

Vendor Research Sources & Channels

Bronte Harbour Classic 5K - Discovery Strategy

Purpose: Comprehensive guide to finding potential vendors through multiple channels, with specific strategies for using MCP tools (Perplexity, Firecrawl) and traditional research methods.

Research Strategy Overview

Multi-Channel Approach

- **Primary Channels:** Facebook groups, BIAs, Chambers of Commerce, local markets
- **Secondary Channels:** Instagram, event directories, web search
- **MCP Tools:** Perplexity for curated research, Firecrawl for web scraping
- **Manual Research:** Direct outreach, referrals, networking

Research Phases

1. **Phase 1:** Map all available channels and sources
1. **Phase 2:** Use MCP tools to gather initial lists
1. **Phase 3:** Validate and enrich lead data
1. **Phase 4:** Prioritize and score leads
1. **Phase 5:** Begin outreach campaigns

Channel 1: Facebook Groups

Target Groups (Halton Region)

Local Business Groups:

- "Oakville Small Business Network"
- "Burlington Business Owners"
- "Halton Region Entrepreneurs"
- "Milton Business Community"
- "Oakville Local Business Directory"

Market & Vendor Groups:

- "Halton Farmers Market Vendors"
- "GTA Craft Market Vendors"
- "Ontario Pop-Up Market Vendors"
- "Local Artisan Markets GTA"
- "Food Truck Vendors Ontario"

Community Groups:

- "Oakville Community Events"
- "Burlington Community Board"
- "Halton Region Community"
- "Local Events Oakville"

Fitness & Running Groups:

- "Oakville Runners"
- "Burlington Running Club"
- "Halton Running Community"
- "GTA Running Events"

Research Strategy**Using Perplexity:****- Query Examples:**

- "Facebook groups for small businesses in Oakville Ontario"
- "Halton region vendor market Facebook groups"
- "Local artisan markets Burlington Ontario Facebook"
- "Food truck vendors GTA Facebook groups"
- **Expected Output:** List of relevant Facebook group names and links

Manual Research:

1. Search Facebook for groups using keywords: "Oakville business", "Halton vendor", "Burlington market"
2. Join relevant groups (may require approval)
3. Review group member lists (if public) for business owners
4. Search group posts for vendor calls, market announcements
5. Identify businesses that post about events, markets, or community involvement

Data Collection:

- Group name and link
- Number of members
- Activity level (posts per week)
- Business names found in posts/members
- Contact information (if available in posts)

Using Firecrawl (if group pages are web-accessible):

- Crawl group event pages for vendor lists
- Extract business names from market event posts
- Note: Facebook groups may require manual review due to privacy settings

Channel 2: Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) & Chambers of Commerce***Target Organizations*****Halton Region BIAs:**

- **Oakville:** Downtown Oakville BIA, Kerr Village BIA, Bronte BIA

- **Burlington:** Downtown Burlington BIA, Aldershot BIA
- **Milton:** Downtown Milton BIA
- **Halton Hills:** Georgetown BIA, Acton BIA

Chambers of Commerce:

- Oakville Chamber of Commerce
- Burlington Chamber of Commerce
- Milton Chamber of Commerce
- Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce
- Halton Region Chamber of Commerce
- Mississauga Board of Trade (Tier 2)
- Hamilton Chamber of Commerce (Tier 2)

Research Strategy

Using Perplexity:

- Query Examples:

- "Oakville Ontario Business Improvement Area member directory"
- "Burlington Chamber of Commerce member list"
- "Halton region BIA business members"
- "Oakville downtown BIA retail stores"
- **Expected Output:** BIA/Chamber websites, member directory links, business categories

Using Firecrawl:

- Target URLs:

- BIA member directory pages
- Chamber of Commerce member listings
- Business directory pages
- **Extraction Strategy:**
- Business name
- Category/industry
- Contact information (email, phone, website)
- Business address
- Business description

- Example URLs to Crawl:

- <https://downtownoakville.com/members/> (if exists)
- <https://burlingtonchamber.com/members/> (if exists)
- Similar pages for other BIAs/Chambers

Manual Research:

1. Visit BIA/Chamber websites
2. Navigate to member directories
3. Filter by relevant categories (retail, food, services, etc.)
4. Export or copy business information
5. Cross-reference with vendor profile criteria

Data Collection:

- Business name
- Category/industry
- Contact email and phone
- Website URL
- Physical address
- BIA/Chamber membership status

Channel 3: Local Markets & Events

Target Markets

Farmers Markets:

- Oakville Farmers Market
- Burlington Farmers Market
- Milton Farmers Market
- Georgetown Farmers Market
- Port Credit Farmers Market (Mississauga - Tier 2)

Craft Shows & Artisan Markets:

- Oakville Craft Shows
- Burlington Artisan Markets
- Halton Region Holiday Markets
- GTA Pop-Up Markets

Community Events:

- Oakville Waterfront Festival vendors
- Burlington Sound of Music Festival vendors
- Local street festivals and community events

Research Strategy

Using Perplexity:

- Query Examples:

