

2024-27

# BUSINESS PLAN

WHEELS UP



Travel  
Alberta  
Canada 



## Land Acknowledgement

In the spirit of respect, reciprocity and truth, we honour and acknowledge the traditional territories of the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit in Alberta. We value these sacred gathering places and aim to inspire others to appreciate and embrace stewardship of the land as they explore our great province.

Alberta is situated within historical and present-day lands that Indigenous Peoples have cared for and lived on for generations. We honour the territories of Treaty 4, 6, 7, 8, and 10 and their signatories, including the Blackfoot Confederacy, Cree, Dene, Nakota Sioux, Saulteaux, Stoney Nakoda, Tsuu T'ina, Dakota, Nakota, and Lakota homelands. We also honour the homeland of the Métis, the Otipemisiwak Métis Government, and the 8 Métis Regions within the historic North-West. We acknowledge the many Indigenous Peoples living in urban areas throughout the province. We appreciate that modern borders do not align with traditional land use and we honour the neighbouring Indigenous communities outside of Alberta who have travelled and inhabited this land throughout history.



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# Executive Summary

Our 2024–27 business plan builds on the success realized through the 2021–24 Bootstrap Plan and outlines how we will elevate Alberta’s tourism sector to new heights.

The 2024–27 Wheels Up Plan sets an ambitious goal of \$15 billion in annual visitor spend in 2027, a target that will ensure we are on track to realize the Government of Alberta’s long-term tourism strategy and sector goal of \$25 billion in annual visitor spend in 2035.

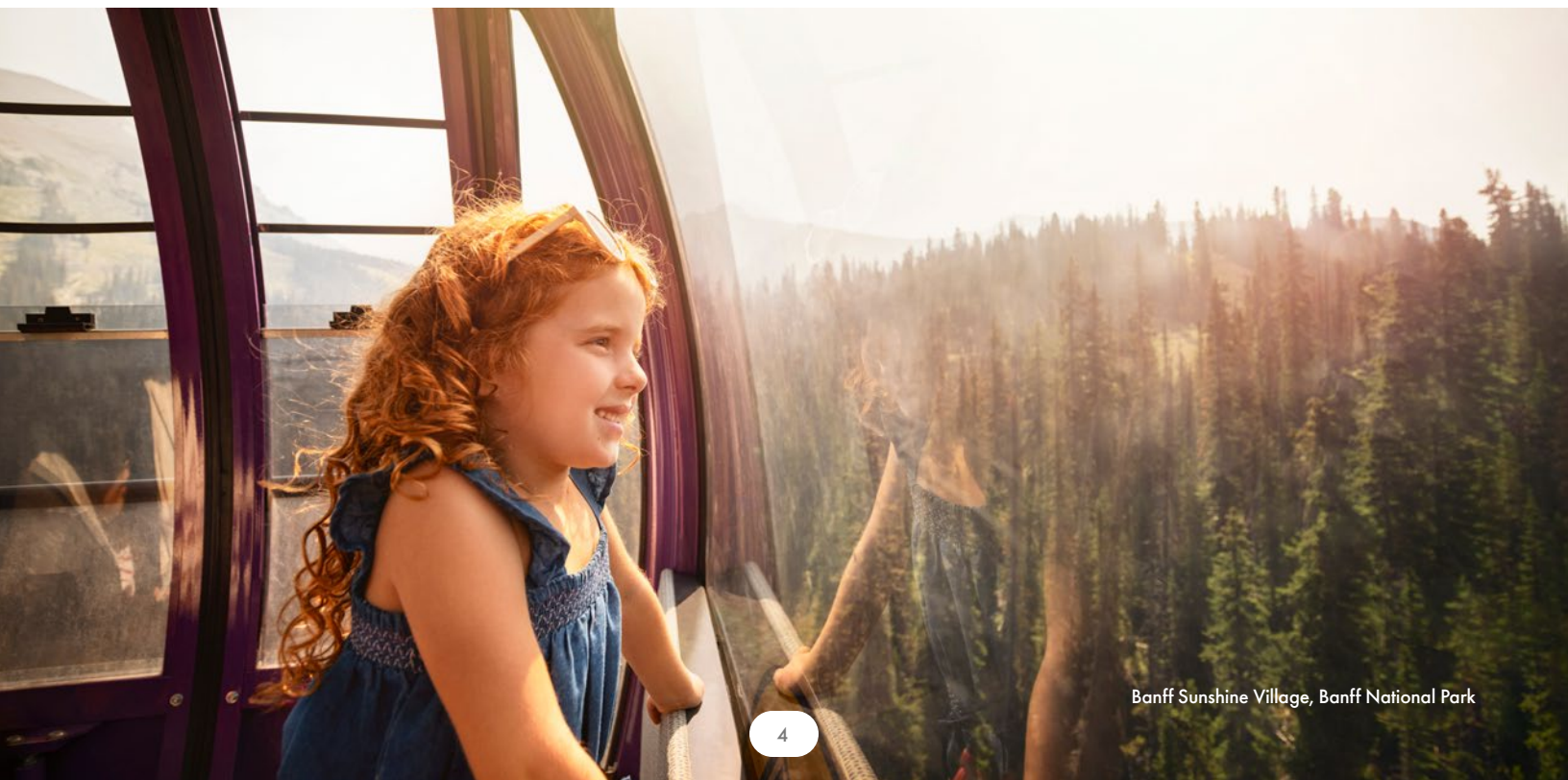
After the success of the 2021–24 Bootstrap Plan, which focused on the strategic pillars of marketing, access and place, the organization is primed to amplify the benefits of Alberta’s visitor economy.

Travel Alberta’s new three-year plan will increase the percentage of spending by visitors

from outside the province, attracting new revenue and establishing tourism as a key driver of economic growth and diversification throughout Alberta. To accomplish this, Travel Alberta is working with industry partners and every level of government to ensure tourism is a vehicle for achieving their goals.

This plan outlines Travel Alberta’s strategy to increase Alberta’s visibility in key markets, improve access to and around the province, and lean further into economic development and diversification to create world-class tourism experiences.

**If we achieve our medium-term goal of \$15 billion in annual visitor spend in 2027, we will be on track to reach our long-term sector goal of \$25 billion in annual visitor spend in 2035**



Banff Sunshine Village, Banff National Park

# 2024–27 LOGIC MODEL WHEELS UP

## MANDATE

**Drive the growth of the province’s visitor economy, creating and promoting must-visit destinations throughout the province and increasing jobs, growth and economic diversification.**

## OPERATING CONTEXT

- Government of Alberta plans and priorities
- Whole-of-government approach
- Economic factors

