



2019 – 2020 Business and Operational Plan

DRAFT

(April 1, 2019 – March 31, 2020)

Contents

Executive Summary.....	1
RTO12 Vision, Mission and Mandate: Revisited in 2017-2018.....	2
RTO12 2019-2020 Goals	2
Organizational Goals.....	3
Governance.....	5
Regional Overview and Assessment	8
Insight from the MTCS Tourism Research Unit.....	8
Product Development Framework.....	10
Building Success: Looking Back to Move Forward	11
Key Learnings	12
Changes in the Landscape: New Considerations	13
EE Continued Strategic Direction:.....	13
2019 - 2020 Business and Operational Plan Summary	15
2019 – 2020 BOP: Objectives, Key Activities and Timelines, Performance Measures	16
Governance.....	16
Marketing.....	19
Product Development.....	23
Product Development / Research.....	24
Investment Attraction.....	25
Workforce	26
Partnership Allocation	28
Marketing Plan.....	29
The Partnership Program.....	34
International Marketing and Development Partnerships.....	34
Domestic Marketing and Development Partnerships.....	34
Stakeholder Training Workshops.....	34
Risk Identification, Assessment, and Mitigation Strategies.....	35
2019-2020 Budget.....	36

Executive Summary

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 Business and Operational Plan (2019 – 2020 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 2019-2020 BOP priorities were considered by the Board of Directors during a strategy session held on December 12, 2018 at 3 Guys and a Stove in Huntsville, Ontario.

EE has solidified itself as a leader in regional destination development for the past eight 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 2019 – 2020 we will usher in the successful launch commercial air service into CYQA applying learnings from international programs, the newly developed Product Development Strategy and applying our successful social, mobile, content marketing strategy to international markets. A key component will be the three fold, the continuation of developing packages and itineraries, introduction of a package and itinerary platform and finally the development of dispersion strategies and tactics to ensure a world class tourism experience.

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

Finally, 2019 – 2020 will see the beginning development of indigenous product thus aligning with federal and provincial priorities. At the same time, using process and strategy, the RTO will execute a feasibility study aimed at understanding the organizational capabilities related to workforce development. The study will examine a regional innovation centre and regional currency model while tackling the housing and transportation dilemma all while continuing to use our consumer-centric approach.

RTO12 Vision, Mission and Mandate: Revisited in 2017-2018

2019-2020 fiscal year will see a focus on International Markets and the launch of Commercial Air Service, both of which will be the continuation of our new 5 year Regional Tourism Strategy (RTS 2018-23).

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

Mission – Explorers’ Edge is an operator-driven organization whose mission is to develop a profitable and thriving tourism industry in the region.

Mandate: “TIIC”

- Train
- Innovate
- Ignite
- Collaborate (with industry stakeholders to then inspire consumers to choose our tourism destination and products).

RTO12 2019-2020 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

- 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 Domestic Brand

Branded for domestic 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 year five 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.)

DRAFT

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 December 12, 2018 is as follows:

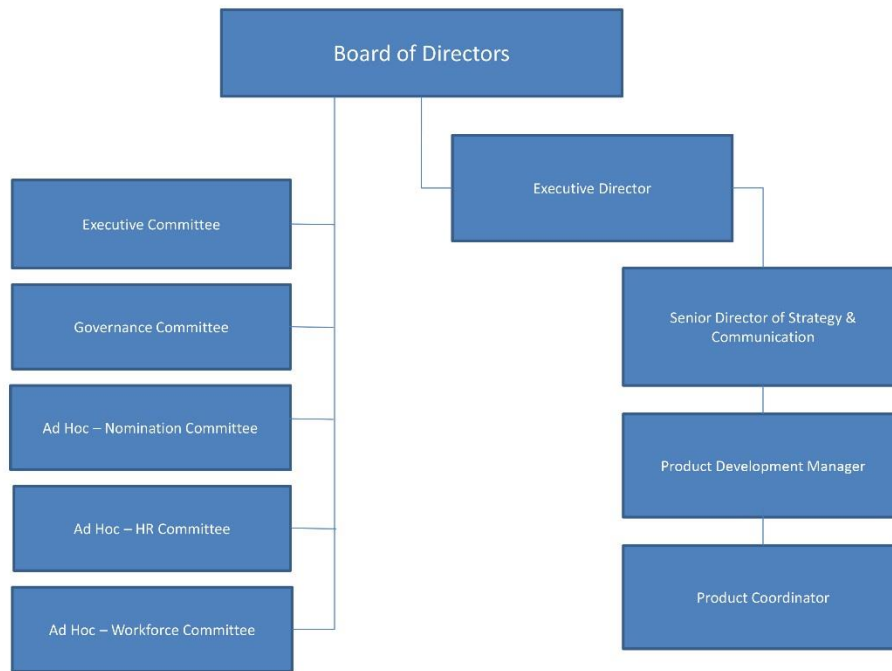
With an objective of keeping administrative costs as low as possible, a staff of four conducts the ongoing work of EE.

