

Grey County Tourism Tourism Destination Development Plan 2010 Recommendations and Detailed Actions



The Resource Management Consulting Group



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4 Recommendations and Detailed Actions

This section of the Action Plan provides a one-page description of each of the 16 recommendations, grouped according to GCT's roles of collaborative leadership, research and marketing. A description of the rationale and key actions is provided for each recommendation. Then, more detail is provided about the actions, including whether new costs will be incurred, timing by quarter and responsibility. This format will allow GCT to update the Action Plan annually.

Grow GCT's role as a collaborative tourism leader

1. Continue to strengthen tourism in Grey County through collaborative leadership
2. Advocate and demonstrate the importance of tourism in Grey County
3. Be recognized as the tourism research resource for Grey County

Use research to build market insight, track performance and guide product development

4. Understand our visitors' behaviour, attitudes and demographics
5. Monitor and report on tourism performance annually
6. Use Web Analytics to manage website and inquiries and assess marketing efforts

Support the further development of Grey County's top demand generators.

7. Develop Grey Experiences for Blue Mountain Visitors.
8. Make Grey County the "go to" place for fall colour and harvest in Ontario.
9. Support major festivals and events that are or have the ability to become demand generators.
10. Continue to support the development of Ride Grey Bruce.
11. Continue to support and develop initiatives that recognize the importance of the Escarpment, Georgian Bay and the natural environment to Grey County visitors.

Align Grey County's marketing with communication strategy and demand generators

12. Ensure that Grey County's marketing efforts are strategic and aligned
13. Make GCT's website the "go to" source for visitors, residents and the media wanting tourism information
14. Adopt new GCT communication strategy
15. Implement new communication strategy
16. Develop marketing campaigns for target markets

Grow GCT's role as a collaborative tourism leader	
<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>New Cost</i>
1. Continue to strengthen tourism in Grey County through collaborative leadership	Yes

<i>Description/Rationale</i>	<p>GCT has gradually assumed a collaborative leadership role, developing successful relationships with tourism businesses and organizations, and these should continue:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Grey County Tourism Industry Newsletter, sent out to all Grey County Tourism businesses, municipalities and stakeholders, should continue as a quarterly publication, reporting on the visitor seasons. The mail out list should be checked annually and councillors for all first and second tier municipalities added to the list. • GCT should continue developing the Industry Website to meet stakeholder needs. • Continue GCT's successful alignments with organizations outside of its borders: Bruce County, GTTA Georgian Bay Destination Development Partnership and the new Regional Tourism Organization. <p>Undertake two new initiatives to encourage tourism stakeholders to get to know each other and work together.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let's Talk Tourism RTMP hosts an annual fall regional tourism conference and a spring brochure swap and these provide good regional networking and education. GCT should host more informal semi-annual gatherings for Grey County tourism organizations to get to know each other, find common ground and new ways of working together to improve tourism delivery throughout the County. It could serve as an information sharing session to discuss: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County-wide and local tourism marketing plans and campaigns • Needs for tourism industry website • Tourism trends, issues, needs and success stories • Media mentoring for attractions, festivals and events • The outcomes of the Annual Tourism Update (recommendation #2) • Visitor Information Centre Network There are at least 13 visitor information centres (VICs) throughout Grey County and another 11 in Bruce County. VICs play an important role providing information to visitors once they are in the region. Although they are run by various organizations (BIAs, chambers, municipalities, DMOs etc), they all face similar challenges. GCT could improve the effectiveness of information distribution and visitor consultation by working on initiatives such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improving the system of visitor guide and pamphlet distribution, eg. Kiosks, regional info racks - Customer service training and FAM tours for VIC staff - Co-ordinating length of season and hours of VIC operation - Tracking VIC performance (recommendation #5) - Replacing collecting tracking data with Visitor Survey (recommendation #5) - Aligning VIC websites, starting with online festival and events listings (recommendation #13) - Showing the locations of all VICs on more product maps - Helping VICs prepare funding applications for improved delivery of visitor information
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Action	New Costs	Timing												Responsible
		2010		2011			2012				2013			
		S	F	W	S	S	F	W	S	S	F	W	S	
Continue & strengthen industry newsletter		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	GCT
Expand industry website		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Continue alignments beyond County borders		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	GCT
<i>Let's Talk Tourism</i>	yes		x		x		x		x		x		x	GCT

Grow GCT's role as a collaborative tourism leader	
<i>Recommendation</i> 3. Be recognized as the tourism research resource for Grey County	<i>New Cost</i>

Description/ Rationale

Information about visitors' behaviour, perception and demographics is becoming increasingly important to tourism businesses, municipalities and funding agencies. Collecting and analyzing this information is beyond the capabilities and budgets of all but the largest tourism businesses.

