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**Introduction**

Central Counties Tourism (CCT) is the provincially funded not-for-profit dedicated to developing, supporting and promoting the tourism assets of Durham Region, York Region and Headwaters Tourism Region. It is governed by the industry through an appointed and elected Board of Directors.

In autumn 2018, the Board of Directors met to review the current strategy and set the priorities for 2019-2020. The board determined that the strategic objectives were still valid:

- Communicate the value of tourism, the role of CCT, and how CCT can facilitate stakeholders capitalizing from tourism.
- Work with tourism organizations and stakeholders to enhance and deliver experiences to target markets.....for stronger experience alignment and greater visitor spend.
- Develop and/or support communications programs designed to assist stakeholders to tell their stories to target audiences.

A main discussion at the meeting was around defining success and answering the question, what does Central Counties do. It was agreed that:

***Central Counties Tourism aligns tourism resources to expand the York Durham Headwaters stakeholder's ability to grow our tourism economy.***

**Executive Summary**

The 2019-2020 Business Plan is a direct reflection of the direction giving to staff at the board planning meetings in the fall of 2018. At the meeting, there was unanimous acknowledgement that Central Counties has a history of delivering against the objectives laid out by the board every year and that, through this focus, the organization continues to be relevant and effective.

A great deal of the planning meeting was dedicated to defining what success looks like for Central Counties and then determining ways to effectively measure that success.

### Serving our People

Central Counties serves the tourism stakeholders in Durham, York and Headwaters. Their success is CCT's success. This key shift in priorities was a result of the board developed 2018-2021 strategic direction approved in 2017. In the priority discussion for the 2019-2020 business plan, the board further expanded what that meant.

The 2018-2019 business plan focused on programs designed to drive visitation to CCT stakeholders. During planning for 2019-2020, the board recognized there were two main drawbacks with that being the main direction:

- 1) Stakeholder reporting back to CCT is limited for a variety of reasons, which makes tracking CCT impact difficult
- 2) Stakeholders are reliant on CCT for their success

The main focus of the 2019-2020 business plan is providing and aligning tourism resources that **enables** CCT stakeholders to **create success** for themselves and the tourism economy. This is a subtle shift, but one that the board recognizes will serve the tourism stakeholders in Central Counties much better in the long run.

### Defining Success for Central Counties

During the planning session for 2019-2020, the board was asked to explain what they thought success looked like for Central Counties. Several themes emerged from the discussion and all of them can be attributed back to one key thing – Industry Engagement.

Central Counties exists to enable tourism stakeholders' ability to grow the tourism economy. In order to accomplish that, industry stakeholders must be actively engaged with Central Counties.

- Stakeholders understand the role of CCT and the opportunities it presents so that CCT is top of mind with stakeholders when looking to improve their tourism capacity
- Alignment of resources so that duplication is limited and stakeholders understand who does what
- Sharing of tourism success stories so that funders and stakeholders understand from true-life examples the tangible benefits of the tourism economy
- Partnering with stakeholders so that resources are leveraged for maximum success

### Strategic Direction 2018-2021

The 2019-2020 business plan marks the second year of the three-year strategy Central Counties is currently delivering. The board-identified successes from above do not deviate from the primary objectives of the strategy which are:

- Communicate the value of tourism, the role of CCT, and how CCT can facilitate stakeholders capitalizing from tourism.
- Work with tourism organizations and stakeholders to enhance and deliver experiences to target markets.....for stronger experience alignment and greater visitor spend.
- Develop and/or support communications programs designed to assist stakeholders to tell their stories to target audiences.

In fact, the updated definitions of success tie directly back to the strategy and allow the organization to move tourism capacity and impact forward within the region.

Several milestones for years two and three (2019/2020 and 2020/2021) were outlined in the strategy. There was no specific order recommended in the plan.

- Develop workshop series to encourage innovation in tourism
- Begin to report on key metrics to region, providing insight on marketing and experience development responses and strategies
- Develop a strong social media analysis model to better target the right audiences with compelling offers
- Explore best practices in supporting business events growth
- Continue to populate YDH.com with compelling promotions and ensure the client path to purchase is user-friendly and efficient
- Investigate non-traditional partnerships to stimulate tourism awareness and visitation across the regions
- Enlist more municipalities to develop their own tourism strategic plans
- Increase GTA awareness with more targeted promotions based on previous year's data.
- Draft a development and investment plan with regional partners to identify and attract interested investors

For the 2019-2020 plan, CCT will be delivering against these milestones and has defined below what actions will be taken to move each forward.

### Develop workshop series to encourage innovation in tourism

For CCT to shift to a role of enabling CCT stakeholders to create success for themselves and the tourism economy, a key priority is to provide resources to allow them to do that. Central Counties will source and develop opportunities for stakeholders to align and partner with other businesses, create new experiences, and successfully target new guests.

It is expected that some workshops and opportunities will be developed and launched within the fiscal while others may take the full fiscal to bring to the stakeholders. Success will be measured by the number of stakeholders taking advantage of the opportunities and, more importantly, the number of new initiatives and/or experiences successfully implemented. The first is easy to track, the second will require stakeholders to report back to CCT their successes. To ensure this happens, CCT will insist that all stakeholders agree to report yearly numbers in order to be registered in any of the opportunities.

### Begin to report on key metrics to region, providing insight on marketing and experience development responses and strategies

CCT will complete four research reports for stakeholders that includes interpretation and actionable suggestions on how to incorporate learnings to further tourism capacity. Research will be compiled from Environics information, the visitor tracking program developed in 2018-2019, Statistics Canada and other sources.

Develop a strong social media analysis model to better target the right audiences with compelling offers

CCT will continue to develop the analytical process by which we measure success on social media channels while utilizing current research and trends to shape the way we position content to targeted audiences. The process will include tracking statistics that are relevant: such as engagement, CTR and referral. CCT will use quarterly results and A/B testing in order to evaluate tactics and grow the strategy. In 2019, CCT will also fold-in third party accredited media (influencers) into the analysis model in order to ascertain third party external impact on awareness of audience growth.

