

NORTHERN BC TOURISM ASSOCIATION

STEWARDING TOURISM INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND RESILIENCY – 2021-2024





Northern BC Tourism Association Corporate Strategy

This Corporate Strategy is an internal road map for Northern British Columbia Tourism Association (NBCTA). It defines the areas of focus and establishes the pillars that NBCTA will centre on to realize our visionary aspirations. We have consulted with partners throughout the region to gain insight and deepen our understanding of the requirements needed to support successful destination management for the Northern BC region. This has helped shape the strategic priorities for the next three years as we seek to build on our strengths, and to maintain our role as a champion of tourism in Northern British Columbia.

At the core of our work is the need to disperse the benefits that tourism can provide across the region in a way that supports further development of livable communities, enhances resident quality of life, is sustainable, and aligns with the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals.



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OUR FOCUS: TO FACILITATE AND STEWARD THE DEVELOPMENT OF A STRONG TOURISM INDUSTRY IN NORTHERN BC THAT IS INTEGRAL TO THE REGIONAL WAY OF LIFE

To achieve this, we will work to further establish a compelling and authentic narrative that inspires the travelers to discover Northern British Columbia with care and respect.

We will help our partners transform stories into authentic experiences that celebrate our wild landscapes, culture, and our northern way of life.

We will advocate for what's best for our visitors and our partners while sustaining the integrity of what makes this region unique.

We will provide innovative leadership that adds value to the tourism industry through our commitment to being agile, relevant, and ahead of the curve.



OUR PILLARS

We have identified four foundational pillars that will shape our priorities and actions. The work under each of these pillars requires a range of actions, including cross-cutting thematic actions that have been identified as delivery themes. Industry collaboration and strategic focus on advancing these pillars and underlying delivery themes will support further development of the sector and steward a sustainable tourism industry.

1. MARKET AWARENESS
2. DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP
3. INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT
4. ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

OUR INTERNAL VALUES

1. We work collaboratively to create vision
2. We encourage innovation within a supportive work environment
3. We are relevant to all of our stakeholders and align with wider goals that underpin sustainability
4. We are committed to working relations that are characterized by integrity and foster diversity and inclusion

OUR DELIVERY THEMES



Mindfully promote the stories of Northern BC



Support the delivery of compelling northern experiences



Advocate for a strong tourism industry in Northern BC



Provide innovative tourism leadership



Assessing Our Context

Regional tourism priorities have been slowly shifting in recent years in alignment with international trends. Increasingly, destination marketing organizations have evolved into destination management organizations (DMOs), as they embrace a wider scope of roles in the development and sustainability of tourism. In addition to facilitating demand for tourism products through marketing and promotional activities, emphasis has been placed on working collaboratively with a wide range of partners towards the coordinated and sustainable management of the visitor economy. A stronger focus on supporting the components that are needed to develop and maintain a successful tourism sector, including access, infrastructure development, advocacy, and capacity building, together with consideration of the impact that tourism has on resident quality of life are being woven into destination management plans around the world.

This shift is reflected in a recent document prepared by the UNWTO for DMOs: Responsible and sustainable destination management should entail a process that effectively and harmoniously addresses the interactions between the visitors, the industry that serves them, the community that hosts them and the environment in a broad sense (natural and cultural resources).¹

As we begin to move forward with BC's Restart Plan and continue to work with provincial and regional partners to address COVID-19 related issues, we recognize the ongoing significance of the transformational opportunities identified by Destination Next² that must be taken into consideration in developing a road-map of this nature:

1. **Destination Stewardship – in other words, the importance of balancing economic development, sustainable tourism and the quality of life.**
2. **Community Alignment and the momentum that can be gained from building public support around a shared vision for the destination, both at the local or community level and at the regional level.**
3. **Digital conversion and the need to continue focusing on connecting visitors on mobile devices to drive real-time sales in-destination.**



1: UNWTO, 2019, UNWTO Guidelines for Institutional Strengthening of Destination Management Organizations (DMOs): Preparing DMOs for New Challenges

2: Destinations International, 2019, Destination NEXT Futures Study 2019: A Strategic Road Map for the Next Generation of Global Destination Organizations



A Reality Check

Developing tourism in Northern BC faces its own set of challenges – many of which have been accentuated by the pandemic. In particular, we recognize the following:

