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Introduction

In the first half of 2024, visitor spending within the borders of Central Counties was estimated at $1.8 billion, including $502 million from international visitors. This represents an 11% year-over-year growth and produced approximately $130 million in provincial sales tax.

The impact of the visitor economy is large, and a very integral part of maintaining and growing the vibrancy of our communities. The role of Central Counties Tourism is to support stakeholders in their efforts to build capacity to increase their success while growing the visitor economy.

Prior to the Board of Directors meeting in September of 2024 to set the priorities for this plan, staff circulated a stakeholder survey and met one-on-one with many of its municipal and DMO partners to learn more about the challenges they are facing and how they would like CCT to support them.

This is the third year that CCT has implemented this approach, and we attribute much of our continued and increasing stakeholder engagement on the fact that we listen and implement programs designed to fill gaps and build capacity. The 2025-2026 priorities are a direct reflection of what stakeholders have told us they need for their continued success.

2025-2026 Assumptions

The following assumptions have been taken into consideration in the development of this business plan:

- Provincial funding will remain unchanged
- The slow economy will remain unchanged for most of the fiscal before a slight improvement
- Provincial and Federal support for tourism will be minimal or non-existent
- There will be an increase in Ontarians traveling within Ontario and international trips to Ontario
- Consumer price sensitivity will increase

Based on those assumptions, CCT believes our stakeholders will experience:

- Continued front line staff shortages
- Increased costs (operating, fixed, taxes and cost of goods sold)
- Difficulty remaining relevant through social media channels (changing algorithms)
- Increased access to capital (but at a much higher borrowing rate than in years past)
- Decrease in time to focus on growing/expanding their business including working with other businesses to build a destination

2025 Municipal Priorities

Almost all communities within CCT have growth of the visitor economy as part of their 2025 plans. The following are the ranked results of the types of activities they will focus on to grow visitation, the tactics they will use to grow visitation and what gaps they want CCT to help fill.

Municipal Areas of Focus for Growing the Visitor Economy in 2025

1. Festivals and Events
2. Downtowns / Retail
3. Art / Culture / Heritage
4. Routes / Trails
5. Family Activities
6. Agri-Tourism / Rural
7. Film Tourism
8. Outdoor Adventure
9. Sport Tourism
10. Culinary Tourism
11. Cycling
12. Group Tourism
13. Business Tourism
14. Multicultural
15. Indigenous
16. Wellness

Tactics Municipalities will Focus on to Help Grow the Visitor Economy in 2025

1. Social Media
2. Website
3. Networking Events / Stakeholder engagement
4. Festivals & Events
5. Influencers
6. Print / Radio / Television
7. Wayfinding Plan
8. Downtown Revitalization
9. Research
10. Dedicated Staff
11. Route / Trail Development
12. Newsletters / E-blasts to consumer database
13. Infrastructure upkeep and development
14. Red Tape Reduction

CCT Supports that Municipalities have Requested for 2025

1. Funding Support
2. Social Media Amplification
3. Research
4. Industry Equipping
5. Influencers
6. Photography / Videography
7. Partnership Funding
8. Route Development
9. B2B Networking
10. General Marketing
11. Website Support
12. Educating Council
13. Marketing Co-Ops
14. Educating Residents
15. Community Tourism Planning

2025-2026 Priorities

CCT's overarching priority is to remain relevant to the stakeholders it supports by providing timely, relevant and implementable tools that fill gaps and provide them the capacity to grow their success. CCT believes that growing the visitor economy starts with operators and works it way up. As such, the 2025-2026 priorities, and the actions and tactics to support them, reflect what the organization has learned through one-on-one conversations, stakeholder feedback and surveys.

Business Model & Sustainability

Priorities: Industry Relations and Engagement
Partnership Program Review (making it clearer)
Grow revenues to maintain and increase core deliverables
Zero-base budgeting
Business and Governance Excellence

Role: Connecting Stakeholder to CCT resources so that they are more successful
Be the recognized regional leader and experts on growing the visitor economy
Research and implement stakeholder programs that include cost recovery
Lead revenue growth (services, products, grants, sponsorship)
Lead the sustainable growth of the organization and the services it provides

Policy/Advocacy

Priorities: Share CCT's successes, leading with ROI and impact
Municipal understanding of the importance of the visitor economy
Connect the visitor economy to broader economic development initiatives
Educating residents so they understand the importance of the visitor economy
Pan-Regional collaboration

Role: Champion communication about the impact of the visitor economy
Lead discussions with municipal staff and council regarding the visitor economy
Advocate for municipal programs and supports that invest in visitor growth
Support stakeholders and municipal staff on their quest to educate residents
Create opportunities for pan-regional sharing

Research

Priorities: Communicate Trends
Build Research Literacy
Champion evidence-based decision making by ensuring stakeholders know how to interpret and utilize the information
Cost recovery

Role: Lead dissemination of visitor analytics and trends
Lead aggregate data collection, analysis and reporting for the region
Support understanding of what questions stakeholders want answered and how to interpret and utilize the data to do that
Support the development of new tools and datasets to further the understanding of the visitor economy and how to grow it.

Industry Equipping

Priorities: Coaching
Provide access to learning & skills development opportunities
Host events that educate and inspire, supporting new relationships and collaboration
Showcase learning, funding, and accreditation opportunities led by others

Role: Lead the development/implementation of relevant learning opportunities for stakeholders
Connect stakeholders to other learning opportunities (sustainability, getting sponsors, etc.)
Maintain feedback loop to gather insights for better education and program delivery
Trusted, go-to source for validated industry information and guidance

Product & Experience Development

Priorities: Maintain and refresh current products and experiences
Support stakeholder-led route development
Grow AVTR1 Subscriptions
Support CCT consumer campaigns by connecting existing stakeholder experiences to create compelling routes

Role: Lead stakeholder understanding of the advantages of route development (Learning Lab)
Support consumer campaigns by connecting stakeholders to themes and itineraries
Lead growth provincial participation in Golf in Ontario
Support stakeholder route development and growth

B2C Marketing

Priorities: Collaborative approach with tourism partners
Target audience reframing
Seasonal campaign evolution
Adherence to guidelines and board direction

Role: Be the experts in consumer tourism marketing and communication trends
Lead the regional content creation and successful implementation of consumer campaigns
Support stakeholders through strategic marketing and communication

B2B Marketing

Priorities: Sustained engagement and participation in the stakeholder development and tourism growth initiatives of Central Counties Tourism
Communicate the importance of the visitor economy, share research & trends
Engaging with industry thought leaders
Personalized communication

Role: Be the experts in B2B tourism marketing and communication trends
Provide stakeholders with engaging, relevant and implementable content and information
Lead the communication of success stories to emphasize the importance of the visitor economy
Support stakeholders, through B2B resources/content, grow their capacity

Investment Attraction

Priorities: Pilot tracking business investments (new businesses opening, expansions, etc.) taking place in the region to communicate the important role the industry plays within communities
Grow municipal investment in tourism through the facilitation and implementation support of Community Tourism Plans and Wayfinding Plans
Leverage stakeholder investment through the partnership program
Provide visitor insights to communities to demonstrate the value of the visitor economy

Role: Support investment by providing research and other information that informs investment decisions
Support investment through the implementation of community tourism and wayfinding plans

Executive Summary

Central Counties Tourism has hit a wall when it comes to capacity. Over the past several years, the organization has surged forward, developing new supports for stakeholders to assist them achieve success for themselves. For many of the programs CCT offers, there is a cost associated – both financial and resource. As stakeholder engagement grows, so does the cost to deliver them.

The dilemma is a perfect Catch-22. Financial support for tourism has been stagnant (and reduced) since the RTO model was introduced more than ten years ago, meaning there are less resources available to grow the pool of stakeholders who understand their place in developing a vibrant visitor economy. However, to create a critical mass of stakeholders who believe in growing visitation to their communities and willing to champion tourism as an economic driver, Central Counties needs to engage more stakeholders and support them as they become part of the fabric of the visitor economy. The stronger the story of the importance of support for this industry, the better the chances that policymakers will increase support for its continued growth.

The workaround for Central Counties Tourism is to grow revenues beyond what is provided by the Province so that it can increase its capacity to support stakeholders. The 2025-2026 Business Plan maintains current service excellence while focusing on growing products and services that provide revenue streams for sustainability.

The organization is well-positioned to deliver this plan based on several successes in fiscal 2024-2025. These include:

AVTR1: CCT's augmented reality platform was refined and piloted, making it ready to bring to the broader regional market.

IRM Team: The role of the IRM team and their priorities were refined, leading to them being able to focus on what is most important – stakeholder engagement and connecting them to the supports provided by CCT.

Marketing: CCT is always at the forefront of trends and works to integrate them into consumer communications, connecting more potential guests to our stakeholders. Identified trends for 2024-2025 and solutions to implement against them, will result in more consumers learning about our stakeholders. Moreover, work is being done to allow stakeholders to potentially license / tap into new technologies being developed to increase marketing effectiveness.

Sponsorship: The asset matrix and potential sponsor list developed in 2024-2025, coupled with learning at the 2025 Tourism Symposium about making an organization a good sponsorship candidate, position CCT for success as it works at developing new revenue sources.

Partnership: Refinements to the partnership program are based on feedback from stakeholders applying, the IRM team and the application evaluators. The goal is to ensure that the process is easy to understand and that all projects have a high ROI on the co-investment.

Governance: The new ONCA-compliant by-laws and letters patent recognize that CCT can support growth of the visitor economy beyond its borders. This allows for additional revenue sources from current supports already offered including research and community tourism planning.

Promotion: CCT began to "toot its own horn" in 2024-2025, making sure that the business successes of the organization were shared with municipalities, DMO's and the Province. CCT is collecting more "good news" stories this fiscal, with the goal of communicating the impact of tourism.

Fiscal 2024-2025 prepared the organization to move further down the path of self-sufficiency. 2025-2026 marks the first year of a long process growing the organizational resources, which will allow CCT to engage with and support even more stakeholders, leading to more success at growing the visitor economy.

These successes will be documented, aggregated and communicated to the policy makers in an effort to bring the Tourism Portfolio the recognition it deserves. The hundreds and hundreds of stakeholders that will benefit through implementation of this plan is a testament to the important roll CCT plays in helping build capacity to grow the visitor economy. That is our reason for being.

This plan has a direct impact on visitor readiness while starting down a road of sustainability that ensures the organization will be able to support more and more engaged stakeholders for years to come.

Defining Success for Central Counties

Each of the Community Tourism Plans that CCT facilitates starts with a question: "What does tourism success look like for [name of the community]?" While there are many variations of specific success measures, there are some underlying similarities in all of them. It is those similarities that define what success is for Central Counties.

1) Businesses understand the importance of the visitor economy on the vibrancy of their communities and collaborate with each other to create more reasons for people to visit more often and from further away.
2) Residents understand that visitors are adding money to the tills of their favourite places to eat, shop and visit, often making the difference between the businesses being solvent or having to close. The collaboration (not competition) between businesses creates a growing pride of place with residents who then become ambassadors, welcoming visitors and helping connect them to the great things to see and do.
3) Municipalities invest in infrastructure that makes communities more visitor friendly and connects destinations within its borders and beyond. Staff and council understand that there are no walls between their municipality and those they border and start to work on projects that build an even bigger destination which will appeal to a larger audience willing to travel greater distances to get there.
4) Destinations within Central Counties deliver amazing guest experiences that build reputation and brand. Strategic and targeted marketing & communications, coupled with word of mouth, propel visitor growth across the region.
5) Sustained and increasing visitation prompts investment in new businesses that further support the visitor economy and bring full time employment to the region.
6) Visitors become residents who increase a captive workforce which prompts investment in non-tourism businesses to open in the region.

