The mission of Visit Annapolis and Anne Arundel County is to market the destination, provide economic prosperity, and enhance employment opportunities.
2018-2019 ANNUAL REPORT

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The mission of Visit Annapolis and Anne Arundel County is to market the destination, provide economic prosperity, and enhance employment opportunities. In this regard we've had a stellar year.

Marketing the destination: within our $3.9M budget we spent $1.9 M in advertising alone, more than our total budget in 2003. Those efforts and the efforts of the entire team generated 1.5M visitors to our websites, drove nearly 200,000 travelers to our visitors centers and helped to secure a 72% hotel occupancy.

Economic prosperity: Anne Arundel County experienced a 2% growth in dollars spent by visitors last year, totaling $3.8B. 80% of the $20.4M of lodging tax alone was placed in city and county general funds for teacher salaries, firefighters pay and infrastructure.

Enhance employment: travel and tourism generated over 31,000 jobs. Jobs that provide a living wage and beyond.

I couldn’t be prouder of the team and their successful efforts to promote Anne Arundel County. And I must say, as you are the product we sell— you make our jobs a little easier. Without your amazing food, preserved history, lifestyle-fun businesses, top entertainment, trendy shops and the incredible arts we are not a travel and tourism destination; nor are we a place where 360,000 people want to live. What a great combination of efforts between your product and our marketing!

It is my pleasure and honor to serve the travel and tourism industry of Annapolis and Anne Arundel County. Thank you for the opportunity.

Connie Del Signore

It’s taken 16 years, but I finally made the cut. Chairman of the Board! Many of you know what we’ve been able to accomplish since my becoming “The Tourism Senator”. Over those years we passed 3 bills that positively affect tourism marketing for the state of Maryland. But I am most proud of the one we passed in 2009 that put into law the percentage of lodging tax the VAAAC receives, because that meant this organization has gone from a marketing and promotional budget of $1.2 million to what we anticipate to be $4 million in fiscal 2020. That money puts this city and county on the map; on visitors’ bucket lists; and most importantly impacts every resident through 31,000 jobs, millions into the county and city general funds, and in your pockets!

You know, every year when Connie made a presentation to the AACO delegation I listened and then I asked her how she expected to top those numbers in the next year. But she always did.

The additional dollars and exceptional programming do not, however, mean we won’t have challenges next year. We are facing uncertainty in the economy, increased domestic terror and a 2% decline in international travel to the US. How we respond to these challenges begins with how we are prepared. The VAAAC is working closely with US Travel, Capital Region USA, and, locally, the Office of Emergency Management. Please stay actively involved with our efforts and include our TEAM in your plans for fiscal 2020.

Senator John C. Astle
AT LARGE MEMBERS

LISA BARGE
Agricultural Marketing & Development, Anne Arundel Economic Development Corp.

CAROL BENSON
Executive Director, Four Rivers: Heritage Area

SALLY WERN COMPOR
Principal, Art at Large, Inc.

MARGARET DAVIS
President & CEO, Maryland Hall for the Creative Arts

ALAN FRIEDMAN
Attorney at Law

BRIAN GALLAGHER
Director, Council Baradel

RODNEY GOODEN
General Manager, The Westin Annapolis

MICHAEL HUGHES
Manager Partner, MH Media Strategies

JAMES LOBOSCO
Executive VP Hospitality Division, Southern Management Corporation

ROBERTA PARDO
Owner/Creator, Urban Walls Brazil

ROBERT NORTON
President, Cordish Global Gaming and Live! Casino & Hotel

BRIAN RIDDLE
President, Homestead Gardens

STEVE STAVROPOULOS
General Manager, Westfield Annapolis

KEVIN WARNZ
Senior Manager, SP+ Municipal Services

APPOINTED MEMBERS

CDR. ALANA GARAS | USNA Representative
USNA Public Affairs Officers, United States Naval Academy
Miriam Stancic | USNA Community Relations Director

FELICIA NOLAN | City of Annapolis Representative
Development & Events Specialist, City of Annapolis

GINA STEWART | BWI Business Representative
Executive Director, BWI Business Partnership

JERRY WALKER | AAECD Representative
President & CEO, Anne Arundel Economic Development Corp.