In the summer of 2009 and winter of 2010, GCT undertook initiatives to research visitors and track performance indicators county-wide, gaining new insight into visitor behaviour, attitudes and demographics. The research recommendations and actions are detailed in the Research Pillar. The following actions relate to ways that GCT can integrate research into its mandate:

- **Plans and actions should be based on primary and secondary research**
A better understanding of visitors takes the guesswork out of understanding the characteristics and motivations of the market.
- **Top line research results should be shared**
It is essential for GCT to share top line research results as part of the Annual Tourism Update (recommendation #2), *Let's Talk Tourism* and on industry website (recommendation #1) to ensure that all stakeholders have the advantage of visitor insight when planning and marketing.
- **GCT should make it easy for stakeholders to participate in research**
By developing survey templates, training interviewers and being responsible for county-wide data analysis and reporting, GCT can facilitate the collection of standard visitor information to provide broad understanding of the visitor market with a small investment by many.
- **Thank participating organizations**
It takes extra effort for VICs, attractions and events to undertake a survey and they should be well thanked and receive an extra benefit for their efforts, such as full research results (not just highlights) workshop on how to use the results.

Action	New Costs	Timing												Responsible
		2010		2011				2012				2013		
		S	F	W	S	S	F	W	S	S	F	W	S	
Base GCT actions on research		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	GCT
Share top-line research results			x				x				x			GCT
Make it easy for stakeholders		x			x	x			x	x		x	x	GCT
Thank & share participating orgs.			x				x				x			GCT

Use research to build market insight, track performance and guide product development	
<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>New Cost</i>
4. Understand visitors' behaviour, attitudes and demographics	yes

Description/ Rationale

Many Tourism organizations, businesses, attractions and events spend money on advertising with very little knowledge about the characteristics of visitors, their motivations and the effectiveness of their advertising. Ministry of Tourism & Culture is encouraging the tourism industry to gather and analyze visitor information. In 2010, the Celebrate Ontario grants favour applicants with a research component. GCT understands that through collaborative research, valuable insight can be gained at a fraction of the cost of multiple individual research efforts.

The 2009 Visitor Survey, Grey County's first visitor research effort, provided insight into Grey's visitors by adding Grey County sites to the Georgian Bay Destination Development survey sample. As a result, GCT now has a visitor survey template for collecting data about visitor behaviour, motivations and demographics. The intercept survey takes about 5 minutes to administer and can be used at any tourist site throughout the county. By collecting consistent information year over year, Grey County will gain a solid understanding of visitors, and their feedback will be useful for both tourism marketing and product development.

By working together, GCT, attractions and VICs shared research costs. VIC staff conducted face-to-face surveys (goal 100 per centre over the summer season) and entered responses into an online form. Grey County looked after survey design, data analysis, report preparation and sharing the results with the tourism organizations. Some VICs were very successful in completing the surveys, others had little success motivating summer staff to conduct the surveys. The 2009 sample was large enough for statistical analysis, but over-represented the Blue Mountains area and under-represented the remainder of the County. The 2009 survey was a good first effort, showing what can be achieved with additional survey sites and higher sample numbers.

- **Continue Visitor Survey at VICs**
 - Share results with 2009 sites, give feedback on participation, assess whether they can achieve 100 surveys
 - Lead by example – surveys should be administered by managers, not just staff
 - Sampling plan with quotas to obtain better coverage of the County – 400 surveys near Blue, 400 beyond Blue
 - As the fall & winter season continues to expand, consider adding a fall or winter survey
- **Administer Visitor Survey at Attractions**
 - Survey can be administered at attractions to broaden sample beyond VICs and to provide information about the relative proportion of visitors and residents at the attractions (sample goal of 100 surveys per attraction)
- **Develop & Administer Event Survey**
 - Identify Demand Generator Events for research, should include events for all seasons
 - Use Visitor Survey as a base and customize some behaviour/attitudinal questions
 - Need sample of 400 per event for analysis, sampling plan based on intercept locations
 - Two models 1) GCT: develops survey template; Event: customizes survey, administers, analyze reports, shares results with GCT but not data
2) GCT: develops customized survey for event, analyzes data and reports, combining and comparing results to other County events; Event: administers 400 completes
- Use surveys to **identify and analyze OTMP market segments** for additional market insight
- Help **VICs to standardize tracking**, so that visitor data can be compiled, shared and compared
- **Consider Web survey** - for special market promotions, after web site updated (recommendation #13)
- **Share research results** - use opportunities to present at Annual Update, Let's Talk Tourism, other gatherings with stakeholders (recommendations #1&2), post on the web (but not easy for most to understand)

