



# **2022 – 2023 Business and Operational Plan**

(April 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023)

February 23, 2022

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## Executive Summary

Established in 2010, Explorers' Edge (EE) is one of thirteen Regional Tourism Organizations (RTOs) representing stakeholders in the geographic areas of Algonquin Park, the Almaguin Highlands, Loring-Restoule, Muskoka, Parry Sound and South Algonquin, Ontario, Canada.

The region is located on the traditional lands and waterways of the Anishinabek, Algonquin, Métis and Mohawk peoples, and is part of the Robinson Huron (1850) and Williams (1923) Treaties territory.

This Business and Operational Plan (BOP22-23) outlines RTO12's annual strategy; provides a brief background on the status of the organization and the regional tourism industry into the third year of the global pandemic; and identifies specific goals, activities, timelines, performance measures and budget that have been established. The BOP22-23 priorities were finalized by the Board of Directors during a regular meeting of the Board that was held online on February 8, 2021.

Though the regional tourism industry continues to face substantial challenges due to the ongoing detrimental effects of the global pandemic and the intermittent and disruptive travel restrictions that ensue, this part of Ontario – that which we call 'the great Canadian wilderness just north of Toronto' in branded marketing efforts – continues to be in demand with travellers, if not even more so since the pandemic began and rural destinations increased in popularity. That's good news for most, though not all, of our regional tourism businesses, which are still recovering from two years of Covid-19 fallout.

From a corporate perspective, the previous fiscal year was extremely productive for RTO12 in terms of launching its new Regenerative Tourism Strategy and re-positioning as a Destination Development Organization (see BOP21-22 for more details).

As a result, this current BOP will restate major programs that were instigated in the previous year and are in now a developmental trajectory, with the expectation that these initiatives will lead to the entrenchment of sustainability for the organization itself and the region as a whole in the years to come. Fiscal BOP 22-23 carries with it the intention of continuing to move forward with these greater objectives for the recovery, resilience, and endurance of the local tourism industry.

The biggest obstacle to full recovery continues to be substantial gaps in the labour market; the need to attract and retain workers is at an all time high, and not just in this region. Limited affordable housing supply, particularly in a market that became increasingly commodified over the past two years, is also highly problematic.

To that end, workforce development remains a major area of concentration for RTO12. Significant projects are now underway to ensure success, including the introduction of a Regional Data Hub, the micro-credential online training and job recruitment program, and the next phase of the "Explorers' Edge Catalyst Housing" project, all of which are facets of the organization's long-standing *Workforce Thrusters Strategy*.

In 2022-2023, RTO12 will continue the vision to build a resilient and thriving regional tourism industry by keeping regenerative principles at the forefront of all its endeavours.

## Governance

RTO12 has maintained an open and transparent governance philosophy since its inception and has adopted an unwavering reliance on process to do so. 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 January 2022 is as follows:

[Michael Simonett](#), Chair

[msimonett@clublink.ca](mailto:msimonett@clublink.ca) (705) 571-2853

Sherwood Inn / Rocky Crest Resort, 20 Barnwood Drive, MacTier, ON

Hillary Chambers, Vice Chair

[hilary@pinegroveresort.com](mailto:hilary@pinegroveresort.com), (705) 757-2345

Lost Fox B&B, 32 Davis Dr B, Port Loring, ON

Angela Pollak, Secretary

[workingmom@rogers.com](mailto:workingmom@rogers.com), (519) 571-4584

Four Corners Algonquin Camping and Glamping, 29924 Highway 60 PO Box 420 Whitney, ON

Don MacKay, Treasurer

[dmackay@muskokahighlands.com](mailto:dmackay@muskokahighlands.com), (705) 644-2017

Muskoka Highlands, 1040 South Monck Dr, Bracebridge, ON

Andrew Rusynyk

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Hidden Valley Highlands Ski Area Inc., 1655 Hidden Valley Rd. Huntsville, ON

Darren Smith

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Lake of Bays Brewing Company, 2681 Muskoka Road 117, Baysville, ON

Dave Anderson

[dave@huckleberrys.ca](mailto:dave@huckleberrys.ca)

30,000 Island Cruise Line Inc., 9 Bay Street, Parry Sound, ON

Gail Burrows

[gail@seguinvalley.com](mailto:gail@seguinvalley.com), (705) 378-2555

Seguin Valley Golf Club, 173 Badger Road, Seguin, ON

Scott Doughty,

[sdoughty@hiddenvalleyresort.ca](mailto:sdoughty@hiddenvalleyresort.ca) (705) 571-4290

Hidden Valley Resort, 389 Indian Trail, Huntsville, ON

## Resource Members

[Laura Ross](#), Regional Development Advisor

[laura.ross@ontario.ca](mailto:laura.ross@ontario.ca) (705) 641-8349

Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries, 1350 High Falls Road, Bracebridge, ON

Explorers' Edge is governed by a nine (9) member Board of Directors representing each of the six sub-regions (Algonquin Park, Almaguin Highlands, Loring-Restoule, Muskoka, Parry Sound and South Algonquin). Six committees oversee the work of the organization:

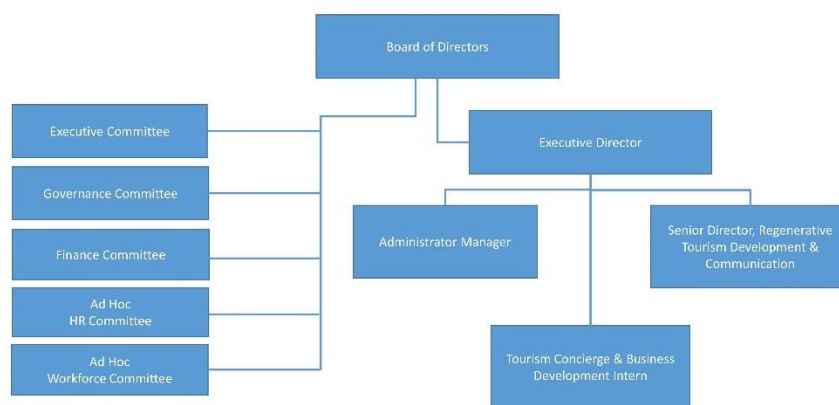
1. Executive Committee
2. Governance Committee
3. Finance Committee
4. Ad hoc – Nomination Committee
5. Ad hoc - Workforce Development Committee
6. Ad hoc – Human Resources

Committee Terms of Reference are available on the [rto12.ca](http://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.

With an objective of keeping administrative costs as low as possible, a permanent staff of three (3) conducts the ongoing work of Explorers' Edge. In Fiscal 2022-2023, EE will also hire a **Tourism Concierge & Business Development Intern** to assist with Commercial Air Service and the administration of the inbound travel division associated with our TICO licence.

Figure 1 - 2022 - 2023 Organization Chart



**Chair: Michael Simonett**

Director of Revenue with Rocky Crest Golf Resort & Sherwood Inn, ClubLink with a demonstrated history of working in the leisure, travel & tourism industry. Strong community and social services professional skilled in Front Office, Customer Service, Customer Satisfaction, Marketing, Revenue, Sales and Training.

