

FOCUSED ON THE FUTURE

**EXPERIENCE
COLUMBIA SC**

Fiscal Year Annual Report

**18
/
19**



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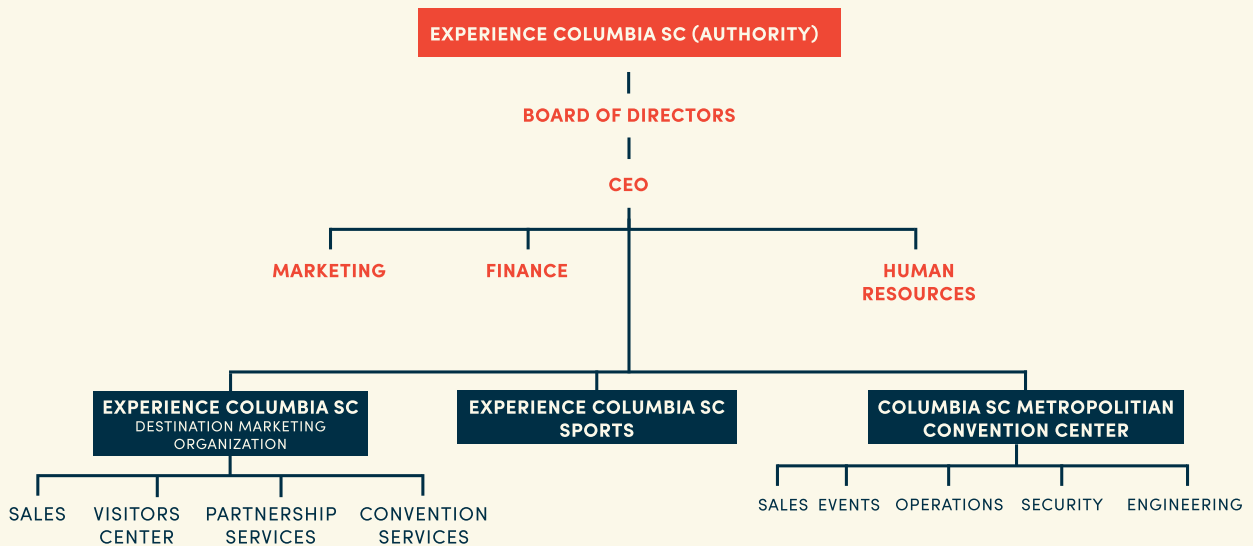
WE SELL COLUMBIA SC

In other words,
our elevator speech.

We are focused on the future. Our mission is to strengthen the area's economy by promoting tourism in the region through active recruitment of new meetings, conventions, leisure travel and sporting events and by enhancing existing tourism through exceptional customer service.

We want the whole world to know what makes Columbia SC so great. Think of us as the biggest

cheerleader for the heart of South Carolina. While each entity has its own mission; the CMCC to book and host events in the building, and ECSC DMO and ECSC Sports to recruit and book events in the City of Columbia and Lexington and Richland Counties, we are all one big family under the Authority umbrella, all working toward promoting the Columbia region as the "Real Southern Hot Spot".



The mission of Experience Columbia SC – Authority includes: Directing and managing the activities and mission of the ECSC-DMO. Overseeing the development and operation of the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center under a long-term management agreement for the benefit of the Governmental Entities: City of Columbia, Lexington County and Richland County. Directing and managing the activities and mission of the ECSC Sports. Directing and managing the operation of the Columbia SC Visitors Center.

A nighttime photograph of a city skyline across a river. The city lights are visible in the background, and a bridge with light trails from traffic is in the foreground. The text is overlaid in large, bold, white letters.

