



SALES, MARKETING, AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PLAN

2024/2025

VISIT FAIRFAX

Our Mission:

To promote, market, and sell Fairfax County as a year-round, preferred destination for visitors from all market segments including all business travel segments, leisure, and sports travel. We use all marketing disciplines to develop incremental visitation by promoting our destination products, programs, and activities that distinguish Fairfax County and contribute to the overall economic and social growth of our citizens and communities

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SUMMARY

It is indeed my great pleasure to share our 2024 – 2025 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 months in advance. This year was no different. Our plan for the 2024 – 2025 Fiscal Year reflects a 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 ongoing Covid-19 issues and other outside variables.

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



Strengths 3 ct

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. Additionally, our diverse population translates to diverse and authentic visitor experiences that are highly desirable to many. Finally, Fairfax County offers visitors the ultimate convenience of accessibility by 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.



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 now-complete expansion of Metro to Dulles Airport provides new opportunity for both individual travelers and group event planners. Four relatively new attractions represent opportunity within all segments. Capital One Hall represents a major addition to our Arts portfolio. The National Museum of the United States Army along with the Lucy Burns Museum and the Turning Point Suffragists Memorial are very attractive to niche groups and individual travelers, and the sense of community spirit in a post-pandemic world provides continued 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.

ENVIRONMENTAL

ANALYSIS



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 could leave tourists with the feeling that Fairfax County may not be a touristfriendly destination. Lack of extensive public transportation was mitigated with the expansion of Metro to Dulles; 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. While city destinations like Washington, DC and New York City are quite well-known among travelers, counties are often difficult to market as they are not as established from a branding and awareness standpoint.

·*** Threats

Thankfully, the threat to the travel industry caused by the global pandemic is now fully behind us; however, its impact on individual business and international travel continues to linger. Record inflation and high gas prices in recent years also put more strain on funds for recreational spending. In this environment, Fairfax County faces the challenge that many destination marketing organizations contend with – drawing eyes to our message when numerous choices abound. Specifically, nearby competitor Washington, DC has invested millions of dollars toward international markets, giving them a competitive advantage in these lucrative marketplaces.

SALES, MARKETING, & DEVELOPMENT

BUSINESS PLAN

Visit Fairfax worked diligently to support our hospitality businesses over the past four years through the full spectrum of response and recovery following the unthinkable effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The travel restrictions that began in 2020 and reemerged cyclically throughout the pandemic are fully behind us, and yet the individual business travelers who played a critical role for our hotels have yet to fully return. The latest data suggests that less than 50% of workers in the DMV have returned full-time to their offices, and many government workers continue to

telework. In Fairfax County, the office vacancy rate is at a 10-year high, and the "new normal" of zoom meetings as opposed to in-person connections has suppressed individual business travel. On the other hand, group travel and leisure travel both represent bright spots, displaying solid growth year-over-year according to the U.S. Travel Association.

Over the past two years, the Fairfax County tourism industry was supported through the American Rescue Plan Act with a significant grant that allowed Visit Fairfax to implement a robust recovery plan to support our stakeholders. That integrated plan resulted in reach to new leisure audiences as well as group event planners. This vital funding provided new tools and assets to elevate

Change is the end result of all true learning.

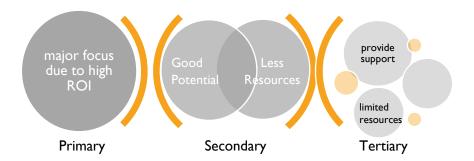
- Leo Buscaglia

Fairfax County's voice among both leisure consumers and group decision makers. It also gave Visit Fairfax the opportunity to explore major markets that were previously prohibitive due to cost, resulting in over \$207 million in tracked ROI to-date. And while these support funds expire in June 2024, they did provide significant learning relating to the highest yielding markets should funding be increased along with new assets that will be leveraged for continued support of Fairfax County's tourism economy.

Without question, the market segment that rebounded first and best was consumer leisure travel, and with eclectic visitor experiences ranging from national historic treasures to wide-open green spaces for those who still prefer less crowded environments, Fairfax County remains an attractive destination for leisure trips. For some, the current state of the overall economy remains uncertain, and so, Northern Virginia represents an incredible value within the National Capital Region with many of the benefits of an urban destination that is complemented by nature and our incredible parks. Using innovative technologies, Visit Fairfax will continue implementing programs that send highly creative messages to very targeted niche audiences with a focus on those precious moments with friends and family that many see as a top priority as they reconnect.

Another encouraging sign of recovery is the uptick in group events even though the competition for those events remains fierce. Identifying innovative ways to reach group decision makers is especially important in light of that competitive environment, and we need to arm our group sales managers with the best possible tools to be effective in their jobs. In doing so, we leverage the power of human connection that only comes from face-to-face interaction.

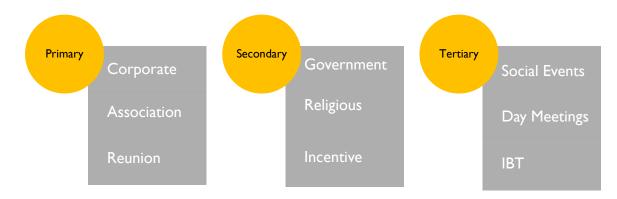
The overall sales and marketing strategy will remain focused on the three key markets that we prioritized from the beginning: Business, Leisure, and Sports – each with dedicated resources based upon their Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary audiences.



We will also continue to reach out to our own local residents who 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.

BUSINESS MEETINGS

MEETINGS AND EVENTS



Now entering our third full year following the pandemic, we continue to see unprecedented demand for group meetings and events. Lead volume has run at historic highs for the past eighteen months, with no signs of abating. Many groups are seeing increased attendance at their meetings year-over-year, leading to increased demand for meeting space and larger room blocks.

Hotel rates have risen in virtually all US markets and all market segments, making our traditional "value proposition" more compelling than ever, especially versus hotels in Arlington, Alexandria, and downtown Washington, DC. Fairfax County hotel rates have also risen, but not by the same increments as those of our competitors, making Fairfax County more attractive to planners. Additionally, the shift in individual business travel (IBT) demand post-pandemic is becoming permanent, making more rooms available for sale to groups mid-week at many of our hotels.

The demand for larger (i.e., full hotel ballroom) meeting space continues to outpace supply, forcing Visit Fairfax and our hotel partners to think creatively about ways to accommodate the maximum number of group meeting requests, especially over prime dates in the Spring and Fall. We continue to educate clients as to the "new reality" of considering secondary (or tertiary) dates, shifting their day patterns, being more flexible in their meeting space requirements, and considering properties that may not have been on their radar originally. Fortunately, the new J. W. Marriott scheduled to open in Reston, VA in the late Spring / early Summer of 2025 will give Fairfax County another upscale, full-service property with meeting space to offer to planners.

Looking ahead, we will continue our presence "out in the marketplace" with a robust schedule of one-on-one appointment tradeshows in all of our key market segments. We also continue to look for opportunities to host such programs, knowing that exposing planners to our hotels and attractions first-hand is one of the most effective ways to sell our destination.

Fairfax County will host the annual Educational Summit of The Military Reunion Network in June of 2024; this event will bring between 40 and 45 military reunion planners here to personally experience all that the destination has to offer their groups. And we are in active discussions with *Meetings Today* magazine to host a hosted buyer event for approximately 50 well-qualified planners in July of 2025.

We will of course continue to develop additional business attracted by the National Museum of the United States Army and by Capital One Hall. Capital One Hall and its 1,600-seat main auditorium is being

promoted to association, corporate, and religious groups requiring larger "General Session" space than any of our existing hotels can supply.



Representing Fairfax County

With over 100 hotels and over 80 additional unique meeting spaces, Fairfax County offers so many options for event planners seeking the perfect location in Northern Virginia.

The extension of the Metrorail Silver Line to Dulles International Airport has allowed us to offer our properties in the Dulles Airport corridor to more planners as viable options now that we can successfully counter the objections that these hotels and venues are "too far away" for groups to consider, including two new groups for 2025 that had previously met for many years in Alexandria and Arlington.

