



Guide Outfitters

Association of British Columbia

Wildlife First™

Range Stewardship Proposal

December 2020

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
COVID-19: From Challenge to Opportunity	1
The Need Is Now	2
A Hand Up, Not a Handout.....	3
Program Activities	4
Range Stewardship.....	4
COVID-19 Safety Plan	4
First Nations.....	4
Program Framework.....	5
Program Outcomes	5
Eligibility.....	5
Program Administration.....	6
Program Budget	7
Conclusion	7
Getting Back to Business.....	7
Appendix.....	8
Backgrounder: Guide Outfitting in British Columbia.....	8
Letter of endorsement from Tourism Industry Association of BC	9

Introduction

COVID-19: From Challenge to Opportunity

The COVID-19 pandemic has served a massive blow to the tourism, hospitality, and culture sectors of British Columbia's economy. Those most greatly affected are those reliant upon international travelers.

The Guide Outfitters Association of British Columbia (GOABC) represents 175 of the 245 small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), located throughout rural and often remote areas of British Columbia. Our industry provides 2,500 jobs in BC's backcountry and generates approximately \$191 million in revenue each year.

Many of these businesses are family owned and operated, and their family's sole source of income. Furthermore, they are often a significant employer in regions where there are otherwise no work opportunities. These SMEs are being decimated by the ongoing border closures. As an association, we want to ensure that the financial aid programs being developed by the provincial government capture the true needs of the outfitting sector whose core product is hunting and fishing.

Many guide outfitter businesses will not be able to survive this crisis without support and require financial assistance and other measures to remain viable. Guide outfitters, whose businesses are founded on international travel, are heavily reliant upon clients in Europe, the United States, and Mexico – many of them exclusively. Revenue for most outfits is down by 80-to-95% or more. Pivoting to resident Canadian hunters provides little potential for replacement revenue. The challenges outfitters face in the coming months are daunting.

Guides and staff have been laid off (or not recalled) resulting in the loss of hundreds of jobs in rural and remote parts of our province where employee detachment leaves lasting and devastating consequences to local economies. Backcountry infrastructure, such as trails and cabins, are being laid fallow, while horses and livestock are burdening what little resources remain.

Hand in glove with the economic turmoil is the social cost to families, marriages, partnerships, and communities. With the scale and scope of this world-wide pandemic, some will not survive economically, spiritually, or indeed, personally.

Guide outfitters, their families and staff are known for their resilience; people of the land who are proud, resourceful, and self-sufficient. However, they are struggling to find a future for their businesses and families in these difficult times.

This GOABC Range Stewardship Program (RSP) is designed to sustain the outfitting industry through this incredibly challenging time by creating jobs, while providing stewardship of the land that will benefit all British Columbians, now and into the future. With the support of the BC government, guide outfitters can re-engage their businesses to benefit wildlife, communities, and the outfitting industry. Guide outfitters stand ready, willing, and able to make a difference and move forward to transform this time of turmoil to opportunity and a strong, sustainable post-pandemic future.

Range Stewardship Proposal

The Need Is Now

Impact from the COVID-19 crisis is well documented around the world, across Canada and here in BC. Governments in all jurisdictions have taken unprecedented action to soften the blow with fiscal stimulus and targeted support to individuals and businesses. To date, however, these efforts have been of little benefit to the guide outfitting industry, a significant contributor to the BC economy (\$191 million in revenue per year) and one of the most impacted, yet one that continues to fall through the cracks in government funding.

In March 2020, the BC Government recognized the need to provide financial support to protect and reboot the provincial economy, releasing the *BC COVID-19 Action Plan*¹. The Action Plan earmarked \$1.5 billion of “dedicated funding to particularly hard-hit parts of the economy, such as the tourism, hospitality and culture sectors.”

In July 2020, the Tourism Industry Association of BC (TIABC) released the *Recovery Stimulus Package for British Columbia’s Tourism & Hospitality Sector*². This report clearly identified for government the high risk, high impact areas of BC’s tourism economy, and the need to develop nuanced and strategically driven programs with special focus on sustaining hard-hit rural and Indigenous communities.

The TIABC report identified the following three key components necessary to sustain and maintain business operator’s solvency, adapt to new COVID-19 operating requirements, and to develop resilient supply chains: Working Capital Recovery Grant; Support for Adaptation Costs; and, Support for Developing Resilient, BC-focused Supply Chains. The guide outfitting industry requires support in all three areas.

