

This is a summation of questions asked and answered during the Q&A portion of the Virtual Visit on June 18, 2024.

MARYLAND OFFICE OF TOURISM “VIRTUAL VISIT” Q & A SUMMARY

Q: How can we send you our videos and photos for your website?

A: Share your creative assets with Daesha at daesha.stark@maryland.gov. We prefer a minimum of 150 DPI (pixels-px), horizontal images, if possible, and minimum size at that size for us is 1200 px by 800 px.

Q: What are the 3 story lines for the upcoming Scenic Byways project?

A: Seasonality, Belong-ability and Sustainability - all of these will be woven into our content and messaging, inclusively, and especially as we build on the Scenic Byways program in 2025 for the 25th Anniversary of Maryland Scenic Byways.

Q: Where is the link to the self-entry portal on the industry website?

A: Scroll on the [home page here](#) and also find the link on the opportunities page - and look for the words **[SELF ENTRY PORTAL](#)**.

Q: The Western Maryland Scenic Railroad in Cumberland has recently received awards from USA Today and Warner Brothers for our train rides. What would be the best way to incorporate those awards with you all?

A: Great! The first thing would be to add this detail to your business listing. Of the three million users that visit, they could see your phrases like “USA Today” and “award-winning.” These are the types of things that search engine optimization (SEO) loves, too. Be sure our public relations team is made aware of your accolades by sharing them with Leslie at ltroy@visitmaryland.org.

Q: Can you share some ROI advertising in detail about Western Maryland?

A: As someone who loves the mountains, Liz said that’s not the case. She suggested giving her a call or sending an email (liz.fitzsimmons@maryland.gov) to discuss further. In addition, be sure you are in touch with your DMO partners in the region – Sarah Duck at Garrett/Visit Deep Creek Lake, Ashli in Allegany County and Dan in Hagerstown/Washington County. All DMO contacts are on [Industry.VisitMaryland.org](#)

Q: Here are some tips regarding your events.

A: Be sure your events are uploaded into our calendar so they appear on VisitMaryland.org. You can do it in stages. We highly recommend you do not wait until it’s three days out and then ask us to promote it. When you know your dates and the title, load it in the system (even if you’ve just started applying for permits for the event.) Then, edit/add to it as you get your headliners and other pieces of the event.

Q: How might my business get featured in Maryland commercials or promotional materials? How do we indicate interest ahead of filming to be considered?

A: Video productions are scaled across all of our units (departments) and the primary contacts are Brian Lawrence and Daesha Elliot. Take a look at the Scenic Byways videos - if you see areas that could be improved upon, let us know since this will be part of the 2025 projects (new videos.) Always, if you have short-form videos

and can share them with us, please send them to Leslie Troy. Be sure when you are posting those, you tag us using our hashtag, #MDINFOCUS because that's monitored and we can amplify.

Also, be sure your business listing is up-to-date and includes your unique story. Our commercials are to drive people to the website so make sure your information and unique proposition is current and tied into messaging.

Q: What is your methodology for capturing visitor spending and is it something we can utilize in our Main Street Community?

A: Research about Maryland visitor spending is conducted by Tourism Economics via an annual survey. It does look at retail within it. We suggest you work with your local DMO as they have access to the material. Looking at Main Street research specifically, you may want to think of other research tools out there as it would be more pertinent for you.

Our research activity is led by Rianna Wan who may be able to work with you on the development of a survey for Main Streets. There may need to be something tailored for each Main Street, and we're happy to work with our partners over at the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development on what that may look like. Not exclusively, but one question might be about Main Streets as they relate to the mission of the Maryland Office Tourism and generating multi-night stays.

Q: How can we get our hotels to be a part of FAM trips?

A: That is generally working with your DMO Partners who we reach out to initially to work with us on our fam trips. Sometimes we ask you to raise your hand and help support them. These could be for filming or for travel media fams or for group tour fams. See checklist for our staff contacts.

Q: A new mural walking tour was created for Annapolis - how do you receive "endorsements" for the project?

A: We don't know what we don't know so please share it! Endorsement isn't a word we necessarily use but you can use our self-entry database tools – Is there a title, like Annapolis Mural walking tour? If so, please create a business listing for it. Search on VisitMaryland.org and see if it is mentioned in art and culture articles. Our Advertising & Content unit manages the articles on our website and our newsletters. Share with Daesha, Theresa and Leslie. To repeat, be sure your local DMO is aware, too. Do you have special events related to this experience? Be sure they are on the calendar of events. We always review our site and use the calendar to search and use new content.

Q: Is there a way to "bulk upload" events?

A: Yes, using the self-entry portal to post events. Once you put in your first event, it's pretty intuitive to repeat in bulk. Just follow the prompts. If you need assistance, contact Brandon or Flo.

Q: What are the current hashtags for social media being used?

A: #MDINFOCUS. We have two handles – @VisitMaryland (Instagram and X) and @TravelMD (Facebook, X and Pinterest) Using #MDINFOCUS gets your pictures noticed and notifies our social media team. In turn, we may use them in our posts too.

Q: How can independent and small businesses, like accommodations, be more engaged with Maryland tourism.

A: You may want to meet our Welcome Center staff and get your brochures in the one close to your site. Be sure you manage your business listing in the database! We are grateful for our small and large businesses in the

tourism industry and encourage you to create packages and partnerships that help generate multi night stays. Also, participating with the Maryland Hotel Lodging Association, your local DMO and their Visitor Centers are good ideas too...we are all in a tourism village together!

Q: Are there any pushes, promotions or campaigns that focus on Maryland's Agritourism and farming?

A: Liz - My good friend Kevin Atticks, Secretary at the Department of Agriculture and I have this conversation frequently. Agritourism tends to be a term that we all use as a kind of an "inside baseball term." What we do promote are our wineries, breweries and farm tours. We do promote all of those other things but haven't bundled it in an Agritourism way so we asked question has been directly to the other 50 state tourism directors and everyone's kind of in that same space of looking at Agritourism as more in the culinary aspect (like farmers markets, grape growing, distilleries and hops.)

Marci - added, getting to know our Maryland Scenic Byways since many of them run through are more rural and agricultural Landscapes is a great way for you to showcase your small businesses, your B&Bs, and Agritourism enterprises. And so because next year is the 25th anniversary we are going to be doing a multi-seasonal marketing effort. We encourage you to go in and learn about what our byways are where you are located according to them and then we'll be happy to have a consultation with you on how to maximize that opportunity.

Q: Are there any small businesses represented on the Maryland tourism development board?

A: We make sure they are represented from the Governor's appointees and from the legislative side so we have representation of all size/types of businesses. Some small businesses may be represented as franchisees in the state of Maryland such as hotels.

In Conclusion

Liz thanked all for their time and reminded all not to forget - your gateway to our office is Industry.VisitMaryland.org!

We've given you a lot and we appreciate everyone taking time out of their day - thank you! We also recognize that it's easy for us to say "just do this or that," but we want to make sure that you have many tools.

Take a look at resources, opportunities and staff contacts on Industry.VisitMaryland.org. Please return often. Thank you.