



# Committee Report

<b>To:</b>	Chair Siegwart and Committee Members
<b>Committee Date:</b>	November 17, 2021
<b>Subject / Report No:</b>	EDTC-TAC-19-21
<b>Title:</b>	Q2 and Q3 Tourism Workplan Priorities Update
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<b>Reviewed by:</b>	Savanna Myers, Director of Economic Development, Tourism & Culture
<b>Lower Tier(s) Affected:</b>	All
<b>Status:</b>	

## Recommendation

1. That Report EDTC-TAC-19-21 regarding Q2 and Q3 Tourism Workplan Priorities Update be received for information.

## Executive Summary

Implementation of the 2021 tourism workplan continues. Several key activities are complete or progressing across three priority areas of tourism infrastructure, investment, and marketing. The Economic Development and Tourism Working Group meets monthly and receives ongoing updates on key tourism activities.

## Background and Discussion

This report provides an update on the tourism workplan with combined activities by the Manager of Tourism, Economic Development Officer – Tourism and the Marketing and Communications Specialist, each focused on a strategic pillar and described below.

## Infrastructure

Progress on Grey County's Cycling and Trails Master Plan includes recent endorsement from several municipal partners and extensive work with the Grey County Outdoor Management Group (GC OMG), which will transition into the Off-Road Trails Working Group. Approval of Grey County's application to ICIP (Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program) for funding was also received, which includes \$40,000 for cycling signage. Development of GIS tools will assist in both planning for cycling signage, and progress tracking of cycling infrastructure with the help of Transportation Services.

Under the Tourism Infrastructure bucket, ongoing communications and work with the Grey County Outdoor Management Group (GC OMG) resulted in a shared document on trails signage, support of grant projects for trails infrastructure by partners and support for a shared inventory of all trails. The value of regular communication and networking through GC OMG has been noted several times by partners.

Grey County also led a county-wide ambassador team initiative over the summer, which included 10 partners. Together, training needs and resources were identified and an orientation day was held to visit many Grey County communities and trail locations. Weekly meetings with team leads and a messaging system were set up to ensure real-time sharing of visitor traffic amongst all team members. Grey County's summer students, Grace and Andrew showed great leadership and kept the communication flowing through information collection and sharing, and were passionate ambassadors for Grey County out on the trail.

With Grey County's Wayfinding Signage policy in place, staff have been working with Transportation Services on intake of new signage requests. Recognizing the ongoing burden of COVID-19 on the tourism industry, tourism signage fees were waived for 2021. Updating existing tourism signage has begun and recommendations for new public tourism signage are being reviewed with Transportation Services.

Presentations on Grey County's Local and Visitor markets, using mobile data from 2019 and 2020 were delivered and well received by webinar in May and October respectively. To help support Grey County's first external marketing campaign since March 2020, (further described in the Marketing section below,) a deep dive on midweek visitors to Grey County communities and natural areas was undertaken to identify key target markets and best methods of reach.

## Investment

Industry support has broadened from a previous pandemic-focus to include more business-building programming. These include an Ontario by Bike webinar, Experience Development workshop led by Kim Clarke of RTO7 and Grey County's two Environics presentations on local and visitor markets. Support for the redevelopment of the Talisman resort area has also been ongoing.

Ongoing support includes Catapult mentoring and five businesses receiving T3 coaching, the Business Support Line, collaborating with area chambers and business associations on various projects and updating Grey's industry website. RTO7's Covid Recovery Fund provided funding to 31 successful Grey County businesses out of a total of 94 applicants. Tourism Week was also recognized with a message from the Warden and highlighting several tourism business profiles.

The Business Mix Analysis project is underway in West Grey, with Meaford next on tap. The project looks at the business mix in downtowns to identify gaps and opportunities, while developing focused marketing plan to build on approved Community Improvement Plans (CIP).

Supporting the communications team in the fall marketing campaign involved reaching out to many local influencers to provide story lines and direction as set by the team. Staff also work with communications through ongoing monitoring of regional tourism industry channels and frequent posting to Grey County's industry social media.

## Marketing

Visitgrey.ca maintenance and enhancements continued through the second and third quarter, after a pause due to the pandemic. In Q2 staff launched the [Rediscover Responsibly](#) digital campaign and continued to spread the message of responsible visitation, including the trail etiquette message from Q1. The original post reached an audience of 55,000 people on Facebook alone and was followed by various social media posts through the summer focused on responsible visitation.

[The Outdoor Activity Map](#) continued to be updated throughout the summer by the tourism summer students who continued to promote its use along with the Rediscover Responsibly messaging.

In Q3 staff launched the [Find it Here](#) fall campaign, featuring 15 local travel stories and itineraries, highlighting all there is to do this fall in Grey County. Staff are specifically promoting midweek visitation, downtowns and local businesses with a goal of supporting local economic recovery. This was the first out-of-market campaign since the pandemic began and continues through mid-November. The stories are being featured on visitgrey.ca and promoted through social media to both local and external markets within Ontario. The audiences were refined using mobile data from Environics Analytics and targeted geographically. The stories are seeing an average reach of 20,000 people per story on social media with high engagement from both residents and local businesses. Radio ads are also running on several local stations pushing to the stories on visitgrey.ca. In partnership with the Waterloo Record, staff engaged in a mail drop of Grey County Regional Map to targeted neighbourhoods on the Thursday prior to Thanksgiving weekend. A digital newsletter followed to the same audience through the Waterloo Record in late October.

## Legal and Legislated Requirements

There are no legal or legislated requirements to this report.

## Financial and Resource Implications

There are no financial or resource implications relating to this report. All items are included in the 2021 Budget.

## Relevant Consultation

- Internal (list)
- External (list)

## Appendices and Attachments

[Q2 and Q3 Tourism Workplan Priorities Update](#)