



Hamilton Halton Brant Regional Tourism Association

**Tourism Product & Experience
Development Framework and Action Plan
2026-2030**

November 2025





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Introduction

RTO3 (Hamilton Halton Brant or HHB) recognizes the need to focus the region's efforts in tourism product development and experience development in order to remain competitive, support tourism stakeholders and attract visitors.

Hamilton Halton Brant has a mandate to lead, coordinate and support tourism growth in the region to allow increased tourism visitation, economic activity and job growth. Five pillars are indicated as priority focus areas for each of Ontario's RTOs, including:

- Product Development
- Investment Attraction
- Workforce Development and Training
- Marketing
- Partnership

Product development activities aim to enhance visitor experience through well-designed tourism offers that meet current and future visitor demand.

As a result of recommendations in the *2024-2026 Strategic Plan for Regional Tourism Development*, Hamilton Halton Brant embarked on this *Tourism Product & Experience Development Framework and Action Plan* in 2025, with input from its sub-regional partners (DMOs). Supporting the product development pillar, this plan aims to guide activities over a five-year period from 2026 to 2030, and will set a course for product and experience development in the region, in light of the current tourism environment.



Goals

The *Tourism Product & Experience Development Framework and Action Plan*, will achieve the following goals while considering the current tourism environment, the region's unique selling propositions, current tourism offerings, as well as the tourism strengths of its partner DMOs.

- Provide guidance, focus efforts and prioritize tasks to support product and experience development in the region
- Leverage opportunities and mitigate challenges, considering the region as a whole as well as the sub-regional areas and their tourism environment and assets
- Foster collaboration with and between tourism stakeholders
- Enhance the region's capacity to attract and welcome visitors
- Position the region as a leader in the development of innovative tourism experiences



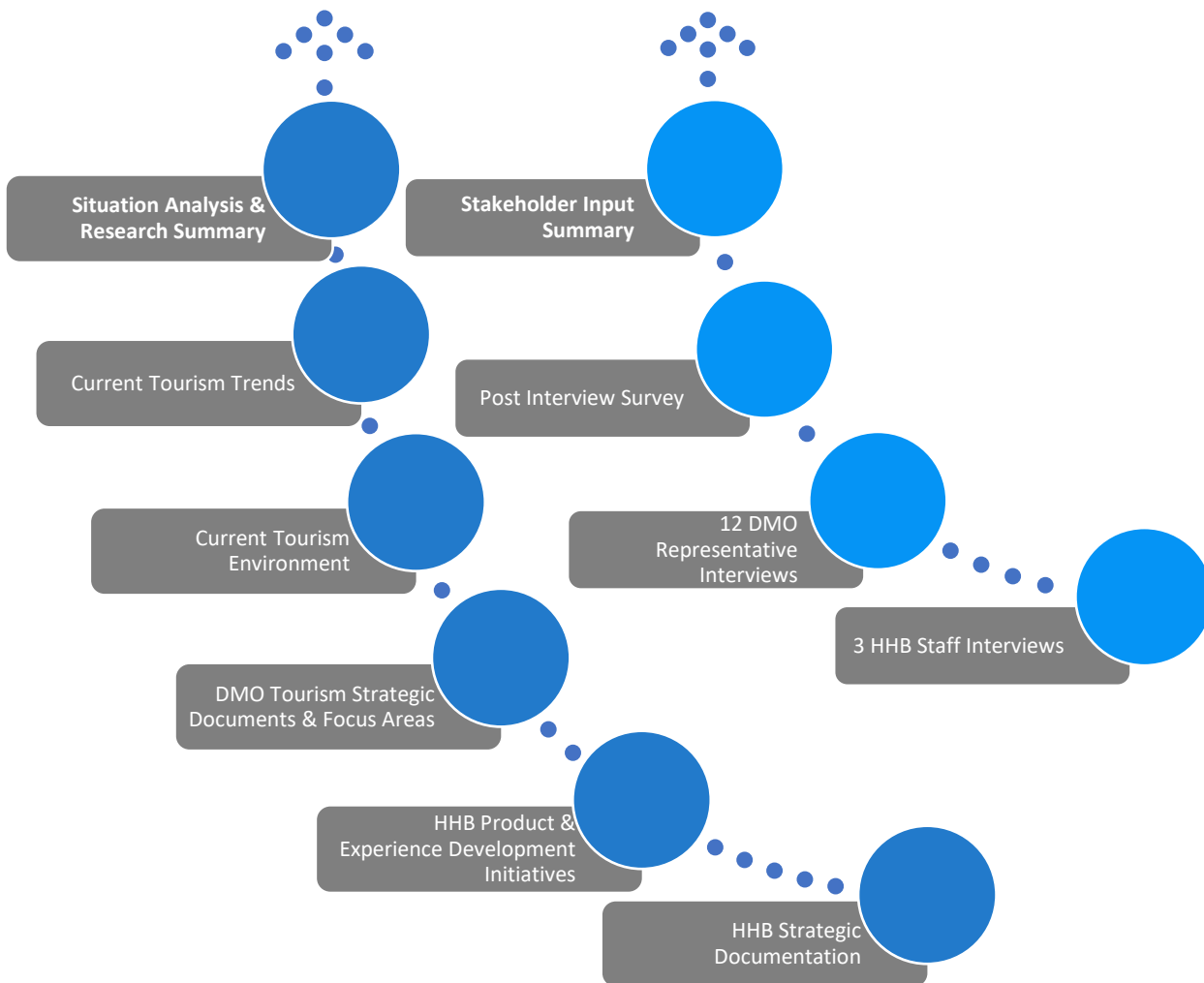
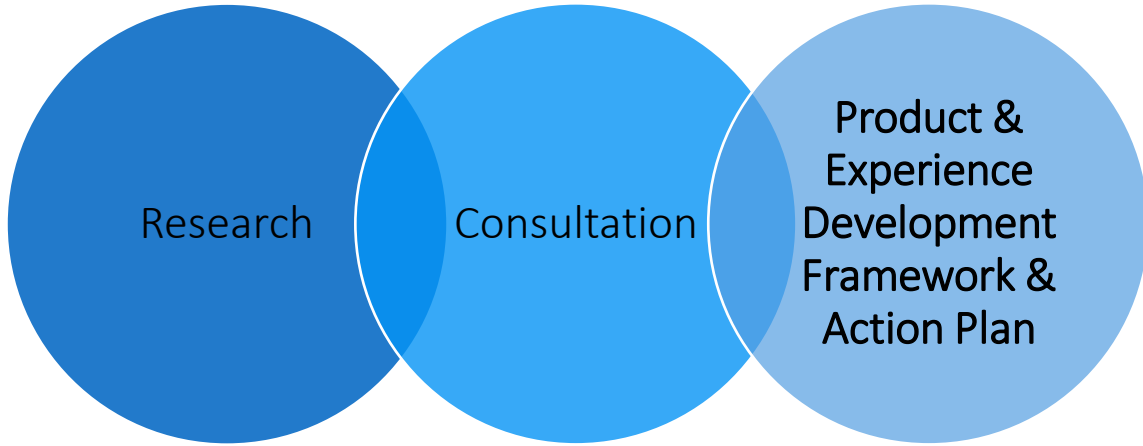
Project Process

The project process was designed for collaboration, considering the input of Hamilton Halton Brant staff as well as key representatives of each sub-regional partner in the region. Interviews were conducted with these staff and 12 DMO participants representing nine partner organizations. Post interview surveys were sent to each participant, allowing them to summarize key opportunities and challenges.

Research included reviewing current strategic documentation for Hamilton Halton Brant as well as each of the nine DMOs in the region. Background regarding the current tourism environment and trends, will set the stage to leverage opportunities that align with the area's strengths and assets, as well as provincial and national focus areas.

The results of the research and consultation were summarized into two reports; the *Product & Experience Development Situation Analysis & Research Summary* and the *Product & Experience Development Stakeholder Input Summary*. Details from each of these reports, which can be reviewed in its entirety as separate documents, are included below.

This approach to stakeholder consultation and research aimed to comprehensively understand the current tourism environment, and the product and experience development opportunities and challenges the region is currently facing. Furthermore, it sought to gather valuable input to inform the development of recommendations for future product and experience development initiatives, as outlined in this plan.





Current Tourism Context

As the *Product & Experience Development Framework & Action Plan* began, it was informative to examine the current tourism environment. These details help to inform and guide the recommendations and actions that are proposed.



National, Provincial, Regional and DMO Product & Experience Development Focus Areas

Destination Canada's Current Approach to Product and Experience Development

Destination Canada's approach to product development and experience development is informed by two key documents. The *2023 Destination Development Strategy*, which emphasizes providing high-value, world-class Canadian experiences, and *A Regenerative Approach to Tourism in Canada*, which outlines a framework for building tourism that supports both people and place. Together, these strategies establish a vision for Canada's tourism sector that is both competitive in the global marketplace and deeply rooted in community and environmental wellbeing.

At the national level, Destination Canada is implementing a two-track strategy for destination development. In the short term, the focus is on driving revenue recovery and market demand through 2025. In the long term, the emphasis shifts toward building resilience and competitiveness through 2030, ensuring that Canada's tourism sector contributes to economic growth, cultural vitality, and environmental stewardship. A key part of this work is strengthening Canada's portfolio of distinctive and authentic experiences that align with the interests of high-value guests and exceed visitor expectations.

*"By strengthening Canada's portfolio of unique and authentic product offerings, the objective is to surpass guests' expectations and deliver truly unforgettable experiences."*¹

Destination Canada is also leveraging data to identify areas of strength, gaps, and investment opportunities. This approach supports regional competitiveness, attracts investment, and enhances the quality of visitor journeys by connecting diverse destinations and experiences across the country. Corridor tourism development projects put less emphasis on isolated

¹ Destination Canada, *Destination Development Strategy*, June 2023.



products and more on complete journeys that connect multiple destinations, landscapes, and cultural offerings across regions of Canada. This is a change from focusing on “standalone attractions” to curating broader visitor journeys highlighting the diversity of Canadian experiences.

Another Destination Canada focus is geographic and seasonal dispersion. This is to encourage travel beyond peak summer months and into the fall and winter seasons, positioning Canada as a year-round destination. By creating elevated and unique off-season experiences, such as embracing Canada’s cold climate as an attraction in itself, the strategy aims to increase economic stability for businesses, extend the visitor season, and reduce pressure on highly visited destinations.

Destination Canada believes that an emphasis on collaboration and community-led development is essential for success. Tourism organizations are evolving beyond marketing, into roles that support product readiness, workforce development, sustainability practices, and inclusive storytelling. By aligning tourism partners and communities around a shared purpose and fostering buy-in from residents, tourism can strengthen local pride while delivering authentic, transformative experiences for visitors.

In reshaping its approach to tourism through a regenerative tourism model, Destination Canada is prioritizing the long-term health of communities, environments, and visitors. This tourism focus goes beyond sustainability by seeking to leave places better than they were found. It focuses on meaningful connections between people and place. This can be achieved through a focus on the environment, economic factors or by giving back to the community. Regenerative tourism offers are deeply meaningful and responsible.

Visitors increasingly seek experiences that are not only enjoyable but also responsible and transformative, enriching both the traveller and the host community. This regenerative approach guides all of Destination Canada’s focus areas, from product readiness and seasonal dispersion to cluster development and investment, ensuring that each initiative contributes to more resilient destinations and communities.



Tourism Product & Experience Development in Ontario

The recent release of the tourism strategy for Ontario provides tourism stakeholders, including Regional Tourism Organizations (RTOs) and Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs), with a roadmap for the next five years. Led by the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO), *Forward Motion – Ontario’s Strategic Playbook (2025-2030)*, is an industry-directed framework designed to guide tourism in the province, at all levels.

