

*Northeastern  
Ontario*  
CANADA

# NORTHEASTERN ONTARIO TOURISM

THREE-YEAR STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN  
**2021**



1-888-465-0990  
[info@neont.ca](mailto:info@neont.ca)  
[northeasternontario.com](http://northeasternontario.com)

## Acknowledgements:

Northeastern Ontario Regional Tourism Organization Inc. (NeONT) in partnership with Destination Northern Ontario retained the services of Karen Jones Consulting Inc. to develop a Three-Year Strategic Action Plan to guide the future growth and direction of NeONT.

The NeONT Steering Committee, Board of Directors and staff provided assistance and helped guide and support the development and direction of the planning process. Input, insight and contributions provided by the Steering Committee, Board of Directors, members, non-members and tourism stakeholders was instrumental to the development of the strategy.



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## Message from the Executive Director



On behalf of Northeastern Ontario Tourism (NeONT) and its Board of Directors, we are thrilled to share the Northeastern Ontario Tourism Strategic Action Plan for 2021-2024. As you will note, the research, strategic thinking, time, and effort that has been invested in creating this plan will help guide NeONT through this next chapter and COVID-19 recovery.

As an organization, we are excited to drive this Strategic Action Plan to fruition and expand on the organization's future direction in order to assist with industry growth and foster relationships with those that matter most, our members. As we know, Northeastern Ontario is well-positioned as a premier destination with four seasons of unspoiled nature, wide-open spaces, and without crowds; the ability to drive this message to consumers will help immensely as we enter into a recovery phase.

We would like to thank the many individuals and organizations that have contributed to this effort including the Strategic Action Plan Steering Committee, Destination Northern Ontario, Karen Jones Consulting Inc., and the numerous public and private sector stakeholders that joined forces to provide input during the many conversations, interviews, and surveys.

Northeastern Ontario Tourism delivers remarkable experiences for visitors and residents and has great potential for enhancing its position, products, services and marketing. Working together will make this a reality.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Trevor Beard".

**Trevor Beard**

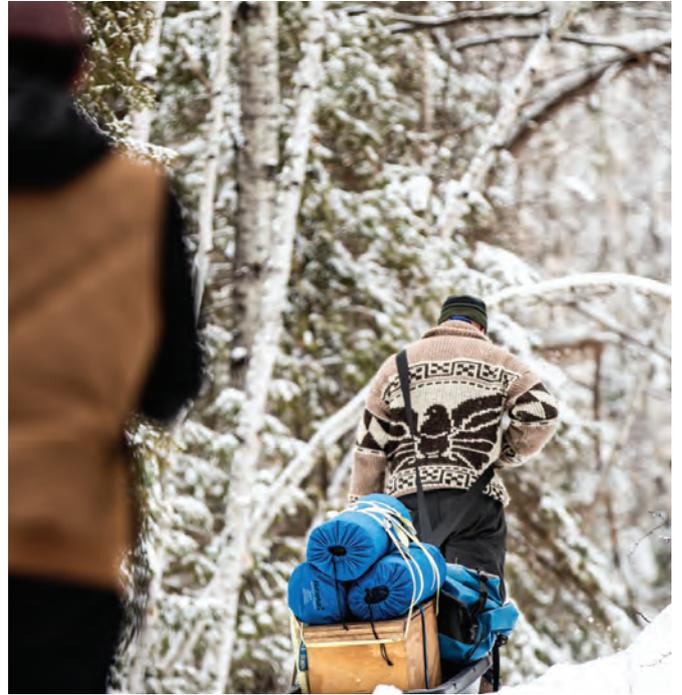
ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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# BACKGROUND

Established in 2012, Northeastern Ontario Regional Tourism Organization Inc. (NeONT) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting the region as a premier travel destination with the goal of increasing tourism revenue for its partners and the region. The Northeast region includes the Districts of Cochrane, Manitoulin, Nipissing, Sudbury, and Timiskaming. The organization is governed by a Board of Directors who provide direction and leadership to the NeONT staff, and it also works with Destination Northern Ontario and Destination Ontario to ensure the region is represented in pan-Northern and pan-Ontario marketing efforts.

Northeastern Ontario Regional Tourism Organization Inc. (NeONT) has undertaken the development of a Three-Year Strategic Action Plan to help set direction, identify priorities, guide organizational growth, heighten the organization's position as the regional Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) and position the region as the premier travel destination for visitors.





The plan was developed utilizing a grassroots approach focusing on primary and secondary research methods, including industry research, best practice review, stakeholder engagement, data analysis, identification of priority areas and development of actions. This collaborative approach was instrumental in creating a plan that reflects the strengths, challenges and opportunities of the organization, the region and the tourism industry.

The strategic priorities focus on COVID-19 recovery support, membership recruitment and retention, sustainability, collaboration, marketing, and product development and include key actions that will enable NeONT to build upon successes and accomplishments achieved to date while capitalizing opportunities to advance and grow.

The strategic planning process allowed NeONT to reflect on successes and challenges, engage and consult with partners and foster relationships with a number of key stakeholders in the industry. The Three-Year Strategic Action Plan will serve as a roadmap to guide NeONT through growth, stimulate and support tourism development and position the region as a premier tourism destination.

The NeONT team is committed to implementing actions identified in the plan, measuring outcomes through key performance metrics as well as pivoting as necessary to ensure the organization continues to support and promote tourism in the region. A clear direction, strong leadership, collaborative partners and engaged membership will be critical in ensuring the continued growth of the organization.