OFFICERS / EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

SENATOR JOHN C. ASTLE | Chairman
Maryland State Senate, Retired

GARY JOBSON | Vice Chairman
Owner, Jobson Sailing, Inc.

DALE HILLIARD | Treasurer
Chief, Policy & Corporate Affairs, Maryland Aviation Administration

ERIC RUDEN | Secretary
Deputy Athletic Director, Naval Academy Athletic Association

ROBERT CLARK | Immediate Past Chairman
President & CEO, Historic Annapolis

CONNIE DEL SIGNORE | President & CEO
President & CEO, Visit Annapolis & Anne Arundel County

THE HONORABLE MAYOR GAVIN BUCKLEY
City of Annapolis

GENE CONDON | Nominating Committee Chair
Vice President/General Manager, Arundel Mills Mall

TYLER PATTON | Anne Arundel County Representative
Anne Arundel County

LOU ZAGARINO | Government Affairs and Advocacy Committee Chairman
Director, University of Maryland/Baltimore-Washington Medical Center Board

WILLIE WRIGHT | Marketing Committee Chairman
General Manager, Marriott BWI Airport

CHAIRMAN’S ADVISORY COMMITTEE

YOUSUF AHMAD
CEO, Northern Anne Arundel County Chamber of Commerce

TOM BAUM
Founding Partner, La Terra Homes

RAJ KUDCHADKAR, ESQ.
President & CEO, Central Maryland Chamber of Commerce

JULIA HOWES
Executive Director, Southern Anne Arundel Chamber of Commerce

ELIZABETH KINNEY
President, Light House Social Enterprise LLC Board

LIZ LEAGUE
CEO, Greater Severna Park and Arnold Chamber of Commerce

TERRY MARTINI
VAAAC Information Specialist, Retired Librarian

PATTI MORIARTY
Sales Associate, Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage

TRENT NEWMAN
VP Relationship Manager Business Banking, Bank of America
Merrill Lynch

ALDERMAN FREDERICK PAONE
Alderman, Ward 2, City of Annapolis, City Council

LAUREN RUSSELL
Creative Director, Maine Cottage & Thomas Baker

ALISSA J SANTORO
Executive Director, Greater Crofton Chamber of Commerce

PATRICIA ZENO
Chair, Historic Preservation Commission, City of Annapolis

2018-2019 FY SOURCES OF FUNDING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>source</th>
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<tr>
<td>Hotel Tax</td>
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<tr>
<td>MD Matching Funds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partner Programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Income</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL SUPPORT AND REVENUE</strong></td>
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EXPENSES

<table>
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<td>Programming</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating</td>
<td>1,228,436.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL EXPENDITURES FY2018-19</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,420,261.68</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ADVERTISING & PROMOTIONS

This year VAAAC invested $1.86 million in advertising and promotions. This included digital and print advertising, social marketing, website promotions, search engine marketing and local event promotion. Print publications were focused on quality over quantity with placement in: Southern Living Magazine, Coastal Living, Food & Wine, Travel + Leisure, Garden & Gun, Conde Nast, and The Knot.

$95,000 was directly invested into developing the editorial blog site, AnnapolisDiscovered.com, the re-launch and re-brand of WeddingsInAnnapolis.com, and maintenance and upgrades to VisitAnnapolis.com, and HotelsatBWI.com.

Overall, the marketing activities of FY19 worked to achieve 1,532,400 visits across our collection of websites. This was a 78% year-over-year increase. Annapolis Discovered generated 197,046 of those visits, with a 72% growth over the former Foodie, Historian and Explorer blog sites of FY18. Experiencing five times as many visits, TheHotelsAtBWI.com generated 209,598 visits and VisitAnnapolis.org continues to have the largest share of visitors, with 731,268 visits in FY19. WeddingsInAnnapolis.com achieved three times as many visits than in FY18. As we continue to expand our content marketing strategy online and focus on advertising in publications with greater reach, we are pleased to see our strategy working.

SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

Our social media platforms continue to generate additional engagement. Collectively, our follower reach is more than 152K, a growth of more than 21% over last year. Our Facebook fanbase had a 35% increase to 133,682 over the previous period. Twitter fanbase maintained its nearly 11K followers and Instagram increased 22% to more than 18K. In FY19 we introduced Pinterest as another form of social engagement, appealing to the dreaming stage of travel.
GROUP SALES ACTIVITIES & IMPACT

Group Sales introduced more intimate events for meeting planners and partners in FY19, resulting in 189 booked groups, a 7.4% increase over the previous year. These current and future bookings, when consumed, will generate an estimated 51,118 room nights with an estimated $15 million in economic impact.

In addition to the new client events, other proven groups sales activities that generated these strong results included: nine trade shows targeting associations, corporate, SMERF, and sports markets; familiarization tours and partnerships with Discover Newport, TEAM MD, and PCMA.

PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES & IMPACT

FY19 marked the transition from being a member-focused to consumer-focused organization and resulted in positive feedback from both visitors and partners. The year ended with a total of 211 investors, over 400 products sold and $104,429.15 in revenue. The new model allowed us to showcase all of the businesses and organizations in the county to our visitors. While at the same time, allowing partners the choice of investing in VAAAC marketing opportunities.

The department hired a full-time coordinator to assist with the administrative aspects of the department, enabling the partnership manager to spend more time interacting and connecting with partners and investors in the county. Many new benefits were created which include: bi-weekly office hours, monthly organizational meetings, one-on-one extranet trainings, and the New Business Welcome Gift Program. This has improved overall engagement and support from our partners and investors.
COMMUNICATIONS & PUBLIC RELATIONS

The PR and Communications department outreach efforts for FY19 included hosting 26 domestic and international journalists on press trips and 120 media assists.

This resulted in 2,116 print, broadcast and online stories and mentions by domestic and international media outlets; including 10 major national media outlets and 7 major international media outlets. The PR and Communications department continues to successfully spread why Annapolis and Anne Arundel County is worth visiting.

NATIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE
Southern Living
Washingtonian
Power & Motoryacht
AAA
EdibleDC
Coastal Living

VISITOR SERVICES ACTIVITIES AND IMPACT

Over 100 highly trained volunteer information specialists greeted and assisted 181,907 visitors in FY19. The installation of a new high-tech system enabled VAAAC to count the number of visitors with 98% accuracy. The Visitor Ambassador Program has been extremely well received by visitors, business owners and local officials; and continues to grow as Ambassadors help visitors from West Street to City Dock.

The overall operations of the Visitors Center has improved with the addition of a full-time receptionist, new volunteer scheduling and communication software, upgraded tablets and the hiring of part-time employees to collect responses for our large-scale tourism research project. These efforts have resulted in nearly 50K brochures and 120,000 visitor guides distributed. In addition, an increase in Familiarizations Tours has expanded our volunteers’ knowledge base of the county to share with visitors.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES

The Special Projects Manager worked to create, sell and distribute advertising for the Annapolis Discount Coupon project where distribution reached 15,000 copies. 20 partners participated in the seasonal weekend business set-up opportunity at the Visitor’s Center. In addition, the Special Projects Manager met with approximately 150 hotel concierges in DC, Northern VA, Baltimore and the National Harbor over FY19.

In order to promote VAAAC to the Canadian Travel Agent Market, the Special Projects Manager attended the Travel Marketplace Conference in Toronto Canada. Over 500 agents and 90 international exhibitors attended. We focused on high producing agents with a specialty emphasis on US and international travel were targeted. New in 2019 was a targeted VAAAC advertising campaign which helped improve awareness of our organization prior to arrival.
Visit Annapolis & Anne Arundel County participated in the Maryland Department of Commerce/Maryland Destination Marketing Organizations 2017 Economic Impact Study performed by Tourism Economics. The research demonstrated that AACO continues to be a leader in the state in travel-generated revenues of $3.8 billion, a 2.1% increase.

Smith Travel Research (STR) reports AACO had a fourth quarter 2019 average occupancy rate of 72.3% and RevPar of $76.2.

VAAAC initiated a short-term vacation rental market analysis in Anne Arundel County, performed by Rockport Analytics. The report showed a loss of $1.4M in lodging tax revenue in 2018 alone. Legislation is pending.