



The Town of The Blue Mountains

Destination Strategy
2025 & 2026 Workplan

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Overview

The 2025 - 2030 Destination Strategy was approved by Council on May 26, 2025. To action the strategy, the 2025/2026 Workplan was developed to build on the pre-scoped implementation plan and to prioritize the Strategy recommendations based on current resources, competing and complimentary projects, tourism industry needs and community priorities. The format of this Workplan will set the standard for how the implementation of the Destination Strategy will be planned for and shared in future years.

The Workplan serves as the actionable framework through which the Town aims to achieve the goals set forth in the Destination Strategy. The Workplan prioritizes specific initiatives aligned with each of the strategy's four pillars aiming to enhance tourism infrastructure, elevate visitor experiences, and foster a robust tourism ecosystem.

Prioritization within the Workplan is linked to resource allocation, ensuring that staffing and budgets are efficiently directed towards high-impact projects. This includes foundational actions such as establishing a Destination Advisory Committee, conducting a carrying capacity study and allocating funding for workforce housing, along with strategic tourism promotional initiatives that will be actioned by the Blue Mountain Village Association serving as the Destination Marketing Organization.

The Workplan aims to optimize partnerships across interrelated areas by working with tourism industry members, local business association and regional/provincial agencies to positively benefit the Town's tourism industry, visitor experience and quality of life for residents.

Additionally, the Workplan integrates mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation, which is essential for adjusting strategies and tracking progress. It accounts for tourism's evolving landscape, setting benchmarks for success and allowing for flexibility in line with community feedback and industry trends.

Ultimately, the 2025/2026 Workplan is more than just an operational guide; it embodies a commitment to realizing the vision of the Destination Strategy through targeted actions and strategic foresight, ensuring The Blue Mountains continues to thrive as a premier, well-managed, and sustainable tourism destination.

Strategic Pillars

The Destination Strategy is structured around four strategic pillars, each accompanied by specific objectives designed to guide its implementation. Each pillar includes recommended actions that were developed with the environmental, social, and economic contexts in mind.

1. Connected and Empowered Destination Network

- Objective A1 - Strengthen the Town's role and capacity as a destination management leader
- Objective A2 - Grow knowledge and understanding of destination opportunities and challenges
- Objective A3 - Foster new relationships and formalize existing partnerships to expand capacity

2. Accessible and Quality Destination Experience

- Objective B1 – Enhance the sense of place and invest in tourism infrastructure
- Objective B2 - Align and enhance the destination's tourism services

3. Cohesive and Inspirational Destination Identity

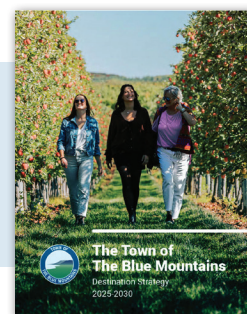
- Objective C1 - Bring to life an inclusive, distinctive, and compelling place brand
- Objective C2 - Mindfully market and promote the entire destination

4. Compelling and Diversified Destination Offering

- Objective D1 - Guide the development of a diversified and four-season tourism offering.

These pillars and objectives came out of the collective insights, perspectives, and knowledge gathered through active participation and feedback from tourism industry members and community residents from August 2024 to April 2025.

Scan to Open the Full Version of the Destination Strategy



Workplan Overview 2025/2026

The Workplans for 2025 and 2026 establish a clear framework for implementing the Destination Strategy, emphasizing strategic priorities to manage and grow tourism in a responsible and sustainable manner.

In 2025, the focus is on strengthening governance and infrastructure to support tourism growth. In 2026, the actions pivot towards deeper engagement and strategic studies, ensuring alignment with industry and community needs. Collectively, these actions are designed to guide The Blue Mountains towards achieving its vision of a vibrant, sustainable and world class tourism destination.

2025 Actions

1. Establish a Destination Advisory Committee (A3.1)
2. Establish a monitoring and evaluation framework (A2.3)
3. Revise by-laws to support innovation and encourage sector diversification (A1.1)
4. Streamline wayfinding and interpretive signage (B1.1)

2026 Actions

1. Conduct a carrying capacity study (A2.1)
2. Establish a workforce housing fund and explore solutions to support housing (A1.4)
3. Revise Town decision-making processes to ensure that tourism is considered (A1.2)
4. Develop tourism sentiment surveys to engage residents and visitors (A2.4)
5. Foster collaboration with indigenous communities (A3.3)
6. Ensure consistency and access to visitor information services (B2.2)
7. Create dedicated initiatives for tourism opportunities (A2.2)

**Titles of actions have been shortened for design purposes*

2025 Workplan

The focus for 2025 is to strengthen governance and infrastructure to support tourism growth. As the Destination Strategy was approved mid-year, the 2025 workplan is focused on initiating actions to demonstrate momentum and progress. Given the compressed timelines, many of the actions will be initiated with implementation continued into 2026 and beyond.