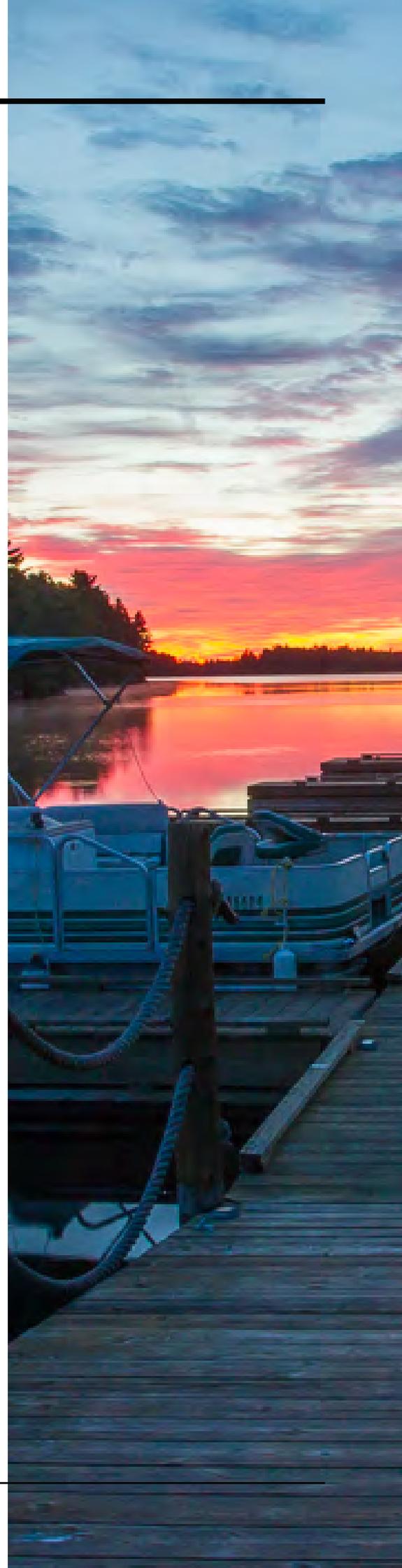
### STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS:



For more information on the strategic process, research, engagement and analysis, contact: [info@neont.ca](mailto:info@neont.ca)

# NORTHEASTERN ONTARIO CATCHMENT AREA

Northeastern Ontario stretches from the French River and Manitoulin Island in the south, to Timmins, Temiskaming Shores and Cochrane in the North. From Mattawa, North Bay and Sudbury to Kapuskasing and Moose Factory.



# SWOT ANALYSIS

## STRENGTHS

- Strong brand recognition
- Dedicated Board of Directors
- Information sharing during COVID-19 Pandemic
- Number of potential partners within the region
- Collaboration with Destination Northern Ontario
- Indigenous Tourism Ontario representation on the board
- Diversity of product and experience offerings within the region
- Proximity to travelers based in large urban markets
- Newly enhanced website with easier navigation
- Diversified marketing initiatives (print, digital, consumer shows)

## WEAKNESSES

- Human resource capacity
- Internal and external communications
- Large geographic region
- Perceived lack of equal representation of product segments, urban and rural markets
- Limited engagement with partners on initiatives, programs and successes
- Lack of trust due to high turnover of staff and board members
- Collection of performance metrics on marketing initiatives
- Limited engagement with members and their online presence
- Lack of value perceived by membership

