

2021 - 2022 Sales, Marketing, and Business Development Plan

Our Mission:

TO MARKET, SELL, AND PROMOTE FAIRFAX COUNTY AS A PREFERRED DESTINATION FOR VISITORS IN THE AREAS OF BUSINESS, LEISURE, AND SPORTS TRAVEL THROUGH EXCITING PRODUCTS, PROGRAMS, AND ACTIVITIES THAT WILL DISTINGUISH FAIRFAX COUNTY AND CONTRIBUTE TO THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL GROWTH OF OUR COMMUNITY.

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EXECUTIVE

It is indeed my great pleasure to share our 2021 – 2022 Sales, Marketing, and Business Development Plan on behalf of the Fairfax County travel and tourism industry. Fairfax County has so much to offer our visitors and residents alike. We are privileged to call this beautiful place home and are honored to have the opportunity to contribute to both the economy as well as the overall quality of life for our citizens simply by sharing our love of this destination with visitors to the region.

Every year we begin the process of planning for our next fiscal year in December and January. This year was no different. However, in late February last year we began to realize that the year ahead of us could bring about significant changes to our Industry as an outcome of the Coronavirus that the world was just learning about. By mid-March that realization turned into the harsh reality of not "could" but "will" impact our industry in ways we could never have imagined. By April, our plans had taken an entirely new direction knowing that travel and tourism prior to the global epidemic would never be the same, or at the very least take some years to get back to some normalcy. And it did. Our plan for the Fiscal 2021 – 2022 Year reflects this new normal and what we will need to do as our world opens up again.

Considering the various facets that make up the travel and tourism industry, our plan was developed with three distinct audiences in mind: Business – relating largely to meetings and events, Leisure – meaning both group tour and individual consumer, and Sports – ranging from state tournaments to broad-reaching international mega-events. Each audience segment plays an important role in the success of the Fairfax County tourism industry. For each segment of our audience, we address the strategic and tactical actions that will be used to market Fairfax County as a preferred destination. Within each segment we have indicated the primary, secondary, and tertiary markets where our attention will be focused as well as some examples of what our efforts will be and where they will be focused. Our plans, as you will notice, have taken everything we have heard and learned through research and forecasts that will affect our industry as a result of Covid-19.

Throughout the year, Visit Fairfax represents the county in a wide variety of different marketplaces and through many types of marketing, advertising, and communication methods. We have provided a master activities calendar to identify each of these major programs and activities. We invite you to use this calendar to leverage our plans to enhance your own sales and marketing efforts for the year.

Please do not hesitate to contact any of the Visit Fairfax team as we are always more than happy to assist in any way that we can. And thank you for making the industry of travel and tourism a major part of the economic fabric of this great county.

Yours in Tourism & Hospitality,

×

Barry Biggar, CDME President & CEO Visit Fairfax



ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

Strengths

With our proximity to the many attractions available to visitors to the region, a central location continues to be a key Fairfax County strength. With world-class hotels, restaurants, and attractions, Fairfax County offers visitors an enviable array of experiences. Combining big-city amenities with wide open spaces, the County boasts highly eclectic choices for visitors – surrounding them with experiences ranging from the natural beauty of Great Falls and historic treasures such as Mount Vernon to the amenities typical of an urban destination such as amazing dining and shopping options. Finally, Fairfax County offers visitors the ultimate convenience of accessibility from air, rail, and highway; easy access to many of the area's best-loved activities and some of the country's top businesses; and a manageable and affordable environment that offers a wide range of quality accommodations.

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Opportunities

Key market opportunities exist for the business, leisure and sports segments, especially during weekends and other distressed periods. The Connect with America brand leverages the county's strengths with a highly personal message. The anticipated expansion of Metro to Dulles Airport provides new opportunity for both individual travelers and group event planners. Three new attractions represent opportunity within all segments. The National Museum of the U.S. Army along with the Lucy Burns Museum and the Turning Point Suffragists Memorial will be very attractive to niche groups and individual travelers, and a new sense of community spirit in a post-pandemic world may provide new opportunity to engage with local residents. Additionally, the planned expansion of Tysons as a pedestrian-friendly area also holds great opportunity. Finally, additional funding would increase opportunities for greater outreach in all markets.

Weaknesses

The most significant weaknesses faced by Fairfax County are infrastructural in nature. The sheer size of the County can make navigating among attractions a challenge. This issue is further aggravated by limited "tourism-friendly" signage throughout the County. Consumer perception is also impacted by the lack of a "downtown area," limited brand awareness, and extensive traffic – all of which leave tourists with the feeling that Fairfax County may not be a tourist-friendly destination. Lack of extensive public transportation was mitigated to a degree with the expansion of Metro to Tysons; however, visitors still require affordable, convenient alternatives. Additionally, consumers may be confused as the various towns and communities tend to market individually instead of as a cohesive group. Finally, Visit Fairfax funding continues to lag significantly behind other DMOs with similar hotel inventory. Compared to similar destinations, Fairfax County does not invest as much in tourism marketing dollars per hotel room, putting the County last in the Commonwealth and most other DMOs in the nation.



Threats

For the past year, the global pandemic has threatened not only Fairfax County but the entire travel industry. Our industry was drastically impacted by the COVID-19 crisis, and the timing for full travel recovery remains uncertain. Competition for visitor attention remains fierce in the region. In this environment, Fairfax County faces the challenge that many destination marketing organizations contend with – drawing eyes to our message when numerous choices abound. Through Visit Fairfax, the County's tourism community has embarked on a collaborative effort to move the needle for leisure, business and sports travelers. With new inventory being added to the marketplace, complicated by even more competition nationwide, the competitive environment remains challenging. Additionally, the potential mid and long-term impact of US travel policies on international travel remains to be seen. Finally, nearby competitor Washington, DC has invested millions of dollars toward international markets such as China and India, giving them a competitive advantage in these lucrative marketplaces.

SALES, MARKETING, & DEVELOPMENT BUSINESS PLAN

Beginning in the spring of 2020 and throughout the past year, the hospitality and tourism community attempted to navigate unprecedented waters through a storm like nothing we had ever seen. This was not the first time that the industry faced troubled times, but neither the aftermath of 9-11 nor the 2008 financial crisis prepared us for the economic impact of COVID-19. With travel stopping almost overnight, the impact on our industry was immediate. To support the tourism industry, Visit Fairfax implemented a strategic response in three phases that began with images of solidarity, transitioned into practices that the industry put in place to keep travelers safe, and ultimately invited them back.

The timing of a full recovery remains uncertain; however, even as restrictions begin to lift, some consumers are hesitant to travel. For event planners and individual business travelers, the situation is even worse with many companies choosing to hold off on meetings and even individual corporate travel.

While the message to consumers during the past year emphasized that "we're ready when you're ready," the situation is also vastly different than it was one year ago. One third of the US population has already been vaccinated and the balance will have that opportunity by late spring or early summer. Recognizing this new paradigm, Visit Fairfax will tap into the pent-up desire to travel that so many are feeling. Without doubt, travel will resume; however, the manner in which visitors choose to travel and the core drivers that motivate them may change.

"We're so desperate to travel, 25% of both Britons and Americans say they'd give up all their savings to do it now, and around two-fifths (US, 38%; UK, 40%) say they'd give up sex for a year to get on the road right away."

Trivago Travel Survey

The biggest opportunity for quick-start impact is leisure consumers, and therefore, we will accelerate our focus on leisure to drive traffic and travel. Given Northern Virginia's central location that is easily accessible by car, Fairfax County is an attractive

destination given the changes in consumer priorities. Additionally, our visitor experiences are highly eclectic, ranging from national historic treasures to wide-open green spaces for those who prefer less crowded environs. Finally, for those who recently faced economic insecurity, Northern Virginia represents an incredible value within the National Capital Region, with many of the benefits of an urban destination surrounded by nature and our incredible parks. Using innovative technologies, Visit Fairfax will continue its programs intended to send highly creative and targeted messages to very defined niche audiences with a new focus on those "precious moments" with family that many see as a top priority given recent events.

All markets have suffered, but the group markets have been impacted severely. Coming up with innovative ways to reach group decision makers through an attentiongetting message is important as the echoes of the pandemic linger. In an incredibly competitive environment, we need to arm our group sales managers with the best possible tools to be effective in their jobs. In doing so, we will leverage the power of human connection that comes only from face-toface interaction in business while instilling confidence in event planners by concentrating on safe meetings.

The overall sales and marketing strategy will remain focused on the three key markets that we have prioritized from the beginning: Business, Leisure, and Sports – each with resources dedicated based upon their Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary audiences. We will also continue to reach out to our own local residents who, now more than ever, influence inbound friends & family, support the tourism infrastructure, and ultimately ensure our success through the shared voice of all of our proud citizens and political leaders. We remain positive that the future is indeed bright and that the strategies planned for the coming year will move us in the right direction.

Primary

Major focus due to high return & good yield

Secondary

Tertiary Provide support but not resources Has good potential, but less resources to avoid duplicate efforts

BUSINESS MEETINGS

Business Meetings and Events



The upcoming year will pose a host of new challenges -- as well as some new opportunities -- in finding business for our stakeholders as the world seeks a new "normal" following the worldwide pandemic and the associated disruption of the economy.