*Working Capital Recovery Grant*³

- Ensure a viable tourism industry in BC in the post-pandemic world.
- Focus on supporting BC tourism and hospitality businesses that have developed plans for long term sustainability.
- Focus on rural and remote locations whose visitors include BC and out-of-province guests
- Focus on supporting BC tourism and hospitality businesses that attract out-of-province visitors. As the timing and magnitude of U.S. and international visitor volumes is uncertain, the immediate priority should be to sustain tourism businesses that normally rely on out-of-province visitors (including Alberta and other parts of Canada) and generate significant revenues for the visitor economy.
- Focus on businesses that play central roles in attracting visitors to a community or a region.

*Support for Adaptation Costs*⁴

The purpose of these funds is to enable BC’s tourism and hospitality businesses to:

- Adapt their operations to confront the challenges of functioning successfully in the current and foreseeable future environment, and,

¹ <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020PREM0013-000545>

² <https://www.tiabc.ca/wp-content/uploads/tiabc-policies/TIABC-COVID-Recovery-stimulus-proposal.pdf>

³ TIABC report: Page 12

⁴ TIABC report: Page 13

Range Stewardship Proposal

- Develop innovative service offerings that will allow the BC tourism industry to recover as effectively as possible.

Tourism businesses are incurring significant costs to adapt to the health and safety measures necessary to reassure and protect their workforce, visitors, residents, and local communities. These incremental costs are placing further stress on already minimal revenues but are essential for maintaining safe operations and working towards recovery. Aligned with this, businesses need to develop innovative ways of making the most of the new prevailing business environment brought about by the pandemic. This includes developing new ways to provide good quality, curated, high-yield tourism experiences for visitors. Adapting innovatively to the COVID-19 business environment will not only augment and accelerate recovery efforts but also maximize the return of funds invested by government.

Support for Developing Resilient, BC-focused Supply Chains⁵

Here, the importance of a nuanced and strategic approach is evident. A guide outfitter's product and 'supply chain' flows from the natural beauty and wildlife that BC is blessed with. Protecting and stewarding the land and wildlife is critical to the long-term sustainability of the guide outfitting industry and benefits all British Columbians.

The TIABC report further identifies program eligibility criteria for priority funding⁶:

- Businesses that are current members of community/regional destination management associations or sector associations.
- Businesses with a long-term plan for sustainability.
- Businesses that actively market, participate in marketing initiatives managed by tourism sector associations, have a web presence, or partner in marketing initiatives.
- Sectors of the industry that do not qualify for other government programs.
- Rural or remote businesses where travel has been virtually halted.
- Export businesses that welcome significant numbers of out-of-province visitors (e.g. minimum 25% of revenues or customers from out of province) because these are impacted most severely and are incurring the greatest revenue and employee losses.

In all cases, the guide outfitting sector demonstrates strong eligibility.

All told, the TIABC report calls for \$680 million in economic and labour-adjustment help for the tourism industry. The recommendations total \$55,000 in support per operator from the program. Without this support the future of tourism, and the guide outfitting industry as a subset of that, is in peril.

A Hand Up, Not a Handout

Guide outfitters are proud and independent people and are more used to giving than receiving. Their desire is to revitalize and sustain their businesses. This RSP was developed with several considerations and objectives in mind:

- Maintain and sustain the solvency and infrastructure of outfitting businesses.
- Create jobs, economic activity, and partnership opportunities in rural and Indigenous communities.

⁵ TIABC report: Page 14

⁶ TIABC report: page 16

Range Stewardship Proposal

- Provide protection and stewardship of the land and wildlife.
- Train, test and implement COVID-19 health and safety protocols.
- Position the guide outfitting industry to thrive in the post-pandemic world.

Program Activities

The RSP provides the structure to deliver on a variety of activities to benefit all British Columbians.

Range Stewardship

The range stewardship component of the program places outfitting staff in the field to perform several functions. These include:

- **Range Protection** – Unprecedented human activity on public land has caused unprecedented pressure on the land base. Clean up of the unmanaged backcountry is essential to preserve the unspoiled wilderness necessary for the outfitting experience and protection of the environment. Outfitters will clean up and remove garbage and refuse abandoned on backcountry roads, in lakes, and streams. The *Report All Poachers and Polluters* (RAPP) program is well established in BC to assist Conservation Officers (COs) by observing, recording, and reporting threats to wildlife and nature. Outfitters will liaise with local COs to provide information on backcountry activities as required.
- **Wildlife stewardship, protection, and enhancement** – In partnership with government biologists, guides will undertake approved stewardship activities that support the mandates of the Ministry. Guides are uniquely qualified to find, observe, and document wild animals. A consulting biologist will liaise with the Ministry biologists on activities and data collection protocols.
- **Field infrastructure maintenance** – Maintenance of trails, cabins, airstrips, and other outfitting infrastructure.

