QUARTERLY SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES
FY21 Q4

STAFFORD COUNTY, VIRGINIA
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM

This summarizes the activities and work of the Stafford County Department of Economic Development & Tourism for the fourth quarter of Fiscal Year (FY) 2021.

OUR MESSAGE: MARKETING STAFFORD

ED&T is the marketing and sales arm for Stafford—to encourage business expansion and investment.

This quarter marks the end of our Fiscal Year, 2021. The last 12-18 months have been, of course, unique and challenging for all of us, but we have made significant progress in supporting business through the Coronavirus Pandemic and are now making plans for "normal" activities in the new fiscal year.

Over the past year, we set new ambitious goals to build and maintain our marketing message through department newsletters, public relations efforts, website engagement, and business and networking events. This was particularly challenging during a pandemic, where travel was limited and business events were all virtual. We met and exceeded all marketing goals with the exception of one. The exception of a goal to maintain the amount of new users visiting the Tourism Website. That exception is no surprise given the pandemic shut downs and changes in consumer behavior to stay "safe". We adjusted our primary tourism marketing message, focusing on engaging with a more local audience. Like many entrepreneurs, we adjusted, learned, and will use what we learned to continue to improve our tourism strategy as we adjust to a new market post-COVID.

A significant amount of our time and message this last quarter has been around the ongoing and new entrepreneurial development programs and the opening of the Virginia Smart Community Testbed on May 25. In FY21 alone, we hosted and planned 29 business and networking events. Our ability to do so is a direct result of the EDA investment in our Marketing & Events Contractor, who has become a valuable member of our Band.

At the same time, since moving our overall marketing in-house in January, we are near the re-launch of our primary economic development and tourism websites. There has been significant time and energy "behind the scenes" over this past quarter on the re-design and launch. While rebuilding we have launched a number of specific brands including *Smart Stafford,* that encompasses our partnership with the Testbed, entrepreneurship, and expansion of broadband. Visit our new landing page highlighting our efforts.

| THE MESSAGE	FY21 TARGET	FY21 Q4	FY21 YTD	% GOAL
Department Newsletter (+PR)	35	3	35	100%
Tour Stafford Website Page Views	169,000	76,103	252,939	150%
Tour Stafford Website Users	94,000	21,975	84,699	90%
Go Stafford Website Page Views	70,000	15,718	72,475	104%
Go Stafford Website Users	35,000	8,980	36,046	103%
Business & Networking Events	8	7	29	363%

EXPAND BUSINESS: BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION (BRE)

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

Our in-person BRE efforts continue to increase as we all become "safer." We have conducted a number of visits with our friends and partner at the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP). This allows us to better review their services, including recruitment, training grants and other programs.

This past quarter, The Rotary Club of North Stafford invited our team to provide an overview on the County as well as an open discussion on current projects and developments. The group was pleased to hear direct information and have the opportunity to converse about the local economy. The primary concern in the business community, learned from our BRE efforts, is the labor supply and skills needed for new job openings. We hope to address these concerns with focused networking with our workforce partners and specific programs using ARPA funds.

	FY21 Q4	FY21 YTD	FY21 Target
Business Visits	18	77	95
Expansion Projects	5	20	10
Business Startups	2	9	15
Business Walkin Service	72	94	400

A major effort this past quarter was the purchasing of over $740,000 in meal cards/certificates as part of our Stafford Cares Project, funded by the Virginia Community Development Block Grant Program. These purchases infused much needed cash into 50 Stafford County restaurants. During the upcoming quarter, the Department of Social Services will be distributing the cards to families in need across Stafford County (SNAP recipients).
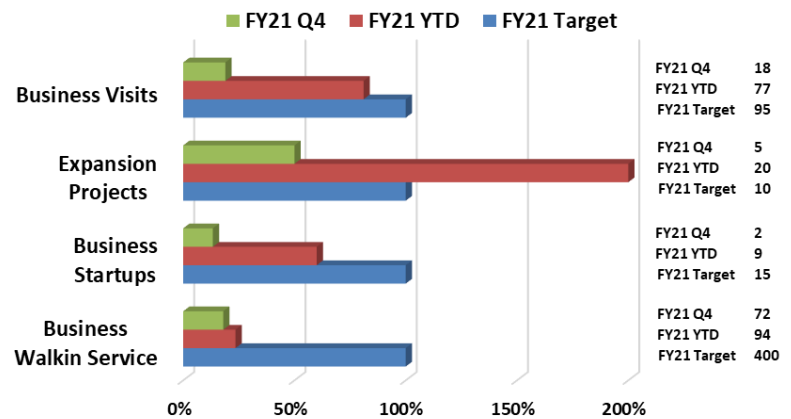
NEW TOURISM ACTIVITIES

