

 Grand River | BRANT

STRATEGIC PLAN FOR REGIONAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT 2024-2026


Mid-Plan Progress Report

June 2025

The land which RTO3-Hamilton Halton Brant represents, forms part of the traditional territory of the Wendat Confederacy, the Attiwandaron Confederacy, the Anishinaabe, including the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, including Six Nations of the Grand River made up of the Onondowahgah (Seneca), Guyohkohnyoh (Cayuga), Onundagaono (Onondaga), Onayotekaono (Oneida), Kanienkahagen (Mohawk), and the Ska-Ruh-Reh (Tuscarora) Nations. The land is part of the Dish with One Spoon (1100) agreed upon by many Indigenous nations around the Great Lakes to share the land and resources. It was later referenced at the signing of the Great Peace of Montreal in 1701 between New France and multiple First Nations to end 100 years of war. Finally, the land is part of the Métis Nation of Ontario’s Region 8 and 9, including the Credit River Métis Council, and the Clear Waters Métis Council.

We thank all Indigenous peoples, communities, and nations, for their continued care for and stewardship of the lands, waters, creatures, and peoples since time immemorial. Without this continued multigenerational effort, the land which RTO3-Hamilton Halton Brant represents, would not be a place to live, work, play, and visit, as it is to millions of people from all over the globe today. We look forward to seeing Indigenous tourism continue to grow and thrive in our region and beyond and look forward to continuing to grow our relationship with our Indigenous partners. We encourage all our stakeholders to continue to learn about Indigenous peoples, their communities, and their major contributions to our society, including within tourism.



 Chiefswood Park, Grand River | BRANT

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The Hamilton Halton Brant Regional Tourism Association (o/a RTO3-Hamilton Halton Brant) is an independent, industry-led, not-for-profit tourism organization funded by the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming. We serve the communities of Hamilton, Burlington, Halton Hills, Milton, Oakville, Brantford, County of Brant, Six Nations of the Grand River Territory, and Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

Our mandate is to drive tourism growth, economic impact, and job creation through strategic initiatives including, destination marketing, product development, workforce development, industry training, investment attraction and partnership building with regional stakeholders. Through collaboration and innovation, we strive to create a vibrant tourism destination that strengthens communities, enhances quality of life, and supports long-term prosperity in our region.



Ontario 

Message from the Executive Director

As we reach the 18-month mark of our strategic plan, I want to take a moment to reflect on the remarkable progress we’ve made—and to look ahead with energy and focus toward what’s next.

Our strategic plan laid out 23 priority action items and I’m proud to report that we have achieved significant milestones in this first half of implementation. From strengthening our core programs and deepening community partnerships, to improving operational efficiency and investing in staff development, the past 18 months have demonstrated our collective commitment to turning vision into action.

As we move into the next 18 months, our focus will be on sustaining momentum and tackling the remaining priorities with the same clarity and determination. Key initiatives ahead include expanding our impact through innovation, enhancing data-driven decision making, and ensuring long-term sustainability through thoughtful resource planning.

We will continue to monitor outcomes, adjust strategies as needed, and remain accountable to the goals we set together. The second half of our plan is not just about finishing what we started—it’s about positioning our organization for lasting success and continued relevance in a rapidly changing environment.

As we continue to progress the action items, the RTO3 Board of Directors Regional Tourism Strategic Planning Committee has already begun considerations to lay the groundwork for evolving the next iteration of our long-term strategy, building on our implementation progress. Your input and engagement will be essential in this next phase. As always, we are strongest when we move forward together—with shared vision, open dialogue, and a deep understanding of the unique value our region brings to Ontario and Canada.

This progress would not have been possible without the dedication, talent, and teamwork of every individual in our organization. I want to thank each team member and for the passion and perseverance you bring to regional tourism development work every day.


Many thanks to our regional DMOs and tourism operators for your ongoing support and partnership. I look forward to continuing the journey to grow the regional visitor economy with all of you.

Best wishes,

Maria Fortunato
Executive Director



Background

 Brant Street Pier, Burlington | HALTON

Launched in 2023, RTO3’s strategic plan has now reached its mid-point milestone, providing an opportunity to share this report on our progress to date and the promising path ahead.

In late 2022, RTO3-Hamilton Halton Brant embarked on a transformative journey to develop a comprehensive 3-Year Strategic Plan for Regional Tourism Development (2024-2026), engaging consulting firm Bannikin to facilitate the process. This strategic planning process was born from a recognition that our tourism landscape was evolving rapidly, shaped by changing visitor priorities, demographic shifts, technological advances, and the lasting impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Scan the QR code to download a copy of the *RTO3-Hamilton Halton Brant Strategic Plan for Regional Tourism Development 2024-2026*.

The Imperative for Change

Tourism plays a vital role in our region’s economic and social fabric. Prior to the pandemic, in 2019 our sector generated \$1 billion in regional tourism spending, supported 8,900 jobs, and contributed \$305 million in tax revenue. However, the substantial changes affecting tourism since 2020 highlighted the need to re-examine our role, recalibrate our responsibilities, and strengthen our strategic direction within our provincial mandate.

