

January 29, 2020

To: Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority

From: Stephanie Pace Brown

Subject: President's Report of November 2019 Activities

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## **NOVEMBER BY THE NUMBERS**

- During November, the sales team posted 1,095 personal contacts (up 5%). November sales activities generated 80 sales leads (up 27%) and 32 convention bookings (down 39%), representing 4,636 rooms (down 31%). Five months into the fiscal year, year-to-date bookings are down 25 percent and room nights represented are down 18 percent.
- CVB sales leads generated 41 group events in November (down 15%), with revenue of \$705,697 (up 72%). The services team assisted 35 groups (down 13%).
- The PR team landed 38 significant placements in November (down 42%), with 41 media touchpoints (up 8%). The publicity value of print and broadcast placements totaled \$2,876,362 with reach of over 4.8 million. Online placements added \$150,450 in value and reach of over 183 million.
- ExploreAsheville.com attracted 559,529 visits (up 66%), including 430,851 to the mobile site (up 84%). Our Facebook fan base total is 295,678 (up 5%) and video views totaled 44,717 (down 29%).
- Online hotel reservations totaled 60 room nights (down 19%) with total room revenue of \$8,174 (down 19%).
- The Asheville Visitor Center welcomed 16,836 visitors (up 12%), and the Pack Square Park Visitor Pavilion is closed for the winter.

## **LODGING & AIRPORT RESULTS**

- Buncombe County Finance reported lodging sales totaling \$50,034,849 in October (up 6%).
- Smith Travel Research reported hotel occupancy of 82.2 percent during October (down 1%). The average daily room rate was \$195.80 (up 2%), and RevPAR (revenue per available room) was \$160.88 (up 1%). Room demand increased 2 percent with 206,117 rooms sold.
- AIRDNA reported short term rental occupancy of 62.5 percent (up 7.7%), ADR of \$103.23 (down 0.1%), RevPAR of \$64.52 (up 7.6%). Total demand for short term rentals increased 29.9 percent to total 132,472 rooms sold.
- Passengers at the Asheville Regional Airport increased 37 percent to total 164,694 in October.

## IN THE COMMUNITY

- Dianna attended the monthly Civic Center Commission meeting.
- The PR Team engaged in several familiarization opportunities during the month that highlighted businesses such as Moogseum, Biltmore (Downton exhibition), Monk's Flask, Hyatt Place, White Labs and the Taste of Asheville event.
- As part of her role on the Chow Chow marketing committee, Dodie Stephens supported the integrated PR/marketing RFP process for the organization. Additionally, CVB staff pitched in on the programming committee to help with recommendations for **navigation** changes on the website and content/social media support for the Call for Participation.
- Dodie sat on the planning committee for the Center for Craft ReOpening Event for the National Craft Hub.
- As incoming chair for the PRSA Travel conference, Dodie led the RFP process for the 2021 conference which included RFP direction, promotion and proposal review.
- Marla attended both the Asheville Downtown Association board meeting as well as the Issues Committee meeting in November.
- Marla attended the Asheville Downtown Rotary meeting, sitting in for Stephanie.
- Pat attended the monthly African American Heritage Commission meeting and presented an update on BCTDA-funded projects relating to the African American community.
- Pat attended the Parking & Transportation Committee meeting, a sub-committee of the Downtown Commission.
- Pat attended GreenWork's Climate Change and Asheville's Urban Forest symposium at Asheville-Buncombe Technical College.
- Pat attended the City Manager's Fall 2019 Development Forum luncheon.
- Pat attended the Local Living Economy meeting, a sub-committee of the Downtown Commission, and met separately with Franzi Charen of the Asheville Grown Business Alliance to coordinate on the 2020 Local Love Week events.
- Kathi, Stephanie, and Pat participated in a two-hour input session on the Vibrant Economy as part of Buncombe County's strategic planning process.
- Kathi spoke on PR and media relations at the monthly Business for Success meeting.
- Kathi, Pat Stephanie and Marla attended Building Our City with urban planner Jeff Speck, sponsored by the BCTDA, Asheville Downtown Association, the City of Asheville, and several other entities.
- Kathi and Stephanie attended a meeting of Leadership Asheville graduates, where Stephanie presented information about how Explore Asheville and the BCTDA, for which Kathi created handouts.
- Kathi accompanied Stephanie to a meeting of the Asheville Downtown Commission, where Stephanie gave an update on TMIP.
- Kathi and Pat joined other staff in attending the ribbon cutting ceremonies and opening events for the Asheville Art Museum and the Center for Craft.
- Kathi, Pat and Jonna attended the Chamber's WomanUp leadership awards, at which BCTDA Board Member Leah Ashburn was named Woman Executive of the Year.
- Kathi and Pat attended the City Manager's Fall Development Forum.
- As a business mentor for the Mountain BizWorks/ScaleUp WNC program, Kathi attended a pitch event for several entrepreneurial startups, including tourism-related ventures.
- Kathi attended the quarterly meeting of the Asheville Independent Restaurants Association (AIR), where Stephanie presented on the work of the CVB.
- Stephanie attended a reception for Cleaster Cotton.
- Stephanie was the guest of honor at a Leadership Asheville Alumni luncheon.
- Stephanie attended the Greater Asheville Regional Airport Authority's monthly board meeting.