STRATEGIES

- 1. Market, sell and promote Fairfax County as a premier business meeting destination with the group business segments that 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 our newest facilities: the National Museum of the United States Army, Capital One Hall, the Metrorail Silver line extension to Dulles International Airport, and new hotel infrastructure

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 with the group business segments that we target: national and state associations, corporate and government.
 - a. Ensure visibility for Fairfax County and our meeting hotels at association, corporate, and government trade shows including Connect (Milwaukee, WI, Greenville, SC, Washington, DC, and New York, NY), Rendezvous South, Northstar's Destination East, and IPEC (Independent Planner Education Conference), Small & Boutique Meetings, and Meetings Today LIVE!.
 - Utilize "virtual reality" tours of our meeting hotels and attractions to sell to planners who may be unwilling or unable to conduct traditional site inspections in Fairfax County.
 - c. Continue to expand our relationships with state association planners through our participation in the Virginia Society of Association Executives (VSAE) including attendance at the group's Fall Conference and various events throughout the vear.
 - d. Provide our hotels with access to Virginia state association planners through a semi-annual Visit Fairfax sales blitz in November and April.
 - e. Take a sponsorship / exhibit table at the FLEX (Fairfax Loudoun Event Executives) "Summer Camp" program in July.
 - f. Use a "break-through-the-clutter" direct mail piece to select prospective planners/groups to pique interest in finding out more about Fairfax County.
 - g. Ensure visibility among corporate, government, and association planners through advertising in *Meetings & Conventions*, *Meetings Today*, and *Convention South*.
 - h. Utilize the bi-monthly group planner eNewsletter to deliver information on new developments, special offers, and items of interest to groups.
 - Continue to develop relationships with the Society of Government Meeting Professionals (SGMP), Association of Meeting Professionals (AMPs), Meeting Professionals

Business Meetings

WHAT

Tradeshows

Print & Online Advertising

Direct Sales

Membership & Sponsorship

Group FAMs & Client Events

WHERE

Washington, DC

Northern Virginia

Richmond

National Shows

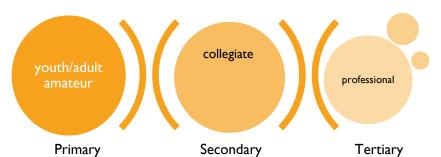
- International (MPI), and Fairfax Loudoun Event Executives (FLEX) planners through attendance at local chapter events and conferences.
- j. Participate in an ongoing digital advertising program with Meeting Professional International (MPI).
- k. Enhance Fairfax County's presence on Cvent to compete more effectively against other destinations and generate additional business opportunities in all target markets.
- 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.
 - a. Continue to participate in a virtual Family Reunion Workshop in partnership with the National Family Reunion Institute, showcasing Fairfax County to family reunion planners across the country.
 - b. Ensure visibility among family and military reunion planners through online advertising in *Reunions* magazine.
 - c. Host The Military Reunion Network (TMRN) Educational Summit in June to reach military reunion planners and convince them to meet in Fairfax County.
 - d. Reach special interest and hobbyist event planners through Connect Marketplace and Rendezvous South.
- 3. Maximize the opportunities presented by our newest facilities: the National Museum of the United States Army, Capital One Hall, the Metrorail Silver line extension to Dulles International Airport, and new hotel infrastructure.
 - a. Continue to e-mail planners of Army reunion groups with periodic issues of our specialty newsletter highlighting recent additions/updates at the Army Museum.
 - b. Develop an eMail database of Navy reunion planners and begin to promote the upcoming opening of the new Navy Museum in downtown Washington, DC.
 - c. Continue to develop relationships with the staff at the Naval Heritage and History Command in preparation for the upcoming opening of the new Navy Museum in downtown Washington, DC.
 - d. Continue to promote the availability of Capital One Hall as a desirable "General Session" space to groups too large to be comfortably accommodated in one of our traditional hotel ballrooms.
 - e. Promote the completion of Metrorail service to Dulles Airport via trade show signage and custom collateral.



- f. Continue discussions with the staff of *Meetings Today* magazine with regard to hosting a three-day hosted-buyer event for approximately 50 meeting planners in July of 2025.
- 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. Offer the use of "Fairfaxopoly" and other experiential activities to planners as unique enhancements to their programs.
 - b. Offer the use of customized "Save The Date" postcards to select planners as a cost-effective tool for enhancing the attendance at their meetings and events.
 - c. Assist planners in arranging locally based guest speakers, sightseeing tours, and entertainment for their programs to enhance the "Wow!" factor of their meetings.



TOURNAMENTS AND COMPETITIONS



After a period of recovery following the global pandemic, the sports market remains one of the most resilient segments within the tourism industry and a leading driver of group travel with business spread evenly throughout the year. According to the latest state-of-the-industry report commissioned by the Sports Events & Tourism Association, sports-related travel in the United States produced a direct economic impact of \$52.2 billion in 2023. Since youth travel sports are viewed by many parents as a necessity rather than a luxury and because tournaments and competitions have become lucrative revenue streams for event organizers, this market continues to generate significant economic impact for destinations while providing a sense of civic pride to residents in communities throughout the country.



Patriot Park North

This 6-field turf baseball/softball complex opened in Spring of 2023 and represents many new tournament opportunities for Fairfax County.

To compete effectively in the sports market with other destinations, having the right facilities is vital. As competition for a larger slice of the sports tourism pie has become increasingly fierce, a facilities "arms

race" has developed to offer more and more tournament-capable venues. Compared with other U.S. localities pursuing this market – including some of our neighboring counties – Fairfax County has not kept pace in this race to build large clusters of outdoor fields or indoor courts. However, to address this shortcoming, the Fairfax County Park Authority is in the process of seeking workable public-private partnerships to construct sportsplexes that will best serve the local sports community while expanding opportunities to host travel sports events.

A shining example of a clustered sports venue in the county providing these dual benefits is Patriot Park North. Owned and operated by the Park Authority, this six-diamond turf/lighted complex has been a huge boon since it opened in Spring 2023. Not only has it been used regularly on weekdays by local user groups for practices, games, and camps, Patriot Park North has been booked with local and travel tournaments most weekends from mid-March through early November, generating an estimated total economic impact of more than \$6 million in its first year of operation.

Indeed, the importance of tournament-quality venues to attracting new sports business cannot be understated. The great news is that several exciting facility developments are on the horizon:

- Down the Line Sports Center –
 Capitalizing on the pickleball craze,
 Down the Line Sports Center is expected to open its Annandale location by early 2025 with 18 full-size indoor courts, a pro shop, and a concessions area, making it an ideal venue to host state and regional tournaments.
- Mount Vernon Rec Center With a renovation expected to be completed by Spring 2025, Mount Vernon Rec Center will have two NHL-regulation sheets of ice and a seating capacity of 960. In addition to The St. James and SkateQuest, this Park Authority facility will be in contention to host regional hockey and figure skating competitions throughout the year.



Another important component to positioning Visit Fairfax for success includes sports marketing partnerships with counterparts throughout the Commonwealth. As part of our membership in Sports Virginia, we can leverage our resources with other sports-minded DMOs to lower the cost of client events and to generate significantly more leads than if we exhibited at tradeshows on our own.

And as a result of our SportsNOVA alliance with Loudoun, Prince William, and Stafford counties, we'll continue to build awareness of Northern Virginia's sports tourism assets through cost-effective marketing communications, client events, and site inspections. This past year, cooperation with our regional partners proved especially fruitful with significant room blocks secured in Fairfax County for the 2024 Capital Cup Girls Fest hockey tournament and the 2024 Solheim Cup women's professional golf competition. Visit Fairfax also teamed up with Visit Loudoun on a winning bid to host the 2025 USA Hockey U16 Girls National Championship.

Among our most important partnerships are the ones with our clients, the event rightsholders who bring thousands of athletes and spectators to our destination in the name of friendly competition. Visit Fairfax will provide a variety of support services to several tournaments to grow event attendance, enhance the experience of visiting guests, and save our clients time and money.

Time-tested sales strategies and tactics will continue to generate awareness and interest in our destination and sports tourism assets. Targeted advertising, direct sales efforts, tradeshows, client events, and site inspections remain breadand-butter tools to produce leads and close business opportunities. And our newest assets including videos, new collateral, virtual tours of Patriot Park North and George Mason University, and a custom Sports eMap will all help Fairfax County stand out in a field of tough competitors.

