QUARTERLY SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES
FY21 Q1

STAFFORD COUNTY, VIRGINIA
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM

This summarizes the activities and work of the Stafford County Department of Economic Development & Tourism for the first quarter of FY21.

OUR MESSAGE: MARKETING STAFFORD

ED&T is the marketing and sales arm for Stafford—to encourage business expansion and investment.
As we finish the first quarter of FY21, we have continued to focus on our marketing and communication efforts. We stay abreast of key market and consumer needs as they are ever changing during this climate. Guided by our Marketing Plan, our strategy integrates our message for Stafford and initiatives to showcase Stafford as the best place to do business, visit, and build a family.

Stafford offers compelling advantages for businesses and tourists. Tourism continues our focus on corporate meetings, sports tourism, and on the leisure market. With a new shift in leisure market traveling post-coronavirus, we will follow the State Tourism's plan and target individuals looking for road-trips, weekend getaways, and drivable destinations.

We are perfecting our message through current channels and testing new platforms to engage businesses and tourists. While we currently focus on engagement via social media, our websites, outreach, events, partnerships, and talking with key stakeholders, we have developed new customers through Google My Business services and new Tourism Savings Pass programs.

During this quarter, staff have been engaged in efforts to assist our business community challenged by COVID-19. The Stafford EDA took action at the start of the outbreak with over $450,000 in grant funds to local business. As this quarter (and new fiscal year) started, the Board took action and allocated $2,037,000 in Federal CARES Act funds to the EDA (see below). This effort among many others amplifies Stafford's message that we are here to support businesses and the community.

Key marketing and communications efforts during this quarter include:
- Stronger engagement through various marketing channels and email marketing efforts
- The EDA launched and hosted two entrepreneurial development events as part of our Go Virginia funded entrepreneurial development program (more below).
- John Holden, Director, was the guest speaker speaking on local radio "Town Talk" (twice) and a guest panelist on technology and workforce development in the DMV.

Please help promote our Message and follow us on social media and use the hashtags #WhatsNextStafford, #GoStaffordVA, and #TourStaffordVA.

Follow and like us on social media:
Economic Development Social Media: Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter.

Tourism Social Media: Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube.

THE MESSAGE	FY21 TARGET	FY21 Q1	FY21 YTD	% GOAL
Department Newsletter (+PR)	35	15	15	42%
Tour Stafford Website Page Views	169,000	39,528	39,528	23%
Tour Stafford Website Users	94,000	19,843	19,843	21%
Go Stafford Website Page Views	70,000	21,569	21,569	30%
Go Stafford Website Users	35,000	9,044	9,044	25%
Business & Networking Events	8	2	2	25%

Total Employment 45,889 ↑	MOST AFFORDABLE BUSINESS LOCATION IN THE DMV	HOME TO 2,872 BUSINESSES	SIGNIFICANT AND GROWING CYBER AND TECH SECTOR	545, 992 TOURISM VISITORS EACH YEAR

GO STAFFORD Virginia   TOUR STAFFORD Virginia

EXPAND BUSINESS: BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION (BRE)

ED&T is the customer service arm for businesses in Stafford.

Stafford EDA CARES Act COVID-19 Business Recovery Grants: As noted on page one, a primary focus of our work this past quarter was in response to COVID-19; providing grant funds to local businesses. This involved significant "behind the scenes" work to design guidelines that met federal rules, to market the grants, and finally score and award grants. Stafford provided $1.0M in grants funds to Stafford-based businesses in the last quarter.

As CARES Act funds are extinguished, keep in mind that the Stafford EDA is still offering a COVID-19 Loan Program with *forgivable interest if the principal is paid within 24 months*. This loan program is still accepting applications. Our traditional business visits and outreach (BRE) has been restricted due to the Coronavirus outbreak. Additionally, the number of Walk-in visitors has dropped off significantly. That said, we have been in touch with hundreds of Stafford businesses via e-alerts and newsletters. During this past quarter over 110 local Stafford businesses were awarded Cares Act funded grants.

