



Slave Lake Economic Development (SLED)

ACTION PLAN

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Economic Development Action Plan

Overview

The proposed economic development activities are the result of the planning and research conducted by Incite in the spring of 2021. The purpose of the planning phase was to gain an in-depth understanding of the capabilities, differentiators, and opportunities for the Town of Slave Lake (TOSL) as it relates to region growth. Incite's research findings served as the foundation for the positioning, key messaging, and the brand strategy previously presented, and for the recommended tactics found in this action plan.

Economic Development Pillars

- A. Slave Lake Economic Development (SLED)
- B. Business, Investment, and Labour Attraction
- C. Strengthen and Support Local Business
- D. Tourism



Slave Lake Economic Development (SLED)

Pillar Priorities

- 1A. Increase capacity for execution of action plan and delivery of SLED services
- 1B. Share regional positioning and economic development goals, results, and impacts with the community

Recommended Activities

Slave Lake Economic Development (SLED)

Priority 1: Complete rebrand by creating and launching a new visual identity for the Town

1. New Visual Identity for the TOSL

Objective: To update the TOSL's identity and align it with the region's new positioning and brand experience outlined in the brand strategy

Incite recommends developing a new visual identity for the Town of Slave Lake that will augment the TOSL's position and reinforce the desired corporate brand experience as one that is collaborative, supportive, invested, connected, focused, and one of leadership. A new visual identity will also support the region's economic development efforts moving forward by strengthening the overarching brand of the TOSL while it works to attract businesses and investors to the area.

In the effort of aligning the TOSL to the new positioning, brand experience, and key value points, Incite will develop a new visual identity to support SLED in creating meaningful connections with target audiences including prospective businesses, residents, and visitors, and to differentiate the region from competing options.



Incite will create full brand guidelines for use with staff and third-party vendors. The guidelines will include visual and verbal guidelines (e.g., visual and logo usage, colour palettes, typography recommendations) as well as well as examples of the brand in-use; these elements serve as the visual tools to build a strong, aligned brand going forward.

The TOSL can leverage the brand experience guidelines and in-use examples to work with a third-party provider in building out all necessary materials that will need to be updated following the rebrand.

INCITE'S ROLE	TOSL'S ROLE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Design new visual identity for the TOSL and in-use examples• Two rounds of revisions to proposed visual identity• Develop brand experience guidelines to direct ongoing usage of the brand	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide feedback or revisions to new visual identity• Approve new visual identity• Leverage brand experience guidelines consistently when implementing new brand and provide to third-party vendors, as required

Execution: Incite

Incite Deliverable: New visual identity, brand experience guidelines and in-use examples for the TOSL

Priority 1A: Increase capacity for execution of action plan and delivery of SLED services

2. Hire Economic Development Officer

Objective: To increase the capacity of SLED in order to effectively execute on tourism priorities

SLED is currently led and managed by one individual. Now that specific pillars and priorities have been defined by SLED, this department of the TOSL will require greater organizational capacity in order to execute on this action plan. As such, Incite recommends SLED hire an economic development officer who will work alongside the current officer to implement this plan and lead economic development activities. Roles may be delineated based on pillars or based on differing areas of expertise, to be decided on by the TOSL.



Priority 1B: Share regional positioning and economic development goals, results, and impacts with the community

3. State of the Region Event

Objective: Leverage interest shown during research to engage with the region in a way that brings together key stakeholders and elected officials to collaborate, communicate, and share economic development results

Research indicates that there is a specific appetite for an annual State of the Region event in the Slave Lake region (pending COVID-19 restrictions) where SLED would invite and host key political stakeholders such as elected officials from within the region, the Premier, leadership from Indigenous communities, etc. This event will need to create value in a way that is unique compared to previous town hall efforts. The SLED-drive event, supported by other partners, should help stakeholders share best practices, provide a forum for discussion around what others are doing in the region, and bring to light opportunities for collaboration across geographic and industry groups. The inaugural event is also an opportunity for SLED to educate the regional market on its role in the community, the overarching strategic plan, and details around specific initiatives over the coming year. For years going forward, economic development results, successes, and impacts should be shared with stakeholders.

INCITE'S ROLE	SLED'S ROLE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oversee event strategy• Develop brand for the event• Design agenda, program, and schedule• Create content for programming with SLED	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approve brand recommendation• Work with Incite to create content for programming• Handle planning, project management, execution, and promotion• Create event invitation list• Secure in-kind event sponsorship, if required

Execution: Incite

Incite Deliverable: State of the Region event strategy, agenda, program, schedule, and programming content



4. Impact One-Pager

Objective: Bolster regional pride by showcasing the impacts that are making the region a better place to visit, live, and work

Through the planning process, it was revealed that regional stakeholders have a lack of confidence in future economic development efforts because past efforts have failed to show results. Previously, many plans have been laid out, but action items have not been executed on and, as a result, impact has not been seen within the town or region. SLED needs to share results, successes and impacts that will let the region know progress is taking place.

