

**VIRGINIA
IS FOR
LOVERS®**

**PARTNERSHIP MARKETING
INITIATIVES**

2021 - 2023



IMPORTANCE OF TRAVEL

In 2019, travelers to Virginia spent \$72 Million per day. That's \$72 million per day invested into our communities making them a better place to work, live and play.

Then in March of 2020, the Covid-19 Pandemic devastated our tourism industry like nothing we have ever experienced. While borders were closing, tourism businesses were struggling to keep their doors open.

The set-backs spared nobody, from small rural businesses to large metropolitan attractions. Simply put, the impact was brutal. Virginia lost a baseline of 62,000 jobs and \$11 billion in visitor spending. Our focus in Partnership Marketing is to assist with the industry's comeback – to make our bounce-back outweigh the setbacks as we assist our partners with recovery.

This document has been updated to make sure Partnership Marketing is helping our industry partners move forward and recover from the crisis of 2020. The following pages list our priorities and initiatives for the next two years as we focus on returning tourism to the powerful investment it has been for our localities and residents.

Make no mistake, responsible tourism is a key factor in the revitalization and livelihood of our communities. To our industry partners, we've got your back! To our community leaders, let's get to work, as together we will bounce back stronger, smarter and more resilient than ever before.



WHO ARE WE?

Partnership Marketing's mantra for years has been a simple yet focused one: **Help Virginia Communities Maximize their Tourism Potential.** With a dedicated staff comprised of seasoned tourism professionals, Partnership Marketing focuses its efforts in helping build vibrant communities. We strive to accomplish this by providing three key resources that contribute to the livelihood of the communities we serve:

1. Strategic Tourism Planning
2. Tourism Business Development
3. Cooperative Partnership Marketing Opportunities

While those core services are still the foundation of our division, we have also added the following for the next two years:

1. Relief – help the industry find various funding sources for immediate help
2. Recovery – educate industry on the shift in traveler sentiment and its effect on hospitality to make sure VA communities are safe, relevant and responsible to all
3. Rebound – work with industry on strategic planning & communications to be competitive when high demand for travel returns

PARTNERSHIP MARKETING'S THREE INTERNAL TENETS

Three Main Tenets for the next two years will drive the PM Corporate Culture for looking inward:

- 1. Knowledge**
know the industry, our partners, their needs, our visitors and their expectations
- 2. Assertiveness**
move to action before even being asked to do so – go two steps forward always
- 3. Best Use of Time**
activities that produce the best return on time invested Team Approach vs. Individual Approach – an added focus will be placed on creating teams within PM as well as with other VTC departments for increased collaboration and integration.

As for external tenets, the following comprise Partnership Marketing's dedication to our industry:

- 1. Understanding** the industry's needs & expectations
- 2. Growing Destinations** by highlighting the complimentary nature of products and services within a region and community
- 3. Fostering Innovation** through people and business excellence

GOT YOUR BACK

We have a saying in Partnership Marketing that we always have each other's backs. This past year has taught us that challenges of all sorts can hit you smack dab in the face. When this happens, we are here to help. We got your back!

Whether it is an internal or external audience, the members of Partnership Marketing team will always strive to assist our industry partners, coworkers and peers in the Travel & Tourism industry as well as our residents and visitors. The following leadership traits are expected of all Partnership Marketing staff.

- Make others feel safe to speak up
- Communicate expectations
- Challenge people to think
- Be accountable to others
- Measure and reward performance
- Be a great teacher
- Invest in relationships

HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?
STATEWIDE INITIATIVES



DRIVE 2.0

Drive 2.0 is an update to 2013 DRIVE Tourism - Virginia's Statewide Tourism Development Plan. It is a community conversation with the goal of coming to a consensus for future planning and a strategic blueprint for development that will make our communities more competitive. Partnership Marketing worked with SIR (formerly Southeastern Institute of Research) to answer the following questions:

What should we be promoting now? and What should we be building now?

The result is a statewide section including recommendations and situation analysis, ten regional sections with recommendations and a series of five How to Guides to assist the industry with tools they expressed needing. An additional guide, the Recovery Guide, was added in the fall of 2020 to address the seismic shifts of 2020. The final documents were shared with the industry in fall 2020. DRIVE 2.0 will be implemented through three, six-month implementation rounds beginning January 2021- July 2022. Implementation includes a community survey, a community consensus meeting and grant award for 30 localities (10 communities per round). Once communities have completed implementation, they will have the opportunity to use their funds towards any aspect of their promotion, product or advocacy plans.

Success:

30 five-year DRIVE 2.0 plans by the end of 2022.



MARKETING LEVERAGE PROGRAM

vatc.org/grants/leverageprogram

One of the greatest challenges facing any tourism industry partner is having enough dollars for marketing. Add to this the fact that small businesses comprise 90 percent of the Virginia tourism industry, and the need for marketing funding is even more critical. COVID-19 compounded these challenges.

One of the most effective ways tourism industry partners can amplify their marketing impact is through partnerships. The VTC Marketing Leverage Program grant is designed to allow such partnerships to leverage partners' existing marketing budgets as a match to apply for VTC funding.

In FY19 and FY20, VTC awarded funding of \$3.4 million. VTC funds were matched by partner dollars in the amount of \$13 million, a match of \$3.87 from the private sector for every \$1 awarded by VTC. Most importantly, the VTC Marketing Leverage Program impacted over 780 Virginia tourism partners and provided a total of \$16.6 million to help market travel to Virginia communities.

In 2020, VTC revamped the VTC Marketing Leverage Program in response to the pandemic. The focus was on quickly providing needed marketing dollars to Virginia travel partners impacted by COVID-19. VTC awarded \$866,000 to 90 DMOs through the WanderLove DMO Grant Program. An additional \$1.98 million was awarded through the VTC Recovery Marketing Leverage Program. VTC funded 161 applications that impacted 483 Virginia travel industry partners.

Moving forward, VTC will continue to adapt the VTC Marketing Leverage Program to address our industry needs.

Success:

- Revise the online application process and questions to best assist the Virginia travel industry.
- Provide a minimum of two online "How to Apply" webinars.
- Grow the available funding to \$2 million annually.
- Leverage the VTC dollars at a minimum of 3:1 through in-kind and cash matches.
- Leverage the VTC dollars with a minimum of \$6 million annually in partners' dollars through in-kind and cash matches.
- Impact a minimum of 360 Virginia travel industry partners annually.

TOURISM LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

If 2020 has taught us anything, it is how to shift our mindset in how we operate. Creating a space for sharing best practices and bold thinking has spurred the advent of the Virginia Tourism Leadership Summer Summit. The virtual summit, which will be held over three months each summer, will focus on a myriad of topics ranging from DRIVE 2.0 findings, as well as shared best practices from fellow tourism practitioners from Virginia as well as DMOs across the U.S. The summit will become an annual event held one day in June, July and August each summer.

Success:

30 Destination Marketing Organizations sharing best practices with each other. Also, attract two-three national organizations to share latest trends and research to help grow our industry.



CHAMPION THE VALUE OF TOURISM

The Tourism Industry was devastated in 2020. The healthcare and hospitality industries were pushed to the brink. Hotel rooms became offices, overflow hospital rooms and temporary lodging for our frontline healthcare workers. Restaurants had to rapidly adapt to constant and last-minute changes. Music festivals and venues were cancelled or shuttered their doors. All of this meant workers were out of jobs and localities out of much needed revenue to support services.

With the loss of critical economic contributions from traveler expenditures, one would think tourism has risen in value and appreciation. However, DMOs across the Commonwealth are still having to champion the value of tourism and tourism marketing.

Whether it's educating the local chamber of commerce or demonstrating tourism as a solid investment to stakeholders, the role of tourism as a driver to improve the livelihood of our communities must be a top focus for destination marketing organizations to be sustainable and effective. That is why "Making a Case for Tourism" is one of the key guide books in Drive 2.0 and will serve as the format for education and advocacy over the next two years.

