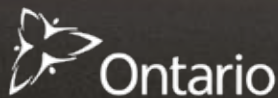


2018

Destination Northern Ontario

Travel Information Centre Project



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Destination Northern Ontario



Travel Information Centre Project

Prepared by STEM Consulting & Marketing Inc.
Eva Gutsche – Project Lead

In partnership with Destination Northern Ontario, the DMOs in
Northern Ontario, and the TICs in the North

Executive Summary



This report was prepared by STEM Consulting in partnership with Destination Northern Ontario (DNO), the Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) in Northern Ontario, and the Travel Information Centres (TICs) in the North. Assistance was sought from the provincial tourism offices across Canada to understand their approach and offering in relation to Visitor Information Services.

This report addresses the various ways in which the visitor experience can be enhanced, in relation to Travel Information Centres (TICs), throughout the three tourism regions in Northern Ontario. The recommendations and strategies are built upon the visitor's needs, many of which were addressed in the Northern Ontario Wayfinding Strategy. The strategies presented also recognize and align with the municipal communities' goals of increasing the economic impact of tourism, for the businesses, in their destination.

The strategy is built upon the foundation that "the most important wayfinding channel is the friendly face at the visitor centres" as cited in the Northern Ontario Wayfinding Strategy. A number of the strategies cited in the Northern Ontario Wayfinding Implementation Plan, are actualized in this report. One of the Wayfinding Strategy recommendations was the creation of an accurate TIC database. That was completed in the research and is presented as part of this report.

Additional recommendations are integrated throughout this report.

The research conducted took a global, national, provincial, regional and local approach. The provinces were all interviewed, with the goal of understanding their Travel Information Centre trends, current services and offerings, structure, along with any recent changes implemented, to meet the changing needs of the traveler. The relationship between the provincial and regional TICs varied across the country and detail is provided for each province.

Nationally and globally TICs are adapting to meet the changing needs of the consumer. Several of these trends are highlighted in the report and presented as options for the TICs in Northern Ontario.

In-depth research was conducted by STEM, with the TICs in the North. In consultation and collaboration with the DMOS, information was gathered on the existing TICs. The report recaps the support offered by the regional DMOs, to the TICs, in their region and provides recommendations to expand that support. The TIC data collected, was gathered from an online survey and a follow-up telephone interview, with those wishing to provide more additional information. The findings are summarized in this report and the full surveys are available in the addendum.

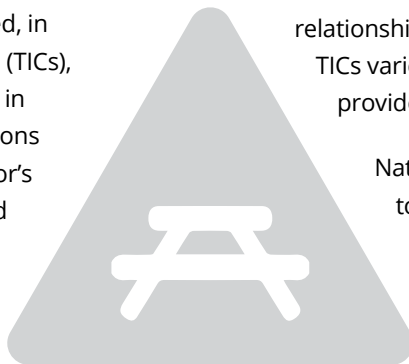




Photo: Rob Stimpson

The most important wayfinding channel is the friendly face at the travel centres.

TIC visitations nationally and globally are generally facing a steady decline as visitors embrace technology for trip planning and wayfinding. TIC numbers in Ontario and the North have been steady or increasing since 2012. Data collection from the Northern TICs varies within the region as some have an accurate tracking approach where other visitation numbers are estimates. Provincial numbers at the Ontario Tourism Information Centres (OTICs) are accurate and clearly show a decline throughout the province until 2012 and then a modest, yet consistent year over year increase since that time.

Based on the current TIC structure in the North, the overriding recommendation is a collaborative approach amongst all the TICs. The importance of a more consistent approach to customer service

delivery, through consistent training programs, is addressed in several ways in this report.

A consistent gap that was noted, during the research, was the TICs challenge in showing the ROI to the funders and communities they service. Very basic steps, such as accurate visitor tracking, are missing in many cases. Others are showing very accurate statistics and records and able to articulate their impact and value. Sharing best practices would benefit all the TICs.

The topics addressed in the report cover staffing, funding, information collection and distribution, outreach, signage, and trip planning.

Introduction

The following will give a brief overview of the background, objectives and what this report covers, in relation to scope of work. The Northern Ontario Wayfinding Study conducted in 2014 provided a number of recommendations in relation to Travel Information Centres (TICs). These recommendations were reviewed and addressed in this document. More alignment and collaboration, was a common theme in the Wayfinding Study and that theme is consistent with many of the recommendations put forth from this study.

Background

The Travel Information Centres in the North are owned and operated, mainly by the municipality or by a local chamber of commerce or a combination of the two (i.e. owned by the municipality and run by the chamber). There are two provincially-run Travel Information Centres (OTICs) in Northern Ontario. At one time, there were five OTICs in the region which has been reduced to one year-round centre in Sault Ste. Marie and a seasonal OTIC in Pigeon River.

Based on discussions with the Ontario Travel Information Centres/Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation there are 350 Regional Tourism Information Centres in the province, referred to by OTMPC as RTICS (Regional Travel Information Centres). Several RTICS/TICs have closed in the past few years including a TIC in Sudbury and North Bay. The Geraldton centre is expected to close in the next couple of years once mining commences.

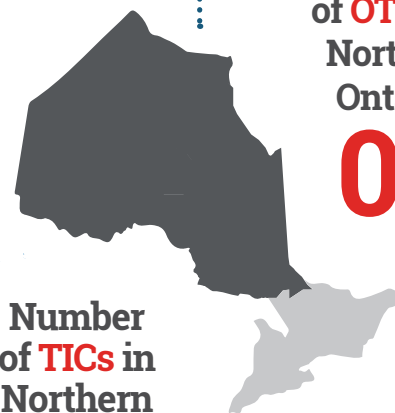
The regional DMO can play a critical role in the staffing, training and many aspects of the operation and services provided, which is currently the case in 13b. In order to have consistency amongst the 47 TICs in the North a guiding force is required. The three DMOs interact with the TICs, in their region, quite differently. From discussions with the DMOs, historically there was more commonality in their support to the TICs. Board decisions influenced this change, particularly in 13a and the interaction with the local TICs is now quite different, region to region.

TICs are owned and operated by **Municipalities or Chambers of Commerce, or both.**

OTICs are provincially run.

Number of **OTICs** in Northern Ontario:
02

Number of **TICs** in Northern Ontario:
47



Objectives

The objective of this TIC Study and Strategy was to conduct research locally, nationally and globally and provide Destination Northern Ontario with recommendations for a TIC strategy for the entire region. The goal of the TIC strategy is to improve the overall visitor experience throughout the region.

The objective of the individual TICs is to drive economic growth in the community operating the TIC.

The reality is, visitors come into the TIC looking for information about their entire experience in the region.

This is considered as a key factor in enhancing the visitor experience.

An alignment of goals and objectives is addressed in this report.

Scope of Work

The approach taken for this report involved research globally, nationally, provincially and locally. On a global level, the information was sourced from TIC reports and studies conducted in various countries. Articles and other sources were also used to understand the global trend in TICs.

On a national level, each province was contacted and interviewed. The findings are summarized in this report and further details provided in the addendum.

Each DMO and DNO provided lists of TICs in the region. The 2014 Wayfinding Study cited 122 TICs. The first goal was to define a TIC and a definitions page can be found in this report. Having printed visitor information available, without a travel counsellor or staff member, does not qualify as a Travel Information Centre, for the purpose of this report. The initial count appears to have included

information distribution centres as a TIC. The list has been pared down to 47 full-time, seasonal or dual-function (often combined with a museum site) TICs in Northern Ontario. A definition sheet was created and this guided the creation of a database of TICs for the North. Half of the TICs provided in-depth detail, on their TIC, through an online survey and post survey telephone interview. Several of the TICs were difficult to reach, based on seasonality of the centres.

This report highlights recommendations for an enhanced visitor experience, which the various TICs could implement. The suggestions are at a high level and upon acceptance, by the various industry partners, a full implementation strategy would need to be created. Recommended action steps are defined for each proposed strategy.



Visitor Definitions

The following definitions will be used throughout this report.

VISITOR SERVICES

This covers the full range of information services available to the visitor at various stages of their trip. The interaction can be in the trip planning phase via social media or in the destination/region through full-time TICs (dedicated bricks and mortar), seasonal, TICs (dedicated bricks and mortar) or dual function TICs (bricks and mortar with a dual function – i.e. museum). The visitor services could also include portable/mobile visitor information booths (i.e. festivals), interactive kiosks or roaming TIC staff (foot or other mode of transportation).

Dual Function TIC – bricks and mortar with a dual function – i.e. museum with dedicated staff offering visitor information. The TIC provides face-to-face visitor services and print materials. Staff would likely have an iPad/Tablet to assist with reservations and online information.

Interactive Kiosk – unmanned kiosk providing local and regional visitor information through an electronic format.

Full-time TIC – bricks and mortar or permanent display (i.e. airport) with dedicated staff operating year-round. The TIC provides face-to-face visitor services and print materials. Staff would likely have a computer or iPad/Tablet to assist with reservations and online information. The TIC could also offer a variety of other services including washrooms, gift shop, vending machines, WiFi, picnic area and other visitor services. These services will vary from one TIC to the next.

Mobile TIC – a staffed booth or display used at festivals and events or for other short term purposes (less than 30 days). This mobile TIC provides face-to-face visitor services and print materials. Staff would likely have an iPad/Tablet to assist with reservations and online information.

OTIC – Ontario Travel Information Centre – run by the Province of Ontario. There are 9 year-round and 2 seasonal OTICs in the province.

Roaming TIC Staff – in destination or regional identifiable TIC staff providing outreach services to the visitors offering visitor information services – verbal via iPad/tablet and print materials.

RTIC – Regional Travel Information Centre – term used by the Province of Ontario when referring to a bricks and mortar Travel Information Centre (as they are called in Northern Ontario)

Seasonal TIC – bricks and mortar or permanent display (i.e. airport) with dedicated staff operating seasonally. The TIC provides face-to-face visitor services and print materials. Staff would likely have an iPad/Tablet to assist with reservations and online information. The TIC could also offer a variety of other services including washrooms, gift shop, vending machines, WiFi, picnic area and other visitor services. These services will vary from one TIC to the next.

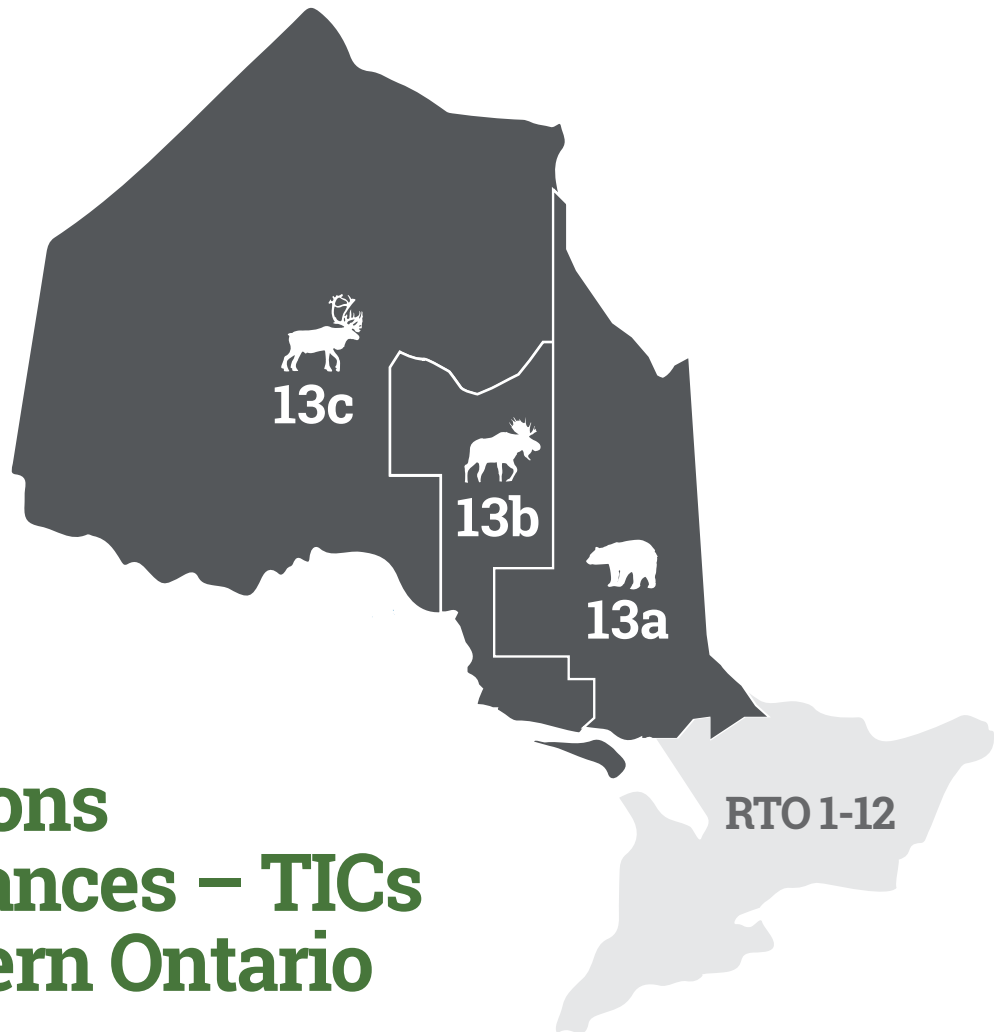
TIC Booth – a booth in-town manned by dedicated TIC staff. This mobile TIC provides face-to-face visitor services and print materials. Staff would likely have an iPad/Tablet to assist with reservations and online information.

Visitor Information Outlet – a bricks and mortar building that racks brochures and other destination or regional info – this could be the town hall or other local site. There are no dedicated full-time or part-time TIC staff associated with the information display though others working in the building might assist a visitor request (i.e. municipal buildings).

Visitor Information Social Media Outreach – connecting with the visitor via social media in the planning stage or while the visitor is in the region or destination. This function would be performed by a TIC staff member versus regular social media marketing.



RTO 13



Locations & Distances – TICs Northern Ontario

Distance Calculator (p. 10-15)

The distance calculator highlights (**in green**) the TICs that are within 75 km of each other. This close proximity lends itself to considering shared services and a collaborative approach based on services offered, seasonality and hours of operation. A collaborative approach that considers geographic proximity could result in enhanced visitor services in the region through coordinated operating hours.

TIC Locations	Alban	Blind River	Bruce Mines	Chapleau	Cochrane	Dobie	Dryden	Ear Falls
Alban	0	217	291	463	438	311	1388	1551
Blind River	217	0	73	246	546	478	1171	1334
Bruce Mines	291	73	0	244	540	551	1097	1261
Chapleau	463	246	244	0	306	358	952	1115
Cochrane	438	546	540	306	0	170	1062	1226
Dobie	311	478	551	358	170	0	1231	1394
Dryden	1388	1171	1097	952	1062	1231	0	164
Ear Falls	1551	1333	1260	1115	1225	1393	164	0
Elk Lake	284	451	524	399	211	96	1272	1435
Elliot Lake	214	58	131	303	542	474	1228	1391
Emo	1416	1199	1125	980	1090	1259	222	356
Geraldton	875	732	658	513	462	631	611	774
Hearst	627	684	610	463	214	383	848	1012
Huron Shores	260	43	38	236	588	520	1135	1298
Ignace	1281	1064	991	845	956	1124	107	270
Iroquois Falls	395	512	506	272	50	126	1111	1274
Kapuskasing	532	607	601	367	119	287	949	1112
Kenora	1525	1307	1234	1088	1199	1367	138	216
Kirkland Lake	308	474	548	340	152	19	1213	1376
Latchford	197	364	437	429	241	114	1303	1466
Little Current	174	148	221	393	503	434	1318	1481
Longlac	837	693	620	475	424	592	638	801
Manitouwadge	773	556	483	337	441	685	722	885
Marathon	765	547	474	328	542	676	634	797
Massey	148	70	143	315	476	408	1240	1404
Mattawa	181	354	427	622	434	307	1495	1658
Moosonee	574	590	427	622	434	307	1495	1658
Morley	319	529	602	774	712	585	1699	1862
Neebing	1094	877	803	658	768	937	364	527
New Liskeard	221	388	461	407	219	91	1280	1443
Nipigon	941	724	651	505	616	784	447	610
North Bay	120	293	367	561	373	246	1434	1598
Rainy River	1473	1255	1182	1036	1147	1315	279	400
Red Lake	1603	1385	1312	1167	1277	1445	216	57
Sault Ste. Marie	361	144	71	249	545	621	1034	1197
Schreiber	850	633	560	414	628	762	528	701
Sioux Lookout	1427	1210	1137	991	1102	1270	1007	261
Smooth Rock Falls	469	545	538	305	57	225	1219	1170
Spanish	169	49	122	294	497	429	1219	1382
St. Charles	45	226	299	471	400	272	1396	1559
Sturgeon Falls	81	254	327	500	371	243	1425	1588
Sudbury	71	172	245	451	404	310	1343	1506
Temagami	163	330	403	463	275	148	1336	1499
Terrace Bay	836	619	545	400	614	748	552	715
Thunder Bay	1060	843	770	624	735	903	353	516
Timmins	364	440	433	200	106	158	1110	1273
Virginiatown	311	478	551	378	190	24	1251	1414
Wawa	582	364	291	140	437	508	812	975
White River	669	452	378	233	447	601	719	882

