



DESTINATION  
**NORTHERN  
ONTARIO**

**2026-27**

**Business Plan**

Ontario



[destinationnorthernontario.ca](https://destinationnorthernontario.ca)



2026-27

# Business Plan

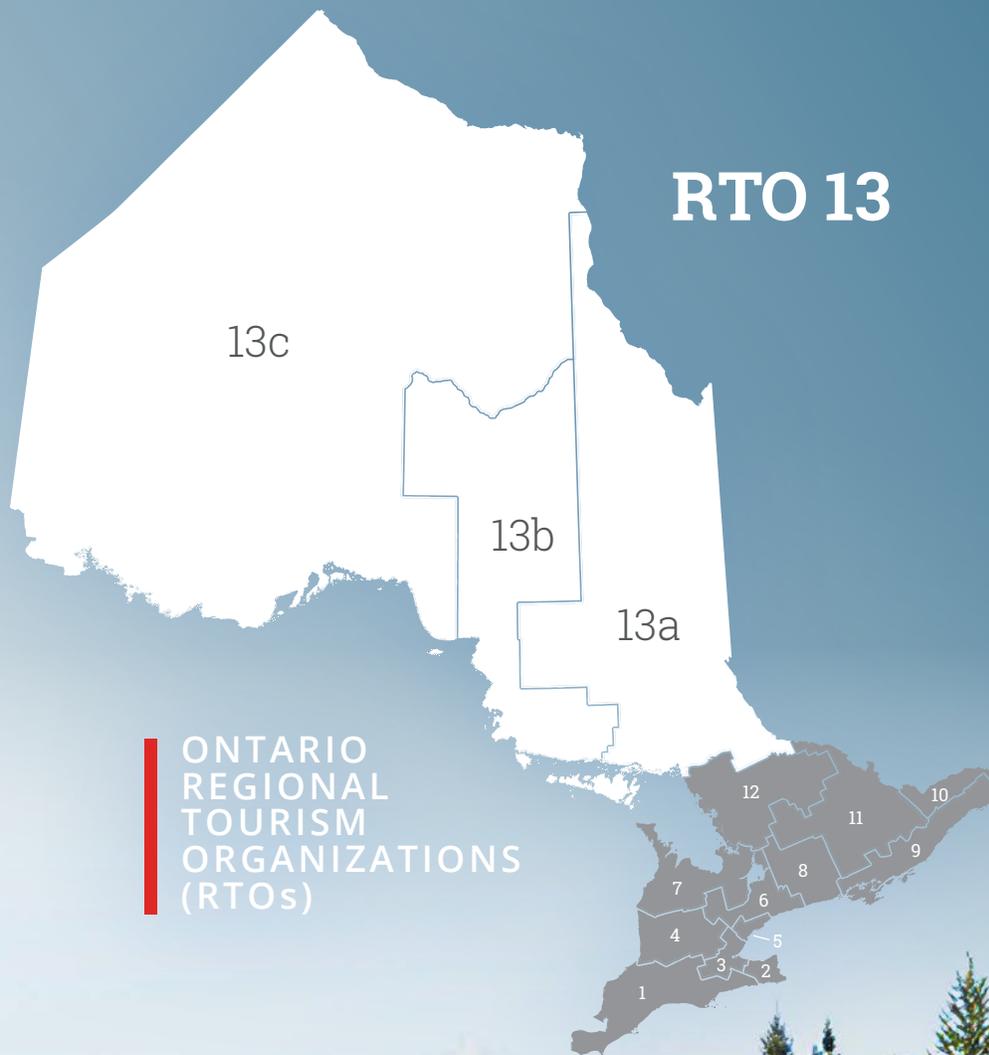
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PROTECT #1



ONTARIO #13



RTO 13

13c

13b

13a

ONTARIO  
REGIONAL  
TOURISM  
ORGANIZATIONS  
(RTOs)

12

11

10

9

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# President's Message

*As we begin the 2026–27 fiscal year, I am pleased to share the strategic direction of Destination Northern Ontario on behalf of our Board of Directors. This year marks an important shift as we move from recovery toward renewed growth, resilience, and long-term competitiveness.*

Northern Ontario's landscapes, communities, and authentic cultural experiences continue to set our region apart. While recent momentum is encouraging, we recognize ongoing systemic challenges and the need to re-engage our industry partners. Our focus this year is on strengthening collaboration, addressing persistent gaps, and supporting a more integrated, year-round visitor economy.

## Our priorities for 2026–27 include:

### 1. Developing Integrated Experiences in All Seasons

We will invest in Indigenous and outdoor experiences, unique accommodations, and seasonal programming to reduce seasonality and drive year-round visitation.

### 2. Fostering Regional Collaboration and Industry Evolution

Through coordinated marketing, service training, product development, and enhanced digital literacy, we will support seamless visitor journeys and a stronger, more inclusive industry.

### 3. Advocating for Strategic Infrastructure and Connectivity

Improving air, road, and rail access, along with signage, rest stops, and digital connectivity remains essential to building a more accessible and visitor-friendly region.

### 4. Championing Northern Identity and Environmental Stewardship

We will continue to highlight the character of Northern Ontario and our commitment to sustainability, supporting experiences that resonate with socially and environmentally conscious travellers.

### 5. Re-engaging and Supporting the Tourism Sector

We will work closely with operators to address systemic barriers, assist sectors still struggling with recovery, and strengthen workforce and business resilience.

### 6. Driving Incremental Growth

Our long-term goal is clear: return Northern Ontario's share of provincial tourism receipts to 10 percent through coordinated, data-informed strategies that drive sustainable growth.

Our progress depends on strong partnerships and shared commitment. Together, we will continue building a resilient, innovative, and inclusive tourism economy that delivers lasting benefits to our communities.



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

DESTINATION  
NORTHERN  
ONTARIO

# Executive Director's Message

Through ongoing collaboration with regional partners, industry stakeholders and the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming, we have laid the important groundwork for renewed sector engagement and sustainable growth. This year will be pivotal as we work to close systemic industry gaps, support struggling sectors, and re-establish Northern Ontario's share of provincial tourism receipts to 10%.

In the year ahead, our efforts will focus on developing integrated, high-quality tourism experiences that attract visitors in all seasons. By investing in Indigenous and outdoor experiences, unique accommodations, and innovative seasonal programming, we aim to combat regional seasonality and drive consistent, year-round visitation. These integrated experiences will help showcase the authentic character of Northern Ontario and elevate the region to a world-class standard.

Regional collaboration remains central to our approach. We will enhance coordinated marketing, advance service excellence, and support product development, emphasizing inclusivity, accessibility, and digital literacy to deliver seamless visitor journeys.



**David MacLachlan**  
Executive Director,

DESTINATION  
NORTHERN  
ONTARIO

*As we move into the 2026-27 fiscal year, we reflect on the continued progress we have made in strengthening Northern Ontario's tourism industry.*

Concurrently, we will continue to advocate for improvements in air, road, and rail access, as well as enhancements to signage, rest stops, and digital connectivity, ensuring the region is accessible and visitor-ready.

Sustainability and Northern identity will underpin all initiatives. By promoting responsible travel and community-led development, we will meet the growing expectations of socially and environmentally conscious travellers. Research and capacity building will guide our decisions, with data on travel trends and market behaviour, informing marketing strategies and product development. Collaboration with municipal and regional partners will ensure effective implementation and optimized resources.

Our award-winning Tourism Excellence North program will continue to advance workforce development through targeted training, mentorship, and technology integration, equipping the industry to adapt to evolving visitor expectations and close skills gaps. While the ongoing trade dispute with the United States presents uncertainty, it also provides opportunities for strategic growth. We remain committed to supporting the sector in mitigating risks and capitalizing on emerging market opportunities.

Together with our partners, we will position Northern Ontario as a global leader in sustainable, authentic tourism, offering extraordinary experiences that celebrate the uniqueness of our region.

# Executive Summary

Destination Northern Ontario (DNO) is entering a transformative phase as it navigates the post-pandemic tourism landscape and new dynamic challenges in real time.

The organization will continue to monitor the impacts of an impending trade war with the USA, how the region's tourism sector could be affected, and developing strategies to mitigate negative impacts. However, with challenge comes opportunity and Northern Ontario has increased its share of provincial tourism receipts outpacing provincial growth. Moving forward, DNO's Board of Directors has developed a five-year strategic plan to engage the sector, identify and bridge industry gaps, support recovery efforts, and drive growth in the regional tourism economy. This annual business and operational plan outlines the strategic focus for the 2026-27 fiscal year, emphasizing sustainable development, industry engagement, and economic revitalization.

## Strategic Focus For 2026-27

DNO's priorities are built around five key pillars set by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Gaming:

- 01 Product Development**  
Bringing high-quality tourism products and experiences to market.
- 02 Investment Attraction**  
Securing funding and support for sustainable tourism initiatives.
- 03 Workforce Development & Industry Training**  
Strengthening the sector through training and education.
- 04 Marketing and Communications**  
Promoting Northern Ontario as a premier tourism destination.
- 05 Partnerships**  
Fostering collaboration to leverage available resources and enhance industry effectiveness.

To support these pillars, DNO will focus on leadership, strategic planning, communication, relationship-building, and being an industry champion to elevate Northern Ontario's tourism sector.

## Integration with the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Gaming

Destination Northern Ontario aligns with the Regional Tourism Organizations Guide and the Ministry's Transfer Payment Agreement. Additionally, DNO is committed to implementing recommendations from the Auditor General's Value for Money Report to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in the tourism sector.



## Vision & Mission

*DNO envisions Northern Ontario as a distinctive tourism destination offering high-quality experiences, fostering entrepreneurship, and connecting communities on local, regional, and global scales. Its mission is to provide leadership in strategically guiding and championing the region's tourism industry through communication, collaboration, and strong partnerships.*

## Core Values

*Destination Northern Ontario is committed to:*

- |                  |              |                 |             |
|------------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------|
| ✓ Accountability | ✓ Leadership | ✓ Collaboration | ✓ Integrity |
| ✓ Transparency   | ✓ Innovation | ✓ Teamwork      |             |

## Goals for Northern Ontario Tourism Sector

- **Supporting** innovation and entrepreneurship through research and education.
- **Bringing** a critical mass of high-quality tourism products and experiences to market.
- **Ensuring** sustainable tourism development and strong product-market alignment.
- **Streamlining** services for operators to improve industry efficiency.

## Business Development & Operational Excellence Goals

*DNO's organizational objectives include:*

- **Conducting** industry research to enhance product development and visitor experiences.
- **Establishing** organizational excellence through corporate services, improved communication, and enhanced financial systems.
- **Strengthening** the workforce through specialized training and strategic partnerships.
- **Promoting** industry leadership in product development, investment attraction, workforce training, marketing, and partnership initiatives.

## Three Development Streams for Northern Ontario

01

- **Defend and Maintain**  
– Preserve and enhance existing tourism assets.

02

- **Inspire & Grow** – Develop new experiences to drive industry expansion.

03

- **Rise & Shine** – Elevate Northern Ontario's tourism offerings to be best-in-class.

## Destination Master Plan Recommendations



### Develop Integrated Experiences in All Seasons

Invest in Indigenous and outdoor experiences, unique accommodations and seasonal programming to combat seasonality and drive year-round visitation.



### Foster Regional Collaboration & Industry Evolution

Create seamless visitor journeys through coordinated marketing, service training, product development and industry support, emphasizing inclusivity and digital literacy.



### Advocate for Strategic Infrastructure & Connectivity Solutions

Improve air, road and rail access; enhance signage, rest stops and digital connectivity to make the region more accessible and visitor-friendly.



### Champion Authentic Northern Identity & Environmental Stewardship

Highlight Northern Ontario's character and commitment to sustainability and accessibility to appeal to socially and environmentally conscious travellers.



## TIAO Ontario Tourism Strategy

The Northern Ontario Destination Master Plan aligns with the TIAO strategy. Destination Northern Ontario will support the provincial strategy recommendations where appropriate at both the regional and provincial levels.

## Successes & Achievements

During the 2024-25 fiscal year, **NorthernOntario.Travel** experienced a notable growth in digital engagement, with total visits to regional subportals reaching **1,093,402** and U.S. organic traffic increasing **34%** to **846,883**, while domestic/regional traffic declined 22% YoY; the program exceeded minimum content targets with **138 articles**, completed **\$12,000** in boosted content spending, developed **21 new itineraries**.

# 1,093,402

VISITS TO REGIONAL SUBPORTALS

# +34%

INCREASE IN U.S. ORGANIC TRAFFIC

# 138

ARTICLES

# 21

NEW ITINERARIES



**Outpacing provincial tourism growth:** The region is exceeding provincial tourism growth rates, particularly in occupancy rates and attracting international visitors from the U.S. and overseas. This success is fueled by targeted marketing, enhanced travel partnerships, and improved accessibility, reinforcing the region's status as a premier destination.

The 2025 **Northern Ontario Tourism Summit** in **Thunder Bay, Ontario** received an overall **satisfaction rating of 4.6/5** and **over \$98,000** in sponsorship, marking a **record year of support for the event**. This strong backing highlights the growing confidence in Northern Ontario's tourism industry and will help enhance programming, networking, and collaboration opportunities for delegates from across the region.

**NORTHERN ONTARIO  
TOURISM SUMMIT:**

# 4.6 / 5

SATISFACTION RATING

# \$98,000

IN SPONSORSHIP **(A NEW RECORD!)**

## Budget & Funding Challenges

For the 2025-26 fiscal year, DNO's core Ministry funding allocation is **\$3,930,235**, with a target to **leverage an additional 50%** through industry partnerships and federal/provincial agreements. However, with no increase in funding since the regional tourism initiative's inception and rising operational costs, additional financial support would permit DNO to sustain and expand successful programs.



REGIONAL TOURISM ORGANIZATION 13 (RTO13) | www.destinationnorthernontario.ca

# Tourism

NORTHERN ONTARIO'S ECONOMIC ANTIDOTE

A **PROVEN** GROWTH ENGINE. A **SMART** INVESTMENT. AN **IMMEDIATE** RETURN.