- » The size of Northern BC as a region is extensive and compounds issues associated with visitor dispersion, stakeholder engagement, and efforts to create a sense of cohesive identity.
- » Market awareness outside of near-in markets, and knowledge of products and northern experiences remain low, although the pandemic may have improved this to some degree within the BC market as provincial residents look to identify alternative options that offer new experiences closer to home.
- » Tourism in Northern BC is at an earlier stage of development than elsewhere in the province, and while the sector continues to grow, the export-ready product offerings remain relatively limited, particularly with regard to curated leisure experiences that would appeal to long-haul markets.
- » The cost of travel to and within Northern BC is often identified as a barrier to growth – an issue that has been exacerbated significantly by the recent decline of air and ferry routes as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- » Tourism investment in Northern BC is not considered a top priority in many parts of the region and as such, the tourism sector is less mature than elsewhere. Many local areas do not have a funding model to support tourism development opportunities and there are few DMO's.
- » While discussions on sustainability and regenerative tourism have become a priority focus in many mature tourism destinations around the world, generating a commitment to prioritizing associated activities with the tourism sector in northern BC can be more challenging.
- » Implementation of the Regional Destination Development Strategies is constrained by both limited resourcing and a limited understanding of the value of destination development activities by many regional decision makers. This can also have an effect on our ability to influence associated tourism development policies.

Our Opportunities

- » As pandemic restrictions ease, we anticipate a growth in demand for nature-based experiences that are regarded as safe, particularly from regional markets. Northern BC is well positioned to offer experiences that are perceived as distinctive, including identified iconics such as the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark, Khutzeymateen Grizzly Bear Sanctuary, or Muskwa-Kechika Management Area. However, leveraging these opportunities will require a coordinated focus on strengthening the concepts of health, wellness and safety in relation to what the North has to offer and building a greater level of awareness of Northern experiences. Improving market readiness and focusing on innovative experience development will need to be a priority.
- » Northern BC has compelling stories to tell – stories that can animate travel corridors and elevate existing sites and attractions. Curating these stories more effectively, and re-positioning the circle routes of the north offers potential to build global recognition for northern touring experiences.
- » While COVID-19 has significantly impacted the tourism economy and many businesses have struggled to remain viable, the Tourism Resiliency Program has proven to be an important opportunity to provide direct business support and enhance connectivity with tourism operators throughout the region.
- » As we move forward with restarting tourism in the north, it is an opportune moment to strengthen local understanding of the value and significance of the regional tourism economy. NBCTA has an important role to play in highlighting the benefits that communities derive from tourism, and the way in which tourism can support the viability and liveability of northern communities.
- » There is an increasing recognition that tapping into the region's potential in an appropriate way will require ongoing advocacy efforts. NBCTA has a strategic role to play in working collaboratively with industry to further profile industry needs at all levels of government, and to encourage dialogue in global conversations on sustainability, biodiversity and climate change.
- » Indigenous tourism is one of the fastest growing tourism sectors globally. Indigenous nations and partners throughout the region are considering the opportunity to develop authentic tourism experiences that profile stories and celebrate the region's rich Indigenous culture.
- » The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified global connectedness, and the importance of having a well-established digital presence has never been more critical. Many tourism businesses are keen to become more digitally sophisticated and enhance their digital readiness.
- » The opportunity to acquire tourism research through advanced technologies has created an ability for NBCTA to access more robust visitor data. A commitment to a collective approach to analyze and disseminate this research will elevate the industry's ability to understand tourism performance and strategically manage regional tourism activities.
- » The COVID-19 pandemic has created an opportunity to rethink the sustainability of the tourism industry and implement policies that support a more sustainable and resilient tourism model that better balances the environmental, social, and economic impacts of tourism.

This Corporate Strategy outlines how NBCTA will continue to align itself with global DMO trends. Our strategic priorities are focused on addressing the challenges that face this region, and leveraging these emerging opportunities. Working in partnership with our stakeholders, we can facilitate the development of a strong and vibrant tourism industry in Northern BC that is integral to our way of life.