Our primary focus going forward will be recovering from the upheaval caused by the pandemic, as well as embracing a number of changes in the meetings landscape, some of which are likely to be long-lasting or permanent. While we are experienced in selling during "down" markets (e.g., after the attacks of 9/11/01, during the "Great Recession" of 2008-2009), selling in the current unsettled environment will provide several unique obstacles, as well as a few opportunities.

We'll be navigating several areas of uncertainty, including:

- the need to work closely with numerous planners and our hotel partners throughout the coming year to reschedule, relocate, or refashion previously postponed meetings and programs.
- having to adapt to the changing profile of meetings being planned. Meeting industry experts are predicting that we will likely see an increase in smaller, more customized regional meetings, as opposed to large-scale national conventions. This will likely work in our favor, given our existing inventory of meeting facilities.
- the financial health of the airline industry will likely take several years to recover, which will impact us. In the short term, there are likely to be fewer flights flown, with higher fares charged, which will impact attendance at larger, "fly-in" programs. "Drive in" meetings will likely grow, and there will be more of them planned, giving us an area of opportunity to pursue.
- video conferencing and "virtual" meetings will increase, impacting the demand for traditional hotel and event venue meeting space.
- our largest meeting hotel in the county, as well as our two large "meeting space only" venues, have permanently closed as a result of the pandemic, which will restrict our ability to place larger programs here.

Our overall approach will require a great deal of flexibility, as the traditional parameters and "windows" for booking meetings and events will have changed.

Primary Government Association Reunion

IBT

Tertiary Secondary Religious Corporate Social Incentive Day Mtgs

Looking ahead, we have added to our existing schedule of "one-on-one" appointment trade shows with Destination Southeast in Marco Island, FL in July and Meetings Today Live! In Louisville, KY and Myrtle Beach, SC, to our show schedule. We'll continue to look for opportunities to play host to such programs, knowing that exposing planners to our hotels and attractions first-hand is far more effective than any brochure, e-mail, or sales presentation can possibly be.

We will enjoy increased opportunities to book additional business attracted by the new National Museum of the United States Army, the

opening of Capital One Hall, and the extension of Metrorail Silver line service to Dulles Airport, all three of which are scheduled to take place during the upcoming year.

We'll continue to identify and prospect Army reunion groups who will be drawn to the National Capital area by the opening of the National Museum of the United States Army. We will continue running display advertising in online issues of Reunions magazine, and will attend the TMRN (The Military Reunion Network) Educational Summit in New Orleans, LA. We will bid to co-host a "fam trip" event for reunion planners with TMRN in the fall of 2022.

We will host two events related to the opening of the Army museum that we were forced to postpone due to the public health emergency: a "press fam", specifically for editors and writers, to promote the museum, and a luncheon for locally-based meeting planners, to showcase the museum as a special events venue. Likewise, we'll host a planner luncheon and "hard hat" tour of Capital One hall for locally-based planners, prior to its opening in October, 2021. We'll promote the 1,550-seat facility in our sales efforts to association and religious groups that require larger "General Session" capacities than any of our existing meeting hotels are able to provide.

The extension of the Metrorail Silver line will provide us with a "once in a generation" opportunity to drive additional business to our hotels in the Herndon and Chantilly areas of the county. As we did in 2013/2014 for the opening of the Silver line's first phase, we'll begin promoting the enhanced access that the Dulles extension will afford groups with trade show collateral, mailings, e-mail blasts, and meeting planner luncheons, beginning in mid-2021 and continuing through the line's scheduled opening in early 2022.

Group planners have responded enthusiastically to our providing them with customized, full-color "Save the Date" postcards, which we offer as a value-added service to assist them in maximizing the attendance at their meetings, and we'll expand this program in the coming year.

This complimentary amenity allows Visit Fairfax to stand out from the crowd of competing destinations for their business, as do our other service enhancements, such as helping to arrange guest speakers, sightseeing tours, and entertainment options, including our life-sized icebreaker game of "Fairfaxopoly."

Business Meetings

WHAT

Tradeshows

Print & Online Advertising

Direct Sales

Membership & Sponsorship

Group FAMs & Client Events





Washington, DC

Northern Virginia

Richmond

National Shows

STRATEGIES

1. Market, sell and promote Fairfax County as a premier business meeting destination within the group business segments we target: national and state associations, corporate and government.

2. Profile and build on our database of group meetings and events that meet during specified need periods, specifically military and family reunions, religious groups, and special interest / hobbyist groups.

3. Maximize the opportunities presented by the three new facilities opening in 2021 / 2022: the National Museum of the United States Army, Capital One Hall, and the Metrorail Silver line extension to Dulles Airport.

4. Continue to build upon the service reputation of Visit Fairfax by providing the highest levels of personalized service, attention, and support for meeting planners and event organizers.

TACTICS

1. Market, sell and promote Fairfax County as a premier business meeting destination within the group business segments we target: national and state associations, corporate and government.

a. Ensure visibility for Fairfax County and our meeting hotels at association tradeshows including Connect (New Orleans, LA, and Washington, DC), *Convention South* Rendezvous South, Northstar Travel Media IPEC (Independent Planner Education Conference), Destination Southeast, and Destination East, *Meetings Today* Meetings Today Live! (Louisville, KY and Myrtle Beach, SC), and cVENT's cVENT Connect (virtually).

b. Bid to host Northstar Travel Media's Destination East hosted buyer trade show in the fall of 2022.

c. Utilize our new "virtual reality" tours of our large meeting hotels and attractions to market to / close business with planners who may be unwilling / unable to travel to Fairfax County to conduct traditional site inspections.

d. Continue to expand our relationships with state association meeting planners through our participation in VSAE and attendance at various VSAE Meetings and events throughout the year.

e. Exhibit at the VSAE Fall Conference in October, partnering with our Fairfax County meeting hotel partners. Provide our hotels with access to Virginia state association planners through a semi-annual Visit Fairfax sales blitz (November and April).

f. Exhibit at the Reston-Herndon Meeting Planners (RHMP) "Summer Camp program (August).

- g. Develop a new themed campaign, to be featured in both our print and online advertising and marketing, and to run throughout the year, focusing on the ability of group planners to book meetings and events here without "fear" of attrition and cancellation penalties if circumstances change. Tentative theme: "The No Fear Zone"
- h. Ensure visibility among corporate and association planners through advertising in *Meetings & Conventions, Meetings Today* and *Convention South*.
- i. Utilize the bi-monthly group planner eNewsletter to deliver information on new developments, special offers, and items of interest to groups.
- j. Continue to develop relationships with Society of Government Meeting Professionals (SGMP) and Meeting Professionals International (MPI) planners through chapter events and conferences.
- k. Host "Bidding on Government Meetings Bootcamp" to educate hoteliers about best practices when soliciting state and federal government business.
- I. Enhance our CVENT listing to compete more effectively against other destinations and generate additional business opportunities in all target markets.
- Profile and build on our database of group meetings and events that meet during specified need periods, specifically military and family reunions, religious groups, and special interest / hobbyist groups.
 - a. Refashion our annual Family Reunion Workshop, into a more intimate, more focused, and more cost-effective "Family Reunion Seminar" to showcase Fairfax County to family reunion planners.
 - b. Ensure visibility among family and military reunion planners through advertising in *Reunions* magazine online.
 - c. Attend the TMRN Educational Summit in New Orleans, LA in June to reach military reunion planners and convince them to meet in Fairfax County.
 - d. Bid to host a TMRN military reunion planner event in the fall of 2022.
 - e. Reach special interest and hobbyist event planners through Connect Marketplace and Rendezvous South.
- Maximize the opportunities presented by the three new facilities opening in 2021 / 2022: the National Museum of the United States Army, Capital One Hall, and the Metrorail Silver line extension to Dulles Airport.
 - a. Host a press fam promoting the opening of the National Museum of the United States Army in July of 2021 to draw attention to the museum and Fairfax County in various publications.
 - b. Host an online "virtual reality" tour of the Army Museum for Army reunion group planners in conjunction with The Military Reunion Network (TMRN).
 - c. Host a luncheon and tour of the National Museum of the United Army for locally-based association, corporate and government planners.
 - d. Attend the Overseas Brats Gathering event in San Antonio, TX in October. Give a formal presentation to the attendees, providing them with an update on the Army museum, and on the group's 2022 Gathering, to be held in Fairfax County.
 - e. Continue ongoing direct mail / e-mail / telephone prospecting campaigns to generate military reunion leads, especially Army reunion leads.

- f. Promote the scheduled early 2022 arrival of Metrorail service to Dulles Airport via trade show signage and custom collateral.
- g. Host two "Countdown to Metro" luncheons (November and March) for locally-based meeting planners, to highlight the Silver line extension to Dulles and showcase the capabilities of our meeting hotels in the Dulles Airport area.
- h. Host a luncheon and "hard hat" tour for locally-based association, corporate and government planners to promote the upcoming opening of Capital One Hall.
- **4.** Continue to build upon the service reputation of Visit Fairfax by providing the highest levels of personalized service, attention, and support for meeting planners and event organizers.
 - a. Continue to promote customized Fairfax County "Save the Date" postcards as a low-cost, high value-added service available to planners as an attendance-building tool for their programs.
 - b. Offer the use of "Fairfaxopoly" and other experiential activities to planners as unique enhancements to their programs.
 - c. Assist planners in arranging locally-based guest speakers, sightseeing tours, and entertainment for their programs to enhance the "Wow!" factor of their meetings.

