

RTO12 Regional Tourism Strategy 2018-2023

Business & Operational Plan 2018-2019



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Introduction

Established in 2010, Explorers' Edge (EE) is one of thirteen Regional Tourism Organizations (RTOs) funded by the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture & Sport (MTCS), representing the geographic areas of Algonquin Park, the Almaguin Highlands, Loring-Restoule, Muskoka and Parry Sound.

This Regional Tourism Strategy (RTS) outlines the developmental approach EE will embrace for the next five years (2018-2023). The strategy provides a brief background on the status of the organization and also specifies goals and activities, concluding with additional considerations for moving forward. Aligning with the five 'pillars' mandated by MTCS and following a trajectory from the previous plan, the 2018-2023 RTS identifies the strategic priorities of the Board of Directors. The RTS also serves as the guiding document for annual Business & Operational Plans, which further elaborate on these priorities and identify associated tactics, timeframes, responsibilities and measureable objectives.

The 2018-2023 RTS priorities were considered by the Board of Directors during a strategy session held on November 20-21, 2017 at Hidden Valley Resort in Huntsville, Ontario.

EE has solidified itself as a leader in regional destination development for the past seven years. With a forward-thinking, strategic and innovative staff guided by a private sector Board of Directors, the organization has been at the forefront of social, online, mobile content marketing, innovative programs and tourism partnerships. EE has focused on marketing to southern Ontario and the GTA audiences (the segment called 'Ontario Explorers') and on developing programs that produce optimal ROI for tourism stakeholders. EE is now entering the "Worldly Wise" phase of its evolution, which entails a new focus on international markets, workforce development and product development.

Several documents and programs were reviewed to: a) set the stage for both the renewed RTS 2018-23 and the 2018-19 Business & Operational Plan and b) gather information on previous activities. Major references for the RTS are noted in the 'references' section.



EE Vision, Mission & Mandate

The Vision, Mission and Mandate of Explorers' Edge guide the organization. Based on the renewed commitment to a 'consumer-centric approach', the Board agreed to a revised Vision, Mission and Mandate during the November 20-21, 2017 strategy session.

Explorers' Edge Vision

In five years (2023), the Explorers' Edge region will be the most popular tourism destination in Canada.

The Associated Mission

Explorers' Edge is an operator-driven organization with the mission to develop a profitable and thriving tourism industry in the region.

Explorers' Edge Mandate

To "Train, Innovate, Ignite & Collaborate" (TIIC) with industry stakeholders to then inspire consumers to choose our tourism destination and products.



Current Tourism Landscape – Ontario and Beyond

Information produced by partner organizations and additional tourism stakeholders provides further insight into the state of the industry in Ontario. One example is the publication *“Closing the Tourism Gap: Creating a Long-Term Advantage for Ontario”* by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, which examined in particular the need for Ontario to attract more of the increasing number of international travelers. This is of particular importance for RTO12 in terms of how do visitors to Ontario – most of whom arrive via Toronto – become dispersed to the Explorers’ Edge region of Ontario? This report resulted in many formal discussions around the need for a rural dispersion strategy, including a Round Table conducted by the Parry Sound Chamber of Commerce to formulate a response to this conundrum.

Also, since the creation of the last regional tourism strategy (RTO12 Destination Development Plan 2014-2017), the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario was engaged by MTCS to review five years of operation of the Ministry’s regional tourism model. The resulting report – entitled *“Mapping Ontario’s Tourism Future”* – informed the creation of the Ministry’s Tourism Action Plan, which was released in 2016. The ‘top priority areas’ from this action plan include: Product & Experience Development, Tourism Workforce Development, Marketing Strategically, Advancing the Tourism Sector, Making Evidence-Based Decisions.



Major Accomplishments Last 3 Years

To understand what RTO12 hopes to achieve with its new five year Regional Tourism Strategy, it is necessary to first understand the work conducted in the previous fiscal years and how we will build on it for even greater success. Analyzing the previous year's results, it proved to be very successful for RTO12. The organization can boast of significant achievements under the Five Pillars designated by the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport (MTCS), including the following:

The organization's key accomplishments for the duration of the previous RTS (2014-2017 DDP) are listed below:

- **Domestic Social, Online, Mobile, Content Marketing:** Despite a diminishing budget between 2014 & 2017, the hard-working domestic marketing program increased results YOY related to website visitation and outbound referrals utilizing primarily in-house content generation that produced 480 pieces of content. Since 2014, website visits have increased exponentially by 120%.
- **Lead Nurturing Program:** The introduction of marketing automation and marketing segmentation saw a significant increase in domestic email leads, as well as an unprecedented jump in open (up to 48%) and click through rates, particularly pertaining to niche product marketing (up to 38%). The successful domestic lead nurturing program was adapted for international audiences with two successful international marketing campaigns, resulting in 7000 international leads being added into the marketing automation database in 2017.
- **Social Media Expertise:** Using content marketing and social promotion tactics, EE grew its Facebook followers to 170,000 over the course of three years and saw exponential growth in social reach (50 million), impressions (100 million) and engagement (2.7 million by fiscal year-end 2017). Explorers' Edge is currently one of the Top 25 travel pages in Canada on Facebook and is second only to Toronto among the provincial RTOs in terms of followers.

- **Shoulder Season Development via the Fuel & Fun Program:** The Fuel & Fun Package continues to be exceptionally popular with tourism business owners and travelers alike. Successfully dispersing visitors to do and spend more across the region, the program is run only in spring or fall to encourage shoulder season visitation. The program – targeting domestic audiences up until 2017 – saw YOY increase in tourism operator participation and consumer bookings. (The Fuel & Fun Package offers a \$50 gas card and \$50 in cash vouchers to travelers who book two nights’ accommodation in the region during a particular booking period.) Spring 2017 saw the Fuel & Fun Package program oversell for the first time (500+ packages redeemed).
- **Suite of Self-Guided Mobile Tour:** Responding to the marketplace desire for digital planning and travel options, Explorers’ Edge created a signature suite of self-guided mobile responsive tours designed to be followed on your tablet or smart phone. Featuring the Group of Seven Outdoor Gallery (www.go7murals.ca), the Cottage Country Beer Trail (www.cottagecountrybeertrail.ca) and Bike Cottage Country (www.bikecottagecountry.ca), the responsive mobile tours led the industry in technical and marketing innovation.
- **Tourism Indicator Framework:** EE undertook the development of this unique-in-Ontario framework in order to produce more timely information pertaining to the regional tourism industry. Research that is collected and disseminated includes but is not limited to: occupancy, business HST, attractions, weather, rounds of golf, etc.
- **Commercial Air Service Investment Attraction (YQA):** Established during the execution of the past DDP in relation to increased collaboration with the airline industry. Aligned with various partners, EE carried out feasibility studies, industry reconnaissance, origin demand intelligence and risk sharing scenarios with the goal of establishing commercial air service.
- **Partnerships:** Funds are allocated to projects in partnership with various organizations and businesses based on mutually beneficial objectives, triggered through the submission of detailed business plans. During the period of 2014-2017, over 160 business proposals were considered, with 96 partnerships being developed.
- **Product Development Framework:** In response to planning for future growth, a product framework was created that relied heavily on significant consumer research into preferred activities, product offering and travel motivations.
- **Package and Itinerary Refinement & Development:** In preparation for international marketing initiatives, the project developed 20 regional itineraries based on Destination Canada’s EQ segments cross-referenced against RTO12’s segmented audiences. Ten itineraries were finalized for recommendation, with preliminary recommendations for packages included.

- **Tourism Excellence North (TEN):** Piloted a program in partnership with additional Northern Ontario tourism stakeholders that included the development of regional case studies, operator training, best practice missions and facilitated workshops.
- **International Marketing Campaigns:** EE’s first foray into international markets using direct-to-consumer tactics – the Share Your Canada 150 campaign – produced 7,000 leads in four weeks and 1,400 pieces of user generated content.
- **Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey:** RTO12 led all the Ontario RTOs with response rate and satisfaction in both years the survey was implemented while improving upon key performance indicators YOY (i.e. response and overall satisfaction).
- **Online Referral System:** Implemented the JackRabbit Reservation System on the EE website and on partner sites (a local DMO and a local Chamber of Commerce).
- **Governance Development & Review:** Updated committee structure and in 2017 a review of the regional by-laws and director training.
- **Photo Bank Development:** Continued investment and oversight of a regional image bank that experiences increased usage YOY.
- **Tourism Operator Engagement:** Facilitated the online Tourism Operator Forum, AMAs with industry experts, workshops, training and outreach coinciding with industry feedback/intelligence regarding gaps in knowledge such as reservation platforms, marketing, content development, granting programs etc.



Program and Campaign Results 2014-2017

Website Facebook Content

- 4.3 million page views
- 425+ unique pieces of content

Explorers' Edge

It ain't always about roughing it in Algonquin Park.

EXPLORERSEGE.CA

Algonquin Park Resorts & Accommodations: No Need to Rough It

2,363,457

People Reached

45,555

Engagements

149,767

Clicks

View Insights

Boost Post

Like

Comment

Share

Most Relevant

Write a comment...

Luke Zegel

We're roughing 3 nights in Algonquin the weekend before the long weekend.

By roughing it I mean car camping... See More

Like Reply Message Ty Edited

Explorers' Edge

There are many recreation opportunities and special events. Check out these links: http://www.algonquinpark.on.ca/visit/recreational_activities/

Algonquin Park Resorts & Accommodations: No Need to Rough It

Algonquin Park is one of the most beautiful camping destinations in the world, but did you know you don't have to be a fan of tents and bear pits to enjoy a little bit of this great destination? Plenty of resorts are located within the park itself or just on the periphery, allowing you to experience the breathtaking beauty of this place, without having to sacrifice some of the comforts you prefer.

There's also no need to carry dry-packed foods with you either. Plenty of fine dining can be found in or near the park, including the innovative kitchen at Barlett's Lodge, Arrowhead House, and Killarney Lodge, the personal chef preparing locally-sourced meals including fresh fish at the Algonquin Log Cabin at Voyageur Quarters, or the local-sourced (and internationally recognized) menus at Northern Edge Algonquin.

Here is just a partial list of accommodations to be found in and around Algonquin Park:

In the Park

Algonquin Eco-Lodge

Arrowhead House in Algonquin

Share Your Canada 150

- 1,300 User Generated Stories & Images
- 7,000 International Leads



Muskoka Fever

I had not been home for Christmas for 2 years due to my move to the UK and work obligations. I was craving snow and missing my family. Due to the fact that I was applying for a residence card for the UK I didn't have a passport as it was with the UK government. After a stressful 3 days of running around and crying trying to get a temporary passport, I made it home just in time for Christmas. My sister's fiancé took us to his cottage in Muskoka where the snow was untouched for months. It was my first time winter cottaging and I couldn't ask for a more beautiful sight. That is a view of my family clearing off snow on the frozen lake for a skate. My Irish boyfriend also fell in love with Muskoka. We've agreed we're making it our Canadian tradition to go back to Muskoka every time we're home.

- Tram



James Murphy @rto12news · 6d
120 people voting per hour for shareyourcanada150.com stories, overwhelming response from our international audiences @explorersedge



My Son Cody lives in Canada

I love Canada because it's where my son lives and we love to explore the beautiful mountains and lakes. To me, Canada will always be my Home and Native Land!

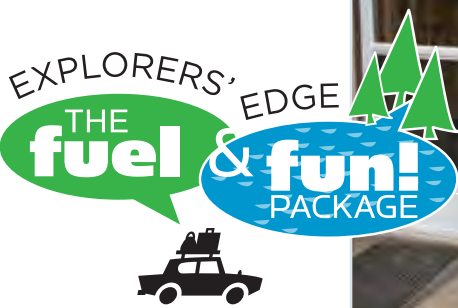
- Chad

Fuel and Fun

- 1,600 new visits to the region
- 3,800 room nights generated



Tyler Francis @RTO12Tyler · 2017-08-20
@muskokabearwear has been welcoming Fuel & Fun travelers - vouchers are being used all over #explorersedge dispersing visitors across region



James Murphy @rto12news · 2015-09-18
All hands on deck delivering F&F packages, personally stopped by to see Michelle KOA PS @mpinkie @explorersedge

Partnerships

- 82 regional collaborative partnerships

Snowfalls and Serenity: Winter Weekends At Muskoka's Sherwood Inn

By Kate in Accommodations, Attractions, Culinary, Outdoor Adventures on November 2, 2016



For over 75 years, **Sherwood Inn** has welcomed summer guests to its shores on beautiful Lake Joseph near Port Carling, Ontario. From May to October, the inn buzzes with the sounds of relaxed and happy vacationers who delight in all things hot and cozy – especially anything near the water.

But when the colder months arrive, when pristine snow has frozen towering pine trees and the lake has settled to ice, then it's the peaceful hush of the winter woods in Muskoka that holds such breath-taking appeal for visitors to the inn. **This is winter's serenity at its finest.**



Imagine a scene from the most idyllic Canadian winter, and you are likely picturing a getaway to Sherwood Inn.

Envision your own cottage with a real, crackling fire waiting for you upon check-in (staff light the fire, you keep it stoked with the wood pile outside your door). See yourself gathering with friends and family around a main lodge fire – inside or out – to enjoy a cocktail or hot chocolate while you warm your toes.



Marvel at each fresh snowfall that entices you to head out for invigorating fun. **Outdoors there is plenty to do**, from skating to snowshoeing, from fat biking to skiing on the wooded trails. Be sure to stop for a break along the way at one of many Muskoka chairs, and perhaps indulge in a pre-ordered picnic from the Sherwood kitchen. And enjoy a moonlight hike using Energizer capsaicins, or search for hidden treasures on our GPS scavenger hunt.