- Stephanie met with a group from the Ripley County Economic Development Corporation, representing five counties and one city from SE Indiana, to share how Asheville has achieved success in building its tourism industry.
- Stephanie met with new Assistant City Manager Richard White.
- Stephanie, Pat and Kathi attended the “Experience the Block – Honor the Past & Embrace the Future” event at Eagle Market Place and the YMI Cultural Center.
- Stephanie met with the United Way’s new CEO, Dan Leroy, and Kris Dionne, associate director of donor engagement.
- CVB staff attended the Asheville Independent Restaurant Association’s annual Taste of Asheville event at The Venue.
- Glenn attended a community-building potluck for Friends of the Black Mountain Center for the Arts.
- Glenn attended the Board Meeting of the Black Mountain Center for the Arts.
- Stephanie attended AIR and Chow Chow executive committee and board meetings throughout the month.

## MARKETING & PUBLIC RELATIONS

**Staff:** Director of Content Development Cat Kessler resigned her position as Director of Content, effective December 31. Ritchie Rozzelle was hired to lead the content initiative of the CVB. His experience includes Land of Sky, Earth Fare, the Kennedy Center and extensive community involvement in sustainable transportation.

**Advertising:** The holiday campaign fully launched in November. Elements of the campaign include paid social on Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest as well as native ads and radio. Paid search also incorporated a new offering, Google Discovery ads, that are shown on YouTube, the Google app and Gmail. The holiday campaign runs through December 22. The winter campaign will begin January 6. A creative brief was finalized, and development of the Cozy Winter assets began in later November.

The agency and staff also reviewed existing plans for the spring, shifting the budget and adjusting media to get into the market earlier in the spring. Tweaks to the plan include staggering broadcast schedules to align with state primary dates, increasing streaming in markets with later primaries and moving radio up in selected DMAs. The revised plan was presented at the November board meeting.

**Paid Search:** Paid search drove 98k sessions to ExploreAsheville.com in November, an increase of 64.2% YOY. The bounce rate did go up (4.8% YOY), but average session duration was at 2:48, an increase of 2.1% YOY. In addition, pages per session were up to 3.26, an increase of 2% YOY.

	November 2018	November 2019	YoY
<b>Total spend</b>	\$36,773	\$63,571	72.9%
<b>Impressions</b>	927,929	2,684,043	189.3%
<b>Clicks</b>	55,868	105,398	88.7%
<b>CTR</b>	6.02%	3.9%	-34.8%
<b>CPCs</b>	\$0.66	\$0.60	-8.4%

**General Media Relations:** The PR Team logged 41 media touchpoints, initiated 149 targeted pitches and hosted 4 media on the ground in Asheville in November. Pitch numbers were high this month due to the distribution and individualized pitches of What’s New in 2020 content.

Supported site visits included media representing *Artsy.net*, *Livability Media* and the blog *BridgesandBalloons.com*. Story support included *Sherman's*, *Birmingham Magazine*, *Elks Magazine*, *Tampa Bay Times*, and *Red Tricycle*. Asheville imagery and assistance were also provided to *VAMONDE.com*, *Tripveel Media*, *The Spa Insider* and *Woman's World Magazine*, among others.

### What's New in 2020 Outreach

The PR Team crafted a "What You Can't Miss in 2020" press release focusing on the major art museum/center openings and new creative offerings in the destination for the coming year. The release was distributed via PR Newswire and picked up 177 times with a potential audience of 64 million. It was also distributed via MailChimp to 773 subscribers and media friends of Explore Asheville and individually pitched to 137 targeted journalists.

