



Building Vernon's Tourism Future

Business Strategic Plan, 2017 - 2021

FINAL: June 2016



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DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS

- Conversion - visitor has taken an action that leads to a purchase, e.g., a hotel booking
- DMAI – Destination Marketing Association International
- DMO – Destination Marketing Organization, e.g., Tourism Vernon is a DMO
- DBC - Destination British Columbia, the provincial DMO that promotes British Columbia as a destination
- FIT – Fully Independent Traveller, e.g., not travelling on a group tour
- ITAs – International Tourist Arrivals, the # of tourists who travel to a country other than their usual residence
- Leisure market/traveller – travel for pleasure, e.g., not for business, sports, visiting friends/family, etc.
- MRDT – Municipal Regional District Tax
- OTA – Online Travel Agency, e.g., Expedia, Booking.com, etc.
- TOTA – Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association, the regional DMO
- Travel Trade - people and companies that resell travel products, i.e., Jonview Canada, Gap Adventures

Executive Summary

This plan presents a vision for Tourism Vernon to implement over the next five to seven years. It intends to move Tourism Vernon as an organization forward, ensuring the right budget and efforts are being applied to the right initiatives to support tourism stakeholders and tourism growth. It has also been developed to enable Tourism Vernon to move the destination forward and make it more competitive with other desirable destinations within the Thompson Okanagan and British Columbia.

Vision

The aspirational vision for Vernon as a destination: *Vernon is the destination of choice on our target market's list of places to visit in the Thompson Okanagan.*

The vision for Tourism Vernon is to: *Be the most innovative and effective Destination Marketing Organization in the Thompson Okanagan in inspiring our target markets to experience our destination.*

Goals

1. Increase Vernon's market share of travellers to and within BC.
2. Improve Vernon's Net Promoter Score.
3. Increase stakeholder rating of Tourism Vernon's overall performance.
4. Increase tourism-driven economic benefits to Vernon.

Strategic Framework

Four strategic areas have been identified to drive the strategic plan and ensure Vernon is aggressively taking advantage of short-term opportunities as well as preparing for the long-term future.

Inspire Visitation through Focused Marketing	Activate Strategic Marketing Partnerships	Enhance Destination Appeal	Provide Visionary Leadership
Inspire increased visitation to Vernon through targeted marketing efforts.	Leverage strategic tourism partners to extend marketing reach and effectiveness.	Create greater destination experience and product appeal to better compete with other Thompson Okanagan and BC destinations.	Provide innovative and inspiring leadership through effective destination management and organizational structures.

Strategies

Inspire Visitation through Focused Marketing

1. Build the Vernon destination brand.
2. Evolve and enhance leisure marketing efforts to complement the current focus on generating awareness and interest with a stronger focus on conversion for booking a trip to Vernon.

3. Increase role in travel trade sales efforts, working in collaboration with tourism businesses.
4. Increase efforts on the sports tourism market.

Activate Strategic Marketing Partnerships

5. Leverage existing and new strategic marketing partnerships and programs with local Vernon stakeholders.
6. Work collaboratively with destinations along the primary travel corridors in the Thompson Okanagan.
7. Leverage relevant sector marketing partnerships and programs for tourism growth.
8. Increase engagement of Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association (TOTA), Destination BC and Destination Canada to improve marketing efforts for Vernon.

Enhance the Destination Appeal

9. Encourage and enable industry to develop new remarkable products and experiences that support the Vernon brand, demand generators and target markets.
10. Increase focus on supporting new and enhanced festivals and events.
11. Facilitate collaboration to ensure Vernon is leveraging its unique potential as a gateway and hub for the North Okanagan Rail Trail.
12. Provide more compelling and enticing packaged travel experiences within the destination and between destinations.
13. Ensure a positive community experience.
14. Continue to evolve the visitor services model.
15. Support the focus on understanding and protecting natural assets of the region.

Provide Visionary Leadership

16. Evolve to a Commission-managed organizational structure over time to enable Tourism Vernon to be more effective.
17. Advocate for the tourism industry within the municipality, region, and province.
18. Continue to ensure the tourism industry is inclusive of the Vernon area.
19. Continue to engage stakeholders and residents through communications and community relations activities to contribute to an enhanced tourism development climate.
20. Facilitate and encourage industry training and development.
21. Lead the ongoing collection, analysis and sharing of performance metrics, research and intelligence.
22. Secure additional funding to resource Tourism Vernon appropriately.
23. Ensure ongoing tourism planning.

Budget

The budget is based on an aggressive but achievable target of successfully applying for 3% MRDT effective in 2017, increasing MRDT 8% on average between 2016 and 2021, and fast-tracking the utilization of the Reserve Fund. Based on these changes, the budget for Tourism Vernon increases to over \$1,000,000, which is a significant increase that enables Vernon to be more competitive with other Okanagan destinations.

	Base Year: Budget 2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
TOTAL	\$830,292	\$1,030,297	\$1,150,818	\$1,143,214	\$1,096,962	\$1,175,302

Introduction

Tourism Vernon is the official Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) for the City of Vernon, operating as a department of the City of Vernon and responsible for marketing the area and operating the Vernon Visitor Centre. Tourism Vernon contracted Align Consulting and Vardo Creative to conduct a situation analysis review and create a new five- to seven-year Business Strategic Plan.

The Situation Analysis review was developed with input from industry stakeholders, including an all day planning workshop on March 1, 2016 with over 40 stakeholders, a stakeholder survey with over 70 responses, and in-depth interviews with over 20 individuals.

Tourism Vernon is a relatively new Destination Marketing Organization, and has achieved significant success since its inception. This plan presents a vision for Tourism Vernon to implement over the next five to seven years. The plan intends to move Tourism Vernon as an organization forward, ensuring that the right budget and efforts are being applied to the right initiatives to support tourism stakeholders and tourism growth. It has also been developed to enable Tourism Vernon to move the destination forward and make it more competitive with other destinations within the Thompson Okanagan that currently have more significant destination appeal, product offerings, budgets and staff resources.

The following plan should be reviewed and updated as necessary to reflect changing tourism objectives, priorities and market conditions. The plan is based on industry's desire for realistic but aggressive growth; any unforeseeable and significant changes may impact performance, e.g. catastrophic worldwide events, substantial wildfire season, etc. Also, results should be tracked regularly such that subsequent plans, with learning from the current year's activities, can be even more effective in increasing benefits to the city.

It is important to note that this plan extends beyond the municipal boundaries of the City of Vernon and includes the surrounding Vernon area. For the purposes of this plan, "Vernon" includes the entire Vernon area; the Vernon area consists of multiple municipalities including the City of Vernon, the Municipality of Coldstream and the Regional District of North Okanagan Electoral Areas B & C. Tourism initiatives often include a wider region that extends from Enderby in the north to Lake Country in the south, Cherryville to the east and Falkland to the west. This area includes areas like Silver Star Mountain Resort, Armstrong and Lumby.

Vision

The vision for Tourism Vernon and Vernon as a destination is aspirational and has been created for beyond the life of this plan. This vision should be reviewed periodically to ensure it remains relevant over the long-term.

The vision for Vernon as a destination:

Vernon is the destination of choice on our target market's list of places to visit in the Thompson Okanagan.

The vision for Tourism Vernon is to:

Be the most innovative and effective DMO in the Thompson Okanagan in motivating our community and partners to grow in excellence, and inspiring our target markets to experience our destination.

Mission

It is the mission of Tourism Vernon to promote, protect and enhance Vernon’s position as one of North America’s premier holiday and lifestyle destinations through leading the execution of targeted marketing programs, supporting destination development programs and advocating for the sustainable growth of tourism in Vernon.

Goals

It is the desire of Tourism Vernon’s stakeholders to see a realistic stretch target that demonstrates a stronger growth rate in Vernon than the provincial average. Baseline research by Tourism Vernon will be required to determine the current performance measurement of these objectives and establish targets for the future.

