

May 27, 2020

To: Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority
From: Stephanie Pace Brown
Subject: President's Report of April 2020 Activities

April 2020 is the first full month impacted by the global pandemic COVID-19 crisis. The North Carolina "Stay Home, Stay Safe" order effectively shut down tourism mid-March, with Phase 1 in effect through May 22. During this time, Explore Asheville has worked collaboratively daily with Buncombe County and many community organizations to communicate requirements, advocate for the industry, and develop resources to assist tourism-related businesses.

The Buncombe County Tourism Jobs Recovery Act was signed into law on Monday, May 4, authorizing the BCTDA to allocate up to \$5 million to assist tourism businesses in reopening. The BCTDA authorized the Chair to enter into an agreement with Mountain BizWorks at a special meeting on Friday, May 8. Mountain BizWorks established a website as well as grant criteria based on the legislation and held a webinar the following week. The application period began May 15 and will close May 31. All applications will be reviewed, and grants will be awarded in June.

In anticipation of Phase 2, Explore Asheville established an interdepartmental team to work with stakeholder groups to prepare for tourism to begin to reopen. Glenn Cox and Dianna Pierce convened task forces for hotels and attractions to create a uniform set of recommended safe operations protocols. Pat Kappes aligned those efforts with other groups representing additional industry sectors. Kathi Petersen spearheaded the development of a toolkit for tourism partners and was heavily involved in an effort led by the Chamber to provide the go-to document for Western North Carolina. Marla Tambellini and Sarah Kilgore developed the "We Care Stay Safe Pledge" that was distributed on May 22.

The marketing and public affairs departments worked throughout the month to collect and promote the daily changing business operations and amplify creative online offerings of local businesses. The *Together in Spirit* website also includes an online shopping section. Significant content has been developed for the website, media relations efforts and social media channels.

Our sales team continued to foster relationships with meeting planners and support sales teams throughout Buncombe County. They also have advance branding, video content and other marketing and communications materials to respond to the fluid advancement through the phases of the pandemic.

I would like to commend each and every member of the Explore Asheville team. This hard-working team has demonstrated flexibility, keen strategy, and an unwavering commitment to serve the people of Buncombe County by leading through this crisis.

APRIL BY THE NUMBERS

- During April, the sales team posted 682 personal contacts (down 40%). April sales activities generated 39 sales leads (down 56%) and 24 convention bookings (down 50%), representing 2,155 rooms (down 71%). Ten months into the fiscal year, year-to-date bookings are down 24 percent and room nights represented are down 17 percent.
- CVB sales leads generated zero group events in April (down 100%), with revenue of zero dollars (down 100%). The services team assisted 7 groups (down 81%).
- The PR team landed 31 significant placements in April (up 7%), with 29 media touchpoints (down 69%). The publicity value of print and broadcast placements totaled \$86,306 with reach of over 404 thousand. Online placements added \$1,028,820 in value and reach of over 547 million.
- ExploreAsheville.com attracted 85,011 visits (down 81%), including 48,155 to the mobile site (down 85%). Our Facebook fan base total is 297,151 (up 4%) and video views totaled 112,659 (down 80%).
- Online hotel reservations totaled -2 room nights (down 103%) with total room revenue of -\$418 (down 104%).
- The Asheville Visitor Center welcomed zero visitors (down 100%), and the Pack Square Park Visitor Pavilion remains closed after the winter.

LODGING & AIRPORT RESULTS

- Buncombe County Finance reported lodging sales totaling \$13,877,062 in March (down 56%).
- Smith Travel Research reported hotel occupancy of 37.7 percent during March (down 48%). The average daily room rate was \$125.42 (down 6%), and RevPAR (revenue per available room) was \$47.32 (down 51%). Room demand decreased 46 percent with 96,013 rooms sold.
- AirDNA reported short term rental occupancy of 45.5 percent (up 11%), ADR of \$88.26 (down 7.6%), RevPAR of \$40.17 (down 17%). Total demand for short term rentals increased ten percent to total 94,601 rooms sold.
- Passengers at the Asheville Regional Airport decreased 47 percent to total 64,792 in March.

