

Strategic Regional Tourism Plan

City of Corner Brook, Bay of Islands and Lower Humber Region (STAR Humber-Bay of Islands)

**Final Report
October 2019**



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PROJECT PURPOSE AND PROCESS



PROJECT PURPOSE AND PROCESS

The City of Corner Brook and the eleven towns in the Bay of Islands and Lower Humber region recognize the positive economic impact of developing the significant tourism potential of their region. Led by the City of Corner Brook, the group has undertaken a strategic regional tourism plan following the Strategic Tourism for Areas and Regions (STAR) program developed by Tourism Atlantic. **STAR** is a seven-stage process that builds a region's tourism success by focusing on how it is viewed through visitors' eyes – in all seasons. The customized tourism development program guides destinations through a collaborative process with the tourism industry, local organizations, communities and residents.

The key goal of the program is to develop, through an integrated process, a tourism plan for the region based upon its strengths and assets. The key outcomes of the STAR process include:

- A regional tourism baseline.
- A Strategic Regional Tourism Plan with actionable and realistic recommendations for destination development over the next three to five years.
- A network of leaders and committed stakeholders.
- Increased knowledge to create enticing experiential tourism products where success can be measured over time.
- A bank of training tools and resources to build capacity in the region.
- Performance measures to monitor and measure the success of the plan.
- Identification of appropriate and adequate funding sources to sustain actions to achieve long term plan goals.

The STAR Humber-Bay of Islands planning process was initiated in November 2018 and completed October 2019. The initiative was led by a Regional Tourism Working Committee comprised of industry stakeholders. Tract Consulting Inc. was engaged as the planning facilitator and the City of Corner Brook provided administrative support through its Community Services Office.

The Strategic Plan for the STAR Humber-Bay of Islands region is comprised of three major components as shown in Figure 1: i) Environmental Scan – an overview of findings related to our region, our visitors and tourism sector; ii) Overall Direction for the region (Guiding Principles, Vision, and Overarching Goal); and iii) Strategic Recommendations and Tactics – a compendium of action items/initiatives towards achieving the Vision/Goal.

Implementation of the Strategic Plan is guided by an Initial STAR Workplan. This workplan focuses on priorities identified by the working committee which are based upon consultations and analysis undertaken during the STAR planning process. Responsibility, projected timelines and costing for implementation of priority initiatives are included in the workplan.

Selected background research and tools to support implementation of the plan are presented in the Appendices.

Figure 1: Components of Strategic Plan



ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN



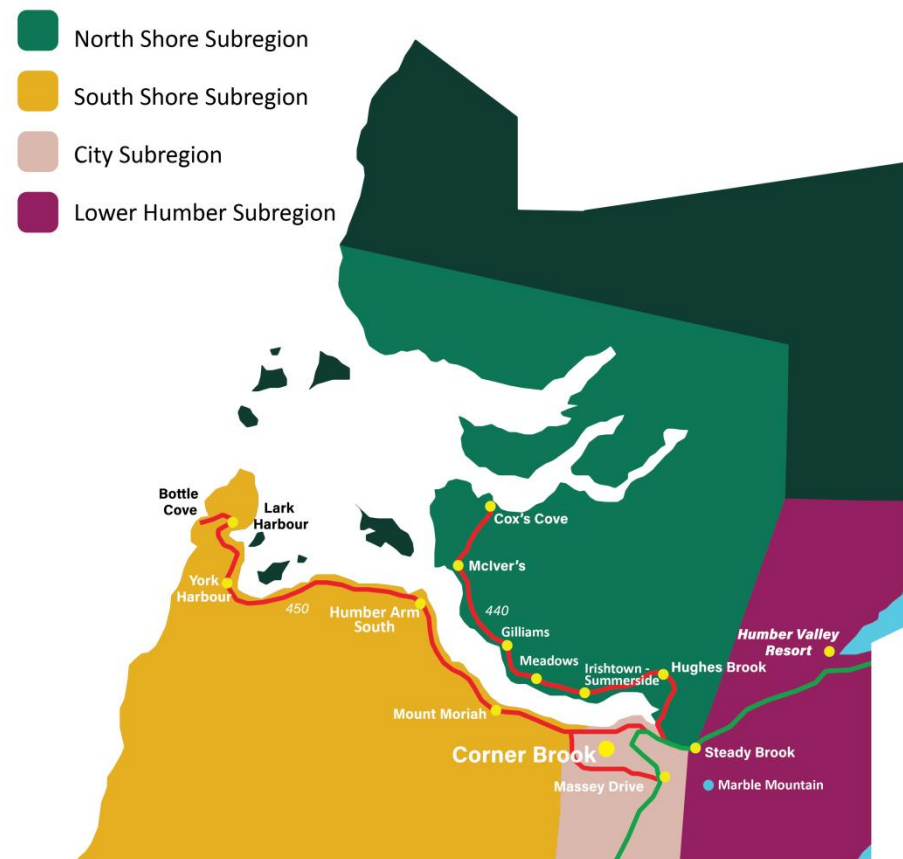
Our Region

The Humber-Bay of Islands region is located to the south of and adjoins Gros Morne National Park. The region is comparable to the Park in its dramatic scenic vistas of a coastal fiord and mountainous landscape. The region differs from the Park in geographic and human development perspectives, particularly related to the significance of the river and valley in the Lower Humber and the urban area in the City of Corner Brook.

During initial consultations and research related to the current status of tourism destination development, it became evident that the Humber-Bay of Islands could best be described as an interrelated region comprised of four fairly distinct subregions:

- North Shore Subregion – This is comprised of the area on the north side of the Bay of Islands adjoining Gros Morne National Park. It has a population of 3,935 in the six towns along the north side of Humber Arm: Hughes Brook (225); Irishtown-Summerside (1,418); Meadows (626); Gilliams (410); McIvers (538) and Cox's Cove (687).
- South Shore Subregion – This is comprised of the area on the south side of the Bay of Islands from the boundary of the City of Corner Brook to the entrance of the Bay. Its four towns have a population of 3,211: Humber Arm South (1,599); Mount Moriah (746) and Lark Harbour and York Harbour (866).
- City Subregion – This is comprised of the City of Corner Brook (19,806) and the adjoining Town of Massey Drive (1,632) with a total population of 21,438.
- Lower Humber Subregion – This is the area along the Humber River from the City of Corner Brook including the Humber Valley Resort on the lower north side of Deer Lake. The Town of Steady Brook has a population of 444 while there is a population of 824 reported in the Census Subdivision containing the unincorporated portions of the Subregion.

STAR - Humber-Bay of Islands



The level of tourism activity in terms of number of operators, visitor experiences, traveller services and community development between the North and South Shore, the City and the Lower Humber is very different. The North and South Shore Subregions currently have a low level of tourism sector development but there are emerging operators poised to take advantage of the natural assets of the area. The City of Corner Brook is the largest urban area in the province outside the northeast Avalon and as such has a wide range of traveller services and accommodations along with some very good tourism products. The Lower Humber Subregion is already a well-developed tourism area with a high number of luxury and mid-level accommodations associated with a wide range of tourism products including the Marble Mountain Ski Resort, the Humber Valley Resort Golf Course and various family-oriented adventure experiences.

Our Tourism Sector

The STAR planning process involves a very high level of consultation with tourism sector stakeholders particularly tourism operators. These consultations, which included large stakeholder sessions, coffee break groups and individual conversations along with electronic interactions were used to build a profile of the current industry status, the outlook of participants and their priorities and aspirations for the future.

Tourism Asset Inventory

The base information for the Tourism Asset Inventory was generated from the Department of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation (TCII) tourism operator database for 2018. This provided a full listing of registered tourism operators and products/attractions/services by municipality to develop a preliminary asset inventory. This preliminary asset inventory was used during consultations to garner direct information from stakeholders regarding changes to the status of assets as well as to expand the database with unregistered assets.

Observations arising from the Tourism Asset Inventory include:

- There are a high number of tourism assets throughout the region which take advantage of its scenic beauty.
- The presence of the City of Corner Brook means that there is a very wide range of traveller services “visitors can get just about anything they want or need”.
- There is a high number and range of accommodation providers in the City and Lower Humber but very little in the Bay of Islands.
- There is already a good selection of tourism experiences and products available in the area with strong interest in the development of new experiences and products both by existing operators and new entrepreneurs.

The Tourism Asset Inventory has been provided in electronic form to the Working Committee and should be maintained as a support database for sector development.

Benchmarking

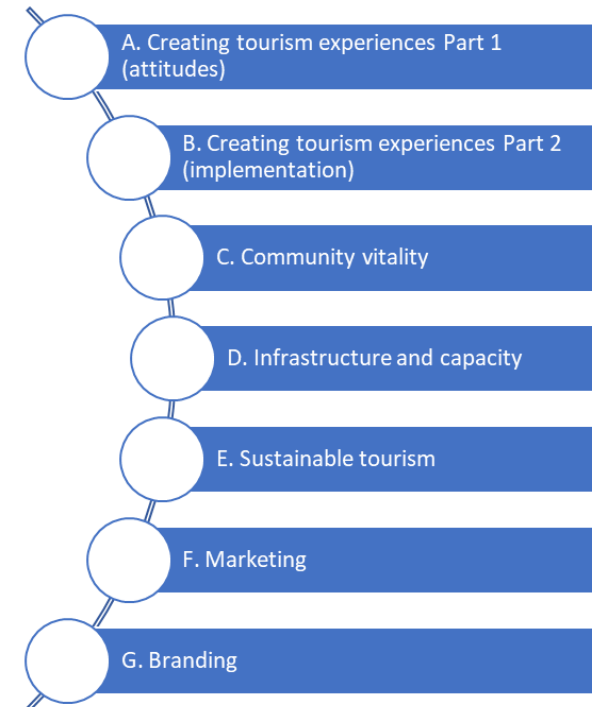
The Tourism Vitality Survey which was developed for Tourism Alberta by the Centre for Innovative and Creative Leadership (CEIL) was used to measure perceptions of community leaders, businesspeople and tourism operators about tourism in their community. The survey is based on CIEL's **Tourism 360 Guide**, which has been used by communities across Canada as a means of assessing and improving tourism product and experiences and was conducted and analyzed by Tract Associate, Mike Stolte, Founder and President of CEIL.

The TVA Survey contains 35 questions designed for community leaders, businesspeople and individuals involved in tourism development. It is divided into **seven sections** (see graphic on right), each containing five important questions communities and regions need to ask themselves. By answering these, a community or region will quickly get a sense of where it might want to make improvements. Each section represents an essential aspect of tourism. The survey also contained open-ended questions that help the reader gain a better understanding of strengths as well as things to improve in each section.

Forty-four people completed and returned the survey, including 12 in the working group session (March 13/19) and 32 in the community session (March 14/19) where the City of Corner Brook put out an invitation to tourism operators and the public.

A summary of findings is as follows:

- The region sees itself in a very positive way. Beautiful/scenic/natural beauty; friendly/welcoming; outdoor adventure/adventurous were by far the most frequently mentioned words. In fact, only one negative word – closed – was mentioned of 132 words listed. That's an astounding 131:1 positive: negative word ratio.
- The greatest strengths of the region (of 49 identified) were seen to be natural beauty/views/landscapes/scenery and the people, most notably their friendliness and warmth.
- The greatest underdeveloped opportunities (of 63 identified) were seen to be culinary offerings and experiences, and restaurant (especially seafood) fine dining experiences.
- Among those underdeveloped opportunities mentioned amongst 4 or more respondents were boat/dory tours, hotels and accommodations, adventure/guided/organized tours, walking/hiking trails, fishing experiences, GeoPark/geological experiences and arts/local culture/music/folklore.
- The lowest scoring sections were Tourism Branding, Tourism Marketing and Infrastructure and Capacity.
- The highest scoring sections were Creating Tourism Experiences: Attitudes, Regional Vitality and Creating Tourism Experiences: Exploration and Implementation.



- The most commonly cited improvements needed were a cohesive brand, marketing and promotion of the brand, better utilization of web and social media, wayfinding and signage, and better visitor information services.
- While most people recognized there were many things to do around Humber-Bay of Islands, there is little identification and packaging of experiences, and poor identification and signage leading tourists to the experiences.
- The collaborative STAR process was seen to be critical in gaining focus and collaboration between governments, NGOs and businesses to move the sector forward.
- There was a significant amount of ‘potential’ that was listed throughout survey responses. Critical to the potential being realized was a recognition of having key players on board especially collaboration between governments (ACOA, TCII, City Corner Brook, smaller municipalities), NGOs, tourism operators and the identification of entrepreneurs to help fill tourism niches.
- The highest scoring individual questions were around the region valuing the arts, tourism operators being entrepreneurial and filling niches, residents’ pride in the region, citizens having a positive attitude towards tourists, and the region having rich geographic and natural assets that are being turned into tourism experiences (See Appendix 1 for all scores).
- The lowest scoring individual questions were around signage, kiosks, available maps, the region having a brand, the clarity and acceptance of the brand, the lack of a tourism web-site making it easy to find things to do and booking them online and the lack of a high-quality visitor centre.

Regional Priorities Consultation

During the Stakeholder Session on March 18th, 2019 participants were asked to provide advice regarding what they consider to be the highest near and medium-term priorities for action.

The groups of 5-7 participants were requested to:

- Review the discussions regarding where the region is and where it wishes to be.
- Develop three short term priorities to be undertaken within the first year.
- Develop three medium term priorities to be undertaken within the first five years.
- Report to the full group (briefly).

Following is a summary of the priorities reported by the six discussion groups. It shows the priority issues as identified by the groups at each priority level.

Short Term – Year 1 Priorities:

Priority #1	Priority #2	Priority #3
Signage	Roads	Toilets
<u>Network</u> of individuals and stakeholders	10 Point Marketing Plan	Comprehensive research on Eastern Canada markets
Signage (visitor friendly)	Visitor Services (tea & pee)	Identify Threats (eco-friendly)
Wayfinding/Signage	Website/Social Media	Scenic Lookouts in South and North Shores
Hotel Levy	Branding	Collaboration/Cooperation
Brand	Social Media	Product development and partnership

Medium Term – 5 Year Priorities:

Priority #1	Priority #2	Priority #3
Infrastructure	Amenities	Digital App for community tours
Hotel Levy	Infrastructure and Capacity Building	Super Host Program for worker education
Regional Tourism Association	Experience Development	Transportation to region
App Development	Improved communications infrastructure	Public Washrooms
UNESCO designation (Geology)	Aboriginal Tourism	Transportation
HR Development for Front line service staff	Product development and partnership	Business start-up

Regional Vision Consultation

Participants at the Stakeholder Session on March 18th, 2019 were asked to consider a vision for tourism industry development in the Humber-Bay of Islands. To do this they first generated a list of “Key Words” which they felt would best describe the region and then were asked to use these words to develop potential vision statements. The proposed vision statements (shown below) are remarkably similar in their main themes.

- Our vision for tourism in the Humber Valley-Bay of Islands is to become internationally known for our ability to provide experiences through the four seasons to enjoy stunning local marine and mountain environments through adventure, history and cultural activities.
- Become Newfoundland and Labrador’s four-season adventure playground surrounded by rugged beauty, rich culture and history with the space to find yourself.
- Experience the four seasons diversity of NL culture and lifestyle in unspoiled beauty in our friendly “hidden gem”.
- We proudly acknowledge we have four seasons that encompass a range of activities that take in the raw beauty of our region and celebrate the different layers of the cultural, artistic impressions and expressions of the region.
- Become a tourism destination known for spectacular scenery presenting an uncharted environment and authentic culture that creates opportunities for visitors to become explorers with our people through traditional activities.

Our Visitors

Profile of Visitors: Humber-Bay of Islands

A clear profile of visitors to the Humber-Bay of Islands informed priorities within the Strategic Regional Tourism Plan. During the STAR process, we were provided anecdotal information on visitor origins and numbers. Stakeholders in Lark Harbour/York Harbour suggested numerous people are visiting their towns to hike their trail system, shop for crafts and enjoy water-based recreation activities. Cox’s Cove Town Council advised that local tourism operators are drawing a lot of vacationers to the town. Council also advised that they have never seen as many visitors as they have this summer (2019).

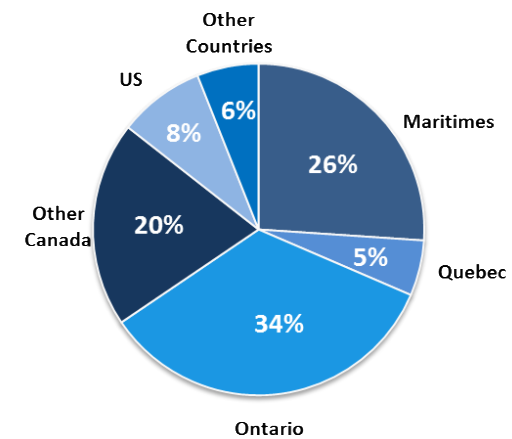
From a visitor origin perspective, one winter tourism operator stated that they are seeing more and more visitors from the US, Germany, France and New Zealand coming to enjoy a snowmobiling experience. This informal information was considered in the development of this tourism strategy, but we relied most heavily on the Zone 8 tourism information to illustrate the tourism potential of the region and to develop strategic directions to support industry growth. Visitor information for the Western region, which includes the Humber-Bay of Islands, presented in this report comes from the *Exit Survey 2016: Shoulder Season Vacation Visitors*, *NL Visitor Exit Survey 2016* and the *Exit Survey 2016: Overnight Visitors to Zone 8: Divided into Deer Lake/Humber Arm and Corner Brook*.

Visitor Origin

Over 34% of visitors to Newfoundland and Labrador came from Ontario, representing the province's largest source market. Over one quarter (26%) come from the Maritimes, accounting for the largest share of travel parties. In terms of other markets, Quebec represented 5% of non-resident parties, while 20% of visitors arrived from provinces west of Ontario and the territories.

Accounting for a total of 86%, Canada remains the province's main travel market. In addition, 8% of parties travelled from the United States while the remaining 6% were from other countries. Overall, the share of travel party origins did not change significantly compared to the 2011 survey.

The majority of visitors to this province (65%) are first time visitors, taking a "bucket list" trip and tending to spend freely. Neighbouring Gros Morne (62.9%) is second only to St. John's (71.6%) as having at least one overnight stay by vacationers. (NL 2016 Visitor Exit Survey)



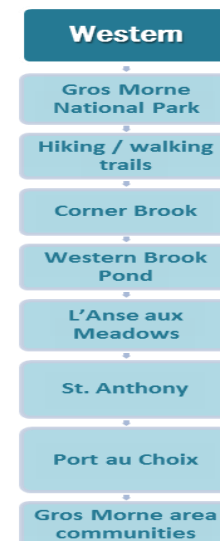
2016 Non-Resident Parties – Origin
(NL 2016 Visitor Exit Survey)

Mode of Travel in Western Region (NL 2016 Visitor Exit Survey)

Most non-resident parties visiting Newfoundland and Labrador in 2016 travelled to the province for vacation (34%). Air travel to the province among vacation visitors continues to dominate, with more than 7 in 10 (72%) vacation parties travelling by air, versus 28% travelling by vehicle. In the western region auto travel is higher and accounts for 38% of travellers to Gros Morne. In terms of length of stay auto travellers tend to visit longer (12 days) while air travellers (9 days).

Top Attractions Western Region (NL 2016 Visitor Exit Survey)

Gros Morne National Park (65%) was the most visited attraction in the Western region among visitors to that area, while Corner Brook (59%), regional hiking and walking trails (53%) and Western Brook Pond (36%) were also popular.