Action A3.1: Establish a Destination Advisory Committee		
Key Steps:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research best practices related to Destination Advisory Committee governance structures and committee representation • Create a draft Terms of Reference for Council review and approval • Complete the committee recruitment process • Develop committee orientation material and schedule meetings 	
Priority: High	Lead: Strategic Initiatives	Approval: Council
Budget: N/A	Timeline: Q4 2025 - Q1 2026	Resources: Internal Staff
Expected Outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formation of a well-structured committee that represents a breadth of local tourism interests, expertise and community perspectives • Development of a supportive governance structure to guide informed and strategic decision-making to support tourism • Enhanced collaboration among stakeholders, facilitating cohesive actions towards shared tourism goals 	

Action A2.3: Establish a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework		
Key Steps:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research best practices related to strategy performance reporting and destination performance measurement • Identify and confirm data points that will be tracked/reported • Integrate the framework into the Destination Strategy webpage on the Town website and launch 	
Priority: High	Lead: Strategic Initiatives	Approval: Director of SI
Budget: N/A	Timeline: Q3 2025 - Q1 2027	Resources: Internal Staff
Expected Outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of a framework to monitor and measure the implementation progress of the Destination Strategy • Review and confirmation of key destination indicators to report on the role of tourism in the destination and to increase public awareness of tourism's value • Collaboration across departments and partners through shared metrics and reporting 	

Action A1.1: Revise by-laws to support tourism and agritourism innovation and encourage sector diversification	
Key Steps:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct internal review to identify by-laws/policies that may have a potential impact and/or connection to tourism and agritourism • Research and draft potential amendments that could be considered to support key tourism and agritourism goals and objectives • Present research findings and potential changes to Council seeking endorsement to advance recommended amendments • Conduct public consultation including relevant external organizations, stakeholder groups and residents • Further refine and present the final recommendation to Council for approval/endorsement
Priority: Medium	Lead: Strategic Initiatives
Budget: \$6 - 10K	Timeline: Q4 2025 - Q4 2026
	Approval: Council
	Resources: Internal & External Support
Expected Outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated by-laws that more effectively support tourism and agritourism objectives, enabling innovation and sector diversification • Increased engagement with stakeholders leading to well-informed amendments that reflect community and industry needs

Action B1.1: Streamline wayfinding and interpretive signage	
Key Steps:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to advance efforts to install Gateway and Community Entrance signs • Continue to support the interpretive sign work of the Blue Mountain Public Library and Craigleith Heritage Depot • Conduct an inventory/needs review to identify where new wayfinding signs are needed and where existing signs require refurbishment • Research and apply for grant funding opportunities when available
Priority: Medium	Lead: Strategic Initiatives
Budget: N/A	Timeline: Q4 2025 - Q4 2026
	Approval: Director of SI & Council
	Resources: Internal & External Support
Expected Outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated, consistent, accessible, and relevant wayfinding and signage across the destination, including interpretive and informational signage • Improved visitor experiences and engagement across the whole destination through clearer informative signage

2026 Workplan

The focus for 2026 is to enhance the foundation that supports tourism as the Town’s primary economic sector. Actions are planned to understand tourism opportunities and challenges, including prioritizing tourism considerations within Town decision making, addressing key issues such as workforce housing, deepening relationships and partnerships with community groups and external organizations, and to beginning the process to further explore areas of opportunity to grow and support tourism.

