



destinationnorthernontario.ca

2024-25

Annual Report

Ontario 

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- › **Destination Northern Ontario** / destinationnorthernontario.ca
- › **Tourism Excellence North** / tourismexcellencenorth.ca
- › **Domestic Marketing** / northernontario.travel
- › **International Travel Trade** / northernontarioitt.com



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Message from the President

It is my pleasure to present you, the reader, with Destination Northern Ontario's 2024-25 Annual Report.

This document outlines the successes and challenges the organization experienced over the past fiscal year. It also summarizes our work as it relates to our key activities outlined in our Transfer Payment Agreement with the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming..

As we look back, the past year truly marked a pivotal moment for tourism in Northern Ontario. Emerging from the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, we entered this chapter with resilience and determination alongside our industry partners. Together, we demonstrated innovation, strengthened collaboration, and drove growth in meaningful ways.

This year, Destination Northern Ontario deepened its relationship with the Culinary Tourism Alliance, embarking on a three-year agreement supported by FedNor funding. Culinary storytelling campaigns flourished under the "Do Something Delicious" banner, and we successfully delivered a 'Feast ON' signature event in Timmins, which showcased our region's flavors and hospitality.

We also leveraged international visitor potential by enhancing tools such as the Northern Ontario Trip Planner and by prioritizing e-commerce platforms, simplifying purchasing processes for travelers.

Our Tourism Rocks campaign further amplified Northern Ontario's presence and energy, inspiring both visitors and locals alike.

Our commitment to product development initiatives, including Great Lakes Cruising, Experience Fishing, and 2SLGBTQ+ tourism experiences, demonstrated our dedication to diversifying Northern Ontario's offerings. We also advanced efforts in key consumer markets, including transborder states and emerging domestic markets such as the Greater Toronto Area.

Perhaps most importantly, our partnerships proved invaluable. With the support of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming, as well as the collaboration of many dedicated partners, we were able to channel additional resources into the region. This collective effort allowed us to continue working toward our ambitious goal of ensuring Northern Ontario represents 10% of all provincial tourism spending.

Reflecting on this year, we can proudly say it was filled with progress, innovation, and collaboration. The achievements of 2024-25 have set a strong foundation for the years to come, and they are a testament to the dedication of everyone who contributed to Northern Ontario's tourism story.



***Yours in Tourism,
Marty Kalagian
President,***

**DESTINATION
NORTHERN
ONTARIO**

Board of Directors | 2024-2025

Destination Northern Ontario is governed by a pan-Northern Ontario Board of Directors who are recognized industry leaders and who collectively provide vast knowledge, experience, and insight as they set the strategic directions for the organization. The organization maintains representation on the Board from the private sector at more than 50%.

The Board of Directors regularly consults with and is provided with guidance by an advisory group comprised of key government officials in tourism-related ministries and agencies. The advisory group is a key component to the Board of Directors' strategic planning and consultation process. The representatives are from the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming, the Ministry of Energy, Northern Development and Mines, Destination Ontario, FedNor, Ontario Parks and Parks Canada.

NAME	POSITION	SECTOR
Marty Kalagian	President	Private Sector – Retired
Gerry Webber	Vice President	Public Service – Retired
Heather Gropp	Secretary	Municipal Government
Betty McGie	Treasurer	Private Sector – Retired
Ray Nadeau	Director	Private Sector
George Stivrins	Director	Private Sector
Lori Branch	Director	Private Sector
Tammy Frick	Director	Not for Profit
Guy LaMarche	Director	Public Service – Retired
Ian Wood	Director	Municipal Government – Retired
Shannon McMullan	Director	Private Sector
Will Pawlowski	Director	Private Sector

Government Advisors | 2024-2025

NAME	POSITION	SECTOR
Laurie Brownlee	Advisor	Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming
Laurie Ypya	Advisor	Ministry of Northern Development
Todd Eastman	Advisor	Destination Ontario (OTMPC)
Heather McKeown	Advisor	FedNor
Chad O'Halloran	Advisor	Parks Canada
Vacant	Advisor	Ontario Parks

Our Team

Destination Northern Ontario Staff | 2024-2025

Staff compliment is dependent upon MTCG and MLTSD funding.

NAME	POSITION
GOVERNANCE & ADMINISTRATION	
David MacLachlan	Executive Director
Bobbi-Lynn Pallot	Corporate Services Officer
Kathy Carlson	Finance Officer
MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS	
Stephanie Hopkin	Senior Coordinator, Product Development, Marketing and Communications
Sara Currier	Coordinator, Industry Communications
Tiina Keranen	Visual Communications Designer
Megan Boyd	Product Inventory Intern
INVESTMENT ATTRACTION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	
Gord Knowles	Senior Coordinator, Investment Attraction & Economic Development
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT & INDUSTRY TRAINING	
Karen Peacock	Senior Coordinator, Workforce Development & Industry Training
Gillian McCullough	Learning Coordinator
Naza Obasi	NOHFC Intern
DESTINATION NORTHERN ONTARIO SUPPORT TEAMS (Under Contract)	
Ian McMillan	Business Development & International Marketing Specialist
Marla Tremblay	Francophone Tourism Specialist
Mike Wozny	Strategic Initiatives Coordinator

Vision

Northern Ontario will be a unique and distinctive tourism destination wherein high-quality products and experiences resonate with consumers, entrepreneurship is valued, and tourism provides local, regional, and global connections for the entire region.

Mission Statement

Destination Northern Ontario will take a leadership role to strategically guide and champion growth in Northern Ontario's tourism industry, through strong communication, collaboration, and partnerships with industry.

Values

Destination Northern Ontario's Board is committed to focusing on the vision in an "innovative, results-based, effective and fiscally responsible manner, with a foundation of strong governance and management leadership." Destination Northern Ontario's Board also recognizes the following values as important aspects of the strategic plan:

- **Accountability**
- **Leadership**
- **Collaboration**
- **Integrity**
- **Transparency**
- **Innovation**
- **Teamwork**



Business Development Goals

- › **Generate** industry research and monitor industry performance to continually improve products and experiences and evaluate the success of Destination Northern Ontario programs to ensure a "visitor first" approach.
- › **Implement** a strategic approach to bring high quality products and experiences to market through strong partnerships and workforce training.



