

Cultivating Our Destination

2027-2031

Corporate Strategic Plan

Central Nova Scotia Tourism Development Society

October 2026





Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that the geographic region of Colchester County is located in Mi’kma’ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi’kmaq People.

We recognize the enduring relationship of the Mi’kmaq with these lands and waters and honour the Peace and Friendship Treaties.

As treaty people, we are committed to building respectful relationships and advancing reconciliation through our actions.

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Vision.

You see what we see

Our aspiration is for visitors, communities, and partners to recognize Central Nova Scotia as the distinctive, welcoming, and experience-rich destination that those who know it already see.



Mission.

Strategically cultivate
our people, places, and experiences
to grow our visitor economy

Guiding Principles.

Our way of being and doing is guided by five principles:

- **Bold** in our leadership, vision, and action
- **Authentic** to our region and to who we are
- **Strategic** in our decisions, priorities, and approaches
- **Aligned** as collaborators and with our regional strengths
- **Deliberate** in our efforts to achieve tourism outcomes

Priorities.

1. Grow Our Authentic Regional Identity
2. Curate Memorable Visitor Experiences
3. Elevate Events as a Driver for Growing Tourism
4. Strengthen Regional Tourism Leadership and Collaboration
5. Build an Impactful Catalyst for Regional Growth

Message from Board Chair and Executive Director

Central Nova Scotia Tourism Development Society

The creation of the Central Nova Scotia Tourism Development Society marked an important step forward for tourism in our region. It brought our community, First Nation, and municipal partners together around a shared commitment to take a more coordinated and strategic approach to growing our visitor economy.

As a new organization, much of our early work has been about building a strong foundation. We have established our governance and operations, built relationships throughout the region, and begun moving forward on priorities identified through the Strategic Tourism Expansion Plan (STEP). With that work underway, this five-year Strategic Plan sets the direction for what comes next.

At the heart of the plan is a simple belief: **Central Nova Scotia has tremendous potential as a destination**.

We see it in our communities, our landscapes, our trails and tides, our culture and stories, our events, and especially in the people and businesses that create great experiences for visitors. Over the next five years, we want more people to see what we see. We want visitors to see Central Nova Scotia as a destination worth exploring, residents to recognize and take pride in what makes this region special, and our partners to see the opportunity tourism represents for our communities and economy.

Our role is to help cultivate that potential.

This plan gives us a clear direction for the next five years. We will focus on building an authentic regional identity, creating memorable visitor experiences, using events to help grow tourism, strengthening collaboration across the region, and continuing to build CNSTDS into an organization that can be a catalyst for regional growth.

We also recognize that growing tourism takes more than marketing. It takes good reasons to visit and stay longer. It takes strong experiences, events, and businesses. It takes investment and collaboration. And it takes communities that understand the value of tourism and see themselves as part of the visitor experience.

As stewards of Tourism Marketing Levy revenues and other public investments, we have a responsibility to use resources thoughtfully. We need to focus our investments where they can make a difference, measure our progress, communicate the results, and be willing to adapt as opportunities and challenges emerge.

We are grateful to the community leaders, Indigenous and municipal partners, organizations, tourism operators, and others who shared their perspectives in developing this plan. Their involvement reflects something that will remain important throughout the next five years. CNSTDS has a leadership role to play, but growing Central Nova Scotia as a destination will take all of us working together.

This plan gives us a roadmap and a shared direction. Now the work is to bring it to life.

We look forward to what the next five years will bring and to continuing to cultivate a destination that we are proud to share.

Mark Laughlin
Board President

Nick Sharpe
Executive Director

A Regional Approach to Growing Tourism

A New Regional Direction

The Central Nova Scotia Tourism Development Society (CNSTDS) was created when regional tourism partners, Millbrook First Nation, the Municipality of Colchester, the Town of Stewiacke, and the Town of Truro came together to take a more coordinated, regional approach to growing tourism. This collaboration represents an important step forward in strengthening the region's tourism sector.