Explore best practices in supporting business events growth

The board determined that success in group travel could not be measured by room nights and economic impact but rather by capacity building within the region. To this end, a key role of the Business Development Manager will be to disseminate and support the implementation of business event best practices by stakeholders.

Continue to populate YDH.com with compelling promotions and ensure the client path to purchase is user-friendly and efficient

CCT will continue to utilize the website as the key portal for tourism storytelling and offerings. The content will reflect authentic product offerings from key tourism businesses with clear links to purchase options and additional information.



Investigate non-traditional partnerships to stimulate tourism awareness and visitation across the regions

CCT will continue to match promotional partners (like CAA) with seasonal campaigns. As CCT assists stakeholders build their own tourism capacity, they will suggest and support inclusion of non-traditional partners in new product and experience development and promotion.

Enlist more municipalities to develop their own tourism strategic plans

This has been ongoing for the past two fiscals and assists with tourism capacity building

Increase GTA awareness with more targeted promotions based on previous year's data

Currently 80-83% of our tourism audience is from the GTA. Ontario continues to be the primary audience for the regions of York Durham and Headwaters. In 2018/19, York Durham Headwaters re-defined itself as Ontario's Road trip Destination in order to appeal to the GTA as a hidden gem with a plethora of products geared toward specific audiences all attainable within a 30-90 minute drive from the GTA. CCT will also be conducting 2 online consumer surveys in order to measure the relevancy and appeal of online content and promotions while providing a forum for our visitors to give relevant feedback. CCT will use the feedback to evaluate to re-adjust content accordingly.

Draft a development and investment plan with regional partners to identify and attract interested investors

It was determined that CCT is not the lead for investment development within the region. Rather, CCT supports municipalities, regions and the provincial tourism development office in their efforts to attract new tourism investment. CCT research and other information is openly available to assist new investments in the region.

### **2019-2020 Business Plan Objectives Summary**

The 2019-2020 Business Plan builds off the success of 2018-2019. The Ministry of Tourism Culture and Sport recognizes five pillars of responsibility for RTO's: 1) Governance and Administration, 2) Workforce Development (Industry Equipping), 3) Product/Experience Development, 4) Strategic Marketing and 5) Investment Attraction. Strategic Partnerships were added as a separate budget line four years ago. From the Strategic Plan and the 2019-2020 board planning session, CCT will focus effort to deliver on the following objectives.

#### *Governance and Administration*

- Take a leadership role with RTO's (at board level) to ensure the sharing of best-practices, and ensuring there is a transfer of knowledge / learnings / information upward (Provincial Government), and downward (into the industry)
- Communicate the value of CCT to stakeholders for greater understanding, investment and alignment
- Update board governance and committee terms of reference to ensure compliance with not-for-profit corporate rules
- Engaged Board of Directors to maximize organizational excellence and direction
- TPA compliance and clean audit to ensure proper delivery of the approved business plan

*Industry Equipping / Workforce Development*

- To become a catalyst in building strategic alignment and promoting collaboration within the industry
- Facilitate and support the attraction, development and retention of a tourism workforce to enhance the customer experience
- Define a process for engaging and understanding labour market shortages in YDH so that CCT can develop a plan to support the industry in this area

*Product/Experience Development*

- To enhance visitor experience through well-designed tourism products that meet current and future customer demand
- Facilitate the development and support the delivery of stakeholder-lead products/experiences

*Strategic Marketing & Business Development*

- Build Brand Awareness based around “products” found in York Durham Headwaters
- Drive visitation to our regions in order to increase economic impact
- Raise awareness of our stakeholders and regional products
- Align with Destination Ontario and other tourism partners in order to raise awareness of Ontario as a premier destination.
- Partner with a major brand for the promotional purpose of extending audience reach
- Increase group travel capacity within the region
- Support stakeholders in their efforts to engage the group travel market so that they can build successful relationships
- Provide opportunities for stakeholders to communicate with group travel visitors so that they drive additional visitation

*Investment Attraction*

- Facilitate the development of Community Tourism Plans so that municipalities recognize the value and economic impact of tourism
- Support the delivery of approved Community Tourism Plans so that municipal funders and private partners see improvements in local tourism capacity
- Respond to municipal, regional and provincial requests for support in their attempts to drive new investment within Central Counties so that potential investors recognize aligned support for their project.

### **Business Plan Details**

To deliver against the three main objectives of the strategic plan and the pillar objectives that came out of the board planning session for fiscal 2019-2020, many actions take place throughout the year. For reporting purposes and to provide quarterly snapshots on how staff is delivering against the plan, detailed charts that match Ministry Reporting formats have been created.

Each action area under the pillar is broken into chart form where tactics to achieve the action are described. Where relevant, KPI's and Goals have been added to the tactic. The Results column will be filled out at mid-term and year-end to demonstrate how CCT delivered against the plan. The Lead is the manager responsible for ensuring staff and organization are on track to deliver the tactics.

**Governance and Administration**

- Objectives:
- Take a leadership role with RTO’s (at board level) to ensure the sharing of best-practices, and ensuring there is a transfer of knowledge / learnings / information upward (Provincial Governments), and downward (into the industry)
  - Communicate the value of CCT to stakeholders for great understanding, investment and alignment
  - Update board governance and committee terms of reference to ensure compliance with not-for-profit corporate rules
  - Engaged Board of Directors to maximize organizational excellence and direction
  - TPA compliance and clean audit to ensure proper delivery of the approved business plan

Advocacy and Support				
Tactics	KPI’s	Goals	Results	Lead
Organize RTO Board Chair meetings with RTO ED’s	# of meetings	2		Chair
Communicate meeting outcomes through B2B channels	# of Reports	2		Chair
CCT presents at other industry events (municipal, regional)	# of Presentations	4		ED
Research, write and disseminate good news stories about stakeholders, products and successes.	# of articles # of releases	12 12		DMC/DI R
Present, in collaboration with DMO and local stakeholders, tourism updates to municipal councils and MPP’s.	# of Presentations	8		ED