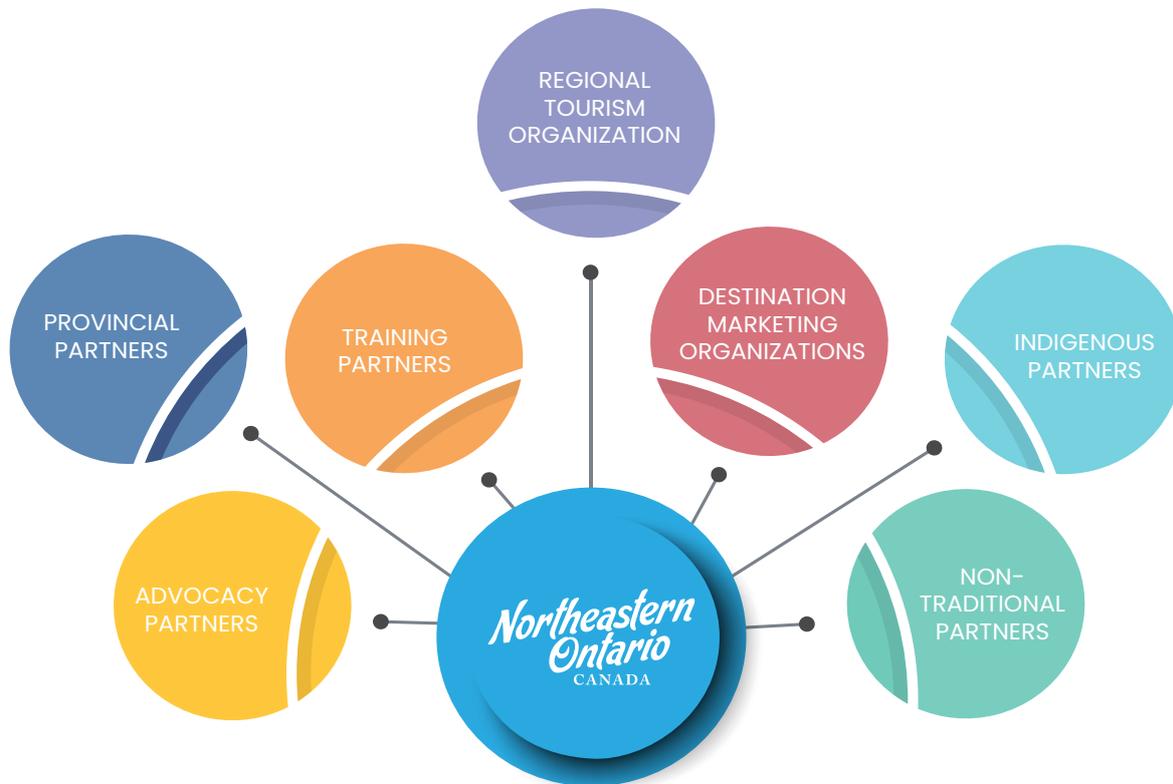
## OPPORTUNITIES

- Build internal staff capacity
- Establish a diversified board that truly represents the region
- Formalize board recruitment, onboarding and training process
- Increase communications and engagement
- Explore and foster strong relationships with TIAC, TIAO, and NOTO in relation to advocacy efforts
- Collaborate with other DMOs (urban and rural)
- Increase membership value through added services and product development initiatives
- Promote and create packages to connect urban and rural markets
- Partner with Tourism Excellence North to build capacity within the tourism operators and further enhance available experiences and products to exceed visitor expectations
- Collaborate with non-traditional partners to assist with investment attraction, business retention and succession planning efforts
- Develop an annual Business Plan to guide operations and align with Strategic Plan
- Create a marketing strategy that caters to all five product segments and represents urban and rural markets
- Promote and build Indigenous and Francophone experiences
- Develop an internal succession plan for board and staff
- Provide ongoing supports, industry research information about funding/training opportunities to retain and grow the tourism ecosystem

## THREATS

- Financial stability
- Global pandemic & economic downturn
- Change in provincial tourism structure
- Travel restrictions
- Lack of available tourism products/experiences post COVID-19

# KEY TOURISM PARTNERS



<p><b>PROVINCIAL PARTNERS</b>                  Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Cultural Industries (MHSTCI)                  Destination Ontario (DO)</p>	<p><b>REGIONAL TOURISM ORGANIZATION</b>                  Destination Northern Ontario (DNO)</p>	<p><b>INDIGENOUS PARTNERS</b>                  Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC)                  Indigenous Tourism Ontario (ITO)</p>
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<p><b>ADVOCACY PARTNERS</b>                  Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAC)                  Tourism Association of Ontario (TIAO)                  Nature &amp; Outdoor Tourism Ontario (NOTO)</p>
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<p><b>TRAINING PARTNERS</b>                  Ontario Tourism Education Corp. (OTEC)                  Tourism Excellence North (TEN)</p>
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<p><b>DESTINATION MARKETING ORGANIZATIONS</b></p>	
<p>RTO 13A                  Northeast</p>	<p>Tourism North Bay                  Tourism Sudbury                  Tourism Timmins</p>
<p>RTO 13B                  North Central</p>	<p>Algoma Country                  Tourism Sault Ste. Marie</p>
<p>RTO 13C                  Northwest</p>	<p>Sunset Country                  Superior Country                  Tourism Thunder Bay</p>

<p><b>NON-TRADITIONAL PARTNERS</b>                  Community Futures Development Corporations                  Small Business Enterprise Centres                  Economic Development Departments                  Chambers of Commerce                  Workforce Planning Boards                  Post-Secondary Institutions                  Ministry of Energy, Northern Development &amp; Mines                  Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation                  FedNor</p>
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# STRATEGIC DIRECTION

**Value Statement:** Northeastern Ontario’s tourism sector is recognized as a key economic driver as a result of marketing, capacity building, product development, and investment attraction programs.

**Mission Statement:** To build partnerships, increase awareness, and develop strong connections with industry to increase tourism in Northeastern Ontario.

## Guiding Principles:

- Collaborating, communicating and working with industry partners and communities to develop strong programs that support the sector;
- Representing the diversity of the industry, its products and locations across the region;
- Facilitating marketing, workforce development, product development, and investment attraction efforts in collaboration with key partners;
- Adopting a visitor-first mindset and assisting industry partners and communities to evolve tourism assets to meet and exceed visitor expectations;
- Ensuring organizational sustainability through efficient and responsible handling of resources; and
- Positioning the organization as a leader and innovator within the industry.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREAS:



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# COVID-19 RECOVERY SUPPORT



**Goal:** To provide support, resources and tools including information sharing to assist tourism operators, communities and partners during the recovery phase of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Assisting the tourism industry through the recovery phase of the COVID-19 pandemic will be vital to the industry's continued success and growth over the coming years. As one of the hardest hit sectors across the country, it is critical that organizations such as NeONT is connected to both industry and government representatives in order to advocate, educate and communicate the needs of the industry while promoting the available programming and supports back to industry partners. Ensuring operators and communities have the tools to safely welcome visitors when travel is permitted and promoting those regulations is also important in fostering tourism growth within the region, especially within new consumer segments.

## **Key Performance Metrics:**

- Northeast representation on partner COVID-19 impact surveys
- Number of partners consulted with in relation to COVID-19
- Level of engagement on partners boards and committees
- Number of COVID-19 related messages distributed through communication channels
- Number of industry-related tools developed
- Number of marketing initiatives undertaken during COVID-19 recovery
- Number of new products and experiences available in the region
- Number of members / retention of members



# COVID-19 RECOVERY SUPPORT ACTIONS

1

**Continue to foster a strong working relationship with Destination Northern Ontario (DNO) and its partners to further support marketing, product development, workforce development and investment attraction within the region.**

- Provide support to partners such as NOTO, TIAO, TIAC who advocate on behalf of the tourism industry to ensure there are relevant funding supports and programming targeted to the tourism sector.
- Assist in gathering industry data from operators and communities on the impacts of the pandemic and share with partners such as DNO, DO, DC and ITO. Share industry surveys distributed by partners with NeONT membership when applicable, to ensure the Northeast is captured within the data gathered for future programming initiatives.

2

**Communicate the available funding opportunities and program supports available to members through online channels, newsletters and one-on-one communications.**

- Continue to share industry information, training programs, supports and funding opportunities to members through all communication channels as it becomes available.
- Connect members with relevant business development organizations to assist with funding applications and business plan development supports. This could include the SBECs, Economic Development Departments, CFDCs, NOHFC, FedNor and Chambers of Commerce. NeONT could provide assistance through sharing of industry data and letters of support.

3

**Work with partners to develop industry-specific tools and guidelines to help facilitate the opening of tourism operations as well as communicate safe travel regulations.**

- Collaborate with DNO and other DMOs to develop a set of online resources to assist operators with opening and operating safely according to provincial and federal guidelines. This could be broken down by product area/operation type.
- Work with DNO on messaging to be used to promote safe travel within the region and across Northern Ontario. Additional education to residents and communities on the importance of tourism may be required to assist with creating a friendly environment to foster tourism growth in the region.