For the ultimate outdoor winter adventure, book your reservation for the **Family Day Weekend from February 17th to the 19th, 2017**, an annual event featuring ice fishing equipment provided, "snowgolf" (yoga in the snow), craft brewery samplings and food pairings, campfires, hot chocolate and more. And be sure to pack your skates to take advantage of the **Sherwood Cranberry Ice Trail Package** – a special getaway that includes skating around the frozen berry bogs at Johnston's Cranberry Marsh.



The Active Women's Winter Weekend: Healthy Fun in Parry Sound, Ontario

By Kate in Attractions, Events, Food, Outdoor Adventures on December 1, 2016



This beautiful area of Ontario continues its rise as an outdoor adventure destination with the expansion of the annual Women On Skis day at **Georgian Nordic Ski & Canoe Club** trails.



If you're a woman who embraces the best that the Ontario outdoors has to offer in the colder months, then the **Active Women's Winter Weekend in Parry Sound from February 11-12, 2017** is an event you won't want to miss.

Join like-minded women for tons of healthy fun in the UNESCO-designated **Georgian Bay Biosphere Reserve** and make this the winter you try something new or perfect your skills.

Traditionally held only at the **Georgian Nordic** trails, this year's edition showcases more activities and more locations, including yoga and snowshoeing at the serene **Harmony Outdoor** trails, curling at the local club, music workshops, fat biking with **Parry Sound Bikes** at Georgian Nordic, and skiing and hiking too.




Mix and match activities when you choose 3 of 7 programs offered in different time slots over the weekend. All Sunday morning programs include a light breakfast and healthy lunch. Saturday evening, get your tickets for the dinner, dance and live musical performance by **Katherine Whitley** and **Gathering Spores** at the Bobby Gitt Centre.

There's plenty of great accommodation in Parry Sound to choose from – the town is definitely open for business in winter. Consider **Bayshore Inn**, **Travelers Motel**, **Town & Country Motel** or **Canada's Best Value Inn & Suites** for special event rates.

Grab your girlfriends and head to Parry Sound on Georgian Bay this February 2017 for the **Active Women's Winter Weekend** – and for some of the warmest hospitality you'll find in Canada.

For more information and to purchase tickets, [click here](#).



Explorers' Edge

Published by Kate Edge (7) · 21 October at 17:06 · 49

There's still time to grab your 'brosies' to head to Huntsville's Girlfriends Getaway Weekend - and November 4th-6th is the perfect time for busy women to go!



November Is A Girl's Best Friend

Huntsville's Girlfriends Getaway Weekend is the perfect excuse to turn November into the most memorable month of the year. Grab your besties and go.

EXPLORERSEDGE.CA

100,002 people reached

Like Comment Share

Deborah Borg, Sherry McIntyre, Giannone and 2.2k others · Top comments · 167 shares · 46 comments

Explorers' Edge

Published by Kate Edge (7) · 29 June · 49

SantaFest is coming to town and the summer parade is back!



SantaFest: Merriment in Ontario's Cottage Country

Santa's back in Bracebridge, Muskoka and spreading good cheer at the 2nd annual SantaFest celebrations on July 9, 2016.

EXPLORERSEDGE.CA

259,641 people reached

Like Comment Share

Lyle Menary, Lorna Downie and 3.7k others · Top comments · 664 shares · 115 comments

Explorers' Edge

Published by Kate Edge (7) · 31 August · 49

The two weekends of the Muskoka Autumn Studio Tour showcase exceptional artwork and country roads with brilliant leaves all about. It's also a unique opportunity to discover some amazing creative spaces.



Muskoka Autumn Studio Tour: Discover the Inner Sanctums of 20 Incredible Artists

Of course exceptional art is what makes this tour so great, but checking out the artists' inner sanctums gives visitors a rare insight into creative processes as well. Now in...

EXPLORERSEDGE.CA

289,240 people reached

Like Comment Share

Susan Briggs MacLean, Given Vaughan and 3.6k others · Top comments · 150,348 people reached

Explorers' Edge

A place worth visiting and comfort worth discovering.



The Lost Fox B&B in Port Loring: Elegant Country Charm

Meander off the beaten path to beautiful Port Loring, Ontario and discover a charming place to rest and relax in the great Canadian wilderness.

EXPLORERSEDGE.CA

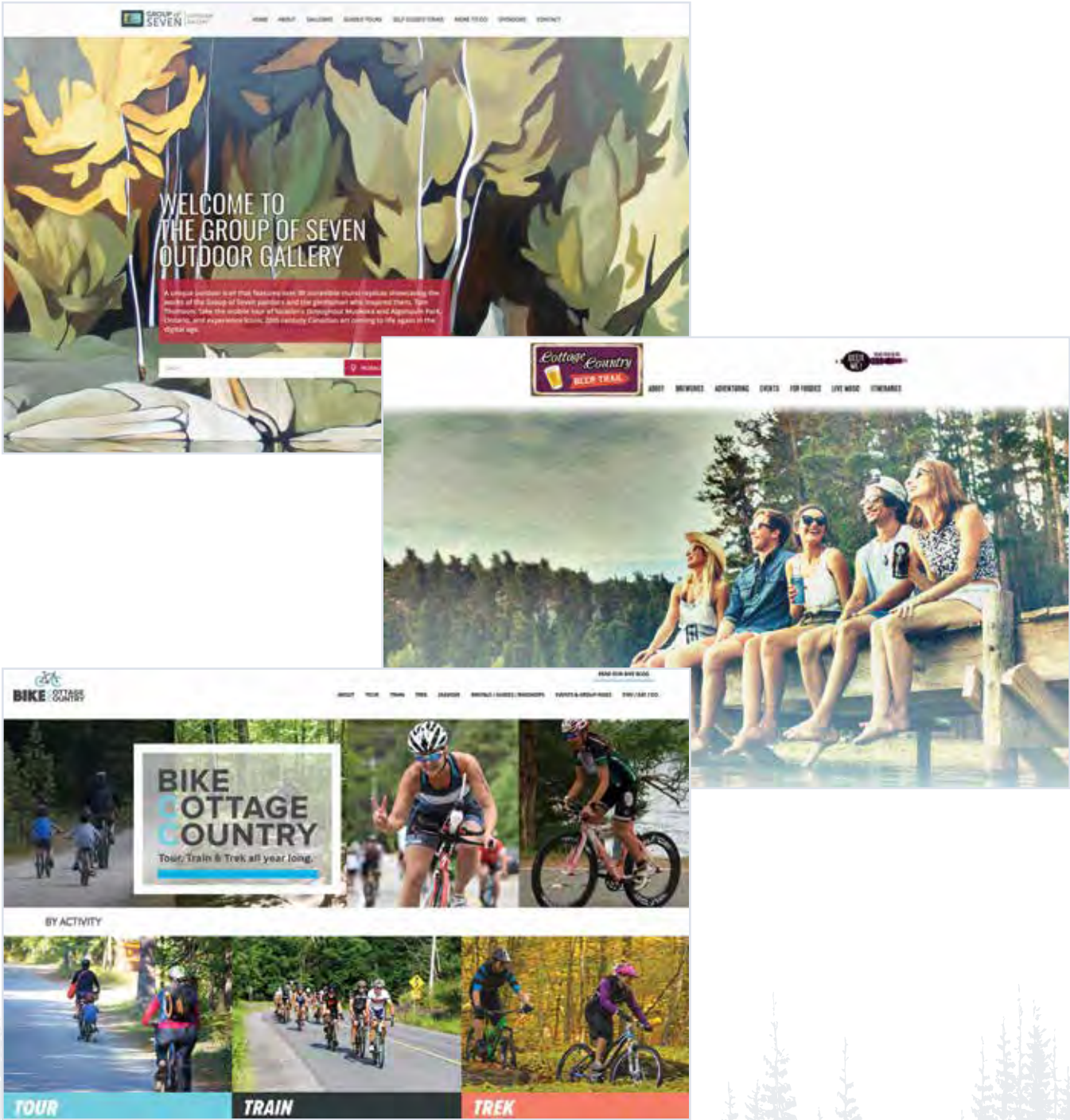
150,348 people reached

Like Comment Share

3.4K · Top Comments

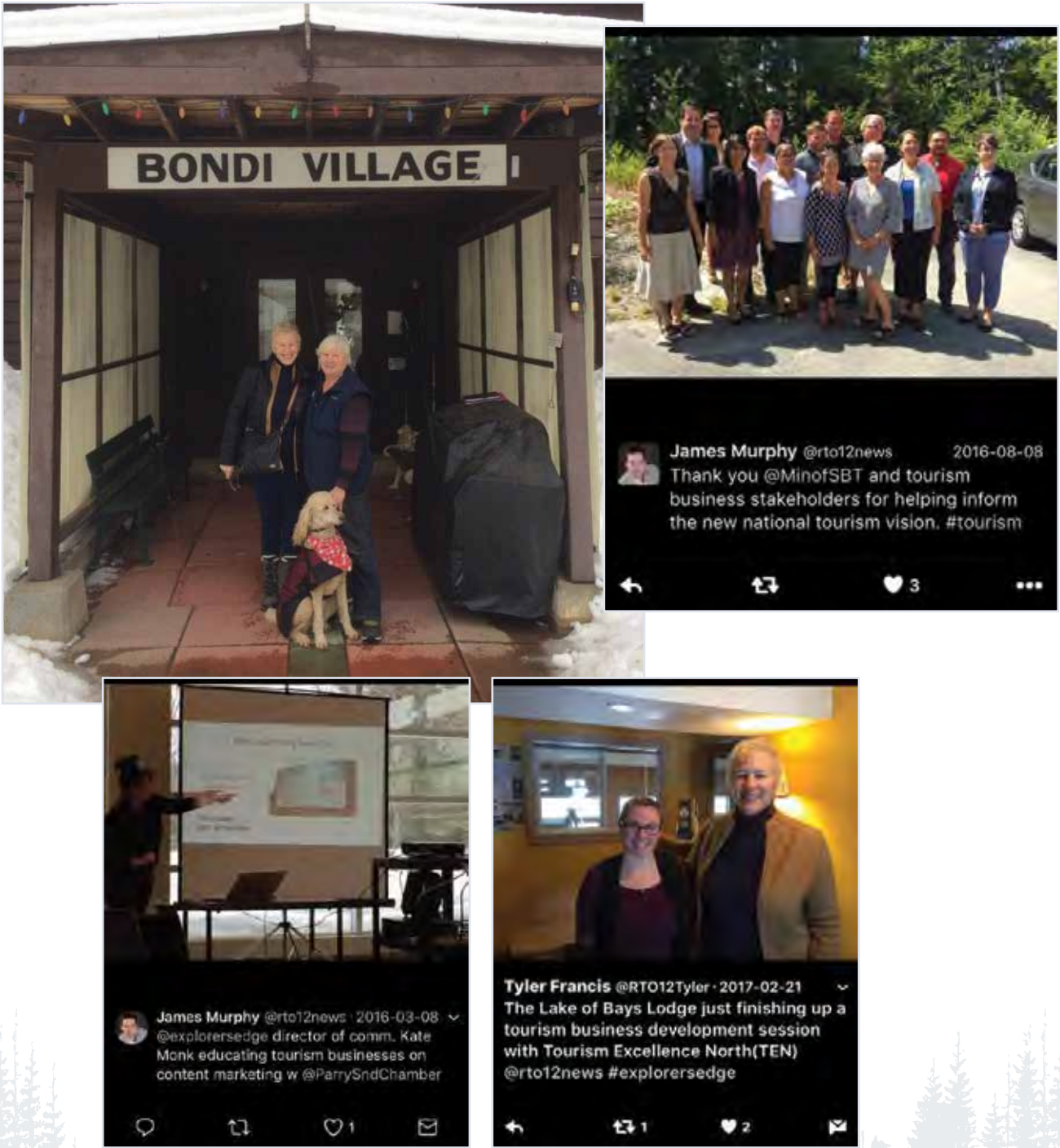
Self-Guided Mobile Tours

- Developed and launched three self-guided mobile tours



Workforce Development

- 245 stakeholders attended AMA and training presentations
- 82 TEN program participants





Key Learnings Last 3 Years

- Strategy & Process are the keys to EE's success
- "Do more with less" is our ongoing mantra
- Dispersion strategies are needed to ensure provincial and federal marketers meet rural tourism objectives
- Don't ever rely on the status quo – be willing to lead the way and try something new
- Don't rely on consultants for final programming – instead use them a resource to formulate dynamic planning
- Business owners are key to success at Board level because they empower the organization to take smart risks
- Never rely on aspirational budgeting
- Don't rely on federal or provincial marketers necessarily, although collaborate when strategies align
- Our best work comes when we consider the consumer/traveller: ask what will make it easier for the visitor to choose our destination?
- In-house control over all projects is optimal for program development and successful outcomes

**SWOT ANALYSIS of the Board of Directors at the 2017 Planning Session:
'State of the Organization'**

Strengths

- Great natural resources
- International brands/awareness – Algonquin
- Outdoor adventure destination – golf, motorized and non-motorized water sports, cycling, hiking, skiing/snowboarding, snowmobiling
- More people looking for activity on their vacations
- Award winning resorts, restaurants, chefs
- Four season destination
- Diversity of the RTO board
- Efficient, qualified administration
- Targets are achievable and costs low – we do more with less
- Robust content
- Do more with less
- Great vision as to our mandate
- Vision of board and staff focused on the mandate
- Board composition
- Industry skillsets
- Level playing field
- High quality administration and staff