IN THE COMMUNITY

- Stephanie participated in a panel discussion during the Leadership Asheville Virtual Winter Breakfast Buzz event, which focused on where the Asheville area is now in the COVID-19 crisis and how we might plan for the future.
- Stephanie virtually attended the Greater Asheville Regional Airport Authority monthly board meeting.
- Stephanie was interviewed by an Appalachian State student group doing a final project on tourism in Asheville.
- Stephanie participated in a virtual Ideas to Action planning group meeting.
- Stephanie attended AIR executive committee and board meetings during the month.
- Stephanie and Kathi participated in regular COVID Response – Business Community calls with Buncombe County.

- Stephanie participated in the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce's virtual Town Hall meetings.
- Stephanie and other members of the team attended local and industry COVID-19-related webinars.
- Marla attended a virtual Asheville Downtown Association meeting and a separate issues committee meeting.
- Dodie worked in support of Chow Chow via the board of directors, marketing, and program committees.
- Dodie and Josh worked with Chow Chow on the rollout of the festival postponement message including message development and design integration on the Chow Chow website, hosted by EACVB. Dodie also supported programming work toward a schedule of virtual content.
- Sales team members attended the Asheville Buncombe Sports Commission's virtual monthly meeting.
- Sales team members contacted all lodging partners sharing a message of actions available through CVB.
- Pat attended Town Halls hosted by the Chamber and County for partner groups – Lodging, Retail, Arts/Entertainment/Recreation, Restaurants and Personal Services.
- Pat attended weekly virtual meetings of the Local Living Economy committee, as a member of this subcommittee of the Downtown Commission that includes representatives from the City of Asheville staff and council, Asheville Downtown Association, Asheville Grown Business Alliance, Asheville Independent Restaurant Association and the Downtown Commission. The committee increased frequency of meetings from monthly to weekly to discuss issues in the community around the pandemic.
- Kathi attended numerous virtual meetings, panel discussions, and webinars, including those with NC Restaurant & Lodging Association and the NC Metro Mayors Coalition; Leadership Asheville; Asheville Chamber Advocacy & Policy Committee; and Buncombe County EOC members.
- CVB staff members volunteered with MANNA Food Bank as a part of their COVID-19 Response Team focusing on building emergency food boxes, packaging bulk product and other necessary projects.

MARKETING & PUBLIC RELATIONS

COVID-19 Activities: Much of the work in April focused on two areas: creation of new Together in Spirit video, and expansion and refinement of the microsite on ExploreAsheville.com. Further development of the microsite included more immersive virtual hub and creation of additional pages, including a virtual storefront for retail and community efforts. The homepage of the website greets users with a succession of informative alert banners and image+information sliders directing to the updated microsite. With these elements in place, the content team continues to update the Virtual Visit and Community Spirit pages with highlights, like a 360-degree hike with butterflies, and new community initiatives, like the "COVID Cookbook." Explore Asheville is also working with the City of Asheville, IAMAVL, and other organizations to highlight live streaming events within the virtual hub. The new content provided a springboard for additional pitches and storytelling from the PR and social media teams.

The team also started to consider messaging for re-opening and specifically what messages would most resonate with visitors. National visitor research, tourism and local sentiment, market considerations, virus hotspots and discussions with elected officials are part of the consideration for a "go-slow" approach that will be implemented in conjunction with the Phase 2 reopening. More information will be provided at the May board meeting.

Advertising: The advertising and agency teams worked together to develop a Together in Spirit video which was presented at the April board meeting. In addition, the Together in Spirit messaging and logo was rolled out through our owned and operated channels. No paid media was in market during April, but the teams crafted strategies and tactics for introducing elements such as the video and virtual hub through paid search and social in May before switching to recovery message once hotels reopen to leisure travel. The marketing team and agency are also working together to review pre-COVID FY21 strategies and adapt to scenarios that may play out in the coming year, knowing that we must remain flexible and fluid.

