Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who We Are</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018 Destination Development Priorities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018 Marketing Goals</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Grey County Brand</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism Market Trends for 2018</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWOT Overview</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product &amp; Experience Development</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demand Generators and Product Offerings</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market Research and Target Markets</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing Strategies, Tactics &amp; Promotional Tools</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership Opportunities</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Performance Measures</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Who We Are

Grey County Tourism is the Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) for Grey County. We are part of the Economic Development and Tourism department with a mandate to support Grey County’s Goal 1 of Strengthening the local economy through tourism development and marketing.

OUR VISION

Welcoming destinations and great experiences make Grey County the natural place to visit and live.

OUR MISSION

To encourage tourism development & marketing across Grey County in order to contribute to economic prosperity and higher quality of life in our communities.

WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS THROUGH:

- Actively engaging with industry stakeholders to develop new tourism experiences, strengthen Grey County as a preferred destination, provide excellent customer service, and market Grey County to our chosen visitor markets.
- Aligning with strategic business partners from Grey, Bruce, Simcoe and beyond to develop and promote regional experiences and destinations.
- Undertaking market research, tracking results in our visitor markets, and evaluating their economic impact upon Grey County.

STAFF

Tourism Staff report to:
- CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER
  – Kim Wingrove
- MANAGER OF TOURISM
  – Bryan Plumstead
- TOURISM MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST
  – Heather Aljoe
- TOURISM PARTNER & MEDIA RELATIONS SPECIALIST
  – Vacant
- ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT
  – Mary Jane Hills

TOURISM ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC)

CHAIR
  – Gary Gingras / Owner / Cedars of Lake Eugenia
VICE-CHAIR
  – Philip Allanson / Flesherton

INDUSTRY/COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Jim Diebel / Owner / Hanover Holidays
Jim Halliday / Grey Highlands
Andrea O’Reilly / Marketing / Georgian Hills Vineyards
Andrew Siegwart / President / Blue Mountain Village Association

COUNTY COUNCIL MEMBERS

Gail Ardiel / Deputy-Mayor / The Blue Mountains
Selwyn Hicks / Deputy-Mayor / Town of Hanover
2018 Destination Development Priorities

Grey County Tourism’s Destination Development Action Plan (DDAP) was completed in early 2016 and provides annual recommendations for activities over a 3-4 year timeframe, under 4 pillars. The Tourism Advisory Committee (TAC) approves an annual list of priorities and monitors completion and performance through quarterly scorecards. Priorities for 2018 include:

1. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT
   Continue ‘Tourism Talks’, Maintain Stakeholder Communications, Make the industry website a useful tool and resource.

2. DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT
   Deliver consistent and compelling brand messaging, Create advocates for the Grey County Brand and the experiences Grey County offers, Expand the Visiting Friends & Relatives (VFR) marketing and communications campaign, Create a Grey County Tourism mobile application/mapping, Facilitate Creation of Packages and Itineraries, Create a Simple Experiential Outbound Tour Operator Strategy.

3. MARKET RESEARCH AND TRACKING
   Track success of the Action Plan, Track key quantitative and qualitative metrics and economic impacts of tourism, Create profiles of target market audience groups.

4. RESOURCE ALLOCATION
   Create the most effective structure able to support stakeholders, Ensure staff are always on top of marketing trends.
2018 Marketing Goals

As detailed in our Destination Development Action Plan, this annual marketing strategy will direct our marketing and promotion efforts, as well as set the overall direction for 2018 in regards to tourism development, partnerships with stakeholders and best meeting the needs of our visitors.

1. Increase sustainable visitation and visitor expenditures through:
   - linking outdoor activities with food / drink, amenities & downtowns
   - encouraging value-added experiences
   - converting more overnight stays

2. Create a differentiated brand through innovative marketing and communication.

3. Be authentic, awe-inspiring and engaging.

4. Engage local residents and increase knowledge and participation from the visiting friends & family (VFR) market.
The Grey County Brand

The Grey County Tourism brand reflects our personality. It helps our audience recognize and trust us, and it differentiates us from our competitors. The brand also illustrates what people can expect from Grey County.

Our brand is a collection of the tangible and intangible attributes that people experience when they interact with Grey County Tourism. It isn’t just our logo. It’s everything we stand for: our experiences, our reputation, our look, and our feel. It’s also what people think and how they feel about us. In short, our brand is our story.
Brand Platform

The Grey County brand platform is the foundation of the brand and is cemented in the vision and mission of the County. Everything Grey County Tourism does should reflect the aspiration of Grey County.

