



TRAVEL TRADE GROWTH STRATEGY

A 3-Year Strategic Action Plan 2026-2028

Developed and prepared by RTO3 - Hamilton Halton Brant, with research and strategic support from Advantage Sales Strategy

REGIONAL ACCESS AND CONNECTIVITY

Hamilton Halton Brant is strategically positioned within Ontario's strong tourism economy, offering seamless access to major urban gateways while delivering authentic, nature, culture, culinary, and Indigenous experiences across diverse communities and landscapes.

Located on the corridor of nearby Greater Toronto and Niagara Falls, the region connects visitors to waterfronts, a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve, rural communities, heritage downtowns, and experiential tourism opportunities within a one-hour drive of Toronto Pearson International Airport and home to Hamilton International Airport.



WHY THIS REGION WORKS FOR TRAVEL TRADE

EXPERIENCE DIVERSITY

Urban / Rural / Nature / Waterfront / Indigenous Experiences in one connected region.

TRAVEL TRADE READY

- Strong motorcoach and group tour potential
- FIT and small-group itinerary opportunities
- Culinary, cycling, hiking and outdoor experiences
- Authentic arts, culture, heritage and Indigenous tourism assets
- Four-season and shoulder-season appeal
- Group-friendly attractions, venues and accommodations
- Multi-day urban, rural and river corridor touring routes
- Growing inventory of bookable visitor experiences

MARKET POSITION

Located within one of Canada's largest population and visitation corridors with strong domestic drive markets and growing international visitation of Destination Ontario and Destination Canada's priority markets.

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR TRAVEL TRADE

Hamilton Halton Brant offers tour operators and travel trade buyers the ability to package multiple experience types with close geographic proximity - reducing transportation time while increasing itinerary diversity and visitor spend opportunities.



1.5 M+
REGIONAL
POPULATION BASE



1 HOUR
FROM TORONTO
PEARSON AIRPORT



**MAJOR
HIGHWAYS**
401, 403, 407
& QEW



**GO TRANSIT
& VIA RAIL
ACCESS**



**HUB & SPOKE
DESTINATION**

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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



RTO3 – Hamilton Halton Brant carries out its work across the Treaty Lands and Territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, and the traditional territories of the Wendat, Neutral, Attiwandaronk, Anishinaabe, and Haudenosaunee peoples, including the Haudenosaunee peoples of Six Nations of the Grand River. These lands are connected to the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement rooted in shared responsibility to care for the lands, waters, and resources of the Great Lakes region.

We acknowledge and thank Indigenous Peoples for their enduring stewardship of these lands and waters since time immemorial. Through our work in regional tourism development, RTO3 is committed to supporting Indigenous-led tourism and, where guided by Indigenous partners, Indigenous-informed visitor experiences that honour culture, teaching, language, storytelling, and lived connection to the land. We are committed to advancing this work in ways that foster respect, understanding, reconciliation, and long-term, meaningful relationships with Indigenous communities.

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FOUNDATION



Acknowledgements

RTO3 Hamilton Halton Brant led the development of this *RTO3 Travel Trade Growth Strategy* and the *RTO3 Regional Travel Trade Industry Playbook*, shaping our vision, structure, and practical application as a user-focused guide for the region. Through this leadership, RTO3 translated research and stakeholder insights into an actionable framework that supports tourism operators and regional partners in achieving trade readiness and sustainable growth.

Developed and Prepared by: Bev Scott, Manager, Business and Visitor Experience Development, RTO3 Hamilton Halton Brant

Advantage Sales Strategy contributed to this process by undertaking the situational and SWOT analysis, conducting stakeholder interviews with DMOs, preparing research reports on the travel trade landscape, and developing the strategic pillars that inform the action plan. These inputs strengthened the evidence-based foundation of the strategy and helped guide its overall direction.

Jennifer McGregor, CEO, Advantage Sales Strategy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hamilton Halton Brant is home to extraordinary experiences, vibrant communities, rich cultural assets, and welcoming tourism businesses. From nature-based adventures and agri-tourism to culinary, heritage, arts, and Indigenous tourism experiences, the region offers visitors authentic opportunities to connect with place, people, and story.

As traveller expectations continue to evolve and competition for visitors intensifies, travel trade presents a significant opportunity to expand market reach, attract new visitor segments, and support sustainable tourism growth. By connecting tourism businesses with tour operators, travel advisors, receptive operators, wholesalers, and other industry buyers, travel trade helps transform exceptional experiences into market-ready, bookable visitor journeys.

The 3-Year RTO3 Travel Trade Growth Strategy has been developed to provide tourism operators, destinations, and industry partners with a clear roadmap for engaging successfully with the travel trade marketplace. The strategy outlines current market opportunities, identifies priority actions, and provides practical tools, case studies, buyer insights, and industry best practices to help businesses strengthen their market readiness, build strategic partnerships, and increase visitation.

More than a guide, this strategy represents a shared commitment to building a stronger, more connected visitor economy across Hamilton Halton Brant. Success in travel trade requires collaboration, alignment, and ongoing investment in product development, relationship building, and industry capacity. Through this strategy, RTO3 - Hamilton Halton Brant is committed to supporting tourism stakeholders as we navigate and capitalize on travel trade opportunities.

Together, we can elevate regional experiences, strengthen the tourism sector, and position Hamilton Halton Brant as a compelling destination for visitors from across Ontario, Canada, and international markets. By working collectively, we can create new pathways for growth, increase economic impact, and ensure the region remains competitive in an evolving tourism landscape.

Your success is our success, and we look forward to supporting your travel trade growth journey.



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REGIONAL MAIN ALIGNMENT OBJECTIVES

Regional Tourism Strategy Alignment

The RTO3 Hamilton, Halton, Brant international and domestic Regional Travel Trade Growth Strategy and the Regional Travel Trade Industry Playbook each serves as a foundational guide and resource for strengthening our presence within key travel trade channels and expanding market-ready opportunities across the region.

The two separate documents align with Priority Action Area 2 of the 2026/27 Business Plan by establishing a clear, evidence-based approach to engaging travel trade partners, enhancing product visibility, and driving increased visitation through targeted domestic and international market development.

By defining our regional value proposition, identifying priority markets, and integrating market analysis, SWOT analysis, insights, and best practice models, the growth strategy supports a coordinated and strategic pathway for industry participation. It ensures travel trade development directly complements the RTO3 Regional Product and Experience Development Framework 2026-2030 and contributes to measurable regional growth.

The resulting strategic direction will guide partnership development, itinerary and experience readiness, and long-term capacity building, supported by KPIs that articulate success metrics and track opportunities across the travel trade ecosystem.



RTO3 VISION, MISSION, MANDATE

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

Vision

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

Mission

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

Mandate

We are a non-profit Regional Tourism Organization (RTO) that works to increase tourism visitation, economic activity and job growth throughout the Hamilton, Halton, Brant region. In Ontario, RTO3 are responsible for tourism marketing, product development, workforce development and destination management at a regional level.

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GROWTH STRATEGY PURPOSE AND PROCESS

STRATEGIC CONTRIBUTING PARTNER



Jennifer McGregor, CEO

Alternative Sales Strategy is a travel trade consulting firm specializing in market access, sales strategy, and buyer engagement for destinations and tourism organizations. In 2025, Alternative Sales Strategy was engaged by RTO3 to contribute to the development of the region's Travel Trade Growth Strategy and Action Plan, bringing expertise in trade readiness, distribution pathways, and practical, action-oriented planning.

Goal of Contracting Alternative Sales Strategy

The goal of engaging Alternative Sales Strategy was to develop a clear, practical Travel Trade framework that reflects the region's readiness, capacity, and market potential. The firm was contracted to provide specialized travel trade expertise that would help RTO3 move beyond ad hoc trade activity toward a coordinated, evidence-informed approach, one that supports operators, aligns partners, and focuses on the most appropriate and achievable markets.

Benefits to the Region

Engaging Alternative Sales Strategy provided several key benefits:

Specialized travel trade expertise

Reinforce RTO3's deep knowledge of travel trade structures, buyer expectations, and distribution pathways that are not typically held at the regional level.

Objective, third-party perspective

An external lens to assess regional strengths, gaps, and readiness, ensuring recommendations are realistic, prioritized, and grounded in market realities.

Clear pathways to market

Identification of practical routes to engage tour operators, receptive operators, and travel buyers, reducing uncertainty for both RTO3 and local operators.

Operator-focused outcomes

A shift from market-chasing to market-readiness, prioritizing the development of tourism businesses that are equipped to succeed in travel trade. This ensures operators have the right product, pricing, and capacity to convert opportunities into bookings, creating a stronger and more sustainable pipeline of export-ready experiences.

Regional competitiveness and market positioning

Support how RTO3's focus in positioning the region as a cohesive, compelling, and bookable destination within the travel trade ecosystem.



WHAT THIS MEANS

What This Means for Destination Development

This strategy is designed to give tourism operators clarity, support, and realistic pathways when considering the travel trade.

For operators, RTO3's Travel Trade Growth Strategy and the Travel Trade Industry Playbook will:

- Clarify when travel trade makes sense for your business, and when it may not
- Demystify the travel trade ecosystem, including buyers, distribution channels, and media expectations
- Support trade readiness, helping operators understand pricing, packaging, capacity, and operational requirements
- Reduce guesswork and risk by focusing efforts on right-fit markets aligned with regional strengths
- Create opportunities for connection, where appropriate, with trade buyers through coordinated regional efforts

The growth strategy and the industry playbook is not about pushing all operators into travel trade, together, they are about ensuring those who choose to pursue it are better informed, better prepared, and better supported.

RTO3's role in travel trade is to unlock the region's export potential by building industry readiness, strengthening business capacity, and connecting market-ready experiences to global demand.

- Provide regional leadership and coordination for travel trade planning and engagement
- Set strategic priorities for markets, timing, and levels of trade engagement
- Support operator readiness through information, tools, learning opportunities, and partner connections
- Align partners and investments to reduce duplication and strengthen collective impact
- Represent the region at a strategic level, where appropriate, in collaboration with destination and sector partners
- Monitor progress and outcomes, using the strategy as a framework for decision-making and evaluation

RTO3 aims to create a coordinated, travel trade-ready destination ecosystem that enables tourism businesses and destinations to develop, package, market, and sell authentic regional experiences through domestic and international travel trade channels, resulting in increased visitation, visitor spending, and year-round economic prosperity.

ECONOMIC VALUE

Travel Trade converts market exposure into confirmed visitation and multi-sector spending.

Travel Trade is more than a distribution channel. Through group tours, packaged itineraries, FIT, and pre-sold experiences, it helps destinations generate advance bookings, shoulder-season demand, regional dispersal, and export revenue.

For Ontario destinations, this supports local employment, small businesses, regional supply chains, and sustainable visitor economy growth.

1. Economic Value in Action

Motorcoach Group Travel A Concentrated Economic Value Driver

\$10,000 - \$15,000

estimated daily economic activity from one overnight motorcoach tour



**One coach. One overnight stay.
Thousands in local spending.**

Source: Motor Coach Canada. Additional context supported by Tourism Economics research for the American Bus Association, 2024.

Spending flows across the destination:

	Accommodation	Fills rooms and supports advance booking
	Restaurants & Food Service	Drives group dining and local food spending
	Attractions & Experiences	Increases admissions and paid programming
	Retail & Specialty Products	Adds visitor spend beyond the core itinerary
	Guides & Sightseeing	Supports local storytelling and interpretation
	Local Transportation	Strengthens regional mobility and support services

2. Why This Matters to Destinations



Predictable Demand

Long lead times help businesses plan pricing, staffing, inventory, and capacity.



Shoulder-Season Growth

Group travel can help fill hotels, restaurants, attractions, and experiences outside peak periods.



Multi-Business Spending

One itinerary can generate revenue for many businesses across the visitor economy.



Regional Dispersal

Travel Trade helps move visitors beyond major gateways into secondary, rural, and emerging communities.

3. What DMOs and Operators Need to Know



Travel Trade success requires readiness

Destinations and operators need the right pricing, packaging, capacity, booking processes, and buyer-facing tools to convert interest into confirmed business.

- ✓ Maintain forward-looking group and FIT pricing.
- ✓ Protect capacity for advance bookings.
- ✓ Create commissionable or net-rate-ready products.
- ✓ Build itineraries that connect multiple businesses.
- ✓ Support shoulder-season and mid-week opportunities.
- ✓ Make the product easy for tour operators and receptive operators to sell.

Key Takeaway for Ontario Operators and DMOs

Travel trade is a scalable growth channel that drives visitation, spending, and economic development. When businesses are trade-ready and regions are aligned, it delivers consistent demand, stronger ROI, and measurable regional prosperity.

Why Travel Trade Matters Economically

Economic Feature	What it Means	Benefits to Industry and Destinations
Advance Bookings and Revenue Certainty	Travel trade works on long lead times, with tour operators securing inventory months or even years in advance.	Provides businesses with earlier revenue visibility, stronger planning confidence, and more predictable demand.
Forward-Looking Pricing and Capacity	Suppliers need to offer pricing and availability in advance to be competitive in the travel trade marketplace.	Encourages businesses to plan strategically, protect inventory, and create packaged pricing that works for operators.
Shoulder Season Stabilization	Travel trade often moves visitors in spring, fall, and other non-peak periods.	Helps fill rooms, restaurants, attractions, and experiences outside the busiest summer season.
Multi-Business Spending	Group and packaged travel typically includes accommodations, meals, attractions, guides, retail, and specialty products.	Spreads visitor spending across multiple businesses and sectors, increasing the total economic impact of each itinerary.
Itinerary-Based Travel	Travel trade builds multi-stop itineraries that connect gateways, communities, and experiences.	Encourages visitor dispersal beyond major destinations like Toronto and Niagara Falls into secondary, rural, and emerging communities.
Geographic Distribution of Spend	Organized itineraries bring travellers into places they may not discover independently.	Supports smaller communities, local businesses, and regional tourism development.
Export Revenue	International visitors bring new money into Ontario through packaged travel and global sales channels.	Positions travel trade as an export sales channel that connects Ontario businesses to international buyers.
Market Access Through Buyers	Tour operators, receptive operators, wholesalers, OTAs, and travel advisors connect local experiences to broader markets.	Extends the reach of regional tourism products without each business having to sell directly to every visitor market.

International Arrivals Recovery

Market Context for Ontario

Understanding source market recovery is important when evaluating travel trade growth potential. Travel trade development should be aligned with where demand has recovered, where growth is still rebuilding, and where long-term market relationships need to be developed now.

1. Market Recovery Snapshot

Source Market	Recovery Status	Strategic Meaning
Domestic Canada 	Fully recovered / above 2019	Immediate opportunity for regional packaging, group travel, FIT itineraries, and shoulder-season demand.
U.S. Visitors to Canada 	94% recovered	Strong near-term opportunity, especially for accessible Ontario itineraries and cross-border travel trade partnerships.
Overseas Visitors to Canada 	82% recovered	Still rebuilding, but important for long-term growth, export readiness, and international buyer relationships.
Total International Arrivals 	90% recovered	Recovery is well advanced, but growth strategies should remain phased and market-aligned.

Source: Statistics Canada

2. What This Means For Ontario and RTO3



Focus Now

Domestic and U.S. markets represent the strongest short-term opportunity, with higher recovery levels and more immediate conversion potential.



Build Next

Use Ontario / Toronto gateway momentum to strengthen regional packaging, dispersal opportunities, and trade visibility.



Prepare For Long-Term Growth

Continue building international readiness, buyer relationships, and product alignment as overseas markets recover.

3. Strategic Takeaway

Travel Trade growth should be phased and market-aligned. Domestic and U.S. markets offer the strongest near-term opportunity, while overseas markets require ongoing relationship-building, product readiness, and strategic engagement.

For RTO3, this means focusing now on markets that can deliver results today, while preparing the region to capture future growth as long-haul international visitation continues to recover.

Strategic Implications and Pathways for Regional DMOs

Domestic and U.S. Markets as Immediate Opportunity With strong recovery levels, travel trade engagement in nearby U.S. and interprovincial markets presents near-term revenue potential.	Toronto / Hamilton as Gateways, Regions as Beneficiaries Gateway markets introduce visitors; travel trade itineraries disperse them regionally, driving economic impact beyond major cities.
	
Pathways: • Prioritize group and coach-ready experiences for short-haul markets • Engage with regional and U.S. tour operators through marketplaces and partnerships • Develop 2–3 day itineraries aligned to drive markets • Align with Destination Ontario campaigns and sales initiatives	Pathways: • Package pre/post Toronto experiences into sellable regional extensions • Collaborate with receptive tour operators and inbound partners • Develop corridor-based itineraries • Position experiences within 1–2 hour travel radius for ease of inclusion
Overseas Markets as Scalable Growth As overseas markets continue rebuilding toward 2019 levels, establishing relationships now positions Ontario operators for future expansion.	Group Travel as High-Value Per Arrival Even modest group volumes can significantly impact smaller communities due to concentrated spending patterns.
	
Pathways: • Participate in international trade marketplaces and virtual sales missions, aligning with Destination Ontario • Build export-ready product, demonstrating an understanding of commissionable rates, net pricing, clear policies • Develop market-specific itineraries / experiences • Host FAM tours and media/trade visits to build awareness and relationships	Pathways: • Ensure business operators are group-ready through capacity, timing, pricing, parking/logistics • Create bundled experiences - dining attraction, guided component • Standardize group rates and booking processes • Target shoulder season and midweek availability for group inclusion

The Bottom Line: Economic Value to a Destination

Travel trade converts individual tourism experiences into structured, export-ready products that drive consistent and scalable economic value. For operators, it delivers more predictable revenue, expands market reach, reduces reliance on direct marketing, and enables inclusion in multi-day itineraries. For DMOs, it generates measurable economic impact, distributes visitor spending more broadly across the region, increases occupancy and yield, and strengthens alignment with provincial and national sales strategies. Beyond a post-pandemic context, where domestic demand is strong and international markets are recovering, travel trade is one of the most effective ways to turn recovery into sustained, long-term growth for Ontario destinations, especially in Hamilton Halton Brant.

REGIONAL SWOT ANALYSIS

A SWOT analysis provides a clear and structured assessment of a destination's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, offering a comprehensive view of its current position. It informs strategic planning and decision-making by identifying how to leverage strengths, address gaps, capitalize on opportunities, and mitigate risks.

Strengths

Strong Regional Leadership

The region provides coordinated leadership and clear strategic direction, ensuring consistent support and alignment across tourism partners. This unified approach strengthens regional performance, builds industry readiness, and enables more effective participation in travel trade.

Recognized and Trusted Brand

The RTO3 brand is well-respected within both regional and provincial tourism networks. Its strong reputation enables seamless integration into broader Ontario itineraries, complementing marquee destinations such as Niagara Falls and Toronto.

Strategic Partnership Network

RTO3's strong network of regional and provincial partners enables alignment across jurisdictions, coordinated market development, and collective execution, positioning the region to integrate effectively into high-value travel trade itineraries alongside destinations such as Niagara Falls and Toronto.

Market-Ready Foundations

DMO partners across RTO3 are well-positioned for domestic and group travel markets, providing a strong and coordinated foundation to advance toward export readiness and future international market expansion.

Weaknesses

Limited Dedicated Capacity

Over the past three years, investment in travel trade leadership and coordination has been limited at both the RTO3 and partner DMO levels. This has constrained the ability to enable, align, and sustain long-term market development and growth initiatives.

Uneven Destination Maturity

Destination readiness and brand recognition vary across the region, creating inconsistencies in trade appeal, experience quality, and the ability to deliver a cohesive visitor journey.

Product and Capacity Gaps

The region faces constraints in upscale accommodations and premium visitor services, limiting its competitiveness in high-value international markets. In addition, there is a limited pipeline of export-ready experiences and operational capacity, impacting the region's ability to consistently deliver to travel trade demand.

Connectivity Challenges

Transportation gaps between sub-regions limit seamless visitor movement, creating barriers to cohesive itinerary development, particularly for FIT and travel trade markets.

Opportunities

Value-Driven Market Positioning

With cost advantages relative to Toronto and Niagara Falls, RTO3 is well-positioned to deliver strong value within travel trade itineraries. This creates opportunities to attract price-sensitive and group markets, support longer length-of-stay, and enhance regional competitiveness in both domestic and international channels.

Strategic Alignment with Provincial Leadership

Leveraging alignment with Destination Ontario enables RTO3 to amplify its market presence, access shared resources, and participate in coordinated sales and marketing efforts. This positions the region to compete more effectively in global markets, while maximizing return on investment through collaboration.

Scaling Through RVC

Participation in Rendez-vous Canada positions 2027 as a strategic runway to build awareness, align partners, and prepare export-ready experiences. This sets the stage for strong conversion during Ontario's 2028 hosting and FAM tours, driving itinerary inclusion, partnerships, and sustained international growth. Together, this phased approach enables stakeholders to maximize visibility, strengthen regional packaging, and secure a competitive position in international travel trade, setting the foundation for sustained growth.

Leveraging Authentic Experiences for Growth

As global travellers seek deeper, more meaningful experiences, RTO3 is well-positioned to respond through its natural landscapes, cultural assets, and partnerships with Indigenous communities. By investing in authentic, place-based experiences, the region can strengthen its market appeal, increase export readiness, and support reconciliation through tourism.

Lead Through Readiness

As markets rebuild, regions that are prepared will lead. By advancing readiness now, RTO3 can differentiate itself, build early trade relationships, and secure placement in future itineraries, ensuring it is top-of-mind as demand accelerates.

Threats

Fragmented Regional Alignment

Without strong, consistent collaboration across stakeholders, the region risks diminished collective impact, limiting its ability to present a unified and competitive offering to travel trade partners.

Fragmented Investment

Without coordinated funding and aligned priorities across DMOs and partners, the region risks diluted impact and inefficiencies in travel trade development. Disconnected investment can limit visibility, reduce scalability, and hinder the ability to sustain momentum in competitive markets.

Insufficient Long-Term Commitment

Travel trade requires sustained, multi-year investment. Short-term approaches risk undermining market development, delaying readiness, and limiting measurable economic outcomes.

Rising Competitive Pressure

Competing destinations are advancing aggressively in travel trade, increasing competition for limited buyer attention and market share. Regions that move faster and more strategically will secure stronger positioning.

MARKET DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal

To further position the RTO3 Hamilton Halton Brant region as a recognized, export-ready destination through coordinated DMO leadership and strong collaboration with business operators and regional stakeholders. By aligning marketing investment, product development, and trade engagement strategies, the region will cultivate high-value, year-round visitation and deliver market-ready tourism experiences that generate sustainable economic impact across communities

Objectives: Three Pillar Approach

Pillar 1: Enable



The focus is on enabling the region and its operators to participate effectively in the travel trade ecosystem. This foundational work establishes the tools, insights, and pathways necessary for growth, including building a comprehensive understanding of regional products and operator readiness, engaging Indigenous and community partners, and providing targeted capacity-building opportunities.

By enabling access to data, resources, and training, Year One lays the groundwork for a confident, coordinated, and market-ready tourism industry poised for sustained engagement in domestic and international travel trade.

Pillar 2: Educate



Equipping regional tourism operators and partners with the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to create market-ready, high-quality experiences and effectively engage with the travel trade. Through targeted training, mentoring, and accessible tools, this pillar builds operator capacity, strengthens trade readiness, and ensures consistent, professional, and scalable experiences that support the region's growth objectives.

Pillar 3: Activate



Driving the promotion, distribution, and sale of regional tourism experiences by leveraging partnerships, trade relationships, and targeted marketing initiatives. This pillar focuses on converting product readiness and operator capacity into bookings, visitor engagement, and measurable economic impact, while increasing destination and product awareness.

TACTICS

To strengthen the region's collective ability to engage and compete effectively in the travel trade marketplace, RTO3 will implement a coordinated framework grounded in three foundational pillars: Enable, Educate, and Activate.

Together, these pillars establish a structured approach for aligning DMOs, business operators, and regional stakeholders around shared goals of market and export readiness, product excellence, and market responsiveness.

This strategy guides how the region invests in collaborative product development, leveraging the regional product and experience development framework 2026-30, building stakeholder capacity, and maintaining consistent market presence in priority domestic and international markets. By integrating strategic marketing, industry education, and long-term stewardship, Hamilton, Halton, and Brant, Six Nations of the Grand River, and Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation will be positioned for sustainable, year-round growth driven by high-value travel trade partnerships.



Pillar 1: Enable

Focuses on a leadership role in building the foundations for regional travel trade readiness, positioning the region as a coordinated, market- and export-ready destination.

Through a combination of data-driven insights, capacity-building programs, and accessible sales tools, we will equip tourism operators, DMOs, and Indigenous partners with the resources, knowledge, and frameworks needed to:

Understand regional product strengths, gaps, and market opportunities

Regional Asset Inventory

Work with DMOs to create a comprehensive inventory of travel trade assets, including experiences, accommodations, attractions, and businesses targeted at both domestic and international markets. This information will feed into the RTO3 Regional Product Inventory and Asset Index.

Develop trade-ready, sellable experiences

Themed Itinerary Development

Design multi-day, pan-regional itineraries that highlight the region's unique strengths and seamlessly integrate experiences across multiple communities.

From Readiness to Market Engagement

Stakeholder Training and Guidance

Through structured training and guidance, tourism partners gain the confidence to engage with travel trade, transforming their experiences into export-ready, bookable products. Key initiatives, including group tour sessions, the Travel Trade Insider Forum, and the Tourism Industry Association of Canada Export READI™ Program, support this progression from readiness to active market participation.

Group Readiness Program in Partnership with the Ontario Motor Coach Association

OMCA is a critical partner in advancing RTO3's group travel strategy, providing direct access to industry insights, buyer expectations, and established distribution channels within the motorcoach and group tour sector. Through a coordinated Group Readiness Program, RTO3, working in partnership with regional DMOs will deliver a series of targeted learning sessions designed to build a shared understanding of the group travel market, including operator needs, booking cycles, and the value of participation in travel trade networks. These sessions serve as a strategic entry point for industry engagement, enabling businesses to assess their readiness, align their offerings to market expectations, and identify pathways to deeper participation through association membership, marketplaces, and partnership opportunities. Increased engagement with OMCA strengthens the regional ecosystem by connecting operators with active buyers and receptive tour partners, supporting relationship development, itinerary inclusion, and long-term market growth.



Travel Trade Insider Forum: RTO3's Insider Look at the Industry's Ecosystem

The Travel Trade Insider Forum is a flagship, full-day capacity-building program designed to accelerate industry readiness and support tourism operators and DMOs in entering and expanding within the travel trade market. Targeted to businesses new to travel trade, as well as those looking to evolve from group day trips to multi-day, domestic, and international market opportunities -the Forum provides a practical, hands-on understanding of how to successfully engage with travel trade channels.

The program bridges the gap between knowledge and execution, providing clear guidance on how to align products, operations, and pricing with market demand.

Through direct engagement with industry experts and provincial leaders, including partners such as Destination Ontario, and the Travel Media Association of Canada (TMAC), participants will gain a strong understanding of the travel trade ecosystem. They will leave with actionable tools and clear implementation pathways to enter or grow within the market, along with the confidence to build and sustain meaningful relationships with buyers.



TIAC Export READI™ Program Advancing Export Readiness and Industry Competitiveness

The Tourism Industry Association of Canada READI™ Program is a nationally recognized designation and capacity-building initiative designed to strengthen the resilience, competitiveness, and market readiness of Canadian tourism businesses. Through a structured framework, spanning operations, sustainability, digital capability, and Export READI™, the program provides practical tools, assessments, and training to help operators understand their current state, identify gaps, and progress toward full market and export readiness. Participation in the Export READI™ stream enables businesses to align with international travel trade expectations, build the capabilities required to engage global markets, and achieve a recognized designation. Successful participants are featured in TIAC's national directory, enhancing credibility, visibility, and access to travel trade opportunities.