Action A2.1: Conduct a carrying capacity study		
Key Steps:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pre-engage potential partners to gather interest, confirm potential study locations and to build awareness about upcoming work• Confirm study scope/priorities, hire external consultant and implement monitoring/measurement tools• Review existing data inputs and collect new data as required• Work with the project team to conduct study across four tourism seasons and analyze findings• Present findings to Council to guide future planning, investment and tourism development decisions	
Priority: High	Lead: Strategic Initiatives	Approval: Director of SI
Budget: \$50k	Timeline: Q2 2026 - Q2 2027	Resources: Internal & External Support
Expected Outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Comprehensive understanding of the Town’s environmental, social, and economic tourism limits, informing future development and investment decisions• Data-driven insights to balance tourism growth with environmental and community health	



Action A1.4:		Establish a workforce housing fund and explore solutions to support housing
Key Steps:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define fund purpose and policy, including clarifying objectives, drafting a policy framework for how the reserve fund will operate, and revising Municipal Accommodation Tax bylaw as needed • Review opportunities to integrate the reserve fund with Community Improvement Program incentives to support industry participation • Present the framework to Council for endorsement and seek direction of MAT fund percentage allocation • Support ongoing Council efforts to increase the supply of workforce housing 	
Priority: High	Lead: Strategic Initiatives	Approval: Council
Budget: N/A	Timeline: Q1 2026 - Ongoing	Resources: Internal Staff
Expected Outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a fund and policy that bolster workforce housing availability, supporting tourism sector employment • Strategic integration of community improvement incentives to foster industry participation and support 	

Action A1.2:		Revise Town decision-making processes to ensure that potential impacts to tourism are considered before decisions are made
Key Steps:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct internal review to identify opportunities to integrate tourism considerations into the decision making process (ex- staff reports, internal review meetings, budget meetings, etc.), with a focus on where tourism considerations are currently absent or informal • Review opportunities to increase the awareness regarding the role and importance of tourism to the Town’s economy into employee and Council orientation and training • Identify opportunities to share the story regarding the role and importance of tourism to the Town’s economy to the general public and residents 	
Priority: Medium	Lead: Strategic Initiatives	Approval: Council & SMT
Budget: N/A	Timeline: Q2 2026 - Q4 2026	Resources: Internal Staff
Expected Outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporation of tourism implications in the Town’s decision-making process, enhancing alignment with economic and community goals • Increased awareness and appreciation of tourism’s role among staff, Council, and the public 	

Action A2.4: Develop and implement tourism sentiment and experience surveys to engage visitors and residents		
Key Steps:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define survey objective/scope and adapt previous question sets (ex - Role of Tourism Survey and Resident Satisfaction Survey) • Develop project plan and align surveys with internal work timelines and tourism seasonality • Engage Grey County, RTO7, local BIAs, accommodation providers, and tourism operators to support distribution and promotion • Analyze survey results, identify key insights, and incorporate learnings into future Destination Strategy strategic actions 	
Priority: Medium	Lead: Strategic Initiatives	Approval: Director of SI & DMO
Budget: \$6 - 10K	Timeline: Q3 2026 - Q1 2027	Resources: Internal & External Support
Expected Outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive data collection on resident and visitor tourism experiences to refine the focus of destination management and to inform decision making • Establishing data sets to benchmark and monitor progress to improve sentiment and personal experiences related to tourism 	

Action A3.3: Foster collaboration with Indigenous communities and Indigenous tourism organizations and businesses		
Key Steps:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and confirm contact information for local Indigenous tourism organizations and officials • Strengthen relationships to share updates on destination development and explore collaboration opportunities • Align with existing indigenous projects and explore co-development of Indigenous tourism products and storytelling capacity/activations • Assess value of Town membership with Indigenous tourism organizations (e.g., Indigenous Tourism Ontario, Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada) to grow partnerships and stay informed on good practices and opportunities • Continue established meeting processes and regularity to build on process and trust, leading to future partnerships, storytelling expansion, and a more connected destination 	
Priority: Medium	Lead: Strategic Initiatives	Approval: Director of SI
Budget: N/A	Timeline: Q1 2026 - Ongoing	Resources: Internal Staff
Expected Outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthened partnerships with Indigenous communities and organizations, promoting inclusive tourism development • Co-development of tourism products and narratives that honor Indigenous cultures and histories 	

