



Municipality of the District of Guysborough

STRATEGIC PLAN 2017 2022

Message from the Council

Our new strategic plan will guide our municipality for years to come. It lays the foundation for achieving an inspiring vision, and will shape decision-making and action. Like any good strategic plan, it's flexible, and as such, it will be a working document that we can adjust to fit the internal and external environment that we live in. The strategic plan identifies four over-arching goals and fifteen strategic objectives, each with key actions to be implemented. They reflect organizational priorities, and are built on a foundation of public input gathered in recent years from multiple MODG initiatives. The most recent public input was received during the consultation that was carried out during the creation of this Strategic Plan. The goals and associated objectives and actions are listed in no particular order as all are equally important. Our approach to sustainability as outlined in our Sustainability Plan will be incorporated into the actioning of our Strategic Plan. Staff will be developing and carrying out their work based on the goals/objectives/actions/strategies contained in this document. Council will be regularly interacting with staff to ensure that we achieve as much success as possible in implementing this Plan. Our Council is committed to build on the quality of life

opportunities that are available for the residents of our community. MODG is the best place to live in the country and we will work tirelessly to ensure that we build a sustainable future for our generation and generations to come. We are here to work with you and for you and welcome your input on any issue at any time.

- *Council of the Municipality of the District of Guysborough*



From left to right, top to bottom: Neil DeCoff, District 3; Rickey McLaren, District 7; Fin Armsworthy, District 8; Miles MacDonald, District 1; Blair George, District 4; Warden Vernon Pitts, District 6; Janet Peitzche, District 5; and Deputy Warden Sheila Pelly, District 2



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Introduction

“10 years from now, we want to have the opportunities available which enable our young people to have the option to stay, be trained, and work in the areas they want”

- MODG Councillor
Strategic Planning Session 2017

The Municipality of the District of Guysborough’s (MODG) 2017-2022 Strategic Plan provides a framework to organize and align the municipality’s activities with a clear focus for the future. This plan is firmly grounded in the spirit of MODG’s mission, values and vision for the community.

This plan is meant to be a living document which remains flexible and relevant through annual reviews and modifications made as new realities emerge. It provides four broadly defined, long-term, strategic goals which extend beyond the five-year strategic plan period and which guide all actions of MODG. These long-term goals serve as themes which align with MODG’s vision and provide focus for the next five years. Corresponding objectives define the intent, direction and behaviour of MODG and guide the Council’s policies throughout its term. The plan provides a high-level monitoring and reporting framework without getting into the finer details which fall to management for implementation.

MODG’s strategic plan establishes a new focus for the future and a set of realistic and achievable goals in pursuit of improved quality of life for its citizenry. With its adoption, the Council is the ultimate authority responsible for ensuring the plan is acted upon. The Chief Administrative Officer is responsible for its implementation, and delegating applicable responsibilities to staff.



Long-Term Strategic Goals



PEOPLE

A wide diversity of individuals and families who live in, work in and visit MODG creates a healthy backdrop for continued prosperity



PROSPERITY

Targeted and proactive economic development activities result in conditions that sustain a healthy, diverse and resilient local economy



INFRASTRUCTURE

Effective planning and innovative management provide for civil infrastructure that supports growth and a high quality of life for residents



ENVIRONMENT

Responsible protection and enhancement of MODG's natural advantages ensure a remarkable natural setting for future generations

The Guysborough Point of View

MODG is a rural community of 4,670 people occupying the eastern half of Guysborough County in Nova Scotia, Canada. MODG's land mass of 211,682 hectares, or 2,117 square kilometres, includes over 400 kilometres of coastline and 38,180 hectares (18%) of protected land or land under special designation with the province. The vast land area and small pockets of population scattered along the coast and main transportation thoroughways makes the equitable distribution of services a considerable challenge for the municipality. The community boasts a pristine environment which includes natural ecosystems and habitats, wetlands, parks, trails and open spaces, air quality, wildlife, and beaches. MODG has a great tourism product offering and is working hard to discover its untapped potential.

