

SECTION 3

DREAMING...

Where Do You Want to Be?

Visitor Friendly Alberta

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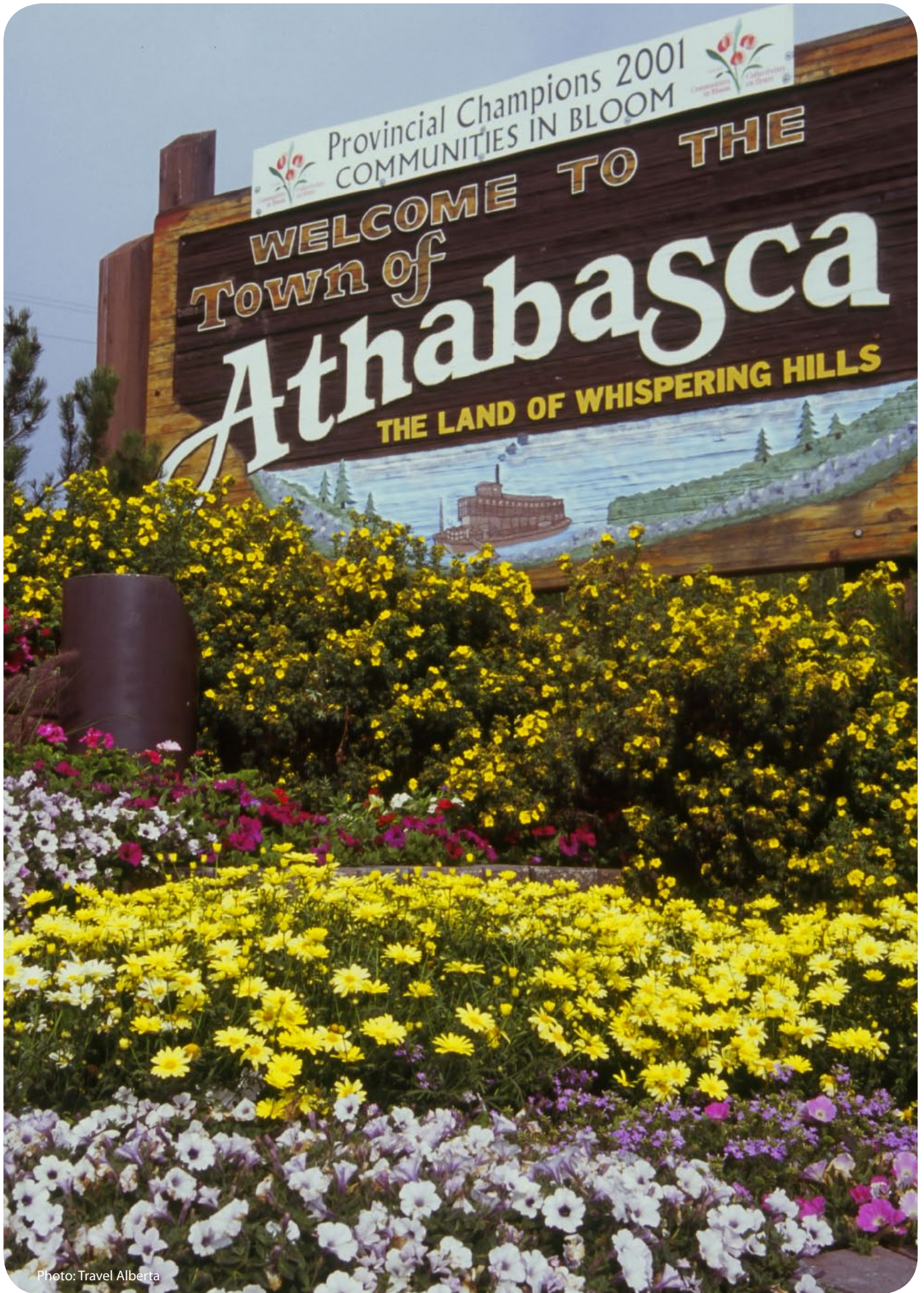


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Tip

Suggested agendas for each session are located in the Section Tools.