Explorers' Edge is governed by an eight (8) 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 Committee
2. Governance Committee
3. Ad hoc – Nomination Committee
4. Ad hoc - Workforce Development Committee

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. She is currently enrolled at George Washington University, studying Sustainable Tourism Development.

Tourism 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.

Product Coordinator, Jack Hopkins

Jack graduated from the Trent University School of Business in 2017 where he achieved a Bachelor of Business Administration degree with a specialization in Marketing and Consumer Culture. Prior to joining RTO 12 Jack spent 7 memorable summers working as a golf services attendant at both public and private golf courses in Muskoka.

Regional Overview and Assessment

Insight from the MTCS Tourism Research Unit

RTO12 Estimated Visits:

- 2008: 3.5 million visits
- 2010: 3.8 million visits
- 2011: 4.8 million visits
- 2012: 4.1 million visits
- 2013: 4.3 million visits
- 2014: 4.3 million visits
- 2015: 4.4 million visits
- 2016: 4.7 million visits

RTO12 Estimated Spending:

- 2008: \$662 million in spending
- 2010: \$513 million in spending
- 2011: \$598 million in spending
- 2012: \$596 million in spending
- 2013: \$614 million in spending
- 2014: \$589 million in spending
- 2015: \$699 million in spending
- 2016: \$778 million in spending

RTO12 Businesses:

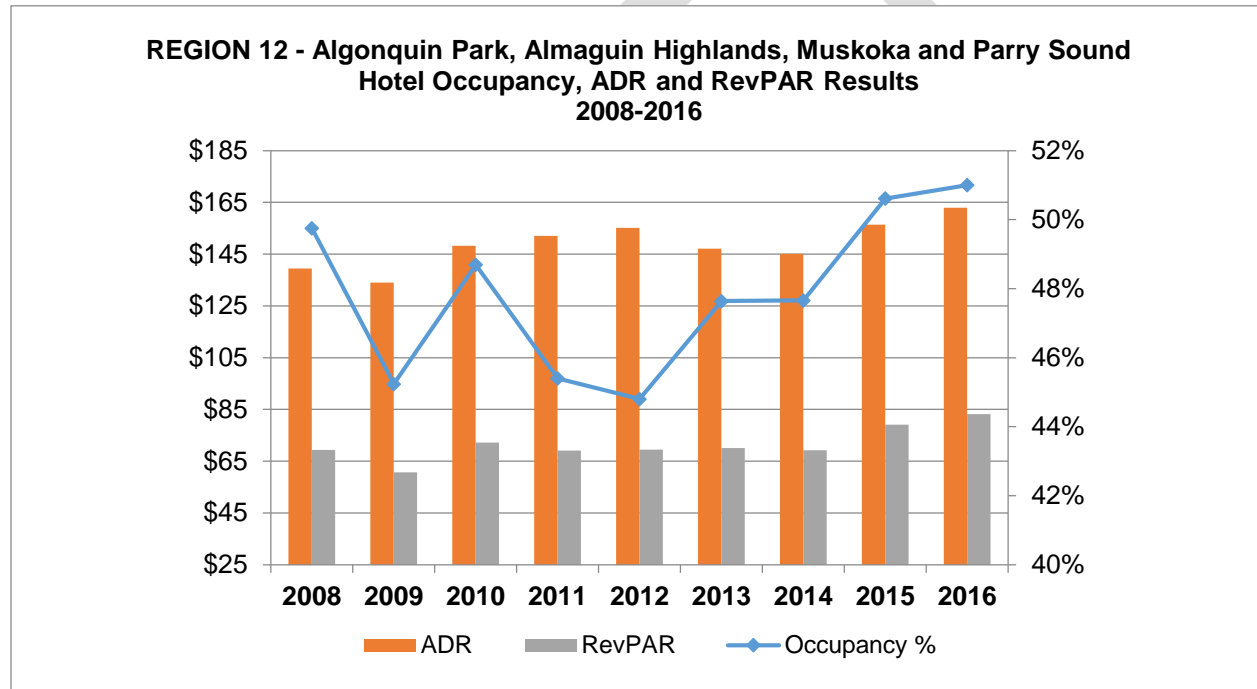
- 2008: 1,738 establishments
- 2010: 1,688 establishments
- 2011: 1,666 establishments
- 2012: 1,757 establishments
- 2013: 1,795 establishments
- 2014: 1,905 establishments
- 2015: 1,921 establishments
- 2016: 1,931 establishments

2016 saw a second significant increase in visitor spending and a modest increase in visitation to the region.