1. Increase Vernon’s market share of travellers to and within BC.
 - a. Increase MRDT revenues to Vernon by an average of 8% annually from 2017 to 2022.
 - b. Increase average length of stay by 14.8% to a minimum of 2 nights.
 - i. Current 2015 baseline average across all months was 1.75 nights.
 - c. Increase visitation in shoulder and winter seasons.
 - i. Benchmark: grow average hotel occupancy rate for winter months above 40% by 2022. (November increases by 25%, from 32% to 40%; January increases by 82%, from 22% to 40%; February increases by 25%, from 32% to 40%; and March increases by 21%, from 33% to 40%) This is dependent on accommodation capacity for SilverStar Mountain Resort.
2. Improve Vernon’s Net Promoter Score¹.
 - a. Benchmark to be developed with Destination BC assistance. Improve by a minimum of 1% annually.
 - b. For more information on Net Promoter Score, see Appendix 1.
3. Increase stakeholder rating of tourism Vernon’s overall performance by 15.3% to over 4.0 by 2022.
 - a. Benchmark 2015: Average score was 3.47 for performance.
 - b. Meet 3% MRDT requirement for Community Collaboration.
4. Increase tourism-driven economic benefits to Vernon.
 - a. Benchmark to be developed.

¹ Net Promoter® and NPS® are registered trademarks and Net Promoter Score and Net Promoter System are trademarks of Bain & Company, Satmetrix Systems and Fred Reichheld.

Strategic Framework

Building on the success Tourism Vernon has seen to date, four strategic areas have been identified to drive the strategic plan and ensure Vernon is aggressively taking advantage of short-term opportunities as well as preparing for the long-term future.

Inspire Visitation through Focused Marketing	Activate Strategic Marketing Partnerships	Enhance the Destination Appeal	Provide Visionary Leadership
Inspire increased visitation to Vernon through targeted marketing efforts.	Leverage strategic tourism partners to extend marketing reach and effectiveness.	Create greater destination experience and product appeal to better compete with other Thompson Okanagan and BC destinations.	Provide innovative and inspiring leadership through effective destination management and organizational structures.

Strategies

There are 23 strategies to support the strategic framework in four strategic areas.

Inspire Visitation through Focused Marketing

Inspire Visitation through Focused Marketing is about building on the marketing foundation Tourism Vernon has created and featuring the identified demand generators to inspire more travellers to choose Vernon as a destination.

Strategies

1. Build the Vernon destination brand.
2. Evolve and enhance leisure marketing efforts to complement the current focus on generating awareness and interest with a stronger focus on conversion for booking a trip to Vernon.
3. Increase role in travel trade sales efforts, working in collaboration with tourism businesses.
4. Increase efforts on the sports tourism market.

Activate Strategic Marketing Partnerships

Activate Strategic Marketing Partnerships entails leveraging tourism partners to extend marketing reach and effectiveness. The BC tourism industry functions best through collaboration and partnering. This strategic area ensures Tourism Vernon is in alignment with the goals of the provincial tourism system, which has been

designed to create access to more marketing funds for all parts of the industry, and reduce administration costs and duplication wherever possible.

Strategies

5. Leverage existing and new strategic marketing partnerships/programs with local Vernon stakeholders.
6. Work collaboratively with destinations along the primary travel corridors in the Thompson Okanagan.
7. Leverage relevant sector marketing partnerships and programs for tourism growth.
8. Increase engagement of Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association (TOTA, Destination BC and Destination Canada to improve marketing efforts for Vernon.

Enhance the Destination Appeal

Enhance the Destination Appeal is about ensuring Vernon develops a core offering of memorable and remarkable products and experiences to attract new visitation, encourage repeat visitation, and generate word of mouth advocacy and referrals. A key part of enhancing the appeal of Vernon as a destination is focusing on improving the existing product experiences as well as creating new experiences that support the brand positioning to differentiate Vernon from other destinations such as Kelowna, Kamloops, Penticton, Osoyoos and the Shuswap.

While it is not Tourism Vernon's role to lead destination development, it is a critical component of destination management and Tourism Vernon needs to influence the evolution of the destination. It is also important that Tourism Vernon encourages stakeholders by providing or facilitating the use of the tools, information and education which supports the development of remarkable destination experiences for visitors.

Strategies

9. Encourage and enable industry to develop new remarkable products and experiences that support the Vernon brand, demand generators and target markets.
10. Increase focus on supporting new and enhanced festivals and events.
11. Facilitate collaboration to ensure Vernon is leveraging its unique potential as a gateway and hub for the North Okanagan Rail Trail.
12. Provide more compelling and enticing packaged travel experiences within the destination and between destinations.
13. Ensure a positive community experience.
14. Continue to evolve the visitor services model.
15. Support the focus on understanding and protecting natural assets of the region.

Provide Visionary Leadership

Provide Visionary Leadership is about shifting the way Tourism Vernon does things. It's about establishing the right organizational systems to provide strong leadership and nimble decision making to ensure this strategic plan will be successful.

Strategies

16. Evolve to a Commission-managed organizational structure over time to enable Tourism Vernon to be more effective.
17. Advocate for the tourism industry within the municipality, region, and province.

18. Continue to ensure the tourism industry is inclusive of the Vernon area.
19. Continue to engage stakeholders and residents through communications and community relations activities to contribute to an enhanced tourism development climate.
20. Facilitate and encourage industry training and development.
21. Lead the ongoing collection, analysis and sharing of performance metrics, research and intelligence.
22. Secure additional funding to resource Tourism Vernon appropriately.
23. Ensure ongoing tourism planning.

Branding

In 2015, the City of Vernon completed a community branding project with the objective to “Create a strong brand message to represent the City of Vernon to all markets (tourists, residents, economic development, people looking to relocate, etc.)”

The Activate Life brand has been adopted by Tourism Vernon, with a destination twist, such as Activate Your Senses, Activate Your Game, Activate Your Menu, etc.

Tagline: Activate Life

Brand Promise: To enrich active lifestyles that take advantage of our natural surroundings.

Positioning Statement

Vernon provides the perfect palette for creating active, well-balanced lifestyles. The incredible natural environment draws people outside to enjoy abundant activities that range from cultural to sporting, suitable for young families and extreme outdoor enthusiasts alike. Nowhere else in the Okanagan Valley offers the top-to-bottom experience that Vernon does, with world-class mountain ski resorts, beaches, golf resorts, orchards, vineyards and farms all within 30 minutes of each other. Small-town charm with access to large-city amenities let visitors and residents have it all in one place. Vernon — activating lifestyles.

BC Destination Brand Alignment

It is important for the Vernon brand to align to the BC destination brand, with the tagline Super, Natural British Columbia. The BC destination brand is built upon BC’s true nature, which is vast, diverse, abundant awe-inspiring and powerful. At the core of the brand is the brand essence: Wild at Heart. The brand essence speaks to a truth about BC’s target audience: they have a deep appreciation of nature and while they may lead successful and accomplished lives, there is a part within them that craves a connection to the wild. In the wild, they are reminded of what is real and what matters, and the true nature of beauty and freedom. For more information, see www.destinationbc.ca/Resources/british-columbia-tourism-brand.

Target Markets

The primary target markets for Tourism Vernon’s Business Strategic Plan have been divided into Consumer Markets and Stakeholder Markets:

Consumer Markets

Primary

- Leisure
 - Active travellers
 - Geographic:
 - Lower Mainland / BC markets
 - Northern Alberta / Edmonton
 - Southern Alberta / Calgary
 - EQ: Free Spirits, Cultural Explorers, Authentic Experiencers, Rejuvenators
- Travel trade – tour operators
 - Free Independent Travellers (FIT) and tour groups
- Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR)

Secondary

- Okanagan Day Trippers
- Sports groups
- Washington – Seattle/Spokane
 - Key market for Kelowna, which creates spin-off effect and opportunities for Vernon

Tourism Vernon Stakeholders

- Including municipalities, Regional District, tourism businesses, partner organizations, and residents

Demand Generators

Six demand generators have been identified for Vernon. These have been identified through research and stakeholder feedback. Future marketing and development initiatives should endeavour to include these themes.

1. Leisure Market – Outdoor Recreation
 - a. Consumer research demonstrated that Vernon’s appeal to visitors includes its scenery, lakes, and outdoor activities. Almost three-quarters of visitors participated in outdoor activities.
 - b. Includes: hiking, cycling (trail/road), mountain biking, water sports, golf, downhill skiing, nordic, snowshoeing, wildlife viewing, etc.
2. Leisure Market - Festivals and Events
 - a. Festival and Events is a strong travel motivator and has been identified as a key theme to attract shoulder season visitation. Festival and Events can support and enhance other Demand Generators, e.g., mountain biking events, golf events, agritourism festival, ski event, sport tourism event, etc.
 - b. Includes cultural and performing arts events.

