# NORTHERN ONTARIO REGIONAL TOURISM ORGANIZATION

"Empowering Northern Ontario's thriving tourism industry!"

## A DIGITAL STRATEGY FOR NORTHERN ONTARIO

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# 1.0
## INTRODUCTION

Radical shifts in technology, consumer behaviour, and social & cultural dynamics have created opportunities to engage directly with consumers. With access to an abundance of information, consumers have a multitude of choices which has created small market segments.  Consumers are scattered into a variety of markets resulting in thousands of these segments, referred to as niches. This shift has created microsegmentation amongst consumers and powerful online media hubs. To seize this opportunity through the Northern Portal, powerful online content must be created to captivate consumers' attention. To be effective, this content must be planned and managed accordingly.

The overall goal for the Northern Portal is to educate and attract consumers to Northern Ontario through the creation and sharing of engaging, authentic, and authoritative content.  The content starts a dialogue that captivates the consumer. The guiding principles of the new Northern Portal require less content with higher quality. This content must be optimized for tablet and mobile computing, as this is where the audience groups are spending their leisure time and is the general direction of all digital arenas of engagement.

The following report highlights strategies and steps to support the creation of content that will captivate the consumer and result in increasing awareness about tourism in Northern Ontario.

For the purposes of this document the following terms are used:

Content Coordinator: The person responsible for online activity at the regional or vertical level
Vertical Leads: Refers to the individuals in charge of the OTMPC Northern Office Experiential Programs
Sub-regions: Refers to - Northeastern Ontario: Northern Ontario RTO 13A
                     - Northwest Ontario: Northern Ontario RTO 13C
                     - Northcentral Ontario: Northern Ontario RTO 13B
Regional Leads: Refers to organization leading the marketing and Northern Portal content process

# 2.0
## DIGITAL STRATEGY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Digital Strategy Committee led the direction and provided guidance for the strategy development process to The MAKC Communications team during the process. The following provides a list of the members of the committee.

- Chris Milner, OTMPC
- Claude Aumont, OTMPC
- Graham Campbell/Ian Wood, Northern Ontario RTO 13
- Doug Reynolds, NOTO
- Ian McMillian, Tourism Sault Ste. Marie
- Jody Cameron, City of Greater Sudbury
- Jeff McGirr, Mattawa-Bonfield Economic Development Corporation

As the hired consultants for the Digital Strategy Project, The MAKC Communication team worked collaboratively with the committee. The MAKC Communication team is comprised of the following individuals:

Mike Jacobs
Andre O'Bonsawin
Karen Jones

# 3.0
## COMMUNICATION

### 3.1 Bi-Weekly Meetings
The Consultants and the Digital Strategy Committee met via teleconference on a bi-weekly basis to discuss the progress of the project. The purpose of the meeting was for The MAKC Communications team to provide an update, ask questions, seek advice, and offer suggestions on how to move forward.

### 3.2 Board Presentations
To ensure the Northern Ontario RTO Board of Directors were up-to-speed with the development of the strategy, three presentations were made. One presentation was made at the Marketing Summit and offered a way to communicate the direction of the strategy and seek input and advice from the Regional Leads about their needs.

**Please refer to Appendix A for copies of the presentations made.**
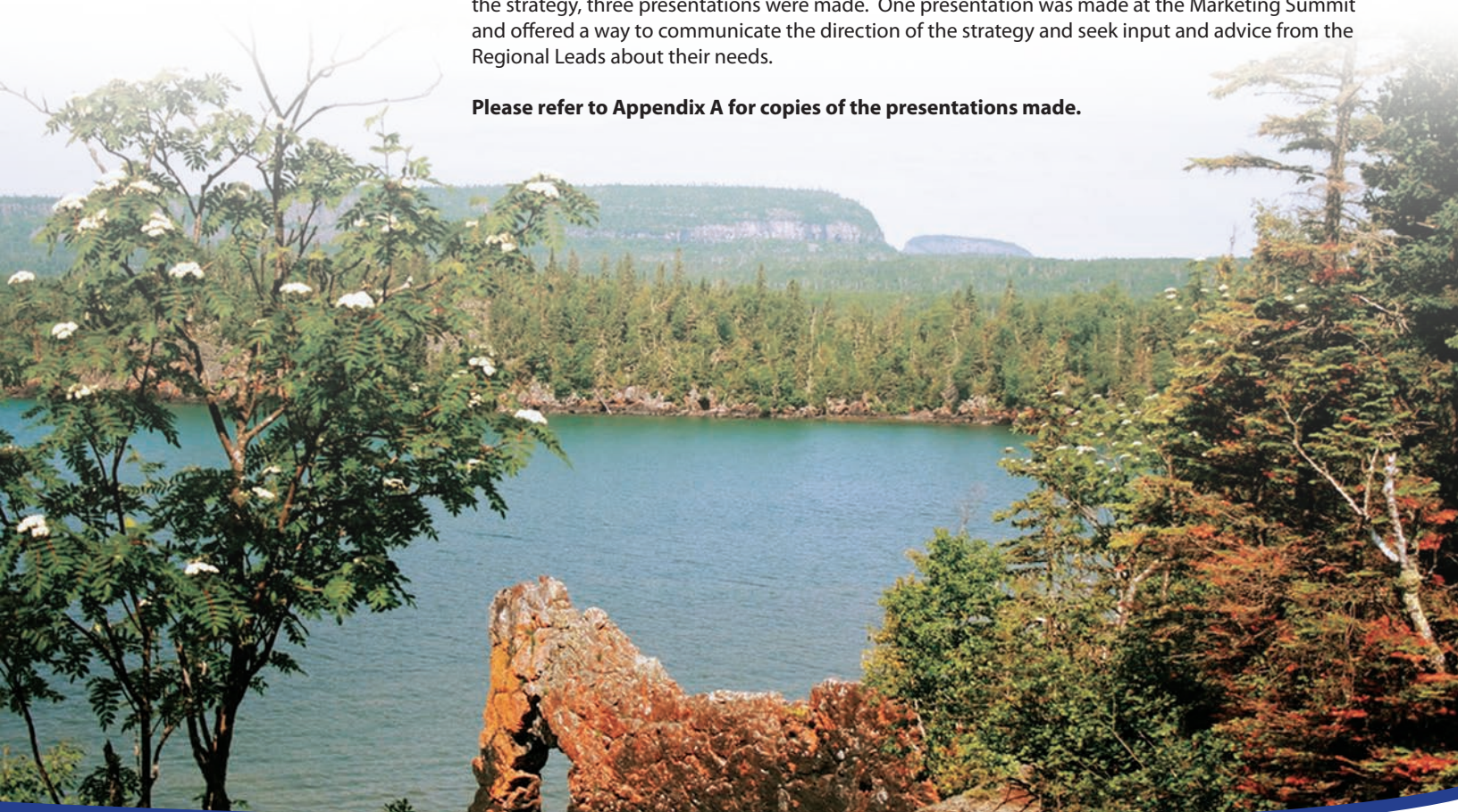
# 4.0
## INFORMATION GATHERING PROCESS

**Consultations**
To support the development of the strategy, The MAKC was committed to hearing from a cross representation of individuals and organizations throughout Northern Ontario about their digital needs. To accomplish this, the MAKC team traveled throughout the region and met with stakeholders, industry representatives, and partners in Northwest Ontario, North Central Ontario, and Northeastern Ontario.

Approximately 20 one-on-one consultations occurred and included discussion with Cities, NORTA's, Operators, and Stakeholders.

In addition, conference calls occurred with industry experts, technology gurus, and stakeholders to solicit information and feedback on potential ideas and strategies as they developed. The conversations allowed for the seamless implementation of strategies and approaches.

This information was compiled into a SWOT Analysis.
**Please refer to Appendix B for a summary of the feedback collected.**

**Surveys**
Surveys were developed and sent to operators, stakeholders, and existing content providers to gain additional insight into the needs of the Tourism Sector. In doing so, the following results were generated.

53 Operators completed the survey
15 Stakeholders completed the survey
15 Content Providers completed the survey

- 98% of Operators have website and/or social media accounts
- 75% would like social media coaching
- Majority of Operators and Stakeholders willing to share analytics
- Both cite time and/or resources restricting engagement in social media
- Majority do not have a policy for social media

**Please refer to Appendix C for a summary of the information collected.**

NORTHERN
ONTARIO

## 5.0
### RFP FOR DEVELOPMENT & MAINTENANCE OF NORTHERN PORTAL

A Request For Proposals for the development and maintenance of the new Northern Portal was created. The Guiding Principles of the Northern Portal are as identified:

- Less content, higher quality;
- Media Relations;
- Social Media - Working Partnerships;
- Optimized for tablet and mobile; and
- All content tagged by season, region, experience.

The site structure will be split between three types of content - Feature Articles, Social Media, and Static Content. Feature Articles are high-quality content, written by media professionals, and Social Media is managed by the Content Coordinators as a content development mechanism. Static Content will also be developed by the Content Coordinators and will be relevant to the needs and trends of consumers at any particular time.

The Feature Articles will be sourced from media professionals, journalists and celebrities who come with their own print, tv, radio or online audience. They will often be tied to a FAM tour run by the regions, cities and verticals. All of the Feature Article content will run on an six-month editorial calendar, based on seasonality and travel planning habits. The Social Media Content will be aggregated from operators, communities, partners, consumers, and third parties. This will include Facebook posts, Flickr images, Tweets, YouTube Videos, Blogs, etc. To support Search Engine Optimization, the content will be tagged for season, experience and region. Relevant social media feeds will appear beside the feature content and will demonstrate a healthy balance between traditional marketing and authentic content. The Static Content will offer a permanent resource of useful information for travelers and must be updated regularly to ensure that the information is up to date. The purpose of the content is to provide links to the positive attributes of a tourism product. This may include events listing Top Ten lists, operator listings, travellers' information and other useful content that is used to tie to a tourism product.

The RFP was posted on the Northern Ontario RTO website and distributed through email to a variety of networks. A mandatory bidders meeting was held to answer questions and provide additional information about the RFP process.

**Please refer to Appendix D for a complete copy of the RFP.**
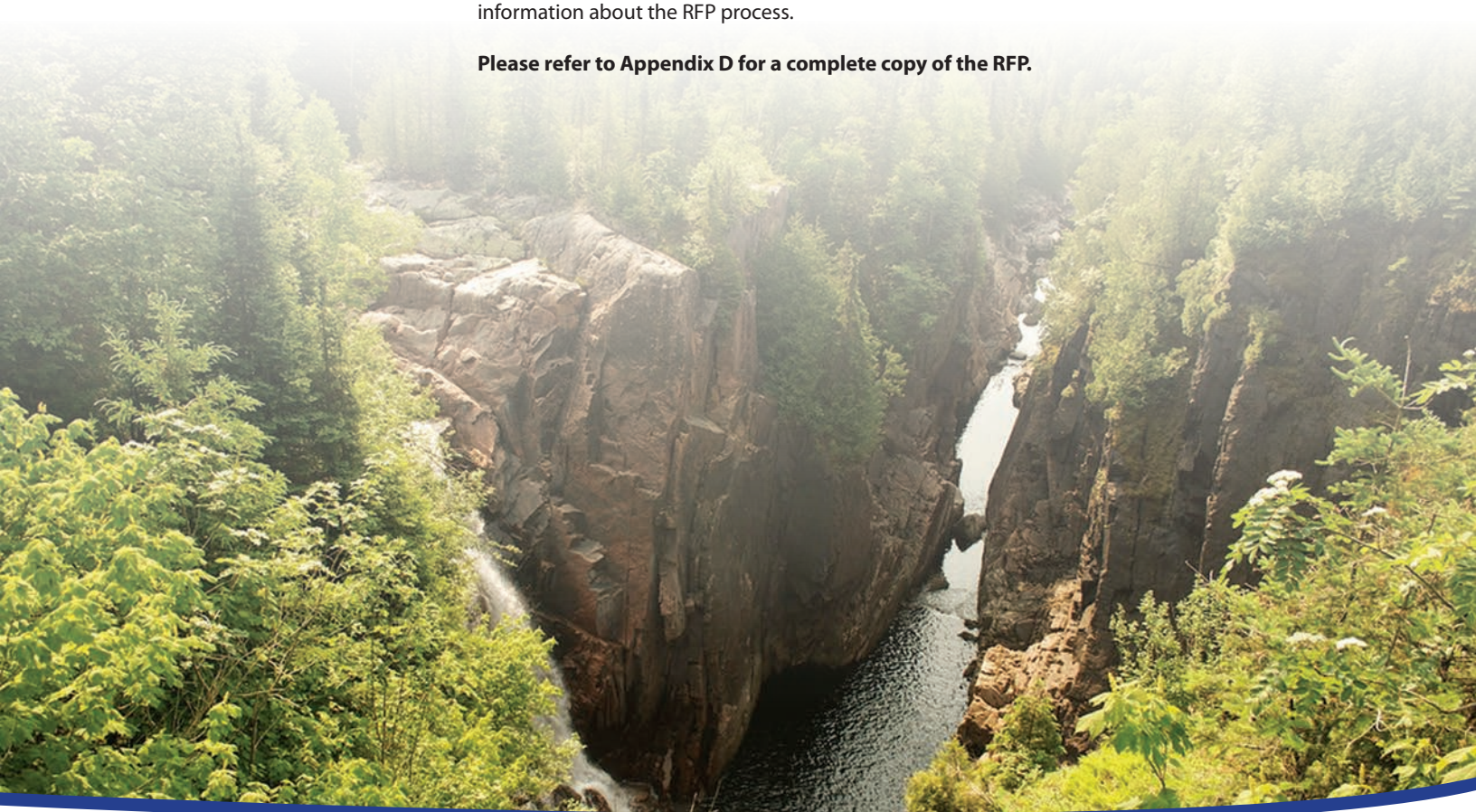
# 6.0
## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation Reports were created to support the development of the strategy. The Content Development Recommendation Report provides direction on the proposed approach for creating and developing content on the new Northern Portal. This also includes recommendations on measuring content to ensure effectiveness.

The Training Recommendation Report provides strategies and workbooks for the Content Coordinators to meet the requirements for successful content creation. It also provides recommendations on how to ensure operators are maximizing the full potential of the Northern Portal.

The Online Booking Engine Recommendation Report offers suggestions on what to consider when adopting a booking engine and provides suggested directions on how to best proceed for Northern Ontario.

# NORTHERN ONTARIO REGIONAL TOURISM ORGANIZATION



*"Empowering Northern Ontario's thriving tourism industry!"*

# CONTENT ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

# 6.1.1
## CONTENT DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

*RECOMMENDATION 1: INCORPORATE KEY CONTENT ELEMENTS*

*RECOMMENDATION 2: CREATE THREE TYPES OF CONTENT*

The following section outlines the types of content needed for the Northern Portal, the channels that content will be sourced from, and will provide strategies on sourcing this content.

Northern Ontario has many unique products to offer. To effectively showcase these products relative to the vast geography and changing seasons, the content must be targeted to the audience's needs. To appeal to online consumers, the content must be visually engaging, highlight the geographic location of each product, and must be relevant to the upcoming or current season. Incorporating these elements into the content, and utilizing a back end system that allows for the content to be tagged will increase exposure and generate greater results.

It is recommended that the site feature three distinct types of content, in two categories. The types of content are as follows:

1.       Journalistic Feature Articles - written by media professionals
2.       Social Media - written and organized by regional or vertical leads

Each piece of content created for the Northern Portal must meet the following criteria:
- Inform consumers
- Serve a function
- Answer a need
- Provide value and create the WOW Factor
  - The content will be found through search engines, targeted ads, social media, or PR campaigns. By stimulating a genuine interest, there is potential to create viral worthy content and something that the target audience wants more of.

To further support this process, it is recommended that market research be conducted with potential consumers in the targeted geographical areas. This research will provide key information on how to best inform, serve, answer a need, and provide value to the audience groups. The Northern Ontario RTO has invested in consumer insight research with OTMPC and should use this research as the basis for content creation and audience targeting.

By creating a content-focused mindset, Northern Ontario RTO and sub-regions can effectively position themselves as players in the 'content business' based on today's digital trends. Understanding the differences between a hunting style and a fishing style and ensuring a healthy balance between the two concepts will create more opportunities for success.

- The hunting process involves 'hunting' down the prey (consumers) and shooting it with ammunition (media buys, link exchanges, social media shares, analytics) to grow audiences.
- The fishing process is attraction focused and involves attaching good bait (blogs, video, photos, social media platforms) to the line and casting it out until the fish (consumer) is drawn in.

## RECOMMENDATION 3: USE CONTENT COORDINATORS TO DEVELOP SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT

The Content Coordinators are responsible for identifying strategies and techniques to initiate the first 'bite' and for implementing strategies to continue the engagement process.  By providing consistent content on a regular basis, both the consumer and the Content Coordinators will create solid routines.  Adopting this recommendation will allow for an interative process and a path for engagement will be created.

To aid the Content Coordinators in the engagement process the following steps are recommended:

1. Identify the target market.
2. Select the influencers within the network.
3. Create useful, fun content that ties an experience to a market-ready tourism product.
4. Create a stream of authentic and informative content that supports the messaging in the feature content.

Social Media will play a major role in how the consumers are educated about the vast range of travel offerings in Northern Ontario. The creation of content, managing consumer engagement, and attracting attention will be dependent on a solid execution of a social media strategy. Content must be tagged with regional tags, which can include cities, sub-regions, colloquial names for regions and cities, as well as season and experience. This will drive the ability for social media content to shift as the consumer moves through the site. When managing the social media campaign, the Content Coordinators must perform the following tasks:

### 1. Create Content for Sharing on Social Media Platforms

Create content for sharing through accounts owned by the Regional/Vertical Lead. This includes updating Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Flickr (and any other platforms deemed relevant for target markets) with timely posts that contain a call to action. Each Content Coordinator will be required to share the content created for the Northern Portal through their networks and be responsible for growing this audience. The idea is to create content that compels users to share the content with their own audience. Personal referral is the strongest form of recommendation for a product or experience. Social media provides an instantaneous and measurable venue for that referral to happen.

### 2. Share Relevant Third Party Content

Content Coordinators for the region or vertical will source content to share what has been created by operators, media professionals, and influencers. The content shared will be relative to regional and/or vertical programs.

### 3. Sharing Agreements with Partners

Content Coordinators will establish sharing agreements with partners. The monitoring process can be done informally or formally depending on the relationship with the individuals and organizations involved. This component will also include monitoring the fulfillment of agreements with media professionals. Each feature article created will be accompanied by a contractual agreement to share content, and this must be monitored to ensure an effective digital strategy for the Northern Portal.

## RECOMMENDATION 4: USE CONTENT COORDINATORS TO DEVELOP STATIC CONTENT

Static content is generally created by the Regional or Vertical Leads. It is static in the sense that it offers a permanent resource of useful information for travellers in Northern Ontario. This content must be updated regularly to ensure that the information is current.

In line with the principles of content creation, this content provides a useful service to consumers. The benefit of Static Content is that it provides links to the positive attributes of a tourism product. For example, an article on Best Fishing in Northeastern Ontario will list the top places to fish in the region, but until it gives instances of specific operators, packages or other buyable products, it is mainly a piece of content that is created based on it's usefulness. The event listings for regions and verticals are a main component of this content, as well as any Top Ten lists, operator listings, travellers' information and other useful content that is used to tie to a tourism product.

## RECOMMENDATION 5:
## USE MEDIA PROFESSIONALS TO DEVELOP JOURNALISTIC CONTENT

Feature articles are pieces of content that are created by media professionals, journalists, celebrities, or any other type of influencer who already has an audience. This content is not limited to a specific medium and could include articles, videos, photo essays, and podcasts. Many formats are recommended as long as the production quality of the content is comparable to the best in it's particular medium. (i.e. a podcast would need to be as good as any CBC podcast.)

Once developed, it is recommended that the audience groups within the media professionals' networks be targeted to disseminate the content. This audience must be tangible and visible online. **As this is the primary method for promoting the content through the Northern Portal, it is important that any media professionals hired to create content share it with their online networks.** This is an essential part of the overall strategy.

The requirements for sharing the content must be strategic coupled with a strong lure to encourage consumers to click through a social media link. Media professionals are required to use an effective approach to lure the consumer to the content created on the Northern Portal. Using the most attractive detail about the article will garner success. Foregrounding the personality of the person creating the article is also highly important, because people will search for their name, and also recognize them as an authority within their own sphere of influence.