The Grey County brand promise captures and invokes the character of the individuals that shaped Grey County. It also recognizes the many diverse and unique communities that make Grey County what it is today through their individual spirit and personalities. Grey County offers everything its residents need and want, which is why those who live there experience such a high quality of life. The brand promise captures the unique nature of the Grey County environment and its positive influence on all who visit or call it home.

“Authentic Rural Experiences”

The brand essence is our brand’s fundamental nature or quality – stated in two to three words. Strong brands have well-defined, easily grasped, and obvious brand essences. It’s not easy to articulate how our audience feels about our brand in an accurate and meaningful way, but it’s important! Part of Grey County Tourism’s responsibility is to ensure that people wishing to visit Grey County are exposed to the brand. Our goal is to share the hidden treasures Grey County holds.

In 2018 Grey County will move to 100% brand-compliance in all publications, signage (billboards) and public-facing assets. We will further build our brand through stories, communications and marketing and working with our local ambassadors.
Tourism Market
TRENDS FOR 2018

- Mobile platforms and responsive websites are the primary engagement platform for travelers. 60% of web traffic to visitgrey.ca came from mobile & tablet users in 2017.

- Travelers are demanding more information, control, interaction, and personalization. Ie: customized and experiential travel.

- Visitors are increasingly looking for a travel experience that allows them to experience a local’s way of life. “Locavore”

- Technology is enabling faster decision-making by customers, thereby, increasing business to a destination. Google Business listings are key.

- Marketers have to speak to their niche markets directly, using key messages crafted specifically for that audience. Gone are the days of mass marketing.

- Visitors want access to information while they’re here. There’s a need for wifi and high speed internet while they travel.

- Destinations are embracing user-generated content through blogs, photos & video.

- Frontline staff interactions with visitors are essential in a hi-tech world. Visitors to Grey County expect friendly, welcoming locals, kindness and superior customer service.

- Social Media platforms, specifically images and video have now become the biggest way to connect with potential visitors. Live videos are big.
**S**

**STRENGTHS**

Natural assets:
- Unique nature and environmental features
- Four seasons: Distinct seasons with different tourism experiences offered year round
- Blue Mountain: Iconic and well-known demand generator
- Culture and history: A defined history with compelling stories
- Organizational stability

**W**

**WEAKNESSES**

Soft infrastructure:
- Limited signage, parking, washrooms, mapping, and cell phone coverage.
- Few accommodation options available outside of Blue Mountain and Owen Sound
- Limited restaurant and retail options, with reduced hours of operation
- Regional Transportation and transit very limited

**O**

**OPPORTUNITIES**

Growing agri-tourism
- Better collaboration with local DMOs, neighbouring counties and RTO7
- Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) as focused target market
- Better packaging and itinerary development
- The US Market, and changing multi-cultural markets
- Food, beverage and unique local food stories.
- Trails (hiking & cycling)
- Growth of alternative accommodations

**T**

**THREATS**

Weather / climate change
- Limited development/adoption of Grey County brand
- Workforce Issues
- Monitor new and growing competitive national tourism organizations
- Capacity issues in select areas
Grey County’s Key Strengths

“Grey County is a true four-season rural destination with exceptional natural assets, a strong emerging food and beverage scene, two hours from the Greater Toronto area, and the only County in Ontario with a world-class ski resort within it is boundaries.”

NATURAL ASSETS:
Unique nature and environmental features (i.e., geography) – Grey County’s natural environment and conservation areas are unique within the region and Ontario, benefit from some level of higher awareness among travel consumers and are in demand as travel experiences.

FOUR SEASONS:
Distinct seasons with different tourism experiences on offer – Grey County can credibly claim to be a four season travel destination.

BLUE MOUNTAIN:
Iconic and well-known demand generator – Blue Mountain draws large numbers of visitors to the region with the great potential for increased dispersal within Grey County.

FOOD AND AGRI-TOURISM:
Unique food product flavours – Grey County’s unique food products and agricultural sector with increased investment can become a central tourism experience and draw for regional consumers.

CULTURE AND HISTORY:
A defined history and interesting cultural mix – Grey County typifies a quintessential Ontario ‘small town’ – a very unique selling feature. Specifically Mennonite culture, and history relating to the marine industry, Underground Railroad and Prohibition.

PRODUCT & EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT
Grey County Tourism will continue to work on development of cycling, as well as trails and active transportation in 2018. We will work to link our culinary and cultural amenities to our outdoor products and experiences, and seek opportunities for further experiential development by the private sector, in partnership with RTO7.
Blue Mountain is the most widely recognized and popular demand generator in Grey County.

