

2026 TACTICAL PLAN (MRDT)

Overview and Update to Five-Year Strategic Business Plan

This is the second Tactical Plan of the Five-Year Strategic Business Plan. Material updates include; the Aqualink water taxi project has been transferred to the Salish Sea Inter-Island Transportation Society, and the mobile visitor services program has been discontinued due to unsuccessful grant funding. SGITP will continue to support inter-island transportation and visitor servicing under the leadership of partner organizations while exploring alternative opportunities.

This 2026 Tactical Plan and Budget sets forth the Southern Gulf Islands Tourism Partnership Society's expectations for the 2026 calendar year respecting the Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT). Those seeking more context to the 2026 plan can read the [Five-Year Strategic Business Plan](#).

Strategic Direction

Vision Statement

To create a visitor economy that works for everyone— an accessible, interconnected archipelago where visitor experiences are in harmony with local community values to shape the destination better than we found it.

Mission Statement

The Southern Gulf Islands Tourism Partnership (SGITP) develops, promotes, and advocates for regenerative exploration to our region by focusing on seasonal and geographic dispersion, visitor education, workforce housing, and local partnerships. Working in collaboration with local government, First Nations, businesses, not-for-profit organizations, and residents, SGITP harnesses local talent and leverages creative solutions to improve the quality of life in our region— economically, socially, environmentally, and culturally.

Strategic Areas of Focus

- 1) **Destination Marketing:** Create compelling marketing and promotions that raise awareness about the values important to our communities, inspiring like-minded people to visit our islands responsibly.
- 2) **Regenerative Destination Development:** Create conditions for positive experiences by emphasizing sustainability and community engagement, ensuring the Southern Gulf Islands thrive for both residents and visitors.
- 3) **Community and Industry Outreach & Partnerships:** Develop local, regional, and provincial partnerships to foster inter-island cooperation and contribute to a sustainable and resilient tourism sector.
- 4) **Organizational Excellence:** Manage effectively to ensure the organization's financial sustainability and long-term industry and community support and engagement.

Goals and Objectives

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase Revenues: Increase overnight stays. ● Seasonal and Geographic Dispersion: Disperse visitors across islands seasonally and geographically, optimizing attraction usage and mitigating overcrowding issues. ● Enhance Events: Improve the coordination and timing of events on each island to disperse visitors strategically and provide a more enriching experience. ● Visitor Services: Increase outreach to visitors on all islands encouraging visitor dispersion and regenerative visitor behaviour. ● Resident Sentiment: Increase community support for tourism ● Partner Engagement: Increase partner engagement in SGITP programs and services ● Increase Visitor Participation in Destination Protection: Reduce water use by visitors and support water conservation efforts by government and NGOs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>2% increase annually</i> ● <i>5% increase annually</i> ● <i>Event coordination in place by 2025 (complete)</i> ● <i>Change: coordinate with local partners on visitor servicing</i> ● <i>3% increase by 2029</i> ● <i>2% increase annually</i> ● <i>2% decrease in water consumption annually</i> |
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Key Learnings and Conclusions

An annual review of SGITP's progress on the current year's activities showed the following key learnings and conclusions:

- **Digital infrastructure is a major barrier to effectiveness.** Both the website and core software are buggy and create extra workload while other digital tools have poor integration with the low-tech adoption of local partners. There's a clear need for a reliable tech stack to maximize productivity in a small team.
- **Partner participation is shallow.** This limits referral performance, cooperative marketing efforts, industry training, and product and experience development. Engagement efforts must be diversified and communication improved.
- **Marketing outputs are strong,** especially with recent developments in SEO, influencer marketing, and media relations. They also encourage better relationship-building with local operators. Improving tools and creating partner participation guidelines can strengthen this further.
- **Measurement gaps limit both decision-making and engagement.** Limited data is available for our region; STAR reports and Mobilescapes data aren't reliable, while AirDNA is an incomplete tool. Relying on BC Ferries visitor volume cross-referenced with MRDT revenue means that measurement and evaluation tools are long-delayed. In the absence of timely data products, there needs to be a consistent cycle for evaluating and reporting the available data to improve utility.
- **Research and governance are both showing strong progress** toward long-term strategic maturity and organizational excellence. Board governance updates and financial management processes are nearing completion, making internal management significantly more professional. The research pipeline is in place with results pending.

Overall, capacity constraints shape nearly every challenge, from organizational effectiveness to outreach and partnerships to efficient marketing. Strategic simplification has worked, but going forward, it will be essential to establish the right staff and contract support to effectively deliver on both the strategic and annual tactical plans.