- "Oakville farmers market vendor list 2025"
- "Burlington craft show vendors Ontario"
- "Halton region artisan market vendors"
- "GTA pop-up market vendor directories"
- "Oakville community event vendors"
- **Expected Output:** Market websites, vendor directories, event pages with vendor lists

Using Firecrawl:

- Target URLs:

- Market vendor directory pages
- Event vendor lists
- Market application pages (often list current vendors)

- Extraction Strategy:

- Vendor business names
- Vendor categories
- Contact information (if available)
- Vendor websites/social media

- Example URLs to Crawl:

- Market websites with vendor lists
- Event pages with "Meet Our Vendors" sections
- Market application pages (may list approved vendors)

Manual Research:

1. Visit market websites
2. Find vendor directories or "Our Vendors" pages

3. Review vendor profiles
4. Note business names and categories
5. Search for contact information

Data Collection:

- Market/event name
- Vendor business names
- Vendor categories
- Vendor contact information
- Market dates (to understand vendor availability)

Channel 4: Instagram & Social Media

Target Hashtags & Accounts

Hashtags:

- #oakvillebusiness
- #burlingtonbusiness
- #haltonregion
- #oakvillelocal
- #burlingtonlocal
- #oakvillemarket
- #gtaartisan
- #localmaker
- #oakvillerunning
- #burlingtonfitness

Accounts to Follow:

- Local business directories
- Market organizers
- Community event pages
- Running stores and fitness businesses

Research Strategy

Using Perplexity:

- Query Examples:

- "Instagram accounts for local businesses Oakville Ontario"
- "Oakville artisan makers Instagram"
- "Burlington food vendors Instagram"
- "Halton region small business Instagram accounts"

- **Expected Output:** Instagram account names, business profiles, hashtag usage

Manual Research:

1. Search Instagram for relevant hashtags
2. Review posts from local businesses
3. Identify businesses that post about markets, events, or community
4. Note business names and contact information
5. Check business profiles for website/contact info

Data Collection:

- Instagram handle
- Business name
- Category (from bio/posts)
- Website (from profile)
- Contact information (if in bio)

Note: Instagram research is primarily manual due to API limitations. Use Perplexity to identify key accounts and hashtags, then manually review.

Channel 5: Web Search & Directories

Target Directories

Local Business Directories:

- Yelp (Oakville, Burlington, Halton businesses)
- Google Business (local business listings)
- Yellow Pages (local business directory)
- Local.com (Oakville, Burlington listings)

Category-Specific Directories:

- Running store directories
- Fitness center directories
- Local restaurant directories
- Wellness service directories

Research Strategy

Using Perplexity:**- Query Examples:**

- "Running stores Oakville Ontario"
- "Fitness centers Burlington Ontario"
- "Yoga studios Halton region"
- "Local restaurants Bronte Oakville"
- "Wellness services Milton Ontario"
- "Artisan shops Burlington"
- **Expected Output:** Curated lists of businesses by category and location

Using Firecrawl:**- Target URLs:**

- Yelp category pages (e.g., "Running Stores in Oakville")
- Google Business category pages
- Local directory category pages

- Extraction Strategy:

- Business name
- Category
- Address
- Phone number
- Website URL
- Rating/reviews (for quality assessment)

Manual Research:

1. Use Perplexity queries to identify business categories
2. Visit directory pages for each category
3. Review business listings
4. Filter by location (Halton Region, then GTA)
5. Collect contact information

Data Collection:

- Business name
- Category
- Address
- Phone
- Website
- Email (if available)
- Rating/reviews

Channel 6: Event Directories & Past Events

Target Resources

Event Listing Sites:

- Eventbrite (past events in Halton/GTA)
- Facebook Events (past market/community events)
- Local event calendars

Similar Events:

- Moon in June Road Race (vendor list if available)
- Other 5K races in GTA (vendor lists)
- Community festivals (vendor directories)

Research Strategy

Using Perplexity:**- Query Examples:**

- "5K race vendors GTA Ontario"
- "Community festival vendors Oakville"
- "Running event expo vendors Ontario"
- "Father's Day event vendors Halton"

- **Expected Output:** Event pages, vendor lists, event organizer contacts

Using Firecrawl:**- Target URLs:**

- Past event pages with vendor lists
- Eventbrite event pages (vendor sections)
- Festival websites (vendor directories)

- Extraction Strategy:

- Event name
- Vendor business names
- Vendor categories
- Event dates (to understand vendor availability)

Manual Research:

1. Search for similar events in Halton/GTA
2. Review event websites for vendor lists
3. Contact event organizers for vendor referrals (if appropriate)
4. Review Eventbrite for past market/festival events
5. Extract vendor information

Data Collection:

- Event name
- Event date
- Vendor business names
- Vendor categories
- Event organizer contact (for referrals)

MCP Tools Usage Guide

Perplexity AI - Research Queries

Best Use Cases:

- Finding curated lists of businesses by category and location
- Identifying Facebook groups, BIAs, Chambers
- Discovering market and event directories
- Getting business recommendations by category

Query Templates:

Example: "List of running stores in Oakville Ontario"

Organization Search:

Example: "Oakville Business Improvement Area member directory"

Market/Event Search:

Example: "Burlington farmers market vendor list 2025"

Social Media Search:**1. Business Category Search:**

1. "List of [category] businesses in [city] Ontario"
1. "[City] Business Improvement Area member directory"
1. "[City] farmers market vendor list"
1. "Facebook groups for [category] in [city] Ontario"
1. Example: "Facebook groups for small businesses in Oakville Ontario"

Output Processing:

- Extract business names, websites, contact info
- Note source URLs for verification
- Categorize by vendor profile criteria

- Add to CRM with lead source = "Perplexity"

Firecrawl - Web Scraping

Best Use Cases:

- Extracting vendor lists from market/event websites
- Scraping BIA/Chamber member directories
- Collecting business information from directory pages
- Gathering vendor data from past event pages

Target URL Types:

Category-specific pages

Market Vendor Lists:

Market application pages (may list vendors)

Event Vendor Lists:

Past event vendor lists

Business Directory Pages:

1. BIA/Chamber Directories:

1. Member listing pages
1. Business directory pages
1. "Our Vendors" pages
1. Vendor directory pages
1. Festival vendor directories
1. Event sponsor/vendor pages
1. Yelp category pages
1. Google Business category pages
1. Local directory category pages

Extraction Strategy:

- Business name
- Category/industry
- Contact information (email, phone, website)
- Address
- Business description

Data Validation:

- Verify contact information is current
- Check business websites are active
- Validate business addresses
- Cross-reference with exclusion rules

Output Processing:

- Clean and format extracted data
- Remove duplicates
- Categorize by vendor profile
- Add to CRM with lead source = "Firecrawl"

Research Workflow

Phase 1: Channel Mapping (Week 1)

1. Document all available channels (this document)
1. Identify specific groups, BIAs, markets to target
1. Create list of target URLs for Firecrawl
1. Prepare Perplexity query list

Phase 2: Initial Research (Week 2-3)

1. Run Perplexity queries for each category
1. Use Firecrawl on target directory pages
1. Manually review Facebook groups
1. Collect initial lead pool (target: 200+ leads)

Phase 3: Data Enrichment (Week 3-4)

1. Validate contact information
1. Categorize leads by vendor profile
1. Score leads using scoring model
1. Prioritize into Tier 1, 2, 3

Phase 4: Lead Validation (Week 4)

1. Verify businesses are still active
1. Check websites and social media
1. Confirm contact information
1. Remove duplicates and invalid leads

Phase 5: Outreach Preparation (Week 4-5)

1. Finalize lead list (target: 150+ qualified leads)
1. Prepare outreach templates

1. Begin outreach campaigns

Data Collection Template

Lead Information to Collect

- **Business Name:** Official business name
- **Contact Name:** Primary contact person (if available)
- **Email:** Business email address
- **Phone:** Business phone number
- **Website:** Business website URL
- **Social Media:** Instagram, Facebook handles
- **Address:** Business physical address
- **City:** City/region
- **Category:** Primary vendor category
- **Subcategory:** Specific business type
- **Lead Source:** How we found them (BIA, Facebook, Perplexity, etc.)
- **Lead Date:** Date identified
- **Notes:** Additional information, observations

CRM Entry

- Add all leads to Vendor Master List in CRM
- Assign Vendor ID
- Score using scoring model
- Assign Tier (1, 2, 3, or 4)
- Set Outreach Status to "Not Contacted"

Quality Control

Data Validation

- **Contact Information:** Verify emails and phones are current
- **Business Status:** Confirm businesses are still operating
- **Website Check:** Visit websites to verify business type
- **Exclusion Check:** Screen against exclusion rules immediately

Duplicate Detection

- Check for duplicate business names
- Verify same business with different contact info
- Merge duplicate entries in CRM

Source Tracking

- Record lead source for each vendor
- Track which sources produce best leads
- Measure conversion rates by source
- Optimize research strategy based on results

Research Metrics

Track These Metrics

- **Leads Identified:** Total number of potential vendors found
- **Leads by Source:** Breakdown by channel (BIA, Facebook, Perplexity, etc.)
- **Leads by Category:** Distribution across vendor categories
- **Leads by Geography:** Tier 1, 2, 3 breakdown
- **Data Quality:** Percentage of leads with complete contact info
- **Research Efficiency:** Time spent per lead identified

Source Performance

- **Best Sources:** Which channels produce highest quality leads
- **Conversion Potential:** Which sources lead to most applications
- **Time Investment:** Research time vs. leads acquired per source
- **ROI:** Quality and quantity of leads per research hour

Notes

- **Start Local:** Focus on Halton Region first, expand to GTA as needed
- **Quality over Quantity:** Better to have 100 high-quality leads than 500 low-quality
- **Validate Early:** Check exclusion rules and brand fit during research phase
- **Document Sources:** Track where each lead came from for future optimization
- **Regular Updates:** Update research as new channels are discovered

- **Privacy Compliance:** Respect privacy when collecting contact information
- **Professional Approach:** Maintain professional standards in all research activities

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Next Review: After initial research phase completion