2016 Non-Resident Parties – Top 5
Regional Attractions Visitor (May to
October) 2016 Visitor Exit Survey)

Non-Resident Visitor Demographics (NL 2016 Visitor Exit Survey)

AGE:	EDUCATION:	HOUSEHOLD INCOME:
55+ (60%)	Post-Graduate (30%)	\$150,000+ (25%)
45-54 (17%)	University (51%)	\$100 - 149,000 (23%)
35-44 (7%)	Comm./Tech. College (11%)	\$ 70 – 99,999 (24%)
18-34 (10%) Millennials	High School or less (8%)	\$ 40- 69,999. (20%)
<18 (6%)		< \$ 40,000 (8%)

Generally speaking, our visitors are very well educated and have a high expendable income.

2016 Non-Resident Vacation Parties - Top 5 Outdoor Recreation Experiences (NL 2016 Visitor Exit Survey)

Top outdoor experiences have remained consistent since 2011. For vacationers, pleasure walking in and around communities and hiking are the most popular vacation activities. This speaks to the need to have accessible communities with walking trails linked to community services and assets.

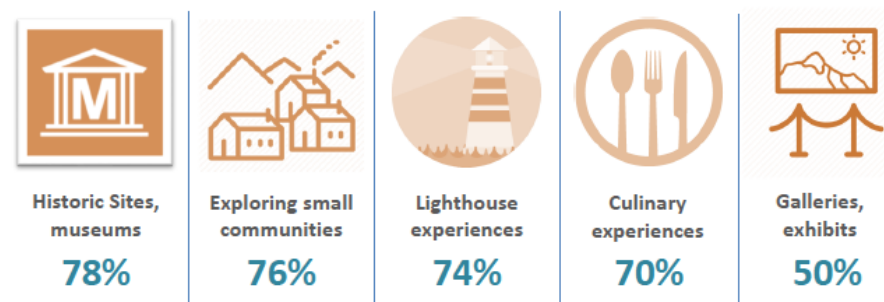


2016 Non-Resident Vacation Parties – Top 5 Outdoor Recreational Experiences
(% Parties, May to October (NL 2016 Visitor Exit Survey))

2016 Non-Resident Vacation Parties - Top 5 Culture and Heritage Experiences (NL 2016 Visitor Exit Survey)

For many visitors, experiencing culture and meeting locals is always a highlight of their trip, with 7 in 10 or more vacation parties doing so. Exploring our communities (76%) and tasting our local food (70%) are favorites when it comes to these kinds of experiences. For 50% of our vacation travelers, visiting galleries or exhibits provide an immersive experience of culture and heritage.

“Compared to visitors overall, vacation travel parties showed higher levels of participation in all cultural and heritage experiences. Culture, heritage and history are experienced to greater levels by air vacation than auto vacation parties. Most notably, air vacationers are almost twice as likely to experience a live performance at a local pub than auto parties (52% vs. 28%) and also experience local food to a greater extent (74% vs. 60%). Air parties also engage more in lighthouse experiences (78% vs. 65%), visit galleries or exhibits (57% vs. 34%) and take in theatre plays or live performances (27% vs. 15%).”



These visitor statistics identify tourism development opportunities in the smaller picturesque traditional towns of the Bay of Islands.

2016 Non-Resident Vacation Parties – Top 5 Cultural and Heritage Experiences
(% Parties, May to October) (NL 2016 Visitor Exit Survey)

Accommodations

Year	Zone 8		Corner Brook		Province	
	RNS %	ADR \$	RNS %	ADR \$	RNS %	ADR \$
2016	49.69	126	51.12	132	50	138
2017	50.75	131	53.29	134	51	140
2018	48.93	128	48.62	136	--	--

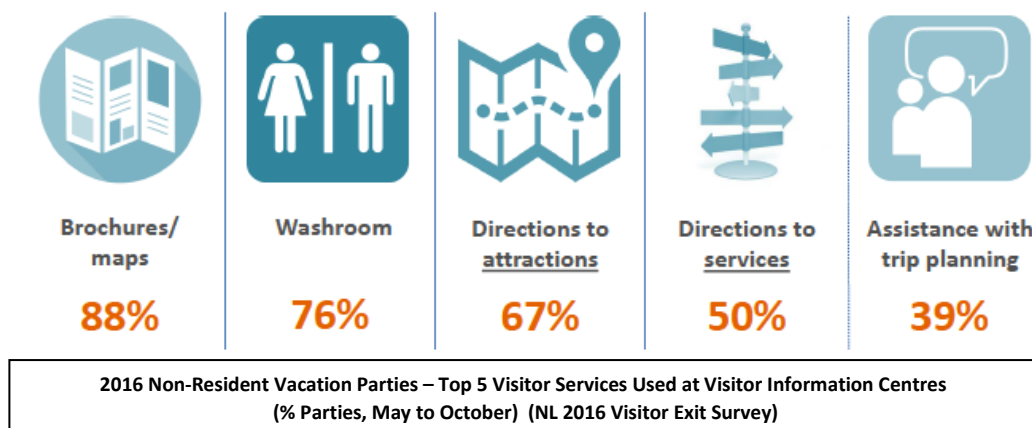
- RNS = Room Nights Sold
- ADR = Average Daily Rate

The accommodation sector accounts for 43% of non-resident vacation party expenditures and is the top vacationer revenue generator. Keeping abreast of and responding to specific vacationer needs is a growing trend in the accommodation sector.

Non-Resident Vacation Parties: Top 5 Visitor Services (NL 2016 Visitor Exit Survey)

Print material, particularly brochures and maps, is obtained from Visitor Information Centres by nearly 9 in 10 vacation parties. Having access to washroom facilities and getting directions to attractions and sites of interest is also very important.

These are important visitor services to consider.



Trip Planning (NL Visitor Exit Survey 2016)

The majority of visitors (71%) take from 1 – 6 months to plan a trip to the province. Pre-trip planning information most frequently used is the destination website (75%), websites of local accommodations (73%), websites of attractions and activities (72%) and NL.com (71%). In the province, vacationers trip planning is supported by talking to local residents (71%) and visitor service personnel (71%) and these are the highest sources of in-province trip planning. These are followed closely by printed brochures of attractions (70%) and the NL travel guide (65%).

The trip planning exit survey results speaks to the need for an effective online presence, with a brand reflective mobile friendly website, coupled with engaging and frequently updated social media platforms. Accommodators too, must provide quality vacationer friendly services based on defined need and ideally be brand supportive. Brand reflective brochures and knowledgeable visitor service staff and residents are also a necessity.

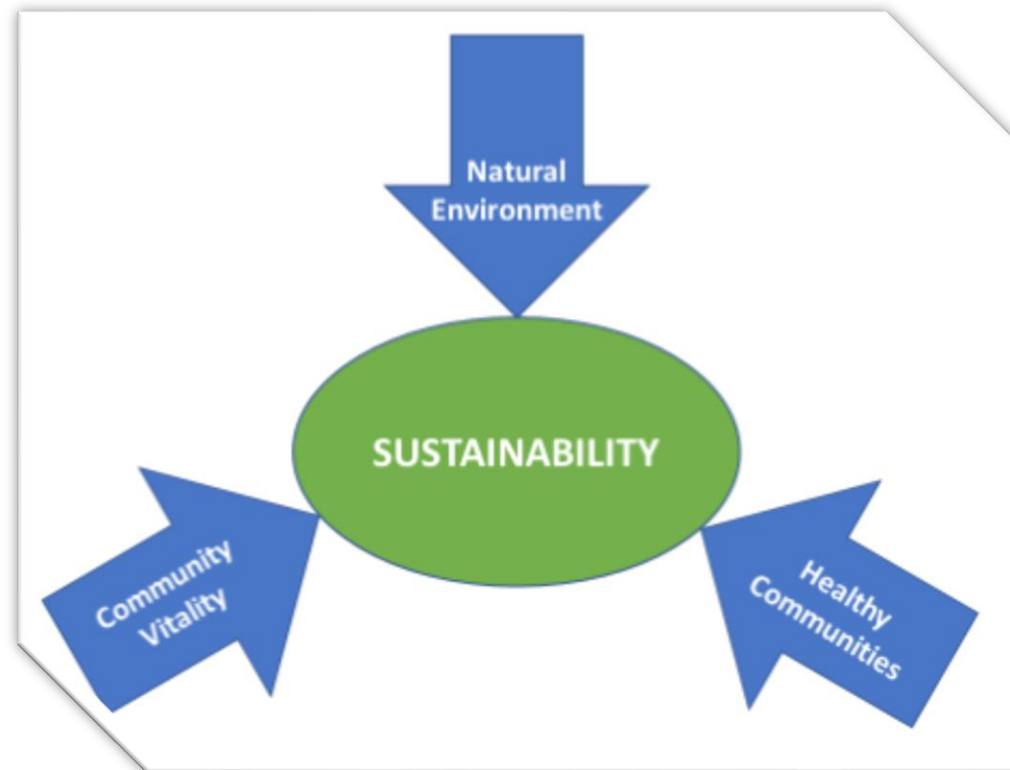
THE PLAN GOING FORWARD



Guiding Principles of the Plan

The guiding principles for completion of the Plan were:

- Presents a single vision for tourism development and planning.
- Identifies a clear, measurable goal for tourism development.
- Defines a roadmap of strategies, recommendations and tactics for achievement of the goal.
- Be based upon a factual assessment of tourism assets and potential.
- Focuses on tourism products that lead to the so-called 'triple bottom line' benefits of people, planet and profits thereby creating sustainable development.
- Celebrates the culture and traditions of the people and communities in the region.
- Acknowledges business development and entrepreneurship as critical elements for development of the tourism industry.
- Complements and builds upon the Provincial Government's *The Way Forward 2017-20* *Provincial Tourism Product Development Plan* and *Raising the Bar: Western Tourism Destination Visitor Appeal Appraisal* along with other ongoing planning and development activities in the region.
- Recognizes the role of Gros Morne National Park as the primary tourism demand generator for the West Coast and the potential for the Corner Brook/Bay of Island/Lower Humber Region to offer new/additional tourism experiences that attract these visitors.



Vision

“Our vision is for the Humber-Bay of Islands region to become the home port of Newfoundland and Labrador’s four-season adventure”.

Tag Line

Experience Newfoundland and Labrador’s four seasons, rugged beauty and rich culture with the space to find yourself.

Overarching Goal

By 2025, the Lower Humber/Corner Brook/Bay of Islands region will have increased overall tourist visitations and tourism expenditures by at least 25%¹.

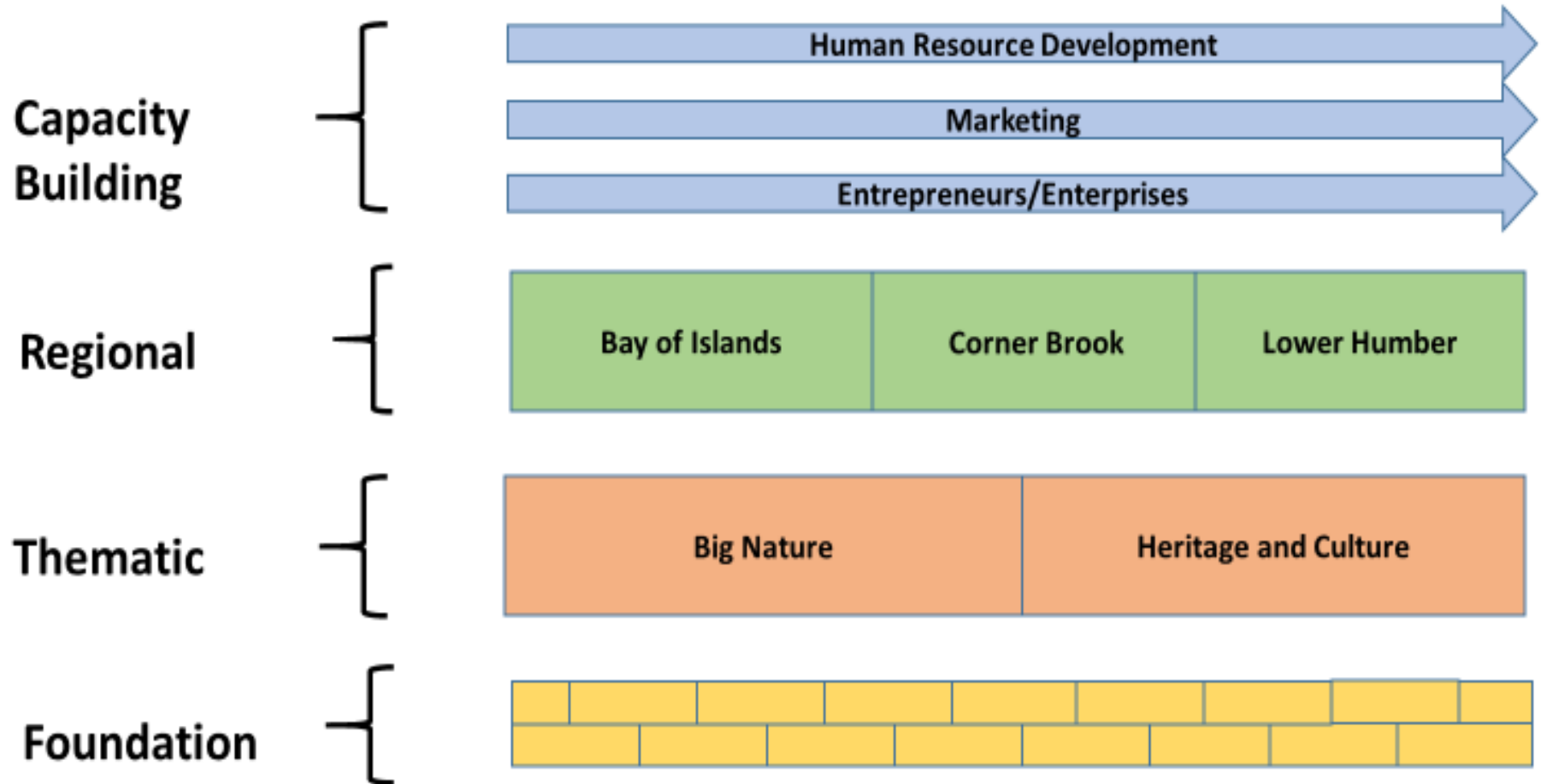
¹ This would be an average annual rate of 5%. By comparison, since 2008, expenditures in the tourism industry in NL has grown at an annual rate of 3.7% per annum.

Strategies

The strategies identified to achieve the vision and goal of the Strategic Regional Tourism Plan are:

- Building a foundation for strong tourism sector leadership, communications, planning, funding and policy development in the region.
- Enhancing the opportunities for “Big Nature” and programmed adventure experiences in all seasons.
- Celebrating and preserving the heritage and culture of the region.
- Developing the tourism potential of the Bay of Islands.
- Expanding Corner Brook’s role as the supply base and service centre for tourism in Western Newfoundland and developing tourism capacity in the City.
- Establishing the Lower Humber as Newfoundland’s playground for all ages.
- Fostering a proactive program to mentor new tourism entrepreneurs and provide ongoing support for existing enterprises.
- Enhancing human resource development throughout the regional tourism sector.
- Integrating but distinguishing regional tourism marketing with Gros Morne National Park and with the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS AND TACTICS



STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS AND TACTICS

One indicator of the interest in and potential for development of the tourism sector in Humber-Bay of Islands is the number and scope of ideas which were generated in the research and consultation components of the STAR planning process. It became clear as the planning process progressed that the ideas fit into the nine strategies presented on Page 21 and further that the strategies along with the recommendations and tactics arising from them actually comprised four distinct clusters: Foundation; Thematic; Regional and Capacity Building.

The “**Foundation**” cluster includes those strategic recommendations and tactics which relate to building a strong organizational foundation to guide development of strong, vibrant and sustainable tourism sector in the region. This foundation includes strong leadership, the appropriate organizational structure, a source of ongoing funding support, industry engagement and support, partnership development, a role in policy development and ongoing fact-based planning.

The “**Thematic**” cluster includes those strategic recommendations and tactics which apply throughout the region and focus on two areas of opportunity which were rated very highly: “Big Nature Adventures in all Seasons”; and “Celebrating Heritage and Culture”.

The “**Regional**” cluster includes those strategic recommendations and tactics which apply primarily to one of the distinct sub-regions: “Accessing the Tourism Potential of the Bay of Islands”; “The Corner Brook Base Camp Experience”; and “Lower Humber Playground for all Ages”.

The “**Capacity Building**” cluster includes those strategic recommendations and tactics which build tourism sector capacity related to “Entrepreneurship”, “Human Resource Development” and “Regional Marketing”.

Building the Foundation

Development of a strong, vibrant and sustainable tourism sector requires a strong foundation. This foundation includes building the leadership and organization, identifying sources of sustainable funding, establishing effective communications with industry and community, and developing strong partnerships with all levels of government.

1. Leadership and Organization

Achievement of the vision for the region's tourism sector will require long term strong leadership from the industry supported by a Secretariat. There are various models which could potentially undertake this role, ranging from establishing a completely new organization to tasking the role to an existing organization (NGO or municipality). Each of these models has positive and negative attributes. For example, a new organization could be custom designed to focus on its prime mandate but would have the challenge of obtaining long term operating funding. On the other hand, tasking the role to an existing organization would be less costly but run the risk of the mandate being sidelined by that organizations primary function. The model which is recommended is that a new tourism action Task Force (Tourism Humber-Bay of Islands) be formed with Secretariat support from an existing organization. This Task Force would be led by private industry members with support from other key stakeholder organizations.

A key stakeholder is the City of Corner Brook. In addition to having a resourced tourism unit, the City has shown vision and leadership in regional tourism development by sponsoring the STAR project. While the City does not have a mandate for the full region, it does have a vested interest in tourism related regional economic growth throughout the region because of the spin-off impacts on the City. It is therefore suggested that optimal organization to host the Secretariat is the City of Corner Brook.

- ***Establish a new tourism action Task Force (Tourism Humber-Bay of Islands) to lead implementation of the STAR Plan.***
- ***Develop an agreement with the City of Corner Brook to host the Secretariat which will provide administrative support for the Task Force.***

2. Sustainable Funding

In order to be relevant and effective, the Task Force will need access to a source of sustainable funding. Considerable work has already occurred in the region regarding the possibility of establishing a fee on accommodations which can be used broadly to increase visitation to the region. There are two general options for such a fee: i) a tax or levy legislated by a government body (municipality) upon accommodation's room revenue; and, ii) a destination marketing fee (DMF) which is a fee voluntarily placed upon room revenue by the industry. The latter format would be preferred if there is widespread industry support. As well, the levy option might be difficult to implement outside the City of Corner Brook. In any case, either option could be a source of ongoing funding for the Task Force.

The total spending of visitors on accommodations in the Humber-Bay of Islands region is not readily available. However, the total accommodations spending in the City of Corner in 2018 was just over \$9.8M and in the larger Economic Zone 8 region was over \$19.7M. If we assume that accommodations spending in the Humber-Bay of Islands region was approximately 20% higher than just in the City, then we have a total of about \$11.8M. Therefore, if the accommodations fee were to be applicable to the full region then annual revenue of \$118,000 would be generated for each 1% of the fee.

- ***Facilitate development of the appropriate visitor fee to support initiatives to increase visitation.***

3. Communicate with Industry and Community

During the STAR planning process, there has been significant participation from all elements of the tourism industry and members of the general community in the various presentations, workshops and informal sessions. Through these activities, the level of interest in tourism development has been enhanced and a large list of interested individuals has been identified.

The future success of the Working Committee/Task Group will depend largely on its ability to maintain interest and expand the knowledge and involvement of tourism industry personnel and the general public. This will require a concerted effort of ongoing communications through traditional and new media. To kick off the communications program, the final STAR Plan will need to be readily available, there will need to be a well-designed and maintained web page, there will need to be regular stories in traditional media and there will need to be real time information available on social media platforms.

- ***Design and implement a proactive communications program for industry and community.***

4. Partnership with Government

Implementation of the Plan and achievement of its vision and goals will require the understanding and buy-in of all levels of government. Federal and Provincial government representatives have been actively involved in the evolution of the STAR Plan. However, upon completion of the Plan, it will be necessary to engage senior members of Government, both elected and officials. This should be undertaken by the Working Committee in Fall 2019 and annual follow-up meetings held by the Task Force in subsequent years.

Similarly, representatives of the municipalities in the region have been consulted during the planning process. Upon completion of the Plan, the Working Committee should provide copies for each municipality and meet with individual councils and senior staff to discuss implementation. In addition to the communications program described earlier, the Task Force should provide annual updates to councils.

The Qalipu First Nation has been consulted during the planning process and a representative has participated on the Working Committee. Engagement with the First Nation should be undertaken similarly to the municipalities.

- ***Undertake engagement sessions with federal, provincial and local government.***

“Big Nature” Adventures in all Seasons

The term “Big Nature” is based on the scale of the majestic mountainous and coastal landscape found within the Humber-Bay of Islands. “All Seasons” responds to the fact that the region offers a variety of four-season “Big Nature” adventures not readily found in other areas of the province. The adventures relate to eco-tourism which is defined as responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people (people, planet, profits). The visitor experience typically includes physical activity, interaction with the environment and some type of cultural exchange.

The STAR Humber-Bay of Islands region is adjacent to Gros Morne National Park, and both areas have a very similar topography and comparable scenic vistas and “Big Nature” visitor experience opportunities: one resident stated during the STAR community consultations, “the region is Gros Morne but bigger – bigger river, bigger bay, bigger mountains” (Cabox Mountain, Humber-Bay of Islands, is the highest peak on the island at 812M, Gros Morne Mountain is 806M.) Humber-Bay of Islands has the opportunity to present a variety of “Big Nature” tourism products, programs and services not generally available within the purview of a national park.

The “Big Nature” approach aligns with *The Way Forward: 2017-20 Provincial Tourism Product Development Plan*. Its primary focus is creating and delivering people and program-based brand experiences. These are experiences that engage visitors with locals, and authentic experiences around special natural and cultural icons and attractions, such as are found in the Bay of Islands.



2016 Visitor Exit Survey: Chart 10: 2016 Non-Resident Parties –Trip Satisfaction (% of Parties Rating 8-10 on a 1-10-point scale; May to October)

5. Trails Master Plan

The Humber-Bay of Islands region has a substantial number of trails which have been developed for hiking, bicycling, ATVs in the Spring/Summer/Fall and for snowmobiling and cross-country skiing in the Winter.

The number and diversity of these trails is a substantial tourism asset. However, without a trail master plan there is the potential for conflict between users and the potential to miss opportunities to cooperate where joint use is possible and to maximize return from the capital investment in trail development. Even where joint use is not possible there may be the opportunity to “double-up” on the trailheads by establishing an access to a secondary trail corridor for multiple uses.

The *Tourism Destination Visitor Appeal Appraisal: Western Region* (2015) supports such an approach and identifies the need to:

“Embrace and adopt BTCRD’s (now TCII) cluster-based approach for trail development in the Western region. This capitalizes on the presence of trail networks and connects trail groups to local community tourism-based businesses to ensure that trail development is done as a collective effort in order to enhance the visitor experience with trail activities, extend visitation in an area, drive greater economic impact and ensure long-term stability for the trail.

This approach entails:

a. Understanding the drivers; hence investment partners, for community trails vs. trails that drive tourism visitation and increase the length of stay and spend for resident and non-resident travellers;

b. Ensuring any investment goes beyond infrastructure investment and pre-plan the opportunities for single vs. multiple-use trails, revenue generating potential of visitor activities on the trail, long-term trail maintenance, and promotional appeal in generating awareness for the community/sub-region;

c. Educating proponents invested in development process about how to secure a license to occupy permits, connect to accommodators, food and beverage (F&B) establishments, retailers, that meet the Tourism Assurance Plan (TAP) criteria;

d. Target communities who could benefit from a cluster approach for a trail network;

e. Align inter-governmental interests and requirements from environmental and archaeological assessments, to municipal interests, to tourism product development and marketing to optimize all investments for the greater good and sustainability of the land.

f. Prioritize funding for trails networks and specific enhancements for those projects that consider the visitors journey and link several communities and trails together with other anchor attractions (e.g. national historic sites) to create holistic appeal that encourages overnight stays and participating in other community tourism offers.”

The approach as outlined in the TDVAA should be the model for the Humber-Bay of Islands Trail Master Plan and within the Master Plan there should be subsets of trails (both motorized and non-motorized) that can be marketed as individual visitor experiences.

The opportunity exists to cross-promote trails types to vary and expand the visitor experience. For example, combining a driving tour route with short hikes to lookouts, integrating a hiking experience with a kayaking experience, or, as is being done by the Salt Box restaurant in Benoit's Cove, combining geological tours that are interpreted via a hiking trail, with those interpreted via a boat tour.

- ***Develop a Trail Master Plan for the Humber-Bay of Islands region that highlights different types of trails.***

6. Hike Humber-Bay of Islands

Hike Discovery on the Bonavista Peninsula has done an amazing job in developing packaging, and marketing the hiking trails on the Peninsula. The trails range from easy family-oriented outings to challenging back woods adventures for seasoned hikers.

Humber-Bay of Islands already has a myriad of hiking trails throughout the region. What is missing is a focus on developing, packaging and marketing these trails to make them collectively into a demand generator for the region. This can be done by establishing Hike Humber-Bay of Islands as an organizational framework to take an overall coordination role for the hiking trails in conjunction with the municipalities.

Such an organization could coordinate efforts to develop additional trails and to establish trailhead and staging areas for hiking within local communities, ideally adjacent to local business, to maximize the opportunity to support local entrepreneurs while expanding the opportunity for one-on-one engagement with residents. As well, it can investigate the opportunity to “double-up” on the trailheads by establishing an access to a secondary corridor for bicycling, snowmobiling, and ATV's.

- ***Establish Hike Humber-Bay of Islands based upon the Hike Discovery Model.***

7. Mountain Biking

The benefits of mountain biking are economic, environmental, and social. Mountain biking is a proven travel motivator and mountain bikers are well educated, affluent and most are over 30 years of age.

To date, there has not been a comprehensive study of mountain biking in this province to determine the volume of local riders, the attraction of riders from out of province or the magnitude of the economic impact of mountain biking. However, there is significant interest and investment. Gros Morne National Park now has a designated mountain biking trail. As well, ACOA is supporting the Atlantic region as a bicycle destination and has sponsored two learning missions to the US (Oregon and West Virginia) with a focus on capacity development and economic benefits.

The optimism is related to positive assessments such as that by Red Bull in its web article *Discovery Canada's hidden mountain biking gem*: “the island of Newfoundland isn't really known for its mountain biking, but there is some amazing riding to be found there. The landscape is raw, vast and very beautiful. The problem it would appear is lack of product.” It is also related to the results of economic impact studies of mountain biking in other locations. One such study was conducted in the municipality of Whistler, British Columbia in 2016. Whistler is famous for skiing, but when the snow melts it becomes home to hundreds of kilometers of trails both inside and outside the Whistler Bike Park. Nearly 533,000 rides were made in Whistler in 2016, with 296,000 rides made by out of town travellers during 102,500 visits to the resort. The estimated economic impact of this level of mountain biking is shown in the following table.

Mountain Biking in Whistler			
533,000 rides in Whistler	\$46.6 million in visitor spending directly attributable to mountain biking	389 Whistler jobs supported	\$75.9 million in economic activity supported in British Columbia
102,500 out of town visits made to ride in Whistler during 2016	\$18.1 million in wages & salaries supported in Whistler	\$39.3 million boost to provincial GDP	\$14.1 million in taxes supported across Canada

The Bay of Islands has spectacular mountain biking opportunities and trails can be cross promoted with the biking trail in GMNP. The West Coast Cycling Association has developed and is implementing the “Corner Brook Mountain Biking Trail Master Plan”, a four-stage trail development plan to build a network for mountain biking trails in the City of Corner Brook. These will be used for four season multiple purpose enjoyment, including snowshoeing and fat bike excursions. Once that plan has been implemented, the next focus should be to develop the coastal mountain biking product for the York Harbour/Lark Harbour area (as it is already developing into a sought-after area for mountain bikers and hikers). One of the local trails, Coppermine, is already promoted on the Trail Forks biking network that reaches 102 countries.

The combination of accessible inner city professionally developed trails, with coastal trails in the Lark Harbour/York Harbour, and other areas will be very attractive to this growing niche market.

- ***Develop a mountain biking trail development plan to complement the current plan for the City with initial concentration for development on the York Harbour/Lark Harbour region.***

8. Snowmobiling

The Bay of Islands area provides incredible snowmobiling opportunities, and the existing groomed snowmobile trail network provides links to varied “Big Nature” short excursion and off the grid organic snowmobiling, not to be found anywhere else in Atlantic Canada. Visitors using Corner Brook as a snowmobiling hub can, with a guide, snowmobile directly from the City into the wilderness. As well, short four-hour excursions are growing in popularity. Local operators are seeing an increase of visitors from the United States and Europe who are interested in these short tour experiences, which include features such as travelling to a viewpoint for a “boil-up” with local food and storytelling.

Tourism Destination Visitor Appeal Appraisal: Western Region (2015) suggested that: “The region’s snowmobile and ATV trails present an immediate opportunity to stimulate business in shoulder and winter seasons. Interested operators should identify ways to fully leverage this aspect of the region’s trail networks through the regional snowmobile and ATV trails working group. The first task for the group is to prioritize those activities that must be implemented in the next 12 months in order to grow business revenues.”

Development of this winter visitor experience requires input from local operators and the NL Snowmobiling Federation. The “Economic Impact Assessment Overview of the Snowmobiling Industry in NL” (2017) observed that non-resident users have demonstrated a high willingness to spend significantly on recreational snowmobiling, and major opportunities exist in enhancing the connectivity of trails and tourism amenities (accommodation, food and beverage, fuel, retail, etc.) in the many communities that are, or could be, visited during snowmobiling trips. Snowmobiling contributed \$81M to the NL economy in 2105/16. The economic impact associated with the NL snowmobiling industry and trail system could be expanded by building relationships and linking strategies with other trail users such as all-terrain vehicle (ATV), biking, and hiking groups.

There is a need to undertake a comprehensive assessment of snowmobiling product development needs for the Humber-Bay of Islands region. The Working Committee/Task Force should work with local operators and organizations to complete this work.

- ***Identify snowmobiling product development needs for the region including better signage, staging areas, mapping and mobile device apps.***

9. ATV Adventures

The City of Corner Brook recently approved a right of way for ATV’s through the City. This right of way creates links to the NL T’Railway to the east and the west and into the visitor assets and services found in Corner Brook. The new link is already attracting ATV tours into the City and having positive impacts on the local economy. In fact, the well-known ATV organization “Dirt Tracks” has recently visited the City to film the route and is also exploring other ATV trails to be found on both sides on the Bay of Islands.

The ATV trail system can be enhanced by creating better links between the City and selected backcountry areas and local towns and coordinating the staging areas for hikers, mountain bikers, ATV users and snowmobilers in each of the towns found within the study area.

Ideally, these staging areas would be created in concert with commercial establishments, accommodation providers and local community centres to maximize potential economic impact.

- ***Expand ATV linkages between the City selected backcountry areas and local towns, with staging areas formalized in the towns.***

10. Packaged Scenic Tours

The Way Forward: 2017-20 Provincial Tourism Product Development Plan suggests that “collaborating for high quality itineraries and packages that link the appeal of attractions and experiences, such as cultural sites or trail experiences, to Newfoundland and Labrador’s target markets will encourage visitors to have longer stays and experience more” and significantly increases spending. The consultations leading to this report repeatedly identified the need for more programmed visitor experiences in the region to support itinerary development and packaging. This is a key need for the region, and it is suggested that the Working Committee/Task Force in concert with the City, area municipalities, the Qalipu Nation and the Grenfell Innovation Centre identify and test market ready visitor experience packages for the region.

With regard to potential experience packages, the *Tourism Destination Visitor Appeal Appraisal: Western Region* (2015) suggests that: “.....project initiatives, such as the proposed Global GeoPark, represents an opportunity to build on the iconic position of Gros Morne National Park, a World Heritage site, by extending the visitor’s journey through to the North Arm Hills, Blow-Me-Down Mountains and Lewis Hills. Two key project opportunities highlighted in the report were: Qalipu First Nations’ approach to tourism development; and Marble Mountain developments.” and “... Underdeveloped stories in the Western region to consider include the Qalipu First Nation, the Stephenville military history, the Newfoundland dog (Isle aux Morts), and the impact of French and other European influences.”

One specific packaged tour opportunity which should be addressed in the short term is the potential for helicopter/seaplane tours. Heli-tours are currently offered in the Twillingate area and are proving to be popular. The Twillingate service runs from mid- May 15 to mid-October. Per person costs for a minimum of 2 persons per flights are based on flight times: 10 min, \$150; 20 min, \$300; and, 45 min \$665 (plus HST). The service also offers custom tours and drop off for bird watching, hiking and kayaking adventures.

Helicopter/seaplane tours would likely appeal to a significant number of visitors to the region. It would also be attractive to the increasing number of cruise ship passengers who visit the area, similar to tours offered on the Canadian West Coast and in Alaska. A helicopter or seaplane tour might be a very appealing complement to visitor service offerings in the region.

- ***Research the market potential of offering helicopter/seaplane tours from the Humber-Bay of Islands region.***
- ***Attract a tour operator to be based in the region.***
- ***Work with TCII and DMO to identify and test market ready visitor experience packages for the region.***

Celebrating Heritage and Culture

The Humber-Bay of Islands region has significant elements of heritage and culture to celebrate and to use as the basis for experiential tourism offerings. The region is the home to about 40% of the members of the Qalipu First Nation representing the heritage and culture of the people that first inhabited the land. With regard to European settlement, from the Treaty of Versailles in 1783 until the early 1900's the region was part of the French Shore with fishing rights reserved for French fishermen. It was surveyed by Captain James Cook prior to his great voyages to the Pacific. It was and is the home to active fishing communities. It is the site of Newfoundland's only remaining pulp and paper mill and the logging industry and culture which surrounds it.

Several current strategies of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador recognise the importance of culture and heritage to people and communities of the province, to the economy and to the tourism product. "*The Way Forward Cultural Action Plan 2019* captures the breadth of culture and heritage and identifies its importance to the tourism product: "Culture captures the unique essence of Newfoundland and Labrador and is expressed and celebrated in our art, literature, music, traditions and built heritage, languages, food oral histories, and story-telling". *The Action Plan* highlights the Province's recognition of arts and heritage resources as a significant economic driver and stated Government's commitment to continue its core support to protect, develop, promote, and celebrate it, including support for cultural initiatives.

The *Crafting our Future: Craft Industry Strategy 2018-2022* estimates total craft industry sales to be worth \$36M, with tremendous opportunities to grow its value. A key action is to develop tourism offerings to visitors with a focus on developing and delivering workshops.

The first and primary focus of *The Way Forward: 2017-20 Provincial Tourism Product Development Plan* (PTPD) is people and program-based brand experiences that engage visitors with locals, including through cultural activities, food, music, theatre, stories and crafts. The plan recognizes the opportunity for tourism growth in telling the Newfoundland and Labrador story directly and effectively to visitors through high quality tourism experiences that celebrate people, place, and culture. The PTDP has developed several actions to meet this need, including identifying gaps and opportunities, providing tools for tourism suppliers such as market-readiness and mentoring tools, providing support, promotion, collaboration linkages and other partnerships.

Specific to Western Newfoundland, the *Tourism Destination Visitor Appeal Appraisal Western Region* (2015) states: "Developing the untold stories of the Western region into new visitor experiences could serve the Western region well in driving niche markets into smaller communities along the coast." The report recommends engaging the expertise of HNL, Gros Morne Institute for Sustainable Tourism (GMIST), Bonavista Institute for Cultural Tourism (BICT) and other operators to assist with building experiences around the diverse and unique stories throughout the region, including the Qalipu First Nation, and other European influences, as these experiences will greatly enhance the competitiveness and appeal of each part of the region.

This strategic plan focuses on Indigenous tourism visual and performing arts and four seasons of festivals.

11. Indigenous Tourism

Indigenous tourism has been the fastest growing tourism sector in Canada over the last four years and has grown by over 10% in NL. The Humber-Bay of Islands region is home to roughly half (10,000) of the members of the Qalipu Nation. The Qalipu are very active in the development of the tourism product island wide but specifically in the Bay of Islands. A separate wing of the organization, Experience Qalipu, is focused on tourism product development. A summary of Qalipu tourism initiatives and plans is included in Appendix B.

Tourism Destination Visitor Appeal Appraisal: Western Region (2015) recognizes Qalipu as offering an opportunity to tell the unique story of the Western region. The Province is supporting development of Indigenous Cultural Heritage through its many strategies, including *The Way Forward Cultural Action Plan 2019* and *The Way Forward: 2017-20 Provincial Tourism Product Development Plan*. Under the Atlantic Growth Strategy, the Provincial government will collaborate with the Government of Canada and the Maritimes to support Indigenous tourism product development initiatives and will provide various kinds of support to Indigenous stakeholders and operators.

While all of the tourism initiatives to be undertaken by the Qalipu will have a positive impact on the region, they have identified one particular area for joint action. The Qalipu, through the Qalipu Cultural Foundation would be willing to participate in visitor experiences that celebrate non-Indigenous and Indigenous crafts, in on-the-ground craft/art sales, and craft making visitor experiences in cooperation with the Rotary Art Centre, Grenfell College of Fine Arts and other local arts and crafts providers. This could include establishing a cooperative arrangement between the Working Committee/Task Force and Experience Qalipu on the development and marketing of authentic Indigenous visitor experiences and cuisine. The Working Committee/Task Force could also support the Qalipu Cultural Foundation working with local arts and crafts providers to support the preservation and promotion of Qalipu culture and heritage, to support the arts in general and to cooperatively celebrate the art and crafts industry.

- ***The Working Committee/Task Force should work cooperatively with the Qalipu to develop Indigenous and non-Indigenous visitor experience particularly in arts and crafts and in cuisine.***

12. Visual and Performing Arts

The region has great resources in the visual and performing arts. These resources include artists, the programming and facilities of Grenfell Campus, Theatre Newfoundland and Labrador, the Rotary Centre for the Arts, and many amazing venues throughout the region.

Performing Arts, such as The Gros Morne Theatre Festival and The Garrick Summer Series in Bonavista, have become a significant element in the tourism product for the province. The Garrick Summer Series features films, musical performances, and theatrical performances as well as featuring art, literature, food, tours, and historical lectures and discussions to “enlighten and entertain”. In the Humber-Bay of Islands region the Gros Morne Summer Music hosts performances by local musicians throughout the year and is recognized as a festival of national acclaim.

Tourism Destination Visitor Appeal Appraisal: Western Region (2015) reported that the performing arts/theatre scene is growing and benefiting the region. Some companies are currently taking advantage of the natural landscapes to create interesting backdrops for a variety of new performances. Further it recommends that “efforts should be made to foster and further support this development as it is a unique, memorable and a differentiating aspect of theatre and performing arts. It can also have the benefit of end of day programming, which increases the need for overnight stays, meals and shopping”.

The Way Forward: 2017-20 Provincial Tourism Product Development Plan recognizes that focusing experience development goals on craft and arts has the potential to increase visitor spending and economic benefit to communities. It states “The number of people in Newfoundland and Labrador with exceptional craft and arts talent provides extensive opportunities to build diverse and differentiated people and program-based experiences that embody the provincial tourism brand of people, place and culture. There are opportunities for bringing craft and arts experience providers into partnerships with existing tourism attractions, activities and operations. There are other opportunities where craftspeople and artists have their own businesses and can package a tourism experience as a new revenue stream. The critical element is developing these experiences to be reflective of visitors’ needs, expectations and values through market-readiness guidelines.”

Industry experts note that the number of unique artists and craftspeople in the region provide a tremendous opportunity to host workshops. Tourism hot spots in the province are leading the way and include Bonavista, Twillingate, and Gros Morne. At the Gros Morne National Park - Fibre Arts Newfoundland and Labrador Conference held in October 2015, instructors came from all over the world to participate in a celebration of the versatility of fibre. In 2020, the Bonavista Peninsula will host Craft @ The Edge: A Handmade Future, with local and international producers offering hands-on workshops, lectures, discussion panels, industry development seminars, makers’ exhibitions and more.

The Humber-Bay of Islands region has the opportunity to further integrate the region’s resource base in visual and performing arts into the overall visitor experience. This would involve developing opportunities to display visual arts throughout the region, offering experiential opportunities such as arts and cultural workshops and classes, and increasing the frequency of performing arts events.

- ***Develop specific initiatives to further integrate visual and performing arts into the regional visitor experience.***

13. Four Seasons of Festivals

Festivals are great ways to attract visitors to lesser known venues in the region and to attract visitors in the normal off-season. There are a number of longstanding festivals in the region and there is experience organizing and implementing major “one-off” festivals.

The Province recognizes that several existing festivals and events are travel demand generators and can have significant economic impact. The region hosts festivals and events of both provincial acclaim (Humber Valley Triathlon (Pasadena), Corner Brook Winter Carnival, and Festival 500 Sharing the Voices – Corner Brook) while on the Great Northern Peninsula the Gros Morne Summer Festival, Writers at Woody Point, and Trails, Tales and Tunes in Norris Point have national acclaim.

A focus of *The Way Forward: 2017-20 Provincial Tourism Product Development Plan* is to enhance the sustainability and experience development of festivals and events. The key to developing this initiative is to identify travel demand generating festivals in the region and to strengthen financial and human resource capacity, infrastructure, experiences, market-readiness, and partnerships.

- ***Form a regional festival working group for the Task Force to organize and promote current festivals and to identify and launch new festivals at strategic times and/or locations.***

Accessing the Tourism Potential of the Bay of Islands

International tourism consultant Roger Brooks said that the scenic drive along the south shore of the Bay of Islands was worth the trip to Newfoundland all by itself. The north shore drive has similarly spectacular scenery and both sides of the bay have historic and still working fishing communities, trails, and lookouts.

However, the Regional Tourism Asset Inventory documented a low level of tourism products in the towns on both sides of the Bay of Islands. There is no iconic attraction at the end of the road and few tourism enterprises, including accommodations and food providers, to translate visitation into economic activity. The second issue, which was very strongly presented by residents and tourism industry operators in the stakeholder sessions, is that there is an overall deficit in basic traveller services.

The strategic recommendations presented below address the issues of sub-standard roads: the lack of basic amenities; the need to help visitors find and navigate the area; the need to develop an iconic attraction at the end of the road; and the potential to develop the marine and fishing assets.

14. Road Improvement

While road improvement is outside the purview of the Task Force, it can still play a role in assisting towns to prioritize areas requiring road renewal and can lobby Government to include those areas in its annual capital construction plans.

- ***Develop a priority plan for road improvement and lobby provincial government.***

15. Basic Amenities (Tea and Pee)

The lack of washroom facilities and food establishments is a negative factor for promotion of visitation in subregions. The objective in the long term is to establish tourism enterprises that address this need in conjunction with other tourism products. However, there is an immediate need to provide these essential services in the short term.

Each community has a municipal building, and there are service organizations and churches with accessible washrooms and kitchen facilities. There is potential to use some of these facilities to ensure washroom access is available in all communities and to provide a food option in those communities without an active restaurant.

- ***Develop a model to ensure washroom access and food availability in all communities.***

16. Signage and Wayfinding

During the preparation of this plan, the requirement for better signage was repeatedly recognized as a key product development need for the region. Corner Brook and the entire study area needs a comprehensive signage and wayfinding system to effectively direct visitors to key visitor hubs and tourism assets throughout the study area. We need to create a “sense of arrival” for the visitor, to create a sense of welcome and belonging. The signage and wayfinding system are a key part of the visitor experience and must promote the area’s destination brand while directing visitors to assets and services. For this reason, the region needs an integrated signage and wayfinding system that goes beyond signage and integrates with the regions varied media including website and social media channels.

- ***Design and implement an integrated signage and wayfinding system that goes beyond signage and integrates with the regions varied media including website and social media channels.***

17. Bay of Islands Driving Tour

The Bay of Islands Driving Tour will introduce our guests to the area communities, assets and spectacular “Big Nature” of the Bay of Islands. This project should be undertaken in two phases. The initial phase would include an assessment of the current physical quality of the road surface, the location of signage, lookouts, parking areas, key community TAP compliant assets and services, and links to short hikes to designated points of interest viewing areas, waterfalls, natural swimming holes and geological sites. The second phase would be to enhance the visitor experience by creating a virtual guided tour utilizing audio/radio and GPS waypoint technology.

- ***Design and implement the Bay of Islands Driving Tour.***

18. GeoPark

UNESCO Global GeoParks are single, unified geographical areas where sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education, and sustainable development. They use geological heritage in connection with all other aspects of the area’s natural and cultural heritage to enhance awareness and understanding of key issues facing society, such as using our earth’s resources sustainably, mitigating the effects of climate change, and reducing natural disasters-related risks. UNESCO’s bottom-up approach of combining conservation with sustainable development while involving local communities is becoming increasingly popular.

At present, there are 147 UNESCO Global GeoParks in 41 countries of which there are just three in Canada – Tumbler Ridge, British Columbia; Stonehammer, New Brunswick; and Perce, Quebec. In this province, work has been underway for some time to achieve UNESCO Global GeoPark designation for the Bonavista Peninsula.

The Cabox Aspiring GeoPark group has prepared a Letter of Intent, which is a substantial and detailed document that describes the rationale for the area in the outer Bay of Islands including Cabox Mountain being designated a Global GeoPark. The submission was prepared in May 2016 but

has not yet been submitted to UNESCO. However, the Cabox Aspiring GeoPark Chairperson, Paul Wylezol, has been very active in attending varied GeoPark events, and has the support of the International Appalachian Trail, other international GeoPark organizations, and the local Outer Bay of Islands Enhancement Committee.

The Saltbox Restaurant in Benoit's Cove is home to the Cabox GeoPark Information Centre; Everoutdoor Adventures offers zodiac tours to the GeoPark sites visible only from the ocean. As well, they have hired hiking guides and have developed a hiking guide training manual to support interpretation of GeoPark hiking tours. The tours will highlight the key geological assets in the proposed GeoPark area. To date customer feedback has been very positive. Trail heads for the hiking tours are located in Benoit's Cove, York and Lark Harbour. Other sites are located in the Cox's Cove area.

The GeoPark would be good for the region. It will add to its visitor appeal and would thematically link the area to GMNP. It is proposed that the Working Committee join the Joint Councils in supporting the existing GeoPark committee continue with efforts to have the area gain UNESCO designation.

The Towns of York Harbour and Lark Harbour are at the end of the proposed Southside Bay of Islands driving tour while Cox's Cove is at the end of the northside driving tour. These communities are regularly visited by bus tours and cruise ship visitors and have distinct assets beyond geology such as Bottle Cove in Lark Harbour and the picturesque harbour and water falls in Cox's Cove. Lark and York Harbour are seeing many visitors each season who are taking advantage of the great hiking and scenery of the Blow Me Down Mountains.

In the context of the GeoPark UNESCO requirements, the Towns of York and Lark Harbour, Humber Arm South and Cox's Cove should be the focus of product development plans to support the GeoPark, managing existing and attracting new visitors. This would create a unique attraction base at each end of the Bay of Islands drive.

- ***Rebrand the aspiring Cabox GeoPark as the "Bay of Islands Cabox GeoPark" to be consistent with future regional tourism branding.***
- ***Support efforts to gain UNESCO designation for the GeoPark.***
- ***Develop GeoPark based tourism products in York Harbour, Lark Harbour, Humber Arm South and Cox's Cove as the unique attraction base at each end of the Bay of Islands drive.***

19. Marine and Fishing Adventures

The Bay of Islands and the Lower Humber River present an immense opportunity to provide visitors with a diversity of marine and fishing adventures.

The large protected body of water in the three arms of the Bay of Islands provide an ideal setting for almost every possible type of marine experience available in the province. There are isolated islands and former communities to explore, great scenery and wildlife (seabirds and whales) to see and photograph, and ocean kayaking areas suitable for beginners and for experienced off-the-grid adventurers. There are a number of active fishing communities where the potential exists to observe and participate in traditional and modern fishing activities. There are many areas which are prime fishing grounds for cod, mackerel and other species and wharves for kids to catch cunners. There is opportunity to weave these experiences together with picnics, campfires and stories of the area.

The area is home to the Bay of Islands Yacht Club in Curling and a smaller marina across the Bay in Irishtown-Summerside.

The Lower Humber River is both a very scenic area and an historic salmon river which continues to produce trophy fish for anglers. In this area, the river is wide and accessible with many productive pools. The Lower Humber receives an annual run of some 20,000 – 30,000 salmon that have spent upwards of two years at sea and are thus fully mature and of good size when they return to the river. The best fishing on the Lower Humber typically starts in mid-July making this river section one of the latest to peak in the system. Fish 30 to 60 inches are common in the Lower Humber from July 15th to late September. These Atlantic salmon giants combined with big water can test an angler and his equipment.

➤ ***Promote marine and fishing adventures in the Bay of Islands and angling on the Lower Humber River.***

Cod Fishing Boat Tour:

This deep-sea fishing tour is a must. Our licensed guide(s) will take you to the fishing grounds (especially during the recreational cod fishery) where you can catch cod, ocean perch, flounder, mackerel and squid and have them filleted before your eyes!

[Four Seasons Tours, Cox's Cove](#)

The Corner Brook “Base Camp” Experience

In 2017, international tourism consultant, Roger Brooks, was engaged to undertake an assessment of the tourism potential of the City of Corner Brook. Mr. Brooks was very much impressed by the region around Corner Brook extending into Gros Morne National Park. His conclusion in general terms was that Corner Brook is positioned adjacent to “some of the most iconic destinations in Atlantic Canada”. Further, Corner Brook is “easily positioned to be the provisioning headquarters for Western Newfoundland, as well as visitors’ base camp. Is there anything someone couldn’t get here in Corner Brook? Probably not. Tap into that potential, encourage visitors to make Corner Brook their headquarters and give them more shops, entertainment, and restaurants with a local flare to entice them to stay.”

The outcomes from tourism research which support this strategy include: i) shopping, dining, and entertainment accounts for 80% of non-lodging visitor spending; and ii) 70% of all consumer spending takes place after 6 pm.

The Brooks Report identified a number of initiatives which could be undertaken to position Corner Brook to take full advantage of the tourism industry throughout the western region. The five following initiatives have been selected from the Brooks Report for inclusion in the STAR Plan based upon feedback garnered in the planning process.

20. Wayfinding (in City of Corner Brook)

For a small urban area, Corner Brook is quite difficult to actually drive/walk around to find dining, shopping and entertainment. This is partly due to the way that the City has grown over time with multiple shopping and industrial areas, as well as the geography of the town which has resulted in residential, industrial and service development extending from the original downtown up the steep slopes of the river valley.

Currently the City enjoys two key urban areas: Broadway and West Street. Both need to be better programmed to support the visitor. Getting visitors into the City core is a challenge that starts with the need for better signage at the TCH entrances to the City. What is also needed are defined routes to visitor parking in the downtown, defined access to visitor facilities such as parks and trails, and the availability of information regarding entertainment and events.

Regarding Wayfinding in Corner Brook, Roger Brooks “Assessment Findings and Suggestions Report” 2017 states that: “As we drove into Corner Brook, we saw the welcome (to Corner Brook) sign. It is attractive and in a good location. . . Finding our way around Corner Brook was a real challenge. The many winding roads, complex intersections, waterways, and one-way streets made driving in the City difficult. In addition, there is very little wayfinding.”

Mr. Brooks’ bottom line regarding wayfinding in Corner Brook was: “It was very hard for us to find places in Corner Brook to spend time and money. Creating a comprehensive wayfinding system for Corner Brook would help solve that problem. It should be your number one priority. Not only would it help direct people, it would inform visitors and residents of what you have to offer.”

It is recommended to develop a comprehensive wayfinding system for Corner Brook that makes it easy for visitors (and residents) to spend time and money. This wayfinding system should include signage (on-site promotional, off-site promotional, directional, interpretive signs), banners, visitor information kiosks, printed and digital information, mobile friendly website or app, links to social media. This system will assure visitors that they are on the right route and that information on car-based navigation systems (such as Google maps) is correct.

The City might consider developing a comprehensive wayfinding process. This process would begin with a review of the *City of Corner Brook - Downtown Development Association, Downtown Signage and Wayfinding Plan, Concept Design* (2017). This report includes an assessment of existing directional signs, an overview of how visitors get downtown, concept designs for a family of “identity-building” signs for the downtown core, general locations and placements signs, and digital wayfinding case studies and suggestions.

- ***Develop a comprehensive wayfinding system for Corner Brook.***

21. Promote Anchor Tenants

Anchor Tenants are the attractions, shops, activities and restaurants which a visitor will drive out of their way to go to. These anchor tenants need to be promoted. By increasing their visitation there will also be a spin-off impact on other attractions and enterprises.

Brooks suggested creating a brochure (paper and electronic) about the “Very Best of Corner Brook” and include attractions and enterprises throughout the Humber-Bay of Islands region. He noted that “A “Best Of” guide can have a dramatic impact on visitor spending. Visitors don’t just want lists—they want to know specifics. They want to know where YOU, a local, would go. The beauty of a “Very Best Of” brochure is that it really entices people to come for the anchor tenants, and while in the area, they’ll also go into other shops, restaurants, and attractions. It’s important that the brochure NOT look like a bunch of ads.”

With regard to the format of the brochure, he recommended “Use an advertorial format; include lots of photos with specific, descriptive text. Market your best: Restaurants (6); Retail shops and galleries (6); Activities & attractions (12) within a 25-minute drive or less of Corner Brook.”

Participation in this “Very Best” brochure would be vetted to ensure that those included meet a high standard. It is very strong advertising so participants would be expected to pay a fee.

- ***Develop a “Very Best of Corner Brook” brochure (paper and electronic).***

SAMPLE CRITERIA

- MUST HAVE GOOD CURB APPEAL
- MUST BE OPEN YEAR ROUND
- MUST BE OPEN UNTIL AT LEAST 7PM
- MUST BE OPEN SIX DAYS A WEEK
- MUST BE UNIQUE TO THE AREA (NO CHAINS)
- MUST BE HIGHLY REGARDED (80%+ POSITIVE REVIEWS)

Assessment Findings and Suggestions Report, Brooks, 2017

22. Enhance Curb Appeal

Curb appeal is the attractiveness of an enterprise's exterior when viewed from the street. It forms potential buyers' first impressions of your business, and more often than not, someone's decision to walk into a store hinges greatly on how it looks from the outside. Curb appeal can account for 70% of first-time sales. This is why improving your curb appeal to be more inviting and aesthetically pleasing is so important.

Measures which can be taken to enhance curb appeal include:

- **Creative window displays.** Use window displays to provide a glimpse into your store and your product offerings and entice prospective customers to check you out.
- **Parking.** Depending on the location of your business, adequate parking facilities can have a huge impact on its overall curb appeal. If you do provide private parking, make sure that your lot is clear of debris and in good shape, which includes fixing the pavement and having clearly marked parking lines.
- **Building maintenance.** Every part of your brick-and-mortar store should look clean, new, and cared for. No one wants to walk into a store with dusty windows or peeling paint, so stay on top of general maintenance tasks.
- **Outside displays.** Show off a few of your products on the sidewalk in front of your building. A product that people can interact with often gets them to stop and check out what you have for sale. You might also display clearance items. Be sure to keep the area safe, not one that hinders foot traffic or creates a tripping hazard.
- **Signage.** Make sure the sign on your building is large, easy to read and easy to spot for potential customers. If your shop's name doesn't spell out what you sell, provide a graphic or some other clear indicator of the types of products or services you offer. Consider blade signs which can be seen from a distance.
- **Landscape.** If you have areas in front of your business that look plain or dull, add a few benches, potted plants, flowers or shrubs. They will add a fresh, new look to the front of your business.

Tourism in Corner Brook would be enhanced by providing information and training for enterprises regarding simple and largely inexpensive beautification to make their businesses more attractive.

➤ *Develop a program to encourage enterprises to “enhance curb appeal”.*

23. Revitalize Downtown

A vibrant downtown is critically important to economic development, tourism and community development.

The downtown in Corner Brook is essentially Broadway, West Street and the area in between which includes two shopping malls. The streets and the malls have all experienced significant decline over the past few decades although there are now some signs of renewal with the completion of the new city hall, construction of a new hotel on West Street, and new brew pubs. The proposed addition of a new aboriginal themed space at the end of West Street would also create an opportunity for a variety of visitor related activities.

The Brooks Report had high praise for the Corner Brook Stream Trail System, which is linked into the downtown, suggesting that: “. . . the trail system was Corner Brook’s signature attraction. It was gorgeous, and we had an opportunity to mix with the locals who also enjoy the trails. The interpretive signage along the trails is fantastic. Very well done, and we can’t praise this trail system more highly. It makes Corner Brook worth spending the night for.”

Brooks goes on to suggest that: “In economic development, tourism, and community development there is absolutely, positively NOTHING that is more important than your downtown.” He also suggests that “downtowns are critical to your success and that downtowns are the heart and soul of a community. If residents don’t hang out in the downtown neither will visitors.” And he suggests giving consideration to “turn your downtown malls into year-round public spaces.”

To provide an example of the gaps that need to be filled in the prime urban downtown area of Corner Brook, West Street, the Brooks Report suggests that the following is needed to realize the tourism based economic development potential of the street, and support the “Base Camp” concept:

- Five restaurants with outdoor seating.
- Toy store.
- Island Treasures.
- Two galleries and gift shops (with real NL art).
- Micro-brewery.
- Casual clothing store (logo gear).
- Outfitter (with rental gear).

There is a need to develop a long-term plan for Corner Brook downtown which would incorporate best practices from other cities towards revitalizing the streets, repurposing the existing malls and attracting new business.

➤ ***Develop a long-term plan for revitalization of the Corner Brook Downtown.***

24. Enhance the Cruise Ship Experience

Corner Brook is the primary port of call for cruise ships in the Western region. According to the Cruise Newfoundland and Labrador website cruise schedule, 20 cruise ships are scheduled to visit Corner Brook in 2019, with an estimated 34,785 visitors and 13,972 crew.

The City of Corner Brook's Downtown Events Planning Committee and the Corner Brook Port Corporation undertook a stakeholder session with regional participants in 2015. This resulting report, *Confidential Report - Cruise in Corner Brook: Maximizing Opportunities* (2015) highlights four priority actions:

- Priority Action #1: Create the Wow Experience for Cruise Guests in Corner Brook.
- Priority Action #2: Make it easy for guests to experience Downtown Corner Brook.
- Priority Action #3: Provide training for the front line.
- Priority Action #4: Establish a cruise stakeholder group and leadership for the group.

Actions and recommendations identified in the Report to realize the priorities include:

- Make it easy for guests to navigate downtown Corner Brook.
- Create a hub for the downtown in front of City Hall and then direct guests on exploring outward from there.
- Continue to have greeters offering assistance to guests to ensure their experience is excellent, and to maximize opportunities from cruise ship visitors in the downtown.
- Continue to shuttle cruise visitors to City Hall.
- Continue to have greeters giving out visitor information, offering assistance to guests and tables for local vendors.
- Improve directional signage for visitors throughout downtown Corner Brook.
- Provide a customized cruise visitor map identifying shopping areas, key attractions, where their ship is located, where the shuttle drop off is located, and other important information.
- Leverage existing training programs and opportunities.

Additional action items include:

- Further beautification of the community.
- Infrastructure maintenance.
- Notification of cruise ship's schedule to outlying communities.

Excursions from these ships currently fall into three categories – full day tours into Gros Morne National Park, shorter tours/visits to attractions within the Humber-Bay of Islands region and free time exploration in the City. During STAR Plan consultations there was concern expressed regarding the consistent quality of these excursions and whether the full range of potential excursions were being offered. Ideas which were raised included training for tour guides and prepared tour notes.

The idea of the following recommendation is to: i) assess the current state of these experiences for cruises; ii) review best practices from other locations; iii) identify ways which current excursions might be improved; and iv) identify additional excursion packages which might be offered; combining tours of the outer bay with a visit to an attraction in the Lower Humber or shopping in the City and introducing new packages such as flying tours of the region and the GeoPark.

- ***Develop a comprehensive plan for enhancing the experience of cruise ship visitors to the City/region.***

Lower Humber Playground for all Ages

The Humber-Bay of Islands region is positioned to offer incredible “Big Nature” experiences. Within the region the Lower Humber area is a special place.

In the early 20th century, the potential for salmon fishing in the area was recognized and owners of the Bowater Pulp and Paper Mill located its showpiece resort and fishing lodge at Strawberry Hill. In the middle of the century, the province’s leading downhill ski area was developed at Marble Mountain. At the end of the century, an innovative new concept of luxury chalets and a nationally ranked golf course were built on the lower north shore of Deer Lake.

In recent years, each of these facilities has had to adapt to significant changes in their operating environment. However, they remain significant tourism assets and have been the anchor for development of a unique mix of tourism products which position the Lower Humber area to become Newfoundland and Labrador’s “playground for all ages”.



25. Support for Marble Mountain

According to “Intrepid Travel Top 10 Tourism Trends 2018”, winter will become the new peak season. Of increasing interest are winter festivals and holidays, northern lights and winter events.

Tourism Destination Visitor Appeal Appraisal: Western Region (2015) suggested that “.... Marble Mountain strengthens the case for further developing the winter season invitation to both the resident and non-resident markets. Recent investments at Marble Mountain such as the \$4.5M Lightning Express chairlift along with the recently completed (March 2014) Marble Mountain Comprehensive Base Area Master Plan and Development Strategy, for example, add to the opportunity to grow winter tourism.the trail networks accessed by hikers in summer can also be easily accessed in the winter on snowshoes or cross-country skis.”

The report further suggests the need to:

- Complete a winter tourism Economic Impact Study to benchmark current impacts and then repeat every 5 years to monitor results.
- Review the recently completed “Marble Mountain Comprehensive Base Area Master Plan and Development Strategy” and work together to evaluate its merits against the opportunity to increase winter tourism.
- Establish a theme around which all winter activities along the west coast can be used for specific promotional campaigns moving forward.
- Develop a promotional strategy that targets winter enthusiasts and considers a “Celebrate Winter” positioning for the Western region. Efforts should focus on promoting the snowmobiling, downhill and cross-country skiing opportunities.”

The *2019 International Report on Snow & Mountain Tourism, Overview of the key industry figures for ski resorts* suggests that globally, 2018/19 was the 4th best ski season on record. But in Canada, “Due to the ongoing stagnation of attendance . . . Several operators have also diversified their activities and some of the major resorts now offer numerous summer activities that enable them to balance out visits for both seasons. The idea of a year-round resort has been highly developed and promoted. Some resorts near metropolitan areas have developed water rides and other summer activities, which even allow them to use some of the lifts during the summer, as well as to sell year-round passes.”

The Roger Brooks “Assessment Findings and Suggestions Report” 2017 recognized the opportunity Marble Mountain presents for the Humber-Bay of Islands region and supports its development as a four-season attraction. As per the emerging Canadian trends of making ski resorts year-round amenities he suggests, “Consider operating a ski lift during the off-ski-season for visitors to go up the mountain and enjoy the views. It is a beautiful lodge, and a great facility, with excellent customer reviews. What a terrific asset for the area! . . . Consider running your ski lifts in the summer so that visitors can go up the mountain for the view and for mountain biking. Many other ski resorts do this, including Whistler Resort in BC.” According to Brooks, “Whistler Resort does more business in the summer than in the winter. Work to extend your seasons from April through October at least. Some ski resorts will allow concessionaires to operate a few ski lifts in the summer and rent mountain bikes to visitors. Sometimes adding this summer season helps spur the ski resort to greater success, even in the winter.”

In summary, there is an opportunity to enhance Marble Mountain’s position as a winter tourism attraction and perhaps an even greater potential to take advantage of its natural assets to become a four seasons attraction.

➤ **Support investment at Marble Mountain as a significant four- season visitor asset.**

26. Playground for all Ages

The Lower Humber has a high number of luxury and mid-level accommodations along with a wide range of tourism products. These products include the Marble Mountain Ski Resort, the Humber Valley Golf Resort, and various family-oriented adventure experiences. These experiences include fishing, river rafting, kayaking, zip lining, obstacle courses and mountain hiking. This is a unique tourism product offering for Western Newfoundland and indeed the entire province which could be developed into a “playground for all ages”. Becoming this “playground for all ages” will require a critical mass of tourism products selected to cover the four seasons in keeping with the overall vision.

The idea of creating a “playground for all ages” in the Lower Humber is not completely new. The *2014 Marble Mountain Resort Comprehensive Base Area Master Plan and Development Strategy* prepared by Ecosign Mountain Resort Planners Ltd. proposed to establish an Adventure Zone and Pond Activity Zone to create an area for the development of additional recreation facilities and activities. Ideas for the Marble Mountain area identified in that study are shown in the following table:

Winter Season	Summer/Shoulder Season
• Alpine Skiing • Snow Tubing • Snowmobile Tours • Dog Sledding • Snow Shoeing • Sliding • Snow Play • Skating • Ice Climbing • Outdoor Fire Pit • Zip Line and Ropes Course	• Zip Line and Ropes Course • Hiking • Cycling’ • Pump Track • ATV or Go Kart Track • Skateboard Park • Mini Putt • Disc Golf • Playground • Picnic Area • Outdoor Fire Pit • Archery Range • Euro Bungee • Farmer’s Market • Sightseeing Lift

Other adventures for individuals and families which might be developed in the Lower Humber include:

- Camping - RV campsite, tent campsites or rustic lodge.
- Off-roading - ATV, ROV, 4x4.
- Trail Sports - Nature running (3miles plus), rock climbing and repelling, horseback riding.
- Water Sports - Kayaking, rafting, canoeing, scuba diving, snorkelling, sailing, stand-up paddle boarding, waterskiing, and sea-doo.
- Water Park.
- Wheel Sports - Street bike, off-road.
- Wildlife Viewing.
- Festivals.
- Niche Experiences - Wilderness “sweat” lodge, “meditation” mountain, cannabis tourism, “goat” yoga.

As activities in the Lower Humber “playground for all ages” grows it can be expected to be a distribution centre for visitors taking advantage of visitor experiences in the Bay of Islands, and can readily complement services, food and entertainment available in Corner Brook.

- ***Undertake a product market development study to identify potential new outdoor adventure products which might be offered in the Lower Humber and concurrently how local and/or external entrepreneurs might be attracted.***

Entrepreneurial Support

Tourism as an economic sector is executed through a myriad of private sector entities ranging from small businesses to multi-national corporations. While the Task Force can indeed influence the development of the tourism sector by taking initiatives as described in this document, success will only be possible if current or new entrepreneurs see opportunities and invest their resources into expanding or launching business enterprises.

Corner Brook is blessed with significant capacity to assist entrepreneurs. In addition to government agencies, Grenfell Campus of Memorial University and the Corner Brook Campus of the College of the North Atlantic have established the Navigate Enterprise Centre which is a joint initiative assisting the Corner Brook region by providing entrepreneurship education, one-on-one business start-up support, networking opportunities and business-related resources.

27. Tourism Entrepreneurship Program

While there are substantial local business opportunities for new enterprises in the tourism industry, taking advantage of these opportunities is a challenge. One way of overcoming this challenge is through the development of a vibrant network of new and experienced entrepreneurs, aspiring entrepreneurs, support agencies, and formal/informal means in which people can learn and help one another in the creation of new ventures. Therefore, various mechanisms should be explored to develop such a network, with the specific goal to increase the number of tourism enterprise start-ups and success in the region. A thriving entrepreneurial community must be driven by the entrepreneurs themselves; however, universities and government agencies can provide valuable support in certain capacities. The Navigate Entrepreneurship Centre and Business Incubation Centre along with Dr. Billy Newell of the Grenfell Business Faculty are open to providing support in this initiative where needed. Navigate has played a significant role in the development of a local entrepreneurial community, and Dr. Newell researches and teaches entrepreneurship at Grenfell Campus.

There are many possibilities for the design of mechanisms to help increase the number of local tourism enterprise start-ups. One possibility would be to create a consistent tourism accelerator program aimed at building entrepreneurial and business skills over multiple cohorts of new and experienced entrepreneurs and mentors. Navigate can also provide a means in which alumni of this accelerator can stay connected to the community and help future cohorts.

The key to designing an effective program is to consult with current and aspiring tourism operators to determine the challenges they face, the skills they wish to learn, and which problems a program should help solve. This process would help create a relevant program that would get engagement from the entrepreneurs themselves. Such a four-stage approach would include: 1) consultation with entrepreneurs on program content; 2) design and implementation of a pilot program; 3) modification and delivery of a second iteration of the program; and 4) encourage ongoing communication and cooperation among program participants.

- ***Develop a tourism entrepreneurship development program with the University/College through Navigate.***

Human Resources

During consultations in the Humber-Bay of Islands region, concerns were expressed both related to the source of future labour, training, and skills development for persons currently employed in the industry. There are significant resources in the region and within provincial organizations to address this issue.

28. Preparing for Future Labour Shortages

Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador has identified labour as a major policy issue for the NL tourism industry.

Like many other industries, tourism continues to experience stiff competition for workers amid rising labour shortages. In 2016, Tourism HR Canada and the Conference Board of Canada released the report *Bottom Line: Labour Challenges Threaten Tourism's Growth*, projecting that by 2035, potential labour supply shortages in the tourism sector in Newfoundland and Labrador could reach 15.2%, leaving 3,016 jobs unfilled. Current projections suggest that the tourism sector could potentially support more jobs than workers will be available to fill. This means tourism in Newfoundland and Labrador will experience one of the most acute labour shortages of any province in Canada.

The projected labour shortages in the tourism sector are caused by the rising demand for labour during a period when the Newfoundland and Labrador labour force is expected to experience a sizable shift in its growth and composition. Traditionally, the tourism sector has relied heavily on young people as a source of labour. However, the rate at which young people are entering the labour force is decreasing, while competition to attract young workers is intensifying from other sectors of the economy.

It is important that the region be aware of the implications of these changes in the labour force and prepare plans to meet the challenge.

- ***Undertake an assessment of future labour force needs for the tourism industry in the region and potential actions which might be taken.***

29. Assessment of Training Needs

During the consultations, various areas from basic front-line interpersonal skills to online technical skills to management education were identified as being required in the regional tourism industry. However, there was no measure of the numbers of personnel requiring training; neither was there consensus regarding the priority of various training options.

Nevertheless, the consultants identified specific training requirements in the region based on the findings and recommendations of this study. Tourism training in the region should focus on customer service training, visitor experience development, and community capacity building.

Customer service training should include a super host program that can be offered for front line service staff.

Visitor experience development should include training in how to develop packages and itineraries; how to develop programs for cruise ship visits; how to implement artisans and crafts into the tourism product; and how to organize and manage events. Training should also be provided in online technology specific to the tourism industry and in facilitating strategic tourism partnership networking.

Community Capacity Building: The STAR Plan and its recommendations should be presented to the individual municipal Councils of the region. Their continual engagement and support are necessary as they have a critical role to play in the development of the regional tourism product. Training should be provided to support planning visitor friendly communities, and to raise their awareness of the social, economic and environmental impacts of tourism. Given the impact the proposed UNESCO GeoPark can have on the region, municipalities should also be offered an information session regarding the GeoPark development process, so that they have a clear understanding of their role and the potential benefits Geopark status brings to communities in the region.

The training needs described above were agreed in a teleconference meeting on September 16, 2019 with the client, Working Committee Co-Chairs, Tourism Atlantic, ACOA and TCII. It is recognized that tourism operators also must to be consulted to confirm any additional training needs they require.

- ***Undertake a survey of tourism operators in the region to document a full inventory of current and future training needs.***

Regional Marketing

The role of the Working Committee/Task Force in regional tourism marketing for the Humber-Bay of Islands is a complex issue. The challenge is in how to promote the region and local tourism providers within the context of the marketing strategies and activities of Tourism NL for the full province, and of the destination marketing office (Go Western) for western Newfoundland. Added to this is the marketing activities of Gros Morne National Park and the activities of various independent interest groups within Humber-Bay of Islands.

Therefore, it is proposed that Working Committee/Task Force efforts can be best directed in three general areas:

- Developing a brand identity to distinguish the Humber-Bay of Islands region.
- Building partnerships and cooperation with other organizations such as:
 - Leveraging the muscle of Tourism NL proven ability to reach national and international travelers.
 - Linking and taking advantage of the expertise of Go Western, the destination marketing office for Western Newfoundland.
 - Integrating but distinguishing regional tourism marketing with Gros Morne National Park.
 - Positioning the marketing efforts of the City, the Qalipu, and the other municipalities within a regional context.
- Focusing specific Humber-Bay of Islands regional marketing efforts online.

30. Branding

A destination, or place brand, is your promise. It celebrates the distinct qualities of place that differentiates and celebrates why the Humber-Bay of Islands is a special place offering memorable and accessible experiences to the visitor. At the center of place branding is the formulation of a visitor experience concept, in other words, the place experience visitors can expect. It is important that the essence of the brand matches the values of the audience you are trying to attract, referred to as brand positioning. The values are reflected and are translated into brand guidelines that inform place brand imagery. Successful place brand imagery links the brand to the visitor experience concept. Ideally, as the brand is developed visitors have access to a variety of experience options (itineraries) and can pick and choose to co-create a personal experience (package). So, it is important that we match our brand values, to the values of our target markets.

To implement the destination brand we cannot rely on imagery and communication alone. It requires the development of the product and the building of place experiences, and consistently projecting the brand requires cooperation among many stakeholders. More and more the role of place marketers also involves product development. The idea is to go beyond projecting the identity of place to making physical changes that enhance the product offering such as the development of attractions, amenities, access and services.

Success can only be realized through a cooperative effort, and often a demonstration project that illustrates experience concepts and brand associations through cultural projects, events or targeted infrastructure projects can enhance cooperation and investment. Consideration might

be given to celebrating existing, or creating new, “landmarks”, visual icons of place that catch the public eye. Place branding through experience icons are worth exploring.

The study area needs a Destination “Place” Brand early in the tourism product development process.

- ***Develop a Destination “Place” Brand.***

31. Regional Tourism Marketing Plan

Development of a regional tourism marketing plan for the Humber-Bay of Islands region would be a key initiative of the Working Committee/Task Force. As outlined in the general discussion on regional marketing, the focus of the plan would be on building partnerships and cooperation with other organizations involved in marketing in the region and developing specific initiatives which would promote the region and local tourism operators online.

Other important elements of the plan would include developing guidelines and strategies for effective use of the regional brand and to best utilize resources identified elsewhere in the STAR Plan related to intercepting tourists at points of entry and throughout the region. The latter would include the initiatives such as those related to signage and wayfinding, curb appeal and promoting anchor tenants.

- ***Develop a regional tourism marketing plan and digital media strategy.***

Summary of Strategic Recommendations and Tactics

Strategy	Tactic	Recommendation	Action Category
Foundation	1 Leadership and Organization	<i>Establish a new tourism action Task Force (Tourism Humber-Bay of Islands).</i>	Organizational Development
		<i>Develop an agreement with the City of Corner Brook to host the Secretariat for the Task Force.</i>	Organizational Development
	2 Sustainable Funding	<i>Facilitate development of the appropriate visitor fee to support initiatives to increase visitation</i>	Organizational Development
	3 Communicate with Industry and Community	<i>Design and implement a proactive communications program for industry and community.</i>	Engagement
	4 Partnership with Government	<i>Engagement sessions with federal, provincial and local government.</i>	Engagement
“Big Nature”	5 Trails Master Plan	<i>Establish Hike Humber-Bay of Islands based upon the Hike Discovery Model.</i>	Organizational Development
	6 Hike Humber-Bay of Islands	<i>Develop a trail master plan for the entire region that highlights different types of trails.</i>	Planning
	7 Mountain Biking	<i>Develop a mountain biking trail development plan to complement the current plan for the City with initial concentration for development on the York Harbour/Lark Harbour region.</i>	Planning
	8 Snowmobiling	<i>Undertake a comprehensive regional snowmobiling product development strategy that identifies product development including better signage, staging areas, mapping, app, etc.</i>	Product Development
	9 ATV Adventures	<i>Expand ATV linkages between the City selected backcountry areas and local towns, with staging areas formalized in the towns.</i>	Infrastructure
	10 Packaged Scenic Tours	<i>Work with TCII and DMO to identify and test market ready visitor experience packages for the region.</i>	Product Development
		<i>Attract a tour operator to be based in the region.</i>	Product Development
		<i>Research the market potential of offering helicopter/seaplane tours from the Humber-Bay of Islands.</i>	Product Development

Strategy	Tactic	Recommendation	Action Category
Heritage and Culture	11 Indigenous Tourism	<i>Work cooperatively with the Qalipu to develop Indigenous and non-Indigenous visitor experience particularly in arts and crafts and in cuisine.</i>	Product Development
	12 Visual and Performing Arts	<i>Develop specific initiatives to further integrate visual and performing arts into the regional visitor experience.</i>	Product Development
	13 Four Seasons of Festivals	<i>Form a regional festival working group for the Task Force to organize and promote current festivals and to identify and launch new festivals at strategic times and/or locations.</i>	Organizational Development
Bay of Islands	14 Road Improvement	<i>Develop a priority plan for road improvement and lobby Provincial government.</i>	Infrastructure
	15 Basic Amenities (Tea and Pee)	<i>Develop a model to ensure washroom access and food availability in all communities.</i>	Planning
	16 Signage and Wayfinding	<i>Design and implement an integrated signage and wayfinding system that goes beyond signage and integrates with the regions varied media, including website and social media channels.</i>	Marketing
	17 Bay of Islands Driving Tour	<i>Design and implement the Bay of Islands Driving Tour.</i>	Product Development
	18 GeoPark	<i>Rebrand the aspiring Cabox GeoPark as the “Bay of Islands Cabox GeoPark” to be consistent with future regional tourism brand.</i>	Marketing
		<i>Support efforts to gain UNESCO designation.</i>	Marketing
		<i>Develop GeoPark based tourism products in York Harbour/Lark Harbour, Humber Arm South and Cox’s Cove as the unique attraction base at each end of the Bay of Islands drive.</i>	Product Development
	19 Marine and Fishing Adventures	<i>Promote marine and fishing adventures in the Bay of Islands and angling on the Lower Humber River.</i>	Marketing

Strategy	Tactic	Recommendation	Action Category
Corner Brook	20 Wayfinding	<i>Develop a comprehensive wayfinding system for Corner Brook.</i>	Marketing
	21 Promote “Anchor Tenants”	<i>Develop a “Very Best of Corner Brook” brochure (paper and electronic).</i>	Marketing
	22 Enhance Curb Appeal	<i>Develop a program to encourage enhance “curb appeal” for enterprises.</i>	Marketing
	23 Revitalize Downtown	<i>Develop a long-term plan for revitalization of the Corner Brook Downtown.</i>	Planning
	24 Enhance the Cruise Ship Experience	<i>Develop a comprehensive plan for enhancing the experience of cruise ship visitors to the City/region.</i>	Planning
Lower Humber Valley	25 Support for Marble Mountain	<i>Support investment at Marble Mountain as a significant four- season visitor asset.</i>	Product Development
	26 Playground for all Ages	<i>Undertake a product market development study to identify potential new products which might be offered in the Lower Humber and concurrently how local and/or external entrepreneurs might be attracted.</i>	Product Development
Program	27 Tourism Entrepreneurship Program	<i>Develop a tourism entrepreneurship development program with the University/College through Navigate.</i>	HR Development
	28 Preparing for Future Labour Shortages	<i>Undertake an assessment of future labour force needs for the tourism industry in the region and potential actions which might be taken.</i>	Research
	29 Assessment of Training Needs	<i>Undertake a survey of tourism operators in the region to document a full inventory of current and future training needs.</i>	HR Development
	30 Branding	<i>Develop a Destination “Place” Brand.</i>	Marketing
	31 Regional Tourism Marketing Plan	<i>Develop a regional tourism marketing plan and digital media strategy.</i>	Marketing

INITIAL STAR WORKPLAN



INITIAL STAR WORKPLAN

As was noted earlier, an indicator of the interest in and potential for development of the tourism sector in Humber-Bay of Islands is in the number and scope of ideas which were generated in the research and consultation components of the STAR planning process. Once these ideas were formulated into strategic recommendations, there was general consensus that while all were worthy initiatives, the Working Committee/Task Force would need to prioritize these recommendations in order to effectively move forward.

Accordingly, at the July 24th meeting of the Working Committee, members were asked to prioritize recommendations based upon their perception of how best to achieve the overall goal and vision for the Humber-Bay of Islands region. These priorities would form the basis of an Initial STAR Workplan which would be prepared with action plans for implementation and costing.

During this discussion, it was agreed that the four recommendations under the Building the Foundation Strategy - *Leadership and Organization, Sustainable Funding, Communicate with Industry and Community and Partnership with Government* – were essential to all other work and collectively identified as a priority and the first action to be undertaken by the Working Committee.

With regard to the remaining twenty-seven program and capacity building recommendations, the Working Committee selected five to be included in the Initial STAR Workplan. These five priority recommendations are:

- Branding.
- Signage and Wayfinding.
- Packaged Scenic Tours.
- GeoPark.
- Regional Tourism Marketing Plan.

An Action Plan is proposed for each of the priorities included in the Initial STAR Workplan. For three of the Foundation Strategy recommendations, it is appropriate for the Working Committee/Task Force to take on the work outlined in the Action Plans. In all other cases, it is strongly suggested that the Task Force establish Action Committees of 3-4 qualified individuals from among stakeholders. These Action Committees should be chaired by a member of the Task Force to ensure continuity and communications.

Section A - Foundation Priorities

1. Leadership and Organization Action Plan

The STAR Plan Recommendation #1 is:

- ***Establish a new tourism action Task Force (Tourism Humber-Bay of Islands) to lead implementation of the STAR Plan.***
- ***Develop an agreement with the City of Corner Brook to host the Secretariat which will provide administrative support for the Task Force.***

The existing Working Committee should take on primary responsibility for establishing the Tourism Humber-Bay of Islands Task Force with the objective of having it operational by January 2020.

The Action Plan is proposed as follows:

- a. Establish a Terms of Reference for Tourism Humber-Bay of Islands
The key parameters, arising from the STAR planning process to be incorporated into the Terms of Reference are that the Task Force should: have responsibility for facilitating implementation of the STAR Plan; be led by private industry with support from other stakeholders; be a new organization but have Secretariat support from an existing organization, preferably the City of Corner Brook. A proposed Terms of Reference for the Task Force is outlined in Appendix D.
- b. Develop a Secretariat Agreement with the City of Corner Brook
The initial task would be for the Working Committee to engage the City into general discussions regarding role of the Secretariat and potential implications for the City related to provision of resources such as space and general administrative support. Once a general understanding has been reached then a formal agreement would need to detail the respective responsibility and authority of the Task Force and of the City. The general principle for starting discussions should be that hosting the Secretariat should be cost neutral for the City except for the provision of in-kind support.
- c. Obtain Initial Seed Funding
In order for the Tourism Humber-Bay of Islands Task Force to move forward in an effective manner from the beginning of the 2020 calendar year, it will require a modest level of seed funding. This funding would be used to hire or second a part-time coordinator for the Task Force and to cover general operating expenses.
- d. Hire/Second a Part-time Coordinator
This individual would undertake the ongoing work such as moving the various initiatives forward, communicating with stakeholders

and organizing meetings and consultations. This will allow the private industry Board Members to concentrate on the higher-level strategic issues facing Tourism Humber-Bay of Islands.

Responsibility: Working Committee with the City of Corner Brook and Regional Municipalities.

Estimated Cost: SEED funding of \$60,000 in 2020 potentially split equally between the Regional Municipalities/City, TCII and ACOA. It is assumed that sustainable funding for the Task Force would be provided through implementation of a visitor fee program.

Timeframe: 4th Quarter 2019 for completion in January 2020.

2. Sustainable Funding Action Plan

The STAR Plan Recommendation #2 is:

- ***Facilitate development of the appropriate visitor fee to support initiatives to increase visitation.***

Recognizing that implementation of a visitor fee is outside the purview of the Working Committee/Task Force, efforts should be focused on dialogue and research towards helping industry and government reach an agreement on the appropriate visitor fee for the region and lay the groundwork for implementation by the second quarter of 2020.

The Action Plan is proposed as follows:

a. Establish an Action Team

Establish an Action Team of 3-4 individuals, chaired by a member of the Working Committee in Fall 2019, to facilitate development of an appropriate visitor fee. Members of the Action Team should be fully aware of the parameters of different options for such a fee: i) a tax or levy legislated by a government body (municipality) upon accommodation's room revenue; and, ii) a destination marketing fee (DMF) which is a fee voluntarily placed upon room revenue by the industry. See below links for two reviews that have been provided for reference:

"Organizing for Destination Marketing" prepared for Destination Yellowknife by Outcrop Communications Inc. (2017) <https://yktourism.ca/resources> and "Destination Management Fee Structures in Alberta" prepared for the Alberta Hotel and Lodging Association by Western Management Consultants (2011). https://www.ahla.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Final_AHLA_DM_F_Assessment_Sept_2010.pdf.

b. Consult with Stakeholders

Consult with industry stakeholders in particular the hotelier's association along with municipal and provincial governments to identify issues or concerns which may be delaying reaching a final decision of the type of fee and the timing for implementation.

c. Obtain Expert Advice

Based upon the outcomes of the consultations, engage an independent qualified expert to provide advice.

Responsibility: Working Committee and Task Force.
Estimated Cost: SEED funding of \$30,000 to engage expert to provide advice.
Timeframe: 4th Quarter 2019 and 1st Quarter 2020.

3. Communicate with Industry and Community

The STAR Plan Recommendation #3 is:

- ***Design and implement a proactive communications program for industry and community.***

The existing Working Committee should design and start implementation the communications program immediately with the objective of having it operational by January 2020.

The Action Plan is proposed as follows:

- a. Develop a framework for communicating with stakeholders
This framework should include the following elements:
 - Utilize the Website as the primary go-to source of background information available to all stakeholders and to the public.
 - Utilize the Project Blog, Facebook and Twitter for general updates and communication of events to stakeholders.
 - Utilize the email listings to communicate directly with stakeholder groups as identified.
 - Utilize traditional media to build momentum for initiatives and events and to communicate with all residents of the region.
- b. Adopt a message matrix system for key events
Recognizing the importance of key events in promoting the STAR Plan and its key initiatives, a formal message matrix system should be adopted to ensure maximum impact. Under this system the key message wished to convey, the desired audience, the channel of communication, and the outcome /call to action would be clearly identified prior to the key event.
- c. Share the Final STAR Plan with stakeholders
The first key event will be the release of the Final STAR Plan. This would be done at a stakeholder session in October 2019 where the Final STAR Plan is presented followed by a discussion session. It would be followed up with separate consultations with industry groups and relevant government and non-governmental agencies/officials.
- d. Implement, Monitor and Adjust
The communication framework to build awareness of the STAR Plan and the ongoing initiatives of the Task Force will be implemented, monitored and communications activities adjusted as required.

Responsibility: Working Committee and Task Force.
Estimated Cost: N/A – covered by initial SEED funding.
Timeframe: 4th Quarter 2019 for completion in January 2020.

4. Partnership with Government

The STAR Plan Recommendation #4 is:

- ***Undertake engagement sessions with federal, provincial and local government.***

The existing Working Committee should initiate this process which would be carried on annually by the Task Force.

The Action Plan is proposed as follows:

- a. **Meet with Senior Government Officials**
Federal and Provincial government representatives have been actively involved in the evolution of the STAR Plan. However, upon completion of the Plan, it will be necessary to engage senior members of Government both elected and officials. This would include initial meetings with the Premier, Cabinet Members and senior officials of the Provincial government as well as the local Member of Parliament and senior Federal officials responsible for tourism and economic development. This should be initiated by the Working Committee in Fall 2019 with annual follow-up meetings held by the Task Force in subsequent years.
- b. **Meet with Municipal Leaders**
Similarly, representatives of the municipalities in the region have been consulted during the planning process. Upon completion of the Plan, the Working Committee should provide copies for each municipality and meet with individual councils and senior staff to discuss implementation. In addition to the communications program described earlier, the Task Force should provide annual updates to councils.
- c. **Meet with First Nations**
The Qalipu First Nation has been consulted during the planning process and a representative has participated on the Working Committee. Engagement with the First Nation should be undertaken similarly to the municipalities.

Responsibility:	Working Committee and Task Force.
Estimated Cost:	Covered by initial SEED funding for 2019/20; \$2,500 for subsequent years.
Timeframe:	4th Quarter 2019 and ongoing.

Section B - Program Priorities

1. Branding

The STAR Plan Recommendation #30 is:

- ***Develop a Destination “Place” Brand.***

The Task Force should initiate this process in January 2020 with the objective of having the Brand developed by 4th Quarter 2020.

The Action Plan is proposed as follows:

- a. Establish an Action Team
Establish a Branding Action Team of 3-4 individuals, chaired by a member of the Task Force. This Branding Action Team would determine the approach to be followed for development of the Brand which will be the basis of and RFP for professional services.
- b. Develop a Request for Proposals
Prepare a Request for Proposals for professional services. Background material to assist with the development of the RFP is included in Appendix E - Notes to inform Developing a Brand for Humber-Bay of Islands.
- c. Engage and Manage Consultant
Engage a qualified marketing firm to undertake development of the brand. The outcome from this work and related costs would be expected to be: i) Name development (\$7,500); ii) Brandmark/Logo creation (\$5,500); Brand website and digital marketing strategy (\$25,000); iv) Social media annual advertising fees - one year (\$20,000); Brand Book - graphic standards, signage, promo-materials (\$12,500)

Responsibility:	Task Force.
Estimated Cost:	\$70,500 in 2020.
Timeframe:	1st Quarter 2020 through 4th Quarter 2020.

2. Signage and Wayfinding

The STAR Plan Recommendation #16 is:

- ***Design and implement an integrated signage and wayfinding system that goes beyond signage and integrates with the regions varied media, including website and social media channels.***

The Task Force should initiate this process in 2nd Quarter 2020 with the objective of starting implementation in 2021.

The Action Plan is proposed as follows:

- a. **Establish an Action Team**
Establish a Signage and Wayfinding Action Team of 3-4 individuals, chaired by a member of the Task Force. This Signage and Wayfinding Action Team would determine the approach to be followed for design of the signage and wayfinding system which will be the basis of and RFP for professional services.
- b. **Develop a Request for Proposals**
Prepare a Request for Proposals for professional services. Background material to assist with the development of the RFP are included in Appendix F - Notes to inform the design and implementation of an integrated signage and wayfinding system in Humber-Bay of Islands.
- c. **Engage and Manage Consultant**
Engage a graphic design and landscape architecture firm to design the signage and wayfinding system.
- d. **Oversee Implementation**
Engage a contractor to construct and install the signage and wayfinding system.

Responsibility: Task Force with City, Towns, and Department of Transportation and Works.
Estimated Cost: \$40,000 in 2020 for System Design and \$175,000 in 2021 for implementation.
Timeframe: 3rd Quarter 2020 through 4th Quarter 2021.

3. Packaged Scenic Tours

The STAR Plan Recommendation #10 is:

- ***Research the market potential of offering helicopter/seaplane tours from the Humber-Bay of Islands region.***
- ***Attract a tour operator to be based in the region.***
- ***Work with TCII and DMO to identify and test market ready visitor experience packages for the region.***

The Task Force should initiate the three actions included in this recommendation in early 2020 with the objective of having the helicopter/seaplane tours market assessment completed in 1st Quarter 2020 and a tour operator attracted by the end of 2020. Increasing the number of quality visitor experience packages available in the region will be ongoing throughout the initial five years.

The Action Plan is proposed as follows:

- a. **Establish an Action Team**
Establish a packaged Tour Action Team of 3-4 individuals, chaired by a member of the Task Force. This Action Team would determine the approach to be followed related to packaged tours in the region. In order to ensure consistent messaging and memorable engaging visitor experiences which visitors seek, the Team might adopt the Thinking (informative, conceptual, factual), Feeling (sense of place, creative, inspiring) and Doing (active, social, fun, experiential) mode of visitor engagement and experiences (Toni Roberts, 2014). In this model, all visitor experience must respond to at least two of the three modes of visitor engagement and designed within the context of return on investment, market readiness and TAP compliance.
- b. **Assess the Market Potential for Helicopter/Seaplane Tours**
Engage Navigate at Grenfell College to undertake an assessment of the market potential for helicopter/seaplane tours in the region. If positive make the information available to local helicopter/seaplane companies and tourism operators.
- c. **Attract a Tour Operator**
Identify existing tour operators who might be willing to relocate to the region, current tourism operators looking to expand their scope of activities as well as potential entrepreneurs who might be interested in setting up a new enterprise. This will involve research regarding current packaged tour activity, the potential for expansion and the interest level from the groups identified.
- d. **Identify and Test Market-Ready Visitor Experience Packages**
Increasing the number of quality visitor experience packages available in the region will be an ongoing task. Notes to assist mobilization and undertaking this work are included in Appendix G.

Responsibility: Task Force with GMIST, Go Western, TCII, ACOA.

Estimated Cost: \$1,500 for helicopter/seaplane market assessment, \$2,500 for travel related to attracting a tour operator and \$10,000 annually for development of visitor experience packages.

Timeframe: 1st Quarter 2020 and ongoing.

4. GeoPark

The STAR Plan Recommendation #18 is:

- ***Rebrand the aspiring Cabox GeoPark as the “Bay of Islands Cabox GeoPark” to be consistent with future regional tourism branding.***
- ***Support efforts to gain UNESCO designation for the GeoPark.***
- ***Develop GeoPark based tourism products in York Harbour/Lark Harbour, Humber Arm South and Cox’s Cove as the unique attraction base at each end of the Bay of Islands drive.***

The Task Force should undertake the first two actions included in this recommendation in early 2020 and the third action in 2021 assuming the GeoPark Letter of Intent is submitted in 2020 and experiences a positive reception.

The Action Plan is proposed as follows:

- a. Establish an Action Team
Establish a GeoPark Action Team of 3-4 individuals, chaired by a member of the Task Force. This Action Team would support efforts to gain UNESCO designation and mobilize efforts to develop GeoPark based tourism products.
- b. Rebrand the GeoPark
The Action Team would engage with the existing GeoPark Committee to discuss and promote the idea of rebranding the GeoPark to be consistent with regional tourism branding.
- c. Support Efforts to Gain UNESCO designation
The Action Team would help the GeoPark Committee with efforts to enhance public understanding of the GeoPark concept, provide letters of support, encourage other interested groups to provide letters of support, and engage with UNESCO officials through communications and during site visits as appropriate. Notes to assist mobilization and undertaking this work are included in Appendix H.
- d. Develop GeoPark based Tourism Products
Undertake a review of other GeoParks to identify best practices for tourism products related to GeoParks and provide information to towns and entrepreneurs in the Bay of Islands.

Responsibility: Task Force with GeoPark Committee.

Estimated Cost: \$5,000 to identify best practices for tourism products related to GeoParks packages.

Timeframe: 1st Quarter 2020 to 4th Quarter 2021.

5. Regional Tourism Marketing Plan

The STAR Plan Recommendation #31 is:

- ***Develop a regional tourism marketing plan and digital media strategy.***

The Task Force should initiate strategy development and cooperative marketing activities in 2020 and target development of a digital marketing plan to start in 4th Quarter 2020, following completion of the destination brand described above, with the objective of having the Plan developed by 2nd Quarter 2021.

The Action Plan is proposed as follows:

- a. Establish an Action Team
Establish a Marketing Action Team of 3-4 individuals, chaired by a member of the Task Force.
- b. Strategy Development
Initial activities of the Action Team would be research and consultation to address the complex question of how to promote the region and local tourism providers within the context of the marketing strategies and activities of the Tourism NL for the full province, of the destination marketing office (Go Western) for western Newfoundland and of Gros Morne National Park, in addition to the various independent interest groups within Humber-Bay of Islands. The Team should engage a marketing expert to help define an overall strategy for positioning regional marketing.
- c. Building Partnerships
Based upon the overall strategy for positioning regional marketing, the Action Team will build partnerships and cooperation with other organizations towards enhancing marketing of the Humber-Bay of Islands region through:
 - Leveraging the muscle of Tourism NL proven ability to reach national and international travelers.
 - Linking and taking advantage of the expertise of Go Western, the destination marketing office for Western Newfoundland.
 - Integrating but distinguishing regional tourism marketing with Gros Morne National Park.
 - Positioning the marketing efforts of the City, the Qalipu, and the other municipalities within a regional context.
- d. Develop a Digital Marketing Plan
Digital marketing has been identified as a specific area where the region needs to define itself. Accordingly, the Action Team should engage a qualified consultant to develop a Digital Marketing Plan. The Terms of Reference for this work should include:
 - Assessing the risk associated with pursuing social media and develop a Humber-Bay of Islands policy around social media communications.

- Using specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely digital marketing to increase tourism sales, website traffic, brand awareness, and generate leads (visitors, investors and tourism partners).
- Using brand positioning statements to differentiate the Humber-Bay of Islands guide marketing efforts, and to promote the new brand identity brand mark, and tagline.
- Establishing website structure and content so visitors have a clear path to engage with Humber-Bay of Islands, its partners, service providers and area communities.
- Creating social media presence to promote the Humber-Bay of Islands visitor experience: create a system to organize content for distribution, incorporate video marketing into content strategy, utilize Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and email to communicate and take advantage of social media insights and google analytics.

Responsibility: Task Force.

Estimated Cost: \$10,000 to engage Marketing Strategy advisor and \$20,000 to complete a Digital Marketing Plan.

Timeframe: 1st Quarter 2020 to 2nd Quarter 2021.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE & BUDGET

Initial STAR Workplan	2019	2020				2021				2022				2023				2024			Total Cost
	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	
Section A: Foundation																					
1. Leadership and Organization (Establish Tourism Humber Bay of Islands)																					\$60,000
a. Terms of Reference																					
b. Secretariat Agreement																					
c. Seed Funding		60.0																			
d. Hire Part-time Coordinator																					
2. Sustainable Funding																					\$30,000
a. Establish Action Team																					
b. Consult with Stakeholders																					
c. Expert Advice		30.0																			
3. Communicate with Industry and Community																					\$0
a. Develop Framework																					
b. Adopt Message Matrix System																					
c. Share STAR Plan																					
d. Implement, Monitor and Adjust																					
4. Partnership with Government																					\$10,000
a. Meet Senior Government Officials					2.5				2.5				2.5				2.5				
b. Meet Municipal Leaders																					
c. Meet First Nations																					
Section B: Program Priorities																					
1. Branding																					\$70,500
a. Establish an Action Team																					
b. Develop a Request for Proposals																					
c. Engage and Manage Consultant			70.5																		
2. Signage and Wayfinding																					\$215,000
a. Establish an Action Team																					
b. Develop a Request for Proposals																					
c. Engage and Manage Consultant				40.0																	
d. Oversee Implementation						175.0															
3. Packaged Scenic Tours																					\$49,000
a. Establish an Action Team																					
b. Assess the Market Potential for Helicopter/seaplane Tours		1.5																			
c. Attract a Tour Operator			2.5																		
d. Identify and Test Market-Ready Visitor Experience Packages				5.0		10.0				10.0				10.0				10.0			
4. GeoPark																					\$5,000
a. Establish an Action Team																					
b. Rebrand the GeoPark																					
c. Support Efforts to Gain UNESCO designation																					
d. Develop GeoPark based Tourism Products						5.0															
5. Regional Marketing Plan																					\$30,000
a. Establish an Action Team																					
b. Strategy Development			10.0																		
c. Building Partnerships																					
d. Develop a Digital Marketing Plan					20.0																
Annual and Total Costs	0.0				242.0				192.5				12.5				12.5			10.0	\$469,500

APPENDICES



Appendix A – Calendar of Events

Stage 1: STAR Start-up & Regional Research

- Initial Meeting (Proponent & Start-up Committee).
- Tourism Atlantic Meeting.
- Detailed Work Plan Monday.
- Preliminary/Background Research.
 - Identify Preliminary Research Needs.
 - Compile Preliminary/Background Research Report.
- Tourism Inventory Development.
- Support Selection of STAR Working Committee and Chair.
- Tourism Analysis Activities.
 - Current Market Assessment.
 - Market Effort Assessment.
 - Product/Experience Matrix.
- Add Second Meeting (Proponent & Start-up Committee).

Stage 2: STAR Introduction and Site Visit

- Initial Working Committee Meeting.
- Site Visit.
 - Add - Pre-Winter Site Visit.
 - Official Site Visit.
- Stakeholder Session (Introduction and Regional Tourism Inventory).
- Develop Communications Framework.

Stage 3: Visioning, Benchmarking and Idea Generation

- Working Committee Meeting.
- Stakeholder Session (Benchmarking and Idea Generation).
- Stakeholder Session (Priorities Report).

Stage 4: Regional Consultations

- Regional Tourism Survey and Regional Tourism Survey Report.

- Working Committee Meeting.
- Coffee Break Sessions/Stakeholder Updates + Stakeholder Session Outcomes Summary.

Stage 5: Draft Plan and Capacity Building

- Compile Draft Plan.
- Review Draft Plan with Working Committee.
- Stakeholder Session (Draft Final Plan).
- Capacity Building Sessions (To be determined by Working Committee).

Stage 6: Final Plan and Implementation

- Integrate Input.
- Submit Final Strategic Regional Tourism Plan.
- Mentor Working Committee regarding Plan Implementation.
- Capacity Building Sessions (To be determined by Working Committee).

Stage 7: Follow -up and Interim Reporting

- Support to Working Committee.
- Review of 6-month Report on Achievements and Priorities.
- Review of Year 1 Report on Achievements and Priorities.

Appendix B – Qalipu Tourism Strategy and Initiatives (Humber-Bay of Islands)

Indigenous tourism has been the fastest growing tourism sector in Canada over the last four years. That said, the sector has not shown positive growth in the Maritimes, but it has grown by over 10% in NL. The Humber-Bay of Islands region is home to roughly half (10,000) of the members of the Qalipu Nation. The Qalipu are very active in the development of the tourism product island wide but specifically in the Bay of Islands. They have a separate wing of the organization – Experience Qalipu – that is focused on tourism product development.

Qalipu Tourism Goal:

To celebrate the Indigenous community by providing authentic and respectful cultural experiences in NL, and to have Experience Qalipu be the vehicle to facilitate the development, delivery, training, and operationalizing the business model for Indigenous tourism in the Bay of Islands.

Tourism Objectives:

- To identify authentic Indigenous experience tourism product development gaps.
- To, based on the identified gaps, develop a program of authentic Indigenous visitor experiences to bring to market.
- To, using a pilot program, test and confirm the applicability and viability of the proposed visitor experiences.
- To with proof of concept confirmed, have Experience Qalipu hire local operators to deliver the programs.
- To, as needed, provide training and support to new Indigenous tourism entrepreneurs wishing to entre the marketplace.
- To have Experience Qalipu manage the packaging and experience delivery.
- To have Experience Qalipu manage all aspects of the visitor purchase/pay cycle via the Experience Qalipu website (the visitor would will pay Qalipu directly, and Qalipu would pay the experience providers).

Experience Development current underway:

- Drum Making
- Medicine Walks.

Urban Event Venue:

Qalipu seek a “go to” place to offer varied visitor experiences in an urban environment – perhaps on West Street near the Qalipu offices. The model is similar to what is being done in Stanley Park, Vancouver with great success.

GMIST and Indigenous Tourism:

- Qalipu are currently working with GMIST, to develop an Indigenous tourism-based visitor experience.
- A focal point of the program is storytelling.
- They also asked by the cruise industry to develop shore excursions for cruise ship passengers.
- A visitor Experience Qalipu program guide is in the works.

Future Events:

Currently Qalipu is considering an Indigenous celebration for the Bay of Islands, and the development of a series of linking celebrations with the Conne River Nation and the St. Georges Band, similar to what is being done in other areas of Canada.

Indigenous Cuisine:

Qalipu have an Indigenous chef who is keen to develop Indigenous culinary initiatives and wants to create a Canada-wide Indigenous cuisine organization that focuses on servicing wild game.

NL is being considered as the site for a future taste of the Nation food conference with Indigenous chefs from across Canada taking part.

Indigenous Cuisine French Infusion:

Qalipu fully support the concept of integrating Qalipu Nation recipes with French infusion to celebrate both cultures and offer a distinct food experience for visitors.

Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Local Arts and Crafts

Qalipu, through the Qalipu Cultural Foundation, would be willing to participate in visitor experiences that celebrate non-Indigenous and Indigenous crafts, in on-the-ground craft/art sales, and craft making visitor experiences in cooperation with the Rotary Arts Centre, Grenfell College of Fine Arts, and other local arts and crafts providers.

Appendix C – Other Issues Impacting Tourism Development in the Bay of Islands

Transportation

Transportation is an integral part of the tourism industry. The development of transportation, transportation vehicles (taxis, shuttles, bus network, rentals) and new technologies (GPS, Virtual Assistant, HVR radio) in this sector speed up the development of tourism. For example, the World Tourism Organization, suggests that the significant growth in tourism is in part based on the rapid development of the transportation sector, and application of technological innovations which enable the tourists to reach and explore destinations.

Transportation plays a role in enriching the travel experience and can turn into a separate tourist attraction element such as touring routes, boat trips on the Bay of Island and heli-tours.

In short distances automobile transportation makes it easy to see local culture and presents great flexibility in contrast to other modes of transportation. When compared with the prices in air transportation, this mode of transportation is frequently used by tourists because of low prices. But the main factor affecting this choice is time and distance.

The tourist's travel experience starts and ends with transportation. In this sense, if the province wants to grow the tourism sector in Western NL, they must pay attention to transportation sector costs, reduce the airlift monopoly, and provide sound competitive opportunities for visitors.

To develop and increase the role of transportation in tourism in the Humber-Bay of Islands then air lift must be enhanced, and the road network and signage must be improved.

Developing Rural Tourism in the Bay of Islands

During some of the consultations, and in discussion with a local operator, we determined that local residents did not always look positively on the development of tourism assets and businesses in local towns. Some area residents felt that new businesses might cause extra traffic, create noise till late at night, and create congestion problems. Others felt that giving visitor access to the back country would negatively impact traditional hunting, and other felt the influx of visitors may negatively impact the quality of life the area residents enjoy.

The message is clear. Residents must be aware of and fully engaged in the tourism development process and ensuring that potential negative impacts are accounted for in development. Through varied communication channels, community leadership, and residents can become fully engaged in the tourism product development process.

Indeed, the idea for tourism in the Bay of Islands is meant to showcase rural life, art, culture and a fishing heritage for the social and economic benefit of the community. The intersection between the "local" and the visitor should create a more enriching tourism experience for both the visitor and community residents, who are also part of the tourism product.

The tourism model proposed for the Bay of Islands is experience oriented, occurs in a natural environment, is primarily seasonal in nature and is based on preservation of culture, heritage, and traditions. The usual visitor activities involve staying in local towns, engaging (working) with a local resident, enjoying local cuisine, nature viewing and nature walks in and around area communities, wildlife viewing, as well as local art, special events, and rural activities.

Potential downsides exist with seasonality; increased prices, abuse of local culture and traditions, overuse of resources, inactive participation by local people; and building unnecessary or inappropriate infrastructure.

Within the Bay of Islands, the key challenges to overcome to ensure success are:

1. Protect local culture and resources – identify those tangible and intangible assets and resources in each community that are to be preserved and that can become part of the visitor asset base.
2. Manage land use – comprehensive municipal plans for each community are a necessity. As are asset management and climate change adaption plans. Three of the area towns (Steady Brook, Massey Drive, and Pasadena) have recently completed asset management plans. They are critical tools to understanding community infrastructure investment needs. Within the context of the asset plan, it is also necessary that local towns understand how to adapt to and mitigate against the potential impacts of climate change.
3. Land ownership – a critical need in many rural NL towns is to understand who owns what land where. In NL landowners not required to register land so towns find it difficult to manage growth and to take advantage of economic development opportunities available lands can provide.
4. Lack of training support – for new, particularly young, entrepreneurs they need a guiding hand and on-going training to have your business market ready and TAP compliant.
5. Inappropriate or poor-quality infrastructure – public realm infrastructure must be developed to a very high standard. If we are looking to attract the Gros Morne visitors, then the Parks Canada level of design and construction must become the benchmark for the Bay of Islands tourism infrastructure.
6. Lack of money – with the proposed accommodation fee and anticipated support from the Province and the Federal government, we do not foresee big challenges in accessing funds to support tourism growth.
7. Poor maintenance – to ensure infrastructure is maintained to a high standard, then each new development must include a maintenance impact statement. The impact statement identifies the annual preventative and corrective maintenance tasks required to maintain assets to a high level. If the means cannot be found to fund future maintenance costs, then the asset should not be built.
8. Lack of local involvement and participation – this is a critical need. With today's technology residents can be regularly updated via social media and you cannot replace the town hall meetings where the development ideas are introduced for public input and commentary.

Appendix D– Draft Terms of Reference (Tourism Humber-Bay of Islands)

1. THE ROLE OF TOURISM BAY OF ISLANDS

Tourism Bay of Islands is established to lead implementation of the STAR Humber-Bay of Islands Plan going forward.

2. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The organization will consist of a Task Force and a Secretariat.

3. TASK FORCE

Role of the Task Force

- Ongoing strategic thinking regarding tourism priorities and strategies.
- Working to develop a consensus regarding a “common vision” of the future tourism industry for the region.
- Promoting cooperation among regional industry stakeholders and partners.
- Building and maintaining the Asset Inventory database for the region.
- Managing implementation of the initiatives outlined in the STAR Plan starting with those initiatives identified in the Initial STAR Workplan.
- Adjusting and updating the STAR Plan as appropriate.
- Monitoring and reporting on progress related to benchmarks and on key successes.

Composition

- A chairperson.
- 8 – 10 members.
- The Task Force membership will be generally representative the different areas of the region and the different elements of the tourism industry.

Prerequisites for Chairperson and Members

- Be an owner or senior manager of a private (commercial) tourism enterprise in the region.
- Be a member of public or private sector organization (i.e. community arts and culture organizations, business leaders, etc.).
- Be a member of not-for-profit groups (i.e. festivals/events).
- Be a representative of Municipal, Provincial, and ACOA (typically ex-officio).
- Be a strategic partner (i.e. Parks Canada, etc.).
- Be a representative of traditional resource sector representatives (i.e. fishery, agriculture, etc.).
- Be committed to cooperative and sustainable development of the tourism sector.

- Have a broad understanding of the tourism sector and the factors influencing its development.
- Be a “big thinker” who can identify opportunities and take a regional perspective regarding tourism development.
- Be willing and able to represent Tourism Bay of Islands within the tourism sector and to outside interest groups and the general public.
- Be available to participate in regular meetings.

Identification and Appointment

- Potential members and chairperson for the initial Task Force will be identified by the STAR Working Group.
- Selection and appointment of the initial chairperson and members will be done by a committee comprised of the Co- Chairs of the Working Committee along with representatives of the City and the towns in the region.
- For subsequent appointments the Co-Chairs of the Working Committee will be replaced by the Chairperson of the Task Force.

4. Secretariat

A Secretariat will be established within a partnership organization to coordinate Task Force activities and to provide administrative and financial support services.

Appendix E –Notes to inform Developing a Brand for Humber-Bay of Islands

Roger Brooks in an *Assessment Findings and Suggestions Report 2017* of Corner Brook and area suggest that: “A detailed branding plan would help to build on the results of this assessment, adding in-depth research, evaluation, and local input to develop a unique brand and implementation program”.

When we combine the work done by Roger Brooks, with the STAR process and the work that has been done by the City, the DMO, the Province and the Qalipu Nation we have a very good starting point for a Brand for Humber-Bay of Islands.

What is a Brand?

A brand is not a logo, identity or product. A brand is meaning, symbols and associations created by brand cues, experiences and promotion. A brand is measured by a person’s “gut feel” about an organization, region, product or service. Brands are defined by customers and guests not by the communities, companies or organizations they represent. In other words, it is not what we say about the region that matters, it is what the visiting public perceives, feels and says about the Humber-Bay of Islands region that defines the brand. People need brands to help make choices about products or services, and those choices are made based on trust. Trust comes from exceeding customer (visitors and public) expectations.

The process of the Task Force building a brand must be based on several brand-building disciplines. Such as the need to differentiate, because we notice what is different. The differentiation begins with a focused value proposition based on the stated vision for the region. So, the Humber-Bay of Islands brand needs to be different and focused: Who are you? What do you do? Why does it matter? Brand building is a collaborative process, so your branding partners can support your focused message. Strive to be innovative with your brand development, do not be predictable, strive for something that surprises, is new and edgy to build brand value. A great name is another needed feature of a successful brand.

The Task Force needs to cultivate the brand and its execution by influencing the “voice” of the brand. Managing your message execution is critical to ensuring it is your voice defining the brand and not someone else. The brand voice refers to the character of who you are (inspiring, playful, friendly, etc.), the truths (defining who you are, your personality, and being true to it) and maintaining a consistent tone in your brand voice and the language you use (savvy, fun, simple, serious). Finally, ensure your message is getting to your defined audience.

One Approach to Developing the Brand

1. Discovery: Research and Analysis

- Interview internal stakeholders for needs and perceptions.
 - Much of this work has been completed as part of the STAR process and the results of the community meetings, coffee break sessions and the results of visioning and benchmarking sessions.
 - The visioning and benchmarking session results can help inform the brand.

- In the community meetings residents expressed a very positive place identity: beautiful, scenic, natural beauty, friendly, welcoming, adventurous.
- Interview visitors and key influencers.
 - The one on one meetings with key stakeholders, businesses, the Working Committee, the Province, ACOA, the City, Qalipu, and a review of the Visitor Exit Surveys have helped to inform the current brand perceptions.
- Evaluate existing brand and brand architecture.
- Audit communication and marketing tools.
 - The Roger Brooks Report has done a good job of evaluating the existing brand materials and marketing tools. Key among them was a lack of lack of good signage and wayfinding, lack of a consist and compelling branding and promotional materials, the need to promote Gros Morne National Park and its proximity to the region, and the need to better use social media platforms.
 - He also felt the area had tremendous assets and a great opportunity to grow into a tourism destination region.
- Review competitive brands and market trends.
 - This STAR process has reviewed a number of tourism areas in the province and abroad to get an understanding of what other areas are doing and current visitor trends. The work on the Bonavista Peninsula was noted as an area with relevant branding insights. The NL Exit Survey also provides a lot of useful information on the desired visitor experiences.

2. Envision: Brand Strategy

- Synthesize learnings.
 - Listing the key learning from the Discovery, and using the information inform the brand strategy, positioning platform.
- Develop brand strategy, positioning platform.
 - The brand strategy is a long-term plan for brand development focused on achieving your brand goals. The brand goals are captured in your vision, mission statement and brand objectives.

Vision: As per this report, the suggested (to be approved) vision for the Humber-Bay of Islands is: “The Humber-Bay of Islands region to become the home port of Newfoundland and Labrador’s four-season adventure”.

Tag line: Experience Newfoundland and Labrador’s four seasons, rugged beauty, and rich culture with the space to find yourself.

Mission Statement: The vision and mission statement are often confused with each other. The vision statement outlines what we want to be the *future*. The mission statement describes what we want to do *now*, concentrates on the present; it defines the customer(s), critical processes, and it informs you about the desired level of performance.

A Mission Statement for the Humber-Bay of Islands Task Force might be:

“To provide memorable four-season nature adventure and cultural based experiences in the Humber-Bay of Islands. Experiences that are defined and sought-after by vacationers and that comply with the Province’s Tourism Assurance Program requirements.

This we will do with our partners: the Province, ACOA, Parks Canada, UNESCO GeoParks, City of Corner Brook, Bay of Island communities, Grenfell Campus, local NGO’s, DMO, existing tourism experience providers, and Qalipu Nation. Our tourism product development planning is community based (focusing on community planning and public realm enhancements), and business led (focusing on confirming the return on investment model of identified, piloted and new visitor experiences).

With our partners we will support empowering new entrepreneurs to become tourism providers, offering rich immersive memorable green and environmentally friendly experiences in Humber-Bay of Islands. Finally, we will seek constant feedback from our visitors, and develop the means to monitor, market, and measure visitors’ perceptions of our brand, and the impact of tourism on the local economy over the next 5 years.”

Objectives: Are the specific actions that supports attainment of the associated goal(s). The objectives are actions that respond to the mission statement and can be compartmentalized based on the components of the STAR Plan to be implemented that might include creating tourism experiences, strategic implementation, community vitality, infrastructure and capacity, sustainable tourism, marketing, and branding.

Brand Positioning

Your brand positioning refers to the place the brand occupies in the minds of customers that are seeking experiences and belonging. For example: Nike positions itself as being “For serious athletes, NIKE gives confidence that provides the perfect shoe for every sport.” The focus is on a brief description of target market and how you want that market to perceive and experience your brand.

To create the region’s Brand Positioning Statement, we need to answer the following questions: Who are my customers? What benefit’s do my products and services offer its users? Who are my competitors? (how do they differentiate in the marketplace)

The statement Brand Positioning describes the core benefits of your statements based on what your competitors are doing. Remember when you create the Brand Positioning Statement, everyone who is involved in the brand must live by that statement.

- Draft brand attributes and key messaging.
 - The attributes (your personality) are three key attributes that describe character of the brand. Three examples for the Humber-Bay of Islands might be beautiful, welcoming and adventurous.

- Create a brand architecture strategy.
 - Consideration has to be given to how the brand created for the Humber-Bay of Islands is presented in the context of local business, municipalities, and the proposed GeoPark.

3. Realization: Brand Expression.

- Design brand identity.
- Develop marketing and communications alternative approaches.
- Develop name.

- Brand expression is the visible elements of a brand, such as color, design and logo, that identify and distinguish the brand in

consumers' minds. Brand identity is distinct from brand image. The former corresponds to the intent behind the branding and the way a region does the following—all with the goal of cultivating a certain image in consumers' minds:

- Name.
- Logo.
- Uses colors, shapes, and visual elements in products and promotions.
- Tone of language advertisements.
- Training employees to interact with customers and represent the brand.
- The brand expression needs to reflect the essence, or core values, of the Humber-Bay of Islands. Must be authentic, differentiated, goals based and respond to your defined market needs.

The brand expression must however respond to customer image of your brand.

- Trademark protection (if applicable).
 - Consideration should be given to trademarking your brand so others cannot use it without permission. With some type of protection others can simply start using your brand imagery to, for example, sell merchandise without consent.

Branded House	Sub-Brands	Endorsed Brands	House of Brands
One brand creates a single powerful image, sometimes with a descriptor	Combining the corporate brand with strong sub-brands Sub brands help differentiate and boost corporate brand	Leading with a strong sub-brand but leveraging corporate brand as endorser	Decentralized companies targeting diverse markets
    	   	    	     

4. Execution: Finalize and Test

- Finalize brand solutions.

Confirm the “why” – the purpose of your brand.

- Do you have a marketing strategy that conveys your brand values?
- Have you confirmed how you want your audience to think about your brand, and what makes your brand different?
- Do you clearly understand your audience, and how they relate to the product and services on offer?
- Is your brand personality and tone clear?
- Prioritize and design for all brand applications.
 - Brand application how you use your brand on all of your marketing materials and customer touch points, the way your brand is applied to various marketing efforts.
 - The brand is the basis of everything the region does as part of its marketing plans and efforts.
 - Applications begin with the logo, identity program (logo, business cards, letter head, business forms, website, blog, social media profile pages and so on).
 - You need to ensure it works well in all the applications and clearly conveys your brand messages.
- Test to ensure quality and functionality.
 - Quality control is essential and ensures the brand products are compliant and functional requirements.
 - Testing will aid in detecting and solving technical issues: source code, usability, performance, security and compatibility.

5. Management: Manage Assets

- Build synergy around the new brand.
 - Commit to one element of your brand that you can consistently deliver on. For examples: all walking trails in the Humber-Bay of Islands will be safe, comfortable, attractive and memorable.
 - Establish your initial brand experience around this idea.
 - Incorporate the idea into multiple networking platforms.
 - With the networking provide an incentive for customers to use the trails. For example, all hikers can enjoy a 10% discount at area restaurants.
- Implement launch strategy.
 - Develop a formal launch strategy for the brand.
 - Chose a launch date, location, invite the media and your target markets.
 - Have brand related activities.

- Create a Marketing Message around the launch.
- Nurture brand campaigners.
 - These are basically a series of emails that elaborates on the new brand that are sent to your target audiences with an offer of value, not simply a sales pitch.
- Maintain quality control.
 - Create a Brand Book that contains a series of do's and do not's regarding the use of your identity materials.
- Track response and optimize programs.
 - The inherent traceability of social networking sites means you can start from nothing and quickly build a thorough picture of your brand that reflects the current "visitor" reality. Through various social media channels, the Task Force can analyze social conversations, and better understand what aspects of your brand are contributing to on-line perceptions. Insights gained can be used to help support initiatives to shape the study area brand.
 - Analyzing conversations with negative sentiment will help you identify the various visitor issues that could be harming your brand perception. And brands do not exist in isolation. Measuring the brand perception of successful tourism regions in the province, can help the Task Force understand where your strengths and weaknesses lie, and how the brand image should be focused.
 - Detailed knowledge of your customers: general age, gender, origin, language, professions, and interests. Sites visited and experiences desired is vital when considering what shapes your desired brand image. Every visitor's experience in the region will be different, but there may be some common themes that social listening can uncover.
 - Once you have worked out visitor perception of your brand, and you know more about what visitors are looking for and you can act on your findings.
 - It has been found that the use of social media is the easiest way to change, increase brand perception and inform brand messaging. Knowing who your customers are, what they think of the area, and what else they are passionate about gives you the information you need to focus the Humber-Bay of Islands brand.

Appendix F – Notes to inform the design and implementation of an integrated signage and wayfinding system in Humber-Bay of Islands

The Humber-Bays of Islands Signage and Wayfinding Plan is a key priority of the STAR Humber-Bay of Islands Regional Tourism Plan. The Roger Brooks, *Assessment and Findings Report* (2017) references the critical need for better signage and wayfinding in the region. The *Western NL Destination Tourism Visitor Appeal* (2015) also identified the need for better signage and wayfinding in the region. *The Way Forward: 2017-20 Provincial Tourism Product Development Plan* references the need to create a sense of arrival for visitors. To successfully create the desired sense of welcome, an area needs an integrated Signage and Wayfinding Strategy.

Furthermore, the need for the Plan arises out of a well-recognized need to provide for better wayfinding from the point of arrival, either at Port Aux Basques Ferry or the Deer Lake Airport, and the visitors ability to easily and comfortable navigate the network of roads, Corner Brook streets, and adjoining communities, offering the tourism visitor experiences.

Clearly it is tourists – the people who are most unfamiliar with Humber-Bay of Islands region - who will benefit most from more effective signage. The most recent statistics (2015) indicate that tourist expenditures/spending exceeded \$1 billion in NL, with the resident component representing approximately 51% and the non-resident component accounting for 49%. A good signage system supports increased area expenditures.

Developing effective wayfinding plan involves thinking like a tourist. Where are people coming from? Where do they want to go? What routes are they most likely to take? What information do they need? How do we most effectively convey the information they need? These questions are at the root of any good signage plan.

Goal and Objectives

The goal of the Signage and Wayfinding Plan is to develop an integrated signage and wayfinding system throughout the Humber-Bay of Islands region that:

- Enhances signage at the approaches to the City, particularly finding the Downtown area, and key assets in the Lower Humber and Bay of Islands.
- Integrates with the existing signage developed for “Final Report Downtown Corner Brook Signage & Wayfinding Plan Report” (2017) for the City of Corner Brook and the Downtown Business Association, with the proposed Regional Signage and Wayfinding Plan.
- Considers a ‘hub and spoke’ wayfinding approach emanating from the City to signature TAP compliant destinations in Bay of Islands municipalities, to extend visitor stay and encourage spending.
- Create strong connections between the region’s market ready Destination Trails (Corner Brook Stream, Appalachian Trail, Snowmobile/ATV trails) and the region’s attractions and food experiences.

Considerations

Considerations for development of the Signage and Wayfinding Plan include:

- Use the brand graphic resulting from the area branding strategy identified as a priority for Humber-Bay of Islands Plan.
- Integrate (graphically and physically) with the 'signage family' using the Corner Brook Downtown Development Associations brand imagery.
- Recognize the Qalipu Nation Signage and Wayfinding System for the proposed Qalipu Ward gateway signs, two such Wards are located within the Study Area.
- Utilize the results of STAR consultations in this report, and future discussions with the City, Qalipu Nation, neighboring municipalities, NL Snowmobile Federation and other key partners and collaborating agencies (DMO, TCII, Department of Transportation and Works and Service NL).
- Recommend strategic routing and placement of signs for auto, cycling, snowmobiling/ATV, and pedestrian wayfinding.
- Identify existing Provincial Highway Corridor 1 regulatory signs maintained by the Province, where text changes are recommended to support Wayfinding. Cross reference with a similar assessment completed for the *Final Report Downtown Corner Brook Signage & Wayfinding Plan Report* (2017).
- Adhere to the NL Highway Signage Regulations, the Province's Tourism Oriented Signage Program, and Transport Canada Highway Signage guidelines.
- Identify Corridor 2, Off-site promotional signage locations along provincially designated Highway Signage Corridors and propose a signage template reflecting the Humber-Bay of Islands Brand in the graphic template for all off-site promotional signs.
- Provide regulatory compliant signage concept designs for each identified signage family type that includes Vehicular, Bicycle, Snowmobiling/ATV and Hiking/Walking Trail signs, as well as other tourism destination signs.
- Signage types to include: Directional, Assurance, Community Amenities, Informational, Interpretive, On-Site Promotional, Off-site Promotional, Community Gateway graphic template, Hazard, Signage Kiosks, and an Area map.
- Explore viability of using solar energy to illuminate signs and kiosks.
- Include installation details, costs to fabricate, and install.
- Once sign locations have been determined seek official approval to install signs from regulatory agencies.
- Create a signage layout and signage coordinates in a geographical information system compatible with the City mapping system.
- Prepare a Maintenance Management Plan for the signage inspection, renewal, and replacement and updating.
- Recommend a proposed direction for the implementation of the signage strategy.

Signage Design

Sign design is an art and a science. Signs must conform to established legibility and safety rules, but they must also express the Humber-Bay of Islands brand identity. Good signage is simple, iconic, and intuitive. Graphics, materials and location must work together, not only to ensure comprehension but also to convey a feeling for what makes a place unique and special.

Some of the core values that inform the signage plan should include:

- **Uniformity:** Signage needs to be an extension of branding strategy developed for the region and needs to fit within a common theme that supports core messages in an integrated manner.
- **Simplicity:** Too much information is often placed on signage: effective signage communicates simple messages.
- **High-production values:** The region's signage should be a statement of the value that it places on itself.

Appendix G– Notes to Inform the Identifying and Testing of Market-Ready Visitor Experience Packages

Background:

For the entire Humber-Bay of Islands region, to ensure consistent messaging and memorable engaging visitor experiences our visitors seek, adopt the Thinking (informative, conceptual, factual), Feeling (sense of place, creative, inspiring) and Doing (active, social, fun, experiential) mode of visitor engagement and experiences (Toni Roberts, 2014). All visitor experience must respond to at least two of the three modes of visitor engagement and designed within the context of a return on investment model, market readiness and TAP compliance.

Potential Actions

- In partnership with Navigate, coordinate an entrepreneurial idea exchange to kick start product development around visitor experience packages for Humber-Bay of Islands.
- Following the idea exchange, identify the initial list of visitor experiences categories based on “Big Nature” and cultural/heritage experiences. “Big Nature” will include camping, fishing, off-roading, snow sports, trail sports, water sports, wheel sports, wildlife viewing and nature-based play such as the zipline at Marble. Cultural and heritage will include performing arts (theatre, dance, music), visual arts and crafts, festivals, museums and cultural centres, historic sites, interpretive centres, aboriginal experiences, and locally based food and beverages.
- Review the STAR Asset Inventory database list to categorize and describe the existing visitor experience on offer from local businesses, against the visitor engagement and experience model, and existing provincial TAP requirements. In consultation with the experience provider, assess the experience packages against the described (Thinking, Feeling, Fun), and TAP compliance model, and advise if enhancements are needed, and if the existing return on investment model needs adjustment.
- Review the existing STAR Asset Inventory Database, and the STAR Plan recommendations to identify other targeted visitor experience packages, that respond to existing target market segments experience motivators. Generate a list of visitor experiences from the idea exchange and against current assets, to generate a prioritized list based on service gaps by market segment.
- Validate each proposed visitor experience against current market readiness: TAP compliance, existing infrastructure, signage and wayfinding, etc. Prioritize each based on level of market readiness, and for sites that are not market ready, identify what enhancements are required and at what cost.
- Based on the results of the validated list of market ready, TAP compliant visitor experiences, create a prioritized list, and with Navigate and GMIST create a visitor experience program based on the Thinking-Feeling-Doing model. Pilot and test the first priority to confirm the quality of the experience package and the projected return on investment.
- Once validated, promote the pilot to local entrepreneurs, and for new entrepreneurs use the Navigate incubation centre to train the individual(s) in the basics of business and to provide mentoring and support in the first two years of business.

Appendix H– Notes to inform efforts to establish an UNESCO GeoPark in Humber-Bay of Islands

Overview of UNESCO Global GeoParks

UNESCO Global GeoParks are single, unified geographical areas where sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education, and sustainable development. A UNESCO Global GeoPark uses its geological heritage, in connection with all other aspects of the area's natural and cultural heritage, to enhance awareness and understanding of key issues facing society, such as using our earth's resources sustainably, mitigating the effects of climate change and reducing natural disasters-related risks.

By raising awareness of the importance of the area's geological heritage in history and society today, UNESCO Global GeoParks give local people a sense of pride in their region and strengthen their identification with the area. The creation of innovative local enterprises, new jobs and high-quality training courses is stimulated as new sources of revenue are generated through geotourism, while the geological resources of the area are protected.

UNESCO Global GeoParks empower local communities and give them the opportunity to develop cohesive partnerships with the common goal of promoting the area's significant geological processes, features, periods of time, historical themes linked to geology, or outstanding geological beauty. UNESCO Global GeoParks are established through a bottom-up process involving all relevant local and regional stakeholders and authorities in the area (e.g. landowners, community groups, tourism providers, Indigenous people, and local organizations). This process requires firm commitment by the local communities, a strong local multiple partnership with long-term public and political support, and the development of a comprehensive strategy that will meet all of the communities' goals while showcasing and protecting the area's geological heritage.

Focus areas include:

- Natural Resources – GeoParks inform people about the sustainable use and need for natural resources while promoting respect for the environment and the integrity of the landscape.
- Geological Hazards – Many promote awareness of geological hazards, such as the land slumping that is common in the Bay of Islands.
- Climate Change – GeoParks educate people on climate change and support adopting to renewable energy and “green tourism”. The GeoPark will have an impact on our tourism product, the need for community climate change adaption and mitigation plans, and the use of alternative energy in community and tourism infrastructure development.
- Education – all GeoParks operate educational activities on geological heritage, and its links to natural, cultural and intangible heritage. From a tourism programming perspective this presents a great opportunity to link the geological development of the region with the cultural development and the use of the land by Aboriginal peoples and European settlers.
- Culture – GeoParks are about people and celebrating the links between our communities and where our development heritage comes from.

- Women – empowering women through focused education or women’s cooperatives.
- Sustainable Development – areas of outstanding geological heritage cannot become a GeoPark unless they have a plan for sustainable development. This will mean sustainable municipal development plans, with similar land use policies, for all communities in the region. Such plans also serve to support tourism development by preserving lands that are valued by the community.
- Local and Indigenous Knowledge – Involve local and Indigenous peoples in preserving and celebrating culture.
- Geo-conservation – GeoParks utilize the concept of sustainability, value the heritage of Mother Earth, and recognize the need to protect it.

UNESCO Global GeoPark Annual Proposal and Evaluation Process:

The following is a summary of the UNESCO proposal and evaluation process.

- Aspiring UNESCO Global GeoPark sends a Letter of Intent, ideally by 1 July.
- Submission of applications, between 1 October and 30 November.
- Verification check on completeness of documents after 1 December.
- Desktop evaluations until 30 April.
- Field evaluation missions starting 1 May.
- Recommendations on applications by the UNESCO Global GeoParks Council in September.
- Decision by the Executive Board of UNESCO during its spring session.

Status of Cabox Aspiring GeoPark

The Cabox Aspiring GeoPark has completed the Letter of Intent (May 2016) but not submitted it to UNESCO.

Consultation Advice arising from Discovery GeoPark, Bonavista Experience

Following is a summary of information gleaned from a September 03, 2019 interview with Edith Samson, Executive Coordinator, Sir William Coaker Heritage Foundation, and member of the Board, Discovery GeoPark, Bonavista. Edith worked on the Aspiring Discovery GeoParks for over 12 years and is a leader in making the Bonavista Discovery GeoPark a reality. It is anticipated that the Discovery GeoPark will be officially recognized in 2020. We interviewed Edith to provide advice on the Cabox Aspiring GeoPark, and its path to become a UNESCO GeoPark.

- GeoParks were initially established as a means to promote and support the sustainable growth of rural communities – similar to how tourism in rural areas is being promoted.
- Undertake required GeoPark Self-Assessment Report, a very important component of attaining GeoPark status and must be completed as an initial step.
- The Province’s Departments of Natural Resources and Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation will be the two key Departments working with the GeoPark Management Committee. It is important that the GeoPark proponents ensure that both Departments GeoPark goals and objectives are aligned, in supporting the GeoPark Self-Assessment and in attaining UNESCO GeoPark status.

- The proponent must have a licence to occupy for lands that are owned by the Crown within the GeoPark.
- Before promotion and access is permitted, the proponent must confirm that some of the GeoPark sites are market-ready, and Tourism Assurance Program (TAP) compliant.
- Important to confirm in writing for Government support for the GeoPark both Federal (Parks Canada) and Provincial (Natural Resources and Tourism, Culture, Industry, and Innovation).
- The GeoPark will require its own Management Board and should be independent of the STAR Task Force.
- The Management Board needs to demonstrate that they are a separate organization, are incorporated with a board structure, constitution and by-laws, that an approved GeoPark Management Plan is in place and that 66% of the Board represent Non-Government Organizations. (A goal of the GeoPark is to be a public organization).
- A Memorandum of Understanding with GeoPark partners, such as Non-Government Organizations and municipalities, is required.
- The role of the park is to protect significant geology and any fossil site.
- The quarrying of rock is permitted within a GeoPark as is hunting, snowmobiling, ATVing, fishing, berry picking and managed wood cutting. A permit will be required to undertake these activities.
- The GeoPark should offer educational programming and promotion of the GeoPark to local residents and visitors. A record is to be kept of those who attend programmed educational activities.
- The GeoPark should be promoted through varied media: interpretive signs, brochures, video, images, and social media channels are encouraged.
- The GeoPark signs should be professional and on-site amenities such as parking, garbage collection, washrooms services and access should be provided.
- Telling the story of the natural history of the GeoPark involves interpreting how nature, culture and heritage have been intertwined into the lifestyle and sustainability of neighbouring communities. For example, in Bonavista the Elliston Root Cellars are an accepted GeoPark site.