Heritage Sites for Dialogue

Building a Cultural Heritage Tourism Program

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Abstract: Cultural heritage tourism enhances and sustains the culture, environment, and well-being of residents and provides a meaningful visitor experience. A sustainable cultural tourism program requires strategically addressing all assets – cultural, environmental, and physical – to establish and maintain a delicate balance between components. Strategic planning for cultural tourism guides the process for communities to realize their vision and establish procedures and operations necessary to achieve that vision. The presenter will share their experiences through the strategic planning process and lessons learned for their respective cultural tourism programs. First, with the Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma, USA and second, for the Akwesasne Mohawk in New York, USA and Ontario, and Quebec, Canada. Each tourism program illustrates how strategic planning can guide and sustain authentic cultural tourism while bolstering community and economic development.

Keywords: heritage site management plans; enhancement; heritage; preservation
INTRODUCTION

Cultural travelers visit destinations such as cultural, historic, and archaeological sites and experience authentic local customs. Destinations are coming to realize that cultural tourists generate a far greater share of local income than their numbers would indicate. Cultural heritage tourism seeks to enhance the culture, environment, and well-being of a community and provide a meaningful visitor experience. A sustainable cultural heritage tourism program requires strategically addressing all of a community’s assets to establish and maintain a delicate balance between components. Those assets include cultural, environmental, and physical resources. Planning and collaboration are critical.

Strategic planning for cultural heritage tourism guides the process for communities to realize their vision and establish procedures and operations necessary to achieve that vision. Collaboration with your community and potential partners and supporters will sustain support for the program. This paper will share the authors’ experiences developing a sustainable cultural heritage tourism program and balancing community needs with visitor expectations. It will also frame how to achieve your vision for a successful cultural heritage tourism program.

STAGE 1: ENVISION

Before getting into the details of strategic planning – envision your program. This is the time to dream – to think big – to be brave.

1.1 Have a Clear Purpose

The purpose of a cultural heritage tourism program is to benefit the community by providing new sources of funding that create economic opportunities for local artisans and entrepreneurs and support cultural programs. The tourism program should also provide a central location or “place” where a community can explore its past and share with visitors the continuing evolution of its culture and identity.

The purpose and goals for a tourism program should be viewed from both the community’s and visitors’ perspectives.

- A community’s Operational Goal is usually described as, *The organization will do X in order to achieve Y*, e.g., by attracting and welcoming increased numbers of guests and sharing aspects of our proud culture and place, our community will continue to work together on the revitalization of our culture and build a healthy economy.

- A Visitor Experience Goal might be, *Visitors will A in order to B*, e.g., guests will gain an appreciation for our community through personal engagement built on our rich culture and community.
1.2 Understand the Role of Culture and Heritage in Tourism

A cultural heritage tourism program is most likely to succeed by operating in collaboration with other existing tourism attractions such as recreational activities, casinos, or other entertainment. These programs usually have established infrastructure such as food, lodging, and transportation. A cultural heritage tourism program located nearby can draw from those mainstream attractions by contributing additional, unique attractions that would encourage visitors to stay longer, and/or provide alternative experiences for larger groups with varying interests.

Early in program planning, understand the relationship between other tourism-related destinations and how cultural heritage can contribute to enhance those tourism programs. For a cultural heritage program, the primary goal is not to be the biggest or best, but rather the most unique and authentic. Do not presume to compete with casinos, food and beverage services, or entertainment attractions, rather convey how cultural heritage is a new and different type of attraction – an experience that will support and add depth to the larger tourism economy. Some visitors will be willing to pay a higher than normal fee for a richer than normal experience; focus on quality not quantity.

1.3 Assess the Potential

Before going too far, be sure to ask the question, is a cultural heritage tourism program right for your community? The first step in cultural heritage tourism development is to determine current supporting resources. Are more visitors wanted? Can more visitors be supported? How many visitors can the local community support? What resources are available that visitors would want to see? Who are the stakeholders? Effective cultural heritage tourism development requires that benefits and challenges are understood. It also requires that existing and potential historic and cultural tourism attractions are identified and assessed. Identify the expectations of your ideal visitor and assess if appropriate visitor services are available and good customer service can be provided. An honest assessment of these needs is the first step.