**TOURISM BRINGS
BUSINESS,
INVESTMENT,
CAPITAL, JOBS AND
TAX DOLLARS TO THE
COLUMBIA REGION**

EXPERIENCE COLUMBIA SC *Economic Impact*

**14.8 MILLION
ANNUAL VISITORS**

\$2.3 billion direct impact

\$119 MILLION
local/state
taxes

11%
increase
from 2016

24,000
local jobs
supported

14%
increase
from 2016

\$426.7 MILLION
spending on
food & beverage

\$256.1 MILLION
spending on
lodging services

EXPERIENCE COLUMBIA SC *Highlights*

New Columbia SC Visitors Center

The new Columbia SC Visitors Center, located at the corner of Lincoln and Gervais Streets, opened in September 2018. Increased visibility at this new location provides opportunity to engage with the community and connect with more visitors. Locals and travelers alike can stop in for information and shop for local products. The facility won a 2019 Preservation Award in the area of New Construction in a Historic Context.



Visitor Wayfinding

Experience Columbia SC partnered with the City of Columbia, the University of South Carolina, Historic Columbia and entertainment district partners to roll out a vehicular wayfinding system designed to help direct visitors and residents to key destination points such as museums, venues, attractions and parking garages. The 222-sign system also provides a sense of place within primary entertainment districts as well as the Columbia region as a whole.



Key Events

Meeting Name	Days	Attendees	Room Nights	Location	Departments Involved
Carolina9's Festival	2	1,000	140	Fields at Saluda Shoals	ECSC SPORTS
Chick-fil-A Classic	4	6,600	376	Richland NE High School	ECSC SPORTS
Coastal Plain League All-Star Show	2	1,500	194	Lex. County Baseball Stadium	ECSC SPORTS
DanceMakers	1	1,100	230	CMCC	ECSC SPORTS & CMCC
Dynamic Baseball, USC	2	700	540	Founders Park	ECSC SPORTS
Miss South Carolina Scholarship Org.	12	2000	1121	Township Auditorium	ECSC DMO
Nashicon	3	2,500	69	CMCC	ECSC DMO & CMCC
National Baptist Deacons Convention of America, Inc.	7	800	917	Doubletree by Hilton	ECSC DMO
NCAA Men's Basketball 1st & 2nd Rounds	5	20,000	3553	Colonial Life Arena	ECSC SPORTS

3-Millionth Visitor

The CMCC welcomed its 3-millionth visitor in May 2019, during the annual Richland One School District Celebration. Approximately 6,000 events have been held since the building opened. To commemorate this occasion, our President and CEO, Bill Ellen made a special announcement on stage, attendees received locally-made, branded cake pops and one randomly-selected winner went home with a gift basket.



2019 SC Governor's Conference

In February, attendees of SCPRT's annual Governor's Conference on Tourism and Travel were given the Columbia SC experience. Tourism leaders from across the state networked with industry peers, major travel and lifestyle publications and media outlets, such as Southern Living and TripAdvisor. The conference, held at the CMCC, included keynote speakers and break-out sessions. The ECSC team hosted a welcome party for attendees, and organized tours that showed off the growth of the city as a destination.



Celebrating 35 Years

June 2019 marked the start of Experience Columbia SC-DMO's 35th year in operation as the Columbia region's destination marketing organization. For 35 years, we have cultivated relationships within the community, as well

as with visitors from all over. We have seen Columbia grow into the destination it is today and we thank you all for your continued support as we work together to make Columbia a wonderful place to visit and live.

Meeting Name	Days	Attendees	Room Nights	Location	Departments Involved
Net Elite Baseball Prime, Fireflies Bash	2	500	500	Segra Park	ECSC SPORTS
Nike Palmetto Cup	3	3,000	100	Fields at Saluda Shoals	ECSC SPORTS
SC Association of School Librarians	3	600	425	CMCC	ECSC DMO & CMCC
SC Council of Teachers of Mathematics	3	1,000	218	CMCC	ECSC DMO & CMCC
SC Green Industry Association	5	2,500	47	CMCC	ECSC DMO & CMCC
SC Music Educators Association	3	1,000	804	CMCC	ECSC DMO & CMCC
SC United Methodist Conference	5	2500	490	Township Auditorium	ECSC DMO
SC State Firefighters Association	4	5,000	1080	CMCC	ECSC DMO & CMCC
Southern Gas Association	5	950	566	CMCC	ECSC DMO & CMCC
St. Patrick's Day Cup	2	7,400	1152	Multiple Soccer Complexes	ECSC SPORTS
United Sporting Companies Ellett Brothers/JSC	7	800	1075	State Fairgrounds	ECSC DMO
Way of the Cross Church of Christ, Int'l.	5	800	501	Doubletree by Hilton	ECSC DMO

THE ROAD *to the* FINAL FOUR

Hosting NCAA Basketball Fans:

From bidding to preparing hospitality partners, Experience Columbia SC Sports worked tirelessly for Columbia's time to shine in a national spotlight. Together, with the community's support, we pulled it off without a hitch.