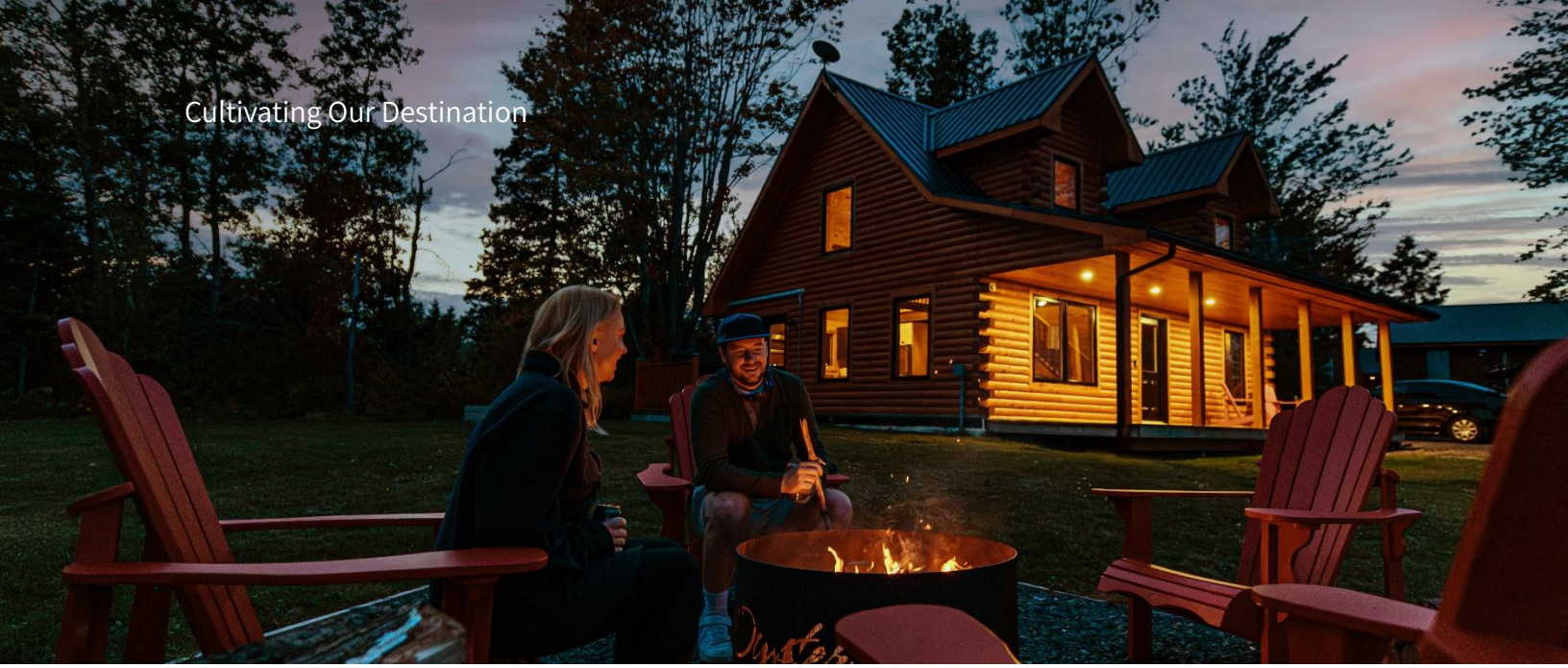
As the regional destination marketing and management organization (DMMO), CNSTDS is mandated to execute activities for the **purposes of tourism marketing, destination development, and sector growth** in the geographic region of Colchester County.

CNSTDS collaborates with local, regional, and provincial partners to advance shared tourism goals. Through this collaboration, CNSTDS's role is to:

- promote the region to target audiences;
- enhance visitor experiences;
- develop and support events, including Sport Tourism, festivals and events, and meetings and conventions;
- support local tourism operators;
- administer marketing levy funds that will have a positive impact on tourism outcomes;
- implement regional strategic plans (such as the STEP Tourism Strategy); and
- seek or administer third-party grants to support festivals, businesses, and major event hosting, where possible.

The operations and governance of the regional DMMO are primarily funded through the Tourism Marketing Levy and led by a Board of volunteer Directors and staff under the leadership of the Executive Director, who is responsible for ensuring a high-performing organization.

The regional DMMO is committed to ensuring tourism marketing levy revenues are allocated transparently, strategically, and in alignment with CNSTDS's mandate and investment framework based on defined strategic priorities. The intent is that CNSTDS will leverage funds to further the objects of the regional DMMO in the longer term.