Weaknesses

- Shortage of summer inventory
- Traffic on weekends – no easy access to our area
- Finding staff for tourism businesses is a massive problem
- Lack of cultural diversity
- Taking on too much
- Focus on ALL sub-regions needs to be considered and laying out achievable goals year over year is important so that the work gets done
- We like to complain about government, but we can't change that
- Inequity of funding
- Risk of staff burnout
- Products targeted at foreign markets
- Duplication

Opportunities

- Off-season inventory
- Transportation improvement
- Revive the trains – get off plane and jump on rail
- New Canadians
- Marketing to existing businesses – building a support network within RTO
- Q&A forum where businesses can network and communicate
- Partnerships being discussed
- Airlines
- Workforce development
- Increase packaging opportunities

Threats

- Shrinking labour force
- Similar products offering in other Ontario Regions
- Shrinking real estate in the tourism industry
- Yearly funding model
- Succession planning
- Copycats who have more money

Key Learnings

- International
- Social, online, mobile content marketing
- Package
- Partnerships
- Commercial Air Service Development
- Industry communication



Changes in the Landscape: New Considerations

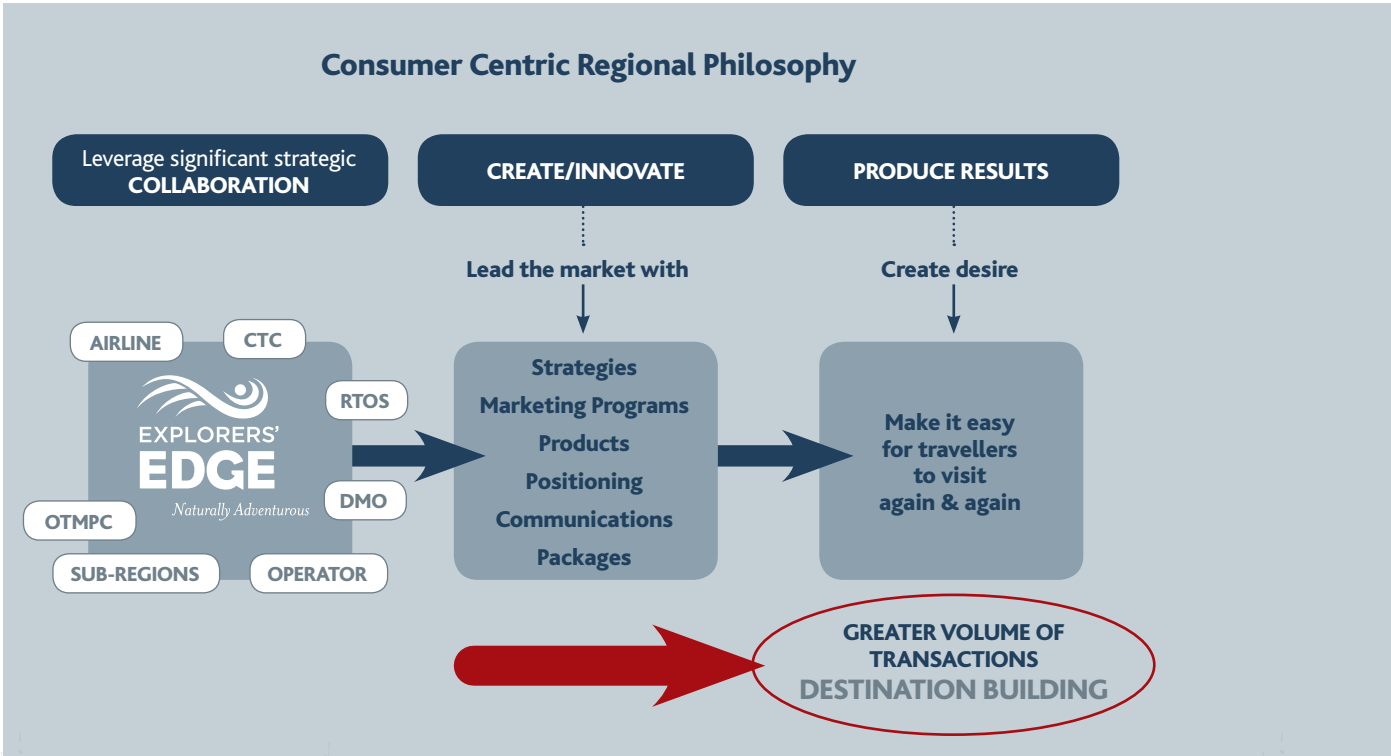
With the development of its successful social, mobile content strategy targeting domestic audiences, and with the new era of planning being in the control of travelers (who seek digital planning resources), it is now possible for a smaller, lesser-funded regional tourism organization to make some noise on the global stage. To that end, Explorers' Edge, as one of the leading content marketers in the Canadian tourism industry, will attempt to adapt its successful direct-to-consumer social, mobile content strategy to international audiences. It is through this adaptation that EE hopes to build new audiences and to compete globally.



EE New Strategic Direction

After three years of shouldering domestic marketing in this region, Explorers' Edge will now work to build new audiences by focusing on product development, international marketing, and leveraging greater partnership and funding opportunities. (Explorers' Edge will also continue to do domestic marketing, while shifting budget weight to these new areas over the course of the next five years.)

Continuing with a Consumer-Centric Approach – where the consumer wants and needs are the key concerns – is integral to developing in these three areas (collaboration, create/innovate & results).



Additionally (and significantly), Explorers' Edge will turn its attention to solving the challenges faced in the industry around finding adequate and qualified staff; to that end Workforce Development will become a major focus in the next five years.



2018-2023 Goals

The mandated pillars by Ministry of Tourism, Culture & Sport for the RTO to work within continue to include:

- **Product Development** – to enhance visitor experience through well-designed tourism products that meet current and future visitor demand
- **Investment Attraction/ Investor Relations** – to increase investment in the tourism industry to enhance visitor experience
- **Workforce Development and Training** – facilitate and support the attraction, development and retention of a tourism workforce to enhance the visitor experience
- **Marketing** – to increase awareness of Ontario as a travel destination and increase conversion in target markets
- **Partnership** – to become a catalyst in building strategic alignment and promoting collaboration within the industry
- **Additional** – Industry Communication, Liaison and Accountability

Explorers' Edge Guiding Principles – 2018-2023 RTS

- Leverage strategic collaborations to develop strategies, programs, products and communications that significantly increase the volume of visitors to the Explorers' Edge region
- Use strategy and process as guiding beacons to ensure the success of the organization and its initiatives

Explorers' Edge Operating Principals

- Change perceptions
- Build international audiences
- Increase four season business
- Leverage significant strategic partnerships
- Engage multiple operators

Overall goal set by MTCS

Double tourism receipts by 2020.

RTO12 Brand

Branded for consumer reference as Explorers’ Edge in 2011, the organization’s Board-sanctioned brand positioning is: "a quintessentially Canadian wilderness experience just two hours from the city."

Organizational Goals

The following goals will shape the work of Explorers’ Edge for the next 5 years:

Marketing

- Attract international travelers to the region
- Explore competitive packages and itineraries for international markets
- Identify tipping point and incentive programs for international markets
- Focus on developing the destination as four-seasons through innovative programs
- Enhance photography inventory for regional partners
- Utilize media for broader communication of regional assets

Product Development

- Lead with product that differentiates our destination from others
- Explore and align new product that will distinguish our destination
- Continue to communicate product development in the region

Investment Attraction

- Continue to develop and strengthen economic development links
- Enhance investment attraction programs with regional partners
- Create tourism related investment attractions opportunities for regional stakeholders

Workforce Development

- Establish tourism specific training mechanisms that meet the current workforce challenge facing the industry
- Continue to assess the ongoing workforce needs and needed resources via collaborative partnerships
- Look to international markets to supplement the current workforce base
- Position the region as a training and innovation hub for tourism

Partnership

- Create a shared vision for tourism growth
- Ensure regional partners understand the region tourism strategy
- Support regional priorities and programs

Industry Communication, Liaison and Accountability

- Engage multiple operators when possible
- Continue to strengthen ties and communication with industry
- Ensure the industry is well informed on all tourism related topics (marketing, research, product development, training, investment etc.)

Broad priorities for the next five years

1. Marketing and Promotion Strategy

Over the course of five years, EE will shift from domestic to international markets through strategic collaboration.

- Continue an active social, mobile online content marketing presence with continued tracking, research and referral programs
- Target international markets (priority)
- Continue domestic marketing aligning with developed product
- Continue to with regional transacting program
- Continued involvement in earned media and media relations
- Participation in International FAM tours and trade shows
- Continue to undertake region-wide market research

2. Product Development and Innovation Strategy

EE will lead in the development of product with priorities that include:

- The enhancement of current product: e.g. paddling, biking, craft beer, Group of Seven, Ride The Edge, golf
- Fill gaps: e.g. hiking, culinary, green tourism, transportation (bus/air), Indigenous tourism, international tour operators, workforce development, corporate travel, VFR

3. Investment Attraction Strategy

EE will continue to collaborate with partners, working closely with existing economic development agencies and MTCS with the priorities of:

- Continued support regional commercial air service and cruise ship development
- Collaboration to optimize use of federal funding programs
- Continued communication to potential investors (working closely with economic development representatives)
- Continued communication with existing economic development agencies and the Ministry

4. Workforce Development and Training Strategy

Address the workforce dilemma with in-house programs and strategies with the priority of:

- Exploring the feasibility and development of a tourism training & innovation centre
- Attracting international students, train refugees
- Content marketing & regional job opening promotion
- Continue communication with other agencies to disseminate industry resources and information
- Continue with web-based training seminars/presentations
- Continue to utilize the Tourism Excellence North program based on need identification

5. Partnership

- Enhancement of regional tourism product
- Alignment of international marketing programs and associated projects
- Augmentation of workforce programs
- Continued attraction of private and public partners

6. Industry Communication, Liaison and Accountability Strategy

- Senior management liaise with the industry more often
- Continue and enhance AMAs
- Continue to increase membership
- Continue dissemination of research materials and update regional partners in current findings via industry newsletters (monthly)
- Refine, update and trouble shoot tourism indicator framework with continued development of detailed accountability performance measurement metrics specifically tailored to RTO12
- Continue to strengthen communications with industry throughout RTO12
- Continue to engage operators: town halls, Ask me Anything (AMA), RTO12 forum, stakeholder satisfaction survey
- Continue to refine Operator Database
- Review and updated RTO membership model and funding model



Strategic Recommendations

- 1 Improve the way we work with consultants (use them as a valued resources and as advisors)
- 2 Nurture partnerships that will have the biggest impact
- 3 Introduce and enhance international marketing and product development to grow new visitation as per OTMPC segmentation recommendations (2013)
- 4 Dispersion strategies to get travelers from main urban centres to the region is key



Five Year Pillar Outlook

Workforce Development

Year One

- Build the region as a branded workforce destination (content marketing, website and employer job opening referrals)
- Review of current research on workforce – environmental scan
- Recon on additional research needed (e.g. housing solutions, what are other areas doing, potential funding programs)
- Outreach and alignment with international employment process / opportunities
- Draft Regional Tourism Ambassador Strategy (consider sub-regions, airport, cruise ship & information centres)
- Review Tourism Excellence North involvement and results to determine next steps
- Coordinate with regional and provincial partners (Labour Market Group, Simcoe Muskoka Workforce Development Board, OTEC, etc.)
- RTO seminars – sharing of knowledge, strategies and best practices for business improvement, B2B connecting/liaising

Year Two

- Incentivize international employees (particularly students)
- Invest in additional research, report and communicate findings
- Strategy for Regional Innovation Centre – outreach, input, alignment
- Explore federal & provincial partnerships – align with strategy
- Launch Regional Tourism Ambassador program
- Continue Year 1 – content marketing, website and branded destination communication
- Coordinate with regional and provincial partners (Labour Market Group, Simcoe Muskoka Workforce Development Board, OTEC)
- RTO seminars – sharing of knowledge, strategies and best practices for business improvement, B2B connecting/liaising

Year Three

- Launch “Regional Innovation, Training & Development Centre” (working title)
- Continue Year 1 – content marketing, website and branded destination communication
- Continue to incentivize international employees (particularly students)
- Development partnership applications
- RTO seminars – sharing of knowledge, strategies and best practices for business improvement, B2B connecting/liaising

Year Four

- Transportation and housing – development and recommendations
- Continue with “Regional Innovation, Training and Development Centre”
- Continue Year 1 – content marketing, website and branded destination communication
- Continue to incentivize international employees (particularly students)

Year Five

- Transportation and Housing Implementation
- Continue with “Regional Innovation Centre, Training and Workforce Development Centre”
- Continue Year 1 – content marketing, website and branded destination communication
- Continue to incentivize international employees (particularly students)
- Review five year plan, recommendations and next steps



Five Year Pillar Outlook

Product Development

Year One

- Transportation Outreach – testing shuttles (packages and itineraries with ParkBus, charters etc.)
- International Tour Operator Outreach
- Indigenous Tourism Association of Ontario Outreach
- Enhance and “unleash” self-guided mobile tours (marketing)
- VFR content marketing (VFR to cottages, VFR to Ontario)
- Corporate content marketing (partnership opportunity with MTMA)
- Loyalty Program (consider to “prime the pump” of tour operators for example)
- Explore regional provincial and federal alignment – outreach

Year Two

- Add to Signature Suite of Self-Guided Mobile Tours (Historical Hotspots)
- Explore Product Infrastructure Partnerships (especially after implementation of Accommodations Tax by municipalities)
- VFR content marketing (VFR to cottages, VFR to Ontario)
- Explore provincial partnerships (OTF)
- Regional Culinary Tourism Strategy development
- Continue shuttle service – align packages and itineraries with ParkBus, charters etc.
- Continue International Tour Operator Outreach
- Indigenous Tourism Association of Ontario Partnership Development
- Continue or revise Loyalty Program
- Align regional, provincial and federal strategies related to workforce – outreach and communication