EVENTS & MEETINGS

Sports Tournaments, Meetings, & Events



Along with practically every aspect of normal life, COVID-19 has turned the sports world upside down. For the better part of 2020, tournament directors in the U.S. had to postpone or cancel events, reduce staff, and implement creative strategies to stay in business. Successful sports planners pivoted quickly, complying with federal, state, and local mandates, restrictions, and protocols instituted to combat the pandemic. Signs went up at public and private facilities reminding people to wea r masks, social distance, and wash hands. Various checks and tests were done on-and off-site to curtail COVID from infiltrating and shutting down tournaments. And in professional and collegiate sports, players had their seasons cancelled or competed in stadiums and arenas with no fans or with strict attendance limitations.

Because COVID regulations often varied from state to state, running regional and national events was particularly difficult for organizers. Some states locked down entirely while others continued to allow outdoor events. Some allowed play with masks, others had no restrictions at all, and there were those that didn't allow teams to leave their state to play in competitions. But by Fall 2020, with strict safety protocols in place, travel tournaments were being hosted again at private facilities, with Visit Fairfax providing hotel selection and sponsorship support to various basketball and hockey clients. By Spring 2021, tournaments in the county were back in full swing at outdoor sites, with Mclean Youth Soccer hosting three consecutive soccer tournaments in March.

Indeed, the sports market had been experiencing challenges even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Tournament planners were competing for athletes like never before, destinations and their athletic venues were battling for the rights to host events, and families were challenged with finding the time and money to support their kids playing travel sports. Also, as the competition for a larger slice of the sports tourism pie had become increasingly fierce, destinations – often in cooperation with their local governments – had been entering into a sports facilities "arms race" to offer larger, more tournament-capable venues. Compared with other U.S. destinations, Fairfax County has not kept pace in this race to build large clusters of outdoor fields, indoor courts, and other facility types. This in turn has adversely affected the county's ability to fully capitalize on the booming youth sports market.

On a positive note, the consulting firm Conventions, Sports, and Leisure (CSL) submitted its final report in Fall 2020 to the Fairfax County Sports Tourism Task Force. The report recommended new and improved tournament-capable public facilities, proposed sites and a governance model for new facilities, a booking/scheduling policy that prioritizes events based on hotel room nights and economic impact thresholds, and outlined the need to coordinate marketing efforts with Visit Fairfax.

Facility recommendations include additional and upgraded outdoor complexes (i.e., 16-field rectangle complex; 10-field diamond complex; and improvements to Baron Cameron, Patriot Park North, Wakefield, and Braddock Parks), a new indoor hardcourt complex with 12 NBA basketball courts; an indoor 200-meter, 6-lane banked track; a second sheet of ice at Mount Vernon RECenter; and a new natatorium with 50-meter competition pool and diving complex. With bond funding secured, the project to complete a six-diamond turf complex at Patriot Park is moving forward and is expected to be completed by Spring 2023.

In terms of existing private facilities, there is no venue in the county with greater potential to attract travel tournaments than The St. James. This indoor, 450,000-square-foot mega sportsplex located in Springfield features a FIFA turf field with 70-foot height clearance, two NHL sheets of ice; four NBA basketball courts (convertible to nine volleyball courts); a 50-meter, 10-lane Olympic pool; and eight international squash courts. Visit Fairfax is working closely with St. James staff to grow existing events and attract new ones in 2021 and beyond.

Other challenges to the county's sports tourism objectives are the perennial ones often faced by bidders interested in hosting large-scale events that attract thousands of attendees: rights fees and funding for initial operating costs. Without the ability to make such investments requested by event rights-holders, destinations with insufficient resources are often shut out from competing for select competitions. Fortunately, Fairfax County government's new Economic Opportunity Reserve fund has made it much easier to overcome these financial barriers.

Created to "stimulate economic growth" and to provide "strategic investment opportunities," this reserve – funded with an initial budget carryover of \$5 million – provide investment dollars for capital development projects, property acquisition, and programming support (which would include potential funds to secure and operate sports events). The criteria for distributions will include financial modeling analysis (e.g., cost-benefit, etc.) to determine the fiscal impact to the county of the proposed investment opportunity and will require approval from the Board of Supervisors. After carefully assessing the potential return-on-investment of various sports events available for bid and targeting the best prospects, Visit Fairfax and its partners will take full advantage of this county program and apply for grants whenever appropriate.

Visit Fairfax remains prepared and ready to support its stakeholders with a number of new DMO and county programs and activities in place or on the horizon to make inroads toward rebuilding this market:

- In 2020, Visit Fairfax entered into a sports tourism alliance SportsNOVA with Loudoun, Prince William, and Stafford counties. During the pandemic, SportsNOVA partners developed a website, promotional materials, and a marketing plan to more aggressively promote Northern Virginia as an ideal destination for travel sports events, particularly multiand large single-sport tournament and competitions.
- New sales tools 3D scans, 360 perspectives, and aerial drone footage have been developed to virtually showcase select public and private sports venues, which will facilitate selling our destination by providing sports planners with the option of a pre-site inspection sneak-peak or a supplemental venue selection tool if there still is a reluctance to travel.
- Visit Fairfax will subscribe to the Sports Tourism Index/Scout, a newly developed sales tool that evaluates the strength of a destination's sport tourism assets and provides suppliers and event organizers a two-way "match-making" system driven by data and technology.
- In February 2021, the Fairfax County Athletic Council approved a two-year pilot program that will make it easier for tournament directors to secure rectangular turf fields at nine designated county park sites over Memorial Day, Labor Day, and Columbus Day weekends.

Sports

Wнат

Conferences & Tradeshows

Direct Sales

Virtual Sales Tools

Public Relations & Trade Publications

Relationship-Building

Fairfax County Sports Tourism Task Force

Local Organizing Committees

SportsNOVA

Sports Tourism Index & Scout



WHERE

Connect Sports

TEAMS Conf & Expo

Sports ETA Symposiums

Fairfax County Park Authority & Public Schools

NOVA Parks

GMU and NOVA

Private Sports Facilities

This is a significant opportunity for a permanent policy change that would remove some of the crippling roadblocks that rights-holders have endured when planning their events. If permitted to offer input in the establishment of program parameters, Visit Fairfax will share ideas to maximize the generation of visitor spending and economic impact for the county.

While it may take several years for the industry to return to previous levels, there is strong optimism that sports tourism will rebound robustly in 2021, according to SportsEvents magazine's annual state of the industry report. Many of Visit Fairfax's clients are hopeful that the pent-up demand for events, heightened consumer confidence due to vaccine availability, and the continued implementation of safety practices will bring a flurry of activity when more of the nation allows participation at significant levels. Barring virus outbreaks that require shut-downs or the reinstitution of severe venue capacity restrictions, we should be on a positive trajectory to recovery.

As Visit Fairfax navigates the sports market during these uncertain times, it will continue to keep abreast of COVID-19 public health issues and implement the following marketing plan strategies and tactics designed to rebuild Visit Fairfax's sales pipeline while promoting the county as a safe, first-rate destination to host travel tournaments and competitions.

STRATEGIES

1. Attract state, regional, national, and international sports events that match up well with the area's existing facilities infrastructure and grow existing competitions that have the potential of drawing additional out-of-town visitors.

2. Continue to build awareness of and support for Visit Fairfax's sports marketing initiatives among various stakeholders (event planners, sports leaders, facility owners, government officials, etc.) and work cooperatively with these stakeholders to enhance event hosting opportunities and improve the county's sports tourism infrastructure.

3. Provide sports stakeholders with marketing and event support services to increase tournament attendance, assist with event planning/execution, and maximize visitor spending.

TACTICS

- 1. Attract state, regional, national, and international sports events that match up well with the area's existing facilities infrastructure and grow existing competitions that have the potential of drawing additional out-of-town visitors.
 - a. Promote Fairfax County as an ideal destination to host state, regional, national, and international sports events at industry trade shows and conferences:
 - (1) 2021 CONNECT Sports
 - (2) 2021 TEAMS Conference & Expo
 - (3) 2021 & 2022 Sports ETA Symposiums
 - (4) Virginia Sports Summit
 - b. Participate actively in the Sports Events and Tourism Association (Sports ETA) as well as Sports Virginia, the coalition of CVBs and sports commissions which seeks to attract new events to the state.
 - c. Communicate regularly with local sports leaders, event organizers, and facility owners/managers to discuss ways to attract new events and grow existing ones.
 - d. Mine various sports event databases and sales systems –including the Sports Tourism Index/Scout for tournament hosting opportunities.
 - e. Continue to build prospect list of sports planners and conduct sales solicitation calls with those whose events match up well with Fairfax County's sports tourism assets.
 - f. Conduct in-person and virtual site tours to promote Fairfax County to select sports decisionmakers and influencers.
 - g. Provide sponsorship support to select events to grow existing business and attract new opportunities.
 - h. Draw outdoor, adventure, and other leisure groups to Fairfax County by promoting select public and private venues in the area that target these groups (e.g., golf courses, parks, The St. James, etc.)
- 2. Continue to build awareness of and support for Visit Fairfax's sports marketing initiatives among various stakeholders (event planners, sports leaders, facility owners, government officials, etc.) and work cooperatively with these stakeholders to enhance event hosting opportunities and improve the county's sports tourism infrastructure.
 - a. Educate tournament directors, facility managers/owners, sports leaders, and other tourism stakeholder groups about Visit Fairfax's sports initiatives through networking events, presentations, and e-marketing tools.
 - b. Play a leading role in the Sports Tourism Task Force's efforts to improve the county's facilities infrastructure and tournament-related policies. Work closely with the consultant hired by the Task Force to recommend improvements to this infrastructure to ensure the achievement of desired tourism objectives.
 - c. Update database of Fairfax County and area facilities capable of hosting various sports events and competitions.
 - d. Generate awareness of SportsNOVA (the newly formed sports tourism alliance between Fairfax, Loudoun, Prince William, and Stafford counties), which will target multi-sport and large single-sport competitions. Promote Fairfax County and Northern Virginia's sports

tourism assets through public relations, advertising, sponsorships, client functions, and other communications vehicles.