In addition, Stafford secured the deployment and expansion of broadband to approximately 140 homes making use of CARES Act funds.
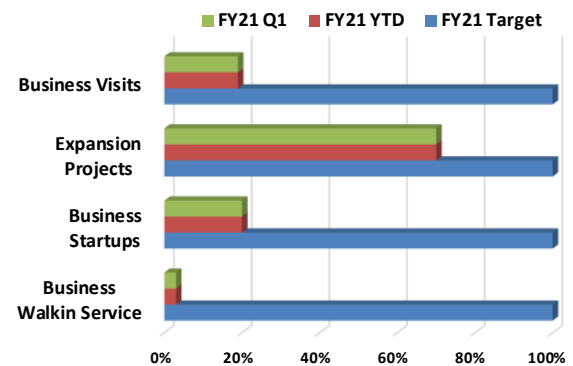
ATTRACT INVESTMENT

ED&T works to attract new business and visitors to Stafford. Interest in new business investment in Stafford continues to grow. We attribute the continued interest in our messaging and marketing over the last two years that Stafford is the lower-cost opportunity south of NOVA and can serve a region from Richmond through the DMV. The focus on logistics and distribution is gaining attention in the marketplace, but so too are other business sectors.

Currently, ED&T continues to work with three major developers or companies that are considering millions of square feet of distribution and high-tech manufacturing space. In addition, we are getting attention from more "technology" and "smart" sectors, including those with international connections. We intend to revisit our efforts in connecting with international firms seeking U.S. operations in 2021. More and more international firms realize they need to establish U.S. offices to grow their U.S. market. That said we have begun to develop some details to better prepare Stafford to be "site-ready". After labor force, the "speed to operation" is the number one issue for new business interests. Staff is preparing two initiatives to improve Stafford's Site Readiness during the new quarter (see page 4).
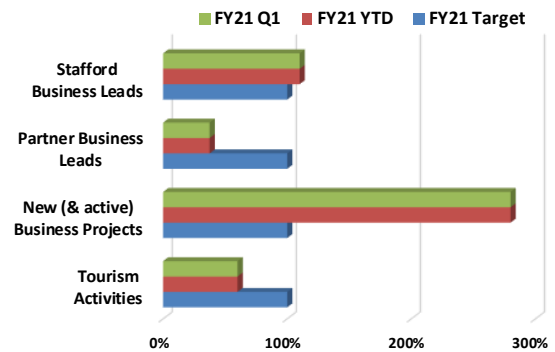
NEW TOURISM ACTIVITIES

Stafford Tourism continues to support marketing plans and initiatives through COVID-19 and plan for the future. In response to COVID-19, the Tourism Program initiated and continues to participate in activities and programs to promote spending in area hotels and restaurants.

- Stafford Tourism created and launched two web-based Stafford Savings Passes for the community and tourists.
- Ongoing work to bring new investment to Stafford County through sporting events, group travel, meetings, and conferences.
- Focusing on strengthening its social media presence to increase engagement.

ENTREPRENEURIAL DEVELOPMENT

As reported last quarter, ED&T and the EDA secured Go Virginia grant funding to attract and secure entrepreneurial development programming in Stafford and our Region. This is the start of a 12-month journey of customer discovery for us and our partners exploring how we might foster an entrepreneurial ecosystem in our region.

Our first event was held on July 30, 2020: **Interactive Town Hall—Shaping the future of Stafford & Greater Fredericksburg**. The event focused on gauging the region's priorities, introducing RIoT, engaging businesses, entrepreneurs, non-profits, and schools to better understand their needs and interests as it relates to entrepreneurship initiatives. The Town Hall was a virtual event and had a peak attendance of 113 participants.

