

Almaguin Brand Strategy



CONTENTS

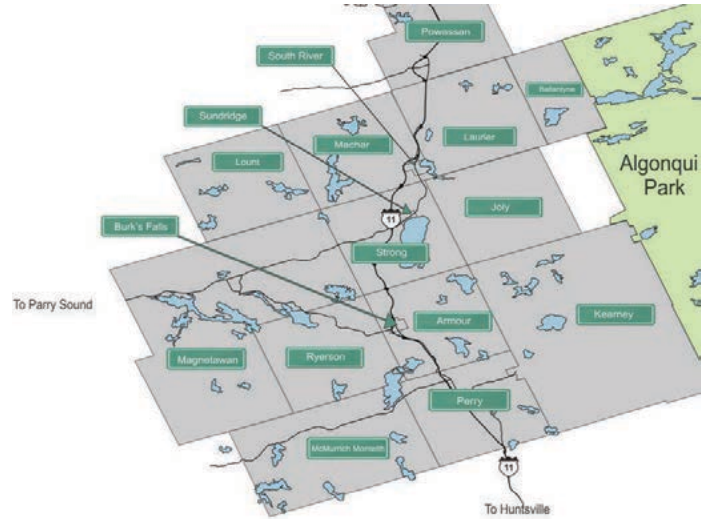
01	Acknowledgements
02	1.0 Executive Summary
03	2.0 Project Background
05	3.0 Key Findings Summary
13	4.0 Brand Development
17	5.0 Regional Brand Strategy

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1. Township of Perry
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3. Village of Burk's Falls
4. Township of Ryerson
5. Municipality of Magnetawan
6. Township of Strong
7. Village of Sundridge
8. Township of Joly
9. Municipality of Powassan
10. Village of South River



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PREPARED FOR:

56 Ontario
Burk's Falls, ON P0C 1C0

www.investalmaguin.ca

PREPARED BY:

Karen Jones Consulting Inc.

101-238 Worthington St E.
North Bay, ON P1B 1G5

www.kico.ca

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY





The Almaguin Highlands Community Economic Board and Department (ACED) was established in 2019 as a partnership between regional communities and organization with the vision to collaboratively ensure the economic growth of the Almaguin Highlands Region. The formation of ACED involved the merger of two previous economic development organizations and was a major recommendation in the 2018 Almaguin Highlands Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan (RED Plan). The strategic plan identified actions to help prioritize and align economic development initiatives across the region to achieve growth and included the recommendation for the development of a Regional Brand Strategy.

The ACED Board determined that creation of the Almaguin Brand Strategy as a top priority in order to ensure consistency in activities throughout the execution of the strategic plan. The Brand Strategy will act as a framework to establish a collaborative brand including a regional visual identity and an implementation plan to align marketing and promotion efforts across the region and establish the Almaguin region as an attractive destination for tourism, business investment and quality of life for residents. Almaguin Community Economic Development (ACED) engaged the services of Karen Jones Consulting Inc. to facilitate and develop a regional brand strategy.

The strategy was developed using a grassroots approach focusing on primary and secondary research methods including research, stakeholder consultation, data analysis, identification of priority areas and development of recommendations and actions. This collaborative approach was instrumental in creating a plan that reflects the strengths, challenges and opportunities of the organization and the region.

The process identified achievable and measurable priorities and actions to collaboratively promote the region and foster growth. The implementation occurs over a two-year period ranging from short-, medium- and long-term timelines. Partnership opportunities have been outlined along with roles and responsibilities to ensure forward momentum and accountability.

The strategy is built on four key pillar areas:

	<p>Priority 1 Regional Brand Hub</p>		<p>Priority 3 Brand Awareness</p>
	<p>Priority 2 Brand Adoption</p>		<p>Priority 4 Regional Asset Development</p>

This final report represents the completion of all phases of the project and presents a summary of key findings, the regional visual brand and tagline, a communication plan and identified priorities, strategies and initiatives for the successful launch, execution and implementation of regional brand initiatives.

The actionable strategic plan will allow ACED to build upon the successes and accomplishments achieved to date and to position the region as a destination to live, work and play.

2.0 PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Almaguin Brand Strategy will serve as a roadmap to unite and guide regional partners in efforts to promote and market the region to target audiences and to support economic development initiatives. Throughout the process realistic and attainable solutions were developed that can be seamlessly implemented by stakeholders.

A four-phased approach was taken.



Each phase of the project has a specific set of purpose-based deliverables. To set the stage and provide a clear understanding of this report, the project objectives and purpose are summarized as follows:



Phase 1: Research & Analysis

This phase of the project consisted of reviewing reports and websites to gain insight into research and recommendations that have already been put forward as they relate to regional identity and collaboration, marketing and branding. A review of existing websites and social media was conducted to determine how various stakeholders are promoting the region and if the Villages of Almaguin theme has been adopted in online platforms. A best practice review provided insight into challenges, standards, practices and recommended solutions to developing and implementing a Regional Brand Strategy. The initial phase of the project also allowed for the identification key stakeholders, engagement tools, methods, distribution channels and partners.



Phase 2: Engagement

The objective for Phase 2 was to collect feedback and insight on the regional brand and brand strategy from key stakeholders including regional businesses, municipalities, organizations and associations, permanent and seasonal residents, and visitors to the region. The engagement processes included an online survey, one-on-one interviews and focus groups. The process also provided a platform to educate stakeholders on the importance of regional collaboration and encourage buy-in for the implementation of the regional brand and strategy.



Phase 3: Brand Development

Engagement from the different stakeholder groups also help to gain a deeper understanding of the people and communities that make up the region, assisting in identification of what makes the region different and what draws people to work, live and visit the area. Based on input and feedback from stakeholders, a regional logo and tagline was developed that incorporated elements that visually represent the character and strengths that Almaguin has to offer and that resonates with multiple target audiences. The logo and tagline are a key tool to help businesses, organizations, communities and groups in their efforts to promote the region.



Phase 4: Regional Brand Strategy

Information collected within the initial phases of the project led to a deeper understanding of the regional landscape and economic development goals. Potential challenges and barriers stakeholders may face in implementing the brand strategy were identified, along with solutions to help mitigate these obstacles. The key findings from the initial phases led the development of the recommendations outlined in this report. An Action Plan was created outlining the identified recommendations and next steps to serve as a working guide for ACED in moving forward in achieving regional brand goals and objectives.



3.0 KEY FINDINGS SUMMARY

The initial two phases of the project focused on the collection, review and analysis of data along with insight obtained from research through stakeholder engagement and industry research. This data helped to guide the development of the SWOT Analysis and the identification of priority pillars, recommendations and actions presented in this report.

3.1 Research & Analysis Overview



Phase 1

This phase of the project consisted of data collection through a review of existing reports, a website and social media review and a best practice analysis of other organizations that have developed and implemented a regional brand strategy.

An examination of existing documents was conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the regional identity, collaborative efforts, marketing tactics and branding practices. Most of the reports reviewed gathered information from community stakeholders about the strengths, weakness and opportunities of the region including areas of focus such as infrastructure, workforce and other areas of community investment and growth. The following highlights the key findings from the reports related to collaboration, identity, and promotion of the region, along with operating a business and living in the region.

