

DATE: August 9, 2017

FILE: 0470-20/Courtenay

TO: Chair and Directors
Committee of the Whole

FROM: Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer

RE: Municipal and Regional District Tax Program – Letter of Support Requested

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to recommend that the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) Board support the Comox Valley Economic Development Society (CVEDS) in their reapplication for the Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT) program for the City of Courtenay

Policy Analysis

Under the current MRDT program, formerly known as the Additional Hotel Room Tax program, the applicant requires evidence of support from the relevant regional district.

Executive Summary

CVEDS is applying for the renewal of the Five Year Municipal and Regional District Tax program to have the City of Courtenay remain as a designated accommodation area with the two per cent tax applied to accommodation in the City of Courtenay. The CVRD Board supported the same application in 2012. All information on the MRDT can be found at this link <http://www.destinationbc.ca/BC-Tourism-Industry/Municipal-and-Regional-District-Tax-Program.aspx> and attached to this report is the draft five year strategic plan that has been approved by the accommodation properties within the City of Courtenay. CVEDS is doing additional stakeholder outreach and feedback with the sector and the CVEDS standing committee on tourism – the Destination Marketing Advisory Committee.

Recommendation from the Chief Administrative Officer:

THAT a letter be provided to the Comox Valley Economic Development Society advising of the Comox Valley Regional District's support for the 'Municipal and Regional District Tax' application in the City of Courtenay.

Respectfully:

R. Dyson

Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer

Prepared by:

J. Warren

James Warren
General Manager of
Corporate Services

Attachments: Appendix A – Five Year Strategic Business Plan – final draft

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Appendix 1.2 Five-Year Strategic Business Plan – DRAFT V1

Designated Recipient: Comox Valley Economic Development Society
Community Name: Courtenay
Date Prepared: June 12, 2017
MRDT Term Expiry Date: March 31, 2018
Five Year Period: April 1, 2018 – March 31, 2023

Section 1: Five-Year Strategic Overview	
Vision and Mission	<p>Vision The Comox Valley is recognized as the premier, year round Vancouver Island destination.</p> <p>Mission Expand and enhance destination marketing initiatives resulting in increased visitation and overnight stays to the Comox Valley, as well as increased partnerships within the industry.</p>
Strategic Context	<p>The Comox Valley, with its naturally abundant outdoor and marine activities, well developed culinary tourism sector (including craft beers, artisan wineries and distilleries), festivals and events and significant accessibility via the Comox Valley Airport (Air Canada, Pacific Coastal and Westjet), float plane (Harbour Air) and rubber tire, is positioned to become a major destination.</p> <p>Overall, British Columbia's tourism sector continues its trend of growing international overnight visitors, with particularly strong growth in Washington State overnight visits. The US dollar is forecasted to hold its value for the long term which makes marketing to the US market, and the Washington State outdoor traveler, a strong proposition for generating overnight stays. The Comox Valley Visitor Centre reported a 33% increase in Washington State visitor volume over the last year and a half. Growth from this market is expected to continue with Vancouver Island's popularity in the region.</p> <p>BC Ferries vehicle volumes rose 5.3% along major routes, according to their 2015/16 Annual Report, and a new ferry was added to the Comox-Sunshine Coast route in March 2017.</p> <p>Population growth in the Comox Valley is projected by BC Stats to remain strong, averaging 1.3% per year through 2036, the second fastest rate among comparable BC regional districts.</p> <p>The visitor profile for the Comox Valley shows that on average, visitors spend 9 nights away from home. For 66% of the visitors, the Comox Valley was the main destination of their trip, for 28% of visitors, it was one of several planned stops but not the main destination and for 5%, it was an unplanned stop on the way to another destination. Most visitors (81%) spent at least one night in the Comox Valley, while 19% were here for a day trip only.</p>

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There are more repeat visitors (74%) than first time visitors (26%).

Of the 70% of Comox Valley visitors that arrived by ferry, 41% landed at Departure Bay, 31% landed at Duke Point, 16% landed at Swartz Bay, and 10% landed at Little River in Comox. Of the 29% that arrived by air, 81% landed at the Comox Valley Airport, 14% landed at the Victoria International Airport, 2% landed at the Campbell River Airport, and 2% landed at Comox Harbour.

The purpose of trip visit to the Comox Valley is predominantly for leisure (64%) with another 37% visiting friends and/or relatives, 8% for a combination of business and leisure, and 4% for business or work. The most popular attractions for visitors to the Comox Valley include local shops/boutiques (62%), beaches (60%), parks and trails(55%) plus golf courses and restaurants. The top activities groups participated in during their stay were shopping (58%), beach activities (53%), hiking (41%) and self-guided sightseeing (40%).

The majority of visitors choose to stay in a hotel or motel in the Comox Valley (45%) with an average length of stay of 3 nights. People also stay with friends and family (29%) and tend to stay longer with a 7 night stay on average. The average group size was 2.6 people per group; 55% of groups consisted of two or three people, 14% were solo travellers, and only 2% of groups had 10 or more people.

Opportunities

The Comox Valley is well positioned to attract new destination level events, and expand existing ones. Removing or reducing any barriers for event hosting infrastructure will aid this initiative including the addition of new or enhanced event hosting facilities be them for meetings, events or conferences. Developing and implementing strategies to secure new meetings and conferences is another important opportunity.