Governance

- › **The Board of Directors** met six times this past fiscal. To keep attendance at acceptable levels, meetings via GoToMeetings enabled the Board to travel less, while still sharing resources and weighing in on decisions from their respective locations. Board attendance in 2023-24 was 87%. The Board monitors organizational performance through oversight of the various strategies in the business and marketing plans through the review of detailed performance reports.

\$

STATISTICS FOR NORTHERN ONTARIO



90%

of Northern Ontario's
tourism economic
benefits **STAY IN THE
REGION**



+20%

INCREASE in
**INTERNATIONAL
VISITATION**
year over year



36%

INCREASE in
**OCCUPANCY &
DAILY ROOM RATES**
since 2019



+92%

of the region's
ACCOMMODATORS
are stand-alone
**OWNER/OPERATOR
SMALL BUSINESSES**

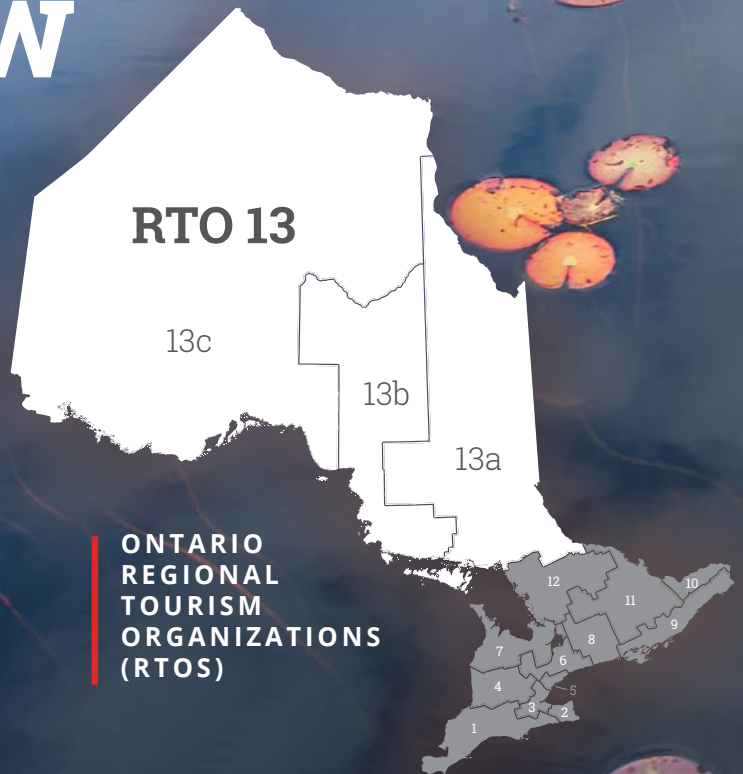


DESTINATION
**NORTHERN
ONTARIO**

A COMMITMENT TO ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE,
PROFESSIONALISM AND QUALITY PROGRAM DELIVERY

Overview

Geographically, Destination Northern Ontario (RTO13) is the largest tourism region in Ontario. The region spans from the French River in the south including Manitoulin Island, the Ottawa River in the east, west to the Manitoba border and north to the saltwater coast. The region is divided into three sub-regions: Northeastern Ontario (13A), Algoma-Sault Ste. Marie (13B) and Northwestern Ontario (13C). Destination Northern Ontario's role in the tourism industry is to strategically guide and champion growth in Northern Ontario through strong communication, collaboration, and partnerships with industry.



STATISTICS FOR NORTHERN ONTARIO

8.2

**MILLION
VISITORS**

\$2.8

**BILLION IN
TOURISM
RECEIPTS**

+\$500

**MILLION GENERATED
IN TAX REVENUES**

BETWEEN JANUARY
& DECEMBER 2024

Organizational Excellence

**100% of
planned
initiatives
completed
on-time.**

Destination Northern Ontario has exercised administrative diligence on both planning and adhering to reporting deadlines with 100% of planned initiatives being completed on-time. Guided by a strategic implementation plan, a dedicated staff person is responsible for each of the four priority pillars with support staff as needed. Partnership projects also align with mandated pillars and each staff person works on partnerships related to their portfolio.



Destination Northern Ontario continues to align with the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming in both its programs and coordination of staff.

Developed as a tool to help the Destination Northern Ontario Board of Directors track the organization's performance each year, this annual report is aligned with the Ministry's Regional Tourism Organizations Guide which recognizes five pillar areas



5 CORE PILLARS

- 01 Product Development
- 02 Investment Attraction
- 03 Workforce Development & Industry Training
- 04 Marketing & Communications
- 05 Partnerships

The year of 2024-25 has marked a period of strong growth and innovation for Destination Northern Ontario. Building on the momentum of past initiatives, DNO has continued to expand product development opportunities, strengthen key partnerships, and invest in the visitor experience to ensure Northern Ontario remains a premier tourism destination. The 13 existing product teams remained active while undergoing a review aimed at streamlining operations and amalgamating teams where appropriate, fostering a more collaborative approach to industry consultation.

Product Development

13

**PRODUCT
DEVELOPMENT
TEAMS**

70

**CERTIFIED OPERATORS
IN THE EXPERIENCE
FISHING PROGRAM**



Multi-year product development initiatives advanced significantly. **The Experience Fishing program** expanded its reach with **70 certified operators**, setting a new benchmark for participation. This year also brought new market development opportunities, including **partnerships** with **Northeastern Ontario Tourism** and **Epoch Times** to target the **Asian travel market**. The program benefited from increased global exposure through the filming of **FishON!** TV episode evolved with the addition of ice fishing and accessibility features, broadening its inclusiveness and extending its seasonality.



The organization made significant strides in **2SLGBTQI+ tourism development** in 2024-25. Working with **5 communities**, DNO coordinated a comprehensive training program that exceeded expectations, identifying **25 trainers** against the original target of 20. With secured funding from FedNor, NOHFC, and other partners, Northern Ontario is increasingly positioned as a safe, inclusive and welcoming destination.