	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities
Regional Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrated interest in working collaboratively on regional marketing and other initiatives • Open communication with partnering organizations such as provincial and federal governments and agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of collaboration and sharing of information and resources • Lack of clear roles, expectations, deliverables, resources among existing organizations • No unique value proposition or competitive advantage outlined 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness about business development organizations • Further develop and position Almaguin identity to resonate outside regional borders • Develop a regional identity and marketing tools • Develop regional marketing strategy to identify target markets, partnerships and actions • Create packages for regional opportunities and cross promotion of assets
Operating a Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proximity to Toronto • Cost effective • Approachable people • Close to Cottage Country and Algonquin Park • Small communities • Natural environment • Great highway system • Volume of tourists / tourism • Government incentives • Limited competition • Great place to live and work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of collaboration between businesses • Lack of joint marketing opportunities • Lack of community interest • Small market • Local support / getting local clientele • Hard to break into larger markets • Just beyond traditional cottage country 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared marketing initiatives • Develop long-term expansion plans to attract and establish a thriving business community • Various municipalities and organizations working together to promote region and communities • More communication to reunite the pride of all who live here

	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities
Living in the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community ties and support • Quiet, friendly, relaxing lifestyle • Affordable, low cost of living • Natural beauty, country living, open spaces • Recreational lifestyle and access to nature and lakes • Low crime, feeling of safety • Peaceful, slower way of life • Not the city • Proximity to larger towns • Such solid roots with core values of honesty, decency and compassion • Residents are proud 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data not collected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data not collected

To further support the data review, an analysis of existing websites and social media accounts was conducted to determine how various stakeholders and organizations are currently promoting the region through online channels. A total of 8 website pages and social media accounts were reviewed, along with 13 Municipal websites. While each of the websites reviewed had their own predominant areas of focus such as economic development, community or tourism, there were similarities in the language and content used to describe the region. Moving forward, it is vital that the regional brand be visible on all online platforms including partner websites in a consistent and complementary way.

Additionally, best practice research was conducted to gain insight into challenges, standards, practices, and recommended solutions to developing and implementing a Regional Brand Strategy. The review consisted of a literature review and an online review of regional brands.

The review identified reoccurring patterns related to challenges in developing a place brand including:

- Lack of unity over purpose and objectives – audiences have different agendas and messages
- Lack of control over inputs and outputs – no one single department in charge of implementation
- Restrictions on flexibility – media, visitors, word of mouth, other various sources of information
- Lack of measuring effectiveness
- Lack of implementation of brand by communities after the brand launch
- Lack of consistency in utilizing brand consistently across communities, groups, organizations, business, etc.

The most significant challenge in place branding appears to be related to the actual communities, business, residents and other key stakeholders in the community continuing to implement, promote and share the brand and messages that have been adopted. The recommendations put forth in the Almaguin Brand Strategy have emphasized the importance of instilling pride of place amongst internal stakeholders and providing seamless implementation strategies to increase brand adoption and awareness.

The data collected through the document review, website, social media analysis and best practice research led to the identification of actions and recommendations. Please refer to the ACED Phase 1 Interim Report for a more detailed presentation of Phase 1 findings.

Highlights of the key findings from the initial phase of the project include:

- The need for regional collaboration related to investment and growth, infrastructure development, workforce development, marketing and promotion
- A demonstrated interest in working collaboratively on regional marketing and other initiatives exists with communities, businesses and organizations across the region
- Identified challenges and barriers to promoting the region as a whole including costs, capacity, resources, expectations, communication and leadership
- Resources and tools are needed to help mitigate obstacles to promoting the region and to facilitate collaboration between stakeholders
- Consistency in implementing a regional brand in all marketing efforts including digital platforms
- Clear support and buy-in from all community leaders and stakeholders
- The regional brand must evoke pride of place for residents, business owners, organizations and communities
- Brand messaging should be created and managed at the regional and community level to influence the brand story, narrative and perception
- The brand must be authentic and highlight the region’s promise, market position, value proposition, vision, values, and personality

Additional data collected from Phase 1 of the project is included in the development of the SWOT Analysis outlined in the next section of this report.



3.2 Engagement Overview



Phase 2

This phase of the project included stakeholder engagement in the form of surveys, telephone interviews and virtual focus groups. Stakeholders included a range of audience groups including permanent and seasonal residents, former residents, visitors to the region, regional businesses/organizations, municipal staff and council members.

The engagement phase played an important role in gaining feedback about the region and brand, identifying challenges and barriers to implementing a brand strategy and outlining tools that can assist with the adoption the brand. It also offered the opportunity to educate stakeholders on the importance of regional collaboration and promotion to encourage buy-in and excitement for the brand and brand strategy.

Online Survey

An online survey was conducted using Survey Monkey to gain a deeper understanding of the current perceptions of the region and collect feedback and insight into the regional brand and brand implementation process. The survey was distributed and promoted through the ACED website, social media channels and internal communications with stakeholders. A total of 346 respondents completed the survey and represented the following audience groups.

AUDIENCE	RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE
Permanent resident	248	71.68%
Seasonal resident	67	19.36%
Work within the region but live outside the region	12	3.47%
Visitor to the region	10	2.89%
Former resident	9	2.6%
TOTAL	346	100%

Of the 346 respondents, 58% indicated that they owned a business in the region, worked or volunteered at a community-based organization or community association, are a municipal staff member or council member.

AUDIENCE	RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL
Business	91	26.30%
Community-based organization	78	22.54%
Community association	16	4.62%
Municipal staff member or council member	15	4.34%
TOTAL	200	57.80%

The primary clientele for businesses, organizations and associations within the region include:

- Residents and local markets (75%)
- Visitors to the region (57%)
- Outside the region (34%)
- Other businesses (21%)
- Other (11%)
- Seasonal residents (11%)

The business, organization and association respondents indicated that word of mouth is their predominant means of promotion and marketing (73%), followed by social media (69%), website (51%), networking (34%), flyers and brochures (17%), business-to-business (15%), and online advertisements (12%).

Approximately 45% of businesses, organizations and association respondents indicated that marketing content always included promotion of the community in which they operate and 23% indicated they always promote the Almaguin region in their marketing content.

Stakeholder Consultations

To further support the stakeholder engagement phase, one-on-one telephone interviews were conducted with key stakeholders in addition to virtual focus group sessions. Stakeholder engagement has played a key role in the development of the visual identity as well as identifying recommendations that foster brand adoption while providing partners with the necessary tools and supports to assist in implementation efforts.

A total of 13 telephone interviews were held to gain further feedback from other stakeholders including business owners, municipal councilors and members of regional community-based organizations. Information was gathered including strengths, challenges, target audiences, marketing activities, visual identity recommendations, partnership opportunities, and ideas on how to assist with overall implementation efforts throughout the region.

Common target markets of the organizations and businesses interviewed include:



According to those interviewed, promotion of the region is part of the current marketing efforts of businesses and organizations. However, this predominately appears to be happening through the promotion of regional events, the promotion of businesses in Almaguin and the promotion of regional assets. Marketing of the region in and of itself does not appear to be happening in a consistent manner.

Three virtual focus groups were conducted with key stakeholders representing municipalities, business owners, organizations, permanent residents and seasonal residents. The focus group sessions were promoted through the ACED website and social media channels as well as a print advertisement placed within the local newspaper. A total of 13 individuals participated in the focus groups.

Feedback and input from focus group participants was similar to responses gathered through the surveys and telephone interviews. Marketing tactics used by focus group participants included many of the previously mentioned methods, with the addition of a few marketing mediums such as radio and signage:

- Website
- TripAdvisor
- Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Blogs)
- Radio
- Explorer’s Edge/RTO12
- Chamber of Commerce and Community Guide
- Online and print news / articles
- Community bulletin boards
- Annual municipal calendar
- Business listings on websites
- Posters, brochures
- Word of mouth
- Community events
- Signage
- Community maps

Many participants in the focus groups indicated that they do promote the region as a whole, while some promote only their individual community. Focus group participants indicated that they feel there is a strong need to establish a regional brand, and that they would incorporate it into their promotional activities.