Success:

- Align with 30 community strategic partnerships to leverage resources and build capacity
- Using the DRIVE 2.0 How to Guide: Make the Case guide, activate, engage and inspire new and existing advocates through compelling communication tools and messaging
- 90% of Local travel and tourism investments remain stable in dedicated funding or grow by end of calendar year 2022

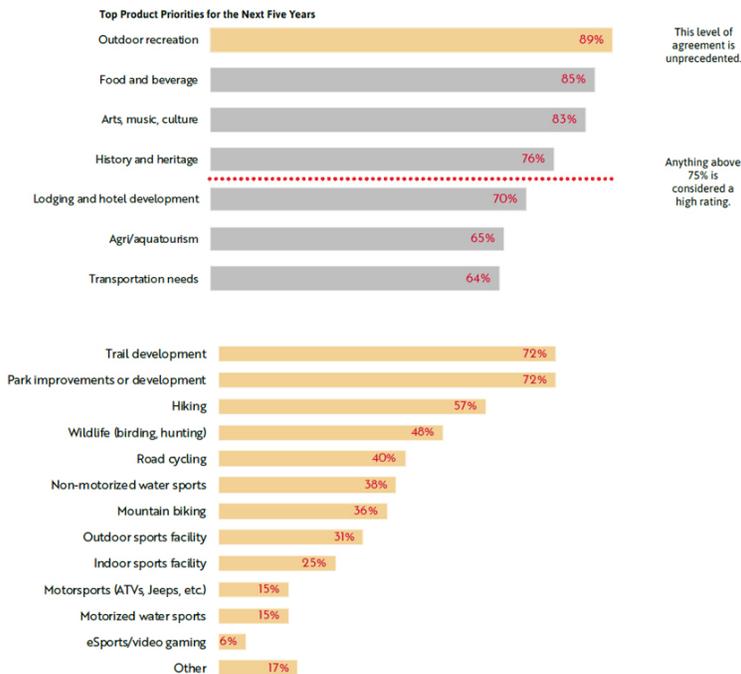


OUTDOOR RECREATION

DRIVE 2.0 research identified outdoor recreation as a major priority for product development. With 89% of the industry identifying it as a priority. Even through the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020 (and into 2021), outdoor recreation has grown and is expected to continue to prosper in the future. For product development, more specifically trail development earned the most mentions whether physical hiking, biking, ATV trails, or trails that connect similar attractions across localities. Park improvements or development also came in as a top area of focus when it comes to outdoor recreation. These ratings hold true across the Commonwealth, region to region.

Success:

- Work with DMOs to incorporate outdoor recreation into product development
- Advance Virginia’s outdoor recreation by tying vibrant communities through arts, music, culture, food and beverage.





VA-1 TOURISM SUMMIT

Building off the success and excitement from the 2019 VA-1 Tourism Summit, Partnership Marketing will continue to work with the programming committee to generate relevant and engaging speakers for all sessions. The 2021 VA-1 Tourism Summit provides stakeholders with useful information that can be immediately implemented to grow their destinations for residents, visitors and stakeholders.

Success:

- An attendance of 500 Industry stakeholders scoring the event as beneficial and worthy of their time and investment.

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT FINANCING PROGRAM (TDFP)

Virginia's Tourism Development Financing Program (TDFP) identifies new product development as a key to staying competitive. The TDFP closes that gap by leveraging local, developer and state investments to complete these projects that, otherwise, cannot find 100 percent sufficient lending.

With the TDFP, a municipality (the applicant) identifies and proves a local deficiency which cannot meet current, high visitor demand.

A developer (with a project meeting that proven deficiency) secures all the financing and lending needed to complete the project. The financing sources can amount to 70 percent independently secured, along with a maximum of 30 percent (gap) which the state, municipality and developer all contributing matching contributions, drawn from one percent of the project's new, quarterly revenue.

Similar to Tax Increment Financing (TIF) , the municipality and state agree to contribute sales tax revenues from the new project towards the developer's debt with their Lender

Success:

- Secure one or two TDFP certified communities, annually.
- Engage at least 20 Virginia municipalities on potential TDFP projects (e.g. EDA, IDA, PDC, DMOs and community development organizations).
- Educate at least 400 industry partners via TDFP presentations at tourism meetings and symposiums (e.g. VTC orientation, state agency partners, PDCs, associations and community speaking engagements).
- Educate at least 250 industry partners on TDFP-required Tourism Zones, including localities, developers and other state agencies; maintain a growing statewide Tourism Zone database
- Establish one or two sustained contacts with commercial lending institutions on TDFP availability and process.





ASSISTANCE WITH LOCAL, REGIONAL AND FEDERAL FUNDING RESOURCES

VTC's Partnership Marketing Division co-developed and leads Catalyst VA (formerly P.A.C.E.D.), a group of Virginia Partner Agencies for Community and Economic Development. Catalyst VA focuses and connects Virginia businesses and communities to resources including technical assistance and funding.

This partnership will focus on small business growth, tourism development and downtown development projects. Current partner agencies include Virginia Community Capital, Virginia Tourism Corporation; Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development; Virginia Tobacco Commission; Virginia Housing Development Authority; Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services; Virginia Small Business Development Center Network; Virginia Main Street; Virginia Economic Development Partnership; Virginia Small Business and Supplier Diversity; Opportunity Virginia; United States Department of Agriculture Office of Rural Development; and Virginia Resource Authority.

With DRIVE Tourism 2.0 identifying outdoor recreation as a major component for development, VTC's Partnership Marketing Division will work to further develop relationships with Virginia Wildlife Resources, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, the National Park Service, and other partners such as the NOAA Office for Coastal Management programs.

Success:

- Identify and engage on ten collaborative projects with focus on technical assistance, funding assistance, job creation and workforce training.
- Identify and engage on three collaborative projects with focus on outdoor recreation.



Black Traveler Engagement

VTC’s Partnership Marketing division is engaged supporting VTC’s Marketing division to greatly uncover and expand the state’s history and museum experiences, specifically about and for the Black traveler.

VTC is working with brand strategy and consulting firms *JMI* and *Share More Stories* to build relationships through genuine connections with customers, employees and society, through and across values-based communities. And, to connect the Virginia is for Lovers brand with the varied identities and cultures within Black communities and travelers.

JMI is leading informational sessions with Black travelers focused on more deeply understanding their experiences as travelers in Virginia – an often under-prioritized but powerful consumer segment. And, to share these experiences with the Virginia travel industry.

Share More Stories has been hosting sessions with Black travelers to uncover insights and develop ideas for how we can enhance their travel experience and connect with them in a more authentic and equitable way.

Success:

- Communicate to Black travelers they can visit and enjoy Virginia’s variety of experiences
- Communicate to Black travelers they belong in Virginia , which is welcoming and safe for them
- Demonstrate to Black travelers that the Virginia’s history we share is inclusive of under told stories involving Black people
- Develop a better insight of the current Black traveler experience
- Explore the emotions, values and needs of the Black travelers, as a whole, as well as key segments within this consumer group
- Build our understanding of how to apply this research to how your organizations develops experiences and communications

DIVERISTY, EQUITY & INCLUSION in TOURISM
Industry Relations & Marketing

LGBTQ+ Traveler Engagement

Since 2016, VTC has engaged statewide businesses localities, LGBTQ+ organizations and Pride leaders to identify and welcome LGBTQ+ visitors to the find the destinations and events which match their LOVE of travel. The Commonwealth’s @visitgayva social channels and Virginia.org/LGBT website dynamically serve LGBTQ+ and Ally-owned welcoming and safe experiences. We’ve also welcomed and hosted Queer travel journalists, chefs and Foodies, outdoor lovers, musicians, influencers and sports teams to experience and share what they love about our home state.

In the next two years, VTC will continue to engage the Virginia’s tourism industry through education, partnerships and marketing opportunities to welcome Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning and Non-Binary visitors.



Success:

- Engage 20 DMOs exploring LGBT tourism opportunities.
- Support and grow awareness for 30+ annual Pride events.
- Maximize Owned Media opportunities in social media, website and blog content.
- Maximize Earned Media on news websites, forums, blogs, and social media.
- Explore Paid Media with VTC Marketing; assist VTC Domestic and International media visits.
- Track and share LGBT marketing trends, legislation and cultural happenings affecting LGBT travel.

