



SUSTAINABLE TOURISM + EVENTS PLAN 2024-2027

APPROVED: December 2023 | UPDATED: March 2024

tourism
calgary

Land Acknowledgment

The city of Calgary, where the Bow and Elbow rivers meet, was historically a place of confluence where the sharing of resources, ideas and opportunities naturally came together. Long before Scottish settlers named it Calgary, the original Indigenous Nations of this area had their own names for the land. In the Blackfoot language, it is called Moh-kins-tsis. The Îlethka Nakoda Wîcastabi First Nations refer this place as Wicispa Oyade and the people of the Tsuut'ina nation call it Guts-ists-l. The Métis call the Calgary area Otos-kwunee.

We would like to acknowledge that we welcome all visitors and guests to the traditional territories of the people of the Treaty 7 region in Southern Alberta. This includes: the Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai collectively known as the Blackfoot Confederacy; the Îlethka Nakoda Wîcastabi First Nations, comprised of the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Goodstoney First Nations; and the Tsuut'ina First Nation. The city of Calgary is also homeland to the historic Northwest Métis and to Métis Nation District 5 & 6. We acknowledge all Indigenous urban Calgarians, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis, who have made Calgary their home.

We thank all the Indigenous people for accommodating and hosting visitors and for continuing to welcome guests and share our history.



Executive Summary: Our Strategic Approach to Sustainability

Our 2024-2027 strategy sets out the priority actions for our Tourism Calgary teams and industry partners, and how they can contribute to the successful delivery of our commitments to sustainability, diversity, and inclusion. Our proposed activities will achieve the following goal and are organized by three strategic objectives.

Goal

Advance our organizational commitment to foster sustainable travel within our destination that not only provides a memorable experience for visitors and guests, but contributes positively to Calgary's environmental, social, and economic prosperity.

Objectives:



ECONOMIC

Enhance business competitiveness of Calgary tourism industry.

Foster business competitiveness by facilitating 3rd party sustainability certification for hotels, as well as building capacity, awareness, and education of sustainability throughout the sector.



ENVIRONMENT

Encourage regenerative events, programs, and initiatives.

Demonstrate environmental stewardship by launching programs and initiatives that reduces measurable environmental impact through events and encourages & celebrates businesses who are implementing change at the local level.



SOCIAL

Lead a welcoming team, within a welcoming city.

Increase engagement and dialogue around Calgary's IDEA movement as it relates to the tourism economy. Lead, support, and participate in committees, speaker series, and marketing and communication activities that contributes to a diverse and welcoming destination.

Key Performance Indicators

Economic

Foster business competitiveness by facilitating 3rd party sustainability certification for hotels, as well as building capacity, awareness, and education of sustainability throughout the sector.

KPI's: Economic	Target		
Enhance business competitiveness of Calgary	2024	2025	2026
Increase hotel room certification (percentage of all hotel rooms certified)	25%	30%	35%
Increase Calgary's GDS-Index Score	Score 50%	Score 53%	Score 55%
Increase the number of tourism & event businesses participating in sustainability initiatives	Baseline Assessment	Baseline +10%	Baseline + 10%

Environmental

Demonstrate environmental stewardship by launching programs and initiatives that reduces measurable environmental impact through events and encourages & celebrates businesses who are implementing change at the local level.

KPI's: Environmental	Target		
Encourage regenerative events, programs, and initiatives	2024	2025	2026
Increase the number of businesses who source local, ethical, or sustainable products as noted by the LEAF Certification	Baseline Assessment	Baseline + 5%	Baseline +10%
Enhance event sustainability by increasing the number of businesses and events who participate in Tourism Calgary's RED Events Program	Program Development Complete	Baseline Assessment	Baseline + 5%
Advocate and increase the number of events who have advanced or promoted public transportation (via communications, downloaded toolkit).	Baseline Assessment	Baseline + 5%	Baseline +10%

Social

Increase engagement and dialogue around Calgary's IDEA movement as it relates to the tourism economy. Lead, support, and participate in committees, speaker series, and marketing and communication activities that contributes to a diverse and welcoming destination.

