

Fiscal Year Report

2021-2022



A MESSAGE FROM VISIT HERSHEY & HARRISBURG LEADERSHIP

Visit Hershey & Harrisburg (VHH), like most destination marketing organizations emerging from a lengthy period of Covid-influenced operations, invested time throughout FY 21-22 to re-evaluate our strategies and evolve to meet the ever-changing needs of our visitors and stakeholders. VHH worked toward a strategic roadmap for navigating our industry's highly fluid future, positioning us for success in the years and months ahead.

- **CONTENT** to inspire travel to the Hershey Harrisburg Region from guests in target drive markets.
- **SALES** strategies to support re-engagement with established connections to kick-start high-probability bookings in market segments that showed potential for the quickest recovery.
- **A NEW 2022 PARTNERSHIP MODEL** focused on affordability and value-based benefits.
- **SPORTS & EVENTS** efforts focused on the growth of existing events and attraction of new events.

The notes above focus on business strategies, but we cannot reflect on the year without applauding the work of our VHH team. Each challenge and new endeavor was met with collaboration, passion, and professionalism. We welcomed new faces who bring fresh perspectives, energy, and enthusiasm. We are beyond proud to play a role in the health of our region by driving economic impact through tourism.

And, of course, we cannot reflect on the year without highlighting the resilience of our Partners. From small businesses to world-class attractions, your efforts to sustain and enhance the visitor experience are to be celebrated. Thank you all for your hard work!

• **The DestinationNEXT 2021 Futures Study showed three common themes that emerged during our industry's recovery that apply to most all destinations.**

1. There is greater awareness among governments and community leaders today of the impact of tourism and business events in their destinations.
2. There is heightened attention given to efforts to understand diversity, equity, and inclusion and the environmental impact of tourism on a destination.
3. The Hospitality & Tourism industry is re-evaluating its purpose, values, roles, and performance indicators.

• **VHH used these core themes as guides to facilitate a sustainable total destination experience for travelers in all segments (leisure, group, business, sports, and events). Core strategies for FY 21-22 included:**

- **ADVOCACY EFFORTS** to address the hiring gap and job vacancy challenges facing the post-Covid Hospitality & Tourism Industry.
- **DEVELOPMENT OF NEW EXPERIENCES** to broaden the region's diversity, cultural experiences, and opportunities.
- **MARKETING CAMPAIGNS** designed to reconnect visitors from our key markets with the tourism assets in the Hershey Harrisburg region.
- **COMMUNICATIONS** to deliver our region's story to the appropriate audiences in the leisure, meetings & conventions, sports & events, and media markets.



Lisa Stokes, Board Chair



Mary Smith, President & CEO

FISCAL YEAR 21-22

OPERATING FINANCIALS

REVENUE

Hotel Room Tax	\$2,343,604
Grants	\$1,087,020
COVID Relief	\$369,303
Partnership/Co-op Marketing	\$72,175
Events	\$61,418
Rentals	\$33,000
Miscellaneous	\$5,544

Total Support & Revenue	\$3,972,064
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EXPENSES

Marketing/Communications	\$1,531,774
Sales/Partnership/Services	\$578,550
Management & Operations	\$714,054
Community Relations	\$507,820
Sports & Events Authority	\$466,270

Total Expenses	\$3,798,468
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Associations & Organizations

VHH actively participates in the following:

- African American Chamber of Commerce of Central PA
- Alliance of Independent Meeting Planners
- Amateur Athletic Union
- American Bus Association
- American Society of Association Executives
- Blacks in Travel & Tourism
- Brand USA
- Conference Direct
- Connect
- Cvent
- Destinations International
- Harrisburg Regional Chamber & CREDEC
- HelmsBriscoe
- Keystone Regional Volleyball Association
- The Latino Connection
- Maryland Motorcoach Association
- Meeting Planners International (Middle PA, Philadelphia and Potomac chapters)
- Mid-Atlantic Tourism Public Relations Alliance
- National Collegiate Athletic Association
- National Tour Association
- PA Esports Coalition
- PA Interscholastic Esports Association
- PA Sports (Statewide Sport Marketing Alliance)
- Pennsylvania Bus Association
- Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association
- Pennsylvania Restaurant & Lodging Association
- Pennsylvania Society of Association Executives
- Professional Convention Management Association
- Small Market Meetings
- Sports ETA
- Student & Youth Travel Association
- US Travel Association
- Virginia Motorcoach Association