VTC ORIENTATION PROGRAM

vatc.org/pam/orientations

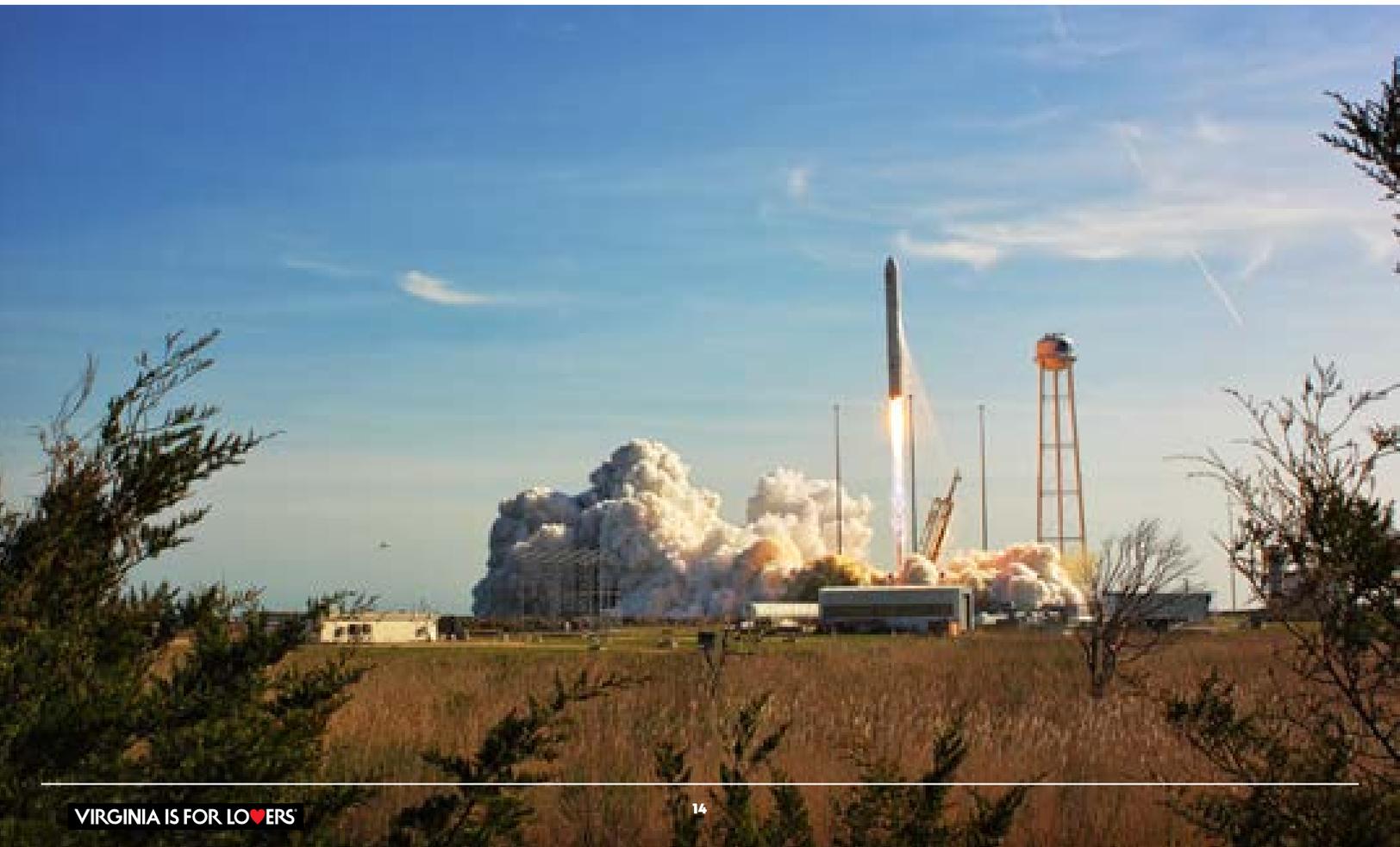
VTC offers dozens of programs to assist the Virginia travel industry; however, navigating through these programs can be daunting. To better acquaint our industry partners with VTC services, VTC offers Orientation Sessions to new members of our industry, as well as a refresher course to anyone who needs to be updated on VTC services.

In 2020, VTC revised the Orientation program to four, two-hour virtual sessions – held during a one week period. VTC Orientation Program strives to educate industry partners on how to better market their businesses and destinations, provide trends and marketing tips, and demonstrate how partners can fully use VTC programs and services.

The VTC Orientation Program will remain online and quarterly sessions will continue through 2021. Sessions offer free registration and will be conducted via a Zoom platform.

Success:

- Continuing interest and demand with a minimum of 100 industry partners participating in each of the four online Orientation sessions
- Consistently maintain a satisfaction rating of 90 percent or higher from all attendees through follow up surveys.
- Annual follow-up survey showing that 90 percent of past participants are now using at least three VTC services within six months of attending Orientation.



BENCHMARKING TRIP WITH STAFF & INDUSTRY

In 2019, Partnership Marketing conducted a small pilot project trip to Fayetteville, West Virginia to speak with leaders of their bustling outdoor recreation industry . Both staff and stakeholders rated the trip as extremely beneficial. Partnership Marketing will look at one destination to visit over the next two years that should serve as models for tourism, community and economic development.

Success:

- VTC staff members and industry leaders visiting one Benchmarking Destination for a multi-day exchanging of ideas to learn the best practices for community place-making as well as community place-marketing.



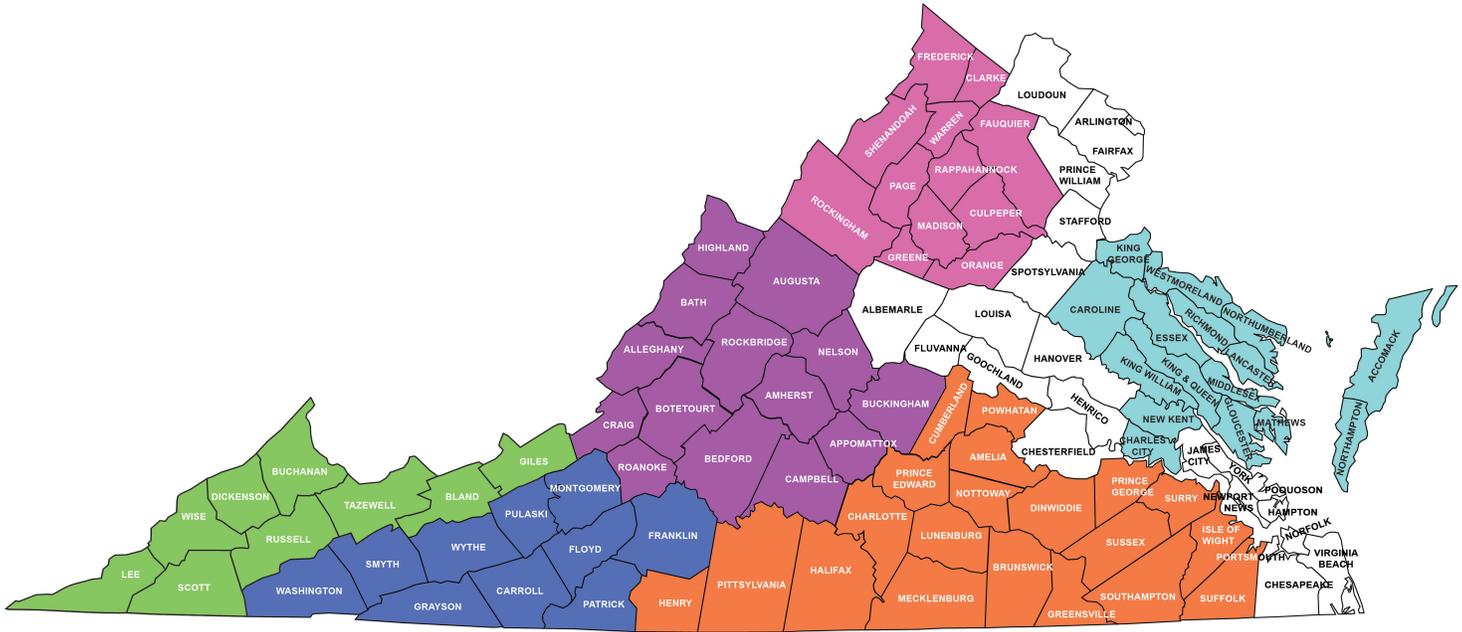
BRAIN EXCHANGE

One of the findings we learned from Drive 2.0 is that our industry wants more face time with VTC leadership and marketing directors. PM will lead statewide Brain Exchanges with CEOs of Destination Marketing Organizations to ask two key questions: What are your priorities and how can we help you?

Success:

- Six Brain Exchange sessions per year with industry leaders and key VTC staff.