KPI's: Environmental	Target		
Lead a welcoming team, within a welcoming destination	2024	2025	2026
Increase number of IDEA organizations/charities/events TC Staff to directly donate time and expertise	2	3	4
Increase number of businesses profiled who offer sustainable or diversity-orientated experiences in tourism.	3	5	7
Build and maintain industry-focused engagement program delivering sessions regarding sustainability and IDEA.	1	2	2

“Leave it better than you found it.” - Robert Baden Powell

In alignment with the City of Calgary foundational commitments to achieve net-zero by 2050, we are dedicated to fostering sustainable practices and creating social benefit for our destination within our visitor and tourism economy.

In 2024, Tourism Calgary will release a new ten-year Destination Strategy. This extensive, strategic engagement work conducted across many sectors and partners, has informed Tourism Calgary’s Sustainability plan, and solidifies our organizational commitment to our destination’s environmental, social, and economic practices.

This sustainability plan sets out key short to medium-term actions which will focus our team, and partners, on driving and supporting change across the sector. As the strategic lead for tourism and conventions, Tourism Calgary has an important role to support our city in establishing a balanced, regenerative approach to managing our destination’s visitor economy.

The proposed actions and accountability identified in the 2024-2027 Tourism Calgary Sustainability Plan directly support, and align with:

- Government of Canada Tourism Strategy
- Tourism Calgary Destination Strategy 2024-2030
- City of Calgary Climate Strategy
- Destination Canada Canadian Business Events Sustainability Plan
- UN Sustainable Development Goals

Tourism Calgary has responsibility for key elements of destination management and will continue to work closely with stakeholders, industry, and partners as we strengthen our sustainable and responsible visitor economy.



Tourism Calgary Vision

To become Ultimate hosts. Ultimate host city.

As ultimate hosts, we aim to exemplify Calgary's indelible community spirit by fostering a destination that is welcoming, innovative and offers experiences that showcase our diverse culture and celebrate Calgary's unique heritage. Visitors find it easy to be here and are unencumbered in their pursuit of shareable experiences. Our community feels engaged and that tourism contributes to their quality of life.

We will have world class venues, infrastructure and products that will enable us to host more conferences, high-level sporting events, and cultural experiences.

We'll enable visitors to unlock the best version of Calgary by tailoring their experiences through itineraries that meet – and exceed – their needs and expectations.

We'll collaborate with partners and the community, support Calgarians who are hosting visitors, and enable businesses, community groups and citizens to be the best possible ambassadors for our city and region, ultimately leading to repeat visitation and economic activity for our destination.

Tourism Calgary Mission

Inspire more people to visit Calgary for memorable experiences that celebrate our community, culture, and people.

Tourism Calgary Mandate

As the official destination management organization for Calgary, the purpose of Tourism Calgary is to work closely with industry and community partners to drive demand to local member businesses, increasing the economic impact of the visitor economy in Calgary, while also considering the needs of the community and the environment. We:

Promote Calgary as a destination of choice, marketing the city locally, nationally, and internationally.

Steward Calgary's destination brand.

Attract and host sport, cultural, major events, and meetings and conventions.

