STAR

Strategic Tourism for Areas and Regions

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Glossary

COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST (COI) - Communities of Interest connect people with a shared interest or passion through social media. The concept combines advocacy marketing and influencer marketing in a unique way to reach a much larger audience than seen in the past through traditional media. The concept also stimulates and supports product innovation.

DIGITAL or ONLINE FOOTPRINT - The online profile and the "trail" a community/region leaves behind online, on social media, websites, and online forums. A digital footprint reflects a destination's online identity and presence at a particular point in time, and offers insights into the "brand" of an area through visitors' eyes.

EXPERIENTIAL TOURISM - Engages visitors in a series of memorable, participatory activities revealed over a period of time that are inherently personal, engage the senses, and make connections on an emotional, physical, spiritual, and/or intellectual level.

DEMAND GENERATOR - A tourism asset with sufficient attributes and benefits to singularly motivate individuals to visit a destination – the #1 reason(s) contributing to the visit decision.

DEMAND SUPPORTER - A tourism asset that, in combination with other tourism assets, motivates individuals to visit a destination; the extra reason(s) contributing to the visit decision.

PRODUCT/EXPERIENCE CLUSTERS - Clusters of products/experiences create reasons to visit, add value, and make an area more enticing. Three product/experience clusters most relevant to sustainable planning efforts are:

1) **Like-Product Clusters:** Clusters of product/experience sub-sectors (e.g., hiking trails, wineries, crafters, ceilidhs).

2) **Diverse-Product Clusters:** Clusters of a variety of several types of products/experiences (e.g., many Atlantic Canadian cities, different products and experiences in various sectors, mapped on a trail).

3) **Composite Clusters:** Destination is robust with both like and diverse products/experiences (e.g., the Niagara Region with its wine, culinary, gaming, and golf products).

SIGNATURE EXPERIENCE - Officially designated by Destination Canada, Canadian Signature Experiences are once-in-a-lifetime travel experiences found only in Canada. https://www.destinationcanada.com/en/programs

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM - Sustainable tourism actively fosters appreciation and stewardship of the natural, cultural and historic resources, places considered special by local residents, the tourism industry, government and visitors. It is tourism, which can be sustained over the long-term because it results in a net benefit for social/cultural, economic, and natural/built in elements in the area.

STRATEGIC REGIONAL TOURISM PLAN - A Plan that focuses a region to become a sustainable tourism destination with a defined vision, goal and objectives. The Plan is created using the framework outlined in this Guide, and tailored to the specific needs of a destination.

Introduction
Growing Tourism in Atlantic Canada

The ACOA **Tourism Innovation Action Plan (TIAP)** guides tourism development in Atlantic Canada. The Plan is designed to advance Atlantic Canada tourism's competitiveness and productive capacity by placing a greater emphasis on small and medium enterprise (SME) growth and innovation, and supporting development and capacity building of these businesses throughout Atlantic Canada. The focus is on clustering, value-added product development, plant maximization, and mobilizing destinations to leverage the power of the internet and social media. The **Strategic Tourism for Areas and Regions (STAR)** program has been designed with these key elements in mind.

The two pillars of the Action Plan are straightforward: 1) increasing yield and profits from tourism efforts and operations by adding value to products/experiences and extracting a higher return from visitors during the traditional tourism season; and 2) plant maximization - encouraging destination marketing organizations (DMO), provinces and private sector operators to collaborate and extend the traditional tourism season and therefore, to operate at the highest annual capacity possible. Tourism projects supported by the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) moving forward must demonstrate potential to increase yield and/or maximize the plant.

Three core activities promoted in the Action Plan are key to achieving tourism growth.

1) **Product Clustering** continues to be a development priority with opportunities sought among clusters of like-products, diverse products, and composite products.

2) **Strengthening Online Connectivity** for all tourism stakeholders is essential for competitiveness and growth of Atlantic Canada's tourism industry.

3) **Communities of Interest (COI)** concept connects people with a shared interest or passion through strategic and proactive social media programming. COI is distinctly tied to online connectivity and uses the expertise and enthusiasm of advocates and influencers in a specific product/experience category to target and engage like-minded individuals to share photos, ideas, and experiences regardless of where they live.

What is STAR?

Strategic Tourism for Areas and Regions (STAR) is a regional tourism development program built to support economic growth in large tourism regions[1] in Atlantic Canada with proven tourism success by encouraging strategic and collaborative destination development. The program focuses on helping regions, as well as SMEs,

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[1] *A STAR **Area** or **Region** is defined as a geographic area having definable characteristics but not always fixed boundaries, and is typically made up of several communities and more than 4,000 people.*

to better compete in a highly competitive tourism environment. A project of Tourism Atlantic, a division of ACOA, this customized destination development program guides tourism regions through the STAR process; a series of practical activities and capacity building sessions that focus on strategic and sustainable tourism planning.[2]

The Strategic Regional Tourism Plan results from the process is tailored to the region and considers economic, environmental and social/cultural elements that are relevant and beneficial to tourism in the region. Engagement and active participation from tourism industry SMEs, local organizations, businesses, communities, and residents are critical to the success of STAR planning and long-term outcomes of the Plan. Effective private-sector leadership is essential.

In a nutshell, a Proponent organization works with ACOA Tourism Atlantic through pre-planning considerations, including the Sustainable Tourism Screening process to assess suitability for the STAR program. Once a STAR region is selected, the region identifies local Working Committee leadership and contracts a professional Consultant certified in STAR as the region's STAR "mentor". The STAR process unfolds over a period of 12 months to allow for incorporating regional nuances in key seasons. Consultant follow-up at 3 months, 6 months and 12 months post-completion is included in the STAR process.

The STAR Process: A Guide to Growth

The STAR process is pictured in **Figure 1** and detailed in the pages that follow. **Although each element is proven to contribute to developing a robust Strategic Regional Tourism Plan, the expectations and nuances of a region will influence the application and timing of elements.**

STAR is a seven-stage destination development process that takes place over a 12-month period, building a region's tourism success by focusing on how it is viewed through visitors' eyes - in all seasons. The implementation and timing of the STAR stages is determined by the tourism business cycle in a region.

> *"The Tourism Sub-Committee of the Bonavista Trinity Chamber of Commerce created a Working Committee to engage in the STAR process during 2018. We found the STAR to be a very positive process for our region. It afforded us a great opportunity to reach out and bring the region together, especially in areas with a less developed tourism economy. The process was very well executed by our Consultants and, through the regional engagements, we developed a strong plan, identifying the key priorities for our region to focus on in the coming years. The final STAR Plan provides our region with an excellent document with which to engage stakeholders and funding agencies with our region's future plans."*
>
> *Shane Hayes, Chair, Bonavista STAR Working Committee (NL)*

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[2] ***A Note on Stakeholder Sessions:*** *It is important to note from the outset that, **at all stakeholder sessions and consultations**, consideration should be given to SME needs – the Consultant should make sure to stress this when meeting with stakeholders. In addition, Consultants should be familiar with the **Tools and Solutions** and integrate them into at least one of the Stakeholder Sessions. A handout for stakeholders listing these Tools and Solutions and their applicability to SMEs should be considered.*

Figure 1: STAR Stages and Process

STAGE 1: STAR Start-up and Regional Research (Months 1-3)

Initial " Virtual Meeting" - Consultant and Proponent/Working Committee
Preliminary Research - Launch Digital Footprint Tool
Initiate Tourism Asset Inventory - Finalize Working Committee, Chair, and Executive Committee

STAGE 2: Introduction to STAR and Site Visit (Month 3)

Meeting - Consultant and Working Committee - Site Visit
Individual Community Meetings: Round 1
Confirm Communications Framework/Launch Communications Tactics
Stakeholders Session: *Benefits and Expectations of STAR*

STAGE 3: Visioning and Idea Generation (Month 4)

Meet with Working Committee - Follow-up Site Visit
Stakeholders Session: *Visioning and Idea Generation*

STAGE 4: Regional Consultations (Months 5-6)

Draft Strategic Regional Tourism Plan
Regional Tourism Survey (Online) and Reporting
Individual Community Meetings - Round 2

STAGE 5: Draft Plan Presentation and Launch Capacity Building Session(s) (Months 7-8)

Review Draft Plan with Working Committee and Gather Feedback
Begin Capacity Building Session(s) as Outlined in the Plan

STAGE 6: FINAL Plan Presentation and Implementation (Months 9-12)

Revise and Submit Final Strategic Regional Tourism Plan to Working Committee
Present Final Plan to the Region
Continue Delivering Capacity Building Sessions

STAGE 7: Follow-up and Interim Reporting

(At 3 months, 6 months and 12 months post-completion of the Plan)
Mentor a Region as Implementation is Underway
Detail Progress Using Post-Plan Interim Report Card
Communicate Ongoing Acheivements to STAR Stakeholders

Goals and Outcomes
Goals of STAR

Major goals of STAR are to:

1) Guide Atlantic Canada regions and stakeholders to collaborate and strategize, develop and execute a Strategic Regional Tourism Plan for a three to five-year period.

2) Support and empower SMEs and key organizations to better compete by building tourism capacity including product clustering, value-added product development, plant maximization, and leveraging the power of digital technology and social media.

3) Encourage regional tourism leadership, regional communications and engage stakeholders in all facets of regional destination development.

> **The STAR process focuses on:**
> - Destination development
> - Leadership
> - Strategic planning with community input
> - Communication and collaboration
> - Product clustering
> - Building tourism capacity
> - Online/digital marketing
> - Achievable implementation and measurement

STAR Outcomes

▶ An ambitious, achievable and measurable Strategic Regional Tourism Plan with actionable and realistic recommendations for destination development over the subsequent three to five years.

▶ A "statement" of the region's current tourism baseline situation, including an inventory of tourism assets, a measure of the region's digital footprint and assessment of the status of tourism in the region gained through extensive consultation.

▶ A network of industry leaders and committed stakeholders to lead the tourism process forward beyond STAR development period.

▶ Increased knowledge of product clustering and a bank of tools and training options for use by regions, individual SMEs, and tourism stakeholders to stimulate capacity building and destination development.

▶ Performance indicators to monitor and measure the success of the Plan.

Dynamic Tourism Landscape

Tourism is a global industry; to compete effectively and to grow destinations and operators in Atlantic Canada, we must be alert to changes in customer demands and vigilant in striving to meet them. Tourism trends shift and though they are felt globally, each is relevant to Atlantic Canada. The TIAP has captured and adjusted for shifting global factors. Regional destinations and communities must appreciate these global factors in the context of Atlantic Canada realities.

Global Issues/Trends

Key global issues[3] impact tourism in Atlantic Canada. They are:

1) Maintaining a destination's sustainable tourism development from the standpoint of economic, social/cultural, natural and built resources.

2) Concerns for safety and security.

3) Impact on the travel and tourism industry resulting from global economic, social/cultural and political directions.

4) Long-term impacts of climate change and global warming on tourism.

5) Necessity for increased local/regional/national/international leadership in tourism policy and strategic planning.

6) Resolving barriers to travel: visas, passports, immigration issues, airline services, fees, and delays.

7) Educating travelers and businesses in optimizing the application of new technologies within the tourism industry.

8) Maintaining a sustainable, engaged, skilled, and experienced workforce in order to deliver quality tourism experiences.

9) Effects on travel and tourism from natural/human-induced disasters, health issues, and political disruptions.

10) Utilize tourism as a vehicle for bringing indigenous and rural populations out of their state of oppression and marginalization.

Changing Consumer Patterns and Interests

These trends drive tourism development and include:

- Aging populations and changing households
- Immigration
- Advances in technology
- Shifts away from longer trips to multiple, mini-vacations
- Increased demand for quality products/experiences and services
- Shifts away from rural to urban destinations
- Environmental conscience
- Demand for something new, different, unique, and memorable
- Shift to experiential tourism that involves local culture

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[3] *Edgell 2019.*

Atlantic Canada's Competitive Challenges

Atlantic Canada must successfully compete in a global arena. Several key issues affect our ability to compete and must be considered in all tourism development efforts, whether at the regional, community or operator level.

▶ **Sustainability:** Atlantic Canada must remain committed to sustainable tourism development as it brings 1) economic benefits (e.g. revenues and jobs); 2) positive social impacts, so that tourism is a positive experience for local residents, businesses and tourists; and 3) positive environmental practices that take a long-term approach. Protection of both built and natural resources should be paramount.

▶ **Tourism Infrastructure:** Atlantic Canada is well-positioned with the core assets to offer distinctive and unique travel experiences to various consumer traveler segments. A critical issue is that the region's tourism infrastructure, product, and experiences demand revitalization and refreshing.

▶ **Accessibility:** Accessibility - how you get here - affects industry growth; once travelers arrive in our area, we want to ensure that they are easily able to visit the various corners of the four Provinces, whether by road, sea or air. It is expensive to travel to and throughout Atlantic Canada and rural distances from urban areas often compounds this difficulty.

▶ **Seasonality:** A primary tourism season concentrated on 8 to 12 weeks in the summer limits growth, affects profitability and cash flow. Expanding the season to allow for increased revenues is a region-wide issue and means that everyone must cooperate to be open and provide visitors with top-notch experiences. Season extension is relative to the location – a community that shuts down Labour Day would experience season extension if operations were extended later into September. Conversely, a community that typically stays open until late September would experience season extension if operations committed to staying open until late October.

▶ **Technology:** Destinations and operators in Atlantic Canada lag with respect to adopting tourism technology, social media, and innovation. Visitors need to access information whenever and wherever they travel and regions and communities need to be competitive.

- ▶ **Shift to Urban Destinations:** Although Atlantic Canada is marketed primarily as a rural destination, tourism-related visits to urban destinations are increasing while the rural market share of arrivals has declined.

- ▶ **Human Resource Challenges:** It is difficult to access skilled employees during peak tourism season and arguably more difficult during the growing shoulder seasons. Competition for skilled employees is high, especially in rural areas. The misalignment of season extension demands, together with the school calendar, compounds the difficulty in obtaining employees when attempting to extend the season. This is exacerbated by the lack of awareness and/or low regard for tourism as a potential career path.

- ▶ **Lack of Investment:** Accommodations and attractions visitation remains concentrated in summer months and it is difficult for SMEs to secure the capital and investment required to enhance, improve, and generate significant incremental returns during off-peak seasons. Underinvesting in tourism marketing also makes it difficult to compete.[4]

The STAR Program is designed to guide destination leaders, SMEs, and tourism operators to understand and help tackle these issues in their respective regions.

STAR Stages Detailed

To succeed, STAR demands the attention of regional tourism SMEs, tourism operators, stakeholders, municipal and provincial leaders, local associations, groups, and tourism partners working closely with the Working Committee and the STAR Consultant.

Resources and tools are listed at the beginning of each stage and these are also available in the STAR Toolbox.

Stage 1: STAR Start-up and Regional Research *(Months 1-3)*

The focus of Stage 1: Launching STAR and contracting a Consultant; initiating strong and trusting relationships among the Working Committee, the community and the Consultant; gathering relevant research; and generating baseline information upon which to build the Plan.

Stage 1: Resources and Tools

The STAR Toolbox includes samples of:
1) Working Committee Terms of Reference
2) Sample List of Duties and Responsibilities: Consultant, Chair and Working Committee
3) Preliminary Research Sources
4) Tourism Asset Inventory
5) Digital Footprint Tool and Sample Request for Proposal (RFP)
6) Optional Activity: STAR Current Market Assessment
7) Optional Activity: STAR Regional Tourism Marketing Efforts Assessment

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[4] *McKinsey and Company, Unlocking the Potential of Canada's Tourism Economy; commissioned by Destination Canada, December, 2018.*

Objectives of Stage 1

The objective of Stage 1 is to set the stage for the STAR project:
    1) Contract the STAR Consultant.
    2) Initial meeting - Consultant and Proponent/Working Committee.
    3) Begin research and launch Digital Footprint Tool.
    4) Initiate development of Tourism Asset Inventory.
    5) Finalize the Working Committee, Executive Committee, and Chair.

1. Initial "Virtual" Meeting with Proponent/Working Committee

Once selected, the Proponent/Working Committee should meet the Consultant as soon as possible. This meeting will (unless proximity allows for face-to-face contact) be a telephone or video conference.

Among agenda items will be a discussion on formulation/finalization of the Working Committee - the tourism stakeholders who will lead the STAR effort. During this meeting, the Consultant will review the requirements of the Tourism Asset Inventory with the Proponent/Working Committee and will instruct the group to complete a preliminary inventory in advance of Stage 2. Activities to launch the Digital Footprint Tool will be outlined.