Social media has many parts to play in the creation of the feature article content. Ideally the personality would authentically share content through their social networks while participating in the experience. In addition, they would also be required to share the content to their networks following the experience. If the personality is not able to share on their networks as the trip is happening, the Content Coordinator would participate to capture the experience as it happened and build interest in viewing the feature content when it has completed.

## RECOMMENDATION 6:
## DEVELOP CAPTIVATING CONTENT

In order to engage consumers, the content must generate interest and be communicated in a way that appeals to the target audience. The following provides tips and techniques to achieve this.

When creating captivating social media content, consider the following:

### Is the content unique?

√    Conduct research to determine if there is a need that is not being addressed.
√    Identify new or better ways to meet that need.
√    Assess other forms of effective content to identify unique factors.

### Is the content useful?

√    Ensure that the content is relevant to the needs of the target audience.
√    Allow the content to identify and cater to an unmet need.
√    Provides a clear solution for the needs of the target audience.

### Is the content well executed?

√    In accordance with the editorial calendar, the Content Coordinators are responsible for working within their teams to develop and implement an execution model that generates compelling content and measures results.
√    Is there a strong call to action?
√    Is it tagged correctly for indexing by search engines?
√    Does it link to relevant information on other sites where appropriate?
√    Does it lead consumers to share, comment or otherwise engage?
√    Does it add a creative element to using technology or interacting with others?

## Is the content fun?

The content can be developed in a variety of ways depending on the communication objective and identified key message. The following provides a list of themes to accomplish this:

√  Entertaining
√  Amusing
√  Inspiring
√  Hilarious
√  Uplifting
√  Silly
√  A welcomed distraction

## Does the content make good use on the right channels?

- 6 Digital Channels

  - o  Search
  - o  Online Display Ads
  - o  Email Marketing
  - o  Social Media
  - o  Mobile
  - o  Traditional

## 7 Steps to Creating Captivating Content

When creating captivating content the following 7 steps may serve as a guide.

### Step 1 :  Educate and organize teams around creating content

- Identify other people who can add value and insight into the content development process.
- Recognize that a balanced blend of art and science creates captivating content. Mix analytical techniques with creativity to accomplish this.
- Pair right and left brain thinkers by creating teams comprised of creative and logical/analytical individuals.
- Develop a holistic and creative approach.
- Work with external organizations and agency partners to expand the reach when possible (OTMPC, CTC, DMO's, Cities, Attractions, etc.)

### Step 2 :  Develop ideas based on customer behaviours, attitudes, and lifestyles

- Do not focus primarily on the product - incorporate consumer needs into content.
- Think about what the consumer may be doing when engaging in the content and how you can enhance it.  Daily activities may include:

  - o  Exercising
  - o  Waiting for an appointment or a flight
  - o  Hanging out in the park
  - o  Commuting to work
  - o  Cooking at home
  - o  Doing housework
  - o  Relaxing at home

- Research customer insights and behaviours.
- Understand the target market needs and wants to create content that enhances daily activities.

**Step 3 : Define and own value proposition**

- Think in terms of the consumer:

    o "If I were a target customer would I be interested in this content?"
    o "Would I pay a nominal fee for this content? Is it worth something?"
       *If both answers are yes, the ability to create captivating content exists.*

**Step 4 : Leverage the existing customer base to find test ideas**

- Identify special things you can do for existing customers and how you can engage them in the new content.
- Determine specific ideas on how to design new content for existing customers.

**Step 5 : Build an Engagement Map**

- Detail the path you want consumers to take after the initial hook.
- Integrate the map with your Marketing Communication Plan to ensure consumers have a seamless set of experiences.
- Develop benchmarks that tie into your overall Marketing Communication Plan to properly measure engagement and ROI based on the Measurement Recommendations on page 15 section. Choose a number of shares, likes, and comments that indicate you've met your goal for the online reach of the story. Setting these goals is relatively simple and they can be monitored automatically with most major analytic programs.

**Step 6 : Buy Media to Build Reach**

- Invest in online and offline paid media to get word out about the content.
- Target influential people associated to the target audiences and networks.
- Draw attention using a balanced approach of paid media and digital channels - traditional media, paid search, organic search, optimization techniques, permission based marketing, etc.

**Step 7 : Stay Flexible: Attract, Engage, Measure**

- Be prepared to change based on consumer needs.
- Spend less time debating about what will work and more time creating stuff that goes out to the field.
- Let the consumers be the judges.
- Share success stories with the partners.

**ATTRACT** - Create and disseminate content into the marketplace.

**ENGAGE** - Allow consumers to engage with content (or not).

**MEASURE** - Monitor results based on Evaluation Methods identified in the Measurement Recommendation section - 6.1.4.

The objective is to find an effective way to deal with empowered consumers and create content that the target market will seek out and welcome. This can be done through content that is serious, practical, influential, convenient, and entertaining.

Each type of content has it's own specific requirements that relate to these overall principles.

# 6.1.2
## CONTENT ACQUISITION RECOMMENDATIONS

*RECOMMENDATION 1: ACQUIRE FEATURE CONTENT USING MEDIA PROFESSIONALS*

This section outlines the methods for acquiring content, the organizational structure that will support this, and measures for the performance of the content. Guidelines for choosing stories and authors for feature content are detailed and a framework for scheduling stories on an ongoing basis is provided. In addition, strategies and recommendations on using social media to amplify the message are outlined.

Content Coordinators at the regional and vertical level should identify people who would be suitable to hire to create content. This includes newspaper and magazine writers, bloggers with significant followings or influence, filmmakers, musicians, and anyone who has measurable influence.

The simplest way to find these people is through Internet searches, as measuring influence is straight forward. However, based on the identified target markets and geographic targets for each region, these professionals will be found in different places. They may also include print, TV and radio. For example, if Northcentral wished to target the Michigan touring market, they might start by looking for authoritative writers on road trips who live in that area. Note that established TV, radio and print personalities who also have a measurable online following would be ideal. In many cases Regional Leads already have these contacts, it's just a matter of including the creation of a story for the Northern Portal as a part of their other deliverables.

Thinking outside the box will pay dividends, as online consumer are weary of traditional marketing activities.

The training recommendation document gives specific examples of how to measure someone's online influence.

Working with OTMPC Northern Office to combine efforts and budgets to bring more influential people to Northern Ontario and combine experiences and regions will be key. Efforts should be made to ensure that a good proportion of stories created for the Northern Portal are joint efforts between the two organizations.

Regional Leads will be responsible for the content they produce, however working with the Content Strategist will ensure there is no duplication. It will provide opportunities for collaboration between organizations and ensure that the professionals paid for content have suitable influence.

The Northern Portal is not meant as a standalone promotional site, as it works best when integrated with other marketing efforts. If a regional or vertical program is embarking on a significant media campaign, integrating the Northern Portal and its social media program is recommended. This can be accomplished by requiring that content created for the media campaign include a component for the Northern Portal, or by incorporating the promotional efforts into a social media campaign, and using the Northern Portal as a network to increase exposure.

Budgeting for stories over the course of the year will be an integral part to the success of the program. When deciding upon which content to acquire, consideration should be given to stories that have an opportunity for a larger reach. Using strategic partnerships to develop stories with partners with limited resources will support the creation of content and be important in expanding the network. Content Coordinators will share content with their online audiences and leverage their network to find people and organizations to grow the social media following.

The Northern Portal will be regional based. Experiences and information will be broken down on a geographic level, in accordance with the three sub-regions. To supplement this, it is recommended that the Northern Portal feeds into a Vertical platform that highlights experiences and a Francophone platform that offers relevant content to the Francophone market. As a result of this composition, there are different approaches to acquiring authors for this content.

## Regional

Since geography is a key factor in marketing these travel experiences on the Northern Portal, finding media professionals who speak to an audience that is within a geographically close target market (i.e. Winnipeg for Northwest Ontario) is important. Searching for media professionals in close proximity is a practical place to begin, however, expanding geographic boundaries and seeking professionals in other markets is also recommended. By sourcing out these professionals, the Content Coordinators will have a higher success rate with reaching larger targeted audiences. When using Social Media tools to locate media professionals, it is recommended that their audiences be measured and their digital imprints be understood. For example, if they have a significant number of friends on Facebook, but no one shares or comments on their posts, they may not be a real influencer. If their content is regularly shared, or retweeted or reblogged, but they have less total followers and friends, they may be a more qualified candidate.

Working with the vertical programs should yield benefits in reaching media professionals with larger audiences. Using existing media relationships to develop content is an effective strategy and allows good partners to grow and share their audiences. Inviting celebrities whose interests align with the tourism product in the regions, and engaging them to create content will expand the appeal. It is rare for an article to go "viral", so content that is unique in its approach is more likely to reach the larger audiences. This content could be videos, podcasts, custom maps or a combination of these elements. It is important to have a set story that the media professional is required to cover, but allowing them the flexibility to highlight what they believe their audience is looking for. This will add to the potential reach of the content.

Urban stories will vary widely from the rural stories. To appeal to these types of visitors, a viriety of approaches must be taken, and content must be sourced from a different type of media professional. Typically the focus will be on some entertainment, event or cultural aspect of the city or cities, and as a result the media professional should be able to appreciate and speak to those qualities.
Using economies of scale to purchase the services of photographers, videographers and editors will allow for added value.  By entering into contracts with the service providers and purchasing the services for a specified period of time rather than on a project-by-project basis will reduce the overall costs. Furthermore, this process will allow the development of longer-term relationships with the service providers who will have a deeper understanding of the tourism product throughout the duration of the contractual period. Creating a formula for contracts for these media professionals will be required. Included in the agreement should be a list of deliverables and expectations. Each Regional Lead will have their own procurement processes that suit their business needs.

## Verticals

The experience is a key factor in marketing.  This means that finding media professionals who speak directly to the target market, or to individuals and groups that have demographic characteristics of the desired target market is essential. This includes leveraging the established media relationships that exist under current programs, as well as expanding the media familiarization tours to encompass the creation of a diverse range of content. The target markets for the verticals often have clear preferences as to the type of content that they like to engage with. It is important to recognize these needs and develop techniques that ensure the feature stories are able to effectively engage these consumers.

Within each vertical program there are established relationships with magazines, online promotional channels, not-for-profit organizations, and journalists. Ideally these programs will expand to engage with celebrities and other media professionals in the digital realm that have established audiences. Partnerships with media should also be re-evaluated to ensure that they are making efforts, or already have a significant online following and authority.

## Francophone

The French language and culture offer a unique proposition for tourism in Ontario and the best approach to attracting this target market is to acquire content created by Francophone media professionals. Stories should be selected based on regions and experiences that appeal to the Francophone markets, both in Ontario, Quebec and Internationally. The Francophone section of the Northern Portal will not be a direct translation of the English content. To support this process, a

team of qualified individuals/organizations should be identified to work on the content acquisition component.

The Northern Portal presents an opportunity to frame high-quality content beside social media posts that confirm to consumers that these are experiences that are real and obtainable. In addition to the social media aggregation that happens on the Northern Portal, the social media accounts of the regional, vertical and Francophone programs are essential to the success of the overall program. Growing the audience online, adding followers each time a media professional shares relevant content with their audience, and using it as an engagement tool are important to the overall digital strategy for marketing tourism in Northern Ontario.

The Content Acquisition Strategy for the Northern Portal will include the use of media professionals, their feature stories, and the content created to populate social media feeds. By having Content Coordinators shadow the media professionals and use mobile devices to blog about their experiences as they happen will add extra value to the strategy. Furthermore, creating agreements with partners to share key content across a variety of networks will help grow the audience for future content.

In order to keep with the strategic objectives of the tourism marketing partnerships, sharing content from operators is important. Validating content for appropriateness and alignment with the program message requires time and effort, but ultimately this is one of the most important functions of these partnerships.

Using consumer content establishes authority. It is recommended that the Content Coordinators share posts from consumers which aligns directly with their key message.  This approach will ensure the most impact in the social media realm. Impassioned consumers can create content that affects other consumers in an influential way. While it is rarely product oriented, it serves to pique interest in a region or experience, and can have tremendous impact in the long term.

Feature story budgets are flexible. Where warranted feature stories can exceed the budget if the total annual budget for content development is not exceeded. For example, if a particular feature story costs $5,000 to develop, but the potential reach is greater than the average story, the cost is warranted. However, the total budget available for other stories will have to be adjusted accordingly.

Content coordination at the regional level assumes some in-kind resource support for social media activity already undertaken by the Regional Leads as part of their own programs.

# 6.1.3
## ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

**RECOMMENDATION 1:**
**IMPLEMENT AND**
**ORGANIZATIONAL**
**STRUCTURE**

To ensure the content contains consistent messaging, highlights appropriate features, and maximizes the opportunities for promotion, a solid organizational structure must be developed. As a component of this organizational structure, it is recommended that a leadership role be created to manage the content development and content sharing processes. This leadership will ensure that content sharing on social media platforms is not misused or exposes any of the partners on the website to unwanted attention or messaging.

The following provides an overview of each role recommended to support the growth and development of the Northern Portal.

An Editorial Calendar will be viewable online to the Regional Leads, Content Coordinators, Northern Ontario RTO and OTMPC staff to ensure openness and accountability.

**RECOMMENDATION 2:**
**DEVELOP AN EDITORIAL**
**CALENDAR**

The calendar will meet the following requirements:
1.    Each segment (six regional, seven vertical) should create one new story per month.
2.    Content will be shared over multiple segments (i.e. content created by Outdoors vertical in Northwest Ontario will also show up under the Northwest section of the Northern Portal.)
3.    Each story needs to balance regions and experiences.
4.    Monthly story meetings with regions and verticals to decide how to link stories and which media professionals to target.

**Please refer to Appendix E for an example of of the editorial calendar.**

# 6.1.4
## MEASUREMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

*RECOMMENDATION 1: DEVELOP CONTENT PERFORMANCE MEASURES*

Measuring the performance of content can be challenging, as there is often a lack of adequate metrics and measurement systems to drive marketing performance. It can also be difficult to engage online consumers who have short attention spans and face abundant choices. To be successful, strategies must be developed to break through the clutter and engage at a personal level. By integrating offline and online marketing approaches the best outcome is achievable. Online communication efforts must be planned, executed, and optimized at every facet of the content development process. To achieve impact online, the content created must be measured. By pairing captivating content with a set of performance measures, Content Coordinators will have a powerful approach. To measure the results the following three aspects must be considered: Exposure, Strategic, and Financial Metrics.

Exposure Metrics are short-term aspects of the campaign, reach and frequency rates by the number of visitors who interact with the content, engagement of digital marketing, increase in the number of visitors on the site, click through rate on search terms, etc. Exposure Metrics offer a base to get a handle on the audience.

Strategic Metrics capture long-term strategic marketing objectives of the customer growth. They gauge levels of the brand preference and look for increases through surveys before and after the site visits. Strategic Metrics measure if it is working and what is needed to achieve the financial goals.

Financial Metrics quantify the Return on Investment (ROI) or financial outcome of the marketing activity. This could be through primary metrics such as the overall success of a marketing program (sales, revenue) or diagnostic metrics which explain the reason for the primary metric such as why or why not visitor traffic increased/decreased. Financial Metrics calculate the change in sales and ROI based on the cost of the content.

To effectively measure the impact the content is having, there are a variety of metrics to consider.

These include:
- Qualified Reach/Visits
- Click Through Rate
- Brand Perception Lift
- Engagement Score
- End Action Rate (What do you want the consumer to do? What is the fulfillment? Is it a link to a partner site, a booking, an inquiry, increase in brand awareness?)
- Efficiency metrics - cost per x (x = clicks, impressions, leads, orders, engagement, etc.)
- Positive Return on Investment

**Efficiency Metrics**
To determine the efficiency of the content the following provides a number of ways to measure the metrics.
- Cost per Qualified Reach
- Cost per Click
- Cost per Order
- Cost per Lead
- Cost per Engagement Score
- Cost per End Action

**Engagement Score**
To identify the Engagement Score, track the number of events/occurrences the campaign stimulated over an identified period of time. Compare the Engagement Score across a variety of assets or a variety of time periods to effectively measure the results.

| Score | Engagement | Example |
|-------|------------|---------|
| 10 | Extend | Widget, Download App |
| 5 | Create | Profile, Upload Pictures/Video |
| 5 | Share | Send to a Friend, Social Media |
| 3 | Request | Sign Up, Email |
| 2 | Respond | Rate, Vote, Add Comments |
| 1 | Interact | Play Videos, Virtual Tour, Demo |
| 0 | View | Read articles, View Pictures |

Example:

| Score | Engagement | Number of Events | Total Points |
|---|---|---|---|
| 10 | Extend | 1 | 10 |
| 5 | Create | 2 | 10 |
| 5 | Share | 5 | 25 |
| 3 | Request | 10 | 30 |
| 2 | Respond | 20 | 40 |
| 1 | Interact | 100 | 100 |
| 0 | View | 1000 | 0 |

**Engagement Score = 215**

## RECOMMENDATION 2: INCORPORATE ANALYTICAL TOOLS TO SUPPORT MEASUREMENT & SUCCESS

The overall goal of the Northern Portal is to educate tourism consumers in effort to increase awareness and raise the profile of Northern Ontario online. With a relatively small digital footprint, it is imperative to measure the effectiveness of the overall strategy from inception. Measuring the influence and reach of the brand must be incorporated into the regular routines of the implementation process.

To ensure that resources are being used effectively, measurement tools and techniques should be used. These measurement tools are available online in ways that were not previously available for traditional media. Learning and understanding how to use this data is an integral part of any successful marketing strategy.

# NORTHERN ONTARIO REGIONAL TOURISM ORGANIZATION

"Empowering Northern Ontario's thriving tourism industry!"

# ONLINE RESERVATIONS SYSTEMS AND
# BOOKING ENGINE RECOMMENDATION REPORT

# 6.2.1
## INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the Northern Ontario Digital Strategy, the following provides a list of recommendations for handling online reservations and bookings throughout Northern Ontario.

The current five-year Northern Strategy dictates that Regional Leads will be responsible for fulfillment, therefore any online reservation and booking systems should cater to this. Furthermore, it is important that the reservation system or booking engine must prioritize customers habits, wants and needs. During the consultation process it was determined that the five Regional Leads have different requirements and needs. As a result, a pan-Northern booking engine is not recommended.

The feedback collected during the research phase of the consultation process has identified the various points in the process that each sub-region is currently at. Sault Ste Marie already has a booking system in place. Timmins, Sudbury and Northeastern Ontario are working on implementing a similar solution. Algoma has indicated one to two years before implementation of a booking engine for their region. Thunder Bay and Northwest Ontario have stated that operator response is at present, mixed, but that support from leaders in the industry as well as attractions would likely generate buy-in from smaller operators over time.

It is recommended that the Regional Leads focus on collaboration and shared intelligence in the implementation of these tools to communicate best-practices with one another. As many of the systems are built on the same platform, learning from previous implementations will create goodwill amongst partners, and will allow for faster and more efficient deployment.

It is suggested that the identified attributes for online accommodation and attraction booking systems should take into account the unique nature of tourism products in Northern Ontario.

# 6.2.2
## SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

As a result of Northern Ontario's unique geography, transportation networks, infrastructure, population and variety of products, the ideal system must be able to accommodate these diversities.

The following functionalities are recommended:

**Be easy to use**
Skill levels with computer technology vary widely, not only for consumers but also for operators and their staff. As a result, systems that are easy to use are essential. The ideal system should not require training, although it should have training material and a help desk in place. The system should be primarily a graphical user interface. The consumer side (front-end) of the website should be simple and easy for people to navigate, view different products, and find what they are looking for. The operator side (back-end) must be user-friendly and should not require any specialized knowledge to input or edit products or offerings.

**Be web-driven**
Tourism thrives on the web. As an industry the privacy and security concerns do not require a private network. By making the system web-driven, it ensures that anyone with an Internet connection can make a purchase, or edit a profile or package on the system. It also ensures that the visual interface and standards are consistent with what most consumers are familiar with.

