PARTNERSHIP MARKETING INITIATIVES



2025 — 2028

VIRGINIA TOURISM CORPORATION

VIRGINIA IS FOR LOVERS®

Claytor Lake - Pulaski County, VA

THE VALUE OF TOURISM IN VIRGINIA

2024 Economic Impact of Visitors to Virginia

$35.1 B Visitor Spending
Up 5.4% from 2023 - Nearly $2 billion in new visitor spending

114.5 M Annual Visitors
A 2.5% increase over 2023

$96 M Daily Spending
This equals $96 million in visitor spending every day in Virginia

$15.3 B Labor Income
The $15.3 billion in total income generated by visitors is the equivalent of $4,600 for every VA household

$16.8 B Personal Income
This is the equivalent of $4,800 per resident household, regardless of any connection to the visitor economy

328,365 Jobs
The visitor economy sustains 7.7% of all jobs in Virginia

$2.5 B State & Local Taxes
Each household in Virginia would need to be taxed an additional $990 to replace the visitor generated taxes received by state and local governments in 2024

People want their lives and communities to be enriched by travel.

Residents want this. Visitors LOVE this. Tourism is the front porch of economic development and developers are jumping on board seeing tourism assets as a powerful tool for business attraction, development, and retention.

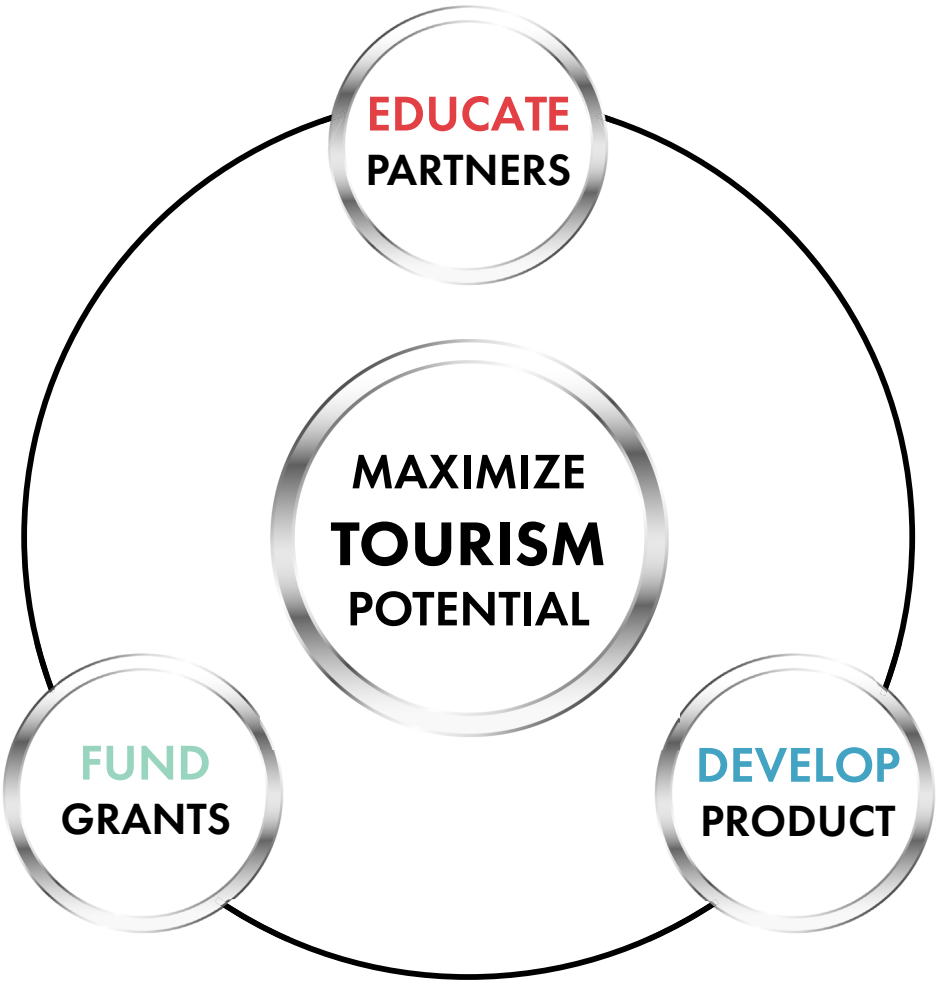
From strategic tourism planning and focused tourism product development to cooperative marketing grants and industry education, VTC's Partnership Marketing division works with industry partners, locality leaders and elected officials to maximize Virginia's tourism potential.

