



Committee Agenda

Tourism Advisory Committee March 10, 2021 – 9:30 AM

Electronic Participation, Grey County Administration Building

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Declaration of Interest**
3. **Reports**
 - a. [EDTC-TAC-08-21 Q1 Workplan Priorities Update](#)
That Report EDTC-TAC-08-21 regarding Q1 Tourism Workplan Priorities Update be received for information.
4. **Growth Management Study Update** (Scott Taylor)
5. **Roundtable and Discussion Points to Consider:**
 - How has business been to date
 - Outlook for summer 2021
 - Workforce Outlook
6. **Other Business**
7. **Next Meeting Dates**
 - a. To be determined
8. **Adjournment**



Committee Report

To:	Chair Siegwart and Committee Members
Committee Date:	March 10, 2021
Subject / Report No:	EDTC-TAC-08-21
Title:	Q1 Tourism Workplan Priorities Update
Prepared by:	Bryan Plumstead, Manager of Tourism
Reviewed by:	Savanna Myers, Director of Economic Development, Tourism & Culture
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	All
Status:	

Recommendation

1. That Report EDTC-TAC-08-21 regarding Q1 Tourism Workplan Priorities Update be received for information.

Executive Summary

Implementation of the 2021 tourism workplan is underway. The Economic Development and Tourism Working Group continue to meet monthly. Several key items are progressing across all three priority areas of tourism infrastructure, investment, and marketing.

Background and Discussion

With the reorganization of tourism staff to further align portfolios with economic development and communications, the tourism workplan comprises the combined activities of the Manager of Tourism, Economic Development Officer – Tourism and Marketing and Communications Specialist, each focused on a pillar and described below.

Infrastructure

[Grey County's Cycling & Trails Master Plan](#) has been accepted by Council and the Manager of Tourism will be working with Transportation Services staff on implementation. This includes circulating the plan to member municipalities for endorsement, which is underway. At the same time staff will proceed with key recommendations from the plan; the formation of two Working Groups, one for on-road cycling and one for off-road trails, devising a cycling wayfinding signage plan, and applying for funding as it becomes available to install cycling signage on County Roads.

Under Tourism Infrastructure, a major focus for 2021 is to work with public land managers across Grey County to respond to the unprecedented demand for access to outdoor areas, with a top priority being to provide additional parking capacity where possible, working collaboratively on key communication messages including how to be a responsible visitor, and finally as health protocols permit, to tie natural area visitation to economic benefit to our communities and businesses. Grey County has posted two summer student positions for an Ambassador program this summer and is in discussions with other ambassador teams across Grey County to work collaboratively.

Grey County also just passed a [Wayfinding Policy](#) which pulls together the many disparate forms of signage into one policy document, including Grey County Tourism Oriented Destination Signage (GC TODS) which replaces the previous Rural Tourism Signage Policy. Council also accepted staff's recommendation to reimburse/write off payment of 2020 signage fees for Grey County's participating tourism businesses. The next step is to prioritize tourism signage for installation in 2021.

Using mobile data from 2019 and 2020, staff are looking at volume and segmentation changes from the 2019 baseline to 2020 visitation and using these insights to help plan for 2021, and specifically inform summer preparations and cycling implementation.

Investment

Grey County continues to assist tourism businesses with coaching and mentoring programs. To date five Grey County businesses have received ongoing coaching through the T3 program and eight tourism businesses have received coaching through the Catapult program. Staff also continues to support on-going requests for assistance from local tourism businesses and stakeholders via the Business Support Line.

In Fall of 2020, Grey County collaborated with Regional Tourism Marketing Organization 7 (RTO7) to attract \$1.2 million dollars to help small and medium sized tourism businesses in Grey and Simcoe Counties and the cities of Barrie and Orillia. The COVID Tourism Response Fund opened on January 4, 2021 and received an incredible volume of applications for the highly competitive program. The program closed on January 31 and following an adjudication process with representation from Grey County, successful applicants have been awarded non-repayable financial support ranging from \$2,500 to \$20,000 dollars. At present, successful applicants are being contacted, agreements are being drawn up and final funding results on the projects and organizations that received funding will be released once all agreements are signed.

Staff are also beginning the business mix analysis project, beginning with West Grey. Meaford and Owen Sound have also indicated interest in the process. The goal is to understand the business mix in downtowns to develop a focus and marketing plan that builds on recently approved Community Improvement Plans (CIP).

Marketing

Grey County's newly redesigned and restructured tourism website, visitgrey.ca officially launched on November 27th, 2020. Since launch, 35,000 visitors have browsed the visually-

pleasing site. Website visits are down overall since March 2020, as staff have not advertised the website, or engaged in any marketing outside the local area.

The Communications department has been focused on safety messaging, with various tips on exploring outdoor spaces safely, promoting the Outdoor Activity Maps (both summer and winter) as well as supporting local businesses where possible, with the Business Resiliency Map. Most recently in conjunction with the Outdoor Areas Management Group, staff developed a Grey County Trail Etiquette graphic which has been very well received by landowners, trail groups and business partners.

