



# GOLD COUNTRY COMMUNITIES SOCIETY

2018 – 2022 BUSINESS & STRATEGIC PLAN

## Abstract

BUILDING ON THE SUCCESS OF THE GOLD COUNTRY COMMUNITIES SOCIETY FOR A  
SUSTAINABLE FUTURE IN TOURISM

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## Introduction

The Gold Country Communities Society Business Plan serves as the embodiment of the overall vision, mission and economic goals while also serves as the road-map for the years ahead. While this plan presents goals and strategies to 2022, the Society should aim to ensure annual reviews, updates and goals are implemented. The 2018-2022 Business Plan for GCCS presents a review of the current situation, the weaknesses and opportunities within the Gold Country sub-region, industry trends, and a strategic plan moving forward.

Aligning with the five-year business plan is a feasibility study, conducted separately by consultant Margaret McCormick of Authentic Experience Consulting. The results of this study will play an integral role in the efficiencies of the organization as it will determine options and deliver recommendations for a new, and more feasible location for the Gold Country Communities Society day to day operations.

The Five-Year Business Plan has been written with consideration to the following:

- Review of 2013/2014 DBC Community Tourism Foundations Business Plan
- Review of 2014, 2015, 2016 Gold Country Community Societies Annual Reports
- Initial discussions between consultants and COO, Terri Hadwin; March 30, 2017
- Review of requested materials and responses to email communication; ongoing through to May 30, 2017
- Participation in Gold Rush Trail Symposium; April 6, 2017
- Meeting with Terri Hadwin, COO and consultants; Cache Creek, BC, April 12, 2017
  - Tour of Historic Hat Creek new welcome centre
  - Tour of Cache Creek community infrastructure including Cache Visitor Centre, GCCS offices and potential relocation sites
  - Meeting with Kat Chatten and Visitor Centre Counsellor re: current visitor servicing model
- Meeting with Gold Country Communities Society Board of Directors, COO and Cache Creek Visitor Centre Manager. Discussion re: Gold Country strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

## Executive Summary

Gold Country Communities Society is a not for profit destination marketing organization (DMO), representing the sub-regions of Bonaparte Plateau, Copper Desert Country, Lillooet, Blue Sky Country and Nicola Valley North and South with a mandate to increase economic development and tourism for the Gold Country region. The organization offers services to an area of approximately 9000 sq. miles.

Since its incorporation in 1991, the Gold Country Communities Society has provided a framework for their participating communities and stakeholders that enable national, provincial, regional and local marketing and industry development and has most recently been guided by the implementation of the Gold Country Tourism Plan (2013/14). Since the implementation of the plan, GCCS has evolved to a stage where consideration should be given to adapt, adjust and realign to meet the changing needs of their stakeholders and customers. In relation to this contrast, there is a need to balance resources to remain viable and relevant while maintaining a position a step ahead of the competition. This entails adjusting to provincial and regional transformational opportunities and emerging trends while preserving the tourism benefits for Gold Country.

In recent years, the GCCS has taken an integrated marketing approach to promoting the many attributes of this region including building on the themes of the *Wild Outdoors*, the *Winter Wonderland*, the rich and vibrant *Heritage, Arts & Culture*, and internationally recognized *Geocaching Program*. An overview of the highlight of achievements are:

- Secured management contract and fee for service agreement to operate Village of Cache Creek Visitor Centre
- Enhanced website
- Increased digital inventory including image gallery, EQ driven vignettes, and Gold Country video
- Increased activity on social media channels
- Development and delivery of promotional materials including Visitor's Guide & Welcome packages, tear away map and commencement of revised Gold Country Trail Guide
- Implementation of revised tourism signage program
- Increased stakeholder engagement; 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Tourism Symposium, FAM Tour, bi-monthly newsletter

The overall goal of Gold Country Communities Society is to create a thriving tourism attraction based economy for the sub-region. The overall strategy to achieve this goal is to continue to market and promote Gold Country's unique geographic areas; outdoor recreation and environmental features; historical, cultural and First Nations experiences and agricultural products and services. The overall objective is to increase visitation, overnight stays and economic impact to Gold Country. Priority goals are:

1. To increase visitor volumes by **7%** in the short term
2. To increase traffic volumes on average by **20%** in the long term
3. To develop three to five themes or packaged products that align with EQ targets
4. To expand First Nations partnerships and product development
5. To increase tourism industry employment
6. To increase Gold Country's annual operating budget of **2%**

A high-level summary of the five-year plan is to support and maintain the substantial progress that has been made in current programs while exploring new and innovative ways to promote Gold Country; ensuring a distinctive place on a competitive playing field. This includes:

- Research, develop and implement a new operational model for Gold Country Communities Society including identification of Society, administrative and visitor servicing needs and demands.
- Increased stakeholder and community engagement with the goal to better understand the needs, motivations and challenges of Gold Country visitors and potential visitors as well as to better align stakeholders to destination marketing strategies and destination development.
- Working collaboratively with industry partners to identify opportunities to access available DBC open pool marketing funds.
- Strengthening relations with neighboring communities, the region and the province to amplify messaging and capitalize on existing programs such as the Gold Rush Trail and Route 97.
- Supporting the development of market ready products and services.
- Growing opportunities with soft adventure including hiking, cycling and trail systems, strengthening reputation as an outdoor adventure, all season destination.

- Build on the strong indigenous history and culture of the area. By working with the existing quality of First Nations product and collaborating with other key partners, there is a unique opportunity to incorporate an authentic visitor experience.
- Developing and building on Festivals and Events.
- Increased engagement with the accommodation sector with the goal to better understand their business climate while ensuring marketing strategies are aligned with traveler trends and demands.

## Vision and Mission

The Gold Country Communities Society works in close cooperation with all relevant organizations, levels of government and those interested parties whose interests are compatible to furthering the primary purposes of the Society. The Vision Statement for the Gold Country Communities Society was developed in cooperation with the sub-region stakeholders in 2013 and remains as follows;

*Gold Country offers a positive experience for travellers with a full range of year-round activities and products. It is a destination with an increasing number of domestic and international visitors. Circle routes and new market-ready tours and services have increased awareness of the region's unique historical, cultural and natural attributes.*

*Partnerships between communities, First Nations and industry have led to more consistent and professional marketing practices, coordinated signage and infrastructure development, and helped integrate sustainability and environmental standards into the overall visitor experience. The industry has grown, generating new jobs and helping to diversify and expand the economic base*

## Mission

The Mission Statement of the Gold Country Communities Society is;

*"To positively, ethically and professionally promote the pursuit of tourism, related economic development and the necessary technology to improve the economy of member communities; encouraging and supporting a strong local and regional sustainable tourism industry."*

## Strategic Framework

Four strategic priorities have been identified to guide the five-year business and strategic plan while ensuring the Gold Country Communities Society region continues to have the ability to align marketing and organizational short term opportunities, continue to build upon existing successes while positioning the organization for long term sustainability.

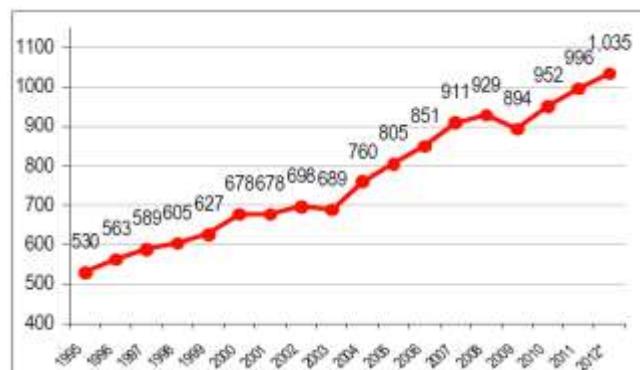
Building Capacity	Positioning and Marketing	Destination Experiences	Destination Management & Leadership
To work with regional and sub-regional partners, seeking collaborative opportunities and leveraging funding opportunities.	Strengthen the appeal of Gold Country through targeted promotional activities.	Work with TOTA, regional community partners and identified destination strengths to increase awareness and visitation to destination and increase competitiveness with other regions and provincial destinations.	Provide leadership through effective destination management including strengthening organizational, visitor servicing and stakeholder relations structures.

## Strategic Context

### Global and BC Operating Environment

Defined as one of the world's fastest growing industries, the tourism industry has recorded six consecutive years of above-average growth and it is expected to grow over the next 10 to 15 years due to the rapidly growing middle class in emerging economies, steady economic growth in developed countries as they rebound from the 2008 global economic crisis, and the increasing understanding that travel continues to be experienced by residents of prosperous countries.