DIR – Director of Industry Relations, ED – Executive Director, Chair – Board Chair,  
 DMC – Director of Marketing and Communications, FIN – Manager of Finance and Procurement,  
 RD – Manager of Research and Development

Organizational Excellence				
Tactics	KPI's	Goals	Results	Lead
Review and Update Board Committee Terms of Reference and Governance Manual	# updated	80%		Chair
Add Committee Reports to the agenda of board meetings	# of reports on agendas	80%		Chair
Clean Audit				ED
Quarterly progress reports to Board of Directors	# of Reports	4		ED
Ministry reports completed on time				ED



**Industry Relations (Partnerships) and Industry Equipping (Workforce Development)**

Objectives: To become a catalyst in building strategic alignment and promoting collaboration within the industry.  
Facilitate and support the attraction, development and retention of a tourism workforce to enhance the customer experience.

Partnering and Alignment				
Tactics	KPI's	Goals	Results	Lead
Develop a process matrix or “playbook” that outlines DMO, CCT and, where possible, Ministry/Destination Ontario priorities and deliverables against the pillars	Playbook delivered	Q1		ED
Develop an Action Plan Calendar which ensures RTO/DMO’s meet more often / regularly and outlines when seasonal meetings will occur and content to be discussed / decide	Calendar Delivered	Q1		ED
By project, determine stakeholders/operators that may be able to aid in delivery and bring them into the discussion at the beginning to ensure buy-in and success	# of stakeholders delivering on projects	10		DIR
Determine DMO investments and amplify those that have been identified as being aligned with CCT approved Business Plan	DMO/CCT agreement on use of regional support budget line	100%		DMC

Collect and interpret visitor tracking data (system developed in 2018/2019) and communicate to stakeholders how to implement findings to aid in business success

Tactics	KPI's	Goals	Results	Lead
Create four quarterly reports on the collected data	# of Reports	4		RD
Communicate actionable items for the stakeholders to implement based on the research findings	# of stories for B2B channels	4		DIR
Produce a research column in the B2B newsletter which interprets the research from other tourism sources	# of Columns	6		RD
Maintain membership in associations that assist CCT and stakeholders achieve their goals through research, business development opportunities, media and communications				FIN
Support and communicate to stakeholders TIAO's stakeholder advocacy efforts and communicate stakeholder's issues to TIAO	# of stories for B2B channels	6		DIR

Provide learning opportunities for stakeholders to build tourism capacity within their business				
Tactics	KPI's	Goals	Results	Lead
Conduct Tourism Now Open Houses to inform stakeholders about the ways CCT can assist them in becoming more successful	# of Open Houses # of Participants	5 75		DIR
Research and conduct partnered learning opportunities for stakeholders to expand their knowledge about relevant tourism-related topics	# of Courses # of Participants	4 100		DIR
Host a regional tourism symposium	# of registrations Satisfaction Rating	300 90%		DIR
Provide financial assistance to qualified and approved stakeholders wanting to improve their knowledge to strengthen their business	# of partners investing in improving their knowledge	20		ED
Include learning opportunities to make AGM more engaging and relevant for stakeholders	# of Attendees Satisfaction Rating	100 90%		DIR

**Product / Experience Development**

Objective: To enhance visitor experience through well-designed tourism products that meet current and future customer demand

Facilitate the development and support the delivery of stakeholder-lead products/experience.

Facilitate focused product development networking forums for likeminded businesses to inspire new ideas and motivate stakeholders to see them through to an actionable plan.				
Tactics	KPI's	Goals	Results	Lead
Identify clusters of stakeholders (including art and artisan from 2018/2019 plan) based on trends and strong products and invite them to participate in collaboration (in conjunction with DMO)	# of clusters identified	3		ED
	# of participating stakeholders	45		
Develop a facilitation plan	Deliver the plan	Q1		DIR
Organize the sessions	Total # of sessions	6		DIR
Develop and communicate a CCT support package (further education, connections, marketing/communications, development funds)	Deliver the support package	Q2		ED

Continue to develop compelling itineraries and trails to support the B2C communications efforts and provide compelling ideas/reasons to visit the region (CCT Lead)

Tactics	KPI's	Goals	Results	Lead
Create three new trails (one per region) based on consumer trends and industry strengths	# of trails	3		DMC
Work with the Greenbelt to develop strong tourism loops for York and Headwaters	# of loops	2		DMC
Refresh existing itineraries to support campaigns	# of refreshed itineraries	24		DMC

Revamp the Temperance and Temptation Experiences

Tactics	KPI's	Goals	Results	Lead
Host a forum of possible stakeholders that fit the stories/theme and determine which want to participate in both the guided and self-guided tours	# of interested participants	40		RD
Refresh the content based on new participants and consumer feedback	Refreshed Content	Q2		RD
Work with tour operator(s) to build and sell guided Temperance & Temptation Tours	# of guided tours offered	10		RD
Work with Chris Wilson to leverage the live entertainment component (stories, scenes and music) to other stakeholders through the region in support of the T&T initiative	# of purchasable / customizable entertainment experiences developed for sale	2		RD

**Investment Attraction**

Objective: Facilitate the development of Community Tourism Plans so that municipalities recognize the value and economic impact of tourism  
 Support the delivery of approved Community Tourism Plans so that municipal funders and private partners see improvements in local tourism capacity  
 Respond to municipal, regional and provincial requests for support in their attempts to drive new investment within Central Counties so that potential investors recognized aligned support for their project

Investment through capacity building				
Tactics	KPI's	Goals	Results	Lead
Develop Community Tourism Plans with interested municipalities. The plan prioritizes needs to enhance the visitor experience and, once adopted by council, usually results in investment of some sort	# of plans developed	3		ED
Assist in the delivery of action items from completed tourism plans, leveraging municipal and private investment where necessary	# of action items CCT assists deliver	12		ED
Communicate to stakeholders CCT's willingness to assist in supporting solicitation of new tourism investment in the region	# of stories about investment attraction support in B2B channels	4		ED

## Marketing Plan

Objective: To increase awareness of Ontario as a travel destination and increase economic impact in target markets while continuing to define YDH as Ontario's Road Trip Destination.