TIC Locations	Elk Lake	Elliot Lake	Emo	Geraldton	Hearst	Huron Shores	Ignace	Iroquois Falls
Alban	284	509	1416	875	627	260	1281	395
Blind River	451	58	1199	732	684	43	1064	511
Bruce Mines	529	131	1125	658	611	38	991	505
Chapleau	399	303	980	513	463	236	845	272
Cochrane	211	543	1090	462	214	533	956	50
Dobie	96	474	1259	631	383	520	1124	126
Dryden	1272	1228	222	611	848	1135	107	1111
Ear Falls	1434	1391	356	774	1011	1298	270	1274
Elk Lake	0	448	1300	672	424	493	1165	167
Elliot Lake	448	0	1256	789	698	100	1122	508
Emo	1299	1256	0	639	876	1163	257	1139
Geraldton	671	789	639	0	248	696	504	511
Hearst	424	699	876	248	0	648	742	263
Huron Shores	493	100	1163	696	648	0	1029	498
Ignace	1165	1121	267	504	742	1028	0	1004
Iroquois Falls	167	508	1139	511	263	498	1005	0
Kapuskasing	328	604	977	349	101	593	842	168
Kenora	1408	1364	181	747	985	1272	243	1248
Kirkland Lake	85	471	1240	612	365	517	1106	108
Latchford	88	360	1330	702	454	406	1196	198
Little Current	413	144	1346	907	659	190	1212	468
Longlac	633	751	666	39	210	658	532	473
Manitouwadge	726	613	750	180	227	520	616	490
Marathon	717	605	662	347	328	512	527	580
Massey	381	67	1268	801	632	112	1134	441
Mattawa	280	351	1523	895	647	397	1389	391
Moosonee	398	563	986	478	277	594	807	278
Morley	558	525	1727	1173	925	571	1593	669
Neebing	987	934	392	317	554	841	257	817
New Liskeard	66	384	1308	680	432	430	1173	175
Nipigon	825	781	475	164	402	688	341	664
North Bay	219	290	1462	834	586	336	1328	330
Rainy River	1356	1313	57	695	933	1220	324	1196
Red Lake	1486	1443	408	826	1063	1350	322	1326
Sault Ste. Marie	595	201	1062	594	547	108	927	511
Schreiber	803	690	566	251	414	597	431	676
Sioux Lookout	1311	1267	319	650	888	1174	146	1150
Smooth Rock Falls	266	541	1034	406	158	531	900	105
Spanish	402	46	1247	780	653	92	1113	462
St. Charles	246	222	1242	861	613	268	1289	356
Sturgeon Falls	217	251	1453	832	584	297	1318	327
Sudbury	283	169	1370	808	560	214	1236	370
Temagami	121	327	1354	736	488	372	1230	232
Terrace Bay	789	676	580	265	400	583	445	662
Thunder Bay	944	900	381	283	521	808	246	784
Timmins	199	436	1138	510	262	426	1003	72
Virginiatown	97	474	1279	651	403	520	246	147
Wawa	529	422	840	373	325	329	705	402
White River	622	509	747	280	233	416	613	495

TIC Locations	Kapuskasing	Kenora	Kirkland Lake	Latchford	Little Current	Longlac	Manitouwadge	Marathon
Alban	533	1525	308	197	174	837	819	764
Blind River	607	1307	475	364	148	693	556	547
Bruce Mines	602	1234	548	437	221	620	483	474
Chapleau	368	1088	340	430	393	475	337	328
Cochrane	120	1199	151	241	503	424	441	542
Dobie	288	1367	19	114	434	592	685	676
Dryden	949	138	1212	1302	1318	638	722	634
Ear Falls	1112	216	1375	1465	1481	801	885	797
Elk Lake	329	1408	84	88	144	633	726	717
Elliot Lake	604	1365	471	360	408	751	613	605
Emo	977	181	1240	1330	1346	666	750	662
Geraldton	349	748	612	702	907	38	180	347
Hearst	101	985	365	454	248	210	227	328
Huron Shores	649	1272	517	406	190	658	521	512
Ignace	842	243	1106	1196	1211	532	616	527
Iroquois Falls	168	1248	108	198	469	473	490	590
Kapuskasing	0	1085	269	359	564	310	328	428
Kenora	1085	0	1349	1439	1455	775	859	770
Kirkland Lake	270	1349	0	111	431	574	667	658
Latchford	360	1439	111	0	320	664	757	748
Little Current	564	1455	431	320	0	868	704	695
Longlac	310	775	574	664	869	0	142	236
Manitouwadge	328	859	667	757	703	142	0	99
Marathon	429	771	658	748	695	236	99	0
Massey	537	1377	405	294	78	763	626	617
Mattawa	553	1632	304	193	311	857	910	901
Moosonee	245	991	350	442	596	448	439	499
Morley	830	1836	582	471	485	1135	1085	1076
Neebing	655	500	918	1008	1024	337	428	340
New Liskeard	337	1416	88	24	344	642	734	725
Nipigon	502	584	766	856	871	192	276	187
North Bay	492	1571	243	132	250	796	849	840
Rainy River	1033	225	1297	1387	1403	723	807	719
Red Lake	1164	268	1427	1517	1533	853	937	849
Sault Ste. Marie	647	1170	618	507	291	556	419	410
Schreiber	514	675	744	834	780	279	185	97
Sioux Lookout	988	234	1252	1342	1357	679	762	673
Smooth Rock Falls	64	1143	207	297	501	368	385	486
Spanish	558	1356	426	315	99	742	605	596
St. Charles	518	1533	269	158	182	823	781	773
Sturgeon Falls	489	1561	240	129	211	794	810	801
Sudbury	466	1479	307	196	129	770	728	719
Temagami	393	1473	145	34	287	698	790	782
Terrace Bay	500	689	730	820	766	142	170	82
Thunder Bay	621	489	885	975	990	311	395	306
Timmins	167	1246	140	230	396	471	527	518
Virginiatown	308	1388	39	114	434	613	706	697
Wawa	425	948	470	560	512	334	197	188
White River	333	856	562	652	599	242	104	96

TIC Locations	Massey	Mattawa	Moosonee	Morley	Neebing	New Liskeard	Nipigon	North Bay	Rainy River
Alban	147	181	574	314	1094	221	941	119	1473
Blind River	70	354	590	525	877	388	724	292	1255
Bruce Mines	143	427	599	598	803	461	651	365	1182
Chapleau	315	622	430	771	658	407	505	561	1036
Cochrane	477	434	247	713	768	219	616	373	1147
Dobie	408	306		585	937	91	784	246	1315
Dryden	1240	1495	876	1696	364	1280	447	1434	279
Ear Falls	1403	1658	890	1858	527	1443	610	1597	400
Elk Lake	381	280	398	559	978	66	825	219	1147
Elliot Lake	67	350	563	522	934	384	781	289	1356
Emo	1268	1523	986	1723	392	1308	475	1462	57
Geraldton	801	895	478	1174	317	680	164	834	696
Hearst	633	647	277	922	554	432	402	586	933
Huron Shores	112	396	594	567	841	430	688	335	1220
Ignace	1134	1388	807	1589	257	1173	341	1327	324
Iroquois Falls	442	390	278	669	817	175	664	330	1196
Kapuskasing	537	551	245	830	655	336	502	491	1033
Kenora	1377	1631	991	1832	500	1416	584	1571	225
Kirkland Lake	405	303	350	582	919	88	766	243	1297
Latchford	294	192	442	471	1008	24	856	132	1387
Little Current	78	311	596	482	1024	344	871	249	1403
Longlac	763	857	448	1136	344	642	192	796	723
Manitouwadge	626	910	439	1081	428	734	276	848	807
Marathon	617	901	499	1072	340	725	187	839	719
Massey	0	284	572	455	946	318	794	222	1325
Mattawa	284	0	569	385	1201	217	1049	62	1580
Moosonee	572	569	0	1007	718	427	598	558	1033
Morley	459	384	1007	0	1405	495	1252	340	1784
Neebing	946	1201	718	1401	0	986	153	1140	448
New Liskeard	318	216	427	495	986	0	833	156	1364
Nipigon	794	1049	598	1252	153	833	0	987	
North Bay	224	62	558	341	1140	156	988	0	151
Rainy River	1325	1579	1033	1780	448	1364	532	1519	0
Red Lake	1455	1710	919	1910	579	1495	662	1649	452
Sault Ste. Marie	214	498	593	669	740	531	587	436	1118
Schreiber	703	987	804	1158	244	811	91	925	623
Sioux Lookout	1280	1534	233	1735	403	1319	486	1473	376
Smooth Rock Falls	475	489	578	768	712	274	560	428	1091
Spanish	21	305	546	476	925	339	773	243	1304
St. Charles	156	149	548	354	1102	183	949	87	1481
Sturgeon Falls	184	100	528	379	1131	154	978	38	1509
Sudbury	102	186	472	379	1049	220	896	124	1427
Temagami	260	159	537	438	1042	58	889	98	1421
Terrace Bay	688	972	695	1144	258	797	105	911	637
Thunder Bay	913	1167	315	1368	41	952	120	1106	437
Timmins	370	422	357	672	816	207	663	362	1194
Virginiatown	408	307	470	586	957	92	804	246	1336
Wawa	434	718	518	889	518	537	365	657	896
White River	521	805	425	977	425	630	272	744	804

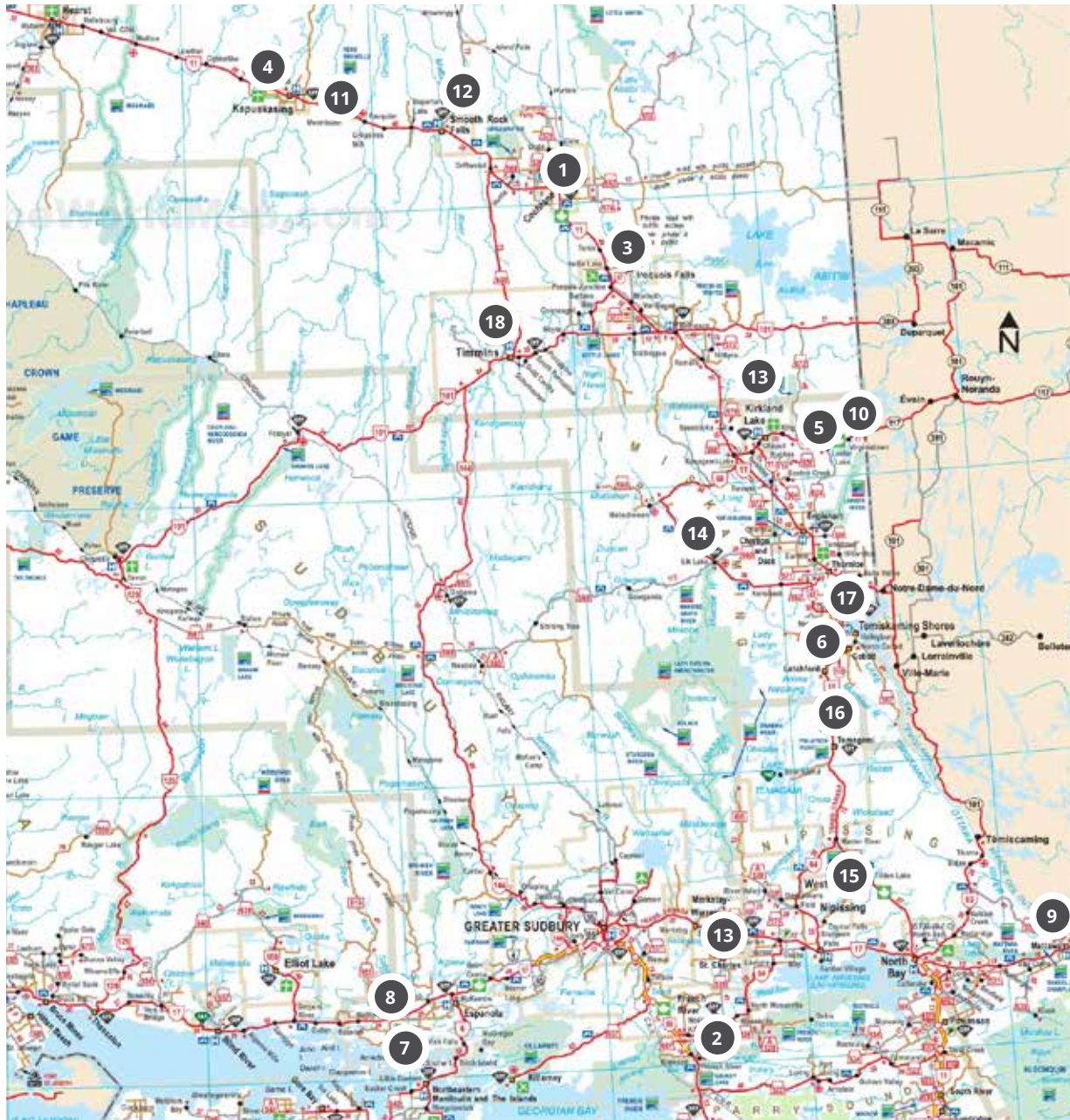
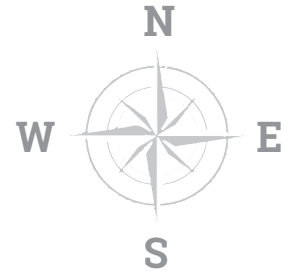
TIC Locations	Red Lake	Sault Ste. Marie	Schreiber	Sioux Lookout	Smooth Rock Falls	Spanish	St. Charles	Sturgeon Falls
Alban	1603	320	850	1429	469	169	45	80
Blind River	1386	143	633	1212	544	49	226	254
Bruce Mines	1312	70	560	1139	538	122	299	327
Chapleau	1167	249	414	993	305	294	471	500
Cochrane	1278	545	628	1104	57	498	400	371
Dobie	216	1033	538	99	1007	1219	1396	1425
Dryden	57	1196	701	262	1169	1382	1559	1588
Ear Falls	1487	594	803	1313	266	402	246	217
Elk Lake	1443	201	690	1269	541	45	222	251
Elliot Lake	408	1061	566	321	1034	1247	1424	1453
Emo	826	594	251	652	406	780	861	832
Geraldton	1063	547	414	890	159	654	613	584
Hearst	1350	108	597	1176	586	91	268	297
Huron Shores	322	927	431	148	900	1113	1289	1319
Ignace	1326	511	676	1152	105	463	356	328
Iroquois Falls	1164	647	514	990	63	558	517	488
Kapuskasing	268	1170	674	236	1143	1356	1532	1561
Kenora	1428	617	744	1254	207	426	269	240
Kirkland Lake	1518	507	834	1344	297	315	158	129
Latchford	1533	291	780	1359	501	99	182	240
Little Current	853	556	279	680	368	742	823	794
Longlac	937	419	184	763	386	605	781	810
Manitouwadge	849	410	96	675	486	596	773	801
Marathon	1456	213	703	1282	474	21	156	184
Massey	1710	497	987	1537	767	305	149	100
Mattawa	579	739	244	405	713	925	1102	1131
Moosonee	1495	531	811	1321	274	339	183	154
Morley	663	587	91	488	560	925	949	978
Neebing	1650	436	926	1476	429	245	88	39
New Liskeard	452	1118	623	378	1091	1304	1481	1509
Nipigon	0	1248	753	314	1221	1434	1611	1630
North Bay	1249	0	496	1075	566	192	369	398
Rainy River	753	496	0	579	572	1259	858	887
Red Lake	313	1073	577	0	1046	1259	1435	1464
Sault Ste. Marie	1222	543	572	1048	0	496	455	426
Schreiber	1434	192	682	1261	495	0	177	205
Sioux Lookout	1611	368	858	1437	455	177	0	49
Smooth Rock Falls	1640	397	887	1466	426	205	49	0
Spanish	1558	315	805	1384	402	125	58	86
St. Charles	1551	473	867	1377	330	281	125	96
Sturgeon Falls	767	481	14	593	558	667	844	873
Sudbury	568	706	210	394	679	892	1069	1097
Temagami	1325	438	604	1151	104	391	353	359
Terrace Bay	1466	621	782	1292	245	426	273	244
Thunder Bay	1027	227	274	853	435	413	590	618
Timmins	934	314	181	760	391	500	677	706
Virginiatown	311	478	551	378	190	24	1251	1414
Wawa	582	364	291	140	437	508	812	975
White River	669	452	378	233	447	601	719	882

TIC Locations	Sudbury	Temagami	Terrace Bay	Thunder Bay	Timmins	Virginiatown	Wawa	White River
Alban	72	163	836	1060	364	311	582	669
Blind River	172	330	619	843	439	478	365	452
Bruce Mines	245	403	545	770	433	551	291	378
Chapleau	451	463	400	624	200	378	140	283
Cochrane	404	275	614	735	106	190	437	447
Dobie	1342	1336	552	353	1110	1251	1062	719
Dryden	1505	1499	715	516	1272	1414	1225	882
Ear Falls	283	121	223	944	199	96	211	662
Elk Lake	168	327	676	900	436	474	422	509
Elliot Lake	1370	1364	580	381	1137	1279	840	747
Emo	808	736	265	238	509	651	373	280
Geraldton	560	488	400	521	262	403	325	232
Hearst	214	372	583	808	426	520	329	416
Huron Shores	1235	1229	445	246	1003	1145	705	612
Ignace	369	232	662	784	72	147	402	495
Iroquois Falls	464	393	500	621	166	308	425	333
Kapuskasing	1478	1473	688	489	1246	1388	948	856
Kenora	307	145	730	885	140	39	470	652
Kirkland Lake	196	34	819	975	230	114	560	242
Latchford	128	287	766	990	396	434	512	599
Little Current	770	698	142	311	868	613	334	242
Longlac	727	790	170	395	527	706	197	104
Manitouwadge	719	782	82	306	518	697	188	96
Marathon	102	260	688	913	369	408	434	521
Massey	186	159	973	1168	423	307	719	806
Mattawa	1048	1042	258	41	816	957	518	425
Moosonee	220	58	797	952	207	92	537	630
Morley	895	889	105	527	663	804	365	272
Neebing	125	99	912	518	362	246	658	745
New Liskeard	1427	1421	637	437	1194	1336	896	804
Nipigon	1557	1551	767	568	1324	1466	1027	934
North Bay	315	474	482	706	446	621	227	315
Rainy River	804	867	14	210	604	782	274	181
Red Lake	1381	1375	591	392	1149	1290	851	758
Sault Ste. Marie	402	330	558	679	104	245	435	391
Schreiber	123	281	667	892	390	429	413	500
Sioux Lookout	58	125	844	1068	353	273	590	677
Smooth Rock Falls	86	96	873	1097	359	244	618	706
Spanish	0	162	791	1015	297	310	536	624
St. Charles	162	0	853	1008	263	148	593	686
Sturgeon Falls	790	853	0	224	590	768	260	167
Sudbury	1014	1008	224	0	782	924	484	391
Temagami	297	264	590	782	0	179	330	423
Terrace Bay	310	148	768	924	179	0	508	601
Thunder Bay	536	593	260	484	330	508	0	93
Timmins	623	686	167	391	423	601	93	0
Virginiatown	97	474	1279	651	403	520	246	147
Wawa	529	422	840	373	325	329	705	402
White River	622	509	747	280	233	416	613	495