Action	New Costs	Timing												Responsible
		2010		2011				2012				2013		
		S	F	W	S	S	F	W	S	S	F	W	S	
Continue and expand VIC Survey		x				x				x		x		GCT + VIC comm.
Administer Survey at attractions	maybe									x		x		GCT + attractions
Event Survey	yes				x	x	x			x	x	x		GCT + events
Analyze OTMP market segments	yes						x					x	x	
Standardize VIC Tracking	yes								x	x			x	GCT
Web Survey	yes											x	x	
Share research results			x				x					x		

Use research to build market insight, track performance and guide product development	
<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>New Cost</i>
5. Monitor and report on Grey County's tourism performance annually	

<p><i>Description/ Rationale</i></p> <p>GCT should compile standard indicators of tourism performance from all the research. A small number should be included in the Annual Tourism Update (recommendation #2). :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MTour Regional Profile (appendix E) (2006-08) GCT should continue to track all of the MTour Regional Tourism profile indicators as they are available, using the format provided in the Performance Indicators Report. For the Annual Tourism Update, the following should be reported: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Total Number of Annual Visits, % Overnight Visits - Top Activities - Total Visitor Expenditures, wages & salaries, job numbers and local taxes • Annual Visitor Survey (recommendation #4) For the Annual Tourism Update (recommendation #2), the following should be reported <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rating experience on a scale of 1 to 10 - Nights spend in Grey County - Type of Accommodation - Top 3 Activities - Visitor Geography • Annual Events survey (recommendation #4) Once the Events Survey is implemented, indicators such as the following will be available for reporting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Event ratings - Visitor geography • Accommodation Tracking The accommodation occupancy tracking should continue and the following should be reported in the Annual Tourism Update <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Owen Sound branded hotels - Public Campgrounds - Additional as budget allows • Attendance at Attractions & Events Tracking of attendance at attractions and events should continue and the following reported in the Annual Tourism Update <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gated attractions and event attendance for those that reported in 2009 - Additional as budget allows ▪ VIC Performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GCT prepare a standard template for tracking performance (# enquiries, type of information requests, information distributed), data sent by VICs to GCT online and GCT compiles for all VICs

Action	New Costs	Timing												Responsible	
		2010		2011				2012				2013			
		S	F	W	S	S	F	W	S	S	F	W	S		
MTour Regional Profile Indicators			x					x					x		GCT
Annual Visitor Survey Indicators			x					x					x		GCT
Annual Events Survey Indicators			x					x					x		GCT + events
Accommodation Tracking			x					x					x		GCT + accommodations
Attendance at Attractions & Events			x					x					x		GCT + attractions/events
VIC Performance													x		GCT + VICs

Use research to build market insight, track performance and guide product development	
<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>New Cost</i>
6. Use web analytics to manage website and inquiry tracking to assess marketing efforts	

<i>Description/ Rationale</i>
<p>Web analytics provide a powerful tool for gauging web traffic, visitor interests and how they navigate through the website. In addition, GCT drives most tourism inquiries to their website: www.visitgrey.ca. This allows fairly precise tracking of what are key areas of interest for accommodations, activities, any campaigns or contests that are running as well as providing a geographic fix on where people are from. Inquiries for mail outs also allow tracking of key activities and the geographic area of the inquiry.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Continue to systematically measure website traffic using Google & other Analytics:</u> Investigate web traffic during and after specific marketing efforts to determine how much traffic increased, how long the increase co-related with the promotion and how long the increase lasted after the promotion ended. • <u>Systematically track all inquiries and fulfillments</u> and relate them to specific campaigns to determine how many inquiries were received (both web and telephone) from the target geography during specific ad campaigns based on postal codes, how long the inquiries continued to come from postal codes within the target geography after the campaign ended. • <u>Web analytics</u> helps understand how visitors use the website and are useful for fine tuning the existing website and will be a valuable resource for updating the website to align with the new Communication Strategy. (recommendation #14) • <u>Ongoing tracking of web analytics</u> is important to ensure that web site meta tags optimize exposure of grey County and the key demand generators. Use separate landing pages/urls for specific campaigns to track traffic by campaign analytics.

