



Carolyn O'Donnell Consulting

Community Tourism &
Economic Development Strategies

PARRY SOUND AREA TOURISM SUMMIT

Tourism Activities Analysis and Recommendations

February 2016



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Acknowledgements

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- Township of The Archipelago
- Carling Township
- Township of McDougall
- Township of McKellar
- Town of Parry Sound
- Seguin Township
- Regional Tourism Organization 12 (Explorers' Edge)

Thank you to the following tourism stakeholder organizations who took time to provide detailed information on their tourism activities and participate in the Tourism Summit:

- Georgian Bay Biosphere Reserve
- Parry Sound Area Chamber of Commerce
- Parry Sound Downtown Business Association
- Parry Sound Tourism
- Festival of the Sound
- Playland Special Events & Marketing
- Tower Hill Heritage Gardens

In addition, 37 tourism businesses took time to complete a detailed on-line survey. Due to the anonymity of the survey participants' names are not being provided. Several also attended the Tourism Summit on December 15, 2015. Thank you for sharing your ideas and input in this important exercise.

Executive Summary

In October 2015, Regional Tourism Organization 12 (Explorers' Edge) in partnership with the Town of Parry Sound, Carling Township, the Township of McDougall, Seguin Township, the Township of McKellar and the Township of The Archipelago embarked on an exercise to gain an understanding of the current roles of various tourism stakeholder organizations in the Parry Sound Area and clarify the best future direction. Carolyn O'Donnell Consulting was retained to work with information gathered from Parry Sound Area Tourism Industry Stakeholders and Tourism Operators to present a draft report, facilitate a half day discussion with stakeholders followed by a final report based on discussion outcomes.

The goals of the exercise were to:

- Identify potential service gaps;
- Identify potential service overlaps;
- Align tourism stakeholder priorities; and
- Improve collaboration and coordination of tourism programs and services.

The background work to complete this exercise included reviewing and compiling the results from a Tourism Stakeholder Questionnaire (13 participating organizations) as well as the Tourism Operator Survey (37 completed surveys).



Tourism Stakeholders were evaluated based on their level of engagement as well as human and financial resources in 8 key areas. Based on that evaluation each area was designated as either in-sync, having overlapping activities, needing engagement/coordination or needing overall improvement. The chart below shows a snapshot of the findings.

	In Sync	Overlap	Needs Enhancement/ Coordination	Opportunity to Improve
Investment Attraction				O
Training and Development				O
Product/Experience Development			N	
Visitor Services and Signage			N	O
Community Engagement				O
Marketing			N	O
Motor coach, Sports Tourism and Meetings/Conferences				O
Research and Planning				O

In summary Tourism Stakeholder input showed that:

- There are opportunities to improve in each of the 8 strategic areas of tourism focus;
- There are missed opportunities to leverage regional initiatives without local coordination efforts in place;
- There does not appear to be a logical existing lead organization within the Parry Sound Area;
- No one agency has the mandate or resources to fulfill the current gaps/opportunity; and
- There is an appetite to collaborate.

The engagement of tourism operators in this exercise was a positive sign with 37 taking time to complete the survey. It is clear that tourism operators are frustrated with the lack of local/regional tourism activities.

Tourism operators feel that the following activities are critical to the success of the area's tourism industry:

1. Leadership and Coordination
2. Financial Resources
3. Partnership Development and Packaging
4. Marketing
5. Brand Development
6. Signage and Visitor Services
7. Improved Products and Experiences

63% of the respondents would like to see a new DMO established in order to accomplish tourism goals. In summary the Tourism Operator survey emphasized:

- Tourism operators want assistance locally with grass roots product and experience development;
- Tourism operators want to work with other owner/operators to create synergies, partnerships and packages but they need help facilitating this;
- Tourism operators have an appetite to work with a local DMO; and
- Tourism operators are seeking local coordination and want the entire area to work together as one.

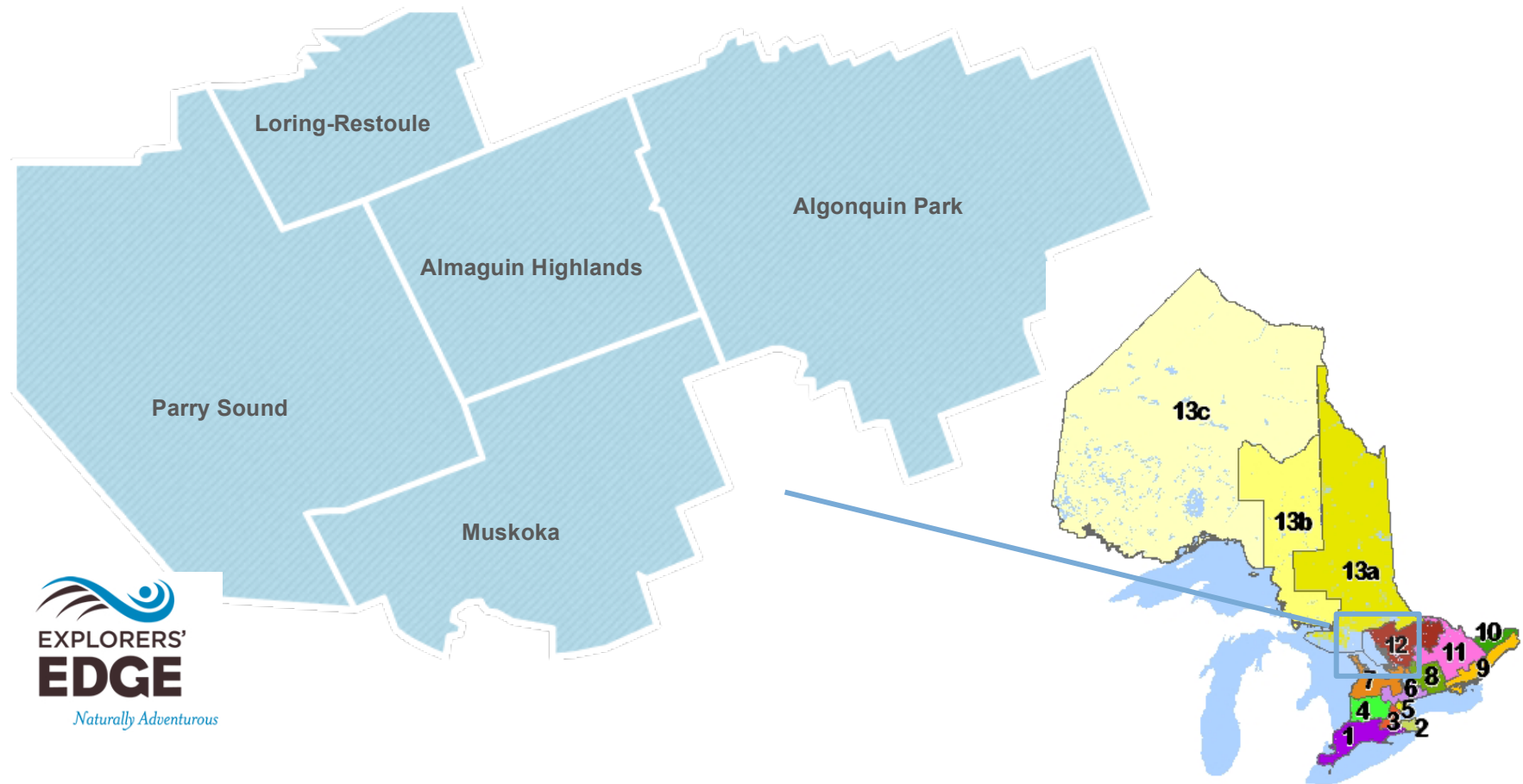
In order to achieve the goals of the exercise there are 7 key recommendations. These recommendations are a compilation of the information gathered in the Tourism Stakeholder Questionnaire, the Tourism Operator Survey and the ideas brought forward at the Tourism Marketing Summit on December 15, 2015.

1. Develop a Tourism Destination Management Plan
2. Create a culture of tourism industry collaboration
3. Provide tourism industry owner-operators with training to enhance their product/experience offerings
4. Establish a focused marketing plan for the Parry Sound Area
5. Provide visitor services
6. Designate a leader
7. Secure 3 years of funding for destination marketing and development activities

Parry Sound Area's Location Within A Regional Tourism Organization

Regional Tourism Area 12

From a tourism industry perspective the Parry Sound Area sits within Regional Tourism Organization 12 as designated by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport. This area encompasses the 5 sub-regions of Parry Sound, Muskoka, Loring-Restoule, Almaguin Highlands and Algonquin Park as shown below.



Regional Tourism Organization 12, known by consumers as Explorers' Edge is governed by a 15-member Board of Directors representing each of the five sub-regions. The organization receives funding from the province annually to support tourism initiatives that are intended to create a stronger, more competitive tourism industry (\$1,664,000 of funding in 2015).

The Explorers' Edge 2014-2017 Destination Development states the following key areas of regional focus:

1. Marketing and Promotion Strategy,
2. Product Development and Innovation Strategy,
3. Investment Attraction Strategy,
4. Workforce Development and Training Strategy, and
5. Industry Communication, Liaison and Accountability Strategy.

In order to be successful in each of the key areas of focus Explorers' Edge works closely with the sub regional destination management/marketing organizations (DMOs) and when applicable directly with tourism operators. Tourism destination management/marketing looks different in each of the 5 sub regions given that not all areas have a fully operational DMO. Recently Almaguin Highlands formed a Chamber of Commerce that encompasses the communities within the Almaguin Highlands sub-region as well as Loring-Restoule. In 2015 they launched a website and visitor guide with the assistance of Explorers' Edge. Muskoka has the support of an upper tier district government (District of Muskoka) who provides some funding support to Muskoka Tourism, a member based tourism marketing agency that has been in effect since 1935 (originally the Muskoka Tourist Association). Algonquin Park is an Ontario Provincial Park operated by the province.