A significant opportunity exists to ensure strong growth in packaged tour/event & stays with the growing number of sophisticated and diverse regional and BC based Tour Operators to drive overnight stays around strategic tourism experiences including outdoor and marine adventures, and culinary & agritourism products, that will be sold online via the intergrated Discover Comox Valley reservation system.

Supporting and expanding air access at the Comox Valley Airport as well as complementary floatplane and airport services is also key.

Increased marketing partnerships at all levels is also an opportunity, including the Vancouver Island Visitor Centre, Tourism Vancouver Island,

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other Island DMO's, Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training, Destination BC and the Canadian Tourism Commission.

Challenges

Challenges that lie ahead include the ability to find and retain qualified staff. The Island location, which increases transportation costs and travel time, continues to present its challenges to convert visitors from off-Island.

Key Learnings

Since the implementation of the hotel tax in 2013, development of signature events, building stakeholder involvement in those events, and focusing on developing additional visits through off-peak periods have been a primary objective of the destination marketing plan. CVEDES has seen significant increases in key indicators related to these efforts:

- 12-month, year over year comparisons; MRDT revenues are +31% from 2014 to 2016;
- Q1 MRDT revenues (January to March) are +90% from 2013 to 2017, showing a significant increase in off-peak period visits;
- January revenue increases +64% from 2014 to 2017 (WinterFest signature event month);
- June revenue increases are +52% from 2013 to 2016 (BC Shellfish and Seafood Festival signature event month).

The current 5-year plan, with some revisions along the way, combined with the MRDT implementation have paved the way to creating large-scale destination events that have metrics to prove their success and positive impact on the region.

Partnerships are also very critical to the success of community events. New Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreements have recently been signed with the Downtown Courtenay BIA (DCBIA) and with Tourism Mount Washington. The Downtown BIA MOU helped to create a central hub of activity for the WinterFest event this year which engaged more businesses and brought more visitors to the downtown core to extend the length of stay. In future, more emphasis on après events and night-time events will be solicited to build out the after skiing component of the festival and tie-in businesses at sea level in the Comox Valley.

Media partnerships proved to be very important as well. The Shellfish and Seafood Festival moved its major TV partner from CTV in 2015, to Global in 2016. Global's market share proved to be worth its weight in marketing gold. Contest entries alone increased almost 2000% YOY, with 4966 unique contestants in 2016 vs 238 in 2015. The partnership included Saturday Chef segments, branded and contest ads and calendar of event coverage.

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	<p>Globalnews.ca was the Festivals websites top referral page with 6495 sessions.</p> <p>Social Media and Online Advertising continue to prove their value. For the Shellfish and Seafood Festival, a significant increase in budget and agency support in advertising through Google and Facebook, resulted in massive boosts to overall click-throughs to the festival website compared to the previous year. Retargeting and remarketing tactics also prove to be a valuable tool in reaching the online market who are already interested in the products and festivals the Comox Valley has to offer.</p>
Overall Goals, Objectives and Targets	<p>Advertising Specific, targeted, event based campaign ads will be implemented to drive consumers to DiscoverComoxValley.com and micro sites to support tour packages, ticket sales and seasonal specials. Co-op ads will continue to be solicited and tied back to holidays and softer visitation periods. The objectives are to expand and enhance destination marketing initiatives resulting in increased visitation and overnight stays to the Comox Valley, as well as increased partnership within the industry. Print, Online, Newsletter E-blasts, Social Media and TV campaigns will be used to achieve these objectives.</p> <p>Targets: Increase overnight stays each year thus increasing the MRDT revenue each year by 10% 10% increase each year in website sessions</p> <p>Market Research and Destination Branding Market Research and Destination Branding will continue with the objective to ensure progressive and effective Discover Comox Valley brand identity in addition to unique signature festival branding, in all its marketing. The data collected can then be used to drive future marketing initiatives.</p> <p>Targets: Increase leveraged funds by 5% each year</p> <p>Trade and Consumer Shows The objective is to attend select, targeted consumer, trade and travel shows to ensure targeted and general awareness of destination and sell product.</p> <p>Targets: Attend 2 to 3 shows per year and measure the success by the number of groups, leads, stakeholder participation in the shows and contest entries at the shows.</p> <p>Event Development and Enhancement Over the next 5 years, Comox Valley off-season events will be developed and enhanced with the overall objective to develop or attract new meetings and conferences as well as participant focused events, and/or expand existing</p>

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	<p>destination level events that will drive more out of area visitation and increase overnight stays during slower periods. In addition, reducing or removing any barriers that impede attracting events to use the Comox Valley as the host location will also be undertaken. The Sport and Event Attraction Program will also be expanded with more community engagement through the grant program to solicit new events.</p> <p>Targets (annually): 5% increase in new events 5% increase in ticket sales of CVEDS-lead events 10% increase in website sessions for CVEDS-lead festival sites 10% increase in online referrals to accommodation partners</p> <p>Communications and Media Relations Program The Media Relations Program objective is to ensure that potential visitors are aware of the Comox Valley as a leading location for visiting Vancouver Island by engaging traditional and online media writers, journalists and influencers to generate destination coverage on the Comox Valley in key target markets. Additionally, the goal is to deliver timely, relevant & engaging industry and tourism communications content via digital & traditional media.</p> <p>Communication Program Targets for stakeholders (annually): 12 Tourism E-Newsletters 24 Consumer E-Blasts 10 Seafood E-Newsletters 5% increase in social media followers</p> <p>Media Relations Targets: \$1.5 million earned media value every year 10% increase in FAM tours hosted</p>
Strategies - Key Actions	<p>Promotional strategies include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Print ads • TV campaigns • Online and Social Media • Discover Comox Valley E-Blasts • Targeted Consumer Shows <p>Print Ads Print ads will be placed in the Blackpress group of Island newspapers, Times Colonist newspaper with coop ads promoting holidays and signature event campaigns. Destination marketing ads will also appear in Times Colonist 'Discover' publication plus select destination publications that distribute to Washington State, including the Tour and Exploring Guide through Tourism Vancouver Island.</p>

