



**DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN –
*FINAL REPORT***

AUGUST, 2011

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RTO 12

DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN – FINAL DRAFT

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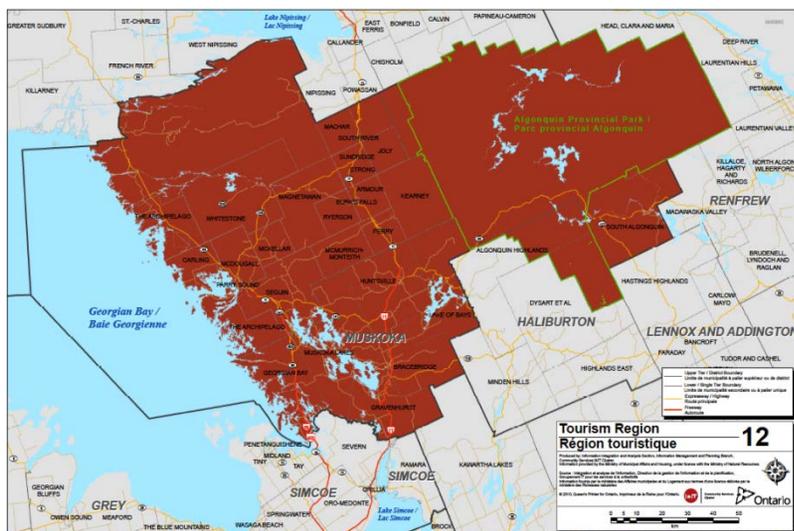
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RTO 12 Destination Development Plan Executive Summary

What is RTO 12?

RTO 12 is one of 13 Regional Tourism Organizations (RTOs) established throughout Ontario in 2010 to help implement the recommendations of the 2009 Ontario Tourism Competitiveness Study (more commonly known as the Sorbara Report). One of the key findings of that study was that Ontario's tourism industry suffered from being, on average, small-scale; was in need of refreshment and new product development; was insular and un-cooperative; and was not well promoted. A key recommendation coming out of the Sorbara Report was to set up the RTOs as structures to rectify some of these shortcomings. RTOs were intended to be independent, industry-led, not-for-profit organizations responsible for working with tourism partners and stakeholders to grow and enhance each region's tourism products and marketing activities.

RTO 12, incorporated in 2010, encompasses the District of Parry Sound, the Regional District of Muskoka, the Almaguin Highlands and Algonquin Park. The area is quite diverse, spanning the shores of Georgian Bay in the west to the highlands of Algonquin and Almaguin to the east and north. In the middle is the very popular area of Muskoka. There are many individual municipalities and communities throughout the area, as shown below.



Municipalities Comprising RTO 12:

- Algonquin Provincial Park
- Township of the Archipelago
- Township of Armour
- Town of Bracebridge
- The Municipality of the Village of Burk's Falls
- Carling Township
- Township of Georgian Bay
- Town of Gravenhurst
- Town of Huntsville
- Joly Township
- Town of Kearney
- Township of Lake of Bays
- Loring and District Local Services Board
- Township of Machar
- Township of Magnetawan
- Municipality of McDougall
- Township of Mckellar
- Township of McMurrich-Monteith
- Township of Muskoka Lakes
- Town of Parry Sound
- Township of Perry
- Restoule Local Services Board
- Township of Ryerson
- Seguin Township
- Township of South Algonquin
- Village of South River
- Strong Township
- The Village of Sundridge
- Municipality of Whitestone

Context: Tourism in RTO 12

Tourism in RTO 12 is a significant industry. Information from the Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Culture for 2008 (the most recent available) reveals the following facts about tourism in RTO 12:

- **3.478 million tourists** visited RTO 12 in 2008
- most of these (73%) were overnight visits
- most (67%) of these were from the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and Simcoe County
- most (74%) of these visits were for pleasure
- just over half these visits (51%) were in the third quarter of the year (July, August, September); only 10% were in the first quarter (January, February, March)
- the average party size visiting RTO 12 is 3.5 persons; 78% of parties are adults only; 22% have kids
- average length of stay is 3.4 nights
- the most common form of accommodation used is private home or cottage (56% of all accommodation-nights used); only 22% of nights were in roofed commercial accommodation)
- average expenditure per person-visit (in 2008) was \$223 (for overnight visits)
- most common activities engaged in were outdoor activity (60% of all visitors); boating (33%); fishing (20%); and visiting nature parks (14%)
- total visitor spending throughout RTO 12 in 2008 was estimated at **\$662 million** (value of tourism receipts)

These facts show that the industry is significant in size in terms of the number of establishments and the receipts generated. It further shows, however, that the industry depends to a large extent upon southern Ontario for its market (the same situation as several other RTOs across the province find themselves in).

**Although the \$403,000 figure is the average for all businesses, it must be recognized that business size is not evenly ('normally') distributed around this mean, and that most businesses will be quite significantly smaller than this.*



- several Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) and related organizations are active throughout RTO 12 (see above)
- the size of the industry was estimated at **1,738 establishments**: 264 accommodation establishments; 180 arts, recreation and entertainment enterprises; 271 food and beverage establishments; 711 retail businesses; and 312 other establishments
- average gross receipts per tourism business were \$403,000*

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Assessment

Through the review of background materials, interviews, surveys, workshops and focus groups, a number of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats were identified. These provide a basis in which the strategy is grounded. The ‘headlines’ regarding these are shown in the following chart:

<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - scenic and natural beauty; strong sense of place - strong brand identities - access to large GTA market - strong base of arts and culture activities - strong cottager base - number of regional and international class attractions (especially accommodations and foodservice) - entry into the area possible from several directions (e.g. Highways 400, 17, 11) - wide range of prices for foodservices, attractions, and accommodations - not “foreign” in feeling; low risk visit (unlike going somewhere exotic, unknown, or possibly uncomfortable) - active sports tourism focus - good fishing, particularly in the northern part of the RTO 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - seasonal nature of tourism industry and seasonal nature of economy - economic slowdown - poor transportation network - high costs of doing business - poor signage - difficulty in finding staffing support - stereotypical view of what the region offers - lack of market research - sub-regions within RTO 12 have very different marketing needs - sub-regions are not equally ready for marketing (infrastructure, services, product development) - lack of understanding of the changing demographics, buying behaviors, and psychographics of GTA market - Highway 11 north of Orillia is a visually unattractive entrance to the region - little collaborative marketing (yet) - little packaging of attractions and events in the region - high cost image in some parts of RTO 12 - value proposition (i.e. what the traveler gets in return for an investment of time and money in getting to the destination) is unclear or is different for each part of the RTO - intra-regional communications (especially with operators and service providers) needs upgrading - (at present) little sense of common purpose throughout the region (focus is on sub-region needs and issues) - cost of gasoline makes visit increasingly more expensive since most visitors arrive by car - mid-size conference facilities lacking or needs upgrading - lack of easy access to development capital
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OPPORTUNITIES

- market development opportunities in the GTA
- niche market opportunities with ethnocultural groups
- aging population
- use of social media
- sports tourism
- continuing waterfront development
- develop broader base of shoulder season and winter attractions
- green tourism
- greater range of events
- customer training program
- greater broadband access for maximum tourist convenience
- provision of grants and operational funding
- tourism information centres
- mentoring opportunities
- more product and event packaging
- very high vehicle counts: divert and stop drive-by traffic
- small and medium meeting market staying in Canada as US/Canada border “thickens” further

THREATS

- increasing competition (from other RTOs, as well as destinations outside of Ontario)
- large territory of RTO 12
- continuing slow economic recovery
- threats to existing DMOs (in terms of future funding)
- high Canadian dollar makes increase in US traffic more unlikely
- increase in marketing and product development spending by other nearby RTOs
- disparity in service and product offerings continues
- all sub-regions continue to have the same priority (e.g. infrastructure, sales pitch)
- over-dependence on GTA market (for example, if the GTA economy shrinks then RTO has no other customers to take up the slack)

The Destination Development Plan: Vision and Mission

The purpose of this project was to develop a ‘Destination Development Plan’ for RTO 12. This Destination Development Plan consists of a strategic framework, plus the operational or business plan that flows from the strategy and is the means to implement it over the period of the plan. Through a tender process, the firm of TCI Management Consultants, in association with Millier Dickinson Blais and GGA•Management Consultants, was retained to undertake the work. The strategic plan was developed based upon extensive input with the tourism industry throughout Region 12. Approximately 200 businesses were consulted over the course of the work, through a combination of industry consultation across the region (12 workshop sessions were held throughout the area), personal interviews with the consultants, and an on-line survey.

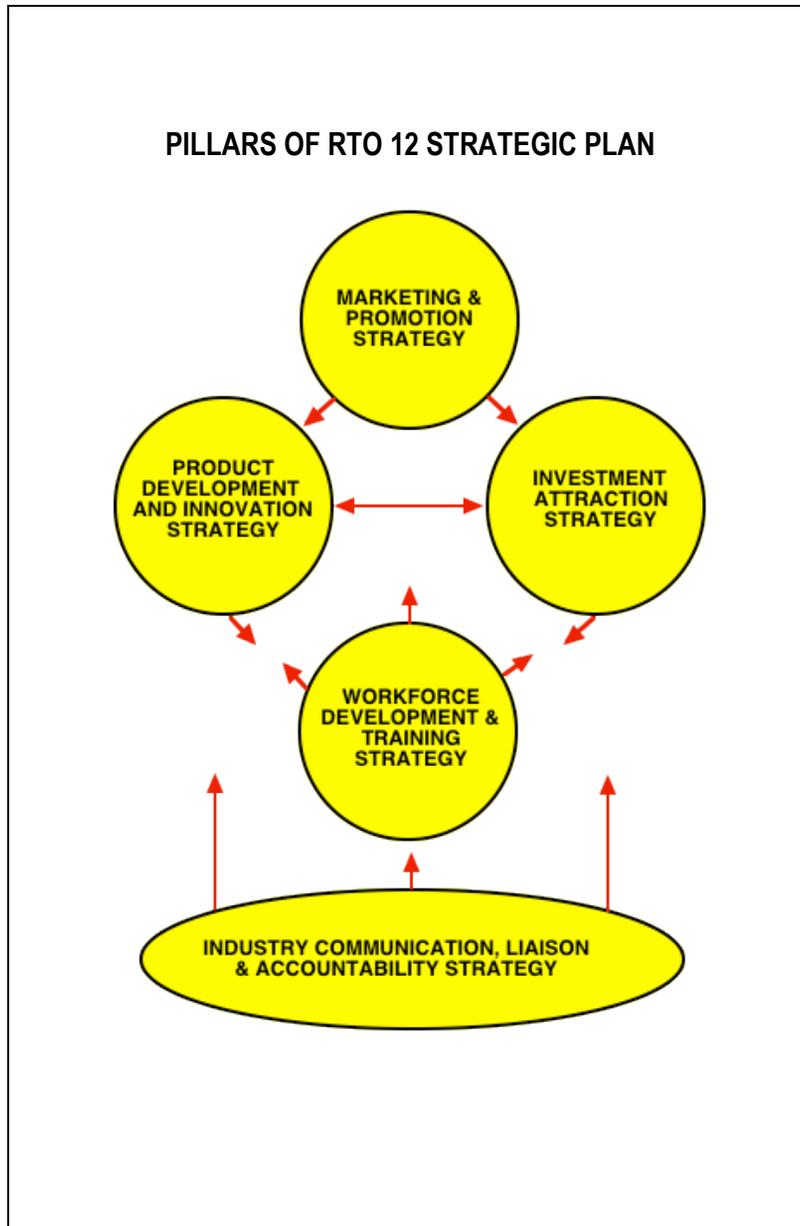
Based upon this extensive input, a strategic plan that was developed consisted of a proposed Vision for the tourism industry throughout the region designated as RTO 12, a proposed Mission statement for the RTO 12 organization (henceforth known as the RTO 12 Corporation) and five key action areas that collectively comprised the strategic thrusts for the organization.

The Vision and Mission developed for RTO 12 emerging from this process was as follows:



The five action areas that were required to bring about this Vision are described next.

Five Strategic Action Areas



RTO 12 was originally asked to address in its strategic planning efforts four key areas of activity: 1) marketing and promotion; 2) product development and innovation; 3) investment attraction; and 4) workforce development and training. The industry consultation process described above suggested a number of activities in these areas. As well, a fifth area of activity was suggested: ‘industry communication, liaison and accountability’. The strategy therefore consists of 5 interrelated clusters of activity designed to bring about the Vision articulated. These five strategic areas are all mutually reinforcing and supportive as illustrated in the diagram to the left. A brief explanation of each is provided below:

- 1) **Marketing and Promotion Strategy:** Here the focus is to develop and communicate a positive brand identity for RTO 12 that can provide a supportive context for local and sub-regional identities. An **integrated** marketing strategy would focus on attracting new and returning visitors, diverting or stopping traffic, and extending the length of stays. Tools that would be used for attracting new and returning visitors include the web, certain social media, continuity programs using direct and electronic mail, print such as directories and events programming, and some broadcast depending on the event. For extending stays or diverting traffic, the main tools would be out-of-home advertising, signage, local print advertising, product and event packaging, tour company fam tours, and service staff cross-selling training.
- 2) **Product Development and Innovation Strategy:** The set of actions contained in this strategy is focused upon working with existing operators to improve existing operations in a number of respects: expansion of product and activities; more activity in the shoulder and winter seasons; environmentally responsible operations; and greater packaging.
- 3) **Investment Attraction Strategy:** The main thrust of these activities was to work in partnership and in a supportive capacity with economic development organizations throughout RTO 12 in their own individual efforts to attract investment.
- 4) **Workforce Development and Training Strategy:** A number of initiatives in this area of strategy were suggested during the consultation process; however, relative to more urgent marketing and product development needs, it was seen to be a less important and longer-term strategy. Accordingly it is a part of the strategy developed, although does not come into play until downstream in the RTO’s overall efforts.
- 5) **Industry Communication, Liaison, and Accountability Strategy:** In addition to the four areas outlined above a fifth cluster of activity emerged from the consultation process, relating to various mechanisms through which industry coordination and alignment would occur. Also, the theme of *accountability* to the industry, integrally related to communications and liaison, emerged as part of this set of strategies.

Roles, Priorities, Timing

A number of initiatives in each of these five areas were suggested through the interviews, surveys and workshop sessions. These were presented at a Board session in March 2011 where the Vision for RTO 12 was validated, the five areas or initiative were debated, and where specific strategic actions were discussed. The Board considered each action in terms of three fundamental aspects:

Role of the RTO Corporation →

The Board understands that the RTO Corporation cannot do everything by itself. The RTO 12 Corporation will have a lead role in certain of the initiatives selected, with a responsibility to drive the activity and make things happen. In other areas, the role for the RTO 12 Corporation will be to support: to act as a team player on various initiatives and strategies that may be led by others. This may involve providing resources (e.g. staff support, office assistance), or simply acting as a partner around the table. In still other areas, RTO 12 Corporation will play more of a reactive and advisory role, providing advice and counsel when called upon.

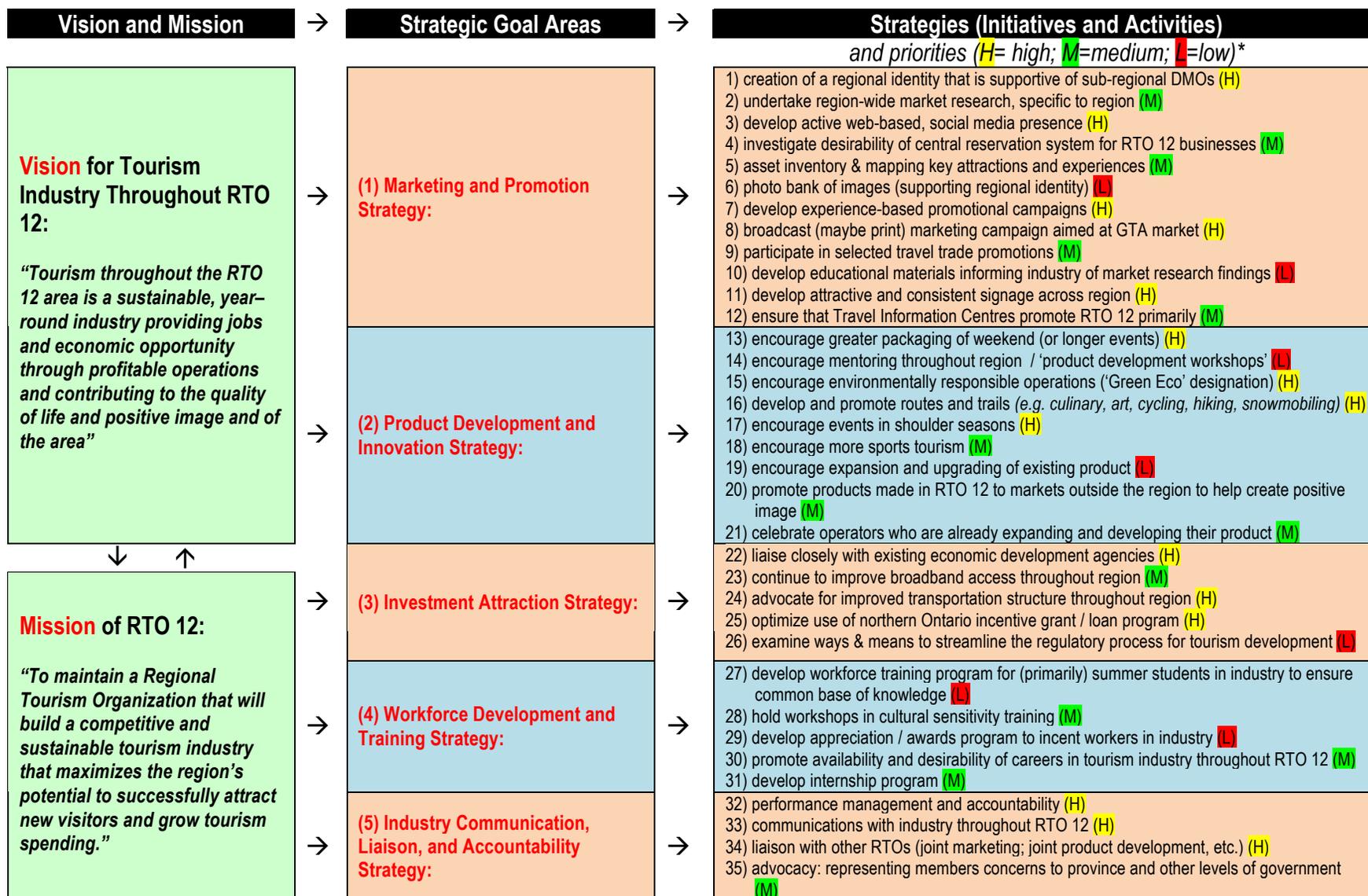
A second area of deliberation for the Board was with respect to the priority of the initiative. Some actions were deemed high priority: initiatives that are essential to have accomplished if the Vision is to be realized. Other actions were quite important as they were considered to be supportive and supplementary to the highest priorities: these are considered to be medium priority. Low priority initiatives were strategies that could wait until the high and medium priorities were taken care of: if there was time and were resources left over, then the RTO Corporation could address them. They might be considered 'desirable' but not 'necessary' from the perspective of achieving the Vision.

← Priority of the Initiative

Timeframe →

*The third area of discussion revolved around the question of **when** the Board wished to see action on each of the initiatives. Some were on-going or in the opinion of the Board should begin ASAP, and therefore were deemed to be immediate (if not sooner). Others were seen to properly begin some time within the RTO Corporation's first fiscal year of operation (i.e. April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012). Others were regarded as medium term actions (in the second full fiscal year) while still others were seen to be even longer-term than that. In all of these deliberations regarding timeframe, there was an awareness as to which items were on the 'critical path' and needed to be in motion or complete in order to enable other strategies to be realized.*

RTO 12 Destination Development Plan: Strategy at a Glance



* aggregate rating of strategy presentations to the industry in June, 2011

Performance Evaluation

In any strategy it is imperative to measure the results of activities and initiatives undertaken in order to understand what is working, and what is not. The strategy for the RTO 12 Corporation has outlined a number of performance monitoring and evaluation measures, in 4 areas, as illustrated below:

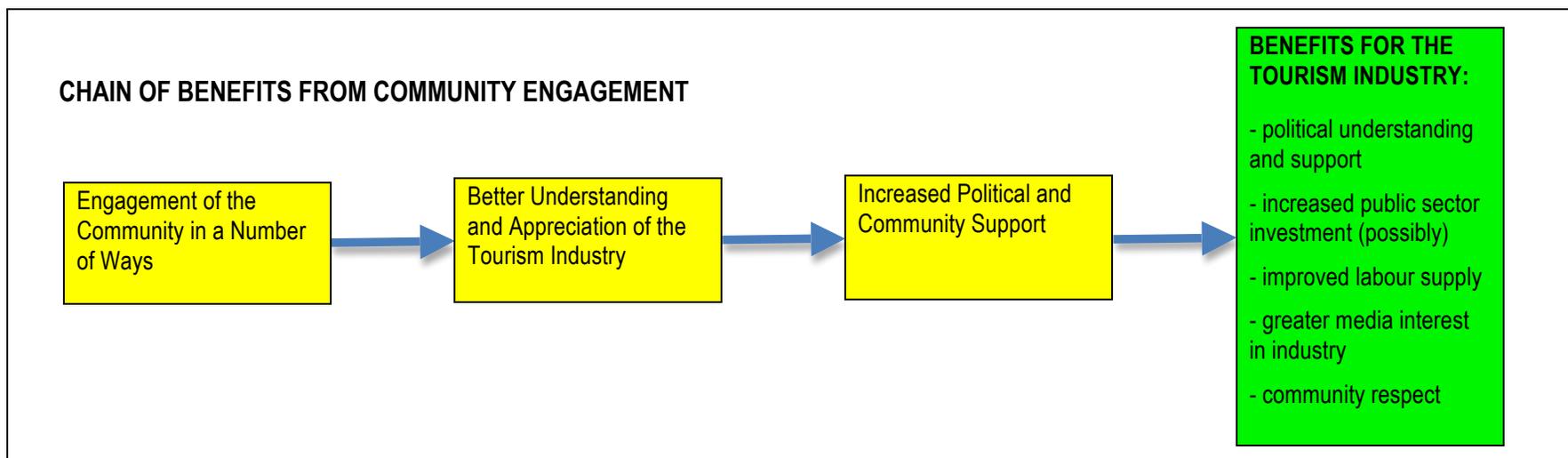
Category of Performance Metrics	Examples of Measures
A) Organization Performance Measures (<i>workload measures of RTO 12 organization's activities</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - numbers of communications with members - programs offered to members (and types of programs offered) - budget ratios: office and administrative costs as % of total costs - sources of funds ratios: self-generated funds as a % of total revenues
B) Program Effectiveness measures (<i>measures of the effectiveness of various programs and activities</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - effectiveness of advertising campaigns (awareness, retention, visit conversion, etc.) - press coverage statistics - web site utilization statistics
C) Member Participation and Satisfaction Measures (<i>degree to which RTO 12 programs and activities are meeting the needs of members</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - number of active members as percentage of total number of eligible businesses / organizations throughout RTO 12 - indicators of participation of members in various industry programs - results of satisfaction survey: participation rate (a significant indicator by itself), satisfaction with promotion campaigns, product development workshops, etc.
D) Industry Economics and Regional Performance Measures (<i>measures of industry performance throughout the region</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - number of tourist visits to RTO 12 - average length of stay - average daily expenditure - average party size - total tourist receipts in region - key industry measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - occupancy rates - [possibly] REVPAR (<i>revenue per available room</i>)

Community Engagement Strategy

An important aspect of RTO 12’s work involves informing, educating and engaging the broader community throughout the RTO 12 region, about the nature of the tourism industry and the RTO’s activities. Three fundamental objectives for this:

- 1) to ensure that residents throughout RTO 12 are aware of the assets (attractions and events) available to them within the region
- 2) to convey and understanding to residents of the importance of the tourism industry as an economic engine throughout RTO 12
- 3) to create a better understanding of the job opportunities and career potential offered by the tourism industry

A more engaged community is good for the tourism industry:



A number of strategies are recommended as part of a community engagement strategy, including Board members as ambassadors, staff members as liaison to community organizations, press releases, social media releases and various awareness-raising events .

Conclusion

The RTO 12 organization has the potential to be a significant player in the growth and development of the tourism industry throughout the region, yielding significant benefit and return-on-investment to the region. The strategy contained in this Destination Development Plan, and the subsequent business and operating plans contained within the full Report, are the road map and tools to guide the organization along this path.

Introduction to This Document

This document consists of three parts:

- 1) Background to this Project and the Destination Development Plan
- 2) Strategic Plan Framework for RTO 12
- 3) Business and Operational Plan Outline for Next Three Years

The initial section briefly introduces the RTO 12, the purpose of this project, and the various activities undertaken in the development of the Destination Development Plan.