By engaging with local organizations in an advocacy role to further develop the county's sports infrastructure, working cooperatively with DMO partners throughout the state and also regionally, providing event organizers with sponsorship support and customized event services, and building awareness of and interest in Fairfax County's sport tourism assets, Visit Fairfax will strive to foster economic development for tourism stakeholders and enhance the quality of life of area residents. As we navigate the sports market post-pandemic, we will implement the following marketing plan strategies and tactics designed to bolster Visit Fairfax's sales opportunities 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.

SPORTS

WHAT

Tradeshows & Conferences

Direct Sales

Client Events & Site Inspections

Sports E-Map & Virtual Presentations

Advertising & Public Relations

Playeasy Events Database

Sports Facility Guide

Promotional Videos

Strategic Partnerships

SportsNOVA & Sports Virginia

Fairfax County Sports Tourism Task Force

WHERE

Connect Sports Marketplace

TEAMS Conf & Expo

Sports ETA Symposium

ABCA Convention

Patriot Park North

Fairfax County Parks & Public Schools

George Mason University

NOVA Parks

The St James and Other Private Sports Facilities

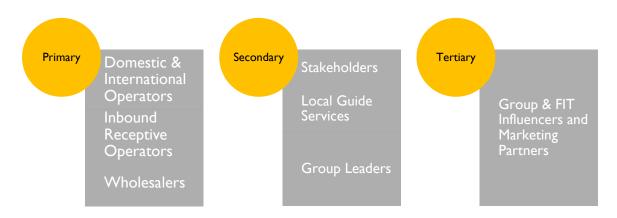
TACTICS

- 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:
 - 2024 Connect Sports Marketplace
 - 2024 TEAMS Conference & Expo
 - 2025 American Baseball Coaches Association Convention
 - 2025 Sports ETA Symposium
 - b. Participate actively in the Sports Events and Tourism Association (Sports ETA) as well as Sports Virginia, the coalition of DMOs 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 for tournament hosting opportunities.
 - e. Continue building prospect list of sports planners and conduct sales solicitation calls with organizers whose events match up well with Fairfax County's sports tourism assets.
 - f. Conduct in-person site inspections and virtual tours to promote Fairfax County to targeted sports decision-makers 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, advertising, public relations, and eMarketing vehicles.
 - 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 members of the Task Force to ensure the achievement of desired tourism objectives.
 - c. Partner with the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) to market and book baseball/softball tournaments at Patriot Park North (PPN), FCPA's six-diamond turf/lighted complex; promote the newly developed PPN video and virtual tour to event organizers and coaches throughout the U.S.
 - d. Maximize opportunities to host events at The St. James and other private facilities including the CYA Fieldhouse, Hashtag Gaming Arena, and Capital One Center.
 - e. Support George Mason University in its efforts to bid on and land NCAA Championship events; work with the school's athletic department to book more youth tournaments using indoor and

- outdoor facilities; use the GMU virtual tour tool to educate sports planners about athletic venues on the Fairfax campus.
- f. Update database of Fairfax County and area facilities capable of hosting various sports events and competitions; distribute general and sports-specific facility guides to rightsholders.
- g. Continue to generate awareness of SportsNOVA the regional sports tourism alliance between Fairfax, Loudoun, Prince William, and Stafford counties; target and book multi-sport and large single-sport competitions; promote Fairfax County and Northern Virginia's sports tourism assets through advertising, client functions, and site inspections.
- 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. Assist FCPA to increase revenue by developing golf packages that incorporate hotel, attraction, and other stakeholder benefits.
 - c. 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.
 - d. Promote "Extend Your Stay" web page that encourages sports groups to add leisure time to their tournament trips; market the program via Visitor Services as part of pre-arrival group servicing materials.

GROUP LEISURE

GROUP TOURS AND FIT TRAVELERS



The enthusiasm for leisure travel remains robust with ongoing growth and recovery from the impact of Covid-19 in 2020. While concerns such as economic anxieties and rising travel costs, including gas, airlines, and hotels, influenced travelers' decisions since then, those concerns did not extinguish their desire to explore, but rather only reshaped it. While domestic travel continued to lead the way, the elimination of all Covid testing requirements for travel to and from the United States spurred an uptick in overseas visitors to the US and the region. Consequently, there was a corresponding surge in US travelers venturing abroad, slightly shifting the balance between domestic and international visitation. Nevertheless, overall visitation to the region continued to grow year-over-year, presenting new opportunities for further expansion in the year ahead.

The student market reigns supreme in the DC-Metro region, and Virginia has broken into the top 10 destinations for educators and planners for the first time in over 7 years. Proximity to DC, coupled with a rich array of experiences and partnerships across Virginia, positions us favorably. In 2023, the student market experienced exceptional growth and demand, with many planners achieving record numbers and others nearing pre-pandemic levels. Conversely, the adult tour market witnessed minimal growth due to economic factors and lingering concerns over Covid during fall and winter. However, apprehension is mounting among group markets due to rising hotel rates in the region, a factor that may dampen demand. Additionally, concerns arise regarding the availability of services, both from experiences and providers. Specifically, many food and beverage providers and transportation services closed during the pandemic, sold off fleets, and are thus not returning. Nevertheless, renewed overall interest in travel is palpable. Major conferences and trade shows recorded unprecedented attendance this past year from travel planners seeking both updates and the establishment of new or existing partnerships while seeking fresh and unique experiences for their travelers.

Overseas visitation continues to rise with reports indicating a rebound in key Western European markets for the Capital Region including Germany, France, and the UK—each of which ranked among the top 5 international markets for the region in 2022 and expected to return to 2019 levels by late 2024. With these markets on track to fully recover and with increased routes and connections through Dulles International Airport, attention is now turning toward the expansion of marketing efforts and growth into other regions of Western Europe such as Switzerland, Belgium, and the Netherlands, all of which have shown interest in the region. Rounding out the top 5 with India and Canada, Virginia Tourism Corporation

will begin focusing on the India market in the coming year with new initiatives including media/marketing and in-person sales missions in the spring of 2025.

Washington, DC remains the primary destination for many international travelers in the Capital Region which encompasses Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia. Overseas planners have expressed concerns about accommodation costs, but many are adapting as adventurous travelers who are open to exploring new destinations are increasing, particularly those visiting the US for the second or third time. Trends in the European market indicate continued growing interest in luxury and exclusive experiences with a focus on sustainability and authenticity. While factors like the value of the US dollar, visa wait times, and global-political events influence both growth and competition overall for the US as a top destination for international travelers, opportunities and interests in the region remain apparent. Moreover, emerging markets are being monitored closely with a keen eye on new opportunities in the coming year.

Raising awareness is the crucial first step in engaging consumers and driving visitation. Without effective marketing and exposure, the message and products remain invisible, lost amidst competing voices. Internationally, establishing visibility and awareness for the region, particularly Fairfax County, requires consistent efforts across various channels, including in-person engagements, marketing campaigns, media exposure, and cooperative initiatives aimed at both planners and end consumers.

Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center

Visitors from around the world travel to Fairfax County to see world-famous attractions like Space Shuttle *Discovery*, the grande dame of the orbiter fleet, at the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center including Familiarization Tour participants.



A dedicated focus on marketing endeavors, such as Familiarization tours, independent advertising, and cooperative programs, will continue to target international planners and media outlets. Recent successes in the UK have demonstrated the value of forging new alliances to increase exposure and secure placements in regional itineraries. These partnerships will be nurtured to maintain momentum, while actively seeking out new opportunities to stay relevant and prominent in other Western European markets, thereby laying a solid foundation of awareness.

In the domestic market, similar efforts will be employed to enhance awareness through initiatives like Familiarization tours. cultivating new and existing partnerships and alliances, industry support, and leveraging various media and advertising platforms.

In 2025 and 2026, significant events and historic milestones, combined with growing demand from both domestic and international markets for fresh, exclusive, and luxury experiences, present numerous opportunities for Fairfax County. Furthermore, our close proximity to Washington, DC, coupled with accessible and affordable transportation options, is driving an increase in demand from international markets for accommodations that offer value without compromising quality.

By effectively communicating the needs of buyers to our stakeholders and actively seeking new products while enhancing existing services and experiences, we aim to capture, document, and expand upon these opportunities while reenforcing partnerships and community involvement.

