Tourism Business Services Inventory and Gap Analysis

Submitted to

Sandy Hachey, Executive Director
Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon
#3 – 1109 First Ave.
Whitehorse, YT Y1A 5G4

Submitted by

Teresa Earle
Teresa Earle Communications
&
Donna Mercier
Mercier Solutions

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Executive Summary

Between mid-January and mid-March we conducted research on the availability of information about tourism business services and funding in the Yukon and compiled an inventory of these programs and services. Using extended questionnaires we interviewed 20 tourism business owners and administrators, and we received about 40 responses to short online surveys. We made 20 unscheduled site visits to offices in Whitehorse that are known to provide programs and services to Yukon tourism businesses. We also spent considerable time online reviewing Internet resources available for tourism business programs and services.

In short, we found an impressive array of programs and services, and awareness levels among industry members surveyed are reasonably good. From our research, it's also clear that the government- and association-oriented culture in the Yukon creates a very fragmented landscape for business people. Tourism-related business information, resources, programs and services are housed by multiple governments, branches, agencies, chambers and industry associations that are spread out physically and in the online world.

Throughout this project we often encountered the 'silo mentality', in both government and in non-government organizations, and industry respondents also expressed frustration with the fragmentation of information and resources. This silo phenomenon is understandable in the sense that people take ownership of and are most familiar with the programs and services they are responsible for. However, the silo effect is widely acknowledged as being a barrier to making information and resources available to those who need them.

We also observed that there is disparity within the industry ("haves" and "have-nots") in terms of who is aware of and accessing the programs and services. Two profiles emerged during our surveys and interviews:

1. Savvy, experienced entrepreneurs and administrators who know that resources and services are available: These people understand the value of networking; generally their business is established and/or they have experience running a business. The fact that tourism-related business resources are not coordinated is inconvenient and frustrating, but it does not appear to be a barrier to their success.
2. Small-scale, new and emerging entrepreneurs who are unfamiliar, wary or confused by the support services landscape: Many are motivated to start a business for non-business reasons (eg. lifestyle, location, background in hospitality or guiding, etc), and often they are challenged by business basics; some are working at other jobs, some are new to the territory, some are just starting out.

In a cursory review of tourism business development funding, we saw that availability of funding does not appear to be an issue at the *individual* level. An impressive mix of programs and services exists, and many businesses and organizations are taking advantage of these opportunities. Frustrations arise from access issues, lack of clarity in program criteria, onerous

reporting requirements and the like. At the *industry* level, we observed that funding for tourism development continues to lag behind other sectors.

Industry members are eager for a non-partisan online portal that facilitates easier access to information about tourism and how to grow their businesses and organizations. The tourism industry already has high levels of connectivity—most entrepreneurs look to the web to conduct their research, and it's increasingly expected by the business community that business support resources are available online. In particular, a business-friendly single-window to all tourism-related business resources could be a significant boost to the large number of small, new and emerging tourism businesses that are not accessing or benefiting from these resources.

The product of this research project is an inventory that will be very useful to Yukon tourism businesses and organizations. The inventory contains over 80 listings sorted into the following categories:

- Association (13)
- Business Services (20)
- First Nation Venture (15)
- Funding (14)
- Information (9)
- Regulatory (11)

1. Current Awareness Levels of Programs and Services

The following is based on about 40 completed online surveys and about 20 interviews.

Two online surveys

On February 10 TIAY sent email invitations to 386 members to participate in a short online survey. When the survey closed on February 16, 85 visits had been made to the survey site and 28 surveys were completed [7% response rate]. At the meeting with the working group, we agreed to send out the survey again. We used the same six questions and added a few more. Email invitations to participate in the second online survey were sent on March 2. When the survey closed on March 10, 57 visits had been made to the survey site and 12 surveys were completed. The combined response rate was 10%.

Interviews

The working group provided us with a list of 35 members who were known to have made recent inquiries about tourism programs and services and/or were known to have recent experience accessing programs and services. Over several weeks we successfully contacted and interviewed 20 of them. The rest were unavailable, away or declined to participate.

Respondent profiles

Overall, our study sample of 60 participants was relatively small (15% – about 60 out of 386 members). Because the online survey was completed by members who took the time and initiative to do so, there is perhaps potential for results to be biased, eg. members who are engaged and responsive to TIA communications may have a higher awareness of programs and services. To ensure that our research was representative of a broader spectrum of perspectives, experiences and needs, we conducted interviews with twenty businesses that had recently sought industry information, are new and/or expanding, have a thorough understanding of a specific sector etc.

