

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Gros Morne Region

Strategic Tourism Plan

Strategic Tourism for Areas and Regions (STAR) Pilot Project

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*The Gros Morne Regional Tourism
Working Committee*

by

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Executive Summary

Gros Morne Region Strategic Tourism Plan

Introduction

As the most compelling rural travel destination in Newfoundland and Labrador, the Gros Morne Region has earned its reputation as a majestic and extraordinary landscape, a recognized cultural and festival center and a tourism leader in Atlantic Canada. The Gros Morne Region recognizes that a focused, regional undertaking and collective effort will move Gros Morne to stronger national and international destination prominence. Therefore, the region has embarked on the development of its first **Regional Strategic Tourism Plan**.

This **Gros Morne Region Strategic Tourism Plan** outlines a 10-year Tourism Vision for the region. An aligned 5-year Goal is identified, along with eight (8) Strategic Recommendations, each of which has clearly defined tactics, timelines and budgets. The **Gros Morne Tourism Asset Inventory** is an important companion document. The plan is rooted in significant consultation, including with regional tourism industry, stakeholders, partners and residents, as well as research, trends, market analysis and best practice review.

The **Gros Morne Region Strategic Tourism Plan** is the result of a new Atlantic Canada program, *Strategic Tourism for Areas and Regions* (STAR) spearheaded by ACOA-Tourism Atlantic. The project proponent, Gros Morne Cooperating Association (GMCA), engaged the services of Tourism Synergy Ltd (Dr. Laurel Reid) and Broad Reach Strategies Ltd (Marsha Pond) to develop the STAR Program and the Gros Morne plan.

The Plan – Going Forward

Vision for Tourism

As an over-arching guide to the Plan, the Vision for Tourism in the region is drawn from existing strategies and consultations.

DRAFT 10-Year GM Tourism VISION (to 2027)

Gros Morne Region is internationally sought after as an iconic Canadian travel destination where spectacular nature, cultural expression and authenticity are interwoven to enrich the lives of visitors and residents.

Guiding Principles of the Plan

The Gros Morne Region Strategic Tourism Plan:

- Identifies new initiatives as well as tactics that add value to key Gros Morne planning efforts and initiatives already underway.
- Helps integrate and communicate development efforts.

- Aligns with the pillars of Sustainability: 1. respect for the environment, 2. financial viability, and 3. social and cultural well-being.
- Recognizes that GMNP is the key driver and motivator for visitation to the area, and indeed western Newfoundland.
- Recognizes GMNP and GMCA as key players in leading regional collaboration to support, enhance and benefit from the shared tourism Vision and Goal.
- Strive for healthy and successful enclave communities as basis for regional strength.
- Acknowledge business development and entrepreneurship as critical elements in fueling successful tourism growth.

Goal of the GM Region Strategic Tourism Plan

The Plan articulates a 5-year Goal for Tourism.

5-Year GOAL GM Region Strategic Tourism Plan

By 2021, Gros Morne Region is THE most renowned destination in Atlantic Canada. It will achieve this choice destination status by:

1. Delivering customer focused experiences;
2. Advancing strategic tourism development and business principles, and
3. Best practice collaboration among public and private partners locally, nationally and internationally.

Strategic Recommendations and Tactics

The Plan identifies eight (8) Strategic Recommendations required over the next 5 years to bring the Goal, and ultimately the Vision, to reality.

Recommendation 1: Validate and endorse the Tourism Vision and Goal and “live them” to the benefit all visitors as well as the regional and provincial economy

- Conduct a Visioning Workshop in 2018 with all key tourism and community members to “look into the future” with resulting actions identified

Recommendation 2: Create an industry-driven, regional Tourism Coordinating Team by fall 2017, with support from an individual identified to perform the job and functions of a Tourism Specialist no later than January 2018

- Create a regional Tourism Coordinating Team (TCT) to “own the Plan” and share in making it successful
- Use existing resources of GMNP and GMCA to perform the job and functions of a full-time Tourism Specialist responsible for supporting the TCT and enhancing online marketing
- Create and use as a priorities’ guide, an annual *Tourism Action Framework* reflecting regional efforts beginning in 2016 (sample included in Plan).
- Endorse and promote a *GM Commitment of our Guests*, a regional statement of intent to grow with tourism by fall 2017 (sample included in Plan).
- Work with Parks Canada on a business case for improved cell service.

