

# Merrickville & District Historical Society

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Operational Strategy Research  
Merrickville, Ontario

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Merrickville and District Historical Society (MDHS or “the Society”) has engaged Social Delta to provide research and stakeholder input to help inform their future strategic goals and options.

This report offers Eleven concrete recommendations to the MDHS Board to inform future operational and planning efforts based upon both the practices, programs and structures of other organizations operation museums or historic sites across Eastern Ontario and the feedback from more than 73 stakeholders.

The following pages document significant (though not exhaustive) research on competitors, potential collaborators and current factors affecting the work of the MDHS, including price points, funding sources and design of comparable services and the strengths/weaknesses of their business execution. Some of the best practices of similar historical societies or cultural organizations in Canada have been highlighted.

With the ongoing threat of COVID, a community stakeholder consultation was done through an online survey which asked a series of 15 questions on three main themes:

1. The perceived and expected role of the MDHS in the protection and preservation of historical buildings and artifacts,
2. Ideas to help inform the activities and programs of the Society to maximize their mission impact, and,
3. Possible sources of funds and partners to support the future work of the Society.

The research led to eleven (11) recommendations, as follows:

1. Continue to Engage the Village Council of Merrickville-Wolford
2. Build Stronger Ties With Other Local Organizations
3. Launch a Proper Fundraising Program
4. Create an Annual Festival
5. Broaden the Historical Preservation Role
6. Look for a Long-Term Home for the Society
7. Actively Engage Youth
8. Update the Blockhouse Museum
9. Try Theatrical Endeavors
10. Create a Modest Retail Operation
11. Invest in Marketing and Promotions

The findings of these research indicates that there are many specific opportunities that can be explored by the MDHS. There is no need to change the structure of the organization, as its registered non-profit status affords it a strong governance structure, the ability to generate both

earned and donated revenue, and to maintain a close relationship with the people of Merrickville-Wolford.

The positive responses and input from the many stakeholders of the organization indicate that the Society is working to protect valuable stories, artifacts, build heritage and the commercial interests of the region. It will be important to focus the efforts of the future work of the Society to engage new audiences, to recruit more volunteers (especially from different stakeholder groups including local government, business owners, First Nations and youth), to broaden the offerings of the Society and to effectively promote the existing and new value that the Society brings to the economic, social and cultural life of both local citizens and visitors.

The costs of the recommendations are largely expressed in time, although where there are material costs, there are several elements of the recommendations that propose modest new sources of revenue, from the Village Council, from foundations, from individual donors and from local or regional sponsors.

Social Delta believes that the greatest threat to the MDHS may well be obscurity. Current work running the Blockhouse Museum, curating the archives, offering local events and managing the volunteers and members of the Society is done well, but too few know about it. The senior volunteers are achieving great results, but they need to broaden their engagement with other members and organizations in the community. This broader engagement will make it possible to create new, interesting, contemporary activities and programs which will serve two purposes: generate renewed interest in the important work of documenting, preserving, celebration and creating local history, while simultaneously ensuring that the Merrickville and District Historical Society creates greater financial resilience to remain a vibrant and effective contributor to the community they serve.