4

**Continue to provide value and build relationships with members through collaborating with tourism partners on new marketing and product development initiatives in relation to COVID-19 recovery.**

- Ensure NeONT is involved in all marketing campaigns being implemented by DNO and DO to showcase Northern Ontario experiences to key consumer segments. This could include initiatives such as the #DreamON campaign implemented in 2020.
- Encourage ongoing communication with members to garner their insight into industry challenges and success stories through the pandemic. Communicate challenges with other industry partners in order to provide supports and resources to those who require it. Additionally, if given approval, showcase industry success stories including which companies have pivoted to cater to new markets, introducing new programming or adjusted their operations to follow new safety protocols.
- Assist in product development initiatives cross the region through participating in relevant committees and providing supports where needed. As the tourism industry recovers from the pandemic, product development is going to be crucial. Product development initiatives such as touring routes, self-guided experiences, interactive maps, family-orientated experiences as well as cultural experiences should be focused on.

# MEMBERSHIP

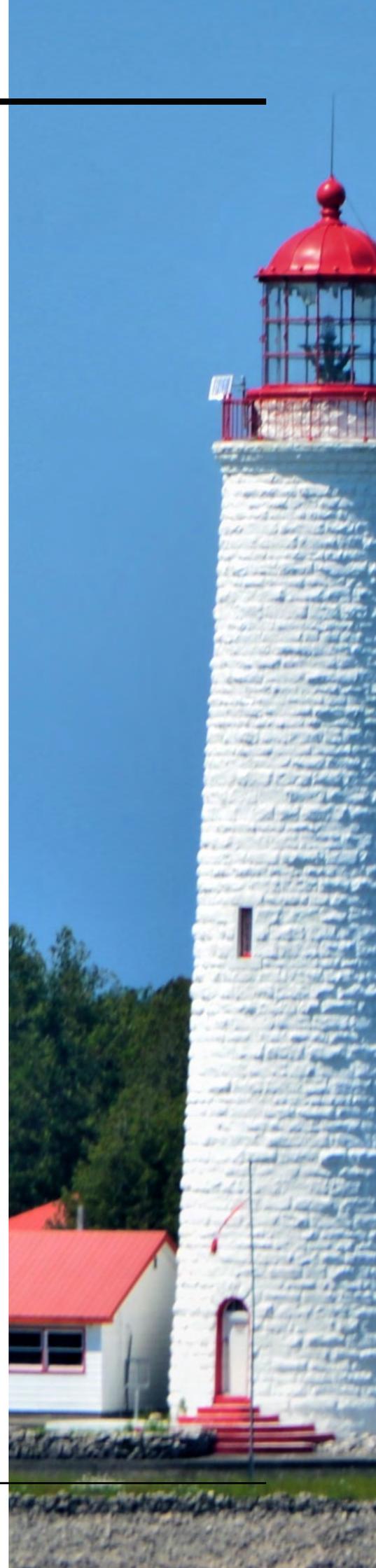


**Goal:** To provide programming, supports, tools and resources to foster growth within the tourism industry resulting in an increased membership base.

Increasing the membership base of NeONT is critical to the organization's viability and existence within the region. Ensuring it delivers a number of high-quality services, programs and supports in a timely manner is crucial to fostering a strong, resilient and vibrant tourism industry in the Northeast. Engaging members and partners to keep a pulse on industry needs and visitor expectations is key to ongoing success.

## Key Performance Metrics

- Finalized membership rate structure
- Increase in membership
- Increase brand presence
- Increased revenue and profitability
- Variety of members
- Number of partnerships (new and existing)
- Increased human resource capacity
- Number of events held
- Increased communication with members
- Increased confidence within membership
- Increased membership renewal rate
- Number of value-added services created
- Increased value of membership
- Increased capacity within operators
- Number of new products and experiences available in the region



# MEMBERSHIP ACTIONS

1

**Review and update membership structure and available value-added services to ensure desired membership value is achieved.**

- Conduct a review of the membership structure to ensure that it is relative to other DMOs as well as solidify a per capita ratio for community partners.
- Establish a menu of additional supports and services to support industry growth while diversifying revenue streams. Examples could include website assistance, social media marketing, creative design, and training.
- Ensure all NeONT staff and board members are aware of available programming, benefits and costs associated to each membership structure as well as value-added services.
- Review and update the member onboarding package to ensure the information is relevant and the process is streamlined when welcoming new members.

2

**Increase engagement, establish trust and build confidence within the region through ongoing communications to members and partners.**

- Communicate available programming, tools and supports to members through online platforms such as the website, social media channels and newsletter. This could include marketing initiatives, product development programs, funding opportunities, industry updates and workforce and industry training tools.
- Showcase successful campaigns and provide performance metrics to partners on initiatives and campaigns conducted throughout the year. It is imperative that partners who have paid for additional services are updated on the final results.
- Provide business development and investment attraction supports through partnerships with SBECs, CFDCs, and economic development departments to assist members with growth and to access available programming, industry data and funding supports.
- Establish a mechanism to garner member feedback such as town hall events, monthly coffee clubs, online forums, and open houses. Use this time to promote the organizations progress, upcoming trends and programming and engage members in what they would like to see/how the organization can best assist them. This would also be a way to collect information on new products and experiences which could be shared through member spotlight campaigns.
- Share and engage on member posts when relevant to the organization as well as establish a member spotlight campaign. The spotlight campaign could be associated by product/experience or location and shared via social media platforms and the newsletter.
- Distribute an annual survey to members and partners to measure satisfaction rate, garner feedback on campaigns and identify new opportunities and partnerships for the upcoming year.