Culinary tourism has emerged as another cornerstone of regional growth. In 2024-25, DNO deepened its relationship with the Culinary Tourism Alliance (CTA), embarking on a three-year agreement supported by FedNor funding. Culinary storytelling campaigns continued under the **"Do Something Delicious"** banner, complemented by the successful delivery of a **'Feast ON' Signature Event** in Timmins. These initiatives reinforced Northern Ontario's reputation for authentic, place-based food experiences.

The World's Best Snowmobile Destination program, managed by Northeastern Ontario Tourism, continued to develop the project with the integration of digital tools, which has enhanced its online presence and partner engagement. Stakeholder consultations show strong participation, and the 3-year World's Best Snowmobile Destination Plan is advancing.

Cruise tourism continued its steady rise. **The Battle Island Cruise Ship Readiness Project Phase II** advanced planning and infrastructure to support increased stops along the Lake Superior coast. Passenger visits in 2024 included itineraries from **Viking** and **Hapag Lloyd**, marking a milestone as **five landings** were successfully welcomed. Meanwhile, strategic support for the **Algoma Cruise Plan** leveraged additional federal investments, underscoring the growing significance of Northern Ontario as a cruise destination.



Cycling tourism increased traction with **The Lake Superior Cycling Route**, connecting Sault Ste. Marie and Thunder Bay. This route was further developed and showcased through the successful hosting of the **2024 Great Waterfront Trail Adventure**, which drew over **120 riders**. The resulting economic impact exceeded **\$538,000**, with the majority retained in Northern Ontario, highlighting the important role cycling plays in expanding active lifestyle tourism.



120 RIDERS IN GREAT LAKES WATERFRONT TRAIL ADVENTURE

RESULTING
ECONOMIC
IMPACT OF

+ \$538,000



Research and strategic planning remained a priority for 2024-25, with the initial consultation for the **Destination Master Plan** and **Skift research** aimed at expanding research capacity and ensuring data-driven decision-making for the industry. Completion of these research pieces is an important step for visitor services and infrastructure. Concurrently, **wayfinding projects** in Blind River and Terrace Bay were completed, improving visitor navigation and community connectivity.

Partnerships continued to anchor DNO's success in 2024-25. Highlights included advancing the **Algoma Cruise Plan**, expanding culinary experiences with the **Culinary Tourism Alliance**, and continuing preparations for the **Georgian Bay Aspiring Geopark** to pursue **UNESCO** designation. These strategic collaborations reflect the organization's commitment to storytelling, marketing positioning, and long-term product readiness.





**MISSISSAUGA
FIRST NATION &
BLIND RIVER** Win Economic
Developers Council of Ontario's
Award for "**EXCELLENCE IN
RURAL DEVELOPMENT**"

EDCO's Award of Excellence

Destination Northern Ontario led an initiative with **Mississauga First Nation and Blind River** and won the prestigious **Economic Developers Council of Ontario's (EDCO) Award of Excellence for "Excellence in Rural Economic Development"** for the "**Lake Huron North Shore Tourism & Recreation Community Economic Development (CED) Initiative.**"

A special feature of this initiative was the tripartite partnership involving shared land stewardship which led to economic development providing tourism, recreation and community services.

The goal was to support local activities, businesses, jobs and a sustainable outdoor tourism product.

This \$1.355 million initiative included marine tourism infrastructure enhancements on Lake Huron and Matinenda Lake; multi-use trail connectivity and signage; event facility upgrades and improvements; and development of investment-ready CED sites. The project had a total estimated economic impact of **\$2,160,756** generating **\$1,094,789** in GDP, **\$760,426** in labour income and **\$305,541** in taxes to all levels of government.

Rising above all other jurisdictions in Ontario and winning this EDCO award, clearly demonstrates that developing tourism and recreation products in Northern Ontario is not only good for tourism but good for economic development in Ontario as well.

\$2.16M
**ECONOMIC
IMPACT**

\$1.1M
IN GDP

\$760,426
**IN LABOUR
INCOME**

\$305,541
**IN TAXES TO
GOVERNMENT**

"Working with Destination Northern Ontario's "Fast Track to Success" marketing program has helped us not only get a birds eye view of our operations, but their coaches have also helped us look at the finer details of our marketing program and offered us many great suggestions and goals to help our business succeed! Having just completed a video highlighting our history (as recommended by this program) we feel we are really starting to fill the gaps noted in the final reports from the DNO team."

— Rob Dokuchie, Director of Marketing,
Lake of the Woods Brewing Company

3.87
MILLION

**VISITS TO NORTHERN
ONTARIO WEB PORTAL**

75%

**INCREASE YEAR-OVER-
YEAR IN TRIP PLANNER
ITINERARY DOWNLOADS**

Marketing



The 2024-25 fiscal year marked a significant milestone in the marketing pillar, building upon the momentum gained in the previous year. Tactical contracts with rural leads continued on an annual investment basis, and marketing partnerships were fully subscribed earlier than 2024-25. Destination Northern Ontario maintained its focus on research-based, consumer-first marketing investments, encompassing key activities at both sub-regional levels and pan-northern initiatives.

The SimpleRes platform maintained strong performance, with **23 operators** generating **\$1.99 million in sales**, just a 10% decrease from \$2.2 million the previous year. Participation also expanded, growing from **24 to 29 operators**, adding five more tourism businesses to the system.

Northernontario.travel remained a cornerstone of digital engagement, recording **3.87 million visits** in 2023-24. While regional and domestic traffic declined by 22% to 2.67 million visits, U.S. organic traffic **grew by 34%**, reaching **846,883 visits** and reflecting successful efforts to expand awareness south of the border. Outbound clicks to partner sites rose **5.46%** to **793,298**, and the cost per visit successfully met the \$0.50 target, demonstrating efficient marketing investments.

The Northern Ontario Trip Planner experienced impressive uptake, with itinerary downloads **increasing 75% year-over-year**. This tool continues to play a critical role in assisting visitors with trip planning and driving conversion from inspiration to visitation.