### **Significant Placements:**

1. *Artropolis* | "Artists of Appalachia Push Back on Regional Stereotypes"
2. *Chowhound* | "Chow Chow Is the Blissful Marriage of Pickles & Coleslaw We've Been Waiting For"
3. *Esquire* | "22 New Best Restaurants in America"
4. *Forbes* | "12 Festive American Towns Offering Holiday Carolers, Boat Parades, Polar Trains – Even Elves"
5. *INSIDER* | *The 20 most festive places to spend the holidays in the US*
6. *Market Watch* | "8 cities that are making it easier to go vegan"
7. *O Magazine* | "The High Five"
8. *People* | "The Downtown Exhibition Is Now Open at the Biltmore Estate – See Inside"
9. *Town & Country* | "What to Do When Visiting the Biltmore Estate at Christmas"
10. *Travel + Leisure* | "Asheville is One of the Best Craft Beer Cities in the U.S. – Here Are All the Best Breweries to Visit"
11. *Travel Market Report* | "The 10 Most Festive Christmas Towns in the U.S. for 2019"

**Content Development Projects:** The month of November saw the wrap up of the fall color season as well as a deep dive into coverage of holiday happenings.

The final fall color report of 2019 was posted on November 7. Over the course of the season, total web traffic to our main fall pages—including the color report and interactive map—was up 120% YOY.

ExploreAsheville.com Editorial Content:

- During the month of November, 10 new pieces of content were added to ExploreAsheville.com: a story rounding up notable openings in November, the "what's new for 2020" press release, a blog post featuring the winning entries of the National Gingerbread House Competition, photo tours for Christmas at Biltmore, the Downtown Abbey exhibition and the Asheville Art Museum, and four new "things to do this weekend" blog posts.
- The most popular blog and story content this month was 8 Ways Asheville Sparkles for the Holidays, which received 28,179 new pageviews, followed by 8 Places to See Holiday Lights in Asheville, which received 27,467 pageviews.

### **Social Media Stats:**

Facebook:

*Visit Asheville* page

- November posted 1,986 daily new likes to Facebook for a total of 295,678.

- There were 22 new Facebook posts added to the Visit Asheville page in the month of November.
- The most popular unpaid Facebook post during the month was Jason's photos of the Biltmore Tree Raising ceremony. The post reached 107,931 people organically, generating 5,746 total reactions, and 552 comments. This was also the most engaging post of the month; it engaged 10.1% of users reached.

#### Video:

- There were 10,152 new, organic YouTube views in November. The most popular video by organic views this month was the scenic fall time lapse, which received 1,546 non-paid views. The Black Mountain video came in second with 972 new views.
- Across all our video platforms, there were 44,717 non-advertising views, with the majority coming from Facebook. There have been 275,862 views of Explore Asheville video content YTD (since July 1, 2019).

#### Pinterest:

- *Note: Pinterest has changed some of the stats that they display within the platform—a change that appears to be in line with the platform's shift away from a social media model and more toward a search engine model. Our reporting moving forward will reflect this change.*
- There were 234k organic impressions of pins linking to Explore Asheville content, down 6% over the previous month. There were also 13k engagements on these pins, down 8% over the previous month.

#### Instagram:

- Our Visit Asheville account has 68,572 followers.
- There were 3 new posts in November. The most popular photo post was a photo of the Winter Garden decorated for Christmas at Biltmore. It received 3,094 engagements (likes and comments).

#### Twitter:

- Across all our accounts we have a total of 16,741 followers. \*Please note this number is significantly lower than October 2019 because our Foodtopia account was compromised and our follower count (and tweets) were erased. We are working with Twitter support on the issue.
- The most popular account (with current numbers available) is Visit Asheville, which has 8,211 followers.
- 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 124,509 active subscribers.
- Opens/Click-throughs:
  - In November, our monthly Asheville Traveler e-newsletter went out to 125,298 subscribers. It had an overall open rate of 18.7 percent and a click-through rate of 3.5 percent.

**ExploreAsheville.com:** Website user sessions in November increased 66.3 percent compared to last year. Organic traffic was up 23.9 percent year-over-year in November. Paid search traffic was up 61.7 percent compared with last year. Referral traffic was down 35.4 percent year-over-year, and traffic from eNewsletter clicks was down 31.4 percent year-over-year in November. Social media traffic, excluding Paid Social, was up 15.8 percent compared with last year. Traffic

from advertising campaigns, including Paid Social was up 1,058.2 percent in November compared to last year. Sessions to the booking engine increased 29.8 percent year over year in November and booking engine searches increased 29.6 percent. But room nights booked on the booking engine dropped 18.9 percent.

