

## Report CCR-PCD-28-15

**To:** Chair Wright and Members of the Planning and Community Development Committee  
**From:** Bryan Plumstead, Manager of Economic Development & Tourism  
**Meeting Date:** September 15, 2015  
**Subject:** **Tourism Destination Development Action Plan Update**  
**Status:** Recommendation adopted by Committee as presented per Resolution PCD112-15; Endorsed by County Council October 6, 2015 per Resolution CC138-15;

### Recommendation(s)

**WHEREAS Grey County's 2015 budget includes funding to contract consulting services to undertake an update of its Tourism Destination Development Action Plan (DDAP);**

**AND WHEREAS the Tourism Advisory Committee participated in a workshop resulting in the direction and recommendations contained in this report;**

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Report CCR-PCD-28-15 being the Tourism Destination Development Action Plan Update be received;**

**AND THAT staff proceed to incorporate the deliverables with the update to the Tourism Destination Development Action Plan as outlined in this report.**

### Background

An update of Grey County's Tourism Destination Development Action Plan (DDAP), which was completed in 2010, is in Grey County's approved 2015 budget. Over the past four years Grey County Tourism, guided by the Tourism Advisory Committee (TAC), has substantially completed most of the actions identified under 16 recommendations, in support of the overall goal to *"Increase sustainable tourism revenues through managing & marketing Grey County as a tourism destination."* The existing plan created many "tools in the toolbox" which need to be reviewed, and refreshed for today's needs. Grey County's first economic development strategy, Made in Grey, was completed in early 2015, and Tourism was identified as one sector of focus within the

overall seven themes of the plan. Updating the DDAP was a specific action identified in this plan, and with the overall economic strategy and action plan prepared, the Tourism Department now turns its attention to updating its plan. Finally, the impacts of technology and evolution in the role of the Destination Marketing/Management Organization (DMO) has changed dramatically over the past few years, and new approaches are needed to meet the challenges and opportunities these present.

### *Approach*

Destination development involves creating memorable experiences for visitors based on a critical mass of attractions, events and services and involves management of the destination's assets in addition to marketing activities. The most successful destinations match its region's demand generators with its market opportunities. To develop the tourism potential of Grey County, it is important to build on the products and experiences it offers combined with an understanding of its existing and potential markets.

Grey County's Tourism Advisory Committee undertook a workshop at its July 22, 2015 meeting to review past performance of the DDAP, the key assets, experiences and markets. Discussion ensued around each of the four pillars of the former plan, and key points to be brought forward were noted. There was also discussion around the "DestinationNEXT" approach, which staff and TAC have been looking at as a potential model for updating the plan. Staff was directed to undertake further investigation into this model, to confirm its applicability for Grey County and to report back to TAC members with recommendations. The Tourism Manager undertook this due diligence and the recommendation to move forward with incorporating the DestinationNEXT approach within the DDAP update was supported by TAC members, as well as applying to RTO7 for Partnership Funding for this project.

### *DestinationNEXT*

The Destination Marketing Association International (DMAI) is the largest international association dedicated to the professionalism, effectiveness, and significance of destination marketing organizations (DMOs). It represents over 600 DMOs worldwide, with its membership concentrated in the United States, and includes 27 members from Canada, five from Ontario, including Blue Mountain Village Association (BMVA). Simcoe County has recently applied for membership. Through Grey County's relationship with BMVA, and with Don Braden chairing the Tourism Advisory Committee over the past few years, staff has been looking at DMAI as a model for best practices and potential membership. Last year DMAI commissioned a major study of the DMO industry and position in the marketplace, the DestinationNEXT report. Phase I of this study identified major trends and issues, proposed a typology of DMO types, and an overview of actionable strategies. Phase II of the DestinationNEXT report has been in

development by DMAI over the past year. It is an actionable toolkit with more detailed implementation strategies, and was released at this year's annual convention July 14-17. Of particular interest to Grey County is the assessment tool which appears to be an excellent template for engagement of the many different partners in tourism. Engagement of businesses was one of the key areas of focus outlined by the Tourism Advisory Committee.