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 2016 vs. 2015 (YOY15v14) the region increased visitation by 10%
- YOY16v15 the region increased in visitor spending by 11%
- YOY16v15 roofed accommodation was up 20%, resulting in 733,000 nights
- YOY16v15 Occupancy (1% increase), Average Daily Rate (\$6.59 increase) and Revenue per Available Room (\$3.99 increase) all increased year over year, 2016 vs. 2015



Product Development Framework

RTO12 Product Development Framework: Worldly Wise

Tangible			Intangible
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"

Possibly one of the most substantial projects undertaken by the RTO was the development of a product development framework. We started with a framework and not a strategy because there was so much information to be gathered and analyzed in order for the RTO to come up with a strategy, we needed to break it down to something we could articulate. Included in that information gathering was an industry stakeholder survey, an environmental scan, competitive analysis and most importantly Environics research into the USA.

One of the more significant outcomes of the report was the identification of six Key Tourism Activities (KTAs) which can be described as “outdoor activities” that differentiators in the competitive provincial landscape, they include:

- Being lakeside
- Wildlife viewing
- Guided nature tours and wildlife viewing
- Hiking in nature
- Paddling
- Learning about Indigenous culture

The information contained in the Product Development Framework includes recommendations that are currently being in the new Product Development Strategy which is outlined in the 5-Year Regional Tourism Strategy (2018-23). For RTO12, the development of tourism product moving forward (though restricted by resource and funding limitations) is a priority for targeting high-potential markets in the States, and this development will be particularly relevant if commercial air service is introduced at the Muskoka Airport.

Building Success: Looking Back to Move Forward

To understand what RTO12 hopes to achieve with BOP19-20, 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, 2018-2019 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:

- **Domestic Social, Online, Mobile, Content Marketing:** despite a diminishing budget between, the hard-working domestic marketing program yielded 1.5 million page views utilizing primarily in-house content generation.
- **Launch of the International Program – The Great Canadian Wilderness:** an outcome of the Environics research associated with the Product Development Framework was the identification of high potential markets in the US which we began a long term marketing strategy using the six KTA's that differentiate us in Ontario. The preliminary findings were positive
- **Lead Nurturing Program:** The continuation of marketing automation and marketing segmentation saw a significant increase in domestic email leads. Overall, last fiscal year the RTO increased its email data base by 4,000 leads
- **Shoulder Season Development via the International 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 was only run in the fall of 2018 to international travellers. The program resonated with international audiences yielding 80 bookings, all of which were first time visitors to the region.
- **Suite of Self-Guided Mobile Tour Updates:** over the course of the year the suite of tours were updated to a) ensure mobile responsiveness and b) content was relevant and timely. The tours included the Group of Seven Outdoor Gallery (www.go7murals.ca), the Cottage Country Beer Trail (www.cottagecountrybeertrail.ca) and Bike Cottage Country (www.bikecottagecountry.ca).
- **Research Tracking and Communication:** EE undertook the continued update 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 Development - Investment Attraction (YPD & 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:** the RTO continued to align strategies with regional stakeholders fostering partnerships that increased the competitiveness of small to medium sized tourism stakeholders.
- **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. This framework was presented and communicated over the course of the fiscal year to ensure regional stakeholders understood the RTO's transition into new markets. The process resulted in the implementation of an Indigenous component into the 2019 fiscal plan aligning with both Federal and Provincial strategies.
- **Online Referral System:** The RTO conducted a best practice review of the online referral system in anticipation of international markets and the need to track the impact of the commercial air service program. The review prompted the posting of a RFP for a package and itinerary platform that will be built into the 2019 fiscal plan.
- **Governance Development & Review:** Reviewed committee structure, completed a bylaw review and updated the organizations policies and procedure organizations and in 2017 a review of the regional by-laws and director training. Work completed resulted in bylaw updates at the AGM, most significant resulted in the board make up being 7 - 11 directors
- **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.

Key Learnings

- 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
- Our best work comes when we consider the consumer/traveller: ask what will make it easier for the visitor to choose our destination?

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.

With the impending transportation hub at YQA Muskoka Airport via commercial air service the RTO will attempt to ensure regional dispersion via a last mile program that will be aimed at ensuring a world class tourism experience en route to regional product. What the industry refers to as the 'last mile' the RTO will endeavour to provide international travellers with ambassador program with the transportation program aimed at providing pertinent tourism information while gathering valuable destination feedback, ultimately tracking economic impact.

Related to workforce development, stakeholders continue to race to find solutions, strategies and programs to solve the impending workforce development challenge, for our organization we will review regional workforce findings and using strategy and process embark on a feasibility study to determine the applicability of the development of a regional innovation centre and regional currency program that will ultimately tackle housing and transportation needs associated with workforce development.

EE Continued Strategic Direction:

Explorers' Edge will now works in building 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 year.)

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 the RTO will undertake a feasibility study to better understand the programs in which the RTO can initiate to begin solving the current Workforce Development challenge.

