

Explorers' Edge Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
Thursday, March 11, 2021
Webinar

Present: Michael Simonett, Gail Burrows, Scott Doughty, Angela Pollak, Dave Anderson, Andrew Rusyntyk, Christine McRae, Darren Smith, Hilary Chambers, Don MacKay

Resource: n/a

Regrets: Mike Strong

Staff: James Murphy, Erin Smit (taking minutes)

Welcome

Call to Order and Chair Remarks: Chair Michael Simonett called the meeting to order at 10:32am.

Meeting today to update the financials from the last meeting and to discuss new money available for applications in grants from the provincial government.

**Michael's internet then went down and Hilary Chambers resumed the meeting as board vice-chair.*

Conflict of Interest: n/a

Approval of Agenda – March 11, 2021

Motion: Scott Doughty

Seconded: Angela Pollak

Discussion: n/a

Carried.

Approval of Minutes – February 24, 2021

Motion: Darren Smith

Seconded: Christine McRae

Discussion: n/a

Carried.

Financial Update – James Murphy

James Murphy discussed work fine tuning the budget from the last board meeting on February 24, 2021, with the financial statements presented then from February 21, 2021. Ongoing conversations with the accountant and auditor are taking place, working out how we will position the books for deferred revenue. Auditor mentioned the need for an official correspondence from the government that there is approval in place by them to handle the incoming funds this way. The TPA specifies we must have the budget spent by a set date, but this document would allow us to defer. JM will keep a close eye on the financials as we close out the fiscal year. Asked for questions from the floor? None.

Executive Director Update – James Murphy

James Murphy thanked the board for jumping on this quick call. Objective for today is to discuss the workforce proposal that was laid out in the final hour of the last meeting. The BOP has been drafted and circulated and has been submitted to MHSTCI for their TPA development. Input from the board was articulated into the completed document and built out with deliverables, etc. The BOP does still remain in development as we await feedback on a number of items – from the government as well as other colleagues being brought in to tighten up the language on our deliverables. Once the green light comes from the Ministry, this document will be posted publically. Will leave the document with the board to go through, and asked the board to please contact him as soon as they can if anything catches their eye that need to be flagged for attention.

Job mapping for RTO staff has taken place with Jack Hopkins and Erin Smit. Year-end preparations are also underway with the accountant, and James has continued outreach to FedNor looking for final decisions on the funding requested as this will impact projects and decision making down the line. Murphy will email the board with where that stands at the end of next week.

The Winter Arts Collective and Digital Campfire initiatives are ongoing, as well as workforce programming with Ryerson University and Humber College.

Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries Proposal

Workforce Thrusters Strategy is in the queue. Had a call with the Ministry regarding federal government allocation that has been moved to the provincial model and proposed to the RTOs to roll out workforce programs. Details of the funding available were not clear; but with programs already developed in the que EE would be ready. JM had a call with other RTO EDs and discussed if they would be applying individually, working together to collaborate on a proposal together, or going alone. RTO12 already has projects in the works and so will apply individually. New project consists of short term and long term goals. Housing has been the biggest gap, but investors are required to make that happen, and plans need to be in place to attract investors.

Short Term:

- Attract workers to the region for the immediate short term

Long Term:

- Pilot project
- Curriculum development
- Master class development
- Community Engagement

Workforce Thrusters Strategy in the short term aims to attract workers to the region to address immediate staffing needs. Will continue with zoom recruitment sessions (including post-secondary institutions, secondary schools and immigration centres), familiarization tours (day and overnight rural regional tours and incentivized promotions) and recruitment videos and content on the new website and in social media. Processes will begin to draft benchmarks for how these projects convert to

recruitment – aiming for 10% conversion from 150 FAM participants and 250 Zoom participants. Budget has been developed since we have had these details over the last week. Murphy noted the importance of business owners as part of this project and how they will be integral to success. HR Recruitment project looks to bring up 5 workers from a broad spectrum and have them work in small spurts (3 months) in different industries throughout the region and in different sub-regions (phased approach beginning with Muskoka and Parry Sound). The program includes participants putting in working hours, as well as training development hours (Master Class). The RTO will need to put out an expression of interest for this pilot project. The RTO would hire the staff and provide the salary; the employer remits payment to the RTO for their hours, but only a portion to offset costs (this will be used as revenue generation); main salary comes from RTO. Discussed the Rotary model and billeting students. This also comes back to the neighbourhood networking program discussed at the last meeting and the importance of making the program participants feel like part of the community.

Outcomes of this pilot project would help iron out HR process; participants could form a committee for feedback which will help detail a business development plan that can be presented to investors; very important intelligence building. The RTO would be investing in these five people over the course of a year. All feedback would be used to gauge year two interest; 5 for the pilot year, 150 potential workers for year two signup in Phase II.

