

WHAT LAMBTON SHORES TOURISM BUSINESSES NEED

1. **TOURISM TRAINING FOR OWNERS:** Develop and implement at least 4 tourism workshops geared to small business owners in Lambton Shores (avoid peak tourism months). Provide for free or nominal fee (@ \$50).
2. **TOURISM TRAINING FOR EMPLOYEES:** Develop and implement annual combined Fam-Tour / Customer Service workshop for seasonal hires providing front-line customer service training and Fam-Tour of Lambton Shores Area assets and attractions. Price it for small business (@\$20 pp). Hold last week of May to capture as many seasonal hires as possible.
3. **PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT:** Longtime TSL feedback to us has been – “you’re not motor coach ready” – “we can’t take motor coach tours where they don’t want to go”. We want motor coaches! Audit our larger accommodations and restaurants to identify ways they can become motor coach ready. Work with our businesses to bring them to motor coach/niche market readiness. Identify grants or special loans for property improvements and marketing dollars. Help businesses with the grant applications. Support Lambton Shores tourism product businesses by actively promoting them to travel planners.
4. **EVENT DEVELOPMENT & SUSTAINABILITY:** Local events planned / implemented by volunteers living / working in Lambton Shores Area. They are not “plugged-in” to province’s tourism marketing structure. Volunteers looking to do something fun, are not aware of grants, permit requirements, need for head counts and statistics. **Hold Tourism Event Planning Information Sessions in Lambton Shores:** Raise awareness of TSL’s services and assistance for grassroots event planners. Suggest 2+ information sessions held at key times to kick-start event planning timed to leverage grant applications and permissions. Hold sessions at a time convenient for volunteers (i.e. evening). Include list of potential grants, key requirements, deadlines, how TSL could help with grants, applications, permits, security, insurance, marketing, timelines for marketing implementation, record-keeping, access to low-cost graphic design assistance. Use local media and business and community networks to promote these sessions (Lakeshore Advance, Forest Standard, 104.9 the Beach, myFM Exeter, Forest BIA, Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, Optimists, Kiwanis).
5. **UPDATE COUNTY VISITOR GUIDE:** “*Navigate to Great Times*” content needs to match its cover. Text is old-fashioned, not written for today’s quick-hits readers. Visuals suffer from poor layout/dated design. Conduct literature review of award-winning visitor guides to identify today’s best-of-breed marketing techniques and styles. (See www.ustravel.org/member-services/award-programs/mercury-awards/past-winners)
6. **ESTABLISH UNIFIED BRAND / BROAD-BASED BRAND AWARENESS:** “Tourism Sarnia Lambton” label is used as the County’s tourism identifier, but this is not tourist-friendly and does not work for this area’s tourism product (i.e. Grand Bend, Ipperwash, Port Franks). Differentiate the Tourism Voice from the Organization’s Name.
7. **WEBSITE NAME NOT TOURIST-FACING:** New website much improved and mobile device friendly, but domain name is that of the Organization NOT the Voice or Experience of the County. Change it and be more action oriented. **Audit Listings:** Establish criteria for accommodation listings, a number are “dives” that locals would never recommend. Some places listed no longer in business. **Organization of Listings:** Implement a filter function so tourists can find locations close to their immediate vicinity, currently no ability to do this. Use tourist-centred references – like Grand Bend, Forest, Port Franks, Ipperwash not “Lambton Shores”, as tourists don’t know to what this refers.
8. **MARKETING / ADVERTISING:** Lambton Shores has 50% of all Lambton County’s tourism-based businesses. As the County’s top vacation destination, Lambton Shores’ tourism assets should be marketed independent of the “Sarnia-Lambton” label. Marketing and advertising support needs to be tourist-centred not geo-political. Focus on beaches, marinas, natural and outdoor amenities, live theatre, drag racing etc. Area’s Unique Selling Proposition is “the Beach”; Chamber’s marketing tagline “*It Starts at the Beach....and ends where you want*” keys in on identified travel trigger (see research conducted by SWOTC & RTO4) for benefit of all local tourism assets. The beach remains the area’s primary travel trigger (Port Franks is entirely beach, marina, hiking, cottages; Ipperwash is beach; Arkona – waterfall/fossils).

- **Develop Cross-Marketing Packages:** Work with area businesses to help them cross-promote their product. Will require creating owner awareness as to what that means and how a marketing package does not extend their liability or insurance needs.
 - **Heritage / historical walks:** Three volunteer-based groups responsible for the ONLY historical walks in the area – Forest, Grand Bend and Exeter. The Forest group doesn't have a brochure, while the Grand Bend group does, but no money to get it professionally printed. Text could benefit from professional research/writing and photographic reproduction. TSL could utilize the work already done plus the volunteers' good-will to further develop these promising initiatives to be more market-ready.
9. **WAYFINDING SIGNAGE:** Area needs signage to assist visitors already here to arrive at the attraction they seek. 2015 research confirms no wayfinding signage available.
 10. **REGIONAL COLLABORATION:** Lambton Shores suffers from its geographical location. Tourism assets border three municipalities and two counties, placing tourism product in different destination marketing jurisdictions. Result is typically that the area is under-represented by all. Recommend integration and dovetailing of marketing efforts to properly promote this area. Think "Borderless Tourism".
 11. **VISITOR SERVICES IN LAMBTON SHORES:** While it's not TSL's mandate to provide local Visitor Services, it would be beneficial for our local tourism businesses if TSL were to work with local Municipal staff to identify methods of providing Visitor Services. The Welcome Centre (owned by the Chamber) is open year-round. Although not as busy November to February as May to September, requests for visitor guide information packages start January. The Chamber is open to sharing Welcome Centre space with TSL or Municipal staff providing Visitor Services. Current staffing levels devoted to Visitor Services are half-person year-round plus two full-time summer staff June to Labour Day.

TOURISM SARNIA LAMBTON (TSL)

Is the official Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) for Lambton County, responsible for marketing, product development and management of tourism businesses, attractions and assets internally within the County and externally beyond County borders. TSL is primarily county-funded (87%), but funding also comes from advertising sales. Municipality of Lambton Shores pays about \$60K annually via the county levy to fund TSL.

VISION: Foster partnerships in Lambton County through programs, ideas, and initiatives to grow tourism industry and result in greater tax revenue for municipalities.

STRATEGIES: (1) Lead and assist partners in development that integrates and generates economic renewal; (2) Establish unified brand; (3) Grow sustainable long-term funding for TSL and marketing and management initiatives

KEY AREAS OF FOCUS: (1) **Marketing & Communications:** Identify the needs of new, emerging and existing markets & Develop programs to address; (2) **Product & Partnership Development:** Identify and build tourism products that will attract visitors; (3) **Provide Visitor Services:** Provide visitor information to those outside community and coordinate same in local areas

CORE SERVICES: (*within County*): Identify potential investment (attract / liaise); Industry training, development and communications; Signage; Community awareness; Develop and enhance tourism products; Regional collaboration; Strategic planning.

CORE SERVICES: (*beyond County*): Market development; PR & Media relations; Publications (i.e. "Navigate"); Website (i.e. TourismSarniaLambton.com); Broad-based Brand Awareness; Niche leisure marketing; Motor Coach Programs; Meeting, convention & incentive travel; Sports tourism.

STAFF (5 staff): Marlene Wood – General Manager; Leona Allen – Information & Visitor Services Coordinator; Vicky Praill – Information & Visitor Services Coordinator; Lesley Gelinas – Website, Signage & Systems Coordinator; Beverley Horodyski – Product Development & Group Coordinator; Christine Bregman - Marketing & Administration Coordinator/Interim Social Media Coordinator