Board of Directors

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Brewer Lister

Hershey Entertainment & Resorts Company

Kara Luzik Canale

Harrisburg Regional Chamber & CREDC

Marcia Perry Dix

Perry Media Group

Jensine Ruscito

Tröegs Independent Brewing

Faniel Yemane

iDrive Interactive

MARKETING

As we emerged from the challenges of Covid-19 early in FY 21-22, the majority of our marketing focus was on launching and supporting newly developed experiences and cultural guides including the Chocolate & More Sweet Treat Trail, Brew Barons Beer Trail, Leprechauns & Lagers Spring Tour, Murals & More – A Walk of Art, and The Black Travel Experience. We also began the research and planning phase of a new initiative designed to reach the Latino traveler. Increased resources were focused on promoting these trails and experiences in the local market. In addition to the new experience campaigns, we ran a traditional outer market inspiration/branding campaign in fall and spring. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion has been a priority for marketing this year both in developments of activations (web pages and resources) as well as assets with a distinct focus on gathering and using imagery and video that is more representative of our visitors.

OBJECTIVES

- **DATA AND INSIGHTS:** Determine what the new normal is and re-establish baseline metrics in a post-Covid world.
- **RECONNECT:** Re-establish connection and consideration with potential visitors in our key markets.
- **CONTINUE TO INCREASE LOCAL TOURISM:** Local tourism was much more resilient during Covid times and has the capacity to engage with our tourism assets throughout the year.

STRATEGIES

- Utilized existing (Google analytics, Facebook, STR, etc.) and new (Visa Destination Insights) data sources to compare website activity, spend in market, and overnights this year versus a benchmark of 2019. Tracking focused on where and when visitors were searching (online planning) and spending.
- Deployed efficient, high impression paid media (programmatic and out-of-home) to reengage with potential visitors in the Fall and Spring after a Covid-initiated absence in primary outer markets.
- Increased VHH Trails & Experiences promotion and visibility in the local market via out-of-home campaigns, programmatic digital display and video campaigns, and social campaigns.

WEBSITE STATS



Users

ALL TRAFFIC

689,984

ORGANIC TRAFFIC

371,756



Sessions

855,840

453,455



Pages Per Session

1.75

2.03



Average Session Duration

1:09

1:33



TOP MARKETS

ALL
TRAFFIC

ORGANIC
TRAFFIC

Philly
HLLY
NY
DC

HLLY
Philly
NY
DC

CONNECTED TV
Over 3K Photos
Added to Catalog

PROGRAMMATIC DISPLAY ADVERTISING
15 Million Video Views

PROGRAMMATIC VIDEO
57 Photo
& Video
shoot
Locations

135 Ads
Created

YOUTUBE ADS
260K Clicks

7 Campaigns

190 Million Digital Impressions

INSTAGRAM VIDEO
24 Million
Billboard
Impressions

OUT OF HOME
LANCASTER
YORK
PHILADELPHIA
15 Billboards
in 4 Cities
HARRISBURG



EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT

Cheers to an exciting fiscal year highlighted by several new Experience Development initiatives! Highlights include the launch of our first seasonal Beer Trail promotion (Leprechauns & Lagers), the digital redesign of Chocolate & More – The Sweet Treat Trail, a cultural guide for The Black Travel Experience, and the launch of Murals & More – A Walk of Art! Data from these digital programs provide valuable insight into visitation trends, and the user-friendly designs help visitors branch out to find more to love in our region.

OBJECTIVES

- Develop new experiences with themed structures.
- Broaden VHH's experiences focused on the region's diversity, culture, and opportunities.
- Increase visitation and correlating local economic impact.
- Enhance existing engagement programs.