The goal of the assessment is not just to list resources, but to do some preliminary evaluation of the potential quality and level of service. This first assessment will provide baseline data that can be used to measure progress and help make key decisions as the cultural heritage tourism program develops. Assets should be evaluated in these three areas: attractions; target audience; and visitor services.

A baseline assessment will help determine if cultural heritage tourism is right for a site or community. Cultural heritage tourism can deliver economic, social, and environmental benefits to communities when they are thoughtfully developed, however, it requires an investment of both time and money. When developing a tourism site, the community and the resources must come first, and the benefits must be more than economic. To make this decision, a community must evaluate the following:

- How cultural heritage tourism can meet community needs
- The trade-off between the benefits of cultural heritage tourism and the costs and liabilities it imposes
- Community interest in cultural heritage tourism
1.4 Assemble Your Core Team

Begin with a small team of approximately five to seven people who believe in the idea and are willing to invest a substantial amount of their personal as well as work time. This initial stage is a time to dream and to believe anything is possible, so be sure the core team is filled with true believers. As you move through the process of defining your mission, vision, principles, and goals, realities will inevitably temper idealism soon enough, so aim high but be mentally prepared for the bumps ahead. The community should create the vision for the program, but consultants can be hired to address technical challenges such as funding, detailed planning, and development.

Be intentional in selecting your team. Teams should have a balanced mix of ages, genders, and perspectives. Team members must be organized self-starters with a history of accomplishments. They should have excellent communication skills, share a passion for cultural heritage, believe in the benefits of tourism, and convey community pride.

Each community, and therefore team, are unique in their needs and strengths. These are some highlighted examples of what an ideal team might include:

- An organized and committed manager with good communication skills who is well connected and respected in the community
- A recent retiree who is seeking a volunteer opportunity to give back to the community
- Someone who works, or has worked, for local government in planning or economic development
- A local social worker or clergy member who understands the social needs of the community
- An educator who has expertise in history and culture and is a promoter of after-school programs
- An elected or government official who believes in the project, and is willing to advocate for it

In defining your team, you may find the book *StrengthsFinder* by Tom Rath and the associated book *Strength Based Leadership* by Tom Rath and Barry Conchie helpful in developing a balanced, skilled team.

1.5 Dream Big, Start Small

Begin with a small group of dedicated people who enjoy working together and share a common vision. Proceed with confidence and believe in what you are doing. As the anthropologist Margaret Mead said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world: indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”
STAGE 2: PLAN

2.1 Understand Needs

The success of any tourism program is intricately connected to understanding and addressing the needs of all the people involved. That includes those who are key in the planning process, such as the community, council members, local businesses, artisans, and eventually your visitors. Be strategic in identifying all those involved and their specific needs, concerns, and expectations. Research and define what you will need to do to gain their support and what could turn them away or against you.

2.1.1 Community Members

The community is at the heart of a cultural heritage tourism program. A community wants to take pride in who they are and be acknowledged as a desirable place to live. Citizens want quality jobs, improved facilities, and business opportunities, but they also want tourists to be kept at a distance and not intrude on their daily lives with increased traffic, noise, and safety concerns.

Develop a web site for community members and leaders to access planning updates. Ensure it is well written with good images. Community engagement is ongoing; it is not a one-time event.

2.1.2 Community Leaders and Government

Community leaders want to improve their community’s infrastructure and social fabric, increase their tax base without increasing taxes, and showcase their community’s identity and pride. Elected officials and leaders need to understand the economics of what is being proposed to ensure the program is sustainable and well managed. They also need to understand how the proposed program might affect zoning, health, and safety regulations.

During strategic planning, consider when leaders and elected officials should be provided with status reports on progress and when they will be asked to provide key decisions. Consider this schedule in light of elections and other leadership cycles. The tourism program is likely a key part of community development and therefore will be a critical part of a politician’s campaigning.

Be sure that all materials are clear, defensible, and without error. Develop PowerPoint presentations and simple handouts that are straightforward, inspired, and engaging.

2.1.3 Local Businesses and Artisans

Business development and employment opportunities are at the heart of any cultural heritage tourism program. The economic success of a tourism program lies in keeping tourism income within the community, not going to outside tour companies or hotel and restaurant chains. Local businesses and entrepreneurs will want the opportunity to share in the tourism economy, so program managers should work closely with them, providing business incubator support projects and training opportunities.
2.1.4 Partners & Stakeholders

Identify and build partnerships with other cultural or historic sites, community organizations with a similar mission, or educational institutions with shared interests. You will be stronger working together with each other providing a unique aspect of a story rather than competing for funding, volunteers, and visitors. Convey the message that they will be able to improve their program and facilities by working together and sharing resources. However, market analysis should provide an understanding of how your community’s program stands apart from other tourism entities.