Year Three

- Add to Signature Suite of Self-Guided Mobile Tours (Arts & Culture)
- Implement Regional Culinary Tourism Strategy
- Continue shuttle service – align packages and itineraries with ParkBus, charters etc.
- VFR content marketing (VFR to cottages, VFR to Ontario)
- Continue International Tour Operator Outreach
- Indigenous Tourism Association of Ontario Partnership
- Continue Loyalty Program
- Align regional, provincial and federal strategies related to workforce – outreach and communication

Year Four

- Review Product Development Framework – reconciliation / SWOT
- Review and update culinary program
- Update all Self-Guided Mobile tours
- Continue shuttle service – alignment with packages and itineraries with ParkBus, charters etc.
- VFR content marketing (VFR to cottages, VFR to Ontario)
- Continue International Tour Operator Outreach
- Indigenous Tourism Association of Ontario Partnership
- Continue or revise Loyalty Program
- Explore regional provincial and federal alignments – outreach

Year Five

- Product Development Strategy review, outcomes
- Recommended next steps based on strategy review (fill gaps where applicable)
- Continue shuttle service – alignment with packages and itineraries with ParkBus, charters etc.
- Continue International Tour Operator Outreach
- Indigenous Tourism Association of Ontario Partnership
- Continue Loyalty Program
- Explorer regional provincial and federal alignments – outreach



Five Year Pillar Outlook

Marketing

Year One

- Domestic (sub-regional, seasonal priorities, product) 25%
- International – build audiences, awareness of branded destination and competitive product) 75%
- International B2B – Group Tour Operators (Content production)
- Earned Media
- Photography
- International Incentive Program
- International Trade Shows – aligning with product
- Online Referral Program
- Outreach with regional, provincial and federal partners

Year Two

- Domestic (sub-regional, seasonal priorities, product) 20%
- International - build audiences, awareness of branded destination and competitive product) 80%
- International B2B Group Tour Operators (Content)
- Earned Media
- Photography
- International Incentive Program
- International Trade / Travel Media Shows – aligning with product
- Review Online Referral Program
- Outreach with regional, provincial and federal partners

Year Three

- Domestic (sub-regional, seasonal priorities, product) 20%
- International – build audiences, awareness of branded destination and competitive product) 80%
- International B2B Group Tour Operators (Content)
- Earned Media
- Photography
- International Incentive Program
- International Trade / Travel Media Shows – aligning with product
- Review Online Referral Program
- Outreach with regional, provincial and federal partners

Year Four

- Website Update and Review
- Domestic (sub-regional, seasonal priorities, product) 15%
- International – build audiences, awareness of branded destination and competitive product) 85%
- International B2B – Group Tour Operators (Content production)
- Earned Media
- Photography
- International Incentive Program
- International Trade / Travel Media Shows – aligning with product
- Outreach with regional, provincial and federal partners

Year Five

- Domestic (sub-regional, seasonal priorities, product) 15%
- International – build audiences, awareness of branded destination and competitive product) 85%
- International B2B – Group Tour Operators (Content)
- Earned Media
- Photography
- International Incentive Program
- International Trade / Travel Media Shows – aligning with product
- Outreach with regional, provincial and federal partners



Five Year Pillar Outlook

Investment Attraction

Year One

- Last mile considerations (air arrivals and departures, cruise ship disembarking)
- Review of Current Assets
- Partnership Reconciliation
- Liaise with regional Economic Developers (ensure tourism footprint on Venture Muskoka)
- Liaise with provincial investment stakeholders

Year Two

- Consider and explore partnerships related to Regional Innovation and Training Centre
- International entry points (Airport & Ports) last mile partnerships
- Continue to update current investment assets
- Explore regional investment attraction strategy
- Liaise with regional Economic Developers (ensure tourism footprint on Venture Muskoka)
- Liaise with provincial investment stakeholders

Year Three

- Develop (based on partnership) investment attraction strategy with regional partners.
- Communicate and liaise with regional provincial and federal partners
- Continue with International entry points (Airport & Ports) last mile partnerships
- Continue to update current investment assets
- Liaise with regional Economic Developers (ensure tourism footprint on Venture Muskoka)
- Liaise with provincial investment stakeholders

Year Four

- Communicate and liaise with regional provincial and federal partners
- Continue with International entry points (Airport & Ports) last mile partnerships
- Liaise with regional Economic Developers (ensure tourism footprint on Venture Muskoka)
- Liaise with provincial investment stakeholders
- Continue to update current investment assets
- Implement strategy recommendations

Year Five

- Communicate and Liaise with regional provincial and federal partners
- Continue with International entry points (Airport & Ports) last mile partnerships
- Liaise with regional Economic Developers (ensure tourism footprint on Venture Muskoka)
- Liaise with provincial investment stakeholders
- Continue to update current investment assets
- Implement strategy recommendations



Five Year Pillar Outlook

Partnership

Year One

- Communication of partnership objectives and goals
- International Airport & Cruise Ship
- Sub-regional projects (content, workforce, investment, product development)

Year Two

- Communication of partnership objectives and goals
- International Airport & Cruise Ship
- Product Infrastructure Projects
- Workforce Development Projects
- Sub-regional projects (content, workforce, investment, product development)

Year Three

- Regional Innovation Centre (70%)
- International Airport & Cruise Ship
- Communication of partnership objectives and goals
- Sub-regional Projects (content, workforce, investment, product development) (30%)

Year Four

- Regional Innovation Centre (70%)
- Sub-regional Projects (content, workforce, investment, product development) (30%)
- Communication of partnership objectives and goals

Year Five

- Regional Innovation Centre (70%)
- Sub-regional Projects (content, workforce, investment, product development) (30%)
- Communication of partnership objectives and goals



Five Year Pillar Outlook

Industry Communication, Liaison and Accountability (Governance)

Year One

- Spring Annual General Meeting
- Tourism Business Awards (correspond with Tourism Week and the AGM)
- Development of Board Package for Member to Member recruitment
- Nomination Training
- Monthly Industry Newsletter
- Tourism Indicator Framework
- Provincial Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey
- Industry Website Updates

Year Two

- Spring Annual General Meeting
- Continue with Business Awards
- Tourism Employee Awards
- Monthly Industry Newsletter
- Tourism Indicator Framework

Year Three

- Spring Annual General Meeting
- Continue with Business Awards
- Continue with Tourism Employee Awards
- Monthly Industry Newsletter
- Tourism Indicator Framework
- Provincial Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey
- Governance Review & Update

Year Four

- Spring Annual General Meeting
- Continue with Business Awards
- Continue with Tourism Employee Awards
- Monthly Industry Newsletter
- Tourism Indicator Framework

Year Five

- Spring Annual General Meeting
- Continue with Business Awards
- Continue with Tourism Employee Awards
- Monthly Industry Newsletter
- Tourism Indicator Framework
- Provincial Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey

Year One 2018-2019

Business and Operational Plan



(April 1, 2018 – March 31, 2019)

Executive Summary – Year One

Established in 2010, Explorers' Edge (EE) is one of thirteen Regional Tourism Organizations (RTOs) funded by the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture & Sport (MTCSS), representing the geographic areas of Algonquin Park, the Almaguin Highlands, Loring-Restoule, Muskoka and Parry Sound.

This Business and Operational Plan (2018-2019 BOP) outlines the strategy, provides a brief background on the status of the organization and also specifies goals and activities, concluding with key activities, timelines, performance measures and budget.

The 2018-2019 BOP priorities were considered by the Board of Directors during a strategy session held on November 20-21, 2017 at Hidden Valley Resort in Huntsville, Ontario.

EE has solidified itself as a leader in regional destination development for the past seven years. With a forward-thinking, strategic and innovative staff guided by a private sector Board of Directors, the organization has been at the forefront of social, online, mobile content marketing, innovative programs and tourism partnerships. EE has focused on marketing to southern Ontario and the GTA audiences (the segment called 'Ontario Explorers') and on developing programs that produce optimal ROI for tourism stakeholders. EE is now entering the "Worldly Wise" phase of its evolution, which entails a new focus on international markets, workforce development and product development.

In 2018-2019 we will usher in the successful launch commercial air service into CYQA applying the newly developed Product Development Strategy and applying our successful social, mobile, content marketing strategy to international markets. A key component will be the continued development of packages and itineraries.

We will continue to develop our 'blue chip' programs, including our 'tipping point transacting programs' (e.g. Fuel and Fun), our 'Signature Suite of Self-Guided Tours', (e.g. www.bikecottagecountry.ca), our database lead nurturing (which resulted in open rates up to 48% and CTRs of up to 20%), as well as our Tourism Excellence North program to optimize individual business offerings and results.

Finally, 2018-2019 will see the beginning of the new five year 2018-2023 Regional Tourism Strategy, one that emphasizes new markets, prominence on product development and devotion to the workforce development pillar all while continuing to use our consumer-centric approach.

RTO12 2018-2019 Goals

The mandated pillars by Ministry of Tourism, Culture & Sport for the RTO to work within continue to include:

- **Product Development** – to enhance visitor experience through well-designed tourism products that meet current and future visitor demand
- **Investment Attraction/Investor Relations** – to increase investment in the tourism industry to enhance visitor experience
- **Workforce Development and Training** – facilitate and support the attraction, development and retention of a tourism workforce to enhance the visitor experience
- **Marketing** – to increase awareness of Ontario as a travel destination and increase conversion in target markets
- **Partnership** – to become a catalyst in building strategic alignment and promoting collaboration within the industry
- **Additional** – Industry Communication, Liaison and Accountability

Governance

The RTO has sustained an open and transparent governance philosophy since its inception and has adopted an unwavering reliance on process. Composition of the Board of Directors is developed using a nomination process, and representation on the Board pertains to geographic, sector, gender, skill set considerations. As priority membership is given to business owners or their key GMs/presidents, the RTO Board of Directors has been composed of private sector tourism operator stakeholders since it was created. Ex-Officio members also sit at the table to lend expertise and input. The Board meets bi-monthly, with the Executive conferring weekly. A list of Board of Directors as of November 2017 is provided in Appendix A. With an objective of keeping administrative costs as low as possible, a staff of three conducts the ongoing work of EE.

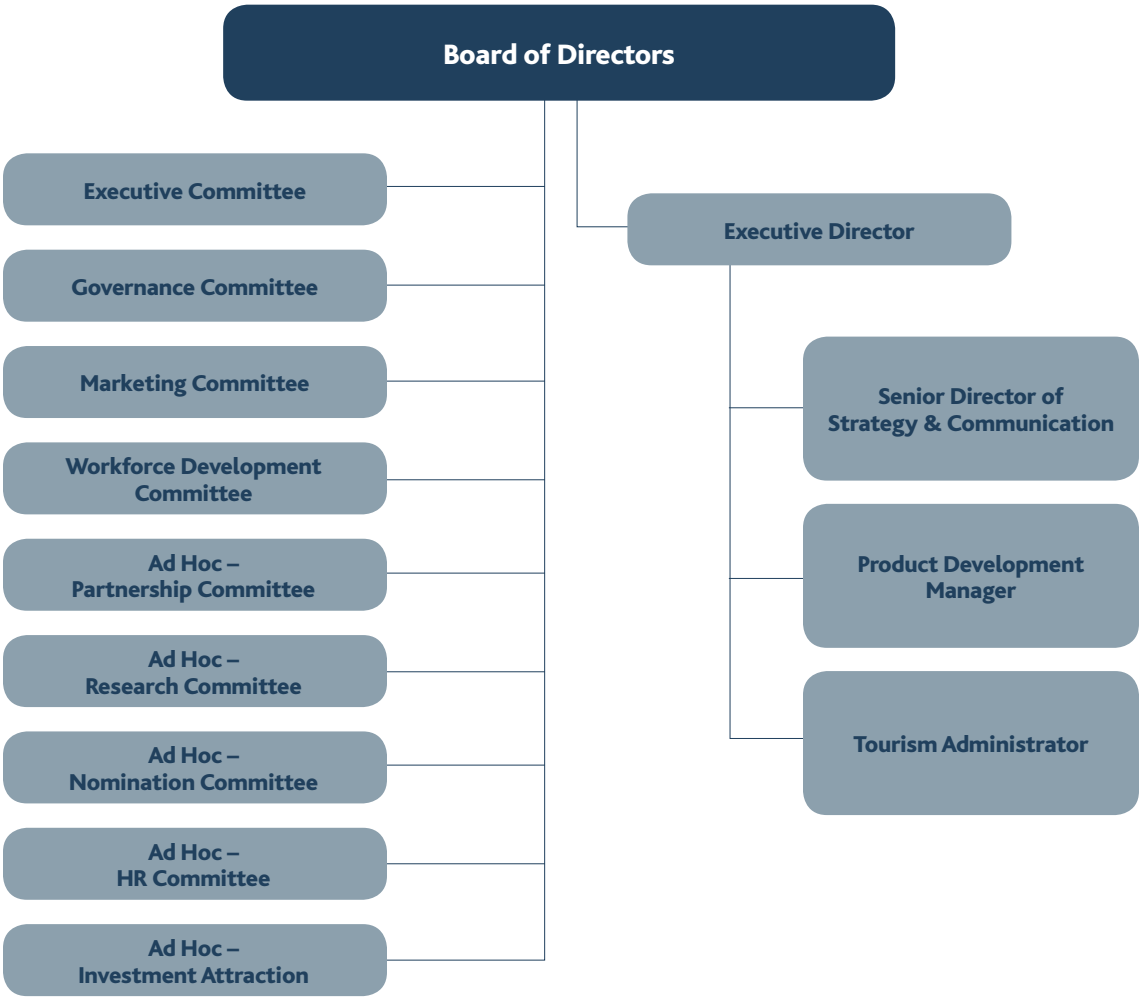
Explorers' Edge is governed by a 14-member Board of Directors representing each of the five sub-regions (Algonquin Park, Almaguin Highlands, Loring-Restoule, Muskoka and Parry Sound). Four committees oversee the work of the organization:

1. Executive
2. Governance
3. Marketing
4. Workforce Development

Five Ad Hoc committees also work on behalf of the Board: Human Resources, Research, Partnership, Nomination, and Investment Attraction.