Website Improvements – SEO, QA & Accessibility: In November, Explore Asheville content and web teams worked with a product called SiteImprove to assist with search engine optimization, quality assurance and accessibility efforts.

**Online Reservations:** There were 48 orders for 60 room nights in November with a total of \$8,173 in booking revenue and \$210 in commission. The top 5 states for room nights booked in October were Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Illinois and Georgia.

**Visitor Guide:** The 2020 Visitor Guide was finalized with edits, listings and photo changes for a final proof before being sent to the printer in the first week of December.

There were 2,031 requests of the *Official Asheville Visitor Guide* in November. Fiscal year-to-date, there have been 13,144 visitor guide requests.

## **GROUP SALES & SERVICES**

Group sales reported 32 definite group bookings in November, a 38 percent decrease over the prior year. Of these group bookings, 25 were for meetings & conventions, two were group tours and five were weddings. The combined total definite room nights were 4,636 room nights, a 31 percent decrease over the prior November. Eighty leads (64 for meeting/conventions, 13 weddings and three motorcoach) representing 16,641 room nights were distributed to Buncombe County accommodations in November. Leads distributed were up 27 percent and rooms represented were up 18 percent over the prior year.

Estimated revenue for leads issued was \$1,232,905, a 19 percent increase over the prior year. Actualized revenue was \$705,697, a 72 percent increase over the prior year. Person-to-person outreach totaled 1,095 contacts, a 5 percent increase from last year. Indirect outreach totaled 362, an 86 percent decrease over the prior year.

Beth McKinney began personal leave in November. Daniel Bradley is covering the wedding and reunion markets and Dianna is handling motorcoach related travel and activities.

### **Sales Calls/Trade Shows:**

- Shawn Boone attended Financial Insurance Conference Professionals (FICP) Annual Meeting in Austin, TX. Explore Asheville was a Copper Sponsor. Shawn participated in daily meeting activities and evening networking events. More than 300 meeting planners attended the three-day conference.
- Tina Porter exhibited at Teams Conference & Expo in partnership with the Asheville Buncombe Regional Sports Commission and met with 37 rights holders.
- Beth McKinney hosted a local client event for wedding planners and venues. She shared CVB updates with the guests. Dianna attended as well.
- Connie Holliday attended Tennessee Society of Association Executives' Annual Bootcamp and Tradeshow, meeting approximately 55 executives and planners. Eight potential groups were uncovered with potential for Asheville. Connie posted while at the tradeshow and had 417 views.

**Explore Asheville: The 48-Hour Experience:**

Held November 12-15, with 9 planners attending. Planners came from Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, Texas, and Virginia. The majority of whom have not personally been to Asheville nor hosted a meeting here. Attendees were vetted using a qualifying questionnaire, requiring a verifiable history of their ability to place a meeting in the southeast. Grand Bohemian Hotel Asheville was the host for this event. Three RFP's totaling 140 room nights have already been received from the FAM; of those three, one is definite, representing 30 room nights, and two are tentative, representing 110 room nights.

**Miles Partnership Meeting Brand Refresh Project:**

Miles Partnership hosted a series of four facilitated conversations with respect to the meeting brand refresh project. The director of sales conversation involved 11 participants, the destination management company / independent planner conversation involved six attendees and the general manager and Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority conversation involved 12 participants. Miles also held facilitated conversations with the sales team. An advance survey was sent to all registered participants. Post visit interviews were held with Marla Tambellini to obtain a better understanding of the "Let Your Spirit Run Free" consumer campaign and with representatives from Biltmore. Plans are underway for a series of conversations with meeting planner who have and have not met in Asheville.

**Site Visits/Bookings/Leads:** The team hosted 10 area site visits this month. They included: 2020 ITC – 440 rooms, 2021 NC Association of Public Safety Commissions – 875 rooms, 2021 Corporate group - 1,380 rooms, 2021 Generis – 188 rooms, 2020 Balalaika and Domra Association of America – 224 rooms; HPN Site with Mr. Geoffrey Cooks, VP, Global Accounts; 2020 Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation – 160 rooms, 2020+ Bon Beer Voyage – 20 rooms, 2020 HeXpo – 240 rooms, 2022 Claims Institute – 340 rooms.