Resort life, skiing, mountain biking, Blue Mountain Village (shopping, dining, events), caving, golf, spas, accommodations.

Small Towns & Communities.
Grey County’s small town charm is exemplified by its main streets.

Neustadt, Thornbury, Clarksburg, Hanover, Owen Sound, Meaford, Markdale, Flesherton, Durham, Dundalk, Holstein, Eugenia, Ravenna, Walter’s Falls

Festivals & Events

In addition to offering traditional festivals, Grey County is home to a variety of unique celebrations that are eagerly anticipated each year. Salsa at Blue Mountain, Hanover Sights & Sounds, Summerfolk, Concours d’Elegance, Meaford Scarecrow Invasion, Apple Harvest, Festival of Northern Lights, and more.

Local Food & Drink

The Apple Pie Trail, Saints & Sinners, Butter Tarts & Buggies, wineries, breweries, cideries, farmers markets, maple syrup festivals, local food in restaurants, and world class chefs serving up Grey County’s best.
Demand Generators & Product Offerings

Nature Appreciation
Georgian Bay, Niagara Escarpment, hiking trails, including almost 300 km of Bruce Trail, several waterfalls, caves, lakes, beaches, scenic vistas, rural gardens, and fish ladders.

Outdoor Adventure
Cycling, paddling, caving, climbing, skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, fishing, golf, hiking, skating, boating, swimming, horseback riding, and snowboarding.

Fall Colours / Harvest
Driving tours, farm gate sales, fall fairs, local food, studio tours, and apple harvest.

Arts & Culture
Art Galleries (Tom Thomson, Durham), studio tours, local artisans, antiques, museums, living history, theatres, local music and festivals.
EXPLORER QUOTIENT SEGMENTS

Developed for Destination Canada, the Explorer Quotient®, or EQ, is an innovative market segmentation system. This technique groups customers into “segments” based on common criteria such as demographics, geography, interests and travel behaviours. This allows marketers to identify and understand the segments that are most likely to align with the product or experience they are selling.

Grey County uses Environics PRIZM segmentation and postal code data, which can be mapped to EQ segments, allowing us to identify key markets and trends over time. Two distinct target markets include our “internal” Visiting Friends & Relatives (VFR) markets based on household population (Grey County Residents) and our “external” Southwestern and Central Ontario Visitors (Grey County Visitors), based on postal codes from attractions, accommodations, and marketing campaigns. The following page contains a brief description of each segment.
- **Free Spirits** are highly social and open-minded. Their enthusiasm for life extends to their outlook on travel. Experimental and adventurous, they indulge in high-end experiences that are shared with others.

- **Authentic Experiencers** are typically understated travelers looking for authentic, tangible engagement with destinations they seek, with a particular interest in understanding the history of the places they visit.

- **Cultural History Buffs** are defined by their focused interest in the history, culture and natural surroundings of the places they visit. They are driven to learn everything about a culture, in the company of other like-minded people.

- **Cultural Explorers** are defined by their love of constant travel and continuous opportunities to embrace, discover and immerse themselves in the culture, people and settings of the places they visit.

- **Personal History Explorers** are primarily defined by their desire to connect to their own cultural roots – and do so by traveling in comfort, style and security.

- **Rejuvenators** are family-oriented people who travel with others to escape from the stresses of everyday life to get pampered and indulge themselves.

- **No-Hassle Travelers** are cautious, dutiful and reserved people who seek secure group travel that allows them to escape from the duties and obligations of everyday life.

- **Gentle Explorers** are primarily defined by their reluctance to venture far beyond the comfort of home and travel ‘on condition,’ demanding the very best and most comfortable environments for themselves when they must do so.

- **Virtual Travelers** prefer the comforts of home to the uncertainties of new places and cultural differences. Trips tend to be shorter, closer to home and centered on family events.
Target Markets

Building upon the digital campaigns of 2015-17, Grey County Tourism will continue to position Grey County as a top destination in Southwestern and Central Ontario for outdoor adventure and authentic rural experiences. Visitors are looking for memorable and authentic experiences and Grey County will focus on our area’s top demand generators through seasonal marketing. Recognizing that friends and relatives of local residents (VFR) continue to play an important role, we will further expand our VFR Campaign “Colouring It Your Way” which successfully launched last year. For tourism to flourish in our area there must be both visitors and hosts and our local residents should be our strongest ambassadors.