“This plan also signals a deliberate and timely shift in governance philosophy. No single entity can, or should, own the future of tourism in Ontario. Instead, this framework promotes a hybrid leadership model: provincial ministries set enabling conditions and make strategic investments; Destination Ontario leads brand storytelling and data; TIAO and sector partners carry the sector’s voice in policy; RTOs and DMOs support and deliver locally; and operators, suppliers, educators, and communities activate the ground truth of tourism. What emerges is a functional, multi-tiered system of leadership defined by collaboration rather than control, and by clarity rather than duplication.”²

Aiming to support tourism’s longstanding place as an economic driver, in a time of continued recovery, economic uncertainty, and intense competition, the strategy outlines six strategic pillars that will set the foundation for sustainable growth in tourism in the province:

- Attract more visitor spending
- Expand transportation infrastructure
- Strengthen workforce resilience
- Facilitate product development & capacity investment
- Advance practical sustainability
- Foster collaboration & leadership

To attract more visitor spending, investments in a roadmap and capacity building for increased international visitation are needed. Expanding transportation infrastructure will provide better access to rural and remote areas and support international and domestic visitation. Further

² Tourism Industry Association of Ontario, *Forward Motion, A Strategic Playbook for Ontario’s Tourism Industry 2025-2030*.



development of EV infrastructure will support “Green Travel Corridors or Routes” throughout the province. Workforce resilience focuses on building a steady, capable labour force, through reduced barriers and improved job quality.

Product development and capacity investment are strategically intertwined and aim for long term results. It’s noted that “...many businesses, especially small, seasonal, and culturally significant ones, lack the structural supports, access to investment, and hands-on training to develop compelling visitor experiences year-round.”³ Aiming for an expansion of tourism capacity throughout the year, through investment, capacity building and innovation, the strategy highlights five product specific actions and outcomes.

1. A province-wide investment attraction plan and best practices tools for industry.
2. Assistance related to operator investments in technology to improve bookings and visitor experiences.
3. Product development and market readiness training and programs for operators.
4. Advocate for mechanisms to incentivize investment.
5. Provide resources to Indigenous Tourism Ontario to facilitate Indigenous tourism investment, capacity building and marketing.

Key performance indicators for this pillar are noted as increased tourism products or experiences launched annually, positive visitor satisfaction and investments resulting in the development and enhancement of tourism products and experiences.

Advancing sustainability in a practical way, recognizes that businesses have an understanding of the need to be sustainable, but the lack tools and resources to make investments. Encouraging certification, creating toolkits and test pilots are recommended, as well as a provincial task force to advocate for incentives.

The strategy provides a summary of the roles and responsibilities of various tourism stakeholders⁴ and calls for collaboration and leadership across the tourism sector. Regional Tourism Organizations are noted as regional capacity builders and service providers, providing marketing, product development, workforce development and data collection for the region, as well as providing support for the region’s DMOs and operators through coordination. DMOs are destination stewards, advocates and promoters focusing on local needs, strategies, marketing,

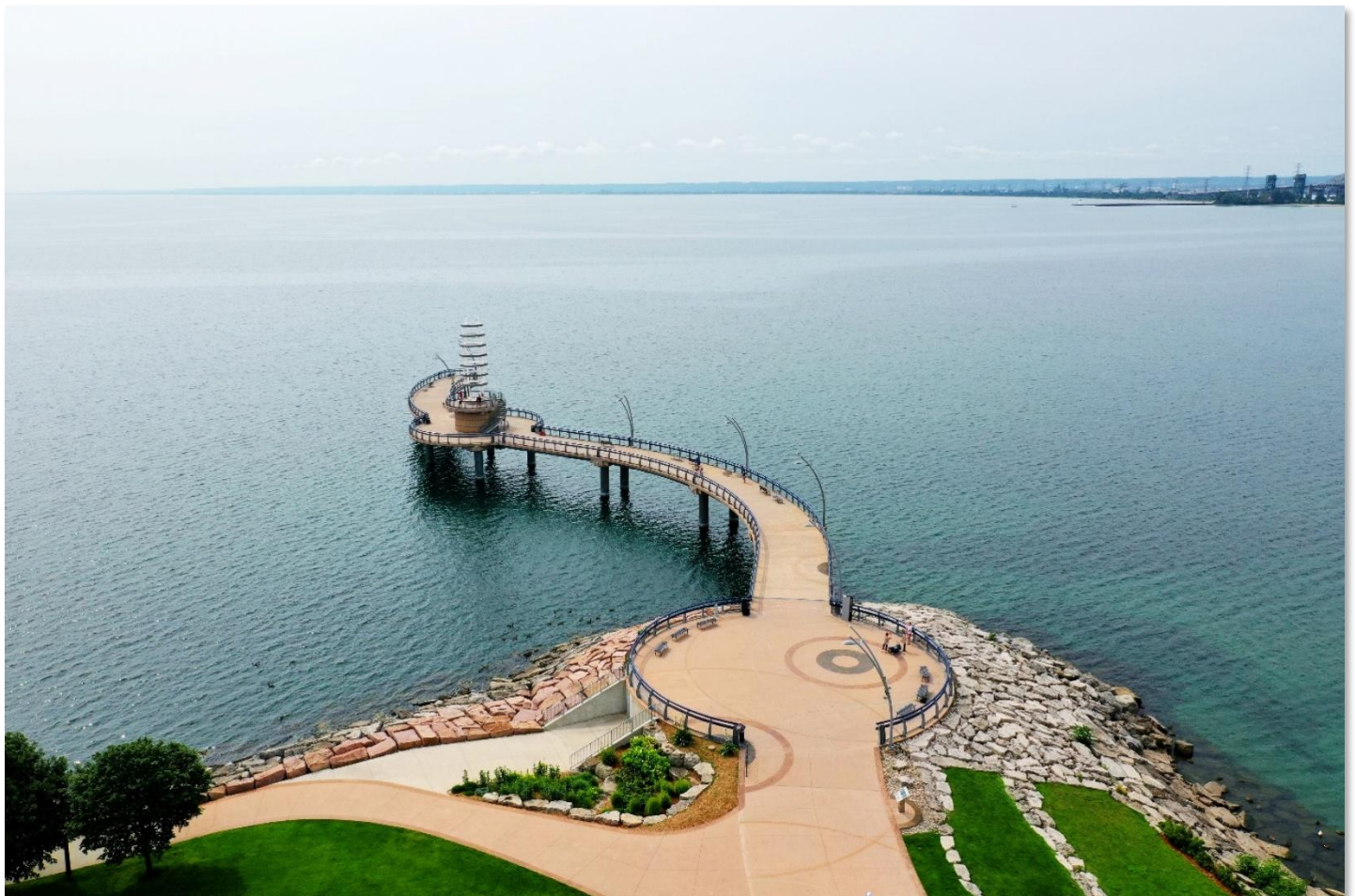
³ Tourism Industry Association of Ontario, *Forward Motion, A Strategic Playbook for Ontario’s Tourism Industry 2025-2030*.

⁴ Tourism Industry Association of Ontario, *Forward Motion, A Strategic Playbook for Ontario’s Tourism Industry 2025-2030*.



programming, and destination investments. Municipal governments and economic developers support local tourism operations and investment in infrastructure, implement Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT), often providing DMO services and economic development functions. They also approve land use and deliver services and infrastructure. Tourism operators, the frontline that provides experiences to visitors, undertake business investments and provide services. Roles and responsibilities are also outlined for municipal partners and economic developers, Indigenous partners, among other tourism stakeholders.

Regional Tourism Organizations, DMOs and sector organizations are encouraged to amplify and align with the strategic outcomes of the strategy, to continue to support and grow tourism in the province.





Hamilton Halton Brant's Current Product & Experience Development Focus

Strategic Directions

The HHB 2024-2026 *Strategic Plan for Regional Tourism Development* provides a focused path to support tourism in the region. The plan includes an updated vision and mission and actions for the three-year period.

The vision speaks to the interconnected nature of the tourism economy, partners throughout the region, the environment and the wider society.

The Heart of Ontario, which includes Hamilton, Burlington, Oakville, Halton Hills, Milton, 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, society and environment.

The mandate states that HHB will act as a leader and innovator, working with partners and providing services to support stakeholders in the delivery of tourism.

We are a leader and innovator working to steward a regional destination into the future. Through our programs and services, collaboration 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.

HHB is shifting from a focus on increasing overnight visitors and spending to a broader mandate that integrates prosperity, people, placemaking, and sustainability. Actions emphasize stakeholder collaboration, aligning with provincial and national tourism priorities, strengthening "The Heart of Ontario" brand, and prioritizing responsible and inclusive tourism development.



Expansion of innovative and diverse sub-regional and cross-regional tourism experiences and products, research, technology adoption, and stronger partnerships with underrepresented groups, environmental organizations, and Indigenous partners are part of the evolving approach.

Current marketing initiatives as outlined in the *2025-26 Consumer Marketing Strategy and Plan* are focused on amplifying the region's identity while supporting sub-regional priority areas and attracting highly engaged guests, who stay longer, spend more and support sustainable operators. Prioritizing visitors from Ontario, and visiting friends and relatives, Hamilton Halton Brant looks to attract travellers seeking authentic, experience-driven offers aligning with Destination Canada's Explorers' Quotient categories of Outdoor Explorer, Culture Seekers and Purpose Driven Families.

The *2025-26 Business Plan* reinforces the commitment to development and delivery of high value, well-designed tourism products that meet visitor demands. These include the delivery of authentic cultural experiences and transformational travel opportunities with a focus on sustainability and strengthening of shoulder season offers.

Hamilton Halton Brant operates with a core annual budget of \$1,050,000. The product development allocation from the budget varies on an annual basis. During 2025/26, approximately 7%, or \$72,500 (excluding salaries and benefits), was allocated to product development.

Partnership funding has been allocated to support private businesses and organizations with tourism initiatives on a 50/50 funding model. The fund, which is set at a total of \$145,000, is allocated over two intakes in 2025/26. Intake one supported marketing opportunities. Intake two is also supporting marketing initiatives and has a budget of \$20,000 allocated to product development for shoulder season experience development. It also has \$5,000 set aside for the achievement of certifications including Rainbow Registered, Ontario by Bike and Feast ON.



Current Product & Experience Focus Areas

Hamilton Halton Brant's current product focus areas reflect the region's mix of natural landscapes, cultural assets, Indigenous heritage, and family-friendly attractions. Several product and experience categories currently form the foundation of its tourism offers as indicated on its website, and in strategic documentation.

1. **Outdoors & Nature** – The Niagara Escarpment, Bruce Trail, Grand River, and waterfalls anchor the region's outdoors and nature product. HHB has developed multi-day waterfall and hiking itineraries, cycling routes (HamBur, Ride the Ridge as well as others developed by its sub-regional partners), paddling products, and outfitter partnerships. Conservation areas and Royal Botanical Gardens further expand the outdoor portfolio.
2. **Food & Drink** – Local food production, dining experiences, festivals, and agritourism are highly valued and in demand. Culinary trails and storytelling are emerging focus areas.
3. **Arts, Heritage & Culture** – Anchors include the Art Gallery of Hamilton, Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum, National Historic Sites (Dundurn Castle, HMCS Haida, Chiefswood National Historic Site, etc.), galleries, live theatre, and performing arts centres. Public art, small-town cultural hubs, and creative districts add depth.
4. **Indigenous Tourism** – Authentic, community-driven Indigenous experiences are being developed in partnership with Six Nations and Indigenous Tourism Ontario. Current offerings include three packages (culture, paddling, Haudenosaunee games) as well as Pow Wows, Moccasin Trails, cultural sites, and glamping/cabins.
5. **Festivals & Events** – Music, cultural, culinary, heritage, and sports events are important demand generators. The region has hosted big ticket events in the past.
6. **Family Attractions & Signature Experiences** – African Lion Safari, Treetop Trekking, premium shopping outlets, conservation areas, and Royal Botanical Gardens are strong draws. Signature experiences include Lancaster flights at the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum and African Lion Safari's "Wake Up the Wild."
7. **Urban & Small-Town Experiences** – Hamilton's cultural districts, and Burlington and Oakville's waterfront combined with boutique shopping, culinary experiences, and creative hubs in smaller towns throughout the region.