According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), international tourist receipts grew by 4.4% worldwide in 2015. Approximately 52 million more people travelled in 2015 than in 2014, which also marked the 6<sup>th</sup> consecutive year of growth. The number of international travelers is projected to reach 18 billion by 2030.<sup>1</sup> With a healthy outlook for international tourism arrivals, the UNWTO's forecast is for tourism to continue to be a strong industry globally over the next decade and beyond.



<sup>1</sup>World Inbound Tourism International Arrivals (2017)

International travelers account for approximately 25% of visitor volume in the province and present a more lucrative, higher-yield for our limited accommodations, products and services, generating approximately 40% of expenditures.

Source: UNWTO World Tourism Barometer Jan 2013

Tourism in B.C. has been on the rise since 2014. During 2015 and 2016 international arrivals to BC increased 7.9% and 12.3% respectively, and was above the global growth rate during the same period.<sup>1</sup>

Within the next several years, there is expected to be continued and increasing competition for the global tourist dollars as more destinations are seeing the economic benefits of tourism and are aggressively trying to attract travellers.

*Unlike many Canadian industries, travel and tourism is experiencing optimal business conditions, particularly from the US market where the combination of economic recovery, increased passport ownership and currency exchange provides an excellent opportunity to generate interest in travel to Canada. – TIAC News, March 22, 2016*

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Tourism is one of the B.C.'s top performing industries, generating \$15.7 billion in revenue in 2015, a 5.3% increase over 2014 and a 37.5% increase from 2005. Tourism is currently outpacing forestry, agriculture and fishing as a leading industry for the province.

Despite the diverse target markets, in recent years, the province's tourism industry has become increasingly reliant on BC residents to grow consumer demand. In 2015, 58% of BC's visitors were BC residents. This accounted for 36% of revenue that was generated in the province. The secondary market for BC is from other parts of Canada, with Alberta as the leading province and accounted for an additional 24% of BC's tourism revenues in 2015. Also, to note, there is expected to be continued increasing competition for the global tourist dollars as more destinations are seeing the economic benefits of tourism and are aggressively trying to attract travellers. In particular, there has been an increase in the competitive efforts from international destination to lure Canadian's abroad.

- There is an increase in the number of potential travelers as more consumers around the world have the resources and inclination to travel. Identified for BC are baby boomers and emerging markets such as China, India, Russia and Brazil.
- Border security continues to provide challenges with facilitating quick, easy crossing through Canadian borders.
- There are continued challenges with ensuring affordable, convenient air access to and throughout BC.
- Increasing gas prices impact consumer travel decisions.

## Regional Environment

Due to its geographical location, the Gold Country Communities Society has aligned marketing initiatives primarily with the Thompson Okanagan tourism region however, product offerings as

well as natural and man-made corridors have provided opportunities for GCCS to also periodically align with the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast tourism region.

In January 2015, Destination BC provided 2012 highlights to the six regional profiles. The Thompson Okanagan represents 20% of provincial overnight visitation. British Columbia residents make up the largest share of overnight visitation (70%) and spending (52%) in the Thompson Okanagan. 84% of all overnight visitation to the region can be attributed to Alberta and British Columbia residents, and 73% of related spending. Most people travelled in the Thompson Okanagan during the peak summer months. Over one-quarter of travelers visited during the spring months from April to June, particularly Other international residents (34%) and US residents (28%). British Columbia residents were more likely to travel to the region during the winter months than other markets of origin.<sup>1</sup>

According to the most recent Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Regional Tourism Profile, overnight tourism in British Columbia generated 17.9 million person-visits and \$8.6 billion in related spending. The Cariboo Chilcotin Coast received 549,000 overnight person-visits representing 3% of provincial overnight visitation. The region generated over \$118 million in related spending representing 1% of provincial related spending.<sup>2</sup>

British Columbia residents make up the largest share of overnight visitation (80%) and spending (67%) in the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast region. Germany and Switzerland are included in the top markets for visitation and spending, one of two regions that have the German market in their "top five" list.

2. Destination BC Regional Tourism Profile; – Jan 2015

## Review 2013 – 2017

At the province's regional level, the Thompson Okanagan (TOTAL) region has been building on their ten-year regional tourism strategy - *Embracing Our Potential* and has provided a strategic framework for community tourism plans to better align their own marketing efforts.

Now 5 years into the regional strategy, the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association identifies five experience-based themes that are priorities and actions and they are core to positioning the Thompson Okanagan as a region of *iconic* and *authentic* quality experiences. They are;

- **Identifying the iconic**
  - Profiling and developing those truly outstanding experiences and activities associated with iconic landscapes will differentiate the region and set it apart from its competition.
- **Enriching local flavours**
  - Strengthening the region's growing emphasis on local flavours and building recognition for its culinary attributes.
- **Revealing the story**
  - Highlighting the local and regional stories in a way that will allow visitors to make a strong emotional connection with the destination.
- **Expanding personal horizons**
  - Identifying unique learning experiences and opportunities for self-development, recognizing that learners constitute 35% of the global travel market.
- **Building authenticity**
  - Focusing on creating a strong sense of place and opportunities for travellers to engage in immersive experiences with local communities and enjoy the sense of being where things are real and original.

The TOTA region continues to emphasize strategies on these identified themes, building on the strategic marketing and development of tourism in the region; enhancing the distinctiveness of its sub-regions and corridors.

The regional strategy's five core experience-based themes continue to provide a framework for Gold Country Communities Society. An assessment of Gold Country's attributes that are aligned with the regional strategy framework continues to guide strategic priorities for GCSC that include product and destination development and marketing positioning. (See **Appendix II**)

Locally, with the implementation of the previous Gold Country Communities Society 5-year Business Plan, there has been significant growth in the tourism industry. A diverse blend of history, culture, outdoor experiences and seasonal events have ensured a mix of all season activities for the consumer and an opportunity to extend to a fall/winter season economy. Also, to note, changes to regional and provincial marketing programs as well as a rapid evolution of the visitor economy has resulted in the organization to review the current strategic direction, analyze the aspects of change, explore opportunities for new alliances that would encourage more collective approaches to marketing and to develop newly defined goals for the organization from both a marketing and visitor servicing perspective.

Our strategy for the next five-year plan is to support and maintain the substantial progress that has been made in current programs while exploring new and innovative ways to promote Gold Country; ensuring a distinctive place on a competitive playing field. This includes:

- Research, develop and implement a new operational model for Gold Country Communities Society including identification of Society, administrative and visitor servicing needs and demands.
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- Increased engagement with the accommodation sector with the goal to better understand their business climate while ensuring marketing strategies are aligned with traveler trends and demands.

Gold Country Region Visitor Centre Statistics – 2012 to 2016

VISITOR CENTRE	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Ashcroft Info Booth	200	824	812	closed	1379
Ashcroft Museum	1403	1583	1526	1272	1322

Cache Creek Visitor Centre	7256	6817	3493	6342	7989
Clinton Museum	3154	2082	2908	3456	4000
BCVC – Merritt	262216	249289	272981	294785	347456
Lillooet Museum & Visitor Centre	32295	28243	29041	26670	31587
Logan Lake Visitor Centre	6214	7725	555	6455	4814
Lytton Visitor Centre	6640	6082	5382	5529	7440
Merritt Baillie House	14414	16209	19224	22515	24614
Walhachin Museum	405	324	280	448	
<b>Total</b>	<b>333792</b>	<b>319178</b>	<b>336202</b>	<b>367472</b>	<b>430601</b>

There continues to be consistency in the number of visitors utilizing Gold Country visitor centres and on average, an increase of approximately 3.7% annually with the exception of 2015 when the BCVC in Merritt experienced a substantial increase of 14.8% in visitation. Of note, the Ashcroft Info Booth did not open in 2015 due to moving building local and four of the 10 recording Visitor Centres experienced a decline in visitation. The Cache Creek Visitor Centre experienced an increase in visitation of 33% in 2016, partially due to extended operating hours.

**BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure**  
**Annual Day of Week Summary 2007 – 2016**  
**Location: P-28-1NS-NY; Route 97 at 57 Mile, 16 km north of Clinton**

	<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>Saturday</b>	<b>AADT</b>	<b>AAWDT</b>	<b>AAWET</b>	<b>% POS</b>
<b>2016</b>	4,019	4,032	3,526	3,551	4,081	4,689	3,382	3,897	3,797	3,700	50
<b>2015</b>	3,848	3,873	3,383	3,396	3,794	4,492	3,348	3,733	3,611	3,598	50
<b>2014</b>											
<b>2013</b>	3,749	4,045	3,432	3,390	3,867	4,544	3,287	3,759	3,683	3,518	50
<b>2012</b>	3,612	3,769	3,190	3,214	3,652	4,312	3,152	3,557	3,456	3,382	50
<b>2011</b>	3,627	3,707	3,244	3,227	3,723	4,230	3,060	3,545	3,475	3,343	50
<b>2010</b>											
<b>2009</b>											
<b>2008</b>	3,593	3,697	3,250	3,231	3,565	4,254	3,149	3,534	3,436	3,371	50
<b>2007</b>	3,909	4,108	3,511	3,574	4,129	4,867	3,524	3,946	3,830	3,717	50

The Ministry of Transportation currently monitors two routes that influence the Gold Country region on a regular basis. The following charts identifies summaries for days of the week as well as average daily total, average daily total week days, and average daily totals weekends. Since 2008, on average, there has been minimal growth in traffic on this route, both on weekends and weekdays, with the exception of 2016 in the Hope/China Bar corridor. Influencers such as road closures will impact traffic volume. Continued monitoring of these routes may provide further insight to traffic patterns as well as determine the impact of marketing initiatives from both Route 97 and the Gold Rush Trail.

**BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure**  
**Annual Day of Week Summary 2007 – 2016**  
**Location: P-27-1EW-NY; Route 1, east end of China Bar Tunnel 58 km n. of Hope**

	<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>Saturday</b>	<b>AADT</b>	<b>AAWDT</b>	<b>AAWET</b>	<b>% POS</b>
<b>2016</b>	3,020	2,996	2,618	2,637	2,985	3,501	2,521	2,897	2,809	2,771	50
<b>2015</b>	3,067	3,119	2,731	2,764	2,929	3,428	2,638	2,954	2,886	2,852	50
<b>2014</b>	3,009	3,038	2,683	2,754	2,976	3,469	2,627	2,936	2,863	2,818	50
<b>2013</b>	2,815	2,941	2,415	2,467	2,769	3,295	2,375	2,725	2,648	2,595	50
<b>2012</b>	2,798	2,930	2,560	2,618	2,812	3,333	2,503	2,793	2,730	2,651	51
<b>2011</b>	2,829	2,855	2,520	2,489	2,876	3,280	2,391	2,749	2,685	2,610	51
<b>2010</b>	2,818	2,623	2,456	2,379	2,693	3,046	2,303	2,617	2,538	2,561	50
<b>2009</b>	2,941	2,845	2,534	2,564	2,817	3,251	2,537	2,784	2,690	2,739	50
<b>2008</b>	3,181	3,224	2,808	2,793	3,097	3,714	2,791	3,087	2,981	2,986	50
<b>2007</b>	3,405	3,532	3,113	3,117	3,467	4,030	3,039	3,386	3,307	3,222	51

Data Source: Ministry of Transportation; [www.th.gov.bc.ca/trafficdta/index.html](http://www.th.gov.bc.ca/trafficdta/index.html)

## Travel Trends Relative to Gold Country

TRAVEL TREND	DESCRIPTION
<b>Emerging Markets</b>	Gold Country Communities Society will monitor the expanding consumer based intelligence in new and emerging markets as well as continue examination of Destination BC's Global Tourism Watch. Combined with monitoring awareness and travel intentions of BC's core markets, discussions with media and travel trade and supporting TOTA where applicable and advised, ensuring alignment of the right product with the right market, including collateral material and distribution channels will guide in the growth of these markets.
<b>Discovering Untouched and Unique Places</b>	This phenomenon is a common niche in establishing tourism markets. As cities like Vancouver and Victoria and regions like the lower mainland of BC draw in massive tourism numbers, visitors have begun to show desire to explore beyond the metropolitan into the perceived rural or suburban area to experience what living there would be like. This niche is also important to develop for the ever growing 'staycation' market as locals from nearby communities and regions look for experiences close to home.
<b>Immersing in Culture and Heritage</b>	Culture and Heritage form a key attraction for visitors and is an important part of GCCS tourism experiences. Studies show visitors to BC are searching for authentic experiences that allow them to understand and become familiar with the people, places and events that make a community or region different. There are unique and valuable cultural and heritage amenities in Gold Country with numerous stories to be told, providing visitors with a sense of place. Of particular appeal and opportunity to grow visitation are the Gold Rush Trail initiative and McAbee Fossil Beds Historic Site.
<b>Aging Markets</b>	It is estimated that by the year 2026, seniors will represent 25% of Canada's overall population. Similar aging trends are forecasted in most developed countries. Additionally, trips by foreign residents in the older segments of the population have been increasing more rapidly than trips taken by other age groups. This active, aging population will likely influence the type of activities and experiences that will

	draw visitors to the Gold Country region.
<b>Millennial Travelers</b>	The millennial traveler continues to be a high valued target for DMO's for many reasons with the obvious being that they are also the youngest traveler and provide the highest potential for repeat visitation. Gold Country, like many collective regions in the province, provides a diverse blend of experiences which are in high demand for this demographic. The key to attracting this demographic involves ensuring that our message and that of our stakeholders is on the platforms that millennials frequent as well as to ensure it is a unique message to stand alone on the wealth of social media and peer reviewed travel sites, (e.g. Trip Advisor, Expedia and other OTA's).
<b>Increased Use of Technology</b>	This is the single most important issue in marketing, destination positioning and delivery of the visitor experience. New technologies have dramatically changed our consumer and marketing landscape. Keeping informed and embracing with technology trends will ensure Gold Country Communities Society marketing initiatives and visitor servicing outreach is aligned to the best of our ability with the methods travelers are utilizing both for booking and for ongoing communications before, during and after a vacation.
<b>Shorter Trips, Closer to Home</b>	This trend has been noticeable for several years, as with the rising cost of fuel and lower Canadian dollar, people are taking shorter trips closer to home. Audiences in these markets need to receive different messages. GCCS tailors advertising and promotional opportunities to speak to the specific needs of these travelers and encourage them to explore the Gold Country Region or simply visit from a neighboring community or region.

## Market Performance

### Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats Analysis

Examining Gold Country's strengths and weaknesses, as well as identifying opportunities and threats provides summarized learnings that enable the ability to collectively be more strategic and efficient in the development, implementation and evaluation of marketing, destination development and visitor services programs.

Gold Country is ideally situated to continue to benefit from tourism in the years to come. The region's strategic geographical location links the Lower Mainland to the interior of BC and its strengths lay in its mild climate, outdoor adventures, ambiance of the small-town feel, unique geographic features, circle touring itineraries as well as inclusion to the Gold Rush Trail and settlement theme. Weaknesses relate to the lack of market awareness, declining highway traffic volumes, industry engagement, funding challenges, lack of retail and services, and the availability of market-ready products including tours.

The major opportunities include developing more themed, authentic experiences that link to the Gold Rush, Kettle Valley, Route 97 and First Nations product offerings, better penetration of highway visitors, and a potential focus on emerging markets. Regional partnerships also have excellent potential due to the ongoing success of the project and implementation capacity of Gold Country.

Collaboration among stakeholders, including communities and industry remains an ongoing concern as it is imperative in building and growing a strong tourism base. Competitive destinations, the substantial growth of other DMO's in the province, changing travel markets, infrastructure, labor shortage and the costs of travel are other challenges facing tourism the Gold Country region.

## Product Offerings

Gold Country is a region comprised of limited urban and a predominate rural mix of services, amenities and experiential product. The following unique aspects of the region differentiate Gold Country from competing sub-regions:

- Geographic location, connecting to key corridors; Gold Rush Trail, Highway 97, Kettle Valley and abundance of diverse circle route itineraries
- Diverse and picturesque landscapes that also support a vibrant agri-tourism industry
- Rich history and cultural tourism products; First Nations & BC History
  - Gold Rush Trail, McAbee Fossil Beds Heritage Site, Hat Creek Ranch, etc.
- Gateway to all season outdoor soft adventure experiences; fishing, hiking, biking, skiing, snowmobiling, motocross and water sports
- Diverse mix of accommodation options ranging from campgrounds, family run motels to full service resorts

## Strong Partnerships

The Gold Country Communities Society strives to follow DMO best practices that will position the organization for long-term success. Confidence in the tourism industry and the GCCS organization has ensured many long-term partnerships and investment from several key stakeholders such as the Northern Development Trust Initiative, Southern Interior Development Initiative Trust, BC Rural Dividend Program, Regional Districts, Municipalities as well as Regional and Provincial Tourism offices. Alignment and inclusion as a strategic partner in successful initiatives such as Route 97, Gold Rush Trail and Historic Hat Creek programs have also proved to be beneficial to tourism development and visitor demand.