Here's a quick profile of our 60 respondents:

- 14 large businesses/events/organizations (5+ employees)
- 40+ small businesses/events/organizations
- 11 new or recently purchased businesses (under 3 years)
- 16 accommodations – included B+Bs, lodges, cabins, hotels, campgrounds and a hostel
- 14 wilderness tour operators
- 8 arts/culture/heritage
- 4 attractions
- 6 industry association reps
- 4 retailers and/or restaurants
- 3 First Nation
- 2 transportation

Awareness levels

In the interviews we asked two questions about respondents' level of awareness:

Q1: Would you rate your general awareness level of tourism Programs in Yukon as LOW, MEDIUM or HIGH?

Q2: Would you rate your awareness level with tourism Programs outside of Yukon as LOW, MEDIUM or HIGH?

- Almost all interviewees said they had MEDIUM or HIGH awareness of Yukon tourism programs.
- Almost all interviewees said they had a LOW or MEDIUM level of awareness of programs outside of the Yukon.
- Only one interviewee had a better understanding of programs outside than in Yukon (a recent arrival).
- Only a handful of interviewees had a LOW level of awareness of Yukon tourism programs – these were new operators, or in peripheral sectors (i.e. arts/heritage).

In the online surveys we did not specifically ask the two questions about awareness levels, but the responses to other questions indicated that respondents have good to excellent levels of awareness of Yukon programs and services. In reviewing the responses to 3 questions below asked in both surveys and all interviews, it's clear that respondents are aware of key sources of tourism industry information and are availing themselves of the programs and services that are offered:

Q1: When you are looking for information on the tourism industry, who/what are your main sources?

Q2: Please list any organizations that you have previously obtained tourism business development support from. (e.g. industry research, business development advice, licensing/certifications, training, regulatory information, etc.)

Q3: Please list any organizations that you have previously obtained tourism business development funding from. (eg, to attend tradeshows, for marketing, business planning, training, feasibility studies etc.)

- In response to Q1, almost all respondents cited Tourism Yukon and/or at least one industry association as their primary source of information. Most respondents mentioned the internet/websites as primary sources. Many also cited colleagues, industry leaders and other individuals.
- In response to Q2 about (non-financial) support, 53 out of 60 respondents said that they had obtained tourism business development support and they listed a wide range of sources. Many noted that it had been many years since they had obtained support.
- In response to Q3 about funding, 45 out of 60 respondents said that they had obtained tourism business development funding. A large majority cited TCMF and Tourism Yukon programs (i.e. Product Development). Many cited the Tourism Training Fund. A few cited Yukon EcDev, INAC, other funds and non-Yukon sources.
- Upon a closer look, the respondents who have obtained no funding and/or support can be generally described as small and/or new and/or at the industry margins.

2. Gap Analysis

Tourism funding

At an individual level, availability of funding does not appear to be an issue. A number of funding programs are accessible to the tourism industry (including Product Development Partnership Program, Tourism Cooperative Marketing Fund, Yukon Tourism Training Fund, Strategic Industries Fund, Regional Economic Development Fund, Enterprise Trade Fund, INAC) and many tourism businesses and organizations are benefiting from these programs. Rather, funding access issues include:

- How can tourism operators more efficiently and effectively access these funds? (eg. one window to information, streamline application processes, clarity in criteria, etc)
- Are small-scale, new and emerging entrepreneurs aware of and accessing these funds?

At the industry level, it's fairly clear that the tourism sector continues to trail other sectors in its ability to secure industry development funds. Some funding figures at a glance…

- Tourism Yukon had $550,000 available through the PDPP and TCMF in 2008/2009 and TIA Yukon had $80,000 available through the Tourism Training Trust Fund.
- In a Feb 18/09 announcement, Yukon Government increased the Yukon Mining Incentive Program (through Energy Mines and Resources) to $1.8 million.
- TIA Yukon and two tourism businesses received SI funding each of the last two years. Most of SI's $800,000 was stated as going to the mining sector.
- The three main funds at Economic Development (SI, RED, ETF) totaled $1.8 million in 2008/2009.
- The federal government committed up to $9.3 million to the Yukon Mine Training Association in July 2008 (Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership).