Key Current Initiatives

Current initiatives are used to strengthen Hamilton Halton Brant’s tourism products and enhance visitor experiences. These efforts focus on improving product readiness, adopting digital tools, addressing infrastructure gaps, and integrating sustainability and inclusivity across the region. These initiatives are helping to position the region as a distinctive, year-round destination while continuing to focus on future growth and alignment with broader provincial and national priorities. Key initiatives include:

- Developing itineraries (waterfall, sustainable, luxury, cycling, and multi-day outdoors).
- Expanding digital tools for itinerary planning and booking.
- Addressing gaps in transit access and connectivity, especially for non-driving markets.
- Integrating sustainability, regenerative tourism, and social inclusion across marketing and product development.
- Collaboration between DMOs and RTO regarding destination sustainability, destination development, destination insights and destination marketing.
- Positioning “The Heart of Ontario” as a collection of sub-regional destinations with distinctive offerings.
- Building stronger year-round tourism by enhancing shoulder season products.

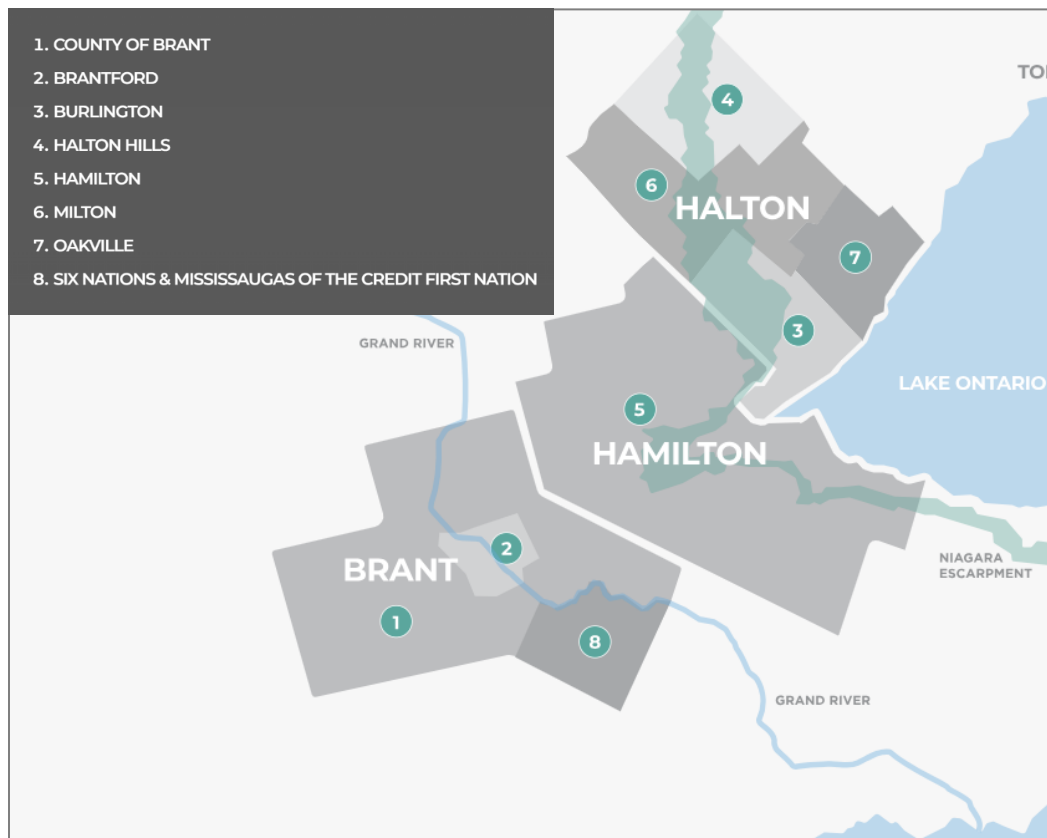




Sub-Regional DMOs in Hamilton Halton Brant

The region’s distinct sub-regional partners are key partners in providing tourism products and experiences for visitors to the region. The nine DMO’s located within the geographic area of the Hamilton Halton Brant Regional Tourism Association include:

- Brant County
- Brantford
- Burlington
- Halton Hills
- Hamilton
- Milton
- Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation
- Oakville
- Six Nations



Closer examination of the tourism products and strategic focus of sub-regional partners provides further information to guide the product and experience development focus for the region. Desk research including review of partner consumer tourism websites, strategic documents that have been provided, as well as interviews with tourism or economic development staff has resulted in the following summary of the product and experience development focus and priorities for each partner.



Brant County

Brant County is characterized by its welcoming rural communities, natural beauty, historical significance, unique architecture, and local artisans. The Grand River, a Canadian Heritage River, flows through the county, offering opportunities for recreation and exploration on-river and along its waterfront trails.

Key Areas of Focus

Key areas of focus for Brant County in terms of tourism and destination development as evidenced by the county's strategic planning documents and review of the consumer tourism webpages include:

- Arts, culture and heritage including support of Indigenous culture, the creation of dynamic and economically sustainable downtowns, and the revitalization of downtown Paris, positioning it as a hub for cultural exploration in the county
- The Grand River, a Canadian Heritage River with Exceptional Waters designation, as a scenic natural, recreational and tourism asset
- Support for agritourism opportunities, linking to culture and food
- Interest in sustainability, environmentally responsible communities and climate action

Brantford

The City of Brantford, is the birthplace of several distinguished Canadians, including inventor Alexander Graham Bell, hockey legends Walter and Wayne Gretzky, Lawren Harris and scientist James Hillier. The city offers outdoor and recreational activities along 70 kilometres of trails and the Grand River. Cultural assets such as art galleries, heritage architecture and live performances add to its tourism offer.

Key Areas of Focus

Based on the review of information resources for Brantford, the following key areas of focus for tourism product and experience development have been identified:

- The Grand River as a key tourism resource for paddling and fishing as well as its links to the trails and parks spaces along the waterfront in the city
- Cultural attractions offer learning opportunities regarding famous local residents and the Indigenous community at the Woodland Cultural Centre
- The city has ample sport tourism facilities and excels at tournament hosting
- Event hosting is also a key focus area



Burlington

Burlington is consistently recognized for its high quality of life, which also contributes to its appeal as a visitor destination. The city supports a robust arts, culture, and heritage sector. Extensive trails showcase scenic views along the Lake Ontario shoreline and the Niagara Escarpment and a location between Toronto and Niagara Falls positions Burlington close to market.

Key Areas of Focus

Tourism product and experience development in Burlington hinges on several strategic areas as noted through review of strategic plans and online resources. Key details and area of focus include:

- A welcoming urban environment with scenic waterfront and natural surroundings including the Niagara Escarpment
- A focus on festivals and events with expansion plans supported through a Destination Development Fund
- Key natural attractions such as Royal Botanical Gardens, Mount Nemo and the Bruce Trail provide outdoor activities along with regional cycling routes
- Investments in infrastructure are being made to support tourism
- Interest in expanding family attraction offerings, culinary tied to agritourism, and supporting cultural and heritage offerings

Halton Hills

Halton Hills provides a mix of offers with a small-town feel. The area on the edge of Toronto, includes rural and urban amenities, providing agritourism experiences, scenic landscapes, retail outlets, and a variety of dining options. This combination contributes to Halton Hills' position as a destination for short-term leisure travel on the northwestern edge of Hamilton Halton Brant.

Key Areas of Focus

The Halton Hills Economic Development and Tourism Strategy note several key areas for tourism product and experience development:

- Support for businesses in the development of tourism offers
- Key product areas include nature and outdoors, rural communities and historic downtowns, agritourism, festivals and events, retail, arts and culture and sports and recreation
- The green economy is identified as a key investment focus and opportunity for Halton Hills, and the community has actioned a net-zero by 2030 goal



Hamilton

The City of Hamilton, offers visitors a unique blend of urban amenities and scenic natural landscapes. The city is home to a thriving arts community, both of which are actively reflected in public spaces and cultural programming. The proximity to Toronto markets and diverse attractions, create unique experiences for visitors.

Key Areas of Focus

Hamilton has an extensive tourism offer and has invested in strategic tourism planning. Key tourism products and experiences are currently available in the city or have been identified for support and/or development.

- Major attractions bring tourists to Hamilton
- The city hosts major corporate and leisure events
- Natural assets have been identified for sustainable development through planning and infrastructure improvements
- Waterfalls are recognized as a key natural asset, with future investments and developments that will be guided by the currently ongoing *Waterfalls Master Plan*
- Placemaking will support vibrant tourism districts supported by the development of high quality, unique experiences and authentic itineraries
- The *Indigenous Tourism Strategy* calls for awareness and support in the creation of Indigenous experiences, development of educational opportunities and partnerships

Milton

Milton is characterized by its culture, and its fast growing and diverse population. The Niagara Escarpment is a key feature of the area, and outdoor activities including hiking, cycling, skiing, and golf. In addition to these amenities, seasonal events, such as local markets, festivals and farm-to-table experience are offered in the community.

Key Areas of Focus

Primary priorities for economic development in Milton, as identified through analysis of strategic planning materials and Milton's website, include:

- Cultural development for community building
- Celebration of diversity and support of Indigenous truth and reconciliation
- Support of local entrepreneurs, and attraction of new business opportunities
- Expansion of cultural infrastructure



Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation

The Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation is a dynamic and resilient community grounded in cultural heritage and forward-looking values. Deeply connected to the land and committed to environmental stewardship, they foster a sense of unity and care while nurturing traditions, and place emphasis on teaching and preserving history, that will guide generations to come.

Key Areas of Focus

While Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation does not have a consumer tourism website and has not undertaken strategic planning related to tourism, limited activities are taking place, showing an interest in education and engagement.

- The Moccasin Project, a cross Canada initiative, was supported by Carol King and the First Nation as well as the Greenbelt Foundations. The initiative placed 20 installations in the area, using visual queues to increase treaty awareness
- A tourism and economic website are not currently available
- Staffing includes positions related to culture, events and sustainable economic development with an interest in learning and being a part of initiatives

Oakville

Oakville is recognized for its established recreational infrastructure, including well known golf courses. The city offers a scenic waterfront area and diverse amenities including unique shops, cultural venues, and a range of dining establishments. Its proximity to Toronto enhances its accessibility and appeal as a place for visitors.

Key Areas of Focus

Review of Oakville's tourism strategic plans and online information provides the following key areas of focus related to product development:

- A need for tourism experience development that increases the number of bookable experiences and evening offers
- Strategic investments in cultural initiatives
- Data for informed decision making
- A Tourism Investment Fund that provides up to \$5,000 for new or growing events
- Focus areas that include sustainability, accessibility and inclusivity



Six Nations of the Grand River

Six Nations of the Grand River invites visitors to explore its rich Indigenous heritage and natural beauty. Sites like Chiefswood National Historic Site and the Woodland Cultural Centre provide cultural learning opportunities. The Grand River offers scenic opportunities for kayaking, canoeing, and hiking. Six Nations offers opportunities for community connection through authentic cultural experiences, education and natural exploration.