General Media Relations: The PR Team logged 29 media touchpoints, initiated 259 targeted pitches and, due to COVID-19, hosted no media on the ground in Asheville in April. Pitch numbers were high due to a community spirit round-up sent to media this month. Story support included *FoodandWine.com*, *Broccoli Magazine*, *Chowhound* and *StyleBlueprint*. Asheville imagery and assistance were also provided to the *Toronto Times*. After gathering information from editors' panels and travel media industry research, the team also conducted planning for short/long-lead pitch opportunities that will support a next wave of proactivity, aligning Asheville with publications, editorial calendars and destination opportunities in the new landscape.

Community Spirit Content: The PR Team turned its attention to stories of community spirit and philanthropy within the local hospitality industry in April. The team compiled and organized a list of the community efforts sent in by partners and captured by local news organizations and social media. A round-up piece was created utilizing this list and served as the lead content piece for [ExploreAsheville.com](https://www.exploreasheville.com)'s new Community Spirit section. The PR Team also wrote multiple smaller blurbs on larger community initiatives like #AshevilleStrong, One Buncombe, and We Give a Share. The team then assisted the Content Team in identifying and pulling in visual assets for all these new content pieces. The PR Team continues to maintain this ever-growing list of community initiatives and provide updates for the online content.

Community Spirit Pitch & Virtual Hub Outreach: Utilizing the round-up of community stories created for [ExploreAsheville.com](https://www.exploreasheville.com)'s new community spirit section, the PR Team sent a soft pitch to 255 members of the media. The goal was to put forward the new Virtual Travel Hub, Community Spirit Section while sharing stories of resilience and innovation. The team received many positive responses and the touch point also prompted some journalists to reach back out with their own editorial needs. Asheville-related content appeared on *FoodandWine.com* (Mother's Day story that included Katie Button) and *Chowhound* (story on where chefs will eat when restaurants open with Jacob Sessoms) due to this outreach.

M&C / Group PR Efforts: Sarah Lowery worked with Carli Adams on a request from *ConventionSouth's* "N.C. Event Planner's Guide," providing information and images regarding Asheville as a meeting destination.

Significant Placements:

1. *Better Homes & Gardens* | "Asheville's Biltmore Estate Is Now Sharing Weekly Blooming"
2. *Cary Living* | "Double Up on Summer Vacation Fun"
3. *Conde Nast Traveler* | "Best Airbnbs with Scenic Views"
4. *Eater Carolinas* | "How to Help North Carolina's Local Makers During COVID-19"
5. *Her Campus* | "Adventure Can Wait"
6. *House Beautiful* | "You Can Virtually Tour the Biltmore Estate"
7. *National Geographic* | "10 ways to get your travel fix from home"
8. *Smarter Travel* | "25 Vacations You Can Take from Home"
9. *StyleBlueprint* | "Virtual Vacation: Take a Trip to Asheville, NC"
10. *Thrillist* | "The Next Portland: 8 Cities All the Cool Kids Are Moving To"

11. *Today's Parent* | "Can't Leave the House? Take the Kids on a Virtual Vacation"
12. *Wedding Wire* | "The 7 Best U.S. Cities for a Brewery Wedding"

Content Development Projects: Throughout the Coronavirus pandemic, a deft hand has been necessary in both website and social media content, striking a balance between emphasizing that people follow health guidelines, while also providing inspiration and hope for visiting during better times. All indications are that the messaging is resonating well with our followers.

On the Visit Asheville social media channels, focus during the month of April centered largely on inspiring video. The Visit Asheville Facebook page earned more than 79,000 organic video views during the month – the highest monthly total of the current fiscal year. Those videos included archival content captured by the Social Media Manager's pre-COVID hikes to Skinny Dip Falls and the Laurel River Trail. Toward the end of April, the Together in Spirit video was rolled out across social platforms, with text captions added to the Facebook post of the video.