***DESTINATION
DEVELOPMENT SPECIALISTS
WHERE ARE WE?***



DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT SPECIALISTS

- Michelle Workman** 276 722 0238
mworkman@virginia.org

- Becky Nave** 276 791 9172
bnave@virginia.org

- Katie Conner** 540 460 9512
kconner@virginia.org

- Stephanie Lillard** 540 742 0168
slillard@virginia.org

- Sandra Tanner** 434 774 9008
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- Staci Martin** 575 390 7330
smartin@virginia.org

Steve Galyean - Director of Planning & Partnerships
 804 545 5517 | sgalyean@virginia.org

Contact VTC’s Destination Development Specialists in your area for strategic planning, marketing leveraging and other community development assistance and resources.

WHAT ARE WE DOING?
REGIONAL INITIATIVES

BLUE RIDGE PLATEAU**(New Initiative)**

(No website at this time)

VTC PM Team Member

Becky Nave

Region/Localities Impacted

- **Southwest Virginia - Blue Ridge Highlands:** Patrick County, Floyd County, Carroll County, Grayson County, City of Galax
- **Virginia Mountains:** Franklin County

Summary

The Blue Ridge Plateau is a collaborative marketing effort of the communities surrounding the Blue Ridge Parkway. Tapping into a unique geographic point of reference and marketing differentiation, the group was brought together to create regional themes to connect downtowns to the Blue Ridge Parkway visitors.

Status

- Planning process – Consultant selected
- Phase one- Preliminary plan assessment

What's Next?

- Begin theme development work.
- Identify tourism ready assets and needs.
- Set timeline for theme development.
- Select imagery and photography.

VTC PM Involvement

- Facilitated first meeting to bring the group together.
- Ongoing technical assistance and guidance.

Assistance From VTC

- Year-round marketing of the Blue Ridge Parkway communities.
- Commercial airing Fall of 2020 featuring Blue Ridge Plateau communities.
- Communications assistance through PR, Social and Digital Marketing.
- Support community development in surrounding towns.

Success:

- Five themed itineraries developed.
- Marketing campaign designed and implemented.
- Increased social media, and website visitation.
- Tourism expenditure growth in the region.

REGIONAL INITIATIVES

HOMETOWNS OF MOUNT ROGERS

(New Initiative)

(No website at this time)

VTC PM Team Member

Becky Nave

Region/Localities Impacted

- **Southwest Virginia - Blue Ridge Highlands:** Damascus, Glade Spring, Saltville, Chilhowie, Marion Troutdale, Rural Retreat, and Independence

Summary

Mount Rogers is the highest mountain peak in Virginia and provides unrivaled outdoor recreation opportunities for Southwest Virginia and beyond. The purpose of this initiative is to provide strategic framework for entrepreneurial and economic development growth for the eight gateway communities of Mount Rogers.

Status

- Planning process – Consultant selected
- Phase one- Preliminary plan assessment

What's Next?

- Identify priority targets specific to each gateway community's core theme.
- Develop and adopt Mount Rogers brand.
- Coordinate marketing identities for each gateway community.
- Expand local small business incentives and business planning competitions.

VTC PM Involvement

- Hometowns of Mount Rogers design team.
- Tourism strategic planning for gateway communities.
- Ongoing technical assistance and guidance.

Assistance From VTC

- Assistance with identifying new outdoor focused products, opportunities and events to create new and additional demand.
- Support for tourism infrastructure (lodging, dining) through Tourism Development Financing Program (TDFP).
- Communications assistance through PR, Social and Digital Marketing.
- Provide assistance with community development in gateway communities.

Success:

- Creation of experience-based itineraries.
- Marketing campaign designed and implemented.
- Established Certified Guide Program.
- Strengthened knowledge between downtown business owners and regional offering.

REGIONAL INITIATIVES

SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA OUTDOORS – FORMERLY APPALACHIAN SPRING

(Ongoing Initiative)

friendsofswva.org/development/anchor-areas

VTC PM Team Member

Becky Nave and Michelle Workman

Region/Localities Impacted

- **Southwest Virginia - Blue Ridge Highlands**
- **Southwest Virginia - Heart of Appalachia**

Summary

Southwest Virginia Outdoors is a partnership of community and regional development, tourism, environmental stewardship, outdoor recreation, and entrepreneurial assistance stakeholders to develop and promote Southwest Virginia as a world class destination of natural and recreational assets for visitation and enjoyment.

Status

- Under the guidance of Friends of SWVA, the project will continue to evolve.

What's Next?

- Continue to connect eight anchor recreation destinations to surrounding communities and develop an even larger outdoor recreation industry in Southwest Virginia.
- Appalachian Trail; Blue Ridge Parkway; Breaks Interstate Park; Clinch River; Daniel Boone's Wilderness Trail; High Knob; Mount Rogers; New River.

VTC PM Involvement

- Technical assistance for master planning processes.
- Serve as Chair of Wayfinding group for High Knob Regional Initiative.
- Continued support for their marketing efforts.
- Sponsor of SWVA Outdoor Expo.

Assistance From VTC

- Continued development team involvement/assistance.
- Market the eight anchor destinations & gateway communities.
- Include Southwest Virginia, Southwest Virginia Outdoors, #swva in our content.
- Outdoor recreation is huge for Southwest Virginia.

Success:

- Major Southwest Virginia outdoor assets are linked together in cohesive trail and package.
- Regional outdoor marketing program is developed and implemented.
- Outdoor assets are connected to nearby towns.

REGIONAL INITIATIVES

TAZEWELL/BUCHANAN TRAILS INITIATIVE

(New Initiative)

(No website at this time)

VTC PM Team Member

Michelle Workman

Region/Localities Impacted

- **Southwest Virginia - Heart of Appalachia:** Buchanan County, Tazewell County

Summary

The counties of Buchanan and Tazewell are working along with the Thompson Charitable Foundation, Friends of Southwest Virginia, Virginia Tourism, and Breaks Interstate Park to develop sustainable outdoor recreation options.

Status

- Planning phase - consultant selected for (4) county outdoor recreation development plan

What's Next?

- Four-county outdoor recreation development plan.
- Development of outdoor recreation options, including hiking and biking trails, river access points, etc.

VTC PM Involvement

- Serve as member of the trails committee
- Participated field trip to Knoxville to tour Urban Wilderness Trail System.
- Provide ongoing technical assistance.
- Assist with committee as liaison for VTC and other agencies.
- Provided letter of support for grant application for four county outdoor recreation assessment.

Assistance From VTC

- Ongoing marketing of the counties, and ongoing marketing technical assistance.

Success:

- Development of multiple hiking and biking trails in Tazewell and Buchanan.
- Trail connecting Burkes Garden to Breaks Interstate Park.
- Primary tourism amenities available (lodging, restaurants, etc.).
- Annual tourism expenditure growth in counties.

CLINCH RIVER VALLEY INITIATIVE (CRVI)

(Ongoing Initiative)

clinchriverva.com

VTC PM Team Member

Becky Nave and Michelle Workman

Region/Localities Impacted

- **Southwest Virginia - Heart of Appalachia:** Scott County, Russell County, Wise County, Tazewell County

Summary

The Clinch River Valley Initiative (CRVI) is a collaborative effort in Southwest Virginia, focusing on the Clinch River Valley—one of the most biodiverse river systems in North America. Working at a watershed scale with many local partners, this grassroots effort has developed significant momentum with applicability for communities in Appalachia and beyond. The effort builds upon the unique cultural and ecological assets of the Clinch River to create new possibilities in the communities along the Clinch, particularly around environmental education, economic development, and entrepreneurship.

Status

- The Initiative is currently transitioning to a 501c3.
- The Clinch River State Park is in development with hiring a park manager.

What's Next?

- Fundraising for 501c3, State Park Master Planning Process.

VTC PM Involvement

- Serve on the steering committee, Downtown Revitalization Action Group.
- Serves on the transition team and communications strategy team for the transition to 501c3.

Assistance From VTC

- Work collaboratively with CRVI partners to assist with communication and marketing strategies for the park and the communities along the Clinch River to increase eco and heritage tourism.
- **Public Relations** – assist with distribution of press release leading up to and as park opens.
- **Social Media** - share post when the park opens through Instagram, Facebook and Twitter
- **Digital** - featured blog post.

Success:

- Clinch River State Park is open.
- Full-time Executive Director hired.
- Financially stable.

