

## Appendix 2.2 Annual Performance Report

Under the *Provincial Sales Tax Act*, all designated recipients, including designated recipients not subject to the renewal application requirement, must report back to the Province annually. As such, all designated recipients (or the designated recipient’s service provider), are required to complete the following Annual Performance Report as well as a Financial Report (refer to Appendix 2.1) **by May 31 of each year**.

**All** designated recipients are required to fill in the sections below.

**Only** those designated recipients that receive the three percent tax rate will be required to report out on additional metrics (as indicated below).

A description/instructions pertaining to each performance metric is provided in grey text as a guide only. Please delete the grey text and provide your response accordingly.

**Designated Recipient:** City of Courtenay **Report Completed:** 25-04-2024

**Designated Accommodation Area:** City of Courtenay

**Reporting period:** Jan 1- Dec 31 – 2023

\*or for first year of term, indicate accordingly

1. Effective tourism marketing, programs and projects	
MRDT-funded tourism marketing, programs and projects maximize the potential for increased visitation and growth in tourism business activity, employment and incremental tourism revenue.	
Mandatory Metric	Designated Recipient Response
<b>MRDT Revenue</b>	\$417,520.71 General MRDT + \$280,807.15 OAP = \$698,327.86 Total

<p><b>MRDT activities, tactics, investment efforts and outcomes</b> (as per your One-Year Tactical Plan)</p>	<p><b>Overview</b></p> <p>The Comox Valley is a diverse region, located on Vancouver Island’s east coast in BC, situated between the Beaufort Range and the Comox Glacier to the west and the Strait of Georgia to the east. It stretches from the ocean to the alpine, Fanny Bay in the south to Miracle Beach in the north, including the main communities of Courtenay, Comox and Cumberland. It’s a vibrant mix of urban and rural, cosmopolitan and wilderness, with well-known destinations and hidden gems within a 30-minute drive.</p> <p>Experience Comox Valley marketing positions the communities of Cumberland, Comox, Courtenay, and the CVRD electoral areas A, B, and C (collectively “the Comox Valley”) as a premiere destination in British Columbia for outdoor adventure; including ski, mountain biking, hiking and marine experiences, as well as unique farm-homegrown culinary and craft culinary experiences.</p> <p>Like many other Vancouver Island communities, the Comox Valley has limited capacity throughout the summer months but possesses capacity to increase room stays and visitor numbers in the shoulder seasons of early spring, after the main winter visitation drops off, and in the fall before the snow and alpine attractions open. Experience Comox Valley continuously aims to create stronger seasonal and regional dispersion of visitors to the region to decrease the strains of tourism numbers in the peak seasons.</p> <p>Objectives include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Drive increased overnight volume and visitor expenditures from the BC and Alberta markets through a strong selling proposition;</li> <li>● Support tourism operators in developing and strengthening tourism product, in particular that appeal to visitation in the off-peak periods;</li> <li>● Create stronger regional alignment amongst industry and community partners towards a supportive eco-system that enables businesses to succeed, and a cohesiveness of messaging to occur;</li> <li>● Move consumers efficiently through the path to purchase with clear sales messages, compelling content and further enhancements to responsive website sales pages.</li> </ul> <p><b>Destination Plan Goals</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase revenue from visitation</li> <li>2. Manage growth and benefit through seasonal and geographical dispersion</li> <li>3. Increase competitiveness of Comox Valley as a desired destination</li> <li>4. Support sustainable tourism initiatives and activities</li> </ol>
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## 2023 Output Measures

### Print Ads

Objective: Raise awareness for Comox Valley as a desirable destination and inspiration/ideas for things to do when visiting.

Outcome: Experience Comox Valley had print ads in the following publications:

- Vancouver Island Visitor Guide, full page ad & editorial
- Go Vancouver Island, full page ad & editorial
- BC's Guide to Arts & Culture, 2 page spread
- Landmark Media Map of Comox Valley, cover page
- Landmark Media Map (flatmap) of Vancouver Island, corner ad
- Canada Travel & Lifestyle Magazine, full page ad
- SOAR Magazine, 2 page spread

### Asset Collection - Images & Video

Objective: Acquire visual assets to promote Comox Valley as a destination, showcasing various locations, activities and businesses.