Through partnerships, we want to grow jobs, develop assets and support marketing initiatives to help communities thrive and to help Virginia meets its goal of $100M in daily visitor spending by 2028.

We are Partnership Marketing.



Staunton River State Park - Clarksville, VA



EDUCATION

Educate, train and collaborate with over 3,000 entrepreneurs, stakeholders, leaders and regional organizations to partner and leverage and grow Virginia's Visitor Economy

DEVELOPMENT

Collaborate with Destination Management and Economic Development Organizations to create 17 strategic development and marketing plans, infrastructure and new mid- to large-scale tourism products

FUNDING

Award 350 grants averaging four partners per grant while leveraging private sector marketing investments to the ratio of 3:1 with grant funds

EDUCATION

Partnership Marketing's direct and daily engagement with our tourism industry includes one-on-one coaching, mobilizing local and regional partners to unify and activate unique development projects, assisting in the creation of marketing plans and maximizing the use of Virginia Tourism resources and advocacy efforts. These efforts help leverage tourism spending and create ambassadors to grow Virginia's tourism economy while amplifying the message that tourism is an "Instant Revenue Generator."

As the largest gathering of Virginia's Tourism Industry, Partnership Marketing co-leads our **VA-1 Tourism Summit**. This annual event is crucial to our industry's education, collaboration and sharing of best practices with our industry.

Three times a year, during **VTC's Orientation Program**, all of VTC's marketing and development divisions share resources and new opportunities to statewide business owners, DMOs, EDA and industry leaders. Through community engagement and educational workshops, we guide partners in creating marketing plans that align with local goals and statewide initiatives.

The Virginia Association of Destination Marketing Organizations (VADMO) is an association of destination management organizations and supporting businesses. The primary mission of VADMO is to develop and promote their destinations. VTC partners with VADMO to create the first-ever **VADMO Tourism Leadership Institute (VTLI)** focusing on leadership, communication, advocacy, community development, finance and management.

MEASURING IMPACT

- Annually engage more than 2,000 business owners, entrepreneurs, DMOs, EDOs and leaders
- Leverage tourism spending and create ambassadors to grow Virginia's tourism economy
- Amplify the message that tourism is an **"Instant Revenue Generator"**



Pleasure House Oysters - Lynnhaven River, Virginia Beach

MARKETING ELEVATION

FOCUS ON MARKETING

Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) has built a strong framework centered on the importance of a marketing plan—often the first step in accessing the state's tourism development and funding programs. From rural B&Bs to city festivals and regional outdoor projects, every initiative must begin with a strategic road map. Partnership Marketing staff collaborate with businesses, DMOs, and local governments to define target markets, set goals, and identify seasonal opportunities.

This assistance is more than technical support—it's a strategic entry point. The **Destination Development Team** reviews and strengthens business-level plans, then aligns them with local and regional messaging to maximize resources and drive visitor spending through a cohesive approach.

A solid plan is required for **VTC's Marketing Leverage Grant programs**—including DMO Marketing, Special Events & Festivals, and the Microbusiness Marketing Program. Broader initiatives like VA250 and seasonal campaigns also depend on this alignment. VTC helps applicants with templates, workshops and coaching to ensure their plans attract visitors, extend stays and grow spending.

Marketing plan updates are great benefit of the **DRIVE Tourism program**. They help communities clarify target markets, align with the hub-and-spoke model and set measurable goals. This strengthens DRIVE grant applications by tying strategies to defined outcomes and demonstrating ROI.

Beyond grants, marketing plans are essential for larger tools like the **Tourism Development Financing Program (TDFP).** Localities and developers must show how their projects will attract new visitors. A clear marketing strategy supports certification and helps secure deferred tax reinvestment support.

Together, these efforts give businesses and communities a unified strategy that aligns with regional and statewide goals. They also help partners better align and access **VTC's Brand Campaign Cooperative Marketing efforts**. Entrepreneurs and small businesses find that clearly defining their audience opens doors to matched funding—and across Virginia, the marketing plan has become a powerful catalyst for tourism success more than a requirement—it's the catalyst for access, funding and sustainable tourism growth.