2.1.5 Volunteers

Volunteers will supplement your labor and will be key to cultural programming. Meeting their expectations will be key to the success of your program. Consider two targets groups within your community for building a volunteer program:

- Retirees who look for worthy ways to give back to their communities in a part-time and relaxed forum, where their contributions are valued.
- Teens who are looking for worthy volunteer experiences to build their credentials for college applications and entering the job market.

2.1.6 Visitors

Research from the United Nations World Tourism Organization indicates that cultural tourists stay longer and spend more than general tourists. One study revealed that the cultural tourist spends 38% more per day and stays 22% longer than the average traveler. Also, cultural travelers take one more trip than the average traveler and are more likely to share their experience with friends and on social media. Visitors seeking cultural heritage destinations seek a range of quality experiences. They do not want to be treated like strangers, rather to be welcomed like guests to obtain a unique and authentic experience.

2.2 Write a Strategic Plan

A strategic plan is a roadmap for an organization to envision and answer the questions: Where are we? Where do we want to go? How do we get there? The foundational document for any tourism program is the Strategic Plan which defines the program’s mission, vision, principles, and goals. These will be foundational to the long-term planning efforts. The Plan should be comprehensive and detailed and will be used by key staff and those responsible for day-to-day implementation of the program.

One should also prepare an Overview Plan or Executive Summary that is a high-level document that outlines the Strategic Plan but for a different audience. This document can be shared with decision makers and community members who don’t necessarily want or need all the details of a Strategic Plan. This document should also be put into a simple but compelling PowerPoint presentation to share the vision in public venues such as a council or community meetings.
2.2.1 Develop Your Mission, Vision, Principles & Goals

*Mission*

An example of a clear mission would be: The mission of the cultural heritage tourism program is to promote the XXX people's cultural identity thereby nurturing respect for, knowledge of, and economic opportunities for the XXX people.

*Vision*

An example of a clear vision might be: A thriving cultural heritage tourism program will provide opportunities for the XXX people to strengthen their cultural identity, build economic self-reliance, develop leaders in business and government, and celebrate our environment, heritage, and language.

*Principles*

Examples of principles that might be pertinent to a cultural heritage tourism program may include:

- Cultural heritage tourism will provide opportunities for members of the XXX community and visitors to experience and understand the XXX community's heritage and culture firsthand thereby influencing public opinion.
- Members of the XXX community should be involved in planning for cultural and historic preservation and tourism, as appropriate.
- Cultural heritage tourism and preservation activities will further the economic self-sufficiency of the XXX people and provide employment for community members.
- Interpretation and marketing of places and resources will be anchored in authenticity.

*Goals*

Goals should be framed around the three primary components of a tourism program: organization; people; and places:

- **Organizational** - The Strategic Plan and associated plans will direct and support strong organizational strategies to effectively develop, manage, and market the community’s tourism destinations and experiences.
- **People** - The program must engage with the community, train its people, and reinforce language, arts and culture (see section below, Understand Your People).
- **Places** - The Strategic Plan and associated plans will determine where the primary location of your program will be and which cultural heritage tourism attractions will be developed (see section below, Find Your Place).

2.2.2 Approach in Stages

Developing a tourism program is complex and multi-faceted. To achieve multiple goals over a long period of time, program development should occur in stages. In Stage 1, envision your program and do some preliminary assessment. In Stage 2, develop your Strategic Plan and associated plans. The Strategic Plan is your road map to success and will provide the foundational information that ensures consistency.
in decision making. Associated plans are the specific plans that may be developed by staff, consultants, architects, and/or engineers concerning a range of specialized topics. Stage 3 involves implementation of the plans to develop and establish the program. Stage 4 is the evaluation of the program where you will systematically analyse, nurture, and improve the program to ensure continuing success.

2.2.3 Understand Funding

Where will the funding come from for your program? This is one of the biggest questions and often hardest to answer and obtain. Usually programs are funded by a combination of public and private support and grants.