- **3.** Provide sports stakeholders with marketing and event support services to increase tournament attendance, assist with event planning/execution, and maximize visitor spending.
 - a. Offer support services to tournament directors and visiting sports teams/participants through a Visitor Services support program.
 - b. Create customized "Welcome to Fairfax County" web landing pages for select tournaments to provide useful destination information to participating teams/individuals and encourage additional event registrations.
 - c. Offer additional tournament amenities to assist with the sales process and encourage repeat bookings.
 - d. Promote "Extend Your Stay" web page that encourages sports groups to add leisure time to tournaments by "multi-tasking" their trip. Promote increased spending through hotel, attraction, and restaurant offers to group travelers. Market the program and offers via Visitor Services as part of pre-arrival servicing packets.

DOMESTIC & INTERNATIONAL GROUP LEISURE

Group Tours and FIT Travellers



FY22 will continue to be challenging for the group tour market due to circumstances caused by COVID-19. Considering the long-term implications for the global economy, the pandemic will continue to impact domestic and international travel well beyond 2022. While there is a lot to be sorted before group tour fully rebounds—vaccine distribution, health passports, testing, and arrival and departure requirements for international travel— progress is being made.

On the domestic front, pent up demand in leisure travel is beginning to release. The vaccine rollout and subsequent cautious easing of coronavirus restrictions have led to an uptick in domestic travel. According to a recent poll shared by US Travel Association, 60% of surveyed respondents are confident we will 'return to normal' by summer 2021 following the May 1 goal to open vaccine eligibility to all U.S. adults. Visit Fairfax anticipates continued demand for less crowded destinations and outdoor recreation, with drive markets spearheading the gradual recovery of the industry.

What remains of critical importance is all that we do between now and that time. It has now been one year since the onset of the pandemic; a year filled with uncertainly and many challenges but also, several adaptations in response to new opportunities in the changed group travel landscape. While travel is cautiously resuming, sales efforts are focused on engaging with travel trade on and providing destination updates through virtual meetings. Numerous organizations have pivoted to

Primary Int'l Operators Receptives Domestic Operators & Niche Markets

Tertiary Coach Operators & Charter Companies virtual tradeshows given COVID protocols around in-person meetings. Attending these e-marketplaces will allow us to stay informed on shifting trends in packaged travel, deepen relationships with existing clients and forge alliances with operators who are new to us.

Capitalizing on the increased interest in virtual experiences, we will continue enhancing our virtual tour assets to execute immersive virtual site inspections and virtual FAM tours. In addition to enabling clients to fully envision themselves visiting these sites, virtual FAMs will allow us to leverage operators' appetite for new products and itineraries by showcasing these venues. We are dedicated to supporting operators in product development and continue to craft highly customized itineraries to match their clients' niche interests. These efforts highlight new and diversified product in Fairfax County such as Turning Point Suffragist Memorial, the National

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Museum of the United States Army the Lucy Burns Museum and River-Sea Chocolate Factory, among others.

On the international front, Capital Region USA reports that tour operators are optimistic about travel resuming. Many operators have indicated some travel later in 2021, but nearly all were very positive about 2022 being a strong year for the return of international leisure. In testament to this confidence, CRUSA is planning a robust FY22 event calendar to include sales missions in the UK, France, Germany, and China. We will maintain sales efforts in these lucrative markets in addition to the mature and easily accessible Canadian market. These markets, which have consistently yielded strong arrival numbers and enjoy extensive air service, continue to drive our international strategy. Additionally, opened testing facilities at airports, including both Reagan National and Dulles International Airports, will provide a convenient option for added safety as demand for travel begins to return.

China has long been a top international source market to the Capital Region and one of the top focus countries for our international sales efforts. Outbound travel from China will be contingent on when air service and visa approvals resume. We are positioning to welcome this important market back by planning an in-country sales mission in conjunction with CRUSA and participating in tradeshows that are geared towards Chinese travel trade such as Active America China (AAC). Given AAC will be held in Washington DC, we plan to capitalize on the captive audience of tour and receptive operators to host 10 qualified operators for a post-show FAM in Fairfax County.

There is also still appetite for future travel from the mature Western European markets. Industry updates from CRUSA indicate high demand in 2022 as COVID wanes. Considering that the UK and Germany are our second and fourth largest overseas source markets respectively, we plan to continue engaging via participation in tradeshows oriented towards the European market, such as IPW and RTO East, as well as sales missions to both countries.

As tourism increasingly gravitates to novel, experience-based offerings, it is imperative to focus on product development with stakeholders to craft and promote tourism experiences that elevate Fairfax County's competitive advantage in the domestic and international marketplace. With so many unique attractions in our inventory that appeal to varied niche market interests such African American heritage, women's history and STEAM-focused tours, tour operators can easily enhance their tour products by adding these distinct activities to their itineraries.

Sales efforts will also continue to focus on student groups, for which the learning component of the itinerary is particularly important. Visit Fairfax is uniquely positioned to appeal to this market given the wide array of available educational programs, after-hour activities and group dining options at student-friendly price points. Senior groups, while requiring more customized itineraries, remain an important market for Fairfax County given their propensity for post-retirement travel, high disposable income and appetite for new and niche products.

Finally, sales efforts will be further supplemented by targeted advertising in qualified trade publications that reach active tour operators and group planners. Cooperative efforts will be leveraged through CRUSA and NVTP including co-op advertising and familiarization tours.

Group Leisure



Sales Missions

Tradeshows

CRUSA

NVTP

FAMs

Advertising

Cooperative Marketing





Domestic

China

India

Canada

United Kingdom

Germany

STRATEGIES

1. Build strategic tourism product lines—based upon current market conditions and trends—that will attract and grow the domestic markets, which are key to short and mid-term recovery.

2. Capitalize on the appetite for travel to rebuild business volume by presenting Fairfax County as the "smart choice" within the region for international travelers.

3. Leverage partnerships with organizations such as Capital Region USA (CRUSA) and Northern Virginia Tourism Partnership (NVTP) to raise Fairfax County's domestic and international profiles and connect within the region through advertising, international tour co-ops, and sales mission opportunities.

4. Show buyers firsthand why they should be selling Fairfax County, Virginia—rather than only telling—through familiarization tours.

TACTICS

1. Build strategic tourism product lines—based upon current market conditions and trends—that will attract and grow the domestic markets, which are key to short and mid-term recovery.

a. Further develop niche product lines with a collection of supporting collateral, collaborating with nearby destinations to create well rounded experiences.

b. Attend the American Bus Association's Marketplace in Baltimore targeting motor coach operators to underscore the convenience of Fairfax County hotels and major roadways.

c. Attend the National Tour Association's Travel Exchange to meet with domestic as well as international tour operators that are currently coming to Fairfax County and those that are not yet utilizing the county's products.

d. Be a preferred partner of the Travel Alliance Partnership and attend their annual tradeshow to maintain close connections with key domestic and receptive tour operators throughout the United States, which will help promote Fairfax County to others in the industry.

- e. Attend Mid Atlantic Receptive Services' (MARS) tradeshow Spotlight on the East to directly promote our destination to MARS client base and group leaders planning trips to the Capital Region.
- f. Attend Student & Youth Travel Association's annual conference to create new connections with decision makers in the student and youth travel market and leverage non-traditional student options within the Capital Region.
- g. Attend Southeast Tourism Society's Domestic Showcase to increase market share and regional awareness with operators selling Southeast tours.
- **2.** Capitalize on the appetite for travel to rebuild business volume by presenting Fairfax County as the "smart choice" within the region for international travelers.
 - a. Attend U.S. Travel Association's IPW in our own Visit Fairfax booth, showing that Fairfax County remains a top destination within Virginia and the Capital Region.
 - b. Attend Active America China for one-on-one appointments with Chinese tour operators and Chinese inbound receptive operators looking for new American tour product.
 - c. Attend the International Inbound Travel Association's Annual Summit to update key receptive operators on the hotel, dining, and attraction offerings that Fairfax County has to offer.
 - d. Create more in-language content for international tour operators to increase reach and enhance the development of tour product.
 - e. Attend Receptive Tour Operator (RTO) Summit East to have one-on-one appointments with receptive tour operators based in the New York/New Jersey region, an epicenter for inbound European and Asian visitors.
 - f. Attend Receptive Tour Operator Summit South to meet with receptive operators who service European, Asian and Latin American markets
- 3. Leverage partnerships with organizations such as Capital Region USA (CRUSA) and Northern Virginia Tourism Partnership (NVTP) to raise Fairfax County's domestic and international profiles and connect within the region through advertising, international tour coops, and sales mission opportunities.
 - a. Increase Fairfax County's web presence through touroperatorland.com to reach tour operators looking for new and unique product ideas.
 - b. Participate in Capital Region USA's China sales missions to continue educating these growing markets about Fairfax County and to meet face-to-face with key decision makers.
 - c. Participate in Capital Region USA's Germany sales mission to participate in sales calls and training opportunities in this important market.
 - d. Participate in Capital Region USA's France sales missions to participate in training opportunities, sales calls, and private client events in this key mature market.
 - e. Participate in Capital Region USA's UK sales missions to participate in training opportunities, sales calls, and private client events in this key mature market.
 - f. Partner with international tour operators in co-operative targeted advertising and marketing campaigns through CRUSA.