LOVE Work Town Centre Park - Kilmarnock, VA

BENCHMARKING TRIPS

Tourism Benchmarking Trips offer peer-to-peer learning opportunities for staff and industry partners to explore tourism development strategies in comparable destinations outside of Virginia. These immersive experiences allow participants to see firsthand how other communities are building tourism product, strengthening partnerships and aligning with long-term tourism development goals. Past trips, including the 2019 visit to Fayetteville, West Virginia, have focused on themes such as outdoor recreation and placemaking.

2025 BENCHMARKING TRIP: Blowing Rock, NC

In the spring of 2026, the Partnership Marketing team will lead a benchmarking trip to Blowing Rock, North Carolina. This trip will focus on Trail Town development and building stronger pipelines for entrepreneurship, product growth, and workforce development. Insights from DRIVE Tourism workshops and Partnership Marketing staff input help inform the destinations selected for these trips, ensuring relevance and alignment with Virginia's competitive landscape and community goals.

FUTURE TRIPS & THEMES

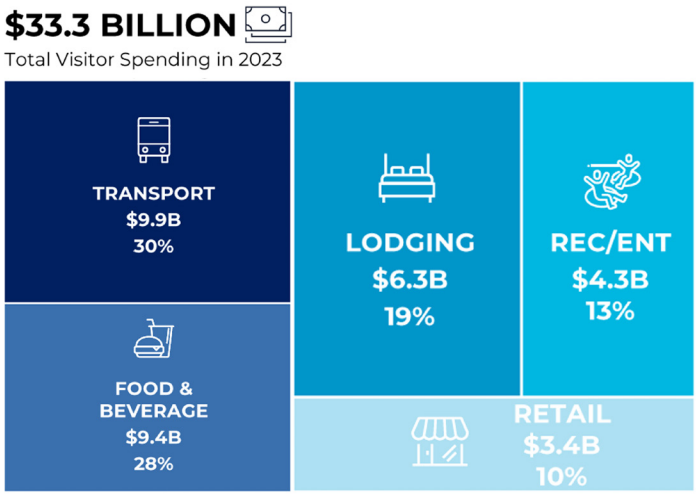
Partnership Marketing will continue hosting Tourism Benchmarking Trips on a biannual basis, each one centered on a key theme designed to inspire and inform destination development and increase competitiveness across the Commonwealth. The themes will continue to evolve based on initiative feedback such as the upcoming 2025 - 2028 Statewide Strategic Tourism Plan and DRIVE Tourism, tourism and trends and Partnership Marketing team input.

MEASURING IMPACT

- By 2028, two benchmarking trips will be completed, each offering industry partners the opportunity to experience tourism product firsthand.



Spearhead Trails - Wise County





Bristol Rhythm and Roots Reunion | Bristol, VA | 40k annual attendance, generating $16 M for the region

STATEWIDE TOURISM PLAN

The **2025 - 2028 Statewide Strategic Tourism Plan** will serve as a guiding framework to advance Virginia's tourism industry over the next three years. Grounded in research and stakeholder engagement, the plan will outline strategic priorities that strengthen the Commonwealth's competitiveness, encourage extended traveler length of stay and ensure tourism continues to spur economic growth. Building on the foundation of the 2020 - 2025 Statewide Strategic Tourism plan, DRIVE 2.0, this next iteration will reflect new insights, challenges, and opportunities facing Virginia's tourism industry.

PLAN DEVELOPMENT & INDUSTRY INPUT

The plan will debut in late 2025 and is being developed in partnership with Hunden Partners, a global advisor with expertise in tourism destination development, state-wide strategic planning and economic asset analysis. Through robust input from industry partners via interviews, focus groups and surveys, VTC and Hunden Partners will ensure the plan is actionable, comprehensive and aligned with statewide priorities. The plan will also include an analysis of top economic, social, environmental, and tourism trends affecting Virginia's tourism outlook for promotion and product development. Once released, the 2025 -2028 Strategic Tourism Plan will inform VTC programs, including future iterations of DRIVE Tourism, and guide collaborative efforts to develop industry growth.

PLAN COMPONENTS

The final product of the Statewide Strategic Tourism Plan will include a Statewide Plan encompassing the latest travel and marketing trends, along with the best tourism product development opportunities for the Commonwealth. There will also be ten Regional Plans focusing on the top lures to promote now to differentiate Virginia and what tourism assets could be developed to create more vibrant, competitive destinations.