3. World-class Resort-based Experiences
 - a. Specific demand generator for targeted resort-based experiences, including Predator Ridge (golf), Sparkling Hill (health and wellness), and SilverStar Mountain Resort/Sovereign Lake Nordic Centre (winter).
4. Leisure Market – Small Town Charm
 - a. Consumer research demonstrated that Vernon’s appeal to visitors includes the downtown and its small town charm, as well as the people in Vernon.
 - b. Downtown
 - c. Culinary & Agritourism
 - d. Family Friendly, including attractions, heritage sites, etc.
 - e. Vernon People
5. Sports Tourism
6. Travel Trade – Free Independent Travellers (FIT) and group tours

Priority Initiatives

The following section outlines the priority initiative areas to support the identified goals, objectives and strategies. This document is not meant to be an exhaustive list of all tactical implementation activities, but highlight the strategic priorities for the next five years.

Inspire Visitation Through Focused Marketing

Strategy #1	Build the Vernon destination brand.
Description	With the launch of the Vernon “Activate Life’ brand in 2015, significant work is needed to entrench the brand and ensure it is supported and amplified by all tourism stakeholders and partners. Also, ongoing efforts are required to ensure the Vernon brand aligns with the BC destination brand, with the tagline Super, Natural British Columbia.
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide training and assist tourism businesses to ensure their marketing efforts reflect and align to the Vernon brand. Ensure all stakeholders are knowledgeable of the brand platform and have the tools and guidelines to leverage the brands in their marketing efforts. 2. Continue to build assets that reflect the new brand, including written content, images, video/b-roll. 3. Work with partners to ensure content and messaging on Vernon is updated and reflects the new Vernon brand positioning, e.g., TOTA, Destination BC, Destination Canada, sector marketing organizations, and sales channels such as Online Travel Agency sites (OTA, e.g. Expedia, Booking.com). 4. Work with Destination BC to ensure the Vernon brand aligns to the new BC destination brand.
Role	Tourism Vernon to lead with the support and engagement of tourism partners and operators.

<p>Strategy #2</p>	<p>Evolve and enhance marketing efforts to complement the current focus on generating awareness and interest with a stronger focus on conversion for booking a trip to Vernon.</p>
<p>Description</p>	<p>In 2015 and 2016, significant efforts were made by Tourism Vernon to increase awareness through media relations and social media activities. Over the course of this plan, the intent is to continue the awareness generating initiatives and increase the proactive marketing to target markets to increase the length of overnight stays. As such, Tourism Vernon should create a promotional mix of marketing activities that continue to raise awareness and desire/interest of Vernon as a “must-see” destination in the Okanagan, with increased efforts on more strongly influencing a decision to visit, and driving conversion in that they entice visitors to book.</p> <p>It is important to note that conversion implies the visitor has taken an action that leads to a purchase, e.g., an overnight stay, a tour or an attraction entrance, and does not intent to mean Tourism Vernon manages a proprietary booking engine.</p>
<p>Actions</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Attract visitors to Vernon by marketing the destination’s unique attributes and demand generators. Showcase the unique, competitive, and motivating features of Vernon as a destination to position as a compelling alternative to competing destinations, e.g., Kelowna, Kamloops, Penticton and the Shuswap. 2. Promote the demand generators through marketing messages, including outdoor recreational experiences, festival and events, and small town charm with the connections to local food, local people and local businesses. 3. Continue to leverage the EQ program to identify the most opportune/highest yield traveler for outdoor recreation, festival and events and agritourism experiences and incorporate EQ creative intelligence into all marketing campaigns/programs. 4. Continue to aggressively target and secure media relations visits and overall earned media coverage. 5. Expand social media efforts to engage passionate communities and traveller advocates. Create engagement with visitors while in the destination to increase word of mouth promotion. 6. Continue to develop Integrated Marketing Campaigns to drive short-term and long-term results for the region. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Increase focus on converting the awareness and desire to an actual purchase with a focus on promoting packages and special offers. b. Implement a robust Repeat Visitation campaign with a focus on converting existing visitors to come back again, increasing the length of their subsequent stay. 87% of surveyed visitors were very likely to visit Vernon again. c. Implement a robust Residents campaign. More than half of Vernon’s visitors are in Vernon to visit friends and relatives. Given this fact, there are opportunities to ensure Vernon residents are fully aware of the variety of experiences available to their visitors. This initiative may require a review and update of Tourism Vernon’s policies. d. Implement off-season Locals campaign from outside the Vernon area, e.g., Kelowna, Kamloops, Penticton. Local visitors (Thompson Okanagan) were

	<p>more likely to visit during the shoulder season. This initiative may require a review and update of Tourism Vernon’s policies.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Continue to provide valuable and inspiring trip planning information through online and visitor services channels. 8. Continually review and enhance the Vernon presence with Online Travel Agents (OTAs), e.g., Booking.com, Expedia, TripAdvisor.
Role	Tourism Vernon to lead, working in collaboration with tourism businesses and other partners.

Strategy #3	Increase the role in travel trade sales efforts, working in collaboration with tourism businesses.
Description	<p>Currently, travel trade represents 10% of total visitors according to the Vernon Commercial Accommodation Survey Results. Vernon is well positioned along the Vancouver to Alberta corridor to capture a share of the important drive market, positioning Vernon as a scenic alternative to Kamloops. In addition, the accommodation sector has strongly articulated a desire for Tourism Vernon to assist with capturing a larger share of the travel trade FIT and tour group market.</p> <p>However, Vernon needs to develop a solid travel trade strategy to ensure there is adequate product experiences to capture extended day-visits and overnight stays that lead to increased benefits for the tourism industry and don’t negatively impact tourism businesses or community assets.</p>
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with accommodators and key attractions to develop a travel trade sales and marketing strategy. 2. Increase staff resources towards travel trade activities with a focus on increasing the amount of Vernon product represented in travel trade FIT and group tour packages. (As outlined in strategy #16, this may include a portion of the recommended full-time Marketing Specialist position). 3. Work with TOTA to ensure Vernon is attending and maximizing opportunities to be featured at trade shows attended by the TOTA as a region, e.g., Canada’s West Marketplace, Rendezvous Canada, National Tour Association (NTA). 4. Determine opportunities to leverage existing tour operators travel itineraries that travel through Vernon to increase length of stay and paid experiences.
Role	Tourism Vernon to lead the efforts, working in collaboration with TOTA, DBC, Destination Canada and tourism operators, as well as tourism businesses.

Strategy #4	Increase efforts on the sports tourism market.
Description	<p>Vernon has a good history of sport hosting, some adequate facilities and a good accommodation base for sport tourism. In addition, sports tourism complements the Activate Life brand positioning. However, currently there is no sport tourism strategy, dedicated resources or focused attention on this growing and extremely competitive market in BC. Other destinations are becoming more aggressive and Vernon needs to increase its intentions on this market to continue to maintain market share.</p>

	<p>Analysis of Vernon’s Commercial Accommodation Survey suggests that there are opportunities to drive increased occupancy to accommodation properties in both peak and shoulder seasons, and a more dedicated focus on sports tourism can help fill the gap. Currently, sports team visitors are important shoulder season visitors; efforts to increase sport tourism in the shoulder season are particularly important to increase average occupancy rates.</p> <p>The goals of the sports tourism strategy will be developed based on the facilities assessment and development of a strategic plan; this may include attracting new events, growing existing events, increasing capacity utilization, and increasing sports benefits in the shoulder and off season.</p>
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a Sports Tourism Strategy, including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Facilities assessment gap analysis based on market needs and sports tourism strategies. b. Hire a part-time Sport Tourism Coordinator. (As outlined in strategy #16, this would include half of the recommended full-time Marketing Specialist position). c. Develop an incentives and sponsorships plan. d. Identify specific tournaments, events and meets and assist local sports organizations with hosting bids. e. Market to provincial and national amateur sports organizations. f. Develop initiatives to inspire friends and family visits with the athletes. g. Develop initiatives to generate repeat leisure travel. 2. Participate on the Canadian Sports Tourism Alliance and the newly reinvigorated Community Sport Hosting Network led by the Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development. 3. Explore Grant funding opportunities specifically for sport hosting.
Role	Tourism Vernon to lead.