- g. Partner with NVTP to develop key international and domestic markets to the region, whether this be through new itineraries, familiarization tours, or receptive sales missions.
- h. Leverage board of directors' position on National Tour Association, by attending Contact Marketplace and through other board activities, to identify opportunities to further increase visibility of Fairfax County.
- i. Maintain active membership with the Virginia Motorcoach Association to interact with member motor coach operators within the immediate domestic market.
- j. Advertise in Group Tour Magazine's November 2021 issue focusing on outdoor adventures and Virginia's music to highlight Fairfax County's parks and music venues to adult and senior group tour planners.
- k. Advertise in Leisure Group Travel Magazine's May 2022 edition featuring a Virginia Group Tour Guide to highlight niche tour options to adult and senior group tour planners.
- I. Utilize direct e-Mail marketing via Group Tour Media's Youth Travel Planner Itinerary Builder to provide educators and youth travel planners with relevant and compelling content during their key planning time.
- **4.** Show buyers firsthand why they should be selling Fairfax County, Virginia—rather than only telling—through familiarization tours.
 - a. Host several familiarization tours through Capital Region USA with their in-country representatives pre-qualifying each participating tour operator.
 - b. Capitalize on tradeshows being held in proximity to Fairfax County to host attending operators for pre- or post-show FAMS:
 - i. Host a post-show FAM for 10 qualified tour and receptive operators attending Active America China 2021, which will be held in Washington DC.
 - ii. In collaboration with Virginia Tourism Corporation and NVTP, host a pre-event FAM for operators attending Southeast Tourism Society's Domestic Showcase which will be held in Virginia Beach.
 - c. Create familiarization tour itineraries that fit the specific market that is being hosted; include stakeholders who want/fit the market that is being hosted for the best ROI.

LEISURE **ONSUMER**

Individual Travellers & Visitor Parties



The past year was a roller coaster ride for our nation and certainly for the tourism industry. Often times, messages were mixed with shutdowns and travel restrictions changing practically overnight. This uncertainty was evidenced even in recent weeks taking potential travelers from emotional highs with vaccines being distributed ahead of schedule to apprehension resulting from other countries going back into lockdown and some leaders in the health community strongly advising against any form of travel. As it relates to our national psyche, this uncertainty is our new normal.

We don't know how these swings will affect travel in the long-term; however, one thing is certain: our resilient nation will travel again. This is not a question of if, but when. Perhaps the more important questions will be how and why. In terms of leisure travel, past research suggests that more than 80% of leisure visitors arrive by car, and the Great American Road Trip holds even more appeal in a post-pandemic world. As to the question of what motivates visitors to come, or the "why," so many of us are yearning to reconnect with family and friends and to unplug from the technology overload during the pandemic as so much of our lives became "virtual."

For individual leisure travelers who seek a drivable destination that offers great visitor experiences and outdoor environments, Northern Virginia fits the bill. Fairfax County is somewhat unique in that the destination is not only very urban but also somewhat rural. Visit Fairfax will leverage that duality to attract visitors who crave wide-open spaces but also enjoy big-city amenities. Masks and safety restrictions may be a part of our reality for some time, but we can leverage our urban amenities that are surrounded by so many wonderful outdoor experiences.

Primary **Drive Markets** Niche Markets Locals

> Secondary International Markets

Other Growth Markets

Tertiary

We may not know exactly how COVID-19 will affect travel in the long-term, but we also will not give up on the progress we have made, especially with niche audiences. For years, we have seen considerable growth in website traffic and consumer interest via highly targeted messaging directed at highly defined audiences, chosen in alignment with our tourism assets. This strategy resulted in hundreds of thousands of consumer engagements and nearly a million visitors to fxva.com. In the new year, we will continue these targeted campaigns that leverage our strengths, but with careful consideration of the potential changes in our national psyche, specifically in terms of what we value, and therefore what we seek in terms of travel experiences.

Visit Fairfax FY22

Individual Leisure Consumer

WHAT

Search Engine Mktg & Optimization

eMail Marketing

Niche Audiences

Digital Advertising

Social Media

Consumer Publications

Visitors Guide





Search Engines

Drive Markets

Niche Audiences

Virginia, Maryland, & District of Columbia

We will execute two niche campaigns anchored by our newest assets: the Lucy Burns Museum and the Turning Point Suffragist Memorial (women's history), and the National Museum of the United States Army (military history). Additionally, we will execute more general campaigns targeting visitors who are seeking uncommon or "off the beaten path" experiences as well as those who want to reconnect with family and friends through our own local residents. Each of these campaigns will be deployed at the right time when public confidence in travel has sparked and our visitors are once again open to the message. Finally, we will employ our owned distribution channels with the greatest ability and agility for audience targeting, message type, engagement, and accountability.

As always, one of the great benefits of online marketing is the ability to evaluate return-on-investment through the use of analytics that track actual visitor party spending. And so, we will have the opportunity to adjust the plan as we receive real-time data on what is working and what is not – allowing us to calibrate the plan even as it is being executed.

STRATEGIES

1. With close attention paid to our new reality, maximize engaging content on FXVA.com that helps consumers to personally connect with Fairfax County.

2. Develop and execute a marketing and communications strategy for local residents and constituents.

3. Utilize direct e-Mail marketing to build consumer relationships in those markets that result in the highest yield in converted visitor parties.

4. Execute a comprehensive Search Engine Marketing program while continuing the migration from paid search to organic optimization with content that evolves to meet consumer mentality and needs.

5. Reinforce stakeholders' use of the Fairfax County brand message to multiple audiences and build alliances within the County's tourism community.

6. Ensure maximum attention within the growing audience of mobile users through mobile-friendly platforms and outbound messaging.

7. Execute six integrated marketing campaigns that target highly motivated consumers by engaging those visitors through targeted messaging and relevant content.

8. Leverage inherent interest in high-demand local events by "drafting" the Visit Fairfax message off of existing consumer interest.

9. Track and report online conversion through 3rd party conversion study.

TACTICS

- 1. With close attention paid to our new reality, maximize engaging content on FXVA.com that helps consumers to personally connect with Fairfax County.
 - a. Execute a redesign of FXVA.com based on a recent consumer experience path review to include new navigation/user experience, updated imagery and content, ADA compliance, and streamlined functionality.
 - b. Integrate a cohesive theme throughout FXVA.com that showcases the dual nature of the County's visitor experience, offering urban amenities alongside green outdoor spaces.
 - c. Engage consumers through the extensive virtual reality technology content that was developed and curated during the pandemic to make it easy and appealing to preview a visit to Fairfax County online.
 - d. Ensure that all visitor experiences feature both group/social and other more individual/solitary options to appeal to the entire range of potential visitors.
 - e. Incorporate real-life imagery and user-generated content derived from a cross-section of social media platforms via Crowdriff technology.
 - f. Employ dynamic website technology to craft personalized webpage content based on previous consumer behavior or their geographic location.
 - g. Support new and existing content through social media channels with a focus on "unplugging" and the desire to create "precious moments" with loved ones.
 - h. Develop content that features visitor experiences that are found "off the beaten path" (Quirky Virginia) along with unique products that are Made in Fairfax.
 - i. Develop unique visitor experiences through Bandwango that offer specialized digital itineraries.
- **2.** Develop and execute a marketing and communications strategy for local residents and constituents.
 - a. Continue to promote Bandwango Trails as amenities for local residents and as a means to promote our local businesses.
 - b. Develop and execute a marketing communications strategy that encourages local residents to invite their family and friends to "reconnect" through a visit.
 - c. Use website personalization to ensure messaging that will resonate with locals who visit FXVA.com.
 - d. Develop an integrated messaging campaign to locals using owned and earned media that highlights tourism programs and amenities for local residents.
 - e. Continue to leverage the Insider newsletter to highlight what Visit Fairfax is doing to support the county's hospitality industry.
 - f. Use the LoveShare section of FXVA.com to showcase hospitality businesses that give back to the community through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs.
 - g. Execute a direct eMail marketing campaign directed to local residents and all that our industry offers them in their own backyard.