STRATEGIES

- Identified tourism assets to deploy in themed experiences designed to resonate with target markets.
- Researched industry trends and adapted to the changing visitation landscape.
- Researched additional elements to showcase our region's diversity and culture.
- Utilized digital, interactive technologies to showcase the region in a user-friendly way.
- Created a wider range of experiences and trails to appeal to more diverse interest groups.
- Leveraged existing technology platforms and partnerships to enhance existing programs.





Brew Barons Beer Trail

A mobile passport featuring 30 local craft brewery and tasting room locations. Guests win prizes as they reach mobile check-in milestones. This program was launched in July 2020.

	2021/2022	ALL TIME
FIRST TIME USERS	882	2,462
CHECK-INS	7,737	16,174
PRIZES EARNED	718	1,490

TOP CHECK-INS (2021/2022)

1. Rubber Soul Brewing Co.
2. Ever Grain Brewing Co.
3. Troegs Independent Brewing
4. Mellow Mink Brewing Co.
5. Rotunda Brew Pub

TOP CHECK-INS (ALL TIME)

1. Troegs Independent Brewing
2. Rubber Soul Brewing Co.
3. Ever Grain Brewing Co.
4. Rotunda Brew Pub
5. Tattered Flag Brewing



Leprechauns & Lagers – Brew Barons Spring Tour

Promotion length: 6 weeks (Feb. 17 – March 31)

This brand-new promotion gave users a 6-week window to access a spring-themed passport on the Brew Barons Beer Trail app. This seasonal trail offers users a limited window to revisit their favorite breweries, even if they've completed the prize tiers from the original Brew Barons passport. It also generated 225 new users.

TOTAL USERS
1,171

CHECK-INS
4,108

TOTAL PRIZES
339

TOP CHECK-IN LOCATIONS

1. Troegs Independent Brewing
2. Ever Grain Brewing Co.
3. Rubber Soul Brewing Co.
4. JB Lovedraft's Brewing Co.
5. Mellow Mink Brewing Co.

HERSHEY & HARRISBURG

Chocolate & More Sweet Treat Trail

SIGN-UPS
723

CHECK-INS
316

PRIZES EARNED
18

Chocolate & More - The Sweet Treat Trail

A new mobile version replaced the original paper bingo version this past year. Guests check in with a digital PIN after making a qualified purchase at any of the 25 participating sweet spots featured in this trail. This program was re-launched in January 2022.

TOP CHECK IN LOCATIONS

1. Desserts, Etc
2. Cubby's Ice Cream
3. Strite's Orchards
4. The Sweeterie
5. Nittany Scoops
6. Au bon Lieu



MURALS
& MORE A Walk Of Art

VISIT HERSHEY & HARRISBURG

SIGN-UPS
312

CHECK-INS
529

PRIZES EARNED
19

Murals & More – A Walk of Art

This program is an audio tour of over 35 murals, monuments, and public art locations along two paths in Harrisburg. Guests check-in with a free mobile passport and receive an art-inspired prize. This program launched in April 2022.

TOP CHECK IN LOCATIONS (APRIL - JUNE)

1. Harrisburg Mural
2. Lady Commonwealth Mural
3. Transformation Mural
4. Mothra Mural
5. Bioforms Mural



VISIT HERSHEY HARRISBURG

ADVENTURE TRAIL

WEB PAGE VIEWS
38,498

Adventure Trail

An extensive web-based guide featuring trails, parks, waterways, and attractions suited for outdoor (and a few indoor!) adventures of all ages. New sections added this past year include Fishing and Birdwatching.

TOP PAGE VIEWS BY CATEGORY & LOCATION

1. Hiking | Hawk Rock
2. Kayaking | Swatara - Boathouse Run
3. Biking | Stony Valley Rail Trail
4. Fishing | Clark's Creek
5. Family Fun | Hershey Gardens

COMMUNICATIONS

As the new and reimagined department of Communications & Content officially launched on January 1, 2022, FY 21-22 reflected a transition period for content and public relations efforts. Where Q1 and Q2 activities were driven primarily by project-to-project deliverables, Q3 and Q4 featured greater attention to adjustments, intent, purpose, and growth.