Business Plan Details

The tactics, KPIs and goals listed below are how CCT plans on delivering against the priorities as set out by the Board of Directors. The expectation in 2025-2026 is that no additional supports will be available and it will be up to staff to find additional funds to complete projects not directly tied to the draft budget.

Staff Lead Acronyms

[ED – Executive Director, DO – Director of Operations, DM – Director of Marketing, DID – Director of Industry Development, MM - Consumer Marketing Manager, B2B – B2B Communications Manager, RDM – Research Development Manager, IRM – Industry Relations Managers,]

Business Model & Sustainability

Industry Relations and Engagement (The IRM Team)

CCT's relevance lies in the engagement of stakeholders across the region and beyond. The more stakeholders that take advantage of the programs and supports we provide, the better equipped they are to grow their business and the visitor economy. The focus of the Industry Relations Managers is to engage more stakeholders and manage relationships with currently engaged stakeholders to ensure they take advantage of the services we provide.

As the front-line ambassadors for CCT, the Industry Relations Managers are often called upon to support other organizational initiatives like partnerships, research, industry equipping and marketing. The time required to complete tasks for these other areas, while important and often involve connections with the stakeholders they have relationships with, have reduced the amount of time they have available to introduce CCT to new stakeholders.

With that in mind, a review of current tasks, and the time it takes to complete, was conducted by the IRM team and Executive Director. Role priorities were then set for 2025-2026 to best meet the agreed upon priorities from the strategic planning session.

1) Finding, engaging and onboarding new stakeholders (which includes connecting them to CCT supports)
2) Stakeholder management (keeping stakeholders engaged with CCT and ensuring we are their first call for assistance when it comes to growing their business)
3) Networking Events (Connecting Stakeholders to each other and CCT programs)
4) Leading and Supporting Destination and Route Development
5) Supporting Seasonal Marketing Campaigns (showcasing best stakeholders to fulfill the theme)
6) Connecting Stakeholders to cost recovery and pay for service CCT programs

Some of the listed priorities support the Marketing, Industry Equipping and Research Pillars but are documented here as they are part of the IRM's role.

Increase the number of stakeholders (businesses that have potential to drive visitation and organizations that support growing the visitor economy) actively engaged with CCT.				
Tactics	KPIs	Goals	Budget Line	Lead
Through conversations with municipal, DMO, BIA, etc., stakeholders (from Destination Development priority), source new businesses that are opening or that have become engaged in the visitor economy at the local level and are not currently involved with CCT.	# of newly engaged businesses / organizations profiles added to CCT's stakeholder database	50 per region	IRM Mileage	IRM
Research businesses online that provide products/services that support municipal and CCT visitor priorities.				
When doing stakeholder visits, make note of other businesses that are not yet connected with CCT.				
Meet with stakeholders (onboarding) to introduce them to CCT and the services / supports provided				
Follow up with onboarded stakeholders to assist with them uploading their business profiles and teaching them how to upload events (if applicable)				

Stakeholder Management – keeping stakeholders engaged with CCT and ensuring we are their first call for assistance when it comes to growing their business				
Tactics	KPIs	Goals	Budget Line	Lead
Proactive: Calling and emailing relevant stakeholders to let them know about CCT opportunities like networking events or campaigns they may fit into.	This part of the IRM role takes about 50% of their time and is the main reason that stakeholder engagement continues to grow. Having said that, overall stakeholder engagement is a combination of having a point person to connect with AND having relevant supports that our stakeholders want to take advantage of. The sheer volume of stakeholder connections makes tracking that number as a KPI cumbersome and tracking program specific metrics lies within other action items.	Compelling campaigns and full networking events	No Cost	IRM
Proactive: Dropping in on stakeholders when in the community on other business				
Reactive: Respond to stakeholder emails and calls. Set up meetings to discuss their projects and / or partnership applications		Strong partnership applications, new stakeholder products and increased use of CCT research and Marketing opportunities	No Cost	IRM
Reactive: Connect stakeholders to other staff resources at CCT that may be able to assist with their project or questions				

Networking Events (Connecting Stakeholders to each other and CCT programs)				
Tactics	KPIs	Goals	Budget Line	Lead
Work with municipal and regional partners to support and deliver stakeholder networking events. Where possible, try to cluster neighbouring municipalities to expand stakeholder knowledge of other businesses in the area.	# of networking events % of events that had municipal / regional support # of attendees	15 total 50% 450	Industry Relations	IRM
Host regional or pan-regional networking event for specific segments (eg.community heritage sites / museums, agri-tourism, etc.) to share best practices and explore opportunities to work together.	# of networking events # of attendees	3 90	Industry Relations	IRM
Provide information about the programs and supports offered by CCT both through a brief presentation and takeaway collateral.	% of attendees that take the collateral with them	90%	No Cost	ED

Leading and Supporting Destination Development and Stakeholder Routes				
Tactics	KPIs	Goals	Budget Line	Lead
Host and/or attend regional municipal meetings to support regional communication and information exchange, alignment of supports for stakeholders, discussion and development of a regional approach to destination development (municipalities working together with their DMO/RTO to create bigger products/experiences).	# of meetings hosted / attended This will vary by region based on size and the presence of a regional DMO	12 4 – Headwaters (hosted by CCT) 4 – South York 2- North York (hosted by CCT) 4 – Durham (hosted by Durham Tourism)	No Cost	IRM
Initiate conversations with municipal contacts to learn about current and upcoming priorities and determine what supports (if any) CCT may be able to provide.	% of municipalities that discuss tourism priorities with CCT at least once	90% Not all municipalities have the visitor economy as a top agenda item, although the majority with CCT do	No cost	IRM
From these meetings, determine and document common themes, gaps, etc. so that CCT can make business decisions that support their needs for successful destination development.				
Attend meetings or become members of tourism or economic advisory committees at the municipal and regional levels to ensure that destination development is on the agenda.	# of meetings attended	This is a reporting metric only as the number of meetings and CCT's invitation to them is not guaranteed	No Cost	IRM
Connect route development stakeholders to support organizations that can assist in the development and implementation of the route (upon request)	This tactic and associated KPI's and Goals are outlined in the Experience Development Pillar			

Supporting Seasonal Marketing Campaigns (showcasing best stakeholders to fulfill the theme)				
Tactics	KPIs	Goals	Budget Line	Lead
Determine the themes, focus and proposed content for each of the seasonal campaigns.	These can be found in the Experience Development section of the plan			
Research and document stakeholders / stakeholder experiences that support the theme and focus.				
Connect chosen stakeholders to Marketing so that they can be included in seasonal content and trails designed to motivate travel to the region				

Partnership Program Review

Continue to evolve the CCT Partnership Program to be more effective and efficient				
Tactics	KPIs	Goals	Budget Line	Lead
Evaluate applications and questions asked by stakeholders who were trying to fill out the application to determine what, if any, questions need to be modified to ensure the responses fit the intention of the question.	Communication of the 2026-2027 Partnership Program Application Guide to stakeholders	Q4	No Cost	ED
Recommend changes to the Partnership Committee for incorporation in the 2026-2027 Partnership Program		Stronger applications and less questions from stakeholders		
Review partnership program priorities and make recommendations to the Partnership Committee for implementation in the 2026-2027 Partnership Program	Completed Review and Recommendations Approved	Q3	No Cost	ED

Grow revenues to maintain and increase core deliverables

Grow CCT revenues to provide additional core functionality				
Tactics	KPIs	Goals	Budget Line	Lead
Develop collateral for all "fee for service" offerings for distribution at CCT events and through municipal partners, mirrored on the B2B website.	Collateral ready for distribution	Q1	B2B Field Support	B2B
Implement the AVTR1 tactics from the Experience Development Section of this plan	Membership Revenue	$100,000	Revenue	ED
Secure sponsorship for the 2026 CCT Tourism Symposium	Sponsorship Revenue	$35,000	Revenue	ED
Solicit year-round corporate sponsorship based on the asset matrix developed in 2024-2025	Sponsorship Revenue	$50,000	Revenue	ED
Apply for grants that allow CCT to deliver new services and products that do not affect core budget	# of successful grants	Reporting Only		ED
Continue to grow stakeholder investment in research both within the region and across the province.	Revenue from Research Reports	$50,000	Revenue	ED

Zero-base budgeting

The 2025-2026 Business Plan was developed without pre-conceived notions of available budget by project. Each proposed project for 2025-2026 has been costed out. All administrative and project costs were added together to create the starting budget. Projects were then prioritized to determine which needed to be set aside or deliverables modified to meet the allocated funds for 2025-2026.

Business and Governance Excellence

Organizational Excellence				
Tactics	KPIs	Goals	Budget Line	Lead
Strong financial management	Clean Audit and On Budget	June 15, 2025	Administration	DO
Board of Director Oversight	# of meetings	5	Administration	DID
Implement the Business Plan to grow visitation and visitor capacity	% of Business Plan Objectives Achieved	90%	All	ED
Consult with Ministry Reps to update them on CCT progress and learn about new trends / "hot-topics" at the provincial level.	# of meetings	6	No Cost	ED

CCT is the Industry Expert for Stakeholders				
Tactics	KPIs	Goals	Budget Line	Lead
Facilitate Community Tourism Plans and Wayfinding Plans	# of new or refreshed CTPs or Wayfinding Plans	3	Revenue	ED
Sit on Tourism Boards, Advisory Committees, Panels, Industry Groups, etc.	# of local, regional, provincial and national industry groups CCT has a voice at the table of	6		All Staff

Policy / Advocacy

Unified messaging about the impact of the visitor economy across all levels of government is an effective way to ensure proper investments are being made to grow it. CCT's role is to ensure that its municipalities, and its residents, understand the importance of visitors to the vibrancy of their communities, while reporting impact metrics and other successes to the province so they can tell a compelling story about the ROI from tourism investment.

Priorities:
- Share CCT's successes, leading with ROI and impact
- Municipal understanding of the importance of the visitor economy
- Connect the visitor economy to broader economic development initiatives
- Educating residents so they understand the importance of the visitor economy
- Pan-Regional collaboration

Communicate advocacy priorities				
Tactics	KPIs	Goals	Budget Line	Lead
Share CCT's successes through Quarterly Trend reports directly with DMOs & Municipalities	Reports distributed	4		ED
Deliver CCT Releases that communicate CCT programs, and success stories to industry and media.	Press releases distributed	4		B2B
Communicate the impact of the visitor economy to stakeholders / government / media	# of impact reports shared through B2B channels and directly with the Ministry	2		B2B
Increase municipal understanding of the visitor economy by providing 2024 visitor economy results to municipal and regional councils	# of municipal / regional council updates (in person or through municipal staff report)	10	No Cost	ED
Meet with other RTO's to discuss common messaging and other policy/advocacy efforts that should be aligned to have a greater impact at the provincial level.	# of All-RTO meetings	4	No Cost	ED
Share best practices with other RTO's and determine opportunities for collaboration for greater impact and/or creating economies of scale in terms of costs and resourcing.	# of meetings with individual, select group or all RTO's to specifically discuss an advocacy/policy project to determine how to collaborate to increase impact	6	No Cost	ED

Research

CCT's research continues to be recognized as the go-to leader across its region and provincially, and frequently collaborates at the national level by representing the region on several boards/committees. CCT uses empirical data to demonstrate the value and economic impact on the visitor economy, identify trends in visitation to grow its targeted markets, and overall help grow visitation to the region, its municipalities, and the province as a whole. The two-year RTO wide research initiative that started in FY 2024-2025 will be coming to an end in this FY 2025-2026, and discussion on continuing the project beyond are already in the works.