In addition to consumer communications, staff have been communicating regularly with industry partners through e-newsletters and social media. In Q1, nine communications to various industry groups were sent to ensure all are up to date with the business supports being offered, funding opportunities, provincial and local regulations, as well as upcoming events like the virtual job fair and webinars. The goal is to inform without overwhelming.

In late November of 2020, Tourism, Economic Development and Communications teams worked together to launch the Home for the Holidays campaign. The campaign featured nine stories written by local writers, showcasing local shopping, dining & outdoor activity opportunities in each municipality. The stories were featured on visitgrey.ca and promoted through social media to a hyper local audience. An average reach of 17,000 people per story on social media with high engagement from both residents and local businesses was noted, with complementary ads on local radio.

Following the provincial stay-at-home order, staff launched a series of hyper local social media ads in mid-January to encourage residents to continue supporting those local businesses that were still open, by purchasing take out, delivery and curbside pick-up where possible. These were linked to the Business Resiliency Map, while the Economic Development team worked with local business to ensure data was up to date.

Legal and Legislated Requirements

There are no legal or legislated requirements relating to this report.

Financial and Resource Implications

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

Relevant Consultation

- Internal - Tourism Staff
- External – Economic Development and Tourism Working Group

Appendices and Attachments

[Q1 Tourism Workplan Priorities Update](#)

Tourism Workplan – 2021

Focus Area	Action Item	Status
Priority One: Infrastructure - Staff Lead: Bryan		
Cycling & Trails Master Plan Implementation	Master Plan Passed by Council	Complete. Endorsed by County Council November 12.
	Endorsement by Member Municipalities	In progress. Request for Endorsement Letters to be sent out. Presentation to TOBM Committee completed.
	On-road Cycling & Off-Road Trails Groups Working	In progress. Terms of Reference being drafted.
	Cycling Wayfinding Signage Plan CIP Funding sought to fund cycling signage & CP Rail Trail enhancements.	In progress. Preliminary planning discussions with transportation sign shop. Complete. Application submitted with finance, planning and transportation.
Tourism Infrastructure	Stakeholder Alignment – Outdoor Areas Management Group	In progress. Stakeholders identified and meeting monthly. Preliminary Priorities: Parking, Communication, Responsible Visitor
	Parking/Capacity/Trails Signage	In progress. Parking priorities identified, collaborative work on signage.
	Summer Student Ambassador Team	In progress. Student jobs posted, aligning with other teams in Grey.

Focus Area	Action Item	Status
Wayfinding Signage	<p>Wayfinding Policy Endorsed by Council</p> <p>Prioritize tourism signage for 2021</p>	<p>Complete. Report presented and endorsed by Committee of the Whole, February 25.</p> <p>In progress. Compiling inventory of tourism signs to replace/install.</p>
Market Research/Tracking	<p>2019 EA Mobile - Baseline Segmentation</p> <p>2020 Mobile Extracts</p>	<p>Complete.</p> <p>In progress. Data being pulled and analyzed to inform changing travel demand, particularly due to Covid, for use in summer planning and cycling implementation.</p>
Priority Two: Investment - Staff Lead: Alison		
Pandemic Support	Tourism Matters	<p>Complete. One (1) COVID support webinar for tourism businesses held in January.</p> <p>In progress. Business Support Line operating five days per week to support business re-opening.</p>

Focus Area	Action Item	Status
	Industry Website	<p>In progress. Five (5) upcoming business webinars scheduled for March and April through BEC.</p> <p>Complete. New Website Launched.</p> <p>In progress. Regular updates and enhancements are ongoing.</p> <p>In progress. Intake ongoing.</p>
	Mentoring Programs (T3, Catapult)	
	RTO7 Covid Recovery Fund	In progress. Successful applicants are being contacted and contracts are being drawn up.
Product & Experience Development	Downtown Destination Development	In progress. Business mix analysis is beginning with West Grey in Q1. Meaford and Owen Sound also interested in Q2-Q4 projects.

Focus Area	Action Item	Status
Priority Three: Marketing - Staff Lead: Heather, Alison		
Consumer Communications	Website – visitgrey.ca	Complete. New website launched. In progress. Content creation and ongoing maintenance to be done.
	Social Media	In progress. Trail etiquette, winter activity map, visitor safety messaging.
	Mobile App	In progress. Tri-County, RTO7 conversation. Reviewing platforms and best practices.
Industry Communications	Newsletters	In progress. Business supports, Covid updates, events/webinars.
	Social Media	In progress. Business supports, Covid updates, events/webinars.
Marketing Campaigns	Shop Local Campaigns (Home for the Holidays, Local is Calling)	In progress. Ongoing local digital, print and radio marketing campaigns.
	2021 Marketing Plan	n/a Q1