Ongoing meetings with the Working Committee should be regularly scheduled; the meeting schedule is a shared responsibility of the Consultant and Working Committee.

2. Preliminary Research

The project Proponent and Consultant have important roles in assembling the background information required to launch the STAR process. The Proponent possesses the local understanding of regional nuances and sensitivities and will assist the Consultant by gathering/compiling reports, tourism plans, strategies, inventories, and other documents relevant to the tourism planning process. The Consultant and Working Committee will discuss key documents to be assembled, understanding that the STAR Regional Tourism Plan will align with and complement, not duplicate, the key planning efforts that have been undertaken in the region to date.

The Consultant brings objective experience and a fresh, third party point of view to the process. Preliminary research provides a comprehensive overview of the region through existing provincial tourism-related reports, local visitor information, and results. Results can be agenda discussions with the Working Committee in Stage 2. Completion of the **Regional Marketing Assessment** is optional but will provide an overview of regional marketing efforts to date.

The **Digital Footprint Tool** will launch in Stage 1 to generate a picture of the online footprint of the region as it appears to the visitor. An online/digital footprint is intended to identify the region's online status and needs for tourism websites and social media activity. With ACOA's TIAP focused on enhanced SME digital capacity and online marketing tactics, the baseline information from this assessment is essential for the STAR work. Conducted by a third party, funds for this assessment are included as part of the STAR project. An RFP is managed by the Consultant and Working Committee and the results of the footprint are reported to the Consultant and Working Committee for use in the Plan and to help inform capacity building session topics.

The Consultant should also review the Sustainable Tourism Screening Tool results in advance of visiting. The preliminary research helps both parties prepare for the upcoming site visit, initial consultations (Stage 2), and future capacity building sessions.

3. Tourism Asset Inventory

A comprehensive tourism inventory is a basic component in every successful regional tourism plan. An area must identify and understand its competitive strengths, tangible and intangible tourism assets, how to use and position them, and objectively recognize the gaps in experiences, products and services in order to capitalize on strengths and plan for the future.

The tourism inventory is regional and segmented by community. The information considers whether assets are: i) visitor ready, ii) somewhat visitor ready, or iii) not visitor ready, providing inputs into development and marketing priorities.

In the initial meeting with the Proponent/Working Committee, the Consultant will instruct the group on details to initiate the inventory asking that the first draft be ready in advance of Stage 2 and the initial site visit. The inventory will inform the itinerary for the site visit.

Updates to the inventory are the on-going responsibility of the Working Committee and/or its successor leadership team. The Tourism Asset Inventory is provided in the STAR Toolbox.

4. Finalize the Working Committee, Executive Committee, and Chair

The Consultant guides the process to complete the Working Committee. The importance of establishing an effective, committed and **industry-led regional** Working Committee cannot be overstated. The Working Committee will speak for the project and advance its activities and efforts in the months ahead. Working Committee members must be "big thinkers" who have a regional perspective and are able to envision what the project "can do for us" NOT "what it can do for me."

Considerations in forming the Working Committee are shown in **Table 1**, and the Terms of Reference are included in the Toolbox. It is essential that committee members be active tourism leaders and participants who understand and accept the Working Committee responsibilities outlined in the STAR Toolbox. Members must be in a position to devote time and share-of-mind to the STAR process. The Working Committee needs to be engaged year-round; wherever possible, recognizing that most activity will take place in the off-season.

There are several options for finalizing a Working Committee. Some leaders will be evident and willing. In other cases, potential Working Committee members may not be as obvious. In one case, the Proponent asked individuals who were previously identified in the pre-planning stage to generate a list of potential representatives. These names were then voted on by this group and sorted by the highest to lowest votes, with the top names being approached to serve, ensuring there were no conflicts of interest.

Once selected, the Working Committee should strongly consider identifying an ad-hoc Executive Committee (recommended three people, two of whom are the Chair and Proponent) who can continue to move the process forward with the Consultant when committee engagement is more difficult in the prime, demanding tourism season. Should an Executive Committee be assigned, regular communication between the Executive and the Consultant is recommended during the busiest of months.

Table 1: Considerations in Forming the Working Committee

1) **Keep the committee a workable size:** The committee should be big enough that tasks can be spread around (you may end up with several subcommittees and an ad-hoc Executive Committee if decided upon) but small enough to be manageable. It is recommended that **8 to 12** people in total, comprise a regionally representative Working Committee. **Strong industry representation and leadership is required.** An ad-hoc Executive Committee of the Working Committee for effective prime season contact may be selected.

2) **Chair:** An inspiring Chair to spearhead the STAR Plan is essential. This individual should be recognized in the region as a tourism leader who can "sell" a vision and bring fresh ideas, energy, and focus to the Plan, along with the necessary skills to put the Plan in motion. **Ideally, the Chair is drawn from the tourism industry and is someone highly respected in the region and the province.** The Working Committee Chair must be someone supported by the Proponent.

3) **Representation:** Consider the need for representation from:
   - **Tourism industry stakeholders:** SMEs and organizations directly involved in developing products for and serving tourists.
   - **Other stakeholders:** organizations and businesses active in the community.
   - **Other public and private sector organizations:** municipal governments, community arts and culture organizations, business leaders in the community, representative of the Proponent, strategic partners, such as Parks Canada.
   - **Local tourism association or subcommittee:** existing tourism association, committee, or organization.
   - **Not-for-profit groups:** organizing festivals/events and operating tourism assets that are important to visitors.
   - **Geographic representation:** not all communities may be represented; someone might represent several (2-3) communities within the region.

4) **Ex-officio representatives:** Federal and provincial government agencies can contribute added expertise and information to benefit the Plan; **the project funders are represented**.

The Working Committee's core function is to help develop and advance the STAR effort and support the capacity building sessions that fall within the scope of the project by encouraging as many people as possible to participate.

Once completed, the Strategic Regional Tourism Plan should recommend a governance model for regional tourism development in subsequent years and indicate how the Working Committee participates and transitions over time. The go-forward governance model will be tailored to the needs of the region and the "jobs at hand" post-completion of STAR. The leadership team could evolve from the Working Committee over time including standing sub-committees for long-term projects and/or employ task teams for specific initiatives. Funding and administrative support for the governance model should be delineated and its core responsibilities will be evident in the implementation requirements of the Regional Plan.

Consultant Role

The Consultant guides the region through the STAR process in Stages 1 to 4, with a strong understanding of required inputs and early outcomes. The Consultant takes the lead in penning and presenting the draft and eventually, the final Plan. Although working with a structured STAR program, the Consultant must be alert to the individual needs and aspirations of the region as they surface and be available as needed for "creative adjustments" to the program while addressing regional needs. The Consultant **is expected to be open to frequent and honest communication** with the Working Committee. Establishing a mutually trusting, working relationship with the Working Committee early on will facilitate the overall success of STAR.

Beginning with Stage 5, the Consultant begins to work more as a mentor, delivering professional expertise and capacity building resources, and ensuring the final Plan captures the ambitions and the potential of the region with significant regional input.

Optional Activities

Consultants have optional activities in Stage 1. Two activities assist with assessing the markets and marketing efforts of the region; 1) Current Market Assessment; and 2) Regional Tourism Marketing Efforts Assessment.

These activities may be used by the Consultant in developing the Plan be incorporated into the first Working Committee meeting or into the first or second Stakeholder Sessions, in which case, additional time will be needed for their inclusion. Optional activities are included in the STAR Toolbox.

Stage 2: Introduction to STAR and Site Visit *(Month 3)*

Once the initial research and the digital footprint work is underway, it is important for the Consultant to be introduced first-hand to the region through a site visit guided by the Proponent/Working Committee, a series of individual community meetings, and an introductory session for the region's operators and tourism influencers. A **Communications Framework** for engagement and transparency is developed at this stage. It is anticipated that the Consultant is onsite for a minimum of two days during Stage 2.

Stage 2: Resources and Tools

The STAR Toolbox includes samples of:
  1) Sample Site Visit Schedule
  2) Communications Framework
  3) Stakeholders Session: Participant List and Invitation
  4) Stakeholders Session: Agenda and Presentation Outline
  5) Thank You E-Letter to Stakeholder Session Participants
  6) Stakeholders Session Evaluation Form

Objectives of Stage 2

1) Meet with the Working Committee, tour the region, providing the Consultant with first-hand experience with regional assets and their juxtaposition, and meet with stakeholders.
2) Familiarize the Consultant with issues and ambitions of communities and tourism stakeholders in the region through individual community meetings.
3) With the Working Committee, develop an on-going Communications Framework for engagement and transparency and discuss initial draft of inventory framework.
4) Organize and host Stakeholders Session: *Benefits and Expectations of STAR*.

1. Meet with Working Committee

The first formal face-to-face meeting with the Working Committee is conducted in conjunction with the regional site visit. It is important to meet with the Working Committee to share expectations around what will occur at the initial Stakeholders Session: *Benefits and Expectations of STAR* and understand Committee and Consultant roles and responsibilities (see STAR Toolbox). During this first meeting, the Consultant will discuss the Tourism Inventory draft generated by the Working Committee and any preliminary results from the Digital Footprint work.

Site Visit

During Stage 2, the Consultant tours the region with the Proponent and Working Committee to appreciate "the lay of the land," the distance and juxtaposition of communities and tourism assets, and to meet with key tourism stakeholders in individual communities. It is essential that the Proponent/Working Committee contributes local knowledge to the organization of the site visit, takes the lead in planning the visit, and creates an itinerary to share with the Consultant and all involved in the tour.

2. Individual Community Meetings: Round 1

Regional stakeholders need to be confident in the STAR Consultant to facilitate community engagement and participate in the process from the outset. The Consultant should be well-informed about the community beforehand and assume an active listening role. These face-to-face meetings provide an opportunity for this important interactive introduction.

The community meetings with key industry representatives and stakeholders around the region are scheduled by the Proponent as part of the site visit; the number and breakdown will follow the "functional groupings" within a region. These meetings provide an opportunity for the Consultant to appreciate - in a preliminary way - the geography, tourism offers, ambitions, concerns, and some of the key issues of all communities in the region. Greater insights into a community's vision for the area begins to surface in these meetings. These elements create an important foundation upon which to build understanding of the region. Ideas and insights from these meetings help shape the Strategic Regional Tourism Plan.

> For the STAR Bonavista Peninsula (2018) site visit, individual meetings were held with communities in four geographically grouped areas.
>
> During the initial STAR site visit to Gros Morne (2015), five individual community meetings (there are seven communities in the region) were scheduled, plus meetings with the Proponent and Parks Canada.

3. Communications Framework

Throughout the process, the Consultant leads the effort in ensuring a relevant Communications Framework is developed and executed for regular communication of the planning efforts and engagement among the Working Committee, Consultant, and regional stakeholders.

The Consultant takes the lead in drafting the Communications Framework; however, it is the responsibility of the Proponent and the Working Committee to execute it. The Proponent and Working Committee help to identify the priorities of this framework; they know the region best. Regular (if possible, monthly) communication should be considered in the form of e-mail updates, e-newsletter, STAR project website, Facebook page and other forms of communication. A combination of these works best. Once Working Committee members are confirmed, they should be introduced to the region by the methods established in the Communications Framework.

> **Communications checklist:**
> - Database of stakeholders for direct communication on announcements and meetings.
> - Website/social media with separate URL to post agendas, reports, surveys and research links.
> - E-mail blasts and notifications.
> - Local media lists and contacts (radio station, cable, newspaper).
> - Meetings as required with communities/influencers.
> - Posters/flyers for events and meetings posted online and circulated.

The "golden" tool for regional communications is an up-to-date database of industry stakeholders developed over the course of the project. This database includes tourism operators including SMEs, not-for-profit leaders and volunteers, local businesses and municipalities; this list grows throughout the process. Participants at sessions are included in the list beginning with the participant list from STAR sessions.

4. Stakeholders Session: *Benefits and Expectations of STAR*

This interactive session is open to all regional tourism stakeholders and the community at large. The session is intended to highlight the benefits and expectations of STAR. The session, led by the Consultant, will launch STAR, introduce the Consultant and Working Committee to the region, explain the STAR planning process, including the Tourism Asset Inventory and the Digital Footprint Tool, and share the Consultant's initial observations and insights from the first site visit. The role of the broad community and need for input is underlined. The Working Committee role is reviewed and, as appropriate to a region, volunteers may be requested from session participants.

A preliminary draft of the Tourism Inventory may also be shared at the session. Projected on a screen, with hard copies for participants, the inventory facilitates comprehensive stakeholder input and discussion which can be captured for the Plan.

A participant list for the session will be developed and an evaluation conducted. A post-session follow-up thank you letter to participants is also a useful tool.

The Tourism Inventory: An Insightful Tool to a Region's Potential

Regional stakeholder input into the **Tourism Inventory** provides an opportunity to discuss the destination's tourism assets through a regional lens; it offers a "local's view" at the region's tourism assets and can serve as a motivational tool for stakeholders. As a planning tool, the inventory is objective and dynamic; it:
- ▶ profiles tangible and intangible assets, as well as latent assets (hidden gems);
- ▶ identifies tourism-related products/experiences and services;
- ▶ suggests possible product/activity clusters; and
- ▶ benchmarks and measures progress at given points in time.

Stage 3: Visioning and Idea Generation *(Month 4)*

The Consultant is onsite again in Stage 3, on average for two days, for meetings and to conduct the second Stakeholders Session: *Visioning and Idea Generation*. While onsite, the Consultant will become more familiar with the area, conduct additional meetings to support plan development, and meet with the Working Committee.

Stage 3: Resources and Tools

The STAR Toolbox includes samples of:
- Stakeholders Session - Agenda and Presentation Outline
- Sample Visioning Exercise(s)
- Sample Exercise to Identify Regional Priorities
- Stakeholders Session - Evaluation form

Objectives of Stage 3

1) Meet with the Working Committee for an update on progress and overview of the upcoming *Stakeholders Session*.
2) Conduct a *Stakeholders Session* which focuses on describing the region's current tourism position; generating the framework for a regional vision; and group exercises to help identify regional tourism priorities and ideas for workable tactics to feed the Plan.
3) Additional site visit reconnaissance and individual meetings as needed.

1. Meet with Working Committee:

During Stage 3, the second meeting with the Working Committee is held, in advance of the Stakeholders Session: *Visioning and Idea Generation*. The Consultant and Working Committee may meet in advance of the *Stakeholders Session* to review the session agenda, or the Consultant may lead a post-mortem should the meeting follow the session. The meeting also updates the group on STAR progress and reinforces for Working Committee members, their roles and expectations for the coming planning months.

2. Stakeholders Session: *Visioning and Idea Generation*

This session is critical to isolate foundational pieces of the Regional Strategic Tourism Plan and to generate interaction among stakeholders on REGIONAL priorities and ambitions. As many stakeholders as possible are encouraged to participate, and the Working Committee, using the communications framework, makes every effort to "get people out".

Allocate a minimum of two hours for the session; do not rush it and smother regional discussion and momentum. This session builds on Session #1 and aims to:
> 1) Describe the current tourism situation – the starting point for the Plan
> 2) Highlight elements of a regional vision for tourism
> 3) Generate ideas regarding regional tourism goals and priorities 4) Highlight regional actions
> 5) Facilitate active stakeholder participation and "buy-in"

The three major principles of sustainable tourism are noted during this session: 1) community based, 2) economic development, and 3) cultural and environmental stewardship.

Elements of this session are highlighted below:

Current Situation

It is essential to understand where the tourism journey begins in order to plot a course for the future. At the outset of this session, the Consultant walks the region through the market profile, visitation, and recent tourism results; aims to isolate the value of the industry to the region; and shares regional insights from the provincial website and preliminary results from the digital footprint as well as evidence of branding in municipal materials and websites. The Consultant must encourage questions.

Drafting Elements of a Vision

A tourism vision statement is essential for engaging stakeholders in a common direction. Drafting the elements for a tourism-specific vision leads to a singular focus for how tourism in the region should be planned, developed, managed, and marketed over time.

Based on some of key components in the Tourism Asset Inventory, the group will be asked the core question: *"where do you want to be in 5-10 years?"*

Once this information is collected, the Consultant is in a position to propose a draft vision for inclusion in the Regional Tourism Plan. A sample visioning exercise is included in the STAR Toolbox. The vision can be further refined by using questions in the regional tourism survey (Stage 4).

