

BUSINESS AND OPERATIONAL PLAN

2026-27

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	01
Vision and Mission Statement	03
Executive Summary	04
Defining Success for Kawarthas Northumberland	07
Business Plan Details	08
Research	13
Visitor Personas	14
Provincial Brand Alignment	15
RTO8 Organizational Structure	16
Board Chair & Executive Director Bios	17







INTRODUCTION

The board and staff of RTO8/Kawarthas Northumberland believe that the visitor economy is delivered by businesses, championed by communities and supported by DMOs/RTOs. The 2026-2027 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.



VISION STATEMENT

Kawarthas Northumberland is an internationally recognized four-season destination of places and experiences that are brought to life by the people who call them home.

Our values include Community & Collaboration, Authenticity and Integrity, Growth & Resilience, Appreciation and Celebration, Respect & Kindness.

MISSION STATEMENT

Enabling the visitor economy to drive positive impact into the communities that make up Kawarthas Northumberland.

Why: Kawarthas Northumberland is a beautiful, unique, culturally and environmentally rich region of communities that are worth sharing with others.

- Support operator access to experience development opportunities to enable year-round experiences.
- Increase awareness of RTO8 and its programs.
- Leverage the Trent-Severn Trail Town program to build the visitor economy in the region.
- Implement targeted marketing campaigns and partnerships.





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Objectives for fiscal 2026-2027 are:

Governance and Administration

- Clear and transparent delivery of the 2026-27 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

- Support experience development and enhancement.
- Leverage the Trent-Severn Trail Town Program to help build the visitor economy in the region.
- Build shoulder season capacity.

Investment Attraction/Investor Relations

- Generate and share market intelligence.
- Champion the visitor economy at the local level.
- Leverage partner investment initiatives through the Partnership Allocation Program.

Workforce Development & Training

- Amplify and support the good work of others.
- Connect industry to best practices and each other.

Marketing

- Utilize market intelligence.
- Develop strategic content.
- Conduct relevant market research.
- Increase digital assets & content.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Continued

Partnership Allocation Program

- Support the collaboration of industry partnerships through initiatives in specific categories.
- Increase awareness of RTO8 and its programs.

2025-26 Key Accomplishments

- Leveraging being the only Canadian destination named one of the top 52 Places to Visit in 2025 by the New York Times, we have included listings of "nearby" attractions in each of our ten Trent-Severn Trail Towns to encourage a longer visitor stay. Our tswtrailtowns.ca website saw an increase of +130% from January 1 to September 30th with an increase in engagement events for the same period of +69%.
- Our inaugural Regional Tourism Summit held October 21st in Port Hope exceeded its expected attendance of 100 to garner a record 172 registrants attracting a diverse cross-section of regional and provincial tourism partners strengthening RTO8's network and reinforcing its leadership role within the regional tourism ecosystem. Attendees represented both tourism support organizations (36.5%) and visitor-facing tourism operators (63.5%), reflecting broad industry engagement. Attendee ratings for overall experience at the Summit were 88.9% rated their experience as Excellent, 11.1% rated their experience as Good.







DEFINING SUCCESS FOR KAWARTHAS NORTHUMBERLAND

We can view success by an increase in partner 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 partner 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. **The activities, outputs and outcomes will be carried over all four quarters of the fiscal year.**



Product Development

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

For RTO8, Product Development is about supporting the development of unique and memorable experiences that meet visitor demand while benefiting the communities where they are enjoyed.

Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
<p>Support operator access to experience development opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance communication with tourism partners • Facilitate/support experience development / networking events • Support/communicate experience development opportunities 	<p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase year-round market ready experiences by 2 • Supported 2 experience development opportunities
<p>Leverage the Trent-Severn Trail Town (TSTT) Program to help build the visitor economy in the region</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase partner participation in the program • Include itineraries and storytelling on tswtrailtowns.ca 	<p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase participants in the TSTT Friendly Business program by 10 • Develop 3 itineraries for activities nearby TSTT • Develop 2 operator/ community stories
<p>Build shoulder season capacity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support shoulder season demand generators to help increase visitation • Targeted digital capacity support for operators 	<p>Target:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 new/enhanced operator developed shoulder season experiences

Investment Attraction/Investor Relations

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

For RTO8, investment attraction is about stimulating the sustainable growth and development, including diversification, of tourism-related businesses within the region.

Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
<p>Generate and share market intelligence</p> <p>Champion the visitor economy at the local level</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support pathways for research, communication, and data sharing • Municipalities are interested, able and willing to invest in tourism 	<p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate, package and share insights from visitation research • Deliver 3 presentations around the value of and opportunities within tourism
<p>Leverage partner investment initiatives through the Partnership Allocation Program</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Municipalities/DMO's with Gap Analysis, digital portfolio development/enhancement 	<p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of 1 analysis/feasibility study • 2 initiatives via the Partnership Allocation Program

Workforce Development & Training

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

For RTO8, Workforce Development is about collaborating with others to respond to the workforce needs of the businesses and people behind the regions visitor economy.

Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
<p>Amplify and support the good work of others</p> <p>Connect industry to best practices and each other</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate educational training and workshop initiatives/programs 	<p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain an updated resource page on the rto8.com website to connect industry and partner resources and opportunities • Supported 2 partner facilitated initiatives



Marketing

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

For RTO8, marketing is about communicating that tourism is a co-creative process that can benefit everyone.

Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
<p>Utilize market intelligence to create diverse and targeted marketing campaigns with high conversion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attract our target markets by showcasing unique aspects of the region and communicate seasonal themes through targeted print & digital campaigns with Ontario By Bike, Destination Ontario and the Globe & Mail 	<p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase website traffic by 10% over previous year • Actively share and amplify social media content from our regional DMOs
<p>Develop strategic content that cultivates pride in our shared place</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create operator and community storytelling that reflects pride of place • Actively share and amplify social media content from our regional DMOs • Support referrals to partner websites and their social media channels 	<p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase Kawarthas Northumberland social media community size by 10% over previous year • Increase social media engagement by 10% over previous year
<p>Continue to build a diverse digital library and regional content that showcases both the uniqueness of the region and its many assets to attract visitation</p> <p>Conduct research to identify visitor profiles, demographics and economic impact</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update, refine and grow the library of digital assets (photography and video) to support content marketing initiatives into the future • Continue to develop blog stories that feature a variety of content including itineraries, listicles, seasonal themes and experiences • Work with data/research providers to identify regional and sub-regional data and communicate results to partners 	<p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase digital assets by 75 photos and or videos for future campaigns and social media platforms • Minimum of 6 new blog posts • Develop 4 partner data insight reports • Create a menu with research report options generated by RTO8 that will be available to partners



Marketing (Continued)

Target Markets	Consumer Profile	Growth Opportunities
<p>Primary – 1 to 4 hour drive radius of the Kawarthas Northumberland region with the GTA as the primary target market, and Kingston, Ottawa, Hamilton regions as markets within the drive radius</p> <p>Travel within the Kawarthas Northumberland region (40+KM) is a secondary market for visitors</p>	<p>Couples & families 25-65+, particularly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Outdoor Explorers”, “Fun and Sun Families”, “Simplicity Lovers”, “Refined Globetrotters” • Profiles are based on the Canadian Data Collective’s visitor profile insights and Geofencing research • Affluent adults 35-65+ with 90K + household income and culinary/arts/travel interests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2024 Destination Canada LASR data reflects a spend of \$1.3 billion dollars in 2024 (an increase of 9% over the previous year). Ontario remains the top origin market at 83%. International spending with year over year growth \$150.4 million (an increase of 16% over the previous year). USA is the second highest origin market at 9%. • Food and Beverage leads all categories in tourism spending at 30% followed by accommodations at 23%, transportation at 21%, entertainment at 13% and retail at 12%.

Partnership Allocation Program

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

For RTO8, the Partnership Allocation Program is about enabling individuals, organizations and businesses across the region to co-create value through tourism.

Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
<p>Support the collaboration of industry partnerships through initiatives in the following categories:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Professional/EquityTheatre 2. Strategic/Community Development Plans 3. Digital Capacity Building 4. Educational/skills-based workshops/training 5. Signage, both wayfinding and directional 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support ticketed demand generators and utilize TREIM to develop the economic impact • Support the creation of community/strategic development plans • Support digital capacity through new/enhanced websites, photo/video development, direct to operator booking capability • Support skills based training opportunities • Support the creation of signage to enhance the visitor experience 	<p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full utilization of the \$114,000 funds invested by the ministry. • 5 first time applicants utilizing the program • 3 ticketed operators utilizing TREIM



RESEARCH

2026/27 will be the second year of our licencing agreement with Environics Analytics. Although costly, this program has enabled us to access detailed data and insights for our region including census sub-division data that identifies visitor demographics, Prizm profiles, overnight and day visitors and spend. We will continue to use TREIM to report economic impact.



VISITOR PERSONAS

Based on research from the Canadian Data Collective, powered by Destination Canada, our key visitor segments include: Outdoor Explorers, Simplicity Lovers, Fun & Sun Families, and Refined Globetrotters. These profiles provide valuable insights to guide marketing, product development, and visitor experience strategies.

Destination Ontario's Market Segmentation:



Outdoor Explorers



Simplicity Lovers



Fun & Sun Families



Refined Globetrotters





PROVINCIAL BRAND ALIGNMENT

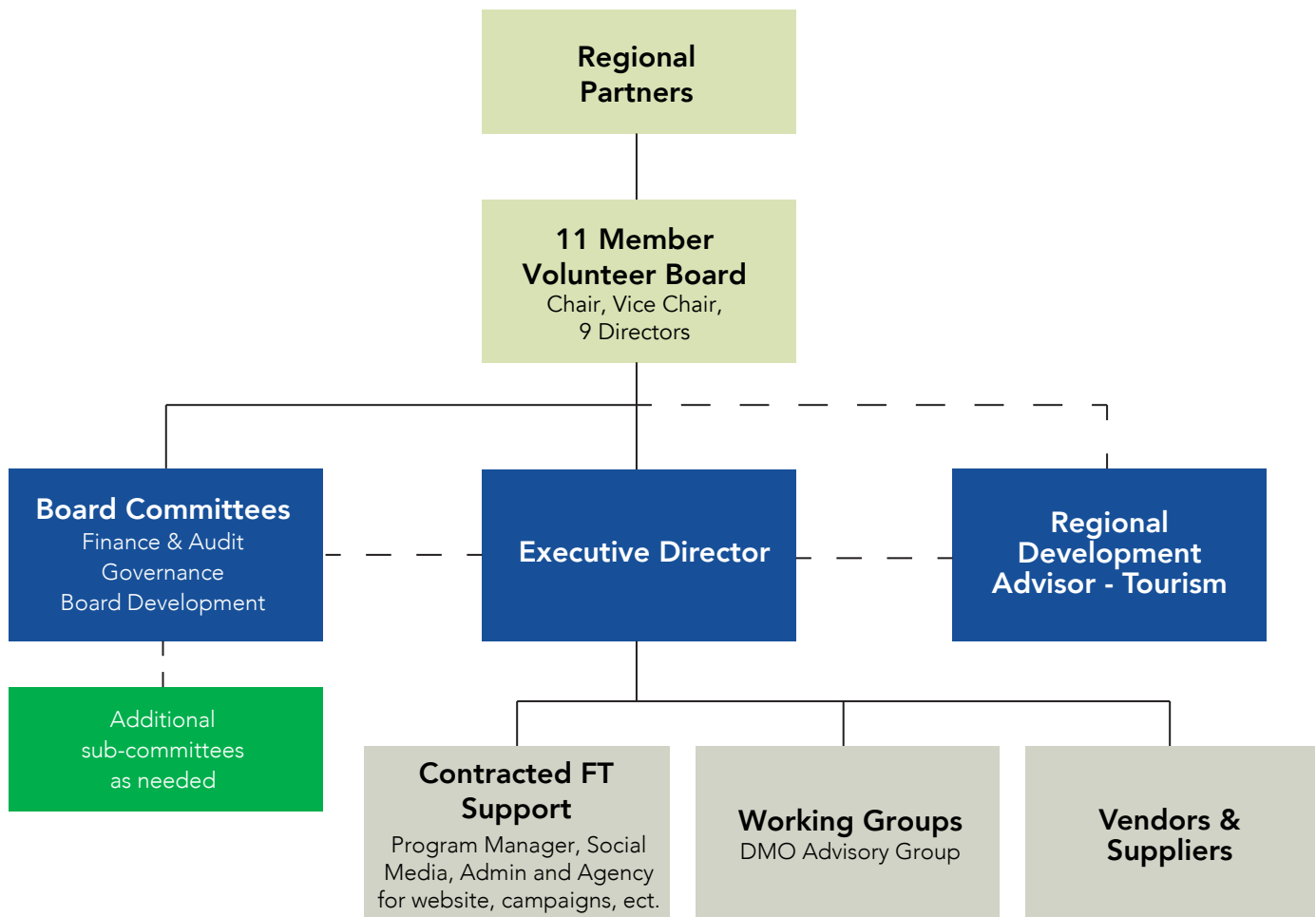
Provincial brand alignment will be observed through collaborative Destination Ontario campaigns and partnerships.

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.





RTO8 ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



BOARD CHAIR & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHIES



Elizabeth King – RTO8 Board Chair Museum Operations Manager, Lang Pioneer Village Museum

Elizabeth King serves as the Museum Operations Manager at Lang Pioneer Village Museum (LPVM), where she is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations and strategic direction of the museum. In this capacity, she leads the museum's marketing and business development initiatives, while also managing programming, facility operations, and collections stewardship. Elizabeth joined the County in 2009 and has since held a variety of roles at LPVM, culminating in her current position, which she assumed in August 2021.

With more than 20 years of experience in the museum sector, Elizabeth brings a wealth of expertise to her work. She is an active member of the Ontario Museum Association (OMA) and serves on the boards of both the Peterborough Architectural Advisory Committee (PACAC) and Regional Tourism Organization 8 (RTO8). Elizabeth holds a degree in Psychology from the bilingual Glendon College at York University. Her personal interests include reading, photography, hiking, and a deep passion for museums.



Brenda Wood, Executive Director of Regional Tourism Organization 8

Brenda has spent the past twenty-five years in the tourism industry. Working as a destination representative for a tourism operator in Mexico, Cuba and Spain, she oversaw the arrivals of over 1,200 passengers from Canada each week. She has worked in hotel and attraction sales and for a large DMO in Southern Ontario, specializing in travel trade. Since joining Regional Tourism Organization 8 ten years ago as their Executive Director, she has focused on the development of unique and authentic experiences including Canada's first Waterway Trail Town program to help grow tourism visitation and revenue within the Kawarthas Northumberland region.



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

Board Approved on: November 18, 2025
Approved by: Elizabeth King, Board Chair