One of the advantages of a staged planning approach is to set achievable goals and provide funders feedback on the potential return on their investment. Consider the following options and questions:

- Community benefactors will often support worthy ideas to improve their community. Contact community, business, or academic leaders for suggestions.
- Begin with simple, small grants. Start small with achievable grants; later you can seek out larger grants that are more competitive and harder to win. There are numerous grants available to worthy community development projects. Check with your local tourism bureau, regional economic development organizations, the local library, and online.
- Fund raising with a community dinner or selling items door-to-door is a simple way to raise small amounts of money. Additionally, it can provide an opportunity to share your ideas and convey your enthusiasm face-to-face with your neighbors. Your approach should be unpretentious, fun, and informative.
- How are you dividing each stage? How does one stage inform the next?
- Be aware of grant schedules.
- Be realistic about what the overall program, as well as each stage, will cost and when you anticipate seeing a return on investment. Build the budget and adjust as needed as you complete each plan.
- How will you stand out in the crowd of other applicants?

2.2.4 Set a Timeframe

One of hardest things to do when building a tourism program is establish a reasonable and accurate timeframe from establishing the vision to welcoming the first visitors. The schedule needs to be fast enough to not lose momentum but also be achievable and realistic. Missing deadlines can be discouraging and can adversely impact funding and support. Identify key tasks that will be carried out to implement the program successfully and identify who is accountable for each activity. Have regular check-ins with the team to understand the project’s status, and any needs for adjustment.

2.3 Find Your Place

Culture is place based; it is rooted to land. If you examine any successful cultural heritage tourism program or an ancient cultural site, you will discover that often they are rooted to a built or natural environment with a central location with an inherent sense of place.
Historical communities nearly always had a village square or central park that served as the gathering place for the community. It is fundamental for a cultural heritage program to have a central place that anchors it to the community. If your community has a central place such as a downtown or park, focus around that as a destination. If such a centre doesn’t exist, consider creating one.

In an ideal scenario, you would identify a neighbourhood or obtain a plot of land you can develop in the following ways:

- Define a cultural center that is one or two city blocks and is near, but not impacted by daily commerce, traffic, or crowds of tourists.
- Work with local zoning authorities to designate a buffer around the park as a historic or tourism district to regulate traffic, noise, signage, and types of buildings.
- The park should have a central open space that is available for a range of uses.
- Surround the open space with a pedestrian-only walkway that allows people access to the space on one side and to shops and amenities on the other.
- Establish primary structures on opposite ends of the park from each other to be used as a visitor center with a museum, a business center, a theater or multi-purpose gathering space, and classrooms.
- The visitor center and/or museum would serve as the primary entrance to the cultural park to collect fees, educate visitors, and provide a pickup point for tour group busses.
- Surround the interior of the cultural park with historic and cultural buildings that are either authentic or compatible with surrounding architecture that can be used for shops, cafes, clubs, and crafts demonstrations.
- Create an attractive perimeter with fencing or plantings to enhance a sense of place.

2.4 Develop Associated Plans

Associated plans are the specific plans that may be developed by staff, consultants, architects, and engineers. These should include: Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan and Gap Analysis, Resources Inventory, Interpretive Experience Visitor Plan, Design Guidelines, Marketing Plan, Business Cases for new development, and others. All associated plans need to be in alignment and build upon the foundational Strategic Plan that articulates the mission, vision, principles, and goals of the cultural heritage program. While the scale and needs of every program are different, these key components need to be addressed in the planning process. Following are examples of specific types of detailed associated plans.

2.4.1 Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan and Gap Analysis

The Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan (TIDP) provides a tourism infrastructure framework for how a community can be developed to become a world-class cultural heritage tourism destination. Gap Analysis identifies the state of existing conditions, identifies key infrastructure gaps, and provides recommendations to close the gaps. The TIDP should develop a strategy that establishes guiding
principles for infrastructure development, presents a tourism land use plan, and introduces tourism infrastructure design elements. Some components to consider include:

- Are there existing tourism attractions such as a casino, amusement park, or recreational facility near the cultural heritage resources?
- Are there hotels, restaurants, and retail businesses nearby?
- Are there plans to build additional tourism facilities?
- Are there enough community resources to accommodate visitors e.g. ATM machines, hotels, restaurants, public restrooms?
- Are destinations ready for visitors? If not, what is needed to get them ready?

