

Tourism Cowichan

2025 One-Year Tactical Plan

DESIGNATED RECIPIENT: Tourism Cowichan Society
DESIGNATED ACCOMMODATION AREA: Cowichan Valley Regional District
DATE PREPARED: October 21, 2024
MRDT REPEAL DATE: July 1, 2027
FIVE YEAR PERIOD: July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2027

Section 1: Overview and Update to Five-Year Strategic Business Plan

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

As we look ahead to the next year, our strategic business plan for the Cowichan region must adapt to the evolving needs and insights of our stakeholders and changing economic conditions. While our overarching goals remain focused on increasing tourism revenue and fostering stakeholder engagement, our marketing efforts can be more effectively targeted to drive growth, manage seasonal and geographical dispersion and enhance collaboration across the region.

We're making slight adjustments to our marketing objectives to better align with the needs of the region. This includes a stronger emphasis on promoting diverse accommodation options to attract a wider range of visitors, particularly during off-peak seasons. We will also focus on community-specific marketing strategies that highlight unique offerings and address the distinct challenges faced by different areas within the Cowichan region. Additionally, we aim to foster greater collaboration among stakeholders by developing marketing initiatives that showcase joint efforts and amplify the voices of underrepresented sectors. These strategic shifts in our marketing approach are designed to not only achieve our targets but also to create a more vibrant and resilient tourism landscape in the Cowichan region.

Mission

Tourism in the Cowichan Valley region is a significant contributor to the region's economic and social well-being, with the region being recognized as a premier destination for leisure getaways and vacations.

Vision

Contribute to increasing the economic and social benefits of a thriving tourism industry through focused, industry driven and professionally managed marketing and promotion of the region into the nearby markets; and supporting the efforts of regional, provincial, and national destination marketing.

Brand Strategy

As we move into 2025, Cowichan's brand strategy will continue to emphasize the core values of warmth, authenticity and simplicity, while also adapting to the evolving needs and expectations of our target audiences. The strategy will focus on deepening the connection between visitors and the local community, ensuring that every interaction feels personal, heartfelt and meaningful. By

promoting the region's unique features, we aim to create an experience that both attracts visitors but also leaves a lasting impression, encouraging repeat visits and strong word-of-mouth referrals.

In 2025, our marketing efforts will be tailored to highlight unique experiences that set Cowichan apart from other destinations. This includes a focus on promoting year-round attractions that encourage seasonal and geographical dispersion, as well as a concerted effort to spotlight underrepresented sectors within the region, such as agritourism and cultural tourism. This strategy aims to increase visitation and revenue as well as strengthen the region's reputation as a welcoming, down-to-earth place where simple pleasures and genuine connections are at the heart of every visitor experience.

Anticipated Challenges

As we continue to promote Cowichan's unique offerings, we must identify and address potential hurdles such as accommodation shortages, transportation limitations and workforce constraints that could impact our ability to attract and retain visitors.

- **Accommodation Shortages:** The Cowichan region is grappling with a significant shortage of tourism accommodations, both in terms of quality and quantity, which has been exacerbated by the loss of short-term rental options due to recent provincial regulations. These short-term rentals previously played a crucial role in providing flexible and diverse lodging choices for visitors, particularly during peak and off-peak seasons. With their reduction, stakeholders feel the region's ability to accommodate the growing number of travelers has been impacted.
- **Economic Uncertainty and Consumer Behaviours:** With inflation and economic uncertainty affecting consumer spending, visitors have become more price-sensitive and have less disposable income for leisure travel. The marketing approach will need to be adaptive, potentially promoting affordability of the region while still highlighting its unique, high-quality experiences. Encouraging longer stays and higher spending per visitor will be more challenging under the current economic conditions.
- **Transportation Limitations:** Transportation limitations present a significant marketing challenge for Cowichan, affecting both the ease of reaching the region and the ability to explore it once visitors arrive. The lack of public transportation options within and to the Cowichan region from nearby communities can make it difficult for travelers to access different parts of the area, particularly the more secluded towns and attractions. This challenge is compounded by ongoing issues with BC Ferries, which often faces delays and limited capacity, making it difficult for visitors coming from the mainland to plan their trips with confidence. Additionally, ongoing challenges with major airlines, such as limited flight availability and high costs, further hinder accessibility for travelers from other regions or countries.
- **Workforce Housing and Staff Shortages:** The ongoing challenges of workforce housing and staff shortages continue to affect local businesses, particularly during off-peak

seasons. Efforts to boost visitation during shoulder seasons may face difficulties if businesses cannot fulfill their hours or services due to staff shortages.

- **Digital Readiness Among Stakeholders:** A lack of digital readiness among some local stakeholders remains a challenge, affecting the quality and consistency of user-generated content (UGC). This could hinder Cowichan's ability to compete with other destinations that are more digitally advanced and connected.
- **Stakeholder Collaboration:** Maintaining strong relationships and collaboration between local businesses, Indigenous communities, tourism partners and local government is essential for cohesive branding and marketing strategies. Ensuring that all parties are aligned can be complex and time-consuming.
- **Lack of Awareness and Highway Appeal:** Despite the welcoming nature of the towns within Cowichan, the area is not immediately inviting or easily recognizable from the highway. This can make it difficult for potential visitors to find and access the charming communities that make up the region. The towns are tucked away, and without clear, inviting signage or well-known landmarks, travelers may pass by without realizing the rich experiences that await them just off the main roads.

KEY LEARNINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

2024 Marketing Efforts

Throughout 2024, Tourism Cowichan executed a robust and multifaceted marketing strategy aimed at increasing brand awareness, driving visitation and extending visitor stays across the region. Key initiatives included:

Seasonal Campaigns

The "Boldly Go" spring campaign leveraged digital, print and television channels to target short-haul markets in Victoria and the Lower Mainland. The campaign was executed from March through June, utilizing Connected TV ads, pause ads, sponsored content, and geo-targeted digital display ads, all of which demonstrated strong engagement and click-through rates.

The fall campaign, "Your Official Invitation to Visit Cowichan," launched in September and continued to build on the region's brand positioning of "Warm hearts. Open arms. Simple pleasures." This campaign included a multi-channel approach targeting BC markets with email marketing, social media ads, paid search, BC Ferries ads, radio and TV commercials, as well as sponsored content and display advertising in collaboration with Vancouver Is Awesome, Curiosity Vancouver, and NowMedia Group.

While digital channels were a primary focus, traditional print advertising remained a key tactic for reaching older demographics. Print ads were strategically placed in publications like BC Road Trips Guide and Edible Magazine, focusing on shoulder seasons to drive off-peak visitation.

Collaboration and Partnerships

Tourism Cowichan partnered with various media outlets and content creators, such as Bell Media, CTV, Vancouver Is Awesome, BC Food and Wine Radio, and local influencers, to create content that highlighted the region's attractions. Collaborating with value-aligned content creators and micro-influencers for emotionally authentic storytelling and short-form video content, continues to result in the highest level of engagement on organic social media channels. Partnerships with platforms like GetintheLoop continued to amplify local agritourism experiences, resulting in significant reach and engagement for small businesses in the region.

Content Development and Digital Readiness

Significant investments were made in content acquisition, including new photography, video assets, and the development of an itinerary builder functionality on the Tourism Cowichan website to enhance trip-planning capabilities for visitors. This tool aims to encourage geographical dispersion and responsible travel within the region. Tracking usage will also provide Tourism Cowichan with valuable insights on visitor interests and travel demand.

Key Learnings

The marketing efforts laid a strong foundation for promoting Cowichan, with successful campaigns and valuable insights that will inform strategies in 2025 and beyond. These were some of the key takeaways from 2024.

