

FY2020
Destination Marketing
and Business Plan



Gaston County
Department of Travel & Tourism

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Plan Outline

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Three Year Strategic Destination Direction

The enclosed FY2020 Destination Marketing and Business Plan for Gaston County Department of Travel & Tourism is aligned to the strategic direction and priority initiatives in the FY2020–FY2022 Gaston County Strategic Destination Plan Schematic and Rationale report documentation. This plan details the annual program of work based on the agreed-to destination organization (DO) vision, mission and long-term goals.

A schematic summary of the agreed-to strategic plan follows for reference.

Three-Year Strategic Destination Plan

FY2020–FY2022

GASTON COUNTY

Our DO Purpose and Direction

Mission

Optimize Gaston County brand experiences to drive visitation and partner economic growth.

Destination Organization Vision 2030

Realize the destination vision through effective collaborative execution of impactful priority promotion, product development and partnership initiatives.

Destination Vision 2030

Be the Piedmont's premier outdoor recreation destination.

Our DO Culture

Values

- Collaborative
- Productive
- Civil
- Hospitable
- Adaptable
- Resourceful

Visitor Promise

Provide on-demand destination guidance on Gaston County brand experiences.

Our Destination/DO Challenges

Heightened Tourism Partner Communications:

formalized strategy to enhance ongoing dialogue and form mutually-beneficial industry and community partnerships

Enhanced Destination Development Growth:

coordinated partner-vested tourism product strategy/master plan with agreed-to activated destination vision

Increased Public Relations and Media Engagement:

proactive tourism and DO value messaging with regular media communications programming

Destination Brand Strategy Alignment:

consumer research results strategy to provide consistent and differentiated positioning and organization identity platform

Focused Advisory Board Leadership:

increased influential support with agreed-to community relations and industry input roles and responsibilities

Partner Promise

Facilitate business development opportunities and education.

Three-Year Strategic Destination Plan

Mission, Strategic Goals & Priority Initiatives

Our Mission Focus	Drive Visitor Demand	Enhance the Visitor Experience	Communicate Relevancy and Viability	
Our Strategic Goals	Targeted Destination Sales and Marketing Presence	Impactful Destination Management	Influential Destination Partnership	Effective DO Performance
Our Priority Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced digital/social media marketing program investment (2020-2022) Conference and sports tourism market potential update (2020) Reinforced brand strategy tied to new destination marketing creative (2020) Dedicated B-leisure and regional/visiting friends & relatives conversion program (2020-2021) Expanded community tourism partnership programming with Belmont, Gastonia and Mt. Holly TDAs (2020-2021) Revised segmented/measurable destination sales & marketing plan execution (2020-2022) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tourism product development strategy/master plan opportunities determination in conjunction with Economic Development Commission, County Parks & Recreation, County Museum and communities (2020-2021) Themed trails development review and revised strategy formulation (2020-2022) Expanded online special interest travel programming and packing development (2020) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formalized internal stakeholder communications plan (2020) Travel & Tourism grants investment program analysis and new directions (2020-2022) Proactive research-based tourism advocacy strategy (2020) Partners in Tourism ambassador training program development and delivery (2020-2022) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing strategic plan updates aligned to annual destination marketing plan with budget allocation (2020-2022) Continued advisory board and Travel & Tourism department professional development program (2020-2022) Advisory board orientation, bylaws and policies updated development (2020) Travel & Tourism department staffing needs evaluation (2021)

Our 2022 Strategic Results Coverage

- | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> County estimated total visitor expenditures Leisure visitor inquiry contact database total with estimated conversion rate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key destination website analytical metrics reporting Social media engagement interactions reporting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Earned travel media exposure value estimate Volume of group visitor business specific to meetings/conferences, sports events and group/student tour leads with estimated occupied room nights | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lodging demand estimated growth projections Stakeholder tourism/DO awareness indices |
|--|--|--|---|