With the strong pillars built over the past years and the prevailing trends that we are currently witnessing, our trajectory is promising. The enthusiasm for leisure travel remains unwavering, indicating a robust recovery from the impact of Covid-19. The success in the student market and Virginia's emergence as a top destination signal our favorable position. While challenges persist, such as rising hotel rates and lingering economic uncertainties, we are proactive in addressing them. The surge in overseas visitation, coupled with growing interest from Western European markets, presents exciting growth opportunities. Our dedication to raising awareness, both domestically and internationally, through strategic marketing initiatives underscores our commitment to driving visitation. By fostering partnerships, embracing new trends, and continuously enhancing our offerings, we are poised for further success in the years ahead.

STRATEGIES

1. Build overall brand awareness of Fairfax County and stakeholders to the group and FIT, domestic and international leisure markets, through attendance and engagement at travel-related tradeshows along with familiarization tours. Continue to build buyer network while filling overall sales funnel for attractions, hotels, experiences, and services in Fairfax County.

Tour Groups

Tradeshows

International Sales Missions

FAMs

Partnerships & Memberships

Marketing & Advertising

North America

United Kingdom

Germany

Switzerland

France

- 2. Continue to forge and strengthen regional relationships and leverage partnerships to increase Fairfax County's visibility through collaborative efforts while strategically increasing our presence in the international and domestic group and FIT leisure markets.
- 3. Acquire exposure through both primary strategic outlets involving media (print and web) and sponsorship opportunities that maximize exposure to the group and FIT international and domestic leisure markets.
- 4. Seek out stakeholder product offerings and updates. Through market research of the trends relating to the experiences/services that are desired, locate potential products in Fairfax County and aid in the facilitation of new product development designed for the FIT and group markets with standalone or collaborative products. Introduce opportunities for stakeholders to enhance brand visibility and overall sales within the markets through key third-party wholesalers.
- 5. Increase engagement with stakeholders, foster new and existing connections, and enhance communication systems. Boost engagement and dialogue with stakeholders to cultivate a robust foundation of tourism partnerships and strengthen alliances.

TACTICS

- 1. Build overall brand awareness of Fairfax County and stakeholders to the group and FIT, domestic and international leisure markets through attendance and engagement at travel-related tradeshows along with familiarization tours. Continue to build buyer network while filling overall sales funnel for attractions, hotels, experiences, and services in Fairfax County.
 - a. Attend the tri-state North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia Motorcoach Conference in Williamsburg, Virginia to meet domestic tour and travel planners that typically do not attend the larger national tradeshows and conferences.
 - b. Strategically select and participate in conferences and tradeshows involving the region's top and emerging international markets. For FY25, return to Travel South International and abstain attendance at IPW, replacing it with Brand USA's Travel Week Europe to meet with tour and travel planners who have specific interest in the US market and the Virginia region.
 - c. Delay attendance at IITA for one year to allow time for hotel product development before returning in FY26 with stronger product offerings and portfolio for sales and marketing.
 - d. Hone in on key Western European markets. Participate with CRUSA on two overseas Sales Missions to the UK and German markets. Remain tuned into other top international markets including India and South Korea and look for potential opportunities as they develop.
 - e. Return to NTA (National Tour Association) to market and educate domestic tour planners on offerings available to the group tour markets.
 - f. Seek opportunities to host key international buyers and secure placement on CRUSA itineraries. Additionally, discuss a new familiarization tour strategy with CRUSA and secure placement on itineraries that solely welcome US-based Receptive and Third-Party Wholesalers on FAMs to the area.
 - g. Continue attendance at both ABA (American Bus Association) Marketplace taking place in Philadelphia, PA and SYTA (Student Youth Travel Association) taking place in New York, New York.

- h. Participate with Virginia Tourism Corporation through marketing opportunities and an inperson sales mission to India, one of our top 5 international markets.
- 2. Continue to forge and strengthen regional relationships and leverage partnerships to increase Fairfax County's visibility through collaborative efforts while strategically increasing our presence in the international and domestic group and FIT leisure markets.
 - a. Partner and collaborate with Northern Virginia Tourism Partnership.
 - b. Continue partnership within Destination DC with both the domestic and international sales teams to increase opportunities to collaborate on future familiarization tours, industry events, and co-ops. Acquire destination-specific contacts and leads, and stayed informed regarding events and happenings in the city that may impact Fairfax County and the metropolitan region.
 - c. Participate in membership with North Carolina Motorcoach Association to connect with those planners who could potentially bring groups that would overnight into Fairfax County, and stay informed on industry trends.
 - d. Continue relationships and memberships with IITA (International Inbound Tour Association), ABA (American Bus Association), SYTA (Student Youth Travel Association), and NTA (National Tour Association).
 - e. Partner with the Virginia Tourism Corporation throughout the year, discovering and capitalizing on opportunities to partner and represent Fairfax County to the domestic and international markets.
 - f. Continue affiliate partnership and collaboration with CRUSA. Seek opportunities to increase communication pathways, internally and externally. Revisit and update CRUSA itineraries, services, and imagery while increasing the name recognition and brand of Fairfax County on the CRUSA website, thus defining ourselves and increasing overall awareness.
 - g. Establish and fortify additional relationships with Fairfax County stakeholders and Capital Region DMOs in preparation for America's 250th Commemoration. Continue support and partnership with the Virginia History Road Trip collective to build momentum and awareness to the market. Partner with DMOs on new itineraries and marketing opportunities through media outlets (print and web).
 - h. With membership secured, engage with the Guild of Professional Tour Guides regularly and host education familiarization tour of group-specific attractions while educating them on
 - i. On a more robust scale, engage, partner, and support the Student Youth Travel Association and the Student Youth Foundation in 2024/2025 while enhancing the exposure and awareness of Fairfax County overall. Renew CSTP (Certified Student Travel Specialist) accreditation through SYTA.
- 3. Acquire exposure through both primary strategic outlets involving media (print and web) and sponsorship opportunities that maximize exposure to the group and FIT international and domestic leisure markets.
 - a. Secure advertising in the Virginia edition of *Group Leisure* Magazine in April. Seek additional exposure, either independently or through collaboration, in the 2025 America's 250th edition of the magazine.
 - b. Participate and secure advertising in the annual CRUSA Holiday Guide that is used in-market through Western Europe by in-market representatives at consumer shows, trainings, and conferences.
 - c. Ship Visit Fairfax annual Visitor Guides to in-market reps in Western Europe for distribution at consumer shows.

- d. Partner with Purely America, a strong partner with noted sales to the Capital Region, by advertising in London Life for three months, reaching over 70,000 affluent households monthly across the London region.
- e. In the January 2024 edition of Teach & Travel Magazine, Virginia was announced as one of the Top-10 student/youth travel destinations for the first time in over 7 years as recorded and reported by a survey of Tour Operators and Educators. If awarded again in 2025, secure the opportunity to advertise in the annual guide that promotes these top-10 destinations through distribution at the annual conference and also a direct mail to 35,000 qualified educators and student planners throughout the United States and Canada.



- f. Source two new opportunities for partnership and sponsorship with key, top-producing International Receptive Operators and/or Tour Planners in the UK and Germany for 2025.
- g. Seek out promotional and/or sponsorship opportunities with third-party wholesalers such as Expedia, ATI, or WebBeds to build awareness and sales of Fairfax County and its hotels while fostering new potential partnerships for each entity to build new and additional product and offerings for the markets.
- 4. Seek out stakeholder product offerings and updates. Through market research of the trends relating to the experiences/services that are desired, locate potential products in Fairfax County and aid in the facilitation of new product development designed for the FIT and group markets with standalone or collaborative products. Introduce opportunities for stakeholders to enhance brand visibility and overall sales within the markets through key third-party wholesalers.
 - a. Conduct meetings with hotels interested in engaging international markets and provide insight on data, trends, and buying habits. When applicable, connect with top-performing and emerging third-party wholesalers.
 - b. Foster and assist stakeholders in the creation and development of new luxury offerings for the FIT market.
 - c. Seek out and meet with restaurants regarding primary group routes to provide insight on the group travel market, determine interest in working with group markets, and discuss outlets to capture new sales pipelines.
 - d. Conduct meetings with top-selling third-party wholesalers and independent Fairfax County hotels to gain insight on established partnerships and sales outlets in the FIT marketplace.