Idea Generation - Identifying Priorities and Actions

Strategic tourism planning demands choices and regional input into chosen priorities is critical. Ask participants to work in smaller groups to identify the top 3 - 4 regional tourism priorities for the next 3 to 5 years. These priorities can be ranked by the large group to isolate the top five. This exercise should be coupled with the key actions required to achieve those priorities. A sample exercise to identify priorities is included in the STAR Toolbox.

The priorities, along with the vision, are further refined using questions in the regional tourism survey (Stage 4).

An evaluation of the session is conducted. The proposed priorities are posted online and distributed via identified communications framework tactics.

3. Additional Site Visits

While on-site, the Consultant should visit further areas/attractions and may hold specific meetings with individuals or small groups (e.g., attractions, municipal, sector-focused stakeholders, or business leaders).

Once Stage 3 is complete, the Consultant has a wealth of information required to build the draft Strategic Regional Tourism Plan including: preliminary research and results from the Digital Footprint tool; a detailed regional Tourism Asset Inventory; regional priorities and actions; vision input; Working Committee support; and regional participation.

Stage 4: Regional Consultations *(Months 5 - 6)*

In Stage 4, the Consultant and Working Committee validate and gather additional information for the Plan from the industry and the broader community.

Stage 4: Resources and Tools

The STAR Toolbox includes samples of:
1) Sample Online Survey Invitation
2) Sample Regional Tourism Online Survey
3) Individual Community Meetings: Round 2 - Sample Invitation
4) Individual Community Meetings: Round 2 - Sample Agenda/Topics

Objectives of Stage 4

The major objective of Stage 4 is to obtain input directly from regional tourism stakeholders through use of an online survey and individual community meetings: Round 2. It is anticipated that the Consultant is onsite for up to two days during Stage 4.

1. Regional Tourism Survey

The principle of community input in strategic tourism planning is reinforced by a survey targeted at regional residents. Drafted by the Consultant and approved by the Working Committee prior to circulation, an online survey is an effective way to gather a cross section of views. The Consultant is responsible for survey design, implementation and analysis. The Working Committee is responsible for posting the survey, promoting it, and actively encouraging participation. An incentive can be used to encourage responses (e.g., gift basket or gift certificate). Questions should be made available using an on-line survey program (e.g., Survey Monkey). It is advisable to have printed copies available for those without online access.

The online survey is a mechanism to validate priorities, identify destination development gaps to be addressed in capacity building sessions, and to pinpoint potential partners for plan implementation. Include questions to gauge public support for tourism development, validate the tourism vision and goals, help identify product/experience clusters, and help understand regional online capability of residents.

Who should be surveyed? Survey broadly; encourage participation! Using tactics in the Communications Framework, the STAR database of contacts should be sent an invitation to participate, along with a link to the survey. Invite the broader community to participate by partnering with the Board of Trade, business associations, and not-for-profit organizations to encourage fresh input. The Working Committee is instrumental in coordinating partners.

Ask for quick turnaround for survey feedback from the Working Committee as well as responses so results can be reported and included in the Plan. Compile a summary of results and distribute it to all participants.

2. Individual Community Meetings: Round 2

Key learnings from the online survey can serve as discussion points/agenda items for the meetings to obtain additional input into development of the Plan from communities and key stakeholders. **These meetings are an opportunity to prompt discussions on recommendations as they form and to assess enthusiasm for topics of capacity building sessions.** These informal discussions typically last for 1.5 to 2 hours. The meetings help keep the STAR project top-of-mind and "alive" during the time when the Plan is being drafted; it is important to keep STAR momentum going.

Meetings are organized by the Project Manager and Working Committee along with agenda items. Ideally, the Consultant, Proponent and a member of the Working Committee are present at all meetings.

Who Should be Invited? Stakeholders from previous sessions, municipalities and other community representatives should be invited to attend. The more, the merrier! The same groups assembled for discussions in Stage 2 can be re-visited or other groups can be invited. The meetings should take place once results of the Regional Tourism Survey have been made available online.

Suggested Topics for Community Meetings
Each session will be particular to a STAR region and are opportunities to:
- Discuss topline Regional Online Survey results
- Reinforce/validate priorities from stakeholders
- Review the unique features of communities and gather updates on plans with links to tourism
- Discuss local issues which may impact future regional tourism development(s)
- Discuss/validate early recommendations forming
- Assess enthusiasm for capacity building session topics emerging

Stage 5: Draft Plan Presentation and Launch Capacity Building Sessions *(Months 7-8)*

In Stage 5, all of the research and assessments conducted in previous Stages 1 to 4, results of the stakeholder sessions and experience learned from the region culminates in a Draft Strategic Regional Tourism Plan which is workshopped with the Working Committee. The capacity building sessions outlined the Plan also launch in Stage 5.

The Consultant will be onsite for a minimum of one day to workshop the Draft Plan–possibly longer depending on the Consultant role in the capacity building session(s).

Stage 5: Resources and Tools

The STAR Toolbox includes samples of:
1) STAR Strategic Regional Tourism Plan Outline Template
2) STAR Plan implementation Timeline and Budget Template
3) Planning Tools Detailed
4) Solutions Detailed
5) Suggested Capacity Building Sessions
6) Potential Partnerships and Funding Options

Objectives of Stage 5

1) Present and refine the Draft Plan with Working Committee support and input.
2) Host capacity building session(s) as identified and outlined in the Plan.

1. Review Draft Plan with Working Committee

The Strategic Regional Tourism Plan is specific to the region; it highlights key recommendations and capacity building sessions for SMEs, area communities, and tourism operators going-forward and includes recommendations for a regional Tourism Vision. The Plan will outline a go-forward plan for achieving the recommendations, including an implementation schedule and implementation budget with partnerships and funding options identified.

Support programs available through ACOA - Tourism Atlantic, the Province and other sources are considered for go-forward actions in the Plan, especially those programs targeted at SMEs to help them compete and grow ultimately growing the region. As needed, Planning Tools are used during the planning process to help determine a region's level of development and sophistication; the solutions can be used as needed as part of recommendations to improve SME knowledge and community appreciation for tourism, and will help strengthen experiences and product clustering, online connectivity and social media expertise.

Planning Tools (during process)	**For the Destination**	**For Operators**
	• Tourism Asset Inventory	• Site Assessment Tool
	• Built Heritage Community Walkabout Exercise	
	• Digital Footprint Tool	• VX (Visitor Experience) Evaluation Tool
	• Communities of Interest (COI) Discovery Questionnaire	

Solutions

1) Gros Morne Institute for Sustainable Tourism (GMIST): Edge of the Wedge Program *(best for a cohort of operators from the same destination)*
2) Tourism Best Practices Program
3) Accelerated Market Readiness (AMR) – Included for operators as part of the STAR project
4) Travel Trade Market Readiness Program (TTMR)
5) CanExport
6) Consulting Assistance Program (CASP)
7) ACOA programming – Business Development Program (BDP), Regional Economic Growth through Innovation Program (REGI), Innovative Communities Fund (ICF)

The recommended format for the Strategic Regional Tourism Plan is included in the STAR Toolbox along with templates for the Plan's priorities and actions and the implementation schedule and budget. The STAR Toolbox details the Planning Tools and Solutions and highlights partnership and possible funding sources that should be considered in Plan development.

Once drafted, the Plan is circulated to the Working Committee and ACOA (including Tourism Atlantic) for review and input. On a mutually-agreed timeline, the Consultant meets face-to-face with the Working Committee to review and gather input and refinements. A PowerPoint presentation is useful to keep the meeting on track.

2. Capacity Building Session(s)

The Strategic Regional Tourism Plan recommends capacity building sessions for tourism SMEs and other stakeholders; the topics of these skills development sessions are selected based on gaps, challenges and opportunities flagged in the Tourism Screening Tool, the Digital Footprint Tool, consultations to date, and regional priorities.

Capacity building sessions continue in Stage 6 and beyond. Capacity building sessions are tailored to each region's needs; however, a communication-focused Tourism Forum aimed at all stakeholders should be considered, along with product/experience development and clustering, and online/social media training.

Depending on the Consultant's background, they may or may not be directly involved with the delivery of the capacity building session(s). All sessions should be evaluated.

Stage 6: Final Plan Presentation and Implementation *(Months 9-12)*

In Stage 6, the Final Strategic Regional Tourism Plan is shared in detail with industry SMEs and stakeholders and capacity building sessions are in full swing. The Consultant is on-site for presentation of the Final Plan and as needed for any associated capacity building session.

Stage 6: Resources and Tools

The STAR Toolbox includes samples of:
1) Sample Invitation to Final Plan Presentation
2) Stakeholders Session: Sample STAR Final Plan Presentation Agenda
3) Tourism Forum Framework
4) Stakeholders Session Evaluation Form

Objectives of Stage 6

1) Revise the Draft Plan based on Stage 5 feedback and achieve sign-off from the Working Committee.
2) Present the STAR Strategic Regional Tourism Plan to regional stakeholders.
3) Continue delivering recommended capacity building sessions.

1. Revise and Submit Final Plan

Using Working Committee input and feedback, the Draft Plan is revised and recirculated to the Working Committee for sign-off and presentation to the region. Once the Plan is accepted, it is the job of the Working Committee to move it forward. Measurement of plan recommendations is an on-going role for the Working Committee and/or its successor, depending upon governance recommendations in the Plan.

2. Plan Presentation to the Region

Once the Plan is accepted by the Working Committee, the Consultant prepares a presentation of the Plan targeted at regional stakeholders. This presentation focuses on the future, outlining the tourism vision, goal(s), objectives, and key actions that have been accepted as the implementation Plan. The tone is one of enthusiasm and promise. The Plan may be presented to stakeholders by the Chair/members of the Working Committee depending upon the individuals' familiarity with plan details and ability to answer any questions, or by the Consultant. Past experience has been that this session is introduced by the Chair; the Consultant "closes the loop" and presents the Plan go-forward actions, and the Chair closes the session by outlining next steps. Where possible, the Working Committee is included in answering questions.

Participants are invited to attend using the STAR contact database. Municipal and provincial representatives and influencers - some of whom may not have been engaged to date - should also be invited. The Working Committee's input is important for assembling this meeting. The presentation is posted online.

Consider adding a capacity building element to the Plan Presentation session while key stakeholders are gathered.

3. Additional Capacity Building Sessions

Additional capacity building sessions (three to five in total, depending upon budget) are anticipated as recommended in the Plan. Sessions are designed to build the capacity of tourism SMEs and other regional industry stakeholders with the ultimate aim of more effectively enticing and serving visitors to increase expenditures. It is the role of the Working Committee or its successor to organize these sessions with specialists or lead them. The Consultant may or may not be involved going forward.

Consider an interactive and communication-focused **Tourism Forum**, a session where stakeholders review the past tourism season and highlight/validate regional priorities from the Plan for the upcoming year. The forum approach has been used successfully in several STAR projects to date; it can be combined with a skill-development session or capacity building presentation.

Suggested capacity building session topics are included in the STAR Toolbox (Stage 5).

Stage 7: Follow-up and Interim Reporting *(At 3 months, 6 months and 12 months post-completion of the Plan)*

The planning process does not end once the Plan is submitted; Consultant follow-up and aftercare is built into the STAR program. It is advised that the Consultant connect with the Working Committee (or its successor as outlined in the Plan) at about three months post-plan to "check in" on progress. However, at six months post completion of the Plan and again, at the one year mark, the Consultant will connect with the regional leadership committee, working with them to generate a report on plan achievements and priorities to gauge (measure) preliminary success. This report is shared with original STAR project funders and regional tourism stakeholders.

Stage 7: Resources and Tools

> **The STAR Toolbox includes samples of:**
>   1) STAR Plan Interim Results Report Card Template

Objectives of Stage 7

1) Mentor a region as implementation is underway.
2) Detail progress using a post-plan Interim Report.
3) Opportunistically communicate on-going
   achievements and accomplishments to STAR stakeholders.

1. Mentoring and Results Reports

Once recommendations are "in play", continuity is important to the Plan's success. Regional accountability to both stakeholders and funders along with mentoring by the Consultant, are key to ensuring that recommendations progress. The Working Committee or its successor is responsible for ongoing monitoring of plan progress and tracking these initiatives.

It is advised that the Consultant connect with the regional leadership team (as outlined in the Plan) at about three months post-plan to check in on their progress. This is not a formal follow-up that is documented in the Interim Report, but simply to ensure momentum has continued and the group is moving forward independently and with confidence.

At six months post completion of the Plan and again at the one year mark, the Consultant connects with the regional leadership committee, working with them to generate an Interim Report on plan achievements. This report is shared with the original STAR project funders, ACOA (including Tourism Atlantic), the Proponent and the Province (if applicable), and with the regional tourism stakeholders. Interim reporting is a timely opportunity for the Committee to confer with the Consultant and assess directions, initiatives and recalibrate if required.

Mentoring services required will be specific to a region. Two additional days of consulting time are available to the region in Stage 7 for the 3, 6 and 12 months reporting and mentoring on implementation questions or challenges. These meetings and discussions will typically, unless close proximity allows, be conducted virtually.

These reports are also opportunities to update stakeholders in the region on plan achievements and important next steps, demonstrating that investments of time and energy made in STAR are worth the effort.

STAR Bonavista Peninsula:
Plan Evolution and Lessons Learned

The Bonavista Peninsula is one of Newfoundland and Labrador's (NL) top destinations. The STAR process was intended to further strengthen tourism and unify the region. Located in the Eastern part of the province, the Bonavista Peninsula is a compelling and iconic destination, offering some of Atlantic Canada's signature attractions and experiences. A brand is emerging that presents the Peninsula as a contemporary view of traditional Newfoundland.

The Provincial Department of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation (DTCII) estimates that overnight non-resident vacation spending in the area (May to October) was approximately $40M in 2017. This conservative estimate does not factor in day trip visitation to the Bonavista Peninsula by Newfoundlanders or non-resident visitation from October to May.

Almost half (43%) of all non-resident vacationers to Newfoundland and Labrador spend time on the Peninsula and the impact of resident travel is also profound. Visitor numbers, growing accommodations occupancies and increasing average daily rate (ADR) in accommodations are clear indicators of progress. As well, the Peninsula is bucking the trend and attracting the attention and investment of young millennials.

The Bonavista Peninsula STAR Project (April 2018 to January 2019) was an undertaking of the Bonavista-Trinity Regional Chamber of Commerce (BTRCC), funded by the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, the Province of NL and BTRCC. Oversight for the STAR Plan was provided by an industry-led Working Committee representative of the four geographical areas of the Peninsula: 1) Bonavista, Elliston, Maberly-Spillers Cove; 2) Trinity Bay North; 3) Newman's Cove to Charleston; and 4) Port Rexton, Trinity and Area.

Broad Reach Strategies Ltd. (lead) and Conach Consulting were the Consultants contracted for the project. In collaboration with a strong and committed Working Committee, the Consultants undertook extensive community and consultations throughout the Peninsula over a ten-month period. Inputs included:

- ▶ A Regional Tourism Asset Inventory
- ▶ A detailed literature and document review
- ▶ Four community consultations at the commencement of the project
- ▶ Three regional stakeholder consultation sessions to:
    1) introduce the project
    2) for in-depth regional strategic planning
    3) to workshop season extension
- ▶ An online survey of tourism and non-tourism stakeholders in the Region
- ▶ A third-party review of the "online footprint" of the Peninsula
- ▶ Best practice review of successful season extension destinations
- ▶ Multiple key informant interviews

The Consultants and the Working Committee met at each stage of the consultations to review and confirm findings. Additionally, a Calendar of Festivals and Events was developed and a Tourism Charter was developed.

The final STAR Plan (2019-2023) was structured around six strategic recommendations and thirty (30) actions identified as important to meet tourism goals.

The Stages of STAR

The STAR project on the Bonavista Peninsula unfolded as outlined in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Bonavista Peninsula STAR Stages 2018-2019

**Preliminary Research
Tourism Asset Inventory Development:**
March 2018

**Site Visit and Initial Community Meetings Session
#1:** *Introduction to STAR and Tourism Asset Inventory Review*
April 2018

Confirmation of Working Committee and Communications Plan
March/ April 2018

Session #2: *Establishing a Vision, Inventory Confirmation,
Idea Generation and Benchmarking*
June 2018

**Regional Community and Resident Tourism Survey
Capacity Building Session 1:** *Third Party Online Audit*
Seasonality Best Practises x 3
July to September 2018

**Stage 4: Community Consultation and Seasonality
Capacity Building Session 2:** *Regional Forum with Legendary Coasts*
October 2018

Capacity Building Session 3: *Sustainability of Key Attractions with DTCII*
November 2018

Session #3: *Draft Plan Presentation to Working Committee*
November 2018

Final Plan Submission
January 2019

STAR Bonavista Peninsula: Stages Detailed

In early 2018, BTRCC completed a number of pre-planning preparations in advance of issuing a Request for Proposals for a Consultant to conduct the STAR project. It was evident from the outset that BRTCC was a legitimate regional business leader to serve as the Proponent for the Bonavista Peninsula STAR project. BRTCC had identified the core of a Working Committee, each with tourism experience, to help select the Consultant and launch the program. The Chamber also dedicated a contract staff member (project manager) for 10 hours per week to help with project administration and management and assemble an inventory of studies and project outlines for the Consultant. The selection committee interviewed the consulting team by phone prior to awarding the project in March 2018.

