



QUARTERLY REPORT FY22 Q2

Stafford County Department of
Economic Development & Tourism

GO
STAFFORD
Virginia

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STAFFORD
Virginia

Our Message: Marketing Stafford

Elevating the brand

Entering a new calendar year and reporting halfway through Fiscal Year 2022, recall that we have dedicated a tremendous amount of time and work into building our brand and message this past calendar year. As a result of that “behind the scene” work, this past quarter we released two new and improved websites, developed and implemented new campaigns for both economic development and tourism, new social media strategies, began tracking earned media mentions more rigorously, and announced a number of new and existing business expansions in Stafford.

In October, we launched the redesign of our Economic Development website www.GoStaffordVA.com. The redesigned site communicates the benefits of locating or expanding a business in Stafford. In addition to providing data about the cost of doing business, details about starting a business in the county, and information about commercial real estate, the site also provides a deep-dive for specific key industries. Check out the official media release [here](#) for more details. At the end of November, we launched the redesign of our Tourism website www.TourStaffordVA.com. The new site features a prominent tool for visitors to book stays in the county’s hotels, as well as a detailed itinerary section that helps people plan their visit to the Stafford area. Additionally, the site has listings of the county’s tourism assets, including historical sites, outdoor destinations, restaurants and breweries and wineries. Read the official media release [here](#) for more details. These redesigns reflect the ever-evolving online market. They are integrated into our entire marketing and communications planning, which includes our online presence, social media, earned media, and paid advertising, all with detailed and documented marketing metrics.

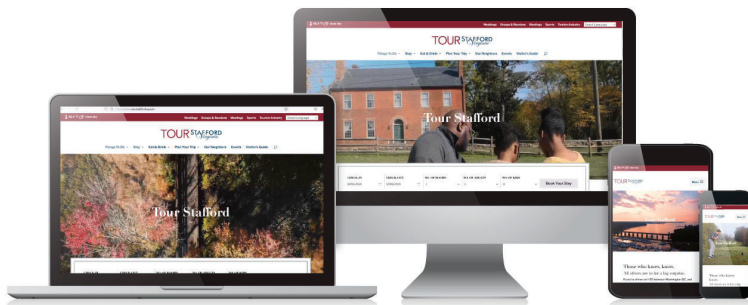
New marketing campaigns are being developed and launched on a monthly basis for both Economic Development and Tourism. Economic Development focused on the success and opportunity of growing warehouse/distribution markets and the advantage of Stafford’s infrastructure for new business. During the holiday season, Tourism targeted travelers along the interstate using geofencing. Anyone who traveled around or through Stafford County during the holidays received targeted messaging on their phone on why they should stop and explore the Stafford area. We highlighted recreation areas and our local restaurants in this campaign.

During this past quarter, we developed a new social media strategy for both Economic Development and Tourism. We also evaluated and developed a new tracking metric to measure “earned media” – tracking the amount of times Stafford County is mentioned in the media for our positive economic development and tourism efforts or projects. This past quarter we were mentioned 48 times in online media outlets. Visit our [newsroom here](#) for business announcements and highlights regarding Amazon’s second location, UVision, the expansion of Virginia Oncology Care, the groundbreaking of The Garrison, the groundbreaking of The D.A.R.W.I.N. Center at the Qube, and much more.

As we continue to improve our messaging and marketing, we will adjust our metrics and “service levels” in our FY23 budget to reflect our improved marketing activities.