### THE OPPORTUNITY AT HAND

- \$3.0 billion** projected tourism spend in 2025 — +50% over 2019
- \$2.8 billion** in visitor spending (2024) with **+9.6% year-over-year growth**
- Over \$900 million** in annual tax revenues generated for municipal, provincial, and federal governments
- Canadian tourism projected to hit a whopping **\$183 billion in 2025**
- 91%** of tourism revenues **stay in Northern Ontario**, supporting local businesses and communities
- Northern Ontario border crossings show the **least decline in U.S. visitation** compared to other regions

### WHY NORTHERN ONTARIO WINS

Northern Ontario outperforms other rural regions because it:

- Is not constrained** by airlift or capacity limitations
- Offers iconic, experience-driven tourism** aligned with global travel trends (nature, outdoor adventure, culture, wellness)
- Retains more tourism dollars locally** than most regions in Canada
- Attracts and sustains visitation year-round**, not just peak seasons

**Tourism demand is rising across all seasons**, and Northern Ontario is uniquely positioned to capture this growth.

## Call for Additional Investment

DNO draws comparisons to Newfoundland and Labrador, which has successfully positioned itself as a premier destination. With its closer proximity to markets and a broader range of tourism offerings, Northern Ontario has the potential to outpace this success. A short-term investment increase of \$5 million annually over 5 years would enable DNO to enhance destination marketing efforts and grow tourism receipts substantially with a goal of increasing tourism revenues by **\$1 billion** and to **10% of provincial receipts**, generating **over \$300 million in annual tax revenues** and creating an additional **14,000 full-time jobs** in rural and Indigenous communities. Destination Northern Ontario has participated in 2025 Budget Consultations with the Ministry of Finance, submitting a proposal for consideration.



[> View the Handout](#)



## Financial Plan (April 1, 2026 to March 31, 2027)

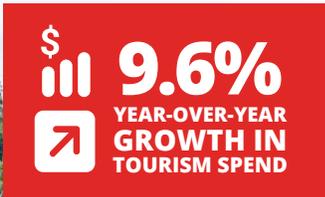
Area of Focus		% Total Budget	% including Partnership
Governance & Administration	\$ 550,235.00	14%	14%
Product Development	\$ 300,000.00	8%	12%
Investment Attraction	\$ 300,000.00	8%	9%
Workforce Development & Industry Training	\$ 425,000.00	11%	12%
Marketing	\$1,750,000.00	44%	53%
Partnerships	\$ 605,000.00	15%	Included in pillars
<b>Total Eligible Expenses</b>	<b>\$3,930,235.00</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Leveraged Contributions Goal	\$2,000,000.00	50%	Minimum \$605,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5,930,235.00</b>	<b>150%</b>	

# Regional Overview & Assessment

Tourism is a major economic driver in Northern Ontario with receipts ranking higher per capita than those of other regions in the province and many provinces in the country.

Tourism is the **largest employer of young workers** in the province and Destination Northern Ontario's research reveals that **40%** of the workforce in the region, as well as **one-in-four businesses** are tourism-related. In 2024, tourism receipts in the region accounted for **\$2.8 billion** in spending, **9.6% year-over-year growth**.

In 2025, Northern Ontario's hospitality sector showed strong growth, with hotel occupancy reaching nearly **79%** and RevPAR increasing **11%** from the previous year. Short-term rentals also performed well, with ADR up over **20%** in the region. Overall, both hotels and rentals are seeing rising demand and higher revenues, reflecting a healthy tourism market.



Statistics Canada's National Travel Survey and Visitor Travel Survey 2019; CBRE Hotels Trends in the Hotel Industry National Market Report, AirDNA, Statistics Canada's Business Register 2019, MTCS.

# RTO 13

# Regional Insights

## Spending Patterns & Growth

Tourism spending in RTO 13 continues to show robust growth, driven by both domestic and international visitors. In 2024, spending reached \$2.8 billion, marking a 9.6% year-on-year growth. International spending has surged, rising from **\$7 million** in 2018 to **\$48 million** in 2023, and reaching **\$81 million** in 2024. U.S. travellers comprise **14%** of the total spending, growing at **13.7%** over the past five years, reinforcing its status as a key secondary market. Overseas markets, though smaller, have exhibited **21.3%** short-term growth, indicating further potential for international engagement.

In 2024, total tourism spending in Ontario reached **\$29.1 billion**, with transportation playing a vital role, accounting for approximately **17%** of this total, or about **\$4.95 billion**. This significant allocation underscores the importance of mobility in enabling tourists to explore destinations effectively. Notably, the 6% increase over 2023 combined with a **4.5% 5-year Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR)** indicates strong recovery and possibly improvements in transportation infrastructure or increased mobility. The growth in this category suggests that tourists are travelling more within Ontario, benefiting from better connectivity and more accessible travel options.

## International Tourism is Surging



**\$81 Million** (2024)  
**\$48 Million** (2023)  
**\$7 Million** (2018)



## Total Spend in Tourism in Ontario



**Approx. 17%**  
**transportation related**

## Occupancy & Pricing Trends

**In 2025, Northern Ontario saw improvements across all key metrics compared to 2024:**

- **Occupancy Percentage:** Increased across all sub-regions, with the largest growth in North West Ontario (Region 13c) at +3.6 points, bringing overall occupancy in Northern Ontario to 51.6%.
- **Average Daily Rate (ADR):** All regions experienced growth, with North East Ontario (Region 13a) posting the highest increase at 10.1%, reaching an ADR of \$227.83.
- **Revenue Per Available Rental (RevPAR):** Strong growth was recorded in every sub-region, with North East Ontario again leading at +12.7%, reaching \$110.32 per available rental. The overall RevPAR for Northern Ontario rose to \$115.18, a 12.2% increase from 2024.



## Sub-regional Highlights

### Vacation Rental Market

SUB-REGION	OCCUPANCY GROWTH	ADR	RevPAR
North East Ontario (13a)	Steady occupancy growth (+1.1 points)	+10.1%	+12.7%.
North Central Ontario (13b)	Occupancy (+1.7 points)	+8.9%	+12.4%.
North West Ontario (13c)	Strongest occupancy gain (+3.6 points)	+4.3%	+11.4%

Northern Ontario's vacation rental market is showing healthy growth in occupancy, pricing, and revenue per unit, with North West Ontario showing the most significant occupancy improvement and North East Ontario leading in revenue growth.

Source: Ontario.ca, Short-Term Rental Statistics, DataSet, September 2025

### Hotel Market

In 2025, Northern Ontario's hotel performance showed strong growth, with September occupancy reaching **78.6%**, up **3.4%** from 2024.

The average daily rate (ADR) increased by 6.2% to \$186.43, while revenue per available room (RevPAR) rose 11% to \$146.58. Across Ontario, hotel occupancy reached 60% compared to 2024. Short-term rentals in May 2025 also saw gains, with Northern Ontario occupancy at

48.7% (+1.7% from 2024) and ADR rising 21% to \$229, while Ontario overall experienced 48% occupancy (+3%) and ADR of \$312 (+28%). In rural areas in 2024, occupancy increased by 3% and revenue grew by 4%, reflecting steady demand in these regions.

#### Hotels across Northern Ontario showed solid gains in 2025:

- **Occupancy:** Increased in all regions, with North Western Ontario seeing the largest growth (+5.3 points) and Thunder Bay leading at 74.2% occupancy.
- **Average Daily Rate (ADR):** Modest growth overall, with North Western Ontario posting a 5.9% increase to \$202.75.
- **Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR):** Strongest gains in North Western Ontario, up 14.1%, reaching \$149.22, with Thunder Bay achieving \$150.06, a 15.6% increase.

Source: Ontario.ca, Hotel Statistics, DataSet, September 2025

## Ontario Border Crossings

Visits from the USA continue to lag 2019 numbers. The resource-based tourism sector, especially in Northwest Ontario, is reliant on the U.S. market.

In February 2024, border crossings from all key international markets (except the U.S.) surpassed February 2023 levels but did not reach pre-pandemic levels (February 2019) by a 12.6% gap; U.S. entries grew 19.1% versus February 2022 but declined 11.5% compared to February 2019.

In 2025, Northern Ontario's eastern border crossings at Sault Ste. Marie and Pigeon River are outpacing the provincial average while border crossings at Fort Frances and Rainy River continue to lag.

Source: Destination Ontario: Ontario Tourism Industry Health Check August 2024 – Ontario's Border Crossings

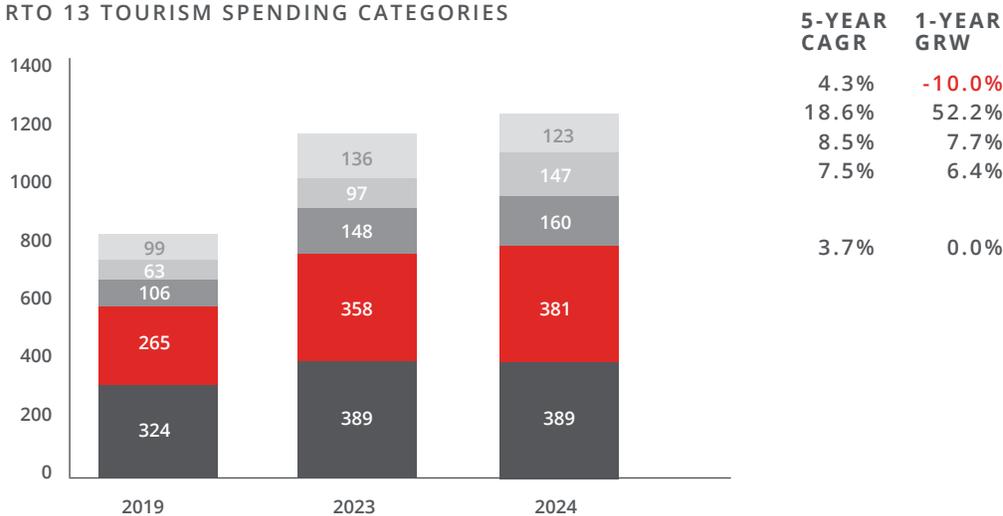


## Tourism Spending

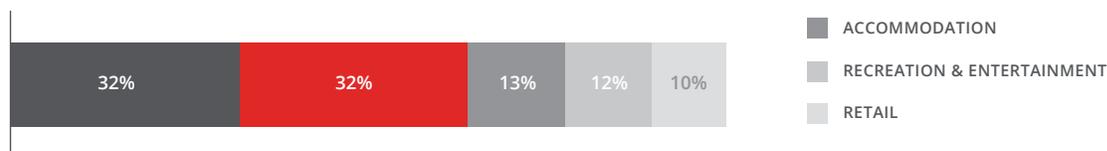
In 2024, tourism receipts in the region accounted for \$2.8 billion in spending, 9.6% year-over-year growth supporting roughly one in four businesses and significant employment, with projections for continued growth and government investment in marketing, infrastructure, and Indigenous tourism initiatives to boost this sector's contribution to the region's economic diversification.

- International spending outperformed Domestic spending, with the two markets growing by 24.3% and 3.4%, respectively. Total spending for the period equaled \$195 million for International and \$1 billion for Domestic.
- The industry has grown consistently over the past five years, with a total average growth of 6.9% per year since 2019. Domestic and International spending grew at 5.9% and 13.3% per year, respectively, over the past five years.
- While the industry's short-term monthly growth shows some volatility, its long-term growth is stable and shows sustainable growth potential.
- Transportation, Food and Beverage are the dominant categories in the region, accounting for 32% each of total spending. Food and Beverage show consistent growth, but Transportation stagnated over the past year and showed low long-term growth.

RTO 13 TOURISM SPENDING CATEGORIES



RTO 13 SPENDING BY CATEGORIES (CURRENT YEAR)



Source: Destination Canada Data Collective Lodging Aligned Spend Reporting 2024 YTD Ontario

## Trends & Visitor patterns

### → High Interest in Outdoor Activities

An overwhelming **70.8%** of respondents expressed a love for outdoor activities, with another **26.3%** enjoying them occasionally. This signals a strong market for nature-oriented experiences.

### → Top Activities

Sightseeing led with **72.2%**, followed by hiking (**65.2%**), camping (**62.8%**), and beach activities (**59.8%**). Activities like cycling saw less interest, highlighting where investments might have the highest ROI.

### → Interest in Indigenous Culture

Nearly half (**48.5%**) expressed significant interest in Indigenous cultural experiences, with an additional **43.6%** open to learning more. This indicates a growing demand for culturally immersive travel, particularly in regions with rich Indigenous heritage.

### → Food as a Travel Experience

Food exploration ranks high, with **70%** of participants eager to try different culinary offerings. Culinary experiences could be a major attraction in the travel package, especially for regions with unique food traditions.

### → Seeking Relaxation

A relaxing getaway was the primary travel motivator (**56.6%**), with cultural immersion and adventure activities appealing to smaller segments. Marketing efforts might focus on tranquility, scenic beauty, and rejuvenation rather than extreme adventure.

### → Reliance on Word of Mouth and Social Media

Friends and family recommendations are influential (**67.3%**), followed closely by social media (**41.3%**) and blogs (**40.9%**). This highlights the importance of building social proof and tapping into community-driven marketing.

### → Family and Partner Travel

The majority travel with family (**44.5%**) or a partner (**39.5%**), indicating a preference for group-oriented or couple-friendly accommodation and activities.

### → Nature Accommodation

Lodges or cabins (**67.8%**) and camping (**52.1%**) are preferred ways to experience nature, suggesting a trend towards rustic but comfortable lodging that connects travellers with the environment.

*Sourced from NorthernOntario.Travel Tourism Tech Travel Intentions within the Soft Outdoors Travel Segment Survey Results*

## Travel is Prioritized

**Travel is a priority:** Even in today's economic climate, consumers globally are allocating a larger share of wallet to experiences over goods, with spending on experiences up **65%**, while spending on things is up 12%, compared to 2019, as of March 2023. **48%** of Canadians are prioritizing travel at the expense of other spending.

Canadians are ready to roam, let's keep their adventure close to home. Despite the anticipated economic slowdown and the allure of international destinations, domestic spending is expected to maintain its growth trajectory. Domestic travel was vital in the early stages of recovery. In 2022, tourism spending reached **97%** of 2019 levels. In 2023, domestic spending will reach **\$80 billion, 4.2%** more than in 2019.



Travellers from the **UK, Germany, and France** hold positive and well-informed perceptions of Canada and Ontario specifically. Compared to major global destinations like Australia, Japan, and the U.S., Canada was rated more favourably in overall appeal. The most encouraging insight? A majority of respondents view Canada as a destination worth visiting on its own, not just as a stopover during a broader North American tour.

Ontario's identity as a vibrant, safe, and inclusive destination with natural beauty and cosmopolitan experiences is a clear differentiator. Even amid economic pressures, intent to travel remains moderately high.