RTO3 will partner with TIAC and regional DMOs to identify, support, and mentor a cohort of operators through the program, ensuring alignment with regional priorities and maximizing participation. This coordinated approach strengthens the pipeline of export-ready experiences, supports industry advancement, and positions the region for increased inclusion in domestic and international itineraries.



Pillar 2: Educate

Building Industry Capacity for Travel Trade Growth

To build travel trade capacity across the region requires a coordinated, practical, and scalable approach to education, training, and applied support. This pillar ensures that destinations and businesses not only understand how the travel trade operates, but also how to meet market expectations, package competitive experiences, and operate effectively within domestic and international distribution channels.

Through structured learning pathways and hands-on tools, stakeholders gain the knowledge, skills, and confidence to engage with buyers, access new markets, and convert opportunities into bookings, revenue, and sustained growth.

Market Readiness Toolkits

From Knowledge to Implementation

RTO3 will develop a suite of user-friendly, interactive learning modules that guide destinations and operators through each stage of travel trade readiness. These toolkits are designed to move beyond theory, providing practical, step-by-step guidance supported by worksheets, templates, checklists, and implementation tools.

Proposed Modules:

Domestic Travel Trade Readiness

Supports operators in entering and scaling within Canadian and U.S. markets by focusing on:

- a) Commissionable pricing and cost structures
- b) Creating bookable, group-ready experiences
- c) Understanding the travel trade ecosystem
- d) Operational readiness (capacity, policies, logistics)

Outcome: Operators are equipped to confidently engage with domestic buyers and convert near-term opportunities into revenue.

International Export Readiness

Prepares businesses for global markets by addressing:

- a) Export-readiness standards and expectations
- b) Cultural considerations and market nuances
- c) Product packaging, itinerary integration, and storytelling
- d) Tiered and international pricing models
- e) Working with receptive tour operators

Outcome: Operators are positioned to access international distribution channels and compete in high-value global markets.

OTA (Online Travel Agency) Readiness

Builds understanding of digital distribution channels, including platforms such as Expedia Group and Booking Holdings, with a focus on:

- a) How OTAs operate and generate demand
- b) Optimizing listings for visibility and conversion
- c) Managing inventory, availability, and pricing
- d) Leveraging digital platforms to reach independent and long-haul travellers

Outcome: Operators can expand their reach, increase direct bookings, and complement travel trade distribution through digital channels.

Strategic Outcome

These toolkits establish a foundational and scalable learning system that strengthens the tourism ecosystem at every level. For business operators, they build the capability to create, package, and sell experiences, driving increased bookings, diversified revenue, and reduced reliance on single channels. For destinations, they enhance the quality and consistency of offerings, enabling more cohesive and market-ready positioning. At the regional level, they support the development of a stronger pipeline of export-ready experiences, driving itinerary inclusion, visitor dispersion, and measurable economic impact.

Provincially, they contribute to a more aligned and competitive tourism system, supporting Destination Ontario priorities and strengthening Ontario's position in domestic and international travel trade.

Educational Workshops: Building Industry Capability

Deliver targeted, in-person and virtual workshops designed to equip destinations and operators with the practical skills, knowledge, and confidence to grow their travel trade business. Sessions are tailored to reflect varying levels of readiness and maturity across DMOs and stakeholders, ensuring relevant, actionable learning at every stage.

These workshops move beyond theory, focusing on real-world application so participants understand not only what is required, but how to implement it effectively within their operations.

Core Focus Areas

Partnering with Online Travel Agencies (OTAs)

Provide best practices for working with major platforms such as Expedia Group and Booking Holdings, and GetYourGuide, including optimizing listings, increasing visibility, and converting digital demand into bookings.

Designing Travel Trade Packages and Pricing Structures

Guide operators in developing commissionable pricing models, export-ready experiences, and bookable itineraries that align with the expectations of domestic and international tour operators.

Tradeshow Preparation and Best Practices

Prepare stakeholders to participate effectively in key marketplaces such as Rendez-vous Canada, Ontario Motor Coach Association Marketplace, and Bienvenue Québec. Topics include booth readiness, sales materials, appointment strategies, follow-up, and measuring return on investment.

Strategic Outcome

These workshops build industry capability and confidence, enabling stakeholders to engage more effectively in travel trade, strengthen their market positioning, and ultimately convert opportunities into bookings, revenue, and sustained growth.

Travel Trade Engagement and Market Development

Focusing on bringing product to market, connecting export-ready experiences to the right buyers, channels, and opportunities. Through coordinated engagement, strategic partnerships, and targeted promotion, RTO3 will convert readiness into bookings, market presence, and measurable economic impact.

Core Activation Strategies

Industry Association Engagement

Strengthen RTO3's presence and credibility by actively participating in key tourism and travel trade associations. This positions the region as a visible, credible, and export-ready destination, while creating ongoing opportunities to build relationships, access market intelligence, and influence industry networks.

Strategic Marketplace Participation

Prioritize consistent, coordinated participation in high-impact marketplaces to connect directly with buyers and decision-makers. RTO3 will support DMOs and operators with preparation, positioning, and follow-through, ensuring meaningful engagement that leads to qualified leads, partnerships, and itinerary inclusion.

Rendez-vous Canada (RVC) Activation

Leverage RVC as a cornerstone platform for international market engagement through a coordinated regional approach:

- Represent RTO3 as a unified regional delegation
- Host pre- and post-event FAM tours in partnership with Destination Ontario to showcase export-ready experiences, where applicable
- Prepare stakeholders with lead engagement strategies, sales tools, and post-show conversion plans

Media and Influencer Amplification

Collaborate with travel media, influencers, and content creators to extend reach in priority markets and support travel trade storytelling. This enhances destination awareness, product visibility, and buyer interest, complementing direct trade engagement.

Alignment with Provincial and National Strategies

Align closely with Destination Ontario and Destination Canada to ensure coordinated market presence. This enables RTO3 to leverage shared campaigns, co-investment opportunities, and global distribution channels, maximizing exposure and impact in key markets.

Strategic Outcome

Through coordinated activation, RTO3 strengthens its position in travel trade by building relationships, increasing visibility, and driving conversion, ensuring regional experiences are included in itineraries, booked by operators, and contributing to sustained economic growth.



Pillar 3: Activate

Driving Market Engagement, Visibility, and Conversion

The Activate pillar translates strategy into action by connecting export-ready experiences to the market. Through coordinated engagement with travel trade partners, targeted promotion, and aligned regional efforts, RTO3 positions Hamilton, Halton, Brant, Six Nations of the Grand River, and Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation as a compelling, bookable destination.

This includes maintaining market-ready tools and platforms, participating in high-impact trade events and FAM tours, leveraging cooperative marketing with provincial and national partners, and amplifying regional storytelling. These efforts drive buyer engagement, itinerary inclusion, and measurable economic impact.

Core Activation Actions

Coordinated Cooperative B2B Campaigns

Deliver targeted travel trade campaigns in partnership with DMOs and aligned stakeholders

- Co-invest in campaigns with Destination Ontario and Destination Canada
- Develop market-specific campaigns - U.S., domestic, priority international markets
- Align messaging and product with buyer demand and itineraries

Travel Trade Media and Storytelling

Build destination awareness and demand through curated storytelling

- Host media and influencer FAM tours tied to travel trade priorities
- Develop story-led content aligned with bookable experiences
- Amplify through trade, media, and partner channels
- Develop media-ready tools and resources; stories

Strategic Market Alignment

Align regional efforts with provincial and national strategies

- Integrate with Destination Ontario sales missions, FAMs, campaigns, and trade platforms
- Leverage shared resources, buyer networks, and market intelligence
- Ensure regional experiences are positioned within broader Ontario itineraries

Marketplace and Buyer Engagement

Engage directly with tour operators and buyers

- Invest and participate in key B2B trade marketplaces
- Deliver coordinated regional presence and partner readiness
- Implement structured lead capture and follow-up systems

Success Measurement and ROI Framework

To ensure accountability and continuous improvement, success will be measured across 4 key areas.

1. Stakeholder Engagement and Investment

Measures the number of participating DMOs and operators, the level of co-investment and program participation, and engagement with RTO3 platforms, including microsite usage, downloads, and inquiries. Increased participation and investment indicate strong industry alignment and a shared commitment to regional growth, signaling a positive return on engagement efforts.

2.Travel Trade Engagement

Measures the number of tour operators and buyers engaged, leads generated through marketplaces and campaigns, and the progression from inquiries to itineraries and confirmed bookings. Growth in qualified leads and strengthened buyer relationships indicates a healthy pipeline, demonstrating future revenue potential and effective market engagement.

3.Product and Itinerary Development

Measures the number of market-ready experiences and packages developed, their inclusion in tour operator itineraries, and alignment with key segments such as nature, culture, Indigenous, and culinary tourism. Additional indicators include the number of export-ready operators and the growth of multi-day itineraries versus day trips. A stronger pipeline of bookable, market-aligned product enhances competitiveness and increases the likelihood of conversion into sales and visitation.

4.Sales and Economic Impact

Measures the number of group tours, motorcoaches, bookings/contracts of FIT, Receptive Tour Operators, visiting the region, overnight stays and length of stay, estimated visitor spend, and inbound visitation from gateway markets. It also tracks visibility through media reach, digital engagement, website traffic, and inclusion in external itineraries / operator listings. Increases in visitation, visitor spending, and itinerary inclusion indicate strong market penetration and demonstrate direct economic return on travel trade efforts.

Digital Infrastructure for Travel Trade Readiness

Access to Digital Platforms and Resources

To support operators and partners in becoming market- and export-ready, we will establish a coordinated digital ecosystem that enables effective product packaging, visibility, and distribution within travel trade channels.

Dedicated Travel Trade Foundation Platform Microsite

Develop a centralized travel trade microsite within the RTO3 website, serving as the primary access point for buyers and operators. This platform will showcase export-ready experiences, provide essential tools, and position the region as organized, accessible, and trade-ready

Stakeholder and Supplier Directory

Create a structured market/export-ready directory of DMOs and tourism businesses with clear contact pathways, enabling seamless connections between operators, suppliers, and travel trade buyers. This supports faster relationship-building and simplifies itinerary development.

Resource Hub and Itinerary Bank as Planning Tools

Provide a curated resource hub on the industry site, including Travel Trade toolkit, direct links to partner assets, an active bank of themed, downloadable itineraries and offers. Enabling operators and buyers to have ready-to-use planning tools aligned with market expectations.

Multilingual Buyer Materials for Market Accessibility

Develop downloadable, standardized sell sheets in multiple languages to support international markets, ensuring the region is accessible, professional, and easy to sell across global channels.

Curated Media and Immersive Content for Market Enablement

Develop a centralized library of trade-ready images, video, and immersive content that brings the region's experiences to life and supports effective storytelling for travel trade. By providing controlled access to these assets, RTO3 enables partners and buyers to easily market and promote the destination, ensuring consistent brand representation, stronger product positioning, and increased appeal within competitive markets.

3

TRAVEL TRADE 101



WHAT IS TRAVEL TRADE

Travel trade is the business-to-business network of tourism professionals, such as retail travel agents, tour operators, wholesalers, receptive operators, and Online Travel Agents (OTA) that package, promote, and sell travel products accommodations, transportation, attractions, activities, experiences, tours, dining, and more, to consumers.

Acting as intermediaries between suppliers and travellers, the travel trade serves as the distribution system for tourism, helping destinations and businesses reach Canadian, U.S., and international markets through curated, bookable experiences for individuals and groups.

Case Study: Air Canada Vacations

Air Canada Vacations (ACV) is a major Canadian tour operator and part of the Air Canada travel family. It develops, markets, and distributes pre-packaged vacation products that combine flights (usually on Air Canada or Air Canada Rouge) with hotels, tours, excursions, car rentals, and other FIT experiences, essentially bundling travel products into bookable experiences for consumers.

As Canada's largest tour operator, ACV develops and distributes integrated flight-inclusive vacation products through travel trade partners and direct channels. By packaging air travel with accommodation, tours, and experiences, ACV helps destinations increase visibility with Canadian, U.S., and international travellers, illustrating how travel trade products expand market reach and convert interest into revenue-generating bookings.

What ACV Canada Product Looks Like

Air Canada Vacations offers a range of travel packages sold through travel trade and directly to consumers, including:

- Flight and Hotel packages (FIT)
- Tour itineraries in destinations worldwide (Europe, Asia, Caribbean, Canada, U.S., etc.)
- Cruise and Flight combinations
- Long-stay and immersive experiences
- Multi-day guided and self-guided tours
- These products are marketed through travel agents, online platforms, and ACV's own distribution channels to reach both Canadian and international travellers.

TRAVEL TRADE VALUE

Travel trade provides a powerful, scalable pathway to grow visitation, revenue, and regional economic impact. By connecting destinations and operators to global distribution networks, it expands market reach and attracts higher-value visitors who stay longer and spend more.

At the same time, it creates greater business stability through advance bookings, reduces operational risk, and supports year-round demand by filling shoulder and off-peak periods. Built on strong relationships, travel trade also enables repeatable business and long-term growth, positioning the region as a competitive and sustainable destination in both domestic and international markets.

Value Driver	What It Means	Why It Matters	What It Delivers
Market Access and Expertise	Access to global distribution through experienced tour operators	Reaches new domestic and international audiences	Increased visitation and expanded market reach
Economic Impact and Yield	Attracts higher-value visitors through packaged itineraries	Travellers stay longer and spend more across the region	Greater visitor spend and regional economic impact
Revenue Stability and Risk Mitigation	Advance bookings and managed logistics through operators	Reduces uncertainty and operational complexity	Predictable revenue and improved business planning
Marketing Reach and Visibility	Promotion through global trade networks and platforms	Expands awareness beyond local and regional marketing	Stronger destination presence and demand generation
Seasonality Management	Group and packaged travel fills off-peak periods	Reduces reliance on peak season demand	More consistent, year-round business
Repeatable Business and Long-Term Growth	Itineraries can be sold repeatedly through trade partners	Builds long-term relationships and consistent demand	Sustained growth and repeat visitation

TRAVEL TRADE: THE VISITOR ADVANTAGE

Travel trade transforms a visit from a single-stop trip into a multi-day regional experience, benefiting both the traveller and the destination.

The Role of Travel Trade in Destination Success

Travel trade doesn't just simplify travel, it elevates the entire visitor experience, transforming a trip into a seamless, enriching, and memorable journey that encourages repeat visitation and word-of-mouth advocacy.

Through expertly designed itineraries, travellers experience destinations with greater ease, confidence, and depth. Every element, from accommodations and activities to transportation and timing, is thoughtfully curated, allowing visitors to focus on enjoying the moment rather than managing the logistics. This creates a stress-free travel experience, where trusted operators handle the details, navigate unexpected challenges, and ensure a smooth journey from start to finish. Travellers benefit from insider access and local expertise, gaining deeper cultural understanding, authentic connections, and experiences they may not discover on their own.

Packaged travel also delivers strong value, combining convenience with cost efficiencies and maximizing time spent exploring. Whether travelling independently or in a group, visitors enjoy opportunities for connection, shared experiences, and meaningful engagement with the destination and its people.

Ultimately, travel trade helps create more fulfilling and memorable visits, experiences that not only meet expectations but exceed them. These are the kinds of journeys that inspire visitors to stay longer, return again, and share their experiences with others, amplifying the destination's reach and reputation.

Visitor Experience in Action: Travel Trade Advantage: Scenario: U.S. Couple Visiting Ontario

Without Travel Trade

A couple flying into Toronto plans a short downtown stay but, with limited awareness, misses nearby regional experiences like the Grand River, Niagara Escarpment, Lake Ontario communities, and small-town experiences. Their visit remains brief, transactional, and limited in scope.

With Travel Trade

Through a packaged itinerary developed by a tour operator, the same travellers experience a multi-day journey that includes:

- A stay based in the Hamilton Halton Brant region
- Visits to a garden attraction nearby the Niagara Escarpment
- A guided cultural experience with Six Nations of the Grand River
- Culinary stops and local experiences across multiple communities, from urban to rural

The itinerary is seamless, curated, and enriched by local storytelling, creating a more immersive and memorable experience.

The Impact

For The Visitor	For The Region
• Less stress, more meaningful experiences • Deeper cultural connection and discovery • A trip worth sharing, and repeating	• Longer stays and increased overnight visitation • Higher visitor spend across multiple communities • Stronger destination awareness beyond gateway cities • Increased likelihood of repeat visitation and referrals

GROW YOUR BUSINESS WITH TRAVEL TRADE

This visual illustrates the shift from operating independently to being connected to the global market, showing how travel trade expands reach, drives bookings, and supports long-term business growth.

What Travel Trade Delivers to Your Business	What is the Opportunity for Your Business	Your Business: Before Travel Trade: <i>Operating Independently</i>	Your Business: After Travel Trade: <i>Connected to the Global Market</i>
Expand Your Market Reach	Access domestic and international travellers that are difficult to reach independently	LIMITED REACH Relying on local or regional markets only	EXPANDED MARKET ACCESS Reach domestic and international travellers
Diversify Your Customer Base	Reduce reliance on one market and build resilience across multiple visitor segments	INCONSISTENT BOOKINGS Seasonal peaks with unpredictable demand	PREDICTABLE BOOKINGS Advance reservations support planning and stability
Increase Visitation and Exposure	Attract group travellers and boost awareness across regional experiences and communities	SHORTER VISITS Primarily day-trippers or single-stop visits	LONGER STAYS Included in multi-day itineraries across the region
Secure Advance Bookings	Benefit from early reservations that support planning, staffing, and cash flow	REACTIVE BUSINESS MODEL Responding to demand rather than planning ahead	PROACTIVE GROWTH MODEL Plan ahead with confirmed business and partnerships
Extend Your Season	Drive business in shoulder and off-peak periods for more consistent year-round demand	HIGH MARKETING COSTS Paying to reach audiences individually	SHARED MARKETING POWER Leverage tour operators' global networks
Attract High-Value Visitors	Welcome guests who stay longer, spend more, and travel regardless of weather	LOW VISIBILITY Limited exposure beyond your immediate market	INCREASED VISIBILITY Positioned in curated, bookable travel experiences
Leverage Global Marketing Reach	Gain exposure through tour operators' networks without added marketing costs	SELF-FUNDED MARKETING Own marketing efforts to reach audiences	AMPLIFIED GLOBAL EXPOSURE Promoted through tour operators' international sales and marketing networks

HOW TRAVEL TRADE PACKAGES THE REGION

Aligning the right product to the right tour type helps operators meet buyer needs and secure placement in itineraries.

Travel Trade Tour Types	What It Looks Like	Opportunity for The Region	Product Development Priorities
Day Trips - No Accommodation	Short, curated single-day experiences, typically from nearby markets such as the GTA, Southwestern Ontario, U.S. border cities, and school groups	Day Trips equals Volume Drives immediate visitation and midweek demand / Introduces visitors to the region - encourages repeat trips / Supports high-volume businesses like attractions, food, retail	Volume and First-Time Exposure Develop 2-4 hour curated experiences - guided, timed, easy to book / Create group-ready attractions with clear capacity, pricing, and logistics / Bundle experience, dining, retail into simple packages / Ensure coach accessibility and logistics RTO3 Strategic Role: Entry point to the region, driving immediate visitation and repeat visits
Multi-Day Trips - Single, Multi-City, or Cross-Border	Structured itineraries including accommodations - often connecting iconic experiences in Toronto and Niagara Falls	Multi-day Trips equals Revenue Increases length of stay and visitor spend / Positions the region as a key stop or overnight destination / Attracts long-haul and international markets	Revenue and High-Value Markets Build full-day and multi-day itineraries - bookable, themed / Increase accommodation alignment that are group-friendly, consistent quality / Develop signature experiences / Ensure commissionable pricing and packaging RTO3 Strategic Role: Drive overnight stays for higher spend, and international appeal
Hub-and-Spoke Itineraries	Travellers stay in one location and take day trips to surrounding destinations	Hub-and-Spoke equals Longer Stay Positions RTO3 as a cost-effective base between Toronto and Niagara / Encourages overnight stays and regional dispersion Ideal for group tours and international markets	Overnight Stays and Regional Dispersion Position the region as a base destination- clustered experiences within 1-2 hours / Develop day-trip circuits / Strengthen transportation and routing clarity / Package multi-day stay and daily excursions RTO3 Strategic Role: Convert gateway traffic into overnight stays and regional exploration
Fly/Drive Programs / FIT	Travellers fly into a gateway, rent a car, and follow a flexible or pre-designed itinerary	FIT equals Market Expansion Leverages gateways like Hamilton International Airport-YHM / Supports exploration of smaller communities / Expands reach with international and self-drive markets	Flexibility and Global Reach Create self-guided itineraries through maps, routes, digital guides / Develop bookable, flexible experiences - short duration, easy entry / Enhance wayfinding, signage, and digital navigation tools / Focus on authentic, local, and lesser-known experiences RTO3 Strategic Role: Expand reach into international and independent traveller markets

OUR SELLING PROPOSITION

Hamilton, Halton and Brant is not a gateway destination, but a value-added region that strengthens Southern Ontario itineraries. With a mix of cultural and heritage significance, natural landscapes, Indigenous experiences, culinary depth, and urban-rural contrast, it offers authentic, scalable experiences in a compact, easy-to-sell and easy-to-operate region.

Why RTO3 Works For Travel Trade



Strong Itinerary Fit and Geography

- Strategically located within Southern Ontario, with easy access from Toronto, Niagara Falls, and major gateways - air, road, rail
- Ideal for multi-day itineraries, pre/post extensions, loop routing, and an overnight hub
- Compact geography minimizes drive times and maximizes experience time



Distinctive, Sellable Experiences

- UNESCO-designated Niagara Escarpment, Bruce Trail, Canada's oldest and longest footpath, and the Grand River corridor experiences
- Authentic Indigenous-led and Indigenous-informed experiences
- Diverse outdoor, cultural, heritage, culinary, and agri-tourism offerings
- Curated cycling, hiking, and walking routes for active travellers
- Signature immersive, and bookable experiences that anchor itineraries
- Aligned with demand for nature, wellness, culture, and regenerative travel



Product Diversity for Multiple Markets

- Diverse portfolio suited to group tours, FIT, soft adventure, cultural, culinary, and nature-based travellers
- Flexible, market-aligned packaging across domestic and international segments
- Travel trade-ready with bookable, commissionable experiences aligned to buyer expectations
- Supports year-round and shoulder-season demand
- Balances iconic highlights with lesser-known discoveries
- Positioned between Toronto and Niagara Falls for multi-destination itineraries
- Drives longer stays, increased visitor spend, and regional dispersal



Export-Ready and Trade-Supportive

- Growing base of visitor-, market-, and export-ready operators and DMOs
- Motorcoach- and group-friendly infrastructure, including attractions, accommodations, experiences, and dining
- Operators familiar with tiered pricing, room blocks, group menus, and contracting practices

Compelling Value Proposition

Hamilton Halton Brant delivers high-quality, authentic Canadian experiences at a strong value relative to major gateway cities, offering travel trade partners the opportunity to enhance itineraries with greater depth, storytelling, and meaningful place-based connections. The region supports longer stays and increased visitor yield without adding operational complexity, while its four-season appeal enables year-round programming across diverse market segments.

Strategically located, Hamilton Halton Brant provides seamless access to key Ontario destinations, including Toronto and Niagara Falls, positioning it as an ideal hub for overnight stays and expanded regional exploration.



TRAVEL TRADE AUDIENCES

Targeting Growth Opportunities

Travel trade is not a single market, it is a collection of distinct traveller segments, each with different expectations, behaviours, and economic potential. Understanding these audiences allows RTOs, DMOs, and tourism operators to focus efforts where they will generate the greatest return.



Why This Matters

- ✓ Focus on higher-value visitors
- ✓ Support longer stays
- ✓ Drive year-round demand
- ✓ Improve product-market alignment
- ✓ Strengthen broader Ontario itineraries



What This Section Covers

- ✓ Understand who the traveller is
- ✓ Identify what motivates them
- ✓ See what experiences they seek
- ✓ Align products and services
- ✓ Support travel trade readiness



Fully Independent Travellers - FIT

Flexible, self-directed, experience-led travel



Escorted Group Tours

Itinerary-ready products and coach-friendly logistics



Educational Tours

Student and youth travel with structured learning



Speciality & Niche Small Group

Interest-based travel around culture, food, nature, and heritage



High-Value Traveller

Premium experiences, longer stays, stronger spend



Experience-Led Travellers

Exclusive access, personalization, and quality



Intentional Travellers

Meaningful travel with positive impact on place, people, and nature

How Travel Trade Works in Practice

This section includes illustrative case examples showing how operators align products, services, packaging, pricing, and positioning to meet the needs of specific travel trade audiences. These examples provide practical insight for operators and DMOs seeking to strengthen market readiness.

Case Study Disclaimer: Examples are provided for illustrative purposes only and may be adopted to reflect regional relevance.

AUDIENCES

Fully Independent Travellers - FIT

Flexible, high-value travellers seeking personalized experiences

Who They Are

- Individuals or small groups
- Typically under 10 people
- Plan and book independently
- Value flexibility and freedom

What They Want

- Authentic, local experiences
- Culinary, culture, nature
- Unique, off-the-beaten-path experiences
- Personalized, interest-driven itineraries

Why They Matter

- Growing global segment, especially from international and long-haul markets
- Tend to stay longer and spend more per trip
- Strong demand for authentic, immersive experiences
- Drives visitation beyond major gateways into regional destinations

Strategic Opportunity

Growing demand for independent, experience-led travel creates an opportunity to position the region as a destination for authentic, bookable local experiences. FIT travellers are more likely to explore multiple communities, stay longer, and spend more per trip, driving broader regional economic impact and year-round visitation.

DISCOVER



- Social media
- Travel blogs
- Word of mouth
- Destination websites

Inspiration and ideas spark interest

PLAN



- Suggested itineraries
- Maps and guides
- Reviews and recommendations
- Compare options

They research and build their ideal trip

BOOK



- Online booking
- Mobile-friendly
- Real-time availability
- Secure payment

They book experiences and services easily

EXPLORE



- Culinary
- Culture & heritage
- Nature & outdoor
- Local experiences
- Hidden gems

They enjoy authentic, local experiences

SHARE



- Reviews
- Photo & videos
- Social media sharing
- Referrals

They share and inspire others

What This Means For Operators and DMOs

- 1 Develop short-duration, bookable experiences (2-4 hours) with flexible options, customization, and focus on high-quality imagery.
- 2 Ensure experiences are easy to find, book, and access online - clear availability and booking processes.
- 3 Create self-guided and flexible itinerary options, with distinctive local or place-based experiences.
- 4 Focus on storytelling and authenticity reflecting local culture and nature.
- 5 Package experiences that complement gateway markets like Toronto.
- 6 Offer consistent premium service, including strong guide or host quality.

Why They Matter

FIT travellers represent a key growth market to increase regional exploration, extend length of stay, and drive higher-value visitation, particularly as international markets continue to fully recover.

- More room nights
- More spending across the region
- More places explored
- Stronger regional impact



NEXT UP:

Illustrative Case Study - How a FIT Operator Packages and Sells Experiences

ILLUSTRATIVE CASE STUDY

Audley Travel and the Fully Independent Traveller (FIT)

Understanding how FIT specialists design, sell, and manage high-value travel experiences.



Buyer Type
FIT Specialist /
Tailor-Made Tour
Operator



Audience
Affluent, self-
directed travellers;
couples; small
private groups



Travel Style
Custom, flexible,
experience-led
independent travel



Best Fit For
Boutique stays,
guides, cultural
experiences,
nature, premium
transport

At A Glance

What They Buy

Tailor-made itineraries, premium accommodations, private guides, transport, and curated experiences.

What They Need

Local expertise, seamless logistics, flexibility, quality assurance, and authentic experiences.

Why It Matters

High-per-guest spend, longer stays, year-round dispersal, and strong support for small operators.

