National Guidelines

For Culinary Tourism Strategy Development in Rural and Remote Destinations

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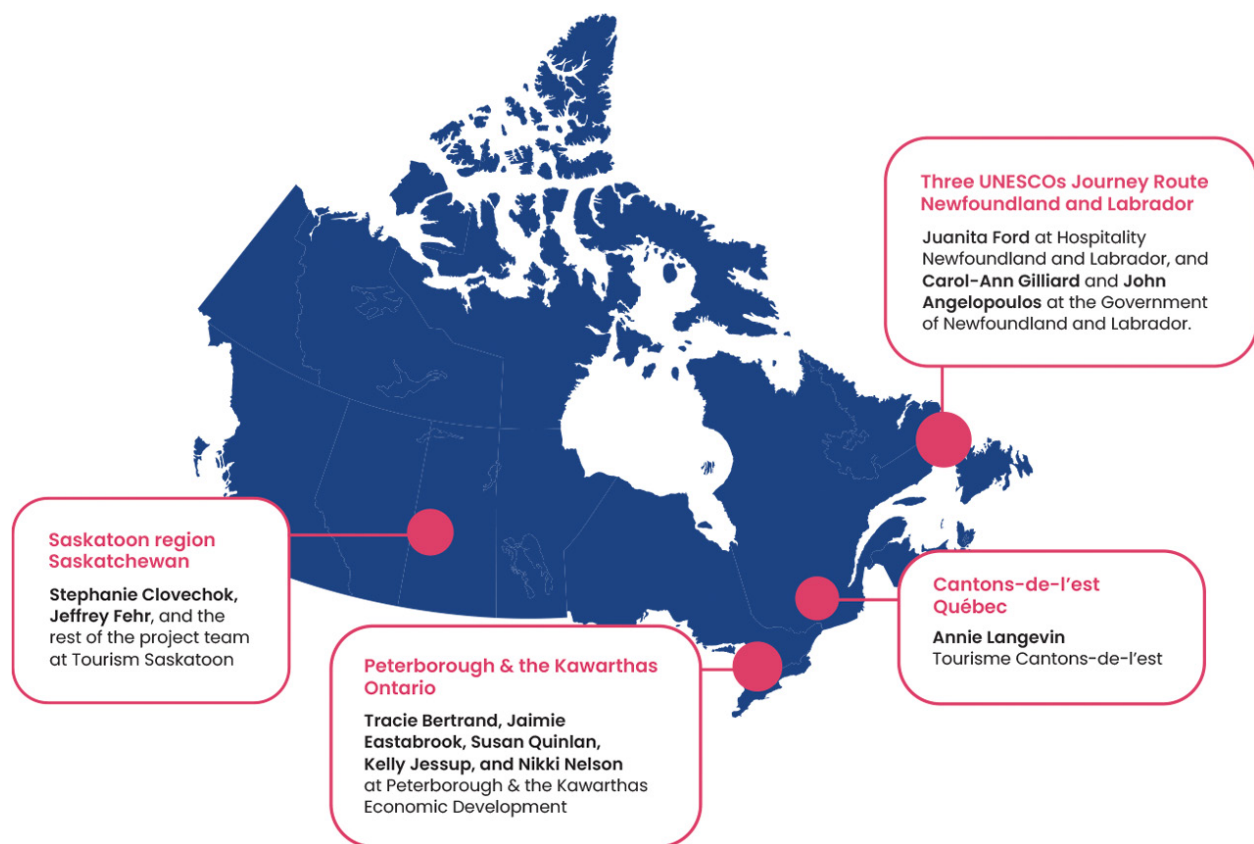
Culinary Tourism Strategy Development

Guidelines

Acknowledging all First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples who were here before us, as well as those who live with us now, and the seven generations to come, is the starting place for all tourism development work in Canada. As Indigenous peoples have done since time immemorial, it is the responsibility of all to be stewards and caretakers of the lands and waters of the place they call home, and to respect the cultures, ceremonies, and traditions of all who reside there.

Indigenous foods and foodways are an integral part of tourism in Canada and Indigenous culinary products and experiences will continue to elevate the tourism landscape across Canada in the years to come. Through the combined efforts of several organizations, including the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada, Indigenous Culinary of Associated Nations, and provincial and territorial industry organizations, along with Indigenous tourism businesses, Indigenous culinary tourism is strengthening Canada's value proposition.

The Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAC), with funding from the Government of Canada's *Canadian Experiences Fund*, worked with the Culinary Tourism Alliance (CTA) from 2019 to 2021 to develop the national guidelines for rural and remote destinations as part of the *Elevating Canadian Experiences Program*.

The CTA worked alongside municipal and provincial partners to co-develop four distinct and context-specific strategies to grow culinary tourism in four destinations. Across the four pilot destinations, the CTA formed four distinct teams to facilitate the strategy development processes. Importantly, each culinary tourism strategy was co-developed with tourism teams from the destination and employed a community-based participatory research approach. The guidelines would not have been possible without the dedication, energy, and efforts of the destination development teams at the four strategy development pilot destinations:

Three UNESCOs Journey Route Newfoundland and Labrador

Juanita Ford at Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador, and **Carol-Ann Gilliard** and **John Angelopoulos** at the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Saskatoon region Saskatchewan

Stephanie Clovechok, Jeffrey Fehr, and the rest of the project team at Tourism Saskatoon

Cantons-de-l'est Québec

Annie Langevin Tourisme Cantons-de-l'est

Peterborough & the Kawarthas Ontario

Tracie Bertrand, Jaimie Eastabrook, Susan Quinlan, Kelly Jessup, and Nikki Nelson at Peterborough & the Kawarthas Economic Development

Additionally, the Alliance de l'industrie touristique du Québec, Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador, the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario, and Tourism Saskatchewan were key partners in facilitating the connections with each regional partner and supporting the pilot process.