2.4.2 Heritage and Cultural Resources Inventory

Culture is dynamic and continually changing. To develop a cultural heritage tourism program, you will need to fully understand your community’s history, culture, and associated resources.

Heritage resources, sometimes called tangible heritage, focus on the built environment e.g. buildings, designed landscapes. The International Council on Museums and Sites (ICOMOS) defines this as follows: Tangible heritage includes buildings and historic places, monuments, artifacts, etc., which are considered worthy of preservation for the future. These include objects significant to the archaeology, architecture, science, or technology of a specific culture.

Cultural heritage, sometimes called intangible heritage, focuses on events, traditional practices, and other expressions of cultural knowledge and skills. ICOMOS defines this as follows: Intangible cultural heritage means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage.

Ask yourselves these types of questions:

- Are there historically or culturally significant sites or places listed on the National Register of Historic Places in your community?
- Are there archaeological sites or ancient burial areas in your community? If so, are they appropriate to include in a tourism program?
- Is there an existing or potential historic downtown?
- Who are potential artisans and craftspeople partners?
- What are some of the special cultural events in the community and when/where are they held?

Identify what your communities’ resources are, where they are located, their current use, and potential use. The primary focus of the inventory should be on whether it is a place of interest to visitors, ready to receive visitors, and if the community supports it being a visitor destination. For example, there may be a very significant archaeological site within a community, but the site is below ground and fragile, so its
location should not be shared with the public. Another example is that a historic church would require the support of its parishioners to be open to the public during or outside of service times.

The inventory of heritage and cultural resources may include historians, architectural historians, archaeologists, and/or elders. Research your community’s history and interview multiple individuals of different ages and cultural perspectives. You may be surprised by the wealth of hidden stories, forgotten histories, and false assumptions. It is worth investing a substantial amount of energy in your research, as the more you understand your stories and resources, the richer your cultural heritage program will be, and the more likely it will be supported and funded. Go beyond the known history and explore the hidden narratives. The industrial and digital revolutions have had profound impacts on culture. Be careful not to fall into the trap of recreating a bygone era that is no longer authentic or downloading easily accessible information from the internet that may not be accurate.

2.4.3 Visitor Interpretive Experience Plan

An Interpretive Plan is the document that guides development of an interpretive program which would include such things as exhibits, interpretive waysides, mobile apps, publications, and similar interpretive opportunities for a site or community. The plan identifies opportunities that communicate desired messages to target audiences through an array of interpretive opportunities.

People today buy experiences. A Visitor Interpretive Experience Plan (VIEP) begins with reaching your target audiences where they are – physically, emotionally and intellectually – and taking them where you want them to go by using a combination of trip planning information, orientation, wayfinding and interpretive opportunities. The VIEP should also identify and address barriers to the desired experiences, such as facilities that aren’t fully accessible to people with disabilities, or in a single language.

The community must be consulted when developing a VIEP. Develop overarching themes and goals that tie your resources to your stories. Test your stories on community members, making sure to include families, teenagers, and the elderly. With the assistance of elders, be sure the community is clear on what stories should not be told to outsiders to ensure traditional knowledge is protected when needed.

2.4.4 Design Guidelines

Let your stories and culture guide your designs. The tourism destinations should include design principles that provide foundational guidelines related to improving aesthetics, safety, and orientation. The following principles should be considered for any tourism program:

Aesthetics

- **Design elements**: Provide design guidelines for light standards, signage, and furnishings that should be applied throughout the tourism areas.
- **Streetscaping**: Incorporate streetscape elements, such as consistently designed lamp posts, to help define and enhance the pedestrian zones.
- **Lighting**: Include attractive street lighting that is standardized along a corridor or around the downtown area.
• **Utilities:** Enhance the visual quality of roadways by burying overhead utilities cables and screening with foliage or attractive fencing.

• **Business and Advertising Signage:** Design signage that identifies businesses without dominating the setting or skyline.

**Safety**

• **Traffic calming:** Install appropriate traffic calming in key locations.

• **Sidewalks:** Include sidewalks that are separated from the roadway by landscaping or barriers.

• **Medians:** Where possible, incorporate medians to divide travel lanes at intersections in high travel areas.

• **Crossings:** Provide safe and clearly marked pedestrian crossings.

**Orientation**

• **Wayfinding:** Incorporate wayfinding at key locations throughout the community that provide appropriate levels of information to visitors. Develop a detailed Wayfinding Plan.