1. **Importance of Digital Engagement:** The 2024 campaigns demonstrated that digital advertising, particularly geo-targeted display ads, Connected TV and social media, continues to be highly effective in engaging target audiences. The success of these channels underlines the importance of maintaining and expanding digital marketing efforts to reach potential visitors at various stages of their travel planning.
2. **Content Diversity and Inclusivity is Key:** The use of diverse models and inclusive storytelling in marketing content resonated well with audiences, reinforcing the need to continue developing and promoting content that reflects the diverse and authentic experiences available in the Cowichan region.
3. **Challenges in Stakeholder Digital Readiness:** A recurring challenge has been the digital readiness of local stakeholders. Increasing stakeholders' ability to produce and share brand-aligned content will be critical for amplifying the regional marketing efforts. Ongoing education and support for stakeholders in digital marketing practices will be essential moving forward.
4. **Accommodation and Transportation as Growth Barriers:** Despite successful marketing efforts, the limitations in accommodation availability and public transportation remain significant barriers to growth. Addressing these infrastructural challenges will be key to sustaining and increasing visitation, particularly during peak seasons and as visitor interest in the region continues to grow.
5. **Adaptation to Economic Conditions:** With economic uncertainties influencing consumer behaviours, it will be important to highlight the affordability and unique appeal of the Cowichan region to help attract visitors who are more price-sensitive during times of economic fluctuation.

OVERALL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 1: Increase Revenue from Visitation

To remain competitive and effectively respond to shifting visitor expectations, our current objectives, focused on increasing overnight stays, occupancy, revenue per available room and awareness, should evolve. While these objectives remain critical, they need to be more strategically targeted to address specific barriers, such as the limited variety of accommodations and the challenges of boosting occupancy during shoulder and off-peak seasons. As such, we have adjusted the objectives as outlined below:

- **Increase Awareness of Diverse Accommodation Options:** Monitor via engagement metrics such as website visits, click-through rates and social media interactions related to accommodation content.
- **Increase Occupancy Rates During Shoulder and Off-Peak Seasons:** Measured by occupancy data and seasonal booking trends.
- **Improve Conversion Rates for Accommodation Bookings:** Measured by the percentage of website visitors who complete a booking, particularly those directed through marketing campaigns. (Not measurable via TourismCowichan.com, only via individual stakeholders).
- **Enhance Collaboration in Marketing Efforts:** Measured by the number of joint campaigns, co-branded content and packaged offerings developed and executed.

Goal 2: Manage growth and benefit through seasonal and geographical dispersion

Our original targets (dispersion of share to shoulder and off-seasons, higher off-season occupancy and increased off-season Revenue Per Available Room) were set to manage growth and distribute the benefits of tourism more evenly throughout the year. However, it has become clear that simply aiming for these outcomes is not enough. The tourism landscape requires a more focused approach that directly addresses the underlying challenges of seasonal and geographical dispersion. As such, we have adjusted the objectives as outlined below:

- **Increase Off-Season Visitor Engagement:** Measured by website traffic, social media activity and inquiries related to off-season events and experiences.
- **Boost Visitor Numbers in Underrepresented Areas:** Measured by visitor surveys, website analytics and bookings in these areas.
- **Enhance Off-Season Campaign Effectiveness:** Measured by campaign-specific metrics such as reach, engagement and conversion rates.
- **Promote Year-Round Attractions:** Aim for an increase in mentions and feature content across marketing channels.

Goal 3: Increase stakeholder collaboration and export readiness

To strengthen the region's tourism offerings and competitiveness, our original objectives focused on increasing collaboration between stakeholders, expanding the inventory of

market/export-ready products and improving the Net Promoter Score (NPS). While these targets are valuable, they need to be refined to more effectively address the current challenges. There is an increasing demand for better coordination in marketing efforts, more robust support for underrepresented sectors, and stronger promotion of market-ready products. As such, we have adjusted the objectives as outlined below:

- **Increase Collaborative Marketing Efforts:** Measured by the number of joint initiatives, co-branded content, and cross-promotions developed.
- **Expand Visibility of Market/Export-Ready Products:** Measured by mentions and features in marketing materials, social media, and website content.
- **Improve Stakeholder Satisfaction with Marketing Efforts:** Measured by annual stakeholder surveys.
- **Support Underrepresented Sectors:** Measured by the diversity of businesses featured in campaigns and the number of sectors actively engaged in marketing initiatives.
- **Enhance Engagement with Community Partners:** Increased engagement with Cowichan Valley Regional District, municipal partners, and Indigenous communities to understand and support tourism development priorities.

STRATEGIES

- **Enhance Collaboration and Partnerships:** Continue to align with Destination BC's brand and marketing programs, and collaborate with Indigenous Tourism BC and First Nations in the Cowichan region to create and promote Indigenous tourism experiences. Actively engage in cooperative marketing, travel trade and media opportunities with 4TVI, and collaborate with neighboring DMOs to include Cowichan in touring and sector-based marketing programs.
- **Encourage Sustainable Tourism and Responsible Visitor Education:** Promote eco-friendly/sustainable travel practices by encouraging visitors to minimize their environmental impact and respect the natural and cultural resources of Cowichan. This involves recognizing the Indigenous stewards of the land and waters, and taking meaningful action to ensure that tourism does not cause harm, but rather provides benefits to First Nations communities. Highlight sustainable tourism operators and create educational campaigns that provide guidelines on responsible behavior, such as reducing waste, respecting wildlife and supporting local conservation efforts.
- **Promote Unique and Diverse Accommodation Options:** Create targeted messaging that showcase a variety of accommodation types, from luxury resorts to budget-friendly options, to attract different visitor segments. Highlight unique stays, such as boutique hotels, B&Bs and vacation rentals. Tie content to local experiences directly to accommodation options, such as itineraries that pair popular attractions with nearby lodging.
- **Seasonal Marketing Approach:** Develop and launch seasonal content that promotes special offers and packages for shoulder and off-peak seasons. This content should focus on the benefits of visiting the Cowichan region during quieter times, such as fewer

crowds and exclusive experiences like off season events, festivals and outdoor adventure opportunities.

- **Geographically Targeted Content:** Develop content that specifically promotes lesser-known communities and attractions within the Cowichan region. Use geo-targeting in digital ads to reach audiences in key markets, encouraging them to explore these underrepresented areas.
- **Develop Joint Marketing Campaigns:** Create and promote campaigns that involve multiple stakeholders, allowing businesses to pool resources and reach broader audiences. Consider creating and promoting off-season packages that combine accommodations with dining, tours and other experiences.
- **Highlight Market-Ready Products in Promotional Content:** Prioritize the inclusion of market-ready products in all marketing materials, including social media, website content, and visitor guides. By giving these products greater visibility, we can drive awareness and attract both domestic and international visitors.
- **Support Community Organizations and Events:** Assist community organizations in developing events that draw visitation to the region. This includes providing marketing support and helping to improve market and export readiness so that local operators can offer new experiences, especially in the shoulder and off-seasons.
- **Create Sector-Specific Marketing Initiatives:** Launch targeted marketing initiatives that focus on underrepresented sectors, ensuring these businesses are featured prominently in regional campaigns. This will help elevate the visibility of diverse tourism offerings and ensure a more inclusive promotion of the Cowichan region.
- **Facilitate Stakeholder Workshops and Networking Events:** Organize workshops and networking events to encourage collaboration among stakeholders and provide training on effective marketing strategies. These events will also offer a platform for sharing best practices and fostering a cohesive tourism community.
- **Improve Visitor Market Research:** Enhance visitor market research to better allocate marketing resources and optimize programs. Use audience segmentation tools like MobileScapes to identify key demographics and tailor campaigns to their preferences, helping Cowichan stand out in a competitive landscape.

TARGET MARKETS

Primary Audience

Authentic Experiencers and Cultural Explorers

Seeking immersive cultural, heritage and local experiences. They are interested in wine and culinary tourism, agritourism, arts, heritage and culture. They value quality over quantity in their travel experiences and are willing to spend more for unique and authentic offerings.

