



QUARTERLY REPORT FY22 Q3 & Q4

Stafford County Department of
Economic Development & Tourism

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Virginia

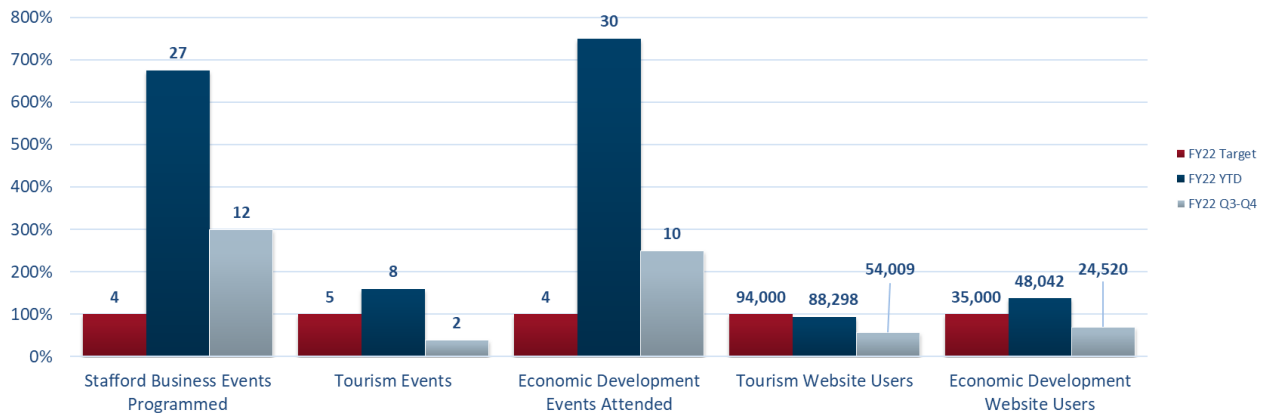
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Stafford Economic Development and Tourism FY22 Q3-Q4 Report

This quarterly report represents the last two quarters of FY22

Our Message: Marketing Stafford

Marketing, Communications, and Events



We continue to focus on our Brand and Messaging for Go Stafford (economic development) and Tour Stafford (tourism) and continue to see improvements in reaching new potential “customers”.

Updated marketing and sales collateral

We released the [Stafford County Economic Development & Tourism Profile](#), in May. This integrated marketing and communications brochure provides readers with information on programs, resources, and initiatives we offer to attract, create, and retain jobs in Stafford. We launched this profile during Economic Development Week in May along with receiving a proclamation from the Stafford Board of Supervisors to declare #EconDevWeek22 for Stafford County. In May, we also released the new [Stafford Area Visitors Guide](#) during Tourism and Travel Week. This is a marketing tool designed to highlight Stafford’s tourism attractions and create travel planning inspiration to attract potential visitors and events to the Stafford community.



EDA Chairman Joel Griffin receives #EconDevWeek22 proclamation from Stafford County Board of Supervisors Chairman, Crystal Vanuch

Recognition and department awards

In March, the Department was awarded the [March Madness Best Websites Award](#) by the [Fredericksburg Regional Chamber of Commerce](#). We congratulate Courtney Swenson, our marketing manager, as she was recognized as one of [Destinations International 30 Under 30 award recipients](#). [Destinations International](#) is the world’s largest resource for official destination organizations, convention and

visitors' bureaus (CVBs) and tourism boards. Courtney was selected among 73 nominations from across the globe and this is one of the highest distinctions available to tourism professionals in the industry.

Website visitors

Over the past six months, we saw significant online visitors as a result of focused marketing and messaging efforts. Our (still) new websites are performing exceptionally well as a result of targeted online marketing campaigns. The [Economic Development website](#) saw a big increase in users over the fiscal year, with a 32% increase year over year. During the spring and summer, economic development users were up 21% year over year. This growth was fueled by geographically targeted advertising as well as hyper-focused advertising at economic development conferences.