### 2.4.5 Marketing Plan

An effective strategy for marketing a cultural heritage tourism destination relies on an integrated process for identifying, developing, and maintaining a compelling set of tourism products that meet the demands of an identified market or markets. This integrated process must consider the product development needs in tandem with traditional marketing efforts. Prior to addressing those needs, it is critical to establish a foundation of agreed-upon tourism attributes, resources, partnerships, parameters and desired outcomes. These are the building blocks for a strong tourism marketing strategy, and a unified community vision. These factors, when combined with limited resources, usually call for a focused strategy that avoids casting a wide net among a wide variety of potential travelers. For example, consider if the community is seeking group travel or independent travelers. How can your destination be positioned to draw upon the unique characteristics of the community to competitively contrast it against its competitive set, regional destinations and attractions that offer the most comparable cultural heritage tourism experiences? Do a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis to determine how your community could position itself distinctively from its competitors in the eyes of its visitors. Research into local tourism demand, looking at the competitor set and other local attractions to gain insights into the demographics and purchasing behaviors of potential consumers. Identify your targets markets, then pursue them.

### 2.4.6 Business Cases

Individual, large-scale projects, such as development of a new heritage or visitor center, will need a business case that pulls together a range of data to compile into a report that explains and justifies the business potential and return on investment for the community.

The objectives of the tourism program and particularly development of a new heritage center need to be realistic and achievable. A Business Case is developed to provide that analysis. Meaningful economic
development goals for a tourism program require a synergy between the physical and cultural elements in order to develop businesses and create jobs. But the benefits are not just financial. Cultural heritage tourism can help support and sustain an already-thriving artistic community. Communities need to look beyond those important factors to consider impacts on overall community development, expanded public services, and much more.

To develop a Business Case requires realism and honesty, not wishful thinking. Much is claimed about the return on investment for cultural heritage tourism universally, however, statistics do show tremendous potential economic return for communities developing effective tourism programs. A Business Case will analyze and present those potential economic investments returns and strategies. Data includes marketing analysis, architectural concepts and estimates, and more.

2.4.7 Evaluation Plan

A project evaluation plan identifies and measures the outcomes and impacts that result from project completion. The project evaluation process involves an analysis of different components or indicators that characterize the project’s progress towards the achievement of its goals and objectives. These components or indicators are Outcomes and Impacts.

Outcomes
These are any measurable changes that can be obtained as a result of the project’s successful accomplishment. They determine the extent to which the identified problems have been mitigated, resolved, or eliminated. Outcomes define the measurable results and benefits once the project is done. They serve as the general indicator of project progress towards successful implementation of project goals and objectives. Outcomes describe short-term and medium-term effects generated by the project. Some examples of outcomes are:

• New skills and competencies obtained by staff or volunteers
• Young adults are choosing to stay or return to the community
• Improved knowledge of community’s history and culture
• Increased local business opportunities for residence
• Change in participation in decision making

Impacts
These are the indicator of changes that can be specifically linked to the project’s implementation. Impacts determine and measure the extent to which goals and objectives of the project are achieved. They define and measure the effects or consequences (both tangible and intangible) of the project upon the environment in which this project is implemented. Impacts produce a long-term, lasting effect that is observable for months and years after project completion. Some examples of project impacts are:

• Increased quality of a product or service
• Decreased incidence of diseases in the targeted region
• Higher number of visitors wishing to visit your community or a specific site
Increased number of businesses who want to participate in the tourism program

Develop an Evaluation Plan for the entire program to establish evaluation criteria, identify what you will need to evaluate, and what information will be required to address your evaluation questions. Establish standardized definitions of terms and define the associated data related to those terms and the questions you will be required to answer. The Strategic Plan and each associated plan should then include criteria for evaluation in relation to evaluation criteria for the overall program. For example, in your Business Case you may have projected that the number of visitors will increase by 10% per year for the first three years. How are you collecting that data? What are starting and end points? What events or demographics may inform or skew data?

In designing a project evaluation plan, follow these general guidelines:

- **Identify outcome and impact** - Use the status of your goals and objectives as the framework for project evaluation. Achievement of a goal creates benefits, which are outcomes. Through measuring outcomes, you can understand the extent of goal achievement.