Our second event was held on September 24, 2020: **Smart Infrastructure & Cybersecurity.** This event was held in partnership with RIoT and Cyber Bytes Foundation. The event included four industry panelists who discussed the current state and predicted future of Smart Infrastructure and Cybersecurity. The event included 40 attendees ranging from students to executives, and national engagement with 30% of registrants being out of state.

The next two programs will be hosted across our Region including King George and Fredericksburg, but open to all guests across the region.

Stafford's entrepreneurial development initiative is focused to help encourage new business startups and expansion of existing businesses. It crosses all economic sectors and is designed to be complimentary to our economic strengths in cyber and Smart Technology. During this past quarter, a handful of our new business "leads" (see below) are from those technology sectors—all attributed to our focused message around IoT, Cyber, and entrepreneurship.

To further expand our efforts, collaboration with others, and messaging, the Stafford EDA has applied for federal funds to further develop our entrepreneurial programming. We also expect to apply for follow-up Go Virginia funds during the balance of FY21.

Stafford is well-positioned to be the host and leader of an entrepreneurial development program, notably as it relates to the use of cyber and smart technology and the Internet of Things (IoT). It was ED&T marketing and networking that identified and attracted RIoT's internationally recognized programming to Stafford. This initiative will foster the expansion of existing and growth of new enterprises. The foundations for such an ecosystem exists and is based in the wide range of well-established business leaders willing to give back to foster new business growth. Our partners in this overall program include some like the Cyber Bytes Foundation, Intuit, Harkcon, GCubed, CASK Government Services, University of Mary Washington, Germanna Community College, and many others.

Upcoming Q2
Entrepreneurial Events

MBA in IoT | Oct 14

COVID-19 Market Shifts | Nov 4

Go VA Grant -
Mapping the Future of
King George | Dec 3

Customer Discovery | Dec 10-11

INITIATIVES

Initiatives include continued review and update of our economic development "tool box" and major development projects across Stafford.

SMART STAFFORD: IT'S ALL COMING TOGETHER!

We have reported on the broad effort to brand and market "**Smart Stafford".** This effort will integrate and leverage overlapping projects and programs into a significant initiative. Smart Stafford includes:

- The Virginia Smart Community Testbed
- Downtown Stafford (as "Smart Place")
- Our Tech-Entrepreneurial Development Programs

- The expansion of broadband across through Stafford
- Messaging around our talented workforce "pipeline"

The **Virginia Smart Community Testbed** is a significant program and includes millions of dollars of investment by the Virginia Center for Innovative Technologies (CIT), to pilot new technologies in Stafford. During the next quarter, ED&T will launch more marketing and branding around Smart Stafford and the Testbed. As noted above, this effort is gaining international attention and attracting interest and potential new business investment in Stafford. The Testbed is designed to provide technology and related infrastructure to support the development of "Smart" Downtown Stafford, including the recently approved Fountain Park at Downtown Stafford.

Our entrepreneurial development programming (noted on page two) further compliments and will help market new business growth in Stafford. Working with RIoT, we are offering programs for a wide variety of tech businesses and entrepreneurs, from around the globe, but "hosted" in Stafford. Smart Stafford includes the entire County including the expansion of broadband, as we continue to fund and seek out new funds for broadband expansion across the County.

SITE READINESS

As noted above, Staff from ED&T and Planning are researching and will be offering recommendations to the EDA and Board of Supervisors to help make Stafford an attractive "site ready" destination for new businesses. The easiest "fixes" are in the streamlining of rezoning and development of creative financing to help prepare infrastructure for new investments.

The second most cited need for new business investment (behind workforce) is speed to market—having buildings or sites ready for new investment. Staff from ED&T and Planning are researching and will be offering recommendations to the EDA and Board of Supervisors to help make Stafford an attractive "site ready" destination for data centers. Additionally, ED&T and the EDA will be considering and soliciting additional professional advice on innovative financing tools to invest in public infrastructure to support new economic development.