In order to regularly communicate back to the community and key stakeholders about the progress SLED is making toward its strategic priorities, SLED should create and publish an annual impact one-pager in collaboration with the TOSL. Rather than a large annual report, a double-sided one-pager can concisely communicate the positive results due to SLED's efforts and initiatives and should be distributed to businesses and residents. Information should be conveyed partially in an infographic format, and partially through other statistics or case studies that communicate the narrative of the region. The following are items that could be included:

- Key statistics of new businesses or investors brought to the region
- New entrepreneurial endeavours initiated by residents
- Population growth or changes
- Incentive programs
- SLED goals for the upcoming year
- New partnerships initiated
- Number of visitors brought to the region

Incite also recommends that each time there is a “win” with a new business opening in the region, SLED should promote it and update the community through:

- News or media release
- Social media posts
- Update posted on the regional website (if tourism-focused) or SLED website in a designated, easy-to-find location
- Announcement at relevant pillar roundtables or State of the Region event

Execution: SLED



5. Customer Service Video – Ambassador Initiative

Objective: To harness local businesses and their networks as a medium for creating brand ambassadors for the town

Incite recommends SLED leverage the customer service program developed and owned by Community Futures - Lesser Slave Lake. The customer service program, targeted to launch in the Spring of 2022, is a series of educational videos and quizzes for local businesses to use to equip their staff with adequate customer service training. As such, this presents an opportunity for SLED to include a mini-series of 3 or 4 short videos (1-3 minutes each) to create brand ambassadors for the town.

SLED needs to activate local business ambassadors by encouraging and promoting the newly adopted brand, messaging, and initiatives to support tourism and economic development. This activity will not only provide SLED an organic rollout the new brand, but also assist with the remaining three pillars. Potential topics for the videos are:

- Slave Lake brand & messaging
- Slave Lake tourism opportunities
- Who is Slave Lake economic development?
- Amenities and attractions in Slave Lake
- How you can play a role in Slave Lake Economic development & tourism

Execution: SLED and Community Futures - Lesser Slave Lake



Business, Investment, and Labour Attraction

Pillar Priorities

- 2A. Provide access to resources and information essential for business and investment decision-making
- 2B. Develop incentive programs to attract prospective business and investment
- 2C. Define and deliver a high-touch service experience to assist businesses and investors seeking to enter the region

Recommended Activities

Priority 2A: Provide access to resources and information essential for business and investment decision-making

6. Sector Profiles (complete)

Objective: To develop tools for different sectors that will consistently communicate the region's positioning and articulate its value to potential investors

In order to articulately speak to audiences about the Town, Region and specific sectors, the TOSL requires the development of profiles. Incite will work with SLED to adapt existing content provided, along with research collected earlier during this project to articulately communicate the opportunities of the Town, Region, and each sector to support the attraction of new investment in the region. Incite will create five unique one-to-two-page visual documents that outline the key information of each, creating palatable resources for the SLED team. Profiles to be included are:



- The Town of Slave Lake
- Slave Lake Region (for tourism)
- Retail sector
- Industry (Forestry and Oil & Gas) sector
- Manufacturing sector

INCITE'S ROLE	SLED'S ROLE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Write sector profiles using raw content and data provided by SLED, along with any additional information that came from previous Incite search• Design five, 1-2-page digital PDF for distribution• Up to two rounds of revisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide Incite with raw content for the sector profiles• Review content and design, providing feedback for up to two rounds of revisions• Distribute to appropriate stakeholders

Execution: Incite

Incite Deliverables: Five, 1-2-page digital PDFs

7. Gather, Update, and Publish Data in a Centralized Location

Objective: Create easily accessible information for potential businesses and residents to access when considering a move to the region

Incite recommends SLED work to acquire and publish data in a centralized location that can be easily accessed by potential business when considering the region as a place to for investment. In some scenarios, the data may already exist, and this means ensuring its updated and moved to the main SLED website for simple consumption. In other cases, SLED will need to work with industry, local businesses, regional stakeholders, and residents in order to gather data that would be useful for potential investors. This could include the need to conduct a town or regional census for demographic data.

The following types of data should be gathered, updated, and published:



- Relevant findings from the Business Activity Survey
- Transportation Survey data
- Information from the previous Visitation Survey
- Update information from the regional website (slavelakeregion.ca) and move resident and business data to the SLED website (slavelake.ca/1626/Economic-Development).
- Town or regional demographic data, housing prices, and tax rates (corporate and personal)
- Relevant findings from the Retail and Services Market Analysis (see activity #12)

Incite also suggests consideration be made to the development of a standalone SLED website. Separation from the rigid framework of the TOSL website will allow SLED to better convey key messaging and differentiation for the region, provide easier access to materials and information pertinent to attracting prospective investors, residents, and visitors to the region, and allow for on-demand updates and adjustments to be made when necessary.