The next section presents the strategic plan for RTO 12, based upon extensive consultation with the tourism industry in the region. This discusses the Vision for RTO 12, and the underlying logic of that Vision. Next, five strategy areas are discussed. These include the four strategy areas that all RTOs have been asked to address, namely marketing and promotion; product development and innovation; investment attraction; and workforce development and training. In addition, a fifth area, relating to industry communication, liaison and accountability has been developed. Each strategy area is further discussed in terms of specific strategies and actions including their overall priority, the role of the RTO, and the timeframe in which the action will take place. These details are presented in terms of a series of charts summarizing the aforementioned details.

The third section presents business and operating plans for the first full three years of operation of the RTO. Given the speed with which activities are happening in the RTO, and uncertainties regarding the economic, social and political environment over the next three years, these business / operational plans are necessarily somewhat ‘high level’ in nature. Nevertheless, they do serve to provide some general overview of the key priorities and activities that are planned in order to implement the strategy developed and ultimately achieve the Vision developed.

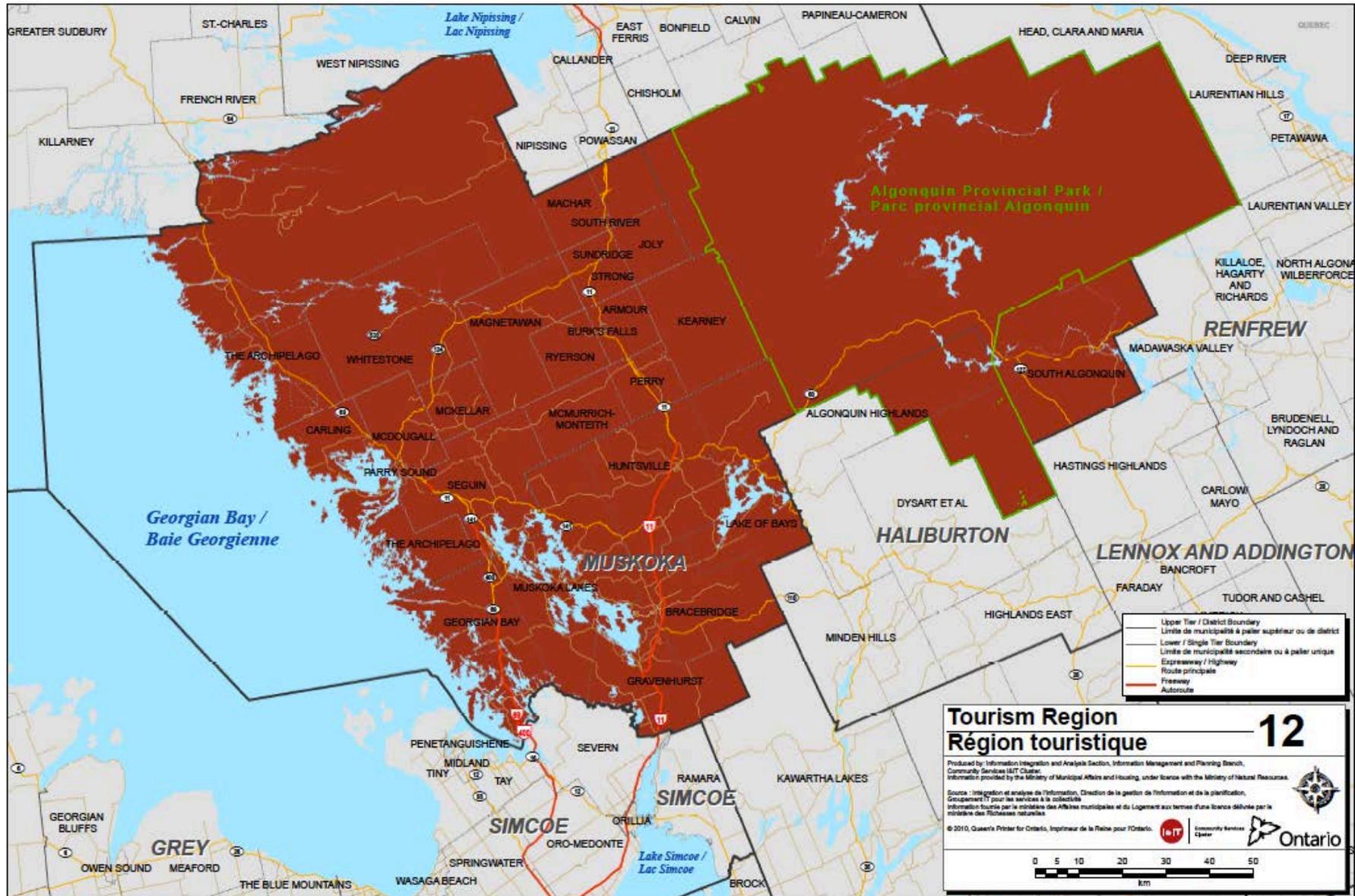
Two other strategic elements contained within this report are: 1) recommendations regarding the monitoring and evaluation criteria that might be useful in measuring the implementation of the plan and the success of the industry in reaching the targets identified, and 2) a community engagement strategy, to ensure that the industry and the general public are aware of the efforts of the RTO. Various Appendices contain specific analyses and other relevant elements of the project.

1. Background to this Project and the Destination Development Plan

1.1 Background to RTO 12

RTO 12 is one of 13 Regional Tourism Organizations (RTOs) established throughout Ontario in 2010 to help implement the recommendations of the 2009 Ontario Tourism Competitiveness Study (popularly known as the Sorbara Report). One of the key findings of that study was that Ontario's tourism industry suffered from being, on average, small-scale; in need of refreshment and new product development; insular and unco-operative; and not well promoted. A key recommendation was to set up the RTOs as structures to rectify some of these shortcomings. An overall goal of doubling tourism receipts by the year 2020 (i.e. in a decade) was suggested as being a reasonable and achievable target for the industry province-wide. Each RTO was to develop a plan for improvement in its particular area, to help ultimately achieve this target.

RTO 12, established in early 2010, is one of the larger RTOs in the province, spanning a vast area encompassing Parry Sound District, the District Municipality of Muskoka, the Almaguin Highlands area, Algonquin Provincial Park, and South Algonquin. The territory is shown on the map overleaf.



The municipalities encompassed by RTO 12 are:

- *Algonquin Provincial Park*
- *Township of the Archipelago*
- *Township of Armour*
- *Town of Bracebridge*
- *The Municipality of the Village of Burk's Falls*
- *Carling Township*
- *Township of Georgian Bay*
- *Town of Gravenhurst*
- *Town of Huntsville*
- *Joly Township*
- *Town of Kearney*
- *Township of Lake of Bays*
- *Loring and District Local Services Board*
- *Township of Machar*
- *Township of Magnetawan*
- *Municipality of McDougall*
- *Township of Mckellar*
- *Township of McMurrich-Monteith*
- *Township of Muskoka Lakes*
- *Town of Parry Sound*
- *Township of Perry*
- *Restoule Local Services Board*
- *Township of Ryerson*
- *Seguin Township*
- *Township of South Algonquin*
- *Village of South River*
- *Strong Township*
- *The Village of Sundridge*
- *Municipality of Whitestone*

1.2 Background to this Study

In December of 2010, the team of TCI Management Consultants, GGA•Management Consultants, and Millier Dickinson Blais was retained by the Board of RTO 12 to undertake the preparation of a Destination Development Plan for the RTO. This plan was essentially to be the strategic foundation driving the RTO that would set the basis for the subsequent efforts of the organization. As with all regional tourism organizations, RTO 12 was asked to address in its strategic planning efforts four key areas of activity: 1) marketing and promotion; 2) product development and innovation; 3) investment attraction; and 4) workforce development and training. As well, RTOs were asked to identify any other areas where they felt the new RTO structure could be of benefit to the industry throughout the region.

Given the urgency of the timelines in which the relatively new RTO organizations were being implemented across the province, RTO 12 has commissioned several other projects ‘in advance’ of this strategy having been developed. These are all initiatives for which there was broad consensus at the Board level that they were needed, and would clearly be a part of the strategy developed in any event. (And, in fact, the development of this strategy has validated the need for them in the first place.) These projects are:

- **development of an on-line reservation system:** This project involves investigation into the structure, likely participation and costs of developing an online reservation system for attractions and accommodators throughout RTO 12. The intention is that this will be a low entry cost way for all industries that may use reservations systems to participate.
- **social media technology infrastructure:** This project involves the development of a social media system that will enable all participating operators throughout RTO 12 who are connected to the RTO's website to take advantage of (i.e. be connected to) social media opportunities should they desire. This project is actively underway with a coordinator already hired and in place.
- **brand development:** A study has just (March 2011) been commissioned to develop a brand identity for RTO 12 that will develop an attractive and memorable brand for the region that will complement the existing strong brand identities.
- **research and development:** RTO 12 has an effort underway to review what data collection initiatives relevant to the tourism industry in RTO 12 are occurring (such as the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership initiative) , and whether to buy in or participate in these (as opposed to collecting its own purpose-specific data). This review is underway, and does signal a strong intent on the part of the RTO to foster a culture of research throughout the region.
- **attraction coordination:** Another project in the formative stages is the development of an inventory of attractions to understand the full base of tourism assets throughout the region, and to help inform future marketing and product development initiatives. While still in the formative stages, this project speaks to a strong intention to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the attractions, experience and support facilities extant throughout the region, in order to help inform future strategic initiatives.
- **training and education for front line staff:** A final on-going project intention is to undertake workforce development and training to ensure that front-line staff have the right attitude and base of knowledge / information when dealing with visitors. Like other project intentions, this is still in the formative stages and will be shaped further by the strategy developed here; nonetheless the initial identification of this as a priority area does demonstrate an intention to focus upon this area as one key priority.

1.3 Activities Undertaken

The intention in developing this strategy was to ‘cast the net wide’ and ensure that all operators throughout the region knew of the RTO, the intention behind this project, and had an opportunity to participate. To this end a number of key tasks were undertaken. These included:

- **reviews of all relevant background materials:** Working with the facilitators (representatives from Muskoka Tourism and Georgian Bay Country) a number of background documents were assembled and reviewed by the consultants to ensure that they were up to speed in terms of issues and opportunities facing the tourism industry throughout the RTO, and recent developments of significance.
- **personal interviews with key stakeholders:** Again working with the facilitators, interviews (some 20 in total) were held with key representatives in the tourism industry, to provide an early read on key issues and opportunities throughout the region.
- **focus groups:** Focus groups were held in the third and fourth weeks of February in 12 locations throughout the RTO, in order to provide operators with a chance to attend a session nearby to them. These sessions were structured workshops where an initial presentation explaining the purpose of the RTO provincial initiative was made, specific information concerning the purpose and structure of RTO 12 was conveyed, and then an active group discussion was convened, focusing on identifying the ‘job description’ for the RTO. Sessions were held in:

Rosseau, *Monday February 14*
 Parry Sound, *Monday, February 14*
 Britt, *Tuesday February 15*
 Port Loring, *Tuesday February 15*
 Magnetawan, *Wednesday, February 16*
 Sundridge, *Wednesday, February 16*

Dwight, *Thursday, February 17*
 Huntsville, *Thursday, February 17*
 Bracebridge, *Friday, February 18*
 Port Carling, *Friday, February 18*
 Gravenhurst, *Tuesday February 22*
 Port Severn, *Tuesday February 22*

The availability of these focus groups was promoted through ads in the local published media and on some radio stations. In total, approximately 100 persons attended all 12 of the sessions.

- **on-line survey:** In addition to the foregoing (as part of the philosophy of ‘casting the net wide’), an online survey was undertaken, in order to provide every operator with an opportunity to participate. A link to the survey was published on the RTO 12 website, in addition to the promotion of the on-line opportunity at the focus groups sessions themselves. The survey link was also published in the ads promoting the focus groups sessions. In

addition, approximately 100 operators who had not been represented at the focus group sessions were separately identified and telephone calls were made to each to ensure that they were aware of the survey and the need to participate. In total, 63 responses to the survey were obtained.

- **benchmarking:** In addition to these data collection activities, some benchmarking with other RTO-like operations globally (i.e. tourism development and marketing organizations that are positioned ‘mid way’ between local destination marketing organizations and a state, provincial or national-level organization) was undertaken. This identified some strategic initiatives and actions that RTO 12 could consider.

These key activities generated many suggestions for strategies and actions that RTO 12 should contemplate. (In total, from the activities outlined above and from the participation at the public meetings to present the plan, over 200 individuals in the industry were consulted in this exercise.) From these suggestions, a number of ‘consensus themes’ were identified, representing the most frequently mentioned and potentially useful (in the consultant’s judgment) for RTO 12. These were discussed at a meeting of the Board, and a voting exercise to determine the priority of the actions, the role that RTO 12 should undertake, and the timeframe for action.

After the initial Destination Development Plan was developed and discussed at the Board, the final stage was to present and discuss it at 5 subsequent industry forums held in late May and early June 2011. Two were held in Huntsville (the ‘Chautauqua event’, and one other) and in Port Loring, Parry Sound and Gravenhurst. At these sessions, several refinements to the SWOT analysis, the Vision and Mission, and the priorities of the various initiatives were discussed. These are all reflected in the present document.

2. Context to the Destination Development Plan

This section of the Report contains two sub-sections that provide the context to the Destination Development Plan. The first section is a profile of the tourism industry in the RTO 12 looking at both the characteristics of the industry (a supply-side perspective) as well as the characteristics of the visitors themselves (a demand-side perspective). The second component is a summary of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the industry as gleaned from the interviews, focus groups and workshops, and surveys undertaken. This then prepares the groundwork for the subsequent development of the strategy itself.

2.1 Profile of the Tourism Industry in RTO 12 Region

Tourism in RTO 12 is a significant industry. Information from the Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Culture for 2008 (the most recent available) reveals the following facts about tourism in RTO 12:

- **3.478 million tourists** visited RTO 12 in 2008
- *most of these (73%) were overnight visits:*

	<i>Overnight Trips (000)</i>	<i>Total Visits (000)</i>	<i>% Trips Overnight</i>
<i>From Ontario</i>	2,322	3,239	71.2%
<i>From Elsewhere in Canada</i>	29	33	87.9%
<i>From US</i>	113	130	86.9%
<i>Overseas</i>	62	74	83.8%
<i>Total Visits</i>	2,526	3,478	72.6%

- most (67%) of these were from the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and Simcoe County:

	<i>Percentage of total visits</i>		
	<i>Same Day Trips</i>	<i>Overnight Trips (000)</i>	<i>Total Trips</i>
<i>From GTA (Toronto, York, Peel, Durham, Halton)</i>	17.6%	38.8%	56.5%
<i>From Simcoe County</i>	3.9%	6.9%	10.8%
<i>From Waterloo Region</i>	0.1%	3.4%	3.5%
<i>From Wellington County</i>	0.1%	2.0%	2.1%
<i>From Hamilton-Wentworth</i>	0.6%	2.5%	3.1%
<i>From Niagara</i>	0.3%	2.5%	2.8%

- most (74%) of these visits were for pleasure:

	<i>Number of Trips (000)</i>	<i>% of Total</i>
<i>Pleasure</i>	2,588	74.4%
<i>Visiting Friends and Relatives</i>	750	21.6%
<i>Business</i>	72	2.1%
<i>Personal</i>	67	1.9%
<i>Total Trips</i>	3,478	100.0%

- just over half these visits (51%) were in the third quarter of the year (July, August, September); only 10% were in the first quarter (January, February, March):

	<i>Number of Trips (000)</i>	<i>% of Total</i>
<i>1st Q: Jan - Mar</i>	356	7.3%
<i>2nd Q: Apr - Jun</i>	756	21.7%
<i>3rd Q: Jul - Sep</i>	1,787	51.4%
<i>4th Q: Oct - Dec</i>	579	16.6%
<i>Total Trips</i>	3,478	100.0%

- the average party size visiting RTO 12 is 3.5 persons; 78% of parties are adults only; 22% have kids
- the average age of travelers is 47.1 years; the age distribution of travelers is:

	Number of Travelers (000)	% of Total
Under age 15	26	0.8%
16 - 24	289	8.4%
25 - 34	505	14.6%
35 - 44	665	19.2%
45 - 54	741	21.4%
55 - 64	643	18.6%
65+	589	17.0%
Total Travelers Stating Age	3,458	100.0%

- average length of stay is 3.4 nights
- the most common form of accommodation used is private home or cottage (56% of all accommodation-nights used); only 22% of nights were in roofed commercial accommodation):

	Total Nights Spent (000)	% of Total Nights
Roofed Commercial Accommodation	1,914	22.2%
Camping / Trailer Park	1,416	16.4%
Private Home / Cottage / Cabin	4,833	56.0%
Other Accommodation	466	5.4%
Total Person-Nights	8,629	100.0%

- *most common activities engaged in were outdoor activity (60% of all visitors); boating (33%); fishing (20%); and visiting nature parks (14%)*

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Number of Travelers Engaging in Activity (000)</i>	<i>% of Total</i>
<i>Festivals / Fairs</i>	<i>113</i>	<i>3.2%</i>
<i>Cultural Performances</i>	<i>121</i>	<i>3.5%</i>
<i>Museums / Art Galleries</i>	<i>187</i>	<i>5.4%</i>
<i>Zoos / Aquariums</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>1.3%</i>
<i>Sports Events</i>	<i>70</i>	<i>2.0%</i>
<i>Casinos</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>0.7%</i>
<i>Theme Parks</i>	<i>86</i>	<i>2.5%</i>
<i>Federal / Provincial Nature Parks</i>	<i>485</i>	<i>13.9%</i>
<i>Historic Sites</i>	<i>210</i>	<i>6.0%</i>
<i>Any Outdoor Sports Activity</i>	<i>2,104</i>	<i>60.5%</i>
<i>- boating</i>	<i>1,135</i>	<i>32.6%</i>
<i>- golfing</i>	<i>256</i>	<i>7.4%</i>
<i>- fishing</i>	<i>679</i>	<i>19.5%</i>
<i>- hunting</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>2.0%</i>
<i>- downhill skiing / snowboarding</i>	<i>141</i>	<i>4.1%</i>

- *average expenditure per person-visit (in 2008) was \$223 (for overnight visits):*

	<i>Average Daily Expenditure</i>
<i>From Ontario</i>	<i>\$204</i>
<i>From Elsewhere in Canada</i>	<i>\$146</i>
<i>From US</i>	<i>\$518</i>
<i>Overseas</i>	<i>\$430</i>
<i>Total Visits</i>	<i>\$223</i>

- *total visitor spending throughout RTO 12 in 2008 was estimated at **\$662 million** (value of tourism receipts)*

- *total visitor expenditure by category (millions, rounded):*

Category	Ontario	Elsewhere in Canada	US	Overseas	Total Expenditure
<i>Public Transport</i>	\$1.0	\$0.1	\$1.8	\$0.6	\$3.5
<i>Vehicle Rental</i>	\$2.6	\$2.2	\$2.3	\$2.5	\$9.6
<i>Vehicle Operations</i>	\$108.4	\$2.2	\$5.7	\$0.6	\$116.8
<i>Local Transport</i>	\$1.8	\$0.1	\$0.2	\$0.3	\$2.4
<i>Accommodation</i>	\$146.3	\$1.2	\$18.9	\$8.0	\$174.4
<i>Food & Beverage</i>	\$234.6	\$3.3	\$14.0	\$6.4	\$258.3
<i>Recreation</i>	\$33.0	\$0.6	\$3.6	\$0.9	\$38.1
<i>Culture</i>	\$6.3	\$0	\$3.1	\$2.4	\$11.9
<i>Clothing</i>	\$20.2	\$0.1	\$4.6	\$1.9	\$26.9
<i>Other Retail</i>	\$10.7	\$0.6	\$4.8	\$3.7	\$19.8

- *total visitor expenditure by percentage of total expenditure:*

Category	Ontario	Elsewhere in Canada	US	Overseas	Total Expenditure
<i>Public Transport</i>	0.15%	0.02%	0.27%	0.09%	0.53%
<i>Vehicle Rental</i>	0.39%	0.33%	0.35%	0.38%	1.45%
<i>Vehicle Operations</i>	16.38%	0.33%	0.86%	0.09%	17.65%
<i>Local Transport</i>	0.27%	0.02%	0.03%	0.05%	0.36%
<i>Accommodation</i>	22.11%	0.18%	2.86%	1.21%	26.36%
<i>Food & Beverage</i>	35.45%	0.50%	2.12%	0.97%	39.04%
<i>Recreation</i>	4.99%	0.09%	0.54%	0.14%	5.76%
<i>Culture</i>	0.95%	0.00%	0.47%	0.36%	1.80%
<i>Clothing</i>	3.05%	0.02%	0.70%	0.29%	4.07%
<i>Other Retail</i>	1.62%	0.09%	0.73%	0.56%	2.99%

- *several Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) and related organizations are active throughout RTO 12*

- *the size of the industry was estimated at **1,738 establishments**: 264 accommodation establishments; 180 arts, recreation and entertainment enterprises; 271 food and beverage establishments; 711 retail businesses; and 312 other establishments*
- *major types of businesses (top 5 in each category):*

<i>Accommodation Establishments:</i>	<i>Housekeeping cottages and cabins (60) Resorts (44) Motels (38) RV Parks and Campgrounds (36) Recreational (non-Hunting or Fishing) and Vacation Camps (27)</i>
<i>Arts, Recreation & Entertainment Enterprises</i>	<i>Marinas (69) All Other Amusement and Recreation Facilities (28) Golf Courses & Country Clubs (25) Sports Centres (18) Commercial Art Dealers (7) Other Heritage Institutions (6)</i>
<i>Food and Beverage Establishments</i>	<i>Full-Service Restaurants (144) Limited-Service Eating Establishments (96) Caterers (15) Drinking Establishments (Alcoholic Beverages) (12) Mobile Food Services (4)</i>
<i>Transportation and Travel services</i>	<i>Taxi Service (15) Travel Agencies (7) Scenic and Sightseeing Transportation (6) Non-Scheduled Chartered Air Transportation (6) Tour Operators (6)</i>
<i>Retail Businesses</i>	<i>All types (711)</i>
<i>Other Establishments</i>	<i>All types (251)</i>

- *sizes of businesses, by employment (number of establishments):*

<i>Type of Business</i>	1 to 19 employees	20 to 49 employees	50 to 99 employees	100+ employees	Indeterminate Number of Employees	Total Establishments
<i>Accommodation Establishments:</i>	101	21	8	9	125	264
<i>Arts, Recreation & Entertainment Enterprises</i>	94	15	2	4	65	180
<i>Food and Beverage Establishments</i>	166	27	0	0	66	271
<i>Transportation and Travel services</i>	27	0	0	0	18	45
<i>Retail Businesses</i>	423	32	13	8	235	711
<i>Other Establishments</i>	111	10	0	2	128	251
<i>Total Establishments</i>	929	106	32	27	644	1738

- *sizes of businesses, by employment (percentage of total establishments):*

<i>Type of Business</i>	1 to 19 employees	20 to 49 employees	50 to 99 employees	100+ employees	Indeterminate Number of Employees	Total Establishments
<i>Accommodation Establishments:</i>	5.8%	1.2%	0.5%	0.5%	7.2%	15.2%
<i>Arts, Recreation & Entertainment Enterprises</i>	5.4%	0.9%	0.1%	0.2%	3.7%	10.4%
<i>Food and Beverage Establishments</i>	9.6%	1.6%	0.0%	0.0%	3.8%	15.6%
<i>Transportation and Travel services</i>	1.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.0%	2.6%
<i>Retail Businesses</i>	24.3%	1.8%	0.7%	0.5%	13.5%	40.9%
<i>Other Establishments</i>	6.4%	0.6%	0.0%	0.1%	7.4%	14.4%
<i>Total Establishments</i>	53.5%	6.1%	1.8%	1.6%	37.1%	100%

- *total tourism receipts across the RTO region in 2008 were estimated as \$700 million – note that this is higher than the average visitor spending figure of \$662 million as it factors in additional travel expenditure from residents within the region (i.e. not visitors)*
- *this total tourism receipts figure represents receipts of approximately \$403,000 per tourism-related business (i.e. \$700 million divided by the count of 1,738 tourism-related businesses throughout RTO 12) – note that this is average is a very rough calculation, and that there is inevitably a very wide range of variation around this mean : although the \$403,000 figure is the average for all businesses, it must be recognized that business size is not evenly ('normally') distributed around this mean, and that most businesses will be quite significantly smaller than this.*

The Magnitude of the Challenge

- *the Sorbara Report target of doubling tourism receipts by the Year 2020 would imply, for the tourism industry in RTO 12, a doubling of this figure to \$1.4 billion in that year, or growth of \$58 million each year*
- *to put this into context, at the current ratio of receipts to businesses, this would imply an additional 144 new tourist businesses each year*
- *alternatively, if the average receipts per business could be increased by 50% to (say) \$600,000 per business on average, AND new businesses were to come on stream, the required number of new tourism businesses (earning this level of receipts) would drop to 49 per year¹*
- *either way, there is a significant challenge to be met by the RTO organization: both to increase the earnings of tourism businesses as well as to grow the base of the industry*

¹ Calculated as follows: if tourism businesses in 2020 were generating \$600,000 in gross receipts each on average, then the target of 1.4 billion would require a industry of 2,333 businesses, an increase of 585 businesses over the current base of 1,748, or 49 new businesses per year.