13a

Total # of TICs: **18**

—| 20 km

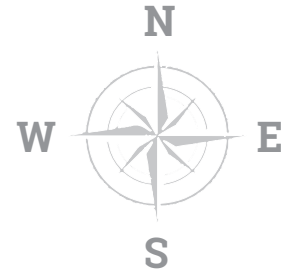


TICs and Visitor Services in 13a



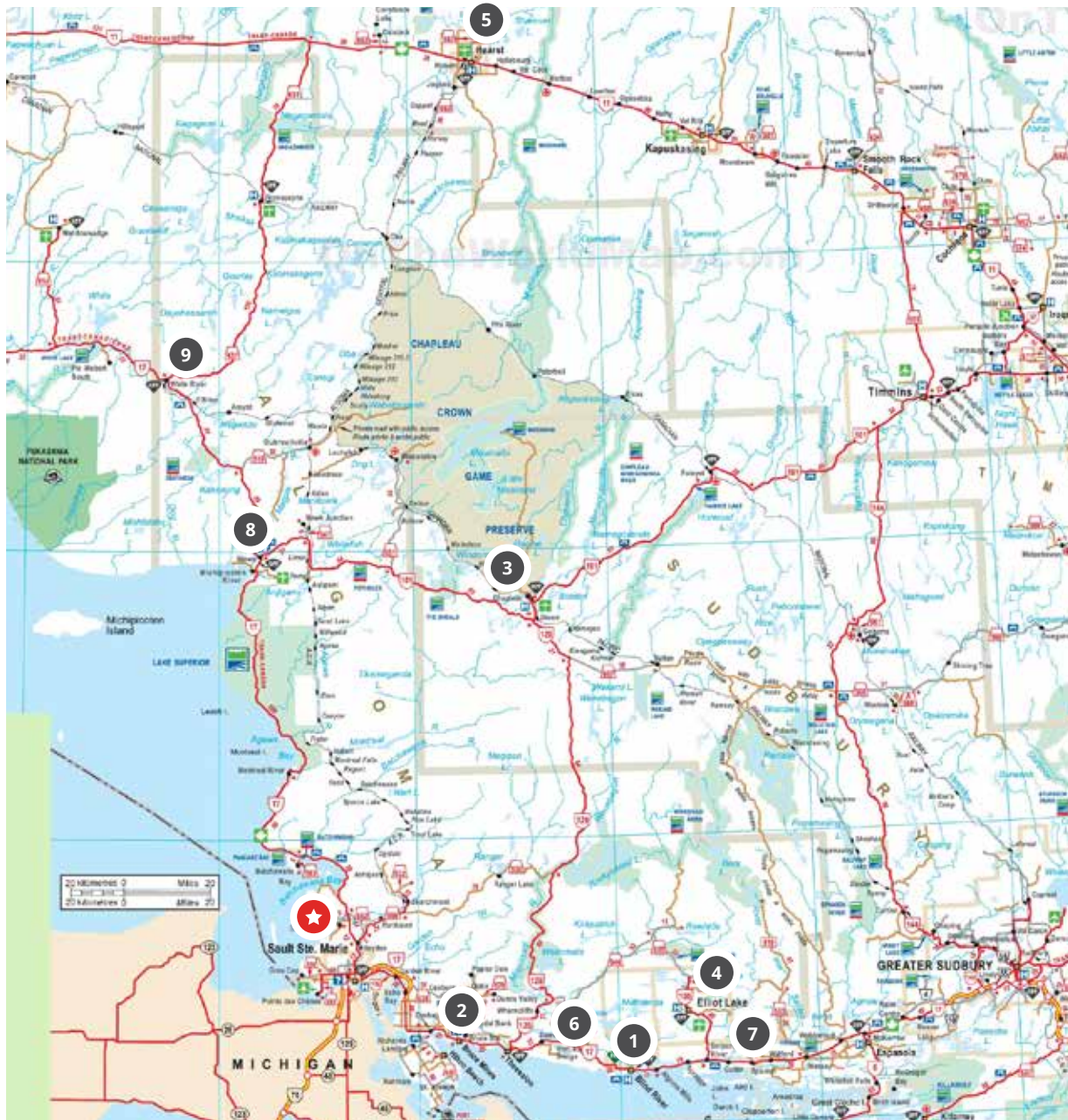
Location	TIC	Hours
1 Cochrane	Cochrane Travel Information Centre	Winter: Mon. to Fri. / 8:30 am – 5:00 pm Summer hours: Open additionally on Saturday from 10:00 am – 4:00 pm.
2 French River	French River Trading Post/ Information Centre	7 days a week, 9:00 am – 6:00 pm
3 Iroquois Falls	Iroquois Falls Travel Information Centre	Mon. to Fri. / 8:30 am – 4:30 pm
4 Kapuskasing	Kapuskasing Welcome Centre	TBA
5 Larder Lake	Larder Lake Tourist Centre	Operating season: July and August
6 Latchford	Town of Latchford	Mon. to Fri. / 8:30 am – 4:00 pm
7 Manitoulin Island	Manitoulin	May 15 to September 15 7 days a week, 9:00 am – 8:00 pm
8 Massey	Massey Museum	April - November
9 Town of Mattawa	Mattawa Information Centre and Service Ontario	7 days a week, 9:00 am – 4:00 pm Closed Christmas Day
10 McGarry	McGarry Tourist Centre	July & August
11 Moonbeam	Touristique de Moonbeam (Kiosque)	Mostly all year long from 8:30 am – 4:30 pm May to August: 8:00 am to 6:00 pm
12 Smooth Rock Falls	Smooth Rock Falls	July - August 7 days a week, 10:00 am – 7:00 pm
13 St. Charles	Municipality of St. Charles	TBA
14 James	Township of James	End of June until the end of August
15 Sturgeon Falls	West Nipissing Information Centre	Mon. to Fri. / 9:00 am – 4:00 pm
16 Temagami	Temagami Information Centre	Sept. to mid June: 4 hours on Thursday & Friday, End June to Sept.: 35 hours per week, 5 days per week.
17 Temiskaming	Temiskaming Shores & Area Tourism Information Centre	Mon. to Fri. / 9:00 am – 4:30 pm as Chamber and TIC; however, we are also an Ontario Northland Agency so our doors are open from 7:00 am - 7:00 pm for bus and BPX. During the summer months, depending on funding for students, we are open 7 days a week from 7:00 am - 7:00 pm.
18 Timmins	Timmins Convention Bureau and Visitor Welcome Centre	Operating year round Monday 9:00 AM 5:00 PM Tuesday 9:00 AM 5:00 PM Wednesday 9:00 AM 8:00 PM Thursday 9:00 AM 8:00 PM Friday 9:00 AM 5:00 PM Saturday 12:00 PM 4:00 PM Sunday 12:00 PM 4:00 PM

13b

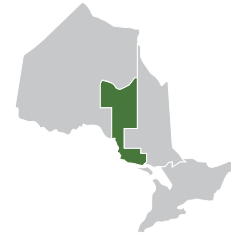


Total # of TICs: **9** Total # of OTICs: **1**

—| 20 km



TICs and Visitor Services in 13b



Location	TIC	Hours
1 Blind River	Blind River	Winter Hours: Mon. to Fri. / 8:00 am - 4:00 pm Summer Hours: } Mon. to Sat. / 8:00am - 5:30 pm
2 Bruce Mines	Bruce Mines & District Museum	June 1 to September 30 Mon. to Fri. / 10:00 am to 17:00
3 Chapleau	Chapleau Centennial Museum & Info Centre	May 1 to Oct 31
4 Elliott Lake	Elliott Lake Welcome Centre	TBA
5 Hearst	Gilles Gagnon Tourist Information Centre (Hearst)	January to May: Mon. to Fri. / 8:00 am to 4:30 pm, June to August: Mon. to Fri. 8:00 am to 5:30 pm / Saturday: 10:00 am to 4:00 pm September to December: Mon. to Fri. / 8:00 am to 4:30 pm
6 Iron Bridge	Iron Bridge Historical Museum	Mid June – Mid September: 7 days a week, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm daily Closed Tuesday and Wednesday in September
7 Spanish	Spanish Municipal Marina	Friday of the May long weekend until September 30th, 8 a.m. - 8 p.m.
8 Wawa	Wawa Tourist Information Centre	May Long week end - thanksgiving Weekend (may extend fall closure 3 weeks)
9 White River	White River Information Centre	TBA

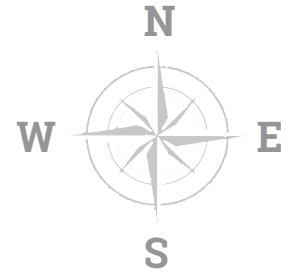
Location	OTIC	Hours
1 Sault Ste. Marie	Ontario Travel Information Centre	Year Round



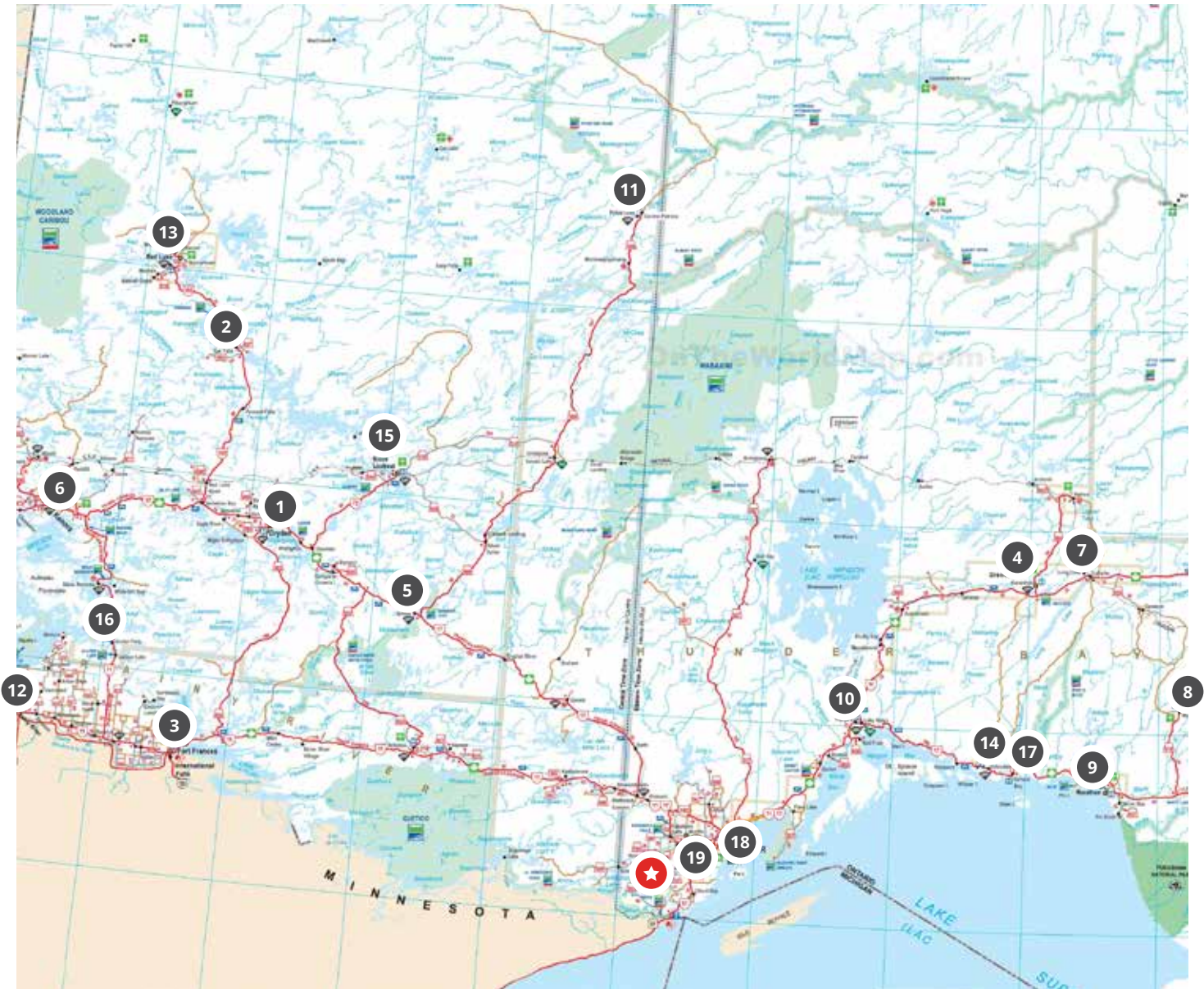
13c

Total # of TICs: **19**

Total # of OTICs: **1**



— 20 km



TICs and Visitor Services in 13c

The TICs in 13c are covered by Sunset Country or Superior Country. Currently the TICs manage their own funding, staffing and brochure inventory systems.



Location	TIC	Hours
1 Dryden	Dryden Visitor Information Centre	Monday to Friday with daily operations, extended hours and travel counsellors from May long-weekend through till Labour Day.
2 Ear Falls	Ear Falls Tourist Information Centre	April to September / Wed. evenings / 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. June to August / Mon. to Fri. / 8:30 am – 4:00 pm
3 Fort Frances	Fort Frances Tourist Information Centre	Open in the third week of May until late September
4 Geraldton	Geraldton Interpretive Centre	Mid May to September / Mon. to Sun / 9:00 am – 5:00 pm
5 Ignace	Ignace Visitor Centre	Winter: Sept. – June / 9:00 am – 4:30 pm Summer: July – Aug. / 8:00 am – 6:00 pm
6 Kenora	Lake of the Woods Discovery Centre	Summer (June - August) Sun. - Thurs. / 8:00 am to 7:00 pm Fri. – Sat. / 8:00 am – 8:00 pm Winter (September - May) 10:00 am – 4:00 pm
7 Longlac	Longlac Tourism Information Centre	May 14 to September 2: 7 days a week / 9:00 am – 5:00 pm
8 Manitouwadge	Manitouwadge Tourist Information Centre	July – August
9 Marathon	"Marathon C of C and Visitor Centre/ Gchi-Waaswaaganing "	May long weekend to end of September 7 days a week / 11:00 am – 6:00 pm
10 Nipigon	Nipigon Tourist Information Centre	Mon. to Fri. / 8:30 am – 4:30pm July & August: Sun. to Sat. / 8:30 am – 6:00 pm (Closed on stat holidays)
11 Pickle Lake	Pickle Lake Travel Information Centre	TBA
12 Rainy River	Rainy River District WI Museum	July - August: 10:00 am – 4:00 pm Will open for groups upon request
13 Red Lake	Red Lake Regional Heritage Centre	Winter Hours: Mon-Fri, 9:00 am – 5:00 pm Summer Hours: Mon-Fri, 9:00 – 5:00 / Sat. 10:00 am – 4:00 pm
14 Schreiber	North Shore Express Discovery Centre - Schreiber	Opening May 2019. Planned operating hours will be From May to August
15 Sioux Lookout	Sioux Lookout Travel Information Centre	January to May: Mon. to Fri. / 8:00 am – 5:00 pm June to September: Sun. to Sat. / 8:00 am – 6:00 pm, October to December: Mon. to Fri. / 8:00 am – 4:00- pm
16 Sioux Narrows	Sioux Narrows Travel Centre	May 20 to September 10 / 8:00 am – 5:00 pm
17 Terrace Bay	Terrace Bay Tourism Information Centre	May long weekend to September 30th: 9:00 am – 6:30 pm
18 Thunder Bay	Thunder Bay - Terry Fox Information Centre	Mid June to Labour Day: 7 days a week / 9:00 am – 7:00 pm September to Mid June: 7 days a week / 9:00 am – 5:00 pm (Closed on stat holidays)
19 Thunder Bay	Thunder Bay's Tourist "Pagoda"	Early June – Labour Day: Tues. to Sat. / 10:00 am – 6:00 pm

Location	OTIC	Hours
1 Pigeon River	Ontario Travel Information Centre	May 15 to May 31: 9:00 am to 5:00 pm/ June 1 to June 21: 8:30 am to 6:00 pm/ June 22 to August 25: 8:00 am to 8:00 pm/ August 26 to September 3: 8:30 am to 6:00 pm/ September 4 to October 8: 9:00 am to 5:00 pm

Current Situation – TICs Northern Ontario

The following information is based on the survey feedback. The detailed, individual, TIC responses are provided in the addendum section of this report. They will be a useful tool for the Executive Directors of the DMOs, in coordinating efforts and assessing individual needs. Half of the TICs in Northern Ontario provided input. It is recommended that the DMOs continue with the process and collect the data from all the TICs in their region. The input provides detail on all aspects of the individual TICs.

The centres range in size, visitation numbers, services and amenities, seasonality, ownership and management. The information below highlights the commonality and differences amongst the TICs.



Northern Ontario TICs – Ownership/Operating Structure

Owned and Operated (multiple choice).

Please describe the organization structure of your TIC.