Execution: SLED

8. Inventory of Public & Private Land

Objective: To promote development opportunities in a way that is easy to interact with online

To simplify the research process for potential developers and investors, and to promote regional business opportunities in-market in a professional and sophisticated manner, Incite recommends SLED invest in the creation of an interactive land use map. This inventory of public and private land would be posted on the SLED website and would be for informational purposes, to be updated as regularly as deemed reasonable. Utilizing mapping and analytics software such as ArcGIS, provides prospective investors with on demand access to site specific information that instills confidence and trust at the start of decision making process.

Execution: SLED

9. Formalize and Promote Business Licensing Process

Objective: Enhance the business licensing process and use it to promote attract prospective investors



A process review of business licencing for the Town will be conducted and from there, recommendations to enhance and ultimately formalize the process will be provided. Once approved, the process should be used to promote conducting business in the region with prospective investors. The creation of a one-pager, highlighting the new process and the benefits it provides should be created, published, and promoted through Town communication channels.

Priority 2B: Develop incentive programs to attract prospective business and investment

10. Incentive Levers

Objective: To identify and implement incentives for businesses SLED would like to attract to the region and to support the growth of vital local businesses

To attract businesses and investment to the region, SLED should work with the TOSL and other regional bodies to develop incentive programs for prospective companies or industries as they relate to taxes, investment, and growth. The Business Activity Survey also revealed that established businesses within the region were looking for government incentives for training, attraction, and retention. When considering other areas to focus on for the creation of incentives, Incite recommends SLED consider the Top 20 Retail and Service List (see activity #14) to identify potential opportunities as well as some of the industries with growth potential indicated in the Business Activity survey:

- Manufacturing and supply chain
- Alternate/renewable energy
- Forestry and lumber
- Tourism operators and accommodations
- Wholesale trade

Lastly, there are a few tax incentives and grants already offered for the province that should be reviewed and promoted on the SLED website and information should be shared with key stakeholders for broad distribution if they have not been already. These include, but are not limited to:

- Innovation Employment Grant
- Alberta Petrochemicals Incentive Program (APIP)



- Scientific Research and Experimental Development (SR&ED) Program
- Strategic Innovation Fund

Execution: SLED

Priority 2C: Define and deliver a high-touch service experience to assist businesses and investors seeking to enter the region

11. Investor Touch Point Analysis

Objective: Integrate a streamlined and high-touch business development process for prospective regional investors

Incite recommends SLED work in collaboration with the rest of the TOSL to conduct a touch point analysis focused on streamlining the business development experience from a prospective business investor's perspective, in turn creating opportunities for a strong, articulated, high touch experience. Working collaboratively through the analyses allows for greater buy-in among attendees, collaboration, and understanding of the functions of different team members, in addition to building consistency in the process moving forward. This process could also be repeated by the MD and other governmental bodies in the region.

Incite will facilitate two touch point analysis sessions with SLED and may include business owners from within the region. The initial session will map out the development process, from identification of investor needs to the opening of new business. The second session will be to identify gaps and areas of opportunity and determine an ideal process with the SLED and Planning & Development teams that can feasibly be implemented. Incite will then design a finalized map of the process to be used as a tool in ensuring consistency and can be shared with relevant stakeholders in the community.



INCITE'S ROLE	SLED'S ROLE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work with SLED to identify required attendees• Facilitate two, two-hour touch point analysis sessions• Provide additional recommendations based on identification of gaps and Incite's understanding of best practices• Design finalized process map	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coordinate with required attendees to select dates for sessions• Attend touch point analysis session• Review and approve finalized touch point map• Leverage map throughout development process to ease stakeholder frustrations

Execution: Incite

Incite Deliverable: Two, two-hour touch point analysis sessions

12. Retail and Services Market Analysis

Objective: Create a deliberate business and investment and attraction plan based on filling gaps in the market

Research indicated that there are gaps in the current retail and service market in the Slave Lake Region that may need to be filled before other potential businesses or visitors will invest in the region. SLED should conduct a detailed market retail analysis for the region to examine the market segmentation in the area, find gaps in the current retail and services market, and retail business potential. Augmenting these areas within the region will increase the number of businesses and residents willing to invest in the region and will also support recruitment efforts of local businesses.

In the future, portions of this analysis can be leveraged for the impact one-pager report (see activity #5). The larger analysis should be distributed to relevant stakeholders and influencers who would be inclined to share it with potential investors. This analysis should be updated every 3-5 years depending on investment and growth in the region going forward. As of early 2021, residents of the region noted the following as high-level gaps, but these should be confirmed through deeper analysis:

- Accommodations
- Restaurants and food services
- Tourism operators



- Retailers
- Entertainment services
- Healthcare, social assistance, and mental health services
- Lawyers

Execution: SLED

13. Business and Investment Attraction Toolkit

Objective: Encourage businesses and investment in the Slave Lake region by proactively providing consistent and digestible information to support their research