Please refer to ACED Phase 2 Interim Report for a more detailed presentation of findings gathering during the stakeholder engagement phase as well as the raw data that was collected through surveys, interviews and focus groups.

Highlights of the key findings from the engagement phase of the project include:

- It is clear there is a strong sense of regional pride from all stakeholder groups
- Less than half of businesses, organizations and associations promote the region through their marketing efforts
- Less than a quarter of municipalities promote the region through their marketing efforts
- A total of 88% of business, organization, association and municipal respondents indicated they would promote the region in marketing efforts if a regional brand were attractive, managed and readily available
- A majority of stakeholders admit to not seeing the current Villages of Almaguin logo
- While some elements of the current logo are well liked, most stakeholders feel improvements can be made to better reflect the region and that a tagline is needed
- Many stakeholders do not feel the use of the term “Villages” is representative or inclusive of all the communities located in the region
- Clear communication and an outline of expectations/roles is needed to successfully implement the strategy
- Strong advocacy was made for ACED to lead the implementation process and act as a driver for collaborative branding and promotion of the region
- Tools are needed for stakeholders to successfully incorporate the regional brand into marketing practices

The majority of the participants indicated that they would incorporate the Almaguin regional brand in their promotional activities, as long as the following needs were met.

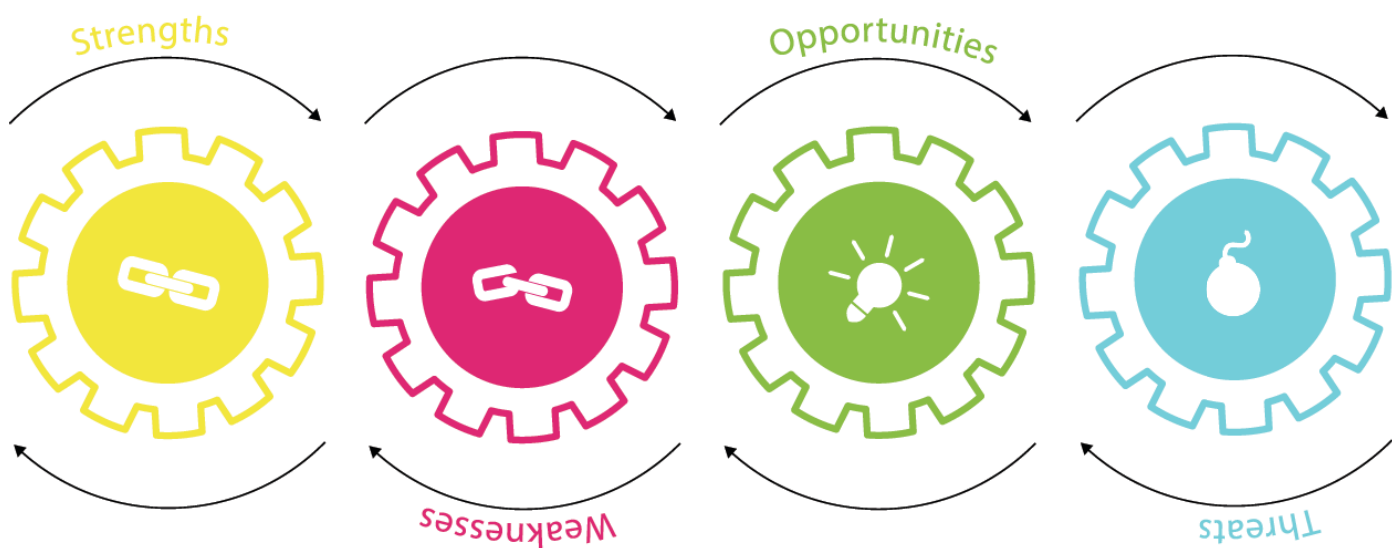
1. The brand aligned with their own brand and messages
2. A variety of training and tools were in place to support implementation
3. Support from ACED to drive the implementation process

Recommendations for assistance and supporting tools include:

- Digital toolkit with images and messaging
- Tools provided in easy-to-use formats
- Database of imagery/photography of the region that business could use/access
- Onsite training and a guidebook
- Education on target markets/audiences that come to the area
- A regional tourism-based website with a link to share (a single point of contact for accessing information on activities, trails, events, etc.)
- A website that lists businesses in the region
- A regional updated map that can be printed
- A regional community guide

Insight and feedback collected is included in the SWOT Analysis and provided insight to shape the recommendations and actions presented in this report.

SWOT *analysis*



3.3 SWOT Analysis

The following chart highlights identified strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats related to implementing a Regional Brand Strategy.

STRENGTHS

- Demonstrated interest in collaborative promotion of the region from businesses and communities
- Open communication with partnering organizations such as provincial and federal governments and agencies
- Existing sense of community pride from most stakeholders
- ACED has strong working relationships with business community
- Diversity of region, assets and experiences
- Natural beauty of the region
- Welcoming communities and region (friendly people)
- Located near Algonquin Park and Muskoka
- Situated along Highway 11 corridor
- Strong historical and cultural heritage within the region
- Available investment and entrepreneurship opportunities
- Increase in visitation from provincial travelers due to pandemic
- Increased interest of relocation to the region from residential market

WEAKNESSES

- Limited human resource capacity
- Lacking financial resources to market effectively
- Requires a central point of contact and dedicated staff person to implement (ACED)
- Multiple audience groups making it difficult to market with one message
- Multiple layers of council cause implementation and collaboration difficulties
- Some stakeholders lack will to work together as a region
- Lack of current unified vision
- Some residential stakeholders do not want to share assets with visitors or wish to see communities grow
- Lack of infrastructure to support business and economic development
- Internet issues make online marketing challenging
- Large geographical size of region
- Ability to implement brand consistently by different stakeholder groups
- No central area to find information and lack of tools and resources to promote region

OPPORUTNITIES

- Establish a central point of contact for regional initiatives such as the brand strategy
- Further develop and position Almaguin identity to resonate outside regional borders
- Create an online platform to house regional information and to be used as a tool to market the region to external audiences
- Increase available amenities through product development initiatives
- Establish brand ambassadors within each community
- Share brand resources, content and imagery that can be used on business promotional activities
- Increase availability of information on accommodations, food, retail, trails and tourism experiences
- Share the unique value proposition of the region
- Shared marketing initiatives and programming with local businesses and community organizations
- Develop opportunities for businesses to participate in joint-marketing efforts and networking on a regional scale
- Promote investment opportunities
- Increase shop local campaigns
- Engage communities through regional collaboration efforts and offer incentive programs to assist with implementation

THREATS

- Inability to access funds to implement regional brand
- Lack of will to adopt brand from internal stakeholders
- COVID-19 Pandemic impacting travel and in-person gatherings
- Economic stability
- Lack of regional unity
- Municipal politics
- Dissolution of ACED due to core funding constraints

4.0 BRAND DEVELOPMENT



Phase 3

Insight and feedback gathered during the stakeholder engagement phase played an integral part of the development of the brand for the Almaguin region. As identified in the best practice review, for a regional brand to be successful it must evoke pride of place in those that live, work and play there.

Feedback about the current logo was collected from stakeholders, who also provided suggestions for changes and improvements to better reflect the region and its communities.

Many stakeholders reinforced the opinion that the term “Villages” was not inclusive or reflective of all the communities in the region and suggested its removal. The importance that the regional logo reflects the natural beauty of the region and its welcoming and inviting communities was highlighted, along with a design that offers a clean, updated look and does not feel institutional or corporate.