Fragmentation and lack of a one-stop shop

While there is a wide variety of programs and services available to the tourism industry, information is not easily accessible. Tourism-related business information, resources, programs and services are housed by multiple governments, branches, agencies, chambers and industry associations that are spread out physically and in the online world. Regulatory information is similarly spread out. The result is a very confusing landscape for business people. One operator echoed the sentiments of many others: "Fragmented information is a problem with respect to government programs. You have to know what you are looking for. It would be helpful to have one place to go to."

Respondents offered valuable observations and suggestions. Many embraced the idea of a single-window to online business resources for the industry, and several want current industry contact lists and industry check-lists. Several respondents suggested they would like to see an information package delivered to them once a year outlining new funding and service opportunities including changes to existing ones. One suggested "a total list of all

tourism attractions, accommodations and services." Meanwhile, many participants reported that they are typically "bombarded" from the various organizations that play a role in tourism.

New, emerging and small businesses

New, emerging and smaller businesses represent the balance of Yukon's tourism industry, but many are not accessing the resources and services that are available. They are not as familiar with the opportunities as established tourism operators and often they are pre-occupied with the challenges of operating a small business. Many lack confidence and some are wary of asking for help. Many are entering business for the first time, and some are dealing with additional challenges like language barriers or being new residents. The problem of fragmented industry information is costing these businesses more than it should.

In addition to better coordination of industry information, several respondents suggested other ways of engaging and supporting these developing entrepreneurs. One operator suggested mentorships, anther suggested "a place for someone starting a new tourism business to be able to receive regular assistance – then we started, it seemed like we were asking a million questions and always getting pushed to different places…it seemed like an awkward process." In addition to funding information, another small business owner wants "the ability to have professional assistance when I need it." Other ideas included information packages for new businesses, creation of a peer-to-peer program, or an "advisor to work with tourism businesses who is not tied to any particular fund or organization so there's no vested interest."

Challenges working with Yukon Government

Generally respondents who have received funding reported favourably on their interactions with all funding programs. Some businesses had good experiences working with Yukon Economic Development, while some identified challenges working with EcDev programs. Many tourism businesses liaise regularly with Yukon Environment, and some challenges were also identified in working with this department.

Several respondents stated that EcDev program guidelines are unclear or inconsistent and that paperwork was onerous. A couple of respondents reported very negative experiences. On one hand the guidelines for EcDev funding programs have been designed to allow flexibility in terms of supporting projects. On the other hand, clients want clarity in terms of the funding guidelines and criteria to ensure that the process to secure funding is efficient and fair. We also found that some of these funds are not being spent (eg. 55% and 66% of ETF), while at the same time tourism businesses reported being turned down. While many Yukon Government funding programs use committees and peer review processes, EcDev's review process is internal and unclear to applicants. This approach is less transparent and also does not harness knowledge and experience from outside the department.

Environment Yukon is a key point of contact for many tourism-related businesses, and yet the department does not easily identify with tourism or private business. Parks and Wildlife Viewing branches have more experience working with tourism, but other sectors (eg. hunting outfitters, wilderness operators) also regularly deal with conservation officers and other staff at Environment Yukon. The department's focus is mainly on environmental integrity, regulation and enforcement, and residents – as it should be – however, there are good opportunities for Environment Yukon to streamline delivery of its programs to be more tourism business-friendly and accessible.

Specific data gaps

A few operators mentioned the lack of hotel occupancy data as a gap in the information that they need for competitive analysis. We also heard about a need for more off-season visitation data. A couple of respondents mentioned the need for more easily accessible and more detailed airport data (beyond numbers/origins to reason for travel etc). One operator pointed out that the larger amount of data available on rubber-tire visitation does not serve their business and they want to see more information about destination Yukon visitors.

