

BUSINESS AND OPERATIONAL PLAN

2024-25



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INTRODUCTION

The board and staff of RTO8 / Kawartha Northumberland believe that the visitor economy is delivered by businesses, championed by communities and supported by DMOs/RTOs. The 2024-2025 Business Plan reflects this belief and clarifies RTO8's leadership role in the industry – both regionally and at the provincial level.

RTO8's purpose is to grow the visitor economy. We recognize that in order to achieve that, two things have to happen:

- 1 Tourism businesses must have the capacity to grow and be more successful**
- 2 Municipalities must deliver a welcoming, visitor-friendly environment**

There are many methods to achieve the above. Each of the many activities, outputs and outcomes within the business plan are designed to support these two keys to tourism success.

It is important to note that the business plan has been developed during the post-pandemic recovery period and is flexible should the need for change be required.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our plan has been developed to deliver against our priorities while furthering our mission to provide resources and support to stakeholders so they have the capacity to achieve success.

Objectives for fiscal 2024-2025 are:

Governance and Administration

- Clear and transparent delivery of the 2024-2025 Business Plan
- Transfer Payment Agreement compliance, clean audit and budget oversight
- Recruit, train and engage stakeholders within our region for our Board of Directors to maximize organizational excellence

Product Development

- Build visitor economy through the Trent-Severn Trail Town program
- Support operator access to experience development opportunities
- Enhance cross-regional and themed itineraries (eg. storytelling, history) to help increase shoulder season capacity

Investment Attraction / Investor Relations

- Support the collection of data/ research to aid in the attraction of business investment and expansion within the region
- Leverage stakeholder investment through the partnership program

Workforce Development & Training

- Support the creation of a recruitment tool kit / strategy to assist in tourism workforce growth.
- Support business owners and operators to grow their business and enhance their skill set through the RTO8 Acceler8 program

Marketing

- Align with in-region tourism partners such as Destination Ontario, Ontario by Bike and the Culinary Tourism Alliance to coordinate a series of seasonal / theme based marketing campaigns to raise awareness of Kawartha's Northumberland as a welcoming travel destination

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Continued

Marketing (continued)

- Provide opportunities for stakeholders to share their stories through the development of regional content to visitors through media and online digital marketing tactics
- Raise consumer awareness of tourism businesses and products found in Kawartha Northumberland while retaining strong sub-regional identification

Research

- Support research to identify the economic impact of visitors to our region to better understand the visitor landscape and make informed decisions about target markets

Partnership Allocation Program

- Support the collaboration of industry partnerships
- Foster tourism investment
- Support the digital capacity of operators
- Increase the number of new applicants to the program