Audley Travel specializes in tailor-made, fully independent travel for high-value guests seeking personalized itineraries, flexibility, and authentic engagement with culture, nature, and place.

Fully Independent Traveller Key Product Features

Audley creates custom travel experiences built around the traveller's interests, pace, and preferences.

- Every itinerary is tailor-made
- Deep local knowledge and destination expertise
- Premium hotels, lodges, and private transport
- Flexible travel with seamless logistics
- Authentic, experience-led activities

Experience Elements

Customization

Local Expertise

Premium Quality

Flexibility

Authenticity

Private Transportation

EXAMPLE: INDIGENOUS-LED EXPERIENCE

Journey would include a multi-day Indigenous-led wolf tracking experience in British Columbia, where guests stay in Indigenous territory and explore landscape, culture, and wildlife alongside Indigenous guides by land and water.

The Model

FIT travellers seek immersive, place-based experiences that offer meaning, exclusivity, and a strong connection to local culture.

How FIT Specialists Work With The Travel Trade

ADVISOR / DIRECT SALES

Works through travel advisors and direct client relationships



BUILD THE JOURNEY

Co-creates personalized itineraries around traveller goals



SECURE SUPPLIERS

Contracts with hotels, guides, transport, and premium operators



MANAGE LOGISTICS

Coordinates bookings, timing, service quality, and risk



DELIVER THE EXPERIENCE

Supports seamless independent travel with expert overnight

Results and Value

Higher-Yield

Independent travellers spend more per trip due to bespoke journeys and premium options.

Year-Round Dispersal

Flexible trip timing can reduce seasonal pressure and spread benefits across the region.

Longer Stays

Personalized itineraries encourage deeper, multi-day exploration.

Support For Small Operators

Independent travellers often seek boutique and specialized experiences.

Destination Reputation

Strengthens positioning around high-value, experience-led travel.

Deeper Engagement

Creates meaningful visitor connection to culture, landscapes, and community.

AUDIENCES

Escorted Group Tours

High-volume, structured travel driving consistent visitation and regional impact

Who They Are

- Organized groups travelling together
- Typically 30-50 passengers per motorcoach
- Guided by a professional Tour Director
- Travel through pre-planned itineraries

What They Want

- Seamless, well-organized itineraries
- Comfortable pacing and logistics
- Quality accommodations and dining
- Curated attractions and experiences

Why They Matter

- Generate high-volume visitation
- Produce significant economic impact
- Fill shoulder season and midweek demand
- Drive regional dispersal beyond gateway markets into regional destinations

Strategic Opportunity

Escorted group tours are a cornerstone of the travel trade ecosystem, generating high-volume visitation and significant economic impact across accommodations, dining, attractions, retail, and transportation. Their ability to drive shoulder-season demand, support multi-community itineraries, and deliver predictable, contracted business makes them a strategic growth market for the region.

PLAN	PACKAGE	SELL	TRAVEL	RETURN
 • Product sourcing • Destination research • Supplier contracting Tour operators identify destinations and secure suppliers.	 • Hotels • Attractions • Dining • Retail • Transportation Experiences are assembled into a sellable multi-day itinerary.	 • Travel advisors • Group leaders • Direct marketing Travel advisors and group leaders promote departures to travellers.	 • Guided itinerary • Group experiences • Seamless logistics Guests enjoy a fully managed and guided experience.	 • Repeat departures • Referrals • Loyalty Successful tours generate repeat business and future departures.

What This Means For Operators and DMOs

- 1 Develop group-ready experiences with clear capacity and timing, featuring the destinations key offerings.
- 2 Offer commissionable pricing and group rates and ensuring marketing and sales tools are available.
- 3 Ensure motorcoach accessibility, parking, and washrooms at all group-ready stops.
- 4 Create full-day and multi-stop itineraries to demonstrate a destination's diverse offering at all corners of the region.
- 5 Deliver consistent service standards, responding to enquiries in a timely manner.
- 6 Build relationships with tour operators and travel advisors.

Why They Matter

Escorted group tours generate significant economic impact through accommodations, dining, attractions, retail, and transportation. Their ability to drive shoulder-season and midweek demand, support regional dispersal, and provide predictable business makes them one of the region's most valuable travel trade markets.

- More room nights
- More regional spending
- More businesses featured
- Stronger regional economic impact



NEXT UP:

Illustrative Case Study - How an Escorted Tour Operator Packages and Sells Experiences

ILLUSTRATIVE CASE STUDY

Mayflower Cruises & Tours Escorted Group Tours by Motorcoach

A U.S.-based tour operator specializing in escorted group travel across North America and around the world, with expert tour managers, convenient logistics, and fully planned itineraries.



Buyer Type

Tour Operator -
Escorted Group
Travel



Audience

Travel advisors, group
leaders, organizations,
community partners,
individual travellers



Travel Style

Escorted
Motorcoach
tours



Best Fit For

Experience providers,
accommodations,
attractions, restaurants,
step-on guides

At A Glance

What They Buy

Pre-arranged inclusions of accommodations, meals, transportation, attractions, and experiences that are pre-booked and scheduled.

What They Need

Fixed dates and group-friendly logistics of arrival/departure dates, expectations of experience, amenities, pricing

Why It Matters

High-volume, advance-booked visitation, fill midweek and shoulder-season demand - predictable, reliable

Mayflower's escorted tours combine transportation, accommodations, sightseeing, guides, meals, and cultural experiences into one structured package.

Escorted Group Motorcoach Key Product Features

Travel between attractions and cities on comfortable motorcoaches, and sometimes trains, cruises or other local transport.

- Every itinerary is pre-planned and scheduled
- Narrated and enriching experiences
- Moderate to budget hotels, with breakfast, coach parking, elevators
- Seamless logistics and setting timing
- Expert-tour managers and professional local guides

Experience Elements

Curated

Local Expertise

High Quality

Structured / Predictable

Day and Overnight

EXAMPLE: EASTERN CANADA EXPLORER

Travellers depart from Buffalo, U.S. and journey by motorcoach into Ontario and Quebec, visiting regional highlights, scenic towns, and cultural sites over an-8-day programs.

The Model

Instead of travellers sourcing individual components, this example demonstrates how they assemble a fully bookable product that agents can sell with confidence.

How Escorted Group Tour Operator Specialists Work With The Travel Trade

TRAVEL AGENTS, GROUP LEADERS

Works through travel advisors and direct client relationships



TOUR ITINERARY PLANNING

Creates itineraries based on destination / supplier knowledge and client preference



SECURE SUPPLIERS

Contracts with hotels, guides, transport, and premium operators



MANAGE LOGISTICS

Coordinates bookings, timing, service quality, and risk



DELIVER THE EXPERIENCE

Supports seamless group travel throughout itinerary

Results and Value

Increased Group Bookings

Motorcoach logistics and itinerary management reduce the planning burden for both sellers and travellers.

Accessible Destinations

Tours like the example drive visitation to Canadian regions that travellers might otherwise find difficult to plan on their own.

Consistent Product Delivery

With many years in operation and structured itineraries, this operator maintains operational consistency that trade partners appreciate.

Trade Partner Confidence

Agents and group leaders choose Mayflower's tours because logistics and itinerary management reduce risk and workload.

Attractive to Travellers

Fully planned journeys with expert guides and convenient logistics create a stress-free, enriching travel experience.

AUDIENCES

Educational Group and Student / Youth Travel

Purpose-driven travel delivering off-peak visitation and future market growth

Who They Are

- Students and youth travelling in organized groups
- Typically arranged through schools, colleges, universities, and youth organizations
- Travel with educators, supervisors, and group leaders
- Participate in curriculum-linked learning experiences
- Travel primarily during spring, fall, winter

What They Want

- Curriculum-linked learning experiences
- Safe, supervised environments
- Interactive and hands-on activities
- Educational and cultural enrichment
- Affordable and well-organized travel programs

Why They Matter

- Generate high-volume group visitation
- Support shoulder-season demand
- Create repeat annual business
- Build future destination awareness
- Introduce new generations of travellers to the region

Why This Matters

By developing curriculum-linked experiences and strengthening educational travel partnerships, we can generate repeat visitation while supporting year-round tourism growth.

- Repeat annual business
- Off-season demand
- More businesses featured
- Stronger regional economic impact

Strategic Opportunity

Educational travel supports shoulder-season visitation, repeat group business, and long-term destination awareness. By aligning regional experiences with curriculum outcomes, we can strengthen year-round tourism demand and cultivate future travellers.

LEARN	RESEARCH	BOOK	EXPERIENCE	REFLECT
 • Curriculum goals • Educational outcomes • Teacher planning Learning objectives shape destination selection.	 • Tour operators • Educational programs • Destination suitability Schools evaluate destinations that align with learning outcomes.	 • Transportation • Accommodations • Attractions • Educational experiences Operators package curriculum-linked experiences into a complete program.	 • Museums • Heritage sites • Indigenous learning • Cultural and environmental education Students engage in hands-on learning beyond the classroom.	 • Classroom integration • Student projects • Long-term awareness Experiences reinforce learning and build future travel affinity.

What This Means For Operators and DMOs

- 1 Develop curriculum-link experiences aligned with educational outcomes.
- 2 Create safe, structured, and group-ready programs.
- 3 Ensure accessibility, supervision, and risk management standards.
- 4 Offer affordable pricing and educational group packages.
- 5 Build experiences that combine learning with engagement, ensuring suppliers are equipped to receive student groups.
- 6 Establish relationships with educational tour operators and schools.



NEXT UP: *Illustrative Case Study - How an Educational Travel Operator Packages and Sells Experiences*

ILLUSTRATIVE CASE STUDY

WorldStrides Educational Travel Educational Group & Student / Youth Travel



Understanding how educational group tour operators buy, package, and sell student travel experiences



Buyer Type
Wholesale /
Group Tour
Operators



Audience
Students, Youth
Groups, Educators



Travel Style
Curriculum-based
Group Travel



Best Fit For
Museums, Attractions,
Accommodations,
Restaurants, Transportation,
Retail

At A Glance

What They Buy

Group-ready itineraries, attractions, meals, accommodations, transportation

What They Need

Safety, capacity, educational value, clear pricing, accessibility, reliability

Why It Matters

Brings predictable group volume, off-season demand, and repeat annual business

A leading global educational group tour operator specializing in student and youth travel. Its programs combine curriculum-linked learning with immersive travel experiences.

Educational Group and Student Key Product Features

WorldStrides designs immersive learning experiences that connect classroom concepts to the real world.

- Curriculum-linked itineraries aligned to educational standards
- Museums, historic sites, culture, performance, hands-on workshops
- Subject-specific themes such as history, civics, arts, STEM, culture, and global learning
- Guided interpretation and behind-the-scenes access
- Structured, safe group experiences-supervision and student well-being

Experience Elements

Learning & Curriculum

Safety & Supervision

Group Capacity

Accessibility & Access

Day and Overnight

EXAMPLE: WASHINGTON, D.C. STUDENT TOUR

A typical educational group itinerary may include multi-day learning experiences connected to history, civics, and culture. Students may visit sites such as Capitol Hill, Arlington National Cemetery, history theatres, Smithsonian museums, and other significant sites.

The Model

Educational tour operators are looking for destinations and suppliers that can connect real-world places to classroom learning.

How Educational Travel Specialists Work With The Travel Trade

BUILD THE ITINERARY

Works with DMOs/RTOS attractions, venues, accommodations, dining, and transportation partners.



VET THE SUPPLIER

Looks for safety, capacity, supervision, accessibility, washrooms, group flow, and educational relevance.



CONTRACT THE PRODUCT

Secures pricing, group terms, cancellation policies, menus, room blocks, and booking timelines.



MOVE THE GROUP

Coordinates coach routing, arrival times, loading areas, timing, and duty-of-care requirements.

Results and Value

Repeat Business

Schools often return year after year when the experience is reliable and relevant.

Off-Season Demand

Student travel supports visitation during shoulder seasons and lower leisure periods.

Predictable Volume

Group travel supports workforce planning, scheduling, and capacity use.

Lower Risk for Educators

Structured programs reduce planning burden and support safety and duty of care.

Regional Economic Impact

Groups generate spending on accommodations, attractions, dining, and transportation.

AUDIENCES

Specialty and Niche Travel

High-value, interest-driven travel seeking immersive and authentic experiences

Who They Are

- Individuals and small groups travelling around a shared passion or purpose
- Motivated by interests such as culinary, culture, wellness, nature, photography, genealogy, cycling, hiking or Indigenous experiences
- Typically higher-value travellers seeking depth over volume
- Travel independently or through specialty operators
- Value authenticity, exclusivity, and meaningful connections

What They Want

- Unique and immersive experiences
- Expert hosts, guides, and storytellers
- Authentic local connections
- Small-group participation
- Personalized and interest-led itineraries

Why They Matter

- Higher visitor spending
- Longer stays and deeper engagement
- Strong alignment with wellness, culture, nature, and regenerative travel trends
- Supports premium and boutique tourism businesses
- Drives sustainable, high-yield visitation

Why This Matters

By leveraging regional strengths in culture, culinary tourism, nature, wellness, heritage, and Indigenous tourism, we can increase visitor spending, extend length of stay, and support sustainable tourism growth.

- High-value business
- Demand in all season
- Demand for all tourism sector niche offerings
- Stronger regional economic impact

Strategic Opportunity

Specialty and niche travel offers an opportunity to attract high-value visitors seeking authentic, interest-driven experiences that align with the region's unique strengths. By developing distinctive products rooted in culture, culinary tourism, nature, wellness, heritage, and Indigenous tourism, we will increase visitor spending, extend stays, and support sustainable tourism growth.

INSPIRE



- Personal passions
- Shared interests
- Lifestyle aspirations

Travel begins with a specific interest rather than a destination.

DISCOVER



- Specialist operators
- Trusted recommendations

Travellers seek experiences aligned with their passions.

SELECT



- Curated itineraries
- Expert-led programs
- Authentic local experiences

Quality and authenticity influence purchase decisions.

EXPERIENCE ADVOCATE



- Cultural immersion
- Culinary discovery
- Wellness, nature / outdoor
- Hands-on participation

Travellers engage deeply with people, place, and purpose.



- Story sharing
- Repeat travel
- Community referrals

Meaningful experiences inspire loyalty and advocacy.

What This Means For Operators and DMOs

- 1 Develop signature, experience-led products around specific themes and interests.
- 2 Focus on authenticity, storytelling, and local expertise.
- 3 Create bookable, premium, and small-group experiences.
- 4 Support hands-on participation and meaningful connections.
- 5 Package experiences around culture, cuisine, nature, wellness, and Indigenous tourism.
- 6 Align products with regenerative and community-based tourism principles.



NEXT UP:

Illustrative Case Study - How a Specialty and Niche Travel Operator Packages and Sells Experiences

ILLUSTRATIVE CASE STUDY

Insight Vacations 'Private' Specialty and Niche Travel

Serve affinity-based and special interest groups seeking premium, customized travel experiences with expert guidance, immersive access, and authentic local connections.



Buyer Type

Affinity and Special Interest Groups, Private Groups, High-Value FIT



Travel Style

Customized, Expert-Led, Premium Experiences



Focus

Culinary, Arts and Culture, History, Architecture, Wellness, Photography, Genealogy



Best Fit For

Typically Smaller than Mass-Market Tours

At A Glance

What They Buy

Curated itineraries, exclusive access, premium, authentic, expert-led products

What They Need

Unique, immersive-delivered through expert hosts, premium service, authentic community connections, exclusive access.

Why It Matters

Generates higher visitor spending per guest, encourages longer stay and deeper destination engagement

A premium small-group and private travel operator that transforms existing tours into exclusive departures or highly customized journeys tailored to specific interests.

Specialty and Niche Key Product Features

Attracts high-value travellers seeking personalized, interest-driven experiences.

- Interest-led programs
- Curated itineraries with exclusive access, expert-led experiences, and immersive local encounters
- Premium inclusions with premium accommodations, dining, and transportation throughout
- Depth and authenticity through curated activities and local connections
- Unique access and high-per-guest spend
- Expert leadership deliver seamless operations and rich storytelling

Experience Elements

Authentic connections

Cultural Immersion

Small Group

Personalization

Expert & Exclusive Access

Day and Overnight

EXAMPLE: COUNTRY ROADS JOURNEY

Showcases this operator's approach to premium travel by combining authentic local experiences, expert-led exploration, quality accommodations, regional cuisine, and seamless service. Designed for deeper cultural connections and meaningful engagement with destinations while delivering a comfortable, high-value travel experience.

The Model

Demonstrates how premium travel operators transform regional experiences into curated journeys through strong partnerships, exceptional service, and authentic local storytelling.

How Specialty and Niche Travel Operators Work With The Travel Trade

SOLD THROUGH ADVISORS

Advisors act as group organizers and client advocates.



EXPERT BRAND SUPPORT

Advisors leverage the brand, product expertise, and operational support.



STRONG PARTNERSHIPS

Works with DMOs and premium local suppliers to secure exclusive experiences and venues.



SEAMLESS OPERATIONS

Contracts and manages hotels, attractions, dining, and logistics to brand standards.



ON-TRIP EXCELLENCE

Oversees all logistics, quality control, and on-trip delivery.

Results and Value

Higher Per-Visitor Spend

Drives strong guest satisfaction, repeat visitation, and affinity-based referrals.

Supports Premium Suppliers

Generates higher spend across accommodations, dining, attractions, and experiences.

Sustainable Visitation

Attracts high-yield, lower volume visitation aligned with regional sustainability goals.

Off-Peak Dispersal

Disperses travel to off-peak times and unique venues, encouraging longer stays.

Deeper Engagement

Encourages longer stays and deeper engagement through curated, multi-day itineraries.

AUDIENCES

High-Value Travel

Higher-spend, longer stays, and greater economic and community impact

Who They Are

- Affluent travellers seeking quality over quantity
- Travel independently, privately, or in small groups
- Often book through luxury advisors and specialty operators
- Value authentic, premium, and personalized experiences
- Prioritize meaningful engagement over traditional sightseeing

What They Want

- Authentic and experience-led travel
- Premium accommodations and service
- Curated itineraries and seamless logistics
- Local culture, food, and community connections
- Experiences aligned with personal values and interests

Why They Matter

- Generate higher spend per visitor
- Stay longer and travel across multiple communications
- Support premium tourism businesses
- Drive off-peak and shoulder-season demand
- Create stronger economic and community impact

Strategic Opportunity

High-value travellers generate greater economic impact through higher spending, longer stays, and deeper engagement with local communities. By developing authentic, premium experiences and seamless visitor journeys, we will increase visitor yield, support local businesses, and strengthen year-round tourism growth.

INSPIRE	RESEARCH	CURATE	EXPERIENCE	ADVOCATE
 • Personal interests • Lifestyle aspirations • Trusted recommendations	 • Luxury advisors • Specialist operators • Destination inspiration	 • Personalized itineraries • Premium operators • Destination inspiration	 • Cultural immersion • Culinary discovery • Nature and wellness • Private and guided experiences	 • Repeat visitation • Referrals • Destination loyalty
Travel begins with purpose, passion, and personal values.	Travellers seek destinations offering authentic, high-quality experiences.	Experiences are tailored to individual interests and expectations.	Travellers seek deeper engagement with people, places, and stories.	Exceptional experiences drive loyalty and destination advocacy.

What This Means For Operators and DMOs

- 1 Develop premium, experience-led tourism products.
- 2 Encourage multi-day and multi-community itineraries, highlighting diverse, unique experiences.
- 3 Focus on authenticity, quality, and storytelling.
- 4 Support local, cultural, culinary, and Indigenous experiences.
- 5 Create bookable, commissionable, and market-ready products.
- 6 Promote shoulder-season and off-peak travel opportunities.

Why This Matters

By focusing on authentic, premium experiences and seamless visitor journeys, we can increase visitor yield, strengthen local businesses, encourage longer stays, and support sustainable tourism growth.

- Higher visitor spend
- Demand for longer stays
- Demand premium experiences
- Stronger regional economic impact



NEXT UP:

Illustrative Case Study - How a High-Value Travel Operator Packages and Sells Experiences

ILLUSTRATIVE CASE STUDY

Kensington Tours High-Value Traveller



Specializes in fully customized journeys for affluent travellers seeking personalized service, exclusive access, and authentic experiences. Itineraries are designed around the traveller's interests, pace, and preferences.



Buyer Type

Affluent FIT Travellers, Luxury Travel Advisors, Couples, Families, and Special Occasion Travellers



Travel Style

Fully Bespoke, Private, Experience-Led, Luxury Travel



Focus

Culture, Heritage, Culinary, Nature, Wildlife, Soft Adventure, Luxury, Multi-Generational Travel



Best Fit For

Premium accommodations, boutique hotels, premium experiences, private guides, exclusive venues, culinary experiences, cultural attractions, and destination experts

At A Glance

What They Buy

Fully customized itineraries - private guides, luxury, exclusive access, experiential travel

What They Need

Authentic experiences delivered by expert hosts, reliable service, and seamless operations.

Why It Matters

Generates high visitor spending, longer stays, and sustainable, high-value tourism growth.

Bespoke luxury travel for affluent, experience-driven guests

High-Value Key Product Features

Personalized luxury travel designed around the traveller's interests, combining exclusive access, expert guidance, premium accommodations, and seamless service.

- Fully bespoke itineraries
- Private guides and transportation
- Premium accommodations
- Curated cultural and culinary experiences
- Expert destination specialists
- High-touch service and support
- Flexible pacing and customization
- Exclusive access opportunities

Experience Elements

Local Authentic

Local Connections

Cultural Immersion and Culinary Discoveries

Private Experiences

Expert & Exclusive Access

Overnight

EXAMPLE: PRIVATE AND GUIDED CUSTOM ITINERARY

Travellers may experience exclusive access and expert-lead encounters, such as guided visits with specialists similar to archaeologists at historic sites, private culinary experiences, or unique transportation moments like self-driving historic routes or private vessel excursions.

The Model

Transforms traveller interests into personalized journeys through premium accommodations, expert guides, authentic experiences, and trusted destination partnerships, generating high-value visitation and deeper destination engagement.

How High-Value Travel Operators Work With The Travel Trade

LUXURY ADVISORS

Partner to target specific preferences and expectations.



COLLABORATE WITH DESTINATIONS

To identify and develop exclusive, distinctive experiences.



PREMIUM PARTNERSHIPS

Contracts with premium hotels, boutique properties, guides, transportation providers.



LEVERAGES LOCAL PARTNERS

Relies on trusted local partners to deliver consistent, high-touch service on the ground.



END-TO-END OPERATIONS

Manage logistics, quality control, and risk internally to protect guest experiences.

Results and Value

Longer Stays & Deeper Engagement

Encourages long stays and deeper engagement through customized, multi-day itineraries.

Strong Loyalty and Repeat Visitation

Builds strong destination loyalty and repeat visitation through exceptional service delivery.

Supports Premium & Boutique Suppliers

Supports a diversity of tourism businesses that offer different price levels and customers.

Seamless Multi-Stop Itineraries

Longer, multi-stop itineraries with seamless routing across the region.

Enhances Destination Reputation

Enhances destination reputation for bespoke, high-quality, and experiential travel.

AUDIENCES

Experience-Led Traveller

Seeking authentic, memorable, transformational and meaningful experiences that connect them to people and place.

Who They Are

- Experience-first travellers
- Often travel in couples, small groups, or independently
- Motivated by culture, food, nature, wellness, and local stories
- Seek authentic connections over traditional sightseeing
- Value memorable experiences over material purchases

What They Want

- Authentic, local experiences
- Hands-on participation and learning
- Local hosts, guides, and storytellers
- Meaningful cultural and community connections
- Memorable experiences worth sharing

Why They Matter

- Spend more on experiences than attractions alone
- Stay longer and explore deeper
- Support local businesses and communities
- Drive demand for authentic tourism products
- Create destination advocacy through storytelling and sharing

Why This Matters

By developing immersive experiences that reflect the region's unique identity, we can increase visitor spending, extend stays, strengthen local businesses, and create stronger destination loyalty.

- Strengthens communities
- Builds destination understanding
- Demand for longer stays
- Demand for higher visitor spend
- Stronger destination loyalty

Strategic Opportunity

Experience-led travellers are attracted by authentic local culture, food, nature, and meaningful human connections. By developing immersive experiences that reflect the region's unique identity, we will increase visitor spending, extend stays, strengthen local businesses, and build stronger destination loyalty.

INSPIRE	DISCOVER	BOOK	CONNECT	SHARE
 • Social media • Travel stories • Recommendations • Personal interests Experiences inspire travel decisions.	 • Local culture • Food and drink • Nature and wellness • Community stories Travellers seek destinations offering authentic, high-quality experiences.	 • Guided experiences • Small-group activities • Local encounters • Experience packages The experience becomes the reason to visit.	 • Meet local people • Participate • Learn • Contribute Meaningful engagement creates lasting memories.	 • Photos & videos • Reviews • Word of mouth • Repeat visitation Memorable experiences inspire advocacy and return visits.

What This Means For Operators and DMOs

- 1 Develop authentic, experience-led, transformational products.
- 2 Create opportunities for hands-on, immersive participation.
- 3 Showcase local culture, food, heritage, and nature.
- 4 Support local guides, hosts, and storytellers.
- 5 Package experiences into bookable products.
- 6 Focus on storytelling, quality, and memorable visitor moments.



NEXT UP:

Illustrative Case Study - How an Experience-Led Operator Packages and Sells Experiences

ILLUSTRATIVE CASE STUDY

Intrepid Travel 'Premium' Experience-Led Traveller

Luxury and high-value tours balanced adventure, cultural immersion, and premium service, appealing to guests seeking personalized, high-touch travel. These tours are high-yield, low-volume, and provide strong economic and reputational value to destinations and suppliers.



Buyer Type
Luxury / High-Value
Tour Operator



Travel Style
Curated,
Small-Group
Premium
Experiences



Focus
Comfort,
Authenticity,
Sustainability
and Impact



Best Fit For
Tourism businesses that offer
authentic experiences, premium
service, local storytelling, and
strong sustainability practices.

At A Glance

What They Buy

Premium, small-group journeys featuring authentic cultural immersion, exclusive access, and curated local experiences.

What They Need

Authentic experiences delivered by expert hosts, premium service, seamless logistics, and flexible customization.

Why It Matters

Drives high-value visitation through higher spending, longer stays, and deeper destination engagement.

Curated journeys for experience driven travellers who value authenticity, comfort, and positive impact

Experience-Led Key Product Features

Delivers high-value, experience-led travel that benefits destinations, communities, and the environment.

- Curated small-group travel
- Authentic cultural immersion
- Premium accommodations and transport
- Exclusive access and bespoke options
- Sustainable and responsible practices through ethical suppliers
- Attention to detail with service and support
- Flexible pacing and customization
- Dedicated tour leaders

Experience Elements

Authenticity Connected to Community
Wellness and Culinary Experiences
Ethical and responsible integration
High-touch Services
Personal and Exclusive Access
Day and Overnight

EXAMPLE: THE HARVEST TABLE

Travellers spend time on a working farm with the owners, learning how food is grown and produced. They may harvest seasonal ingredients, participate in artisan food-making, meet livestock producers, enjoy chef-led tastings, and share a meal featuring products from the farm and surrounding region.

The Model

An immersive farm-to-table journey where travellers connect with local producers, participate in the harvest, learn regional culinary traditions, and share a chef-curated meal that tells the story of the destination through its food, people, and landscape.

How Experience-Led Travel Operators Work With The Travel Trade

ADVISORS & DIRECT SALES

Works with experience-led travel advisors who organize high-value client trips.



PARTNER COLLABORATION

Builds partnerships with RTOs / RTOs, and premium local suppliers.



CUSTOMIZATION

Manages supplier agreements, transportation, and quality control for consistent service.



CONTRACT & LOGISTICS

Advisors leverage Intrepid's expertise to tailor experiences for small groups.



SUSTAINABLE ALIGNMENT

Partners are chosen based on ethical, environmental, and cultural alignment.