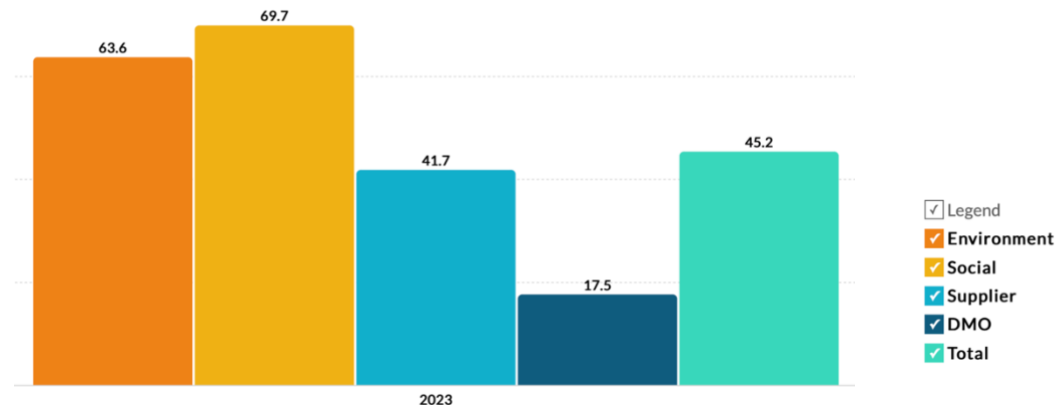
Advocate and support the ongoing development of Calgary as a destination, including its products and experiences.

Connect with current and future visitors, providing the information they need to have a great experience in Calgary.

GDS-Index 2023 Insights

In 2023, Calgary received a grade of 45.2% on the GDS-Index. This was considered a solid score for the first year of indexing and was a result of excellent engagement with partners to collate multiple sources of data to complete the comprehensive 69 questions.

Scores in each of the four index surveys were as follows:



Areas of strength for Calgary results consisted of:

- From the city: Climate Action, Environment Strategy, Circular economy (Circular City Roadmap), Biodiversity Plan, Transportation/soft mobility, RouteAhead Accessibility strategy.
- DMO DEI Strategy and Action Plan.
- Citizen Engagement and engageCalgary.com.
- CalgaryEats! All the capacity-building work they are contributing to the circular economy in restaurants.
- Venues with 3rd part certification.
- SAIT's Hospitality and Tourism Management program.
- DMO soft mobility promotion and accessibility guides.

Areas of weakness for Calgary results consisted of:

- No DMO sustainability policy or third-party certification for its organization.
- Limited marketing & communications of sustainability initiatives.
- No internal or external sustainability committees in place.
- Capacity building & training for internal team and tourism supply chain.
- Measurement and reporting.
- Event legacy and social impact programs.

Sustainability Action Plans 2024-2027

Economic

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INITIATIVES: Enhance business competitiveness of Calgary tourism industry.



Support and educate Calgary's tourism industry partners to advance awareness and achievement of sustainability and DEI certifications for our destination. Encourage events and visitors to engage in regenerative or legacy initiatives within our communities.

Action	Timing			Responsibility	Budget Implications
	24	25	26		
1. Facilitate 3 rd Party Sustainability Certification for Calgary Hotels					
a. Build and maintain contact lists for appropriate hotel contacts.	✓			Tourism Calgary	
b. Education on certification programs available.	✓	✓		Tourism Calgary	
c. Advance communications on GDS-Index requirements.	✓	✓	✓	Tourism Calgary	
d. Implement incentive program for Sustainable Certification for hotels.		✓	✓	Tourism Calgary / Calgary Hotel Association	✓