1 Giant basketball showcasing local artists & curated with the help of One Columbia & First Citizens



66,619

Pieces of ECSC & NCAA branded signage displayed around town

70+

Volunteers worked a combined 326 hours







647,493 IMPRESSIONS

9,551 ENGAGEMENTS

4,154 USES OF #REALCOLUMBIASC



10

Welcome tables at host hotels, Colonial Life Arena & CAE

600+ MEDIA MENTIONS

\$1.1 million in publicity value for Columbia region

30+

Community events for fans & locals alike



\$11.33 MILLION DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT

47,977 PAID ATTENDANCE

Hotel ADR increased 8% regionally and 14% in downtown

\$115 hotel ADR compared to \$94 the previous year



2019 INSIDER'S GUIDE

The 2019 Insider's Guide showcased the renovation revival happening across the Columbia region where new restaurants, breweries and cafés are set within historic structures and breathing new life into historic neighborhoods. Other features included the resurgence of heirloom agriculture, outdoor fun all year long and a look at the region's neighborhoods, events and hotels.

LOCAL AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

This year, ECSC launched a "Real Local" ambassadors program to highlight the local voices and enthusiasm in our region. Each ambassador helps contribute to website and social media content to tell the Columbia SC story. Inaugural ambassadors included Vanessa Driscoll Biaolobreski (F2T Productions, Management & Catering), Anthony Goldman (Koala Bottle), Lynn Luc (SOCO/@GoCola), and Shanika Pichey (Life Is Pichey).



INFLUENCER MARKETING

We partnered with social media influencers such as @BeausAndAshley, @CocktailBandits, and @BearFootTheory to tell the Columbia SC story through social media, blogs, and top-tier travel outlets like Garden & Gun and Matador Network. This method of advertising provides an authentic look at our destination and creates a sense of inspiration for potential visitors outside of our own network.

CO-OPERATIVE MARKETING

We assisted 25 partners with promoting their message outside of the Columbia area through our cooperative marketing program. Attractions, hotels, and festivals around the region were able to tell their story and/or drive ticket sales for events through the use of digital billboards and web banners, among other media outlet, all at discounted rates.



EXPERIENCE COLUMBIA SC *Marketing*



SOCIAL MEDIA

19.7 million
Impressions

190,000
Total Followers
(as of June 30, 2019)

Over
21 MILLION
IMPRESSIONS

Lifestyle print & digital blitz
with Garden & Gun, Southern
Living & The Local Palate



WEBSITE

1.3 million
Visits

730,000+
Organic Visits



TELEVISION

13,280,457
Impressions

1,308,364 NCAA
11,972,093 General

Over
250,000
MEETING PLANNER
GUIDES DISTRIBUTED

Through meeting industry
publications & at tradeshows



BILLBOARD

87,096,325
Impressions

5,983,429 NCAA
81,112,896 General

National Television Commercial Campaign on Cooking Channel, Food Network, Hallmark Channel, OWN Network, Travel Channel, History Channel & regional network affiliates across the southeast.

