



Tourism Workforce Action Plan

April 2022



Contents

Executive Summary	3
Setting the Stage	4
Strategic Goals and Action Plan	9
Goal 1: Strengthen the Foundation	11
Goal 2: Change Perception	18
Goal 3: Build Momentum	22
Implementation	27

© 2022 MDB Insight Inc.

In April 2022, MDB Insight was acquired by Deloitte Canada.

V20220609

Acknowledgements

Tourism Industry Association of Prince Edward Island (TIAPEI) wishes to express gratitude and acknowledge the broad community support from provincial departments, municipalities, local workforce supports, sector support organizations, local employers and operators, educators, job seekers, and other workforce intermediaries who participated in the various surveys, interviews, and meetings conducted as part of this study.

The Workforce Development Committee

Matthew Jelley – Maritime Fun Group (Committee Chair)

Chad Heron – Cows

James Tingley – Delta Prince Edward

Mary Lou MacFarlane – Rodd Hotels and Resorts

Margaret Somers – Delta Prince Edward

Kevin Murphy – Murphy Hospitality Group

Stewart MacIntosh – ACOA

Mary Hunter – Skills PEI

Chris Jones – Tourism PEI

Keith Hansen – Tourism PEI

Jeff Young – Immigration PEI

Leslie Swift – Ocean Acres Campground

Dan James – Kindred Spirits Inn and Cottages

Corryn Clemence – TIAPEI

MDB Insight

Trudy Parsons, Executive Vice-President, Project Lead; Chris Bandak, Executive Vice-President, Survey Design Lead; Clark Hoskin, Senior Consultant, Project Manager; Simon Webb, Consultant, Survey Analysis; Tehseen Rana, Consultant; Andrea Marriaga, Consultant; Tom McCormack, metroeconomics; Adam Morrison, President and CEO, Ontario Tourism Education Corporation (OTEC)



Executive Summary

Setting the Stage

Prince Edward Island's tourism industry is a proud, innovative, tenacious business sector that built a solid international travel brand and a consistent reputation for authentic, high-quality hospitality. Tourism employment has been steadily growing on PEI for more than 15 years. Unfortunately, the disruptions of the COVID pandemic interrupted that growth, with tourism employment dropping more than 14 percent in 2020 and only partially recovering in 2021. Looking over the horizon, tourism employment projections are very healthy, pointing to enormous gains in job opportunities by 2026, led by restaurants, conferences, and other hospitality businesses.

Tourism has a tremendous opportunity to reinvent itself to bring tourism workers back. Business operators and government policymakers have much to learn from the successes and failures of the last 24 months. Owners and managers have tried various tactics to recruit and retain employees, and many of these ideas are leading edge. Discussions around financial sustainability within the tourism industry merit deep consideration in order to secure long-term business viability and employment security.

The labour market as we knew it prior to the pandemic is no more. Systemic and structural challenges to the workforce have accelerated, and more power and control has been transferred to employees – the most important assets in a service-oriented tourism sector. Adaptation by businesses and government is essential to respond to the intensity and depth of the obstacles that face the industry.

Structural challenges to the workforce have accelerated, and more power and control has been transferred to employees – the most important assets in a service-oriented tourism sector.

This report strives to answer key questions about the future. It aims to reveal and document what we know and where we are and to highlight what is standing in our way to respond to priorities. This report seeks to define what needs to be done to position the sector for strong and sustainable growth. As a primary focus, securing the labour needed to meet tourism demand is of utmost importance.

Tourism Industry Association of Prince Edward Island (TIAPEI) Mandate

TIAPEI is a not-for-profit organization that was established in 1980 to be the voice of all Prince Edward Island tourism operators. TIAPEI promotes and advances the tourism industry on PEI through industry advocacy, training and education programs, and industry communications and engagement. TIAPEI strives for continued development and improvement of the tourism facilities and services offered to the public and for the creation of a wider interest in the tourism industry among the general public in PEI.

Project Purpose and Methodology

The purpose of this project was to convey an in-depth understanding of Prince Edward Island's tourism labour challenges and to develop a Tourism Workforce Action Plan for the Tourism Industry Association of Prince Edward Island. Even as the sector recovers from pandemic effects, many pre-existing challenges may return alongside new realities. A comprehensive tourism workforce action plan, with a

particular focus on tourism labour, is now more important than ever as the sector strives to collectively overcome existing and emerging hurdles. MDB Insight was retained by TIAPEI to lead this study in December 2021. The goal of the project was to deliver a research-based, stakeholder-informed action plan and report that provides:

Research

A review of COVID's impact on tourism in PEI and across Canada, including:

- Examining collected research on tourism employment issues, relevant research from other sources, and additional factors that affect tourism and its workforce.
- Understanding of what programs, strategies, data, and recruitment and retention best practices exist in PEI and elsewhere and how that knowledge can be expanded and applied to support the development of a tourism workforce action plan.
- Qualitative and quantitative primary research through a comprehensive engagement strategy, which included interviewing 95 PEI tourism operators, ensured the action plan is grounded not only in data but also in the lived experiences of local stakeholders, businesses, operators, and the labour force.

Analysis

The articulation of COVID's impact on the tourism sector over the past year, including:

- Comprehensive assessment of relevant occupations/sectors and sub-sectors relevant to the tourism plus projected labour demand looking out to 2026.
- Benefits and challenges generated by socio/economic circumstances such as housing, transportation, wages, benefits, and geographic demand, and funded programs, including Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) and Temporary Foreign Workers.