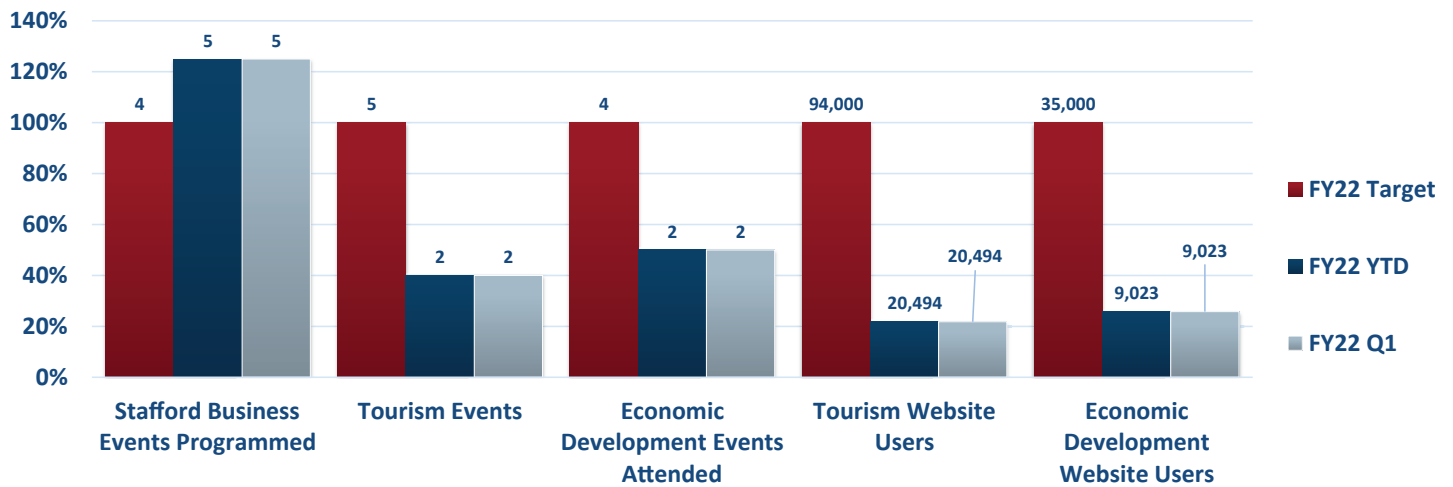
Marketing in the digital world was also the topic for the EDA’s Beer and Business event this past quarter, held at Adventure Brewing. Our guest speaker, Chris Muldrow of Rambletype, shared his experiences with 38 attendees.

This past quarter, members of our Band* attended a number of business events and meetings as COVID cases were low. Events attended included the Greater Washington Board of Trade, the Fredericksburg Regional Alliance, the Virginia Economic Development Association, and many more.



* We are a “Band.” A “Team” denotes a group working together in a common competition against others, while our Band works together and with others to make great music for Stafford, your business, and our entire surrounding area and region. Any one of us may be the lead singer from time to time, but everyone in our Band plays multiple instruments in their own area of expertise. Together we make great music. Meet the band [here](#).

Marketing, Communications, and Events



Tourism

Tourism has remained busy even through the recent waves of the Pandemic. In this past quarter, Tourism supported the Frosty 5K and the Halloween 5K as part of the Stafford Race Series, the Marine Corps Marathon Turkey race, and provided local tourism information to incoming families for the FBI National Academy graduation.

With a new and improved website, Tourism continues to focus on consistent branding and messaging through all marketing and communications platforms, specifically in advertising and social media. This past quarter, we enhanced key features and utilized new tools on our social media platforms to enhance the overall user experience.

Last quarter, tourism implemented a retargeting campaign which focused on attracting returning visitors back to our website. The goal was to get our brand in front of individuals who have already explored our website, while reemphasizing the idea of exploring the Stafford area. This campaign is still ongoing. In addition, and as mentioned above, Tourism also implemented two geofencing campaigns. During the prime holiday travel windows at both Thanksgiving and Christmas, we targeted ads to individuals traveling along the I-95 corridor that encouraged them to stop in Stafford to explore. Both of these campaigns were highly successful as nearly 300,000 people saw our ads. We reached (drew new visitors to our website) at twice the national average.