Strategies for 2026

- **Destination Marketing:**
 - Continue to refine the marketing mix to improve efficiency, reach, and measurable results.
 - Enhance the website and tech stack to better execute campaigns and conversions.
 - Grow travel media initiatives to increase earned media.
 - Grow newsletter subscribers to increase warm leads.
 - Continue developing social media collaborations and influencer marketing.
 - Refine the printed collateral mix to support local partners with visitor servicing.
- **Regenerative Destination Development:**
 - Advocate for regenerative destination management.
 - Explore industry training opportunities that support visitor-focused businesses.
 - Refine event coordination to strengthen adoption and engagement.
 - Create consistency in data analysis and reporting.
- **Community and Industry Outreach & Partnerships:**
 - Identify diverse avenues to strengthen engagement with local partners across all islands.
 - Develop clearer ways to inform residents, elected leaders, and electoral area staff about the value of tourism.
 - Develop program guidelines to inform partner participation in marketing and training initiatives.
- **Organizational Excellence:**
 - Finalize board governance updates to strengthen organizational clarity and accountability.
 - Streamline financial procedures to improve efficiency, accuracy, and transparency.
 - Pursue grant opportunities that advance strategic priorities.
 - Establish staff or contract supports that expand capacity.

Key Content Themes:

- *Arts and culture*
- *Food and culinary*
- *Nature and ecotourism*
- *Wellness*

Target Markets

	Primary	Secondary
Geographic	Vancouver and Victoria (drive-distance BC)	Major cities in Alberta and Washington
Demographic	Age: 30–55 Household income: ~\$150,000 Life stage: Singles and couples without children	Age: 25-55+ Household income: ~\$100,000 Life stage: Young families, retirees, and remote workers
Activity-based	Nature Arts and culture Food and culinary Wellness	Cycling Paddling Agritourism
Desired length of stay	3-4 nights	5-7 nights
Traveller segments	Culture Seekers Outdoor Explorers	Purpose-driven families Refined Globetrotters

Project Plan

Major Category	Destination Marketing: Media Advertising and Production
Activity	Off-season promotion
Tactics	Print, Paid Search/Search Engine Marketing, Paid Social Media, Sector Partnerships
	Implementation Plan
Short Description	Our marketing efforts promote off-season (October through April) travel to the Southern Gulf Islands through our key pillars; arts, food, nature, and wellness.
Quantifiable Objectives	• Increase new website visitors • Increase newsletter subscribers • Increase outbound referrals to partner websites
Rationale	Inviting travellers from October to April increases off-season business thereby increasing viability of local businesses, longer-term local employment, and increased year-round community services for locals. It also reduces the strain on the environment and local infrastructure that occurs during peak season. Using digital advertising to target values-aligned visitors increases brand awareness and drives travellers along the path to purchase, while also maximizing ROAS and providing opportunities for learning and refinement.
Action Steps	1. create advertisements using photo, video, and written assets that captivate and motivate visitors and potential visitors to visit southerngulfislands.com and partner websites, as well as subscribe to the newsletter 2. program advertisements and continue to monitor, learn, and refine 3. create and distribute visitor newsletters 4. explore opportunities for targeted print and out-of-home advertising 5. support sector partners with content and visuals
Partnerships	Advertising partners include accommodators and operators. Sector partners include; Paddle BC, BC Bird Trail, BC Ale Trail, Ahoy BC, RE:BC, Farmer's Markets BC, Arts BC. These sector contributions are matched with Coop Program funding by applications and agreements through each recognized Sector Organization and our participation uses MRDT funding only.
Resources	SGITP staff Digital marketing agency
Funding Sources	Municipal Regional District Tax (MRDT) Destination BC (DBC) Co-operative Marketing Partnership Program (except Coop-supported sector partnerships)
Timeframe	Ongoing

Major Category	Destination Marketing: Website Hosting, Development & Maintenance
Activity	Website evolution and improvements
Tactics	SEO and GEO, Usability updates
	Implementation Plan
Short Description	Our website, southerngulfislands.com , is the home of our digital presence. This will provide ongoing website improvements to increase traffic and time on site as well as improve search engine rankings. We will continue to improve website usability by improving keywords, enhancing local business and event listings, updating page formats and CTAs, and improving the mobile experience.
Quantifiable Objectives	• Increase direct traffic • Increase average engagement time • Increase outbound referrals to partner websites
Rationale	A more interactive and engaging, mobile-first website will ensure the consumer continues toward purchase, finding the inspiration and information for booking and trip planning. Ongoing

	improvements are required to better engage consumers in trip planning and booking, as well as to rank accurately and prominently in search engines and AI.
Action Steps	1. Maintain SEO services, implement GEO 2. Engage agency to improve user interface/user experience 3. Monitor website analytics
Partnerships	Accommodators Operators
Resources	SGITP staff SEO service provider (contractor) Digital marketing agency
Funding Sources	MRDT DBC Co-op funding
Timeframe	Ongoing