Stakeholder participation and input also ensured inclusivity in the branding process and the opportunity to inspire ownership and pride in the resulting logo and tagline, as well as an opportunity to reinforce the need and benefits of implementing a brand and brand strategy for the region.

Please refer to ACED Phase 2 Interim Report for details on findings obtained through the stakeholder engagement process related to the development of the regional logo and tagline. This input helped guide the development of the logo and tagline presented below.

4.1 Logo



The logo is a visual representation of the region’s identity. It is an important tool that symbolizes the personality and values of the region and helps create a positive perception of the region through its consistent and frequent usage.

To create a stronger alignment with perceived values and strengths and to encourage ownership and pride of place, the original “Villages of Almaguin” logo was enhanced and a new tagline was created.

Revisions to the new design include:

- Adoption of “Almaguin” and removal of “Villages”
- Updated font to a more modern style script
- Added imagery elements to better showcase the region’s natural environment and assets
- Added imagery elements to represent the connection between the region’s communities
- Updating font choice and adjustments to brand colours
- Addition of a tagline to further clarify and reinforce the region’s identity

Logo Elements

The imagery and elements for the logo were selected based on several design concepts, including:

- how clearly and concisely they portray the region’s strengths
- how closely they represent the region’s landscape and people
- how they differentiate the region from other competitive regions
- how easily they can be utilized with other campaigns
- how impactful they are on creating a positive first impression

The following chart outlines the various font elements and their contribution to the overall design of the logo.

Font	The font used for Almaguin has been updated to a more modern script version, replacing the more traditional look of the original font while retaining the sense of creativity instead of institutional or corporate.
Winding River	The river connects the font and graphic elements together and represents the connection between the communities and people within the region. The river also represents the natural environment and the many rivers and lakes found in Almaguin.
Trees	Pine trees have been added to the logo to represent the natural elements found within the region.
Peaks	The peaks in the logo represent the rolling hills of the highlands and can also be viewed as rooftops representing the region’s towns, villages and hamlets.

Logo Tagline: Embrace our nature

The logo tagline is a short phrase that helps reinforce the brand message for the region and complements the design of the logo. The tagline was developed to align with feedback provided by stakeholders about their perceptions of the region’s core values and strengths. The “Embrace our nature” tagline not only refers to the region’s beautiful landscapes and natural environment, but also to the warm, welcoming and inviting nature of the communities and people within region.

Logo Variants

The logo has been designed to include a specific area of white space that can be used to include various messaging that can link the logo with other campaigns or affiliate partners. Specific call-to-action phrases can be creatively incorporated below the peaks/rooftops and above the Almaguin font. This includes previously developed ACED campaigns such as:

- Shop in (Almaguin)
- Feast in (Almaguin)
- Celebrate in (Almaguin)
- Invest in (Almaguin)
- Explore in (Almaguin)
- Play in (Almaguin)

If future campaigns are created, ACED can incorporate this into the logo following the brand guidelines. Please refer to the Regional Brand Book Guidelines for specific requirements. Community partners are encouraged to work with ACED to use the logo to market and promote specific activities related to the campaign.



4.2 Brand Elements

Brand Positioning

Almaguin is a beautiful region in Northern Ontario that is made up of warm, inviting communities and stunning natural landscapes. It is a place of connection that inspires families to put down roots, a place of opportunity that attracts entrepreneurs and businesses, a place of adventure that calls to explorers and visitors from all over the world. Connected to the north and south by a major transportation corridor, Almaguin offers the best of affordable rural living with urban accessibility.

Brand Values

The Almaguin brand is based on core values that identify what makes region different and the culture and beliefs held by those who work, live and play in the region. Feedback and insight from the engagement phase of the product guided the development of the following Almaguin brand values:

- **Welcoming:** Connection and caring.
- **Unique:** Creative, authentic and interesting.
- **Collaborative:** Collectively committed to success.
- **Environment:** Four-season enjoyment and respect for nature.
- **Accessible:** Affordable rural quality of life balanced with urban accessibility.

Brand Goals

The Almaguin Brand Strategy is important for promoting the region as an attractive destination for tourism, business investment and quality of life for residents. Its frequent and consistent use over time will help establish a positive perception of the region by communicating its unique identity, heritage and value proposition. The following provides a visual indication of each facet the regional brand and subsequent strategy will impact.

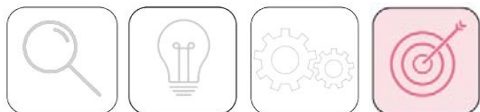


The goals for the Almaguin regional brand include:

- Highlight the unique attributes assets of the region
- Effectively communicate the region's personality, values and culture
- Complement the unique character of each of the region's communities
- Foster a sense of regional pride from all community members
- Encourage sharing of resources and support community development
- Create a positive perception of the region and its communities
- Increase recognition of the region as an attractive place to live, work and play

For more information on the visual identity and regional brand implementation and applications, please refer to the Almaguin Regional Brand Book Guidelines.

5.0 REGIONAL BRAND STRATEGY



Phase 4

5.1 Communications Plan

Internal Audience Communication

Internal stakeholders will be instrumental in supporting the regional brand. The brand strategy will serve as a roadmap to unite and guide regional partners in promoting and marketing the Almaguin region to external audiences.

Internal stakeholders include a cross-section of different community partners.



The success of the Almaguin regional brand requires an investment from all stakeholders. Each internal audience group has a role to play as brand ambassadors in taking action to truly adopt the brand and promote it consistently across all marketing channels and throughout all regional initiatives. For a brand to become recognized, it must be presented frequently and consistently from a variety of perspectives.

This collaborative approach from stakeholders is essential to managing the perception and reputation of the region and to drive awareness and interest from prospective residents, investors and visitors. Consideration to messaging that encourages audiences to adopt the brand will serve as a key advantage and increase overall success.

INTERNAL AUDIENCES	MESSAGES	TACTICS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACED • Municipal Councils & Staff • Business Owners & Entrepreneurs • Tourism Organizations • Community Organizations & Associations • Permanent & Seasonal Residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration is key to the success of our regional brand • The regional brand must be utilized frequently and consistently to gain widespread recognition • We are all ambassadors and stewards of our regional brand • Using the regional brand will help attract investment and positively impact job creation • The regional brand will help create positive perceptions about the region to help attract visitors The regional brand will help instill and communicate pride of place felt by those who live here 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACED website • ACED social platforms • Print materials • Meeting, convention and event materials



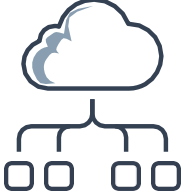

External Audience Communication

External target audiences include businesses and entrepreneurs seeking affordable locations for their operations, developers and investors looking for innovative and new opportunities, tourists and visitors looking for exciting experiences, and potential new residents seeking the best of rural living with the convenience of easy urban access. The following outlines external target audiences, key messaging, and tactics best used to reach them.