Outcome: 150+ new images, video b-roll clips collected, plus 4 new videos, each with different themes (outdoor adventure, culinary experiences, events and arts and culture).

### Website - ExperienceComoxValley.ca

Objective: Raise awareness for Comox Valley as a desirable destination and inspiration/ideas for things to do when visiting.

Outcome: 6 new blogs were created; [Ways to Get On The Water](#), [Arts, Culture & Festivals](#), [Vancouver to Comox 4 Day Itinerary](#), [Calgary to Comox 5 Day Itinerary](#), [Edmonton to Comox 5 Day Itinerary](#), [Explore Sauna Experiences in the Comox Valley](#).

Number of sessions/visits to website: 81,992

Number of unique visitors to website: 63,870

Number of referrals: 1,934

Sources of website traffic: Organic 21,452, Paid Search 18,733, Direct 9,908, Paid Social 9,512, Referral 1,866, Organic Social 1,669

Devices used for visits: Mobile: 49k, desktop: 12k, tablet: 2.8k

Geographic origins of visitors: Canada, United States, United Kingdom, Mexico, Germany

### Paid Search Ads

Paid search ads through Google yielded strong results. With an impressive 303,749 impressions and 32,211 clicks, our ads captured the attention of our target audience. Notably, the average click-through rate of 10.8% underscored the compelling appeal and resonance of the ad content. Through ongoing optimization

	<p>our paid search ads continue to serve as a dynamic tool in driving engagement and fostering meaningful connections with our audience.</p> <p><u><a href="#">Organic Social Media</a></u></p> <p>Experience Comox Valley has 20,570 Facebook followers (@ExperienceComoxValley), a 7.2% increase in 2023, and 8,041 Instagram followers (@TourismComoxValley), which is a 23.9% increase compared to last year. The average engagement rate on Facebook was 2.49% and 6.85% on Instagram. In 2023, Instagram had a total reach of over 1M (622k in posts and 419k in stories) and Facebook had 1.6M reach.</p> <p><u><a href="#">E-Newsletters</a></u></p> <p>Experience Comox Valley sent a total of 10 e-newsletters, with an average open rate of 52.9% and click through rate of 7.6%.</p> <p><u><a href="#">Visitor Servicing</a></u></p> <p>The Comox Valley’s Visitor Centre was open 5 days a week, Tuesdays to Saturdays, in Fall, Winter and Spring, and 7 days a week in July and August. Also in the summer months, there were mobile visitor information servicing kiosks in the downtown centres of Courtenay, Comox and Cumberland. In 2023, staff assisted a total of 15,966 visitors (13,568 at the Visitor Centre and 2,398 at the kiosks), providing answers, ideas and inspiration for places to visit and things to do in the Comox Valley.</p>
<b>Key Learnings</b>	<p><b>Projects</b></p> <p><u><a href="#">BC Ale Trail campaign</a></u></p> <p>Objective: Inspire visitors to ‘warm up to winter’ and come to the Comox Valley now. Whether for winter alpine activities (skiing, tubing, snow shoeing), experiencing arts &amp; culture, or tasting unique culinary offerings and sipping at our 5 local breweries.</p> <p>Outcome: Social media carousel ads were created for Facebook and Instagram, driving traffic to ExperienceComoxValley.ca. The 2 ads had over 162K &amp; 330k impressions, 57k &amp; 89k reach, and a click through rate of 1.68% &amp; 0.55% with a total of 3,279 clicks.</p> <p>Timing: The campaign ran from January 20 - February 17, 2023.</p> <p>#</p> <p><u><a href="#">Warm up to Winter campaign</a></u></p> <p>Objective: To inspire visitation through winter-themed itineraries and ideas.</p> <p>Outcome: A digital ad campaign, with google ads, display, and social media ads to drive traffic to the Warm Up To Winter website landing page. Social media ads ran</p>

on Facebook and had 1.8M impressions, 392k reach, and a click through rate of 0.47%.