**Executive Director: James Murphy**

After completing a college diploma in Hotel & Resort Management, James completed 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 district and provincial levels as a Board member with Muskoka Tourism, the Ontario Culinary Tourism Association (OCTA) and the Muskoka Lakes Chamber of Commerce. James has also worked on projects with the Canadian Tourism Commission (now Destination Canada), Canadian Relais & Chateaux Association and Statistics Canada. James joined RTO12 as Executive Director in 2011 is responsible for the introduction of strong governance, administrative procedures, additional funding revenue and the organization's industry-leading programs. He leads the organization's shift to a Destination Development Organization.

**Senior Director, Regenerative Tourism Development & Communications: Kate Monk**

Kate Monk holds a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) from the University of Toronto. She also earned post-graduate certificates in public relations and media copywriting from Humber College in Etobicoke, Ontario. She is a proven business strategist and communications professional, with particular interest in transformation, innovation, and benchmarking beyond the status quo. In 2021 she earned her Professional Certificate in Sustainable Tourism from the Global Sustainable Tourism Council. Kate joined RTO12 in 2011 and has been responsible for the creation of its innovative strategies and programs.

**Administration 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. She is the lead on project management for most undertakings at RTO12, and for operator outreach. Erin also acts as the organization's office administrator.

**Tourism Concierge & Business Development Intern – TBD**

## RTO12 Vision, Mission and Mandate:

The impact of Covid-19 on the global tourism industry meant the need to revisit and revise RTO12's **Vision, Mission** and **Mandate** statements in Fiscal 2021-2022. The following summarizes the new priorities for the organization from an administrative and governance perspective:

**Vision** – RTO12 is a Destination Development Organization that leads the Canadian tourism industry in regenerative development, ensuring that the region's communities and tourism stakeholders are resilient and able to thrive long-term.

**Mission** – RTO12's mission is to steward the regional tourism industry's recovery, rebuild and renewal by developing innovative regenerative programs to ensure long-term sustainability and success for all stakeholders.

### **Mandate:**

- Steward / Lead
- Research / Innovate
- Recover / Build
- Sustain
- Train
- Collaborate

### **Explorers' Edge Guiding Principles:**

- Develop regenerative strategies, programs and products that are the result of "out of the box" thinking, innovation and strategic collaboration.
- Use strategy, process and "the business of tourism" as guiding beacons to ensure the sustainability of the organization, tourism stakeholders and connected communities.
- Prioritize industry, stakeholder and community communications.

### **Explorers' Edge Operating Principles**

- Lead the recovery and rebuild as the regional Destination Development Organization
- Build programs and initiatives using the lens of regenerative business thinking.
- Leverage significant strategic partnerships.
- Engage various direct and indirect stakeholders to ensure wider sustainability and growth.
- Build revenue generation for the long-term sustainability of the organization and the regional industry.

# Regional Overview & Assessment: March 2021–April 2022

## Provincial Travel Indicators

Prior to the pandemic, visitation and spend results from the Research Unit of the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries showed that domestic travel to the RTO12 region remained strong up until the last year reported (2019):

### 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
- 2017: 4.5 million visits
- 2018: 3.7 million visits
- 2019: 4.4 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
- 2017: \$650 million in spending
- 2018: \$884 million in spending
- 2019: \$840 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



- 2017: 1,958 establishments
- 2018: 1,965 establishments
- 2019\*: 841 Establishments

\*2019 statics did not include “Retail” & “Other Services”, which accounted for 1,101 establishments in 2018.

## RTO12 Occupancy Data

Occupancy data for regional accommodations for the twelve months ending in December 2021 showed that our RTO continued to grow year over year. More importantly our region was able to increase its Average Daily Rate from \$188.68 to \$218.92 well ahead of the provincial average. This underscores the current demand for accommodation in our region. Revenue per room also increased substantially year over year.

Figure 2 - CRBE Twelve Months Ended December 2021

TRENDS IN THE CANADIAN HOTEL INDUSTRY  
National Market Report: A monthly professional publication

**CBRE**

Report of rooms operations for RTO 12 and the Province of Ontario  
MONTH OF DECEMBER 2021

Location	Occupancy Percentage			Average Daily Rate			Revenue Per Available Room		
	2021	2020	**Point Change	2021	2020	Variance	2021	2020	Variance
RTO 12	36.3%	22.0%	14.3	\$184.24	\$156.28	17.9%	\$66.92	\$34.37	94.7%
ONTARIO	45.4%	25.3%	20.2	\$137.85	\$104.79	31.5%	\$62.64	\$26.50	136.4%

\*\* Please note that the variance between current and previous year occupancy is reported as a point change and not as a percentage variance.  
SOURCE: CBRE Limited with reproduction and use of information subject to CBRE Disclaimer and Restrictions as detailed at <https://www.cbre.ca/en/real-estate-services/business-lines/valuation-and-advisory-services/hotels-valuation-and-advisory-services/disclaimer>

TRENDS IN THE CANADIAN HOTEL INDUSTRY  
National Market Report: A monthly professional publication

**CBRE**

Report of rooms operations for RTO 12 and the Province of Ontario  
TWELVE MONTHS ENDED DECEMBER 2021

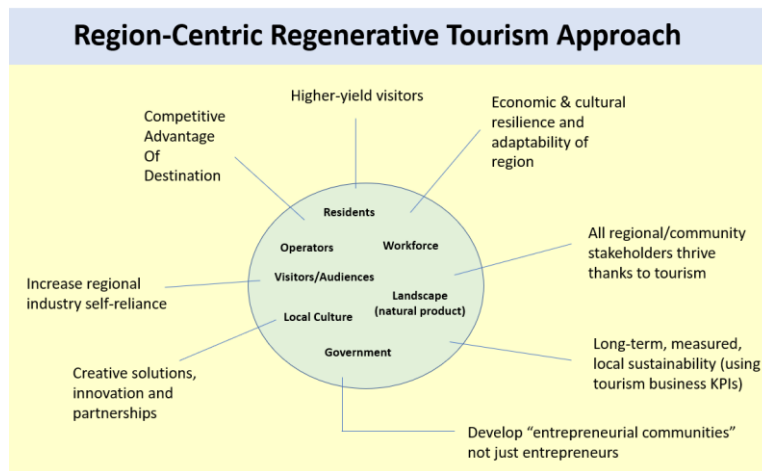
Location	Occupancy Percentage			Average Daily Rate			Revenue Per Available Room		
	2021	2020	**Point Change	2021	2020	Variance	2021	2020	Variance
RTO 12	42.4%	39.6%	2.8	\$218.92	\$188.68	16.0%	\$92.86	\$74.65	24.4%
ONTARIO	44.1%	34.8%	9.3	\$128.79	\$126.03	2.2%	\$56.79	\$43.84	29.5%

\*\* Please note that the variance between current and previous year occupancy is reported as a point change and not as a percentage variance.  
SOURCE: CBRE Limited with reproduction and use of information subject to CBRE Disclaimer and Restrictions as detailed at <https://www.cbre.ca/en/real-estate-services/business-lines/valuation-and-advisory-services/hotels-valuation-and-advisory-services/disclaimer>

In winter of 2022, operational mandates were once again placed on tourism stakeholders by the Government of Ontario, stemming from a significant surge in the Omicron variant. This meant restricted occupancy and indoor limits for some regional tourism businesses. The impact of these restrictions has not yet been measured at the time of this document’s publication.