Session 1 – Dreaming

Suggested time to complete:	3 – 3 ½ hours
Suggested preparation:	Review sections 1, 2 and 3 of the guide
Session goal:	Orient the group to the project and stimulate thinking about visitor friendliness.
Topics covered in this session:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Visitor friendliness: what does it mean to you and your community?• Why be more visitor friendly?• Who are your visitors? A simplified market assessment• Dreaming – how do you see your community in the future?
Suggested materials:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flip chart or white board + digital camera/smart phone for recording white board information• Visitor Friendly Guide for each group member - either paper or electronic copy• Current tourism marketing plan• Computer with LCD projector for completing fillable forms as a group

Your first session is intended to orient the group to the project and to stimulate thinking around visitor friendliness. The group facilitator should guide group discussions. Each topic has a work sheet. Document discussions using a flip-chart, white board or computer with LCD projector. If a computer is used, enter information directly into the fillable worksheets. At the end of



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the Working Session, transfer the key points to the electronic Summary Forms.

1. Visitor Friendliness: What Does It Mean to You and Your Community?

What does “visitor friendly” mean to you? The appeal or attractiveness of a community involves much more than what to see and do. Think about the five visitor friendly categories and how these relate to your community.



Tip

Using flip charts can help focus group discussions, stimulate ideas and record key points. If you use a white board, take digital photos to record information before you erase.

Remember

A community that is visitor friendly thinks about how visitors see and experience their community—and makes the visit easy, comfortable and enjoyable.



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Worksheet #1.1: What Does It Mean to Be Visitor Friendly?

Think like a tourist – when you visit other communities, what kind of attributes leave a positive impression on you?

Think of the places you've visited and what made them memorable. Did you feel welcome? What was the overall ambience or feeling of the community? Was it easy to navigate? Were your travel needs met?

What about a place that left an unfavourable impression? What were the reasons? Did you receive rude service? Perhaps the streets felt unsafe. Or did you think, "The place was great, except for ..."

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Imagine visiting your community for the first time. Think about the entrance to the community, the level of town beautification, the signage, the visitor information centre and the quality of service. What would your impressions be as a visitor?

Based on your experiences as a tourist, what are some ways your community could be more visitor friendly?



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2. Why Be More Visitor Friendly? Benefits of This Project

Your group needs a good understanding of why your community wants to become more visitor friendly. Identifying the reasons for working on this project will help keep your group motivated and focused. Having a clear picture of the benefits will make it easier to prepare an action plan that is relevant and meaningful to your community.

Consider the following points and expand upon these from your community's perspective. Make sure that you record key benefits and reasons on the Summary Forms at the end of this section so the group can refer back to them during the Action Planning phase.



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Worksheet #1.2: Why Be More Visitor Friendly?

What is the current level of support for tourism and enhancing your community's visitor friendliness? Is the timing right to do this?

What are the potential impacts of increasing tourism in your community?

What are the benefits to residents, businesses and the community at large?

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How would strengthening your community's visitor friendliness affect your visitors stay and impressions of your community?

What are the types of economic return that could be gained from becoming more visitor friendly? Remember, an economic goal of tourism is to bring more money into your community than is leaving your community.

Are there other reasons to become more visitor friendly?

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3. Who Are Your Visitors? A Simplified Market Assessment

All communities play a role in tourism and attract visitors, whether or not a community is actively pursuing tourism. It could be a small role – perhaps travellers stop to refuel at a local gas station or to pick up a snack, or residents host friends and family from out of town, who spend money at an attraction or local restaurant. Or it could be a larger role where visitors are drawn to experience special events and local attractions. Who comes to your community should be a factor in thinking about visitor friendliness, since each type may require different types of service, amenities, attractions, or transportation and access needs.