Strategy Development

Supporting and advancing the competitiveness, capacity, and sustainability of local tourism operators, and the broader tourism sector, is key, including:

- Developing relevant areas of strategic priority to achieve the overarching goal of an aligned labour market.
- Preparing a comprehensive, evidence-based action plan that offers tactical solutions identifies timelines, potential partners/supporters, and performance metrics to monitor outcomes and impact.

Key Findings

The following high-level research findings – based on feedback from PEI tourism operators – emerged from this study.

Desire for action

Several provincial and national reports have been produced related to tourism as a sector, focusing on the industry landscape, marketing and development, tourism workforce trends, human resource best practices, and other strategic initiatives. This report is the first study to address the tourism industry's specific workforce needs in the form of actionable recommendations.

Positive future

Detailed projections prepared for this study indicate that PEI tourism job opportunities will increase by 3% annually over the next four years. The gains projected reflect the recruitment challenges faced by tourism operators due to the expected full recovery and expansion of tourism between now and 2026.

Urgency

A comprehensive review of labour market information between 2020 to 2021 telegraphs the impending demand for workers. In 2021, job postings increased by 87%, with tourism-related job postings representing 23% of the total job postings in PEI. Those postings outline the soft skills needed: customer service, teamwork, communications skills, fast-paced setting, and flexibility.

Challenges of seasonality

Key tourism stakeholders believe PEI benefits from an attractive workplace environment, but business seasonality is a big challenge. As a result, many businesses simultaneously hire employees as the season begins and are then faced with having to end their employment as the season winds down.

Employer challenges

Competitive compensation and benefits, affordable housing and childcare, transportation, and concerns pertaining to quality of available training programs were significant workforce challenges facing employers. There is also a shortage of workers between the ages of 15-24, as well as those over 55.

Employers face significant workforce challenges: competitive compensation and benefits, affordable housing and childcare, transportation, and concerns pertaining to quality of available training programs.

Top priorities

Tourism business operators would like to utilize immigration and foreign workers to expand the workforce. In equal measure, they want to improve perceptions of tourism as a career and create effective employee retention plans. These priorities can be helped by leaning on the tourism industry's strengths, which include businesses' growing ability to adapt to a virtual environment, staff's ability to apply new knowledge, and ongoing government and non-profit employment support.

Government support

Many tourism operators feel that ongoing government aid is needed to support their businesses and their workers, but they are concerned about the impact these supports may have on public perception of the tourism industry. Some are worried that government funding of tourism reinforces a feeling of job insecurity among current and potential employees. On the ground, operators believe grants and cash flow assistance are needed for employee retention and recruitment incentives, as well as marketing and promotion.

Stewardship of the PEI brand

Tourism operators say they hope PEI can retain its image of possessing a safe and clean environment and a relatively inexpensive cost of living compared to other parts of the country. Ensuring that PEI's excellent tourism brand stays relevant and authentic is paramount.



Strategic Goals

Prince Edward Island has developed a unique, valuable tourism brand, and the integrity of that image is reliant upon quality experiences buttressed by a reliable, hospitable workforce. While the tourism sector's systemic challenges have been amplified by the pandemic, consumer demand for travel is turning around quickly, providing a beacon of hope for PEI's tourism businesses. However, the return of visitors has the potential to overwhelm an industry struggling to rebuild its workforce into a new normal. Operators remain optimistic that PEI is up for the challenge and that workforce challenges can be corrected, and the situation improved.

The recommendations in this report aim to change the narrative on perceptions of working in tourism by addressing specific obstacles to recruiting and retaining employees. They strive to strengthen capacity and support for businesses and organizations to rebuild the tourism workforce by communicating more effectively and placing more emphasis on considering worker's needs. The recommendations call for advocacy so that government programs, policies and protocols work in lockstep with the industry's commitment to competitive compensation and workplace supports.

Government programs, policies and protocols should work in lockstep with the industry's commitment to competitive compensation and workplace supports.

The collective abilities and desires of businesses, government, workers, and communities can be aligned to produce tangible outcomes. The recommendations promote a clearer, comprehensive, industry-driven response that encourages vigorous involvement and leadership across and among all industry stakeholders.