- **3.** Utilize direct e-Mail marketing to build consumer relationships in those markets that result in the highest yield in converted visitor parties.
 - a. Continue the momentum established through the e-Dialogue program database of 100,000 permission-based subscribers with 60 e-Mail deployments to 3 consumer segments (sites & attractions/culinary, Military History, and Locals) in addition to group meeting planners and tourism stakeholders.
 - b. Maintain the e-Mail database with 20,000 new subscribers within the highest performing segments.
 - c. Attract more organic opt-in subscribers on fxva.com via attention-getting strategies designed to deliver 12,500 new subscriptions.
- 4. Execute a comprehensive Search Engine Marketing program while continuing the migration from paid search to organic optimization with content that evolves to meet consumer mentality and needs.
 - a. Calibrate the Search Engine Marketing Program in alignment with current trends of online consumer behavior.
 - b. Prioritize the top 20 most successful PPC phrases and optimize those landing pages to ensure the best results with top consideration given to new consumer sensibilities.
 - c. Continue the emphasis on both paid clicks and organic rankings; however, ensure a continued presence on engines with a program delivering 135,000 new consumers to the fxva.com website using both PPC advertising.
 - d. Continue to broaden the organic optimization program with new key words and phrases resulting in top sort rankings. Integrate these key words through strong optimization of highly impactful and relevant landing pages with a target of 12,500 new organic visitors.
 - e. Utilize A/B testing on high-traffic pages and PPC landing pages to increase time on page and decrease bounce rates.
- 5. Reinforce stakeholders' use of the Fairfax County brand message to multiple audiences and build alliances within the County's tourism community.
 - a. Host a Fairfax County celebration to bring the hospitality and tourism community together in recognition of National Travel & Tourism Week.
 - b. Institute an idea bank for stakeholders to contribute niche marketing ideas that align with their products and visitor experiences.
 - c. Help stakeholders make the most of Fairfax County resources by reinforcing use of the online stakeholder resource toolkit as well as the sales collateral system.
 - d. Execute a photography/video shoot to gather additional image assets for use in Visit Fairfax marketing.
 - e. Support county stakeholders through social media, seeking ways to reinforce their brand message within the Visit Fairfax hospitality community.
 - f. Leverage the influence of the Marketing Advisory Committee as ambassadors of the brand through grass roots efforts within their own peer communities.
 - g. Offer opportunities to increase stakeholder exposure through packaged advertising in the visitor guide and on FXVA.com.

- **6.** Ensure maximum attention within the growing audience of mobile users through mobile-friendly platforms and outbound messaging.
 - a. Utilize Bandwango technology and mobile offerings to implement a variety of curated "experience paths" for consumers that include targeted itineraries, special discounts/passports, a County Brew Trail, and other benefits.
 - b. Execute an outbound text strategy to engage mobile users of the Bandwango trails.
 - c. Ensure mobile friendly web design and imagery through the website redesign.
- **7.** Execute 8 integrated marketing campaigns that target highly motivated consumers by engaging those visitors through targeted messaging and relevant content.
 - a. Develop and execute two seasonal campaigns delivering 7 million-impressions using Epsilon's first-party data which affords us the best option for targeting at maximum cost effectiveness, as well as the most accurate tracking of actual visitor spending.
 - Develop and execute a consumer campaign, based on Virginia Tourism Corporation's WanderLOVE message, that targets drive markets and encourages the Great American Road Trip.
 - c. Execute a military history campaign that spotlights the rich military history available in Fairfax County and the Capital Region.
 - d. Continue the successful Women's History campaign that not only spotlights the Suffragists story but also celebrates women who made history in Fairfax County and the Capital Region.
 - e. Continue the successful craft brew campaign to support our local breweries including a mobile Craft Brew Trail.
 - f. Work with Virginia Tourism Corporation's TripAdvisor co-op to extend Visit Fairfax marketing dollars through the popular travel platform.
 - g. Leverage the County's incredible parks through a campaign inviting bird enthusiasts to visit the Mid-Atlantic flyway in Fairfax County.
 - h. Using dynamic website technology, present compelling content and imagery that specifically appeals to these niche interests, including custom landing pages that "speak to" and pay off banner and print advertising with content based on the special interests of the targeted consumers.
- **8.** Use social media channels to tap into targeted niche audiences and to "draft" off of high-demand local events that leverage existing consumer interest.
 - a. "Draft" traffic to fxva.com during high-interest events (e.g. National Cherry Blossom Festival) by carefully using specific key word content that drives Internet users to relevant programs offered by County attractions.
 - b. Deliver highly targeted messages to highly defined niche audiences via social media channels.
 - c. Look for "newsjacking" opportunities, as they present themselves, that give Fairfax County a chance to ride a wave of public interest when our travel products align.
 - d. Deliver 30,000 website visitors to custom landing pages that fulfill the advertising message specific to the audience.
- **9.** Track and report conversion through a 3rd party conversion study.

- a. Work with our marketing partners and Texas A&M University to track conversion through a statistically valid and reliable research study.
- b. Analyze results and compare return-on-investment to identify the most lucrative programs as well as those that need to be reviewed prior to future investment.

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Supporting the Visit Fairfax sales force, as well as the sales efforts of County stakeholders, is the mission of the Visitor Services Department. Given the far-reaching effects of the recent corona virus pandemic, the VS department has now devised new strategies to respond to the needs of the post-corona traveler, both as individuals and as members of pre-formed groups. As always, the staff will ensure that prospective clients have all they need to successfully plan and promote their group. In addition, the Visitor Services team will provide information and assistance to the leisure traveler in an environment which the visitor feels safe and healthy. Finally, through training and tours, County stakeholders are given the tools, both virtually and in person, which they need to increase their sales and respond to the changing needs of the business traveler.

The Visitor Services Department accomplishes these objectives through a three-pronged approach with Visitor Center Operations, Ambassador Program, and Group Servicing.

STRATEGIES

Visitor

Parties

Group Services **Stakeholders**

 Continue to ensure that the Visitor Center maintains its ability to service county visitors with the most current information and interesting, interactive technology; and that Visitor Counselors are not simply information providers, but sales professionals who suggestively sell new experiences to visitors and increase traffic to the Center.

2. Continue to increase the force of hospitality industry professionals and students in the county who can increase their organizations' bottom line by giving their customers the information they need to experience sites and create a desire for return visits through the Ambassador Program. Tailor the Program to the needs of hotels to reflect the staffing levels/availability in the post-corona period.

3. Satisfy all requirements for groups traveling to the County to ensure expectations are met and exceeded before, during and after their stay and to encourage extended and repeat visits. Introduce new

Visitor Services



Consultative Selling

Ambassador Program

Event Planner Support

Visitor Guides

Local & Regional Events

Delivering Consumer Experiences





Visitor Center

Local Hotels

College Campuses

Airport Taxis

Stakeholder Sites

incentives to increase attendance which will undoubtedly be affected after the pandemic.

4. As with other large events following the pandemic, visitor interest in attending the programs of the National Cherry Blossom Festival will be affected. Support the continued viability of the Festival as a way to also attract visitors to Fairfax by sponsoring Festival-related events, either live or virtual.

TACTICS

1. Continue to ensure that the Visitor Center maintains its ability to service county visitors with the most current information and interesting, interactive technology; and that Visitor Counselors are not simply information providers, but sales professionals who suggestively sell new experiences to visitors and increase traffic to the Center.

a. Promote the usage of the new database of experiential offerings provided by County stakeholders by working with the Marketing Department and Visitor Center staff.

b. Capitalizing on tourists' desires to collect items from their travels, create a new program whereby visitors will be encouraged to visit partner sites to collect "badges, which can then be displayed on lanyards. The Visitor Center staff will manage this program.

c. Maintain a well-stocked and current supply of county and regional brochures and informational material.

d. Encourage visitor use of the interactive kiosk to increase excitement about county attractions and encourage visitation.

e. Participate in applicable Tysons Corner promotions, as well as promote the Center to Tysons Corner retailers who can then refer visitors to the Center.

f. Promote the Center through the Visit Fairfax website with the popular free gift offer.

2. Continue to increase the force of hospitality industry professionals and students in the county who can increase their organizations' bottom line by giving their customers the information they need to experience sites and create a desire for return visits through the Ambassador Program. Tailor the Program to the needs of hotels to reflect the staffing levels/availability in the post-corona period.

a. Hold classes for hoteliers, taxi drivers, and hospitality students in local colleges. Hold classes at attractions with their visitor services staffs. This will prepare the visitor services staffs at the attractions for an increase in visitors following the pandemic as visitors gain confidence in traveling.

- b. Hold classes geared to hotel sales professionals to provide destination information, as well as refresher tips on utilizing Visit Fairfax sales tools.
- c. Hold tours of county attractions for Ambassadors to provide first-hand experience of the sites discussed in classroom settings.
- 3. Satisfy all requirements for groups traveling to the County to ensure expectations are met and exceeded before, during and after their stay and to encourage extended and repeat visits. Introduce new incentives to increase attendance which will undoubtedly be affected after the pandemic.
 - a. Work with Bandwango to create customized experiences for large groups, drawing on the new database created and vetted by the Visitor Services team.
 - b. When requested by the client, print "save the date" postcards to promote meeting attendance.
 - c. Actively promote and implement every aspect of the Event Planner toolkit to meeting planners serviced by Visit Fairfax. Continually update information and incorporate tools for stakeholders.
 - d. Welcome qualified groups to the County with a planner amenity and welcome letter.
 - e. Send a survey after a group visits to assess the quality of the services provided, providing feedback to the sales team for changes suggested by the client.
 - f. Provide storage and timely fulfillment of visitor guides to groups, hotels, attractions and Certified Virginia Visitor Centers.
 - g. Order and maintain the supply of appropriate promotional items so that office staff has a ready supply of branded items for client gifts. Suggest possible new items for the changing sales/visitor environment.
- 4. As with other large events following the pandemic, visitor interest in attending the programs of the National Cherry Blossom Festival will be affected. Support the continued viability of the Festival as a way to also attract visitors to Fairfax by sponsoring Festival-related events, either live or virtual.
 - a. Sponsor events at County attractions (either live or virtual), such as the Workhouse Arts Center, Green Spring Gardens, Meadowlark Botanical Garden, Children's Science Center, Frying Pan arm Park and others. Promote these events through our website, social media and Visitor Center.
 - b. Create an amenity for distribution at these events which promotes Visit Fairfax.
 - c. Hold an event during the Festival at the Visitor Center, increasing attendance at the Center and promoting the Center as a venue offering County and Festival information.