Results and Value

Low-Volume, High-Yield

Attracts low-volume, high-yield visitation, supporting sustainable tourism and preventing over-saturation of sites.

Strong economic Impact

Drives spending toward local communities, conservation initiatives, and responsible operator.

Purpose and Positive Impact

Supports conservation, habitat restoration, re-wilding projects, heritage preservation and community-based initiatives.

Beyond Peak Travel

Encourages travel in off-peak periods and to lesser-known regions and experiences.

Deeper Human Connection

Fosters emotional connection through mentorship, skill-sharing and authentic, cultural exchange.

AUDIENCES

Intentional Traveller

Seeking meaningful connection and positive impact on people, place, and nature.

Who They Are

- Purpose-driven travellers
- Often travel independently, privately, or in small groups
- Guided by values, not just destinations
- Seek meaningful connections with communities and culture
- Want travel to contribute positively to people and place

What They Want

- Authentic local experiences
- Indigenous-led and community-based tourism
- Conservation and stewardship activities
- Opportunities to learn, participate, and contribute
- Travel aligned with sustainability and personal values

Why They Matter

- Support local communities and businesses
- Encourage longer stays and deeper engagement
- Align with regenerative tourism goals
- Drive demand for authentic, low-impact experiences
- Create positive environmental and cultural outcomes

Strategic Opportunity

Intentional travellers seek experiences that create positive impact while fostering meaningful connections with people, culture, and nature. By supporting regenerative tourism, community partnerships, and stewardship-based experiences, we will strengthen local communities, extend visitor stays, and position the region as a leader in responsible tourism.

PURPOSE DISCOVER PARTICIPATE CONTRIBUTE ADVOCATE

 • Personal values • Positive impact • Meaningful travel goals Travel begins with intention and purpose.	 • Community stories • Conservation projects • Indigenous experiences • Responsible operators Travellers seek experiences aligned with their values.	 • Hands-on learning • Stewardship activities • Cultural exchange • Community connection Visitors become active participants not just observers.	 • Support local economies • Conservation initiatives • Cultural preservation • Community wellbeing Travel creates measurable benefits for destinations.	 • Share stories • Support responsible travel • Repeat visitation • Positive influence Meaningful travel inspires long-term loyalty and advocacy.
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What This Means For Operators and DMOs

- 1 Develop experiences that benefit community, culture, and environment.
- 2 Build authentic Indigenous and community partnerships.
- 3 Offer stewardship, conservation, and learning opportunities.
- 4 Clearly communicate impact and responsible tourism practices.
- 5 Focus on quality, authenticity, and meaningful participation.
- 6 Encourage longer stays through immersive experiences.

Why This Matters

By supporting regenerative tourism, community partnerships, and stewardship-based experiences, we can position the region as a destination that delivers lasting benefits to visitors and local communities alike.

- Strengthens community connections
- Honours culture and preservation
- Demand for immersive stays
- Demand for long-term resilience



NEXT UP:

Illustrative Case Study - How an Intentional Operator Packages and Sells Experiences

ILLUSTRATIVE CASE STUDY

Black Tomato Intentional Traveller

Travellers prioritize purpose, environmental stewardship, cultural impact, and meaningful local connection alongside comfort and exclusivity. Less focused on volume or luxury signals, and more motivated by positive contributions, authenticity, and long-term impact.



Buyer Type

Purpose-Driven /
Regenerative Travel
Operator



Travel Style

Tailor-made impact-
led Transformative
Journeys



Focus

Purpose, Conservation,
Community, Culture
and Positive Impact



Best Fit For

Small groups, Private,
and FIT

At A Glance

What They Buy

Regenerative, transformative travel experiences that combine conservation, wellness, cultural immersion, and meaningful community connection.

What They Need

Authentic local experiences, conservation and community partnerships, exclusive access, and exceptional service delivery.

Why It Matters

Attracts high-value travellers while supporting local communities, environmental stewardship, and sustainable tourism growth.

Designs highly customized travel experiences for impact-driven guests who seek to leave destinations better than they found them.

Intentional Key Product Features

Purpose-driven travel featuring personalized itineraries, immersive cultural encounters, regenerative experiences, luxury service, and expert-led access..

- Bespoke small-group and FIT travel
- Community and conservation benefits
- Place-based slow travel with depth over breadth
- Deep collaboration supplier engagement for positive impact
- Nature and Conservation-Led Experiences
- Thoughtful pacing and access

Experience Elements

Authentically Connected to
Community

Cultural Exchange

Ethical and Responsible
Integration

High-touch Services

Personal and Exclusive
Access

Day and Overnight

EXAMPLE: COSTA RICA CONSERVATION JOURNEY

Travellers work alongside local scientists on sloth conservation research and support coral reef regeneration initiatives while staying in premium eco-luxury accommodations. Throughout the journey, they learn from conservation experts, connect with local communities and ecosystems, and balance meaningful impact activities with wellness experiences and immersive time in nature.

The Model

Demonstrates how tourism can generate economic value while supporting local communities, protecting natural assets, celebrating culture, and creating meaningful visitor experiences that leave a lasting legacy.

How Intentional Operators Work With The Travel Trade

ADVISORS & DIRECT SALES

Works directly with high-value, impact-driven clients through select specialist travel advisors.



PARTNER COLLABORATION

Partners with RTOs / DMOs aligned with sustainability and regenerative goals.



EXPERT BRAND SUPPORT

Collaborates with local operators, conservation groups, and community enterprises.



MANAGE LOGISTICS

Prioritizes suppliers that demonstrate responsible practices and long-term local benefits.



END-TO-END OPERATIONS

Manages itinerary design, logistics, quality, and high-touch service for experience integrity.

Results and Value

Per-Guest Economic Impact

Generates strong per-guest economic impact while minimizing pressure on infrastructure and ecosystem.

Supports Local Communities

Directs spending toward local communities, conservation initiatives, and responsible operators.

Longer Stays, Deeper Engagement

Encourages longer stays and deeper engagement with fewer destinations per trip.

Purpose & Economic Benefits

Purpose and economic benefits for a more responsible business value system and mission.

Regenerative Mindset

Encourages travellers to leave places better than they found them.



4

TRAVEL TRADE ECOSYSTEM AND READINESS



VALUE CHAIN

Understanding how destinations, suppliers, and buyers work together to create bookable travel trade experiences

The travel trade ecosystem is the connected network of organizations that design, package, distribute, sell, and deliver travel experiences to consumers. It links destinations, tourism businesses, receptive operators, tour operators, travel advisors, online platforms, media, and visitors across domestic and international markets.

For destinations and tourism businesses, success in travel trade depends on more than having a strong visitor experience. Products must be market-ready, group-ready, priced appropriately, easy to book, and supported by reliable partners. When the ecosystem is aligned, destinations can attract higher-value visitors, extend stays, support shoulder-season demand, and generate broader economic impact across the region.

Why the Ecosystem Matters

A strong travel trade ecosystem helps destinations and tourism businesses:

- Reach domestic and international markets through established sales channels
- Convert experiences into export-ready tourism products
- Generate shoulder-season, midweek, and repeat visitation
- Create predictable volume for accommodations, attractions, restaurants, guides, and transportation providers
- Support Indigenous, rural, culinary, cultural, nature-based, and experience-led tourism
- Disperse visitors across the region and connect high-impact attractions with surrounding communities
- Strengthen destination competitiveness through coordinated product development, distribution, and promotion

TRAVEL TRADE READINESS

The Readiness Lens

The Readiness Lens helps RTO3 assess, support, and strengthen the region's ability to participate in travel trade. It identifies where businesses and destinations are already prepared, where gaps exist, and what supports are needed to move from interest to activation.



Travel trade readiness is the foundation that allows a destination to move from opportunity to activation. It ensures that tourism businesses and destination partners have the products, pricing, processes, partnerships, and sales tools required to work with travel trade buyers.

The goal is not only to help individual businesses become trade-ready, but to strengthen the overall ecosystem so the region can present coordinated, bookable, and market-aligned experiences to domestic and international buyers.

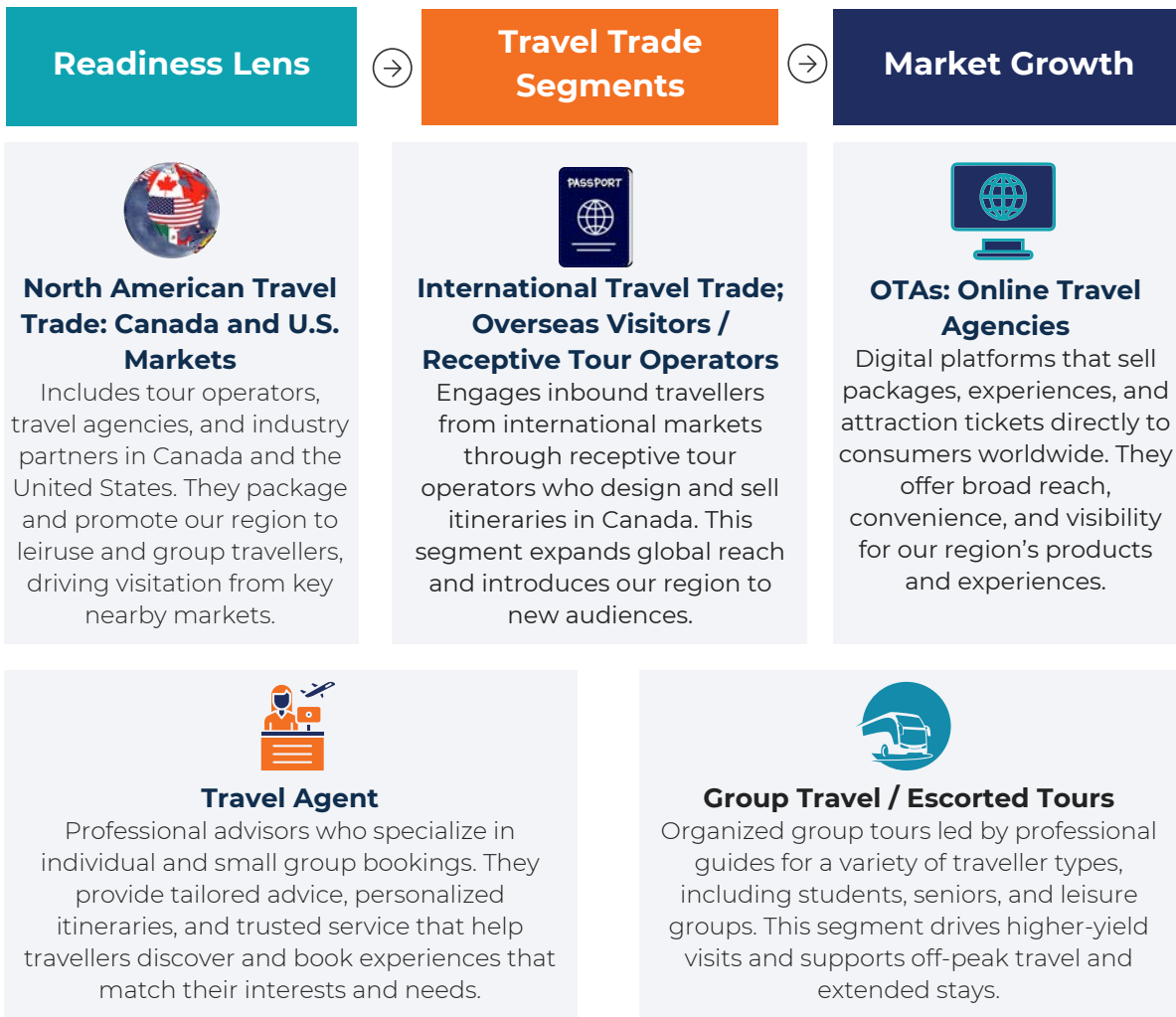
RTO3 will use a readiness lens to assess where the region is prepared, where gaps exist, and what supports are needed to advance travel trade participation. This includes identifying priority experiences, supporting supplier education, building sales tools, aligning DMOs and operators, and preparing the region for future marketplaces, familiarization tours, sales missions, media and influencer site visits, and buyer engagement.

KEY TRAVEL TRADE SEGMENTS

Travel Trade Segments: Pathways to Market

The Travel Trade is made up of multiple distribution channels, each representing a different pathway to market. These segments connect our region with travellers through a range of intermediaries, platforms, and partners who influence how visitors discover, plan, and book their trips.

Understanding these segments helps us align product development, supplier readiness, partnerships, and market engagement with the channels most likely to generate regional growth and long-term value.



Strategy Takeaway: Understanding each segment helps RTO3 and its partners align product development, supplier readiness, sales tools, and buyer engagement with the channels most likely to generate regional growth.

NATIONAL & PROVINCIAL TOURISM ECOSYSTEM

Destination Canada and Destination Ontario play complementary roles in the travel trade ecosystem by building market demand and connecting destinations to global and domestic distribution channels, while working closely with RTOs and DMOs to bring regional experiences to market.



Destination Canada (DC)

Destination Canada is the national tourism organization responsible for marketing Canada as a premier travel destination to international markets. It works closely with provincial and territorial tourism partners, industry stakeholders, and travel trade operators to develop and promote Canada-wide tourism products to grow demand. DC provides market intelligence, trade resources, marketing programs, and funding support to help destinations attract high-value international travellers while advancing sustainable and export-ready tourism.

Key Travel Trade Leisure Priority Markets

Destination Canada is broadly aligned with long-haul, high-value source markets. Their travel trade efforts emphasize both leisure and business markets. DC's international marketing and trade-development efforts are concentrated on the following core markets:

- United States
- United Kingdom
- France
- Germany
- Mexico
- Australia
- Japan
- South Korea
- China
- Canada

*<https://www.destinationcanada.com/en-ca/markets> - Appendix 2

DESTINATION ONTARIO

Destination Ontario (DO)

Destination Ontario is the provincial tourism marketing organization, focused on promoting the province domestically and internationally. It partners with RTOs, DMOs, and tourism operators to increase visitation, extend length of stay, and enhance visitor spending. DO provides market insights, travel trade resources, cooperative marketing programs, and support for product development, helping Ontario destinations position themselves effectively in domestic and global travel markets.

Key Travel Trade Leisure Priority Markets

DO targets a mix of domestic and international markets. Priority markets include: Canada (domestic), United States, United Kingdom, Germany, France, China, Australia, Japan, South Korea, Mexico

DO supports RTOs and DMOs through research-driven campaigns, international travel trade distribution and Familiarization tours, and access to in-market representatives providing us with tools to extend reach, enhance visibility, and maximize impact in key markets.

*<https://doinsights.crg.ca/en> - Appendix 2

NATIONAL & PROVINCIAL TOURISM ASSOCIATIONS

The Travel Industry Association of Canada and the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario play key advocacy, coordination, and industry-voice roles within the travel trade ecosystem, working alongside RTOs and DMOs to strengthen the business environment for tourism. TIAC and TIAO are not travel sellers, but they are essential enablers, advocating for policies, investments, and conditions that allow RTOs, DMOs, and travel trade partners to attract visitors, grow markets, and operate sustainably.



Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAC)

The national voice of Canada's tourism industry, representing businesses, destinations, associations, and sector organizations. TIAC advances the sector through federal advocacy, policy leadership, research, industry collaboration, and initiatives that strengthen Canada's tourism competitiveness.

Strategic Importance to Travel Trade

TIAC plays a national leadership role in advancing Canada's travel trade and export tourism sector by identifying international export readiness as a key priority for tourism growth. This includes support related to pricing and commission structures, packaging and itinerary development, trade-ready operations, booking processes, and market expectations. For RTO3 Hamilton Halton Brant, alignment with TIAC strengthens the region's ability to position tourism operators for inbound domestic and international market opportunities.

In partnership with Destination Canada, TIAC co-produces Rendez-vous Canada (RVC), Canada's premier international travel trade marketplace connecting Canadian tourism suppliers with global buyers. Through programs such as Export READI™, TIAC provides training, assessments, tools, and recognition frameworks that help tourism businesses become market-ready, trade-ready, and export-ready, strengthening industry competitiveness and inbound visitation growth.



Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO)

Recognized by the Government of Ontario as the voice of Ontario's tourism industry, TIAO represents businesses, destinations, associations, and sector partners across the province. It advances tourism through policy advocacy, workforce development, research, industry collaboration, and strategic leadership.

Strategic Importance to Travel Trade

TIAO identifies travel trade as a critical mechanism for growing visitation, increasing visitor yield, and expanding Ontario's reach in domestic and international markets. Through its [Forward Motion: A Strategic Playbook for Ontario's Tourism Industry 2025–2030](#),

TIAO positions travel trade as a core outreach and market development channel that supports international growth, sustainable tourism, and long-term destination competitiveness. The strategy emphasizes the importance of coordinated action across the tourism ecosystem, recognizing that collaboration between Destination Ontario, RTOs, DMOs, and industry partners is essential to strengthening Ontario's global tourism position and attracting high-value visitors.

For regions like RTO3 Hamilton Halton Brant, TIAO's strategic direction provides strong provincial alignment for travel trade development, export readiness, destination competitiveness, and industry collaboration.



INDIGENOUS TOURISM ASSOCIATIONS

The Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) and Indigenous Tourism Ontario (ITO) play essential roles in the travel trade ecosystem by advancing Indigenous-led tourism, supporting market readiness, and ensuring respectful integration aligned with Indigenous protocols and priorities. Working alongside RTOs and DMOs, they help position Indigenous experiences as market-ready while supporting regional coordination, market access, and storytelling, advancing reconciliation and sustainable tourism growth.

Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC)

The national organization responsible for advancing Indigenous tourism across Canada. ITAC works to support the development, growth, and global promotion of authentic Indigenous tourism experiences, ensuring they are led by Indigenous communities and grounded in cultural integrity, respect, and self-determination.



Structure

- (a) National, Indigenous-led organization representing Indigenous tourism businesses across Canada
- (b) Works in partnership with provincial and territorial Indigenous tourism organizations
- (c) Collaborates with national and regional partners, including Destination Canada, Destination Ontario, RTOs, and DMOs
- (d) Guided by Indigenous leadership, ensuring programs and initiatives reflect community priorities and cultural protocols

Strategic Importance for Travel Trade

Plays a critical role in enabling Indigenous tourism to participate in the travel trade by ensuring businesses are market-ready, connected, and supported, while maintaining cultural authenticity and community control. This strengthens Canada's global tourism offering and responds to growing demand for meaningful, Indigenous-led experiences.

Indigenous Tourism Ontario (ITO)

Supports the growth and development of Indigenous tourism across Ontario by building operator capacity, advancing product development, and preparing Indigenous-led experiences for domestic and international markets.



Structure

- (a) Indigenous-led, not-for-profit organization representing Indigenous tourism businesses across Ontario
- (b) Works in alignment with Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada to support national consistency and market access
- (c) Collaborates with provincial and regional partners, including Destination Ontario, RTOs, and DMOs
- (d) Guided by Indigenous leadership and community-based priorities, ensuring tourism development reflects cultural protocols, values, and self-determination
- (e) Supports a network of Indigenous operators across diverse communities and tourism experiences throughout Ontario

Strategic Importance for Travel Trade

Plays a key role in enabling market and export readiness by preparing Indigenous tourism businesses to engage with travel trade through training, mentorship, and product development. It ensures authentic and respectful representation by guiding how experiences are developed and marketed in alignment with community protocols. ITO also connects Indigenous operators with travel trade partners and supports the integration of Indigenous experiences into regional and provincial itineraries. In doing so, it strengthens Ontario's global tourism offering while advancing destination stewardship, economic opportunity, and reconciliation.

INDUSTRY REGULATORY CORPORATIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS

Travel Industry Council of Ontario (TICO)

A regulated body responsible for overseeing Ontario's travel retail and wholesale sector. It's a not-for-profit corporation mandated by the Ontario government to administer and enforce the Ontario Travel Industry Act, 2002 and its associated regulations on behalf of the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement.



Key Functions

Regulatory oversight: Registers, inspects, supervises, and disciplines travel retailers and wholesalers operating in Ontario.

Consumer protection: Promotes a fair, safe, and informed travel marketplace for consumers by enforcing compliance with provincial travel industry laws.

Travel Compensation Fund: Administers an industry-financed compensation fund that protects consumers if a registered travel agency or wholesaler fails to provide the services paid for due to insolvency or other qualifying circumstances.

Education and awareness: Educates both travel professionals and consumers about rights, responsibilities, and best practices in travel purchasing.

Who Must Register with TICO?

Travel agencies and tour operators based in Ontario must be registered with TICO to legally sell travel services in the province. Booking travel through a TICO-registered agent provides additional protections under Ontario law that may not be available when booking with unregistered entities.

TICO acts as Ontario's travel industry regulator with a strong consumer-protection mandate, ensuring that travel retailers and wholesalers operate ethically and that travellers have recourse and compensation options if things go wrong. <http://www.tico.ca>

Association of Canadian Travel Agents (ACTA)

Known as the Association of Canadian Travel Agencies and Travel Advisors, is the national trade association representing Canada's retail travel sector. It is an industry-led, non-profit, membership-based organization that advocates for travel agencies and travel advisors across the country.



Key Functions

ACTA advocates for its members by representing their interests with federal, provincial, and industry stakeholders, working to shape policies and regulations that support travel agencies and advisors. The organization also focuses on education and professional development, offering training, certification programs, and resources to elevate industry standards and enhance the expertise of travel advisors. In addition, ACTA promotes the value of using professional travel advisors to the public, positioning its members as trusted experts in the industry. It also fosters connections and networking by providing members with access to information, industry research, contacts, and programs designed to support business growth and operational success.

Role in the Travel Industry

ACTA's mandate emphasizes professional, ethical travel counselling and consumer protection, strengthening the retail travel industry's role as an intermediary between travellers and travel product suppliers. ACTA serves as the voice, educator, and connector for Canadian travel agencies and advisors, helping to ensure a strong, professional, and sustainable travel retail sector in Canada.

Canadian Association of Tour Operators

CATO is driven by a passionate group of industry leaders and volunteers who donate their time and ideas to advocate for an industry that is diverse and resilient, and provides a fair and level playing field for all parties involved.



Key Functions

The Canadian Association of Tour Operators (CATO) represents the interests of Canadian tour operators at the national level, advocating for policies that support a competitive, fair, and resilient travel industry. It promotes industry standards and best practices by encouraging ethical operations, consumer protection, and consistency across outbound, inbound, and domestic travel.

CATO engages with federal agencies and policymakers on key issues such as travel regulations, consumer protection, and industry recovery, while ensuring its members, across outbound, inbound, intra-Canada, and trans-border travel, are effectively represented within the tourism ecosystem. The association also works collaboratively with partners such as Tourism Industry Association of Canada and Destination Canada to strengthen Canada's tourism sector. In addition, CATO provides market intelligence and industry insights to help members respond to evolving traveller behaviour and global trends, and plays a critical role in supporting industry resilience by advocating for members and coordinating responses during periods of disruption.

Role in the Travel Industry

The CATO-Canadian Association of Tour Operators strengthens Canada's tourism industry by advocating for tour operators, promoting high professional standards, and fostering connections among industry players. It also supports marketing Canadian destinations and provides research and insights that help operators grow, innovate, and deliver quality experiences to travellers.



Photo @MarkZelinski.com

Ontario Motor Coach Association (OMCA)

A not-for-profit, membership-based trade association that supports and represents the motor coach and group travel industry in Ontario and across North America.



Key Functions

The OMCA Ontario Motor Coach Association is dedicated to supporting the growth and vitality of the motor coach, group travel, and broader tourism sector. It provides a unified voice for the industry, advocating for members and promoting best practices to strengthen the overall travel ecosystem.

OMCA is membership-driven, including motor coach operators, tour operators, bus manufacturers and service providers, as well as tourism suppliers such as attractions, accommodations, and restaurants. With a history dating back to 1929, the association is guided by a volunteer board of directors and continues to play a central role in connecting, educating, and advancing the interests of its members.

Role in the Travel Industry

Networking and Business Development: Organizes events like the OMCA Marketplace and the Ontario Transportation Expo, which create opportunities for operators, suppliers, and destinations to connect, network, and secure group travel business.

Advocacy and Representation: Advocates on behalf of its members with government and regulatory bodies on issues affecting the motor coach and group travel industry.

Education and Resources: Offers tools, resources, data insights in the motor coach industry, and training, including travel trade toolkits and professional development programs, to help members grow and operate effectively.

Purpose and Value

The OMCA Ontario Motor Coach Association fosters a collaborative community of businesses that support motor coach tourism and group travel, connecting operators with tourism suppliers and destinations. Through these partnerships, OMCA plays a key role in promoting group tours and motor coach travel across Ontario and beyond.

OMCA is the key industry body advancing the interests, business development, and professional standards of the motor coach and group travel sector in Ontario.

Rendez-vous Canada (RVC)

Canada's premier international tourism marketplace, bringing together the global travel trade and Canadian tourism suppliers to build business partnerships and increase international visitation. It is co-produced by Destination Canada and the Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAC) and has been the nation's signature travel trade event for five decades in 2027.

Rendez-vous Canada

Key Features

International Tourism Marketplace: Connects, over 3 days, qualified international travel buyers- tour operators, receptive operators, travel agents, and media; with Canadian sellers- Canadian business operators, suppliers, DMOs, RTOs, RTOs of tourism products and experiences from all 13 provinces and territories.

Pre-Scheduled Appointments: One-on-one business meetings are arranged between buyers and sellers to explore partnerships, product offerings, marketing strategies, and distribution opportunities.

Networking and Market Insights: The event includes networking receptions, educational sessions, luncheons, and market-specific insights, enabling participants to better understand travel trends and buyer needs.

Large-Scale Participation: Each year, thousands of delegates attend, including hundreds of Canadian tourism sellers and international buyers from key global markets.

Purpose and Value

Rendez-vous Canada is designed to facilitate meaningful business connections and long-term partnerships between Canada's tourism industry and the international travel trade. It's a critical platform for sellers to showcase products, negotiate wholesale contracts, and expand their distribution globally.

Rendez-vous Canada (RVC) in Ontario - 3-4 Year Opportunities

Rendez-vous Canada (RVC) presents a premier opportunity for international exposure, buyer engagement, and travel trade market development. With Ontario confirmed as host province in 2026, 2028, and 2030, RTO3 is well-positioned to use these milestone years to build regional readiness, prepare industry stakeholders, strengthen export-ready product development, and showcase the region through targeted pre- and post-FAM opportunities.

Attendance at RVC 2027 in Calgary, Alberta is also strategically important. As the marketplace marks its 50th year, participation as sellers will allow RTO3 and interested demand generators, and DMO partners to maintain momentum following the region's 2026 travel trade growth investments. It will also respond directly to DMO interest in being in-market for trade business and support continued relationship-building with international buyers.

Maintaining an active presence in years when RVC is hosted outside Ontario ensures that RTO3 and its sub-regions remain visible, credible, and engaged with global travel trade partners. Participation supports ongoing B2B relationship development, lead nurturing, market intelligence, and buyer confidence, while reinforcing the region's position as a desirable, prepared, and export-ready destination within Canada's international travel trade marketplace.

Bienvenue Québec

A curated B2B tourism marketplace that connects trade-ready Québec sellers with qualified domestic and international buyers to support inbound travel and commercial partnerships.



The Bienvenue Québec Marketplace is Québec's flagship B2B tourism trade event, designed to connect Québec tourism businesses with domestic, U.S.A. and international Tour Operator and Receptive Operator buyers. It functions as a structured marketplace where sellers and buyers meet through pre-scheduled appointments to develop, renew, and grow commercial relationships.

Key Features

Pre-Scheduled B2B Appointments

One-on-one meetings are pre-matched and scheduled in advance, with buyers and sellers selecting appointments based on product fit. This approach maximizes efficiency and ensures relevant, targeted conversations for both parties.

Seller Readiness Expectations

Sellers are expected to be fully bookable, priced, and travel trade ready, with clear product descriptions, availability, and commissionable pricing. Experiences must be reliable, confirmable, and suitable for resale within tour operator itineraries.