Tip

Attractions draw visitors to your community – a museum, festival, golf course or historic main street. Visitor services and amenities support a visitor's stay – a gas station, Visitor Information Centre, accommodations, day-use area, bank, or restaurant. Some activities, such as shopping, might be both an attraction and an amenity.



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Conducting a detailed analysis of who visits your community can involve a lot of work, time and resources. This guide presents a simplified approach that focuses on the big picture and general observations about who your visitors are and what they are looking for in your community.

Use the collective wisdom of the working group to discuss the following series of questions in the worksheet below. Support your assumptions with evidence, if possible. You may have to do some more research and report your findings at the next session. Some good sources for additional information include:

- Your current tourism marketing plan, if available
- Google maps or a local business directory (for identifying key amenities)
- Community event calendar
- Hotel/motel guest information (for point of origin, busy seasons)
- Guest books from museums or visitor information centres

Tip

Record or 'park' ideas and possible solutions that come up during discussions. Consider these in the action planning phase.

This worksheet will be completed in two sessions:

Session 1:

Provide a response in the first row based on collective wisdom and the information you have now.

Indicate sources for the information.

Before the Next Session:

What else do you need to know? Identify information gaps and assign people who will do more research and report.

Session 2:

Fill in results and identify additional information that you will need to address in your Action Plan.

At the end of each session, transfer the information from the worksheets to the [Summary Form 1.B: Simplified Market Assessment](#) found at the end of this section.



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Worksheet # 1.3: Simplified Market Assessment

What types of visitors come to your community? Are they day visitors, en route overnight visitors, longer stay visitors? Use these categories to define your key tourism markets. See Food for Thought, Digging Deeper.

Session 1:
Response:

How do you know this is true? Supporting information:

Before next session: Follow up information needed and person/people responsible:

Session 2:
Results of additional research:

Next steps:
Information gaps to address in your Action Plan:

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Generally, what is it about your community that attracts your key markets to stop or visit?
What is the draw?

(e.g. visit friends and family, attractions, festivals and events, unique landmarks, your location en route to other destinations, etc.)

Session 1:
Response:

How do you know this is true? Supporting information:

Before next session: Follow up information needed and person/people responsible:

Session 2:
Results of additional research:

Next steps:
Information gaps to address in your Action Plan:



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What are the key attractions and activities that attract your key markets to stop, visit, or stay longer?

Session 1:
Response:

How do you know this is true? Supporting information:

Before next session: Follow up information needed and person/people responsible:

Session 2:
Results of additional research:

Next steps:
Information gaps to address in your Action Plan:

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What are the key visitor support services and amenities that your community offers to visitors?

(e.g. gas station, bank, internet, visitor information centre, accommodation, grocery stores, pharmacy, liquor stores, public washrooms, retail/arts/crafts/souvenir stores, etc.)

Session 1:
Response:

How do you know this is true? Supporting information:

Before next session: Follow up information needed and person/people responsible:

Session 2:
Results of additional research:

Next steps:
Information gaps to address in your Action Plan:



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When do the majority of your key markets come to visit?

(i.e. seasonality – summer, fall, spring, winter; weekends / weekday)

Session 1:

Response:

How do you know this is true? Supporting information:

Before next session: Follow up information needed and person/people responsible:

Session 2: Results of additional research:

Next steps: Information gaps to address in your Action Plan:

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How do the majority of your key markets travel to your community?
(e.g. by car, RV, train, air, etc.)

Session 1:
Response:

How do you know this is true? Supporting information:

Before next session: Follow up information needed and person/people responsible:

Session 2:
Results of additional research:

Next steps:
Information gaps to address in your Action Plan:

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Food for Thought



Digging Deeper: What Is Tourism and Who Is a Tourist?

More simply, a tourist is someone who visits your community for reasons other than commuting to work or school, or for routine visits such as conducting sales or service calls, household grocery shopping and appointments. Not all visitors to your community will be tourists. You may find that the majority of your visitors are locals coming into town for shopping, appointments or community events. Being visitor friendly will encourage locals to support your community rather than driving to major centres. This will help keep money in the community.