Answer Choices	Responses	
Provincially-run	1	4.17%
Municipally-run	13	54.17%
Chamber of Commerce owned & operated	3	12.50%
Non-Profit Organization - run by Board of Directors	4	16.67%
Other - please describe <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipality owns the facility but a collaborative group operated it in 2016 • Owned by municipality operated by Non - Profit organization • Municipality owns building - Chamber of Commerce Operates 	3	12.50%
Total Respondents	24	



**Non-Profit
Organization –
run by board of
directors – 17%**

**Municipally
Run – 54%**

**NORTHERN
ONTARIO TIC
STRUCTURES**

**Provincially
Run – 4%**

**Chamber of
Commerce
owned &
operated
– 13%**

Other – 13%

Northern Ontario TIC – Visitation Trends

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Bruce Mines & District Museum	<i>250-300</i>	<i>250-300</i>	<i>250-300</i>	250	<i>250-300</i>
Mattawa Information Centre and Service ON	<i>2,700</i>	<i>2,700</i>	<i>2,700</i>	<i>2,700</i>	<i>2,700</i>
Blind River		3,366	3,718	2,403	3,992
"Marathon C of C and Vistor Centre/ Gchi-Waaswaaganing "	8000	7500	6800	closed	16000
Spanish Municipal Marina		412	752	1172	1250
Nipigon Tourist Information Centre	8,000	7,500	n/a	n/a	6,133
Lake of the Woods Discovery Centre	20,291	23,461	23,418	25,517	25,261
Massey Museum	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>
Town of Latchford	<i>1,500-2,000</i>	<i>1,500-2,000</i>	<i>1,500-2,000</i>	<i>1,500-2,000</i>	<i>1,500-2,000</i>
Temiskaming Shores & Area Tourism Information Centre	<i>2,000-2,500</i>	<i>2,000-2,500</i>	<i>2,000-2,500</i>	<i>2,000-2,500</i>	<i>2,000-2,500</i>
Sault Ste. Marie Ontario Travel Information Centre	106,381	112,146	114,367	118,057	122,484
Iron Bridge Historical Museum	<i>1,000</i>	<i>1,000</i>	<i>1,000</i>	<i>1,000</i>	<i>1,000</i>
Chapleau Museum and Tourist Info Centre	<i>1,200</i>	<i>1,200</i>	<i>1,200</i>	<i>1,200</i>	<i>1,200</i>
Temagami Information Centre (PROV)	<i>250-300</i>	<i>250-300</i>	<i>250-300</i>	250	<i>250-300</i>

Note – most estimate their traffic and don't keep actual stats – these are *italicized*.

Northern Ontario TIC – Visitation Trends

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Terry Fox Information Centre	2,700	2,700	2,700	2,700	2,700
Thunder Bay's Tourist "Pagoda"		3,366	3,718	2,403	3,992
Gilles Gagnon Tourist Information Centre (Hearst)	8000	7500	6800	closed	16000
Timmins Convention Bureau and Visitor Welcome Centre		412	752	1172	1250
Iroquois Falls Travel Information Centre	8,000	7,500	n/a	n/a	6,133
Longlac TIC and the Geraldton TIC.	20,291	23,461	23,418	25,517	25,261
Manitoulin - * under renovation in 2015	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Chapleau Centennial Museum & Info Centre	1,500-2,000	1,500-2,000	1,500-2,000	1,500-2,000	1,500-2,000
Ear Falls Tourist Information Centre	2,000-2,500	2,000-2,500	2,000-2,500	2,000-2,500	2,000-2,500
Pickle Lake Travel Information Centre	106,381	112,146	114,367	118,057	122,484
Touristique de Moonbeam (Kiosque)	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Wawa Tourist Information Centre	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200
Cochrane Travel Information Centre					2,000
Terrace Bay Tourism Information Centre	6,939	8,416	7,486	5,695	8,420
Ignace Visitor Centre	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500

Northern Ontario TIC– Services Used & Requested



Information Requested – Survey #1

The following is a recap, based on the survey results, of the most requested and used services at the TICs in the north. Travel counselling in its various forms, ranks highest.

What type of information is most often requested, at your TIC, by the Visitor?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Distances within Northern Ontario	10	30.30%
Asking for directions	19	57.58%
Recommendations for accommodations	15	45.45%
Recommendations for things to do	24	72.73%
Recommendations for places to eat	14	42.42%
Looking for services (i.e. gas station)	10	30.30%
Other, please specify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To take pictures with our flying saucer • Campgrounds nearby & permits • Weather • Local area • Maps are the biggest request we get • Provincial Road maps, local maps, trail maps, information on Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, Chapleau, Wawa and further west, Chi-Cheemaun schedule, and Manitoulin Island Info. • Discount coupons, reservation assistance, currency exchange services, fishing information • RV dump stations, hiking trails • Outdoor information (e.g. fishing, camping) 	19	57.58%
Total Respondents	33	
Skipped	2	



Services provided – Survey #2

Washrooms, free internet access, displays and picnic areas are the most common visitor services provided. Displays and interpretation ranked high amongst the TICs in the region. Some have products for sale ranging from vending machines to fishing licenses. Actual onsite booking for accommodation and attractions ranked low.

What services are provided by your TIC?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Free internet	21	61.76%
Washrooms	34	100.00%
Gift Shop	15	44.12%
Recycling drop-off	8	23.53%
Food & beverage services	0	0.00%
Rental spaces	10	29.41%
Displays and interpretation	29	85.29%
Fishing licenses	1	2.94%
Camping permits	2	5.68%
Accommodation reservation services	5	14.71%
Attraction/activity ticket sales	5	14.71%
Picnic area	21	61.76%
Currency exchange	0	0.00%
Other, please specify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity • RV dump station and portable water • Bank is closing in town • We are close to fast food and a museum, we are also an ONTC Bus Agency • Currency exchange closed at the end of November and we will have an RFP out soon to get another one in the building. We've applied to the MNR to take over selling fishing licenses/corwn land camping permits, we have a vending machine for beverages. • Vending machines @ Terry Fox only • Convention planning • Skate park, hiking trail 	9	26.47%
Total Respondents	34	



Employee Resources – Survey #3

The following reflects the employee resources provided by the individual TIC. Based on this 70% of new staff receive training. From a service delivery and consistency standpoint, training should be provided at all TICs, which is not the case. One standardized training manual and/or online training program, would help with a more consistent approach to service delivery and travel counselling skills.

Do you provide any of the following to your employees?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Job Description	30	93.75%
Orientation	28	87.50%
Employee Manual	15	46.88%
Training/professional development for new employees	24	75.00%
Training/professional development for returning employees	17	53.13%
Uniform	10	31.25%
Name Tag	11	34.38%
Other, please specify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPR • Our students are trained by AKTA. We also do our own training on local attractions and events, health and safety. • Yes, training is provided;-yes we could use standard training offered provincially. • T-shirts • WHMIS, Health & Safety • Radio for contact • Exit interview 	8	25.00%
Total Respondents	32	
Skipped	3	

DMO Support and Programs for Regional TICs – Current Situation



Information

Northeastern Ontario CANADA



13a – Northeastern Ontario Tourism (NeONT)

In 13a the TICs are supported with regional information and publications which are sent by NeONT to the TICs. There are 15 TICs that get regular information and contact from Northeastern Ontario. In addition to the TICs there are some Visitor Information Outlets, with high traffic, that are also serviced by NeONT.

- Chief Commanda II - (Visitor Information Outlet)
- Cochrane Welcome Centre
- French River Provincial Park & Visitor Centre
- French River Trading Post/ Information Centre
- Kapuskasing Welcome Centre
- Larder Lake Tourist Info Centre
- Manitoulin Tourism Association
- Massey Museum & Information Centre
- Mattawa Information Centre
- Moonbeam Info Centre
- Moosonee Town office
- North Bay Tourist Information -
- Smooth Rock Falls Heritage Centre (Museum) & Tourist Information
- Sudbury Tourism
- Temagami Travel Information Centre
- Temiskaming Shores & Area Chamber of Commerce
- Thornloe Cheese - (Visitor Information Outlet)
- Timmins Info Centre
- Town of Spanish
- Township of Chapleau
- West Nipissing Information Centre

The following are additional TICs that indicated they operate a seasonal TIC. These were uncovered through the research:

- 1)** Township of James **2)** Township of McGarry **3)** Municipality of St. Charles

Training – Training is delivered by the individual TICs. NeONT is not involved in training delivery, at this time.

FAM Trips for TIC staff – TIC staff fams are not currently coordinated by the DMO. The DMO is involved in trade and media fams.

Funding – Each TIC applies for their own student/staff grants. NeONT is not involved in this process, at this time.

Human Resources – TICs hire, pay and cover their own staff – NeONT is currently not involved in this process.

Collateral/Brochure Support –The TICs receive supplies of NeONT publications. Any additional publications and resources, required by the TIC, are ordered directly by the TIC



Algoma

That real.

13b – Algoma Country

Algoma country is actively involved with the TICs in the region and provides a number of resources and support. Out of the three DMOs in the North, Algoma Country currently offers the most support and is involved in many aspects of the TIC operations. The TICs are not members of Algoma Country though the municipalities that run the TICs do hold a membership with Algoma Country.

Training – Annual training is coordinated and delivered by Algoma Country. The training covers all aspects of the travel counsellor’s role. This ranges from customer service excellence, handling difficult situations, researching information and providing travel recommendations and advice. The TICs pay a nominal amount to have their staff participate in the training.

The TIC might have additional staff that are not Algoma staff. Those staff

members can also participate for a small fee. Transportation is coordinated amongst the region to reduce costs and increase attendance.

The two-day training session takes place in Sault Ste. Marie and all aspects of the training experience and related travel costs are included. The participants receive a full training manual to take with them. Portions of Algoma’s training are mirrored after the OTIC, though the majority has been designed by and for Algoma Country TICs.



Familiarization (FAM) Trips – Part of annual training includes visiting key sites in Sault Ste. Marie. The participants are also educated on other parts of the region. Canada Customs is part of the FAM tour of the city.

Funding – Algoma country applies directly for the funding for TIC staff for each TIC in the region.

Human Resources

- Staffing – Algoma applies for funding and works with the TIC during the hiring process. Staff are hired by the individual TICs in the region, and the staff member then becomes an Algoma Country employee.
- Payroll – Algoma Country handles all the payroll aspects for staff members that were hired under the funding grants applied for by Algoma. Some TICs may have additional staff that they pay for directly.
- Insurance – WSIB – is covered under Algoma Country for staff paid by Algoma.

Collateral/Brochure Support – Algoma coordinates the literature for the TICs in the region. TICs advise Algoma Country of the literature needed and a bulk order is placed by Algoma Country. During the regional training session, the boxes of materials are given to the TIC staff to take back to their TIC. Algoma Country replenishes stock as requested.

Algoma also sends out information from the TIC and operators for other provincial TICs. The TIC and operators in the region provide Algoma with bundled packets of brochures and information with instructions on which TIC the information is to be sent to.

This service is available to all 13b members.

TIC Information Listing on algomacountry.com website – The TICs are all listed under the Travel Information section of the algomacountry.com website under the Local Info and Services tab. Address information and seasonality is provided.

13c – Sunset Country & Superior Country

The TICs in the region manage their own operational aspects, training, staffing and information collection and distribution.

Training – Training is delivered by the individual TICs. 13c is not involved in training delivery at this time.

FAM Trips for TIC staff – TIC staff fams are currently not arranged or coordinated by the DMO.

Funding – Sunset Country coordinated the Summer Experience Program (SEP) funding in 2018 and Superior Country is looking at taking on this project in 2019.

Human Resources – TICs handle all aspects of recruiting, onboarding and payroll for their staff.

Collateral/Brochure Support – There is no organized and coordinated brochure ordering and distribution system. The TICs receive regional publications for the DMOs.

Superior Country Website – The Superior Country website does list the communities in the region on the website. This would be the ideal section to include TIC information for each of the communities in the region,

that offers this visitor service. Currently there is no TIC information on the site.

The interactive map on the site does list the communities in the region, though does not list the specific TICs.

Sunset Country Website – At the bottom of the Communities page on the Sunset Country website, there is a link to a Travel Information Centres page. The page lists the TICs on the left. The link is to the municipal website. Very few of the municipal websites provide information on their TIC. Most do not mention the TIC at all, though they do highlight tourism assets and experiences for the town or region.

There is an interactive map on the Sunset Country website, which does allow the visitor to plot the town on the map.

Additional information on the TIC, including exact location, season and hours of operation would be helpful for the visitor.





Provincial Travel & TIC Stats and Trends



There are currently 11 OTICs operating in Ontario:

Year-round OTICs:

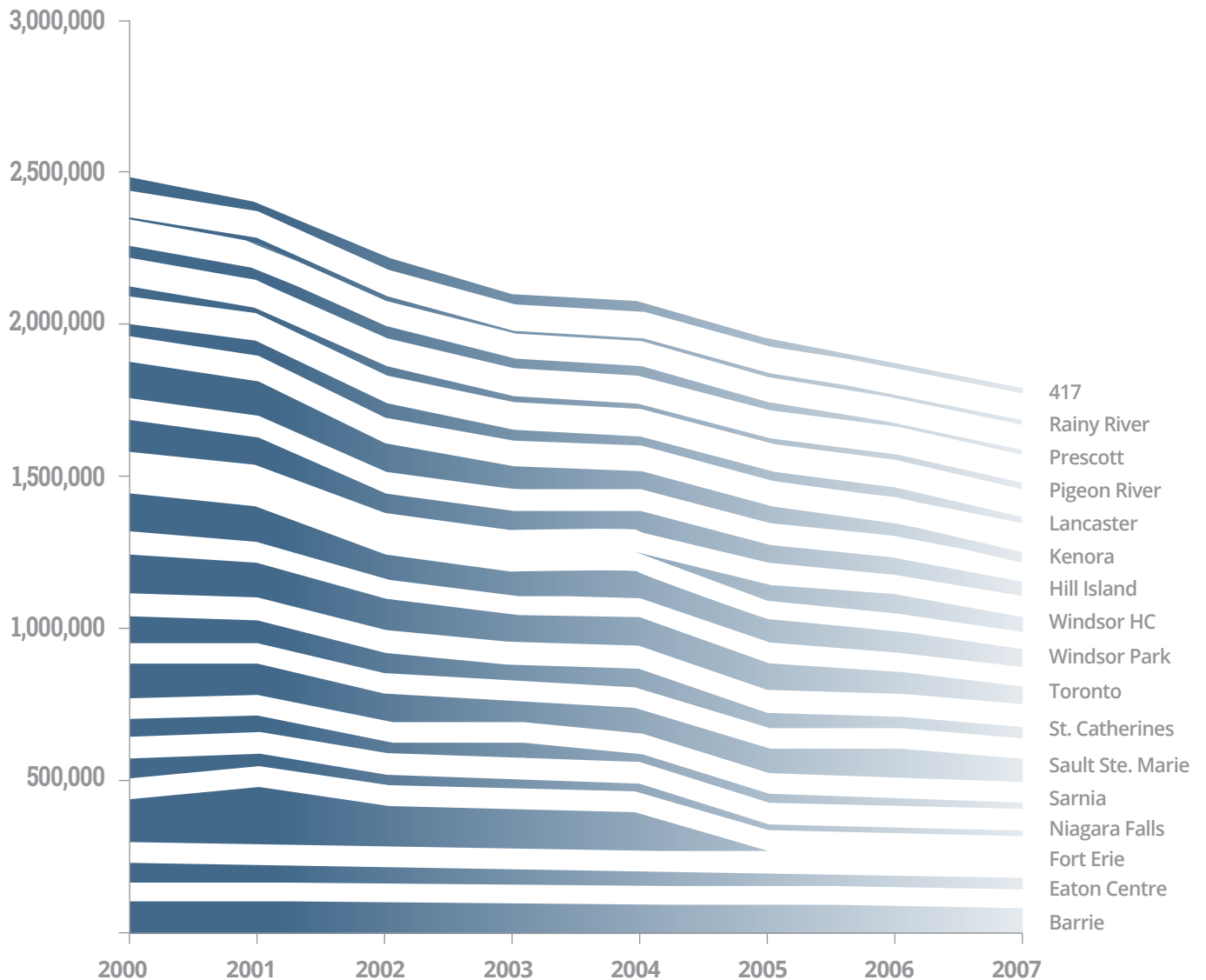
Bainsville Barrie, Niagara Falls, St. Catharines, Sarnia, Sault Ste. Marie, Tilbury, Toronto-Union Station, Windsor Park

Seasonal OTICs (Mid-May - October) - Hawkesbury, Pigeon River

OTIC Statistics:

The following stats from 2000 - 2007 show a steep decline in OTIC usage, though still relatively high visitations.

Ontario Travel Information Centre Annual Visitation, 2000-2007



Source: OTMPC



The following statistics show the OTIC visitor numbers, 1-800-Ontario calls and OntarioTravel.Net

Factors impacting the stats:

- In 2012, the province closed 7 OTICs in the province.
- The following shows a decline from 2007 until 2012. After 2012 there is a rise in visitations. Please note – there is a disclaimer in the data that states - that after 2011, historical numbers are not directly comparable due to a change in systems and analytics.
- Ontariotravel.net data after 2011 is not directly comparable to historical data due to system and analytic changes

The OTIC numbers hit their lowest in 2012. This is the year seven OTICs closed. Since 2012 numbers have been on the rise. 2016 saw figures close to 2015. The stats for 2013–2014 are for 11 OTICs not 18.

Community Inquiry Statistics			
Year	OTICs	1-800-Ontario	OntarioTravel.Net
1999		629649	936780
2000	484753	445816	772072
2001	2102458	479168	830396
2002	1684162	398140	1320294
2003	1562301	317016	1431248
2004	1544905	296293	2326900
2005	1563551	263870	2137691
2006	1419816	191088	2469369
2007	1257599	183226	2681691
2008	1016462	147041	2989256
2009	991812	123278	3261357
2010	995193	184250	4411499
2011	927887	114817	3276990
2012	839394	84736	1842203
2013	903397	73149	1782554
2014	951288	67078	1431701
2015	1025925	67015	2928000
2016	1023237	63320	3017000
Grand Total	20294140	4128950	39847001

Source: Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation - <http://www.mtc-currentperformance.com/CallsTICs.aspx>

The following shows the number of visits, by specific OTIC and indicated the year over year increase or decline in visitor numbers. Most show steady growth.