Priorities: Communicate Trends
Build Research Literacy
Champion evidence-based decision making by ensuring stakeholders know how to interpret and utilize the information
Cost recovery

Role: Lead dissemination of visitor analytics and trends
Lead aggregate data collection, analysis and reporting for the region
Support understanding of what questions stakeholders want answered and how to interpret and utilize the data to do that
Support the development of new tools and datasets to further the understanding of the visitor economy and how to grow it.

Communicate Trends				
Tactics	KPIs	Goals	Budget Line	Lead
Identify and disseminate trends in visitation to partners/stakeholders via B2B Newsletter articles	# of B2B Newsletter articles highlights trends mid-year and year-end	2	Revenue	RDM

Communicate the impact of the visitor economy to stakeholders / government / media	# of impact articles written for distribution	2	No Cost	RDM

Build Research Literacy				
Tactics	KPIs	Goals	Budget Line	Lead
Provide quarterly research presentations/webinars to educate others how to interpret the data, make best use of it, and increase targeted visitation	# of Presentations/Webinars	4	Revenue	RDM

Champion evidence-based decision making by ensuring stakeholders know how to interpret and utilize the information				
Tactics	KPIs	Goals	Budget Line	Lead
Create 'cheat sheet' one-pagers to easily utilize the data, rather than it sitting on a shelf	# of 'one-pagers' created based on stakeholder needs	3	Revenue	RDM

Stakeholders use research to make informed investment and development decisions to grow the visitor economy				
Tactics	KPIs	Goals	Budget Line	Lead
Fulfill leads generated by IRM team through their stakeholder engagement	# of new stakeholders that purchase CCT Research Services # of stakeholders that purchase new datasets for comparative purposes	3 5	Revenue	RDM

Provide aggregate visitor analysis to stakeholders, municipalities, DMO's and RTO's				
Tactics	KPIs	Goals	Budget Line	Lead
Collect monthly hotel occupancy rates and revenues for Durham, York, and aggregated CCT (shared quarterly).	# of collections	4	Industry Relations	RDM
Geo-fence specific locations for municipalities, DMO's and RTO's.	# of reports	25	Industry Relations	RDM
Write a series of articles for the B2B Newsletter on visitation trends & success stories.	# of B2B Articles	4	Industry Relations	RDM

CCT is an integral part of provincial/national research working groups and panels				
Tactics	KPIs	Goals	Budget Line	Lead
Continue to represent RTO6 and its stakeholders at a provincial/national level within various research groups and disseminate key insights as needed.	# of committees	3		RDM

Make research results easy for all stakeholders to understand, interpret and use for making informed decisions				
Tactics	KPIs	Goals	Budget Line	Lead
Present research results through infographics/visualization with key take-aways and suggestions.	# of reports	4		RDM

Industry Equipping & B2B Alignment

Most municipalities do not have the capacity to assist stakeholders in building their capacity through education. It is a gap that they, along with businesses, have asked CCT to fill. In 2025-2026, CCT will focus on communicating the opportunities (and the importance of taking advantage of them) that are available for stakeholders to better their capacity to welcome and retain guests. This includes both the courses & workshops developed by CCT and making connections to worthwhile accreditation programs that are offered by trusted third parties.

Industry Equipping

Priorities: Coaching
Provide access to learning & skills development opportunities
Host events that educate and inspire, supporting new relationships and collaboration
Showcase learning, funding, and accreditation opportunities led by others

Role: Lead the development/implementation of relevant learning opportunities for stakeholders
Connect stakeholders to other learning opportunities (sustainability, getting sponsors, etc.)
Maintain feedback loop to gather insights for better education and program delivery
Trusted, go-to source for validated industry information and guidance

Lead the development/implementation of relevant learning opportunities for stakeholders				
Tactics	KPIs	Goals	Budget Line	Lead
Plan and promote virtual Q&A sessions and webinars, highlighting CCT programs and services, funding program, industry partners and associations.	# of virtual sessions	4	Industry Equipping	DID
Provide stakeholders with additional learning content, focused on important tools, technology, and trends thought to improve their business, and visitor and staff relations.	# new learning courses/content made available to CCT members inside the 'Learning Lab' portal	3	Industry Equipping	DID
Host CCT's annual Tourism Symposium – a full day in-person event – with presentations by CCT, Presenting Sponsors (ex. DMO), Keynote Presentations and Panel discussions, as well as dedicated time for stakeholder networking. Theme varies year to year, generally the content includes: announcements, deep dive into a "hot topic" such as new trends/technology impacting tourism, a chance to showcases regional success stories and examples.	# of attendees	250	Industry Equipping	DID

Provide access to learning & skills development opportunities				
Tactics	KPIs	Goals	Budget Line	Lead
Promote trusted training & skills development opportunities to CCT Stakeholders (that are not part of the Learning Lab.)	# of 3rd party training opportunities each quarter	Min. 1 per quarter	Industry Equipping	DID
Gather information and develop profiles with local/regional workforce & skills development	Information gathering & discovery calls	Database development	No Cost	DID

Maintain feedback loop to gather insights for better education and program delivery				
Tactics	KPIs	Goals	Budget Line	Lead
Mid-year: Seek feedback via Stakeholder survey to gather feedback to inform 2026-27 Business Plan.	# of completed surveys	50	No Cost	DID
Post a relevant question across B2B Channels encouraging opinions and ideas to be shared more frequently. Feedback to inform future B2B content, eLearning, webinars, marketing, etc.,	# of monthly questions/topics	8	No Cost	DID
Send targeted eBlasts to specific Learning Lab users to reengage them (ex: suggest completing an "open" course, another course you might be interested in.) etc.,	# of email campaigns	2	No Cost	DID

Trusted, go-to source for validated industry information and guidance				
Tactics	KPIs	Goals	Budget Line	Lead
Promote available tourism workforce development programs to stakeholders.	# of emails campaigns sent # of webinars	Based on program availability	No Cost	DID
Develop and share profiles, events, and good news stories more frequently, filing the gap between newsletters to ensure time sensitive resources (links, articles, media coverage, etc,.) are available across our Industry channels.	# of articles for website # of posts # of dedicated emails	4 (1 per quarter) Benchmark year Benchmark year	No Cost	DID

Product / Experience Development

2025-2026 will be a year of maintaining and strengthening the programs CCT has developed over the years. At the same time, we will be supporting stakeholders that are working to provide more visitor-ready products and experiences throughout the region.

Priorities: Maintain and refresh current products and experiences
Support stakeholder-led route development
Grow AVTR1 subscriptions
Support CCT consumer campaigns by connecting existing stakeholder experiences to create compelling routes

Maintain and refresh current products and experiences				
Tactics	KPIs	Goals	Budget Line	Lead
Continue to showcase the region's diverse beverage producers and rich history of bootlegging by producing season two of the T&T podcast that is available through Spotify, Apple and other podcast platforms, along with the CCT website and partner websites.	# of new episodes recorded and launched in season 2	6 (two from each region)	Experience Development	ED
Update the current Trails Talks, T&T and Spine-Tingling Tours through integration with AVTR1 and/or new stops or stories.	# of updates	3	Experience Development	DM

Support Stakeholder-led route development so that more businesses are enjoying growth through collaboration				
Tactics	KPIs	Goals	Budget Line	Lead
Connect stakeholders to the route development toolkit on the learning management system through B2B communications (both CCT and municipal/DMO) networking events, and other stakeholder meetings	# of times the Route Development Toolkit and a link to it are part of CCT B2B Communications Channels	12 between the B2B newsletter and social channels	B2B	B2B
	# of municipalities that share information about the Route Development Toolkit including a link to the program in their B2B communications	6	No Cost	ED
	% of networking events that include an introduction to and/or discussion about route development and the toolkit that is available through CCT	60% The reason it is not 100% is that some networking events will be the 2nd or 3rd in various communities and other networking events are partnered with or hosted by municipalities	Industry Relations	ED
	% of newly onboarded stakeholders who are introduced to the Learning Lab and available courses / modules	100% Part of the introduction to what CCT is and how it helps is info about the Learning Lab	No Cost	IRM
Facilitate stakeholder planning meetings to move route development forward (upon request)	% of facilitation requests fulfilled by Executive Director to work directly with stakeholders who are working through the process (toolkit) of developing a new tourism route	90% This is a % because it is upon request. Not 100% in case ED not available for a meeting	Mileage	ED

Support Stakeholder-led route development - Continued				
Tactics	KPIs	Goals	Budget Line	Lead
Connect route development stakeholders to support organizations (municipalities, DMO's, TIAO, OTEC, etc.) that can assist in the development and implementation of the route (upon request)	% of fulfilled requests This is a % KPI because we can not anticipate how many stakeholders developing routes will reach out to ask us to put them in touch with other organizations that will help.	90% While CCT is recognized by stakeholders as a strong resource for connecting them to others, there may be times when we can't find the right fit	No Cost	IRM
Support the launched route, and its events (if any) through core B2C marketing and communications channels.	% of launched routes that receive support This KPI is a % because we are not sure how many routes are going to launch in the fiscal and, more importantly, the type of marketing support each route receives will be customized.	100%	No Cost	DM
Share the launch of the developed route through B2B channels and local media to capture the important investments being made in the community and hopefully encourage more stakeholders to follow suit.	# of B2B / Media related activities per launched route. These can include press releases, CCT newsletter mentions/articles, CCT social media mentions/reels, municipal posts, etc.	Min. 1 Often one press release can be picked up and published by several organizations	B2B	B2B

Grow AVTR1 Subscriptions to build a separate revenue-generating business unit				
Tactics	KPIs	Goals	Budget Line	Lead
Develop testimonials from stakeholders who are successfully using AVTR1 to enhance visitor experiences	# of testimonials	Min. 1 from each sector (hotels, museums, breweries, etc.) utilizing the tech		ED
Revamp the AVTR1 landing pages, including an "order form", to increase the number of leads to conversions	Completion of revamped landing pages	Q1	Product Development	ED
Showcase AVTR1 at Ontario and Canadian Sector Association Conferences and Trade Shows to spark additional interest and sales	# of Tradeshows Attended	Min. 4* Canadian Museum Association, Creative City Summit, Ontario Museum Association, Canadian Craft Brewers Association	*funded by AVTR1 subscriptions	ED
Develop business plan for stand-alone AVTR1 Business Unit	Approved Business Plan and Budget for 2025-2026	Q4	No Cost	ED
Promote AVTR1 across the province utilizing B2B communications channels from partner organizations (other RTOs, TIAO, ORHMA, OMA, DMOs, etc.)	# of visitors to the AVTR1/Sales Landing Page	1,000		ED
Fund AVTR1 Growth through subscriptions	Revenue generated by subscriptions in 2025-2026	$100,000	Revenue	ED

Support CCT consumer campaigns				
Tactics	KPIs	Goals	Budget Line	Lead
Understand the themes, focus and proposed content for each of the seasonal campaigns.	% of recommended stakeholders that meet marketing requirements for each campaign (meaning are a right fit whether used or not)	90%	No Cost	IRM
Research and document stakeholders / stakeholder experiences that support the theme and focus.				
Connect chosen stakeholders to Marketing so that they can be included in seasonal content and trails designed to motivate travel to the region				

Investment Attraction

CCT role in Investment Attraction is two-fold. Through advocacy and community tourism planning facilitation, CCT increases municipal and regional investment in resources that help grow the visitor economy. And, by working directly with businesses and organizations that deliver visitors experiences and enhance their stay, CCT builds destinations that attract more visitors, more often. When those two things are combined, the more likely it is for new businesses to invest in that community.