The Parry Sound Area does not have an upper tier regional or district level of government. Up until 2012 Georgian Bay Country was a local DMO that promoted the Parry Sound Area with the support of the municipalities and FEDNOR who provided some annual funding. In 2012 this organization closed and the area has not had formal sub-regional tourism coordination since.

In 2006, 5 municipalities (The Town of Parry Sound, Township of Carling, Seguin Township, Municipality of McDougall and the Township of McKellar) came together to create the Regional Economic Development Advisory Committee (REDAC). The committee was created to assist in the realization of the Parry Sound Area Development Community's vision to be a progressive

and diverse economic center¹. REDAC facilitates initiatives aimed to support, stimulate and enhance economic growth and development while ensuring the protection of the natural, social and visual environments. Current project focuses include SMART communities, Regional Marketing Plan and the Tourism Summit.

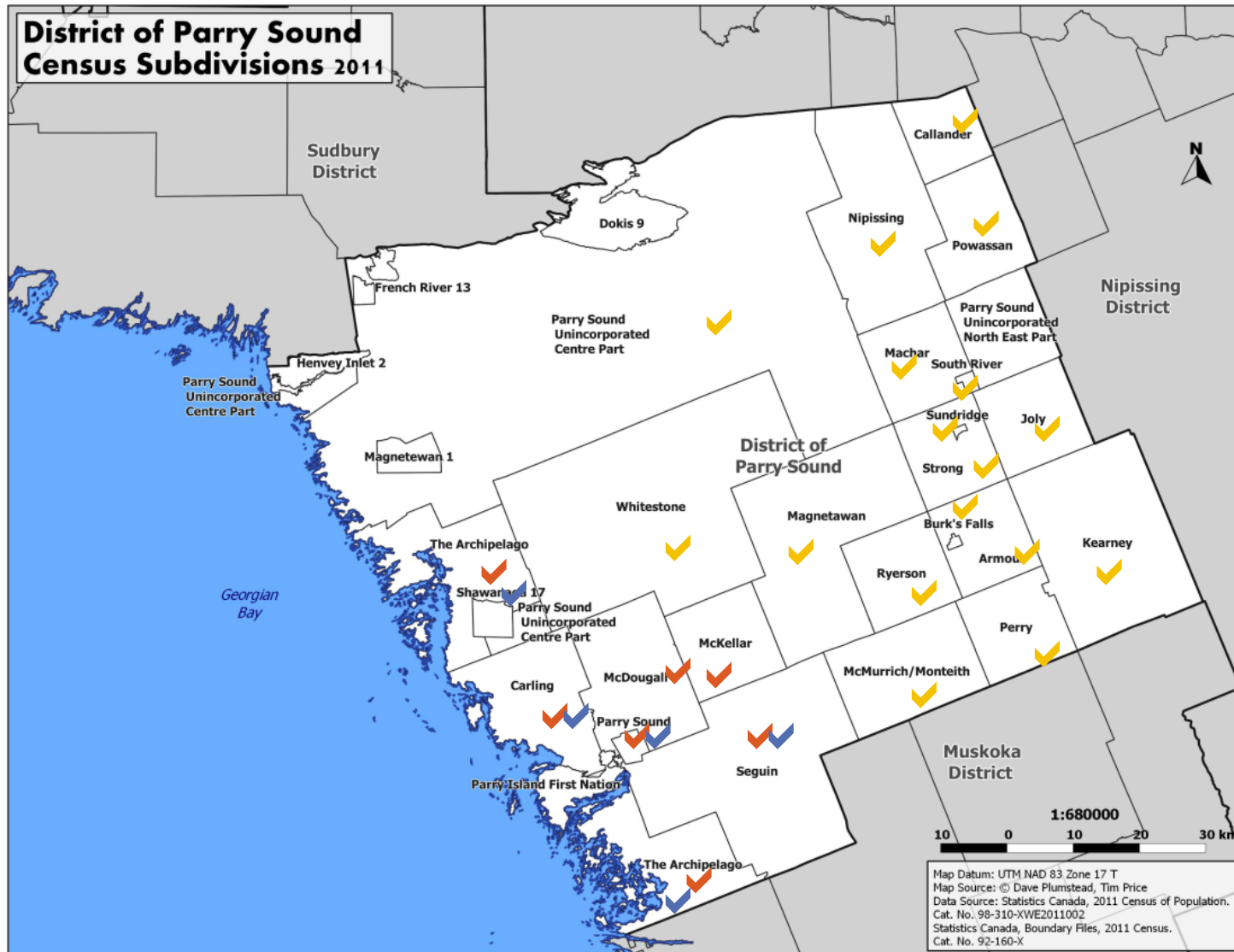
The map on the following page shows the communities in the District of Parry Sound Census Division and those that are working together in the Parry Sound Area on economic development and tourism initiatives. It also shows the communities that reside within the District of Parry Sound Census Division who have come together to work under the Almaguin Highland Chamber of Commerce.

¹ The Regional Economic Development Advisory Committee (REDAC). Available: <http://www.cityfree.ca/pagesmith/5> (Dec 2015)

Members of REDAC ✓

Partner in Tourism Summit Project ✓

Communities of Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce ✓



Tourism in Parry Sound At-a-Glance

Why Tourism Matters?

The tourism industry plays a significant role in the economic health and subsequent quality of life of the Parry Sound Area and its residents. In the most basic sense tourism means attracting visitors who spend their dollars from outside the area at the local businesses. Many businesses are those considered to be core tourism establishments such as hotels, resorts, campgrounds, attractions, and arts and cultural facilities, however other businesses such as retailers, restaurants, grocery stores and others in the area rely on visitor spending to supplement local spending in order to remain profitable. The tourism dollars spent help to ensure the vibrancy of the local downtown and the cultural facilities.

A larger proportion of Parry Sound residents are employed in the tourism sector compared to the figures for Ontario as a whole². The Labour Market Group reported that in 2006 Parry Sound had a total of 1,870 tourism jobs (15.3% of all jobs in the area).

In 2012 there were 1,087,201 visits to the District of Parry Sound, of which 69% stayed overnight. Those visitors spent \$132,736,930 (87% from overnight visits). The average per person spend for each overnight visitor was \$154.



² The Labour Market Group, *The Tourism Industry and Tourism Workforce in Parry Sound*, October 2012.

Review of Parry Sound Area's Tourism Programs and Services

Tourism Stakeholder Groups- Tourism Activities Analysis

In order to gather a robust understanding of tourism programs and services the background research for this initiative included gathering and understanding the current and future roles related to tourism of each of the 12 stakeholder organizations listed below.

Regional Tourism Organization	Municipalities	Non-profit Organizations	Private Organizations
•Explorer's Edge	•Seguin Township •Municipality of McDougall •The Town of Parry Sound •Township of The Archipelago •The Township of Carling •Township of McKellar	•Parry Sound Area Chamber of Commerce •Georgian Bay Biosphere •Parry Sound DBA •Festival of the Sound	•Parry Sound Tourism

Tourism Activities Analysis Methodology

Each of the 12 stakeholder organizations completed a thorough questionnaire that asked them to report on their organization's activities in 8 key areas that are critical to managing a successful and sustainable tourism destination. A copy of the questionnaire is included in Appendix A.

The 8 key areas of focus include:

- Investment Attraction
- Training and Development
- Product/Experience Development
- Visitor Services and Signage
- Marketing
- Community Engagement
- Motor coach, Sports Tourism and Meetings/Conferences
- Research and Planning

A review of the current and future tourism programs and services was intended to identify potential service gaps as well as overlaps. The categories used for evaluation as illustrated below allow for a clear understanding of what is happening and where there are opportunities for change.

In Sync	Overlap	Needs Enhancement/ Coordination	Opportunity to Improve
An ideal scenario where activities are in place that promote a healthy and sustainable tourism industry.	Area where several agencies are working in silos. A lack of coordination creates unnecessary redundancies and wasted resources. Can be confusing for tourism operators and consumers.	Activities where some organizations are playing a role but a coordinated effort and region wide approach would be beneficial.	There is a lack of attention on any scale in this area. Opportunities for regional collaboration should be explored.

Investment Attraction

What is Investment Attraction?

Investment Attraction typically involves the creation of a strategy that is rooted in an overall economic development strategy. As specifically related to tourism this would include an analysis and assessment of community assets (infrastructure, business gaps and opportunities). The purpose of the investment attraction strategy is to develop a well-conceived strategic plan for attracting business and investment, based on a clear set of goals and objectives that can be achieved by implementing carefully thought out strategies and tactics.³

What is Happening Now?

There are stakeholder organizations involved in economic development activities related to investment attraction. Seguin Township, McDougall Township and the Town of Parry Sound are engaged in some activities although overall these tend to be reactive rather than proactive especially as related to the tourism sector. The Georgian Bay Biosphere partners with other Biosphere Reserves in the provinces to great new tourism products and identify infrastructure needs under the umbrella of Amazing Places. Overall the activity level in this area is quite low and any current activities are happening in silos. This is an area that has an **Opportunity to Improve** through regional collaboration.

	In Sync	Overlap	Needs Enhancement/ Coordination	Opportunity to Improve
Investment Attraction				
Identify what new developments are needed				O
Identify what infrastructure is required				O
Develop strategies to secure investment				O
Host foreign direct investment tours				O

³ The Government of British Columbia, *Preparing an Investment Strategy* Available: <http://www.jtst.gov.bc.ca/businessattractiontoolkit/section2/tool2-4.html> (Dec 2015)

Training and Development

What Is Training and Development?