Building a Strong Foundation

The need for a regional DMMO was outlined in the Strategic Tourism Expansion Plan (STEP) 2025–2027 Tourism Strategy as a body to champion tourism development and growth in the geographic region of Colchester County. The STEP Tourism Strategy outlines a shared approach, including recommendations and actions to increase visitation, extend the tourism season, and support local businesses. CNSTDS has a role to play in terms of leadership on behalf of the region.

Since the establishment of CNSTDS, the Board and Executive Director have been focused on building what is most important for strong governance and organizational leadership. The primary objective was to establish a strong foundation required to transition from organizational setup to sustained, impact-driven destination development and promotion.

A Look at the Next Five Years

The Board and Executive Director recognized the timing was right to establish a corporate strategic plan for CNSTDS that will provide a roadmap for the next five years. This 2027-2031 Corporate Strategic Plan defines the strategic direction and actions for the regional DMMO aligned with its defined purpose and guiding principles.

The Plan is based on feedback and guidance from collaborators who contributed to inform what is needed for CNSTDS to have a positive impact on tourism outcomes and growing the visitor economy, as well as the STEP Tourism Strategy recommendations and actions. A clear strategic and focused approach to regional development and growth has been outlined, which in turn will generate widespread benefits for Colchester County.

Community Impact from Growing Visitor Economy

The regional Destination Marketing and Management Organization's role is to drive sector growth and support the regional economy by facilitating and supporting strategic destination development, promoting the region to targeted audiences, and driving visitor engagement.

A primary focus is on **growing the visitor economy**, recognizing that the total economic impact of people travelling to and visiting the region is beyond traditional tourism spending. While growing visitation will have a positive impact on tourism within the region, the benefits will be widespread and generate economic and social well-being in our communities.

Critical to destination development is a strong understanding by collaborators and communities of the importance of tourism and the role they play in growing opportunities.



Regional Tourism Development Potential

Collaborators identified what is most important to focus on for regional tourism development:

A strong and cohesive brand,

Targeted marketing and storytelling that support visitation and business generation,

Deeper collaboration throughout the region,

Continued work on Indigenous partnerships and reconciliation,

Celebration of the future Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre as a meaningful and dynamic centre for Mi'kmaq people and for visitors across Nova Scotia, Canada, and the world,

Alignment of targeted marketing and strategic development with regional strengths – Outdoor Explorers, Culture Seekers, and Simplicity Lovers, and year-round tourism,

Greater support for strategic destination and experience development,

Leveraging event hosting to drive visitation and stimulate engagement and tourism spending,