Priorities

- Pilot tracking business investments (new businesses opening, expansions, etc.) taking place in the region to communicate the important role the industry plays within communities
- Grow municipal investment in tourism through the facilitation and implementation support of Community Tourism Plans and Wayfinding Plans
- Leverage stakeholder investment through the partnership program
- Provide visitor insights to communities to demonstrate the value of the visitor economy

Tracking Business Investments				
Tactics	KPIs	Goals	Budget Line	Lead
Develop a database of investments by region and municipality	Database Developed	Q1	No Cost	ED
Ask for investment updates at municipal, BIA and chamber meetings taking place throughout the year (from Industry Relations section)				
Log all investments into the databases				

Grow municipal investment				
Tactics	KPIs	Goals	Budget Line	Lead
Audit existing CTP action items	# of action plans reviewed # of action items implemented	6 10	I.A	ED
Solicit municipal investment in research to provide prospective investors a clear picture of the visitor impact	# of municipalities purchasing research	10	Revenue	RDM

Leverage stakeholder investment through the partnership program				
Tactics	KPIs	Goals	Budget Line	Lead
Successfully implement the 2025-2026 partnership program	# of stakeholders applying for partnership	60	Partnership	ED
Co-invest with stakeholders on projects that will grow the visitor economy	$ invested by stakeholders	$450,000	Partnership	ED
Stakeholders build capacity through completion of mandatory learning lab modules	# of stakeholders completing modules	60	Partnership	ED

Provide visitor insights to communities to demonstrate the value of the visitor economy				
Tactics	KPIs	Goals	Budget Line	Lead
Communicate available CCT research programs and available reports stakeholders have access to	# of times research programs are communicated to stakeholders through email and B2B social	4	B2B Marketing	B2B
Communicate good news stories about how municipalities have successfully used research to grow the visitor economy	# of stories communicated	4	B2B Marketing	RDM
Solicit municipalities to purchase visitor insights data to support growth in the visitor economy	# of municipalities purchasing datasets	10 (same 10 as the first table)	Revenue	RDM

CCT B2C MARKETING PLAN 2025/26

Executive Summary

The 2025/2026 Central Counties Tourism (CCT) B2C Marketing Plan represents a strategic evolution in destination marketing, built on data, research, and insights from the 2024 Board retreat. This plan focuses on enhancing visitor engagement, refining target audiences, and updating seasonal campaigns to align with emerging trends and evolving visitor preferences.

With a renewed emphasis on the growing populations of new Canadians and the aging demographic, CCT aims to diversify its reach, appealing to a broader range of travellers. By targeting these emerging segments, CCT will leverage advancements in AI, targeted content, and a refined digital to enhance the online visitor experience.

CCT will also ensure a more dynamic and responsive user experience through its consumer-facing website, YorkDurhamHeadwaters.ca, and social channels @VisitYDH. By embracing innovative digital tools and partnerships, CCT is positioning York, Durham, and Headwaters as accessible, welcoming, and desirable destinations for today's diverse travellers, ultimately driving increased visitation and economic impact across the regions

Target Audiences: Expanding While Retaining

CCT's strategy centres on two primary demographics for growth: new Canadians and the aging population, while continuing to engage a loyal local and regional audience.

New Canadians represent a young, economically impactful demographic with a strong interest in accessible, family-oriented travel experiences. Driven by the desire to connect with friends and family, this audience seeks culturally rich and community-integrative experiences. CCT will use YorkDurhamHeadwaters.ca and @VisitYDH to highlight attractions across York, Durham, and Headwaters, focusing on culturally resonant events that support integration and exploration, appealing to this group's unique needs.

Aging Populations, especially baby boomers, represent a significant opportunity due to their spending power and interest in wellness-oriented, accessible travel. "Skip-generation" travel, where grandparents vacation with grandchildren, is increasingly popular, providing valuable bonding opportunities. CCT will promote family-friendly, accessible travel options to support this intergenerational trend.

Meanwhile, retaining Existing Audiences remains essential. Seasonal campaigns will specifically target returning visitors by emphasizing unique regional attractions and local events that keep loyal visitors engaged and eager to return.

We will also be targeting a new type of business and leisure traveller known as "Laptop Luggers." These individuals have the flexibility to work from anywhere, enabling a blend of business and pleasure travel. This remote work capability has created a hybrid travel style, allowing them to enjoy destinations while staying connected professionally.

Website Enhancements and User Experience Optimization

As mobile-first trip planning continues to grow, a seamless, accessible user experience on YorkDurhamHeadwaters.ca is critical. CCT is prioritizing mobile-responsive design, intuitive navigation, and advanced planning tools, including interactive maps and customizable itineraries, to allow users to explore travel options across York, Durham, and Headwaters easily from any device.

To support travellers who plan well in advance, CCT will introduce long-lead planning tools to help users curate trips months ahead, aligning their itineraries with seasonal events, family schedules, and budgets. Enhanced accessibility features, such as larger fonts, high-contrast designs, and straightforward navigation, will ensure an inclusive experience for all, particularly seniors and new Canadians.

SEO and AI-Driven Search Adaptation

Google's new AI-driven search bar is reshaping online search by prioritizing context and user intent over traditional keywords. To remain visible and relevant, CCT will adapt its SEO strategy for YorkDurhamHeadwaters.ca, creating content that directly addresses common travel questions and needs, increasing visibility within Google's evolving AI model.

CCT will apply for a grant in December 2024 to fund the development of an AI integration suite for YorkDurhamHeadwaters.ca. This AI-powered system will allow for personalized, conversational user experiences that anticipate visitor needs and deliver custom recommendations. Monthly SEM campaigns will supplement this approach, ensuring that CCT's content reaches high-intent audiences across York, Durham, and Headwaters who are seeking accessible, family-friendly travel experiences.

Curated, Targeted Content Development

The CCT marketing team will collaborate closely with stakeholders to create content that highlights the unique experiences and products across York, Durham, and Headwaters. By leveraging the expertise of CCT's Industry Relations Managers and actively engaging with stakeholders for updated content, we will ensure a dynamic and engaging online presence.

This content strategy will be tailored to resonate with specific target audiences. For new Canadians, CCT will feature multicultural experiences on YorkDurhamHeadwaters.ca and @VisitYDH, incorporating inclusive visuals, authentic testimonials, and stories that celebrate local festivals, dining, and events. Senior-focused itineraries will emphasize wellness, accessibility, and family-friendly experiences, making regional attractions welcoming and enjoyable. Seasonal campaigns will highlight culturally significant events such as Lunar New Year and Diwali, fostering year-round engagement with Ontario's diverse communities.

Social Media Strategy and Integration

CCT is updating its social media strategy to address current trends across major platforms and meet the demands of emerging markets, the aging population, and shifts in audience engagement. With the rise of ad fatigue and content noise, CCT is committed to targeting new audience segments beyond traditional tourism demographics, encouraging travel to and within York, Durham, and Headwaters.

The new strategy will focus on establishing a strong presence across key social channels (@VisitYDH), integrating content creation, photography, and influencer partnerships to optimize reach and effectiveness. This unified approach will enable CCT to streamline resources, improve alignment across platforms, and reduce staff workload. By focusing on growth beyond traditional tourism audiences, CCT will create a more engaging and impactful digital presence that resonates with diverse groups and drives increased engagement within the regions.

Influencer Strategy and Diversity Initiatives

CCT's influencer strategy is evolving to engage new visitor segments by partnering with influencers from diverse backgrounds, including "Silver Influencers" who resonate with the senior market, as well as lifestyle-focused influencers who appeal to multicultural and younger audiences. These influencers will feature content on their own channels, sharing it with @VisitYDH to expand our reach and connect authentically with various demographics. For select campaigns, we will also develop more comprehensive content, including dedicated blog articles on YorkDurhamHeadwaters.ca, to deepen connections and build trust with our audiences.

By collaborating with influencers who authentically represent Ontario's multicultural and multi-generational landscape, CCT will foster an inclusive brand image that connects with new Canadians, seniors, returning visitors, and other communities in an engaging and relatable way. This diverse influencer outreach, supported on YorkDurhamHeadwaters.ca and @VisitYDH, allows CCT to share genuine stories and showcase York, Durham, and Headwaters as accessible and welcoming destinations. Through these partnerships, CCT aims to inspire trust, build connections, and drive engagement across all platforms.

Pay-to-Play Partnerships and Paid Marketing

Pay-to-play partnerships will remain a key component of CCT's marketing strategy, enabling us to maximize our marketing budget and expand our reach to new audiences. We will continue to pursue partnerships with targeted tourism associations to co-create compelling content and share resources.

Paid advertising in key tourism publications will remain a priority, alongside exploring new partnerships with organizations like CARP, CAA, and multicultural media channels. These strategic collaborations and advertising channels will help increase CCT's visibility across a wide range of platforms and demographics.

Earned Media and Emerging Market Strategy

Earned media will continue to be a key element of CCT's strategy, with a renewed focus on reaching emerging markets. In addition to maintaining our current efforts, we will implement a strategy targeting multicultural media by crafting press releases in multiple languages. This approach will help build consumer trust and effectively communicate our offerings to new, diverse audiences.

By partnering with established media outlets and trusted journalists, CCT will raise awareness in emerging markets, positioning York, Durham, and Headwaters as desirable destinations. This earned media strategy will ensure we connect with new audiences authentically, enhancing our credibility and broadening our reach.

Functionality and Data-Driven Enhancements

Adapting to Google's AI-driven search technology is a core element of CCT's digital strategy. As Google's search bar prioritizes semantic understanding, CCT will ensure that content on YorkDurhamHeadwaters.ca is value-rich, directly addressing common travel questions and meeting users' needs. By adapting to this evolving AI model, CCT can stay competitive within Google's search ecosystem and provide more relevant results to potential visitors.