Defining your tourist markets will help you meet their needs and be visitor friendly. In general, you can analyse tourists by demographics (who they are), geographic (where they come from) or by psychographics (what they're interested in). Each of these factors will affect the types of amenities, services and experiences they want. See the Resources at the end of this section for more information.

One simple way to categorize tourists for this project is to look at length of stay. Use the following definitions as a guideline:

The World Tourism Organization defines tourism as:

“The activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes.”

Canadian Tourism Commission. *Glossary of Tourism Terms.*



Photo: Government of Alberta

Tip

Distance plays a role in determining same day trips, but does not apply to overnight trips.

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Day-use visitors (same day trips):

- Do not stay overnight
- Come to your community from more than 40km away
- Come to your community for:
a) a specific attraction, activity or event or, b) stopping en route to another destination
- May require services related to travel (service stations) and food and beverage (lunch, supper or light groceries)
- May look for shopping and retail services or public amenities like picnic areas, walking trails or public washrooms

Overnight visitors en route to somewhere else:

- Stay overnight, likely arriving in the evening and departing in the morning. They don't necessarily visit attractions
- Require support facilities and services including accommodation, service stations, food and beverage services.
- May look for food and beverage services that are open in the evening, and possibly some evening activities

Multi-day visitors:

- Stay for one or more nights. They visit attractions and participate in activities or events in the area
- Could be visiting for the weekend
- Require support facilities and services including accommodation (e.g. hotel, bed and breakfast, campgrounds), food and beverage services that are open in the evening, evening activities, retail shopping and craft outlets, travel services (gas stations, sewage dump stations, grocery stores), picnic areas, walking/biking trails, events and festivals



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4. Visioning

Developing a vision statement provides your group with a common goal for this project. It paints the big picture and focuses you on where you want to be. It reflects values rather than measurements. A vision should be inspiring – describing a clear, compelling and achievable picture of your community’s preferred future for visitor friendliness.

Here are a few vision statements to get you started:

“Downtown St. Albert is an exciting vibrant place where residents, visitors, businesses and government come together. It’s a place to shop, celebrate history and the arts, and enjoy outstanding events and entertainment.”

- City of St. Albert

“By the year 2032, Downtown Lacombe will emerge as the symbolic “Heart of Lacombe”, celebrating its rich historic roots while embracing complementary contemporary architecture. With its progressive and dynamic central core, surrounded by beautiful, safe, and highly livable residential neighbourhoods, Downtown Lacombe will be celebrated as a vibrant year round destination for all to enjoy.”

- City of Lacombe

City of St Albert. *Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan*. St. Albert, AB: 2010.

Parioplan. *City of Lacombe Downtown Area Redevelopment and Urban Design Plan*. Edmonton, AB: Parioplan. 2013.