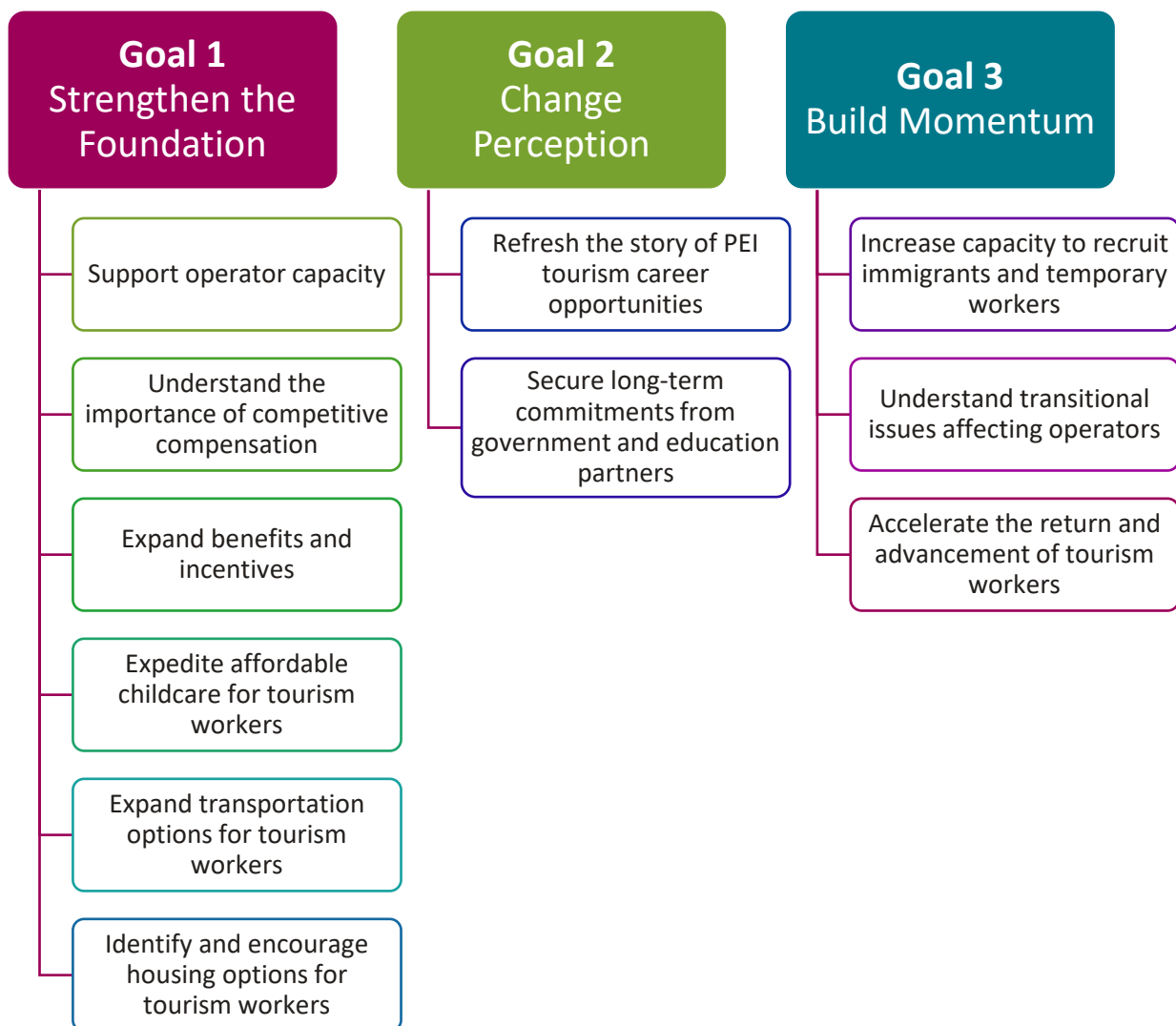
- **Goal 1: Strengthen the Foundation** - Support operator capacity, understand the importance of competitive compensation, benefits and incentives, and explore solutions to childcare, transit, and housing for tourism workers
- **Goal 2: Change Perception** - Refresh the story of career opportunities, secure long-term commitments.
- **Goal 3: Build Momentum** - Increase capacity to recruit workers, understand transitional issues, accelerate the return and advancement of workers

A large group of people, mostly older adults, are seated at long tables covered with red and white checkered tablecloths. They are inside a large white tent with a high ceiling, decorated with strings of warm white lights and a chandelier. The atmosphere is festive and social. A teal semi-transparent banner is overlaid across the bottom half of the image, containing the title text in white.

Strategic Goals and Action Plan

Strategic Goals

The primary deliverable of this project is the development of a three-year Tourism Workforce Action Plan for Prince Edward Island. The Action Plan has been designed to offer tangible and measurable goals, objectives and actions that will address the gaps, challenges, and opportunities emerging through the project consultation and research. The strategic recommendations and action plan will position the province, its regions, and the tourism and hospitality sector to be proactive and responsive in its approach to strengthening sector talent attraction, recruitment and retention.





1 Strengthen the Foundation



Goal 1: Strengthen the Foundation

Objective 1A: Support operator capacity

What We Heard: Economic sectors are made up of businesses that bring products and services to market. These businesses are the foundation of the sector and oftentimes key contributors to local jobs. To add further complexity for the tourism and hospitality sector, businesses face capacity issues impeding tourism operators to implement effective recruitment and retention practices. Tourism operators are missing opportunities to recruit employees. The majority of those we spoke to (78%) said that recruitment was the responsibility of the owner/manager, with only 11% of respondents having a human resources department. While 87% of operators agree there is value in implementing a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion strategy into their hiring practices, more direct supports are needed for employers to access and implement these programs. In terms of government-funded programs, nearly one-quarter of tourism operators had not accessed any funding resources. Potential solutions to workforce shortages (e.g., workers with multiple employers, gig economy considerations, temporary foreign workers, etc.) also increase the administrative burden.

Actions:

1. **Ensure smaller tourism operators have access to human resource management and staff development supports.**
 - a. Offer access to human resources support, such as an employer coaching service, through a third-party agency, industry association, or a trusted tourism business.