For Earth Day, an impactful image contributed by a Social Media fan was posted along with a prompt asking people to share nature pictures from their past visits to Asheville. The post went viral on both Instagram and Facebook. On Facebook, the post had an organic reach of 66,382. It earned 6,600 engagements, including 2,100 likes, 248 comments (many with pictures) and 357 shares. Another successful post in April asked social fans to share what they miss most about Asheville. That post had an organic Facebook reach of more than 32,000 and earned more than 1,600 engagements.

ExploreAsheville.com Editorial Content:

- During the month of April, there were 17 content pieces added to ExFtploreAsheville.com – constituting all the sub-pages of the Together in Spirit microsite Virtual Visit and Community Spirit landing pages.
- The most popular blog and story content this month was "50 Things to Do in Asheville", which received 3,642 pageviews, followed by Biltmore in 360 with 3,351 pageviews and which was featured in our Virtual Vacation content.

Social Media Stats:

Facebook:

Visit Asheville page

- April saw 607 daily new likes to Facebook for a total of 297,151.
- There were 16 new Facebook posts added to the Visit Asheville page in the month of April.
- The most popular unpaid Facebook post during the month was the post of the Together in Spirit video. The post reached 44,222 people organically, generating 1,862 engagements, and 39 comments.

Video:

- There were 9,961 new, organic YouTube views in April. The most popular video by organic views this month "Experience Black Mountain 'America's Prettiest Small Town'" which received 1,793 non-paid views. The "Scenic Time Lapse: Fall Foliage and Incredible Mountain Views" video came in second with 1,274 views.
- Across all our video platforms, there were 112,659 non-advertising views, with the majority coming from Facebook. There have been 583,282 views of Explore Asheville video content YTD (since July 1, 2019).

Pinterest:

- The total audience in March was 78,900. Impressions were 110,300 with 4,190 engagements.

Instagram:

- Our VisitAsheville account has 73,998 followers (through April 30).
- There were 11 new posts in April. The most popular photo post was a mountain vista picture for Earth Day. It received 2,797 engagements (likes and comments).

Twitter:

- Across all our accounts, we have a total of 16,997 followers (as of March 31). *Please note this number is significantly lower than it was prior October 2019 because our Foodtopia account was hacked and our follower count (and tweets) were erased.
- The most popular account is Visit Asheville, which has 8,450 followers (as of April 30).
- We continue to provide a mix of proactive response to travel inquiries and pushes of website and Instagram content.

Asheville Traveler E-newsletter:

- Subscribers: We have 128,173 active subscribers.
- Opens/Click-throughs: In April, due to a hold while new COVID-19 response content and Together in Spirit video were in development, no E-newsletter was sent.

ExploreAsheville.com: Website user sessions in April decreased 81.9 percent compared to last year. Organic traffic was down 68.9 percent year-over-year in April. Paid search traffic was down 99.6 percent compared with last year (due to all paid search being suspended.) Referral traffic was down 61.4 percent year-over-year, while traffic from eNewsletter clicks was down 86.7 percent year-over-year in April (due to no April eNews.) Social media traffic, excluding paid social, was down 87.9 percent over last year. Traffic from advertising campaigns, including paid social was down 100 percent in April compared to last year. Sessions to the booking engine decreased 60 percent year over year in April and booking engine searches decreased 68.4 percent.

Website Improvements – SEO, QA & Accessibility: In April, website development was largely focused on tools to support COVID-19 response, such as developing and refining Together in Spirit microsite, redesigning home page slider images, and updating site-wide notification banners. Explore Asheville content and web teams worked with a product called SiteImprove to assist with search engine optimization, quality assurance and accessibility efforts. A sitewide style refresh continued in coordination with Atlas Branding in Asheville. The design and other structural improvements, including new navigation and a new events module will be fully implemented in June.

Online Reservations: There were 12 orders for 18 room nights in April with a total of \$3,588 in booking revenue and \$203.26 in commission.