# Regenerative Review: Long-Term Strategy for Recovery, Rebuild and Resilience

Figure 3 - Region-Centric Regenerative Tourism Approach



In Fiscal 2021-2022, RTO12 embarked on an ambitious “Region-Centric Regenerative Tourism Approach” to create innovative solutions for industry sustainability, wider community development, and organizational sustainability (see BOP21-22 for details). The key pillars of this approach are:

- 1) Work to ensure the economic, social, cultural, and environmental resilience of the region through tourism development.
- 2) Consider and weigh the desires and needs of all community stakeholders – not just those involved directly in the tourism industry, nor only those in ownership positions.
- 3) Increase regional self-reliance to solve local challenges and increase revenue generation to stabilize and develop the tourism industry.
- 4) Seek and implement creative solutions, innovation, and strategic partnerships to solve community development and industry sustainability challenges. Develop timely research and attract digital and tech innovation for the industry.
- 5) Develop KPIs to reflect improvement of the tourism industry in relation to economic, social, cultural, and environmental objectives (a holistic measurement).
- 6) Concentrate on developing higher-yield visitation (spend more, stay longer in the region) rather than on mass tourism.
- 7) Build an extremely robust communications plan to promote the ongoing development of the regional tourism business ecosystem.

- 8) Position EE as a Destination Development Organization that champions ‘the business of tourism as a catalyst for thriving communities.’

## **Regenerative Foundations: Work-To-Date**

Big bucket items of RTO12’s region-centric regenerative approach commenced in Fiscal 2021-2022 and included the following:

### **Data / Research**

One of the most important initiatives moving forward is the necessity to build a “Regional Data Hub” (RDH) that will provide up-to-date and timely intelligence on the state of the local tourism industry. With regenerative principles in mind, this expands the information usually gathered to beyond the traditional measurements of visitation and spend. The RDH will also establish KPIs and track performance of regenerative tourism programs developed by RTO12.

In the previous fiscal year, RTO12 contracted Environics to conduct research into four main areas:

- A new ‘Business Confidence Index’ (includes items affecting the ability of a business to have confidence, such as provincial operational restrictions, labour shortages, increased costs for staff and guest safety, etc.).
- Regional Labour Shortages & Requirements (from the operator perspective: how many workers do we need at any given time?)
- Worker Insights (to improve loyalty and attraction of workers: why do they stay, why do they leave, and how do we attract more workers)
- Resident Sentiment (to ensure community support for “the business of tourism” as an economic driver)

The RDH will be developed using Google Data Studio and will help the RTO and tourism stakeholders develop responsive business initiatives for recovery, rebuild and resilience. The dashboard will live on the new RTO12 corporate website (launched March 2021) and will also eventually include information regarding the impact of tourism on the environment.

### **The Sustainable Tourism Pilot Project**

In an effort to convince as many tourism businesses as possible to adopt sustainable practices on their properties, RTO12 partnered with nine regional businesses to have them become certified in sustainability by GreenStep Solutions Inc., a consultant that uses the recognized standards of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council. This group of businesses will then work with RTO12 staff to additionally build a greater business case for sustainability, in order to educate additional regional operators on the benefits of introducing sustainability. This is a multi-year project to track YOY indicators.

## Micro-Credential Training: The Rural Tourism Certificate for Job Recruitment



In an effort to attract workers, RTO12 developed a micro-credential program called “The Rural Tourism Certificate” which launched in March of 2022. A series of online modules educate participants on the region and why it is a popular vacation destination, as well as why a tourism job in the region will serve them well.

The program also makes the case for rural vs. urban workforce development. The intent is to build a lead nurturing database to share information about current job openings and recruitment events.

The first five videos in this expandable online training include:

1. Introduction to the Rural Tourism Certificate Training
2. Welcome to Rural: The Great Canadian Wilderness Just North of Toronto
3. The Rural Tourism Revival
4. Developing Tourism Products & Experiences: A Rural Approach
5. Work & Play in the Great Canadian Wilderness

Each module contains a graded quiz, and a certificate of completion is issued with an overall passing grade. This micro-credential training is expandable to additional modules depending on target audiences, and acts as a pilot project for additional training in the Catalyst Housing and Workforce Thrusters Strategy.

### Job Bank Development

In September of 2021, recognizing the need to recruit workers to fill the gaps left by the departure of seasonal student workers, RTO12 created a regional tourism Job Bank, which was housed on the branded consumer website and marketed using display advertising. The inaugural edition of the Job Bank marketing was a great success, and a second round of advertising commenced in late winter of 2022.

RTO12 will continue to make enhancements to the Job Bank in order to optimize efficacy and conversion, as well as operator participation.

### Catalyst Housing

The Catalyst Housing project is RTO12’s innovative housing model that is intended to serve the regional tourism industry, and potentially other sectors as well (e.g. healthcare, building trades). The intent is to “attract workers and develop professionals” by leverage housing, employment and training opportunities in one offering.

As part of its regenerative approach, funding for the Catalyst Housing project will include a combination of public, private and impact investors.

In 2021, RTO12 commenced its “Road Map to Catalyst Housing” communications plan, which will be released in Fiscal 2022-2023. It will include recommendations for community involvement and the successful development and issuance of impact bonds.

Figure 4 - Road Map to Catalyst Housing



## TICO

RTO12 continued the process of acquiring its Tourism Industry Council of Ontario (TICO) license to operate as a travel agency. This will allow for the development of itineraries and packages that will target higher yield visitors, who stay longer and spend more. A percentage of revenue from the sale of packages will also be put towards sustainability programs across the region.

### **Commercial Air Service: Higher Yield Visitors and Regional Dispersion**

With its aviation partner, Porter Airlines, RTO12 was thrilled to announce the return of summer service to the Muskoka Airport, with tickets sales commencing on February 22, 2022. The service, which runs twice weekly from June 24 to September 6, 2022, is intended to attract higher yield visitors from international markets, including New York, Boston and Chicago.

In addition to taking a lead in marketing for the service, RTO12 will once again invest in and deploy a shuttle service to ensure dispersion of visitors across the entire region, for the benefit of as many tourism stakeholders as possible.

### **Indigenous Outreach and Tourism Development**

Working with an economic development specialist with a background in First Nations outreach, grant development and tourism development, RTO12 commenced efforts to build mutually respectful and beneficial relations with the First Nations and Metis stakeholders in the Robinson Huron and Williams Treaties territory.

## RTO12 2022-2023 Goals

The current and long-standing mandated pillars by Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism & Culture Industries for the RTO to work within 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

*As a result of pandemic learnings and keeping in mind the pillars of operation required by the Ministry, the following goals will shape the work of RTO12 for the next 2 years (as a continuation of the 3-Year Regenerative Strategy launched in BOP21-22).*

### Marketing

- Leverage our successful content marketing program to target hyper local, domestic or international audiences, depending on the state of opening in the province and region.
- Leverage the flexibility of content marketing to “stop and go” our marketing thrust, depending on the state of opening and which particular audience is to be targeted (if at all, on any particular day). We are prepared to scale up or scale down at a moment’s notice.
- When not actively marketing, produce content to retain audiences for when travel bans are lifted, in order for the region to remain front of line.
- Present multiple “travel Zoom” events targeting travellers and pertaining to demand generators.
- Market programs and initiatives to all community stakeholders, not just tourism operators and government.
- Continue to develop branded transacting programs to stimulate purchase and travel.
- Include packages and itineraries in all lead nurturing and content in order to move travellers down the purchase funnel to repeat conversion.
- Transition the Explorers’ Edge brand to the administrative identity, and position “The Great Canadian Wilderness Just North of Toronto” as the sole consumer brand, regardless of target market (hyper local, domestic, international). Promote new website.
- Include messaging to protect the natural product and to prevent any negative effects of “over tourism” as rural destinations increase exponentially in popularity (e.g. a “Leave No Trace” education campaign).