**Be able to integrate into any site, either with a widget or a single click button**
Consumers expect one-click to be between their interest in a product and making a purchase. This could be in a variety of locations such as a social media post, an article on a third party website, on the Northern Portal, on the regional site, or directly on an operator's site. The point of purchase could come at any time. It is important to ensure that a call-to-action is easily fulfilled. The end result should be that any operator, Regional Lead or approved marketer (OTMPC's experiential program, municipalities, DMO's) can embed the purchase widget for a given product into any marketing site on the Internet. An example would be putting a purchase widget at the end of a Northern Portal article. In this way, fulfilment is still handled by the Regional Lead, as it is their system, but it harnesses the interest generated by the Northern Portal.
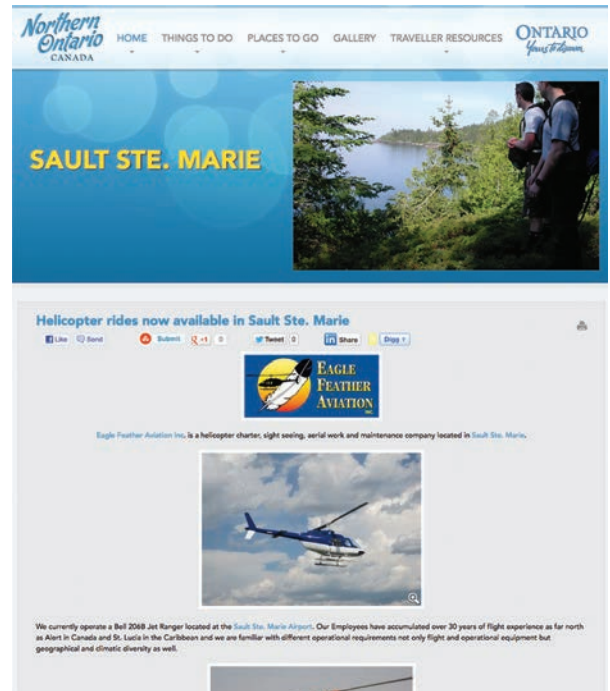
**Use mobile web standards**
The growth of mobile devices continues to rise and this trend is evident directly within the tourism industry. While the percentage of total mobile users is still smaller than the total number of traditional laptop or desktop based users, the demographic of consumers who use mobile devices closely matches the ideal for tourism. Ensuring that any booking engine can be integrated with mobile web standards is highly recommended over developing platform specific applications. The mobile market is too volatile to develop for any specific platform which includes the dominant ones such as iOS, Android, and BlackBerry. Even if these chosen solutions have their own mobile application, it may not be ideal. While any smartphone or tablet can use mobile web standards, the broad demographics of people who tend to visit Northern Ontario means that they will use a multitude of devices to access information and purchase tourism products. By leaving them with the option to use whichever device they choose, ensures that technology will never hinder someone from taking a Northern Ontario vacation.

**Use open standards**
Essentially this means that the code of the system is open-source or is based on standardized systems. Linux, MySQL and open-source content management systems like Wordpress are good examples of this principle. With these types of systems, there is a wide base of support for the underlying technology, which ensures that long after the system is put in place it will be easier to resolve problems. As there are so many people using the same system, support is more widespread and often the developer community takes it upon themselves to resolve what might otherwise be costly bugs.

**Have a flexible Inventory Management System**
The variety of attractions, accommodations, and tourism products in Northern Ontario allows for a unique destination. Each segment has different requirements and criteria that consumers look for when making travel decisions. Chief amongst these are the differences between the high-volume product and the long-stay product. For high-volume products, the access to increased resources in staffing, time and Internet connectivity make live bookings a possibility. The consumer typically expects this in most urban environments. Rural areas or smaller outfitters often depend on repeat customers, and continue to make bookings by telephone. Based on their experience, this ensures that their customers get the exact package they want and are apprised of details that aren't often accounted for in traditional booking engine databases (such as hunting and fishing criteria, weather, lake conditions, type of accommodations, etc.). Generalizing the criteria required for a product database for these operators would require considerable detailed knowledge. Separating the high-volume package oriented products from the specialized product databases offers a solution. To be effective, the criteria should be created by the Regional Leads in partnership with the operators.

**Offer adequate live (real-person) support**
Having a help section to the website is often enough, but in the initial phases of any implementation there will be many questions. This reinforces the need for shared intelligence amongst the regions and for live support from the organization offering the technological solution.

# 6.2.3
## OPPORTUNITIES

Throughout the research process, several opportunities and key pieces of information presented themselves.

**Provide more information to operators about Booking Engines**
Surveys undertaken in Phase One of the Digital Strategy project indicate that operators who responded are interested in booking engines but require more information. This was supported by Regional Leads. To achieve buy-in at a larger level, operators need more information on the costs and benefits. While the majority of large hotel chains already offer their own booking engines, smaller operators and attractions within the urban centres would benefit the most from these tools.

Without good lines of communication in place with operators, getting buy-in for these or any other regional efforts may be difficult. NOTO (Nature and Outdoor Tourism Ontario) has already developed an operator database and are positioned ideally to possibly become the central administrator of this data.

**Market packages that can be sold in partnership with OTMPC programs**
Working with OTMPC Experiential Programs to develop and market packages that can be sold either on the Northern Portal, Canada's Great Outdoors or through social media platforms is a great way to leverage complementary marketing programs into purchase fulfillment.

**Potential Pan-Northern Booking Engines**
Three systems seem capable of meeting the above requirement: aRes, Rendezvous and Meridian. Each offers different strengths. aRes offers the most web-friendly GUI, Rendezvous offers scalability into different tourism sectors, and Meridian has high market penetration in Ontario, and offers direct booking at some travel centres. Without buy-in from the regional partners, having a pan-Northern booking engine is likely not possible. Furthermore, the Northern Strategy recommends that the Regional Leads assume responsibility for fulfillment.

# NORTHERN ONTARIO REGIONAL TOURISM ORGANIZATION



"Empowering Northern Ontario's thriving tourism industry!"

# TRAINING RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT

# 6.3.1
## INTRODUCTION

To effectively implement the recommendations identified, training programs are required for the Content Coordinators and managing organizations. As social media takes centre stage for online marketing, it is important that anyone involved in marketing Northern Ontario as a tourism destination becomes aware of the differences and similarities between social media and traditional marketing. Content Coordinators must be able to spot emerging trends for their target markets' online behaviour and translate the trends into realistic action steps. In addition, they must be able to share this intelligence with fellow coordinators.

The following training program recommendations relate to three groups:

1.      Northern Ontario RTO
2.      Content Coordinators
3.      Operators

# 6.3.2
## *RECOMMENDATION 1: PROVIDE DIGITAL STRATEGY OVERVIEW FOR NORTHERN ONTARIO RTO & REGIONAL LEADS*

A Digital Strategy overview should be coordinated for the Northern Ontario RTO Board, Committees and Regional Leads to ensure a broad understanding about how the strategies and recommendations are being effectively implemented. The focus of this training should be on the changing landscape and key concepts of the digital sphere. Involvement from the Northern Ontario RTO Board Members will ensure that each decision maker is aware of the general concepts and how they relate to overall marketing efforts. Without this knowledge, it may be difficult to make clear decisions on how to proceed with the online marketing of tourism products in Northern Ontario.

# 6.3.3
## *RECOMMENDATION 2: PROVIDE TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR CONTENT COORDINATORS*

Content Coordinators should have annual training on managing their social media presence and consumer engagement protocols. Similar to individuals working in a call centre, Content Coordinators are the face of the organization and must understand how to effectively respond to all types of requests. Content Coordinators will require training on both the technology and the appropriate ways of engaging consumers online because of the transparency associated with social media. Effectively combining knowledge of both maximizes the effect of the interactions. Creating and sharing content online is an incredible way to promote awareness of the brand and products and it also serves as an effective method to engage consumers directly in a public forum. When implementing digital tourism marketing strategies it is important to be mindful that the online world creates a unique and exciting ever-changing platform. As a result, communication strategies differ from traditional marketing approaches.

Successful online communication strategies have included four principles that have proved effective and have demonstrated success for major companies across the world. With the Internet being a major source of tourism information, ensuring a strong presence and a solid understanding of online marketing techniques will ensure the broader organizational goals are met.

**Principle 1: Real People Are Key**
Stories that use content created by real people are more likely to be shared. To be successful, it is important to engage people who post content in conversations by commenting on what they are sharing or adding to their comments.

**Principle 2: Be Fluid With Brand Definition**
By allowing consumers to play creatively with a brand, they are subtly encouraged to express their take in creative ways. This allows thousands of people to express their personal experiences and interests, spreading stories of the brand far and wide.

**Principle 3: Focus on Stories and Feelings**
Putting too much emphasis on the final product can be a major turn off for marketing weary consumers. Focus instead on their stories and feelings to get consumers to engage with the brand.

**Principle 4: Don't Lose Sight of Goals**
Generally, Northern Ontario focuses on educating consumers about their experiences and showcasing operators who can fulfill those experiences. However, if there is too much off-topic discussion, the conversation should be re-directed to meet the overall goal.  To compensate for this, future posts can be made to pull the discussion closer to the objectives. By promoting the best content, the lesser content will fall to the side.

With these four principles in mind, utilize the workbook materials, and learn from the case studies to identify how they are applied in the "real" online world.

# 6.3.4
### RECOMMENDATION 3:
### UTILIZE CONTENT
### WORKBOOK MATERIALS

Using the four principles above, the following set of Workbook Materials will guide users of all skill levels through the steps required to maximize the return on marketing activities in the digital sphere.

The Workbooks are organized with an Action and an Example. Additional space is provided for organizations using this material to list their own action. Measurement of success will vary widely depending on the amount of time and money invested in the strategy. For example, organizations that spend marketing dollars on paid ads to solicit followers will naturally have more followers and likes.

Success, by any measure, will depend on how committed an organization is to having people participate, sharing things that are positive, and making things that are either useful or fun.

## How to Create and Monitor a Reaction to a Facebook Post

| Action | Example | Your Action |
|---|---|---|
| Source content, either through your own channels or through a third party. | Photo, Video, Text, or Combination of the three. | |
| If third party content, evaluate and create new perspective. | A photo of a consumer holding up a big fish from their summer trip. Share and add "This is how summertime memories are made." | |
| If original content, focus on how it makes people feel. | A video of a bush plane taking off and a comment about the excitement generated when this happened. | |
| Tag Operators where possible, or other individuals. | If photo is taken at a Lodge that is on Facebook, tag them in the original post. | |
| Geo-tag if posting from mobile device. | Add specific operator location, or add a new custom location that identifies a region or experience. | |
| Respond to comments, always expanding the detail. | Consumer asks "Where is this" respond with "This is on the dock at Lodge XYZ in Northern Ontario". | |
| Measure amount of likes and comments after one day. | Check in regularly to see how many people are actively participating in the content you have shared. | |
| If many "likes" but no comments try leaving information out so people ask questions. Engage the audience by asking a question at the end of the post or encourage story telling from others about their own personal experiences. Try creative approaches to the content. Do something unexpected, gauge the response, identify what caused the good part of the response and integrate it into future posts. | Post a video that highlights all of the features of the region, then watch what people respond to most. Post an album with a wide variety of activities and styles of photography and watch which ones get the most comments. | |

## How to Create and Monitor Reaction to a Twitter Post

| Action | Example | Your Action |
|---|---|---|
| Identify a piece of useful information to share with followers. | "Anishnabek First Nations Pow-Wow this Weekend." | |
| Include a link with your Tweet – use link shortening services like bit.ly to conserve characters. | "Anishnabek First Nations Pow-Wow this Weekend: http://www.bit.ly/8csd7" | |
| Tag relevant users with @ tags. | "Anishnabek First Nations Pow-Wow this Weekend: http://www.bit.ly/8csd7 @ Anishnabek" | |
| Add relevant hashtags so users looking for similar topics can find and follow you. | "Anishnabek First Nations Pow-Wow this Weekend: http://www.bit.ly/8csd7 @ Anishnabek #FirstNations #POWWOW" | |
| Use a program like TweetDeck or HootSuite to schedule tweets in advance if you are not able to post often. | Set post to auto-publish Monday before the event. | |
| Set follow up posts that expands on the information in a way that reveals and excites the audience. | "Tom Cochrane has just announced that he'll be at the Pow-Wow this weekend! http://www.powwow.com" | |
| If people reply, retweet or favourite your tweet, follow up with information tailored to their answer. Others will read these exchanges for both information and entertainment. | Consumers Question: "Do you know if there's parking, or do we just park on the road?" Your reply: "Plenty of parking! Check the event page for details! http://www.powwow.com/event" | |
| Keep track of Tweets that get replies, favourites and re-tweets for future campaigns. | | |

# How to Find and Grow Audiences

| Action | Example | Your Action |
|---|---|---|
| Determine if you're looking for an audience by region or by experience. | Think about the event/activity you are trying to promote. Determine the audience makeup to support this. Are you looking to build an audience of people residing in an 8-hour drive of the event? Or are you looking to build an audience of people who are passionate about a particular experience? | |
| If regional, identify keywords for regional target. | If looking to attract people from Michigan, use Detroit, Novi, Upper Penninsula, UP, in searches. | |
| If experiential, identify keywords that consumers use. | If looking for the motorcycling market, search for bikers, riders, names of popular brands (Harley-Davidson) etc. | |
| Combine the two as necessary. | Michigan Biker, Michigan motorcycle, Detroit riders. | |
| Use social media searches to find users. | Search directly in YouTube, Flickr, Twitter, Tumblr, Facebook, socialmention.com. | |
| Add a lot of friends. | Look for people to add who post content about your region or experience. | |
| Trim friends after a few weeks. | Remove people with few followers or who aren't in your target market after you have monitored their activity and identified that they do not fit. | |
| Comment, like and share content. | If someone posts a picture of a great lake in your region, share it with your network. | |
| Identify influencers. | Look for people who have many friends and followers, who have active feeds, comments, and likes on their posts. | |
| Engage influencers. | Tag people who are active in your posts.  Be sure to make meaningful comments on things they share and engage with them offline. | |

# How to Determine Feature Stories Success

| Action | Example | Your Action |
|---|---|---|
| Release story. | Publish the story on the Northern Portal. Share the story through social networks and on the social networks of author. Share the story on forums, and send an email to the subscribers. | |
| Engage. | Respond to comments, watch for new followers. | |
| Review Traditional Analytics. | Review Google traffic for the article on a day-to-day basis, check the keywords used to find it, and look closely at the referral sources. | |
| Double-down on referral sources. | If a particular source is responsible for much of the traffic to the article, post content on that source that supports the article. Include a link back to the original. | |
| Review social media analytics. | Create an engagement score identified in the Content Development section of the Digital Strategy Final Report. Give each story a score based on how many likes, shares, and comments. | |
| Compare against other articles. | Review the success of at least six articles before making decisions about which type of person, what type of content, and which social networks work best. | |
| Review performance of media professional. | Ask yourself the following: Was the story on time? Was the author helpful in distributing the content? Did the project have elements that worked better than others? | |

Feature stories are meant to use the influence of media professionals and celebrities, high-production content and creative execution to draw attention to your product. Gauging its success is important in determining how to tailor future content and investments.

# How to Determine Which Social Media Platforms are Relevant to your Target Markets

| Action | Example | Your Action |
|---|---|---|
| Create a List of Relevant Social Networks. | Start with the largest social networks, before conducting a Google search. Don't start with Google as it can't index some of the larger social networks. | |
| Identify a variety of networks to research. | Search for keyword terms on these networks and look at the users in the groups, popular users, and influencers. Identify who the followers of influencers are and look at the other social networks that your ideal target market follow. | |
| Incorporate trends and information about demographics on social networks. | Facebook: Broad | |
| Choose three networks and monitor activity for three to six months. | Twitter: Younger, Ethnic and on Mobile Phones | |
| Based on the response received, decide where you can maintain, remove, or improve your presence. | Tumblr: Younger and Male | |

Each social media platform tends to skew towards a particular demographic; however, there are often sub-groups that are more active than other users. Use your best judgment to determine how much energy to devote to any single one.

## How to Determine the Most Relevant Call to Action from a Post

| Action | Example | Your Action |
|--------|---------|-------------|
| Determine if content is primarily entertainment or useful. | Great picture of a fish on a dock is entertainment. List of lakes with Walleye fishing is useful. | |
| If useful, find a way to connect a tourism product to the listing in a way that enhances the usefulness. | After each lake listed, include a link to a list of good fishing lodges on that lake, or a link to a list of public launches. | |
| If entertainment, try to tag other operators, people, and regions. Avoid obvious specific references to packages or purchasable items, as this will harm your credibility as their source for fun. | "This beautiful fish was caught right off the dock at @Lodge69." "Check this incredible video out – shot in Wawa, Ontario" | |
| If questions or comments are made, reply to them with detailed information. Keep in mind that other people will read this content. | User comment "Great video, where is Wawa?" Response: "It's about nine hours from Toronto, and has some of the BEST snowmobiling in North America." | |

Online consumers have different expectations about how marketing will try to attract their attention and influence their habits. As such, any content must be measured against entertainment value and usefulness and the call-to-action must integrate with that.

# How to Establish Online Partnerships and Agreements

**This letter can be used as a template to form agreements with partners in traditional media who are engaging in a social media presence, or with organizations that serve the target market online.**

Dear (Partner Name),

Recently (program or regional name) has embarked on a comprehensive social media campaign. In the last three months, we have added (include analytics stats, number of followers, likes and shares, and activity on social networks) and are working with industry and media partnerships to expand our reach and level of consumer engagement.

Part of our program is to enhance our network of strategic partnerships with selected individuals and organizations that have an established presence and authority in the (program or region name) tourism market - either as an industry leader, an established media outlet, or a proven online personality or brand. We have identified your organization as an ideal partner for this program. Our proposed approach is to create a series of agreements to share content that will allow us to mutually share access to our respective diverse audiences in different disciplines.

With that in mind, we are proposing the following;
• A verbal agreement to promote one another's social media activity to our respective audiences where alignment is present;
• A line of communication between social media coordinators in our respective organizations to share intelligence and identify posts to share;
• Advising one another of significant social media campaigns over the course of the year that would benefit from cross-promotion;
• A schedule of appropriate shares across YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and Blogs; and
• The co-ordination of the creation of new content that is beneficial to both organizations.

The nature of social media is such that overt advertising is rarely as effective as genuine consumer engagement. With our combined resources, we feel that these kinds of partnerships will take both of our organizations to the next level of online authority, and help us meet our own goals in a non-competitive manner.

If you are interested in pursuing this relationship, we would be happy to arrange a meeting to further discuss the specific details relative to our organizational goals.

Sincerely,

John Doe

# How to Effectively use Traditional Analytics

| Measurement | What it Means | What to Do |
|---|---|---|
| Visits | This is the total amount of visits to the site. This number is often higher than "visitors", because over a given time period people will generally visit a site more than once. | If your overall visitation is low, push your content out through social media, make sure your content is fresh and interesting, useful or entertaining, and build your audience. Use celebrities and online media professionals to create content about your product and share it on their networks. |
| Unique Visitors | This is the number of people who visited your site. | Follow the rules above to increase new visitors. |
| Pageviews | This is the number of pages on your site that people viewed. Each person may look at more than one site. | Pageviews is an indicator of how compelling your content is. If your pageview to visitor ratio is high (i.e 7,000 pageviews to 1,000 visitors), it means that visitors read many pages before leaving, which means that content is engaging and holding their interest. |
| Pages/Visit | This is an average of how many pages each visitor reviews. | This figure is an average and can be misleading. While some visitors may only be looking for one piece of information, others are just browsing. That doesn't mean that either group was better served. Outbound link tracking is a better measure, assuming that linking to operator websites occurs. |
| Bounce Rate | This is the percentage of the number of visitors who leave after viewing just one page. | Ideally, the lower the bounce rate, the better. Trim old stories and make sure the content is appropriately tagged when using SEO as the primary draw. Ensure that the content is well organized so similar stories appear alongside one another. |

There are a number of different ways to use analytics to determine if your strategies are effective. This chart gives an idea on how to read the different figures for analytics and make changes to your approaches based on your figures.