INPUTS	OBJECTIVE	INITIATIVES	AUDIENCE	OUTCOME BY PILLAR	MEASURED BY	INDUSTRY OUTCOME	LONG-TERM (2035) INDUSTRY OUTCOMES			
<p>The Government of Alberta's long-term tourism strategy</p> <p>Budget allocation</p> <p>Market analysis</p> <p>Enterprise risk management framework</p> <p>Supply and demand analysis</p> <p>Environmental scan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Labour and business impact</li> <li>• Visitor spend forecast</li> <li>• Hotel performance</li> <li>• Air recovery</li> <li>• Sustainability framework</li> </ul>	<p><b>MARKETING</b></p> <p>Drive consideration to travel to/within Alberta among travellers from key source markets</p>	Tell stories that differentiate Alberta as a desirable travel destination	Travellers in key source markets	Export revenues increase as the share of spending from visitors to the province increases	Incremental change in searches for Alberta destinations in U.S. target markets versus control markets <i>Source: Google search data</i>	<p>Visitor spending reaches \$15B in 2027 from \$10.7B in 2022</p> <p>—</p> <p>Key indicator: Tourism levy receipts</p>	<p>Visitor spending reaches \$25B in 2035 from \$10.7B in 2022</p> <p>More than 50% of tourism spending in Alberta is by visitors from outside Alberta, from 40% in 2022</p> <p>Albertans consider tourism as one of top 5 drivers of economic growth</p> <p>Indigenous-led tourism drives success for Indigenous individuals, businesses, and communities throughout Alberta</p>			
		Collaborate with Alberta and national partners to promote tourism								
		Drive sales of Alberta tourism product								
	<p><b>ACCESS</b></p> <p>Accelerate seat capacity to Alberta and around the province</p> <p>Inform government policy and investment to increase traveller-friendly connectivity and access throughout the province</p>	Co-invest in high-potential route opportunities	Canadian and international airlines and Alberta airports	Visitors have improved access to more destinations across Alberta	ROI on invested air routes <i>Source: Travel Alberta grant program data</i>					
		Engage governments and associations across the province to jointly address development barriers	Government of Alberta, municipal governments and economic development organizations							
		<p><b>PLACE</b></p> <p>Lead collaboration, design and implementation of destination development plans in priority tourism regions</p> <p>Stimulate growth across select destinations and tourism businesses</p> <p>Attract and facilitate private sector investment</p> <p>Enable tourism businesses to launch and prosper</p>	Execute long-term development plans in priority regions and build positive sentiment on value of tourism					Economic development organizations, municipalities, businesses and residents	Alberta’s visitor economy has thriving businesses, prosperous communities and a growing investment environment	Resident sentiment <i>Source: Travel Alberta resident sentiment survey</i>
			Identify and execute targeted investment programs					Destination organizations, communities and tourism businesses		
	Position and promote Alberta’s tourism sector as an investment opportunity		Domestic and international investors, different orders of government							
	Provide tourism consulting to support growth	Tourism businesses	Impact on Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from tourism development projects <i>Source: Travel Alberta calculation using Statistics Canada’s input-output multipliers</i>							

# About Travel Alberta

## WHAT WE DO: OUR MANDATE

As the Government of Alberta’s destination management organization, Travel Alberta drives the growth of the province’s visitor economy, developing and promoting must-visit destinations across the province. We do this by helping businesses and communities develop memorable tourism products and experiences, marketing those products and experiences to the world, and ensuring visitors can easily access them.

In 2021, the *Travel Alberta Act* was amended, expanding Travel Alberta’s mandate of destination marketing to encompass destination management.

According to the *Travel Alberta Act*, the purposes of the Corporation are to:

- Market the tourism assets, attractions and opportunities present in Alberta in domestic, national and international markets
- Promote the development and growth of the tourism industry in Alberta to increase revenue and employment in, and the economic benefits generated by, the industry

- Promote Alberta as a destination for tourists and other visitors
- Assist Alberta communities and tourism industry operators to develop and market their products
- Provide visitor services
- Exercise or perform any other powers, duties and functions authorized by the Lieutenant Governor in Council

Travel Alberta collaborates with other government departments (including Environment and Protected Areas, Forestry and Parks, Transportation and Economic Corridors, and Jobs, Economy and Trade) to help advance other priorities through tourism, including culture and heritage sites, provincial parks and recreation areas, transportation networks, film industry, immigration and labour, and education and training. Travel Alberta also directly supports communities, businesses and entrepreneurs, using tourism to increase jobs and economic diversification.

## WHY WE DO IT: THE VALUE OF TOURISM

As Alberta’s top service export, tourism offers economic benefits to communities across the province. Responsible tourism development creates jobs, supports communities, and creates vital infrastructure that benefits residents.

As a primary employer of people under the age of 35<sup>1</sup>, tourism can help rural communities continue to grow and thrive. It can preserve and build cultures, regenerate and conserve the environment, and directly support Albertans with additional revenue streams that bring net new dollars into Alberta’s economy in a sustainable manner.



Silvertip Resort, Canmore

## WHO WE ARE: OUR STRUCTURE

**MINISTER OF TOURISM AND SPORT**



**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**



**TRAVEL ALBERTA CEO**

As the Government of Alberta’s destination management organization, Travel Alberta reports to the Minister of Tourism and Sport and is accountable to a Board of Directors.

Members of the Board of Directors are nominated and appointed by the Minister of Tourism and Sport.

For more information on Travel Alberta, see the Mandate and Roles document on [industry.travelalberta.com](https://industry.travelalberta.com).

<sup>1</sup> Tourism HR Canada, 2022



## WHO WE WORK WITH: OUR COMMUNITY

Alberta’s tourism industry is an interconnected and multidimensional network comprising nearly 24,000 tourism-related businesses<sup>2</sup> and is supported by communities, industry associations and all orders of government. Travel Alberta meets and works with stakeholders regularly to align strategic priorities and investment activities, and to discuss areas of mutual interest.

### Alberta NorthStar partners

Destination organizations representing Alberta’s legacy destinations, including mountain communities and the province’s two largest cities.

Members: Explore Edmonton, Tourism Calgary, Banff and Lake Louise Tourism, Tourism Jasper and Tourism Canmore Kananaskis. This group also includes Indigenous Tourism Alberta representatives and the Tourism Industry Association of Alberta (TIAA).

### Alberta Constellation partners

Destination organizations representing smaller urban areas and emerging destinations outside of the Rockies and major cities.

Members: Tourism Red Deer, Tourism Lethbridge, Tourism Medicine Hat, Fort McMurray Wood Buffalo Economic Development & Tourism and Grande Prairie Regional Tourism Association.

### Indigenous Tourism Alberta (ITA)

A non-profit organization devoted to helping grow and promote authentic, sustainable, and culturally rich Indigenous tourism experiences to the world.

### The Tourism Industry Association of Alberta (TIAA)

A not-for-profit tourism association that advocates on behalf of all segments of Alberta’s tourism economy for a competitive and sustainable business environment that generates substantial economic value for the province.

### Industry Advisory Committees

Travel Alberta meets twice a year with advisory committees made up of business leaders across the province. Members of the Marketing Insights Advisory Committee and the Access and Product Development Advisory Committee provide a business perspective on Travel Alberta’s strategies and plans.

### Government and industry stakeholders

Travel Alberta works closely within the Government of Alberta and with municipal and federal tourism entities, including Destination Canada, to ensure strategic and program alignment. Travel Alberta also consults with sector associations such as the Alberta Hotel and Lodging Association (AHLA) and the Alberta Hospitality Association (AHA), as well as Canada-based airlines and Alberta airports on areas of mutual interest.

<sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada

## WHERE WE WERE: THE BOOTSTRAP PLAN

In 2021, Travel Alberta developed the Bootstrap Plan — a three-year plan to recover Alberta’s tourism revenues to 2019 levels by 2024. Actions to support recovery focused on three strategic pillars: marketing (destination promotion), access (air access, broadband and transportation initiatives) and place (destination development and support for tourism businesses).

According to data from Statistics Canada<sup>3</sup>, Alberta saw \$10.7 billion in tourism spending in 2022 — up \$600 million from 2019 levels.

**Alberta’s visitor economy recovered  
to pre-pandemic levels in 2022,  
two full years earlier than predicted.**

<sup>3</sup> Statistics Canada, 2022 National Travel Survey and Visitor Travel Survey



# Strategic Context

This section provides an overview of the various environmental factors that have informed and influenced this business plan. Contextual information includes results and historical outcomes that have led us to this point, as well as a forward-looking analysis that sets the stage for the next three years and beyond.



## EXPORT REVENUES

Tourism is Alberta's top service export sector, generating \$4.4 billion in revenue from outside the province in 2022<sup>4</sup>. Export revenue in tourism refers to spending by visitors originating from outside the local area — in this case, visitors from outside of Alberta. Spending benefits Alberta's gross domestic product (GDP) and resident quality of life by injecting money from outside the province directly into Alberta businesses. Visitors also support the growth of Alberta's tourism sector through the tourism levy, a 4% surcharge on any temporary accommodation provided in Alberta.

In 2022, over 40% of total tourism spending in Alberta was by visitors from outside the province. This business plan outlines our approach for increasing the percentage of spending by visitors from outside Alberta over the next three years.