3

**Build rapport and increase brand exposure within the region through ongoing communication to non-members and partners.**

- Collect, analyze and distribute relevant industry data to assist tourism operators and communities with their growth and ensuring it aligns with priority product areas and consumer segments for the region.
- Host regional events to bring tourism operators, partners and non-traditional stakeholders together to foster a strong network of tourism leaders and promote collaboration amongst the industry. This could be done in partnership with the regional Chambers and their partner networks.

4

**Promote the organization, member benefits and importance of regional collaboration through a membership campaign.**

- Develop a marketing campaign to promote available member benefits to operators and communities across the region. Using high-quality imagery, videography and partner testimonials will help to convert potential leads.
- Ensure that staff are aware of the campaign and are well equipped and trained to respond to membership inquiries.
- Collaborate with partners to share membership information to their members/clients through their newsletter, social media channels, and website.
- Assign or hire a staff member/third party support to oversee partnership development opportunities and membership recruitment.

# SUSTAINABILITY

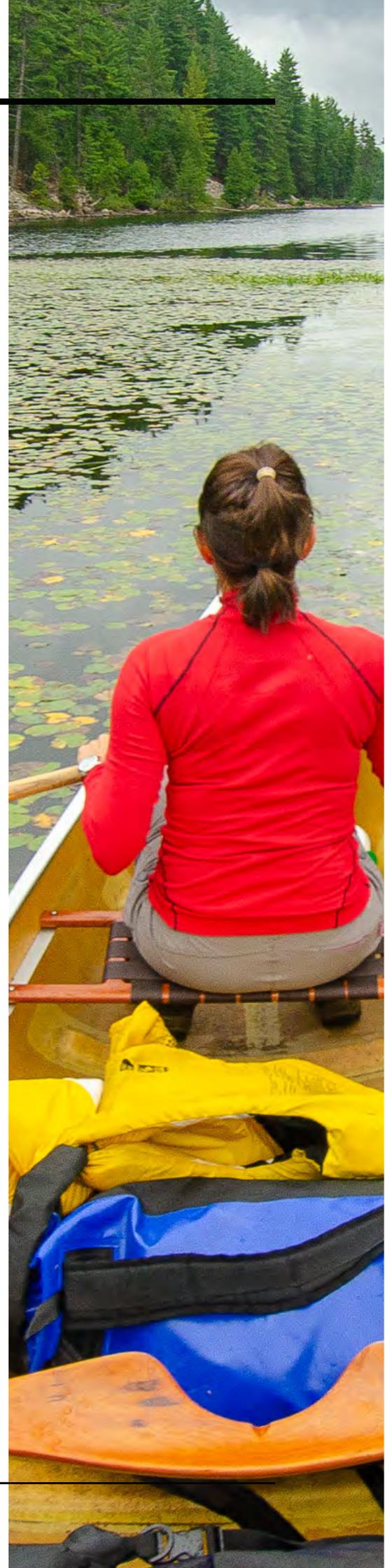


**Goal:** To create a sustainable, credible and efficient organization through increased capacity, adoption of policies and procedures and diversification of revenue sources.

Fostering a strong organizational culture internally will establish the foundation to create alignments and partnerships with industry stakeholders and operators. Creating a complementary mix of board members to best represent the region, building internal staff resources to drive the day-to-day operations and establishing internal policies to ensure effectiveness of the organization and its resources is critical to overall success. Adopting financial management practices to guide operational expenses and identify revenue generation sources will be key in building future capacity within the organization.

## Key Performance Metrics

- Development of Annual Business Plan and Marketing Strategy
- Increased human resource capacity
- Number of board and committee meetings held
- Board engagement and attendance at meetings
- Number of professional development opportunities attended
- Adoption of internal policies, procedures and plans to guide operations
- Diverse board complement that truly represents the region
- Increased revenue and profitability
- Development of internal succession plan



# SUSTAINABILITY ACTIONS

1

## **Foster strong board governance by providing board members with the tools and supports to effectively lead the organization through growth.**

- Review and update board by-laws, policies, insurance requirements, terms and procedures to ensure it aligns with Corporation Act requirements.
- Conduct board governance training to ensure all board members are aware of their roles and responsibilities, tourism landscape, tourism organizations and industry needs.
- Establish an onboarding process inclusive of a board manual, organizational mandate, roles and responsibilities, board member expectations, board meeting structure, tourism landscape and training opportunities. Ensure a transparent and inclusive board recruitment process occurs when new board members are recruited.
- Complete a board skills assessment to identify missing gaps, competencies and geographic representation with a balance between rural and urban directors.
- Establish a re-occurring meeting schedule for the Governance Committee to meet regularly and review board policies, procedures and related matters.

2

## **Create internal policies and procedures to ensure organizational sustainability.**

- Create an annual Business Plan and Marketing Strategy that aligns with NeONT's Strategic Action Plan to guide daily operations and marketing tactics. The plans should be led by the Executive Director and approved by the Board of Directors. It is vital that the Executive Director has the ability to implement tactics and pivot when necessary.
- Create a reporting template for board meetings, partner updates and funding requirements to ensure KPIs are captured in a timely and consistent manner.
- Establish policies, operating procedures, staff resources, organizational chart, and communication structure to allow for consistent delivery of services to partners.
- Develop a Board of Directors and staff succession plan to assist with organizational stability.

3

## **Increase human resource capacity to support partners and industry stakeholders.**

- As financial resources allow, increase staffing to ensure effective and consistent services are delivered to members, industry stakeholders and regional visitors. Human resources are required to implement services and programs identified in the organization's Mission and Value Statements.
- Utilize a variety of local, provincial and federal programs, services and partners to assist with service delivery and offset initial human resource costs.
- Develop committees when necessary to advance priorities, consult with industry and engage members and partners.
- Encourage ongoing professional development for staff and Board and actively participate in industry-related events and conferences such as the Northern Ontario Tourism Summit.