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TV Campaigns

TV Campaigns will be used building upon the success of TV campaigns in recent years, supported by targeted online marketing tactics and contesting in Alberta, lower mainland and/or Vancouver Island that drive to website landing pages with accommodation partners highlighted.

Online and Social Media

Online and Social Media strategies are key areas of focus and will see continued increases in all areas of online/digital marketing, especially on Facebook and Instagram. Increased social media engagement through hashtagging use in advertising and promotion with #exploreBC, #exploreComoxValley and festival specific hashtags will ensure alignment and gain more followers, potential customers and visitors. Tagging through microsites to track customers and retargeting track post-click and post-view conversions will be utilized for all targeted campaigns.

E-Blasts

Discover Comox Valley consumer E-Blasts will be a key strategy and sent bi-monthly to weekly at times, and will include seasonal consumer event e-promos, events, seasonal hotel package specials and tour packages. The consumer contact database will be expanded with contesting and promoted posts.

Consumer Shows

Consumer Shows will target the outdoor adventure market in select markets including the Seattle Travel, Adventure and Gear Expo and the Calgary Outdoor Show. Both interactive and ideal venues to sell direct to outdoor adventure seekers.

Media Relations strategies include:

- Monthly press releases
- Online communications
- Media outreach and hosting activities
- Production of communications tools including online backgrounders, fact sheets and updates to websites

Media Relations strategies will drive increased awareness around regional tourism attractions, tours and Signature Series Events via the hosting of media for Familiarization Tours of the region, and supplying information to media about the destination to generate increased awareness about the destination to thereby motivate potential visitors to view the website and visit.

Media Relations firms and digital media communications firms will be engaged, as needed, for specific targeted support relative to Signature Events

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and key initiatives, as well as possible Media Show attendance, and tracking systems will be implemented to evaluate the successes on a quarterly basis.

Destination Development

Destination development strategies include developing additional photography and video collateral to support marketing festivals, events and the destination. The goal is to increase the video presence on Discover Comox Valley's YouTube page and promote the key sectors of Arts and Culture, Outdoor, Marine, Dine and Drink via new video. The video shorts will feature atmospheric, stylized cinematography to help build brand and drive customers back to DiscoverComoxValley.com. In addition, ongoing revisions and updates to the Discover Comox Valley brand and main website and event based micro sites will be implemented. Keeping the website current and new with a clear, branded direction will help to focus specific tour programs and themes relating back to the Visitor Services program.

Market Development and Product Experiences

Market development and product experience strategies are focused on events including:

- Sport and Event Attraction & Expansion Program
- Meetings and Conferences
- Signature Series Events
- Secondary Events

Sport and Event Attraction & Expansion Program

The Sport and Event Attraction & Expansion Program plus the provision of the Sport and Event attraction & expansion fund will continue to provide funding capacity that supports removing expansion barriers to existing events, or enables new event hosting groups or agencies to hold events for the first time in the Comox Valley. The program focuses on groups demonstrating increased overnight accommodations, with preference given to shoulder season.

Meetings and Conferences

An increased focus on securing meetings and conferences, that are applicable to the regional venue capacity, will be implemented as an intergral part of the 5 year plan. Regional & national associations, hobby groups, businesses groups and clubs are targeted. Website improvements allow for easy dissemination of venue and property information.

Signature Series Events

Building upon the significant emphasis placed on event development and expansion, 3 existing destination level Signature Series Events, held in the shoulder seasons, are expanded and enhanced via sponsorship & product development, and supported by multi-media marketing & communication

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resources to result in overnight stays and awareness of the destination. They include WinterFest in January, BC Shellfish & Seafood Festival and BC Seafood Expo in June and Two Wheels Bike Festival in September. For these key festivals, an additional strategy will be obtaining larger headline performers to attract more out of town visitation, where appropriate. Continue to collaborate with key transportation providers for packaging, contesting, joint marketing and bookings via the Vancouver Island Visitor Centre; including Harbour Air, Westjet, Air Canada, Pacific Coastal Airlines and BC Ferries. Further integration of tour bookings through Rezgo system will help to increase sales opportunities for hotel packaging and tour operator stakeholders.

Secondary Events

Secondary events compliment and leverage upon awareness generated by the Signature Event Series, with a focus on shoulder season events and higher level events identified and earmarked for additional support through the Sport and Event Attraction & Expansion grant program.

A comprehensive festival and events calendar will be maintained at DiscoverComoxValley.com's event calendar plugin, with a goal of this resource becoming the go-to tourism calendar for Comox Valley's events.

