



## **BUSINESS PLAN 2010**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

After a period of study, reflection and adjustment, the Cowboy Trail Tourism Association is back in the business of promoting tourism in on the Eastern Slopes of Alberta.

With newly revised bylaws that better reflect today's situation and empower its business members, the organization is coming out of dormancy with a clear vision of who it serves, and how it will provide members with good value for their membership and advertising money.

This plan outlines the manner in which the CTTA will attract and better serve both members and tourists in 2010, and do so in a manner that is financially responsible.

Key decisions for the 2010 year are:

- An emphasis will be placed on promoting the Cowboy Trail more actively through an improved, more interactive website.
- The CTTA will work with communities to develop and promote "by-way" tours enticing day-trippers to their region from the major neighbouring urban centers
- The CTTA will collaborate with the Alberta Outfitters Association, the Alberta Country Vacations Association and other industry groups to improve overall effectiveness of marketing
- Membership in the CTTA will be de-linked from advertising in the guide booklet, thereby allowing smaller businesses to get involved at a lower cost.
- The CTTA will continue to produce and distribute its highly successful guide booklet
- The debt will be paid down gradually over several years.

## **1. GOALS OF THE COWBOY TRAIL TOURISM ASSOCIATION**

As proclaimed in the bylaws, the objects of the Cowboy Trail Tourism Association (CTTA) shall be to:

- a. Promote the cultural, heritage, and adventure opportunities afforded within the Cowboy Trail Corridor to tourists seeking these experiences, products and services;
- b. Assist communities, attractions and businesses offering tourist experiences within the Cowboy Trail Corridor to develop, coordinate and collaborate with each other to mutual benefit; and
- c. Help the general public find the cultural, heritage and adventure activities and experiences they seek within the Cowboy Trail Corridor.

The aim of this Business Plan is to outline the manner in which these objectives will be pursued in 2010/11.

## **2. MARKETING PLAN**

Philosophy. All marketing must be undertaken within the framework of a very limited budget. Cooperation with members willing to “carry the flag” together with their own, and collaboration with other organizations will be necessary to achieve exposure economically.

Marketing in 2010 will take 4 forms:

1. Shows and direct marketing
2. Internet
3. Brochure production and distribution
4. Brand promotion

### **2.1 Shows and Direct Marketing:**

a. Mini-shows with CWA in:

- Spokane;
- Seattle;
- Portland;
- Sacramento;
- San Rafael;
- San Francisco;
- Paolo Alto;
- Napa/Sonoma; and
- Monterey

- b. Rural Roots in collaboration with AOA and Dames on the Range 20-21 Mar
- c. Agi-days with the town of Black Diamond and the Bar U
- d. Promotion along site Alberta Historical Sites at the shows they attend
- e. Alberta Showcase 6 May and the Outdoor and Adventure Show 27-28 Mar with Moose Mountain Adventures
- f. Other joint opportunities as may economically present themselves

## 2.2 Internet

Update "thecowboytrail.com" with the following enhancements:

- a. An interactive map similar to that on the "Crown of the Continent" website.
- b. Develop daytrip "by-way tours" starting from major cities and showing suggested daytrip routes, attractions and activities. These will be submitted by member communities, and formatted as PDF maps downloadable from the website.
- c. Put membership information and forms on the website
- d. Use of reciprocal links to full advantage

## 2.3 Guide Brochure Production & Distribution

The brochure has always been our primary marketing tool and will continue to play a leading role. Its format will remain largely unchanged in 2010 since it is very popular with tourists. All aspects of brochure production will be contracted to Chuck Lee and Associates. Assuming the same number of advertisers and similar costs to last year, advertising revenue will equal or exceed production costs.

50,000 copies will be ordered (same number as 2009), with delivery by May.

Absolute deadline for guide brochure advertising (text, photos, money) is 5 April.

We will need a new guide brochure by Mar 2011. The campaign to find advertisers for the 2011 brochure will begin in December to meet that target.

## 2.4 Products

Highway signs are currently available for sale. These are quite popular and we will continue to sell them as orders come in.

A Product Development Committee will be formed to Investigate licensing promotion companies to use our logo on mugs, T-shirts etc. 5% is proposed as the license fee, and companies looking into this would be encouraged to consult members to solicit demand information and orders.