A budget needs to be developed for this project, and with the tight turnaround this was done as an educated cost analysis based on past experience with proposals and work with third-parties. James Murphy then broke down the \$460k total budget proposal. Discussed using Muskoka/Parry Sound as the area to pilot with a higher concentration of operators there to draft options for the pilot employees. Murphy discussed the opportunity available with these extra funds and how this opportunity to develop a pilot project to present to investors can really amplify future workforce projects from the RTO down the road. Line items in the budget include an HR Consultant, Training Development Consultant, Familiarization Tours, Recruitment, Workforce Website Redesign, Pilot Participants, and Administration.

Hilary Chambers gave kudos to the team for completing the BOP and this proposal under such tight deadlines. Likes how this program would integrate with what we're already working towards with the Workforce Thrusters Strategy and sees how this can really engage students and revive interest in our region to potential staff. Angela Pollak mentioned another funding project she knows about and how including barriers to employment as a piece of the project may provide a higher likelihood there would be an approval - wondered if this funding might be under the same umbrella as the grants she had been hearing of.

The end goal is to have an evolving door of motivated potential employers who want to take part in this program and have access to a number of facets of the tourism industry. Murphy asked if the business owners on the board would be willing to take on staff members for a three month interval as part of the program. Hilary hoped to have someone come out to Port Loring potentially once the program gets underway. Andrew Rusynyk spoke to his staffing needs; would need a number of people ready for the entire season and to specify their skills to a certain department. With the pilot project for the 5 would likely be Georgian College students and could be moved around for the purpose of the pilot, but for the

following year would like to see larger volumes of workers who he could keep in one department per season.

Murphy discussed the zoom sessions and how this works to pique the interest of potential staff, but this project is needed to follow through with having them come up. Scott Doughty asked about housing for these potential staff. Murphy spoke to the mention of the billet programs; service clubs that are currently doing this by placing students, athletes, etc in the community with local residents, etc. Wants to build a case for investment and how they will be housed down the road. Angela Pollak mentioned how housing of staff is an ongoing problem in South Algonquin, and is thinking of ways these potential pilot students may be housed in her area. Lots of capacity building to be done in her region – this is an ongoing issue for them. Hilary Chambers mentioned partnerships with other businesses and how this may be done on trade for housing (gave example of working on a horse farm for room and board).

Angela Pollak asked about how data collected for the biggest parts of our region can be made applicable to her region. Can the data be broken down sub-regionally to understand how her area fits into the greater plan? James Murphy noted this request and will continue to push for more specific data from the province.

Darren Smith said he would be willing to participate in the pilot; would like to be able to demonstrate an ability to attract and house employees. Christine McRae spoke to her business model – some of the work she does could be done remotely, and employee could then meet with her for onsite tourism experiences. Working this way could make opportunities for businesses like hers to take part (with students perhaps being housed in larger areas but coming out to work with her/for her directly on occasion).

Don MacKay mentioned working from the outcomes backwards; what are we going to take out of this and how do we get there. What is our final goal? Is it a trained workforce with available talent any business could employ, or is it to be leaders in training a workforce that is committed to the tourism industry? Having these workers understand that there is value in jobs in this industry; fight the stigma that this is low-wage, entry level work. Wonders what this looks like. Hilary Chambers said she hopes this creates a pool of engaged employees that have a vested interest in this area and who want to be employed here long term.

Angela Pollak asked about an incentive that could be offered to have employees who participate commit to a long term position here. For example, a \$5k bonus that goes towards their student debts (mentioned how this is being done for rural doctors). James Murphy said these types of ideas can be addressed down the line. Don MacKay agrees with the concept of an incentive, but the reward has to be that they understand that they can live, work, and thrive here year round. James Murphy spoke to all this feedback leading to the importance of the pilot project – how once this is underway there will be learnings we can take to Phase II. Don agreed this is a necessary commitment to make – will fund the test through grants but let's get something that really works where the 'wheels stay on the car down the road'.

James Murphy will get the proposal in for tomorrow's deadline and report back to the board with a decision when he gets it. Will require a signed TPA if it goes through, so glad the basics of this pilot could be discussed here today. JM is open for questions as needed.

Governance Update

Angela Pollak; policies have not yet been distributed. All directors will continue into the next fiscal year, so there will not be a nomination or onboarding process this year. Hilary Chambers did mention that if anyone was wanting to remove themselves, to please let us know as soon as possible.

Hilary asked about discussing 1A, 1B and 1C. The meeting had gone over the discussed timeline – so would like to move this item to the next meeting so details can be circulated. Governance training will be coming up – will look into having the same consultant as the last round conduct the sessions. Don MacKay mentioned breaking up the bylaws into a number of different meeting times for discussion and asked for perhaps three per meeting to have them completed in the next year with the specific details or each set circulated before each meeting.

Motion to Adjourn

Motion: Don MacKay

Seconded: Scott Doughty

Discussion: n/a

Carried