- Geography:
 - British Columbia (Victoria and Lower Mainland)
 - Alberta (Calgary and Edmonton)

- Washington State
- Demographics:
 - Couples aged 45 and older with higher incomes (\$100,000+)
 - Typically traveling without children
- Behaviour:
 - Meticulous planners who appreciate curated itineraries and detailed information about destinations
 - Respond well to marketing that highlights high-end, culturally rich experiences such as wine tours, culinary events, art festivals, and heritage sites
 - Drawn to content that showcases the Cowichan region's distinctive local character, including farm-to-table dining and boutique accommodations

Secondary Audience

Free Spirits

Seeking unique, adventurous activities and experiences. They are attracted to outdoor adventures, including hiking, mountain biking, marine activities and golf. They also have a strong interest in arts, culture and local cuisine, but their emphasis is more on experiencing these activities in an active, engaging manner.

- Geography:
 - British Columbia (Victoria and Lower Mainland)
 - Alberta (Calgary and Edmonton)
 - Washington State
- Demographics:
 - Families with children and solo travelers or young couples aged 25-40
 - Middle to upper-middle income levels
- Behaviour:
 - Spontaneous travelers who are influenced by social media, travel blogs and digital advertising
 - Likely to travel during shoulder seasons to avoid crowds and are drawn to promotions that offer adventure and value
 - Responds well to dynamic and visually appealing content that emphasizes the adventurous side of the Cowichan region, including outdoor activities, local festivals and unique dining experiences

Audience Insights

	Why they're coming	Unique regional appeal
Culinary Connoisseurs	Seeking exceptional food and wine experiences that showcase the local flavors	Home to a variety of boutique wineries, farm-to-table restaurants, and artisan food producers, offering wine tours, culinary festivals

	and craftsmanship of the region.	and immersive dining experiences that highlight the region's rich agricultural heritage.
Outdoor Adventurers	Looking for diverse and challenging outdoor activities, from hiking and mountain biking to kayaking and marine adventures.	Stunning natural landscapes, including forests, mountains and coastlines, provide the perfect backdrop for outdoor recreation. With well-maintained trails, beautiful waterways and opportunities for both land and water-based activities, the region caters to adventurers of all levels.
Cultural Explorers	Interested in discovering the cultural and historical richness of the region, including Indigenous heritage, arts and local traditions.	Deep connection to Indigenous culture, with opportunities to visit galleries, attend cultural events and explore historical sites. The vibrant arts scene, local markets and heritage sites provide a rich, immersive experience for those seeking to understand the cultural fabric of the region.
Wellness Seekers	In search of a peaceful, rejuvenating escape that offers wellness activities such as yoga, spa treatments, and nature retreats.	Selection of wellness retreats, spas, and quiet, nature-rich settings, make it an ideal destination for those looking to unwind and reconnect with themselves. The region's slower pace and natural beauty provide the perfect environment for relaxation and rejuvenation.
Arts and Crafts Enthusiasts	Drawn to the local arts scene, seeking out handcrafted goods, art galleries, and opportunities to engage with local artists.	Numerous galleries, studios and artisan shops showcasing the work of local creators. Visitors can explore the region's artistic heritage through workshops, gallery tours and craft markets, connecting with the creativity that defines the local culture.
Boating and Marine Enthusiasts	Seeking scenic waterways, safe harbors, and opportunities for boating, sailing, and marine exploration in a picturesque and tranquil setting.	Calm, sheltered waters, numerous marinas and easy access to the Gulf Islands. The region's coastline is dotted with charming seaside communities, making it a base for exploring the surrounding waters, enjoying waterfront dining and experiencing the rich marine life through activities like fishing, kayaking and wildlife watching.

Section 2: One-Year Tactical Plan with Performance Measures

MARKETING | CONSUMER ASSET DEVELOPMENT

Tourism Cowichan will enhance its visual and written content, aligning with an elevated strategic focus on sustainable tourism, refined brand communication and strategic growth management. This year's asset development will continue to embrace principles of diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility across all media, ensuring that the region's diverse offerings are authentically represented. Particular emphasis will be placed on content that highlights the accommodation, transportation, and arts and culture sectors, addressing stakeholder concerns about underrepresentation in these key areas.

Tactics

Photography	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Images that feature a wide range of accommodation options, from luxury resorts and boutique hotels to cozy bed-and-breakfasts, unique vacation rentals, and camping options.• Imagery that showcases Cowichan's rich cultural heritage, including Indigenous art, local galleries, and community festivals.• Images that emphasize Cowichan's commitment to sustainability, such as eco-friendly accommodations, green transportation options, and visitors engaging in responsible travel practices.• Moments that reflect the warmth and friendliness of the Cowichan community, such as locals greeting visitors, families enjoying outdoor activities together or people sharing meals at local eateries.
Video	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create videos that showcase a day in the life of various community members, such as a local farmer, artist or guide.• Videos that include visitor tips on how to explore Cowichan responsibly, interviews with local conservationists, and footage of ongoing sustainability projects.• Capture real visitors sharing their experiences in Cowichan, focusing on what made their trip special. This could include families talking about their favorite activities, couples reflecting on a romantic getaway or solo travelers sharing the hidden gems they discovered.

Written Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stories that feature profiles of local artisans, Indigenous cultural practices, community events and historical landmarks. • Continue to expand seasonal content for the region. • Create content about specific communities, highlight their proximity to other major communities or landmarks. • Develop resource articles that provide practical information on accommodations and travel options in Cowichan. Include guides on choosing the right type of lodging, tips for booking during peak and off-peak seasons, and detailed information on transportation options within the region. • Create preview articles and recaps of key events happening in Cowichan.
------------------------	--

Implementation Plan

In 2025, asset development will broaden and diversify Cowichan's brand portfolio to enhance marketing initiatives aligned with sustainability and strategic growth objectives.	
Quantifiable Objective	Showcase the region's unique appeal, promote sustainable tourism and responsible travel, and foster emotional connections to support marketing and engagement goals.
Rationale	Strengthening the asset base enhances marketing efforts, promotes sustainable tourism, manages visitor distribution and encourages community relationships.
Action Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop detailed content creation guidelines and content acquisition calendar based on seasonality, sustainability and DEIA principles. • Schedule and conduct diverse content creation sessions across varied locations. • Utilize influencer partnerships to generate authentic content from their travel experiences in the region. • Engage with community stakeholders for authentic representation in content. • Integrate new assets into marketing channels and distribute to partners.
Potential Partnerships	Environmental NGOs, cultural organizations, local businesses/tourism operators, Indigenous communities, content creators, Destination BC Brand Team.

Resources	Photographers, videographers, content writers, Indigenous communities, DEIA and sustainability consultants.
Sources of Funding	MRDT, Destination BC Co-op Dollars, local business contributions, sustainability grants.
Timeframe	Ongoing, with adjustments based on seasonal tourism trends and stakeholder feedback.
Budget	Photography: \$25,000 Video: \$25,000 Written Content: \$10,000 Total: \$60,000
Performance Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tracking the number of visits to specific web pages that feature the new content provides direct insight into the effectiveness of the marketing materials in attracting interest. Social media platforms are a primary channel for digital marketing and a critical area where new content is likely to be consumed and shared. Engagement metrics such as likes, shares, comments, and video views provide immediate feedback on the content's appeal and reach.

MARKETING | MEDIA ADVERTISING & PRODUCTION

Tourism Cowichan's 2025 media strategy is centered on capturing the attention of targeted visitors and driving meaningful engagement while fostering the long-term growth of our brand. Our approach leverages a diverse mix of media channels to deliver authentic, compelling messages that resonate with our core audiences. In alignment with Cowichan's core values of warmth, authenticity and generosity, the strategy emphasizes responsible travel, sustainability, and truth and reconciliation, ensuring these principles are thoughtfully woven into all advertising and content efforts.