SLED should enhance its business and investment attraction collateral by formalizing a toolkit that will allow ambassadors, businesses, and SLED team members to provide tangible information to the market quickly and consistently. In addition to providing information quickly, a well-built toolkit creates trust in the regional brand, as the experience is smooth, professional, and aligned with the desired positioning and messaging. The toolkit can leverage elements from other activities, but should also include:

- SLED one-pager
 - Leverage the content from the TOSL sector profile work (see activity #13) to create a version specifically focused around economic development initiatives
 - Informational piece to communicate how the Slave Lake region and SLED supports businesses investing in the area
 - Should also outline SLED's role and mandate
 - Outlines the impact of economic development in the region (pull elements from the impact one-pager from activity #5)
- Case studies
 - Create an inventory of case studies of active, successful regional businesses to showcase; choose three to build in the first 12 months
 - Case studies should be developed to be included in the toolkit and displayed on the SLED website
 - Leverage content developed for tourism initiatives and new tourism product development for that pillar
- Retail and market services analysis (see activity #12)
- Top 20 retail and services list (see activity #14)
- Informational sheets around rental rates, available space, days to development, etc.



Toolkit materials should be created with options for both digital or physical distribution, using digital as the primary dissemination method at the outset, and physical copies created as resources become available.

Execution: SLED

14. Top 20 Retail and Services List

Objective: Prioritize and target prospective businesses and investors

To strategically target business development efforts, Incite recommends that SLED develop a Top 20 list of prospective businesses that would most benefit the region for 2021–2024. These should each be prioritized, and a customized, individual sales plan should be created to individually target and pitch the Slave Lake Region as an ideal area for investment.

To develop this list, research with area landowners and developers, businesses, and other community partners should be conducted. Discussions may include one-to-one conversations, connections to developer organizations, or roundtables bi-annually with representatives from a variety of stakeholders. Potential focus areas should be based around areas of opportunity and growth identified in the 2021 Business Activity Survey. Focus areas for consideration include, but should not be limited to, the following:

- Manufacturing and supply chain
- Healthcare, social assistance, and mental health services
- Alternate/renewable energy
- Forestry and lumber
- Accommodation and restaurants
- Tourism operators
- Retailers and entertainment
- Wholesale trade

Execution: SLED



15. Explore Implementation of Transportation Survey Recommendations

Objective: Review and determine potential next steps based on the recommendations from the Transportation Survey

Over the course of 2021, extensive research was conducted in region around Slave Lake's place in Alberta's transportation network. A review of the recommendations made should be conducted, with focus being placed on the investigation of the viability of a new truck stop along highway 2. Further to this, work should be considered regarding the development of empty spaces along highway 2 and highway 88.

The Town of Slave Lake recognizes the current state of provincial highways in the region and will continue to advocate for improvements to the Alberta Government.

Execution: SLED



Strengthen and Support Local Business

Pillar Priority

- 3A. Engage key regional stakeholders to better understand local market challenges and concerns, to educate the local business community on SLED, and to drive increased collaboration and communication

Recommended Activities

Priority 3A: Engage key regional stakeholders to better understand local market challenges and concerns, to educate the local business community on SLED, and to drive increased collaboration and communication

16. Host a Local Business Advisory Council (BAC)

Objective: Leverage business stakeholder groups to inform and advise the efforts of SLED based on their day-to-day experiences

Incite recommends that SLED form a business advisory council (BAC) that will meet three times per year. The BAC would keep SLED informed about the day-to-day challenges and successes that businesses are experiencing in the region. This feedback would be supplemented by the business visitations completed for each pillar. There is additional opportunity for the BAC to advise on how the work of SLED is having an impact on local businesses. Ultimately, the BAC should become champions of SLED and the Slave Lake region for growth and economic development.

Execution: SLED



17. Provincial and Federal Advocacy

Objective: Harness stakeholder collaboration to advocate for regional needs to provincial and federal governments

There is an overarching desire for the TOSL to play a bigger role in partnering or working with businesses in the region to be a stronger voice to the provincial and federal government. There are businesses and industry in the region looking to expand, partner on innovative initiatives, and ultimately bring more residents to the region as employees, but they are in need of further support from SLED and the TOSL when it comes to advocating to government bodies and fostering stronger relationships with MPs and MLAs. Working collaboratively with the MD, Indigenous groups, and local businesses allows SLED to take a more regional approach to bringing in funding and creates a more persuasive argument for what is sometimes perceived to be a small area within a riding of significant geographic area.

Execution: Council

18. Ongoing Meetings with Indigenous Groups

Objective: Increase regional collaboration and identify underleveraged opportunities through Indigenous partnership development

A regional opportunity that came up in research findings as being currently underleveraged was the idea of Indigenous partnerships. Incite recommends SLED does ongoing work to instigate and build relationships with local Indigenous groups. This is a long-term activity and may not generate immediate impact but will be important for the region's economic development endeavours.