April 2020	Current Month	This Month Last Year	Variance Monthly	YTD Actual	YTD Last Year	Variance YTD
Booking Rev	\$397	\$12,448	-97%	\$21,300	\$42,085	-49%
Commission	TBD	\$697	N/A	N/A	\$1,933	N/A
Orders	2	40	-95%	99	140	-29%
Room Nights	3	85	-96%	161	233	-31%

Visitor Guide: There were 472 requests of the *Official Asheville Visitor Guide* in April. Fiscal year-to-date, there have been 23,470 visitor guide requests.

GROUP SALES & SERVICES

Group sales reported 24 definite group bookings in April, down 50 percent from the prior year (10 meetings/conventions, 11 weddings and three group tour). Of these definite bookings, six (three sporting events, three weddings) represented groups who cancelled events due to COVID-19 and rescheduled with significant contractual changes (new contracted property, meeting configuration changes, room rate(s), or a combination of the three). These six bookings rescheduled in the year for the year and represented 447 room nights. The combined total definite room nights were 2,155 room nights, down 71 percent from the previous year. Thirty-nine leads (29 meeting/conventions, eight weddings, and two tours) representing 9,922 room nights were distributed to Buncombe County accommodations in April. Leads distributed were down 56 percent and rooms represented were down 59 percent over the prior year.

Estimated revenue for leads issued was \$357,260, down 70 percent. Person to person outreach totaled 682 contacts, down 36 percent from last year. Indirect outreach totaled 217 contacts, down 98 percent from the prior year. Actualized revenue was \$0 (down 100 percent). All group bookings for the month of April were cancelled due to COVID-19. Cumulative COVID-19 related cancellations as of April 30 were 67 groups representing 13,136 total contracted room nights and \$3,247,096 total estimated revenue.

Sales Activities:

- Connie Holliday attended an online MPI Georgia gathering along with 36 other members.
- Staff attended numerous industry sponsored webinars specific to COVID-19 to understand best practices in sales, communications and how to record cancellations/postponements.
- Staff attended numerous online webinars/events sponsored by planner organizations (HPN Global, BizBash Chicago Virtual Discussion, BizBash South Florida Virtual Discussion, UNC Asheville Virtual Athletics) to stay connected and in front of planners.
- A 206-piece direct mailer accompanied with appropriate messaging was sent to the CVB's top meeting planners
- Six wedding guides were downloaded this month as compared to nine guides in April 2019.
- Glenn Ramey received the CVent Supplier certification after completing online training. CVent is one of the largest lead distribution channels in the industry.
- Staff followed up with planners who attended the Smart Meetings Webinar sponsored in part by the CVB.
- Initial webpage for Plan with Perks was created.
- On-demand webinar being updated to intent to push out as a virtual FAM. Target execution date is May 2020.

April bookings Include:

- 2021 TOC Meeting – 84 rooms
- 2021 Compass Group Overflow – 495 rooms
- 2020 Earth Science Information Partners – 190 rooms
- 2020 USA Softball Summer Select Series – 110 rooms
- 2020 Paint it Pink & Blue Ridge Fall Bash - 120 rooms each
- 2020 Glory Hound Events – 60 rooms
- 2020 Ville to Ville Craft Brew Relay – 130 rooms
- 2020 Carolinas Society for Healthcare Strategy – 40 rooms
- 2020 White Star Series (3) – 150 rooms in total

Group Sales Communications:

A status call with Miles Partnership regarding the brand refresh was held. A new brand tag line was confirmed, Meetings Elevated, and we received clearance memorandum and research document from Miles attorney regarding use of the phrase. The team provided feedback on full page ad and tradeshow banner designs along with tradeshow concept and is expecting updated drafts soon. Initial redesigned Fact Sheets were sent to staff for review. Results of a web content audit was also sent to staff.

An Explore Asheville Meetings & Conventions company page was created on LinkedIn.

LinkedIn views for April included: 762 - Together in Spirit; 1553 - Virtual Experience; 1881 - Craggy Pinnacle Trail; 1236 - Smart Meetings article.