To support this approach, CCT will apply for a grant in December 2024 to fund an AI integration suite for YorkDurhamHeadwaters.ca. This suite will enable a personalized, conversational experience, anticipating visitor needs and offering tailored recommendations, making it easier for users to plan trips and discover the attractions of York, Durham, and Headwaters. Partnerships with mobile applications will enhance the digital experience by offering interactive planning tools, allowing users to create, customize, and navigate trip itineraries directly from their devices. These features will help CCT deliver a streamlined, user-centric platform that fosters deeper engagement and supports tourism across the regions.

This strategy, informed by insights from industry leaders including *Forrester, Deloitte, Destination Ontario, CN Traveller, Destination Canada, the Interactive Advertising Bureau, Rezgo, CARP, AARP and CAA*, positions Central Counties Tourism to adapt and thrive. By focusing on inclusivity, accessibility, and engagement, CCT will create a dynamic, effective digital presence that captures the diverse interests of both new and returning visitors in the regions of York, Durham, and Headwaters.

2025-2026 Visitor Profile Update

Central Counties Tourism (CCT) has identified and refined six key visitor profiles to align with the updated 2025-2026 business plan. These profiles, developed through extensive research utilizing Numeris Data, Mobile Data Geofencing, Postal Code Audits, and Prizm Segmentation, are instrumental in helping CCT stakeholders effectively target and market to their ideal consumers. Each profile has been matched with CCT stakeholder businesses, ensuring tailored outreach that resonates with the specific interests of each visitor type.

In 2025/26, CCT will retain these six visitor profiles, as they continue to reflect accurate and relevant visitor characteristics. This year's plan also includes a focused effort to curate emerging market profiles and integrate them into the existing segmentations, refining tactics and content to address the unique needs of new and growing demographics. This responsive approach will enable CCT to better reach evolving audience segments through targeted digital and social media campaigns, influencer partnerships, and curated content strategies, deepening engagement across the regions of York, Durham, and Headwaters.

The six primary visitor profiles are:

- Adventure Seekers
- Art Lovers – Urbanite (Core)
- Art Lovers – Community Explorer (Tactical)
- Family Fun
- Foodie Fanatics
- Passionate Putters

For detailed information on each profile, please visit CCT Visitor Profiles.

Geographical Targeting and Emerging Housing Trends

The 2025-2026 CCT Marketing Plan continues to target key audiences in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and its immediate surroundings, specifically within a 20-60 km radius of the region's borders. In recent years, two significant trends have emerged, impacting both visitation and residential interest in CCT regions:

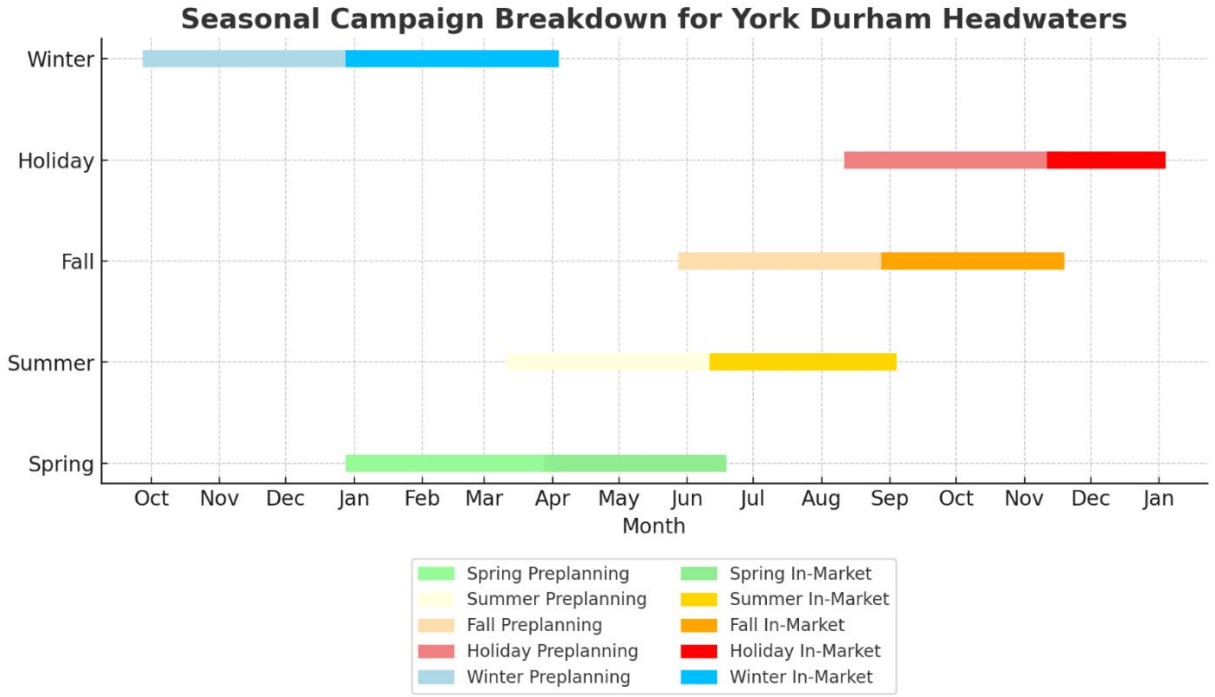
1. *Increased Cross-Regional Visitation*
   Cross-regional travel is still on the rise, with visitors moving across York, Durham, and Headwaters for diverse experiences. This aligns with CCT's influencer and social media strategies, which highlight cultural, family-friendly, and outdoor attractions across these areas, appealing to a variety of visitors, including "Laptop Luggers" who blend work and leisure travel.

2. *Housing Market Trends and the "Exurban" Migration*
   Housing affordability and availability continue to be significant concerns in the GTA, and the shift in housing preferences across Ontario remains ongoing. Families are increasingly exploring communities within a 60-120 km radius of the GTA, seeking more affordable, spacious homes and a quieter lifestyle. As a result, many families and professionals are relocating to growing towns to the north, west, and east of the GTA. CCT will continue to rely on its research to effectively target these areas, driving visitation and economic impact to the regions of York, Durham, and Headwaters.

Seasonal Campaigns

The CCT marketing team will remain committed to its seasonal campaigns in 2025-26, as these continue to strongly resonate with visitors and play a key role in their travel planning. These campaigns will deliver content in an engaging and easily digestible format, ensuring maximum impact. This year, we'll also be incorporating multicultural celebrations into each season, provided there are relevant tourism offerings to support them.

To further enhance the success of these campaigns, we are introducing a new pre-planning element. This B2B initiative will provide stakeholders with ample time to showcase their experiences and products, ensuring they are well-integrated into the seasonal programming and reach the widest possible audience.



Website Strategy

Objective: To establish YorkDurhamHeadwaters.ca as Ontario's leading road trip planning platform by creating an accessible, user-friendly site that promotes the region's tourism stakeholders, products, and experiences. This initiative prioritizes seamless functionality across devices, adapts to AI-driven SEO trends, and provides engaging, year-round content for diverse audiences, including new Canadians and multigenerational travellers.				
Tactics	KPIs	Goals	Budget Line	Lead
Mobile Functionality and Accessibility: Create a seamless experience across devices with mobile optimization, integrated planning tools, advanced accessibility, and a pilot AI concierge to support all user needs.	Create a mobile optimization strategy % completion of mobile-responsive design updates, planning tools, and accessibility enhancements by a set deadline. Create pilot AI – Concierge Tool. # of tools	1 100% 1	Web Strategy	DM
SEO and AI Search Adaptation: Optimize SEO strategies to align with AI-driven search trends, archive outdated content, and apply for funding to develop an AI-powered interface for personalized recommendations.	Create a SEO/AI strategy Apply for grant funding. # of applications	1 1		DM

Targeted SEM Campaigns: Run monthly campaigns focused on high-intent keywords and regional stakeholder promotion to attract targeted, seasonal audiences.	# of Campaigns	12		DM
Seasonal and Year-Round Content: Develop season-specific campaigns and year-round content to engage diverse travellers, including those planning trips months in advance.	# of campaigns	6		DM
Enhanced Road Trip Planning Tools: Provide customizable trip planning options with exportable itineraries and partnerships with apps for integrated mapping and itinerary building across devices.	Complete all phases of the road trip planning tool development, including functionality testing, by the targeted launch date, ensuring readiness for user access. % of completion	100%		DM

Digital Strategy

Central Counties Tourism (CCT) is refining its digital strategy for 2025-2026 to enhance engagement, reach new audiences, and increase visitation to the regions of York, Durham, and Headwaters. With a focus on emerging demographics, including new Canadians and the aging population, the strategy combines targeted content development, an updated social media approach, and influencer partnerships to create a more inclusive, dynamic, and engaging online presence.

As data shows that Facebook's core audience is primarily 55+, we will tailor content specifically for this demographic, focusing on themes such as wellness, accessibility, and family-oriented travel experiences. We will reduce our investment in paid boosts, reallocating those funds to more effective components of the strategy. While continuing to engage key travel influencers, we will also expand our influencer pool to include *Silver Influencers*, lifestyle creators, and multicultural influencers, broadening our reach and fostering deeper engagement.

Given the rise in ad fatigue and content noise across social media platforms, we will decrease our reliance on paid display ads. Instead, we will prioritize high-value paid partnerships with influential publishers such as *Wellness Travelled*, *Curiosity*, *Narcity*, and *BlogTO*. These partnerships will help us connect with more targeted, engaged audiences, ensuring that our marketing dollars have a greater impact.

To capitalize on the growing trend of visual discovery, CCT will expand its social media strategy to include Pinterest. We are developing a dedicated strategy for the platform, with plans to launch four Pinterest boards by Q3. These boards will showcase visually engaging content tailored to our target audiences, driving higher engagement and increasing awareness of York, Durham, and Headwaters as top travel destinations.

CCT aims to create a more focused, efficient, and inclusive social media presence, reaching diverse audiences and driving increased visitation and economic impact in the regions of York, Durham, and Headwaters.

Objective: To drive visitation and economic impact in York, Durham, and Headwaters by building an inclusive, targeted digital presence that engages emerging demographics through dynamic content, strategic partnerships, a diversified influencer pool, and enhanced storytelling across key social media channels				
Description	KPI	Goal	Budget Line: B2C-Digital Strategy	Lead
Develop a new digital strategy to address new emerging audiences, platform trends and consumer ad fatigue	#	1	Digital Strategy	DM/MM
Social Media Engagement: Complete quarterly YOY engagement growth comparison for all social channels for B2C, YorkDurhamHeadwaters.	% of engagement increases per channel	Facebook: 5% Instagram: 2% TikTok: 5%		MM
Complete quarterly social media performance reports to track engagement and audience metrics	# of reports	4		MM
Research and attend Content/Social media learning opportunity.	# of opportunities	1		MM
Content development: work with travel writers (YDH Bloggers) to create compelling articles for yorkdurhamheadwaters.ca that tell the story of the region, tourism businesses, products, campaigns and programs.	# of new articles # of refreshed	25 40		MM

Social content development (not present on ydh.ca) for channels. IG, Pinterest, TikTok.	# of reels # of TikToks # of boards	50 24 4		MM
To work with high yield digital media publishers to produce online and social media campaigns	# of campaigns	3		MM
To create a series of paid influencer campaigns that support the YDH seasonal campaigns	# of paid campaigns	12		MM

Marketing Support Tools

Marketing support tools like graphic design, photography, video, and image banks are crucial for successful marketing for both CCT and Stakeholder initiatives. They create engaging visuals, convey brand messages effectively, and ensure consistency across campaigns. These tools boost brand visibility, tell the stakeholder story, enhance audience engagement, and drive conversions in a competitive market. In 2025-26, we will execute an audit of the bank, removing outdated imagery, created seasonal collections for each consumer segment, and refine meta tags.