Action	New Costs	Timing												Responsible	
		2010		2011				2012				2013			
		S	F	W	S	S	F	W	S	S	F	W	S		
Track web traffic related to marketing efforts			x												GCT
Track inquiries to measure marketing channel, origin, demand for activities		x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	GCT
Use web analytics results as input to web site redesign							x	x							GCT
Web analytics to optimize for key demand generators, language			x												GCT

Support further development of Grey County's top demand generators	
<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>New Cost</i>
7. Develop Grey Experiences for Blue Mountain Visitors	yes

<i>Description/Rationale</i>
<p>Blue Mountain has been identified as Grey County's key demand generator, and has been very successful in attracting visitors during all seasons. Giving guests more things to see and do in the area will benefit both Blue Mountain and Grey County with extended or additional guest stays, more money spent and an enhanced visitor experience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GCT should begin by developing driving tours and off-resort activities in line with the Blue Mountain Village Association, Activity Central and Blue Mountain resort focus. Develop daytrips and half daytrips complete with full itineraries (where to stop, where to eat, where to shop etc.) and maps. Itinerary ideas could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fall colour driving tours and hikes in line with apple harvest festival and augment the Apple Pie Trail, - cycling routes in support of the upcoming cycling event, - waterfall tour (recommendation #11), and - winter snowshoeing locations along the Bruce Trail. • A handful of tour operators have begun providing services in the Blue Mountain area. Several of these groups sell their services to Blue Mountain guests through the resort's Activity Central, which acts as a booking agent. Still, many opportunities exist for providing visitors with additional options for outings. GCT should work with the Blue Mountain Village Association (BMVA) and Blue Mountain Resort (BMR) staff and local tour operators to support existing and encourage new development of third party off-resort packages designed for Blue Mountain guests and residents. • An important opportunity lies in simply recognizing Blue Mountain as a gateway to Grey County. Currently, Owen Sound is often at the centre of the experience offered by GCT in its tours, or they start mid-county. Focusing on The Blue Mountains as the gateway, especially in tours marketed to Blue Mountain visitors and through signage will help to get this market moving around within the County. Several tours, could be re-written with Blue Mountain as the starting point, and a separate landing page or link set up for these travellers. • Once the above opportunities have been implemented, GCT should develop and implement an in-room and/or in-resort marketing strategy. The strategy should be determined in conjunction with the BMVA and BMR, hinging on the benefit of longer or more frequent stays for guests by presenting them with more things to do within the County. • Seasonal residents of The Blue Mountains have a special bond with the region already, but many only visit the area in the winter to ski and snowboard. Building on their seasonal commitment to the area, GCT should develop a marketing strategy to target these seasonal residents and to get them returning and experiencing all the County has to offer in the summer and fall seasons.

Action	New Costs	Timing												Responsible	
		2010		2011				2012				2013			
		S	F	W	S	S	F	W	S	S	F	W	S		
Develop driving tours and off-resort activities		x	x	x											GCT
Support third party off-resort packaging				x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		GCT
Blue Mountain gateway to Grey Cty						x	x	x	x		x	x	x		GCT
In-room/resort marketing strategy	yes				x	x			x	x			x		GCT
Seasonal resident marketing strategy	yes				x	x			x	x			x		GCT

Support further development of Grey County's top demand generators	
<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>New Cost</i>
8. Make Grey County the “go to” place for fall colour and harvest in Ontario	yes

Description/Rationale

Grey County has tremendous potential as a fall colour destination. Backed up by strong supporting attractions and diversions, and recognized as one of Ontario’s largest producers of apples, Grey County has potential to become recognized as the fall colour getaway of choice in Ontario.

To support further development of this demand generator, Grey County should support the **Apple Harvest Festivals and the Apple Pie Trail** initiatives. Several communities in the Blue Mountains region were organizing their own harvest related festivals until two years ago when the groups all came under one umbrella, the Apple Harvest Festival. During 2009, the Apple Pie Trail (an initiative of the BMVA) was launched with much media success. GCT should support these successful initiatives by:

- Supporting the committee overseeing the events
- Supporting requests and applications for funding to expand the events

There is an additional opportunity for private investment in developing fall family activities for visitors (i.e. you-pick apple and pumpkins, corn maze etc.)

Experiences to support **fall colour and harvest touring** in Grey County should be fully developed including driving tours in and around the County. Several tours have been developed by GCT. Further investment should be made to fully support these tours with mapping, signage, up to date itineraries, photos and video. Tours should highlight the supporting attractions and diversions and could build upon the Apple Harvest Festival and Apple Pie Trail.

Local food is a large part of the harvest component of this demand generator. GCT should continue its **support of the local food initiatives** by:

- maintaining its support of the Grey Bruce Local Food project
- identifying restaurants and markets serving local food on fall tours developed
- flagging Grey County restaurants serving local food on visitgrey.ca website

GCT should ensure it ranks **high in Google for all searches related to fall colour travel in Ontario** for the target markets of the GTA, central and south western Ontario. Tactics to ensure high ranking should include Search Engine Optimization for the visitgrey.ca website, use of social media applications to promote the region for fall travel and Google Adword key word buys to ensure top placement. Additionally, GCT should expand their **fall colour and harvest advertising campaign**, targeting these same markets.