A Stakeholder-Driven Approach

The development of our strategic plan was grounded in a stakeholder-driven and community-based participatory research approach. We formed a Strategic Task Force with representatives from across our region’s diverse tourism industries and communities, including Hamilton, Halton Region (Burlington, Oakville, Halton Hills, Milton), Brant County, Brantford, Six Nations of the Grand River Territory, and Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

Our comprehensive methodology included reviewing 25+ background documents, conducting over 20 key stakeholder interviews, administering industry and resident surveys with 90+ respondents, hosting three industry engagement sessions with 35+ attendees each, a session with the Board of Directors, completing tourism asset scans and market analysis, and undertaking comparative analysis with peer Regional Tourism Organizations.

A Bold New Direction

The resulting strategic plan established a refreshed vision and mission statements that build upon our foundational values of Leading, Connection, and Inclusiveness. Our vision positions Hamilton Halton Brant as “a region of choice whose destinations make up a tourism ecosystem that supports the flourishing of our economy, society, and environment.”

Four Strategic Pillars for Success

The plan is organized around four strategic focus areas containing 23 specific actions:

A. Relationship Development & Communications

Building stronger networks and collaborative partnerships to activate a welcoming and thriving region of destinations.

B. Leadership & Representation

Establishing RTO3 as the recognized and trusted leader representing the needs and priorities of our sub-regions both inside and outside our region.

C. Ecosystem Development & Value Co-Creation

Working collaboratively with regional partners to maximize tourism’s economic, social, and environmental benefits.

D. Resource Management

Ensuring organizational resilience and capacity to effectively respond to stakeholder needs.

Implementation Timeline

The strategic plan was designed with a phased implementation approach beginning in January 2024, with most actions launching throughout 2024 and continuing through 2026. Nine specific actions were identified for collaborative implementation with our Destination Marketing/Management Organization (DMMO) partners, recognizing the critical importance of sub-regional collaboration in achieving regional success.

As we reach the midpoint of our implementation period, this progress report provides a comprehensive assessment of our achievements, challenges, and the path forward in delivering on our strategic commitments to the Hamilton Halton Brant tourism community.

Our Vision, Mission, Mandate & Values

Our strategic direction is founded on an inspiring vision for the future of tourism in our region, a strong mission for our organization, and a comprehensive mandate illustrating our approach to work and collaboration.

Vision Hamilton Halton Brant, which includes Hamilton, Burlington, Oakville, Halton Hills, Milton, Brant, Brantford, Six Nations of the Grand River Territory, and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, is a region of choice whose destinations make up a tourism ecosystem that supports the flourishing of our economy,

Mission We are a leader and innovator working to steward a regional destination into the future. Through our programs and services, collaborations with partners, and strong connections, we support a breadth and diversity of local, regional, and pan-regional stakeholders in harnessing the value that tourism can bring to our destinations and province.

Mandate We are a non-profit Regional Tourism Organization (RTO) that works to increase tourism visitation, economic activity and job growth throughout the Hamilton, Halton, Brant region. In Ontario, RTOs are responsible for tourism marketing, product development, workforce development and destination management at a regional level.

Values

LEADING

- We lead by helping others grow and evolve through mentorship, partnership, and collaboration.
- We recognize and support practices that promote sustainability and conservation.
- We will consider the past, present, and future of our actions to be forward thinking.

CONNECTION

- We are committed to ongoing communication to engage and network with the industry.
- We facilitate relationship building and function as a conduit to connect stakeholders and partners.
- Through RTO channels and programs, we are initiative-taking, sincere, and value-driven in our interactions.

INCLUSIVENESS

- We invite, welcome, and listen to new ideas and perspectives in our work with regional partners and stakeholders.
- We promote and highlight the many ways to experience the region.
- We welcome everyone.



Relationship Development and Communications

 Coote's Paradise | HAMILTON

GOAL: We are highly connected and engaged with a strong network of stakeholders and partners who we collaborate with to activate a welcoming and thriving region of destinations.

OBJECTIVE:
To formalize and showcase our relationships with others based on shared understandings of clear roles and responsibilities.

ACTION ITEM

1

Co-develop a strategic regional collaboration framework with DMMOs and local tourism organizations.

ACTION ITEM

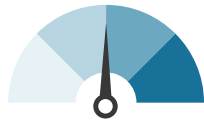
2

Continue to share successes and needs with Provincial government.

ACTION ITEM

3

Review organizational brand to establish a clear and consistent brand and stakeholder communication approach.



See also Action Items 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 15, 16, 20 for related progress highlights and 2025-26 priority activities.

Mid-Plan Progress Highlights

Hamilton Halton Brant Destination Leadership Alliance (HHBDLA) Formed: Senior leadership from all DMOs + RTO3 formed new strategic working group with adopted Terms of Reference and established collaboration framework across four areas of focus: Destination Sustainability, Destination Development, Destination Insights, Destination Marketing.
Meetings and Communications: Quarterly in-person meeting cadence established (6 meetings held to date); bi-monthly leadership newsletter launched summer '24.
DMO Strategic Support: RTO3 participation and inputs across multiple DMO destination development and strategic planning initiatives.

2025-26 Priority Activities

Meetings and Communication: Continued schedule of meetings and communications including new gated portal for HHBDLA on industry website for shared strategic documents, research, data and more.
Individual DMO Consultations: Individual DMO consultations planned for Q2/Q3 in advance of RTO3 2026-27 business planning cycle.
DMO Strategic Support: Ongoing RTO3 participation and inputs across multiple DMO destination development and strategic planning initiatives as requested.