Reoccurring meetings with key Indigenous stakeholders and continuous effort invested in the development of these partnerships will serve to strengthen advocacy work (see activity #17), will allow SLED to better understand the needs and skills accessible within these groups, and will support the exploration of potential opportunities related to cultural tourism and tourism product development.

Execution: SLED and Council

19. Visitation Program

Objective: Increase engagement with local businesses to strengthen relationships, build trust in the TOSL's efforts, and inform SLED decisions



Incite recommends that SLED initiate an informal visitation program to meet with local businesses, groups, and community organizations individually. This program is intended for one of the SLED officers to meet with each local business at their location at least once throughout the year. By taking the time to meet, this program will create a forum for dialogue and discussion around opportunities and challenges in the region and would create a platform for the local market to access SLED's team.

Execution: SLED and BAC

20. Training Research

Objective: To further explore gaps related to training within local businesses triggered by initial research findings

The Business Activity Survey indicated that 53% of respondents are spending the majority of their time developing the skills of current employees and 16% are training new employees. In addition to the development of incentives around training, recruitment, and retention (see activity #10), Incite recommends SLED use the business visitation program (see activity #19) and roundtables (see activity #15) to explore

- Types of tools currently being used for training
- Topics being introduced
- Who is executing the training that businesses are leveraging
- Other training still needed or desired

By identifying the gaps, SLED will be able to identify ways it can further support local businesses in this area.

Execution: SLED



Tourism

Pillar Priorities

- 4A. Develop and launch a Summer 2021, in-market digital tourism campaign for the region
- 4B. Create foundational elements to promote regional visitation
- 4C. Educate key stakeholders to champion tourism in the region
- 4D. Develop the resources and tools necessary to support local entrepreneurship as it relates to the development of sustainable, year-round tourism product
- 4E. Deliver excellent front-line visitor service experiences



Recommended Activities

Tourism

Priority 4A: Develop and launch a Summer 2022, in-market place brand and tourism campaign for the region

21. Develop a Digital Tourism Campaign Concept

Objective: To increase visitation through the summer of 2022 by promoting the region to communities located in northwestern Alberta as well as those located in the metro Edmonton region using SLED's new positioning and messaging

Considering the focus on tourism as a significant opportunity for the region in the coming years, and the fact that increasing visitation often encourages growth in regional residents or the ability for businesses to attract future employees, Incite recommends building a tourism campaign concept that will be used in-market to attract visitors to the region in the summer of 2022. **SLED should leverage Travel Alberta's Cooperative Investment Program to acquire funding for this campaign.**

In the effort to aligning the region to the new positioning, messaging, and brand experience, Incite will develop a campaign concept to support SLED in creating meaningful connections with target audiences in and around Edmonton, including friends and family of current residents, new visitors, etc. The campaign will also serve to differentiate the region from competing options for weekend road trips. Incite will create a campaign guide outlining the campaign theme, high-level campaign messaging or slogan, desired campaign experience, details around campaign visuals (e.g., indented usage for campaign visuals, colour palettes, typography recommendations), and of the concept in-use. The campaign guide and in-use examples should be used by SLED to work with a third-party provider in building out all necessary materials.



INCITE'S ROLE	SLED'S ROLE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meet with SLED to kick off the project and download additional information, if required• Develop two campaign concepts to present to SLED• Finalize selected campaign concept and develop in-use examples for illustrative purposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meet with Incite to provide required information• Provide feedback on two campaign concepts and select one with which to proceed• Provide in-use examples to any third-party designers or suppliers supporting in execution and development of materials

Execution: Incite

Incite Deliverables: Campaign guide including theme, high-level campaign messaging or slogan, in-use examples of campaign visuals, and guidance around colour palettes and typography

22. Digital Campaign Collateral and Implementation Tools

Objective: To support the in-market execution of the tourism campaign concept

To bring the campaign to life, a suite of collateral and implementation tools will need to be developed or leveraged based on the overarching campaign concept (see activity #21). Promotional items, materials, and tools should create consistency experience and leverage the messaging, positioning, and brand personality outlined in the SLED brand strategy document. They should also highlight the experiential opportunities the region provides for visitors and prospective residents. The following are examples of collateral or tools that should be developed or leveraged when thinking about in-market implementation:

- Campaign guide (see activity #21)
- Update regional tourism website (see activity #24)
- Digital strategy and plan
- Posting about events that SLED or other organizations are hosting or attending within the community
- Targeted digital advertising (using Travel Alberta funding) at those from surrounding northwestern communities and the Edmonton Metropolitan Region



- Creation and dissemination of digital assets such as
 - Imagery of experiences, events, and locations that share the Slave Lake story
 - Quotes or testimonials for use online
 - Images for a Q & A series on social media about the region and its tourism products
- Create and share sample day itineraries that bundle suggested experiences for visitors
- Showcase tour operators in the region or businesses that would be attractive to visitors from Edmonton (i.e., Dog Island Brewing, water sport rentals, camping options, Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory, etc.)
 - Potential to collaborate with businesses in the creation of visitor promotions
- Leverage “Things to Do” social influencers in urban areas such as Curiosity in Edmonton and Calgary (on Instagram)
- Encouragement of editorial coverage in urban areas where residents could easily reach Slave Lake on a weekend trip (see activity #23)
- Promotional video to tell the story of the region in a more dynamic and immersive manner (if resources allow)