Committee responsibilities are briefly noted in Appendix B. Committee Terms of Reference are available on the rto12.ca website. Committee updates are provided at each Board meeting.

In 2017 the Governance Committee reviewed bylaws, policies and procedures as well as the Terms of Reference for each Committee. In addition, Explorers’ Edge undergoes annual financial audits as a requirement of its open and transparent philosophy. The organization is in sound financial standing.



Chair, Jeff Suddaby

Owner of 3 Guys and a Stove, located in Huntsville, ON, Jeff has ushered in a culinary experience for tourist and locals alike. In 2014 Jeff joined the RTO board of directors with long standing experience holding positions on other boards, Huntsville Lake of Bays Chamber of Commerce.

Executive Director, James Murphy

After completing a college diploma in Hotel and Resort Management, James went on to complete an undergraduate degree at the University of New Brunswick with a Bachelor of Applied Management in Hospitality & Tourism in 2004. In 2008 James received his Master of Arts, Recreation and Leisure Studies, Tourism Planning and Policy degree from the University of Waterloo. Post-graduation, James served as the general manager of SAVOUR Muskoka, a culinary tourism initiative aimed at bridging the gap between supplier and restaurant chef while at the same time creating a culinary identity for the region of Muskoka and Parry Sound. During this time he was involved in tourism initiatives on a district level and provincial level as a board member with Muskoka Tourism, Ontario Culinary Tourism Association (OCTA) and the Muskoka Lakes Chamber of Commerce. James has also worked on projects with the Canadian Tourism Commission, Canadian Relais & Chateaux Association and Statistics Canada. He speaks regularly on topics of supply chain management in culinary tourism and has research published in the International Journal of Hospitality Management.

Senior Director of Strategy and Communications, Kate Monk

Kate Monk holds a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) from the University of Toronto, where she majored in English literature at Victoria College.

She also earned post-graduate certificates in public relations and media copywriting from Humber College in Etobicoke, Ontario. Kate has a broad range of marketing communications experience, including product management, strategy, web and social media development, and multimedia copywriting. She has worked in various industries, including publishing, advertising, tourism, arts and the not-for-profit sectors. Her articles have been published in Marketing Magazine, Business Sense Magazine, Chatelaine, Muskoka Magazine and What’s Up Muskoka.

Born and raised within the borders of Explorers’ Edge, she spent 17 years working in Toronto, returning home to Muskoka in 2004.

Product Manager, Erin Smit

Erin holds a BA in Sociology from Laurentian University and a diploma in Hotel & Resort Operations from Georgian College in Barrie. She joined Explorers’ Edge under a one-year FedNor contract and then joined the team permanently as our Tourism Administrator. She’s the friendly voice you hear when you call the office, and the calm, competent administrator who keeps the office moving along. Originally from Waterdown, Ontario, she is now settled in Bracebridge with her husband and twin girls.

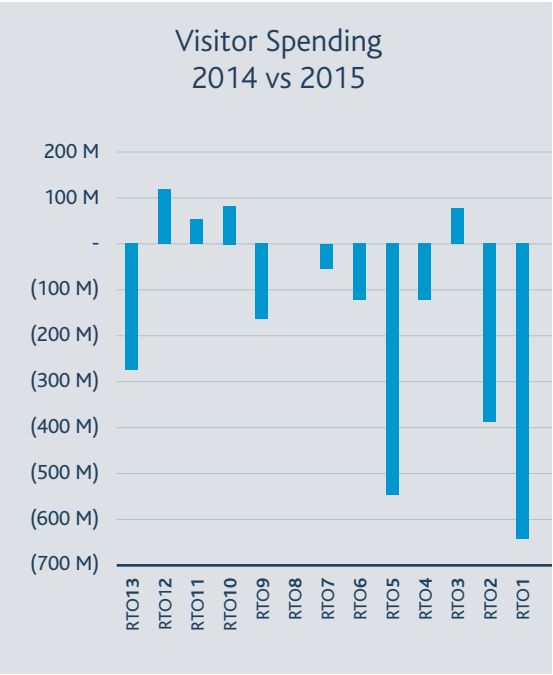
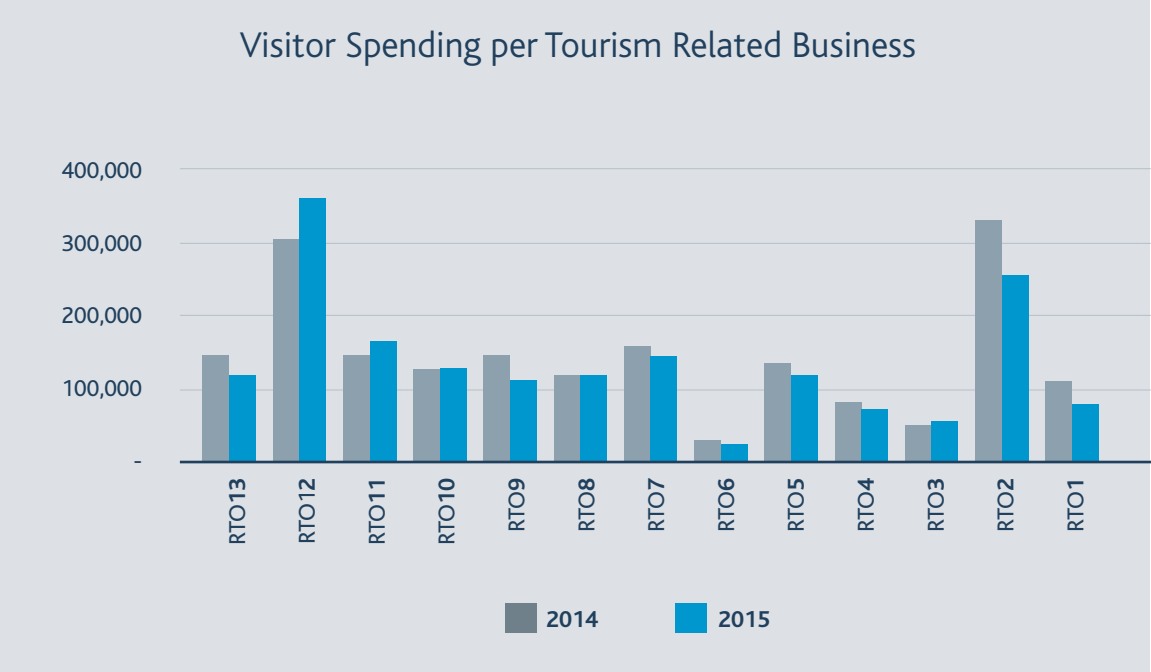
Regional Visitation & Spending Snapshot

The RTO landscape for Ontario and a snapshot of EE’s (RTO12’s) particular position in relation to other RTOs is shown in Table 1 (with 2015 stats offering the most recent comparative data at the time of publishing the RTS).

	Visits (millions) 133.5 mil	Visitor Spending (\$ billions) 19.8 bil.
RTO1 Southwest Ontario	9.7%	6.9%
RTO2 Niagara	7.4%	8.1%
RTO3 Hamilton, Halton & Brant	8.0%	4.5%
RTO4 Huron, Perth, Waterloo & Wellington	8.0%	4.4%
RTO5 Greater Toronto Area	19.6%	37.6%
RTO6 York, Durham & Hills of Headwaters	8.2%	4.1%
RTO7 Bruce Peninsula, Southern Georgian Bay & Lake Simcoe	9.3%	6.8%
RTO8 Kawartha & Northumberland	4.2%	2.4%
RTO9 South Eastern Ontario	5.6%	3.9%
RTO10 Ottawa and Countryside	6.6%	8.5%
RTO11 Haliburton Highlands to Ottawa Valley	4.0%	3.0%
RTO12 Muskoka, Algonquin Park, Parry Sound, Almaguin Highlands, Loring-Restoule	3.3%	3.5%
RTO13 Northern Ontario	6.1%	6.1%

The following visitation and spending estimates have been reported for RTO12:

Visits and Spending			Businesses	
2006	563 M	3.5 M	2009	1,738
2007	571 M	3.4 M	2010	1,688
2008	670 M	3.5 M	2011	1,666
2009	592 M	3.6 M	2012	1,757
2010	513 M	3.8 M	2013	1,795
2011	597 M	4.7 M	2014	1,905
2012	609 M	4.4 M	2015	1,921
2013	614 M	4.2 M		
2014	588 M	4.2 M		
2015	699 M	4.4 M		



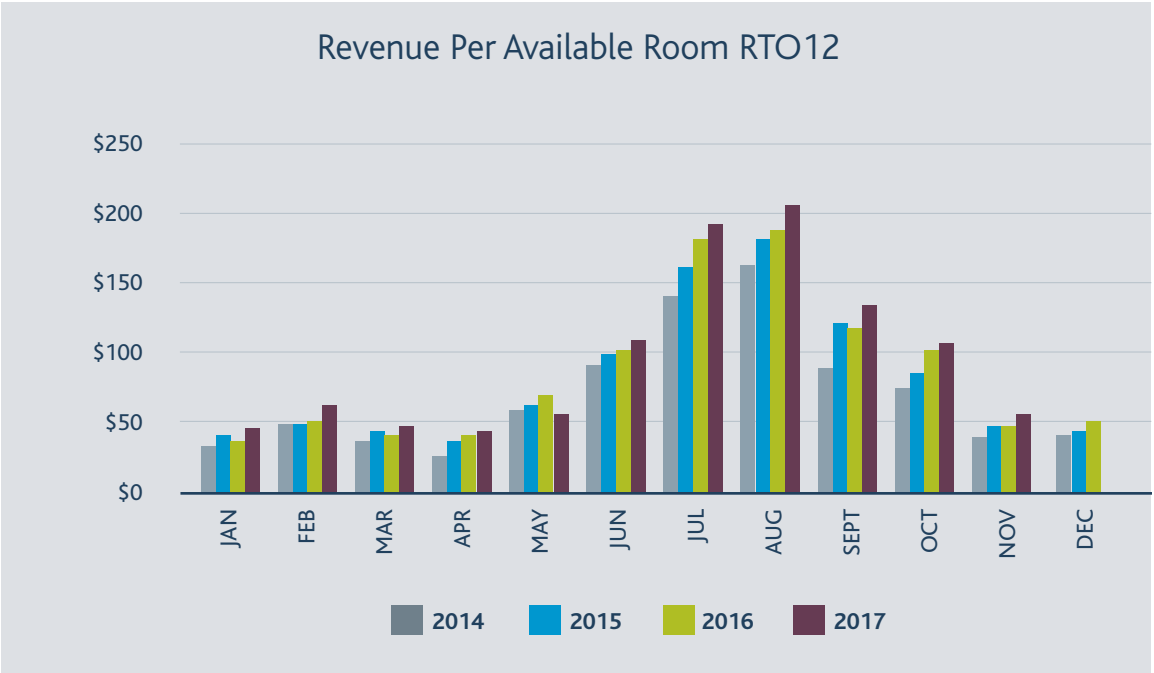
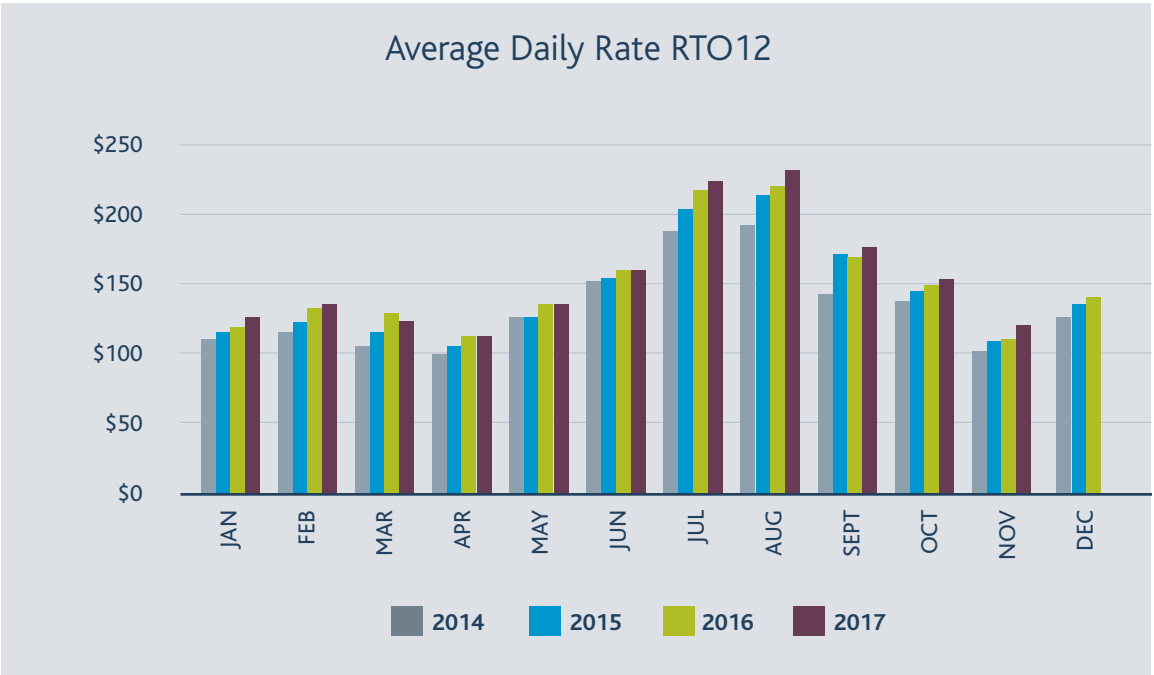
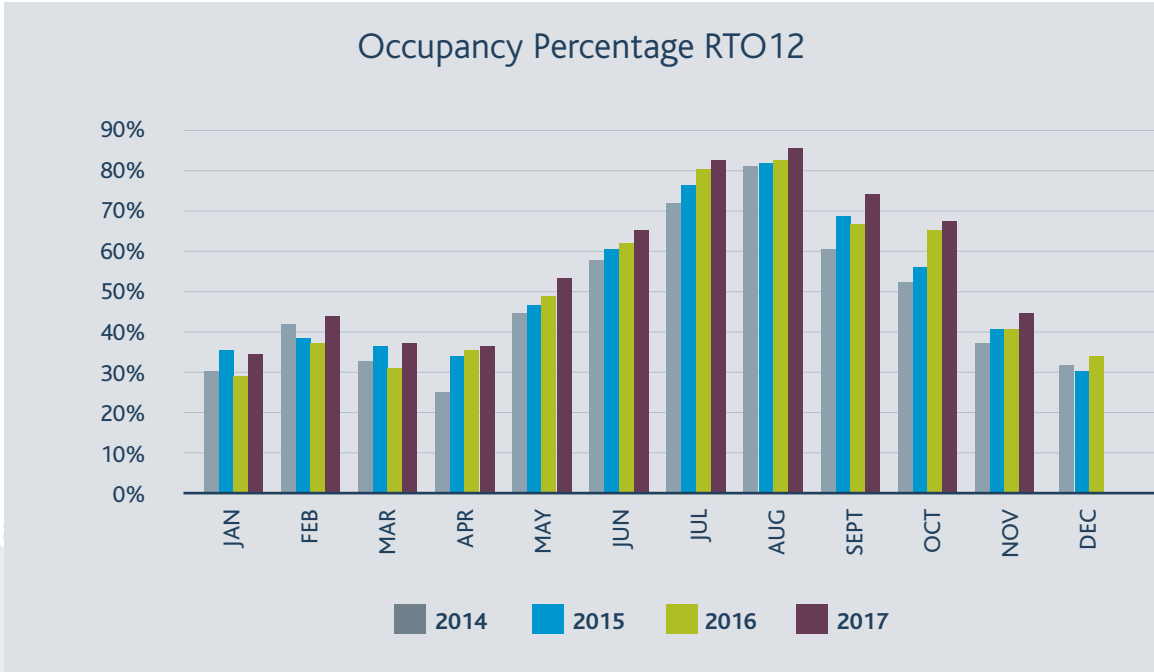
2015 saw a significant increase in visitor spending and a modest increase in visitation to the region. The year reported coincided with both the Pan Am Games in Toronto (and a potentially higher than usual dispersion from the GTA as a result) and the launch of EE's significant and industry-leading social, mobile, online content marketing program (among the first of its kind in the Canadian tourism industry).