STAGE 1

The first official meeting between the Working Committee and the Consulting Team was a virtual meeting in April 2018 where participants were introduced, questions about the project were clarified, and next steps identified. There was discussion around gathering the required research and project milestones were outlined. An important and free-flowing discussion made it clear from the outset that the Working Committee anticipated "actionable outcomes" in the Regional Plan and that the significant work that had already been done on the Peninsula should be considered. A spirit of enthusiasm for a regional tourism approach was evident.

In Stage 1, the Chair of the BRTCC acted as interim Chair of the Working Committee. The structure of the final Working Committee, additions to its membership (representation from throughout the Peninsula), roles, and responsibilities were agreed upon. After the first meeting, the Chair was handed off to a prominent industry member, agreed to by the group. The Tourism Asset Inventory was initiated with the Consulting Team generating an initial draft. As well, pillars of the project's Communications Plans were identified by answering the question, "how will the Bonavista Peninsula choose to receive on-going information on STAR?" A webpage and email contact database were decided upon, and organized by the Project Manager.

The requirements for Stage 2 were discussed with Committee members and tasks/ timelines assigned to prepare for the all important face-to-face introductions in Stage 2. Minutes from the virtual meeting were circulated by the Project Manager within five days.

Following the meeting, a Communications Plan was drafted by the Consultants, circulated for input, and Consultants began research and interviews.

STAGE 2

In the weeks after the initial virtual meeting, ongoing communication between the Consultants and the Working Committee had:
- fleshed-out Working Committee membership;
- organized a site-visit;
- prepared the invitations;
- arranged for four individual meetings throughout the region; and
- set the tone for the initial stakeholder session, all of which happened in late April 2018.

Communication and active effort on the part of the Working Committee to encourage participation in all sessions going forward made the difference between shallow input and community engagement in STAR. Active involvement by the Consultants established credibility and expertise for the STAR process.

When the Consulting Team arrived on the Peninsula, the schedule called for a tour of each of the four sub-areas, at which time, a Working Committee member served as guide. Following each site visit, an informal roundtable discussion (structured with key questions) was held with local industry reps, business people, and elected officials in each of the four Peninsula areas.

Each of these sessions allowed local issues, concerns and aspirations to be aired and the "thin ice" became evident as sessions progressed. Each session was chaired by a Working Committee member and the project manager who kept minutes; these notes became benchmarks for local expectations going forward. Attendance ranged from 10-25 people per session. Post-meetings, the Consultants pulled together a document identifying the ten themes that surfaced during the individual meetings - these were posted on the STAR webpage.

Following these four roundtable sessions, the Working Committee and Consultants met face-to-face for the first time as a group. They debriefed on the site visit and roundtables, discussed nuances that surfaced, and the Consultants offered initial observations. In preparation for the first Stakeholders Session: *Introduction to STAR and Regional Tourism Asset Inventory*, the group reviewed the inventory and the upcoming stakeholder session agenda and established expectations. Milestone dates for the project were also reinforced.

A number of people who contributed to the individual meetings attended the first Stakeholder Session and were joined by new participants. Generating enthusiasm for STAR and reinforcing the importance of broad participation was key to the success of this initial stakeholder gathering. The session evaluation results indicated a growing regional interest in STAR.

STAGE 3

By mid-June 2018, Consultants had completed background research, polished the Tourism Asset Inventory, and prepared for the Stakeholders Session which would formulate cornerstones of the STAR Plan. A Stakeholder Session to establish a vision and plan priorities was scheduled for June 18, before the busiest months of the tourism season. The Working Committee was enthusiastic and well prepared for the session and had roles to play as scribes.

Working from a "strawman" vision statement, a group of 23 participants was led through an exercise to identify the key pillars of a tourism vision for the Peninsula and discussed the key words integral to the vision. It was an engaging session and also identified priorities for the region going forward.

The six key Stakeholder Priorities surfaced that helped inform the recommendations of the STAR Plan:

1) Season Extension
2) Marketing (emphasis Online)
3) Human Resources & Training

4) Support for Non-Profits
5) Transportation
6) Agency Collaboration

STAGE 4

The busiest summer tourism months for operators were also the busiest for the STAR project as the Consulting Team (liaising with the Working Committee through an ad hoc Executive group of three) undertook a number of unique-to-Bonavista tasks that had been previously agreed upon with the Working Committee.

During the summer months:
- ▶ A best practice review of three centers in Canada that have achieved success in extending tourism season with festivals and special events was conducted and analyzed for lessons learned.
- ▶ An experienced, third-party was employed (as a capacity building effort) to conduct a survey that would profile the online/digital footprint of the Peninsula through visitors' eyes.
- ▶ An online regional survey was implemented over a six-week period to obtain resident opinions; 92 responses were received.

Each effort laid a strong foundation for stakeholder discussions and STAR Plan input going forward.

The bones of the Plan were taking shape at this point and two complementary Provincial projects were incorporated into the STAR project: 1) While the Peninsula identified Season Extension as its top growth priority, Tourism NL was preparing to execute a pilot, fall campaign to non-residents; and 2) The Peninsula had also put a stake in the ground to support non-profit organizations, and Tourism NL was launching a project to review how best to do the same.

In October 2018, in partnership with the NL Eastern Destination Management Organization (DMO), a stakeholder workshop pulled together 30 operators, including Tourism NL, to hammer out a go-forward plan on seasonality. This session also served as a regional "Tourism Forum". The seasonality best practice was reviewed and the results of the online/digital footprint outlined and next steps were shared with the group. It was an outstanding day that not only added meat to the Plan, but created operator relationships/partnerships and built confidence that the Plan was achievable.

In November 2018, Tourism NL gathered non-profit organizations from throughout the Peninsula and worked through its template to identify key efforts to support tourism not-for profit entities. A go-forward plan was part of that session as well.

STAGE 5

In late November 2018, the Consulting Team returned to the Peninsula for a hands-on session with the Working Committee to review in detail the six Strategic Recommendations and 30 Actions in the Draft STAR Plan. Working Committee input helped polish recommendations, rework the nuances that might "trip up" the Plan moving forward, and agreed on key implementation efforts and strategies.

STAGE 6

In January 2019, the lead Consultant returned to the Peninsula for a public presentation of the STAR Plan. Hosted by the Working Committee and presided over by the Chair, the morning session allowed for questions and focused on the recommendations and next steps.   Following the session, as 30 people were gathered, a capacity building workshop on the "effective use of Instagram" was held, consistent with a recommendation identified in the STAR Plan.

STAGE 7

The aftercare sessions and report in STAR Bonavista Peninsula were scheduled for 6 months and again at 12-months post-plan.

Key Observations/Significant Features of STAR Bonavista Peninsula:

- The Working Committee for the project was stellar, consisting of a strong, well-respected group of tourism industry leaders with an industry Chair, each successful in their own right and deeply involved with and committed to growing the Bonavista Peninsula as a regional destination. They shared opinions and experiences and "got their hands dirty" in various elements of the project.

- The Ex-Officio team of provincial and federal tourism and economic development representatives supported the STAR project, attended all meetings, facilitated innovative approaches to issues, and participated fully in the process. The results were stronger for this engagement.

- Skilled, part-time project management services provided by BTRCC at 10 hours per week were essential to communications and organization.

- STAR Bonavista Peninsula was rolled out using the six Stages of STAR as outlined in the Handbook. While satisfying STAR requirements, the process was creative and was alert to regional nuances and expectations. STAR was tailored to the Bonavista Peninsula and employed innovative tactics to obtain useful information, engender enthusiasm, and achieve results. (Stage 7, after-care, is scheduled for the months following STAR project completion and had not begun as of time of writing).

- STAR did not take a break during the prime tourism season and therefore, momentum in the process and the STAR profile did not falter. However, the project's stages and elements were pre-planned on a timeline to minimize hands-on work for the Working Committee and tourism operators from June to September 2018. An ad-hoc executive group of three people emerged as the primary, but not exclusive, liaison with the Consulting Team during the busy prime season. Significant work was conducted by the Consultants and delivered during the summer months.

- As a mature tourism destination, significant projects are underway and planned throughout the Peninsula and the individuals involved have valuable experience. The Province has plans and projects in play that benefit the region.

TOOLBOX

STAR

Strategic Tourism for Areas and Regions

CONTENTS

Introduction to the STAR Toolbox

This Toolbox is a companion document to the **STAR Handbook**. The Toolbox provides tools and resources to accompany each of the seven stages of STAR's destination planning and development process. Resources and tools for each stage are shown on the pages that follow.

The ACOA Tourism Innovation Action Plan (TIAP) guides tourism development in Atlantic Canada. The Plan is designed to advance Atlantic Canada tourism's competitiveness and productive capacity by placing a greater emphasis on small and medium tourism enterprise (SME) growth and innovation and supporting their development and capacity building throughout Atlantic Canada. The focus is on product clustering, value-added product development, plant maximization, and mobilizing destinations to leverage the power of the internet and social media.

The Strategic Tourism for Areas and Regions (STAR) program is designed with these key elements in mind while the tools and resources outlined in the Toolbox support the goals of the TIAP.

Stage 1: STAR Start-up and Regional Research - Resources and Tools

1) Working Committee Terms of Reference *– to be tailored and developed over time*

▶ Active participation in the STAR process including development and implementation of the Strategic Regional Tourism Plan.
▶ Work closely with STAR project Proponent.
▶ Lead on regional tourism priorities and "speaking for" regional tourism efforts.
▶ Direct STAR project management efforts.
▶ Direct/lead regional STAR activities such as capacity building sessions, forums, surveys, and special projects.
▶ Advise on regional industry communication and tourism issues among stakeholders and partners.
▶ Advise on experience/product development and clustering efforts.
▶ Advise on regional marketing efforts including online.
▶ Monitor/communicate tourism updates.
▶ Monitor and report on successes, benchmarks, and shifts in the tourism landscape.
▶ Advise on rationalization and optimization of significant, existing infrastructure.
▶ Monitor annual work plan outlining priorities, deadlines, resources and partners required, progress indicators, and industry/stakeholder communication efforts.
▶ Advise on hiring if/when necessary.

2) Sample Roles, Responsibilities: Consultant, Chair, Working Committee

Consultant
▶ Guides the region through the STAR process in Stages 1 to 4, with a strong understanding of required inputs and early outcomes.
▶ Mentors the region in Stages 5 to 7.
▶ Takes the lead in penning the draft and eventually the Final Plan.
▶ Beginning in Stage 5, offers expertise and capacity building resources.
▶ Ensures the Final Plan captures ambitions and potential of the region, along with regional input.
▶ Manages and initiates follow-up with region in Stage 7.

Chair *
▶ Represents the region at tourism-related meetings as required.
▶ Acts as spokesperson for tourism efforts in the region.
▶ With administrative assistance, regularly reports to councils and influencers on progress of tourism projects.
▶ **Strongly recommend the Chair is an industry representative**.

* Co-chair format also an option

Working Committee
- ▶ Actively participates in STAR process including development and implementation of the Strategic Regional Tourism Plan.
- ▶ Advises the development of the Communications Framework and executes the communications tactics identified.
- ▶ Develops and maintains the Tourism Asset Inventory with direction and input from the Consultant.
- ▶ Advises on the development of the Digital Footprint Tool.
- ▶ Consults and communicates with communities and operators for buy-in and support on major tourism efforts.
- ▶ Oversees organization of training and capacity building opportunities.
- ▶ Maintains a record of meetings and reports regularly (twice a year) to community councils.
- ▶ Oversees and carries out the Tourism Plan recommendations and actions for the region in an affordable and timely manner.
- ▶ Ensures that success is measured.

Executive Committee of the Working Committee may be identified
- ▶ Communicates with Consultant on behalf of the Working Committee during busiest tourism periods.
- ▶ Keeps the Working Committee informed of any decisions made.

3) Preliminary Research Sources

Canadian and Atlantic Canada Resources:
- Destination Canada: www.destinationcanada.com/research
- New Brunswick: http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/thc/publications.html
- Nova Scotia: https://tourismns.ca/nova-scotia-tourism-performance
- Newfoundland and Labrador: http://www.btcrd.gov.nl.ca/tourism/tourism_research/stats/index.html
- Prince Edward Island: http://www.gov.pe.ca/tourism/index.php3?number=1046190&lang=E

Global Tourism Trends (consult most recent year)**:**
- UNWTO: http://mkt.unwto.org/
- #ECUCOB News: https://blog.ecu.edu/sites/cob/blog/2018/07/16/10-important-world-tourism-issues
- Trekk Blog: https://www.trekksoft.com/en/blog/65-travel-tourism-statistics-for-2019
- Conference Board: 2016 http://www.conferenceboard.ca/press/newsrelease/15-12-15/canadian_staycations_to_continue_to_trend_in_2016_but_prices_are_set_to_increase.aspx

Local Tourism Resources:
- Local and municipal tourism plans and/or economic development plan including tourism
- Feasibility and planning documents for major local projects
- Visitors statistics from VICs or visitor surveys
- Local tourism/municipal online marketing tools (websites, Facebook pages, Instagram accounts, etc.)

4) Tourism Asset Inventory Framework

CATEGORY	Community 1	Community 2	Community 3	Community 4	Pan-Regional
Population					
Tourism Industry Leadership					
Local Tourism Group/Committee					
Chair/Champion					
Annual Budget (if relevant)					
Available Partners/Volunteers					
Demand Generators (DG), Demand Supporters (DS) - Classify each with symbols					
1. Natural Assets: Scenic view points, trails, parks, etc.					
2. Cultural Assets: Human activity sites (tangible and intangible), art, heritage, culinary, industrial					
3. Built Assets: Heritage homes, unusual buildings and structures unique to the area					
4. Festivals/Events Designed for Visitors: Include dates, indicate Quality Assurance Compliance					
5. Experiences Designed for Visitors: Indicate Quality Assurance Compliance					
6. Special Projects for Distinct Markets: Meetings, cruise, training, etc.					
7. Underdeveloped Prospects: Projects identified for development					
Traveler Services					
1. Accommodations: Indicate Canada Select; TAP Quality Assurance Compliance					
i. Fixed Roof					
ii. Campgrounds/RV Parks					
2. Restaurants/Dining: Indicate Fine Dining (FD), Fast Food (FF)					

Tourism Inventory Framework (continued)

3. Shopping: Indicate crafts and unique retail					
4. Visitor Information Services					
5. Support Services: Groceries, banking, liquor stores, health services, parking, transportation					
Marketing					
1. Marketing Strategy					
2. Marketing Resources: Staff, budget					
3. Other					

5) Digital Footprint Tool

Digital marketing is quickly becoming the primary focus of many tourism marketing campaigns. Despite several digital platforms being less than a decade old, these technologies have become a vital component in promoting a destination to potential travelers. Provincial marketing organizations, destination marketing organizations, regional tourism associations and individual operators have all adopted varying technologies, tools and platforms to include in the marketing mix for their regions. The widespread adoption of these digital marketing approaches has led ACOA to incorporate a dedicated digital assessment as part of the STAR process to help communities and regions better understand the impact of their digital presence.

Digital Evolution
Today visitors can explore a wide range of digital assets to learn about a region, ranging from provincial tourism sites to individual operator social media accounts. It is important to recognize the role of each of these channels when working to promote a destination, and to encourage cohesion among the digital assets of a region when applicable. Tourism stakeholders today have a varying range of comfort when it comes to leveraging digital marketing opportunities, and the goal of this digital footprint tool is to help identify opportunities for improvement while recognizing community successes.

Employing The Tool
Unlike other tools in the STAR Toolbox, the Digital Footprint Tool has been designed to be outsourced to a third party. The Digital Footprint Tool is comprised of three main components provided in a digital file:

1) **A template spreadsheet** used to collect relevant data from DMO and operator websites, social media platforms, Google listings and review sites. This spreadsheet has been designed to capture raw data, and leave room for subjective interpretation by the consultant through the 'comments' columns.

