



*Naturally Adventurous*

# **Business and Operational Plan DRAFT**

**(April 1 2013-March 31 2015)**



January 2, 2012

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## 1. Introduction

One of 13 Ontario Regional Tourism Organizations (RTOs), Explorers' Edge (RTO 12) was established in 2010 by the Provincial Ministry of Tourism, representing the broad geographic area of Algonquin Park, Almaguin Highlands, Parry Sound and Muskoka.

The Business and Operational Plan specifies the operational priorities for 2013-2015. Following from last year's plan, these priorities were mapped out by the Board of Directors during an Operational Planning Session held on October 31, 2012 at Nippising University, Bracebridge. Board members are identified in **Appendix A**.

The *Destination Development Plan* (DDP) released in September 2011 serves as the guiding document for both this 2013-2015 Operational Plan and last year's Plan. Priorities are identified and aligned with the DDP and assigned to working committees established to meet Operational Plan goals. Timelines and budget estimates are also presented. Please note that **refinements to the Plan are expected to be made throughout the next two years as objectives and activities evolve.**

The following overarching goals drive the strategic focus for Explorers' Edge.

### **Overall Goals for Explorers' Edge** (RTO 12 *Business and Operational Plan*, 2010-2011)

1. Double tourism receipts by 2020.<sup>1</sup>
2. Identify regional priorities that move the Provincial RTO agenda forward.
3. Change how government and industry work together to develop and foster economic growth.
4. Maximize and measure the impact of private and public tourism investments and new and revitalized product
5. Reach out to consumers before they get here and once they arrive so that we can welcome more tourists.
6. Set standards for success to become more internationally competitive in areas such as workforce development, skills training and others.
7. Establish measureable ROI criteria.

## 2. Snapshot of Explorers' Edge and Ontario Tourism, 2010

Several documents were reviewed set the stage for the 2013-2015 Operational Plan and summarize what has gone before. Major references for the Plan are noted in **Section 6**.

The RTO landscape and a snapshot of where RTO 12 "sits" in relation to other Ontario RTOs are shown on the following page (**Figure 1**). These estimates were released in the Fall of 2012. Most agree that a goal set by the Ministry Tourism, Culture and Sport (MTCS) of doubling of tourism receipts is lofty in this economic climate. The organization is in still in start-up mode (1.5 years since hiring staff and setting up a structure) and is focused on developing marketing programs that pay off and measuring the extent to which these programs work. Given the current economic situation and outlook for the next 2-3 years (**Figure 1**), the goal of "doubling receipts" should be revisited by the organization and more realistic revenue goals devised.

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<sup>1</sup> This goal was established by the Sorbara (2009) report and may be revisited by individual RTOs -- as more reliable, timely and accurate benchmarks are established. The OMTCS currently uses accommodation sector data as the primary measurement tool to gauge industry performance.

**Figure 1: Explorers' Edge and Ontario Tourism Snapshot, 2010\***

**Ontario** 103.7 million visits \$17.1 billion spending  
**Explorers Edge** 3.8 million visits \$513 million spending (\$146 million in taxes – all levels)

	Region	Visits (millions)	Visitor Spending (\$ billions)
<b>RTO</b>	<b>All Ontario</b>	<b>103.7</b>	<b>\$17.1 bil.</b>
RTO 1	Southwest Ont.	13.1%	7.5%
RTO 2	Niagara Falls & Wine Country	9.7%	9.1%
RTO 3	Hamilton, Halton, Brant	7.1%	3.2%
RTO 4	Huron, Perth, Waterloo, Wellington	8.5%	4.8%
RTO 5	Greater Toronto area	18.2%	30.0%
RTO 6	York, Durham, Hills of Headwaters	7.3%	3.5%
RTO 7	Bruce Peninsula, South Georgian Bay	9.2%	6.8%
RTO 8	Kawartha and Northumberland	4.5%	2.7%
RTO 9	South Eastern Ontario	6.2%	4.4%
RTO 10	Ottawa and Countryside	6.7%	7.7%
RTO 11	Haliburton Highlands to the Ottawa Valley	4.0%	2.4%
<b>RTO 12</b>	<b>Explorers' Edge</b>	<b>3.7%</b>	<b>3.0%</b>
RTO 13	Northern Ontario	6.1%	7.3%

\*Sources: Statistics Canada, Travel Survey of the Residents of Canada, 2010, International Travel Survey 2010, Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport (Tourism Research Unit).

## OUTLOOK

- Domestic visits represent 87% of visits will experience positive growth between 2010 and 2015 with an average annual growth rate of 2.4%.
- US visits are expected to decline from 2010-2012 then grow 2013-2015.
- Overseas visits are expected to grow each year, with an average growth rate of 4.7%.
- Avg. spend in Ontario: \$165 per trip - \$134 per trip in RTO 12. US visitors \$376/trip. Avg. # nights 3.1.
- Algonquin highest Provincial Park visited with 772,300 visitors (1.5 million for all Ont. Prov. Parks).

EE Tourism Related Establishments	2010
Accommodations	254
Arts, Entertainment Recreation	180
Food & Beverage	250
Transportation	46
Travel Services	14
Retail	666
Other Services	278
<b>Total</b>	<b>1688</b>

Spending Dollar
9% Retail Other
8% Rec/entertainment
39% Food & Beverage
19% Accommodations
18% Transport.

Activities	% Particip.
Higher Particip. rate	
Boating	37%
Fishing	21%
Nat/Prov. Parks	13%
Historic Sites	7%
Golf	5%
Museums/Art Galleries	5%
Festivals/Fairs	4%

74% of EE visits were overnight vs. 59% same day visits for Ont.

Purpose of Visit (3.8 M)
72.8% Pleasure
21.9% VFR
3.6% Other Personal

### 3. Explorers' Edge Vision, Mission and Mandate

The vision, mission and mandate of Explorers' Edge guide the organization. During the October 31, 2012 session, the Board agreed that the Vision and Mission are confusing and need to be streamlined.