- Include message to promote safe visitation.
- Focusing on developing higher-yield customers rather than mass volume of visitors
- Improve resident sentiment towards tourism as integral to regional economic development.
- Continue to offer marketing training workshops and instruction to operators.
- Conduct ongoing, timely and region-centric consumer research.

### **Product Development**

- Build relationships with existing Indigenous tourism operators and develop opportunities for new Indigenous operators.
- Develop packages related to strategic itineraries, with the intention of converting higher-yield customers.
- Develop branded travel packages such as “Fuel & Fun” or “Cottage Country Spirit Local Travel Package” to stimulate purchase (whether hyper local, domestic or international)
- Continue to promote and support product relevant to the “Key Tourism Activities”.
- Market Explorers’ Edge as a travel booking agency once final TICO accreditation is achieved (anticipated April 2021)
- Introduce package booking widget functionality to consumer website, content and promotional tactics.
- Build sustainability training programs for tourism operators/operations.
- Build regional field to fork culinary supply chains for local agri and dining sustainability.

### **Investment Attraction**

- Build community and impact investing for the catalyst housing/training program.
- Build stakeholder and community membership contributions for “buffer” investing.
- Start to build a tourism business case for passenger rail service.
- Continue to invest in Great Lakes cruise ship programs with the Town of Parry Sound, including shuttle service for day trip dispersion (anticipated cruise ships return summer 2022)
- “Re-launch” commercial air service promotion and passenger programs including shuttle service for regional dispersion when air service returns

### **Workforce Development**

- Continue to work with post-secondary and secondary institutions to build awareness of the region as a tourism career destination.
- Convert urban students to rural employees.
- Communicate with youth, return-to-work, immigrant, international student and “she-covey” audiences.
- Continue to host Zoom Job Recruitment events that include “sense of place” marketing.
- Build a “Neighbourhood Network” of police-checked volunteers who will welcome new workers to the region.

- Launch 3-year Catalyst Housing project with training development (Year 1); build strategy in Years 1 & 2 (with potential build(s) in Year 2 & 3); stakeholder investing outreach and buy-in Years 2 & 3
- Conduct ongoing, timely and region-centric industry research

### **Partnership**

- Ensure regional partners understand the Region-Centric approach and have opportunities to align strategies.
- Partner strategically with local agencies or individuals to deliver hyper local program.
- Develop extra-industry partnerships to move projects forward (including expertise)

### **Industry Communication, Liaison and Accountability**

- Develop communication and relations with our Indigenous community throughout and beyond our RTO12 regional borders.
- Engage multiple operators when possible.
- Continue to strengthen outreach and communication with industry.
- Develop outreach and communication to non-industry stakeholders.
- Develop “regenerative tourism champions” across the region.
- Ensure the industry is well informed on all tourism related topics (marketing, research, product development, training, investment etc.)
- Deliver and receive diversity, inclusion and equity training.
- Determine regenerative tourism KPIs to track economic, social, cultural and environmental sustainability and growth of the regional industry and community stakeholders.

What follows is a summary of the BOP22-23 implementation, as well as objectives, key activities, timelines, and performance measures for MHSTCI TPA requirements.



## 2022 - 2023 Business and Operational Plan Summary

<b>Governance</b> <b>250,500</b>	<b>Marketing</b> <b>452,000</b>	<b>Product Development</b> <b>64,000</b>	<b>Investment Attraction</b> <b>23,607</b>	<b>Workforce</b> <b>176,000</b>	<b>Partnership</b> <b>182,000</b>
<p>Govern EE through effective leadership; strong equitable industry representation and following strategy, systems, policies, and procedures.</p> <p>Regional Tourism Summit sharing tourism sustainability program outcomes, regenerative program development and destination development updates.</p> <p>Annual General Meeting. Explore business awards and tourism employee awards.</p> <p>Build stakeholder &amp; community membership contributions.</p> <p>Ensure organizational decisions meet the needs of both the tourism business community and the community of a whole to “float all boats” (including tourism SME’s, employees, and residents)</p>	<p>Promote the great Canadian wilderness brand.</p> <p>Target hyper local, dom. &amp; int’l markets depending on provincial/federal restrictions.</p> <p>Publish exceptional content &amp; launch promotion that is flexible, adaptable &amp; scalable.</p> <p>Sell product packages &amp; itineraries (primary CTA) via TICO travel division</p> <p>Develop &amp; promote incentivized travel packages to coincide with high yield travellers to the region.</p> <p>Reboot lead nurturing and commercial air service.</p>	<p>Build relationships with existing Indigenous tourism operators and develop opportunities for new Indigenous operators.</p> <p>Develop high yield packages &amp; itinerary for purchase.</p> <p>Commence development of local culinary supply chains.</p> <p>Develop content to promote the KTAs to target audiences.</p> <p>Explorer product opportunities to ensure year two of regional air service exceeds expectations.</p> <p>Maintain Bike Cottage Country product site.</p> <p>Continue sustainability training programs for tourism operators / operations (e.g. property stewardship guides).</p>	<p>Explore partnerships &amp; investing that prioritizes regenerative tourism and workforce development.</p> <p>Communicate community &amp; impact investing for the catalyst housing/training program.</p> <p>Continue to explore a tourism business case for passenger rail service.</p> <p>Continue to liaise with regional economic development agencies to ensure that the tourism impact remains a top priority.</p> <p>Continue as a member of the Great Lakes Cruise Coalition ensuring a robust cruise network, investment and season on the shores of Georgian Bay,.</p>	<p>Attract workers and develop professionals via outreach to education partners including high schools, colleges, and universities.</p> <p>Educating workers on the region as career destination via the developed Micro Credential Workforce Rural Certificate.</p> <p>Convert urban post - secondary students to rural employees.</p> <p>Communicate with youth, return-to-work, immigrant, international students &amp; “she -covery” audiences.</p> <p>Host Zoom Recruitments.</p> <p>Build a “Neighbourhood Network” who will welcome new workers.</p> <p>Conduct ongoing, timely and region-centric industry research.</p>	<p>Prioritize partnerships that support RTO12’s regenerative tourism and workforce development initiatives.</p> <p>Marketing and communication to support the commercial airline year two launch.</p> <p>Continue to work with local stakeholders to examine mutually beneficial regional partnerships.</p>

## 2022 – 2023 BOP: Objectives, Key Activities and Timelines, Performance Measures

### Governance

Priority / Strategic Focus	Objectives	Key Activities / Tactics	Performance Indicator
Governance and Administration			
Governance			
<p>Govern EE through effective leadership; strong equitable industry representation and following strategy, systems, policies, and procedures.</p> <p>To ensure organizational decisions meet the needs of both the tourism business community and the community of a whole to “float all boats” (including tourism SME’s, employees, and residents)</p>	<p>Introduce sustainability principals with solid &amp; innovative business strategies.</p> <p>Cultivate an organizational philosophy with the greater community to understand impacts of the RTOs role as a Destination Development Organization.</p> <p>Manage our assets and liabilities responsibly while delivering expected results on time.</p>	<p>Solicit community input / reaction on strategies and organizational approach (Region-Centric Regenerative Tourism Approach) via webinars and surveys reporting back on outcomes via follow-up communication.</p> <p>Continue governance training and diversity, inclusion, and equity training.</p> <p>Development of committee(s), when necessary, that is inclusive to the community.</p> <p>Board quarterly update, review, and input on annual BOP execution.</p> <p>Conduct board reviews via surveys of RTO plans and performance measures against stated objectives and targets; adjusting as required</p> <p>Complete a skills matrix to identify priority areas for board member recruitment.</p> <p>Regularly review activities, finances at board meetings.</p>	<p>Participation in community input sessions (target 600 participants) (target 12 webinars) (target 3 surveys).</p> <p>Effective board training participation (target 100% of board directors) (target – 70% of participation identify being satisfied / highly satisfied with training outcomes).</p> <p>Business plan participation, results of the financial audit and operational reporting (operating goals met, clean audit)</p> <p>Board satisfaction with governance updates and discussions at the board table regarding committee items(target – 70% of participation identify being satisfied / highly satisfied with governance outcomes).</p>