Suggestion: TIAPEI liaison staff could direct operators to resources, like how Propel ICT¹ assists start-ups. Employer coaching services may include one-on-one help, webinars and workshops on topics such as job descriptions and recruitment practices. Help in preparing grant and wage support applications may increase operator uptake in such programs. A directory of human

¹ Propel ICT, propelict.com

resource consultants, employment support networks, etc., would serve to make a direct link between those that need the services and those that provide the services.

- b. Maximize small business capacity to utilize grants and funding support initiatives through a concerted effort that provides guidance, clarity, and assistance to businesses that qualify.

Example: Leverage business-to-business services with a grant consulting firm offering writing services on behalf of small businesses or platforms such as Izzy.² Grant applications include wage subsidies applications, training and market expansion grants.

2. Support initiatives to empower operators to develop new and enhanced experiences to boost revenues and improve yields.

- a. Collaborate with Tourism PEI and other organizations to fulfill the goals and objectives of the province's tourism strategy.³

Examples: Of interest to retailers, the Perennia Buy Local Market Intelligence Report indicated that even with a 20% price premium for local strawberries, 80% of Nova Scotians would purchase them over non-local alternatives. Another example is hosting menu engineering training workshops that specifically focus on local food integration pricing strategies may be valuable for restaurant operators.

Objective 1B: Understand the importance of competitive compensation

What We Heard: Employers recognized that wages in the tourism industry need to increase to remain competitive. The province's minimum wage is \$13.70 per hour (effective April 1, 2022), and according to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, the living wage rate for Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, is much higher.⁴ When surveyed, responses were split between those who found it easier to offer competitive wages and those who found it difficult.

A seasonal completion bonus is currently available for students. The idea of a bonus system was proposed in the form of additional pay if employees hit other performance targets, such as attendance, punctuality, revenue, and customer service excellence.

It is recognized that smaller seasonal businesses often operate without services for bookkeeping, making it difficult to prepare the necessary documents and financials to support wage subsidy applications. This creates a barrier to actively participating in these available funding supports, which are often designed to support these small businesses.

Actions:

3. Create a phased strategy to enhance earning potential within the tourism industry, with a focus on competitive compensation.

- a. Develop an evidence-based earning strategy that improves the earning potential of workers within the tourism sector while managing the impact on tourism operators.

² Izzy, izzyplatform.com

³ Charting the Course of Tourism in PEI for the Next Two Years, princeedwardisland.ca

⁴ CCPA, policyalternatives.ca

Example: Small businesses like Cake & Loaf Bakery promote that they pay competitive compensation.⁵

4. **Educate tourism employers on competitive compensation and the longer-term benefits for employee attraction, recruitment, and retention.**
 - a. Create a concise, evidence-based information publication that directly addresses the business benefits when offering a competitive-compensation strategy for employees. Such publication may include a sample charter to which businesses can publicly commit to higher wages.

Example: In Ontario, a provincial network provides information on the benefits of becoming an employer who offers competitive compensation and hosts a website allowing prospective job applicants to search regionally by identified businesses.⁶

5. **Advocate for government wage rebates for businesses that commit to paying competitive compensation or bonuses.**
 - a. Create a communications/advocacy plan to seek financial support from levels of government.

Objective 1C: Expand benefits and incentives

What We Heard: Interviews of tourism operators reflected agreement that the development of a retention plan for the industry is a priority. This includes dedicating resources to recreating the image for tourism as a lifelong career instead of a temporary job. There is also a desire to address labour force issues and broaden employee benefits. Employee benefits funded by employers vary across Canada, according to a 2019 benchmarking report,⁷ with 49% of employers offering extended healthcare to hourly workers to supplement government plans. The tourism operator survey ranked the need for experienced tourism workers, affordable housing, soft skills, and childcare among the labour force issues of most importance.

Actions:

6. **Enhance information access to support tourism operators and employees to make informed choices about employee benefits**
 - a. Gain an evidence-based understanding of the range of employee benefits offered by PEI businesses and the interest in a shared strategy to improve this offering as part of a retention and recruitment priority.

Examples: Retirement savings, prescription drug coverage, vision care, dental, paramedical practitioners, travel insurance, life insurance, employee assistance programs, gym memberships, free access to employer amenities – golf, attractions, etc.

⁵ Cake & Loaf Bakery, cakeandloaf.ca

⁶ Ontario Living Wage Network, ontariolivingwage.ca

⁷ Asinta, [Benchmarking Employee Benefits in Canada](#), 2019

7. Provide an incentive guide to tourism operators that showcases employee incentive best practices and offer employer success stories

- a. Develop details about potential employee incentives, bonuses, discounts and perks to address specific labour force challenges and share with tourism operators

Examples: Contributing to employee childcare; matching student debt payments, employee discounts, commuting allowances, professional development, etc. Payscale.com's annual 2022 Compensation Best Practices Report⁸ sampled 4,225 respondents across Canada and the United States for analysis on employment compensation trends, incentive practices, and to be used as a baseline for competitive compensation packages. An employee bonus program can be geo-targeted to redirect money back into the local economy, using technology such as geo-fenced credit cards. The Tourism London "Stay a Little Longer" marketing campaign was created for tourists, but it could be adapted for workers.⁹

Objective 1D: Expedite affordable childcare for tourism workers

What We Heard: Tourism operators consider the lack of childcare spaces on PEI as a major obstacle to attracting tourism workers. When asked, 64% of tourism businesses are dissatisfied with the availability of childcare as a labour-force-related factor.