Globally, consumer spend on travel experiences is up

**+ 65%**

**48%**

of Canadians are prioritizing travel at the expense of other spending

Majority of survey respondents view

**Canada** as a destination worth visiting on it's own

Source: Destination Canada, Tourism Outlook: Unlocking Opportunities for the Sector  
Sourced: Destination Ontario, EU Traveller Pulse Survey Results



## Provincial

Ontario maintains a strong brand position as a leisure destination. Roughly seven in ten travellers rate Ontario positively, with particularly strong perceptions among Ontario residents and U.S. markets. Western Canada shows a significant improvement in brand perception compared to the previous month.

**Ontario is widely associated with:**



**Unique Experiences**



**Cultural Diversity**



**Sustainability for short getaways**



**Strong overall value**

Advocacy remains strongest among Ontario residents and U.S. Fly travellers, as reflected in Net Promoter Scores. This growing likelihood to recommend suggests increasing word-of-mouth potential heading into future travel seasons.

Interest in travelling to Ontario over the next 12 months remains strong, particularly among Ontario residents, U.S. Fly travellers, and Atlantic Canada. Western Canada shows notable month-over-month growth in intent, while U.S. Drive travellers show a decline.

Summer continues to dominate planned travel, with July and August as peak months. June and September present emerging opportunities, particularly for markets planning further ahead.

*Source: Destination Ontario, Ontario Travel & Tourism Monthly, November 2025*



## Workforce Overview

Ontario’s labour market showed modest year-over-year growth in 2025, with employment gains concentrated in full-time positions. However, employment growth in the province lagged behind the national average, and the unemployment rate remained higher than Canada’s overall rate.

### Unemployment Trends

Ontario’s unemployment rate averaged 8.3% in Q3 2025, exceeding the national rate of 7.3%. In September, the provincial unemployment rate increased slightly to 7.9%, up from 7.7% in August, while Canada’s unemployment rate held steady at 7.1%.

### Outlook

Although Ontario’s unemployment rate has risen steadily from its historic low of 5.0% in April 2023, the current rate remains only slightly above the long-term provincial average of 7.4%. A similar trend is evident nationally. Rising unemployment rates may be partly attributed to rapid population growth in recent years combined with softer labour demand in recent months.

Source: Ontario.ca, Ontario Employment Reports, July - September 2025

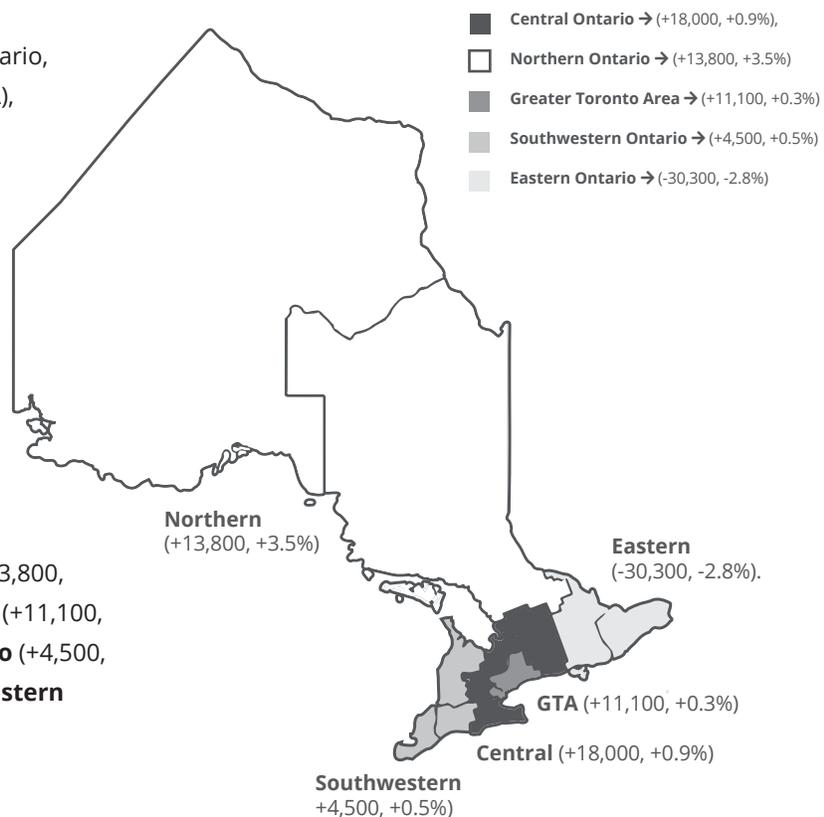
### Geographic Region

The map shows Ontario’s five regions:

Northern Ontario, Eastern Ontario, Southwestern Ontario, Central Ontario, and the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), which are based on the Ministry of Finance’s groupings of Statistics Canada’s economic regions.

The numbers in brackets show employment changes in thousands and percentages between the third quarters of 2024 and 2025. Employment increased in four of the five Ontario regions led by **Central Ontario**

(+18,000, +0.9%), followed by **Northern Ontario** (+13,800, +3.5%), the **Greater Toronto Area** (+11,100, +0.3%), and **Southwestern Ontario** (+4,500, +0.5%). Employment declined in **Eastern Ontario** (-30,300, -2.8%).



Source: Ontario.ca, Ontario Employment Reports, July - September 2025

**Industry Highlights**

- **Accommodation and Food Services** continued to see employment growth, though some subsectors remain below pre-pandemic staffing levels.
- **Recreation and Entertainment** experienced solid gains, with employment growth exceeding labour force growth.
- **Transportation** showed mixed month-to-month results but remained stronger than last year overall.
- **Travel Services** data was limited and should be interpreted with caution.

*Sourced: Tourism HR Canada, Canadian Tourism Labour Market Snapshot: October 2025*

## Provincial Summary

The following table provides October 2025 summaries for the provinces, focusing on tourism and its five industry groups.

Comparison data is provided for the larger provincial economy, as a benchmarking reference. Seasonally unadjusted estimates are provided for labour force, employment, and hours worked, and the final row of each table indicates tourism’s share of each of these metrics. The share of work that is part-time (as opposed to full-time) is also provided, as a rough indicator of the labour composition, as well as the unemployment rates.

### ONTARIO

SECTOR	LABOUR FORCE	EMPLOYMENT	HOURS WORKED	PT SHARE OF EMPLOYMENT	UNEMPLOYMENT
<b>All sectors</b>	<b>8,876,000</b>	<b>8,252,000</b>	<b>251,234,700</b>	<b>17.9%</b>	<b>7.0%</b>
<b>Tourism sector</b>	<b>848,600</b>	<b>815,200</b>	<b>21,210,700</b>	<b>40.8%</b>	<b>3.9%</b>
Accommodations	60,300	56,600	1,821,300	12.0%	6.3%
Food & Beverage Services	399,800	381,500	9,558,300	47.5%	4.6%
Recreation & Entertainment	222,800	213,900	4,777,700	51.1%	3.9%
Transportation	154,500	151,900	4,769,300	21.3%	1.7%
Travel Services	11,300	11,300	284,100	23.0%	-
<b>Tourism as % of all sectors</b>	<b>9.6%</b>	<b>9.9%</b>	<b>8.4%</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>

*Source: Tourism HR Canada, Canadian Tourism Labour Market Snapshot: October 2025*

## Northern Ontario Transportation

Northern Ontario covers a vast geographic area but has a low population density, making efficient transportation networks essential for economic development and community connectivity.

Tourism is a key sector in the region, supporting local businesses and attracting visitors from across Canada and beyond. However, air travel has faced ongoing challenges, including reduced flight availability, high operational costs, and aging infrastructure, which limit accessibility for both residents and tourists. Road transportation also presents obstacles, such as harsh weather conditions, safety concerns, limited passing opportunities, and infrastructure vulnerabilities that disrupt mobility and trade.

Addressing these issues requires coordinated efforts from federal and provincial governments, as well as local stakeholders. Solutions include increased financial support for northern airports, improved road infrastructure through highway expansions and upgrades, and the integration of visitor services into transportation planning. Additionally, expanding cellular coverage and EV charging stations will enhance accessibility and modernize travel options. Investing in these improvements will strengthen economic opportunities, improve safety, and ensure better connectivity for Northern Ontario's communities and industries.





## Rail Transportation

Effective transportation in Northern Ontario originated with the construction of the Canadian Pacific, Canadian National, Algoma Central and Ontario Northland railways. Historic trains such as the Canadian, the Polar Bear Express, the Agawa Canyon Tour Train, and the Sudbury-WhiteRiver Budd Car, continue to provide vital passenger rail service in the region and demonstrate the potential for sustainable, growth-oriented tourism. The return of the Northlander in 2026 will provide another building block for rail tourism growth and future success. With support from the provincial and federal governments and some flexibility from the mainline railways, Northern Ontario could be home to two or three additional rail tourism experiences, designed to attract high-yield international and domestic visitors.



## Air Transportation

The Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO), through its Remote Northern Transportation Office (RNTO), owns and operates 29 remote airports in Northern Ontario to provide year-round air access. Many other airports in the region are community-owned, serving larger municipalities and regional centres. Scheduled flights and passenger traffic across Northern Ontario have declined significantly from 2019 to 2023, with air travel accounting for just 3% of all visitors arriving by air.



- **Sudbury** airport flights decreased from 4,800 in 2019 to 2,380 in 2023, a reduction of over 50%.
- **North Bay** saw scheduled flights drop from approximately 1,900 in 2019 to 1,000 in 2023, a difference of 47%.
- **Timmins** experienced a decrease from over 4,000 flights in 2019 to 2,100 in 2023.
- **Greater Sudbury** Airport experienced a decrease from 254,722 passengers in 2019 to 130,000 passengers in 2023.
- + **Thunder Bay** airport is on pace for 720,000 passengers in 2024 and slightly ahead from previous year. The airports pre-pandemic peak was 860,000 passengers in 2018.
- **Sault Ste. Marie's** scheduled flights declined from almost 4,300 in 2019 to 2,669 in 2023.

**94%** of all visitor arrivals in Northern Ontario occur by road.



### KEY STATISTICS

Northern Ontario’s road transportation network is crucial for connecting communities and supporting economic development across the region. It includes **11,000 km** of provincial highways, with key corridors as Highway 11, Highways 69/400, and Highway 17 linking population centres and industries to the rest of the province. The network also encompasses municipal roads, and forest access roads, which are vital for accessing remote and natural resources.

Approximately **8,400** truck trips occur daily on the northern provincial highways. These trips move more than **87,000** tons of cargo valued at over **\$200 million daily**. The average distance travelled per truck is about **350 km daily**. Additionally, the road network plays a pivotal role in supporting tourism, as a significant **94% of all visitor arrivals in Northern Ontario occur by road**, underscoring the importance of maintaining and enhancing this infrastructure.

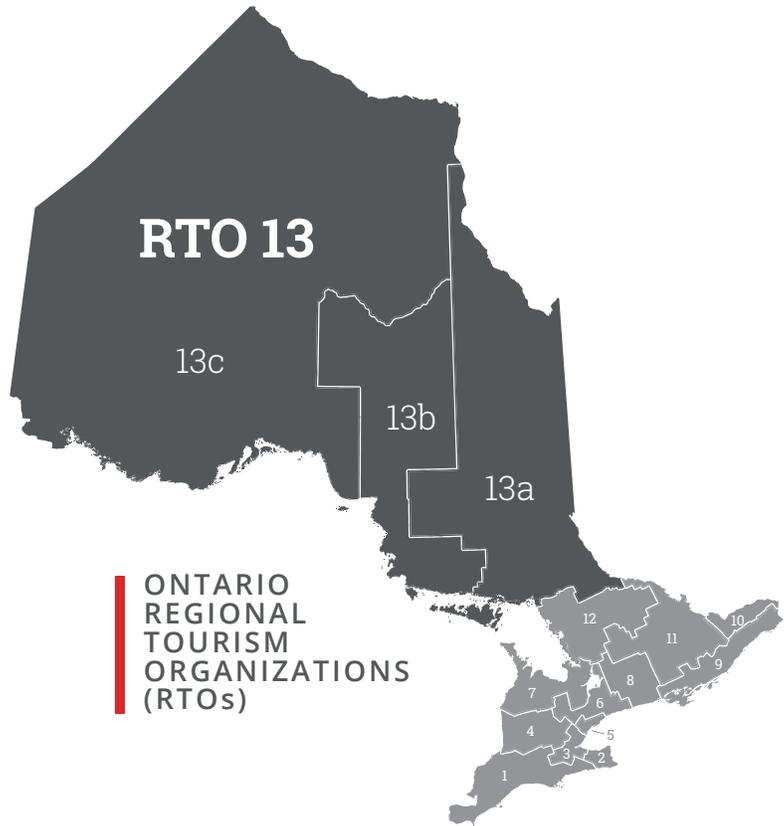
Source: Destination Canada Data Collective Lodging Aligned Spend Reporting 2024 YTD Ontario  
 Sault Ste. Marie Airport Development Corporation: News - Air travel recovery skips northern Ontario as regional airports face service cuts and rising costs - August 14 2024  
 CBCnews: Air travel recovery skips northern Ontario as regional airports face service cuts and rising costs | CBC News  
 Northern Policy Institute



# Business & Operational Overview

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, composed 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.