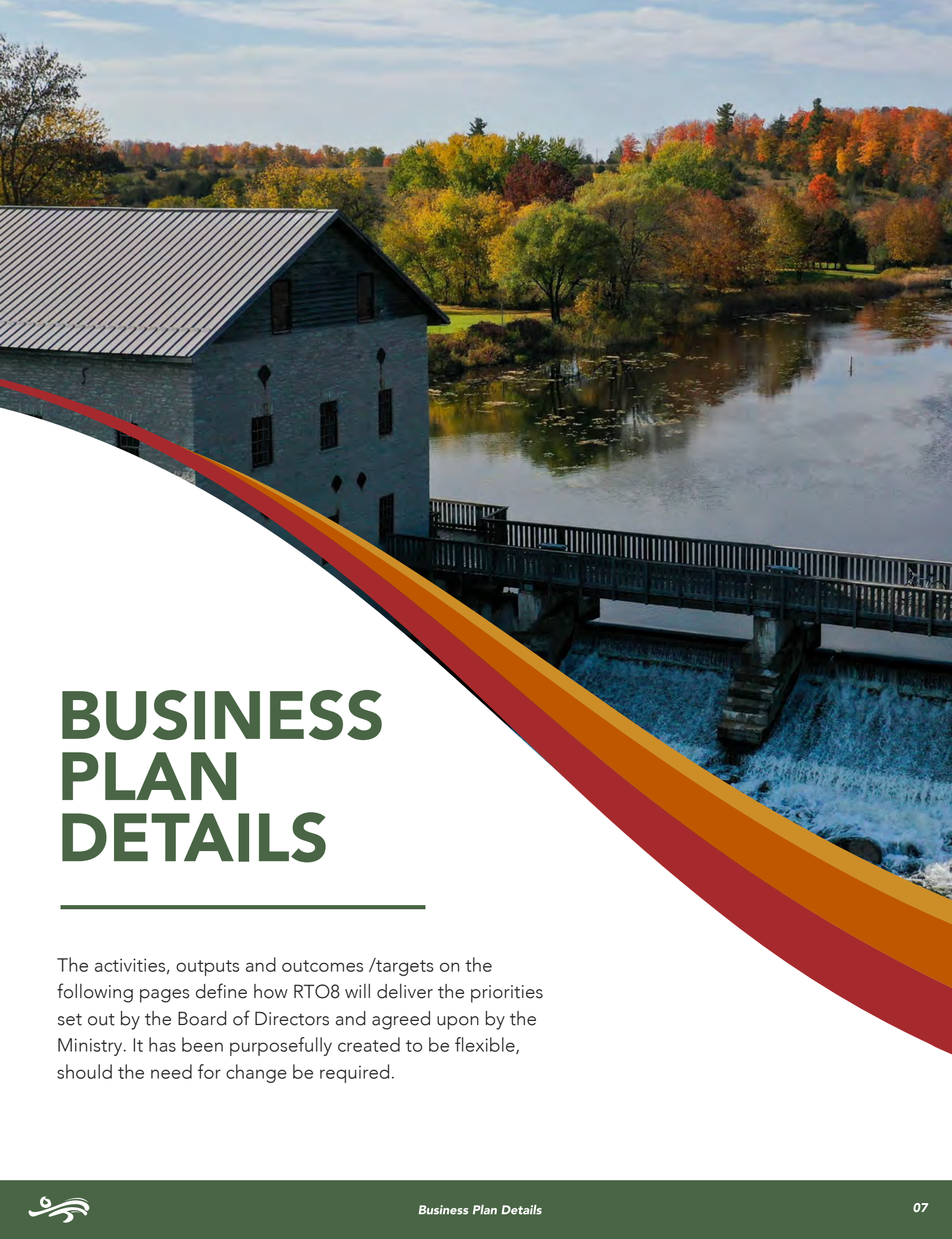




DEFINING SUCCESS FOR KAWARTHAS NORTHUMBERLAND

We can view success by an increase in stakeholder capacity which can be achieved through participation in RTO8 supported programs and initiatives, the number of new products / experiences developed and marketed and the amount of stakeholder investment being made. Another method to view success is through municipal investment in Community Tourism Planning, tourism products and events and municipal investment in tourism infrastructure, budgets and an acknowledgement of the economic impact of tourism in communities.

Each of the objectives within the pillars below are broken into activities, outputs and outcomes / targets that form the initiatives that the staff will implement and report on throughout the year.



BUSINESS PLAN DETAILS

The activities, outputs and outcomes /targets on the following pages define how RTO8 will deliver the priorities set out by the Board of Directors and agreed upon by the Ministry. It has been purposefully created to be flexible, should the need for change be required.

Product Development

Objective: To enhance visitor experience through well-designed tourism products that meet current and future customer demands.



Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
<p>Support operator access to experience development opportunities</p>	<p>Communicate opportunities for experience development (e.g, GMIST initiatives) and provide support where possible to assist operators in the enhancement / development of consumer experiences</p>	<p>Target: 5 operators participating in initiatives</p>
<p>Leverage the Trent-Severn Trail Town (TSTT) Program to help build the visitor economy in the region</p>	<p>Enhance the existing program with public art, culinary and experiential initiatives while building awareness and increasing community and business involvement</p> <p>Increase revenue for participating operators in the program and visitation to the region through community and partner featured videos / photography</p> <p>Enhance TSTT itineraries to entice longer stays and visitor spend through storytelling</p>	<p>Targets:</p> <p>Develop one public art initiative</p> <p>Increase participation in Taste of the Trent-Severn programs by 10</p> <p>Increase participants in the TSTT Friendly Business program by 12</p> <p>Develop 2 themed itinerary videos (Trail Towns by boat, cycling the Trail Towns)</p> <p>Coordinate 30 new community and partner photos</p>
<p>Increase capacity in the shoulder seasons (spring and fall) by offering compelling product experiences that extend stay</p>	<p>Enhance cross community or themed itineraries with a focus on shoulder season</p> <p>Generate conversion in the shoulder season and awareness of the region as a destination for shoulder season travel</p>	<p>Target: 2 itineraries</p>

Investment Attraction / Investor Relations

Objective: To increase investment in the tourism industry to enhance visitor experience

Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
Support the collection of research / data for investment & expansion in the region	Provide support to communities & municipalities for the collection of data	Target: 2 DMO's / communities
Leverage stakeholder investment through the Partnership Allocation Program	Support partner led projects to attract new investment	Target: 1 project via the Partnership Allocation Program

Workforce Development & Training

Objective: Facilitate and support the attraction, development and retention of a tourism workforce to enhance the customer experience

Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
Facilitate the mentoring of business owners and operators to develop and grow their business through RTO8's Acceler8 program.	<p>Business mentoring targeted to the specific needs of the business</p> <p>Business education and training</p> <p>Referral system to community partners for additional resources</p> <p>Support participating businesses achieve success as they define it</p> <p>Support the retention/survival rate of participating businesses</p> <p>Support the retention of existing jobs and the creation of new ones</p>	Target: Participation of 5 business owners / operators in the Acceler8 program
Support the development of a recruitment tool kit / strategy to support tourism workforce growth	Partner with organizations in the development of the tool kit / strategy	Target: 1 tool kit/strategy developed



Marketing

Objective: To increase awareness of Ontario as a travel destination and increase conversion in target markets.

Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
<p>Marketing Campaigns and Partnerships: Coordinate a series of seasonal and/or theme-based marketing campaigns</p>	<p>Coordination for regional marketing initiatives</p> <p>Integrated marketing of theme /products, such as: Fall Routes, Spring Maple Campaign</p> <p>Print and digital ad buys in key venues, such as: CAA , Culinary Tourism Alliance, Ontario By Bike, Destination Ontario, Globe & Mail</p>	<p>Targets: Increase website traffic by 7%* over previous year</p> <p>Increase referrals to DMO's and partners by 5% over previous year</p> <p>*Note: Google Analytics have changed so flexibility on data reporting is required</p>
<p>Social Media Marketing: Maintain an active voice and presence on Social Media Channels</p>	<p>Create ongoing monthly social media content</p> <p>Actively share and amplify our regional DMO partner's social media content</p> <p>Support referrals to partner websites and their social media channels</p>	<p>Targets: Increase Kawarthas Northumberland social media community size by 5% over previous year</p> <p>Increase social media engagement by 5% over previous year</p>
<p>Content Development: Development of regional content via researching story ideas, interviewing stakeholders and working with regional partners</p>	<p>Continue to update, refine and grow the library of digital assets (photography and video) to support content marketing initiatives into the future</p> <p>Continue to develop blog stories that feature regional content including itineraries, listicles, seasonal themes, and experiences</p> <p>Facilitate the content on our consumer and industry websites to ensure they are fresh and up to date. Websites include: KawarthasNorthumberland.ca TSWtrailtowns.ca FallRoutes.ca RTO8.com</p>	<p>Targets: Increase digital assets by 50 photos and or videos for future campaigns and social media platforms</p> <p>Minimum of 8 new blog posts</p> <p>Update 4 websites to ensure they are accurate</p>



Marketing (Continued)

Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
<p>Research: Support research to identify the economic impact of visitors to our region to better understand the visitor landscape and make informed decisions about markets to target</p>	<p>Partner with the RTU for the Research Working Group</p>	<p>Targets: One comprehensive report on the economic impact of visitors for the KN Region</p>
Target Markets	Consumer Profile	Featured Products and Experiences
<p>Primary – 1 to 4 hour drive radius of the Kawarthas Northumberland region</p> <p>Secondary - the Kawarthas Northumberland Region</p>	<p>Couples & families 25-65+, particularly:</p> <p>“Connected Explorers”, “Family Memory Builders”, “Nature Lovers”, “Tweeniors” (upcoming seniors)</p> <p>(As per DESTINATION ONTARIO’s market segmentation)</p> <p>Affluent adults 35-65+ with 90K+ household income and culinary/arts/travel interests.</p>	<p>Region-wide food & drink experiences</p> <p>Unique and/or provincially significant arts/heritage and cultural experiences</p> <p>Region-wide outdoor experiences (e.g. cycling, fishing, paddling, hiking, boating etc.)</p> <p>Trent-Severn Waterway National Historic Site of Canada</p>

Partnership Allocation Program

Objective: To become a catalyst in building strategic alignment and promoting collaboration within the industry

Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
<p>Support the collaboration of industry partnerships through initiatives such as: translation, out of region digital marketing, digital capacity experience development / enhancement, photography / videography, wayfinding, festivals, events etc.</p>	<p>Increase in experiences offered in the shoulder season</p> <p>New industry applicants utilizing the program</p> <p>Operator season expanded and jobs created in the off-peak season</p> <p>Tools developed to entice travel to the region and provide visitor assistance</p>	<p>Target: Full utilization of the \$114,000 funds invested by the ministry</p> <p>Five first time applicants utilizing the program</p> <p>Operators see increase in sales from initiatives implemented through the support of the program</p>



RESEARCH

In 2024/25, research will continue to be a key resource in understanding both the economic impact and the post-pandemic visitor. We will utilize provincial and federal research gained by participating in the ministry's research working group along with our own research initiatives to support our marketing efforts to be recognized as one of the leading destinations in Ontario for soft outdoor and rural adventure.



VISITOR PERSONAS

Visitor personas for our region as identified through Destination Ontario research continue to be Connected Explorers as our primary followed by Nature Lovers, Family Memory Builders and “Tweeniors” (up and coming Seniors) as secondary. The majority of adult travelers to the region range between the ages of 35 – 64 years old, with the average age of 46.