Mid-Plan Progress Highlights

Formal Reports and Informal Communications with Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture & Gaming (MTCG): Ongoing semi-annual Business Plan progress reporting to MTCG submitted on time; ongoing check-in calls with senior MTCG staff.
Joint RTO Meetings with MTCG: Quarterly meetings held with Ministry staff and RTO Executive Directors.
MTCG Regional Tourism Review: Participation in MTCG regional tourism review.

2025-26 Priority Activities

Formal Reports to Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture & Gaming (MTCG): Ongoing semi-annual Business Plan progress reporting to MTCG.
Ongoing Communications with MTCG: Continue sharing industry comments with MTCG staff; invitations to MTCG Regional Advisor to attend RTO3 Board Meetings, HHBDLA meetings, Industry Exchanges and other applicable events
Pan-RTO Executive Director Meetings: Ongoing participation in Pan-RTO Executive Director meetings
MTCG Regional Tourism Review: Continued participation in MTCG regional tourism review.



Mid-Plan Progress Highlights

Industry-Facing Brand Relaunch: Completed internal brand review with updated industry logo and branding guidelines launched in January '25.
Industry Communications Strategy: Developed strategy to expand industry-facing communications activities and deepen stakeholder engagement.
Industry Database and Newsletter: Expanded industry newsletter content began August '24.
Industry Database Growth: Completed database audit in Fall '25 and increased database acquisition activities.
Industry Website Refresh: Major content expansion and updates launched February '25.
Industry Social Media Channels: Increased LinkedIn content frequency and audience engagement strategy; launch of industry-facing Instagram channel in January '25 to reach broader tourism operator audience.

2025-26 Priority Activities

Industry Communications Strategy: Continued focus on providing frequent and timely industry-facing news, opportunities and insights via all industry-facing communications channels.
Industry Survey and Feedback: Implement formal industry surveying to gauge awareness, impact and satisfaction of RTO3 activities and opportunities.

OBJECTIVE: To recognize similarities and celebrate differences across our sub-regions through our marketing and communications.



 Rattlesnake Point Conservation Area, Milton | HALTON

ACTION ITEM

4

Co-develop a collaborative regional marketing plan.



See also Action Items 1, 6, 7, 8, 11, 15, 16, 20 for related progress highlights and 2025-26 priority activities.

Mid-Plan Progress Highlights

Winter '25 Co-Op Advertising Campaign Pilot: Successfully introduced and executed partnered Winter '25 marketing campaign (Jan-Mar) featuring co-op advertising campaigns with 6 DMOs participating.

DMO Inputs and Updated Consumer Marketing Strategy: Inputs gathered from 2024-26 Strategic Planning research, HHBDLA group and ongoing one-on-one discussions with DMO marketing teams informed update to RTO3's Consumer Marketing Strategy & Plan completed in March '25 for launch in 2025-26.

2025-26 Priority Activities

In-House Marketing Model: RTO3 will reduce reliance on external marketing agency resources, utilizing savings to expand the capacity of internal team to better serve DMO partners and expand marketing activities overall.

Implement Updated Marketing Strategy: RTO3 will begin implementing new marketing strategy and plan in closer alignment with sub-regional destination priorities and marketing efforts; planned meetings with DMO marketing teams for Q2/Q3 to inform 2026-27 business planning.

Marketing Partnerships: Utilization of available RTO3 Partnership Program Funding to execute a range of collaborative consumer advertising campaigns and other marketing initiatives in partnership with DMOs and other sub-regional stakeholders and operators.

ACTION ITEM

5

Evolve the visitor-facing website and related resources to better position the Heart of Ontario as a region made up of sub-regional destinations.



Mid-Plan Progress Highlights

Best Practices Review: A preliminary best practices review of other regional visitor-facing websites has been completed to inform future evolution of consumer website.

2025-26 Priority Activities

Website Content Audit and Updates: Comprehensive content and SEO audit to identify opportunities for improved sub-regional destination representation including: new content development, updates to existing content, enhanced external linking strategy, increase focus on self-serve tourism stakeholder/partner content including listings, events, experiences and offers.

E-Mail Marketing and Social Channels: Evolution of consumer-facing e-mail marketing strategy and social media strategy to amplify sub-regional representation.

OBJECTIVE: To establish and grow our relationship with residents and better understand their views and experience of tourism.



 Champion of Champions Pow Wow, Six Nations | BRANT

ACTION ITEM

6

Measure resident sentiment and gather feedback about tourism development.



See also Action Items 1, 4, 7, 8, 11, 15, 16, 20 for related progress highlights and 2025-26 priority activities.

Mid-Plan Progress Highlights

DMO Interest in Collaborative Research Gauged: Preliminary discussions with HHBDLA and informal survey of DMOs in Sept ‘25 to gauge interest in collaboration on Resident Sentiment Research and other research and data needs.

2025-26 Priority Activities

Execute Region-Wide Resident Sentiment Survey via DMO Research Partnership: Planned utilization of available RTO3 Partnership Program Funding to execute Resident Sentiment Survey in Q3/Q4.

ACTION ITEM

7

Evolve tourism marketing promotions to regional residents leveraging DMMO priorities.



See also Action Items 1, 4, 6, 8, 11, 15, 16, 20 for related progress highlights and 2025-26 priority activities.