DESTINATION ONTARIO



## DESTINATION NORTHERN ONTARIO

# Board of Directors

### 2026-27 Board of Directors

NAME	POSITION	SECTOR
Marty Kalagian	President	13B Private Sector - Retired
George Stivrins	Vice President	13A Private Sector
Betty McGie	Treasurer	13B Private Sector
Lori Branch	Secretary	13C Private Sector
Rod Duhaime	Director	13B First Nation
Tammy Frick	Director	13A Not for Profit
Shannon McMullan	Director	13A Private Sector
Ray Nadeau	Director	13C Private Sector
Will Pawlowski	Director	13C Private Sector
Ian Wood	Director	13A Municipal Government - Retired

### 2026-27 Government Advisors

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

DESTINATION NORTHERN ONTARIO

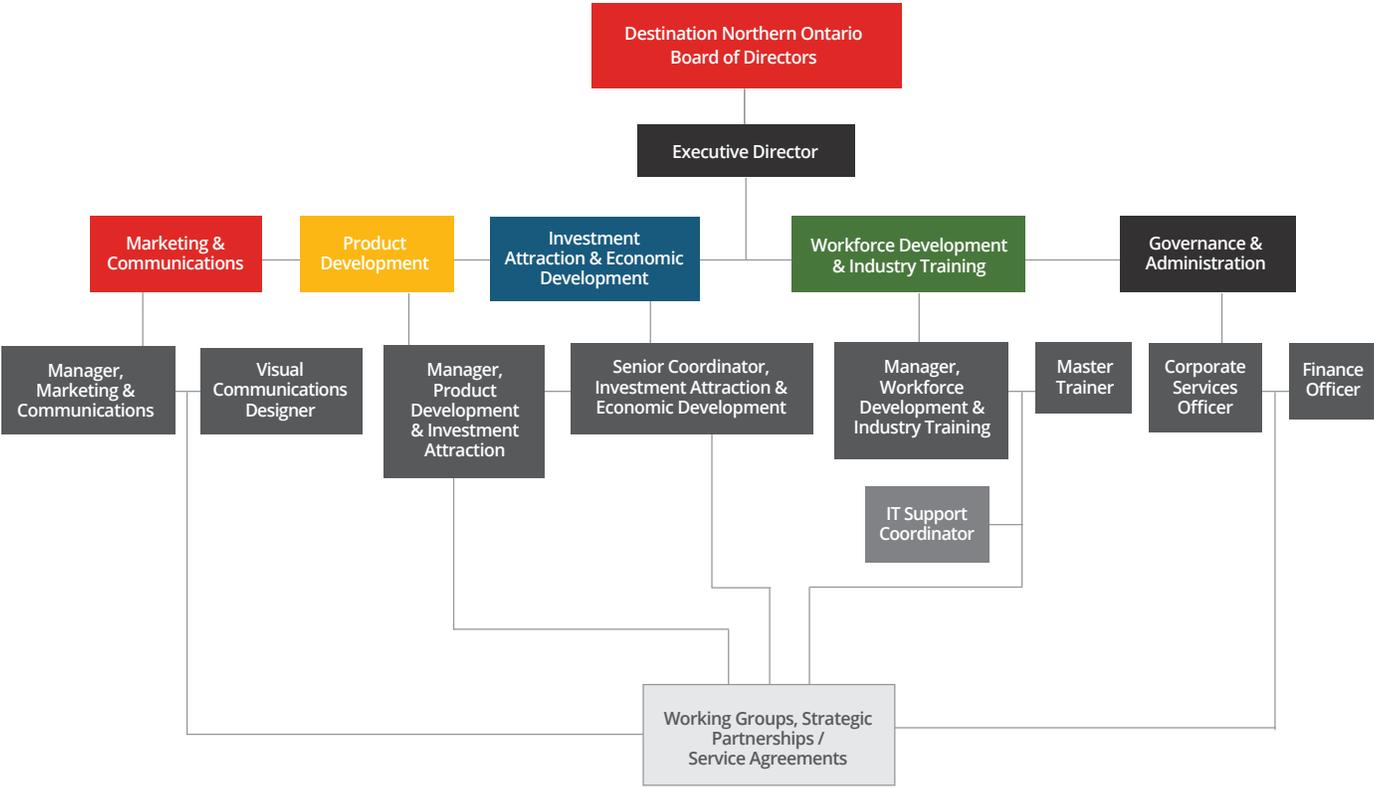
# Staff Directory

Staff complement is dependent upon MTCG and MLTSD funding.

NAME	POSITION
<b>GOVERNANCE &amp; ADMINISTRATION</b>	
<b>David MacLachlan</b>	Executive Director
<b>Bobbi-Lynn Pallot</b>	Corporate Services Officer
<b>Kathy Carlson</b>	Finance Officer
<b>PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT</b>	
<b>Megan Boyd</b>	Manager, Product Development & Investment Attraction
<b>MARKETING &amp; COMMUNICATIONS</b>	
<b>Sara Currier</b>	Manager, Marketing & Communications
<b>Tiina Keranen</b>	Visual Communications Designer
<b>INVESTMENT ATTRACTION &amp; ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>	
<b>Gord Knowles</b>	Senior Coordinator, Investment Attraction & Economic Development
<b>WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT &amp; INDUSTRY TRAINING</b>	
<b>Gillian McCullough</b>	Manager, Workforce Development & Industry Training
<b>Naza Obasi</b>	Information Technology Support Coordinator
<b>DESTINATION NORTHERN ONTARIO SUPPORT TEAMS – UNDER CONTRACT</b>	
<b>Ian McMillan</b>	Business Development & International Marketing Specialist
<b>Marla Tremblay</b>	Francophone Tourism Specialist
<b>Mike Wozny</b>	Strategic Initiatives Coordinator
<b>Karen Peacock</b>	Master Trainer

DESTINATION NORTHERN ONTARIO'S

# Organizational Structure



An important component to Destination Northern Ontario's success is the dedication of the Board towards implementation of all strategic objectives, and adherence to Board policies to ensure that appropriate governance, sound advice, and oversight of the organization are being met.

Furthermore, the Board will continue to monitor progress to ensure that Destination Northern Ontario is successful in reaching its overall goals and objectives. The Board of Directors will meet in person a minimum of four times throughout the year.

The Board of Directors has developed and maintains a Succession Plan for all Board and Staff positions ensuring both smooth transition and renewal.

## Core Priority Pillars

Destination Northern Ontario has dedicated itself in taking a leadership role to guide Northern Ontario’s tourism industry. As such, this business plan not only incorporates Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming program pillars but also includes goals to achieve Organizational Excellence.

The following table highlights Destination Northern Ontario’s core priority pillars that allow the organization to meet Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming reporting requirements:

PROGRAM PILLARS	DESTINATION NORTHERN ONTARIO OPERATIONAL AREAS / KEY PROGRAMS
<b>Corporate Services &amp; Governance</b>	→ Governance, Organizational Excellence (Administration), Outreach.
<b>Product Development</b>	→ Engaging the sector and supporting growth in priority products and experiences. → Improved visitor services.
<b>Investment Attraction</b>	→ Engaging the sector, supporting, and facilitating investment attraction across the region.
<b>Workforce Development &amp; Industry Training</b>	→ Supporting recovery and growth through the Tourism Excellence North and Forward Motion programs.
<b>Marketing &amp; Communications</b>	→ Providing marketing tools and tactics to grow tourism across the region. → Engaging the sector.
<b>Partnerships</b>	→ Reflect all pillar areas.

For the organization to demonstrate leadership, the staffing plan has been developed to reflect pillar area leadership, with the following roles:

- Manager, Product Development
- Senior Coordinator, Investment Attraction & Economic Development
- Manager, Workforce Development and Industry Training
- Manager, Marketing and Communications
- Corporate Services Officer, Governance and Administration

Destination Northern Ontario's Executive Director manages all Senior Coordinators and is tasked with ensuring that initiatives under staff leadership are completed for each pillar area. The Executive Director along with the Senior Coordinators form a senior management team.

Destination Northern Ontario has increased its resources this fiscal to support additional investment attraction activities. Overall, the organization plays a supporting role when it comes to investment attraction. However, Destination Northern Ontario will play an active and leading role in finding solutions for sustainable regional tourism development.

It is not expected that all staff will be located at the Destination Northern Ontario office in Sault Ste. Marie. However, Senior Coordinators with office space in other locations will be required to act as representatives of Destination Northern Ontario for their respective community and sub-region. As such, it is expected that during the hiring process, Destination Northern Ontario ensures adequate representation in all three sub-regions. In keeping with Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming guidelines and Destination Northern Ontario's mission to establish a leadership role in the various program pillar initiatives, salaries are allocated to affiliated pillar areas.

## Performance & Reporting

The Executive Director and Senior Coordinators will monitor implementation of initiatives in the annual business plan. Performance will be measured in each of the pillar areas. This will be accomplished through internal reporting, face-to-face team lead meetings, teleconferences and senior staff working directly with the Executive Director.

The Board will monitor progress and performance through a combination of dashboard reports, pillar updates and financial reports as well as review Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming performance and progress reports.

Destination Northern Ontario will submit on-time reports to the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming, including progress and final reports, financial documents and appropriate attestations identified in the transfer payment agreement.

# 01

## Governance & Administration

### OBJECTIVE

The primary objective to guide Governance & Administration for Destination Northern Ontario over the next year is:

*To ensure strong governance and organizational excellence while enhancing product development, investment attraction, workforce development and industry training, marketing, communications, and partnership development in the tourism sector.*

This pillar is managed by the Executive Director, Corporate Services Officer, and Finance Officer with support from the Office Administrator. They will organize themselves around three management functions to ensure organizational excellence:

1. Operations.
2. Financial Administration.
3. Office Administration.

Staff follow Destination Northern Ontario's Operational Policies and Processes Manual, Health and Safety Plan, Succession Plan, Risk Management Plan, Strategic Plan, Destination Master Plan, and annualized business plans.

Staff will continue to ensure the workplace remains safe and productive by monitoring and responding in real time to internal and external pressures and demands. The organization has made strides to improve efficiency, accuracy and timelines.

With respect to the Board, there are Board Governance Policies in place, and the Board will monitor its own processes and progress with initiatives identified in the strategic and annualized business plans.

# Governance & Administration | Strategic Focus

01 Priority Action Area					
<p><b>Enhance</b> strength and effectiveness of Destination Northern Ontario through good governance and Board renewal, to cultivate a culture of integrity and accountability, leading to positive performance and sustainability.</p>					
<b>\$65,000.00</b>					
Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status	
<b>a</b>	Adhere to Board governance policies and procedures, compliance with provincial conflict of interest policies, and conduct annual review(s).	The Board, Executive Director (ED), and Corporate Services Officer (CSO) monitor and review governance policies.	Enhanced organizational excellence with 100% of policies followed and reviewed.	Q1-4	Continued
<b>b</b>	Maintain a five-year strategic plan and develop annualized business plans in accordance with MTCG directives.	The Board of Directors monitors and contributes to the process led by ED with support of senior staff. TPA secured.	Enhanced organizational excellence with 1 annual business plan completed and submitted successfully to MTCG.	Q3-4	Continued

02 Priority Action Area					
<p><b>Ensure</b> staffing plan aligns with strategic plan and consistently monitor resource allocations to ensure long-term organizational excellence, stability, and sustainability.</p>					
<b>\$300,235.00</b>					
Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status	
<b>a</b>	Review resource needs for all Destination Northern Ontario (DNO) programs including new funding opportunities.	Activities are coordinated and managed by the Executive Director and/or Corporate Services Officer and supported by the Office Administrator.	Enhanced organizational excellence with 100% initiatives and reporting completed.  Increased programming with budget leveraged by a minimum of \$2 million/50%.	Q1-4	Continued
<b>b</b>	Adhere to and monitor compliance to DNO policies, manuals, and plans. Undertake an annual review to ensure relevance.	CSO communicates, monitors, and conducts annual review.	Improved organizational excellence with 100% staff compliance and 100% policies reviewed.	Q1-4	Continued

# Governance & Administration | Strategic Focus

## 03 Priority Action Area

**Maintain** physical office premises and provide adequate resources to ensure successful execution of the business plan. .

**\$60,000.00**

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
<b>a</b> Maintain a productive workspace for all employees.	Offices maintained in Sault Ste. Marie and Sudbury, with staff working remotely where they reside more than 25km from the nearest DNO office.	Increased presence with 2 offices open for business and 3 employees working remotely.	Q1-4	Continued
<b>b</b> Encourage staff to meet and work collaboratively from across the region.	Working and meeting space created that provides for video conferencing.	Increased alignment, collaboration, and effectiveness with connective meeting and working space in both Sault Ste. Marie and Sudbury resulting in a minimum of 26 biweekly meetings.	Q1-4	Continued

## 04 Priority Action Area

**Confidently manage** Destination Northern Ontario finances following all policies and procedures.

**\$60,000.00**

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
<b>a</b> Track performance and provide reports to funders as required and on-time.	CSO completes funding reports with support from ED, Finance Officer (FO) Office Admin, Senior Staff, and team members as appropriate.	Enhanced organization excellence and leveraged resources with 100% of funding reports completed accurately and submitted on-time.	Q1-4	Continued
<b>b</b> Identify and monitor priorities/initiatives that require compliance with Destination Northern Ontario's Risk Management Plan.	CSO manages the process with support of senior staff.	Enhanced organizational excellence with 100% staff compliance on all appropriate initiatives.	Q1-4	Continued
<b>c</b> Maintain relationships with legal and accounting professionals.	CSO and FO retain legal and audit teams.	Enhanced organizational excellence with 100% of audit(s) completed on-time and clean.	Q1-4	Continued
<b>d</b> Follow DNO financial policies and processes.	FO with support of CSO and office admin monitors compliance.	Enhanced organizational excellence with 100% of policies followed.	Q1-4	Continued

## 05 Priority Action Area

**Board** and staff travel as necessary to execute business plan pillar initiatives.

**\$30,000.00**

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
<b>a</b> All travel is consistent with DNO travel policy.	All staff follow policy that is monitored by CSO with all travel approved by ED.	Enhanced organizational excellence with 100% staff compliance.	Q1-4	Continued

## Governance & Administration | Strategic Focus

### 06 Priority Action Area

Maintain membership in key tourism industry organizations.

**\$20,000.00**

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
<b>a</b> Maintain memberships in industry organizations.	Memberships maintained in, <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Destinations International</li> <li>Travel Industry Association of Canada (TIAC)</li> <li>Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC)</li> <li>Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO)</li> <li>Northern Ontario Tourist Outfitters Association (NOTO)</li> </ol>	Increased collaboration, effectiveness, knowledge, and capacity with 5 memberships maintained.	Q1-4	Continued
<b>b</b> Champion Northern Ontario's tourism sector by being a productive member by contributing industry knowledge.	Staff participate on boards, committees and participate in events.	Increased knowledge of Northern Ontario's tourism sector through staff participation in 6 industry organizations.	Q1-4	Continued
<b>c</b> Access full range of member benefits.	Staff access and participate in membership benefits.	Increased capacity with 4 lead staff accessing professional development benefits.	Q1-4	Continued

### 07 Priority Action Area

Ensure organization is adequately resourced around information technology.

**\$15,000.00**

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
<b>a</b> Conduct annual review to ensure staff and board are adequately resourced.	Process managed by CSO.	Increased organizational excellence with 100% staff and board satisfied with available resources.	Q1-4	Continued
<b>b</b> Maintain a common document and file sharing system.	Managed by CSO with support of office admin and communications team.	Increased organizational excellence with 100% all project and partner (ship) related files available through file sharing system.	Q1-4	Continued



### Performance Measures



Board, staff, partner engagement and satisfaction with progress in accomplishing strategic directives compared to target (75% board attendance, 75% overall satisfaction and 100 partners engaged).



Percentage of planned initiatives undertaken, completed and on-budget compared to target (75%) and percentage of core budget leveraged compared to target (50%).