- **Choose evaluation method** - Examples of methods include: implementation reviews, surveys, questionnaires, focus groups, records analysis, interviews

- **Report on the evaluation** - includes your conclusions about the project’s ability to produce desired change and accomplishing goals and objectives. Using evaluation criteria, explore whether your project’s goals and objectives are fully achieved and whether desired outcomes and impacts have been reached.

**STAGE 3: IMPLEMENT**

3.1 Create a Destination Management Organization

A Destination Management Organization (DMO) plays a key role in the long-term development of a destination by formulating an effective travel and tourism strategy.

For the visitor, DMOs serve as a gateway to a destination. They offer the most current information about a destination’s attractions. They're a one-stop-shop, maintaining a physical presence where visitors can engage with staff, obtain maps, brochures, information, and promotional books and magazines formulated by the DMO and its clients. Every DMO uses strategies that conform to its own budget and targeted markets. For the community, the DMO provides a central business location for all those involved with or affected by the tourism program.

DMOs are typically funded through hotel occupancy taxes, membership dues, improvement districts, and other government resources. DMO members, such as hotels, artisans, attractions, and historic or tourism districts obviously have a keen interest in promoting travel and tourism. Not only does the DMO provide jobs and bring in tax dollars for infrastructure improvements, but it also heightens the profile of a destination. A vibrant tourism destination increases the likelihood that additional restaurants, stores,
festivals, and cultural and sporting events will be attracted and take root in the destination. A DMO is responsible to:

- oversee, create, and implement marketing campaigns and promotions to inspire travelers to visit their destination
- advocate for increased investment to enhance the visitor experience
- formulate campaigns to attract events to their destination that display the destination and its attractions in the most favorable and enticing manner
- interact with leisure, vacation, and business travelers as well as tour operators and travel agents

According to the leading industry group, the Destination Marketing Association International (DMAI), each $1 spent in destination marketing generates $38 in visitor spending across international markets.

### 3.2 Nurture the Community

The purpose of a cultural heritage tourism program is to benefit the community. It should provide economic opportunities for local craftspeople and entrepreneurs and provide a physical place where the community can explore its past and support the continuing evolution of its culture and identity. The program should also meet the needs and expectations of the community’s old and young. For a cultural heritage tourism program to be sustainable, visitors must be able to participate in authentic cultural programs; these require community involvement and support. Therefore, participants in cultural programs should constantly be sought out, nurtured, and supported. But how best to do that?

#### 3.2.1 Social Services Programs

A community is a group of people who share a sense of place, identity, values, and customs. Humans are social beings who typically thrive on social connections. Research where the social needs are in your community. In most communities, social services programs are stretched to capacity, often struggling to provide meaningful social programs to engage the retired and after-school youth. Cultural heritage tourism programs can collaborate with such social programs to include activities such as creating a community art project, writing down traditional stories, recording elders telling stories and sharing traditional knowledge, researching historic places, gathering recordings of traditional music, conducting language classes, and so much more. Work with community social workers, clergy, and teachers to understand the needs of the old and young in your community. Structure your programs around understanding and meeting their needs. Work in harmony with other programs.

#### 3.2.2 Volunteers

To grow a tourism program, you will need dedicated volunteers as well as skilled staff. To ensure you will have enough volunteer support, you will need to understand and structure your program to meet their expectations.

Recent retirees will likely be your primary volunteers. Recent retirees are searching for:

- Worthy and interesting ways to spend their time and give back to the community
• A program with a flexible schedule to come and go as they need
• A social environment to talk, learn, share, and mingle with different ages and perspectives

As life spans increase, recent retirees and couples with grown children are searching for worthy ways of spending their time. This age group can provide your program with a skilled volunteer workforce.

Teenagers and the parents of teenagers are seeking internships and volunteer opportunities to build credentials for job and college applications. Volunteer opportunities in a cultural heritage tourism program can build a young person’s credentials, encourage them to help others, and give back to the community; all of which builds both their confidence and resume. The environment would be safe and provide the teenager a growing appreciation for their community’s roots and history.

Create a volunteer program by establishing a clear purpose, common goals, and a safe respectful environment.

• Focus on people who have a love or curiosity about history and culture
• Identify where the needs are and understand that you can’t be all things to all people
• Analyze existing social, elder, and after-school programs and leverage existing programs
• Identify and nurture leaders
• Establish a programing vision but let the community members develop their own goals
• Maintain an ongoing rhythm of development, identity, and companionship

3.2.3 Nurture & Grow Your Culture
As the community becomes more involved in building the cultural heritage tourism program, treat it like a garden that you nurture and grow. It will need a lot of attention and consistent support.