Activate Strategic Marketing Partnerships

Strategy #5	Leverage existing and new strategic marketing partnerships and programs with local Vernon stakeholders.
Description	There are significant marketing opportunities to partner more effectively with the Vernon stakeholders, and look for non-traditional partners that are already passionate Vernon advocates.
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to work in alliance, and build upon successful partnerships with local tourism businesses throughout Vernon. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Continue to offer the MRDT Coop Marketing Program to leverage marketing funds from the MRDT with tourism operators/private sector. b. Continue to support stakeholder initiatives towards the Meeting, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) market through

	<p>information on the website and referring enquiries to stakeholders directly.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Continue to leverage partners, and look for new partners that complement the focus areas within the plan, e.g., Downtown Vernon Business Association, Regional District of North Okanagan for the Cultural Master Plan and Agricultural Plan. 3. Explore non-conventional marketing partnerships that may significantly generate greater reach for Vernon. Examples may include packaged goods (e.g., Davison Orchards), travel contest prize to Vernon, local media, local non-tourism businesses (e.g., Kal Tire, Tolko, Hoban Equipment), bicycle manufacturers, etc. 4. Continue to identify and build partnership opportunities with outlying cities and communities that can contribute to enhancing the Vernon appeal as a destination and/or strengthen and leverage marketing efforts, e.g., Lumby, Enderby, Cherryville, Lake Country, etc.
Role	Tourism Vernon to lead.

Strategy #6	Work collaboratively with destinations along the primary Thompson Okanagan travel corridors.
Description	The success of community destination marketing is to work in partnership with local business, neighbouring communities and relevant strategic businesses, and improve the linkages between destination marketing organizations at all levels (e.g. structures, resources and strategies). Stronger working relationships with destinations along Vernon’s key travel corridors can be mutually beneficial for all parties.
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Engage TOTA and peer DMO’s in exploratory dialogue and strategic planning sessions to identify new and innovative marketing collaborations for the benefit of the entire region. 2. Continue to work in alliance, and build upon successful partnerships along the south-north Okanagan corridor. 3. Continue to work in alliance and build upon successful partnerships along the west-east Vancouver to Alberta corridor. 4. Develop a strategy to work as a Consortium (three or more communities working together) and leverage the new Destination BC Co-operative Marketing Program to provide matching marketing funds for Tourism Vernon and partner initiatives.
Role	Tourism Vernon to lead for the Vernon area, looking to TOTA to lead for the region.

Strategy #7	Leverage relevant sector marketing partnerships and programs for tourism growth.
Description	The shift in the role of the sector marketing organizations in BC has resulted in an increase in relevance for these organizations in terms of promoting their sector. It is important that Vernon engage and leverage the relevant sector activities to ensure Vernon is represented and expanding marketing efforts to appropriate target markets.
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with sector associations to leverage their provincial marketing efforts and ensure Vernon is well represented, including providing content they can use (story ideas, images, videos, content). Identified sectors include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. BC Golf Marketing Alliance b. Mountain Bike Tourism Association (e.g., annual contest promotion)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. North to Alaska (Drive market, RV and FIT) d. Canada’s West Ski Area Association e. Fishing sector marketing organizations, e.g., BC Fishing Resorts and Outfitters Association, Sport Fishing Institute. f. BC Ale Trail (new for 2016) g. BC RV and Campground Association
Role	Tourism Vernon to outreach to sector marketing organization, who will take the lead on provincial efforts, to determine opportunities for Vernon.

Strategy #8	Increase engagement of TOTA, Destination BC and Destination Canada in working with Tourism Vernon to improve marketing efforts.
Description	Increased alignment within the provincial tourism system creates new opportunities to work with TOTA, Destination BC, Destination Canada and relevant sector associations to promote Vernon tourism opportunities. Also, it is important to proactively work with TOTA to address the concerns expressed by stakeholders that TOTA’s focus of effort is imbalanced, with greater emphasis on South Okanagan than North Okanagan.
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase familiarization of the Vernon area for relevant TOTA, Destination BC and Destination Canada staff by hosting a Vernon fam tour. 2. Develop action plans to identify and monitor opportunities for further engagement with both TOTA, Destination BC and Destination Canada, so that Vernon can support the regional, provincial and federal strategies and vice-versa. Review on an annual schedule. 3. Advocate for fair representative of Vernon in TOTA and Destination BC activities and efforts. 4. Continue to create new assets and communications that support the content plans of TOTA Touring campaigns, Destination BC provincial campaigns, and Destination Canada federal campaigns. 5. Ensure all TOTA, Destination BC and Destination Canada marketing materials accurately reflect the positioning and messaging for Vernon, including editorial content, photographs, driving routes, trip ideas, blogs. 6. Leverage partnerships with TOTA, Destination BC and Destination Canada to expand the reach of Vernon’s marketing message and gain exposure in long-haul Canadian and International markets. 7. Review promotional partnering opportunities with TOTA, Destination BC and Destination Canada for maximizing effectiveness while in the destination decision-making stage. 8. Coordinate a presentation with Destination BC and Destination Canada to provide an overview of Vernon’s tourism products and experiences to highlight the destination for staff (Victoria and Vancouver offices). 9. Encourage Vernon businesses to participate in TOTA, Destination BC and Destination Canada programs, e.g., Listings Program, Special Offers, etc.
Role	Tourism Vernon to lead.

Enhance the Destination Appeal

It is critical that the mandate for destination development isn't added to the existing role of Tourism Vernon, or another organization, without adequate resources to ensure the workload doesn't jeopardize current tourism marketing or other critical initiatives of benefit to the region, e.g., Okanagan Rail Trail.

Strategy #9	Encourage and enable industry to develop new remarkable products and experiences that support the Vernon brand, demand generators and target markets.
Description	<p>While there has been a strong emphasis on marketing with proven results, there isn't the same organizational structure, mandate or resources on the destination development side of the destination management equation.</p> <p>Vernon does have a solid base of market ready products, but a more compelling critical mass is required to enhance the destination appeal.</p> <p>While tourism stakeholders strongly desire for Tourism Vernon to remain focused on marketing, there has been a global trend for DMOs to place a greater emphasis on destination development that ensures unique product experiences to market.</p> <p>As such, there is a need for Tourism Vernon to encourage and enable others to lead the development of new remarkable products and experiences.</p>
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Participate in Destination BC Remarkable Experiences program as a full community destination. 2. Provide information and insight to identify best development opportunities and support any development planning and initiatives. 3. Evaluate the quality of the experiences by using Net Promoter Score. <p>Based on input and engagement from both visitors and stakeholders, participate in the development of Destination Development Action Plans to identify key concrete steps that can be taken to create more product experiences, improve the appeal and quality of the current product offer, and support visitation in the shoulder seasons. Action Plans should be developed for each of the following (due to the significant nature of Festivals & Events and the Okanagan Rail Trail project, these plans have been identified as separate strategies below):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Develop an Outdoor Activities Action Plan <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identified as a unique selling proposition and key motivator for travel to the region. b. Select a few key iconic Outdoor Activities to further develop as remarkable experiences and "Must Do" Activities in Vernon, e.g., SUP or kayak on Kalamalka Lake. 5. Develop a Small Town Charm Action Plan <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identified in consumer research as appeal of Vernon, and differentiates Vernon from Kamloops and Kelowna. b. Focus on: agritourism, local foods/beverages, downtown, unique attractions, etc. 6. Develop an Aboriginal Tourism Experiences Action Plan <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identified as a trip enhancer for the region. 9% of visitors to the visitor centre requested information about First Nations (the third highest

	<p>request), and TOTA is increasing resources by hiring a regional aboriginal tourism specialist.</p> <p>b. Work with Aboriginal Tourism Association of BC (AtBC), TOTA, and local First Nations to support the development and long-term growth of cultural tourism and build stronger relationships with the First Nations communities, e.g., Okanagan Indian Band, Spltasin Band, and other potential partners.</p>
Role	Tourism Vernon should communicate and advocate for the need for product development, facilitate planning, and support the City of Vernon and industry in their efforts to develop new and enhanced product experiences.

Strategy #10	Increase focus on supporting new and enhanced festivals and events.
Description	In terms of product development, visitor and stakeholder research has demonstrated there are opportunities to facilitate development of large-scale event projects that highlight Vernon’s outdoor appeal.
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a Festival & Events Strategy and Action Plan to support new events creation and expansion of existing events with potential for increased visitation and overnight stays, including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identify existing key signature events that support the Activate Life brand positioning and identify opportunities for enhancement. b. Identify gaps in the event calendar, or where current events are at capacity, and develop plan to address. In particular, focus on festivals & events the entire community can support and promote to draw significant visitors. c. Identify potential new events that enhance the destination appeal, including mountain biking, arts/cultural events, and multi-destination events to showcase the entire destination, e.g., Ski to SUP, triathlon, Ironman. d. Increase the visibility of festivals to potential travellers through heightened promotion. e. Support the arts and cultural events as identified and executed through the Regional District of North Okanagan Cultural Master Plan, e.g., festivals and live performances. 2. Fund the Festival & Events Strategy and Action Plan Fund through the reserve funds. 3. Facilitate elevated packaging and promotion of existing events. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Explore combining existing community-specific events into more significant offerings to increase the draw to the entire Vernon area. b. Explore adding additional features to existing events to encourage event attendees to stay longer and spend more. c. Develop overnight packages attached to key events, e.g. all day, evening or weekend events. d. Work with tourism operators to develop packaged offers to support overnight stays. e. Support existing events through all marketing vehicles.