**MTCG Budget Total \$550,235.00**



# Destination Development

The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming defines destination development as *“a collaborative approach to enhancing a location as a desired destination for tourists that encompasses all/any of marketing, product development, investment attraction and workforce development.”*

## Destination Development may include:

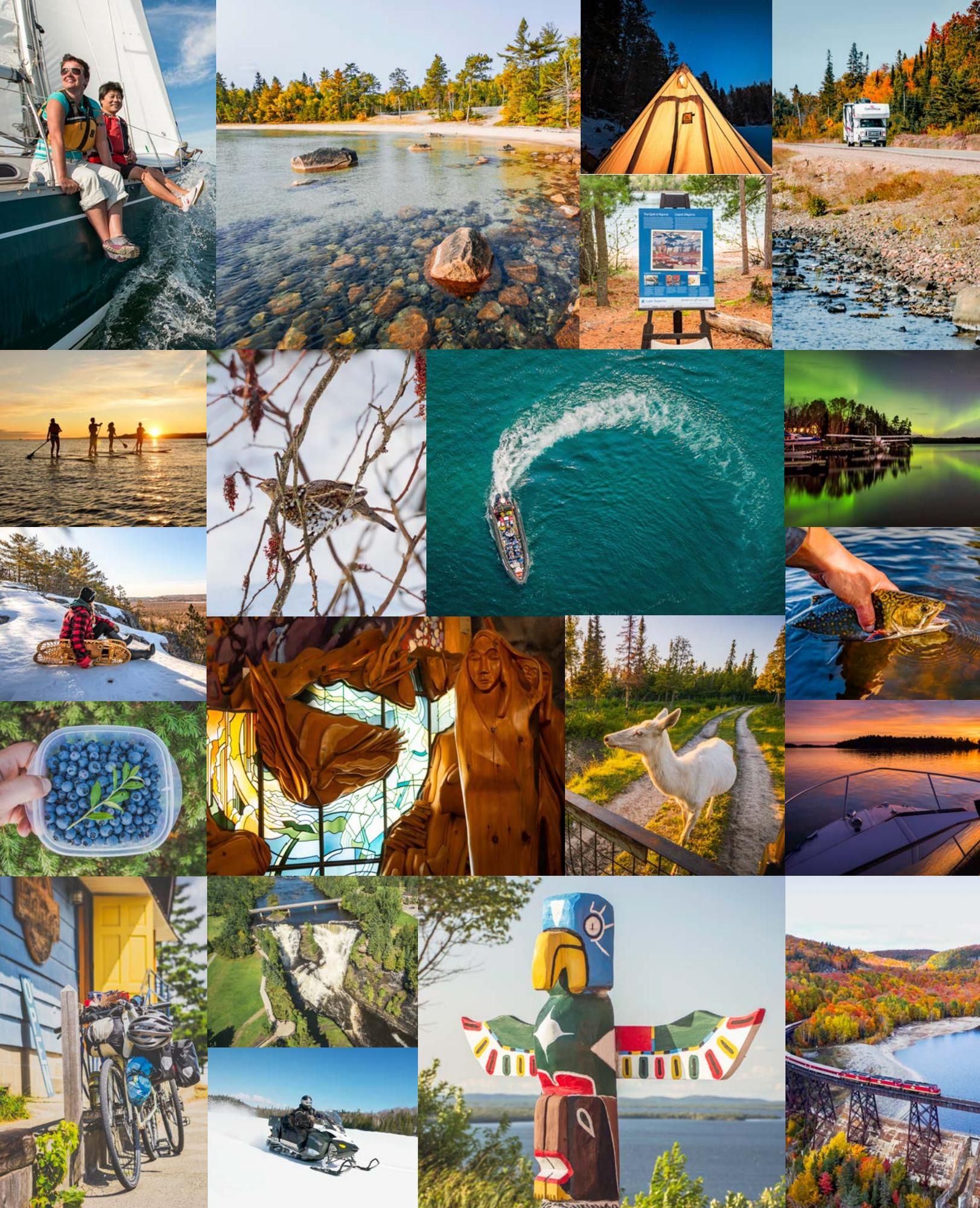
- Understanding what draws visitors to a place;
- Developing the right products/experiences/services to meeting visitor needs; and
- Effectively marketing priority products to a target market.

Close to 40% of Destination Northern Ontario’s allocation from the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming is focused on destination development activities in product development, investment attraction, workforce development and industry training, and the provision of marketing tools and research to the sector.

In 2024-25 Destination Northern Ontario undertook the development of a Destination Master Plan with completion in the fall of 2025. Lead staff will ensure future pillar initiatives align with the following broad recommendations:

- **Develop** Integrated Experiences in All Seasons: Invest in Indigenous and outdoor experiences, unique accommodations and seasonal programming to combat seasonality and drive year-round visitation.
- **Foster** Regional Collaboration and Industry Evolution: Create seamless visitor journeys through coordinated marketing, service training, product development and industry support, emphasizing inclusivity and digital literacy.
- **Advocate** for Strategic Infrastructure and Connectivity Solutions: Improve air, road and rail access; enhance signage, rest stops and digital connectivity to make the region more accessible and visitor-friendly.
- **Champion** Authentic Northern Identity and Environmental Stewardship: Highlight Northern Ontario’s character and commitment to sustainability and accessibility to appeal to socially and environmentally conscious travellers.

The Destination Master Plan Steering Committee will monitor plan implementation.



# 02

## Product Development

### OBJECTIVE

Hiawatha Highlands | Algoma Country

The primary objective to guide Product Development in Northern Ontario over the next year is:

*To enhance the visitor experience through well-designed tourism products that meet current and future customer demand.*

For 2026-27, Destination Northern Ontario’s product development initiatives are anchored in three strategic priorities built upon the Destination Master Plan. By advancing all-season and must-do experiences, enhancing visitor services and quality, and maintaining and elevating high-potential offerings.

The pillar will work to drive measurable growth in the region’s tourism sector through innovation, collaboration, and continuous sustainable improvement through these three priorities:

01

#### Advancing All-Season, Must-Do Experiences:

Product development will focus on creating, reviewing, and refreshing tourism products that can be enjoyed across all seasons and sub-regions. There is an emphasis on enhancing accessible experiences and accommodations to align with shifting visitor expectations and market demand.

02

#### Maintain and Elevate High-Potential Offerings:

The region will maintain its commitment to high-priority segments such as nature-based, adventure, and Indigenous tourism, as well as resource-based, culture and heritage, and culinary tourism. Continued investments will support the implementation of new and ongoing multi-year initiatives.

03

#### Enhance Visitor Services and Quality:

Continue to improve the overall visitor experience through better services and infrastructure by continuing to implement the Visitor Information Strategy.

Collectively, these initiatives support the Destination Master Plan’s recommendations to grow tourism receipts and strengthen Northern Ontario’s competitiveness through coordinated, sustainable development.

# Product Development | Strategic Focus

## 01 Priority Action Area

**Implement** a clear staffing and governance model to lead, execute, and report on all product development initiatives within the Product Development Pillar, aligned with the Destination Master Plan and the TIAO Strategy. The Manager will create a workplan, monitor resources, and ensure initiatives are completed on time, and on budget.

**\$125,000.00**

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
<b>a</b> Monitor and leverage resources to execute planned initiatives ensuring completion, on time and on budget.	Manager will execute pillar activities.	Improved performance with 100% of initiatives completed on time and on budget, with reporting complete and on time.	Q1-4	Continued
<b>b</b> Integrate the Destination Master Plan and TIAO strategy into previously reviewed product plans and update as necessary.	Manager will execute pillar activities.	Improved performance with minimum 3 product plans refreshed as necessary and 1 new strategy developed to remain current and relevant.	Q1-4	Continued



# Product Development | Strategic Focus

## 02 Priority Action Area

**Maintain** and grow the momentum for Northern Ontario’s “Best Bet” products and experiences by concentrating effort and investment on priority product development initiatives to integrate accessibility, all-season, and must do experiences that increase visitation, yield, and visitor satisfaction.

**\$150,000.00**

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
<b>a</b> PD Manager will work with the Product Development Advisory Committee to guide regional product development and integrate Sustainability and Accessibility Product Plans.	Manager will execute pillar activities and implement accessible, all season, signature experiences across sub regions based on industry recommendations.	3 itineraries developed to increase visitor satisfaction and regional tourism growth through sustainable, accessible, all-season experiences.	Q1-4	New
<b>b</b> Destination Northern Ontario staff will work together with industry partners to execute Destination Certification with Greenstep.	Manager will execute the GreenStep Destination Certification assessment process and action plan with participating partners.	1 certification to position Northern Ontario as a sustainable tourism destination that partners/ operators can actively promote in their marketing and communications.	Q1-4	New
<b>c</b> Create resources and tools to increase product quality in the Northern Ontario accommodation sector by developing an accommodation program.	Manager executes this initiative working with the IA Senior Coordinator and TEN team to create a capital navigation tool kit to support operators accessing capital improvement funding and grants.	Increased product quality of accommodations for a minimum of 3 operators.	Q1-4	New
<b>d</b> Continue supporting or investing in new tourism products in priority product areas including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Angling &amp; Hunting</li> <li>• Culture and Heritage</li> <li>• Gateway and Destination Communities</li> <li>• Nature and Adventure</li> <li>• Touring</li> </ul>	Manager oversees this initiative working with DNO Product Development Staff to continue implementation of current multi-year initiatives. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Experience Fishing</li> <li>2. 2SLGBTQ+ Project</li> <li>3. Balado Itineraries</li> <li>4. Culinary Development</li> <li>5. Cycling Route Development</li> <li>6. Great Lakes Cruising</li> <li>7. RV Itineraries</li> <li>8. ITO Corridor Development</li> <li>9. Heart of Canada</li> </ol>	Increased diversity of Northern Ontario tourism experiences through engagement of 25 industry champions to implement a minimum of 8 product development initiatives.	Q1-4	New / Continued

# Product Development | Strategic Focus

## 03 Priority Action Area

**Set the foundation** for improved visitor services and product quality across the region. **\$25,000.00**

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
<b>a</b> Continue to implement priority recommendations from DNO’s Visitor Information Centre (VIC) Strategy and ensure better coordination among Northern Ontario VICs through quarterly meetings.	Manager works with the VIC team to execute this activity.	One strategy improved alignment, coordination, visitor services with, finalization of 1 strategy implemented and 4 meetings annually.	Q1-4	New / Continued
<b>b</b> Support improved wayfinding VICs.	Manager executes this initiative.	Improved navigation to VICs and within the region with 1 initiative identified and executed.	Q1-4	New

## ☑ Performance Measures

- ✓ Increase in the number of new tourism products and experiences introduced and/or existing ones enhanced and brought to market with a minimum of 3 product plans or strategies reviewed annually and 6 initiatives executed.

**MTCG Budget Total \$300,000.00**



03

# Investment Attraction

## OBJECTIVE

Boarding Ontario Northland Train | Colin Field

The primary objective to guide Investment Attraction and Economic Development in Northern Ontario over the next year is:

*To increase investment in the tourism industry to enhance visitor experiences.*

Investment Attraction and Economic Development activities continue to grow and adapt as the sector undergoes radical shifts in operations following the global pandemic and international unrest.

Led by the Senior Coordinator and working in close collaboration across the organization’s other pillars, the Investment Attraction pillar has developed over the past five years to be one of support and networking between the public and private sectors, bridging the gap for municipalities, not-for-profits and community-led organizations to move projects forward with third-party investors, government funding agencies and local benefactors/angel investors.

**For the 2026-27 business plan, Investment Attraction and Economic Development activities coalesce around four key priority action areas:**

01

**Play an active supporting role** in investment attraction and economic development to Northern Ontario’s tourism industry.

02

**Through research,** increase DNO’s role as a resource for Northern Ontario businesses seeking investment and for Northern Ontario’s investment community.

03

**Provide support** for investment into Northern Ontario tourism products and experiences through industry communication.

04

**Play an active role** in enhancing the facilitation of investment attraction and economic development activities to Northern Ontario’s tourism industry.

Key activities in years previous have led to increased access for investors to connect to municipal and local organizations, assisting in the building of up to half a dozen new accommodations in Northern Ontario with an estimated build value of over \$4.5 million.

DNO has also played a significant role in establishing municipal accommodation tax programs in rural communities, leading to increased revenue generation and community-building initiatives to be self-generated. Ongoing dialogue on both fronts remain extremely promising for new development in unserved/underserved rural areas, key areas highlighted through multiple strategic planning and outreach activities undertaken in years previous. Partnership programs with federally-funded organizations, most notably the Community Futures (CFDCs), have formed highly successful, leveraged-funding opportunities to build capacity for the region's tourism and tourism-adjacent businesses to grow, access capital through incorporation, build resilience, and plan for succession and sale.

Future activities, when achieved in this business plan, will grow the sector's ability to meet current needs while looking towards the future, most notably through succession, electric vehicles and electric pleasure crafts, and tourism-focussed adaptation of communities to ever-growing demands of adjacent industries such as mining, forestry, and nuclear storage/power.

## Investment Attraction | Strategic Focus

### 01 Priority Action Area

**Play an active supporting role** in investment attraction and economic development to Northern Ontario's tourism industry.

**\$125,000.00**

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
<b>a</b> Monitor resources to execute planned initiatives ensuring completion, on time and on budget.	Senior Coordinator completes all initiatives.	Increased productivity and accountability with 100% of all planned activities completed, on-time and on-budget.	Q1-4	Continued
<b>b</b> Review DNO's Investment Attraction Strategy incorporating recommendations from Destination Master Plan and stakeholder outreach.	Senior Coordinator completes all initiatives.	Increased investment and awareness of tourism with 1 strategy updated during 2026-27 year.	Q1-4	Continued
<b>c</b> Engage the public and private investment and economic development communities, including municipalities that have implemented or are considering implementing a Municipal Accommodation Tax, communities that are pursuing tourism as an economic development driver, and Indigenous communities looking to establish new/improved working relationships with the industry.	Senior Coordinator completes all initiatives.	Increased engagement, alignment, and collaboration with a minimum of 24 interactions with a minimum of 48 stakeholders.	Q1-4	Continued

# Investment Attraction | Strategic Focus

## 02 Priority Action Area

Through research, increase DNO's role as a resource for Northern Ontario businesses seeking investment and for Northern Ontario's investment community.