## Efficiently Managed DMO

The organizational structure of Gold Country Communities Society has been established to maintain a balance between the required resources to move the organization forward and the infrastructure needed to ensure a sustainable future. GCCS focuses on maintaining a balance between administrative costs and marketing dollars that are put directly into the marketplace, and as such, maintains a lean but extremely competent and dedicated staff. The ability to draw on a strong volunteer base as well as the organizations seasonal and contract support allows the GCCS to manage administrative expenses while ensuring organizational goals and objectives are met.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Highway location</li><li>○ Proximity to Lower Mainland</li><li>○ Mild Climate</li><li>○ Agri-tourism</li><li>○ Gold Rush theme</li><li>○ Corridors; Gold Rush Trail, Route 97</li><li>○ Abundance of circle route itineraries</li><li>○ Outdoor assets</li><li>○ Small town ambiance/safety</li><li>○ Volunteers/Community Pride</li><li>○ Sub-region (collective) DMO</li><li>○ Ambassadors/volunteers</li><li>○ Route 97 and Gold Rush Trail initiatives</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Market awareness</li><li>○ Declining highway traffic</li><li>○ Cell coverage</li><li>○ Signage within rural jurisdictions</li><li>○ Industry engagement</li><li>○ Funding and capacity</li><li>○ Retail and services</li><li>○ Transportation (in-bound)</li><li>○ Market-ready products</li><li>○ In bound tour operators</li><li>○ Lack of understanding on the value of tourism</li><li>○ Small business red tape</li><li>○ High concentration of rural products &amp; services</li><li>○ Connection to First Nations product</li></ul>

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Themed initiatives</li> <li>○ Cluster development</li> <li>○ Authentic experiences</li> <li>○ B2B/Cross promotions</li> <li>○ Highway traffic volumes</li> <li>○ Emerging markets</li> <li>○ First Nations</li> <li>○ McAbee Fossil Beds Historic Site development</li> <li>○ Kettle Valley (Merritt to Spences Bridge) expansion</li> <li>○ Increased marketing from CCCTA re: MRDT application</li> <li>○ Regional strategy linkages (TOTAL, CCCTA, AtBC)</li> <li>○ Build on shoulder season</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Lack of cooperation</li> <li>○ Funding</li> <li>○ Competing communities and clusters</li> <li>○ Loss of regional partner (s)</li> <li>○ Industry apathy</li> <li>○ Travel markets &gt; change</li> <li>○ Infrastructure decline</li> <li>○ Value of Canadian dollar</li> <li>○ Fuel costs</li> <li>○ Aging residential demographics</li> <li>○ Lack of business succession plans</li> <li>○ Labor market</li> </ul>

### Internal Weaknesses

- *Labor Market and Lack of Business Succession Plan*  
While market development continues to be an essential priority to promote Gold Country to existing and potential visitors, there is a recognized weakness in the business environment in several communities within the sub-region. While the strength of Gold Country is in its small-town ambiance and appeal, it also serves as a concern among local business owners who may struggle with the inability to secure dedicated employees as well as plan for succession of their business. As a result, businesses are often positioned with difficult decisions that may impact the level and quality of service to visitors.
- *Small Business Education*  
Gold Country is home to a diverse mix of small businesses, and owners/operators who are often challenged with the regulations and red tape associated with operating a small business. Business development is essential to ensuring a healthy and vibrant economy, however, education and information distribution remains a challenge to many business owners. Concern is for the “new Canadians” demographic who in recent years are choosing to re-locate to the region but lack awareness on how and where to seek small business education.

### External Opportunities

- *Global Economic Factors*  
Low oil prices continue to drive the Canadian dollar to a significant low point. A weaker Canadian dollar remains positive for the tourism industry as BC and other Canadians are more likely to travel closer to home, while the US and international visitor experiences greater value as a consumer of our products and services.
- *Increased demand for Cultural Experiences*  
Trends in tourism indicate a strong and increasing demand for cultural tourism attractions. Today, more visitors are looking for experiences that immerse them in a foreign culture and allow them to experience the history, customs and traditions firsthand. BC and the region’s aboriginal cultural tourism industry has some of the most

diverse and best developed operators in the world and historical corridors serve important linkages through the Gold Country region and beyond.

## Overall Goals, Objectives and Targets

### Target Markets

The Gold Country sub-region continues to experience measurable growth in visitation from both regional and out of province markets. The primary contributor of revenue to the local tourism economy results from spending by visitors.

The following key target markets are identified as having the greatest potential to build upon Gold Country's strengths. They include the types of visitors that are priorities for Gold Country, primary and secondary target markets, geographic target markets, as well as demographic and activity-based target groups. These markets are also priority markets for the Thompson Okanagan (TOTAL) and Cariboo Chilcotin Coast (CCCTA) and therefore, provides additional opportunities to leverage resources and develop collaborative approaches to marketing whenever possible.

#### Primary Geographic Markets

Vancouver/Lower Mainland/Fraser Valley

Okanagan/Similkameen Valleys (near-in markets within a 2-3 hr. drive)

Cariboo Chilcotin Coast

Other BC

Alberta

Washington State

- Residents of the Okanagan and Similkameen Valleys, including couples and families.
- Residents of the Cariboo, Chilcotin and Coast region, including couples and families.
- Other BC markets, including residents of Metro Vancouver and the Fraser Valley seeking weekend getaways and regional markets that include couples and families.
- Alberta residents seeking activity-based experiences that include outdoor, soft adventure, history and culture.
- Visitors to the Okanagan and Cariboo from the Washington State and Cascadia region, predominately couples that are traveling for leisure purposes.

International visitors that frequent the region include: United Kingdom, Germany, Netherlands and Australia.

#### Key Visitor types for Gold Country include;

- Leisure travelers (FIT) and small groups
- Couples & Families
- Weekend Warriors
- Outdoor Adventure Enthusiasts
- Touring (Circle tours, routes, corridors)
- History and Culture Seekers
- Regional destination products (country music, western culture, ranching)
- Visiting Friends & Family

### **IMPLICATIONS TO TOURISM IN BRITISH COLUMBIA:**

From an age demographic perspective, Boomers are a large and important market with money to spend, and their interest in nature aligns well with BC's brand promise. Millennials are an important and growing group with different tastes and expectations, an appetite for travel, but possess only limited disposable income at this life stage. Given the size of each group, targeting each generation may not be feasible. Segmenting by passion-based interests or by psychographics such as Explorer Quotient is more effective than by demographics alone. \*

\* Destination BC Environmental Scan – August 2016

### **Explorer Quotient**

Destination Canada's Explorer Quotient research framework has been adopted by Destination BC and the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association and provides Gold Country Communities Society with a foundation for establishing target EQ types based on the region's attributes and other factors, such as alignment with TOTA and Destination BC. EQ research is specific to each of Destination Canada's target geographic markets. It adds a psychographic element to targeting, but also folds in demographics and experience appeal by EQ Type. With Gold Country's demographic and geographic targets in mind, the following EQ Types were chosen as primary Gold Country targets for the Canadian market:

#### *Cultural Explorer*

- These travel types are constant travelers and love to be immersed in local culture, people and settings. This may also include cultural history buffs who travel to further research their hobbies and interests.

#### *Authentic Explorer*

- This travel type is something of an improve artist, and likes to explore. They are seeking authentic, tangible engagement with destinations and are high on historical and cultural travel.

The secondary EQ Type target for the Canadian market is:

#### *Free Spirit*

- This is a highly social, open-minded, experimental and adventurous traveler who loves high-end hedonistic experiences. They make up 12% of the Canadian market; 45% Men/55% Female

### **Strategies and Key Actions**

The concept for executing the following 25 strategies is to remain flexible and have the ability to adapt to the anticipated and unexpected changes that occur in our industry while ensuring to remain focused on our goals and four pillars of action. Each of the strategies that support the framework will be reviewed annually. This will guide the ability to efficiently allocate resources while ensuring the relevancy of the 5-year planning process and the ability to readily transition and evolve with opportunities, industry trends and visitor expectations.



## A. Building Capacity |

Build and strengthen capacity for the Gold Country Communities Society by ensuring long term funding including ongoing opportunities to increase GCCS budget while liaising with region (TOTAL), partner communities and sub-regional stakeholders as well as seeking collaborative opportunities. Increasing the budget will enable the ability to leverage more partnership funding, further develop existing programs and increase value-added marketing.