Relationship Building

In addition to scheduled appointments, networking sessions and social events provide opportunities to build connections. The focus is on developing long-term partnerships rather than one-time transactions.

Purpose and Value

The marketplace provides direct access to qualified domestic and international buyers, creating opportunities to secure distribution through tour operators and other intermediaries. It also offers valuable market insight into buyer expectations, pricing norms, and demand trends, helping operators refine their offerings.

Strategic Market Positioning and Progression

Marketplace	Market Reach	Buyer Type	Primary Outcome
OMCA	Ontario / Near Market	Bus and group tours	Volume, entry-level travel trade / Builds readiness and relationship
Bienvenue Québec	Domestic / Québec	Group and motorcoach	Regional packaging, cross-border growth / Expands regional packaging and domestic growth
RVC	International	Global tour operators	Export growth, international visitation / Delivers international market access and export growth

DISTRIBUTION NETWORK

The travel trade ecosystem is a connected network of intermediaries that work together to move tourism products from suppliers to travellers.

Wholesale tour operators contract travel products in bulk and create packaged programs. Tour operators design and operate itineraries, such as escorted tours or custom packages - by bundling transportation, accommodations, and experiences. Receptive tour operators or Destination Management Companies - DMC manage on-the-ground logistics within destinations, coordinating local suppliers and delivering the experience. Travel agents sell these packaged or custom products to consumers, providing expert advice and personalized service, while Online Travel Agents (OTAs) distribute travel products digitally at scale.

Together, this network transforms local experiences into bookable, market-ready travel products and delivers them efficiently to domestic and international markets.

Travel Trade Pricing and Commission Ecosystem Overview

Core Concept: Travel trade operates on two primary pricing models:

1) **Commission model - gross pricing:**

Supplier set a retail price and partner takes a % commission

2) **Net rate / markup model (B2B):**

Supplier provides a net rate to partner, they add markup and controls final selling price

Increasingly, the industry is shifting toward net rate and markup, especially in international and B2B distribution.

Travel Trade Distribution Channel Comparison Matrix

Category	Wholesale Tour Operator	Receptive Tour Operator	Tour Operator	Travel Agent	Online Travel Agent
Primary Role	Distributes travel in bulk	Builds in-destination packages	Packages and sells travel	Sells and advises travellers	Self-serve booking platform
Market Type	B2B	B2B	B2C / B2B	B2C	B2C
Customer Type	Mass market agents and operators	International inbound operators	Group and packaged travellers	High-touch premium complex itineraries	Independent travellers (FIT), price-driven
Access to Product	Direct contracts - bulk rates	Direct supplier contracts	Direct or via Receptive Operator	Via tour operators / wholesalers	Direct contract v/ platform

Travel Trade Distribution Channel Comparison Matrix

Category	Wholesale Tour Operator	Receptive Operator	Tour Operator	Travel Agent	Online Travel Agent
Revenue Model	Markup 25-30%	Markup 25-30%	Markup 20-30%	Commission 10-20%	Commission 15-30%
Inventory Model	Block / bulk purchasing	Block and release / on request	Block and release / allotments	No inventory	Free sell (live availability)
Pricing Requirement	Net/volume rates	Net rates	Net rates	Comissionable	Commisionable and rate parity
Booking Style	Pre-packaged / bulk	Packaged (B2B)	Packaged booking	Assisted / advisory	Instant / self-serve
Lead Time	6-12+ months	6-18 months	6-18 months	Short-medium	High
Volume Potential	Very high	Moderate - High	High	Moderate	High
Margin impact	Lowest - volume-driven	Moderate	Lower - moderate	Moderate	Lower (high commission)
Best Fit	High-capacity, standardized products	Regional integrated experiences	Group-ready, scalable experiences	Complex, niche, premium experiences	Standardized, bookable products
Key Benefit	Scale and predictable volume	Market access and packaging expertise	Volume and international reach	High conversion and trust	Global reach and instand bookings
Key Risk	Commoditization, low margins	Less control over packaging	Operational pressure	Limited control over messaging	Margin erosion, rate parity
Strategic Role	Scale and distribution engine	Gateway to global markets	Primary volume driver	Final conversion point	Demand generator / gap filler

CHANNEL PROFILE

Wholesale Tour Operator

How wholesale partners package, distribute, and scale travel trade products.



A wholesale tour operator develops packaged travel products and sells them through partners such as travel agents, OTAs, and other tour operators. They typically do not sell directly to consumers. Their role is to source tourism products, negotiate rates, package experiences, and distribute them through established sales channels.



Primary Role:
Packaging and
Distribution



Sells To:
Travel Agents, OTAs,
Tour Operators



Best For:
Suppliers seeking volume,
market reach, predictable
demand



Requires:
Net pricing, contracts,
allotments, consistent
delivery

How This Channel Works



Strategic Insight

Wholesale tour operators play a critical role in scaling distribution by positioning products across multiple markets through established trade networks.

They are particularly effective for suppliers seeking volume and consistent demand, but require competitive pricing and standardized, reliable product delivery.

This channel is best leveraged alongside other distribution channels to balance margin and brand positioning.

Typical Pricing and Commission Structure

- **Typical margin:** 25–25%+
- **Pricing model:** Deep net rates below direct retail
- **Distribution:** Sold through travel agents and retail partners
- **Volume expectation:** Higher volume potential, lower margin per booking
- **Supplier expectation:** Contracted rates, allotments, guaranteed space, clear booking terms

⚠️ Protect margin and rate integrity across channels.

What This Means for Suppliers



Provide net rates and contracted pricing



Maintain availability and communicate blackout dates



Define booking terms and cancellation policies



Supply accurate product descriptions and images



Ensure consistent service delivery and quality



Be prepared to manage volume and group demand

Key Takeaway

Wholesale tour operators can help expand market reach and generate predictable demand, but suppliers must be prepared with competitive net pricing, reliable availability, clear contracts, and consistent delivery. This channel is strongest when used as part of a balanced distribution strategy.

CHANNEL PROFILE

Receptive Tour Operator

How local experts package, contract, and deliver export-ready itineraries for international markets.



Receptive tour operators specialize in designing, packaging, and delivering travel experiences for international visitors within a destination. Working closely with local suppliers—accommodations, attractions, transportation providers, and experience operators, they create multi-day, bookable itineraries that are ready for international distribution.



Primary Role:

Packaging, contracting and in-destination delivery



Works With:

International tour operators, travel advisors, local suppliers



Best For:

International market access, scalable itineraries, export-ready distribution



Requires:

Net rates, reliability, FIT and group pricing, strong local coordination

How This Channel Works



Strategic Insight

International travel trade is built on partnership and structured distribution, rather than direct selling.

Receptive tour operators serve as the critical gateway connecting local experiences to international buyers.

Success within this channel depends on offering products that are competitively net-priced, consistently reliable, and easy to package into itinerary-ready experiences.

Typical Pricing & Commercial Structure

- **Typical margin:** 25-30%
- **Role:** Intermediary between international buyers and local suppliers
- **Pricing model:** Net rates / non-commissionable
- **Supplier expectation:** Reliable confirmations, clear FIT and group pricing tiers, export-ready product details
- **Key note:** These are among the most important partners for international markets

⚠ Focus on rate integrity, reliability, and export-ready delivery.

What This Means for Suppliers



Provide net rates and tariff-ready product



Ensure reliable confirmable bookings



Offer both group pricing and FIT pricing tiers



Prepare bookable multi-day or itinerary-ready components



Support smooth guest service and on-the-ground delivery



Be ready to work within international market requirements

Key Takeaway

Receptive tour operators are a critical gateway to international markets. They help transform local products into export-ready itineraries and connect destinations with overseas buyers through structured distribution, strong local coordination, and dependable delivery.

CHANNEL PROFILE

Tour Operator

How designing, packaging, and delivering multi-component travel experiences to global travellers.



Tour operators are a key player in the travel trade ecosystem, responsible for designing, packaging, and selling multi-component travel experiences to consumers and travel advisors. They create seamless, bookable itineraries that combine transportation, accommodations, attractions, and activities, tailored to specific markets, traveller types, and price points.



Primary Role:

Product integrator and market-maker



Sells To:

Travellers, travel advisors, groups, and other channels



Best For:

Expanding reach, increasing length of stay, and scaling visitor experiences



Requires:

Competitive net rates, reliable availability, clear terms, and consistent delivery

How This Channel Works



Strategic Insight

Tour operators are primary drivers of volume and market access, transforming individual experiences into scalable, bookable itineraries for domestic and international markets.

They are best suited for destinations and suppliers that are group-ready, consistent, deliverable, and able to offer competitive net pricing.

As a distribution channel, tour operators should be leveraged to expand reach and increase length of stay, while balancing margin considerations within a broader, multi-channel strategy.

Typical Pricing and Commission Structure

- **Typical margin:** 20–30%+ at package level
- **Pricing model:** Fixed net rates, which are confidential, with year-round pricing or seasonal rate sheets
- **Distribution:** Promote and sell travel packages directly to consumers or through intermediaries such as travel agents
- **Logistics:** Oversees all operational aspects, including reservations, bookings, and payments
- **Supplier expectation:** Inventory commitments, Contracted rates, allotments, guaranteed space, clear booking terms

What This Means for Suppliers



Offer competitive net rates



Provide reliable availability



Share clear terms and policies



Ensure consistent service delivery



Build strong, long-term partnerships

Key Takeaway

Tour operators connect destinations with global markets by packaging and delivering seamless travel experiences. Strong partnerships with this channel can drive volume, increase length of stay, and elevate the value of regional experiences.

CHANNEL PROFILE

Travel Agent / Travel Advisor

How customers access personalized service, expert guidance, and curated travel bookings.



Travel agents help travellers turn ideas into unforgettable experiences. They provide personalized service, expert guidance, and curated planning for complex, long-haul, group, luxury, and niche travel that online platforms cannot easily replicate.



Primary Role:

Final point of sale; match traveller needs with the right experiences.



Works With:

Suppliers, tour operators, wholesalers, and receptive operators



Best For:

High-value travellers, long-haul, niche, group, and premium experiences.



Requires:

Clear products, easy booking, commission, and strong supplier partnerships.

How This Channel Works



Strategic Insight

Travel agents are a critical distribution partner for destinations seeking to influence high-value travellers and longer stays.

Their recommendations shape itineraries, extend length of stay, and introduce visitors to experiences they may not have otherwise discovered.

Agents are best suited for products that benefit from storytelling, customization, or bundling, particularly premium, niche, or group-ready experiences.

Typical Pricing & Commercial Structure

- **Typical margin:** 10-20% commission, paid after travel completed
- **Role:** Curate products from tour operators, wholesalers, and preferred suppliers based on quality, commission, and ease of booking
- **Pricing model:** Often based on retail - gross pricing
- **Supplier expectation:** Commissionable rate clearly define
- **Key note:** Manage disruptions, changes, and emergencies before and during travel

What This Means for Suppliers



Provide clear product details, strong visuals, and seamless booking processes.



Ensure rates and policies are commissionable and transparent.



Offer flexible packaging options and competitive rate structures.



Provide training, updates, and resources that help agents sell with confidence.



Maintain open communications and reward loyalty and referrals

Key Takeaway

Travel agents combine expertise, relationships, and personalized service to convert interest into high-value bookings. By partnering with agents, you gain access to influential advocates who drive longer stays, repeat business, and premium experiences.

CHANNEL PROFILE

On-Line Travel Agency (OTA)

How consumers access travel through digital travel platforms for global reach and instant bookings.



Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) are digital platforms that allow travellers to search, compare, and book travel products and services including flights, accommodations, tours, and activities. OTAs provide a convenient, self-serve interface for travellers and earn revenue through commissions on each booking.



Primary Role:

Digital distribution channel that connects travellers with travel products instantly.



Works With:

Global audience with 24/7 access, especially strong for last-minute and short-duration bookings.



Best For:

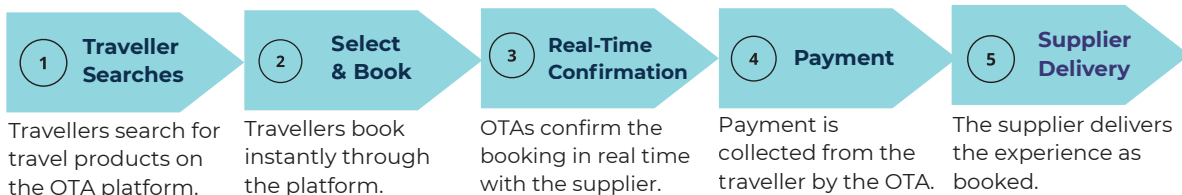
Standardized, bookable experiences with consistent availability.



Requires:

Real-time inventory, competitive pricing, seamless booking, and strong content.

How This Channel Works



Strategic Insight

OTAs are high-volume, performance-driven distribution channels that reward competitiveness, consistency, and responsiveness. They are most effective for suppliers with standardized, bookable products and the operational capacity to manage real-time inventory and customer expectations. This channel is best used to complement a broader distribution strategy, driving incremental demand, filling unsold capacity, and expanding market reach while balancing margin considerations and maintaining direct customer relationships.

Typical Pricing & Commercial Structure

- **Typical margin:** 15-30% commission
- **Role:** Intermediary between international buyers and local suppliers
- **Pricing model:** Performance-based, pay per booking, commissionable
- **Supplier expectation:** Real-time availability and instant bookings/confirmations
- **Key note:** OTAs trade margin for volume and visibility. Allow comparison of pricing, availability, and reviews; use algorithms to rank listings.
- **Content:** High-quality images, descriptions, reviews

⚠ Rate parity means no undercutting elsewhere

What This Means for Suppliers



Expand global-reach access millions of travellers worldwide, 24/7



Drive incremental demand by filling unsold inventory and increase visibility.



Stay competitive by maintaining competitive pricing and rate parity.



Deliver consistency, provide accurate availability and instant confirmation



Build strong content, use quality images, descriptions, and strong reviews



Monitor performance, optimize pricing, content, and availability continuously

Key Takeaway

OTAs offer global reach, instant bookings, and high-visibility. Success depends on competitive pricing, reliable inventory, quality content, and active performance management to grow volume while protecting margin and brand reputation.



DISTRIBUTION NETWORK

Travel Trade Distribution Network





TRAVEL TRADE SUPPLY CHAIN

Understanding the Travel Trade Ecosystem

Tourism operates through a layered distribution system that moves a visitor experience from supplier to traveller-customer.

At the foundation are tourism operators, the accommodations, attractions, experiences, events and transportation services who create the product. These products are then packaged, bundled, and distributed through intermediaries such as receptive tour operators, wholesalers, tour operators, online platforms, and retail travel agents/advisors.

Each layer adds value, from product development and packaging to marketing reach, sales representation, and risk management, ultimately connecting local experiences to global demand.

Value of the Travel Trade Market Access Strategy

This diagram provides a clear, structured pathway for tourism businesses to connect their products to the right markets, through the right distribution channels, to reach the right traveller.

The Travel Trade Market Access Strategy transforms how tourism businesses approach distribution, shifting from reactive participation to intentional, strategic market access.



5

REGIONAL BENEFITS

TRAVEL TRADE STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Why This Matters

Travel trade is continuously recognized by Destination Canada, Destination Ontario, TIAC, and TIAO as key driver of visitor growth, export development, market diversification, and year-round tourism demand.

For RTO3, this presents an opportunity to align regional investment, product development, and industry readiness with broader tourism priorities while positioning Hamilton Halton Brant as a travel-trade-ready destination.

Alignment Framework

NATIONAL PRIORITIES	PROVINCIAL PRIORITIES	RTO3 RESPONSE
Grow international visitation	Increase Ontario's global competitiveness	Build export-ready tourism products
Diversify source markets	Expand travel trade partnerships	Develop buyer-ready itineraries and packages
Increase tourism exports	Strengthen regional dispersal	Position Hamilton Halton Brant as a value-added extension destination
Support sustainable tourism growth	Grow shoulder-season demand	Develop year-round experiences and itineraries
Strengthen tourism businesses	Increase industry readiness	Deliver training, tools, and market-readiness programs

RTO3 Strategic Travel Trade Roadmap





What Success Looks Like



More Export-Ready Businesses

Operators understand pricing, packaging, and distribution.



More Buyer-Ready Experiences

Products are commissionable, bookable, and market-aligned.



More Regional Dispersal

Visitors travel beyond Toronto and Niagara Falls, discovering RTO3.



More Shoulder-Season Demand

Tourism benefits are distributed throughout the year.



Stronger Visitor Economy

Higher visitor spending, longer stays, and broader economic impact.

Strategic Recommendations For RTO3 Region

To maximize travel grade growth opportunities, RTO3 region should continue aligning regional actions with Destination Ontario, Destination Canada, TIAC, TIAO, ITO, and ITAC priorities by focusing on:



Product Development

- Develop bookable, commissionable experiences.
- Strengthen culinary, Indigenous, cycling, and corridor-based products



Industry Readiness

- Expand travel trade education
- Improve pricing, packaging, and distribution readiness.



Market Activation

- Build relationships with tour operators, receptive operators, OTAs, travel advisors, and travel media.
- Leverage RVC, Destination Ontario, and Destination Canada opportunities.



Regional Positioning

- Promote Hamilton Halton Brant as Ontario's value-added extension destination between Toronto and Niagara Falls.
- Increase overnight stays and regional dispersal through curated itineraries.



"Tourism is fundamental to Canada's economic future. When we welcome visitors to our communities, we're creating jobs, supporting small businesses, and showcasing vibrant places we all want to call home. We're uniting Team Canada to ensure everyone understands tourism's crucial role in our nation's prosperity and quality of life."

Marsha Walden, President & CEO, Destination Canada

SUSTAINABILITY AS A TRAVEL TRADE READINESS ADVANTAGE

Turning responsible and regenerative travel demand into market-ready experiences

Global travel demand is shifting toward experiences that are authentic, locally connected, lower-impact, and aligned with traveller values. As consumers place greater importance on sustainability, cultural connection, community benefit, wellness, and environmental responsibility, the travel trade is adapting. Tour operators, receptive operators, OTAs, and destination partners are increasingly looking for experiences that can demonstrate responsible practices, credible sustainability commitments, strong storytelling, and meaningful benefits for host communities.

For destinations that can deliver credible, market-ready experiences with clear sustainability practices and strong local storytelling will be better positioned to grow travel trade partnerships and respond to evolving traveller demand.

What This Means for Travel Trade Readiness

To be competitive in responsible and regenerative travel markets, experiences should be:

Readiness Elements	What It Means
Credible	Supported by certifications, standards, or clear responsible practices
Bookable	Easy to price, package, sell, and include in itineraries
Local	Connected to community, culture, food, nature, and heritage
Low-Impact	Supports shoulder-season travel, dispersion, and responsible visitor behaviour
Story-rich	Clearly communicates purpose, place, people, and impact
Regenerative	Creates positive value for communities, culture, nature, or stewardship

The 2030 Pledge: Turning Sustainability into Market-Ready Experiences

A regional approach to the 2030 Pledge provides a practical platform to align sustainability, regeneration, and responsible travel with travel trade development. As traveller demand shifts toward authentic, nature-based, community-connected, and purpose-driven experiences, the pledge can help guide how the region develops, packages, and promotes experiences that reflect these values.

Sustainable
Tourism2030

This includes supporting Indigenous-led tourism, regenerative product development, local food and cultural experiences, cycling and low-impact itineraries, shoulder-season experiences, and operator practices that contribute to destination stewardship. Tools such as the Hamilton Halton Brant Responsible Travel Video can further support this work by giving operators and partners shared language, storytelling assets, and visitor-facing messages that connect responsible travel principles with real, bookable experiences.

For RTO3, sustainability and regenerative tourism are not separate from travel trade growth; they are part of what will make the region more competitive, credible, and compelling in the marketplace. By helping operators develop responsible, locally connected, and market-ready experiences, the region can respond to evolving traveller expectations while strengthening community benefit, destination stewardship, and long-term visitor economy resilience.

SUSTAINABILITY AS A TRAVEL TRADE READINESS ADVANTAGE

How sustainability demand translates into travel trade opportunity and regional value.



REGIONAL TRAVEL TRADE READINESS INSIGHTS

As part of the growth strategy development, a series of one-to-one consultations were conducted by Alternative Sales Strategy with DMO leadership across each sub-region within RTO3. These discussions were critical in capturing on-the-ground insights, local priorities, and varying levels of travel trade engagement, ensuring the strategy was grounded in regional realities and aligned with partner needs.

Through this process, the consultant was able to synthesize a comprehensive view of the region, identifying common opportunities, shared challenges, and areas where RTO3 can take a leadership role in advancing travel trade development. This approach ensured the strategy was not only informed by best practices and market intelligence, but also co-developed with those responsible for destination delivery.

Following these consultations, all destinations within RTO3 demonstrated foundational status of readiness to support our growth in group tours and attract Canadian and U.S. tour operator business. While each DMO is well positioned for North American travel trade engagement, additional stakeholder education and capacity building were identified as key priorities to strengthen effectiveness and advance toward full export readiness for international markets.

Across all consultations, DMOs expressed strong interest in deeper engagement with the travel trade sector, particularly to grow niche, shoulder-season, and off-season visitation. Partners also highlighted a clear need to support and educate local tourism businesses on the value of travel trade, and to build the knowledge and capabilities required to become fully travel trade ready.



DMO Insights - Visit Halton Hills Travel Trade Readiness Profile

CURRENT POSITION

Developing - Niche Market Potential



Emerging travel trade destination with strong product assets and growing alignment with niche and experiential travel markets.

STRONGEST TRADE FIT



Nature-Based . Agri-tourism . Cycling . Heritage & Culture . Active Travellers . Culinary . Niche/Special Interest . FIT . Shopping

CORE TRADE VALUE



Halton Hills offers authentic rural and heritage experiences, agritourism, conservation areas and cycling routes close to major markets - ideal for experiential and active itineraries.

KEY ANCHOR EXPERIENCES



- Bruce Trail and UNESCO Niagara Escarpment
- Farms, Farmers' Markets and Agritourism
- Historic Downtowns and Heritage Sites
- Art studios and local galleries
- Conservation Areas and parks
- Events, Festivals and Cultural Experiences
- Premium Outlet shopping
- Authentic small towns

KEY STRENGTHS

- **Diverse Experience Mix:** Strong blend of nature, heritage, agri-tourism, arts and culinary experiences
- **Proximity Advantage:** Close to the GTA and major HWY 401 and 407 corridors with easy access to multi-stop itineraries
- **Authentic Communities:** Distinct hamlets and downtowns with rich history and local character
- **Outdoor and Active Travel Assets:** Bruce Trail access, conservation areas and an extensive cycling network
- **Supportive Destination Partner:** Active DMO with strong municipal partnerships and product development focus

PRIORITY OPPORTUNITIES

- **Develop Themed Itineraries:** Create package-ready experiences focused on rural, heritage, culinary, arts agri-tourism and culture and special interest
- **Grow Group and Motorcoach Visitation:** Expand short-haul group travel and multi-stop beyond GTA itineraries
- **Enhance Trade Tools:** Continue building trade-facing assets including images, itinerary ideas and operator resources and capacity
- **Increase Shoulder-Season Activity:** Leverage indoor attractions, events and festivals to drive off-peak travel

RTO3 SUPPORT ROLE

- Support packaging and itinerary development aligned with trade market needs
- Connect Halton Hills experiences to regional multi-stop routes and thematic clusters
- Provide access to trade channels, FAMs, buyer education and market intelligence
- Support operator readiness, sustainability and agri-tourism awareness



BEST-FIT TRADE MARKETS



FIT & Small Groups



Cycling & Active Travel



High-Volume Retail



Heritage, Culture, & the Arts



Special Interest & Niche



Agritourism & Farm Experiences



Culinary & Local Food



Events & Festivals



Domestic & U.S. Markets

THE BOTTOM LINE: Halton Hills has the ingredients for compelling, experience-rich itineraries that appeal to niche and active travellers. With strategic packaging, trade alignment and targeted promotion, it is well positioned to grow its presence within travel trade distribution channels.

DMO Insights - Visit Oakville Travel Trade Readiness Profile

CURRENT POSITION

Market-Ready

Well-positioned for short-haul and specialty group markets with strong infrastructure, visitor services and a diverse, high-quality experience mix.



STRONGEST TRADE FIT

Group Tours . Short-Haul Groups . Waterfront . Meetings & events . Luxury FIT . Culinary . Domestic & U.S.



CORE TRADE VALUE

Oakville offers a premium mix of waterfront, culture, shopping, dining and heritage in a walkable, accessible destination that enhances multi-stop regional itineraries.



KEY ANCHOR EXPERIENCES

- Oakville harbour and waterfront
- Downtown Oakville and heritage district
- Oakville galleries, museums, cultural venues and performing arts
- Bronte Village, marinas and lakeside parks
- Shopping, dining and local culinary scene, Michelin Star restaurant
- Festivals and events



KEY STRENGTHS

- **Diverse Experience Offering:** Waterfront parks, heritage areas, galleries, performing arts and premium district shopping create a well-rounded visitor experience
- **Premium Positioning:** Accommodations, dining, art galleries, and neighbourhoods appeal to high-value FIT and groups
- **Strategic Location:** Located immediately outside the GTA with excellent access via HWY 403, 407 and QEW, GO Transit, VIA Rail
- **Strong Visitor Services:** Established DMO with in-house group expertise, dedicated group tour platform, and active OMCA membership
- **Events and Programming:** Robust calendar of festivals, events, including off-peak culinary, and cultural programming drives year-round visitation
- **Strong Heritage Assets:** Distinct small-town heritage offers historic streetscapes, local stories, cultural landmarks and authentic visitor experiences

PRIORITY OPPORTUNITIES

- **Develop Themed Itineraries:** Create package-ready experiences focused on waterfront, heritage, culinary, arts and culture and luxury/leisure
- **Grow Group and Motorcoach Visitation:** Expand short-haul group travel and multi-stop beyond GTA itineraries
- **Enhance Trade Tools:** Continue building trade-facing assets including images, itinerary ideas, operator resources and capacity
- **Increase Shoulder-Season Activity:** Leverage indoor attractions, events and festivals to drive off-peak travel

RTO3 SUPPORT ROLE

- Connect Oakville experiences to regional themes and multi-stop Hamilton Halton Brant itineraries
- Support itinerary packaging, product development and trade-facing tools
- Provide access to trade channels, FAMs, buyer education and market intelligence
- Support sustainability and responsible travel alignment and awareness



BEST-FIT TRADE MARKETS



THE BOTTOM LINE: Oakville is a market-ready destination with premium experiences, strong infrastructure and excellent accessibility. With continued packaging and trade alignment, Oakville is well positioned to grow short-haul group travel and high-value FIT visitation within multi-stop GTA and regional itineraries.

DMO Insights - Town of Milton Travel Trade Readiness Profile

CURRENT POSITION

Developing - Active and Nature Based

Emerging travel trade destination with strong natural assets and growing appeal for active, world-class cycling, educational, cultural, and group travel.



STRONGEST TRADE FIT

Group Tours . Nature-Based .
Educational Travel . School Groups
. Heritage & History . Sport Tourism
. FIT Agri-tourism . Domestic & U.S.



CORE TRADE VALUE

Milton offers a mix of natural landscapes, heritage assets, conservation areas and accessible location - ideal for active groups, school travel and niche itineraries.



