



**Microbusiness Marketing  
Leverage Program  
Grant Webinar**

June 29, 2026

# 2024 Economic Impact of Visitors in Virginia

*\*Source: Tourism Economics &  
Longwoods International*

# 44.7 MILLION VISITORS

AN ALL TIME HIGH BY OVER ONE MILLION

COMING FROM FURTHER

## 73%

Out of State Visitors

+3% from 2023

STAYING LONGER

## 3.4 NIGHTS

Up from 3.1 in 2023

SPENDING MORE

# \$35.1 BILLION

UP 5.4% FROM 2023 - NEARLY \$2 BILLION IN NEW VISITOR SPENDING

## ALL BENEFITTING VIRGINIA

State & Local Taxes Paid by Visitors

## \$2.5 BILLION

+4.2% from 2023

## OVER 5% OF ALL VIRGINIANS

are employed in visitor-facing industries.





# VTC Application & Review Process

This outlines the Virginia Tourism grant review process from start to finish and is designed to guide applicants clearly through each step. Our goal is to provide a **transparent and supportive experience** that ensures applicants understand requirements, timelines, and expectations. By prioritizing clear communication and assistance, we aim to deliver the highest level of customer service throughout this process.



# Microbusiness Marketing Leverage Program (MMLP)

The **Microbusiness Marketing Leverage Program (MMLP)** leverages existing funds and requires a targeted and research-based marketing plan designed to drive tourism to Virginia. This **reimbursable grant program** focuses on **new marketing initiatives** for small businesses and shoulder season.

- MMLP Application Closes: July 30, 2026 | 5:00 p.m. ET
- Max Award: \$5,000
- Match: 1:1 cash or in-kind match
- Marketing Focus: New initiatives, target markets, campaigns, and marketing categories for small businesses & shoulder season marketing (September – May)





# Required Application Materials

The following application materials are required for an application to be considered eligible. Because VTC grant programs are highly competitive, **inclusion of all required materials is essential for eligibility**. Applications that do not contain all required items at the time of submission will be deemed ineligible and will not be considered for funding.

- EIN # (one application permitted per EIN #)
- Signed Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) Letter of Support
- Signed Lodging Partner Letter of Support
- Hub & Spoke Itinerary
- Target Markets
- Data & Research
- Marketing Plan

# Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants for the MMLP are organizations whose mission aligns with Virginia Tourism's goals of attracting visitors to Virginia during shoulder season. Eligible applicants **must demonstrate clear strategy and impact**, along with the capacity and financial responsibility to successfully execute the proposed project.

- Small tourism-related businesses (20 or fewer full-time equivalent employees)
  - e.g., food trucks, restaurants, boutique retail, small attractions, museums, craft breweries, distilleries, wineries, boutique lodging and B&Bs, and events
- Chambers of Commerce
- Main Street Organizations
- Planning District Commissions
- Economic Development Authorities

*\*Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) are not eligible for the MMLP. DMOs are encouraged to apply for the [FY27 Co-op advertising opportunities](#).*

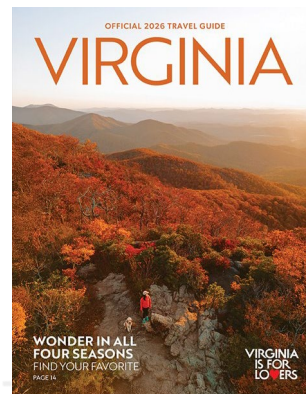
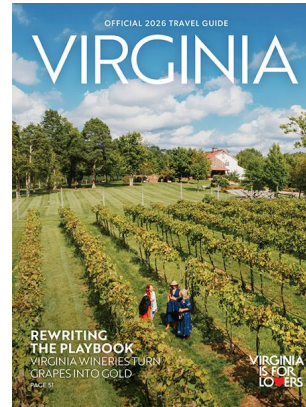


# Eligible Expenses

Eligible expenses for the MMLP include **costs directly related to marketing** out of state and out of region during shoulder season (September – May).

