


# Culinary Tourism Strategic Plan 2026–2030

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## A strategic plan to grow culinary tourism in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Newfoundland and Labrador has always been shaped by food. Our history is written in salt cod and hard bread, in berry picking and moose hunting, in kitchens where recipes were passed between generations without ever being written down.

The way we eat tells the story of where we come from, what the land and sea provide, and how we come together.

In recent years, a growing number of chefs, producers, and food entrepreneurs have been turning that story into something visitors can taste. Farm-gate operations, craft breweries, and foraging experiences are popping up in communities across the province. We have a wealth of culinary assets, and people are noticing.

Over the same period, there has been a shift in many visitors' attitudes toward food; it is no longer something they deal with between activities — it is a primary reason people choose a destination. These travellers tend to spend more, stay longer, and engage more deeply with the places they visit. They want authentic connections. They seek moments that engage all their senses and memories that linger long after they return home. Food has emerged as one of the most compelling pathways to that kind of connection. This trend is recognized in the province's tourism strategy, where food experiences are identified as a key opportunity area.

There is an opportunity for Newfoundland and Labrador to position itself to meet that demand. While individual operators have achieved real success, the province still lacks cohesive branding, consistent standards, and the strategic infrastructure to position culinary tourism as a driver of economic growth, season extension, and regional dispersal.

Hospitality Newfoundland & Labrador, with support from our funders[1], has developed this Culinary Tourism Strategic Plan in response to that opportunity.

*Seasoned NL: Culinary Tourism Strategic Plan 2026–2030* provides a roadmap for transforming Newfoundland and Labrador into a recognized culinary destination: one where food experiences are not merely an accompaniment to travel, but a primary reason to visit, explore, and return. The foundational work completed by Hospitality Newfoundland & Labrador over the past year created the tools, partnerships, and knowledge base necessary to implement the plan.

[1] Funders include the Department of Jobs, Growth and Rural Development (JGRD) and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA).



# The Case for Culinary Tourism

## What Makes Newfoundland and Labrador Different

This province has a culinary identity unlike anywhere else in North America. Our food culture was shaped by centuries of adaptation to the North Atlantic Ocean: by the fishery, by foraging, by resourcefulness born of geographic isolation, and by the Indigenous, English, Irish, Basque, and French communities rooted here and, increasingly, by newcomers whose foodways are adding new layers to a culinary tradition that has always evolved through the meeting of cultures. Many were drawn by the colonial cod trade that first connected this place to the wider world. From salt cod, toutons, and Jiggs dinner to moose, caribou, partridgeberries, and wild mushrooms, the foods of this place cannot be replicated anywhere else.

Our competitive advantage is not one of scale, sophistication, or Michelin stars. It is something harder to replicate: world-class hospitality, an abundance of wild foods, a deep relationship with the Atlantic Ocean, and culinary assets that are unavailable anywhere else. Seasonal scarcity, so often seen as a limitation, creates natural exclusivity. Snow crab season, capelin roll, berry harvests, moose hunting, wild food foraging windows – these are not marketing constructs. They are real, and they give visitors a reason to come at different times of the year.



## How Tourism Research Supports Our Work

Visitor research has been sending a remarkably consistent message for years: food matters. Visitor Exit Surveys conducted by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation (TCAR) continue to show that local culinary experiences are the most popular cultural activity among leisure visitors to Newfoundland and Labrador, with nearly seven in ten visitors participating during their trip. Visits to local beverage producers, including breweries, wineries, and distilleries, also rank among the province's most sought-after experiences. Together, these findings reinforce what operators across the province already know: food and beverage experiences are not a secondary part of the visitor journey. They are a core part of what attracts people here and helps define their experience once they arrive.

At the same time, the research highlights a clear opportunity for growth. While visitors place a high value on local cuisine, satisfaction with opportunities to experience and enjoy local food remains among the province's lower-rated visitor experience categories. Feedback frequently points to limited dining options and difficulty accessing local seafood. This gap between expectation and experience suggests that Newfoundland and Labrador's culinary potential exceeds its current visitor offering. Closing that gap will require not only developing new experiences, but ensuring visitors can easily find, access, and understand the stories behind the food experiences that already exist.

The economic importance of this work is equally clear. Food and beverage spending consistently represents one of the largest categories of visitor expenditure in Newfoundland and Labrador, generating meaningful benefits for businesses, producers, and communities throughout the province. When visitors spend on food, those benefits often extend well beyond restaurants, supporting fishers, farmers, processors, craft beverage producers, and the broader local supply chain.



## Current Challenges

Any conversation about culinary tourism in Newfoundland and Labrador must start with an overview of the food and beverage sector. COVID-19 devastated restaurants and food businesses across the province. Many closed for good. Those that survived came out the other side with depleted savings, fewer staff, and a fundamentally different operating environment.

The recovery has been slower than most people expected, and the pressures are not easing. Rising labour costs, difficulty finding and retaining staff, the cost-of-living crisis, supply chain disruptions, aging demographics, and high food costs have all compounded the problem.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, these national pressures are layered on top of unique provincial challenges (VOCM, 2026). Twenty-five percent of the population is now sixty-five or older (the first province in Canada to reach that threshold), further shrinking the available workforce (Stats Canada, 2025). At the same time, local markets that once helped to provide a reliable year-round customer base are contracting. Declining population, shifting spending habits, and cost-of-living pressures mean fewer locals dining out, and many operators who once relied on a steady stream of local patrons can no longer count on that foundation. For a sector already strained by labour shortages and rising costs, the erosion of local demand makes the case for attracting visitors not just strategic but urgent. Industry engagement surveys conducted by Hospitality Newfoundland & Labrador during the foundational phase confirmed these pressures are being felt across every region.

This plan is built on the premise that brick-and-mortar restaurants, cafés, pubs, and food businesses are a bedrock of culinary tourism. They are where visitors eat every day and are the front line of the province's culinary identity.

Stakeholder consultations and research surfaced a number of interconnected challenges that this plan addresses:

- Ongoing COVID-19 negative impacts on the food and beverage sector.
- Declining local market demand.
- Rising labour and material costs affecting operator viability.
- Difficulty recruiting and retaining staff, particularly in rural and seasonal operations.
- High seasonality, with the large majority of visitation concentrated between June and September.
- Limited visitor-ready culinary experiences outside St. John's and major tourism corridors.
- Gaps in digital readiness, pricing knowledge, and experience design among smaller operators.
- Untapped connections between agricultural producers, fisheries, and the tourism supply chain.