Actions:

8. Explore shared childcare services among clusters of tourism businesses.

- a. Work with existing daycare providers to expand capacity and operating hours
- b. Explore tourism business interest and capacity to work collaboratively to respond to worker childcare needs.
- c. Pilot the establishment of a shared daycare facility to accommodate employee childcare needs among these employers.

Example: Outdoor clothing retailer Patagonia identified that by providing on-site childcare facilities, they were able to increase the retention duration of their active workforce and additionally leverage this asset as an incentive to attract prospective employees.¹⁰

⁸ Payscale 2022 Compensation Best Practices Report, [payscale.com](https://www.payscale.com)

⁹ Tourism London, Stay a Little Longer Geo-targeted Visa, londontourism.ca

¹⁰ Patagonia, [patagonia.ca](https://www.patagonia.ca)

Objective 1E: Expand transportation options for tourism workers

What We Heard: Public transportation options are not sufficient, particularly in rural areas where many seasonal operations are located. The Province's Labour Market Needs Assessment specifically calls for transportation subsidies to enhance the local labour pool in PEI. Availability of transportation ranks among the top-ten important labour force issues among employers surveyed. Transit PEI runs service between island communities on weekdays, leaving a significant gap for those working weekend shifts.

Actions:

9. **Encourage Transit PEI to improve its schedules to facilitate the needs of tourism industry employees.**
 - a. Expand more frequent morning, evening, and weekend transit coverage to reflect business operating times and staff schedules.
10. **Explore opportunities with private transportation services.**
 - a. Consider partnerships with tour companies and the Kari ride-sharing service to facilitate workers' schedules and routes.

Examples: T3 Transit's existing shuttles could be leveraged to help tourism workers access jobs in more areas of the island.¹¹ Kari is a new ridesharing service that can provide service in most areas of PEI if booked in advance, as well as staff discounts.¹²

Objective 1F: Identify and encourage housing options for tourism workers

What We Heard: The lack of housing for seasonal tourism employees was considered the number one challenge for operators, with 83% of those surveyed being dissatisfied with the availability of worker accommodation. The issue is a problem in many tourism destinations, especially as more residents rent out their spare rooms via Airbnb or new residents buy properties formerly used as worker housing. Some municipalities are encouraging the development of worker accommodation in tourism destinations through policy change and incentives.

Actions:

11. **Explore worker accommodation partnerships with developers and residents**
 - a. Encourage tourism operators, individually or in partnership, to approach housing developers to secure long-term leases for accommodating employees in new builds.
 - b. Create a registry of residents willing to host tourism employees.

Example: Occupation Wild¹³ offers a centralized list of active hospitality jobs across North America which have accommodation built into the employment contract. Westmark Inn Dawson City, Yukon, offers subsidized staff accommodation available, on-shift meals included, and meal discounts when dining off-shift.

¹¹ T3 Transit, t3transit.ca

¹² Red Ride Inc. dba kari, meetkari.com

¹³ Occupation Wild – Westmark Inn Dawson City, occupationwild.com

12. Encourage tourism operators to add worker accommodation within their building footprint.

- a. Create an inventory of vacant rooms in existing tourist accommodators and rent them to other tourism businesses.

Example: Sun Peaks Grand Hotel & Conference Centre¹⁴ in Kamloops, British Columbia, borrowed practices from the oil & gas sector to create temporary, seasonal housing units to support seasonal staff who had difficulty securing accommodation while working for the hotel.

13. Advocate for local governments to support the development of worker accommodation.

- a. Adapt municipal policies to encourage the building of worker accommodation.

Example: Township of Muskoka Lakes in Ontario established an Employee Housing Grant to encourage employers to build housing for workers in a tourism destination with seasonal accommodation pressures.¹⁵

- b. Develop incentives for businesses to develop worker accommodation in tandem with other tourism uses.

Example: Pearle Hospitality's plan in Elora, Ontario, included an additional storey on its hotel development for worker accommodation.¹⁶



¹⁴ Go2HR Case Study - Sun Peaks Grand Hotel & Conference Centre, go2hr.ca

¹⁵ Township of Muskoka Lakes, engagemuskokalakes.ca

¹⁶ Pearle Hospitality news article, wellingtonadvertiser.com



2 Change Perception



Goal 2: Change Perception

Objective 2A: Refresh the story of PEI tourism career opportunities

What We Heard: Managing the reputation of the tourism industry was challenging during the pandemic, evidenced by 83% of tourism operators admitting that ‘managing perceptions of job security’ was difficult. As one employer said, reputation is paramount and has the potential to negatively impact PEI’s brand as a hospitality leader. Moving forward, tourism operators want to see the industry take control of its own narrative. They want to see PEI tourism as a growing industry, where wages and job stability have improved. Businesses seek a tangible shift in human resource practices so that PEI is recognized as a leader in tourism and a preferred employer, as compared to other sectors. Other industries could support tourism by acknowledging the positive impacts tourism has on the Island supply chain.

Actions:

14. Catalogue positive news in the tourism workforce and industry to inform confident, constructive messaging

- a. Periodically survey the tourism industry about job opportunities, wage increases, expanded benefits and incentives, new full-time, year-round positions, innovative approaches to human resources management, etc.
- b. Understand the supply-chain implications of the tourism industry and communicate how tourism supports other sectors and workers of the economy.