## TRAVEL DEFICIT

In 2022, Albertans spent \$6.8 billion travelling outside the province. This equates to \$1,501 per capita — the second highest in Canada behind Prince Edward Island. Almost a third of this was in British Columbia, where Albertans spent over \$2 billion. By comparison, British Columbians spent only \$772 million in Alberta, resulting in a \$1.2 billion travel deficit with British Columbia alone.

This business plan outlines how Travel Alberta will reduce Alberta's travel deficit by creating additional tourism offerings that will encourage Albertans to explore their own backyard while attracting new travellers from other provinces, the United States and long-haul international markets.

## VISITOR ECONOMY

Alberta's tourism industry recovered to pre-pandemic levels in 2022, with 32 million visitors generating \$10.7 billion in spending. This recovery was driven by exceptionally high domestic travel, pent-up demand for travel (supported by excess savings accumulated during the pandemic) and demand by high-income households with a greater propensity for discretionary spending.

At the start of summer 2023, severe wildfires affected several regions of Alberta, disrupting tourism and other economic activity. Early indicators do not point toward any significant lasting negative impact on visitation or visitor spending.

Despite a summer season disrupted by wildfires and the potential for economic slowdown in key source markets, we expect strong momentum to continue in 2024. A more complete return of international visitors and business travellers will be key to driving growth over the next three years.

<sup>4</sup> Statistics Canada, 2022 National Travel Survey and Visitor Travel Survey

<sup>5</sup> National Tourism Indicators, Second Quarter 2023, Statistics Canada

Visitation and Spending in Alberta

SEGMENT	ORIGIN REGION	2019		2022		% CHANGE IN SPEND
		Visitor spending	Visitors	Visitor spending	Visitors	
Domestic	Within province	\$5.7B	28.6M	\$6.3B	27.3M	+11%
	Rest of Canada	\$2.1B	3.6M	\$2.9B	3.5M	+37%
International	United States	\$991M	1.2M	\$730M	552K	-26%
	Overseas	\$1.3B	1.2M	\$799M	548K	-38%
Total visitor spending		\$10.1B	34.6M	\$10.7B	32M	+6%

Source: Statistics Canada's National Travel Survey and Visitor Travel Survey, 2022

## MACROECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Globally, high inflation in 2021–2022 led many G7 countries to tighten monetary policies starting in late 2022<sup>6</sup>. This resulted in cooling inflationary pressures; however, not all indicators (jobs, housing prices, consumer spending, etc.) responded as central banks expected. Accordingly, higher interest rates may remain in place longer, risking further economic slowdown into early 2024.

While the U.S. economy has proven resilient, leading indicators point toward a mild recession in the near term before a normalization in 2025<sup>7</sup>. This will be driven by rate hikes, tighter lending conditions and declining consumer and business confidence.

In Canada, the delayed effects of the Bank of Canada’s monetary tightening policy are starting to reduce inflation:

- Major economic drivers point to a slowdown in economic activities until mid-2024.
- Inflation expectations are moderating but may still be volatile<sup>8</sup>.
- Hiring in the private sector has decelerated.
- Consumer spending is starting to slow.

Alberta’s economy continued to lead the country in growth in 2023. Despite a temporary slowdown in the oil and gas sector caused by summer wildfires, a quick recovery in production led to an overall robust performance for the year. Alberta weathered the interest rate hikes relatively better than other provinces with strong growth in employment, partly due to a record level of immigration into Alberta in late 2022 and 2023. Alberta’s buoyant labour market supported healthy consumption spending, even amid high inflation.

Even with the provincial economy’s temporary slowdown, the outlook improves later in 2024 as inflation declines<sup>9</sup>.

## LONG-TERM SECTOR GOAL

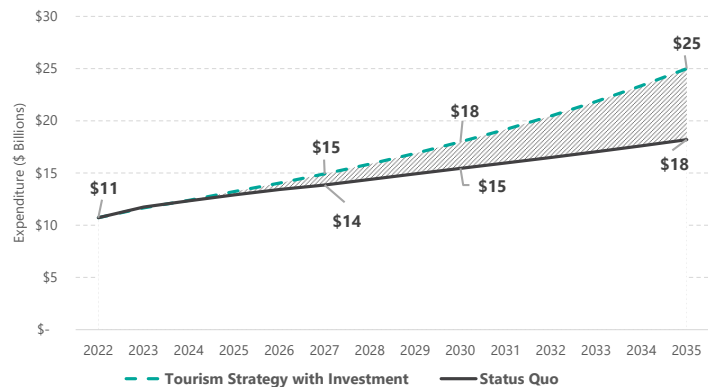
Travel Alberta engaged Tourism Economics, a division of Oxford Economics, to forecast future tourism expenditures in the province. The July 2023 forecast took into account 2022’s strong recovery, driven largely by high inflation and increased travel spending, and resulted in an updated growth forecast for Alberta’s tourism industry<sup>10</sup>.

Tourism Economics has projected that tourism expenditures will reach \$18.2 billion in 2035, over 20% higher than its previous year’s forecast. This forecast is considered a “Status Quo” baseline for sectoral growth without any interference or investments in destination development.

In contrast, the Government of Alberta’s long-term tourism strategy sets a higher goal of \$25 billion in annual expenditures in 2035. This represents an additional \$32 billion in incremental visitor spending over the ten-year period from 2025–2035.

To accelerate our efforts, Travel Alberta is adopting this ambitious goal of \$25 billion in 2035, and this business plan serves as a roadmap for achieving our goal. With coordinated support and investment across the public and private sectors, we can grow Alberta’s tourism sector to reach its full potential.

Tourism expenditures (\$ billions)



Global travel demand is predicted to grow despite an economic slowdown, making it the opportune time to pursue an aggressive destination development strategy. This, together with the government’s commitment to increase investment in tourism and create the winning conditions to attract private capital, positions the tourism industry to grow significantly over the next 10 years.

## SUPPLY GAPS

To identify a path to reach this long-term growth target, Travel Alberta carried out detailed analysis to understand supply-side gaps that could inhibit our ability to achieve the aggressive visitor revenue targets by 2035. These include:

- **Air access:** Despite significant improvements in air access in 2022 and 2023, we will need an additional 5.7 million inbound seats by 2035 to reach our goal.
- **Accommodation:** According to our estimations, we will need to add more than 15,000 rooms across hotels and shared accommodations. The largest deficit will occur in rural Alberta, where current accommodations inventory is limited.
- **Labour:** Due to a high level of retirements and general economic growth, the labour market will change and tighten significantly by 2035. The industry is likely to see a shortage of 178,000 workers by 2035. We will need a long-term solution to attract and retain workers to meet our sector goal.
- **Private capital investment:** Based on the potential projects identified across the province and through capital budgeting analysis, approximately \$3 billion in private capital investments are currently in the pipeline for development, which are likely to generate approximately \$9 billion in cumulative revenue from 2025–2035. However, to reach our target of \$25 billion in tourism expenditures by 2035, the industry requires an additional \$7 billion in private capital investments from 2025–2035. This is more than twice the value of currently identified projects and illustrates the need for significant additional private capital investment.

<sup>6</sup> Global Quarterly Economic Forecast, TD Economics, September 2023

<sup>7</sup> Country Economic Forecast, US, Oxford Economics, October 2023

<sup>8</sup> Bank of Canada, 2023

<sup>9</sup> Alberta’s Three-Year Outlook, The Conference Board of Canada, September 2023

<sup>10</sup> Tourism Economics, 2023



# Strategic Approach

Over the past three years, Travel Alberta has worked in partnership with Alberta’s tourism sector and regional, provincial and federal organizations to rebuild the visitor economy following the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our 2024–27 Wheels Up Plan builds on the successes realized through the 2021–2024 Bootstrap Plan and outlines how we will elevate Alberta’s tourism sector to new heights. This section outlines our strategic approach to grow tourism in Alberta, including collaboration with other industry stakeholders and partners across the province. It describes how we will achieve our goals over the next three years, setting the stage to achieve our long-term industry growth target of \$25 billion in annual visitor spending in 2035.