2. Educate Partners and Front-Line Tourism Industry Employees					
a. Annually publish, and share with all partners, Tourism Calgary Sustainability 2024-2027 Strategy and Plan, and KPI results.	✓	✓	✓	Tourism Calgary	
b. Establish communications strategy to advance sustainability initiatives and results to key stakeholders and partners.	✓			Tourism Calgary	
c. Integrate sustainability and DEI content into White Hat Academy program.	✓	✓		Tourism Calgary	✓
d. Incorporate sustainability and DEI content into New Partner Orientation materials and program.	✓			Tourism Calgary	
3. Tourism Calgary Organizational Certifications and Employee Training					
a. Annually publish, and share with all civic partners, Tourism Calgary Sustainability 2024-2027 Strategy and Plan, and KPI results.	✓	✓	✓	Tourism Calgary	
b. Participate in the 2024, 2025 and 2026 Global Destination Sustainability Index Program	✓	✓	✓	Tourism Calgary / City of Calgary and Partners	✓
c. Pursue and Initiate 3rd Party Sustainability Certification for the organization.	✓			Tourism Calgary	✓
d. Review all corporate policies and establish Sustainability KPI/measurement and reporting program.	✓			Tourism Calgary	
e. Establish new employee training on sustainability initiatives and expectations and annual review for all staff.	✓			Tourism Calgary	
f. Assess current operational practices and equipment and seek opportunities for retrofit and upgrades to environmentally friendlier options.		✓	✓	Tourism Calgary	✓
4. Establish Sustainability Narrative and Asset Development					
a. Develop sustainability and inclusion narrative and commitment statements, that aligns to the Destination Strategy and City of Calgary initiatives, for promotion of our destination.	✓	✓	✓	Tourism Calgary	
b. Establish centralized content and assets database for Tourism Calgary employees to us in promotion to travel trade, sports and events group and visitors. Profile capital investments and projects, including those receiving municipal, provincial or federal support, in the following areas: i. Environment: innovation in GhG/Carbon Reduction, alternative energy projects. ii. Culinary and Circular Economies: local sourcing, food recycling + waste management. iii. Transportation/Soft Mobility: Bike/Scooter/Walk Paths, low-carbon transport (urban + regional), accessibility. iv. Biodiversity: Greenspaces/Parks, species diversity + restoration. v. Health + Wellness: Safety and inclusivity of communities.	✓	✓	✓	Tourism Calgary	✓

Environmental

Demonstrate environmental stewardship by launching programs and initiatives that reduces measurable environmental impact through events and encourages & celebrates businesses who are implementing change at the local level.

KPI's: Environmental	Target		
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INITIATIVES: Encourage regenerative events, programs, and actions.



Support hotels/restaurants, venues, and event planners to minimize their food waste, encourage a circular economy practice and procure more locally supplied ingredients and menu options.

Action	Timing			Responsibility	Budget Implications
	24.	25	26		
5. Grow Awareness of CalgaryEATS! Food Action Plan					
a. Share CalgaryEATS! Businesses and project stories with partners and public/visitors.	✓	✓	✓	Tourism Calgary	
b. Promote tourism partners who have established their business around locally sourced and plant-based healthy food options.	✓	✓	✓	Tourism Calgary	
c. In partnership with City of Calgary, offer LEAF Certification grant program for restaurants seeking support.		✓	✓	Tourism Calgary /City of Calgary	✓
d. Profile LEAF Certified restaurants in Calgary.		✓	✓	Tourism Calgary	

6. Promote City of Calgary Public Transportation System					
a.	Advance delegate and visitor access to City of Calgary Public Transportation options in promotional materials and delegate packages.	✓	✓	✓	Tourism Calgary /City of Calgary
b.	Advocate with partners on new opportunities to incentivize use of public transportation for events, conventions, and meeting visitors.	✓	✓	✓	Tourism Calgary ✓
7. Establish Calgary RED (Reduce, Enrich, Divert) Events Program					
a.	Work collaboratively with Calgary Convention Venues to establish a destination events program to implement with Meeting Planners and Event Coordinators. Program to include initiatives for: i. Reduce: Lowering Environmental Impacts ii. Enrich: Community + Non-Profit Initiatives iii. Divert: Recycling and Waste Reduction	✓			Tourism Calgary, Calgary TELUS Convention Centre, BMO Centre/Calgary Stampede ✓
b.	Investigate and establish governance committee structure to oversee continued development and implementation of RED program initiatives.		✓	✓	Tourism Calgary
c.	Develop online and printed materials for Meeting Planners and conference delegates to include: i. Local, sustainable businesses and experiences ii. Connectivity to outdoor parks/green spaces iii. Sustainably sourced food and drink options iv. Carbon-reduced transportation options	✓			Tourism Calgary ✓
d.	Incorporate Sustainability Narrative and RED Events Program into Event Bids/RFP responses	✓	✓	✓	Tourism Calgary ✓
e.	Annually review, maintain, and expand upon Events Program		✓	✓	Tourism Calgary
8. Annually share and promote Calgary RED Events Program with Partners					
a.	Provide feedback mechanism for Calgary businesses to propose initiatives for future consideration.	✓	✓	✓	Tourism Calgary

Social

Increase engagement and dialogue around Calgary's IDEA movement as it relates to the tourism economy. Lead, support, and participate in committees, speaker series, and marketing and communication activities that contributes to a diverse and welcoming destination.