Tactics

Print (Newspaper/ Magazine)	Utilizing regional newspapers and magazines, this involves placing advertisements that resonate with niche audiences who value content from publications in their communities. Print will target consumers likely to respond to a call to action to plan and book travel, particularly those who appreciate detailed, in-depth articles and ads in print media.
Television / Radio	Running commercials and integrated content on major regional broadcast channels like CTV, Global BC and ChekTV, particularly during news and prime-time slots to maximize exposure. This tactic will utilize TV and radio's extensive reach to promote shoulder season campaigns and special offers, directly increasing visitor nights and spending.
Email Marketing	Developing a targeted email marketing strategy that focuses on building and nurturing a list of 'owned' leads, which allows for direct communication and personalized marketing. This approach will aim to increase subscriber engagement through regular updates and promotions, driving direct bookings and encouraging repeat visits through continual engagement.
Out-of-Home	Invest in strategic out-of-home advertising, such as table-top ads and posters with BC Ferries. Showcase stunning imagery of Cowichan's landscapes and experiences to capture the attention of urban travelers looking for a down-to-earth travel experience.
Paid Search/Search Engine Marketing	Using targeted ads on search engines to capture the attention of potential visitors at the crucial moment they are researching or planning a vacation. Paid search will help to generate immediate bookings by optimizing ad spend based on search trends and user intent, focusing on high conversion keywords related to travel and tourism.

Paid Social Media	Leveraging platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest and X to run targeted ads that promote Cowichan's attractions, events and travel packages. The ads will drive engagement and conversions through compelling calls-to-action, special offers, and interactive content that promotes immediate booking and enhances brand awareness.
Display and Third-Party Advertising Partnerships (Digital)	Utilizing display ads on various digital platforms and partnering with third-party websites to place contextual ads that align with the interests of potential visitors. They aim to maximize brand awareness through widespread visibility on popular sites and blogs, targeting right-fit consumers with dynamic, visually appealing ads designed to encourage travel and exploration of the region.

Implementation Plan

Implement a year-long, multi-channel media booking strategy for Tourism Cowichan with seasonal content updates to maximize budget efficiency and campaign effectiveness.	
Quantifiable Objective	To increase awareness and drive visitation by delivering targeted, compelling messages that resonate with the region's key audiences. Ultimately, the media campaign will aim to enhance the Cowichan brand, attract high-value visitors and support the long-term growth and sustainability of the local tourism industry.
Rationale	Booking media on an annual basis allows for better negotiation rates and placement opportunities, ensuring continuous visibility. Seasonal content updates keep the messaging fresh and aligned with consumer interests and behaviors that vary throughout the year. Multi-channel media advertising will ensure broad coverage and targeted reach, effectively communicating Cowichan's unique offerings to potential visitors.
Action Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to refine the visual identity and value proposition of Cowichan as a destination. • Coordinate with media outlets to secure annual contracts for various advertising channels including print, television, digital, and social media. This will be done early in the year to ensure cost-effectiveness and secure prime advertising spots. • Develop a flexible content calendar that aligns with seasonal themes and promotions. This involves creating a suite of adaptable templates and core messages that can be customized easily. • Schedule and execute content updates at the start of each season. This includes updating visuals, promotional offers, and specific

	calls-to-action that reflect the current seasonal appeal of the Cowichan region.
Potential Partnerships	Regional TV stations, print publications and online publications to showcase the area's diverse offerings. Collaborate with local businesses, cultural organizations and event promoters to ensure content is reflective of Cowichan's diverse offerings and upcoming events.
Resources	Long-term agreements with a media planner and outlets, creative agencies/designers for content development and a dedicated marketing team to manage campaigns.
Sources of Funding	MRDT, Destination BC Co-op Dollars, supplemented by partnerships and possibly local business contributions.
Timeframe	Annual media planning and booking, with content updates occurring at the transition of each season (spring, summer, fall, winter).
Budget	<p>Television: \$70,000</p> <p>Radio: \$15,000</p> <p>Print: \$40,000</p> <p>Out-of-Home: \$20,000</p> <p>Email Marketing: \$15,000</p> <p>Paid Search Engine Marketing: \$20,000</p> <p>Paid Social Media: \$75,000</p> <p>Digital Display & Native: \$50,000</p> <p>Brand Creative: \$20,000</p> <p>Total: \$325,000</p>
Performance Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor the cost-effectiveness of annual media bookings compared to previous season-by-season bookings, assessing spending against reach and engagement metrics. • Evaluate the impact of seasonal content changes through metrics such as click-through rates, conversion rates, and social media engagement specific to seasonal promotions. • Track year-long brand visibility across all channels, measuring fluctuations and impacts based on seasonal content adjustments. • Gather continuous feedback from stakeholders and visitors to refine and adapt content for future seasonal updates, ensuring the messaging remains dynamic and responsive to market trends and visitor feedback.

MARKETING | WEBSITE

TourismCowichan.com will continue to undergo enhancements in 2025 to align with our broader objectives of increasing visitation, promoting off-season travel and enhancing stakeholder collaboration. These updates will focus on optimizing user experience and functionality, ensuring the website serves as a comprehensive and engaging portal for both potential visitors and local stakeholders.

Key updates will include the integration of an interactive itinerary builder that allows users to customize their travel plans, pairing local attractions with accommodations and dining options. This feature will support our strategy of promoting diverse accommodation types and encouraging geographical and seasonal dispersion by highlighting lesser-known communities and off-peak experiences.

To further align with our objectives, the website will emphasize responsible travel and sustainability through dedicated content and resources. We will also prioritize the inclusion of market-ready products, promoting them prominently across the site to attract both domestic and international visitors. These enhancements will not only improve content depth but also support our broader goals of strengthening stakeholder collaboration and promoting the unique offerings of the Cowichan region in a cohesive, impactful manner.

Tactics

Content Enhancement and Optimization	<p>Conduct regular content audits to ensure that all information on the site is up-to-date, relevant and aligned with current marketing objectives. This includes updating seasonal content, ensuring accurate event listings and refreshing visuals as needed.</p> <p>Increase the depth of content on lesser-known communities and attractions within the Cowichan region. Develop articles, guides and multimedia content that highlight unique local experiences, including seasonal activities and off-peak travel opportunities.</p> <p>Create dedicated sections of the website focused on sustainable tourism practices, including responsible travel tips, eco-friendly accommodations, and activities that support local conservation efforts. Feature stories on local businesses that prioritize sustainability and how visitors can contribute to preserving the region’s natural beauty.</p>
Itinerary Builder Integration	<p>Integrate the newly developed itinerary builder tool on the website to encourage use of the tool and monitor how it’s being used both to improve usability on the website, but also understand what activities are most</p>

	popular amongst potential visitors. Continue to build out curated, seasonal itineraries that guide visitors through multi-day experiences in the region, with a focus on off-peak travel.
Cross-Promotion of Stakeholder Content	Collaborate with local businesses to feature their content on the website, such as blog posts, special offers and guest articles. This not only enhances the site's content but also strengthens ties with stakeholders and promotes a wider range of regional offerings.
Expansion of Stakeholder Portal	To better support our local businesses and enhance their digital readiness, we propose a significant expansion of the existing stakeholder portal on TourismCowichan.com. Based on stakeholder research, we know that our partners are seeking more robust resources and tools to help them effectively market their offerings and engage with potential visitors online. They have expressed a desire for easily accessible marketing materials, training resources, and more opportunities for collaboration that can help them elevate their digital presence and align more closely with the region's broader marketing strategies.
User Experience Improvements	Continuously update the website's design and functionality to ensure a seamless, intuitive, and accessible user experience, including faster load times, responsive design and accessibility features to cater to all users.