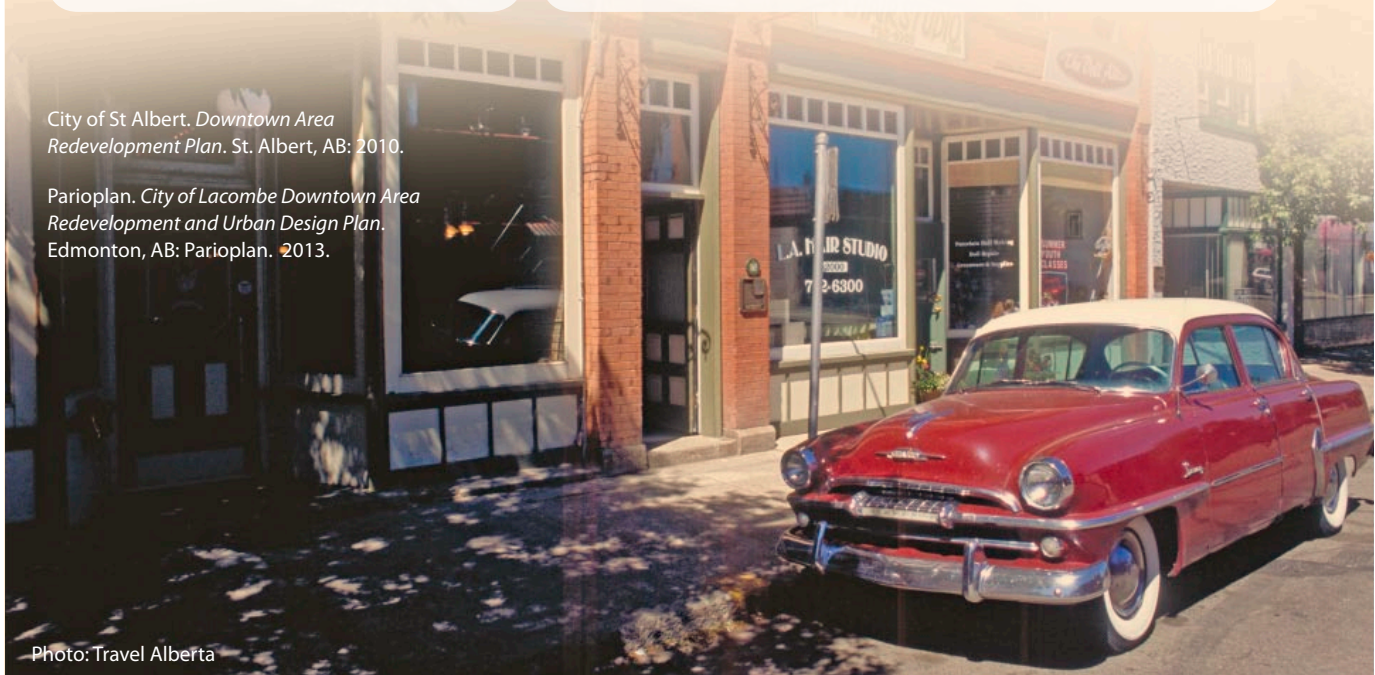


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Bring the whole group together and brainstorm to develop your vision statement. Set a time limit of 10 minutes, and use your group facilitator to record ideas on a flip chart or white board.

Use the following questions to get people thinking:

Where Are We Now?

- What do we do well for our visitors?
.....
- How can we improve things for our visitors?
.....

Where Do We Want to Go?

- What kind of community do you want to live in?
.....
- What kind of community do you want to be for visitors?
.....
- What is the experience you want visitors to remember and talk about?
.....

After brainstorming, do a preliminary sifting of the ideas. Are there any ideas that are similar and could be grouped around a theme? Which ones have the most merit for your community? Which ones resonate with your community, reflect its authenticity or hold true?

Use the flip chart or white board recordings to document key points on the [Summary Form 1.C: Visioning Key Points](#) located at the end of this session. They will be useful when you develop your Action Plan.

You may be able to craft a good vision statement during the session. If not, have a couple of members create a vision statement that captures the collective thoughts of the group. This draft statement should then be presented back to the working group at the next session for feedback, amendment and approval.

Once the group has agreed on the vision statement, document it and provide it to all members of the working group.

Remember



Brainstorming is about collecting ideas without judgement. Everyone has a say. There are no ideas too big or silly at this point. Be creative. One idea may spawn another idea.

Tip



Revisit your visitor friendly vision at the start of each session to make sure that the group's activities are on track, or to see if the vision needs tweaking, based on new information gathered during the process.