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1. Identify and secure existing opportunities for funding including monitoring ongoing partner funding rates.
2. Explore new options for funding, enabling an increase in GCCS annual operating budget.
3. Seek and secure ongoing grant writing capacity, identifying areas of additional funding to benefit GCCS.
4. Seek new partner opportunities and leverage investments for cooperative marketing initiatives.
5. Work with applicable regions and industry partners including DBC to ensure leverage of the annual marketing budget that will increase cooperative marketing opportunities through DBC's Open Pool Funds Program.

## B. Positioning and Marketing |

Align the destination market position to current target markets that will strengthen the appeal of Gold Country. This includes a collaborative and partnered approach to marketing and to ensure Gold Country (GCCS) is in alignment with the regional (TOTAL) and provincial (DBC) guidelines to ensure continued access to marketing funds and applicable programs. The system to generate visitor interest must include key messaging and appropriate promotional tools to distribute throughout the purchase cycle, with adequate means to get the message out; matching existing product and experiences with market analysis, and building online reputation that is aligned with market demands.

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6. Develop strategic traditional and non-traditional campaigns including story-telling approach to promote itineraries and experiences focusing on the regions cultural diversity; historic sites, First Nations experiences, Gold Rush Trail, transportation corridors, cultural and natural landscapes.
7. Work in collaboration with strategic partners along the primary travel corridors in the TOTAL and CCCTA region.
8. Ensure up to date inventory and updated content on [hellobc.com](http://hellobc.com) and [exploregoldcountry.com](http://exploregoldcountry.com), highlighting market ready products, services and experiences.
9. Ensure dedicated attention to visitor services in support of destination promotion and destination development.
10. Grow the level of engagement of community ambassadors.
11. Strengthen social media channels by building reach and increasing return on content creation.

## C. Destination Experiences |

Enhancing the destination appeal attracts new visitors, encourages repeat visitation, generates word of mouth referrals and supports advocacy for the Gold Country region. GCCS will aim to

work with provincial (DBC), regional (TOTA, CCCTA, AtBC), sub-region partners, products and services to build and strengthen existing product experiences while seeking opportunities to create new experiences that will support the Gold Country brand and create demand while differentiating the destination from its competition.

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12. Support and encourage industry partners in development of new products and experiences that support the Gold Country brand, target markets and visitor demand.
13. Identify shoulder season opportunities and expand marketing strategies that extend visitation.
14. Promote the positive image of Gold Country through ongoing engagement and continue to build a compelling brand in core markets.
15. Evaluate product clusters and identify emerging clusters and strengthen their contribution through targeted program activities.
16. Facilitate collaboration with Gold Country event organizers to ensure focus on supporting new events while increasing focus on current festivals and events.
17. Work with TOTA and aboriginal tourism products and services in the Gold Country region to further develop experiential products for marketing.
18. Support the education and promotion of the valuable heritage, cultural and natural assets of the Gold Country region.

#### D. Destination Management and Leadership |

The GCCS Society has been operating as a sub-regional marketing organization since 1991. By ensuring visionary leadership, destination management best practices and enhanced organizational systems, the GCCS will be better positioned in its ability to deliver effective and efficient services and programs on behalf of its stakeholders while meeting industry expectations and visitor demands.

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19. Monitor external and internal influencers and institute changes to organizational structure to reflect changes in how tourism develops and grows in the Gold Country region.
20. Develop and implement an organizational direction in an environment that is inclusive and responsive to both its stakeholders and visitors.
21. Continue to evolve the visitor servicing model for Gold Country.
22. Deliver communication methods and community relations activities and serve as a resource and connection of industry related information to its stakeholders, businesses and residents of Gold Country.
23. Collaborate and advocate with national, provincial, regional and community level tourism organizations.
24. Facilitate and encourage ongoing industry training and development.
25. Ensure ongoing tourism planning for Gold Country region.

### STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

This section highlights the 25 strategies identified that support the goals and objectives of Gold Country Communities Society. The actions associated with the strategies are designed to be fluid and adjustable to provide alignment with industry opportunities and challenges throughout the various stages of this plan. In most strategic activities, the role of Gold Country Communities Society will be to lead, often working in collaboration with tourism businesses and other partners and to support stakeholders in development and growth opportunities wherever applicable.

<b>Strategic Priority: Building Capacity</b>	
<b>Tactic:</b>	To work with regional and sub-regional partners, seeking collaborative opportunities and leveraging funding opportunities
<b>Strategy &amp; Implementation Plan:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify and secure existing opportunities for funding including monitoring ongoing partner funding rates.</li> <li>2. Explore new options for funding, enabling an increase in GCCS annual operating budget.</li> <li>3. Seek and secure ongoing grant writing capacity, identifying areas of additional funding to benefit GCCS.</li> <li>4. Seek new partner opportunities and leverage investments for cooperative marketing initiatives.</li> <li>5. Work with applicable regions and industry partners including DBC to ensure leverage of the annual marketing budget that will increase cooperative marketing opportunities through DBC's Open Pools Funds Program.</li> </ol>
<b>Quantifiable Objectives:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased annual revenues compared to previous annual revenues</li> <li>• Increase in membership</li> <li>• Increase in membership fees</li> <li>• Increase in stakeholder participation with Co-op Marketing programs</li> <li>• Increase in investment from stakeholders in cooperative programs</li> </ul>
<b>Rationale:</b>	Funding for the Gold Country Communities Society is essential to the sustainability and growth of the organization. Partner funding options are limited and there continues to be the risk that some partners may opt to discontinue their relationship. Additionally, funding existing marketing initiatives including leveraging funds provides the opportunity to enhance the quality of tourism experiences, products and services as well as provides opportunities to grow projects while extending marketing reach.
<b>Action Steps:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore additional funding opportunities with local and regional government agencies that receive benefit from the GCCS.</li> <li>• Research current membership fee structure identify opportunities to grow membership base and fees</li> <li>• Source additional funding programs and grant opportunities applicable to destination development; i.e. Canada 150</li> <li>• Long-term, explore MRDT opportunity to significantly increase resources to GCCS.</li> <li>• Research, identify and implement opportunities to increase fees and pay to play programs.</li> </ul>
<b>Potential Partnerships:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TOTA, CCCTA</li> <li>• Regional Districts</li> <li>• NDIT</li> <li>• SIDIT</li> <li>• TNRD</li> <li>• Community stakeholders</li> </ul>
<b>Resources:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destination BC</li> <li>• Regional Districts</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal and Provincial funding programs</li> </ul>
Responsibilities:	COO and GCCS staff; Board of Directors
Timeframe:	Q1 through to Q4 annually
Budget:	
Evaluation Mechanism:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding levels for annual operating budget</li> <li>• Number of successful grant applications</li> <li>• Increased funding capacity for existing marketing activities</li> <li>• Number of projects funded</li> <li>• Increased revenues from stakeholder buy-in opportunities</li> </ul>
Performance Measures:	
<b>Output Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To fund a maximum of 3 projects annually from the Open Pools Fund program</li> <li>• Number of GCCS members and stakeholders</li> <li>• To annually review membership fee structure of GCCS</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To increase membership fees of GCCS Society by 2% annually</li> <li>• To grow GCCS Society membership by 15% overall</li> <li>• To grow GCCS Society stakeholder base by 10% overall</li> <li>• To increase overall operating budget of GCCS by 2% annually</li> </ul>

<b>Strategic Priority: Positioning and Marketing</b>	
<b>Tactic:</b> To strengthen the appeal of Gold Country through targeted promotional activities	
<b>Strategy &amp; Implementation Plan:</b>	
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Develop strategic traditional and non-traditional campaigns including story-telling approach to promote itineraries and experiences focusing on the regions cultural diversity; historic sites, First Nations experiences, Gold Rush Trail, Route 97, Kettle Valley, transportation corridors, cultural and natural landscapes.</li> <li>7. Work in collaboration with strategic partners along the primary travel corridors in the TOTA and CCCTA regions.</li> <li>8. Ensure up to date inventory and updated content on <a href="http://hellobc.com">hellobc.com</a> and <a href="http://exploregoldcountry.com">exploregoldcountry.com</a>, highlighting market ready products, services and experiences.</li> <li>9. Ensure dedicated attention to visitor services in support of destination promotion and destination development.</li> <li>10. Grow the level of engagement of community ambassadors.</li> <li>11. Strengthen social media channels by building reach and increasing return on content creation.</li> </ol>
<b>Quantifiable Objectives:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed new content for the Explore Gold Country website featuring region's unique qualities</li> <li>• New opportunities for stakeholder engagement in campaigns and initiatives</li> <li>• Increase number of visitor inquiries and number of visitors served</li> <li>• Increase the number of visitors to website <a href="http://ExploreGoldCountry.com">ExploreGoldCountry.com</a></li> <li>• Increased traffic and length of time on Gold Country website</li> <li>• Increased engagement with visitors at key gathering points, events and high demand information distribution</li> </ul>