In common with many Atlantic Canadian municipalities, MODG is experiencing a declining and aging population. The decline of traditional industries, an urbanization trend, and national and provincial economies experiencing slow or stagnant growth are contributing to an out-migration of youth predominantly in search of employment and educational opportunities. The steady decline and aging of MODG's population is likely its number one challenge, as a shrinking labour pool and competing generational investment priorities provide a challenge to the sustainability of provision of services.

MODG has many strengths which it will utilize and build on to capitalize on opportunities and achieve its vision. A corporate approach to revenue generation has resulted in diversified revenue streams which enable the municipality to deliver services, and maintain facilities and infrastructure well beyond levels that tax revenues alone could support. Maintaining this unique diversified revenue base in light of maturing and/or expiring sources of revenue is a key strategic element for the municipality. This, and the exodus of the community's youth, has made economic development a prominent strategic area of focus.

MODG has identified the unincorporated Shiretown of Guysborough as the primary growth centre for the municipality and is proactively working to improve the economic environment for its citizens and visitors. MODG is actively working to improve the business environment and to make quality information easily accessible and usable for potential investors.

MODG has many long-serving councilors and employees which has resulted in strong relationships, a culture of collaboration and a large bank of residual/organizational knowledge. The municipality believes that progressive leadership, a focus on community and service delivery excellence, and willingness to think outside the box are foundational to its organizational culture and key to the future prosperity of its citizens.

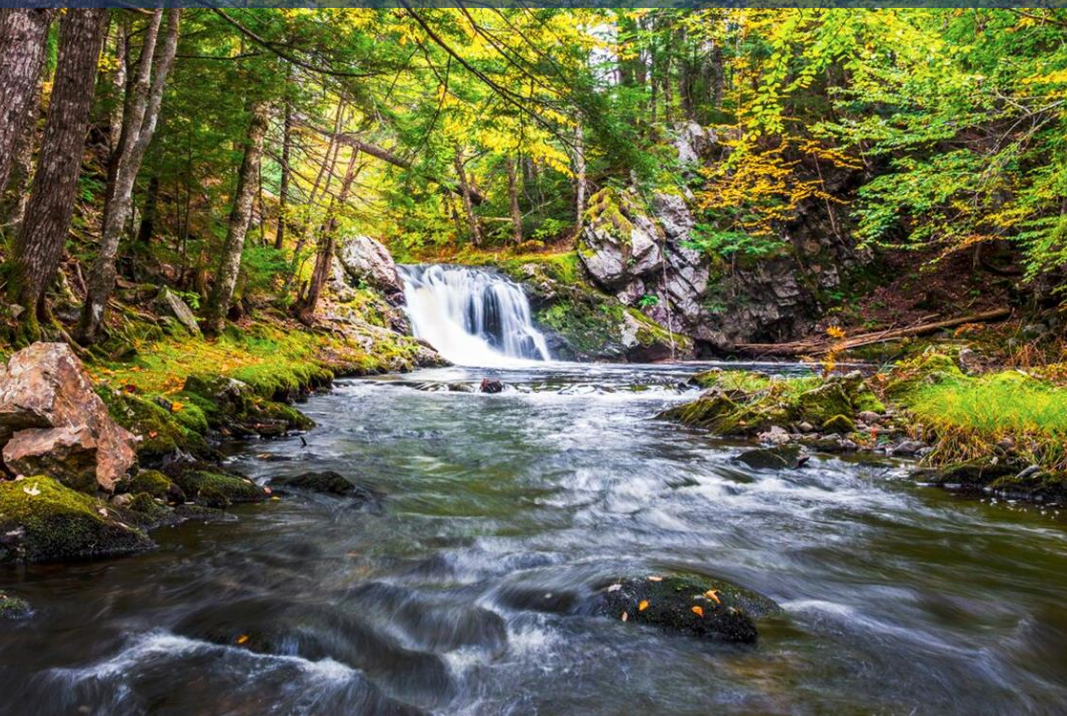
SWOT Summary

The following SWOT chart is a high-level summary of MODG’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats according to takeaways from the consultations performed while developing this strategic plan (see Appendix A).