As with any industry, owner operators in the tourism industry need a wide range of knowledge and skills to both start and operate a successful business. Not only do they need generic business knowledge in such areas as marketing, financial management and planning, they also need specific tourism industry learning opportunities. Customer Service and general hospitality training is important not only for tourism business owner operators but also front-line employees who serve visitors.

What is Happening Now?

There are municipalities in the Parry Sound Area that provide internal customer service training for their staff as well as the Parry Sound Chamber of Commerce that provides some business training/workshop opportunities. Overall the activity level in this area is quite low and any current activities are happening adhoc. This is an area that has an **Opportunity to Improve** through regional collaboration.

	In Sync	Overlap	Needs Enhancement/Coordination	Opportunity to Improve
Training and Development				
Customer Service, Hospitality Training				○
Tourism Industry business development				○

Product/Experience Development

What is Product/Experience Development?

Travel is not just about where you've been anymore – it's about what you did while you were there, how it made you feel, the people you met while you were there, and the memories you took home. A product is what you buy; an experience is what you remember. ⁴

Product/Experience Development is a key area of focus for many of Canada's leading destinations and has been adapted by several provincial tourism agencies. Tourism Nova Scotia's Experience Development Toolkit ⁵ describes Experience Development as a process that requires rethinking the traditional approach to tourism so visitors can be offered more experience opportunities, not just products.

The global tourism market is very competitive. Visitors have their own perspectives, values, and expectations that influence their reaction to a product. They use those perspectives and values to select the product, and have expectations of what it is going to be like. The challenge is to find a way to offer an experience that speaks to those values and unique perspectives, and fulfills or exceeds the expectations of visitors.

What is Happening Now?

Several stakeholder organizations are involved in product/experience development initiatives in a variety of ways:

- Biking Product Development
- Triathlon
- Trails network
- Amazing Places network (Georgian Bay Biosphere)

With this type of work already started there is a jumping off point where coordination and enhancement of these activities would benefit the entire area. Those product development initiatives that are already underway can become leaders and best practice examples that others in the industry can be inspired by and learn from.

⁴ Tourism Nova Scotia, *Visitor Experience Development*. Available: <https://tourismns.ca/visitor-experience-development> (Dec 2015)

⁵ Tourism Nova Scotia, *Experience Toolkit*. Available <https://tourismns.ca/sites/default/files/2011-experience-ns-toolkit.pdf> (Dec 2015)

This is an area that **Needs Enhancement** through regional coordination of efforts.

	In Sync	Overlap	Needs Enhancement/ Coordination	Opportunity to Improve
Product/Experience Development				
Identify new products/experiences that will attract new visitors			E	
Engage tourism businesses in training to enhance their offerings			E	
Host festivals or events with the purpose of attracting visitors			E	
Create collaborations amongst local stakeholders			E	
Partner with neighbouring communities			E	
Create and promote itineraries and packages				O

Visitor Services and Signage

What Does Visitor Services and Signage Involve?

Visitor services plays role in each of the phases of a visitor's experience including:

- Trip planning tools (on-line, print publications, in-person contact and follow up)
- Visitor information centre/kiosk in the community and wayfinding
- Post trip customer service/follow up, memory sharing and relationship building

What is Happening Now?

The Town of Parry Sound at the Downtown Business Association provides an unattended information kiosk on the corner of Gibson/Bowes streets. The Chamber of Commerce has just recently passed a resolution that they will no longer provide information centre services. Several stakeholder organizations provide responses to visitors' phone calls and emails as well as publishing brochures and maps to assist visitors. Overall this is an area that **Needs Enhancement** through regional coordination of efforts. In terms of a physical Visitor Information Centre there is an **Opportunity to Improve** by providing some basic services in a high traffic area.

	In Sync	Overlap	Needs Enhancement/ Coordination	Opportunity to Improve
Visitor Services and Signage				
Operate a physical VIC				O
Answer phone and email inquires			E	
Provide brochures/maps			E	
Identify what tourism signs are needed			E	
Signage strategy, funding			E	
Policy and bylaw development, implementation, applications				O

Marketing

What is included in the marketing category?

Marketing includes the activities of stakeholder organizations in promoting and selling tourism products/experiences or services, including market research and advertising. This is above and beyond marketing done by individual businesses.

What is Happening Now?

Financial and human resources for tourism marketing at the municipalities tends to be quite very low. Most provide basic information on municipal websites and some engage in social media activities, as does the Georgian Bay Biosphere. The Parry Sound Downtown Business Association and the Parry Sound Area Chamber of Commerce do activity promote tourism through their websites, social media and print. REDAC is currently working with a consultant, to develop a Regional Marketing Plan which includes tourism.

As related to marketing tactics this is an area that **Needs Enhancement** through regional coordination of efforts. In terms of market research and strategy development there is an **Opportunity to Improve** through regional collaboration.

	In Sync	Overlap	Needs Enhancement/ Coordination	Opportunity to Improve
Marketing				
Attracting media, coordinating media FAMs, writing press releases			E	
Identifying the needs of new and existing markets				O
Host and update content on tourism website				O
Social media related to tourism activities			E	
Production of publications, maps, brochures			E	
Advertising				O

Trade Shows				○
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Community Engagement

What is Community Engagement?

Community engagement can raise the profile and understanding of the importance of tourism in a community. Programs such as ambassador training can increase tourism by turning every visitor encounter into a positive experience. Residents who are well informed can raise the level of engagement and personal pride in the role they play within their tourism community. Tourism awards, speaking engagements and presentations can ensure that tourism activities are well known and that government decision-makers are up to date with happenings and the significant role the industry plays in the local economy.

What is Happening Now?

Overall tourism community engagement is not happening in the Parry Sound Area. This is an area where there is an **Opportunity to Improve** through regional collaboration.

	In Sync	Overlap	Needs Enhancement/ Coordination	Opportunity to Improve
Community Engagement				
Speaking Engagements				○
Tourism awards				○
Council presentations				○
Tourism ambassador and local hosts activity				○

Motor coach, Sports Tourism and Meetings & Conferences

What does this category included?

Motor coach, Sports Tourism and Meetings and Conferences are sub-sectors of the tourism industry that typically require dedicated focus in order to create proactive opportunities in the community. Not all communities are in a position given their tourism infrastructure to be heavily involved in all or any of these activities.

What is Happening Now?

Overall motor coach, sports tourism and meetings/convention activities are not happening in the Parry Sound Area other than adhoc and reactive. This is an area where there is an **Opportunity to Improve** through regional collaboration although this is typically an area that would be looked at mid-to long term if there are other areas that require attention first. Infrastructure can be limiting in some of these areas and would need to be assessed.

	In Sync	Overlap	Needs Enhancement/Coordination	Opportunity to Improve
Motor coach, Sports Tourism and Meetings & Conferences				
Develop itineraries, attend marketplaces				○
Liaise with Motor coach companies, FAM tours				○
Proactive sales activity/bids				○
Sports Tourism: Hosting services				○
Conferences: Actively pursue events, coordinate RFP				○

Research and Planning

What activity does this category included?

The role of tourism research and planning can include:

- Planning and management;
- Budgeting and funding strategies;
- Social, environmental and economic impacts;
- Motivations, needs, expectations and levels of satisfaction of visitors;
- Business information/data; and
- Information/data for comparative studies.

What is Happening Now?

Overall tourism research and planning activities are not happening in the Parry Sound Area. This is an area where there is an **Opportunity to Improve** through regional collaboration.

	In Sync	Overlap	Needs Enhancement/Coordination	Opportunity to Improve
Research and Planning				
Develop and implement exit surveys				○
Conduct on-line research and analysis				○
Develop mid to long term strategic tourism plans				○
Keep up-to-date on government (all levels); two-way				○
Write grant applications related to tourism activities				○

Tourism Stakeholder Groups- Tourism Activities Observations Summary

Based on the input provided by the 12 stakeholder organization the following observations have been made:

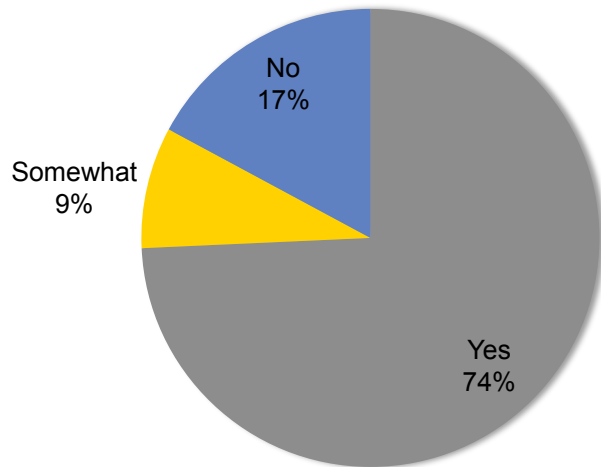
1. There are opportunities to improve in each of the 8 strategic areas of tourism focus
2. There are missed opportunities to leverage regional initiatives without the local coordination in place
3. There does not appear to be a logical lead within the Parry Sound Area
4. No one agency has the mandate or resources to fulfill the current gaps/opportunity
5. There is an appetite to collaborate

Tourism Operator Survey Results

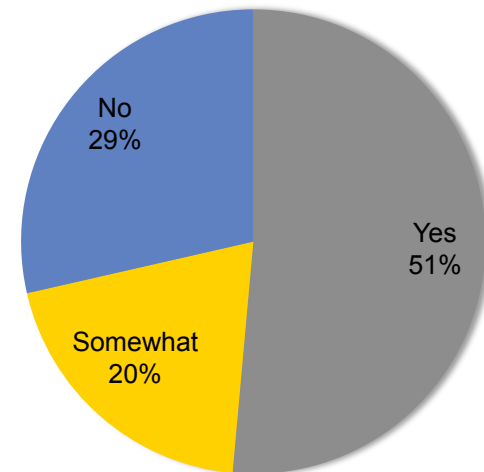
Tourism operators were asked to participate in the exercise by completing an on-line survey. A copy of the survey is included in Appendix B. A link was sent to 72 tourism businesses in the Parry Sound Area and 37 responded. The information to follow has been compiled from the survey data collected from October to December 2015.