Glossary of Terms

B-leisure: combined business-leisure segment opportunity to influence current business travelers on destination leisure activities pre- or post or in the future

Brand Experience: differentiated destination “buy” presence based on a county/community visitor promise and key messages, and typically expressed through brand identity creative

Business Development: sales and services programming related to leisure, business and group travel

Challenges: current top opportunity and/or problem areas to be recognized and resolved

DO: destination organization; also known as a destination marketing/management organization (DMO) or a convention & visitors bureau (CVB)

Leisure Travel: discretionary pleasure/vacation and visiting friends and relatives travel

Mission: organization primary purpose and expected results

Partner Promise: benefits value proposition to hotel assessment members and community/visitor industry partners

Priority Initiatives: immediate programs and/or projects to be seriously considered for execution given necessary resources in place

Strategic Goals: long-term qualitative statement to be achieved in concert with tactical and quantifiable objective statements

Strategic Results: measurable outcomes given relevant quantifiable metrics

Tourism Advisory Board: appointed volunteer body of committed proponents providing community and industry non-binding counsel on tourism/hospitality needs, issues and future directions

Tourism Product: supply parameter covering visitor facility/venue and services experiential development including programming and packaging as required

Values: organization operating norms on how things are done philosophically and through best practices usage

VFR: visiting friends and relatives market segment where persuasive communications engage current and/or past residents on the destination’s attractions, events and activities

Visitor Conversion: percentage of potential influenced visitors to arrive at a destination

Visitor Demand: measurable level of visitor volume typically by number of persons or trips and related spending

Vision: organization future aspirational role(s)

Visitor Promise: benefits value proposition to business, leisure/visiting friends and relatives (VFR) and personal travelers

Destination Current Situation

SWOT/Future Map Analysis

Strengths (Exploit and Invest: present advantages)	Weaknesses (Mitigate: present disadvantages)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abundant natural resource/outdoor recreation assets • Proximity to Charlotte Uptown, CLT Airport and I-85 • Multiple unique municipalities within the county • Convenient branded hotel offerings • Belmont Abbey College and neighboring U.S. National Whitewater Center • New Hilton Garden Inn conference facility • Focused strategic plan with priority initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No strong group meetings presence • Minimal inter-municipality connectivity • Unclear Travel & Tourism governing structure • Low tourism advocacy and political influence • Inadequate local TDA partnerships • Low Travel & Tourism mission understanding and awareness
Opportunities (Monitor and Capitalize: potential advantages)	Threats (Prepare for Contingencies: potential disadvantages)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New sports tourism/recreation potential • Carolina Thread Trail Greenways/Blueways expansion • Increased community tourism marketing/development • Higher visitor industry value awareness • Consistent destination brand creative and messaging • Strengthened website development and social media engagement • Gastonia Conference Center adjoining hotel development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing political interference • Inconsistent tourism decision making process • \$1 million fund balance as potential target for redirection • Funding needs requests from non-tourism interests

Conclusions

1. Strengthening of consistent destination brand imagery and related marketing messaging
2. Execution of strategic destination plan priorities along with further engagement of county officials on tourism matters
3. Increased involvement with local TDAs and other industry partners on future tourism product development to enhance visitor experiences

Key

ABM Advisory Board Members EC Emily Carpenter VC Visitors Center
 BB Brandon Black MA Michael Applegate

Destination Sales and Marketing

The annual focus of Gaston County Department of Travel & Tourism in this strategic goal attainment is to drive more visitors to the county and its communities through an overall destination marketing communications support effort and an eight-priority target market strategy approach. There are five-targeted strategies for the individual/leisure travel markets and three for the group/meeting markets. The key marketing support and targeted marketing strategies with action plans follow.

Strategic Goal

To achieve higher destination brand awareness and conversion through targeted promotional, sales and services strategies.