## How to Effectively use Social Analytics to Guide Content Creation Practices

| Action | Example | Your Action |
|---|---|---|
| Use social analytic tools to determine relevant keywords to geographic target markets. | Using socialmention.com or Google Analytics. Limit the search results to North America, and use words that the target market is likely to use. Perform at least ten searches to determine which terms are most relevant. | |
| Determine which users are most active. | Look at the types of sites and the types of comments people are posting. Assess where the majority of content is generated from and what gets the most feedback. | |
| When creating posts use the keywords used by the target market. | "Here is a happy rider in the wilds' of Northern Ontario" rather than "Here is a happy motorcyclist on the roads of Northern Ontario." | |
| Create content based on top interests. | Snowmobilers seem to comment on photo-essays from around a trail. Post an album of photos from just one tour on one trail. | |
| Commission content from top producers and comment generators. | Bob123's YouTube videos seem to get a lot of hits and comments. Ask him to visit the region and do a video on his impressions and experience. | |
| Read the numbers at a deep level. | While someone may have 1,200 Twitter followers, watch to see if they engage in spam-like behavior. Ensure that they regularly share other people's content. | |

Similar to traditional analytics, social media analytics function uses keywords to group content. To generate traffic, it is imperative to find keywords that the target market actually uses, instead of the ones the tourism industry uses to define groups of people or products.

## Case Studies

**Successful Twitter Feeds vs. Unsuccessful Twitter Feeds**

Successful

This is the Twitter feed of Jesse Hirsch. He's a technology writer and thinker. Key attributes to his success are the number of other people involved in his Twitter feed. He re-tweets relevant content that other people produce, replies to questions, and treats the site as a place for public conversation.



Unsuccessful

This is the Twitter feed for Superbike Planet where the content creator only posts his own Tweets. He doesn't repost others content, and rarely engages in conversations with other people. A good feed should have a mix of your own content, others content, and conversations with other people.
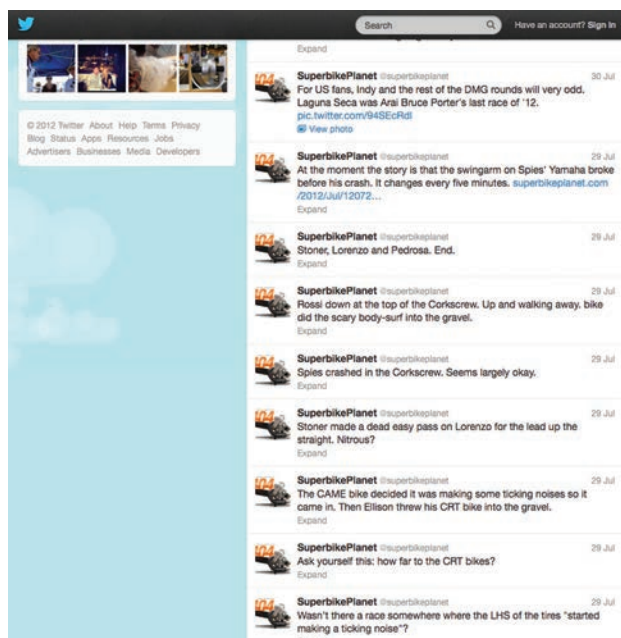
**Assessing a Person or Organization's Audience and Reach**

A component of the Digital Strategy is to solicit content from people with an audience online. This can be challenging as many of the media professionals in traditional media haven't yet invested in their online presence. The following provides an explanation on how to determine if an organization or individual has the audience and reach to get your message to the masses.

An audience is simply the number of people that an organization or person is connected to. On Facebook this is generally referred to as friends and on Twitter, Tumblr and Instagram it is referred to as followers. By looking at a person or organization's profile, you should be able to gather enough information about that potential author's audience.

On top of the total amount of followers the author has, it is important to see if their audience is comprised of the right people. For example, a snowmobile journalist should have a lot of friends with sleds in their profile pictures. If it is just family and friends on their profile, they may be less useful in terms of pushing the content through their social network, but more useful as a columnist.

The following provides a view of the first page of friends listing for Craig Nicholson, known as The Intrepid Snowmobiler:



There are at least five pictures of snowmobiles, as well as watercraft and dirt bikes in this group.
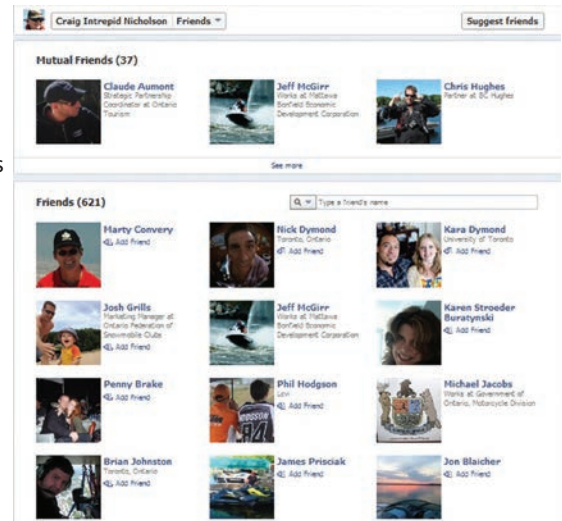
The following illustration is a view of Lorraine Sommerfeld's wall. There are many comments from a variety of people on her posts. This is a good example of audience engagement. This indicates that everything Lorraine writes about compels people to respond.



Some influencers have smaller total audiences, but their followers and people who repost their content have a wider reach. For example, if a potential author or partner organization only has 300 Twitter followers, but their followers are all Original Equipment Manufacturers who repost their content, they have a wide reach by virtue of the audience of their followers.

**Building and Managing an Audience**

Building an audience isn't just about posting interesting content. Finding people who are interested in what you have to offer is essential to getting the message out.

Check out this search for Glamping on Twitter – this can be done on almost any social media site. Users interested in this particular product will appear in this feed. Look for individuals who appear frequently as experts. Use your knowledge of your target market demographics to find people to add as friends. Generally people will follow you back.

Depending on what kind of social media analytics program you are using, you may also be able to find an audience. SocialMention.com will show you a list of posts to social media, where you can see the authors and will also provide a list of top users.

**Effective Call to Action in Social Media**
It is important that the online audience doesn't perceive you as trying to sell them something. Consumers perceive social media and the web as a form of entertainment or information. The focus of your social media efforts should be on building relationships and increasing trust within your networks. However, when done appropriately and tactfully, highlighting a product at the right moment is an important part of online marketing efforts.

This post by Algoma Country showcases how tagging an operator is a great way to integrate a call to action seamlessly, without turning off the consumer.

**Crowdsourcing a Brand - Letting Your Audience Control Your Message**
Allowing the audience to participate in the creation of your brand perception is a win-win proposition. Rather than spending money trying to figure out what consumers think, they tell you and then tell the story of your brand for you. Allowing them to showcase their story gives them a reason to believe in the brand.

For example, on the right side of the Ontario Outdoors page below, a family is going on a hike through Pukaskwa National Park and blogging about it. This is an effective way to allow your audience to control the message.

## 6.3.5
### RECOMMENDATION 4: PROVIDE TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR OPERATORS

As a result of the rapid advancements in technology, the web, and digital marketing, tourism operators have ample opportunities to participate in larger marketing efforts.

Based on the survey feedback from tourism stakeholders throughout Northern Ontario, Regional Leads should be responsible for engaging operators on the use of social media. Ensuring that operators are well equipped to integrate digital marketing tools into their communication strategies will create a stronger brand presence for Northern Ontario.

Engaging operators one-on-one during off-peak season will yield great results. Seminars and workshops will serve useful to support this one-on-one training but should not be the only tool. Based on the varying levels of buy-in and understanding for social media, the different learning styles and skill levels amongst operators, and the geographic distances in Northern Ontario, custom programs in each sub-region should be developed to cater to the diverse needs. Furthermore, working with other government and non-government organizations may prove fruitful in ensuring that operators are brought to a reasonable standard of proficiency.

The following outlines a basic path to build capacity and increase social media proficiency amongst operators.
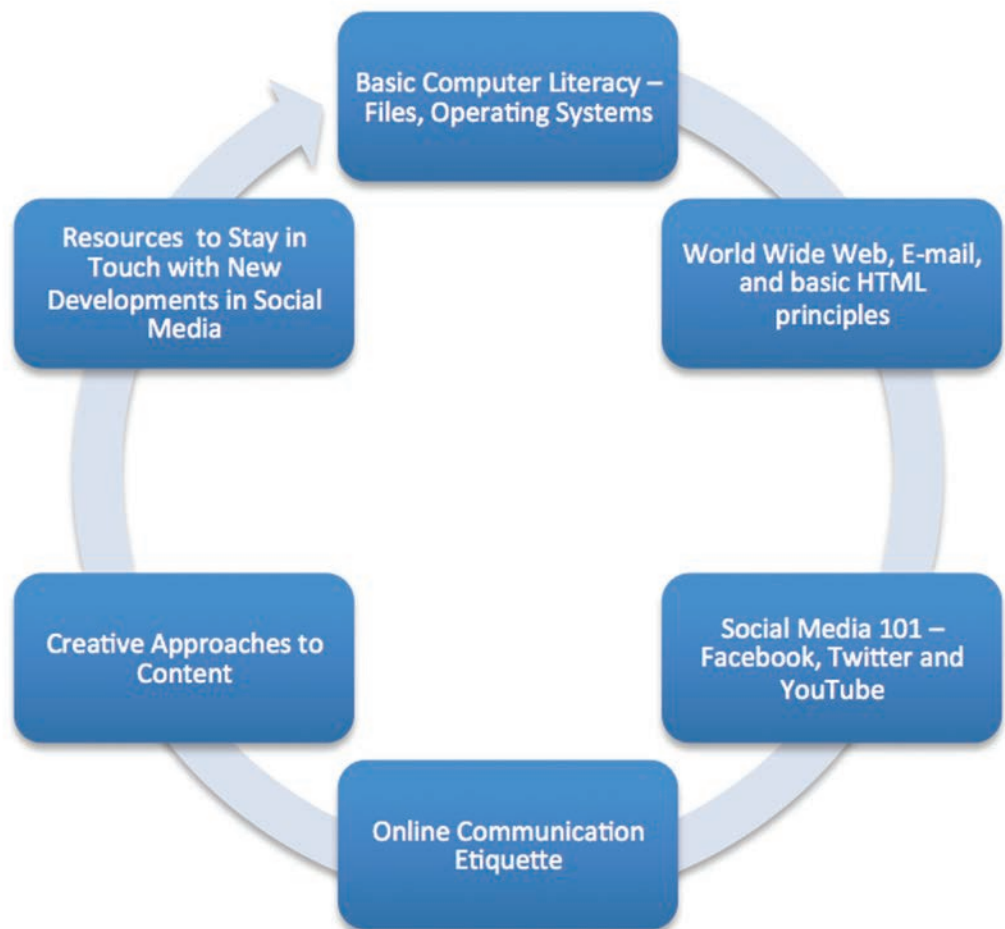
# 6.4
## CASCADING
## FRAMEWORK

The following details how the various websites, social media accounts, and online databases that market Northern Ontario as a tourism destination should work together to increase awareness about the different regions and experiential offerings.

**Please refer to Appendix F for a Cascading Framework Diagram to illustrate how these efforts connect.**

The key values attributed to the recommendations suggest that online marketing efforts should be non-hierarchical, inclusive, and connected.

In the broad sense, this means:

**1.    Non-hierarchical**

Consumers naturally use a number of different methods to either become aware or educated about a tourism offering, or fulfill a desire to travel for one of those offerings. In Northern Ontario, consumers can find information on regions and experiences from a wide variety of access points such as social media, regional sites, the Northern Portal, or experiential sites. A variety of topics may interest the Consumer as they may be:

√    Attracted to an article on the Northern Portal because of the celebrity status of the author.
√    Intrigued by a photo of a particularly beautiful piece of scenery on a Facebook page
√    Fascinated by a video of successful day fishing on a YouTube channel.

These multiple points of contact mean that the traditional top-down approach is no longer viable. However, ensuring that each marketing effort is clearly defined as either a lure or fulfillment is essential. Lures, such as social media and the Northern Portal, should direct consumers to the correct fulfillment site, with the knowledge that consumers may bypass the lures altogether.

**2.    Inclusive**

Online marketing should make every effort to include partners in the creation of content and databases. For Regional Leads, this means the inclusion of DMO's, municipalities, operators, OTMPC, and CTC. At the most basic level, this means that regions will actively pursue the sharing of content created by other regions or organizations where the goal is mutual. Information, such as content databases, media lists, and operator listings that are collected at a regional level should be shared with others within the same industry. *The elevation of partners by including them in broader marketing efforts will increase the reach of the tourism marketing message in Northern Ontario.*

**3.    Connected**

Content, such as websites, pages within the sites, feature articles, event calendars, social media posts (including photos, videos and text), other online campaigns (such as e-mail marketing), and content from third-party sites (such as news articles, public domain photos and videos, and blogs) should also be shared and cross-linked between partners wherever relevant.  This includes sharing content through social media channels (retweeting, sharing, reblogging,) linking to partners' and third-party websites in features and blog posts and generally acknowledging and sharing good content that is relevant. These practices result in more traffic to regional properties, increase audience reach, establish brands as authorities, increase the renown of the larger brands as a whole, and are in line with consumer expectations for online marketing.

The following provides the recommendations for applying these values;

1.  Websites

    a.  Function of the Northern Portal
    b.  Non-Hierarchal Connections
    c.  Aesthetics
    d.  Functionality and Ease of Use

2.  Databases and Lists

    a.  Regional and Vertical Roles
    b.  Northern Ontario RTO and Content Strategist Role
    c.  Ensuring Inclusion Through Good Records
        i.  What Criteria to Include in Records

3.  Social Media

    a.  Aggregator and Cascading
    b.  Regional Responsibilities

## *RECOMMENDATION 1: WEBSITES*

This section describes the function of the Northern Portal within the ecosystem of tourism websites, the connections between the CTC, OTMPC, regional and partner sites, and how the connections should work. It also addresses how to handle the differences in design, content, and usability of the regional sites and makes suggestions for minimum requirements for these sites.

### a.    Function of the Northern Portal

The Northern Portal exists as a lure for consumers. With significant effort being put into developing new content that is of high quality, created by authors with their own following, it is expected that the Northern Portal will educate consumers on the wealth of opportunities for recreational travel in the North.  Furthermore, it will make significant gains in increasing the reach of the online marketing campaigns. As they are lured to the site via social media, search engines, or blogs, the feature content they find will highlight similar relevant content, revealing the diversity of the North and giving the consumer options to discover.

The key to feature content on the Northern Portal will be a drive to regional fulfillment.
This takes two forms:

1.  The design of the site should compliment the sub-regions by incorporating design elements
2.  The article itself and the social media content associated with it should drive toward the most relevant page on the regional site.

Each commissioned story must also include a Digital Debrief to be included with the content creators' itinerary. This Digital Debrief will indicate how the Regional Lead wants their region to be identified and linked to on the web. This should include the relevant social media account names, hash tags, and specific website links.

### b.    Non-Hierarchal Connections

The best bet for success across the ecosystem of websites, blogs, and social media profiles in Northern Ontario is to allow consumers to choose their own points of engagement and control their decision-making process.  To support this, the proper organizational structure can have a positive effect on the likelihood to make a decision.

***Consumers should be pushed toward the regional sites, where the fulfillment process occurs.***
In this case, fulfillment can take the form of a phone number, an online information request form, a link to an operator website, a packaged or bundled vacation, or a booking engine, with the latter being the preferred method. Booking engines are preferred because they meet consumer expectations for online marketing, they finalize the process of fulfillment from a regional marketing perspective, allow the measurement of successful marketing tactics, and share that success with operators and other partners.

**c.    Aesthetics**

The multitude of websites that exist to promote different regions, destinations, municipalities and experiences in Northern Ontario vary wildly in their approach to design. As the Regional Leads have a deep understanding about the needs of their target markets, they are ideally positioned to lead this process. However, there remains a certain level of quality required from website design.

These criteria are difficult to quantify without getting into specifics for each site, but consistency is important. To successfully grow the tourism market in Northern Ontario, regardless of whether the consumer is in an avid niche or is simply a casual traveler, there must be some continuity between the lure sites and the fulfillment sites.

While most regions already have websites in place, it is recommended that any new developments consider the consumer experience when they move from a site with a current modern design such as the Northern Portal, to the range of sites that exist at the regional level. These changes in design affect the consumer perception, in the brand as a whole and their confidence in the purchasing process.

Relevant content should be placed on the same page as featured content. For example, if there is a package listing on a regional website that highlights a particular operator, there should be other similar packages listed in less detail on the same page. This helps keep consumers engaged with the content, keeps bounce rates low, and gives them options.

**d.    Functionality and Ease of Use**

Ensuring that consumers can navigate websites with ease is critical. For the Northern Portal and the combined social media, PR and other online campaigns to be successful as lures, customers must be able to find information quickly and easily.  As the regional sites are to be the ***repository of static information and lists that lead to fulfillment***, it is essential that they contain information that allows the consumer to fulfill their desire to purchase.

With this in mind, a successful regional website should use precedence to establish the user on the site. Every page should easily answer three questions in its functionality:

1.    What is this website?
2.    Where am I now?
3.    Where can I go from here?

The site should break the lists of operators and packages into categories and those categories should be visible from every page.

## RECOMMENDATION 2: DATABASES AND LISTS

Keeping good records has always been a function of the DMO's, but there is a need for accessible, well-maintained and complete digital records. Recently, the Northern Ontario RTO undertook a project to collect contact information on operators for the purpose of communication. There are several recommendations to leverage this for the marketing efforts of the Northern Portal. This will ensure that all operators who wish to participate in both the creation of feature content in their region and/or have active social media accounts or websites that they wish to see appear in the social media aggregators on the Northern Portal, are included wherever possible.

There will be other uses for a comprehensive list as new efforts are undertaken. While the current list has been developed exclusively for communication between the Northern Ontario RTO and the operators, it is recommended that the Northern Ontario RTO request the operators permission to use this list for other purposes.

It is also recommended that this database be accessible via a website and be expanded to include three other categories, with the ability to define further categories as they become relevant. The following categories include:

1. Media and media organizations
2. Partners, and non-government organizations (not-for-profits, clubs, etc.)
3. Miscellaneous

### a. Regional and Vertical Lead Roles

Regional Leads should be responsible for collecting information on the operators in their area, as well as contributing to the media list and local partners, DMO's and municipalities' listings. Vertical Leads should contribute with their media contacts and freelance contractors listing. These lists will be limited to the Northern Ontario RTO Board, staff, and Content Coordinators.

### b. Northern Ontario RTO and Content Strategist Role

It is recommended that the Northern Ontario RTO oversee the maintenance of the database, and could delegate this part to the Content Strategist.

### c. Ensuring Inclusion Through Good Records

One of the primary goals of having a shareable database of contacts is to ensure that operators who wish to participate in the larger marketing efforts and feature story creation for the Northern Portal are included. Each time a story is conceptualized, the Regional Lead should use their list to ask operators who would like to be included. Those who cannot be included can be marked in the database as a future candidate for feature stories.

### d. What Criteria to Include in Records

Aside from the obvious information about addresses, phone numbers, contact e-mails, and websites, it is recommended that operator records include social media accounts and, where possible, Google Analytics codes. During the survey process it was discovered that most operators would consider sharing their own analytics with the Northern Ontario RTO. This would create direct ties to the operators and would allow for goodwill and productivity, especially where decision-making is involved. By sharing information, it will be easier to gain consensus.

## RECOMMENDATION 3: SOCIAL MEDIA

It is estimated that in the next two years social media will make up for more than half of all web traffic. While optimizing sites for search engines is still a valuable technique for increasing awareness of tourism offerings, social media will play a larger role, and will offer major benefits over search engines. A search engine can help find content, but it does not establish authority or credibility. The social media plan recommended ensures that Regional Leads will grow their audience, extend their reach and build on established partnerships.

The Northern Ontario RTO is not responsible for marketing which requires the Regional Leads to collaborate with OTMPC Experiential Programs to share content across their platforms, as well as connect with the social networks of any media. Part of any media buy should be explicit in their requirement that regional content be shared on the particular media outlet's social network, and where relevant, media buys can be done for repeat mentions throughout the year.

Given OTMPC's larger reach and marketing budget, it is recommended that the Regional Leads make every effort to strengthen the partnership online and through the sharing of content via social media. This is a two-way street, with the Regional Leads also sharing OTMPC content that is relevant to their region on their own social media channels.