Of note: In terms of visitor spending per tourism related business, RTO12 led all the RTOs (including Toronto and Niagara) in Ontario.







Regional Tourism Picture and Outlook

- Year-Over-Year 2015 vs. 2014 (YOY15v14) the region increased visitation by 20%
- YOY15v14 the region increased in visitor spending by 17% (one of only four RTOs that witnessed an increased; RTO12 led with an additional \$100 million in visitor spending
- YOY15v14 roofed accommodation was up 10%, resulting in 1,928,009 nights
- YOY15v14 international markets were up slightly (6%)
- Q1 Jan-Mar, 2015 v 2014 grew by 20%
- YOY15v14 Occupancy (6% increase), Average Daily Rate (7% increase) and Revenue per Available Room (14%) all increased Year over year, 2015 vs. 2014

Occupancy Data



2018-2019 Business and Operational Plan Summary

Governance	Marketing	Product Development	Investment Attraction	Workforce	Partnership
305,500	724,200	135,000	30,000	53,149	342,000
					
<p>Effective Governance: Govern EE through effective leadership; strong industry representation and following strategy, systems, policies and procedures.</p> <p>Review & Update director make-up and committee structure.</p> <p>Administrative Activities, Reporting, Situation Analysis and the updating of the 5 year Regional Tourism Strategy.</p> <p>Continue to liaise with industry stakeholders to ensure that they are aware of regional strategies, priorities and programs.</p>	<p>Reinforce both the regional and sub-regional brands via content development.</p> <p>Introduce regional product to domestic and international audiences.</p> <p>Introduce regional product to international group tour companies.</p> <p>Participate in selected travel trade and media promotions to facilitate a positive media coverage of RTO12.</p> <p>Continue to develop video and image bank.</p> <p>Provide consumers with tipping point program(s) aimed at growing international travel with the strategic focus to prompt new visits to the region.</p> <p>Jack Rabbit Referral system: Maintain, grow and sustain on-line referrals (8); continue to ensure operator sites are up-to-date</p>	<p>Communication and review of the Product Development Strategy.</p> <p>Ensure international travellers have access to regional tourism product.</p> <p>Communicate to niche markets product related self-guided mobile tours.</p> <p>Continue to improve the Tourism Indicator Framework.</p> <p>Acquire and analyze consumer market research; review for next BOP.</p>	<p>Provide operators and stakeholders with the necessary tools, trends applicable tourism development opportunities and applicable information to succeed.</p>	<p>Ascertain the current landscape the regional workforce.</p> <p>Continue to promote availability and desirability of careers in tourism industry throughout RTO12.</p> <p>Support Business Stakeholders owners with skills and knowledge training.</p>	<p>Broadening the RTO's market reach with international marketing.</p> <p>Enhancing and expanding tourism content related to RTO12 across/throughout/with tourism stakeholders.</p>

2018-2019 BOP: Objectives, Key Activities and Timelines, Performance Measures



Governance

Priority / Strategic Focus	Objectives	Key Activities / Tactics	Performance Indicator
Governance			
Effective Governance: Govern EE through effective leadership; strong industry representation and following strategy, systems, policies and procedures	a) Foster organizational capacity with regional stakeholders and ensure committee are engaged in order to deliver regional tourism mandate	a) Review succession plan – Q3 a) develop director handbook a) communicate via e-mail and presentation outreach the RTO structure to regional stakeholders	a) Effective committee participation achieved (goal and target – min at least 50% of committee members have participated in all meetings)
Review & Update director make-up and committee structure	b) Manage our assets and liabilities responsibly c) Deliver expected results on time d) Review Terms of Reference (Selection Criteria, Terms, Numbers) to ensure competency-based skill sets required for the Board of Directors and all Committees	a) administer post committee surveys to capture relevant feedback b) Complete a skills matrix to identify priority areas for board member recruitment – Q3 b) Provide new board members with on-boarding including review of conflict of interest, code of conduct etc. – Q1 b) Offer a minimum of 2 workshops that help board promote organizational excellence – Q2-Q3 b) Solicit stakeholders’ input for business and project plans and report back on activities and decisions – Q3-Q4 b) Regularly review activities, finances at board meetings – Q1- Q4 c) Conduct board reviews of RTO plans and performance measures against stated objectives and targets; adjust as required – Q1-Q4 d) Continue discussion examining paid membership options for EE	b) Effective board participation achieved (goal and target – min at least 70% of board members have participated in all meetings) c) Business plan participation, results of the financial audit and operational reporting (operating goals met, clean audit) d) Time allotted to the discussion of organizational “financial” sustainability and the future funding model (target – during two board meetings and operational planning) d) Membership (target of 200 paid members)

Operations			
Administrative Activities, Reporting, Situation Analysis, and the development of a updated 3 year Strategic Direction/Critical Path	a) Be recognized by regional tourism operators and stakeholders as a regional tourism resource and catalyst c) recognize tourism businesses for their commitment and outstanding achievements	a) Annual update for Business and Operational Plan – Q3 a) Collect and analyse program data, reconcile programs and negotiate TPA – Q1-Q4 a) Fulfill and communicate performance metrics/ measureable as outlined in the Transfer Payment Agreement – Q1-Q4 b) Develop tourism business awards for Annual General Meeting presentation – Q1 b) Present tourism awards at the Annual General Meeting – Q1	a) Number of stakeholders operators involved in RTO committee and/or project work, not including partnership fund or anticipated product development initiative (Target – 14 stakeholders) a) RTO participation with local/regional tourism and/ or economic planning processes to offer subject matter input (goal and target – participation on 5 initiatives) a) Number of regional agencies that the RTO interacts with (target – 22 agencies) b) Number of tourism business that submit for Annual General Meeting Awards (target/benchmark – 8 businesses)

Governance (cont'd)

Priority / Strategic Focus	Objectives	Key Activities / Tactics	Performance Indicator
Industry Communication, Liaison and Accountability			
Continue to liaise with industry stakeholders to ensure that they are aware of regional strategies, priorities and programs	<p>Continue to strengthen communications with industry throughout RTO12 by:</p> <p>a) Foster outreach to operators, and facilitate information sharing</p> <p>b) Continue to facilitate development of industry capacity by providing relevant information</p> <p>c) Strengthen communications with operators</p> <p>d) Explore joint marketing, joint product development, and other initiatives that benefit operators</p> <p>e) Increase the number of paid, registered, tourism operator memberships</p> <p>f) Sustain the number of subscribers to the Stakeholder Quarterly Outreach Newsletter and increase open rate</p> <p>g) Continue to represent member concerns to province and other levels of government</p>	<p>a) Provide most recent research findings on website, on tourism trends, RTO12 and Ministry market research – Q2 & Q4</p> <p>b) Meetings, presentations, face-to-face activities throughout the Region – Q1-Q4</p> <p>c) Review, update and assess gaps in the CRM database – Q1</p> <p>d) Employ direct mail, Operator Forum and other techniques to engage operators – Q1 & Q4</p> <p>e) Leverage the Forum & position as an “enabler” for members to develop partnerships/collaborative marketing programs</p> <p>e) Direct follow-up with current and past members to gather feedback and interest</p> <p>f) Review current mailing list, confirm contacts and conduct regional communication outreach campaign – Q1</p> <p>g) Continue industry outreach engaging stakeholder directly in person or by phone</p>	<p>a) Response rate and results of the Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey (goal and target – 100 responses and a 75% satisfaction rating)</p> <p>b) Number of new subscribers to Quarterly Outreach Newsletter (target – 45)</p> <p>c) Number and types of partnerships with other operators (goal and target – 2)</p> <p>d) Number of joint marketing, joint product development, other initiatives that benefit operators (target – 2)</p> <p>e) Increase the number of paid, registered, tourism operator memberships (by 20)</p> <p>f) Sustain the number of subscribers to the Stakeholder Quarterly Outreach Newsletter and increase open rate by 2%</p> <p>g) identification of three stakeholder concerns to be communicated to the Board of Directors</p>



Marketing

Priority / Strategic Focus	Objectives	Key Activities / Tactics	Performance Indicator
Content Development			
Reinforce both the regional and sub-regional brands via content development	<p>a) Provide greater reach & access to EE region by linking the consumer to regional information, via developed content</p> <p>b) Capture consumer email addresses in the lead nurturing program for future communication</p> <p>c) Increase website analytics, sessions, users, page views, pages/session & average session duration (via content)</p>	<p>a) Development of regional content via researching story ideas, interviewing stakeholders, alignment with research (includes interviews, photography development and regional outreach)</p> <p>b) Assigning staff on a weekly basis to work with the lead nurturing third party to develop, deploy and monitor segmented emails.</p> <p>c) Assigning staff on a daily basis to update consumer website with new content, events, pictures, listings and packages</p> <p>Additional Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Update 2016-2017 Marketing Plan, based on Marketing Committee and stakeholder feedback – Q1• Circulation of monthly monitor tracking reports that include change in website traffic, traffic sources, media performance, outbound referrals, social engagement etc. – Q1-Q4• Assigning staff resources in the communication of use and applicability of the EE logo (Canada 150) on stakeholder communication – Q1-Q4• Assigning staff resources in the exploration of collaborative partnerships stakeholders at a federal, provincial and regional level – Q1, Q2, Q3• Participate in OTMPC programs as relevant to include but not limited to the provincial marketing and advertising tactics – Q1-Q4	<p>a) Regional Content developed (target – 20 domestic pieces on Explorers' Edge website and on applicable microsites and target – 45 international pieces)</p> <p>d) Consumer opt-in for the consumer e-mail database (target – 4,000)</p> <p>c) Website analytics including: visits (target – 800,000), page views (target – 1.5 million), pages/session (target – 1.51) & avg session duration (target – 1.00 minute)</p>
Social Media Marketing			
Introduce regional product to domestic and international audiences	Create awareness of regional product and travel experiences consumers visiting on-line channels	<p>Traffic developed content over social media channels monitoring, updating and responding to travel enquiries related to posted information – Q1-Q4</p> <p>Update social media channels with information related to regional product and experiences</p> <p>Respond and interact with travel enquiries across multiple social media platforms</p>	<p>Social media analytics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Facebook Likes (target – 10,000 new)- Twitter followers (target – 1000 new)- Social media mentions (target – 5,000)- Social media comments (target – 2,000)- Social media Post Likes (target – 25,000)- Social media clicks to Website (target – 100,000)
International Trade Shows			
Introduce regional product to international group tour companies	Make international connects and ascertain interest in regional content and enhance regional awareness	<p>Attend international trade shows and communication regional product</p> <p>Pre-show outreach to attendees where applicable</p> <p>Research tradeshow audiences</p> <p>Staff and volunteer training</p> <p>Post show ROI measurement</p>	<p># of trade shows (goal 2)</p> <p># of tour leads and content adoption leads (12)</p>