AUDIENCE	MESSAGES	CAMPAIGN TAGLINES	TACTICS
<p>New Businesses</p> <p>Business owners in manufacturing, construction, development, agriculture, tourism and other industries seeking a business-friendly region offering investment opportunities, economic and cost advantages, and easy access to urban centres.</p>	<p>Almaguin is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a place of opportunity and innovation a place of creativity, culture and natural beauty a place of open spaces connected to larger markets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest in Almaguin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Websites Social media Print Ads Tradeshaw, conferences and events Testimonials Success factors
<p>Regional Visitors: Nature Lovers</p> <p>Visitors attracted to outdoor experiences such as camping, hiking, cycling, paddling, fishing, boating, and other 4-season outdoor recreational activities.</p>	<p>Almaguin is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a great place to connect with nature a place to enjoy outdoor adventures and new experiences an exciting place to explore 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shop in Almaguin Feast in Almaguin Celebrate in Almaguin Explore in Almaguin Play in Almaguin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Websites Social media Print ads Signage Tourism partnerships Marketing collateral
<p>Regional Visitors: <i>Family Memory Builders</i></p> <p>Families with children looking to enjoy vacations centered around building memories and having fun.</p>	<p>Almaguin is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a place to create childhood memories that last a lifetime a place for family fun and spending time together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shop in Almaguin Feast in Almaguin Celebrate in Almaguin Explore in Almaguin Play in Almaguin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Websites Social media Print ads Signage Tourism partnerships Marketing collateral
<p>Regional Visitors: <i>Knowledge Seekers</i></p> <p>Visitors seeking to expand their knowledge and explore cultural, historical, and natural landmarks.</p>	<p>Almaguin is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a place to discover historical and natural wonders a place to uncover unique art and culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shop in Almaguin Feast in Almaguin Celebrate in Almaguin Explore in Almaguin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Websites Social media Print ads Signage Tourism partnerships Marketing collateral
<p>Prospective / Seasonal Residents</p> <p>Families seeking to relocate to smaller, affordable communities offering a connected, safe and balanced quality of life.</p>	<p>Almaguin is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a warm and welcoming place a safe and affordable place to raise a family a caring, community-oriented place to live 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shop in Almaguin Feast in Almaguin Celebrate in Almaguin Play in Almaguin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Websites Social media Print ads Signage Tourism partnerships Marketing collateral Tradeshows

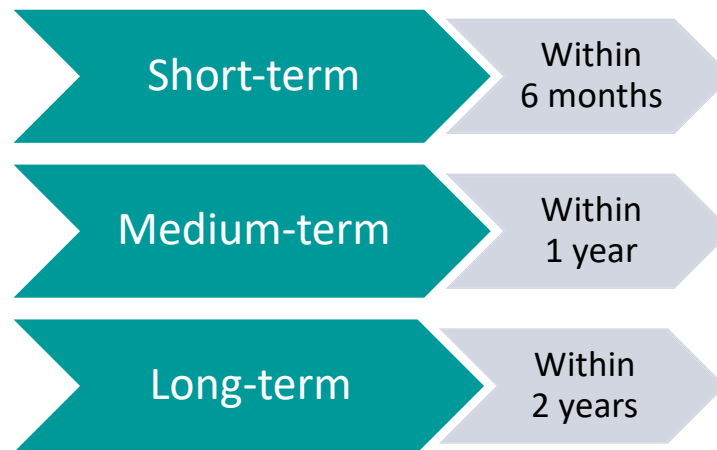
5.2 Priority 1 Areas

Through the initial phases of the project, key priority areas were identified in order to guide recommendations and actions toward efforts that will maximize results and best align with organizational and regional needs.

	<p>Priority 1 Regional Brand Hub</p>		<p>Priority 3 Brand Awareness</p>
	<p>Priority 2 Brand Adoption</p>		<p>Priority 4 Regional Asset Development</p>

The timing to implement the actions identified may occur simultaneously to one another based on available resources. It is encouraged that a working group meets on a frequent basis to discuss progress and ensure that momentum continues.

The following provides a recommendation on short-, medium- and long-term timeframes.



5.3 Recommended Actions

The following recommendations and actions have been developed in alignment with organizational priority areas to address identified challenges and opportunities.

To ensure the regional brand is truly adopted by internal and external audiences, it is vital that the brand is championed by ACED and its partners and integrated into all communication efforts. With ACED at the helm to navigate the implementation efforts of the Regional Brand Strategy, it is imperative that support and assistance is received from partners, municipal staff, councils, business development organizations, businesses, community organizations and residents. In order to accomplish the recommendations and actions, efforts from all key stakeholders will be necessary.



PRIORITY 1: REGIONAL BRAND HUB

Establish one central point of contact for regional branding and communication efforts.			
Actions	Partners	Metrics	Timeline
<p>Assign ACED with all communication, branding, and regional collaboration efforts in relation to economic development and tourism.</p> <p>Designate one staff person within ACED to coordinate communication tactics, implement the Almaguin Brand Strategy and liaise with community and business stakeholders through branding efforts. Things to consider when hiring a Communications and Branding Coordinator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thorough understanding of region • Knowledge of traditional and digital marketing practices • Experience in branding and visual design • Technical experience on design software • Strong interpersonal, communication and presentation skills • Experience in project management • Experience with online website and social media tools including gathering analytics <p>Ensure the necessary support is provided to the dedicated staff person to assist with the implementation of communication and branding efforts by retaining third-party support until internal capacity is adequate. *</p>	<p>FedNor</p> <p>Rural Economic Development Program</p> <p>Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation</p>	<p>Secure ACED as lead organization for the Brand Hub</p> <p>Secure funding</p> <p>Communications and Branding Coordinator hired</p>	<p>Short-Term (within 6 months)</p>

* Should hiring a third-party firm to support implementation efforts be unattainable, a dedicated senior ACED position should be hired to support the implementation process.

NEXT STEPS:

- Complete and submit funding applications to Federal and Provincial Programs
- Hire Communications and Branding Coordinator
- Prepare required terms of reference if necessary, to guide a fair process when selecting a third-party firm for support



PRIORITY 1: REGIONAL BRAND HUB

Develop a regionally branded, cohesive and well-maintained online presence through the use of a website and digital platforms to promote regional information to internal and external audiences.

Actions	Partners	Metrics	Timeline
<p>Create a landing page which allows the user to select which portal they would like to proceed with (e.g. live, work, play). Develop sub portals with regional information pertaining to each section.</p> <p>Utilize existing content on the current ACED website and refine as required for 'work and live' sections. House information on the website under 'play' including available amenities, attractions, food, accommodations and trails with links to partner sites.</p> <p>Establish and maintain one social media account on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn which provides information on the region, events, attractions, programming and available supports to residents, businesses and visitors.</p> <p>Adjust branding to reflect the new visual identity on campaigns and social pages for affiliate brands such as 'Shop in Almaguin'. Ensure pages are linked to the main social page for the region.</p>	<p>Partnering Communities</p> <p>Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce</p> <p>Explorer's Edge</p> <p>Destination Northern Ontario</p> <p>Northeastern Ontario Tourism</p> <p>Local Businesses</p> <p>Local community-based organizations and associations</p> <p>FedNor</p> <p>Rural Economic Development Program</p> <p>Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Branded central website platform and sub portals • Branded social media pages • Branded affiliate campaign pages <p>Web and social media performance metrics to be collected monthly and reviewed quarterly on an ongoing basis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of unique website visitors • Location of visitors • Time on site • Referrals to partners • Number of likes and followers • Post engagement (likes, comments, shares) • Click through rate to website 	<p>Short-Term (within 6 months)</p>

NEXT STEPS:

- Develop Request for Proposal/Quote for website redevelopment services
- Select web developer to build online platform and integrate economic development and tourism websites into one portal
- Work with partners to gather required content and information
- Create copy that resonates with identified audience groups for each component of portal
- Consolidate social media pages into one regional page
- Integrate regional branding across social media platforms