Business Retention & Expansion

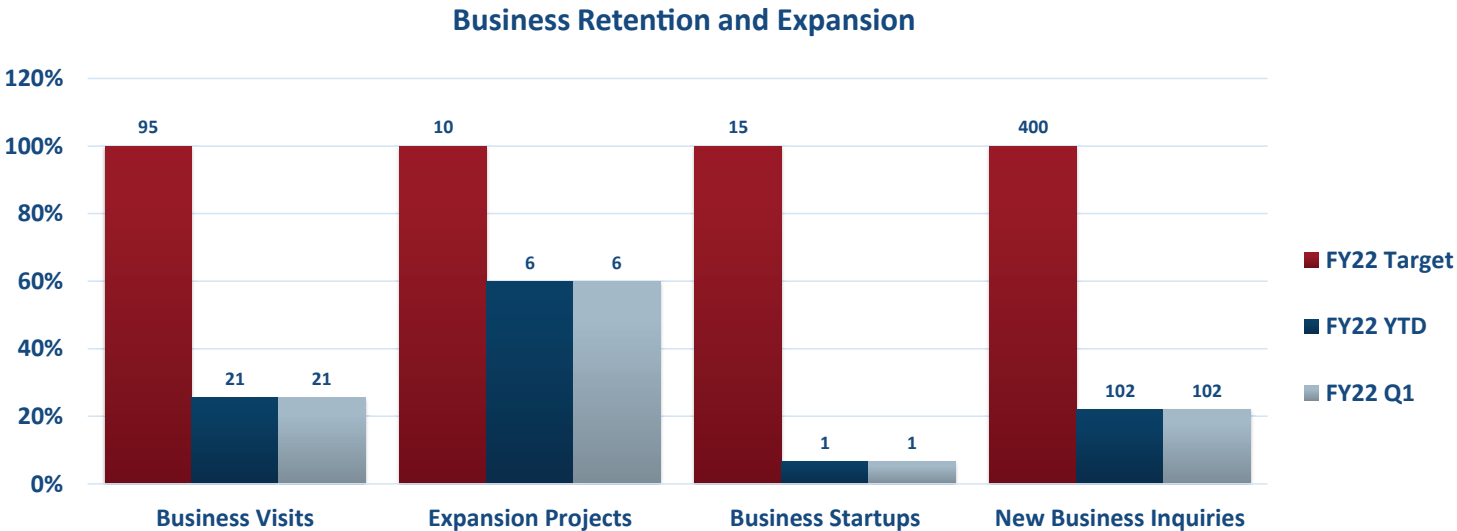
Assisting existing Stafford business

Existing business meetings in the second quarter further established and identify the critical need for employees in every level of our workforce. Business leaders we met with expressed serious concern on the ability to attract new employees. Their concerns are not only the need for improved technical and “soft” skill sets but also the number of applicants. Labor force needs (numbers and training) will be a significant issue for our existing (and new) business community, from restaurants to high-tech, cyber government contractors.

We continue to work with our state, regional, and local workforce teams, maintaining communications to connect job searchers with new and existing positions. Our partners tell us that new hires need additional personal (what they call “wrap around”) funds to cover their new job adjustment period, including transportation, child care, and basic attire necessities. We are coordinating with other agencies and seeking funding sources to address these needs. We have also begun exploring ways to help attract talent to our business community.

With the growing workforce gap, we are communicating and working with the local schools and universities as they develop pipelines of students, teaching them skill sets, certifications, and entry-level education.

One of our “big wins” this past quarter was the expansion and investment by Virginia Oncology Care. The success and new investment of Dr. Manan Mehta is a major new investment in Chatham Heights. This location bolsters the shopping center as a Healthcare “anchor” and will likely attract new customers to the surrounding stores and will increase incomes for the employees in that area. The Board of Supervisors and EDA approved an incentive agreement with Virginia Oncology Care that has a positive ROI in year two and over 170% at the end of the five-year agreement.



Entrepreneurial Development

Enhancing and fostering innovation

This past quarter, we continued to foster entrepreneurship across the region with the launch of the Rappahannock River “entrepreneurial ecosystem.” This program is spear-headed by our Department and the Stafford EDA, funded, in part by GO Virginia.