MEASURING IMPACT

The creation of an actionable Statewide Strategic Tourism Plan with ten regional plans.



CapTech USA Cycling Collegiate Road National Championships- Richmond, VA



Downtown Fredericksburg, VA

DRIVE TOURISM

DRIVE Tourism empowers communities to develop and implement tourism strategies based on community input that create vibrant destinations and strengthen Virginia's overall competitiveness.

BUILDING ON PAST SUCCESS

The most recent iteration, DRIVE Tourism+, builds on the research, trends, and strategies established in DRIVE 2.0, Virginia's 2020 - 2025 Strategic Tourism Development Plan. DRIVE Tourism+ supported 20 communities through two rounds of facilitated workshops between September 2024 and October 2025. Through these workshops, communities have explored how to differentiate themselves, implement the hub-and-spoke model to promote their top lures, and enhance experiences that support extended traveler length of stay and increased spending.

FUTURE DIRECTION

DRIVE Tourism+ will conclude in late 2025. Looking ahead, future iterations of DRIVE Tourism will align with the 2025 - 2028 Strategic Tourism Plan, which will debut in late 2025. The initiative will continue to provide a framework that helps communities prioritize tourism as an economic development strategy. While details of the next phase are still in development, the initiative remains committed to supporting localities through research, strategic planning, and collaborative community engagement. The DRIVE Tourism initiative will continue to create more vibrant communities and increase Virginia's competitiveness.

MEASURING IMPACT

- 20 Communities engaged through DRIVE Tourism+ by October 2025 focused on extending their traveler length of stay through tourism development projects identified from community workshops.
- Additional 30 DRIVE Tourism workshops conducted through 2028 to support the initiatives and recommendations laid out in the 2025-2028 Statewide Strategic Tourism Plan.

DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

The **Destination Development Team** within the VTC Partnership Marketing Division provides strategic guidance, resources, educational opportunities, planning support, and technical assistance to municipalities, tourism organizations, and both existing and emerging tourism businesses across Virginia.

Our **Destination Development Managers** are dedicated to fostering and promoting new tourism businesses and community-based tourism initiatives throughout the Commonwealth, with a special focus on high-growth potential areas.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Offers support for both new and existing tourism businesses, including guidance on business planning, marketing plans, finances, regulations, and more. As an active partner with local, state, and federal support organizations, VTC connects entrepreneurs to essential resources. VTC also provides industry partners with a comprehensive overview of available programs and services.

TOURISM PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

Supports communities in developing and launching tourism products and programs by offering planning resources, research tools, and organizational guidance through Tourism Strategic Plans. The team also assists with implementing DRIVE Tourism programs, and Virginia's Statewide Tourism Plan. Developing new tourism products is essential to driving growth in Virginia's communities.

Downtown Culpeper, VA

DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

FUNDING ASSISTANCE

Helps identify funding opportunities for tourism businesses and programs, connecting partners to local, state, and federal resources. The Partnership Marketing team also administers key funding programs, including the VTC Marketing Leverage Program, Virginia DMO Marketing Grant, Special Events and Festival Program, and the Tourism Development Financing Program.

INDUSTRY LIAISONS

Facilitates relationships between tourism industry partners and key organizations, including VTC staff, local tourism offices, and relevant state and federal agencies. The Partnership Marketing Destination Development Team helps build strong networks to support the growth and success of Virginia's tourism industry.

CRITICAL SUPPORT

VTC stands ready to support communities when challenging times arise. As an example, during the aftermath of 2024 Hurricane Helene, Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) staff provided critical support to affected counties through strategic planning facilitation and crisis management communications. Our team worked closely with local officials and tourism partners to assess immediate needs, stabilize messaging and develop recovery-focused strategies. By guiding counties through tailored planning sessions and ensuring clear, consistent communication with visitors and stakeholders, VTC helped these communities begin the process of rebuilding their tourism economies with resilience and confidence.

MEASURING IMPACT

- 20 localities successfully completed tourism strategic plans and began implementing identified priorities
- 1,200+ participating in VTC training opportunities across the state
- 5 % Increase in direct visitor spending in supported communities

Damascus, VA | Several renowned trails intersect within town limits, bestowing the honor of "Trail Town USA"



TOURISM DEVELOPMENT FINANCING PROGRAM

Virginia's Tourism Development Financing Program (TDFP) supports new product development as a key to staying competitive. The TDFP leverages 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. Similar to Tax Increment Financing (TIF) , the municipality and state agree to contribute future sales tax revenues from the new project towards the developer's gap financing.