Execution: SLED

23. Editorial Coverage

Objective: To build interest in the idea of weekend trips to the Slave Lake region in-market through media coverage

In addition to digital promotion of the in-market tourism campaign, Incite recommends SLED work to attract the attention of media to gain news or editorial coverage about the region. SLED can do this effectively via the following two methods:

Attraction of media influencers and bloggers to the region

- Invite and hosting significant media influencers and bloggers around the Slave Lake region
 - Will serve to highlight different tourism products in the region and would support the development of positive editorial coverage
 - Media influencers in Edmonton, Grande Prairie, and Athabasca should be considered
- SLED must evaluate the quality of its visitor experience prior to hosting influencers to ensure it will communicate a compelling and consistent regional message
- Level of tourism product development and ability of operators to host a quality experience will need to be evaluated



Pitching the regional tourism story to relevant publications in urban areas where residents would be likely to take a weekend trip to Slave Lake

- SLED identifies publications in which it would like to be highlighted and approached the editors with a pre-crafted story about the region or pitches a story that the publication would write themselves
 - Communicate a sample half-day and full-day itinerary that would be appealing for visitors (e.g., breakfast locations followed by a hike that ends at the brewery where a packed lunch can be arranged)
 - Showcase success stories of local business or organizations (e.g., Dog Island Brewing, Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory)
- Could also include or be substituted with paid advertisements
- Publications could include, but are not limited to the following:
 - *AMA Insider* magazine
 - Edify Edmonton
 - Taproot Edmonton
 - Avenue Calgary
 - Roadtripalberta.com
 - *RV Lifestyle* magazine
 - *Canadian RVing* magazine

Execution: SLED



Priority 4B: Create foundational elements to promote regional visitation

24. Update and Maintain the Town and Regional Tourism Websites

Objective: To ensure the platform for the tourism campaign and the main information source for visitors is aligned with SLED's desired positioning

Incite recommends leveraging the current regional tourism website and updating it for use as the foundation from which to launch the in-region tourism campaign, and as a digital platform to disseminate information for visitors. Since time is of the essence when considering the 2021 tourism season, Incite suggests using the place brand previously developed and updating its messaging to align with the positioning outlined in the SLED brand strategy document.

The following items should be considered when updating and maintaining the site in the long term:

- Assign responsibility to one individual, such as the communications coordinator, to ensure the website stays current and incorporates all relevant tourism information
- Remove aspects of the website focused around "Working in the Region" (i.e., the attraction of businesses) and "Living in the Region" (i.e., attraction of residents), but repurpose any relevant information from "Living in the Region" for tourism and visitation purposes
- Create a stronger tie between the two websites
- Adjust functionality of the website so its user experience is based on addressing visitor needs and pains, rather than business opportunities and economic statistics
- Update messaging so it is focused on the positioning and KVPs laid out in the SLED brand strategy
- Include 3-4 sample itineraries for visitors based on seasonality, indoor vs outdoor activities, location, etc.
- Include new photography that is sourced locally and is of the region itself. Use this photography to showcase local areas to explore, businesses to visit, and individuals and their stories (see activity #26)
- Update 'Things to Do' and 'Where to Eat' after Tourism Product Audit (see activity #29) to ensure all opportunities are highlighted

Execution: SLED



25. Source Regional, High-Resolution Photography and Video Content

Objective: To support a compelling regional narrative by providing visual assets that reinforce the desired tourism and brand experience

SLED will need to have a robust collection of assets for in-market promotion and for the execution of other activities such as the ambassador program (see activity #28) and VIC toolkit (see activity #31). By performing an asset audit, SLED can identify where there are gaps, noting where additional photography and video content is required. Developing an inventory list will allow for the classification of assets based on the area, type of tourism activity, or medium, they should be used for.

Once gaps in the inventory list are identified, SLED will need to build a comprehensive asset library to ensure SLED's brand strategy, desired regional brand experience, and messaging are conveyed visually while reflecting the region's strengths.

The following are ways SLED may acquire additional visual assets:

- Put a call out to local businesses and tourism operators for high-quality photos and video footage that highlight the region, its people, and tourism activities
- Hire a local photographer to capture key images to be used on the slavelakeregion.ca website and TOSL's slavelake.ca website
- Create a social media contest asking residents and visitors to source or provide their best photos of the region in competition for a prize

Images must be high-resolution and should consider the following:

- Feature in-region tourism experiences
- Highlight individuals who are showing positive emotions
- Picturesque views of the region
- Marquee events focused on people that also showcase diversity

Execution: SLED



Priority 4C: Educate key stakeholders to champion tourism in the region

26. Formalize partnership with the Slave Lake Tourism Society

Objective: To improve communication and collaboration with the Tourism Society

In the effort of improving communication and collaboration with the Slave Lake Tourism Society, discussions should be held around creating a permanent member seat for the Town's EDO to occupy. By formalizing this partnership between the Town's EDO and tourism lead and the Tourism Society, a more consistent approach will be created to sharing and collaborating on tourism initiatives in the Town and region overall. Further to this, space in each meeting agenda should be saved for the Town's EDO to provide an update on relevant economic development and tourism initiatives and activities.

