



Tourism Squamish

Strategic Plan

2019 - 2020

Board Approved: January 15, 2019

2019 STRATEGIC PLAN OVERVIEW

Introduction

In 2016, the Tourism Squamish Board developed a five-year Strategic Plan that accompanied the application for the Municipal & Regional District Tax (“hotel tax”) to guide the organization and establish priorities and key initiatives to increase the contribution that tourism makes to the Squamish economy and community well-being. The plan was designed to articulate tourism opportunities in the District of Squamish and outline the strategic approach to be taken by the Society to realize the benefits associated with these opportunities.

In November 2018, the Tourism Squamish Board held a strategy session to review the past year’s achievements and refine the plan for 2019.

This Strategic Plan provides the necessary framework to position Squamish within the new brand of *Hardwired for Adventure*. It is a blueprint for identifying and taking action, and is meant to be a living, dynamic document that evolves with changing conditions. Tourism Squamish will work together with its members, partners and stakeholders for successful implementation, monitoring and measuring of this plan to improve on performance over time.

History of Tourism Squamish

In 2006, representatives from local tourism businesses and organizations designed the Squamish Community Tourism Plan. As a result of these efforts, Tourism Squamish was founded in 2007 as a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) to expand and promote the local tourism industry sector. It was conceived as an economic development initiative of the Squamish Sustainability Corporation, and became an independent organization when it was incorporated as a not-for-profit society in May 2010. The Tourism Squamish Society is a dynamic and entrepreneurial destination marketing organization.

The Society is governed by an industry appointed Board of Directors and represents more than 110 businesses which comprise the local tourism economy.

Tourism Squamish has three primary business functions:

- Destination Marketing
- Visitor Services
- Destination Development

The Society represents the tourism industry within the District of Squamish (Britannia to Brackendale, including Paradise & Squamish Valley), with a vision and constitutional mandate to

Act as an ambassador and steward of our destination, promoting a healthy tourism sector in order to secure broad benefits for our community. This will be achieved through a comprehensive approach to planning, continued infrastructure development and a sustainable tourism structure ¹

¹ Tourism Squamish Constitution and Bylaws

2019 STRATEGIC PLAN OVERVIEW

Vision

The vision of Tourism Squamish is to:

To become the premier mountain town in British Columbia known for Sea to Sky experiences that highlight our rich natural surroundings and enhance local lifestyle.

Mission

The mission of Tourism Squamish is to:

Work collaboratively with partners to execute strategic marketing and sales programs that deliver both more visitors and higher yield visitors to Squamish throughout the year;

Foster and support remarkable visitor experiences that celebrate and preserve our natural and cultural history and secure broad benefits to our residents;

Provide industry leadership and create awareness within our community of the value of tourism by actively measuring the impact of the products and services that we offer.

Guiding Principles

Tourism Squamish will conduct its business in a manner that is:

- **Open and transparent** - processes are open to public scrutiny; opportunities to be informed and provide input are made available and decisions and their rationale are known by all interested stakeholders
- **Accountable** – annual reports are provided to stakeholder, local government and Ministry of Finance as per funding agreements.
- **Sustainable** – triple bottom line (socially / environmentally and fiscally responsible)
- **Strategic** – Tourism Squamish reads the market closely and crafts strategies that promote Squamish’s unique competitive position, brand and key messages in a disciplined and logical way; knee jerk responses that are ‘off strategy’ are avoided
- **Industry supported** – as evidenced by general support for organization, growing membership and by participation in specific marketing/sales/service initiatives
- **Customer focused** - within the context of community values/vision, customer’s needs are a priority
- **Collaborative** – clear roles for each participating organization – supportive of each other- Tourism Squamish works together with other organizations and individuals and provides opportunities to participate in relevant DMO programs
- **Unified** - creative dialogue/debate encouraged but once a decision is made – all are supportive
- **Action and results oriented** – measure a baseline + measure progress + report results

Key Strategic Areas

1. **Governance, Stakeholder & Member Relations**
2. **Visitor Experience**
3. **Research**
4. **Marketing**
5. **Destination Development**

Governance, Stakeholder & Member Relations

Tourism Squamish has a sustainable funding source from the Municipal & Regional District Tax (MRDT) in place until the next renewal in 2023. This program requires annual reporting and the Tourism Squamish board and staff are committed to annual planning and review of the existing strategy. Strong membership support is crucial to the viability of the organization and the local visitor economy.