2019 - 2020 Business and Operational Plan Summary

Governance	Marketing	Product Development	Investment Attraction	Workforce	Partnership
<p>323,449</p>	<p>703,000</p>	<p>145,600</p>	<p>25,000</p>	<p>40,800</p>	<p>186,000</p>
<p>Effective Governance: Govern EE through effective leadership; strong industry representation and following strategy, systems, policies and procedures.</p> <p>Review & Update policies, bylaws, director make-up and committee structure.</p> <p>Deliver town halls as an opportunity to interact with directors and learn about RTO programming.</p> <p>Second Annual Regional Tourism Summit.</p> <p>Explore business awards and tourism employee awards.</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. Monthly industry webinars.</p>	<p>Reinforce both the regional and sub-regional brands via content development.</p> <p>Introduce regional product to domestic and international audiences while fostering the lead nurturing database.</p> <p>Introduce regional product to international group tour companies.</p> <p>Participate in Rendez-vous Canada and other selected international travel trade promotions to facilitate a positive media coverage of RTO12.</p> <p>Continue to develop video and image bank.</p> <p>Develop and execute International incentive & dispersion program.</p> <p>Review and update online referral platform in order to support transacting/conversion associated with international audiences.</p>	<p>Communication and review of the Product Development Strategy.</p> <p>Facilitate dispersion of international travellers throughout the regional provide access to regional tourism product.</p> <p>Develop, maintain and produce product related self-guided mobile tours.</p> <p>Track, analyze and communicate regional tourism indicators.</p> <p>Acquire and analyze consumer market research; review for next BOP.</p> <p>Facilitate regional Indigenous inventory and product development via outreach and workshops.</p>	<p>Provide operators and stakeholders with the necessary tools, trends applicable tourism development opportunities and applicable information to succeed.</p> <p>Communicate timely regional investment and facilitate information related to investment best practices.</p> <p>Explore partnership and investment opportunities associated with regional training, accommodation and development hubs i.e. Regional Innovation and Training Centre.</p> <p>Continue to liaise with regional economic development agencies to ensure that the tourism impact remains a top priority.</p>	<p>Review regional workforce research findings and update the current landscape the regional workforce via coordination with regional and provincial partners.</p> <p>Continue to promote availability and desirability of careers in tourism industry throughout RTO 12.</p> <p>Outreach to international immigration centres to facilitate and communicate regional workforce opportunities.</p> <p>Support Business Stakeholders owners with skills and knowledge training.</p> <p>Oversee a regional feasibility study that address the RTO's Regional Innovation Centre and Tourism Ambassador Program while addressing accommodation and transportation needs.</p>	<p>Broadening the RTO's market reach with international marketing.</p> <p>Transitioning the RTO's move from domestic to international marketing with domestic marketing campaigns.</p> <p>Supporting and strengthening regional training workshops.</p> <p>Enhancing and expanding tourism content related to RTO12 across/throughout/with tourism stakeholders.</p>

2019 – 2020 BOP: Objectives, Key Activities and Timelines, Performance Measures

Governance

Priority / Strategic Focus	Objectives	Key Activities / Tactics	Performance Indicator
Governance and Administration			
Governance			
<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>a) Foster organizational capacity with regional stakeholders and ensure committee are engaged in order to deliver regional tourism mandate.</p> <p>b) Manage our assets and liabilities responsibly.</p> <p>c) Deliver expected results on time.</p> <p>d) Review Terms of Reference (Selection Criteria, Terms, Numbers) to ensure competency-based skill sets required for the Board of Directors and all Committees.</p>	<p>a) Review succession plan, bylaws and policy documents. Q1-Q4</p> <p>a) communicate organizational developments and updates via e-mail and monthly webinars to regional stakeholders Q1-Q4</p> <p>a) administer post committee and board surveys to capture relevant feedback and foster engagement Q1-Q4</p> <p>a) solicit tourism stakeholder for membership Q1-Q4</p> <p>b) Complete a skills matrix to identify priority areas for board member recruitment.Q3</p> <p>b) Provide new board members with on-boarding materials including review of conflict of interest, code of conduct etc. Q1</p> <p>b) Offer a minimum of 2 workshops that help board promote organizational excellence. Q2 – Q3</p> <p>b) Solicit stakeholders' input for business and project plans and report back on activities and decisions.Q3 – Q4</p> <p>b) Regularly review activities, finances at board meetings.Q1 – Q4</p> <p>c) Conduct board reviews of RTO plans and performance measures against stated objectives and targets; adjust as required.Q1 – Q4</p>	<p>a) Effective committee participation achieved (goal and target – min at least 50% of committee members have participated in all meetings).</p> <p>a) Membership (target of 200 paid members)</p> <p>b) Effective board participation achieved (goal and target – min at least 70% of board members have participated in all meetings).</p> <p>c) Business plan participation, results of the financial audit and operational reporting (operating goals met, clean audit)</p> <p>c) Governance updates and discussions at the board table regarding committee items</p> <p>d) Time allotted to the discussion of organizational "financial" sustainability and the future funding model (target - during two board meetings and operational planning)</p>

