

GREY HIGHLANDS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE ACTION PLAN

2021



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Goal 1 Objectives & Actions

Goal

Strengthen and support the Chamber’s network of businesses by understanding needs, providing innovative programs, bolstering the Chamber’s strategic, collaborative partnerships, and engaging our network as measured by membership size changes, membership satisfaction surveys, and Executive Committee oversight.

Objective 1

Continually seek innovative programs and promotions to meet Member needs, via bi-monthly meetings.

Action	Responsibility	Timing
Develop a Store Window program as a membership benefit, and a revenue stream	Office Staff; Member Engagement, Service, & Retention Committee	Q2
Consider a Shop Green Here program	Board; Member Engagement, Service, & Retention Committee	Q2
Consider hosting an online local shopping site with ties to a Municipally owned pickup locker (future possible Municipal budget item) that would produce a revenue stream based on usage, which itself would be partly driven by the Chamber’s promotional capacity	Board; Member Engagement, Service, & Retention Committee	Q3
Meet bi-monthly to discuss new “great concepts” and progress on “active concepts”	Office Staff; Board	Bi-monthly

Develop an active speaker series	Office Staff; Board; Member Engagement, Service, & Retention Committee	Q2
Enhance the Chamber's networking program by publishing lists of the monthly dates for the year.	Office Staff; Member Engagement, Service, & Retention Committee	Q2–Q4
Survey Members annually on satisfaction and suggestions	Office Staff; Member Engagement, Service, & Retention Committee	Q3
Review other Ontario Chambers' offerings	Office Staff; Member Engagement, Service, & Retention Committee	Q3
Leverage and strengthen relationships with the Municipality, the County, TIAO, OCC, and other stakeholders and counterparts to ensure their offerings are shared to our Members where beneficial	Office Staff; Executive Committee	Q2–Q4
Set regular bi-weekly calls with Municipal Economic Development staff, and quarterly calls with a larger complement, with the goal of gaining insight into the other's challenges and successes, and discussing opportunities to collaborate for the betterment of the community	Office Staff	Q2–Q4

Objective 2

Establish an active Mentorship Program.

Action	Responsibility	Timing
Ask Board, and possibly Members, to identify potential mentors; approach possible mentors	Office Staff; Board	Q3
Research best practices and assist mentors to provide the “Chamber’s idea” of a mentorship program	Office Staff	Q3
Identify audience for mentorship, appropriate message(s), and ways to reach this mentorship	Office Staff; Member Engagement, Service, & Retention Committee	Q3

Objective 3

Encourage Member involvement in committees and introduce these Members to Board positions.

Action	Responsibility	Timing
Survey Members as to interest in Chamber committees	Office Staff; Member Engagement, Service, & Retention Committee	Q2
Approach Members to “audit” committees prior to committing	Office Staff	Q2

Objective 4

Survey Members annually to identify opportunities to better connect with Members and to measure Member satisfaction.

Action	Responsibility	Timing
Draw up survey questions designed to collect desired data	Office Staff; Member Engagement, Service, & Retention Committee	Q3
Execute survey once to twice annually, and implement supportive changes quickly as identified	Office Staff; Member Engagement, Service, & Retention Committee	Q3

Objective 5

Assist the Municipality to provide access to high-speed internet throughout Grey Highlands at reasonable speeds and prices.¹

Action	Responsibility	Timing
Seek and maintain relationship with Municipal IITF committee	Office Staff; Executive Committee; Strategic Planning, Policy, & Finance Committee	Q1
Apply for a CIRA grant to employ a university student to collect data for Municipal IITF committee use in making recommendations	Office Staff; Executive Committee	Q1
Hire and supervise student, and assist in data presentation to IITF	Office Staff; Executive Committee	Q2–Q4

Objective 6

Pay homage to the community’s business and economic past, present, and future, exploring grant opportunities for any costs to keep lively and meaningful, creating interest from and pride in our business community, residents, and tourists.