A total of 16 wedding guide requests were fulfilled this month as compared to nine in November 2018.

November bookings for future years include (but are not limited to):

- 2020 National Trust for Historic Preservation – 90 rooms
- 2021 Major County Sheriffs Association – 380 rooms
- 2020 Strong Bonds Program – 42 rooms
- 2020 Symposium American Society of Brewing Chemists – 164 rooms
- 2020 Truckload Carriers – 81 rooms
- 2020 Syngenta Crop Protection – 130 rooms
- 2020 Steel Founders' Society's Fall Leadership Meeting – 105 rooms
- 2020 Comdata – 165 rooms
- 2020 American Clogging Hall of Fame – 265 rooms
- 2021 Corning Awards Weekend – 141 rooms
- 2020 Ocala/Marion County Chamber – 140 rooms
- 2020 Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama – 140 rooms
- 2020 MarjaNet Inc. - 30 rooms
- 2020 NC AAUW Annual Meeting – 20 rooms
- 2020 Bon Beer Voyage – 20 rooms
- 2019 Genetech – 20 rooms
- 2020 Mutual Drug – 285 rooms
- 2020 Besenji Rescue and Transport – 80 rooms
- 2020 Spartan Race Staff & Crew Rooms – 158 rooms
- 2020 Electric Cooperatives of SC – 84 rooms

- 2020 Sweet Magnolia Tours – 100 rooms
- 2020 NC Certified Commercial Investment Members – 85 rooms
- 2020 Carolinas Public Gas Association – 257 rooms

### **Group Sales Communications:**

Explore Asheville hosted Miles Partnership who led three local stakeholder meetings and met with EA sales staff on November 25th to gather key information for the refresh of the Explore Asheville meetings brand project.

### **Media:**

- Asheville was named the “Best Beer or Wine Trail” in the *Groups Today* Readers’ Choice Awards published in the November/December 2019 issue.
- The CVB was featured as MPI-Central Carolinas Chapter’s member spotlight

### **Mass Communications:**

- An email was sent to 172 Tennessee-based clients in advance of the TNSAE trade show. Open rate: 32% Clicks: 4
- An email was sent to 316 Raleigh-area meeting planners to invite them to a client event hosted by Explore Asheville and seven industry partners. Open rate: 40% Clicks: 43

### **Convention Servicing Highlights:**

Deliveries for three conferences were made.

## **PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

### **Tourism Product Development Efforts:**

The Asheville Art Museum hosted a check presentation and ribbon cutting ceremony to celebrate the re-opening on November 13. The BCTDA’s support was recognized on the donor wall and in the naming of the “Explore Asheville Exhibition Hall.”

The Center for Crafts recognized the BCTDA’s support by naming a meeting area the Explore Asheville Assembly Hall”. A check presentation and ribbon cutting took place during opening weekend events November 15-16.

The WNC Farmers Market’s visitor information signage and rack for Visitor Guide distribution will be installed in January 2020.

### **Partner Engagement and Events:**

Explore Asheville CVB 101 Orientation: The public affairs team hosted a CVB 101 Orientation on November 13, which included eight representatives from Beer City Scooters, H & F Burger Asheville, iDaph Events, Milan Hotel Group, and Weinhaus.

New Partners: There was one new partner in November: RosaBees. Terri Wells, sales rep for SagaCity handling ad sales for the Visitor Guide, has been contracted to conduct new partner outreach to assist in onboarding new businesses and existing businesses that may be unaware of Explore Asheville’s free sales and marketing opportunities.

Joe also continued to reach out to Music Venue partners regularly to ensure they are submitting their events to the Live Music Calendar and has seen a consistency in the number of Live Music events submitted.



Partner Forum - November 19: Fifty-eight partners attended the partner meeting featuring "Build the Perfect Listing & ExploreAsheville.com Advertising Opportunities". CVB marketing staff announced upcoming changes to the website events module and Meredith Sasser with DTN presented tips on improving listings as well as advertising opportunities on ExploreAsheville.com.