- Social Media Advertising – paid boosts, reels, ad placement on channels
- Digital Media Advertising - streaming, public broadcasting/streaming service episode
- Digital Streaming & Broadcast Channels Radio Advertising
- Print & Digital Newspaper Advertising
- Print & Digital Magazine Advertising
- Print & Distribution of Brochures, Rack Cards, & Flyers
- Contracting a Photographer/Videographer
- Contracting a Marketing Consultant
- Contracting a Creative Agency
- Contracting an Influencer
- Website/App Development/Updates
- Expenses related to participating in the VTC Partnership Marketing & Advertising Program (PMAP)
- Outdoor billboard (50+ miles away from the location of business/organization)
- Tradeshow Booth Rentals
- VIFL Promotional Items (maximum of 10% VTC award)
- ASCAP/BMI Fess (maximum of 10% of VTC award)
- Event Liability Insurance (maximum of 10% VTC award)
- Mobile Vehicle Wrap Advertising (must be managed by a third-party marketing agency and vehicle is driven 50+ miles away from the applicant's destination)
- Civil War Trails & Road to Revolution memberships and signage





# VTC Marketing Opportunities

VTC offers a variety of both paid and complimentary marketing opportunities for industry partners to utilize in **strengthening and evolving** their marketing strategies.

- [Virginia Welcome Centers & Safety Rest Areas](#)
- [Virginia Travel Guide](#)
- [Virginia.org](#)
- [VIFL Wholesale](#)
- [Get listed on Virginia.org \(it's free\)](#)



# Ineligible Expenses

Ineligible expenses for the MLP include **costs not directly tied to marketing the destination/business** to out of state and out of region visitors.

- Individual receipted expenses for influencers (e.g., lodging receipts, meal receipts, transportation receipts, etc.)
- Website/App hosting & maintenance fees
- Billboards without an exact location
- Mobile vehicles wrapped for DMO-owned, business-owned, organization-owned, or locality owned-vehicles
- Promotional merchandise not acquired through Creative Color
- Event production expenses including staff, police, fire, emergency services, referees, fireworks/pyrotechnics, accommodation, food, beverage, or other equipment rentals.



# Eligible Cash Match

Eligible cash match for the MMLP include **costs directly related to marketing** out of state and out of region during shoulder season (September – May).

- Social Media Advertising
- Digital Media Advertising
- Radio Advertising
- Newspaper Advertising
- Magazine Advertising
- Brochures & Rack Cards
- Contracting a Photographer/Videographer
- Contracting a Marketing Consultant
- Contracting a Creative Agency
- Contracting an Influencer
- Website/App Development/Updates
- Expenses related to participating in the VTC Partnership Marketing & Advertising Program (PMAP)
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# Eligible In-kind Match

Eligible in-kind match for the MMLP include **costs directly related to marketing** out of state and out of region during shoulder season (September – May). Instructions on how to value earned and owned media are in the Program Application Instructions.

- Paid Media (e.g., paid ads on Meta, paid Google Ads, etc.)
- Owned Media (e.g., business's official website, newsletter, blog, etc.)
- Earned Media (e.g., travel article or feature written about a business/destination by a journalist, news stories, blogger reviews, etc.)

# In-kind Match Values & Requirements

Accurate documentation of in-kind match contributions is essential to demonstrate that required match commitments have been met and that all reported values are verifiable. Proper records such as publication dates, proof of placement, and screenshots of followers, engagement, and posts ensure transparency and compliance with grant requirements. **Adequate documentation of in-kind match is required for reimbursement.** Undocumented or insufficiently documented in-kind contributions may be deemed ineligible and could result in reduced or denied reimbursement.