**\$75,000.00**

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status	
a	Track and communicate regional accommodation performance, seek improved qualitative data for regional gaps and opportunities, and participate in RTO research collaborative.	Senior Coordinator working with the Manager of Marketing and Communications to create data that can be shared with industry.	Increased understanding of visitor trends leading to targeted real-time programming with 2 semi-annual regional performance reports completed and communicated to industry.	Q1-4	Continued
b	Maintain operator database.	Senior Coordinator, with assistance of third-party consultants/AI tools to maintain the DNO database and keep current.	Increased capacity with 100% of entries in DNO's industry database reviewed/updated annually.	Q1-4	Continued
c	Refresh investment attraction toolkit.	Senior Coordinator, with support of staff and/or third-party consultants.	Update and re-release of 1 toolkit in both official languages, made available for access on subportal.	Q1-4	New



## Investment Attraction | Strategic Focus

### 03 Priority Action Area

**Provide support** for investment into Northern Ontario tourism products and experiences through industry communication.

**\$75,000.00**

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
<b>a</b> Support Northern Ontario's tourism sector (investors, business owners, economic development community) access information through the communication of investment news, funding opportunities, and local resources, newsletters, podcasts, and web portals.	Senior Coordinator with support of Manager of Marketing and Communications and Manager of Product Development to enhance DNO's investment attraction web portal and add new tools/resources.	Increased investment through increase in visits to DNO's website with 1 investment attraction portal enhanced, 2 new tools/resources available, 6 newsletter articles communicated, and 4 podcast episodes created.	Q1-4	Continued
<b>b</b> Support the sector by attending and/or assisting with execution of investment attraction, economic development or municipal conferences and events to further build programming and partnerships.	Senior Coordinator will participate in industry conferences and events.	Increased alignment, awareness, and coordination with participation in a minimum of 6 events annually.	Q1-4	Continued
<b>c</b> Support the sector through initiatives to improve the region's transportation networks including updating Northern Ontario's tourism transportation trends report.	Senior Coordinator will support initiatives to maintain/grow transportation routes, maintain/improve services and support growth opportunities in the EV sector.	Increased alignment, awareness, and coordination with support of a minimum of 2 groups annually, and attendance of a minimum of 2 events geared towards new and emerging trends in the sector.	Q1-4	New
<b>d</b> Maintain regular communication with economic development stakeholders to champion tourism in economic development and municipal strategic plans for Northern Ontario communities.	Senior Coordinator participates in scheduled meetings, events, and one-on-one communications with municipal stakeholders.	Increased tourism investment with a minimum of 12 meetings/events attended.	Q1-4	Continued

# Investment Attraction | Strategic Focus

## 04 Priority Action Area

Play an active role in enhancing the facilitation of investment attraction and economic development activities to Northern Ontario’s tourism industry.

**\$25,000.00**

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
<b>a</b> Play an active role in enhancing the facilitation of investment attraction and economic development activities to Northern Ontario’s tourism industry.	Senior Coordinator in collaboration with regional stakeholders from the investment community to support development with private developers to address key gaps in regional accommodations.	Maintain the number of tourism businesses in Northern Ontario with 5 businesses supported, and at least 3 new businesses opened.	Q1-4	Continued
<b>b</b> Support operators to be ready for the next crisis and be eligible for remedial support through the DNO/CFDC Incorporation Program.	Senior Coordinator to engage the investment community to further develop and grow programs geared to assist unincorporated tourism businesses incorporate.	Increased vitality of the sector with more business eligible for support and funding programs with 1 target initiative continued, with 5 businesses directly supported.	Q1-4	Continued
<b>c</b> Support operators to be ready for the next crisis and be eligible for remedial support through a proposed DNO/CFDC Bookkeeping-Readiness Program.	Senior Coordinator to engage the investment community to further develop and grow the program.	Increased vitality of the sector with more business eligible for support and funding programs with 1 pilot target initiative created, with 2 businesses directly supported.	Q1-4	New
<b>d</b> Facilitate tourism investments by providing grant writing assistance and/or providing letters of support.	Senior Coordinator works with industry proponents to complete funding applications and letters of support, assist in the development and funding of succession plans and strategic development advice.	Increased investment into Northern Ontario’s tourism sector with a minimum of 3 funding applications written and submitted and 6 letters of support for tourism initiatives that support DNO strategic priorities.	Q1-4	Continued
<b>e</b> Facilitate municipalities in securing multi-year funding for tourism-based economic development plans including development officers who will focus on developing local tourism initiatives and products.	Senior Coordinator will identify and work with communities to support applications.	Increased investment with minimum of 1 community supported and successfully securing multi-year funding.	Q1-4	Continued

## Investment Attraction | Strategic Focus

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Performance Measures</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Outreach KPM:</b> Number of successfully completed investment attraction outreach activities, compared to target (48), number of events attended (4), number of IA-specific media outreach efforts (including podcasting, newsletters and targeted social media (10+), number of organizations assisted in a support role (6).</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Partnership KPM:</b> number of partners collaborated with throughout the year (25), and comparison to years previous (100%+), amount of dollars leveraged from outside sources for projects (&gt; 25% of every partner \$ invested from core funding), number of tourism-related businesses assisted (5), and comparison to years previous (100%+).</p>
<b>MTCG Budget Total    \$300,000.00</b>	



# 04

## Workforce Development & Industry Training

### OBJECTIVE

The primary objective to guide Workforce Development & Industry Training in Northern Ontario over the next year is:

*To facilitate and support the attraction, development, and retention of a tourism workforce to enhance the customer experience.*

With the completion of DNO's 10-Year Master Plan and Tourism Excellence North's multi-year Recovery Project, delivery and implementation of innovative training solutions in-person and online will include personalized coaching, online learning e.g.; Tourism Business Essentials, enhanced self-assessment courses and group learning.

These initiatives will support ongoing industry growth and help tourism professionals build skills for future growth. In addition, mentorships, a Best Practice Mission, a podcast series and a targeted webinar series (ADAPT 2026), will further provide critical insights and strategies for tourism businesses navigating the current environment. Through these combined efforts, the workforce development and industry training plan aims to position Northern Ontario as a leader in tourism excellence and innovation.

A key initiative will be the continued delivery of Tourism as a Career Awareness Campaign, Tourism Rocks. This initiative will include an updated Tourism Rocks Toolkit designed to inspire job seekers to explore career opportunities within the tourism sector, supported by the development of two new promotional videos. The initiative will also strengthen collaboration with key industry partners, including OTEC and TIAO, to help address skills gaps and ongoing workforce challenges.

The Manager of Workforce Development and Industry Training and Information Technology Support Coordinator will implement key activities and action areas with the support of the Master Trainer and TEN Industry Partners assessing staff complement as needed.

# Workforce Development & Industry Training | Strategic Focus

## 01 Priority Action Area

**Play an active role** to demonstrate leadership, execute, and report on initiatives within the workforce development and industry training pillar.

**\$200,000.00**

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
<b>a</b> Ensure human, financial, and other resources are in place to implement, monitor and report on the performance of WDIT initiatives and work with DNO staff across all pillar areas.	Manager will lead review, develop and implement reporting and performance monitoring processes to ensure organizational excellence.	Increased accountability with 100% of planned initiatives completed on time and on budget.	Q1-4	Continued
<b>b</b> Review strategy and research documents to ensure current and incorporate Destination Master Plan recommendations into future business planning.	Policies and framework developed and/or updated.	Inclusive WDIT programming with 1 strategy reviewed and 1 business plan developed.	Q1-4	Continued

## 02 Priority Action Area

**Continue to work across DNO staff and with partners** to address the labour market shortage and skills gaps across the region through the development and delivery of enhanced multi-year and multi-faceted initiatives

**\$75,000.00**

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
<b>a</b> Work in collaboration with TIAO and provincial partners on 'Forward Ready Tourism – A Collaborative Solution for Tourism' project if funding is approved under Skills Development Fund Round 6 via Ontario Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development to address labour gaps in management positions.	DNO ED and WDIT Manager oversees the initiative.	DNO ED and WDIT Manager oversees the initiative.	Q1-4	Continued
<b>b</b> Continue to foster partnerships to expand delivery and reach.	Partnerships with educational organizations, community employment training programs and industry.	Greater alignment with minimum 2 partnerships created or maintained.	Q1-4	Continued
<b>c</b> Continue to deliver Tourism as a Career Awareness Campaign to encourage education, skills development, and awareness of diverse tourism career pathways and job opportunities available across Northern Ontario.	Manager of Marketing and Communications executes this initiative in coordination with Visual Communications Designer.	1 multi media campaign launched.  Performance tracked through traditional marketing KPIs, including earned media, placements, and reach.	Q1-4	Continued

# Workforce Development & Industry Training | Strategic Focus

## 03 Priority Action Area

**Continue to work across DNO staff and with partners** to develop and deliver priority training that addresses industry skill gaps, builds capacity and aligns with priority product development goals through the Tourism Excellence North program, resulting in enhanced or new business and customer improvements. In addition, continue to identify and implement methods in which to scaffold businesses and communities along the learner pathway.

**\$150,000.00**

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
<b>a</b> Continue to assess, identify, and develop training opportunities utilizing the Learner Design Experience and ensuring quality standards are met.	Manager with support of Master Trainer to oversee initiative with support from the Manager of Marketing and Communications with 1 marketing and communications plan updated and implemented.	Enhanced program uptake with a minimum of 60 participants engaged via the execution of 1 marketing and communication plan.	Q1-4	Continued
<b>b</b> Continue to engage training delivery partners to align with product development priorities.	Master Trainer with support of WDIT staff will continue to engage education facilities, community development agencies, consultants and tourism organizations to execute the initiative.	Increased alignment and quality tourism products in market or tourism plans developed, increased uptake, and increased capacity with 12 organizations engaged and a minimum of 2 workshops delivered to 24 participants.	Q1-4	Continued
<b>c</b> Develop an annual calendar of training opportunities, an annual marketing and communication plan, and promote DNO's training opportunities.	Master Trainer with the support of WDIT staff will execute identified activities.	Increased alignment and capacity within the tourism sector with 1 annual training calendar developed and promoted through 1 annual marketing and communication plan.	Q1-4	Continued
<b>d</b> Continue to engage community stakeholders (defined in past as TEN Brokers - they are economic/community developers, funders, etc.), training specialists, and partners in a collaborative process to explore, market, deliver and assess training opportunities. Explore and deliver enhanced and new curriculum/content for self and group learning through online modules, podcasts, webinars, virtual and in-person workshops and best practices missions including broad service excellence training as recommended in the Destination Master Plan. Integrate AI-focused training to equip industry with practical skills that strengthen competitiveness and future readiness.	Master Trainer and WDIT staff with support of DNO communications staff, brokers, product teams, professional services, Training Specialists, and industry peers to deliver training.	Increased capacity with the delivery of employability/ soft core skill gap courses with 75 participants. Explore 6 Community Tourism Assessments with 30 participants. 3 operator workshops with 36 participants. Enhanced self-assessment uptake with 200 participants. 4 ADAPT webinars with 100 participants. 1 BPM with 12 participants. 6 podcasts with 75 participants and 12 sector training opportunities.	Q1-4	Continued / New

# Workforce Development & Industry Training | Strategic Focus

## 03 Priority Action Area

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
<b>e</b> Continue to deliver personalized coaching and mentorship through Fast Track to Success.	Managed by Manager and Master Trainer.	Increased future industry capacity with minimum 6 mentorship sessions executed.	Q1-4	Continued
<b>f</b> Continue to deliver follow up mentorship post-training.	Executed by TEN Training Specialists.	Increased visitor appeal and business capacity with a minimum of 18 personalized coaching sessions executed.	Q1-4	Continued
<b>g</b> Identify and accredit training participants, tracking their progress through the TEN solutions.	Managed by WDIT staff with the support of professional services to execute an on-line training experience, track participation, and continue to develop a standardized accreditation program.	Increased industry capacity and increased ROI through the development of 1 tracking and accreditation system for all TEN participants.	Q1-4	Continued
<b>h</b> Maintain proficiency and professionalism of WDIT staff by encouraging their participation in ongoing professional development training opportunities.	WDIT staff completes training.	Enhanced and innovative WDIT programming development and delivery with staff attending a minimum of 2 external training opportunities that target or contribute to adult learning development and delivery.	Q1-4	Continued

## Performance Measures

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Number and % change in stakeholders reporting business/customer improvements as a result of Destination Northern Ontario training activities compared to target (300).
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Number % change in stakeholders participating in (400 participants) and showing satisfaction with Destination Northern Ontario training activities compared to target (300 or 75%).

**MTCG Budget Total** **\$425,000.00**

# 05

## Marketing & Communications

### OBJECTIVE

The primary objective to guide Marketing in Northern Ontario over the next year is:

*To increase awareness of Northern Ontario as a travel destination and increase conversion in target markets.*

In 2026–27, Destination Northern Ontario (DNO) will focus on strengthening regional alignment and elevating the region's visibility through a unified, research-driven approach to tourism marketing. Working closely with Destination Ontario, Destination Marketing Organizations, and industry partners, DNO will implement a pan-Northern marketing strategy that positions the region as a destination of choice while ensuring clarity, consistency, and collaboration across all initiatives.

A central priority is a pan-regional branding initiative to clearly define Northern Ontario's core target audience and strengthen the region's market position. By unifying sub-regional messaging under a cohesive brand, DNO will highlight high-value experiences, support priority markets, and provide a clear, compelling identity that resonates with visitors.

To enhance planning and marketing effectiveness, DNO will leverage research and data-driven insights. This will improve understanding of traveller behaviours, guide strategic investments, and ensure consistent messaging across all sub-regions.

At the same time, DNO will serve as a central resource hub, providing tourism partners with enhanced access to data, tools, and digital assets, including the Northern Ontario Trip Planner to improve collaboration, distribution, conversion tracking, and overall performance.

Through coordinated marketing campaigns, DNO will grow visitation, increase conversions, and showcase priority experiences, including soft outdoor adventure, touring, and international markets. These campaigns will align with provincial strategies and continue to evolve DNO's digital initiatives, integrating AI and emerging technologies where they meaningfully enhance targeting, user experience, or operational efficiency.

Finally, communications strategies will engage and inspire stakeholders, amplify tourism’s economic and social value, and strengthen connections with Francophone, Indigenous, and 2SLGBTQ+ communities. These efforts will enhance DNO’s industry presence, support government and community partners, and target a 10% growth in digital following, ensuring a strong, unified voice across the region.

By aligning branding, research, marketing, and communications, DNO will create a cohesive, pan-Northern approach that elevates Northern Ontario’s profile, strengthens regional collaboration, and supports sustainable, long-term tourism growth.