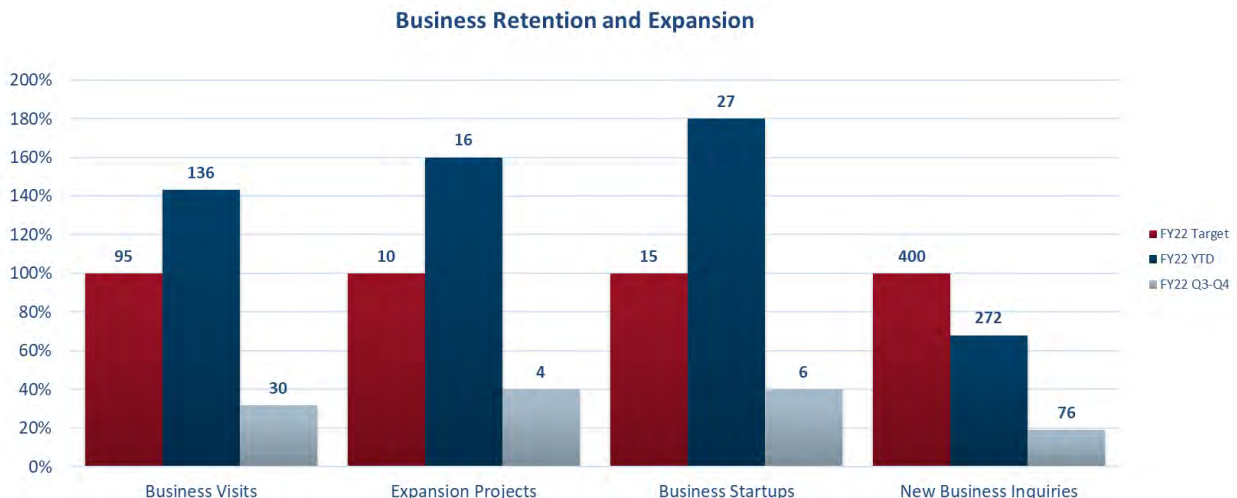
[Tourism website](#) visitors have increased 4% this fiscal year, with a marked growth over the second half of the year. Users went up more than 59% from January of 2022 to June of 2022. Much of this growth over the spring and summer was driven by native advertising and other highly targeted advertising efforts. This traffic has resulted in increased "conversions" to both of our websites, where visitors have contacted staff for input and resources. This strategy will continue to be our focus on upcoming marketing campaigns.

Marketing support to the Stafford Regional Airport

ED&T worked with the [Stafford Regional Airport](#) over the past six months to support and improve their marketing materials and efforts, including:

- A new website focused to bring aviators, corporate business, and tech-based (drone) business to the Stafford airport
- Billboard on Interstate-95, co-branded with our department
- Marketing brochure and banner to sell the Stafford Airport at tradeshows
- Dedicated wall in the airport to highlight Stafford's robust business community – included branding from ED&T and the EDA

Business Retention & Expansion (BRE)



Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) is about providing “customer service” to our existing “clients”—existing businesses in Stafford. Among others, this period included:

- Focused efforts to assist in the continued expansion of [First Line Technology](#)
- Support to [Precision Digital Forensics, Inc. \(PDFI\)](#), a forensics analysis lab expansion and recipient of *2022 EDA Innovation Award*
- Guidance and assistance of a corporate headquarters expansion for an existing government contractor

Workforce Pipeline

The availability of labor and a quality workforce continues as a prominent discussion topic for all business. In collaboration with [VEDP](#), eight BRE meetings took place to connect workforce options to Stafford businesses. VEDP provided an overview of recruitment and training resources such as [Virginia Jobs Investments Program \(VJIP\)](#) and the [Virginia Talent Accelerator Program](#).

We are working closely with local and regional workforce and education centers to promote the openings of over 1,500 jobs in logistics and distribution, cyber, and other business sectors. Stafford’s partner organizations for job connections include [VEC/CareerWorks Fredericksburg](#); [BayWIB](#); [Germana Community College](#); [UMW Career Center/UMW Stafford](#); and [Goodwill Industries](#). In addition, the Department and [Stafford EDA](#) are working closely with the new [Cyber 4+ program](#) developed by Stafford Schools, and continue to also promote the other certification course opportunities in the area.

Connecting community leaders with MCBQ

In April, members of Stafford’s Board of Supervisors held a receptive and thought-filled meeting with Marine Corps Base Quantico Commander Colonel Michael L. Brooks and other senior officials at the National Museum of the Marine Corps. The conversation provided an update on many topics, including a new Quantico train station; opportunities for Stafford, Prince William, and other jurisdictions to partner; improve project timelines and cut costs on new and necessary infrastructure; and other high-level topics. MCBQ Directors and Colonel Brooks’ leadership team highlighted workforce issues along with the Marine Corps Transition program.

In June, Stafford ED&T met with managers of the MCBQ Military Transition team, and included area workforce partners. We reviewed the “NOVA Military Transition Pipeline” programs to further assist and connect former Marines to the many new jobs available in our community. As a result of that conversation, we are preparing for a follow-up meeting with business executives and human resource directors to coordinate attendance at upcoming job fairs, education, and certification meetings.