		<p>c) review Governance Committee terms of reference and action items for current fiscal year Q1</p> <p>d) Continue discussion examining paid membership options for EE. Q3</p>	
--	--	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--

Priority / Strategic Focus	Objectives	Key Activities / Tactics	Performance Indicator
Operations			
Administrative Activities, Reporting, Situation Analysis, and the review/update of 5 year regional tourism strategy	<p>a) Be recognized by regional tourism operators and stakeholders as a regional tourism resource and catalyst.</p> <p>c) recognize tourism businesses for their commitment and outstanding achievements</p>	<p>a) Annual update for Business and Operational Plan. Q3</p> <p>a) Collect and analyse program data, reconcile programs and negotiate TPA. Q1 – Q4</p> <p>a) Fulfill and communicate performance metrics/measurable as outlined in the Transfer Payment Agreement. Q1 – Q4</p> <p>b) Develop tourism business awards for Annual General Meeting presentation Q1</p> <p>b) Present tourism awards at the second Annual Tourism Summit Q1</p>	<p>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)</p> <p>a) RTO participation with local/regional tourism and/or economic planning processes to offer subject matter input. (goal and target – participation on 5 initiatives)</p> <p>a) Number of regional agencies that the RTO interacts with (target - 22 agencies)</p> <p>b) Number of tourism business that submit for Regional Tourism Awards (target/benchmark – 8 businesses)</p>

Priority / Strategic Focus	Objectives	Key Activities / Tactics	Performance Indicator
Industry Communication, Liaison and Accountability			
<p>Continue to liaise with industry stakeholders to ensure that they are aware of regional strategies, priorities and programs.</p>	<p>Continue to strengthen communications with industry throughout RTO12 by:</p> <p>a) Foster outreach to operators, and facilitate information sharing while continuing to facilitate the development of industry capacity by providing relevant information.</p> <p>b) Strengthen communications with operators.</p> <p>c) Explore joint marketing, joint product development, and other initiatives that benefit operators.</p> <p>d) 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, RTO 12 and Ministry market research. Q2 Q4</p> <p>a) Facilitate monthly webinars with stakeholders Q1 – Q4</p> <p>a) Review current mailing list, confirm contacts and develop monthly regional e-mail communication. Q1 – Q4</p> <p>a) Meetings, presentations, face-to-face activities throughout the Region to coincide with email campaigns and monthly webinars. Q1- Q4</p> <p>b) Review, update and assess gaps in the CRM database by gathering intelligence from stakeholders via a survey on how they want to receive RTO updates. Q1</p> <p>c) circulate partnership forms as a trigger to gather possible initiatives and foster information gathering example; Utilize the operator forum, monthly webinars and circulated forms to engage stakeholders. Q1 & Q4</p> <p>d) Participation in annual events such as TIAO Queens Park, TIAC conference, consultation round table session ect.</p>	<p>a) Response rate and results of the Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey. (Goal and target – 100 responses and a 75% satisfaction rating)</p> <p>a) attendees at monthly RTO webinar updates (10 per webinar)</p> <p>a) Number of new subscribers to Quarterly Outreach Newsletter. (target – 45)</p> <p>b) Respondents to communication survey (goal and target - 45)</p> <p>c) Number of joint marketing, joint product development, other initiatives that benefit operators (target – 4)</p> <p>d) identification of three stakeholder concerns to be communicated to the Board of Directors and levels of government</p>

Marketing

Priority / Strategic Focus	Objectives	Key Activities / Tactics	Performance Indicator
Marketing			
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 by scanning regional and provincial partner sites and social accounts.</p> <p>Additional Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update 2019-2020 Marketing Plan, based on the transition to international markets. 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 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 – 5 domestic pieces on Explorers’ Edge website and on applicable microsites and target -40 international pieces)</p> <p>d) Consumer opt-in for the consumer e-mail database (target – 4,000).</p> <p>c) Domestic website analytics including: visits (target – 400,000), page views (target – 800k), pages/session (target – 1.51) & average session duration (target – 1.00 minute)</p> <p>c) International website analytics including: visits (target – 200,000), page views (target – 400k), pages/session (target – 1.25) & average session duration (target – 80 seconds)</p>

Priority / Strategic Focus	Objectives	Key Activities / Tactics	Performance Indicator
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>Domestic Social media analytics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facebook Likes (target – 2,000 new) - Twitter followers (target – 200 new) - Social media mentions (target – 500) - Social media comments (target - 500) - Social media Post Likes (target – 5,000) - Social media clicks to Website (target – 50,000) <p>International Social media analytics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facebook Likes (target – 4,000 new) - Social media mentions (target – 700) - Social media comments (target - 700) - Social media Post Likes (target – 8,000) - Social media clicks to Website (target – 100,000)