Examples: Integrate the positive news of the tourism industry into Initiative 3 (Communicate Strategy and Improve Stakeholder Collaboration) and Initiative 4 (Collect and Share Market and Resident Sentiment Research) of the PEI Tourism Strategy.¹⁷ In collaboration, TAIPEI and TPEI could hold workshops through the RTAs to ensure both strategies are communicated and create additional ways of supporting the industry. New and innovative PEI tourism products and approaches should be highlighted by hosting more industry events and training.

¹⁷ PEI Tourism, Charting the Course of Tourism in PEI for the Next Two Years, princeedwardisland.ca

15. Develop a communications plan to promote the positive narrative of PEI tourism careers

- a. Be the advocate for the tourism sector through engagement with public, private and non-profit sectors, utilizing social media and news media to broaden message distribution.

Example: Hospitality Rising¹⁸ is a recruitment campaign designed to attract new talent to the United Kingdom's tourism and accommodation sector. The multi-channel partnership campaign highlights operations and employment opportunities to backfill a large volume of vacancies.

16. Create a workforce ambassador / speaker program

- a. Recruit volunteers among established and articulate tourism owners, managers, and employees to speak with community groups, service clubs, newcomer groups, all levels of government, school boards, educators, other organizations, etc. These ambassadors can also utilize their own social media following to keep the sector dialogue current and broadly shared.

Example: The city of Cincinnati has modified the Certified Tourism Ambassador Program¹⁹ curriculum to create an effective team of Cincy USA Tourism Ambassadors.²⁰

17. Encourage expansion of career exploration opportunities in collaboration with school boards

- a. Encourage student integrated learning through familiarization tours with employers, informing curriculum, promoting co-op student placements, engaging in career fairs, contributing to extracurricular hospitality training, etc.

Example: School boards can partner with tourism operators to develop Try-a-Trade® Take Out packages for classroom hospitality training.²¹ Developed by Skills Canada Nova Scotia,²² the educational packages are integrated into classrooms and encourage students to try out and learn more about a skilled trade, including those in the hospitality sector.

- b. Establish hands-on learning opportunities and cooperative education credits within secondary schools aligned with tourism workforce gaps, including food handling certificates, kitchen skills, first aid, customer service, and other hospitality subjects, to position students for employment.

Examples: The Academy Diploma Program coordinated by PEI's Department of Education and Early Childhood Development offers a Travel and Tourism program at Kensington Intermediate Senior High.²³ In Ontario, the Specialist High Skills Major program allows students to gain credits toward their Ontario Secondary School Diploma and focus their learning on a specific economic sector at the same time.²⁴

¹⁸ Hospitality Rising, hospitalityrising.org

¹⁹ Certified Tourism Ambassador Program, ctanetwork.com

²⁰ Cincy USA Tourism Ambassadors, cincyusa.com

²¹ SkillsCanada Nova Scotia Partnership Packahe, skillsns.ca

²² Skills Canada Nova Scotia, skillsns.ca

²³ ACP, adppe.weebly.com

²⁴ Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, ontario.ca

Objective 2B: Secure long-term commitments from government and education partners

What We Heard: Tourism operators told us they look to the provincial and federal funding agencies – and TIAPEI – for help and guidance on their labour force needs, and 67% are satisfied generally with government and non-profit employment support. However, business owners see weaknesses in how some programs operate, specifically when the timing of announcements and deadlines for programs fail to provide tourism operators with the direction or confidence to hire workers and prepare for the tourism season. Longstanding barriers to entry such as clawbacks of benefits for potential workers need to be addressed. Sometimes, the objectives of government policies and education programs unintentionally clash with the aims of the tourism industry to improve and innovate. There is a desire for serious discussion on specific objectives that could be addressed with policymakers.

Actions:

18. Advocate for financial and policy commitments from senior levels of government

- a. Advocate for change in government programs and policies to ensure relevance and consistency, to encourage a reliable and resilient workforce and to boost the re-entry of people into the labour force.
- b. Work with program planners to adapt application process for ease of understanding, longer application and funding horizons, and better communications.

19. Secure multi-year education program commitments for workforce training, recruitment, and subsidies

- a. Extend and secure long-term training partnerships between TIAPEI and other organizations, such as Holland College, etc., to allow for better communication of training opportunities and higher student intakes and graduation rates.





3 Build Momentum

Goal 3: Build Momentum

Objective 3A: Increase capacity to recruit immigrants and temporary workers

What We Heard: Programs are in place to help tourism operators recruit full-time, non-seasonal employees from offshore. Some representatives of the industry thought funding and support should be put in place to help operators access existing programs and to assist them with paperwork challenges. Given the seasonal nature of tourism in PEI, operators have observed the seasonal offshore workers recruited by the agricultural and seafood industries through federal government programs.

Actions:

20. Help tourism operators understand and navigate the entire process for international workforce recruitment and hosting

- a. Offer small business assistance and administrative supports to increase access to the Atlantic Immigration Program or the Skilled Workers Outside Canada Program through a third-party agency or industry association or a trusted tourism business.
- b. Advocate for process streamlining and timely approvals for the offshore worker programs.
- c. Develop an international tourism worker recruitment strategy

Examples: By collaborating with Immigrant & Refugee Services Association PEI,²⁵ TIAPEI and employers may find help with the international workforce. British Columbia offers a database of licensed recruiters who support business with the administrative processes related to processing applications for foreign workers.²⁶ A pilot in Australia focuses on labour from Pacific countries.²⁷

21. Advocate for a Seasonal Tourism Worker Program to source employees from offshore

- a. Advocate the federal government for the replication of the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program in PEI for the 2023 tourism season.

The Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program²⁸ (SAWP) is available to farmers in PEI, but the model could be used for tourism businesses, as well. The Prince Edward Island Federation of Agriculture has been investigating how best to improve temporary foreign worker retention and satisfaction on PEI.²⁹ By collaborating with PEIFA, TIAPEI may find mutual goals and objectives with the farmers. It would be wise to review the work completed by the Cooper Institute³⁰ in PEI. To see how businesses can leverage SAWP, explore the services and programs of F.A.R.M.S.,³¹ a farmer-led organization that oversees coordination of SAWP in Ontario. F.A.R.M.S. has set up its own travel agency to coordinate flights for foreign workers.

²⁵ IRSA, irsapei.ca

²⁶ British Columbia Licensed Foreign Worker Recruiters, gov.bc.ca

²⁷ Australian Government, austrade.gov.au

²⁸ Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program, canada.ca

²⁹ Investigating the Needs of Migrant Workers in Agriculture Working in PEI, peifa.ca

³⁰ Cooper Institute's Work for Migrant Workers, cooperinstitute.ca

³¹ Foreign Agricultural Resource Management Services, farmsontario.ca

Objective 3B: Understand transitional issues affecting operators

What We Heard: Over half of surveyed PEI tourism businesses are well-established, being in business for more than ten years. However, the tourism industry has a large share of small operators. About 31% of restaurants and 32.5% of accommodations have less than ten employees, suggesting they are smaller tourism businesses, in some cases sole proprietors.³² Tourism stakeholders are cognizant of the challenges of smaller operators and expect there to be attrition in the ranks over the coming years. They would like the industry to be proactive in addressing an expected exodus of small operators. Tourism operators also hope to see the year-round tourism industry grow. Extending the season makes employment in the tourism sector more appealing. PEI's 2022-23 Tourism Strategy³³ specifically addresses seasonality, including "improve winter and shoulder season product." In lieu of an expanded season, operators agree they must ramp up communication between businesses and employees during the off season will keep them engaged with the industry.

22. Support smaller operators with information about business transition opportunities

- a. Support succession planning efforts to support business transition to new owners or efficiencies that support business continuation.

Examples: PEI's Future Farmer Program³⁴ supports new farmers to improve the probability that they establish or continue profitable and sustainable commercial farm businesses. Ontario's Business Redesign Framework program offers a self-diagnostic assessment for small and medium-sized business owners/leaders to look within their internal operations to identify areas for improvement and/or respond to change. Regional Tourism Organization 7 (located in Ontario) helped facilitate a business succession matching program to pair entrepreneurs to existing tourism businesses.³⁵ Within the first three years, 15 businesses successfully transitioned ownership because of the succession matching program allowing their tourism businesses to remain within the region.³⁶

- b. Explore opportunities to connect newcomers and other potential buyers with small tourism operators interested in selling or retiring.

Examples: According to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada,³⁷ immigrants represent 50% of restaurant business owners (self-employed persons with paid staff) in Canada. Encourage tourism operations to provide their information to the PEI Business for Sale database, which is targeted to newcomers interested in purchasing an existing business in PEI.³⁸

³² EMSI, Industries by Business Location Size, PEI, June 2021.

³³ Prince Edward Island 2022-23 Tourism Strategy, princeedwardisland.ca

³⁴ Future Farmer Program, princeedwardisland.ca

³⁵ Succession Matching, successionmatching.com

³⁶ RTO7 Report, rto7.ca

³⁷ Statistics Canada, 2016, canada.ca

³⁸ Prince Edward Island Business for Sale Buyer Search, peibusinessesforsale.com

23. Recognize the benefits of seasonal expansion for tourism workforce opportunities

- a. Collaborate with Tourism PEI and other organizations to fulfill the goals and objectives of the province's tourism strategy related to shoulder season and off-peak tourism.
- b. Educate the tourism industry of the positive links between expanding the tourism season and retaining and recruiting employees.

Examples: In Search of Sarah Travel Blog: "8 convincing reasons to visit PEI during the winter,"³⁹ Destination Canada: "Embrace winter like a local on Prince Edward Island."⁴⁰ Tourism Industry Association of Canada "Elevating Canadian Experiences Winter & Culinary National Program" offers toolkits, guidelines and tourism resources.⁴¹

Objective 3C: Accelerate the return and advancement of tourism workers

What We Heard: Tourism businesses explained how crucial the recruitment of new workers is to sustaining industry success. Replenishing the workforce with Next Generation workers is a priority.⁴² PEI's tourism stakeholders said businesses would need to be flexible and responsive to attract former tourism workers back to the sector. Training and communication are priorities, especially around enhanced job stability, transferability of hospitality skills, and the image of the sector. Destinations across Canada are implementing programs to help workers and employers through skills enhancements. The Tourism & Hospitality Emergency Recovery (THER) program plans to support tourism businesses in the recovery of the sector's workforce. Diverse tools, resources, data, and technology will be needed to support the different stages of recovery, which is why helping tourism operators is essential to support job seekers.