Entrepreneurial Development

Stafford’s growing partnership with RIoT

ED&T has been working alongside [RIoT](#) as they continue to expand their footprint in Virginia, and more specifically, the Stafford region. In Q4, RIoT launched their Foundations and Virginia RIoT Accelerator Program initiated by the Department and the Stafford EDA. These programs are funded by Go Virginia, and are a regional program based in Stafford at the [Virginia Smart Community Testbed](#). Six early-stage entrepreneurs participated in the RIoT Foundations Program and seven startups were accepted into the

first Virginia RIoT Accelerator Program cohort. Those participants will offer their “business pitch” at the [RAP XI Pitch Night](#) on August 24 at 5:30 p.m. located at the Fredericksburg Area Museum.

The Testbed – a launchpad for entrepreneurs

The Testbed has become a hub for technology and entrepreneurial development, supported in partnership with the [Virginia Innovation Partnership Corporation](#). The Department is now engaged with a number of entrepreneurs from the RIoT Accelerator Program and others from around the nation and globe who are attracted by opportunities to develop and deploy a [Pilot Project](#) in Virginia and start or expand their business in Stafford.

Stafford celebrated new business openings through ribbon cuttings

We welcomed nine new businesses with ribbon cuttings and groundbreakings over the past six months:

- [NOVA Brows](#)
- [Always Flavored](#)
- [GCubed Access VR](#)
- [Sika](#)
- [Sheetz at Burns Corner](#)
- [Asurion Tech Repair & Solutions](#)
- [Manhattan Pizza Stafford](#)
- [VA Oncology Care](#)
- [Up North Kutz](#)

Speaking opportunities and hosted events

Stafford was a sponsor at the [DICE East 2022](#) data center event in Reston. As the first event in two years, our team was able to network, educate, and have personal discussions with speakers, developers, and data center prospects. The Department provided a *County Overview* and update to the [Coldwell Banker Commercial Elite](#) office where 10 area brokers got an update on commercial activity and growth in Stafford.

The EDA hosted many business networking events including:

- The annual [Stafford County Business Appreciation](#) event at the Holiday Inn and Conference Center had 149 attendees for a dinner reception, awards, and fellowship
- The [Veterans Business Bootcamp for Startup and New Businesses](#) held in February had 16 attendees
- [Beer & Business: Raw Truth of Fiber Communication](#) with Express-Tek held in March at Barley Naked Brewing Company had 47 attendees who engaged with one another and learned about the development of fiber networks
- [Beer & Business: The Raw Truth of Baseball](#) with Fred Nats held in May at Highmark Brewery had 42 attendees who learned the value and business model of baseball in our region

As part of our resources and marketing, we continue to highlight and share our [events calendar](#) for details on upcoming business networking events and opportunities.

Tourism

Updated marketing brochures

Tourism released a brand-new [Stafford Area Visitor Guide](#). As mentioned above, this is designed as a marketing tool to highlight Stafford’s tourism attractions and create travel planning inspiration to attract potential visitors and events to the Stafford community. This is distributed to a variety of businesses,

visitor centers, welcome centers, and rest areas across the state. We also developed a simple Stafford Area rack card to showcase at local events.

Updated tourism resources to businesses

Tourism relaunched its [Tourism Events Sponsorship Program](#), which provides funding to organizations interested in hosting tourism-related events in Stafford. We provided funding to seven applicants in the last six months. The marketing team developed a [Tour Stafford VA Marketing Co-Op](#) program which connects tourism-related businesses with discounted marketing and advertising options with local, regional, and statewide publications and media outlets.

Smart Tourism - smart kiosks

In efforts to educate about the Stafford area, Tour Stafford now has two smart kiosks. These kiosks are due to the efforts of the Virginia Smart Community Testbed and allow visitors to learn more about Stafford in a digital-focused experience.

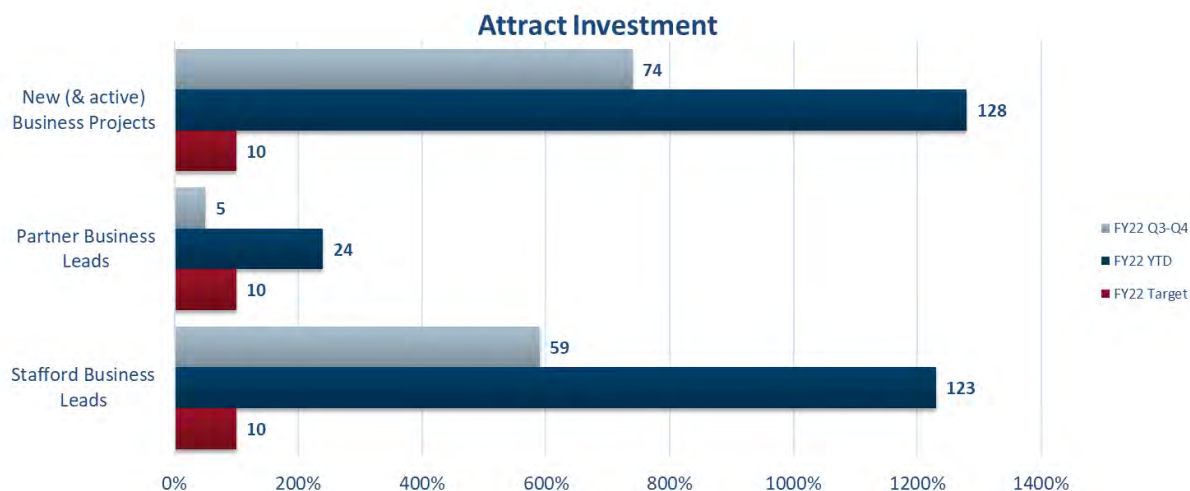
ED&T sponsorship and event participation