	<p>points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased collateral distribution</li> <li>• Increased engagement on social channels</li> <li>• Increase the number of unpaid media generated stories</li> </ul>
<b>Rationale:</b>	
	<p>Effective aligning of the destination market position to current target markets will strengthen the appeal of Gold Country. This includes continuing with a collaborative and partnered approach to marketing and to ensure Gold Country (GCCS) is in alignment with the regional (TOTAL) and provincial (DBC) guidelines to ensure continued access to marketing funds and applicable programs. The system to generate visitor interest must include key messaging and appropriate promotional tools to distribute throughout the purchase cycle, with adequate means to get the message out; matching existing product and experiences with market analysis, and building online reputation that is aligned with market demands.</p>
Action Steps:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure ongoing distribution of Gold Country promotional materials</li> <li>• Seek additional co-op advertising opportunities with programs in neighbouring regions</li> <li>• Continue communication with stakeholders through newsletters, events and distribution through social channels</li> <li>• Develop and implement a content management strategy for Gold Country</li> <li>• Develop and implement a social visitor servicing strategy for Gold Country</li> <li>• Promote GCCS activities to stakeholders on regular basis</li> </ul>
Potential Partnerships:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destination BC</li> <li>• TOTAL and CCCTA</li> <li>• Information distribution points and community level Visitor Centres</li> <li>• GCCS stakeholders</li> </ul>
Resources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gold Country Visitor's Guide, Trail Guide, map pads</li> <li>• Social channels</li> <li>• Stakeholders</li> <li>• Visitor Information Centres and visitor servicing programs</li> <li>• Community volunteers/ambassadors</li> </ul>
Responsibilities:	GCCS staff, COO; GCCS Board of Directors
Timeframe:	Q1 through to Q4 annually
Budget:	
Evaluation Mechanism:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reported number of visitors at community visitor centres</li> <li>• Information requests and brochure distribution</li> <li>• Web analytics, specifically time spent on websites</li> <li>• Increased revenues to local businesses</li> <li>• Increased occupancy during summer and fall seasons</li> <li>• Variety of subject matter and media channels (traditional/non-traditional)</li> <li>• Increase in information/image/video requests from media</li> <li>• Earned media impact</li> </ul>

<p><b>Performance Measures:</b></p> <p><b>Output Measures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in overnight stays</li> <li>• Increased visitation to <i>ExploreGoldCountry.com</i> and social channels</li> <li>• Visitation and historical and cultural sites and businesses</li> <li>• Visitation at community visitor information centres</li> <li>• Revenues generated at businesses</li> <li>• Number of visitor inquiries</li> </ul> <p><b>Outcome Measures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10% annual increase to website over previous year</li> <li>• 15% increase in number of followers and level of engagement on Gold Country social media channels compared to previous year</li> <li>• 10% increase in number of visitors served by community visitor centres</li> <li>• 5% increase in traffic volumes on key routes</li> <li>• Increase in media stories generated</li> <li>• Increase in overall hotel occupancy rate compared to previous year</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Strategic Priority: Destination Experiences</b></p> <p><b>Tactic:</b></p> <p>To work with TOTA, regional and community partners and identified destination strengths to increase awareness and visitation to destination and increase competitiveness with other regions and provincial destinations.</p> <p><b>Strategy &amp; Implementation Plan:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12. Support and encourage industry partners in development of new products and experiences that support the Gold Country brand, target markets and visitor demand.</li> <li>13. Identify shoulder season opportunities and expand marketing strategies that include shoulder season visitation.</li> <li>14. Promote the positive image of Gold Country through ongoing engagement and continue to build a compelling brand in core markets.</li> <li>15. Evaluate product clusters and identify emerging clusters and strengthen their contributions through targeted program activities.</li> <li>16. Facilitate collaboration with Gold Country event organizers to ensure focus on supporting new events while increasing focus on current festivals and events.</li> <li>17. Work with TOTA and aboriginal tourism products and services in the Gold Country region to further develop experiential products for marketing.</li> <li>18. Support the education and promotion of the valuable heritage, cultural and natural assets of the Gold Country region.</li> </ol> <p><b>Quantifiable Objectives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in number of visitor inquiries</li> <li>• Increase in overnight stays</li> <li>• Increase the number of visitors to <i>ExploreGoldCountry.com</i></li> <li>• Enhance website content on products, activities &amp; events</li> <li>• Number of high quality on-brand images</li> <li>• Number of EQ driven vignettes and b-roll</li> <li>• Interest and participation from stakeholder buy-in opportunities</li> <li>• Annual number of participants in GeoTour Program</li> </ul> <p><b>Rationale:</b></p> <p>Enhancing the destination appeal attracts new visitors, encourages repeat visitation, generates word of mouth referrals and supports advocacy for the Gold Country region. GCCS will aim to work with provincial (DBC), regional (TOTA, CCCTA, AtBC), sub-region partners, products and services to build and strengthen existing product experiences while</p>
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<p>seeking opportunities to create new experiences that will support the Gold Country brand and create demand while differentiating the destination from its competition.</p>	
<b>Action Steps:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research and identify new areas of product development that may benefit the Gold Country region, i.e. cycling, motorcycle itineraries, farm-to-table events.</li> <li>• Build inventory of Gold Country events that are aligned with target markets</li> <li>• Encourage product development and packaging with market ready businesses, focusing on EQ markets</li> <li>• Grow and expand GeoTour Program</li> <li>• Identify businesses that currently deliver Aboriginal experiences as well as those with potential</li> <li>• Facilitate partnerships to enhance local activities and events; i.e. agri-tourism</li> <li>• Engage and educate stakeholders on the value of tourism</li> <li>• Identify gaps in on-brand images and video based on priority products of Gold Country</li> <li>• Work with Thompson Nicola Film Commission on EQ driven vignettes and b-roll featuring Gold Country activities</li> <li>• Enhance social media strategies to better engage with visitors online</li> </ul>
<b>Potential Partnerships:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destination BC</li> <li>• TOTA, CCCTA, Aboriginal Tourism of BC (AtBC)</li> <li>• Stakeholders</li> </ul>
<b>Resources:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-traditional; online, video</li> <li>• Visitor Services</li> <li>• Media/Influencers</li> </ul>
<b>Responsibilities:</b>	Community Visitor Centres, GCCS staff, COO; Board of Directors
<b>Timeframe:</b>	Q1 through to Q4 annually
<b>Budget:</b>	
<b>Evaluation Mechanism:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Website visits – tracked via unique landing pages or tracking codes</li> <li>• Social media and video engagement</li> <li>• Increased occupancy</li> <li>• Increase in itineraries that highlight overnight stays</li> <li>• Increase in BC itineraries that include the Gold Country region and/or extended stays in the region</li> <li>• Increase in number of packages</li> </ul>
<p><b>Performance Measures:</b></p>	
<p><b>Output Measures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A minimum of 5 packages and 5 new itineraries created overall</li> <li>• 37,500 copies of the Gold Country Visitor's Guide and 10,000 copies of the Gold Country Trail Guide</li> <li>• Promote the use of #exploregoldcountry and #ExploreBC on all digital mediums</li> <li>• Meet and consult with a minimum of 10 new businesses offering experiences aligned with EQ market</li> <li>• Facilitate workshops on experience development</li> <li>• Number of hosted FAM tours to Gold Country</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Outcome Measures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support a minimum of 10 new businesses offering new or enhanced experiences overall</li> </ul>	

- Support a minimum of 5 new or enhanced Aboriginal experiences overall
- Increase in interest in advertising in 2018/2019 Visitor guide
- Increase in the number of Gold Country stories generated
- 10% increase in number of FAM's to Gold Country
- Increase in revenues from stakeholder buy-in

### Strategic Priority: Destination Management and Leadership

#### Tactic:

To provide leadership through effective destination management including strengthening organizational, visitor servicing and stakeholder relations structures.