- Use that insight in-market to identify new opportunities and partnerships for hoteliers to connect with wholesalers thus creating new product and sales opportunities.
- e. Remain vigilant for new services in Fairfax County that hold potential for product offerings to the tour and travel market. Establish connections and foster relationships.
- 5. Increase engagement with stakeholders, foster new and existing connections, and enhance communication systems. Boost engagement and dialogue with stakeholders to cultivate a robust foundation of tourism partnerships and strengthen alliances.
 - a. Through customer relationship systems, increase communication frequency to stakeholders when services and products are marketed to potential buyers. Share all advertising and marketing (print and social) conducted through tour and travel, on stakeholder's behalf, within 30 days of completion to provide consistent communication and reinforce our dedication and support of our stakeholders.
 - b. Continue to find new ways to open the lines of communication with stakeholders in the tour and travel segment.
 - c. Host a networking event for tour and travel-related stakeholders to foster relationships while creating a network and collective of market-related partners.
 - d. Increase opportunities and outlets for visibility of Fairfax County in addition to information sharing and collaborative outlets. Through internal outlets, provide data relative to the tour and travel segment including data from trusted sources such as ABA, CRUSA, MWAA, etc. Additionally continue to build and foster stakeholder relationships and reinforce partnerships through peer-to-peer, and peer-to-buyer platforms.

LEISURE

CONSUMERS

INDIVIDUAL LEISURE TRAVELERS & VISTOR PARTIES



The past 18 months of substantial budget supplements through the American Rescue Plan Act resulted in outreach to new audiences that were previously cost-prohibitive. To-date, that program of work has already resulted in over \$207 million in return-on-investment from leisure consumers with more to come as tracking continues through the balance of the current fiscal year. And while FY25 funding will return to the pre-pandemic levels of four years ago, the ARPA boost resulted in significant learning that accompanied the exploration of new markets, new vehicles for distribution and messaging, and most importantly, new ways to track results.

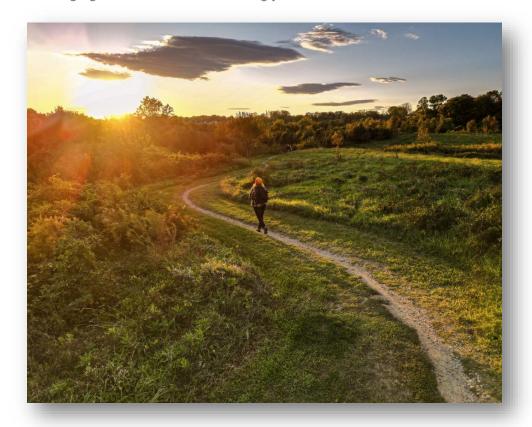


Leveraging Assets

New assets help make the case that Fairfax County and Northern Virginia are a perfect choice for precious leisure time with friends and family.

For many years, Visit Fairfax has used technology and analytics to make data-driven decisions that ensured maximum return-on-investment. Our newest partnerships not only provide total spending data

but also identify the specific digital programs that drove visitation from more than 50 miles away. We also now know how much those travelers spent and the category of spending while in Fairfax County. The implications of this level of detailed data are stunning as we no longer need to wonder which ad units and methods of delivery are the most effective. We know what drove the most visitation and can optimize our messaging and distribution accordingly.



This calibration of our marketing outreach is not the only legacy of additional funding. Visit Fairfax also took the opportunity to considerably bolster our assets including brand new photo and video assets that will serve as a foundation for all future outreach including new website designs to help showcase those assets and new influencer articles that provide an aspect of authenticity to our messaging. These new assets will play an important role in the new year, and most likely, for years to come.

Following the travel hesitancy of the pandemic, the pent-up demand for vacations that was evident in more recent years provided significant opportunity for the tourism industry. For individual leisure travelers seeking a drivable destination that offers great visitor experiences and outdoor environments, Northern Virginia fits the bill. Fairfax County is a unique destination that is simultaneously very urban and somewhat rural, and Visit Fairfax has leveraged that duality to attract visitors who not only crave wideopen spaces but also enjoy big-city amenities. This unique combination allows us to leverage our urban amenities that are surrounded by so many wonderful outdoor experiences.

The reduction in funds for FY25 will obviously limit our total consumer reach compared to the past two years; however, the increased understanding relating to the most effective delivery system to reach those consumers will maximize results using the funds that we have. And regardless of the consumer campaigns that we run in the coming year, we will certainly maintain the momentum that has built over years of time through our integrated digital marketing programs including our owned distribution channels through FXVA.com, our robust social media following, and over 100,000 permission-based eMail subscribers.

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

STRATEGIES

- 1. With close attention paid to current consumer sentiment, maximize engaging content on FXVA.com to help consumers 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 maintain 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. Build alliances within the County's tourism community and reinforce stakeholder use of the Fairfax County Connect with America brand.
- Ensure maximum attention within the growing audience of mobile users through mobile-friendly platforms and outbound messaging.
- Execute integrated digital marketing campaigns, based on previous performance, that target consumers with engaging messaging and relevant content.
- 8. Leverage high-demand local events by "drafting" off of existing consumer interest and inserting our Visit Fairfax message.
- 9. Track and report online conversion through 3rd party conversion study.

TACTICS

1. With close attention paid to current consumer sentiment, maximize engaging content on FXVA.com to help consumers personally connect with Fairfax County.

Individual Consumer

WHAT

Search Engine Marketing & Optimization

eMail Marketing

Digital Advertising

Social Media

Local Residents

Stakeholders Resources

WHERE

Drive Markets

Fly Markets

Virginia, Maryland, & District of Columbia

- a. Increase visibility of niche visitor experiences on FXVA.com to include Women's History, African American History, Military History, and Birding.
- b. Leverage new video and article assets in key locations throughout the website and invest in new assets that continue to build on that foundation of vibrant imagery.
- c. Engage consumers through the extensive virtual reality technology content that was developed 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. Based on the great success of the Visit Fairfax Blog content, maintain focus on editorial content to elevate the user experience on FXVA.com with integrated articles on pages throughout the site.
- h. Ensure that FXVA.com is accessible for users of all abilities including a focus on content and imagery that is welcoming for differently abled visitors.
- i. Support the Potomac Banks brand through promotion of the Bandwango visitor experience to explore South County attractions.
- 2. Develop and execute a marketing and communications strategy for local residents and constituents.
 - a. Use dynamic website technology to feature homepage content that is specifically appealing and useful to users coming from a local IP address and encourage residents to invite their family and friends to "reconnect" through a visit.
 - b. Install the local advocacy video in as many local locations as possible to promote FXVA.com as the go-to source for things to do in the area and upcoming events.
 - c. Take the Neighborhood section of FXVA.com to the next level by inviting community leaders to contribute content that encourages local residents to find information on happenings near them.
 - d. Use owned and earned media to highlight tourism programs and amenities for local residents.
 - e. Use the LoveShare section of FXVA.com to showcase hospitality businesses that give back to the community through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs.
 - f. Execute a direct eMail marketing campaign directed to local residents and all that our industry offers them in their own backyard.
 - g. Promote the Fairfax County LOVEworks trail along with other public art to encourage exploration and photo ops.
 - h. Continue the successful craft brew campaign to support our local breweries including a mobile Craft Brew Trail.
- 3. Utilize direct e-Mail marketing to maintain 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 5 Million eMails over 72 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 by seeking out 30,000 new subscribers within the highest performing segments.
- c. Attract more organic opt-in subscribers on FXVA.com via attention-getting strategies designed to deliver more visitors to fxva.com.
- 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 preferences.
 - a. Calibrate the Search Engine Marketing Program in alignment with current trends of online consumer behavior.
 - b. Prioritize the top 25 most successful PPC phrases and optimize those landing pages to ensure the best results with top consideration given to updated consumer sensibilities.
 - c. Continue the emphasis on both paid clicks and organic rankings; however, ensure a continued presence on engines with a program delivering 175,000 new consumers to the fxva.com website using PPC, paid social, and native 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 ongoing 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. Build alliances within the County's tourism community and reinforce stakeholder use of the Fairfax County Connect with America brand.
 - a. Celebrate the 20th anniversary of Visit Fairfax and the FXVA brand with an industry event in July that acknowledges the milestone and also showcases the tools that can be used to promote the brand.
 - b. Host a Fairfax County celebration to bring the hospitality and tourism community together in May to recognize National Travel & Tourism Week.
 - c. Continue to leverage the *Insider* newsletter to highlight what Visit Fairfax is doing to support the county's hospitality industry.
 - d. 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.
 - e. Support county stakeholders through social media, sharing their posts to reinforce their brand message within the Visit Fairfax hospitality community.
 - f. Offer opportunities to increase stakeholder exposure through packaged advertising in the visitor guide and on FXVA.com.
 - g. Publish a content editorial calendar to help guide stakeholders in both package/offer creation as well as potential drafting opportunities based on their own promotions and activations.
- **6.** Ensure maximum attention within the growing audience of mobile users through mobile-friendly platforms and outbound messaging.
 - a. Use responsive website design to promote curated "experience paths" to mobile devise users including targeted itineraries, special discounts/passports, a County Brew Trail, and other benefits.
 - b. Bundle content through listcycles, etc. in a manner that is inherently conducive to viewing on a mobile device.