Each of these challenges also points to an opportunity, and Seasoned NL is built on those opportunities.

**According to Restaurants Canada's most recent survey (November 2025), 44% of Canadian restaurants are currently operating at a loss or barely breaking even (compared to just 12% in 2019).**

**(Restaurants Canada, 2026)**

## Culinary Tourism Potential

Newfoundland and Labrador's tourism strategy[2] identifies culinary experiences as one of four priority experience development categories for the province, alongside arts and culture, Indigenous, and nature-based experiences.

The economic case for culinary tourism investment is compelling. Visitor segmentation analysis conducted by Hospitality Newfoundland & Labrador confirms that travellers most likely to seek out culinary experiences align closely with the province's target markets: culturally curious, higher-spending visitors who value authenticity and are willing to travel off the beaten path. They venture beyond traditional tourism corridors in search of authentic encounters with producers, chefs, and food traditions.

**Culinary-motivated travellers spend up to 24% more per day than other leisure visitors, and 77% say food and drink experiences make them more likely to return to a destination.**

**(World Food Travel Association, 2026)**

## Season Extension

Newfoundland and Labrador's culinary calendar does not end in September. Wild game season runs through the fall. Root cellars, preserving traditions, and winter comfort food carry deep cultural resonance. Snow crab arrives in spring. Berry season stretches from late summer into early fall. Iceberg season, sealing traditions, and community kitchen culture all offer compelling reasons to travel in months when the province currently sees very little visitation.

Travellers inclined toward culinary experiences are already predisposed to shoulder-season travel. They seek out wild foods as they emerge, seasonal catches at their peak, and harvest traditions as they unfold. The culinary traveller is not asking whether Newfoundland and Labrador is open in October; they are asking what is in season.

In short, culinary tourism addresses precisely the challenges our province seeks to overcome: seasonality, regional concentration, and the need for higher-yield visitor experiences.

Realizing this potential requires more than individual operator efforts. It demands coordinated brand development, systematic capacity building, sustained collaboration between sectors, and sustained investment in experience development.

[2] This Strategic Plan is being developed in alignment with the province's emerging tourism strategy and is reflective of its early direction.

# Strategic Framework

Our logic model maps the strategy from inputs through to long-term outcomes, distinguishing between what the project will deliver (outputs) and the changes those deliverables are designed to create (outcomes). It is intended as a shared reference point for partners, funders, and operators to visualize how the pieces fit together.

## *Inputs*
What Needs To Be Invested

**Time, effort, and skill** of dedicated staff.

**Stewardship and administrative support** from Hospitality Newfoundland & Labrador, the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, and Recreation (TCAR), Destination Management Organizations (DMOs), and partners.

**Financial support** of the Department of Jobs, Growth, and Rural Development (JGRD) and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA).

**Expertise and support** from provincial peer advisory group.

**Volunteer time, effort, and professional generosity** of culinary sector.

## *Activities*
What We Will Do

**Launch the Seasoned NL Brand**

- Build brand awareness.
- Establish quality standards.

**Expand and Enhance the Portfolio of Culinary Experiences**

- Build operator capacity.
- Extend the tourism season.

**Create Connections**

- Connect tourism operators with agricultural producers and food artisans and manufacturers.
- Establish leadership networks.
- Foster the kind of collaboration that strengthens the entire culinary ecosystem and keeps economic benefits local.

**Evaluate Throughout the Project**

- Assuring plan effectiveness.



## *Outputs*
What We Will Accomplish

**Brand and Awareness**

- Seasoned NL brand launched with guidelines, collateral, and digital presence.
- Quality standards deployed with operator self-assessment tool.
- Regional Culinary Calendar published with seasonal campaigns.

**Capacity Building**

- Training workshops and webinars delivered across regions.
- NL Ale Trail (craft beverages) designed, and NL Taste Trail (food & restaurants) launched as flagship culinary trails.
- Regional Culinary Trail Development Toolkit published for DMOs.

**Partnerships**

- Farm to Table buyer-supplier events held.
- Local sourcing guide and online mapping tool launched.
- Culinary Tourism Leadership Network formed.
- Best Practice Mission completed with learnings documented.

**Evaluation**

- Evaluation reports on project outcomes produced for funders and partners.

## *Outcomes*

### The Difference In The Near Future

**Operators**

- Increased confidence in delivering quality culinary experiences.
- Stronger skills in pricing, digital marketing, and experience design.
- Growing recognition of the value of Seasoned NL brand and quality standards.

**Visitors**

- Increased likelihood to seek and access culinary experiences throughout the province.

**Sector**

- Appreciate the value of relationships between tourism operators and local food producers.
- Rely upon leadership network to share knowledge and surface shared challenges.
- Seek opportunities to grow shoulder-season culinary offerings.

### The Difference In The Long Run

**Destination**

- Newfoundland and Labrador recognized as a distinctive culinary destination where food is a primary reason to visit.

**Economy**

- Visitors choose to spend more of their travel budget on local culinary experiences.
- Visitors plan trips outside peak season specifically to participate in culinary offerings.
- Visitors choose to explore and travel to a wider range of communities beyond traditional tourism hubs.

**Communities**

- Local producers, suppliers, and businesses see the value in sourcing, selling, and collaborating within regional food networks.
- Indigenous communities increasingly design, lead, and deliver their own culinary tourism experiences.

**Sector**

- Culinary operators extend their operating seasons, with more businesses staying open through shoulder and winter months because visitor demand and programming now make it viable to do so.
- A self-sustaining culinary tourism community that collaborates, innovates, and raises the standard together.