Year-round				
	2013	2014	Year over Year	% Difference
Bainsville	151,130	176,297	25,167	17%
Barrie	92,557	92,907	350	0%
Niagara Falls	142,878	174,023	31,145	22%
Sarnia	90,967	77,348	-13,619	-15%
Sault Ste Marie	112,146	114,367	2,221	2%
St. Catherines	76,067	77,822	1,755	2%
Tilbury	69,224	73,402	4,178	6%
Toronto	86,915	74,652	-12,263	-14%
Windsor	41,046	40,218	-828	-2%
Seasonal				
Pigeon River	28,556	23,684	-4,872	-17%
Hawkesbury	31,911	26,568	-5,343	-17%

Year-round						
	2015	Year over Year	% increase/ decrease	2016	Year over Year	% increase/ decrease
Bainsville	188,750	12,453	7%	154,942	-33,808	-18%
Barrie	88,703	-4,204	-5%	85,500	-3,203	-4%
Niagara Falls	188,399	14,376	8%	197,467	9,068	5%
Sarnia	78,147	799	1%	82,715	4,568	6%
Sault Ste Marie	118,059	3,692	3%	122,484	4,425	4%
St. Catherines	76,003	-1,819	-2%	77,197	1,194	2%
Tilbury	81,132	7,730	11%	84,609	3,477	4%
Toronto	76,026	1,374	2%	117,102	41,076	54%
Windsor	41,145	927	2%	45,733	4,588	11%
Seasonal						
Pigeon River	26,005	2,321	10%	26,748	743	3%
Hawkesbury	63,556	36,988	139%	65,173	1,617	3%

Research Globally, Nationally & Provincially

Overview

Ontario – Provincial Input

There are currently 11 Ontario Travel Information Centres in the province of Ontario, nine of which operate year-round and two on a seasonal basis. There are two OTICs in Northern Ontario – one year-round TIC in Sault Ste. Marie and one seasonal TIC in Pigeon River.

In 2012, there were 18 centres and based on declining numbers 7 of the centres closed. Three of the 7 closures were in Northern Ontario which included Fort Frances, Rainy River and Kenora. The Wayfinding Study cited one of the action steps as working with Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corp (OTMPC) to have visitor centres that have been closed, re-opened. According to the Ministry of Tourism's website, OTMPC cited that it was realigning its tourism services by focusing on online travel marketing activities to meet consumers' travel research preferences, through major redevelopment of its tourism information website, call centre, and brochure distribution service.



Kiosks in the ONRoute centres also host information on all regions and tourism operations in the province.

An OTIC conference is held each year in the province. This year the conference will take place in Northern Ontario for the first time. The event will take place in Sault Ste. Marie from October 16th until October 18th. This conference provided an excellent opportunity for education and networking. DNO is offering a subsidy to encourage northern TIC staff to attend.



Discover ON Mobile App

The Discover ON Mobile App lists the OTICs in the province along with all the RTICs. This is a free resource for the provincial tourism operators. This tool needs to align with regional information, TIC information and operator listings.

Training – There is a 3–5-day training program for the OTICs each year which focusses on customer service and travel counselling. In addition, staff receive 3–4 weeks of in-house training and participate in numerous FAMS. The staff are primarily college and high school students. All staff have a performance learning plan which is reviewed regularly.

The training materials are available to any RTIC to use for their own in-house training. In discussions with Algoma Country, they use some of this content and the remainder is customized content for the Algoma TICs.

Outreach & Mobile – The OTICs participate in events throughout the year, promoting the regions. Some OTICs are strategically positioned to maximize visitor engagement opportunities. This is the case of the OTIC located in a currency exchange operation, right at the border crossing, in Southern Ontario. In Niagara Falls OTIC staff engage visitors on the Falls promenade. They are identifiable based on a consistent look, all wearing the same clothing. They engage the visitors while on foot by providing tourist info with the help of an iPad, maps and other resources available.

ROI – Some OTICs take a very proactive approach to booking and conversion. In Niagara Falls for example, they have a direct link to inventory for a chain of hotels in the area. They make the booking for the visitor and are then paid a commission. The revenues are all tracked as they are commission based. The revenues are put back into the OTIC to cover operating costs.



Newfoundland & Labrador – Provincial Input



The province operates two TICs at each international airport year-round and six seasonal TICs on the highway. The counsellors have iPads to assist visitors with their trip counselling. The centres have screenscapes which displays NL images. In 2013, the province closed the TIC that was located in the Marine Atlantic Ferry Terminal in North Sydney, NS. Free WiFi is available at each TIC.

Social Media – Travel Counsellors respond to visitors’ trip counselling questions on Facebook and plot icebergs on the Icebergfinder.com website.

Training – All travel counsellors are Emerit Tourism Visitor Information Counsellor-certified and supervisors are Emerit Supervisor-certified. All employees receive World Host, Emergency First Aid and CPR, and Occupational Health and Safety training. Depending on budget, all employees will get together yearly for training and a fam tour. Training has varied in the past from customer service to sales training and presentations from tourism operators or regions. Each employee receives a Visitor Information Counsellor Manual.

Uniform – All provincial employees wear a uniform and name tag.

Literature Distribution – All tourism operators must be TAP (Tourism Assurance Program) approved and accommodations are licensed. The distribution centre will receive brochures only from operators that meet these criteria. There is an online ordering system that all provincial and regional centres can access to order literature for their centres.

Signage – NL uses the TODS highway signage and the (?) symbol for its Travel Information Centres.

Print and online – Only provincial Travel Information Centres are displayed online and in the Travel Guide and map.



Photo: Johnathan Nightingale

Newfoundland and Labrador – DMO/Regional/Community Information Services

Newfoundland and Labrador financially supports 9 Travel Information Centres throughout the province, this has decreased from 22 in recent years with budget cuts. There are no set criteria for funding but the centre must have a permanent staff person and regular operating hours during the season.

In the past, the province has provided a Travel Information Centre manual, SuperHost (now WorldHost), Emerit TTIC online training and/or workbook, webinars, onsite training with a Provincial Travel Information Centre counsellor and funding to do regional fam tours.

Regional centres can order literature online through the provincial literature distribution centre.

Nova Scotia – Provincial Input

Nova Scotia has 6 provincial Travel Information Centres. Three of the centres are year-round and three are seasonal. All centres have screenscapes, tourism operators can advertise on the screens and it's a revenue generator for the province. The Centre in Yarmouth is new and it has a touchscreen for visitors to use. The Centre also has 3x9 screens above the brochure racks that showcase experiences in NS. There are 9 screens in total in the centre. Other amenities that Nova Scotia offers its visitors are; iPads, docking stations, and bike racks.



Training – Employees participate in World Host, Emerit Tourism Visitor Information Counsellor training and certification, Emerit Supervisor Certification, First Aid, WHMIS, Occupational Health and Safety, and Respectful Workplace training. Each centre has a Visitor Services Manual that is updated regularly; it includes customer service and a checklist, etc. In the past, Tourism Nova Scotia would have a large meeting/training program that included a provincial fam tour. Regional Travel Information Centres were invited to attend this training with provincial staff. Now training is completed on-site by the supervisors. They will complete mini fams in their area. This year, training will be focused on selling experiences vs. booking accommodations/attractions. The supervisors will do this training on site with their employees.

Literature Distribution – Tourism operators in NS must be licensed. The distribution centre will only accept brochures from licensed operators. Provincial and regional centres can order and receive brochures from the centre. NS has a literature distribution policy.

Print and Online – Provincial and regional centres are listed online and in the TG and map.

Wayfinding – Nova Scotia uses the TODS signage and a (?) symbol for their TICS.

Nova Scotia – DMO/Regional/Community Information Services

The DMOs used to manage TICs in a region but the DMO model/network in NS has changed. Tourism Nova Scotia provides funding to two DMOs, the provincial tourism industry association and a regional tourism association to operate TICs in four regions of the province. The funding for the TICs can be used for operations or staffing, there is no set criteria for the use of the funds. There is money allocated out of the budget specifically for training. Mandatory training includes Emergency First Aid, World Host and Service Excellence. Sometimes regional centres request training; a one-off, and Tourism NS has provided it. Each of the organizations receives a 15% admin fee for administering the TIC program in the region. There is a formula document that is loosely used to determine funding. The funding formula is under review to accommodate innovative changes to visitor

services versus the purely traditional bricks and mortar TIC model.

Yarmouth, Nova Scotia has a provincial and regional centre that is a great example of how the two complement one another in providing visitor services to visitors. There is a provincial centre in the community so the regional organization provides mobile services. Provincial TICs have a closed Facebook group to share information.

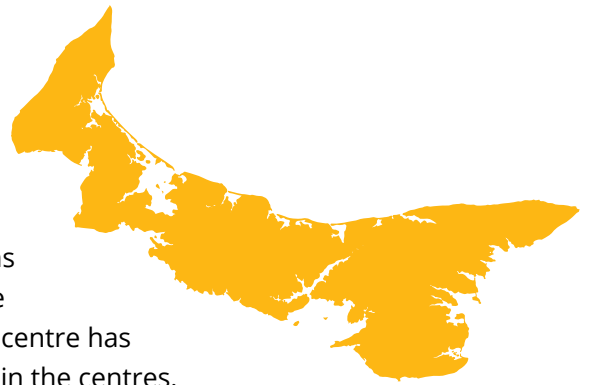
There is discussion to create a closed regional Facebook group for sharing of information.

There used to be a Quality Assurance program for community TICs with dedicated resources to audit/check the quality yearly. With recent budget cuts this program no longer exists.



Photo: Jvienneau at English Wikipedia

Prince Edward Island – Provincial Input



The Province has four Travel Information Centres plus one at the airport. The Airport has a self-serve kiosk. The buildings are all older and unique. They offer accommodations and reservations booking services through Book PEI. All of the centres have free Wi-Fi and iPads for use by the visitors. Each centre has Screenscapes and electronic signage over the brochure racks in the centres. Their provincial Contact Centre is operated by Travel Information Centre travel counsellors. Sometimes provincial travel counsellors will assist with social media.

Signage – Provincial TODS program and Travel Information Centres use the (?) symbol.

Literature Distribution – Literature is distributed to all centres through their online ordering system from their distribution centre.

Training – All managers of the centres are Emerit Tourism Visitor Information Counsellor-certified. Some of the casual employees are as well.

The “Ask An Islander” program is relatively new. TIC staff and local residents are trained through an Ambassador program to answer questions from visitors. It has been very successful winning many awards for the province.

Prince Edward Island DMO/Regional/Community Information Services

PEI has a partnership with four centres, called Destination Centres. The province provides financial support, quality assurance and training. The training is six days and includes a fam tour, World Host, and experience specialist training. Literature is ordered from the province.

There are also several Community Welcome Centres on PEI. The province provides \$500 at the end of the season if the Centre has maintained a minimum standard, a shirt for employees and one day of training. As an incentive to attend the training, the province will give each organization a \$50 bonus for every employee that attends. Literature is ordered from the province.

PEI also has a partnership with Northumberland Ferries to staff the ferries. They receive financial support and training from the province.

New Brunswick – Provincial Input



New Brunswick has 5 Provincial Centres located on the highway. They also have staff on the ferry that operates from New Brunswick to Nova Scotia. In addition to printed materials, counsellors use iPads and tablets as resources to counsel visitors. There are charging stations available for visitors to use. The centres have TV screens with images of NB running constantly. In 2016, one of the Centres had a selfie wall, it was very successful. In 2017, NB is going to have selfie walls in all of their centres.

Training – All Supervisors are Emerit Tourism Visitor Information Counsellor (TTIC)-certified. NB purchases four of the modules from the Emerit TTIC online training for all provincial employees to complete. They also developed a 30-minute video focused on using the Travel Guide and map for trip counselling. As well, all employees receive a half-day customer service seminar. Starting this year, PTIC employees will mentor and train Municipal TICs.

Outreach – NB would like to do more outreach in communities. In 2016, they experimented and some staff attended some events. In 2017, they are planning to send 1-2 travel counsellors to all festivals and events.

Wayfinding – All provincial centres are listed online, in the Provincial map and travel guide. They use the (?) for all their signage as well as in their printed and online material.

Distribution Centre – NB has a distribution centre where all provincial and municipal centres can order information for display.

ROI – Visitor Services doesn't have a formula that they use to measure ROI but 2 years ago, they started using number of visitors compared to the number of staff per centre to determine their staffing levels. With this new formula, they have decreased their student staffing. They only have one student per centre.

New Brunswick DMO/Regional/Community Information Services

New Brunswick does provide funding and training for Municipal Travel Information Centres. In 2016, some of the training provided to MTICs included training and mentoring at a PTIC. NB is going to expand this program in 2017. MTICs are only listed online if they fill out the form and submit it. There are no guidelines for literature displayed at MTICs

Quebec – Provincial Input

Québec has close to 200 tourist information points where visitors can find expert advice and get help with planning their stay: the Infotouriste centres, a network that extends across Québec; the bureaux d'information (information offices), generally regional in outlook; and bureaux d'accueil (welcome offices), whose focus is largely local. Some 40 Relais d'information (information stations) complete the offer with informative panels that are publicly available 24 hours a day.

The regional centres are owned and operated by the municipalities. The RTAs work very closely with the regional visitor centres. The RTA organizes and runs the annual training which runs from 3-5 days. The training focusses on customer service and travel counselling skills. A strong product knowledge component is included. In the larger regions, the training is split into two sessions. The location of the training moves around the region which helps enhance and expand product knowledge for new and returning staff. The regional centres pay a small amount for their staff to attend the training. The remainder is topped up by the province.



The TICs hire their own staff and rely heavily on summer students and grants.

There is a regional map provided to each of the regional TICs. In some cases, the municipality also produces their own, detailed map which is also distributed. Regional guides are a mix of print or digital format and posted on the provincial tourism website

The regional centres operate with desktop computers. There is some mobile outreach from the TICs and there is a desire to expand this service.

Accreditation – A regional Travel Information Centre works with the Regional Tourism Association (RTA) in the province in to apply for accreditation. The RTA coaches and supports the TIC and assists them in understanding and meeting the accreditation criteria. The accreditation is free of charge though the TIC needs to cover any of the costs associated with meeting the accreditation standards.

Signage – There are signage standards in place. The Ministry provides signage at no cost to the regional centre once it has been accredited.

Manitoba – Provincial Input

The province operates four centres, one in Winnipeg and three regional centres. There is a Visitors Services Network. Through this network, the province has engaged some partners in small rural towns. These TICs do not receive direct funding. They receive training and printed resources. There are about 6 TICs in the network and they are actively trying to engage others.



Social Media – This is handled by the province. The information centres do not have an account.

Literature Distribution – An online literature and brochure distribution systems exists. Tourism businesses need to be provincially approved in order to have their information available for distribution.

Signage – There are provincial signage standards.

Provincial TIC Services

- Information services
- Washrooms
- Coffee and seating area
- Free WiFi at some
- Picnic area at some

Human Resources – Many students are hired annually to staff the TICs. A volunteer program is in development. Employees are trained, but are not certified as Tourism Visitor Information Counsellors and Supervisors through Emerit. All provincial TIC staff are provided with uniforms and nametags.

ROI – Travel counsellors have iPads to assist with bookings. The counsellor does not finalize the booking, they hand over the iPad to visitor who completes the transaction. City passes are available through iPad and they track this. They do track visitor numbers and are currently implementing a digital guestbook. They do not have an exit survey.

Non-Provincial Centres – The regional centres work on their own. Travel Winnipeg works closely with the hotels and delivers information to the hotels for distribution. Travel Winnipeg engages in social media, and would answer visitor inquiries online. For large conferences they have a visitor outreach program.

Saskatchewan – Provincial Input

As of Fall 2016, Tourism Saskatchewan has closed all of their provincial Travel Information Centres. Originally, they had 5 centres, all located on the highway. Three of the centres were closed in 2015 and the remaining 2 were closed in the fall of 2016. Their Visitor Services Centre fields all inquiries via email, live chat and phone. They are responsible for updating all the industry operator information for their Provincial Website and Travel Guide.

They have a yearly contract with Parks to answer all of their calls. This is renewed annually.

Their social media team (not the Visitor Services team) takes care of all of their social media channels.

There is no relationship with other centres; no funding or other support. They will list Travel Information Centres online if the centre has regular operating hours.



Photo: Paul Hamilton

Alberta – Provincial Input



Alberta operates 10 provincial highway visitor centres. They are located at major entry points into the province. They also operate one TIC in West Glacier, Montana, USA. In addition, they have a static kiosk at the Edmonton Airport and are looking at models for Calgary. In 2016 they added a Mandarin/Cantonese kiosk based on a new inbound flight. There is also a self-service kiosk in Canmore.

The department that oversees the provincial TICs also responds to visitor inquiries made by email or 1-800 Alberta calls, but do not engage on FB, Twitter and Instagram. Calls to the 1-800 Alberta number have dropped drastically and as a result the numbers of staff have been reduced. The trend for the call centre is last minute trip planning or very extensive trips. The number of emails is steadily increasing. They used to have a live chat, however, they found this too costly based on usage.

Digital screens can be found at each Provincial TIC.

Mobile Visitor Services – These services are subcontracted to the Chamber of Commerce, DMOs and other tourism groups. Training is provided. There is money in the budget for mobile outreach, and they ask their partners to provide at least two outreach initiatives throughout the year, which can include campgrounds and events. This program is working well. They plan to invest in bikes for Canmore for visitor outreach.