Target Markets

- Outdoor Recreation and Adventure Travel
- Arts and Cultural Heritage Tourism
- Food and Retail Shopping Tourism
- Agritourism
- Visiting Friends & Relatives, Alumni and Pass-Thru Travel
- Meetings and Conferences
- Sports Tourism
- Group/Student Tours

Positioning Differentiators

- Proximity to CLT airport and I-85
- Adjacent to U.S. National Whitewater Center
- Crowders Mountain State Park
- Belmont Abbey College, Gastonia Conference Center and Kings Mountain area

Top Trends Implications

- Increased outdoor recreation specialty markets
- More weekend business
- VFR/regional/day visitor conversion
- Conference centers with adjoining/nearby hotels

Marketing Communications Support

The overall activity support to Gaston County destination marketing effort is detailed as follows.

Marketing Support Action Plan

Program Activity	FY 2020				Staff Assigned
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Visitors center operations and maintenance	☒	☒	☒	☒	VC/EC
Digital strategy formulation	☒	☐	☐	☐	MA
Visitors Guide evaluation and creative transformation	☐	☐	☒	☒	MA/EC/BB
Destination website redesign	☒	☐	☐	☐	MA
Annual integrated leisure promotional campaign	☒	☒	☒	☒	MA/EC
PR program development	☒	☒	☐	☐	MA
Revised brand strategy for consistent destination brand creative and its application	☒	☐	☐	☐	MA/EC
B-leisure and dedicated VFR program assessment and setup	☒	☒	☒	☒	MA/BB

Measurable Objectives

- Visitor spending increase
- Contact database growth
- Social media engagement activity
- Website visitation metrics

Key

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BB Brandon Black MA Michael Applegate

Outdoor Recreation and Adventure Travel

(hiking, biking, paddling, etc.)

Marketing Strategy Direction

The Gaston County Department of Travel & Tourism will deploy the following *Market Penetration Strategy* and activities for this targeted market segment.

Marketing Action Plan

Program Activity	FY 2020				Staff Assigned
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Blue Ridge Outdoors, The Destination Magazine and Trip Advisor advertising	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MA
U.S. National Whitewater Center accommodations related partnership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MA
Carolina Thread Trail – Greenways promotion	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MA
Catawba River & South Fork River Blueway Trails promotion	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MA
Red Bull Pump Track Series marketing support	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MA
Crowders Mountain State Park marketing partnership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MA

Measurable Objectives

- Social media engagement activities
- Website visitation metrics
- Weekend hotel demand growth
- Blog stories influencer postings

Key

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Arts and Cultural Heritage Tourism

(museums, art galleries, festivals, theater, etc.)

Marketing Strategy Direction

The Gaston County Department Travel & Tourism will deploy the following *Market Penetration Strategy* and activities for this targeted market segment.

Marketing Action Plan

Program Activity	FY 2020				Staff Assigned
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Gaston County Museum of Art & History, Gaston County Parks & Recreation and Gaston County Public Library promotions	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MA
Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden supportive marketing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MA
Schiele Museum of Natural History & Planetarium supportive marketing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MA
Christmas Town, USA marketing partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	MA
Community concerts, festivals and events promotional programming	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MA
AAA GO Carolinas Magazine, AAA Living Magazine and Preservation Magazine advertising	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MA
Carolina Heritage Guide advertising	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MA

Measurable Objectives

- Social media engagement activities
- Website visitation metrics
- Blog stories influencer postings

Key

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 BB Brandon Black MA Michael Applegate

Food and Shopping Tourism

Marketing Strategy Direction

The Gaston County Department of Travel & Tourism will deploy the following *Market Penetration Strategy* and activities for this targeted market segment.

Marketing Action Plan

Program Activity	FY 2020				Staff Assigned
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Gaston Eats website partnership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MA
Municipal downtown merchants promotional programming	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MA
Ridgeline Craft Beverage Trail “Look Book” investment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	MA
Agritourism focus on Farmers Markets promotion	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MA
Antiquing promotions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	MA

Measurable Objectives

- Social media engagement activities
- Website visitation metrics
- Blog stories influencer postings

Key

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Agritourism

Marketing Strategy Direction

The Gaston County Department of Travel & Tourism will deploy the following *Market Development Strategy* and activities for this targeted market segment.