Action	New Costs	Timing												Responsible
		2010		2011				2012				2013		
		S	F	W	S	S	F	W	S	S	F	W	S	
Support the Apple Harvest Festival and Apple Pie Trail initiatives		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	GCT
Fully develop fall colour & harvest tours	yes	x				x								GCT
Support Local Food		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	GCT
Ensure high Google rankings for fall colour	yes	x	x			x	x			x	x		x	GCT
Fall colour & harvest ad campaign	yes	x	x			x	x			x	x		x	GCT

Support further development of Grey County's top demand generators	
<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>New Cost</i>
9. Support major festivals and events that are or have the ability to become demand generators	yes

Description/Rationale

Major festivals and events have the ability to motivate tourists to visit Grey County, create jobs in the community have an impact on the local economy.

To begin to support major festivals and events, GCT must first **develop criteria** to determine which events are or have the ability to become tourism demand generators for the County. Criteria should analyze such factors as attendance, event length, event capacity, economic impact, attendee origin and event's stage in the product lifecycle.

Once criteria have been developed, GCT should promote major festivals and events through **enhanced presence on the GCT website** and in events calendars, presenting better information to potential visitors from farther distances. Enhanced listing could include such benefits as:

- front and centre presence on website and events calendar,
- full event write-up,
- more event details,
- video and photo content, and
- social media content

Improved listing provides better information for major events, as opposed to having them mixed in with all other community focused events.

GCT should **implement visitor surveys at major festivals and events first**, and assist these festival organizers with interpreting the results. (recommendation #4)

Finally GCT should **support Celebrate Ontario applications** by demand generator festival and events. Often, event organizers are volunteers or groups not familiar with tourism funding application processes. GCT can offer these groups assistance by reviewing applications for content and context and by supplying letters of support for any funding applications.

Action	New Costs	Timing												Responsible	
		2010		2011				2012				2013			
		S	F	W	S	S	F	W	S	S	F	W	S		
Develop key events criteria				x											GCT
Enhance key events presence on GCT website								x	x						GCT
Research at key festivals & events	yes				x	x	x								GCT
Support Celebrate Ontario applications			x					x					x		GCT

Support further development of Grey County's top demand generators	
<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>New Cost</i>
10. Continue to support the development of Ride Grey Bruce	yes

Description/Rationale

In the years since its development, Ride Grey Bruce has made a name for itself in the motorsports industry in Ontario. A well known location with great roads for riding and trails for snowmobiling, close to major markets, Grey Bruce has become a motorsports destination of choice for enthusiasts.

GCT should **continue the Ride Grey Bruce partnership** it has established with Bruce County. This partnership has shown success in driving tourists into the area and aligns Grey County with another DMO with experience with the motorsports industry. Further to this regional partnership, has been the development of the **Georgian Bay Destination Development Partnership and their Georgian Bay Coastal Route Motorcycle Tour**. Grey County should also continue its support of this initiative.

GCT along with Ride Grey Bruce should work toward **fully developing the motorcycle and snowmobile routes** with the focus of making planning easy for the consumer. Developments for both activities should include:

- full itineraries including places to stop, places to stay and places to eat along the route
- on-line useable route mapping that the visitor can print and take on their trip
- mapping of motorcycle routes on the motorcycle brochure/map
- snowmobile loops marked on OFSC District 9 maps
- encouraging entry-level fully guided snowmobile/motorcycle experiences and rentals

Further, in line with the fall colour and harvest demand generator (recommendation #8), GCT (in partnership with Bruce County) should develop a strategy to **make Grey Bruce the “go to” place for fall colour motorcycle touring in Ontario**. GCT has an abundant opportunity to make the County into premier fall touring destination – adding the motorcycle product to that plan is a natural extension of an already successful product. Tactics driving consumers to the Ride Grey Bruce website should include Search Engine Optimization for the ridegreybruce.com website, use of social media applications to promote the region for fall touring and Google Adword key word buys to ensure top placement.

Action	New Costs	Timing												Responsible
		2010		2011				2012				2013		
		S	F	W	S	S	F	W	S	S	F	W	S	
Continue Ride Grey Bruce partnership		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	GCT
Continue support of GBDDP motorcycle tour		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	GCT
Fully develop motorcycle touring routes and snowmobile loops	yes		x	x	x	x								GCT or Consultant
Go to place for fall motorcycle touring	yes					x	x		x	x			x	GCT or Consultant

Support further development of Grey County's top demand generators	
<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>New Cost</i>
11. Continue to support and develop initiatives that recognize the importance of the Escarpment, Georgian Bay and the natural environment to Grey County visitors.	yes

Description/Rationale

Research concludes that visitors see Grey County as the place to experience nature. The value proposition of Grey County as an outdoors destination is in its natural resources: the Niagara Escarpment, Georgian Bay, the rolling fields, abundant forests, inland rivers and lakes.