Key Areas of Focus

Six Nations of the Grand River recognizes the importance of cultural tourism and has invested in a plan for destination and experience development over a ten-year period to 2034. Areas of focus include:

- Growing the number of tourism experiences available
- Integration of culinary, arts, storytelling, signature events and attractions and expanded adventure packages
- Integration of technology into tourism offers
- Enhancement of infrastructure to support tourism visitation



Current Tourism Environment

Tourism Trends

Tourism trends offer valuable insight into shifting visitor preferences, emerging niche market segments, and evolving travel behaviours, which are valuable in informing strategic planning. Analysis of these trends helps identify opportunities for product and experience development, as well as capacity building, infrastructure investment and targeted marketing. Considering trends when developing the framework and action plan ensures that destination development aligns with current interests and remains adaptable to future conditions. Investing in trends that make sense for the region will ensure advancement is strategic and targeted.

Current Tourism Trends

The tourism landscape has undergone significant change over the past five years, shaped by the lasting impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, economic pressures, and shifting global dynamics. Recent research and industry reports were reviewed to identify the trends most influencing visitor behaviour and destination development today. This includes insights from tourism organizations, sustainability studies, market research, and strategy documents. Together, these sources reveal how travellers are adapting their habits by prioritizing local, meaningful, and sustainable experiences, and how destinations must evolve in response. The following trends highlight the key themes that consistently emerged across the research.

Domestic and Regional Travel

Rising travel costs and global uncertainty have encouraged visitors to explore destinations closer to home. Domestic and intra-provincial tourism has surged, with travellers prioritizing regional road trips and backyard adventures over long-haul vacations. This shift has opened up new opportunities for local destinations to re-engage nearby markets and promote lesser-known attractions. Destinations that offer affordable and easy to reach travel options, paired with meaningful local experiences, are well-positioned to benefit from this trend.

Sustainability and Eco-Conscious Travel

More travellers are actively seeking ways to reduce their environmental footprint while supporting responsible tourism practices. This includes choosing sustainable transportation, staying in eco-certified accommodations, and prioritizing locally owned businesses. Visitors want to see visible commitments to sustainability, not just words, but actions. Destinations that



provide clear sustainability information and promote low-impact travel options are better able to meet rising consumer expectations and contribute to long-term destination stewardship.

Culinary Tourism

Food and drink remain top motivators for travel, with visitors hungry for locally inspired culinary experiences. Whether it's sampling regional dishes, following a foodie trail, or attending a farm-to-table event, travellers are using food as a gateway to understanding place and culture. Culinary tourism supports local producers and restaurants while offering visitors a distinctive, memorable experience. Destinations that tell the story of their tastes of place have a competitive edge in attracting both domestic and international guests.

Cultural, Indigenous, and Local Experiences

Travellers increasingly want to engage with destinations in meaningful ways that reflect the true character of a place. This includes exploring local heritage, attending arts and cultural events, participating in Indigenous experiences, and discovering "off-the-beaten-path" gems. Destinations that highlight their unique culture and traditions, and do so in a respectful, collaborative way, appeal to today's experience-driven visitor. Supporting cultural tourism not only enriches visitor experiences but also strengthens community identity and local economies.

Technology and Digital Integration

Digital tools have become essential in shaping the visitor journey, from trip planning to real-time decision-making on the ground. Travellers expect seamless online booking, mobile-friendly websites, and smart technologies like AI-powered recommendations or digital concierge services. Visual content and peer reviews on social media platforms strongly influence travel choices. Destinations that embrace digital innovation and provide user-friendly, informative platforms can better engage audiences and enhance the overall visitor experience.

Nature and Wellness-Based Tourism

Health, wellbeing, and time in nature are top priorities for travellers seeking a break from daily stressors. Visitors are drawn to restorative experiences like hiking, kayaking, spa treatments, and quiet retreats that promote mental and physical wellness. Wellness tourism is booming, especially in areas that offer natural beauty, clean food, and opportunities for relaxation. Destinations connected to nature, with active and passive offerings, are ideally positioned to meet this growing demand.

Experiential and High-Quality Travel

Modern travellers are choosing immersive, hands-on experiences over traditional sightseeing. Whether it's joining a guided food tour, participating in a cultural workshop, or taking a self-



guided cycling route with curated stops along the way, visitors want travel that feels personal and memorable. Quality is a key driver, with people willing to spend more on premium, authentic, and well-curated experiences. Destinations that focus on experiential tourism, especially ones that can't be replicated elsewhere, have a clear competitive advantage.

Inclusion, Diversity, and Safety

Feeling safe, included, and welcome is a core part of the travel experience; especially for equity-deserving groups such as 2SLGBTQIA+, BIPOC communities, and travellers with accessibility needs. Visitors are choosing destinations that reflect inclusive values and provide meaningful representation in tourism offerings. This includes diverse storytelling, inclusive festivals and events, and experiences developed in collaboration with underrepresented groups. Destinations that lead with empathy and equity are better equipped to meet the needs of today's diverse travellers.

Slow Travel and Extended Stays

More people are opting to travel less often but for longer periods, focusing on deeper exploration and quality over quantity. This "slow travel" trend is driven by a desire for deeper connections, reduced environmental impact, and more flexible work arrangements. Visitors are choosing to stay in one place longer, explore at a relaxed pace, and immerse themselves in the community. Destinations that support extended stays and encourage immersive experiences stand to benefit from this growing travel mindset.

Emerging Niches and Tourism Opportunities

Several niche markets are showing strong growth potential, offering destinations new ways to diversify. These include, but are not limited to, music and festival tourism, wellness retreats, agritourism, cannabis tourism, and film tourism. Short-term rentals, luxury "lite" travel, and blended business-leisure trips are also on the rise. Each presents a chance to tap into specific interests, seasons, and demographics. Destinations that identify with emerging niches may be well-positioned to attract new audiences.

PESTLE

Examining the key political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental factors that are currently affecting tourism, the PESTLE provides a foundational understanding to support strategic decision-making. It ensures that tourism planning is responsive to broader systemic forces and aligned with the current environment and market realities.



Political	Economic	Social	Technological	Legal	Environmental
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Global political instability may limit international visitation. ▪ U.S. political climate influences cross-border travel and sentiment. ▪ Federal and provincial governments are supportive of tourism ▪ Political and economic challenges may shift priorities of government at all levels, potentially affecting support for tourism-related initiatives. ▪ Canada’s Federal Tourism Growth Strategy (2023) will invest in five key tourism priorities by 2030. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Invest in tourism assets 2. Embrace recreation and the great outdoors 3. Partner to grow Indigenous tourism 4. Attract more international events 5. Improve coordination through a Federal Ministerial Council ▪ Local/provincial support for tourism recovery and sustainability. ▪ Regulatory issues and travel advisories may deter travellers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inflation and rising cost of accommodations, food, and fuel may make travel less accessible. ▪ Higher household debt, economic and job insecurity is suppressing discretionary spending. ▪ Travellers are choosing local, regional, and budget-friendly options. ▪ Domestic tourism spending is rising; international spending is down. ▪ Businesses face higher operational costs (energy, wages, supplies, insurance). ▪ Businesses are still recovering from debt as a result of the covid-19 pandemic. ▪ Short-term rentals remain popular, but fees and regulatory changes are causing issues. ▪ Demand for value-driven, sustainable, and local experiences is increasing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Travellers seek authentic, local, immersive and slower-paced experiences. ▪ Diversity, inclusion, and accessibility are key decision factors. ▪ Remote work has driven growth in blended business-leisure travel. ▪ Labour shortages and lack of low-income housing are impacting workforce recruitment. ▪ High demand for cultural tourism, Indigenous experiences, nature and wellness-focused travel. ▪ Social media and influencers play a major role in trip inspiration and planning. ▪ The pandemic identified the tourism industry’s reliance on international visitors and dependence on the U.S. market. It has since built a consumer culture of domestic travel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Visitors expect seamless digital experiences (mobile sites, real-time updates) ▪ AI trip planning is increasing. ▪ Contactless accommodation check-in, personalized travel recommendations, and digital booking are becoming the norm. ▪ User-generated content and social media drive marketing success. ▪ Rural broadband gaps for high-speed internet and cellular service. ▪ Lack of EV charging stations limit accessibility in rural parts of Ontario. ▪ Direct bookings via social platforms (i.e. Instagram, TikTok) are on the rise. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Changing bylaws on short-term accommodations affect availability and business models. ▪ Accessibility legislation is increasing requirements for inclusive infrastructure. ▪ Labour and immigration laws affect seasonal and hospitality workforce supply. ▪ Privacy and data protection regulations influence digital service delivery. ▪ Sustainability certifications and environmental compliance are gaining relevance. ▪ Bill C-59 introduces measures to prevent false or misleading environmental claims (greenwashing) in business marketing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increasing pressure on and sustainability issues at iconic outdoor sites ▪ Travellers expect destinations to demonstrate real commitment to sustainability and climate action. ▪ Eco-conscious choices (low-impact transport, local food, walkable destinations) are a growing priority. ▪ Climate change is increasing the frequency of extreme weather, impacting infrastructure and safety. ▪ Visitors are interested in regenerative tourism and lesser-known destinations. ▪ HHB’s Bronze Level Sustainable Tourism Certification (GreenStep) reflects regional progress.



Stakeholder Consultation

Consultation was undertaken with the nine sub-regional DMOs, and three HHB staff, with key representatives taking part in twelve one on one interviews and a post interview survey distributed to gather further information. Designed to garner input on the current opportunities and challenges in product development and experience development in the region and at a local level, the consultation process provided an opportunity for input to the outcomes of the framework and action plan. A summary of key input received follows.



Key Product and Experience Focus Areas and Unique Selling Propositions

Participants noted several key product and experience areas for consideration that they feel define Hamilton Halton Brant's tourism potential. Participants emphasized the region's rich natural assets, cultural depth, and emerging agritourism and culinary offerings as foundational pillars for regional tourism development. These themes were consistently identified as unique selling propositions that could be elevated through strategic collaboration, infrastructure investment, and product and experience development.

Most Frequently Mentioned Focus Areas:

- Nature & Outdoor Recreation – strong natural assets throughout the region
 - Niagara Escarpment, Grand River, Bruce Trail, waterfalls, conservation areas
 - Cycling, hiking, paddling, waterfront access
 - Need for sustainability and infrastructure to support outdoor tourism
- Agritourism & Rural Experiences
 - Farm-to-table, cideries, family farms, Indigenous agriculture
 - Connection to culinary tourism and rural placemaking
 - Identified as a growing interest with potential for strategic development
 - Opportunity surrounding an agritourism strategy to focus development efforts
- Culinary Tourism
 - Diverse offerings in many areas notably, Hamilton, Burlington, Paris and Brant
 - Craft beverages, Michelin-level dining, Feast On certifications
 - Need for cohesive culinary strategies
- Cultural, Heritage (including Indigenous experiences)
 - Attractions and cultural themes (War of 1812, Joseph Brant, Pauline Johnson, museums, art galleries, heritage districts, National Historic Sites)
 - Indigenous tourism is seen as a potential strategic growth area
- Cycling & Route Development
 - Bike-friendly infrastructure, regional cycling routes
 - Potential for curated itineraries supported by market-ready experiences
- Events & Festivals
 - Signature arts, culture and entertainment offerings
 - Sporting events and tournaments



- Seen as valuable but potentially under-leveraged cross-regional collaboration

Additional factors for consideration that were provided included:

- Strategic Location & Accessibility
 - Proximity to Toronto, Niagara, and U.S. border is a key feature
 - Strong appeal for day-trippers

Key Priorities for Support of Product and Experience Development

Stakeholders interviewed emphasized that meaningful development requires investment, training, and collaboration. There was broad agreement that HHB should take a leadership role in facilitating product readiness, connecting operators, and delivering targeted programs that build capacity across sectors.

