

“We know our mission, and we hit our targets every time”

Response for Proposal: Muskoka Watershed Council

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Strategic TASKS Response for Proposal: Muskoka Watershed Council

Background

The Muskoka Watershed Council (MWC) is a non-profit volunteer based organization designed to provide information to decision-makers and the general public. The goal of the MWC is to sustain the water, air, and ecosystems of the Muskoka watersheds through the objectives of evaluating, advocating, educating, and demonstrating. One of the programs of the MWC involves the production of the Muskoka Watershed Report Card (MWC-RC), which is a scientific evaluation of the indicators of watershed health: water, land, wetlands, and air (included in 2010). The production of the MWC-RC requires a great deal of work on the part of the MWC volunteers; furthermore, it represents the latest scientific research, painting the most accurate picture possible on the health of the watersheds in the Muskoka area. A total of three MWC-RC's have been released since 2004; the next report is planned to be released in 2014. Although the MWC-RC is made available for free through local papers and public speaking presentations hosted by the MWC, there is no information about the effect the report has had.

Problem and Understanding

If the MWC-RC is to be of any value the message needs to be transmitted to the full-time and seasonal residents who inhabit the area and produce some kind of an impact; however, the impact of the previously released reports from 2004, 2007 and 2010 has not been extensively tested. In addition to finding out which residents the report is reaching, the MWC would like to know the value of the report in terms of the impact it has on residents' understanding, beliefs and behaviours surrounding watershed health. To this end, a plan to identify the target audience and assess the impact of the report is essential. The results of this research will shape future reports both in content and in how the information is given to the Muskoka community at large.

Purpose

Assess the behavioural and perceptual impact the Muskoka Watershed Council's Report Card has on the seasonal and permanent residents of Muskoka.

Literature Review:

- Shoreline health and impact (Articles: Aquatic Plants Are Not Just Weeds, Beach Building Blues, Natural Shorelines)
- Water quality (Articles: Shorelines, Water Quality Changes 2011, Wetlands 101)
- Other Articles: Preserving Fish Habitat, Golf course Pesticides
- None of the above articles answer the problem for MWC but we will also look at the 2010 feedback questionnaire as a methodological resource.

Research Objectives

1. Assess residents' awareness of the Muskoka Watershed Council.
2. Explore residents' awareness of issues impacting the Muskoka watersheds.
3. Examine the effect The Watershed Report Card has on residents' behaviours and beliefs and actions relating to watershed health.
4. Gather the opinions from residents on what content they want included/excluded on the Report Card.
5. Discover how concerned residents are with protecting the natural Muskokan lands.
6. To develop a demographic profile of respondents/readers of the Report Card.

Methodology and Sampling

Phase One: Create a public awareness of the MWC_RC and the upcoming efforts to survey the public about its previous report. This will be achieved through local radio and small print advertisement. The thrust of this phase is to remind the public who the MWC is.

Phase Two: Re-release the 2010 watershed report to the public in the May 18th edition of “The Weekender.” Along with the report there will be a survey that people can complete online or by mail within the next two weeks, closing on June 1st. Each survey will have a unique identifying number that will be imputed when people go online to do the survey. Paper surveys may be mailed or dropped off at the Muskoka Municipal office. As incentive for all those who participate, there will be a draw for the winner’s choice of either a pre-paid \$500 Visa gift card OR a “Muskoka Kayak” manufactured by Clearwater Designs of Ontario.

Phase Three: The final phase of the research project will be to collate the data and put together a report that will address the concerns that have been put forth by the Muskoka Watershed Council.

Sampling: 384 completed surveys are required in order to ensure a representative sample of the residents. A census of all residents, both full-time and seasonal, will be solicited through the local newspapers. Proportionate sampling will be applied by randomly selecting 384 surveys from the respondent list.

Deliverables

Our team will be developing a short 15-second script to be aired as a public service announcement on local radio stations two weeks prior to the report and questionnaire’s release. In addition, we will draft a small written advertisement to be placed in The Weekender and the 24 Hour Sun papers alerting residents of Muskoka to be on the look out for the re-released report and our survey.

On June 2nd all of the questionnaires will be collected, at which time data analysis and finding interpretation will occur. A meeting will be held with the MWC in August of 2012 where we will present our findings.

Timeline

The research project is expected to take approximately six months, beginning in March and ending in August (See Appendix A): Proposal planning stage is projected to consume approximately two to three weeks, beginning in the middle of March; instrument construction should take approximately one to two weeks, beginning in April; May 1st will mark the beginning of the instrument administration and data collection phase, ending on June 2nd; in July the data analysis phase will commence, ending in mid-August; finally, the communication of findings with the MWC will occur at the end of August.