Priority / Strategic Focus	Objectives	Key Activities / Tactics	Performance Indicator
Operations			
<p>Continue with regenerative practices within the organization to benefit both internal and external stakeholders.</p>	<p>To steward the regional tourism recovery, rebuild and renewal.</p> <p>Continue to develop an investment strategy for future operational, organization and industry resiliency.</p>	<p>Revenue generation via membership, activities include the development, communication, and solicitation of an updated membership model.</p> <p>Development of investment strategy, activities include outreach, research, and input.</p> <p>Development of tourism award(s) with activities that include communication and participation.</p> <p>RTO will presentation of organizational operational updates / direction via webinar, Zoom, WebEx meetings, Microsoft Teams etc.</p>	<p>Membership (target – 150)</p> <p>Award Participants (target – 12 stakeholders)</p> <p>Number of stakeholders involved in the communication of organizational activities / updates (target – 1,400 stakeholders)</p> <p>RTO operational presentations (target – 12)</p>

## Industry Communication, Liaison and Accountability

Priority / Strategic Focus	Objectives	Key Activities / Tactics	Performance Indicator
Industry Communication, Liaison and Accountability			
<p>Ensuring the community understands the role the RTO plays in leading the recovery of both the regional economy and the community.</p>	<p>Strengthen communications with industry and non-industry throughout RTO12.</p> <p>Ensure the industry is well informed of all tourism related topics.</p> <p>Make certain all three levels of government understand the impacts decisions at the municipal, provincial, and federal level impact our regional communities.</p>	<p>Foster outreach to operators and facilitate information sharing while continuing to facilitate the development of industry capacity by providing relevant information.</p> <p>Strengthen communications with operators and ensure updates happen in a timely manner.</p> <p>Monitor Facebook business forum for feedback.</p> <p>Monitor Twitter for regional grievances, criticism, complaints etc.</p> <p>Explore joint investment, marketing, product development, and other initiatives that benefit operators.</p> <p>Strengthen outreach and communication with industry reviewing / updating internal CRM, mailing list etc.</p> <p>Facilitate presentations via webinars with RTO senior staff and guest speakers highlighting best practices, innovative tourism programs, recovery related programs.</p>	<p>Participants on RTO webinar updates (35 per webinar).</p> <p>Number of new subscribers to organization Newsletter. (target – 65)</p> <p>Identification of three stakeholder concerns to be communicated to the Board of Directors and levels of government (target – 6)</p>

## Marketing

Priority / Strategic Focus	Objectives	Key Activities / Tactics	Performance Indicator
<b>Marketing</b>			
<b>Content Development</b>			
Create promotional content for the destination brand, sub-regions, products/KTAs, commercial air service, and for package and itinerary sales.	<p>Convert “discoverers” to travellers by moving them down the purchase funnel (“awareness” to package “purchase”).</p> <p>Capture consumer email addresses in the lead nurturing program to move registrants down the purchase funnel.</p> <p>Increase website analytics, sessions, users, page views, pages/session &amp; average session duration (via content).</p>	<p>Development of regional content via researching story ideas, interviewing stakeholders, alignment with research (includes interviews, photography development and regional outreach).</p> <p>Assigning staff on a weekly basis to work with the lead nurturing third party to develop, deploy and monitor segmented emails.</p> <p>Assigning staff daily to update consumer website with new content, events, pictures, listings, and packages by scanning regional and provincial partner sites and social accounts.</p>	<p>Regional Content developed (target – 6 sub-regional pieces, 10 product pieces, 10 itinerary pieces)</p> <p>Consumer opt-in for the consumer e-mail database: (target – hyperlocal/500, domestic/1000, international/100)</p> <p>Website analytics including: visits (target – 150,000), page views (target – 200k), pages/session (target – 1.40) &amp; average session duration (target – 1.20 minute)</p>
<b>Social Media Marketing</b>			
Introduce regional product to hyper local, 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.</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 (MERGED)</p> <p>Facebook Likes (target – 500 new)</p> <p>Twitter followers (target – 50 new)</p> <p>Social media mentions (target – 500)</p> <p>Social media comments (target - 500)</p> <p>Social media Post Likes (target – 5,000)</p> <p>Social media clicks to Website (target – 50,000)</p>

Priority / Strategic Focus	Objectives	Key Activities / Tactics	Performance Indicator
<b>Media / PR Program</b>			
Participate media promotions to facilitate a positive media coverage of RTO12.	<p>Continue brand/story awareness and produce unpaid, positive, and engaging editorial coverage in target markets.</p> <p>Continue media release outputs related to work being completed during fiscal year.</p>	<p>Regional outreach to gauge feedback on media opportunities.</p> <p>Engage industry partners (DO, sub regional partners, operators) on media opportunities.</p> <p>Meet with media representatives at key virtual marketplaces.</p> <p>Develop community outreach and membership communication plans.</p> <p>Develop robust hyper local, domestic, and international in-house Media List.</p> <p>Coordinate media tours when safe to do so.</p> <p>Track media engagement.</p>	<p>Inbound media visits. (target – 1)</p> <p>Increase in unique visits to the RTO media communication page on new administrative site.</p> <p>Produce organization communication plan.</p> <p>Increase in the number of media contacts in the database. (target – 50-75)</p> <p>Coordinated media tours. (target – 1)</p> <p>Deploy minimum one media release per quarter.</p>
<b>Dispersion / Shuttle Service</b>			
Facilitate a summer shuttle service coinciding with commercial air service ensuring traveler dispersion throughout the region.	Provide air travelers to the region the opportunity to disperse into sub regions of RTO12 / Explorers' Edge.	<p>Re-establish 2019 scheduled stops with regional business(s).</p> <p>Re-visit reservation platform, updating and making necessary changes.</p> <p>Communicate shuttle service to travellers to the region.</p> <p>Update terms and conditions along with the schedule to transportation AOR.</p>	Total # of travellers using the service – target 300