OBJECTIVES

- **COMMUNICATIONS:** Deliver our region's story to the appropriate audiences in the local stakeholder, leisure, meetings & conventions, sports & events, and media markets.
- **CONTENT:** Inspire travel to the Hershey Harrisburg Region from guests in target drive markets. Engage prospective meetings & events decision makers by highlighting the region's amenities.

STRATEGIES

- Engaged local media to amplify VHH initiatives, products, and programs via print & digital stories and/or guest appearances on podcasts or radio interviews.
- Produced engaging travel guide, website, and marketing campaign copy to reflect the variety of experiences available to travelers.
- Posted timely VHH and user-generated-content (UGC) across multiple social media channels to amplify tourism assets, experiences, and events throughout Dauphin County.
- Rejoined the Mid-Atlantic Tourism Public Relations Association (MATPRA) to take advantage of the group's collective travel media pitch & exposure efforts and professional development opportunities.



PUBLIC RELATIONS

As VHH returned (largely) to the pre-pandemic routines of traditional DMO operations, promotions, and visitor outreach, we were once again in a position to tout new programs and initiatives to media contacts. Media interest in new Trails & Experiences, as well as revived media attention to tourism in general, resulted in VHH features in local news coverage as well as guest spots on industry podcasts.

CONTENT CREATION & UPDATES

Content efforts included travel guide development, website updates, marketing campaign & experience development support, sales department & HHSE feature article placements, and a gradual reactivation of social media presence across various channels.

- Produced all copy and new content concepts for the 2022 VHH travel guide – a reimagined piece focused on seasonal themes and destination travel inspiration.
- Continually assessed and updated website and/or marketing materials copy to reflect appropriate seasonal and operational priorities.
- Developed content for four (4) new website sections including: The Black Travel Experience, Leprechauns & Lagers, Career Connections (Sales), Murals & More – A Walk of Art



E-NEWSLETTER COMMUNICATIONS

Internal (Partnership) communications updated VHH Partners on industry trends, marketing opportunities, and community events. Consumer emails highlighted seasonally appropriate planning tools and inspiration for upcoming travel.

E-newsletter Sends

PARTNERSHIP

26

CONSUMER

11

Consumer Email Data

PARTNER MENTIONS

192



TOP TOPICS DETERMINED BY NUMBER OF CLICKS

# OF CLICKS	TOPIC
550	Sweet Treat Trail
442	The Black Travel Experience
244	Free Things to Do
230	Little Buffalo Apple Festival
169	Farm Show Food Festival
155	Beer Trail
151	Trails and Guides
124	Chocolatetown
121	Fall Bucket List
118	America's Largest RV Show

ORGANIC SOCIAL MEDIA

After limited social activity through the pandemic due to staffing transitions, VHH began to re-establish a presence across multiple social media platforms. Through links to original content, posts featuring user-generated-content (UGC), and sharing Partner events and experiences, VHH social posts re-engaged users and generated positive destination exposure through organic (unpaid) reach.



Instagram

Highlighting experiential & inspirational photography and video and UGC.

INSTAGRAM FOLLOWERS
5,994

INSTAGRAM REACH
59,362



Facebook

Highlighting links to VHH content, Partner events, UGC.

FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS
51,266

FACEBOOK REACH
281,979

TOTAL FACEBOOK & INSTAGRAM REACH: 341,333

Twitter

Transitioned from a seldom-used & strictly media-facing platform to a wider media and local stakeholder audience with potential consumer crossover.



TWITTER FOLLOWERS
424

TWITTER IMPRESSIONS
35,488
(Re-launched Jan 1, 2022)



SALES

The FY 21-22 Sales efforts maximized resources and opportunities as market segments that suffered disproportionately greater losses than the overall travel industry began their climb to recovery. Strategies focused on re-engagement with established connections to kick-start high-probability bookings and focused on market segments that showed potential for quickest recovery.

