

MEMORANDUM

TO: Frank J. Rogers, County Administrator

FROM: Nina Rezai, Director of Economic Development
Molly Eden, Economic Development Specialist

SUBJECT: Virginia Destination Marketing Organization Designation

DATE: January 6, 2026

BACKGROUND:

As part of Campbell County Economic Development's role in fostering sustainable growth, ensuring economic resilience, and enhancing the quality of life for its residents, the department supports the County's tourism sector. The tourism sector includes lodging, food and beverage sales, retail, recreation, and transportation services (taxis, rental cars, Uber, etc.). Through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) received significant funding, which they divided proportionally to all Virginia localities, to be used explicitly to help Virginia's tourism sector recover from COVID lockdown losses. Campbell County's \$60,000 allotment allowed Economic Development to purchase a strong foundation of marketing assets to promote tourism.

Campbell County Economic Development's Tourism Initiatives

ARPA VTC Tourism Grant Administration

- Aided development of two Visitor Centers (Altavista & Rustburg)
- Procured professional photography and videos to promote tourism
- Engaged professional design services for three marketing brochures
- Distributed brochures in Virginia's Welcome Centers and in hotels and visitor centers across the state.

Local Attraction Promotion

- VTC grant support to the Avoca Museum in Altavista
- Ads in the Virginia Travel Guide and Blue Ridge Outdoors promote river-based outdoor activities, including Brookneal's annual fishing tournament weekend
- Regular social media promotion
- Seasonal promotion of agritourism opportunities
- Civil War Trails membership, which leverages the proximity of historic sites in the county to regional attractions
- Fish Virginia First membership, which promotes fishing and water-based tourism
- Southern Virginia Blueways Project (still in its planning phase), an extensive and coordinated regional river tourism marketing effort

VA250 Committee

- Established the Campbell County VA250 Committee

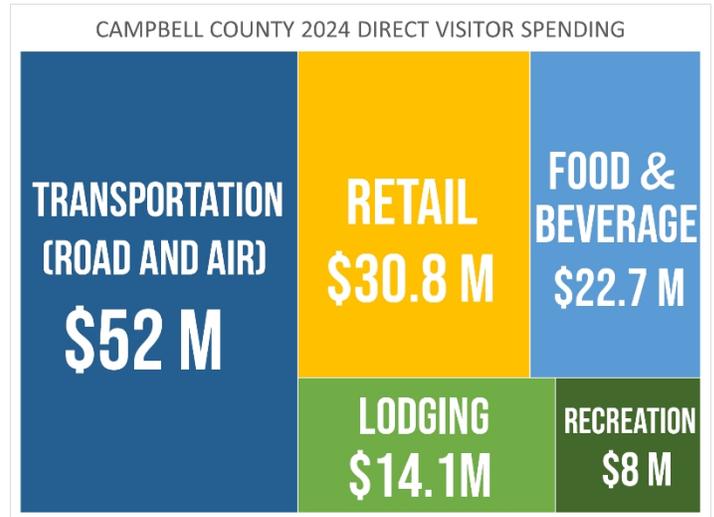
- Distribute information on available grants and promotion opportunities to local groups
- Maintaining the Campbell County page on the state’s official website (VA250.org)
- Manage a social media account that promotes local history-focused events

Economic Impact of Tourism

VTC reports 2024 Direct Visitor Spending in Campbell County was \$127.6 million, producing \$6.6 million in local taxes. The tourism sector provides 886 jobs in the County.

In 2024, Campbell County’s share of statewide direct visitor spending was 0.4%. Neighboring communities with registered DMOs include the City of Lynchburg (0.8% of statewide spending), Appomattox (0.1%), Bedford County (0.2%), and Halifax County/South Boston (0.2%).

Economic Development manages the tourism budget, which funds advertising, event sponsorship, and tourism product development (ex. Brookneal Library mural). In FY26, this amount was \$12,000.



Campbell County Economic Development has fulfilled the role of a designated marketing organization through the small but consistent efforts in tourism each year.

DISCUSSION:

VTC is the statewide organization responsible for marketing Virginia as a premier tourism destination. Their flagship motto, *Virginia is for Lovers*, is one of the most highly recognized tourism slogans in the world. Each locality in Virginia can designate one Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) to be the main point of contact with VTC. Major responsibilities of a DMO include developing a comprehensive marketing plan and budget to promote the locality as an attractive travel destination, assisting with tourism product development, and coordinating with VTC on partnership programs and grant opportunities. Recognizing that Campbell County Economic Development has been consistently acting in the capacity of a DMO, VTC staff recommends Campbell County Economic Development petition to be recognized as an official Virginia Destination Marketing Organization.

Due to the current lack of designated status, Campbell County Economic Development is excluded from certain DMO-Only opportunities that would allow for more robust and cost-efficient promotion of Campbell County as a destination, including the following:

- registered DMO-only grant funding
- discounted advertising rates
- free access to expensive, but valuable, visitor spending habit data

- large tourism project gap financing through the Commonwealth of Virginia Tourism Development Financing Program

As the designated DMO, Campbell County Economic Development would also be included in planning regional visits from travel writers, social media influencers, and bus tour operator familiarization tours.

Petitioning for DMO Designation is a multi-step process involving first coordinating with VTC's Director of Destination Development to develop a satisfactory proposed marketing plan. Once the application meets all the qualifying criteria, Economic Development would then need to submit resolutions from the governing bodies of the area's localities (Campbell County Board of Supervisors and the Town Councils of Altavista and Brookneal) supporting the petition for this designation. Once VTC officially verifies the resolutions, Campbell County Economic Development would be added to the registered Virginia DMO list and be immediately eligible for its benefits.

There are no fees or costs involved in petitioning for recognition aside from the staff time. Unless directed by the Board, it does not require additional budget considerations for tourism.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff requests Board direction on whether to begin the process to petition the Virginia Tourism Corporation to become the designated DMO for the County. Staff will return later for an official resolution and the approval of the tourism marketing plan.