INTERNAL & EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS



As we move into year two and three of a global pandemic that has changed everything, the travel and tourism industry continues to navigate its new reality, filled with uncertainty and ever-changing restrictions, regulations, and vacillating consumer confidence. A new reality is also evidenced in the media and communications world. Many travel publications have had to cut staff, close offices, hire freelancers using diminished resources, and completely rework editorial calendars as travel came to a halt. This shift in operations for both industries presents new challenges and opportunities for pushing through unique and relevant messaging as we all rebuild together.

Over the past year-plus, Visit Fairfax took a more local approach than it has in the past to storytelling and content creation, curating uplifting stories from stakeholders, working with the restaurant industry to highlight socially distanced and/or outdoor dining options, and crafting content with a road trip and outdoor focus. Perhaps more than ever, the local Fairfax County and Washington, DC media scene has taken notice and helped push this messaging out to the community, broadening the awareness of Visit Fairfax as a helpful – and necessary – travel resource.

As the world – and travel – opens back up, Visit Fairfax will continue at a rapid pace to create innovative approaches to content marketing, communications, and



Visit Fairfax will also continue to work as one unit with the regional partners of Northern Virginia to give a more comprehensive overview of this incredibly rich cultural region. As more and more people

Communications

WHAT

Increase Share of Online Conversation

Positive Media Coverage

News for Stakeholders

Local Community Support

State & Regional Cooperative Outreach

User-generated Content

Content Creation





Social Media Outlets

Local Media

National Media

International Media

Blog

Tradeshows

get vaccinated and feel comfortable doing longer trips, this regional approach will help showcase Northern Virginia as a prime destination for a well-rounded vacation.

Internally, Visit Fairfax must continue its ongoing efforts to support its stakeholders and tell their stories using tools available via social media, industry e-newsletters, its new Feel Good Friday video series, and web-based promotions like the blog and event calendar.

The goals of this communications plan will be achieved through numerous strategies and tactics that include facilitating press coverage through pitches and networking, creating and distributing content via social media, web, eMail, and video, and educating and supporting our local hospitality industry in a day and age when they continue to need it more than ever. Visit Fairfax will continuously measure, adjust, improve, and refresh all of these strategies and tactics throughout the year to deliver the most effective results, as the whole industry works towards recovery.

STRATEGIES

1. Further develop public relations initiatives by proactively seeking out and placing media coverage in local, national, and international publications to build awareness about Visit Fairfax and Fairfax County.

2. Strengthen content marketing efforts through owned and shared media with integrated approach to storytelling.

3. Develop new communications strategies to support local stakeholders and hospitality partners to help fuel recovery from the covid-19 pandemic.

4. Seek out new relationships and strengthen current ones with local media, content creators, and micro-influencers to help build credibility for the Visit Fairfax brand within the community and with national/international media to help further our message.

5. Cultivate and fine-tune brand's social media presence with consistent and targeted messaging and by utilizing user-generated content (UGC), stakeholder assets, and intimate knowledge of Fairfax County tourism product to help build Visit Fairfax's share of the online conversation.

6. Find new ways of using existing consumer assets (website/blog, visitor guide, etc.) to communicate the Fairfax County tourism message.

- **7.** Strengthen partnership with the state and regional tourism entities to generate positive press and awareness for the County, region, and Commonwealth.
- 8. Strengthen partnerships with industry colleagues, public relations alliances, and stakeholders who can help spread the Fairfax County tourism message.
- **9.** Develop partnerships and materials for consumers and stakeholders that will pique interest and encourage visitors to engage with our tourism products.
- **10.** Leverage and draft off trending national and local events to insert Fairfax County's message into the conversation.
- **11.** Promote in-destination brand advocacy and encourage local pride by serving as a resource and voice for the local and regional tourism industry.

EXTERNAL PLAN

- 1. Develop new pitches and outreach to specifically help spread the travel recovery message, as well as highlighting the outdoors and spacious offerings of the area to promote Fairfax County as a safe destination.
- Identify other travel trends and media opportunities to proactively pitch story lines that will result in positive press coverage for Fairfax County and Visit Fairfax in the national/international markets.
- **3.** Respond to media/journalist inquiries and requests for information, photos, interviews, and press visits to produce positive press for Fairfax County and Visit Fairfax.
- 4. Based on journalists' travel comfort levels, host a variety of press familiarization tours throughout the year, some targeted to specific niches, to gain valuable editorial coverage in local, national, and international publications.
- Distribute seasonal and campaign-focused press releases and content verticals covering Fairfax County tourism product to local, national, and international media through new TravMedia platform.
- Develop new engaging and shareable content that can be utilized and distributed on the online blog module to help tell more niche, featurette, and local community stories about Fairfax County.
- 7. Work with "local experts" to create new content for the website and social media, bringing trusted third-party stories into the fold and forming relationships that will benefit Visit Fairfax for future endeavors.
- 8. Create brand equity, start conversations about tourism in Fairfax County, and curate new content for web, social, and other marketing channels by engaging social media users and influencers via Crowdriff and native social platforms.
- **9.** Maintain fluid, daily editorial calendars to ensure messaging continuity on social media platforms, pushing out compelling, fact-based, shareable information.

- **10.** Expand upon successful Feel Good Fridays video series, which promotes safe things to do in a visual way and also supports stakeholders.
- **11.** Build out a graphic-heavy content approach to sharing evergreen content on Pinterest, already a trusted platform for seeking travel and lifestyle inspiration.
- **12.** Refresh the Official Fairfax County Visitors Guide with new and updated editorial content, imagery, and listing details to help guide visitors through the County.
- **13.** As they become available again, attend public relations tradeshows, networking events, and press missions to pitch story ideas, network with journalists, and take Fairfax County's message in-market to further Visit Fairfax's reach in our target markets.

INTERNAL PLAN

- 1. Communicate regularly with stakeholders about viable opportunities and relevant updates via the Partner Extranet and Toolkit, e-Blasts and Insider Newsletter.
- **2.** Gather information from stakeholders through quarterly outreach.
- **3.** Foster new relationships with stakeholders by proactively seeking out and welcoming new members of the Fairfax County tourism community through in-person meetings, training calls, and social media communication.
- Create content creation opportunities via the blog by partnering with stakeholders who are experts in their fields already and give them a platform on FXVA.com in which to share their knowledge.
- **5.** Present opportunities to our stakeholders and incoming special event organizers to further their brand through the tools and resources offered by Visit Fairfax.
- **6.** Host an Open House event at Visit Fairfax's new offices to show support for the industry and spread the word that the offices have moved should stakeholders need assistance in the future.
- **7.** Host an annual stakeholder event in conjunction with National Travel & Tourism Week to allow the Fairfax County tourism community to gather, network, and promote all tourism efforts.
- 8. Serve as a sponsor for the Valor and Innovation Awards, as well as the annual tourism scholarship initiative through the state hospitality association.

RESOURCES

Performance Measures

Board of Directors

Team Members

Activity Schedules

MEASURING PERFORMANCE

Market	Performance Measure	Market	Performance Measure
Business & Sports Groups	Number of Definite GroupsNumber of Definite Room NightsNumber of Definite AttendeesNumber of LeadsNumber of Potential Room NightsNumber of Potential Attendees	Leisure Groups	Number of Overnight ProgramsNumber of Definite Room NightsNumber of VisitorsNumber of DaytripsNumber of Potential Room NightsNumber of Potential Visitors

Market	Performance Measu
	Website Visitors
Consumer	Time on Website
& Public	Website Engagement
	Social Media Engagement
Relations	Positive Media Stories
	Digital Marketing Conversion

mance Measure

-	
-	
-	
-	

BOARD OF DIRECTORS





Robert Maurer, Immediate Past Chairman

Ex Officio Barry Biggar, CDME Connie Royal

Connie Roya Bryan Hill









Directors

Don Anderson Matt Briney Trish Drews Sondra Hemenway Rajesh Khubchandani Jo LaBrecque-French Bill Lecos Morgan Maravich Sam Misleh Marion Myers Dr. Sue Slocum Mike Thompson Sarah White Holly Williamson

Emeritus

James Wordsworth Mark Carrier



PROFESSIONAL TEAM

Barry H. Biggar, CDME President & CEO

Dean Miller National Sales Manager, Association & Reunion

Margaret Tenenbaum Visitor Services Counselor **Jackie Franchi** Vice President Mktg & Sales