When connecting with the CTC, it is recommended that Northern Ontario content leverage their hash tag #explorecanada wherever possible, and work towards a formalized agreement for content sharing, once the Content Strategist is in place.

### a.    Aggregator and Cascading

The Social Media aggregator as part of the Northern Portal RFP has the ability to automatically showcase the Social Media feeds (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.) of partners, operators, and more. The aggregator is the easiest way to include the efforts of these other organizations and people in broader marketing efforts.

As a result of the multiple points of connection, social media does not perfectly fit the cascading approach of previous online marketing strategies. However, the rule of thumb is that those with a larger audience and marketing budgets should share the content of those with smaller audiences and marketing budgets.

### b.    Regional Responsibilities

Regional Leads will be responsible for managing the social media accounts on behalf of their region. These will function primarily as lures to their own sites, but also give them an opportunity to share operators, DMO, partner, and municipal content with their own audiences. They will also be responsible for managing the social media aggregator and ensuring partners and operators are showcased.

# 7.0
## CONCLUSION

In summary, the process followed, the research conducted, and the recommendations and strategies suggested are reflective of the digital needs of the Tourism Industry in Northern Ontario. The recommendations made have been approved by the Digital Strategy Committee.  The strategies are flexible in nature and can be molded to fit the needs of each sub-region.  As technology advances and changes occur, the strategy can evolve with it.  The objective of the new Northern Portal is to build a platform that engages and interacts with the targeted audiences, educates, and increases awareness about the attributes of Northern Ontario in efforts to entice consumers to learn, explore, and visit Northern Ontario.

**To further support the strategies and recommendations identified, please refer to Appendix G for a copy of the proposed Content Strategist job description, and Appendix H for a copy of the proposed budget.**

# NORTHERN ONTARIO REGIONAL TOURISM ORGANIZATION

## APPENDIX A: BOARD PRESENTATIONS

# Northern Digital Strategy

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# Digital Strategy

- Evolution of the Northern Portal
- RFP for Northern Portal
- Content Development Acquisition and Management
- Consumer Online Engagement including Social Media Development and Management
- Online Reservations
- Measurement and Success Measures
- Current Campaign and Partner Sites
  - Cascading Framework
  - Developing Capacity

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# Survey Summaries

- 98% of Operators have website and/or social media accounts
- 75% would like social media coaching, stakeholders agree
- Majority of Operators and Stakeholders willing to share analytics
- Both cite time and/or resources restricting engagement in social media
- Majority don't have policy for social media

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# Guiding Principles

- Less content, higher quality
- Media Relations
- Social Media
- Optimized for tablet and mobile
- All content tagged by season, region, experience

Northern Portal RFP

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# Site Structure

– Two types of content: Feature Articles and Social Media

– Features Articles high-quality content, written by media professionals

– Social Media managed by online coordinators

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# Northern Portal RFP

## Feature Articles

- Sourced from media professionals, journalists and celebrities who come with their own print, tv, radio or online audience

- Tied to FAM tours run by regions, cities and verticals

- Run on an six-month editorial calendar, based on seasonality and travel planning habits

# Northern Portal RFP

- Social Media

- Aggregating social media from operators, communities, partners, consumers and third parties.
  - Facebook posts, Flickr images, Tweets, YouTube Videos, Blogs

- Content tagged for season, experience and region.

- Show beside feature content, supports traditional marketing with authentic content

- Changes as the user's focus changes

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# Portal Traffic

What does the portal do that other sites don't?
Generates new content on a regular basis.

Consumers arrive at portal in one of three ways:

- SEO
- Media Referral
- Social Media Referral
- Call to Actions in Traditional Media

They arrive directly at an article, not at the main page

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# Content Acquisition & Development

## Northern Portal

| West (urban and rural) | Central (urban and rural) | East (urban and rural) |
|---|---|---|
| Feature | Feature | Feature |
| Co-ord | Co-ord | Co-ord |

Regional Content

MC&IT @ Sub-region

### Franco-phone

Feature

Co-ord

Content

### Canada's Great Outdoors

| Fish | Hunt | Outdoors | Touring |
|---|---|---|---|

| Feature X2 sections | Feature | Feature X4 sections |
|---|---|---|
| Co-ord | Co-ord | Co-ord |

Experiential Content

Sports Tourism – Separate Site

# Regional and Experiential

- RTO regionally driven, includes only content about the North

- OTMPC vertically driven, includes only content about the vertical

- A holistic content management and social media system that feeds both OTMPC and RTO programs seamlessly

- Feeds each based on tags

- Reduces duplication, creates home for experiential "avids" and for regionally driven travellers

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# Discussion Points

- How do we measure if our strategy is working?
  - Integrate analytics across the board
  - Integrate Social Media monitoring
  - Observe first, then set targets
  - Decide on specific categories to go after online

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# Northern Digital Strategy and Support

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# Introduction

## The MAKC Team

- Karen Jones
- Mike Jacobs
- Andre O'Bonsawin

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# Northern Portal Overview

## History of Portal

- 4 years old
- 19 different content providers
- Five different types of content "stories"
- Regular training sessions and team calls
- SEO lures consumers to site
- Once there, the site educates them about Northern regions, cities, attractions and activities
- One major overhaul to site design in 4 years

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# Northern Portal Overview

Issues identified and addressed over the course
of 4 years:

Quality of content

Quantity of content

Seasonality

Frequency of content addition

Proper SEO protocols

Variety of types of content

Inclusion of rich media (videos, maps, slideshows)

Ability to "like" on Facebook

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# Situational Analysis

The online world is continuing to change. Several factors contribute to the digital landscape:

- Social media and networks have changed how people make decisions about travel
- Total global engagement in social media continue to increase
- Location based media allows for service delivery directly to consumers
- New devices and tools entering the marketplace daily
- Internet access is a consumer expectation
- Direct relationships with consumers is easier than ever
- Increase in noise as consumer and businesses utilize multiple platforms to communicate

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# Looking Forward

To keep up with this change, Northern Ontario must Implement a strategy that is forward-thinking and nimble enough to change with the digital landscape.

A balance between social media's authentic and engaging style and traditional marketing tactics is essential when educating consumers about Northern Ontario.

A variety of options to complement the diversity of Northern Ontario's tourism product must be considered, and weighed against their suitability for our message.

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# Digital Landscape: Northern Ontario

Northern Portal

Go Ride Ontario

Sault Ste. Marie

North of Superior

North Bay

Ontario's Near North

Northern Ontario's Attractions

Sunset Country

Hunting Ontario

Northwest Ontario

Ontario Adventures

Northestern Ontario

Sudbury

Ontario Wilderness Region

Rainbow Country

Algoma Country

Thunder Bay

Canada's Great Outdoors

Timmins

Go Fish

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# Consultation Process

- The goal of the consultation process is to understand the local opportunities and challenges throughout Northern Ontario to guide the strategy development process.

- Visits with operators and stakeholders are occurring with stakeholders, community leaders, and operators throughout Northern Ontario.

- The consultation process is ongoing. Regional Leads will be engaged throughout the project.

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# Operator Challenge

A common challenge is that many operators:

- Lack the time to implement social media into their business.
- Lack the resources/tools to implement social media into their business.
- Lack the understanding to implement social media into their business.

As small efforts are implemented, a louder voice can be created resulting in a solid marketing partnership for the Northern Portal.

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# Our Process

- Social Media Integration
- Direct Engagement
- Measurement and Tracking Tools
- SEO ability to generate leads at regional/operator level
- Basic training and tools to ensure fulfillment can happen seamlessly at the sub-regional and operator level
- Oversight

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# Our Process

Personal engagement is our priority – we will focus on the strengths of the region and incorporate a healthy balance of alignment and individuality.

Digital Committee

Playbook Presented to Committee June 30th

Strategy Development

Ongoing Communications

Relationships with Stakeholders & Operators

Market Research

RFP Development March 31st

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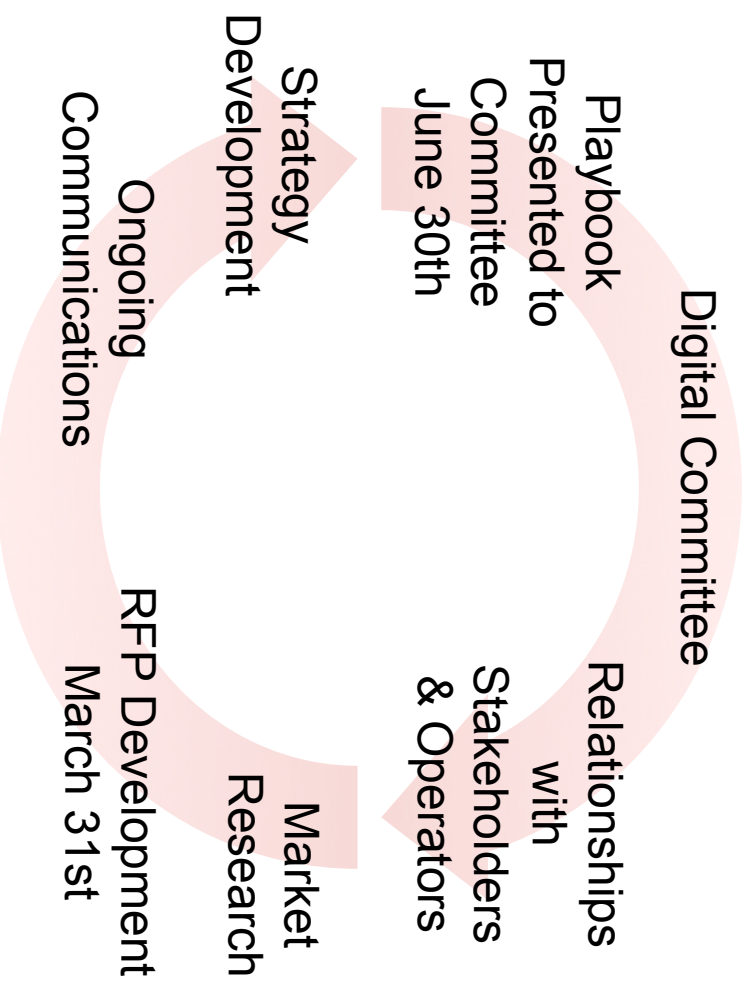
# Questions & Feedback

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### communications

Thank You

Karen Jones
Mike Jacobs
Andre O'Bonsawin

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Northern Portal RFP
and Survey Summaries

# Northern Portal RFP

- Function and Design
- Content Providers
- Content Coordinators

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# Northern Portal RFP

## Guiding Principles

- Less content, higher quality
- Optimized for tablet and mobile
- All content related to geography in a visual way
- Seasonality and geography emphasized
- Aggregation of social media from internal and external sources
- Tagging system that showcases most relevant content (season, region, experience)
- Leadership and hands-on direction focused

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# Site Structure

Two types of content:

1. Feature Articles
2. Social Media Aggregator

- Feature articles high-quality content, written by media professionals
- Social Media Aggregator managed by online coordinators

Northern Portal RFP

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# Feature Articles

- Magazine feature article production quality – text, photo, video and maps

- Sourced from media professionals, journalists and celebrities who have their own audiences

- Content providers will be required to push stories out through their own social networks, as well as home publications

- Tied to FAM tours run by regions, cities and verticals

- Run on an six-month editorial calendar, based on seasonality and travel planning habits

Northern Portal RFP

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# Social Media Aggregator

- Aggregating social media from operators, communities, partners, consumers and third parties
  - Facebook Posts, Flickr Images, Tweets, YouTube Videos, Articles
- Every piece of content will be tagged for season, experience and region
- Shows beside feature content, supports traditional marketing with authentic content
- Changes as the user's focus changes (i.e. shows regional content when region is selected)

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# Northern Portal RFP

## Online Coordinators

- Content providers become "online coordinators"
- Responsible for online presence for their region/experience
- Blog posts on portal
- Responsible for moderation and aggregation of social media
- Sharing of new feature articles, photos and video to appropriate target market
- Engage consumers in these forums
- Online coordinators could also work from the road, generating content from mobile devices
- Create feeds for YouTube/Flickr/Facebook/Twitter

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# Content Segments

(To be determined)

The following provides a variety of options for consideration.

Option A: Regional only, with all content tied to experience (motorsports, hunt/fish, outdoors)

Option B: Experiential only, with content then tied to region

Option C: A blend of Regional and Experiential

Option D: A blend of Regional, Urban and Experiential

Option E: Regional, then experiential

*Festivals and Events to figure in*

Northern Portal RFP

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# Survey Summaries

Operator Survey Summary

Stakeholder Survey Summary

Content Provider Summary

# Survey Summaries

## Operator Surveys

- 55 operators replied - continuing to solicit responses
- 50% aware of Northern Portal
- 60% indicated that they don't receive additional traffic from portal
- 98% have website and/or social media accounts
- No consensus on marketing ideas
  - "more US billboards"
  - "keep promotions broad and experiential"
  - "help visitors understand distances"

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# Survey Summaries

## Operator Surveys

- 73% said online is "very important" to marketing their business
- Website is preferred form, Facebook is second
- Time and lack of knowledge are biggest impediments to online marketing
- 70% have used outside help for online marketing
- 64% use Google Analytics, 76% would share data

# Survey Summaries

## Operator Surveys

- The majority of respondents will spend approximately 50% of their marketing resources online (followed by Trade Shows-18%)
- 25% would participate in pan-Northern booking engine, 53% were not sure
- 75% would like social media coaching
- 64% would consider bundling products with other operators
- General comments on digital marketing efforts in Northern Ontario
  - More operator contact
  - More efforts directed at US
  - Report on effectiveness of marketing campaigns
  - Help lobby for high-speed internet everywhere
  - Highlight operators on portal
  - Training sessions for social media
  - More research

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# Survey Summaries

## Stakeholders Surveys

- 93% are familiar with Northern Portal, GoRide, GoFish, Canada's Great Outdoors
- 50/50 split about effectiveness of driving traffic to their sites
- General comments on how to improve portal:
  - Add fulfillment
  - Include more social media
  - Include more "grassroots" content
  - Less options
  - Arrange experiences under regions

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# Survey Summaries

## Stakeholders Surveys

- 75% engage in social media for tourism marketing
- 81% said online marketing is "very important"
- 60% do not have social media integrated into organizational policies
- Majority don't have a specific aim for social media engagement
- 70% use Analytics, 77% were willing to share data
- 50/50 split in advertising resource spending – Online vs. Print
- 80% support a pan-Northern booking engine
- 81% believe social media coaching should be available for operators
  - 65% believe this should be driven sub-regionally

# Survey Summaries

## Stakeholder General Comments

- Need to understand the costs of a booking engine
- Any social media efforts should have a consistent look and feel, as well as training
- Operators don't have time or money to do social media marketing

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# Survey Summaries

## Content Provider Surveys

- 16 respondents
- 73% able to get operators to create content
- 66% used third party content providers
- Daily Features most successful story type
- 100% felt that the portal was successful in luring visitors to the North
- 75% share content on social networks
- Sourcing photos and finding story ideas is the biggest issue in creating content for the portal

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# Survey Summaries

## Content Provider Surveys

- General comments
    - Reduce number of sections
    - Better archiving for content
    - Better ordering of aging content
    - Guidance required on content
    - Would like a full-time editor

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Northern Digital Strategy

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# Digital Strategy

- Evolution of the Northern Portal
- RFP for Northern Portal
- Content Development Acquisition and Management
- Consumer Online Engagement including Social Media Development and Management
- Online Reservations
- Measurement and Success Measures
- Current Campaign and Partner Sites
  - Cascading Framework
  - Developing Capacity

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Northern Portal RFP

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- Media Referral
- Social Media Referral

They arrive directly at an articlenot at the main page

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MEDIA

Northern Portal

West | Central | East

Experiences (best-bet)

Attractions

Cities

Festivals and Events

Sports Tourism

MC & IT

Francophone

OPERATORS

COORDINATION

Canada's Great Outdoors

Fish | Hunt | Outdoors | Motor

CONSUMERS

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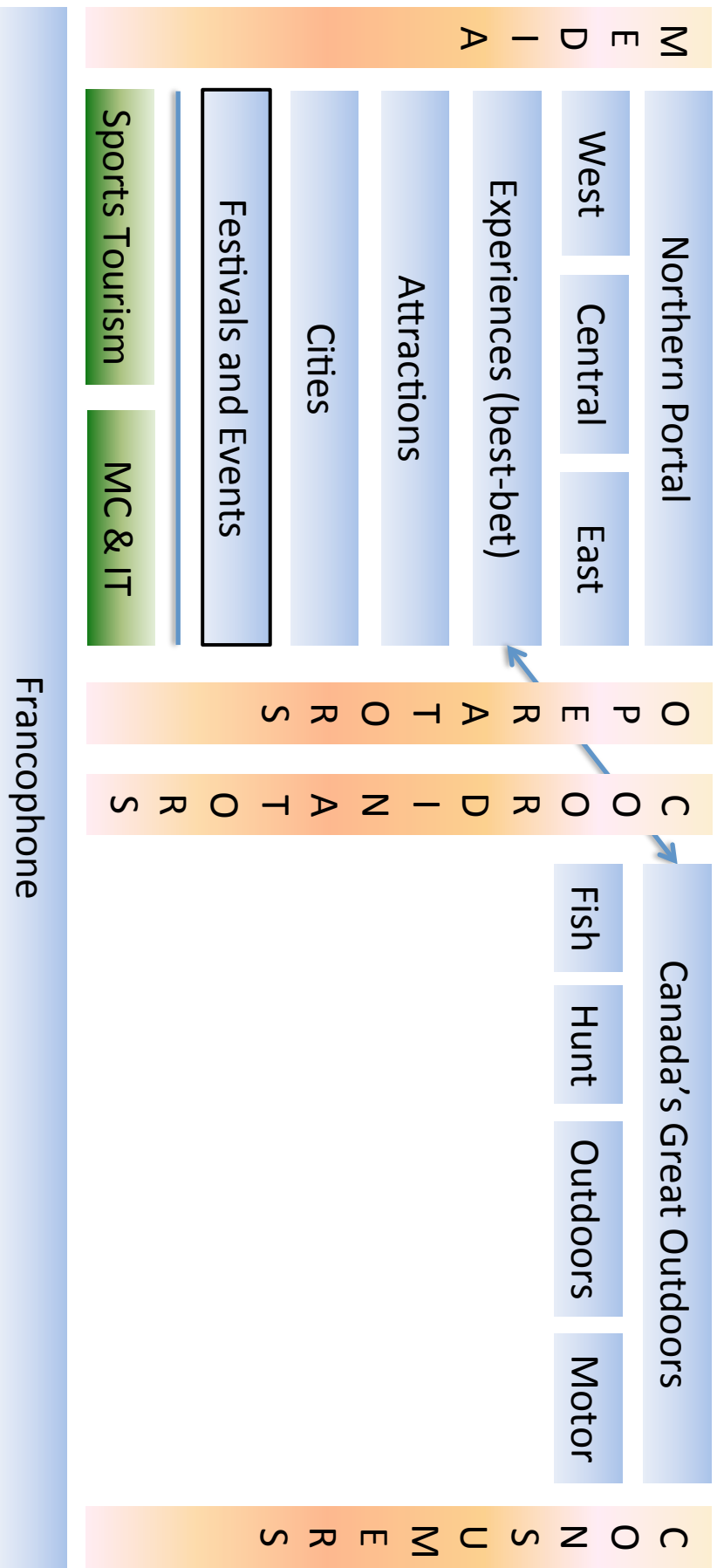
# Discussion Points

- RTO regionally driven, includes only content about the North

- OTMPC vertically driven, includes only content about the vertical

- Could we create a holistic content management and social media system that feeds both OTMPC and RTO programs seamlessly?