## DESTINATION MANAGEMENT

Destination management is the process of leading, influencing and coordinating the management of a destination, including tourism supply (accommodation, experiences, attractions, and events), transportation, research, local resources, and promotion. The United Nations World Tourism Organization, Destinations International, World Travel and Tourism Council and Tourism Industry Association of Canada support a holistic model for sustainable visitor economy growth<sup>11 12 13</sup>.

There are eight facets to Travel Alberta’s approach to destination management:

### **Vision, strategic planning and leadership**

We believe tourism has the power to transform communities, build the economy, and improve quality of life for all Albertans. We identify a clear path to growing Alberta’s visitor economy, partnering with industry and communities to maximize sector-wide impact.

### **Data, research and intelligence**

We exemplify research best practices, collecting and sharing data from a wide range of sources. We help businesses, stakeholders and sectors understand market behaviours, business operating environments, resident sentiment, and tourism’s contribution to the economy.

### **Whole-of-government approach**

Alberta’s visitor economy is complex and far-reaching, affecting Alberta’s public and private sectors. We collaborate with leaders in all orders of government to inform policy, mobilize collective action, navigate regulatory processes, and direct resources toward our common goals.

### **Indigenous partnerships**

We work closely with Indigenous partners to create opportunities to share cultures, languages and traditions through tourism and develop future economic, cultural and social opportunities. Through partnerships and alignment with Indigenous Tourism Alberta, the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada and Indigenous-owned businesses, we support meaningful Indigenous-led experiences, amplifying Indigenous voices and supporting reconciliation.

### **Business-friendly environment**

In partnership with government, industry, and communities, we foster streamlined processes for entrepreneurs and small businesses to enable cross-sector growth. We provide industry expertise and business growth support to tourism businesses, raise awareness of potential funding avenues, and promote sustainable, multi-seasonal growth. This includes supporting a favourable policy environment that attracts investment and development.

### **Investment attraction**

Rather than simply investing in businesses at the provincial level alone, we work with organizations in the private and public sectors to align investment priorities and create the optimal environment for businesses to thrive. We coordinate with economic developers and regional destination organizations (DOs), city-level organizations, and federal organizations such as PrairiesCan to coordinate and streamline investment.

### **Strong Alberta brand**

We deploy a people-focused brand to competitively promote Alberta as a sought-after destination to visit, invest, work, and play. We align with industry stakeholders to maintain a consistent identity that resonates with our target travellers.

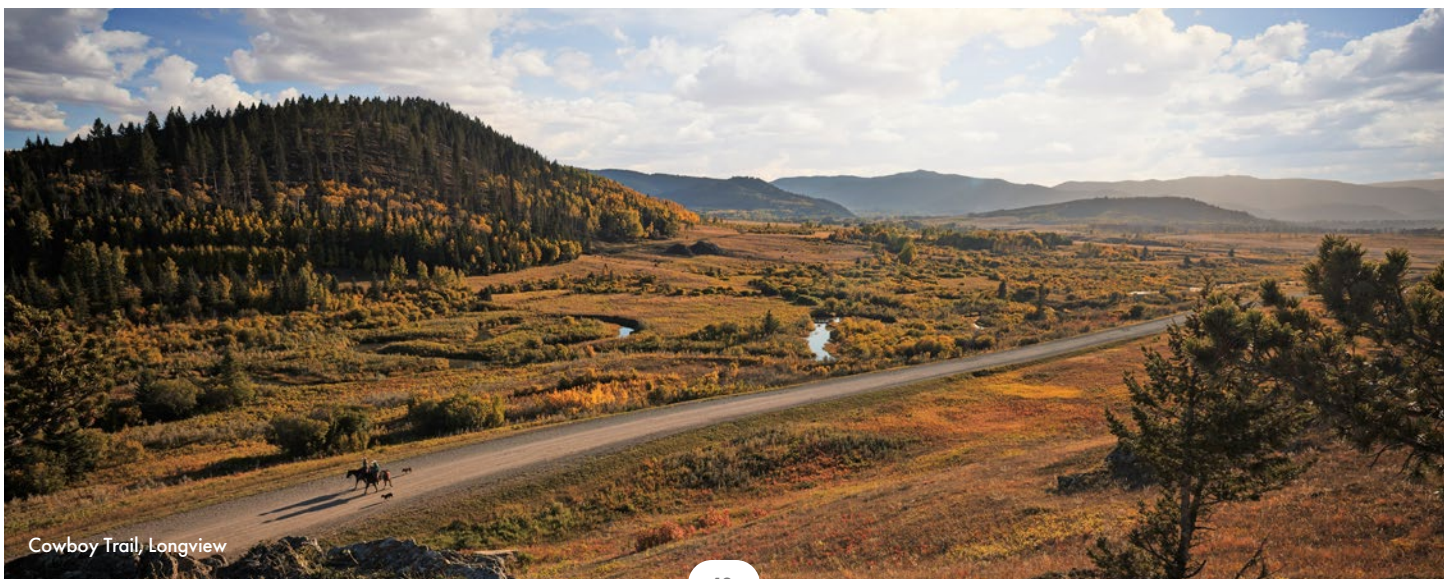
### **Community engagement**

Travel Alberta works in partnership with tourism organizations across the province to engage with residents and ensure tourism helps communities achieve their goals. Done right, tourism development can directly benefit communities by creating jobs, building infrastructure, and driving economic growth.

<sup>11</sup> [UNWTO – A Practical Guide to Tourism Destination Management \(unwto.org\)](https://unwto.org)

<sup>12</sup> [Tourism Industry Association of Canada - Tourism Industry Association of Canada Outlines Key Pillars in Support of a New Federal Tourism Growth Strategy \(tiac-aitc.ca\)](https://tiac-aitc.ca)

<sup>13</sup> [Destinations International – DestinationNEXT Futures Study \(destinationsinternational.org\)](https://destinationsinternational.org)



Cowboy Trail, Longview



## TOURISM ECOSYSTEM

To ensure the most efficient and effective use of resources, Travel Alberta partners with regional and federal destination organizations to support both marketing and experience development activities. These organizations form the foundation of the tourism ecosystem, supporting Alberta's visitor economy across place, access and marketing.



Philip J. Currie Museum, Grande Prairie



## PLACE

Travel Alberta directly supports NorthStar and Constellation DOs with an annual investment via our tourism investment programs, empowering them to tailor investment and development to their region’s specific needs. This investment helps strengthen operations and supports destination development, large-scale festivals and events, and attraction of meetings, incentives, conventions and events (MICE).

Travel Alberta also invests in areas not supported by DOs to help grow the number of unique products and experiences in emerging destinations. Travel Alberta directly supports tourism operators, associations, and rural communities via the tourism investment programs. Other destination development initiatives include tourism development zones, navigating regulatory environments, and attracting private and public investment.

Destination Canada supports federal tourism development by driving strategic alignment between the provinces, supporting economic development and streamlining tourism investment, and bolstering Canada’s labour market.



## ACCESS

Both Travel Alberta and Destination Canada work to increase the number and frequency of air routes to improve traveller access. Destination Canada does this by investing in airports to increase route capacity and partnering with airlines to create incentives for travellers from key markets, whereas Travel Alberta works directly with airlines to increase route capacity. While some DOs partner with Travel Alberta to support specific air route investment, their focus is largely promotion and development.

Beyond air access, organizations on all levels work to improve access to destinations and experiences, improve broadband and Wi-Fi accessibility, improve safety, support additional transportation options, and increase the number of export-ready businesses in all corners of the province.



## MARKETING

DOs lead marketing outreach to regional and domestic travellers, while Travel Alberta’s promotional focus is on the U.S. and key international markets. Together, Travel Alberta and NorthStar DOs identify opportunities for partners to lead marketing and sales efforts, with the support of Travel Alberta programs and funding.

Local tourism businesses engage in direct marketing and sales to their target markets, which vary depending on the nature of their business. DOs also provide marketing support to individual tourism businesses via membership programs and other partner initiatives.