Priority / Strategic Focus	Objectives	Key Activities / Tactics	Performance Indicator
<b>Transacting</b>			
To assist tourism SMEs with liquidity issues and stimulate travel during the pandemic through out the rebuild phase.	Ensure markets are dispersed throughout the region exploring tourism product via either hyper local or domestics depending on the current travel advisories.	<p>Update the scope of the RTO long standing voucher program (hyper local and domestic program) examining applicability and viability along side the current and future travel needs for the region.</p> <p>Coordinate with local chambers of commerce, BIA's and DMO's to identify local, regional, and provincial tourists.</p> <p>Communicate outcomes with the board of directors and stakeholders on the commencement of the program.</p> <p>Provide stakeholders with information related to transacting programs on a regular basis.</p> <p>Survey past package recipients related to applicability and use of the voucher program.</p>	<p>Dispersion – continue traveller spending &amp; dispersion 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 – 50 responses)</p> <p>Operator Satisfaction with the transacting program (target – 85% satisfied or highly satisfied)</p>
<b>Package Development</b>			
The development of high yield packages to generate revenue filling an identified gap in the consumer purchase funnel.	Development of high yield packages aligning with organizational KTAs.	<p>Work with the Travel Industry Council of Ontario (TICO) to launch our inbound travel division.</p> <p>Outreach to tourism operators regarding criteria and scope of the high yield packages.</p> <p>Organization of travel packages that coincide with commercial air service.</p> <p>Communication of RTO specific travel packages.</p> <p>Monitoring, follow-up and reporting on RTO packages.</p>	<p>During first year of TICO Licence benchmark revenue &amp; expenses</p> <p>Targets associated with package development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 packages developed.</li> <li>• 20 stakeholders participating</li> <li>• 50 packages sold</li> </ul>

## Product Development

Priority / Strategic Focus	Objectives	Key Activities / Tactics	Performance Indicator
<b>Product Development</b>			
<b>Indigenous</b>			
Gain an understanding of challenges associated with Indigenous tourism operators.	Understand the role that tourism can play in reciprocity with our Indigenous communities.	Continue outreach with Indigenous communities via the RTO Economic Developer consultant.  Continue Indignons dialogue and communication.	Track Indigenous outcomes and exchanges communicating lessons learned.  Confirmed meeting with each of our nine identified regional Indigenous communities.
<b>Sustainability</b>			
Position our region as a sustainable destination option.	Work towards fostering regional sustainability with tourism SMEs through out the region.	Present findings of first group of sustainable tourism SMEs at regional and provincial summits.  Continue working with our accreditation consultant guiding SMEs through the process.  Meet with cohort of business participants on a quarterly basis to discuss action items, challenges, successes while gathering program feedback.  Benchmark number of accredited tourism operators and share successes.	Present findings of year one sustainable development program at three regional speaking engagements.  Confirm six accredited sustainable tourism SME's
<b>Industry Statistics</b>			
Track the health of regional tourism industry.	Ensure industry and non-industry stakeholders have access to relevant tourism statistics.	Track monthly occupancy percentages, average daily rate & Revenue per available room via CRBE.  Using staff resources the RTO will network with stakeholders to assemble data related occupancy outcomes.  Track and disseminate Ministry- generated consumer research, statistics, and tourism updates.	Number of views / downloads of the online research findings (target - 125).  Number of participants participating in the research dialogue via Regional Tourism Summit, quarterly stakeholder meetings and monthly webinars (target- 55)  Number of research presentations (target - 2)



## Investment Attraction

Priority / Strategic Focus	Objectives	Key Activities / Tactics	Performance Indicator
<b>Investment Attraction</b>			
<b>Communication</b>			
Make certain that Tourism is an investment priority across regional, provincial, and national networks.	Tourism investment bolsters the Workforce Thruster Strategy as it relates to the catalyst housing / training program.	<p>Explore partnerships &amp; investing that prioritizes workforce development.</p> <p>Additionally, conduct outreach, solicit feedback, and interview potential investment partners.</p> <p>Provide regional economic development partners with project outlines and applicable updates related to the progression of forthcoming investment projects in the region.</p> <p>Present and communicate the concept of impact investing and community bonds.</p>	<p>Involvement in investment seminars, meetings, and workshop(s) (target - 10)</p> <p>Regional outreach / update engagement sessions (target - 5)</p>
<b>Transportation</b>			
Investigate and maintain travel infrastructure options throughout the region.	To ensure all options for travel to the destination is examined, researched, maintained, and developed (where deemed appropriate).	<p>Examine the necessary foundational work for the development of a tourism business case for passenger rail service. Additionally, conduct rail passenger interviews with key national and international experts.</p> <p>Support the Great Lakes Cruising Coalition (GLCC) with membership and input as it related to their efforts during the travel ban.</p> <p>Additionally, attend GLCC meetings, AGMs, industry zoom events adding input and advice.</p> <p>Continue dialogue with partners involved in the commercial air service program maintaining dialogue. Additionally, provide input into additional investment into the commercial air service program.</p>	<p>Passenger Rail Interviews (target - 6)</p> <p>Great Lakes Cruising Coalition Events (target – 6)</p> <p>Commercial Air Service Meetings (target - 4)</p>

## Workforce

Priority / Strategic Focus	Objectives	Key Activities / Tactics	Performance Indicator
<b>Workforce</b>			
<b>Work Force Inspiration &amp; Intelligence Gathering</b>			
Endorse tourism as a career.	Showcase tourism as a desirable and applicable career choice showcasing RTO12 a premier tourism career destination.	<p>Continue work with high schools, colleges, and universities to Inspire and gather intelligence related to student career sentiment towards tourism.</p> <p>Communication of career options via content, zoom recruitment and familiarization tours along with the circulation of the Rural Tourism Certificate Micro Credential.</p> <p>Work with existing organizations to coordinate workforce development, opportunities in the region.</p>	<p>Number of educational institutions working with the RTO (target – 5)</p> <p>Students that the RTO engages with (target – 250)</p> <p>Completion of Rural Tourism Certificate Micro Credential (target – 75)</p>
<b>Work Force Communication</b>			
Communicate the possibilities regional workforce opportunities.	Involve youth, return-to-work, immigrant, international students, and ‘she-covery’ audiences via communication outreach.	<p>Update communication plan for additional audiences related to research outcomes.</p> <p>Continue to capture contact information to continue dialogue while gauging feedback.</p> <p>Continue to create content positioning the region as a career option related to tourism.</p>	<p>Leads captured related to interested individuals and audiences (target – 50)</p> <p># of pieces of content related to workforce development (target – 2)</p> <p># of content views (target – 250)</p>
<b>Work Force Recruitment &amp; Welcome</b>			
Convert Urban graduates to rural employees.	Introduce graduates to rural tourism opportunities.	<p>Continue “Neighbourhood Network” program that educates, welcomes, and converts urban graduates.</p> <p>Continue outreach to service clubs to ascertain involvement and support.</p> <p>Assemble regional ambassadors, on board and brief on program objectives. Additionally, link the ambassadors with Urban graduates.</p>	<p>Ambassador to graduate network / relationships (target – 40 matches)</p> <p>Urban graduates working in RTO12 (benchmark target – 8)</p>

Priority / Strategic Focus	Objectives	Key Activities / Tactics	Performance Indicator
Work Force Research			
Gain a comprehensive understanding of the current workforce landscape.	<p>Gain a thorough understanding of employment insights via residents who don't work in the industry, those who currently work in the industry and those who have left the industry.</p> <p>Obtain information on labour shortages via tourism business owners in the region.</p>	<p>Development of surveys related to employment insights and labour shortages.</p> <p>Review and integrate research outcomes into upcoming strategies / operation plans</p> <p>Solicit feedback from community partners related to research objectives.</p> <p>Communicate research outcomes to regional partners, board of directors and stakeholders.</p>	<p>Research presentations to regional stakeholders (target – 3)</p> <p># of downloads of research (target – 200)</p> <p># of times research is used by stakeholders (other than the RTO) to support business plan development (target – 10)</p>