Total Leads Distributed	291
Total Lead Room Nights Distributed	46,191
Trade Shows Attended	12
Client FAM Tours Hosted	18
Events Hosted	4



TOTAL ROOM
NIGHTS BOOKED
22,359



CAREER CONNECTIONS EVENT

OBJECTIVES

- Address the hiring gap and job vacancy challenges facing the post-Covid Hospitality & Tourism Industry.
- Educate and mentor students who will be entering the workforce on the benefits of tourism-related careers.
- Match tomorrow's workforce with area employers for potential internship, seasonal, and career opportunities.

STRATEGIES

- Partnered with Temple University School of Sport, Tourism and Hospitality Management to create a day of education and networking.
- Temple University staff educated VHH partners with insight into today's students and graduates and what their drivers are for career development.
- Provided an opportunity for students to directly engage with VHH Partners through on-site venue and attraction visits and roundtable discussions.





MEETINGS & CONVENTIONS

OBJECTIVES

- Cultivate new connections and contacts while building upon established planner relationships.
- Assist with the re-booking of rescheduled Covid events and inspire new meeting bookings into Dauphin County.
- Create opportunities for VHH Partners and community stakeholders to connect with planners.
- Generate awareness of safety protocol and meetings messaging.

STRATEGIES

- Attended local MPI & PASAE networking events.
- Attended tradeshows with one-on-one appointments, including Connect DC, HelmsBriscoe, ConferenceDirect and C-Vent Connect.
- Hosted VHH sponsored events, inviting both partners and meeting planners to connect. This included a holiday Mingle & Jingle & Philadelphia planner event.
- Utilized a multi-tactic marketing campaign to target planners as meeting and events began to return to the region.



TOUR & TRAVEL/INTERNATIONAL

OBJECTIVES

- Cultivate new connections and contacts while building upon established tour operator relationships.
- Shift resources to fastest recovering markets.
- Maximize limited resources.

STRATEGIES

- Re-activated in-person attendance at key industry trade shows and marketplaces including RTO, IPW, and ABA.
- Followed market trends to identify which markets were seeing faster returns and shifted resources accordingly.
- Initiated regional partnerships to combine resources and budgets in the group market arena.

MARKETING

Digital marketing agency, Orange142, created a multi-tactic campaign targeting meeting and event planners in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Connecticut, Virginia, Washington DC, and Maryland between **April 1 and October 28, 2021.**

TACTICS

Native advertising,
retargeting, video,
email, social

OVERALL IMPRESSIONS

4,158,961





HERSHEY HARRISBURG SPORTS & EVENTS AUTHORITY

The Hershey Harrisburg Sports & Events Authority is now better positioned for success than ever before. With the Business Development position now rehired, the department boasts more than 30 combined years of experience in the sports tourism field. In a steady rebound from effects of the pandemic, we experienced the regrowth of numerous annual events, and the willingness of others to return to hosting their events in our region. After a “DNP” due to Covid challenges in 2020, our team hosted the 2021 Big 26 Baseball Classic high school all-star event, an HHSE-owned event poised for annual growth.

OBJECTIVES

- Increase destination visibility in a post-Covid landscape.
- Improve Harrisburg’s Municipal Equality Index (MEI), an important metric used by event organizers as an indicator of a destination’s dedication to diversity, equity, and inclusivity.
- Ensure retention and growth of events to maintain a strong base of annual business.

STRATEGIES

- Returned to a more normal schedule of attendance at industry conferences and symposiums.
- Leveraged participation in PA Sports to increase HHSE brand visibility through maximized online presence, tradeshow sponsorships, and client meetings.
- Created new sales collateral and marketing pieces.
- Partnered with area facilities and stakeholders to encourage support and growth of events.
- Collaborated with appropriate Harrisburg contacts to highlight the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts and their impact on an MEI score. (MEI scores are used by event organizers to help identify host venues and destinations.)