PRIORITY 2: BRAND ADOPTION

Actions	Partners	Metrics	Timeline
<p>Explore opportunities of creating a Wayfinding and Marketing Partnership Program (WMPP) to serve as a cost sharing initiative to encourage brand adoption and regional collaboration. Funds could be utilized to off-set costs associated with print, signage, content creation and digital assets. CED would administer the program and foster IOUs with partnering municipalities and organizations.</p> <p>CED to present the regional brand and cost sharing program to all municipal councils to generate support and adoption.</p> <p>CED to provide support to community on regional brand initiatives, and work with partners on brand implementation efforts and provide tools and resources to assist with ongoing implementation (brand guidebook, training).</p>	<p>ACED Municipalities</p> <p>Community Organizations</p> <p>Local businesses</p> <p>FedNor</p> <p>Rural Economic Development Program</p> <p>Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost sharing program developed • Number of partners engaged in the cost sharing program • Number of assets developed (signs, digital/print assets etc.) • Number of referrals generated to central website • Amount of leveraged dollars through partnerships 	<p>3-term (within 2 years)</p>

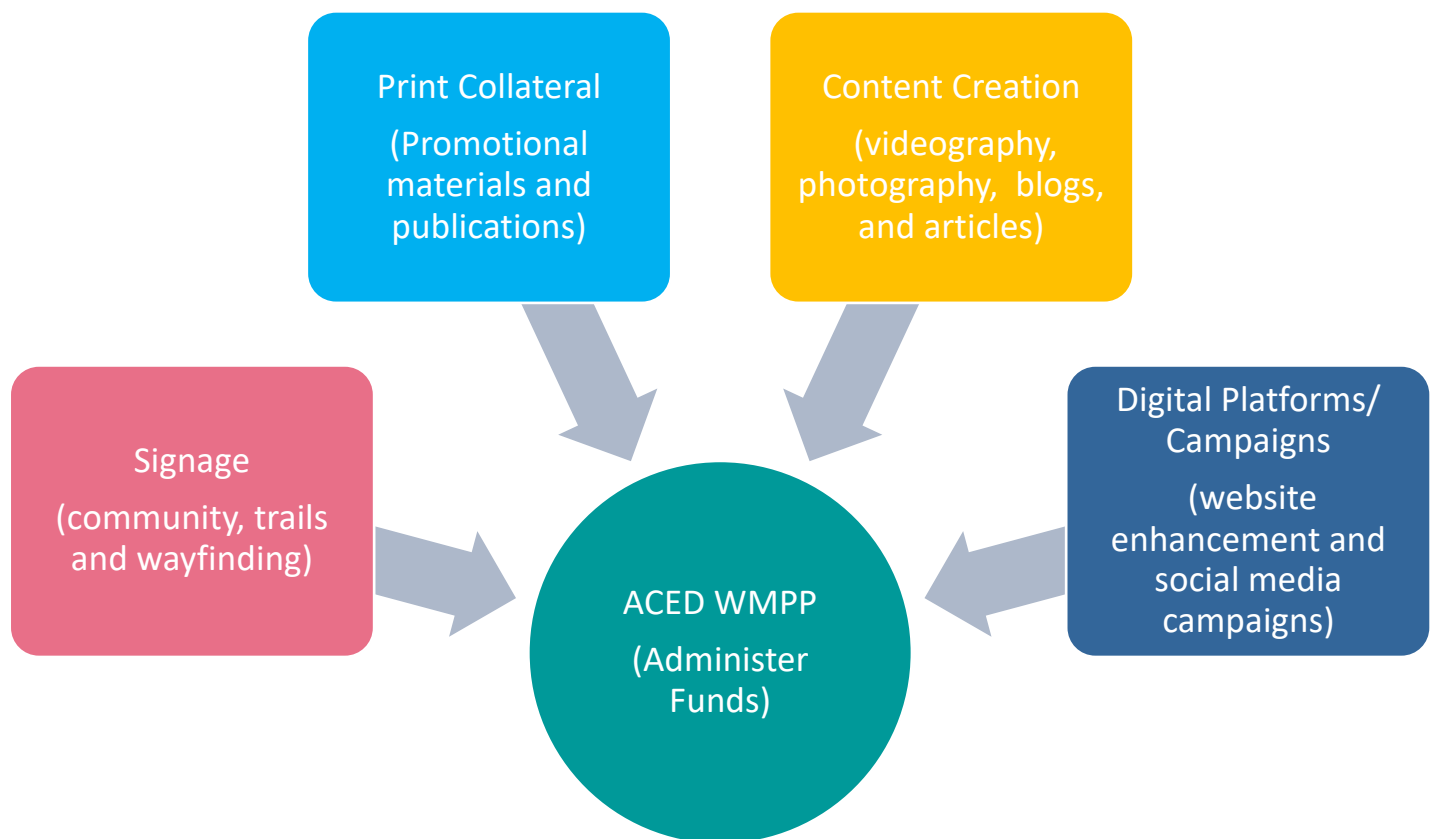
NEXT STEPS:

- Present to Municipal Councils and request resolutions to support the adoption of regional brand
- Establish program processes to guide the implementation of the Wayfinding and Marketing Partnership Program including:
 - Establish an annual operating budget
 - Establish program terms to guide the overall process
 - Develop application forms and agreement templates
 - Create a Wayfinding Strategy to guide signage design and installation
 - Establish an application review committee
- Work with Municipal staff to implement visual identity on communication tools

Wayfinding and Marketing Partnership Program (WMPP)

The proposed Wayfinding and Marketing Partnership Program (WMPP) could follow a similar model to a Community Improvement Plan to encourage partnership investment into regional branding initiatives with matching funds. It is recommended that a program be established with \$60,000 which has been allocated within the 2-year budget. This budget can be further refined at the discretion of the Communications and Brand Coordinator. This would enable ACED to leverage funds received from federal and provincial partners while incentivizing municipal partners to adopt and implement the regional brand through assets described below.

Joint wayfinding and marketing initiatives will be further determined by the Communications and Brand Coordinator. The below illustration provides examples of assets that could be funded through the Program. The WMPP is a tool to assist municipal partners with the integration of the regional identity through traditional and digital formats while alleviating the financial resources required for implementation. The creation or enhancement of assets while integrating the regional identifier will strengthen overall regional brand awareness for both internal and external stakeholders. The Communications and Brand Coordinator will develop the program terms, application process, operating budget and performance metrics.



Examples of joint wayfinding and marketing initiatives may include, but not limited to the following:

- Design and installation of community welcome signage with the inclusion of the regional logo;
- Development of a Community Profile while integrating regional information and imagery;
- Creation of a video highlighting community and regional tourism assets to for visitor attraction efforts; and
- Municipal website enhancement with the integration of regional resources, tools, imagery and logo.