Role	Tourism Vernon should lead the development of an events strategy, review the ability to add financial incentives for new events, and facilitate packaging and promotional opportunities. Additional involvement is required from the City of Vernon, Regional District of North Okanagan, Coldstream, and surrounding areas.
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Strategy #11	Facilitate collaboration to ensure Vernon is leveraging its unique potential as a gateway and hub for the North Okanagan Rail Trail.
Description	Trail infrastructure in the Vernon area is currently under development and substantial efforts are being put forward by municipalities, Regional District, local organizations and TOTA to develop the Okanagan Rail Trail. Trail tourism has been identified as a key priority and Tourism Vernon has an opportunity to quickly establish Vernon as the northern hub. However, efforts need to be applied to guide the tourism industry, and entrench this positioning.
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tourism Vernon to contract a lead Project Manager to ensure product development and marketing initiatives are kept on track and implemented on time for the Vernon area. This position would work closely with TOTA and engage all relevant organizations. 2. Work with Ribbons of Green Trail Society and TOTA to activate Regional Trails Strategy for Vernon, including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Support of a strategic and select group of market-ready trails from the existing trail/cycling initiatives (e.g. SilverStar Mountain Resort, North Okanagan Cycling Society initiatives, city planned trails). b. Major awareness marketing. c. Directional devices –Signage, apps, maps, rack cards, guides. d. On the ground systems for users –transport, meals, etc. e. Airport pick-up with bike racks. f. Kelowna return, Penticton return, Osoyoos return. g. Gear movement. h. Bike rentals and repair -mobile & injury transport. i. Packed lunches & snacks. j. Evening events -bike tune-up area. k. Massage, hot tubs, etc. l. Bike storage lockers, bike bag storage. m. Poor weather activities. 3. Leverage the Okanagan Rail Trail Visitation to generate repeat visits and longer stays for Vernon. 4. Use a two-year allocation of the reserve funds to activate this initiative to firmly entrench Vernon as the best starting point along the Okanagan Rail Trail.
Role	Tourism Vernon / City of Vernon to contract a lead Project Manager. There is no intention that Tourism Vernon will fund capital/infrastructure related projects or financially support the operation of capital/infrastructure projects.

Strategy #12	Provide more compelling and enticing packaged travel experiences within the destination and between destinations.
Description	In order to diversify the market and attract new visitors to the area, new product development is needed. Efforts should be made to facilitate collaboration to ensure compelling and attractive packages are developed and promoted.

	<p>Consumers are looking for unique, memorable and authentic experiences. Efforts should be made to create compelling and attractive packages that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage visitors to the Okanagan and Shuswap to visit Vernon for a day trip. • Encourage visitors to Vernon to stay longer and participate in activities and experience throughout the entire area. • Entice same day or event-specific visitors to return for a longer visit. • Provide residents with ideas for Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) to enhance and extend their stay. • Entice visitors to bring their families to participate in other activities, e.g., while one is at a sporting event, the other is engaged in another experience. <p>Media and travel trade are looking for new and unique offerings for their consumers.</p>
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Facilitate workshops and networking opportunities between tourism operators—in particular accommodations, transportation and activities— for the development of partnerships and packaged offers. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Create packages and itineraries for both day and overnight stays. Focus goal of packages on increasing visitation, length of stay and yield (dollars spent per person). b. Facilitate packaging and itinerary development workshops and sessions. Provide assistance and guidance to members and stakeholders on developing appealing and compelling packages and promoting them. c. Create itineraries featuring a variety of activities but with each itinerary appealing to a specific market or travel motivation, e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ By target market, e.g., locals (within region), Lower Mainland, etc. ▪ By season, e.g., spring, summer, fall, winter. ▪ By length of stay, 1 day, 2 days, one week. ▪ By Explorer Quotient (EQ) types. 2. Explore the consumer appeal and feasibility of developing packages with other destinations, e.g., Osoyoos to Vernon packages, Kelowna to Vernon packages. These will both entice visitors north from more popular Okanagan destinations, as well as support the destination brand through association. 3. Utilize all relevant marketing communication vehicles to ensure the prominence of package offers and value-add messaging, including the website and social media. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Highlight packaged offerings on website, and throughout marketing communications and channels.
Role	Tourism Vernon to lead.

Strategy #13	Ensure a positive community experience.
Description	Collaborative efforts should be made to ensure the entire Vernon area community is collectively contributing to creating a positive experience for the visitor that compels the visitor to share their experiences with others and engenders loyalty for a return visit.
Actions	Connectivity

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure visitors can connect through digital and mobile devices through the destination. <p>Wayfinding/Signage</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Ensure adequate use of highway signs to attract travellers into communities and attractions throughout Vernon. 3. Update signage at each end of Vernon to welcome visitors and create awareness of the destination. 4. Extend new signage that is utilized downtown to other areas of the destination to assist travellers to get to other places, e.g., lakes, orchards, etc. 5. Ensure consistent use of trail signage throughout the destination, including hiking trails, the Okanagan Rail Trail and mountain biking trails (estimated 200 signs required). <p>Quality Assurance</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Provide operators with a standards guideline for ensuring the level of visitor service and overall experience supports the brand positioning, marketing and brand promise and expectations of visitors. Potentially have operators sign an MOU in order to receive marketing support. <p>Beautification</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Enhance the appeal of driving through Vernon on the main highways, extending the downtown charm to the main thoroughfares. 8. Enhance the appeal around the Visitor Centre to make the first impression more positive for visitors. 9. Improve the visual appeal of Kalamalka Lake and Okanagan Lake waterfront access, e.g., work with Regional District of North Okanagan to improve chain link fence at Kalamalka Lake, provide pocket parks along Okanagan Lake until long-term development plans are realized.
Role	<p>Tourism Vernon to advocate for these identified infrastructure improvements, working in collaboration with all Vernon area stakeholders. There is no intention that Tourism Vernon will fund capital/infrastructure related projects or financially support the operation of capital/infrastructure projects.</p>

Strategy #14	Continue to evolve the visitor services model.
Description	<p>Effort needs to continue to be applied to ensure the visitor has the information they need regarding the activities and services that are available in Vernon and that this information is easy to find. Efforts should be made to ensure the community is collectively contributing to creating a positive experience for the visitor.</p> <p>Provision of visitor services is in a state of change around the world. Tourism Vernon should continue to innovate the provision of visitor services by trying new ways of connecting with visitors, including embracing new technology to connect with visitors. Special attention should be paid to tracking the success of new initiatives.</p> <p>Also, the visitor services model should be reviewed with the aim to redistribute current and future budgets allocated from visitor services to marketing and promotions.</p>
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to provide visitor services through the Visitor Centre Network. 2. Develop an innovative visitor services strategy to address the changing needs of visitors, in particular for outside of visitor centres, to address the growing trend in using mobile platforms for trip planning. Explore feasibility of expanding roaming mobile visitor services for reaching visitors where they are located, in particularly at

	<p>key festival & events and sporting events and the ability for them to upload and distribute their experience via these services.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Ensure the ongoing collection, analysis and sharing of visitor services intelligence. 4. Explore implementing innovative online and social media efforts to engage with visitors already in the Thompson Okanagan looking for ideas for the day. 5. Continue to supply traffic sources (e.g., Kelowna Airport, hotels, sports facilities, Visitor Centre) with tourism information for Vernon. 6. Explore a less costly visitor services model to realign funds to higher value activities.
Role	Tourism Vernon to lead.