- 7. Execute integrated digital marketing campaigns, based on previous performance, that target consumers with engaging messaging and relevant content.
 - a. Target drive-market audiences through the Love Every Mile campaign, delivering 4.2 million impressions using Epsilon's first-party data which affords the best option for targeting at maximum cost effectiveness.
 - b. Leverage new video assets through VTC co-op with CTV Streaming Video Content.
 - c. Execute a spring digital campaign based on the final results of the different distribution sources that were explored through ARPA funding.
 - d. 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. Leverage high-demand local events by "drafting" off of existing consumer interest and inserting our Visit Fairfax message.
 - a. "Draft" traffic to FXVA.com during high-interest events (e.g. National Cherry Blossom Festival) by using specific key word content that drives Internet users to relevant programs offered by County attractions.
 - b. Deliver highly targeted messages to highly defined native audiences with a geo overlay via social media channels and content-relevant websites.



Unique Visitor Experiences

Fairfax County offers so many unique visitor experiences for a wide range of interests.

- 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 website visitors to custom landing pages that fulfill the advertising message specific to the audience.

- 9. Track and report online conversion through 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. Implement Google Analytics 4's (GA4) better tracking and reporting capacity to more accurately define conversions, consumer engagement, and site usage to make more informed decisions
 - c. Use the Adara tracking platform along with the Adara campaign report to determine the best return-on-investment was for each of our major campaigns as well as for FXVA.com.
 - d. Create a research and data hub on the Visit Fairfax Stakeholder Toolkit that can be used to help our tourism stakeholders make better informed marketing and sales decisions.
 - e. 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.



PERSONAL SERVICE FOR GROUPS AND VISITOR PARTIES

The Destination Services Department serves as a support arm to our Sales and Marketing teams, as well as to the sales efforts of Fairfax County stakeholders. Destination Services focuses on complementing new visitation to Fairfax County as well as inspiring return trips. As in the past, this will continue to be the focus, to provide a personalized and inviting customer service experience whether it is a group meeting, sports tournament, solo traveler, or families on vacation. Visit Fairfax wants to ensure a positive experience for all our visitors to Fairfax County. We help meeting planners successfully execute their events and focus on all the amazing attributes to be seen here in the county. We provide information and assistance to leisure travelers, affirming that Fairfax County is extraordinary in what is here which will guarantee a delightful vacation. Finally, through the development of resources for our Fairfax County stakeholders, we provide them with tools to increase their opportunities to capture and grow their sales and ensure they are equipped to meet the needs of their guests.



Virginia is for Lovers

And so is Fairfax County, with one of the largest representations of LOVEworks

This year, Destination Services will take the opportunity to continue previous programs that have been successful and which only can add to our strengths and reinforce the vital role Visit Fairfax plays in providing a world-class visitor experience to Fairfax County. As an example, Visit Fairfax has a long history associated with the Ambassador Program which certified hundreds of "Fairfax County Ambassadors" to serve as information providers to visitors at hotels, restaurants, and attractions. The COVID-19 Pandemic brought that training program to a virtual standstill as stakeholders struggled to maintain their labor force. As we return to pre-pandemic visitation and hotel occupancy, we feel the upcoming year will be an opportunity to reinvent the Ambassador Program, and to return it to a vibrant and beneficial opportunity for hospitality workers built around a theme of "what can Visit Fairfax do for you?"

Finally, Visit Fairfax is the only regional DMO that supports the National Cherry Blossom Festival as a sponsor, and as such, has the unique opportunity to capture the lion's share of Festival-goers' attention in Northern Virginia. The festival organizers position it as a regional festival, and there is most definitely spillover from the District of Columbia into the surrounding areas, a situation on which Fairfax County wants to capitalize. We also have cherry blossom trees dotted across the county that can be enjoyed by both visitors and residents. By developing even more experiences associated with the NCBF that take place in Fairfax County, we will show that we are community partners and can take advantage of an influx of visitors to the region that would not be here without the Festival event.

This "Destination Services 2.0" will focus on what has been a success for us: the Ambassador Program, the National Cherry Blossom Festival, BLeisure visitors and conference attendees, and keeping our brand in the public eye.

STRATEGIES

- 1. Host stakeholder orientation programs in the Visit Fairfax offices to: maximize exposure to the team, learn how to leverage Visit Fairfax resources, and acquire critical product knowledge about the county and its offerings.
- 2. Increase the visibility of Fairfax County, and Northern Virginia in general, within the State Welcome Centers
- 3. Provide advance information to groups traveling to the County so that they can successfully prepare for their time here. Additionally, grow visitation before and after meeting dates by providing personalized contact when meetings commence to encourage the BLeisure Market as a great way to "Come for work and stay for fun."
- 4. Support the annual Cherry Blossom Festival as a means of attracting visitors to Fairfax by sponsoring Festival-related events, demonstrating our commitment and connection to wider regional happenings.
- 5. Promote Fairfax County's "Connect with America" brand across the County via stakeholders and partners.

TACTICS

- 1. Host stakeholder orientation programs in the Visit Fairfax offices to: maximize exposure to the team, learn how to leverage Visit Fairfax resources, and acquire critical product knowledge about the county and its offerings.
 - a. Develop a new orientation program based on the previous success of the Ambassador Training.
 - b. Include tools and resources geared to stakeholders including hotel sales professionals and management, attractions, and restaurants to provide destination information, as well as refresher tips on utilizing Visit Fairfax sales and marketing tools.
 - c. Update stakeholder toolkit to mirror Orientation Program as an ongoing resource for graduates.
 - d. Update the Ambassador Buzz newsletter to reflect new program graphics to serve as an ongoing reminder of the program and as a resource for graduates.
- 2. Increase the visibility of Fairfax County, and Northern Virginia in general, within the State Welcome Centers.
 - a. Command attention at the Gateway Welcome Center, the closest I-95 State Welcome Center to Northern Virginia that hosts tens of thousands of northbound travelers. with four full months of a Fairfax County "takeover" blitz that saturates the center with Fairfax County signage, collateral, and video.
 - b. Work with the management of the Main Street Welcome Center located inside of the historic Amtrak Station in Richmond with seasonal signage featuring interactive QR codes that promote events and activities in Fairfax County.
- 3. Provide advance information to groups traveling to the County so that they can successfully prepare for their time here. Additionally, grow visitation before and after meeting dates by providing personalized contact when meetings commence to encourage the BLeisure Market as a great way to "Come for work and stay for fun."
 - a. Update the Meeting Planner toolkit to reflect a "Welcome to Fairfax" message, including all new assets and tools that have been developed to assist event planners and to promote extended stays to their attendees.
 - b. For larger groups that are open to direct mail, print "save the date" postcards to promote meeting attendance.