#### Explorers' Edge **VISION**

Tourism throughout the RTO 12 area is a sustainable, year-round industry providing jobs and economic opportunity through profitable operations and contributing to the quality of life and positive image and of our communities.

*In five years, Explorers' Edge will be the recognized leader in helping regional tourism operators increase profits for their own benefits and for the subsequent economic benefit of the communities in which they operate. We will have earned this recognition by continuously delivering programs that come from solid strategic planning and execution to produce measurable successes.*

#### The associated **MISSION**

Working with businesses and stakeholders, we develop a competitive and sustainable tourism industry that reflects the Region's unique strengths and maximizes its potential to successfully attract new visitors and grow tourism spending.

*Explorers' Edge is a grass roots, operator-driven organization whose mission is to develop a competitive and sustainable tourism industry for the benefit of regional tourism operators and the communities in which they operate.*

#### Explorers Edge **MANDATE**

It is the Explorers' Edge mandate to help regional tourism operators increase receipts by providing strategic leadership, by developing strong, collaborative partnerships and compelling packages, by developing workforce and skills training, and by developing innovative and effective marketing initiatives that produce measurable results.

### 4. Destination Development Plan Status

As noted on page 1, the guiding document for the Business and Operational Plan is the DDP developed in 2010. Five strategic areas are outlined in the plan and their status as of November 1, 2011 and October 2012 is documented in **Table 1**.

**Table 1: Explorers' Edge Destination Development Plan Status at October 31, 2012**  
**(for operating period April 1, 2012-March 31, 2013)**

<b>As per 2011 Destination Development Plan (DDP) -- Status at Oct 31, 2012</b>				
	<b>DDP Recommendation</b>	<b>Pri- ority</b>	<b>Status at Op. Planning Session - Nov 2011</b>	<b>Status at Op. Planning Session, Oct 31 2012</b>
	<b>I. Marketing and Promotion Strategy</b>			
1	Creation of a regional identity that is supportive of sub-regional DMOs (H)	H	Done	Done
2	Undertake region-wide market research, specific to region (M)	M	Now consumer and asset	Done - posted on website & provided webinars, presentations, web blasts with partners etc.
3	Develop active web-based, social media presence (H)	H	Done and ongoing	Done and ongoing
4	Investigate desirability of central reservation system for RTO 12 businesses (M)	M	Muskoka tourism manages	Cancelled
5	Asset inventory & mapping key attractions and experiences (M)	M	Consumer and asset studies beginning (Cloud)	Completed a program of building a data base tourism related business's (asset's). Inventory of key attractions and experiences not completed.
6	Photo bank of images (supporting regional identity) (L)	L	Done and ongoing	Done and ongoing
7	Develop experience-based promotional campaigns (H)	H	Starting in Jan (Cloud)	Done - Winter 2012 * Done Summer 2012 * Done Fall 2012
8	Broadcast marketing campaign aimed at GTA market (H)	H	Winter and ongoing - fall Social media with bloggers	Done - Winter 2012 * Done Summer 2012 * Done Fall 2012 - ongoing
9	Participate in selected travel trade promotions (M)	M	FAMS and publicity initiated; ongoing.	FAMS and publicity initiated; ongoing.
10	Develop educational materials informing industry of market research findings (L)	L	Not yet (reports on website; trail is on there); training opportunities.	Done - hosted on rto12.ca - ongoing
11	Develop attractive and consistent signage across region (H)	H	No	No - way finding signage programs have been supported through the Product Development Fund and are currently being examined with the Partnership Funds
12	Ensure that Travel Information Centres promote RTO 12 primarily (M)	M	No	Done & Ongoing - completed a promotional program with Ontario Travel Information Centres across the province that also highlighted the RTO specific region

	DDP Recommendation	Priority	Status at Op. Planning Session - Nov 2011	Status at Op. Planning Session, Oct 31 2012
	<b>II. Product Development &amp; Innovation Strategy</b>			
13	Encourage greater packaging of weekend (or longer events)	H	No	Done& ongoing - Workshop and Fuel and Fun (Spring and Summer)
14	Encourage mentoring throughout region / 'product development workshops'	L	No -	Done & Ongoing
15	Encourage environmentally responsible operations ('Green Eco' designation)	H	No	No
16	Develop and promote routes and trails (e.g. culinary, art, cycling, hiking, snowmobiling)	H	Just starting – New hire will assist.	Done & Ongoing - promotion through I-phone app, newsletter, social etc. Developing trails with Park2Park research project and SAVOUR Muskoka and Park2Park - Tourism Product Development Fund
17	Encourage events in shoulder seasons	H	Done social media around shoulder events	Done social media around shoulder events
18	Encourage more sports tourism	M	No	Ongoing - Specifically working with Tri Muskoka and preliminary work with the 2014 Ontario Winter Games, also encouraging sports tourism through marketing and social media.
19	Encourage expansion and upgrading of existing product	L	No	Done and ongoing - 15 product development programs were supported/funded that encouraged expansion and upgrading - Arrowhead Provincial Park Ice Trail as an example.
20	Promote products made in RTO 12 to markets outside the region to help create positive image.	M	Not yet - winter campaign	Done - Winter 2012 * Done Summer 2012 * Done Fall 2012 - ongoing
21	Celebrate operators who are already expanding and developing their product	M	Put in newsletters; March AGM; Awards?	No - 2012 AGM