9 MEDIA FAM TOURS DELIVERED

Media relations have remained a powerful tool in showcasing the region's tourism assets. In 2024-25, **nine media familiarization tours** were delivered, featuring collaborations with partners such as Adventure with the Hills, Adventure Cast, SUP Outdoors, Colin Fields, and Motorcycle.com. Destination Northern Ontario's investment of \$34,000 **leveraged \$145,000** in additional partner support, amplifying exposure for regional experiences including adventure tourism, Indigenous tourism, and Great Lakes cruising.

Partnership development remained central to Destination Northern Ontario's success. The organization identified, planned, and executed **26 strategic marketing partnerships** with **61 partners** to strengthen its Inspire and Grow markets. These collaborations ranged from major campaigns with Destination Ontario and Porter Airlines to community events, sports, cultural initiatives, and niche tourism experiences that showcased the region's diversity.

26 STRATEGIC MARKETING PARTNERSHIPS
61 PARTNERS





Corporate Communications

In 2024-25, Destination Northern Ontario advanced its efforts to strengthen industry communications, expand engagement, and enhance the visibility of tourism across the region. Significant progress was made in digital engagement, industry outreach, inclusivity, and recognition, positioning Northern Ontario as a leader in collaborative and innovative tourism development.

Industry communications remained a key priority this year, with **36 newsletters distributed** to more than **4,800 contacts**, an **increase of 300** over the previous fiscal period. These newsletters highlighted major initiatives, including DNO and TEN programming, the Northern Ontario Tourism Summit, and notable industry achievements.

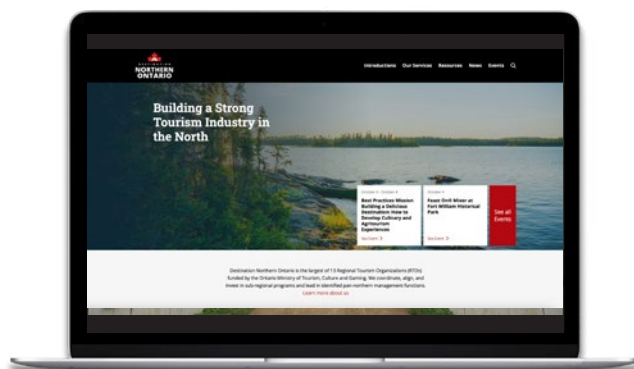
36

NEWSLETTERS
DISTRIBUTED

4800+

CONTACTS

The launch of **DNO's new corporate website** strengthened knowledge sharing by introducing a comprehensive resource library, dedicated pillar pages that align with organizational priorities, and an industry events calendar serving as a centralized hub for both DNO and TEN activities. In the final two quarters alone, the calendar featured **more than 20 events**, providing a unified platform to showcase opportunities for collaboration and professional development.



> [Visit the website](#)



Social media growth remained strong, with DNO surpassing **18,000** followers across all platforms, representing a **12.3% increase** compared to the previous year. **More than 340 posts** were published, expanding the reach of industry news and programming updates.

18,000 **340+**

**FOLLOWERS ON
SOCIAL MEDIA**

POSTS

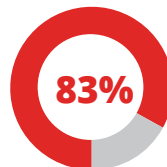
Inclusivity and representation were advanced through the completion of a new **three-year Francophone and Indigenous engagement strategy**. As part of this initiative, organizational communications are now offered in French, Oji-Cree, and English. DNO also implemented 2SLGBTQ+ initiatives, including dedicated product team meetings, and earned Rainbow Registered accreditation, further demonstrating a commitment to diversity and inclusion within the tourism sector.



Satisfaction Survey Results

Industry participation and recognition continued to underscore DNO's leadership role. Engagement and satisfaction surveys distributed in Q4 highlighted the organization's strong performance, with **83%** of partners reporting they were very satisfied with their partnership with DNO, and the remaining **17%** percent satisfied. Similarly, **77%** of product team participants expressed satisfaction with progress to date, and **91%** percent of board members reported confidence in the overall direction of the organization.

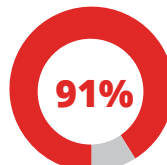
Collectively, these achievements reflect the growing impact of Destination Northern Ontario's communications and engagement strategies.



83% of partners **very satisfied** with their partnership with DNO. Remaining percentage of partners were **satisfied** with their partnership with DNO.



77% of product teams **satisfied** with progress to date.



91% board members reported **confidence** in overall direction of the organization.

International

For fiscal year 2024-25, the key objective of International Marketing was to build on recent successes and continue positioning Northern Ontario as a compelling destination for international buyers developing travel itineraries.

With international markets rebounding, Germany and the U.K. remained the primary focus, while Japan and Korea are emerging as promising markets. **Growing interest in outdoor experiences, fresh air, nature, and uncrowded travel positions** Northern Ontario to develop and introduce products that meet the evolving preferences of international travelers.



The “Team Northern Ontario” approach will continue, fostering close collaboration with Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) partners across the region. Efforts will also target domestic and U.S.-based tour operators to strengthen cross-border travel opportunities. Key activities include developing innovative experiences and products with sub-regional and private-sector partners, participating in in-person marketplaces, trade missions, and online events in coordination with Destination Canada and Destination Ontario, and forming joint marketing agreements with key tour operators and receptive agencies. Familiarization tours (FAMs) will be organized to showcase Northern Ontario’s offerings, while ongoing performance monitoring and reporting will ensure strategies are effective.

Further initiatives include enhancing the Northern Ontario Travel Trade web portal, creating touring routes connecting cities, attractions, and experiences with international arrival hubs, and fostering collective approaches to group travel with regional DMOs in Canada and the U.S. Northern Ontario will maintain a coordinated presence at key marketplaces, developing thematic booths to attract adult, senior, and student travel groups. Through collaboration, product innovation, and strategic market engagement, Northern Ontario will continue to strengthen its profile as a distinctive, nature-focused destination for international travelers.