Budget and Staffing

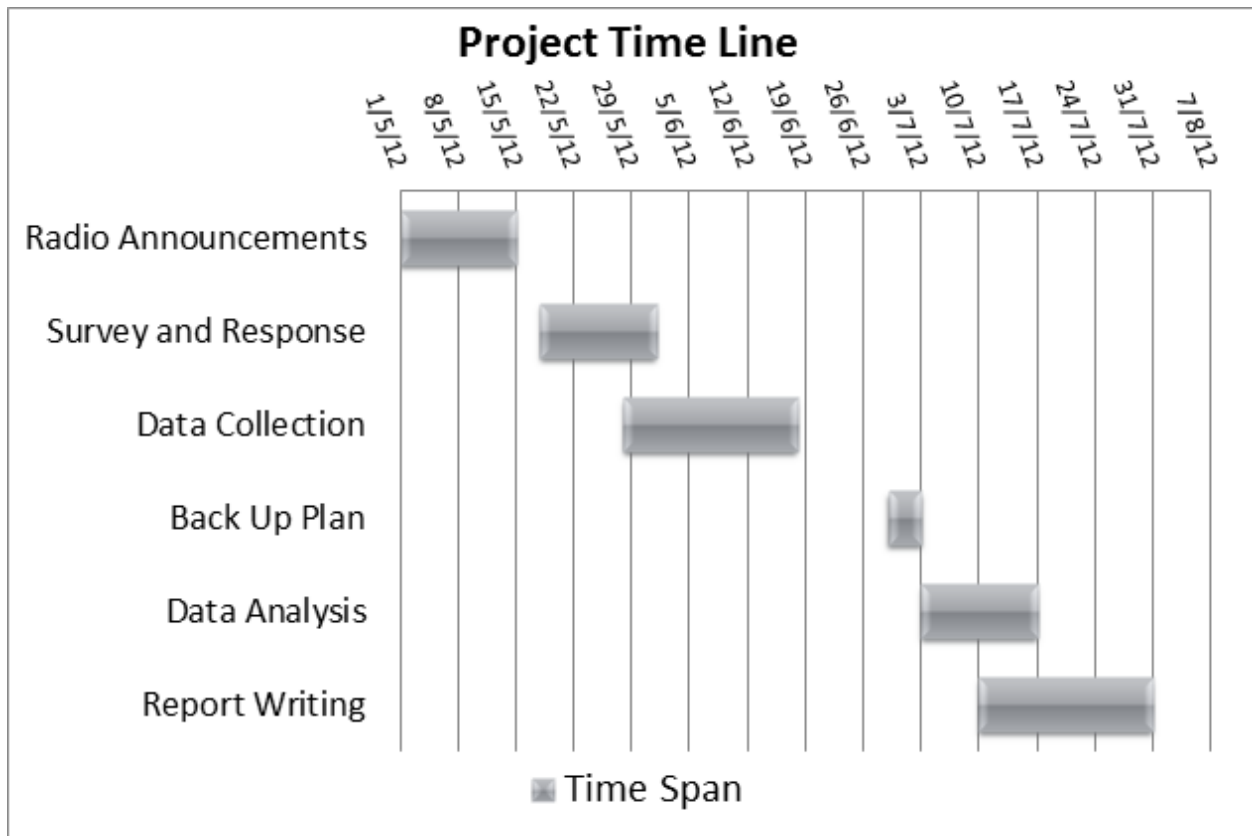
The total projected costs for the research project are estimated to be \$5595 (See Appendix B): Advertising costs for two newspapers are estimated to be \$1175 for 1/8th of a page; instrument construction costs are estimated to be approximately \$2100; and staffing and company fees are estimated to be approximately \$2320.

The proposal planning stage of the project will be headed by *Strategic TASKS* (See Appendix C) chairman Tyler Martin due to his extensive background as an environmental researcher, and will involve the collaborative efforts of all team members. Instrument construction will be fielded by the company's top survey design team members, headed by Stephanie Roberts. Advertising and budgeting, as well as data administration and collection will be initiated by Anna Sedore, the company's manager of public relations. Data analysis will involve the collaborative efforts of all *Strategic TASKS* team members. Finally, the communication of findings will be fielded by Sergey Pylypenko, head of graphic design, and Katrina Dobson, *Strategic TASKS* report writing specialist.

References

Metcalfe, T.L., Dillon, P.J. & Metcalfe, C.D. (2008). Detecting the transport of toxic pesticides from golf courses into watersheds in the Precambrian shield region of Ontario, Canada. *Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry*. 27(4), 811-818. Retrieved from <http://web.ebscohost.com>

Appendix A: Timeline



Appendix B: Budget

Table 1: Advertising

Newspaper	1/8 of a Page (5/3-5/5 B/W)
24 Hour Toronto (free)	\$ 1095
The Weekender (free)	\$ 80
Total	\$ 1175

Table 2: Instrument Construction

	Black and White (B/W)
Dbi sided	\$ 0.07
Total	\$ 2100

Table 3: Staffing Costs

Month	Phase	Total # of Hours	Rate/Hour	Total
March	Proposal planning	(48)	\$20	\$960
April	Instrument construction	(26)	\$20	\$520
May/June	Data collection	(2)	\$20	\$40
July	Data analysis	(18)	\$20	\$360
August	Data interpretation	(22)	\$20	\$440
Total				\$2,320

Appendix C: Strategic Tasks

Strategic TASKS is a profit sharing company made up of a talented and dedicated team of research consultants:

Tyler Martin: Environmental Researcher

Tyler has been working as a professional researcher for the last 3 years. Prior to graduating from the Research Analyst Program at Georgian College Tyler worked in the fields of health, education in Northern Canada as well as an environmental inspector the Muskoka Region.

Sergey Pylypenko: Graphic Designer

Sergey, being a devoted naturalist photographer, spent a lot of off-work time traveling across Algonquin and Muskoka regions exploring Ontario's natural heritage and comparing them with those in Virginia and West Virginia of similar irreplaceable value of natural purity places.

Anna Sedore, PhD: Public Relations

Anna is a trained communications specialist and a cognitive-behavioural expert. With four years in the field of research, Anna's abilities are essential to the various public relation elements of research initiatives.

Katrina Dobson: Report Writing Specialist

Katrina, a published writer, has a knack for editing and for polishing off Strategic TASKS projects and reports. Katrina has a background in sociology, and has worked in the research industry since 2008.

Stephanie Roberts, M.Ba. Survey designer and statistical analyst.

Stephanie has always had a passion for the outdoors, having written her honours thesis on Arctic sovereignty and has assisted with annual hunting surveys in Bracebridge.