PILLAR 1:

MARKET AWARENESS

VISION: NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA WILL BE WIDELY RECOGNIZED FOR ITS DISTINCTIVELY AUTHENTIC WILDERNESS EXPERIENCES AND LIFESTYLE AND BECOME A HIGHLY RECOMMENDED DESTINATION BY VISITORS WHO ARE INSPIRED TO EXPLORE THE REGION WITH CARE AND RESPECT

OBJECTIVES:

- » Heightened market awareness through strategic alignment across the tourism marketing ecosystem.
- » Content development and distribution through a shared approach to curating and presenting authentic stories that profile and celebrate regional culture and inspire visitors to experience Northern BC.
- » Regionalized campaign development that generates conversion

KEY ACTIVITIES:

Creating strategic alignment through:

- » Supporting the consistency and alignment of marketing activities throughout the tourism ecosystem including with all levels of government, communities, businesses, and DMO's
- » Developing a stronger brand proposition for Northern BC within the provincial marketing ecosystem
- » Supporting the Destination BC Invest in Iconics and Place Brand process, and strengthening the Super, Natural British Columbia brand
- » Enhancing and aligning content distribution partnerships with Destination BC and other appropriate partners

Developing compelling and authentic travel content through:

- » Establishing an in-depth understanding of the target audience and preferred distribution channels
- » Creating engaging imagery and quality video materials that can be used in each stage of the consumer journey
- » Working with businesses and communities to develop high quality, brand appropriate content and ensuring that stakeholders are well informed on content and asset curation within NBCTA
- » Working within the tourism ecosystem as the authoritative resource for Northern BC content, with an emphasis on sharing stories that transform northern icons into motivators for travel
- » Creating content development and distribution partnerships with like-minded brands and partners to reach qualified audience
- » Curating and amplifying high quality user-generated content
- » Developing compelling travel itineraries in partnership with communities, businesses and DMOs

Promoting regional messaging through:

- » Developing partnerships and leading multimedia campaigns for Northern BC
- » Working with communities, DMOs and sector partners to continue strengthening appropriate partnerships to profile sector-based experiences core to the Northern BC region.
- » Crafting strategic marketing messages focused on safe, respectful, and regenerative travel opportunities in appropriate markets
- » Establishing and/or maintaining effective partnerships with travel trade and media influencers, and partners in key markets that promote the authentic stories and experiences of the region

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS



1. Enhanced awareness in key markets
2. Strong Net Promoter Score
3. Increased consumer content consumption
4. Expansion of content distribution network
5. Increased visitation in shoulder seasons

DELIVERY THEMES





PILLAR 2:

DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP

VISION: THE TOURISM SECTOR IN NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA WILL BE CHARACTERIZED BY A COLLABORATIVE AND STRATEGIC APPROACH TO CREATING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL TO TOURISM STAKEHOLDERS AND COMMUNITIES THROUGHOUT THE REGION

OBJECTIVES:

- » A tourism industry committed to the sustainable use of natural assets and to the promotion of biodiversity
- » A shared agenda fostered among all partners that promote destination development and management
- » Tourism growth that supports the goals and interests of Indigenous communities through progressive enhancement of our Indigenous relations
- » Strong awareness of the benefits of tourism to the economy and to residents' quality of life in Northern British Columbia
- » Enhanced resilience through facilitating the mitigation, preparedness response and recovery of the Northern BC tourism industry in times of emergency



KEY ACTIVITIES:

Promoting sustainability through:

- » Positioning NBCTA as a champion of sustainability
- » Pursuing Biosphere Certification and implementing the Biosphere process for communities and businesses
- » Aspiring and adhering to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals
- » Ensuring the implementation of effective policies, procedures and systems that prioritize accessibility and inclusion
- » Developing a tourism industry that is committed to respecting and upholding the socio-cultural authenticity and traditional values of host communities, and to supporting inter-cultural understanding

Supporting destination development through:

- » Continuing to implement and champion the Regional Destination Development Strategies
- » Elevating visitor experiences and core iconic features with infrastructure and corridor development
- » Supporting the coordination of the Regional Destination Development Advisory Committees that provide advice and localized input on destination development activities

Enhancing Indigenous relations and supporting reconciliation through:

- » Supporting recommendations relating to the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples on tourism related matters
- » Advancing and supporting Indigenous participation in all areas relating to tourism and destination development and supporting Indigenous experience development
- » Working in partnership with ITBC, including a joint initiative to employ regionalized Indigenous Tourism coordination
- » Signing collaboration / MOU agreements with Indigenous communities to strengthen Indigenous relationships, partnerships and collaboration
- » Supporting a cross-government approach to Indigenous outreach, training, development of protocols and intercultural understanding



Strengthening stakeholder and government relations through:

- » Working collaboratively to measure and promote the value of tourism within communities
- » Continuing to work with TIABC and relevant partners on advocacy and policies relating to environmental integrity, transportation, and connectivity
- » Continuing to elevate local government and residents' understanding of the contributions of tourism to the quality of life and economic well-being
- » Maintaining government outreach and relations and working with appropriate government ministries on matters relating to permits, authorizations and tenures to ensure sustainability of assets and viability of tourism activities
- » Maintain and develop relationships with all levels of government and First Nations