## Partnership Allocation

Priority / Strategic Focus	Objectives	Key Activities / Tactics	Performance Indicator
Marketing & Communication			
Collaborate with partners that align communication and marketing with RTO priorities and objectives.	Work in partnership to ensure commercial air service program, and regional product communication are supported.	<p>Using staff resources communicate organizational operational plans, strategies, objectives, and outcomes.</p> <p>Circulate partnership criteria and process to regional stakeholders.</p> <p>Work with third party(s) to establish partnership work plans, key deliverables, and dates.</p> <p>Using staff resources communicate mid partnership progress and final report to board of directors and stakeholders.</p>	# of communication and marketing partnerships (goal and target – 8)

# Marketing Communications Plan:

## Context

The 2018 *Product Research & Framework* study ([Click Here - Appendix 1](#)), which is the basis for the 3-Year Strategy pertaining to marketing, identified six “Key Tourism Activities” (KTAs) that were most likely to motivate high potential international travellers to the region. These include:

- Indigenous Cultural Tourism
- Being Lakeside
- Hiking
- Paddling
- Wildlife Viewing
- Guided Nature Tours

With the return of commercial air service (intended to attract international travellers) and the opening of domestic travel, RTO12 will continue to market the KTAs to build both international and domestic visitation. The establishment of hyper local marketing, integral to the ongoing recovery of the regional industry, will continue as well, though an increase in this targeting by multiple local agencies will require more consideration of how not to duplicate efforts.

## Continuing With the 3-Year Strategy

### *Package Sales*

A key deliverable the re-designed consumer site is to feature and promote package sales on interior pages and in content (main CTA). This is part of the organization’s commitment to increase higher-yield travel conversions, and to increase organizational revenue.

### *New Segments in a Covid World*

In the summer 2020, Explorers’ Edge undertook a substantial region-centric consumer research study ([Click Here - Appendix 2](#)) to determine macro and micro travel intentions in pandemic/post-pandemic times.

The results indicated that the regional brand – “The Great Canadian Wilderness Just North of Toronto” – will resonate extremely well with domestic and international travellers for years to come and act as a catalyst to book (in contrast to provincial urban destinations, where travel intentions are lower).

As a result of the study, which included factor analysis of the primary research, Explorers’ Edge created four new traveller segments, two of which became the primary audiences for targeting in 2021-2022, and which will continue for 2022-2023.

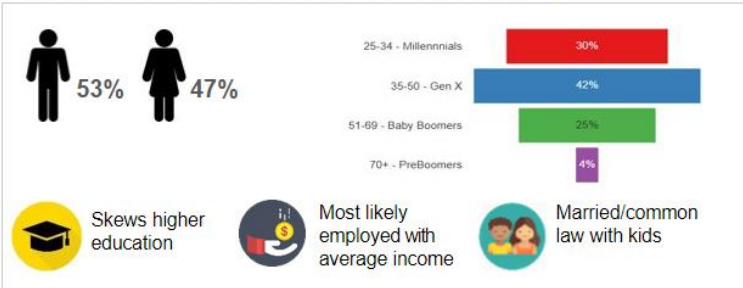
### *NEW - Ontario Staycation Tax Credit*

All content marketing landing pages and commercial air service pages will include information related to the temporary Ontario Staycation Tax Credit. The credit aims to encourage Ontario families to explore the province, while helping the tourism and hospitality sectors recover from the financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Top Priority Segment 1: Excellent alignment with brand, regional offerings, and KTAs**



**ONTARIO ACTIVE & OUTDOORS (43%)**  
Immersive & active, want to be outside and occupied

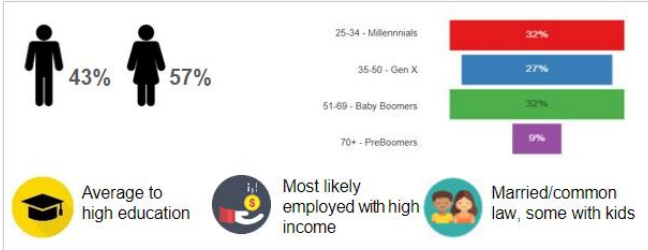


<b>Drivers to travelling in Ontario</b>	Being active, escaping, relaxing
<b>Barriers to travelling in Ontario</b>	Lack of flexibility, things to do, safety protocols
<b>Product</b>	Winter and Fair weather sports, nature, relaxing
<b>Impact of COVID on travel</b>	Cancelled plans in 2020 but likely to travel in 2021
<b>Focus</b>	Appeal to their vitality and need for escape

**Top Priority Segment 2: Highest % of most-likely-to-travel/Millennials**



**FREE & FOMO (6%)**  
Experiential, looking for authentic experiences



<b>Drivers to travelling in Ontario</b>	Exploring, being out there, taking great pictures
<b>Barriers to travelling in Ontario</b>	Not feeling excitement about what's available
<b>Product</b>	Wine/brews tours, culture, relaxing
<b>Impact of COVID on travel</b>	Cancelled plans in 2020 but likely to travel ASAP
<b>Focus</b>	Appeal to need to explore & fear of missing out

### ***Hyper Local Travel: Here to Stay***

The pandemic saw the exponential rise of hyper local travel to sustain regional businesses. Marketing to ‘backyard tourists’ is now a staple strategy of any destination and will remain so for a long time to come. Explorers’ Edge will continue to build this audience to promote intra-regional travel and make particular use of incentivized local travel packages to do so.

The hyper local market is also important for ensuring outbound sales and high load factors on the Porter Airlines summer seasonal service in 2022.

### ***“Stop & Go” Marketing***

Our long-standing content marketing program has served us well during the pandemic when, depending on orders from the provincial or federal governments, we could be open or closed at a moment’s notice. Internally, we call this “Stop & Go” marketing. One week we could be in a holding pattern and only publishing scenic content with no call-to-action (CTA); the next we could be targeting regions of Ontario not under travel bans or lock down orders to book a getaway or to sign-up for a local travel package.

To that end, though this plan entails producing and promoting a specific amount of strategic content, Explorers’ Edge recognizes that our approach moving forward must continue to be flexible, adaptable and scalable as long as external pandemic influences exist.

## Marketing Priorities 2022-2023

- Continue to promote the long-standing GCWNT brand and brand voice (“earnest, approachable, informed and most of all, Canadian”)
- Target hyper local, domestic, and international markets depending on provincial and federal travel restrictions.
- Ensure the return of commercial air service with Porter Airlines is a success (optimize inbound and outbound load factors)
- Publish exceptional content (‘educate, entertain, convince’) and launch promotion that is flexible, adaptable, and scalable.
- Use successful social, mobile content promotion tactics (primarily Facebook) while testing additional platforms to reach up-and-coming travellers/younger audiences.
- Sell product packages and itineraries (primary CTA) / also work with Porter Escapes
- Develop and promote incentivized travel packages, such as *Fuel & Fun* and the *Cottage Country Spirit Local Travel Package*
- Reboot lead nurturing marketing, which was halted during the pandemic.
- Maintain/develop content on BikeCottageCountry.ca, CottageCountryBeerTrail.ca and GolfMuskoka.com

### Overall Goal:

**Build hyper local, domestic, and international leads and convert them to higher yield\* travel purchasers in the Great Canadian Wilderness Just North of Toronto (when it is safe/legal to do so).**

*\*Higher yield does not connote luxury travel segments only. Rather it is travellers who stay longer and spend more, regardless of their travel budget and intentions. The aim is to attract more of these visitors, instead of mass volumes of lower-yield visitors.*

### Overall Strategy:

**Use proven social content marketing program to promote itineraries and packages to attract and convert higher-yield travellers, whether originating from hyper local, domestic, or international markets.**

### Tactics:

- Content Development (note: not all content will be boosted with spend as the budget is considerably less than other years)
- Facebook Marketing (promoted posts and ads)
- Display Advertising (for package promotion)
- Potential Retargeting with Display
- Lead Nurturing (database and email marketing, which includes segmenting hyper local, domestic, and international leads for better quality interaction and better chance of conversion)
- Earned Media: develop robust hyper local, domestic, and international media databases and promote products and packages.
- Product Zooms: develop product-related “Branded Travel Zooms”
- Repurpose content when fitting.