Both Destination Canada and DOs use marketing and sales to attract MICE to Alberta. Travel Alberta also participates in buy-in marketing programs to reach additional international markets under the Canada brand, led by Destination Canada.

## GOVERNMENT ALIGNMENT

Travel Alberta is a provincial agency within the Ministry of Tourism and Sport. We align with the Department of Tourism and Sport’s strategic direction to support both Alberta’s vibrant tourism industry and its sport and recreation sectors.

Travel Alberta is responsible for the development and promotion of Alberta’s tourism sector in alignment with the priorities of the Government of Alberta. We help inform government policy through our extensive research and work with stakeholders, businesses, communities and Indigenous Peoples on key

projects to help drive the growth of our industry, helping to identify and recommend approaches to remove barriers to growth.

We also collaborate with other government departments to help advance tourism, including in important areas such as culture and heritage sites, provincial parks and public recreation areas, transportation and access, film industry, immigration and labour, and education and training.



## KEY MARKETS

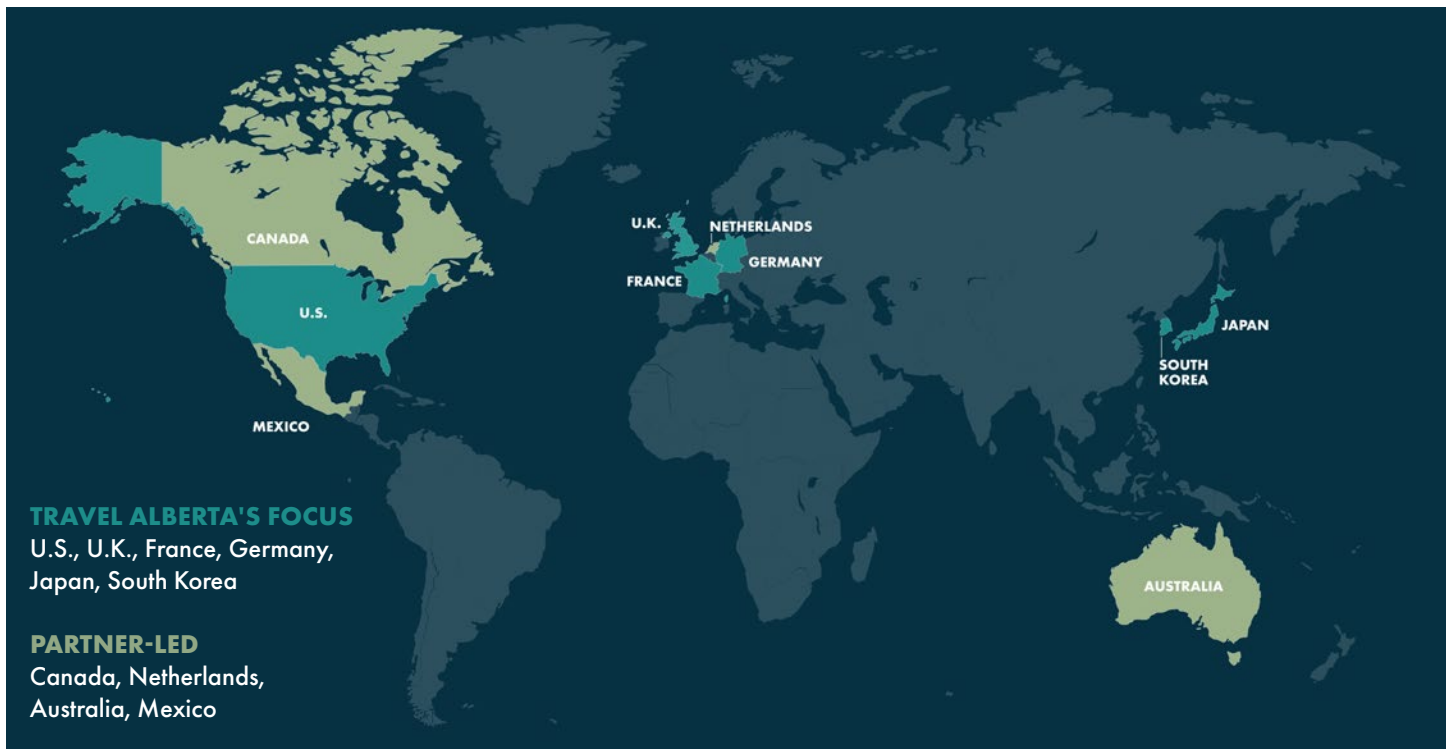
Travel Alberta continues to monitor and evaluate our market investment strategies to ensure we’re reaching those with the greatest potential. We assess our priority international markets using a combination of quantitative and qualitative data and align our approach with other regional and national destination organizations.

Our top-ranking markets have direct air access to Alberta, partnership opportunities with Destination Canada, in-market Travel Alberta representatives, and high visitor spending:

- United States
- United Kingdom
- France
- Germany
- Japan
- South Korea

### Partner-led markets

Travellers from Australia, Mexico, and the Netherlands tend to have a keen preference for specific itineraries and experiences in the Rockies and our major cities. Accordingly, NorthStar partners lead in these regions due to existing alignment and relationships.



## TARGET AUDIENCE

According to visitor spending data, travellers from further away continue to spend more than domestic travellers. In 2022, on average, per trip<sup>14</sup>:

- Visitors from within Alberta spent \$450
- Visitors from the rest of Canada spent \$975
- Visitors from U.S. spent \$1,320
- Visitors from overseas spent \$1,450

(Note: Spending figures have been rounded.)

Travel Alberta’s business outcomes, objectives, and initiatives prioritize higher-spending travellers while ensuring that the province’s businesses and communities remain welcoming and accessible to travellers from all locations.

## ACCESS PRIORITIES

Alberta’s two major international airports in Calgary and Edmonton provide essential connections to the province’s many compelling destinations, bringing millions of visitors annually from our key U.S. markets and around the globe. Travel Alberta partners with Canadian-based airlines to increase the number and frequency of air routes, enabling more travellers to fly direct to Alberta.

However, to support holistic destination development across the province, we must also make it easier for travellers to reach rural and smaller urban areas of the province that do not have international air access. A holistic access approach that considers factors such as safety, transportation, infrastructure, awareness and connectivity requires continued effort and investment across all levels of government and within communities. Travel Alberta can help drive alignment on access priorities through our destination development planning, particularly in rural areas.

<sup>14</sup>Statistics Canada, National Travel Survey and Visitor Travel Survey, 2022

## DEVELOPMENT

### Regional dispersion: Tourism development zones (TDZs)

Pre-pandemic, nearly 60 per cent of visitation and 75 per cent of visitor spending occurred in the mature or legacy tourism destinations of Banff, Lake Louise, Canmore, Jasper, Calgary and Edmonton. These legacy destinations form the foundation of Alberta’s tourism industry, attracting visitors from around the world and acting as trip anchors. However, to achieve our ambitious growth targets, we must develop additional destinations across the province.

After extensive engagement across the province, we identified 10 tourism development zones (TDZs) with a high potential for tourism growth over the next ten years. With successful development, these destinations can have a significant impact on Alberta’s tourism economy.

1. Fort McMurray Wood Buffalo
2. Northern Rockies
3. Northeast Lakelands
4. David Thompson
5. Olds to Lacombe
6. Cochrane/Sundre/Rocky Mountain House
7. Canadian Badlands
8. Foothills
9. Lethbridge to Medicine Hat
10. Southern Rockies

*NOTE: TDZs are listed in order from north to south. Boundaries may change as the project continues to evolve.*

Developing products and experiences in these emerging destinations will encourage travellers to extend their itineraries and explore more of the province when they visit. These extended itineraries — anchored by Calgary, Edmonton, and the Central Rockies — will help disperse visitation across a wider range of destinations, reduce pressure on legacy destinations during peak seasons, and drive economic growth in these smaller urban and rural areas. Emerging destinations also create more opportunities for Albertans to explore their own backyard, reducing congestion in legacy destinations while helping to reduce Alberta’s traveller deficit.