Destination Services

Orientation Program

Event Planner Support

Visitor Guides

Local & Regional Events

Delivering Consumer Experiences

Local Hotels

Airports

Virginia Welcome Centers

Stakeholder Sites across the County

- c. Provide event planners of larger groups with a planner amenity and customized welcome letter, and for qualified groups, provide either a manned or passive welcome table at a group event.
- 4. Support the annual Cherry Blossom Festival as a means of attracting visitors to Fairfax by sponsoring Festival-related events.
 - a. Sponsor events at County attractions such as the Workhouse Arts Center, The Children's Science Center Lab, Green Spring Gardens and Frying Pan Farm Park. Promote these events through our website and social media.
 - b. Encourage additional stakeholders to participate with their own unique products and offerings as Festival sites to grow awareness of Fairfax County as part of the broader regional event, and feature these via our website and media components.
 - c. Work with the marketing department to identify the locations within Fairfax County that also feature the beautiful cherry trees that are such a draw in the District of Columbia. Share that information via the stakeholder and Ambassador newsletters for stakeholders to use in promoting their own businesses.
- 5. Promote the Fairfax County "Connect with America" brand throughout Fairfax County stakeholders and partners.
 - a. Provide timely fulfillment and distribution of thousands of visitor guides to individual consumers, groups, hotels, attractions and certified Virginia Welcome Centers.
 - b. Maintain a supply of branded promotional items for client and VIP gifts with a special focus on sustainability in keeping with the County's goals of environmentally friendly initiatives. Concentrate on products associated with our major attractions as opposed to traditional specialty advertising items, yet still with a connection to Fairfax County.
 - c. Call on organizations that interact with both local residents and visitors including the Fairfax County Police Academy, local real estate agents, local airport information desks, libraries, Fairfax County Supervisor offices, and other highly trafficked businesses to promote awareness and to educate new ambassadors of the Fairfax County brand.
 - d. Curate providers of guided tour and specialty visitor experiences as a bank of purchasable products and promote them on fxva.com.

COMMUNICATIONS

MEDIA AND STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH

In an ever-changing news cycle and with thousands of interesting destinations to consider, the need to be sharp and innovative in messaging to break through the "clutter" is as important as ever. And with such varying degrees of how the public – and journalists – consume content, thinking outside of the box about the mechanisms of distributing Fairfax County's message needs to be top of mind.



On Location in Vienna

Fox 5 DC brings their Zip Trip to Fairfax County in Vienna in 2023

To accomplish these goals, Visit Fairfax looks at several overarching strategies when it comes to overall communications efforts, extending into local, national, and international landscapes while also working with internal staff and stakeholders to share in bolstering the messaging.

Within target feeder markets (whether locally, domestically or abroad), Visit Fairfax frequently aims to further its brand awareness and brand equity through relationship-building and pitching at various media events and marketplaces, to hosting journalists in-destination on experiential familiarization tours, to crafting customized pitches, press releases, and inquiry responses. The continuation of efforts in this sector helps further the goal of creating demand for visitation to the region.

Within the local advocacy space, there has been a great deal of lift for the Visit Fairfax brand over the past couple of years, with many community organizations, elected officials, and industry partners sharing content developed by the organization and pushing out tourism messaging, which helps the community see Visit Fairfax as a critical travel resource and expert in all things Fairfax County. The introduction of a new local advocacy video piece will help keep the momentum going in this sector – not just with officials, but with the public as well, hopefully creating more buy-in from County residents.

When it comes to having unique stories to tell about a destination, Fairfax County certainly has plenty to share. The area's major infrastructure changes and addition of top-tier attractions, activities. accommodations, and critically acclaimed dining spots on a yearly basis pays off the idea that Fairfax County is a place to be - maybe even THE place to be, as evidenced by the wide visitation to the area.

Moving into 2025 and 2026, along with the state and country's efforts, Fairfax County will be even more a part of national conversation as we draw close to America's 250th commemoration.

In addition to historic milestone anniversaries like this, other trending story angles big for the year continue to focus on sustainability and wellness, diversity and inclusion as well as accessibility, innovative dining and craft beverage offerings, exclusive and luxury experiences, and unexpected outdoor adventures. These angles will be pushed out in various methods, from web article development to short-form video to earned media opportunities.

Regionally, Visit Fairfax will continue to work as one unit with its partners in Northern Virginia to give a comprehensive overview of this rich cultural region, helping solidify the area as a prime destination for a well-rounded getaway.

Internationally, Visit Fairfax will leverage the learning from last year's ARPA-boosted, in-market media missions to key markets and implement that learning into familiarization tours and tailored outreach that will resonate with the international traveler.

Internally, Visit Fairfax continues to be an expert trusted industry resource and ally for stakeholders and community, aligning its messaging with its partners to support visitation to the region. This will be achieved utilizing the vast collection of tools available in the marketing and communications arsenal, including social media and video content production, industry e-newsletters, owned channels like the blog and events calendar, and personal relationships with the local, domestic, and international media landscape.

As always, Visit Fairfax will continue to measure, adjust, improve, and refresh all of the strategies mentioned in this plan throughout the year to deliver the most effective results and grow the brand accordingly.

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.

Communication

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

- 2. Strengthen content marketing efforts through owned and shared media with integrated approach to storytelling.
- 3. Develop new communications strategies to directly support local stakeholders, businesses, and hospitality partners.
- 4. Pursue new relationships and fortify existing ones with local media, content creators, and microinfluencers to help build credibility for the Visit Fairfax brand within the community and with national/international media to help further Fairfax County's message.
- 5. Cultivate and fine-tune the 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.
- **b.** Find new ways of using existing consumer assets (website/blog, videos, virtual tours, visitor guide, etc.) to communicate the Fairfax County tourism message.
- 7. Strengthen partnership with 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 materials and additional opportunities for consumers and stakeholders that will pique interest and encourage visitors to engage with our tourism products.
- 10. Leverage and draft off of 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 TACTICS

- 1. Identify trending themes 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.
- 2. Respond to media/journalist inquiries and requests for information, photos, interviews, and press visits to produce positive press for Fairfax County and Visit Fairfax.
- 3. Organize and 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 outlets.
- 4. 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.
- 5. Work with local television stations on morning show broadcasts highlighting varying localities in Fairfax County, bringing in stakeholders and elected officials to represent the destination.

- 6. Distribute seasonal and campaign-focused press releases and content verticals covering Fairfax County tourism product to local, national, and international media through TravMedia platform.
- 7. Utilize the "editorial-forward" design of FXVA.com to push out compelling story angles about Fairfax County people, places, and events and continually refresh an easily accessible asset library for media to search and download.
- 8. Develop engaging and shareable content that can be utilized and distributed on the online blog module to help tell more niche, in-depth, and/or community-pride stories about Fairfax County.
- 9. Building on the success of viral short-form video, create additional appealing video assets to highlight compelling visitor experiences in an engaging, attention-getting way that also supports county stakeholders.
- 10. Maintain influencer marketing campaigns by working with both micro-, macro-, and nano- content creators who can bring a trusted third-party endorsement to the fold in addition to creating new owned content for the website and social media.
- 11. 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 other native social platforms.
- 12. Maintain fluid, daily editorial calendars to ensure messaging continuity on social media platforms, pushing out compelling, fact-based, shareable information.
- 13. Refresh the Official Fairfax County Visitors Guide with new and updated editorial content, imagery, and listing details to help guide visitors through the County and utilize technology-forward tools like QR codes, AR technology and other digital content within the printed guide's pages to make for a more immersive experience.

INTERNAL PLAN TACTICS

- 1. Host a Visit Fairfax 20th Anniversary celebration to mark this significant milestone for the Fairfax County tourism community.
- 2. Communicate regularly with stakeholders about viable opportunities and relevant updates via the Partner Extranet and Stakeholder Toolkit, e-Blasts and Insider Newsletter.
- 3. Gather information from stakeholders through quarterly outreach.
- 4. 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.
- 5. 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.
- 6. Present opportunities to our stakeholders and incoming special event organizers to further their brand through the tools and resources offered by Visit Fairfax including FXVA.com, social media, video production, or media relations outreach.
- 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, and other industry events as deemed appropriate to support the Visit Fairfax mission.