4

## **Adopt financial management policies and diversify revenue generation tactics to ensure stability.**

- Review and update as necessary, internal financial management practices including monthly bookkeeping and year-end audits to ensure all regulations are followed.
- Increase revenues through building the membership base, establishing value-added services, fostering partnerships, exploring funding opportunities and managing funds efficiently.

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# COLLABORATION

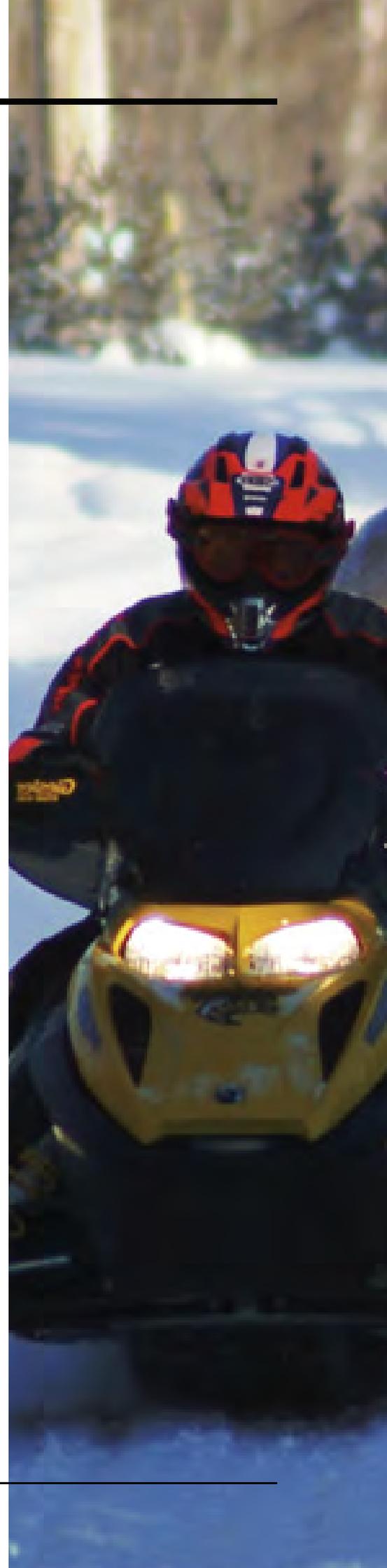


**Goal:** To collaborate with industry partners to achieve organizational goals, align efforts to support the tourism industry, increase human and financial capacity, and reinforce the relevancy of the organization.

Developing strong, mutually beneficial relationships with industry partners is crucial to future success and reducing duplication within the industry. Forging connections with local, regional, provincial and federal stakeholders will increase organizational exposure, build credibility and rapport with members and develop value-added services to foster growth within the tourism industry. Creating a strong network of allies and partners will assist in the organizations efforts in positioning the region as a premier travel destination.

## Key Performance Metrics

- Number of partnerships
- Increased human resource capacity
- Increased revenue and profitability
- Leveraged dollars through partnership opportunities
- Increased value of membership
- Number of members
- Increased brand presence
- Level of engagement on partners boards and committees
- Increased capacity within operators
- Number of new products and experiences available in the region
- Number of Indigenous and Francophone products and experiences available in the region



# COLLABORATION ACTIONS

1

**Continue to foster a strong working relationship with Destination Northern Ontario (DNO) and its partners to further support marketing, product development, workforce development and investment attraction within the region.**

- Build internal capacity to administer DNOs marketing initiatives and partnerships in an effective manner to produce results aligning with the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Cultural Industries reporting requirements.
- Participate in working groups and committees that align with best bet product segments and interests of rural and urban tourism partners in the region.
- Actively promote and engage, where applicable, programming and supports available through DNO including Tourism Excellence North, Experience Fishing and World's Best Snowmobile Destination.
- Leverage funding opportunities with Destination Ontario to promote industry partners and operators through available marketing initiatives and partnership programs including Discover ON, travel trade promotions, and advertising opportunities. Utilize internal HR resources when possible to execute partnership deliverables and build internal capacity.
- Collaborate with other rural and urban DMOs through partnership opportunities such as promoting pan-northern experiences, building touring itineraries and offering online booking services.
- Partner with DNO to identify regional assets and gaps to assist with future tourism investment attraction efforts.

2

**Collaborate with advocacy-focused organizations such as NOTO, TIAO and TIAC to ensure that the region is represented at all levels of government.**

- Establish ongoing communications with the above organizations to advocate on behalf of NeONT members while communicating barriers to growth and opportunities to help stimulate investment within the industry.
- Partner with NOTO to promote industry regulations and policies while helping operators and communities as needed.
- Maximize partnership opportunities through membership, board representation and support towards key issues affecting the industry.

3

**Work with non-traditional partners to build industry capacity through promotion of supports, tools and resources while increasing membership value.**

- Identify synergies and opportunities to work with partners such as CFDCs, SBECs, Economic Development Departments, Workforce Planning Boards and regional Chambers of Commerce.
- Build industry capacity and promote training opportunities through partnerships with post-secondary institutions, OTEC, TEN and other training organizations.
- Provide relevant and timely industry data to educate the importance of the tourism industry, promote best bet products and share key consumer segment information.
- Assist members through promotion of business development services, funding opportunities and industry research to assist with their business development.

4

**Continue to partner with organizations, communities and operators to promote Indigenous and Francophone tourism experiences and products.**

- Foster a strong working relationship with Indigenous Tourism Ontario (ITO) and promote available services and programming such as the business broker network to relevant members.
- Actively engage in partnership opportunities available through ITO such as the culinary tourism, virtual reality and Indigenous Experiences Ontario.
- Work with DNO, TEN and francophone partners to develop and promote francophone experiences and products available within the region.