### Seasonal dispersion: A multi-seasonal sector

While there is some degree of visitor and revenue dispersion among Alberta's six legacy destinations from a geographic perspective, most of these revenues are realized over a short period of three summer months (June to August).

Our destination management approach includes strategies to reduce seasonal compression and encourage travellers to embrace winter and off-season travel. Our initiatives include:

- **Investing in winter activities**  
Encouraging tourism operators to extend their operating season by investing in additional infrastructure and programming.
- **Marketing winter travel**  
Promoting off-season travel through marketing and travel trade initiatives.
- **Developing all-seasons resorts**  
Prioritizing development of four-season resorts and large-scale accommodations on former industrial and brownfield sites.

### Enhancing product: Signature development investments

Beyond the investments made through our tourism investment programs, Travel Alberta will support the creation of larger signature developments. These iconic developments will attract a greater level of private investment and establish the brand identity of an area, serving as new, year-round trip anchors. They will also serve as a catalyst for further development by attracting visitors to the area and generating additional opportunities for local operators, creating a positive feedback loop of development and visitation in the area for years to come.

Examples of signature developments could include large-scale all-season resorts, boutique hotels, spa and wellness facilities, passenger rail itineraries, Indigenous resorts offering wildlife and aurora viewing, or luxury ranch accommodations.



## CONVENING PRIVATE AND PUBLIC INVESTMENT

To significantly increase the value of Alberta's visitor economy by 2035, both private and public investment will play a crucial role. However, businesses seeking investment in Alberta face multiple hurdles. To make Alberta the top choice in Canada for tourism investors, we must take immediate and strategic action to address these challenges.

This is where Travel Alberta plays a key role. Our experience in engaging with international markets and generating demand through destination promotion has earned us an intimate understanding of international demand for tourism products and experiences. With a destination management mandate and balanced investments to both develop and promote Alberta's tourism experiences, Travel Alberta bridges the gap between supply and demand.

Our research and insights, combined with our holistic understanding of Alberta's tourism industry, enable us to make the data-driven decisions to yield the greatest possible return on our investments while also supporting investors in making well-informed business decisions. Equipped with this intimate knowledge of Alberta's tourism industry and tourism development pipeline, we are optimally positioned to drive the supply side of tourism.

To encourage investments, Travel Alberta will:

- Match potential investors with shovel-ready tourism projects across the province
- Support businesses with the capability to pursue expansion into Alberta
- Support multi-season attractions and all-season destinations that enable year-round revenue opportunities, in turn mitigating risk for investors
- Provide potential investors with tailored concierge services to assist with understanding demand and navigating the complex regulatory environment
- Raise awareness of the programs and resources available for tourism businesses and entrepreneurs, including our wealth of insights and traveller data
- Act as an intermediary between investors and the government to foster collaboration and growth

**PUBLIC AND  
NON-PROFIT ROLES**

The investment ecosystem is a multifaceted and complex environment made up of many diverse organizations, ranging from lenders to enablers and regulators. As a driver, partner and convener working to grow Alberta’s tourism sector, Travel Alberta helps tourism businesses and potential investors navigate these complex relationships and regulations.





## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable and regenerative tourism is important for the future of Alberta's visitor economy. While the name may suggest a focus on environmental impacts, the implications are much broader, encompassing environmental, social, cultural and economic sustainability, and health and wellbeing.

The United Nations has developed a framework around sustainable development, identifying 17 sustainable development goals applicable to global destinations and industries<sup>15</sup>. These goals go beyond the traditional definition of sustainability to address the various ways that development can improve the world, and many of them have strong ties to tourism, including:

- **Goal 8 — Decent work and economic growth**  
Tourism is a core driver of economic growth and job creation around the world. As a leading employer of young people, tourism creates meaningful employment opportunities that keep communities young and vibrant.
- **Goal 9 — Industry, innovation, and infrastructure**  
A vibrant tourism sector can lead to strengthened infrastructure improving accessibility, efficiency, and quality of life for residents and visitors.
- **Goal 11 — Sustainable cities and communities**  
Tourism breathes new life into local businesses and economies through events and festivals, and more. It creates opportunities to diversify as well as sustainable revenue streams to support growth.
- **Goal 15 — Life on land**  
Rich biodiversity and natural heritage are often the main reasons tourists visit a destination. If sustainably managed, tourism can help foster an appreciation and sense of personal ownership over these wild spaces to ensure they remain for generations to come.

Travel Alberta will contribute to sustainability practices through the following key pillars:

### Continuing to support the growth of Indigenous tourism across the province

Indigenous tourism is a key component of reconciliation. It supports the livelihoods of Indigenous entrepreneurs and creates a platform for Indigenous Peoples to share their rich cultures. Community-led Indigenous tourism is regenerative and aligns with sustainable development goals.

Indigenous tourism also represents a competitive advantage for Alberta. One in three international travellers is seeking authentic Indigenous experiences. One in two Albertans is interested in Indigenous tourism. Indigenous tourism is projected to contribute \$133 million in GDP in 2024.

Through our continued investments in and support of Indigenous tourism operators, communities and organizations, we aim to establish Alberta as the leading destination for Indigenous tourism in Canada.

Alberta is home to many Inuit, Métis, and First Nations. From the Kainai Nation in the south, to the Paddle Prairie Métis Settlement in the north, this province contains many unique cultures, perspectives and languages. Accordingly, Indigenous tourism development requires a relationship-based and community-led approach that reflects the diversity of Indigenous Peoples.

### Supporting regenerative tourism on former industrial and already disturbed sites

Post-industrial rehabilitation through tourism provides an opportunity to engage communities, stimulate economic growth, and promote sustainability. By repurposing these sites as tourism attractions, we can provide a new sense of community and pride of place, support development of additional tourism offerings, attract new investment, and welcome more visitors to the area (examples outside Alberta include Cabot Links, Whistler, Eden Project).

Moreover, prioritizing sites that are already "disturbed" reduces potential impacts of development on pristine, previously undeveloped grounds.

Additional benefits of regenerative tourism on former brownfield sites:

- **Reconciliation opportunities**  
Working in partnership with Indigenous communities who may have a cultural or historical connection to the land.
- **Environmental rehabilitation**  
Reducing community reliance on heavy industry, while supporting sustainable practices, reintroducing natural biodiversity, etc.
- **Local benefit**  
Demonstrating the positive economic, social and cultural benefits of these tourism developments to communities resulting in an increase in resident quality of life.

### Establishing nature-based tourism

Nature-based tourism can provide a unique perspective and experience of our rich ecosystems and wild spaces, providing a deeper sense of connection with the world around us. For visitors, these experiences can have a profound impact on their perspectives, inspiring a sense of stewardship that endures long after trip ends.

Travel Alberta can develop and promote nature-based tourism experiences to:

- **Inspire environmental stewardship**  
Provide regenerative opportunities for locals and visitors to interact with Alberta's wild spaces through nature-based experiences, instilling a desire to protect and uphold these ecosystems for generations to come.
- **Preserve wild spaces**  
Employ sustainable development practices that will help conserve the environment for many years to come. Consider sustainability goals as a key factor informing funding decisions and development priorities of a destination, in partnership with residents and the local community.
- **Create advocates**  
Instill a sense of ownership and responsibility for a destination's growth and wellbeing among residents, resulting in highly engaged and vocal advocates for sustainable tourism.

<sup>15</sup>UNWTO Sustainable Development Goals, 2023

## PARTNERSHIP WITH INDIGENOUS TOURISM ALBERTA

On March 10, 2023, Travel Alberta signed a new Memorandum of Understanding with Indigenous Tourism Alberta committing \$6 million over three years in direct and in-kind support.

Indigenous Tourism Alberta helps develop and promote authentic, Indigenous-owned and operated tourism experiences across the province. They have over 200 members and are one of Canada's fastest-growing Indigenous tourism organizations.