Media:

- Staff responded to a request for information for a forthcoming “North Carolina Event Planners' Guide” for *Convention South*.
- *Meetings Today* published “Amaze Attendees in Asheville, Appalachia’s Hidden Gem”.
- Staff were interviewed for the story *Group Travel Leader* published “Head Outdoors in the Carolinas” and included Asheville after staff spoke with the writer.
- *Small Market Meetings* published “Scenic Settings in the Carolinas” and included Asheville after staff spoke with the writer.
- *Meetings Today* invited Explore Asheville to participate in a video project offering a message from CVB CEOs offering support to meeting planners. *Meetings Today* will promote the video collection on its website, social media, and newsletters.

Convention Service Highlights: Staff completed outreach to meetings booked by Explore Asheville scheduled to be held in May and June 2020. Microsites were completed for sporting events: River Ruckus Crossfit, Ville to Ville Craft Brew Relay, Biltmore Bash.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Tourism Product Development Efforts:

The TPDF Annual Reports from each grantee were compiled and presented to the BCTDA at the April board meeting.

Staff has been working closely with PGAV on the final report of the Tourism Management & Investment Plan (TMIP).

The Buncombe County Tourism Jobs Recovery Act was signed into law on May 6, enabling the BCTDA to establish a \$5 million fund for emergency grants, available for local businesses that provide a direct visitor experience, including restaurants, retail establishments, studios and galleries, attractions, tours and activities, entertainment and event venues, and breweries, wineries, cideries and distilleries, among others. The grant program will be managed by Mountain BizWorks and the application period will open May 15 - 31 with a target grant announcement by mid-June.

Partner Engagement and Events:

The public affairs team continues to receive and respond to partner business and event updates as needs of tourism partners are changing quickly and frequently. While partners have the

option to make the changes themselves via the extranet, they are choosing to have our team make the updates for them. Additionally, the Food + Drink page is being updated manually at least twice a day to make the takeout/delivery list as comprehensive and up to date as possible. Our updates are being shared with AIR and the City/County food resource webpage.

Partner Database Engagement Stats: Joe updated 243 records in April to generate content for the Together in Spirit microsite on ExploreAsheville.com (161 attractions/retail businesses and 82 food & drink businesses). Charlie processed 225 events for the ExploreAsheville.com calendar, the majority of which were generated due to Charlie's significant outreach efforts to help populate the website and educate partners on our new virtual offerings.

Partner Communications: In addition to the partner news alert emails, all staff collaborated on a direct outreach effort with a goal to personally connect with each attraction and lodging tourism partner by phone or email. The process is ongoing.

A survey was created to better understand the needs of tourism partners given new challenges associated with impacts of COVID-19. We received 109 responses; the results will be used to inform partner engagement strategies going forward.

New Partners: There were three new partners in April: Angel Dog, Funkatorium, and LChenard Art.

Explore Asheville CVB 101 Orientation: The monthly orientation was canceled due to office being closed. The public affairs team is managing partner inquiries and extranet support questions via email and calls.

Previously planned events for this time period have been cancelled or postponed due to the COVID crisis:

April 30 & May 1 – Creative Sector Summit (assisting Asheville Area Arts Council with agenda)
May 5 – National Tourism Week Summit

April 14 – Explore Asheville Virtual Partner Forum: "COVID-19 & Beyond": 124 attendees joined Explore Asheville via GoToWebinar, for an update on current partner support activities during the COVID-19 crisis, intermediate strategies, and long-term plans for reactivating Asheville's customer base as soon as it is safe to travel. The meeting started with an update from Buncombe County officials on the current status of COVID-19 and social distancing orders in place, and was followed by presentations from Stephanie Brown, Kathi Petersen, Pat Kappes, Marla Tambellini, and Dianna Pierce. The webinar video and presentations can be found on AshevilleCVB.com.

Projects:

African American Heritage Project: The Community Engagement Phase I Report summarizing feedback, themes, and a recommended plan for next steps is in final stages.