## Underlying Assumptions

- Newfoundland and Labrador has distinctive culinary assets (wild foods, seasonal harvests, food traditions) that are not yet consistently packaged or marketed as visitor experiences, which means the province is not realizing its full potential as a culinary destination.
- Operators across the province are delivering strong food experiences individually. Still, the lack of a unifying brand, shared standards, and coordinated marketing means visitors struggle to discover them, and the sector lacks a cohesive identity.
- Many culinary operators, particularly in rural areas, lack access to training in experience design, pricing, digital marketing, and storytelling, which limits their ability to create visitor-ready offerings and operate sustainably.
- Seasonality is one of the province's greatest challenges and greatest assets. Visitors will travel in shoulder and off-peak seasons if given compelling, well-marketed culinary reasons to do so.
- Tourism operators and local food producers (farmers, fishers, artisans, and manufacturers) are not well connected, resulting in missed opportunities for authentic, place-based experiences and keeping economic benefits from circulating locally.
- Culinary tourism cannot be developed by any single organization. It requires sustained collaboration between government, industry associations, DMOs, and operators, with Hospitality Newfoundland & Labrador serving as a coordinating body.
- If operators are supported with training, connected to one another and to local producers, and united under a trusted brand with clear quality standards, the result will be a stronger, more consistent visitor experience that positions the province as a recognized culinary destination.
- Current regulatory frameworks were not designed with culinary tourism in mind. Some create unintended barriers to the kinds of experiences this plan seeks to develop (farm-to-table dining, on-site tastings, pop-up food events, etc.). This plan assumes that as the sector grows, there will be a need for ongoing dialogue with regulatory bodies to ensure that legislation supports, rather than inhibits, culinary tourism innovation, while maintaining the public health and safety standards those regulations exist to protect.
- Indigenous communities must lead the development of Indigenous culinary tourism on their own terms. Providing resources and support without directing the process will lead to more meaningful and culturally appropriate outcomes.
- Newfoundland and Labrador's culinary identity is not static. Newcomers to the province are introducing foodways, techniques, and ingredients that are adding new dimensions to the local food landscape. This plan assumes that embracing this evolution and creating space for newcomer food entrepreneurs will strengthen rather than dilute the province's culinary identity, just as centuries of cultural exchange have shaped the food traditions we celebrate today.





## Mission

**To develop world-class culinary experiences that celebrate Newfoundland and Labrador's food heritage, support local operators and producers, and deliver real value to visitors and communities.**

## Vision

Newfoundland and Labrador is celebrated as one of Canada's most distinctive culinary destinations, a place where food connects visitors to the land, the sea, and the people who have shaped our traditions for generations.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, that connection is built on wild harvests, cold ocean waters, genuine hospitality, and living traditions, and it returns lasting value to the operators, producers, and communities who sustain it.



# Our Goals

The three strategic goals must advance together. Brand awareness without quality experiences creates disappointment. Excellent experiences without marketing remain undiscovered. Individual operators working in isolation miss the benefits of collective action. Success requires coordination across all three fronts.

## 1. Brand Development and Destination Recognition

**Goal: Launch the Seasoned NL brand, build awareness among target markets, and establish quality standards that create visitor confidence and operator commitment.**

A recognizable culinary brand does two things at once. It helps visitors understand what to expect when seeking food experiences in the province, and it helps operators communicate their value in a crowded market. The Seasoned NL brand has been developed to capture what is genuinely distinctive about our culinary identity: the seasonality of our ingredients, the depth of knowledge our operators bring to their work, and the authenticity of food traditions that are practiced because they matter, not because they look good on Instagram. Beyond marketing, the brand serves as a framework for operator development, supporting businesses in refining their pricing structures, strengthening their business models, and building the human resource capacity they need to compete confidently in a market where visitor expectations are rising, and operational costs are not going down.

The work under this priority moves from brand launch and standards deployment in Year 1, through seasonal campaign execution and culinary calendar refinement in Year 2, to brand evaluation and refresh in Year 3. Throughout, media and trade engagement supports growing awareness in target markets.

# Our Goals

### 2. Experience Development and Capacity Building

**Goal: Expand and enhance the portfolio of culinary experiences available to visitors, build operator capacity to deliver those experiences well, and extend the tourism season through targeted programming and infrastructure support.**

Brand development creates demand. Experience development makes sure we can meet it. If the marketing works and visitors arrive expecting memorable food experiences, we need operators who are ready, open, and delivering. The actions under this priority range from training to culinary trail development. What connects them is a focus on the operator and the visitor: what does the operator need to succeed, and what does the visitor need to have an experience worth remembering?

A recurring theme here is the tension between ambition and readiness. We want more culinary experiences across more regions and more months of the year. But experiences that are not ready for market do more harm than good. An underwhelming foraging tour or a half-hearted farm visit does not just disappoint one visitor; it shapes how they talk about the province to everyone they know. So, the emphasis throughout is on quality first, expansion second. Get the experience right, then grow it.

### 3. Cross-Sector Collaboration and Leadership

**Goal: Connect tourism operators with agricultural producers and food artisans and manufacturers, establish leadership networks, and foster the kind of collaboration that strengthens the entire culinary ecosystem and keeps economic benefits local.**

Culinary tourism sits at the intersection of several sectors: tourism, agriculture, fisheries, food processing, and hospitality. A chef who wants to source local lamb needs a relationship with a farmer. A foraging tour operator benefits from knowing what agricultural producers nearby can offer for a follow-up experience. A brewery looking to attract visitors has more to gain when the restaurant next door is also participating in the culinary trail.

These connections do not happen automatically. Operators in different sectors often do not know each other, attend different events, and belong to different associations. The actions under this priority create the spaces and structures for those connections to form, establishing a leadership network that can sustain collaboration beyond the life of this project.

*For detailed actions for each goal, refer to Appendix A: Implementation Plan.*



# Value Proposition for Operators

This plan asks a lot of the province's food and beverage businesses. It asks them to adopt a new brand, embrace quality standards, participate in training, and open their doors to cross-sector collaboration. This only works if the value flows both ways.

Seasoned NL is designed to give operators something they cannot easily build on their own: a coordinated provincial platform that works on their behalf. Here is what participation offers:

### Marketing Exposure

Individual operators rarely have the resources to market beyond their own front door. Seasoned NL changes that. Participating operators will be featured in Seasoned NL within culinary trail routes and in destination marketing, putting them in front of visitors who are actively looking for their next food experience. The brand does the heavy lifting that most operators cannot do on their own.

### Training and Capacity Building

Operators will have access to practical training in areas they have told us will matter most: pricing strategies, experience design, food photography, digital marketing, culinary storytelling, and local sourcing. Training will be delivered through regional workshops, webinars, and an online resource library that is designed to be accessible to operators across the province. The goal is not to add to the workload but to sharpen the skills that directly improve the bottom line.