• Begin with grandparents and elders, not marketing consultants
• Emphasize food, storytelling, hospitality, and sharing
• Focus on handing down knowledge and exploring new methods and approaches
• Encourage a culture of caring for the very young, the ill, and the elderly
• Encourage new ideas and new leaders
• Provide mentors to guide and support

3.2.4 Build Community Pride
Focus on building community in your program. Participate in community events, be collaborative and humble, and support and celebrate neighbouring community’s organizations and events.

3.3 Develop Rich Programming
The best way to develop rich programming is to let the old & young lead. Once you have laid out the mission, vision, and goals of your program, and the volunteers are on-board with your vision, then it’s
time to slowly step back and let the community develop the cultural programming and events. This will keep the culture alive and vibrant.

Second, create a culture of developing new programming. Do not let your original programming concepts dominate or prevent new ideas. If your culture is vibrant and alive, then your programming should reflect that, and new ideas should be encouraged.

Third, generate enthusiasm. As the programming takes shape, begin to advertise it to the local and surrounding communities to generate enthusiasm. Create events, have open houses, have artisan and performers present in local schools, community halls, and retirement homes. Develop a compelling and interesting image of the program to draw more volunteers and support.

And forth, share your excitement. Encourage your volunteers to share their enthusiasm and excitement wherever possible. Setup social media sites by those with the skills and interests to help develop your online community.

3.4 Welcome Visitors as Guests

Welcome visitors as guests. Opening your cultural center and programs to visitors will have an impact on the community. Programs and services that have been developed will need to be tested and improved. The best approach is to begin small with a soft opening. Prepare staff with training and set realistic expectations. It will likely take several months or more for everything to function as was envisioned.

3.5 Support Community Entrepreneurs

As the number of visitors grows, so will the economic opportunities for artists, craftsman, and entrepreneurs. The DMO can assist with training, financing, and market support. The DMO can also manage and license directly related business services to ensure that they do not detract from authenticity and that management and revenue remains with local merchants.

STAGE 4: EVALUATE

4.1 Evaluation Cycle

Successful, sustainable growth of a cultural heritage tourism program requires a clear process and constant feedback, evaluation, and adjustment. The criteria for evaluation identified in Stage 2: Plan, ensures systematic decision-making, provides accountability throughout program development, and allows for adjustments in decisions based on accumulating information. The specific criteria you develop for your program’s Evaluation Plan can be understood within the framework of an ongoing evaluation cycle. This cycle continually calls for revisiting the program’s mission, vision, principles, and goals to ensure that as the program develops it will reinforce, not erode, the foundation. The four stages of the evaluation cycle are as follows:
4.1.1 Analyze

Analyze the ways you can improve the outcomes and impacts that characterize your program’s progress towards achieving its goals. This includes things such as ROI, numbers of visitors, ratio of visitors to staff, visitor feedback, and online presence, etc.

4.1.2 Adjust

Allow for any adjustments identified during analysis in order for your program to continue to progress seamlessly. Adjust your plan to create the best outcomes – forming new partnerships, creating new activities, improving facilities, etc.

2.1.3 Approve

Review requested adjustments to ensure they are sustainable for the long-term health of your program. This involves the input of key members that have become key stakeholders in your cultural heritage tourism program. Clear decision making and general consensus are key.

4.1.4 Implement

Share the tangible experiences that you and your community have created together based on continual careful analysis, adjustments, and agreed-upon approvals.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, cultural heritage tourism seeks to enhance the culture, environment, and well-being of the community and provide a meaningful visitor experience. A sustainable cultural heritage tourism program requires strategically addressing all of a community’s assets to establish and maintain a delicate balance between the sometimes-conflicting needs and expectations of the community and visitors. Careful planning and collaboration are critical.

Establishing a cultural heritage tourism program is a complex and long-term commitment. By following the steps outlined in this paper, from envisioning through planning to implementation and evaluation, you can create a process that leads to a sustainable program. Your program can achieve a community’s vision to find economic opportunities for local artisans and entrepreneurs, provide a place where the community can explore its past and support the continuing evolution of its culture and identity, and share your cultural pride and place with visitors who you can welcome as guests.