# MARKETING

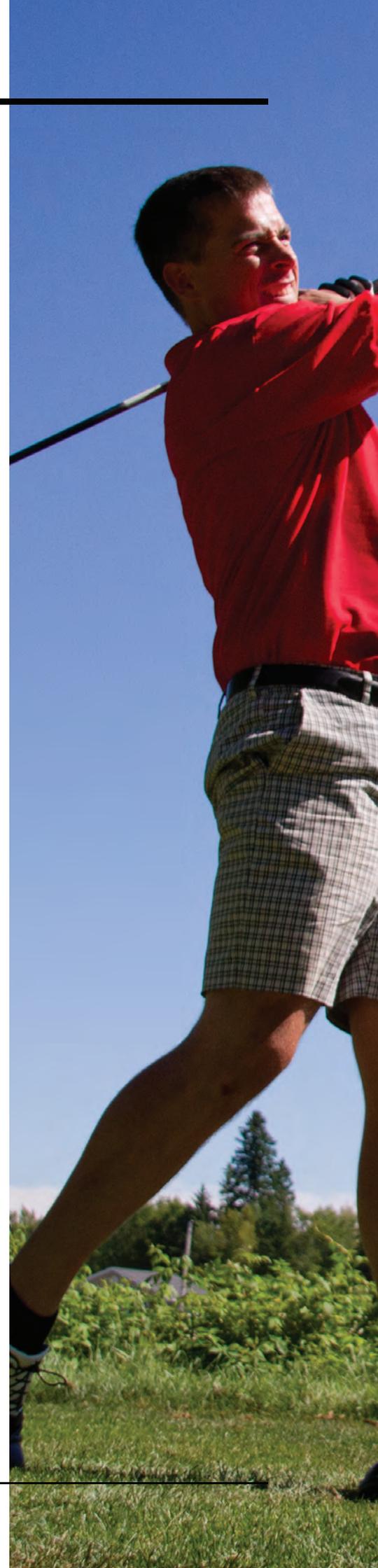


**Goal:** To grow visitation and tourism receipts within the region through a unified and tactical marketing approach of promoting regional products, experiences and destinations to best bet consumer markets.

Building upon the organizations' successful visual identity through consistent branding and communications of the region is key to fostering industry and visitor trust, rapport and credibility. Creating insightful and thought-provoking content to engage visitors and encourage regional travel is vital to the growth of the industry and volume of tourism receipts within the Northeast region. Staying relevant, implementing innovative marketing tactics, fostering unique partnerships and measuring successes is vital to continual growth.

## Key Performance Metrics

- Development of an annual marketing plan
- Increase in website performance
- Increase in social media performance
- Number of partnerships
- Increased brand presence
- Increase of visitors to the region
- Increase in domestic markets travelling to the region
- Number of marketing initiatives implemented
- Increased use of online booking system by members
- Increased communication with members
- Leveraged dollars through partnership opportunities
- Increased return on investment



# MARKETING ACTIONS

1

**Create an annual marketing strategy that identifies promotional tactics for each priority product areas while ensuring the messaging resonates with target consumer segments.**

- Align marketing efforts with DNO's priority product areas including angling and hunting, culture and heritage, gateways and urban communities, nature and adventure and touring.
- Ensure there is fair representation across rural and urban markets through the promotion of all priority product areas. Focus on experiences, tours and packages that combine rural and urban markets to strengthen regional collaboration through marketing efforts.
- Implement initiatives that align with DNO and DO branding and messaging to assist with market reach and exposure.
- Identify, collect and monitor key performance metrics for each marketing tactic to allow the organization to pivot messaging, imagery or approach as needed.

2

**Continue to increase online exposure through website updates, consistent use of social media and ongoing engagement with members and partners.**

- Continue to update and maintain a strong website presence that promotes members and regional assets through high-quality imagery, videography and storytelling content to identified consumer segments.
- Ensure all members are equally highlighted on the website with an integrated referral process.
- Share and engage on relevant member social media posts to assist in relationship building and further enhance member exposure.
- Collect and analyze metrics for all digital platforms to measure performance such as page views, time on page, partner referrals, page likes and post engagement. Pivot marketing messaging and tactics as required to ensure ROI on paid marketing efforts.
- Increase engagement with partners and members through ongoing updates and develop a mechanism to welcome and capture feedback and ideas on new initiatives, platforms and tactics.

3

**Collaborate with stakeholders such as DNO, DO, ITO and other DMOs to diversify marketing opportunities and maximize return on investment.**

- Align with partners tactics and strategies to increase online exposure and promote the region as a premier travel destination. Examples of a successful campaign includes the #DreamON Campaign.
- Explore marketing partnership opportunities in order to leverage funds and increase exposure for members and the region. Initiatives could include asset development, FAM tours, virtual experiences, regional cross-promotion and pan-northern activities.
- Partner with writers and industry influencers to create engaging content to introduce quality products and experiences to visitors through the Northern Ontario Portal.
- Promote online reservation and booking system opportunities in partnership with Algoma Country to encourage members to sell their packages, products and experiences online.

4

**Increase regional visitation through promotion of high-quality products, experiences and destinations.**

- Educate operators and consumers on travel regulations and health and safety practices as travel becomes more prominent during the recovery of COVID-19.
- Capitalize on the provincial travel market through developing and implementing a domestic marketing campaign.
- Promote members by sharing positive visitor experiences through online marketing platforms and highlight industry success stories that resonate with consumers.
- Collaborate and promote touring routes, itineraries and packages throughout the region. Align with Destination Northern Ontario efforts with the Northern Ontario Trip planning tool.
- Work with partners to attend relevant consumer shows to promote the region, its members and destination drivers.
- Provide support to members as they navigate the digital world and enable them access to high-quality photography and videography to utilize on their platforms to promote the region.

# PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT



**Goal:** To stimulate growth within the region’s tourism industry through the enhancement and creation of products, experiences and destinations that exceed visitor expectations.

Working in partnership to support enhancements and create products and experiences is required to attract new markets and encourage longer stays within the region. Building capacity and providing industry training is crucial to ensuring that products and experiences meet and exceed visitor expectations. Fostering regional collaboration between rural and urban markets while promoting priority product areas will assist in developing in-demand products, experiences, touring routes, itineraries and packages resulting in increased visitation.