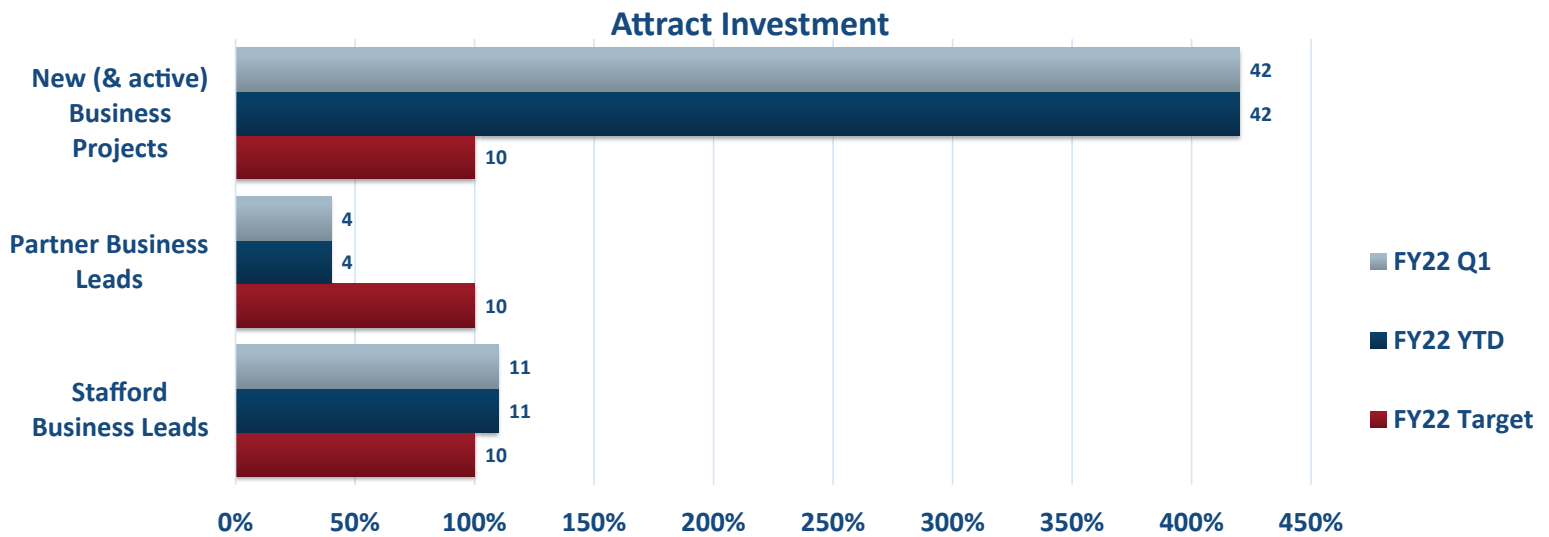
We have fully built-out and prepared the [Virginia Smart Community Testbed](#) and are now using it as a hub of technology and entrepreneurial development. Our partner, RIoT, announced they have hired Jennifer Morgan, formally with GWRC and GO Virginia, as their Virginia [RIoT Accelerator Program](#) lead. Jennifer is working with us closely as they launch the accelerator program.

The Testbed is generating interest around the greater region, Virginia, USA, and internationally. As a result of the Testbed, ED&T and other County Departments are engaged and discussing new innovative technologies with firms from around the globe. Some of which may “pilot” a project in the Testbed and Stafford and some of which, we hope, will establish an office here in Stafford.

We welcomed six new businesses with ribbon cuttings and groundbreakings this past quarter: Code Ninja; Pence Group’s The Garrison; Berea Health & Rehabilitation; The D.A.R.W.I.N. Center at the Qube; Sampson Properties; Float Stafford. The EDA also held its revised and updated Veterans Business Bootcamp. We helped Merritt Properties host a “Trick or Treats of Employee Retention” event, and worked with RIoT to host a Lunch & Learn on Smart Agriculture.

Visit our [events calendar](#) for dates and details on upcoming events.





