

STAFF REPORT



TO Community and Social Services Committee

SERVICE AREA Community and Social Services

DATE September 17, 2013

SUBJECT Tourism Services RFP Update

REPORT NUMBER CSS-ED-1336

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide information on the results of the Request for Proposals (RFP) regarding the provision of Tourism Services, and to recommend next steps.

KEY FINDINGS

The RFP closed on July 15, 2013, resulting in two submissions being received.

The evaluation committee were unanimous in determining that neither submission met the needs set out by the City, nor demonstrated the ability to deliver the requested services. Accordingly, the evaluation committee did not recommend awarding the RFP to either of the proponents.

It is the recommendation of staff that in order to better assess the long term needs and sustainability of Tourism Services in Guelph, staff should undertake a formal operational review of the services currently offered, an assessment of the strategic needs for tourism services, and a best practice analysis of other funding, service delivery and governance models for similar municipal tourism services. Once this has been completed, Council will be able to determine how best to proceed with the provision of Tourism Services within Guelph.

In the interim, in order to ensure the effective provision of Tourism Services during the review period, staff also recommend that the position of 'Supervisor of Tourism Services' be filled on a temporary contract basis. This will enable the Corporation to re-start accepting new requests for tourism support and marketing initiatives, have a voice at regional discussions, as well as to continue to provide existing tourism services.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The estimated cost for this review would be approximately \$50,000 and would be covered within the existing 2013 Tourism budget.

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ACTION REQUIRED

Staff seek the endorsement of staffs' recommendation to proceed with conducting an operational review of Tourism Services, utilizing existing budget resources from within the 2013 Tourism operating budget, and that staff be directed to report back no later than the end of Q2 2014 on the results of the review.

Staff are also requesting that the Committee agrees to the filling of the position of Supervisor of Tourism Services on a temporary contract basis, until such time Council has provided further direction.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Committee and Council endorse the staff recommendation to proceed with conducting an operational review of Tourism Services, utilizing existing budget resources from within the 2013 Tourism operating budget
2. That Committee and Council agrees to the filling of the position of Supervisor of Tourism Services on a temporary contract basis
3. That staff be directed to report back no later than the end of Q2 2014 on the results of the Strategic Review of Tourism Services

BACKGROUND

As part of the 2013 budget deliberation process, Council directed staff to issue a Request For Proposals (RFP) for a community partner to take over the management of the tourism services currently provided by the City of Guelph and report back to Council no later than June, 2013 on both the results of the RFP as well as a transition plan.

Additionally, staff were directed to report back on any potential cost savings through the 2014 budget process, to leave the position of Senior Business Development Specialist vacant, and to pause any new tourism marketing initiatives until such time as the transition plan has been completed.

A Tourism RFP was issued on June 7, 2013. In order to ensure a fulsome public consultation on the RFP, staff first scheduled a public consultation session on March 20, 2013, so that members of the public, other tourism stakeholders and community organizations would have an opportunity to provide their feedback into the process and the framework for the provision of tourism services.

More than sixty interested community stakeholders attended the information session, and their feedback was then used to develop the RFP document.

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The RFP was open for a period of five weeks, closing on Monday, July 15, 2013. Fifteen organizations requested a copy of the RFP document, and staff held a public information session on June 25, 2013 for potential proponents. At that session, further detailed information was provided on the RFP process, the current level of services provided and budget for Tourism Services, as well as detailed information about the role of Regional Tourism Organization (RTO4) and the type of support available from that organization.

Despite the number of inquiries, only two bids were submitted.

An internal staff evaluation committee independently reviewed the submissions. As well, an independent review of the submissions was conducted by the Executive Director of RTO4. The evaluation committee members and RTO4 Executive Director were unanimous in their assessment of the two submissions, and determined that neither met the needs set out by the City, nor did they demonstrate the ability to deliver the requested services. Accordingly, the evaluation committee did not recommend awarding the RFP to either of the proponents.

Next Steps

In order to better assess the long term needs related to the delivery of Tourism Services in Guelph, staff recommend undertaking a formal operational review of the services currently offered, an assessment of the strategic needs for Tourism Services, and a best practice analysis of other funding, service delivery and governance models for similar local Tourism Services. Once this review has been completed, staff will be able to recommend how best to proceed with the provision of Tourism Services within Guelph.

Staff consulted the City's Internal Auditor and concluded that the assessment and report back to Council could be completed by the end of Q2 of 2014. The cost for a review would be approximately \$50,000 and could be covered within the existing 2013 Tourism budget.

In the interim, in order to ensure the effective provision of Tourism Services during the review period, staff also recommend that the position of 'Supervisor of Tourism Services' be filled on a temporary contract basis. This will enable the Corporation to resume the process of evaluating new requests for tourism support and marketing initiatives, have a voice at regional discussions, as well as to continue to provide existing tourism services.

CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN

Innovation in Local Government

- 2.2 Deliver Public Service better
- 2.3 Ensure accountability, transparency and engagement

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City Building

- 3.2 Be economically viable, resilient, diverse and attractive for business
- 3.3 Strengthen citizen and stakeholder engagement and communications

DEPARTMENTAL CONSULTATION

Finance & Enterprise Services – Purchasing
Office of the CAO – Auditor
Community and Social Services – Business Services

COMMUNICATIONS

The City will continue updating employees, members of CSS Committee and City Council, and community members about any and all developments and opportunities regarding the provision of Tourism Services for the City of Guelph.

ATTACHMENTS

N/A

Approved and Recommended By

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