MEDIA TYPE	COMPENSATION	REQUIREMENTS
 <b>PRINT EDITORIAL</b> Quarter Page	<b>\$250</b> per quarter page	 Publication date must be within program dates.
 <b>PRINT EDITORIAL</b> Full Page	<b>\$1,000</b> per full page	 Publication date must be within program dates.
 <b>ONLINE EDITORIAL</b> Quarter Page   Full Page	<b>\$500</b> per quarter page <hr/> <b>\$2,000</b> per full page	 Must still be online.
 <b>SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS</b>	<b>10¢</b> each	 Screenshot of follower/insights must be during program allowable dates.
 <b>OWNED WEBSITE CLICKS</b>	<b>10¢</b> each	 Screenshot must be during program allowable dates.
 <b>ONLINE LISTING</b>	<b>\$200</b> each	 Must still be online.
 <b>SOCIAL MEDIA LIKES/SHARES PER POST</b>	<b>10¢</b> each	 Screenshot showing likes/shares must be during program allowable dates.
 <b>PRINT LISTING</b>	<b>\$100</b> each	 Publication Date must be within program dates.

# Budget

A well-developed budget is critical to ensuring that all necessary items and resources are strategically allocated and purchased to successfully execute a marketing strategy that meets industry demand. By clearly outlining expenses, it helps organizations **prioritize programming and marketing** that enhance the visitor experience. Additionally, a thoughtful budget ensures **accountability and efficient use of funds**, ultimately supporting sustainable growth and making the destination more competitive and attractive to visitors.

*\*Eligible lookback period for expenses is May 1, 2026. Eligible expenses must follow VTC proof of placement guidelines.*

Use of VTC Funds	VTC Request	Use of Match Funds	Match Amount
Meta Ads	\$500	Google Ads	\$250
Billboards in Charlotte, NC for Apple Pie & Cider Festival at Draper Cider Co.	\$1,000	Meta Ads	\$250
Rack Card Printing	\$500	Rack Card Distribution	\$1,000
Contracting with Digital Asset Co. for Apple Pie & Cider Festival promotional photography/ videography	\$1,000	Blue Ridge Outdoors Magazine Advertisement	\$500
		VIFL Promotional Items (t-shirts & hats)	\$300
		Draper Cider Co. Apple Pie & Cider Festival website updates	\$700
<b>TOTAL VTC REQUEST</b>	<b>\$3,000</b>	<b>TOTAL MATCHING FUNDS</b>	<b>\$3,000</b>

**TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET**

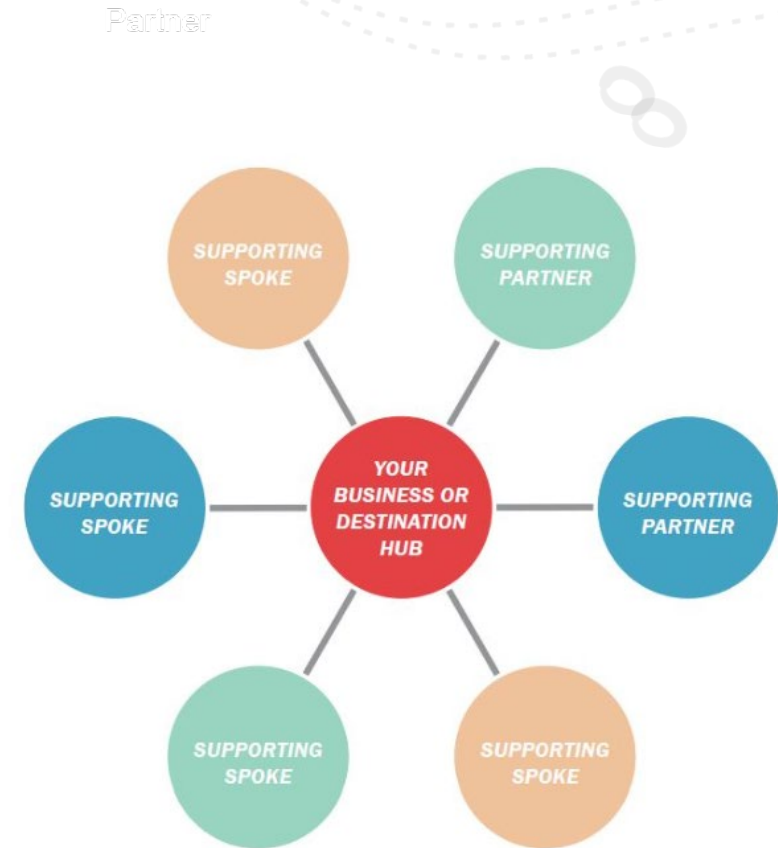
**\$6,000**



# Hub & Spoke Itinerary

Eligible partners serve as key spokes within an itinerary. These include attractions, accommodations, dining, and experiences. Their **collaboration is essential** to creating a cohesive, compelling marketing strategy that enhances the overall visitor experience and drives engagement and visitation.

- Identify lodging partner
- Identify additional spoke partners – must be open and operational tourism-oriented business/organization with 20 or fewer full-time employees
  - Land attractions, including state and national parks, are permissible spoke partners (e.g., Shenandoah National Park, Clinch River State Park, Blue Ridge Parkway, etc.)
- Partners & Spokes must have brick-and-mortar locations with appropriate licenses
- Identify how you and your partners work together to achieve your goals
- Identify what marketing message will help you and your partners achieve your visitation/visitor spending goals



# Hub & Spoke Itinerary Example



## Lodging Partner

*\*If the applicant is the lodging partner, please put the name of your property.*



## Partner #2

*Lodging, Activity, Attraction, Restaurant, Craft Beverage/Wine, Museum, Boutique Retail, Outdoor Recreation*



## Spoke #3

*Lodging, Activity, Attraction, Restaurant, Craft Beverage/Wine, Museum, Boutique Retail, Outdoor Recreation*



## Spoke #4

*Lodging, Activity, Attraction, Restaurant, Craft Beverage/Wine, Museum, Boutique Retail, Outdoor Recreation*



## Spoke #5

*Lodging, Activity, Attraction, Restaurant, Craft Beverage/Wine, Museum, Boutique Retail, Outdoor Recreation*



## Spoke #6

*Lodging, Activity, Attraction, Restaurant, Craft Beverage/Wine, Museum, Boutique Retail, Outdoor Recreation*

# Ineligible Hub & Spoke Partners

The following **ineligible partners** will not serve as key spokes within an itinerary that will create a cohesive and compelling marketing strategy.

- Personal health and wellness business (e.g., nail salons, gyms, massage parlors, yoga studios-unless in a lodging resort)
- Vendor services (e.g., advertising agency, PR firm, printing agency, television channel, web developer, influencer, marketing consultant, etc.)