Key Priorities for Industry Support & Suggested Programs:

- Funding & Co-Investment Initiatives
 - Regional grants for product/experience development
 - Funding to encourage collaboration across DMOs and operators
 - Infrastructure funding to support focus areas investments in products and experiences
 - Support for new experiences and new entrepreneurs entering the tourism space
- Training, Mentorship & Capacity Building
 - Operator training programs (i.e. tourism 101, customer service, experience development workshops)
 - One-on-one coaching and mentorship to ensure product readiness
 - Export readiness training (i.e. TIAC READI workshops, travel trade education)
 - Training surrounding specific topics (i.e. regenerative tourism, sustainability, culinary, cycling etc.)
- Product Development Facilitation
 - Support for themed tours and development of experiences
 - Collaboration across DMOs to build cohesive regional products
 - Facilitation of experience alignment (i.e. syncing offers with major events)
- Data, Research & Strategic Insights
 - Regional tourism data to support investment decisions and council support



- Information regarding visitor insights from Destination Canada
- Product and operator inventories to identify gaps and opportunities, to allow staff to work with up-and-coming operators
- Awareness, Communication & Engagement
 - Clear communication of available programs and support
 - Subregional symposiums and workshops to engage more operators
 - Education for residents and councils on tourism's value and impact
- Sustainability & Transformational Travel
 - Programs focused on regenerative tourism and purpose-led travel
 - Projects to develop meaningful experiences, provide guidance on how to be sustainable

These recommendations point to a need for HHB to act as a convenor, educator, and investor, to help the region move forward.

Key Trends to Consider

Participants identified a range of emerging product and experience trends and strategic opportunities that they believe HHB should prioritize to stay competitive and relevant in a shifting tourism landscape. There was alignment around the need to support meaningful, sustainable, and immersive experiences, including Indigenous offers, agritourism, and regenerative travel.

Most Mentioned Trends & Opportunities:

- Transformational, Regenerative & Responsible Travel
 - Emphasis on slow, meaningful, story-rich experiences
 - Growing demand for curated, local experiences and micro adventures
 - Small group, high-value travel with emotional and environmental depth
 - Regenerative tourism education and experience development training
- Agritourism & Culinary Tourism
 - Farm-based experiences and local food
 - Need for strategic development and potential integration with arts and heritage
 - Culinary experiences tied to agritourism and regional identity
- Indigenous Tourism



- Demand for authentic cultural storytelling and immersive experiences
- Interest in Six Nations and broader Indigenous partnerships
- Opportunity for a regional Indigenous tourism strategy and joint development efforts
- **Outdoor Recreation & Eco-Tourism**
 - Continued focus on hiking, cycling, waterfalls, and waterfronts
 - Nature-based experiences with sustainability and low-impact travel in mind
- **Digital & Influencer-Driven Itinerary Planning & Marketing**
 - The use of trip planning tools at the DMO level and influencer-curated themed tours and itineraries
 - Importance of clear, searchable itineraries for digital platforms and AI tools
- **Seasonal & Off-Peak Travel Opportunities**
 - Development of shoulder season and winter experiences
 - Indoor and cultural assets as alternatives during hot summer weather

Product and Experience Development Issues

Stakeholders across the Hamilton Halton Brant region identified a range of product or experience development issues at the regional level.

Key Issues:

- **Lack of Strategic Planning & Clear Direction**
 - Absence of a regional product development plan and annual work plans
 - Confusion around roles between RTO and DMOs; unclear who leads and when
 - Need for performance indicators and strategic focus areas
- **Funding & Investment**
 - Limited or unstable budgets for product development (vs marketing)
 - Need for flexible, accessible funding
 - Infrastructure investment needs
- **Limited Operator Capacity & Knowledge**
 - Operators unsure how to build, package, and sell experiences
 - Need for coaching, mentorship, and training programs with accountability
 - Overburdened operators lacking time or resources to engage in development



- Coordination, Collaboration & Communication
 - Further opportunities for regional synergies and for DMOs working together effectively
 - Limited or late communication between RTO and DMOs
 - DMOs are not aware of work the RTO is doing which leads to duplication of efforts
- Gaps in Tools, Infrastructure & Accessibility
 - No centralized booking system; lack of digital tools to support product sales
 - Transportation barriers (i.e. last-mile access, from Toronto)
 - Infrastructure limitations (i.e. access to Grand River sites, lack of accommodations in certain DMOs)
 - Lack of inventory of operators and market readiness
- Uneven Representation & Regional Equity
 - Some areas and operators may receive more attention and resources
 - Need for equal spotlight and shared content across all DMOs
 - Desire for regional packaging to help smaller areas stand out

These issues suggest that HHB has a critical opportunity to unify the region through strategic leadership, targeted investment, and capacity-building programs that empower operators and DMOs to deliver compelling, coordinated tourism experiences.

Product & Experience Development Areas that DMOs need Help With

The most commonly mentioned areas where sub-regional partners are seeking support from HHB highlight a need for practical tools, funding, and collaborative leadership to help bring tourism products and experiences to life.

- Funding & Co-Investment
 - Grants and financial support for product development, infrastructure, and placemaking
 - Partnership funding models to enable collaboration across DMOs
 - Co-investment opportunities
- Training & Capacity Building
 - Experience development training for operators and staff



- Regional tourism 101 sessions and mentorship programs tailored to different experience levels
- Webinars on grant writing and business development
- Research & Market Data
 - Visitor insights and market segmentation (i.e. Destination Canada EQ profiles)
 - Data to support investment cases and garner council support
 - Research and guidance to align product development with broader provincial and national strategies
- Collaboration & Networking
 - Support for cross-subregion collaboration on shared experiences
 - Networking groups for operators to exchange ideas and build partnerships
 - Co-promotion and co-bidding opportunities for events and group travel
- Inventories & Operator Readiness Tools
 - Development of operator inventories with market readiness rankings
 - Tools to identify who is market-ready and where support is needed

The answers show that stakeholders are looking to HHB not just for funding, but for leadership, coordination, and practical tools that empower them to build and promote compelling tourism experiences.

Additional Product Development Information

When asked if they had any additional points they would like to convey, a few stakeholders offered additional points for considerations, that had not been mentioned before.

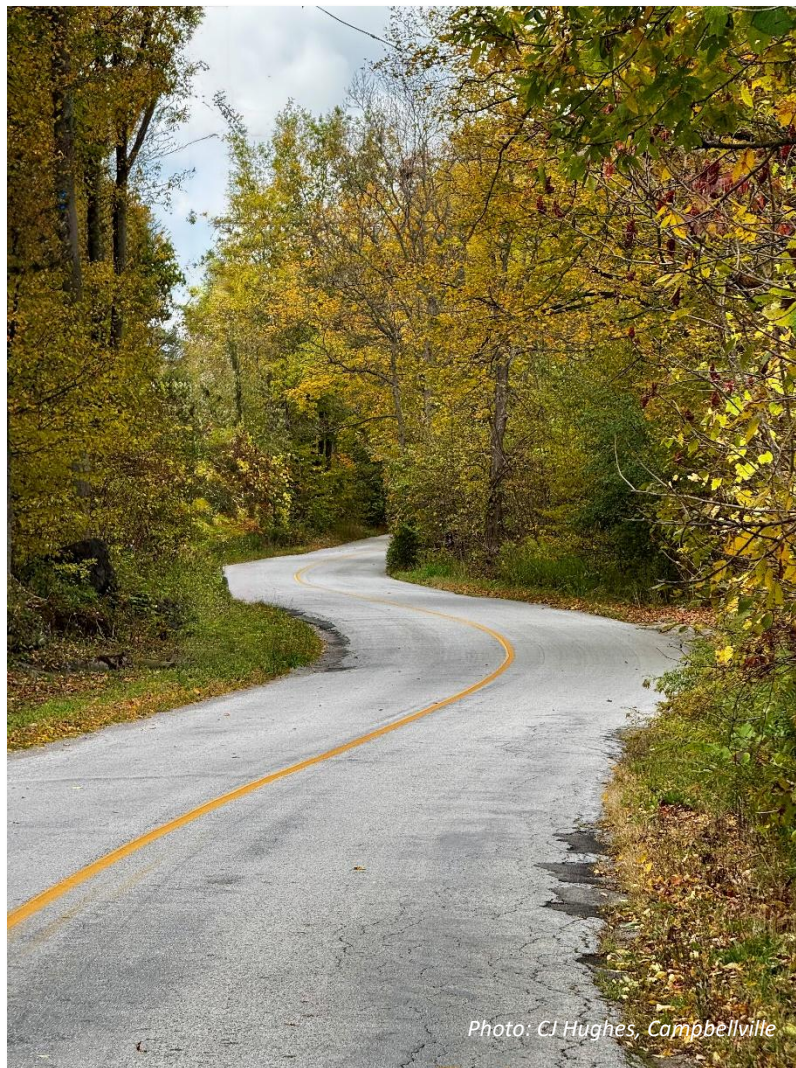
- MAT funds are needed and an opportunity to support product development and infrastructure development in the region
- Opportunity for a corridor strategy with Destination Canada
- The Destination Alliance Group is valuable, and discussion should continue
- The Hamilton Airport represents an opportunity for transportation for visitors from further distances
- True collaboration between DMOs and HHB will benefit the region
- Focus in supporting of DMOs in product and experience development vs marketing is needed
- Co-investment on product development projects would benefit everyone



The Essence of Hamilton Halton Brant

Survey participants provided their thoughts on the essence of Hamilton Halton Brant. Thoughts provided included the following:

- “Authentic tastes and local makers. Close to home, far from ordinary. Where nature meets urban energy. Rooted in heritage, rich in stories.”
- “Country charm to city excitement and everything in between.”
- “A cluster of opportunity. Diversity in people and places. A place of warmth and authenticity. Richness in nature, people, and connections. A rich tapestry of cultures, histories, and experiences.”
- “Close Enough to Escape, Far Enough to Discover.”
- “A Land of Waterfalls, Wild Trails, and World heritage Wonders.”
- “From Farm to Fork, Spirit to Soil.”
- “Culture Runs Deep, Adventure Lives Here.”
- “Where Communities Welcome, and Stories Connect.”
- “Outdoor adventures beyond expectations; a city-country mosaic; a foodie destination grown from agricultural roots; rich in Canadian history and heritage and cultural richness in creative communities.”



The Path Forward

Based on the research, current tourism context and feedback from stakeholder input, the following recommendations and actions are proposed to elevate and focus tourism product and experience development across Hamilton Halton Brant. These recommendations and their corresponding actions aim to provide guidance and strengthen efforts related to product and experience development in the region and to strengthen collaboration with tourism stakeholders, building tourism capacity, and aligning priorities. Together, these tactics will position the region as a leader in the development of innovative tourism experiences, supporting the creation of high-quality, market-ready offers that attract visitors.



Key Product & Experience Focus Areas

Hamilton Halton Brant is home to a diverse mix of tourism assets and attractions, offering unique and vibrant urban experiences and exceptional natural landscapes. Visitors can enjoy the best of both worlds, exploring city life, cultural hubs, and culinary districts while being only moments away from scenic trails, waterfalls, farm experiences and outdoor adventures.

The region's tourism strength lies in this diversity, with key product areas that include Outdoors & Nature, Food & Drink, Arts & Culture, Indigenous Tourism, Urban Neighbourhoods & Small Towns and Major Festivals & Events.

Within these focus areas, HHB's distinctive assets set it apart from other destinations and will continue to guide future product and experience development efforts. Focusing on key product focus areas that differentiate the region and have the ability to elevate the offer, while continuing to supporting the regions diverse offers will help to guide future regional initiatives, further elevating the region as a tourist destination.