Tour Stafford continues to be an active part of the local community through event sponsorships. Over the past two quarters, we sponsored the Stafford NAACP Juneteenth celebration, the Marine Corp Marathon Foundation's Race Series, and the Stafford Soap Box Derby. *The Rappahannock Regional Soap Box Derby celebrated their 25th anniversary with the Stafford Soap Box Derby, which was hosted for the first time in Stafford County.*

Growing sports tourism in Stafford

Sports tourism in Stafford is growing from repeat business and new business. Stafford continues to be a go-to destination to host a variety of soccer tournaments and Kayak Bass Fishing (KBF) tournaments. Tour Stafford will host, for the first time, the [American Junior Golf Association \(AJGA\) All-Star Qualifier Tournament](#) in August at the Gauntlet Golf Club. This tournament brings AJGA's rising young golf stars from across the country to Stafford to compete.

Attract



Generating business leads

Our marketing and messaging for economic development “leads” continues to show results through ongoing traditional and digital marketing campaign. This past quarter we responded to 64 new business “leads,” generated by our partners or our own economic development marketing. We also continued work on 40 diverse new business projects. All of these are potential new businesses for Stafford. ED&T was extremely busy and active in the last two quarters. This is due to the previous quarters growth in investment and enterprise investments (GDP), and the return of a number of business investment programs and events, including our own.

Key target industry focus: Cyber Security and Technology

During this period, we focused our business attraction and investment strategy on one of our key industries: Cyber Security and Technology. As a result, we generated three new business interest “leads” from the Unmanned Aerial Systems (drone) sectors and over 30 from international companies looking to invest in the US.

Initiatives

Virginia Smart Community Testbed

Over the past six months, ED&T and the [Virginia Innovation Partnership Corporation \(VIPC\)](#) continued to see tremendous interest and show results from the [Virginia Smart Community Testbed](#). With the exponential growth of the Testbed, we also developed a new dedicated website which allows partners, sponsors, founders, and prospects to engage and learn about the various initiatives and projects going on. We will be announcing results of some of the current Pilot Projects next quarter, some that have a direct benefit to Stafford County.

The Virginia Smart Community Testbed celebrated its one-year anniversary by hosting a number of dignitaries from the state, federal, and our own Stafford Board of Supervisors. Supervisor Gary and Allen accepted the *2022 Smart 50 Award* on behalf of Stafford County. This award presented by Smart Cities Connect recognizes global smart city projects, honoring the most innovative and influential work. As noted, the Testbed is attracting new business talent and small businesses from around the nation and globe to “pilot” their technology in Stafford and across the Commonwealth. We are pleased to hear that some of these companies are discussing new operations in Stafford.

Planning for post-COVID events and outreach

ED&T and the EDA have spent much of this quarter planning for many activities post-COVID. Traditionally, spring and fall are busy “event” months for our department. With so many events being postponed and then rescheduled over the previous year, this past spring was extremely busy.

Events put on or attended include:

- EDA Beer & Business
- EDA Business Application Reception
- Modern Day Marine—ED&T had a major presence to encourage marine and marine family to visit Stafford and discuss opportunities with businesses selling products and services to the Marines
- Smart City conference in Columbus, Ohio

- SelectUSA—major event, in-person after two-years, for international firms seeking US sites
- Sports sales conference in Fort Worth, Texas
- Meetings sales conference in Branson, Missouri

Growing an entrepreneurial ecosystem

As noted, the [Virginia RIoT Accelerator Program](#) recruited its first Virginia Cohort and will begin this next quarter. RIoT is focused on entrepreneurs, start-ups, and thinkers who are looking to bring their business ideas and products to fruition. With this foundational approach, they opened the RIoT Foundations Program and the Virginia RIoT Accelerator Program (VA-RAP) right here in Stafford. As the program launched less than a year ago, RIoT, alongside our team have worked hard to promote an entrepreneurial ecosystem in the Stafford community.

Stafford County Department of Economic Development & Tourism

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www.GoStaffordVA.com
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