The following plan follows the guidelines as set out in the approved RTO Strategic Plan while offering stakeholders additional trackable marketing opportunities within the targeted campaigns as identified by the Board at the 2019-2020 planning session.

- Campaigns: Timelines, Elements, Weight
- Product Focus
- Consumer Segments
- Geographic Breakdown
- Marketing Objectives

Masthead Campaign Message: York Durham Headwaters is Ontario's Year-Round Road Trip Destination.



Each season, using the product categories to engage visitors and drive visitation to our regions, CCT will continue to position YDH as the ideal road trip destination for its primary target markets. Building on the success of 2018/19, CCT will focus on developing engaging content to raise awareness of key stakeholders and products.

Campaigns: Spring, Summer, Fall, Holiday, Winter

Campaign	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Spring												
Summer												
Fall												
Holiday												
Winter												

Campaign Elements and Resource Weight

- Spring: Digital (paid & organic), Media Relations, Co-Op ads in Globe and Mail – 10%
- Summer: Digital (paid & organic), Media Relations, Print Magazine, Co-Op ads in Globe and Mail – 30%
- Fall: Digital (paid & organic), Media Relations, Co-Op ads in Globe and Mail – 15%
- Holiday: Digital (paid & organic), Media Relations, Co-Op ads in Globe and Mail – 15%
- Winter: Digital (paid & organic), Media Relations, Print Magazine, Co-Op ad in Globe and Mail – 30%



Product Focus

As per the direction of the original Destination Management Plan (2015-2018) and supported by the audience research report and new Strategic Plan (2018-2021) all York Durham Headwaters consumer campaigns focus on the following:

- Outdoor & Indoor Adventure/Trails (cycling, hiking, equestrian, snowshoe, cross country ski)
- Small Towns and Rural Landscapes (arts and culture, festivals, events, heritage)
- Culinary (craft beer, distillery, agri-tourism)
- Golf
- Family Attractions (year-round)

CCT has reassigned the above into 5 major categories for consumer consumption:

- Art Lovers
- Foodie Fanatics
- Adventure Seekers
- Family Fun
- Golf

Product Focus	Spring	Summer	Fall	Holiday	Winter
Art Lovers	Blue	Green	Green	Blue	Green
Foodie Fanatics	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue
Adventure Seekers	Blue	Green	Blue	Blue	Green
Family Fun	Blue	Green	Blue	Blue	Green
Golf *	Green	Green	Green	Black	Black

**Please note:** Green indicates heavy promotion during campaign, blue is constant. Golf has its own campaign as part of a joint venture with other golf destinations in the province under the brand Golf in Ontario.

### Consumer segments

Our four priority consumer segments for York Durham and Headwaters are:

- Connected Explorers
- Nature Lovers
- Up and Coming Explorers
- Knowledge Seekers

Please note that we have expanded our previous segmentation to include Knowledge seekers based on the audience needs research study done in 2017. Please see page 10 for detailed information.

### Geographic Campaign Focus (The Audience)

Spring/Summer/Fall	<b>Primary:</b> Ontario (GTA and Other) - 80%
	<b>Secondary:</b> US Border States (NY, MI, OH, PA) - 15%
	Quebec – 5%
Holidays/Winter	<b>Primary:</b> Ontario (GTA and Other) - 100%

### Overarching Marketing Objectives

- **Build** Brand Awareness based around “products” found in York Durham Headwaters while retaining strong sub-regional identification.
- **Drive** visitation to our regions in order to increase economic impact
- **Raise awareness** of our lead stakeholders and regional products
- **Align** with Destination Ontario and other tourism partners in order to raise awareness of Ontario as a premier destination
- **Partner** with a major brand for the promotional purpose of extending audience reach

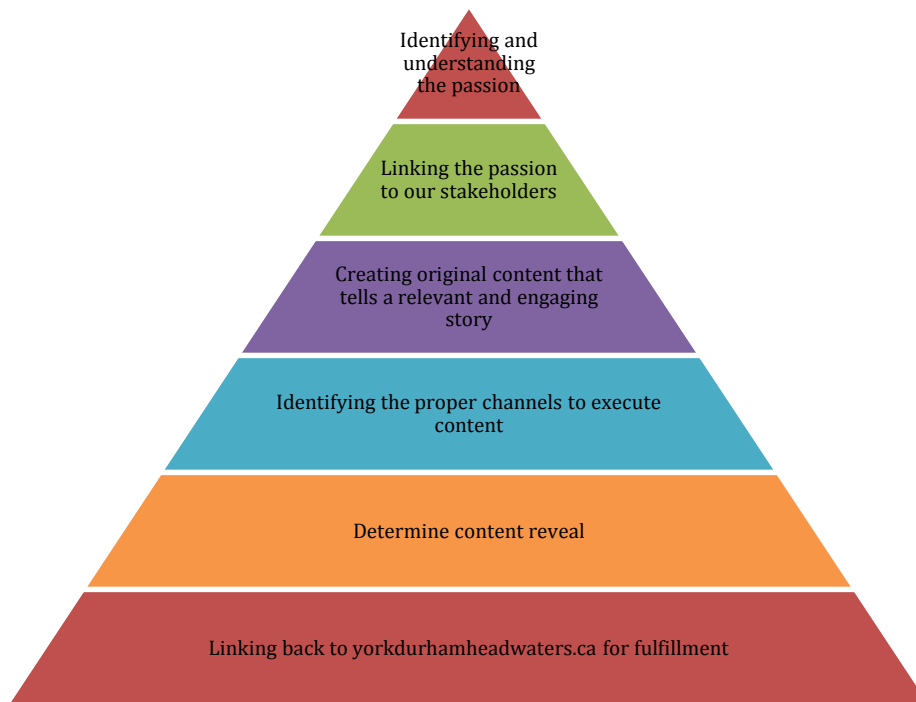
### Brand Strategy

In 2019-2020, CCT will continue to focus on strengthening the YorkDurhamHeadwaters (YDH) brand as Ontario’s Road Trip Destination in the B2C (consumer) market by following a new “lure through passions” approach in the way we speak to our target audience through our marketing channels. In 2018/19, CCT changed the way we speak to our target consumers. We identified through CCT research:

- a need to alter the way we tell our stories in order to rise to the top in a saturated market
- improve our understanding of the people we were trying to reach and how we market to them
- isolate current but relevant (to YDH & Tourism) topics of interest
- determine what motivates our audiences to act
- know what people are talking about as those conversations are key indicators as to what they will do as a potential consumer

Using industry research & trends, the Where-Am-I YDH case study, notable shifts in advertising methodology, CCT online consumer surveys, and social listening tools; CCT created a new advertising/communications fulfillment model for both paid and organic campaigns. The campaigns are and will continue to be executed strategically in an aligned tactical manner across multiple platforms: social media, search engine marketing, third party influencers, media relations and print advertising.

The model:



Understanding the model

**The Passion:** By isolating a passion within one of our core product categories we establish a connection with our targeted consumer.

**Link:** The connection is revealed through strong content about one of our stakeholders.

**Channels:** We match the right content with the right channel for the right consumer.

**The lure:** We determine how much of the content to reveal and share to the consumer in order to spark motivation, action and conversion.

**The fulfillment:** We share the complete content with links to conversion and promote passion matched product.

This model also allows CCT to measure referral traffic with the lead stakeholders while giving interested stakeholders greater opportunities to share their stories thus improving our B2B support messaging.

CCT will continue to utilize the audience research conducted in 2017 that identified that the consumer is still struggling with the YDH Brand despite success in product awareness. To re-fresh, the research concluded that because the GTA consumer (80% of the target market) had no brand recognition of the regional brands (York Region, Durham Region and Headwaters Region), this in fact is impacting the brand traction of YDH. Another finding indicated that because of CCT’s close geographical orientation to the GTA, this issue is unlikely to be resolved and thus we should continue to stay the course and focus on a product-oriented brand. We believe strong YDH campaigns and partnerships with like-minded tourism brands like: Destination Ontario, Greenbelt and others will assist us in gaining consumer awareness of our products.

Continue to build the YorkDurhamHeadwaters consumer brand without diluting the impact of the sub-regions.				
Tactics	KPI's	Goals	Results	Lead
Create and conduct brand/sub regional brand research project to assist with the creation, development, and strengthening of campaigns.	Completed project	Q3		DMC
Create pan-regional campaigns for ideal target audience optimization in order to increase visitation to the regions	# of campaigns	5		DMC
Promotionally partner with brand appropriate third-party organizations or corporations who are brand appropriate in order to increase marketing reach	# of partnerships	2		DMC
Partner with Tourism Leaders/Organizations to leverage awareness of YDH through external third party channels	# of partners	3		DMC

Web Strategy

CCT will focus on developing a 5-season content strategy organized around its key pillar consumer product categories. We will also continue to showcase key stakeholders through our featured articles section while improving our directory listings.

CCT will continue to conduct audience research in order to shape how we deliver content to consumers while re-defining how we track and measure success through the platform.

Build creative content on yorkdurhamheadwaters.ca that engages consumers and assists them on their path to visitation conversion				
Tactics	KPI's	Goals	Results	Lead
Continue to align original content online within our product category landing pages.	# of refreshed landing pages	5		DMC
To create a website performance model in order to effectively measure success.	Completed Model	Q3		DMC
Complete a visitor experience audit	# of completed surveys	400		DMC/MM
Create compelling “passion” based featured articles on yorkdurhamheadwaters.ca	# of stakeholders featured	24		DMC/MM

### Digital Planning and Content Development

CCT will continue to invest in both paid (PPC) and organic (creating great content) Search Engine Optimization (SEO) to improve its ranking and grow in search priority.

Utilizing a greater understanding of changing algorithms by paying attention to our target market channel preferences, we will be strategic in the ways we execute campaigns within the CCT Social Media Portfolio. As younger audiences step away from FACEBOOK, we will seek to improve our content on Instagram, Pinterest and Twitter. CCT will also offer through its “Lure through Passions” model, opportunities for stakeholders to showcase their products in compelling ways.

CCT will also create a new updated Social Media Analysis model in order to track and define success for our stakeholders, board and the ministry.

CCT will continue to invest heavily in staff development and networking opportunities to ensure we are innovative and leading edge in our content creation while developing stronger relationships with our leading tourism partners.

The acquisition of quality photography and video remains a top priority in 2019/2020. Using the product categories, authentic stakeholder products & events, CCT will continue to build the image bank (CMS system) in order to deliver compelling content to audiences. 2019/20 will see the execution of a new curated b-roll bank for video with a focus on the product categories and seasons.

CCT will continue to update and improve on key words and tagging in order to assist stakeholders with search on the CMS system.

Create a strong digital plan that is aligned with pan-regional and provincial campaigns while delivering compelling content that increases engagement and unique traffic to YDH social media channels while assisting leading stakeholders with their own programs.