### Revenue Opportunity

Culinary tourism drives spending. Visitors motivated by food tend to spend more, stay longer, and travel more widely within a destination. Seasonal campaigns and culinary trails are designed to bring visitors to businesses during shoulder and off-peak periods, when every additional cover counts. Trail inclusion, seasonal flagship events, and coordinated marketing create new revenue pathways that operators benefit from simply by participating.

### Culinary Sector Network Access

Operating in isolation is one of the biggest challenges facing food and beverage businesses in the province. Seasoned NL connects operators to one another through digital platforms, to local producers through farm-to-table events and online resources, and to the broader tourism ecosystem through DMO partnerships and the Culinary Tourism Summit. These connections lead to practical outcomes: new sourcing relationships, shared learnings, mentorship, and a collective voice that is stronger than any one business on its own.



## Evaluating Implementation

A plan this ambitious requires honest, ongoing evaluation. We need to know what is working, what is not, and why, so we can adjust rather than discovering at the end of the plan period that we missed the mark. Success will be measured against the outcomes and indicators established in the province's tourism strategy, supplemented by project-specific metrics.

### Guiding Principles for Measurement

**Measure what matters, not what is easy.** The most important outcomes (visitor satisfaction, operator viability, community benefit) are harder to measure than outputs (workshops delivered, operators onboarded). We will track both, but we will not confuse activity with impact.

**Build measurement into the work.** Data collection will be part of how initiatives operate.

**Be honest about attribution.** Tourism visitation and spending are influenced by many factors beyond this plan. We will measure our direct outputs and immediate outcomes with confidence.

We will resist claiming credit for changes we cannot demonstrate we caused.



## Risks and Mitigation

Every plan carries risks. We must name them up front and understand how we prepare to respond when things do not go as expected.

| Risk | Mitigation |
|---|---|
| **Continued slow recovery of the food and beverage sector**<br>**Likelihood: High**<br>**Impact: High** | Prioritize actions that support operator viability. Recognize that food and beverage businesses, however pressured, are where visitors experience the province's culinary identity every day. Design programming that strengthens these businesses rather than adding burden to them. |
| **Labour shortages limit operator capacity**<br>**Likelihood: High**<br>**Impact: High** | Design programs that work with realistic staffing levels. Coordinate with workforce development partners and provincial workforce projects. |
| **Seasonal closures undermine marketing**<br>**Likelihood: High**<br>**Impact: High** | Culinary calendar must honestly reflect availability. Pop-up and shoulder-season programs address gaps. Do not market what is not there. |
| **Low operator uptake of Seasoned NL brand**<br>**Likelihood: Medium**<br>**Impact: High** | Make participation genuinely valuable (marketing benefits, community building, initiative inclusion). Keep administrative burden low. Communicate the "how to" in practical, business-level terms. |
| **Uneven regional capacity**<br>**Likelihood: Medium**<br>**Impact: Medium** | Acknowledge differences openly. Use early-adopter clusters to develop models. Ensure broad geographic representation in Leadership Network. |
| **Visitor expectations outpace readiness**<br>**Likelihood: Medium**<br>**Impact: Medium** | Quality standards and training will mitigate this. Marketing efforts will be phased to match experience development. Our plan is to under-promise and over-deliver. |
| **Cross-sector partnerships difficult to sustain**<br>**Likelihood: Medium**<br>**Impact: Medium** | Start with willing partners and clear mutual benefit. Build relationships through repeated, low-barrier events. Track and communicate economic value to both sides. |



# Conclusion: A Destination Worth Tasting

Newfoundland and Labrador's culinary sector is at a point where important decisions must be made if we are to succeed. The global culinary tourism market is growing at a compound annual rate of nearly 20% (Grand View Research, 2026). Traveller preferences have shifted decisively toward the authentic, participatory, and place-based experiences that match our strengths (Booking.com, 2025). The foundational work of Hospitality Newfoundland & Labrador's Culinary Tourism project over the past year has positioned us to act. The question is no longer whether to invest in culinary tourism development, but how quickly and effectively we can execute.

The opportunity before us is clear. The initiatives are defined, and the partnerships are in place. What we do next will determine whether Newfoundland and Labrador becomes known not just as a place of stunning landscapes and rich culture, but as a culinary destination where food is the pathway to understanding who we are.



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# Appendix A: Implementation Plan

## Partner Context

This plan is built for Newfoundland and Labrador's culinary sector – the operators, producers, chefs, and food artisans and manufacturers whose work defines the visitor experience. Everything in this implementation plan is designed to strengthen their capacity, extend their reach, and support their viability. Ultimately, this work will succeed only if industry embraces it as their own.

It operates within the framework of the province's tourism strategy. Newfoundland and Labrador's tourism strategy identifies culinary experiences as one of four priority experience development categories, alongside arts and culture, Indigenous, and nature-based experiences. Critically, it calls for a comprehensive, province-wide approach to culinary development.

All partners within the Implementation Group (IG), including TCAR; JGRD; ACOA; Hospitality Newfoundland & Labrador; and the DMOs share responsibility for advancing the goals of the province's tourism strategy. This plan contributes directly to the Performance Measurement Framework (PMF) established by the IG, which defines the success indicators, data sources, and outcomes against which collective progress is measured. This plan will serve as the roadmap for the implementation phase of the Culinary Tourism Development Project (CTDP).

**Priorities and Plans, 2026 to 2030**

This appendix lays out the operational plan for the next five years. It takes the vision and strategic priorities and turns them into specific actions with timelines and responsibilities.

The actions here are designed to build on each other. Early work creates the foundation for later initiatives. A brand launch in Year 1 creates the identity that a culinary trail needs in Year 2. Nothing in this plan stands alone, and progress in one area supports progress across the others.



## Guiding Principles

Established through the CTDP, these principles will guide all actions under this plan:

**Whole-Sector Approach:** This plan is for the entire food and beverage sector, not a select group. Brick-and-mortar restaurants are as central to this work as signature experiences and festivals.

**Authenticity:** Experiences must be rooted in genuine place-based food culture. Food traditions in this province are practiced because they matter, not because they look good on social media.

