**2020 Summer Partner Check-in Survey**

Overview

This 10-question survey was sent to roughly 105 tourism businesses and partners in Abbotsford in August 2020 and was designed to better understand how our local businesses were coping during the COVID-19 pandemic. The data collected will be used to inform our communication with the province of British Columbia as we move towards the end of the year and into 2021. We received 44 responses from businesses in a variety of different sectors and have highlighted below some of the key findings.

Results

1. Please indicate the impact of COVID-19 on your current operations

* 75% Reduced Operations
* 15.9% Business as Usual
* 4.5% Open Late for Season
* 4.5% Permanently Closed

1. What percentage have your staffing levels been in June, July & August of this year compared to the same period last year?

* 14% of respondents answered 10% or less
* 11.6% of respondents answered 11-35%
* 37.2% of respondents answered 36-70%
* 37.2% of respondents answered 71-100%

1. As a percentage, approximately how has your June, July & August 2020 revenue been compared to June, July & August 2019?

* Over 50% of respondents answered that their revenue was 50% or less compared to this time last year
* 40% of respondents answered that their revenue was 51-100% compared to this time last year
* 7.5% of respondents answered that their revenue was over 100% compared to this time last year

1. Have there been any noticeable trends this season as to where people are visiting from, why they may be visiting, or how they heard about your business?

* The majority of respondents answered that they did not see any noticeable trends other than that almost all of their traffic was from locals who were wanting to shop small and support local businesses
* Some saw visitors from Alberta but nothing farther than that

1. Do you anticipate you will be operating a normal level of business this fall and winter? If not, what percentage are you expecting compared to previous years?

* Roughly 41% of respondents answered that they expect to see 0-50% of previous years revenues this fall and winter
* Roughly 41% respondents answered that they expect to see somewhere between 51-100% of last years revenues this fall and winter
* Roughly 18% respondents answered that they expect to be operating at a normal level of business this fall and winter

1. Looking ahead to the fall and winter, what are your three biggest concerns?

* The main concerns that were given included not being able to hold events, the Canada-US border remaining closed, a second wave of COVID/restrictions being put back in place, losing staff/being able to pay staff and bills, and staff health.

1. What tourism sector does your business fall under?

* 27.3% - Food & Beverage
* 18.2% - Farm Experiences
* 13.6% - Accommodations
* 13.6% - Events/Festivals
* 9.1% - Retail/Shopping
* 18.2% - Other

**Appendix A**

**Responses to ‘Please use the space below to share any other comments or thoughts”**

* So far with the spacing requirements, we cannot seat enough guests in the dining rooms at the restaurant. We generally do $350k of offsite catering sales and that has all but disappeared.
* We are frustrated and discouraged that the Provincial Health Authority is not willing to engage with events to evaluate proposals with viable & safe plans to go ahead with events on a reduced attendance basis.
* We'd like to see some of these funding to towards promoting why they should support local business FROM our community vs. National or international businesses that are IN our community. Big corporations create jobs - yes, but they do not contribute to the energy and uniqueness of who we are... so we need to fight for what is unique local.
* While we reopened in June, our attendance is about half of what it would normally be as we have not been presenting any in-person public programs. Online programming has been well received, but it is just not the same qualitative experience for anyone involved.
* Our cost of continuing a farm actually increases to adhere to Covid regulations and yet visitation will actually decrease due to inability to handle social distancing prescribed densities. Its a loose x loose situation. Annual crops like corn and pumpkins are set with anticipation of traditional sales. Perennial crops need to be pruned and maintained regardless of whether they sell or not. Cost is higher with anticipated lower demand.
* The challenge with hosting events at lower capacity is that we can't make it worthwhile, costs more to host the event than the revenues it would bring in. There are no covered spaces on the property to hold events outside. We have tried to host Zoom virtual tours but it's not really reliable.
* The rules around CERB have made the largest impact on scheduling staff for retail workers. If they work under $1,000, then they get a $2000 bonus from CERB. If they work $1,200 worth of hours, then they get no bonus. An employer cannot reasonably ask someone to take an income cut just to have them work an extra day.
* Overall we know that we've been exceptionally fortunate this year, and we do not take that for granted. We know that CERB will eventually run out, too, and with national debt & unemployment at a record high we know that a recession could be what hits us on the tail end of all this.
* The drop in head count may or may not impact our ability to apply for the grants which make up 98% of our annual funding next year. When numbers have dropped in previous years, let's say due to a teachers strike, it's taken years to recover. Sometimes we have not been able to recover from drops in certain demographics a decade later. While I don't expect us to be impacted this winter, next winter might be a different story!
* The most discouraging part of this, is that our business systems, teams, reputation and momentum is stronger than it has ever been and our momentum and market share within the industry is also continuing to improve and go beyond our original expectations. However, due to the guest restrictions in place, the business model is no longer viable long-term. If the restrictions were to be lifted to events hosting even 100 guests in a safe manner, we would continue to thrive and grow into a large successful company employing many staff in the service industry as well as continuing to highlight and sell our local farmers produce and support our local vendors. It would be a shame to see an otherwise successful business model not work due to a temporary issue in the marketplace.