1. Focus tourism product and experience development efforts on key regional tourism assets.

The unique selling propositions (USPs) for Hamilton Halton Brant lie in its remarkable outdoor recreation opportunities and the scenic natural beauty woven throughout the region. These elements have the ability to unite partner DMOs and to distinguish HHB from other destinations, providing a clear foundation for product and experience development. By aligning around these core strengths, HHB can focus its resources on initiatives that build competitive advantage, encourage regional collaboration, and elevate the area's most defining tourism assets.



a. Reinforce the Grand River as a key unique attribute of the region.

A Canadian Heritage River, the Grand River stands out as a defining natural and cultural asset for Hamilton Halton Brant. Beyond its scenic beauty and recreational appeal, the river carries deep historical and cultural significance, particularly for the Indigenous communities who have long lived along its shores. This connection adds a powerful storytelling dimension that can be reflected in future product and experience development, and woven into more traditional outdoor pursuits. Whether enjoyed from its banks or explored by paddle, the Grand River connects visitors to the region's landscapes, histories, and sense of place. Recognizing it as a unifying tourism corridor creates opportunities for collaboration with neighbouring RTOs and Indigenous partners, supporting the development of cohesive, sustainable, and culturally informed river-based experiences.

**Actions:**

- i. Continue collaboration with neighbouring RTOs to advance tourism product and experience development along the Grand River.
- ii. In partnership with RTOs 1 and 4, update the Grand River tourism development Action Plan.
- iii. Advocate for continued access to the river and destinations along the river at the DMO and municipal level.
- iv. Advocate for and support well-developed river access points to allow tourists and local residents to access the waterfront and waterway.
- v. Support the development of new and refined river-based tourism experiences.
- vi. Advocate for and support tourism product development and infrastructure development opportunities along the river, through partnership and infrastructure funding.

Birding in Saskatchewan ¹

Saskatchewan is on the migratory path of 15 endangered bird species. Recognizing the prevalence of significant birds in the province, set a course recognizing birding as key tourism asset and opportunity.

Establishing birding as one of six niche market focus areas for the province with the help of data from Environics, Tourism Saskatchewan is investing in product and experience development to celebrate this natural asset. Research, which is readily available to tourism operators, provides additional insight into the birding market, and two personas of travellers who are interested in travelling to experience birding opportunities.

Experience development training highlights niche market opportunities, encouraging operators to backfill these key focus areas with offers. Efforts have been successful to introduce new, quality birding experiences in the province, attracting new visitors.

¹ Tourism Saskatchewan, <https://business.tourismsaskatchewan.com/niche-market-research-birding>



b. Celebrate the Niagara Escarpment as a key natural asset of the region.

Stretching 725 kilometres across southern Ontario, the Niagara Escarpment is one of Hamilton Halton Brant's most defining natural features. Within the region, it contributes to approximately 110 kilometres of the Bruce Trail and connects to a network of conservation areas and trail systems. Few urban centres offer such seamless access to nature, where visitors can step from the city into a landscape of cliffs, forests, and waterfalls. The Niagara Escarpment provides a wealth of outdoor recreation opportunities including hiking, climbing, caving, and nature viewing, while its scenic lookouts and waterfalls add immense appeal. As both a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve and a cornerstone of HHB's outdoor identity, the Niagara Escarpment represents a vital tourism asset for product and experience development.



Actions:

- i. Collaborate with RTOs, DMOs, communities, and conservation authorities along the Niagara Escarpment as well as the Bruce Trail Conservancy.
- ii. Undertake (in collaboration) a Niagara Escarpment and Bruce Trail Destination Canada corridor project or rural tourism development project to advance tourism opportunities related to these key assets.
- iii. Support tourism experience development opportunities related to the Niagara Escarpment and outdoor recreation activities along and connected to it.
- iv. Advocate for and support nature and outdoor tourism product development and infrastructure development that showcases the Niagara Escarpment or Bruce Trail, to support tourism through partnership and infrastructure funding.
- v. Support waterfall tourism infrastructure and experience development opportunities.





c. Elevate cycling product as a key regional tourism offer.

Hamilton Halton Brant is a hotspot for cycling enthusiasts, offering paved, gravel and mountain bikes routes that appeal to this niche market. The region's proximity to the Greater Toronto Area and access to the GO Train network position the region perfectly for attracting day-trip and overnight cycling visitors.

Several of the region's DMOs already feature well-developed cycling routes, making the next step the creation of a cohesive, connected regional cycling network. Linking existing routes into a larger system will elevate HHB as a premier cycling destination, encourage longer stays, and support local businesses. Continued investment in infrastructure, wayfinding, visitor services and bicycle friendly coaching for businesses, would ensure the region remains competitive and aligned with Ontario's growing cycling tourism market.

Actions:

- i. Create a collaborative working group of DMOs who are currently promoting cycling in the region, to explore product development opportunities and discuss challenges.
- ii. Create a cycling tourism Action Plan, that examines route development opportunities, in collaboration with DMOs with existing cycling routes.
- iii. Support initiatives such as collaborative DMO route development by applying for project funding.
- iv. Encourage DMOs to work together to link existing road, gravel and mountain bike cycling routes to create longer routes that transcend municipal boundaries.
- v. Consider linking routes to Go Train stations to allow for active transportation to the region.
- vi. In collaboration, offer cycling friendly certification for tourism operators along the routes.
- vii. Encourage implementation of collaborative route collateral and marketing opportunities for cycling routes.



Photo: CJ Hughes, Paddy Green Road, Ancaster



2. Recognize, support and position other key tourism assets, for success through further development.

The Hamilton Halton Brant region is rich in tourism assets that can be further developed to showcase its strengths and diversify its visitor appeal. Regional tourism assets such as arts, culture and heritage, agritourism and culinary, and events, present opportunities to enhance the region's identity and visitor experience. Some also offer an opportunity to support and align with key product focus areas. Elevating offers in these product categories will help to support seasonal and geographic dispersion, extending and encouraging visitation into the shoulder and off-seasons, contributing to a more balanced, year-round tourism economy. By recognizing, supporting, and strategically positioning these areas for growth, HHB can strengthen its overall tourism offering across the region.



Photo: ishutterphotography via Instagram



a. Collaborate to elevate and expand arts, culture, heritage and Indigenous offers in the region.

Hamilton Halton Brant's cultural landscape is deeply rooted in its diverse history, from Indigenous settlements and early European communities, to the stories of Black settlers seeking freedom along the Underground Railroad. The region is home to the Six Nations of the Grand River and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation as well as several notable Canadians, including inventor Alexander Graham Bell, artist Lawren Harris, and the hockey legend, Wayne Gretzky. Their legacies add further depth to HHB's cultural narrative. Together, these stories form a foundation for arts, culture, and heritage tourism. By supporting the development of experiences, creative programming, and partnerships that bring these histories to life, HHB can strengthen the region's arts, culture and heritage tourism offerings and create more meaningful, educational, and year-round visitor experiences.

Actions:

- i. Create a Regional Arts, Culture & Heritage Working Group to connect museums, cultural centres, Indigenous organizations, and DMOs for collaborative product and experience development.
- ii. Support the third-party creation of story-driven visitor experiences that highlight key historical themes.
- iii. Support the development of interpretive programming in collaboration with local cultural institutions and Indigenous partners to enhance visitor engagement and education.
- iv. Facilitate cross-promotion and packaging between cultural attractions and sites, and complementary experiences (e.g., pairing museums or galleries with culinary or outdoor activities).
- v. Identify funding and partnership opportunities for infrastructure improvements, display and interpretation modernization, and digital storytelling to enhance accessibility and year-round engagement.
- vi. Encourage integration of local artists and storytellers into experience design, festivals, and placemaking initiatives to reflect authentic local identity.
- vii. Leverage existing cultural assets for shoulder-season programming, workshops, and events to extend visitation beyond peak summer months.



b. Recognize and celebrate the wealth of agritourism and culinary offers in the region.

Hamilton Halton Brant offers a diverse and thriving food and drink scene that spans from vibrant urban dining districts to authentic on-farm agritourism experiences. Not only can visitors enjoy exceptional cuisine but they can also connect with the stories, people, and places behind them, learning how food and drink is grown, crafted, and shared. From farm tours and tastings to chef-led culinary workshops, there are significant opportunities to create hands-on, immersive experiences that highlight the region’s agricultural



Photo Location: Brantwood Farms

heritage and local food producers. In recent years, Indigenous culinary offerings have also come to the forefront, creating meaningful opportunities for visitors to explore and experience Indigenous food traditions. By developing a cohesive regional culinary and agritourism plan, HHB can strengthen its culinary identity, drive regional collaboration, and attract visitors seeking authentic “taste of place” experiences.

Actions:

- i. Create an agritourism and culinary tourism Action Plan designed to further recognize, celebrate and develop agritourism and culinary offers in the region, with an emphasis on local food and drink.
- ii. Support the development of farm-to-table experiences that highlight local producers, seasonal ingredients, and the region’s agricultural heritage.
- iii. In collaboration with sub-regional DMOS, create experience packages that connect culinary and agritourism offerings with outdoor and cycling experiences (e.g., “bike and bite” tours, culinary trails, or restaurants featuring local producers).



- iv. Expand hands-on and educational food experiences by supporting workshops, cooking classes, and behind-the-scenes opportunities that allow visitors and residents to learn the “how” and “why” behind HHB’s food and drink scene.
- v. Incorporate elevated and luxury culinary experiences such as private chef events, food and wine weekends, or boutique accommodation pairings as a way to attract high-value overnight guests.
- vi. Collaborate with Indigenous Tourism Ontario and local Indigenous chefs or businesses to respectfully develop and promote Indigenous culinary offerings that highlight traditional ingredients, techniques, and cultural stories.
- vii. Leverage partnerships with programs like Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance, Feast On and Taste of Place and to align with provincial initiatives, increase visibility, and strengthen HHB’s reputation as a “taste of place” destination.

Culinary Tourism Alliance, National Culinary + Agritourism Action Plan 2025-2028 ¹

The *National Culinary and Agritourism Action Plan*, sets a course for Canada to become a globally recognized leader in culinary and agritourism by 2030. Recognizing a need for more market-ready and export-ready culinary and agritourism experiences, the Culinary Tourism Alliance is creating national experience standards for market and export ready offers, as well as a framework, toolkits and a strategy to guide their development. The Action Plan calls for local food and drink to be paired with outdoor experiences, for Indigenous led initiatives and for the development of more shoulder season and regenerative offers.

“There is a need for more market-ready and export-ready culinary and agritourism experiences and products in Canada.”

Further, the plan advocates for a national approach to market culinary and agritourism and support for the tourism industry in marketing these offers.

¹ Culinary Tourism Alliance, *National Culinary + Agritourism Action Plan 2025 – 2028*, June 17, 2025.



Photo: Paris to Ancaster Bike Race

c. Facilitate cross-community partnerships to attract, align and amplify festival and event opportunities.

Events drive visitation and showcase the region to visitors who travel for a specific purpose. From major sporting events and tournaments to arts, culture, and entertainment festivals, events can generate significant economic impact and create lasting impressions for both visitors and residents.

With a variety of quality venues and supporting amenities, Hamilton Halton Brant is well-positioned to attract and host a wide range of events. Coordination among municipalities is key for a more unified regional approach to event attraction, development, and promotion. Through collaboration accommodations, dining and local attractions and experiences can complement festivals and events, with the goal of extending visitor stays in the region.

Actions:

- i. Create a Festivals & Events Working Group to facilitate partner organization, municipalities and DMO’s collaboration on event bids, hosting opportunities, expansion of existing festival offers and new festival and event development.
- ii. Encourage new festival and event developments that align with key product focus areas.
- iii. Facilitate wider community support of festivals and events, and secondary partner engagement and alignment with event themes.