Tourism Operator Current Marketing Activities

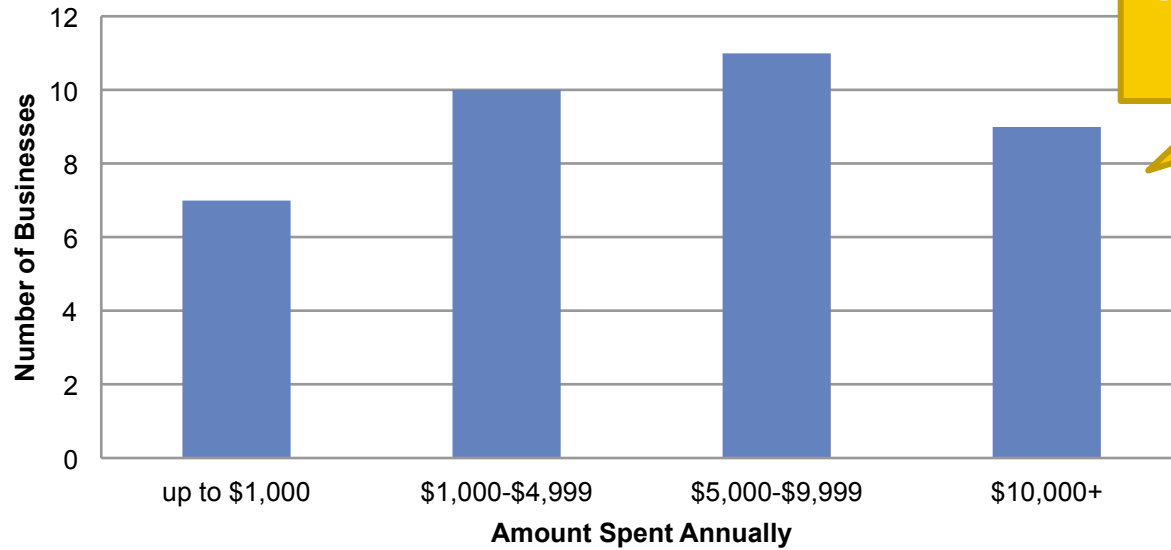
Does Your Business Have a Marketing Plan?



Are you happy with your marketing efforts?



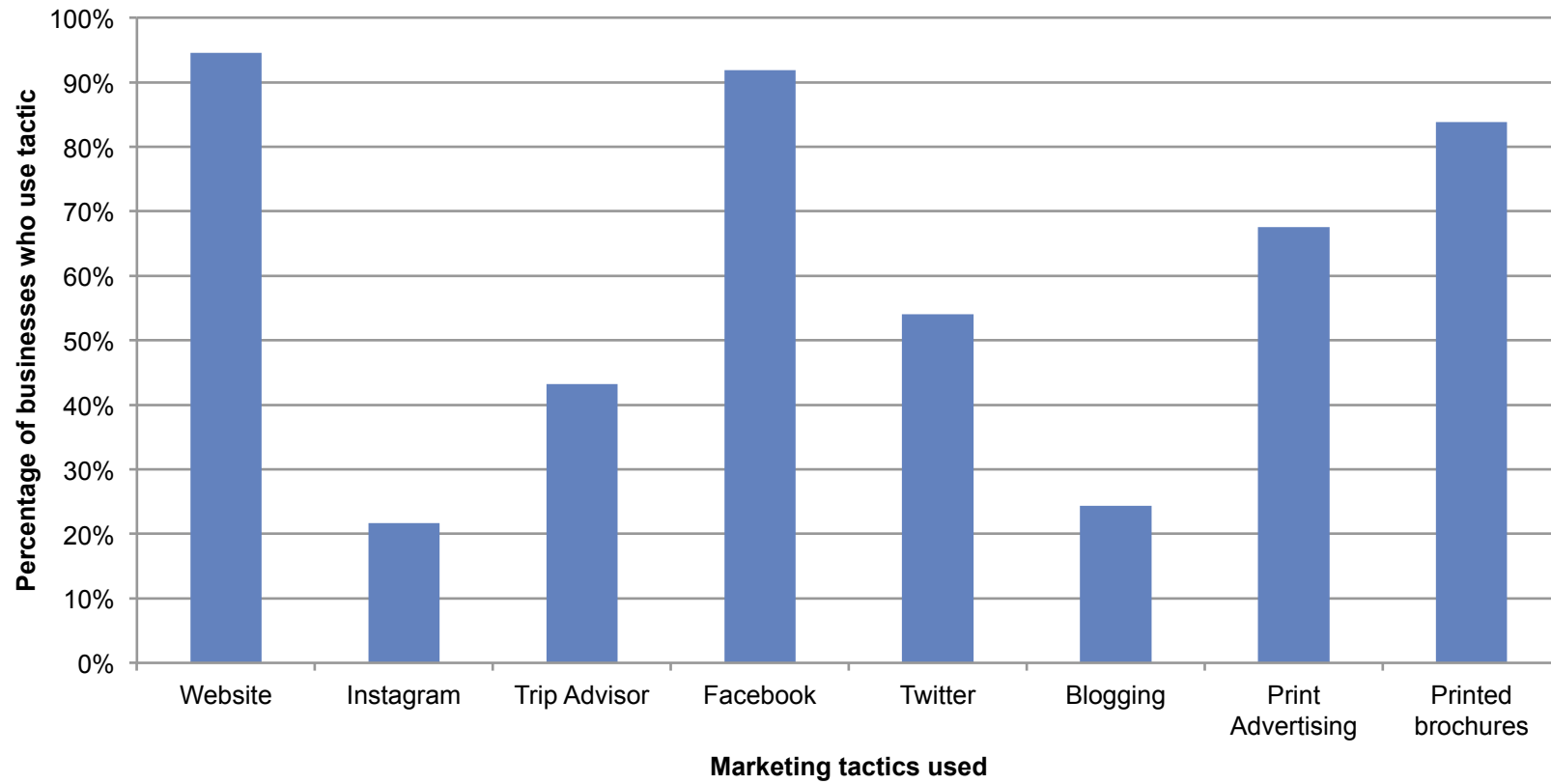
How much do you spend annually on marketing?



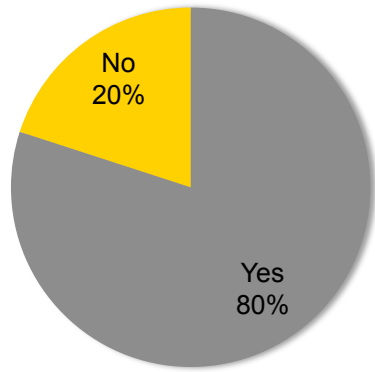
Collectively 37 businesses spend over \$220,000 annually



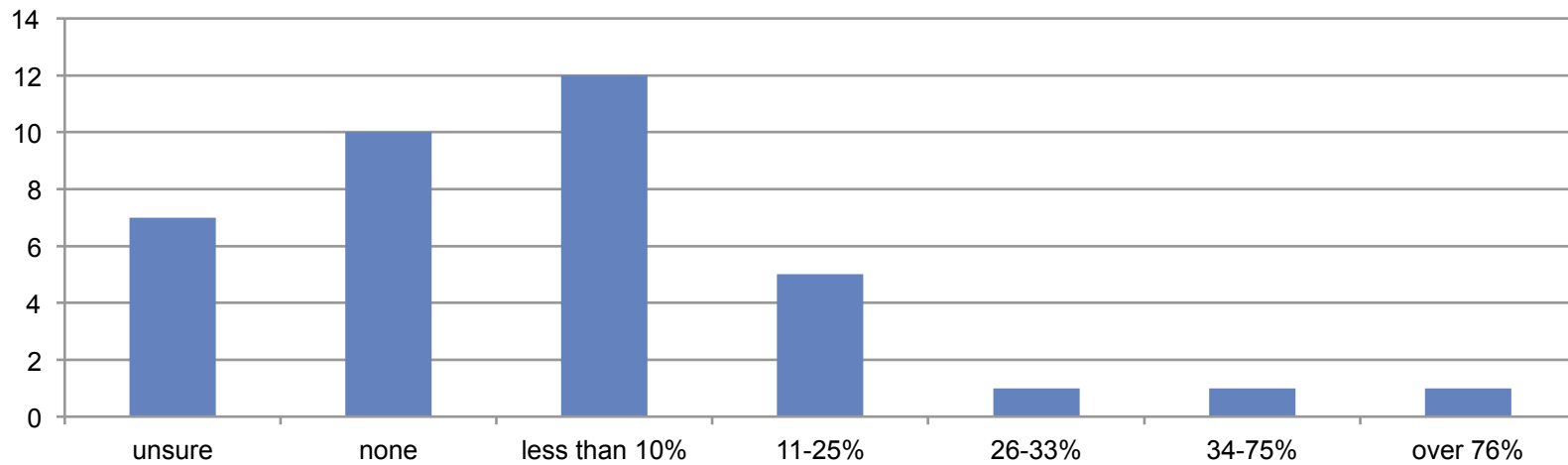
What marketing tactics do you use?



Do you work with local agencies to promote your business?



How much of your current marketing budget do you spend partnering with local/regional marketing organizations?