Marketing Action Plan

Program Activity	FY 2020				Staff Assigned
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Lewis Farm, Stowe Dairy Farm and Lineberger Farm development partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	MA
Ridgeline Craft Beverage Trail promotion	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MA
The Destination Magazine advertising	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MA
Agritourism focus on Farmers Markets promotion	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MA
Agritourism “Look Book” investment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	MA

Measurable Objectives

- Social media engagement activities
- Website visitation metrics
- Weekend hotel demand growth
- Blog stories influencer postings

Key

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Visiting Friends & Relatives, Alumni and Pass-Thru Travel

Marketing Strategy Direction

The Gaston County Department of Travel & Tourism will deploy the following *Market Development Strategy* and activities for this targeted market segment.

Marketing Action Plan

Program Activity	FY 2020				Staff Assigned
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Belmont Abbey Sports Network advertising and promotion	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MA
U.S. National Whitewater Center accommodations related partnership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MA
Partner meetings for "I'm Going" events calendar	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MA
Discovery Maps for hotels production	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	MA
Where Charlotte Guestbook in metro hotel rooms investment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	MA
Ultimate Magazine for Ultimate Air Shuttle (6 Origin Cities) advertising	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MA

Measurable Objectives

- Social media engagement activities
- Website visitation metrics
- On-campus promotion responses at Belmont Abbey College
- Blog stories influencer postings

Key

ABM Advisory Board Members EC Emily Carpenter VC Visitors Center
 BB Brandon Black MA Michael Applegate

Meetings and Conferences

Marketing Strategy Direction

The Gaston County Department of Travel & Tourism will deploy the following *Market Penetration Strategy* and activities for this targeted market segment.

Marketing Action Plan

Program Activity	FY 2020				Staff Assigned
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Association Executives of NC (AENC) membership investment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	BB/MA
AENC Member Directory & Resource Guide advertising	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MA
AENC Trade Show participation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	BB/MA
Business NC advertising	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	MA
Visitors Guide 4 page spread dedicated to meetings facilities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	BB
Website section update on meetings facilities and venues	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	BB
Familiarization (FAM) Tours/Site Visits in partnership with AENC and Gaston County meetings facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	BB/MA/ EC
Meetings "Look Book" investment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	BB
Social Media Partner/Venue/Events highlights	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	BB

Measurable Objectives

- Number of accounts/contacts in Simpleview meeting sales database
- Number of attendees on FAM tour/site visits
- Number of meeting sales leads
- Number of meeting sales leads turned definite
- Number of hotels rooms resulting from meeting sales booked

Key

ABM Advisory Board Members EC Emily Carpenter VC Visitors Center
BB Brandon Black MA Michael Applegate

Sports Tourism

Marketing Strategy Direction

The Gaston County Department of Travel & Tourism will deploy the following *Market Penetration Strategy* and activities for this targeted market segment.

Marketing Action Plan

Program Activity	FY 2020				Staff Assigned
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
North Carolina Sports Association (SportsNC) membership/quarterly meetings investment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	BB/MA
Sports Events & Tourism Association (Sports ETA) membership/trade show investment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	BB
Connect Sports Trade Show participation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	BB
TEAMS Trade Show participation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	BB
S.P.O.R.T.S Trade Show participation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	BB
Belmont Abbey Sports Network participation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MA
Carolina Playbook investment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	BB
Sports Planning Guide development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	BB
Visitors Guide 4 page spread dedicated to sports facilities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	BB
Website section update on sports facility information	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	BB
Sports Venue "Look Book" investment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	BB
Social Media Partner/Venue/Event highlights	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	BB
Gaston Sports Travel Alliance formation investigation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	BB/MA
Sports tourism market research potential	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	BB