Before the start of the four pilot projects, the CTA conducted desk research into culinary tourism strategy development processes. This involved researching culinary tourism strategies or plans developed on or after 2015. A total of 16 culinary tourism strategies were analysed, these were focussed on rural and remote destinations and included a mix of six Canadian and 10 international examples. As part of this scan of methodologies, the CTA also referred to the United Nations World Tourism *Organization's Guidelines for the Development of Gastronomy Tourism (2019)*.

The resulting guidelines are informed by the above-mentioned research and by the methods, processes, activities, and learnings from the four culinary tourism strategy development pilots. Through each of the pilots the CTA used developmental evaluation to follow learnings and adjust each pilot, and ultimately to inform these guidelines. The developmental evaluation approach for the pilot was facilitated by Camilo Montoya-Guevara at the Culinary Tourism Alliance with support from Walter Jamieson, PhD. Adjunct Professor, Hospitality and Tourism Management, Ryerson University. Thank you!

Finally, this work would not have been possible without the combined time, energy, and effort of Connie Trombino and Vince Accardi at the Tourism Industry Association of Canada.

Culinary Tourism Alliance

The national guidelines were developed by a team at the Culinary Tourism Alliance, including Trevor Jonas Benson, Camilo Montoya-Guevara, and Caroline Morrow.

They were informed by learnings that came out of a pilot process and the combined experience of several additional individuals, including Martin Lacelle, James Arteaga, and Valerie Keast.

The Culinary Tourism Alliance is a not-for-profit industry organization dedicated to bridging the gap between the food & drink and tourism industries.

02 Using the Guidelines

Culinary Tourism Strategy Development

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The national guidelines have been developed to guide destination developers in rural and remote destinations in the process of preparing for, researching, and planning a culinary tourism strategy.

The guidelines are structured into four main components that can be used chronologically or as independent pieces. The components of the guidelines are guides to help you in *assessing your readiness, setting goals and objectives, approaching strategy development, developing your culinary tourism strategy,* and *planning for implementation.*

The contents of each component are not exhaustive nor prescriptive. Rather, the guidelines are a collection of learnings, good practices, and suggestions that you can leverage to develop your culinary tourism strategy.

As you work your way through the guidelines, keep your local context, intentions for culinary tourism development, the needs of your stakeholders, and previous tourism development work top of mind. Rural and remote destinations have the unique opportunity to leverage their unique settings and landscapes, healthy natural environments, rich histories and cultural heritage, agricultural traditions, and diverse communities of Indigenous Peoples, historic settler, and newcomers that live or have historically lived in the destination to grow culinary tourism.

A range of resources are included in *references & resources* to support you in understanding and pursuing culinary tourism strategy development.

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Timing

There is never a perfect time to proceed with the development of your culinary tourism strategy. No matter when you begin and end the process, there will be factors beyond your control that will affect it. These will influence when the research takes place, who you engage, what methods you use, how far you plan ahead, and ultimately, the strategies that you decide to pursue.

Times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, only add to the impacts that external factors can have on strategy development. It is then important for you to anticipate as many of these as possible before you begin the process. Equally important is that you begin the process if you are ready, despite external factors. Having a plan for making food & drink a meaningful part of every visitor experience can help you to respond to change, build resilience in your destination, and empower your stakeholders. The key is to build flexibility into your methodology and process, so that you can be responsive to your environment, including the needs of tourism stakeholders in your destination.

Is it the right time for you to proceed with the development of a culinary tourism strategy?

Alignment

Culinary tourism, like any form of niche tourism, does not exist in a vacuum and should not be perceived as *the* solution for a destination working to develop and grow. Food & drink products and experiences are means to attract visitors and elevate the visitor experience. They can also be used to exceed the expectations of visitors motivated to come to your destination for other reasons.

Whether food & drink are your primary or secondary focus, it can be part of a more integrated approach to destination development, marketing, and stewardship. Put differently, your culinary tourism strategy may serve to refresh, supplement, or complement current, past or future tourism strategies.

How does growing culinary tourism align with your destination development plans?

Investment

Regardless of when you begin to develop your strategy, and whether it will become part of, or inspire a broader destination development plan, it is very important that you and your tourism stakeholders are invested in the process. You will need resources to develop your strategy, including time, energy, and effort. You will also need to ensure that those stakeholders who are best positioned to contribute to the strategy development process—and benefit from its implementation—are interested, willing, and able to support its development.

> *Stakeholder insights, input, and feedback are invaluable resources to you, and the future of culinary tourism in your destination will depend on whether key stakeholders were listened to and see themselves in the final strategy.*

Significant investment will also be required to implement your strategy, and it is not expected that you are the sole source, so it is important to connect with strategic partners before, during, and after the strategy development process. Culinary tourism growth and development is a collaborative effort that requires ongoing investment from a breadth and diversity of actors.

Are you and your stakeholders ready to invest in culinary tourism development?

Ecosystem

By definition, an ecosystem is a community that is made up of diverse actors interacting with their shared physical environment, and this is defined by a specific geographic area.

Considering that food & drink products and experiences are the manifestation of a community of stakeholders that have come together to celebrate their foodways with visitors to their place, it is both constructive and important to think of your culinary tourism strategy as the product of a tourism ecosystem.