Wayfinding signage for RAD: Pat continues to work with MERJE to refine the plans for the signage system package with a goal to fabricate and install later this year in coordination with completion of RADTIP construction by the City of Asheville.

PUBLIC INFORMATION & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Local Media / Public Information / Engagement: In addition to responding to numerous media requests regarding the BCTDA and CVB's COVID-19 response, Kathi has also spent considerable time writing, posting, and managing content on the Coronavirus Resources pages of the AshevilleCVB.com website, to include business resources, webinars and forums, community support opportunities, FAQs, etc.

An integral part of this has been managing everchanging content as the Governor's and the County's emergency orders are updated, particularly with respect to the online Lodging Compliance Toolkit she created. She has also coordinated town halls between Buncombe officials and the lodging community; the most recent one attended by more than 200 representatives of Buncombe County hotels, bed and breakfasts, short-term rentals, and homestay operators.

In April, she wrote content for six partner newsletters and participated in a virtual forum with other CVB team members to give partners an update on efforts to provide useful information and valuable opportunities. She also continues to respond to Freedom of Information Act requests and with the team has worked closely with PGAV as the TMIP process continues.

Buncombe County Tourism Jobs Recovery Fund: Since Senator Edwards' announcement on April 24 about the bill he filed that led to the creation of this fund, Kathi has responded to numerous media requests; developed and disseminated a press release; made media pitches; coordinated interviews; written FAQs, social media posts, and website content; and is continuing to promote the Fund through a variety of local communication channels.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE

Tourism Jobs Recovery Fund: Stephanie worked with Senator Chuck Edwards, Buncombe County Commissioner Joe Belcher, and members of the BCTDA and Asheville Buncombe Lodging Association to propose a change to the legislation to allow \$5 million in TPDF funds to be used to establish the Buncombe County Tourism Jobs Recovery Fund. This was an aggressive attempt to help the local community, as the General Assembly was not considering local bills in the very short session focused on COVID-19 matters. The legislation was ultimately included in the overall COVID bill and signed into law by Governor Cooper on May 4. The application process will be handled by Mountain BizWorks and funding will directly benefit local non-lodging, tourism businesses with costs associated with reopening following the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown.

Human Resources: Glenn researched the flexibility within the Families First Coronavirus Recovery Act for Team Members to utilize the Extended Family Leave provision. It was determined Team Members who qualify can take the available time on a daily, hourly, or weekly basis. Four Team Members have requested to utilize this offering. On April 24, Stephanie and Glenn Zoomed with ISA to finalize D&O corporate insurance for Explore Asheville.

Personnel: On April 3, Ritchie Rozzelle was onboarded into team member benefits. On April 23, Dodie was onboarded into the Lincoln Financial Dental plan at the family level. As provided for in the County declaration, Glenn continued to work in the office on a daily basis so the rest of the Explore Asheville team can work remotely.

Building: The building was placed on total lockdown the week of March 24 and remained locked down throughout the month of April.

Destination Marketing Accreditation Program: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic requiring staff to focus on other high-priority tasks, work on the Destination Marketing Accreditation Program reaccreditation application has stalled for the time being. Staff will resume work on the application when available.

Tourism Management & Investment Plan: The Explore Asheville team continued working on the TMIP process in April with PGAV. Progress was made and discussed via several virtual meetings during the month.

BCTDA Budget: In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Explore Asheville team reassessed cashflow for the rest of FY 20 and worked through reducing proposed costs in the FY 21 budget, which was presented to the board at the April 29 meeting. Staff also worked with vendors to reduce expenditures related to ongoing services and contracts wherever possible.

Remote Operations: The Explore Asheville team continued to work remotely from home during the month of April to comply with Buncombe County's Stay Home/Stay Safe order. Jonna Sampson and Daniel Bradley researched, selected, and implemented technology options for virtual board meetings and a Partner Forum. Jonna also coordinated and communicated all logistics related to hosting the BCTDA meetings online.