## Measurable Objectives:

- 10 product/KTA themed pieces of content
- 1 Porter Airlines service piece of content
- 1 Explorers' Edge Airport Shuttle Service piece of content
- 5 itinerary themed pieces of content
- 2 sustainable practices themed content (promote respect for the landscape...work in conjunction with Muskoka Watershed Council "awareness days")
- Continue to develop a substantial hyper local, domestic, and international leads database
- Deploy minimum one media release per quarter.
- Increase hyper local leads: 200 new entries.
- Increase domestic leads: 500 new entries.
- Increase international leads: 100 new entries from targeted Designated Marketing Areas
- Deploy one e-newsletter per fiscal quarter to each segment (hyper local, domestic, international)
- Sell 50 packages

## Investment Development: Marketing Commercial Air Service

2022 will see the return of Porter Airlines to the Muskoka Airport, the second year of service that was agreed to in the tri-party, three-year contract (Porter Airlines, RTO12, the District of Muskoka), and which was on hiatus for two years due to the pandemic.

As part of the agreement, RTO12 is obligated to provide significant marketing support to ensure the success of the service over the contract period. (RTO12 will start nurturing other partners in 2022 to ultimately assume responsibility for marketing the longer-term program.)

Comparing the first-year 2019 bench mark season to the Summer 2022 service will not be possible, given that the pandemic has created uncertainty in traveller intentions. Learnings from the pandemic, however, including our understanding of how to mobilize hyper-local audiences, will hold RTO12's marketing team in good stead as they work to increase the overall inbound and outbound passenger load factors by 10-15%. This will be done using our proven content marketing and display advertising strategies, and by increasing our investment in local media to enhance the outbound traffic in particular.

RTO12 will also once again invest in a Shuttle Service, this year being on demand, to disperse Porter passengers across the region across five scheduled routes. This is to ensure that as many regional tourism stakeholders – not just those in Muskoka – benefit from the investment in commercial air service by RTO12.

## Strategic Partnerships

As always, Explorers' Edge will consider marketing partnerships with agencies (e.g. Destination Ontario, Chambers, DMOs, etc.) and entities (private businesses, etc.) whose strategies and objectives align with our own. (A caveat to partnership availability in 2022-2023 is that the priority of the Partnership Program will be regenerative development programs, including workforce projects.)

## Activity Timeline:

See BOP Activity Chart Above

## **Budget:**

See BOP Budget Below

*Note: Due to the inability to anticipate when provincial or federal travel restrictions will be implemented or rescinded at any given time, the applied budgets are anticipated for Fiscal 2022-2023 but may be impacted depending on the state of travel over the coming year.*

## **The Partnership Program**

The Partnership Program will once again be an opportunity for industry and community partners to collaborate with Explorers' Edge on mutually beneficial and strategic initiatives. As Explorers' Edge adopts a "Region-Centric Regenerative Tourism Approach," priority will be to projects that help Explorers' Edge move towards its newly stated Destination Development 'goal posts.'

Staff will actively seek out significant, innovative, and strategic partnerships to further develop the organization's goals, and intake of proposals from the industry or community stakeholders will commence in Spring 2022 while at the same time continuing supporting regional level communication programs where applicable.

## Risk Identification, Assessment, and Mitigation

While there are no identified barriers or possible risks to successfully delivering on BOP2022-2023, 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.
- Work with other RTOs on mutually beneficial programs to further drive efficiencies and reduce duplication efforts.

## 2022-2023 Budget

Budget Items	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
<b>Governance and Administration</b>					
Salaries & Benefits	27,500	27,500	27,500	27,500	<b>110,000</b>
Governance	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	<b>8,000</b>
Overhead / Facilities	15,000	15,000	15,000	16,000	<b>61,000</b>
Finance and Administration (Accounting, Audit, Legal)	5,000	5,000	5,000	10,000	<b>25,000</b>
Travel	8,750	8,750	8,750	8,750	<b>35,000</b>
Industry Relations / Stakeholder Engagement	1,625	1,625	1,625	1,625	<b>6,500</b>
Information Technology	2,000	500	500	2,000	<b>5,000</b>
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>					<b>250,500</b>
<b>Product Development</b>					
Salaries & Benefits	5,750	5,750	5,750	5,750	<b>23,000</b>
Product Development Engagement	20,000	5,000	5,000	2,000	<b>32,000</b>
Sustainability	0	4,000	0	0	<b>4,000</b>
Research	0	5,000	0	0	<b>5,000</b>
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>					<b>64,000</b>

<b>Marketing and Promotion</b>					
Salaries and Benefits	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	<b>100,000</b>
Marketing / Advertising	20,000	0	2,000	8,000	<b>30,000</b>
Commercial Air Service	100,000	0	0	50,000	<b>150,000</b>
Content Development / Guest Authors / FAM Tours	1,250	1,250	1,250	1,250	<b>5,000</b>
Promotions/Contests/Incentives	2,000	3,000	1000	4,000	<b>10,000</b>
Creative Development	1,250	1,250	1,250	1,250	<b>5,000</b>
Project Mgmt. Ad Trafficking	4,000	0	0	2,000	<b>6,000</b>
Strategist (Retainer)	7,500	7,500	7,500	7,500	<b>30,000</b>
TICO	0	0	0	3,000	<b>3,000</b>
Newsletter	750	750	750	750	<b>3,000</b>
Shuttle Service	0	50,000	0	0	<b>50,000</b>
Reservation Platform	4,000	0	0	6,000	<b>10,000</b>
Transacting / Dispersion / Tracking	0	50,000	0.00	0.00	<b>50,000</b>
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>					<b>452,000</b>
<b>Investment Attraction</b>					
Salaries & Benefits	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	<b>20,000</b>
Outreach / Meetings	0	1,000	2,000	607	<b>3,607</b>
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>					<b>23,607</b>

<b>Workforce Development</b>					
Salaries & Benefits	15,250	15,250	15,250	15,250	<b>61,000</b>
Workforce Recruitment, Training and Outreach	10,000	5,000	2,500	2,500	<b>20,000</b>
Workforce Research & Development	40,000	20,000	20,000	15,000	<b>95,000</b>
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>					<b>176,000</b>
<b>Partnership</b>					
Salaries & Benefits	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	<b>16,000</b>
Marketing & Communication	50,000	25,000	10,000	25,000	<b>110,000</b>
Regional Marketing / Workforce	5,000	30,000	15,000	6,000	<b>56,000</b>
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>					<b>182,000</b>
<b>TOTAL AGREEMENT COSTS</b>					<b>1,148,107</b>