KEY ANCHOR EXPERIENCES

- Crawford Lake Conservation Area - on Niagara Escarpment's UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve, Bruce Trail
- Rattlesnake Point Conservation Area for hiking, rock climbing, escarpment lookouts
- Kelso Conservation Area
- Milton Historical Society and local heritage
- Local events and festivals
- World-class Velodrome, recreational experiences, and cycling trails/routes



KEY STRENGTHS

- **Natural Assets:** Located on the Niagara Escarpment with conservation areas, trails and outdoor experiences
- **Year-Round Active Experiences:** Hiking, climbing, paddling, maple syrup events, and winter activities support active and experiential travel
- **Accessible Location:** Conveniently located along Hwy 401 and 407 with GO Bus Transit service connecting to Toronto
- **Growing Community and Amenities:** Expanding accommodation, restaurants and visitor amenities support group visits
- **Strong Heritage Assets:** Historic downtown, village communities and cultural heritage sites offer authentic small-town character, local stories, historic streetscapes

PRIORITY OPPORTUNITIES

- **Develop Trade-Ready Products:** Package nature-based, heritage and active experiences into bookable itineraries
- **Grow School and Youth Travel:** Build on strong educational assets and outdoor learning opportunities
- **Enhance Digital and Trade Tools:** Improve online presence, trade-facing collateral and itinerary resources
- **Increase Shoulder and Off-Season Visitation:** Promote winter/shoulder-season activities, indoor attractions and events
- **Build Partnerships and Capacity:** Strengthen operator readiness, pricing strategies and booking pathways

RTO3 SUPPORT ROLE

- Support operators in product development, itinerary building and packaging for trade channels
- Connect Milton experiences to regional multi-stop routes and shared themes
- Provide access to trade channels, FAMs, buyer education and market intelligence
- Support operator readiness, sustainable practices and awareness
- Leverage unique to Milton experiences - skiing at Glen Eden downhill skiing, Velodrome cycling events



BEST-FIT TRADE MARKETS

Group Tours &
Motorcoach

School Groups &
Youth Travel

Cycling &
Hiking Travel

Heritage, Culture
& the Arts

Nature & River /
Water Experiences

Sport &
Recreation



Culinary & Agri-Tourism



Events & Festivals



Domestic & U.S.
Markets

THE BOTTOM LINE: Milton has strong natural assets, active experiences and educational appeal that make it well-suited for group, school and niche itineraries. With continued product development, trade alignment and targeted promotion, Milton can grow its presence in regional and multi-stop travel trade markets.

DMO Insights - Discover Burlington Travel Trade Readiness Profile

CURRENT POSITION

Market-Ready

Strong foundation for domestic group travel and niche itineraries with opportunity to grow export-ready experiences..



STRONGEST TRADE FIT

Group Tours . Nature-Based . Gardens . Waterfront . Culinary . Sport Tourism . Cultural . Niche/Special Interest



CORE TRADE VALUE

Burlington offers a compelling mix of anchor attractions, natural assets, urban amenities, and strong visitor infrastructure that supports group travel and shoulder-season visitation year-round. A Welcome Centre demonstrates readiness.



KEY ANCHOR EXPERIENCES

- World-class Royal Botanical Gardens
- Waterfront and Spencer Smith Park
- Mount Nemo Conservation Area and Trails - Bruce Trail
- Urban Amenities and Shopping Districts
- Rural, Agricultural and Culinary Experiences
- Up-scale hotel property on the lakefront
- Great Lakes Waterfront Trail and beach shorefront
- Art Gallery, Sculpture Trail, Museums and Heritage sites, Performing arts



KEY STRENGTHS

- **Anchor Attraction:** Royal Botanical Gardens is a premier draw for domestic and international visitors
- **Diverse Product Mix:** Waterfront, conservation, active and walkable downtown, agriculture, arts, culture, shopping, dining and events
- **Group-Friendly Infrastructure:** Strong inventory of hotels, restaurants and attractions that welcome groups
- **Established Visitor Services:** Dedicated group travel page, planning tools and experienced DMO team at Discover Burlington
- **Industry Alignment:** Active OMCA membership and engagement with group tour operators
- **Accessibility and Connectivity:** Excellent access via GO Transit - VIA Rail, major highways- 401, 407, QEW, and proximity to GTA and Niagara Falls, while 1 to 1.5 hours from U.S. border

PRIORITY OPPORTUNITIES

- **Package and Promote Experiences:** Develop trade-ready itineraries that connect gardens, waterfront, culinary, agriculture and cultural experiences
- **Shoulder-Season Growth:** Position Burlington as a year-round destination with seasonal themes and events
- **Trade-Ready Collateral:** Expand image library, sell sheets and operator-facing product information
- **Regional Connectivity:** Integrate Burlington experiences into multi-stop Hamilton Halton Brant itineraries

RTO3 SUPPORT ROLE

- Support itinerary packaging and trade-ready experience development and booking pathways
- Connect Burlington assets to regional themes and multi-stop routes
- Provide access to trade channels, FAMs, buyer educational and market intelligence
- Support sustainability and regenerative tourism alignment and awareness



BEST-FIT TRADE MARKETS



Group Tours & Motorcoach



Educational Travel



Cycling & Hiking Travel



Heritage, Culture & the Arts



Nature & River / Water Experiences



Luxury & Premium FIT



FIT & Small Group



Culinary & Agri-Tourism



Events & Festivals



Domestic & U.S. Markets

THE BOTTOM LINE: Burlington is a market-ready destination with strong group travel foundations and compelling assets. With strategic packaging, regional connectivity, and trade-facing support, Burlington is well positioned to grow its presence in domestic and international travel trade channels.

DMO Insights - Tourism Hamilton Travel Trade Readiness Profile

CURRENT POSITION

Market-Ready

Highly travel trade ready with strong infrastructure, diverse assets, and a refreshed tourism strategy focused on culture, events, sport and meeting.



STRONGEST TRADE FIT

Group Tours . Sport Tourism . Meetings and Events . Cultural and Heritage . Nature-Based . Educational Travel . FIT . Domestic & U.S. and International Markets



CORE TRADE VALUE

Hamilton offers a compelling mix of urban culture, heritage, natural assets, major events and sport, supported by strong infrastructure and a commitment to year-round visitation and multi-day itineraries.



KEY ANCHOR EXPERIENCES

- Art Gallery of Hamilton - 4th largest in Canada and Theatre Aquarius Education Centre
- Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum, and Avro Lancaster significance
- Dundurn NHS, Battlefield House Museum & Park NHS- War of 1812 significance, Nine Hamilton Civic Museums and Sites
- Royal Botanical Gardens
- Waterfalls, Niagara Escarpment, UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve, Bruce Trail
- Culinary, craft, Agri-Tourism, Michelin Guide Restaurants
- Hamilton Tiger-Cats and Major Events and Venues
- City of Music - community identifier
- Mix of Rural and Urban



KEY STRENGTHS

- **Diverse Signature Attractions:** World-class museums, art gallery, heritage sites, gardens, African Lion Safari, performing arts and unique cultural experiences
- **Natural Advantage:** Located on the Niagara Escarpment, a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve, with 100+ waterfalls, extensive trails, and access to Lake Ontario via the waterfront and the marinas; Carolinian Forests zone
- **Events and Sports Leadership:** Strong calendar of festivals, major events and professional sport - Hamilton Tiger-Cats
- **Infrastructure and Capacity:** Extensive hotel inventory, meeting and event venues, visitor infrastructure to support groups and sport tourism, and active OMCA membership
- **Accessibility and Connectivity:** Excellent access via YHM, GO Transit - rail and bus, major highways and proximity to GTA and Niagara Falls, while 1 hour from U.S. border

PRIORITY OPPORTUNITIES

- **Develop Multi-Day Itineraries:** Combine culture, heritage, nature and culinary experiences into market-ready packages
- **Expand Shoulder-Season Visitation:** Leverage events, festivals, museums and indoor attractions year-round
- **Enhance Trade-Facing Assets:** Grow image library, detailed itineraries and operator-ready product information
- **Strengthen Export Readiness:** Pursue further investment RVC and international buyer engagement
- **Leverage YHM International Airport as an Inbound Gateway:** Position as a strategic access point for fly-and-stay packages, regional touring routes and travel trade itineraries

RTO3 SUPPORT ROLE

- Support development of trade-ready itineraries and product packaging, and booking pathways
- Connect Hamilton experiences into regional multi-stop themes and routes
- Facilitate access to trade channels, FAMs, buyer education and market intelligence
- Support sustainability and regenerative tourism alignment and certification awareness



BEST-FIT TRADE MARKETS



Group Tours & Motorcoach



Educational Travel



Cycling & Hiking Travel



Heritage, Culture & the Arts



Nature & River / Water Experiences



Sport Tourism



Events & Festivals



Culinary & Agri-Tourism



Meeting, Conferences & Conventions



Domestic & U.S. Markets

THE BOTTOM LINE: Hamilton is a market-ready destination with scalable assets, strong infrastructure and outstanding potential for travel trade growth. With continued product development, regional collaboration and export readiness, Hamilton is well positioned to lead multi-day, year-round itineraries in the region.

DMO Insights - Discover Brantford Travel Trade Readiness Profile

CURRENT POSITION

Market-Ready

Established group tour destinations with strong credibility, trade relationships, and operator-friendly infrastructure.



STRONGEST TRADE FIT

Group Tours . Educational Travel . Motorcoach . Heritage and Culture . Cycling & Hiking Travel . Indigenous Tourism . FIT . Domestic & U.S. Market



CORE TRADE VALUE

Brantford offers a rich blend of heritage, culture, Indigenous experiences, and outdoor assets, anchored by the Grand River and a portfolio of attractions.



KEY ANCHOR EXPERIENCES

- Bell Homestead NHS
- Sanderson Centre for the Performing Arts
- Brantford corridor of the Grand River
- Glenhyrst Art Gallery of Brant
- Woodland Cultural Centre
- Trans Canada Trail and trail network, Brantford to Hamilton Rail Trail
- His Majesty's Chapel of the Mohawks



KEY STRENGTHS

- **Signature Attractions:** Strong portfolio including Bell Homestead NHS, other heritage sites, museums and the Sanderson Centre for the Performing Arts
- **Iconic Natural Asset:** Carolinian Forest zone, The Grand River, a Canadian Heritage River, provides a central scenic and outdoor experiences, with 3 access points, ideal for leisure and group itineraries
- **Trail Hub Positioning:** Located at the crossroads of major trail systems - Trans Canada Trail, making Brantford a key destination for cycling, walking and active travel
- **Comprehensive Group Tour Services:** Dedicated group tour website, itinerary planning support, FAM tours, collateral, motorcoach welcome programs, and active OMCA membership
- **Visitor Infrastructure and Accessibility:** Visitor and Tourism Centre within the Wayne Gretzky Sports Centre provides centralized visitor services; strong connectivity via GO Transit and VIA Rail, and HWY 403

PRIORITY OPPORTUNITIES

- **Expand Thematic Itineraries:** Develop and promote themed experiences - heritage, Indigenous, culinary, arts and culture, trails, for both domestic and U.S. markets
- **Strengthen Shoulder-Season Visitation:** Leverage events, indoor attractions and cultural programming to drive-year group travel
- **Enhance Trade-Facing Content:** Continue building imagery, itineraries and product information for receptive operators and tour planners
- **Grow Overnight Stays:** Increase multi-day itineraries and hotel partnerships to encourage longer visits

RTO3 SUPPORT ROLE

- Support packaged product development, itinerary building for trade channels, and booking pathways
- Connect Brantford experiences into regional multi-stop routes and shared themes
- Provide access to trade opportunities, FAMs, buyer education and market intelligence
- Support operator readiness on pricing, packaging, sustainability and accessibility



BEST-FIT TRADE MARKETS

Group Tours & Motorcoach



Educational Travel



Cycling & Hiking Travel



Heritage, Culture & the Arts



Indigenous Tourism



Nature & River / Water Experiences



Sport Tourism



Culinary & Agri-Tourism



Events & Festivals



Domestic & U.S. Markets

THE BOTTOM LINE: Brantford is a market-ready destination with strong group tour foundations, iconic experiences, and excellent infrastructure. With continued investment in themed itineraries and trade-facing tools, Brantford is well positioned to grow its presence in domestic and U.S. travel trade markets.

DMO Insights - County of Brant Tourism Travel Trade Readiness Profile

CURRENT POSITION

Foundational Readiness

Strong foundation for domestic group travel and growing potential for broader travel trade engagement. Well positioned to transition from foundational readiness to active participation through stronger packaging, promotion, and trade alignment.

STRONGEST TRADE FIT

Group Tours . FIT and Small Groups . Nature-Based . Heritage, River Experiences . Arts and Culture . Agritourism

CORE TRADE VALUE

County of Brant offers a balanced mix of nature, agricultural, local dining, heritage towns, arts, rural character, and river-based experiences that support authentic, place-based itineraries for group and independent travellers.

KEY ANCHOR EXPERIENCES

- Grand River, paddling experiences, and expert fishing, river access
- Paris and St. George as heritage communities
- Forest trails and rail-trail cycling
- Galleries, studios and community arts, festivals and events
- Rural landscapes, hamlets and towns, farms and agri-tourism
- Unique dining and boutique heritage hotel
- Conservation area for recreational experiences

KEY STRENGTHS

- **Diverse Natural Assets:** The Grand River, a Canadian Heritage River, established outfitters anchors outdoor experiences including paddling, fishing, trails, Carolinian Forest zone, and active itineraries
- **Heritage-Driven Communities:** Paris and St. George offer charming heritage settings ideal for walking tours, Cobblestone architecture, culinary experiences, small-group exploration
- **Arts and Culture Experiences:** Galleries, studios, art tours, and community programming provide authentic, locally rooted visitor experiences, festivals and events
- **Rural and Agricultural Character:** Hamlets, farmland, and agricultural roots create opportunities for storytelling, agritourism, and place-based tourism
- **Strategic Alignment:** Tourism development is a municipal priority, with travel trade seen as a lever for visitation, economic growth, regional positioning, and active OMCA membership

PRIORITY OPPORTUNITIES

- **Package Heritage and Nature Experiences:** Create trade-ready itineraries that connect river, heritage, arts, culinary, and rural experiences
- **Advance Group and FIT Packaging:** Further structure products for both organized groups and independent travellers, while developing tourism opportunities in the county's rural and hamlet communities
- **Trade-Ready Collateral:** Build sell sheets, imagery, and operator-facing product information
- **Regional Connectivity:** Link County of Brant more clearly into Grand River and Hamilton Halton Brant multi-stop itineraries; accessible by 403 highway

RTO3 SUPPORT ROLE

- Support itinerary packaging, experience development, and booking pathways
- Build operator knowledge and travel trade readiness
- Connect County of Brant to regional themes, FAMs, and buyer channels
- Strengthen trade-facing storytelling, collateral, and market intelligence



BEST-FIT TRADE MARKETS



Group Tours & Motorcoach



Cycling & Hiking Travel



FIT & Small Groups



Heritage, Culture & the Arts



Special Interest & Niche



Nature & River / Water Experiences



Culinary & Agri-Tourism



Events & Festivals



Domestic & International Markets

THE BOTTOM LINE: County of Brant has strong foundational travel trade potential. With strategic packaging, stronger trade-facing tools, and regional itinerary integration, it is well positioned to grow its presence in group, FIT, and nature-based travel markets.

DMO Insights - Six Nations Tourism Travel Trade Readiness Profile

CURRENT POSITION

Export-Ready Potential

Highly travel trade ready with a decade of engagement in key channels. A leading Indigenous destination with market-ready experiences and strong distribution pathways.



STRONGEST TRADE FIT

Indigenous Experiences . Cultural Tourism . Educational Travel . Group Tours . FIT . Heritage and History . Domestic and International



CORE TRADE VALUE

Six Nations offers authentic, Indigenous-led experiences rooted in Haudenosaunee culture, culinary, history, land and the Grand River - delivered with integrity and purpose. The new Welcome Centre aligns the tourism focus for visitor engagement, demonstrating readiness



KEY ANCHOR EXPERIENCES

- Chiefswood NHS - heritage significance
- Woodland Cultural Centre - leading cultural and education centre
- Mohawk Institute Residential School - important site for truth, education and reconciliation
- Historic chapel - His Majesty's Chapel of the Mohawks
- Grand River paddling experiences
- Grand River Champion of Champion Pow Wow - signature cultural event
- Unique Accommodations - Cabins and Glamping
- Arts, culture and local artists / makers



KEY STRENGTHS

- **Indigenous Destination Leadership:** Official Indigenous DMO for Six Nations, providing authentic, community-led tourism experiences
- **Established Trade Engagement:** Active member of OMCA and dedicated seller participant at Rendez-vous Canada (RVC) with strong relationships and visibility in travel trade channels
- **Market-Ready Experiences:** A portfolio of packaged cultural programs, guided tours and seasonal offerings suited to group, FIT and educational markets
- **Cultural and Educational Depth:** Experiences rooted in Haudenosaunee knowledge and storytelling, including language, history, land and traditions
- **Natural Setting:** Located along the Grand River, a Canadian Heritage River, with unique waterfront experiences

PRIORITY OPPORTUNITIES

- **Expand International Awareness:** Increase visibility in long-haul markets and through international tour operators
- **Grow Seasonal and Shoulder-Season Product:** Develop year-round programming and multi-day offerings
- **Enhance Trade-Facing Tools:** Continue building itinerary ideas, collateral and digital assets for trade partners
- **Support Capacity for Growth:** Invest in infrastructure, accommodations, programming, and experience readiness to support increased visitation

RTO3 SUPPORT ROLE

- Elevate Six Nations experiences through regional themes and multi-stop itineraries
- Provide access to international trade opportunities, FAMs, buyer education and market intelligence
- Support experience packaging, pricing strategies and accommodation experience development
- Advance sustainability, cultural tourism best practices and respectful storytelling



BEST-FIT TRADE MARKETS



Group Tours & Motorcoach



Educational Travel



FIT & Small Groups



Indigenous Experiences



Heritage, Culture & the Arts



Special Interest & Niche



Nature & River / Water Experiences



Culinary & Agri-Tourism



Events & Festivals



Domestic & International Markets

THE BOTTOM LINE: Six Nations Tourism is market-ready, Indigenous-led destination with deep cultural authenticity, strong trade relationships and a proven ability to deliver meaningful experiences for group, FIT and educational travellers. Continued investment and international visibility will further strengthen its position as a top-tier destination in domestic and global markets.



6

ABBREVIATIONS, DEFINITIONS, GLOSSARY, RESOURCES AND APPENDICES



ABBREVIATIONS

TOURISM RELATED ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

A

AAA	American Automobile Association
ABA	America Bus Association
AATC	African American Travel Association
ACME	Association of Convention Marketing Executives
ACTA	Association of Canadian Travel Agencies
ADR	Average Daily Rate
AGM	Annual General Meeting
AHMA	American Hotel & Motel Association
AIBTM	The Americas Incentive, Business Travel & Meetings International Association of Congress Centres
AMA	American Marketing Association
AMO	Association of Municipalities of Ontario
APAQ	Quebec Bus Association and Bienvenue Quebec
ASTA	American Society of Travel Agents
ATTC	Aboriginal Tourism Team Canada

B

B&B	Bed & Breakfast
B2B	Business to Business
B2C	Business to Consumer
BBB	Better Business Bureau
BAR	Best Available Rate
BIA	Business Improvement Area
BIC	Business Information Centre
BOH	Back of House
BSP	Bank Settlement Plan

C

CAA	Canadian Automobile Association
CBBH	Canadian Bed & Breakfast Hosts
CBSA	Canadian Border Services Agency
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CIC	Citizenship and Immigration Canada
CITAP+	Canadian Inbound Tourism Association of the Asia Pacific & International Receptive Market
CM	Chartered Marketer Certification
CMA	Canadian Marketing Association
CMP	Certified Meeting professional
CMP	Complete Meeting Package
COTA	Council of Tourism Associations
CRM	Client Relations Management System
CRS	Central Reservations System
CSAE	Canadian Society of Association Executives
CSP	Canadian Specialist Program
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CSR	Customer Service Representative
CTA	Culinary Tourism Alliance
CVA	Convention & Visitors Association
CVB	Convention & Visitors Bureau
CWM	Canada's West Marketplace

ABBREVIATIONS

TOURISM RELATED ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

D

DC	Destination Canada
DI	Destination International
DO	Destination Ontario
DT	Destination Toronto
DMAI	Destination Management Association International
DMC	Destination Management Company
DMF	Destination Marketing Fee
DMO	Destination Marketing Organization
DMP	Daily Meeting Package
DNO	Destination Northern Ontario
DOS	Director of Sales

F

FAM	Familiarization Tours
FCM	Federation of Canadian Municipalities
FIT	Free Independent Travel
FIT	Foreign Independent Travel
FIT	Fully Independent Travel
FOBBA	Federation of Ontario Bed & Breakfast Association
FOH	Front of House

G

GBTA	Global Business Travel Association
GDS	Global Distribution Service
GIT	Group Incentive Tour
GMIC	Green Meeting Industry Council
GS	Guest Services
GSA	Guest Service Agent or Global Sales Agent
GSM	Guest Service Manager
GSO	Global Sales Office

H

HAC	Hotel Association of Canada
HSMAI	Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International
HST	Harmonized Sales Tax

ABBREVIATIONS

TOURISM RELATED ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

I

IAAMC	International Association of Management Companies
IACC	International Association of Conference Centres
IACVB	International Association of Convention and Visitor Bureaus
IAMC	Institute of Association Management Companies
IATA	International Air Transport Association
ICCA	International Convention Centres Association
IFEA	International Festival and Events Association
IITO	International Inbound Tour Operator
IMEX	International Meetings Exhibitors
IMG	International Motor Coach Group
IMN	International Motor Coach Network
ITAC	Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada
ITB	Internationale Tourismus-Borse/International Tourism Exchange
ITO	Indigenous Tourism Ontario

K

KPI	Key Performance Indications
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L

LCC	Low Cost Carrier
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M

MAT	Municipal Accommodation Tax
MC&IT	Meetings, Conventions & Incentive Travel
MCC	Motor Coach Canada
MICE	Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions
MLOS	Minimum Length of Stay
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding

N

NBTA	National Bus Traffic Association
NET	NET Rate (the price before you add commissions, taxes, fees)
NOTO	Northern Ontario Tourist Outfitters
N/S	No Show
NTA	National Tour Association

O

OCC	Ontario Chamber of Commerce
OCITOA	Ontario Chinese Inbound Tour Operators Association
OMCA	Ontario Motorcoach Association
OTE	Ontario Transportation Expo
OTEC	Ontario Tourism Education Corporation
OTIC	Ontario Travel Information Centre
OTA	On-line Travel Agency

ABBREVIATIONS

TOURISM RELATED ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

P

Pax	Passengers
PBA	Pennsylvania Bus Association
PCMA	Professional Convention Management Association
PNR	Passenger Name Record
PTO	Provincial Tourism Organization

R

RCMA	Religious Conference Management Associations
RDMO	Regional Destination Marketing Association
Retail Rate	The published rate to the consumer
RFP	Request for Proposal
RevPar	Revenue Per Available Room
ROI	Return on Investment
RRW	Resort Reservations World-wide
RVC	Rendezvous Canada
RTO	Regional Tourism Organization
RTO	Receptive Tour Operators

S

SIG	Special Interest Group
SITE	Site inspection
SITE	Society of Incentive and Travel Executives
SMERF	Social, Military, Educational, Religious, Fraternal Groups
SRP	Special Rate Plan
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
SYTA	Student Youth Travel Association

T

TA	Travel Agent
TIAC	Tourism Industry Association of Canada
TIAO	Tourism Industry Association of Ontario
TIC	Tourist Information Centre
TICO	Tourism Industry Council of Ontario
TIF	Tax Incremental Financing
TMAC	Travel Media Association of Canada
TQM	Total Quality Management
TREIM	Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model
TTL	Ticket Time Limited
TTRA	Travel & Tourism Research Association

ABBREVIATIONS

TOURISM RELATED ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

U

UMA	United Motorcoach Association
USCC	United States Chamber of Commerce
USTOA	United States Tour Operators Association

V

VAT	Value Added Tax
VCB	Visitors and Convention Bureau
VFR	Visiting Friends and Relatives
VIC	Visitor Information Centre or Visitor Information Councillor
Voucher	A document/proof of payment that the tour operator gives the guests/group to use to as payment for the service being provided on-site

W

WL	Waitlist
WTO	World Tourism Organization
WTD	World Tourism Day
WTTC	World Travel and Tourism Council
WTM	World Travel Mart



DEFINITIONS

2030 PLEDGE

A commitment by destinations and tourism businesses to take measurable action toward more sustainable and regenerative tourism by 2030.

AGENT

A person or company authorized to promote and sell a tourism supplier's product or service on their behalf, such as a travel agent, tour operator, wholesaler, or receptive tour operator.

AGRITOURISM

A tourism experience focused on agriculture and rural life, such as farm tours, farmers' markets, growers and producers, wineries, breweries, meaderies, distilleries, farm-based events, and related artisan or culinary experiences.

ALLOTMENT

A pre-negotiated number of seats, rooms, vehicles, or other inventory held by a wholesaler or inbound tour operator for sale within a set period.

ATTRACTIONS

Tourism products or places that appeal to visitors and encourage visitation, such as museums, historic sites, performing arts venues, conservation areas, waterparks, entertainment centres, and other visitor experiences.

BESPOKE ITINERARY

A custom-designed travel plan tailored to the specific interests, preferences, and needs of an individual or group.

BILLING

A payment arrangement that allows a receptive tour operator or tour operator to pay the tourism supplier after the client has used the booked services.

BLACKOUT PERIOD

A period when a supplier temporarily restricts travel trade rates, commissions, discounts, or inventory access, usually due to high demand, special events, holidays, or limited availability.

BLOCK OR BLOCKED SPACE

A set number of rooms, seats, or spaces reserved in advance by a travel trade buyer, such as a wholesaler, tour operator, or travel agent, to secure inventory for a package or group program. Blocked space is typically negotiated with the supplier and may include deposit, release, and cancellation terms.

BOOKING

A confirmed reservation or purchase of a tourism product or service, such as accommodation, attraction admission, transportation, dining, or a guided experience.

BRAND

The recognizable identity of a product, service, business, or destination, shaped by its name, logo, visual style, messaging, reputation, and the associations people connect with it.

BUYER

A tour operator or travel trade partner interested in purchasing or packaging a tourism supplier's product or service as part of a tour, itinerary, or travel program.

CLIENT

A customer of a tourism business or supplier, which may include an individual traveller, group, tour operator, wholesaler, travel agent, or other travel trade partner.

COMMISSION

A payment made by a tourism supplier to a travel agent, tour operator, or other sales partner for selling their product or service. Commission is usually calculated as a percentage of the retail price or total booking value.

DEFINITIONS

COMP POLICY

A supplier's policy for providing complimentary items, such as rooms, meals, tickets, or airfare, in recognition of group business. Comps are often offered at a set ratio, such as 1 per 20 or 2 per 40 paid guests, and typically apply to the tour escort and driver.

COMPLIMENTARY ROOM

A guest room provided at no charge, often offered as part of a group booking agreement or comp policy.

COMPONENT

An individual travel service or experience, such as accommodation, transportation, meals, attractions, or guided tours, that can be combined with other elements to create a package or itinerary.

CO-OPERATIVE ADVERTISING

Advertising that is jointly funded by two or more partners to promote a shared product, experience, destination, campaign, or travel package.

CULINARY TOURISM

A form of tourism where food, beverage, and local flavours are a central part of the visitor experience, including restaurants, farms, markets, food tours, cooking classes, breweries, wineries, distilleries, and other taste-of-place experiences.

CONFIRMATION

A written notice that verifies travel arrangements, reservations, or services have been booked. It is typically sent by email or issued through a booking system and may include a confirmation or authorization number.

DEPOSIT POLICY

A supplier's payment requirement outlining the amount or percentage due in advance to secure a booking, along with the date it must be paid before arrival or service delivery.

DISTRIBUTION

The sales channels through which a tourism product or service is made available for purchase, such as direct bookings, travel agents, tour operators, receptive tour operators, wholesalers, OTAs, or other third-party sellers.

DMO (DESTINATION MARKETING ORGANIZATION)

An organization responsible for promoting and supporting a specific destination, such as a country, province, region, city, territory, or community. DMOs are often non-profit organizations and may be funded through government support, membership fees, municipal accommodation taxes, chambers of commerce, or other tourism-related partnerships.