> *Foodways address who, what, where, when, why, and how food becomes part of the fabric of a community. They shed light on the physical, social, cultural, economic, and spiritual factors that inform their experience of food.*
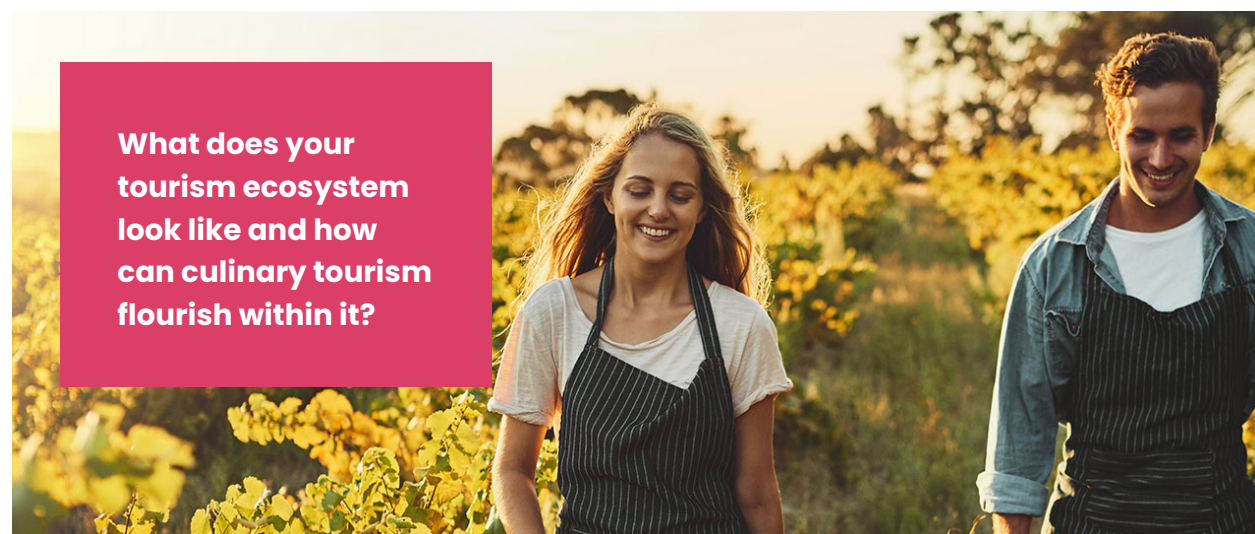
In other words, your culinary tourism strategy needs to be situated within a context that includes the economy, society, and environment. Each of these areas are full of intangible and tangible assets you can leverage during the development of a culinary tourism strategy that is unique to your destination.

It is important to think about how cultures are currently and have been connected to your destination through food. Perhaps there are Indigenous-led projects that connect individuals to traditional territories and ingredients, or perhaps the rural area has a long history of agricultural production. With this in mind, there is a breadth and diversity of culinary tourism stakeholders, including individuals, businesses, and organizations that operate with your tourism ecosystem and need to be mobilized as part of your strategy development process.

Taking a whole systems approach to culinary tourism strategy development better positions you to connect your visitors to the rich food histories, heritage, cultures of your destination, and most importantly, to the people who bring these all to life through their traditions, practices, and stories. This will also help you build a strategy for culinary tourism development that is grounded on the amazing landscapes, buildings, and businesses that define your destination.

Each and every actor within your tourism ecosystem has a unique combination of capital, ranging from experiential and intellectual to financial and material, and everything in between. Your willingness to identify and leverage the pool of capital within your destination, in a responsible manner and to the benefit of all involved, will result in the development of a culinary tourism strategy that is greater than its parts.

What does your tourism ecosystem look like and how can culinary tourism flourish within it?

The ecosystem from which your culinary tourism strategy will take shape:

The ecosystem from which your culinary tourism strategy will take shape includes:

The Environment

All of those living and non-living elements and resources that you have the privilege of working with and the responsibility of protecting and regenerating in your role as a destination steward.

Government

Any local, Indigenous, regional, provincial or territorial government body that could inform, influence, and support culinary tourism development.

All of Industry

All those businesses involved in the visitor economy, including the breadth and diversity of businesses that have the potential to directly connect to your visitors through food; specifically, accommodations, attractions, beverage producers, cooking schools, farmers' and public markets, farmers and food producers, festivals and events, foodservice operators, retailers, and tour operators.

Your Broader Community

Every individual or organization that could benefit from or be affected by culinary tourism development, from Indigenous Peoples who, since time immemorial, have been stewards of the lands and waters upon which your strategy is being developed, to historic settler communities who molded your destination, to newcomers who have chosen to call your destination home and have so much to contribute.

The Destination and its Stewards

The unique combination of elements that you market to your prospective visitors, including places, spaces, products, activities, and experiences, along with all of those individuals and organizations responsible for managing these elements.

Your Organization

Anyone and everyone who may inform your strategy or be held responsible for its implementation.

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Goals

There are many reasons why you may choose to undertake a culinary tourism strategy development process, from increasing visitation to providing more meaningful and multisensory experiences to visitors.

Do not proceed with the development of a strategy until those who will lead the process have a shared understanding of what they expect to get out of it. A good place to start is with setting clear goals. Goals set expectations around the future state that is to be achieved. Because they are broader in scope, they tend to be difficult to measure. For example, you may have identified overarching goals for your strategy development project such as *the establishment of a foundation for growing culinary tourism* or *the mobilization of industry around a shared vision for culinary tourism*.

A trick for goal setting is to ask yourself, what do I want to be celebrating with others at the end of the strategy development process?

What are you trying to achieve through the development of a culinary tourism strategy?

Objectives

Objectives are clear statements that should inform your strategy development work. When agreed upon at the onset, these will greatly assist you in scoping the entire process. Put simply, objectives will guide actions that will collectively achieve your goals. The language of S.M.A.R.T. objectives is used across several industries because of how simple it is to understand and use as criteria for both setting and assessing objectives.