2.2 Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats (SWOT) Assessment

A SWOT assessment is the logical place to start in developing a strategic plan for tourism development and management. It ensures that the strategy ultimately developed is grounded in a clear understanding of the advantages possessed by, and challenges and opportunities facing, the industry. Below we discuss first the underlying logic of a SWOT approach, then the application of this approach to the creation of this Destination Development Plan.

The Logic of the SWOT Approach

A SWOT analysis can provide the basis for a strategic plan. Different elements (strengths, weaknesses, and so on) will logically imply different types of strategic actions and initiatives, as shown in the chart below:

	How Defined Strategically?	Strategic Actions
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unique or very strong factors that provide current advantages or benefits in the provision of services to residents and visitors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protect an advantage • further develop or capitalize upon an existing advantage
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • areas of current disadvantage in the provision of services to residents and visitors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strengthen areas of weakness • reposition to eliminate weakness (in reality, or through the creation of alternative perceptions)
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • situations that present opportunities for future advantage or benefit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feasibility testing • implementation planning
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • situations that present dangers of future disadvantage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • risk assessment • contingency planning

The SWOT assessment discussed here is based upon the reviews of background information, interviews undertaken, input from the 12 focus group sessions undertaken, the results of the on-line survey, and the consultant's judgment. Note that the factors reported upon here represent at the end of the day, the opinions of the consultants. However, there are three avenues through which these opinions are expressed. These are differentiated in the text as follows:

- text in **black font** represents opinions that reflect a consensus from those individuals consulted, and with which the consultants agree
- text in **blue font** represents factors that did not come out strongly in the consultation process, but rather reflect the consultant's opinions
- text in **green font** represents opinions that reflect some consensus from those individuals consulted, and but in the consultants views are not correct, or represent an opportunity for education or further assessment (these are further explained in the write up of each factor)

Strengths

Current strengths of the region and the tourism industry within it were reported to be as follows. (Note that the rank order in which items are reported in this assessment roughly mirrors the frequency with which they were mentioned in the workshops, interviews and surveys).

- **scenic and natural beauty:** Throughout the RTO 12 region, there are many areas of scenic and natural beauty, reflecting the image of the rugged Canadian north and evocative of the spirit of discovery and adventure. •
- **strong brand identities:** The RTO 12 region reflects some internationally recognized brand identities ('Algonquin Park', 'Muskoka') as well as several other strong brands within the province and Canada ('Georgian Bay', 'Huntsville' [resulting from GB activities], Parry Sound, Bracebridge, Gravenhurst)
- **access to large GTA market:** The GTA and southern Ontario market, which represents the core visitor base for the RTO is large and growing.
- **low entry cost:** Some suggested that relatively low cost of land and availability of businesses represented a low entry cost for new tourism businesses for new operators. If true, this would be a feature that the RTO 12

organization and other economic development agencies in the region could make known on a more widespread basis. However, it is likely that the business entry cost across RTO 12 varies so widely based upon specific location and type of tourism business that this may not be a meaningful indicator.

- **strong base of arts and culture activities:** The RTO 12 area has developed in recent years a strong base of cultural facilities (Stockey Centre in Parry Sound; Algonquin Theatre and Summit Centre in Huntsville; Rene Caisse Theatre in Bracebridge). Moreover, several arts and related organizations throughout the RTO 12 area have been particularly active in recent years.
- **strong base of cottagers and seasonal residents:** One of the unique characteristics of this RTO region, unlike many others, is its very high proportion of seasonal residences. Many of these are converting into year-round (winterized) homes as cottagers age and retire. This provides a growing base of relatively affluent homeowners who may then start contributing to the economy². While this does not particularly benefit accommodation operations, it does help to grow the base of those who might be attracted to local events and activities. It also means that there is an attuned market in southern Ontario, the GTA and beyond that is familiar with the region in the summertime and may be more amenable to coming to shoulder season events and activities.
- **good fishing, particularly in the northern parts of the RTO:** The caliber and quality of fishing throughout the RTO region, and particularly in the northern and more remote parts, is acknowledged to be excellent.

Weaknesses

Current weaknesses of the region and the tourism industry within it were reported to be as follows.

- **seasonal nature of the business:** Summer is clearly the peak season throughout RTO 12. Many businesses shut down for the relatively long winter season. While winter-oriented sports are growing, and drawing a larger number of visitors into the region, there is still a strong perception that the RTO 12 tourism business is largely seasonal in nature.
- **seasonal economy:** Related to the above, the economies of many of the communities in the RTO 12 area are highly seasonal in nature, with many operations shutting down over the winter and shoulder season months.

² In fact, many of these individuals are part of what geographer and economist Richard Florida would call 'the creative class', and are thus the types of individuals who might be more likely to start or invest in a business, mentor an existing business, become involved in the community, etc. See, for example, Richard Florida, *Who's Your City* (Random House, 2008).

- **economic slowdown:** The general economic slowdown is seen to be a major factor causing a decline in tourism business. The high cost of gas and travel, economic and job uncertainty, the HST, and the perceived high cost of living generally, are seen as major factors inhibiting travel. For US residents, the high value of the Canadian dollar and the increased difficulty in crossing for US residents as a result of passport requirements exacerbate this effect.
- **industry characterized by small operators:** While there are clearly several large and significant players in the tourism industry in RTO 12, most of the tourism operators in RTO 12 are small-scale operations. This makes it more difficult for the tourism industry on a number of levels: smaller operations are less able to charge premium prices; pay higher wages; have the time or resources to participate in marketing activities; or have the time to invest in coordinated activities on behalf of the sector. *They also may be more inherently suspicious of government and sectoral initiatives, which may make it difficult for the RTO organization to effectively represent their interests.*
- **poor transportation connections:** A number of themes relating to poor transportation connections were heard throughout the consultation process. These related to ensuring 4-lane accessibility throughout the region (speaking of the twin ‘spines’ through the region: the Highway 400/69 corridor, and the Highway 11 corridor). As well, better road connections throughout the region, and regular and reliable public transport linking the communities throughout RTO 12 (to better enable employees to work throughout the area) were also frequently mentioned themes. *This latter point is one that would require careful analysis, weighing the very high costs of providing such a service to the communities against the benefits achieved. It may be that some links would warrant such a service, but there is a good possibility that most would not.*
- **high cost of doing business:** Several respondents suggested that the cost of doing business in some areas in Region 12 was high, and that this was a threat to the sustainability of their operation. Specific factors mentioned in this regard were high taxes (property and commercial), high transportation and travel costs, and (in a few cases) high wage rates. *Compared to other areas across Ontario, this perception is likely not true, and the RTO may, in concert with economic development agencies across the region, wish to undertake some analysis to address it. (The findings from such an analysis could be reported to the industry throughout the RTO region using whatever communications vehicles the RTO develops.)*
- **poor signage:** This was a theme heard frequently in the various surveys and interviews. There were actually three ‘sub themes’ heard in this issue area: the first related to the fact that signage to the area in some cases was poor; the second reflected a perception that signage within the area was confusing and needed improvement, and the third (and likely most common) position was that that current signage didn’t (and future signage should) reflect a regional

image and identity. A somewhat related concern, heard in only a few instances, was that certain attractions throughout RTO 12 were not adequately represented (or even listed at all) in many GPS systems.

- **difficulty in finding staffing support:** Some operators indicated that they encountered on-going difficulties in finding staff, for both seasonal positions as well as expertise for on-going permanent positions. Many also felt staff were not very knowledgeable about product throughout the RTO, or even in the local area in which they worked, and that it would be helpful if they were able to act more effectively as local advocates for attractions and activities for tourists. Some felt that this was due to local attitudes ('laziness') and/or a perception of low pay and little opportunity for advancement. **However, the opposite is often as true: some 'low end' jobs provide opportunities for some individuals to flourish and obtain invaluable contacts, and there are careers throughout RTO 12 that have been forged in the tourism industry. This may represent an opportunity to educate those living throughout the RTO region as to the benefits and employment/career opportunities offered by the tourism industry.**
- **stereotypical view on what the area offers:** Some interviewees made the point that the RTO 12 region offers more than "rock, lakes and trees" but that the view of many living in the source markets was that this was all that there was in the region. Others expressed this notion as a need to broaden the image of the region beyond just cottages and camping. Still others suggested that the traditional view of golfing, fishing and boating in the area was all well and good, but that the region needed to develop a broader offering and image. Elements of a broader image included winter activities, culinary events, arts crafts and cultural activities, etc. This point speaks to the overall image and brand of the region.
- **lack of market research:** Although mentioned by a few, this was not a major theme to emerge from the research. However, in our view, the lack of consistent, comparable and timely market research is a barrier to understanding tourists' behavior patterns and opportunities that may result from these. Without access to such data, management of tourism attraction, events and support services are relying on gut feel and anecdotal information from guests for decision-making support.
- **lack of access to development capital:** Several interviewees made the point that access to development capital for upgrading or new development, was difficult. It was acknowledged that this was generally a problem for the tourism industry overall, but especially so for smaller operations in the more remote parts of the RTO area.

Opportunities

Future opportunities for the region and the tourism industry within it were reported to be as follows.

- **market development opportunities in the GTA:** Several see that there could be significant opportunity in developing and promoting packages to the large and growing GTA and southern Ontario marketplace. As long-distance travel becomes more expensive, short vacations closer to home (so-called ‘staycations’) are expected to increase in popularity, and it is recognized that the RTO 12 region has a wide variety of product to reach this market.
- **niche market opportunities with ethnocultural groups:** Related to the above, some see some opportunity in developing particular packages and tours oriented towards ethnocultural markets in the GTA. (The point about the Norman Bethune Historical Site in Gravenhurst attracting a market that was 90%+ Chinese [largely tours from China] was heard several times). Several mentioned that there was an opportunity to market in particular to ‘first generation’ Canadians³. *It may be that as ethnocultural communities become increasingly comfortable within Canadian society (likely to be whatever generation(s) follow the original immigrants) there may be potential here. As well, for the immigrants themselves, guided packaged tours offered in native languages – like the Bethune tours – could have potential).*
- **aging population:** Several as well mentioned the fact that aging population base in Ontario posed some opportunity. Despite the fact that as a result of foreseeable economic circumstances over the medium to longer term, Canadians will likely be working longer and retiring later, there may still be some opportunity in this regard. (It is likely that the opportunity is simply not as great as was once thought.) The growth in second homes in Muskoka (and likely Parry Sound District as well) is indicative of this fact. An aging population base with more leisure time, and being conscious of value for money, may well pose a major opportunity for RTO 12.
- **use of social media:** It was widely recognized that there were tremendous opportunities for the use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, Digg, etc.) for marketing and communications purposes – especially in terms of reaching the next generation. (Even as this strategy was initiated, RTO 12 had recognized these opportunities and was investigating possibilities in this regard.)

³ This is a matter that bears further analysis. The term ‘first generation’ is ambiguous – sometimes referring to the immigrants who become naturalized citizens, sometimes to their children who are the ‘first generation’ born in Canada.

- **sports tourism:** Several interviewees and interview respondents mentioned sports tourism as an opportunity area, and suggested that more could be done to promote the region’s facilities to obtain a greater share of this growing market.
- **continuing waterfront development:** Several interviewees suggested that a key asset of communities throughout RTO 12 was their waterfront, and that a continuing focus upon waterfront development and beautification was necessary. This was presented in the context of continuing the efforts that already were underway in Parry Sound, Gravenhurst, etc.
- **develop broader base of shoulder and winter attractions:** Another common theme heard was that the tourism industry throughout RTO 12 needed to develop more shoulder season attractions and events in order to make better use of existing capacity at these non-peak times, as well as to develop an image and reputation of being more than just a summer season destination.
- **provide tax breaks, grants and operational funding:** Another common theme heard was that the RTO 12 could get involved in providing tax breaks, grants, seed funding and in some cases operating loans to tourism businesses. However, RTO 12 was never envisaged to be, nor will it ever be, a funding agency. This opportunity suggestion, while clearly a popular choice, is clearly a ‘non-starter’. RTO 12 might consider in its messaging to the industry, making it clear exactly what the role and mandate of the organization is, and that direct grants or operational funding are not its mandate. (It can and will work with funding agencies, but will not itself provide funds.) One clear opportunity here lies in the fact that RTO 12, being part of ‘northern Ontario’ does qualify for certain grants and financial incentives unavailable elsewhere. RTO 12 should ensure that the tourism industry is aware of this, and understands where to go to find out more (i.e. economic development agencies).
- **‘green tourism’:** Several mentioned an opportunity to encourage, and become known for, environmentally sensitive tourism. This would build upon the area’s existing image as offering opportunities to engage with nature, see pristine beauty, etc. An existing RTO 12 initiative to develop a ‘green certification’ program for industry capitalizes upon this opportunity.
- **greater range of events:** Many respondents indicated that there were significant opportunities to develop a broader range of events and activities, particularly in the shoulder and winter seasons. Specific suggestions included culinary events and ‘trails’; geocaching; dogsled races; cycling tours (‘tour de RTO 12’); music events; painting courses (a la Haliburton School of the Arts); etc. **Note that not all (and possibly none) of these event will prove to be feasible,**

which will be a function of the time and cost of organizing and mounting the event relative to the return in terms of visitors and expenditures. But this does represent an area where the RTO might become involved in certain product development events.)

- **greater broadband access:** Some respondents see that an opportunity to stimulate tourism might relate to encouraging broadband access throughout the RTO region. This could be a positive support to tourism in that it increases convenience to visitors throughout the region, but is perhaps unlikely to draw tourist into the RTO 12 area in the first place. Granted, lack of good Internet access is a deterrent to some visitors, who might not return if they have had difficulty in connecting. This is a more important factor in ensuring a high-quality visitor experience, than in attracting visitors in the first place.
- **RTO 12-specific customer training program:** One common complaint heard was that front-line staff are not very knowledgeable about the range and variety of activities and events available in the local area (to say nothing about RTO 12 overall!), and that is there were some sort of training program that employees could take to bring them ‘up to speed’ in this area. One opportunity to address this would be to design an on-line training / certification program, where employees could learn basic facts and then take a certification test. (This could be modeled on the province’s existing ‘SmartServe’ program for those serving alcohol in the province, where various training modules are covered and then a test taken, all on-line.)
- **tourist information centres:** Another opportunity mentioned less frequently was the idea of ensuring that all tourism information centres throughout the RTO12 region act as information centre for the **entire** RTO region, as opposed to just their local area. (Under this approach, it will clearly be necessary for all front line staff to have a good working knowledge of the entire range of assets throughout the entire region.) The information centres ideally would be somehow branded as information centres for the entire region through signage and messaging.
- **mentoring opportunities:** There may be some potential to pair small businesses, especially newer ones in the region, with older individuals (possibly new retirees into the area) who may have some interest in assisting or advising such businesses. This is a strategy that has worked in economic development strategies in other regions.

Threats

Future threats facing the region and the tourism industry within it were reported to be as follows.

- **increasing competition:** Many respondents see increasing competition as being a primary concern to the industry throughout RTO 12. This is seen on three fronts: 1) competition from other tourism destinations outside Canada; 2) competition from other provinces; and 3) competition from other RTOs. This third factor was the most frequently mentioned, as other RTOs compete with RTO 12 for the lucrative and nearby GTA and southern Ontario marketplace.
- **continuing slow economic recovery:** Many see that the current economic conditions (slow economic growth, high travel costs, HST, etc.) will continue and contribute to a general decrease in interest in travel and tourism. *As mentioned earlier, however, this could be as much opportunity as threat in terms of appealing to the GTA and southern Ontario source markets.*
- **threat to existing DMOs:** Depending upon the funding model to emerge from the deliberations of the RTO organization, some business and DMOs are uncertain as to what the implications for their own funding situation may be in the longer term. They see a potential threat if individuals businesses are force to choose between paying membership dues to their local DMO as well as the RTO. *This is an opportunity for the RTO to become involved in educational efforts to inform the industry as to what the longer -term possibilities might be.*
- **large territory of RTO 12:** RTO 12 encompasses a very large territory, including some areas that have good transportation connections to the GTA markets (Parry Sound, Gravenhurst, Bracebridge, Huntsville) but others that are not so well connected (the northern fringe of the RTO 12 area; locations that are some distance off Hwys. 11 or 400/69). As well, the nature of the tourism product is different to some extent, with the Georgian Bay islands and large-lake boat experience opportunities to the west and the more inland and smaller lake opportunities inland. This may pose an on-going challenge to the RTO 12 organization Board and management to communicate and remain relevant to this diverse area.

Strategic Opportunities

This section began with an assertion that a SWOT planning approach was a good way to approach strategic planning in that strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats may have strategic implications. It concludes with an analysis of what those strategic opportunities might be, based upon the SWOT findings presented.

Strategic Implications of SWOT Assessment

SWOT Area	Finding	Strategic Implications and Considerations
Strengths	scenic and natural beauty	- ensure that regional brand reflects this strength
	strong brand identities	- ensure that regional brand builds upon and supports existing strong brand identities
	access to large GTA market	- strategy should support existing and new marketing strategies focused upon this market
	low entry cost	- for some types of businesses in some locations this may be a factor, and the RTO organization and economic development agencies may wish to [promote these opportunities on an ad hoc basis
	strong base of arts and culture activities	- image, promotions and packages should reflect strong activities already present - product development activities could support additional development
	strong cottager base	- provides growing market for events and activities
Weaknesses	season nature of tourism industry	- opportunity to develop more off-season and winter events and activities
	seasonal nature of economy	- Vision statement for industry articulates economic diversification and year round industry as a goal
	economic slowdown	- competitive pricing, value-for-money and packaging will be important themes n RTO 12 organization product development activities
	industry characterized by small operators	- RTO 12 will need to ensure that programs and services are seen to be relevant and affordable to smaller operators - will be strong need (opportunity) for education of small operators into need and purpose of RTO organization
	poor transportation network	- organization could consider increased advocacy activities to lobby for improvements
	high costs of doing business	- RTO organization may wish to address this (likely) false impression through analysis in concert with economic development agencies throughout the region
	poor signage	- RTO 12 could play a major role in helping to improve signage throughout the region
	difficulty in finding staffing support	- opportunity for RTO 12 to become involved in educational and workforce development initiatives to address what may be as much perception as reality
	stereotypical view of what the region offers	- RTO 12 need to ensure that its brand and image reflects a diversified offering in tune with the emerging interests and needs of the marketplace
	lack of market research	- RTO 12 could play a strong role in directing, commissioning, and advising on the types of information that would aid decision-making, at the level of the RTO, the DMOs, and individual operators

SWOT Area	Finding	Strategic Implications and Considerations
Opportunities	market development opportunities in the GTA	- GTA will be a (the) key target market for RTO 12 marketing and promotional activities
	niche market opportunities with ethnocultural groups	- RTO 12 could have a strong role in identifying, assessing/understanding these opportunities, and promoting them to members - possibly also a role here for workforce development and training initiatives aimed at encouraging cultural sensitivity
	aging population	- also RTO 12 could have a strong role in identifying, assessing/understanding these opportunities, and promoting them to members - convenience, packaging and value-for-money will all be very important to this segment: RTO 12 product development activities will need to continually reinforce this fact
	use of social media	- develop a social media strategy, identifying target markets, key messages, and a schedule of activities / events
	sports tourism	- RTO 12 should consider ways and means of growing this business, which provides opportunities in the shoulder and winter seasons
	continuing waterfront development	- RTO 12 could consider ways and means of supporting these efforts
	develop broader base of shoulder season and winter attractions	- this could become a major focal point for RTO 12 product development activities
	green tourism	- this could become a basis for educational and product development efforts throughout the RTO 12 region - efforts in this regard would also support and solidify the brand and image for the region - a certification program (such as is being planned) will also support the brand
	greater range of events	- RTO 12 could play a strategic role as catalyst in identifying, assessing and developing events that had merit in terms of meeting those elements of the Vision relating to more diversified and year-round tourism
	customer training program	- RTO 12 could become involved in the development of an industry knowledge and customer service program specific to the region
	greater broadband access	- RTO 12 should work with existing agencies to ensure that access improves throughout the region, as a strategy to ensure consistent visitor satisfaction
	provision of grants and operational funding	- RTO 12 needs to make it clear to the industry that it is not a granting or funding agency - however, the organization could adopt a role where it acts as an information portal to organizations and agencies that do provide such funding – however, it should be recognized that this is the job of the economic development organizations active in the region

SWOT Area	Finding	Strategic Implications and Considerations
	tourism information centres	- RTO 12 could play a role in ensuring that tourism information centres throughout the region carry a full complement of information about the RTO region as well as are branded appropriately
	mentoring opportunities	- RTO 12 organization could investigate the potential to develop a mentoring program of this type for the region
Threats	increasing competition	- RTO 12 organization will need to be aware that while there will be opportunities for cooperation and joint programs with surrounding and other RTOs, at one level these RTOs are in competition with one another
	large territory of RTO 12	- emphasizes importance of communication and coordination activities for RTO 12 - also need to ensure on-going relevance to members
	continuing slow economic recovery	- RTO 12 will need to ensure that the operators continue to offer what is seen as affordable and high value tourism experiences – this will be a product development imperative for the RTO organization
	threats to existing DMOs	- this represents an opportunity for the RTO to become involved in educational efforts to inform the industry as to what the longer -term possibilities might be

3. Strategic Plan Framework for RTO 12

In the discussion following, there is an important difference in how the terms ‘Vision’ and ‘Mission’ are used that needs to be clarified in order to avoid confusion. ‘Vision’ is used in the sense to mean the **end state for the tourism industry throughout the geographic region defined as ‘Region 12’**. The end state time period is not specifically stated, but could be imagined to be the year 2020, when the Sorbara Report had envisaged tourism receipts throughout the province to be doubled. This suggests an end state period at which the vision would be achieved to be approximately a decade from now. The Vision itself describes an industry that is characterized by economic stability, operating within a region that has a strong and positive brand identity.

The focus of the “Mission” of RTO 12 is, in contrast, a statement of operation for the RTO 12 organization itself, describing how it will operate as a key player to help bring about the Vision articulated. This recognizes that RTO 12 is one organization of many (albeit a very significant one) that should act in concert with the private sector (i.e. the industry itself) to help bring about the Vision. The Mission Statement describes the **types of operations and tactics that the RTO 12 organization will undertake in working with the industry to bring about the Vision**.

Thus the Vision is directed at the industry overall throughout the RTO 12 area, while the Mission is restricted to the RTO 12 organization. The term ‘**Region 12**’ (when describing the Vision for the geographical area) and ‘**RTO 12 Corporation**’ (when describing the Mission for the organization) will be used to ensure clarity.

3.1 Vision Statement for the Tourism Industry Throughout Region 12

The starting point for the development of the Destination Development Plan for RTO 12 is the Vision Statement for the tourism industry within the RTO 12 region overall.

The Vision Statement that emerged from these discussions was in fact very close to the original statement developed – indicating that the RTO ‘had it pretty much right’ from the outset. The Vision Statement that emerged is:

Vision for Tourism Industry Throughout RTO 12

“Tourism throughout the RTO 12 area is a sustainable, year-round industry providing jobs and economic opportunity through profitable operations and contributing to the quality of life and positive image and of our communities.”

The Vision Statement can be ‘deconstructed’ in terms of the significance of certain key phrases, as shown in the table below:

Phrase	Meaning
“sustainable... tourism industry”	- tourism operations adhere to a triple bottom line philosophy: <i>1) they are environmentally responsible, and are known to be sustainable</i> <i>2) the industry provides opportunities for social and community engagement to residents</i> <i>3) the industry creates economic benefits (jobs, wages, taxes) throughout the region</i>
“year-round tourism industry”	- many enterprises throughout RTO 12 are able to operate profitably on a year-round basis, or, at least, on a longer-term basis than is currently the case
“jobs and economic opportunity”	- tourism is, and is seen to be, an economic mainstay of the regional economy
“profitable operations”	- individual operators are able to make a living in the tourism industry - young people see that they can make a living and have a career in the industry
“contributing to the...positive image of the area”	- the tourism industry is a contributor to the strong positive brand image and identity of the RTO 12 area
“contributing to the quality of life...of our communities”	- not only does tourism provide entertainment and recreation for people outside of the region, but also provides opportunities and amenities for local and regional residents as well

3.2 Mission Statement for RTO 12 Corporation

The Mission Statement defines the method of operation of the RTO 12 organization, recognizing that it is one of the key stakeholder groups working with the industry to bring about the Vision previously stated. The Mission of RTO 12 as it emerged through the workshops, surveys and industry sessions, was as follows:

Mission of RTO 12

“Working with businesses and stakeholders, we develop a competitive and sustainable tourism industry that reflects the region’s unique strengths and maximizes its potential to successfully attract new visitors and grow tourism spending.”