- Forge collaborations and partnerships with those who could help alleviate human resource pressures and/or provide training assistance to regional businesses, volunteers and community groups.

Recommendation 3: Communicate, cooperate and partner among regional stakeholders in relevant and profitable ways suggested in the Plan, by committing to an annual regional Tourism Forum beginning in November 2016, and systemic networking efforts to ensure a strong culture of communication.

- Share and promote the Plan
- Host in November annually, a *Tourism Forum* to encourage a free flow of two-way communication to operators, stakeholders, partners and communities
- Use www.visitgrosmorne.com Calendar of Events as tool for ongoing activities and experiences in the region
- Continue existing meetings for specific projects, reporting outcomes to TCT and at the Tourism Forum.

Recommendation 4: Build evolving, and meaningful tourism experiences region-wide, by optimizing available industry education resources and market-readiness tools to extend visitor stays and increase expenditures.

- GMIST will develop and host annually in the spring, an *Experience Refresher Workshop* for new and non-profit experience providers beginning in spring 2017
- Encourage revival and offering of key courses of dormant cultural programs formerly offered by Bonavista Institute for Cultural Tourism
- Conduct Accelerated Marketing Readiness (AMR) Programs for 10 operators at a time, Beginning in summer 2017 and recurring annually
- By 2018, GMIST offers and pilots in Gros Morne Region a new, advanced *Elite Edgies* Program for “graduates” of Edge of the Wedge
- Immediately engage with Memorial University to optimize opportunities with Bonne Pay Marine Station
- From 2017 to 2019 work to become the first “World Host Certified” region in Atlantic Canada
- Give priority attention to experience development and market-readiness associated with Culinary and Cultural Experiences.

Recommendation 5: Recognize tourism-related environmental practices as: 1. valuable and profitable for tourism growth, and, 2. as a way of competitively positioning the destination -- in line with the regional Vision, Parks Canada’s philosophy and Gros Morne destination status as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

- In 2018, survey regional tourism operators, businesses, institutions, municipalities and organizations to understand the current situation regarding environmental practices
- Based upon Survey results and using Parks Canada environmental guidelines consider appropriate programs or program adjustments.

Recommendation 6: Extend the tourism season, by planning strategically, beginning with a Fall 2016 workshop aimed at extending June and September periods.

- Conduct a *Season Extension Symposium: HR Challenges Focus* to generate recommendations and endorse a Season Extension/HR approach moving forward.

Recommendation 7: Continue to market the region as a single destination; dedicate additional human and financial resources and a prioritized work plan to focus on online tactics and brand development.

- Empower TCT as the “voice” for regional marketing advice and collaboration
- Tourism Specialist develops and implements a hands-on work plan to enhance the region’s online efforts to ensure the region is appropriately and consistently represented online
- Generate a business case and funding formula (from the on-line workplan) for local investment to enhance the destination presence online; targeting investment to the value of \$5,000 for 2018-2019.
- Leverage the power of www.newfoundlandlabrador.com wherever possible
- Strengthen and optimize marketing partnerships with VOBB and Old Crow Magazine
- Consolidate and use key marketing messages across the board and undertake a Branding effort by 2019.

Recommendation 8: Monitor progress and report results in specific ways suggested in the plan to measure the effectiveness of the Plan’s recommendations.

- By fall 2016, finalize success measures and metrics suggested in the Plan by which progress can be evaluated and reported.

Estimated Costs and Timeline

The five-year implementation timeline for the objectives/recommendations anticipates a budget requirement of approximately **\$12,117** for year one. Once all costing is complete, an annual budget of up to **\$26,019** is estimated to sustain the efforts outlined in the plan. These budget numbers assume Tourism Specialist funding, estimated at \$50,000 per year, comes from existing sources.

Conclusion

The Gros Morne Region has the potential to be a leading destination in Canada; collaboration among Gros Morne National Park, GMCA, industry operators, community organizations and residents will contribute to make this happen. The collaborative implementation of the Gros Morne Region Strategic Tourism Plan will ensure achievable and profitable results as well as sustainability for tourism in the area in future years.