REGIONAL INITIATIVES

SPEARHEAD TRAILS

(Ongoing Initiative)

spearheadtrails.com

VTC PM Team Member

Becky Nave and Michelle Workman

Region/Localities Impacted

- **Southwest Virginia - Heart of Appalachia:** St. Paul (Wise & Russell Counties), Grundy (Buchanan), Pennington Gap (Lee), Pocahontas, Richlands (Tazewell), Haysi, Breaks (Dickenson)

Summary

- Spearhead Trails is currently a system of five all-terrain/off-highway vehicle (ATV) trails, one four-wheeled drive vehicle and ATV trail, and one equestrian trail that wind through the mountains of Southwest Virginia.

Status

- The Spearhead Trail has opened several trails and is expanding new trails.

What's Next?

- Scott County Horse Trail
- Clinch River Equestrian Trail
- Pound River Access Points
- Continued expansion of current trails

VTC PM Involvement

- Continued facilitation (VTC began the development of the initiative in 2006).
- Serve in a technical assistance capacity on the Board – along with other Board committees.
- Provide letters of support for funding – both for Spearhead Trails and businesses connected to the initiative.

Assistance From VTC

- Continued marketing through VTC channels.
- New photography needed for new trails.

Success:

- Backroads of the Cumberlands complete.
- Trail expansion to connect with Hatfield McCoy Trails.
- Opening of Sportsman Center.
- Trail connections between communities.

SHENANDOAH SPIRITS TRAIL

(Ongoing Initiative)

shenandoahspiritstrail.com

VTC PM Team Member.

Stephanie Lillard

Region/Localities Impacted

- **Shenandoah Valley:** City of Harrisonburg, Rockingham County, Luray-Page County, Front Royal-Warren County, Clark County, City of Winchester/Frederick County.

Summary

The Shenandoah Spirits Trails connect wineries, craft breweries, cideries and distilleries across seven localities in the Northern Shenandoah Valley. In addition to libations, visitors are encouraged to experience farm-to-table dining, downtowns, and outdoor recreation.

Status

- The invested DMO partners are working to establish a long-term plan for funding and sustainability.
- The trail is supported by the DMO's and various marketing and advertising grants, with no dues payable by the trail members.
- The trail localities continue to assess past performance for both digital and print marketing efforts.

What's Next?

- Establish partnerships with visitor transportation services and inbound leisure marketing agencies to increase visitation from northern drive markets.
- Apply for marketing leverage grant.

VTC PM Involvement

- PM destination development staff attends partner marketing meetings, serving in an advisory role, providing planning assistance and guidance on VTC programming, to include: grant funding, PR, brand, and digital media opportunities.

Assistance From VTC

- Public Relations and media contacts.
- Promotion and awareness by Communications and Sales team.

Success:

- Increased trail membership.
- Increased visitors.
- Sustainable Funding.

REGIONAL INITIATIVES

VISIT LYNCHBURG – SPORTS TOURISM MARKETING INITIATIVE

(New Initiative)

lynchburgvirginia.org

VTC PM Team Member

Katie Conner

Region/Localities Impacted

- **Central Virginia:** City of Lynchburg

Summary

Focus incorporates looking into recommendations for facility, event, and organizational development enhancements that will likely drive additional overnight stays and economic impact to the City of Lynchburg through the sports tourism market.

Status

- Strategic plan completed in May 2019 by the Huddle Up Group.
- Working group began meeting in October 2019.
- Planning and development phase – small group meeting to determine content for consumer brochure, as well as inquiring into budget needs to accommodate new website, marketing, etc.

What's Next?

Advance action items that support the following primary recommendation areas:

- Event Solicitation/Creation Concepts, Success Measures/Benchmarks, Local Messaging and Marketing Platforms and External Partnerships.
- Consideration of the secondary recommendation areas: Venue Enrichment/Development/ Usage, Funding Mechanism and Investigate Organizational Structure.

VTC PM Involvement

- PM destination development staff will be part of working group.
- Provide guidance and feedback for applying for Marketing Leverage Program grant.

Assistance From VTC

- Sports Virginia acknowledgment and partnership.
- Leads through Sports Virginia.

Success:

- Create new sports facility guide.
- Increased marketing of Lynchburg Legacy events.
- Increased sales tax collection for room nights and restaurants.

FIELDS OF GOLD/BIKE THE VALLEY (TOUR DE FARM PROGRAM)**(Ongoing Initiative)**

No dedicated Tour de Farm website at this time. Will likely live within Bike the Valley or Fields of Gold.

VTC PM Team Member

Katie Conner and Stephanie Lillard

Region/Localities Impacted

- **Shenandoah Valley and Virginia Mountains:** The current footprint that makes up the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission include the counties of Rockbridge, Augusta, Rockingham, Highland and Bath, the cities of Buena Vista, Harrisonburg, Lexington, Staunton and Waynesboro, as well as 11 towns.

Summary

Highlight cycling trails that connect Fields of Gold stakeholders/sites with the cycling community through the Bike the Valley program. Fields of Gold is more than just a thematic motorized trail.

Status

- Planning phase – Fields of Gold is in a transitional phase, determining next steps for how the program can best be sustained, and continue to be successful.
- Bike the Valley has identified Tour de Farm featured routes and is working with sites on best practices and ways to market the program.

What's Next?

- Build-out marketing plan for program and identify best practices for sustainability.

VTC PM Involvement

- Serve on steering committee and marketing committee for Fields of Gold and provides facilitative and technical assistance as needed.
- Will assist with review of RFP's for website development and obtain research from VTC regarding applicable areas of interest for cycling, agritourism, etc.

Assistance From VTC

- Fields of Gold program would like stronger presence on Virginia.org as it relates to Agritourism in Virginia.
- Linking travel writers to the initiative for cycling magazines, bloggers, etc. is a priority.

Success:

- All bike routes developed/promoted (website, social media, etc.).
- One premier event each year.
- Five new destination sites/businesses in three years.
- Tourism expenditure growth in region.

REGIONAL INITIATIVES

SHENANDOAH VALLEY TOURISM PARTNERSHIP

(Ongoing Initiative)

shenandoahvalley.org

VTC PM Team Member(s)

Katie Conner and Stephanie Lillard

Region/Localities Impacted

- **Shenandoah Valley DMO partners:** Lexington-Rockbridge Area Tourism, City of Waynesboro, City of Staunton, Augusta County, Rockingham County, City of Harrisonburg, Shenandoah County, Luray-Page County Chamber of Commerce, Page County, City of Winchester, Clark County, Front Royal-Warren County.

Summary

A collaboration of DMO partners who seek to increase awareness and advocate for the promotion of the Shenandoah Valley as a premier destination in Virginia to markets outside of the individual DMO reach.

Status

- Contracted with *CURE* as Agency of Record
- Continue to work towards reaching markets outside of their individual reaches, included drive markets and Canada.
- Hold monthly meetings and an annual meeting.
- Annually host travel writers and media.

What's Next?

- Build-out website to incorporate an itinerary builder for real-time trip planning.
- Enhance content for website and printer collateral.
- Identify legislative agenda items supported by the partnership in preparation of general assembly session in January.

VTC PM Involvement

- Serve in an advisory role to partnership – give monthly VTC updates.
- Coordinate applicable VTC marketing activities when needed.
- Facilitate and develop two-year action plan.

Assistance From VTC

- Public relations media contacts and staff FAM tour.
- Guidance with group tour market, international marketing opportunities.

Success:

- Steady tourism expenditure growth in the trail region.
- Enhanced partnerships with private sector businesses.

VIRGINIA'S LEWIS & CLARK LEGACY TRAIL

(Ongoing Initiative)

www.valewisandclarklegacytrail.org

VTC PM Team Member

Katie Conner and Becky Nave

Region/Localities Impacted

- **Statewide** through 10 localities, Albemarle to Bristol

Summary

Extension of the Western Legacy Trail eastward to form the Eastern Legacy Trail portion of the Lewis and Clark Heritage Trail in Virginia.

Status

- Board of Directors formed and 501c3 status established in 2020.
- Planning phase; applicable state legislation passed through House and Senate legislative session in 2015; no Federal or State funding at present.
- Program leadership (volunteer) now includes chairpersons for each of the participating localities.
- Lewis and Clark Heritage Trail Foundation Portrait Signage partnership established in 2019. Approved sites can make application to have signs on property.

What's Next?

- Two separate Resolutions of Support documents will be presented during the 2020 General Assembly Session.
- Funds to support signage development and marketing efforts.