Marketing (con't)

Priority / Strategic Focus	Objectives	Key Activities / Tactics	Performance Indicator
Media / PR Program			
Participate in selected travel trade and media promotions to facilitate a positive media coverage of RTO12	<div>a) Increase in brand/story awareness and produce unpaid, positive and engaging editorial coverage in target markets</div> <div>b) Increase media release outputs</div>	<div>a) Regional outreach to gauge feedback on media opportunities – Q1</div> <div>a) Engage industry partners (OTMPC, sub regional partners, operators) on media opportunities – Q1-Q4</div> <div>a) Meet with media representatives at key marketplaces – Q1 & Q2</div> <div>b) Review communication strategy – Q3</div> <div>b) Coordinate media tours – Q1-Q4</div> <div>b) Track media engagement – Q1-Q4</div>	<div>a) Increase number of media visits (target – 8)</div> <div>a) Increase in the number of media contacts in the database (target – 12)</div> <div>a) Increase in unique visits to the RTO media communication page (target – benchmark)</div> <div>b) Increase impressions in earned media and in value of media impressions (target 20% year over year)</div>
Image Bank			
Continue to develop video and image bank	Expand image bank selection and size	<div>Identify image bank gaps – Q1</div> <div>Arrange photo shoots – Q1-Q4</div> <div>Assigning staff resources in the communication of updates to stakeholders and tourism partners – Q2 & Q4</div> <div>Acquire necessary images that support the RTO marketing activities – Q1-Q4</div>	<div>Increase in stakeholder's requests to use imagery in travel and tourism marketing</div> <div>Increase in # of downloads and subscriptions on photography and videography platforms</div>
Transacting			
Provide consumers with tipping point program(s) aimed at growing international travel with the strategic focus to prompt new visits to the region	Increase first time visits to the region via the prompted program travel survey (75% of program participants chose EE over other destinations)	<div>Encourage net new visits to the region via international transacting programs associated with product.</div> <div>Coordinate with stakeholders to field feedback and opportunities for collaboration – Q1-Q4</div> <div>Communicate outcomes with the Transacting Committee on a quarterly basis – Q1-Q4</div> <div>Provide stakeholders with information related to transacting programs on a regular basis – Q1-Q4</div> <div>Identify and work with operators to ensure that accommodation, attraction ticket and package rates are online and recent</div> <div>Coordinate with stakeholders to field feedback and opportunities for collaboration – Q1-Q4</div> <div>Explore gaps and opportunities in the area of package development – Q1-Q4</div> <div>Provide regional outreach and training session(s) to stakeholders on package development and implementation of an online rate and inventory system – Q1-Q4</div>	<div>Signature Tipping Point Program change in first time visitation (target – 75%) and pre-planned visitation (target – 18%)</div> <div>Redemption rate of vouchers (target – 70%)</div> <div>Transacting Visitor Exit Survey (target – 100 responses)</div> <div>Operator Satisfaction with the transacting program (target – 85% satisfied or highly satisfied)</div> <div>Change in the number of operators with a rate and inventory information on JackRabbit (target – 10 operators)</div> <div>Increase Number of packages listed on the Jack Rabbit platform (target – 30)</div> <div>Online referral and reservation system referrals (target – 40,000)</div>
Jack Rabbit Referral system: Maintain, grow and sustain on-line referrals (8); continue to ensure operator sites are up-to-date	Provide consumers with accommodation, package and attraction rate information		



Product Development

Priority / Strategic Focus	Objectives	Key Activities / Tactics	Performance Indicator
Product Development Strategy			
Communication and review of the Product Development Strategy	Confirm deliverables/outcomes of the product development strategy	Using staff resources present the strategy to regional stakeholders via in person presentations, webinar and AMA session Solicited feedback and ensure regional stakeholders are familiar with Product Development Strategy Communication and outreach to International Tour Operators and Indigenous Tourism Association of Ontario based on strategic recommendations Explore regional product programs linking associated regional product offering Test VFR and corporate content and analyze impact on regional product	# of tourism stakeholders involved in the feedback/ education process (target – 80)
Transportation			
Ensure international travellers have access to regional tourism product	Improve connectivity across multiple product offerings	Network and outreach with transportation companies / service providers Develop report/information related to product, routes and best practices Align transportation routes with package and itinerary information/offering	# of product linked to transportation routes # of travellers utilizing transportation services
Self-Guided Mobile Tours			
Communicate to niche markets product related self-guided mobile tours	Create awareness about the developed self-guided mobile tours	Trouble shoot self-guided mobile tours for accuracy and applicability Develop content specific to each tour Communicate tours via social media platforms Engage tourism stakeholders to push out suite of self-guided tours	Track web analytics and usage of self-guided mobile tours (benchmark year)
Research			
Continue to improve the Tourism Indicator Framework. Acquire and analyze consumer market research (7); review for DDP next year	a) Develop annual report via online dashboard capturing the data collected across the key performance measures (HST, attractions, occupancy, weather, etc.). Include PKF data b) Continue to keep abreast of and integrate relevant Ministry research with our own	a) Over the course of the year using staff resources the RTO will network with stakeholder to assemble data related to Organizational Program Performance, Tourism Business Performance, Visitor Intelligence via an Exit Survey – Q1-Q4 b) Continue to track and disseminate Ministry-generated consumer research – Q1-Q4 b) Acquire and analyze consumer market research; review for DDP next year	a) Sustain the number of section items and indicators included in the Tourism Indicator Framework (target – 6 sections and 6 indicators) a) Number of views / downloads of the online dashboard (target – 250) b) Number of participants in the online dashboard (target – 35) c) Number of research presentations (target – 6)



Investment Attraction

Priority / Strategic Focus	Objectives	Key Activities / Tactics	Performance Indicator
Investment Attraction			
Provide operators and stakeholders with the necessary tools, trends applicable tourism development opportunities and applicable information to succeed	<p>a) Continue to develop and strengthen economic development links</p> <p>b) Explore programs for attracting unique investment that will differentiate the region</p> <p>c) Access new markets via the development of commercial air service and great lakes cruising</p>	<p>a) Disseminate relevant Investment Attraction information to stakeholders on a quarterly basis – Q1-Q4</p> <p>b) Organize investment attraction networking event(s) – Q1 & Q3</p> <p>b) Communicate investment attraction opportunities to potential investors</p> <p>c) Communicate commercial regional air service progress ensuring the broader regional group of stakeholders is involved and abreast of developments – Q1-Q4</p> <p>c) Assigning staff resources in the engagement sessions with the District of Muskoka, Muskoka Airport, Transport Canada, CATSA, regional stakeholders and consultant outreach – Q1, Q3 & Q4</p> <p>c) Continued development support of commercial air service to the Muskoka Airport CYQA and great lake cruising to Parry Sound</p>	<p>a) # of attendees at investment seminar/workshop(s) (target – 20)</p> <p>b) # of program / projects created or maintained (target – 2)</p> <p>c) # of regional outreach engagement sessions (target – 5)</p>



Workforce

Priority / Strategic Focus	Objectives	Key Activities / Tactics	Performance Indicator
Work Force			
Ascertain the current landscape the regional workforce	Gain an understanding of current work force resources, gaps, best practices, resources and applicable partners	<p>Review of current workforce development tools and programs.</p> <p>Workforce Committee meetings</p> <p>Work with existing organizations to coordinate workforce development, prospect/ opportunities in EE & facilitate/communicate workforce opportunities</p> <p>Reconciliation via a regional report on the additional research that will be required</p> <p>Draft of a regional tourism ambassador strategy (consider sub-regions – airport and cruise ship)</p> <p>Assigning staff resources to review workforce and assimilate resources in the region. Q3</p> <p>Engage sub-regions that are point of entry for international travelers and engage in a consultation and training process. The outcome with be a developed strategy to ensure consistency among international points of entry</p> <p>Explore the necessary process and components of international employment (student and refugee)</p>	<p>Number of workforce development opportunities communicated (target – 5)</p> <p># of participants in the development and communication of the workforce overview (target – 15)</p>
Work Force			
Continue to promote availability and desirability of careers in tourism industry throughout RTO12 (25)	Position the RTO as a workforce development hub collecting and sharing resources related to workforce development	<p>Update and network with the workforce development committee</p> <p>Make necessary website update to rto12.ca related to workforce development</p> <p>Create content position the region as a career option related to tourism</p>	<p>Website analytics related to workforce development (benchmark year)</p> <p># of pieces of content related to workforce development (target – 3)</p>
Work Force			
Support Business Stakeholders owners with skills and knowledge training	Provided business stakeholders with the opportunity to gain critical feedback while acquiring new skills and abilities	<p>Organizes and execute relevant presentations and seminars</p> <p>Develop and schedule Ask Me Anything (AMA) webinars based on stakeholder needs and feedback</p> <p>Review Tourism Excellence North (TEN) program and communicate the pilot project out to operators</p>	<p>Industry seminars and presentations (target – 6)</p> <p>Industry AMA sessions (target – 6)</p> <p># of stakeholders involved in TEN review (target – 14)</p> <p>Satisfaction rating related to seminars and AMA's (target 80% satisfied or highly satisfied)</p>



Partnership Allocation

Priority / Strategic Focus	Objectives	Key Activities / Tactics	Performance Indicator
International Market Development and Marketing			
Broadening the RTO's market reach with international marketing	Engage and communicate the breadth of tourism product to international markets	Using staff resources in cooperation with third party develop strategy, tactics and deliverables – Q1 Work with third party to establish work plan, key deliverables and dates – Q1 Using staff resources communicate mid partnership progress and final report to stakeholders – Q2-Q4	# of content pieces produced (goal and target – 10)
Content Development (Workforce, Marketing, Investment Attraction & Product Development)			
Enhancing and expanding tourism content related to RTO12 across/throughout/with tourism stakeholders	Increase of information (blogs/content) and the impact of such information in the market place for consumers	Using staff resources work with regional stakeholders in the development of content related to regional product offering via collaborative partnerships – Q1 Using staff resources develop necessary contracts – Q1-Q2 Using staff resources on board partners and AOR – Q2-Q3 Using staff resources execute, track and report back on project deliverables – Q2-Q4	# of content pieces produced (goal and target – 10)

Marketing Plan

Based on the exceptional results of our foray into international markets the Board of Directors of RTO12 has recommended that the marketing strategy for 2018-2019 be a continuation of what was set in place in the previous year, with the introduction of various refinements (e.g. quality of content over quantity, the testing of new channels, the application of our domestic approach to the international programs, etc.) and with an international audience.

Marketing Mission

To make our target audience aware of the Explorers' Edge region and of the exceptional tourism offerings found in the sub-regions within, in order to convert targeted audiences into overnight travelers to the region.

Marketing Manifesto

As our target audience continues to turn away from traditional advertising and other interruptive marketing, we will continue to use content marketing to ensure this region is foremost in their consideration when they are thinking of travelling. Of particular note, we will attempt to ensure we have a high standard of content and social interactions, so that our efforts are optimized.

The challenge with traditional advertising is that most of what it communicates is irrelevant to our target needs or reaches them at the wrong time. What distinguishes content is that it seeks not to interrupt, but to be found – and to be found at precisely the moment when the target is ready to consider our message. Moreover, because it's better suited to inform and educate, our content will attract visitors to Explorers' Edge and its 5 sub-regions, and engage potential customers much earlier in the path to purchase.

And unlike traditional advertising, content marketing doesn't limit the scope of our message, and allows us to communicate the breadth and depth of the Explorers' Edge proposition and be inclusive of ALL the regions it comprises. (It also means more of our marketing budget is spent on reaching the prospect and not on agency fees and creative development.)

We have already found our voice as social mobile content publishers, and have proven that content marketing can bring qualified prospects to the region.

In 2018-2019 we will fully commit ourselves to solidifying our place as the leading content marketers in the Ontario tourism industry, and to out-performing our competitors. We will publish more compelling content – content designed to convince and convert – and ensure that it is fully optimized for the social mobile consumer.

We will once again be Ontario tourism's leading social mobile content marketers in 2018-2019.

Brand Positioning

A quintessentially Canadian wilderness experience just 2 hours from the city.

Tagline

"The great Canadian wilderness just north of Toronto."

Brand Voice

Earnest, approachable, informed and, most of all, "Canadian".