As of April 2025, the program has certified (12) projects, accomplishing the following:

- $1.6 billion in capital investment
- $291 million in gap financing
- $ 20.2 million in annual Sate Taxes
- $ 26.5 million in annual Local Taxes
- 2,280 jobs
- 2,800 hotel rooms

ZONING | TOURISM ZONES + TOURISM IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS (TID)

Much like a traditional Business Enterprise Zone, **Tourism Zones** allow for businesses to take advantage of local tax incentives and deductions not available to businesses elsewhere. **Tourism Improvement Districts** are a hospitality-specific model of the traditional Business Improvement District (BID). TIDs use special benefit assessments to raise revenue for destination marketing and development.

MEASURING IMPACT

- Secure 2 new TDFP certified community projects annually
- Engage at least 25+ Virginia municipalities on potential TDFP and TID projects (e.g., EDA, IDA, PDC)
- Educate at least 750+ industry partners via TDFP and TID presentations at tourism meetings and symposiums

Kalahari Resort, Spotsylvania Co. | Opening fall 2026 | Capital Investment $900 m | New Annual Taxes $6.8 m | Jobs 805





The Historic Cavalier Hotel & Beach Club + Marriott + Embassy Suites - Virginia Beach, VA

Year	Locality	Projects	Capital Investment	Gap Financed	Tax Revenue	FTE Jobs
2012	Fredericksburg	Hyatt Place Hotel	$14,940,000	$1,150,000	$327,000	40
2012	Newport News	Oyster Pt. Dining	$22,000,000	$4,300,000	$2,200,000	250
2014 - 2023	Virginia Beach	Cavalier Resort	$247,500,000	$24,500,000	$612,000	350
2015	Norfolk	The MAIN Hotel	$77,744,474	$7,285,248	$2,000,000	250
2016	Farmville	Hotel Weyanoke	$12,200,000	$2,750,000	$516,280	76
2018	Hampton	Element Hotel	$17,305,729	$1,815,729	$2,340,246	22
2019	Manassas	Tru Hotel	$13,948,300	$1,500,000	$369,000	35
2019	Bristol	Sessions Hotel	$23,000,000	$4,021,000	$556,019	75
2022	Alexandria	Hotel Heron	$69,600,000	$6,073,000	$395,537	111
2023	Spotsylvania Co.	Kalahari Resort	$885,000,000	$221,250,000	$6,840,000	805
2024	Shenandoah Co.	Simply Shenandoah	$201,500,000	$15,000,000	$1,000,000	225
2024	Petersburg	Hotel Petersburg	$23,138,000	$2,200,000	$421,000	40
			$1.6 Billion	$291 Million	$17.5 Million	2,279

COOPERATIVE MARKETING PROGRAMS

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% of the Virginia tourism industry and the need for marketing funding is even more critical. One of the most effective ways tourism industry partners can amplify their marketing impact is through partnerships.

Thanks to continued funding from the Virginia General Assembly, VTC offers grants for special events and festivals, destination marketing offices, small tourism-oriented businesses, chambers of commerce, economic development authorities, and planning district commissions.

MEASURING IMPACT

- By November 2025 and each year thereafter, over 350 grant applications awarded impacting over 1,400 Virginia travel industry partners through marketing initiatives that will grow revenue and create jobs in travel sectors such as agritourism, outdoor recreation, craft beverage, and meetings and conventions
- Annually, offer a minimum of 12 "How to Apply" webinars in partnership with organizations such as VADMO, Virginia Recreation, Travel and Lodging Association, Small Business Development Centers, and Chambers of Commerce
- Unique partnerships that drive visitors to seek out authentic Virginia experiences



Random Row Brewing and Flour Power Cupcakery pairing – Charlottesville, VA

LEVERAGING $3 M INTO $9 M
PLACING $12 M INTO THE MARKETPLACE

VTC MARKETING LEVERAGING PROGRAM

Designed to leverage public and private matching dollars, this program supports tourism-oriented businesses and organizations such as Main Streets, Chambers of Commerce and destinations. The partnership component requires six partners who work together on cross-promotion and cooperative marketing to activate visitor spending.