Objective: To create a robust and organized collection of shareable creative assets in order to support B2B, B2C, and stakeholder marketing and communication initiatives.				
Description	KPI	Goal	Budget Line	Lead
Image Bank Audit, Collections and Meta Tag Program	# of programs	1	Marketing Support Tools	DM/IBA
Continue to grow our photography	#of photoshoots	12		DM/MM
Create seasonal b-roll collections	# of seasonal b-rolls	4		DM/MM

Earned Media and Public Relations

Earned media—across digital, television, and print platforms—remains a key and highly effective component of our marketing strategy. Through our press release and media outreach program, we target specific media outlets to secure coverage that endorses the tourism offerings of York, Durham, and Headwaters (YDH). This approach not only enhances our credibility, and fosters trust among potential visitors, but it also provides measurable impact through metrics such as reach, engagement, and ad value.

In addition to traditional media, we are expanding our efforts to include multicultural media outlets. This will help us reach diverse audiences and position YDH as an authentic, inclusive destination. By tapping into these additional media channels, we aim to further establish York, Durham, and Headwaters as a trusted, desirable place to visit, resonating with a broader range of potential travellers.

Objective: To strengthen York, Durham, and Headwaters' reputation as an authentic, inclusive destination by securing targeted media coverage across digital, television, print, and multicultural platforms to enhance credibility, reach diverse audiences, and drive measurable impact.				
Description	KPI	Goal	Budget Line	Lead
Pan-Regional Monitoring – Create report in order to measure success in the following categories: impression reach, PR value and regional coverage.	# of reports	12 (monthly)	Earned Media and Public Relations	DM
Press release creation and distribution of the YDH What's On press releases and/or advisories in order to raise awareness of campaigns, offerings, and special products.	# of releases	48		DM

To effectively monetarily measure the success of the earned media and public relations program.	Earned media and impression value	4 million		DM

Paid Marketing

In 2025-2026, Central Counties Tourism will focus on raising awareness and driving visitation to York, Durham, and Headwaters through strategic partnerships. We will partner with tourism businesses via the YDH Co-Op ad program in *The Globe and Mail* to promote their products, programs, and events. Collaborations with Destination Ontario and the Culinary Tourism Alliance (CTA) will extend our reach while maximizing marketing dollars. Media partnerships with broadcasters and Ontario-based tourism publications will also be pursued to further promote the region. The co-op program will continue to generate sustainable revenue and support stakeholders.

Objective: Drive awareness and visitation to York, Durham, and Headwaters by leveraging strategic partnerships, co-op advertising, and media collaborations to promote regional tourism offerings, optimize marketing spend, and generate sustainable revenue for CCT.				
Description	KPI	Goal	Budget Line:	Lead
Partner with tourism businesses to raise awareness of their products, programs and events via the YDH Co-Op ad program in the Globe and Mail.	# of full-page co-op ads	10	Partnership	DM
Partner with Destination Ontario and CTA in order to extend audience while leveraging dollars.	# of campaigns Leverage Value: $25,000	1 DO 1 CTA	Paid Marketing	DM/MM
Partner with Destination Ontario for media partnerships with broadcasters	#of media partnerships	2		DM

Work with Ontario based tourism/interest publications and organizations to promote visitation to YDH	# of organizations	5		DM
Print Collateral	# of pieces	3	Paid Marketing	DM

2025-2026 B2B MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

The B2B Marketing & Communications Plan for Central Counties Tourism (CCT) is crafted to strengthen stakeholder engagement, fuel regional tourism growth, and keep stakeholders informed about available programs, marketing opportunities, and resources. Grounded in research, this plan integrates stakeholder insights, industry trends, and staff feedback with a refreshed digital strategy, positioning CCT as a leader in tourism support and development in Ontario.

This streamlined strategy aligns with current B2B marketing trends, incorporating digital tools, personalized communication, and innovative engagement techniques—including AVTR1—to make CCT's offerings accessible and impactful. The primary goals are to drive sustained stakeholder engagement, boost website traffic, and deliver relevant, value-driven support for ongoing tourism development.

Data-Driven Decision Making

CCT's B2B marketing approach is anchored in data analysis, utilizing insights from social media metrics, stakeholder feedback, and website analytics. This approach allows CCT to fine-tune its programs, address stakeholder needs effectively, and pinpoint areas for growth. Comparative analysis with other Regional Tourism Organizations (RTOs) further highlights strategic areas for CCT to enhance tourism support and innovation.

Incorporation of B2B Marketing Trends

Personalized communication remains central to this strategy, leveraging CCT's stakeholder database to tailor messaging to individual business needs. Content will be segmented to target specific audiences, and CCT will produce educational articles on topics such as attracting multicultural visitors, customizing experiences for diverse age groups, and engaging the senior market.

Database and Communication Enhancements

Enhanced database segmentation and exportability are core components of this plan, enabling streamlined outreach and targeted communications. Improvements to the database management system will give CCT more autonomy in campaign management, and seasonal data audits will ensure information remains accurate and relevant.

Targeted Email Campaigns

CCT will continue to leverage its established e-newsletter as a primary outreach tool, using a CRM platform like MailChimp to standardize email communications. In addition to regular updates, CCT will introduce segmented email templates that prompt stakeholders to update listings, participate in seasonal campaigns, and submit content suggestions. This tailored approach will help keep businesses aligned with CCT's marketing initiatives, ensuring consistent, value-driven communication.

Expanded Print Co-op Advertising

To extend the reach of the print co-op program beyond the Globe & Mail, CCT will collaborate with additional publications like *In The Hills Magazine*, supporting seasonal initiatives and increasing visibility for participating stakeholders.

Enhanced B2C Seasonal Marketing Integration

CCT will introduce customized pop-up banners on the B2B website to invite stakeholders to submit content, events, and promotions. An intake form will streamline the content submission process, while Industry Relations Managers (IRMs) will integrate these resources into their outreach efforts.

Social Media Engagement

Social media is a vital tool for driving traffic to centralcounties.ca and encouraging stakeholder engagement in CCT's programs and opportunities. This strategy will focus on fostering meaningful interactions with current followers, reinforcing CCT's presence and value within the tourism community. By sharing program updates, success stories, and interactive content, CCT aims to build a stronger connection with stakeholders, prompting them to explore available resources and participate in initiatives that support their business goals.

To maximize impact, CCT will implement targeted campaigns that highlight seasonal programs, promote co-op advertising opportunities, and showcase the successes of participating stakeholders. Engaging visuals, storytelling, and informative posts will be used to drive awareness and showcase the tangible benefits of collaboration with CCT. Social media analytics will guide content adjustments, helping to ensure that messaging remains relevant, impactful, and aligned with stakeholder needs.

Informational Print Resources

A Stakeholder Outreach Kit will be available both online and in print, equipping IRMs with concise, one-page resources outlining the benefits of CCT programs. This quick reference guide will offer stakeholders easy access to support options.

Augmented Reality Integration with AVTR1

In partnership with AVTR1, CCT will leverage augmented reality to present stakeholder opportunities in an interactive format. This approach will make resources more engaging, immersive, and memorable, showcasing CCT's innovative approach to tourism development.

The 2025-2026 B2B Marketing & Communications Plan for Central Counties Tourism (CCT) is crafted to strengthen stakeholder engagement, enhance tourism visibility, and provide valuable support through targeted, trend-driven strategies. By prioritizing digital innovation, personalized communication, and practical resources, CCT will empower stakeholders to succeed in Ontario's competitive tourism landscape.

This plan reaffirms CCT's role as a trusted resource and proactive leader, dedicated to fostering a vibrant tourism ecosystem and driving sustainable growth across the region.

B2B Marketing Plan

Objective: Launch a targeted "CCT Content/Article" strategy on centralcounties.ca to highlight stakeholder programs, events, and resources, enhancing awareness of CCT's support in research, education, marketing, and funding opportunities.				
Description	KPI	Goal	Budget Line	Lead
Information Articles (Internal: Research, Marketing, Industry Equipping)	Information Articles	6	B2B Content	BBMM
Featured Article: External Articles	6 articles	6	B2B Content	BBMM
Stakeholder Spotlight	# of Spotlights	6	B2B Content	BBMM
Maintain Newsletter engagement	Average Annual Open Rate	40%		BBMM
Increase the image bank and video portfolio for B2B marketing purposes	Number of Photoshoots	3	B2B Photography and Video	BB / MM

Objective: Elevate Central Counties Tourism's brand presence and engagement through a strategic social media plan that drives traffic to centralcounties.ca, increases stakeholder participation, and amplifies programs and events for tourism businesses in York, Durham, and Headwaters, Ontario.				
Description	KPI	Goal	Budget Line:	Lead
Create a social media calendar that supports CCT programs and opportunities.	Number of Calendars	1		B2B
Increase overall social engagement across all channels	Increase engagement growth across current social media platforms:	Engagement Growth %: 2		B2B
Grow social media audience	Increase number of followers across current social media channels	5%		B2B
Research and attend Content/Social media learning opportunity.	# of opportunity	1		B2B

Objective: Optimize the CCT website to strategically showcase our support for tourism stakeholders through seasonal pop-up banners for key programs, engaging AVTR1 content delivery, and enhanced database access and exportability for CCT staff to efficiently locate stakeholders in curated categories for inclusion in B2C marketing campaigns. This user-focused platform will educate stakeholders, foster engagement, and encourage active participation in CCT's programs and initiatives.				
Description	KPI	Goal	Budget Line:	Lead
Pop Up Banner Programs	Number of programs	1		B2B
Integrate AVTR1 into promotional marketing for pay to play tools	Number of avatar experiences	2		B2B
Increase stakeholder engagement	% of engagement growth	5%		B2B
Enhanced database segmentation and exportability (CCT dashboard back-end useability)	% of project completion	80%		B2B
Develop a pilot AI-Concierge program (dependent on funding)	# of programs	1		B2B

Objective: Utilize media to share the stories of CCT stakeholder product experiences and events to targeted media in order to tell their stories and increase audience reach. Share CCT programs, opportunities and success stories to targeted media and industry in order to raise awareness and increase program participation.				
Description	KPI	Goal	Budget Line	Lead
Maintain the stakeholder press release dissemination program	Number of press releases forwarded to press	50	Public Relations	B2B
Create a CCT Release program that communicates CCT programs, and success stories to industry and media.	# of Releases	10	Public Relations	B2B

Golf in Ontario

Objectives: Be the best practice example of pan-regional partnership through the Golf in Ontario Program
Realize at least $1.5M in economic impact across the province through the program

Golf in Ontario Growth				
Tactics	KPIs	Goals	Budget Line	Lead
Solicit new stakeholder partners to actively grow the program within YDH and the rest of the province.	# of new stakeholders	5	Golf in Ontario	ED
Support the marketing / branding efforts of the Golf in Ontario program to grow bookings	Economic Impact	$1.5M	Golf in Ontario	DM

Partnership: Ministry Allotment $379,000

Objectives Foster tourism investment
Further CCT's impact on tourism

Further CCT impact on tourism				
Tactics	KPIs	Goals	Budget Line	Lead
Solicit partnerships that encourage increased visitation and increased length of visit.	# of partnerships	25	Partnership	IRM
Encourage development of shoulder season products/experiences.	# of partnerships	4	Partnership	IRM
Work with pan-Provincial associations to further the regional impact for CCT members	# of association partnerships	2	Partnership	ED

Foster Tourism Investment				
Tactics	KPIs	Goals	Budget Line	Lead
Solicit partnership proposals from municipalities, BIAs, DMOs and regions that focus on supporting increased visitation, stakeholder capacity, destination development and other tourism-related projects.	# of mentions in B2B newsletters #of direct conversations with stakeholders # of Partnerships	4 10 4	Partnership	IRM
Support projects that advance Community Tourism Plan action items	# of Partnerships	4	Partnership	ED

Appendix I

Definitions

In discussing strategy, it is important to have a common understanding of the terms used in the document.