Similarly, the Mission Statement can be ‘deconstructed’ in terms of the significance of certain key phrases, as shown in the table below:

Phrase	Meaning
<i>“working with businesses and stakeholders”</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the organizations works in partnership with not just private sector businesses, but also with other stakeholder groups that influence and are affected by the tourism industry - these include not for profit organizations, economic development agencies, chambers of commerce, etc.
<i>“competitive... tourism industry”</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - having product and experiences that reflect the resources of the area and are the equal of tourism product elsewhere in the province - being a destination of choice when compared to other potential destination areas in the province

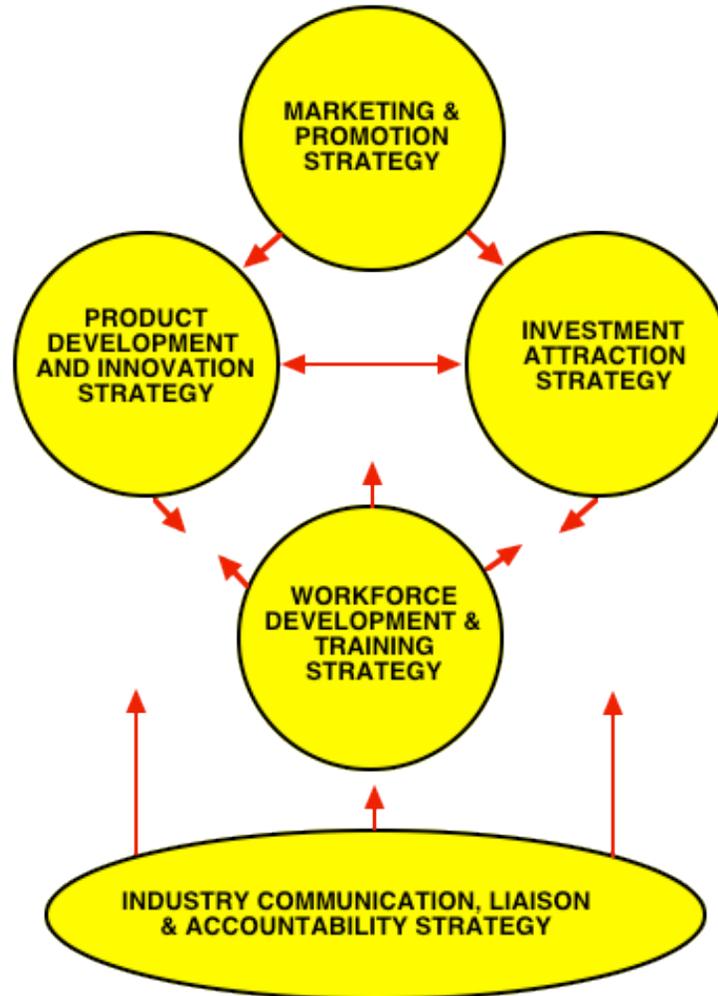
<p><i>“sustainable tourism industry”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - tourism operations adhere to a triple bottom line philosophy: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) they are environmentally responsible, and are known to be sustainable 2) the industry provides opportunities for social and community engagement to residents 3) the industry creates economic benefits (jobs, wages, taxes) throughout the region
<p><i>“maximizes the region’s potential”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the tourism product of the region is utilized to a better (ideally, maximum) capacity through new activities and events, more activity in the off-season, etc.
<p><i>“attract new visitors”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - more visitors are attracted into the region as a result of marketing and product development activities undertaken - in addition to more repeat visitors, there are also more new visitors coming into the region who have not visited before, some of whom will become future repeat visitors
<p><i>“grow tourism spending”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - more expenditure from tourists occurs, as a result of <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) more tourists coming to the area 2) tourists spending on average a greater length of time in the region 3) tourists spending, on average, more per day (or night) during their stay in the region - this ultimately is what will contribute to the aforementioned goal of doubling tourism receipts by the year 2020

Thus the Mission Statement contains a number of key messages, all of which are consistent with the intent of the province when setting up the RTOs as well as with the aims and desires of the industry itself.

3.3 Goal Areas

As previously mentioned, RTO 12 was asked to address in its strategic planning efforts four key areas of activity: 1) marketing and promotion; 2) product development and innovation; 3) investment attraction; and 4) workforce

development and training. The industry consultation process described above suggested a number of activities in these areas. As well, a fifth area of activity was suggested: ‘industry communication, liaison and accountability’. The strategy therefore consists of 5 interrelated clusters of activity designed to bring about the Vision articulated. These five strategic areas are all mutually reinforcing and supportive as illustrated in the diagram below:



A brief explanation of each is provided below:

- 1) **Marketing and Promotion Strategy:** Here the focus is to develop and communicate a positive brand identity for RTO 12 that can provide a supportive context for local and sub-regional identities. The key tool to through which to do this will be an active web-based and social media presence in the marketplace, supported by targeted market research and print advertising as appropriate.
- 2) **Product Development and Innovation Strategy:** The set of actions contained in this strategy is focused upon working with existing operators to improve existing operations in a number of respects: expansion of product and activities; more activity in the shoulder and winter seasons; environmentally responsible operations; and greater packaging.
- 3) **Investment Attraction Strategy:** The main thrust of these activities was to work in partnership and in a supportive capacity with economic development organizations throughout RTO 12 in their own individual efforts to attract investment. (As well, the Ministry of Tourism and Culture is in the process of developing a new tourism investment strategy overall, in which all RTOs would likely play a supporting and advisory role.)
- 4) **Workforce Development and Training Strategy:** This strategy was generally accorded a lower overall priority than others, although the interviews, surveys and workshops did continually mention the need for customer service training as an endemic issue – not just throughout RTO 12, but across the province as well. However, relative to more urgent marketing and product development needs, it was seen to be a less important and longer-term strategy. Accordingly it is a part of the strategy developed, although does not come into play until downstream in the RTO's overall efforts.
- 5) **Industry Communication, Liaison, and Accountability Strategy:** In addition to the four areas outlined above (which all RTOs have been asked to address in their respective strategies) a fifth cluster of activity emerged from the consultation process, relating to various mechanisms through which industry coordination and alignment would occur. Also, the theme of *accountability* to the industry, integrally related to communications and liaison, emerged as part of this set of strategies.

3.4 Detailed Strategy Outline

The following charts outline in detail the various strategic initiatives discussed and presented to the Interim Board of RTO 12. There are in total, 35 distinct strategies or action areas that have been developed from the interviews, focus group workshops, online surveys, and comparison with other jurisdictions. These have been clustered into the five strategy areas as articulated above, and are presented in detail in the accompanying charts.

The charts outline, for each strategy area, specific actions that could be pursued in addressing each. As well, for each of the 35 actions, the assessment of the Board regarding is presented. (These are as a result of a Board workshop session held on March 8, 2010.) There are three implementation aspects considered: 1) the **priority** of the specific action from the Board’s perspective, in terms of its efficacy in terms of helping RTO 12 and the tourism industry achieve the Vision articulated; 2) the **role** of the RTO in working with the industry, and like-minded organizations, and other stakeholders to implement that activity or set of actions; and 3) the **timeframe** in which the specific set of activities should be undertaken. The specific assessments made were as outlined below:

Implementation Consideration	Code	Meaning
Priority	H	High Priority – this strategy should be implemented as a major initiative of the RTO – time and resources should be spent on these activities first, before other possible actions are considered – getting these things done is a necessity ('mission critical')
	M	Medium Priority – once the high priority items have been initiated and are well under way, then the medium priority items should be considered and addressed – getting these things done is important but not necessarily 'mission critical'
	L	Low Priority – once high and medium priority items have been implemented or are well underway, if there is time and budget available, then low priority items should be addressed – accordingly, depending upon the implementation history of the high and medium priority items, these strategies may or may not be implemented
RTO Role	L	Head Role – here RTO 12 'leads the charge' and takes the initiative and the responsibility to make the particular strategy happen
	S	Support Role – here RTO 12 is not the lead agency but rather works with other organizations and stakeholders to help support various actions – this support could take the form of devoting some staff and Board time to the activity, the provision of funding and resources, or taking on some key task – RTO 12 in this capacity might also act to 'convene a conversation' by bringing together various players around the table – the key distinction between this and a lead role, however, is that RTO 12 would look to some other organization to play the lead role
	A	Advisory Role – here RTO 12 is simply letting it be known that they are available to be consulted and act as advisors on various matters that may be the primary concern of others – this role may extend to consultation with the membership on various matters, or simply other organizations soliciting the considered opinion of RTO 12 staff or Board members
Timeframe	I	Immediate – these actions are either already underway, or should begin as soon as possible
	S	Short-Term – these actions should begin in the next fiscal year of operation of RTO 12 (April 1 to March 31, 2012)
	M	Medium-Term – these actions should begin in the second full fiscal year of operation of RTO 12 (April 1 to March 31, 2013)
	L	Longer-Term – these actions should begin in the third full fiscal year of operation of RTO 12 (April 1 to March 31, 2013) or beyond

The following charts use these codes in discussing the implementation of the strategy.

Note that areas where the rating of the Interim Board was unanimous are indicated by means of an asterisk; other ratings were simply ‘majority rules’. In the few cases where there was a tie, the consultant’s judgment was used to tip the vote one way or the other.

RTO 12 Destination Development Plan: Marketing and Promotion Strategy

Recommended Strategic Direction	Specific Actions Involved in Doing This	Priority (High, Medium, Low)	RTO Role (Lead, Support, Advise)	Timeframe (Immediately, Short, Medium, Long)
1) creation of a regional identity that is supportive of sub-regional DMOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - undertake development of attractive and memorable brand identity that reflects assets and experiences of entire region, and provides a supportive context for existing local and sub-regional identities - ensure that brand is compatible with and aligned with social media possibilities (e.g. use of QR codes) - undertake specific branding study as next step (underway) 	H*	L*	I
2) undertake region-wide market research, specific to region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - develop specific market research vehicles and data collection protocols in three areas: 1) existing visitor profiles; 2) source market surveys; and 3) industry performance metrics 	H*	L*	I
3) develop active web-based, social media presence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - undertake specific social media development and marketing strategy (currently underway) - retain specialist in this area - ensure optimum functionality of web site (for both operators in RTO 12, as well as the general public) 	H*	L*	I
4) investigate desirability of central reservation system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - undertake investigation into the desirability and functionality of a central reservation system (currently underway) 	H	L	I
5) asset inventory & mapping key attractions and experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identify the criteria for mapping of key attractions and experiences - identify specific uses to which information will be put - determine kinds of information to be collected and mapped (based upon use) - identify required update frequency for data collection and mapping activities - determine appropriate software for retaining and manipulating data - undertake data collection and updating, according to methodology developed 	H	L	I*
6) photo bank of images (supporting regional identity)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identify types and locations of images that are consistent with the brand identity developed - develop photo bank of images (through contracts, contests, etc.) - use images as appropriate in communications supporting brand identity, on an on-going basis 	H	L	S
7) develop experience-based promotional campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identify types of experiences throughout the Region that are supported by the brand identity and have market appeal - develop four-season campaigns (supported by market research undertaken in b) above) and promote accordingly 	H	L	S

* denotes an area where the rating of the Board was unanimous

RTO 12 Destination Development Plan: **Marketing and Promotion Strategy, continued**

Recommended Strategic Direction	Specific Actions Involved in Doing This	Priority (High, <u>M</u>edium, <u>L</u>ow)	RTO Role (<u>L</u>ead, <u>S</u>upport, <u>A</u>dvice)	Timeframe (Immediately, <u>S</u>hort, <u>M</u>edium, <u>L</u>ong)
8) broadcast (maybe print) marketing campaign aimed at GTA market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - selectively develop print marketing materials, reflecting regional brand identity developed - develop marketing campaign and materials informed by market research information (see b) above) 	H*	L*	S
9) participate in selected travel trade promotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - determine at Board or subcommittee level what types of travel trade promotions are most appropriate for RTO 12 to attend on behalf of members - send RTO staff, Board and representatives as appropriate 	H	L	S
10) develop educational materials informing industry of market research findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - develop short framework (e.g. 1-2 page PDF file) outlining findings from research undertaken, and implications for RTO 12 operators, and regular distribution plan - investigate other forums at which to 'push out' research and related information (e.g. one-day workshops; on-line summaries) 	M	L*	M
11) develop attractive and consistent signage across region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - develop guidelines for signage throughout the entire region, based upon the image developed in a) above, and reflecting a consistent and attractive image of the region - develop deployment plan for overall signage across region 	L	S	M
12) ensure that Travel Information Centres promote RTO 12 primarily	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identify 'core set' of information requirements that each tourism information centre in RTO 12 should carry, as well as core of knowledge that behind-the-counter personnel should have of the entire region (see strategy a) in Workforce Development and Training Strategy) 	L	S*	I

* denotes an area where the rating of the Board was unanimous

RTO 12 Destination Development Plan: **Product Development and Innovation Strategy**

Recommended Strategic Direction	Specific Actions Involved in Doing This	Priority (High, Medium, Low)	RTO Role (Lead, Support, Advise)	Timeframe (Immediately, Short, Medium, Long)
13) encourage greater packaging of weekend (or longer events)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identify successful package operations already in place throughout the region - develop 'case studies' of these successful operations - promote these success stories throughout the region (using the vehicles suggested in j) of the Marketing and Promotion Strategy 	H	L	I
14) encourage mentoring throughout region / 'product development workshops'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - on a trial basis initially, identify operators who would be willing to participate in a product development seminar (i.e. those who had already undertaken successful product development and might be willing to share their experiences with others) - develop a one-half day workshop devoted to discussion of ways and means of encouraging product development - if successful, investigate rolling out to rest of region, and undertaking on a more frequent basis 	H	L	I
15) encourage environmentally responsible operations ('Green Eco' designation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - develop set of requirements for 'Green Eco' designation for RTO 12 operators (underway) - develop certification standard for those operators meeting standard - promote advantage of designation to industry throughout RTO 12 - undertake review process of operators and develop list of approved / certified businesses - develop strategy to: a) educate operators as to how to best utilize the designation, and b) [eventually] use the critical mass of approved operators to positively promote the region 	H*	L*	S
16) develop and promote routes and trails (e.g. culinary, art, cycling, hiking, snowmobiling)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identify potential for additional trails and circuits of activity - target two per year to further identify, develop (possibly involving signage, social media links, etc.) - where possible, expand trails and networks in this regard throughout entire RTO 12 region 	H	L	S*
17) encourage events in shoulder seasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - work with existing groups and organizations already trying to develop off-season activities and events -possibly arrange session to brainstorm possibilities for additional events and activities in the shoulder and winter seasons (recognizing that there is already much occurring and being developed, but that more would be better) 	M	S	L

* denotes an area where the rating of the Board was unanimous

RTO 12 Destination Development Plan: Product Development and Innovation Strategy, continued

Recommended Strategic Direction	Specific Actions Involved in Doing This	Priority (High, <u>M</u> edium, <u>L</u> ow)	RTO Role (<u>L</u> ead, <u>S</u> upport, <u>A</u> dvice)	Timeframe (Immediately, <u>S</u> hort, <u>M</u> edium, <u>L</u> ong)
18) encourage more sports tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - work with existing groups and organizations that are already running and developing sports and related activities and events - identify potential for additional sports tourism events and opportunities to have events come into RTO 12 	M	S	L
19) encourage expansion and upgrading of existing product	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - work with existing operators to identify potential interest in expansion, and opportunities to do so - work with local economic development operators to facilitate information exchange, analysis, and actual expansion 	L	S	L
20) promote products made in RTO 12 to markets outside the region to help create positive image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identify products manufactured and / or crafted in RTO 12 that also fit the unique image and identity of the region (as determined in a) of the Marketing and Promotion Strategy) - identify ways and means of promoting the region as well in the on-going marketing of these products - work closely with economic development agencies throughout the region in accomplishing this 	L	S	M
21) celebrate and promote operators who are already expanding and developing their product	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - develop case studies of successes featuring operations who have successfully expanded and further developed their product (see b) above) - consider providing some sort of 'official' recognition and promotion to these enterprises, who then may be an inspiration to others - use local media in developing this promotion and publicity (possible sponsorship opportunity) 	L	S	M

RTO 12 Destination Development Plan: Investment Attraction Strategy

Recommended Strategic Direction	Specific Actions Involved in Doing This	Priority (High, Medium, Low)	RTO Role (Lead, Support, Advise)	Timeframe (Immediately, Short, Medium, Long)
22) liaise closely with existing economic development agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ensure frequent and regular communications with all economic development agencies and departments throughout RTO 12 - consider regular contact with RTO 12 staff (and possibly Board) with these agencies (e.g. quarterly breakfast meetings, periodic attendance at EDO Board meetings, etc.) 	H*	S	I
23) continue to improve broadband access throughout region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - support continuing efforts of existing organizations throughout RTO 12 to increase coverage and access to internet and communications networks 	H	S	I
24) advocate for improved transportation structure throughout region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - support efforts of municipalities and economic development agencies to improve highway and other access to the RTO 12 region, as well as within the region itself 	L	A	L
25) optimize use of northern Ontario incentive grant / loan program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ensure that operators are aware of the incentives available (where applicable) through northern Ontario incentive programs - again, work with local economic development agencies to ensure awareness of opportunities, as well as to identify specific opportunities where such funding might be particularly applicable (e.g. where individual operators might not be aware of the possibilities) 	L	S	M
26) examine ways & means to streamline the regulatory process for tourism development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - part of the on-going dialogue recommended in a) above could be to identify opportunities to streamline the development process for tourism operations - this could take the form of identifying a 'checklist' of processes and procedures that could be provided to tourism operators in the relevant jurisdiction, or (where appropriate) some revision to the regulations or procedures themselves 	L	A	L

* denotes an area where the rating of the Board was unanimous

RTO 12 Destination Development Plan: Workforce Development and Training Strategy

Recommended Strategic Direction	Specific Actions Involved in Doing This	Priority (High, Medium, Low)	RTO Role (Lead, Support, Advise)	Timeframe (Immediately, Short, Medium, Long)
27) develop workforce training program for (primarily) summer students in industry to ensure common base of knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a common and core set of knowledge relating to a) customer service expectations and standards; b) the range of attractions and experiences available throughout RTO 12; and c) the most frequently-asked questions (FAQs) by tourists would be developed - a training program, likely on-line, would be developed and required by operators who have agreed to this customer standards training - workers would be certified through a short on-line survey that tested basic knowledge - working with other partners, RTO 12 would develop such a program 	L	S	L
28) hold workshops in cultural sensitivity training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - recognizing that many visitors to RTO 12 are from non-traditional cultures, there may be a need for 'cultural sensitivity training' in certain areas throughout RTO 4 - this is thought to be necessary as well in order to continue to attract visitors from key source populations such as the GTA - working with other partners, RTO 12 would develop such a program 	L	A	L
29) develop appreciation / awards program to incent workers in industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - this would involve working with BIAs and Chambers of Commerce throughout the RTO 12 region to identify exemplary employees in the tourism or visitor-based industry - in addition to and recognizing and rewarding excellence in tourism, the purpose would be to profile careers in the industry and possibly inspire others 	L	A	L
30) promote availability and desirability of careers in tourism industry throughout RTO 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - this would likely take the form of working with high schools and through the educational system, holding workshops and meetings to ensure that young people were aware that they could have a career in the industry, and in RTO 12 - this exists already to some extent; the role of RTO 12 would be to support and expand this were possible 	L	S	L
31) develop internship program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the feasibility of developing formal internships in the tourism industry in RTO 12 would be investigated - ways and means of facilitating internships would be considered (e.g. bursaries or sponsorships provided by RTO 12 or industry partners) - potential partners in this initiative could be the workforce development boards 	L	A	L

RTO 12 Destination Development Plan: Industry Communication, Liaison and Accountability Strategy

Recommended Strategic Direction	Specific Actions Involved in Doing This	Priority (High, Medium, Low)	RTO Role (Lead, Support, Advise)	Timeframe (Immediately, Short, Medium, Long)
32) performance management and accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - measures and metrics of performance will be developed to assess the effectiveness of RTO 12's efforts in implementing this strategy, and in the performance of the industry overall - this will be related to the market research program developed (see b) in Marketing and Promotion Strategy) 	H	L*	I
33) communications with industry throughout RTO 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - regular vehicles for on-going communication and coordination throughout RTO 12 will be developed - these will include communications regarding market research (see j) in Marketing and Promotion Strategy); coordinated calendar of activities; regular meetings rotated around the region; etc. 	H	L*	I
34) liaison with other RTOs (joint marketing; joint product development, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - periodic communications and meetings with other RTO organizations (certainly those bordering RTO 12; possibly others as well) will be held - on-going involvement in these sessions will depend upon the utility of the information shared; participation; and perceived effectiveness by those involved (i.e. the usefulness of information shared compared to the time to organize and attend) 	H	L*	I
35) advocacy: representing members concerns to province and other levels of government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - it is possible that through communications with members and/or with other RTOs it may from time to time be useful or necessary to approach the province or other levels of government regarding specific issues - this would not be a formal strategic direction articulated, but rather an activity that may 'organically emerge' from any collective concerns of members 	L	A	L

* denotes an area where the rating of the Board was unanimous

Note that high priority ratings from the Interim Board’s perspective were in most cases echoed by the industry: however, there were a few cases where the Interim Board and the industry diverged (i.e. the ratings given to the various strategies by the industry sessions in June, 2011). These areas were:

Where Interim Board rated as ‘Low’ Priority and the Industry rated as ‘High’	Where Interim Board rated as ‘High’ Priority and the Industry rated as ‘Low’
11) develop attractive and consistent signage across region 24) advocate for improved transportation structure throughout region 25) optimize use of northern Ontario incentive grant / loan program	6) photo bank of images (supporting regional identity) 14) encourage mentoring throughout region / ‘product development workshops’

The new Board will need to determine for itself how it wishes to handle these outlier strategies: particularly those where the industry is suggesting that the actions should have a higher priority than that accorded by the Interim Board.

4. Business and Operational Plan

4.1 Approach

Given the strategy developed in the previous section, this part of the document presents the three-year business and operational plan for the RTO. The three years span the period from 2011 to 2014 and are, specifically:

- 1) March 31, 2011 – April 1, 2012: called Year 2 of the plan (as the first year of the plan encompassed 2010 and into 2011) - the planning materials of RTO 12 have called this year ‘Planning to Plan’
- 2) March 31, 2012 – April 1, 2013: called here: ‘Year 3’
- 3) April 1, 2013 – April 1, 2014: called here: ‘Year 4’

The following charts contain the detailed business and operational plans. The format for each year follows a modified version based upon the preliminary Year 2 Business and Operational Plan developed in the fall of 2010. This format follows the following logic for each strategic area in the plan:

- a) Specific activities anticipated
- b) Deliverables
- c) Budget and Resources Required
- d) Monitoring and Measurement Considerations

Fiscal Year 2011 – 2012 (i.e. ‘Year 2’) is further detailed by quarter.

As previously stated, given the speed with which activities are happening in the RTO, and uncertainties regarding the economic, social and political environment over the next three years, these business / operational plans are necessarily somewhat general in nature. Nevertheless, they do serve to provide some general overview of the key priorities and activities that are planned in order to implement the strategy developed and ultimately achieve the Vision developed.

The other consideration is that the specific operational details contained herein may be subject to modification and change after input from the next round of public meetings has been undertaken (note that these are to be held in mid April).

4.2 Year Two, by Quarter

As mentioned, Year 2 is based upon the preliminary plan as presented in the fall of 2010, and modified somewhat in light of the findings emerging from the consultation process (that resulted in the strategic plan presented in this document). This is presented in the following charts.

Given that the starting point for Year 2 is the existing preliminary Year 2 plan, with an ‘overlay’ of strategic planning themes placed upon it, the first quarters of Year 2 will represent a combination of original activities with a ‘folding in’ of the strategic plan priorities. (Where appropriate, initiatives in the original plan that actually represent or relate to items in the strategic plan priorities are noted.) Over time, as would be expected, the activities coalesce into the strategic plan areas themselves.