Major Category	Destination Marketing: Social Media
Activity	Social media management
Tactics	Organic social media management, DAM, influencer marketing
Implementation Plan	
Short Description	Engage an active and growing digital community via social media with a focus on brand-aligned short-form video, user-generated content (UGC), and targeted influencer marketing partnerships.
Quantifiable Objectives	• Increase engagement rates • Increase link clicks, saves, and shares
Rationale	Posting fresh and captivating content organically on social media channels is a cost-effective way of developing and amplifying brand awareness for the Southern Gulf Islands and spreading the “social proof” that the Southern Gulf Islands are a desirable destination. It has also proved useful and desirable to local operators and accommodations.
Action Steps	1. plan content across social platforms based on seasonal priorities and performance data 2. source relevant UGC 3. create short-form videos 4. initiate targeted influencer partnerships 5. report monthly on social analytics and optimize for improvements 6. develop guidelines to inform and encourage partner participation
Partnerships	Accommodators Operators
Resources	SGITP staff Social media management provider (contractor) CrowdRiff platform Influencers
Funding Sources	MRDT DBC Co-op funding
Timeframe	Ongoing

Major Category	Destination Marketing: Consumer Shows
Activity	Consumer Shows
Tactics	Consumer shows
Implementation Plan	

Short Description	Attend values-aligned consumer shows to engage potential travellers in-person and turn warm leads into a long-term engaged audience.
Quantifiable Objectives	• Increase newsletter subscribers • Increase social media followers
Rationale	Consumer shows offer SGITP the opportunity to engage with motivated travellers who value nature and unique outdoor experiences, and to encourage visitation during the off-season.
Action Steps	1. book targeted consumer shows in key markets (Vancouver and Calgary Outdoor Shows) 2. prepare display and giveaway materials
Partnerships	Accommodators Operators Vancouver Island region CDMOs
Resources	SGITP staff Printed marketing collateral Merchandise
Funding Sources	MRDT DBC Co-op funding
Timeframe	March 2026

Major Category	Destination Marketing: Collateral Production and Distribution
Activity	Printed collateral
Tactics	Visitor inspiration guide Community map program
	Implementation Plan
Short Description	To create and distribute a regionally-focused inspiration guide that serves to generate awareness for travel to the Southern Gulf Islands, and to provide support for community-driven initiatives to create locally-relevant map materials that support visitor servicing.
Quantifiable Objectives	• Amount of collateral distributed • Geographic radius of distribution
Rationale	A printed visitor guide distributed beyond key markets inspires new stays and geographic dispersion. Intended as a biennial guide, it's a foundation for developing potential future advertising revenue. Community-driven initiatives to create detailed local maps will create strong, positive partnerships, ensure information is accurate and appropriate to the local context, and better manage staff capacity.
Action Steps	1. edit and reprint guide as needed 2. evaluate distribution locations as needed 3. create guidelines for a community map program 4. open applications to community groups for funding support, subject to reporting requirements, project suitability, and positive partnership alignment
Partnerships	Accommodators Community non-profit organizations
Resources	SGITP staff Hemlock Printer Certified Folder
Funding Sources	MRDT DBC Co-op funding Feature advertisers

Timeframe	April 2026 (community map program implementation) August 2026 (guides)
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Major Category	Destination Marketing: Media and Travel Trade
Activity	Travel Media
Tactics	Media trips, media relations
	Implementation Plan
Short Description	In order to properly leverage travel media relations activities and build earned media over the long term, SGITP must create foundational resources to support this work including creating a media kit, story starters, and hosting FAM trips.
Quantifiable Objectives	• Number of media hosted • Number of media placements • Referrals to southerngulfislands.com
Rationale	Earned media offers high brand credibility and partner support. It will increase knowledge and understanding of the Southern Gulf Islands and support seasonal and geographic dispersion.
Action Steps	1. engage media relations agency 2. support with content, assets, and hosting 3. develop guidelines to inform and encourage partner participation
Partnerships	Accommodators Operators
Resources	SGITP staff Media relations agency 4VI
Funding Sources	MRDT DBC Co-op funding DBC Visiting journalist program Local partnerships
Timeframe	Mid-October through mid-May