Timing: This campaign ran December 19, 2022 to March 15, 2023.

#### Email Marketing - Golf VI E-blast

Objective: Highlight Comox Valley as a golf destination, partnering with Golf VI to target their consumers (e-newsletter subscribers).

Outcome: On Friday, February 10 2023, the Comox Valley was featured as a destination in Golf VI's e-blast (to over 32k recipients). The email showcased the Comox Valley, its communities, golf courses and things to do. It received an open rate of 43.1% (13,792 opens) and 500+ clicks. Open by country location (in descending order) were: USA (71.6%), Canada (21.2%), Sweden (5.9%), followed by Mexico, Russia, UK, Australia, Germany, etc. (<1% each).

#### Explore VI - Trade Show Event

Objective: To network with receptive Tour Operators, Travel Agencies and Wholesalers that are looking to expand their business in the Vancouver Island area.

Outcome: This event took place in Cowichan Bay on March 8, 2023. In attendance were 19 Operators/Online travel agencies (i.e. 'buyers'), and 35 VI stakeholders (including CDMOs).

#### Traditional Marketing - Print Guide

Objective: Raise awareness for Comox Valley as a desirable destination and inspiration/ideas for things to do when visiting.

Outcome: Comox Valley Vacation Guide was updated for 2023. With a distribution of 50,000, printed copies were distributed to BC Ferries, Victoria Airport, Comox Valley Airport, Visitor Centres, and local accommodation providers and partners. The widespread distribution ensured maximum visibility and accessibility, effectively positioning the Comox Valley as a must-visit destination for travellers seeking unforgettable experiences.

#### Traditional Marketing - Art Brochure

Objective: Partner with Comox Valley Arts to print the art studio map for use as a visitor servicing tool.

Outcome: A printed art studio tour map trifold brochure was created and available in print in May 2023. This bespoke brochure serves as a comprehensive guide, spotlighting the array of art studios and galleries open to visitors, enriching their cultural exploration of the region.

### Spring campaign

Objective: To inspire visitation from key Alberta markets through spring-themed itineraries and ideas.

Outcome: A comprehensive digital ad campaign ran in May and June, with Google ads, display ads, and targeted social media ads to drive traffic to ExperienceComoxValley.ca. Social media ads ran on Facebook and generated 900k impressions, 355k reach, and a click through rate of 1.85%. Additionally, a 30 second commercial was created by Corus for broadcast on CITV (Edmonton) and CICT (Calgary) for 6 weeks during the same period. The commercial, supplemented by bonus PSA and spill-over spots in the US, effectively captured the attention of viewers and inspired them to embark on a springtime adventure to the Comox Valley.

### Article - Vancouver is Awesome

Objective: To inspire visitation through fall-themed content and ideas.

Outcome: Vancouver is Awesome produced a Comox Valley focussed article, [this easily accessible BC destination offers three destinations in one](#). This article increases the awareness of fall activities available in the Comox Valley, including marine, dining, arts, and spa, as well as the direct flight options to Comox Valley Airport. By showcasing the region's diverse offerings and accessibility, the article effectively piqued the interest of potential visitors and inspired them to explore the beauty of the Comox Valley during the autumn season.

### Paid Social Media - Direct Flight Awareness

Objective: Increase awareness of direct flight options to Comox Valley

Outcome: The Marketing Coordinator at Comox Valley Airport shared some low cost flight options to Comox so Experience Comox Valley boosted a Facebook post in August, targeting Alberta residents, with messaging to increase awareness. In total it had 68k reach, 960 post engagements, 899 link clicks for \$0.56 cost per click.

### Market Research - Visitor Intercept Surveys

Objective: Gain insights to visitor behaviours, expectations, and satisfaction.

Outcome: Experience Comox Valley launched 2 market research projects. Partnering with the Comox Valley Airport and Intervistas, an outbound/departing passenger in-person survey took place one week in August (for insights during peak travel times), with another week of data collection in February 2024 (shoulder season travel). Also launched in summer 2023 is a Visitor Intercept Survey Study, partnering with Vancouver Island University.