Marketing Priorities

- Publish exceptional content pertaining to product development – cycling, paddling, craft beer and culinary and promote it via social media (inbound marketing) primarily
- While our focus will be on "discoverers" (i.e. new audiences), our content marketing strategy will also attract "searchers" (i.e. audiences planning trips who are further down the purchase funnel)
- Grow amount of quality traffic to the Explorers' Edge website (1.2 million visits total)
- Grow number of qualified referrals out to tourism stakeholder websites (350K total)
- Convert Visitors: Nurture consumer leads and convert them to "heads-in-beds" and increase the number of leads in the segmented database
- Target U.S. (Washington, New York, Chicago and Boston)

Marketing Objectives 2018-2019

- Publish 65 pieces of exceptional quality (45 International and 20 domestic) content across multiple websites (new and updated):
 - 1) www.explorersedge.ca (most important)
 - 2) www.bikecottagecountry.ca
 - 3) www.go7murals.ca
 - 4) www.cottagecountrybeertrail.ca
- Drive 1 million visits to the Explorers' Edge website using content marketing
- Add 4K leads to the email database
- Drive 300K referrals to regional tourism stakeholder websites
- Increase the number of Earned Media impressions
- Continue to promote the brand for competitive positioning

Priority Target Market(s)

US Authentic Experiencers

- Male 55% female 45%
- Education: Highest with Post Grad
- Occupation: Highest retired and professional
- Household Income: High
- Lifestage: Empty Nesters
- Want to see vast natural settings and wonders around the globe, but also like to take in local park scenery • Like to integrate into the local culture, eat authentic foods, learn the language to converse with locals, and explore areas ignored by tourists • Seek to learn all that they can about the cultures they visit in advance of their trips • Abhor commercial comforts of western hotels, seeking to live as authentically as the locals do • Not overwhelmed by travel – on a life-long journey of learning, so travel is not about escape but personal development

US Cultural Explorers

- Male 42% Female 58%
- Education: College/University
- Occupation: High FT, professional/office
- Household Income: Middle-high
- Lifestage: Average
- Always excited about the next trip • Fascinated by the ancient history as well as the modern cultures of the places they visit • Travel is a journey, not the destination, and it is best experienced with like-minded companions who enjoy having fun while learning • Feel relaxed and free while travelling • This segment seeks an authentic experience and doesn't want to stay in sterile, commercial hotels • While cautious, these travellers are not afraid to venture into the unknown in pursuit of discovery • They will not be constrained to "tourist" schedules or destinations, but will chart their own courses

Marketing Tactical Plan

Content Publishing Strategy

We focus editorial content on the following:

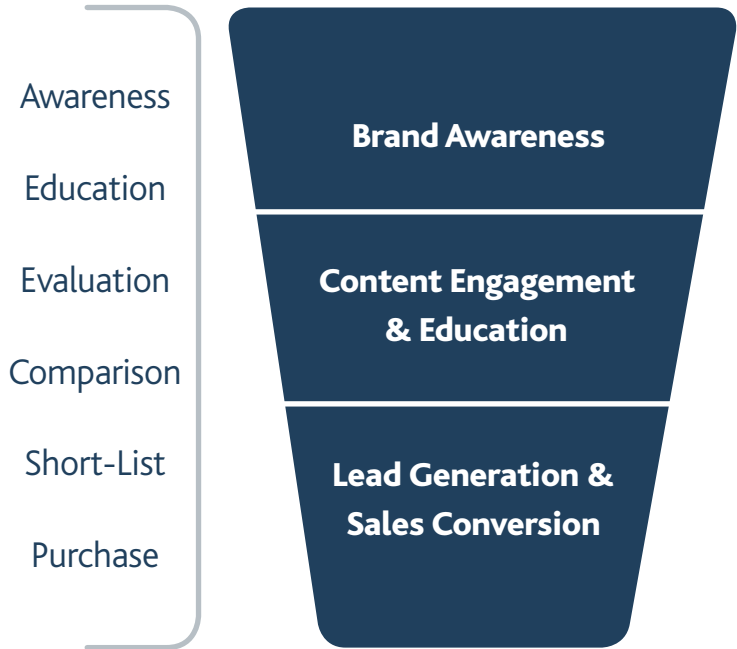
- Content that is attractive to our six established marketing "Personas" – Motorsports Enthusiasts, Food & Culture Fans, Outdoor Adventurers, Family Vacationers, Hunters & Fishers, Fit & Sportives
- The purchase decision criteria where EE is perceived to be lacking against competitor regions (these include proximity/accessibility, accommodations, cultural activities, attractions and dining/entertainment)
- Communities of interest, or niches, such as cyclists and paddling enthusiasts, etc.
- We will publish content that has universal appeal (and thus highly shareable) but still connects to the region (e.g. "Winter Photography: Don't Put Your Camera Away Just Yet")
- We will publish 65 new pieces of content in 2018-2019 using this strategic mix as a guideline
- We will produce high quality content, which may include quality videos and photos, as well as text that is optimized for search (and includes no fewer than 500 words)

Primary Marketing Channel(s)

- Facebook

Marketing Funnel: Inbound Marketing to Move Followers Further Down the Funnel

By using content marketing to attract email sign-ups (inbound marketing), Explorers' Edge intends to develop more targeted communications with interested parties in order to move them further down the "purchase funnel" (i.e. turn "discoverers" into "searchers" into "purchasers"). This is known as the Lead Nurturing Strategy, which relies on email marketing software from Hubspot to build enhanced customer experiences (as per the "Consumer –Centric Regional Application" from the 2014-2017 DDP) to enhance customer relations (and ongoing selling).



Lead Nurturing Program Objectives

The strategy for 2018-2019 is to convert more leads (travel planners) into purchasers (travellers who book in our region). We will measure this based on referrals out to tourism stakeholder websites and on package clicks (trackable in the Hubspot back end). The primary objectives of the Lead Nurturing Strategy, now that Personas have been established and the audiences are being segmented based on Personas, will be twofold:

Continue to build the overall list of email recipients

- Introduce additional calls to action that will evoke more bookings in the region e.g. package offers in content or in email newsletters with approximately 40 packages promoted
- Marketing automation software (Hubspot) will make it possible to increase the potential success of our Lead Nurturing Strategy by doing the following:
 - Automating the deployment of customized email based on the behaviour of our website users (e.g. which specific pieces of content are leads clicking on? Can additional direct response content be sent to them around their interests to send them further down the purchase funnel?)
 - One-off emails to address tourism challenges or promote a specific program (example Fuel & Fun)

The Lead Nurturing Strategy will entail that each segmented user is sent, at a minimum, four quarterly e-newsletters that contain specific calls to action.

Timing for Lead Nurturing Strategy Implementation

In market week of April 1, 2018 and run to week of March 31, 2019.

Marketing Partnerships with OTMPC

Explorers' Edge will explore multiple co-branded marketing initiatives with OTMPC in the 2018-2019 fiscal year, we will consider – but not commit to – the following OTMPC initiatives:

- Group of Seven
- International Opportunities
- Canadian Paddle Culture

Media Relations / PR

RTO12 will continue to work with our AOR (Enterprise Canada) to build awareness of the branded destination, our programs and products using strategic media outreach tactics.

Testing New Tactics

Explorers' Edge will continue to research and test multiple advertising tactics in order to optimize our results (while ensuring cost-effectiveness of each tactic).

Tracking / Measurement

As part of our marketing management, we will track the results of the campaign and provide a “dashboard” of results. These metrics include:

- Web ad impressions/clicks
- Traffic profiles/trends on Explorers' Edge websites
- Visits by influential bloggers to the region
- Social media posts
- Social network mentions (Facebook/Twitter)
- New interactions with Explorer's Edge (including e-news sign ups)
- Net new Facebook fans and Facebook interactions (insights)
- Twitter, Flickr, YouTube, Pinterest and Google Plus insights
- Referrals – Jack Rabbit Referral System and outbound links

The Partnership Program

In an effort to achieve optimal results with the Partnership Funds provided to RTO12 (and to build greater volume of visitors to the region), the next phase of partnerships, for fiscal 2018/2019, will aim to align with the transition from domestic to international markets while at the same time align with the outcomes of our recently published RTO12 Product Research and Framework.

RTO12 Product Development Framework: Worldly Wise			
Tangible			Untangible
Current Digital Assets	Differentiated KTAs	New / Gap	New / Gap
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bike Cottage Country• Cottage Country Beer Trail• Group of Seven Outdoor Gallery• Fish the Edge• Ride the Edge• Golf Muskoka• Current Inventory Asset• Paddling Inventory	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being Lakeside• Wildlife Viewing• Guided nature tours• Indigenous Culture/ Tourism• Paddling• Hiking in Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Visiting Friends & Relatives (VFR)• Culinary Tourism• International Itineraries & Packages• Indigenous Culture/ Tourism• Arts & Culture• Corporate Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Workforce Development (Service)• Transportation (Accessibility)• Sustainability to consider the main offering (the landscape) and to avoid "over tourism"

- Specifically, the RTO will look to see what category best suits your proposal. For instance:
- does it align with one of the "Key Tourism Activities" (Being Lakeside, Hiking, Paddling, Guided Nature Tours, Wildlife Viewing, Learning About Indigenous Culture
 - or, is it an identified tourism gap in the Product Development Framework (VFR, Arts & Culture, Workforce Development, Transportation, Sustainability)

Risk Identification, Assessment, and Mitigation Strategies

While there are no identified barriers or possible risks to successfully delivering on BOP2017-2018, the Board of Directors will wisely defer some decisions until more data are obtained. The Board at times will also, if necessary, restructure a project such that the impact of early decisions on "downstream" execution is minimized. Additionally, projects will also be reviewed for go or no-go decisions at identifiable, discrete points.

RTO12 project risk management is an iterative process that begins in the early phases of each project and is conducted throughout the project life cycle. The RTO applies proactive, systematic thinking about all possible outcomes before they happen and defining procedures to accept, avoid, or minimize the impact of risk on the project.

Types of risk that are considered during the process include:

- Financial risk of the budget and project costs
- Government/political risk such as regulatory change, legislative change or policy change
- Physical risk such as natural disasters, fire, accidents, death etc.
- Technical risk such as IT security, infrastructure, software etc.
- Participants i.e. project managers, team members, stakeholders and experts
- The following Best Practices are implemented by the RTO to mitigate risk
- Identify Early – identify risks as early as possible in the project lifestyle
- Identify Continuously – continue to identify and reevaluate project risk
- Analyze – analyze the potential impact of the identified project risk
- Define and Plan – define risk thresholds and triggers
- Communicate – regularly communicate status and risk
- Update – update stakeholders as often as possible
- Educate – educate the entire board of directors and encourage them to actively communicate and mitigate risk

2018-2019 Budget

Budget Items	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
Governance and Administration					
Salaries and Benefits*	38,250.00	38,250.00	38,250.00	38,250.00	153,000.00
Governance	-	10,000.00	-	-	10,000.00
Overhead/Facilities:	15,500.00	15,500.00	15,500.00	15,500.00	62,000.00
Finance and Administration	4,500.00	5,000.00	2,500.00	2,500.00	14,500.00
Travel	11,250.00	11,250.00	11,250.00	11,250.00	45,000.00
Industry Relations/Stakeholder Engagement	2,750.00	2,750.00	2,750.00	2,750.00	11,000.00
Information Technology (Industry)	2,500.00	2,500.00	2,500.00	2,500.00	10,000.00
Sub-Total	74,750.00	85,250.00	72,750.00	72,750.00	305,500.00
Product Development					
Salaries and Benefits*	16,250.00	16,250.00	16,250.00	16,250.00	65,000.00
Product Development Framework Communication	5,000.00	5,000.00	-	-	10,000.00
Product Development Enhancements	10,000.00	20,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00	40,000.00
Research	10,000.00	2,500.00	2,500.00	5,000.00	20,000.00
Sub-Total	41,250.00	43,750.00	23,750.00	26,250.00	135,000.00
Workforce Development					
Salaries and Benefits*	5,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00	20,000.00
Communication, Training and Outreach	15,000.00	10,000.00	5,000.00	3,149.00	33,149.00
Sub-Total	20,000.00	15,000.00	10,000.00	8,149.00	53,149.00
Marketing					
Salaries and Benefits	21,250.00	21,250.00	21,250.00	21,250.00	85,000.00
Social Media Advertising Domestic	35,000.00	10,000.00	5,000.00	8,000.00	58,000.00
Social Media Advertising International	115,000.00	50,000.00	10,000.00	75,000.00	250,000.00
Content Development / Guest Authors	5,000.00	5,000.00	10,000.00	5,000.00	25,000.00
Promotions/Contests/Incentives	5,000.00	-	-	5,000.00	10,000.00
Creative Development	2,500.00	-	-	2,500.00	5,000.00
Project Mgmt. Ad Trafficking	22,500.00	9,000.00	2,250.00	12,450.00	46,200.00
Strategist (Retainer)	12,000.00	12,000.00	12,000.00	12,000.00	48,000.00
International FAM Tours & Trade Shows	5,000.00	5,000.00	20,000.00	5,000.00	35,000.00
Lead Nurturing (E-mail database)	5,500.00	5,500.00	5,500.00	5,500.00	22,000.00
Image Bank	5,000.00	5,000.00	2,500.00	2,500.00	15,000.00
Media / PR	3,000.00	3,000.00	-	4,000.00	10,000.00
Reservation Platform	60,000.00	-	-	5,000.00	65,000.00
Transacting	-	40,000.00	10,000.00	-	50,000.00
Sub-Total	296,750.00	165,750.00	98,500.00	163,200.00	724,200.00
Investment Attraction					
Salaries and Benefits*	5,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00	20,000.00
Outreach/Meetings	5,000.00	2,500.00	2,000.00	500.00	10,000.00
Sub-Total	10,000.00	7,500.00	7,000.00	5,500.00	30,000.00
Partnership Allocation					
Salaries and Benefits*	2,500.00	2,500.00	2,500.00	2,500.00	10,000.00
International Marketing & Development	100,000.00	25,000.00	25,000.00	-	150,000.00
Content Marketing Domestic	4,000.00	4,000.00	-	8,000.00	16,000.00
Sub-Total	106,500.00	31,500.00	27,500.00	10,500.00	176,000.00
TOTAL AGREEMENT COSTS	549,250.00	348,750.00	239,500.00	286,349.00	1,423,849.00



www.explorersedge.ca



thegreatcanadianwilderness.com



bikecottagecountry.ca



cottagecountrybeertrail.ca