EXPORT READY

A tourism business that is prepared to work with domestic and international travel trade partners. Export-ready businesses understand trade distribution channels, offer commissionable or net rate pricing, provide clear booking and cancellation policies, and can respond to buyer expectations with reliable service and advance planning.

ECOTOURISM

A responsible form of nature-based tourism that focuses on experiencing natural areas while supporting environmental conservation, cultural understanding, and appreciation for local ecosystems and communities.

EDUCATIONAL VISITS

Hosted visits that allow travel trade partners, media, or industry stakeholders to experience a tourism product first-hand, increasing their product knowledge and ability to promote, sell, or recommend the experience.

FAMILIARIZATION TOUR (FAM)

A complimentary or reduced-rate hosted visit designed to introduce travel trade partners, media, or influencers to a destination, attraction, accommodation, or experience. FAM tours help participants better understand the product so they can promote, sell, or package it more effectively.

DEFINITIONS

FIT

An acronym for Fully Independent Travel or Free Independent Traveller, referring to individual travellers or small parties who travel independently rather than as part of an organized group tour.

FIT TRAVELLER

An independent traveller who is not part of an organized group tour. FIT travellers may book their travel services directly with tourism businesses or through a travel agent, tour operator, or online booking platform.

FLY DRIVE

A travel package that includes airfare and a rental vehicle, giving travellers the flexibility to arrive by air and explore the destination independently by car.

FRONTLINE STAFF

Staff who interact directly with customers or travellers, such as retail travel agents, reservations staff, visitor services teams, ticketing staff, and guest service representatives.

GATEWAY

A primary entry point into a destination or region, such as an airport, border crossing, train station, ferry terminal, or major highway corridor, where travellers typically arrive or begin their visit.

GROSS RATE

The full published retail price charged to the consumer for a tourism product or service, before any commissions, discounts, or negotiated trade rates are applied. Also known as the retail rate, rack rate, or door rate.

GROUP LEADER

The person responsible for accompanying and supporting travellers during a group tour. The group leader serves as the main point of contact for participants while on tour and often coordinates with the tour operator, guide, driver, and suppliers to help ensure the itinerary runs smoothly.

INBOUND TOUR OPERATOR

A travel trade company that specializes in developing, packaging, and managing travel services for visitors coming into a destination. This may include accommodations, transportation, airport transfers, attractions, sightseeing, dining, and itinerary coordination for tour operators, wholesalers, or travel agents. Also known as a Receptive Tour Operator (RTO).

INDUSTRY

The collective network of businesses, organizations, and partners involved in tourism, including product suppliers, accommodations, attractions, transportation providers, restaurants, tour operators, travel agents, receptive operators, wholesalers, and destination organizations.

INCENTIVE TRAVEL

A travel experience offered as a reward or recognition for performance, often provided to top-performing employees, sales teams, dealers, or business partners.

LONG HAUL TRAVEL

International travel to a destination that is typically five or more hours from the traveller's point of origin. For example, Germany or China would be considered a long-haul market for travel to Canada.

LOW SEASON

The period when a destination or tourism business experiences lower visitor demand, fewer bookings, and often reduced prices compared to peak travel periods.

MEET AND GREET SERVICE

A pre-arranged welcome service where clients or groups are greeted upon arrival at a designated location, such as an airport, visitor centre, hotel, attraction, or event venue. This service may include orientation, check-in support, itinerary information, or assistance with next steps.

DEFINITIONS

MEETING AND INCENTIVE PLANNERS

Professionals who plan, organize, and manage meetings, conferences, incentive travel programs, and special events, including logistics, accommodations, venues, activities, transportation, and attendee experiences.

MOTORCOACH

A comfortable, full-size passenger vehicle used in group tour programs to transport travellers between destinations, attractions, accommodations, and experiences. A standard motorcoach typically seats up to 56 passengers.

MOTORCOACH TOUR

A group tour where a motorcoach is the primary mode of transportation between destinations, accommodations, attractions, dining stops, and experiences.

MULTI-DAY TOUR

A travel package that takes place over two or more days and typically includes multiple components, such as accommodations, transportation, meals, attractions, and guided experiences. Many multi-day tours are escorted and packaged as inclusive itineraries.

NEGOTIATED RATE

A discounted rate agreed upon between a tourism supplier and a travel trade partner or company, often based on expected volume, repeat business, or the value of the partnership.

NET RATE

The price offered to a travel trade partner after commission or discounts have been removed from the gross rate. It is the amount the tourism supplier receives from the agent, tour operator, or wholesaler.

NON-REFUNDABLE TICKET

A ticket that cannot be refunded for cash or credit once purchased. In some cases, changes may be permitted for a fee, subject to the supplier's terms and conditions.

ONLINE DISTRIBUTION

The use of websites, online booking platforms, OTAs, and digital marketplaces to promote, sell, or distribute a tourism product or service to consumers.

ONLINE TRAVEL AGENT (OTA)

An online booking platform that allows consumers to search live availability, compare pricing, and book travel products or services in real time through the OTA's website or app.

OPERATOR

The owner, manager, or organization responsible for delivering and managing a tourism product, service, attraction, or experience.

PAX

A common travel industry abbreviation for "passengers," used to refer to the number of travellers, guests, or participants in a booking, tour, or group itinerary.

PEAK SEASON

The period of the year when a destination experiences its highest visitor demand, resulting in increased prices, strong occupancy, limited availability, and larger crowds.

PLATFORMS / METHODS OF SELLING

The channels and tools travel trade partners use to promote and sell tourism products to their customers. Understanding these platforms helps suppliers support trade partners, increase visibility, and ensure their products can be packaged, promoted, and sold effectively.

DEFINITIONS

PRODUCT MANAGER

The person responsible for researching, selecting, and managing the tourism products, experiences, and suppliers that a tour operator, wholesaler, or travel company will package, promote, and sell.

PREFORMED GROUP

An existing group of travellers who share a common interest, affiliation, or organization, such as travel clubs, seniors' groups, alumni groups, faith groups, hobby groups, or other affinity-based groups.

RATE PARITY

A contractual agreement in the hospitality industry requiring hotels to maintain consistent room rates across all booking channels.

REGENERATIVE TRAVEL

A form of travel that aims to leave a destination better than it was found by supporting the long-term wellbeing of local communities, cultures, economies, and natural environments. It goes beyond reducing negative impacts by actively contributing to restoration, stewardship, and positive change.

RENDEZ-VOUS CANADA (RVC)

Canada's premier international tourism marketplace, delivered by Destination Canada and the Tourism Industry Association of Canada. RVC uses a pre-scheduled appointment format to connect international travel buyers with Canadian tourism suppliers, creating opportunities to build relationships, promote products, and generate travel trade business.

RETAIL TRAVEL AGENT

A travel advisor who works directly with consumers to help them plan and book travel products or packages. Retail travel agents may book through wholesalers, tour operators, online platforms, or directly with tourism suppliers.

RevPAR

Revenue Per Available Room is a hotel performance metric that measures how much revenue is generated per available guest room. It is calculated by multiplying the Average Daily Rate (ADR) by the occupancy rate.

ROOMING LIST

The list of names or passengers on a tour or other group travel program, submitted to a hotel.

RTO (RECEPTIVE TOUR OPERATOR)

A travel trade company that specializes in arranging and managing local destination services for incoming visitors on behalf of tour operators, wholesalers, or travel agents. Services may include accommodations, transportation, airport transfers, attractions, sightseeing, dining, guides, and itinerary coordination.

RTO (REGIONAL TOURISM ORGANIZATION)

An organization responsible for supporting tourism development, marketing, partnerships, and visitor economy growth within a defined geographic region. RTOs work with destination organizations, municipalities, tourism businesses, and industry partners to strengthen regional tourism competitiveness and collaboration.

SALES CALLS

Meetings with travel trade partners, such as travel agents, tour operators, wholesalers, or receptive operators, to build relationships, share product updates, provide training, discuss market opportunities, and negotiate rates or partnership terms.

SEASONALITY

The predictable fluctuation of visitor demand throughout the year, where tourism activity increases or decreases during certain seasons, months, holidays, or events.

SELL AND REPORT

An arrangement that allows a receptive tour operator or tour operator to sell a tourism product without requesting advance confirmation from the supplier for each booking. The operator reports confirmed sales to the supplier on the same day, based on agreed terms and available inventory.

DEFINITIONS

SHORT HAUL TRAVEL

International travel to a destination that is relatively close to the traveller's point of origin, typically within a few hours of travel time. For example, Atlanta may be considered a short-haul market for travel to Canada.

SHOULDER SEASON

The period between a destination's peak and off-peak seasons, when visitor demand is moderate. Shoulder season often offers favourable weather, better availability, fewer crowds, and more competitive pricing than peak season.

SLOW TOURISM

A style of travel that encourages a more relaxed pace, deeper connection, and meaningful immersion in a destination's local culture, community, landscapes, and way of life.

STEP-ON GUIDE

A local guide who joins a motorcoach for a specific portion of a tour to provide expert commentary, storytelling, historical context, cultural insights, or destination interpretation.

SUPPLIER

A tourism business that provides products, services, or experiences for travellers, either sold directly or through travel trade partners.

TARGET AUDIENCE / MARKET

A specific group of potential customers that a tourism business or destination aims to reach through its marketing, sales, and product development efforts. This group may be defined by demographics, interests, travel behaviours, motivations, geography, lifestyle, or purchasing patterns.

TARIFF

A schedule of wholesale rates distributed in confidence to travel wholesalers and travel agents by a receptive tour operator or tourism supplier. A list of prices; often "Confidential Tariff" or wholesales Catalogue used by Receptive Tour Operators to sell their product to tour operators or travel agencies and travel consortia; not available to consumers.

TIAC (TOURISM INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION OF CANADA)

The national industry association representing Canada's tourism sector. TIAC advocates on behalf of tourism businesses and organizations, supports industry development, and delivers programs, resources, and events that strengthen Canada's visitor economy.

TIAO (TOURISM INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO)

The provincial industry association representing Ontario's tourism sector. TIAO advocates on behalf of tourism businesses and organizations, provides industry resources and research, and supports policies, partnerships, and programs that strengthen Ontario's visitor economy.

TIERED PRICING

A pricing structure that provides different net rates or commission levels to various travel trade partners, such as receptive operators, tour operators, wholesalers, travel agents, or group leaders. Each tier allows the appropriate partner to earn a margin for their role in marketing, packaging, selling, or managing the product, while maintaining the published retail rate for consumers.

TRAVEL CONSORTIA

A network of independent travel agencies, advisors, or travel companies that work together to increase buying power, expand marketing reach, and negotiate preferred rates, commissions, benefits, or exclusive offers with tourism suppliers such as hotels, cruise lines, tour operators, and destinations.

TOUR ITINERARY

A detailed day-by-day schedule outlining the activities, destinations, accommodations, transportation, meals, attractions, and experiences included in a tour.

DEFINITIONS

TOUR OPERATOR

A travel company that develops, packages, markets, and operates travel programs, often for one inclusive price. Tour operators may combine transportation, accommodations, attractions, sightseeing, meals, guides, and other experiences into a complete itinerary, sold directly to consumers or through travel agents and other travel trade partners. Also sometimes referred to as a tour wholesaler.

TOUR SERIES

A set of multiple tour departures offered throughout the year using the same or similar itinerary, destination, routing, and package components.

TOURISM SUPPLY CHAIN

The network of businesses, organizations, and partners involved in creating, delivering, marketing, and selling tourism products and experiences. This may include accommodations, attractions, restaurants, guides, transportation providers, activity operators, destination organizations, tour operators, wholesalers, travel agents, and other distribution partners.

TOURISM SUPPLIER / SELLER

A business or organization that provides a tourism product, service, or experience that can be sold directly to visitors or through travel trade partners. Examples include accommodations, attractions, restaurants, transportation providers, guides, venues, and experience operators.

TRADE SHOW / MARKETPLACE

An industry-only event where tourism suppliers, destinations, and travel trade buyers meet to build relationships, promote products, discuss opportunities, and generate business. Participation is often by invitation or registration and may include appointments, networking, presentations, and product showcases.

TRANSFERS

Pre-arranged local transportation that moves travellers between key points in an itinerary, such as an airport, train station, hotel, attraction, restaurant, or experience. Tour contracts should specify the type of transportation provided, such as private vehicle, shuttle, or motorcoach, and whether escort or meet-and-greet service is included.

TRAVEL AGENT

A travel professional who helps individuals or groups plan and book travel services, such as accommodations, transportation, attractions, tours, cruises, and packages. Travel agents may be generalists or specialize in areas such as luxury travel, cruises, groups, or specific destinations. They may work independently, from home, or as part of an agency, chain, or travel consortia, and are often compensated through supplier commissions.

TRAVEL DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM

The network of travel trade, online platforms, and sales channels that connect tourism suppliers with consumers, allowing travellers to research, compare, book, and purchase travel products locally, nationally, or internationally.

TRAVEL PRODUCT

Any tourism service, experience, or package that can be sold to or purchased by travellers. Examples include accommodations, guided tours, attractions, experiences, events, festivals, restaurants, food and beverage services, transportation, and other visitor activities.

TRAVEL TRADE

The network of businesses and intermediaries that help package, promote, sell, and distribute tourism products to travellers. This typically includes receptive tour operators, tour operators, wholesalers, travel agents, online travel agents, and other sales partners.

UNIQUE SELLING PROPOSITION

The distinct feature, benefit, or value that sets a product, experience, or destination apart from its competitors.

TRAVEL MEDIA GLOSSARY

ART DIRECTOR

The person responsible for overseeing the visual style, layout, and creative presentation of a publication, campaign, website, advertisement, or media outlet. An art director ensures the design, imagery, typography, and overall look align with the brand and communication goals.

ASSIGNMENT

A story, article, photo shoot, video, or content project assigned to a media professional by an editor or publication, usually with a specific topic, angle, deadline, and deliverables.

ASSIGNMENT LETTER

A letter from an editor or publisher confirming that a journalist has been assigned to cover a specific story, topic, or destination.

AUDIENCE DEMOGRAPHICS

Data that describes a media outlet's audience, including characteristics such as age, income, location, interests, lifestyle, and travel behaviours.

BEAT

A journalist's area of focus or specialization, such as travel, food, outdoor adventure, culture, or sustainability.

BLOG

A regularly updated website or digital platform featuring written content, often focused on topics such as travel, food, lifestyle, culture, or experiences. Blogs may be independent or part of a larger media outlet.

BROADCAST MEDIA

Television, radio, or streaming programs that feature travel-related stories, interviews, destination profiles, or tourism experiences.

B-ROLL

Supplemental, unedited broadcast-quality video footage used to support a story, interview, or destination feature.

BYLINE

The name of the journalist credited with writing an article. Bylines can help identify media contacts who regularly cover relevant topics.

CASL

Canada's Anti-Spam Legislation, which sets rules for sending commercial electronic messages, including requirements for consent, identification, and unsubscribe options.

CIRCULATION

The number of copies a print publication distributes. For digital media, circulation is often measured through monthly unique visitors, page views, or audience reach.

CLIPPINGS

Copies or links to published media coverage, such as articles in newspapers, magazines, or online outlets. Also known as tear-sheets.

CONSUMER PUBLICATION

A general-interest or specialty publication written for the public, rather than for industry or trade audiences.

CONTENT CREATOR

A person who produces digital content, such as videos, photos, blogs, or social posts, for platforms like Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, or other online channels.

CUTLINE

A caption that describes or provides context for a photograph, illustration, or graphic.

EDITOR

The person responsible for overseeing, selecting, assigning, and shaping the editorial content of a publication, media outlet, or platform.

TRAVEL MEDIA GLOSSARY

EDITORIAL COVERAGE (EARNED MEDIA)

Unpaid media exposure gained through newsworthy stories, media relationships, press outreach, or hosted experiences rather than paid advertising.

EDITORIAL CALENDAR

A publication's planning schedule that outlines upcoming themes, topics, deadlines, and issue dates.

EMBARGO

A request or agreement that information not be published or shared publicly until a specified date and time.

ENGAGEMENT RATE

A social media metric that measures how actively an audience interacts with content, such as likes, comments, shares, saves, or clicks, in relation to followers, reach, or impressions.

FACT CHECKER

A person who verifies the accuracy of story details, facts, names, dates, quotes, and sources before publication

FAM TRIP / FAMILIARIZATION TRIP

A hosted visit that gives journalists, content creators, or travel trade partners first-hand experience with a destination, attraction, accommodation, or tourism experience.

FIXER

A local contact who coordinates on-location logistics for a television, film, or media crew, such as permits, access, schedules, contacts, and production support.

FREELANCER

An independent journalist, writer, photographer, or content creator who develops and sells stories or assignments to multiple publications or media outlets.

IMPRESSIONS

The total number of times content is displayed or viewed, including repeat views by the same person

INFLUENCER

A digital content creator with an established online audience who can shape awareness, interest, or travel decisions through social media storytelling.

KEY MESSAGES

Clear, consistent statements that communicate an organization's main value, positioning, priorities, or story to its target audiences.

LEAD TIME

The amount of time between developing or pitching a story and when it is published or aired.

LEDE

The opening sentence or paragraph of an article or press release, designed to capture attention and introduce the main story.

MASTHEAD

A section of a newspaper, magazine, or publication that lists key information such as the title, ownership, editors, staff, and publication details.

MEDIA KIT / PRESS KIT

A collection of materials provided to media, typically including key messages, background information, high-resolution images, and fact sheets.

MEDIA PTICH

A targeted message sent to a journalist, editor, or media outlet to propose a story idea, interview, destination angle, or coverage opportunity.

MEDIA RELATIONS

The practice of building relationships with journalists, editors, and media outlets to share news, story ideas, and information about a product, destination, or organization. Also known as public relations (PR).

TRAVEL MEDIA GLOSSARY

MEDIA VETTING

The process of reviewing a journalist, media outlet, or influencer to assess credibility, audience fit, content quality, professionalism, and alignment with campaign goals.

MEDIA VISIT

A hosted trip that introduces travel media to a destination, attraction, accommodation, or tourism experience first-hand. Also known as a press trip or FAM trip.

NEWS WIRE

A digital news distribution service that sends timely news releases, stories, updates, and information to media outlets for potential publication or broadcast.

PITCH

A concise story idea or angle presented to a journalist, editor, or media outlet for potential coverage.

PRESS KIT

A collection of media-ready materials that provides journalists with key information, story angles, images, background details, contacts, and other resources to support coverage.

PRESS RELEASE

A formal written announcement shared with media to communicate news, updates, events, launches, or key organizational information.

PRESS TRIP

A hosted visit that introduces travel media to a destination, attraction, accommodation, or tourism experience first-hand. Also known as a media visit or FAM trip.

PUBLIC RELATIONS (PR)

The practice of building relationships and sharing news, information, and story opportunities to shape public awareness and media coverage. Also known as media relations.

REACH

The total number of unique people who may see, hear, or be exposed to a piece of content, campaign, or media placement.

SIDEBAR

A short, separate information box that supports a feature article, often highlighting quick facts, tips, sources, websites, or additional resources.

SPONSORED CONTENT

Paid content created in partnership with a publication or influencer. It is clearly labeled as advertising or sponsored material.

STAFFER

A member of a publication or media outlet's editorial team who supports content planning, writing, editing, production, or assignment coordination.

STAFF WRITER

A journalist employed by a publication or media outlet to regularly write assigned stories, articles, or features.

STORY ANGLE

The specific focus or perspective that shapes how a story is told.

TRADE MEDIA

Publications and platforms that serve travel industry professionals such as travel advisors and tour operators.

TRAVEL TRADE PUBLICATION

A media outlet or publication created for travel industry professionals, such as travel agents, tour operators, wholesalers, suppliers, and destination organizations.

THIRD-PARTY VALIDATION

Credibility gained when an independent journalist or outlet positively covers your destination or business.

VISITING JOURNALIST PROGRAM

A structured support program that assists qualified media with travel logistics to visit a destination.

INDUSTRY RESOURCES

This resource library brings together the key research, data platforms, industry associations, and readiness tools. These sources support evidence-based planning, product development, market readiness, and long-term destination competitiveness for industry.



Market Intelligence and Data



Regional Tourism Profile Dataset-RTO3

Comprehensive regional tourism data & indicators to support planning & performance measurement.

data.ontario.ca/en/dataset/regional-tourism-profiles/resource/6726506d-e4b5-4789-907d-e746c6a3af31



Destination Canada - Data Collective

National data platform providing insights on visitation, spending, accommodations and more.

www.tourismdatacollective.ca/



Destination Canada - Market Profiles

In-depth profiles of key international markets to support targeting and planning

www.destinationcanada.com/en-ca/markets



Statistics Canada - National Travel Survey

Primary source of data on Canadian travel behaviour, spending and trip characteristics.

www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&SD=5232



TREIM - Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model

Measures the economic impact of tourism in Ontario communities and region.

www.ontario.ca/page/tourism-regional-economic-impact-model



Travel Trade and Export Readiness



TIAC-Export READI™ Program

National program that helps tourism businesses build export readiness and prepare for international markets

tiac-aitc.ca/Library/READI_PROGRAMMING/ExportReadiness_Playbook.pdf



TIAO - Forward Motion

Ontario's tourism strategy advancing a sustainable, competitive and resilient tourism industry

www.tiaoontario.ca/cpages/tourismstrategy



OMCA - Ontario Motor Coach Association

Advocates for and supports the motorcoach industry and group travel in Ontario.

www.omca.com/



Motorcoach Canada

National association representing Canada's motorcoach industry and promoting safe, sustainable travel.

www.motorcoachcanada.com/about-the-industry/



Tourism Industry Association of Canada

TIAC is Canada's national tourism industry association, advocating for policies and programs that support the growth and competitiveness of the visitor economy.

tiac-aitc.ca/Export_READI.html



Economic Impact and Motorcoach Research



Tourism Economics - 2024 Economic Impact of Motorcoach Group Travel in the U.S.

National study quantifying the economic contribution of motorcoach group travel across the United States.

assets.simpleviewinc.com/simpleview/image/upload/v1/clients/williamsburgva/2024_Economic_Impact_of_Motorcoach_Group_Travel_in_the_United_States_033beef1-82f3-4e12-8c60-698d3fd77946.pdf



Economic Impact of Motorcoach Tourism in Greater Cleveland, Ohio

Regional study showing the economic benefits of motorcoach travel in Cleveland and surrounding communities

buses.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Report-Cleveland-Economic-Impact.pdf



TREIM - Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model

Modelled estimates of tourism's economic impact across Ontario regions and communities.

www.ontario.ca/page/tourism-regional-economic-impact-model



Travel Media and Storytelling



Adventure Travel Trade Association

Guide to hosting media and working with tour operators and destination representatives.

www.adventuretravelnews.com/how-to-work-with-media-a-guide-for-tour-operators-and-destination-representatives



Travel Media Association of Canada

National association representing Canada's travel writers, editors and content creators.

travelmedia.ca/



Destination BC - Travel Media Relations Guide

Best practices for working with travel media and influencers.

www.destinationbc.ca/what-we-do/marketing/travel-media/



Tourism Strategy and Emerging Trends



Booking.com - 2025 Traveller Awareness Research

Research on how travellers discover destinations and make decisions at home and abroad.

news.booking.com/bookingcoms-2025-research-reveals-growing-traveler-awareness-of-tourism-impact-on-communities-both-at-home-and-abroad/



Destination Canada - Generative AI Search Playbook 2026

Playbook for leveraging AI search trends and emerging traveller behaviour.

www.tourismdatacollective.ca/generative-ai-search-playbook



Destination Canada - Tourism Outlook 2026-2035

Canada's Global Moment: Canadian Tourism Outlook. This report provides an economic outlook from now through 2025, Canada's global moment of brand strength, high growth and fast returns.

www.tourismdatacollective.ca/tourism-outlook-2026-2035



American Express Travel's 2025 and 2026 Global Travel Trends Reports

The 2025 report highlights travellers balancing passion and practicality, with strong interest in international travel, journey-focused trips, rewards/loyalty value, and technology that makes planning more personalized and seamless.

www.americanexpress.com/en-us/travel/discover/img/gtt2025/2025_AME_X_GLOBAL_TRAVEL_TREND_REPORT.pdf?v=0

The 2026 report shows travellers being more intentional with vacation time, prioritizing meaningful experiences through trends such as milestone trips, hands-on "sight-doing," destination storytelling, and food-focused.

www.americanexpress.com/en-us/travel/discover/get-inspired/global-travel-trends



A Regenerative Approach to Tourism in Canada

An offering of why and how tourism can more fully support people, place and prosperity -with case stories, principles, and indicators of progress.

archives.destinationcanada.com/sites/default/files/archive/1872-A%20Regenerative%20Approach%20to%20Tourism%20in%20Canada/A-Regenerative-Approach-to-Tourism-in-Canada_EN.pdf



RTO3 Strategic Plan for Regional Tourism Development - 2024-2026

Guides regional collaboration, product development, industry capacity building, and sustainability. It positions RTO3 as a connector and catalyst for strengthening destination competitiveness and visitor economy growth.

rto3.ca/news/resources/2024-2026-hhbrta-strategic-plan-for-regional-tourism-development/



Sustainable Tourism 2030 - Take the Pledge

A GreenStep program that encourages tourism businesses and destinations to commit to measurable sustainability action. The pledge helps organizations begin or advance their sustainability journey by aligning with recognized best practices, the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and GreenStep's sustainability assessment and certification pathways.

www.sustainabletourism2030.com/pledge/

APPENDIX 1

INDUSTRY ASSOCIATIONS

National

Destination Canada (DC)

800-1045 Howe Street
Vancouver, BC, V6Z 2A9
Tel: (604) 638-8300
Destination Canada Ottawa Office
#408-130 Albert Street
Ottawa, ON K1P 5G4
www.destinationcanada.com

Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAC)

1300-180 rue Elgin Street
Ottawa, Ontario K2P 2K3
Tel: (613) 238-7887
Email: contact@tiac-aitc.ca
tiac-aitc.ca

ITAC - Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada

8th Floor, 333 Seymour Street
Vancouver, BC V6B 5A7
Toll-Free: 1-888-803-ITAC (4822)
Tel: 1-604-351-1028
Email: info@IndigenousTourism.ca
indigenoustourism.ca

Provincial

Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO)

207 Queen's Quay West, Suite 405
Toronto, Ontario M5J 1A7
Tel: (416) 483-1691
Email: info@tiaontario.ca
www.tiaontario.ca

Destination Ontario (DO)

10 Dundas Street East, Suite 900
Toronto, ON M7A 2A1
Tel: (416) 314-7570, 437-216-2388
Email: destinationontario@ontario.ca
www.destinationontario.com

Indigenous Tourism Ontario (ITO)

1300 Hwy 540, 4 Directions Complex Unit 4
Aundeck Omni Kaning, Ontario P0P 1K0
Southern Office: 207 Queens Quay West, Suite 405
Toronto, Ontario M5J 1A7
Tel: 705-368-1919
info@indigenoustourismontario.ca
indigenoustourismontario.ca

Retail/Wholesale Regulation Body Tourism Industry Council of Ontario (TICO)

55 Standish Court, Suite 460
Mississauga, ON L5R 4B2
Tel: (905) 624-6241
Toll free: 1-888-451-TICO (8426)
tico@tico.ca
www.tico.ca

Association of Canadian Travel Agents (ACTA)

P.O. Box 12612, Martinway Plaza
Etobicoke, ON M9R 4C7
Tel: 905-282-9294
Email: memberservices@acta.ca
www.acta.ca

Ontario Motor Coach Association (OMCA)

c/o 290 North Queen Street, Suite 112
Toronto, ON M9C 5L2
Phone: 416-229-6622
Email: info@omca.com
www.omca.com

Check organization's websites for any updates on contact information

APPENDIX 2

INSIGHT PROGRAMS AND STATISTICS

DESTINATION ONTARIO

Destination Ontario Insights Program

Destination Ontario Insights Portal

<http://doinsights.crg.ca/>



The Destination Ontario Insights Portal (DO-IP) is an online insight platform developed in collaboration with Context Research Group Inc. (CRG).