## Key Performance Metrics

- Number of members participating in programming
- Increased in number of products and experiences available in the region
- Participation on product development committees
- Number of tours, packaging and itineraries developed
- Number of festivals, events, conferences and sports initiatives supported
- Increased brand presence
- Increased value of membership





# PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS

1

**Assist partners in adopting a visitor-first mindset through enhancing and building upon existing tourism assets and infrastructure.**

- Build operator and community capacity and ensure available products and experiences meet visitor expectations through the promotion of the Tourism Excellence North training tools and resources including self-assessments, best practices, and mentorship programming.
- Promote product development programs such as the Experience Fishing Program and World's Best Snowmobile Destination to further enhance service offerings and cater to new consumer markets.
- Serve as a conduit and ambassador as new programs are developed and launched.

2

**Promote and engage in product development initiatives taking place across Northern Ontario.**

- Actively participate on DNO product development teams to ensure the region is represented and the organization is aware of and involved in upcoming trends, best practices and new programming.
- Increase regional collaboration by promoting existing touring routes, packages and experiences that connect urban and rural markets.

3

**Collaborate with partners to develop new products and experiences that align with priority product areas and consumer segments.**

- Promote available funding programs and business development supports to members and provide assistance where applicable.
- Communicate industry trends, priority product areas and consumer research to economic/business development organizations in order to attract and guide investment within the tourism industry.
- Foster regional collaboration through the development of tours and itinerary building initiatives that cater to consumers with emphasis being placed on the rise of group travel.
- Engage Indigenous and Francophone partners to further enhance cultural experiences.
- Work with communities to develop and promote regionally focused festivals, events, conferences and sports initiatives as health regulations permit. Identify assets and gaps within each community to further understand and explore complementary partnerships and synergies between communities across the region.

# COMMUNICATION PLAN

Audience	Action	Tactics
<p><b>Members</b></p> <p>Communicate organizational successes and efforts, increase two-way communication and foster a strong member community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share information on COVID-19 resources, tools and supports related to the tourism industry.</li> <li>• Engage members through discussions, events, surveys and polls through online and in-person formats.</li> <li>• Communicate successes and challenges in relation to NeONT initiatives and programs to members on a regular basis.</li> <li>• Share priority product areas and consumer segment research with industry to assist with their future decisions.</li> <li>• Facilitate connections between members and available partner resources, programming and funding to support growth within the industry.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct one-on-one discussions</li> <li>• Circulate monthly newsletters</li> <li>• Consistent use of social media</li> <li>• Share partner information through all communication channels</li> <li>• Regularly update the website</li> <li>• Host virtual and in-person member gatherings</li> <li>• Create and distribute surveys and polls to garner member feedback</li> <li>• Provide organizational updates on a quarterly basis to members</li> <li>• Share industry research and information</li> </ul>

Audience	Action	Tactics
<p><b>Partners</b></p> <p>Build organizational capacity, increase credibility and foster growth within the industry.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate for members needs in relation to COVID-19 funding supports and programming.</li> <li>• Communicate NeONT member benefits so partners can share with their industry-related clients.</li> <li>• Share relevant industry data and resources with partners to assist in future planning and facilitating growth within the industry.</li> <li>• Liaise with partners and communicate member needs in relation to marketing, industry training, product development and investment attraction opportunities.</li> <li>• Continue to share partner communications with members to build a mutually beneficial relationship.</li> <li>• Host roundtable discussions to explore project-based initiatives to assist with industry growth.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in committees</li> <li>• Attend networking sessions</li> <li>• Continue ongoing outreach</li> <li>• Host one-on-one discussions</li> <li>• Attend tradeshows</li> <li>• Share relevant partner information</li> <li>• Foster group collaboration through roundtable discussions</li> </ul>



Audience	Action	Tactics
<p><b>Non-members</b></p> <p>Recruit members, increase organizational revenue and stimulate growth in the industry.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate NeONT member benefits and advantages of regional marketing efforts.</li> <li>• Provide industry research to assist with business planning or expansion initiatives.</li> <li>• Share partner research, resources and programming with interested parties.</li> <li>• Build credibility within the industry through ongoing communications and active participation within the region.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and implement a membership recruitment campaign</li> <li>• Share industry research and information</li> <li>• Collaborate with partners on marketing, product development, workforce development and investment attraction activities</li> <li>• Consistent messaging and branding through all communications</li> <li>• Attend industry events, tradeshow and conferences</li> <li>• Participate in committees</li> </ul>

Audience	Action	Tactics
<p><b>Visitors</b></p> <p>Entice travelers to come to the region, increase length of stay and foster growth of regional tourism receipts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share COVID-19 related travel tips and resources.</li> <li>• Promote members products and experiences through all available channels.</li> <li>• Collaborate with partners on marketing initiatives to showcase the region.</li> <li>• Develop unique and creative content that showcases the region and implement through innovative marketing tactics.</li> <li>• Showcase the region through the use of high-quality imagery, videography and story-telling content that resonates with visitors.</li> <li>• Promote new regional products and experiences as they are developed, especially those that tie rural and urban markets together.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an annual marketing strategy to guide tactics and performance metrics</li> <li>• Highlight members through website and social media channels</li> <li>• Update website and ensure high search engine optimization</li> <li>• Explore marketing partnerships</li> <li>• Create blog content to be shared on the Northern Ontario Portal</li> <li>• Utilize social media platforms</li> <li>• Foster two-way communication with members and partners</li> <li>• Create product / location spotlights to highlight priority product areas</li> <li>• Grow visual and content asset database</li> </ul>



A person wearing a black winter jacket with a fur-lined hood, red pants, and red gloves is holding a camera. They are standing in a snowy forest with tall trees. Other people in winter gear are visible in the background.

*Northeastern  
Ontario*  
CANADA

1-888-465-0990  
info@neont.ca  
northeasternontario.com