Mid-Plan Progress Highlights

Targeted Regional Residents Via 2024-25 Seasonal Campaigns: Residents within the geographic boundaries of Hamilton Halton Brant included in all RTO3 funded consumer marketing campaigns.

Targeted Regional Residents Via Winter ‘25 Co-Op Advertising Campaign Pilot: All DMOs (6) participating in Winter ‘25 co-op advertising campaign pilot included geographic targeting of residents within Hamilton Halton Brant.

2025-26 Priority Activities

Target Regional Residents Via 2025-26 Seasonal Campaigns and Partnership-Funded Co-Op Advertising Campaigns: Continue to target residents within the geographic boundaries of Hamilton Halton Brant in all RTO3-funded and Partnership-Funded co-op consumer marketing campaigns.

Gather Insights Via Resident Sentiment Survey: Utilize planned Resident Sentiment Survey (see Action Item 6) to gather insights from region’s residents on awareness of and participation in regional tourism experiences and products to inform future marketing to regional residents.




Leadership and Representation

Bell Memorial Park | BRANTFORD

GOAL: We are the recognized and trusted leader representing the needs and priorities of our sub-regions both inside and outside our region.

OBJECTIVE: To activate our capacity to represent regional industry needs and inform related policy and infrastructure developments, both within our region and beyond.

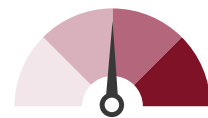


 Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum | HAMILTON

ACTION ITEM

8

Support DMMOs and relevant organizations in evolving the development of a better-connected region (incl. transportation policy and infrastructure).



See also Action Items 1, 4, 6, 7, 11, 15, 16, 20 for related progress highlights and 2025-26 priority activities.

Mid-Plan Progress Highlights

Collaboration to Increase Leisure Ridership of Lakeshore Line GO Train: Participated in collaboration between DMOs and Metrolinx to increase leisure ridership on Lakeshore Line GO trains.

Collaboration to Extend GO Bus Service to First Nations Communities: Participated in successful collaboration to extend GO Bus route stops to Six Nations of the Grand River and Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation communities.

John C. Munro International Airport Southern Ontario Gateway Development: Participation in John C. Munro International Airport’s ‘YHM Marketing Alliance’; active collaboration with DMOs in supporting YHM to increase their marketing reach.

PLAY Airlines Project: Collaborated with Destination Ontario to explore inbound traffic and product opportunities with PLAY Airlines’ Canadian network strengthening regional readiness for future air access partnerships.

2025-26 Priority Activities

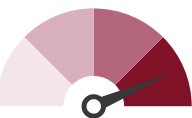
Support of Regional Stakeholder Transportation Planning and Advocacy Initiatives: Active participation in working groups and advocacy efforts providing tourism industry perspective, data, and regional context to support stakeholder transportation planning initiatives and regional priorities.

John C. Munro International Airport Southern Ontario Gateway Development: Ongoing participation in John C. Munro International Airport’s ‘YHM Marketing Alliance’ working group and direct supports to increase YHM consumer and travel trade marketing reach.

ACTION ITEM

9

Establish new and strengthen existing relationships with other RTOs in Ontario.



Mid-Plan Progress Highlights

Southern Ontario Tourism Conference - RTO3 + RTO1: Year 4 of collaborative presentation of SOTC (March ‘25).

Pan-RTO Research Consortium - 11 RTOs + TIAO: Joint project initiated June ‘24 and ongoing through 25-26; leveraging of FedDev TGP funding to access new Canadian Tourism Data Collective and Environics Analytics data.

Pan-RTO Destination Sustainability Leadership Group + TIAO: Working group focused on best practices related to destination sustainability initiatives

Grand River Visitor Development Working Group - RTO3, RTO1, RTO4, RTO6: multi-year initiative; Grand River Forum held Sept ‘24.

Tourism Innovation - Black Tourism “Spark” Program – RTO3 + RTO 1: Intake/competition for new black-led tourism initiatives matching winners with mentors and seed funds (Fall ‘25).

Collaborative RTO Industry Training in Sustainable Tourism: RTO3 opened its Spring ‘25 Sustainable Tourism Learning Series events to other operators from other RTOs; also 4-part co-funded Sustainable & Regenerative Tourism Learning Series with RTO9 in Feb/Mar ‘25.

Product Development - RTO3, RTO1: Collaborative development and marketing of Nith River focused shoulder season package.

2025-26 Priority Activities

Continued Initiatives: Ongoing participating in SOTC Conference, Research Consortium, Destination Sustainability Leadership Group and Grand River Visitor Development Working Group and product development initiatives detailed in Progress Highlights section above. Ongoing efforts to leverage Pan-RTO shared Industry Training opportunities.

ACTION ITEM

10

Strengthen communications and collaborative relationships with TIAO and other sector associations.



Mid-Plan Progress Highlights

TIAO-Ontario Tourism Summit: Membership maintained; RTO3 panel participation at 2024 Ontario Tourism Summit.

TIAO-Provincial Tourism Strategy Development Advisory Group: RTO3 representation on TIAO’s Advisory Group actively engaged in reviewing and providing input at various stages of strategy development process.

Waterfront Regeneration Trust: Ongoing collaboration on cycling initiatives along the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail.

Culinary Tourism Alliance: Membership maintained; co-operative marketing partnership with CTA and Destination Ontario Winter ‘25; letter of support for CTA re: Greenbelt Food Trail development.