#### Tumble into Fall Digital Campaign

Objective: To inspire visitation through fall-themed itineraries and ideas.

Outcome: A digital ad campaign ran from September 15 to November 30, with google ads, display, and social media ads to drive traffic to ExperienceComoxValley.ca. Social Media ads had a total of 590k impressions, 224k reach, 5,203 clicks and an average click through rate (CTR) of 0.9%. Website display ads had 167k impressions, 361 clicks and a CTR of 0.22%. A sponsored online article on the Calgary Herald had 1,068 pageviews, 46k impressions, 147 clicks (0.32% CTR), and spent an average of 3 mins on the webpage.

#### Alberta Market - Win a Trip to the Comox Valley

Objective: To increase awareness of direct flight options for Calgary to Comox and Edmonton to Comox in the Alberta market.

Outcome: A 'win a trip to Comox Valley' contest was promoted in the Alberta market from October 1 to November 30. Two trips were offered, one winner from Calgary and one from Edmonton, which included a pair of round trip direct flight tickets, two nights hotel stay, a deluxe sauna circuit for two, and \$200 in dining gift certificates donated by industry stakeholders. A digital display ad at the WestJet luggage carousel in Calgary International Airport included a QR code to enter the contest. Social media ads targeted Calgary and Edmonton residents to acquire additional contest entries, and a radio station in Edmonton heard about the contest and asked to do a radio interview with Tanya on their morning show. In total, there were 1,012 entries from Calgary and 1,711 entries from Edmonton.

#### Social Media - BC Arts Instagram Takeover

Objective: Highlight arts and culture opportunities in the Comox Valley.

Outcome: Experience Comox Valley took over BC's Guide to Arts & Culture page, @artbcguide, for 48 hours, November 1-2, to showcase this sector in our communities. Local museums, art studios and galleries, 12 in total, were featured over the 2 days.

#### Broadcast - CTV Community Spotlights

Objective: Increase awareness for Comox Valley as a desirable destination.

Outcome: Filmed and aired in October, the community spotlights showcased 3 different businesses, one in each community and one for each of our destination driver pillars: outdoor adventure, arts and culture, and culinary experiences.

#### Broadcast - CTV Commercials

Objective: Increase awareness for Comox Valley as a desirable destination.

Outcome: A 15 second promotional commercial ran on CTV broadcast and Connected TV (pause ads, video pre-roll, instream video) from September 15 to

December 8, 2023. These video ads geotargeted Metro Vancouver and Alberta (Calgary & Edmonton).

- Live impressions adults 18+: 2.5M
- Ad impressions: over 220k (44k in BC, 176k in AB)
- Click Through Rate: average 0.25% (0.20% in BC, 0.27% in AB)

### **Challenges & Successes**

- Digital campaigns in the Alberta market performed very well, as seen by the high number of contest entries we received from Calgary and Edmonton residents to win a trip to the Comox Valley, as well as high performing geo-targeted social media ads to that market. This year, we committed to an ad buy strategy with Pattison Media at the Calgary Airport which included ads at the luggage carousel and digital posters. This ad buy was greatly influenced by stakeholder feedback, wanting to see an in terminal Comox Valley presence, however the metrics from these ad buys versus digital ad campaigns reiterated the effectiveness of conversations on digital ads. Going forward, in airport advertising will be limited or discontinued, and marketing spend will be increasingly allocated to Alberta-based digital campaigns.

- A major success for 2023 was the establishment of a more formalized partnership between the Comox Valley Airport and Experience Comox Valley. In the past, collaboration between these two partners was often limited and in many cases marketing efforts were not aligned. Through ongoing engagement and relationship building, 2023 was the first year an MOU was signed, signaling a stronger marketing partnership. This past year, this partnership already saw several joint projects and plans are being made for spring and fall campaigns in the Alberta market for 2024.

- Market research showed that the majority of visitors come to the Comox Valley for pleasure/holiday and or to visit friends and relatives. Outdoor activities formed the largest proportion of activities that visitors engaged in while here. Top activities included hiking, beach, shopping, marine, wineries, breweries, and events and festivals.