**Product First:** Experience development is the foundation the rest of this plan builds on. We get the culinary product ready first, then scale brand and marketing to meet the demand it creates. Strong experiences and operator readiness come before the push to promote them.

**Under-Promise, Over-Deliver:** We would rather exceed expectations than set them too high. Marketing grows in step with what operators can genuinely deliver, so visitors get more than they were promised.

**Community Benefit:** Growth must reach rural and remote communities, Indigenous peoples, and small-scale producers, not just urban centres.

**Sustainability:** Development must respect ecological limits, promote responsible sourcing, and support long-term sector viability.

**Ground-Up and Top-Down:** The best ideas come from operators and communities. This plan works at the local and regional level while connecting to provincial and national strategies.

**Building on Success:** Newfoundland and Labrador is not starting from scratch. This plan builds on what already works and finds ways to amplify it.

**Evidence-Based:** Actions are informed by research, surveys, and analyses conducted during the foundational year, and will be evaluated against the outcomes established in the PMF within the province's emerging tourism strategy.

# Goal 1: Brand Development and Destination Recognition

Goal: Launch the Seasoned NL brand, build awareness among target markets, and establish quality standards that create visitor confidence and operator commitment.

### Action 1.1: Finalize and Launch the Seasoned NL Brand to Operators

Complete brand development including visual identity, messaging framework, brand guidelines, and marketing collateral. Coordinate with TCAR to ensure alignment with provincial tourism marketing. The brand launch follows a deliberate sector-first approach: operators and sector partners receive the brand standards (Action 1.2) before consumer-facing marketing begins. The brand needs to feel like it belongs to the sector, not to a government office, so the launch should involve operators directly and visibly.

**2026**
Launch and deploy brand to industry.

**2027**
Build awareness and integrate into campaigns.

**2028**
Evaluate and refresh creative.

**2029**
Brand maturity, second-generation assets.

**2030**
Comprehensive evaluation of brand, sustainability model development.

### Action 1.2: Deploy the Seasoned Quality Standards

The Seasoned NL quality standards framework was developed during the foundational year (2025) and defines what it means to be a Seasoned NL operator. The standards focus on qualities that will enhance our overall culinary ecosystem, values that matter to visitors and to the integrity of the brand: local sourcing, storytelling, visitor experience quality, and authenticity. This is not a facility rating system or a checklist of equipment requirements. It is about whether an operator is genuinely committed to delivering excellent food experiences and invested in the big picture.

**2026**
Vet standards, launch to industry, onboard operators.

**2027**
Expand uptake and gather operator feedback.

**2028**
Refine standards based on two years of application.

**2029**
Renewal cycle. Explore expansion.

**2030**
Standards embraced by industry and embedded as sector norm.





### Action 1.3: Enhance Operator Online Presence

Equip culinary operators with the tools and training to be discovered online. This includes listings management, photography, search optimization, and visibility on AI-based search platforms. Support operators in strengthening their presence on NewfoundlandLabrador.com and collaborate with TCAR to develop visitor-facing Seasoned NL content connected to the Regional Culinary Calendar (Action 1.4).

**2026**
Digital presence training delivered across all regions.

**2027**
Training expanded, collaboration with TCAR begins.

**2028**
Develop content tied to project initiatives and campaigns.

**2029**
Evaluate digital readiness gains, refresh training. TCAR marketing collaboration continues.

**2030**
Culinary content embedded in ongoing provincial destination marketing.

### Action 1.4: Development of Regional Culinary Calendar and Seasonal Flagship Initiatives

Map existing and emerging seasonal culinary opportunities across the province into a marketing calendar that positions seasonal scarcity as a premium asset rather than a limitation. Snow crab season, berry harvests, moose hunting, capelin roll, wild food foraging windows, and other seasonal moments become the anchors of targeted campaigns that drive shoulder-season visitation.

**2026**
Culinary calendar developed.

**2027**
Signature seasonal assets identified. First seasonal campaigns launched.

**2028**
Campaign performance assessed. Seasonal flagships expanded.

**2029**
Calendar becomes a standing annual tool.

**2030**
Season extension impact evaluated against provincial tourism targets.

### Action 1.5: Enhance Media and Travel Trade Engagement

Develop culinary-specific tools and content that support TCAR and DMOs in their media and travel trade activities. Prepare culinary itineraries, operator profiles, and storytelling assets for use in familiarization tours, trade shows such as Rendez-vous Canada, and travel media outreach. Support partners in building relationships with tour operators who specialize in culinary and experiential travel.

**Timeline:**

This is ongoing, collaborative work that builds over the life of the project and expands as the brand matures and the portfolio of bookable culinary experiences grows. Early efforts focus on working closely with partners to identify established operators and signature experiences; later phases can showcase newer offerings, the Ale Trail, the Taste Trail, and seasonal flagships.

## Goal 2: Experience Development and Capacity Building

Goal: Expand and enhance the portfolio of culinary experiences available to visitors, build operator capacity to deliver those experiences well, and extend the tourism season through targeted programming and infrastructure support.

### Action 2.1: Deploy Operator Training and Capacity Building Initiatives

Deliver training programs focused on the practical skills operators need to create and deliver strong culinary experiences. This includes culinary storytelling, experience design, local sourcing relationships, pricing strategies, food photography, digital marketing, and visitor engagement. Training will be delivered through a mix of in-person regional workshops and online resources, recognizing that operators in rural areas cannot always travel to attend sessions. Regional culinary clusters are priority locations for in-person workshop delivery because the concentration of operators makes sessions more efficient and builds peer relationships that last beyond the training room.

| 2026 | 2027 | 2028 | 2029 | 2030 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Foundational training delivered across regions. | Specialized and advanced training. Educational institution partnerships explored. | Peer-led learning formats piloted. | Peer learning expanded. Training sustainability model developed. | Training embedded in ongoing sector development. |

### Action 2.2: Support Peak- and Non-Peak-Season Culinary Programming

Support DMO-led dining initiatives, experiences, and marketing campaigns that increase the availability and quality of dining experiences during peak and off-peak months. Regional culinary clusters are the primary delivery geography for these programs because the concentration of willing operators in a defined area makes coordinated programming viable. Events supported under this action should align with Seasoned NL principles by incorporating local sourcing visibility, menu storytelling, and data collection that feeds the broader monitoring framework.

| 2026 | 2027 | 2028 | 2029 | 2030 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Visitor journey mapped for gaps and opportunities. | Initial pop-up events launched across two clusters. | Regional expansion. Replicable program model documented. | Programs embedded in DMO / product development annual planning. | Sustainability and revenue impact assessed. |

### Action 2.3: Support Year-Round Culinary Programming (Urban Regions)

A healthy year-round culinary sector is a precondition for delivering on visitor-facing promises. When year-round culinary operators struggle to make ends meet during their off-peak seasons, it directly impacts our overall food and beverage landscape and culinary tourism product. To offset some of the loss experienced in the winter season, marketing campaigns and dining programs will be delivered to target residents to increase revenue.