To support this strategic area we will develop a Membership Engagement Strategy and Communications Plan to guide the organization as it aims to strengthen its membership numbers and member involvement in the organization's programs and initiatives. Regular communication to members about cooperative marketing programs, industry performance and key challenges will be on-going.

Key Performance Indicators

- Annual Stakeholder Survey results
- MRDT revenues
- Cooperative dollar investments
- Tourism Squamish membership numbers

Visitor Experience

Visitor experience includes a focus on providing seamless and exceptional experiences to increase repeat visitation, positive referrals and extend overnight stays. The definition of "visitors" covers a wide spectrum of travelers from holiday makers, special interest groups, business visitors, convention delegates, learners, events participants, sports participants or spectators to overseas visitors and many others including tourists. The Visitor Experience includes actual and virtual service ranging from our website, app and online presence to the guest service provided at the Visitor Centre.

To support this strategic area we will offer exceptional customer service setting the bar for the other tourism businesses in Squamish. Our staff will be trained on and knowledgeable about all Squamish activities, attractions, accommodations and events. Our Visitor Centre will remain a recognized community, historical and cultural beacon and a "must stop" when visiting Squamish. We will work collectively and in collaboration with our members and together create memorable experiences for visitors to Squamish. We will also encourage our visitors to respect of our community values and work to ensure they understand our expectations of them while they are visiting.

Key Performance Indicators

- Number of visitors to VC; number of visitors intercepted by Street Teams
- Website analytics
- Visitor Centre bookings
- Retail sales
- Engaged social media users
- Net promoter score
- Intercept survey results on visitor satisfaction
- Increases in length of stay (increasing yield)

Research

In order to better understand the visitor economy, Tourism Squamish will assess current visitor statistics, develop a research plan and continue gathering research. Distilling statistical findings, sharing digestible amounts of data and ensuring stakeholder engagement in research are key drivers for 2019.

To support this strategic area we will develop a research strategy identifying what data we wish to collect and develop the methodology to collect the data in Q3. Once collected, we will analyze and share out the results. We will also complete the 2017 and 2018 Value of Tourism models in cooperation with Destination BC. We will create on-going tracking protocols for key data and metrics in addition to continuing our work on the partnership open data project with the District of Squamish and Squamish Chamber of Commerce.

Key Performance Indicators

- MRDT revenues
- Stakeholder survey results
- Value of Tourism findings
- Intercept survey results

Marketing

Marketing and Advertising includes a focus on raising the profile of Squamish as a preferred tourist destination. Our focus remains to grow our non-peak period (October – May).

To support this strategic area we will:

- Collaborate with our members and partners to create integrated campaigns, build synergies and raise awareness of Squamish
- Generate demand for the destination by actively marketing Squamish to key and emerging markets which represent the greatest potential for tourism growth
- Be diligent in our sales and marketing planning and measure/benchmark all our programs and activities then adjust campaigns accordingly
- Be visitor focused and communicate our sales and marketing messages using the most effective channel

Key Performance Indicators

- Media pitching and hosting
- Travel stories in core markets
- Growth in bookings
- Growth in occupancy
- Member marketing program fees (buy-ins)
- Target market traffic to online tools and social media
- Increases in number of engaged visitors to website (views of 4+ pages)
- Increases in number of member business page visits
- Event hosting and attendance

Destination Development

Tourism Squamish will advocate and work on behalf of the visitors and stakeholders to encourage a culture that enhances the visitor experience, encourages repeat visitation and addresses challenges hindering industry growth. Tourism Squamish will be the community's recognized "voice of the tourism industry" on member's priority issues.

To support this strategic area we will advocate to ensure that the visitor economy is understood by local government, residents, business operators and Tourism Squamish members. Documenting key challenges and inventorying assets will be key action items for 2019.

Key Performance Indicators

- Visitor Volume
- MRDT revenues
- New product offerings
- Industry event attendance