RTO 12 – Business & Operational Plan: Year 2, Q1 (April 1, 2011 – June 30, 2011)

Strategic Action Area	Specific Activities Anticipated	Deliverables	Budget and Resources Required	Monitoring and Measurement Considerations
On-Going Business in Year 2				
Situation Analysis	- on-going consultation to assess industry competitiveness (building on consultation associated with Destination Development Plan)	- finalized Destination Development Plan, containing situation analysis	- no additional resources required (funds already committed)	- delivery of final Destination Development Plan report
Market Assessment	- Branding Study underway that will identify relevant and potential future market segments - participation with OTMPC market research activities also will generate relevant data	- no specific deliverables, other than interim reports from these activities, expected until later in fiscal year	- no additional resources required (funds already committed)	- process measures (i.e. activities underway, demonstrating progress)
Competitive Analysis	- Branding Study underway will identify key competitive regions; advantages and disadvantages	- clear statement of competitive advantage and disadvantage	- no additional resources required (funds already committed)	- process measures (i.e. activities underway, demonstrating progress)
Business Description (of RTO)	- continuing open dialogue and receptivity on part of RTO 12	- continuing provision of opportunities for input - public hearings undertaken as part of Destination Development Plan	- no additional resources required (funds already committed)	- process measures (i.e. activities underway, demonstrating progress) – particularly holding of public meetings associated with Destination Development Plan
Strategic Directions	- completion of the Destination Development Plan	- approved and finalized Destination Development Plan (strategy and business / operating plan parts)	- no additional resources required (funds already committed)	- delivery and formal adoption of Plan
Governance and Administrative Plan	- new Board structure in place - Social Media specialist hired - GM hired and begins role - project managers appointed / hired for specific tasks - investigate physical premises - RTO Board Governance workshop undertaken	- new positions secured and in place - office established	- new budget implications for staffing costs, etc.	- personnel in place - organization address established
Communications and Partnership Engagement Plan	- on-going consultation to develop and present Destination Development Plan	- consultation ongoing throughout April	- no additional resources required (funds already committed)	- counts of total number consulted during creation of Destination Development Strategy
Critical Path / Workplan	- to be developed, pending approval of Destination Development Plan	- to be developed, pending approval of Destination Development Plan	- to be developed, pending approval of Destination Development Plan	- to be developed, pending approval of Destination Development Plan
Annual Budget	- to be developed, pending approval of Destination Development Plan	- to be developed, pending approval of Destination Development Plan	- to be developed, pending approval of Destination Development Plan	- to be developed, pending approval of Destination Development Plan

RTO 12 – Business & Operational Plan: Year 2, Q1 (April 1, 2011 – June 30, 2011), continued

Strategic Action Area	Specific Activities Anticipated	Deliverables	Budget and Resources Required	Monitoring and Measurement Considerations
Strategy Implementation				
Marketing and Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - see branding activities, above - social media activities undertaken - begin planning asset inventory and mapping activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - branding and social media activities as outlined above - asset inventory and mapping planning to be underway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - branding and social media as previously defined - asset inventory and mapping activity contained within existing staff allocations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - process measures (i.e. activities underway, demonstrating progress)
Product Development and Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - develop requirements for 'Green Eco' operations - outline nature and form of product development workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - none anticipated in first quarter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - none anticipated in first quarter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - none anticipated in first quarter
Investment Attraction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - develop policies and procedures for regular and on-going liaison with economic development agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - establish protocol for liaison with EDOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - liaison activity to be contained within existing staff allocations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - initial contacts established
Workforce Development and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no activity suggested in Year 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no activity suggested in Year 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no activity suggested in Year 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no activity suggested in Year 2
Industry Communication, Liaison and Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - see Communications and Partnership Engagement Plan, above - develop structure and format for industry communications vehicle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - develop policy / guideline regarding nature and type of information to be shared, as well as 'look and feel' or communications vehicle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - none at this point (other than staff and Board time), although budget for communications activity should be developed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - process measures (i.e. activities underway, demonstrating progress)

RTO 12 – Business & Operational Plan: Year 2, Q2 (July 1, 2011 – September 30, 2011)

Strategic Action Area	Specific Activities Anticipated	Deliverables	Budget and Resources Required	Monitoring and Measurement Considerations
On-Going Business in Year 2				
Situation Analysis	- done	- done	- done	- done
Market Assessment	- Branding Study underway - participation with OTMPC market research activities underway	- no specific deliverables, other than interim reports from these activities, expected until later in fiscal year	- no additional resources required (funds already committed)	- process measures (i.e. activities underway, demonstrating progress)
Competitive Analysis	- Branding Study underway	- clear statement of competitive advantage and disadvantage	- no additional resources required (funds already committed)	- process measures (i.e. activities underway, demonstrating progress)
Business Description (of RTO)	- final adjustments (as required) to corporate structure	- done	- done	- done
Strategic Directions	- done	- done	- done	- done
Governance and Administrative Plan	- project managers appointed / hired for specific tasks (on-going) - complete move into physical premises	- new positions secured and in place - office established	- new budget implications for staffing costs, etc. – to be determined	- process measures (i.e. activities underway, demonstrating progress)
Communications and Partnership Engagement Plan	- see Industry Communication, Liaison and Accountability below	- see Industry Communication, Liaison and Accountability below	- see Industry Communication, Liaison and Accountability below	- see Industry Communication, Liaison and Accountability below
Critical Path / Workplan	- done	- done	- done	- done

RTO 12 – Business & Operational Plan: Year 2, Q2 (July 1, 2011 – September 30, 2011), continued

Strategic Action Area	Specific Activities Anticipated	Deliverables	Budget and Resources Required	Monitoring and Measurement Considerations
Strategy Implementation				
Marketing and Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - see branding activities, above - social media activities on-going - continue planning asset inventory and mapping activity - begin planning for central reservation system implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - branding and social media activities as outlined above - asset inventory and mapping planning to be underway - initial scoping / terms of reference development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - branding and social media as previously defined - asset inventory and mapping activity contained within existing staff allocations - time of staff required; in addition budget will need to be scoped out for this component 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - process measures (i.e. activities underway, demonstrating progress)
Product Development and Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - develop plan for marketing and roll-out of 'Green Eco' designation and certification program - continue planning for product development workshops: begin to solicit industry interest - undertake initial planning for product packaging strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - none anticipated in second quarter (primarily planning activity) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - none anticipated in second quarter (primarily planning activity) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - none anticipated in second quarter (primarily planning activity)
Investment Attraction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - continue EDO liaison activity, following protocol developed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - regular contacts with between RTO and EDOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - liaison activity to be contained within existing staff allocations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - simple counts of frequency and contact agencies
Workforce Development and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no activity suggested in Year 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no activity suggested in Year 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no activity suggested in Year 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no activity suggested in Year 2
Industry Communication, Liaison and Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - implement industry communications vehicle decided upon - begin to develop detailed performance management system (once staff has been in place for several months) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - regular communications with industry - initial development of performance management system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - possibly print / distribution costs (to be determined) - performance management system likely just staff time at this point 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - counts of numbers reached - possibly member satisfaction or invited feedback (on first efforts) - performance management system metrics to be developed

RTO 12 – Business & Operational Plan: Year 2, Q3 (October 1, 2011 – December 31, 2011)

Strategic Action Area	Specific Activities Anticipated	Deliverables	Budget and Resources Required	Monitoring and Measurement Considerations
On-Going Business in Year 2				
Situation Analysis	- done	- done	- done	- done
Market Assessment	- Branding Study (complete) that will identify relevant and potential future market segments - participation with OTMPC market research activities also will generate relevant data (complete)	- final reports from both these activities, which will provide a branding platform, as well as better market understanding	- no additional resources required (funds already committed)	- report completions
Competitive Analysis	- Branding Study (complete) will identify key competitive regions; advantages and disadvantages	- clear statement of competitive advantage and disadvantage	- no additional resources required (funds already committed)	- process measures (i.e. activities underway, demonstrating progress)
Business Description (of RTO)	- done	- done	- done	- done
Strategic Directions	- done	- done	- done)	- done
Governance and Administrative Plan	- done	- done	- done	- done
Communications and Partnership Engagement Plan	- done	- done	- done)	- done
Critical Path / Workplan	- done	- done	- done	- done

RTO 12 – Business & Operational Plan: Year 2, Q3 (October 1, 2011 – December 31, 2011), continued

Strategic Action Area	Specific Activities Anticipated	Deliverables	Budget and Resources Required	Monitoring and Measurement Considerations
Strategy Implementation				
Marketing and Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - new brand development complete - social media activities on-going - asset inventory and mapping activity underway - start central reservation system development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - branding and social media activities as outlined above - asset inventory and mapping planning to be underway - initial scoping / terms of reference development for central reservation strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - branding and social media as previously defined - asset inventory and mapping activity contained within existing staff allocations - time of staff required; in addition budget will need to be scoped out for this component 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - process measures (i.e. activities underway, demonstrating progress)
Product Development and Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - implement 'Green Eco' designation and certification program - undertake initial product development workshops - identify and begin initial product packaging strategy (possibly trails) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'Green Eco' program developed; initial roll outs underway - product development workshops underway) - packaging plan begun 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to be determined 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - satisfaction evaluation from program participation
Investment Attraction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - continue EDO liaison activity, following protocol developed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - regular contacts with between RTO and EDOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - liaison activity to be contained within existing staff allocations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - simple counts of frequency and contact agencies
Workforce Development and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no activity suggested in Year 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no activity suggested in Year 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no activity suggested in Year 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no activity suggested in Year 2
Industry Communication, Liaison and Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - continue implementation of industry communications vehicle decided upon - continue development of detailed performance management system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - regular communications with industry - continuing development of performance management system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - possibly print / distribution costs (to be determined) - performance management system likely just staff time at this point 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - counts of numbers reached - possibly member satisfaction or invited feedback (on first efforts) - performance management system metrics to be developed

RTO 12 – Business & Operational Plan: Year 2, Q4 (January 1, 2012 – March 31, 2012)

Strategic Action Area	Specific Activities Anticipated	Deliverables	Budget and Resources Required	Monitoring and Measurement Considerations
On-Going Business in Year 2				
Situation Analysis	- done	- done	- done	- done
Market Assessment	- done	- done	- done	- done
Competitive Analysis	- done	- done	- done	- done
Business Description (of RTO)	- done	- done	- done	- done
Strategic Directions	- done	- done	- done	- done
Governance and Administrative Plan	- done	- done	- done	- done
Communications and Partnership Engagement Plan	- done	- done	- done	- done
Critical Path / Workplan	- done	- done	- done	- done
Strategy Implementation				
Marketing and Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - new brand development complete and being used in campaigns (to be specified) - social media activities on-going - asset inventory and mapping activity complete - central reservation system development underway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - branding and social media activities as outlined above - asset inventory and mapping underway - initial scoping / terms of reference development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - branding and social media as previously defined - asset inventory and mapping activity contained within existing staff allocations - time of staff required; in addition budget will need to be scoped out for this component 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - process measures (i.e. activities underway, demonstrating progress)
Product Development and Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - implement 'Green Eco' designation and certification program - continue product development workshops - identify and begin initial product packaging strategy (possibly trails) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - continue roll-out of 'Green Eco' program - continue product development workshops underway - first packaging plan finished 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to be determined 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - satisfaction evaluation from program participation - packaging plan complete; industry participation evident
Investment Attraction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - continue EDO liaison activity, following protocol developed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - regular contacts with between RTO and EDOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - liaison activity to be contained within existing staff allocations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - simple counts of frequency and contact agencies
Workforce Development and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no activity suggested in Year 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no activity suggested in Year 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no activity suggested in Year 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no activity suggested in Year 2
Industry Communication, Liaison and Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - continue implementation of industry communications vehicle decided upon - continue development of detailed performance management system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - regular communications with industry - continuing development of performance management system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - possibly print / distribution costs (to be determined) - performance management system likely just staff time at this point 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - counts of numbers reached - possibly member satisfaction or invited feedback (on first efforts) - performance management system metrics to be developed

4.3 Years Three and Four

Recognizing that much can change between now (Year 2) and Years 3 and 4, the initiatives proposed are presented in summary outline form. Closer to the actual dates, management at the RTO will place these activities within the same sort of business plan and operational framework as is currently in use for Year 2.

In **Year 3**, key initiatives and strategies recommended would be:

- continue on-going business activities undertaken in Year 2
- continue all existing marketing and promotional activities
- continue product development initiatives begin in Year 2
- continue to respond to investment overtures as required (working closely with economic development organizations in the RTO area)
- continue all industry liaison activities begun in Year 2

In addition, major new initiatives that should be implemented in Year 3 include:

- investigate workforce training and development initiative aimed at creating on-line ‘industry knowledge certification process’ for front line staff: aim to develop and pilot test this system in Year 3, aiming at rolling it out to all front line employees in Year 4
- first year of implementation of detailed accountability system using performance measurement metrics specifically tailored to RTO 12 (see Section 4.4)
- determine future funding model for the RTO organization
- determine future membership model for the organization

In **Year 4**, key initiatives and strategies recommended would be to continue the operational and strategic activities of the RTO organization. It is likely that at this point, the organization will be increasingly involved with neighbouring RTOs in joint initiatives and activities, as well as (likely) various initiatives at the provincial level.

4.4 Performance Evaluation Plan

A fundamentally important aspect of RTO 12's operation will be to collect performance metrics data to demonstrate to members and to the province overall that RTO 12 operates in an accountable manner. There are four categories of performance metric that should be examined in this regard.

Organization Performance measures are simply workload measures, showing the 'effort' the RTO organization has put in on various areas of activity. These are important to demonstrate to the industry that the organization is working on their behalf and is actively engaged in a wide range of activities.

Program Effectiveness measures show that the various key programs and activities undertaken by the organization are 'working' in the sense of generating a good return on the investment of time and money put into them.

Member Participation and Satisfaction measures determine the extent to which the membership is aware of, participating in, and satisfied with the programs and activities sustained by the RTO.

Industry Economics and Regional Performance measures show the extent to which the efforts of the RTO and other agencies in the province aimed at assisting the tourism industry overall are being effective. These measures, which are directly relevant to the Ontario Government's objective of 'doubling tourism receipts by the Year 2020' are also critical in measuring the health of the industry.

The table below lists these four categories of metrics, provides example of the kinds of indicators that should be considered, and comments upon the ways in which the data should be collected and measured. As shown, there are a variety of players who potentially can be involved in the overall performance measurement and evaluation effort. In some cases, it will likely be necessary to retain objective third-party assistance in some of these areas, in order that the measurement and evaluation effort be, and be **seen** to be, objective and unbiased.

Category of Performance Metrics	Examples of Measures	Ways in Which Data Could be Collected
A) Organization Performance Measures (<i>workload measures of RTO 12 organization's activities</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - numbers of communications with members - programs offered to members (and types of programs offered) - budget ratios: office and administrative costs as % of total costs - sources of funds ratios: self-generated funds as a % of total revenues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - records kept by RTO 12 organization - auditor (for financial measures)
B) Program Effectiveness measures (<i>measures of the effectiveness of various programs and activities</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - effectiveness of advertising campaigns (awareness, retention, visit conversion, etc.) - press coverage statistics - web site utilization statistics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - advertising / promotional agencies - clipping service (possibly arranged through advertising / promotional agencies) - web service provider
C) Member Participation and Satisfaction Measures (<i>degree to which RTO 12 programs and activities are meeting the needs of members</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - number of active members as percentage of total number of eligible businesses / organizations throughout RTO 12 - indicators of participation of members in various industry programs - results of satisfaction survey: participation rate (a significant indicator by itself), satisfaction with promotion campaigns, product development workshops, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - records kept by RTO 12 organization - third-party (external) consultant or survey company for member satisfaction survey (for impartiality and objectivity)
D) Industry Economics and Regional Performance Measures (<i>measures of industry performance throughout the region</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - number of tourist visits to RTO 12 - average length of stay - average daily expenditure - average party size - total tourist receipts in region - key industry measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - occupancy rates - [possibly] REVPAR (<i>revenue per available room</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - individual tourism operators (providing data to RTO 12, Ministry or third-party survey house) - Ministry of Tourism and Culture (to measure tourism receipts and economic impact measures)

4.5 Community Engagement Strategy

The Community Engagement Strategy is a set of activities and attitudes to be adopted by the RTO Corporation to ensure the residents of the RTO 12 region are aware of the benefits that the tourism industry conveys throughout the region, and of the role of the RTO organization in working with and nurturing the industry. As outlined in the Business and Operations plan, this is a set of activities that would get underway in the second fiscal year of operations of the RTO Corporation.

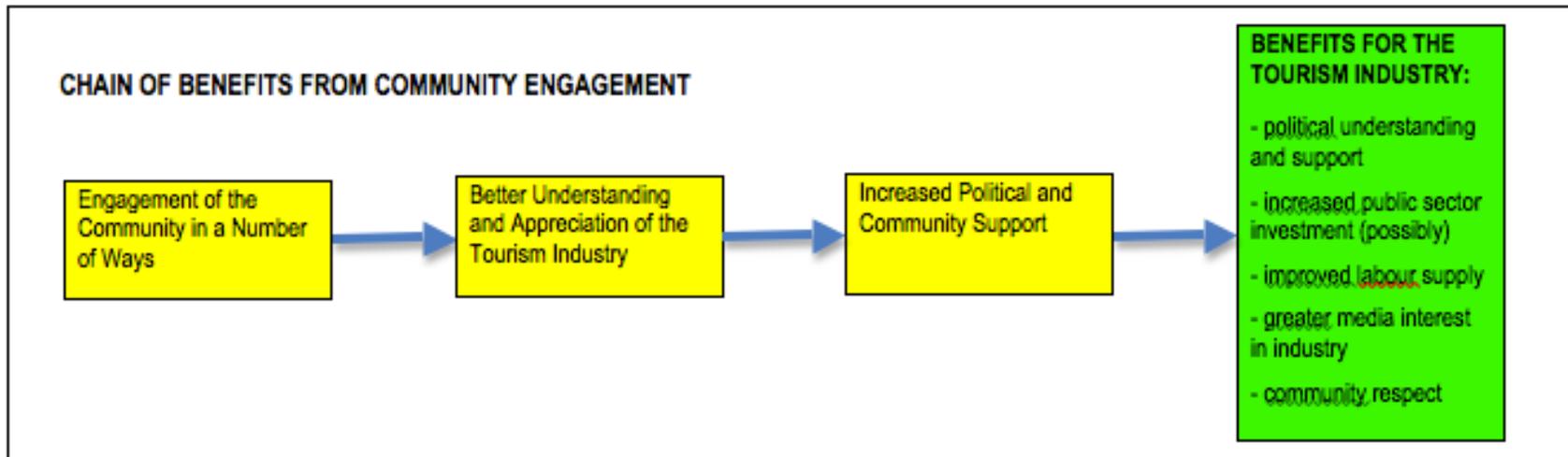
The objectives of the Community Engagement Strategy are at least threefold:

- 1) **to ensure that residents throughout RTO 12 are aware of the assets (attractions and events) available to them within their own region** – especially in the current tough economic environment where ‘staycations’ are increasingly becoming the norm (i.e. shorter vacations closer to home that are more affordable than the traditional long-haul vacations where extensive travel is involved) – insofar as local residents can be made aware of the range and number of recreational and entertainment opportunities available throughout RTO 12, their effective quality of life may be increased
- 2) **to convey and understanding to residents of the importance of the tourism industry as an economic engine throughout RTO 12** – this is a message that in particular should be impressed upon politicians and key community stakeholders, but is also one that should be understood by the general public as well – several of the measures discussed in the previous section (see ‘industry economics and regional performance measures’) would form the basis for the kinds of messages to be conveyed
- 3) **to create a better understanding of the job opportunities and career potential offered by the tourism industry** – achieving the Vision for the tourism industry as stated earlier in this Report will imply growth in the numbers of tourism businesses and jobs throughout the region (more establishments as well as existing establishments having longer operating seasons) – this, in turn, will require additional employees who wish to work in the industry, and ideally most of these will come from within the region – as well, for some, there will be longer term careers and employment situations in the industry – if residents have a better understanding of the scope of the tourism industry, and the value that it has to the local economy, the greater the likelihood that they will seek out jobs and careers in the industry

In a sense, the Community Engagement Strategy is thus a marketing plan, aimed at encouraging local residents to understand and become involved with the tourism industry. There are a number of strategies and initiatives that we recommend be considered by RTP 12 to encourage and facilitate this direction. These are discussed below:

- **Board members as ambassadors:** For the most part Board members are already ambassadors for the tourism industry, as it is their bread and butter and they are ‘natural advocates’ – they should be mindful of their role whenever at other business and political functions throughout the RTO region, and take every opportunity to talk about the economic benefits of the industry, the growth prospects, and the role of the RTO is helping to bring this about
- **staff members as liaison to community organizations:** As part of their role in networking with the industry and the broader community, staff will have numerous formal and informal connections with economic development agencies, cultural organizations, marketing groups, business organizations, etc. They should consider part of their formal job description to inform all these organizations of the purpose and achievements of the tourism industry and the RTO
- **press releases, and social media releases:** The RTO should selectively use the information that it collects (see the previous section on performance evaluation measures) to issue periodic releases to local print and broadcast media, as well as through social networking avenues as appropriate.
- **awareness-raising events:** A variety of awareness-raising events should be considered, including: presentations in the schools; industry forums; kiosks and displays at local gathering spots (e.g. liquor stores, banks, grocery stores, etc.); radio contests for tourism knowledge (with prizes that involve local attractions); school contests; cleanup campaigns and events for local public tourist gathering spots; etc.

The underlying philosophy here is that by engaging the community in a variety of ways, a better understanding of the industry will result, and improved attitude will develop, and a host of benefits that might not otherwise come about, could be possible. This process is illustrated in the diagram below:



Not all of these benefits may materialize, of course, and there may well be other positive aspects accruing from a proactive community engagement stance.

4.5 Return on Investment from RTO 12 Activities

As mentioned at the outset, the overriding goal of the Sorbara Report was to double tourism receipts by the year 2020. According to the tourism profile information presented in Section 2.1 of this report, total tourism receipts in the RTO 12 area were \$700 million in 2008. Doubling this by the year 2020 (from a 2008 base) implies receipts of on the order of \$1.4 billion throughout RTO 12, or growth of \$58 million in receipts each year. If the RTO is able to help achieve this goal, it will obviously represent a multiple many times over the budget for the organization, whatever it may be in future years. This clearly represents a significant return-on investment from the RTO organization's activities.

Beyond the reinforcement of the role of the tourism industry as an economic driver, this growth and development of the tourism industry will also result in a significant improvement of the quality of life of regional residents. Not only will there be more businesses, jobs and careers in the industry available to RTO 12 region residents, but also a wider range and diversity of recreational and entertainment activities will be opened up to them. Achieving the Sorbara Report target will clearly represent a 'win-win' situation for the businesses and residents throughout the RTO 12 region.

APPENDICES

REGIONAL TOURISM ORGANIZATION 12

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Introduction

Regional Organization 12 (RTO 12) is one of 13 new regional tourism organizations created by the Province of Ontario. This link will take you to more information about the provincial RTOs
<http://www.tourism.gov.on.ca/english/regions/index.htm>

As a not for profit organization RTO 12 has a geographic area that includes parts of the District of Parry Sound, the District of Muskoka and the Township of South Algonquin. RTO 12 roles and responsibilities are:

- **Strategy Development**
- **Marketing**
- **Product Development and Innovation**
- **Investment Attraction**
- **Workforce Development and Training**
- **Coordination**
- **Manage Performance**
- **Support Financial Sustainability**

Though an open and inclusive process (online survey, 12 townhall style meetings) this project will engage regional partners and stakeholders to help identify RTO 12 regional priorities based on the roles and responsibilities identified above. This information will be used by the RTO Board to chart future activities for the organization.

PLEASE NOTE:

Funding for this project is conditional on government support. No government support, no Destination Development Plan. RTO12 is preparing an Operational Plan (which includes this project) for review by the responsible provincial ministry. We are expecting a funding response for eligible projects by the end of December.

The RFP Process

The RFP process will take place as follows:

1. Pre-screened Potential bidders will be e-mailed a copy of the RFP.
2. This project is posted on Merx
3. Upon receiving the document and reading its content, potential bidders are requested to send an email to Michael Lawley (mlawley@muskokatourism.ca) to acknowledge their intent to provide information about their solutions. This step will guarantee that the bidder name is entered in the bidder list.
4. The bidders prepare their formal response and send their document in an electronic format to Muskoka Tourism by the specified RFP close date.
5. The evaluation team will review all vendor responses.

Timelines

Event	Timeframe
Issue RFP	December, 2010
RFP Close Date	January 14, 2011
Issue Contract SUBJECT TO CONFIRMED FUNDING	Week of January 17, 2011

Proposal Submission Guidelines

Restrictions on Communications with Staff

If you wish to seek clarification on any of the information presented here, please contact Michael Lawley , Executive Director Muskoka Tourism, by email to mlawley@muskokatourism.ca until the due date.

Information Due Date

The due date is January 14, 2011 at 5:00PM.

Information Submission Format

All responses to the questions in this document must be submitted in a Microsoft Office Windows compatible format.

Submit Information to

Muskoka Tourism

RR#2, 1342 Highway 11 North

Kilworthy, Ontario, Canada P0E 1G0

Attention: Michael Lawley, Executive Director Muskoka Tourism

Number of Copies Required / Format of Copies

- 1 electronic copy by e-mail or on CD

Confidentiality

During the RFP process, the bidder may obtain confidential information in regards to RTO 12 businesses and / or its members and employees. The Bidder agrees to keep such information strictly confidential at all times. The bidder may disclose confidential information only when necessary for the submission of a response to the RFP. This does not apply to information known and available to the public.

The Bidder acknowledges that RTO 12 will receive many responses to the RFP that might contain information considered confidential by the bidder. The bidder will allow RTO 12 to use such information for the purpose of the RFP process.