VTC PM Involvement

- Involved in a supporting/advisory role as needed and appropriate.

Assistance From VTC

- Continued support and facilitation as needed and appropriate.
- Once established, a VTC staff familiarization tour will be organized of the locations to learn and promote the new trail.
- Provide guidance on marketing and applicable opportunities once established.

Success:

- Trail acknowledged and accepted at the local level and completed.
- Marketing plan developed/implemented.
- Tourism expenditure growth in region.

REGIONAL INITIATIVES

BRUNSWICK STEW TRAIL

(New Initiative)

(No website at this time)

VTC PM Team Member

Sandra Tanner

Region/Localities Impacted

- **Southern Virginia:** Brunswick County

Summary

Connects of assets in Brunswick County by creating a marketing effort based on Brunswick Stew. Ultimate goal is to connect all assets and have visitors moving throughout the county.

Status

- Currently in the planning phase with goal of developing a cohesive brand and marketing program for Brunswick County.

What's Next?

- Official trail launch planned in February 2020.
- Continued development of tour route and sites.
- Development and implementation of marketing plan.

VTC PM Involvement

- Technical assistance and guidance for tour development.
- Facilitation of meetings.

Assistance From VTC

- Ongoing marketing of the town/region, and ongoing marketing technical assistance
- Assistance with tour development.

Success:

- Trail developed and implemented.
- Marketing campaign designed and implemented.
- Recognition for Brunswick Stew and Brunswick County.
- Steady visitation growth to social media channels and website.
- Five new/expanded businesses triggered by the trail.
- Tourism expenditure growth in region.

SOUTHERN VIRGINIA RACING PARTNERSHIP

(New Initiative)

(No single website at this time)

VTC PM Team Member

Sandra Tanner

Region/Localities Impacted

- **Southern Virginia:** South Boston, Martinsville, Danville
- **Central Virginia:** Dinwiddie County

Summary

A collaboration of Southern Virginia Race Tracks with the main goal to get the tracks working together to create itineraries to attract race fans into the region and keep them staying longer in the area.

Status

- Planning phase with the goal of developing a cohesive marketing and branding of the race tracks.

What's Next?

- Development of relationships and marketing for Southern Virginia race tracks.

VTC PM Involvement

- Facilitation of meetings.
- Technical assistance for planning and marketing.

Assistance From VTC

- Assistance for developers through the Tourism Development Financing Program if applicable.
- Ongoing marketing of the town/region, and ongoing marketing technical assistance for racing in the region.

Success:

- Race Tracks working together.
- Development of marketing and Itineraries.
- Increase in race fan visitation to tracks.

REGIONAL INITIATIVES

TOWN OF SOUTH BOSTON DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT

(Ongoing Initiative)

southboston.com

VTC PM Team Member

Sandra Tanner

Region/Localities Impacted

- **Southern Virginia:** South Boston

Summary

VTC continues to work with the town to assist with implementation of its master plan for downtown redevelopment/economic restructuring. The plans involve renovations of the John Randolph into a boutique hotel; trail development to connect the Tobacco Heritage Trail to the downtown area; and development of blue-way, greenspace and downtown businesses. Developing city/town centers to be competitive with the NC border communities is a component of the overall economic development strategy for the area.

Status

- Planning phase continues to progress, and resources are being identified to move forward.

What's Next?

- Acquisition of property for greenspace and park.
- Development of trails leading from the Tobacco Heritage Trail to the downtown area.
- Provide assistance for business development, including workshops, business consults, etc.
- VTC will hold workshops to assist the entrepreneurs in the region.

VTC PM Involvement

- Member of the downtown master plan committee.
- Assistance with the downtown master plan
- Assist with developers as liaison for VTC services. Ongoing technical assistance and liaison to other resources.
- VTC assisted as a judge in the Community Business Launch program. Businesses have opened in the downtown as a result and one business has already expanded into the Town of Halifax.

Assistance From VTC

- Assistance for developers through the Tourism Development Financing Program if applicable
- Ongoing marketing of the town/region, and ongoing marketing technical assistance.

Success:

- Connection to the Tobacco Heritage Trail completed.
- Hotel/lodging project completed.
- Primary tourism amenities available in town (brewery, lodging, coffee shop, etc.).
- Annual tourism expenditure growth in town.

SALTY SOUTHERN ROUTE

(Ongoing Initiative)

saltysouthernroute.com

VTC PM Team Member

Sandra Tanner

Region/Localities Impacted

- **Coastal Virginia:** Southampton, Franklin, Suffolk, Surry, Smithfield, Isle of Wight
- **Central Virginia:** Sussex
- Opportunity to expand to other areas

Summary

A partnership among localities for the development of a marketing campaign promoting peanuts and pork, including restaurants that serve these items as signature dishes on the “trail”. The ultimate objective is to develop a trail connecting farms, restaurants and other attractions centered around peanuts and pork. Connecting these assets was a goal of the DRIVE Tourism 1.0 Statewide Tourism Plan.

Status

- The route was launched in Spring 2019 and is being marketed by the regional partners.
- Trail expansion and recruitment of new sites ongoing.
- Successful award of a VTC Marketing Leverage Program grant.

What's Next?

- Continued development of the trail, adding new sites.
- Continued marketing as directed in the marketing plan.

VTC PM Involvement

- Facilitation of meetings.
- Technical assistance.

Assistance From VTC

- Hold workshops in the region for social media, writing a press release, etc.
- Assistance with marketing, website splash page, assistance with public relations, etc.

Success:

- Trail is fully developed and implemented.
- Marketing campaign designed and implemented.
- Steady visitation growth to social media channels and website.
- Five new/expanded businesses triggered by the trail.
- Tourism expenditure growth in region.

REGIONAL INITIATIVES

SOUTHERN VIRGINIA WILD BLUEWAY

(Ongoing Initiative)

sovawildblueway.com

VTC PM Team Member

Sandra Tanner

Region/Localities Impacted

- **Southern Virginia:** Halifax County and Mecklenburg County
- expansion possible to other areas in region

Summary

VTC continues to work with the Southern Virginia Wild Blueway committee to expand its footprint and add rivers/ lakes in the surrounding area to enhance the paddling experiences for visitors.

Status

- The Southern Virginia Wild Blueway marketing campaign continues. The committee sees the need to add launch sites to the existing trail and to increase their footprint by expanding the marketing effort to other localities in the Southern VA region. Further development of outdoor activities and connectivity to the assets in the town and area are part of the Southern Virginia strategy.

What's Next?

- The committee will add other launch sites to the existing trail, and highlight the businesses (lodging, restaurants, etc.).
- The committee is also in the exploratory phase of adding to their footprint by looking at other communities in Southern VA along the water ways. Once they have explored and have other localities on board, they will expand the marketing effort to include other localities.
- Plans are to apply for grants and seek funding assistance with launch site development for this regional initiative.

VTC PM Involvement

- Member of the steering committee.
- Ongoing technical assistance and facilitation.

Assistance From VTC

- VTC continues to promote the Southern Virginia Wild Blueway.
- Social media push will be important.

Success:

- Funding for and completion of all targeted launch sites.
- Expanded marketing efforts to include new towns/launch sites.
- Increased outfitter/guide activity on the river.
- Tourism expenditure growth in region.

TOBACCO HERITAGE TRAIL

(Ongoing Initiative)

tobaccoheritagetrail.org

VTC PM Team Member

Sandra Tanner

Region/Localities Impacted

- **Southern Virginia:** Halifax County - South Boston; Mecklenburg County - Boydton; Clarksville, South Hill, La Crosse, Chase City; Brunswick County - Brodnax, Lawrenceville, Alberta.

Summary

The Tobacco Heritage Trail focuses on the development of a 140-mile multi-use, non-motorized linear park/trail, including some on-road segments for connectivity. The trail construction is being done in phases around the towns so these towns can benefit from the economic impact of trail users. Several sections of the trail are now open. The final phase of the trail will be developed and connected as funds are available.

Status

- This is an ongoing multifaceted project. The project is in the construction phase of some portions, the marketing/ business development phase in other open sections, and in the land acquisition phase of segments for connectivity in other areas.

What's Next?

- Completion of acquisition of property in Halifax County providing connection to town of Halifax

VTC PM Involvement

- Active involvement in the Roanoke River Rails to Trails.
- Primary facilitator of all phases of the trail.
- Marketing Leverage Program funding invested.
- Supporting negotiations of contracts with Norfolk Southern.