PRIORITY 2: BRAND ADOPTION

<p>Develop a Business Ambassador Program (BAP) focused on instilling pride of place within local businesses, organizations and associations to assist with regional brand implementation.</p> <p>Host 'open house' sessions within each partnering community for businesses, organizations and associations to receive regional branding toolkits (on a branded USB) coupled with one-on-one assistance for implementation. CED could gather current information on businesses and organizations operating within the region and use to populate the central database/website.</p> <p>Provide participating businesses with an identifier such as a decal to display within their operations.</p> <p>Create a short, engaging training video that captures the importance of regional branding and the basics of implementing the brand through their marketing efforts. This resource would be shared as part of the ambassador kit.</p> <p>Provide ongoing assistance to interested parties who would like to adopt and promote the regional brand through its marketing efforts. This can be done through sharing a digital brand guideline kit accompanied by printed assets and a training video.</p>	<p>Local businesses</p> <p>Local community organizations and associations</p> <p>Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce</p> <p>The Business Centre</p> <p>NECO Community Futures</p> <p>FedNor</p> <p>Rural Economic Development Program</p> <p>Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of BAP • Number of open house sessions held • Number of engaged businesses, organizations and associations • Number of brand toolkits distributed • Number of decals distributed • Creation of training video • Increased awareness of regional brand visual • Number of referrals generated to central website • Number of BAP participants 	<p>Medium-Term (within 1 year)</p>
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- Develop a training video that outlines brand implementation efforts
- Design and print tangible assets such as USBs, decals, and QR codes
- Assemble ambassador toolkits inclusive of brand guidelines, print materials and digital assets
- Recruit businesses and community organizations to become brand ambassadors
- Provide ongoing support to businesses and community organizations
-



PRIORITY 2: BRAND ADOPTION

<p>Host a series of mini events across the region to showcase the regional brand. These events could be co-hosted with other annual events or 'open houses' within the communities and/or 'open houses' through the Business Ambassador Program (BAP). These sessions can be hosted through a virtual format until in-person gatherings are permitted.</p> <p>Distribute regional swag bags with promotional items to all attendees to assist with overall brand awareness. This could include information sharing about the importance of regional pride and showcasing the brand story.</p> <p>Launch a social media campaign to internal audiences highlighting the new regional brand, upcoming brand launch events and the newly developed website.</p> <p>Publish print advertising within regional news publications and if timing is applicable the Community Guide to promote the new brand, events, website platforms and available resources and tools.</p>	<p>Partnering Communities</p> <p>Local businesses</p> <p>Local community organizations and associations</p> <p>Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce</p> <p>The Business Centre</p> <p>NECO Community Futures</p> <p>The Labour Market Group</p> <p>FedNor</p> <p>Rural Economic Development Program</p> <p>Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation</p>	<p>Number of events held</p> <p>Number of event attendees</p> <p>Number of new participants</p> <p>Number of swag bags distributed</p> <p>Number of residents engaged</p> <p>Increase in like followers on social pages</p> <p>Post engagement (likes, shares, comments)</p> <p>Cost per click rate</p> <p>Number of referrals generated to the website</p> <p>Earned and paid media coverage in print publications</p>	<p>Medium-Term (within 1 year)</p>
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NEXT STEPS:

- Plan and execute brand launch events throughout the region that can be coupled with other events and/or ambassador 'open houses.' If required, host virtual brand launch events through a virtual format to engage audiences and assist with implementation efforts
- Create regional promotional items (bags, pens, notebooks) and assemble swag for event
- Create engaging content and imagery for social media campaigns focused at promoting the new regional brand, launch events and new website
- Launch social media campaign to generate interest as well as attendance at virtual and/or in-person events
- Develop and distribute a media release to engage news outlets about the unveiling of the new regional brand, website and upcoming launch events
-



PRIORITY 3: BRAND AWARENESS

<p>Continue on-going dialogue and discussions with business owners, community organizations and associations to further enhance brand adoption, provide assistance and refer additional programming and supports to assist with operations, product development enhancements and marketing initiatives.</p> <p>Develop social media campaigns that engage residents while promoting the regional brand. This could include photo sharing competitions of regional assets completed seasonally. This will also enable ACED to develop a media inventory to assist with further marketing efforts that could be shared with partners.</p> <p>Attend community events and festivals with a regional booth consisting of regional messaging, signage and marketing materials to ensure the brand remains top-of-mind for both the resident and business community.</p> <p>Use newly-developed Wayfinding Strategy to guide the implementation of regional signage including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signs constructed along boundary lines of region Regional identifier added to community signs Construction of trails and assets signs (cycling, hiking, snowmobiling etc.) 	<p>Partnering Communities</p> <p>Local businesses</p> <p>Local community organizations and associations</p> <p>Local residents</p> <p>Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce</p> <p>Ministry of Transportation (signage)</p> <p>Explorer’s Edge (asset signage)</p> <p>Destination Northern Ontario (asset signage)</p> <p>FedNor</p> <p>Rural Economic Development Program</p> <p>Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of engaged businesses, organizations and associations • Increase in regional brand awareness • Number of referrals generated to central website • Number of social media campaigns developed • Increase in likes and followers on social media channels • Post engagement (likes, comments, shares) • Contest entries / Cost per click rate • Number of community events attended • Number of event attendees • Number of assets developed (signs) 	<p>3-Term (within 2 years)</p>
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NEXT STEPS:

- Develop a social media strategy/editorial calendar to guide organic and paid content for internal audiences
- Create and gather content such as videography, imagery, articles and blogs to be used through social media channels
- Implement Wayfinding Strategy to guide signage design and installation of regional and community signage
- Design and install regional highway signage



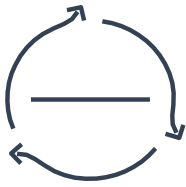
PRIORITY 3: BRAND AWARENESS

Promote the region as a desirable and attractive place to live, work and play to external audiences.

<p>Employ a CED representative to act as a regional point of contact for inquiries.</p> <p>Update blog content that showcases regional assets, attractions, businesses, community organizations, amenities and programming to attract residents, businesses and tourists. Post on a consistent basis and diversify messaging to ensure all audience groups are engaged (e.g. LinkedIn – business investment, Instagram – youth attraction, Facebook – visitor attraction.)</p> <p>Attend events that focus on economic development and tourism to garner feedback on best practices. When possible, promote the region through a branded booth and publications to engage audiences.</p> <p>Develop and implement a series of social media campaigns through use of videos, imagery, and blog content including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Live: Highlight benefits of living in rural Northern Ontario Work: Showcase real success stories of business owners in the region Play: Promote regional destination drivers, assets and events <p>Partner with business organizations to highlight success stories through video creation, story highlights and testimonials from businesses.</p>	<p>Partnering Communities</p> <p>Local businesses</p> <p>Local community-based organizations and associations</p> <p>Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce</p> <p>The Business Centre</p> <p>The Labour Market Group</p> <p>NECO Community Futures</p> <p>Explorer’s Edge</p> <p>Destination Northern Ontario</p> <p>Northeastern Ontario Tourism</p> <p>FedNor</p> <p>Rural Economic Development Program</p> <p>Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Number of inquiries ▸ Number of assets developed (blogs, videos, imagery) ▸ Number of events attended ▸ Number of leads from networking opportunities ▸ Number of social media campaigns developed ▸ Post engagement (likes, comments, shares) ▸ Increase in likes and followers on social media channels ▸ Number of referrals generated to central website ▸ Number of new businesses ▸ Number of new residents ▸ Number of visitors ▸ Number of partners engaged in promotional activities 	<p>Term in 2 years)</p>
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NEXT STEPS:

- Utilize Destination Ontario consumer insight research and Explorer’s Edge industry research to guide communication efforts for external audiences
- Develop a social media strategy to guide organic and paid content for external audiences
- Create content (videography, imagery, articles, blogs) to be used through social media campaigns
- Collaborate with partners to conduct business spotlights and promote economic development and entrepreneurship within the region through social media channels and website



PRIORITY 4: REGIONAL ASSET DEVELOPMENT

Develop digital and print assets, tools and resources to assist with brand implementation, regional collaboration and communication efforts.