**2026**
Program designed and delivered in pilot area.

**2027**
Program reviewed and expanded to additional urban centres.

**2028**
Programs refined.

**2029**
Year-round programming established in urban centres.

**2030**
Review and monitor.

### Action 2.4: Develop Two Province-Wide Culinary Trails – The NL Ale Trail and The NL Taste Trail

Develop two complementary, province-wide culinary trails as a single, coordinated action: the NL Ale Trail*, connecting breweries, distilleries, cideries, taprooms, and other craft beverage producers; and the NL Taste Trail*, connecting restaurants, farm-to-table experiences, and signature culinary destinations. Designing both trails together allows them to share a single design methodology, one digital platform, and one brand architecture, while telling two distinct stories about how visitors experience Newfoundland and Labrador through what it pours and what it serves.

Both trails give visitors a structure for planning itineraries, encourage travel beyond traditional hubs, and create collaborative marketing opportunities among participating operators. Touring for both will prioritize regional culinary clusters where visitor services are concentrated, so travellers find a broader food-and-beverage experience when they arrive. The launch of both will honestly reflect what is open and visitor-ready in each season, consistent with the principle of quality first, expansion second.

*Names are temporary placeholders.

**2026**
Confirm the trail design approach (in-house, external / RFP, or hybrid).**

**2027**
Both trails launched with a coordinated marketing campaign; physical and digital materials deployed.

**2028**
Trails assessed for visitation impact. Participation expanded.

**2029**
Second-phase routing and seasonal programming added. Lessons feed the Regional Trail Development Toolkit.

**2030**
Trails operating as self-sustaining initiatives. Long-term model established.

**Engage operators and define participation criteria for both trails. Design routes. Develop trail names and brand identity with marketing partners and begin the shared digital infrastructure build.



### Action 2.5: Create a Regional Culinary Trail Development Toolkit

Develop a toolkit that enables DMOs to create regionally specific thematic culinary trails suited to their local assets, capacity, and visitor profile. The toolkit provides the methodology, templates, digital infrastructure, marketing frameworks, and operational guidance needed to plan, launch, and sustain a regional trail without starting from scratch.

Potential regional culinary trails might include a wild-food trail on the west coast, an agritourism trail in areas with farming clusters, a seafood trail along the northeast coast, or heritage-food trails connecting communities with distinctive preservation and preparation traditions. The specific culinary trails are for DMOs and their communities to determine based on what is genuine, ready, and sustainable in their region. Regional culinary clusters provide natural anchor points for these trails, offering the density of experiences that a trail needs to be worth following.

The toolkit is built using the lessons and infrastructure developed through the NL Ale Trail and NL Taste Trail (Action 2.4). It includes guidance on operator recruitment and standards, route design, digital platform setup, marketing templates, visitor tracking methods, and sustainability planning.

**2026**
Not active.

**2027**
Toolkit development begins.

**2028**
Toolkit published and distributed. First regional pilots supported.

**2029**
Regional culinary trail pilots evaluated. Toolkit refined. Second wave supported.

**2030**
Regional culinary trails operating independently.

### Action 2.6: Support Indigenous Culinary Tourism Development

Support Indigenous communities in developing culinary tourism experiences on their own terms. This means providing resources, training, funding support, and partnership opportunities while fully respecting community leadership, cultural protocols, and the right of communities to determine what, if anything, they want to share with visitors.

This action is deliberately framed as support rather than development, because the initiative, direction, and ownership must come from Indigenous communities themselves. Work under this action is guided by the Newfoundland and Labrador Indigenous Tourism Association (NLITA) and Indigenous groups and reflects their priorities and timelines.

**Timeline:**
Ongoing engagement throughout 2026 to 2030, paced by community readiness and NLITA + Indigenous community guidance.

## Goal 3: Cross-Sector Collaboration and Leadership

Goal: Connect tourism operators with agricultural producers and food artisans and manufacturers, establish leadership networks, and foster the kind of collaboration that strengthens the entire culinary ecosystem and keeps economic benefits local.

### Action 3.1: Establish and Grow the Culinary Tourism Leadership Network

Create a network of culinary tourism leaders (operators, chefs, producers, DMO representatives, and other stakeholders) who share knowledge, coordinate efforts, and advance collective interests. The network provides informal mentorship for emerging operators, amplifies successful practices, and surfaces problems early.

**2026**
Network formed. Engagement platform activated.

**2027**
Network members leading collaborative initiatives.

**2028**
Network-led projects demonstrating sector impact.

**2029**
Succession planning.

**2030**
Self-sustaining network.

### Action 3.2: Facilitate Supplier-Producer Connections

Create practical opportunities for agricultural producers and tourism operators to meet, build relationships, and develop sourcing arrangements that benefit both sides. This includes hosting buyer-supplier events ("Farm-to-Table Connections" mixers), developing a local sourcing guide, facilitating business-to-business familiarization visits, and building an online asset-mapping tool that helps restaurants find local producers and helps producers find tourism business customers.

**2026**
First events and sourcing guides.

**2027**
Online asset-mapping tools launched. B2B FAM visits facilitated.

**2028**
Additional events. Local sourcing patterns assessed.

**2029**
Sourcing relationships deepening. Tool updated. Economic impact measured.

**2030**
Work is ongoing / supported.

### Action 3.3: Develop Best Practice Mission and Culinary Tourism Summit

A two-component flagship initiative built around knowledge exchange and sector connection.