Assistance From VTC

- Continue marketing the trail, especially the portions where towns are ready for visitors.

Success:

- Downtowns revitalized in all trailhead/access areas.
- Increase outfitter/guide activity on the trail system.
- Continued tourism expenditure growth in region.

REGIONAL INITIATIVES

TOWN OF FARMVILLE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT

(Ongoing Initiative)

visitfarmville.com

VTC PM Team Member

Sandra Tanner

Region/Localities Impacted

- **Central Virginia:** Farmville

Summary

VTC is working with the town/county Leadership and Downtown Farmville Inc. to continue development of the town into a premier destination for the Central Virginia Region. This includes development of South Main Street, an otherwise overlooked section of Downtown. Focus strategies on creating alternative modes of transportation throughout downtown and Main Street, i.e. better walkability and creating bicycle lanes.

Status

- Planning phase.

What's Next?

- Assisting town and Downtown Farmville Inc. with development of strategic plans.
- Act as liaison with developers and potential funding sources.
- Facilitate planning sessions and workshops.
- Working to get Community Business Launch (CBL) program into Downtown Farmville.

VTC PM Involvement

- Ongoing assistance with technical assistance (planning, facilitation, resources, etc.).
- Seek funding sources for Downtown Development initiatives.
- Supporting development of trails connecting to downtown and spur trails off of High Bridge Trail system.

Assistance From VTC

- Continued support from Business Development team with Tourism Development Financing Program.
- Support of Farmville and Downtown Farmville marketing initiatives.
- Assistance with exposure to larger markets (Washington D.C., Charlotte, Raleigh/Durham).

Success:

- Occupation of South Main Street buildings with viable, fun, and attractive businesses to visitors.
- Support of Downtown initiatives throughout Town and County.
- Alternative funding sources to help with project completion.

TOWN OF FARMVILLE RIVERWALK PROJECT

(New Initiative)

visitfarmville.com

VTC PM Team Member

Sandra Tanner

Region/Localities Impacted

- **Central Virginia:** Farmville

Summary

VTC is working with the Town/County Leadership, Downtown Farmville Inc., Department of Conservation and Recreation, and local businesses to develop a riverwalk system that will highlight the natural features of the Appomattox River and create alternative walkability throughout Downtown Farmville.

Status

- Early planning phase

What's Next?

- Move idea into further consideration with town officials.
- Work with local business owners, river advocacy groups (Friends of the Appomattox River) to develop strategic plan.
- Assist with facilitating public input and planning sessions for riverwalk idea
- Gain support from outdoor recreational community.

VTC PM Involvement

- Act as liaison between Farmville and communities and organizations with experience in development of riverwalks (City of Hopewell, Prince George County, and the Friends of the Lower Appomattox River (FOLAR)).
- Ongoing assistance with technical assistance (planning, facilitation, development and research resources, etc.).
- Seek funding sources for Downtown Riverwalk system.
- Work with Town Parks and Recreation committee to add riverwalk to future development project list.

Assistance From VTC

- Marketing of Central/Southern Virginia river activities.
- Research assistance with a specific focus on waterfront communities.

Success:

- Development of Riverwalk plan.
- Unanimous support of this initiative within town, county, citizens, and business communities.

REGIONAL INITIATIVES

APPOMATTOX RIVER REGION ACCESS PROJECT

(New Initiative)

(No website at this time)

VTC PM Team Member

Sandra Tanner

Region/Localities Impacted

- **Southern Virginia**
- **Central Virginia**

Summary

Creating a focus on the Appomattox River as a premier natural tourism asset within the Central/Southern Virginia regions. Helping to develop more public access points and working with communities along river to highlight the river as a draw to the region through new marketing initiatives.

Status

- Planning phase.

What's Next?

- Gaining consensus among counties/communities of the importance of the Appomattox River as a tourism draw.
- Work with local/county/state agencies, developers, and private citizens currently operating in Appomattox River region to create public access points.

VTC PM Involvement

- Act as liaison between communities and organizations within Appomattox River region.
- Employ assistance from Department of Conservation and Recreation.
- Work with communities in Appomattox River region to develop marketing strategy for current and/or planned opportunities for visitors in the region.
- Ongoing assistance with technical assistance (planning, facilitation, development and research resources, etc.).

Assistance From VTC

- Opportunities for development funds for outdoor recreational focused projects.
- Continued support of outdoor recreation projects through DRIVE 2.0.
- Research assistance with a specific focus on waterfront communities.

Success:

- Development of more public access points along Appomattox River.
- Designation of the Appomattox River as Scenic River.
- Marketing plan for Appomattox River region to include outdoor recreational opportunities.

COASTAL VIRGINIA ECOTOURISM ALLIANCE (CVEA)

Chesapeake Bay National Recreation Area Initiative

(Ongoing Initiative)

viriniawatertrails.com

VTC PM Team Member

Staci Martin

Region/Localities Impacted

- **Coastal Eastern Shore**
- **Chesapeake Bay, Coastal Virginia**
- The Virginia Water Trails program impacts Virginia’s Eastern Shore, Middle Peninsula, and Northern Neck. The Lower Chickahominy River region beginning in 2020.

Summary

CVEA's program’s purpose is two-fold: promote ecotourism and paddling as low environmental impact/high economic impact driver in the rural coastal region and to promote stewardship ethics among the visiting public through eco-tour guide certification programs, interpretive programming, visitor marketing, and interpretive materials.

Status

- The CVEA program is funded in part by Virginia Department of Environmental Quality/NOAA Coastal Zone Management program. The Eco-Tour Guide certification course was revitalized with a grant from VTC in 2016. Virginia Water Trails received a VTC Marketing Leverage grant in 2020.

What’s Next?

- Plan RVA has joined the initiative as an outcome of a grant that reviewed the economic impact of conserved lands on the Lower Chickahominy.
- Partners will now work with Charles City County, New Kent County, and James City County to bring them into the initiative and identify existing and new water trail potential in those regions.

VTC PM Involvement

- Assisting through the CVEA ecotourism steering committee.
- Ongoing technical assistance and facilitation as requested and needed
- Support community development in trail towns.

Assistance From VTC

- Assist with promotion of the viriniawatertrails.com website.
- Promote the opportunity through our industry outreach.
- Possible co-branding (with Virginia is for Outdoor Lovers) of T-shirts, glassware, etc.
- LOVEWorks with paddling, watershed, and waterman history themes along the water trails
- Marketing Leverage Program application assistance.

Success:

- Trail fully designed/implemented. Water trail rating with difficulty for beginning paddlers.
- Marketing plan/campaign implemented.
- New outfitters and tour guide certified through the EcoTour Guide course.
- Three new outfitters by end of 2022.
- Three new outfitters were opened by 2020 and successfully created a partnership and MLP Marketing grant application.

REGIONAL INITIATIVES

VIRGINIA'S SPACE LOOP/VIRGINIA IS FOR SPACE LOVERS

(Ongoing Initiative)

- * **Key to pandemic recovery and America's 250th Innovation themes**

VTC PM Team Member

Staci Martin

Region/Localities Impacted

- **Coastal Eastern Shore** and **Northern Virginia** rural and urban areas along I-95, I-64, I-66, US 17 and US 13.

Summary

The Virginia is for Space Lovers initiative includes the Virginia's Space loop concept. The Space Loop will be a designated route that creates a driving loop around the "East of 95" coastal region

Status

- Virginia is for Space Lovers logo was approved in 2017 and unveiled at the Governor's Aerospace Advisory Council as the first phase in development space-related tourism product.
- A landing page virginia.org/space was completed as part of the Apollo Moon Mission 50th commemoration in 2019.
- In 2021 Virginia Space Loop partnership meetings will convene to lay out a plan for a comprehensive regional approach to promoting and growing space tourism in the region.

What's Next?

- Quarterly Virginia's Space Loop partner meetings.
- 2021 update of virginia.org/space with new events and attractions.
- Creation of new Space Lovers sizzle reel.

VTC PM Involvement

- Actively involved in keeping Governor's Aerospace Advisory Council and its members aware of the initiative and its potential impacts beyond tourism.
- Education of communities and businesses about the Space Loop as a tourism driver for tourism development and visitation.

Assistance From VTC

- Promote use of the Virginia is for Space Lovers logo for merchandise sales with partners in museum gift shops and at attractions.
- A special virginia.org/space digital page will be continually updated each year.
- Ongoing promotion of the Virginia Space Loop partner sites and events.