2024-25 Program Results

✓ Results Snapshot

873	In-person Buyer meetings
4	Virtual Buyer and Media
2,015	Virtual participants
7	Marketplaces attended
5	Multi-page media stories generated
17	NEW Tour Companies introducing tours, with Northern Ontario products/experiences
10	Tour Companies re-introducing tours with Northern Ontario Products/experiences
48	Northern Ontario products, experience, accommodations sold in International Tour Operator Tariff



Workforce Development & Industry Training



tourisme
d'excellence
nord

> tourismexcellencenorth.ca



The Workforce Development and Industry Training programs align Destination Northern Ontario's strategic plan priorities in terms of engaging the sector, identifying and addressing industry gaps, and gearing programs to recovery and growth.



Through its award-winning **Tourism Excellence North (TEN)** and **Tourism SkillsNet North (TSNN)** programs, Destination Northern Ontario continues to implement its five-year strategy and Destination Northern Ontario's 2023-28 Post-Pandemic Strategic Focus, by developing and delivering enhanced and new training solutions and programs to address skills gaps and new visitor patterns and interest ultimately focused on enhancing visitation and the "Visitor First" experience. Workforce development and industry training initiatives are overseen by the Senior Coordinator for Workforce Development and Industry Training with support from the Industry Training Coordinator and the Information Technology Support Coordinator.



TOURISM EXCELLENCE NORTH LAUNCHES NEW WEBSITE

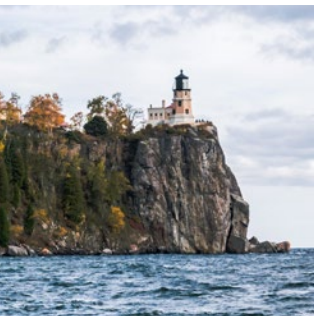
Training Programs

Training and programs in 2024-25 have included the successful delivery of Best Practices Missions, 'Fast Track to Success', ADAPT Webinars, group learning workshops and the Northern Ontario Tourism Summit. Work continued under the Recovery Project with the launch of TEN's website in December 2024 and expanded training delivery through blended online delivery and training tools. The Tourism Business Essentials course, TEN Mentorship Program and a Podcast series titled 'Let's Talk Northern Ontario Tourism' are all part of the new programs launched. Since the launch of the new Tourism Excellence North website, traffic has **increased 147%** between its full launch and March 2025.



TRAINING PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Best Practices Missions



13

PARTICIPANTS

BEST PRACTICES MISSION | APRIL 15 – 18, 2024**'Building a Quality Tourism Destination:
Taking Inspiration from Lake Superior's South Shore**

This Best Practices Mission was over-subscribed with **13 participants** and showcased tourism organizations, partnerships and practices in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan on the U.S. side of the Lake Superior Circle Tour, a longstanding, successful touring route. It provided participants with the practical knowledge and inspiration needed to further develop their community's and region's tourism offerings and touring routes and partner with neighboring communities and organizations to grow their share of the touring route market.

"The ability to talk with the owners and GMs to hear about the success and challenges."

"Learning about PMS, locking systems, and POS at the different locations as our organization is looking into upgraded."

"I loved learning about all of the improvements all of the boutique (hotels) went through and the connections that were made by everyone met while on the Mission."

"The small group and feeling connected to other tourism operators from Northern Ontario. This work can be isolating so being able to share stories and ideas was amazing."

"Being able to talk with other people on the mission. The accommodation stays were great too."



8

PARTICIPANTS

BEST PRACTICES MISSION | OCTOBER 28-30, 2024**Culinary and Agritourism Best Practices Mission: Southeastern Ontario**

This Best Practices Mission in partnership with the Culinary Tourism Alliance (CTA), with **eight participants** held memorable experiences for all participants. This immersive experience took participants through Kingston and Prince Edward County, providing unique insights into the world of culinary and agritourism. On the trip, participants visited farms, attended food tours, experienced a cooking class, and dined at Feast On @ restaurants.

"Thank you for the amazing experience. I have learned so much on how agritourism could work in my own northern Ontario rural community. Encouraging local, means quality and knowing where your product is coming from, better local economy, supporting each other, being more sustainable with a bit less footprint!"

TRAINING PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Fast Track to Success

TEN's Fast Track to Success program **completed all 10 of its personalized coaching sessions**. When surveyed participants **agreed 100%** that the FTS walkabout onsite was useful, the follow-up report contained useful suggestions and feedback, the amount of time they were asked to invest was reasonable for the return received, the program met expectations and were likely to recommend the FTS program to other operators.

"We liked the feedback we received we will be putting the suggestions to use!"

"Having a fresh set of eyes helped me determine where to focus my efforts was very valuable."

"Having a third-party opinion brings new perspectives"

"The mentor had personal knowledge of the industry."

"Very helpful in gaining insight into possible expansion and investment opportunity."

"The amount of feedback and the recommendations for future growth far exceeded what I thought."



10

**PERSONALIZED
COACHING
SESSIONS
COMPLETED**

In addition, an analysis and summary report of the FTS program from sessions completed from January 2019 to March 2025. Overall, the main priorities for operators are **increasing profitability, sales, and marketing**, with a good amount of focus also on **staff management and innovation**.



Moving Tourism from Ideas to Action

A successful 'Moving Tourism from Ideas to Action' group workshop was held in Cochrane in May 2024, with attendees from the communities of **Hearst, Mattice, French River, Kapuskasing, Moonbeam, Moosonee, Smooth Rock Falls, and Cochrane**. In addition, Tourism North Bay hosted **two sessions** in partnership with TEN focused on tourism market readiness employing the Community Tourism Assessment Index and **engaging 21 community stakeholders and operators**.

9

COMMUNITIES

21

COMMUNITY
STAKEHOLDERS
& OPERATORS
ENGAGED

Adapt Webinar Series

Tourism Excellence North has continued to offer its very successful **ADAPT 2020: A Webinar Series for Tourism** created in April 2020; the webinar series provides participants with ongoing relevant training and information. While specifically designed for Northern Ontario tourism business owners and operators, communities, destinations and industry stakeholders, anyone can attend, and it is free of charge. Throughout 2024-25, **nine** ADAPT 2020 webinars were hosted with **480 webinar registrations**. Considering repeat participants, it remains clear this webinar series is a 'go-to' resource for those involved in tourism throughout Northern Ontario.