Summary of Relevant Funding Programs

FUNDING PROGRAM	TOTAL FUNDS AVAILABLE	FUNDS RECEIVED BY PRIVATE SECTOR	FUNDS RECEIVED BY NGOs	COMMENTS
Product Development Partnership Program (PDPP) **2008/2009**	$50,000 Annually	Private sector is ineligible	NGOs, communities and First Nation organizations with a tourism focus	Spent 100% in 2008/09 Examples of projects @ www.tc.gov.yk.ca/758.html
Tourism Cooperative Marketing Fund (TCMF) **2007-2008**	$500,000 Annually	62 private businesses (86% of the total)	10 NGOs and/or Municipalities	Totals include both funds (Marketing and Consumer/Tradeshows) – Spent 100%
Tourism Cooperative Marketing Fund (TCMF) **2008-2009**	$500,000 Annually	65 private businesses (79% of the total)	10 NGOs and/or Municipalities	Totals include both funds (Marketing and Consumer/Tradeshows)
Yukon Tourism Training Fund (YTTF) **2008/09**	$80,433 (includes 10% admin fee/year)	Could not break down between private sector and NGOs.		$13,530 as of Dec. 31, 2008 with more applications by March 2009
Strategic Industries Development Fund (SIDF) **2007/08**	$1.3 million	07/08 – 2 tourism projects (same applicant)	07/08 – 2 tourism NGO projects (both TIAY)	2007/2008 – all spent ($185,000 or approx 14% to tourism industry)
Strategic Industries Development Fund (SIDF) **2008/09**	$800,000	08/09 – 2 tourism businesses	08/09 – 1 tourism NGO (TIA Yukon, also MOU)	2008/2009 – largely spent ($47,000 or approx 6% to tourism industry) – does not include re-vote monies
Regional Economic Development Fund (REDF) **2008/09**	$400,000	Mainly capacity building for municipalities		Only two tourism-related projects
Enterprise Trade Fund (ETF) **2007/2008**	$600,000	62 private businesses*	9 NGOs	66% of allocated budget spent
Enterprise Trade Fund (ETF) **2008/2009**	$600,000	47 private businesses*	4 NGOs	55% of allocated budget spent (as of February 18, 2009)

* total of all businesses funded by ETF: cannot break out how many are tourism businesses
Note: Years shown are government fiscal year – April 1 to March 31

3. Inventory

The completed inventory is an Excel file that contains over 80 records with up to 18 columns of data. Following our late-February meeting with the working group, we met with Geof Harries at Subvert to discuss the technical aspects of preparing the inventory to go online. Over the next month we continued to meet and liaise with Geof to ensure that our inventory would import easily into the content management system he is developing for TIA Yukon to manage this new resource.

The inventory (Excel spreadsheet) has been provided to TIAY on CD. We have also provided a single printed copy (columns A to M only) that is sorted on 'category'.

The categories are:

- Association
- Business Services
- First Nation Venture
- Funding
- Information
- Regulatory

4. Implementation and Maintenance Recommendations

Ownership and Access

This tourism business services inventory will be a great tool for the industry as long as it is a) current, and b) accessible. Therefore, key success factors in its implementation are an 'owner' that has the resources to maintain it and a 'home' with the broadest accessibility. Given the feedback from industry about how they collect information, it was clear that the inventory should be online.

The optimal owner of this inventory will have an inherent interest in supporting tourism businesses in all sectors and the secure funding to maintain it. Tourism Yukon and TIA Yukon are both good candidates to manage this inventory, though adequate resources are an added challenge for the industry association.

The optimal home for this inventory will transcend the fragmented landscape of industry and government players. An inventory housed outside of the silos will result in a more accessible and open shared resource. The owner does not necessarily need to keep the inventory 'under its own roof,' nor does the inventory necessarily have to share its owner's identity. Regardless of who is the owner, the inventory could be hosted at a unique URL (web domain name) and it could have a pan-industry identity. If all parties have a stake in the inventory/URL, it is likely to enjoy greater success including referrals and linkages from associations, agencies and other key industry and government websites and publications.

A shared resource that transcends the silos, sectors and jurisdictions is one that all can embrace. A universal approach will help address a number of related challenges that we noted during our research:

- Several times we were not encouraged or were even discouraged from going to other organizations for information about tourism business services. Individuals often determined the quality or availability of information and services provided.
- While TIA Yukon was lauded for its leadership and efforts to build unity in the industry, it was clear that many businesses and organizations continue to look to sector associations as their primary information source.
- Tourism Yukon was widely cited for its support and depth of industry resources, yet Yukon Government departments sometimes appear out of step with each other on communications, programs, services and funding affecting the tourism industry.
- While many businesses and organizations are meeting with success in their pursuit of funding and other types of support, a large number of small tourism businesses remain at the margins of the industry. These businesses have much to gain from improved access and understanding of the programs and services that are available.