## 2. Effective local-level stakeholder support and inter-community collaboration

Designated recipients are responsible for engaging with key stakeholders, establishing local-level support, and seeking out efficiencies through collaborative activities to inform appropriate decision-making regarding investments.

Mandatory Metric	Designated Recipient Response
<b>Extent of Local-level Stakeholder Engagement</b>	<p>Experience Comox Valley is the operating and consumer-facing name of the Comox Valley Regional District's Regional Tourism Service, which is administered by 4VI. Since its inception in September 2021, the City of Courtenay and 4VI have had a service agreement for the management and expenditure of the Municipal Regional District Tax (MRDT) monies, in funding Destination Marketing, Visitor Information Services, and Stakeholder Engagement. The Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD), City of Courtenay, and 4VI have a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding to ensure full coordination of all tourism activities. A team of marketing and development professionals at 4VI lead destination management tactics to leverage continued growth in this region.</p> <p>The Comox Valley Tourism Advisory Committee (TAC), established in 2022, guides the work of Experience Comox Valley, including advising, reviewing and making recommendations for the annual marketing plans and Comox Valley Destination Plan. The TAC is composed of 11 members from various tourism sectors including accommodations, arts &amp; culture, food &amp; beverage, tour operators, transportation, and indigenous tourism.</p> <p>Experience Comox Valley and Visitor Centre staff continue to encourage stakeholders and partners to utilize the free promotion available through the Experience Comox Valley website events calendar, business listings, and social media amplification of posts and messaging on Facebook and Instagram.</p> <p>Other Experience Comox Valley Stakeholder Engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Stakeholder e-newsletters are sent out approximately once a month throughout the year.</li> <li>● Collaboration with the Comox Valley Record (Black Press Media) to provide editorial content and images for the 2023 Comox Valley Vacation Guide.</li> <li>● In January 2023, an industry engagement session, <i>Building a Sustainable Tourism Economy</i>, was held at Best Western Westerly Hotel in Courtenay. 4VI staff and 50+ stakeholders attended from a wide range of tourism activities including food &amp; beverage, arts &amp; culture, retail, tour operators, transportation and accommodation.</li> <li>● In Spring and early Summer, Visitor Centre staff participated in familiarization tours of local tourism and tourism-related businesses across all communities.</li> <li>● In Fall 2023, Experience Comox Valley did a workshop for stakeholders to learn</li> </ul>

	<p>more about the ways in which Experience Comox Valley can support tourism businesses.</p> <p>The Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) has also partnered with 4VI and Experience Comox Valley to administer a comprehensive tourism strategy planning initiative, which aims to engage local residents, businesses, stakeholders and rights holders to collaboratively design a 10-year scope tourism strategy that aligns with the region's values, sustains its natural resources and maximizes economic benefits. A Tourism Strategy Steering Committee consisting of 12 stakeholders was created to guide this work and provide essential feedback on the draft plan. Two public engagement sessions took place in Fall 2023, with residents, businesses and partners in attendance. This work will continue into 2024, with the new Tourism Strategy Plan in effect for 2025-2035.</p>
<b>Stakeholder Satisfaction</b>	<p><i>Only for designated recipients collecting 3% tax:</i></p> <p>Not applicable for City of Courtenay</p>
<b>Community Collaboration</b>	<p><i>Only for designated recipients collecting 3% tax</i></p> <p>Not applicable for City of Courtenay</p>

<b>Mandatory Metric</b>	<b>Designated Recipient Response</b>
<b>Community Collaboration</b>	<p>Experience Comox Valley and the Comox Valley Airport formalized a partnership with a signed agreement for collaborative efforts to achieve aligned goals surrounding inbound marketing, increasing awareness of direct flight options in the Alberta market, market research, and increasing customer satisfaction.</p> <p>Experience Comox Valley's Tourism Development Specialist participated in the BCRTS and Travel Foundation's Sustainability and Resilience Planning Program with other BC tourism destinations for education around incorporating sustainability into destination planning. This program included group workshops, peer learning opportunities and 1:1 coaching with an advisory.</p> <p>In Fall 2023, Experience Comox Valley partnered with other central Vancouver Island community DMOs for a culinary-based marketing campaign, the Island Taste Trail. This digital campaign encouraged dining out at restaurants, pubs, breweries, wineries and cafes that offered small plate pairings. In Comox Valley there were 22 participating businesses across the region.</p> <p>Ongoing Community Collaboration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience Comox Valley and 4VI staff give presentations to community officials and Council at Town of Comox, Village of Cumberland and City of Courtenay Council meetings and Comox Valley Regional District meetings throughout the year.</li> <li>• Monthly meetings with 4VI and Vancouver Island DMOs; Southern Gulf</li> </ul>