Measurable Objectives

- Number of accounts/contacts in Simpleview sports sales database
- Number of trade show meetings
- Number of attendees on fam tour/site visits
- Number of sports sales leads
- Number of sports sales leads turned definite
- Number of hotels rooms resulting from sporting events booked

Key

ABM Advisory Board Members EC Emily Carpenter VC Visitors Center
 BB Brandon Black MA Michael Applegate

Group/Student Tours

Marketing Strategy Direction

The Gaston County Department of Travel & Tourism will deploy the following *Market Penetration Strategy* and activities for this targeted market segment.

Marketing Action Plan

Program Activity	FY 2020				Staff Assigned
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Carolina Field Trips support	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MA
Visitors Guide 4 page spread dedicated to student tours in	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	BB/MA
Website section update specific to student tours	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	BB/MA
Pride in Gaston Coloring Book publication	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	MA
Social Media Partner/Venue/Event highlights	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	BB

Measurable Objectives

- Blog stories influencer postings
- Website visitation metrics
- Number of school groups/participants serviced

Key

ABM Advisory Board Members EC Emily Carpenter VC Visitors Center
 BB Brandon Black MA Michael Applegate

Destination Development and Management

The annual focus of the Gaston County Department of Travel & Tourism in this strategic goal attainment is to initiate a proactive effort in support of event and destination development through a xx-project strategy approach. The overall destination development strategy with action plan follows.

Strategic Goal

To encourage and fully support the branded development of the county's attractions/events, amenities, hospitality services and related tourism infrastructure.

Target Projects

- Gastonia Conference Center hotel development
- Gaston Aquatics Center
- Belmont Trolley and Trolley Barn/Events Center
- Franklin Urban Sports & Entertainment District (FUSE)
- Various themed trails development
- Online special interest tourism programming and packaging

Development Strategy Direction

The Gaston County Department of Travel & Tourism will deploy the following *Project Development Strategy* and activities for these targeted activities.

Development Action Plan

Program Activity	FY 2020				Staff Assigned
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
County/community tourism development strategy and priorities in relation to Budget/Fund Balance Committee evaluation of development opportunities	☒	☒	☒	☒	ABM/MA/EC
Gateway signage/beautification support	☒	☒	☐	☐	MA
Gastonia Conference Center lobby/visitor information redevelopment	☒	☐	☐	☐	MA
Online special interest tourism programming/packaging development	☐	☐	☐	☐	MA/EC/BB

Measurable Objectives

- New attractors developed and admission/guest demand
- New border gateway signage installed
- Tourism information location in Gastonia Conference Center completion
- Travel & Tourism product development investment

Key

ABM Advisory Board Members EC Emily Carpenter VC Visitors Center
 BB Brandon Black MA Michael Applegate

DO Partnership and Community Relations

The annual focus of the Gaston County Department of Travel & Tourism in this strategic goal attainment is to be informative and persuasive in the understanding and value of tourism through a xx-priority target audience approach. The overall targeted stakeholder communications strategy with action plan follows.

Strategic Goal

To inform strategic partners on the importance and value of tourism and effective roles and beneficial impacts of the Gaston County Department of Travel & Tourism.

Target Audiences

- County and community government officials
- Tourism/hospitality industry owners/managers
- Community associations/corporate leaders
- Media representatives
- Residents

Communications Strategy Direction

The Gaston County Department of Travel & Tourism will deploy the following *Audience Penetration Strategy* and activities for these targeted groups.