	DDP Recommendation	Priority	Status at Op. Planning Session - Nov 2011	Status at Op. Planning Session, Oct 31 2012
	<b>III. Investment Attraction Strategy</b>			
22	Liaise closely with existing economic development agencies	H	Started and ongoing	Ongoing - 4 Community Relations Committee Meetings
23	Continue to improve broadband access throughout region	M	No	No
24	Advocate for improved transportation structure throughout region	H	Written letters	Written Letters
25	Optimize use of northern Ontario incentive grant / loan program	H	applied to FedNor internship - Sudbury; happening started process.	Applied to FedNor internship - Sudbury; happening started process. Monthly Updates and meetings with program advisors
26	Examine ways & means to streamline the regulatory process for tourism development	L	Good relationship with province, TIAC	OTMPC Advisory Committee, Monthly calls with Regional Tourism Unit, bi-monthly meetings with Provincial Partners.
	<b>IV. Workforce Development and Training Strategy</b>			
27	Develop workforce training program for (primarily) summer students in industry to ensure common base of knowledge	L	Being worked on -- workforce development board of Muskoka Tourism	Being worked on -- workforce development board of Muskoka Tourism
28	Hold workshops in cultural sensitivity training	M	No	In progress - collaboration with Gravenhurst Chamber Chinese & LGTB
29	Develop appreciation / awards program to incent workers in industry	L	No - new position to develop - putting tourism operator relations in place. Hiring in Jan 2	No
30	Promote availability and desirability of careers in tourism industry throughout RTO 12	M	No	Yes - Presentations to Georgian College and University of Waterloo, Position on the Georgian College Campus Advisory Committee
31	Develop internship program	M	No	No



	DDP Recommendation	Priority	Status at Op. Planning Session - Nov 2011	Status at Op. Planning Session, Oct 31 2012
	<b>V. Industry Communication, Liaison and Accountability Strategy</b>		Yes, have a TPA process	Yes, have a TPA process
32	Performance management and accountability	H	Incorporating in projects; Ministry accountability good	Incorporating in projects; Ministry accountability good
33	Communications with industry throughout RTO 12	H	Two quarterly newsletters (65% open rate)	Eight quarterly newsletters (78% open rate)
34	Liaison with other RTOs (joint marketing; joint product development, etc.)	H	Monthly conference call with other RTOs; partnership RTO 7 (Grey Bruce); talk to RTO 13, and Highlands -- talk to three border RTOs once a month (RTO7, RTO13, Highlands); Georgian Bay Coastal Route... they're also defining themselves; probably in long run will do joint programs.	Monthly conference call with other RTOs
35	Advocacy: representing members concerns to province and other levels of government	M	No, don't know where members are -- putting in place.	Support Letters have been circulated on various issues.

## 5. Successes in the Past Year

The Board was asked to identify successes during the past year; these are presented in **Table 2**. As to be expected, major successes are marketing related with the Fuel and Fun Program and Social Media exposure at the top of the list.

**Table 2: Overview of EE Accomplishments during the Past year (2012)**

	# Board Members Citing
<b>Marketing Related</b>	
Fuel & Fun Program	13
Social Media Exposure (Facebook)	10
Market Growth, Market Presence, Exposure, Awareness	7
EE Brand (face, feet), Brand Dev.	3
Fall Colour Blue Campaign	2
Winter Turns up the Fun Campaign	2
Marketing; tangible results	
<b>Organizational</b>	
Governance, Board Committee Structure, Openness, Transparency	5
Exec Director; Strategy, Governance	2
Lean staff	
<b>External Awareness</b>	
Cohesion, Collaboration	5
Operator Engagement; profile & communication with operators	4
Community/Operator Awareness (Trail to Trail Park Assoc.)	2
Relevance to Tourism Partners	
Good Relationship with RTU	
<b>Other</b>	
Product Development Fund	3
Leading RTO; proof that we (operators) can do it.	2
Research dollars	
\$ in Op. Pockets	
Increased Shoulder Season	

In order to meet the goals established by Explorers Edge in 2011, the Board established an Executive Committee and six additional working committees to help provide direction and guidance for Explorers Edge as the organization matures.

The primary responsibilities of these Committees are aligned with the strategic directions of Explorers' Edge and were established in the **EE 2012-2013 Operational Plan**. The Terms of Reference and membership of each of these Committees is shown on the RTO 12 website at <http://rto12.ca/category/committees/>. Activities and accomplishments for the past year are shown in **Table 3**.

**Table 3: EE Committees and Key Activities during 2012-2013 Operational Year**  
(as of September 2012)

<b>1. Executive Committee</b>
Committee Members: Gary Froude, Don Mackay, Tony Armstrong - Weekly meetings
<b>2. Marketing Committee</b>
<b>Chair Jackie Leung;</b> Committee Members: Jamie Hopkins, Michelle Berry, Andrew Ryeland, Ken Turner, Mike Laba, Clee Varon, Kelly Haywood, Christine Utas, John Langford, Randy Mitson, Debbie Miller, Michael Lawley, Anna Marie Harris, Gord Bell, Greg Hancock, Cathy Tait, Kate Monk. - Summer & Fall marketing campaigns.
<b>3. Tourism Operator Relations Committee</b>
<b>Chair Dan Feasby;</b> Committee Members: Stephanie Delaurie, Jack Hay, Nicole Saulnier, Diane Wiber, Andy Vitch - Facilitating the PD Fund applications: 11 received; 6 approved at June 30; working on next round plus a Tourism Op engagement strategy.
<b>4. Community Relations Committee</b>
<b>Chair Don MacKay;</b> Committee Members: Nancy Ewing, Cheryl Kelley, Danielle Millar, John Finley, Marianne Braid, Michael Lawley, Anna-Marie Harris, Kelly Krist, Jane Templeton, Lisa McMurray, Lynn Middaugh, Kelly Haywood, Perry Harris, Cole Dault, Les Gayne. - Updates from the Ministry of Tourism, Muskoka Community Network (on-line mapping tool), and Investment Attraction. Meeting themes going forward: 1. Partnership Funding Update, 2. Operational Planning Format, and 3. Media Asset Presentation.
<b>5. Transacting Committee</b>
<b>Chair Jerry Feltis;</b> Committee Members: Andrew Ryeland, Anna Marie Harris, Drew Rachar, Kate Monk - Facilitation of the Fall Fuel & Fun program; wrapped up Sept with 15 – 412 bookings.
<b>6. Research, Tracking and Measurement Committee</b>
<b>Chair Diane Wiber;</b> Committee Members: Jim Murphy, Dave Stewart, Lois Barron-Ralph, Don MacKay - Park2Park trails (trail use); workshop on tourism indicators – toward development on Tourism Indicators Framework.
<b>7. Governance Committee</b>
<b>Chair Tony Armstrong;</b> Committee members: Gary Froude (Director), Michael Lawley, Lynn Middaugh - Governance workshop; board self-assessment tool; outline for Committee Model evaluation.
<b>8. Nominating Committee (ad hoc)</b>
<b>Chair Tony Armstrong</b>