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<p>MUNICIPAL OPERATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial health and fiscal management; Organizational culture; Human capital and operational stability; and Industrial development. <p>COMMUNITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural environment; People – residents of MODG; Infrastructure (e.g. Lifestyle Complex, Hospitals, EMS, etc.); and Low cost of land and housing. 	<p>MUNICIPAL OPERATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uneven service distribution due to geography; and Perceived lack of municipal communications and transparency. <p>COMMUNITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infrastructure (e.g. cell and internet service, some roads, etc.); Aging and declining population; and Isolation from transportation hubs. 	<p>MUNICIPAL OPERATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic development initiatives; Improved communications; and Key infrastructure investments. <p>COMMUNITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural advantages; Growing tourism sector; Organic agriculture and aquaculture; Increase in “work from anywhere” jobs; and Immigration. 	<p>MUNICIPAL OPERATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eventual decline of oil and Sable Natural Gas revenues; Declining commercial assessment value; and Limited negotiating power with provincial and federal counterparts. <p>COMMUNITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perception of remoteness; Trend of urbanization; and Decline of traditional industries.



STRATEGIC PLAN FOUNDATION



Vision

Rich in natural advantages and sustainable economic opportunity,
MODG is the standard for effective rural rejuvenation

Mission

To provide progressive leadership and high-quality municipal
services in promotion of healthy living, environmental
responsibility and sustainable economic prosperity

Corporate Values

Progressive leadership

We aspire to set examples that others
will choose to follow

Respect

We value one another's position and
treat everyone with courtesy, dignity,
and fairness

Collaboration

We believe in the power of team. We
succeed, learn and work together to
achieve our vision

Community

Focused on livability, health and social
well-being of our residents

Excellence

Responsible planning and management
of resources ensure safe, reliable and
affordable services for our community

Integrity

Modeling a culture of truthfulness,
sincerity, transparency, and fairness

PEOPLE

LONG-TERM GOAL:

A wide diversity of individuals and families who live in, work in and visit MODG creates a healthy backdrop for continued prosperity

Throughout the consultations performed in the creation of this strategic plan, the people of MODG were continually mentioned as a welcoming and caring population whose willingness to help each other was unrivalled and a considerable strength of the municipality. Demographics was also expressed as likely the number one risk to MODG's continued prosperity.

Moving forward, MODG will work to foster a community where individuals, groups and regions have a collective sense of belonging and the capacity to participate in the municipality's social, political, economic and cultural life.

MODG will continually work to ensure its residents and communities feel safe and secure, and have access to an adequate standard of living.



Strategic Objective #1

Increase Resident Satisfaction

Ensure that residents remain the primary point of focus throughout all municipal dealings and advance MODG as a livable, healthy and sustainable municipality by:

- 1.1 Providing citizens with competitive, rational and an affordable level of taxation
- 1.2 Ensuring MODG remains a financially sustainable corporate entity
- 1.3 Providing timely, effective and responsive administrative and planning services to residents
- 1.4 Ensuring residents remain safe and secure through continual improvement and effective delivery of emergency management and fire protection services
- 1.5 Ensuring decisions on governance and operations are made in the best interests of residents affected
- 1.6 Ensuring MODG is prepared to protect resident quality of life in the event of possible dissolutions of other municipal entities

Strategic Objective #2

Continue to Invest in Recreational Programming

Contribute to a healthy and active community through investment and effective delivery of recreational programming throughout MODG by:

- 2.1 Implementing specific details in the *Municipal Physical Activity Plan*
- 2.2 Maintaining financial capital assistance to non-profit organizations when they meet municipal requirements on an ongoing basis
- 2.3 Developing and/or maintaining strategic relationships with indoor and outdoor recreation-based entities (e.g. trails, non-profits, etc.) to advance the recreational offering in MODG
- 2.4 Conducting an internal review of existing recreational programs, engaging specific user groups (e.g. youth, seniors, families, etc.), and identifying high-performing programs, gaps in the current stock of programs, and weaknesses or opportunities to improve recreational program delivery
- 2.5 Delivering effective communication of recreational activities, events, and facility operations

Strategic Objective #3

Improve Resident Attraction and Retention

Strategically work to attract and retain young families, create student employment opportunities, and find ways to get active seniors to become engaged and stay engaged within the community by:

- 3.1 Engaging with new residents to build a strong, evidence-based understanding, of why they chose to live in MODG and what criteria were central to their decision-making process
- 3.2 Engaging with educational institutions and local employers (e.g. health providers, private sector, non-profit and community based organizations) to advance the understanding of MODG's labour force needs and to facilitate the increased communication and linkages between the education and business communities
- 3.3 Conducting best practice research in innovative methods of resident attraction and identifying possible benefits MODG could provide to increase the value proposition to prospective residents
- 3.4 Engaging in the preparation and execution of targeted marketing and communications materials:
 - 3.4.1 Families – stressing the low cost of land and housing, clean environment, safety and security, and strong recreational and municipal service offering
 - 3.4.2 Youth – with a goal of building pride and a sense of belonging to the community
 - 3.4.3 Retirees/Repatriates – stressing the low cost of land and living, pristine environment, coastal living, access to health and other related amenities
 - 3.4.4 Skilled labour – to attract and retain skilled people to match labour needs of economic development initiatives
 - 3.4.5 Develop a dedicated welcome package targeted at new residents
- 3.5 Encouraging and promoting the benefits of volunteering within the community and publicly recognizing volunteers for their contribution

PROSPERITY

LONG-TERM GOAL:

Targeted and proactive economic development activities result in conditions that sustain a healthy, diverse and resilient local economy

Employment opportunities are urgently needed to combat a declining population and to ensure the health and prosperity of MODG. The District welcomes and encourages commercial and industrial development of all types and has developed land use plans that clearly define the potential and the requirements for commercial, industrial and all other land use developments.

MODG's corporate approach and proactive development of large-scale industrial projects has led to the financial viability of the facilities, programs and services that are in place, and which would not be possible from resident and corporate tax revenue alone. Progressive and proactive development of current opportunities, as well as support for entrepreneurship, and targeted business sectors were communicated as critical to the community and the way of life that its residents currently enjoy.



Strategic Objective #4

Proactively Pursue High Profile Economic Development Opportunities

Maximize the benefits from current economic drivers and development opportunities by:

- 4.1 Leveraging existing economic development projects/opportunities to improve the economic conditions in MODG
 - 4.1.1 Increasing the contracting out services and revenues generated from the Waste Management Facility and Sable Wind
 - 4.1.2 Maintaining work on existing projects (e.g. Natural Gas/LNG, Melford Atlantic Gateway, and Strait of Canso Superport)
- 4.2 Proactively pursuing and reducing barriers to facilitate the establishment of new economic generators (Canso Spaceport, Blackpoint Quarry, Goldboro Gold Mining, and others as they are identified)
- 4.3 Making it clear that aggressive pursuit of major opportunities is not optional; it is the critical component for making MODG sustainable as a livable, healthy and sustainable rural municipality
 - 4.3.1 Celebrating the success of this approach as soon as results are achieved by demonstrating how new jobs contribute to the fiscal and ultimately the actual health of the community. Countering the skepticism of doubters who say, “show me the jobs!”
- 4.4 Continuing work to retain and attract provincial and/or federal offices or services to MODG

Strategic Objective #5

Foster and Encourage a Business-Friendly Environment

Show that MODG encourages entrepreneurship and welcomes small business as well as major industry by:

- 5.1 Ensuring a competitive commercial tax rate
- 5.2 Supporting programs and policies that promote cost-competitiveness for business
- 5.3 Providing marketing and communications support for small to medium-sized businesses when appropriate
 - 5.3.1 Celebrating local business achievements and encouraging their input to economic expansion for the area
- 5.4 Continuing to position and develop the Shiretown of Guysborough as the hub of development
 - 5.4.1 Developing a vision and strategy for development, capitalizing on the waterfront
- 5.5 Working closely with potential developers to bring sound investment, development and work opportunities to MODG

Strategic Objective #6

Grow Tourism and Maximize the Value of the Sector to MODG's Economy

Utilize MODG's natural advantages and align tourism product and marketing efforts with the Province to leverage strategic partnerships and maximize the value of the sector to our local economy by:

- 6.1 Developing, maintaining, and/or strengthening key external relationships to align development efforts, leverage investment dollars, and build the profile of Guysborough as a destination
 - 6.1.1 Continuing to assist local operators to participate in this activity and encouraging them to take the lead
- 6.2 Marketing MODG's tourism offering
 - 6.2.1 Maintaining and ensuring the continued relevancy of www.visitguysborough.ca
 - 6.2.2 Positioning the Maritime Launch Services Spaceport as a potential tourism flag ship product
 - 6.2.2.1 Leveraging relationships and working to ensure this unique product is featured in provincial-level tourism "trail" or product packaging development
 - 6.2.3 Promoting MODG's tourism industry at tradeshow (e.g. Saltscapes) and conferences when appropriate
- 6.3 Supporting tourism-related events and festivals with strong potential for incremental growth
 - 6.3.1 Working with organizers of the Lost Shores Gran Fondo cycling tour, the Stan Rogers Folk Festival and other events to expand media coverage for the area and tapping potential for pre-event, post-event and repeat visitation
- 6.4 Encouraging private-sector product development which aligns with provincial-level product development efforts
- 6.5 Encouraging/facilitating private-sector accommodation development and improvements
 - 6.5.1 Encouraging customer service training among current and potential operators with a view to expanding MODG's inventory of customer friendly accommodation, including potential Airbnb hosts
- 6.6 Continuing to invest in improved way signage and directional signage

Strategic Objective #7

Proactive Labour Supply Development

Work to ensure labour supply is available to support economic development activities by:

- 7.1 Researching and identifying joint-venture training programs with industry
- 7.2 Ensuring labour force training is available and utilized to support economic development initiatives
- 7.3 Linking municipal-contracted construction and repair work with creation and support of local youth employment when appropriate

Strategic Objective #8

Effective Marketing Communications

Ensure marketing and communications support the prosperity of MODG and its citizenry by:

- 8.1 Ensuring a consistent approach, focused on single-minded positioning and branding, is used to cement the reputation of MODG for thinking and acting outside the box. This should be applied to communications targeting all relevant audiences, including: residents; businesses, tourists, potential investors, and government partners

INFRASTRUCTURE

LONG-TERM GOAL:

Effective planning and innovative management provide for civil infrastructure that supports growth and a high quality of life for residents

A core function of any municipality is to provide basic infrastructure. Road maintenance, underground pipes, and water and waste treatment facilities are some of the most important, most expensive, and yet, least exciting items in a municipal budget. Existing infrastructure requires ongoing investment and servicing, while new infrastructure is needed to support growth.

MODG is committed to advancing infrastructure to support new opportunities while balancing economic and environmental factors in management and decision making.



Strategic Objective #9
Expand Infrastructure

Increase public satisfaction through the effective management and expansion of civil infrastructure by:

- 9.1 Increasing municipal infrastructure in communities throughout MODG where appropriate
- 9.2 Supporting existing health facilities (e.g. Guysborough Memorial Hospital, Milford Haven Home for Special Care, Canso Seaside Manor, and Eastern Memorial Hospital)
- 9.3 Continuing to invest in community infrastructure (e.g. community halls)

Strategic Objective #10
Lobbying and Partnership Building for Improved Infrastructure

Improve MODG's infrastructure through effective lobbying and partnership building by:

- 10.1 Increasing advocacy efforts for improved infrastructure requirements
 - 10.1.1 Lobbying the provincial government to ensure continual road improvements
 - 10.1.2 Continuing to lobby representatives of key infrastructure providers (e.g. Nova Scotia Power, Aliant, Seaside and Eastlink) for improvements to services
 - 10.1.3 Advocating the provincial government to provide high-speed internet access and cellular coverage throughout the entire province
- 10.2 Fostering strategic relationships with Provincial and Federal representatives to improve MODG's ability to leverage funding opportunities for the development and renewal of infrastructure through federal or provincial programs

Strategic Objective #11
Continue to Invest in Recreational Facilities

Increase the health and satisfaction of residents through recreational facilities by:

- 11.1 Completing the Chedabucto Lifestyle Complex – providing year-round sport and recreation opportunities
- 11.2 Ensuring the management of existing recreational facilities embraces a proactive and sustainable approach
- 11.3 Increasing municipal recreational infrastructure

Strategic Action #12

Effective Management of MODG Land and Infrastructure

Improve land-use plans and development opportunities by:

- 12.1 Strengthening the capability and capacity within MODG to manage all the municipality's assets so that they are affordable, dependable and sustainable in the long-term
- 12.2 Continuing to reduce the number of un-titled properties through the land migration program
- 12.3 Continuing to catalogue and make use of MODG land holdings
- 12.4 Working closely with the Department of Natural Resources to explore development opportunities for pockets of Crown Land within MODG

ENVIRONMENT

LONG-TERM GOAL:

Responsible protection and enhancement of MODG's natural advantages ensure a remarkable natural setting for future generations

The environment is central to sustainability; our society, culture and economy exist in, and are supported by, the natural environment. MODG's natural advantages include natural ecosystems and habitats, wetlands, parks, trails and open spaces, air quality, wildlife and beaches.

The People of MODG have a rich history and connection to the environment. There is a real desire to treat MODG's environment with respect, while at the same time build an economy-based on 21st century innovation. A healthy environment is foundational to healthy society and MODG's commitment to sustainability is motivated by respect for the natural world, rather than fear of the future.

Strategic Objective #13

Invest in the Environmental Sustainability of MODG

Ensure the long-term environmental sustainability of MODG through strategic investment by:

- 13.1 Supporting environmental improvement initiatives through the *Municipal Green Fund*
- 13.2 Reducing greenhouse gases by implementing recommendations from the *Municipal Climate Change Action Plan* and by implementing more “green” practices and investing in municipal buildings and facilities to ensure they achieve high-standards for energy efficiency

Strategic Objective #14

Promote Environmental Sustainability within MODG

Build awareness of the importance of environmental sustainable practices within our community by:

- 14.1 Promoting active transportation and implementing the *MODG Active Transportation Strategy*
- 14.2 Expanding support for resident and business-driven initiatives that encourage waste reduction and other environmentally friendly behaviours (e.g. rain barrel program)
- 14.3 Taking advantage of existing municipal communication vehicles to educate the public on environmentally sustainable practices

Strategic Objective #15

Engage in Environmental Sustainability Planning

Implement policies, initiatives and practices which advance MODG as an environmental sustainable community by:

- 15.1 Mitigating environmental risk to built infrastructure in the context of climate change
- 15.2 Ensuring that development is accompanied by responsible environmental management and that MODG is seen to provide leadership on this issue
- 15.3 Ensuring solid waste management and disposal is reviewed and improved on a continual basis
- 15.4 Ensuring policies, practices and initiatives are vetted through an “environmental lens” before being fully implemented

Implementation

This strategic plan is an important part of the holistic approach to resource allocation, designed to ensure that over time, public funds, in the trust of MODG, are invested in a manner consistent with, and supportive of, the strategic plan and its directions. The plan is a valuable tool which will be used to inform municipal decision making. The work of staff will build from, and reflect, the priorities set out in this plan. Progress will be reviewed annually by council and senior municipal staff beginning in 2018. The review will include analyzing the strategies and objectives within this plan to ensure they are still valid and continue to support the vision, mission and values of MODG.