Visitor Services Opportunities Program

Visitor Services Opportunities Program include ensuring the Vancouver Island Visitor Centre (VIVC) marketing systems, including racks, screens, poster housing, banner station and bookable product systems, coincide to support new and expanded festival and event tactics and encourage visitors to extend their stay and visit the tourism properties represented.

A key strategy is to increase the number of Activity Booking Providers included on Rezgo integrated online sales booking systems, as well as to continue to implement a visitor sales program that is a cohesive, sales oriented mechanism for tourism industry businesses to engage in services, and vacation guide print collateral as primary tools for the VIVC and industry to service visitors.

VIVC will coordinate a 'Meet the Visitor Day' at the VIVC by hosting elected officials and dignitaries to act as supportive visitor councillor during the start of the high season.

Targets:

Visitors increase by 9% each year

Achieve 200 businesses participating annually

9% increase in gross VIVC revenues

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Brand Positioning	<p>The Comox Valley is a premier, year round event destination. The Comox Valley is recognized as having ongoing events, festival and special experiences and packages available, and more engagement occurs with consumers.</p> <p>Progressive branded ads utilizing professional imagery, captivating cinematography and strong messaging and calls to action via each campaign will be structured to allow for partner buy-in where appropriate and motivate visitors to engage further online and via social media.</p>
Target Markets	<p>Types of visitors: Primary: Authentic Experiencers and Cultural Explorers, affluent, frequent travellers who are touring and exploring Secondary: Free Spirits</p> <p>Geographic target markets: Victoria and Vancouver Island Lower mainland BC Alberta Washington State</p> <p>Demographic targets: Age 35 + Families</p> <p>Activity-based target groups: Outdoor and Marine Adventure enthusiasts including skiing/snowboarding, biking, hiking, kayaking, diving, wildlife viewing, golf, boating Special Events including cycling, shellfish festival, winter festival promoting aspects of the Art/Culture and plentiful Culinary Tourism sector</p>
Management, Governance, and Administration	<p>Comox Valley Economic Development Society (CVEDS) manages and administers the MRDT funds on behalf of the City of Courtenay and is the official Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) for the Comox Valley. Governance is in place with the following committees:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The Destination Marketing Advisory Committee (DMAC) who represent a diverse range of tourism sub-sectors in the Comox Valley. This committee is committed to increasing year round, overnight stays from tourists and other segments of the travelling public to the Comox Valley. DMAC supports the development and evaluation of the annual Discover Comox Valley Work Plans. 2) The MRDT Committee who represent the Courtenay hotels. This committee is committed to Destination Marketing that is defined as developing marketing programs and initiatives that encourage tourists and other segments of the travelling public to prefer the Comox Valley for their overnight stays. The MRDT Committee supports the review and approval of the Annual Work Plans and MRDT budget allocations.

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	<p>Additionally, sub Committees are established to support event development and enhancement with a broad range of partners and industry stakeholders including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Comox Valley WinterFest Steering Committee• Dine Around / F & B Industry Steering Committee• Farm Cycle Tour Steering Committee• BC Seafood Expo Program Committee
Sources of Funding	<p>In addition to the MRDT, the following are sources of funding anticipated for the next five years:</p> <p>City of Courtenay Town of Comox Comox Valley Regional District Destination BC Cooperative Marketing Partnerships Program Private Sector Businesses Private Sector Sponsorships MOU Collaborations Other Grants where applicable</p>

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Section 2: One Year Tactical Plan with Performance Measures 2018/19

Designated Recipient: Comox Valley Economic Development Society
Community Name: Courtenay

Major Category: Marketing

Activity Title: Outdoor Adventure Campaign

A multi-media campaign targeted to Seattle, Washington State, Calgary and also regional Vancouver Island access points to drive increased touring and exploring of the Comox Valley region & its activity and tour operators, with a focus on marketing the outdoor adventure sector.

Objectives:

1. To drive increased overnight volume and visitor expenditures from the Washington, Lower Mainland and Alberta markets through direct referral sales of hotel and tour activity packages;
2. Increase stakeholder support in outdoor adventure and accommodation sectors to ensure a) capacity to support attraction of increased number of visitors, and b) leverage more resources to market the destination and drive direct referrals of activity and stay packages via the Comox Valley Visitor Centre and online;
3. To support Destination British Columbia's efforts to ensure brand alignment to support the Outdoor sector;
4. Increase social media participation and engagement via Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram;
5. Move consumers through the path to purchase.

Strategies:

- Mix of traditional, digital and trade show attendance, with more budget allocated to digital media which works well with the Free Spirit EQ. Promote Stay and Play Adventure packages with resorts & hotels in partnership with attractions including biking, golfing, diving, boating and adventure activity tour operators;
- Create co-op structure to allow for adventure tourism businesses and other relevant stakeholders to participate in the campaign;
- Utilize tagging into our Outdoor Adventure landing page to track customers and utilize retargeting, track post-click and post-view conversions;
- Track effective call-to-action and sales messaging to determine best methods in converting sales and generate leads;
- Incorporate increased social media hash tagging use into engagement, advertising and promotion with #exploreBC and #exploreComoxValley.