#### Strategy & Implementation Plan:

19. Monitor external and internal influencers and institute changes to organizational structure to reflect changes in how tourism develops and grows in the Gold Country region.
20. Develop and implement an organizational direction in an environment that is inclusive and responsive to both its stakeholders and visitors.
21. Continue to evolve the visitor servicing model for Gold Country.
22. Deliver communication methods and community relations activities and serve as a resource and connection of industry related information to its stakeholders, businesses and residents of Gold Country.
23. Collaborate and advocate with national, provincial, regional and community level tourism organizations.
24. Facilitate and encourage ongoing industry training and development.
25. Ensure ongoing tourism planning for Gold Country.

#### Quantifiable Objectives:

- Number of stakeholders participating in educational programs
- Number of survey/stakeholder engagement participants
- Number of participants at Gold Country Tourism Symposium
- Number of meetings scheduled with stakeholders
- Increase in number of Gold Country stakeholders
- Increase in number of employees in tourism related businesses
- Number of updated Gold Country highway signage locations

#### Rationale:

The GCCS Society has been operating as a sub-regional marketing organization since 1991. By ensuring visionary leadership, destination management best practices and enhanced organizational systems, the GCCS will be better positioned in its ability to deliver effective and efficient services and programs on behalf of its stakeholders while meeting industry expectations and visitor demands.

#### Action Steps:

- Research and implement revised operational plan including office relocation and/or renovations
- Continue to partner and collaborate with TOTA, Aboriginal Tourism BC and Destination BC to:
  - Host workshops focused on providing an exceptional visitor experience, i.e. WorldHost
  - Improve understanding of historical, cultural and aboriginal tourism experiences and value of development
- Promote free webinars to stakeholders, offered by TOTA and DBC, i.e. Online Reputation Management
- Leverage and promote existing TOTA and DBC training

	<p>tools, i.e. Tourism Business Essentials guides to industry stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue communication with stakeholders through newsletters, events and distribution through social channels</li> <li>• Promote on activities and accomplishments to stakeholders on regular basis</li> <li>• Participate in Destination BC <i>Remarkable Experiences</i> program to ensure understanding of tools required to assist businesses to improve or enhance the visitor experience</li> <li>• Update inventory of accommodation properties and number of rooms in Gold Country</li> <li>• Develop and implement additional processes to measure industry performance; i.e. overnight visitation, length of stay, growth in employment in tourism in region, increase in awareness, etc.</li> <li>• Conduct tourism stakeholder survey and/or deliver stakeholder engagement sessions to evaluate Gold Country Communities Society performance on annual basis</li> <li>• Develop system to evaluate quality of visitor experiences in Gold Country</li> <li>• Continue delivery of Gold Country Tourism Symposium</li> <li>• Invest funding for highway wayfinding program (signage) at key locations</li> </ul>
Potential Partnerships:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destination BC</li> <li>• TOTA, CCCTA, AtBC</li> <li>• Stakeholders</li> <li>• Community Visitor Centres</li> </ul>
Resources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DBC Research</li> <li>• DBC destination development workshops</li> <li>• TOTA destination development team</li> </ul>
Responsibilities:	COO, support staff with direction from GCCS Board of Directors
Timeframe:	Q1 through to Q4 annually
Budget:	
Evaluation Mechanism:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sign up for stakeholder workshops and programs</li> <li>• Greater engagement with communities and communication with GCCS</li> <li>• Increase in available research for distribution to stakeholders</li> <li>• Increase in employment in tourism related businesses</li> <li>• Greater regional and provincial engagement with GCCS</li> <li>• Number of successful grant applications</li> <li>• Support for signage strategy</li> <li>• Increased funding capacity for existing marketing activities</li> <li>• Number of projects funded</li> <li>• Number of new partnerships formed</li> </ul>
Performance Measures:	
<b>Output Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of WorldHost and FirstHost program</li> <li>• Increase education on value of tourism and tourism development opportunities to stakeholders</li> </ul>

- Promote the use of #ExploreGoldCountry on all digital mediums

#### Outcome Measures

- An increase in revenues from stakeholder buy-in
- An increase in number of participants in stakeholder workshops, seminars, webinars, surveys
- Increase in requests from stakeholders for collateral materials
- Train an average of 6 front line employees and/or students per quarter
- Increase in employment rate in tourism related businesses

## Funding Investment

Strategies	Allocation of Funds short term	Allocation of Funds long term
<b>Building Capacity</b>	15%	15%
<b>Positioning and Marketing</b>	40%	45%
<b>Destination Experiences</b>	20%	20%
<b>Destination Management &amp; Leadership</b>	25%	20%

## MANAGEMENT, GOVERNANCE and ADMINISTRATION

### Governance Structure

Gold Country Communities Society is currently comprised of 12 members: Ashcroft, Cache Creek, Clinton, Lillooet, Logan Lake, Lytton, Merritt, and TNRD Area E (70 Mile, Green Lake, Loon Lake), Area I (Hat Creek, Spences Bridge, Walhachin), Area J (Savona, Tunkwa Lake, Deadman Valley), Area M (Upper & Lower Nicola, Quilchena, Douglas Lake) and Area N (Brookmere, Aspen Grove).

The Gold Country Communities Society is governed by a twenty-two (22) member Board of Directors and the COO reports to a Board that is both appointed and elected. This policy board consists of representation from each Local Government area, one elected official (Mayor, Councillor or TNRD Director) and one representative of the business or economic development community. In 2017, the GCCS appointed a Director who represents the indigenous community.

As a not-for-profit Society, the Gold Country Communities Society is strictly guided by the Societies Act and enforced Constitution and By-laws which may not be altered or added to except by special resolution. This is supported by Governance policies that reinforce the purpose of the Board, on behalf of GCCS. These policies set strategic direction to achieve the Society's mission within legal and ethical boundaries. Terms of Reference, Conflict of Interest Guidelines and Confidentiality Policies, Annual Disclosure Statements, Code of Conduct, Roles and Responsibilities and evaluation tools for the Board, management and staff provide support of the organizations philosophy.

The Board of Directors represents the respective communities within the sub-region and is given the legal corporate authority and responsibility for the achievement of the organization's mission, for its stability and for provision of systematic linkage with other organizations engaged in the pursuit of similar objectives, and the sub-region at large. The Board is responsible for ensuring that it has adequate information to monitor major areas of corporate performance. Ad hoc Committees are established for projects requiring specific concentration and areas of expertise.

## 2017 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Board Position	Name	Community Position
Chair	Steve Rice	Director, TNRD Area I
Vice-Chair	Ronaye Elliot	Director, TNRD Area J
Treasurer	Charlie Weir	Councillor, District of Logan Lake
Secretary	Debra Arnott	Community Futures GM, TNRD Area I
Director	Gerome Garcia	Indigenous Executive Director
Executive Director at Large	Lisa Dafoe	Councillor, Village of Cache Creek
Executive Director at Large	Yvette May	S. Cariboo Historical Museum Society
Director	Jack Jeyes	Mayor, Village of Ashcroft
Director	Diana Guerin	Councillor, Village of Clinton
Director	Alfrie Trill	Councillor, Village of Ashcroft
Director	Barb Wiebe	Councillor, District of Lillooet
Director	Melody Thacker	District of Lillooet, C. of Commerce
Director	Will George	Ec. Dev. & Mgr. Tourism, Merritt
Director	Jessoa Lightfoot	Mayor, Village of Lytton
Director	Ginny Prowal	Councillor, City of Merritt
Director	Sally Watson	Director, TNRD Area E
Director	Terry Raymond	NPTG Co-Chair, TNRD Area J
Director	Randy Murray	Director, TNRD Area M
Director	Herb Graham	Director, TNRD Area N
Director	Etelka Gillespie	Merritt C. of Com. Mgr. TNRD Area N
Director	Charlene Vandean	District of Logan Lake, Appointed
Director	Ken Huber	TNRD Area E, BC Horsemen
Director	Martin Pilar	Ec. Dev. Corp. Officer, Lytton

## Funding

A combination of tax-based funding, which commenced in 2011, and membership fees form the core of the annual funding model and funds are leveraged with other sources whenever possible. These annual fees enable the Society to support operational expenses that include rent, a full-time COO at 30 hours per week, two part-time assistants at 22.5 hours per week and 10 hours per week. Funding also enables the development and delivery of promotional materials, advertising, and management of digital assets such as website and social media channels.

Through grants and other contributions, the GCCS can fulfil additional projects that are related to its mandate such as the award-winning Gold Country GeoTourism Program.

Gold Country Communities Society focuses on maintaining a financially healthy organization to ensure the ability to be adaptive and responsive to market conditions and trends while aligning

the business strategies with both stakeholder and consumer demands. GCCS maintains an efficient business environment and strives to achieve a balance between administrative costs and marketing funds. The organization remains financially secure, with approximately \$200,000 in cash and assets.