COVID-19 Safety Plan⁷

Every business in British Columbia is required to have a COVID-19 safety plan to re-start operations. Each outfitter has unique circumstances and needs to test the measures for effectiveness and compliance. Becoming operational allows guide outfitters to train staff, test, and implement COVID-19 protective measures, further enabling the arrival of paying clients as soon as this can be done safely. This includes training, protocols, and protections.

First Nations

The GOABC and guide outfitters have a long history of working with First Nations in many areas throughout British Columbia. The Tahltan First Nation were the founders of outfitting in the 1800s. Today more than 30 First Nations (or First Nations people) own outfitting businesses in BC. The RSP is another opportunity to partner and build relationships between outfitters and First Nations. Participating guide outfitters will be encouraged to engage with, hire, or partner with First Nations under this initiative.

⁷ <https://www.worksafebc.com/en/resources/health-safety/checklist/covid-19-safety-plan?lang=en>

Range Stewardship Proposal

Program Framework

A key part of the program is to help industry employees re-qualify for employment insurance and COVID-19 government support. As such, the GOABC will contract individual guide outfitters to hire employees to undertake agreed activities from January 1 to June 30, 2021. Each position will be for a minimum of 420 hours (based on [EI economic region](#)).

The outfitter is responsible for employee supervision and management, as well as all employee payroll expenses, equipment, and supplies, and will receive compensation for these expenses. Each employee will be paid a minimum of \$800 per week.

Based on a 12-week program of \$800/week for employee wages, plus \$900/week for outfitters to cover expenses, this program will provide \$20,400 per position.

The total program budget for the RSP to create 250 jobs is \$5.6 million, including a 10% administration fee for the GOABC.

Program Outcomes

- **250 jobs protected or created** in rural and Indigenous communities.
- **100 to 150 small family businesses supported** in rural and Indigenous communities.
- Outfitters implement, test and train employees on **COVID-19 safety protocols**.
- Protection of backcountry through **cleanup and removal of refuse**.
- **Reconciliation and partnership** opportunities with First Nations and guide outfitters are enhanced.
- **Employees eligible for EI** and related programs at end of their employment term.
- Additional support for provincial biologists and Conservation Officer Service.
- Guide outfitters receive financial support to assist in solvency and liquidity.
- Backcountry infrastructure, including outfitter assets and personnel, are maintained, and preserved.
- Wildlife and backcountry stewardship activities of outfitters are maintained.
- Spin-off benefits throughout rural communities due to increased activity and spending.

Eligibility

All guide outfitters who are licensed and insured to operate in British Columbia are eligible to participate. They do not need to be a member of the GOABC. However, they must be registered with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) and WorkSafeBC as an employer, have a payroll account, and employees must be on the payroll. No contract employees will be permitted. As the intention of the program is to create jobs and manage the employees, the outfitter is not eligible to be the employee and/or receive wages.

The outfitter is responsible for employee supervision and management, as well as all employee payroll expenses, equipment, and supplies, and will receive compensation for these expenses.

Program Administration

We propose that the GOABC enters into a Contribution Agreement with government to implement and administer the program for a 10% administration fee. The GOABC has demonstrated its ability to administer funds many times over:

- **Destination BC Co-operative Marketing Partnership Program** – Shared Cost Agreement
 - 2012 – 2021
 - \$493,291 government funds to date
 - 15 – 20% administration fee

- **Assistant Guide Certification Exam** - Administration
 - 2015 – Present
 - 2,371 certified guides to date

- **First Nations Guide Mentorship Program** – Shared Cost Agreement
 - 2019 - \$100,000
 - 2020 - \$100,000

GOABC stands ready to administer this program without delay. We anticipate two intake periods to ensure the best coverage for all eligible outfitters. In both cases, intake windows will be one week in length, with approvals taking place within one week after intake closes.

For the first wave, each outfitter is permitted to apply for funding for two staff members. If funds remain, a second intake will be announced and take place with the same timing.

Funding will be provided to approved outfitters in three installments. The first installment of 50% of the total approved amount will be paid upon approval of application. The second installment of 40% will be paid upon receipt of invoice and deliverables as noted above, due any time six weeks from employee hire date. The final installment of 10% will be paid at the conclusion of the full 12-week program upon receipt of final invoice and deliverables as noted above.

Range Stewardship Proposal

Program Budget

GOABC Range Stewardship Program Budget			
Wages and Expenses	Cost	Weeks	Total
Employee Wages	\$ 800	12	\$ 9,600
Management & Employee Expenses	\$ 900	12	\$ 10,800
Per posititon			\$ 20,400
250 jobs			\$ 5,100,000
GOABC Administration			\$ 510,000
Program Budget			\$ 5,610,000
Notes:			
Employee Wages - Weekly Salary (Less EI, CPP, Income Tax)			
Management & Expenses - Supervision, Operating Expenses, Payroll Expenses (EI, WCB, CPP)			
GOABC Administration - GOABC Staff, Consulting Biologist, Outfitter Liaison, Office Expenses, Communicaitons			

Conclusion

Getting Back to Business

The GOABC is requesting **\$5,610,000** from the *BC COVID-19 Action Plan* for recovery stimulus to support **125 guide outfitting businesses and deliver 250 jobs** in rural British Columbia.