- Feeds each based on tags

- Reduces duplication, creates home for experiential "avids" and for regionally driven travellers

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# Discussion Points

- How do we measure if our strategy is working?
  - Integrate analytics across the board
  - Integrate Social Media monitoring
  - Observe first, then set targets
  - Decide on specific categories to go after online

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# Content Acquisition & Development - Budget

## Northern Portal

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **West** (including urban and rural) | **Central** (including urban and rural) | **East** (including urban and rural) |
| **Feature** 2.5k/each Bi-monthly 30k/year | **Feature** 2.5k/each 1 per month 30k/year | **Feature** 2.5k/each 1 per month 30k/year |
| **Co-ord** 45k/year | **Co-ord** 45k/year | **Co-ord** 45k/year |

### Franco-phone

| |
|---|
| **Feature** 2.5k per 1 per month 30k/year |
| **Co-ord** 45k/year |

**Regional Content** 225k/year

**Content** 75k/year

## Canada's Great Outdoors

| Fish | Hunt | Outdoors | Touring |
|---|---|---|---|

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Feature** 2.5k per 1 per month X2 sections 60k/year | **Feature** 2.5k per 1 per month 30k/year | **Feature** 2.5k per 1 per month X4 sections 100k/year |
| **Co-ord** 60k/year | **Co-ord** 45k/year | **Co-ord** 180k/year |

**Experiential Content** 475k/year

**Regional Content**

# Editorial Calendar

- Each Segment should showcase two new stories per month

- One created regionaly, one created vertically.

- This means every story has to cover a region and a vertical

- Segments only have to create one new story a month, but it is used in two sections

- Verticals and Regions are staggered. Verticals on the 1st and 3rd week of the month, regions on the 2nd and 4th.

- Monthly story meeting with regions and verticals, decide how to link stories and which media professionals to target.

# Content Coordinators

- Responsible for maintaining their regional or vertical social media account

- Coordiante with Content Strategies to identify story ideas, writers and relevant useful static content for creation

- Engage with consumers through social media

- Layout and SEO of feature articles

- Blog posts for smaller tourism news stories

- Events calendar maintenance (shared across portal) consists of sourcing events, adding them to calendar, associating an appropriate product with the event

- Grow social media networks and followings

- Share content, repost partners content when appropriate

# Feature Content and Writers

- Media professionals, journalists, celebrities and internet personalities
- Use established relationships and new ones
- Paid for content
- Submit stories, RTO/OTMPC responsible for photos and layout
- Ideally amenable to having regional or vertical coordinator follow along and blog with them
- Also writing pieces for their home publication, where possible
- Requested to share portal content through their social networks

# Content Strategist

- Responsible for:
  – Analytics, Measurement and Strategy (monthly review and report to digital strategy committee)
  – Maintaining content calendar
  – Coordinating strategy and content creation with sub-regional and vertical co-ordinators.
  – Awareness of new trends
  – Adjustment to digital marketing efforts based on RTO and OTM priorities, as well as consumer wants/needs

# NORTHERN ONTARIO REGIONAL TOURISM ORGANIZATION

## APPENDIX B: SWOT ANALYSIS

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The MAKC participated in one-on-one consultations in each sub-region in February 2012.  Discussions took place with NORTAs, Cities, Operators, and Stakeholders.  The following provides an overview of the feedback collected and does not necessarily reflect the direction recommended by the digital strategy.

## Strengths

· Stories are appearing on portal that are up to minute which is providing positive feedback
· The portal helps with membership value and provides an opportunity to involve members
· Members/stakeholders have a place to send story ideas with staffing support to create content
· Sites like Go Ride provide traffic to regional organization
· Portal concept is working – getting referrals, people are linking to regional partners
· The portal is an education about Northern Ontario- it is working…fills big gap
· Portal shows that Northern Ontario has a product
· Bundles allow for custom opportunities for operators
· Positive benefit – traffic is driven from portal
· Daily features works well

- Big issue with quality vs. quantity
- Lack of budget for higher quality content
- Model of content collection doesn't make sense
- Lure concept without fulfillment creates issues
- There are too many websites for Northern Ontario tourism – it is confusing
- Lack of identification between consumer audience vs. media audience
- Contract agreements/measurements with content providers doesn't work
- Navigation is difficult with existing portal
- Many operator/regional sites are not professional, lack consistency
- Decrease in traffic to regional site from portal over the past year
- High level of content required causes difficulties as it doesn't always fit
- Issues with creating content to meet requirements- poor quality/messaging
- Length of time for translation is an issue
- Content is overwhelming – not targeted
- Fulfillment challenges as some operators still don't have websites (or have poor ones without a call to action)
- Different writing styles/skills with content providers
- Continuity of content is an issue
- Lack of structure
- Lack of communication messaging
- Unsure of ROI at operator level from portal
- Reactive content development processes
- Lack of awareness at community level about portal's purpose
- Lack of training/tools to support content development process
- Lack of connection with regional digital strategies to ensure consistency
- Lack of awareness/education about portal for operators, partners, consumers, etc.
- FAM tours are coordinated but little follow-up is provided to showcase content developed/ROI for operator
- No guidance on what online strategies are working, how to improve, etc.
- People are getting lost in the portal- must streamline the transition from portal to operator
- Consumers aren't maximizing portal – traffic isn't there
- Content about Southern Ontario is confusing – shouldn't confuse consumer
- Poor attitudes from content providers
- Needs more then just SEO
- Itineraries don't work as it is too specific and pushes single operators
- Poor websites reflect poorly on brand of north
- Few referrals from portal – geared towards experiential side
- City Attractions, Meetings/Conventions not included in strategy
- Technical issues (uploading pictures, no folders for image organization, text wrapping, font size/type constraints)
- Lack of editor
- Editorial role wasn't useful approach
- Awareness issues with feature articles
- Collective messaging not consistent with respect to urban and regional
- Duplication of content among urban/regional leads
- Lack of information about analytics for portal as a whole
- French translation budgetary limitations – inability to decide priority content for translation – no controls in place over what would be translated
- Lack of understanding about who is using portal, why they are coming, what they are looking for
- Not all products are well represented on portal as experience (i.e. rail)
- Lack of resources on fulfillment side in smaller communities – difficulty with capacity and managing online strategies
- Lack of local spin when FAM tours are developed and lack of support to generate online content following tour
- Issues with understanding and learning online effectiveness in smaller communities
- Difficulty for operators to manage booking through booking engine
- Lack of recognition for portal at operator level – must measure effectiveness through results
- Lack of time, resources, understanding about social media at operator level
- Issues with creativity, writing abilities, design
- Subjective scoring – difficult to grade effectively
- Lack of leadership/direction
- Operators (attractions) can not post own content to portal – lack of invitation for involvement
- Lack of connection to operator social media networks
- Lack of coordinated approach for authenticity – look and feel – content not consistent with overall Northern brand
- Portal not inclusive for small communities

## Opportunities

- Big issue with quality vs. quantity
- Social media needs to have measurable ways to determine how it works within the strategy
- Showcase the geography (by sub-regions) in an interactive way
- Value in using PR/Engagement through travel writers, group tours, media linkages to portal
- Find ways to increase traffic by locating, promoting, and creating engaging content through flickr, you tube, etc.
- Use video and image content from portal for city marketing (vice versa)
- Cities attractions, products need to be included – sports tourism, meetings/conventions, group tour
- Focus on strong operators – hand pick those interested in big picture and use to become champions through strategy development
- Social Media/content development tools for content providers
- Engagement strategy from community level to provincial level
- Utilizing media writers to showcase high quality
- Increase social media platforms
- Utilize crowd source video
- Provide booking engine opportunities for operators that want to be involved
- Incorporate regional downloadable guides to showcase efforts on portal
- Encourage operators/regions to build packages that complement one another and foster new relationships
- Bring regional network together online to collaborate
- Build database of leads – pan Northern managed through RTO 13
- Have option on portal to select boxes and access specific information- have information flow customized and direct to consumer through RSS feeds
- Provide leadership to sub regions/operators and help them identify what customers are looking for online and where to put digital efforts
- Foster network marketing opportunities
- Management strategies for operators – how to transition site visits to leads
- Quality content – journalistic style
- Best practices for sub regions operators, online resources, training support
- Engage operators by providing results on number of people driven to site- ask for feedback on how many people they booked
- Provide baby steps for operators to support online strategy development
- Encourage operators ask consumers where they were found online
- Develop time management strategies or third party solutions to help operators incorporate social media into business practices
- Promote & educate consumers about Northern Ontario
- Increase awareness about Northern Ontario to US markets
- Develop process to manage and support content providers-manage the consumer expectations
- Improve representation of city amenities
- Develop consumer strategy for digital marketing in Northern Ontario
- Include interactive map to promote Northern Ontario
- Mentorship programs for operators
- Develop Internship programs to develop consistent approach
- Use operator profiles vs. stories
- Have a creative writer on portal team - submit story concept/details from regional level but have it written by writer to improve quality
- More training on how social media can translate to 'heads in beds'
- Leverage photos/videos at City level to build greater content on portal
- Use FAM tour content on portal
- Convert locals to ambassadors or champions on portal
- Incorporate classified type section for operators to support fulfillment
- Increase social network exposure
- Tie in viral campaign with portal to increase awareness
- Utilize paid travelers to serve as spokes people for North online

## Threats

- Compete vs. partner issues with Cities
- Changing demographics/climates
- Limiting social media policy levels at municipal level
- Inconsistent fulfillment at operator level
- Pan-Northern approach is met with skepticism
- Consumer expectations are not managed
- Utilizing one booking system for all operators will create issues
- Message cities promote is inconsistent with representation at portal level
- Inconsistent execution by third party service providers

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# NORTHERN ONTARIO REGIONAL TOURISM ORGANIZATION

## APPENDIX C: SURVEY SUMMARIES

# Survey Summaries

Operator Survey Summary

Stakeholder Survey Summary

Content Provider Summary

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# Survey Summaries

## Operator Surveys

- 55 operators replied - continuing to solicit responses
- 50% aware of Northern Portal
- 60% indicated that they don't receive additional traffic from portal
- 98% have website and/or social media accounts
- No consensus on marketing ideas
  - "more US billboards"
  - "keep promotions broad and experiential"
  - "help visitors understand distances"

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# Operator Surveys

- 73% said online is "very important" to marketing their business
- Website is preferred form, Facebook is second
- Time and lack of knowledge are biggest impediments to online marketing
- 70% have used outside help for online marketing
- 64% use Google Analytics, 76% would share data

# Survey Summaries

# Survey Summaries

## Operator Surveys

- The majority of respondents will spend approximately 50% of their marketing resources online (followed by Trade Shows-18%)
- 25% would participate in pan-Northern booking engine, 53% were not sure
- 75% would like social media coaching
- 64% would consider bundling products with other operators
- General comments on digital marketing efforts in Northern Ontario
  - More operator contact
  - More efforts directed at US
  - Report on effectiveness of marketing campaigns
  - Help lobby for high-speed internet everywhere
  - Highlight operators on portal
  - Training sessions for social media
  - More research

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# Survey Summaries

## Stakeholders Surveys

- 93% are familiar with Northern Portal, GoRide, GoFish, Canada's Great Outdoors
- 50/50 split about effectiveness of driving traffic to their sites
- General comments on how to improve portal:
  – Add fulfillment
  – Include more social media
  – Include more "grassroots" content
  – Less options
  – Arrange experiences under regions

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# Survey Summaries

## Stakeholders Surveys

- 75% engage in social media for tourism marketing
- 81% said online marketing is "very important"
- 60% do not have social media integrated into organizational policies
- Majority don't have a specific aim for social media engagement
- 70% use Analytics, 77% were willing to share data
- 50/50 split in advertising resource spending – Online vs. Print
- 80% support a pan-Northern booking engine
- 81% believe social media coaching should be available for operators
  - 65% believe this should be driven sub-regionally

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# Survey Summaries

## Stakeholder General Comments

- Need to understand the costs of a booking engine
- Any social media efforts should have a consistent look and feel, as well as training
- Operators don't have time or money to do social media marketing

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# Survey Summaries

## Content Provider Surveys

- 16 respondents
- 73% able to get operators to create content
- 66% used third party content providers
- Daily Features most successful story type
- 100% felt that the portal was successful in luring visitors to the North
- 75% share content on social networks
- Sourcing photos and finding story ideas is the biggest issue in creating content for the portal

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# Content Provider Surveys

- General comments
  - Reduce number of sections
  - Better archiving for content
  - Better ordering of aging content
  - Guidance required on content
  - Would like a full-time editor

Survey Summaries

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# NORTHERN ONTARIO REGIONAL TOURISM ORGANIZATION

## APPENDIX D: NORTHERN PORTAL RFP

# 1.0 BACKGROUND

In 2008, Industry Canada – FedNor, The Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation (OTMPC) and the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation entered into a partnership to provide support for the development and growth of the tourism industry in Northern Ontario. This resulted in the creation and management of a portal website to generate and feature content about experiences and regions in Northern Ontario – **www.NorthernOntario.travel.**

This website, known as the Northern Portal, featured five distinct types of content from 19 different content providers. The content providers were comprised of partner organizations who sourced and created content for the portal. The aim of the portal was to use SEO best practices to lure consumers to the site, with the aim of educating them about tourism offerings in Northern Ontario. Each type of content was to play a role in convincing consumers to plan a vacation to the North. Testimonials were to showcase authentic experiences that visitors to the North had, while daily features were to be used for up-to-the-minute coverage of tourism in the North. Bundles and itineraries would provide in depth information about experiences with links to tourism operators as well as regional tourism sites.

With the recent completion of the previous five-year strategy, a new strategy for tourism development and marketing (the Northern Strategy) was created by Northern Ontario's Regional Tourism Organization (RTO) in partnership with the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation's (OTMPC) Northern Office.

To meet the strategic objectives as outlined in the Northern Ontario Tourism Marketing Strategy for 2012-2017 the RTO is seeking a qualified and experienced firm to guide the evolution of the Northern Portal website. The selected firm will be responsible for developing a new design, implementing the technical and functional requirements and migrating appropriate content from the current Northern Portal.

As outlined in the strategy, the main objectives of this pan-Northern Ontario online presence will be for consumers to find travel information, to streamline the purchasing process, and to make it easier for operators to present their product to the consumer.

*For the purposes of this document, sub-regions refer to the three main regions in Northern Ontario; Northcentral, Northwest and Northeastern. Verticals refer to hunting, fishing, motorsports, and outdoor experiences. Operators refers to business owners in the tourism industry in Northern Ontario; i.e. Lodges, Hotels, Attractions, etc.*

To these aims, the evolved Northern Portal will:

- Lure targeted consumers using social media, Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and the online networks of spokespeople and journalists who participate in media relation activities.
- Educate consumers about the range of experiences in Northern Ontario's regions.
- Push this traffic to sub-regional, vertical, city, attraction and operator sites for purchase fulfillment.

To accomplish these aims, the Portal will:

- Use media relations efforts of RTO, OTMPC, and the sub-regions to generate high-quality content and engage with the broader established audiences of media professionals online and through traditional means.
- Engage consumers using social media feeds from all levels – operators, sub-regions, cities, attractions, OTMPC's vertical programs, and relevant third party contributors – to provide authentic "testimonials" of Northern experiences.
- Integrate web technologies that are relevant to consumers online trip planning habits, such as Trip Advisor, booking engines, event calendars and online trip planners.

While the Northern Portal will remain the central pan-Northern Ontario online presence, other efforts will be undertaken as part of the overall Digital Strategy and will feed into the functionality of the Portal.

Recommendations from the Northern Strategy for the evolution of the Northern Portal include an evolution of the types of content, the total inventory of content, how content is acquired and the functionality and features of the site. The requirements for implementing this are detailed in the Scope of Work.

The successful firm will have proven experience in creative design, marketing, website development, SEO, geo-tagging, integration of social media, as well as the flexibility to incorporate a wide range of open-source and proprietary online tools into comprehensive solutions.

## 2.0 SCOPE OF WORK

Building on the successes of the original Northern Portal, the objective of the new Portal is to draw travellers in with SEO, social media and grassroots push campaigns, engage them through high-quality content created by media professionals who bring their own audience, and to then drive them to complete a purchase at a fulfilment site; either a regional, operator or vertical site.

There will be major changes from the current site in how content is organized and presented, who creates the content, the expanded role that social media plays, and how the content management system integrates with social media.

The successful bidder will deliver the following:

1. Create wireframes and a creative concept for the Northern Portal and each content segment (i.e. Motorcycling, Northcentral, Fishing) that emphasizes strengths and target markets positioning.
2. Create a website based on an approved creative concept that incorporates social media, and geo-tagging.
3. Create a Content Management System (CMS) that allows for easy creation of new content, as well as moderation of social feeds and the ability to post from mobile devices.
4. Provide hosting services, technical support, user training and regular updates to the website that keep pace with digital innovation in Northern Ontario.
5. Outline and execute a plan for migration of relevant content from the current Northern Portal to the new one.

Specific requirements of each of these deliverables are outlined as follows.

## 2.1 SCOPE OF WORK

**Create wireframes and a creative concept for the Northern Portal and each content segment that emphasizes strengths and target markets positioning.**

The successful firm will create a wireframe and creative concept for displaying content that engages consumers while emphasizing regional strengths and appealing to target markets (see Best Bet Products, page 69, **Northern Strategy Executive Summary**). The Northern Portal primary function is to lure and educate consumers about travel opportunities in Northern Ontario. The design and visual elements must differentiate the North from the rest of Ontario, while showcasing the best that each region has to offer. Each content segment must have a theme that fits into the overall image of the North.

The creative design and visual elements of the Northern Portal must align with the consumer's impression of the North (see **Ipsos-Reid Qualitative Branding Assessment**) and complement **OTMPC's branding toolkit**, as well as the **Canadian Tourism Commission** where the elements from the later two favour the image of the North. Balancing elements that differentiate the North, yet building upon the common and positive notions of Ontario and Canada will be a key measure of success in implementing the "look and feel" of the Northern Portal.

The three main types of content will be:
• Feature Articles
• Aggregated Social Media Feeds and Blog Posts
• Static Pages

Content will be segmented through two main portals built on the same platform. NorthernOntario. Travel will present content from a regional perspective, and CanadasGreatOutdoors.com will present content from an experiential perspective, and include some pan-Ontario content. The platform being the same, content will be shared across both portals where relevant.

Regionally the sub-portals have tentatively been identified as:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Sub-Regions** | **Northwest** |
| | **Northcentral** |
| | **Northeastern** |
| **Cities** | **Thunder Bay** |
| | **Sault Ste. Marie** |
| | **Timmins** |
| | **Sudbury** |
| | **North Bay** |

## 2.1 SCOPE OF WORK
(continued)

Experientially the sub-portals have tentatively been identified as:

**Experiences**   **Fish**
**Hunt**
**Outdoor Adventures**
**Snowmobiling**
**Motorcycling**
**ATVing**
**Boating**

Finally, there will also be a Francophone sub-portal. This will be a true sub-portal feature content unique and specific to the Francophone market. This is not a full translation of the entire site, rather it is a section within the site, similar to the regions or the vertical programs.

A site map for content segmentation will be created by the firm in conjunction with the Digital Strategy Committee before work on the wireframes begins.

While the social media and feature articles are front and centre, and change regularly depending on season, consumer planning cycles, and current events, there will also be a number of static pages that showcase the most relevant or attractive content.

Consumers accessing content through mobile computing devices such as smartphones and tablet computers are becoming more prevalent and are typically part of the ideal target markets. The successful proponent will have a thoughtful and creative approach when developing a user friendly tablet and mobile design that takes advantage of the mediums unique properties.

All proposals should include at a minimum three design concepts:

* One for the main landing page
* One for a sub-regional landing page
* One for the tablet-optimized landing page

Access to the OTMPC and Northern Ontario image libraries will be made available by the Digital Strategy Committee. In some cases, images may need to be purchased. Approval for these wireframes and creative concepts must be received before work can commence on the website itself.

## 2.2 SCOPE OF WORK

### A. Website Design Requirements

**Create a website based on an approved creative concept that incorporates social media and geo-tagging**

**A.1 General Design and Functionality**

In keeping with the recommendations of the Northern Strategy, the new Northern Portal must be simple and easy to use, have high quality content, and must make use of the power of social media for sharing stories.

High-quality photos, videos and rich media must be present on each page, and integrated into the design. Following the approved creative concepts and wireframes for the new Northern Portal, the general design and functions of the website must incorporate the following:

* A main section to display Feature article content dominantly that incorporates a map showcasing the location of the activities depicted in the article.
* A secondary section that displays current social media and blog posts related by season, sub-region and experience to the Feature article currently being displayed.
* A list of categories that can include regions, experiences, cities and attractions.
* A list of static pages that contains high-level traveller information.
* An interactive events calendar that showcases events related to region or experience based what the user is currently looking at.