Publication Advertising

Leisure

Garden & Gun, Southern Living, Atlanta Magazine, The Local Palate, Creative Loafing Charlotte, Charleston City Paper, Palmetto Magazine and Augusta Metro Spirit

Sports

Rowing News, Sports Events and Sports Destination Management

Meetings

General Advertising &/or Meeting Insert

RCMA Emerge, ASAE Associations Now, PCMA Convene, Successful Meetings, Venues Now, M&C (Meetings & Conventions), Meetings Today, Convention South, MPI The Meeting Professional, & GASociety of Association

Executives (GSAE) directory, Connect Faith, Connect Association and Connect Corporate, Convention South and SC Society of Association Executives (SCSAE) directory

***“Everywhere you go, you get the sense
the city is enjoying itself.”***

.....
Elizabeth Florio,
Southbound & Atlanta
Magazines, April 2019

“The development catalyzed growth – places to eat, drink, and shop popped up to support the new residential audience, ***nearly all indie businesses with singular, foodie-loving concepts.***”

Stephanie Burnette,
TOWN Magazine, July 2018

“River adventure, sans crowds? Sign us up.

Get on the water to marvel at awe-inspiring timber in Congaree, one of our country’s premier spots for tree tours. You can canoe and kayak, or hike along Cedar Creek in blissful privacy on one of the park’s many marked trails.”

Sunny Montefiore,
Men's Journal, October 2018

“Whether you’re an outdoor adventure seeker, history buff, art enthusiast, foodie, or parent of young children, there is an activity for you. ***Find your niche, pack your day-trip bags and take a short drive to Columbia!*** You’ll be in the center of good times at the center of South Carolina.”

Rebecca Cross,
Florence Morning News, June 2019

“An average high of 63 in February. An easy drive from Atlanta or Raleigh. A range of family-friendly eateries and activities, plus a huge children’s museum and an award-winning zoo. ***No, we’re not talking about Charleston or Savannah, we’re talking about South Carolina’s capital: Columbia.***”

Susan Shain,
Go Escape Magazine
October 2018

EXPERIENCE COLUMBIA SC *Media Relations*

One way Experience Columbia SC strives to live out its mission is through public and media relations efforts. We promote the

Columbia region by pitching story ideas and hosting media to garner regional, national and international destination coverage.



Clockwise from top left: Elizabeth Florio, Southbound Magazine (April 2019); Rebecca Cross, Florence Morning News (June 2019); Stephanie Burnette, TOWN Magazine (July 2018).



Columbia SC Pimento Cheese Passport

In April 2019, we celebrated National Pimento Cheese Day by staking our claim on the southern staple and launching the Columbia SC Pimento Cheese Passport. The program showcases a diverse array of pimento cheese dishes from 14 local restaurants. Pick one up at the Columbia SC Visitors center or at any of the participating restaurants and get started for a chance to win a \$50 gift card!

58



129
MEDIA LEADS

18
HOSTED PRESS VISITS





"We enjoy working with Experience Columbia SC as a partner hotel because we know how valuable their work and efforts are to small business owners in our industry. Their support and one on one attention to our hotel and to us personally is exceptional. We always feel we are among friends when working with everyone on the team and value the streamlined communication we receive!"

Rita Patel, Owner, Hotel Trundle

"We sat together on a plane from Columbia and you (Twila) helped me with hotel reservations for my daughter's wedding. I just wanted to tell you how helpful that was to have those rooms! My daughter was married in June and it all went beautifully! Plus we LOVED the hotel. It was so wonderful to be that close to the Lace House and to the Vista. We will definitely stay there again. The personnel at the hotel are so very nice and helpful!"

Melissa Wernersbach,
Unexpected DMO Client

"In my 10 years in the hospitality industry I have never worked with a group that is eager, organized and as professional as our Experience Columbia SC Staff. Site visits are always well organized and it is always motivating seeing endless opportunities the staff is working on bringing to Columbia."

David Erbacher,
Director of Sales & Marketing,
Hyatt Place Columbia/
Downtown/The Vista



Nearly
\$18 MILLION
IN ECONOMIC IMPACT
From DMO Meetings & Conventions



TOP 10 STATES REQUESTING COLUMBIA SC INFO.
SC • FL • NC • GA • OH • PA • NY • TX • VA • CA



Hotel Performance

City of Columbia, Richland & Lexington Counties

66.4%
Fiscal Year Occupancy

\$94.28
Average Daily Rate

\$62.88
Revenue Per
Available Room

EXPERIENCE COLUMBIA SC
DESTINATION MARKETING ORGANIZATION

"I met some guys from Richmond at Cottontown Brew Lab and they said this visit totally changed their perception of Columbia and SC as a whole. High praise indeed and a testament to the efforts of you and your team."