TIAC: Membership maintained.

OTEC/TSNO: Ongoing participation in TSNO Hamilton Halton Brant regional working group.

ITO: Existing MOU in place.

Attractions Ontario: Membership maintained.

Ontario By Bike: Ongoing participation in Ontario By Bike Industry Partnership Advisory Committee

Rainbow Registered: Achieved and maintained certification through CGLCC.

2025-26 Priority Activities

Maintain and Grow All Key Sector Relationships and Collaborations: As outlined in Progress Highlights above

Destination Ontario: New co-operative marketing partnership planned for Fall ‘25; ongoing marketing content submissions to DO.

Facilitate Tourism Operators Collaboration with Industry Sector Associations : Utilization of available RTO3 Partnership Program Funding to co-fund first-year certifications: Rainbow Registered (CGLCC), Ontario By Bike, FeastOn (CTA)




Ecosystem Development and Value Co-Creation

 Bronte Outer Harbour, Oakville | HALTON

GOAL: We are working collaboratively with our regional partners and stakeholders to maximize the value that tourism can bring to our region.

OBJECTIVE: To work closely with tourism partners and stakeholders to strengthen understanding, appreciation, and action toward regional destination development.



 King William Street | HAMILTON

ACTION ITEM

11

Develop an industry research and data collection framework and dissemination hub.



See also Action Items 1, 4, 6, 7, 8, 15, 16, 20 for related progress highlights and 2025-26 priority activities.

Mid-Plan Progress Highlights

HHBDLA Consultation: Dedicated meeting with HHBDLA DMOs Sept '25 + followup survey to inform framework and future for this initiative; followup meeting June '25.

Pan-RTO Research Consortium Project: Access to Canada Tourism Data Collective and Environics Analytics acquired via Pan-RTO initiative based through end of '25; 3 custom reports developed by Skift and shared to industry.

RT03 Industry Website Readiness: Updates to industry website launched '25 provide enable new Resources Database to house shareable research and data.

RT03-Led Destination Insights Framework Developed: Internally-prepared framework developed May '25 summarizing identified research and data priorities; resourcing dependent.

2025-26 Priority Activities

Pan-RTO Research Consortium Project: Continued participation.

HHBDLA Joint Destination Insights Framework: Ongoing work with HHBDLA to establish a collaborative framework for industry research, data collection and dissemination.

ACTION ITEM

12

Conduct or commission research and data that corresponds to industry and stakeholder needs.

ACTION ITEM

13

Work to establish a shared understanding of sustainable tourism across the region.

ACTION ITEM

14

Gather and share sustainability and stewardship resources, and opportunities with stakeholders.

ACTION ITEM

15

Enhance knowledge and understanding of tourism carrying capacity across the overall region.



Mid-Plan Progress Highlights

Regional Sustainable Tourism Stakeholder Survey: Industry survey executed in collaboration with GreenStep Fall ‘24; findings shared to HHBDLA April ‘25.

2025-26 Priority Activities

2024 Regional Overnight Visitors Report: Summary report of visitation to the region for 2024, including seasonality and the types of visitors who are coming to the region. to be released Summer ‘25.

Regional Product Development Assessment & Action Plan: Prepared in collaboration with HHBDLA DMOs scheduled for completion Sept ‘25.

Regional Travel Trade Assessment & Action Plan: Prepared in collaboration with HHBDLA DMOs scheduled for completion Sept ‘25.

Regional Workforce Insights Reports: To be compiled and released Fall/Winter ‘25.

Consumer Marketing Insights Survey: To be executed and compiled Fall ‘25.

Industry Insights Survey: To be executed and compiled Fall ‘25.



Mid-Plan Progress Highlights

GreenStep Destination Certification Achieved: RTO3 achieved a GreenStep Bronze certification Spring ‘24 setting a baseline for ongoing improvements across key sustainability categories.

Destination Sustainability Action Plan (DSAP) Developed: Completed in Spring ‘24 and endorsed by the Board of Directors June ‘24 outlining strategic actions emphasizing stakeholder-driven initiatives and collaboration with the HHBDLA (DMO) leadership group; Nov ‘25 HHBDLA meeting focused on DSAP next steps; Apr ‘25 HHBDLA followup meeting achieving consensus that DMOs would formulate and provide inputs for the development of a regional Destination Sustainability framework.

Regional Sustainable Tourism Stakeholder Survey: Industry survey executed in collaboration with Green-Step Fall ‘24; findings shared to HHBDLA April ‘25.

2025-26 Priority Activities

Destination Sustainability Action Plan (DSAP) Developed: Analysis of DMO feedback, prioritization of the DSAP action items and findings from the Sustainable Tourism Stakeholder Survey will inform development of regional Destination Sustainability framework to be released at the Nov ‘25 Industry Exchange.



Mid-Plan Progress Highlights

New Destination Sustainability Officer (DSO): FedDev-funded staff role filled August ‘24 to lead destination sustainability projects and sustainable tourism training initiatives through December ‘25.

2024-25 Sustainable Tourism Learning Series: Launched DSO-led development of resources and training for industry partners including two Industry Exchanges (Nov ‘24 and April ‘25), webinars, and other resources shared via industry communications channels.