Implementation

This inventory will be an information gold mine for many Yukon tourism businesses and organizations. The sooner the inventory is available to the industry, the sooner they can benefit from existing programs, services and resources that are available to tourism-related businesses and organizations in the Yukon.

As outlined in our proposal and discussed with the working group, the inventory document is an Excel spreadsheet. This file format is easy to update and maintain, and it's a standard format that web programmers work with when creating forms and database-driven websites. Most entrepreneurs look to the web to conduct their research, and it's increasingly expected by the business community that business support resources are available online. The tourism industry has high levels of connectivity given that travellers increasingly turn to the web to research and book their trips. We encountered very few businesses that were not web-savvy.

We believe that users will approach this inventory through the following interfaces or slices:

- A user may be looking for a general type of support; for example, they want to know about sources of funding or regulatory information. (BY CATEGORY)
- A user is looking for help during a particular task or stage of development; for example, start-up, business planning, training, financing, marketing. (BY TASK/STAGE)
- The user sees a program or service and wants to find out about the organization's other offerings; for example, considering joining WTAY and possibly participating in YukonWild; or applying to TCMF for a marketing project and then how to incorporate images from the Tourism Yukon image collection. (BY ORGANIZATION)
- A user has a specific keyword search in mind; for example, they type in 'TCMF' and the search results brings up the two TCMF funds, or they're interested in 'wildlife' related tools and services. (BY KEYWORD)

Partway through our project, TIAY engaged Geof Harries of Subvert to implement the inventory online. We worked with Geof to ensure that our Excel spreadsheet was created with website implementation in mind. TIAY will be launching a basic searchable online inventory at the TIA Conference in late April, activating two of the above interfaces/slices (CATEGORY and KEYWORD) and incorporating up to 13 fields of data.

In future, TIAY will be able to enhance the functionality of the inventory by activating two additional interfaces (TASK/STAGE and ORGANIZATION) and adding some written content (introduction, definitions, about us, etc). To do this, TIAY will need staff or a contractor to assign TASKS/STAGES to all listings and draft written content for the expanded website (approximately 3 to 5 days of work).

The spreadsheet contains some additional information that TIAY is not activating at this time. For example, most of the funding listings include links to downloadable PDF forms, eligibility info, deadlines etc, and some of the regulatory listings list the regulatory requirements. While funding criteria, laws, dates etc are useful information, these items are

also the most changeable which increases maintenance. This is also sensitive information that TIAY may not want to include to ensure that users are ultimately responsible for ensuring they have the right information.

Further to this question of responsibility, we recommend that TIAY includes a disclaimer on the inventory website clearly stating that users are responsible for ensuring that they have the correct and current information. This inventory is a tool, and TIAY should not be held accountable for any errors that lead to missed deadlines, misunderstandings, etc.

To remain current and useful, the inventory will need to be updated at regular intervals. Most program and service information listed in the inventory will not change from year to year – at most, some contact info or a website link may change. However, more sensitive listings such as funding programs and regulatory information are more likely to change. At its present size (approximately 80 listings), the inventory could be checked and updated twice a year.

Given that the government fiscal year drives most funding cycles and deadlines in the Yukon, it would be wise to update the inventory in the early months of each new fiscal year (April/May) to check if programs and services are ongoing, discontinued, new format etc. Many Yukon tourism businesses slow down in the early fall, and for many business owners fall/winter is the time to engage on business development and industry issues. A semi-annual updating of the inventory (Oct/Nov) would ensure that businesses receive current information about programs and services as they enter the off-season.

The content management system (CMS) being created by Geof Harries/Subvert is user-friendly and will enable staff or a contractor to easily update the database. According to Geof, getting oriented to the CMS takes no more than an hour. The updating process is two steps: the administrator logs in and searches for the listing they want to edit; then they click, edit and save the listing.

The administrator will review all of the inventory listings during each scheduled update period (eg April and October). This involves opening each listing and checking content, links and contacts to make sure information is current. Much of the information can be checked online, and the administrator will need to also make some phone calls. Each semi-annual update can probably be completed in 3 to 5 days, including new listings, deletions and any necessary edits to the website's written copy (introduction, about us etc). If an organization submits an important change between the update periods, it will be fairly straightforward for the administrator to update the listing at that time. A useful addition to the database would be a "Last updated on <date>" for each listing.