Focusing on emergency management through:

- » Engaging and participating in forums and partnerships that assist in mitigating emergency situations
- » Assisting businesses and the regional tourism industry in preparing and planning for emergencies
- » Taking action to support the relief and recovery of the tourism industry when emergencies happen



KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

1. Establish sustainable baseline assessments for our destination and measure performance against them
2. The number of objectives and action items being advanced in the 10-year Destination Development Strategies
3. Contribute to the implementation of UNDRIP and the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.
4. Resident sentiment and understanding of the value of the tourism industry
5. Value of the tourism industry
6. Regular communications to inform and engage government and First Nations on the Value of Tourism and Destination Development activities
7. Support local DMOs and authorities to ensure tourism/ visitor safety is a key part of emergency response planning

DELIVERY THEMES



An aerial photograph of a mountainous landscape. In the foreground, a small village with red-roofed buildings is situated on a peninsula or near a lake with turquoise water. A road winds through the landscape, and a large, light-colored glacial deposit or moraine is visible in the middle ground. The background features steep, rugged mountains under a cloudy sky.

PILLAR 3: INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT

VISION: A COMPETITIVE AND STRATEGIC NORTHERN BC TOURISM INDUSTRY EMPOWERED THROUGH THE DELIVERY OF EFFECTIVE INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

OBJECTIVES:

- » Industry is empowered through a strategic research program
- » An effective industry development program is in place that supports a sophisticated and competitive Northern BC tourism sector
- » Tourism is efficiently serviced by a well-trained committed and motivated regional workforce

KEY ACTIVITIES:

Empowering strategic decision making through:

- » Establishing an effective regional tourism research program
- » Enhancing ability to monitor industry performance
- » Designing and implementing a regional research communication plan
- » Enhancing internal regional research expertise

Supporting the development of a sophisticated and competitive industry through:

- » Providing ongoing assistance to businesses to support the elevation of the Northern BC travel experience
- » Continuing to evolve the Tourism Resiliency Program to ensure the survival of BC tourism businesses through the pandemic
- » Supporting Destination BC's Learning Centre and profiling opportunities to participate throughout the region

Strengthening and supporting a committed and qualified regional tourism workforce through:

- » Working with stakeholders and partners to support the recruitment, retention and recognition of the tourism workforce in Northern BC
- » Supporting the development of post-secondary tourism training programs
- » Continuing to foster partnerships with business support organizations such as go2HR, Community Futures, and Chambers of Commerce



KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS



1. Stakeholder participation and engagement in regional research programming
2. Number of businesses engaged in Industry Development programs
3. Increased regional visitation
4. Growth in number of market and export ready products
5. Workforce training programs offered and stakeholder uptake
6. Measure of information dissemination to Northern BC stakeholders on opportunities to support their tourism workforce

DELIVERY THEMES





PILLAR 4:

ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

VISION: A PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION THAT LEADS AND SUPPORTS THE REGIONAL TOURISM SECTOR AND IS RESPONSIVE AND EFFECTIVE IN MEETING INDUSTRY NEEDS

OBJECTIVES:

- » A diverse team of appropriately skilled and trained staff
- » Strong organizational governance
- » Financial sustainability
- » Effective organizational processes supporting workflow and productivity

KEY ACTIVITIES:

Attracting and retaining a diverse team of appropriately skilled and trained staff through:

- » Maintaining an exemplary corporate culture
- » Providing professional development opportunities
- » Undertaking strategic recruitment

Developing and employing strong organizational governance through:

- » Attracting and retaining a professional and committed board of directors while ensuring diversity and inclusion on the board
- » Implementing board training and development opportunities for board members
- » Engaging the board in strategic planning
- » Monitoring performance of the board

Ensuring the financial sustainability of the association through:

- » Engaging in effective financial management
- » Nurturing a strong relationship with Destination BC and the Provincial Government
- » Exploring new funding opportunities and partnerships

Developing effective organizational processes and systems through:

- » Investing in technology and appropriate platforms
- » Developing and maintaining a comprehensive industry database
- » Developing internal expertise in all processes and systems
- » Regular transparent communication with stakeholders



KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

1. Employee satisfaction
2. Board satisfaction and engagement
3. Strong fiduciary position
4. Stakeholder and partner engagement
5. Annual audit performance
6. Annual reporting

DELIVERY THEMES





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