2) **A destination** report template, to be populated by drawing conclusions from the data, collected in the spreadsheet to offer guidance and suggestions on improving the overall digital presence of the destination.

3) **An individual operator report template**, to be populated using data collected from the spreadsheet to identify areas for improvement for each unique operator within the destination.

While these templates have been prepared to offer some structure to this process, it is important to note that the instructions provided are merely a guide. Individual consultants are encouraged to incorporate their own expertise into the conclusions drawn and recommendations provided, offering destinations and operators rich insights into improving their digital footprint. Templates should be updated with destination specific insights, current tourism best practices and region specific imagery. Ultimately, the spreadsheet and reports will provide the destination with a snapshot in time of their digital presence and concrete recommendations for improvement. These recommendations will feed in to the broader STAR Strategic Plan and provide a sense of direction when it comes to digital marketing for tourism stakeholders moving forward.

6) Optional Activity: STAR Current Market Assessment

Please answer the following questions (in groups or individually)

1. How many visitors do you receive annually?

   _____

2. Who are the current visitors to your region?

   _____

3. Why do visitors come to your region? (Top three reasons)

   _____

4. When do visitors come to your region?

   _____

5. How long do they stay?

   _____

6. What do they do while visiting your region?

   _____

7. How much do they spend in the area?

   _____

8. a) What do they like about the region? (Top three)

   _____

   b) What do they dislike about the region? (Top 2-3 pet peeves)

   _____

9. What are some of the suggestions made to improve tourism in your region?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

7) Optional Activity:
STAR Regional Tourism Marketing Efforts Assessment

Tourism Awareness (Assessing local and regional marketing support.)	YES	NO
1. Are regional residents aware of tourism, and its contributions to the community?		
2. Do local/regional councils support tourism efforts?		
3. Do municipalities understand the contributions of tourism to the community?		
Other Marketing Components	YES	NO
1. Are there tourism website(s) and active social media channels for your region/area?		
2. Does the region advertise in the provincial travel guide/official website or in any Atlantic Canada travel publications?		
3. Does the region participate in any cooperative marketing programs of the provincial government or Atlantic Canada?		
4. Does the region independently advertise its tourism products and appeals online?		
5. What is the current budget for regional tourism marketing efforts?		
6. Is the budget sufficient to undertake the tasks required?		
7. Are the region's tourism operators actively involved in planning the marketing efforts?		
8. Does the region have marketing programs that encourage the cooperative involvement of the region's tourism businesses?		
9. Are the types of marketing programs being done realistic, given the appeals of your community and the resources available for marketing?		

Stage 2: Introduction to STAR and Site Visit - Resources and Tools

1) Sample Site Visit Schedule

STAR Site Visit Overview and Schedule – Sample
Consultant in the region for a minimum of two days

Site Visit Objectives
1) Tour the region, providing the Consultant with first-hand experience with its dimensions and nuances.
2) Familiarize the Consultant with issues and ambitions of communities and tourism stakeholders in the region.
3) Introduce the Consultant to community leaders.

Agenda

Day 1
▶ Arrive in the region.
▶ Meet with Proponent/Working Committee/Project Manager to set the stage for the project, the next days' visit, and review details of the Stakeholder Session.

Days 2 – 3 (dependent upon the region)
▶ Individual community meetings – morning and afternoon, maximum two hours each.
▶ Experience key attractions/primary and secondary motivators.
▶ Meet with influential/important Agency(ies)/partners as required.

Final Day
▶ Stakeholder Session: *Benefits and Expectations of STAR*.

2) Communications Framework

A Communications Framework is important to STAR and is developed by the Consultant with input from the Proponent and the Working Committee. The Working Committee and the Proponent have a responsibility to lead execution of the Communications Framework, in conjunction with the Consultant.

Communications Objectives:
1) To ensure regular communication occurs among the Working Committee, Consultant and regional stakeholders, and that throughout the project "new" participants are encouraged.
2) To build the credibility of STAR as a valuable and transparent project, adding value to regional tourism efforts and welcoming input from all sources.
3) To use communication channels and sources that are familiar and recognized throughout the region.
4) To offer on-going mechanisms for feedback from the region to the STAR process.

Communications Tactics:
▶ **Contact information for the STAR project should be included on every communication.**
▶ **An effective and dynamic list of stakeholders—the "golden database" is essential.** Begin with the core mailing list of the Proponent, local tourism industry members, not-for-profit organizations, municipal and community/association leaders. This list grows with names/emails from attendees of community meetings, workshop participants, survey respondents, and interested local residents. The Proponent manages and updates the list.
▶ **Use online/offline tools for quick communication and updating.** Use a regular e-mail blast, e-newsletter, dedicated page/website, Facebook page and other appropriate social media channels. Create an email address associated with the STAR project and identify the "project manager" to use as a contact for a feedback option on every communication. Local newspaper(s), printed newsletters and radio stations should be engaged from the outset.
▶ **Establish a manageable communications schedule and stick to it!** The schedule is the minimum anticipated communication contact for the project - recommended at least one contact per month; this will be modified as workshop notifications and survey results become ready for circulation. An effective Communications Plan will keep the region engaged, enthused and informed.
▶ **Include popular local communications channels.** Sometimes the local cable channel or bulletin boards are effective communication mechanisms for communities and regions use; ask about them and include them.

Priority communication topics:
▶ Proponent's introduction of the STAR project to the region and introduction of the Consultant.
▶ Introduction of the Working Committee members.
▶ Timely (with at least three weeks advance notice) notification of information sessions, individual community meetings, stakeholder sessions and upcoming workshops AND timely follow-up announcements/reminders.
▶ Circulation and online posting of STAR materials – workshop PowerPoint presentations, overviews and evaluations, Community Survey results, and feedback from community consultations.

3) Participant List and Invitation to Stakeholders Session

Who Should be Invited to the Stakeholders Session?

Anyone in the region interested in tourism development should be invited to the session. This includes:
- ▶ General public interested individuals.
- ▶ Tourism industry stakeholders - SMEs; businesses and organizations directly involved in serving tourists - accommodations, restaurants, retailers, gas station owners.
- ▶ Other stakeholders - organizations and businesses that are actively involved in the community.
- ▶ Public and private sector organizations - municipal governments, community arts and culture organizations, business leaders in the community.
- ▶ Local tourism associations or subcommittees - existing tourism associations, committees, and organizations.
- ▶ Not-for-profit groups - organizing festivals/events and operating tourism assets that are important to visitors.
- ▶ Communities in the region - ensure each community within the region is actively engaged.
- ▶ Government representatives - from federal and provincial government and relevant agencies.

Building on the Region's Success:
STAR – Strategic Tourism for Areas and Regions
Stakeholder Session: *Benefits & Expectations of STAR*

You Are Invited
Let's get rolling on STAR – a destination development and
planning process for the region.

Come meet our STAR Consultant and launch
the project to increase tourism revenues in our region.

Day/Date:
Anticipated Time: 2 hours
Location:

Please RSVP by (date) to: xxx
Coffee, tea and light refreshments?

4) Stakeholders Session: *Benefits and Expectations of STAR*
   – Agenda and Presentation

The agenda for the launch session is tailored to a region and a PowerPoint presentation specific to the region is developed by the Consultant and shared with the Working Committee in advance. As this is a regional, rather than a community session, not everyone in the room will know each other and introductions will be required, including name, community and business/association. Many participants will have attended a community meeting over the past several days.

Led by the Consultant, the session aims to be interactive in highlighting the STAR process, benefits and expectations, introducing the initial members of the Working Committee, and describing the Digital Footprint effort. The role of the broad community and need for input is underlined. The Working Committee role is reviewed and, as appropriate to a region, volunteers may be requested from session participants.

The Consultant contributes third-party insight to STAR and uses the session to offer pertinent, preliminary observations from the visits with communities. Positive, gentle and constructive observations set the tone for the Consultant-community relationships.

The preliminary Tourism Inventory (depending upon its level of completion) is to be shared at the session for input.

Clear go-forward steps with dates, as available, are outlined before the session closes.

AGENDA
Stakeholder Session: *STAR Benefits and Expectations* (Location)
(Anticipated Time: 2 hours)

- Introductions around the room
- Outline STAR project, timelines and expectations
- Introduce Working Committee
- Consultant's preliminary observations
- Key inputs e.g. Regional Tourism Asset Inventory and the Digital Footprint Tool
- Next Steps for STAR
- Questions and/or Comments
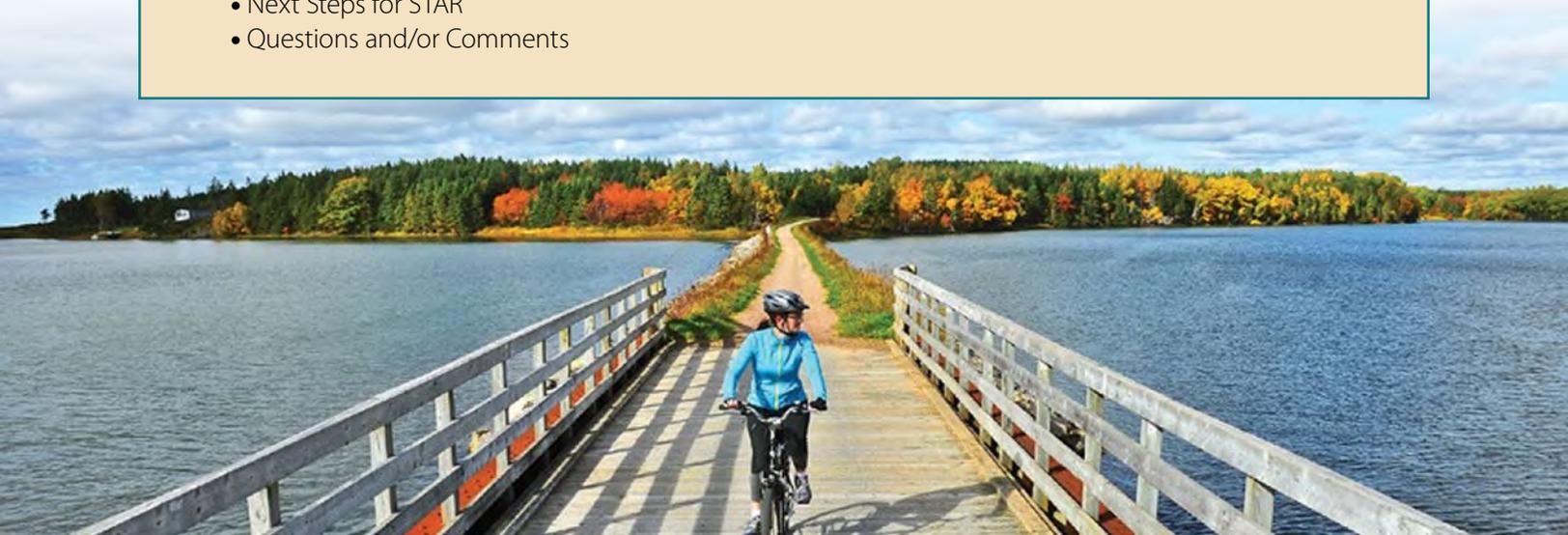
5) Thank you E-letter to Session Participants

Dear XX:

Thank you for attending the initial STAR (Strategic Tourism for Areas and Regions) Stakeholders Session; it was great to see you there. Your input and insights are critical to the success of the Strategic Regional Tourism Plan for our region.

A copy of the presentation made at the workshop on (date) can be found at (link).

We will be back on (date -- pick 2 days) for the next step in the process – a Stakeholders Session -- and hope to see you then. Meanwhile, work on this project continues and the members of your tourism Working Committee will be finalized.

Thank you again for your time and participation in the STAR planning process. Should you have any questions or suggestions please feel free to forward them to us via (name and e-mail).

All the best,
Consultant name and contact information

6) Stakeholders Session Evaluation Form

This evaluation is completed by workshop participants before they leave the session; it is tabulated by the Consultant and posted online for all participants. **The same evaluation form can be used throughout the STAR project, with the name and date of the specific Stakeholders Session changed.**

STAKEHOLDERS SESSION EVALUATION
Stakeholders Session: *(name of the session and date)*

1) What is the most valuable insight/thought/idea/accomplishment you feel resulted from today's session?

   _____

2) Please rate the following elements of today's session (1 = poor; 5 = excellent).

- **Relevance of Topics Covered**   1   2   3   4   5

   Comments: _____

- **Met Specified Objectives/Outcomes**   1   2   3   4   5

   Comments: _____

- **Effectiveness of Facilitator** *(Consultant name)*   1   2   3   4   5

   Comments: _____

- **Organization of Workshop**   1   2   3   4   5

   Comments: _____

- **Overall Usefulness of Session**   1   2   3   4   5

   Comments: _____

3) Of all the ideas and topics discussed today, what are the top two priorities to work on as a Region?

   1.) _____

   2.) _____

   Thank you for your time and input! Results of this evaluation will be available online at xxxxxxxxxxx.

Stage 3: Visioning and Idea Generation – Resources and Tools

1) Stakeholders Session: *Visioning and Idea Generation* - Agenda and Presentation Outline

This workshop is multi-faceted, highly interactive and demands significant community input for effective planning purposes. This session leads participants through a "natural progression" of information and focuses on describing the region's current tourism position; generating the framework for a regional vision; group exercises to help identify regional tourism priorities; and ideas for workable tactics to feed the Plan. The Session is led by the Consultant using a PowerPoint presentation to keep a complex session on track.

There will be participants new to STAR at this session, therefore introductions are required. The agenda for Session 2 is tight; strong facilitation by the Consultant is required.

The basic inclusions of Session 2 are:

i. Snapshot of the REGIONAL Current Tourism Situation: The Consultant builds this piece from information and statistics available at the local, provincial and Atlantic Canada levels, as well as through discussions with key informants as required. In order to plan for the future, everyone must appreciate the starting point; this segment of the session aims to paint a current picture of tourism to the region. It outlines levels of visitation and profile of visitors including their interests; quantifies (where possible) the occupancy, daily rates, and value of the industry to a region; ranks the region's appeal within the province; and highlights key achievements and challenges based upon objective information. Any preliminary information that may be available from the Digital Footprint Assessment may be included. Many session participants will find viewing the area through a regional lens fresh and insightful; it strives to lay a basis for fruitful discussions on vision and priorities.

ii. Visioning Exercise: In order to formulate or validate (if one already exists) a regional Tourism Vision, participants will be challenged with the core question: "where do you see this destination to be in 5-10 years?" With participants in breakout groups, the Consultant will probe with key questions to isolate the pillars of a regional vision. The Vision will be projected on a screen and key questions are to be posed to probe the validity and relevance of its core elements. Should a regional Vision not exist, the Consultant would take all information gathered to date, draft a straw-man vision for working purposes, project it and probe with key questions; the focus here is a regional Vision. Input is captured on a flip-chart.

iii. Priority and Idea Generation: With the current tourism situation and a sense of vision of long-term Visions in mind, participants in small groups are once again, asked to identify, record what they feel are the priorities for the 3 to 5 years to achieve the Vision and to isolate the actions that will help realize those priorities over the next few years. These priorities are reported and discussed among the large group. The resulting priorities are essential inputs to the Strategic Regional Tourism Plan.

2) Sample Visioning Exercise(s)

Exercise Objective:
To identify an achievable long-range Vision for the region the Consultant can, in a plenary session, project the existing Vision or a straw-man, prepare DRAFT Vision, underlining the words the Consultant sees as key elements – the "words that matter"–describing that Vision. As a plenary group, take the group through probing questions to test its validity and capture the feedback on a flipchart, OR to encourage cross-regional communication, assemble break-out groups and ask them to answer probing questions, record and report findings to the whole group.

Example:
Tourism Vision: Bonavista Peninsula, NL - *For the world's explorers, the Bonavista Peninsula is Newfoundland and Labrador's most prosperous and highest rated rural, multi-season destination offering spirited, authentic and creative experiences and stories in a backdrop of outstanding nature with universal value.*

Visioning Task:
- Identify the key elements of our Regional Vision
- Identify the "words that matter" for the Vision
- Isolate the values it embodies

Probing Questions: Tourism Vision
Question: Should any of these points be part of the tourism Vision for our region?