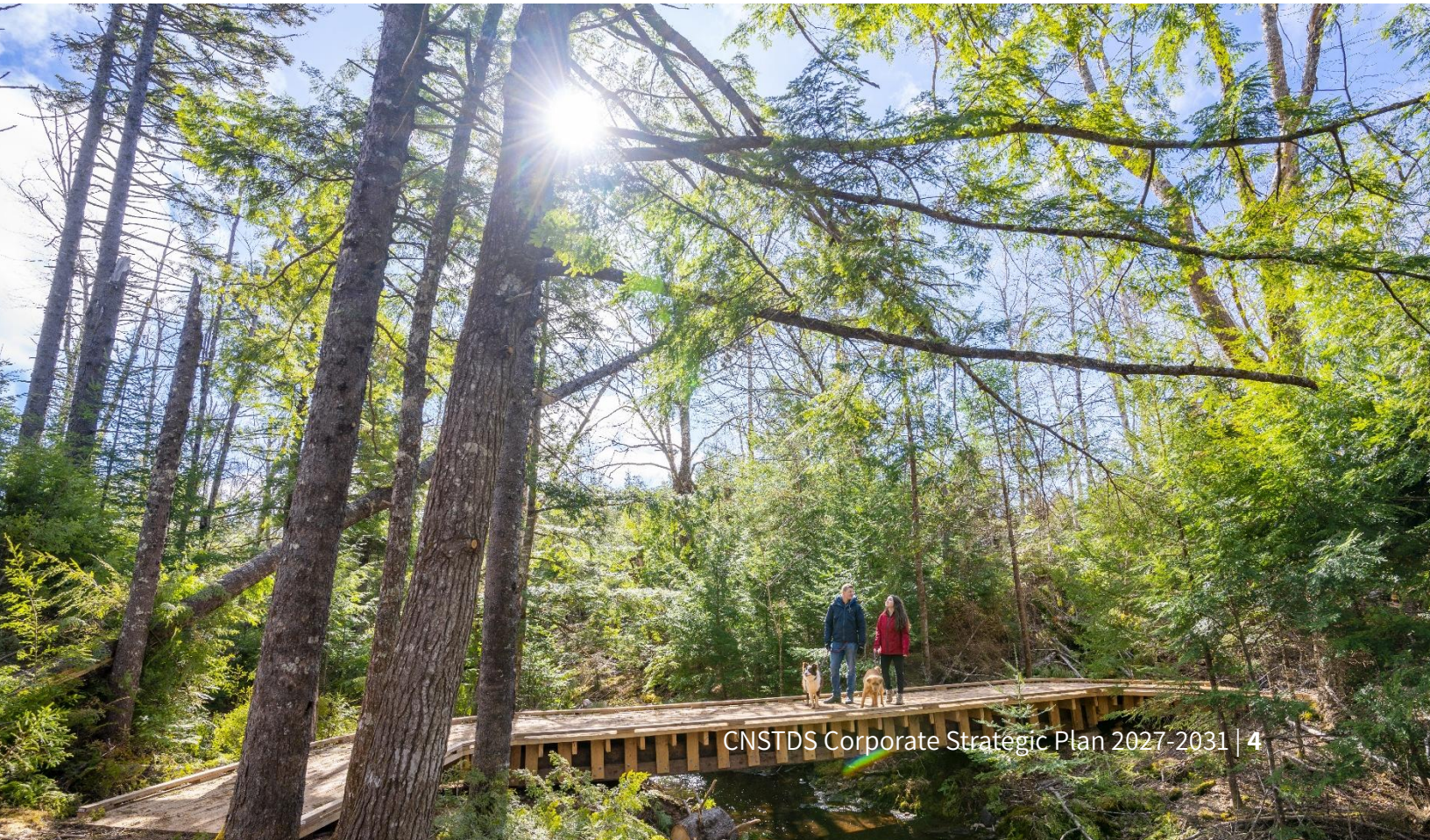
Development of Signature Festival(s) that generate economic benefits and annual visitation for the region,

Partnerships to develop and grow the events attraction and hosting markets, leveraging quality infrastructure and venues,

Regional positioning for meetings and conferences market best suited to our offering,

Sharing reasons for visitors to see and experience what the region has to offer as a Destination and not as a stop along the way,

Strong understanding and buy-in for the roles of the DMMO and that everyone plays in tourism



Our Regional Strengths and Destination Appeal

Our Region has greater opportunity to appeal to Outdoor Explorers, Culture Seekers, and Simplicity Lovers based on the Traveller Segmentation Program through Destination Canada.[1]

Outdoor Explorers

We're daring explorers who crave the thrill of unknown landscapes and overcoming challenges. Adventure travel allows us to grow, learn new skills, and establish personal traditions. We often seek adrenaline through physical activities, engaging with locals, and ensuring a positive impact. We embrace both short getaways and longer holidays, relishing in naturerelated experiences.

Culture Seekers

We are sociable, free-spirited individuals who seek unique, authentic experiences. We thrive on immersing ourselves in, and becoming familiar with, new perspectives, while making connections with locals and other travellers, which boosts our energy and confidence. We prefer vibrant city life, dynamic arts scenes, and culturally rich destinations. We prioritize diversity, inclusion, and sustainability, and are open to both short and longer trips. Travel is an investment we make in ourselves.

Simplicity Lovers

We seek peace, relaxation, and familiarity in our journeys, preferring easy and affordable destinations with a small-town feel. Prioritizing dining and nature experiences, we value simplicity and serenity. Loyal to regular destinations, we appreciate safety and ease of travel, and while we enjoy new cultures, we often stay within our comfort zone.

Figure 1. Destination Canada Traveller Segmentation Profiles

[1] Icons and profile descriptions reproduced from Destination Canada's Traveller Segmentation Program (Canadian Tourism Data Collective, n.d.), https://www.tourismdatacollective.ca/segmentation

Our Compass and Desired Destination

CNSTDS has defined a clear aspirational direction where visitors, community, and partners recognize **all** that the geographic region of Colchester County has to offer. To work towards our vision, CNSTDS will focus on destination development, marketing, and sector growth.