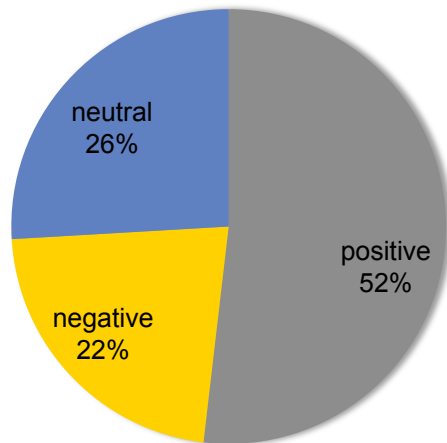


Tourism Stakeholders Views on Current Tourism Activities

Appendix C provides the detailed candid comments expressed by the tourism operators who responded to these open-ended questions

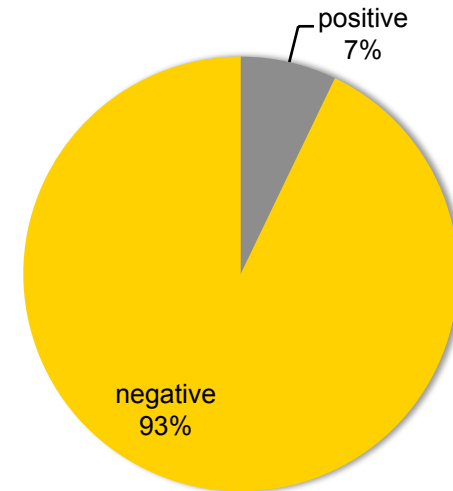
What is your experience of working with local /regional agencies to promote tourism? Have they helped?

Generally, tourism operators feel positive about their experience in working with local/regional agencies.



How would you describe the current tourism marketing landscape for this region (Parry Sound & Area)?

Tourism operators are frustrated with the current situation. They feel strongly that a collaborative effort for the entire region is needed and that the municipalities need to support a long-term plan for tourism.



What Tourism Stakeholders Would Like to See Happen

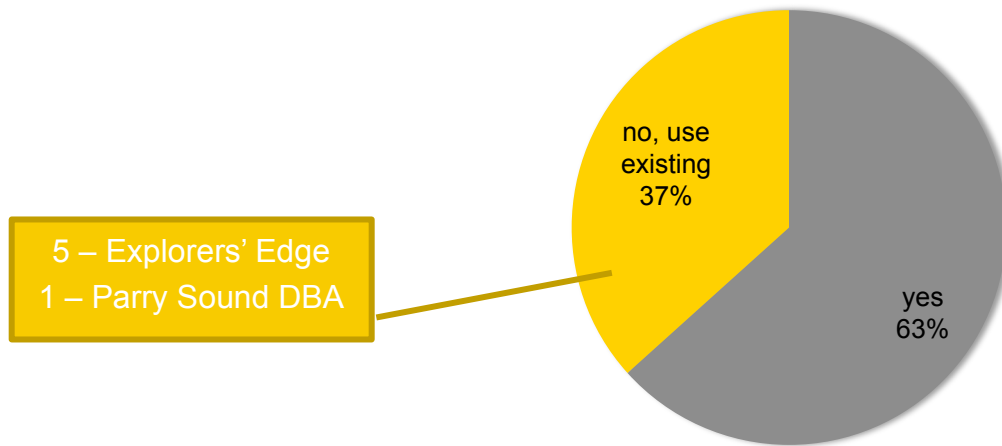
What do you believe would best serve tourism operators to help you build your business and tourism in the area?

The tourism operators who participate in the survey made many proactive and insightful suggestions on what would best serve the collective and help them build a stronger industry. Overall they are seeking the following (full responses available in Appendix C):

1. Leadership and Coordination
2. Financial Resources
3. Partnership Development and Packaging
4. Marketing
5. Brand Development
6. Signage and Visitor Services
7. Improved Products and Experiences

Tourism Stakeholders Suggestions for the Future

Would you like to see a new destination marketing organization (DMO) supported by the municipalities to promote tourism? If not, is there an organization currently in existence you would like to act as the designated promoter?



What one recommendation would you like to make to the municipalities that are hoping to boost tourism with the new Regional Marketing Plan?

The recommendations made by operators fell into the following key areas of focus (detailed responses are included in Appendix C)

1. Cooperation/Coordination
2. Recognition of Tourism
3. Goals and Objectives
4. Marketing
5. Funding
6. Tourism Business Education
7. Visitor Information Centre
8. Product Development
9. Government Support

Summary Observations from Tourism Operator Survey

- Tourism operators want assistance locally with grass roots product and experience development;
- Tourism operators want to work with other owner/operators to create synergies, partnerships and packages but they need help facilitating this;
- Tourism operators have an appetite to work with a local DMO; and
- Tourism operators are seeking local coordination and want the entire area to work together as one.



Tourism Summit Stakeholder Session

On December 15, 2015 approximately 30 participants representing tourism stakeholder organizations as well as tourism operators attended an afternoon session at the Stockey Center. The Agenda included:

- Results of Tourism Stakeholder feedback;
- Results of Tourism Operator Survey;
- What needs to happen? – Discussion in groups; and
- Information sharing.

In groups of 5-6, participants were asked to discuss how they felt Parry Sound Area should move forward to advance tourism. They were asked to consider what was needed in the short term, mid-long term and what it would take to be successful. The following is a summary of the groups' collective responses.

What areas of focus are most critical in the short term?

- 1) Financial support
- 2) Commitment of sustainable resources
- 3) United budget to market the region
 - a) Human Capital
 - b) Staffed Visitor Information Centre
 - c) Establishing a vision for tourism with measurable outcomes
- 4) 5 year plan
- 5) Cohesive marketing plan (targeted)

- 6) Higher per person spend
- 7) Reaching target markets
- 8) Focused approach
 - a) Forming a stakeholder association
- 9) Stakeholder involvement in tourism decisions
 - a) Marketing of the region
 - b) Establish a brand positioning
 - c) Leverage successful festivals and events
 - d) Collaboration
- 10) Consistency
- 11) Long-term commitment

What are the mid-long term priorities?

- 1) Tourism Coordinator for the Parry Sound Area
- 2) Research and Market Knowledge
 - a) Understanding competition
 - b) Best practices and trends

- 3) Product Development
- 4) Leveraging technology
- 5) On-going communication with tourism stakeholders
- 6) Ex-patriot program to attract former resident back to the area
- 7) Business collaboration, packaging, partnership development
- 8) Explorers' Edge to set up satellite location in Parry Sound Area
- 9) There is a need to define what tourism is

What should local efforts look like?

- 1) Leadership Suggestions
 - a) REDAC to take the lead to create a DMO and Visitor Information Services.
 - b) REDAC to hire an Executive Director with board guidance stakeholders engaged as part of a tourism committee
- 2) Funding Suggestions (possible sources suggested by the group)
 - a) REDAC
 - b) FEDNOR
 - c) Explorers' Edge
 - d) Operators

- e) Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation
 - f) Municipalities
 - g) Explore how cottage rentals contribute
 - h) Revisit the idea of collecting a Destination Management Fund (DMF)
- 3) Cooperation and Support Suggestions
- a) On-going communication
 - b) Minimum 3-5 year commitment to get the ball rolling and allow successful implementation that leads to a sustainable organization
 - c) All municipalities need to buy-in
 - d) Everyone must understand the benefits to a regional approach

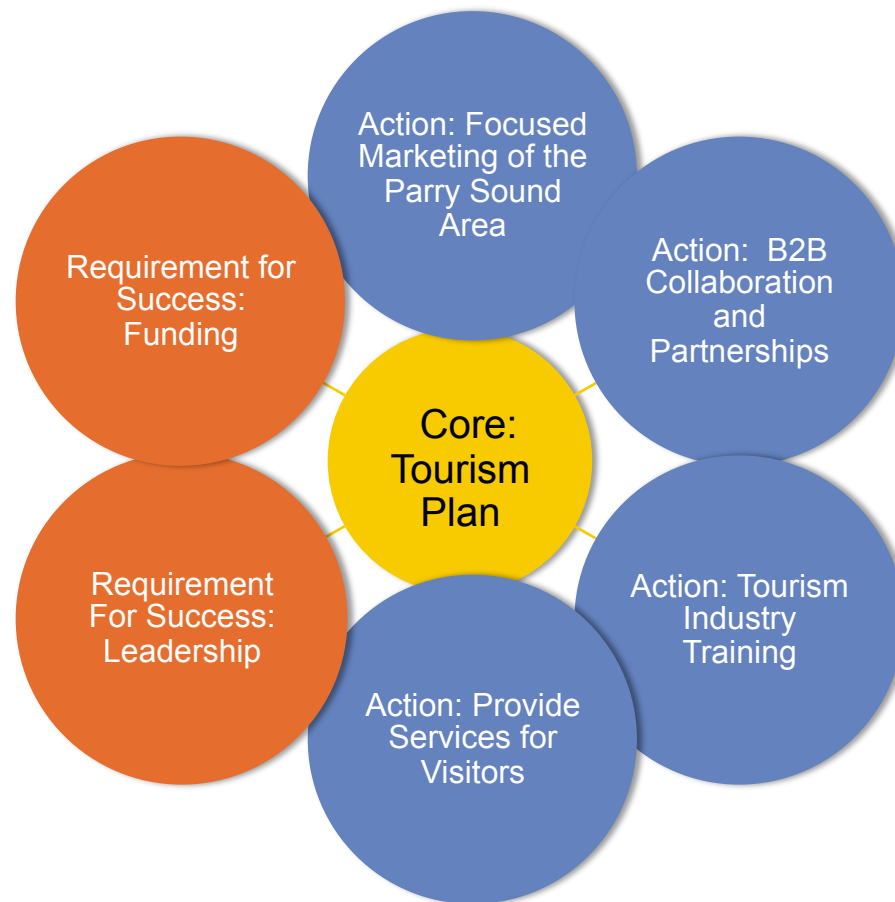


Recommendations

The goals of the background research, stakeholder engagement, operator survey and tourism marketing summit were to:

- Align tourism stakeholder priorities; and
- Improve collaboration and coordination of tourism programs and services.

