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Contact: Rachel McCall, 757-639-8722, rmccall@downtownnorfolk.org

Downtown Norfolk Council Receives Virginia Tourism Corporation Grant for Tourism Marketing

NORFOLK, Va. – (December 2024) – Downtown Norfolk Council received a \$10,000 grant from the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC)'s Microbusiness Marketing Leverage Program (MMLP) for its 2024 Holidays in the City and Grand Illumination Parade initiatives.

Downtown Norfolk Council partnered with other local businesses to secure matching funds for the events and marketing efforts, which bring tens of thousands of visitors to Downtown Norfolk during the holiday season. Hampton Roads residents and out of region visitors are encouraged to shop, dine and stay during the six-week Holidays in the City season, which started in November with the 38th Annual Grand Illumination Parade. The events and marketing campaigns highlight a full day or weekend of family-friendly holiday activities, like the Hot Cocoa War, Elf Door Discovery, the Model Railroad Museum of Hampton Roads Holiday Display, dining out at the many chef-driven restaurants in Downtown, taking in a holiday show and much more.

Virginia Tourism Corporation awarded more than more than \$581,607 in matching grant funds to 108 marketing programs, ultimately impacting 432 combined partners, and supporting more than 1,050 full-time and part-time jobs across the commonwealth. This funding cycle, local partners committed more than \$700,168 in private-public sector funds to match the VTC funding, providing more than \$1.29 million in new marketing activity to help increase off-season visitation to Virginia's small tourism-oriented businesses and events.

"The Holidays in the City season and Grand Illumination Parade are cornerstone traditions for Downtown Norfolk, attracting visitors from across the region and beyond," said Mary Miller, President & CEO for Downtown Norfolk Council. "The Virginia Tourism Corporation grant allows us to expand our reach and showcase all that Downtown Norfolk has to offer, from vibrant holiday events to incredible local dining and shopping experiences. These efforts drive tourism, boost our local economy, and help emphasize Downtown as the perfect destination for holiday memories."

"The Microbusiness Marketing Leverage Program is part of VTC's strategy to grow year-round visitation in Virginia and is designed to support small tourism businesses with marketing dollars to drive out-of-state visitation during off-peak travel seasons," **said Rita McClenny, President**

and CEO of Virginia Tourism Corporation. “This program serves as a gateway for small businesses to engage with VTC’s marketing and development ecosystem to grow their business and build on the Virginia is for Lovers branding.”

The VTC Microbusiness Marketing Leverage Program is designed to increase visitor spending by leveraging limited marketing dollars to stimulate new tourism marketing through partnerships, and to extend the *Virginia is for Lovers* brand to drive off-season visitation. Using the hub and spoke tourism model to create multi-day itineraries, a minimum of five Virginia entities partner financially to apply for funding through the MMLP. Partners may consist of Virginia cities, towns, counties, destination marketing organizations, chambers of commerce, museums, attractions, cultural events, and other tourism-related businesses. The matching marketing dollars will be used to encourage visitors to come to Virginia and support tourism-oriented attractions and small businesses during the holiday, late winter, and spring break season.

VTC will have additional Marketing Program grant and sponsorship rounds opening throughout 2024. Organizations and businesses that are interested in applying may visit vatc.org/grants for more information. A full list of funding recipients can be found [here](#).

For more information about holiday events in Downtown Norfolk, visit DowntownNorfolk.org.

Downtown Norfolk Council is a private, not-for-profit membership organization comprised of businesses and individuals working toward a dynamic, attractive and prosperous Downtown. DNC also manages the Downtown Norfolk Improvement District, a 50-block special services district with enhanced services that keep Downtown friendly, safe and spotless. Connect with Downtown Norfolk on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) or visit DowntownNorfolk.org.

Holidays in the City, presented by Cox Mobile, is Downtown Norfolk's premier celebration of the holiday season. Featuring festive events, activities, and experiences for all ages, it's the perfect way to make your season merry and bright.

Virginia is for Lovers is one of the most iconic and recognizable travel brands in the world. Using that powerful brand equity, Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) is charged with promoting the Commonwealth as a premier travel destination by showcasing all there is to love in a Virginia vacation. The dollars spent by travelers fuel the economy, provide jobs for Virginians, and improve communities across the state. Simply put, tourism helps make Virginia a great place to live, work, and vacation. Learn more at virginia.org.