# Data & Research

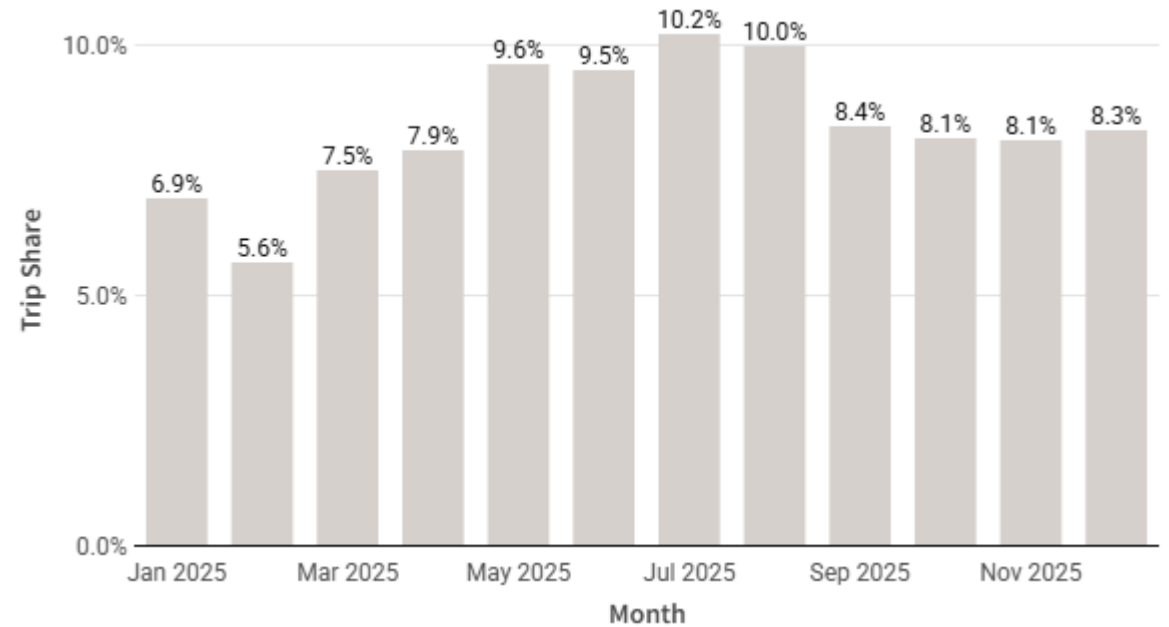
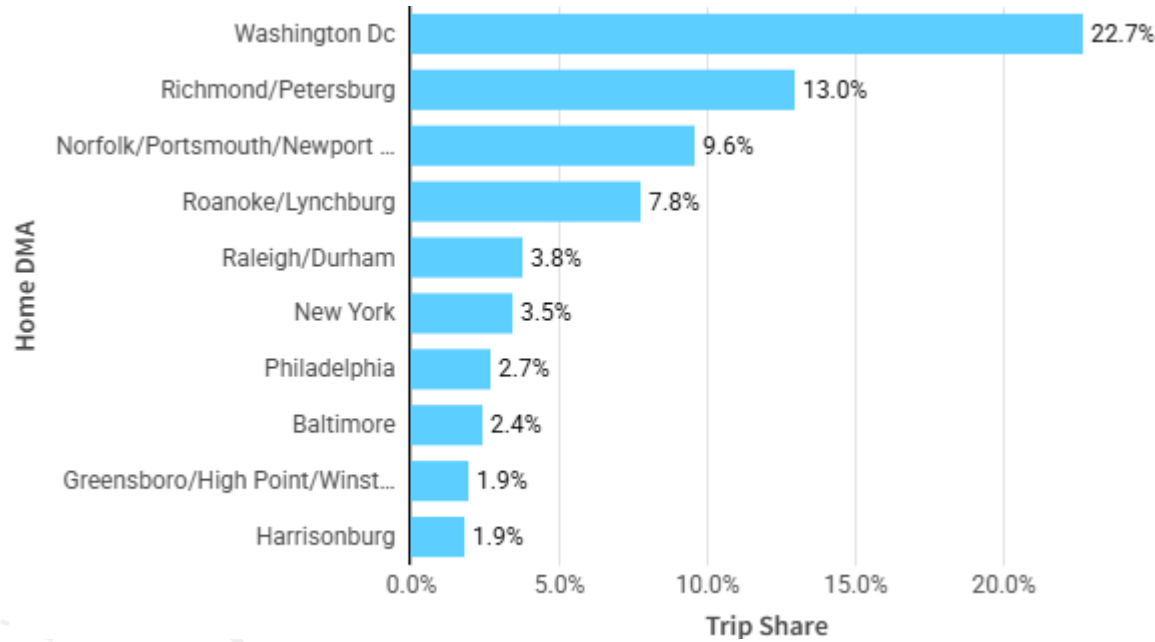
Data and research provide the foundation for an effective marketing strategy by identifying **who** your target audience is and **what** motivates their travel patterns and purchasing decisions. This helps to understand market trends, visitor behaviors, and competitive positions, allowing you to tailor messaging and experiences that resonate.