Vision

You see what we see

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Mission

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Guiding Principles

Our way of being and doing is guided by five principles:

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Aligned as collaborators and with our regional strengths

Deliberate in our efforts to achieve tourism outcomes



Focused Growth, Lasting Impact

Achieving desired results requires a focused approach to regional growth and a lasting impact that benefits the geographic region of Colchester County. There is a strong recognition that **regional prosperity – economic, social, and cultural** – is shared by people living, working, and investing in the region.

With an emphasis on focused growth and lasting impact, the following goals have been identified for the region in the long-term that involve targeted tourism outcomes. Recognizing the newness of the regional DMMO and potential for greater regional collaboration, shorter-term goals focused on process have also been identified.

Long-Term Goals

Targeted tourism outcomes for the geographic region are:

1. Annual increase in tourism revenues, including seasonally
2. Annual increase in overnight visitation
3. Visitor satisfaction and sentiment
4. Annual increase in marketing levy revenue
5. A respected organization empowered to carry out its mandate

Short-Term Goals

Short-term goals are focused on **building a stronger foundation** to ensure a successful regional approach through collaboration and leadership by the DMMO.

1. Awareness and education about the DMMO and Tourism Marketing Levy to build understanding, buy-in, and trust among collaborators, businesses, and communities
2. Regional tourism capacity building, including regional engagement, destination asset mapping, and development taking place at the regional level
3. A strategic and collaborative event attraction and hosting plan that has widespread buy-in and clarity of critical roles and alignment of capacity and resources

Priorities

1. Grow Our Authentic Regional Identity
2. Curate Memorable Visitor Experiences
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Priority

Grow Our Authentic Regional Identity

Our aim is to design marketing that attracts the right kind of visitor to the destination. We will consistently evaluate and assess marketing efforts with the right insights to ensure we are achieving our goals and objectives.

Objective

- Develop a destination brand that is authentic, appealing, consistently used, and recognizable by visitors, collaborators, and communities

Strategic Actions

1. Create, manage, and evolve a **cohesive destination brand** for the region, leveraging differentiating assets and focusing on what the region authentically offers.
2. Lead the development of a **regional marketing strategy** that aligns with what visitors seek and the region has to offer.
3. Design and manage a **well-structured, highly visible website as the destination hub** that forms a strong foundation of the DMMO's digital strategy and serves as an ultimate trip-planning tool.
4. Partner to develop and facilitate **authentic and compelling storytelling** focusing on the unique people, places, and experiences that are distinctive to the region.
5. Celebrate the **rich Mi'kmaw and Indigenous culture** and advance reconciliation through action.
6. Leverage **data to drive impactful marketing and decision-making** through the DMMO's digital strategy and partnerships, including with Tourism Nova Scotia.
7. Partner with other DMOs/DMMOs on **complementary initiatives** and Tourism Nova Scotia on marketing opportunities to strengthen branding and visibility of experiences.

Priority

Curate Memorable Visitor Experiences

Our aim is to facilitate and support visitor experiences that are rich in our local culture, embrace our natural assets, and expand year-round tourism.

Objective

- Grow quality visitor experiences that create emotional connections and lasting memories throughout the year

Strategic Actions

1. Cultivate **strategic and targeted packages** that combine local culture, natural assets, and storytelling.
2. Partner to facilitate the **development of experiences** for market segmentations based on regional strengths – Outdoor Explorers, Culture Seekers, and Simplicity Lovers.
3. Celebrate the opening and ongoing success of the **Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre**, an initiative of all thirteen Mi'kmaw communities in Nova Scotia that will bring greater understanding of the culture and ancestry, while connecting the past to the present.
4. Continue building awareness of the **UNESCO Global Geopark** that showcases the geological heritage of international significance within the region from a tourism perspective.
5. Expand engagement and opportunity through **Familiarization Tours** (FAMs) so local influencers gain a stronger understanding of regional offerings.
6. Foster a **greater understanding of the importance of tourism** among businesses and communities, including sharing information.
7. Work with partners and operators to identify **infrastructure improvements and service gaps** based on the visitor experience and community capacity.

Priority

Elevate Events as a Driver for Growing Tourism

Our aim is to strategically expand event opportunities that grow our regional visitor economy through increased visitor spending and overnight stays, while promoting our local culture and leveraging our infrastructure, investments, and assets.