Eric Kulczycky National Sales Manager, Sports, Govt., & Corporate

Birgit Klare Visitor Services Counselor **Sue Porter** Director of Visitor Services

Linda Horowitz National Sales Manager Domestic/Int'l Group Leisure

Jehan Mondal Visitor Services Counselor Patrick Lennon Director of Marketing

Ali Morris Destination Marketing Manager

Katherine Moore, CPA Accountant **Bert Cook** Office Manager

Marissa Strang Destination Marketing Specialist

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Audience	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	Мау	June
Business	Reston-Herndon Mtg Planners "Summer Camp" Fairfax, VA <u>8/5/21</u> Army Museum Press Fam <u>Date TBD</u> Destination SE Marco Island, FL <u>7/25-27/21</u>	Connect Mkt Tampa, FL <u>8/30-9/1/21</u>	Meetings Today Live! Louisville, KY <u>9/12-15/21</u>	VSAE Fall Conf. Richmond, VA <u>10/7/21</u> Overseas Brats Gathering San Antonio, TX <u>10/27-31/21</u>	Countdown to Metro Lunch Fairfax, VA <u>Date TBD</u> VA Assn Blitz Richmond, VA <u>Date TBD</u> VA-1 Conf Hot Springs, VA <u>Date TBD</u>	Connect DC Washington, DC <u>12/1/21</u>	IPEC Location TBD Date TBD	The Knowledge Exchange Location TBD <u>Date TBD</u>	Rendezvous South Location TBD <u>Date TBD</u> Countdown to Metro Lunch Fairfax, VA Date TBD	VA Assn Blitz Richmond, VA <u>Date TBD</u> Family Reunion Seminar Fairfax County, VA <u>Date TBD</u>	VSAE Annual Mtg Leesburge,VA <u>5/13/22</u> SGMP NEC Conf Location TBD Date TBD	TMRN Educ Summit New Orleans, LA <u>Date TBD</u>
Leisure		SYTA Virtual <u>8/13-17/2021</u> CRUSA Int'I Mktg Summit <u>Date TBD</u>	IPW Los Vegas, NV <u>9/18-22/21</u>		Spotlight on the East Myrtle Beach, SC <u>11/8-10/21</u>	CRUSA UK Sales Mission <u>Date TBD</u> Active America China Washington, DC <u>11/30-12/1/21</u> Active America China FAM 12/1-3/21	ABA Grapevine,TX <u>1/8-11/22</u>	CRUSA France Sales Mission <u>Date TBD</u> NVTP Sales Mission Date TBD	CRUSA Germany Sales Mission <u>Date TBD</u>	FAM TBD	TAP Dance Branson, MO <u>5/23-25/22</u>	CRUSA China Sales Mission <u>Date TBD</u> IPW 2022 Orlando, FL 6/4-8/22 RTO Summit East New York, NY 6/30-7/1/22
Sports		CONNECT Sports Tampa Bay, FL 8/30-9/1/21	TEAMS Conf/Expo Atlantic City, NJ 9/27-30/2021	Sports ETA Symposium I Birmingham, AL 10/25/21							Sports ETA Symposium II Fort Worth, TX <u>5/2-5/2022</u>	

ACTIVITY CALENDAR – GROUP SALES

ACTIVITY CALENDAR – MARKETING AND ADVERTISING

Audience	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June
Business	Group Planner <u>eNewsletter</u> CVENT	CVENT	Group Planner <u>eNewsletter</u> <u>CVENT</u> MPI Potomac Chapter Sponsorship	Advertising <u>Meetings Today</u> Advertising <u>Convention South</u> Advertising Military <u>Officer Magazine</u> Advertising Government <u>Connections</u> CVENT	Group Planner <u>eNewsletter</u> CVENT	CVENT	Group Planner <u>eNewsletter</u> CVENT	Advertising Smart Meetings <u>CVENT</u> SGMP NATCAP Sponsorship	Group Planner <u>eNewsletter</u> Advertising <u>Meetings Today</u> Advertising Reunions <u>Magazine</u> Advertising Military Officer Magazine CVENT	CVENT	Group Planner <u>eNewsletter</u> Advertising <u>ConventionSouth</u> CVENT	CVENT
Leisure	eMarketing Direct <u>Mail Newsletters</u> <u>SEO/SEM programs</u> Facebook <u>Targeted Ads</u>	SEO/SEM programs Facebook <u>Targeted Ads</u>		Facebook <u>Targeted Ads</u> <u>Beer Campaign</u>	eMarketing Direct <u>Mail Newsletters</u> <u>SEO/SEM programs</u> Facebook <u>Targeted Ads</u> Group Travel Magazine	eMarketing Direct <u>Mail Newsletters</u> <u>SEO/SEM programs</u> Facebook <u>Targeted Ads</u> <u>2022 Visitor Guide</u> CRUSA Guide & <u>Website</u>	eMarketing Direct Mail Newsletters SEO/SEM programs Facebook Targeted Ads VTC Leisure Travel Guide Touroperatorland Travel Site	SEO/SEM programs	eMarketing Direct <u>Mail Newsletters</u> <u>SEO/SEM programs</u> Facebook <u>Targeted Ads</u> <u>CRUSA eNewsletter</u> Military History <u>Campaign</u> Beer Campaign	<u>SEO/SEM programs</u> Facebook <u>Targeted Ads</u> Spring Travel	eMarketing Direct <u>Mail Newsletters</u> <u>SEO/SEM programs</u> Facebook <u>Targeted Ads</u> TripAdvisor VTC <u>co-op</u> Leisure Group Travel Magazine – VA Group Tour Guide	eMarketing Direct <u>Mail Newsletters</u> <u>SEO/SEM programs</u> Facebook <u>Targeted Ads</u>
Sports	SportsNOVA co-op marketing	SportsNOVA co-op marketing	SportsNOVA co-op marketing	SportsNOVA <u>co-op marketing</u> Sports Virginia co-op Ad	SportsNOVA co-op marketing	SportsNOVA <u>co-op marketing</u> Sports ETA Digital Ad	SportsNOVA co-op marketing	SportsNOVA co-op marketing	SportsNOVA co-op marketing	SportsNOVA co-op marketing	SportsNOVA co-op marketing	SportsNOVA co-op marketing

ACTIVITY CALENDAR – COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Audience	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June
Outside Media	HARO/Direct Media Pitches MATPRA Qrt Mtg - Howard County, MD <u>7/16/21</u> Meetings & NVTP Press <u>FAMs</u>	HARO/Direct <u>Media Pitches</u>	HARO/Direct <u>Media Pitches</u> IPW Las Vegas, NV <u>9/18/21</u>	HARO/Direct <u>Media Pitches</u> MATPRA Marketplace Pennsylvania <u>10/4-6/21</u>	HARO/Direct <u>Media Pitches</u> NVTP Deskside Meetings <u>TBD</u>	HARO/Direct Media Pitches	HARO/Direct <u>Media Pitches</u> What's New <u>Media Release</u> MATPRA Qtr Mtg Location & Date <u>TBD</u>	HARO/Direct <u>Media Pitches</u>	HARO/Direct Media Pitches	HARO/Direct <u>Media Pitches</u> MATPRA Qtr Mtg Location & Date <u>TBD</u>	HARO/Direct <u>Media Pitches</u> <u>FAM Tour</u>	HARO/Direct Media Pitches PRSA Conference Date/Location <u>TBD</u> FAM Tour
Internal Stakeholders	Amb. Newsletter	Stakeholder <u>Newsletter</u> <u>Amb. Newsletter</u>	<u>Amb. Newsletter</u> Taxi Amb. <u>Class</u> Hotel Amb. <u>Class</u>	Stakeholder <u>Newsletter</u> <u>Amb.Newsletter</u> <u>Amb.Tour</u> Mason <u>Amb.</u> <u>Class</u>	<u>Amb.Newsletter</u> Hotel <u>Amb.</u> <u>Class</u>	Stakeholder <u>Newsletter</u> Ambassador <u>Newsletter</u>	Ambassador <u>Newsletter</u> Hotel Amb. <u>Class</u>	Stakeholder <u>Newsletter</u> Ambassador <u>Newsletter</u> Sales <u>Amb.</u> <u>Class</u>	Amb. Newsletter Taxi Amb. <u>Class</u> Mason Amb. <u>Class</u> <u>Hotel Amb.</u> <u>Class</u>	Stakeholder <u>Newsletter</u> Ambassador <u>Newsletter</u>	Stakeholder ICW <u>Nat'l Tourism Wk</u> <u>Amb. Newsletter</u> Hotel Amb <u>Class</u>	Stakeholder <u>Newsletter</u> Ambassador <u>Newsletter</u> <u>Amb. Tour</u>
Misc	Social Media <u>Outlets</u>	Social Media <u>Outlets</u>	Social Media <u>Outlets</u>	Social Media <u>Outlets</u>	Social Media <u>Outlets</u>	Social Media <u>Outlets</u>	Social Media <u>Outlets</u>	Social Media <u>Outlets</u>	Social Media <u>Outlets</u> Valor Awards <u>Sponsorship</u> NCBF Culture <u>Day at VC</u>	Social Media Outlets Innovation Awards Sponsorship VA Welcome Center Mktg <u>"Takeover</u> "	Social Media <u>Outlets</u> VA Welcome Center Mktg " <u>Takeover</u> "	Social Media <u>Outlets</u>