The portal provides users with access to research on travel preferences, trends, key market deep dives, and much more.

Destination Ontario-Insights Portal also provides you with access to CRG's Ontario Travel and Tourism Monthly (OTTM) reports. A monthly study of over 2,000 high value travellers from across Canada and the U.S.



Destination Canada Data Collective

Canadian Tourism Data Collective

<https://www.tourismdatacollective.ca/>



CANADIAN TOURISM DATA
COLLECTIVE
POWERED BY DESTINATION CANADA

Destination Canada has launched the Traveller Segmentation Program, available in the Canadian Tourism Data Collective. The program supports the tourism industry by providing a deeper understanding of target audiences.

Why Traveller Segmentation Matters to our Destination

Canada's Traveller Segmentation Program, part of the Canadian Tourism Data Collective, helps businesses and destinations identify, understand, and reach their most valuable travellers. Segmentation goes beyond demographics to capture motivations, values, and behaviours.

The Traveller Segmentation Program categorizes travellers from priority markets into seven segments.



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3-YEAR ACTION PLAN

A photograph of a bottle of 'Apple Crisp' fruit wine. The bottle is green glass with a white label featuring a red apple and the text 'Apple Crisp' and 'FRUIT WINE • VIN DE FRUITS'. It is surrounded by vibrant orange and red dahlias in a field under a blue sky.

HOW WE EVOLVE

This strategy establishes a shared direction for how RTO3 Hamilton Halton Brant will approach travel trade engagement over the next three years. The following Travel Trade Growth Strategy Action Plan - 2026-2028 translates that direction into practical, phased steps, outlining what will be done, by whom, and over what timeframe.

Designed as a three-year roadmap, the Action Plan prioritizes actions based on regional readiness, partner capacity, and market opportunity. Early actions focus on building strong foundations and operator readiness, with later actions advancing market engagement and longer-term growth.

This Action Plan is intended to be realistic, adaptable, and responsive. It provides a clear framework for implementation while allowing RTO3 and its partners, operators and stakeholders to adjust as conditions, capacity, and opportunities evolve, ensuring effort and investment remain focused where they can have the greatest impact.



3-YEAR TRAVEL TRADE DEVELOPMENT ROADMAP

Travel Trade Action Plan Overview

The RTO3 Regional Travel Trade Growth Strategy Action Plan is designed as a phased, strategic pathway to build, position, and activate the region as a globally competitive, travel trade-ready destination. Grounded in the core pillars of Enable, Educate, and Activate, the plan aligns industry development with market demand, ensuring tourism operators are equipped, experiences are market-ready, and the region is positioned for sustainable growth.

Structured over three years, the approach reflects a deliberate progression from readiness to market activation and conversion:

Year One: Build the Foundations

Focus on strengthening industry readiness, developing market intelligence, and establishing the core assets required for travel trade success. This includes building a comprehensive product inventory, advancing operator readiness, supporting Indigenous collaboration, and developing export-ready experiences and content.

Outcome: A coordinated, trade-ready foundation across the region.

Year Two: Equip and Position for Market

Shift toward active market engagement by enhancing destination storytelling, expanding marketing assets, and equipping operators with the tools, training, and partnerships required to sell into travel trade channels. This phase also includes re-engaging domestic and international buyers to rebuild awareness and activate relationships.

Outcome: A market-prepared industry, aligned with distribution channels and ready to engage buyers.

Year Three: Activate and Convert

Leverage established foundations and partnerships to engage directly with global buyers, strengthen distribution relationships, and convert regional experiences into bookable itineraries. This includes targeted trade events, FAM tours, media and influencer engagement, and ongoing relationship management.

Outcome: Increased market presence, trade partnerships, and conversion to bookings.

Cross-Cutting Principle: Regenerative Growth

Across all three years, the strategy integrates regenerative tourism principles, ensuring growth is responsible, community-aligned, and reflective of evolving global market expectations.

How This Connects to the Framework

The action plan is directly aligned with the regional development framework:

- Enable = Building market-ready foundations and industry capacity
- Educate = Equipping operators with tools, knowledge, and market insights
- Activate = Driving trade engagement, partnerships, and sales conversion

The following action plan outlines the key initiatives, timelines, and measurable outcomes that will guide this progression from readiness to global market activation.

REGIONAL TRAVEL TRADE GROWTH FRAMEWORK



Purpose of the Travel Trade Development Wheel: How It Gives Industry Direction

The wheel acts as both a roadmap and a progression model, helping industry understand:

- **Where** we are today in our travel trade readiness
- **What** steps are required next to grow our industry
- **How** each element connects to real market success

By organizing activities into three clear pillars - Enable, Educate, and Activate, the model removes ambiguity and provides a step-by-step pathway for operators to:

- **Build** strong foundations
- **Gain** the knowledge and tools to compete
- **Engage** confidently in domestic and international markets

TRAVEL TRADE GROWTH STRATEGY 3-YEAR ACTION PLAN

Year One - Enable

The Enable Pillar is dedicated to empowering the region and its tourism operators to participate confidently and effectively in the travel trade ecosystem. It establishes the foundational tools, insights, and pathways necessary for growth, including fostering a deep understanding of regional products, assessing operator readiness, engaging Indigenous and community partners, and delivering targeted capacity-building opportunities.



By providing access to data, resources, and training, the Enable Pillar lays the groundwork for a coordinated, market-ready tourism industry, one that is equipped, confident, and prepared for sustained engagement in both domestic and international travel trade.

Building Market-Ready Foundations

Objective: Build market-ready foundations by establishing a clear, data-driven understanding of regional tourism supply, readiness levels, and priority opportunities for travel trade development.

Key Area of Focus A: Regional Product Inventory and Operator Readiness Insights

Action Statement	Key Activities / Steps	Measurable Outcomes / KPIs	Year
A.1. Establish a centralized inventory of tourism products and experiences across the region, categorized by trade-readiness, export potential, and alignment with target markets.	- Define framework and criteria - Conduct product and experience audit to design a multi-day itinerary development framework - Map and classify inventory - Identify gaps and opportunity - Include sustainable, regenerative, locally-sourcing businesses and identify opportunities based on the 2030 Pledge	- Clear understanding of regional strengths and gaps 10–15 priority products identified for trade development - Alignment on trade-readiness across partners	One
A.2. Design and implement a regional operator survey to assess travel trade readiness, interests, barriers, and development needs; analyze and share findings to inform coordinated product development.	- By sector, deploy survey via SurveyMonkey or similar platform - Collect and analyze data on readiness, gaps, and operator needs - Develop and share a summary insights report with stakeholders to guide action / next steps	- Insights report delivered to stakeholders - Clear identification of operator needs, barriers, and readiness levels - Data used to inform training, product development, and trade strategy priorities	One

Key Area of Focus B: Indigenous Tourism Collaboration and Growth

Action Statement	Key Activities / Steps	Measurable Outcomes / KPIs	Year
B.1. Support the development of authentic, community-led Indigenous tourism experiences aligned with market demand and respectful engagement practices.	- Engage Indigenous communities to understand tourism priorities and interests - Provide optional support on packaging, pricing, and market positioning - Ensure authentic representation and integration into regional itineraries - Collaborate with <i>Destination Indigenous</i> to amplify in-market experiences or inventory current suitable regional offers - Align with Indigenous Tourism Ontario and Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada in travel trade development	- Increased number of authentic, market-ready Indigenous tourism experiences - Continues to strengthened Indigenous participation in the regional visitor economy - Experiences integrated into RTO3 domestic and international travel trade channels - Contribution to Regional Product & Experience Development Framework (Action 2a) - On-going improvement of regional understanding and alignment with Truth and Reconciliation principles	One
B.2. Collaborate with Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada and Indigenous Tourism Ontario to align regional efforts with Indigenous-led strategies, programs, and market development initiatives.	- Coordinate with ITAC and ITO on priorities, programs, and funding - Promote Indigenous-led training, mentorship, and funding opportunities to operators - Support participation in ITAC / ITO programs- readiness, marketing, trade - Align regional development and marketing with provincial/national strategies - Share regional insights to support broader Indigenous tourism growth - Review with ITO the current MOU to identify alignment updates	- Increased participation of regional Indigenous operators in ITAC and ITO programs - Improved alignment between regional, provincial, and national Indigenous tourism strategies - Number of collaborative initiatives or partnerships established with ITAC/ITO - Increased access to funding, training, and market opportunities for Indigenous operators - Stronger visibility and market readiness of Indigenous tourism experiences in the region	One

Key Area of Focus C: Travel Trade Pathways for Capacity Building and Business Development

Action Statement	Key Activities / Steps	Measurable Outcomes / KPIs	Year
C.1. Deliver peer-to-peer group tour workshops to build operator capacity, share best practices, and advance business development in travel trade.	- Deliver group tour workshops across multiple communities / selecting host destinations - Partner with DMOs - Engage and confirm travel trade speakers - Facilitate operator learning and experiences - Develop workshop curriculum - Develop and launch registration tools and distribute to key operators	- Delivering group tour focused workshops across multiple host communities - Partnering with local DMOs for coordination and promotion - Engaging travel trade speakers to share insights and practical examples - Facilitating operator learning through interactive sessions and hands-on experiences - Developing workshop curriculum and registration tools; distribute to key operators	One - Q1
C.2. Deliver a full-day workshop to equip operators and DMOs with practical knowledge and tools to effectively engage with the travel trade.	- Develop and deliver Travel Trade insider forum format covering ecosystem, opportunities, buyer expectations, etc. - Feature industry experts to provide real-world insights - Facilitate interactive learning and discussion - Offer post-workshop mentorship plan for operators needing additional support - Deliver the RTO3 Travel Trade Growth Strategy, and the Travel Trade Industry Playbook- a resource toolkit	- Workshop delivered; number of operator and DMO participants tracked ≥ 3 actionable takeaways per participant - Increased operator confidence in engaging with travel trade	One - Q2
C.3. Facilitate regional participation in the Tourism Industry Association of Canada Export READI™ program to advance operator export readiness and strengthen travel trade capacity.	- Identify and recruit high-potential operators suited for the READI™ program - Support operators through application and onboarding processes - Provide guidance and mentorship throughout program participation - Engage DMOs to identify, recommend, and support local operators - Align READI™ participation with regional product development priorities	12 business operators enrolled in the READI™ program - Number of operators achieving certification or key program milestones - Increased number of export-ready, trade-aligned tourism businesses - Strengthened regional capacity to engage in domestic and international travel trade	One

Action Statement	Key Activities / Steps	Measurable Outcomes / KPIs	Year
C.4. Deliver an ongoing, topic-specific webinar series to continuously build operator capacity and onboard the next cohort of market- and export-ready tourism businesses into the travel trade pipeline.	• Develop a rolling webinar series focused on targeted topics- pricing, sell sheets, packaging, experience development, media and content engagement; by sector, by sub-region • Deliver sessions annually with refreshed, practical content aligned to operator needs • Position webinars as an entry point, re-engagement tool for operators at different stages - based on export-readiness and level of capacity • Provide tools, templates, and recordings to support ongoing learning on industry website • Identify and funnel high-potential operators into workshops and advanced programs	• The webinar series functions as a continuous intake and capacity-building mechanism, ensuring a sustained pipeline of operators progressing toward export readiness and market activation • Consistent delivery & engagement: 4-6 webinars annually • Pipeline growth: Increased number of new operators entering and progressing through the travel trade pathway • Capability & impact: Improved operator readiness and year-over-year growth in market- and export-ready businesses	One Two Three
C.5. Develop and implement a suite of standardized sales tools and digital assets to equip operators and DMOs with the resources needed to effectively market and sell to the travel trade.	• Develop an online travel trade portal within the RTO3 website as a centralized hub for buyer-facing sales resources • Create destination fact sheets highlighting key value propositions and trade-ready experiences • Develop curated, bookable itineraries for key niche markets • Establish a streamlined process for accessing and requesting digital assets- images, videos, content	• Centralized travel trade tools and resources accessible through a dedicated portal • Improved quality and consistency of regional sales materials • Enhanced ability for operators and DMOs to package and promote experiences • Stronger regional positioning and inclusion in travel trade itineraries • Increased conversion from interest to bookings through effective sales tools	One Two
C.6. Establish a regional partnership and co-investment model to prepare Hamilton Halton Brant for participation as a seller at Rendez-vous Canada- RVC 2027 through destination positioning, partner collaboration, and sales readiness activities.	• Develop RVC participation strategy and business case • Secure DMO and industry partner participation • Establish co-investment framework • Identify export-ready products and experiences • Develop itineraries and sales tools • Deliver seller readiness training • Align with Destination Ontario and Destination Canada priorities	• 4-6 participating partners secured • Co-investment model established • 15-25 export-ready experiences identified • 3-5 buyer-ready itineraries developed • Travel Trade experience Guide completed • 1-2 readiness workshops delivered • 80% participant satisfaction • RVC 2027 participation	One

Year Two - Educate

The Educate Pillar focuses on equipping tourism operators, DMOs, and regional partners with the knowledge, tools, and skills required to effectively engage with the travel trade, elevate product quality, and ensure market readiness. Through a combination of targeted mentoring, self-guided resources, trade enablement toolkits, and structured training programs, this pillar supports operators in creating bookable, high-quality experiences, packaging them effectively, and leveraging trade partnerships to reach both domestic and international markets. By fostering industry capacity, promoting consistency, and providing practical tools for business and trade readiness, this underpins the region's broader product and experience development framework.



Tourism operators who are well-prepared and trade-ready are better positioned to attract visitors, maximize bookings, and contribute to the economic and cultural vitality of the region. By investing in operator education and skills development, the region ensures that experiences are not only appealing to visitors but also competitive, sustainable, and scalable in alignment with regional and national tourism goals.

Equipping for Market Success

Objective: Build regional tourism operator capacity, strengthen trade readiness, and ensure the creation and distribution of high-quality, market-ready experiences through targeted mentoring, training, and accessible trade tools.

Key Area of Focus D: Market Enablement and Sales Tools

Action Statement	Key Activities / Steps	Measurable Outcomes / KPIs	Year
D.1. Develop and deliver a comprehensive, sales-focused Travel Trade Marketing Toolkit that positions the region as market-ready and easy to sell	• Develop core sales assets: High-quality photography, video, and a destination overview brochure that showcase bookable experiences • Create standardized product tools: Fact sheets with key selling points, logistics, and pricing guidance • Produce trade-focused content: Curated media kit and themed/niche itineraries aligned with market needs • Centralize operator access: Directory of export-ready operators with direct links and contact information	• Increased availability of consistent, professional, and sales-ready assets for trade use • Improved ease of packaging and selling the region by domestic and international buyers • Stronger regional positioning and value proposition clarity within the travel trade market • Enhanced operator visibility and inclusion in trade distribution channels	Two

Action Statement	Key Activities / Steps	Measurable Outcomes / KPIs	Year
D.2. Develop and promote themed and corridor-based itineraries that package the region's diverse experiences into cohesive, market-ready journeys	- Develop corridor-based routes connecting multiple communities to encourage longer stays and regional dispersion - Integrate bookable experiences into itineraries to support travel trade packaging and sales - Collaborate with DMOs and operators to ensure accuracy, consistency, and trade readiness	- Coordinated itinerary launch across regional and DMO websites for consumer and trade visibility - Downloadable travel trade itinerary brochure via website portal/microsite - Improved trip planning and packaging for trade and independent travellers - Enhanced regional storytelling and visitor dispersion	Two
D.3. Develop a centralized 'Travel Planner' portal to streamline access to sales tools, trade-ready content, and operator information for buyers and partners	- Launch a dedicated Travel Planner portal/microsite within the regional website - Build a permission-based asset library for partners and travel trade - Host standardized operator profiles and centralized sales tools- itineraries, media kits, brochures, etc. - Enable navigation and search for efficient trip planning and packaging - Launch a Travel Trade Learning Module	- Streamlined access to centralized, up-to-date sales tools - Improved efficiency in itinerary building and packaging - Increased visibility of export-ready operators - Stronger consistency of regional sales materials - Enhanced trade engagement through a user-friendly platform	Two
D.4. Evolve and deliver a comprehensive, self-guided Regional Trade Readiness templates to build operator capacity and market preparedness	- Trade Readiness Toolkit: Downloadable workbook with templates- sell sheets, RFPs, contracts, checklists, channel readiness - Business Readiness Guidance: Pricing, commissions, booking processes, and capacity planning - Partnership & Packaging Support: Working with tour operators / DMOs and building market-ready experiences	- Increased trade knowledge and operator confidence - Improved readiness for domestic and international markets - Higher quality, more consistent, and market-ready experiences - Stronger ability to engage in trade partnerships and distribution channels	Two
D.5. Build and Advance Responsible, Regenerative Tourism Experiences for Global Markets	- Commit to signing the GreenStep 2030 Pledge to advance measurable sustainability and climate action; encourage regional DMOs and operators to allow sign - Demonstrate by tracking and communicate progress to meet global trade expectations and market readiness - Activate the development of low-carbon itineraries and experiences; feature regenerative, local-first, inclusive, and accessible businesses on the travel planner microsite	- Green Commitment: Operators align with GreenStep 2030 Pledge - Embedded Sustainability: Integrated across all tools, training, and development - Market Impact: Regenerative experiences developed; growing trade interest in sustainable offerings	One, Two

Key Area of Focus E: Trade Engagement and Relationship Management

Action Statement	Key Activities / Steps	Measurable Outcomes / KPIs	Year
E.1. Establish clear roles, responsibilities, and processes for coordinated travel trade engagement, relationship management, and lead fulfillment	- Define roles and responsibilities for RTO, DMOs, and operators in trade sales - Standardize lead management and follow-up, exploring platform options - Implement a shared CRM for trade contacts and conversions - Set service standards and response timelines for requests and RFPs - Coordinate pre- and post-marketplace engagement and relationship nurturing - Facilitate regular partner communication to share insights and opportunities	- Move from one-time participation to ongoing relationship management - Improved lead conversion and response efficiency - Stronger coordination and accountability in trade engagement - Enhanced quality and consistency of buyer interactions - Increased repeat business and long-term partnerships	One Two
E.2. Establish an industry-based Regional Trade Working Group to strengthen collaboration, share insights, and inform trade strategies	- Form a cross-sector working group including operators, DMOs, and RTO representatives to guide trade initiatives - Regularly review trade performance and sales outcomes, identifying trends, gaps, and opportunities - Gather and analyze traveller insights on interests, motivations, and preferences to inform product development and packaging - Align with RTO3 Product and Experience Development Framework- 2026-2030	- Enhanced industry engagement and collaborative decision-making on trade priorities - Data-informed evaluation of sales performance and trade effectiveness - Better understanding of traveller motivations, supporting product alignment and itinerary development	Two
E.3. Develop the tools for measuring performance and a ROI Reporting Systems	- Track and analyze key performance metrics for all trade initiatives, including leads generated, bookings, and operator participation - Evaluate market performance to identify top-performing operators, buyer segments, and product types - Provide actionable insights to inform resource allocation, marketing investments, and trade strategies - Develop regular reporting dashboards for internal teams and partners to monitor ROI and adjust tactics	- Demonstrate market impact - Strategic scaling by expanding successful initiatives and refine underperforming tactics for sustained growth	Two

Key Area of Focus F: Performance Measurement and ROI Reporting

Action Statement	Key Activities / Steps	Measurable Outcomes / KPIs	Year
F.1. Use the Performance and ROI Reporting Systems	- Monitor performance metrics– track bookings, inquiries, operator engagement, and trade activity using the reporting system - Evaluate ROI and market performance – Analyze data to identify high-performing markets, products, and initiatives - Inform strategy and resource allocation– use insights to optimize marketing investments, scale successful programs, and refine sales initiatives	- Clear understanding of impact– stakeholders can see tangible results from trade initiatives - Data-driven decision-making– resource allocation and strategy adjustments are informed by actual performance - Optimized regional trade growth– successful initiatives are scaled, underperforming areas are improved, and ROI is maximized	Two

Key Area of Focus G: Strengthening Regional Experiences Through Mentoring and Training

Action Area	Key Activities / Steps	Measurable Outcomes / KPIs	Year
G.1. Deliver targeted mentoring and training programs to strengthen operator capacity, enhance product quality, and ensure market-ready, bookable experiences	- Provide tailored mentorship for operators at all stages of development - Offer practical training on experience design, storytelling, operational readiness (contracting, policy), packaging, pricing, and distribution - Support sustainability, accessibility, and inclusive practices in product development - Facilitate peer learning and collaboration through workshops and networking	- Enhanced operator capacity and confidence in developing, packaging, and marketing experiences - Improved product quality and consistency, aligning with regional and national standards - Greater market readiness for domestic and international travel trade - Strengthened collaboration and knowledge sharing across the region's tourism industry	Two
G.2. Equip businesses and DMOs with the knowledge, tools, and designation pathways to integrate sustainable and regenerative practices, demonstrate measurable impact, and enhance market readiness for the travel trade.	- Provide training, workshops, and resources on sustainable and regenerative and inclusion tourism practices - Guide businesses and DMOs through the designation process, including measurable criteria for environmental, social, and economic impact - Develop tools and templates– sustainability checklists, reporting frameworks, itineraries to embed best practices into market-ready products	- Businesses and DMOs earn TIAC Sustainable & Regenerative READ! designation, boosting credibility with trade partners - More market-ready experiences meet trade expectations for sustainability, inclusivity, and accessibility - Stronger trade partnerships drive increased inquiries and bookings for sustainable tourism and inclusive tourism offerings	Two

Year Three - Activate

The Activate pillar turns strategy into action, demonstrating Hamilton Halton Brant's commitment to growing the region's tourism industry. Through curated, market-ready resources and a dynamic *Travel Planner* portal, active participation in key trade events and FAM tours, and collaborative marketing campaigns with provincial and national partners, we bring the region's unique experiences and value propositions directly to domestic and international buyers.



By leveraging the draw of nearby Toronto and Niagara Falls, and showcasing our tourism assets through influencer partnerships and targeted media storytelling, we amplify visitation, strengthen industry capacity, foster meaningful connections, and drive tangible growth for operators and the broader tourism community. Successes and opportunities will be measured through post-initiative evaluations, trade engagement metrics, and insights gathered from events, campaigns, and stakeholder feedback to continuously refine strategies and maximize impact.

Maximize impact by amplifying efforts, aligning strategies, and measuring results

Objective: Drive regional travel trade engagement and market growth by equipping partners, activating strategic campaigns, and showcasing Hamilton Halton Brant experiences to domestic and international buyers.

Key Area of Focus H: Comprehensive Marketing and Market Amplification

Action Statement	Key Activities / Steps	Measurable Outcomes / KPIs	Year
H.1. Optimize Market-Ready Resources and Digital Platforms	- Maintain and refresh RTO3 Travel Planner portal/microsite with new content - Update and distribute travel trade toolkits for operators and partners - Ensure resources reflect current offerings, itineraries, and niche experiences	- Operators have ready-to-use, high-quality resources for travel trade engagement - Increased consistency and professionalism of promotional materials - Easier access for travel trade to discover and book regional experiences	Three
H.2. Establish cooperative B2B campaigns	- Identify and collaborate with Destination Ontario and Destination Canada on joint B2B marketing and sales initiatives - Plan and execute cooperative marketing campaigns targeting travel trade audiences, as appropriate - Align regional offerings with provincial and national sales strategies	- Expanded market reach through coordinated campaigns - Stronger alignment with provincial and national travel trade priorities - Enhanced visibility of the region in key travel trade channels	Three

Key Area of Focus I: Leverage Provincial and National Strategies to Drive Regional Growth

Action Statement	Key Activities / Steps	Measurable Outcomes / KPIs	Year
I.1. Partner with Destination Canada on Insights on Travel Trends and motivators, and opportunities to engage with priority markets	- Attend Destination Canada sessions on market insights and trends - Analyze data to identify priority domestic and international markets - Collaborate on campaigns and regional activations targeting key markets - Share actionable insights with local operators to guide product and marketing decisions	- Regional strategies aligned with national trends and priority markets - Operators equipped with insights to adapt experiences and messaging - Increased regional visibility in national campaigns - Data-driven decision-making strengthens regional growth opportunities	One Two Three
I.2. Develop the roadmap to attend Rendez-vous Canada, including roles, responsibilities, budget, outcomes, and reporting/measurements	- Define objectives and desired outcomes for regional participation at Rendez-vous Canada - Assign roles and responsibilities for planning, execution, and follow-up - Develop a detailed budget and allocate resources for event participation - Identify priority stakeholders, experiences, and operators to showcase - Establish reporting metrics and evaluation methods to measure success post-event - Coordinate logistics, materials, and collateral needed for the event	- A clear, actionable roadmap guides successful participation at Rendez-vous Canada - Efficient use of resources with defined roles and responsibilities - Targeted promotion of regional experiences to domestic and international buyers - Post-event insights inform future participation and travel trade strategies - Measurable results provide accountability and identify areas for growth	One Two Three

Key Area of Focus J: Evaluate Years 1–3 Actions and Outcomes to Inform Next Phase of Enable and Educate Pillars

Action Statement	Key Activities / Steps	Measurable Outcomes / KPIs	Year
J.1. Evaluate Performance and Drive Continuous Improvement	- Conduct post-initiative reviews of campaigns, events, and FAM tours - Identify areas for growth and opportunities to refine strategies - Capture learnings for future trade activations	- Continuous improvement in trade engagement strategies - Clear understanding of successes and opportunities - Better resource allocation and more impactful trade activations over time	Three



8

CONCLUSION

TURNING INSIGHT INTO IMPACT: A UNIFIED PATH FORWARD

BUILDING MOMENTUM, STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS, GROWING TOGETHER

The completion of RTO3's Three-Year Regional Travel Trade Growth Strategy and the Travel Trade Industry Playbook represents more than the development of a guiding document; it marks a deliberate shift toward coordinated, evidence-based regional market development. Led by RTO3, this work reflects our vision for strengthening the region's position within the travel trade and our commitment to building a more connected, competitive, and sustainable tourism economy.

In support of this work, Advantage Sales Strategy conducted the situational analysis, led stakeholder interviews with DMO partners, and developed research reports and strategic pillars that informed the direction of this strategy. These contributions provided a strong evidence-based foundation, which RTO3 translated into this comprehensive, user-focused playbook for industry.

This work reflects a commitment to alignment, clarity, and long-term competitiveness. It establishes a shared framework that connects regional product development, destination stewardship, and travel trade engagement into one cohesive pathway for growth. For RTO3, it reinforces our role as connector, educator, enabler, activator, and advocate within the travel trade ecosystem, bridging local experiences to provincial, national, and international markets in a way that is strategic, measurable, and sustainable.

By defining our value proposition, identifying priority markets, and outlining operational readiness standards, we have created a roadmap that strengthens both industry confidence and regional positioning. At its core, this growth strategy is about enablement.

For tourism operators, this playbook provides transparency around how travel trade works, what export readiness requires, and how businesses can participate meaningfully in domestic and international channels. It demystifies distribution networks, tiered pricing, sales at marketplaces, and partnership development, empowering operators to make informed decisions aligned with their growth ambitions.

For destination partners and DMOs, it reinforces the importance of collaboration across municipal and regional boundaries, aligning product strengths and situational advantages to present Hamilton, Halton, Brant, Six Nations of the Grand River, and Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation as a compelling and unified regional offering.

With a clear path forward and a shared commitment to action, RTO3 is proud to lead this next phase of regional growth, working alongside industry to turn strategy into measurable results.

Contact

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For more information about this strategy, or to discuss how your organization can engage with travel trade opportunities, please connect with RTO3. We are committed to working directly with industry partners to support growth, readiness, and long-term success in domestic and international markets.





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