Sustained Annual Commitment and Planning

With a strong foundation of tourism assets, Hamilton Halton Brant requires ongoing product and experience development planning to advance future efforts. To maximize impact, coordinated planning should align with both national and provincial tourism strategies while supporting sub-regional DMOs and operators. Establishing an annual commitment to product and experience development will enable HHB to prioritize projects, guide funding decisions, and strengthen collaboration across the region.

3. Allocate an annual budget and resources to product and experience development.

To ensure the sustained advancement, HHB should establish a dedicated annual product and experience development budget, and continue to allocate appropriate staff resources to support these efforts. Continual investment will provide stability for long-term planning, enable consistent progress in product development and experience development, and reduce reliance on external or one-time funding sources. Investing significantly in product and experience development will allow for innovation, positioning HHB as a leader in the industry.

Actions:

- i. Establish a consistent, annual budget commitment to support product and experience development.
- ii. Adopt a proactive and forward-thinking approach by allocating a significant percentage of annual budget to product and experience development activities, recognizing the importance of investment in compelling products for visitors.
- iii. Continue to allocate staff resources to support regional tourism product and experience development.



4. Undertake annual planning related to product and experience development.

To ensure HHB continues to move in the right direction, an annual work plan focused on product and experience development should be created. This plan will define key tactics, timelines, and budget allocations designed to implement actions, focusing on key product and experience focus areas, while aligning with provincial and national tourism priorities. The plan will help HHB prioritize initiatives, track progress, and measure success of both short-term and long-term goals.

Actions:

- i. Create and approve an annual product and experience development work plan with tactics and budget allocations.
- ii. Foster consistent internal communication across RTO teams to support aligned initiatives and annual planning.



Photo: BC Hughes, Brewer's Blackbird Kitchen & Brewery, Ancaster



5. Continue to invest in partnership funding to support tourism product and experience development.

Partnership funding provides an opportunity to increase the capacity to support product development and experience development. Supporting partners in their experience development activities has the ability to elevate tourism throughout the region. Providing an ongoing, consistent mechanism of support will allow coordinated planning for both HHB, and its potential partners. Established funding criteria could include the development of offerings that extend the visitor season, or aligning with key asset focus areas.

Actions:

- i. Allocate a fixed annual budget amount to partnership funding to support product and experience development by DMOs, tourism organizations or private businesses.
- ii. Consider implementing a matched funding model to allow investments to reach further.
- iii. Support experience development and infrastructure needed for experience development that is aligned with key focus areas.
- iv. Outline consistent and ongoing details regarding partnership funding to support ongoing development.
- v. Document partnership funding application parameters, with funding contingent on factors such as completion of training, alignment with key product focus areas and shoulder season expansion.
- vi. Collaborate with DMOs with a municipal accommodation tax and MAT accountable bodies to increase the partnership funding available.



Travel Alberta Product Development Fund ¹

Travel Alberta's Product Development Fund is a targeted investment program designed to accelerate the creation of market-ready tourism experiences across the province. Offering grants ranging from CAD 75,000 to 500,000, the fund requires a minimum 25% private sector match and supports shovel-ready projects that deliver new, bookable experiences. Priority is given to initiatives that extend the tourism season, contribute to Indigenous tourism development, and demonstrate clear economic benefits such as increased employment, revenue generation, and visitor growth.

¹ Travel Alberta, <https://industry.travelalberta.com/programs-and-services/apply-for-grants/product-development>

Tourism Saskatchewan's Tourism Development Program ²

Saskatchewan's Tourism Development Program supports market-ready tourism businesses in expanding and diversifying their offerings through experience creation, seasonal extension, and core capacity growth. Delivered through a competitive, application-based process, the program provides up to \$40,000 in funding per applicant, with required equity contributions varying by stream. By incentivizing investment in experience development, expansion, and winterization, the program fosters innovation and strengthens the province's year-round tourism appeal. Applicants that have taken part in the province's experiential training program are encouraged to apply.

² Tourism Saskatchewan, <https://business.tourismsaskatchewan.com/Funding/Tourism-Development-Program>



Foster Collaboration & Partnerships

Collaboration and partnerships are the cornerstone of successfully advancing Hamilton Halton Brant’s product and experience development. As the regional tourism organization, HHB plays a key role in fostering cooperation among its DMOs, industry organizations, and tourism operators. Continued leadership in this space will ensure that development efforts are coordinated, strategic, and aligned with broader provincial and national tourism objectives. Allocating dedicated funding toward partnership initiatives will further encourage collective investment and innovation across the region. Strengthened collaboration will also support alignment with national initiatives, such as Destination Canada’s corridor projects, and help position HHB within a larger network of connected tourism experiences.

6. Collaborate to advance tourism in relation to key product and experience focus areas.

With key natural tourism assets such as the Grand River and the Niagara Escarpment spanning a large geographic area, collaboration with neighbouring RTOs and DMOs is essential to advancing product and experience development. Working jointly with organizations such as the Bruce Trail Conservancy and the Niagara Escarpment Commission will help ensure that new offers enhance visitor experiences, while respecting environmental guidelines, and reflect a regenerative approach to tourism. Through coordinated planning and shared stewardship, HHB can help position these assets as signature regional experiences while contributing to broader corridor and cross-regional initiatives.

Actions:

- i. Collaborate with neighbouring RTOs on developments related to areas of key interest (e.g., Grand River, Niagara Escarpment and Bruce Trail).
- ii. Collaborate with Destination Canada, Ontario Tourism, Fed Dev and/or other organizations to support product and experience development initiatives through funding and other resources.



7. Partner with DMOs to advance product and experience development initiatives.

To avoid working in silos and to strengthen regional cohesion, it is important to maintain open and consistent communication between HHB and the area's DMOs regarding product and experience development. A continued collaborative approach to planning, sharing tactics, timelines, initiatives, and funding priorities, will ensure alignment and maximize the impact of collective efforts. Ongoing dialogue will help foster coordinated, connected development across the region, resulting in a more seamless and competitive tourism offering.

Actions:

- i. Continue Destination Leadership Alliance meetings, discussing activities related to product and experience development in an ongoing, collaborative format, garnering input on approach, tactics and timing.
- ii. Work with DMOS to provide support and resources for DMO driven initiatives
- iii. Partner with DMOs to receive support and resources for RTO driven initiatives.

8. Create and maintain a database of the region's tourism operators.

Creating and maintaining a comprehensive database of tourism operators, developed in collaboration with sub-regional DMOs, will allow HHB to identify the region's strengths, growth potential, and partnership opportunities. By capturing information on market readiness, seasonal operations, and experience themes, HHB can better target support, mentorship, and funding opportunities. A regularly updated database will also help monitor progress, identify emerging operators, and guide investment and training decisions that strengthen the overall visitor experience across the region.

Actions:

- i. Create a database to facilitate work with and support of varying operators throughout the region for product and experience development initiatives, as well as marketing opportunities. Include fundamental details for each business as well as market readiness and product focus areas.



Photo: the Heart of Ontario, Main Street Studios, Halton Hills



Training & Mentorship

Training and mentorship are essential to expanding Hamilton Halton Brant’s product and experience development capacity. By working alongside tourism operators to provide targeted training, resources, and mentorship, HHB can strengthen operator readiness and alignment with Destination Canada’s national direction. Building capacity in sustainability practices, accessibility, and digital integration will help ensure the region’s offerings meet the expectations of today’s high-value travellers. Mentorship initiatives can also guide operators in developing meaningful cultural tourism experiences, enhancing nature-based offerings along the Grand River and Niagara Escarpment, and enriching cycling, culinary and agritourism products that share the region’s unique stories.



9. Develop and deliver an annual operator experience development training and mentorship program.

Developing and delivering an annual, multi-level operator training and mentorship program will strengthen product and experience development across the region. This program should support operators at all levels of expertise and readiness, from foundational sessions on market readiness and experience development, to advanced workshops focused on creating authentic, high-value, and regenerative travel experiences. By pairing group training with one-on-one mentorship, HHB can reach businesses with varying levels of readiness, and guide operators through the process of developing, refining, and launching new experiences that align with national priorities, key focus areas and resonate with highly engaged guests.

Focusing on highly engaged guests that connect with Hamilton Halton Brant's core focus areas will ensure that operators are equipped to deliver meaningful, sustainable, competitive visitor experiences and unique attractions.

Actions:

- i. Design an annual, multi level training program that provides education and mentorship to operators with varying levels of expertise. Include beginner experience development programs, niche experience development workshops, regenerative and transformational travel courses and a one-on-one individual mentorship program to advance experiential tourism offers.
- ii. Deliver training program, tailoring learning content with the goal to create new authentic, engaging, high value experiences for highly engaged guests, that align with key focus areas and supporting developing key areas.
- iii. Educate market ready operators regarding international market readiness requirements.
- iv. Provide multi-faceted, sustainability training for tourism operators to continue to advance the sustainability of the region.
- v. Engage with Indigenous Tourism Ontario for Indigenous experience development opportunities.



Embrace the Giant Spirit Program – Northern Ireland ¹

The Embrace the Giant Spirit initiative by Tourism Northern Ireland provides a structured development pathway for tourism businesses of all sizes, helping them enhance their visitor appeal, commercial readiness, and alignment with the national brand. Participating operators gain access to tailored training, mentorship, and networking opportunities focused on scalability, market identification, marketing and sales skills, and travel trade engagement. The program emphasizes authentic, high-quality experiences that extend visitor stays and strengthen regional appeal. Businesses must meet minimum market-ready criteria and commit to ongoing collaboration and data sharing to remain in the portfolio, ensuring consistent standards and strategic growth.

¹ <https://www.tourismni.com/business-guidance/opportunities-campaigns/northern-irelands-embrace-a-giant-spirit-brand/experience-portfolio/>

Tourism Saskatchewan’s AWeshop and Achieving AWESome Programs

Tourism Saskatchewan’s AWeshop Into Left Field program provides established businesses with a targeted way to increase the quality of tourism offers throughout the province. This operator education and group learning process creates inspiration surrounding quality, experiential tourism and new business opportunities. Participants take part in a two-day AWeshop, at a unique workshop location in the province. In pairs, business owners learn about experience development, participate in hands-on learning opportunities via local experiences, learning how to create memorable moments and quality offers for visitors. They leave with a plan for development, and participate in one-on-one coaching to advance their offers, ensuring their launch to market.

Achieving AWESome aims to provide business operators with no experience developing or delivering tourism experiences, with a path forward. The seven-step, four-month, complimentary program is application-based, and provides participants with a path from inception to piloting their experience. Participants invest time and resources in development while receiving training and consultation supports.

Tourism Excellence North Business Training Program – Destination Northern Ontario ²

Fast Track to Success Program

Destination Northern Ontario’s Fast Track to Success Program pairs businesses with a consultant, who visits their business, and over a 24-hour period, and provides actionable and useful advice for changes that can be made to increase the quality of their tourism offer.

Mentorship Program

The Mentorship Program provided by Destination Northern Ontario, provides tourism operators with up to 12 hours of virtual one-on-one mentoring by a consultant. Meant to allow owners to grow or innovate their business, the program provides operators with access to an ally to discuss challenges and opportunities.

Best Practice Mission

Best Practice missions offer themed opportunities for Northern Ontario businesses to take part in guided travel to a new location for learning purposes. During the 3-5 day trip, participants take part in and learn from best-in-class experiential offers.

² <https://tourismexcellencenorth.ca/node/194>



10. Continue and amplify industry engagement and communication initiatives.

Ongoing industry engagement and communication are essential to sustaining momentum in product and experience development. Regular updates, newsletters and check-ins help ensure that operators, DMOs, and partners are aware of current initiatives, funding opportunities, and regional priorities.

Consistent two-way communication not only builds trust and collaboration across the tourism network but also encourages operators to stay active participants in the region's development efforts. Continued engagement will help HHB to strengthen relationships, and create a more aligned, informed, and motivated tourism industry working toward shared goals.