All information and the responses provided to RTO 12 about the RFP will become property of RTO 12 and will not be returned to the Bidder.

Bidder Certification

(Bidder must sign and return.)

I certify that this information is complete and correct to the best of my understanding and that I am authorized to submit this information on behalf of the company.

Authorized
Signature _____ Date _____

Title _____

Print/Type
Name _____

Print/Type Company Name
Here _____

OBJECTIVES

This project will engage RTO 12 tourism partners and stakeholders to help identify regional priorities and initiatives as they relate to RTO 12 roles and responsibilities. These findings and recommendations will help guide future activities of RTO 12. The Destination Development Plan has three phases: **Awareness; Engagement; and Launching Study Findings/Recommendations.**

AWARENESS

RTO 12 will pay for an extensive paid media campaign (print, online, radio) throughout Parry Sound and Muskoka to create awareness about RTO 12 as a new organization and extend an open invitation for all tourism partners and stakeholders to participate in the Destination Development Plan. The call to action will feature the RTO 12 website, an online survey and an invitation to attend one or more of the 12 town hall meetings for the Destination Development Plan held throughout RTO 12. This media campaign is not part of the successful bidder's responsibility.

ENGAGEMENT

Through the online survey and the 12 town hall meetings, regional tourism industry partners and stakeholders will be asked to help determine regional tourism priorities and initiatives relating to RTO 12 roles and responsibilities including but not limited to:

Strategy Development

- Working with industry partners to identify regional tourism priorities
- Develop and implement a 3-5-year regional tourism strategy in collaboration with industry partners

Marketing

- Develop a regional marketing strategy that where possible is in alignment with the provincial brand
- Identify cross-regional marketing opportunities
- Liaise with the provincial marketing organizations
- Where possible, support provincial and federal marketing initiatives

Product Development and Innovation

- Identify product development priorities for the region
- Assess the product base and identify high potential categories, gaps and innovative tourism product offerings
- Work with other RTOs to explore cross-regional development opportunities
- Share information and knowledge about access to capital

Investment Attraction

- Identify regional investment opportunities and priorities
- Establish relationships with industry partners and municipalities etc.
- Consult and collaborate on potential joint initiatives
- Ensure balanced decision-making with regard to tourism investment considerations
- Support the provision of one-window access for potential tourism investments

Workforce Development and Training

- Identify regional and sectoral skill shortages
- Identify regional training needs
- Collaborate with educational and training organizations to develop and deliver training as required

Coordination

- Building relationships within the region to support capacity building, knowledge exchange, cooperation and to explore cross-regional development opportunities
- Ensure regional tourism interests are reflected on the Board and committees of RTO 12
- Act as a single point of contact for government and tourism operators in the region
- Coordinate with other bodies such as the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO) and pan-provincial/sectoral associations
- Work collaboratively with the provincial government to create effective and efficient workflow and communication processes
- Work collaboratively with municipal governments to create effective and efficient workflow and communication processes
- Work collaboratively with other RTOs to create opportunities

Manage Performance

- Develop a regional tourism performance management framework that aligns with provincial objectives

LAUNCH STUDY FINDINGS / RECOMMENDATIONS

- Implement an extensive paid media campaign (online, print, radio) highlighting key recommendations from the destination development plan. The call to action is the RTO 12 website for details. To be paid for by RTO 12.
- Successful bidder to schedule 4 public meetings in Parry Sound / Muskoka with tourism partners to review the Destination Development Plan recommendations.
- Successful bidder to prepare 500 print versions of the Executive Summary as well as a PDF version of the Executive Summary and the complete study to be posted on the RTO 12 website and partner websites.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

The successful bidder to design and deliver an online survey, facilitate 12 townhall meetings and prepare a final report that includes:

- Identifying regional priorities and initiatives for RTO 12 based on findings from the online survey and town hall meetings;
- The online survey results and town hall meeting data to be reported by region within RTO12 as well as an aggregate summary.
- From that information and in consultation with the RTO 12 Board develop a high level 3-5 year strategic plan
- Based on the strategic priorities and in consultation with the Board, prepare an annual operational plan for 2011/2012
- Develop an effective community engagement strategy to maintain relationships with regional tourism partners and stakeholders.

Expected Results:

- a) Up to 300 regional tourism partners and stakeholders participate in the online survey and town hall meetings
- b) Establish clear regional priorities and initiatives for RTO 12
- c) Develop high level 3-5 year strategic plan
- d) Prepare a 2011/2012 Operational Plan
- e) Plan a community engagement development strategy

Time Line:

- RFP issued subject to confirmed funding by December.
- Project start date mid January 2011
- Awareness and Engagement January 2011.
- Complete draft deliverables by mid February 2011
- Launch findings and recommendations by late March 2011

PROPOSAL PREPARATION AND FORMAT

PRICING

Bidders must provide a detailed breakdown of costs to provide the proposed services with total price shown. Prices must be quoted in Canadian dollars, including freight and delivery charges, and taxes.

Note: Be advised that taxes are considered within the project budget. Prices must remain valid for at least 120 days. Bidders are required to provide their payment terms as part of their proposal.

BIDDER QUALIFICATIONS AND REFERENCES

Bidders shall provide the following information:

- Company profile outlining history, capabilities, qualifications, and experience as well as other information you deem relevant
- Summary of prior experience (within last 3 years) in providing the goods or services similar to those described in this RFP.
- Identification of all key personnel, including sub-contractors, who will be assigned to this project. Please include their relevant experience and qualifications and their roles and responsibilities in the project, as well as their level of efforts
- Three references including names, position, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses for which the Bidder has performed similar work. These references might be contacted during the proposal evaluation phase to determine their satisfaction with the work carried out.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED SERVICE

Please describe your recommendations and approach for meeting the project requirements and please include in your presentation:

- **Strategic thinking** – We are looking for your strategic thinking and tactical considerations as it relates to the implementation of this project. Please let us know how you would implement the task at hand. What opportunities and challenges does this project present, what strategies would you employ, are there tactical considerations that need to be brought to the forefront. **Note:** This is where you can demonstrate your value added/out of the box thinking.
- **Project Work Plan:** Bidders are required to submit a work plan, itemizing the tasks and sub-tasks to complete the project in this RFP, along with the outputs. The work plan should be thorough enough in scope and detail to convey the Bidder understands of the project requirements, including the use of

local and environmentally-friendly products and services, and ability to manage the project. Major meetings and all deliverables should be included and each task should show the start and end date as well as the estimated number of hours or days required to complete the task. Each task should also identify the person or persons assigned to complete the task.

- Please provide an implementation schedule/critical path in chart format for the project. Any risks that might impinge upon the timely completion of the project must also be noted.

High Level Evaluation Process

Evaluation of proposals will be performed by the RTO 12 selection committee. Selection of the successful Bidder will be done through a formal evaluation process. Proposals will first be checked against mandatory criteria. Proposals not meeting the mandatory criteria will be rejected without further consideration. Proposals that do meet the mandatory criteria will then be assessed against the additional criteria listed below or in any addendum or addenda to this RFP. Additional consideration will be given to proposals that demonstrate professionalism, innovation and perceived commitment to the project. All submissions will be evaluated using a common set of criteria.

Proposal Evaluation Form	
Evaluation	
CRITERIA	Wtg %
Qualifications and Experience	
• Experience and credentials of the firm;	5.0
• Experience and qualifications (accreditation) of personnel assigned to the project;	5.0
• Familiarity with the tourism and hospitality industry;	5.0
• References indicating the competence and track record of the Proponent in the marketplace with regard to the services required by the RTO 12;	5.0
• Provision of a print/digital portfolio of completed work similar to RFP requirements with supporting references and project results.	5.0
• Capacity to protect confidential information and identified potential conflicts of interest.	5.0
Total:	30.0
Submission	
• Responsiveness to the RFP, completeness/comprehensiveness of submission;	5.0
• Demonstrated willingness to comply with terms and conditions of the RFP;	5.0
• Demonstrated understanding of project objectives and services to be provided from plan development to implementation strategies;	5.0
Total:	15.0

Project Deliverables

• Specific deliverables proposed in terms of meeting the requirements outlined in the Objectives and Deliverables sections of this RFP;	5.0
• Availability of Proponent to work within the project’s scheduling requirement;	5.0
• Ability to provide all services in a timely manner;	5.0
• Quality of the proposal in terms of methodology and approach to the project, project scheduling and proposed deliverables;	5.0
• Allocation of resources and the role of team members clearly identified;	5.0
• Ability to provide all services as per the specifications identified herein;	5.0
• Value-added services within the scope of the services required.	5.0
Total:	35.0
Weighted Qualification Points	80.0
Total Pricing (Inclusive of PST and GST)	
Weighted Pricing	20.0
GRAND TOTAL WEIGHTED SCORE	
Dollars per Point Calculation	

Marking of Qualitative and Price Criteria

Points are awarded on the following basis:

- 0 to 2: Does not meet the requirements
- 3 to 5: Marginally meets the requirements (some reservation)
- 6 to 8: Meets the requirements/expectations
- 9 to 10: Exceeds requirements/expectations

Fees are rated based on the lowest cost proposal receiving 20 pts and each successive proposal receiving a prorated score calculated as follows:

$\text{Lowest Amount} / \text{Proponents Amount} \times 20$

Cost of Proposal Submissions

- The Bidder is responsible for all and any costs associated with the preparation and submission of the Proposal. RTO 12 will not be liable to pay any such costs or reimburse the Bidders in the event RTO 12 decides to reject all Proposals.

Information Indicative Only

- The information that is provided in this RFP is indicative only. Through the review of the proposals and subsequent finalization of an agreement with the successful Bidder, RTO 12 reserves the right to request further information or clarification of information regarding a Bidder and any individuals or other persons associated with a response.

Confidentiality

- If the Bidder does not want the documents that are submitted in response to this RFP to be made available to the public, the Bidder must indicate that the documents are submitted in confidence. The documents contain trade secrets, technical, commercial, financial or labour relations information that disclosure of the documents could reasonably be expected to result in harm, as specified in Section 10 of the Municipal Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection Act. While RTO 12 will endeavour to maintain the confidentiality of all such information, the Bidder must realize that such information may well become public or be disclosed

Other Considerations

- **RTO 12** in its sole and absolute discretion, may discuss or negotiate with any Bidder, the terms and conditions of its response without any obligation to other Bidders and without giving rise to any rights of other Bidders to amend or negotiate their response.
- **RTO 12** shall not have any obligation to notify any of the Bidders of discussions or negotiations with any other Bidder, to invite amended responses from any other Bidders, to disseminate other information disclosed to any one Bidder, or to approve a further submission made as a result of such information.
- Conflict of Interest

The bidder must declare any actual or potential conflict of interest including situations or circumstances that could give a bidder an unfair advantage during a procurement process or compromise their ability to perform ;

RTO 12 reserves the right to disqualify a vendor's quote due to a conflict of interest;
The bidder must avoid and disclose any actual or potential conflict of interest during the performance of their contractual obligations;

RTO 12 reserves the right to terminate an agreement where a vendor fails to disclose an actual or potential conflict or where such a conflict cannot be resolved.

- In the event of any discrepancies appearing, or differences of opinion, misunderstanding or dispute arising between the Bidder and RTO 12 respecting the intent or meaning of this RFP, or accompanying documents, or as to any omission there from or misstatements therein, the decision and interpretation of RTO 12 shall be final and binding upon all parties. There shall be no review or appeal of such decision.

End of RFP. Thank you for your time.

Appendix 2 – Background Materials Reviewed

(listed in chronological order, starting with most recent)

UNITY Plan, Huntsville’s Guide to a Sustainable Future, LURA Consulting, 2010

Creative Muskoka Municipal Roundtable, Township of Muskoka Lakes, Town of Bracebridge, Township of Lake of Bays, Town of Huntsville, Education Huntsville, Southeast Georgian Bay Chamber of Commerce, District of Muskoka, 2010

Muskoka Discovery Guide, Muskoka Tourism Marketing Agency, 2010

Ontario’s Near North Welcome Guide, Ontario’s Near North, 2010

Georgian Bay Country Destination Guide, Georgian Bay Country, 2010

Parry Sound Leisure Guide, Town of Parry Sound, 2010

Central Almaguin Economic Base Review, EDP Consulting, 2009

Muskoka Community Profile, District Municipality of Muskoka, 2009

Muskoka Demographic Profile, District Municipality of Muskoka, 2009

Muskoka Economic Profile, District Municipality of Muskoka, 2009

Muskoka Economic Strategy, Background Study, Malone Givens Parsons, 2008

Muskoka Strategic Priorities, District Municipality of Muskoka, 2008

Muskoka Growth Strategy, Phase 1 Report, Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2008

Economic Development and Environmental Protection: Achieving a Balance – A Position Paper on Economic Development, Muskoka Watershed Council, 2008

Parry Sound Area Cultural & Recreation Master Plan, dmA Planning & Management Services, 2008

Marketing Our Communities, Huntsville & Lake of Bays Chamber of Commerce, 2007

Muskoka Lakes Business Retention and Expansion Final Report, Muskoka Lakes Chamber of Commerce and Muskoka Futures, 2006

Muskoka Assessment Project (Premier-Ranked), 2006, prepared for Muskoka Tourism Marketing Agency

Parry Sound and Area Economic Development Strategy, Partners in Prosperity, Parry Sound Area Community Business and Development Centre Inc. (Community Futures), 2006

Gravenhurst Business Retention and Expansion Final Report, Town of Gravenhurst, Muskoka Community Futures Development Corporation, Gravenhurst Chamber of Commerce, 2005

Muskoka Second Home Study, District Municipality of Muskoka, 2005

Bracebridge Business Retention and Expansion Final Report, Town of Bracebridge, Muskoka Community Futures Development Corporation, 2004

Huntsville Business Retention and Expansion Final Report, Town of Huntsville, Muskoka Community Futures Development Corporation, 2003

Algonquin Park Management Plan, Ontario Parks, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, 1998

Appendix 3 – List of Persons Providing Input

(listed in alphabetical order)

Albrough, Ken	Muskoka Community Network
Anderson, Jen Morgan	Muskoka Lakes Music Festival; Kaleidoscope Arts in Education
Armstrong, Tony	Back Country Paintball
Arnold, Susan	Hidden Valley Highlands Ski Area Inc.
Ashby, Brian	Ashby Glass Studios
Balkwill, Cathy	Parry Sound Area Chamber of Commerce
Barron, Lois	Glenn Burney Lodge
Bebamash, Shannon	Desmasdon's Boat Works; GM Comfort Inn
Beitz, Jeff	Georgian Bay Biosphere Reserve Inc
Bell, Gord	Beauview Cottage Resort
Bossart, Carol	Festival of the Sound
Brushey, David	Muskoka Futures
Brushey, Robin	Downtown Huntsville Business Improvement Area
Charlton, Ilona	Summer's Attic
Cigler, Joe	Otter Lake Marina
Cigler, Sonja	Otter Lake Marina
Collard, Kelly	Rosseau Recreation Committee
Copfer, Sarah	Savour Muskoka
Corbeil, Jed	The Griffin Gastropub
Crawley, John	Bracebridge Chamber of Commerce
Curley, Ann	Muskoka Boat and Heritage Centre
Currie, Sandy	Moon River Property Owners

Dare, Al	Wilson Lake Resort
Davidson, Scott	Log Cabin Inn; Bethune Memorial House National Historic Site
Dempsey, Gayle	Muskoka Lakes Music Festival; Muskoka Chatauqua
Derry, Paul	Pine Lodge Inn
Dunn, Stephanie	Sunset Cruises
Eccles, Debbie	Bethune Memorial House National Historic Site
Evans, Scott	Winding Fences Farm
Evelyn, George	Muskoka Ridge Trailer Park Ltd.
Ewald, Robert	Magnetawan Inn
Fallon, Patrick	Carolyn's Comfort Homes
Feltis, Jerry	Delta Hotels
Fleming, Jeremy	Cedar Grove Lodge
Forest, E	Camp Northway
Forth, Cheryl	FedNor
Furn, Don	Township of Muskoka Lakes
Giaschi-Pacini, Lori-Lynn	District of Muskoka
Gienow, Jody	Beat the Wheat
Ginn, Cameron	The North Star
Haines, Lori	The Friends of Algonquin Park
Hancock, Greg	Charles W. Stockey Centre for the Performing Arts
Harding, Phil	District of Muskoka Councillor
Hargrave, Deborah	Lakeshore Marina & Chalets

Harris, Anna Marie	RTO 12
Harris, Perry	Georgian Bay Marina Inc.
Hastings, Samantha	District of Muskoka
Haywood, Kelly	Huntsville Lake of Bays Chamber of Commerce
Hellyer, Kathy	Arundel Lodge
Hepworth, Gail	Seguin Township
Hepworth, Jack	Seguin Township
Hernando, Laura	Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Culture
Hogarth, Wendy	Johnston's Cranberry Marsh/Muskoka Lakes Winery
Holmes, Krista	Horseshoe Lake Camp & Cottages
Holmes, Krista	Charles W. Stockey Centre for the Performing Arts
Hopkins, Jamie	Santa's Village, RTO Board
Hough, David	North Granite Ridge
Howell, Doug	Pow Wow Point Lodge
Hutton, Jack	Bala's Museum – Lucy Maude Montgomery: Anne of Green Gables Museum
Hutton, Linda	Bala's Museum – Lucy Maude Montgomery: Anne of Green Gables Museum
Joliffe, Lorne	Motel 6
Kathy Hellyer, Kathy	Arundel Lodge
Keith, Bonnie	Town of Parry Sound
Kelley, Cheryl	Town of Bracebridge
Ken	Downtown Business Association

Klein, Joseph	Deerhurst Resort
Knotz, Patrick	Ahmic Lake Enterprises
Lacey, Karrie	Wrights Marina, Britt
Langford, Lila	Ahmic Maintenance & Storage Ltd.
Larkman, Dave	Digital Wilderness Canada
Lawley, Michael	Muskoka Tourism
Lee, Charlotte	Wood House Haven
Leslie, Leah	The Rosseau, Marriott Resort and Spa
Leung, Jackie	Fern Glen Inn
Lowry, Henry	First Choice Bait and Tackle; Microtel Inn and Suotes
Lucier, Todd	Couples Resort
Luker, Kailey	Muskoka Lakes Chamber of Commerce
MackKay, Don	Muskoka Highlands Golf Links
Mason, Greg	Microtel Inn & Suites Parry Sound
McDonald, Estelle	Lakeview Cottages
McGillis, Don	Muskoka Riverside Inn
McNabb, Danielle	RTO 12
McPhee, Rob	Muskoka Learning Network
McTavish, Bob	Township of Muskoka Lakes
McWalter, Lis	Stockey Centre
Miglan, Eric	Killarney Lodge in Algonquin Park
Miglan, Sven	Portage Store, Algonquin Park
Miller, John	Muskoka Steamships
Murphy, Jim	RTO Board

Neal, Fred	Rosseau Community Action Committee
Oliver, Tim	Oxtongue Lake Gem
Paltanen, Esa	Delta Grandview Resort
Palubiski, Adam	Sunset Cruises
Paul, Patti	Riverside Ranch Trail Rides
Poole, Susan	40 Bay St. B&B
Prewitt, Joan	Touchstone on Lake Muskoka
Riley, Katya	Brooklands Farm
Riley, Ken	Brooklands Farm
Roberts, Jeannette	Comfort Inn
Robertson, Arthur	Savour Muskoka
Ryeland, Andrew	Bear Claw Tours
Saulnier, Nocole	Georgian Bay Airways Ltd.
Schmid, Walt	Township of Muskoka Lakes
Scott, Brenda	iBrand Almaguin, RTO Board
Searle, Peter	Woodland Echoes Resort
Smith, Doug	Muskoka Lakes Museum
Smith, Rod	Rosseau Community Action Committee
Sorensen, John	Muskoka Wildlife Centre
Sorrenti, Jim	The Little Britt Inn
Spinney, Bill	Parry Sound Area Community Business & Development Centre Inc.
Stewart, David	RTO Board
Stichnothe, Wolfgang	Christies Mill, Inn & Spa
Stroud, Larry	Korverge, Inc.

Tamboro, Tony	JW Marriott
Templeton, Jane	Muskoka Lakes Chamber of Commerce
Thuro, Wesley	Glenn Burney Lodge
Tillson, Tamsen	The Tillson Group, Marketing & Communications
Tonia	Park to Park Trail Association
Tremblay, Roger	Delta Hotels
Turner, Ken	Woodland Echoes, RTO Board
Vernon, Debbie	Royal LePage
Vicki	Tally Ho Inn
Walker, Cindy	Parry Sound - Muskoka Federal Liberal Association
Waters, Dan	Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs, Happy Wanderers chapter
Wiber, Diane	Northern Edge Algonquin; Winding Fences Farm
Wouda, Tjeerd	Windmill Bakery

Appendix 4 – On-Line Survey Results

The charts and tables below show the results of the on-line survey of 65 tourism businesses throughout RTO 12. This survey was open to any tourism-related business throughout RTO 12, and the link to the survey was promoted through the RTO 12 web site, as well as print and broadcast media.

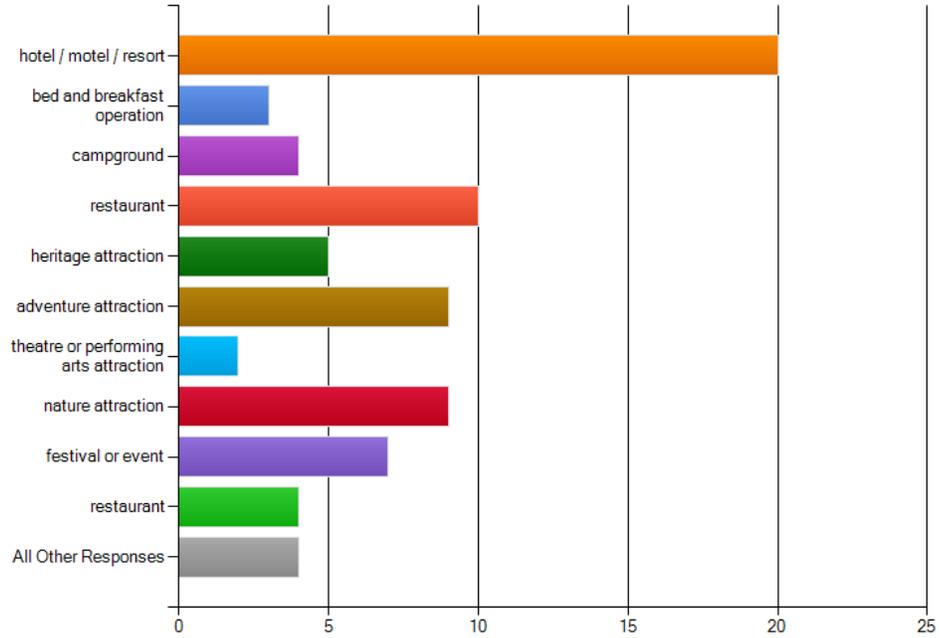
The results of the survey are contained in the charts and tables overleaf. 'Headline' findings are:

- a widely representative response was obtained from attraction and events, accommodation, restaurants and other services supporting the tourism industry
- the response was reasonable representative geographically, with the majority of responses from Muskoka and Parry Sound
- about 2/3 of responses were from year-round operations
- most responses were from long-term establishments (over 10 years)
- the total response represents over 500 permanent employees and over 800 seasonal employees
- most of the respondents were medium-sized businesses with gross revenues in the \$100,000 to \$1 million range; a few responses (13 operations) had gross revenues in excess of \$1 million
- while most operations served 5,000 or fewer guests or visitors, a few (16 respondents) served over 10,000 guests or visitors
- just over half the respondents are reliant upon the tourism industry, with 75% or more of their customers coming from outside the area
- the greatest proportion of total visitors for respondents comes from southern Ontario and the GTA
- a significant proportion of respondents (about a third) had either never heard of RTO 12 or knew very little about it
- most respondents responded that they were not very aware of the tourism resources throughout the RTO 12 region