Objectives	Manageable, time-sensitive allocations of resources that move the organization toward the ultimate Strategic Direction. There is a clear link between each objective and a Strategic Direction. Objectives are the backbone of the yearly Business Plan and build on each other year-over-year.
Tactics	Individual activities that support the achievement of Objectives. Each Objective may have several tactics associated with it. Tactics are measurable and are used to gauge organizational effectiveness at achieving the Objectives and moving towards the Strategic Direction.
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators are the agreed upon outcomes that will be measured to determine the execution effectiveness of each tactic.
Goals	The quantitative and qualitative, agreed-upon target to be achieved for each tactic.
Results	The final measurement of achievement for each tactic.
Outcome	The cumulative affect of results supporting the objective.
Visitor & Visitor Economy	These are used in place of the word "tourist" because the majority of people visiting and spending money in our communities are from Ontario and don't consider themselves tourists any more than operators recognize them as such.

Definitions Cont'd

Operator:	A tourism-related business or organization that is providing an end product/service that is utilized directly by consumers.
Partner:	An organization that supports the tourism agenda without directly owning the products/services that are used to deliver the tourism experience. These include Municipalities, BIAs, Chambers of Commerce, DMOs and Festival Organizers.
Stakeholders:	An umbrella term to capture all operators, partners and individuals who support and/or benefit from tourism.
Region(s):	In its singular, Region is referring to Central Counties Tourism Region (RTO 6). When used as a plural, Regions refers to the three sub-regions that make up Central Counties borders. These are Durham Region, York Region and The Hills of Headwaters tourism region.
DMO(s):	The staff and board of directors of the three regions that work to further tourism within their borders.
Categories:	The five product categories identified as strengths for CCT. They are:

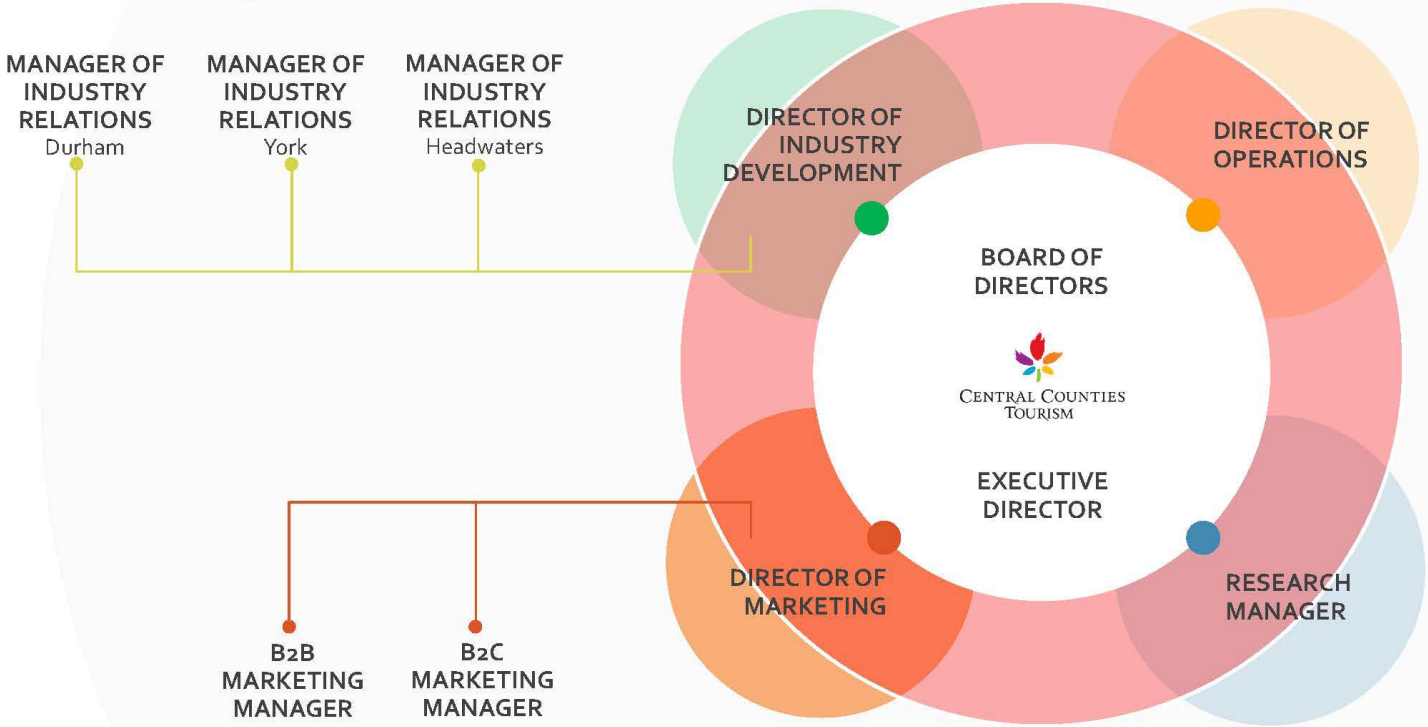
- Art Lovers
- Foodie Fanatics
- Adventure Seekers
- Family Fun
- Golf (Passionate Putters)

Leisure Market:	Visitors travelling for personal reasons, not as a group or for a sport tournament or business meeting/convention
Capacity Building:	Providing tools and supports for operators and other stakeholders to use to become more successful for themselves.

Acronyms

CCT	Central Counties Tourism
HTA	Headwaters Tourism Association
YRAC	York Region Arts Council
Durham	Durham Region Tourism
DeON	Destination Ontario (formerly Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation)
TIAO	Tourism Industry Association of Ontario
DC	Destination Canada (Federal Tourism Agency)
IDO	Investment Development Office (Ministry of Tourism)
Q(1-4)	Fiscal Quarters Q1 Apr-Jun, Q2 Jul-Sep, Q3 Oct-Dec, Q4 Jan-Mar

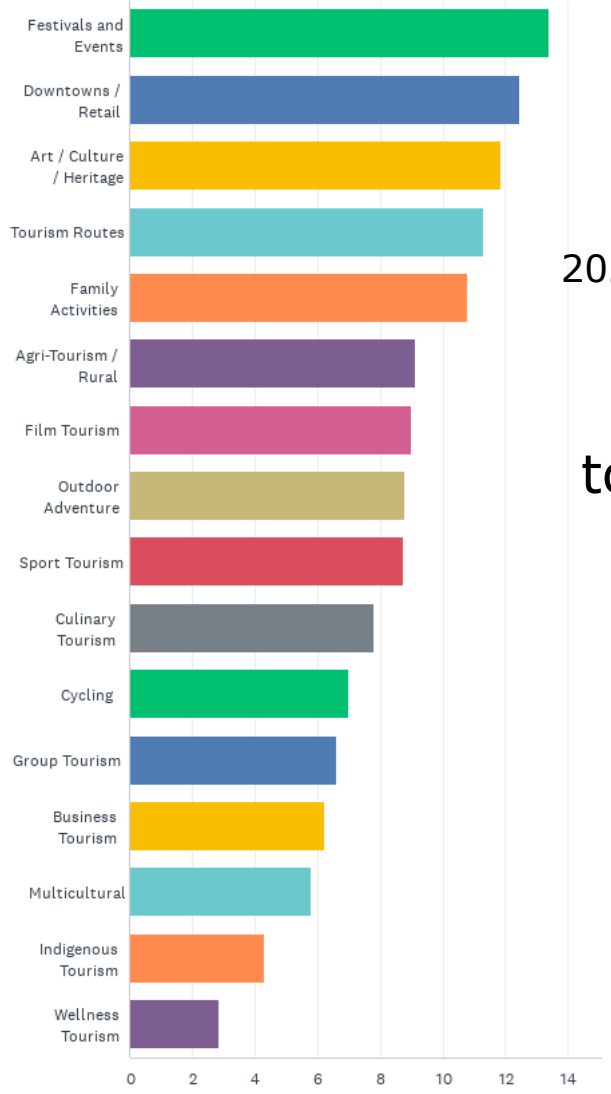
Organization Chart



CENTRAL COUNTIES TOURISM

2025 Municipal Priorities

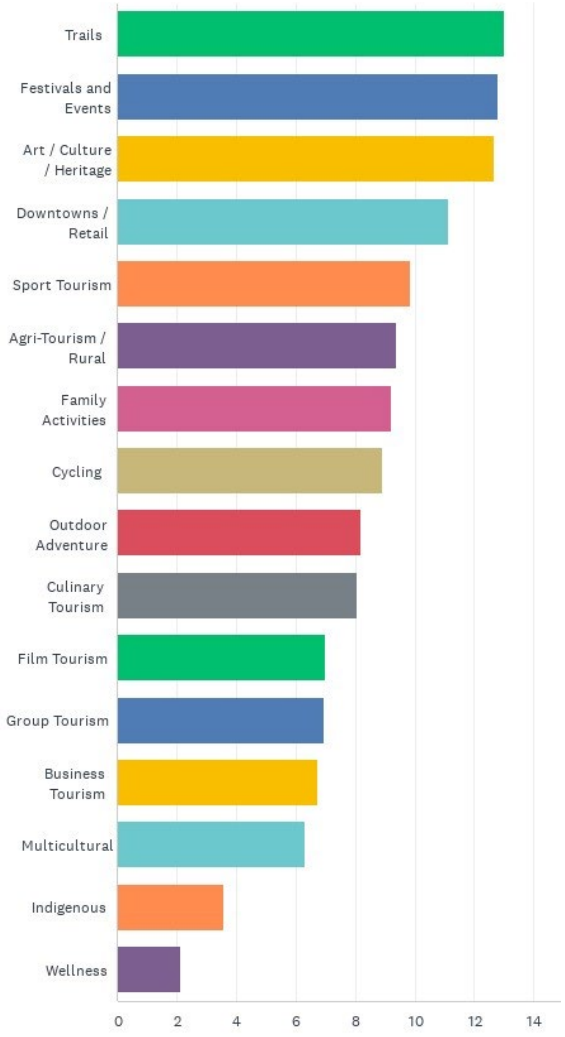
Ranked Market Segments for Growth



2025

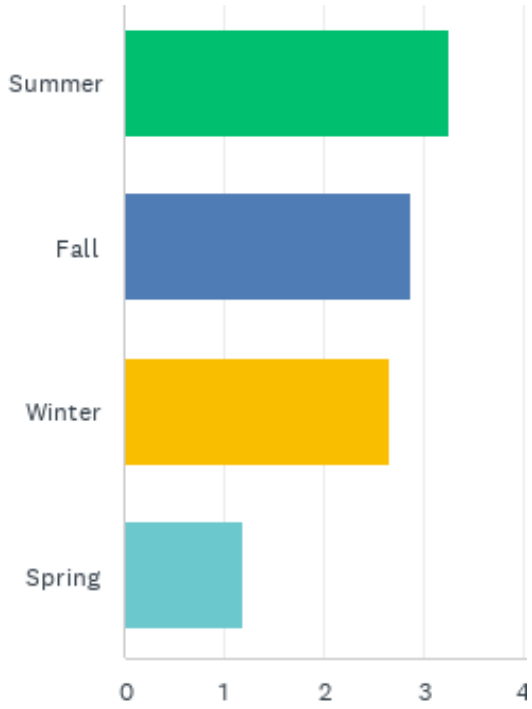
What types of tourism do you hope to grow?