- On-site Data Collection Tools (e.g., attendee tracking)
- Visitor Management Software (e.g., Future Partners, PlacerAI, Datafy, etc.)
- Website Analytics
- Social Media Metrics
- Credit Card Data
- VTC's Arrivalist Data
- VTC's Point of Interest (POI) Data
- Review [vatc.org/research](https://vatc.org/research)



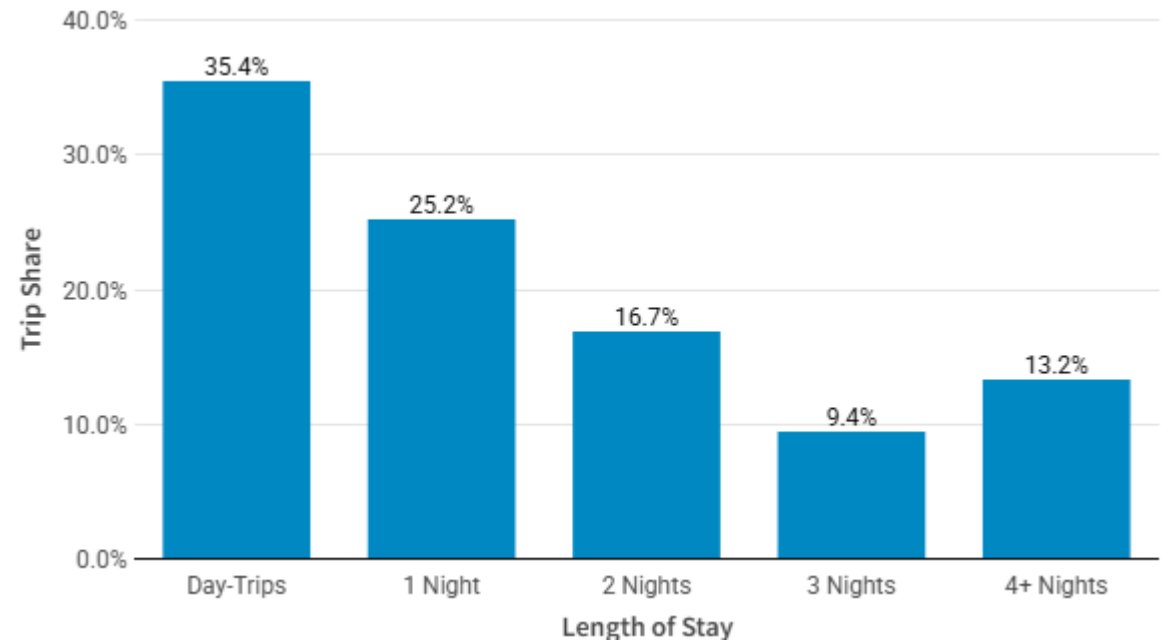
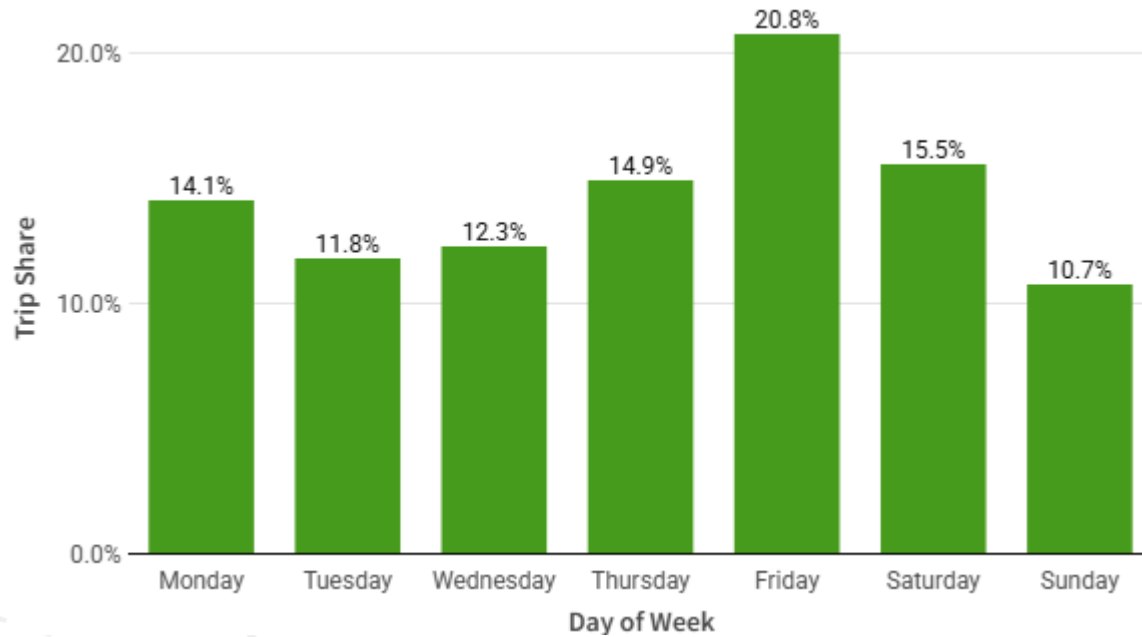
# Arrivalist