"Our vision for tourism is to…"
- Be the (…*leading? most sustainable? most recognized?…*) destination in … *(Atlantic Canada? North America? globally?)*
- Increasing visitation to XXXX.
- Stimulate visitation among … *(who would be our choice guests?…)* by focusing on … *(most unique attributes of?…)*
- Become known as the leading… *(nature-based? heritage? music? crafts? interpreted?)* …destination in … *(Atlantic Canada? the province? the world?)*
- Become broadly acknowledged as a leader in … *(environmental practices? service excellence? excellent interpretation?)*
- Other vision components? _____

3) Sample Exercise to Identify Regional Priorities

This exercise follows naturally from the visioning work, and focuses participants on immediate priorities (3 to 5 years) that help shape the STAR Plan. The priorities identified here are ultimately embedded in the Regional Survey to be assessed/validated by the broader community.

Exercise Objective:

To highlight regional priorities as identified by stakeholders and identify key actions to realize the priorities.

▶ Working alone, participants take five minutes to identify the top 2-3 priorities for tourism development in the region for the next 3-5 years.

▶ Once finished, participants work in smaller groups (ideally, no bigger than eight people) and take 20 minutes to come to a consensus on the top 3-4 priorities of the group, and the top 3-4 actions to make the priorities a reality.

▶ Smaller groups then report back to the group as a whole; the Consultant uses flip chart to record responses.

4) Stakeholders Session Evaluation Form

This evaluation is completed by workshop participants before they leave the session; it is tabulated by the Consultant and posted online for all participants. **The same evaluation form can be used throughout the STAR project, with the name and date of the specific Stakeholders Session changed.**

STAKEHOLDERS SESSION EVALUATION
Stakeholders Session: *(name of the session and date)*

1) What is the most valuable insight/thought/idea/accomplishment you feel resulted from today's session?

   _____

2) Please rate the following elements of today's session (1 = poor; 5 = excellent).

- **Relevance of Topics Covered**   1   2   3   4   5

  Comments: _____

- **Met Specified Objectives/Outcomes**   1   2   3   4   5

  Comments: _____

- **Effectiveness of Facilitator** *(Consultant name)* 1   2   3   4   5

  Comments: _____

- **Organization of Workshop**   1   2   3   4   5

  Comments: _____

- **Overall Usefulness of Session**   1   2   3   4   5

  Comments: _____

3) Of all the ideas and topics discussed today, what are the top two priorities to work on as a Region?

   1.) _____

   2.) _____

   Thank you for your time and input! Results of this evaluation will be available online at xxxxxxxxxxx.

Stage 4: Regional Consultations - Resources and Tools

1) Sample Online Survey Invitation

The region's STAR Proponent *(name of organization)* has partnered with the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) and the Province of *(specific province)* to create a STAR Strategic Regional Tourism Plan for the *(name of the area e.g. Gros Morne)* and its surrounding communities. The Plan is being developed under a program called Strategic Tourism for Areas and Regions, STAR. Our Consultant *(name)* is working with a local Working Committee to develop the Plan and make tourism recommendations for the next five years. Details on development of the Plan to date are available by viewing *(website site address).*

We are seeking your input to ensure the Tourism Plan satisfies both your needs and the needs of visitors to the region. Please share your thoughts and ideas with us on how tourism might best be developed, going forward.

Your answers will be confidential. Information gathered will be used only for our insights in organizing the Plan. Please take 10 minutes and answer the questions below and respond by *(add specific date – minimum three weeks from posting survey).*

Please take a minute before you begin and review the Tourism Inventory developed to help guide this project at *(link to Tourism Inventory).* If there is anything missing from the inventory, please let us know.

Thank you in advance for your participation in this survey. If you have any questions, please contact: *(Consultant Name and Contact Information)*

2) Sample Regional Tourism Online Survey

The program, Survey Monkey, has been used to collect responses online; the program is capable of generating a report on survey results. The survey questions are generated by the Consultant and approved in advance by the Working Committee. Printed copies should be available for those without computer access.

Below are samples of key/core questions that could be included in the survey. Unique priorities and directions in a region will inform questions. However, it is important that the Survey take no more than 10 minutes to complete.

1. What is your main interest in how tourism is developed in the region?
(check all that apply)

☐ I am a resident of the Region and interested in how my community develops.

☐ I use tourism facilities in the Region.

☐ I own a business in the Region.

☐ I am a tourism small or medium tourism business operator.

☐ I am interested in tourism.

☐ Other?

2. In your opinion what are the top 2-3 reasons people visit our Region?

_____

_____

_____

3. At a Tourism Workshop on (date of *Stakeholder Session: Visioning and Idea Generation*) tourism priorities were identified by participants. They are listed below. In your view, how important are the following initiatives to grow tourism in the region? (Rating Scale 1-5; *5=very important, 4=somewhat important; 3=important; 2=somewhat unimportant; 1=unimportant).*

1. Priorities #1-5 outlined here

2.

3.

4.

5.

4. What are 2-3 new experiences/activities that might realistically be offered to visitors to your Community?

_____

_____

_____

5. How effectively do you feel the region is marketed to visitors? (Rating Scale 1-4; *4=very effectively, 3= effectively; 2=somewhat effectively; 1=not effectively.*)
a) Within the Province *(name)*   1   2   3   4
b) Outside the Province   1   2   3   4

6. What marketing initiatives/tactics could be used to better promote the Region?

_____

7. Who (what organizations) should be responsible for leading and monitoring how tourism is developed in the region?

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

8. Where do you live? (list communities in region)

_____

_____

9. Please tell us your age range.

☐ Under 18   ☐ 19-29   ☐ 30-49   ☐ 50-64   ☐ 65+

10. What is ONE THING most needed in the Region to make tourism the best that it can be?

_____

11. Please share any additional comments about future tourism development in the XX Region.

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your time and input.

3) Individual Community Meetings: Round 2 - Sample Invitation

NOTE: It is important to develop a fresh and thoughtful meeting agenda with questions that are new and challenging to participants to encourage participation at the meetings. Participants have offered initial information in Stakeholder Sessions and responded to the online survey. These meetings should not ask the same open-ended questions.

Questions can probe evolving recommendations in the Plan; add information to priorities; address issues raised during the online survey; investigate new community initiatives being considered for the following year; and (depending upon time of year) ask about results of the past or upcoming season.

STAR: Strategic Tourism for Areas and Regions
Individual Community Meetings: Round 2
STAR Strategic Regional Tourism Plan (add date)

As part of our efforts to build a STAR Regional Tourism Plan for (name of the region), you are invited to an informal discussion with colleagues in your community to follow-up on your thoughts about the future of tourism for this region.

XX (name)XX, a member of the project's Working Committee, Consultant (add name) and XX(name) XX from (add Proponent) will host these sessions.

Where: _____   Location _____

When: _____   Date: x _____

Time: x _____

We anticipate needing an hour of your time. And we bring the coffee!

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4) Individual Community Meetings: Round 2 – Sample Agenda/Topics

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STAR Individual Community Meetings: Round 2 - Agenda
Anticipated Time: 1 Hour

- Introductions and status of STAR project.
- Discuss emerging priorities, challenges and draft recommendations *(This will be tailored to each region)*
- Updates on town/village/attraction plans with related tourism links.
- Local issues which have an impact on regional tourism development going forward.
- Getting to the "finish line" of the Regional Plan.
- Assess enthusiasm for capacity building session topics emerging.

Stage 5: Draft Plan Presentation and Launch Capacity Building Sessions - Resources and Tools

1) STAR Strategic Regional Tourism Plan Outline Template

The shape of the Strategic Regional Tourism Plan will be adjusted based on the nature and needs of the region and will reflect the ways in which the Working Committee anticipates using/circulating the Plan moving forward.
Core elements of the Plan are:

Executive Summary

Introduction

Project Purpose and Objectives

The STAR Process and Our Region

Environmental Scan
> ▶ Overarching Issues and Considerations
> ▶ Trends
> ▶ Appreciating Individual Community Priorities

Profile of Our Visitors
> ▶ Overview of Regional Visitor Numbers and Profiles
> ▶ Regional Accommodations Figures
> ▶ Attraction Visitation

The Plan – Going Forward
> ▶ Guiding Principles of the Plan
> ▶ Vision and Overarching Goal
> ▶ Strategic Recommendations and Tactics (specific to the Region)
> ▶ Recommended Tourism Management Framework, Governance
> ▶ Recommended Performance Benchmarks

Implementation Timeline and Budget (in chart form – see #2 below)

Conclusion

Possible Appendixes
> ▶ Tourism inventory
> ▶ Regional tourism history, visitation, room nights
> ▶ Tourism performance (Atlantic Canada, provincial, regional)
> ▶ Visitor profile(s)
> ▶ Recommended management framework, governance
> ▶ Tourism action framework (templated)
> ▶ Recommended performance benchmarks

2) STAR Plan Implementation Timeline and Budget Template

STAR Timeline & Budget Template

Recommendation/ Objective	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Yr 4	Yr 5	Est. Year 1	Est. Year 2	Est. Year 3
(Timeframe: Year 1 / Year 2 / Year 3 / Yr 4 / Yr 5 — Estimated Costs: Year 1 / Year 2 / Year 3)																			
1. Broad Goal/Recommendation																			
i. Tactic or objective																			
ii. ….																			
2. Management, Staffing																			
i. Recommendation/Objective	■	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→			
3. Communication, Partnerships																			
i. Recommendation/Objective	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→			
ii. ….		■		■		■		■		■		■		■	■	■			
4. Products/Experiences																			
i. Recommendation/Objective	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→			
ii. ….		■		■		■		■		■		■							
5. Marketing																			
i. Recommendation/Objective	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→					
ii. …..	■	■					■												
6. Other																			
i. Recommendation/Objective	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→			
ii. ….		■		■		■		■		■		■		■	■	■			
7. Monitor progress and report results																			
i. Identify specific performance measures and report on these.	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→			
TOTAL ESTIMATED COSTS at date…																	$	$	$

Template Choice 2

STAR Goals, Priorities and Actions				
Goal: To strengthen xxx				
Associated Objective: xxx				
Rationale: Increased xxx				
Markets Implicated: xxx				
Overall Timeframe: xx				
Total Cost: $ xx				
Priorities/actions	**When/timing**	**Responsibility/ Who?**	**Cost**	**Expected Results (& When)**
1. Develop xxx				
2. Seek xxx				
3. Decide xxx				
4. Determine xxx				
5. Institute ways of xxx				

3) Planning Tools Detailed

Built Heritage Community Walkabout Exercise

a) What it is and what it is used for
- The Walkabout is a subjective observation exercise designed to open people's eyes to the built heritage elements in their own communities and regions.
- The tool specifically hones in on older residential properties and landmark buildings, gardens/landscaping, circulation routes, industrial structures, open spaces and their preservation.

b) Application: When to use it
- The tool is particularly useful for communities and regions that may tend to overlook the value of their built heritage and how these features contribute to a sense of place that might interest travelers.

c) How to use it
- Community members fill out forms individually or in small groups, walk to various areas in their community and answer built heritage questions that they previously may not have thought about.
- This exercise leads to discussion and generation of ideas for preservation and enhancement of unique features that may appeal to tourists.

Built Heritage Community Walkabout Exercise

Community Feature	Questions	Notes
Older Residential Properties	1. Are there typical patterns for traditional housing types in the community (building shapes, orientation, number of openings)?	
	2. What are the distinctive features that characterize older residential buildings (roof forms, windows, materials, colors, decorative detailing, chimneys)?	
	3. Identify outstanding/well-preserved examples.	
	4. How have these structures changed over time? Have the changes been sympathetic? Why or why not?	
	5. How does new construction fit in with older residential neighborhoods?	
	6. What kinds of outbuildings are associated with these buildings (sheds, root cellars etc.)? Are there many of them left?	
	7. What are the typical setbacks of buildings from roads?	
Gardens/ Landscaping	1. What types of plantings are traditionally found in and around older residential properties? Along streets/ roadways?	
	2. Are/were properties typically fenced? What patterns of fencing exist/existed in the community?	
Circulation Routes	1. Identify road and circulation patterns including old pathways and trails.	
	2. What is it like for pedestrians to walk to the community? (i.e. is it Safe? Scenic? Convenient?)	
	3. What is the condition of roads and pathways?	
Landmark Buildings	1. Identify the special landmark buildings in the community (churches, public buildings etc.).	
	2. How have they changed over time (alternations/use)? Have these changes been in keeping with the period? Why or why not?	
Commercial/Industrial/ Fisheries Structures	1. What types of structures exist/existed in the community? Describe them in terms of form, materials, location and function.	
	2. What changes have they undergone over time? Have these been sympathetic? Why or why not?	
	3. Are many of the structures vacant or under-used?	
	4. What community needs could be accommodated in vacant structures (e.g. recreational, social, housing, cultural activities)?	
Open Spaces	1. Describe the open spaces in the community (empty lots, shorelines, parks/recreational areas, wetland areas). What condition are they in (i.e. well-maintained, neglected, polluted)?	
	2. How do they contribute to the quality of life in the community?	
	3. How could under-utilized spaces best be used to contribute to the quality of life in the community? (As infill housing? Recreational space?)	
General	1. How do the above features/structures contribute to a unique sense of place?	
	2. Has anything been lost from the community fabric?	
	3. What should be preserved?	
	4. Identify "eyesores" in the community. What could be done to improve them?	
	5. Identify the areas in the community where people like to hang out, to walk, to engage in recreational activities. What makes them attractive? How could they be enhanced?	

Site Assessment Tool

a) What it is and what it is used for
- Used to assess market readiness and attractiveness of physical attractions, parklands, museums and other "gated" tourism facilities.
- Attempts to quantify site information from the visitor's perspective and point to elements that are strong or need improvements.

b) Application: When to use it
- Use to assess level of market readiness of the site to identify where improvements can be made. Use to benchmark in year 1, then annually thereafter.
- Sections can also be incorporated into on-site surveys to assess visitor satisfaction with various site components, as desired.

c) How to use it
- Best done individually, then cross comparisons can be made.
- Best used when at least two evaluators (e.g. attraction manager, funding agency) assess the site, so comparisons can be made and discussed.

Site Assessment Tool

Subject Property: _____

Evaluation Performed by: _____

For analysis of all forms of tourism facilities. This tool is intended to provide indicators toward tourism market readiness. (Can be used in tandem with T*he Ten Essentials of Successful Travel Products/Experiences*

Part A: Site Evaluation			
Criteria:	**Max. Possible Points**	**Actual Score**	**Comments**
1. Importance/Significance	**5**	**0**	
a) Importance of Attraction or Resource: International (5); National (4); Regional AC (3); Provincial (2); Local Area (1)	5		
2. Uniqueness	**10**	**0**	
a) Uniqueness/distinctiveness of Attraction or Resource: Internationally (5); within Canada (National) (4); Regional (AC) (3); Provincial (2); within Local Area (1)	5		
b) Is a Demand-Generator (4) (draws people in and of itself); Is a Demand-Supporter (2) (draws people when combined with other local attractions/events); Is Undeveloped (1)	4		
c) Uniqueness is linked to history or theme of site (1)	1		
3. Ease of Access to Site Location	**14**	**0**	
a) Online Access: Web/Mobile Access about & to site with GPS coordinates (4)	4		
b) Transportation Route Access (3)	3		
c) Directional Signage to Site (2)	2		
d) Proximity to other Services (Clustering) (3)	3		
e) Parking Access: Large Buses, RVs, Handicap (2); Cars only (1)	2		
4. Architecture/Facilities	**18**	**0**	
a) Visual Appeal: physical facilities & on-site aesthetics (4)	4		
b) On-site seating (seats, benches, chairs, rest areas); Plentiful (2); Adequate (1).	2		
c) All weather Facilities (2)	2		
d) Reception/Interpretation Area (2)	2		
e) On-site Signage (e.g. directional) (2)	2		
f) Access for those with Disabilities (2)	2		
g) Ability to handle large groups: (40+) (3); 20-39 (2); <20 (1)	3		
h) Visually appealing/professional materials associated with site (print, & electronic; e.g. signage) (1)	1		
5. Season/Hours of Operation	**8**	**0**	
a) Season of Operation: Open Year Round (3); mid-May to mid Oct (2); Sporadic opening times -potential for multi-season (1).	3		
b) Consistent Opening Hours: Open daily/evening at hours convenient to visitors (3); Open daily during business hours (2); Not always open (1)	3		
c) Reservation System: On-line (2); Telephone (1)	2		

Site Assessment Tool (continued)

6. On-Site Amenities & Services	15	0	
a) Front-line Staff/Volunteers Trained in Customer Service (5)	5		
b) Restroom facilities: Handicapped Access (3); Yes but no Handicapped Access (2)	2		
c) Provision of signage, literature, programs in three languages or more (2); Two Languages (1)	2		
d) Shopping: Locally made items available (2); Other (1)	2		
e) Eating/drinking facilities: Local specialty food (2); Other (1)	2		
f) Participant Comfort, Chairs, Benches, Lighting, Sound (2)	2		
MAXIMUM SITE SCORE (70)*	**70**	**0**	

*The higher the score, the more Market Ready the Site.
A score of less than 50% of the maximum potential is considered well below acceptable market readiness capacity.