Component 1, the Best Practice Mission: A focused delegation of six to eight Culinary Ambassadors visits a destination that has built a successful culinary tourism program (potential destinations include Ireland, Scotland, or PEI). The delegation learns firsthand how those places developed culinary trails, extended seasons, connected producers with operators, and built brands. The mission is not a junket; delegates commit to documenting learnings and presenting them back to the broader sector.

Component 2, the Culinary Tourism Summit: A provincial gathering bringing together stakeholders for learning sessions, networking, and collaborative planning. Mission delegates present their findings. External experts share best practices. The broader industry benefits from concentrated knowledge exchange in a format that also strengthens relationships and builds momentum.

**2026**
Best Practice Mission delivered. Learnings shared back with the sector.

**2027**
Summit feasibility study completed.

**2028**
Inaugural biennial Culinary Tourism Summit launched.

**2029**
Sustainability model assessed.

**2030**
Second Summit.



## Activity Map: Actions Across Five Years

The following map provides an overview of all actions across the five-year timeline. Yellow cells indicate primary focus for that year. Blue cells indicate ongoing or supporting activity. Detailed descriptions and timelines for each action are provided in the preceding sections.

### Priority 1: Brand Development and Destination Recognition

| Action | 2026: Establish | 2027: Expand | 2028: Strengthen | 2029: Scale | 2030: Sustain |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.1 Seasoned NL Industry Brand Launch** | Launch and deploy. | Build awareness and campaign integration. | Evaluate and refresh creative. | Brand maturity, second-generation assets. | Comprehensive brand evaluation. Sustainability model development. |
| **1.2 Seasoned Quality Standards** | Vet, launch, and onboard. | Expand uptake and gather operator feedback. | Refine standards based on two years of application. | Renewal cycle. Explore expansion. | Standards embedded as sector norm. |
| **1.3 Enhance Operator Online Presence** | Training delivered across regions. | Expand training. Begin TCAR content collaboration. | Develop content tied to culinary trails and campaigns. | Evaluate digital readiness gains. Refresh training. | Culinary content embedded in ongoing provincial destination marketing. |
| **1.4 Culinary Calendar and Seasonal Flagships** | Calendar developed. | Signature seasonal assets identified. First seasonal campaigns launched. | Campaign performance assessed. Seasonal flagships expanded. | Calendar becomes a standing annual tool. | Season extension impact evaluated against provincial tourism targets. |
| **1.5 Media and Travel Trade** | Develop tools and support. | Expand reach and showcase new offerings. | Assess impact, broaden Familiarization (FAM) trip scope. | Assess and deepen. | Culinary messaging embedded in ongoing provincial trade and media strategy. |

Primary focus  Ongoing / supporting  Not active

### Priority 2: Experience Development and Capacity Building

| Action | 2026: Establish | 2027: Expand | 2028: Strengthen | 2029: Scale | 2030: Sustain |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2.1 Operator Training** | Foundational training delivered across regions. | Specialized and advanced training. Educational institution partnerships explored. | Peer-led learning formats piloted. | Peer learning expanded. Training sustainability model developed. | Training embedded in ongoing sector development. |
| **2.2 Support Peak and Non-Peak Programming** | Visitor journey mapped for gaps and opportunities. | Initial pop-up events launched across two clusters. | Regional expansion. Replicable program model documented. | Programs embedded in DMO / product development annual planning. | Sustainability and revenue impact assessed. |
| **2.3 Support Year-Round Programming** | Program designed and delivered in pilot urban area. | Program reviewed and expanded to additional urban centres. | Programs refined. | Year-round programming established in urban centres. | Review and monitor. |
| **2.4 NL Ale Trail & NL Taste Trail** | Planning and operator engagement. Trail routes designed. Digital infrastructure begins. | Culinary trails launched with marketing campaign. Physical and digital materials deployed. | Culinary trails assessed for visitation impact. Participation expanded. | Second-phase routing and seasonal programming added. Lessons feed trail toolkit. | Culinary trails operating as self-sustaining initiatives. Long-term model established. |
| **2.5 Regional Culinary Trail Toolkit** | | Toolkit development begins. | Toolkit published and distributed. First regional pilots supported. | Regional culinary trail pilots evaluated. Toolkit refined. Second wave supported. | Regional culinary trails operating independently. |
| **2.6 Indigenous Culinary Tourism** | Engage and support. | Engage and support. | Engage and support. | Engage and support. | Engage and support. |

## Priority 3: Cross-Sector Collaboration and Leadership

| Action | 2026: Establish | 2027: Expand | 2028: Strengthen | 2029: Scale | 2030: Sustain |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **3.1 Leadership Network** | Network formed. Engagement platform activated. | Network members leading collaborative initiatives. | Network-led projects demonstrating sector impact. | Succession planning. | Self-sustaining network. |
| **3.2 Supplier-Producer Connections** | First events and sourcing guide. | Online asset mapping tool launched. B2B FAM visits facilitated. | Additional events. Local sourcing patterns assessed. | Sourcing relationships deepening. Tool updated. Economic impact measured. | Work is ongoing / supported. |
| **3.3 Best Practice Mission and Summit** | Best Practice Mission delivered. Learnings shared with sector. | Summit feasibility study completed. | Inaugural Culinary Tourism Summit launched. | Sustainability model assessed. | Second summit. |

## Cross-Cutting

| Action | 2026: Establish | 2027: Expand | 2028: Strengthen | 2029: Scale | 2030: Sustain |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Regional Culinary Clusters** | Identify and engage clusters. | Identify and engage clusters. | Expand to additional clusters. Document model. | Cross-cluster learning facilitated. | Sustainability assessed. |
| **Monitoring & Evaluation** | Baseline and quarterly check-ins. | Annual review and adjust. | Mid-plan comprehensive review aligned with broader tourism PMF. | Annual review. Long-term outcome indicators assessed. | Final comprehensive evaluation. Legacy and sustainability recommendations. |

Primary focus  Ongoing / supporting  Not active



## Roles & Responsibilities

This plan depends on shared ownership. Every partner listed below brings something the others cannot, and the work moves forward because we move it together. The contributions below describe how we see those roles coming together, not a checklist of tasks assigned.