Action	Responsibility	Timing
Provide annual awards including but not limited to the Kate FitzPatrick Memorial Award at Grey Highlands Secondary School, student awards to Macphail and Beavercrest elementary schools, and community awards for Citizen of the Year, Junior Citizen of the Year, Senior Citizen of the Year, and Business of the Year	Office Staff; Executive Committee	Q3
Consider a Business Hall of Fame; hold meetings with sources of content; prepare a plan and execute an online page	Office Staff; Board; local museums; historical organizations; interested community parties	Q1–Q2
Obtain financing and develop the Hall of Fame project further to include an onsite display	Office Staff; Executive Committee; Strategic Planning, Policy, & Finance Committee	Q1–Q4
Meet quarterly to discuss changes to people profiled in the Hall of Fame project	Office Staff; Strategic Planning, Policy, & Finance Committee	Q1–Q4
Hold Chamber or community “big thinking” sessions to identify businesses we want to encourage to join Grey	Office Staff; Board; Member Engagement, Service, & Retention Committee	Q4

Highlands and how we can best “recruit” them		
Advocate for the “community feel” we wish to live in by representing Chamber Members and community members when asked for positions on issues	Office Staff; Executive Committee	Q4

Objective 7

Develop engagement strategies that will help to attract, interact with, and retain identified market segments (certain industry sectors, young professionals, non-profits, etc.).

Action	Responsibility	Timing
Identify market segments and produce messages to encourage desired reaction	Office Staff; Strategic Planning, Policy, & Finance Committee; Member Engagement, Service, & Retention Committee	Q2
Identify key language to draw memory and regularly repeat when connecting with appropriate segment(s)	Office Staff	Q2

Goal 2 Objectives & Actions

Goal

Build the Chamber’s brand, voice, and visibility, becoming a well-known, valuable resource in the community as measured by resident and Member feedback, Facebook followers, event attendance, and website visits, for strong advocacy power.²

Objective 1

Develop a coordinated communications plan across all media utilizing best practices to determine our varied audiences’ preferred form of contact, frequency and timing of contact, and content.

Action	Responsibility	Timing
Identify key audiences and review social media statistics and verbal feedback to determine best practices for communications	Office Staff; Strategic Planning, Policy, & Finance Committee	Q2
Survey members regarding communications desires	Office Staff	Q2
Publish monthly calendar of Chamber events on website and Facebook and share with Municipal Economic Devt. Dept.	Office Staff	Q2

Objective 2

Seek opportunities to provide written and electronic content to various media, including our weekly column in *The Advance*, and guest columns in *Hello Country* magazine.

Action	Responsibility	Timing
Maintain relationship with <i>The Advance</i> to maintain weekly column; consider	Office Staff	Q2–Q4

requesting placement inside the paper, so Southgate receives our news		
Connect regularly <i>Hello Country</i> magazine to see if we can assist with content or otherwise	Office Staff	Q2–Q4
Maintain Chamber’s listing in the <i>Curious Guide</i>	Office Staff	Q2–Q4
Seek other opportunities to provide blog content, social media interaction, and advertising across multimedia; emphasis on relationship with Chamber Member media organizations such as South Grey News	Office Staff	Q2–Q4

Objective 3

Develop podcasting via *In Grey Highlands This Week*, increasing listeners and ultimately gaining advertisers.

Action	Responsibility	Timing
Seek financing to produce the podcasts, which interview Grey Highlanders and discuss issues facing local businesses and residents, helping to water what some call our “media desert”	Executive Committee; Strategic Planning, Policy, & Finance Committee	Q1
Produce a fulsome plan for the annual podcasting series	Staff; Executive Committee	Q2
Actively promote the channel to increase listeners, thereby improving the value proposition for advertisers	Office Staff; Member Engagement, Service, & Retention Committee	Q2–Q4

Objective 4

Create a policy for easily implementing core details of the annual Markdale Santa Parade, Remembrance Day wreaths, store grand openings, and other community-facing events.