Actions:

- i. Continue industry newsletter communications, allowing partners to learn about product and experience development initiatives being undertaken by HHB and local DMOs.
- ii. Undertake one on one discussions with operators to determine their product and experience development needs, to build and boost relationships and to provide information regarding roles, resources and assistance and opportunities that are available.
- iii. Maintain an online educational portal to assist DMOs and operators with staff onboarding and resources regarding tourism, the region, DMOs, focus areas, cross promotional opportunities, customer service etc.



Photo: Supercrawl, Hamilton

Implementation – Advancing the Path Forward

The *Product & Experience Development Framework and Action Plan* is a 5-year guide for advancing tourism in Hamilton Halton Brant. To bring this strategy to life, implementation must be both intentional and adaptive, grounded in the region’s strengths and responsive to evolving opportunities. The following section outlines a phased approach, identifying key priorities and opportunities, and collaborative responsibilities that will guide Hamilton Halton Brant from planning to execution. By aligning efforts across partners, investing in capacity, and embedding product and experience development into annual planning cycles, HHB can ensure sustained momentum and measurable progress toward a more competitive, connected, and experience-rich region.



Actions	Champions	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Key Product & Experience Focus Areas						
1. Focus tourism product and experience development efforts on key regional tourism assets.						
a. Reinforce the Grand River as a key unique attribute of the region.						
i. Continue collaboration with neighbouring RTOs to advance tourism product and experience development along the Grand River.	HHB, RTOs					
ii. In partnership with RTOs 1 and 4, update the Grand River tourism development Action Plan.						
iii. Advocate for continued access to the river and destinations along the river at the DMO and municipal level.	HHB, RTOs, DMOs, First Nations, Municipalities					
iv. Advocate for and support well-developed river access points to allow tourists and local residents to access the waterfront and waterway.						
v. Support the development of new and refined river-based tourism experiences.	HHB, RTOs, DMOs, First Nations, Private Businesses					
vi. Advocate for and support tourism product development and infrastructure development opportunities along the river, through partnership and infrastructure funding.	HHB, RTOs, DMOs, First Nations, Municipalities					
b. Celebrate the Niagara Escarpment as a key natural asset of the region.						
i. Collaborate with RTOs, DMOs, communities, and conservation authorities along the Niagara Escarpment as well as the Bruce Trail Conservancy.	HHB, DMOs, communities, Conservation Authorities, Bruce Trail Conservancy					
ii. Undertake (in collaboration) a Niagara Escarpment and Bruce Trail Destination Canada corridor project or rural tourism development project to advance tourism opportunities related to these key assets.						



Actions	Champions	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
iii. Support tourism experience development opportunities related to the Niagara Escarpment and outdoor recreation activities along and connected to it.	HHB, DMOs					
iv. Advocate for and support nature and outdoor tourism product development and infrastructure development that showcases the Niagara Escarpment or Bruce Trail, to support tourism through partnership and infrastructure funding.						
v. Support waterfall tourism infrastructure and experience development opportunities.						
c. Elevate cycling product as a key regional tourism offer.						
i. Create a collaborative working group of DMOs who are currently promoting cycling in the region, to explore product development opportunities and discuss challenges.	HHB, DMOs					
ii. Create a cycling tourism Action Plan, that examines route development opportunities, in collaboration with DMOs with existing cycling routes.						
iii. Support initiatives such as collaborative DMO route development by applying for project funding.						
iv. Encourage DMOs to work together to link existing road, gravel and mountain bike cycling routes to create longer routes that transcend municipal boundaries.						
v. Consider linking routes to Go Train stations to allow for active transportation to the region.						
vi. In collaboration, offer cycling friendly certification for tourism operators along the routes.	HHB, DMOs, sector organizations					
vii. Encourage implementation of collaborative route collateral and marketing opportunities for cycling routes.	HHB, DMOs					



Actions	Champions	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
2. Recognize, support and position other key tourism assets, for success through further development.						
a. Collaborate to elevate and expand arts, culture, heritage and Indigenous offers in the region.						
i. Create a Regional Arts, Culture & Heritage Working Group to connect museums, cultural centres, Indigenous organizations, and DMOs for collaborative product and experience development.	HHB, DMOs, First Nations, municipalities, cultural organizations, festivals and events, private businesses					
ii. Support the third-party creation of story-driven visitor experiences that highlight key historical themes.						
iii. Support the development of interpretive programming in collaboration with local cultural institutions and Indigenous partners to enhance visitor engagement and education.						
iv. Facilitate cross-promotion and packaging between cultural attractions and sites, and complementary experiences (e.g., pairing museums or galleries with culinary or outdoor activities).						
v. Identify funding and partnership opportunities for infrastructure improvements, display and interpretation modernization, and digital storytelling to enhance accessibility and year-round engagement.						
vi. Encourage integration of local artists and storytellers into experience design, festivals, and placemaking initiatives to reflect authentic local identity.						
vii. Leverage existing cultural assets for shoulder-season programming, workshops, and events to extend visitation beyond peak summer months.						



Actions	Champions	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
b. Recognize and celebrate the wealth of agritourism and culinary offers in the region.						
i. Create an agritourism and culinary tourism Action Plan designed to further recognize, celebrate and develop agritourism and culinary offers in the region, with an emphasis on local food and drink.	HHB, DMOS					
ii. Support the development of farm-to-table experiences that highlight local producers, seasonal ingredients, and the region’s agricultural heritage.	HHB, DMOS, First Nations, private businesses					
iii. In collaboration with sub-regional DMOS, create experience packages that connect culinary and agritourism offerings with outdoor and cycling experiences (e.g., “bike and bite” tours, culinary trails, or restaurants featuring local producers).						
iv. Expand hands-on and educational food experiences by supporting workshops, cooking classes, and behind-the-scenes opportunities that allow visitors and residents to learn the “how” and “why” behind HHB’s food and drink scene.						
v. Incorporate elevated and luxury culinary experiences such as private chef events, food and wine weekends, or boutique accommodation pairings as a way to attract high-value overnight guests.						
vi. Collaborate with Indigenous Tourism Ontario and local Indigenous chefs or businesses to respectfully develop and promote Indigenous culinary offerings that highlight traditional ingredients, techniques, and cultural stories.						
vii. Leverage partnerships with programs like Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance, Feast On and Taste of Place and to align with provincial initiatives, increase visibility, and strengthen HHB’s reputation as a “taste of place” destination.						



Actions	Champions	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
c. Facilitate cross-community partnerships to attract, align and amplify festival and event opportunities.						
i. Create a Festivals & Events Working Group to facilitate partner organization, municipalities and DMO's collaboration on event bids, hosting opportunities, expansion of existing festival offers and new festival and event development.	HHB, DMOs, municipalities, private businesses					
ii. Encourage new festival and event developments that align with key product focus areas.	HHB, DMOs					
iii. Facilitate wider community support of festivals and events, and secondary partner engagement and alignment with event themes.						
Sustained Annual Commitment and Planning						
3. Allocate an annual budget and resources to product and experience development.						
i. Establish a consistent, annual budget commitment to support product and experience development.	HHB					
ii. Adopt a proactive and forward-thinking approach by allocating a significant percentage of annual budget to product and experience development activities, recognizing the importance of investment in compelling products for visitors.						
iii. Continue to allocate staff resources to support regional tourism product and experience development.						
4. Undertake annual planning related to product and experience development.						
i. Create and approve an annual product and experience development work plan with tactics and budget allocations.	HHB					
ii. Foster consistent internal communication across RTO teams to support aligned initiatives and annual planning						



Actions	Champions	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
5. Continue to invest in partnership funding to support tourism product and experience development.						
i. Allocate a fixed annual budget amount to partnership funding to support product and experience development by DMOs, tourism organizations or private businesses.	HHB					
ii. Consider implementing a matched funding model to allow investments to reach further.						
iii. Support experience development and infrastructure needed for experience development that is aligned with key focus areas.						
iv. Outline consistent and ongoing details regarding partnership funding to support ongoing development.						
v. Document partnership funding application parameters, with funding contingent on factors such as completion of training, alignment with key product focus areas and shoulder season expansion.						
vi. Collaborate with DMOs with a municipal accommodation tax and MAT accountable bodies to increase the partnership funding available.						
Foster Collaboration & Partnerships						
6. Collaborate to advance tourism in relation to key product and experience focus areas.						
i. Collaborate with neighbouring RTOs on developments related to areas of key interest (e.g., Grand River, Niagara Escarpment and Bruce Trail).	HHB, RTOs and others	As per timeline recommended above				
ii. Collaborate with Destination Canada, Ontario Tourism, Fed Dev and/or other organizations to support product and experience development initiatives through funding and other resources.						



Actions	Champions	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
7. Partner with DMOs to advance product and experience development initiatives.						
i. Continue Destination Leadership Alliance meetings, discussing activities related to product and experience development in an ongoing, collaborative format, garnering input on approach, tactics and timing.	HHB, DMOs					
ii. Work with DMOS to provide support and resources for DMO driven initiatives						
iii. Partner with DMOs to receive support and resources for RTO driven initiatives.						
8. Create and maintain a database of the region's tourism operators.						
i. Create a database to facilitate work with and support of varying operators throughout the region for product and experience development initiatives, as well as marketing opportunities. Include fundamental details for each business as well as market readiness and product focus areas.	HHB, DMOs					
Training & Mentorship						
9. Develop and deliver an annual operator experience development training and mentorship program.						
i. Design an annual, multi level training program that provides education and mentorship to operators with varying levels of expertise. Include beginner experience development programs, niche experience development workshops, regenerative and transformational travel courses and a one-on-one individual mentorship program to advance experiential tourism offers.	HHB					
ii. Deliver training program, tailoring learning content with the goal to create new authentic, engaging, high value experiences for highly engaged guests, that align with key focus areas and supporting developing key areas.						



Actions	Champions	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
iii. Educate market ready operators regarding international market readiness requirements.						
iv. Provide multi-faceted, sustainability training for tourism operators to continue to advance the sustainability of the region.						
v. Engage with Indigenous Tourism Ontario for Indigenous experience development opportunities.						
10. Continue and amplify industry engagement and communication initiatives.						
i. Continue industry newsletter communications, allowing partners to learn about product and experience development initiatives being undertaken by HHB and local DMOs.	HHB					
ii. Undertake one on one discussions with operators to determine their product and experience development needs, to build and boost relationships and to provide information regarding roles, resources and assistance and opportunities that are available.						
iii. Maintain an online educational portal to assist DMOs and operators with staff onboarding and resources regarding tourism, the region, DMOs, focus areas, cross promotional opportunities, customer service etc.						



Summary

The recommendations outlined in the *Product & Experience Development Framework and Action Plan* provide a clear and coordinated path forward for Hamilton Halton Brant. Grounded in regional strengths and informed by stakeholder insight, they emphasize the importance of sustained investment, collaborative planning, and strategic alignment across all levels of tourism stakeholders. From enhancing iconic natural assets like the Grand River and Niagara Escarpment, to elevating culinary, cultural, and cycling experiences, the plan positions HHB to lead with intention by supporting innovation, deepening partnerships, and building capacity across communities and sectors.

Looking ahead, this framework sets the stage for a more connected, competitive, and resilient visitor economy. By embedding product and experience development into annual planning, investing in operator training, and fostering cross-regional collaboration, HHB and its DMO partners will be well positioned to deliver high-quality, market-ready experiences that reflect the region's identity and meet the expectations of today's travellers. With a shared commitment to excellence and a focus on long-term impact, Hamilton Halton Brant can confidently move forward as a leader in tourism product and experience development while creating lasting value for visitors, operators, and communities throughout the region.