## 6. The Business and Operational Plan – April 2013-March 2015

### 6.1 Goals

The goals for the *Explorers' Edge 2013-2014 Operational Plan* are aligned with the five strategic action areas established in the DDP and are a continuation of goals mapped out in last year's Operational Plan (**Table 4**).

**Table 4: 2012-2013 and 2013-2015 Operational Goals**

The 2013-2015 goals are a continuation of goals set forth in 2012-2013 and are to:

#### 1. Marketing and Promotion:

- a) Focus on developing shoulder and off-season visits to the Region through strategic marketing initiatives.
- b) Grow existing and potential market segments using technology.
- c) Strengthen on-line transaction capability (ability to sell and purchase on-line).

#### 2. Product Development and Innovation:

- a) Offer product-development workshops.
- b) Coordination/aggregation of existing tourism products and experiences throughout the Region.
- c) Create web-based routes and trails.

#### 3. Investment Attraction:

- a) Strengthen economic development links.

#### 4. Workforce Development and Training

- a) Develop an operator awards program.
- b) Conduct a comprehensive assessment of tourism workforce needs and resources (develop and deliver programs if feasible)

#### 5. Industry Communication, Liaison and Accountability:

- a) Strengthen ties with Industry.
- b) Conduct relevant consumer, market and product development research.
- c) Continue to develop and strengthen industry and organizational performance measures.

### 6.2 Priorities for 2013-2015

Priorities were set by the Board during the October 31, 2012 Operational Planning Session. These priorities are grouped by the Committee responsible and shown in **Table 5**. Priorities are shown for the year along with associated activities, timelines and estimated costs. While preliminary costs are shown in Table 5, these have been revised and are reflected in the Operating Budget in **Appendix B**.

Priorities are also included in the complete Operational Plan (2013-2015) Section 5.3 (**Table 6**).

**Table 5: EE Priorities for 2013-2015**

<b>PRIORITIES</b> (at Oct 31 2012)	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Estimated Costs</b>
<b>1. Transacting Committee</b>	<b>Highlighted Dates to be Revisited</b>	<b>PRELIMINARY Revised \$\$ in Budget (App A)</b>
<b>1. Fuel &amp; Fun</b>		\$150,000
- Committee meeting to broaden F&F package (include attractions, L.O.S., 365 days, 3-night stay; etc.	Nov 30, 2012	
<b>2. Preferred Supplier Awards</b>		\$10,000
- Committee to meet and review options	Feb 28	
<b>3. Software, online, upselling on Website</b>	March 31	\$40,000
- Investigate software for website	Date?	
- Implementation (TPA Approval)	March 30	
<b>4. Other Opportunities</b>		
- Air Miles Redemption		
- EE Coupon and/or Gift Certificate program		
<b>2. Governance Committee</b>		
<b>1. Governance Workshops</b>		\$12,000
- Board (\$4,000)	Sept-Oct	
- General workshop (include committees) (\$4,000)	April 2014	
- Onboarding (\$4,000)	June 2014	
<b>2. Destination Development Plan (\$30,000)</b>		\$30,000
- new 3 year plan, consultations	Oct-Nov	
<b>3. Committee Review</b>		
- Committee member survey(are committees effective?)	May-June	
- Analyze & discuss feedback	June	
<b>4. Nominations &amp; Board Succession (\$5,000)</b>		\$5,000
- Review of nomination process/structure	Dec	
- PSA's - AGM - create awareness		
- Recruitment & selection of new Board members	Jan 2014	
<b>5. Review of Vision and Mission</b>	ASAP	
<b>6. Review Policies and By-laws</b>	Date?	
<b>3. Tourism Operator Relations Committee</b>		
<b>1. Engage Operators</b>		
- Hire Operator Ambassador (Jan thru March)	Jan-Mar	\$20,000
- Direct Mail Campaign	Start in Jan - ongoing	\$4,000

- Operator Forum on RTO12.com	Go live 1st week Jan	\$5,000
<b>Table 5</b> (continued...)		
<b>PRIORITIES</b> (at Oct 31 2012)	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Estimated Costs</b>
<b>2. Training Seminars</b>		
- Web-based Marketing seminars; hands-on (e.g. dealing with Trip Advisor etc.) (10, up to 10 people per = 100 people trained)	Jan-Mar	\$20,000
- Customer Relations (2 seminars)	April	\$5,000
<b>3. Operator Database</b> (build structure on website, ready for data)	June	\$10,000
- Collect & enter data from known sources (labour costs)	June-Dec	\$15,000
<b>4. TDP Fund (continuation from 2012)</b>		\$50,000
<b>5. Awards</b> (Develop program for Tourism Operators; e.g. innovation, website...)	June-Jan(develop program); annual presentation	\$10,000
<b>4. Tracking &amp; Measurement Committee</b>		
- Prepare RFP.	Jan-Mar 2013	\$70,000
<b>1. Develop/decide upon a measurement tool</b>	Feb-13	
- Investigate how best to measure ROI - e.g. models such as "Club Class"		
- Look at tourism activity, growth in Region (gross revenue & margins: can these be accessed? Access "Club Class" template; obtain permission to use.		
<b>2. Collect data</b> (historical (2011 & 2012); quarterly for 2013; use a sample.		
- Data sets for Accommodation (including campgrounds), tourism retail, attractions, culinary & dining; food & Bev, Events (e.g. Cranberry Festival)		
<b>3. Analysis of Data</b>	July 2013-Mar 2014, Ongoing	
- Prepare RFP		
Budget Estimates:		
\$25,000 Measurement Tool;		
\$25-40,000 Implement, collect/analyze data, Summary report	Jan Early Feb '14	
\$2-3,000 1 day workshop for operators		