Action	Responsibility	Timing
Identify annual events, partners, steps, timing	Office Staff; Member Engagement, Service, & Retention Committee	Q3
Work with Municipality's Assistant to the CAO to design an efficient, repeatable "grand opening" program for businesses; actively promote this program among Members	Office Staff	Q2
Add to Policies and Procedures files	Office Staff	Q2-Q4

Objective 5

Operate a highly visible, well-located Chamber Office and Visitor Information Centre on Highway 10 in Markdale, complete with tourism flag, alerting visitors and locals to the wealth of information available for both.

Action	Responsibility	Timing
Consistently follow the documented Policy and Procedure: Office Opening	Office Staff	Q1-Q4
Discuss and implement plans to utilize the window of our closed office during COVID-19 (and for any other such major closure) as a billboard for local nature-based tourism	Office Staff; Board; Tourism Committee; Advocacy & Mentorship Committee	Q2

Objective 6

Consider rebranding the Chamber to better represent its product or place.

Action	Responsibility	Timing
Review logos of other Chambers to determine trends and best practices	Office Staff	Q1
Research the ramifications of changing a Chamber logo if any, and decide if and how to proceed	Office Staff	Q2

Goal 3 Objectives & Actions

Goal

Design and lead a powerful, memorable tourism program that successfully supports and builds on the Municipality’s efforts as suggested by user feedback, Municipal feedback, and Board oversight.

Objective 1

Maintain a downtown Markdale Office as the Municipality’s sole Visitor Information Centre, including flying a tourism flag when open. Open the information centre on summer weekends per existing Memorandum of Understanding with the Municipality, in essence as fee-for-service. Continue to staff the tourism centre on long weekends with a student hired via the Canada Summer Student grant, or by Chamber volunteers.³

Action	Responsibility	Timing
Discuss implementation of “stop ahead” signage in advance of the Visitor Information Centre in all directions on Highways 10 and 12	Executive Committee; Strategic Planning, Policy, & Finance Committee; Tourism Committee	Q3
Open the Visitor Information Centre on summer weekends per existing Memorandum of Understanding with the Municipality, in essence as fee-for-service	Office Staff	Q2
Staff the tourism centre on long weekends with a student hired via the Canada Summer Student grant, or by Chamber volunteers	Office Staff	Q3

Stock the Centre with brochures and information documents from tourism sites and experiences across Ontario, with a focus on local	Office Staff	Q2
Investigate, and possibly implement, and online booking service for our local B&Bs	Office Staff; Executive Committee; Strategic Planning, Policy, & Finance Committee; Tourism Committee	Q2
Assist businesses throughout Grey Highlands to create destination experience packages, benefiting Chamber Members and attracting new memberships	Office Staff; Tourism Committee; Economic Development Committee	Q2

Objective 2

Update, reprint, repackage, and promote the 7 community walking and driving tours as a whole experience accessible in both print and online, with increasing uptake year over year in response to annual refreshing.

Action	Responsibility	Timing
Utilize relationships with tourism and historical organizations and leaders to review selected sites, update information, and direct visitors to the chosen sites using routes that benefit our businesses	Office Staff; Tourism Committee	Q2
Consider and encourage businesses and business offerings around the routes to acquire share of tourism dollar	Office Staff; Tourism Committee; Economic Development Committee	Q2–Q4

Objective 3

Work with the Municipality to develop a well-thought-out, consistent tourism signage program.^{4,5}

Action	Responsibility	Timing
Investigate signage best practices and propose to the Municipality a series of signage options	Office Staff; Tourism Committee	Q3
Obtain pricing for shortlisted options, with a focus on local	Office Staff;	Q3
Solicit and deliver public input on signage to the Municipality	Office Staff; Executive Committee	Q3

Objective 4

Pay homage to the community's business and economic past, present, and future, exploring grant opportunities for any costs to keep lively and meaningful, creating interest from and pride in our business community, residents, and tourists.

Action	Responsibility	Timing
Consider a Business Hall of Fame; hold meetings with sources of content; prepare a plan and execute an online page, with an eye towards tourism goals	Office Staff; Board; local museums; historical organizations; interested community parties; Tourism Committee	Q1-Q2

Objective 5

Create and drive a Tourism Ambassador program, teaching our business owners and select locals to act as representatives for our community.