### *Destination Development Action Plan Update Deliverables*

Grey County's Tourism Destination Development Action Plan (DDAP) was completed in May 2010, and identified 16 recommendations under four pillars to support the overall goal. A fifth pillar looking at Grey County's resources was deemed outside the scope of the study back in 2010.

#### **Goal**

**Increase sustainable tourism revenues through managing and marketing Grey County as a tourism destination**

#### **Roles and Responsibilities Pillar**

#### **Market Research and Tracking**

#### **Demand Generators and Product Market Match**

#### **Destination Positioning**

**Allocating County Resources for Destination** – This pillar was not part of the plan in 2010 and is recommended to be included in 2015.

Updating Grey County's DDAP should have regard for the past plan's goals and actions and provide a bridge to recommended future priorities, goals, and actions. The following are a broad set of deliverables that would be incorporated by staff into a draft Request for Proposal, and would be incorporated into a request for Partnership Funding to Regional Tourism Organization 7.

1. Assessment – Grey County Tourism has identified DestinationNEXT as a preferred assessment and engagement tool to kick start the strategic and action planning process. Undertaking an assessment with a wide range of tourism businesses, stakeholders, municipalities along with Tourism Advisory Committee and staff will identify priorities and areas for focus in the ensuing process.
2. Identify a vision, goals, strategies and actions comprising the Grey County Tourism Destination Development Action Plan over a three-five year time frame. Recommend key actions and strategies to meet goals identified and performance indicators to track. Ensure the DDAP is fully aligned with Grey County's corporate vision, goals and strategies.

3. Roles and Responsibilities – Community Support/engagement – Engagement has been identified as a key focus in the DDAP update. This includes engagement with tourism businesses, stakeholders (including tourism organizations and other DMOs) and municipalities. Identifying clear roles and sustainable engagement tools is a top priority.
4. Destination Management – Prioritizing where Grey County should focus its resources in meeting its goal of managing the County as a tourism destination. This includes working with demand generators, building and protecting Grey County's brand, ensuring market readiness of natural and man-made assets and identifying where other businesses, stakeholders and municipalities have a role.
5. Market Research and Tracking – Assess current market research and tracking practices and recommend comprehensive system to provide key metrics useful to industry and to stakeholders and municipalities.
6. County Resources for Tourism – Assess current deployment of staff and functions and make recommendations for optimal delivery of county services in tourism.

## Financial / Staffing / Legal / Information Technology

### Considerations

There are no legal or information technology considerations related to this report. There will be staff time allocated to this project; particularly time from the Manager and Assistant to the Manager.

The tourism budget currently has an allocation for this project of \$40,000 and staffing to supervise and support the project will come from the tourism department.

Partnership funding is available through RTO7 for Experience Development projects which would include the DDAP update. As this is a priority sector for RTO7, it provides enriched funding of \$2 to every \$1 from the applicant. Grey County can apply to RTO7 for funding of \$28,000 to match Grey's contribution of \$14,000 for an estimated total project cost of \$42,000. If the funding application is successful, RTO7 will undertake procurement, subject to their process, under the direction of a project committee, which should include the Tourism Manager and two or three members of the Tourism Advisory Committee.

In the unlikely event the application is not successful; a Request For Proposal would be undertaken through Grey County's purchasing department for the budgeted \$40,000.

## Link to Strategic Goals / Priorities

Goal 3 of Grey County's Corporate Strategic Plan is "Securing our place as Ontario's recreation jewel and Action 3.2 "Utilize market research and senior government funding to build insight, track performance and economic impact, and guide development in the County's tourism sector.

Respectfully submitted by,

Name Bryan Plumstead

Title Manager of Economic Development and Tourism

Director Sign Off: *Sharon Vokes*