In order to remain sustainable, Gold Country Communities Society aims to achieve securing a minimum of \$113,500 in funds annually. The goal is to identify opportunities to increase the operations budget by an additional \$36,500 annually to enable the ability to enhance current projects, develop and deliver new projects, increase staff levels and provide employee benefits.

Annual budgets are prepared based on the public and private revenue streams from actual vs. forecast as well as actual and forecast expenditures. The projections are fueled by considerations to the 3-tiered provincial tourism marketing structure, unpredictable funding and the current global economic conditions. The annual budget is presented as insight to what may result as the organization adjusts to change and by identifying opportunities and evolving trends.

## APPENDIX I: Budget and Forecast 2017 – 2021

### GOLD COUNTRY COMMUNITIES SOCIETY BUDGET & FORECAST – 2017 to 2021

REVENUE	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Advertising Sales	15000	12000	12000	12000	15000
DBC Co-op Marketing Funds (Open Pool)	33350	35000	35000	35000	35000
ASET Student Funding	5610	5610	5610	5610	5610
Canada Summer Jobs	7524	7524	7524	7524	7524
Interest	50	50	50	50	50
Membership Fees	16957	16957	16957	16957	16957
TNRD Tax	71000	71000	71000	71000	71000
VIC Management Fee for Service	15500	15500	15500	15500	15500
Grant writer contract	10000	10000	10000	10000	10000
Sanitation Site Donations	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000
Special Project grants	38900	32000	11000	20000	20000
WorldHost	1360	1360	1360	1360	1360
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>216,451</b>	<b>208,001</b>	<b>187,001</b>	<b>196,001</b>	<b>199,001</b>
EXPENSES	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Wages	75650	75650	75650	75650	75650
Canada Summer Jobs	8427	8427	8427	8427	8427
Benefits	2800	2800	2800	2800	2800
VIC Expenses	15000	15250	15250	15250	15250
VIC Technology Improvements	250	250	250	250	250
Bookkeeping/Accounting	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000
Audit	3670	3670	3670	3670	3670
Marketing	2500	4900	4000	4000	4000
FAM Tours	800	1150	1150	1150	1150
Visitor Guide	5500	29501	0	21000	0
Trail Guide	16726	0	0	0	17000
Map Pad	0	0	20000	0	0
Society Dues	25	25	25	25	25
Newspaper Subscriptions	50	50	50	50	50
Postage	2500	2500	3000	3000	3000
Dues/Fees/Licenses	100	100	100	100	100
Image Bank	5000	5000	0	3000	10000
Insurance	1825	1825	1825	1825	1825
Bank Charges	150	150	150	150	150
Office Supplies	2500	2500	2500	2500	2500
Meetings	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000
Conferences	2150	2150	2150	2150	2150

Tradeshows	2690	500	2600	1500	1500
Miscellaneous Expenses	0	0	0	0	0
Rent	6900	6900	6900	6900	6900
Phone/Fax	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000
Travel	4750	4750	4750	4750	4750
Signage	20000	15000	0	0	0
Symposium	500	2500	2000	1000	1000
Video Production	10000	10000	10000	10000	10000
Special Projects	20042	3000	13000	20000	20000
Website	800	3000	800	2000	2000
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>216,305</b>	<b>206,548</b>	<b>186,047</b>	<b>196,147</b>	<b>199,147</b>
<b>REVENUE vs. EXPENSES</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>1453</b>	<b>954</b>	<b>-146</b>	<b>-146</b>

<b>Gold Country's Projected Budget with New funding</b>			
		<b>new funding</b>	<b>existing</b>
<b>Income</b>			
<b>MRDT or other funding</b>		\$100,000	
Ad Sales		\$15,000	\$15,000
CTO Grant		\$32,100	\$32,100
ASET Student Funding		\$5,610	\$5,610
Canada Summer jobs		\$7,524	\$7,524
Interest		\$50	\$50
Membership Fees		\$16,800	\$16,800
TNRD Tax		\$71,000	\$71,000
<b>ViC Management</b>			\$15,500
Grant writer contract		\$10,000	\$10,000
<b>Sanitation Site Donations</b>			\$1,000
Special project grants		\$21,000	\$21,000
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>\$279,084</b>	<b>\$195,584</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
Wages		\$110,000	\$75,650
Canada Summer jobs		\$13,134	\$13,134
Benefits		\$4,200	\$2,800
<b>ViC Expenses</b>			\$15,500
<b>ViC Tech improvements</b>			\$1,000
Bookkeeping		\$2,000	\$1,000
Audit		\$3,500	\$2,000
Marketing		\$32,500	\$2,500
FAM Tour		\$2,500	\$1,150
Guides		\$17,000	\$17,000
Society Dues		\$25	\$25
Newspaper Subscriptions		\$50	\$50
Postage		\$3,000	\$3,000

Dues/Fees/Licenses	\$0	\$0
Insurance	\$1,825	\$1,825
Bank Charges	\$150	\$150
Supplies	\$5,000	\$2,500
Meetings	\$2,000	\$2,000
Conferences	\$6,000	\$2,150
Miscellaneous Expenses	\$0	\$0
Rent	\$13,000	\$6,900
Phone/Fax	\$1,500	\$1,500
Travel	\$9,000	\$4,750
Signage	\$0	\$20,000
Video Production	\$20,000	\$10,000
Special Projects	\$20,000	\$8,000
Website	\$5,000	\$5,000
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$271,384</b>	<b>\$199,584</b>
<b>Income Over Expenses</b>	<b>\$7,700</b>	<b>-\$4,000</b>

## APPENDIX II: Gold Country Themes

### THEME ELEMENTS

<b>Identifying the iconic</b>	- Thompson & Fraser rivers - Desert/western lifestyle	- Heritage and history - Hat Creek Ranch - Other ranches (Desert Hills, Sundance)	- Native culture - The Packing House - Rafting, fishing, skiing - Limestone Mountains	- Geocache program - Pond hockey - Emporium - Gold Rush - Highland Valley Mine
<b>Enriching local flavors</b>	- Produce production (fruits & veggies) - Fishing	- Desert Hills Farm - Horstings - Left Field Cider - Farmers Markets - Fruit/Veggie stands	- Monkey in the Garden - Winery - Bakeries	- Hay Crops - Annies Pies - Cordial
<b>Revealing the story</b>	- Learn the history (First Nations, Gold Rush, Charles Semlin, Ashcroft Journal)	- Visit the museum - Gold Rush - McAbee Fossil Beds - Building of BC - Artisan shopping	- Harcous Hamrot - Horseback riding - Fishing - Gold panning	- Mountain biking - Hiking Trails - Geocaching
<b>Expanding personal horizons</b>	- Geocaching - Rafting down Thompson River	- Western/rural lifestyle - Becoming Vice	- Rock climbing - Skiing/heli-skiing - Snowmobile	- Venables Valley - Film locations - Windy Canyon

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hiking</li> <li>- Trail rides</li> <li>- Broader history</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chair of Gold</li> <li>Country</li> <li>- Experience a rural vacation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>racing</li> <li>- Motocross</li> <li>- Antique Shopping</li> <li>- Photography &amp; videography</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Motorcycle tours</li> <li>- Folk music festivals</li> </ul>
<b>Building authenticity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Following ancestor footsteps in Gold Rush (building railway/highway)</li> <li>- Cattle ranching</li> <li>- Updated use of technology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communities "off the beaten path"</li> <li>- Stein Valley Green and Crater Lake</li> <li>- Native cultures</li> <li>- Desert/river landscapes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- First Nation/Gold Rush history</li> <li>- Horseback ride along brigade</li> <li>- Ranching history from Merritt to Logan Lake</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Proud to be rural</li> <li>- Visitor Centre in mining shovel</li> <li>- Lytton ferry</li> <li>- Historic cemetery (from 1800's)</li> <li>- Scenic drives</li> <li>- Western flavour</li> </ul>

### APPENDIX III: Definitions and Acronyms

GCCS	Gold Country Communities Society
DBC	Destination British Columbia
TOTA	Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association
CCCTA	Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association
AtBC	Aboriginal Tourism Association of BC
MRDT	Municipal Regional District Tax
NDIT	Northern Development Initiative Trust
SIDIT	Southern Interior Development Initiative Trust
TNRD	Thompson Nicola Regional District
NPTG	New Pathways to Gold
GRT	Gold Rush Trail
FAM	Familiarization (Fam Tour)
VIC	Visitor Information Centre
EQ	Explorer Quotient