Tactics	KPI's	Goals
Develop a new social media analysis model in order to measure success.	Model Complete	Q3
Social Media Engagement: Complete quarterly YOY engagement growth comparison for all social channels for B2C, YorkDurhamHeadwaters	# of engagement increases per channel	Twitter: 900 Facebook: 10,000 Instagram: 3000 Pinterest: 150
Social Media Referral: Complete quarterly YOY comparison for all social channels for B2C, YorkDurhamHeadwaters	# of unique traffic referrals per channel	Twitter: 250 Facebook: 2500 Instagram: 100 Pinterest: 100
Social Media Engagement: Complete quarterly YOY engagement growth comparison for all social channels for B2B, CentralCountiesTourism	# of engagement increases per channel	Twitter: 800 Facebook: 2000 Instagram: 500 LinkedIn: 400



Tactics	KPI's	Goals
Content Development: Create, prioritize and execute a “shot list” to continue to build a robust image bank that accurately reflects the pillar product content inventory of each region for marketing purposes	# of images for print/web	600 images
Content Development: Continue to develop the video bank to accurately reflect the pillar product content inventory of each region for marketing purposes.	#of b-roll collections	4
Research and attend International Social Media Conference	# of conferences	1
Draft and provide best practices, trend and research Report for B2B purposes	# of reports	1

Paid Marketing

CCT will continue to focus on paid marketing campaign support and co-op marketing support opportunities which will consist of print and digital (programmatic, native, PPC, sponsored stories, AdWords)

Secure and execute thoughtful and relevant paid marketing campaigns that drive visitation and increase economic impact to our businesses.

Tactics	KPI's	Goals	Results	Lead
Partner with tourism businesses to raise awareness of tourism products	# of full page co-op ads	10		DMC
Execute a targeted programmatic marketing campaign to raise awareness of tourism products	# of impressions	TBD by Budget		DMC
Create 2 seasonal magazines to tell the YDH story in Summer and Winter	# of distributed magazines	200000		DMC
Execute monthly PPC/Ad word campaigns	# campaigns	12		MM
Execute native ad social media campaigns	# campaigns	3		MM
Work with paid influencers to tell the YDH tourism story on their verified channels utilizing key stakeholders.	# of external campaigns	5		DMC/M M

Media Relations

CCT will continue to offer its PR and media monitoring services to stakeholders. This incredibly successful CCT PR Opportunity Program (PROP) allows stakeholders to access earned media opportunities (value) and monitor the success of their events and programs through the earned media lens. Services include: press release distribution to Canadian, US and Global media, inclusion of event listing CCT monthly event release and program support releases.

Provide stakeholders with resources to tell their stories through media and public relations so that the reach is greater than they could do on their own				
Tactics	KPI's	Goals	Results	Lead
Monitor traditional earned media so that results can be broken down by region and/or story and monetized for reporting purposes	# of reports	12 (monthly)		DMC
Monitor social media so that results can be monetized for reporting purposes	# of reports	12 (monthly)		DMC/MM
Press release distribution for stakeholders in order to extend marketing efforts	# of releases distributed	75		DMC
Press release creation and distribution of CCT generated press releases and advisories in order to raise awareness of campaigns, offerings, special products.	# of releases distributed	20		DMC
Continue to reach out to traditional and digital media via networking international/national conferences	# of conferences	1		MM/DMC

**Working with Destination Ontario**

CCT will continue to align with Destination Ontario. Together the organizations will take a closer look at co-funded projects such as: attribution pixels, referral web-traffic, paid advertising and media influencer opportunities.

Align with Destination Ontario so that CCT leverages their funding and reach				
Tactics	KPI's	Goals	Results	Lead
Co-invest with DeON to organize and execute media influencer event in order to extend earned media reach, increase social engagement and increase visitation	# of events	1		DMC
Advertise with DeON on their OTIC digital channels in order to extend marketing reach for CCT programs and campaigns into the US and Ontario markets	# of ads	2		DMC
Partner in the 2019/2020 Where Am I digital campaign	# of campaigns	1		DMC

**B2B Brand**

In 2019-2020, CCT will continue to position itself as a leader in stakeholder development through B2B stakeholder investment and support programs which will drive stakeholder development and increase economic impact to our regions.

Build the Central Counties Tourism brand in order to build/increase stakeholder trust in B2B programs and support the RTO business model through the telling of success stories.				
Tactics	KPI's	Goals	Results	Lead
Enforce B2B style and support recognition guide	% compliance	80%		DMC/DIR
Re-fresh B2B marketing and communications plan	Completed Plan	Q2		DMC/DIR

Communicate to Industry, Stakeholders and Media the importance of CCT initiatives and Programs				
Tactics	KPI's	Goals	Results	Lead
Draft press releases that showcase CCT partnerships and support programs	# of releases	4		DMC/DIR
Social Media Referral: Complete quarterly YOY comparison for all social channels for B2B, CentralCountiesTourism	# of unique traffic referrals per channel	T: 150 FB: 300 Ista: 250 LIn: 50		

Communicate to Stakeholders information and opportunities in order to help them grow their business

Tactics	KPI's	Goal	Result	Lead
Research and communicate to stakeholders research reports to assist with marketing initiatives	# of reports	2		DIR/MM
Develop marketing opportunities calendar to assist stakeholders with annual budget allocations	# of calendars	1		DMC

**Business Development (Sales) Plan**

Objective: Increase group travel capacity within the region

Support stakeholders in their efforts to engage the group travel market so that they can build successful relationships

Provide opportunities for stakeholders to communicate with group travel visitors so that they drive additional visitation

Capacity Building				
Tactics	KPI's	Goals	Results	Lead
Develop a “group readiness” handbook so that stakeholders understand the needs of various group travel markets and are provided steps to be taken to ensure they are market-ready	Completed Handbook	Q2		BDM
Deliver workshop and one-on-one training for stakeholders wanting to improve their group travel capacity	# of stakeholders participating	50		BDM
Where appropriate, leverage stakeholder investments in group travel capacity building (Fams, courses, supported tradeshow attendance)	\$ Leveraged	\$10,000		BDM

Market Engagement				
Tactics	KPI's	Goals	Results	Lead
Provide education (through workshops and one-on-one) on how group travel tradeshows work, the benefits of attending and how to conduct business at them to see results	# of Stakeholders participating	50		BDM
Provide opportunities for stakeholders to attend tradeshows in partnership with CCT to increase regional presence and allow operators to make direct connections and sales	# of new stakeholders investing in tradeshow attendance	10		BDM
Support, where appropriate, stakeholder bids to attract group travel events	\$ used in support	\$25,000		
Forward leads through CVENT, TEAMS, etc., to appropriate stakeholders for them to be successful in landing the business	% of leads forwarded	90%		BDM
Manage the Sponsor Circle database so that potential groups can leverage funding to bring their events to Central Counties.	% of stakeholders using system	100		BDM