Part B: Program/Experience Evaluation			
Criteria:	**Max. Possible Points**	**Actual Score**	**Comments**
1. On-site Experience	**19**	**0**	
a) Well themed: Tied to local area (3)	3		
b) Customized program can be geared to specific group or target market (3)	3		
c) Unique experience – One of a kind (not available elsewhere) (2)	2		
d) Involves Tours/Activities/Demos/Re-enactments/Story-telling/Interactive Exhibits (3)	3		
e) Features ways to interact with distinctive cultural, historical and/or natural wonders of the area (2)	2		
f) Provides hands-on opportunities: Often (2); Usually (1)	2		
g) Authenticity/Realism (2)	2		
h) Engages participants (intellectually, emotionally, personally, physically, and/or spiritually) (2)	2		
2. Pricing	**4**	**0**	
a) Options (variety, packages etc.); There are pricing options from which to choose? Several (2); Few (1)	2		
b) Good value for dollar - perceived fair prices (in relation to similar attractions) (2)	2		
3. Product Distribution	**4**	**0**	
a) Product is easily adapted for Independent and/or Group Travelers (2)	2		
b) Is packaged with local supplier products (hotels, restaurants, campgrounds, other attractions) (2)	2		
4. Overall Enjoyment	**3**	**0**	
a) Satisfaction, delight, Wow factor (potential for referral or repeat business) (3)	3		
MAXIMUM PROGRAM SCORE (30)**	**30**	**0**	

**The higher the score, the more Market Ready the On-site Program.
A score of less than 50% of the maximum potential is considered well below acceptable market readiness capacity.

TOTAL SCORE (100)	100	0	

Adapted from Reid, L. (1997) and Tourism Synergy Ltd. (2006).

Visitor Experience Tool (VX Tool)

a) What it is and what it is used for
- Assesses the quality of the visitor experience provided by an individual tourism operator.
- Uncovers how a visitor perceives a travel experience before, during, and after participation.
- Helps assess the overall experiential capacity and determines follow-up actions.
- Sets benchmarks for ongoing evaluation.

b) Application: When to use it
- Use on a consistent basis (annually recommended) to ensure the tourism experience measures up to the expectations of today's sophisticated traveler.

c) How to use it
- For use by a tourism Consultant with experience in assessing the visitor readiness of experiences. Results are discussed with the operator and Consultant recommends relevant enhancements and improvement ideas.
- For use by the tourism operator, independently or in collaboration with the Tourism Consultant. Results are compared with the Consultant's assessment and further action discussed.

The VX (Visitor Experience) EVALUATION TOOL

The VX Tool uncovers how a visitor perceives a travel experience before, during and after interacting with it. Travel experiences are subjective, context-dependent, and dynamic over time so **this tool represents a benchmark at a given point in time**.	A **Visitor Ready Experience is:** is built for an identified market and engages visitors, is offered with consistency and meets visitor expectations. The experience is effectively marketed and all licenses, permits, and insurance required to operate are in place.

Name of Operator and Experience:	**Date:**

BEFORE

For OPERATORS the experience is/has:	Description	Excels as Visitor Ready	Visitor Ready	Somewhat Visitor Ready/ Enhancements Recommended	Not Visitor Ready/ Requires Development	Comments/Improvement Ideas
1. Visitor ready: Pre-trip information is available and enticing.	Easily found via various online and offline channels (i.e. website, provincial travel information, etc.). Experience is effectively costed, priced and prices/details are available in advance. Point of contact/ booking is identified. Supporting marketing collateral for both online and offline marketing. Links with provincial and/or regional offerings.					
2. Social media presence	Uses various platforms with content tailored for each (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.). Imagery used and interaction with visitors and others is ongoing. Information is regularly updated.					
3. Connection to local elements	Utilizes local partners, products, suppliers, and community story tellers to create local partnerships.					

DURING

For OPERATORS the experience is/has:	Description	Excels as Visitor Ready	Visitor Ready	Somewhat Visitor Ready/ Enhancements Recommended	Not Visitor Ready/ Requires Development	Comments/Improvement Ideas
4. Training	Evidence of training/coaching of experience providers, staff, partners, suppliers.					
5. Well-themed/well-staged throughout	The experience is well-themed and the storyline is followed and reinforced at every available opportunity. Uses appropriate venue; can include, cues, comfort levels, lighting, sound, background noise, use of props, tools.					
6. Authentic and genuine	Offers a unique perspective on the authentic stories and special interests of an area. The experience is personal and relevant to a visitor.					
7. Aesthetically suitable	Aesthetics, surroundings and materials are visually appealing and add value to the experience.					
8. Customized*	The experience is personalized where possible for individual visitors, taking into account different visitor types/interests.* (see EQ types below)					

9. Value for money	The experience is good value for the dollar spent.					
10. Interactive and memorable with active engagement	Experience engages/ challenges visitors to participate, triggering as many of the 5 senses as possible and leaves lasting memories.					
11. Incorporates relevant takeaways	Incorporates a tangible takeaway, memorabilia or photo opportunity consistent with the theme.					
12. An opportunity to learn	Visitor learns something and/or has a sense of discovery as a result of the experience.					
13. WOW factor	There is a WOW factor associated with this experience that makes it worthwhile and special.					
14. Delivers on the promise	The experience is consistent with or exceeds the promise made beforehand.					
15. Recommendation-worthy	Enthuses a visitor to recommend this experience to others.					
16. Feedback mechanism	Techniques to capture visitor feedback are in place and encouraged i.e. TripAdvisor, exit survey. The feedback is utilized to quickly adjust and enhance the experience.					

AFTER

For OPERATORS the experience is/has:	Description	Excels as Visitor Ready	Visitor Ready	Somewhat Visitor Ready/ Enhancements Recommended	Not Visitor Ready/ Requires Development	Comments/Improvement Ideas
17. Post-experience engagement	Operator encourages visitors to engage online post-experience (i.e. share photos, experience details, recommendations). Promotion advocates for the experience.					
18. Tracking for success	Tracking measures to gauge the response to and success of the experience are integrated into the program, regularly evaluated and the information used for improvement.					

* EQ Visitor Types (as defined by Destination Canada)

I. Cultural Explorers: interested in nature observation activities; exhibits, architecture, historic sites/buildings, museums; and sightseeing activities.

II. Authentic Experiencers: interested in exhibits, architecture, historic sites/buildings, and museums.

III. Free Spirits: interested in shopping, dining, and other food-related activities; entertainment, performing arts, amusement parks; and accommodation-related activities.

Please note: More information on EQ visitor types can be found at www.destinationcanada.com/resources-industry/explorer-quotient

Community of Interest Discovery Questionnaire

a) What it is and what it is used for
- Validates and determines the market readiness of a particular Community of Interest (COI).

b) Application: When to use it
- Typically used at Phase 1: Discovery and Identification stage of COI process.
- Can be used at any time when brainstorming/determining COIs for future development.

c) How to use it
- To be used by a few key stakeholders in a community/region.

Communities of Interest (COI) - Discovery Questionnaire

About the COI

1. Please describe the identity or interest of the COI you are considering.

   _____

2. What are the best times of year to experience the COI products/experiences (check all the periods that apply)?

   ☐ January-March   ☐ April-June   ☐ July-August   ☐ September-October   ☐ November-December

3. Does the opportunity exist to expand the season through new products or education/brand awareness created by the COI? Circle Yes or NO

   If, yes, please identify how

   _____

   _____

   _____

4. Research shows there are six primary motivators that drive visitation to Atlantic Canada. Is the COI a current or potential visitation driver and what categories does it fall into? (check all that apply)

   ☐ Sightseeing and Touring
   ☐ Coastal Experiences
   ☐ Culture, Entertainment and Heritage (including culinary)
   ☐ Signature Events
   ☐ Experiential Accommodation
   ☐ Outdoor Experiences

5. What products, services, experiences, festivals/events currently exist to support the COI and visitors?

6. Who owns the product, services or experiences?

7. Are there any known gaps in products, services or experiences limiting the development of the COI? (ultimately, what is holding the COI back)

_____

_____

8. What is the primary geographic area for the COI? For example, 26 hiking trails in Cape Breton. This may be an area in a province, a whole province, several provinces or the region.

_____

_____

About the Local Advocates

9. Do you already have a group of passionate local advocates?

Advocate	Facebook	Instagram	Twitter	YouTube	Total

10. Are you already working with these local advocates?

_____

_____

11. Is there an opportunity to grow the community of local advocates?

_____

_____

12. Do you feel this this community is currently active online? Circle Yes or No.

13. Are existing activities/events that take place where local advocates gather/connect? (e.g. annual conferences, festivals, meetings, etc.)

_____

_____

Marketing

14. Is there an obvious strong and passionate champion organization to lead the COI and mobilize local advocates? (e.g. an organization that is currently responsible for product development and/or marketing)

15. Do high quality marketing assets currently exist? Please describe and how many. (e.g. photo libraries or videos)

_____

_____

16. What promotional materials currently exist? (Circle all that apply)

       a. Website
       b. Packages
       c. Social Media
       d. Brochures
       e. Maps, Guides
       f. Other, please specify: _____
       g. None

17. What social platforms are currently being used that support the COI approach? Please include the number of followers and engagement rates.

	Facebook	Instagram	Twitter	YouTube	Total
Number of followers					
Level of Engagement					

18. Does it have dedicated resources (internal or external) responsible for social media? Please describe.

_____

_____

19. What is its current marketing budget? _____

      a. What percentage of the current budget is allocated to:

            i. traditional media _____

            ii. online media/social media _____

20. Which organizations, provincially or regionally, are you currently or could you potentially work with to advocate for the COI approach?

Digital Footprint Tool

a) What it is and what it is used for
- Assesses the digital assets of a region.
- Reveals the online accessibility of a region from a visitor perspective and points to elements that are strong or those that need improvement.
- Provides concrete recommendations on improving the digital representation of a region.
- Offers operator specific tactics for improvement based on industry best practices.
- Sets benchmarks for ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

b) Application: When to use it
- Use to assess overall digital footprint and opportunities to make improvements.
- Executed during Stage 1 and used to establish benchmarks, which can be monitored moving forward. Results can also inform capacity building sessions.
- Revisit recommendations annually to ensure tourism assets are well represented online and accessible in visitor planning.

c) How to use it
- For use by a third party consultant with expertise in digital marketing, ideally focused in the tourism industry.
- Results are discussed with the region and participating operators and the consultant prepares recommendations for improvements using the provided report templates.
- Overarching recommendations are incorporated into the final report.
  The digital footprint tool is comprised of three components; a template to collect relevant data from DMO and operator websites, social media platforms, Google listings and review sites, a destination report template and an operator report template. These have been provided in a separate file titled 'Digital Footprint Tool', along with a sample RFP.

4) Solutions Detailed

GROS MORNE INSTITUTE FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM (GMIST)

Opening its doors in Rocky Harbour, Newfoundland in May 2004, GMIST has developed and delivered leading-edge, relevant curricula in experiential tourism, environmental stewardship, and courses of interest to the adventure tourism sector. The core strategy for GMIST is to offer unique specialized courses and ongoing support to groups of tourism operators. Expert instructors provide highly specialized training and are also contracted to help course alumni implement course principles in their specific situations.

Programs such as Edge of the Wedge (Experiential Tourism) have redefined models of tourism training in Canada, and other GMIST developed programs have set new benchmarks for the industry. GMIST has trained over 1,200 individuals across Atlantic Canada representing every tourism sector.

The Institute offers leading-edge professional development workshops scheduled for fall and winter/spring delivery. Workshop prices vary between one-day free offerings to three-day workshops priced at $999 plus HST. A 50 percent subsidy is offered to eligible Atlantic Canadian tourism businesses to attend some GMIST programs.

Under GMIST leadership, tourism operators of every type and size have been assisted in the building of profitable and sustainable businesses by providing richer, more satisfying, authentic experiences for customers, while actively protecting the environment. In similar fashion, GMIST has implemented business procedures and policies to demonstrate its commitment to the environment, the local culture, and the local economy.

For more information see: www.gmist.ca

Contact: Jonathan Foster, Executive Director, P.O. Box 130, Rocky Harbour, NL A0K 4N0

TOURISM BEST PRACTICES PROGRAM

One of Atlantic Canada's premier industries is tourism and there is a definite need to support learning and product development to ensure the continued growth of this industry. The Gros Morne Cooperating Association in partnership with ACOA – Tourism Atlantic, has successfully established the Tourism Best Practices program which supports these issues in all sectors of the tourism industry of Atlantic Canada.

Best Practices Missions are learning opportunities organized for tourism operators in Atlantic Canada. The program is designed to expose private sector operators and representatives of sustainable tourism communities to successful tourism operators/entrepreneurs and outstanding products outside of Atlantic Canada. It is intended this exposure will stimulate the generation of new product ideas, improved practices in customer service, innovative operational techniques, sound planning models and partnership opportunities for the Atlantic tourism sector. Best Practices missions provide Atlantic Canada tourism operators with first-hand industry knowledge and information on development and marketing models which exemplify attributes such as quality, high productivity, extended seasonality and motivation to travel.

Since the beginning of the program in 2000, Tourism Atlantic has hosted 110 Best Practices Missions with varying themes such as Experiential Tourism, Product Development, Festivals and Events, and Culinary Tourism. In total, there have been over 1,000 private sector participants attend Best Practices Missions. The Best Practices project has had a strong impact on improving tourism product in Atlantic Canada. The majority of participants have experienced an impact on their businesses since participating in the mission, e.g. quality improvements, increased visitation or increased revenues.

Mission themes are determined based on tourism strategic priorities in the region and input is provided by various levels of government, as well as industry in the Atlantic Canada provinces. Priority is given to those missions that focus on issues/opportunities most critical for industry operators, destinations where "experiential" is the key focus of a product, destinations where "sustainable tourism practices" are demonstrated, and destinations that have been successful. Although the missions themselves serve as a form of demonstrative research, the program is intended to reinforce the importance of following the Research/Product/Marketing Continuum model in all tourism endeavors.

Depending on location, mission costs vary; however, the average participant cost per mission is $2,300. Private sector operators will be reimbursed at 50 percent of total costs (up to a maximum $1,500). Federal, provincial, crown agency employees, as well as federally and provincially elected officials must cover their own expenses.

For more information see: www.gmist.ca/tourism-best-practices

Contact: Jonathan Foster, Executive Director, P.O. Box 130, Rocky Harbour, NL A0K 4N0
Phone: 1-709-458-3610   E-Mail: info@gmist.ca

ACCELERATED MARKET READINESS (AMR) PROGRAM
AMR is a business improvement program that offers individual tourism operators the ability to increase their standards of excellence, be more responsive to emerging tourism trends and ultimately, increase revenues. The program is offered in an inexpensive and time efficient manner. During a project, the operator will meet with an independent qualified tourism Consultant, who will identify key areas of focus for their business and provide suggested improvements.

AMR is intended for use by individual tourism operators and has been successfully used by a variety of tourism operators from small B&B type operations to large scale tourism resorts and community colleges. The program is designed to work with clusters from a defined geographical area with approximately five individual operators at a time.

AMR is included for a group of operators as part of the STAR project.

Contact: STAR ACOA Working Committee member

TRAVEL TRADE MARKET READINESS (TTMR) PROGRAM
The TTMR Program leave equips tourism operators with tactics, processes and best-practices on how to develop and expand your business through travel trade. A toolkit is available from the provincial travel trade marketing team entitled, *Building Your Business with Overseas and U.S. Visitors: A Toolkit on How to Work with Travel Trade.*

Operators interested in serving this market should access an introductory one-hour webinar produced by Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e1FPL9iBQeM&feature=youtu.be

For more information, contact your provincial travel trade development team to access travel trade market readiness workshops.

CANEXPORT

CanExport provides direct financial assistance to small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) registered in Canada to help them develop new export opportunities and markets, especially high-growth emerging markets.

CanExport provides financial support for a wide range of export marketing activities. CanExport reimburses up to 50 percent of eligible expenses but requires applicants to match funds on a one-to-one basis.

CanExport is delivered by the Trade Commissioner Service (TCS) of Global Affairs Canada, in partnership with the National Research Council of Canada's Industrial Research Assistance Program (NRC-IRAP).