27. Pre-Season Tourism Roundtable

Objective: To communicate the new brand strategy to stakeholders and support consistency in the strategic integration of key messages in-region and in-market

In the effort to relay the tourism-related research findings and brand strategies adopted by SLED, and to elevate the overall regional experience through increased consistency in messaging, community engagement efforts should occur at a regional level, Incite recommends re-connecting with local tourism stakeholders (operators and hospitality-focused businesses) through a pre-season tourism roundtable session. There, SLED will articulate what was heard during economic development research, to share the strategic decisions that have been made by SLED and create alignment around future tourism initiatives. This session will serve to increase momentum and harness existing but underutilized tourism resources, where available.

Aside from tourism operators and hospitality-focused businesses, key players in the tourism industry should also be invited, including but not limited to, Travel Alberta, Alberta Parks, Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC), Slave Lake Visitor Information Centre, Slave Lake Tourism Society, Slave Lake Chamber of Commerce, Lakeside Leader, sport associations, etc. Through these sessions, SLED will be able to:

- Share high-level tourism research findings and new, regional positioning and messaging
- Communicate strategic priorities within the newly established tourism pillar and intentions for tourism in the region
- Communicate tourism's role as it relates to economic development and action items to be undertaken over the coming year



- Call out ways in which SLED will support and encourage entrepreneurs who are interested in partnering for the purposes of product development
- Launch the in-market tourism campaigns
- Communicate KPIs around tourism initiatives
- Engage in valuable dialogue with stakeholders
- Identify ambassadors to be leveraged for the formalized program (see activity #28)

Execution: SLED

Priority 4D: Develop the resources and tools necessary to support local entrepreneurship as it relates to the development of sustainable, year-round tourism product

28. Tourism Product Audit

Objective: To identify gaps in the tourism experience that local operators, businesses, and stakeholders are able to provide to visitors

In order to have a current understanding of the gaps and opportunities for tourism product and operators in the region, an audit should be conducted to provide an updated assessment of the needs, capabilities, and interests. As the past year has caused considerable disruption to many businesses, an up-to-date database of tourism products and operators in Slave Lake and the region should be created to identify areas where the region is lacking as it looks to develop an experiential visitor journey.

The findings of this audit should be leveraged during discussions with tourism stakeholders, ambassadors, and entrepreneurs to articulate where there are opportunities for development and growth that can be realized by creating sustainable, year-round tourism products. This will help guide the tourism activities of SLED in attracting and assisting potential tour operators as they look to bring new product to the market.

Execution: SLED



29. Indigenous Tourism Product Development

Objective: To determine possible Indigenous experiences that could be used as tourism opportunities as well as identify underutilized capabilities and resources that would add to regional tourism development as a whole

Research revealed opportunities for SLED to deepen its engagement with First Nations groups in the region and leverage these partnerships to better understand regional needs and identify ways the groups can work together and find synergies to grow economic development in the region. As a result, Incite recommends SLED capitalize on the opportunity to further develop relationships with local Indigenous communities and work with the leaders and members of Sawridge First Nation and other local Indigenous groups to augment this unique regional visitor experience.

These efforts should include, but not be limited to:

- Collaborative discussions to identify stakeholders that are interested and well-positioned to launch tourism product(s) in Slave Lake and the region
- Determine how to encourage the involvement of Indigenous groups with regional tourism efforts
- Leverage the findings of the tourism product audit (see activity #29) to identify gaps in the tourism experience that Indigenous groups, stakeholders, or businesses may be able to help fill
- identify opportunities for building capacity in Indigenous cultural products that could be brought to market

Since much of this process will be built on relationship development, trust, and time, this will be an activity that will rely heavily on the guidance and expertise of Indigenous leaders and other SLED stakeholders who have a deep understanding of the region's Indigenous groups.

Execution: SLED

Priority 4E: Deliver excellent front-line visitor service experiences



30. Visitor Information Centre (VIC) Toolkits

Objective: To ensure visitors are equipped with the information they require for a smooth experience and that the regional positioning and value is well-articulated

Research revealed that stakeholders feel there is not one consistent place that visitors, or those looking to move to the region, can go to source information about things to do, facts about the region, important contact information, restaurants, lodging, etc. As a result, Incite recommends SLED create a visitor toolkit which will increase the consistency of messaging to those visiting the region and will serve to promote local businesses and tourism products that are looking to grow.