Leveraging Group Visitors				
Tactics	KPI's	Goals	Results	Lead
Grow the partnership with Attractions Ontario to provide stakeholder incentives (coupons) for group travel visitors	# of participating attractions	12		BDM
Leverage stakeholder investment in communicating with and attracting group travel visitors to their location (possible co-op opportunities in group travel verticals, collateral development and distribution, signage at tradeshow, etc.)	\$ leveraged	\$10,000		BDM

## Appendix I

### **2018-2019 Highlights**

The 2018-2019 business plan implemented the first-year recommendations of the 2018-2021 strategic plan adopted by the Central Counties Board of Directors in September 2017. The strategic plan had several milestones associated with year one implementation. The business plan objectives and tactics assisted the organization meet them.

- 1) *Create a target list of municipal officials in the region that have the most short-term potential for tourism development, to meet and advocate on tourism.*

2018 was a municipal election year. Central Counties, in partnership with the regional DMO and select municipal tourism businesses presented a unified voice to municipal councils on the reasons why tourism matters and the resources available to municipalities and stakeholders willing to invest (time, resources, money) in tourism.

- 2) *Work in cooperation with provincial entities to address stakeholder concerns*

The tourism industry was selected for the provincial government's "Red Tape Challenge", which presented all tourism stakeholders the opportunity to express what regulations, bills and laws were making it difficult to successfully operate a tourism business. Information on how to participate was communicated to CCT stakeholders through the B2B newsletter, eBlasts and at the tourism symposiums.

- 3) *Initiate a quarterly calendar of town hall meetings throughout the region to inform and educate on tourism's impact and market readiness.*

Central Counties expanded their municipal Tourism Now meetings to include associations, BIA/Chambers and other tourism focused organizations. In addition, the popular workshop was also posted online as a webinar and information on how to access it was communicated throughout the year to stakeholders.

- 4) *Build working groups or committees across RTO to lead on market readiness assessment: data needs, training, advocacy and awareness, and tourism asset-mapping.*

Central Counties invested in a Research and Development manager who works with municipalities, DMO's and individual stakeholders to assess needs, readiness and assets. In addition, CCT began and completed several Community Tourism Plans which address the above and will be managed by the municipalities or designated committee.

- 5) Develop a 'tourism awareness' regional media relations program and news tracking service for the region – in partnership with tourism organizations (Story ideas, spokespeople, key messages, calendar of events, innovations, non-traditional partnerships, etc.).

Central Counties shared dozens of good news stories about successes stakeholders were having with collaboration with CCT, DMO's and other partnerships. These new business to business social media channels were launched in summer 2018 and continue to grow in reach and engagement.

- 6) *Work with regions to identify a comprehensive program to track key indicators re: spend, visitation, business events, etc.*

In summer 2018, Central Counties added a Research and Development Manager to assist stakeholders understand the importance of collecting and sharing metrics. In addition, the Research and Development Manager analyzed stakeholder postal code data and worked with them comprehend the information and, more importantly, use the information to further business objectives.

- 7) Investigate a visitor tracking program for the region – demographics, travel values, visitor experiences vs expectations

In June 2018, the board recommended that CCT hire a Research and Development Manager to fulfill several deliverables from the plan. The position was filled in August 2018 and using the Environics subscription, CCT was able to provide actionable visitor data tracking for many of its stakeholders.

*8) Continue to develop new experience products and pan regional offers, in cooperation with local tourism organizations*

Central Counties launched the new Temperance and Temptation experiences, engaging more than 30 stakeholders in the programming. In addition, with feedback from municipal and regional partners, CCT continued to develop resources for trails and trails tourism throughout the region.

Research and consultation was also conducted on current capacity of the art segment of the industry in order to determine how best to leverage the skills and assets of the community.

*9) Ensure regional stakeholders adhere to, share and promote the YDH social media feeds*

Central Counties developed and delivered a brand standards guideline document which was provided to all partners to ensure continuity of brand and messaging. Staff worked with stakeholders to ensure proper use of logos and social media tags and launch it at the March 2019 symposium.

*10) Create net pricing itineraries for the travel trade segment and facilitate pilot travel trade fam tour during summer and fall*

Central Counties hosted a travel trade fam tour as part of a CITAP (Canadian Inbound Travel – Asia/Pacific) event organized by CCT. It was determined by the board at the October 2018 board planning session that CCT's effort in group travel are better directed towards capacity building – enabling stakeholders to become market-ready for group travel and then assist them as they break into that market.

### **Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT)**

Markham will be implementing a MAT in January 2019 and Vaughan is poised to implement one in April 2019. Both municipalities will be setting up a new municipal tourism corporation and will control the funds that must be directed to supporting the tourism industry.

Central Counties has been involved in the consultation process and role-out of the MAT in these two communities. While the focus of spending is not yet clear, CCT will continue to work with these two communities (and others who implement a MAT) to recommend alignment of resources for better results.

## Appendix II

### Definitions

In discussing strategy, it is important to have a common understanding of the terms used in the document.