While there is no universally accepted breakdown of the letters that make up the term, the following has been generally accepted and adapted over time:

Specific

Measurable

Achievable

Relevant

Time-bound

Note, objectives can be process-oriented, and unique to the activities that will be taking place over the course of your strategy development process, or they can be outcome-based and focussed on the result that will be achieved as an effect of implementing your strategy research and development activities, or a mix of both. Additionally, because your objectives should be "measurable" it is important to think of indicators that will allow you to measure their success.

A trick for coming up with S.M.A.R.T. objectives is to add "To" before the action in each objective statement. Examples of objectives include the following:

- *To inventory culinary tourism stakeholders across the region*
- *To identify opportunities for new product development*
- *To garner partner interest in and willingness to support*

What statements are you going to use to guide your work, keep you on track, and reflect upon at the end of your strategy development process?

Outcomes

You have decided to pursue the development of a culinary tourism strategy for specific reasons, and you have expectations that the process will yield specific outcomes. This means it is both fair and important to identify anticipated outcomes for your strategy development process.

Outcomes are clear statements of the changes you expect to take place over the course of your strategy development process and as a result of your strategy development efforts. They are what you are working towards in the immediate term, and as they are produced, you will gain confidence that you are heading in the right direction.

A trick to identifying outcomes is to think of the change you want to see take place through the implementation of your strategy. Examples of outcomes statements include the following:

- *Increased understanding of the culinary tourism landscape*
- *Stronger network of culinary tourism stakeholders*
- *Increased clarity around how to integrate food & drink into the overall tourism experience*

Your outcomes may be something you report back on to key stakeholders, including partners and funders. However, there is no guarantee that anticipated outcomes will be produced; so you need to practice honest reflection throughout your strategy development process and make decisions and adjustments on the direction of your strategy and the identified outcomes.

What changes are going to take place as a result of developing your culinary tourism strategy?

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Opportunities

As you begin the process of developing your rural or remote destination's culinary tourism strategy, you'll have the opportunity to:
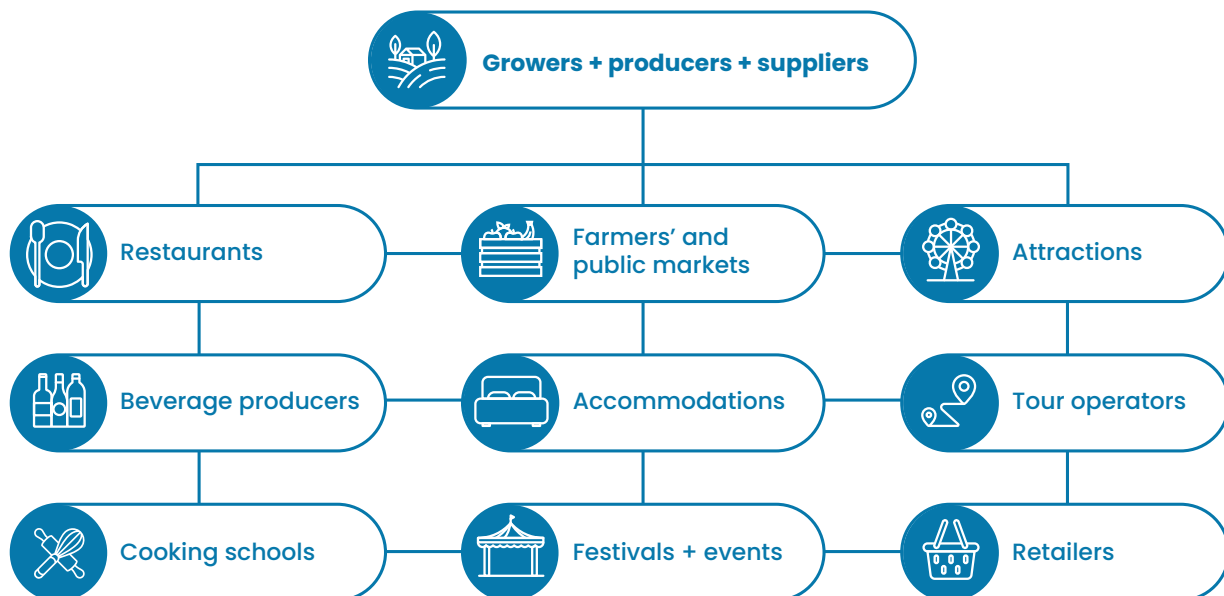
- *Engage a diversity of stakeholders and collaborate across a range of food & drink, tourism, and economic development organizations.*

- *Establish a shared understanding of destination identity across the stakeholders and communities in the region.*

- *Build capacity amongst industry, whether it is to inspire innovation or to create new products or experiences.*

- *Share strategy research with those that contribute to the strategy development.*

- *Identify your current visitor markets and how culinary tourism can be used to appeal to them.*

- *Make a plan to reach new visitor markets through culinary tourism.*

What types of opportunities could come from developing your culinary tourism strategy?

Importantly, part of the opportunity and responsibility of culinary tourism development is to support industry and communities to understand what culinary tourism is, what it means for your destination, and the role they can play in contributing to its development. This type of capacity-building work and engagement with industry and communities helps inform the direction of development and secure buy-in for the strategy.

Culinary tourism strategy development can also support tourism development initiatives. In other words, you can actively build your culinary tourism strategy so that it aligns with your organization and partners' past and ongoing destination development efforts.