Strategy #15	Support the focus on understanding and protecting natural assets within the region.
Description	Vernon’s tourism draw is highly connected to the natural environment and unique culture of the destination. Outdoor recreation in nature, scenery and wildlife viewing are all included in travel motivators to Vernon. The continued focus on cultural stewardship and protecting and preserving the surrounding natural assets is a key priority for all stakeholders to action.
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a Responsible Travel Destination statement/story that can be used to help educate prospective visitors and residents on what the natural values of the destination are, what local actions are being taken to protect it, and the conduct expected by visitors while in-destination. Post on the website and have available for industry to share with guests, including what visitors can do to help and support. 2. Identification of, and promotion of standards for industry to adopt that supports being a Responsible Travel Destination. 3. Build appreciation and knowledge with industry employees (e.g., front line, management, owners, operators) to ensure all visitor connections and touchpoints are supporting the Responsible Travel Destination story. 4. Explore becoming a Wild Cities Champion through the Wild Cities Project, which has a purpose to “regenerate wild nature in urban areas to improve quality of life for all”. (wildcities.org) 5. Explore garnering recognition for the industry efforts, which will assist in developing pride of place, support the brand proposition, and draw media attention to the collective stewardship achievements of the region. Examples may include Tourism for Tomorrow awards and World Responsible Tourism Awards.
Role	Tourism Vernon to facilitate the efforts with the involvement of municipalities, Regional District and tourism operators.

Provide Visionary Leadership

Strategy #16	Evolve to a Commission-managed organizational structure over time to enable Tourism Vernon to be more effective.
Description	<p>Currently, there are significant benefits to Tourism Vernon residing within the city of Vernon. However, that structure also hinders the DMO to be flexible, nimble and resourced appropriately. Over the next few years, efforts should be made to address the challenges and evolve to a new organizational structure that better enables Tourism Vernon to excel in the competitive tourism industry and to better support tourism stakeholders.</p> <p>With the projected growth of tourism, and the resources required to implement this plan, the capacity of Tourism Vernon needs to expand. Also, to ensure consistent, quality delivery of services and engagement of tourism stakeholders, additional staff resources are required.</p>
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hire an additional full-time staff member to take the role of Sport Tourism Manager (1/2 time) and Marketing Specialist (1/2 time). <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Review the current and required roles for the existing Tourism Manager, the additional staff member and contractors for better efficiencies and to ensure the most effective structure of roles and responsibilities. b. Additional staff may be directed to manage sports tourism and group sales, product packaging, festival & events, travel trade as well as assist with ongoing media relations and marketing initiatives. c. Review on a bi-annual basis to determine if additional resources are required. 2. Evolve the Governance Structure: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Create a Tourism Commission governance structure separate from the City of Vernon Council to reduce levels of bureaucracy, and enable quick decisions and faster reaction to market demands. b. Tourism Advisory Committee – Continue with the Marketing and Events Sub-committees. Shift the focus of the Visitor Centre Sub-committee to a Visitor Experience Sub-committee with a stronger focus on the overall end-to-end customer experience. c. Formalize the role of the Marketing Action Team, ensuring there are clearly defined roles, processes, communications and results. 3. Work to address City of Vernon rules and regulations to enable travel media hosting.
Role	<p>Tourism Vernon to work with the City of Vernon to find a solution agreeable to all parties. Involve Tourism Advisory Committee and tourism businesses as needed.</p>

Strategy #17	Advocate for the tourism industry within the municipality, region, and province.
Description	<p>The secondary research, stakeholder interviews and the stakeholder survey revealed there are opportunities to improve tourism infrastructure in Vernon. Tourism Vernon should continue to work with partners within the City of Vernon, senior levels of government and other organizations to provide the tourism perspective on infrastructure challenges and improve the overall climate for tourism.</p>

	While there has been a strong emphasis on marketing through the direction of Tourism Vernon with proven results, there isn't the same organizational structure, mandate or resources on the destination development side of the destination management equation. Industry stakeholders want Tourism Vernon to remain focused on marketing, but long-term competitiveness of the destination requires a mandate for destination development, and a champion to facilitate the process.
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop an advocacy and communication plan to improve tourism infrastructure in Vernon, including providing relevant information and engaging the tourism industry: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Expand and improve parks, trails and greenspaces in Vernon. b. Enhance the appeal of Vernon when driving through. c. Monitor and address peak-season traffic and perceived parking problems. d. Ensure free and easy connectivity/access to the Internet. e. Continue to support development of downtown/quaint town experiences. f. Support development of a new Art Gallery and Museum. g. Continue to support improved visitor transportation options to and throughout the Vernon area. h. Expand and enhance signage/wayfinding outside of the downtown core. i. Expand access and infrastructure to the surrounding lakes, with particular emphasis on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redeveloping a portion of the Okanagan Lake waterfront to include tourism accommodation and destination appeal. • Providing additional waterfront experiences on Kalamalka Lake to improve the overall experience of water-based activities. 2. Advocate to build capacity in the Vernon area for a champion to take the lead role in working with partners in implementing destination development initiatives. 3. Participate fully in the provincial Destination Development plans being led by Destination BC. 4. Take an active role on seeking board positions on regional and provincial industry associations.
Role	Tourism Vernon is responsible for ongoing advocacy and support. There is no intention that Tourism Vernon will fund capital/infrastructure related projects or financially support the operation of capital/infrastructure projects.

Strategy #18	Continue to ensure the tourism industry is inclusive of the entire Vernon area.
Description	DMO partnerships both within and outside of the tourism industry are key to success. More and more, local DMOs are working with their partners in economic development, parks and recreation and other community and regional organizations to align actions and leverage funding opportunities. This is particularly important in Vernon, where many tourism experiences are outside of the city boundaries and there are emerging product development opportunities (e.g. rail trail experiences) that supersede municipal boundaries.
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to partner and collaborate within the City of Vernon departments (e.g. Parks and Recreation) for the betterment of tourism.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Explore funding opportunities with local and regional government agencies that receive benefit from the Tourism Vernon function, including Coldstream and Electoral Areas B & C. 3. Enhance regional collaboration with local First Nations when working on tourism promotion and development activities. 4. Long-term, explore a combined MRDT area inclusive of the entire Vernon area, including Vernon, Coldstream, Regional District Area B & C, Lumby, Enderby, Cherryville, and SilverStar Mountain Resort to significantly increase the available resources and reach of the entire destination.
Role	Tourism Vernon to continue to champion ongoing partner collaboration within the Vernon area.

Strategy #19	Continue to engage stakeholders and residents through communications and community relations activities to contribute to an enhanced tourism development climate.
Description	<p>Engagement and communications efforts should be continued for all stakeholders in the region to build support for tourism, keep stakeholders informed about the progress of individual initiatives and overall plans, and encourage stakeholder participation in tourism development and marketing efforts. Enabling an Engaged Community is about ensuring all community stakeholders are informed and engaged in driving results for the tourism sector in Vernon.</p> <p>A stronger communications plan is needed to strengthen relationships with the community through communications, inclusion, transparency and accountability.</p>
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish a communications and community relations strategy that engages and informs the tourism industry, stakeholders, residents and City of Vernon to contribute to an enhanced tourism development climate. 2. Continue to communicate with stakeholders through newsletters, events, and information posted on the website, among others. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Increase the stakeholder database. 3. Increase public perception of the value of tourism. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Develop an economic impact study. o Create awareness of the value of tourism, including spin-off benefits, e.g., resident’s quality of life, business generation, construction, etc. Explore leveraging existing resources, e.g., TIABC. o Share results of Commercial Accommodation Survey and other research. 4. Stakeholder Participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Initiate email updates/newsletters to interested stakeholders. o Continue inviting stakeholders to meetings – generate participation via emails, possibly incentive for participation. o Ensure product inventory of tourism operators is maintained. 5. Explore the development of a resident campaign, to inform residents of the value of tourism, and their role in being good hosts. 6. Coordinate events calendar. 7. Provide updates on activities and accomplishments, both ongoing and more formally annually. 8. Consider social media activities that help engage residents as well as travellers.