TOP 10 EVENTS
TOTAL ATTENDANCE
300,000+ VISITORS
.....
TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT
\$111.8 MILLION

Top 10 Events

(SECURED, HOSTED, SPONSORED, OR SUPPORTED BY HHSE)

1. Great American Outdoor Show
2. PA National Horse Show
3. PIAA State High School Championships*
4. Hershey Soccer Memorial Day Challenge
5. US Junior Nationals Hershey Showcase Girls Basketball
6. Reflections Synchronized Skating Invitational
7. Hogan’s Hershey Lacrosse
8. Firecracker Baseball Sweet Spot Classic
9. OneHockey Hershey **
10. Americheer Hershey Nationals

*PIAA includes tennis, soccer, cross country, football, basketball, wrestling & spirit

**includes four separate event weekends



71,021

**Total Room
Nights Booked**

82,760

**Room Night
Leads Distributed**

4

**Trade Shows
Attended**

8

**Site Visits
Hosted**


TOP NEW EVENTS

Hoop It Up 3-on-3 Basketball - \$200K
 Americheer Hershey Nationals - \$800K
 OneHockey Hershey add-on weekends - \$600K



TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT

\$1.6 million

Total Attendance
 7,500

MARKETING & PR

After a period of marketing & PR inactivity through the majority of the Covid pandemic, HHSE re-established a presence in multiple industry publications by investing in a variety of print and digital placements touting our region's open spaces and world-class attractions as benefits to event organizers and attendees. An announcement that HHSE would host the 2021 Big 26 Baseball Classic (after the 2020 cancellation) kick-started a summer of positive media exposure and a return-to-normal for welcoming new and returning events to the region.

HHSE developed new destination profile sheets for the overall region, Hersheypark Entertainment Complex, and the PA Farm Show Complex & Expo Center to support efforts to re-engage event organizers looking for host locations.

MUNICIPAL EQUALITY INDEX

HHSE is making an effort to improve the Human Rights Campaign's Municipal Equality Index (MEI) score for Harrisburg. The MEI rates a city on how inclusive the municipal laws, policies and services are for LGBTQ+ people who live, work and play in the destination. Harrisburg currently ranks last in the state, out of 10 cities who have been scored. www.hrc.org/resources/mei-2021-see-your-cities-scores.

An increased MEI score sends a message to all visitors, residents and work force that Harrisburg is diverse, inclusive and welcoming. Inclusive cities attract some of the best businesses and talent and with the importance of tourism in our region, the MEI score will also showcase to travelers that Harrisburg is welcoming to all.

THE BIG 26 BASEBALL CLASSIC®

The fiscal year started off in July 2021 with the much-anticipated return of this HHSE-owned event after a pandemic-related one-year hiatus in 2020.

With the Penn State Harrisburg campus unavailable, we worked with the Hilton Harrisburg to provide outstanding accommodations for players. All baseball events (including the player skills combine) were held at FNB Field.

Despite a late green light for the 2021 Buddy Program due to the uncertainty surrounding the pandemic, we were able to host a successful picnic and wiffle ball game where Big 26 players and special needs buddies connected to kick off the event.



130

**High school players
tried out for 52
roster spots.**

29

**College coaches
attended one or
more scouting
activities.**

30

**Special needs
athletes participated
in the Buddy
Program.**

WHO WE ARE

Visit Hershey & Harrisburg is the official non-profit partnership-based Destination Marketing Organization serving Dauphin County. Visit Hershey & Harrisburg is responsible for developing and executing comprehensive sales, marketing, and communication programs to compete for leisure, business, group, and sporting event travel market segments among leading and national destinations.

OUR MISSION

The mission of Visit Hershey & Harrisburg is to generate economic growth and stability through the marketing and promotion of travel to the Hershey Harrisburg Region and to coalesce, develop, and expand its hospitality industry, products, and workforce.



3211 North Front Street, Suite 301-A, Harrisburg, PA 17110 | (717) 231-7788

VisitHersheyHarrisburg.org