In order to achieve those goals there are 7 key recommendations: **1 Core Foundation**, **4 Actions to Grow Tourism** and **2 Requirements for Success**.



Core Foundation

Recommendation #1: Develop a Tourism Destination Management Plan

The Parry Sound Area has attractive, appealing and unique tourism assets, as well as tourism stakeholders that desire to get to the next level of success. In order to effectively raise the bar, a cohesive Tourism Destination Management Plan is required. The goal of a Tourism Destination Management Plan is to prioritize and coordinate the actions required by government AND stakeholders to enhance the appeal and competitiveness of the Parry Sound Area in order to drive increased levels of tourism visitation and revenue for tourism operators. The plan will define the role of the municipalities, RTO12, and the local stakeholder groups (Parry Sound Downtown Business Association, Parry Sound Area Chamber of Commerce and the Georgina Bay Biosphere) so that everyone can work to leverage the collaborative efforts. Without a plan, there is no common vision or goals for tourism and opportunities may be overlooked and efforts may be duplicated.

Timing: Immediate (Fall 2016), hinges on Recommendation 2 (creation of a Tourism Advisory Committee)

Role: To be overseen by the Tourism Advisory Committee, facilitated by a third party consultant, coordination provide by Explorer's Edge, Parry Sound Area Chamber of Commerce and/or REDAC

Financial Resources Required: Approximately \$15,000 for a third party consultant

Actions to Grow Tourism

Recommendation #2: Create a Culture of Tourism Industry Collaboration

A community-based approach is necessary for future success in tourism throughout the region. A Tourism Advisory Committee (TAC) consisting of a cross section of tourism businesses with representation from each of the municipalities should be formed. The role of this group will be to guide and influence tourism activities and establish opportunities for industry networking and B2B collaboration.

Timing: Immediate (create TAC in fall of 2016)

Role: Parry Sound Chamber of Commerce and Explorer's Edge to work together to identify/assemble a cross section of tourism industry leaders

Financial Resources Required: in-kind (communication, meeting space)

Recommendation #3: Provide Tourism Industry Owner-Operators with Training to Enhance their Product/Experience Offerings

Working together, there is an opportunity to take a proactive role in facilitating and participating in tourism industry equipping / workforce development. Tourism equipping involves creating opportunities to inform and educate operators on aspects specific to the tourism sector. Tourism market readiness training, tourism experience development and enhancing online presence are good examples of industry equipping. Workforce development includes training activities that are hard skill specific. Training related to customer service, technology/computer skills, marketing/public relations and finance are examples.

Timing: Immediate (Fall 2016, Winter 2017)

Role: Tourism Advisory Committee (influencers), Parry Sound Area Chamber of Commerce, Explorers' Edge, Parry Sound Downtown Business Association and The Parry Sound Area Community Business & Development Centre should work together to identify needs and offer industry specific training. Ideally this may fit with in existing mandates and budgets.

Financial Resources Required: minimal, in-kind (communication, meeting space), and additional resources for subject experts

Recommendations #4: Establish a Focused Marketing Plan for the Parry Sound Area

A tourism marketing plan outlines the overall marketing approach that will be used to promote the Parry Sound Area. Marketing plans create a customized action plan that the Tourism Advisory Committee (representing the area's tourism owner/operators) can agree to, follow and use to measure the effectiveness of each campaign. The local tourism marketing plan should seek opportunities to align with the Explorers' Edge marketing plan where possible. Not all of Parry Sound's unique attributes will be common to the pan-regional approach so striking a balance with a limited budget is important.

Timing: Mid-term (Winter and Spring 2017)

Role: Tourism Advisory Committee in cooperation with Parry Sound Tourism and Explorers' Edge

Financial Resources Required: tie into Explorers' Edge programs, operators "pay to play" with Parry Sound Tourism

Recommendation # 5: Provide Visitor Services

The Parry Sound Area requires basic tourism information services that visitors have come to expect. An official tourism website is important. In the short term (with long term potential) there is the opportunity to work with Parry Sound Tourism, a private business who is already working closely with tourism operators to promote the area on a website (<http://parrysoundtourism.com>). The Tourism Advisory Committee should meet with Parry Sound Tourism regularly to influence the content of that website and work cooperatively to enhance the information and trip planning tools available to visitors.

A physical Visitor Information Centre in the Parry Sound Area, especially during peak periods is desirable. It is suggested that this role be a shared function with an existing attraction in a high traffic area that has adequate parking and washroom facilities. The Visitor Information Centre should collect and report on visitor data regularly.

Printed guides and way finding props should be explored once a budget is established. These tools should be stocked and dispersed at the Visitor Information Centre and other tourism businesses throughout the area where visitors frequent.

Timing: Immediate (2016)

Role: Website: Tourism Advisory Committee and Parry Sound Tourism. Visitor Information Centre: Tourism Advisory Committee to discuss with municipalities and key tourism attractions (possibly Stockey Centre)

Financial Resources Required: minimal, use existing staff resources, visitor guides costs may be covered with advertising.

Requirements for Success

Recommendation # 6: Designate a Leader

There is a gap in regional tourism leadership for the Parry Sound Area. While Explorers' Edge offers programs and some support that fills this gap, their role is pan-regional and includes providing programs for four other sub regions along with Parry Sound. Explorers' Edge has minimal human resources and is not currently in the position to take on the role of a local destination management. Grass-roots, local leadership and coordination is critical if the Parry Sound Area wishes to take part in the many programs and opportunities that are presented at the RTO level (approximately \$1.5 M in funding).

Do to the fact that there is not an existing organization currently poised to take on the role of a Tourism Destination Management Organization (DMO) two options are being suggested.

1. Create new not-for-profit Tourism Destination Management Organization. Tourism operators have suggested that REDAC appears to be the most logical organization to oversee a newly formed DMO given the committee's area-wide collaborate approach for economic development. In a presentation to REDAC on February 17, 2016, examples of similar communities who created not-for-profit DMOs were provided. The group indicated that they would like to contact these communities to gather additional insights. A copy of the information shared at the REDAC meeting is included in Appendix D.
2. Explore options to use an existing organization that could add tourism to their responsibilities. The Parry Sound Area Chamber of Commerce creates an environment to support local member businesses and the community by providing opportunities for networking, partnerships, use of government services, advocacy, education, and marketing. While

tourism activities align with the Chamber's mission there are staff and resource constraints that need to be addressed if they were to consider the idea of taking on this additional role. Within the RTO 12 geography, the Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce acts as a DMO and represents 18 distinctive municipalities and is an example of an organization who have recently come together to give tourism operators a collective voice.

Timing: Immediate (2016)

Role: Tourism Advisory Committee to discuss with REDAC and the Parry Sound Area Chamber of Commerce. Explorers' Edge to provide support.

Financial Resources Required: May require 1 additional staff in a year round position (part to full-time \$30,000 to \$60,000 per year)

Recommendations #7: Secure 3 years of funding for Destination Marketing and Development activities

A long-term sustainable model needs to be developed. Initially there needs to be financial buy-in from each of the participating municipalities and stakeholder organizations. The financial buy-in of the local group should be leveraged to secure funding for the first couple of launch years and then transition to a shared model of municipal support and industry memberships with pay to play advertising opportunities. By then ROI metrics can be in place and if the lead organization is functioning optimally, buy-in from industry will be logical choice.

Timing: Immediate (2016), follows recommendations # 6

Role: Leader organization (recommendation #6)

Financial Resources Required: This will be based on activities identified in the Tourism Destination Management Plan (Recommendation #1. It is feasible to assume that the lead tourism organization would leverage any and all existing programs that would benefit tourism (Offered by Explorers' Edge, Community Futures, Parry Sound Area Chamber of Commerce, Parry Sound Downtown Business Association, Georgian Bay Biosphere, etc) and look for opportunities to invest wisely in new activities that have an ROI.

Appendix A: Tourism Stakeholder Questionnaire

Tourism Roles and Functions

DMO Name: _____

Representative: _____

Visitor Information Management

	What does this look like in your community?	Level of Engagement High = mandate of organization Med = play a part role Low = very little attention in this area No= not involved	Human Resources # of people	Financial Resources High = adequate resources Med = able to complete most tasks Low = not enough resources to do well None= no budget for this
Current				
Future				

Which of the following does your organization do?

- Operate a physical VIC
 Answer phone inquiries
 Respond to visitor emails
 Service walk-in visitors
 Provide brochures/maps
 Provide familiarization tours

Industry Training and Development

	What does this look like in your community?	Level of Engagement High = mandate of organization Med = play a part role Low = very little attention in this area No= not involved	Human Resources # of people	Financial Resources High = adequate resources Med = able to complete most tasks Low = not enough resources to do well None= no budget for this
Current				
Future				

Which of the following does your organization do?

Customer Service Training

Tourism Industry Business Training

Other:

Membership Management (Related to Tourism Businesses)

	What does this look like in your community?	Level of Engagement High = mandate of organization Med = play a part role Low = very little attention in this area No= not involved	Human Resources # of people	Financial Resources High = adequate resources Med = able to complete most tasks Low = not enough resources to do well None= no budget for this
Current				
Future				

Which of the following does your organization do?



Operate with a membership

Recruit members

Host networking events

Provided regular communication

Provide targeted resources for tourism businesses

How many members currently?