Grey County Tourism must recognize the importance of these natural elements in everything that they do. The content that they write, the website they develop and most importantly in the **image of the County** that they portray. GCT should implement an image for the county that includes these resources (recommendations #14, 15, 16).

Support for the **protection of these natural resources** can be achieved through:

- continued cooperation with and support of the Saugeen Valley and Grey Sauble Conservation Authorities,
- building a relationship with the Bruce Trail Association and local Bruce Trail Clubs, and
- recognition of the stewardship of these groups in promotional materials marketing these resources.

The **Georgian Bay Destination Development Partnership** (GBDDP) has achieved tremendous success in developing experiences related to Georgian Bay in the past several years. GCT should continue to recognize the importance of Georgian Bay as a tourism attraction within the County by maintaining their support of this partnership and by supporting initiatives that will enable **more public Georgian Bay access**.

Further development of the Grey County Waterfall Tour would further recognize the importance of the outdoors and the Niagara Escarpment for visitors and at the same time add support to Fall Colour and Harvest touring. The Waterfall Tour is an important experience within the County, and should be further developed to its potential. Consideration should be made for infrastructure investments in:

- Adequate washroom facilities accessible at all waterfall locations
- Adequate parking areas
- Signage at the site and directing visitors to the waterfalls.

County infrastructure funds or infrastructure funding would be required to implement these items.

Finally, GCT should internally undertake and support third party **development of products designed to allow visitors to experience nature** within the County. Initiatives in this area could include development of hiking, biking and paddling. (i.e. GCT could consider highlighting the best hiking opportunities in Grey County and give hiking a prime position on the website fully supported with mapping, photos and itineraries, instead of burying it with other products.)

Action	New Costs	Timing												Responsible	
		2010		2011				2012				2013			
		S	F	W	S	S	F	W	S	S	F	W	S		
Image for the County focus on outdoors	yes	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	GCT & design team
Support protection of natural resources		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	GCT
Support GBDDP		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	GCT
Public Georgian Bay access		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	GCT
Waterfall Tour Infrastructure	yes							x	x	x					GCT
Products for visitors to experience nature	yes						x	x	x						GCT

Align Grey County's marketing with communication strategy and demand generators	
<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>New Cost</i>
12. Ensure that GCT's marketing efforts are strategic, aligned & communicate key messages	

<i>Description/ Rationale</i>
<p>There are a plethora of businesses, events, attractions and other organizations marketing different aspects of tourism in and around Grey County. The County must provide a common voice, complimenting and clarifying these efforts, not adding additional clutter to an already crowded situation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Prepare a new GCT Marketing Plan</u> Once the Destination Development Action Plan is adopted GCT must update its marketing goals, strategies & tactics and critically evaluate its ongoing marketing campaigns. Lessons learned from the past three years should be incorporated into best practices for the plan: outcomes of 8 stakeholder workshops, 2 visitor surveys, 3 years of web analytics, successes and challenges of marketing tactics implemented. The key tasks involve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Critically evaluating the goals, strategies and tactics of the existing plan (using research data whenever possible) - Aligning the new Marketing Plan with implementation of the new communication strategy (recommendation #14) - Identifying marketing gaps and duplications with regional stakeholders - Setting measurable goals with time frames (align with this Action Plan – Section 2) • <u>Update GCT Marketing Plan Annually</u> Within ongoing visitor research, inquiry tracking and web analytics, GCT should have measurable feedback on the success of its marketing campaigns, and be able to update and fine tune its marketing plan on an annual basis. • <u>Continue and expand collaborative marketing efforts</u> (recommendation #1): GCT's collaborative marketing efforts are making Grey a more recognizable destination, and efforts to collaborate should continue with its stakeholders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Major attractions with broad-based marketing programs, such as Blue Mountain & Scenic Caves - BIAs, Chambers etc. - Neighbouring counties and DMOs - Other destination development organizations, such as Georgian Bay and the new RTO - OTMPC • <u>Develop external media relations</u> GCT should take a leadership role in raising interest and awareness in products, bringing together events, attractions and supporting services into stories of interest to local and external media and travel writers.

