

Maine Office of Tourism

DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

A photograph of a man and a woman standing on a large, rocky outcrop. The man is crouching down, and the woman is standing next to him, both looking out over a vast, rolling landscape of green hills and mountains under a sky filled with soft, white clouds.

Maine
VISITMAINE.COM



Table of Contents

- 04** Executive Summary
- 06** Methodology
- 10** Macro-Economic Trends
- 16** Vision for the Maine Experience
- 18** Stewardship Principles
- 20** Destination Management Plan
- 27** Plan Action Steps
- 30** Core Planning Team
- 31** Acknowledgements

Executive Summary



Why are we doing this?

Tourism is an important economic engine for Maine, with an estimated 15.4 million visitors to the state in 2022 and direct expenditures of approximately \$8.6 billion.

The Maine Office of Tourism (MOT) remains committed to our core purpose of marketing the state of Maine as a travel destination but recognizes that while tourism is a critical component that fuels Maine's economy and creates jobs and opportunities, we must protect the DNA of our state now and for the future by balancing the visitor economy with stewardship of our natural resources and culture. The quality of life for our residents remains as important as a quality experience for our visitors.

Through the input of stakeholders, residents and visitors, we developed a Destination Management Plan that is sensitive to the long-term sustainability of our state and not solely dependent on high-volume growth. We centered destination stewardship that aligns with our recognized need to balance growth management with residential quality of life and to safeguard the inherent qualities that have always drawn people to Maine as a favorite new England destination.

Like many states, Maine is experiencing a significant rise in visitors traveling for outdoor recreation, raising the potential for overuse of popular sites and a less satisfactory visitor experience. Maine attracts loyal repeat visitors (78% of visitors have traveled to Maine at least twice and nearly one third of visitors have traveled to Maine more than 10 times), making it all the more important to preserve the quintessential Maine experience they have come to love.

Traditionally a drive destination, 80% of Maine visitors arrive by car. However, the state's two largest airports, Portland International Jetport and Bangor International Airport, have experienced a significant increase in new, non-stop air service in recent years, providing opportunities to attract visitors from these new air markets.

In response to these and other travel trends accelerated by the pandemic, including a growing desire for responsible travel opportunities, the Maine Office of Tourism will adjust our visitor outreach and industry support programs to align with Maine values and stewardship principles.

We look forward to how our role will evolve within the context of stewardship and with a clear vision for the future well-being of our state and residents outlined in this Destination Management Plan.

Who helped shape this?

MOT engaged Coraggio Group to guide the creation of the Maine Destination Management Plan in collaboration with representatives from the Maine Office of Tourism, relevant state agencies, local businesses, tourism industry organizations, community and cultural organizations, and other key stakeholders.

What did the process entail?

The three-phase plan development process—Get Clear, Get Focused, Get Moving—began with a discovery phase, where qualitative and quantitative research was analyzed in order to identify strengths, challenges, and opportunities related to the current state of Maine's tourism industry. This comprehensive and multi-faceted research approach identified key themes for areas of focus based on research insights from third-party data sets and custom research studies, as well as important insights from stakeholders, visitors, and residents, and is summarized in a comprehensive Situation Assessment.

With the Situation Assessment in hand, the planning work began and the vision, mission, stewardship principles, imperatives, and action steps took shape. Finally, the Get Moving Phase of the process prioritized Plan Imperatives and Action Steps, creating a clear actionable map to guide MOT in its commitment to destination stewardship.



Methodology



MOT and the State of Maine engaged Coraggio Group to guide the creation of the Maine Office of Tourism Destination Management Plan with input from representatives from the MOT team, relevant state agencies, tourism industry organizations, local businesses, cultural organizations, Maine residents, and other key stakeholders. This section describes the methodology used in each phase of work.