## Marketing & Communications | Strategic Focus

01 Priority Action Area					
<p><b>Coordinate and implement</b> Strategic Direction for Marketing Tourism in Northern Ontario in partnership with Destination Ontario, Destination Marketing Organizations and other industry stakeholders which supports a pan-Northern approach to marketing the region as a destination of choice.</p>				<b>\$250,000.00</b>	
Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status	
<b>a</b>	Monitor resources to execute planned initiatives ensuring completion, on time and on budget.	Manager with the support of the Visual Communications Designer execute planned activities.	Increased accountability and performance with 100% of planned activities executed on-time and on-budget.	Q1-4	Continued
<b>b</b>	Continue to work in partnership with Destination Ontario and support the Northern Tourism Marketing Committee in the development of a renewed Northern Ontario tourism marketing strategy which includes a renewed vision and long-term framework to market Northern Ontario’s unique tourism products and experiences.	Executive Director and Manager support Destination Ontario’s Northern Tourism Marketing Committee in an advisory role and directly participating in Northern Ontario strategy development.	Increased performance through sector alignment, coordination, and collaboration with 1 strategy developed.	Q1-4	Continued
<b>c</b>	Continue to leverage marketing budgets and work to identify new source(s) of revenue to develop and execute a general regional awareness campaign.	Executive Director with the support of Manager identifies and pursues opportunities to greatly leverage DNO’s marketing resources.	A more prominent recognition of the importance of tourism with 1 project brief prepared and presented to 3 Ontario government Ministries (MoF, MTCG, MND) and, if successful, 1 incremental regional awareness campaign developed in consultation with sector partners.	Q1-4	Continued
<b>d</b>	Lead a comprehensive pan-regional branding and organizational initiative to clearly define Northern Ontario’s core target audience and strengthen the region’s market position.	Manager coordinates process with support of professional services.	1 branding initiative completed that will guide future marketing.	Q1-4	New
<b>c</b>	Incorporate AI into organizational strategies, processes, and communications by aligning initiatives with current research and the updated Destination Master Plan, including enhancements to Destination Northern Ontario’s Media Relations Kit.	Manager executes planned activities.	Increased productivity through the development of 1 AI-informed strategy and the adoption of AI in at least 3 DNO processes.  Performance measured through traditional KPIs (number of activities, engagement, and reach).	Q1-4	New

# Marketing & Communications | Strategic Focus

**02** Priority Action Area

**Elevate** DNO’s role as a central resource hub by offering enhanced access to specific tools, data, and research-driven insights to tourism businesses and organizations focusing on improving collaboration, conversion tracking, distribution and performance.

**\$300,000.00**

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
<b>a</b> Continue to support increased e-commerce activities within the region.	Manager coordinates activities in partnership with DMO and other partners.	Increase in the number of tourism products available for on-line purchase with a minimum of 25 operators participating, generating a minimum of \$1 million in sales.	Q1-4	Continued
<b>b</b> Undertake consumer and market research to better understand current travel trends and motivators related to Northern Ontario’s tourism products and experiences, and use these insights to continue growing and enhancing NorthernOntario.travel as the primary consumer-facing website for the region.	Manager with support of DMO and sector partners, and professional services coordinates activities.	Increase in destination awareness of Northern Ontario with a minimum of 3 million visits generating 750K referrals to partners and gathering insights from a minimum of 2 travel intent surveys.  Increased alignment and performance with minimum of 75% targets and KPIs aligned with the digital strategy.	Q1-4	Continued
<b>c</b> Expand and maintain the region’s digital asset library with compelling photography and videography, while driving a unified branding initiative that defines core audiences, refines the region’s value proposition, and ensures consistent application across all communications and stakeholder touchpoints.	Manager with support of the Executive Director, staff, DMO and sector partners coordinate activities.	Maintain a digital asset management system with a 15% YoY increase in assets.  Develop and implement an updated communications strategy aligned with the organizational rebrand to ensure consistent messaging.	Q1-2	Continued / New



# Marketing & Communications | Strategic Focus

**03** Priority Action Area

**Leverage** industry research to inform planning, enhance marketing effectiveness, and create unified, consistent messaging across all sub-regions through coordinated marketing campaigns that promote Northern Ontario, using partnerships to grow visitation, conversions, and priority experiences.

**\$1,100,000.00**

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
<b>a</b> Continue to procure new content and maintain/enhance existing regional and sub-regional content on NorthernOntario.travel.	Manager coordinates activity with the support of staff, DMO partners, and professional services.	Increased awareness with 100 stories, 120 videos, itineraries reviewed, enhanced, refreshed or new content with a minimum of 2 million visits, 500K referrals, and at a cost per visit of 50 cents or less.	Q1-4	Continued / New
<b>b</b> Continue to position the Northern Portal as a key industry resource for operators, partners, and communities, reinforcing its role as a support and information hub.	Manager coordinates activity with the support of staff, DMO partners, and professional services.	Performance tracked through traditional KPIs.	Q1-4	Continued
<b>c</b> Increase awareness of Northern Ontario as a destination of choice through collaborative regional campaigns and product/familiarization tours that align with Destination Ontario, promoting priority products and experiences to both new and existing markets across Inspire & Grow and Defend & Maintain segments.	Manager completes the activity with the support of staff, DMO, Destination Ontario and other partners, and professional services where required.	Minimum of 10 regional marketing campaigns with at least 15 partners.  Minimum of 8 product/familiarization tours featuring priority products/experiences.  Performance tracked through traditional marketing KPIs, including earned media, placements, and reach.	Q1-4	Continued
<b>d</b> Develop and maintain an Industry Resource page to support stakeholder engagement, information sharing, and awareness of tourism’s economic and social importance in Northern Ontario	Manager with support of the Visual Communications Designer will execute the activity.	1 new Industry resource page created on the DNO website to support industry engagement	Q1-4	New



# Marketing & Communications | Strategic Focus

**04** Priority Action Area

**Develop** and **execute** communication strategies that engage, inspire, and strengthen connections with industry stakeholders and elevate awareness of tourism’s economic and social importance in Northern Ontario.

**\$100,000.00**

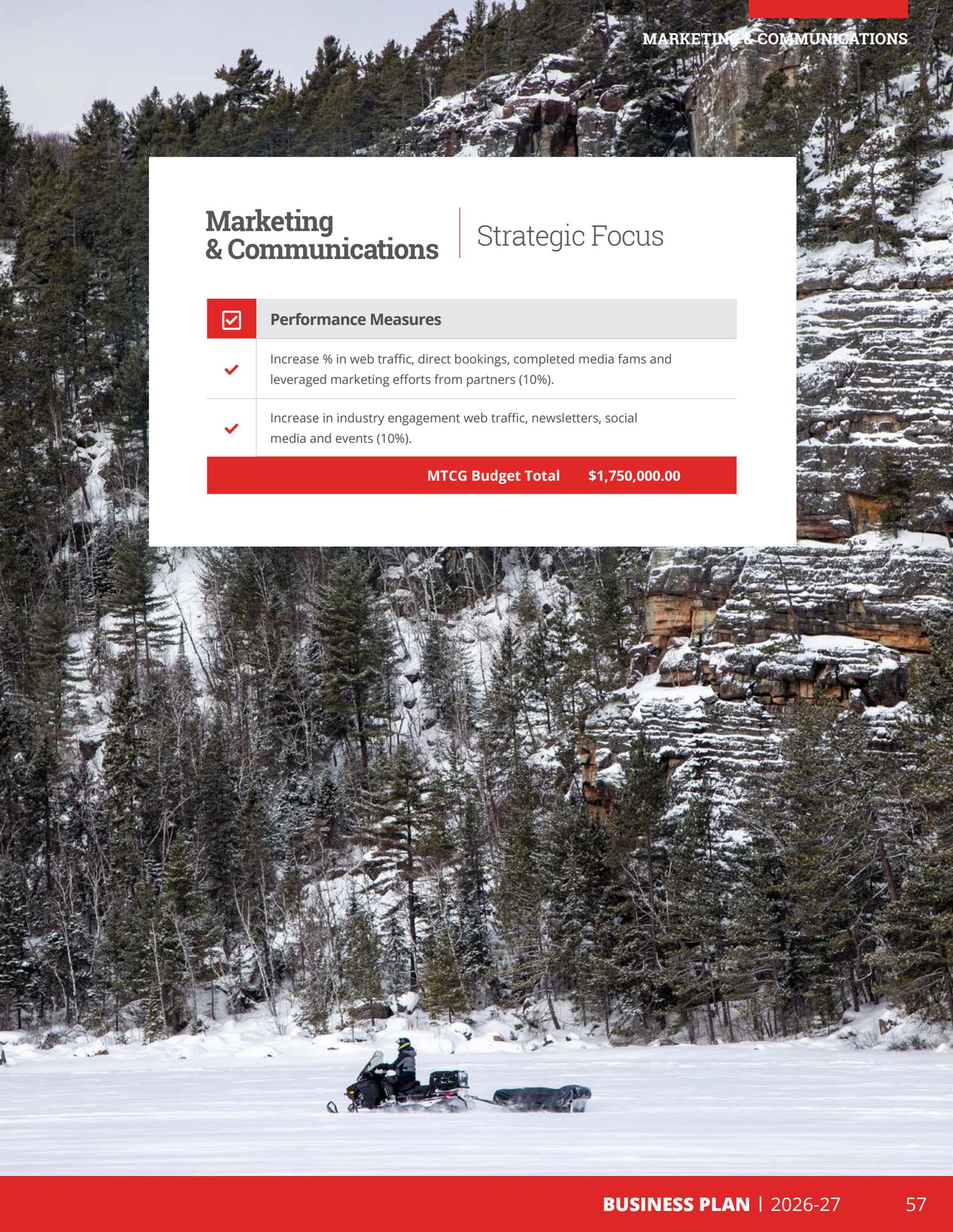
Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
<b>a</b> Develop operator- and community-focused campaigns leveraging data insights to drive participation in DNO programming and optimize collaboration opportunities.	Manager oversees initiative with support of the Visual Communications Designer.	Increased awareness and participation in DNO programming with a minimum of 2 campaigns undertaken, measured by traditional communications KPI (# campaigns or outreach activities, engagement, and participation).	Q1-4	Continued
<b>b</b> Use data-driven insights, consistent branding, and coordinated digital and industry event engagement to strengthen connections with Northern Ontario’s tourism sector and raise awareness of DNO, programming, and Ministry investments.	Manager oversees initiative with support of the Visual Communications Designer.	10% year-over-year increase in social media engagement, website traffic, and newsletter performance, 12 monthly newsletters distributed, 500 social media posts annually, 1 calendar maintained and 1 annual review of online resources completed.  100% compliance with organizational and Ministry branding and recognition requirements.	Q1-4	Continued
<b>c</b> Destination Northern Ontario board and staff attends industry events and secure opportunities to raise the profile of the organization and sector.	Board and Staff represent DNO at industry and other functions/events.	Greater awareness of DNO programming and sector activities/contribution with a minimum of 12 events attended with a minimum of 2 industry awards annually.	Q1-4	Continued
<b>d</b> Engage industry to assess awareness and satisfaction of DNO programs and initiatives, including the collection of success stories to highlight effective practices and outcomes.	Manager and the Corporate Services Officer executes activities.	Increased relevance of DNO programming with minimum of 1 annual survey undertaken with minimum 75% industry satisfaction.	Q1-4	Continued

# Marketing & Communications

## Strategic Focus

- Performance Measures
  - ✓ Increase % in web traffic, direct bookings, completed media fams and leveraged marketing efforts from partners (10%).
  - ✓ Increase in industry engagement web traffic, newsletters, social media and events (10%).

**MTCG Budget Total      \$1,750,000.00**



## 06

## Partnership

## OBJECTIVE

The primary objective to guide Partnership Initiatives in Northern Ontario over the next year is:

*To become a catalyst in building strategic alignment and promoting collaboration within the industry.*

Partnership initiatives are identified, framed, and managed by the Senior Coordinators within their pillar areas, Product Development, Investment Attraction, Workforce Development and Industry Training, and Marketing.

Initiatives are selected based on potential outcomes and alignment with priorities set out in DNO's strategic and annualized business plans reflecting all pillar areas. The DNO Board of Directors has set a goal for initiatives in non-marketing pillars of 50%.

As more operators complete DNO's training through the Tourism Excellence North program a newer priority has been set to execute more partnerships with industry operators to support their completion of training and mentorship recommendations.

Post-pandemic Destination Northern Ontario's partnership program has recovered and is leveraging industry resources for greater impact. We look forward to a fully subscribed portfolio of initiatives again in 2026-27.

## Partnership | Strategic Focus

### 01 Priority Action Area

**Continue** to build long-term relationships with industry partners, focus on projects that show progression beyond marketing, and leverage available partnership funding.

**\$25,000.00**

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
<b>a</b> Implement staffing plan and monitor resources to execute planned initiatives ensuring completion, on time and on budget in alignment with Destination Northern Ontario's strategic framework and incorporating recommendations from the region's new Destination Master Plan.	Senior Coordinators engage stakeholders, identify, frame, and manage partnered initiatives that reflect mandated pillars.	Increased tourism programming, opportunities, awareness, and engagement with, minimum 75 partners engaged in minimum 9 partnership priorities.  Minimum 50% of partnership budget reflects product development, investment attraction and workforce/training pillars.  Minimum of \$1,210,000 leveraged.	Q1-4	Continued

### 02 Priority Action Area

**Work with partners** to identify and undertake strategic partnerships focusing on tourism product development that will assist Northern Ontario's tourism sector develop and grow with an emphasis on strategic plan development and implementation.

**\$175,000.00**

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
<b>a</b> Identify and undertake partnerships to grow tourism through strategic planning and/or implement strategic or other tourism plans.	Senior Coordinators in collaboration with sector partner(s) manage initiatives through to completion.	Increased tourism collaboration, planning and programming with a minimum of 6 partners engaged.	Q1-4	Continued
<b>b</b> Identify and undertake partnered initiatives with communities and/or trails organizations to improve wayfinding.	Senior Coordinators in collaboration with sector partner(s) manage initiatives through to completion.	Increased capacity and improved wayfinding with a minimum of 2 partner communities or trails organizations engaged.	Q1-4	Continued

## Partnership | Strategic Focus

### 03 Priority Action Area

**Work with partners** to identify and undertake strategic partnerships focusing on tourism investment attraction that will promote the value of tourism and projects that will assist operators grow their businesses.

**\$50,000.00**

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
<b>a</b> Identify and undertake a partnered initiative to promote the value of tourism through a Tourism Rocks Awareness campaign(s).	Senior Coordinators in collaboration with sector partner(s) manage initiatives through to completion.	Increased awareness of the importance of tourism to the Northern economy with a minimum of 4 partners engaged and 1 campaign planned and executed with performance measured through standard marketing KPIs.	Q1-4	Continued
<b>b</b> Build operator capacity and ensure long-term sustainability and vitality of the sector through partnered initiatives to facilitate succession and incorporation of tourism businesses.	Senior Coordinators in collaboration with industry partner(s) manage initiatives through to completion.	Increased capacity and long-term sustainability with minimum 10 businesses partnering.	Q1-4	New

### 04 Priority Action Area

**Work with partners** to identify and undertake strategic partnerships focusing on tourism workforce development and industry training that will assist Northern Ontario’s tourism sector grow with an emphasis on initiatives that focus on labour or training gaps.