Tactic: Consumer Shows

Description: The Seattle Travel, Adventure and Gear Expo and Calgary Outdoor Show are both interactive and ideal venues to sell direct to outdoor adventure seekers. Estimated attendance is 30,000 people for both shows.

Rationale: Both shows are well-attended and attract a targeted market looking for outdoor adventure travel.

Timing: March 2019

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Measurable Call to Action: Visitor Centre 1-800, packages at Outdoor Adventure landing page, contesting

Tracking Mechanism: # of contest entries, # visits to landing page, # of booth visitors, # of onsite leads/bookings generated

Tactic Name: Online Campaign

Description: Facebook ads, Google search and retarget, social media marketing campaign, website landing page development

Rationale: Allows for targeted interests, age groups, and to connect the consumer quickly and easily to online stay and outdoor adventure package bookings.

Timing: May - June 2018

Measurable Call to Action: Visitor Centre 1-800, packages at Outdoor Adventure landing page

Tracking Mechanism: # of likes, # of impressions, # of new followers, post view conversions, # of calls to Visitor Centre, # of user sessions on landing page, # of referrals/leads to accommodation partners and Rezgo bookable activities, average engagement as a % of audience.

Tactic Name: Print Advertising

Description: Outdoor Adventure rack card, Onboard BC Ferries print ad, BC Ferries posters, Clipper Advertising

Rational: Vehicle traffic has only one way to get to Vancouver Island and with thousands of passengers travelling 1.5 to 2 hours between the mainland and Vancouver Island, posters in strategic locations allow passengers time to view the Comox Valley messaging. Ads in Outdoor Magazines provide access to a strong, targeted market of outdoor enthusiasts.

Timing: Spring 2018

Measurable Call to Action: Visitor Centre 1-800, packages at Outdoor Adventure landing page

Tracking Mechanism: # of calls to Visitor Centre, # of user sessions to landing page, # of referrals/leads to accommodation partners and Rezgo bookable activities

Tactic name: Video Production/Image Bank

Description: Ongoing B-roll and stills of outdoor product will be collected via cinematographers and professional photographers for all advertising and promo materials. Alignments with DBC guidelines will be utilized in all creative aspects. Video shorts will be produced (90-120 sec) and views will be tracked via Facebook and YouTube channel. Social tie-in to #exploreBC #exploreComoxValley.

Measurable Call to Action: Visitor Centre 1-800, packages at Outdoor Adventure landing page

Tracking Mechanism: # of Facebook/YouTube video views, # of photos taken for campaign, minute/second count of b-roll taken

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Major Category: Market Development and Product Experiences

Activity Title: BC Shellfish and Seafood Festival

The BC Shellfish and Seafood Festival is the largest shellfish and seafood festival in Western Canada and not only showcases a myriad of West Coast seafood, but also attracts tourists from near and far. This festival is a major culinary sector attraction and is also significantly growing the marine adventure sector through whale watching, aquaculture tours and boat charters.

Objectives:

1. To drive increased overnight volume, visitor expenditure and repeat visitations from primarily BC and Alberta markets, through sales of hotel and festival packages, event tickets, tours and activity bookings via direct referrals;
2. Increase the number and diversity of Festival events and partners to ensure a) capacity to support attraction of increased number of visitors, and b) leverage more resources to market the Festival and sell tickets;
3. To support Destination British Columbia's efforts to move consumers through the path to purchase and encourage advocacy, which will have a positive impact on the path to purchase for future visitors.

Strategies:

- Support product development and event expansion initiatives to increase depth of events and products being offered
- Act as a conduit between event hosts and accommodation properties to carefully formulate targeted, attractive Festival packages
- Develop a multi-media marketing campaign, with a stronger focus on online sales and conversion, to drive increased overnight stays & lead generation, increased awareness of the festival and the region
- Create co-operative marketing opportunities to enable event hosts and partners to market their products through the larger Festival
- Utilize tagging through BCShellfishFestival.com to track customers and utilize retargeting, track post-click and post-view conversions
- Track effective call-to-action and sales messaging to determine best methods in converting sales
- Encourage increased social media engagement through hashtagging use in advertising and promotion with #exploreBC, #exploreComoxValley and festival specific hashtags.

Tactic Name: TV Campaign

Description: GlobalBC campaign & contest, 15-second spots

Rationale: Extensive reach with BC's most popular news provider to target market, increase brand awareness for festival and region, while presenting strong, measurable calls to action.

Timing: May to June 2018

Measurable Call to Action: Visitor Centre 1-800, online package inclusions and TV spot package promotion, contesting

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Tracking Mechanism: # of contest entries, # of user sessions to landing page, # of referrals/leads to accommodation partners and Rezgo bookable activities, # of calls to Visitor Centre, June MRDT revenues

Tactic Name: Online Campaign

Description: Facebook ads, Google search and retarget, social media marketing campaign, festival website development

Rationale: Allows for targeted interests, age groups, connects consumers quickly and easily to online festival event tickets and festival overnight packages, tracking of marketing efforts.

Timing: April to June 2018

Measurable Call to Action: Visitor Centre 1-800, package deals, event tickets, contesting

Tracking Mechanism: # of likes, # of impressions, # of new followers, post view conversions, # of calls to Visitor Centre, # of user sessions to landing page, # of referrals/leads to accommodation partners and Rezgo bookable activities, average engagement as a % of audience, # of event tickets sold, June MRDT revenues

Tactic Name: Print Advertising

Description: Print advertisements presenting festival events and stay packages. Newsprint, magazine.