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Summary

In this section, you covered:

- What visitor friendliness means to you and your community
- The reasons for becoming more visitor friendly
- Who visits your community
- Ideas for developing your visitor friendly vision

Before you End Session 1

- Review follow-up activities identified from the simplified market assessment exercise and who is responsible.
- Assign one to two members to draft a Visitor Friendly Vision Statement to present at the next session.
- Use the electronic work sheets and forms to begin documenting information gathered.
- Look ahead to Section 4. Two sessions will be needed to complete this section. At the group's next session, you will conduct a visitor friendly assessment by doing a site visit of your community and taking photographs. Group members will be asked to present their findings at the following session, so that the group can identify visitor friendly strengths and areas for improvement.
- Set the next session date for your group. It's suggested that this be a full day. Factor in time needed to complete any follow-up work and the availability for all members to participate in the full day session. Discuss housekeeping, such as where to meet and whether lunch will be provided.
- Remind group members to review Section 4 before the next meeting.

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Resources

Gutierrez, Eileen; Lamoureux, Kristin; Matus, Seleni; Sebunya, Kaddu. Linking Communities, Tourism & Conservation: A Tourism Assessment Process. Conservation International and The George Washington University, 2005. pp. 24-25. Available as a web resource at: http://www.conservation.org/Documents/CI_ecotourism_tourism_assessment_process_manual.pdf. Accessed March 15, 2013.

Travel Alberta. <http://industry.travelalberta.com/>. For tourism marketing information in Alberta. Accessed March 15, 2013

Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation. <http://www.tpr.alberta.ca/tourism>. For tourism statistics and research. Accessed March 15, 2013

Canadian Tourism Commission. Explorer Quotient - EQ. Ottawa: Canadian Tourism Commission, 2013. Available as a web resource at: <http://en-corporate.canada.travel/resources-industry/explorer-quotient>. Accessed March 15, 2013



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Session 1 - Dreaming

Suggested time to complete:

3 – 3 ½ hours

Suggested materials:

- Flip chart or white board + digital camera/smart phone for recording white board information
- Visitor Friendly Guide for each group member - either paper or electronic copy
- Current tourism marketing plan
- Computer with LCD projector for completing fillable forms as a group

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Suggested Agenda: Session 1

Appx Time	Agenda Topics	Lead by
30 min (Section 2)	Orientation: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welcome & introductions• Introduce project, purpose & intended results / expectations• Confirm project boundary• Establish / confirm roles & functions of group members• Review process & timelines	Chair
20 min (Section 1)	Being Visitor Friendly: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recap / review 5 visitor friendly categories	Chair / champion
40 min total (Section 3)	Dreaming: Facilitated large group discussion	Chair / group facilitator
20 min 20 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What does it mean to our community• Why be more visitor friendly (benefits)	
20 min	Break	
45 min (Section 3)	Key tourism markets <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simplified Market Assessment	
30 min (Section 3)	Visioning <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brainstorm for 10 minutes; use remaining time to review ideas	Chair / group facilitator
15 minutes	Wrap up / Next Steps <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Confirm follow-up activities by whom• Next work session – date & time; purpose / activities	Chair

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Summary Form 1.A: Why Be More Visitor Friendly?

What does visitor friendly mean to our community?

Summary of Key Points	Comments /Notes

Benefits of becoming more visitor friendly

Summary of Key Points	Comments /Notes

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Summary Form 1.B: Simplified Market Assessment

Our current key tourism markets / Key season(s) they visit	Key attractions / services / activities offered that draw visitors	Key support services and amenities visitors are looking for	Comments / notes (e.g. observations related to visitor friendliness)

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Summary Form 1.B: Simplified Market Assessment

Our current key tourism markets / Key season(s) they visit	Key attractions / services / activities offered that draw visitors	Key support services and amenities visitors are looking for	Comments / notes (e.g. observations related to visitor friendliness)

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Summary Form 1.C: Visioning Key Points

How do you picture your community's visitor friendliness in the future?

Brainstorming Ideas	Comments
Idea Clusters and Themes	Comments

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Summary Form 1.D: Vision Statement

Draft Visitor Friendly community vision statement (to be presented to large work group):

Final Visitor Friendly community vision statement:

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