Success:

- Technical support for creation of organizational structure for partners to take the Space Loop to the next step (marketing grant, website, rack cards).
- Growth in ecotourism as it relates to night sky/full moon tours/trips.
- Three new/expanded businesses in three years, directly attributed.

COASTAL VIRGINIA DOWNTOWNS/MAIN STREET INITIATIVE

(New Initiative)

(No website at this time)

VTC PM Team Member

Staci Martin

Region/Localities Impacted

- **Chesapeake Bay: Callao** (Northumberland County-Northern Neck), Town of Tappahannock (Essex County-Middle Peninsula); Gloucester (Gloucester County); Town of Irvington (Lancaster County-Northern Neck); Town of Kilmarnock (Lancaster County)
- **Coastal Eastern Shore:** Cape Charles (Northampton County-Eastern Shore); Onancock (Accomack County-Eastern Shore); Chincoteague (Accomack County-Eastern Shore)

Summary

In 2020 three coastal towns became designated Virginia Downtowns through the DHCD Main Street Program. All three towns have selected tourism as one of their community development focus areas. VTC continues to work with DHCD staff to help these towns create organizational structure and plans to achieve designation and grow economic impacts. Four new towns are interested in pursuing designation.

Status

- Towns are undergoing revitalization in terms of events and product development.
- Partners are working together to create tourism product in key downtowns and surrounding areas.

What's Next?

- Creation of managements teams, community-led committees, and organizational structure through facilitated sessions to narrow roles and responsibilities of tourism support organizations and individual town members is anticipated.
- Creation of annual marketing and event plan that will allow the towns to participate in VTC incentives (TDFP) and VTC marketing grants (MLP) are planned for 2021-2023.

VTC PM Involvement

- Facilitation of tourism development plans/tourism marketing plans when requested.
- Sharing of regional success and strategies.
- Coordinate applicable VTC marketing activities when needed.
- Coordinate potential partnerships between regions and towns where applicable.

Assistance From VTC

- Marketing of the towns through VTC channels

Success:

- Sustainable program/organization to ensure ongoing promotions, programing, product development etc.
- Consistent event listings and marketing of events to drive visitation.
- New tourism related business and organizations added in the region.
- Steady tourism expenditure growth in the localities and adjacent regions

REGIONAL INITIATIVES

VIRGINIA OYSTER TRAIL REVITALIZATION

(New Initiative)

www.virginiaoystertrail.com

VTC PM Team Member

Staci Martin

Region/Localities Impacted

- **Coastal Eastern Shore;** Chesapeake Bay (Middle Peninsula & Northern Neck); Coastal-Hampton Roads Summary

Summary

Virginia Oyster Trail was spun off from Artisan's Center of Virginia into an independent 501c in 2020. Transition and revitalization are ongoing in partnership with Coastal Virginia Ecotourism Alliance program and Virginia Beach Restaurant Association assisting with support.

Status

- An advisory board has been formed. VTC is not on the board but participates in technical support issues and monthly calls with members.
- VOT has some funding contracts through the ANPDC Coastal Zone Water Trails program grant to integrate VOT information into the Water Trails website. As part of Water Trails program, the partnership is looking to SeaGrant institutions for continued support and revitalization funding through the SeaGrant program.

What's Next?

- Ongoing support including meeting facilitation and technical assistance.
- Marketing of the town/regions in the coastal area, marketing of oysters and oyster related events

Assistance From VTC

- Continue ongoing facilitation and development support for tourism development and tourism marketing.

Success:

- Revitalization of the VOT structure, board, and partnerships as a stand-alone entity.
- Funding secured for ongoing operations
- Implementation, business and marketing plans completed.

CHINCOTEAGUE HISTORIC FIREHOUSE REVITALIZATION

(New Initiative)

delmarvanow.com/story/news/2019/10/08/chincoteague-officials-vote-buy-old-firehouse/3906002002

VTC PM Team Member

Staci Martin

Region/Localities Impacted

- **Coastal Eastern Shore:** Chincoteague (Accomack County)

Summary

Chincoteague's Historic Firehouse located downtown on Main Street was recently acquired by the Town of Chincoteague for redevelopment. At 30,000 sq. feet with dorms, commercial kitchen, three vehicle bays, parking and adequate wastewater capacity, the site is prime to jumpstart redevelopment of Main Street in Chincoteague.

Status

- An informal advisory group formed in mid-2019 by the ANPDC to pursue grant funding for revitalization.
- Industrial Revitalization Funds, Virginia Housing Development Association funds, and historic tax credits are all being explored to convert the site into mixed use workforce housing, retail, restaurant, and parking.
- Plan include historic interpretation of VFD history and Chincoteague Pony Swim.

What's Next?

- Develop fundraising plan, renovation plan, business plan, etc.
- Site visits with funding partners, community input meetings, and entrepreneurs.

VTC PM Involvement

- Ongoing support, including technical assistance and facilitation.

Assistance From VTC

- Ongoing marketing of Chincoteague.

Success:

- Feasibility and revenue plans completed.
- Funding secured for renovation.
- Implementation, business and marketing plans completed.
- Application for Marketing Leverage Program to market the facility.
- Renovation and opening.
- Visitation projections met.

REGIONAL INITIATIVES

EASTERN SHORE RAILS TO TRAILS

(New Initiative)

www.delmarvanow.com/story/news/2019/07/02/va-shore-looks-rails-trails-railroad-seeks-abandon-tracks/1616241001

VTC PM Team Member

Staci Martin

Region/Localities Impacted

- **Coastal Eastern Shore:** Accomack County, Northampton County

Summary

Railroad is currently owned by Canonie Atlantic Company and is working with the Federal Railroad Commission on rail operation abandonment and transition to a rails to trails program with easements for improved utilities including wastewater and broadband.

Status

- The Rails to Trails initiative is in its initial phase of seeking appropriate permits and operators through the specified Railroad Commission requirements.
- Meetings with the Virginia Bicycling Federation were held in October 2019 to discuss potential vision for 55 miles of track.
- VDOT completing local visitor center surveys on use and impacts in 2021

What's Next?

- Public information coming through county, planning district commission, and Eastern Shore Tourism Commission.
- Creation of subcommittee should occur in mid to late 2020.

VTC PM Involvement

- Actively involved in the Eastern Shore Tourism Commission and with the Planning District Commission as it relates to this project.
- Connections with other state and federal partners to access Rails to Trails funding, Recreational Trails Program funding, and Federal Transportation Enhancement Authority funding.

Assistance From VTC

- Continued promotion of current bicycling events and bicycle routes on the Eastern Shore.

Success:

- Permanent/capable organization overseeing trail program.
- Full tourism related economic development plan designating needed bicycle tour operators, outfitters, repair shops, and other tourist related amenities including restaurants, lodging.
- Consistent growth in Virginia's bicycling industry in the coastal region; differentiation from mountain biking.
- Three new/expanded businesses in three years, directly attributed to development of rails to trails programming.

ONANCOCK SCHOOL REVITALIZATION

(Ongoing Initiative)

onancockschool.org

VTC PM Team Member

Staci Martin

Region/Localities Impacted

- **Coastal Eastern Shore:** Accomack County

Summary

The concept for the repurposing of the school includes space for artists, incubator space for entrepreneurial initiatives, office space for government and NGO's (Co-op Extension; SNAP/WIC), tourism marketplace, farmers market, community commercial kitchen and summer camp programs. It has potential to be a regional tourism driver.

Status

- An advisory board has been formed, in which VTC is involved and assists as needed.
- Engineering and environmental studies are completed.
- Possible industrial revitalization fund site if locality match can be allocated.
- Potential project for 2021-2022 is addition of a community kitchen in the former home economics building. Conversations with VDACS on possible funding for this aspect will continue in 2020.
- VTC LOVEwork placed in 2020

What's Next?

- Develop fundraising plan, renovation plan, business plan, etc.

VTC PM Involvement

- Ongoing support including meeting facilitation and technical assistance.

Assistance From VTC

- Marketing of the town/region, and ongoing marketing technical assistance.

Success:

- Feasibility and revenue plans completed.
- Funding secured for renovation.
- Implementation, business and marketing plans completed.
- Application for Marketing Leverage Program to market the facility.
- Renovation and opening.
- Visitation projections met.

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