

RIDEAU HERITAGE ROUTE
TOURISM ASSOCIATION



ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN

2011

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Rideau Heritage Route Tourism Association (RHRTA) is a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) mandated to promote the Rideau Heritage Route (RHR) by developing marketing, communications and promotional programs. The RHR, comprised of the Rideau Canal, its adjoining towns, villages and the cities of Ottawa and Kingston, offers a variety of world-class arts and heritage experiences. The fact that the story of the Rideau Canal is, in part, the story of the creation of Canada itself, reinforces the significance of the RHR.

The overall goal is to position the entire RHR Corridor as a tourism destination by promoting the region's authentic, arts, heritage, cuisine, agri-tourism and natural history experiences with specific objectives as listed below.

The RHRTA will promote both UNESCO Designations – World Heritage for the Canal and its fortifications and the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve covering the southern portion. Investment into the RHRTA is especially significant with current Rideau Canal visitation showing signs of growth in a period of declining market share making this attraction a definite potential economic generator for the entire region.

The RHRTA will steer these efforts in order that all stakeholders and partners are working in the same direction so that valuable, limited resources are focused and used effectively.

2. ASSOCIATION PROFILE

2.1 About the RHRTA

Founded and incorporated in September 2004, the RHRTA is a not-for-profit, partner-based organization that will seek to promote its municipalities and private sector partners from the accommodation, attraction, restaurant, outdoor experience, festivals and entertainment industries. Its role is to promote the destination, increase visitation, develop the industry and enhance the industry's economic impact.

2.2 Association Objectives

- To create a climate that stimulates tourism investment, development, marketing and other activities along the RHR Corridor enhancing the quality of the visitor experience.
- To provide direction and assist in the development of tourism products along the RHR.
- To promote tourism and increase tourism revenues in the RHR Corridor.

2.3 Partnership

The RHRTA has three levels of Partnership/Membership, namely government, organizations/associations and businesses interested in furthering the objectives of the Association. Partners/Members are eligible for nomination and election as Board of Directors or Officers of the Association and eligible to serve on committees, sub-committees, working groups, task forces and advisory councils. Government partners will each have one standing member designated to the board.

GOVERNMENT

- Rideau Corridor Municipalities
- Rideau Corridor Counties
- Parks Canada (Federal)
- Ministry of Tourism (Provincial)

ORGANIZATIONS

- Tourism Associations (including RTO 9, 10, 11)
- Chambers & BIAs
- DMOs

BUSINESSES

- Attractions
- Hotels/Inns/B&B
- Restaurants
- Transportation services
- Shopping
- Entertainment

3. INDUSTRY OVERVIEW

3.1 The Ontario Tourism Industry today

There are numerous fundamental changes happening in the Ontario Tourism industry and it will take some time before a clear picture can emerge with respect to future opportunities for the RHRTA.

- OTMP is under review. Its future existence, roles and operating parameters are still unknown, including how they will work with partners in future.
- The Regional Tourism Organizations (RTOs) are in a transition phase for 2010 but little is known about how they will function with existing DMOs.
- The RHRTA jurisdiction has been divided into 3 new RTO regions (Region 9, 10, 11)
- The Ministry of Tourism and Culture and OTMP have yet to clarify if and where the current existing brands fit into the provincial tourism system and how they could be funded.

4. MARKETING

4.1 Marketing Strategy

A range of marketing vehicles, promotions, and communication strategies facilitates the visitor encounter with the RHR. Along the Rideau, visitor information centres will highlight local products. Additional partnerships to market the Rideau Corridor will be negotiated with other tourism partners including Ottawa Tourism, Kingston Tourism, RTOs 9, 10 & 11, Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership and area Chambers of Commerce.

4.2 Marketing Plan

An annual Marketing Plan will be developed by the RHRTA Marketing Committee and approved by the RHRTA board of directors. The plan offers several cooperative opportunities for tourism businesses to participate in a number of strategic initiatives aimed at identified target markets.



5.0 TOURISM PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

5.1 Product Development Strategy

1. Give priority to experience-based products, particularly those involving special interest activities. Both suggested itineraries and flexible packages should be pursued.
2. The RHR Product Development Committee should direct the building of 2 to 3 new products per year, working with stakeholder teams.
3. For this year, review the 6 products started on Jan. 11th and select the 2 or 3 to adopt initially.
4. Use the EPG developed 19 step Product Planning Template.
5. Retain professional help to refine and enhance the products before taking them to market.
6. Contract the services of a person or company to provide receptive services and generally assist in product delivery.

5.2 Touring Itineraries

Rideau touring itineraries will continue to be developed and will link market ready tourism products and businesses into suggested touring itineraries to provide potential visitors with a strong call to action. The itineraries will drive more visitors to the experiences along the route and result in an increased capacity for this entire region to welcome more visitors, coming as a result of the new UNESCO World Heritage Designation of the Rideau Canal. This World Class status is recognized internationally and our region needs to step forward and work together to create “buyable” experiences to accommodate these new visitors. Most UNESCO World Heritage sites see an increase of 40-50% in visitation within the first five years of designation so the time to act is now in order to capitalize on this opportunity.

The touring itineraries we will develop are based on strong themes that define the strength of our region. Identified themes include:

- Cycle touring (work in cooperation with VIA rail & Bike Train initiative)
- Paddling (canoe & kayak/ in cooperation with parks Canada and FABR Paddle the Arch)
- Hiking (work in cooperation with Trans Canada Trail, Rideau Trail & Eastern Ont Trails Alliance)
- Fall Drives (work in cooperation with OTMPC Great Fall Drives)
- Motor-cycle touring
- Cruising (possible link to Great Lakes Cruising as shore excursions)



6. FINANCE

6.1 Budget

The RHRTA prepares an annual balanced base budget that outlines the association's administrative functions and the basic marketing initiatives that will occur with the projected funds. Any municipal funds coming into the RHRTA are "projected" since partner municipalities must pass their budgets and also approve the RHRTA contribution request before investing into the RHRTA. It is recommended that municipal funding partners indicate the RHRTA contribution as an Economic Development expense rather than a "Donation" since it is an investment that is levered 7-10 times through creative marketing and tourism development initiatives.

Projected Annual Base Municipal funding (2011 funding requests)

City of Kingston (KEDCO)	10,000
Town of Smiths Falls	10,000
The County of Lanark	10,000
Township of Rideau Lakes	10,000
United Counties of Leeds & Grenville	10,000
Corporation of the Town of Perth	6,000
Municipality of North Grenville	5,000
Village of Westport	2,000
Village of Merrickville-Wolford	2,000
Township of Drummond North Elmsley	1,000
Township of Tay Valley	1,000
Township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands	1,000
Total requested	68,000

The RHRTA should investigate the addition of new municipal partners to join the base municipal funders in 2011. Namely, the Township of Montague and the County of South Frontenac which follows the western bank of the Rideau from the City of Kingston boundary and up to Westport. There are numerous artisans, B&Bs, lodges and outfitters in this area that are looking forward to working cooperatively with the RHRTA so this would be a natural progression.

6.2 Project Funding

RHRTA will access funding from suitable grant programs that are in line with RHRTA Marketing and Tourism Product Development goals. These additional projects are not currently indicated in the base budget but will be created according to committee and board recommendations. Project funding is accessed by leveraging the base municipal investment which proves to be the most critical element in the association's existence and success in the future.

7.0 APPENDICES

- A) RHRTA 2011 Marketing Plan
- B) Tourism Partner Cooperative Advertising Form
- C) World Heritage Destination Banner Order Form