Explore Asheville Holiday Party - December 10: Partners gathered for the 7<sup>th</sup> annual Explore Asheville Holiday Party on Tuesday December 10 at the Renaissance Asheville Hotel. The event was made possible with generous support from the Renaissance Asheville Hotel, US Foods, Asheville Brewing Company, The Omni Grove Park Inn and Biltmore. Approximately 315 partners plus staff were in attendance, many of whom contributed to the annual U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Program which collected \$748 in cash donations and four bins full of toys. Additionally, four tourism partners were recognized as CVB Superstars for their standout contributions to the work we do to promote Asheville and Buncombe County as a destination including Cleaster Cotton, Ken Stamps, Brenda Durden, and Lisa White.

Partner Forum – January 23: Planning is underway for a “Sales & Marketing Update” Partner Forum in January.

Service Day – January 30: Planning is underway for a staff service day outing in January.

### **Projects:**

African American Heritage Project: The heritage trail project team is focused on preparing for a series of listening sessions to be conducted by the project team over the next two months, with phone sessions taking place in December and in-person workshops scheduled in January.

Pat met with Lynn Smith, chair of the African American Heritage Commission to provide background on the BCTDA-funded heritage trail project and museum at Stephens-Lee Recreation Center. Pat also met with Brenda Mills, Neighborhood & Community Engagement Manager and Allison Dains from the City of Asheville’s parks department to review details of the African American Heritage Cultural District application submitted by River Front Development Group. And, Pat attended a Saturday mediation session at the Stephens-Lee Recreation Center hosted by Assistant City Manager Richard White and Brenda Mills along with members of the Stephens-Lee Alumni Association and River Front Development Group. The purpose of the meeting was to align goals for the museum project among the Stephens-Lee Alumni Association, River Front Development Group, East End Valley Neighborhood Association, City of Asheville, and the BCTDA’s grant.

CRM Audit & Visitor Guide: The public affairs team continue to work on the auditing process for Explore Asheville’s customer relationship management (CRM) database. They are reviewing best practices and support options with SimpleView and have met with the marketing team to assess and prioritize recommendations. Joe also continued work on the 2020 Official Asheville Visitor Guide including proofing all listings.

## **PUBLIC INFORMATION & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Public Information: Kathi responded to news media requests and other related needs regarding the festivals and cultural events grants, BCTDA sponsorship of Chow Chow, the occupancy tax in Buncombe County, and the impact of the cancellation of the Warren Haynes Christmas Jam. She also wrote and disseminated press releases on the November BCTDA board meeting;

assisted Stephanie with a TMIP presentation for the Asheville Downtown Commission; developed a new Media Roundup Report of local media coverage; made media pitches related to TPDF grant funding and tourism entrepreneurship.

Tourism Product Development Fund: Kathi supported opening events for TPDF recipients Asheville Art Museum and The Center for Craft by preparing remarks for Chairman Froeba and for former TPDF Committee Chairman Robert Foster.

Community Engagement: Kathi continued meeting with various community stakeholders and influencers, as well as local media, to discuss her new role. She also responded to comments and requests by citizens.

Other: Kathi supported CVB team members with writing and editing projects, including newsletter and website content, and assisted organizers with the 2019 Economic Brunch with information about Stephanie as a recipient of a Leadership in Economic Development award.

## **EXECUTIVE OFFICE**

Human Resources: Posted opening for Director of Content to replace Cat Kessler, who is resigning effective December 31, 2019. Over 80 applications were received and six initial interviews completed. New and revised policies and procedures for building and staff security were developed, which will be presented in a January staff meeting.

Event Grants: Glenn developed and sent cover letters and Grant Agreement documents to the 21 recipients of the 2020 Festivals and Cultural Events and Major Events grant round.

Attraction Partners Collaborative: Stephanie, Kathi and Glenn attended the third convening of the Attraction tourism partners. Again, there was a good turnout with close to 40 Attraction businesses in attendance. Stephanie welcomed the room and encouraged them to plug in to the free programs offered by staff and free exposure on ExploreAsheville.com. An earlier survey was reviewed followed by breakouts to identify how they can strengthen their business segment.

Destinations International Advocacy Summit: November 12-14, Stephanie attended the 2019 Destinations International Advocacy Summit in Madison, Wisconsin, which brought together advocacy experts and destination organization professionals to exchange ideas on the latest trends and threats to the industry. Sessions included opportunities to focus on leadership skills, strategic planning, talent development, diversity, inclusion and equity and working with legislators.

Tourism Management & Investment Plan: On November 22, PGAV facilitated a TMIP meeting with leaders and stakeholders from the City of Asheville, Buncombe County, and UNC Asheville.