Brochure Distribution – There is a distribution centre for provincial publications which includes a trip planner, campground and accommodation guides, parks guide and several others. Publications are under review and several will only be available online.

Brochure Display in Information Centres – A tourism operator needs to be Alberta-based in order to have their information displayed in a Provincial Travel Information Centre. Operators send their brochures to the various provincial information centres. There is no online ordering system for literature.

Visitor centres are listed on the Travel Alberta website and in the travel guide.

Branding – Provincial TICs are branded by the Travel Alberta brand which includes design, layout and the identifiable blue and white coloring. Buildings are a mix of owned and leased. The “90s centers” were designed to be interpretive centres i.e. - West Glacier – dinosaur focus.

Signage –The provincial centres use the question mark and have the Travel Alberta branding.

Services & Amenities offered at the TICs

- Information services
- Dump stations (varies)
- Washrooms
- Dog runs
- WiFi
- Picnic areas
- Vending machines (no restaurants)
- Gift store/retail

Other services/amenities under consideration

- The Canmore visitor centre offers a Legacy Trail – this is a trail that runs between Canmore and Banff – the trail head is located in the TIC parking lot.
- Canmore has an open event area which is used as a public marketplace.

Onsite Booking – Centres provide reservation services but do not take a commission. They are currently looking at iPad set up versus the current desktop approach.

Human Resources – A 4-day training program takes place each year. The first two days focus on customer service and travel counselling skills, and the focus for the remaining two days is on product knowledge. They do not use the Tourism Visitor Information Counsellors and Supervisors training, available through Emerit. They are currently looking at online training. The training reinforces the approach of staff getting out from behind the counter while engaging with visitors.

All staff at the provincial sites are provided with name tags and uniforms. They do not have a program for non-provincial centres.

They hire mainly students though are focusing on more of a mix of retirees and students.

ROI – Each centre collects the origin of the visitor, the destination and party size. They submit this information weekly along with a booking report.

Non-Provincial Centres – The province does have an accreditation program for non-provincial Travel Information Centres. There is certain criteria that the TICs need to meet which includes accessibility, hours, training and carrying of provincial information.

In the fall of each year there is an Accredited Visitor Information Program (AVIP) Conference where all the managers and supervisors are brought together. This is partially funded by the province and includes an awards ceremony. Different communities bid on the conference.

The AVIPs and other centres are not funded by the province.

British Columbia – Provincial Input



There are 4 Provincial TICs and 110 Regional Travel Information Centres in the province. There is a close relationship between the province and these TICs.

Signage – The regional TICs pay for fabrication and installation of their signage and work with ministry of transport.

Wayfinding – Each centre pays for their own and uses the Destination British Columbia trademark. The province approves the wayfinding signage.

Human Resources – There is a customized training program for the TICs designed by the province. The province supports this financially.

Up until December of 2016 the province had been providing uniforms and name tags. This program has now ended and each TIC establishes their own dress code.

There is a racking program for the four provincially-owned centres. Regional centres use GoBrochures.com – all the communities can list on that site.

There is no official accreditation program in place.

ROI – There is no formal ROI measurement practice in place though visitor numbers are tracked. Each TIC reports their statistics online.

Additional Information

- All TICs get a free listing on HelloBC.com
- They used to have secret shopper but have dropped that because it was too expensive.
- They have an E-library and resource centre that the network can share.
- Outreach – there is a big movement towards this – many counsellors are out on foot or on bikes and engaging visitors within the destination. Travel counsellors are also engaging visitors online in the trip planning stage.
- Each centre has to apply to be part of the network on an annual basis – the application goes out in December and is due on February 14, 2017.
- There are 15 travel information booths. These information booths do not receive funding or trademarks, but they do receive a free listing and generic visitor signage off the highway.

Travel Information Centres Globally

A global scan of Visitor Services revealed that Visitor Services are still very important to today's travelers. The visitor requires knowledgeable travel counsellors to assist them in their journey while on the ground. The tracked benefit to the region, province, and country is that visitors stay longer and spend more money in the destination.

A review of both Australia and Scotland revealed that the country/state have their own Travel Information Centres but also have accreditation programs for regional/community Travel Information Centres. Similar to Ontario, the centres that are owned by the tourism department are branded, recognizable by the visitor, and focus on providing exceptional service by knowledgeable employees. Location, hours of operation and services provided are all listed on the tourism websites and print materials nationally. The process to become accredited varies from a self-checklist to an application process that includes a desk and site audit. The most important criteria for all centres are; clean and welcoming, up to date information/brochures, and local experts. The accredited TICS are recognized with branded on-site signage, tourism websites and print tourism publications.



A best practices model for Travel Information Centres was outlined in the Northern Rivers Regional Visitor Services Strategy, 2012 and by Roger Brooks in his article Travel Information Centres and Services in the Digital Age, 2014. They both focus on signage, brochures/information, well trained employees, 24/7 information, and taking information to the visitor instead of relying on the visitor to come to a centre.

Destination Think published an article on February 2017, "Are DMO visitor centres making a Blockbuster mistake?" The article talked about what happened to Blockbuster Video when Netflix started. It emphasizes that TICS are still relevant but must adapt to the technology and the needs of the visitor.

In today's fast-paced technology-driven environment, Travel Information Centres must determine their value/need to the visitor. Visitors will only stop at a centre if they really need the service. Knowledgeable, friendly staff are still valued by the visitor but only if it is convenient for the visitor. In Roger Brooks' article, he presents a formula that organizations can use to determine the Value of the TIC. If overhead and HR are costing more than \$2.50 per visitor, the organization should reassess how best to offer visitor services. This may include some of the

examples listed below from the Destination Think article. Roger Brooks also cited several examples in the U.S. and Canada that are adapting their services to meet the needs of today's traveler.

Many destinations are not waiting for the visitor to come to them; they are going to the visitor or offering other services/experiences that the visitor will enjoy. This brings visitors through the door, and then knowledgeable staff is able to upsell local tourism businesses/experiences.

**Colorado, USA –
Loveland Visitors Centre**

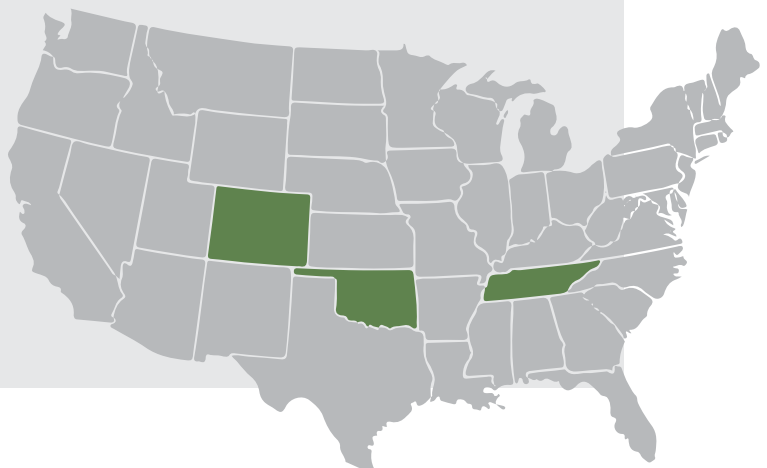
The Travel Information Centre is located inside a bookstore that offers free coffee, free Wi-Fi and a lounge atmosphere. Relevant tourism brochures and publications are displayed and knowledgeable, trained staff are available for trip counselling and recommendations.

**Tulsa, Oklahoma – Tulsa Mobile
Visitors Centre (MVC)**

The Tulsa Convention and Visitor Bureau decided to take their visitor services to visitors. A MVC van attends all the major festivals and events in the area offering visitors tourism brochures, maps, charging station and knowledgeable staff to help visitors while in the destination. In addition to this, visitors can take a selfie with the MVC and post to Tulsa's social media channels for an opportunity to be featured in their publications or on their platforms.

Nashville, Tennessee

The Nashville Convention and Visitor's Corporation has focused their visitor centre on the experience/brand of Nashville – Music City. The branding/layout of the centre and everything inside; brochures, tickets, souvenirs, friendly staff and live music are all about experiencing the music of Nashville. There is a stage within the centre where live musicians perform daily. When there isn't a performance, the stage area is a photo opportunity for visitors to take selfies.



Strategy for TICs in Northern Ontario



TIC Primary Mandate:

To increase dollars spent by visitors
in that specific town or location

Many of the proposed strategies build upon the recommendations in the 2014 Wayfinding Strategy. The report provides recommendations for the Northern Ontario TICs in several different categories.

The information that surfaced from the research showed a clear need for consistency in several areas, and a need for enhanced communication amongst the TICs in Northern Ontario. As most of the TICs are funded municipally or by a Chamber of Commerce or a combination of the two, the primary mandate of the TIC is to increase dollars spent by visitors in that specific town or location. In some cases, based on discussions with the TICs, there is pressure on the local TIC to promote only their specific location.

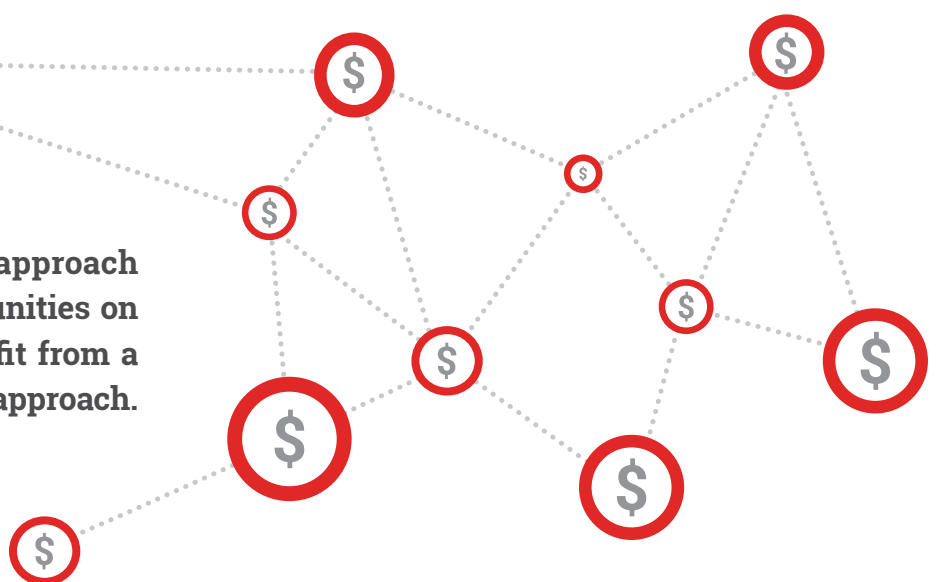
The level of commitment and desire from the Northern TIC managers to have face-to-face visitor services, is very high. The primary purpose of a TIC, with the exception of the OTICs who have a defined regional and provincial focus, is to drive visitors to the local community. The challenge for

many is convincing the local municipality or chamber that there is a significant return on their investment. Based on the interviews and research, one of the challenges is that there is limited tracking of visitations and no direct measurement of economic impact on the region. This makes it difficult for many TICs to prove the economic benefits of running the TIC.

The needs of the visitors sometime differ from the mandate of the local TIC, as the visitor is seeking broader regional information or strictly wanting to access services such as washrooms, WiFi and picnic areas. Once the visitor is in the centre, for whatever reason, the opportunity to engage the visitor is of course high.

Through a more collaborative approach and training, the various communities on the visitor's path could all benefit from a cross-selling/cross promotional approach. Some communities do work together, however, the overall knowledge of other TICs in the North appears limited. In addition to cross-selling there may be an opportunity to share other resources.

Through a more collaborative approach and training, the various communities on the visitor's path could all benefit from a cross-selling/cross promotional approach.



Recommendation – TIC Profile & Database

The TIC database provided along with this report, reflects the current list of TICs operating in Northern Ontario. The list includes the two OTICs, Full-time TICs, Seasonal TICs and Dual Function TICs. The database was built from existing lists that had been provided by DNO and the DMOs. The list was a starting point for developing the final database of 47 Northern Ontario TICs. Some of the TICs could not be reached due to seasonal closures. As an action step, those that had not responded to the survey should be contacted so the database is fully accurate. The database information was collected through an online survey and by contacting the municipal offices in the town. In several instances, the database provides new TIC contact information.

Half of the TICs, in the database, responded

to the survey. Most who responded also provided additional information in a telephone interview. The survey response provides a detailed view of the various aspects of running the centre. It is recommended that the DMOs continue to pursue the data collection from TICs in their regions that had not responded. As the TICs ramp up for the season, it may be easier to reach those that had not responded.

The survey response is a detailed profile of the specific TIC. Information on operating hours, contacts, training, staffing, funding, services and amenities offered along with additional other information has been captured. This information will assist the DMOs in understanding the needs of the TIC and offering the support required.

Action Steps Recap

- 01** DMOs to contact the TICs that did not respond for contact and profile info
- 02** Continue to update the database on an annual basis
- 03** Create a detailed TIC profile sheet, from the survey responses, for each TIC in the region using the survey information



Recommendation – Visitor Feedback

As DNO is looking at a more coordinated effort in aligning services and TIC offerings, it is critical to get direct feedback from the visitor. A standardized visitor exit survey/questionnaire for the entire region needs to be created. There are existing surveys in the regions that could guide the process.

The survey should be concise and capture key information being sought by DNO and the DMOs.

The individual TICS might want additional information specific to their region or destination that they wish to capture.

Past guest databases can also assist in providing relevant feedback. The DMOs could invite their database of past visitors to provide their input in the visitor survey.



Recommendation – Northern Ontario TIC Network

A more cohesive and collaborative approach, amongst the TICs in the North, would impact the movement and travel behaviour of the visitors, throughout the region. It would also ensure a higher level of consistency in service delivery and visitor expectations as they travel throughout the North. This report provides several approaches to foster a stronger relationship between the TICs and encourage a higher level of cross promotion.

Through our discussions, most of the TIC managers or municipal staff overseeing the TIC, were aware of the other TICs within a 100-km range. Beyond the 100-km radius the knowledge of the other TICs and the destinations, with the exception of the cities in the region, was limited.

The relationship with the OTIC in Sault Ste. Marie is good and there is a sharing of print materials and knowledge.

TIC Committee

There is an abundance of experience and knowledge within the collective group of Northern Ontario TIC managers. There is commonality in the overall operational aspects of running a TIC, service delivery, staffing, information distribution and visitor attraction. The TICs are all faced with showing a ROI to their funder.

Some of the TICs are looking at innovative ways to add value for the visitor, thereby driving visitations and subsequent economic impact. The TICs vary in relation to their approach to training, cost savings, staffing, funding approaches and revenue generation.

A volunteer committee made up of two or three members from each region (based on the number of TICs in the region), could provide a forum for sharing ideas and providing input into initiatives, to enhance the overall TIC experience in Northern Ontario. The committee members would each have a number of TICs in their region that they would represent and liaise with for input and information sharing.

The committee could meet, at a scheduled time, ideally in-person if feasible, or via web meeting.

Annual TIC Manager Meeting

An opportunity for the various TIC managers across the region to get together on an annual basis would have many advantages. The annual meeting would ideally move around the region, thereby doubling as a familiarization tour (FAM). The group would share best practices, look at overcoming collective challenges and look at ways to improve visits and visitor satisfaction. The meeting could be a combination of learning and sharing. Ideally the group could meet at the start of the season, during one of the regional training programs.

Mini – Tradeshow

If this annual meeting coincided with a regional TIC staff training, there would be an ideal opportunity to share information about the entire region. A mini-tradeshow format would work well for this forum.

Recommendation – TIC Online Hub

For a travel counsellor, knowledge and access to information are critical in effectively servicing the visitors to the North. Online information on other destinations in the North is difficult to find as the websites all vary in content, design and ease of use. A centralized online resource of information for the travel counsellors would increase their ability to provide fast and accurate information.

The TIC Online Hub could also become a valuable resource for TIC Managers. A toolkit of information could be created and a forum for interaction with other TIC managers in the North.

Information, TIC staff resources

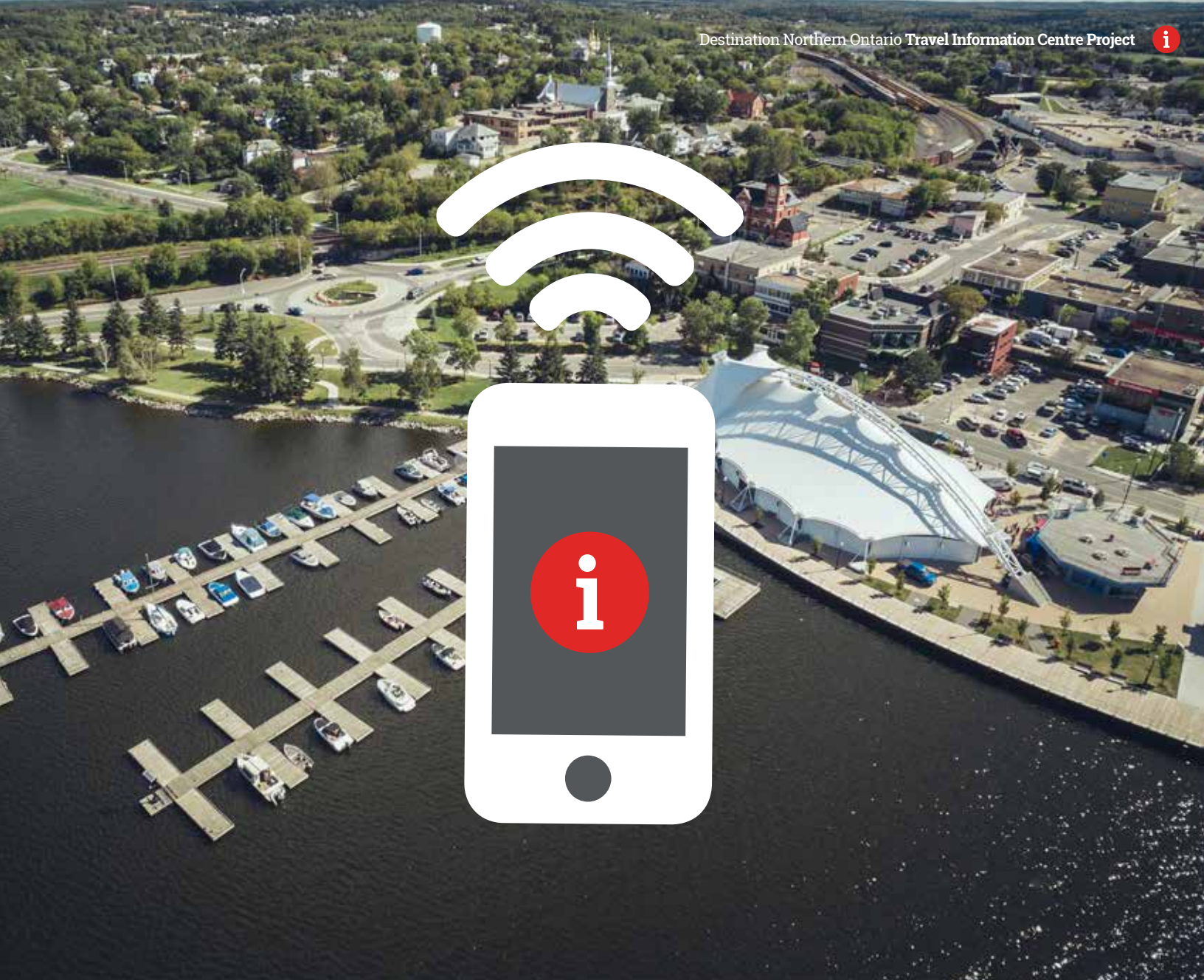
A web portal, ideally hosted on the DNO site, could be an online TIC resource for the TIC staff in the North. On the site, they would find easy to access, consistent information for each TIC in all the North. This information should be concise and provide details including location, season of operation, hours of operation and services and amenities available. A consistent table or grid format would guide the data collection and data presentation.