Implementation Plan

Continue to enrich the Tourism Cowichan website to better showcase the region's unique offerings and facilitate user engagement and conversion to stakeholder activities and bookings.	
Quantifiable Objective	Increase average time on site by enhancing content quality and interactivity, grow the number of referrals to stakeholder websites, enhance user engagement metrics, including sessions, unique visitors and page views, and boost conversions through strategically placed calls-to-action and referral links.
Rationale	Website enhancements aim to integrate several strategic goals to optimize its effectiveness as a promotional tool.
Action Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schedule quarterly content audits to review and update website information, ensuring it remains accurate, relevant and aligned with strategies.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign content creators to research and develop new articles, guides and multimedia content focused on lesser-known communities, sustainable tourism and seasonal activities. • Work with local sustainability experts to create content that aligns with Cowichan's values, including responsible travel tips and eco-friendly business profiles. • Set up meetings with local businesses to discuss opportunities for cross-promotion and content contributions. Establish guidelines for content submission. • Work with marketing and design teams to ensure that high-priority products are featured prominently on the website. • Optimize website architecture for speed, responsiveness and search engine visibility. • Leverage Google Analytics to monitor user behavior and adjust strategies accordingly.
Potential Partnerships	Local tourism operators, cultural groups, and event organizers. Tech firms for web development and interactive tools integration.
Resources	Creative and web development agency, marketing and content creation teams, technology tools for itinerary building and interactive mapping.
Sources of Funding	MRDT, Destination BC Co-op Dollars.
Timeframe	Ongoing, plus updates for seasonality.
Budget	\$30,000
Performance Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track enhancements made to the website (new features, content updates). • Monitor the implementation of interactive tools like the itinerary builder and events calendar. • Analyze improvements in user engagement metrics (time on site, page views). • Evaluate increases in referrals to local businesses and stakeholder websites. • Review user feedback and conduct surveys to gauge satisfaction with the new features and content.

MARKETING | SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT (ORGANIC)

Tourism Cowichan will elevate its social media presence by leveraging user-generated content (UGC) through the CrowdRiff platform, maintaining strong engagement across its channels, and amplifying content from local stakeholders. Recognizing the challenges identified by stakeholders—such as digital readiness and the need for broader regional representation—this strategy will ensure that our social media efforts contribute to sustainable growth and deeper community engagement. Organic content will focus on:

- Showcasing practices within the Cowichan community, celebrating local conservation efforts and encouraging visitors to engage in environmentally responsible behaviors while exploring the region.
- Highlighting the region’s distinctive outdoor adventures, culinary delights and rich cultural experiences, reinforcing the warm, authentic character of Cowichan.
- Promoting a wider geographical spread of attractions throughout Cowichan, including lesser-known communities and off-the-beaten-path experiences.
- Strengthening ties with local businesses, Indigenous communities and other stakeholders, we will create and share content that reflects the true spirit of Cowichan.

Tactics

Content Strategy/ Calendar Development	Creation of and maintenance of a detailed content calendar that outlines all planned social media activities for the year. The content calendar serves as a tool to ensure consistency, timely posting and alignment with overall goals and seasonal themes. It also helps coordinate campaigns, track performance and streamlines collaboration among team members and stakeholders.
Social Media Management	Involves the management of all social media channels associated with the region. It encompasses planning, posting, monitoring and interacting with users to maintain an active and engaging online presence. Regular activities include scheduling posts, responding to comments and analyzing engagement data to optimize strategies and increase the overall visibility.
Amplify Stakeholder Content and Events	Focuses on using social media platforms to promote and amplify content from stakeholders, such as cultural events and community activities. By sharing and highlighting diverse offerings from partners, this aims to create a cohesive community presence on social media.
CrowdRiff Subscription	CrowdRiff is a powerful marketing platform that allows organizations to discover, manage, and share user-generated content (UGC) legally and effectively. This tool enables the team to harness the authenticity and appeal of visuals created by visitors and locals.

Implementation Plan

Implement a comprehensive social media strategy for Tourism Cowichan that leverages user-generated content, regular engagement practices, content strategy development and amplification of stakeholder content to enhance online presence and visitor engagement.	
Quantifiable Objective	Significantly enhance overall social media engagement, notably increase content reach, and improve click-through rates across all platforms.
Rationale	Using a strategic blend of planned content, user-generated content and regular interaction, this approach ensures that the social media presence is both engaging and aligned with the goals of promoting the region. This approach fosters a vibrant community, drives engagement and communicates the unique aspects of the region.
Action Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a content audit to determine what types of content have been most effective. Identify key themes, messages, and campaigns that align with Cowichan's marketing goals. • Create a content calendar that strategically plans posts around key themes such as sustainability, local culture and off-peak travel. Ensure a balanced mix of UGC, stakeholder content and original content. Review and adjust the content calendar monthly to incorporate feedback and emerging trends. • Work closely with stakeholders to co-create content that highlights their offerings while reflecting Cowichan's brand strategy. Provide guidelines and support to ensure that content is visually appealing and brand-aligned. • Purchase and implement the CrowdRiff platform to manage and utilize user-generated content efficiently. Actively engage with users who create high-quality content by featuring their work on social media channels and encouraging continued contributions. Build relationships with key content creators to foster ongoing collaboration. • Regularly collaborate with local businesses and cultural events to promote and share their content, enhancing community engagement and support.
Potential Partnerships	Local tourism businesses, cultural organizations and community event planners, influencers and content creators within the region.
Resources	CrowdRiff software for content curations, social media management tools, dedicated social media team or agency.

Sources of Funding	MRDT, Destination BC Co-op Dollars.
Timeframe	Ongoing, with specific content updates and strategy reviews scheduled quarterly.
Budget	CrowdRiff Subscription: \$8,000 Organic Social Media: \$32,000 Total: \$40,000
Performance Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor the utilization, frequency, and quality of user-generated content, as well as the diversity and relevance of all social media posts according to the strategic content calendar. • Assess user interaction through engagement metrics such as likes, comments, and shares, and evaluate the overall growth in followers and reach to determine visibility. • Regularly review click-through rates to gauge the effectiveness of promotional content and conduct surveys to collect feedback, ensuring content remains relevant and satisfies audience expectations.

MARKETING | CONSUMER EVENTS AND SHOWS

Attend consumer events and shows that align with Cowichan’s 2025 goals of promoting sustainable tourism, broadening geographical dispersion and highlighting unique regional offerings. Focus on events that attract audiences with specific interests in outdoor adventures, culinary experiences, and cultural tourism. Shows that allow for collaboration with local businesses and Indigenous communities will be prioritized.

Tactics

Event Selection	Research and select consumer events and shows that align with Cowichan’s key themes, such as outdoor adventure and culinary tourism.
Establish Partnerships	Sponsor exhibit space for eligible tourism stakeholders at the Vancouver Outdoor Show. Showcase products and experiences from local stakeholders at the events, such as artisan crafts, local foods, or cultural artifacts, to give visitors a tangible taste of what Cowichan has to offer.
Create Booth Experience	Design booth displays that are visually appealing and interactive, encouraging visitors to engage with the content. Consider offering live demonstrations, tastings or running contests. Use sustainable and eco-friendly materials for booth displays and promotional items.
Pre and Post Event Communication	Leverage social media, email newsletters and partner networks to promote Cowichan’s presence at the event ahead of time. Collect contact information from booth visitors and follow up with personalized emails or special offers.

Implementation Plan

Attend strategically selected consumer shows to directly engage with target audiences, showcase Cowichan’s unique offerings, and drive interest and bookings through interactive and collaborative presentations.	
Quantifiable Objective	Increase brand awareness and amplify consumer messaging to put Cowichan top of mind, reaching new consumers to generate sales leads and driving conversions for specific activities and passion areas.
Rationale	Connect with highly engaged and relevant audiences who are actively seeking travel inspiration and experiences. Additionally, these events provide an opportunity to collaborate with local businesses and Indigenous communities.