Action	New Costs	Timing												Responsible
		2010			2011			2012			2013			
		S	F	W	S	S	F	W	S	S	F	W	S	
Prepare a new GCT Marketing Plan			x											GCT & Committee
Update marketing plan annually							x					x		GCT & Committee
Expand collaborative marketing efforts		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	GCT
Develop external media relations								x	x	x	x	x	x	GCT & stakeholders

Align Grey County's marketing with communication strategy and demand generators	
<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>New Cost</i>
13. Make GCT's website the "go to" for visitors, residents and media wanting tourism info	yes

Description/ rationale

Grey County's website is comprehensive and functions extremely well, but could be improved with new content, videos and more use of social media. Over the years, the site has grown and content has increased and it has lost its sense of focus. The website should be redesigned and focused to capture the essence of Grey County, its demand generators and reflect the new Grey County brand. To be successful, the website must be:

- Engaging to residents and visitors – the site where everyone (including the media) goes to find out about what's happening in the region
 - Up-to-date, fun, not-static
 - Video clips
 - Social media links
 - Interactive – feedback from visitors (recommendation #4)
- Embraced by Grey's tourism businesses, attractions, festivals and events – they must see value in having:
 - A presence on the site
 - Links from their sites to Grey and from Grey to their sites
 - Grey County website on their brochures and pamphlets

The Grey County website has a comprehensive **events calendar**, map-based, sorted by region, with data input by the events themselves. The system itself functions relatively well, however if it is to be the tourism "go to" site for visitors and residents, GCT must:

1. Highlight regional events that are of interest to visitors
2. Ensure that the site is of high enough quality and widely enough used that tourism event organizers want to post their events on the site
3. Check postings and make sure that they accurately reflect the location of the event (eg. Keady market shows up in Owen Sound, not Keady and the Owen Sound market doesn't show up at all) and that are removed when the event is over
4. Find a way to ensure that repeated events don't always show up first on the list (eg. Keady market is always the first event listed for Owen Sound)

Twenty organizations (communities, BIAs, chambers etc), plus some attractions have some form of online event calendars. This represents considerable duplication of effort. Some organizations may see value in linking to Grey's website, rather than maintaining their own tourism website or page. With some fine tuning and co-operation among organizations, GCT's event listing could be the primary source for event information throughout the County. GCT should start by **aligning online visitor calendars through the VIC Subcommittee**, as websites become aligned (recommendation #1).

Action	New Costs	Timing												Responsible	
		2010		2011				2012				2013			
		S	F	W	S	S	F	W	S	S	F	W	S		
Critically evaluate the website				x	x									GCT	
Update website to reflect the Communication Strategy	maybe							x	x				x	x	GCT
Refine online events calendar	yes							x	x				x	x	GCT
Align online VIC calendars through VIC Network	yes							x	x	x	x		x		VIC Network

Align Grey County's marketing with communication strategy and demand generators	
<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>New Cost</i>
14. Adopt new GCT Communication Strategy	

Description/ Rationale:

R&P Marketing and Communications developed the new communications strategy for GCT based on the Design Brief (appendix L), which in turn was based on visitor survey, online survey, discussion with stakeholders at the four workshops and discussion with Grey County. The Communication Strategy is as follows:

- **Business Objective**
To build the profit numbers of all Grey County businesses that depend on tourism and visitor interest by 5% in the next fiscal year.
- **Target**
 - 1) Permanent residents who want to share Grey County experiences with their families and friends
 - 2) Seasonal residents who want to make the most of their Grey County lifestyle
 - 3) Visitors from central and south western Ontario who are looking for outdoor and rural experiences
 - 4) Blue Mountain visitors who are looking for Grey experiences beyond Blue
- **Media**
Develop a strong signature and visual profile for Grey County that will consistently underpin all communication materials for the County for: signage, letterhead package, print advertising, outdoor/billboards, collateral materials, website and radio.
- **Communications Objectives**
To generate energy and interest in the many natural attractions, activities and events offered by Grey County by positioning the county as the "go to" destination for a memorable, easy and affordable outdoor Ontario experience.
- **Key Benefit/Core Message** (*What is the key motivating reward for a person spending time in Grey County?*)
Grey County is the ultimate Great Outdoors experience –forest, valleys, rivers, farmlands, the Escarpment and Georgian Bay – an easy and relaxing destination, the best of Ontario's natural places.
- **Tone**
Friendly, natural, authentic, energetic

R&P recommend that:

1. The communication strategy should underpin all tourism marketing and communication, whether written word, photos, images.
2. The logo and graphic signature for Grey County and GCT be one and the same.