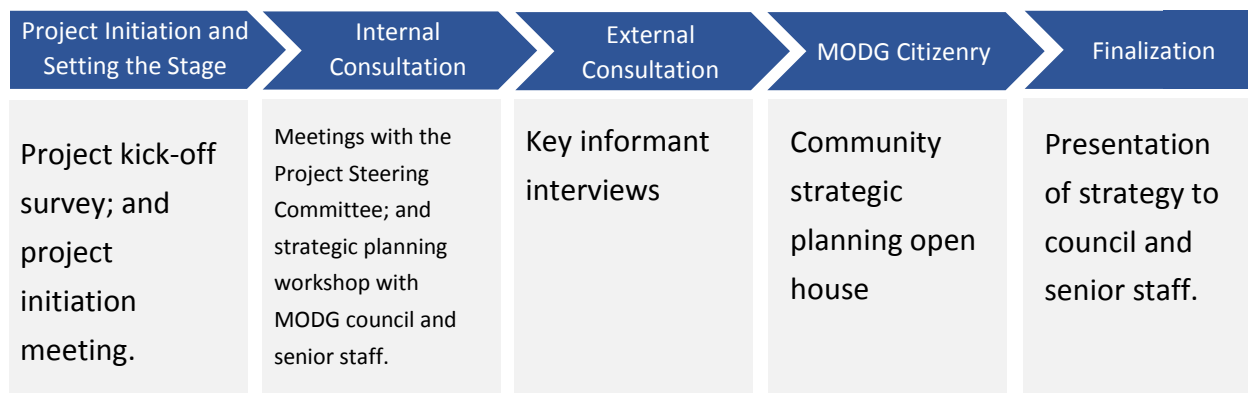
The Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) will oversee the implementation of the strategic objectives laid out in this plan. The CAO will assign responsibility to senior staff to lead the implementation of specific items, including facilitating coordination and collaboration among municipal divisions when required. Staff will update Council and the public through their regular monthly departmental reports that are presented to *Committee of the Whole* meetings. Council will update the public on an ongoing basis using various forms of municipal communications.

APPENDIX A

CONSULTATION PROCESS SUMMARY

The Municipality of the District of Guysborough’s (MODG) Strategic Plan 2022 is derived from overarching research and analysis, as well as an extensive consultation process including steering committee meetings, key informant interviews, an internal strategic planning workshop, a community strategic planning open house and a survey.

Figure 1: Consultation Model



The development of MODG’s Strategic Plan 2022 began with a project kick-off survey. This survey had three simple questions designed to reflect on recent successes, envision what long-term success looks like and to focus priorities of the strategic planning process.

The consultants travelled to Stellarton, Nova Scotia to conduct a strategic planning workshop on January 27, 2017. The workshop was attended by the Warden and municipal councilors, as well as senior municipal officials.

Members of the consulting team conducted 11 key informant interviews at the MODG municipal office on April 18th and 19th, 2017. The key informants were selected by the steering committee and are outlined in Appendix A. MacPherson Roche Smith prepared an interview guide, which was reviewed and approved by the Steering Committee, to facilitate the compilation of comparable and measurable information.

The consulting team held a community strategic planning open house on June 15th, 2017 from 6:30 p.m. to approximately 9:00 p.m. within the council chambers at the municipal office. Eight participants (and two children) attended the session.

Key Informants

Jimmy Long - District #1

Alonzo Reddick - District #2

Mike McLean - District #3

Rob Carter - District #4

Harold Roberts - District #5

Roger Williams - District #6

Mary Rhynold - District #7

Bill MacMillan - District #8

Jeff George – Principal Fanning Education Centre

Barbara Avery – Principle Chedabucto Education Centre

Commanding Officer Addie MacCullum

Ann Marie de Jongh – Guysborough & Area Board of Trade