KPI's: Environmental	Target		
Lead a welcoming team, within a welcoming destination	2024	2025	2026
Increase number of IDEA organizations/charities/events TC Staff to directly donate time and expertise	2	3	4
Increase number of businesses profiled who offer sustainable or diversity-orientated experiences in tourism.	3	5	7
Build and maintain industry-focused engagement program delivering sessions regarding sustainability and IDEA.	1	2	2

INITIATIVES: Lead a welcoming team, within a welcoming city.



Increase coverage of positive environmental and social impacts, and our welcoming and inclusive destination to visitors and guests. Celebrate best practice and ease the process for businesses to be inspired and get involved.

Action	Timing			Responsibility	Budget Implications
	24	25	26		
1. Advance Certification and Develop Incentive Programs for Partners					
a. Staff participation in annual Equity and Diversity, and Indigenous Awareness education.	✓	✓	✓	Tourism Calgary	✓
b. Pursue Certification with Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI)		✓	✓	Tourism Calgary	✓
c. Completion of the Goodwill Employer Inclusion Accelerator Program and implementation of recommendations.	✓	✓	✓	Tourism Calgary	✓
2. Increase Accountability of Tourism Calgary IDEA Committee					
a. Reinstate IDEA Committee, set regular meeting schedule, and implement developed action plan.	✓	✓	✓	Tourism Calgary	
b. Propose annual events within the destination for staff to support/participate in to show support of community.	✓	✓	✓	Tourism Calgary	

c. Identify a charity for Tourism Calgary to donate time and expertise to.		✓		Tourism Calgary	
d. Establish regular reporting on initiatives to Tourism Calgary partners	✓	✓	✓	Tourism Calgary	
3. Establish Sustainability Narrative and Asset Development					
a. Develop sustainability and inclusion narrative and commitment statements, that aligns to the Destination Strategy and City of Calgary initiatives, for promotion of our destination.	✓	✓	✓	Tourism Calgary	
b. Establish centralized content and assets database for Tourism Calgary employees to use in promotion to travel trade, sports and events group and visitors. Profile capital investments and projects, including those receiving municipal, provincial or federal support, in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Environment: innovation in GhG/Carbon Reduction, alternative energy projects. ii. Culinary and Circular Economies: local sourcing, food recycling + waste management. iii. Transportation/Soft Mobility: Bike/Scooter/Walk Paths, low-carbon transport (urban + regional), accessibility. iv. Biodiversity: Greenspaces/Parks, species diversity + restoration. v. Health + Wellness: Safety and inclusivity of communities. 					✓
4. Establish Annual Speaker Series on Sustainability and DEI					
a. Annual research to assess appropriate topics and challenges facing partners looking to pursuing sustainable activities and certification.	✓	✓	✓	Tourism Calgary	✓
b. Establish speaker series program calendar and materials for distribution on sustainability, IDEA, and other initiatives.	✓			Tourism Calgary	✓
c. Annually review, maintain, and expand upon Speaker Series program.		✓	✓	Tourism Calgary	
d. Provide feedback mechanism to share stories and successes.	✓			Tourism Calgary	
5. Ensure Marketing and Imagery is Representative					
a. Build dedicated resources, including guides, photography, and videos for 2SLGBTQIA+, Indigenous, and Persons with Disabilities visitor experiences.	✓	✓	✓	Tourism Calgary	✓
b. Seek out and profile businesses in our community who offer sustainable or diversity-oriented experiences or have received certifications for sustainability or diversity and inclusion.	✓				