Virginia - CY 2025



# Arrivalist

Virginia - CY 2025



# Target Markets & Audiences

Target markets and audiences are essential to a marketing campaign because they ensure messaging, channels, and tactics are specifically tailored to the people most likely to **engage and convert**. This focus increases efficiency, strengthens relevance, and ultimately improves campaign performance by aligning strategy with the needs and behaviors of the intended audience.

- **Out of State Target Markets**

- Baltimore, MD
- Columbus, OH
- Atlanta, GA
- New York, NY
- Harrisburg, PA
- Charlotte, NC
- Philadelphia, PA
- Nashville, TN
- Chicago, IL
- Cleveland, OH
- Pittsburgh, PA
- Other

- **In-State Target Markets**

- Washington, D.C.
- Roanoke-Salem
- Northern Virginia
- Hampton Roads
- Bristol
- Harrisonburg
- Richmond
- Charlottesville
- Other

- **Target Audience**

- Friends
- Family
- Couples





# Marketing Plan

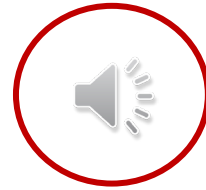
A marketing plan is a structured roadmap that outlines how your business/organization will attract, convert, and retain visitors to your destination. **It combines research, strategy, execution, and measurement.**

- Identify Target Market (Out of State & In-State)
- Identify Target Audience
- Clear & Measurable Marketing Objectives
- Marketing Strategy (e.g., digital campaigns, feeder markets, seasonal travel trends, unique experiences, etc.)
- Deliverables (e.g., # of tickets sold, followers, etc.)
- Budget (e.g., total project cost, spend categories)
- Timeline (e.g., campaign start and end dates, grant reporting and closeout)
- Measurement & ROI (e.g., booking data, revenue increases, email engagement, etc.)

*\*MMLP is not eligible for project extensions.*

# VIFL Proof of Placement

Proof of *Virginia is for Lovers* logo placement is **required for reimbursement** under the VTC Terms & Conditions. This verifies that the grant requirements for recognition and visibility have been met. Providing documentation of this placement ensures accountability, demonstrates compliance with the Terms & Conditions, and confirms that promotional obligations were fulfilled, making a project eligible for reimbursement.



Facebook Feed

**Carter Family Fold** Sponsored · 4

Join us as we welcome Marty Stuart back to Hiltons. It will be a special homecoming of sorts as we consider Marty a beloved member of the Fold and couldn't be more pleased that he is a part of our 50th Anniversary celebration. The Tennessee Mafia Jug Band will be on hand and it's sure to be a memorable Friday evening.