Major Category	Destination Marketing: Consumer Focused Asset Development
Activity	Assets
Tactics	Short-form video, Photography, Written materials
	Implementation Plan
Short Description	Southern Gulf Islands Tourism will continue to develop written content, captivating images, and short-form video on an as-needed basis in alignment with the Brand Guidelines (which have been developed in alignment with the DBC brand) that communicate the unique identity and value proposition of the Southern Gulf Islands. We will require model releases and third-party rights so they can contribute to the Content Commonwealth.
Quantifiable Objectives	• number of assets generated • number of assets added to the BC Content Hub • page views for written content
Rationale	All marketing activities need to be supported by captivating content in the form of images, videos, and written content. While our asset library is now well-established, there remain unfilled needs.
Action Steps	1. identify specific photo/video needs to fill gaps in asset library 2. develop photo and video briefs and contract local creators to source and deliver finished products 3. partner with local organizations for brand-aligned shoots that also meet local needs 4. develop written content that increases the website's relevancy and searchability

Partnerships	Accommodations Operators
Resources	Photographers Videographers Local writers
Funding Sources	SGITP staff Partners MRDT DBC Co-op funding
Timeframe	Ongoing

Major Category	Regenerative Destination Development
Activity	Product Experience Enhancement
Tactics	Experience Development (event coordination)
	Implementation Plan
Short Description	Improving opportunities for events, experiences, and other offerings to reach and attract a visitor market via a regional cultural calendar, GulfIslandEvents.com.
Quantifiable Objectives	• number of events posted • number of partnerships created
Rationale	The slow and laidback nature of the islands make it difficult for visitors to access the events and experiences that give them their character and reputation. By maintaining a regional cultural calendar that serves as a central cultural and entertainment hub, visitors not only have more reasons to plan trips but are better serviced during their experience in-destination. At the same time, the calendar also contributes to resident satisfaction by filling a gap in community access to information.
Action Steps	1. Identify opportunities to create more visibility for and engagement with the calendar 2. Continue to build relationships with event producers to encourage them to post on the calendar
Partnerships	Salt Spring Arts
Resources	SGITP staff GulfIslandEvents.com cultural calendar Salt Spring Arts calendar administrator (elsewhere called event coordination)
Funding Sources	MRDT
Timeframe	Ongoing

Major Category	Regenerative Destination Development
Activity	Research, Evaluation and Analytics
Tactics	Visitor survey, Economic impact study, Quarterly Industry Reports, Resident Sentiment
	Implementation Plan
Short Description	Broader data of the Greater Victoria area and Vancouver Island rarely provide accurate insight about the activity on the islands. Visitor and economic information specific to this region will support SGITP tactical plans, destination development efforts, and relationship-building with local non-profit organizations and government officials.

Quantifiable Objectives	We plan to transition from AirDNA to DBC's Destination Insight Platform. Align Consulting continues to be engaged and helps us compare existing AirDNA data, MRDT revenue, and BC Ferries data to provide meaningful insights about overnight stays in the region. SGITP will keep using this information in its work. • completion of studies • data available and shared with partners and communities • key learnings derived from the data
Rationale	Research is essential to inform ongoing marketing and destination development and management efforts.
Action Steps	1. continue work with Align Consulting to conduct a visitor survey, economic impact data, and overall annual visitor volume. Establish consistency in annual reporting. 2. pull data quarterly for analysis and reporting back to stakeholders via industry newsletters 3. report findings to Southern Gulf Islands Tourism Board and industry members
Partnerships	Accommodators Electoral area directors
Resources	SGITP staff Align Consulting DBC Destination Insight Platform
Funding Sources	MRDT
Timeframe	Ongoing

Major Category	Community and Industry Outreach & Partnerships
Activity	Local and provincial partner engagement
Tactics	Stakeholder website, stakeholder e-newsletter, interactions with local tourism partners, virtual office hours, meet regularly with local government staff and elected officials, build relationships with Indigenous partners and local organizations, engage in provincial and regional tourism industry activities
	Implementation Plan
Short Description	Local, regional, and provincial partnerships are vital for establishing a strong foundation and fostering inter-island cooperation, contributing to a sustainable and resilient tourism sector.
Quantifiable Objectives	• number of tourism partners participating in SGITP program offerings • partner engagement in SGITP communications (newsletter open rate, etc.) • number of member interactions • maintain tourism business/partner database • strengthen industry partnerships
Rationale	SGITP aims to actively engage partners in our programs, ensuring they receive consistent communications and outreach. We also strive to build strong relationships with the local government to promote ongoing collaboration and emphasize the value of tourism. Additionally, SGITP will act as a representative for the local industry at the provincial and regional level, presenting challenges, successes, and opportunities to our partners for consideration.
Action Steps	1. provide regular updates to partners via the SGITP newsletter (campaigns, grant opportunities, training opportunities, etc.) 2. maintain and regularly update the corporate section of the website 3. Interact with tourism partner businesses in one-on-one conversations to share opportunities and challenges and inform advocacy efforts. Explore diverse engagement channels. 4. convene regular meetings with local government staff and elected officials to provide updates on SGITP activities, discuss opportunities to collaborate and advocate on issues that impact tourism.