People continue to take shorter and more frequent trips, and these short haul feeder markets will continue to be our focus, with the hope of converting more day trips to overnight stays. Barrie and area is rapidly growing and we are seeing more visitors from the east, the GTA is a strong market, but on further analysis we see the “doughnut” around Toronto deliver a higher index of visitors based on population (Vaughan, Markham, Brampton, Mississauga, Milton) followed by Kitchener/Waterloo and Guelph. We will be strategically investing in these markets with a digital first approach.
Marketing Strategies
TACTICS & PROMOTIONAL TOOLS

We will undertake a wide range of digital and traditional communication to market Grey County in 2018. Key strategic elements include the following, with most led by Grey County Tourism and others in partnership with our business, community and regional partners.

WEBSITE
We will further strengthen our digital/online marketing, enabling potential visitors to fully research and plan their trips with our website. Building on the most recent design of our site, we will continue to create “journey paths” on our home page, and build on our story telling with Trip Ideas, Blogs and seasonal campaigns. With an added mobile mapping platform in 2018, the goal will be to make the website as user friendly as possible on both desktop and mobile.

SOCIAL MEDIA
Social media marketing is a cost-effective and trackable method for expanding market reach. Grey County Tourism’s Facebook page is linked to both the Twitter account and Instagram account. Each fan base continues to grow with dedicated followers and we will continue to find new ways to interact, encourage conversation and increase engagement. In 2018 we will engage with our followers to gain access to user generated content (UCG) to enhance our social media presence.

18,000 FOLLOWERS
4,000 FOLLOWERS
2,700 FOLLOWERS
SEASONAL CAMPAIGNS
Targeted marketing will occur through digital, social media and some print, focusing on seasonal campaigns to specific targets throughout the year. In 2017 we launched the “Colouring It my Way” Series, featuring local Grey County residents, who told their story about why they loved Grey County, what they loved to do here, why they moved here, why they haven’t left, and simply how they are “colouring it their way.” The campaign enabled us to share the many diverse offerings we have in a captivating way, by story telling. We will continue to build on this successful campaign in 2018, further defining it to make each execution across all media as powerful and compelling as possible. Through rich storytelling, engaging photography and real testimonials, the campaign will invite our potential visitors to picture themselves in Grey County.

PRINT PUBLICATIONS
While we continue to put our focus on digital first, we also know that print maps are still key for planning and executing travel across all target markets. We also produce specific publications to meet niche markets, and currently produce three print publications:
- Grey County Map
- Grey County Cycling Routes
- Grey County Waterfalls

Grey County Tourism also supports the development of guides and maps created by local experts, in order to best serve the visitor. Some examples below:
- Grey Bruce Escape
- See & Do Guide
- Rural Gardens
- The Art Map
- OFSC District 9 Map

TOURISM VEHICLE
Our branded Honda Pilot travels around 32,000 km annually to local events, to businesses to distribute brochures, and all over Ontario to trade shows, business meetings and conferences, acting as a moving billboard. The majority of the use is during the summer months, within Grey County, driven by our summer student patrol team, who attend close to 40 events each summer, setting up a mobile information centre to act as ambassadors for Grey County.

ENTRY BILLBOARDS
In 2018 Grey County Tourism will be updating our entrance billboard to be brand-compliant and provide an impactful welcome to Grey County along our main entrance gateways.

TRADE SHOWS
Each year our staff attends 3-4 consumer trade shows in the GTA, based on our marketing and partnerships. Our line-up for 2018 include the Outdoor Adventure Show, The Toronto Cycling Show and the Canadian International Automobile Show (Toronto) in partnership with Cobble Beach Concours d’Elegance.
MEDIA RELATIONS
To heighten Grey County’s exposure to our targeted audience, we showcase seasonal product offerings and experiences to social media influencers and travel writers who engage with those audiences, increasing visitation to our region from the Southwestern Ontario and GTA Regions.

MEDIA FAMILIARIZATION TOURS AND TRAVEL ITINERARIES
Grey County occasionally hosts seasonal fam tours, which includes touring media throughout the area allowing them to connect with our local tourism businesses and experience the region’s seasonal activities for first hand product knowledge. This includes, as part of our summer “Colouring It Your Way” campaign, hosting local media tours, and educating our residents on the experiences and attractions in their own backyard. More commonly, individual itineraries are developed suiting the needs of solo media aligning with their followers and desired story angles. All while ensuring we are communicating to our target markets.