2025-26 Priority Activities

2024-25 Sustainable Tourism Learning Series Continues: Ongoing development, execution and sharing of DSO-led sustainable tourism resources and training for industry partners including Fall ‘25 Industry Exchanges, webinars, and other resources shared via industry communications channels

Sustainable Tourism Online Resources: Targeted launch of library of resources on industry website Nov ‘25.



See also Action Items 1, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 16, 20 for related progress highlights and 2025-26 priority activities.

Mid-Plan Progress Highlights

HHBDLA Joint Destination Insights Framework: Initial discussions completed with HHBDLA to develop framework and identify key data collection priorities that will support regional carrying capacity analysis.

DMO Interest in Collaborative Resident Sentiment Research Gauged: Informal DMO survey conducted in Sept ‘24 to gauge interest in collaborative Resident Sentiment Research.

Pan-RTO Research Consortium Project: Access agreements finalized for Canada Tourism Data Collective and Environics Analytics platforms.

2025-26 Priority Activities

HHBDLA Joint Destination Insights Framework: Ongoing collaboration with HHBDLA to establish a collaborative research and data framework to provide baseline data that will support understanding of regional tourism carrying capacity.

Execute Region-Wide Resident Sentiment Survey via DMO Research Partnership: Execute collaborative Resident Sentiment Survey in Q3/Q4 to capture community perspectives on tourism impacts and advance understanding of carrying capacity.

Pan-RTO Research Consortium Project: Leveraging access to Canada Tourism Data Collective and Environics Analytics to enhance regional understanding of visitor patterns and impacts.

ACTION ITEM

16

Co-develop sub-regional and cross regional tourism experiences and products.

OBJECTIVE: To pursue strategic collaborations with organizations that support regional priorities and build on our capacities and resources.

ACTION ITEM


17

Develop new and strengthen existing relationships with organizations focused on elevating underrepresented community groups in the tourism sector.

ACTION ITEM

18

Facilitate and support the development of a regional Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan.



See also Action Items 1, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 15, 20 for related progress highlights and 2025-26 priority activities.

Mid-Plan Progress Highlights

Transformational Travel Design Course Delivered: With support from FedDev TGP funding, RTO3 facilitated delivery of a Transformational Travel Design Course in Fall ‘24 to 14 tourism professionals and operators to create new, purpose-led experiences with development and launch of projects slated for 2025-26

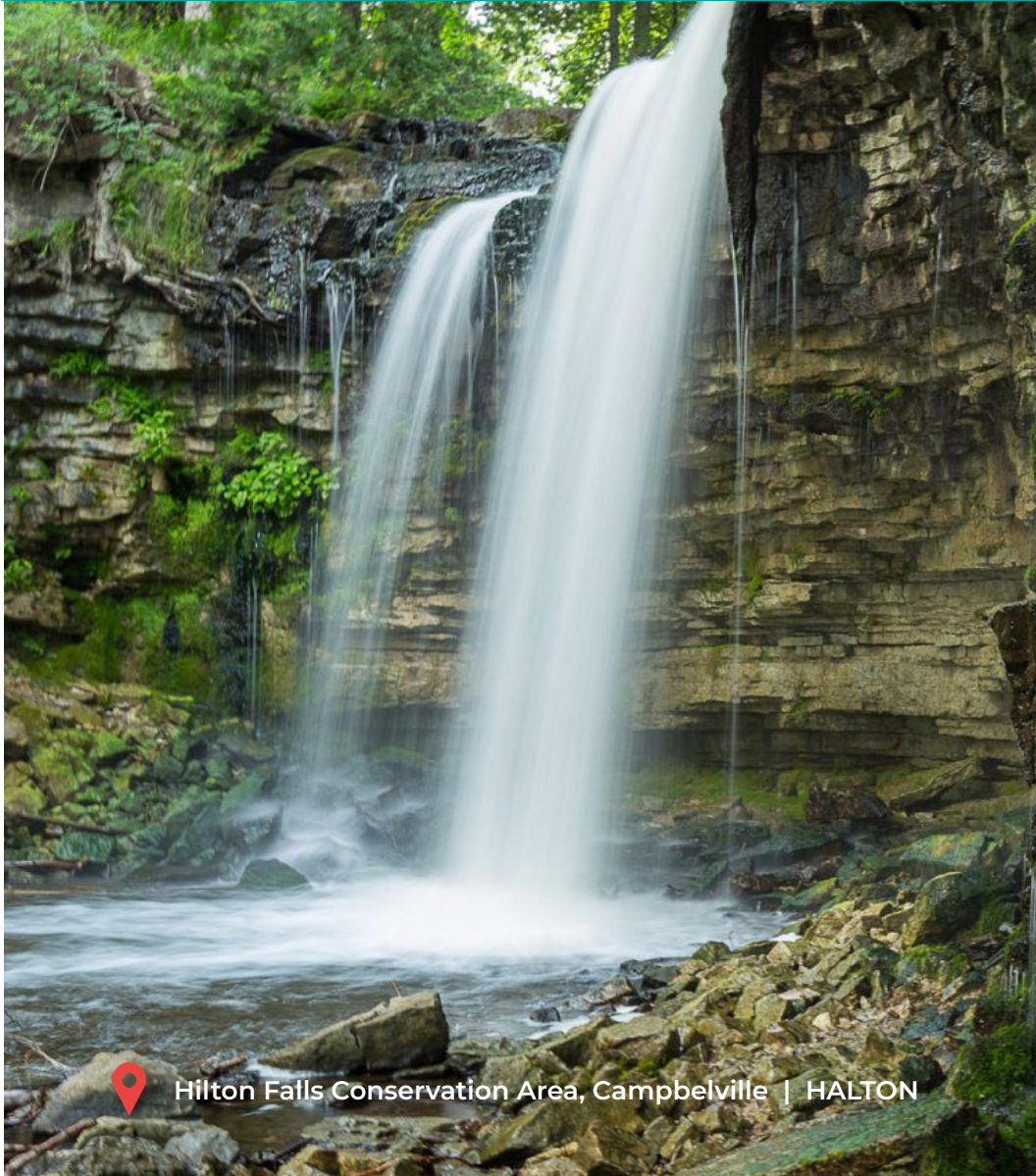
Culinary Itineraries: Development of 8 new pan-regional culinary itineraries completed May ‘25 for launch Fall ‘25.