For more information, contact the regional ACOA office in your area. A list of these offices is found at:
http://www.acoa-apeca.gc.ca/eng/Pages/contactus.aspx

CONSULTING ADVISORY SERVICES (CAS) PROGRAM

The CAS program is funded by ACOA and managed by the Central Business Development Corporation (CBDC) throughout Atlantic Canada. The Program is designed to provide SME businesses and non-profit organizations with the resources and information needed to operate effectively and efficiently.

Eligible CAS program activities include:

i. **Diagnostic Assessment:** The assessment involves conducting a thorough review of all aspects of an existing operation in order to provide an objective assessment of its current performance, key issues and future prospects.

ii. **Business Management Development Practices:** Undertakes a comprehensive review of the management skills of an existing business in order to provide an objective assessment of its current status and identify opportunities to enhance operations/management performances.

iii. **Access to Capital:** Sources other options for capital beyond government sources of financing.

iv. **Market Readiness/Export Potential:** Undertakes an objective assessment of an existing company to determine its export readiness and identify areas that require enhancement to successfully enter the export market.

v. **Specific Studies/Business Plan Mentoring:** A Consultant assists the client with the development and initial implementation of a study or business plan.

vi. **Aftercare/Mentoring and Follow-up:** Provides mentoring or coaching assistance and advice to a client who has proceeded with the implementation of advice/strategies developed in any of the above described CAS products.

For more information, contact the local CBDC in your area. A list of CBDC offices can be found at:
https://www.cbdc.ca/en/contact

ACOA PROGRAMMING

Business Development Program (BDP)

BDP can help start up, expand or modernize businesses. Focusing on SME, the BDP provides access to capital in the form of interest-free repayable assistance. Most business sectors are eligible except retail/wholesale, real estate, government services, and services of a personal or social nature.

The BDP also provides financial assistance, in the form of non-repayable assistance, to not-for-profit organizations that provide support to Atlantic businesses.

Regional Economic Growth through Innovation Program (REGI)

Canada's regional development agencies (RDAs) are one of the ways that the government delivers on its Innovation and Skills Plan in the regions. RDAs across Canada deliver two common streams of programming to fuel economic growth through innovation and create more well-paying jobs for Canadians. These streams, along with tailored programming in each region, foster the right environment to start and grow businesses and create the conditions for the development of strong, dynamic and inclusive regional innovation ecosystems across the country.

Business Scale-up and Productivity

Funding offered under this stream helps businesses to accelerate their growth and assists with the adoption of innovative technologies that support scale-up, productivity and global competitiveness as well as the development of and entry into new markets.

Regional Innovation Ecosystems

Funding offered under this stream helps create, grow and develop strong and inclusive regional networks that support business growth and innovation. It also fosters the entrepreneurial environment necessary for more innovative regional economies and increases the competitiveness of SME, women entrepreneurs and under-represented groups.

Innovative Communities Fund (ICF)

ICF invests in strategic projects that build the economies of Atlantic Canada's communities.
Working in partnership with Atlantic communities and stakeholders, ICF builds on the strengths of communities and provides the tools needed to identify opportunities available for their sustainable economic growth.

ICF focuses on investments that lead to long-term employment and economic capacity building in rural communities. Urban initiatives that stimulate the competitiveness and vitality of rural communities may be considered on a selective basis.

Eligible recipients include non-commercial/not-for-profit organizations such as local development associations, municipalities and their agencies, business or technology institutes, industry/sector associations, economic development associations, local co-operatives, universities and educational institutions.

Contact for all ACOA programming: ACOA STEP Working Committee member

5) Suggested Capacity Building Sessions

Depending upon recommendations in the Strategic Regional Tourism Plan and the priority needs of any given region, Capacity Building Sessions will be identified. They are delivered under leadership of the Working Committee using the STAR budget as outlined.

While the Consultant is in the region workshopping the Draft Plan, it is appropriate to launch capacity building and skill development sessions. The focus of these sessions will be outlined as recommendations in the Strategic Regional Tourism Plan. Sessions will be offered to support tourism SMEs, to optimize use of tourism plant/resources and to increase yield. Sessions will also be considered to advance the key focus areas of the ACOA TIAP which are product clustering, promoting improved digital/social media capability within the industry, and building programs around COI. It is recommended the Consultant considers a Tourism Forum among suggestions for on-going tourism industry sessions to generate continuing communication and collaboration.

Snapshot of Capacity Building Initiatives that Have Worked Well in the Past

Experience/Product Building - An important focus of the STAR is experience development and enhancement. GMIST has been engaged in the past to conduct sessions on experience development. Depending upon the nature and need of the area, the sessions have included a hands-on "experience building" session; an informational presentation with a guest speaker, an industry leader renowned as a signature experience provider; and a roundtable session with sector specific stakeholders (e.g. festival and event organizers) and key individuals from successful sectors in other provinces (e.g. successful festivals/events).

An approach that has also been effective is a group of operators or Working Committee members attend GMIST "Edge of the Wedge".

Experience/Product Clustering - Using the expertise of GMIST as a facilitator, conduct a session involving groups of like or similar experience providers, walking them through a workshop on effectively bundling, partnering and pricing clusters of experiences for sale. GMIST has modularized programming that can work with a group of operators through all aspects of developing an experience with a direct outcome of experiences developed. **There is budget in the project for this type of training.**

Skills including Social Media - It is important to have information on the digital footprint of the area and the online skills of area operators in order to generate a capacity building session to meet needs, and share this information with participants at the outset of the session. It is advisable to use a credible expert in social media to facilitate the session, and where possible, to have participants with devices in hand to experiment in real-time.

Season Extension - Communities and areas throughout Atlantic Canada have advanced season extension at different levels, in different ways and along different timelines. It is important to have information on the season extension experience and results of the area to craft a relevant session/workshop to advance season extension, and share this information with participants at the outset of the session. A session that follows could brainstorm prioritizing a list of season extension ideas and/or could focus on extending the season around a particular theme (e.g. building a cluster of festivals/events in the extended season). It is important to have some concrete go-forward steps as a result of the session, detail a checklist of requirements to move the initiative forward, and possibly strike a taskforce to address the season extension initiative.

Tourism Forum - A Tourism Forum involves presentations by various community stakeholders and members of the Working Committee to present a summary overview of their season, as well as intended plans for the future. Presentations should be about 15-20 minutes in length and might include a panel of stakeholders addressing go forward intentions/challenges.

Best Practice Missions (BPMs) - BPMs are hands-on learning opportunities outside the destination and organized for targeted tourism SMEs within the destination (e.g. operations that would benefit most). The BPM program is designed to expose private sector operators and representatives of sustainable tourism communities to successful tourism SMEs and outstanding products/experiences and services outside of Atlantic Canada. During the STAR program, it is encouraged that a group of stakeholders conduct a small best practices mission to a like-destination that is exemplifying best practices as a tourism destination. **There is budget in the project for this type of BPM**.

Accelerated Market Readiness (AMR): There is budget included in the STAR program for a group of operators to undergo the AMR program. The AMR program is outlined in more detail in the Solutions section of this Guide.

Other suggested Capacity Building Sessions
  ▶ Sessions to address human resources challenges and labour issues
  ▶ Regional marketing workshops
  ▶ Speed networking where regional tourism stakeholders meet with the intent of forming partnerships
  ▶ Front line staff training
  ▶ Succession planning
  ▶ Benchmarking and measurement
  ▶ Group of operators or Working Committee members attending GMIST "Edge of the Wedge"
  ▶ Entrepreneurial training – roundtable discussion on programs with funding partners on opportunities for SMEs
  ▶ Start-Up Weekend – liaise with the start-up community to organize a Start-Up Weekend focused on the tourism sector

  An evaluation of each session is conducted and results considered for future actions.

Note: Evaluations of capacity building sessions should follow a similar format to evaluations for other stakeholder sessions.

6) Potential Partnerships and Funding Options

IDENTIFYING PARTNERSHIPS AND ALLIANCES

The tourism industry, business community, municipality or local community government must form partnerships and include sponsors in the development of a successful sustainable tourism destination both within and outside the community. For example:

- Corporate sponsors for developing and operating community events and attractions;
- Regional and provincial government support, particularly in tourism development and marketing;
- Partnerships with the tourism industry in other communities in the region in event programming and marketing;
- Partnerships within the community, particularly local community service organizations; and
- Volunteerism plays an essential part in community development; this is particularly true in the initial stages of planning. Special attention to the needs of volunteers is required for a successful plan.

Funding Overview

Finding the funding to support major community tourism projects and operations takes time and will require considerable effort. It will be necessary to undertake fundraising program to accumulate the necessary monies to develop major tourism projects, including raising funds for the project's capital costs, day-to-day operating costs, and soft costs such as marketing. Potential funding sources include:

- Government Funding: various public sector sources at the regional, provincial and federal levels
- Destination Levy
- Sponsorship and Donations
- Community Fundraising

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Some potential funding sources at the government level include:

- Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency
- Human Resource and Skills Development Canada
- Provincial government departments (i.e. Tourism, Culture and Heritage and Economic Development)
- Local/regional municipalities
- Other Federal government departments (e.g. Canadian Heritage, Fisheries, Agriculture, etc.)

When approaching public sector departments/agencies for funding support, a community will need to have a business case and a proposal in hand linking the proposed project to the community's Sustainable Tourism Plan. The proposal should include:

- Objectives and rationale for the community project;
- Description of the concept including target markets;
- Estimated capital costs and proposed sources of funding;
- Projection of operating revenues and costs, and sources of monies to cover operating costs;
- Proposed management and staffing plan;
- Marketing strategy; and
- Potential economic and tourism impacts.

Government funding partners will typically expect the community to contribute to some portion of the total capital budget from non-public sources, either through corporate or community donations, or other fundraising initiatives.

SPONSORSHIP AND DONATIONS

There is increased competition for sponsorship dollars, and it is important a sponsorship program is carefully developed. A key to success in attracting sponsorship and donations is having a clear, realistic, creative, and professional approach. This includes identifying goals, objectives, strategies, markets, and expected visitation. Build a case for sponsorship support: what is this sponsor going to receive as benefit from providing support to the community project? Potential sponsors can include:

- Local area businesses and organizations that stand to benefit from tourism and increased economic activity generally, such as retailers; and
- Large corporations including national/international corporations a link to the community and a willingness to support community initiatives.

Another form of fundraising is to solicit funding support from philanthropic organizations, foundations, private benefactors, legacy giving programs, and the like. This form of fundraising gives special recognition to supporters and can be the cornerstone of community tourism development.

COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING

There are numerous ideas for community fundraising, from traditional bake sales and community suppers, to more ambitious programs such as auctions and lotteries. In-kind contributions can also be very helpful as there may be local companies and individuals who are unable to donate cash but are able and willing to donate materials, supplies and services toward the development of the community project or program.

OTHER POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

Other ways of raising funds include:

- Admission fee charged at an arrival/parking centre
- A tourism levy, essentially a tax on revenues from visitors usually a hotel tax
- Fees for local tours, guides
- Direct sale of branded products to visitors (gifts, souvenirs, clothing)
- Royalties from sales by other local businesses of branded items
- Commissions on reservations
- Project/program management fees
- Cooperative contributions from tourism operators in support of special events and tourism marketing.

Stage 6: Final Plan Presentation and Implementation - Resources and Tools

The Draft Strategic Regional Tourism Plan was workshopped with the Working Committee in Stage 5. Input and insights from Stage 5 are incorporated into the Final Plan for presentation to the region, stakeholders and influencers.

1) Sample Invitation to Final Plan Presentation

Invitation: STAR Final Plan Presentation

Hi Everyone!

You are invited to a presentation of the STAR Plan for (name of region) by the Consultant (name). We will answer any questions you may have.

AND we will put the Plan to work right away!

Following the presentation, (name/ title of workshop specialist) will take us through a hands-on session working on (topic). Outlined as a recommendation in the Plan, this (workshop name) is step one in putting our STAR Plan into action.

We look forward to seeing you there. Please RSVP to (Proponent name and e-mail) no later than (Date).

Date:
Location:
Time:
(Add any details requirements/ tools required for the workshop)

The Plan can be found at (Website link).

2) Stakeholders Session: *Sample STAR Final Plan Presentation Agenda*

The STAR Plan is the initial focus of this session. The Plan presentation should reinforce the value of regional cooperation by, as appropriate, a quick review of the past season and review of recent tourism accomplishments that support the priorities identified through planning.

Session #3 AGENDA
STAR Final Strategic Regional Tourism Plan: Presentation
(Add date, location and time)
(Estimated time: 2-4 hours)

1:00 - 1:15 pm	Getting acquainted and season update
1:15 - 1:55 pm	Presentation: Final STAR Regional Tourism Plan
1:55 - 2:10 pm	Q & A and participant feedback
	Break
2:30 pm - ??	Working Committee Chair introduces the topic and presenter of the Capacity Building Session

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3) Tourism Forum Framework

Tourism Forum Framework

8:30 - 9:00 am	Coffee/tea and conversation	
9:00 am	Welcome/opening remarks	Chair: *Working Committee*
9:15 am	Introduction and short overview of the season	*Everyone*
10:15 am	Plan focus and priority actions for coming year	*Working Committee Representatives*

Break

Post-break: A capacity building session with a specialist follows. Timing depends upon the topic and the structure of the session. Hands-on and interactive sessions are recommended. A lunch break may be necessary

Next Steps and final comments   Chair: *Working Committee*

(End of the session)

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4) Stakeholders Session Evaluation Form

This evaluation is completed by workshop participants before they leave the session; it is tabulated by the Consultant and posted online for all participants. **The same evaluation form can be used throughout the STAR project, with the name and date of the specific Stakeholders Session changed**.

STAKEHOLDERS SESSION EVALUATION
Stakeholders Session: *(name of the session and date)*

1) What is the most valuable insight/thought/idea/accomplishment you feel resulted from today's session?

_____

2) Please rate the following elements of today's session (1 = poor; 5 = excellent).

- **Relevance of Topics Covered**   1   2   3   4   5

  Comments: _____

- **Met Specified Objectives/Outcomes**   1   2   3   4   5

  Comments: _____

- **Effectiveness of Facilitator** *(Consultant name)*   1   2   3   4   5

  Comments: _____

- **Organization of Workshop**   1   2   3   4   5

  Comments: _____

- **Overall Usefulness of Session**   1   2   3   4   5

  Comments: _____

3) Of all the ideas and topics discussed today, what are the top two priorities to work on as a Region?

   1.) _____

   2.) _____

   Thank you for your time and input! Results of this evaluation will be available online at xxxxxxxxxxx.

Stage 7: Follow-up and Interim Reporting - Resources and Tools

1) STAR Plan Interim Results Report Template

STAR Plan Interim Results Report
(to be completed six months and one year post-completion of the Plan)

Name of Region: _____

Title of Regional Tourism Plan: _____

STAR Plan Completion Date: _____

This Interim Results Report is intended to be shared with regional tourism stakeholders and STAR Program funders, six months following the Plan's completion and again, one year following the Plan's completion to monitor activities outlined in the Plan and help guide priority initiatives.

1) Timeframe for report: when to when? _____

2) Name and title of person reporting: _____

3) a. Please identify the Tourism Working Committee and **Chair** who are moving the Tourism Plan forward. Please indicate community and/or organization represented by each a committee member represents.

Chair: _____

Committee Members: _____

b. Is the Region well-represented on the Working Committee? e.g. a balance of industry stakeholders and geographic representation. Are additional members expected?

_____

4) Briefly identify the key recommendations that the region has moved forward over the last six months in the following areas. Refer to recommendations and implementation timeline in the report and report on priorities within the six-month (and one year) timeline. If no progress has been made, please skip to the next section.

Examples of priorities:

i.   Committee/management structure: _____

ii.   Regional tourism funding: _____

iii.   Regional communications/collaboration: _____

iv.   Regional tourism marketing: _____

v.   Regional tourism product/experience development: _____

vi.   Benchmarking, performance evaluation of regional efforts: _____

vii.   Special regional projects:_____

viii.   Other (please specify): _____

5) What are the top three tourism projects which the Region has prioritized to address and advance over the next six months?

i.   _____

ii. _____

iii. _____

6) What specific assistance/mentoring is needed to move the priority projects forward?

Project Name/Initiative	**Assistance/Mentoring Needed**
i. _____	_____
ii. _____	_____
iii._____	_____

For further information and questions on the STAR Program contact:
ACOA-Tourism Atlantic