Any special features of the TIC should also be highlighted – i.e. local art gallery, unique displays, etc. A brief description of key attractions, highlights and community services/offerings should also be listed.

Staff could make recommendations on what categories of specific information would be beneficial to the visitors and the fact sheets could then be updated regularly or at least annually.

Resources for TIC Manager

The web portal could have a separate section for TIC Management resources. This could cover funding options, training documentation, Human Resources tools including job descriptions and performance evaluation documentation. Other tools could include information on running a successful volunteer program. Ideally this becomes a shared resource where TIC managers could upload and download information.



Action Steps Recap

- 01** Create a TIC committee with representation from each region.
- 02** AGM for TICs tied in with a fam component and mini-tradeshow format for information sharing
- 03** TIC Web Hub – Create an online portal for the TICs in the North.



Recommendation – Northern Ontario Map

Directional information is one of the top requested pieces of information by visitors at the Northern Ontario TICs. Though GPS technology is likely used by many visitors to the region, those that stop at the TICs are in search of specific information and a printed map would be an asset. A regional map that all TICs would use would be of great benefit to the TICs and the travelers. This recommendation was also cited in the 2014 Wayfinding Report.

Ideally the TICs are all listed on the maps. The challenge is that the TICs are shifting annually causing the map resources to become outdated. An option to support the map would be a one-page, flat sheet that lists the TIC coordination points so it could be easily found on the map. The flat sheet could highlight services available at the TIC – (i.e. WiFi, picnic area, etc.).

Action Steps Recap

- 01** Produce a regional Northern Ontario Map
- 02** Add TICs to the map, or consider a supplementary hand out with the map which includes a concise listing of visitor services.

Recommendation – Advance Trip Planning and the TIC

The trend in some provinces and globally is that TICs are taking an active role in social media outreach to engage the visitor in the planning stage. In discussions with the Northern DMOs, this is a role that the DMO takes on for their region.

The DMO websites do provide good information on trip planning. Several of the municipalities also engage in social media from a tourism standpoint. The municipalities

promoting their region may want to ensure they have the DMO included in their feed. Facebook appears to be the most common social media channel.

TICs that have some down time could look at online engagement as another channel to engage the visitor. Summer staff with knowledge of social media could take this on. It would augment and support the work the DMOs already do in this space.

Action Steps Recap

- 01** Municipalities to include DMOs in their social media outreach
- 02** DMOs to follow all TICs and Municipalities in their region assisting with social media outreach where possible.
- 03** TICs to consider social media outreach as one more level of engagement.



Recommendations – Websites & Online Resources and TICs

From the online review, most communities have a visitors/travel link within their municipal website, though finding specific information can be challenging. For many of the municipalities, they do not list their TIC on their website. Most are active on social media, posting a lot of info very regularly, however, they do not link to the DMO site in their region.

Mobile tools for wayfinding including apps, GPS modules, and mobile-enabled websites

are important for visitors in the North. Travelers in the North using mobile tools may not stop at a TIC for a map or directions unless the GPS functionality is limited, however, they may stop for other reasons for information. Tourism businesses need to be considering mobile apps and functionality as they upgrade and design websites and other online engagement tools.

DMO Websites – Ideally, each DMO lists the TICs in their region with address details and a weblink where possible. A map identifying the location of the TICs would be helpful. The regional DMOs vary in relation to what TIC information is on their website.

In 13c on both the Sunset Country site and the Superior Country sites, there is a listing of the TICs and a map showing the location. The information on the sites varies slightly from the current database. This needs to be cross referenced and updated.

In 13b – Algoma Country all the TICs and the OTICs are listed on the website.

In 13a Travel Information Centre information is not appearing on the northeasternontario.com website.



DMO App – Each DMO needs an app to assist visitors in the region. A DMO app will allow for great accuracy and customization based on the visitor's needs. The TICs could be accurately represented on the app providing the visitor with key information and news on exhibits, special events and community news.

Municipal Websites – Accessing online information about the Northern Ontario TICs is very difficult. Most of the municipal websites do not indicate that they have a TIC in their community. If a TIC is indicated, there is very little information in relation to the operating hours and services available.

The municipal websites vary greatly in relation to detail on tourist services and TIC information. Through this research project, it was difficult to locate all the regional TICs and determine

whether those listed as a TIC truly met the criteria. Some municipal offices have tourist info available which would categorize them as a Visitor Information Outlet, not a TIC based on the definitions agreed upon by the committee.

Discover ON Mobile App – The Discover ON Mobile App lists the OTICs in the province along with all the RTICs. The information for Northern Ontario needs to be updated. There are listings for RTICs which do not fall into the category of a Full-time TIC, Seasonal TIC or Dual Function TIC. There are also TICs in the North that are not listed on this site. It appears that this information is available only in a mobile format. The regular Travel Ontario site did not list the Regional TICs. Any RTIC or Tourism Operator can have a free listing on www.tourismpartners.com which then populates the website, kiosk, app and publications.

Action Steps Recap

- 01** Location of TIC and directions should be listed on the municipal sites.
- 02** The TIC manager could assist the municipalities with enhancing the tourism section of their website
- 03** DMO Websites – update and/or list the TICs in the region and plot TICs onto an online map
- 04** DMOs to update/create an app which lists the TICs, links to directions, provides icons of the services available, provides seasonal dates and times and other pertinent TIC info
- 05** Municipal Websites – encourage municipalities to list their TIC and the operating hours. Any additional information on the TIC would be an asset
- 06** Provincial Mobile App – DNO to work with province to have this information updated
- 07** DMOs to work with RTICs and operators in their region to have the information on the Discover ON mobile app updated

Recommendation – Tracking and Measuring Return on Investment for the TIC operator & funder

Each community is faced with the challenge of determining the economic impact of owning and operating a bricks and mortar TIC. Most of the TICs that provided written and verbal feedback, do not track their annual numbers with a great level of detail. Statistics provided were, in most cases, an estimated annual number of visitors with no year-over-year growth or decline numbers provided. This was not the case for all TICs as some have very accurate records. Actual visitation numbers provided can be found in the Northern Ontario TIC Visitation Trends section of this report.

Some visitor centres will assist with making direct booking, though the economic impact of the transactions is not recorded. Within the province, some RTICs and OTICs are making bookings for the visitors and being paid a commission by the tourism operator. This approach allows for additional revenue for the Information Centre and allows the Provincial or Regional Information Centre to show direct economic impact, to the community, based on their presence. In some parts of the province OTICs and RTICs also sell attraction tickets and are paid a commission, by the attraction, for this service that they provide to the visitor.

Tracking Options

- The TICs need assistance in implementing a visitor tracking system. Automated tracking measures should be considered
 - » Manually tracking the number of visitors
 - » Implement a tracking turnstile or floor mat that tracks
 - » Have a data collection mechanism (contest or similar)
- Have tracking included as a component of training program
- Annual visitor numbers should be given/collected by the DMO
- Track reservations made at businesses within the communities and neighbouring communities
- Local businesses could offer a coupon of value and offer to visitors. These could be distributed by the TIC with the understanding that the business provides numbers of collected coupons/vouchers on a monthly basis.

Pilot Project - Commission Structure

Most hotels are set up to pay commission, in a simple and automated way. As a pilot, accommodators could be offered the option and benefit of setting up TICs, throughout Northern Ontario, as a travel agent. The TIC would make the booking, online or via telephone, and include their agent number in the booking. The visitor would receive a confirmation number and information for the TIC staff member who made the booking. The accommodators would send a commission cheque to the TIC.

This could be run as a pilot project for a destination within a region and a few select hotels to start, or with a hotel brand in the North that would be open to working with a TIC on this project. The TIC staff would engage the visitor and then provide the service of assisting with hotel booking if required.

The approach would work with attractions and other booking services.

Action Steps Recap

- 01** TICs to track visitors
- 02** DMOs to assist TICs with the implementation of tracking system
- 03** TICs to provide DMOs/DNO with annual visitation numbers
- 04** TICs to share best practices (at AGM or through the TIC committee) on ways to drive visitors to businesses in the community and tracking/measuring the impact
- 05** In partnership with a DMO - set up Pilot Project on commission for hotel bookings.

Recommendations – Human Resources



Human Resources – Survey #1

Does the current employee compliment meet the visitors' needs?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	20	68.75%
No	10	31.25%
Total Respondents	32	
Skipped	3	

Comments based on “No” response:

- Funding needs to be better
- Funding shortages
- Due to funding issues this employee is doing 2 different jobs and must focus their time on what the needs are during the month.
- Funding
- Depends on scalability of services offered
- Most of the time yes - extended hours have been covered by volunteers through the Chamber of Commerce - challenge in finding volunteers to cover
- More staff would allow us to be open longer hours and on weekends
- Funding is our major obstacle in keeping the Visitors Centre open longer in the off season.
- Usually only the business director without the internship. Not enough memberships, funding to pay for full time employee

Based on the feedback from the TICs, **38%** indicated that **staffing levels are inadequate.**

Funding is cited as a **major factor** in not having adequate staffing levels.



The TICs rely heavily on student labour to provide the visitor information services. In the case of 13b, the process of applying for summer grants is a service provided by the DMO. The staff are hired and paid by Algoma Country. Some TICs in 13b may have additional staff that are not hired by Algoma Country. In 13a and 13c, the TICs apply for their own funding. This had not always been the case, though is the current situation. With a centralized hiring approach, led by the DMO combined with centralized training, the level of consistency in service delivery would increase.

Based on the feedback from the TICs, 38% indicated that staffing levels are inadequate. Funding is cited as a major factor in not having adequate staffing levels. The “two-week top up” provided by DNO was very well received by those that accessed the program. Expanding this program to the all the TICs

(those that fall into the definition of a Full-time, Seasonal or Dual-function TIC), would allow for more face-to-face interactions for an extended period with the visitors.

Some TICs struggled with the summer employment grant application process and did not receive funding. Details can be viewed in the individual responses in the addendum. Assistance in applying for summer grants would be a valuable service the DMO could provide, for those not already offering this.

The range of funding resources utilized by the TICs is further detailed in the funding section of this report.

Using the proposed TIC hub for posting funding options and advice on how to apply for funding, should assist those seeking additional funding or having challenges with the funding application process.

Recommendations Employees – paid

- Cross reference TIC database with those that took advantage of the “seasonal top-up” in 2017
- Based on available funding, expand the reach of the “seasonal top-up” program
- For TICs within 75 kilometers of one another (the distance chart highlights TICs within 100 km of each other), consider staggering the season – have one TIC open earlier and close earlier and one open later and stay open longer. The two TICs could then cross promote each other and both have a longer season through a collaborative agreement.

Employees – volunteers

- Volunteers are used by many of TICs in the North, particularly once the students leave for the season. In some cases, volunteers are incited by the municipality by receiving a discount at other municipal services (i.e. Recreation Centre) based on the number of volunteer hours.
- Some TICs have a solid volunteer program which greatly assists with providing visitor information. The volunteers need to have the same access to training as the full-time staff. Ideally the volunteers attend the proposed annual, regional training. If this is not feasible then the other training options available should be utilized.
- Attracting, training and retaining volunteers would be an ideal topic for discussion at an annual Northern Ontario TIC conference or at the committee level. A collection of best practices in relation to developing a solid volunteer program, would assist with staffing levels. This would be very advantageous to those TICs that cited that their staffing levels are currently inadequate.
- If the AGM or Committee recommendations do not materialize, there is the option of creating documentation to guide the TIC through the steps required to create a strong volunteer program or the option of an online learning program geared towards the TIC Manager or municipality.





Action Steps Recap

- 01** DMOs to apply for funding on behalf of the TICs or the DMO assists the TIC in applying for summer employment grants.
- 02** Post funding options and opportunities on the TIC Network Online hub
- 03** Continue with seasonal top-off – offer to TICs that did not participate in the 2016 program
- 04** Provide support in relation to training (online and in person) and training resources to assist the TICs in recruiting and running a strong volunteer program
- 05** Encourage TICs within close proximity to coordinate their seasonal hours by offering shared visitor services
- 06** Assist TICs with establishing or enhancing their TIC volunteer staff programs

Recommendations – Training & Development

There are varying resources and implementation of those resources throughout the region. Below is a recap of resources for travel counsellors in Northern Ontario. The documentation is produced by DNO. Below are excerpts. The full document is in the addendum.

Travel Information Reference Guide

In order to better train your staff, TNO has compiled this summary of best practices from Northern Ontario's largest Travel Information Centres for your reference.

01 **The Role of a Travel Counsellor**

Welcome tourists to the municipality, region and province
Answer questions and provide specific travel publications
Promote and sell attractions, facilities, events & services
Encourage visitors to stay longer, experience more & come back
Provide friendly, enthusiastic, professional service to visitors
Create a good impression of Ontario by your professional
Ensure that your VIC is organized, attractive & well maintained

02 **Asking Questions**

Before you make a recommendation, ask:
Visitor's origin (home town)
Visitor's destination
Purpose of travel
Length of travel
Travelling companions (who, how many, ages)
Mode of travel
Type of accommodations needed
Special needs or requirements
Interests and hobbies
Facilities or services required

FIVE STEPS TO SUCCESS

- 01** **Acknowledge**
 - Smile
 - Eye contact
 - Greeting
 - Introduce yourself
 - Offer help
- 02** **Listen**
 - With full attention
 - Actively
 - Curiosity
- 03** **Provide Information**
 - Confine
 - Clarify
 - Answer
- 04** **Sell the Area**
 - Ask Questions
 - Suggest options
 - Be creative
- 05** **End the Conversation**
 - Smile
 - Eye contact
 - A friendly farewell

02

RTO 13 "fewer, better resources" to share with visitors

Northwestern Ontario
northeasternontario.com
800.455.8555

Algoma Country
algomacountry.com
800.263.2456

Superior Country
superiorcountry.ca
807.887.3188

Sunset Country
visitorsunsetting.com
800.667.8386

Sudbury
sudburytourism.ca
866.451.8525

North Bay
tourisnorthbay.com
705.472.8480

Timmins
tourisntimmins.com
800.387.8456

Sault Ste. Marie
saaulttourism.com
800.461.9020

Thunder Bay
thunderbay.ca/visiting
800.667.8386

05 RTO 13 Primary Website
= northernontario.travel

TOURISM NORTHERN ONTARIO

111 Elgin Street, Suite 304, Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, Canada P6A 6L6
tourisnorthernontario.com | info@tourisnorthernontario.com | 705.575.9779

03 **Official Ontario Road Map**

Travel Information Reference

*Note the different scale of each side of the map: Ontario may appear to be shorter on the Northern Ontario side if this is not shared with visitors.

04 **When giving directions**

Listen and clarify details
Unfold map facing the visitor
Circle your location
Highlight the route
Indicate approximate distance
Suggest scenic/tourist routes
Describe landmarks
Mention community attractions
Fold the map so the visitor can see the route you've traced.

05 **Sport Fishing & Hunting Regulations**

Both sports are regulated by the Ministry of Natural Resources, require licensing and have specific restrictions for residents and non-residents.
A complete summary of each is available online: www.mnr.gov.on.ca
There are serious fines levied against anglers and hunters for not following regulations. If you are in doubt about any aspect of fishing/hunting regulations or licensing requirements, check with your local Ministry of Natural Resources office for clarification.

04 **Guide to Travel publications**

In addition to the "fewer, better" publications listed on the front of this document, refer to the following publications for more detailed information.