$1 M Annual Awards

VTC DMO MARKETING PROGRAM

Designed to leverage a DMOs existing budget, this program provides matching grant funding, access to robust visitor research, and allows the DMO to extend their marketing to new markets and new audiences. Open only to locality and VTC-recognized DMOs, this program helps these organizations amplify their destinations.

$800 K Annual Awards

VTC MICROBUSINESS MARKETING LEVERAGING PROGRAM

This gateway to tourism marketing is designed for small tourism-oriented businesses with less than 20 full-time employees and organizations that engage in tourism marketing featuring small businesses. Specifically focused on off-season (September to May) marketing, this program helps drive Virginia's position as a four-season destination.

$500 K Annual Awards

VTC SPECIAL EVENTS & FESTIVALS SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Festivals and events, like music festivals, art shows and conventions drive visitors to Virginia. Specifically created to help existing festivals and events improve visitor experience and attract new audiences, this program focuses on festival and event expansion to encourage visitors to spend more and stay longer.

$1.1 M Annual Awards

VA250 MARKETING PROGRAM

Offered in partnership with, and funded by, the VA250 Commission, this program is open to DMOs, VA250 Committees, museums, and historic sites who embrace the "America: Made in Virginia" initiative and promote history and cultural programs to commemorate America's 250th. This program is authorized through December 2026.

$200 K Annual Awards

MAXIMIZING TOURISM POTENTIAL

Virginia is for Lovers is an internationally renowned travel brand. In addition to being an American icon, it's been inducted to the Madison Avenue Advertising Walk of Fame. This notoriety can help provide a lot of attention.

Partnership Marketing works side-by-side with VTC's Research, Brand, Content/Social, Public Relations, Welcome Center, Group and Sports and International Divisions to a create strong, unified resource for Virginia's tourism industry. Whether launching a new attraction or repositioning a destination, Partnership Marketing helps clarify goals, define audiences and select the right tactics to drive results.

Our mission is to ensure every partner is equipped to grow tourism and strengthen their tourism economy.