Moving forward, we will continue this vital relationship with Indigenous Tourism Alberta and identify opportunities to grow authentic Indigenous tourism across the province including:

- Marketing and content development**  
 Promoting Indigenous tourism experiences through our various channels including advertising, our websites, video and photography production, media relations and storytelling, and social media.
- Investment**  
 In collaboration with Indigenous Tourism Alberta, investing in and providing business coaching support for Indigenous tourism operators to grow and enhance their tourism offerings.
- Community engagement**  
 Alongside Indigenous Tourism Alberta, undertaking an engagement strategy with many Indigenous communities across the province to discuss shared interest in tourism development. This work is an important step as we seek to drive the tourism economy, in partnership with Indigenous entrepreneurs, to foster and grow sustainable, livable communities.





# Strategic Outcomes

Following the groundwork laid to expand from a destination marketing organization to a destination management organization, Travel Alberta is primed to become a more commercially focused organization with even greater impacts on the visitor economy across marketing, access, and place. We will increase Alberta's visibility in core markets, improve access to and around Alberta, and lean further into economic development, working with all levels of government to reduce barriers to sector growth.





## OUTCOME 1

# Marketing

**Export revenues increase as the share of spending from visitors to the province increases.**



Bow Lake, Banff National Park

As a destination management organization, Travel Alberta helps create demand for Alberta's tourism experiences by promoting our destinations to the world. We do this by creating and sharing compelling stories featuring Alberta's people and places that set us apart from other destinations and establish Alberta as a desirable travel destination.

Our U.S. marketing campaigns and partner buy-in programs take a collaborative approach to promoting Alberta, alongside our regional NorthStar DO partners and Destination Canada. Travel Alberta leads promotion efforts to our key markets in the U.S. and is represented overseas under the Destination Canada brand. We also build strong relationships with travel-trade and media partners who promote Alberta's tourism destinations in the U.S., U.K., France, Germany, Japan and South Korea.

In partnership with Indigenous Tourism Alberta, we help amplify the stories of Indigenous Peoples and tourism operators in our key markets to build demand for Indigenous tourism.

## KEY OBJECTIVES

1.1 Drive consideration to travel to/within Alberta among travellers from key source markets.

## INITIATIVES SUPPORTING KEY OBJECTIVE

- Tell stories that differentiate Alberta as a desirable travel destination
- Collaborate with Alberta and national partners to promote tourism
- Drive sales of Alberta tourism product



Burwood Distillery, Calgary



## PERFORMANCE METRICS

**1.a Performance measure: Increase in consideration of Alberta as a tourism destination, measured by incremental change in searches for Alberta destinations in U.S. target regions versus control markets.**

2023–24 TARGET	2024–25 TARGET	2025–26 TARGET	2026–27 TARGET
20%	5%	5%	5%

Marketing has traditionally been described in terms of a funnel, leading from awareness of a product to consideration of that product to making a final purchase decision. In tourism, the process is not as linear, but the tourism industry still uses the term “consideration” to indicate interest and intent to purchase.

Travellers use Google to research and plan travel. If people search for Alberta destinations and experiences using Google, we can infer that they are aware of Alberta and considering travel to the province. By measuring the frequency of Alberta-related searches in the areas we’re currently marketing and comparing with the number of searches for the same terms in markets where there is no active promotion, Travel Alberta can determine how effective we are in our marketing. We measure the effect of our investment as a percentage change from the control market versus the target market.

In December 2023, incremental search lift was at 14 per cent; however, with 70 per cent of investments planned for the second half of the 2023–24 fiscal year, we anticipate reaching the target of 20 per cent. Going forward, incremental search is expected to be more moderate than it was previously. This is due to potential reductions in partner investments and continuous AI innovation in travel-assisted discovery and planning, which may begin impacting Google search as a key resource for travellers.



Running Reins Ranch, Big Valley

## OUTCOME 2

# Access

**Visitors have improved access to more destinations across Alberta.**



Calgary International Airport, Calgary



As a primarily fly-to destination, more than 75 per cent of U.S. travellers and 95 per cent of international travellers in 2022 arrived by air<sup>16</sup>. For Alberta to compete globally as an attractive destination for both business and leisure travellers, we must work to increase the number and frequency of direct inbound seats from our core source markets.

Travel Alberta partners with Canadian-based airlines in alignment with Alberta's international airports to support incremental flight growth.

Additionally, we must make it easier for travellers to access Alberta's many destinations when they arrive. Increased air connectivity within the province, improved transportation infrastructure, greater broadband connectivity, and improving traveller safety all play key roles in improving access to and around Alberta.

Travel Alberta works with agencies across all levels of government to support visitor-friendly access throughout the province. Moving forward, we will build relationships with smaller regional airports across the province to improve intra-provincial air connectivity.

## KEY OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 Accelerate seat capacity to Alberta and around the province
- 2.2 Inform government policy to increase traveller-friendly connectivity and access throughout the province

## INITIATIVES SUPPORTING KEY OBJECTIVES

- Co-invest in high-potential route opportunities
- Engage governments and associations across the province to jointly address development barriers

<sup>16</sup>Statistics Canada. (2023). Non-resident visitors entering Canada, by country of residence, mode of transportation, arrival type and traveller type