Action Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and select consumer shows that align with Cowichan's target audiences. • Secure exhibit space at selected shows. • Create visually appealing and interactive booth displays that reflect Cowichan's brand value. • Develop marketing materials that highlight Cowichan's unique offerings. • Collaborate with local businesses, Indigenous communities and cultural organizations to determine interest. • Promote participation in upcoming shows. • Train booth staff with key messages and talking points.
Potential Partnerships	Stakeholders.
Resources	Dedicated booth team, printers, designers, event coordinator/planner.
Sources of Funding	MRDT, Destination BC Co-op Dollars.
Timeframe	Ongoing
Budget	\$7,000
Performance Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance at brand aligned consumer shows. • Number of consumer interactions. • Newsletter sign-ups added.

MARKETING | COLLATERAL PRODUCTION & DISTRIBUTION

In an increasingly digital world, the value of tangible, printed collateral remains undiminished, offering a unique and enduring way for visitors to engage with their surroundings. Tourism Cowichan recognizes the importance of providing printed guides, maps and itineraries that serve as reliable and accessible resources for tourists and residents alike. These materials complement digital strategies by ensuring that information is readily available without total reliance on smartphones or internet access.

Tactics

Cowichan Visitor Guide	Review and refresh the Cowichan Visitor Guide with updated information, new imagery and content that aligns with the 2025 marketing goals. Ongoing distribution of printed collateral supports brand awareness, trip-planning and contributes to the purchase cycle.
Seasonal Experience Brochures	A series of brochures, each dedicated to a different season in Cowichan, highlighting seasonal events, activities and attractions.
Tasting Map	The Cowichan tasting map is a curated guide that highlights the region's best wineries, breweries, distilleries and farm-to-table experiences. Visitors can explore local flavors, follow suggested routes and discover unique tasting opportunities across Cowichan's culinary landscape.
Arts & Culture Map	A well designed, easy-to-use map that guides visitors through a curated selection of local galleries, artisan studios, museums, cultural landmarks and live performance venues.
Sustainable Travel Guide	A sustainably printed visitor guide using recycled paper (or seed paper) and eco-friendly inks. The guide would focus on sustainable tourism practices, highlighting eco-friendly accommodations, activities and dining options. It could also include tips for responsible travel and a pledge for visitors to commit to sustainability while exploring Cowichan.
Interactive Postcards	Postcards featuring iconic Cowichan landscapes or attractions, with interactive elements such as augmented reality (AR) features that can be accessed via a smartphone. Visitors could scan the postcard to unlock a virtual tour, a video message or a digital discount code.

Implementation Plan

Utilize essential printed collateral such as vacation guides, maps and themed itineraries to enhance visitor servicing and provide valuable information to tourists and residents, facilitating their exploration of Cowichan.	
Quantifiable Objective	Increase the distribution reach of printed materials and track engagement through QR code scans leading to website visits.
Rationale	These additional print materials not only support the strategic objectives by promoting key aspects of Cowichan but also provide valuable resources that enhance the visitor experience, encourage longer stays and foster a deeper connection with the region.
Action Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with businesses, stakeholders and visitor centres to identify which print pieces may provide the most value. • Design and produce the pieces as identified. Collaborate with printers and publications where possible. • Distribute materials through visitor centres, BC Ferries, airports, local accommodations and other stakeholders. • Incorporate QR codes to bridge the gap between print and digital, directing users to further relevant online resources.
Potential Partnerships	Local community groups and cultural organizations, tourism operators, visitor centres.
Resources	Templates and content from previous guides, digital assets from the brand update and website, stakeholder input.
Sources of Funding	MRDT, Destination BC Co-op Dollars.
Timeframe	Produced in early 2025 with ongoing distribution.
Budget	\$60,000
Performance Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track the number and location of distributed print materials, such as vacation guides, maps, itineraries and cultural guides. • Measure how visitors use the print collateral and gather their feedback on its usefulness and appeal. • Use analytics tools to monitor scans of QR codes, tracking subsequent actions such as website visits, page views, or specific conversions like newsletter sign-ups or contact form submissions.

DEVELOPMENT OF NEW MARKETS | TRAVEL TRADE AND TRAVEL MEDIA RELATIONS

Tourism Cowichan is committed to supporting travel trade initiatives and media relations efforts in collaboration with Destination BC and 4TVI. By providing up-to-date content on local products and experiences, hosting media and trade visits and coordinating local support, this strategy aims to enhance the visibility and attractiveness of Cowichan as a premier overnight destination and adventure hub.

Tactics

Media and Trade Familiarization Trips	Host tailored familiarization (FAM) trips for media representatives and travel trade professionals to showcase the best of Cowichan firsthand. These trips are designed to leave a lasting impression, influencing future content and travel recommendations.
Information and Experience Kits	Develop comprehensive kits that include detailed information about Cowichan's attractions, accommodations, and unique experiences. These kits should be tailored to the interests of travel trade professionals and media.
Tradeshow and Media Show Participation	Participate in regional travel trade shows to promote Cowichan to a broad audience of travel professionals and media.

Implementation Plan

These tactics are designed to build strong, productive relationships with travel trade and media professionals, creating advocates who will help promote Cowichan as a premier destination. Each tactic supports the overall strategy of enhancing visibility, improving brand communication, and driving visitor traffic to the region, aligning with the broader marketing goals of Tourism Cowichan.	
Quantifiable Objective	Enhance travel trade partnerships by expanding the number of travel trade-ready stakeholders in the region.
Rationale	By engaging with travel trade and media, the initiative seeks to implement marketing strategies that boost overnight stays and strengthen media relations in primary markets. Fostering positive relations with regional and provincial tourism partners enhances the overall tourism ecosystem.

Action Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify key influencers and decision-makers in the travel trade and media sectors. Plan and execute itineraries that highlight signature experiences and hidden gems in Cowichan. • Compile and continuously update information packets, digital content, and promotional materials that can be easily distributed during trade shows, media events, or electronically. • Prepare engaging booth displays, interactive presentations and promotional giveaways that effectively communicate the allure of Cowichan.
Potential Partnerships	Local tourism businesses and stakeholders, 4TVI, Destination BC, media outlets and travel trade organizations.
Resources	Information and promotional materials about Cowichan, staff and coordination support from 4TVI and Destination BC, media and travel trade networks.
Sources of Funding	MRDT, Destination BC Co-op Dollars.
Timeframe	Ongoing, activities scheduled as required based on opportunities and needs from Destination BC and 4VI.
Budget	Travel Media: \$7,500 Travel Trade: \$2,500 Total: \$10,000
Performance Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track the number and quality of interactions and partnerships developed with travel trade representatives and media personnel. • Monitor the distribution and reception of promotional materials and information shared with partners. • Assess the growth in the number of travel trade-ready stakeholders and the effectiveness of hosted trips in generating positive coverage.

MARKETING | PARTNERSHIP MARKETING

Tourism Cowichan will engage in strategic partnership marketing to enhance its visibility and appeal as a destination. This approach involves collaborating with Destination BC consortiums to promote the region's unique experiences to niche markets.

Tactics

Destination BC Consortiums	Continue to collaborate with Destination BC consortiums to promote outdoor adventures and culinary experiences specific to Cowichan. These include AhoyBC, BC Ale Trail, Golf VI, Ride Island, BC Bird Trail, BC Farmers' Markets, Fishing BC, Paddle BC, and the Spirit Loop.
-----------------------------------	--

Implementation Plan

This strategic partnership marketing plan is designed to capitalize on existing networks and new opportunities, driving both awareness and visitation to Cowichan through focused, collaborative marketing efforts.	
Quantifiable Objective	Expand partnership networks and increase collaborative promotional efforts.
Rationale	Increase reach for consumer messaging. These well-established consortiums have engaged audiences and expertise to market specific activities within a destination.
Action Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluate available sector investment opportunities including tactics, reach, and therefore value for investment.• Work closely with consortium organizations to amplify priority activity-based messaging.• Actively participate in planning conversations with tourism sectors in order to maximize exposure for the Cowichan region.
Potential Partnerships	Destination BC, consortium organizations, tourism sectors and operators, local content creators.
Resources	Marketing team, partnership managers, budget for co-branded marketing initiatives.
Sources of Funding	MRDT
Timeframe	Ongoing

Budget	\$40,000
Performance Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track the number of promotional initiatives executed with each consortium. • Track established partnerships and the initiatives that result from each consortium.