Phase 1 – Get Clear

The purpose of this discovery phase was to develop a comprehensive Situation Assessment, which would serve as the foundation for the development of the Plan. The development of the Situation Assessment included four steps:

1. Review of secondary research, relevant visitor data, and destination trends
2. Primary research of resident and visitor perceptions
3. Primary research of stakeholder perceptions across diverse subsectors
4. Situation Assessment development

Secondary Research

The Coraggio team worked in collaboration with MOT to analyze background data provided by the Maine Office of Tourism. A list of the background data leveraged in this analysis can be found here:

www.motpartners.com/destination-management-plan/

Downs & St. Germain, the research agency of record for MOT, partnered with them to identify key audiences for engagement and the most effective methods of outreach. The table below shows the tools used to engage each audience:

	Opt-In Surveys	Listening Sessions	One-on-one Interviews
Residents	X	X	
Visitors	X		
Stakeholders	X	X	X

Surveys

Coraggio and Downs & St. Germain administered three separate online surveys that yielded the following levels of participation, by respondent category:

613 Resident Responses

1,162 Visitor Responses

657 Industry Stakeholder Responses

Interviews

The team conducted one-on-one interviews, which captured qualitative insights from:

30 Industry Stakeholders

Listening Sessions

Coraggio facilitated nine listening sessions to gather insights on the challenges and opportunities facing the tourism industry in Maine. These listening sessions included one session dedicated to each tourism region, with five held in-person and four virtually, gathering qualitative insights from:

202 Industry Stakeholders

Situation Assessment

Coraggio's multifaceted research approach culminated in a set of themes that formed the baseline areas of focus for the development of this Plan.

View the complete Situation Assessment at

www.motpartners.com/destination-management-plan/

Themes

- Stakeholders believe that Maine's abundant natural resources and unique cultural heritage are important and fragile, requiring the advancement of a stewardship mindset and programs to ensure a future for Maine that can be enjoyed by both residents and visitors alike.
- Stakeholders see a need for investment in Maine's existing tourism infrastructure, as well as a focus on building new assets and resources to ensure readiness for future demands.
- Stakeholders identified a need to achieve greater balance in visitation—across geographic locations, and seasonality, as well as diversified experiences and product offering—to ensure all of Maine's residents and communities benefit from tourism.
- Stakeholders desire greater engagement, collaboration, and sharing of both resources and knowledge among and across state agencies, regions, communities, organizations, and other government entities in order to improve efficiency, ensure sustainability, and increase competitiveness.

- The future viability of Maine's tourism economy is dependent on engagement and collaboration with key public, private, and government partners to resolve significant industry workforce challenges.
- Stakeholders identified a need for greater focus on more inclusive and equitable representation to advance the position of Maine as welcoming to all.
- Opportunities exist to advance marketing and branding efforts that simultaneously highlight the authentic Maine experience and coordinate strategic product development throughout the state.
- There is a desire for MOT to evolve toward stewardship of the destination, becoming a catalyst for strategy and stakeholder collaboration in implementation of key initiatives across the state.

Phase 2: Get Focused

The Get Focused phase of the project was where the collaborative development of this Plan took place. Over seven planning sessions totaling more than 40 hours, Coraggio facilitated exercises and prioritization of Plan elements with the Core Planning team, and six hours with the Tourism Advisory Group, who reviewed Plan elements and provided feedback. They considered the following topics:

- Vision for the future of tourism in Maine
- Mission of the Maine Office of Tourism
- The core values that shape the culture of the Maine Office of Tourism
- Stewardship principles
- Strategic position of the Maine Office of Tourism
- High-Level Imperatives to guide the focus of the Maine Office of Tourism over the timeline of the Plan
- Measurable objectives and metrics
- Key initiatives

The Core Planning Team was the decision-making body with responsibility for developing Plan elements and making final decisions related to the content of the Plan. The Tourism Advisory Group made recommendations on draft content for each element of the Plan. Please see page 28 for a detailed list of planning participants.

Meetings with these two bodies included:

- 5 meetings with the Core Team to develop the Plan's content
- 2 meetings with the Advisory Group to refine and make content recommendations

Phase 3: Get Moving

The Get Moving phase was where specific action steps and a plan for collaborative impact were determined. This work is ongoing and will evolve over time. The Core Planning Team developed and prioritized specific actions that will further the vision for Maine's tourism future. This Destination Management Plan is the final product for this third phase of work.





Macro Travel Trends: Economic, Visitor, and Industry

Demand for travel is always changing. Being aware of the dynamic nature of the industry is critical for all destinations. This awareness allows for increased stewardship and sustainability within destinations, and more effective and impactful marketing and operational strategies.

This section of the report separates demand into two categories:

- **Demand Trends:** What general demand trends are relevant today and need to be considered?
- **Supply Trends:** Across the tourism industry, what key shifts are happening within accommodations, dining, retail, food and beverage, and attractions?