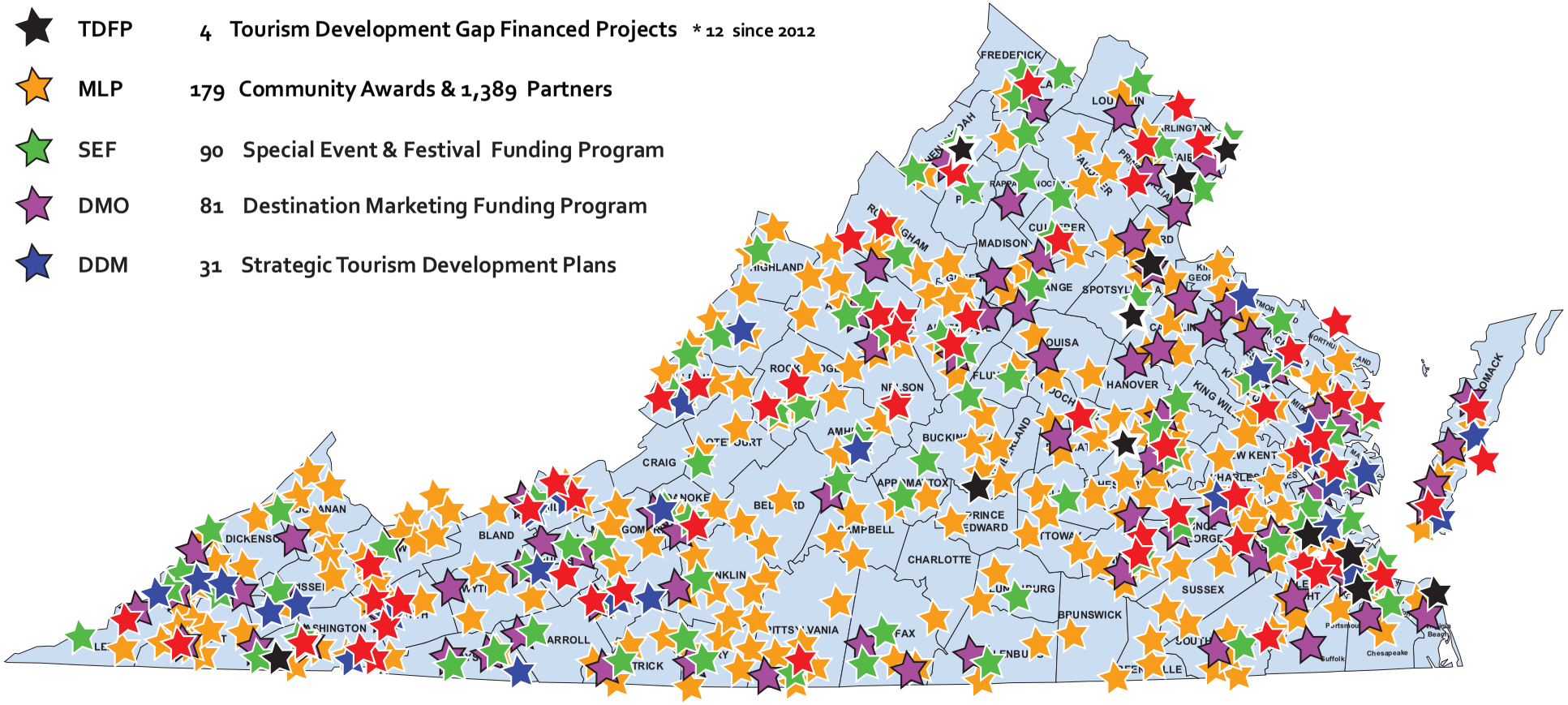
Virginia Scenic Railway- Staunton, VA

VTC | Partnership Marketing Efforts * as of January 2022

VIRGINIA IS FOR LOVERS®

VATC.org/partnershipmarketing

- DRIVE — 50 Community Tourism Development Plans * 1/22 - 12/25
- TDFP — 4 Tourism Development Gap Financed Projects * 12 since 2012
- MLP — 179 Community Awards & 1,389 Partners
- SEF — 90 Special Event & Festival Funding Program
- DMO — 81 Destination Marketing Funding Program
- DDM — 31 Strategic Tourism Development Plans



We measure success by how helpful we are to our partners.

WHO ARE WE?

The Partnership Marketing Team is comprised of tourism practitioners with incredible experience in destination marketing such as a current Mayor, former State Tourism Director, DMO CEOs and Executive Directors, City Council members, Deputy Mayor, School Board Members, Chamber of Commerce Leaders, Marketing and Promotions Directors for Major Tourism Attractions, Vice President of PR Agencies, Ad Agencies and a whole slew of master's degrees in Marketing & Tourism Administration.

We bring our vast experience to every project and most importantly, always ask the key question:

How can we help you? Here is our team ready to help. » VATC.org/partnershipmarketing



Becky Nave
Vice President – Partnership Marketing
bnave@virginia.org
276-791-9172



Kalen Hunter
Managing Director – Grants & Strategic Development
khunter@virginia.org
276-285-4762



Wirt Confroy
Director – Business Development
wconfroy@virginia.org
804-545-5552



Catilin Johnson
Director – Operations & Industry Initiatives
ccjohnson@virginia.org
804-545-5529



Brittany Brown
Director – Grants
bbrown@virginia.org
804-928-2128



Becky Nave
Director – Destination Development
kconner@virginia.org
540-676-4953



Michelle Workman
Sr. Destination Development Manager
mworkman@virginia.org
276-722-0238



John Matthews
Sr. Destination Development Manager
jmatthews@virginia.org
276-967-9020



Laura Messer
Destination Development Manager
lmesser@virginia.org
804-278-7651



Kelli Weaver
Destination Development Manager
kweaver@virginia.org
540-679-6697



Jennifer Kohms
Destination Development Manager
jkohms@virginia.org
804-807-1911



Jacob Bower
Sr. Special Projects Manager
jbower@virginia.org
434-262-8463



Shruthi Manimaran
Sr. Grants Coordinator
smanimaran@virginia.org
804-545-5577



Zoë Macgill
Grants Coordinator
zmacgill@virginia.org
804-845-8411



Sarah Austen Holzgrefe
Partnership Marketing Manager
sholzgrefe@virginia.org
804-545-5554

VTC Partnership Marketing

Destination Development Team

Becky Nave – Director of Destination Development
276.791.9172 | bnave@virginia.org

Sarah Austen Holzgrefe – Destination Development Specialist
804-545-5554 | sholzgrefe@virginia.org