RESOURCES



PERFORMANCE

Market
Performance Measure

Number of Definite Groups
Number of Definite Room Nights
Number of Definite Attendees
Number of Leads
Number of Potential Room Nights
Number of Potential Attendees
Number of Potential Attendees
Number of Potential Attendees
Number of Potential Visitors
Number of Potential Visitors

Market
Performance Measure

Website Visitors
Time on Website

Website Engagement
Social Media Engagement
Positive Media Stories
Digital Marketing Conversion

2024 – 2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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& Marketing

Katherine Moore, CPA

Accountant

activity calendar – Group Sales

	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June
Business		FLEX "Summer Camp" Leesburg, VA 7/31/24 Connect Mkt Milwaukee, WI 8/27-30/2024	Philadelphia Sales Blitz <u>Dates TBD</u> VSAE Fall Conf. & Expo Richmond, VA <u>9/26/2024</u>	Destination East Niagra Falls, NY 10/22-24/2024 VA Assn Blitz Richmond, VA Date TBD	Meetings Today Live Orlando, FL 11/17-20/2024 Connect SE Greenville, SC 11/10-13/2024 Connect DC Washington, DC		IPEC Location TBD Date TBD	Rendezvous South Panama City Beach, FL 2/24-27/2025 Connect NYC New York, NY Date TBD		Small & Boutique Mtgs Location TBD Date TBD VA Assn Blitz Richmond, VA Date TBD Family Reunion Seminar Fairfax County Date TBD	VSAE Annual Mtg Roanoke,VA 5/4-6/2025	TMRN Educ Summit Lubbock, TX <u>Date TBD</u>
Leisure		Student Youth Trvl Assn NYC, NY 8/8-13/2024 NCMA/SCMA/VNA Williamsburg, VA 8/27-30/2024	CRUSA Int'l Charlottesville, VA 9/15-19/2024	Brand USA Travel Week London, UK 10/20-24/2024	Nat'l Tour Assn Huntsville, AL 11/17-21/2024 Guild of Prof Tour Guides FAM Date TBD	Travel South Int'l Atlanta, GA 12/03-07/24		Amer Bus Assn Philadelphia, PA 1/31-2/4/2025	CRUSA UK Sales Mission <u>Date TBD</u>	CRUSA Germany Sales Mission <u>Date TBD</u>		
Sports		Connect Sports Milwaukee, WI 8/27-29/2024	TEAMS Conf/Expo Anaheim, CA 9/23-26/2024				ABCA Annual Convention National Harbor, MD 1/2 - 5/ 2025				Sports ETA Symposium Tulsa, OK 4/14-17/2025	

activity calendar - Marketing & Advertising

	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June
Business	Group Planner <u>eNewsletter</u> <u>Cvent</u>	<u>Cvent</u>	MPI Potomac <u>Digital Mktg</u> Group Planner <u>eNewsletter</u> <u>Cvent</u> Reunions Mag	Meetings Today Magazine Convention South Cvent MPI Potomac Digital Mktg	VA Business Mag Group Planner eNewsletter Cvent MPI Potomac Digital Mktg Meetings & Conventions Magazine	CVENT MPI Potomac Digital Mktg Reunions Mag	Group Planner <u>eNewsletter</u> SGMP NATCAP & MPI Potomac <u>Digital Mktg</u> <u>Cvent</u>	Advertising Smart Meetings Cvent SGMP NATCAP Sponsorship MPI Potomac Digital Mktg	Group Planner <u>eNewsletter</u> Reunions <u>Magazine</u> <u>Cvent</u> MPI Potomac <u>Digital Mktg</u>	Meetings Today Magazine Meetings & Conventions Mag Cvent MPI Potomac Digital Mktg	Group Planner <u>eNewsletter</u> MPI Potomac <u>Digital Mktg</u> <u>Convention South</u>	Reunions <u>Magazine</u> <u>Cvent</u> MPI Potomac <u>Digital Mktg</u>
Leisure	eMarketing Direct Mail Newsletters SEO/SEM programs Facebook Targeted Ads	eMarketing Direct Mail Newsletters SEO/SEM programs Facebook Targeted Ads	eMarketińg Direct Mail Newsletters SEO/SEM programs Facebook Targeted Ads	eMarketing Direct Mail Newsletters SEO/SEM programs Facebook Targeted Ads Group Travel Magazine	eMarketing Direct Mail Newsletters SEO/SEM programs Facebook Targeted Ads	eMarketing Direct Mail Newsletters SEO/SEM programs Facebook Targeted Ads 2025 Visitor Guide CRUSA Guide & Website	eMarketing Direct Mail Newsletters SEO/SEM	SEO/SEM programs	eMarketing Direct Mail Newsletters SEO/SEM programs Facebook Targeted Ads CRUSA eNewsletter Spring Digital Campaigns	Targeted Ads Spring Digital	eMarketing Direct Mail Newsletters SEO/SEM programs Facebook Targeted Ads TripAdvisor VTC co-op Group Tour Magazine – VA Co-Op Spring Digital Campaigns	eMarketing Direct Mail Newsletters SEO/SEM programs Facebook Targeted Ads Spring Digital Campaigns
Sports	Sports Events Digital Mktg SportsNOVA co-op marketing	Sports Events Digital Mktg SportsNOVA co-op marketing	Sports Events <u>Digital Mktg</u> SportsNOVA <u>co-op marketing</u>	Sports Events <u>Digital Mktg</u> SportsNOVA <u>co-op marketing</u>	Sports Events Digital Mktg SportsNOVA co-op marketing	Sports Events <u>Digital Mktg</u> SportsNOVA <u>co-op marketing</u>	Sports Events Digital Mktg ABCA Dig Mktg SportsNOVA co-op marketing	Sports Events <u>Digital Mktg</u> SportsNOVA <u>co-op marketing</u>	Sports Events Digital Mktg SportsNOVA co-op marketing	Sports Events <u>Digital Mktg</u> SportsNOVA <u>co-op marketing</u>	Sports Events Digital Mktg SportsNOVA co-op marketing	Sports Events Digital Mktg SportsNOVA co-op marketing

activity calendar - Community & Public Relations

	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June
	HARO/Direct Media Pitches	HARO/Direct Media Pitches	HARO/Direct Media <u>Pitches</u>	HARO/Direct Media Pitches	HARO/Direct Media Pitches	HARO/Direct Media Pitches	HARO/Direct Media Pitches	HARO/Direct Media Pitches	HARO/Direct Media Pitches	HARO/Direct Media Pitches	HARO/Direct Media Pitches	HARO/Direct Media Pitches
Outside Media	FAM Tours 20 th Anniversary Press Outreach	MATPRA Marketplace Roanoke, VA 8/27-29/2024 FOX 5 ZIP TRIP Herndon	NVTP West Coast Desksides <u>Dates TBD</u> <u>FAM Tours</u>	NVTP Toronto Discover America Day 10/25/24 MATPRA Qtrly Meeting 10/18/24	Holiday Activities Press Outreach		What's New Press Outreach MATPRA Qtrly Meeting 1/17/25		Spring Topic Press Outreach FAM Tour	MATPRA Qtrly Meeting 4/18/25	<u>FAM Tours</u>	PRSA Conference Dates/Location TBD FOX 5 ZIP TRIP Location TBD
Internal Stakeholders	Visit Fairfax 20 th Anniversary <u>Celebration</u> Ambassador <u>Newsletter</u>	Stakeholder <u>Newsletter</u> Ambassador <u>Newsletter</u>	Ambassador <u>Newsletter</u>	Stakeholder Newsletter Ambassador Newsletter Service Team Ambassador Class	Ambassador <u>Newsletter</u>	Stakeholder Newsletter Ambassador Newsletter	Ambassador <u>Newsletter</u>	Stakeholder Newsletter Ambassador Newsletter Sales Team Ambassador Class	Ambassador <u>Newsletter</u>	Stakeholder Newsletter Ambassador Newsletter	National Tourism <u>Week</u> <u>Celebration</u> Ambassador <u>Newsletter</u>	Stakeholder <u>Newsletter</u> Ambassador <u>Newsletter</u>
Miscellaneous	Social Media <u>Outlets</u>	Social Media <u>Outlets</u>	Social Media Outlets Influencer Marketing	Social Media <u>Outlets</u>	Social Media Outlets VA-1 Conf Hot Springs, VA 11/13-15/2024	Social Media <u>Outlets</u>	Social Media <u>Outlets</u>	Social Media <u>Outlets</u>	Social Media Outlets Valor Awards Sponsorship Influencer Marketing	Social Media Outlets Innovation Awards Sponsorship	Social Media <u>Outlets</u> VA Welcome Center Mktg <u>"Takeover"</u>	Social Media Outlets VA Welcome Center Mktg "Takeover"