Rational: Extensive reach to target market, increase brand awareness for Festival and region while presenting strong, measurable calls to action.

Timing: April to June 2018

Measurable Call to Action: Visitor Centre 1-800, festival events ticketing, contesting, festival packages

Tracking Mechanism: # of calls to Visitor Centre, # website sessions, # of tickets sold, # of contest entries, June MRDT revenues

Tactic Name: Radio Advertising

Description: Highlighting festival packages, events supplemented by traditional radio contesting and promos.

Rational: Extensive reach to target market, increase brand awareness for Festival and region while presenting strong, measurable calls to action.

Timing: April to June 2018

Measurable Call to Action: Visitor Centre 1-800, festival events ticketing, contesting, festival packages

Tracking Mechanism: # of calls to Visitor Centre, # website sessions, # of tickets sold, # of contest entries, June MRDT revenues

Tactic Name: Earned Media Development

Description: With the approval of DBC Media Dept., proactively pitch story ideas and invite Tier 1 and Tier 2 media writers and influencers from key markets to attend and/or cover the Festival and the destination. This includes a media-focused launch event in Vancouver (March), familiarization tour outreach & hosting in partnership with industry, and creation of media materials.

Rational: Media coverage provides reliable third party experiences of the Festival and the region to both targeted and broad based consumers. **Timing:** April to June 2018

Measurable Call to Action: Visitor Centre 1-800, festival events

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Tactic name: Video Production/Image Bank

Description: Ongoing B-roll and stills of festival will be collected via cinematographers and professional photographers for all advertising and promo materials. Alignments with DBC guidelines will be utilized in all creative aspects. Video shorts will be produced (90-120 sec) and views will be tracked via Facebook and YouTube channel. Social tie-in to #exploreBC #exploreComoxValley.

Measurable Call to Action: Visitor Centre 1-800, packages at festival website

Tracking Mechanism: # of Facebook/YouTube video views, # of photos taken for campaign, minute/second count of b-roll taken

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Major Category: Market Development and Product Experiences

Activity Title: Two Wheels Bike Festival

Expansion and multi-media marketing of the Comox Valley Farm Cycle Tour. Includes new cycling events, from leisure to competitive, through September weekends; targeted to Vancouver Island, lower mainland bike enthusiasts.

Objectives:

1. To drive increased overnight volume, visitor expenditure and repeat visitations from Vancouver Island and Lower Mainland/Sea to Sky markets, through sales of Ride and Stay festival packages, event tickets, cycle tours and activity bookings
2. Increase the number and diversity of Festival events and partners to ensure
 - a. capacity to support attraction of increased number of visitors
 - b. leverage more resources to market the Festival and sell tickets
3. To support Destination British Columbia's efforts to move consumers through the path to purchase and encourage advocacy, which will have a positive impact on the path to purchase for future visitors
4. Increase awareness and support the fact that the Comox Valley is a major cycling destination in BC
5. bridge the bike sector with agri-tourism by cross-promoting wineries/craft breweries with events and tours.

Strategies:

- Secure additional partners/event promoters who wish to host other cycling related events, to compliment the Farm Cycle Tour event
- Create Ride and Stay packages with local accommodation providers
- Create co-op structure to allow for a broad based of tourism businesses to participate in the multi-media campaign
- Market festival with strongest emphasis to online marketing, to present festival attributes, sell registrations, drive overnight stays and to encourage multiple event registrations per attendee
- Utilize tagging through festival website/landing page to track customers and utilize retargeting, track post-click and post-view conversions
- Incorporate increased social media engagement with hashtagging, advertising and promotion with #exploreBC, #exploreComoxValley and festival specific hashtags

Tactic Name: Online Campaign

Description: Facebook ads, Google search and retarget, social media marketing campaign, festival website development

Rationale: Allows for targeted interests, age groups, connects consumers quickly and easily to online festival event tickets and festival overnight packages, tracking of marketing efforts.

Timing: July to Sept 2018

Measurable Call to Action: Visitor Centre 1-800, package deals, event tickets, contesting

Tracking Mechanism: # of likes, # of impressions, # of new followers, post view conversions, # of calls to Visitor Centre, # website sessions, # of tickets sold, # of referrals/leads to accommodation partners, average engagement as a % of audience, September MRDT revenues

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Tactic Name: Print Advertising

Description: Print advertisements presenting festival events and stay packages via newspaper & magazines.

Rational: Extensive reach to target market, increase brand awareness for Festival and region while presenting strong, measurable calls to action.

Timing: August 2018

Measurable Call to Action: Visitor Centre 1-800, festival events ticketing, contesting, festival packages

Tracking Mechanism: # of calls to Visitor Centre, # website sessions, # of tickets sold, # of contest entries, September MRDT revenues

Tactic name: Video Production/Image Bank

Description: Ongoing B-roll and stills of festival will be collected via cinematographers and professional photographers for all advertising and promo materials. Alignments with DBC guidelines will be utilized in all creative aspects. Video shorts will be produced (90-120 sec) and views will be tracked via Facebook and YouTube channel. Social tie-in to #exploreBC #exploreComoxValley.