Priority / Strategic Focus	Objectives	Key Activities / Tactics	Performance Indicator
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 show including Rendezvous Canada 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>

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	<p>a) Increase in brand/story awareness and produce unpaid, positive and engaging editorial coverage in target markets.</p> <p>b) Increase media release outputs.</p>	<p>a) Regional outreach to gauge feedback on media opportunities. Q1</p> <p>a) Engage industry partners (OTMPC, sub regional partners, operators) on media opportunities. Q1 – Q4</p> <p>a) Meet with media representatives at key marketplaces. Q1 & Q2</p> <p>b) Review communication strategy. Q3</p> <p>b) Coordinate media tours. Q1 – Q4</p> <p>b) Track media engagement. Q1 – Q4</p>	<p>a) Increase number of media visits (target – 8)</p> <p>a) Increase in the number of media contacts in the database (target – 12)</p> <p>a) Increase in unique visits to the RTO media communication page (target – benchmark)</p> <p>b) Coordinated Media Tours (target – 4)</p>

Priority / Strategic Focus	Objectives	Key Activities / Tactics	Performance Indicator
Image Bank			
Continue to develop video and image bank.	Expand image bank selection and size.	<p>Identify image bank gaps. Q1</p> <p>Arrange photo shoots. Q1 – Q4</p> <p>Assigning staff resources in the communication of updates to stakeholders and tourism partners. Q2 & Q4</p> <p>Acquire necessary images that support the RTO marketing activities. Q1 – Q4</p>	<p># Of stakeholder's requests to use imagery in travel and tourism marketing (target – 35).</p> <p># Of downloads and subscriptions on photography and videography platforms.</p>

Priority / Strategic Focus	Objectives	Key Activities / Tactics	Performance Indicator
Transacting			
Provide international travellers associated with commercial air service incentive to explore the region while implementing a tool to track economic impact.	<p>Gain intelligence from first time international air travellers to the region.</p> <p>Disperse travellers throughout the region exploring tourism product.</p>	<p>Develop voucher program, agreements, and mechanisms associated with international voucher program.</p> <p>Coordinate with commercial airline to identify international tourists.</p> <p>Communicate outcomes with the board of directors and stakeholders on the commencement of the program. Q1 – Q4</p> <p>Provide stakeholders with information related to transacting programs on a regular basis. Q1 – Q4</p>	<p>Dispersion – bench mark traveller spending in the region (target – voucher redemption in all sub regions)</p> <p>Redemption rate of vouchers (target – 70%)</p> <p>Transacting Visitor Exit Survey (target – 100 responses)</p> <p>Operator Satisfaction with the transacting program (target – 85% satisfied or highly satisfied)</p>
Referral system: transition into a package and itinerary platform	The objective is to provide the consumer a flexible platform to book an experience while offering the organization a platform to transact and track consumer package bookings.	<p>Identify and work with operators to ensure that accommodation, attraction ticket and package rates are online and recent.</p> <p>Coordinate with stakeholders to field feedback and opportunities for collaboration Q1 – Q4</p> <p>Explore gaps and opportunities in the area of package development Q1 – Q4</p> <p>Provide regional outreach and training session(s) to stakeholders on package development and implementation of an online rate and inventory system Q1 – Q4</p>	<p>Change in the number of operators with a rate and inventory on the platform (target - 5 operators)</p> <p>Increase Number of packages listed on the platform (target - 5)</p>

Product Development

Priority / Strategic Focus	Objectives	Key Activities / Tactics	Performance Indicator
Self-Guided Mobile Tours Development			
Grow the suite of self-guided mobile tours	Provide international travels with additional product related information via handheld devices.	<p>Develop RFP to ascertain the components and budget related to the development of new self-guided tours</p> <p>Using staff resources to develop information related to new self-guided tour.</p> <p>Solicited feedback on current self-guided mobile tours to inform new tours.</p> <p>Work with third party to develop the platform and information related to the self-guided tour</p>	Additional self-guided mobile tour (target – 1)

Priority / Strategic Focus	Objectives	Key Activities / Tactics	Performance Indicator
Transportation			
Ensure international travellers have access to regional tourism product.	Improve connectivity across multiple product offerings, provide a world class welcoming visitor experience and the collection of visitor exit information related to their stay.	<p>Network and outreach with transportation companies / service providers.</p> <p>Develop regional transportation routes and drop off points.</p> <p>Develop Visitor welcome experience and visitor exit survey.</p> <p>Communicate the transportation options out to stakeholders and travellers.</p> <p>Develop report / information related to product, routes and best practices</p> <p>Align transportation routes with package and itinerary information/offering</p>	<p># of product linked to transportation routes (target – 12)</p> <p># of travellers utilizing transportation services (target – 90)</p> <p># of operators taking part in the transportation program (target -12)</p>