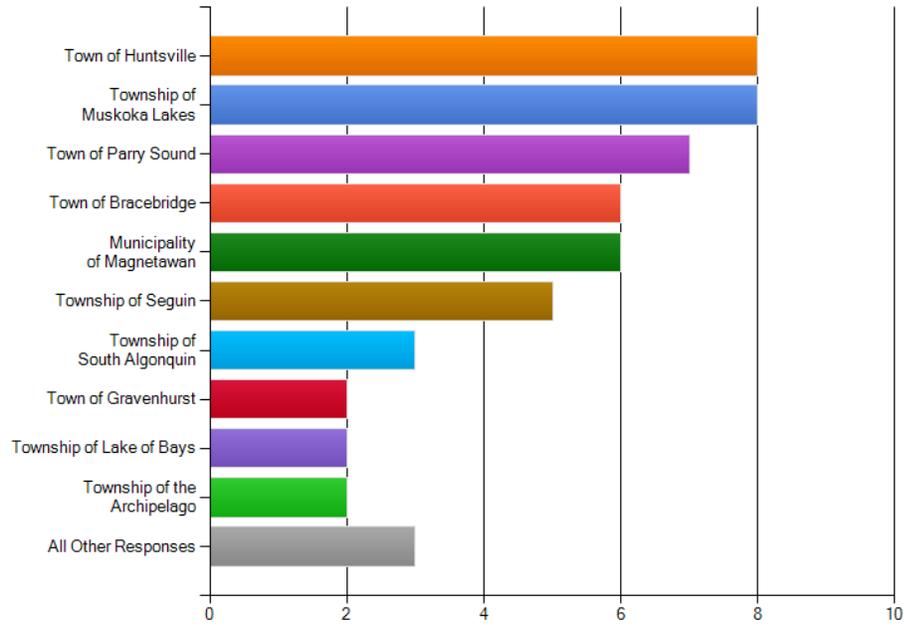
- most respondents felt that RTO 12 should place a high priority on marketing and promotion activities (approximately 80%), product development (just over 50%), investment attraction (also just over 50%), and industry coordination and collaboration
- only about 30% of the respondents felt that high priority should be placed on workforce development activities

APPENDIX 4 - On-Line Survey Results

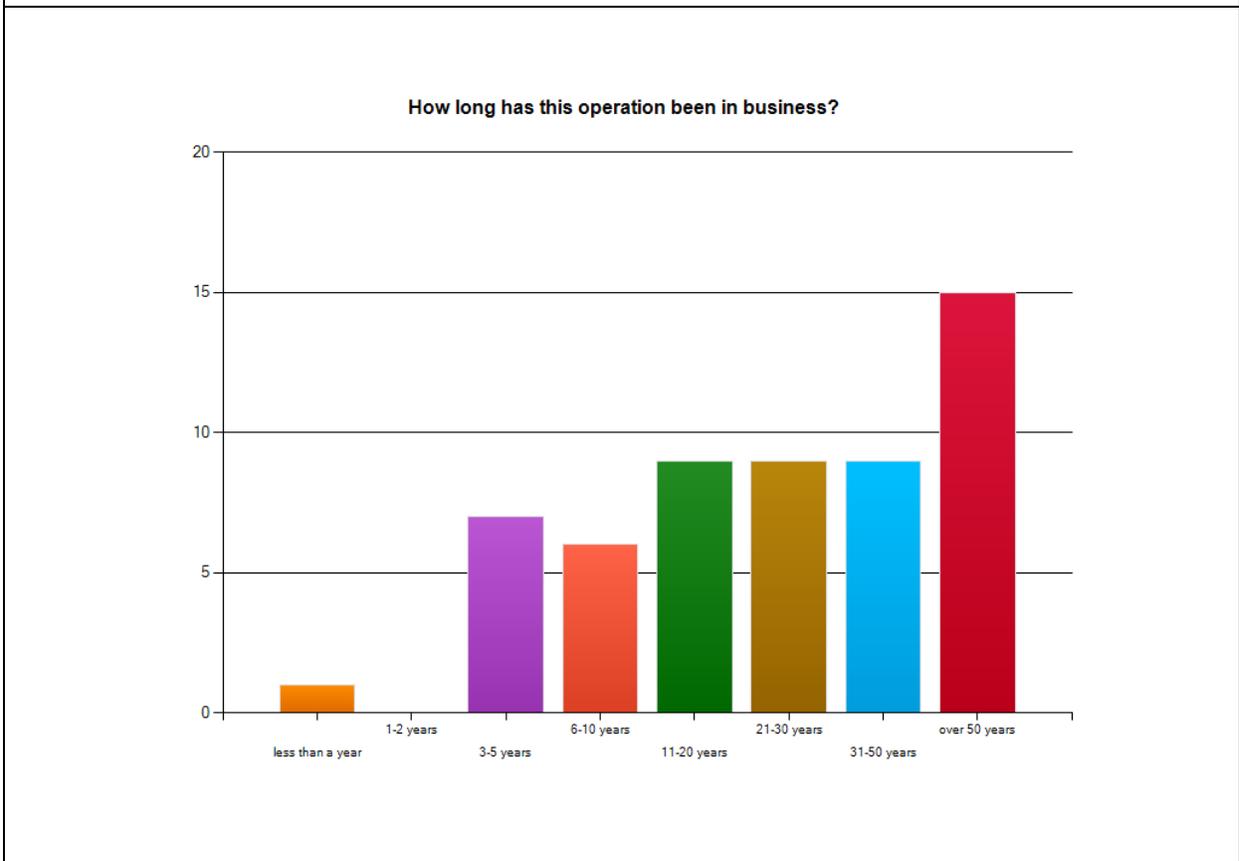
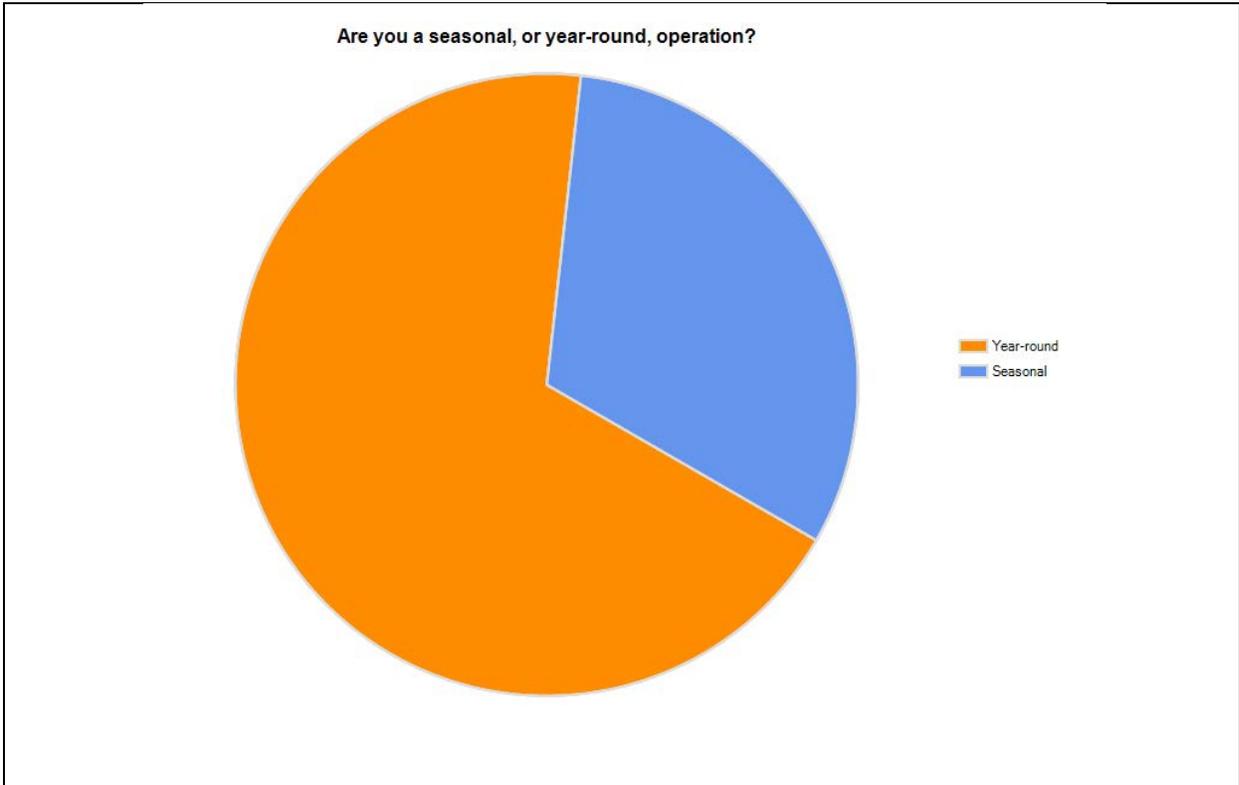
First, how would you describe the kind of business you own, operate or manage? (Check as many descriptors as apply)



Which municipality are you located in (if in more than one location, where is your primary or largest location in RTO 12)?

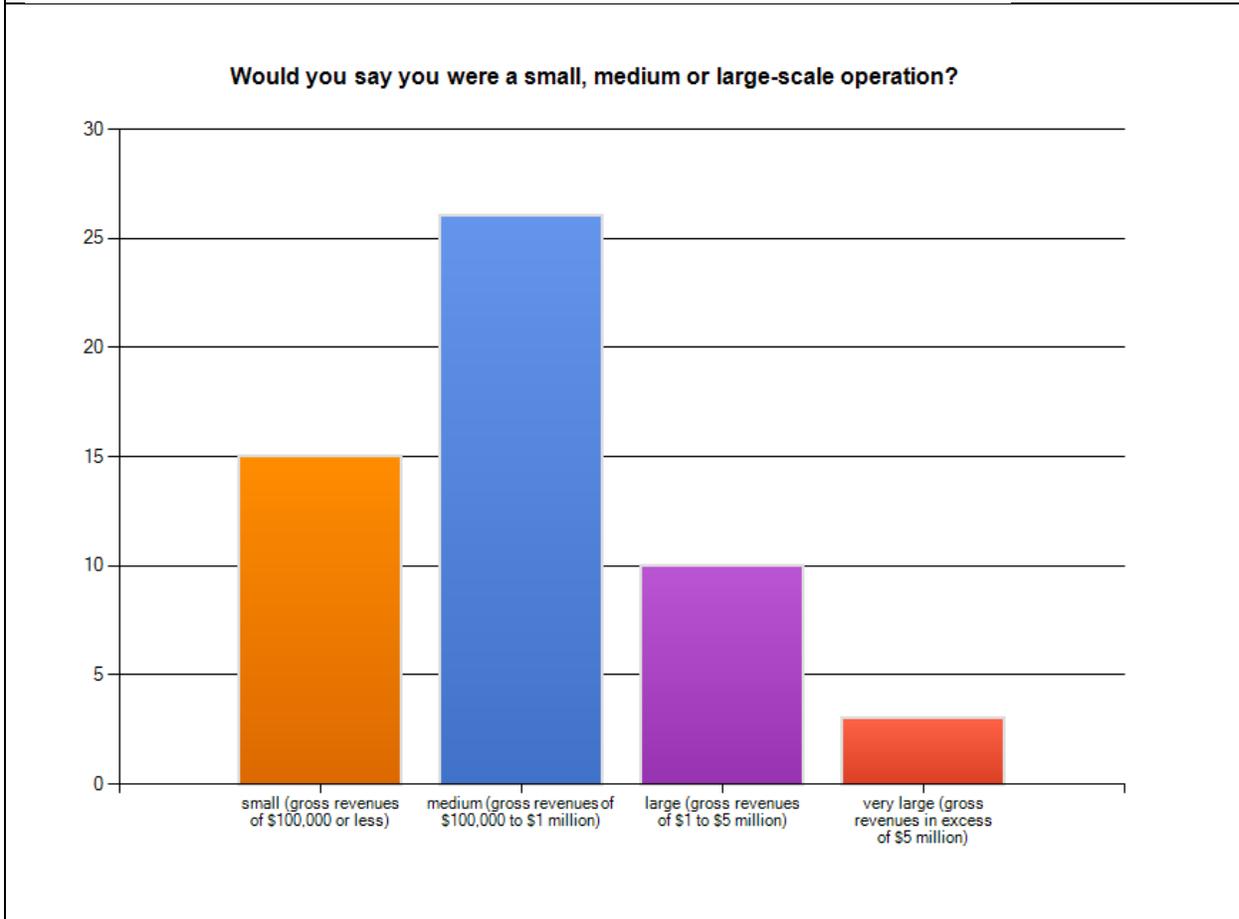
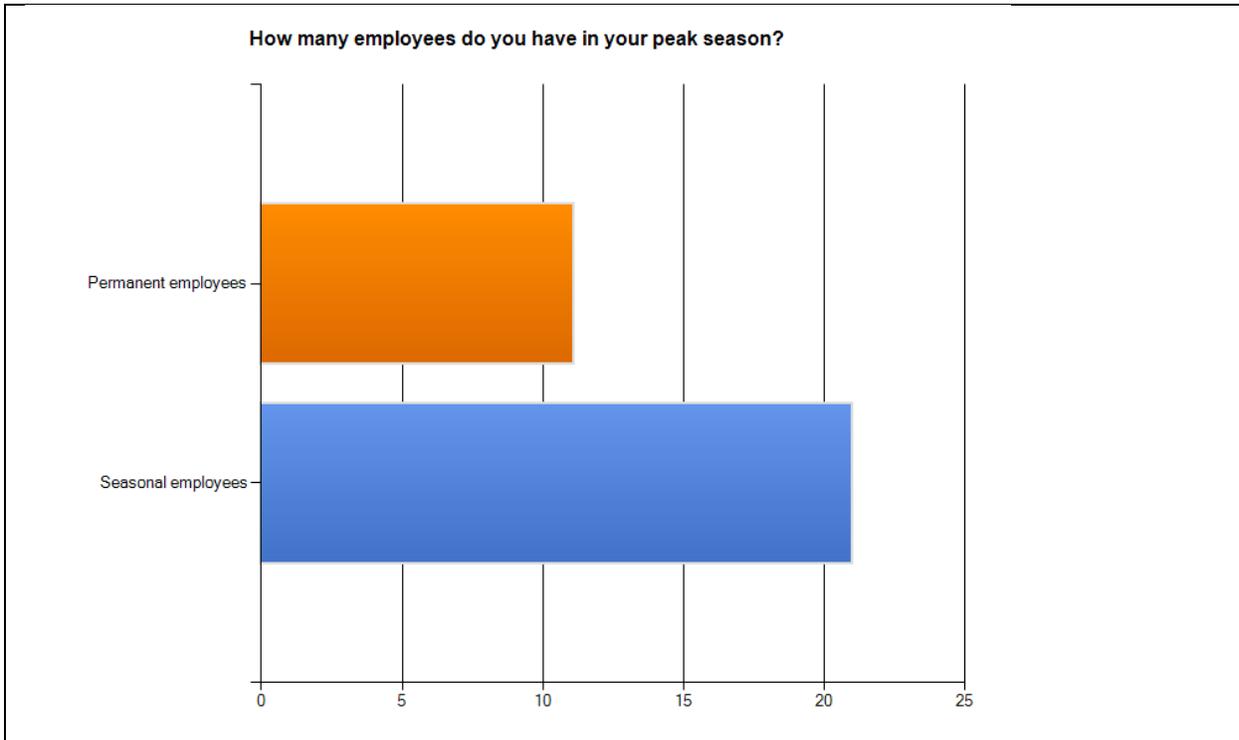


APPENDIX 4 - On-Line Survey Results



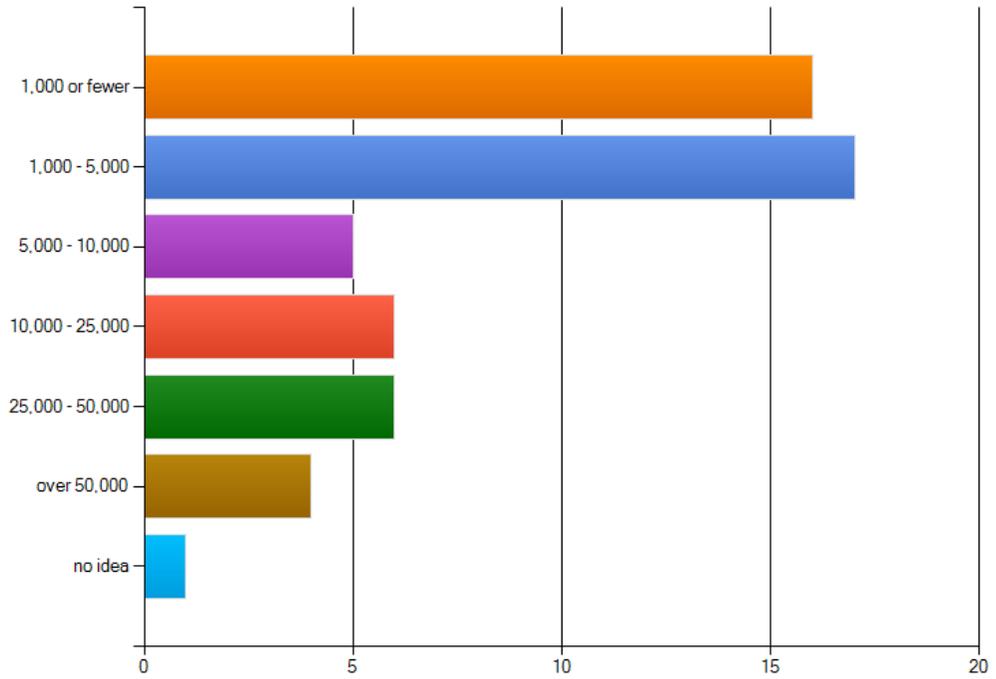
APPENDIX 4 - On-Line Survey Results

The question below shows the average number of employees per respondent. In total, respondents reported 508 permanent employees and 859 seasonal employees.

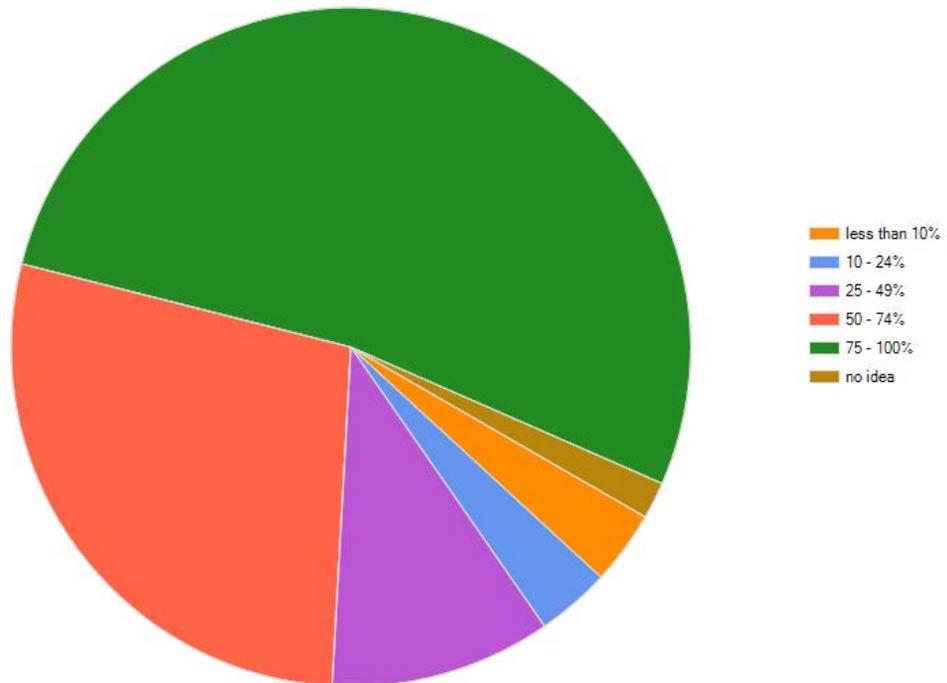


APPENDIX 4 - On-Line Survey Results

As best as you can estimate, how many customers, users or visitors would you have served / hosted in the last year (2010)?

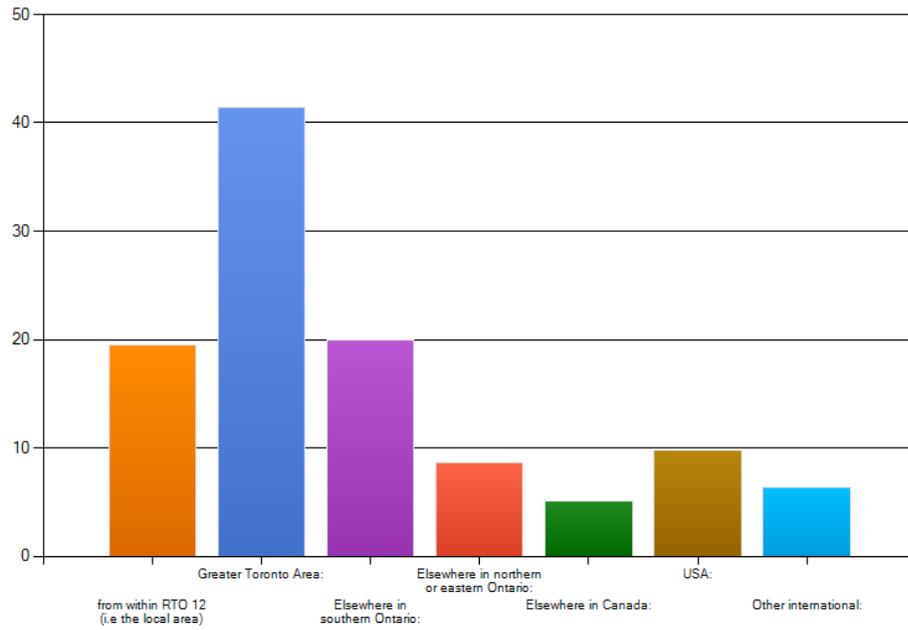


What percentage of your business would you say relies on tourists or visitors from outside your area?

