

DEVELOPING TOURISM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR THE PARKS CANADA AGENCY

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Stations Program, the National Program for the Grave Sites of Canadian Prime Ministers, and the Canadian Heritage Rivers System Program. Although Canada's first national park was established over 100 years ago at Banff, Alberta, Parks Canada continues to expand as a result of the federal government's 2002 action plan which called for ten new national parks and five new national marine conservation areas by 2008. Indicative of the current progressive political milieu, Parks Canada has developed a corporate plan (2005 – 2010) encompassing a vast array of objectives, strategies and expectations. However, the plan fails to explicate goals and objectives for tourism, an imperative and principal function for the sustainability of heritage sites and the agency.

Abstract

The Parks Canada Agency is currently responsible for 174 national sites within three major programs: National Parks, National Historic Sites, and National Marine Conservation Areas. However, the current corporate plan (2005 - 2010) fails to explicate goals and objectives for tourism, an imperative and principal function for the sustainability of heritage sites and the agency. The purpose of this paper is to suggest goals, objectives, and indicators that are fundamental to the success of any planning process. Moreover, it is suggested that these recommendations are salient to the current status of Parks Canada and the future success of its tourism expectations. Only through strategic planning and systematic implementation of goals and objectives can quality visitor experiences be realized and maintained.

1.0 Introduction

Protection, presentation, celebration, and service are the four central commitments of the Parks Canada Agency. This agency presides over the nationally significant natural and cultural heritage sites of Canada. Parks Canada is currently responsible for 174 national sites within three major programs: (1) National Parks; (2) National Historic Sites; and (3) National Marine Conservation Areas. In addition, the agency presides over an additional 500 sites included in the Federal Heritage Buildings Program, the Heritage Railway

Eagles, McCool, and Haynes (2002) define goals as, "the broadly stated social purposes for which a protected area is established" and "objectives are more explicit statements of what is to be accomplished" (p. 44). Hence, objectives that are derived from goals will ultimately guide the management of tourism. Furthermore, if objectives are to be measurable, "indicators need to be developed for monitoring" (p.46). This *a priori* foundation led to the development of tourism goals and objectives predicated on the framework suggested by Schoemaker (1984). Schoemaker provided five foundational characteristics from which to systematically construct objectives: 1) output-oriented; 2) time-bound; 3) specific; 4) measurable; and 5) attainable. Output-oriented means that objectives deal with the results of an activity by describing what is to be accomplished, but not how. Time-bound objectives provide the direction to develop the appropriate management actions, and require accountability. Specific objectives should provide all parties with a clear vision of what is to be accomplished. Measurable objectives provide a clear basis for evaluating progress and allow managers to determine where efforts need to be placed in the future. Attainable suggests that objectives must be achievable with the available funding and staffing resources sometimes compromising between the idealistic vision and the reality of the impacts of tourism.

This propositional paper presents goals, objectives, and indicators that are fundamental to the success of any planning process. Moreover, it is suggested that these recommendations are salient to the current status of Parks Canada and the future success of its tourism expectations. Hence, the explicit goals and objectives are presented as underpinnings for the development of a Parks Canada Tourism Plan. Only through strategic planning and systematic implementation of goals and objectives can quality visitor experiences be realized and maintained.

2.0 Methods

As a result of the paper by Högmänder and Leivo, (2004), Metsähallitus in Finland provided a dialectic catalyst for a University of Waterloo graduate workshop. The students and faculty involved shared issues Parks Canada may well address specifically as goals and objectives for tourism within the National Heritage Sites. Utilizing analytic generalization (Schwandt 2001) based upon Eagles et al. (2002) and Shoemaker's (1984) work, the participants engaged in an extensive discourse over the salience of these processes to the current task. Consensus was generated in the development of four specific tourism strata: 1) national; 2) regional; 3) site managers; and 4) visitors. Groups were formed and worked independently according to their specific stratum. Each group developed unique goals and objectives that were derived from various sources (i.e., brainstorming, literature reviews, government documents, etc.). Subsequently, each proposal was examined by way of analyst triangulation and expert audit review (Patton 2002), upon which the proposals were refined and revised. Several drafts were prepared before the current version was collated.