24. Ensure current, real-time data and labour market information is in place to support the recovery

- a. Collect, analyze, and distribute relevant local labour market information to inform employer decision-making, attraction, retention, and recruitment efforts.

Example: To expedite initial employment decisions, leverage data collected/provided by partners or industry professionals such as Tourism HR Canada to ensure relevant analytical tourism data trends are incorporated into operational planning practices.

- b. Investigate potential programs and supports available to operators to adopt improved infrastructure connectivity and technology integration.
- c. Coordinate sector training needs within changing market demand.

Example: The Hard to Fill Skills pilot program launched in 2022 works to support and pair international skilled labour with specific occupational areas needed across the province of Saskatchewan.⁴³

³⁹ In Search of Sarah, January 2022, insearchofsarah.com

⁴⁰ Destination Canada, 2017, uk-keepexploring.canada.travel

⁴¹ Tourism Industry Association of Canada, tiac-aitc.ca

⁴² Tourism HR Canada, tourismhr.ca

⁴³ International Skilled Worker Hard-to-Fill Skills Pilot, saskatchewan.ca

25. Create a platform for tourism operators to engage and support their employees

- a. Facilitate virtual collaboration for job seekers and employment service providers.

Example: British Columbia's tourism and hospitality human resource association offers suggestions for fostering employee engagement during a crisis, including closed Facebook groups, weekly newsletter emails, video drop-in calls, surprise deliveries to an employee's home (pizza, flowers).⁴⁴

- b. Explore programs and tools to aid job seekers to upskill, skills-match, find employment, plug into local employment supports, or explore new communities and labour markets.

Example: Use the resources available through Future Skills Centre to leverage upskilling and employment supports available to assist with mitigating tourism labour shortages.⁴⁵
In PEI, 18 pilot projects have already been approved.



⁴⁴ Fostering Employee Engagement During a Time of Crisis, go2hr.ca

⁴⁵ Future Skills Centre – Tourism Hospitality Emergency Recovery (THER), fsc-ccf.ca

A photograph of a beach landscape at sunset. The sky is filled with vibrant, horizontal bands of orange, red, and purple clouds. The foreground shows a sand dune with several clumps of tall, thin beach grasses. The sand is light-colored and shows some ripples. The overall scene is peaceful and scenic.

Implementation

Implementation

The implementation of the Tourism Workforce Action Plan is summarized into three timelines:

Short (S) = 3 to 6 months, Medium (M) = 6 to 18 months, Long (L) = 1.5 to 3 years

Goal 1: Strengthen the Foundation

Objective		Action	S	M	L
1A	Support operator capacity	1 Ensure smaller tourism operators have access to human resource management and staff development supports	✓		
		2 Support initiatives to empower operators to develop new and enhanced experiences to boost revenues and improve yields		✓	
1B	Understand the importance of competitive compensation	3 Create a phased strategy to enhance earning potential within the tourism industry, with a focus on competitive compensation	✓		
		4 Educate tourism employers on competitive compensation and the longer-term benefits for employee attraction, recruitment, and retention		✓	
		5 Advocate for government wage rebates for businesses that commit to paying competitive compensation or bonuses			✓
1C	Expand benefits and incentives	6 Enhance information access to support tourism operators and employees to make informed choices about employee benefits	✓		
		7 Provide an incentive guide to tourism operators that showcases employee incentive best practices and offer employer success stories		✓	
1D	Expedite affordable childcare for tourism workers	8 Explore shared childcare services among clusters of tourism businesses		✓	
1E	Expand transportation options for tourism workers	9 Encourage Transit PEI to improve its schedules to facilitate the needs of tourism industry employees			✓
		10 Explore opportunities with private transportation services		✓	
1F	Identify and encourage housing options for tourism workers	11 Explore worker accommodation partnerships with developers and residents	✓		
		12 Encourage tourism operators to add worker accommodation within their building footprint		✓	
		13 Advocate for local governments to support the development of worker accommodation			✓

Goal 2: Change Perception

Objective		Action		S	M	L
2A	Refresh the story of PEI tourism career opportunities	14	Catalogue positive news in the tourism workforce and industry to inform confident, constructive messaging	✓		
		15	Develop a communications plan to promote the positive narrative of PEI tourism careers	✓		
		16	Create a workforce ambassador / speaker program		✓	
		17	Encourage expansion of career exploration opportunities in collaboration with school boards		✓	
2B	Secure long-term commitments from government and education partners	18	Advocate for financial and policy commitments from senior levels of government		✓	
		19	Secure multi-year education program commitments for workforce training, recruitment, and subsidies			✓

Goal 3: Build Momentum

Objective		Action		S	M	L
3A	Increase capacity to recruit immigrants and temporary workers	20	Help tourism operators understand and navigate the entire process for international workforce recruitment and hosting		✓	
		21	Advocate for a Seasonal Tourism Worker Program to source employees from offshore			✓
3B	Understand transitional issues affecting operators	22	Support smaller operators with information about business transition opportunities	✓		
		23	Recognize the benefits of seasonal expansion for tourism workforce opportunities		✓	
3C	Accelerate the return and advancement of tourism workers	24	Ensure current, real-time data and labour market information is in place to support the recovery		✓	
		25	Create a platform for tourism operators to engage and support their employees		✓	