Measurable Call to Action: Visitor Centre 1-800, packages at festival website

Tracking Mechanism: # of Facebook/YouTube video views, # of photos taken for campaign, minute/second count of b-roll taken

Appendix A

Major Category: Market Development and Product Experiences

Activity Title: WinterFest – Awesome All Winter

A multi-media campaign targeted to Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland presenting the Comox Valley as the Island's true winter outdoor and cultural destination of choice during the last two weeks of January; featuring a robust après activity calendar and half-price ski and stays to motivate travelers to Ski and Stay, vs Ski and *Leave*. A secondary part of the campaign advertises Ski & Stays and après activities in the Comox Valley *through* the pre-Christmas period and a portion of March/April when skier visits typically stagnate and/or slow down.

Objectives:

1. To drive increased overnight volume, visitor expenditure and repeat visitations from Vancouver Island and Lower Mainland/Sea to Sky markets, through sales of Ski and Stay festival packages, event tickets
2. Increase the number and diversity of Festival events and partners to ensure
 - a) capacity to support attraction of increased number of visitors
 - b) leverage more resources to market the Festival and sell tickets
3. To support Destination British Columbia's efforts to move consumers through the path to purchase
4. Increase awareness and support the fact that the Comox Valley is a major outdoor recreation hub in BC; cross promote outdoor activities, and more specifically ski sector, with the depth of culinary and cultural experiences available
5. To position the Comox Valley as Vancouver Island's premier true winter destination

Strategies:

- Secure competitively priced Ski and Stay Packages with Mount Washington and MRDT partners
- Create partnerships with music concert and comedy producers
- Secure partnerships with the Downtown Courtenay Business Improvement Assn to activate après ski activities, including an outdoor skating rink & activity Centre, in the downtown core, with business participating in events and providing specials to motivate skiers to extend their stay
- Create co-op structure to allow for a broad based of tourism businesses to participate in a multi-media campaign
- Undertake extensive multi-media campaign, with an emphasis on online marketing to drive sales through effective call to actions and tracking of CTA's to sales conversions
- Utilize tagging through festival website/landing page to track customers and utilize retargeting, track post-click and post-view conversions
- Incorporate increased social media engagement with hashtagging #exploreBC, #exploreComoxValley and festival specific hashtags

Tactic Name: TV Campaign

Description: CTV Vancouver Island and GlobalBC campaign & contest, 15-second spots, 7 second sponsor spots

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Rationale: Extensive reach with BC's most popular news provider, plus Vancouver Island's leading multi-media partner to target market, increase brand awareness for festival and region, while presenting strong, measurable calls to action.

Timing: November 2018 to February 2019

Measurable Call to Action: Visitor Centre 1-800, online package inclusions and TV spot package promotion, contesting

Tracking Mechanism: # of contest entries, # visits to festival website, # of calls to Visitor Centre, December to March MRDT revenues

Tactic Name: Online Campaign

Description: Facebook ads, Google search and retarget, social media marketing campaign, festival website development

Rationale: Allows for targeted interests, age groups, connects consumers quickly and easily to online festival event tickets and festival overnight packages, tracking of marketing efforts.

Timing: October 2018 to February 2019

Measurable Call to Action: Visitor Centre 1-800, Ski & Stay package deals, event tickets, contesting

Tracking Mechanism: # of likes, # of impressions, # of new followers, post view conversions, # of calls to Visitor Centre, # website sessions, # of tickets sold, # of referrals/leads to accommodation partners, average engagement as a % of audience, December to March MRDT revenues

Tactic Name: Print Advertising

Description: Print advertisements presenting festival events and stay packages. Newsprint, magazine.

Rational: Extensive reach to target market, increase brand awareness for Festival and region while presenting strong, measurable calls to action.

Timing: November 2018 to February 2019

Measurable Call to Action: Visitor Centre 1-800, festival events ticketing, contesting, festival packages

Tracking Mechanism: # of calls to Visitor Centre, # website sessions, # of tickets sold, # of contest entries, December to March MRDT revenues

Tactic Name: Radio Advertising

Description: Highlighting ski and stay, festival packages and events supplemented by traditional radio contesting and promos.

Rational: Extensive reach to target market, increase brand awareness for Festival and region while presenting strong, measurable calls to action.

Timing: December 2018 to January 2019

Measurable Call to Action: Visitor Centre 1-800, festival events ticketing, contesting, festival packages

Tracking Mechanism: # of calls to Visitor Centre, # website sessions, # of tickets sold, # of contest entries, December to February MRDT revenues

Tactic name: Video Production/Image Bank

Description: Ongoing B-roll and stills of festival will be collected via cinematographers and professional photographers for all advertising and promo materials. Alignments with DBC guidelines

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will be utilized in all creative aspects. Video shorts will be produced (90-120 sec) and views will be tracked via Facebook and YouTube channel. Social tie-in to #exploreBC #exploreComoxValley.

Measurable Call to Action: Visitor Centre 1-800, packages at festival website

Tracking Mechanism: # of Facebook/YouTube video views, # of photos taken for campaign, minute/second count of b-roll taken

Appendix A

Major Category: Destination Development

Activity Title: Destination Branding and Market Research

Ensure progressive and effective Discover Comox Valley brand identity in all its marketing. Use market research data to drive future marketing initiatives.