Get your tickets now!

carterfamilyfold.org  
Celebrating 50 Years of the Carter Family Fold

Learn more

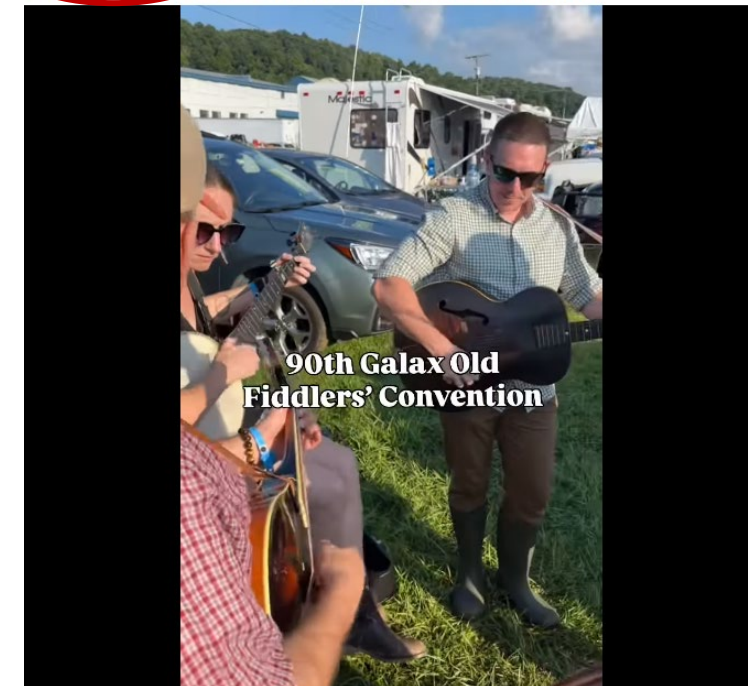
Like Comment Share

The Crooked Road: Virginia's Heritage Music Trail  
May 28 · 4

We'll see you at Galax!

Click the link below to learn more 📌  
<https://www.oldfiddlersconvention.com/>

Virginia is for Lovers Galax City Tourism Center Galax Old Fiddler's Convention #thecrookedroad #appalachia #swva #LiveMusic #bluegrass #oldtimemusic #southwestvirginia See less





# New Processes & Procedures

Below are several new processes and procedures that will apply to VTC grant programs moving forward, including **mandatory awardee webinars**.

- Microsoft SharePoint Grantee Folders
- Mandatory Reports & Reimbursement Forms
- MMLP Awardee Webinar – October 14, 2026 | 10:00 a.m.
- 2027 VTC Grant Programs announced at [VA1 Governor's Tourism Summit](#)

*\*Dates are subject to change.*



# Preparing to Apply

It is **strongly encouraged** that interested applicants complete and submit applications early as 75% of proposals are submitted in the final hours of the application deadline. Questions or concerns regarding the portal and application process should be directed to the VTC grants team.

Upon award notice, a formal processes and procedures session will occur to review **key requirements** and expectations with all grantees.

- Visit [vatc.org](https://vatc.org) to review grant program materials & reports
- Review MMLP Terms & Conditions
- Draft Application in Word Document Template
- Prepare VIFL Proof of Placement
- Prepare a W-9





# Reminders

These are opportunities you can review and opt into as you continue enhancing your **marketing strategy** to prepare your grant application and continue collaborating with our VTC team.

- [Update business/organization listing on virginia.org](#)
- [Utilize VIFL logo on website, social, & other marketing materials](#)
- [Sign up for VTC grant updates](#)
- [Sign up for The Pulse](#)
- [Complete VTC Partner Content Collaboration Form](#)
- [Review Virginia's Statewide Strategic Tourism Plan 2026-2029](#)
- [Register for VTC Orientation](#) – July 21-22, 2026 | 9:00 a.m.
- [Register for the 2026 VA1 Governor's Tourism Summit](#) – November 18-20, 2026 | Kalahari Resorts & Conventions | Spotsylvania, VA
- Connect with your Destination Development Manager





# contact information



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# Questions?