Culinary Tourism Value Chain

Growers + producers + suppliers

Restaurants

Farmers' and public markets

Attractions

Beverage producers

Accommodations

Tour operators

Cooking schools

Festivals + events

Retailers

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Approaches

Opportunities across the development of your strategy will benefit from the right approach. Defining the approach to your strategy development process ensures that you and your team have a clear direction for how the overall project will be caried out in the context of your destination.

There are a number of strategy development approaches to draw from and customize, some examples include:

Approaches	Description
Community-based participatory research	This approach focusses on active participation by the project team and the communities across the project. For culinary tourism strategy development it means collaboratively building the strategy methodology with partners, if being pursued in partnership, and engaging with communities and industry as active contributors to the research that will inform the resulting strategy's priorities and way forward.
Collective awareness and capacity-building	A main focus is to build awareness about a specific topic or initiative among a range of stakeholders. This approach leans on networks and collaborative solutions for research and strategy development. Capacity-building is a main focus and can include workshops on culinary tourism and partnership development sessions, among others.
Transparent and participatory governance	Grounded in empowering stakeholders to participate in public decision-making. This approach is often used in political contexts and to improve public accountability.[1] Within the context of culinary tourism, it points to collective decision-making processes and collaborative strategy development.

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1 https://www.civicus.org/index.php/es/centro-de-medios/recursos/manuales/611-participatory-governance-toolkit

Selecting Your Approach

There is no specific approach that is best suited for culinary tourism strategy development. In destination development, there are rarely any "one-size-fits-all" solutions, and the same is true when considering what approach fits your environmental, political, social, and cultural contexts. Regardless of the specific approach, or mix of approaches, that you choose to adopt or adapt for the development of your strategy, it is important that you ensure your approach facilitates engagement with the diversity of stakeholders in your destination. This includes opportunities for active participation in identifying assets and priorities, building awareness, and building capacity across your project.

It is equally important to actively consider the goal and objectives of your culinary tourism strategy when defining your approach. In other words, ask yourself why you, your team, and your partners are undertaking this work. Based on your answers, determine how a specific approach or mix of approaches can best support your goals and objectives.

What approach will take to develop your culinary tourism strategy?

Ownership

Before setting out on strategy development work, it is important that you and your team answer the question:

> *Who does this strategy belong to?*

In other words, you need to build consensus around who the strategy is for, before you begin the process.

Roles and Responsibilities

Your culinary tourism strategy development project team needs to account for a number of roles, key responsibilities, skills and competencies. Importantly, the team you put together needs to be comfortable scoping and carrying out work for culinary tourism development. This means having expertise in culinary tourism development.

Who will be responsible for implementing your culinary tourism strategy?

Having a decision maker as part of the project team facilitates buy-in across your organization and supports the implementation of your strategy. Additionally, you can look to include and leverage the capacity and expertise of any existing committees or working groups related to culinary tourism that exist in your destination.

Your team should know how culinary tourism fits into overall destination development and have the knowledge or ability to learn about what makes your destination unique and how to grow it sustainably. Some key roles and responsibilities, skills, and competencies of a culinary tourism strategy development team include, but are not limited to:

Key Roles:	Responsibilities, Skills, Competencies:
• Project Manager • Local Leads • Researchers • Project Coordinators • Industry Experts • Working group members	• Project management • Ongoing communications • Meeting facilitation skills • Presentation skills • Research planning and tool design • Output review • Research and analysis • Conducting interviews • Report writing and revision • Research coordination • Community engagement skills • Knowledge of tourism development • Cross-cultural competencies • Connections to local stakeholders • Adaptability • Critical thinking • Open-mindedness and willingness to learn • Sustainable tourism knowledge • Monitoring and evaluation

It's important to ensure that a range of perspectives are present in your strategy development team. For this, you will need to think about the types of experiences, backgrounds, and areas of expertise that you want to draw from. Additionally, across the development of your culinary tourism strategy, you will need to include the diversity of businesses, cultures, partners, and other stakeholders, who can contribute to, and would benefit from, a culinary tourism strategy.

Creating a task force to support the development of your strategy is a good method to bring in a variety of perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds. When involving industry members in your task force, consider the capacity they have to participate in meetings or to review materials. Importantly, aim to include both culinary tourism champions and new stakeholders, who may not have been involved in past culinary tourism development work, but bring equally valuable perspectives. A good practice is to identify specific individuals that you would like to include and create an invitation to participate that outlines their role and responsibilities as part of the task force. This includes the number of meetings that they will be expected to attend, and the types of contributions they will provide across the project.

Who will lead the development of your strategy development process?

Do you and your organization have the expertise and capacity to lead and facilitate the development of a culinary tourism strategy?

What cultural groups or organizations in your area need to be included across the project?

Who are the Indigenous groups in your destination who could contribute to and benefit from this strategy?

Who are the local experts invested in this work who could be engaged for the strategy?

Does your project team include a diversity of backgrounds and perspectives?

Methodology

Before designing your methodology, reflect on how your approach influences the methods and actions you will employ across the development of your culinary tourism strategy.

The types of roles and range of responsibilities needed for your project team also have a direct impact on the methods and activities you can use when developing your strategy. In other words, certain methods will require a particular type of experience or level of expertise, which you will need to make sure is represented within the project team you assemble.

Designing Your Methodology

Before starting your culinary tourism strategy process, think about how you will implement the strategy. This includes earmarking budgetary resources, identifying who will lead implementation, and determining the ideal timeline for the implementation of your strategy.

Your methodology will need to have a structure and flow. This can be achieved by breaking out the methods and related activities into phases. Since your strategy development process needs to be adaptable to context changes, consider how to remain flexible to various in-person and online methods.