9

WEBINARS
HOSTED

480

WEBINAR
REGISTRATIONS

"Thank you for all the hard work in pulling off another great Northern Ontario Tourism Summit. We got so much out of it, and I heard so many people talking about the opportunities, learning, and incredible networking."

— 2024 Northern Ontario Tourism Summit Attendee

Northern Ontario Tourism Summit

The Northern Ontario Tourism Summit in partnership with Nature and Outdoor Tourism Ontario was hosted from **November 19-21, 2024, in North Bay**. The conference had **210 participants** attend more than **30 information sessions and workshops**. Inclusive, accessible and sustainable programming was added to the 2024 Northern Ontario Tourism Summit as well, in the form of a few training sessions including but not limited to:

- Keynote on Sustainability with Dan Riskin
- Meeting the Needs of Today's Diverse Workforce
- Exploring Accessibility: Making Tourism Welcoming for Everyone
- Indigenous Tourism Ontario session
- Francophone Tourism session

210

PARTICIPANTS

30

**INFORMATION
SESSIONS &
WORKSHOPS**



Five-Year Strategy and Recovery Project

As part of its five-year strategy and Recovery Project, a new suite of online courses called **Tourism Business Essentials** has been developed and launched aimed to equip learners with essential knowledge to improve business operations and strategic planning. Our thanks go out to the many Subject Matter Experts who assisted in the development. The course is designed so that you can take one or all of its components, and it is available online, free of charge.

The Tourism Business Essentials course includes:

1. Components of a Business Plan
2. Sole Proprietorship vs. Incorporation
3. Basics of Risk Management & Insurance
4. Improving Your Business Processes with an Operational Plan
5. A Practical Guide to Market Research
6. Fundamentals of Marketing Planning
7. Basics of Budgeting, Bookkeeping, and Accounting
8. Pricing and Costing
9. A Basic Guide to Financial Statements
10. Financing and Loans
11. Succession Planning

Online Training

The Industry Training Coordinator and Information Technology Support Coordinator worked to ensure the new website, learning management system, and customer relationship management system were fully launched in December 2024. Since the launch, the website has experienced a **147% increase** in traffic between its full launch and March 2025. From April 2024 to March 2025, the website recorded **3,524 total visits** and **15,000 page views** and **80 participants** have begun using the enhanced online self-assessments.

Several new courses, expanded from existing TEN self-assessment tools and ADAPT webinars, are in development and scheduled for completion by end of 2025. These courses will feature a new layout, enhanced digital assets, additional resources, improved functionality, and other updates. In addition, digital course certificates will now be awarded to learners upon completing their training.

TEN's Training Coordinator completed Seneca College's Instructional Design Certificate Course.

+147

**PERCENT INCREASE IN
WEBSITE TRAFFIC**

3,524

WEBSITE VISITS

15,000

PAGE VIEWS

80

**PARTICIPANTS USING
ENHANCED ONLINE
SELF-ASSESSMENTS**

TEN's Podcast Series

TEN's Podcast series titled '**Let's Talk Northern Ontario Tourism**' launched in March 2025 with its premiere featuring Destination Northern Ontario (DNO)'s Executive Director, David MacLachlan, is followed by **10 episodes** with insightful and knowledgeable guests and subject matter experts. A total of **168 downloads** were recorded across the five episodes released in March 2025. All 10 episodes are available on TEN's website, as well as on Spotify and Apple Podcasts. Additionally, the podcast scripts have been translated into French and are accessible on TEN's French website.


[Listen Now!](#)


10

EPISODES

168

DOWNLOADS

Mentorship Program

The TEN Mentorship Program was successfully launched in July 2024 with **24 mentors and mentees** having been matched. **Two workshops** for the mentee's were delivered to Mentee's as part of the program. The workshops were Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Digital Marketing for Tourism: Strategies and Trends in 2025.

24

MENTORS & MENTEES
MATCHED

2

WORKSHOPS
DELIVERED

Training Calendar

A new **online training calendar** was published, launched, and synchronized between the DNO and TEN websites in December 2024. It is actively maintained and currently showcases upcoming TEN and DNO events, as well as featured events from our partners. Since its launch, the training calendar on the Tourism Excellence North website has recorded **205 total visits** and **290 page views**.

205

VISITS TO TRAINING
CALENDAR

290

PAGE VIEWS



"Thank you for all the hard work in pulling off another great Northern Ontario Tourism Summit. We got so much out of it, and I heard so many people talking about the opportunities, learning, and incredible networking."

— 2024 Northern Ontario Tourism Summit Attendee





Broker Training

Broker training for all three sub-regions was held as the Broker network was re-launched using Tourism Excellence North's new Learning Management System and Customer Relationship Management. The Learning Management System now hosts a Broker Dashboard that Brokers can use to download and upload resources, update their contact information, and communicate with Tourism Excellence North and tourism business owners, operators, communities, and destinations.

Marketing Campaigns

A "**Northern Ontario Spotlight Focus**" campaign launched with **4 articles** focused on previous TEN participants and run in the **5 major cities** within Northern Ontario and one digital ad. Additional efforts have included marketing of the podcast series with social media posts and video trailers developed by Storied Places podcast producer.

**4 ARTICLES RAN
IN 5 MAJOR NORTHERN
ONTARIO CITIES.**

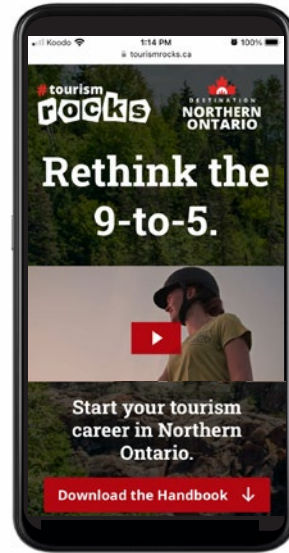
Tourism SkillsNet North

The TSNN management team worked collaboratively in 2023-24 to draft and submit a Round 4 SDF funding application to the MLITSD for Tourism SkillsNet North but unfortunately, was unsuccessful in its application therefore we could not directly recruit, train and match job seekers/participants with available job opportunities in Northern Ontario.