3.0 Recommended Parks Canada Tourism Goals and Objectives

We provide, below, recommended tourism goals and objectives according to the four developed strata: national, regional, site managers, and visitors. In total, 16 goals were generated with 59 corresponding objectives. The four strata were developed in an awareness of potential overlap as each stratum is not insular. Subsequently, several ensuing goals and objectives for each will intersect and parallel at various times. It is suggested that goals and objectives such as

this will complement each other thereby strengthening the overall structure and composition of the document and highlight the dynamic nature of this process. Furthermore, the indicators that have been developed are meant to be seen in broad terms. The purpose of such an approach is to initiate a wide-ranging discourse on the interpretation and implementation of the suggested goals and objectives. It is the authors' hope that this document will provide the catalyst for such proceedings. Thus, the following goals, objectives (bulleted under each goal) and indicators (presented generally under each sub-heading) are presented for discussion.

3.1 National

This stratum was developed as a meta-level approach to tourism goals. Hence, the capacious nature of these goals and objectives was determined appropriate and synonymous with Parks Canada's mandate.

Goal: Create public value for the citizenry by:

- Communicating the reasons for a site's conservation.
- Providing opportunities for heritage appreciation through site expansion, improvement, and/or commemoration.
- Working towards all Canadians visiting at least one national heritage site in their lifetime.
- Engaging citizens in a collaborative process of planning and shared responsibility in shaping visions for the future.
- Fostering a sense of national identity and pride through responsible stewardship of national sites.
- Expanding global awareness and appreciation through implementation of Canada's international obligations.

Goal: Promote a collective conservation conscience by:

- Providing access for all Canadians to the information they need to recognize and protect places of national heritage
- Implementing the Commercial Heritage Properties Incentive Fund
- Maintaining, improving and monitoring natural and cultural integrity of all national heritage sites

- Working to achieve equitable distribution of site visitation

Goal: Enhance national and regional economies by:

- Gaining foreign currency by marketing tourism to key foreign markets
- Redistributing revenue throughout national and regional economies
- Allocate specific revenue to improve Parks Canada infrastructure
- Increasing opportunities for regional employment in both public and private sectors
- Practice fair and just human resource management

Goal: Promote other societal benefits and values of national heritage site visitation by:

- Education through the National School Curriculum Program
- Encouraging augmentation of each national site's interpretive program
- Employing media outlets and internet marketing and programming
- Increasing a sense of ownership through strong partnerships with local communities
- Engaging the audiences of First-Nations, visible minorities, and other marginalized groups in addition to the general population

Possible Indicators: opinion polls, survey non-use values, planning process feedback, international website hits.

3.2 Regional

The regional stratum is intended to represent the geographical area most influenced by each national site. In these regions the geographical boundaries are fluid and do not represent any one community or district. As such, these goals and objectives have applicability to both large and small regions.

Goal: Enhance the collaborative relationships between public and private sectors by:

- Ensuring cooperation for the planning and implementation of tourism activities at national sites

- Regular consultation and collaboration with stakeholders as identified in site management plans regarding the future development of parks and tourism programs
- Cooperatively implementing the sustainable tourism principles of the Tourism Industry Association of Canada/Parks Canada Accord in national parks and national historic sites
- Making clear distinctions between collaborative working relationships and business partnerships

Goal: Help private-sector operators adhere to sustainable tourism principles in national sites by:

- Developing a permitting and licensing system for all commercial tourism
- Utilizing the permitting system as a means to also educate community and operators on better environmentally sustainable business practices
- Ensuring that the licensing fee and associated income is kept in Parks Canada's general budget to support the system and ecological integrity objectives

Goal: Contribute to the diversification of local economies, increase local employment opportunities, and reduce economic leakage by:

- Developing and promoting tourism in national sites, where appropriate
- Developing a "local first" prioritized employment strategy
- Promoting the increase of daily expenditures by site visitors
- Initiating locally tendered operating expenses for each site

Goal: Park tourism will support local communities control over their lives and will be respectful of community culture and values by:

- Developing and maintaining interpretive programs, in consultation with local stakeholders where local community culture and values are included in educational programming.
- Creating opportunities to educate visitors on Aboriginal cultures at all applicable national sites.

- Ensuring local, knowledgeable, guides are used when appropriate.