Below is a list of suggestions and by no means exhaustive. It is not meant to prescribe the development of your culinary tourism strategy. In other words, they are a guide to help you customize the types of phases and their flow to correspond to your timeline, local context, the needs of your stakeholders, and complement or inform the roles and responsibilities of your team.

Phases, Methods and Activities

1 **Research Planning**

- Setting goals and objectives
- Identifying primary and s
  econdary question

2 **Preliminary Research**

- Background document review
- Secondary research
- Best practice review
- Stakeholder identification

3 **Landscape Assessment**

- Culinary tourism value chain and
  asset inventory
- Market research
- Tourism trends research
- Comparator and competitor research
- Asset scan and inventory

4 **Stakeholder Engagement**

- Key informant interviews
- Industry interviews/questionnaire
- Resident questionnaire
- Round tables
- Task force/ Working group formation
- Networking events

5 **In-market Research**

- Itinerary planning
- Secret-shopper visits

6 **Integrated Analysis**

- Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities,
  Challenges/Threats analysis
- Need-gap analysis

7 **Consensus Building and Action Planning**

- Workshops, planning forum,
  or regional meeting
- Co-design sessions (e.g., mission, vision)
- Internal team meeting and decision making
- Areas of opportunity identification

8 **Report writing**

- Preparation of first draft
- Formatting and design
- Communication strategy

9 **Review and Adjustment**

- Council presentations
- Internal review

10 **Implementation Planning**

- Creating an implementation framework

Work Planning

Before starting the work to develop your culinary tourism strategy, you need to plan the work ahead. Factors that will influence your work plan include:

- The **approach** you are taking
- The mix of individuals who make up the **strategy development team**
- The **timeline** for strategy development
- The **days available** across each specific team member
- The **budget** for strategy development

Importantly, these factors relate and influence each other. The combination that you end up with has pros and cons.

Short (1–3 months)	
Pros	**Cons**
• Low budget • Sooner to implement • Limited disruption to industry • Defined scope • Less susceptible to system shocks and environmental factors • Less prone to extending into unsuitable seasons for industry engagement	• Low stakeholder engagement • Limited data collected • Limited capacity development • Accelerated research • Limited flexibility • Less conducive to partnership • Limited opportunity for innovation • Limited fostering of buy-in

Medium (3–6 months)

Pros	Cons
• Meaningful stakeholder engagement • Defined scope • Opportunity for flexibility and adjustment • Opportunity for partnership and collaboration • Opportunity for varied and in-depth research • Opportunity to foster buy-in • Reasonable time to plan for implementation	• Some opportunity for innovation • Some opportunity for broader community engagement • Some stakeholder fatigue • More disruption to industry • Some susceptibility to system shocks and environmental factors • Some disruption to industry • Some risk of extending into unsuitable seasons for industry engagement • Some flexibility

Long (6+ months)

Pros	Cons
• Significant opportunity for stakeholder and community engagement • Ideal for partnerships and collaborative approach • Significant opportunity for innovation • Significantly varied and in-depth research • Significant amount of data collected • Significant flexibility and adaptability • Ideal for fostering buy-in • More time to plan for implementation	• High budget • Significant stakeholder fatigue • Longer to implement • More susceptible to exceeding scope • Significant risk of extending into unsuitable seasons for industry engagement • Significantly susceptible to system shocks and environmental factors

On top of considering the above factors, consider how much budget is available or earmarked for implementation and make sure that resources are allocated to action your strategy.

Work planning can take a variety of shapes, from narratives, to detailed spreadsheets, to online technologies or applications. The most important factor to consider is what tools would facilitate your team's success. It is very likely that by looking at how your team currently works and what has worked well in the past, you will be able to identify specific tools and methods to facilitate work planning.

How are you work planning your strategy development process?

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The development of your culinary tourism strategy will be based on the approach you identify, as well as the goals, objectives, and expected outcomes you determine, while assessing your readiness and approaching strategy development. Your strategy will be a central resource for the direction your destination takes to grow culinary tourism. Additionally, a culinary tourism strategy is an important resource to support future projects, funding asks, and plans for tourism development.

Project Management

Communications

Clear, ongoing communication is the basis of successful project management. The importance of this begins at the onset of the project and continues throughout to its completion. You will likely need a number of communication strategies and tactics to connect with different groups, both internally and externally to the project. A key role of the project manager is to make sure everyone who should be involved is aware and up-to-date on the development of the strategy.

Within the project team, decide on how and when you will check-in, and map this across the project timeline.

Important questions to clarify include:

> - ***Will the project team meet weekly, monthly, or in an ad hoc way?***
> - ***Will the project team meet in person or through video calls?***

It is equally important that you set up a communication plan to share information with relevant parties external to the project team. This means deciding on when and how you will let people know about your project, including opportunities for engagement. Remember, meaningful engagement starts by letting people know about the project early on and sharing final outputs with everyone who contributed to the process. Create a plan to make this happen by asking:

> - ***Who needs to know about this project?***
> - ***On whose traditional territories is this project taking place, and how can I meaningfully connect with these Indigenous groups at the onset of the project?***
> - ***How can we effectively reach everyone who should know about this project? (i.e., Think about the platforms your target groups already use including, newsletters, message boards, etc.)***
> - ***How will project outputs be communicated back to the culinary tourism community?***

In general, good practices for connecting with diverse groups include communications that are:

- *Accessible,*

- *Inclusive,*

- *Time sensitive, and*

- *Respectful to the needs of each group or individual (e.g., do not plan key communications with agricultural stakeholders during harvest season)*

Tools and Resources

There are several tools and resources available to support project management. If you are working with project partners across multiple organizations, pick the project management tools and resources that everyone can easily access.