Attract Investment

Engaging new business and visitor spending

This past quarter we responded to 30 new business “leads,” generated by our partners or our own economic development marketing. At the same time, we continued to assist or work on 40 other new business projects. All of these, are potential new businesses for Stafford.

This past quarter, we were proud to announce Stafford as the new home for UVision USA, Inc. UVision is an international firm that was seeking a U.S. location for its specialized drone business. UVision was introduced to us by our private and state partners as they were considering sites in D.C. and Maryland. Working with our partners we crafted an incentive package approved by the State, our Board, and the EDA. UVision will invest \$2.2 million to establish its production and training center and lease 25,000 square feet of space at the Quantico Corporate Center, creating 40 new jobs. Stafford successfully competed with Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, and Texas for the project.



Initiatives

Virginia Smart Community Testbed

As noted, the Stafford EDA and County have “built-out” and continue to see tremendous interest in the [Virginia Smart Community Testbed](#). We have begun the launch of the new [Virginia RIoT Accelerator Program](#) and will continue to develop “Smart Technology” products for deployment in Stafford and the Commonwealth (e.g., improved public safety drones, secure data, stream monitoring and flood warning systems, etc.).

The testbed now has four Pilot Projects launched in this fiscal year. Additionally, there are over 10 potential projects that the Testbed Executive Committee has discussed as future opportunities.

One project underway is a smart lighting and wireless internet demonstration project with several smart technology partners organized through Networking for Future, Inc. (NFF). This project is a first in the country. Gigabit Luminary has mounted a (smart) pole outside the Tested with the capability to mount IoT devices to the pole. The project will be expanded to create a WIFI network covering the entire Government Center parking area (that currently lacks consistent WIFI).

Alongside these projects are opportunities for entrepreneurs from across the world (literally) to engage with Stafford County as an innovation hub to start their business or find new markets. Our partners at RIoT are helping with our entrepreneur initiative through the accelerator program. Through our initial efforts alone, we have served 17 start-up companies who will all be candidates for the accelerator program. Of the 17, six are foreign start-ups that may very likely use Stafford as their launchpad to expand their business in the U.S., with the others coming from Stafford and the region.

The Testbed has become an active and vibrant place that serves to support innovators and grow our economy with near-daily meetings occurring in the facility. Through the Testbed and the associated RIoT entrepreneurial programs, we continue to build significant “buzz” around innovation and entrepreneurship in Stafford, and we brand these initiatives under “Smart Stafford”.

Stafford Cares Restaurant Program

Our department led the first Stafford Cares Program. That initial project, funded by a grant secured by ED&T, allowed us to purchase \$742,000 worth of meal cards from restaurants during the peak of the Pandemic (when their business was declining) and distribute those meal cards to over 2,300 SNAP recipients. Over the past quarter, ED&T and the Department of Social Services (DSS) distributed meal cards during DSS’s Thanksgiving and Christmas events. The Meal Card Project will be closed out at the end of this coming quarter but the “brand” Stafford Cares will be used in other County community support projects.

Back to Work...Safely

The Department has been discussing and developing plans to assist our local business community with the challenges facing full recovery from the Pandemic. The most critical issue is the attraction and development of a workforce to meet business demand. The labor market concern is a national matter and we are working with our partners at the Virginia Employment Commission, Bay Area Workforce Board, and local business leaders to identify what we can do to assist. There has been a lot of behind-the-scenes meetings and dialogue on how best we can complement the programs available through our partners. There are many programs for retraining and workforce development in place and underway, including new programs we are engaged in with Stafford Schools, Germanna Community College, and others. We are hoping to develop additional, non-duplicative programs that will assist our existing and new business interests and attract talent for their business—large or small, restaurant, hospitality, cyber, or other.



Meet the “band” behind the message.



John Holden
Director



Lisa Logan
Tourism Manager



Courtney Swenson
Marketing Manager



Rick Cobert
Economic Development
Manager



Josh Summits
Business
Development Officer



Linzy Browne
EDA Professional



Dale Hendon
Specialist



Brittany Loving
Tourism Associate



Tammy Guseman
Administrative
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