Action	New Costs	Timing												Responsible
		2010		2011				2012				2013		
		S	F	W	S	S	F	W	S	S	F	W	S	
Administrative support		x												GCT
Committee support		x												GCT
Political support			x											GCT & Committee

Align Grey County's marketing with communication strategy and demand generators	
<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>New Cost</i> yes
15. Implement the new communication strategy	

<i>Description/ Rationale:</i>
<p>The ultimate goal is to have the logo and graphic signature used consistently for all Grey County communication across all media. This should be phased in, starting with components that are most visible and least expensive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signage <i>Primary Target: people in area (visitors, seasonal residents, residents)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Update Grey County signs with new logo when replaced. Use on interpretive signs (waterfalls, trails) • Tourism Vehicle <i>Primary Target: people in area (visitors, seasonal residents, residents) Secondary Target: potential visitors when vehicle out of Grey</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use the new logo and graphic signature for the GCT vehicle starting in 2010 • Complete stationary package <i>Target: anyone that Grey County communicates with</i> • Print Advertising <i>Primary Target: people in area (visitors, seasonal residents, residents) Secondary Target: past and potential visitors when out of Grey</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Incorporate new brand for 2011 marketing campaign • Outdoor billboards <i>Primary Target: people driving into Grey (visitors, seasonal residents, residents)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Update all county boundary billboards with the new brand for 2011 • Collateral Materials (Maps, post cards, posters, brochures, visitor guide, events etc) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Update each piece with new brand as they are re-published, beginning in 2011 • Website <i>Multiple targets: people in area, current visitors, past visitors, potential visitors, media, partners and stakeholders</i> • Radio <i>Grey stations target: people in area (residents, seasonal residents, visitors); Stations outside Grey target: past visitors and potential visitors</i>

Action	New Costs	Timing												Responsible	
		2010		2011				2012				2013			
		S	F	W	S	S	F	W	S	S	F	W	S		
Signage	yes				x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	GCT + design team
GCT vehicle	yes		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Stationary	yes			x	x										
Print advertising	yes			x	x			x	x			x	x		
Outdoor billboard	yes	x	x	x		x		x		x		x			
Collateral materials	yes			x	x			x	x			x	x		
Website components	yes							x	x	x	x	x	x		
Radio	yes			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		

Align Grey County's marketing with communication strategy and demand generators	
<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>New Cost</i>
16. Develop marketing campaigns for the target markets	yes

Description/ Rationale:

R&P Marketing and Communications identified four target markets for GCT:

- 1) Permanent residents who want to share Grey County experiences with their families and friends
- 2) Seasonal residents who want to make the most of their Grey County lifestyle
- 3) Visitors from central and south western Ontario who are looking for outdoor and rural experiences
- 4) Blue Mountain visitors who are looking for Grey experiences beyond Blue

Our 2009 marketing research showed that the primary motivator for ¼ of Grey's visitors was spending time with friends and relatives. Similarly, the Canadian Travel Survey found that visiting friends and relatives was an even more significant motivator for Grey in 2006 (38%) 2007 (29%) and 2008 (40%). The 2009 research also found that advice of friends and family was among the top three information sources for trip planning, along with the internet and previous visits.

R&P marketing recommend that GCT **increase its marketing efforts towards permanent and seasonal residents** (groups 1 and 2). These people have made a commitment to the area and they are the region's best ambassadors. Reaching this people is substantially less expensive than penetrating the GTA or south western Ontario markets. Many of the seasonal residents come primarily for the winter and/or summer season. Extending their visits to the shoulder seasons should be easier than attracting new visitors. If residents and seasonal residents feel committed to Grey County, they will be less inclined to take their vacation dollars elsewhere.

The ongoing Getaway to Grey marketing campaign is directed towards attracting visitors from central and south western Ontario (group 3) through radio, print, web, direct marketing and attendance at special events. This campaign has been successful in attracting/retaining visitors. It should be evaluated and fine-tuned to **align with the new brand**.

Visitors to **Blue Mountain** looking for an experience beyond the Village represent another potential market. Blue recognizes that regional experiences result in longer or more frequent stays, and through Activity Central, encourage visitors to participate in partners activities, some of which are in Grey County. Blue Mountain Village Association has been active in developing some off-resort events and experiences in shoulder seasons to attract new markets. In the future, Blue may be interested in additional collaborative marketing to encourage visitors to spend time in Grey County, while staying at the Village (recommendation #7).

Action	New Costs	Timing												Responsible
		2010		2011				2012				2013		
		S	F	W	S	S	F	W	S	S	F	W	S	
New marketing campaign for residents & seasonal residents	yes							x	x	x	x	x	x	GCT + consultant
Align Central and SW Ontario campaign with new brand	yes			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Blue Mountain campaign	yes					x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	