2025-26 Priority Activities

Ongoing Product Development Projects: Ongoing support and facilitation of new and existing sub-regional and pan-regional products, experiences and itineraries.

Regional Product Development Framework/Action Plan: Completion of a new Regional Product Development Framework and Action Plan (including collaboration with HHBDLA DMOs) to be completed Fall ‘25 will inform future Regional Product Development priorities and activities.

Travel Trade Framework/Action Plan: Completion of a new Travel Trade Framework and Action Plan (including collaboration with HHBDLA DMOs) to be completed Fall ‘25 will inform future Regional Travel Trade priorities and activities.



Hilton Falls Conservation Area, Campbellville | HALTON



Mid-Plan Progress Highlights

CLGCC Rainbow Registered Accreditation: RTO3 (the organization) achieved Rainbow Registered status in late 2023 (3 year accreditation period).

Black Tourism “Spark” Program: RTO3 + RTO1 partnership with Tourism Innovation Lab in their Black Tourism ‘Spark’ competition to match new black-led tourism initiatives with mentors and seed funds Fall ‘25; two successful competitors from Hamilton Halton Brant.

2025-26 Priority Activities

Support Tourism Operators Achieving Rainbow Registered Accreditation: Utilization of available RTO3 Partnership Program Funding to support tourism operators in the accreditation process with CLGCC.

Renew RTO3’s Rainbow Registered Accreditation: Complete successful recertification of the organization in 2026.

Renew MOU with Indigenous Tourism Ontario (ITO): existing MOU to be renewed in 2025-26.



Mid-Plan Progress Highlights

Indigenous-Led Partnership Development: Through the Partnership Funding Program, RTO3 supported collaboration between Hamilton Conservation Authority, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, and Six Nations of the Grand River to develop “The Basadinaa Experience” Indigenous-led trail signage journey in Dundas Valley Conservation Area.

Regional Indigenous Tourism Strategy Engagement: RTO3 Executive Director participated on Tourism Hamilton’s Indigenous Tourism Development Strategy Advisory Committee; provided input into Six Nations Tourism’s 10-year strategic plan.

2025-26 Priority Activities

Indigenous Community Connector Role: RTO3 will continue to facilitate connections that support Indigenous community development while broadening regional understanding of Indigenous culture and heritage.

ACTION ITEM

19

Develop new and strengthen existing relationships with environmental organizations and groups.



Mid-Plan Progress Highlights

Destination Sustainability Stakeholder Committee (DSSC): Established committee of sustainability experts from across region to support and inform Destination Sustainability activities.

GreenStep: completed initiatives include achieving Bronze Destination Certification, development of Destination Sustainability Action Plan, completion of Industry Sustainability Survey

Sustainability Advantage and SWELL Impact Brands: completed consultation with developer of Basic Sustainability Assessment Tool (BSAT); executed BSAT focused webinar

LEAF (Leaders in Environmentally Accountable Foodservice): RT03's DSO elected to co-chair position (2025–2027).

Tourism Cares (US): Initial discovery meeting held.

Green Sports Alliance (US): Initial discovery meeting held.

2025-26 Priority Activities

LEAF (Leaders in Environmentally Accountable Foodservice): DSO's term continues (2025–2027).

Hotels for Trees: Exploration of potential regional collaboration in progress.

Green Venture: Exploration of potential regional collaboration planned.

Green Sports Day: Exploration of potential regional collaboration planned.



Crawford Lake Conservation Area, Milton | HALTON



Resource Management




Grand River, Paris | BRANT

GOAL: We are a resilient organization that is fully equipped to respond to the needs of stakeholders.

OBJECTIVE: To diversify our financial resources to build operational resiliency and maximize investment potential.



 Dundurn National Historic Site | HAMILTON

ACTION ITEM

20

Explore and identify other funding diversification approaches and resource sharing with partners.



See also Action Items 1, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 15, 16 for related progress highlights and 2025-26 priority activities.

Mid-Plan Progress Highlights

Co-Investment Opportunity Exploration: Preliminary discussions conducted with HHBDLA.

2025-26 Priority Activities

Leverage Partnership Program Funding to Expand Consumer Marketing: Launch new year-round Marketing Partnership Opportunities that leverage co-operative marketing investments from RTO3, DMOs, tourism operators and other tourism sector organizations (incl. Destination Ontario and CTA).