<b>Table 5</b> (continued...)		
<b>PRIORITIES</b> (at Oct 31 2012)	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Estimated Costs</b>
<b>5. Marketing Committee</b>		
<b>1. Social Media</b> (Continue presence beyond current spend; Increase mktg. budget over last year!) Note: \$\$ include #1 and #2 below)	Apr 2013 - Ongoing	\$750,000
- Target Facebook advertising & continue contesting		
- Yr. round marketing		
- grow our e-mail database & increase our user engagements & likes		
<b>2. Brand Awareness</b> (\$ included in #1)		
- Continue brand advertising and track our awareness through Cloud		
- Ongoing seasonal campaigns		
<b>3. Seasonal Campaigns</b> (\$ included in #1)		
- Provide directions to Cloud		
- get quarterly reports (analytics, ROI?)		
- Actual campaign & campaign wraps -> edgy & creative		
- Budget - same)		
<b>4. Interactive Google Map - for Fuel &amp; Fun</b>	March, 2013	\$10,000
- Interactive connectivity that is database-driven		
- Working map and list		
<b>5. Explore Niche markets</b> (e.g. Int'l., corporate)	Spring, 2013	\$10,000
- Topic for Marketing Committee (Research)		
<b>6. Develop opportunities</b> for Partnership Marketing	2013-2014	\$5,000
- Logos on advertising		
- Opportunities for revenue generation		

### 6.3 The Operational Plan 2013-2015

These priorities are included in the Business and Operational Plan for the upcoming year, provided in detail in **Table 6**. Deliverables are also noted and the plan concludes with several recommendations which may be factored into the Operational mix.

The Operational Plan is divided into three (3) sections, as follows:

**Part A: On-going Business Activities**

**Part B: Operational Plan -- April 1 2013 – March 31, 2015**

**Table 6: Explorers Edge Draft Operational Plan 2013-2014**

**Explorers' Edge Committees (Comm):** 1. EX:Executive; 2. Gov:Governance; 3. M&P:Marketing & Promotion (includes Social Media); 4. RTM: Research,Tracking &Measurement; 5. TOR:Tourism Operator Relations; 6. TRS:Transactions (On-line); 7. CR:Community Relations.

<b>PART A: ONGOING BUSINESS ACTIVITIES – 2013-15</b>						
<b>Strategic Action Area</b>	<b>Board Priority</b>	<b>Specific Activities Anticipated -- April 1 2013-Mar 31 2015</b>	<b>Responsibility &amp; Timeline</b>	<b>Deliverables</b>	<b>Budget and Resources Required</b>	<b>Monitoring &amp; Measurement Considerations</b>
<b>Ongoing Business in 2013-15</b>		Continue ongoing business activities in 2013-15				
<b>Situation Analysis</b>	Done	Revise yearly; completed for current Operational Plan	ED-end 2013	Incorporate into Operation-al Plan	Staff time	Completed situation analysis
<b>Market Assessment</b>	Branding Study complete; asset and consumer research studies complete	Continue to use and monitor brand; participate with OTMPC market research where relevant	ED; RTM Committee;	\$\$ ??; Research completed and disseminated	Staff & volunteer time	Brand usage
<b>Competitive Analysis</b>	Done	Continue to monitor competition, trends Fulfill and Communicate Performance metrics and measurables as outlined in the MTC Transfer Payment Agreement.	ED; Ongoing	Completion of progress reports as required by MTC	Human Resources	Feedback from MTC to how our reports and measurables fare in the RTO marketplace
<b>Business Description of Explorers' Edge</b>	Done	Incorporate brand, vision, mission, mandate into all programs, activities. Continue regional community outreach, presentations, public speaking etc.	ED; Ongoing	# of regional presentations & speaking engagements	Human Resources	Feedback from board members as to how other operators view the organization
<b>Strategic Directions</b>	Done - DDP (2011-2014)					
<b>Governance &amp; Administrative Plan</b>	Basically completed; ongoing	Review vision, mission, policies; by-laws, nominations and succession plan; governance workshops, committee review	Gov Comm, Board 2013	Revised mission, vision, Succession plan, nomination committee	Volunteer time	



<b>PART A: ONGOING BUSINESS ACTIVITIES – 2013-15 (cont'd)</b>						
<b>Strategic Action Area</b>	<b>Board Priority</b>	<b>Specific Activities Anticipated -- April 1 2013-Mar 31 2014</b>	<b>Responsibility &amp; Timeline</b>	<b>Deliverables</b>	<b>Budget and Resources Required</b>	<b>Monitoring &amp; Measurement Considerations</b>
<b>Governance &amp; Administrative Plan</b>		Determine future <b>membership</b> model for the organization	Board with ED; Not complete	TOR to scope the best possible membership model solution	Human Resources	Operator Membership
<b>Communications &amp; Partnership Engagement Plan</b>	Ongoing	Community Relations Committee; continued meetings	CR Comm	Partnership opportunities.	Volunteer time - Human Resources	# of future CR Comm meetings and attendance
<b>Critical Path/Work plan</b>	Completed -->	Evolves from Operational Plan; To be completed	ED; Jan 2013			
<b>Annual Budget</b>	\$1.316 million in 2012-13	\$1.322 million in 2013-14	ED and Board		Human Resources	MTC is satisfied and has signed off on the TPA
		Determine future <b>funding</b> model for Explorers' Edge	Board; Consider for 2013			Additional Organizational Income