There appears to be demand for the maps in a larger format for sale or distribution. This will be investigated.

## 3. FINANCIAL PLAN

### 3.1 Current Situation.

We go into this year with \$26,823 in outstanding liabilities. The greatest of these is a loan from Community Futures for roughly \$15,980. As bad as this sounds, it is an improvement from last year. In 2010 we will continue to chisel away slowly at the debt, while providing a good service at a fair price to our membership.

### 3.2 Budget.

The Financial Plan is tied directly to the Membership Drive, as memberships are currently the sole source of revenue.

Revenue - assumptions:

50 Basic memberships @ \$225 =	\$11,250
50 Enhanced memberships @ \$325 =	\$16,250
10 Community memberships @\$500 =	\$ 5,000
<b>TOTAL MEMBERSHIP REVENUE =</b>	<b>\$32,500</b>

Anticipated Operating Expenses:

Website hosting, enhancements & maintenance:	\$16,000
Printing, postage, phones:	\$ 500
Membership software:	\$ 600
Banking and service charges:	\$ 500
Minimum Loan payments:	\$ 2,400
Brochure distribution:	\$ 3,000
Show participation expenses:	\$ 400
Travel:	\$ 500
Memberships:	\$ 1,200
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$25,100</b>

Under these conditions, the CTTA will be able to pay down roughly \$7,400 of its outstanding debts. If revenues fall short of expectations, some expenses will be reduced, deferred or dropped.

TDR funding will be used to augment marketing as much as possible.

Community Initiative grants will be applied for to offset some of the operating expenses. If granted, that will free more revenue to market and service the debt.

The guide brochure will be treated as a separate, self-supporting initiative.

#### **4. CUSTOMER SERVICE PLAN**

Since the days of having full-time paid staff and an office, phone number and all that goes with it, we have not been good at responding to inquiries and seizing opportunities. This will change in 2010.

Starting February all inquiries will be forwarded to Creative Western Adventures (CWA), a receptive tour operator that has also been a member of the CTTA for many years. If the inquiry is a simple one they will reply simply, but if it is one that lends itself to packaging a tour or up-selling, they will serve the customer on a commissioned basis. The intention is that the CTTA's customers will get the service they need, the operators will get customers, and Creative Western Adventures will get a commission for the service provided.

This approach is experimental for 2010 and may need to be reviewed at some point if the amount of commissioned sales generated is not proportionate to the time spent by CWA answering non-commissionable inquiries. CWA is to keep records of the total number of inquiries and new business generated by them.

CWA will approach CTTA members individually to become more familiar with what they are offering and determine if they have commissionable products or services.

#### **5. MEMBERSHIP SERVICE PLAN**

##### **5.1 Improved Member Services**

Our members are also customers of the CTTA, and need to get good value for their membership fees. It is felt that the slow increasing of membership fees over the years had the effect of driving out small business members, so this year membership has been decoupled from guide brochure advertising.

In order to serve our members better, we undertake in 2010 to:

1. Conduct a survey of members to identify better their needs and priorities
2. Provide effective marketing at reasonable cost
3. Promote member-to-member and member to executive communication
4. Maintain membership records through use of modern software.
5. Separate the membership and advertising fees
6. Update the website frequently, so new members get posted soon after joining and delinquent members are dropped
7. Provide a “bounty” for members who are active in attracting new members to join the CTTA.

## 5.2 Performance Objectives

Our objective for 2010 is to increase our membership to 100, with members throughout the Cowboy Trail Corridor and in all business categories.

## 5.3 Community Role

The communities of the Cowboy Trail are needed to continue playing a leadership role, as we are a community-based organization. This is particularly important in the regions where the CTTA hasn't yet developed a strong presence.

Among the roles for community leaders are:

- The development of day trip “by-way” maps highlighting the attractions and activities of their region and enticing day-trippers from the major centers to visit.
- Grouping local businesses and attractions together in a guide brochure segment highlighting things to do in their community or region.
- Helping businesses complete funding applications for TDR and other grants.

## 5.4 Bounties

To encourage further promotion of the CTTA, members who recruit new members will get a \$50 rebate off their fees.