Common project management tools and resources include, Gantt charts, critical paths, timelines, calendar tools, and specialized project management software.

Research

Quality research is the basis of culinary tourism strategy development. It provides you with the information needed to chart the direction forward. Putting together a research plan that outlines research methods and activities across your project is essential. Your research plan should include primary and secondary research questions to guide all research activities and be based on the goals and objectives set at the onset of your project. It is important to keep your questions within the context of culinary tourism. Keeping this context in mind will ensure that you have a focussed research plan and contribute to a comprehensive research process and clear strategy.

Primary research questions are overarching to the entire project, whereas secondary research questions inform specific research activities. When compiled together, the answers to secondary research questions will help respond to the primary research question.

Sample primary research question:

> *How should the destination go about developing culinary tourism?*

Sample secondary research question:

> *Who are the key players relevant to culinary tourism in the destination?*
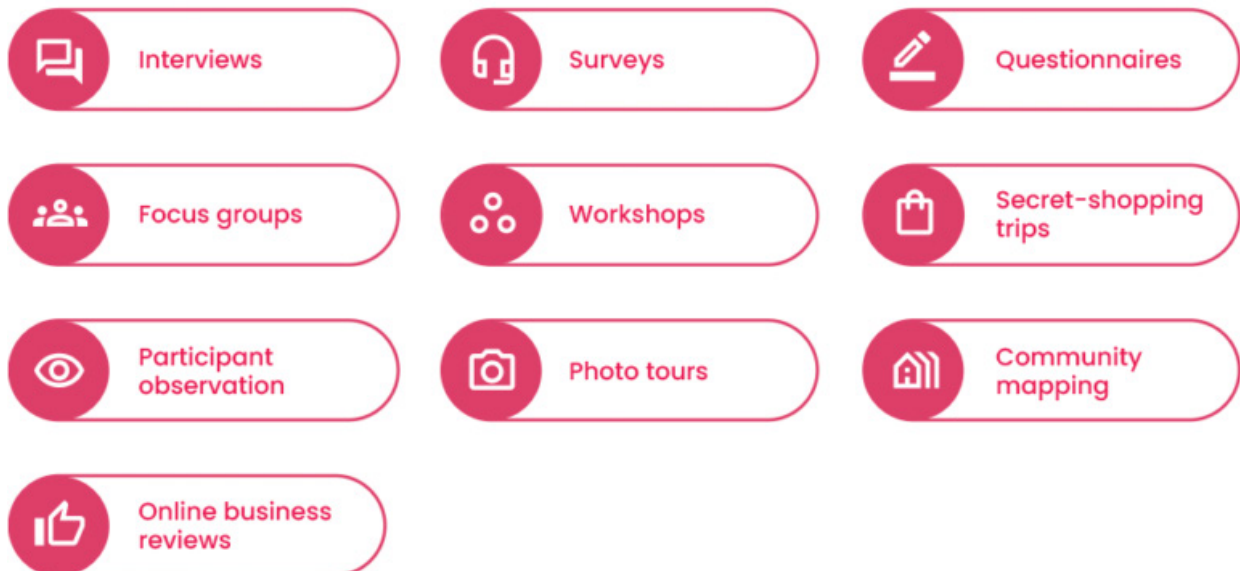
Once you decide on the research questions, you then choose how to collect required data. In other words, you can determine what methods and activities are best suited to collect the data to answer the questions. You will likely use both primary and secondary research methods to do this. Importantly, primary and secondary research methods are distinct from the primary and secondary research questions described above.

Primary Research

Primary research is when you collect data firsthand by engaging stakeholders, partners, government representatives, industry experts, and community members for research purposes. Some primary research methods include:

Community engagement is a key part of primary research for strategy development. When deciding which engagement techniques make sense for your project, remember to tailor these to the specific groups you are trying to reach. For example, if your target group lives in an area with poor internet-connectivity, an online video call is likely not the best way to connect.

Primary Research Methods

Interviews

Surveys

Questionnaires

Focus groups

Workshops

Secret-shopping trips

Participant observation

Photo tours

Community mapping

Online business reviews

Secondary Research

Secondary research involves compiling data from research that already exists. In secondary research, you collect, analyze, and interpret data presented by someone else.

Secondary research does not require direct contact with stakeholders. Therefore, it is strategic to schedule secondary research at times when key stakeholders are otherwise occupied. For example, the tourism industry is often busy in the summer, so that is a good time to undertake low-engagement, secondary research activities such as the ones below:

Secondary Research Methods

Background document review
(e.g., existing plans, previous strategies, etc.)

Archival research

Literature review of academic journals

Policy document reviews

Online research of news articles, blogs, etc.

Inventory reviews

Trip-planning research of business websites, tools, and resources, etc.

Analysis and Planning

To define your strategy, you will need to analyze your research and data to begin planning the opportunities and actions of your strategy. During the analysis and planning phase you are addressing three big questions:

1. *Where are we now?*

2. *Where do we want to be?*

3. *What do we need to do to get there?*

Analysis starts with making sense of all the research data by compiling it to draw conclusions about the current state. Next, you compare the current state to your desired future state as a way to identify gaps. Your desired future state is determined during goal setting at the start of the project or during the research phase via community engagement. Once you identify gaps, you create a plan to fill these gaps through actions set out over a timeline.

Determining the Current State

There are multiple approaches for analyzing research data. By consolidating your research and dividing the findings into predetermined categories you get a clear picture of culinary tourism development in your destination at the time of analysis. Some ways to organize your findings to describe the current state include:

Type of Analysis	Finding Categories
SWOC Analysis	Organize findings into four categories: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Challenges
PESTLE Analysis	Organize findings into six categories: Politics, Economy, Social, Technology, Legal, Environment

After analyzing your research, you might notice that you have not adequately answered all the research questions. If this is the case, consider engaging in supplementary research to address this.