Possible Indicators: planning feedback, monitoring sustainable tourism practices, develop guidelines for partnerships.

3.3 Site Managers

This stratum engages the site managers as the modus ponens of the manager's importance in the success of the site.

Goal: Ensure that the visitor presence supports national heritage preservation through:

- Ecological integrity measurement
- Commemorative integrity measurement
- Existence of educational programs about heritage preservation

Goal: The site will operate to be both fiscally responsible and environmentally self-sustaining by:

- Decreasing the amount of resource extraction
- Pragmatic resource conservation (i.e. water-saving devices and compost facilities)
- Encouraging tourist expenditure within the site
- Ensuring park sizes are large enough to support viable populations of key species

Goal: Management and staff will create an environment of mutual learning with each other, and with the general public by:

- Utilizing a proportion of management data from external sources
- Building and utilizing facilities for research and public education
- Increasing the frequency of collaboration with local/regional community
- Encouraging the development and operation of a Friend's group
- Appointing a staff liaison with a site's Friend's group

Goal: The staff of each site should be trained in public relations and tourism management, including:

- Availability of resources related to tourists
- Information regarding quality service control
- Training sessions about tourism for staff members
- Instruction about impact monitoring

Possible Indicators: proportion of external data, realization of new facilities, collaborative feedback, success of Friend's group work.

3.4 Visitors

The quality of visitor's experiences is a focal point for any tourism agency. This stratum was developed with the intent to address the range of visitor experiences while not compromising the integrity of heritage sites for future generations.

Goal: Provide high quality services to fulfill visitors' educational, social, and physical needs by:

- Maintaining an environment of high quality service
- Influencing appropriate visitors' expectations and perceptions through promotional campaigns, internet advertising, and publicity
- Informing all visitors about sensitive, sustainable, and safe use of Parks Canada's sites

Goal: Maintain current facilities and preserve the ecological and cultural integrity in Parks Canada's sites by:

- Minimizing tourists' negative impacts and maximizing the tourists' positive impacts
- Promoting site conservation and preservation to visitors through all educational activities inside the park as well as national, regional and local publicity

Goal: Create additional educational, social, and physical programs catering to target markets by:

- Motivating park managers through incentive-based directives
- Promoting an array of opportunities inside the park through various strategic channels

Goal: Promote communication with all Canadians, as potential visitors, for increasing awareness and support of National Heritage sites by:

- Positioning a progressive corporate image through promotion of positive economic impacts
- Motivating employees to engage in nature and heritage promotion to visitors in daily operations
- Advancing educational, social, and physical opportunities nation-wide to reach all Canadians

Possible Indicators: visitor exit surveys, effective marketing evaluations, accident reports, impact assessments.

4.0 Discussion

In times of economic constraint, many concerned managers seek to improve image, structure, process and output. It is questionable how many organizations have systematically developed comprehensive goals and objectives. However, effective leadership, and thus effective service, must be modeled after substantive and defensible goals and objectives. We found that adherence to the guidelines suggested by Eagles et al. (2002) and Schoemaker (1984) allowed a process for systematic development to occur and we believe the goals and objectives produced are realistic and achievable. The suggestions offered in this paper are to provide the Parks Canada Agency with a discrete reference point in the development of tourism goals and objectives. Furthermore, the substantive nature of developing an organization's goals and objectives does not preclude the viability of this iterative process. Reflexivity is central to any successful and progressive organization and the use of indicators along with revising and refining goals can abet in this process.

The authors fully recognize the magnitude of these suggestions and realize that interpretation and implementation will depend solely on the discretion of the Parks Canada Agency. Nonetheless, what is necessarily implicit is the responsibility such an agency has for creating public value. Indeed, the concept that a public agency should produce value in both the short and the long term "matches the criteria of success used in the private sector" (Moore 1995, p.10). Conversely,

the potential pitfalls in performance measurement can be numerous if the ontological divide between public and private spheres is not considered (Lindgren 2001). The five characteristics suggested by Schoemaker (1984) utilized in this document are the foundational methods to test the plausibility and utility of an agency's goals and objectives. Developing goals and objectives through this foundational lens will help policy makers navigate through the process and reduce the frustrations associated with goal implementation and realization.

5.0 Citations

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