2024



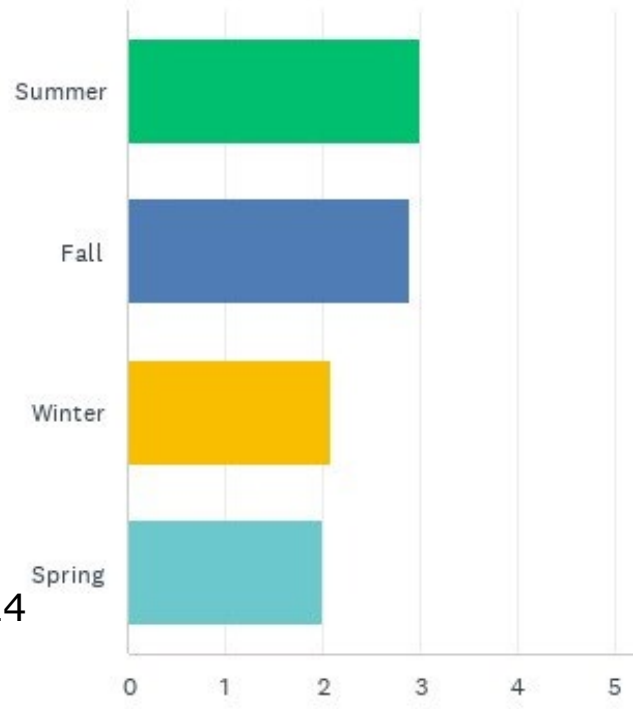
Central Counties Tourism aligns tourism resources to expand its stakeholder's ability to grow the visitor economy

2025 Ranked Seasonal Focus



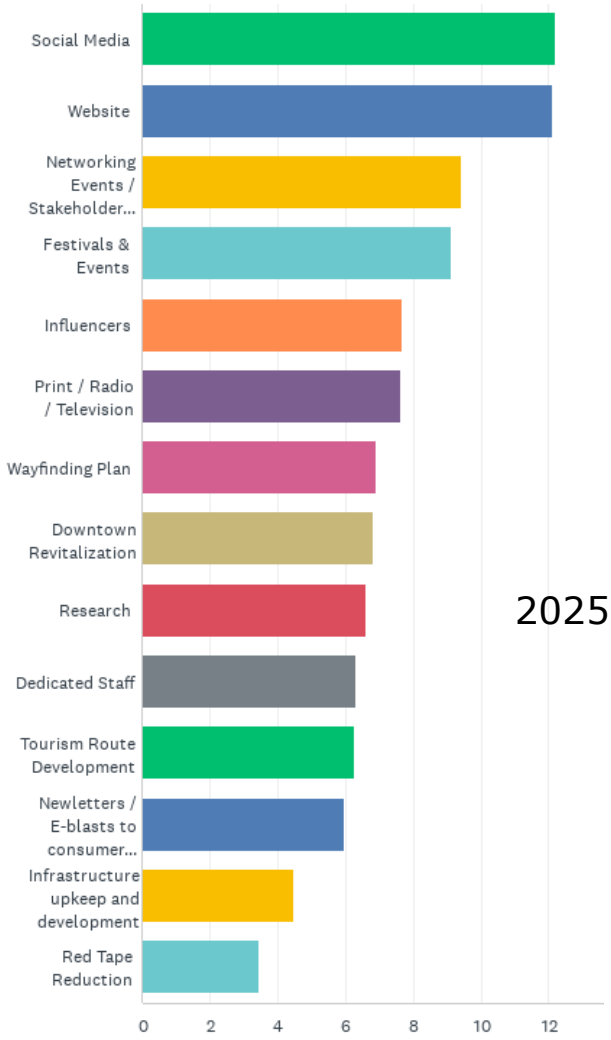
2025

Please put the seasons in the order you put the most emphasis / effort on.



2024

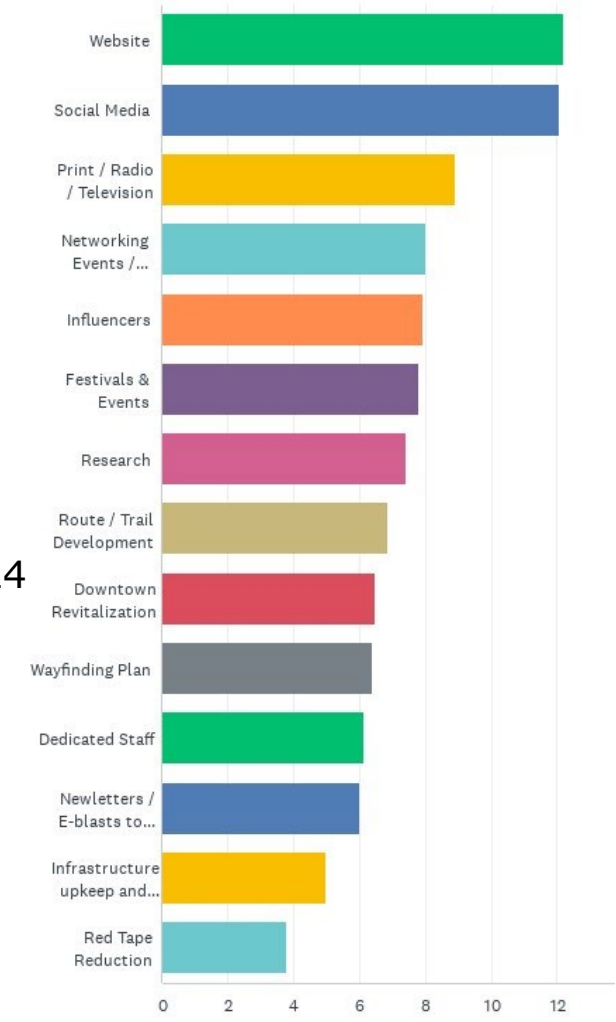
2025 Ranked Municipal Activities



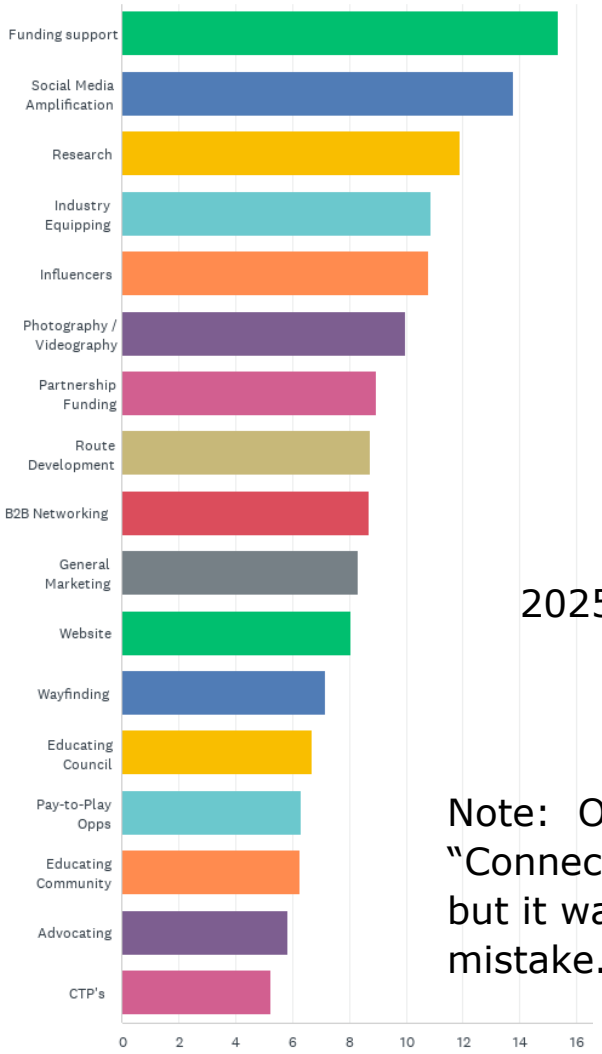
2025

What activities do you plan on doing to support your priorities?

2024



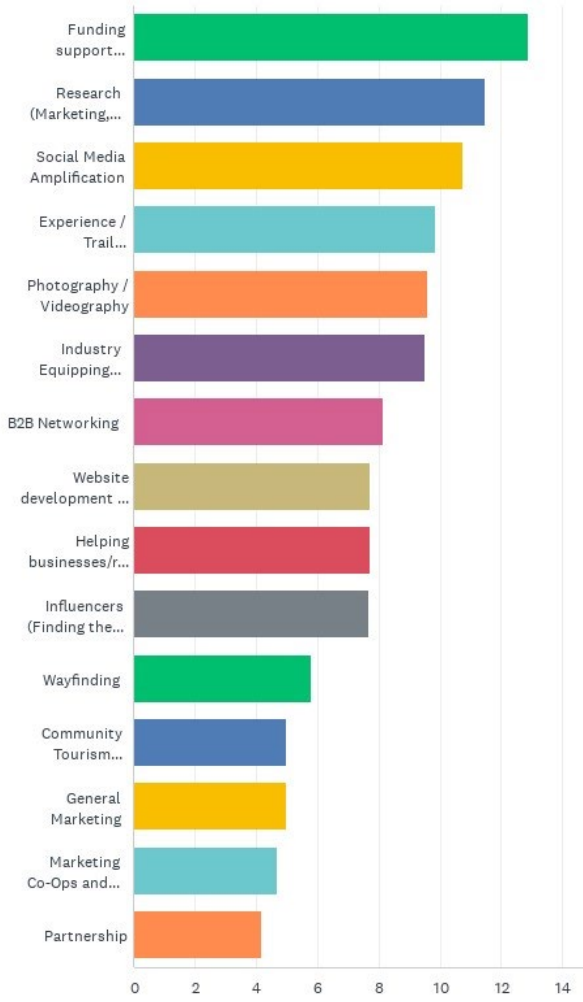
2025 Ranked CCT Supports



2025

Please rank the things that you would like CCT to assist with and/or amplify.

2024



Note: Over half of the municipalities checked "Connecting us to the right people" as a support but it was not added to the priorities ranking by mistake.