Priority / Strategic Focus	Objectives	Key Activities / Tactics	Performance Indicator
Self-Guided Mobile Tours Enhancement			
Update current self-guided mobile tours are operating properly	Current self-guided mobile tours have up to date content, mapping and functionality.	<p>Trouble shoot self-guided mobile tours for accuracy and applicability.</p> <p>Develop content specific to each tour</p> <p>Engage tourism stakeholders to push out suite of self-guided tours</p>	<p>Track web analytics and usage of self-guided mobile tours (benchmark year)</p> <p>Tourism operators communicating the self-guided mobile tours (target – 20)</p>

Product Development / Research

Priority / Strategic Focus	Objectives	Key Activities / Tactics	Performance Indicator
Research			
Track the health of regional tourism industry.	Gather applicable and relevant tourism indicators to inform the current state of tourism in the region.	<p>Track monthly occupancy percentages, average daily rate & Revenue per available room. Q1 – Q4</p> <p>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</p> <p>Track and disseminate Ministry- generated consumer research, statistics and tourism updates Q1 – Q4</p> <p>Present findings at the Regional Tourism Summit and updates at quarterly stakeholder meeting and monthly webinars. At the same time engage in dialogue regarding the health of the tourism industry</p>	<p>Number of views / downloads of the online research findings (target - 250).</p> <p>Number of participants participating in the research dialogue via Regional Tourism summit, quarterly stakeholder meetings and monthly webinars (target- 75)</p> <p>Number of research presentations (target - 5)</p>

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.	Develop and strengthen economic development links ensuring tourism is top of mind and integrated into regional investment projects.	<p>Disseminate relevant Investment Attraction information to stakeholders on a quarterly basis Q1 – Q4</p> <p>Explore and participate in programs for attracting unique investment that will differentiate the region.</p> <p>Communicate investment attraction opportunities to potential investors</p> <p>Communicate commercial regional air service program ensuring the broader regional group of stakeholders is involved and abreast of developments. Q1 – Q4</p> <p>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>Continued development support of commercial air service to the Muskoka Airport CYQA and great lake cruising to Parry Sound</p>	<p>Involvement in regional investment seminar / workshop(s)/projects (target 20)</p> <p># of regional outreach engagement sessions that the RTO participates in (target - 15)</p>

Workforce

Priority / Strategic Focus	Objectives	Key Activities / Tactics	Performance Indicator
Work Force			
<p>Monitor the current workforce landscape.</p>	<p>Continue to glean updates and relevant information from regional partner in order to gain an understanding of current work force resources, gaps, best practices, resources and applicable partners.</p>	<p>Review of current workforce development tools and programs.</p> <p>Development of an ad hoc workforce committee.</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>Explore the necessary process and components of international employment (student and refugee)</p> <p>Undertake a feasibility study on workforce development options and opportunities that are feasible to the RTO and not duplicating current regional programs.</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> <p>Development and presentation of a regional workforce development feasibility study.</p>

Priority / Strategic Focus	Objectives	Key Activities / Tactics	Performance Indicator
Work Force			
Continue to promote availability and desirability of careers in tourism industry throughout RTO 12 (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>Facilitate workforce FAM tours to the region</p>	<p>Website analytics related to workforce development (benchmark year)</p> <p># of pieces of content related to workforce development (target – 2)</p>

Priority / Strategic Focus	Objectives	Key Activities / Tactics	Performance Indicator
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>Organize and execute relevant presentations and seminars based on stakeholder feedback via Ask Me Anything (AMA)</p> <p>Review and coordinate relevant Tourism Excellence North (TEN) programs for regional stakeholders.</p>	<p>Industry seminars and presentations (target – 6)</p> <p>Industry AMA sessions (target 6)</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 Marketing and Development			
Broadening the RTO's market reach with international marketing.	Communicate the breadth of tourism product to international markets via stakeholder partnerships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using staff resources communicate partnership opportunities followed by third party development of 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 international marketing campaign partnerships (goal and target – 6)
Domestic Marketing and Development			
Ensure domestic marketing continues.	Sustain domestic marketing with partnered programs aimed at domestic audiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using staff resources communicate partnership opportunities followed by third party development of 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 domestic marketing campaign partnerships (goal and target – 6)
Stakeholder Training Workshops			
Augment and cohost regional training programs	Expand on the breadth of regional training programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using staff resources communicate partnership opportunities followed by third party development of 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 partnered tourism training programs (goal and target – 6)

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 2019-2020 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 2019-2020 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 2019-2020.