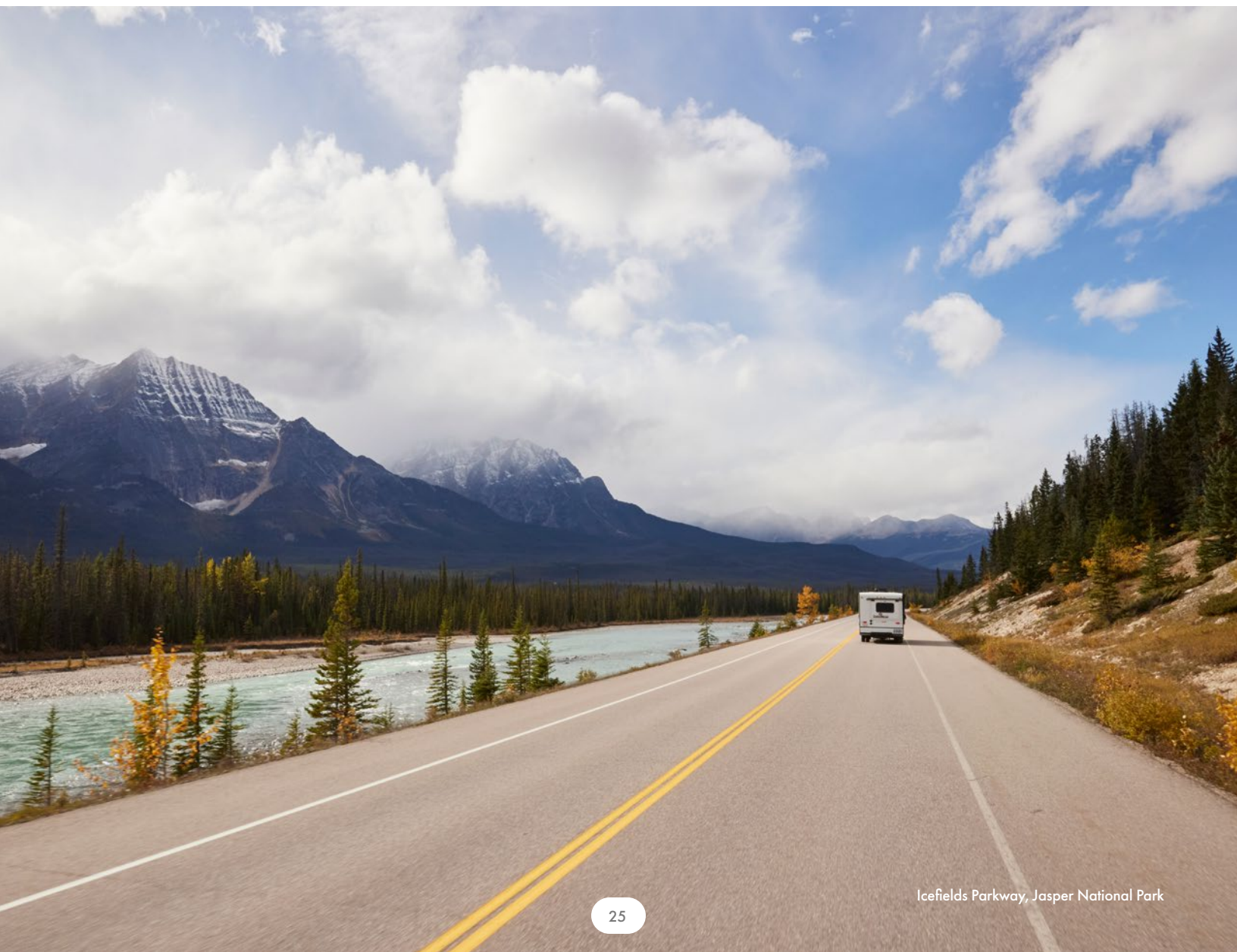
## PERFORMANCE METRICS

### 2.a Performance measure: Return on Investment (ROI) on invested air routes.

2023–24 TARGET	2024–25 TARGET	2025–26 TARGET	2026–27 TARGET
6.5:1	6.7:1	6.8:1	7:1

This ROI represents the incremental spending by visitors on supported air routes to Travel Alberta’s investment. The incremental visitor spending is determined using the percentage of sold seats, the percentage of inbound passengers of non-Albertan origin, and the average spend per traveller from Statistics Canada visitor survey data. Once the investment period is complete, Travel Alberta receives flight performance data from the airlines to perform these calculations.

As of February 2024, we are on track to achieve our ROI target of 6.5:1 in 2023–24. We expect ROI growth to be moderate moving forward, as domestic carrier growth is limited by aircraft and pilot shortages. We expect the current limitations to begin to ease in 2026, improving growth opportunities.



## OUTCOME 3

# Place

**Alberta's visitor economy has thriving businesses, prosperous communities, and a growing investment environment.**



Métis Crossing, Smoky Lake

Destination development will play a critical role in our ability to grow Alberta's tourism sector to \$25 billion by 2035. In many parts of the province, demand for tourism experiences currently outstrips available supply, particularly during peak seasons.

Travel Alberta takes a holistic approach to destination development to drive alignment on tourism priorities, enhance tourism product through targeted investments, establish Alberta's tourism sector as an attractive investment opportunity, and help local tourism businesses grow by offering consulting services and other tools and resources. Rural and Indigenous tourism development remains a priority and will form the cornerstone of our development initiatives moving forward.

Continuing the positive momentum of destination development planning in tourism development zones, Travel Alberta will establish action plans in 2024 to guide our next steps to grow visitation in priority regions.

We will continue to invest directly to support tourism operators, communities and associations in all corners of the province via our tourism investment programs.

Per our three-year MOU commitment, Travel Alberta will also invest \$2 million annually to support Indigenous Tourism Alberta. The investment will enable more Indigenous tourism operators to develop new tourism products, expand existing offerings and more effectively market and attract visitors to their experiences.

Finally, investment attraction and coordination will be more of a priority to achieve our ambitious growth targets. Travel Alberta will act as a convener for both public and private investment opportunities and raise awareness of investment opportunities in Alberta's tourism sector.

## KEY OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 Lead collaboration, design and implementation of destination development plans in priority tourism regions
- 3.2 Stimulate growth across select destinations and tourism businesses
- 3.3 Attract and facilitate private sector investment
- 3.4 Enable tourism businesses to launch and prosper

## INITIATIVES SUPPORTING KEY OBJECTIVES

- Execute long-term development plans in priority regions and build positive sentiment on value of tourism
- Identify and execute targeted investment programs
- Position and promote Alberta's tourism sector as an investment opportunity
- Provide tourism consulting to support growth



## PERFORMANCE METRICS

### 3.a Performance measure: Per cent of Albertans who feel tourism is important to their community.

2023–24 TARGET	2024–25 TARGET	2025–26 TARGET	2026–27 TARGET
65%	66%	67%	68%

Resident support for tourism in their community is foundational for effective destination management; as a result, resident sentiment is an essential KPI for Travel Alberta. Understanding how perception varies from one community to another depending on the significance of the sector to the local economy allows us to tailor tourism development and management efforts in legacy and emerging destinations. Travel Alberta conducts the main resident sentiment survey in winter, with a shorter survey in the summer to measure Albertans' perspective on tourism and the visitor economy.

In alignment with our NorthStar partners and tourism development zones, Travel Alberta will continue to monitor resident sentiment and adjust our initiatives to strengthen residents' connections with tourism to fuel positive attitudes toward it.

Resident sentiment toward any industry tends to reflect the macroeconomic conditions at the time, and tourism is no exception. This was observed in the summer 2023 survey, where we saw resident sentiment toward tourism decline slightly. Improving tourism sentiment of a broad swath of the population requires significant effort, especially given the impact of economic conditions. As such, we are aiming to recover and show moderate growth going forward.

### 3.b Performance measure: Ratio of private sector investment driven by Travel Alberta's investment in tourism development projects.

2023–24 TARGET	2024–25 TARGET	2025–26 TARGET	2026–27 TARGET
1:3	1:3.2	1:3.5	1:4

Based on the first of two rounds of grant intakes in 2023–24, Travel Alberta's investment of \$5.8 million attracted \$63.9 million in private investment. This equates to an investment ratio of 1:10. When weighting is applied to the investment ratio to normalize large variances that result from singular large-scale projects, providing a better representation of year-over-year comparisons, the investment ratio is 1:3.

For 2024–25, Travel Alberta's target investment ratio is 1:3.2, despite expectations that high Canadian interest rates will remain in place, tempering capital investments. A more favourable Alberta regulatory environment for tourism development is expected to stimulate a greater level of private sector investment, offsetting the impacts of higher lending rates.

### 3.c Performance measure: Impact on Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from total tourism development projects.

2023–24 TARGET <sup>17</sup>	2024–25 TARGET	2025–26 TARGET	2026–27 TARGET
\$16.2M Direct Impact	\$22M Direct Impact	\$24M Direct Impact	\$26.6M Direct Impact
\$16.6M Indirect Impact	\$22.9M Indirect Impact	\$24.5M Indirect Impact	\$27M Indirect Impact
\$11.2M Induced Impact	\$15.5M Induced Impact	\$16.6M Induced Impact	\$18M Induced Impact
\$44M Total Impact	\$60.8M Total Impact	\$65M Total Impact	\$72M Total Impact

Travel Alberta's tourism development program will continue to support the tourism economy and the broader provincial economy, as demonstrated by its positive impact on GDP. As Travel Alberta is more successful in attracting higher-value private sector investments, we expect economic impact to increase over time. The total (direct, indirect and induced) effects<sup>18</sup> of the total project investment are estimated using Statistics Canada's input-output multipliers.

<sup>17</sup>The economic impact multipliers have been updated from end-use industries to non-residential building construction industry from the Input-Output multipliers of Statistics Canada, 2018.

<sup>18</sup>Direct impact is the economic impact supported directly by the proposed capital investment costs and post-construction operation costs. This represents the value added to Alberta's economy as a direct result of the capital spending on new and existing products as well as operational expenditures. Indirect impacts refer to the impact generated from business activities supporting the business operations of the capital project, typically suppliers' spending. Induced impact occurs when employees spend their income on goods and services throughout the economy.

# Performance Target Assumptions



Medicine Hat



- While our key markets, including the U.S, are expecting a mild recession, evidence suggests that the prioritization of travel is becoming less affected by expected economic slowdown. This means that the demand for travel will continue, despite economic conditions.
- Any natural disasters and extreme weather conditions will be contained, and impacts on travel to Alberta destinations, key source markets, and transportation infrastructure will be minor and temporary.
- The Alberta regulatory environment is more favourable to tourism development.
- High interest rates will continue to temper capital investments.
- The U.S. exchange rate remains favourable to U.S. travellers spending in Canada at or above 1.3 Canadian dollars for every U.S. dollar.



Royal Tyrrell Museum, Drumheller





Spray Lakes, Kananaskis Country

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