DRAFT

DESTINATION & PRODUCTION EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT | INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT & TRAINING

Tourism Cowichan will support the professional development of tourism business owners and operators through workshops, training, and industry networking events. Ongoing engagement with stakeholders, First Nations, and community partners will help to ensure destination marketing is industry-driven and in alignment with community values. Stakeholder feedback will be used to continuously increase the effectiveness of regional marketing and destination development initiatives.

Tactics

Professional Development	Subsidize stakeholder participation in learning opportunities and training programs offered through Destination BC, 4TVI, and go2HR. Increase awareness of Vancouver Island's Biosphere Commitment Program, and provide education on how to implement sustainable practices into existing tourism products and experiences.
Tourism Networking Events	Coordinate tourism networking opportunities to strengthen cross-sector collaboration and provide opportunity for shared learnings on challenges and best practices. Hold an annual tourism industry workshop to provide an overview of the upcoming tourism season including trends, research and marketing opportunities.
Stakeholder Engagement	Facilitate ongoing 1-on-1 stakeholder meetings and engagement sessions to ensure marketing and destination development efforts remain relevant. An annual stakeholder survey will ask for feedback and satisfaction on marketing programs, and identify key challenges facing businesses.
Stakeholder E-Newsletter	Monthly stakeholder newsletters will be deployed to share updates, marketing opportunities, and industry resources.
Destination Ambassador Course and FAM Tours	Create an online destination ambassador course for front-line staff, volunteers, and residents. A Tourism Cowichan-led FAM tour could also be organized to increase regional knowledge of communities and attractions amongst front-line tourism staff. These initiatives will help to foster strong destination ambassadors that contribute to remarkable visitor experiences and champion the value of tourism for the Cowichan region.
Industry Conferences	Attend industry conferences as needed on behalf of Tourism Cowichan to learn about sustainable tourism initiatives and industry updates that can be shared with our stakeholders, and to use as a networking opportunity.

Implementation Plan

The industry development tactics support the overall strategy of improving awareness for Tourism Cowichan programs, increasing stakeholder involvement in cooperative marketing initiatives, and strengthening community support for tourism in the Cowichan region.	
Quantifiable Objective	Provide professional development, training and networking opportunities for tourism businesses, as well as ongoing engagement sessions with stakeholders, rightsholders, and residents.
Rationale	The visitor experience is strengthened when businesses have digital literacy, regional knowledge, and best business practices. Networking opportunities allow for idea-sharing and collaboration across sectors. Ongoing engagement efforts keep stakeholders informed and ensure marketing and development efforts remain relevant to industry.
Action Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate professional development opportunities for tourism businesses in partnership with Destination BC and 4TVI. • Partner with ITBC to support professional development opportunities for Indigenous tourism operators. • Schedule industry workshops and networking events to support stakeholder engagement efforts and industry collaboration. • Engage with First Nations communities, local councils and committees, and municipal staff to understand and support tourism development priorities. • Develop content and course structure for an online tourism training program to be integrated onto the stakeholder portal. • Organize and lead a familiarization tour for front-line tourism staff and volunteers, in advance of the peak season. • Develop a communication strategy for keeping stakeholders engaged and informed.
Potential Partnerships	4TVI, Destination BC, industry partners (Indigenous Tourism BC, go2HR, Rainbow Registered), tourism committees, stakeholders, rightsholders.
Resources	Tourism Cowichan staff, board of directors, 4TVI, industry partners, stakeholder relations.
Sources of Funding	MRDT
Timeframe	Ongoing
Budget	\$15,000

Performance Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder attendance at workshops and networking events. • Stakeholder satisfaction towards Tourism Cowichan programs. • Stakeholder newsletter open rate and clicks. • Track the number of 1-on-1 stakeholder meetings. • Number of Biosphere Committed and Certified businesses.
-----------------------------	--

DRAFT

DESTINATION & PRODUCT EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT | PRODUCT EXPERIENCE ENHANCEMENT

Tourism Cowichan will enable community members and tourism businesses to access an Events & Festivals Fund, by application, to support the creation and enhancement of events and festivals that attract visitors to the Cowichan region and improve the region's competitive appeal as a preferred multi-night destination on Vancouver Island.

Tactics

Events & Festivals Fund	<p>The Events & Festivals Fund will be available on an annual basis to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase visitation and overnight stays. • Increase economic and social benefits that flow from tourism to residents of the Cowichan region. • Drive seasonal dispersion through the off-peak seasons. • Position Cowichan as a preferred multi-night tourism destination. • Ensure that tourism makes meaningful contributions to the social, cultural, and environmental well-being of the region.
------------------------------------	--

Implementation Plan

Continue to refine and strengthen the existing Events & Festivals Fund program to achieve desired goals and objectives.	
Quantifiable Objective	To support at least 10 events and festivals in 2025 by providing grant funding for out-of-region marketing initiatives.
Rationale	An increase in event product improves the competitiveness of Cowichan as a destination. Expanding marketing for new or enhanced events, particularly in the shoulder season, will drive hotel occupancy during off-peak travel times.
Action Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate key learnings and effectiveness of the program towards achieving desired goals and outcomes. • Further refine the program guidelines, application form and reporting process. • Promote the opportunity to apply to all stakeholders, First Nations, and community groups. • Establish a predetermined matrix and funding committee to review, evaluate and approve events to support financially.

Potential Partnerships	CVRD, community groups and organizations, stakeholders, rightsholders.
Resources	Funding committee, Tourism Cowichan staff, community partners, stakeholder relations.
Sources of Funding	MRDT
Timeframe	Ongoing
Budget	\$100,000
Performance Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased visitor attendance at regional events from outside markets (BC, Alberta, and Washington). • Increased number and length of overnight stays generated by events supported through the program. • Number of new and/or expanded events in Cowichan in the off-peak seasons (Fall, Winter, Spring). • Monitor stakeholder satisfaction towards funding program. • Ensure events align with sustainable practices (e.g. one or more of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals).

DESTINATION & PRODUCTION EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT |

MARKET RESEARCH & VISITOR PERSONAS

Develop visitor personas using a strategic combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies to gather a clear understanding of potential and current visitors to a destination. This process will leverage existing research and data and may require additional, more current research. These data points can be sourced from various channels such as direct surveys, social media analytics, web usage patterns and transactional data.

Implementation Plan

Developing clear visitor personas is a crucial step in tailoring marketing strategies and enhancing the overall visitor experience.	
Quantifiable Objective	Utilize insights to understand visitor behavior, travel patterns, overall satisfaction and local sentiment towards tourism in the region.
Rationale	The focused collection and analysis of visitor and resident data support strategic objectives to precisely target the most relevant consumer segments.
Action Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Review and analyze the data already collected from various sources such as previous surveys, website analytics, social media interactions and customer feedback. Sort through this data to identify patterns and trends related to visitors.Based on the insights gained from the initial data analysis, determine what additional information is needed to develop a comprehensive picture of potential and existing visitors. Additional research might include segmentation research, focus groups or exit surveys.Execute the additional research needed to gather comprehensive visitor information.Grouping similar types of data to form coherent profiles that represent different segments of your audience. Each persona should include demographic details, behavioral traits, motivations for visiting, preferences and any particular needs or expectations.Develop detailed customer journey maps that outline all the touchpoints visitors have with your destination, from initial awareness and consideration through to the travel experience and post-visit engagement.

Potential Partnerships	Research and survey contractors specialized in tourism and community engagement, local community groups and stakeholders including tourism businesses.
Resources	Professional services for data analysis and survey distribution, established relationships with local stakeholders to facilitate data gathering.
Sources of Funding	MRDT, Destination BC Co-op Dollars.
Timeframe	Ongoing, with preliminary results reviewed annually and strategies adjusted accordingly.
Budget	\$40,000
Performance Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amount and quality of data collected on visitor demographics, motivations, and satisfaction. • Development of comprehensive visitor and resident profiles that inform marketing strategies and product development. • Identification of key target markets based on collected data, leading to more focused and effective marketing efforts.