Objectives:

1. Expand and enhance destination marketing initiatives resulting in increased visitation and overnight stays to the Comox Valley
2. Increased partnerships within the industry
3. Be recognized as the premier, year-round Island destination

Strategies:

- General awareness and specific campaign print ads are placed to drive consumers to DiscoverComoxValley.com to support tour packages and seasonal hotel deals through redesigned landing pages.
- Create co-op structure to allow for a broad based of tourism businesses to participate. Co-op ads will continue to be solicited and tied back to holidays and softer visitation periods (Thanksgiving/Fall events, pre-Christmas shop and stays, Ski and Stays in December, January and Spring Breaks)
- Continued increases in all areas of online/digital marketing especially on Facebook and Instagram.
- Utilize tagging through website landing page to track customers and utilize retargeting, track post-click and post-view conversions
- Incorporate increased social media engagement with hashtagging #exploreBC, #exploreComoxValley and festival specific hashtags
- Increase digital video content to increase destination awareness
- Development of additional photography to support marketing
- Use the Net Promoter Score tool to solicit feedback from customers attending signature events.
- Tracking festival and event ticket sales, revenues, marketing efforts and their impact on hotel bookings.

Tactic Name: Print

Description: Blackpress coop ads promoting holidays, Times Colonist coop ads promoting holidays, Times Colonist Discover publication and other destination publications that distribute to Washington State, BC Ale Trail inclusion, Tour and Exploring Guide through TVI

Rationale: Remain competitive in print media that focus on tourism publications. Drives awareness to products and tours with website call to action Alligns with DBC co-op marketing program which support print initiatives and encourage more stakeholder participation. Continues partnership with regional DMO's and Tourism Vancouver Island to support marketing of the region in addition to the Comox Valley.

Timing: April 2018 to March 2019

Measurable Call to Action: Visitor Centre 1-800, website, online package inclusions, contesting

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Tracking Mechanism: # of ads or campaigns, # of partners, # and % increase in website visits and user sessions, Monthly MRDT room revenues, Ads for campaign and signature event metrics include social media impressions, click throughs to website, website user sessions, contest entries, call to VIVC, tours and ticket sold

Tactic Name: Online and Social Media

Description: Seasonal consumer event e-Blasts, seasonal hotel package specials, tour packages, consumer contact database is expanded with contesting and promoted posts. Increase digital video content to increase event awareness. Presence on Instagram and use of #exploreComoxValley and #exploreBC, with social media contests in support of DBC model will ensure alignment and gain more followers, potential customers and visitors.

Rationale: The Comox Valley is recognized as having ongoing events, festival and special experiences and packages available, and more engagement can occur with consumers. DBC co-op marketing program can support these online initiatives.

Timing: April 2018 to March 2019

Measurable Call to Action: Visitor Centre 1-800, website, event tickets, packages, contesting

Tracking Mechanism: # engagements, # of e-Blasts, # of click throughs, MRDT room revenues, # increased engagements on social media channels, social media monitoring (to be determined)

Tactic Name: TV Campaigns

Description: Building upon the success of TV campaigns, create or participate in one additional TV campaigns, supported by targeted online marketing tactics and contesting in Alberta, lower mainland and/or Vancouver Island that drive to DCV website landing pages with MRDT and partners highlighted.

Rational: Extensive reach to target market, increase brand awareness for events and region while presenting strong, measurable calls to action.

Timing: Spring 2018, Fall 2019

Measurable Call to Action: Visitor Centre 1-800, website, contesting, overnight packages

Tracking Mechanism: # of campaigns, # of contest entries, # of website hits, MRDT room revenues

Tactic Name: Brand Enhancement

Description: Development of additional photography and video collateral to support marketing festivals, events and the destination. Continue revisions and updates to the Discover Comox Valley brand and website. Increase video presence and overhaul of Discover Comox Valley's YouTube page. Promotion of sectors: Arts and Culture, Outdoor, Marine, Dine and Drink via new video shorts featuring atmospheric, stylized cinematography to help build brand and drive customers back to DiscoverComoxValley.com.

Rational: Enhanced images allow for improved and more compelling marketing and media outreach.

Video collateral will help build website and social media profiles. Brand alignment across all marketing/media platforms- website, print, video, social.

Timing: April 2018 to March 2019

Measurable Call to Action: Visitor Centre 1-800, website

Tracking Mechanism: Number of images secured for print, web and social media

Appendix A

Major Category: Market Development

Activity Title: Sport and Event Attraction & Expansion Program

Administration and provision of the Sport and Event Attraction & Expansion Fund continues to provide funding capacity that supports removing expansion barriers to existing conferences, meetings, and participation oriented events, or enables new event hosting groups or agencies to hold events for the first time, if they can demonstrate increased overnight accommodations, with preference given to shoulder season.

Objectives:

1. Strategic new and existing destination level events are expanded to drive more out of area visitation
2. Increase overnight stays
3. Barriers are removed in attracting events to use the Comox Valley as the host location

Strategies:

- Existing organizations are successfully applying for and being awarded funds which results in increased overnight stays
- New events or organizations are successfully applying for and being awarded funds which results in increased overnight stays

Timing: April 2018 to March 2019

Measurable Call to Action: Visitor Centre 1-800, website, event packages

Tracking Mechanism: # of events funded, # of overnight stays as a result of events, track events and impact on MRDT room revenues