Under the Tourism SkillsNet North umbrella, Tourism Rocks promoted a positive perception of careers in tourism and awareness of available career opportunities among youth and adults in Northern Ontario. This included a number of presentations to secondary school students.

Tourism Rocks

The Tourism Rocks Toolkit was updated to include new educational and training opportunities in Northern Ontario and was distributed to **over 140 schools** in Northern Ontario. The handbook remains available on the tourismrocks.ca website, in three languages: English, French and Oji-Cree. One Tourism Rocks campaign was completed with **102,566 impressions, 204 ad clicks** and a **64.65% completion rate**. Two new social media accounts were created for Tourism Rocks using Instagram and TikTok.



TOURISM ROCKS CAMPAIGN

102,566
IMPRESSIONS

204
AD CLICKS

64.65
COMPLETION RATE

#tourism
rocks

> tourismrocks.ca



"Destination Northern Ontario is a valued partner that we collaborate with often for a number of initiatives spanning planning, marketing and product development. With DNO's support, Superior Country has the increased capacity to build our region as a world class destination. We have made great strides, for example, in cruise ship attraction and shore excursion development. We have created and are marketing two new culinary itineraries, and are marketing several new cycling itineraries which we were also a major partner in developing. The Investment Attraction team has supported us effectively through our partnerships with DNO and we are excited to continue working with them, DNO and our stakeholders to improve tourism offers in, and increase visitation to, Superior Country."

**— Suzanne Kukko, North Shore Tourism Coordinator,
Superior Country**

Investment Attraction

Throughout the fiscal year, Investment Attraction priorities were led by the Senior Coordinator of Investment Attraction and Economic Development, working closely with management and team members across the organization to build capacity, inform businesses and develop tools to aid in the growth of the region to meet the needs of today's traveler, while recognizing the huge growth potential Northern Ontario faces in light of development in the sector and beyond.



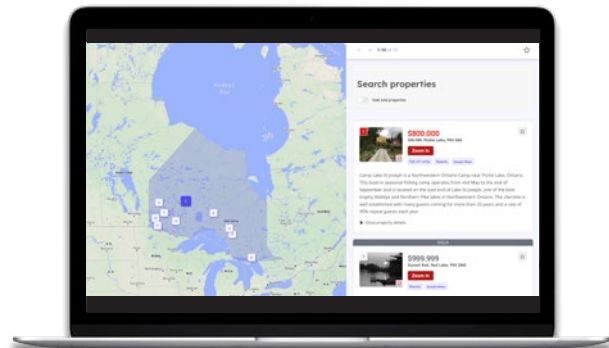
As part of its broader strategy, Destination Northern Ontario continued to track key tourism and tourism-adjacent trends and monitor the rollout of the **Municipal Accommodation Tax** in communities to help support growth and sector diversification. To gain deeper insights, Destination Northern Ontario partnered with data analysis firms to enhance its understanding of the accommodations sector. This includes integrating pan-northern small-scale data scraping into existing urban KPIs and provincial data sets, combined with anecdotal evidence from community stakeholders - creating a more complete picture of occupancy and revealing new areas for growth.

Research remains a cornerstone of the Investment Attraction pillar, supporting stakeholders in making informed decisions for their communities and clients.



The Investment Attraction sub-portal (invest.destinationnorthernontario.ca), developed with FedNor's support, continues to expand and integrate artificial intelligence tools meant to assist new and existing entrepreneurs. Current research projects are helping identify service gaps, spotlight growth opportunities, and populate a database of investment-ready properties, with a special focus on attracting new and underemployed Canadians to aid in business succession and workforce development.

> [Visit the portal](https://invest.destinationnorthernontario.ca)



The second season of the award-winning **Destination: Northern Ontario podcast** launched this year, promoting business purchase and succession opportunities to audiences beyond the region.

Additional investment attraction resources were further developed, including the online resource centre and a growing directory of funding sources.

Virtual support tools were used to assist tourism stakeholders with succession planning, including webinars delivered during Northern Ontario Tourism Training Week. Meanwhile, the popular Spark program returned, offering mentorship and seed investment to support fresh, innovative tourism ideas from individuals, entrepreneurs, small businesses, and non-profits. And last but not least, we continue our successful pilot project in collaboration with Northern Ontario's Community Futures offices to offer incentives for incorporating the region's tourism-related businesses, gaining them access to external funding, cost savings and the ability to maximize profit through the sale of their business.



"Working with the Investment Attraction Team on Season 2 of the Destination: Northern Ontario podcast has been an illuminating experience, introducing me (and hundreds of listeners this year alone!) to valuable business insights and resources for Northerners."