Investment Attraction and Infrastructure Development

	What does this look like in your community?	Level of Engagement High = mandate of organization Med = play a part role Low = very little attention in this area No= not involved	Human Resources # of people	Financial Resources High = adequate resources Med = able to complete most tasks Low = not enough resources to do well None= no budget for this
Current				
Future				

Which of the following does your organization do?

Identify what new developments are needed

Identify new infrastructure required

Develop strategies

Host FDI tours

Signage

	What does this look like in your community?	Level of Engagement High = mandate of organization Med = play a part role Low = very little attention in this area No= not involved	Human Resources # of people	Financial Resources High = adequate resources Med = able to complete most tasks Low = not enough resources to do well None= no budget for this
Current				
Future				

Which of the following does your organization do?

Identify what signs are needed

Strategy development and funding

Policy and by-law development, implementation, applications etc.

Develop and Enhance Tourism Products and Experiences

	What does this look like in your community?	Level of Engagement High = mandate of organization Med = play a part role Low = very little attention in this area No= not involved	Human Resources # of people	Financial Resources High = adequate resources Med = able to complete most tasks Low = not enough resources to do well None= no budget for this
Current				
Future				

Which of the following does your organization do?

Host festivals or events with the purpose of attracting visitors

Identify new products/experiences that will attract new visitors

Engage tourism businesses in training to enhance their offerings

What events do you host?

Tourism Businesses/ Community Partnership Development

	What does this look like in your community?	Level of Engagement High = mandate of organization Med = play a part role Low = very little attention in this area No= not involved	Human Resources # of people	Financial Resources High = adequate resources Med = able to complete most tasks Low = not enough resources to do well None= no budget for this
Current				
Future				

Which of the following does your organization do?

Collaborate amongst local stakeholder groups related to tourism activities

Partner with neighboring communities for tourism development

Create and promote itineraries

Create and promote packages

Government Relations and Tourism Advocacy

	What does this look like in your community?	Level of Engagement High = mandate of organization Med = play a part role Low = very little attention in this area No= not involved	Human Resources # of people	Financial Resources High = adequate resources Med = able to complete most tasks Low = not enough resources to do well None= no budget for this
Current				
Future				

Which of the following does your organization do?



Keep up-to-date on government (all levels); 2-way communication regarding tourism in your community



Are recognized as a Tourism DMO

Community Awareness

	What does this look like in your community?	Level of Engagement High = mandate of organization Med = play a part role Low = very little attention in this area No= not involved	Human Resources # of people	Financial Resources High = adequate resources Med = able to complete most tasks Low = not enough resources to do well None= no budget for this
Current				
Future				

Which of the following does your organization do?

Speaking Engagements

Tourism Awards

Council Presentations

Ambassador programs

Publicity and Media Relations

	What does this look like in your community?	Level of Engagement High = mandate of organization Med = play a part role Low = very little attention in this area No= not involved	Human Resources # of people	Financial Resources High = adequate resources Med = able to complete most tasks Low = not enough resources to do well None= no budget for this
Current				
Future				

Which of the following does your organization do?

Attracting media and coordination of familiarization tours

Writing press releases related to tourism

Marketing Tourism

	What does this look like in your community?	Level of Engagement High = mandate of organization Med = play a part role Low = very little attention in this area No= not involved	Human Resources # of people	Financial Resources High = adequate resources Med = able to complete most tasks Low = not enough resources to do well None= no budget for this
Current				
Future				

Which of the following does your organization do?

- Identifying the needs of new and existing markets
- Host and update content on tourism website
- Social media related to tourism activities
- Print publications
- Advertising
- Tradeshows

Does your organization have a marketing plan for tourism?

Motor coach, Sports Tourism and Meetings & Conventions

	What does this look like in your community?	Level of Engagement High = mandate of organization Med = play a part role Low = very little attention in this area No= not involved	Human Resources # of people	Financial Resources High = adequate resources Med = able to complete most tasks Low = not enough resources to do well None= no budget for this
Current				
Future				

Which of the following does your organization do?

- Develop itineraries, attend marketplaces
 Liaise with motor coach companies, coordinate fam tours
 Prepare sports tournament bids
 Provide sports tournament hosting services
 Build M&C data-bases, actively pursue new functions


Research, Strategic Planning and Funding

	What does this look like in your community?	Level of Engagement High = mandate of organization Med = play a part role Low = very little attention in this area No= not involved	Human Resources # of people	Financial Resources High = adequate resources Med = able to complete most tasks Low = not enough resources to do well None= no budget for this
Current				
Future				


Which of the following does your organization do?

-
- Develop and implement exit surveys Conduct on-line research and analysis Monitor and report on research Develop mid to long tern strategic tourism plans Write grant applications related to tourism activities

Appendix B: Tourism Operator Survey



**EXPLORERS'
EDGE**
Naturally Adventurous



3 Taylor Road , Bracebridge, ON P1L 1W8
(800) 835-7303
Algonquin Park, Almaguin Highlands, Muskoka and Parry Sound
www.explorersedge.ca

Parry Sound Regional Marketing Plan

The Regional Economic Development Advisory Committee (REDAC) which includes representation from 5 of 7 single-tier municipalities in the Parry Sound area is currently working with a consultant to complete a "Regional Marketing Plan."

The new plan will have a tourism component. To that end, Explorers' Edge is charged with surveying tourism operators to determine your particular views on what is needed in the Parry Sound region to move tourism forward. Please take a few minutes to complete the very brief survey below, so that your voice may be heard through this process.

Does your business have a marketing plan in place?

Who is your primary target audience?

Which of the following marketing tactics do you use? (check all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Website	<input type="checkbox"/> Instagram
<input type="checkbox"/> Trip Advisor	<input type="checkbox"/> Print Advertising
<input type="checkbox"/> Radio / Television	<input type="checkbox"/> Facebook
<input type="checkbox"/> Twitter	<input type="checkbox"/> Blogging
<input type="checkbox"/> Printed Brochures	<input type="checkbox"/> Other

How much do you spend annually on marketing?

0\$ - \$999.00
 \$1,000.00 - \$4,999.00
 \$5,000 - \$9,999.00
 \$10,000 +

What "products" in the Parry Sound area do you believe are most popular with visitors?

Are you satisfied with your own marketing efforts?

Do you work with local agencies to promote tourism?

Yes No

If yes: who do you work with?

How much of your current marketing budget do you spent partnering with local/regional marketing organizations?

What is your experience of working with local /regional agencies to promote tourism? Have they helped?

How would you describe the current tourism marketing landscape for this region (Parry Sound & area)?

What do you believe would best serve tourism operators to help you build your business and tourism in the area?

What is needed to boost tourism in your region?

Would you like to see a new destination marketing organization (DMO) supported by the municipalities to promote tourism? If not, is there an organization currently in existence you would like to act as the designated promoter?

What one recommendation would you like to make to the municipalities that are hoping to boost tourism with the new Regional Marketing Plan?

What one thing would you caution against?

ysis

Appendix C: Tourism Operator Survey Responses

What is your experience of working with local /regional agencies to promote tourism? Have they helped?

Positive Responses

- *Google analytics shows good referral rate*
- *There are some good initiatives through regional tourism promoters like EE*
- *Awesome. Recently a fair amount of experience.*
- *Good, but limited. EE is excellent to work with.*
- *GB Country was very good to work with.*
- *Explorers' Edge has been very helpful and has created a good relationship with us on a continued basis*
- *Yes, however it is really up to the operator to self promote*
- *Yes, direct customers our way and provide info*
- *Parry Sound Tourism is starting to build the foundation of something that has never existed here in the past. I don't believe at this point that they have "helped" yet but I like where they are going and their focus on outdoor activities.*
- *When the local group was going well it helped and put Parry Sound and area on the map*
- *Generally positive. It has been helpful promoting partnerships between our business and other local businesses*
- *Fun and fuel. They bring tourist to town*
- *Generally positive. They have helped.*
- *We have lacked a cohesive plan for so long that all steps forward are positive, no matter how small. Over the years we have worked with various organizations.*

Neutral/Luke Warm Responses

- *Yes, but you have to keep nudging*
- *Somewhat, however there is a huge overlap. Every township is doing the same thing. How do you not go in all publications?*
- *Yes - but it's fragmented*
- *Its always difficult to gauge exactly how effective a marketing plan is.*
- *Yes and no. Without the Town of Parry Sound having a tourism office/officer/strategy/budget all efforts small and large are diminished.*
- *Not too bad a little pricey for what you get. We are 10km outside Parry Sound and at times we are not included in Parry Sound markets.*
- *Remains to be seen. Too recent to quantify results.*

Negative Responses

- *We've tried but there hasn't been any new business from it.*
- *Haphazard and inconsistent*
- *No, Return on Investment financially but good return in sharing plans and aspirations.*
- *If had to live off of the results from external local organizations to bring me business, I would starve.*

How would you describe the current tourism marketing landscape for this region (Parry Sound & Area)?