	<p>Islands, Cowichan Valley, Nanaimo, Parksville/Qualicum, Tofino, Ucluelet, Campbell River, Vancouver Island North Tourism.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work in partnership with the Comox Valley Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Courtenay BIA, Comox BIA, and/or Cumberland BA on various projects.</li> <li>• Experience Comox Valley staff also participates in partner mixers, networking, AGM's and business after business meetings.</li> <li>• Visitor Centre staff participated in career days at local high schools and North Island College to raise awareness of job opportunities in tourism.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Marketing Efforts Are Coordinated and complementary to provincial marketing strategies and tactics:</b>          Designated recipients are responsible for ensuring their marketing efforts complement and do not duplicate those of Destination British Columbia to avoid overlap at the community level and dilution of BC's marketing message in key domestic and international markets.</p>	
<b>Mandatory Metric</b>	<b>Designated Recipient Response</b>
<b>Provincial Alignment</b>	<p>Experience Comox Valley's website, <a href="http://ExperienceComoxValley.ca">ExperienceComoxValley.ca</a>, is a mobile friendly format and includes user generated content, events calendar, and trip ideas blog. Brand-aligned visual asset collection (photography and video) continues to be a priority for use online and in print, as well as written content creation for blogs and editorial. Images and b-roll that are captured are submitted to the Destination BC Content Hub for a Comox Valley presence in Provincial marketing efforts.</p> <p>In Spring 2023, Experience Comox Valley staff and key stakeholders joined stakeholders from Campbell River to work together on Destination BC's Vancouver Island North Destination Development Action Plan update. Over a series of 6 meetings, participants from both regions collaborated together to identify shared goals and ideas for tactics/actions to achieve them.</p> <p>In Fall 2023, Destination BC's visitor servicing Regional Conference for Vancouver Island was in Comox Valley. Visitor Centre managers from all over the island gathered together at Crown Isle Resort in Courtenay and had a wonderful and informative training session given by the professionals from DBC. Our Visitor Services Manager, Dino gave an opening presentation and land acknowledgement to welcome all the attendees.</p> <p>Other provincial and regional alignment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance at 4VI (formally Tourism Vancouver Island) Annual General Meeting</li> <li>• Attendance at 4VI's fall roadshow in Campbell River</li> <li>• Destination BC &amp; Go2HR SuperHost Service For All training</li> <li>• Destination BC sector consortiums participation: BC Ale Trail, Ride Island, Ahoy BC, Golf VI, BC Farmers' Markets</li> <li>• 4VI industry e-newsletter subscription</li> <li>• Destination BC industry e-newsletter subscription</li> </ul>

<b>Coordinated with Destination British Columbia on Travel Media and Travel Trade Activities</b>	<i>Only for designated recipients collecting 3% tax:</i>  Not applicable for City of Courtenay
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**4. Fiscal prudence and accountability**  
All designated recipients must be accountable, transparent, and make fiscally prudent investments in community tourism marketing.

<b>Mandatory Metric</b>	<b>Designated Recipient Response</b>
<b>Effective Financial Management</b>	See Financial Report Appendix 2.1
<b>Streamlined Administrative Costs</b>	See Financial Report Appendix 2.1
<b>Leveraging of Other Marketing Funds</b>	See Financial Report Appendix 2.1

By signing this form, you certify the accuracy and completeness of the information provided above.

Designated Recipient's Authorized Signing Authority Name	Designated Recipient's Authorized Signing Authority Title
Date	Designated Recipient's Authorized Signing Authority Signature