Action	Responsibility	Timing
Identify key businesses and businesspeople in each of 7 towns;	Office Staff; Board; Tourism Committee	Q2

determine appropriate message and approach		
Regularly confirm Ambassadors feel supported and ensure adequate supply of brochures	Office Staff	Q2-Q4

Goal 4 Objectives & Actions

Goal

Develop print and social media plans that will be efficient and effective, and will utilize best practices, to share information and achieve other results.

Objective 1

Develop authentic, repeatable voice for print media as written by Office Staff.

Action	Responsibility	Timing
Review past Chamber publications and hold discussions to confirm desired voice	Office Staff	Q4
Make a list of key phrases/language to be used	Office Staff	Q4

Objective 2

Design a writing style guide for the Chamber for all Chamber writers.

Action	Responsibility	Timing
Select treatment of numbers, addresses, collective nouns, spelling, etc. and other language issues, and compile in standard style guide format	Office Staff	Q4

Objective 3

Seek and take on opportunities to write for publications in instances that will present our Chamber brand well.

Action	Responsibility	Timing
Maintain relationships with print and online publishers, connecting quarterly	Office Staff	Q1–Q4
Consider offering articles in exchange for Chamber presence	Office Staff; Strategic Planning, Policy, & Finance Committee	Q2

Objective 4

Grow the Chamber’s voice on social media by seeking a greater audience on Facebook and Instagram. While Facebook will be used to promote Members as triggered by their activity (joining the Chamber, making a post), the Chamber will prepare a strategy, policy, and processes for our Instagram presence.

Action	Responsibility	Timing
Research and prepare a social media strategy, policy, and processes for our social media presence	Office Staff; Strategic Planning, Policy, & Finance Committee; Member Engagement, Service, & Retention Committee	Q2
Plan and create Instagram presence and track metrics	Office Staff; Strategic Planning, Policy, & Finance Committee; Member Engagement, Service, & Retention Committee	Q2
Building on best practices gleaned from the Chamber’s Facebook presence thus far; seek additional followers to increase Member value proposition	Office Staff; Member Engagement, Service, & Retention Committee	Q2

Objective 5

Use the Chamber’s voice on social media to support the efforts of the Municipal Economic Development department as well as other industry counterparts as identified by the Board.⁶

Action	Responsibility	Timing
Responsively share, adapting if necessary/useful, messaging from valued partners across social media to the degree Board is satisfied	Office Staff; Board; Member Engagement, Service, & Retention Committee; ; Economic Development Committee	Q1–Q4

Goal 5 Objectives & Actions

Goal Strive for Chamber sustainability by developing multiple income streams and constantly seeking alternatives.

Objective 1 Achieve a strong degree of awareness of available grants, and ensure the Chamber considers these grant opportunities when contemplating new operations.

Action	Responsibility	Timing
Ensure the Office is signed up to receive communications from granting organizations	Office Staff	Q1–Q4
Alert Board monthly to any new funding opportunities	Office Staff; Strategic Planning, Policy, & Finance Committee	Q1–Q4

Objective 2 Identify annual fundraising efforts and new income streams that can be implemented by the Membership to produce a profit.

Action	Responsibility	Timing
Consider developing a Store Window program as a membership benefit, and a revenue stream	Office Staff; Executive Committee; Strategic Planning, Policy, & Finance Committee; Member Engagement, Service, & Retention Committee	Q2
Consider a Shop Green Here program, ideally with a Municipal partnership	Office Staff; Executive Committee; Strategic Planning, Policy, & Finance Committee; Member Engagement, Service, & Retention Committee	Q3