As we come out of the Pandemic, Stafford Tourism continues to adjust marketing and communication strategies by integrating advertising, social media, earned media, and website messaging efforts. In the last quarter, we serviced and supported a variety of events and meetings including hosting the FBI Junior National Academy, two tournaments for the Kayak Bass Fishing Trail Series Tournaments, and Stafford's Juneteenth celebration. In addition, we wrapped up a three-month long advertising campaign called "Rediscover Stafford" which targeted day-trippers who are interested in food and beverage, outdoors, and history. We saw great success in website traffic and engagement as a result of this marketing campaign and continue to look for ways of showcasing Stafford as a place to visit.

REDISCOVER STAFFORD >>

ENTREPRENEURIAL DEVELOPMENT

In conjunction with the opening of the Virginia Smart Community Testbed, we held a "hybrid" program to foster tech-entrepreneurship. The Stafford EDA was successful in its grant application to Go Virginia Region 6 to expand and sustain our tech-based entrepreneurial programs and to launch our region's first "accelerator program" that will be hosted in the Testbed.

Over the past 12-months of our "exploratory" phase, we engaged with our partner RIoT who met and consulted with more than 40 small businesses in workshops and multiple 1-on-1 mentoring sessions in group settings. As a result of the successful "implementation" grant, RIoT will launch a Virginia RIoT Accelerator Program (VA-RAP). VA-RAP will provide opportunities for a number of startup or young businesses to participate in a series of 12-week high-touch programs that has proven to increase their path to success. VA-RAP will help entrepreneurs connect with state and regional resources as well as an industry consortium of more than 90 companies across the IoT technology stack to learn, partner, and bring their product to market. We expect to have our first "cohort" and VA-RAP launch in January, 2022. Over the next several months, RIoT's programs will expand into our fledgling Testbed program, in concert with our Testbed partners.

ATTRACT INVESTMENT

ED&T works to attract new business and visitors to Stafford.

The economy is heating up and there are a number of businesses around the world looking to expand their operations in the DMV-Richmond Corridor. In this past quarter, we had 34 new "leads" to which we responded with opportunities in Stafford and information about costs of doing business. The two key issues facing these "leads" are available properties (what we call "Site-Ready") and workforce.

We are fortunate to have encouraged private investors to build "spec" site-ready projects sites in Stafford County. Two of the Mid Atlantic's major developers have

Legend: ■ FY21 Q4   ■ FY21 YTD   ■ FY21 Target

Category		
Stafford Business Leads	FY21 Q4	21
	FY21 YTD	61
	FY21 Target	10
Partner Business Leads	FY21 Q4	13
	FY21 YTD	27
	FY21 Target	8
New (& active) Business Projects	FY21 Q4	27
	FY21 YTD	117
	FY21 Target	10
Tourism Activities	FY21 Q4	4
	FY21 YTD	10
	FY21 Target	5

now partnered with Stafford County as we refocus on 21st century advancement. Merritt Properties has completed the first of two flex/light industrial buildings totaling 171,000 SF at Merritt Business Park at Quantico Corporate Center. Now in permit review, Merritt at Austin Ridge will offer five single-story buildings totaling 390,075 square feet of new flex light industrial space located at Interstate-95 Exit 140 (Courthouse Road).

Peterson Companies' new project is NOVA Gateway, and is now under construction, with plans to build a 2.2-million-square-foot warehouse and distribution complex in Stafford County's Centreport area.

Meanwhile, the messaging around the Testbed has increased our presence in the IT and Technology sectors, including our efforts to attract what we call "foreign direct investment" (FDI). ED&T staff participated in a virtual SelectUSA event and a virtual "trade mission" with the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) this quarter and are working through more than 10 new international "leads" that may consider Stafford for their US expansion.