Destination Ontario's Market Segmentation:



Connected Explorers



Nature Lovers



Family Memory Builders



Tweeniors



PROVINCIAL BRAND ALIGNMENT

Provincial brand alignment will be observed through collaborative Destination Ontario campaigns and partnerships.

We will continue to present our brand as part of the Ontario Travel “family” of brands, and put visitors first where possible in our messaging and content marketing. We will develop relationships with passionate advocates of our brand while also creating more genuine methods for consumers to identify with the value of our products and experiences.



MISSION STATEMENT

Kawarthas Northumberland will be a destination that drives its visitor economy with balanced and purposeful year-round visitation that meets our current and future capacity and community development needs.

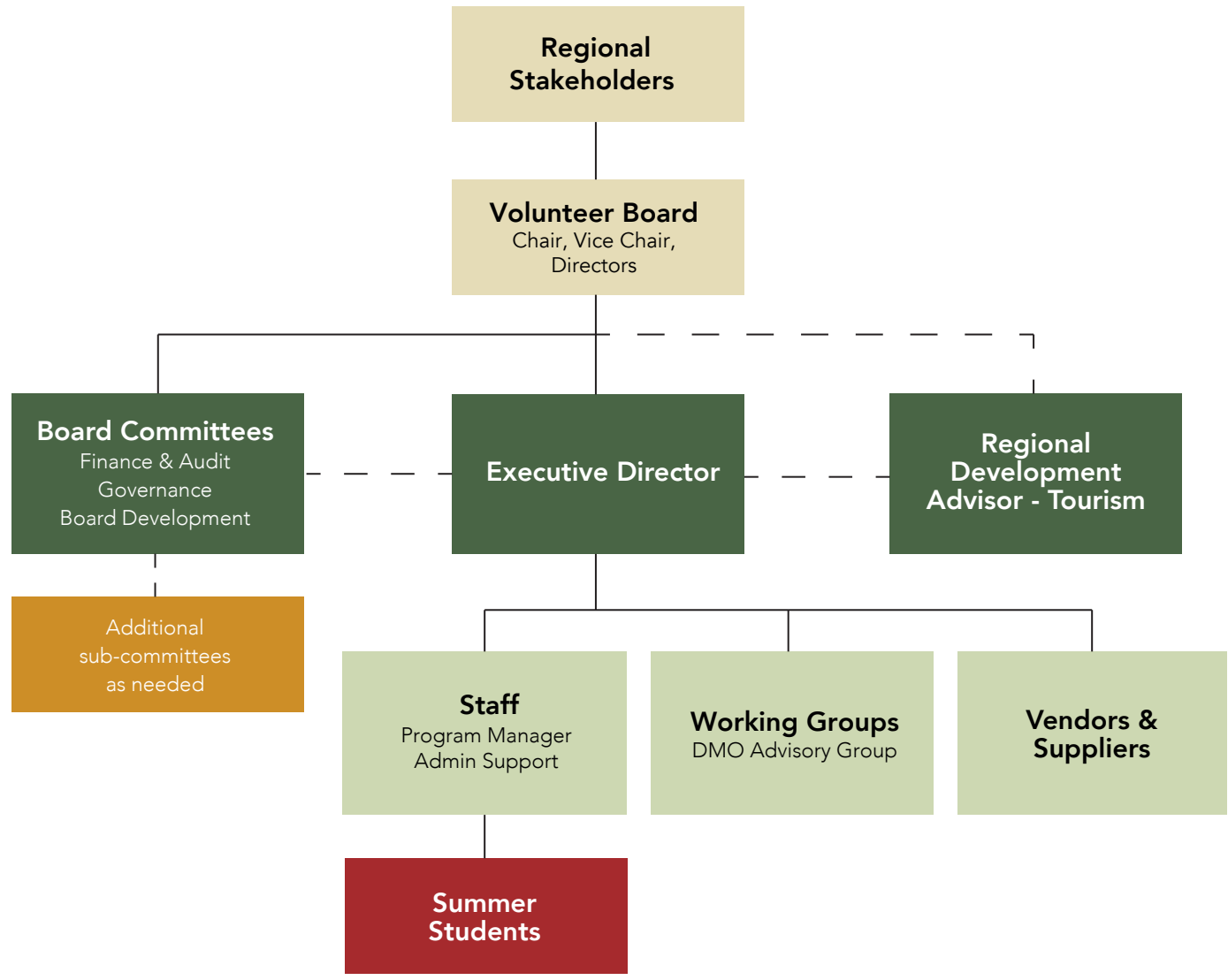
VISION STATEMENT

By 2026, Kawarthas Northumberland communities will be recognized as one of the leading travel destinations in Ontario for experiencing soft outdoor and rural adventure connecting Canadian waterway heritage.





RTO8 ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE





Regional Tourism Organization 8
P.O. Box 40
Hastings, ON K0L 1Y0