Objectives

- Strengthen the economic, cultural, and social impact and understanding of events and festivals
- Facilitate the long-term sustainability of the Winter Long John Festival as a Signature Event that benefits the regional visitor economy
- Build capacity to attract and host events that contribute to year-round tourism

Strategic Actions

1. Lead the development of a long-term **Regional Event Hosting Strategy** that positions the region to proactively pursue opportunities in Sport Tourism, Festival and Events, and Meetings and Conventions markets, working with diverse and appropriate representation.
2. **Strategically invest in festivals and events** that contribute to the targeted tourism outcomes and strengthen the destination (through the Tourism Marketing Levy).
3. Expand the **Winter Long John Festival** to a visitor-focused experience and destination-level event, through a strong governance and partnership model to enable development and by executing a plan to transition the Festival to a third party for the long term.
4. Strategically **navigate and contribute to partnership opportunities for event attraction and hosting** in the region.
5. Leverage **events as a catalyst to promote the region**, generating increased visitation, overnight stays, and repeat visits; promote local cultural experiences, and engage local businesses and communities to embrace and be part of the overall visitor experience.
6. Contribute to opportunities to **leverage funding for events and festivals** in the region.

Priority

Strengthen Regional Tourism Leadership and Collaboration

Our aim is to bring leadership in growing the region's visitor economy, working with the many collaborators and together, build stronger mechanisms and opportunities to work jointly on shared priorities and towards a shared vision for our people, places, and experiences.

Objective

- Be recognized as a valued tourism partner on behalf of the region

Strategic Actions

1. Strategically and effectively **leverage the Tourism Marketing Levy funds** to achieve the greatest impact on the region and be transparent in the use of the funds and overall impact.
2. Foster and grow the **regional tourism ecosystem** through collaboration and engagement of traditional and non-traditional tourism operators, entrepreneurs, Mi'kmaw communities, municipal, federal and provincial governments, and other partners.
3. Ensure CNSTDS is engaged in key discussions and **recognized as a valued tourism partner** within the region and with provincial tourism.
4. Represent the region within **Atlantic Canada as well as nationally and internationally**, including leading best-practice missions and participating in strategic events and conferences.
5. Stay **abreast of the latest** industry trends, leading practices, and visitor insights to inform destination development.
6. Work with **other regional DMOs/DMMOs to share and develop best practices**.

Priority

Build an Impactful Catalyst for Regional Growth

Our aim is to establish a regional destination marketing organization that drives regional tourism growth and the visitor economy. Continuing efforts to build a strong foundation in governance and operations are necessary to ensure long-term viability and impact.

Objective

- Establish a resilient organization that has a deepening community impact and a strong foundation in governance, operations, and support for a sustainable future

Strategic Actions

1. Appropriately resource the organization with the **talent, clarity, and capacity** to carry out the regional DMMO mandate and priorities.
2. Develop and evolve **best practices as an employer** that foster a culture of empowerment, continuous improvement, and continuity.
3. Be **excellent stewards of the CNSTDS operating agreement** with the Millbrook First Nation, the Municipality of Colchester, the Town of Stewiacke, and the Town of Truro.
4. Ensure strong **regional engagement** and effective communication and transparency.
5. Build **strong governance and embed proactive risk management**.
6. Build and diversify a **financially sustainable model** for the longevity of the DMMO.
7. **Celebrate our accomplishments** as a regional DMMO and a region.

Appendix I: CNSTDS Role

Promoting the region to target audiences

- Lead the development of a regional marketing strategy
- Ensure consistent and strong destination branding
- Define key themes that align the brand (opportunities in the region) and research/market segmentation for travellers and focus on all-season and year-round tourism
- Promote the best of the region, including assets, festivals, and events
- Build respective relationships with Mi'kmaw and Indigenous communities and people
- Support storytelling, capturing the emotional needs of the targeted audience, and being authentic to the region
- Develop and implement social media, targeted campaigns, and digital media
- Share consistent marketing and messaging with local businesses and residents

Enhancing visitor experiences and destination development

- Develop and implement the following:
  - Themed itineraries and packages
  - Maps and consistent interpretive materials that leverage visitor touchpoints
  - Tools such as maps, visitor guides, and front-line resources that improve the visitor journey
  - Event-related welcome packages for businesses and visitors
  - Familiarization Tours (FAMs)
- Facilitate the development of experiences that align with marketing strategy/segmentation
- Foster community pride and enhancements to customer service
- Identify and advocate for infrastructure improvements and gaps (e.g., wayfinding)
- Identify and advocate for regional enhancements for visitors' safety, accessibility, and comfort