Positive Comments

- *I think between Explorers' Edge & the PS Chamber we have good coverage.*
- *It has improved with the creation of Explorers' Edge but still has room for improvement. The process is just starting to be streamlined, and summits and things like that help. In the past there were too many people all doing the same thing with limited impact. This seems to be changing.*

Negative Comments

- *Lack of leadership and follow through with commitments; no cohesive activity or plan - rather an informal referral system in place.*
- *Weak at the present time. The area needs to work in cooperation. There are many groups who are contributing to tourism yet fail to work together.*
- *Not enough awareness is brought to this area, it seems to be all about Muskoka*
- *Not great....broken! But I almost give up! We haven't had much municipal support and our own township doesn't even recognize our campground as a tourism business. The Chamber is making headway though finally*
- *Very disjointed*
- *Fragmented, inconsistent, ineffective and what current tourism marketing landscape are you talking about anyway?*
- *Fragmented. There is very little being done for the Parry Sound Area as a whole. It appears to be skewed to Muskoka.*
- *Horrible Pretty good, seems to be improving*
- *Scattered.. We are miles behind Muskoka despite offering virtually all the same attractions*
- *Parry Sound directly not very good as there really is no agency driving the bus*

- *A bit weak. Require more marketing in key areas. Including metro TO.*
- *Muskoka and Algonquin are more recognized*
- *Many people and organizations doing their own thing. Energy, focus and funds are fragmented.*
- *Void of leadership Seems to be more supportive of the Muskoka area.*
- *Parry Sound could use a little more help*
- *Unorganized.*
- *Lacking in "things to do"*
- *Non existent*
- *Misguided and tending to low margin activities*
- *The region is falling behind*
- *People are not working together and their is no local voice or agency*
- *Disjointed. We are not working really as a region yet.*
- *It has improved with the creation of Explorers' Edge but still has room for improvement. The process is just starting to be streamlined, and summits and things like that help. In the past there were too many people all doing the same thing with limited impact. This seems to be changing.*
- *Too many duplicates of groups of information booklets, newspapers, phonebooks, etc*

What do you believe would best serve tourism operators to help you build your business and tourism in the area?

Leadership and Coordination

- *Leadership, consistency and a guarantee and reporting of outcomes.*
- *More and better consistency of service - i.e. downtown Parry Sound store hours*
- *Quit saying Parry Sound is a four season destination when it is not.*
- *One consistent leader that grabbed marketing and ran with it full time.*
- *One group who promotes Parry Sound and all of the businesses as one.*
- *Central agency "parry sound tourism . Com"*
- *Local Facilitator like Tyler who works here vs Muskoka but reports to Explorers' Edge management.*
- *A cohesive, district-wide approach with a bricks and mortar tourism centre, just like the old days before digital marketing :) being able to access EE funds to facilitate that For Parry Sound, it would be nice if the Town of PS did it.*
- *Get municipalities on board to support tourism and fund a DMO events more.*
- *Explorers' Edge Satellite office*

Financial Resources:

- *Money. Money to market to large city centers and money to improve and refine the offering in our area.*
- *Financial support and for everyone to check their egos at the door*

Partnership Development and Packaging

- *Partnership with other businesses to advertise and promote special events A body that specifically promotes tourism*
- *Assistance packaging products where a business partnership exists ex. Bike rentals and B&B's*

- *Help with packaging and promoting products*
- *More options for cross promotion between complimentary businesses and services.*

Marketing

- *Promote the beauty of the area in Southern Ontario*
- *Some kind of visitor's "guide" similar to what GBC used to do but with less advertising.*
- *Increase awareness of GBBR*
- *It will help all to be able to sell directly to a customer through a regional marketing agency such as Explorers' Edge.*
- *Creating a comprehensive regional guide online to show case what we have to offer all in one place*
- *Advertising linked to Parry Sound as a destination...Television ads in Toronto on shows like Breakfast TV or Canada AM...showing destinations, etc. Who doesn't still sing along with the 'marineland' song!*
- *I don't think this effort should be to promote me but rather to promote Parry Sound and indirectly me when people interested in PS need a place to stay.*

Brand Development

- *A recognizable brand for our region, better access to advertising in other markets.*

Signage and Visitor Services

- *Funding assistance for 400 series highway signage better signage to direct where information can be found.*
- *Tourist stop area like USA has when traveling they provide a lot of information on the area and coupon booklets.*
- *A proper information center closer to the highway*
- *Better, distinctive and creative street presence both on Hwy#400 and in the actual town.*

Improved Products and Experiences

- *More and better places to stay*
- *Organize experiential tourism initiatives to help us with our shoulder season*
- *Offer more options, cheaper prices*
- *Sustainable tourism practices*

What one recommendation would you like to make to the municipalities that are hoping to boost tourism with the new Regional Marketing Plan?

Cooperation/Coordination

- *Amalgamate so that we can work together more efficiently as a region!*
- *Accept that change in the way we approach tourist marketing is long over-due*
- *To put together something from all municipalities. Instead of branching off independently. It is very costly for the business.*
- *You only need to look at other provinces to see it done properly. Create a DMO and support it.*
- *Play together and play fair (Tourism is mostly perception and word-of-mouth driven. The private businesses themselves are the best promoters of their offering.*
- *Stop pretending that we are several different areas. This is one region. Like Muskoka, it has sub regions and areas, but only by bringing all our resources together will we have enough resources to hold our own*
- *Collaboration and cooperation to bring people up to the entire area.*
- *The municipalities need to understand that marketing benefits the whole region as well as PS.*
- *If possible include grass root people*

- *To let the operators run the plan to suit their needs and not get caught up in the politics of the municipality.*

Recognition of Tourism

- *A recognition that tourism plays a vital role in the economy of the area and should be recognized and supported as such*
- *Boosting tourism is increasing receipts to tourism businesses. Any business directly or indirectly connected to a tourism business is a tourism business. There has to be a recognition about what a tourism dollar represents to a community. A tourism dollar spent in Parry Sound is a great form of an export business in the sense that the money generated came 100% from out of town money and the revenues received stay in town.*

Goals and Objectives

- *Agreement on clear, measurable short and long-term goals and objectives*

Marketing

- *Market us as the Georgian Bay/Parry Sound region as its more recognized by our international guests and more prestigious and intriguing to go to a Great lake region as opposed to just a lake only region*
- *The town of PS needs to be promoted better.*
- *Focus on shoulder seasons - more corporate promotion*

Funding

- *Long range commitment to funding*
- *Financial support during off peak season*

Tourism Business Education

- *Educate businesses that it helps everyone if we all promote each other.*
- *Help businesses to become more aware of what everyone offers.*

Visitor Information Centre

- *Get back to a staffed tourism centre with real live people who care about the visitor experience and are knowledgeable and able to add value to a visitor's experience.*

Product Development

- *Product development is needed in the area specifically under the events category*
- *Hockey tournament, biker, Promote ecotourism*
- *Even playing field when it comes to private vs commercial rentals*
- *More special events*

Government Support

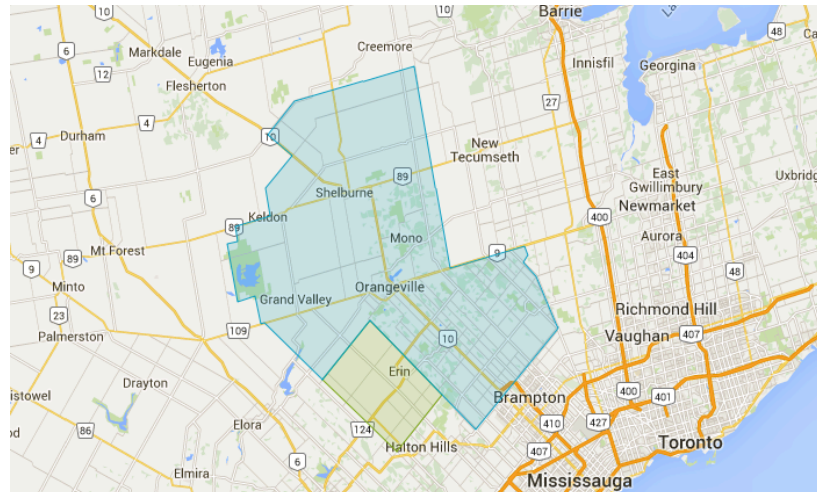
- *Government can come along side and help create a perception of an area but that's about it.*
- *Use our Property taxes wisely. Small businesses have small budgets maybe more incentives would be nice.*

Appendix D: REDAC Presentation Leadership Discussion Slides

Discussion

- Is there an appetite for REDAC to take the lead in creating a new non-profit DMO for the Parry Sound Area?
 - Terms of reference
 - Creating of a Tourism Advisory Committee
 - Hiring of a Tourism Coordinator
- This would require a 3 year financial commitment from the participating partners
 - Establish Service Agreements
 - Clearly stated and measurable goals and objectives
 - Regular updates to partners (council presentations)

Others like you



From Dufferin County Website

The agreement with the Headwaters Tourism Association was extended for one year in the amount of \$69,837, subject to final budget approval. The tourism association, in partnership with the Towns of Caledon, Erin, Mono and Shelburne and County of Dufferin, provides a number of services as part of the agreement such as product development, tourism marketing, tourism marketing communications and tourism advocacy and partnership development.

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⁶ <http://thehillsofheadwaters.com>

Others like you



- The Hills of Headwaters Tourism Association is a regional, non-profit organization with a mandate to facilitate the development and promotion of the Headwaters region as a tourism destination.
- The Hills of Headwaters Tourism currently supports tourism businesses and organizations as well as providing tourism marketing on behalf of the communities of [Erin, Caledon, Dufferin County, Shelburne and Mono.](#)
- The Hills of Headwaters Tourism is governed by a volunteer **Board of Directors**, which are elected annually and supported by representation from our partner municipalities.

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⁷ <http://thehillsofheadwaters.com>



Mission:

- The Hills of Headwaters Tourism Association, working on behalf of and in conjunction with our partners and regional tourism operators shall be the primary marketing and facilitating agent for regional tourism that is consistent with the region's rural heritage, respectful of its extraordinary natural environment and that promotes its spirit of community.

Approach:

- Regional collaboration is the cornerstone of the Hills of Headwaters initiative; using an integrated approach that goes beyond the means of individual businesses, groups, committees or communities.

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⁸ <http://thehillsofheadwaters.com>

Others like you

As an example, The County of Lennox & Addington provides \$20,00/year in funding to Land O'Lakes



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⁹ <http://www.travellandolakes.com>