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)

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 2019-2020

- Publish 45 pieces of exceptional quality (40 International and 5 domestic) content across multiple websites (new and updated): 1) www.thegreatcanadianwilderness.com (most important) 2) www.explorersedge.ca 3) www.bikecottagecountry.ca 4) www.go7murals.ca and 5) www.cottagecountrybeertrail.ca
- Drive 400,000 visits to the Explorers’ Edge website using content marketing and 200,000 visits to the Great Canadian Wilderness site
- Add 4K leads to the email database
- Drive 200K 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 2019-2020 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 2019-2020 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 20 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, 2019 and run to week of March 31, 2020

Marketing Partnerships with OTMPC

Explorers' Edge will explore multiple co-branded marketing initiatives with OTMPC in the 2019-2020 fiscal year.

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
- Conversion on the Package and Itinerary Platform (TBD)

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), partnerships in 2019-2020 will focus on the following areas:

International Marketing and Development Partnerships

- Development of content will focus on information 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”)

Domestic Marketing and Development Partnerships

- The regional domestic partnership allocation will assist in the transition of the RTO from domestic audiences to international audiences.
- Partnerships will focus on campaigns that support festivals and events, regional trails, photography development, niche product; all of which will help attract visitors to the region and encourage them to stay longer and spend more.
- Based on past results, RTO12 will favour campaigns that clearly articulate how they are going to target tourists (i.e. bring visitors to the region, not just exist for permanent and seasonal residents) and how they will promote overnight packages pertaining to the campaign.

Stakeholder Training Workshops

- The regional training workshop partnership allocation will support stakeholder training needs throughout the region and ensure tourism context is intertwined into each project.
- Partnerships will focus on international and product development, examples would include indigenous product development, international cultural sensitivity, workforce development, marketing communication etc.
- Based on past results, RTO12 will favour workshops that clearly articulate outcomes and align with regional strategies and objectivities.

Risk Identification, Assessment, and Mitigation Strategies

While there are no identified barriers or possible risks to successfully delivering on BOP2019-2020, 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 lifecycle.
- 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

2019-2020 Budget

Budget Items	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
Governance and Administration					
Salaries & Benefits	37,000	37,000	37,000	37,000	148,000
Governance	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	10,000
Overhead / Facilities	15,500	15,500	15,500	15,500	62,000
Finance and Administration (Accounting, Audit, Legal)	3,362	3,362	3,362	3,362	13,449
Travel	12,500	12,500	12,500	12,500	50,000
Industry Relations / Stakeholder Engagement	7,500	7,500	7,500	7,500	30,000
Information Technology	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	10,000
SUBTOTAL	80,862	80,862	80,862	80,862	323,449
Product Development					
Salaries & Benefits	16,250	16,250	16,250	16,250	65,000
Mobile Tour Development	10,000	10,000	3,000	-	23,000
Product Development Enhancements	-	-	2,600	-	2,600
Regional Product Dispersion	20,000	20,000	5,000	-	45,000
Research	5,000	5,000	-	-	10,000
SUBTOTAL	51,250	51,250	26,850	16,250	145,600

Marketing and Promotion					
Salaries & Benefits	21,250	21,250	21,250	21,250	85,000
Social Media Advertising - Domestic	15,000	15,000	10,000	7,000	47,000
Social Media Advertising - International	100,000	75,000	50,000	25,000	250,000
Content Development / Guest Authors / FAM Tours	5,000	5,000	-	5,000	15,000
Promotions/Contests/Incentives	1,000	1,000	-	3,000	5,000
Creative Development	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	20,000
Project Mgmt. Ad Trafficking	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	48,000
Strategist (Retainer)	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	48,000
International Trade Show	5,000	-	10,000	10,000	25,000
Rendezvous Canada (Toronto, ON)	45,000	-	-	-	45,000
Hubspot	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	28,000
Image Bank	4,000	4,000	-	-	8,000
Media / PR	-	4,000	-	-	4,000
Reservation Platform	20,000	15,000	-	-	35,000
Transacting / Dispersion / Tracking	10,000	30,000	-	-	40,000
SUBTOTAL	262,250	206,250	127,250	107,250	703,000
Investment Attraction					
Salaries & Benefits	5,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00	20,000
Outreach/Meetings	2,500.00	-	2,500.00	-	5,000
SUBTOTAL	7,500	5,000	7,500	5,000	25,000

Workforce Development					
Salaries & Benefits	6,250.00	6,250.00	6,250.00	6,250.00	25,000.00
Workforce Development	10,000		5,800	-	15,800
SUBTOTAL	16,250	6,250	12,050	6,250	40,800
Partnership					
Salaries & Benefits	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	20,000
International Marketing & Development	50,000	25,000	25,000	-	100,000
Domestic Marketing & Development	20,000	6,000	-	-	26,000
Stakeholder Training Workshops	20,000	10,000	10,000	-	40,000
SUBTOTAL	95,000	46,000	40,000	5,000	186,000
TOTAL AGREEMENT COSTS	513,112	395,612	294,512	220,612	1,423,849