TIAY should clarify with Geof/Subvert how the inventory is backed up. For example, if the administrator makes a change through the CMS, how does TIAY ensure that the change is reflected in a master document (offline)?

We also recommend that TIAY implement a basic analytics program (eg Google Analytics) to measure activity on the website. It may also be worthwhile to hire a web metrics analyst to provide periodic analysis (perhaps semi-annually) for the first year to monitor and evaluate website traffic, popular search terms, user preferences etc. This information will be valuable when refining the inventory or working with partners to develop the next-generation online tourism business resource.

Estimated Year 1 Costs

Task	**Time**	**Cost**	**Notes**
Develop Website v.1	March/April	n/a	TIAY already proceeding with contractor
Domain registration	1 year	Approx $50	TIAY to decide re name
Hosting (or could be a redirect to an existing site)	1 year	Approx $300 (or less for redirect)	TIAY to resolve with current service provider
Web analytics program	1 year	GA is free	
Web metrics analyst, Nov/09	1 day	Approx $1000	Contractor
Web metrics analyst April/10	1 day	Approx $1000	Contractor
Inventory Update, Nov/09	3 to 5 days	Approx $2,000	Contractor or staff
Inventory Update, April/10	3 to 5 days	Approx $2,000	Contractor or staff
Estimated Year 1 total costs (April/09 – April/10)		**Approx $6,500**	

Below we have also provided a list of some inventory editing practices that will help increase usability and minimize maintenance:

- Avoid direct/name email addresses and use general email addresses where possible (eg. list etf@gov.yk.ca instead of juanita.wood@gov.yk.ca).
- When including a program or service website, send users to the closest 'main' page where links and content are relevant and useful for their needs:
    - eg TIAY Membership: www.tiayukon.com [not www.tiayukon.com/abouttiay]
    - eg YTTF: www.tiayukon.com/programs2/yukontourismtrainingfund [not www.tiayukon.com]
    - eg Strategic Industries Fund: www.economicdevelopment.gov.yk.ca/sib.html [not www.economicdevelopment.gov.yk.ca]
- Show acronyms in parentheses after the full name at least once in each listing to ensure that all users will understand and to ensure keyword effectiveness, eg. Klondike Visitors Association (KVA)
- Always include telephone area codes; some programs and services are based outside of the Yukon.
- Where the office address is different from the mailing address:
    - The office address must be a physical street address (for site visits, couriers)
    - The mailing address may be a street address or a postal box
    - If the office and mailing addresses are different, the postal code is always attached to the mailing address.
    - If only one address is listed, the postal code is attached to that address.

5. Looking Ahead

Given its potential value as an industry development tool, this inventory seems like a good prospect for attracting the support of key industry players to guide and fund it. A partnership among key stakeholders could include TIA Yukon and its partner associations and Yukon Government (Tourism & Culture and Economic Development are the dominant funders and service providers). Over the next year, TIA Yukon could take the opportunity to monitor and measure use of the inventory and consult with partners and members about how to enhance and improve delivery of the information in the inventory. If TIAY turns over the resource to government, the metrics will also be of great value as they move forward.

Looking ahead, this inventory also has the potential to be a catalyst for the development of an integrated online tourism industry portal. While this inventory consolidates some key information in a central database, most online tourism-related business resources in the Yukon remain fairly fragmented. Altogether, interview participants mentioned over 25 different Yukon websites that they use to find industry-related tourism information.

In interviews, participants indicated that the following kinds of tourism industry information ranked fairly high in importance to their businesses:

- Current tourism-related statistics and trends
- Information on current Yukon tourism marketing activities
- Program information and incentives available from Yukon Government departments and tourism organizations
- Up-to-date regulatory and licensing information
- Information on support such as training and education for the industry
- New tourism investment opportunities in the Yukon
- Links to tourism-related associations and organizations
- Information on First Nations partnerships and land claim settlements

Much of this information is available from Tourism and Culture through www.tc.gov.yk.ca and www.travelyukon.org, and information about other Yukon Government resources and services is available through www.economicdevelopment.gov.yk.ca, www.investyukon.com, www.environmentyukon.gov.yk.ca, www.yukonheritage.com and www.gov.yk.ca. Key industry information is available through www.tiayukon.com, www.wtay.com, www.meetingsyukon.com and other association websites as well as the websites of other levels of government.