*See section 2.1 for a list of the content segments to be included.*

## 2.2 SCOPE OF WORK
(continued)

### A. Website Design Requirements

Visitors to the site must be driven to perform one of three actions – read more information on the site, follow a link to fulfill a purchase or connect with the online presence of a sub-regional or vertical for further information.

As a result, the sub-portals must link to either the sub-region or vertical it represents, it must also display relevant material on the Northern Portal so visitors can continue reading. This material should be driven by a set of required tags for all content: Location, Season and Experience. A description of this tagging system is included in the CMS section of this document. And lastly, the social media aggregator must make it simple to click on and follow the account of the region or vertical they are most interested in.

The architecture must be flexible enough that when trip planning applications and online booking engines are developed, they can easily be integrated into the site.

There will be two levels of access to the site: Administrator, and Editor.

The structure of each Feature article page must allow for sharing on Facebook and Twitter, as well as show the correct thumbnails, summary information and shortened links on these services.

Feature content must also allow for comments without asking users to login. Comments must also be rateable, so that the best and most useful comments rise to the top.

Based on approval from the Digital Strategy Committee, it may also be acceptable to evolve the current CMS, platform and database to meet the requirements outlined in this RFP.

**A.2 Mapping and Geo-tagging**

Showcasing geography through the use of maps and geo-tagging helps situate viewers and allows them to make better travel decisions. As such the Northern Portal requires an elegant solution to presenting this information. Each piece of content should be geo-tagged and have some element that relates the content to a map. For Feature articles, this could be as simple as creating a template for each article that includes a Google Map as standard in the layout. If this were the case, the ability to modify that map would be a requirement. For the social media posts, individual posts should all relate to one map, as detailed in the following section.

**A.3 Social Media Integration**

The website must include relevant social media feeds from a number of services, and must be able to display them with as much rich media as possible. The social media aggregator for this site must be more than just a widget as it is required to display a mix of content from a variety of services in an intelligent and engaging way.  This will encourage visitors to engage with the services they are comfortable with and must include at a minimum, videos from YouTube, posts from Facebook, tweets from Twitter and images from Flickr, in a collage type display. Ideally it would allow for users to draw in content from any social media service or website. It must also allow all of the functionality normally attributed to plug-ins or widgets, including the ability to like content, follow a user, or open their feed in the native platform. The content must also be linked to geography. A creative  approach to displaying  this information is encouraged.

**A.4 Search Engine Optimization**

While social media is an integral part of reaching the consumer with targeted information, SEO still plays an important role. With that in mind, all of the feature articles, as well as any static content needs to be optimized in it's coding and in the creation of the content to accept keyword tags. Within the CMS section there are additional requirements specified for how SEO is built into the structure of the site.

It is not expected that the social media feeds will factor into the SEO of the site itself, other than in the sharing of Feature articles on social media sites.

## 2.2 SCOPE OF WORK
(continued)

**A. Website Design Requirements**

**A.5 Analytics**

The site must be equipped with the appropriate Google analytics code that allows for the full suite of traffic monitoring reports to be generated, including, but not limited to:

- Total visits
- Page Views
- Bounce Rates
- Traffic Sources
- Keywords
- Referral Sources

There may be additional functionality and additional code for separate analytics applications required as the website evolution process progresses. The successful firm will be expected to implement the required additions within the annual maintenance agreement.

**A.6 Search Functionality**

The site must have an easy to use search function that displays Feature article results, social media results, and partner sites.

**A.7 Quality Assurance (QA) and Testing**

The successful firm will outline a timeframe and plan for suitable QA and testing that incorporates feedback from a range of experts, developers, users and potential visitors to the site. The site will not launch until it is free from errors in programming and content.
As a matter of course, the successful firm will be required to post the entire website in a separate, protected online environment. Once the QA testers have signed off, the Digital Strategy Committee will have final sign off on the launch of the site.

**A. 8 Events Calendar**

The site will display relevant current events linked to the section of the portal the user is currently viewing. A link will be included to view the full calendar of events by region, city, experience or attraction, with the ability to view all seasons at a glimpse. Creative approaches to displaying this information are highly valued – in some instances it will only be useful to showcase two or three of the latest events, with relevant information – description, photo, time, and cost.

## 2.2 SCOPE OF WORK

### B. Web Portal Content Development

**Web Portal Content Development**

This section is for information purposes only, and does not constitute deliverables for the successful firm.

As outlined in the current Northern Strategy, there will be an emphasis on media relation tactics by the RTO and OTMPC Northern Office. With that in mind, high-quality content created by media professionals with an established audience will lead the content structure on the portal – however, sub-regional and experiential leads may also create this content.

All feature articles will driven by an editorial calendar that will be planned out three to six months in advance based on target market travel planning cycles. This will allow for sub-regions and verticals to effectively plan their itineraries for story creation.

Feature articles must have the ability to showcase itineraries or bundles as part of their content, and there may be a requirement to integrate a trip planning or online booking applications to these articles once those technologies become available.

Content coordinators will be responsible for:

- Suggesting and securing stories for Feature articles
- Occasionally writing Feature articles
- Posting and formatting the Feature article content
- Adding SEO, meta-tags and summaries into Feature content
- Manage the tagging system for all other content
- Pushing Feature content out through social networks and other online channels appropriate to their target market
- Maintaining social network accounts for their region or vertical. At a minimum this must include:
    - Facebook
    - Twitter
    - YouTube
    - Flickr
- Moderating third party social media content for their sub-portals
- Integrating other tourism partners social media content
- Creating and maintaining a list of events, with photos and descriptions

It is expected that these coordinators will have three types of social media content to funnel into their aggregators:

- Their own – generated by themselves or by their regional or vertical office and shared on their channels
- Partners – content generated by operators or partners that does not need to be moderated and can automatically be included in the stream
- Third Party – content generated by anyone else that needs to be moderated before posting

## 2.2 SCOPE OF WORK

### C. Marketing of Content

**Marketing of Content**

The marketing of the Northern Portal will occur through organic SEO and social media push campaigns. This will be orchestrated by the coordinators based on customized assessments of online activity of the target markets. Media professionals who are engaged to develop content for the Northern Portal will also be expected to push their content through their own online channels. Sub-Regions and verticals will be expected to back-link where appropriate.

## 2.3 SCOPE OF WORK

**Create a Content Management System (CMS) that allows for the easy creation of new content, the moderation of social feeds and the ability to post from mobile devices**

Considering the role and function of the coordinators as outlined in section 2.2B, the Content Management System must allow for the following at a minimum:

*   Ability to add feature articles that incorporate maps, video, photos and text
*   Ability to identify and link sub-regional or vertical official social media feeds
*   Ability to add partners authorized social media feeds
*   Ability to add one-off posts third party feeds from any social media platform with some functionality to connect with the host accounts or platforms
*   Ability to post to their sub-regional or vertical blog from all mobile devices using either a mobile web site or proprietary application
*   Ability to easily edit static pages
*   Ability to have multiple users post to one segment
*   Ability to tag every feature post with season, sub-region and experience
*   Ability to post calendar events with photos, description and geo-tag.

The CMS should also be able to:

*   Recommend new social media feeds to follow
*   Add individual posts from moderated third party feeds
*   Automatically suggest tags for social media posts
*   Automatically suggest keyword meta-tags for feature content based on low-competition, and high volume of search
*   Easily create subdomains for external links (i.e. atving.northernontario.travel)

Every piece of content must be categorized with three kinds of required tags: Location, Season and Experience. The site will then display relevant articles and feeds based on similarity to those tags. As such, this tagging system is essential.

Design templates for Feature article content that includes suggested layout or placement for video, photos, maps and other rich media elements that optimizes it for a magazine type display on mobile and tablet devices would be a highly desirable asset.

The CMS must also allow for coordinators to post content to the blog section of the site from a range of mobile devices.

The CMS will be used by a wide range of people with different skill sets and levels. User-friendliness is a high-priority.

## 2.4 SCOPE OF WORK

**Provide hosting services, technical support, user training and regular updates to the website that keep pace with digital innovation in Northern Ontario**

The successful bidder will be responsible for domain name purchase and administration, hosting services for the site, user training and must be prepared to update the site as new technologies are developed, including, but not limited to, a trip planner and online booking engine.

Updates would be done on an annual basis, with the assumption that one major addition could be implemented per year, with the requisite design changes, subject to negotiation.

The successful firm will be responsible for hosting the web site for a minimum of one year, with continued hosting negotiated on an annual basis. The successful firm will utilize a virtual private server or a dedicated server with the ability to scale to meet bandwidth requirements, as well as have a backup protocol in place, detailed in their response.

The server that contains the website, content and all associated properties must be hosted within the Province of Ontario, and any backups of these properties must also reside in the province of Ontario.

The proposal must address processes and procedures surrounding 24/7 availability to address system outages and uptime guarantees. Technical support for bugs must be available at regularly scheduled hours throughout the week. The firm must establish reasonable criteria for turnaround times on resolutions to all of the above potential issues.

The site will maintain the current **www.NorthernOntario.Travel** domain for the Northern Portal face, and will require a second domain for Canada's Great Outdoors side, which may use the domain already in place. There may be a requirement for more than one other domain names in English and French. The Digital Strategy Committee will provide the domain names, and the successful firm will be responsible for the registration of the domains, while ownership is officially the Northern Ontario RTO's. These domains may serve as quicklinks to the Francophone, Regional or Experiential portals (i.e. **www.OntarioRides.ca** may point to the Motorcycle Touring Subportal.)

The firm will also be responsible for training content providers from both the sub-regions and the verticals, including an online training manual, preferably using screen capture videos, to show administrators and editors how to use the CMS. This must be done ahead of the launch date, to ensure content providers are capable of managing and inputting content before the site is live.

All information for successful use of the Portal, including the database policy/guidelines, content strategy, etc. should be available in online in a password protected format.

The successful firm will also hold training sessions for new staff on a regular basis.

## 2.5 SCOPE OF WORK

**Outline and execute a plan for migration of relevant content from the current Northern Portal to the new one.**

The successful firm will be responsible for migrating content from the current Northern Portal to the new one. Part of a successful proposal will include a plan for transferring this content in an efficient manner that allows for appropriate content to be re-assigned to the appropriate new content segments. Access to the content database will be made available by the current host until September 30th, 2012, when all content will have been migrated.

## 3.0 DELIVERABLES

The following deliverables are based on the criteria set out in the scope of work.

1. Design a creative concept and wireframes for a new Northern Portal
2. Create a web portal based on approved concepts and wireframes and the functionality requirements
   A. General Design and Functionality
   B. Mapping and Geo-tagging
   C. Social Media Integration
   D. Search Engine Optimization
   E. Analytics
   F. Search Functionality
   G. Quality Assurance and Testing
   H. Events Calendar
3. Create a Content Management System
4. Provide hosting, training resources for content providers and regular updates
5. Outline a plan for content migration from the old portal to the new
6. Project Management and Update Reports
   The firm will be required to:
   A. Identify a lead from their team on the project who will be the first point of contact
   B. Provide bi-weekly updates to the Digital Strategy Committee via a one-page report and teleconference call
   C. Host conference calls as well as define a platform for sharing and archiving documents related to the project
   D. Provide a final report on the development and launch of the new portal, with any recommendations for future updates as well as lessons learned.

## 4.0 SCHEDULE & TIMING

The term of this contract will be June 11th, 2012 to March 31st, 2013 with an option to renew on a yearly basis, consisting of April 1st, 2013-March 31st, 2014 for the first renewal period. All responses to this RFP must be received by May 28th, 2012. The successful bidder will be identified by June 11th, 2012. Work will commence immediately for a launch date of September 30th, 2012. The following outlines key delivery dates:

| Primary Deliverables | Due Date |
|---|---|
| RFP Published | April 23rd |
| Questions Due | April 30th |
| Response to Questions Released | May 7th |
| Mandatory Bidders Conference | May 22nd |
| Submission of Proposals | May 28th |
| Contract Awarded to Successful Firm | June 11th |
| Initial Meeting and Discussion of Requirements | June 18th |
| Delivery of Creative Concepts and Wireframes | July 4th |
| Approval of Creative Concepts and Wireframes | July 11th |
| Content Management System and Frontend | August 9th |
| QA and Testing | August 17th |
| Soft Launch | September 10th |
| Hard Launch – Go Live Date | September 30th |

## 5.0  BUDGET

Bidders must submit a detailed budget outlining a firm cost for professional fees and expenses to complete all deliverables listed for this project. ***The total budget must not exceed $150,000.00 Canadian dollars including all expenses.*** Renewal will be contingent based on the satisfaction with the proponent with respect to the deliverables of the current contract, available funding and on negotiated fees for operating and updating the website.

Proposals that exceed this budget will be rejected and will not be evaluated.

Submission of the budget must be organized into a yearly costs for professional fees and expenses in the following categories:

1.    Creative Concept and Wireframes for a new Northern Portal
2.    Creation and Coding of Web Portal
3.    Creation of a Content Management System
4.    Hosting, Domain Registration and Technical Support
5.    Creation of Training Resources
6.    Content Migration

## 6.0  PROJECT MANAGEMENT

The Digital Strategy Committee will direct the project and provide final approvals on deliverables. One person from the Committee will be selected as the lead contact and will liaise with the successful firm.

## 7.0  PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS & SELECTION CRITERIA

Responses to this Request for Proposal will be concise, accurate and presented in a professional manner that showcase the firm's ability in both design and layout. Proposals cannot exceed a length of ten pages, excluding appendices. The selection criteria is as follows:

1.    **Approach to the Website Development including all Deliverables – 40 points**
Bidders must demonstrate a clear understanding of the deliverables, and expand on them with detailed descriptions of creative and innovative solutions for the requirements of the project. This should include, but not be limited to: design, front-end functionality, mapping, social media integration, templates for feature articles, content management system for features, blogs and social media integration and moderation, training material, hosting and technical support. Proposals must also identify any risks and mitigation strategies and present three design concepts as outlined in section 2.1.

2.    **Project Management – 20 points**
Bidders should describe their approach to project management, client liaison and reporting, including a detailed work plan that includes dates for significant milestones both identified and not identified in this RFP. Bidders will also make recommendations on adjustments to project scheduling here, with support material. Bidders must provide examples of projects that have been delivered on time.

3.    **Project Team Experience and Summary of Qualifications – 20 points**
Bidders will identify
    •    Key personnel and roles, including subcontractors
    •    Indicate areas of engagement for each deliverable for every team member involved in the project
    •    Provide evidence of the bidders knowledge of the digital tourism marketing landscape
    •    Provide evidence of experience in web design with this size of project, including website addresses for review by the committee.
    •    Include resumes of key personnel, including subcontractors if applicable highlighting their qualifications for this project

4.    **Document Quality – 5 points**
As it is considered a precursor of the quality of the final product, written proposals will be assessed on the basis of editorial quality, design, layout and organization of information.

5.    **Budget and Financial Assignments – 10 points**
The successful firm will be within budget, and will have assigned the appropriate amount of resources to fit items outlined in section 5.0. The budget will reflect the project deliverables and be broken down by professional fees and expenses for each of the items, with HST as applicable.

6.    **Other – 5 points**
Preference will be given to firms that operate in Northern Ontario or have a partnership with a Northern Ontario firm or individual who will participate significantly in the implementation of the contract.

## 8.0 PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

An Adobe Acrobat PDF version of the proposal must be submitted no later than 4:00pm Eastern Standard Time on May 28th, 2012 to info@rto13.com. Confirmation of receipt will be provided. If you do not receive confirmation within 24 hours, please call.

**Northern Ontario RTO**
PO Bag 920, 76 McIntyre Road
Schumacher, ON P0N 1G0
T: 705.360.1989

Proposals received after this time will not be considered.

No payment will be made for the submission of proposals or for participation in the mandatory bidder's conference.

## 9.0 QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RFP

Any questions related to the RFP should be submitted by e-mail to the contact listed in section 8.0 prior to the mandatory bidders conference. When all questions are submitted, contact information will be removed and all anonymous questions and the relevant answers will be posted before the due date for the final submission of the RFP.

The mandatory bidders call will take place on **May 22nd, 2012.**

Bidders who do not participate in the call will be deemed ineligible.

All questions will be responded to within 48 hours during the business week. The deadline for questions is **April 30th, 2012.**

## 10.0 CLIENT & CONSULTANT AGREEMENT & CONTRACT TERM

The successful firm will enter into a contract with the Northern Ontario RTO. The term of this contract will be June 11th, 2012 to May 31st, 2013, with the option of renewing the contract on a yearly basis for a four year term. Renewal will be contingent upon satisfaction of the Proponent with respect to the current contract, available funding and on a fee to be negotiated based on operation of the website, content and other deliverables to be determined.

Northern Ontario's RTO shall have the right at any time to cancel the agreement in whole or in part, without further payment except for those services completed prior to cancellation.

## 11.0 APPENDICES

Where documents have been appropriate, they have been linked directly in the document. For all documents pertaining to the RTO's Tourism Marketing Strategy, visit **RTO13.com**.

## 12.0 APPENDICES

Sample of possible Site Map for better visualization of the scope of work on the following 3 pages.

# NORTHERN ONTARIO

**Things To Do**      **Places**      **Festival & Events**      **Plan Your Trip**      **Travel Tools**      **Book Online**

### Main Window Preview

This will feature a high-end magazine style article with prominent image, text and video

### Social Media Aggregator

| You Tube link to Motorcycle video |
|---|
| Facebook link to Motorcycle Article |
| Facebook link to Motorcycle Article |
| Twitter feed for Motorcycle |
| You Tube Videos |
| Flickr Images for Motorcycle images |

For example: if someone tags a post as motorcycle touring, it will appear in the motorcycle pages.
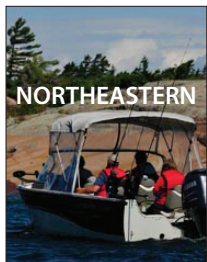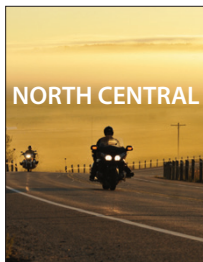
**NORTHEASTERN**      **NORTH CENTRAL**      **NORTHWEST**

Explore Our Regions: Rotating Images
Link into sub-regional page

### Top 5 Things to Do
by Online Communications Coordinators
with images and videos
Link into sub-regional page

### Top 5 Attractions
by Online Communications Coordinators
with images and videos
Link into sub-regional page

### Events Calendar

Link into sub-regional page

---

**Things To Do**

Snowmobiling
ATVing
Boating
Outdoor Adventure
Glamping
Hunting
Motorcycling
RVing
Fishing

**Places**

Sub-Regions

Attraction

Link to
Science North
Fort Williams
Shania Twain
Agawa Train
Hockey Heritage North
Bush Plane Museum
Dynamic Earth
Polar Bear Habitat
etc...

**Festival & Events**

A full listings of a Festivals & Events in all sub-regions

**Plan Your Trip**

Interactive Tool that the consumer can use to select experiences in a region that is linked to their social media networks.

**Travel Tools**

Interactive Map
Downloadable Map
Geography & Distance
Weather
Link to Ontario Travel

**Book Online**

A Booking Engine that the consumer can use to make reservations and payments

# Canada's Great Outdoor

**Things To Do**     **Places**     **Festival & Events**     **Plan Your Trip**     **Travel Tools**     **Book Online**



## Main Window Preview

This will feature a high-end magazine style article with prominent image, text and video





### Social Media Aggregator

You Tube link to Motorcycle video

Facebook link to Motorcycle Article

Facebook link to Motorcycle Article
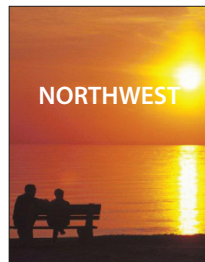
Twitter feed for Motorcycle

You Tube Videos

Flickr Images for Motorcycle images

For example: if someone tags a post as motorcycle touring, it will appear in the motorcycle pages.

