, well-informed contingent of active industry professionals (17) who will serve on a volunteer basis.~~ The Board will meet regularly with the Commissioner to create policy, discuss strategic planning, and implement marketing efforts. Additionally, the Commissioner will have the opportunity to report to a representative body of the region whose livelihood is derived by the production entertainment industry. Membership may be structured as follows:

- Pres. Polignone*
- 3 - NELA Film & Video Association Members *to be selected from*
 - 12 - Region 8 Community Representatives including Lincoln Parish
 - 1 - Monroe Chamber of Commerce Representative
 - 1 - Louisiana Economic Development Entertainment Cluster Director
- Minority Business Council*

executive committee on the design

The office of the NELA Film & Video Commission should physically reside in the Monroe Chamber of Commerce office. This will help accomplish several goals and overcome significant obstacles. Additionally, it allows the Commission to be supervised

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by the Monroe Chamber and assures other elected leaders that the invested dollars are worthwhile and being used wisely. Resources to operate the office include, but may not be limited to are: physical office space, a telephone system onto which a line can be added, access to a receptionist in the absence of NELA Film & Video Commission personnel and access to business equipment such as computer, copier, fax, postage tools, etc. For the first year, the office support staff will include Monroe Chamber staff, college intern, and volunteers who are capable of fielding telephone inquiries and handling light office duties.

- B. Aggressively market northeast Louisiana as a resourceful production region.
 - i. Develop a printed brochure/CD promoting northeast Louisiana as a motion picture and television production location.
 - ii. Personally contact major studio executives, producers and production company location coordinators as potential clients.
 - iii. Conduct a direct mail campaign.
 - iv. Attend various industry-related conventions, expos and trade shows such as Location Expo in California.
 - v. Promptly follow up all inquiries with electronic, written and telephone contact to provide location information requested.
 - vi. Develop print advertising campaign as resources allow.
 - vii. Develop website and electronic promotions as resources allow.

- C. Assist studios, producers, production companies and location scouts in securing locations, personnel, creative talent and the resources required to produce motion pictures and television programs.
 - i. Produce an electronic resource directory, electronic database and website page with information about technicians and vendors in the northeast Louisiana region with the assistance from the NELA Film & Video Association and the state.
 - ii. Provide location scouting service with prompt and complete responses to requests and inquiries. Required services include digital and 35mm photography, film processing, reprints, correct presentation of photographs, Federal Express and significant travel.
 - iii. Coordinate hospitality efforts for visiting motion picture and television executives.

- D. Encourage and communicate with local production professionals. This will be accomplished through membership in the NELA Film & Video Association and public appearances at industry meetings. This will also provide the Monroe Chamber with a spokesperson to the entertainment industry if the Chamber so desires.

- E. The efforts of a film commission are long term investments in the region. Additional objectives to be accomplished through a long term commitment to funding the NELA Film & Video Commission will be:
- i. Provide Northeast Louisiana with greater visibility in the film industry.
 - ii. Give the region exposure as a destination for tourism.
 - iii. Promote the importance of film and television in the local economy.
 - iv. Create local jobs.
 - v. Attempt to change the negative image of the region where it presently exists.
 - vi. Stimulate local investments in the industry.
 - vii. Bring the community together with common goals.
 - viii. Encourage the development and marketing of local film and video projects.

IV. Finance

The funds allocated are relatively low for an organization that is a potential pilot center for the northeast Louisiana region; however, this is a very good starting point. As the financial commitment to the NELA Film & Video Commission is extended into a long term investment, significant returns are expected. Over a period of three years, the budget should be raised to allow an operating level that is self sufficient and will not cause an undue burden on the Monroe Chamber. By year three, we will have a sales and marketing effort that is competitive with most regions in the nation. See the attached budget for reference.

V. Conclusion

The NELA Film & Video Commission will be an integral part of the local production industry and have the support of the community. It will help provide jobs for residents and generate significant revenue for the region. The responsibility of government is to provide an environment that is conducive to building a strong economy and favorable living conditions. It is not the government's responsibility to provide for our every need. The region can help us obtain the clients, but the private sector must provide the competitive services and qualified labor to keep the work here. It will give focus to the hard working community of northeast Louisiana. As necessary, the NELA Film & Video Commission will be a cheerleader, it will be a fan, it will be a coach, it will be a player. What it cannot be is the team. To work efficiently and productively, the team must be comprised of individuals, the professional community and elected officials in local government.