	Transportation	Attractions	Home & Leisure	Health & Wellness	Family & Kids	Learning & Job	RVs/Caravans	ATV/Offroad	Alcohol & Events	Accommodations	Historical Sites	Year Round Attractions	Year Round Attractions	Year Round Attractions	Year Round Attractions
Attractions Ontario	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Explore Northern ON	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Resorts Ontario	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Bed & Breakfast Canada	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Camping in Ontario	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Go RVing Canada	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Ontario Parks	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Beating Ontario	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Fishing Regulations	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Golfish Ontario	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Hunting Regulations	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Golfish Ontario	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Golf in Ontario	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Ontario Travel Events	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
OFSC (snowmobile)	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
ATV Ontario	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Paddling Ontario	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Golfish Ontario	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

Alpha County, 2014

05 **Helpful Website Reference**

<p>Places to Stay</p> <p>Accommodations ontario.accommodationscanada.com</p> <p>Bed & Breakfast Canada bbcanada.com/ontario</p> <p>Camping in Ontario campingontario.ca</p> <p>Farmer's Markets farmersmarketontario.com</p> <p>Nature & Outdoor Tourism ntto.ca</p> <p>Ontario Provincial Parks ontarioparks.com</p> <p>Resorts Ontario resortsofntario.com</p> <p>Winter Getaways ontariotravel.net (under trails)</p>	<p>Things to do</p> <p>ATV Ontario atvontario.com</p> <p>Boating Ontario boatingontario.ca</p> <p>Golfish Ontario golfishontario.com</p> <p>Golfish Ontario golfishontario.com</p> <p>Golfish Ontario golfishontario.com</p> <p>Golfish Ontario golfishontario.com</p> <p>Golf in Ontario ontariotravel.net</p> <p>Motor Home Rentals gorving.ca</p> <p>Golfing by Bike ontarobybike.ca</p> <p>Snowmobile Clubs (OFSC) ofsc.on.ca</p>
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Based on the respondents to the survey, the following is the training that is being used in the regions' Travel Information Centres. The individual responses in the addendum links the training methods to the specific Travel Information Centre. This gives a broad overview.

Training is offered by most TICs in one form or through a combination of training programs and approaches. In order to create more consistency in the level of service offered at the TICs throughout the region, training needs to be more consistent. Training is currently coordinated and offered collectively in 13b.

Some municipalities offer mandatory training but not specific to TICs. Others try to hire locally and provide the students with some local knowledge and will sometimes send students to visit local attractions.



Training & Development– Survey #1

What type of training do you provide?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Service Excellence Dynamics	8	26.67%
Tourism Visitor Information Counsellor online training	2	6.67%
Customer Service	17	56.57%
Sales Training	5	16.67%
In house Training	26	86.67%
Local Knowledge	27	90.00%
Familiarization Tours	19	63.33%
Other – please specify <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard training required by law, ladder safety, cultural sensitivity • Health and Safety • Visitor training with Parks Canada students • CPR • Student Marine Training through Boating Ontario • All City of Kenora H & S Training • Disability 	7	23.33%
Total Respondents	30	
Skipped	5	



Training & Development – Survey #2

Does the current training approach meet the needs of your team?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes – meets all of our needs	6	26.67%
Somewhat – meets most of our needs with some gaps	16	6.67%
No – there are significant gaps in our training approach	2	56.57%
Total Respondents		24

Comments based on “No” response:

- Training is hard as per funding for students
- Tourism / Customer Service training
- On line training for the counsellor
- We need to stress the customer relations aspect much more. Many of the students are shy and do not like to give tours.
- There used to be tours of the area we lived in provided by the District to train Travel Counsellors. This is no longer the case, there is no funding nor is there any training.
- We would love to share more training with our staff
- Organized familiarization tours by RTO/Tourism Organizations would help
- Basic Online training for tourism

In-person Training Workshop

The ideal training situation would be the format used by 13b, where the staff from all the TICs in the region get trained at the same time. This approach would need to be coordinated by DNO and the DMOs. Moving the training around each region would allow for expanded product knowledge for all the counsellors.

Training manuals should be consistent throughout the North for the base content that deals with service delivery,

research methods and customer service. The manuals could be based on the National Occupational Standard Tourism Visitor Information Counsellor for the core content, then be customized to address the tourism offerings in the region, and region specific content – such as maps.

OTIC also offers their training manual content to any TIC in the province, at no charge to the TICs.

OTEC Online Learning

Through the telephone interviews, respondents were asked if they availed of Service Excellence Dynamics provided by DNO. Most organizations did use this program and saw high value in the offering. There is a strong desire from the current users to continue with this program. Some TICs are not using the program. To maintain a high standard of service and service consistency, TICs not utilizing the program should be encouraged to do so by DNO and the DMOs.

In addition to this program, a telephone interview with Victoria Behune, President and CEO of the Ontario Tourism Education Council (OTEC), revealed that they have developed training programs for the OTICS that are specific to visitor services. DNO can organize these training programs and offer to the TICs in the North. The programs are:

- Service Excellence for Visitor Information Counsellors
- Sales Excellence for Visitor Information Counsellors
- Service Excellence Dynamics (online) plus option to add introductory customized video
- Creating Memorable Experiences
- Overcoming Difficult Service Situations
- Service Excellence for Chinese or Indian Visitors
- Visitor Service for Diverse Cultures

OTEC sells the National occupational standard Tourism Visitor Information Counsellor Standard, workbook and online training. It is recommended that the TIC Managers take the online training, have a workbook on site for reference and use the Standard to develop the TIC Training manual.

Further exploration by DNO with OTEC would be worthwhile. The slate of training could address new and returning staff's needs.



Mentoring Program

Through the TIC network, a mentoring program could be developed for new employees to learn from seasoned Travel Counsellors. There are two OTICS in the region who might be open to mentoring new travel counsellors. Other TIC managers/employees could be identified within the TIC network as mentors so all TICS in the North could avail of this opportunity.

Fam Tours

Visitors to a TIC are looking for more specific local/regional information. It is important that the Travel Counsellor is aware of their local area and the region overall. Knowledge of the local community is high and the TICs do offer fams and experiences for the staff, so that they have the local knowledge.

The gap and opportunity lies beyond the community. There is an opportunity for the counsellor's knowledge to be expanded by having regional fams. The ideal combination would be regional training combined with a regional fam.

Videos for Destination Information Training

Videos of the region would be ideal training resources. They could be used at in-person training workshops and as an ongoing TIC resource for training. Each region would ideally produce a destination video geared towards the TIC travel counsellors throughout Northern Ontario.

A cost-effective alternative would be a narrated PowerPoint presentation with strong visuals, though the video would be the ideal option.





Action Steps Recap

- 01** DMOs to apply for funding on behalf of the TICs or the DMO assists the TIC in applying for summer employment grants.
- 02** Post funding options and opportunities on the TIC Network Online hub
- 03** Continue with seasonal top-off – offer to TICs that did not participate in the 2016 program
- 04** Provide support in relation to training (online and in person) and training resources to assist the TICs in recruiting and running a strong volunteer program
- 05** Encourage TICs within proximity to each other, to coordinate their seasonal hours by offering shared visitor services
- 06** Review OTEC offerings a standard for TIC training in the North
- 07** Assist TICs with establishing or enhancing their TIC volunteer staff programs
- 08** DNO and DMOs to produce regional videos used for TIC staff training

Recommendations – Brochure and Information Distribution

The current approach to literature distribution varies amongst the three DMO regions. In 13b, literature is ordered for the TICs and distributed. The TICs and operators in the region can also have the DMO (13b) send their information to specific TICs throughout the province.

One of the challenges expressed in the survey and telephone interviews was managing and ordering the brochures for the TIC. There is a need for a coordinated brochure distribution system for 13a and 13c. Most interviewees said that students will check brochures from the previous year, throw out outdated material and will call tourism operators to request brochures for the season. Most of the student's job at the beginning of the season is spent contacting operators to receive information.

An online ordering system can be set up either through the DMOs website or a separate website. The ordering system would allow the TICs to order their brochures through a pre-populated order form. Upon receipt of the order, the DMO would place the orders for their region. Brochures would then be distributed to the TICs. In Algoma country,

brochure orders are placed in advance of the regional training. The TICs in attendance at the training take the brochures back to their respective TIC. This approach could work well in the other regions.

Tourism operators will need to be informed of this new process and receive information regarding how many brochures they can send to the regional offices which will be sent to the Travel Information Centres in the region.

Closely linked to brochure distribution is brochure racking and displays. A consistent racking system, as suggested in the Wayfinding, would allow for ease of access for visitors overall and in particular, those that are stopping at several locations. The DMOs materials would be showcased in this rack along with other key information like the regional map. Print material needs to easily link to online resources.

The Wayfinding study suggested standards for the Northern Ontario "Seal of Approval" for all channels. These guidelines, once established, could be delivered to the TICs in the proposed training and as a resource tool on the online TIC hub.





Action Steps Recap

- 01** Each region to create an ordering system for brochures
- 02** Each region to distribute brochures to TICS
- 03** DNO in partnership with the DMOs to create standards for print, web and mobile apps.
- 04** Design and manufacture a consistent brochure racking system

Recommendation – Mobile & Outreach Services in Destination

Visitor outreach is prevalent in many parts of Canada, though generally in high traffic areas. Outreach, in the country, generally occurs via mobile booth, via bicycle or on foot.

Examples of this in Ontario, is Niagara Falls, where TIC staff walk along the Falls promenade and engage visitors. They have some literature for distribution and assist the guests, with information via an In Northern Ontario outreach takes place events or seasonal,



reoccurring activities such as the North Bay farmers market.

Outreach and mobile services could assist the TICs in several ways. Based on the likelihood of high traffic and events or specific locations, the opportunity to engage visitors increases. The cost is primarily labour. The mobile TIC staff member could be shared by several TICs.

The Sault Ste. Marie OTIC has outreach visitor services at tradeshow and events.





Action Steps Recap

- 01** TICs looking to expand their reach could consider key events where their potential visitors would likely be, before reaching their destination and provide visitor services.

Recommendation – Signage

Many of the respondents cited that municipal or on-site signage was an issue either because it was old and outdated or no longer existed. Some organizations are going through a branding process and will have new signage for 2017. There is inconsistency in the signage used by the TICs in the North, some use the (i) symbol and some have the name of the TIC on their signage. The TICs should decide collectively to use the same symbol to identify as offering Visitor Services. Recommendation would be to use the (i) symbol.

DNO is offering a Wayfinding Signage

Partnership Program that works with communities to enhance their wayfinding signage. Under this program, DNO provides funding for planning and/or design, fabrication and installation of signs.

Using the database of TICs, DNO should reach out to all TIC managers and offer this program to assist with municipal and on site signage. The signage for TICs should have the (i) symbol and can be easily identified on all mediums of communication; website, social media. Apps, maps, municipal and on site signage.

"Services Offered" Signage

The Wayfinding Report identified the need for a consistent language. This should include symbols, which identify available services, at the TIC. These symbols could be used in online TIC information site, mobile apps, in-print publications and on-site at the TIC. A list of required symbols would need to be identified and then the standards agreed upon and implemented by each TIC.

Action Steps Recap

- 01** Promote Wayfinding Signage Partnership Program to the TICs
- 02** Guide consistency for TICs with the (i) symbol
- 03** Establish consistent symbols of services available for all TICs



Recommendation – Funding

The TICs in the North are accessing a variety of funding options and based on the survey results, about half the funding is accessible and adequate. Others feel quite differently about the funding, finding it challenging to access with limited funding available based on their requirements.



Funding – Survey #1

What types of funding programs do you avail of to operate your TIC?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Summer Experience Program	20	71.43%
Federal funding program for training	2	7.14%
Federal funding program for employees	10	35.71%
DMO Grant	1	3.57%
Provincial funding program for employees	6	21.43%
Provincial funding program for training	0	0.00%
Partnership funding	3	10.71%
Other – please specify <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding events • Canada Summer Jobs • HRSDC and MNO • all staffing, operational costs and training are funded by the municipality except for summer student funding which is provided by AKTA and Canada summer Jobs grants • Municipal budget • MEDC budget, Biigtigong Nishnaabeg Budget • community museums operating grant (\$4717)/Canada summers jobs • We apply every year for students and the last few years we haven't been successful therefore the municipality has to pay. There is only one student hired when this happens. When we used to get funding, we could hire two students per summer which would allow the info center to be open on weekends as well. The way it is now, it is only open through the week. Lack of funding is killing northern tourism • Our operating budget • Algoma Country usually funds 1 or 2 students • Canada Summer Jobs - To our knowledge we cannot access other grant opportunities for non-student. • Jeunesse Canada • Municipal 	12	42.86%
Total Respondents	28	
Skipped	7	



Funding – Survey #2

Do you encounter barriers or challenges to accessing funding, either government or other funding streams?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	4	14.29%
No	9	32.14%
<p>Comments on funding from survey participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding raising takes time and resources which detracts from other aspects of the Heritage Centre • Not eligible • Not enough funding available • Limited availability - time consuming applications • Competition for tourism grants is difficult; increased funding is provided to larger centers/boarder communities. • Because we are a small community funding is very limited from the government. One of our largest barriers is in grant writing. More courses need to be established to help with this. • We have received money for student workers every year. So, not really any barriers. • Applying for summer grants are not always successful. • Funding for summer students has been cut • We are forgotten in Northwestern Ontario for a lot of funding opportunities (ie. Ontario 150) • Had to drop CMA because of coverage required 25% • See note above (Survey #1) • Funding programs, other than SEP and CSJ, are project based. Once the project funding ends, the project still needs to be maintained, and the workload falls back on the remaining staff. Eventually, we stopped applying for federal funding. • Usually the funding is in small portions, forcing us to phase our projects. More funds for interpretive displays and FT staff would also be appreciated. • Limited funds. 	15	53.57%
Total Respondents	28	
Skipped	7	

Additional Service Options & Revenue Streams

The TICs vary in relation to additional revenue streams. Many offer vending machines or have a small gift shop onsite. By working together, the TICs could leverage bulk purchasing opportunities for similar products that they resell. Through the proposed TIC Network, the TIC managers could also share information on products and contacts for those products. The mandate of the TICs is to increase economic growth for their community. By partnering with businesses in the community there might be an opportunity to resell these products.

Based on the survey results, visitors are drawn to displays and interpretation. For those TICs attached to a museum, this is a built-in offering. Others could look at working with local farmers and artisans to showcase their offerings to the visitors.

By looking at the TIC with a multi-purpose lens, the centre can engage the local community differently, while increasing funds. The value of the TIC to the community would likely shift if the TICs are helping promote local art and businesses differently. Below are a few suggestions on how this could be done.

Summer Farmers Markets – Some TICs run a weekly farmers market. These markets engage the local community while attracting visitors to the TIC. Those that are not currently doing so could consider this as an option for additional revenue. Ideally, the market days would be coordinated with TICs in close proximity so markets are available regionally on most days without competing with one another.

Local Art Sales – Displays and interpretation were high on the list of services used and requested by the visitor. The local art gives visitors a reason to stop at the TIC, creates additional revenue for the TIC and engages the local art community. One of the TICs in the North offers a sliding scale commission structure on the art

sale based on the artist's involvement with the TIC. The commission structure for the artists is lower if the artist is on-site to engage with visitors or offer on-site programming.

Meeting and Events Venue – Based on the layout of the TIC, some are able to offer their space as a meeting venue. Some that currently have meeting space choose to offer it at no charge to the local community, while others charge a fee. There is some sensitivity to competing with local businesses.

Seasonal Events – The TICs could consider using the venue for seasonal events such as Christmas or Holiday Markets. Booth rental or a combination of booth and commission could assist in raising funds for the TIC.

Funding for staffing was cited as an issue by half of the survey respondents. The operating season of most of the TICs is dictated by the funding they receive for staffing. The two-week summer extension program, that DNO offered in 2016, was well received and greatly appreciated by the recipients.

Funding to run the TIC is an annual consideration for the municipalities and organizations that operate the bricks and mortar TICs.

One of the challenges cited with funding, was that the funding applied to new hires only. This of course impacts the opportunity to re-hire past employees, who are already trained and familiar with the operation, travel counselling and the region.

Other challenges TICs cited was lack of knowledge and experience in grant writing and lack of knowledge of available funding sources. Having these resources available through DMO coaching, training programs or listed on a TIC Network hub would be helpful to a number of the TICs.



Action Steps Recap

- 01** DMOs - apply for funding for the TICs in their region
- 02** Provided funding resources and instructions on TIC hub
- 03** Provide workshops on applying for funding

Charging stations – Most travelers will have one or several devices that require charging. Charging stations would draw visitors into the centre. TICs could have several charging stations available, on a complimentary basis or available at a fee.

Having the visitor spend time in the community is the ultimate goal of the TIC. A secure set up for devices would allow the visitor to utilize picnic grounds, go into town to shop or buy a meal and then return to pick up devices. This secure option could be a revenue stream. Options would be for the visitor to leave the device(s) with the staff behind the counter. Staff would be responsible for keeping the device secure while it is being charged. A flat rate per device could be charged.

Another option would be to have lockers installed which have an electrical plug inside. The visitor would plug in their device and take the key. These lockers would be available for rent.

A third option would be the rental of portable chargers which the visitor would take with them and then drop off at another TIC on their path. This option would be of most appeal to cyclists and motorcyclists. This option would require all TICs to have credit card transaction capabilities and a distribution and retrieval system.

Advertising and Promotion – Exposure to the visitors showcasing experiences in the local community or region, could be a paid service that the TIC offers. This could appear in the form of screen display that rotates the advertisers or other form of advertising such as a display or other visual. A range of pricing options could be considered.

The OTICs are offering this option to DMOs and tourism operators.

Commission structure for booking accommodations and attractions – TICs could be a point of sale and receive a small commission on the transactions. This could range from hotel booking to attractions and experiences. The simplest way to do this is that the TIC makes the booking and then produces a confirmation slip or number for the visitor. The operator then sends a commission cheque to the TIC. Taking bookings has a two-fold benefit. In addition to a small revenue stream, it also shows direct economic impact.

Sponsorship – TICs could seek sponsorship from local airports or other tourism businesses and services.



Appendix

TIC Detailed Contact Lists – under separate cover - Excel spreadsheet

TIC Survey Feedback – Individual Responses - Under separate cover - PDF format

Know Before You Go – Under separate cover - Word format

Travel Counsellor Summary. Be Informed! – Under separate cover - PDF format



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