**Outdoors**          **Touring**          **Fishing**          **Hunting**

### Top 5 Things to Do
by Online Communications Coordinators
with images and videos
Link into sub-regional page

### Top 5 Attractions
by Online Communications Coordinators
with images and videos
Link into sub-regional page

### Events Calendar

Link into sub-regional page

---

| **Things To Do** | **Places** | **Festival & Events** | **Plan Your Trip** | **Travel Tools** | **Book Online** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Snowmobiling<br>ATVing<br>Boating<br>Outdoor Adventure<br>Glamping<br>Hunting<br>Motorcycling<br>RVing<br>Fishing | Sub-Regions<br><br>Attraction<br><br>Link to<br>Science North<br>Fort Williams<br>Shania Twain<br>Agawa Train<br>Hockey Heritage North<br>Bush Plane Museum<br>Dynamic Earth<br>Polar Bear Habitat<br>etc... | A full listings of a<br>Festivals & Events in all<br>sub-regions | Interactive Tool that<br>the consumer can use<br>to select experiences<br>in a region that is<br>linked to their social<br>media networks. | Interactive Map<br>Downloadable Map<br>Geography & Distance<br>Weather<br>Link to Ontario Travel | A Booking Engine that<br>the consumer can use<br>to make reservations<br>and payments |

Search [          ]          Français          Connect with us...

**Things To Do**   **Places**   **Attractions**   **Festival & Events**   **Plan Your Trip**   **Travel Tools**   **Book Online**



### Photos/Videos Window

Blurb about the region

Visit northeastern.com for more information
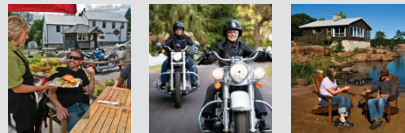
### Northeastern
### Social Media Aggregator

- You Tube link to Northeastern video
- Facebook link to Northeastern Article
- Facebook link to Northeastern Article
- Twitter feed for Northeastern
- You Tube Videos
- Flickr Images for Northeastern images

For example: if someone tags a post as Northeastern Ontario, it will appear in the Northeastern pages.

### Top 10 Things to Do
by Online Communications Coordinators
Help build a profile for Experience Planner

### Interactive Map

Snowmobiling
Hunting
Fishing
Outdoor Adventure
Motorcycle
Boating
Science North
Hockey Heritage North
Shania Twain

Expands to related content videos, photos related to these experiences or attractions

Expands to blogs and social media about each items based on content from leads with links to their site

Help build the Experience Planner for the consumer

Links to partners websites or phones

### Events Calendar
for Northeastern Region

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# NORTHERN ONTARIO REGIONAL TOURISM ORGANIZATION

## APPENDIX E: EDITORIAL CALENDAR

# Content Calendar — January

| Vertical / Regional | | January | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Vertical** | **Regional** | **Week 1** | **Week 2** | **Week 3** | **Week 4** |
| | Northeastern | | **Ice Skating on Lake Temagami** — Author: Brian Boitano; Format: Video; Live Blogging: NO; Social Media: YouTube, Flickr, Facebook | | **Sudbury Winter Nightlife** — Author: Rachel Ray; Format: Video and Text; Live Blogging: YES; Social Media: Twitter, Facebook; Partners: CTV |
| | Central Rural | | | **Errington's Fly-In Fishing Adventure** — Author: Bob Izumi; Format: Video; Live Blogging: NO; Social Media: YouTube, Facebook, Twitter | |
| | Central Urban | **The Soo's Gourmet Lane** — Author: Jamie Kennedy; Format: Text, Video and Photos; Live Blogging: YES; Social Media: YouTube, Facebook | | | |
| | Northwest Rural | | | **Wolf Hunting Adventure Tour** — Author: Sarah Palin; Format: Text and Photos; Live Blogging: YES; Social Media: Twitter, Flickr | |
| | Northwest Urban | | **Thunder Bay's Underground Music Scene** — Author: Dave Navarro; Format: Podcast, Photos and Text; Live Blogging: YES; Social Media: Facebook, Twitter, iTunes | | |
| Fishing | | **Ice Fishing on Lake Simcoe** — Author: Adrian Smith; Format: Video and Text; Live Blogging: NO; Social Media: YouTube, Facebook | | | |
| Hunting | | | **Ice Climbing in the Northwest** — Author: Jack Roberts; Format: Text and Photos; Live Blogging: NO; Social Media: Twitter, Flickr | | **Father and Son Bear Hunt** — Author: Jaden and Will Smith; Format: Text and Audio; Live Blogging: Yes; Social Media: Twitter, Facebook, iTunes, Blogs |
| Outdoor Adventures | | | | | |
| Snowmobiling | | | | **Debreuilville Snowmobiling Adventure** — Author: Luc Levesque; Format: Video and Text; Live Blogging: YES; Social Media: Blogs, YouTube | |
| Boating | | **Personal Watercraft Roundup for 2013** — Author: Jim Waters; Format: Text and Photos; Live Blogging: NO; Social Media: Blogs, Facebook | | | |
| Off-Road | | | | | |
| Motorcycle Touring | | | **Road Trip Planning** — Author: Uwe Watchendorf; Format: Text and Photos; Social Media: Facebook, Flickr, Tumblr | | **Where to Ride in The New Year** — Author: Ken Hoeverman; Format: Text and Maps; Live Blogging: NO; Social Media: Facebook |

## Legend

| | |
|---|---|
| Vertical/Regional | Touring — Motorsports |
| Regional | |
| Vertical | |
| Aboriginal Content | |
| | Adventures |
| | Outdoors |
| | Fishing and Hunting |

# NORTHERN ONTARIO REGIONAL TOURISM ORGANIZATION

## APPENDIX F: CASCADING FRAMEWORK DIAGRAMS

# Websites - Cascading Framework

**Consumer**

Interest in Tourism Product via Search Engine Optimization by topic or celebrity, or Social Media Share

**Consumer**

Decision Made on a Tourism Product

**Northern Portal**

**Regional Website**
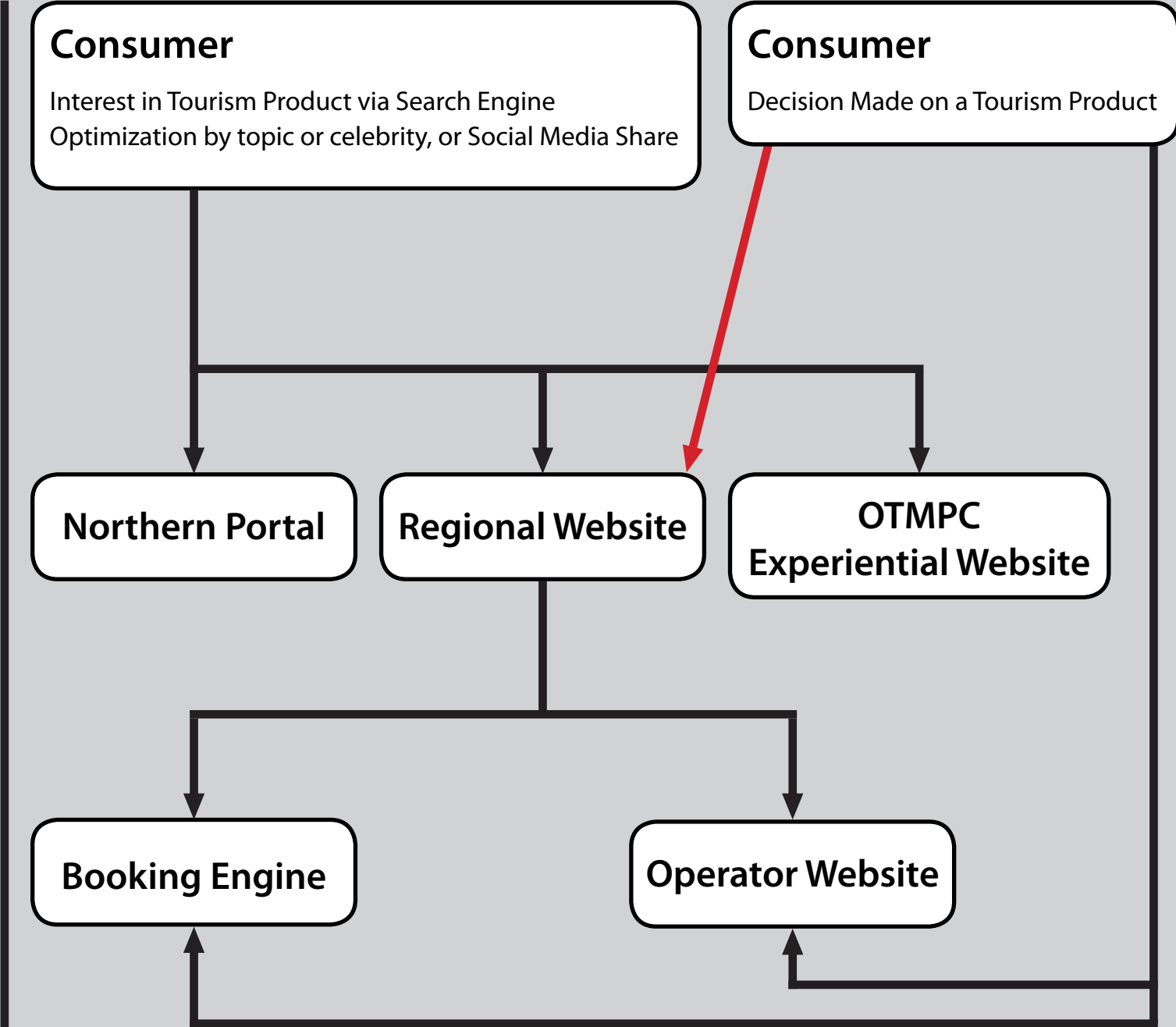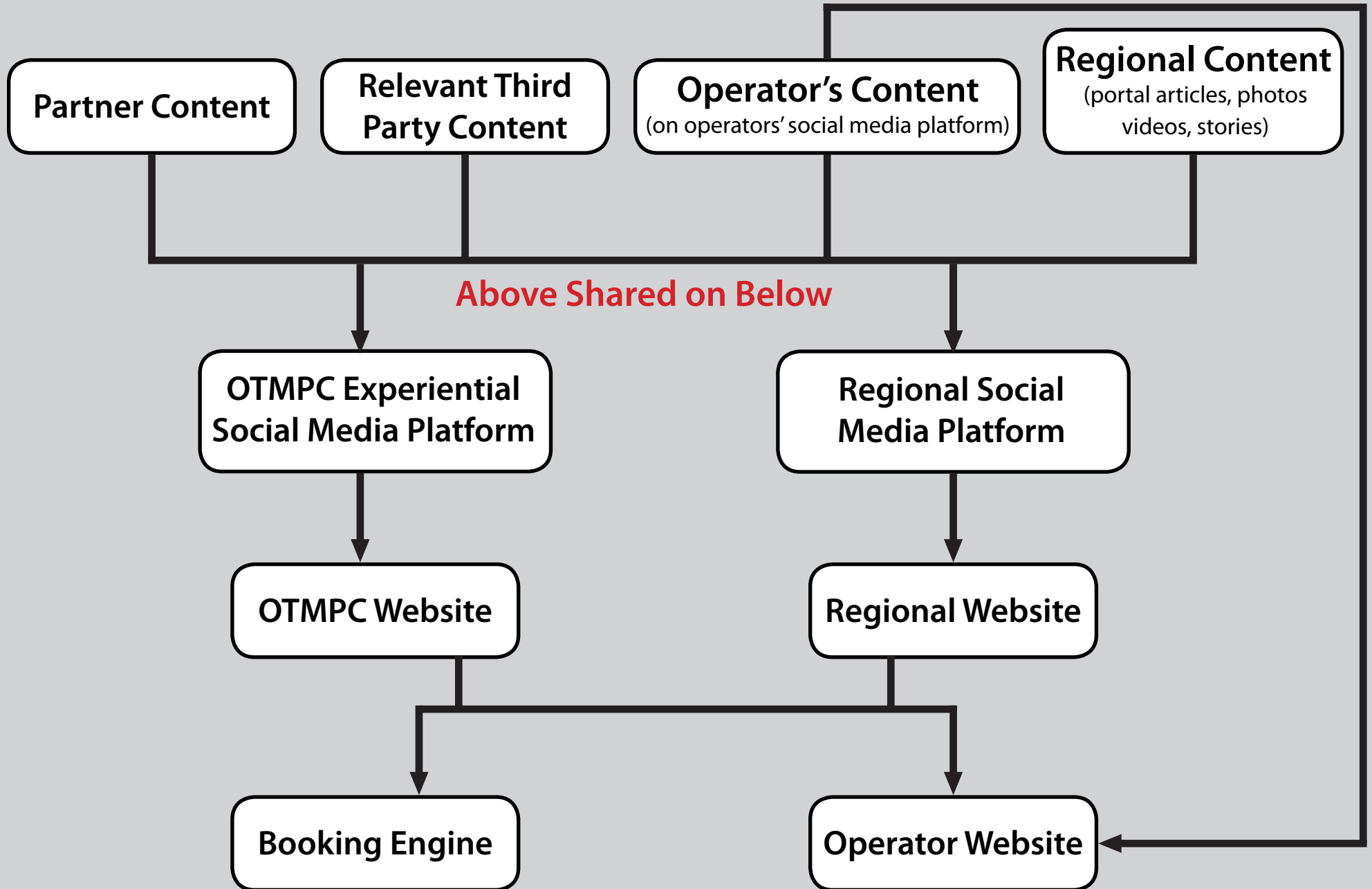
**OTMPC Experiential Website**

**Booking Engine**

**Operator Website**

# Social Media - Cascading Framework

| Partner Content | Relevant Third Party Content | Operator's Content (on operators' social media platform) | Regional Content (portal articles, photos videos, stories) |

**Above Shared on Below**

**OTMPC Experiential Social Media Platform**

**Regional Social Media Platform**

**OTMPC Website**

**Regional Website**

**Booking Engine**

**Operator Website**

# APPENDIX G: CONTENT STRATEGIST JOB DESCRIPTION

# CONTENT STRATEGIST POSITION

The Content Strategist position is as an advisory, training and mentoring role to the regional and vertical leads in the areas of social media, SEO, analytics and online marketing. While the content strategist is not responsible for content development, they will track content that is being produced by creating an editorial calendar. This calendar will have two functions;
1. to ensure that quality content is being created by planning ahead
2. to ensure that any opportunities for collaboration between regions, verticals and other industry partners are maximized

The Content Strategist will also be responsible for creating metrics and targets with the regional leads and RTO leadership and will report to the RTO staff. This function should move away from the web service provider (TWG) and into the hands of this actively engaged advisor who will assist in clarifying terms and defining metrics that are part of how we collaboratively implement our online marketing strategy.

## JOB DESCRIPTION, CANDIDATE REQUIREMENTS AND BUDGET

### Job Description

- Mentor sub-regional content coordinators on online trends, tools and SEO
- Conduct analytics and measurement review, including a monthly assessment with summary report and ad hoc reports for specific campaigns to Northern Ontario Regional Tourism Organization 13 (RTO 13) and regions 13A, 13B, and 13C
- Set targets with regional coordinators and RTO leadership
- Assist with Content Strategy on web marketing trends, recommendations for course correction, sub-regional and vertical content trends
- Maintain a six-month content calendar for feature articles for the regional and vertical leads, as well as assist, where needed, in finding story ideas and authors
- Recommend adjustments to digital marketing efforts based on consumer wants/needs, as well as RTO 13 and OTMPC priorities
- Assist in the creation of a template for a "digital debrief" – a document that indicates to feature article creators what to link to, specific tags to use, and what to mention in articles.
- Assist and train regional and vertical leads in measuring online influence of potential authors
- Assist and train regional and vertical leads in creating itinerary templates for visiting authors, as required
- Work with rural providers to ensure smaller communities are represented in social media aggregator and included in content creation processes.

### Candidate Requirements

- Three plus years of content creation, management, strategy
- Excellent writing skills
- Solid interpersonal skills and ability to work well with others
- Advanced understanding of photo and video (composition, editing, web standards)
- Expert in SEO
- Strength in custom Google Analytics reports
- Knowledge of content management systems, HTML, CSS and web standards
- Strong administrative skills (MS Word, Excel and some basic document design)
- Detailed knowledge of Online Marketing
- Knowledge of Northern Ontario tourism industry, assets and organizational structure

### Budget

- Content Strategy - Analytics, Reporting, Course Correction, Regional Marketing Leads Liaison and Training, OMTPC Experiential Liaison, and Online Services (Hootsuite Pro etc.) - $22,000
- Editorial Calendar Creation & Maintenance – $8,000
- Editorial Services - Proofreading, Editing, and feature article SEO - $10,000
- Travel Costs Related to Training - $5,000

**Total $45,000:   OTMPC Contribution - $22,500**
**RTO 13 Contribution - $22,500**

NORTHERN ONTARIO

# NORTHERN ONTARIO REGIONAL TOURISM ORGANIZATION

## APPENDIX H: PROPOSED BUDGET

## NORTHERN PORTAL BUDGET - October 1, 2012 - March 31, 2013

| Portal rebuild and yearly maintenance | $ 75,000 |
|---|---|
| **Expenses - Regional** | **Cost** |
| **Northwest Regional / Rural** | |
| Six Features | $ 18,750 |
| Content coordination, blogging, social media posts, event listings and follow along during media visits | $ 35,000 |
| **Total** | **$ 53,750** |
| **Northwest Urban** | |
| Six Features | $ 18,750 |
| Content coordination, blogging, social media posts, event listings and follow along during media visits | $ 35,000 |
| **Total** | **$ 53,750** |
| **North Central Regional / Rural** | |
| Six Features | $ 18,750 |
| Content coordination, blogging, social media posts, event listings and follow along during media visits | $ 35,000 |
| **Total** | **$ 53,750** |
| **North Central Urban** | |
| Six Features | $ 18,750 |
| Content coordination, blogging, social media posts, event listings and follow along during media visits | $ 35,000 |
| **Total** | **$ 53,750** |

| Northeastern Regional / Rural & Urban | | |
|---|---|---|
| Six Urban Features | | $ 18,750 |
| Six Rural Features | | $ 18,750 |
| Content coordination, blogging, social media posts, event listings and follow along during media visits | | $ 70,000 |
| **Total** | | **$ 107,500** |
| **Direction Ontario** | | |
| Six Features | | $ 10,000 |
| Content coordination, blogging, social media posts, event listings and follow along during media visits | | $ 20,000 |
| **Total** | | **$ 30,000** |
| **Content Development Total - Regional** | | **$ 300,000** |
| **Content strategist** | | **(RTO half) $ 22,500** |
| **Content strategist** | | **(OTMPC half) $ 22,500** |

# NORTHERN PORTAL RFP SCORE CARD

| Proposal Submission By: | Score | Max Score | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Approach to the Website Development including all Deliverables**<br><br>Bidders must demonstrate a clear understanding of the deliverables, and expand on them with detailed descriptions of creative and innovative solutions for the requirements of the project. This should include, but not be limited to: design, front-end functionality, mapping, social media integration, templates for feature articles, content management system for features, blogs and social media integration and moderation, training material, hosting and technical support. Proposals must also identify any risks and mitigation strategies and present three design concepts as outlined in section 2.1. | | 40 | |
| **Project Management**<br><br>Bidders should describe their approach to project management, client liaison and reporting, including a detailed work plan that includes dates for significant milestones both identified and not identified in this RFP. Bidders will also make recommendations on adjustments to project scheduling here, with support material. Bidders must provide examples of projects that have been delivered on time. | | 20 | |
| **Project Team Experience and Summary of Qualifications**<br><br>Bidders will identify:<br>• Key personnel and roles, including subcontractors<br>• Indicate areas of engagement for each deliverable for every team member involved in the project<br>• Provide evidence of the bidders knowledge of the digital tourism marketing landscape<br>• Provide evidence of experience in web design with this size of project, including website addresses for review by the committee<br>• Include resumes of key personnel, including subcontractors if applicable highlighting their qualifications for this project | | 20 | |
| **Document Quality**<br><br>As it is considered a precursor of the quality of the final product, written proposals will be assessed on the basis of editorial quality, design, layout and organization of information. | | 5 | |

## NORTHERN PORTAL RFP SCORE CARD

| Proposal Submission By: | Score | Max Score | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Budget and Financial Assignments**<br><br>The successful firm will be within budget, and will have assigned the appropriate amount of resources to fit items outlined in section 5.0. The budget will reflect the project deliverables and be broken down by professional fees and expenses for each of the items, with HST as applicable | | 10 | |
| **Other**<br><br>Preference will be given to firms that operate in Northern Ontario or have a partnership with a Northern Ontario firm or individual who will participate significantly in the implementation of the contract. | | 5 | |
| **TOTAL** | | 100 | |