Developing and supporting events

Includes Sport Tourism events, Signature Events, Events and Festivals, business meetings, and conferences

- Support the strategic development of strong assets that will drive destination development
- Work with partners to support the attraction of events, including bid opportunities
- Work with partners to support the delivery of festivals and events, including the development of activities, engagement of local businesses, operators, and partners, and fostering of community buy-in and pride
- Champion efforts to strengthen event hosting in the region and regional opportunities
- Market and promote festivals, events, and sport tourism

- Market and promote the destination as a place for business meetings and conferences
- Administer the levy funding-based tourism outcomes (Event Funding Framework)

Supporting local tourism operators

- Facilitate training, professional development, and networking (e.g., customer service expectations/hospitality, service standards, and pricing strategies; tourism readiness; social media/AI; economics)
- Educate on the importance of tourism and opportunities
- Support local operators with packaging development
- Guide/support product development
- Rebuild industry collaboration through events, workshops, and partnerships
- Grow and strengthen partnerships with Tourism NS, TIANS, and others to include workshops, experience development support, and digital marketing training
- Engage local operators in familiarization (FAM) tours

Strategic tourism leadership and regional collaboration

- Act as a regional connector and coordinator, bringing together venues, operators, and partners
- Build and foster relationships with all industry and community partners
- Help to build buy-in for tourism within the community
- Establish formal and informal working relationships and partnerships to leverage existing organizations, networks, and resources and to achieve outcomes, build capacity, and reduce organizational risk
- Translate research, insights, and best practices into action to support tourism planning, marketing, and destination development
- Identify and communicate infrastructure gaps to support the growth and strengthening of regional tourism

Appendix II: Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

The following measurement tools have been identified to track the performance of the goals defined for the region based on the impact that CNSTDS can support. Baseline measurements will be identified and tracked.

Long-term goals include annual changes and performance outcomes that are measurable, while short-term goals are based on process performance.

Long-Term Goals			
GOAL	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	MEASUREMENT TOOL	STATUS
Annual increase in tourism revenues, including seasonal	All tourism-related spending by non-resident visitors and Nova Scotians: accommodations, food and beverage, transportation, recreation and entertainment, and retail	Annual tourism revenue estimates for Colchester County provided through Tourism Nova Scotia Captured by Lodging Aligned Spend Reporting (LASR) through Canadian Tourism Data Collective powered by Destination Canada	Working with Tourism Nova Scotia to access regional data including seasonal, where possible
Annual increase in overnight visitation	Room nights sold	Total number of room nights rented as part of Monthly Marketing Levy Report completed by Tourism Accommodation Operators in Colchester County and Town of Truro	Program administered by Municipality of Colchester
Visitor sentiment and satisfaction	Visitors' perspectives on the region	Tourism Nova Scotia Voice of the Visitor Survey Program	Working with Tourism Nova Scotia to access regional data
Annual increase in marketing Levy revenue	Total Tourism Marketing Levy revenue	Total Marketing Levy Due (3% of total Room/Unit Revenue less any adjustments) as part of Monthly Marketing Levy Report completed by Tourism Accommodation Operators in Colchester County and Town of Truro	Program administered by Municipality of Colchester
A respected organization empowered to carry out its mandate	Collaborator satisfaction and engagement	CNSTDS Operational Agreement Collaborator satisfaction Involvement in tourism initiatives Governance stability (e.g., Board volunteer satisfaction, turnover) Operational stability (e.g., employee satisfaction, employee turnover) Funding stability	Building a strong foundation in governance and operations

Short-Term Goals		
GOAL	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	STATUS
Awareness and education about the DMMO and Tourism Marketing Levy to build understanding, buy-in, and trust among collaborators, businesses, and communities	Outreach and communications with collaborators, businesses, and communities	Outreach taking place throughout the region
Regional tourism capacity building, including regional engagement, destination asset mapping, and development taking place at the regional level	Key collaborator engagement at the destination level Destination asset mapping	Outreach taking place; discussions about expanding Winter John Long Festival to a destination Signature Event; FAM tour
A strategic and collaborative **event attraction and hosting plan** that has widespread buy-in and clarity of critical roles and alignment of capacity and resources	Regional event attraction and hosting plan developed based on collaboration and with defined roles	2027 priority



Central Nova Scotia Tourism Development Society

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