A tourism industry business portal could pull in existing content from all industry partners, including these and other related sites, with value added through current information and tools that help build traffic (funding announcements, coming industry events, media releases, industry news, RSS etc).

A timely example is Yukon's new mining portal in development this spring by Economic Development. In addition to site design, visual identity and programming, this $250,000 project has involved extensive research, user testing, focus groups and the development of custom applications. The portal will pull all mining industry resources into one site (eg. www.yukonmining.com) including information for investors, extensive data and mapping resources, training, reports and studies, infrastructure and much more. One of the major differences between the mining portal and a potential tourism business portal is that the tourism industry already has an extensive online marketing presence; a tourism portal could focus on the business needs and interests of a narrower industry audience.

In addition to their awesome consumer websites [www.newzealand.com] and travel trade site [www.newzealand.com/travel/trade], Travel New Zealand also has an outstanding corporate site geared very much to industry [www.tourismnewzealand.com]. TNZ is a crown corporation and international marketing agency, but the content on the site extends beyond marketing resources, market research, travel trade programs etc to include a thorough *Industry Resources* section that helps tourism operators better understand the tourism industry landscape, grow their business and access the resources and information they need. One of the tools they direct businesses to is the New Zealand Government's business development portal [www.business.govt.nz] where users can use a search tool to find relevant programs and services.

A business resource website that may also provide some value as an example is Canada Business (www.canadabusiness.ca), Canada's government information service for businesses and start-up entrepreneurs. Canada Business is funded and managed on behalf of the Government of Canada by four lead departments (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Industry Canada and Western Economic Diversification Canada); however, the URL lies outside of the departments involved and the Canada Business Network is operated through a variety of collaborative arrangements with provincial and territorial governments and not-for-profit organizations. The local partner at the Canada-Yukon Business Service Centre (and website) is the Yukon Chamber of Commerce.

6. Investors' Perceptions of the Yukon Economy

In the interviews (20) and the second survey (12) we asked participants for their thoughts on the general investment climate for tourism in Yukon.

Not surprisingly, respondents are nervous about the current global economic crisis and many are experiencing a decline in sales or anticipating lower visitation this year. However, this reality did not overshadow the very positive view that most have about the Yukon's long-term potential as a tourism destination and a sound place to invest for the future.

Some respondents struggled with this question – small entrepreneurs often did not see themselves as investors or understand the language of investment. But the rest shared a wide range of reasons why they feel it is or isn't a good place to invest. Please read the complete responses in the survey and interview summaries.

7. Barriers to Investment and Business Partnerships for Tourism Business

In the interviews (20) and the second survey (12) we also asked participants what barriers to investment they see in the Yukon tourism industry.

Again, we received a wide range of responses. Many respondents – including several who are considering or already pursuing significant investments in tourism – are very optimistic and see few unreasonable barriers to their success. As one southern investor put it: "We don't see these things as challenges or barriers, just that they are next steps – things we need to do. There's not a lot of obstacles in the Yukon."

However, some specific barriers and themes did emerge in our research.

- **Land-related barriers**: more respondents cited the lack of land available for development and the absence of a commercial wilderness lands policy than any other barrier; also land claims and land use planning.
- **Fragmentation** of information, funding, resources, plans and strategies.
- **Local capacity** re access to capital, financing options, vision, knowledge etc.
- **Working with First Nations**, developing aboriginal partnerships, and the associated capacity issues.
- **Distance to market** and associated increases in airfares and energy costs
- **Short season**, need for expanding winter and shoulder to make businesses more viable, need for embracing year-round tourism.

Many respondents referred to some milestones and suggested that their attainment is key to the Yukon reaching its tipping point as a destination. These defining thresholds included a 5-star year-round resort property, resolution of the land access issue to allow commercial wilderness tourism development, and a unified tourism strategy on destination development, marketing and infrastructure.

Please read the complete responses in the enclosed survey and interview summaries.

Appendices

1. Inventory – print and digital file
2. Site Visits Summary – print and PDF
3. Online Survey 1 Summary – print and PDF
4. Online Survey 2 Summary – print and PDF
5. Extended Questionnaire Summary – print and PDF