<b>PART B: Operational Plan -- April 1 2013 – March 31, 2015</b>						
<b>Strategic Action Area</b>	<b>Board Priority</b>	<b>Specific Activities Anticipated -- April 1 2013-Mar 31 2014</b>	<b>Responsibility &amp; Timeline</b>	<b>Deliverables</b>	<b>Budget and Resources Required</b>	<b>Monitoring &amp; Measurement Considerations</b>
<b>Marketing &amp; Promotion</b>	Brand development complete; social media activities aggressively pursued and being used in campaigns; Marketing Strategy guides on-line and social media.	Utilizing the developed Brand, Marketing and Communication strategy, EE will continue all existing marketing and promotional activities; incorporate brand in all marketing programs; ongoing social media programs and leveraging current brands to change perceptions and build audiences	ED; Mkt&Promo Comm	branding and social media activities- asset inventory and mapping	Existing staff allocations; consultants (Cloud) - time of staff required;	All marketing activities are measured through analytics; ROI a priority for 2013-14
	Brand Research & Asset Study	Building on Asset inventory and development/leveraging of online mapping	ED & RTM Comm			
<b>I. Marketing and Promotion Strategy (from DDP)</b>	(H-High; M-Medium; L-Low Priority from DDP)	1. Creation of a regional identity that is supportive of sub-regional DMOs (H)	Done			
		2. Undertake region-wide market research, specific to region (M)	Now consumer and asset			
		3. Develop active web-based, social media presence (H)	Done and ongoing			
		4. Investigate desirability of central reservation system for RTO 12 businesses (M)	No - Muskoka was doing for Region - cancelled			
		5. Asset inventory & mapping key attractions and experiences (M)	Completed, ongoing (Cloud)			
		6. Photo bank of images (supporting regional identity) (L)	Done and ongoing			
		7. Develop experience-based promotional campaigns (H)	Started in Jan 2012 - Ongoing(Could)			

<b>PART B: Operational Plan -- April 1 2013 – March 31, 2015 (continued...)</b>						
<b>Strategic Action Area</b>	<b>Board Priority</b>	<b>Specific Activities Anticipated -- April 1 2013-Mar 31 2014</b>	<b>Responsibility &amp; Timeline</b>	<b>Deliverables</b>	<b>Budget and Resources Required</b>	<b>Monitoring &amp; Measurement Considerations</b>
		8. Broadcast (maybe print) marketing campaign aimed at GTA market (H)	Winter and ongoing - fall Social media with bloggers			
		9. Participate in selected travel trade promotions (M)	No			
		10. Develop educational materials informing industry of market research findings (L)	Report links on website; in newsletters			
		11. Develop attractive and consistent signage across region (H)	No, Not done			
		12. Ensure that Travel Information Centres promote RTO 12 primarily (M)	On-going			
	<b>Mkt/Promo Priority 1: Social Media</b>	Target Facebook advertising and continue contesting; Year round marketing; Grow e-mail database and increase user engagements and likes.	ED, Mkt&Promo Comm; Ongoing	User encouragement, likes	TBD	
	<b>Mkt/Promo Priority 2: Brand Awareness</b>	Continued brand advertising and track awareness through Cloud; Ongoing seasonal Campaigns	ED, Mkt&Promo Comm; Ongoing		TBD	
	<b>Mkt/Promo Priority 3: Seasonal Campaigns</b>	Provide directions to Cloud; get quarterly reports (analytics, ROI?); Actual campaign & campaign wraps --> edgy & creative	ED, Mkt&Promo Comm; Ongoing	Successful year-round campaigns (4)	TBD	
	<b>Mkt/Promo Priority 4: Interactive Google Map for Fuel &amp; Fun</b>	Interactive connectivity that is database-driven; working map and list	ED; Mkt&Promo Comm & TRS Comm; Mar 2013	Interactive Map	TBD	
	<b>Mkt/Promo Priority 5: Explore Niche Markets</b>	Research - niche markets (e.g. corporate, international)	Topic for Mkt&Promo, Spring 2013	Recommendation to Board	TBD	

<b>PART B: Operational Plan -- April 1 2013 – March 31, 2015 (continued...)</b>						
<b>Strategic Action Area</b>	<b>Board Priority</b>	<b>Specific Activities Anticipated -- April 1 2013-Mar 31 2014</b>	<b>Responsibility &amp; Timeline</b>	<b>Deliverables</b>	<b>Budget and Resources Required</b>	<b>Monitoring &amp; Measurement Considerations</b>
	<b>Mkt/Promo Priority 6: Develop Partnership Marketing Opps.</b>	Explore logos on advertising; opportunities for revenue generation.	Mkt&Promo Comm; 2013-2014		TBD	
	<b>TRS Priority 1: Fuel &amp; Fun</b>	Broaden Package to include attractions, 365 days, 3 night stays	TRS Comm; 2013		TBD	
	<b>TRS Priority 2: Preferred Supplier Awards</b>	Committee to meet, explore options (tie into TOR awards?)	TRS Comm with TOR Comm, Feb 2013		TBD	
	<b>TRS Priority 3: Software, online, upselling on Website</b>	Investigate software for website; Implementation (based on TPA approval)	TRS Comm; Mar 31 2013		TBD	
	<b>TRS Priority 4: Other Opportunities</b>	Air Miles Redemption; EE Coupon and/or Gift Certificate Program	TRS Comm; 2013			
<b>Product Development &amp; Innovation</b>		Continue product development initiatives begun in Year 2; Explore and Implement Green Eco designation; initial product development workshops; identify & begin initial product packaging strategy (trails?)		Explore 'Green Eco' program - continue product development workshops underway - first packaging plan finished	To be determined	satisfaction evaluation from program participation - packaging plan complete; industry participation evident
	<b>Board Priority 8 in 2012-13: Attraction Coordination</b>		Assets currently being researched			
		13. Encourage greater packaging of weekend (or longer events) (H)	Begun-Ongoing			
		14. Encourage mentoring throughout region / 'product development workshops' (L)	Begun-Ongoing			