Role	Tourism Vernon to lead with the engagement of all municipalities, Regional District, tourism operators and general public.
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Strategy #20	Facilitate and encourage industry training and development.
Description	<p>The brand promise that is made by marketing Vernon must be in line with the products and services being offered. As Vernon continues to develop its tourism opportunities and outreach to new markets, both individual businesses and the collective industry will require development.</p> <p>Visitors have heightened expectations for optimum quality of customer service. Tourism Vernon and Tourism Vernon stakeholders have identified the need for industry development including customer service training and cross-training of frontline employees (e.g., employees that have direct interactions with visitors such as hotel front desk staff and restaurant servers) on the availability of tourism experiences in Vernon.</p>
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Participate in the Destination BC Remarkable Experiences pilot program that will provide tools to help individual businesses both improve their visitor experience and become the best digital marketers they can be. Destination BC will enable their network of partners with a range of skills, tools and delivery models to help create memorable experiences for their guests, to improve experience design and frontline service delivery, to cost effectively manage their online reputation and empower their guests to amplify the message. 2. Work with TOTA, Aboriginal Tourism BC and Destination BC to host professional development workshops: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Host workshops focused on providing an exceptional visitor experience, including <i>WorldHost</i>® Customer Service Training and accommodation quality standards. b. To improve local understanding of actively participating in online and social media marketing by engaging travellers and generating content. c. To improve skillsets in Product Packaging. d. To improve understanding of cultural tourism experiences and aboriginal tourism development. e. Promote free webinars and downloadable <i>Tourism Business Essentials</i> guides to industry stakeholders, such as Online Reputation Management and Working with Travel Media, among others. 3. Continue to implement a program to assist front line staff throughout the Thompson Okanagan region with product knowledge of Vernon. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Conduct FAM tours of Vernon with key influencers, and front line staff, e.g., Visitor Centre Counsellors. 4. Provide industry with training on the Vernon brand strategy and highlight key initiatives operators can implement to support and reinforce the brand through quality improvements. 5. Provide operators with a standards guideline for ensuring the level of visitor service and overall experience supports the brand positioning, marketing and brand promise and expectations of visitors.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ensure a focus on the cycling market to meet expectations of the Okanagan Rail Trail visitor. <p>6. Leverage and promote existing TOTA and Destination BC training tools, e.g., Tourism Business Essentials guides to industry stakeholders.</p>
Role	Tourism Vernon to lead efforts, with the involvement of tourism businesses, TOTA, Destination BC, and other organizations.

Strategy #21	Lead the ongoing collection, analysis and sharing of performance metrics, research and intelligence.
Description	<p>Business intelligence is a critical aspect to ensuring tourism development and marketing decisions are being made based on sound research. Currently, Tourism Vernon is building intelligence, but research specific to Vernon is limited to a one-year data set.</p> <p>Efforts should be made to continue to gather and share information relevant to Vernon, and instill an industry-wide culture of ongoing performance measurement collection and documentation to enable the analysis of trends over time and ensure business decisions are based on solid information, research and analysis.</p> <p>Efforts are also needed to establish tourism industry research that will provide the information needed to execute this plan, as well as provide critical information for community tourism planning in the future.</p> <p>When planning future research and analysis work, it is imperative to include potential project partners (e.g. SilverStar Mountain Resort, Predator Ridge, Sparkling Hill and other tourism businesses) to share resources as well as research insights. Also, given the need for Tourism Vernon to improve collaboration and communication, ensure Tourism Vernon Stakeholders are aware of study results. The value of tourism to the Vernon area should be calculated and communicated with the broader Vernon community (outside of tourism).</p>
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue with current research and intelligence program to help measure and monitor business plans and provide input into business decisions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Maintain the monthly Vernon Commercial Accommodation Survey. b. Continue to track key visitor services and marketing key performance indicators. 2. Regularly conduct Tourism Stakeholder surveys to evaluate Tourism Vernon’s performance. 3. Conduct visitor surveys on a regular basis. There are opportunities to expand the scope of the visitor survey and evaluate quality of tourism experiences in Vernon; work with Destination BC’s Research, Planning and Evaluation team to implement Net Promoter Score tracking in Vernon, which is recommended to evaluate quality of tourism experiences and can be compared to the provincial tracking and other destinations within BC. For more information on Net Promoter Score, see Appendix 1. 4. Enhance Explorer Quotient insights by linking online survey results with PRIZM5 database (EnviroNics Analytics consumer segment research based on postal code). TOTA can facilitate this work. 5. Conduct a full economic impact study to determine the total number of Vernon visitors, their expenditures, tourism jobs in Vernon, GDP, and government revenues relating to tourism.

	<p>6. Develop a process or program to ensure measurement of industry performance and to work with tourism businesses to instill a culture of tracking and reporting on business performance, including monitoring and sharing the following performance measurements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Increase overnight visitation. o Increase length of stay. o Increase accommodation revenues. o Increase awareness, interest and conversion from target markets. o Increase Net Promoter Score. o Growth in employment in tourism. <p>7. Monitor Destination BC’s Research and Evaluation webpage for industry performance measurement.² Continue to work with Destination BC’s Research, Planning and Evaluation team to assist with Vernon’s performance measurements and intelligence.</p> <p>8. Conduct research into new areas of product development, including cycling and how will it benefit the area.</p>
Role	Tourism Vernon to lead with involvement from accommodators and other tourism businesses.

Strategy #22	Secure additional funding to resource Tourism Vernon appropriately.
Description	<p>Additional resources are required to ensure Vernon can be competitive, increase market share and address existing workload capacity issues.</p> <p>Vernon’s neighboring DMOs in the Okanagan Valley enjoy larger annual budgets than Tourism Vernon. For Kelowna and Kamloops, this is a result of a larger room-base and therefore more income from the MRDT. The majority of Tourism Stakeholders have demonstrated general support for Tourism Vernon to apply for the increase in MDRT which would result in about \$242,000 (2018, first full year) in additional funds for tourism promotion and development. Gaining these additional funds would help Vernon compete with other neighboring communities.</p>
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue efforts to secure 3% MRDT Funding. 2. Request funding from tourism stakeholders and governments that benefit from Tourism Vernon efforts, e.g., Regional District of North Okanagan, Coldstream, etc. This should not be a membership fee structure or model. 3. Identify priority projects within this Tourism Plan requiring outside funding and explore alternative funding options. 4. TOTA and Destination BC programs that could be leveraged to offset costs.
Role	Tourism Vernon to lead with the involvement of tourism businesses, TOTA, City of Vernon, municipalities, Regional District, tourism businesses.

Strategy #23	Ensure ongoing tourism planning.
Description	Continue to involve stakeholders in community planning as this plan evolves.

² See: <http://www.destinationbc.ca/Research/Industry-Performance.aspx>

	<p>Ongoing efforts need to be continued to ensure all stakeholders within Vernon are working together and are represented and supporting this plan.</p> <p>Also, with multiple product experiences being offered to different consumer target groups, it would be beneficial to map out an annual communication plan to ensure the right messages are being delivered effectively. A holistic communication plan will ensure all communications—community, stakeholder and consumer target markets—will be leveraged to achieve objectives, in particular, to increase awareness and engagement from industry.</p>
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to conduct Annual Planning. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Annual meetings to review the execution and budget of Vernon’s Tourism Strategy Update. Engage stakeholders and TOTA in prioritizing projects for subsequent years and allocating funding. 2. Engage AtBC and Vernon area First Nations in tourism planning and development. 3. Continue to work with other City of Vernon divisions on planning initiatives that impact the tourism industry. 4. Integrated Content Plan <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Implement an annual content and communication plan for all outgoing communications materials e.g., website, social media, newsletters, industry and stakeholder communications, media relations, local government.
Role	Tourism Vernon to lead with the involvement of tourism partners.

Governance Model

For this plan to be successful, it is important a strong governance model be in place. In Vernon, the City of Vernon is the delivery agent for tourism services through the marketing name of Tourism Vernon. The function is housed within the Community Development and Infrastructure Division with the Tourism Manager reporting to the Senior Manager of Economic Development and Tourism.

Strategic direction for Tourism is provided by City Council with the assistance of the Tourism Advisory Committee, especially as it relates to the use of funds collected from the Municipal and Regional District Tax and other sources, including City of Vernon funds and resources. This governance model is recommended to continue for the life of this plan, with recognition of the actions identified within Strategy #16 Evolve to a Commission-managed organizational structure over time to enable Tourism Vernon to be more effective.

Advantages of this model:

- Ensures consistent branding and external messaging between all City of Vernon divisions including Economic Development and Tourism. Leverages City of Vernon marketing efforts.
- Increased collaboration between a variety of municipal services including Community Development, Parks and Recreation and Economic Development and Tourism on projects and initiatives. Ensures tourism interests and requirements are included in City of Vernon and partner development projects.
- As it is a part of the municipality, Tourism receives additional support through various functions including Finance, Information Systems, Administration, Operations, Human Resources and Community Development. This drastically reduces administrative, overhead and operational costs associated with the function by \$100,000 and \$110,000 annually.
- There is a mechanism in place for industry to provide input and strategic direction to the Tourism Manager.

Budget

The following budget has been developed based on the approved 2016 budget. It is important to review this plan on an annual basis to reprioritize activities, determine funding requirements and determine availability of funds.