<p>Develop an inventory of images, videos and content that showcases regional assets, natural landscapes, desired attributes and unique characteristics. This media library could be available to participating businesses, community organizations and associations for their marketing efforts. All media assets could be shared with partnering communities to promote the region through online and print tactics.</p> <p>Work collectively with partners to develop a series of videos that can be used for promotional and communication efforts. Engage residents and businesses owners to garner photography and testimonials. Create a minimum of three videos focused on attracting residents, businesses, and visitors.</p> <p>Enhance the regional guide through a strategic partnership with the Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce to assist with the development of content such as destination rivers, accommodations, businesses, parks, trails, amenities etc. This can be used as an information tool for new residents and visitors.</p> <p>Collaborate with partners such as Discovery routes to enhance availability of regional maps highlighting the number of trails and natural amenities available. Distribute to partnering businesses as a promotional tool for guests.</p> <p>Design and create regional tradeshow booth materials including regional publications, promotional items, banners, and table linens.</p>	<p>Partnering Communities</p> <p>Local businesses</p> <p>Local community organizations and associations</p> <p>Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce</p> <p>The Business Centre</p> <p>The Labour Market Group</p> <p>NECO Community Futures</p> <p>Explorer's Edge</p> <p>Destination Northern Ontario</p> <p>Northeastern Ontario Tourism</p> <p>Discovery Routes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of assets collected (videos, blogs, imagery) • Number of assets developed (videos, blogs, imagery) • Number of partners engaged in promotional activities • Number of testimonials gathered from residents, businesses and organizations • Use of media asset inventory by partners • Regional guide enhancement • Distribution of regional guide • Number of regional maps enhanced • Distribution of regional maps • Tradeshow assets developed 	<p>Short-Term Medium-Term in 1- 2 years)</p>
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- Establish a central database to host media assets as they are developed/collected from partners
- Hire a videographer to create videos focused on resident, business and visitor attraction
- Retain a photographer to collect imagery showcasing the region and 4-season activities
- Work with community partners to enhance the regional guide for distribution
- Collaborate with community partners to enhance regional trail maps

5.4 Implementation Plan













The below actions have been categorized by timeline and inputted into an actionable chart to guide implementation efforts of the regional brand. Key performance metrics associated with below actions can be found within their respective priority areas above. The first year will be used to collect relevant data and be used as future benchmarks as the brand is implemented. The Branding & Communications Coordinator will provide progress updates as it aligns with current ACED annual reporting cycles. To assist with alleviating organizational capacity restraints a recommendation to use external support in the short-term has been identified. To gain internal adoption of the brand while increasing overall awareness of the region, it is imperative that ACED is supported by partners, municipal councils/staff and business development organization.

	Priority 1 Regional Brand Hub		Priority 3 Brand Awareness
	Priority 2 Brand Adoption		Priority 4 Regional Asset Development











Short-term (within 6 months)

ACTION	DIRECTOR	BRANDING & COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR	THIRD-PARTY SUPPORT	PRIORITY AREA	STATUS
Submit funding applications to Federal and Provincial Programs					<input type="checkbox"/>
Hire Branding & Communications Coordinator					<input type="checkbox"/>
Prepare required terms of reference if necessary, to guide a fair process when selecting a third-party firm for support					<input type="checkbox"/>
Develop Request for Proposal/Quote for website redevelopment services					<input type="checkbox"/>
Select web developer to build online platform and integrate economic development and tourism websites into one portal					<input type="checkbox"/>
Work with partners to gather required content and information					<input type="checkbox"/>
Create website copy that resonates with identified audience groups for each component of the portal					<input type="checkbox"/>
Consolidate social media pages into one regional page					<input type="checkbox"/>
Integrate regional brand across social media platforms					<input type="checkbox"/>
Present to Municipal Councils and request resolutions to support the adoption of the regional brand					<input type="checkbox"/>

Medium-term (within 12 months)

ACTION	DIRECTOR	BRANDING & COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR	THIRD-PARTY SUPPORT	PRIORITY AREA	STATUS
Develop training video that outlines brand implementation efforts					<input type="checkbox"/>
Design and print tangible assets such as USBs, decals, and QR codes					<input type="checkbox"/>
Assemble ambassador toolkits inclusive of brand guidelines, print materials and digital assets					<input type="checkbox"/>
Promote and recruit businesses and community-based organizations and associations to become brand ambassadors					<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide ongoing support to businesses and community-based organizations and associations while administering the ambassador program					<input type="checkbox"/>
Host 'open house' sessions to promote the ambassador program while adhering to COVID-19 protocols					<input type="checkbox"/>
Plan and execute brand launch events throughout the region that can be coupled with other events and/or ambassador 'open houses'					<input type="checkbox"/>
Design and print regional promotional items such as bags, pens, notebooks etc. and assemble swag bags for event programming					<input type="checkbox"/>
Create engaging content and imagery for social media campaigns focused at promoting the new regional brand, launch events and new website					<input type="checkbox"/>
Launch social media campaign to generate interest as well as attendance at virtual and/or in-person events					<input type="checkbox"/>
Develop and distribute a media release to engage news outlets about the unveiling of the new regional brand, website and upcoming launch events					<input type="checkbox"/>
Collaborate with partners to insert regional brand and brand story into print publications					<input type="checkbox"/>

Long-term (within 2 years)

ACTION	DIRECTOR	BRANDING & COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR	THIRD-PARTY SUPPORT	PRIORITY AREA	STATUS
Establish program processes to guide the implementation of the Wayfinding and Marketing Partnership Program					<input type="checkbox"/>
Work with Municipal staff to implement visual identity on internal and external communication tools					<input type="checkbox"/>
Develop a social media strategy/editorial calendar to guide organic and paid content for internal and external audiences					<input type="checkbox"/>
Create and gather content such as videography, imagery, articles and blogs to be used through social media channels					<input type="checkbox"/>
Implement Wayfinding Strategy to guide signage design and installation of regional and community signage					<input type="checkbox"/>
Design and install regional highway signage					<input type="checkbox"/>
Utilize Destination Ontario consumer insight research and Explorer’s Edge industry research to guide communication efforts for external audiences					<input type="checkbox"/>
Collaborate with partners to conduct business spotlights and promote economic development and entrepreneurship within the region through social media channels and website					<input type="checkbox"/>
Work with community partners to enhance the regional guide for distribution					<input type="checkbox"/>
Collaborate with community partners to enhance regional trail maps					<input type="checkbox"/>

Proposed Budget

The following provides an estimated two-year budget to implement the actions described within each priority area.

Budget Item	Subtotal	Total
Revenue		
ACED		\$50,000
FedNor		\$100,000
Rural Economic Development Program		\$150,000
Total Revenue		\$300,000
Expenses		
Central Hub		\$160,000
Branding and Communications Staff Person (\$50,000 annually)	\$100,000	
Third-party Support	\$40,000	
Regional Website Creation	\$20,000	
Ambassador Programming		\$10,000
Branded USB's for Brand Guideline Kit, decals and QR code	\$2,000	
Training Video Creation	\$8,000	
Brand Adoption & Awareness		\$90,000
Tradeshaw and Promotional Materials	\$8,000	
Social Media Campaigns	\$8,000	
Event Programming and Logistics	\$4,000	
Pilot Wayfinding and Marketing Partnership Program	\$60,000	
Regional Highway Signage	\$10,000	
Regional Asset Development		\$40,000
Videography	\$14,000	
Photography	\$6,000	
Regional Guide Creation and Print	\$12,000	
Regional Map Creation and Print	\$8,000	
Total Expenses		\$300,000

The above budget items will enable the Branding & Communications Coordinator along with partners to develop an array of assets, tools and resources to assist in implementing the regional brand through a sustainable manner. After the initial 2 years, it is recommended that future consideration be given for the salary of the Coordinator as well as a budget for marketing initiatives which can be further refined on an annual basis between the ACED Director and Branding & Communications Coordinator. The Branding & Communications Coordinator should also consider available funding programs, new partnerships and strategic alliances to assist with future regional brand implementation efforts.