The VIC toolkit should include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Key messages about the region (as defined in the brand strategy)
- Facts and stats about the region
- Things to do or see, including suggested routes or weekend itineraries
- Events or tournaments happening in the region
- Relevant maps or wayfinding
- Contact details for regional hospitality partners

The toolkit should be provided to the following stakeholders:

- Visitor Information Centre and other tourism outlets in the region
- Business who are often bringing prospective employees to the region
- Residents that want to share with visiting friends and family

This package will act not only as an educational resource but also as a reference for those looking to host and entertain family and friends in the Slave Lake region.

Execution: SLED



31. Activate Visitor Information Centre (VIC) Team

Objective: To maximize the time and efforts of the VIC staff team

To better utilize the staff that are employed to work at the VIC seasonally, a review of their current roles and responsibilities should be conducted with the intention of increasing the scope of work these individuals are provided with. Additional areas of responsibility that should be considered include:

- Conducting FAM tours with prospective investors and media outlets
- Conducting annual surveys with local tourism-focused businesses

The outcome of this review should be recommendations with which to enhance the scope of work for the VIC staff and their ability for tourism to achieve its annual objectives.

For Future Consideration

The following are activities that Incite recommends would be beneficial for SLED's tourism efforts in the future but have been de-prioritized based on the limitations of available resources.

32. Re-establish a Slave Lake Destination Marketing Organization (DMO)

A DMO plays a key role in the long-term development of destination and harnesses required resources, expertise, and funding on order to drive the overarching tourism strategy for a region. Incite is aligned with the previous recommendations of the 2016 Tourism Strategy in recommending that SLED establish a DMO for Slave Lake and the region in order to lead and champion tourism efforts moving forward.

33. Implement a Destination Marketing Fund

Incite reviewed the Slave Lake Tourism Strategy provided to the Tri-Council Economic Development Committee in 2016 and agrees with the recommendation of re-instituting a Destination Marketing Fee that will collaboratively create sustainable revenue sources for ongoing tourism efforts.



34. Establish and Promote FAM Tours

Incite recommends that SLED work with local operators to deliver customized, easy-to-replicate, and high-touch familiarization (FAM) tours to host potential tourism operators, prospective new residents, and prospective investors in the region. This process should identify stakeholders who will play a role and which attractions should be highlighted and/or toured, providing SLED with the opportunity to work closely with these individuals and organizations involved in determining new and improved ways of elevating the FAM tour experience. Such efforts will also tie in with priorities mentioned for the Business, Investment, and Labour Attraction pillar.



Timelines

See **SLED Action Plan Timelines.xls**, provided as a deliverable alongside this document.



Budget

Please note that all costs may change given significant changes to the nature, scope, or deliverables of the project. Incite fees do not include GST. Budgeted amounts and third-party expenses are estimates only. This is not a contract. The below information can only be current within 30 days of posted date.

ACTIVITIES	INCITE FEES	APPROX. SLED & 3 RD PARTY EXPENSES
1. New Visual Identity for the TOSL	\$31,000-\$55,000	-
2. Hire Economic Development Officer	-	\$85,000 (annually)
3. State of the Region Event	\$20,000	\$10,000-\$15,000
4. Impact One-Pager	-	\$3,000
5. Customer Service Video – Ambassador Initiative	-	\$5,000-\$10,000
6. Sector Profiles (complete)	Complete	-
7. Gather, Update, and Publish Data in Centralized Location	-	-
8. Inventory of Public & Private Land	-	\$15,000
9. Formalize and Promote Business Licensing Process	-	-
10. Incentive Levers	-	Cost of supporting incentives
11. Investor Touch Point Analysis	\$10,000	-
12. Retail and Services Market Analysis	-	\$10,000-\$20,000
13. Business and Investment Attraction Toolkit	-	\$2,000-\$5,000
14. Top 20 Retail and Services List	-	-
15. Explore Implementation of Transportation Survey Recommendations	-	-
16. Host a Local Business Advisory Council	-	\$500
17. Provincial and Federal Advocacy	-	-
18. Ongoing Meetings with Indigenous Groups	-	\$1,000
19. Visitation Program	-	-
20. Training Research	-	-
21. Digital Campaign Concept	\$20,000	-
22. Tourism Digital Campaign Collateral	-	\$40,000
23. Editorial Coverage	-	\$3,000



24. Update Town and Regional Websites	-	Hosting fees, web design, etc.
25. Source Photography and Video Content	-	\$0-\$20,000
26. Formalize partnership with the Slave Lake Tourism Society	-	-
27. Pre-Season Tourism Roundtable	-	-
28. Tourism Product Audit	-	-
29. Indigenous Tourism Product Development	-	-
30. Visitor Information Centre (VIC) Toolkits	-	\$3,000-\$5,000
31. Activate Visitor Information Centre (VIC) Team	-	-
TOTALS	\$81,000-\$105,000	\$177,500-\$222,500