Identifying Gaps Between the Current State and Your Desired Future State

Once you have a clear understanding of the current state and your desired future state, you can identify gaps between the two states, as depicted in the table below:

Objective	Current State	Gap	Desired Future State
To increase the number of culinary tourism experiences in the destination	**50** culinary tourism experiences on offer	**25** more culinary tourism experiences needed to reach desired future state	**75** culinary tourism experiences on offer
To grow the number of visitors through new and enhanced culinary tourism offerings	**100** visitors per day	**100** extra visitors per day needed to reach desired future state	**200** visitors per day
To facilitate access to local food and drink at outdoor spaces and parks	**2** provincial parks in the area with shops **10** food and beverage producers in the vicinity of the parks	**No** mention of or access to local food and drink at the parks	**5** local products available and featured at the provincial park shops

Note: Not all future state will be easy to quantify, but it is important to attach indicators to your objectives so that their success can be measured. Additionally, not all future states need to point to an increase. Your future state may involve stronger connections between businesses and producers or the dispersal of tourists from one specific area of your region.

Strategy Planning

With a clear understanding of the gaps you need to fill to reach your desired future state, review your research data to identify areas of opportunity or pillars for development that can help you move to your desired future state.

Organize a strategy development session where you sit down with your project team to decide on broad strategies that can help you achieve your objectives. For example:

Is there a gap-filling opportunity to ...

- ***...improve destination marketing?***
- ***...grow industry capacity?***
- ***...develop new culinary tourism products?***
- ***...contribute to tourism dispersal across the region?***

Making decisions within your project team and with stakeholders, a task force or working group, is a very important part of the strategy planning process. There are a number of ways to approach decision-making towards the development of your culinary tourism strategy:

- ***In-person decision making meeting***
- ***Co-design session***
- ***Online collector with gaps and preliminary areas of opportunity***

Once the project team has a clear understanding of the broad area of opportunity, list the actions associated with each opportunity across a high-level timeline. This helps to ensure that the recommended actions are reasonable within the implementation timelines determined for the project. For example:

Area of opportunity	Actions (Year 1)	Actions (Year 2)	Actions (Year 3)
Build capacity among industry	Send informational newsletters about culinary tourism	Host workshops for industry	Host workshops for industry Organize a learning journey to a best practice destination

The main outcome of this process will be a culinary tourism strategy document. How you present the strategy document, depends on who the main audience is. Additionally, if your plan needs to be approved by a municipal council, consider adding a short executive summary to make it easily digestible. If your plan is going to be shared with the broader public, think about how you can structure and design the report to make it easy for industry and other stakeholders to use. Equally important is paying attention to the language used across the strategy, aiming to avoid technical jargon.

Although the main output is a strategy report, you may also have additional tools and resources from the process as useful outputs such as a stakeholder database, inventory of culinary tourism businesses, as well as workshop or forum information and capacity-building materials on culinary tourism.

Implementation

Implementation is where the real work begins! This is where you and your partners make a plan for how to implement the actions outlined in the strategy report to fill gaps and seize the areas of opportunity identified to achieve your desired future state.

Key decisions need to be made in this process around each of the actions that are part of your strategy, including:

1 Who will implement each action? (including the lead and supporting partners)

2 What inputs are needed to implement the action? (e.g., contact information for businesses)

3 Who can provide these inputs?

4 What steps are associated with implementing this action?

5 When should each step be undertaken?

6 What are the anticipated outcomes associated with implementing the action?

7 What key performance indicators are associated with implementing the action?

8 What data is needed to monitor the success of implementing this action?

It is recommended that the implementation process be mapped out clearly across a detailed timeline that corresponds to the length of your strategy (e.g., 3-year strategy). This can be done through an implementation framework or action-planning tool. It is important that the method you select for implementation planning allows you and your partners to clearly understand the roles, related responsibilities, required resources, and expected outputs across implementation. When everyone knows their role and related expectations, it is more likely that your strategy can be effectively implemented.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring the progress of your strategy and evaluating the success of your objectives are important parts of culinary tourism strategy implementation.

One way to approach this is to refer to the process-oriented and outcome-based indicators you drafted when you identified your objectives. Using the indicators, you can develop evaluation tools and mobilize destination developers, industry, and other partners to collect data to evaluate the success of strategy implementation. This will allow you to evaluate whether or not the strategy worked to move your destination from the current state to your desired future state and identify areas that need adjustment.

Importantly, monitoring and evaluation of your strategy provides important data for reporting back to funders or supporting organizations. Additionally, when done with integrity and consistency you'll be able to track the progress of your objectives toward understanding the larger impacts of culinary tourism development in your destination. Impacts are longer term effects of the changes you set through the implementation of your strategy. They will likely begin to manifest in 3 or more years after you begin implementation.

Collecting data throughout the implementation of your culinary tourism strategy allows you to monitor the roll out and measure its success against your goals using the key performance indicators.

Iteration and Adaptation

The results of your monitoring and evaluation will guide iteration and adaptation. Revisit your strategies for culinary tourism development periodically to decide if new approaches are needed based on changes to the current context. You will likely need to adapt or develop new strategies for culinary tourism development as time passes and your destination's context changes.

Additional Resources

Please make sure to explore the *Elevating Canadian Experiences* platform for more industry-facing culinary tourism development resources as well as the list of resources below:

Tourism Industry Association of Canada, Resources

United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Guidelines for the Development of Gastronomy Tourism

UNWTO Recommendations on Tourism and Rural Development

UNWTO Tourism for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)