**\$50,000.00**

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
<b>a</b> Deliver industry training through plenary and break-out sessions at the annual Northern Ontario Tourism Summit (NOTS).	Senior Coordinators in collaboration with training partner(s) manage initiatives through to completion at NOTS.	Increased capacity within the sector with a minimum of 250 operators completing training at a minimum of 12 plenary or break out sessions.	Q3	Continued

## Partnership | Strategic Focus

### 05 Priority Action Area

**Work with partners** to identify and undertake strategic partnerships focusing on tourism marketing that will assist Northern Ontario's tourism sector increase visitation and yield.

**\$305,000.00**

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
<b>a</b> Identify, plan, and execute marketing partnerships that focus on Destination Northern Ontario's Inspire and Grow markets..	Senior Coordinators in collaboration with sector partner(s) manage initiatives through to completion.	Increased destination awareness with a minimum of 8 collaborative partnerships executed and measured with standard marketing KPIs.	Q1-4	Continued
<b>b</b> Identify, plan, and execute marketing partnerships that focus on Destination Northern Ontario's Defend and Maintain markets.	Senior Coordinators in collaboration with sector partner(s) manage initiatives through to completion.	Increased destination awareness with a minimum of 8 collaborative partnerships executed and measured with standard marketing KPIs.	Q1-4	Continued
<b>c</b> Identify, plan, and execute co-op marketing partnerships with industry operators who have participated in and enacted recommendations made as a part of TEN's Fast Track program and have enacted recommendations that focus on Destination Northern Ontario's priority markets.	Senior Coordinators in collaboration with industry partner(s) manage initiatives through to completion.	Increased destination awareness with a minimum of 4 collaborative partnerships executed and measured with standard marketing KPIs.	Q1-4	Continued



### Performance Measures

- ✓ Maintain a minimum of 75 individual partners with 100% satisfaction in partnership activities.
- ✓ Leverage \$2 for every \$1 partnership allocation (matching, non-matching, and in-kind contributions).
- ✓ Minimum 50% MTCG partnership allocation going to non-marketing partnerships.

**MTCS Budget Total \$605,000.00**

# Risk Management

Destination Northern Ontario has had a formalized risk management plan in place since 2020. Building off of this plan, the organization has continued to add levels of mitigation as risks have been identified through process and policy.

It is expected that staff will maintain a high level of professionalism in the performance of their duties. The Executive Director, in consultation with the Board, will ensure that the staff complement is adequate and that staff members have the skill sets and competencies to carry out their work. Where warranted, Destination Northern Ontario may also contract independent contractors for specific tasks through a fair and transparent procurement process.

Destination Northern Ontario's Board of Directors is committed to ensuring that they uphold a high level of professionalism and integrity with a "zero tolerance" policy for any perceived or actual conflict of interest. In addition, financial audits are conducted annually, ensuring that funds are used appropriately and according to the terms of the Transfer Payment Agreement with His Majesty.

Additionally, Destination Northern Ontario completes comprehensive risk assessment plans for all projects over the total cost of \$50,000 to ensure risks are identified and analyzed before commencement of activities. This helps the organization through conversations with partners as it relates to potential shared risk and challenges on individual projects.

Finally, the availability of financial resources to carry out the initiatives outlined in this plan are of high importance. Considering this, Destination Northern Ontario is committed to meeting the reporting deadlines that are milestones in the payment schedule. In rare instances where financial gaps need to be bridged, Destination Northern Ontario has negotiated a substantial line of credit with its financial institution.



# Financial Plan



Destination Northern Ontario is funded by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming. Regional Tourism Organizations (RTO's) receive a core allocation consisting of a base amount based on performance compared to provincial fixed roof accommodation tourism receipts. There is also a partnership allocation that matches partner contributions from non-Provincial government sources.

Destination Northern Ontario's budget includes an allocation for pan-Northern Ontario initiatives as well as individual allocations to each of the three sub-regions.

**APRIL 1, 2026 – MARCH 31, 2027**



## Governance & Administration

Governance	\$	60,000.00
Salaries & Benefits	\$	300,235.00
Overhead & Facilities	\$	60,000.00
Finance & Administration	\$	60,000.00
Travel	\$	25,000.00
Industry Relations	\$	30,000.00
Information Technology	\$	15,000.00
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 550,235.00</b>



## Product Development

Salaries, Benefits and Coordination	\$	125,000.00
Priority Products and Experiences	\$	150,000.00
Improved Visitor Services	\$	25,000.00
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 300,000.00</b>



## Investment Attraction

Salaries, Benefits and Coordination	\$	125,000.00
Resources	\$	75,000.00
Support Initiatives	\$	75,000.00
Facilitate Initiatives	\$	25,000.00
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 300,000.00</b>



**Workforce Development & Industry Training**

Salaries, Benefits and Coordination	\$	200,000.00
Workforce Development	\$	75,000.00
Industry Training	\$	150,000.00
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>425,000.00</b>

**Marketing & Communications**

Salaries, Benefits and Coordination	\$	250,000.00
Marketing Tools	\$	300,000.00
Northern Ontario Destination Marketing	\$	1,100,000.00
Communications & Stakeholder Engagement	\$	100,000.00
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>1,750,000.00</b>

**Partnerships**

Salaries, Benefits and Coordination	\$	25,000.00
Product Development	\$	175,000.00
Investment Attraction	\$	50,000.00
Workforce Development & Industry Training	\$	50,000.00
Marketing	\$	305,000.00
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>605,000.00</b>

**2026-2027 Budget Total**

**Total      \$      3,930,235.00**

# Meet the Team

## GOVERNANCE & ADMINISTRATION



**Marty Kalagian**  
President

Marty is a retired Staff Sergeant, Niagara Regional Police after a 35-year career. Following his retirement and their love of Northern Ontario, he and his wife Marilyn bought and operated Mountainview Lodge, near Searchmont Ontario for eight years. Marty has been with Tourism Northern Ontario since its inception through transition to the present Board and has accepted the position of President and Chair. He was also a 3-time elected member of Searchmont Local Services Board and a member of Sault North Waste Management Council. Marty & Marilyn are the proud parents of two sons and are thoroughly enjoying their role as grandparents.



**Bobbi-Lynn Pallot**  
Corporate Services Office

Bobbi serves as the Corporate Services Officer at Destination Northern Ontario, supporting various internal functions with an emphasis on human resources, finance and administration. Her primary responsibilities include providing administrative assistance in daily operations, assisting in employee management, ensuring a safe and efficient working environment, and maintaining compliance and reporting standards. Bobbi has a background in Advertising and Graphic Design as well as Finance, and holds a Human Resource Management designation from "The Society of Human Resource Management". Outside of work, she enjoys spending quiet time with family and friends.



**David MacLachlan**  
Executive Director

In 2013 David became the Executive Director for Destination Northern Ontario. David grew up in the tourism industry and is third generation to work in the family tourism business started 65 years ago by his grandfather. David is also a past chair of the Algoma Kinniwabi Travel Association, OTMPC Northern Tourism Marketing Committee and sat on the Board of Directors for OTMPC. David and Destination Northern Ontario have received numerous awards over the years and most recently two Ontario Tourism Awards of Excellence at the Ontario Tourism Summit in 2023.

**Kathy Carlson**  
Finance Officer

Kathy Carlson has been involved with Destination Northern Ontario since its inception in 2011 and has served in numerous capacities over her career with the organization. She has watched it grow from a small working group to the largest Regional Tourism Organization in Ontario. With over 25 years of experience working in finance, she currently holds the position of Finance Officer supporting the Executive Director, Corporate Services Officer and Senior Coordinators to fulfil the organization's mission. Outside the office she has a passion for the outdoors and is proud to call Northern Ontario her home.

## Investment Attraction



**Gord Knowles**  
Senior Coordinator – Investment Attraction & Economic Development

Gord Knowles (Ec.D) is the Senior Coordinator of Investment Attraction and Economic Development since 2021. He is a career economic developer; prior to his work at Destination Northern Ontario, he served for more than a decade in Ontario-based Community Futures Development Corporations, from positions ranging from intern to General Manager. Projects he has overseen have received top plaudits from Community Futures Ontario (CFO), the Economic Developers Council of Ontario (EDCO), the Economic Developers Association of Canada (EDAC), the International Economic Development Council (IEDC), and the American Recreation Coalition. In 2024 he was awarded EDCO's President Award for contributions to the industry, in addition to previously receiving Young Professional of the Year awards from EDCO, IEDC and being named one of DCI's Top 40 Under 40 global economic developers. Since 2022, Gord has served as a Municipal Councillor for the Town of Atikokan, is the Treasurer of the Atikokan Health and Community Services, and is the chair of the Atikokan Economic Development Corporation. Additionally, Gord is a Past President and former long-time board member of EDCO, and in 2024 was elected to serve on the boards of directors of both EDAC and CFO. Gord resides in Atikokan, where he and his partner Rhea proudly watch their children grow up way too quickly.

## Product Development



**Megan Boyd**  
Manager, Product Development

Megan Boyd is the Manager of Product Development and Investment Attraction at Destination Northern Ontario, where she leads initiatives that strengthen and diversify the region's tourism landscape. With a passion for sustainability, accessibility, and community-driven growth, she works closely with operators, partners, and stakeholders to foster innovation and resilience across Northern Ontario's tourism network. Drawing on her entrepreneurial experience and background in small business management, Megan brings a practical, results-oriented approach to helping tourism businesses scale and succeed in competitive markets. With an authentic, outside perspective, she builds trust with operators and partners, helping them uncover new ways to enhance and share Northern Ontario's unique tourism offerings. Beyond her professional duties, Megan remains actively involved in her community by volunteering her time and skills to local projects that improve and support the region where she lives. She's passionate about collaboration and supports projects that deliver genuine benefits to residents and visitors alike.

## Marketing & Communications



**Sara Currier**  
Manager, Marketing & Communications

Sara Currier is the Manager of Marketing and Communications at Destination Northern Ontario, where she leads strategic initiatives to elevate tourism and industry engagement across the region. Since joining the organization in 2020, she has taken on progressive roles that reflect her strengths in communication, relationship-building, and creative strategy. With over a decade of experience spanning tourism, agriculture, and the nonprofit sector, Sara is known for her collaborative approach and high-quality work. Originally from the Niagara region, she moved to Sault Ste. Marie, inspired by her love of the outdoors and Northern Ontario's unique character. She holds a diploma in Hospitality and Tourism Management from Mohawk College. Outside of work, Sara enjoys day tripping with her husband and son, baking, and finding new ways to experience the region she now calls home.



**Tiina Keranen**  
Visual Communications Designer

Tiina Keranen, Visual Communications Designer at Destination Northern Ontario, holds an Advanced Diploma in Graphic Design from Sault College and brings over a decade of design and marketing experience to the team. She plays a key role in shaping the organization's brand and visual identity while collaborating with internal teams and industry partners to create impactful designs for both consumer and industry-facing initiatives in domestic and global markets. Previously, she worked with Algoma University's Marketing and Communications department, where she refined her skills and expanded her expertise. A self-taught photographer with a passion for the outdoors, Tiina enjoys capturing the raw beauty of Northern Ontario by contributing to a digital asset library for the organization and its partners. Her work reflects creativity, problem-solving, and a deep appreciation for the region.

## Workforce Development & Industry Training



### Gillian McCullough

Manager, Workforce Development & Industry Training

Gillian McCullough is the Manager of Workforce Development and Industry Training. She manages the delivery of training through the Tourism Excellence North program, as well as developing new and enhanced curriculum for the Northern Ontario tourism industry. Gillian also works to maintain and build partnerships across Northern Ontario communities and organizations to identify and support workforce development initiatives. Gillian has a strong background in education and curriculum development, including a Bachelor of Education degree and Instructional Design certification.



### Naza Obasi

Information Technology Support Coordinator

Naza Obasi, Information Technology Support Coordinator, brings nearly 2 years of experience in IT support and systems management to the team, specializing in workflow optimization and technical solutions. She plays a key role in enhancing the operational efficiency of the Workforce Development and Industry Training Pillar, supporting Tourism Excellence North's mission to empower Northern Ontario tourism operators to achieve excellence and growth.

## Support Teams



### Ian McMillan

International Marketing Specialist

Ian McMillan was the Executive Director of the Algoma Kinniwabi Travel Association and Tourism Sault Ste. Marie throughout his career, before joining the Destination Northern Ontario team in 2018 as their International Marketing Specialist. His responsibilities include developing key international market opportunities in Germany, U.K., Japan and Korea, along with coordinating North American Group Tour initiatives. He has served on The Board of Directors of TIAO, Attractions Ontario, TICO and currently serves as the Vice-Chair of the Science North Board of Trustees.



### Mike Wozny

Strategic Initiatives Coordinator

Michael Wozny has been working in the tourism and economic development industry for over 30 years. He has worked in senior management and as an industry consultant with the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism and in the private sector. His success includes over \$250 million direct investment activity in Northern Ontario projects and expertise includes investment attraction and product development; business, financing and strategic plans; government funding programs; feasibility studies; domestic and international marketing campaigns; and various other non-capital initiatives.



### Karen Peacock

Master Trainer

Karen Peacock is the Master Trainer for Destination Northern Ontario, where she guides and supports tourism operators, communities, and partners through high-quality training and capacity building. Joining the organization in 2015, Karen worked as the Senior Coordinator of Workforce Development and Industry Training for Destination Northern Ontario, bringing enthusiasm and dedication to strengthening the tourism sector. She played a key role in coordinating and launching award-winning initiatives, including Tourism Excellence North, a pilot suite of training solutions that has since become the foundation of Destination Northern Ontario's industry training and workforce development pillar. Her last position before joining Destination Northern Ontario was as Executive Director at the Art Gallery of Sudbury. Karen lives in the Greater City of Sudbury.



- › **Destination Northern Ontario** / [destinationnorthernontario.ca](http://destinationnorthernontario.ca)
- › **Tourism Excellence North** / [tourismexcellencenorth.ca](http://tourismexcellencenorth.ca)
- › **Domestic Marketing** / [northernontario.travel](http://northernontario.travel)
- › **International Travel Trade** / [northernontarioitt.com](http://northernontarioitt.com)



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