Our Range Stewardship Program will allow one of the hardest hit sectors of the tourism industry to get back on its feet and prepare for a bright future for all British Columbians. The RSP is a clear, credible plan which includes multiple benefits to outfitters, employees, government and all who live, work, and recreate in the rural regions of our spectacular province.

Appendix

Backgrounder: Guide Outfitting in British Columbia

By the late 1800s, the world's hunting fraternity had learned that British Columbia harboured one of North America's most magnificent big game populations. Local hunters started guiding services to meet the demand for quality big game hunts. Guiding licences were first issued in 1913 and guiding territories were established in the late 1940s. In 1961 legislation provided guide outfitters with the exclusive rights to guide non-resident big game hunters in a specific area. This exclusivity of the guide outfitter certificate became the foundation of the guide outfitting industry in BC. The certificate constitutes property and is part of the estate of a guide outfitter.

Guide outfitters developed an understanding of wildlife and wildlife habitat within their guiding territory. This ownership increased the sense of responsibility and was the beginning of wildlife stewardship. The success of this model was recognized and quickly adopted in the Yukon and Northwest Territories.

Guide outfitters are the founders of the tourism industry and an important part of the outdoor heritage of BC. They enjoy showcasing "super, natural British Columbia" and derive great satisfaction from their clients' enjoyment. More than 5,000 hunters come to BC each year and spend more, per day, per capita, than any other visitor to our province.

The guide outfitting industry is an important contributor to the health and well-being of rural economies. Our industry provides 2,500 jobs in BC's backcountry and generates approximately \$191 million in revenue each year. Most guide outfitters derive their primary source of income from their family-run guide outfitting business. A guide outfitter is an entrepreneur with the leadership qualities, business acumen, and organizing ability necessary to assist clients achieve their specific objective in British Columbia's outdoors.⁸

The Guide Outfitters Association of British Columbia (GOABC) was established in 1966 to represent the guide outfitting industry to government and advocate for science-based wildlife management. Today the association represents more than 60%-70% of the guide outfitters in BC, Yukon, and the Northwest Territories.

MISSION

As passionate advocates for wildlife, the Guide Outfitters Association of British Columbia is the recognized voice of the guide outfitting family. With integrity and professionalism, GOABC promotes the conservation, stewardship, and sustainable use of wildlife.

VISION:

A province with a strong and stable guide outfitting industry and abundant wildlife populations for all to enjoy, both today and in the future.

⁸ Rutledge, L. (1989). *That Some May Follow: The History of Guide Outfitting in British Columbia*. Cloverdale, Friesen.

Range Stewardship Proposal

Letter of endorsement from Tourism Industry Association of BC

September 10, 2020

Sean Olmstead
President, Guide Outfitters Association of B.C.
#103 – 19140 28th Avenue
Surrey, BC V3Z 6M3



Dear Sean:

On behalf of the Tourism Industry Association of British Columbia (TIABC), I am writing to offer our support for the Guide Outfitters Association of British Columbia's (GOABC) inspiring proposal for a sector-wide stimulus and job protection initiative under the B.C. COVID-19 Action Plan.

The Range Stewardship Program (RSP) proposal GOABC has created not only benefits your members and communities around the province, but also helps government and your organization achieve long-standing objectives of protecting wildlife, sustaining or enhancing the natural environment, as well as addressing immediate economic and job loss concerns as a consequence of the present crisis.

From TIABC's perspective, this initiative is an excellent example of tourism businesses pivoting to a new, albeit temporary operating model to provide innovative service offerings that will allow members like yours and the visitor economy in general to ultimately recover from the impacts of COVID-19. In fact, this concept matches perfectly with TIABC's request for support for adaptation costs as part of a tourism and hospitality recovery stimulus package we put forward to government in July.

Aside from the aforementioned benefits, the RSP gives your members a fighting chance at solvency during an extremely difficult period where the viability and recovery of the visitor economy is dependent on innovative and creative solutions like this one.

TIABC is confident that GOABC is the right partner to lead this project, especially given your long-standing commitment to wildlife, the environment, rural British Columbia, and to the overall visitor economy. To that end, we look forward to supporting you in every way possible to ensure the success of the Range Stewardship Program.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Walt Judas".

Walt Judas
CEO, TIABC