<b>PART B: Operational Plan -- April 1 2013 – March 31, 2015 (continued...)</b>						
<b>Strategic Action Area</b>	<b>Board Priority</b>	<b>Specific Activities Anticipated -- April 1 2013-Mar 31 2014</b>	<b>Responsibility &amp; Timeline</b>	<b>Deliverables</b>	<b>Budget and Resources Required</b>	<b>Monitoring &amp; Measurement Considerations</b>
		15. Encourage environmentally responsible operations ('Green Eco' designation) (H)	No			
		16. Develop and promote routes and trails (e.g. culinary, art, cycling, hiking, snowmobiling) (H)	Trail to Trail partnership formed	Some form of continuous trail map		
		17. Encourage events in shoulder seasons (H)	Continued social media around shoulder events			
		18. Encourage more sports tourism (M)	No			
		19. Encourage expansion and upgrading of existing product (L)	Encouraging experience development	New experiences around the region		
		20. Promote products made in RTO 12 to markets outside the region to help create positive image. (M)	Ongoing in campaigns/			
	<b>TOR Priority 4: Tourism product development fund</b>	Continue this fund.	ED; TOR Comm; Ongoing from 2012			
	<b>TOR Priority 5: Awards</b>	21. Celebrate tourism operators who are already expanding and developing their product	TOR Comm-Awards; Put them in newsletters; March 2013 AGM			

<b>PART B: Operational Plan -- April 1 2013 – March 31, 2015 (continued...)</b>						
<b>Strategic Action Area</b>	<b>Board Priority</b>	<b>Specific Activities Anticipated -- April 1 2013-Mar 31 2014</b>	<b>Responsibility &amp; Timeline</b>	<b>Deliverables</b>	<b>Budget and Resources Required</b>	<b>Monitoring &amp; Measurement Considerations</b>
<b>Investment Attraction</b>	Continue EDO liaison activity, following developed protocol	continue to respond to investment overtures as required (working closely with economic development organizations in the RTO area)	ED, Board; Ongoing	regular contacts with between RTO and EDOs	Liaison activity to be contained within existing staff allocations	simple counts of frequency and contact agencies
		22. Liaise closely with existing economic development agencies. (H)	Started and ongoing			
		23. Continue to improve broadband access throughout region. (M)	No			
		24. Advocate for improved transportation structure throughout region. (H)	Written letters			
		25. Optimize use of northern Ontario incentive grant / loan program. (H)	ED; Begun: applied to FedNor internship			
		26. Examine ways & means to streamline the regulatory process for tourism development. (L)	good relationship with province, TIAC			
<b>Workforce Development &amp; Training</b>	<b>TOR Priority 2: Training Seminars</b>	a) Web-based Marketing Seminars; hands on	10 seminars; 2013-14			
		b) Customer Relations	2 Seminars; April 2013			

PART B: Operational Plan -- April 1 2013 – March 31, 2015 (continued...)						
Strategic Action Area	Board Priority	Specific Activities Anticipated -- April 1 2013-Mar 31 2014	Responsibility & Timeline	Deliverables	Budget and Resources Required	Monitoring & Measurement Considerations
	<b>Board Priority 7 in 2012-13: Operator Training</b>	certification process' for front line staff: aim to develop and pilot test this system in Year 3, aiming at rolling it out				
		investigate workforce training and development initiative aimed at creating on-line 'industry knowledge certification process' for front line staff: aim to develop and pilot test this system in Year 3, aiming at rolling it out to all front line employees in Year 4				
		27. Develop workforce training program for (primarily) summer students in industry to ensure common base of knowledge. (L)	No; workforce development board of Muskoka-being worked on.			
		28. Hold workshops in cultural sensitivity training. (M)	Yes, Tourism Product Development Fund			
		29. Develop appreciation / awards program to incent workers in industry. (L)	Slated for 2012 AGM - new tourism operator relations position to develop			
		30. Promote availability and desirability of careers in tourism industry throughout RTO 12. (M)	ED presentations to Universities & Colleges - Ongoing			
		31. Develop internship program. (M)	ED; has begun	Hired intern		

<b>PART B: Operational Plan -- April 1 2013 – March 31, 2015 (continued...)</b>						
<b>Strategic Action Area</b>	<b>Board Priority</b>	<b>Specific Activities Anticipated -- April 1 2013-Mar 31 2014</b>	<b>Responsibility &amp; Timeline</b>	<b>Deliverables</b>	<b>Budget and Resources Required</b>	<b>Monitoring &amp; Measurement Considerations</b>
<b>Industry Communication, Liaison and Accountability</b>	<b>Tracking/Measurement Priority 1: Develop Measurement Tool (ROI)</b>	Explore models, prepare RFP; collect and analyze data; detailed accountability system using performance measurement metrics specifically tailored to RTO 12	RMT Comm, ED; July 2013-Mar 2014, Ongoing	Benchmark for tracking impact of EE marketing programs		
	Continue industry communications vehicle decided upon; development of detailed performance management system	Continue all industry liaison activities begun in Years 2 & 3	ED, staff, Board	Regular communications with industry	Possibly print / distribution costs (to be determined)	Counts of numbers reached - member satisfaction or invited feedback (on first efforts)
		32. Performance management and accountability. (H)	Started; some measures defined			
		33. Communications with industry throughout RTO 12. (H)	Ongoing	EE newsletter; presentations		
	<b>TOR Priority 1: Engage Operators</b>	Hire operator Ambassador; direct mail campaign, operator forum on RTO12.com	Jan 2013 - Ongoing			
	<b>TOR Priority 3: Operator Database</b>	Build structure on website; ready for data	Jun-13			