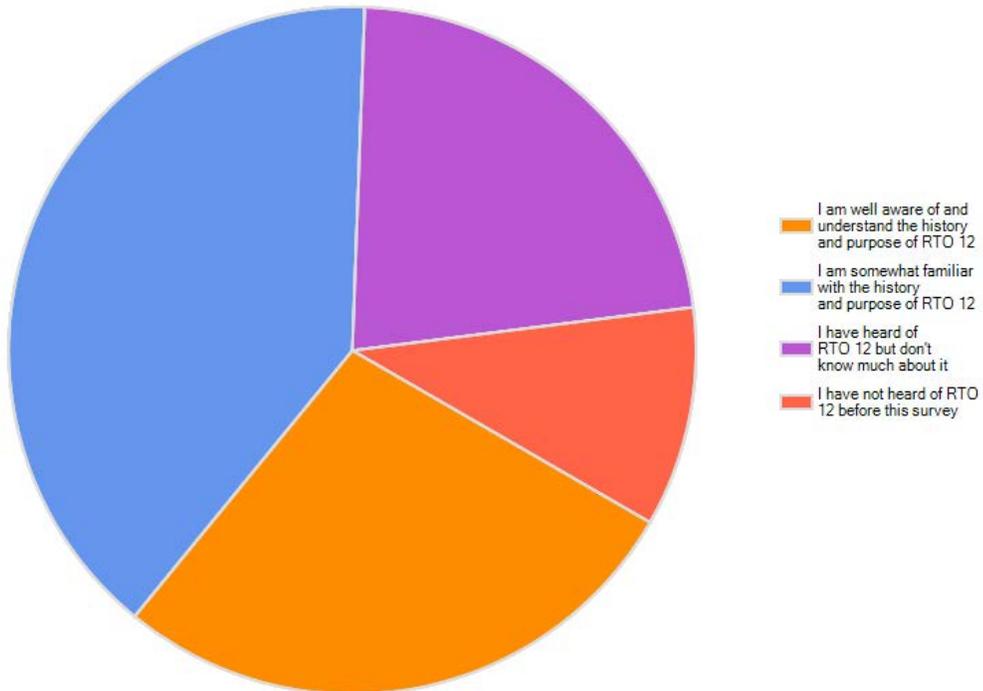


APPENDIX 4 - On-Line Survey Results

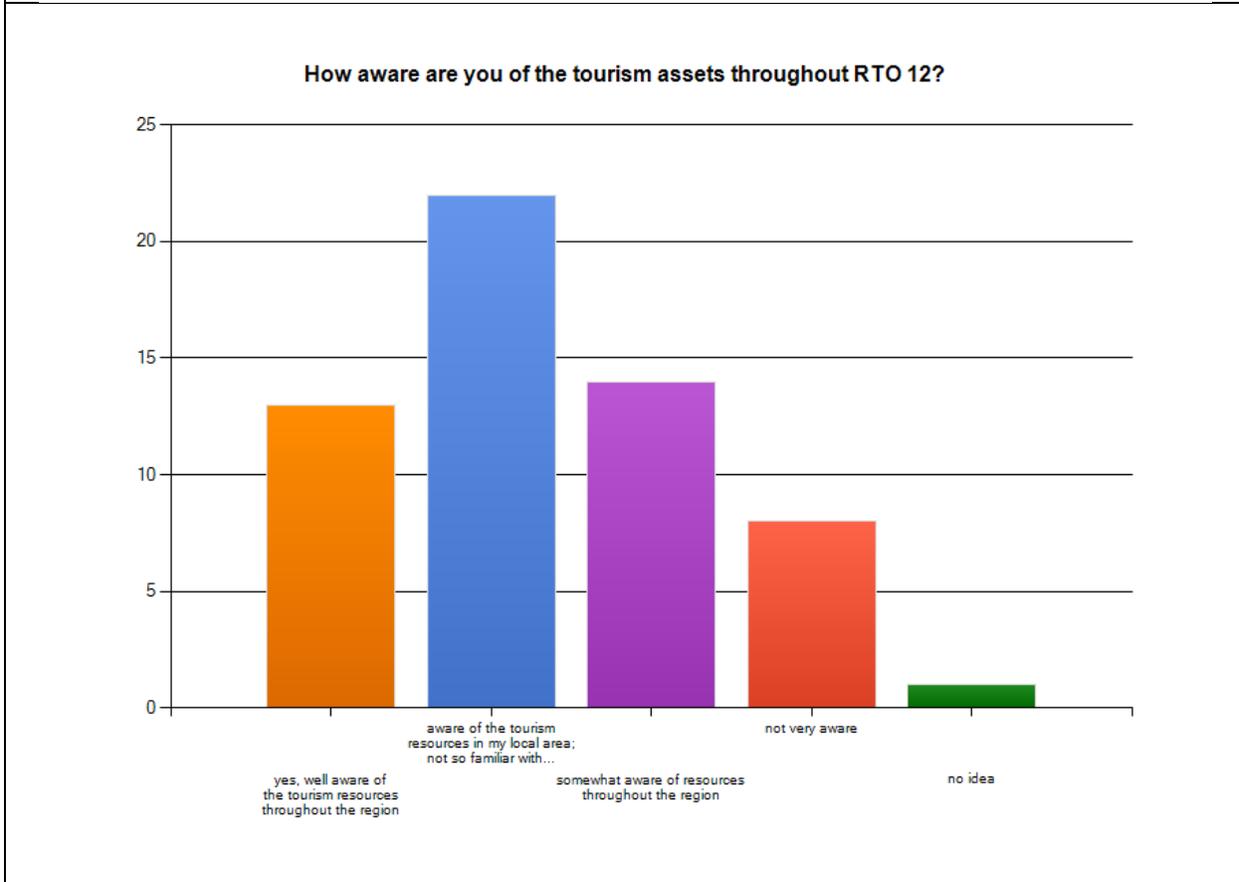
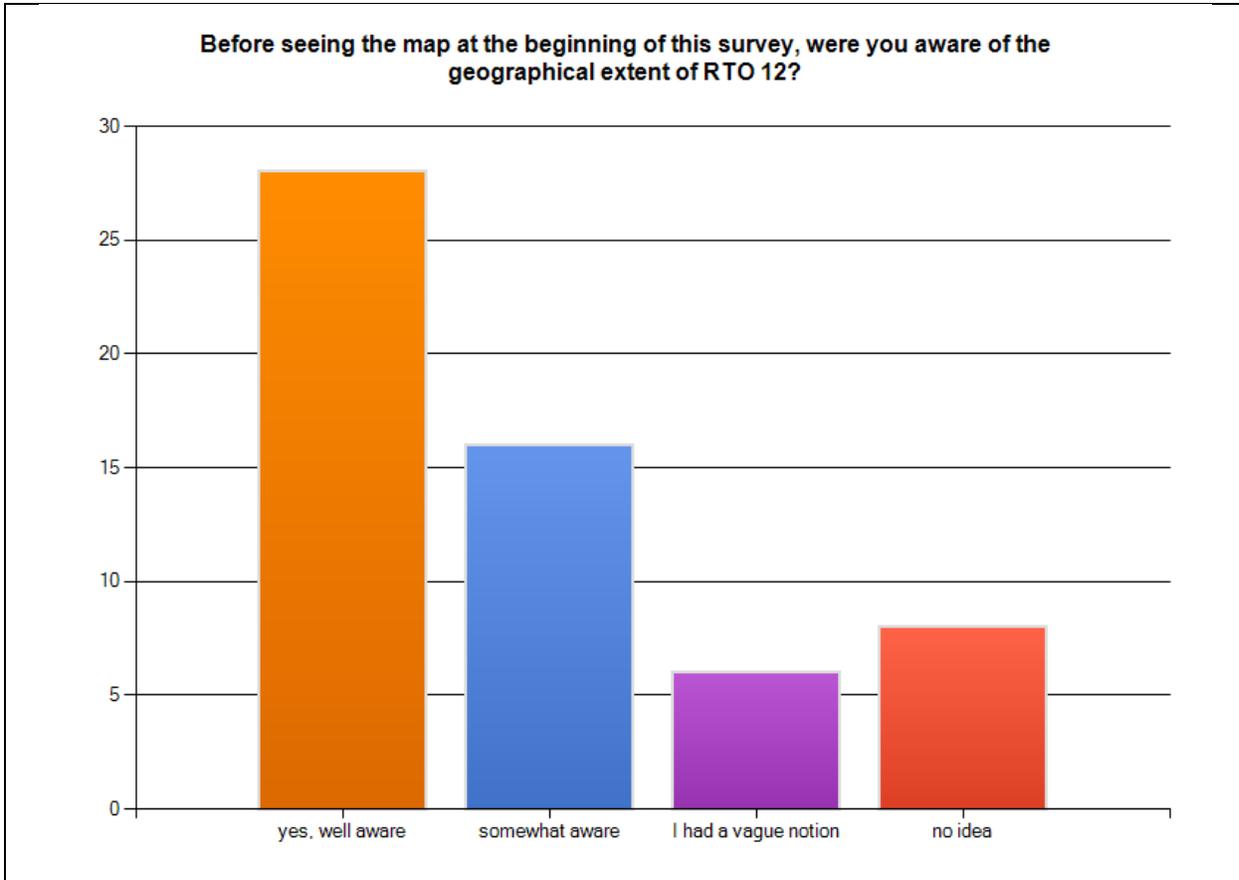
Of all the guests or customers that you have served, what is your best estimate as to where they come from? (Please estimate percentages)



How would you describe your level of awareness and understanding of the general history and purpose of the RTO system in Ontario?

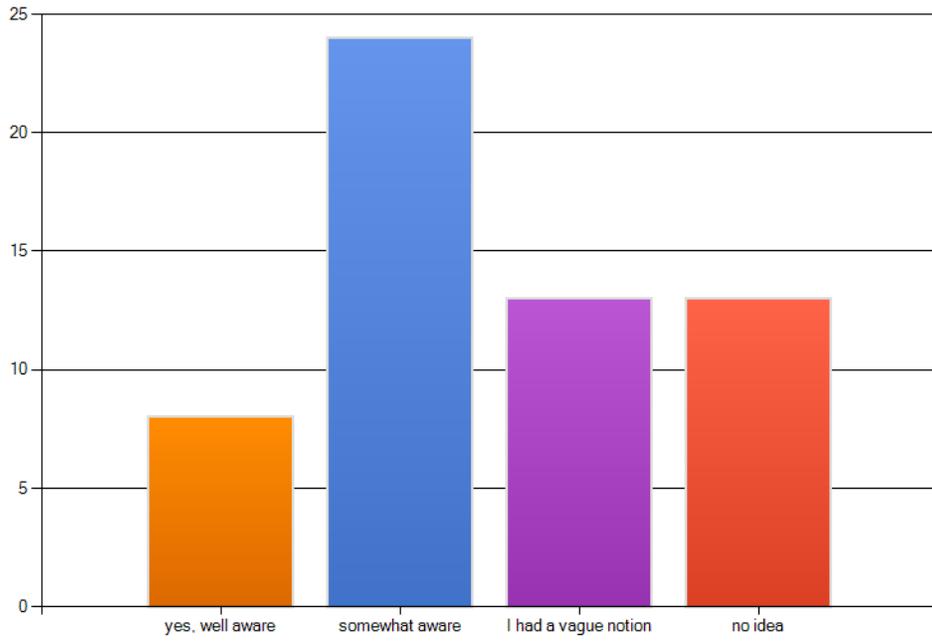


APPENDIX 4 - On-Line Survey Results

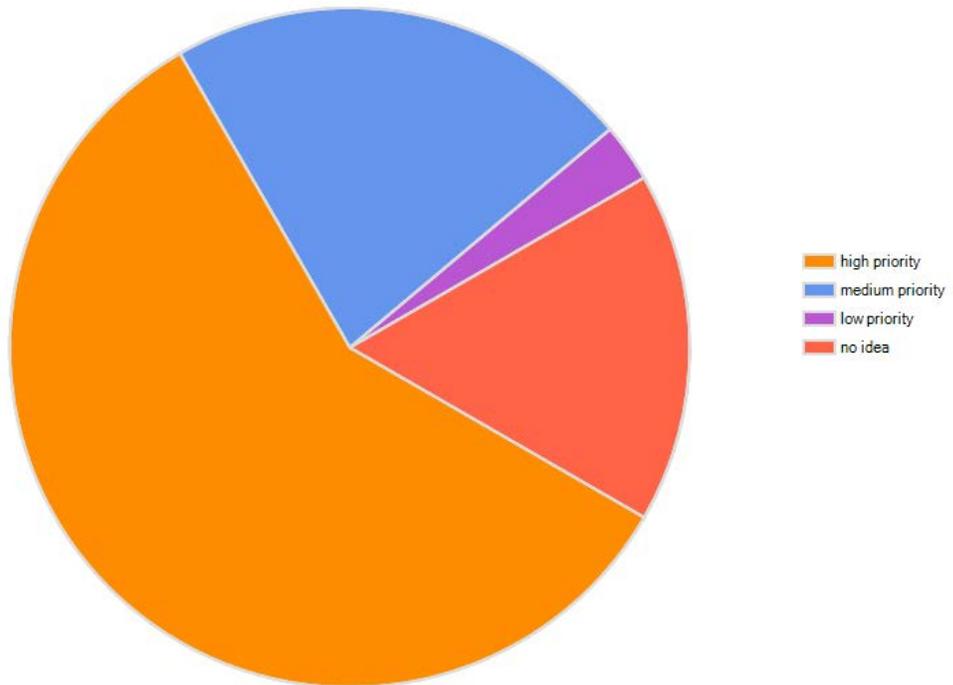


APPENDIX 4 - On-Line Survey Results

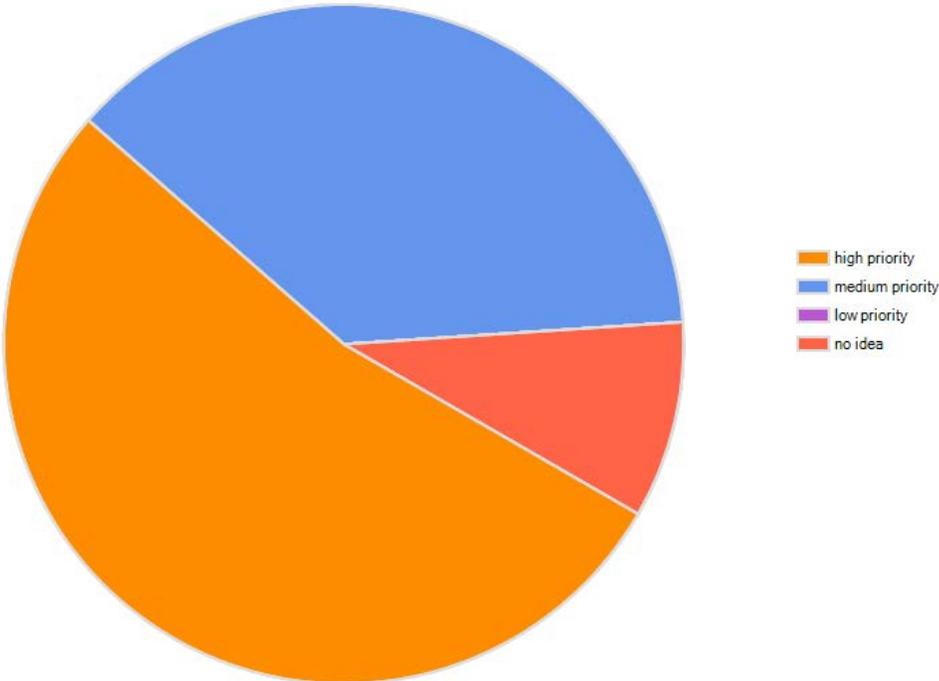
How aware were you of the specific stated purpose and Vision of RTO 12, as shown above, before seeing it just now?



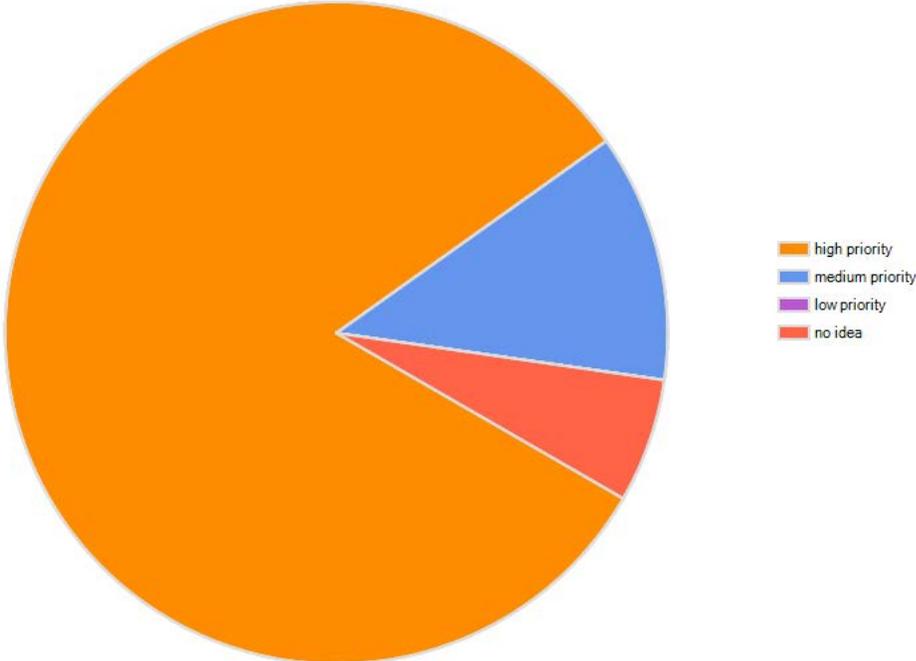
What priority should RTO 12 place upon product development activities as you have described them above?



What priority should RTO 12 place upon investment attraction activities as you have described them above?

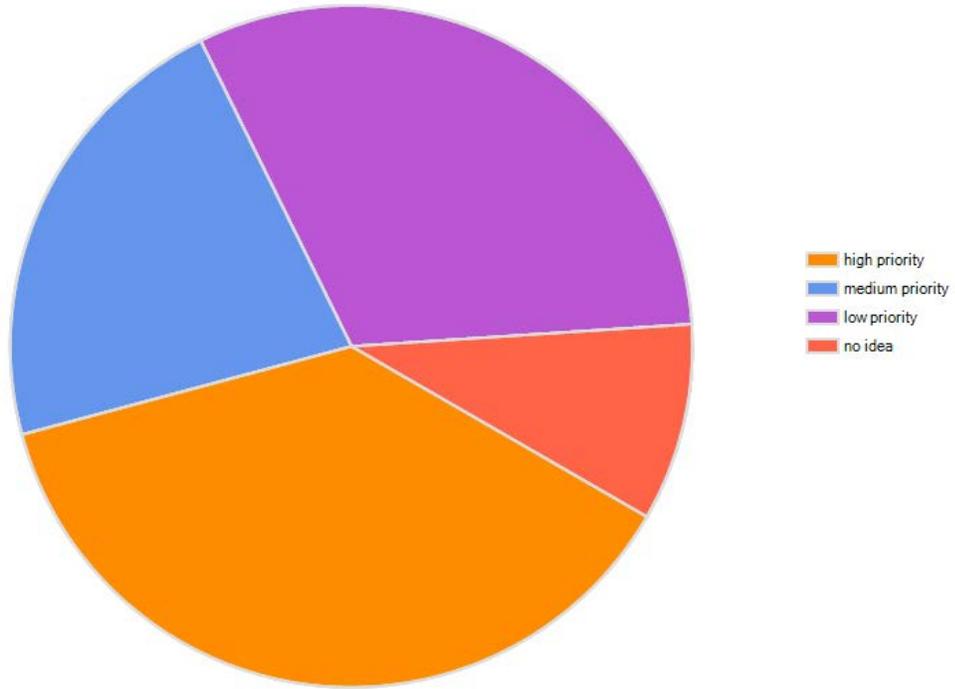


What priority should RTO 12 place upon marketing and promotion activities as you have described them above?

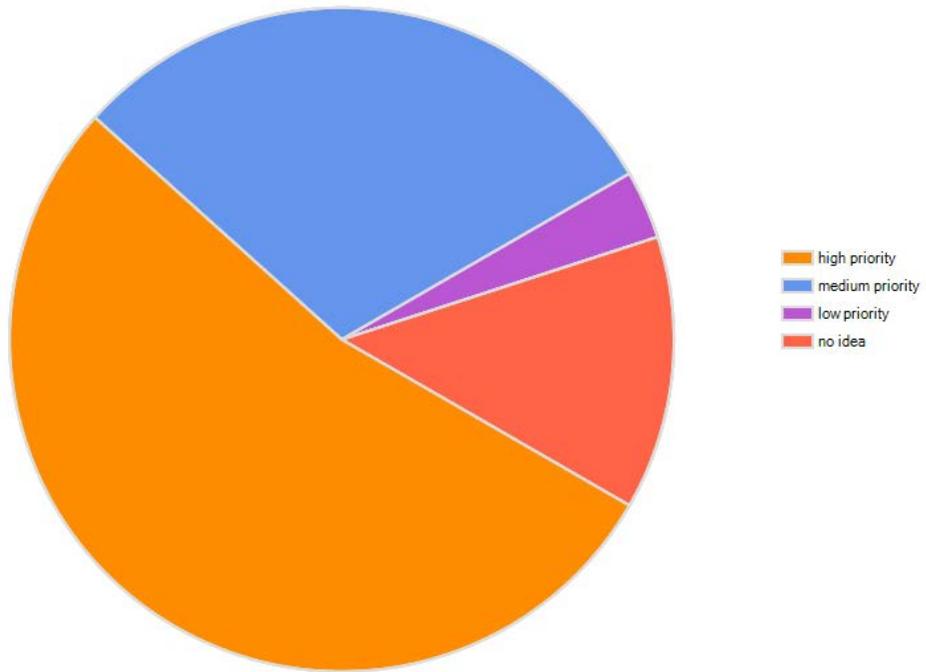


APPENDIX 4 - On-Line Survey Results

What priority should RTO 12 place upon workforce development and training activities as you have described them above?



What priority should RTO 12 place upon industry coordination and collaboration activities as you have described them above?



What are the key *challenges* facing tourism businesses throughout RTO 12

Major themes reported were:

Seasonal nature of business
Economic downturn
Marketing/branding the region
Competition from other tourist destinations:
 - *Outside of Canada*
 - *From other RTOs within Ontario*
Organizing RTO12 into cohesive unit, a fair partnership
Development of Parry Sound waterfront
Taxes/cost of business
Including social media in any marketing initiative

What are the best *opportunities* facing businesses throughout the RTO 12 region?

Major themes reported were:

Establish RTO12 as an eco-friendly tourist destination
Adding/improving winter attractions in area, i.e. winter sports
Four-lane highway accessibility
Harnessing growth of Southern Ontario for tourism dollars
Attracting first-generation Canadians
Better transportation within RTO12, catering to visitors (private or public)
Boomers approaching retirement and having available time

What would say the *gaps in the tourist experience* in RTO 12 are?

Major themes reported were:

Lack of public awareness that RTO12 offers a winter experience for visitors
Many small-scale attractions, few large scale ones
Few planned events apart from Canada Day
Staffing difficulties for short operating season
Lack of unified-brand Tourist resources, i.e. RTO12 signage, RTO12 tourist information centres, etc.
Need to establish area as more than camping, golfing, boating

Product Development

What are the product development or business growth opportunities to address gaps?

Major themes reported were:

- Expanding high-speed Internet through region
- Opportunity to unify separate silos throughout region, create package tours with cooperative efforts
- Expanding dining opportunities in region. Artisanal or culinary “trail” for tourists?

What are the most severe barriers to product development?

Major themes reported were:

- Poor infrastructure makes investment more expensive.
- “Old thinking”; existing brands not wanting to see themselves “watered down”
- Seasonal business; being able to successfully market winter.

What actions would you like to see RTO12 take in Product Development?

Note that 60% of respondents felt this should be a high-priority item. Some themes reported were:

- Provide low-interest loans for businesses
- Support investment in the region and acquisition of capital
- Subsidizing discounts for partnerships between businesses
- Provide tax-breaks or subsidies for seasonal operators
- Market the area as a unified whole

Attracting Investment

What opportunities are there throughout RTO 12 to attract investment?

Major themes reported were:

- Low interest loans to help with start-ups
- Promotion of RTO12 as environmental destination
- Expand broadband/high speed Internet services
- Stress low-cost real estate

What barriers are there to attracting investment?

Major themes reported were:

- Seasonal business
- No active support for local events
- Municipalities competing for investment, area lacks cohesion as of yet
- High cost of doing business

What actions would you like to see RTO12 take in Attracting Investment?

Note that 53% of respondents felt this should be a high-priority item. Some themes reported were:

- Work to show businesses benefits of uniting to achieve regional goals
- Reestablish regional funding or lower taxes
- Establish strong RTO12 brand throughout Ontario

Marketing and Promotion

How should marketing and promotional activities undertaken by RTO 12 support existing DMOs?

Major themes reported were:

- Unified regional signage, branding to market RTO12 as a single destination.
- TV ads billboard space on new highways
- Get up to date market research and communications info
- Check to see if people outside the area know of existing RTO12 brands
- Broaden strong existing brands to encompass more of the region

What are your thoughts regarding the components of a Regional Marketing Strategy?

Note that 90% of respondents felt this should be a high-priority item. Some themes reported were:

Regional Brand/Identity: 85% felt this to be a priority component of the marketing plan

Specific comments were:

- Keep branding that has already been established
- Identify the main perceived strengths of region and promote as a brand
- Use a better name than “RTO12”

Print Marketing: 74% felt this to be a priority component of the marketing plan

Specific comments were:

- Advertise in niche magazines for outdoor life & ecotourism
- Need some presence, but overall low priority

Web Marketing/Social Media: 89% felt this to be a priority component of the marketing plan

Specific comments were:

Need improved web presence
Opportunity for video content
Should follow TV/Radio campaign?

Visitor Information Centres: 74% felt this to be a priority component of the marketing plan

Specific comments were:

Highways 11 and 400 good places for regional info centres
RTO12 needs a stronger presence here than “a flyer”

Market Research and Industry Performance Measurement: 70% felt this to be a priority component of the marketing plan

Specific comments were:

Share this information between RTO12 businesses
Necessary and with accountability
Focus on key-decision making areas: no need to drown in information

Other Areas 14.8% had other comments to make

Themes were:

Customer driven model
Build on social media
Lobby gov't for direct fiscal support

Workforce Development and Promotion

What workforce development needs face businesses throughout RTO 12?

Specific comments were:

Student subsidies for employers
Use workforce incentives program provided by RTO12 partnership businesses to encourage good work and cross-promotion.
More training programs/workshops for seasonal staff
Increased focus on customer service catered to tourists

What actions would you like to see RTO12 take in Workshop Development?

Note that 37% of respondents felt this should be a high-priority item. 31% reported that they felt it to be a low priority strategy. Some themes reported were:

Base funding incentives on contract completion to encourage seasonal employees to “stick it out”

Bring training in to RTO12- shouldn't have to take a day to go to Toronto or North Bay

Learn from GMIST.ca and what Atlantic Canada is doing

Perform needs assessments for individual businesses

Overall Industry Coordination & Collaboration

What are the opportunities and benefits from coordination/cooperation that should be considered?

Specific comments were:

Focus on researching what makes the RTO12 experience uniquely attractive, then exploiting that data

Move to increase tourist base towards more ethnically diverse visitors

Promotional materials: RTO12 should promote the area at trade shows, etc., and also distribute materials between businesses so that tourist-based businesses can recommend each other

What are the challenges to cooperation exist that will need to be overcome?

Specific comments were:

Distances within the region: RTO12 is geographically vast

Lack of decent Internet availability (useful to bridge distance gap)

Establishing a unified vision to discourage “turf wars”

Implementation in a timely fashion

Fear of changing the existing model

What actions would you like to see RTO12 take in Cooperation and Coordination?

Note that 53% of respondents felt this should be a high-priority item. Some themes reported were:

Promotion is key

More local meetings/information exchanges

Increase private sector investment

Providing incentives to collaborate/cooperate.

Work as a lobby within government to implement changes on behalf of business owners

Other Comments

Specific comments were:

Information and signage for tourists, increase access to TODS Signage

DO NOT increase costs of doing business

Go after big fish: foreign visitors.

Note that Muskoka and the other areas of RTO12 are different and will require different approaches

Avoid duplication of existing programs

todd.lucier@gmail.com wishes to stand for nomination to the RTO12 board.

Dealing with competing interests will be a hurdle.

Having one brand umbrella versus building the region recognition for three distinct brand values Algonquin, Muskoka and Georgian Bay

Visitor Information Kiosks: Some believe these are vestigial, not cost-effective and replicable with web and smart phone tech, others see them as vital to establishing a regional identity and human interaction