Objectives	Manageable, time-sensitive allocations of resources that move the organization toward the ultimate Strategic Direction. There is a clear link between each objective and a Strategic Direction. Objectives are the backbone of the yearly Business Plan and build on each other year-over-year.
Tactics	Individual activities that support the achievement of Objectives. Each Objective may have several tactics associated with it. Tactics are measurable and are used to gauge organizational effectiveness at achieving the Objectives and moving towards the Strategic Direction.
KPI'S	Key Performance Indicators are the agreed upon outcomes that will be measured to determine the execution effectiveness of each tactic.
Goals	The quantitative and qualitative, agreed-upon target to be achieved for each tactic.
Results	The final measurement of achievement for each tactic.
Outcome	The cumulative affect of results supporting the objective

**Definitions Cont'd**

Operator:	A tourism-related business or organization that is providing an end product/service that is utilized directly by consumers.
Partner:	An organization that supports the tourism agenda without directly owning the products/services that are used to deliver the tourism experience. These include Municipalities, BIAs, Chambers of Commerce, DMOs and Festival Organizers.
Stakeholders:	An umbrella term to capture all operators, partners and individuals who support and/or benefit from tourism.
Region(s):	In its singular, Region is referring to Central Counties Tourism Region (RTO 6). When used as a plural, Regions refers to the three sub-regions that make up Central Counties borders. These are Durham Region, York Region and The Hills of Headwaters tourism region.
DMO(s):	The staff and board of directors of the three regions that work to further tourism within their borders.
Categories:	The four product categories identified as strengths for CCT. They are: 1) Four Season Outdoor (leisure), 2) Small Towns, Villages, Rural Landscapes (Leisure), 3) Golf (Leisure and Sport), 4) Group Travel (sport, MC&IT, group tour)
Leisure Market:	Visitors travelling for personal reasons, not as a group or for a sport tournament or business meeting/convention











**Acronyms**

CCT	Central Counties Tourism
HTA	Headwaters Tourism Association
YRAC	York Region Arts and Culture
Durham	Durham Region Tourism
DeON	Destination Ontario (formerly Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation)
TIAO	Tourism Industry Association of Ontario
DC	Destination Canada (Federal Tourism Agency)
IDO	Investment Development Office (Ministry of Tourism)
Q(1-4)	Fiscal Quarters Q1 Apr-Jun, Q2 Jul-Sep, Q3 Oct-Dec, Q4 Jan-Mar


**Appendix III**

**Ideal Guests**

In 2017, Central Counties commissioned Strategic Navigator to complete an Audience Research study (Appendix II) to ensure that audiences identified in the 2014 Destination Management Plan were still relevant and to identify emerging audiences. The research identified eight types of visitors who are currently aware of and visit the region. These are:

 <p><b>Family Fun Fan</b> (wants to have a good time with the family)</p>	 <p><b>Outdoor Enthusiast</b> (enjoys getting outside, enjoying fresh air and connecting with nature)</p>	 <p><b>Backroads Explorer</b> (wants to discover towns and experiences off the beaten path)</p>	 <p><b>Culture Connoisseur</b> (enjoys food, music, arts and culture)</p>
 <p><b>Thrill Seeker</b> (enjoys lots of excitement)</p>	 <p><b>Knowledge Hunter</b> (Seeks to understand more about the region, its history and its people)</p>	 <p><b>Pampered Traveler</b> (Loves to relax and get pampered)</p>	 <p><b>Shopping Enthusiast</b> (Enjoys shopping and finding great deals)</p>

Central Counties’ top three recent visitor types are Family Fun Fan, Outdoor Enthusiast and Backroads Explorer who represent more than 60% of the visitors that come to the region.

		Prospective Visitors %	Recent Visitors %	
Family Fun Fan - who wants to have a good time with the family		21	25	
Outdoor Enthusiast - who enjoys getting outside, enjoying fresh air and connecting with nature		17	21	
Backroads Explorer - who wants to discover towns and experiences off the beaten path		11	15	
 <p><b>TRAVELER PERSONA</b></p>	Culture Connoisseur - who enjoys food, music, arts and culture		16	13
	Thrill Seeker - who enjoys lots of excitement		6	10
	Knowledge Hunter - who seeks to understand more about the region, its history and its people		11	8
	Pampered traveler - who loves to relax and get pampered		10	5
	Shopping Enthusiast - who enjoys shopping and finding great deals		7	4

Perspective visitors are more apt to be a little bit older and less likely to travel with kids. The Culture Connoisseur persona becomes the third visitor type, replacing Backroads Explorer for prospective visitors.

Central Counties uses Destination Ontario’s Traveller Segment Profile to identify audiences and has been focusing on:

- Up and Coming Explorers (Family Fun Fan)
- Nature Lovers (Outdoor Enthusiast)
- Connected Explorers (Backroads Explorer)

It is interesting to note that the three segments CCT has focused on over the last three years represent more than 60% of current visitation. Below is a brief description of each segment.

### Up and Coming Explorers

This group consists of young families, aged 18-34 with kids. Many have a diverse background – 45% are visible minorities and 40% are immigrants. They are recently affluent and emerging into a new life phase that includes enjoying new experiences like travel. Visiting friends and family IS NOT a primary travel driver. Their travel experiences start with what is “nearby” and typically considered a core tourism attraction. This group wants to explore and learn new things. 72% see learning as the core benefit of travel, especially when explorations are guided. 70% plan travel to see major sites and attractions.

### Nature Lovers

Nature Lovers are typically families with kids. This group has a passion for experiencing the great outdoors together. Travel for them is all about exploring new, undiscovered places off the beaten path. With a lower than average travel budget, these travellers are happy with the basics – camping in a tent, spending time as a family, and taking in all the beauty around them. Because spending time outdoors means an opportunity to enrich family bonds.

### Connected Explorers

Connected Explorers are young couples under 40, both with and without children. They are a confident, youthful, optimistic group. They have a deep-seated need to travel and expose themselves to many new, authentic experiences. Travel for them is about expanding their horizons, and they are looking for a fully packed schedule of activities. Technology is a key part of travel. They use it at all phases of a trip including researching, booking, planning and especially when sharing their travel experiences once back home

The Audience Research indicates that of the people who have not already been to Central Counties, the most likely visitors will be Family Fun Fans, Outdoor Enthusiasts and Culture Connoisseurs. Culture Connoisseurs translate to Knowledge Seekers in the DeON Traveller Segment Profile.

### Knowledge Seekers

Travellers in this segment are looking to appreciate and understand the places they visit. Their trips are typically about expanding their knowledge and stimulating their minds rather than resting and relaxing. They are driven by a desire to explore culture, history, architecture and natural landmarks and often focus on sight-seeing, museums, galleries and historical sites.