Action B2.2		Ensure consistency and access to visitor information services	
Key Steps:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify visitor information gaps through visitor survey and first impression assessment reviews (availability and accuracy of information, ease of access, brand consistency, etc.) Confirm visitor information priorities and approaches including available resources, organizational roles, marketing needs and current practices Work with Grey County, RTO7, local BIAs, tourism businesses, surrounding municipalities, and Destination Ontario to support content sharing, distribution, and resource contribution Design and develop visitor information materials (website, social media, print, signage, etc.) 		
Priority: Medium	Lead: Strategic Initiatives & DMO	Approval: Director of SI	
Budget: \$51 -100K	Timeline: Q1 2026 - Ongoing	Resources: Internal Staff & DMO	
Expected Outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong and consistent access to visitor information services to inform trip planning, local event promotion and to enhance brand consistency across platforms To strengthen the destination brand identity and position through collaboration with the DMO and local/regional tourism partners for improved content distribution and visitor engagement 		
Action A2.2		Create dedicated initiatives for niche tourism opportunities including agritourism, cultural tourism and sports tourism	
Key Steps:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leverage the Destination Advisory Committee (DAC) to identify opportunities to support and grow agritourism, cultural tourism and sports tourism Conduct best practice research to identify current market gaps, support, services and infrastructure required to advance the opportunity Establish DAC subcommittees to conduct indepth opportunity review Review potential initiatives in line with Destination Strategy and Economic Development Action Plan and schedule for implementation 		
Priority: Medium	Lead: Strategic Initiatives & DMO	Approval: Director of SI	
Budget: \$16 - 30K	Timeline: Q1 2026 - Ongoing	Resources: Internal Staff & DMO	
Expected Outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversification of tourism offerings, leading to growth during shoulder seasons and stabilizing economic impacts throughout the year Increased visitor spending and extended stays through enriched experiences that appeal to diverse interests Enhanced collaboration with industry stakeholders and the Destination Advisory Committee through targeted action plans 		

Investment & Resources

Investment and resource allocation is crucial for the successful implementation of the Destination Strategy. Funding to support implementation will come from four primary areas:

1. Town Share of Municipal Accommodation Tax
2. DMO Share of Municipal Accommodation Tax
3. External Funding through Provincial Tourism Grant Applications
4. Previous Town Funds Allocated to Tourism

Given the interconnected nature of tourism, it's important to highlight that not all actions identified in the 2025 and 2026 workplans are the sole responsibility of the Town. Many actions will leverage the partnership and resources of the Blue Mountain Village Association (BMVA), serving as the Town's Destination Marketing Organization. Further, many actions will be supported through the collaborative efforts and expertise of the Destination Advisory Committee, including community groups and external organizations.

To ensure that the Town is positioned to implement the strategy, staff hours will be allocated within employee workplans of the Strategic Initiatives department. Further, the BMVA has hired a dedicated part-time staff position to support the actions of the DMO.

A key component of this financial framework is the strategic allocation of Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) funds. As identified when the Destination Strategy was approved and through the MAT exploration and implementation research conducted in 2023, a portion of the MAT funds should be allocated to support the Destination Strategy. As many of the budget figures referenced in the work plan are estimates and presented in ranges, it's recommended that Council allocate an overall amount to the implementation of the Destination Strategy. The report recommends allocating \$150,000 to implement the 2025/2026 work plan. Project-specific staff reports with further details will be presented to Council based on the work plan implementation schedule.

In addition, the Town and DMO will actively monitor and apply for available grant opportunities to support implementation. Details regarding the status of grant applications will be shared with Council through the annual progress report.

Conclusion

The 2025/2026 Workplan for the Destination Strategy underscores the Town's pivotal commitment to nurturing a thriving and sustainable tourism sector by aligning key actions with the goals, objectives and anticipated outcomes of the Strategy. The Workplan is not just a roadmap but an embodiment of collective aspirations, informed by community and industry input and expert insights through continued collaboration with and support from Bannikin. It establishes a framework aimed at enhancing governance, infrastructure and collaboration to grow, manage and support The Blue Mountains as a leading four-season tourism destination.

Central to this vision is the understanding that tourism should enhance, not overwhelm, the local community and natural environment. This plan is dedicated to proactively managing tourism in a way that balances the enjoyment and quality of experiences for both visitors and residents. Strategic actions are designed to ensure that tourism pressures are identified, understood, and addressed effectively, preserving the community's character and environmental values.

By allocating a portion of the Town's Municipal Accommodation Tax and leveraging strategic partnerships with stakeholders such as the Blue Mountain Village Association, this Workplan underlines a strong resource strategy that ensures the Town is well-equipped to meet the objectives set out in the Destination Strategy. The integration of adaptive management practices, alongside consistent monitoring and evaluation, positions the Town to remain agile in the face of evolving industry trends and community needs .

Further, this Workplan fosters an environment where economic growth goes hand-in-hand with sustainability and community well-being, ensuring that tourism continues to be a vital contributor to the Towns economy. With the foundation laid by the 2025/2026 Workplan, The Blue Mountains is well positioned to not only meet but exceed its goals, setting a benchmark for sustainable tourism leadership in Ontario.