DESTINATION & PRODUCTION EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT | CYCLING TOURISM STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

Tourism Cowichan recognizes that cycling tourism continues to grow as an economic driver for the region and supports healthy well-being for communities. There is opportunity to align with both provincial and federal tourism initiatives to build on existing sustainable cycling products, experiences, and infrastructure for the Cowichan region. In Fall 2024, Tourism Cowichan initiated the development of a Cycling Tourism Strategy. In Fall 2025, Tourism Cowichan will plan to implement key findings from this strategy. Action steps will be collaboratively coordinated to enhance cycling tourism benefits for the region and support sustainable growth of the cycling tourism sector.

Implementation Plan

Working collaboratively with sector associations, tourism stakeholders, and municipalities to develop and promote products will allow us to meet cycling growth in the coming years.	
Quantifiable Objective	Implement recommendations from the Cycling Tourism Strategy to position the Cowichan region as premier destination for cycling tourism and motivate travel to the region.
Rationale	High quality, sustainable cycling trails and associated visitor experiences hold significant potential to grow and diversify local and regional tourism economies. Well-planned and managed trail experiences can attract visitors from short and long-haul domestic markets, and create appealing conditions to attract new private sector investment into a region. Cycling trails have become one of the most desired recreation assets in BC and are foundational to the quality of life of communities and its residents. Furthermore, cycling trails enable active transportation and a reduction of carbon emissions to help minimize negative impacts.
Action Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare clear outcomes and action steps that should be taken to advance cycling tourism for each project priority area. • Implement the action steps identified from the Cycling Tourism Strategy to optimize the cycling tourism potential of the Cowichan region. Recommendations may include product and experience development, packaging and theming cycling tourism experiences, itinerary development, and business training and support. • Collaborate with local businesses to create cycling-friendly services and packages that cater to tourists.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differentiate the Cowichan region from competitors by developing a marketing plan for signature trail experiences, in collaboration with existing sector associations such as Mountain Biking BC. • Focus time, resources, and effort on opportunities with critical mass while matching the type of traveler that Cowichan seeks to attract. • Establish a review process to monitor the progress of the strategy's implementation and make adjustments based on feedback and performance measures.
Potential Partnerships	Destination BC, 4TVI, CVRD, local municipalities, stakeholders, rightsholders, trail associations, Mountain Biking BC, Cycling BC.
Resources	Project consultants, steering committee, 4TVI.
Sources of Funding	MRDT
Timeframe	Ongoing, beginning Fall 2025.
Budget	\$25,000
Performance Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase market-ready cycling tourism services and products. • Increased attendance at community cycling events. • Visitor satisfaction towards cycling tourism experiences. • Increased alignment, collaboration, and effective planning between tourism stakeholders, local government, and community organizations.

DESTINATION & PRODUCTION EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT | MRDT 5-YEAR RENEWAL ENGAGEMENT

Stakeholder engagement is a critical component for the successful renewal of the Municipal and Regional District Tax. This process will actively involve local tourism businesses, accommodation providers, and community leaders in discussions about the benefits and impacts of the MRDT program. By fostering collaboration and open communication, we aim to understand diverse perspectives and gather insights to ensure that the funds are allocated in a manner that meets community needs. By effectively engaging stakeholders, our goal is to create a supportive environment for the MRDT renewal that reflects the collective vision and priorities of the region, ultimately enhancing tourism planning and development efforts.

Tactics

MRDT 5-Year Renewal Engagement	Tourism Cowichan will coordinate stakeholder mapping and engagement work with key decision makers and tourism industry stakeholders, in preparation for the MRDT application renewal deadline (at least six months prior to the end of the five-year term, ending July 2027).
---------------------------------------	---

Implementation Plan

Quantifiable Objective	Build support for the MRDT 5-year application renewal through engagement sessions with tourism industry stakeholders.
Rationale	MRDT renewal ensures continuous funding for strategic marketing and tourism development initiatives for a sustainable tourism industry. Engaging stakeholders is essential for building trust and demonstrating transparency in the decision-making process. A collaborative approach will create opportunity to address concerns, identify priorities, and ensure that the MRDT renewal is seen as a collective effort to enhance tourism.
Action Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct background research and review external best practices and tourism trends, to develop a background report. • Conduct a stakeholder mapping exercise to identify an engagement plan for local government and tourism stakeholders. • Prepare clear and concise materials that outline the MRDT, its benefits, and the renewal process, to distribute to stakeholders ahead of meetings. • Develop a series of engagement activities, such as workshops, one-on-one interviews, and small group interviews to facilitate dialogue and gather input.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage key decision makers and tourism stakeholders to understand support for a potential increase in the MRDT collection rate (from 2% to 3%). • Consult accommodation providers who are registered under the Provincial Sales Tax Act and who provide 4 or more units of accommodation. • Maintain ongoing communication with stakeholders to keep them informed about the progress of the MRDT renewal.
Potential Partnerships	CVRD, Destination BC, local municipalities, stakeholders.
Resources	4EVER Strategies, Tourism Cowichan staff, board of directors.
Sources of Funding	MRDT
Timeframe	Ongoing
Budget	\$15,000
Performance Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder participation rate • Level of support for MRDT renewal

VISITOR SERVICING | VISITOR CENTRE OPERATIONS

To strengthen the overall visitor experience, Tourism Cowichan will implement an application-based funding program to support Cowichan-based visitor centres in enhancing their services and facilities. This initiative aims to foster a more engaging and inclusive travel experience for visitors, ultimately contributing to a more vibrant and sustainable year-round tourism economy.

Tactics

Visitor Services Innovation Grant	This application-based funding program will enable visitor centres to enhance the overall visitor experience through innovation improvements. Examples could include upgrading visitor amenities, incorporating sustainable practices, developing educational displays, implementing digital technologies, and improving accessibility and inclusion.
--	---

Implementation Plan

This program is designed to support visitor centres in their efforts to enhance the visitor experience and strengthen innovation through targeted improvements.	
Quantifiable Objective	Drive tangible improvements that encourage visitors to stay longer, adopt responsible travel behaviors, and have meaningful experiences while visiting the Cowichan region.
Rationale	Visitor centres play a pivotal role in the consumer journey, including shaping visitors' first impressions and delivering accurate and timely information that enhances the travel experience. Funding targeted experience improvements can lead to increased visitor satisfaction and repeat visits, which in turn supports the broader tourism ecosystem.
Action Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide detailed application guidelines, process, and deadlines.• Evaluate applications based on their potential impact towards enhancing the overall visitor experience.• Work with visitor centres to ensure the grant funds are used effectively and in accordance with program guidelines.• Offer guidance and support as needed throughout the implementation phase.• Review the effectiveness of the grant program in meeting its objectives and make adjustments for future iterations.• Develop systems for tracking and reporting on project outcomes and performance measures.

Potential Partnerships	CVRD, Destination BC, visitor centres.
Resources	Tourism Cowichan staff, funding committee, monitoring tools.
Sources of Funding	MRDT
Timeframe	Program launch in Spring 2025.
Budget	\$50,000
Performance Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved visitor satisfaction. • Strengthen sustainability, accessibility and inclusion efforts. • Number of new projects supported through the funding program. • Increased partnership opportunities between Tourism Cowichan, visitor centres, and tourism stakeholders.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING | COWICHAN REGIONAL HOUSING SERVICE

High level description...

Tactics

Cowichan Regional Housing Service	
--	--

Implementation Plan

Short summary...	
Quantifiable Objective	
Rationale	
Action Steps	•
Potential Partnerships	
Resources	
Sources of Funding	OAP
Timeframe	
Budget	\$220,000
Performance Measures	•