

Central Destination Development Plan – Overview May, 2016

In 2009, the tourism industry and province of Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) released *Uncommon Potential: A Vision for Newfoundland and Labrador Tourism (Vision 2020)*, the tourism vision for the province that identified the goal of doubling annual tourism spending to \$1.58B by 2020. It was a blueprint for extra-ordinary growth that contained seven strategic directions, and a vision for future tourism development.

One of the seven strategic directions of *Vision 2020* is **Product Development**. Important elements of product development include the delivery of strategic, sustainable and differentiating travel experiences that are desired by travellers and compliment the provincial brand as a means of highlighting the unique aspects of the Labrador region to draw travelers' to experience the destination.

In 2013, Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador (Hospitality NL) and Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development (BTCRD), in partnership with regional Destination Management Organizations and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) commissioned a formative evaluation of all tourism regions of the province with the goal of producing a destination development plan to guide the tourism industry in product, market and experience development efforts.

A customized Tourism Destination Visitor Appeal Appraisal (TDVAA) process was created by Brain Trust Marketing and Communication and the Tourism Café Canada Ltd. Designed with the visitor in mind, the research methodology enables each region within the province to be examined as separate entities with unique nuances, but also provides the ability to draw linkages between the regions so that provincial themes or ideas may be built upon.

The Central region was the fourth region to go through the TDVAA process. In the production of the final report for the Central region, 234 documents, reports and studies were reviewed, all-encompassing data collection was undertaken and a series of stakeholder input and feedback meetings were held over a period of 13 months (October 2014 to November 2015), along with extensive consultation with the Central Advisory Committee, made up of tourism stakeholders from the region.

The resulting *Tourism Destination Visitors Appeal Assessment* report outlines 16 Key Findings, including 62 Recommendations, which are based upon the research and feedback received from those directly associated with the tourism industry throughout the Central region. The complete report can be found on http://hnl.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/TDVAA-Central-Final-Report_Final_Jan2016.pdf

Implementing the report

Throughout the Destination Development process, and particularly throughout the stakeholder feedback sessions, implementation was cited as a major priority. Stakeholders felt strongly that the results of the report would only be as good as the ability to implement and affect real change throughout the region. In addition, the report identifies the tourism partner(s) that may be best suited to lead the implementation of specific Findings and Recommendations. This has enabled project partners to further explore the implementation process to be used for the Central region, as well as in other regions as further TDVAA reports are developed.

As can be seen in the TDVAA for the Central region report, implementation of many of the Findings and Recommendations will require a significant effort and investment. Therefore, prioritizing the Findings and Recommendations is critical as the financial and human resource capacity does not exist to take on everything at once. It is therefore important to identify a process by which priorities can be set and collective efforts should be placed.

Throughout the winter months, an implementation team comprised of partners from the Adventure Central Newfoundland (ACN), Hospitality NL, BTCRD and ACOA, met regularly to examine the Central report Findings and Recommendations in order to define an implementation and prioritization process for the report's results. By using

existing opportunity management (OM) processes and tools, such as those administered by BTCRD, the team found a tourism-centric implementation approach that utilises the information already gathered as part of the TDVAA Report while maximising input required from regional stakeholders about what the destination development priorities should be for the region. The OM process will assist all partners in the industry in prioritizing where efforts should be focused towards the achievement of the recommendations.

Central region tourism stakeholders will be encouraged to participate in the OM process through a series of sessions to review and input on the TDVAA Findings and Recommendations. Sessions will take place in four sub-regions of the Central region and the results of the sessions will be combined to determine one set of Destination Development priorities for the region as a whole.

The implementation team identified several common themes throughout the 16 Key Findings and 62 Recommendations. Segmenting the Findings and Recommendations into themes provides a more defined structure from which to examine the context of each specific Finding and/or Recommendation. As each Finding and Recommendation is at different levels they should be categorized at different levels. While the level of detail and scope varies, the process allows for stakeholder involvement and input in all categories as follows:

- (1) Recommendations that are similar are grouped together to form a potential initiative. Such **initiatives** may require financial resources, sustainability planning, new partnership development or collaboration, etc.

Stakeholders will prioritize these during the regional sessions.

- (2) Recommendations that require further **discussion** among industry to capture a more detailed understanding of the recommendation and possible actions.

Stakeholders will be provided the opportunity to discuss such recommendations in small groups during the regional sessions.

- (3) Recommendations that can be addressed with **communication and information** from all partners. For example, some items that are already being advanced.

Stakeholders will be provided a comprehensive update on the status of these recommendations and the opportunity to provide feedback as part of the ongoing communications process for the implementation of the Labrador Destination Development Plan.

Regional Sessions

OM sessions for the Central region will take place in early June 2015. Invitations will be sent to tourism stakeholders within the region requesting participation in the session(s). Facilitators from BTCRD will conduct the sessions; however, representatives from various other government departments, ACN, Hospitality NL, ACOA and other industry affiliates will be present to participate. The prioritization of initiatives will include development of an action plan in which industry involvement will be critical for implementation of the Destination Development plan for Central region.

As the champion of the Destination Development planning process for the Central region, ACN will be involved in every aspect of the implementation process. Stakeholders will be kept apprised of the progress of all partners as the plans are developed and implemented.

If you have any questions or concerns about the implementation process for the Central Destination Development plan, please contact, Caroline Swan, Product Development Manager, Adventure Central Newfoundland at 1-877-361-4859, ext: 2 or cswan@adventurecentralnewfoundland.com.