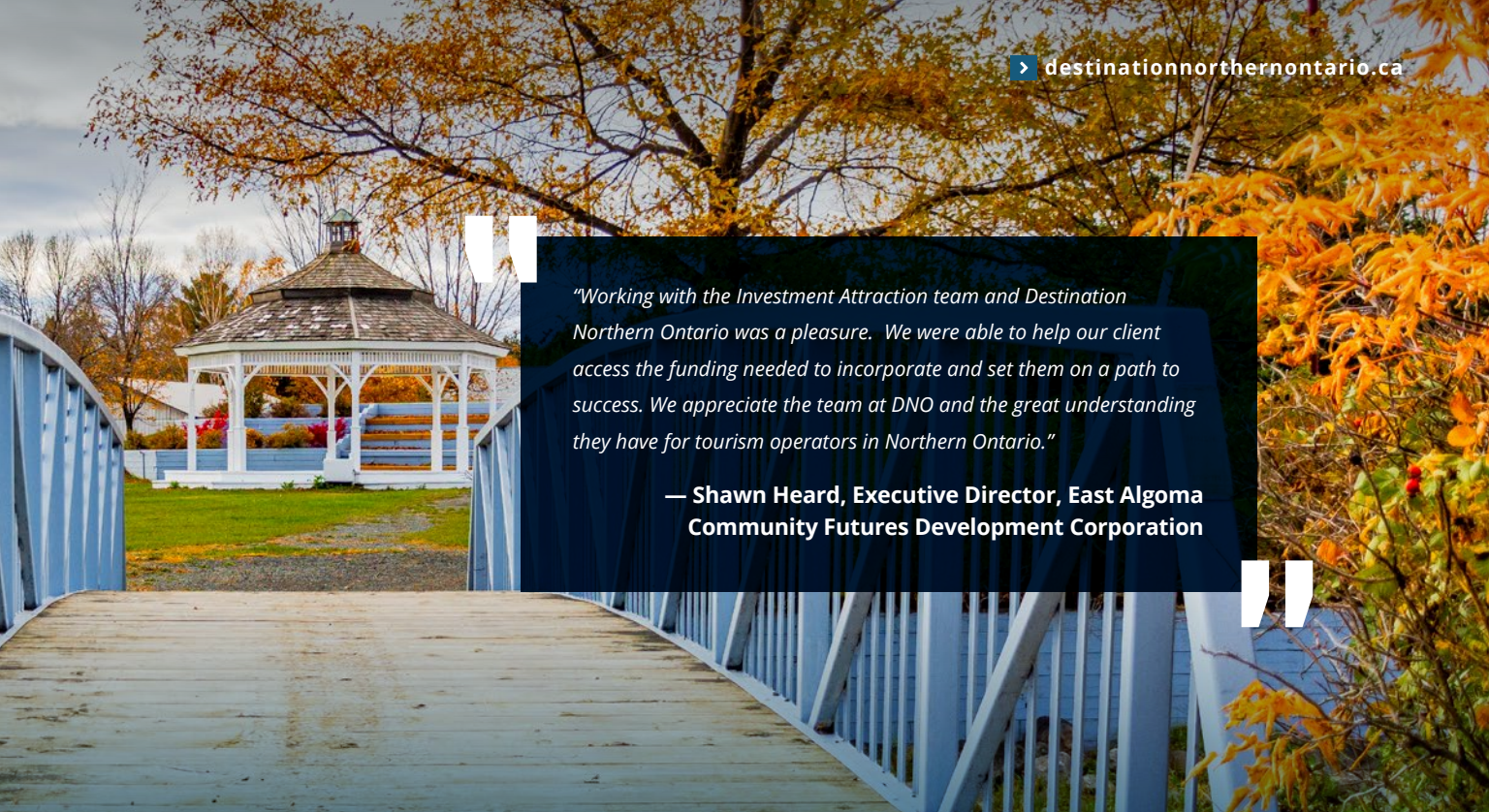
— Michelle Samson, Executive Producer and Owner, Storied Places Media



SEASON II

[> Listen Now!](#)





"Working with the Investment Attraction team and Destination Northern Ontario was a pleasure. We were able to help our client access the funding needed to incorporate and set them on a path to success. We appreciate the team at DNO and the great understanding they have for tourism operators in Northern Ontario."

— Shawn Heard, Executive Director, East Algoma Community Futures Development Corporation

Collaboration remains key, as we work to bridge the divide between the public and private sectors, serving as a trusted source and key contributor to growth projects all over Northern Ontario. Destination Northern Ontario continues to work closely with **Community Futures** organizations to address succession planning, incorporation, and access to capital, ensuring tourism growth is rooted in local benefit and long-term sustainability. The organization also remains active with partners such as the **Tourism Industry Association of Ontario**, the **Tourism Industry Association of Canada**, the **Economic Developers Council of Ontario**, the **Economic Developers Association of Canada**, **Community Futures Ontario**, **regional municipal associations**, and **provincial and federal ministries**. These partnerships are vital in keeping investment attraction a central part of Northern Ontario's revitalization, and working across the channels perpendicular with tourism ensures we are at the forefront of these discussions, and the sector is well-represented. By working directly with local and regional organizations - and in collaboration with other program pillars.

Destination Northern Ontario continues to build resilient, community-driven economic development that fosters sustainable and organic investment.

We thank all of our stakeholders for their continued trust and support, as we work collaboratively to build a better and brighter Northern Ontario.



Partnership

Fulfilling its partnership mandate, Destination Northern Ontario reached out across the North to identify potential initiatives that aligned with its business plan and pillar strategies.

Destination Northern Ontario implemented **32 partnered initiatives** working with **84 partners** and leveraging the province's investment three times over, resulting in **\$1.9 million** of partnered activity, **every \$ leveraged to \$3.26**.



32
PARTNERED
INITIATIVES



84
INDUSTRY
PARTNERS



\$1.9
MILLION
LEVERAGED

Interesting in working together?

At Destination Northern Ontario, we actively develop and manage partnership initiatives across key pillars: Product Development, Investment Attraction, Workforce Development & Industry Training, and Marketing.

Contact communications@destinationnortherontario.ca to discuss further.

Financial Report

Financial Report 2023-24

Area of focus	Actual	Budget	%
Governance & Administration	\$ 452,484.00	\$ 425,235.00	-6%
Product Development	\$ 292,492.00	\$ 350,000.00	16%
Investment Attraction	\$ 342,939.00	\$ 350,000.00	2%
Workforce Development & Industry Training	\$ 531,088.00	\$ 500,000.00	-6%
Marketing & Communications	\$ 1,706,232.00	\$ 1,700,000.00	-1%
Partnership	\$ 605,000.00	\$ 605,000.00	0%
Total MTCG Contribution	\$ 3,930,235.00	\$ 3,930,235.00	0%
Leveraged Contributions*	\$ 2,567,534.00		
Total \$		6,497,769.00	



Connect with us!

WEBSITES

Destination Northern Ontario / destinationnorthernontario.ca

Tourism Excellence North / tourismexcellencenorth.ca

Domestic Marketing / northernontario.travel

International Travel Trade / northernontarioitt.com

SOCIAL



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THANK YOU



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