Leverage Partnership Program Funding to Build Regional Photography Library: Launch new Marketing Partnership Opportunity sharing costs for development of high-quality destination photography with DMOs and tourism operators.

Shared Costs for Certification Support: Launch new Partnership Program Funding Stream to share costs with tourism operators for select capacity-building certifications and accreditations.

Cost Savings Through Pan-RTO Partnerships: Continued participation in Pan-RTO Research Consortium; continued co-presentation of Southern Ontario Tourism Conference (with RTO1); explore Pan-RTO Shared Industry Training Calendar.

ACTION ITEM

21

Create new and/or evolve existing marketing products/ services as revenue generation sources.



Mid-Plan Progress Highlights

Pilot Paid Consumer Marketing Opportunities: Pilot program offering paid features in RTO3 email newsletters to DMOs participating in the Winter '25 co-operative advertising campaigns with two DMOs participating.

2025-26 Priority Activities

Launch Program of Paid Consumer Marketing Opportunities: Launch (Fall '25) new paid marketing opportunities to DMOs and tourism operators through RTO3 owned email marketing and social media channels.

OBJECTIVE: To prepare our current and future team to inform, manage, and deliver our collaborative products/services across our region.



 Oakville Pier, Oakville | HALTON

ACTION ITEM

22

Support and facilitate the needed evolution of staff roles, responsibilities, and capacity across implementation of strategic plan.



Mid-Plan Progress Highlights

Capacity-Building Through External Support: Utilization of outsourced experts and contract FTE accelerated implementation of 2024-26 Strategic Plan and mobilization of Destination Sustainability Action Plan priorities.

2025-26 Priority Activities

Marketing & Communications Team Expansion and External Support: Growth of internal marketing team to two positions to provide necessary capacity to implement new internal marketing service delivery model and resource expanded marketing priorities; outsourced marketing expertise to train and oversee marketing team through Fall '25.

Product Development Capacity-Building Through External Support: Utilization of outsourced experts to accelerate completion of Regional Product Development Framework & Action Plan and International Travel Trade Framework & Action Plan by Fall '25 to actively inform 2026-27 Business Plan priorities and resourcing.

Research Capacity-Building Through External Support Leverage Pan-RTO Research Consortium contractor to provide limited number of turn-key reports.

Staffing Analysis: Assess staffing levels, updated role definitions/areas of responsibility, and address skills gaps to ensure alignment with strategic and operational priorities.

ACTION ITEM

23

Identify and integrate efficiency-building and capacity enhancing technologies based on operational and stakeholder needs.



Mid-Plan Progress Highlights

This work is progressing slowly as it is influenced by other activities RTO3 is working on that will address and benefit Action 23.

2025-26 Priority Activities

Web-Based Marketing Tools: Implementation of new tools and supports including dashboards consolidating marketing and communications metrics to streamline reporting, and project management tools to facilitate coordination and communications.

Web-Based Accounting and Finance Tools: Implementation of new tools to streamline management of internal bookkeeping practices.

Web-Based HR Tools: Implementation of new tools to streamline management of basic HR functions and tracking.

Other: Efficiencies related to the organization's administration and HR management tools are being reviewed to ensure optimization and sustainability as the organization continues to evolve resourcing needs to meet business operational priorities.

Moving Forward with Purpose

As we reflect on the progress made in the first half of our strategic plan implementation period, we are energized by the momentum built and the strong foundation established. With key partnerships deepened, new initiatives launched, and our organizational capacity strengthened, we are well-positioned to accelerate our efforts in the months ahead. The collaborative spirit that defined our plan's development continues to drive our implementation, ensuring that together we will achieve our vision of making Hamilton Halton Brant a truly thriving tourism ecosystem.



Scan the QR code above to download a digital copy of this *Mid-Plan Progress Report*.



Scan the QR code above to download a copy of the *RTO3-Hamilton Halton Brant Strategic Plan for Regional Tourism Development 2024-2026*.



Scan the QR code above to download a copy of the *2025-26 RTO3-Hamilton Halton Brant Business & Operational Plan*.

Glossary

- CGLCC:** Canada's 2SLGBTQI+ Chamber of Commerce
- CTA:** Culinary Tourism Alliance
- DO:** Destination Ontario
- DM(M)O:** Destination Management/Marketing Organization
- DSAP:** Destination Sustainability Action Plan
- DSSC:** Destination Sustainability Stakeholder Committee
- DSO:** Destination Sustainability Officer
- FEDDEV:** Federal Economic Development Agency
- HHBDLA:** Hamilton Halton Brant Destination Leadership Alliance
- ITAC:** Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada
- ITO:** Indigenous Tourism Ontario
- MTCG:** Ministry of Tourism, Culture & Gaming
- MOU:** Memorandum of Understanding
- OTEC:** Ontario Tourism Education Corporation
- RTO:** Regional Tourism Organization
- RTO3:** Regional Tourism Organization 3 (Hamilton Halton Brant)
- TGP:** FedDev Tourism Growth Program
- TIAC:** Tourism Industry Association of Canada
- TIAO:** Tourism Industry Association of Ontario
- TSNO:** Tourism SkillsNet Ontario



Hamilton Halton Brant Regional Tourism Association
270 Sherman Avenue North, Suite 309, Hamilton, ON L8L 6N4
905-297-0190 info@theheartofontario.com
www.RTO3.ca

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