	- educate residents, elected leaders, and local government staff about the value of tourism on the Southern Gulf Islands - continue to build relationships with local Indigenous partners and organizations regarding tourism opportunities. - continued participation in industry and sector organizations, including BC Destination Marketing Association and the Tourism Industry Association of BC - attend provincial and regional meetings and conferences and engage in training opportunities
Partnerships	Electoral area directors Islands Trust trustees Indigenous partners Local organizations (i.e. conservancies, arts organizations, etc.) 4VI TIABC BCDMOA DBC
Resources	SGITP staff
Funding Sources	MRDT
Timeframe	Ongoing

Major Category	Organization Excellence
Activity	Effective DMO management
Tactics	Fee-for-service funding, Grants, Board governance and financial management, MRDT reporting
	Implementation Plan
Short Description	Ensure effective governance, financial management, and bi-annual MRDT reporting
Quantifiable Objectives	- fee-for-service funding secured annually from the Capital Regional District - sufficient board nominations received for AGM - number of successfully secured grants - successful MRDT reporting bi-annually and renewal in 2029
Rationale	Effective DMO management is essential for ensuring the organization's financial sustainability and long-term industry and community support and engagement.
Action Steps	- secure annual fee-for-service funding from the Capital Regional District - conduct quarterly board and committee meetings as required - finalize updated board governance for improved organizational effectiveness - Finalize updated financial management practices to ensure the SGITP's financial stability, and ease of annual reporting - Continue to seek grant opportunities as available that align with Five-Year Strategic Plan and One-Year Tactical Plans - complete required bi-annual MRDT planning and reporting (November & May)
Partnerships	Electoral Area directors (CRD) SGITP Board Governance Consultant Financial Consultant DBC
Resources	SGITP staff and board
Funding Sources	MRDT

Performance Measures

	Output	Outcome
	We know we are on the right track when...	We have succeeded when there is an increase in...
Effective Tourism Marketing, Programs, and Projects	- all marketing and projects are built on a brand concept, which is seen through all tactics, and each tactic, where possible, is continually refined to maximize referrals to Southerngulfislands.com and then partner websites - we see positive metrics resulting from social ads, search engine ads, and programmatic digital (display) ads. - print advertising content partnerships result in greater impressions - website improvements (measured in #referrals, pageviews, sessions, reduced bounce rate) - Southern Gulf Islands Tourism experiences organic social media community growth and increased engagements with content - email marketing campaigns receive greater engagement and generate higher quantities of qualified leads - printed collateral experiences greater distribution numbers	- visitor volume when and where it is desired (i.e. dispersion and seasonality concerns are addressed) - length of stay increases providing more viability for businesses - average daily room rate - approximate return on investment - transportation numbers (BC Ferries traffic)
Marketing efforts are coordinated and complementary to provincial marketing strategies and tactics	- content production efforts result in a greater volume of image, video and written content developed that is BC-brand aligned and can be contributed to the Content Commonwealth - there is growth in the number of articles/earned media that come through Global Marketing (DBC) and the Travel Media team (4VI) - Southern Gulf Islands Tourism and the Southern Gulf Islands' experience shoulder season product enhancement through festival and event investment	- the number of new tourism businesses and initiatives in the Southern Gulf Islands region - the number of attendees at festivals and events increases
Effective local-level stakeholder support, and inter-community collaboration	- there is increased participation in cooperative marketing opportunities offered by Southern Gulf Islands Tourism - there is increased communication and participation in Southern Gulf Islands programs and activities	- visitor volume in the off-season increases - dispersion across the Southern Gulf Islands of visitor volume - dispersion across seasons of visitor volume
Metrics for regenerative tourism	- destination development ideas and additional ideas to be generated are integrated into a coherent whole - product and service gaps are identified - strategies to manage peak demand are identified - priority actions/projects for funding are recommended	- partners better understand the role, and goals, of a destination management organization - resident sentiment and resident support for tourism increases