Columbia SC Local



"People from our office are taking notice of what you guys are doing! Great job on promoting Columbia. Good luck with the next few days and have some fun!"

Andy Clinton, VP of Sales,
Visit York County

"You get A+ for free parking and shuttle transportation! We never had free service at any of the 10+ tournaments we attended. The staff members were both helpful and courteous. We felt very safe at all times, which has not been the case at all previous tournaments. Delays were minimal. You folks could give lessons on customer service!!!"

Carol Kendall, Sunset Beach, NC

"You've got a really wonderful local organizing committee here. The city, the whole community's been really, really excited to make it all work well. And so far everything's fabulous."

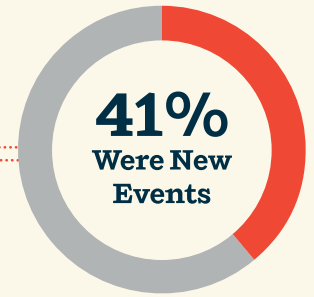
Mark Emmert, NCAA President



"Thank you to the city of Columbia. Wow! What a beautiful city!"

Mike Krzyzewski, Head Basketball
Coach, Duke University

Over
\$15 MILLION
IN ECONOMIC IMPACT
 From Sports Events Hosted



NCAA MARCH MADNESS IN COLUMBIA
 College Sports Event of the Year, *Nomination in Sports Travel Magazine*
 2019 Champion of Economic Impact in Sports Tourism,
Sports Destination Management Magazine



48 Media & Speaking
 Appearances

140,180

ATTENDEES HOSTED



Key Conferences Attended

Sports ETA Women's Summit, NASC
 Symposium, S.P.O.R.T.S. The Relationship
 Conference, 4S Summit, Connect Women in
 Sports Tourism, TEAMS Conference, US Sports
 Conference, US Rowing Annual Convention

119

Face-to-Face
 Appointments with
 Sports Events Owners

8

Tradeshows
 Attended

EXPERIENCE COLUMBIA SC
SPORTS

"This past year we have seen a sizable financial boost in our sales. I have attributed this increase in sales to both the quality and quantity of events and conventions at the Convention Center. From the small insurance company gatherings to large scale events like Comic Con, all businesses in the Vista are tethered to the Convention Center. Thanks again for a wonderful year and we look forward to what you have in store for the future!"

Tyler White, General Manager The Hickory Tavern



"Everyone at the Columbia Convention

Center went so far above and beyond our exceptions. Everything went perfectly! The attention to detail from our event to F&B and even to the sweetest 10 year anniversary cake for our team was truly outstanding. Thank you so much to everyone that made our event so successful!"

Felicia Taylor, Dancemakers

"I had a positive experience from start to finish. I am grateful for the service provided leading up to the event and on the day of the event as well as the cleanliness and location of the facility. We will certainly reach out again for future events!"

Allison Shaw,
Capital City Financial

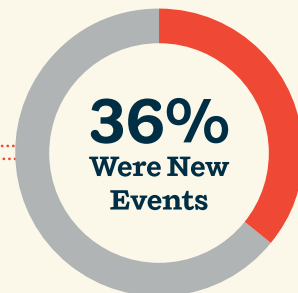


"I want you to know that I was very pleased with how our event was carried out on your end. Virtually seamless! And I truly appreciated how responsive the entire staff was regarding last minute issues/needs that popped up. Special kudos to Phil and his team for helping with the giant cake and feeding our staff at the registration tables."

Cassie Barber, SC First Steps

Record-Setting

1.36 MILLION
IN CONTRACTED REVENUE



TOP 3 MARKETS 1. Corporate — 2. Association — 3. Education



A GREEN INITIATIVE 

28%
Energy savings year over
year with LED Lighting

80%
Of food sourced
within 150 miles during
growing season

34%
Waste diverted
from landfills

EXPERIENCE COLUMBIA SC
COLUMBIA METROPOLITAN CONVENTION CENTER



ExperienceColumbiaSC.com