Consider hosting an online local shopping site with ties to a Municipally owned pickup locker (future possible Municipal budget item) that would produce a revenue stream based on usage, which itself would be partly driven by the Chamber’s promotional capacity	Office Staff; Executive Committee; Strategic Planning, Policy, & Finance Committee; Member Engagement, Service, & Retention Committee	Q3
Prepare/review the business case for “shop local” bag or swag that can be printed in small batches on demand and be sold	Office Staff; Executive Committee; Strategic Planning, Policy, & Finance Committee; Member Engagement, Service, & Retention Committee	Q2
Research the costs of producing annually a municipality-wide, printed business directory that provides incentive for Chamber membership and benefit to current Members, and proceed if the business case is favourable	Office Staff; Executive Committee; Strategic Planning, Policy, & Finance Committee; Member Engagement, Service, & Retention Committee	Q2
Meet bi-monthly to discuss new ideas for income streams and move forward ideas already in discussion	Office Staff; Executive Committee; Strategic Planning, Policy, & Finance Committee	Bi-monthly

Objective 3

Clearly identify the components of our Chamber's Benefit Plan that appeal most to our Members, and promote this improved value proposition to increase uptake of the Plan and increase the monthly payment we receive.

Action	Responsibility	Timing
Speak with Plan's Representative for input	Office Staff	
Work with Representative to prepare a presentation for Members; present	Office Staff; Strategic Planning, Policy, & Finance Committee; Member Engagement, Service, & Retention Committee	Q2
Collect and review data to determine campaign effectiveness	Office Staff	Q2

Objective 4

Identify opportunities for fee-for-service.

Action	Responsibility	Timing
Hold Board brainstorming sessions	Office Staff; Executive Committee; Board; Strategic Planning, Policy, & Finance Committee	Q3
Analyze opportunities for fee-for-service offerings	Office Staff; Strategic Planning, Policy, & Finance Committee	Q3
Determine messaging for multimedia	Office Staff	Q3
Execute if desired	Office Staff	Q3

Objective 5

Review the fee schedule such that we maximize membership revenues to approach or achieve financial sustainability. One consideration would be further discussion of expanding the Chamber's service area into Southgate and Chatsworth, municipalities that are currently without the powerful benefit of a Chamber.

Action	Responsibility	Timing
Seek 200 Members by year-end	Office Staff; Strategic Planning, Policy, & Finance Committee; Member Engagement, Service, & Retention Committee	Q1–Q4
Hold fulsome discussions regarding expanding the Chamber's service area into Chatsworth and/or Southgate and renaming the Chamber	Executive Committee; Strategic Planning, Policy, & Finance Committee; Member Engagement, Service, & Retention Committee	Q2–Q3

Relationship with the Municipality

The Grey Highlands Chamber of Commerce has in recent years worked collaboratively with the Municipality of Grey Highlands.

As part of previous Memorandums of Understanding, in exchange for \$10,000, the Chamber has provided certain service-level data, as well as maintained a downtown Markdale Office as the Municipality's sole Visitor Information Centre, complete with tourism flag. We've opened the Information Centre during regular office hours but also on summer weekends, with a student hired via the Canada Summer Student grant or by Chamber volunteers.

We offer tourists — local and visiting — verbal and print information on the many things to see and do in Grey Highlands, and have assisted several of our Members to become tourism ambassadors as well.

In essence, this is a fee-for-service relationship.

2021 Memorandum of Understanding

This year, the Chamber proposes the following:

In exchange for the sum of \$10,000, the Grey Highlands Chamber of Commerce will continue to staff the Municipality's sole Visitor Information Centre, complete with tourism flag, during regular office hours as well as summer weekends, with office staff, a dedicated, trained summer student, or Chamber volunteers. We will ensure the Centre has supplies of current brochures from local, county, and provincial sites, and will host electronic versions on our website where possible. A visitor log will be maintained for reporting purposes.

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- 1 Supporting 2018 McSweeney Economic Development Strategy, Status Update, January 21. Community Development: Create a priority setting and action-oriented plan to roll out broadband across the Municipality.
 - 2 Ibid.: Community Development: Engage residents and businesses to create a Community Vision across the Municipality.
 - 3 See “Relationship with the Municipality” on p. 23.
 - 4 Supporting 2018 McSweeney Economic Development Strategy, Status Update, January 21. Community Development: Develop a community branded signage program and link to tourism assets/attractions.
 - 5 Ibid.: Tourism: Create and implement a Tourism Signage program.
 - 6 Ibid.: Community Development: Engage residents and businesses to create a Community Vision across the Municipality.