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2024 – 2025 Business and Operational Plan Executive Summary

Established in 2010 by the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture & Sport (MTCS), Explorers' Edge (EE) is one of eleven Regional Tourism Organizations (RTOs) in the province. Representing stakeholders in the geographic areas of Algonquin Park, the Almaguin Highlands, Loring-Restoule, Muskoka, west Parry Sound district and South Algonquin, Ontario, Canada, the company is governed by an independent Board of Directors.

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, as well as the unceded territory of the Algonquins.

This Business and Operational Plan (BOP24-25) provides a brief background on the status of the organization and the state of the regional tourism industry. It also identifies specific goals, activities, timelines, performance measures and budget that have been developed to meet the requirements of the annual Transfer Payment Agreement (TPA) with the MTCS for the upcoming fiscal year. BOP24-25 priorities were finalized by the Board of Directors during an in-person meeting that was held on January 16, 2024 in Gravenhurst, Ontario.

This BOP continues work established in the Regenerative Tourism Strategy (see BOP21-22) that positioned EE as a destination development organization within the Canadian tourism industry. It updates on “Year-1” of the **“Transformation in 3 Years Blueprint”**, an internal guide for successful completion of longer-term projects that the company focuses on, but which may not fit entirely within the annual reporting structure of the TPA. Annual BOPs for each fiscal year contained within this three-year time frame (2023-2026) will build upon the previous year’s work. **“T3Y”** encompasses the umbrella goals of internal and industry “transformation over three years,” and is intended to guide the EE team in its daily work.

Key areas for BOP24-25 consideration are: the launch of the branded “regenerative travel agency” and the “higher yield” strategy; the launch of a new competitive marketing strategy that will also eliminate duplication in the crowded domestic market (which also involves onboarding a new marketing agency of record); the development and launch of a community and stakeholder communications plan pertinent to the company’s work-integrated training project (known as “Catalyst Housing”); and the development of training programs also pertinent to the latter. The Foundational Framework (developed in 2023) for the Catalyst Housing Project will be entrenched into measurable objectives, and the Workforce Infrastructure Strategy of “Train, House, Incentivize, Partner” will be the guiding principles for workforce development in general.

Additionally, the CEO and the Board’s Governance Chair will undertake a review of current governance to determine how it can be strengthened and/or enhanced to support the longer-term projects and expected outcomes of the RTO’s yearly plan.

As part of its “community-centric approach,” in the last fiscal year, EE introduced the “Explorers’ Edge Co-Creation Lab” (CCL), a dynamic entity that allows us to engage community members and to solicit insights from external technical experts to assist with the development of programs. The CCL will help to ensure long term success of and buy-in for multiple projects, while acting as a function of a broader communications effort. The first session was launched at the Fall 2023 Regional Tourism Summit, in the form of a hosted event called “The Women in Tourism Luncheon.” An outcome of this session was the development of the EE Women in Tourism Social Clubs – scheduled gatherings in Muskoka and Parry Sound to support women in the industry and to encourage more to consider a career in the sector.