Positioning Differentiators

- 13 distinct municipalities/downtown areas
- Existing municipality weekend programming
- Tourism value contribution and Travel & Tourism awareness

Top Trends Implications

- New partnerships development
- Increased community relations engagement
- Proactive destination advocacy messaging

Stakeholder Action Plan

Program Activity	FY 2020				Staff Assigned
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Grants program evaluation and new directions	☒	☐	☐	☒	ABM/MA/BB/EC
Annual Tourism Impact Report press release and related publicity	☒	☐	☐	☐	MA
Ongoing community involvement and presentations	☒	☒	☒	☒	MA/BB
Formalized stakeholder/tourism advocacy strategy and plan	☒	☒	☐	☐	ABM/MA
Gaston Lifestyles Magazine tourism articles support	☒	☒	☒	☒	MA
Partners in Tourism ambassador training investment	☐	☐	☐	☒	MA/EC
Tourism action plan investigation and discussions with respective communities	☒	☒	☒	☒	MA/EC

Measurable Objectives

- Grant investment awards
- Community/industry presentations made
- Media coverage value

Key

ABM Advisory Board Members EC Emily Carpenter VC Visitors Center
BB Brandon Black MA Michael Applegate

DO Resources and Administration

The annual focus of the Gaston County Department of Travel & Tourism in this strategic goal attainment is to operate and lead a relevant and credible destination marketing organization through a xx-audience strategy approach. The overall targeted finance/administration strategy with action plan follows.

Strategic Goal

To operate as a fiscally responsible and talent-based organization delivering optimal performance returns.

Target Audiences

- Advisor Board members
- Suppliers/Vendors
- Professional staff

Finance/Administration Strategy Direction

The Gaston County Department of Travel & Tourism will deploy the following *Audience Penetration Strategy* and activities for these targeted groups.

Finance/Administration Action Plan

Program Activity	FY 2020				Staff Assigned
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
County Government Travel & Tourism Department governance structure assessment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	ABM/MA
Full-time Digital and Social Media Manager position investigation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	MA
Board Orientation and Policy Manual/Handbook development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	ABM/MA
Updated strategic plan annually	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	ABM/MA
Board/staff professional development investment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	ABM/MA

Measurable Objectives

- NC Travel Industry Association, and Travel & Tourism Advisory Board meetings
- Travel & Tourism department budget increases

Key

ABM Advisory Board Members EC Emily Carpenter VC Visitors Center
 BB Brandon Black MA Michael Applegate

FY2020 DO Governance

Gaston County Department of Travel & Tourism Advisory Board Members and Department Management Team

Advisory Board Members

Debbie Windley, *Chair*
Citizen at Large, Gastonia Township (J. Brown)

Richard (Dick) S. Cromlish, Jr.
Economic Development Representative (Keigher)

Pamela Goode, *Vice Chair*
Citizen at Large, Riverbend Township (C. Brown)

Cynthia Isenhour
Recreation & Parks Representative (Hovis)

Cam Carpenter
Citizen at Large, Crowders Mountain Township (Hovis)

Heather Britton
Hotel/Motel Industry Representative (Philbeck)

Mark A. Stephens
Citizen at Large, Dallas Township (Philbeck)

Jim Hoffman
Attractions Representative (Fraley)

Tammy Fraley Wilson
Citizen at Large, Cherryville Township (Fraley)

Elysabeth Utick
Non-Profit Attractions Representative (J. Brown)

Ann Stroupe
Citizen at Large, Gastonia Township (Keigher)

Judy Caldwell
Citizen at Large, South Point Township (Worley)

Charles L. Moore
County Manager/Designee/Ex-Officio (Non-Voting)

Staff

Michael Applegate, CDME
Director of Travel & Tourism

Emily Carpenter
Administrative Assistant

Brandon Black
Business Development Manager

Advisory Board Committees

Fund Balance/Budget

Mark A. Stephens, *Chair*
Jim Hoffman
Elysabeth Utick
Tammy Fraley Wilson

Grants

Vann P. Noblett, *Co-Chair*
Pamela Goode, *Co-Chair*
Cynthia Isenhour
Cam Carpenter

Research/Strategic Planning

Richard S. Cromlish, Jr., *Chair*
Debbie Windley