Each season offers something uniquely Grey County, from small town charm, locally infused menus, to festivals, and our wondrous landscapes. We allow media the opportunity to experience it all, so they can adequately tell our stories.

During the 2018 winter season, positioning ourselves as Ontario’s best snow destination, we have promoted snow based activities and Blue Mountain Resort to the following groups:

**Millennials**
– The Kiwi Couple, Rachel Choy and Jeremy Garland (17,500 followers)

**Couples or Girl Friend Getaways**
– Curious Creature, Solmaz (12,900 followers)

During the spring and summer seasons, we will promote proximity to Georgian Bay, outdoor activities and healthy eating to:

**Health and Wellness**
– Travel and Leisure / The Social, Jennifer Weatherhead Harrington (7,100 Followers)

**Family**
– Natalie Preddie Online, Natalie Preddie
(CHCH LIVE – 9,600 Followers)

**Multi-Generational Families**
– Yummy Mummy Club, Yashy Murphy
(13,000 Followers)

In autumn, wineries and cideries coupled with local food and events come to the fore for mature markets:

**Empty Nesters and Adult Couples**
– Life in Pleasantville, Candace Derickx
(CTV -26,000 Followers)

MEDIA ASSOCIATIONS
To heighten Grey County’s exposure and provide destination recognition, Grey County is a member of the Travel Media Association of Canada and this year will become a member of TravelMASSIVE. Each of these associations provides networking opportunities with media and educational betterment presented by media, and annual Canada wide conferences.
PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEOGRAPHY

Our photography and videos will reflect exactly what it’s like to eat, stay and play in Grey County and make people want to visit the area. We will use a variety of landscapes, attractions, cultural activities, people and community photos. We use high quality photographs that showcase Grey County’s beauty, create a sense of wonder and tell an interesting story.
Partnership Opportunities

SOCIAL MEDIA COLLABORATION
We encourage our partners and stakeholders to tag us in posts and photos on social, and also use the hashtag #ColourItYourWay whenever possible. We will share photos and content from partners as we see fit, and as it relates to current trends and campaigns.

WEBSITE
All Grey County Tourism stakeholders can have a FREE business listings on our website, www.visitgrey.ca. We want to ensure the most up to date information is provided to our visitors, and ask that these listings are updated often. We also provide a free listing for festivals and events happening in Grey County. These events are automatically sent out in a weekly e-blast, the week prior to the event, to over 1000 recipients.

STAKEHOLDER CRITERIA
For some time, Grey County has had a minimum “Visitor Ready” criteria for businesses to be listed on visitgrey.ca. In 2018, in consultation with our partners, Grey County will introduce “Market Ready” criteria which ensure tourism businesses are ready to receive and host visitors, and will be required for participation with Grey County in Fam/Media Tours, GCT produced content, website travel journey path, and eligible for inclusion in itineraries.

ONTARIO BY BIKE
Grey County is a member of Ontario By Bike, and this allows any tourism business that caters to the cycling market to apply for registration and be certified as “bike-friendly.” There are several simple requirements to achieve the certification and there is no cost. OBB members are then listed on the OBB website and Grey County’s Cycling Map.

INDUSTRY FAMILIARIZATION TOURS
For our industry partners, Grey County provides two days of familiarization touring before the summer season. New businesses as well as existing experiences in the County are featured, and provide our local tourism businesses firsthand knowledge of the activities and attractions that reside within the region so that they may promote them to the traveling public.

TOURISM TALKS
Bi-monthly education and networking sessions on a variety of topics are hosted to keep stakeholders current with new technology, changing trends, opportunities and challenges. Sessions are held across the County and topic suggestions are always welcome.

ANNUAL BROCHURE SWAP
In early May, Grey and Bruce Counties host a brochure swap which provides local businesses with the opportunity to distribute their annual brochures to other tourism businesses in the region, in a tailgate style swap event.
Performance Measures

Grey County Tourism tracks a variety of metrics and measures for both overall destination performance and marketing progress. Quarterly metrics are reported to the Tourism Advisory Committee on performance measures as outlined in the Destination Development Action Plan. These include:

- Stakeholder Engagement & Communications, Industry Newsletters & Communications, Tourism Talks.

- Destination Management: building the Brand, Google Analytics for website traffic, Social media measurables, Consumer Newsletters & Communications, Media Reach - social media metrics and blog/story readership.

- Market Research & Tracking: Quarterly DDAP Scorecards, Development of a dashboard to measure quantitative and qualitative metrics, Economic impact of Tourism.