### Hospitality Newfoundland & Labrador: Project Lead

Project home and day-to-day lead. The CEO and CPO provide strategic direction, organizational alignment, and budget approval. The Project Lead serves as the connective tissue across the partnership, managing programming, carrying funding recommendations forward, reporting to funders and the Advisory Group, and coordinating marketing and product development alignment with TCAR.

### Advisory Group

Six regional voices with culinary tourism expertise. Test strategic thinking, validate findings, champion the work locally, and join working committees when their insight is needed.

### TCAR: Product Development

Central partner in shaping the province's culinary tourism product. Bi-weekly coordination through active phases, with ongoing engagement via Seasonal Network Planning Sessions.

### TCAR: Marketing

Leads provincial campaign development and execution, NewfoundlandLabrador.com integration, media buying, performance tracking, and the weaving of culinary stories into the broader destination narrative.

Hospitality Newfoundland & Labrador identifies market-ready businesses, builds the brand toolkit, coordinates campaign participation, maintains the verified business database, and supports businesses in registering for the Newfoundland and Labrador online portal.

### Regional DMOs

Closest to the ground. A designated DMO lead per region drives local delivery, identifies and supports businesses, engages community stakeholders, and loops regional insight back to the project team.

### Working Committees

Task-specific groups that form when needed and dissolve when the work is done, drawing from the Advisory Group, businesses, and technical experts.

### Technical Support

Specialists such as training providers, consultants, and marketing agencies engaged through focused, short-term contracts for specific deliverables.

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Specific coordination rhythms, points of contact, and joint planning cycles will be established with each partner as the plan moves into implementation.



# Appendix B: How This Plan Was Developed

This strategic plan is a deliverable of the CTDP, a two-year initiative led by Hospitality Newfoundland & Labrador, with support from TCAR, JGRD, and ACOA. The CTDP was established to drive tourism visitation and spending by developing and marketing the province's unique culinary offerings.

In developing this plan, we have sought to address three fundamental questions:

### Where are we now?

Newfoundland and Labrador possesses remarkable culinary assets, yet these remain fragmented and inconsistently available to visitors. Individual operators have achieved excellence, but the province lacks cohesive branding, consistent standards, and coordinated marketing. Seasonality remains a persistent challenge, with many culinary businesses operating only during peak summer months or struggling to make ends meet during the off-season. Connections between tourism operators and local food producers are underdeveloped, resulting in missed opportunities for authentic, place-based experiences.

### Where are we going?

By 2030, Newfoundland and Labrador will be recognized as a distinctive culinary destination where food experiences evoke a profound sense of place, season, and cultural heritage. The Seasoned NL brand will unite quality operators under shared standards, extending the tourism season through strategic programming that celebrates our unique culinary calendar. Visitors will encounter memorable food experiences across all regions of the province, supported by well-trained operators and robust connections between culinary tourism and local food production.

### How will we get there?

This Strategic Plan establishes three strategic priorities: Brand Development and Destination Recognition, Experience Development and Capacity Building, and Cross-Sector Collaboration and Leadership. These priorities are designed to advance together, with early, visible results in each area building the foundation for longer-term impact. Implementation will require sustained collaboration between government partners, industry associations, DMOs, and individual operators. Hospitality Newfoundland & Labrador will serve as the coordinating body, but success ultimately depends on collective ownership across the culinary tourism landscape.

# Appendix B:
# How This Plan Was Developed

### The Foundation: Year One of the CTDP

The first year of the project (2025) was dedicated to foundational work organized across five strategic areas: Research and Benchmarking, Brand Development, Stakeholder Coordination, Quality and Standards Development, and Business Supports. That foundational phase generated the evidence and stakeholder input that directly shapes the strategic direction, priorities, and actions in this document.

The plan's development involved direct engagement with operators, producers, DMOs, TCAR, government partners, and culinary advisors from every region of the province. It is further informed by best-practice reviews of comparable culinary tourism destinations, including British Columbia, Nova Scotia, PEI, Ireland, Scotland, and Iceland.

### How We Listened

This plan is grounded in direct engagement with the people who live and work in Newfoundland and Labrador's culinary tourism sector. Between April and November 2025, the project team engaged with operators, producers, DMOs, government partners, and culinary advisors from each region of the province through a combination of methods:

- Online operator surveys that reached 150 respondents, providing a broader read on capacity needs, seasonality, and interest in brand participation.
- Regional in-person engagement through tourism symposiums, industry sessions, and community events across several areas of the province.
- Direct engagement at the annual Hospitality Newfoundland & Labrador conference, including a dedicated food and beverage sector meeting and informal conversations with operators from across the province.
- A peer advisory group of six culinary sector leaders representing all five regions who met four times throughout the year to guide the direction of the work and pressure-test emerging recommendations.
- Targeted conversations with provincial and federal government partners, industry associations, and agricultural sector representatives to align the plan with adjacent strategies and programs.

Alongside this engagement, the project team completed a benchmarking scan of culinary tourism strategies in Nova Scotia, PEI, Québec, Ireland, Scotland, and New Zealand, focusing on brand architecture, quality assurance programs, governance and delivery models, seasonality, and approaches to linking tourism with local food production. Insights from this scan informed the design of the Seasoned NL brand, the proposed quality standards framework, and the implementation delivery model.

### From Evidence To Strategy

The themes that emerged most consistently across this body of work (the need for a unifying provincial brand, a significant capacity and confidence gap among smaller operators, a persistent disconnect between food producers and tourism businesses, and the untapped potential of the shoulder and winter seasons) became the three strategic priorities in this plan. The flagship initiatives were selected because each one addresses multiple themes at once and because stakeholders told us they would deliver visible, early momentum for the sector.


### Acknowledgements

Hospitality Newfoundland & Labrador would like to acknowledge the contribution of the following partners in the development of the Seasoned NL Strategic Plan:

The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation (TCAR)

The Department of Jobs, Growth and Rural Development (JGRD)

Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA)

### Advisory Group

Todd Perrin, Rabble Restaurant

Jeremy Charles, King Lobster

Pablo Martinez, The Bread & Cheese Country Inn

Nicole Torraville, Fogo Island Inn

Amanda Oake, Pollen Nation Farms

Andy Turnbull, Mamattuk / Royal Inn & Suites

### Project Team

Allison Connors, Project Manager

Juanita Ford, Chief Project Officer



Prepared by

HOSPITALITY
NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR