

2021 **TACTICAL MARKETING PLAN**

CITY OF VERNON – TOURISM VERNON



TOURISM
✓ vernon



2021 **TACTICAL MARKETING STRATEGY**

prepared by:

City of Vernon
Economic Development and Tourism Department
(Tourism Vernon)

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Thank you to the Tourism Commission whose input was
valuable in creating this tactical marketing plan:

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BACKGROUND

TOURISM VERNON'S FIVE YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

The 2018-22 *Tourism Vernon Strategic Business Plan* sets the goals and vision for Tourism Vernon through to 2022. The strategy was developed with significant input from stakeholders and has been endorsed by the Tourism Advisory Committee (now Tourism Commission) and by City Council. The 2021 Tactical Marketing Plan has been developed with a goal of continuing to implement the goals and objectives identified within the strategic plan.

The information below is a summary of the goals, strategic framework, strategies, target markets and demand generators. A full copy of the 2018-22 *Tourism Vernon Business Strategic Plan* is available online: https://www.vernon.ca/sites/default/files/docs/community-economic/tourism_vernon_business_strategic_plan_-_final_ammended.pdf.

Mission

It is the mission of Tourism Vernon to promote, protect and enhance Vernon's position as one of North America's premier holiday and lifestyle destinations through leading the execution of targeted marketing programs, supporting destination development programs and advocating for the sustainable growth of tourism in Vernon.

Strategic Framework

Four strategic areas have been identified to drive the strategic plan and ensure Vernon is aggressively taking advantage of short term opportunities as well as preparing for the long term future.



Destination BC Brand Alignment

As a crown corporation, Destination BC strives for industry excellence and best practices in all aspects of their organization. It is important for the Vernon brand to align with Destination BC's brand, with the tagline Super, Natural British Columbia.

The Destination BC brand is built upon BC's true nature, which is vast, diverse, abundant, awe-inspiring and powerful. At the core of the brand is the brand essence: Wild at Heart. The brand essence speaks to BC's target audience: they have a deep appreciation of nature and while they may lead successful and accomplished lives, there is a part within them that craves a connection to the wild. In the wild, they are reminded of what is real and what matters, and the true nature of beauty and freedom. For more information, see www.destinationbc.ca/Resources/british-columbia-tourism-brand.



SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability goes far beyond the narrow concept of “going green”. Sustainable development embraces all aspects of a healthy, thriving world and can be actioned at the Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) level on a daily basis through thoughtful, well informed decisions. Aligned with Destination Canada, Destination BC, the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association and the City of Vernon as a whole, Tourism Vernon is continuously engaged and growing with sustainable practices as a pillar.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (Figure A) are the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. While Tourism Vernon staff recognize we are one, small organization that cannot have a direct, immediate impact on sustainability at the global scale, staff recognize Vernon’s important role as part of a much bigger industry.

At a local level, Tourism Vernon seeks to practice and encourage sustainability within our own community and is continually searching for ways to include aspects of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals into daily tactics and practice. Tourism staff have participated in the conversations and development of the City of Vernon’s climate action plan, and will remain a part of the City’s planning and implementation process.

On a regional level, Tourism Vernon staff support and engage regularly with the sustainability efforts of the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association (TOTA). As outlined in TOTA’s 10 Year Regional Tourism Strategy, long term goals for our region include an unwavering commitment to a “sustainable and responsible tourism industry”.

On a national level, Tourism Vernon staff join their peers on an annual basis at the IMPACT Conference, a national discussion on the tourism industry’s impact on Canada’s economic, social, environmental and cultural fabric. IMPACT’s goal is to align the Canadian tourism industry, as well as stakeholders and communities touched by tourism, behind a vision to achieve economic, social and environmental sustainability.



Figure A



2021 SITUATION ANALYSIS

Vernon is poised for a challenging yet resilient recovery. As the tourism sector begins to recover from the COVID-19 global pandemic, a pent-up demand for travel and a renewed emphasis on the outdoor activity sector exist. Wide open spaces and escapes from urban centres are in demand and the Okanagan stands to serve as the perfect combination of safety, well-being and escape. When it is safe to do so, an opportunity exists to showcase Vernon's natural strengths as a destination to an already engaged and growing audience.

While occupancy rates on a regional level were down as much as 50%, several of Vernon's accommodators reported occupancies consistently higher than the provincial average through the summer months. In the midst of a global health and tourism crisis, Vernon preformed well as a destination for domestic travel. Kelowna and Penticton also reported higher occupancy rates than the provincial average. The Okanagan served as an ideal escape from urban centres in Alberta and the Lower Mainland. This trend is expected to continue in 2021.

Tourism is incredibly important to our community and economy, but now is not the time to travel. Until February 5, all nonessential travel to and within BC should be avoided. As a safe and responsible Destination Management Organization, Tourism Vernon will continue to support BC's Provincial Health orders and recommendations by encouraging BC residents to stay local and support local tourism businesses. Vernon will resume regional, provincial and

national marketing activities only when it is safe and responsible to do.

Vernon's incredible natural environment is an established draw for tourists. Dr. Bonnie Henry has encouraged outdoor activity in open spaces making Vernon's lakes, trails, mountains and parks of particular interest in the transformed tourism climate. Moreover, a focus on safe, active, outdoor living aligns with Tourism Vernon's target markets' interests and desired activities. As restrictions ease, it is likely that a heightened demand for outdoor experiences will grow rapidly.

Prior to the global pandemic, Alberta and BC audiences were two of Vernon's strongest tourism markets. As travel restrictions tightened, Alberta and BC audiences remained engaged with Tourism Vernon's marketing and continued to choose Vernon for their summer vacations. Across the board, local tourism businesses reported Alberta and the Lower Mainland as the main sources of peak season tourist traffic. Markets that traditionally relied heavily on international travel experienced significant challenges as they shifted marketing efforts to focus on domestic markets.

While BC is in Phase 3 of the BC Restart Plan, and is not open to non-essential travel from the US or International countries, a continued focus on short-haul, road trip and regional markets is recommended for the duration of Phase 3. Once BC enters Phase 4, revisiting and revising target audiences to include longer-haul markets should be considered.

As the national tourism marketing and research organization, Destination Canada has emphasized the devastating impact COVID has had on the Tourism sector and the reality that there is no set timeline or guide to exactly what recovery will look like. While many details remain unclear, there is much hope for resilience across the tourism sector on the federal, provincial and local level. Tourism Vernon pivoted its original market plans for 2020 and quickly developed a domestic recovery strategy that significantly cut costs. This strategy helped struggling local businesses get marketing tactics quickly into market and focused on promoting Vernon's key strengths in a safe and responsible manner. Building a robust, high impact program around Vernon's inherent strengths and existing domestic audiences is recommended for the year ahead.

TARGET MARKETS

Leisure Market

- Active travelers
- Geographic:
 - Lower Mainland / BC markets
 - Northern Alberta / Edmonton
 - Southern Alberta / Calgary
- EQ Profiles: Free Spirits, Cultural Explorers, Authentic Experiencers, Rejuvenators

Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR)

Okanagan Day Trippers

Hyper local

- Immediate Vernon area, seeking staycation solutions



TARGET MARKET RESEARCH

1. Leisure Market – Outdoor Recreation

- a. Consumer research demonstrates Vernon's appeal to visitors includes its scenery, lakes, and outdoor activities. Almost three-quarters of visitors participated in outdoor activities.
- b. Includes: hiking, cycling (trail/road), mountain biking, water sports, golf, downhill skiing, nordic, snowshoeing, wildlife viewing, etc.

2. Leisure Market - Festivals and Events – paused until permitted

- a. Festivals and Events is a strong travel motivator and has been identified as a key theme to attract shoulder season visitation. Festivals and Events can support and enhance other Demand Generators, e.g., mountain biking events, golf events, agritourism events, ski event, sport tourism event, etc.
- b. Includes cultural and performing arts events.

3. World-Class Resort-Based Experiences

- a. Specific demand generator for targeted resort-based experiences, including Predator Ridge (golf), Sparkling Hill (health and wellness), and SilverStar Mountain Resort/Sovereign Lake Nordic Centre (winter).

4. Leisure Market – Small Town Charm

- a. Consumer research demonstrates that Vernon's appeal to visitors includes the downtown and its small-town charm, as well as the people in Vernon.
- b. Downtown
- c. Culinary & Agritourism
- d. Family Friendly, including attractions, heritage sites, etc.
- e. Vernon People



OBJECTIVES

- Keep Vernon top of mind to future visitors in a safe and responsible manner
- Build awareness around Vernon as a Destination across all applicable markets
- While international and long-haul markets remain 'closed', capture Vernon's market share of travelers from short haul markets like BC and Alberta
- Inspire local and regional citizens to refocus their unmet desire to travel on Vernon's offerings
- When it is safe to do so, promote Vernon as a destination to long-haul markets

STRATEGY

- Promote Vernon's product offering to revised target markets with high impact promotions
- Work directly with demand generating sectors to captivate existing audiences in an engaging way
- Heavy use of digital marketing tactics to allow versatility (i.e. easy to adjust demographics as travel restrictions change)
- Showcase engaging, local content featuring tourism stakeholders
- Balance the promotion of stakeholders' COVID-19 safety policies with the promotion of Vernon as a fun, vibrant destination
- Push audiences to hotel partner and tourism partner websites to encourage conversion and revenue
- Pursue strategic partnerships to pool funds and extend marketing and recovery efforts of local businesses

TACTICS

Marketing tactics are the strategic actions that direct the promotion of a product or service to influence specific marketing goals. The tactics below pertain directly to Tourism Vernon's marketing goals and primarily with the Advertising/Promotion and Contracts budget items.

DIGITAL MARKETING

Website Improvements

Funds Allocated: \$54,000 (Advertising/Promotions, Contracts)

Tourism Vernon's website sees up to 425,000 unique visitors annually and directs nearly 22,000 visitors to Vernon stakeholder websites per year. Meeting visitors where they are, with exactly what they need, should be a pillar of Tourism's 2021 digital program. Travelers are searching more, booking more and buying more on digital platforms. To address significant shifts in Tourism's target markets and audience interests, a site wide audit and refresh to TourismVernon.com's content is recommended.

Tourism's website should assist in meeting visitors exactly where they are with exactly what they need. A mobile friendly website should be easy to navigate and feature frequently used and searched information. This would include:

Mobile Efficiency:

- Tourists need content that performs exceptionally well on mobile devices. Creating a more relevant visitor-friendly experience, featuring frequently searched items like trails and hiking information, would be a focus for Tourism Vernon's 2021 website improvements

Content Overhaul:

- Updating all copy-writing across the site to become more relevant and engaging to a new tourism audience's needs and interests
- An emphasis on converting site visitors to stakeholder and hotelier websites and booking platforms
- Ongoing messaging throughout to ensure new COVID industry standards are being met
- Revised content management: i.e. Tourism Vernon's events calendar will require ongoing management

Social Media: paid & organic

Funds Allocated: \$47,000 (Advertising/Promotions, Contracts)

A phased, cautious return to Vernon's 365 days/year paid social media campaign in all applicable markets is suggested for 2021. In the past, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram advertising has generated millions of views and thousands of visits to TourismVernon.com. The addition of Pinterest and YouTube advertising would help capture new demographics in 2021.

Developing and promoting high impact, engagement content would be the backbone to staff's social media efforts. Social media contesting and giveaways, along with Destination BC's digital story network, would fall into Tourism Vernon's budget for social media.

Showcasing stakeholder content alongside Vernon's natural beauty would remain a focus across all channels.

Digital Advertising and Media Placement

Funds Allocated: \$75,000 (Advertising/Promotions, Contracts)

Digital advertising allows for reliable metrics and reporting, and gives Tourism Vernon the ability to narrow in on hyper target markets, aligned with public health official guidelines. An emphasis on all types of digital marketing would continue with digital ads on platforms such as Vancouver Daily Hive, CTV.ca and NHL.com.

E-Newsletters

Funds Allocated: \$18,000 (Contracts)

Currently, Tourism Vernon produces e-newsletters for consumer, quarterly travel trade, quarterly media, seasonal golf and local industry. These efforts would be expanded in 2021 to create further engagement with our target audiences and promote Vernon's existing, new and up-and-coming experiences.

Content Development: photo, video and copywriting

Funds Allocated: \$25,000 (Contracts)

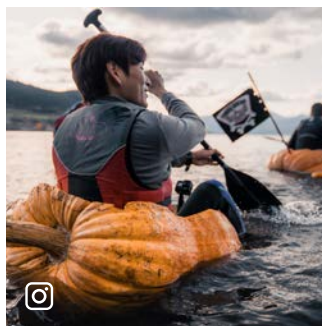
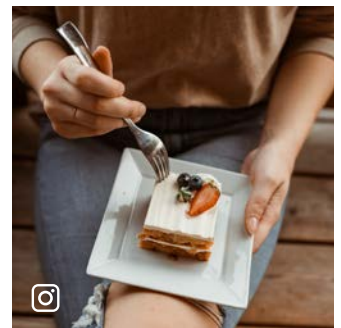
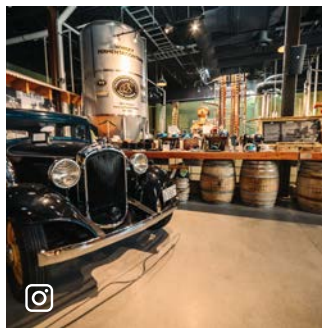
Destination videos and high-impact photography serve as multi-purpose tools, allowing for multiple uses across multiple platforms. Captivating imagery featuring Vernon's exceptional outdoor experience, small city charm and vibrant history and culture is needed for all Tourism Vernon's marketing efforts.

Staff would continue to work with contractors to utilize existing footage, while adding new experiences to the mix. Video content would be utilized across all Tourism Vernon's digital platforms, e-newsletters, website and television commercials.

CrowdRiff

Funds Allocated: \$25,000 (Advertising/Promotions, Contracts)

CrowdRiff is a digital platform, first introduced to Tourism Vernon in 2016 by Destination BC. This platform pulls user generated photos from multiple social media channels, collects them all in one easy-to-access hub for DMOs to use in countless ways. DMOs can search photography by location, hashtag and activity. CrowdRiff serves as an endless source of new, quality Vernon-based imagery that often features key Tourism stakeholders. Tourism Vernon utilizes CrowdRiff on a regular basis to create digital marketing campaigns, television advertising, and engaging photography for our social channels. In 2017, in partnership with Destination BC, Tourism Vernon plans to utilize CrowdRiff to create hundreds of digital story campaigns displayed across Destination BC's website, Google image searches and West Jet's social channels.



PAID MEDIA & PRINT ADVERTISING

Television Campaigns & Advertising

Funds Allocated: \$65,000 (Advertising/Promotions)

Staff are seeking television initiatives that allow for advertising in hyper-targeted markets. Several opportunities have been identified, including packages with Rogers Media, NG Media, Bell and Corus Entertainment. As travel restrictions ease, Tourism Vernon would work closely with a selection of advertisers to promote Vernon's active, outdoor lifestyle and health & wellness sector. Finally, an annual television campaign promoting Winter Wellness in Vernon with Sparkling Hill has been identified as a relevant partnership opportunity.

Print Advertising

Funds Allocated: \$20,000 (Advertising/Promotions)

Finding and selecting high quality print publications matching Tourism Vernon's objective audiences is always the goal. While markets continue to recover, a focus on high impact, regional publications with outdoor enthusiast audiences is recommended for 2021.

Visitor Guide

Funds Allocated: \$30,000 (Advertising/Promotions, Contracts)

The official visitor guide is a vital piece of the Vernon tourism experience. As Tourism Vernon's Visitor Information Centre will remain closed for the duration of 2021, maintaining visitor's access to reliable, quality visitor information becomes an important piece of the visitor experience. Tourism Vernon would print a useful, engaging guide with fewer pages and fewer copies printed. Refreshing the design and layout to include more trails and hiking information is recommended for 2021.

The Vernon Visitor Guide provides valuable visuals and details regarding Vernon's tourism and stakeholder offerings. The guide would be distributed by Vernon's mobile visitor servicing team, in visitor information centres throughout the valley, and at key events and tradeshow. Although some DMO's are moving their guides entirely virtual, it is recommended that we continue with a printed guide, albeit reduced with a smaller print run.

Media: blogger, travel writers & influencers

Funds Allocated: \$15,000 (Advertising/Promotions)

For now, Tourism Vernon has hit pause on all visiting travel journalists to the Vernon area. When it is safe to do so, Tourism Vernon would slowly begin to welcome travel journalists from appropriate locations. The immediate focus would be working with quality, local and/or regional bloggers and influencers to showcase appropriate products and businesses to local and regional audiences. As restrictions ease, Tourism Vernon would welcome media sent directly through DBC or TOTA. At this time, travel journalists are still open for business and receptive to contact and maintaining relationships for future trips.



PARTNERSHIPS & PROGRAMS

Tourism Vernon's Cooperative Marketing Program

Funds Allocated: \$100,000 (Advertising/Promotions)

Introduced in 2013, the Tourism Vernon Cooperative Marketing program has been available to Vernon and area tourism stakeholders and includes opportunities for consortiums, trade shows and events that promote visitation from outside the Thompson Okanagan to drive overnight stays.

In light of the social and economic impacts of COVID-19, local tourism businesses are struggling to find marketing dollars and readjusting to short-haul markets. In an effort to extend marketing reach and strengthen local businesses' recovery efforts, revisions to the Cooperative Marketing Program have been recommended. The proposed approach calls for two intake periods that recognize the anticipated loosening of current travel and gathering restrictions later in 2021.

Funds would be available to Vernon and area partners in all sectors of the tourism industry. To qualify for funds, tactics must adhere to policy as outlined in the 2021 Co-Op Marketing Guidelines and Policy document. To encourage overnight stays, collaboration with local hoteliers is strongly recommended for all applications.



Sector Development

Funds Allocated: \$35,000 (Advertising/Promotions, Contracts)

We know the best strategy focuses on key elements that can make a significant difference. To maximize the effectiveness of our marketing dollars, Tourism Vernon is suggesting a focus on specific sectors with the highest potential for revenue and visitation to the Vernon area.

As a biking, hiking, skiing and golf sectors boom, promoting and developing Vernon as a mecca for outdoor experiences should be front and center in promotional efforts. Moreover, assisting these sectors in their path to sustained success depends heavily on the visitor experience. Ensuring trail maps and trail signage are up-to-date and reliable, for example, becomes an important piece to creating an exceptional visitor experience. Staff would work with community partners such as the Ribbons of Green Trails Society, North Okanagan Cycling Society, Regional District of North Okanagan and the Vernon Golf Consortium to support and enhance visitor experiences within these sectors.

Mountain Biking & Trails

Creating a mountain biking destination requires a broad tourism vision and the collaboration of various groups within and outside the community. With a vision and partnership structure in place, a community is in a much stronger position to critically review its product, and ensure that trails are authorized and ongoing management is taking place. Numerous trail systems including the Okanagan Rail Trail, Grey Canal Trail and urban trails and connections are quickly supporting Vernon as an exceptional destination for trail related tourism. Building a mountain biking tourism sector involves marketing the product in an effective manner and working with other tourism sectors to add value to the overall visitor experience. Staff would work closely with these organizations for 2021 to further develop and promote Vernon's trail product.

Golf

Golf is big business in British Columbia, contributing the following in annual economic impact:

- \$3.7 billion GDP in 2019 (up from \$2.03 billion in 2013)
- Employing 52,183 British Columbians
- Contributing \$858 million in Taxes

Representatives from Tourism Vernon, Predator Ridge Resort, The Rise, Vernon Golf & Country Club and Spallumcheen Golf & Country Club are committed to working together to promote and grow the golf sector in Vernon.

Tourism Vernon would continue to work with the BC Golf Marketing Alliance, DBC's golf sector organization, to actively promote Vernon's unique golf product.

Health and Wellness

A growing demand for health and wellness experiences exists across the world. Destination BC's three year corporate strategy outlines iconic destinations within BC. The Okanagan Valley, listed as one of the iconic regions within BC, will be marketed heavily as a wellness destination complete with outdoor, orchard, and farm-fresh dining experiences. Aligned with DBC's approach, Tourism Vernon would capitalize on our position as a wellness destination. Poised with three world-class resorts offering extensive health and wellness product, and an abundant outdoor living experience, the health and wellness sector would remain a priority for Tourism Vernon's promotional activities.

Ski

British Columbia is home to the world's best skiing experiences and, with SilverStar Mountain Resort and Sovereign Lake Nordic Centre, Vernon is no exception. Skiing is a substantial driver of economic value to the province, with the ski industry accounting for approximately 8% of BC's total tourism revenue, and dispersing travellers throughout the province to BC's many ski areas.

Arts & Culture

This growing sector plays a vital role in creating a sense of place for destinations. With a new cultural facility coming, and as a destination rich in history and culture, Arts & Culture related attractions and content would be a welcome addition to Tourism Vernon's future strategies.

Visitor Servicing

Funds Allocated: \$30,000 (Advertising/Promotions)

Tourism Vernon is excited to activate a new approach to help visitors and locals activate their adventure in 2021, and explore the North Okanagan together, virtually and in person. Visitor services will be going mobile with an enhanced digital presence and a traveling promotion team to meet visitors where they are, with exactly what they need.

Council has approved the continued closure of the Visitor Information Centre throughout 2021, and the reallocation of funding towards digital and mobile visitor servicing activities to offer more accessible information online and more personal interactions within the community. A new mobile visitor services promotion team will be activated, traveling to popular Vernon locations throughout the spring, summer and fall to provide effective and timely support for visitors and locals looking for information or resources. Improvements to Tourism Vernon's website and mobile website will accompany the shift in Visitor Servicing.

Strategic Partnerships & Sponsorships

Funds Allocated: \$48,000 (Advertising/Promotions)

Strategic marketing partnerships entail leveraging tourism partners to extend marketing reach and effectiveness. Priority will be given to projects aligned with Tourism Vernon's revised target markets and projects with the most reach per dollars contributed. BC's tourism industry functions best through collaboration and partnering, so continuing to partner with leading organizations and key stakeholders should remain a priority along Tourism Vernon's path to success. Examples of strategic partnership opportunities arise with:

- Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association (TOTA)
- Destination BC partner programs
- Nearby communities for Okanagan-wide campaigns
- Local businesses or organizations seeking to feature Vernon in their marketing efforts

Destination BC Sector & Cooperative Projects

Funds Allocated: \$32,000 (Advertising/Promotions, Contracts)

Destination BC's (DBC) Cooperative Marketing Partnerships Program is an application-based program that provides cooperative marketing and promotion support to Regional Destination Marketing Organizations, community consortiums, sector organizations or approved community partnerships in British Columbia. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Tourism Vernon had agreed to participate in four cooperative sector initiatives. In light of the Tourism Industry's economic crisis, DBC has extended the deadline to complete sector pool initiatives to 2021. Tourism Vernon has begun strategizing for recovery with four sector projects:

- Mountain Biking Sector
- Farmers Market Sector
- Okanagan Rail Trail
- Ale Trail

New project applications for 2021 were due November 30, 2020. Staff partnered with the Okanagan Indian Band and SilverStar Mountain Resort to bring three communities together and promote Vernon's unique fall and winter product, with a focus on culturally significant, indigenous places in our community.

Finally, an ongoing partnership and collaboration with BC Golf Alliance would amplify Tourism Vernon's effort to promote Vernon as a golf destination.

Shop Local Campaign

Funds Allocated: \$17,000 (Advertising/Promotions)

Partnering with local organizations like the Downtown Vernon Association and The Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce, Tourism staff would collectively create and promote a shop local campaign. Local businesses are the backbone of the Vernon tourism sector. As stakeholders continue to navigate a challenging economy, supporting our local businesses is more important than ever.

Indigenous Tourism

Funds Allocated: \$10,000 (Advertising/Promotions, Contracts)

Indigenous Tourism is a key cultural pillar for attracting visitors to Canada and BC. The City of Vernon and the Okanagan Indian Band (OKIB) signed a relationship accord in the fall of 2018 as part of the Community Economic Development Initiative (CEDI). Based on the lack of indigenous tourism products/activities in the Vernon area, the Marketing Committee felt it was important to include dedicated funding to support Indigenous Tourism creation and growth in and around Vernon. Initiatives would be done in partnership with the OKIB and their efforts to move Indigenous Tourism forward.

Sport & Event Promotional Material Development

Funds Allocated: \$17,500 (Contracts)

While COVID restrictions have placed sports and event tourism on pause, this will remain an important sector as Tourism begins to recover. The landscape of event tourism will likely emerge as a different industry, but should not be overlooked as an opportunity to generate significant economic impact in our community. Spending time and resources preparing for the return and recovery of this industry is recommended for 2021.

Small Accommodators Fund

Funds Allocated: \$4,384 (Advertising/Promotions)

Since 2013, Tourism Vernon has offered small accommodators (80 rooms or less) a dedicated fund to support their marketing initiatives. The goal is to encourage and support marketing efforts of the smaller accommodators. While this fund is typically underutilized, a handful of small accommodators to utilize the funds on an annual basis.

LONG TERM STRATEGY & RESEARCH

2023-2027 Tourism Vernon Strategic Plan

Funds Allocated: \$40,000 (Contracts)

The City of Vernon currently has a 2018-22 Tourism Strategic Plan. A strategic plan is required prior to communities applying for, or renewing, their Municipal Regional District Tax (MRDT) application.

Destination BC has advised Tourism Vernon that a new five-year strategic plan, that would accompany a five-year renewal application, would be required in the spring of 2022. It is recommended that the process to develop the strategy begin in 2021. The strategy will need to align and leverage with Vernon's current Tourism Strategic Plan, the City of Vernon Official Community Plan, The Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association (TOTA) Regional 10 Year Strategic Plan, Destination BC's new brand and strategic plan and Destination Canada's strategic plan.

Market Research

Funds Allocated: \$35,000 (Contracts)

Consumer markets and consumer behavior continue to be significantly impacted by the ongoing global pandemic. Research and insights into how the markets have shifted and how this relates specifically to Vernon would be tremendously helpful. Relevant information helps staff to determine the best course of action short term and long term, and provides valuable insight as to how markets are shifting. Moreover, up-to-date research will help shape Tourism Vernon's five-year strategy for 2023-2027.



STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Hotelier Engagement Program

Funds Allocated: \$10,000 (Contracts)

A new initiative for 2021, this program would focus solely on local hoteliers and their engagement with Tourism Vernon's programming. Staff would move forward with the goal of creating on-going collaboration opportunities between tourism businesses and local hoteliers for packaging and promotion. For example, collaborative workshops dedicated specifically to upcoming community events and programs seeking hotel partners could be facilitated on a yearly basis. Once it is safe to do so, intimate networking events facilitating collaborative discussions between hoteliers and tourism businesses could be a part of this program.

Stakeholder Engagement Event

Funds Allocated: \$15,000 (Contracts)

Tourism Vernon's annual stakeholder event plays a significant role in educating local tourism businesses on best practices and industry updates and serves as a yearly opportunity to come together and collaborate. Due to COVID, this year's event must be virtual. While a virtual event does not present the exact same environment for networking as an in-person event, engaging and communicating with our stakeholders remains a top priority for Tourism Vernon. A virtual stakeholder event is therefore recommended for 2021.

Stakeholder Survey

Funds Allocated: \$5,000 (Contracts)

A requirement as a 3% MRDT collector, this annual survey provides Tourism Vernon stakeholders an opportunity to relay valuable feedback to Tourism Vernon in a documented way. Survey questions are approved ahead of time by DBC and, once the survey is complete, results are also sent along for DBC's review.

ADMINISTRATION

Labour

Funds Allocated: \$277,255 (Labour)

The implementation of the Tactical Marketing Plan is undertaken by the Manager, Economic Development and Tourism, the Tourism Manager, a Tourism Coordinator and with the support of the Administrative Assistant, Economic Development and Tourism. New for 2021, is the addition of two summer students to assist with the Mobile Visitor Information Centre. It should be noted that Manager, Economic Development and Tourism is funded entirely through the Economic Development operating budget. The Administrative Assistant, Economic Development and Tourism is funded equally between the Tourism operating and Economic Development budgets.

Transportation and Travel

Funds Allocated: \$14,935 (Transportation/Travel)

Due to the pandemic, the transportation and travel budget has been significantly reduced. The majority of the costs are associated with the existing Tourism vehicle along with some nominal travel costs to host media later in the fall should travel restrictions ease.

Mailing and Shipping

Funds Allocated: \$5,000 (Mailing/Shipping)

The majority of mailing and shipping costs are associated with the 2021 Visitor Guide. This year's costs have been significantly reduced by reducing the number of guides printed and focusing distribution on local and regional locations only.

Supplies

Funds Allocated: \$15,000 (Supplies)

The supplies budget is to support office needs along with general supplies required for the mobile visitor services team. The budget also covers costs of goods sold.

Hosting and Meals

Funds Allocated: \$11,500 (Hosting/Meals)

The hosting and meals budget has been reduced by 68% compared to what was budgeted in 2020. Administration has recommended some funding remain in the budget to support initiatives should travel restrictions ease later in 2021.

Industry Memberships & Associations

Funds Allocated: \$3,500 (Membership Dues/ Professional Dues)

Associations increase the presence of Tourism Vernon within the industry, which leads to more effective and efficient partnerships with representatives from around the province and country. Additionally, associations offer a broader scope of knowledge into specific sectors (i.e. travel trade and sports tourism). Memberships and associations are also vital to many advocacy efforts regarding Tourism-focused policies and regulations (i.e. Provincial MRDT legislation, Emergency Management BC policies, etc.).

Current list of memberships & associations:

- British Columbia Destination Marketing Organization Association (BCDMOA)
- Canadian Sport Tourism Alliance
- Canadian Inbound Tourism Association (CITAP)
- Mountain Bike Tourism Association of BC (MBTA)
- Tourism Industry Association of BC (TIABC)
- Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAC)
- Travel Media Association of Canada (TMAC)