Destination Development Managers

Michelle Workman 276.722.0238 | mworkman@virginia.org

Kalen Hunter 276.213.0009 | khunter@virginia.org

Katie Conner 540.676.4953 | kconner@virginia.org

Kelli Weaver 540.679.6697 | kweaver@virginia.org

Jennifer Kohms 804.807.1921 | jkohms@virginia.org

Laura Messer 804.278.7651 | lmesser@virginia.org

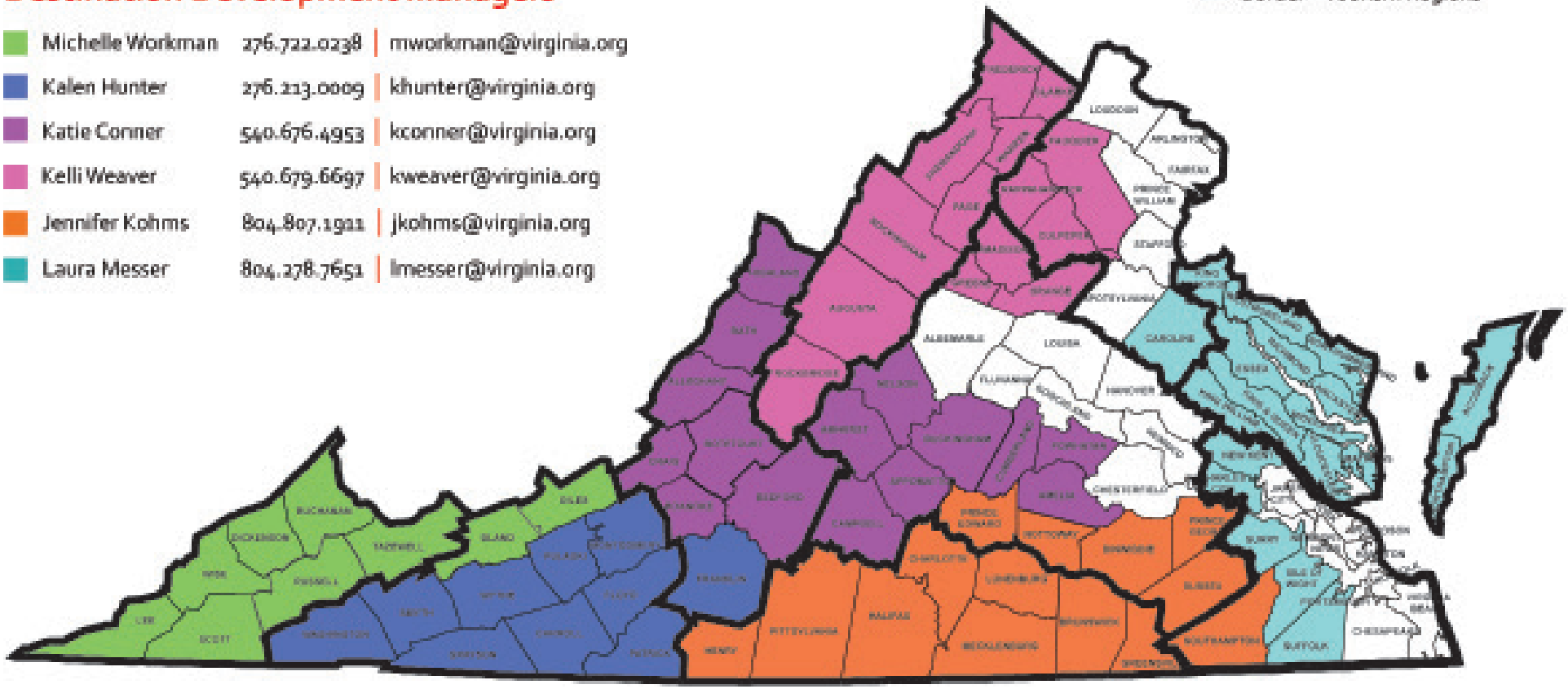
VIRGINIA IS FOR LOVERS

Virginia Tourism Corporation

Contact VTC's ***Destination Development Managers*** in your area for strategic planning, marketing leveraging and other community development assistance and resources

**Contact Becky Nave for white map areas not assigned to a DDM*

Website VATC.org/partnershipmarketing/tdmanagers





Waterman's Cabin - Virginia Coast Reserve, Nassawadox, VA