This plan has been developed based on an aggressive but achievable target of increasing MRDT 8% on average to 2019. It also includes fast-tracking the utilization of the Reserve Fund into 2017. Vernon currently has a significant reserve fund of \$575,000 that most years does not get utilized. To jumpstart tourism in Vernon, it is recommended this plan draw from that funding source to help activate tourism now to better prepare the destination for the future. The plan is based on industry’s desire for realistic but aggressive growth; any unforeseeable and significant changes may impact performance, e.g. catastrophic worldwide events.

In addition, \$108,000 has been added in 2017 based on the successful MRDT process to shift from 2% to 3% (.8% of additional 1% would go to Tourism Vernon, the remaining .2% would remain with the Province to fund a provincial tourism event hosting program. This has been included as ½ year of funding to address the time required to go through the approval process.)

Based on the above changes, the budget grows to over \$1,000,000, which is a significant increase over the current budget forecast (as of 2016, the Tourism Vernon budget is expected to decline to \$742,358 towards 2020 as the reserve is utilized), and enables Vernon to be more competitive with other Okanagan destinations.

The following chart outlines all revenues sources, including the City of Vernon (with annual increases), Destination BC Visitor Centre Operating Grant, Earned Revenues, Reserve Funds and MRDT. As the budget for the Priority Actions outlined within this plan may exceed the total annual budget available from Tourism Vernon, new revenue streams or other resources should continue to be sourced, which may include new funding available by the Province for event hosting, community grant funding programs, etc.

Currently the designated accommodation area for the collection of the MRDT is the City of Vernon boundary; there is an opportunity to include Regional District of North Okanagan (RDNO) Area B.

	Base Year: Budget 2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
MRDT – 2%	\$500,000	\$540,000	\$583,200	\$629,856	\$680,244	\$734,664
MRDT - 3%*		\$108,000	\$233,280	\$251,942	\$272,097	\$293,865
Reserve Funds	\$150,000	\$200,000	\$150,000	\$75,000		
City of Vernon	\$111,382	\$113,387	\$115,428	\$117,506	\$119,621	\$121,774
Destination BC Visitor Centre Operating Grant	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000
Earned Revenues	\$43,910	\$43,910	\$43,910	\$43,910	\$43,910	\$43,910
TOTAL	\$830,292	\$1,030,297	\$1,150,818	\$1,143,214	\$1,096,962	\$1,175,302

Note: Destination BC Visitor Centre Operating Grant is confirmed to 2018, and budgeted to continue in 2019. Earned Revenues for 2017-2021 are based on estimates and are subject to City of Vernon Council approval.

*3% funding – Tourism Vernon receives 0.8% of the additional 1%.

Expenditures by strategic area:

Function	Strategies	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Marketing	Inspire Visitation through Focused Marketing	\$467,950	\$580,000	\$675,000	\$690,000	\$641,962	\$705,302
Marketing	Activate Strategic Marketing Partnerships	\$60,000	\$50,000	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$80,000
Development & Visitor Services	Enhance the Destination Appeal	\$185,450	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$180,000	\$180,000	\$190,000
Administration	Provide Visionary Leadership	\$116,892	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000
TOTAL		\$830,292	\$1,030,397	\$1,150,818	\$1,096,962	\$1,143,214	\$1,175,302

For comparison purposes, a budget with a 2% MRDT has been provided in the event the 3% MRDT application is not successful. The following budget has been provided based on a 2% MRDT funding level.

	Base Year: Budget 2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
MRDT – 2%	\$500,000	\$540,000	\$583,200	\$629,856	\$680,244	\$734,664
MRDT - 3%*		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Reserve Funds	\$150,000	\$200,000	\$150,000	\$75,000		
City of Vernon	\$111,382	\$113,387	\$115,428	\$117,506	\$119,621	\$121,774
Destination BC Visitor Centre Operating Grant	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000
Earned Revenues	\$43,910	\$43,910	\$43,910	\$43,910	\$43,910	\$43,910
TOTAL	\$830,292	\$922,297	\$917,538	\$891,272	\$824,865	\$881,437

Note: Destination BC Visitor Centre Operating Grant is confirmed to 2018, and budgeted to continue in 2019. Earned Revenues for 2017-2021 are based on estimates and are subject to City of Vernon Council approval.

*3% funding – Tourism Vernon receives 0.8% of the additional 1%.

Function	Strategies	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Marketing	Inspire Visitation through Focused Marketing	\$467,950	\$477,297	\$507,538	\$481,272	\$414,865	\$471,437
Marketing	Activate Strategic Marketing Partnerships	\$60,000	\$60,000	\$60,000	\$60,000	\$60,000	\$60,000
Development & Visitor Services	Enhance the Destination Appeal	\$185,450	\$185,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000
Administration	Provide Visionary Leadership	\$116,892	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000
TOTAL		\$830,292	\$922,297	\$917,538	\$915,000	\$824,265	\$881,437

Timeline

Strategies		2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Inspire Visitation through Focused Marketing							
1	Build the Vernon destination brand.						
2	Evolve and enhance leisure marketing efforts to complement the current focus on generating awareness and interest with a stronger focus on conversion for booking a trip to Vernon.						
3	Increase role in travel trade sales efforts, working in collaboration with tourism businesses.						
4	Increase efforts on the sports tourism market.						
Activate Strategic Marketing Partnerships							
5	Leverage existing and new strategic marketing partnerships and programs with local Vernon stakeholders.						
6	Work collaboratively with destinations along the primary travel corridors in the Thompson Okanagan.						
7	Leverage relevant sector marketing partnerships and programs for tourism growth.						
8	Increase engagement of TOTA, Destination BC and Destination Canada to improve marketing efforts for Vernon.						
Enhance the Destination Appeal							
9	Encourage and enable industry to develop new remarkable products and experiences that support the Vernon brand, demand generators and target markets.						
10	Increase focus on supporting new and enhanced festivals and events.						
11	Facilitate collaboration to ensure Vernon is leveraging its unique potential as a gateway and hub for the North Okanagan Rail Trail.						
12	Provide more compelling and enticing packaged travel experiences within the destination and between destinations.						
13	Ensure a positive community experience.						
14	Continue to evolve the visitor services model.						
15	Support the focus on understanding and protecting natural assets of the region.						
Provide Visionary Leadership							
16	Evolve to a Commission-managed organizational structure over time to enable Tourism Vernon to be more effective.						
17	Advocate for the tourism industry within the municipality, region, and province.						
18	Continue to ensure the tourism industry is inclusive of the Vernon area.						
19	Continue to engage stakeholders and residents through communications and community relations activities.						
20	Facilitate and encourage industry training and development.						
21	Lead the ongoing collection, analysis and sharing of performance metrics, research and intelligence.						
22	Secure additional funding to resource Tourism Vernon appropriately.						
23	Ensure ongoing tourism planning.						

1.1 Appendix 1: Net Promoter Score

The following has been provided by Destination BC: <http://www.destinationbc.ca/Resources/Monitoring-and-Evaluation/Net-Promoter-Score.aspx>

The Net Promoter Score (NPS), developed by Frederick Reichheld and Bain & Company in 2002, is a simple metric that helps organizations monitor the engagement of their customers. It reflects the likelihood that customers will recommend a product/company/place to friends, family or colleagues.

In the context of the tourism industry, NPS is based on responses to the question, “How likely are you to recommend [Vernon] as a travel destination to a friend, family member or colleague?” Responses are scored from 0 = “not at all likely” to 10 = “extremely likely”. Respondents are divided into three categories:

- **Detractors** (scores of 0 to 6): Unhappy visitors, unlikely to tell others to visit and might even damage the reputation of a destination through negative word of mouth.
- **Passives** (scores of 7 or 8): Marginally satisfied visitors not excited enough to tell others about their travel experience.
- **Promoters** (scores of 9 or 10): Loyal enthusiasts likely to return and rave about their travel experience.

NPS is calculated by subtracting the percentage of detractors from the percentage of promoters.



The intention to recommend a travel destination, reported by the NPS, is a proxy measure of overall satisfaction with the travel experience. Satisfaction with the travel experience and the intention to recommend greatly increase the likelihood of a return visit to British Columbia. And word of mouth advocacy, either face-to-face or through social media, is critical for attracting first time visitors to British Columbia.

NPS is regarded by researchers as the question that best predicts the future growth of customer centric businesses like the tourism industry. Many tourism businesses and destination management organizations, including the Canadian Tourism Commission, are also measuring NPS to help monitor and measure efforts to improve customer loyalty.

The original research that developed NPS is described in an article by Frederick F. Reichheld in the Harvard Business Review: <https://hbr.org/2003/12/the-one-number-you-need-to-grow>.