<b>PART B: Operational Plan -- April 1 2013 – March 31, 2015 (continued...)</b>						
<b>Strategic Action Area</b>	<b>Board Priority</b>	<b>Specific Activities Anticipated -- April 1 2013-Mar 31 2014</b>	<b>Responsibility &amp; Timeline</b>	<b>Deliverables</b>	<b>Budget and Resources Required</b>	<b>Monitoring &amp; Measurement Considerations</b>
		34. Liaison with other RTOs (joint marketing; joint product development, etc.) (H)	RTOs talk once a month (RTO7, RTO13, Highlands);	Talk to three border properties once a month; also defining themselves; joint programs in long run		
		35. Advocacy: representing members concerns to province and other levels of government	Define member concerns; presentations to government -- ongoing.			
<b>Governance</b>	<b>Gov Priority 1: Governance Workshops</b>	Board, General Workshop (include committees), Onboarding workshop	Gov Comm; Sept 2013-June 2014	Three workshops	TBA	
	<b>Gov Priority 2: Destination Development Plan</b>	Develop	Gov Comm; Oct-Nov 2013	New DDP to guide EE	\$30,000	
	<b>Gov Priority 3: Committee Review</b>	Committee Survey; feedback	Gov Comm; May-June 2013	Committee Review	TBA	
	<b>Gov Priority 4: Nominations &amp; Board Succession</b>	Review of nomination process/structure	Gov Comm; Dec 2012 - ASAP	Nominations to Board	Volunteer time	
	<b>Gov Priority 5: Review Vision, Mission</b>	Committee Review & Recommendations to Board	Gov Comm; ASAP	Revised Vision, Mission	Volunteer time	
	<b>Gov Priority 6: Review Policies, Bylaws</b>	Committee Review & Recommendations to Board	Gov Comm; 2013	Revised Policies, Bylaws	Volunteer time	

## 7. Going Forward – Recommendations for 2013-2015

In addition to the priorities and actions identified by the Board and Communications Committee, there are several operational recommendations for moving forward:

1. **Board:** Revisit goal of “doubling revenues” based on information provided in Figure 1.
2. **Governance Committee: Vision, Mission, Mandate:** Refine and finalize these guiding statements for Explorers Edge during the upcoming year.
3. **Planning:** Consider the need to develop a three-year Plan in Fall 2013 to guide the next phase of Explorers' Edge.
4. **Marketing and Promotion:** Establish “pay-to-play” activities for all future campaigns to permit opportunities for operator involvement.
5. **Product Development:** Continue the Product Development Fund. Also consider one of Explorers' Edge's key roles as serving as an “aggregator” for events (i.e. gathering information from other organizations to push out to EE audiences through social media channels), workforce skill development and equipment that might be used by others across the Region.
6. **Workforce Development:** Continue with workshops that expand operator capacity. Provide a list of these workshops in future reports.

## 8. References Consulted in Developing the 2013-2015 Operational Plan

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*EE Executive Summary Year 2 – TPA June 1, 2012*

*FCA Analytics, August 2012.*

*EE Executive Director Update – June 2012.*

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TNS (2011). *Tourism Research 5 Year Synopsis: RTO 12.*

*Year 2 – TPA Final Report, June 1, 2012*

## Appendix A: 2012-2013 Board of Directors and Staff

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Don MacKay, Secretary and Treasurer

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## Appendix B: 2013 – 2015 Draft EE Operational Budget

	Year Ending March 31 2013 Projected	Fiscal Year Ending 2014 Budget	Fiscal Year Ending 2015 Budget
<b>REVENUE</b>			
Ministry of Tourism (Base & Proportional)	1,316,000.00	1,332,000.00	1,332,000.00
Ministry of Tourism (Partnership)		166,000.00	166,000.00
Partnership Revenue		166,000.00	166,000.00
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>1,316,000.00</b>	<b>1,664,000.00</b>	<b>1,664,000.00</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>			
Salaries and Benefits	184,000.00	255,000.00	255,000.00
Finance and Administration	10,000.00	10,000.00	10,000.00
General Administration	42,000.00	45,000.00	45,000.00
Travel and General Expenses	41,000.00	43,000.00	43,000.00
Other Administration	4,500.00	4,500.00	4,500.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>281,500.00</b>	<b>357,500.00</b>	<b>357,500.00</b>
<b>Governance – Industry Relations</b>			
Outreach/Meetings	15,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00
Tourism Industry Relations	8,000.00	38,000.00	38,000.00
Website/Membership	30,000.00	26,000.00	26,000.00
<b>Marketing &amp; Promotion</b>			
Consumer Marketing & Social Media	658,000.00	598,500.00	598,500.00
Google Adword Campaign	55,500.00		
Photo/Image Bank	60,000.00	12,000.00	12,000.00
On-line Reservation System	18,000.00		
Transacting	50,000.00	150,000.00	150,000.00
<b>Investment Attraction</b>			
Outreach/Meetings		5,000.00	5,000.00
<b>Product Development and Innovation</b>			
Product Development Fund	100,000.00	50,000.00	50,000.00
Research	40,000.00	70,000.00	70,000.00
<b>Workforce Development</b>			
Workforce Training		20,000.00	20,000.00
<b>Partnership</b>			
Partnership Activities		332,000.00	332,000.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>941,500.00</b>	<b>1,306,500.00</b>	<b>1,306,500.00</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>1,316,000.00</b>	<b>1,664,000.00</b>	<b>1,664,000.00</b>
<b>NET INCOME</b>	0	0	0