Demand Trends

Consumer Concern for Sustainability and Regenerative Travel

Environmental and social sustainability are becoming more important to a wide range of travelers. Expedia notes that 90% of consumers are looking for sustainable options when traveling. These travelers expect authentic commitment to sustainability, 7 out of 10 having avoided a destination due to skepticism that they were not actually committed to sustainability.¹

Business travelers are also looking for more sustainable options when traveling. Around 89% of businesses travel managers, their suppliers, and key stakeholders stated that sustainability was a priority for the business travel community.²

It is important to note that there is growing concern among people that aiming for sustainability is insufficient, that the focus of organizations should shift to regenerative activities. It is no longer enough to “not be bad;” rather, regenerative sustainability is a promise that efforts will be made to make things better.

Pent-Up Demand for Domestic Leisure Travel

Pent-up demand has begun to convert to actual trips and travelers look to spend their increased savings from the trips they couldn't take earlier in the pandemic. According to the U.S. Travel Association, the volume of domestic leisure trips recovered to pre-pandemic levels in 2022.³ Conversely, business travel is not expected to recover until 2024 and international visitation will lag behind 2019 until at least 2025. However, Maine has been experiencing some of the fastest recovery rates in the country regarding direct expenditures. Direct travel spending in Maine was 29% ahead of December 2019, while hotel demand was up 28%. This outpaces the national average of 3% in travel spending and 1% in hotel demand.

Two research firms are reporting that inflation concerns are having an impact on travel. A report from Destination Analysts in February 2023 indicated that 42% of American travelers say high travel prices have kept them from traveling in the past month⁴. According

to Longwoods International, about a third of American travelers said they intend to reduce retail purchases, reduce spending on entertainment and recreation and reduce the number of trips they are taking. Additionally, 30% of travelers surveyed said they would reduce the amount they spend on food and beverage, while 25% said they would not spend as much on lodging⁵.

Changing Business Travel

The circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic forced companies to reshape the way they operate, incorporating innovative ways to accomplish goals through web conferencing, remote working, and interactive digital platforms. Many companies are preferring a flexible work-from-home policy even as infection rates decline, and the workforce is opting for remote jobs that offer more flexibility with their lifestyle. Business travel, especially for shorter trips, has been widely replaced with more cost-effective virtual meetings on platforms such as Zoom and Teams. According to Morning Consult Data, 42% of frequent business travelers said in February 2022 that they'll never return to the road. This is an increase from 39% in October 2021⁶.

Tour Operators & Travel Agents

Many travelers are opting for privately organized itineraries through tour operators or travel agents who can not only offer private transportation and individualized guiding services, but also manage all the behind-the-scenes logistics. Travel agents and tour operators are becoming increasingly valuable in this era of uncertainty, filled with fast-changing pandemic requirements & protocols, shifting airline schedules, rental car scarcity, limited hotel inventory, and the “unknown” surrounding up-to-date recommendations.⁷ Even the most independent of travelers are opting for guidance and the reassurance that an experienced and knowledgeable travel agent provides. According to a poll conducted in June 2021 by the American Society of Travel Advisors, 76% of advisors are seeing an increase in customers compared with pre-pandemic levels, and 81% of advisors are hearing from travelers who have never used an advisor before.⁸

Experiential and Active Travel

The continued growth of experiential travel is expected to continue for the foreseeable future. Travelers continue to seek tourism products that allow them to experience the culture, heritage, nature, and food of the destination. In recent years, experiential travel has expanded to new dimensions. There has been a growth in wellness tourism that extends beyond spas to a wider range of healthy lifestyle activities.⁹ There has also been growing interest in transformative experiences designed to change travelers' perspectives.¹⁰

According to a Forbes study, more than 60% of Americans who took up a new activity during the pandemic say they intend to keep doing it long term.¹¹ Although these activities are varied, some of the most popular include hiking, running, and cycling.¹²

Rural Destinations

Rural destinations carried their popularity from 2020 into 2021 and beyond. Ninety percent of travel searches in 2020 were for rural areas and cabin rental searches are up 143% since 2019.¹³ Rural destinations accounted for 22% of all Airbnb's room nights globally in 2021, up from 10% in 2015.¹⁴ Family travel to rural destinations increased from 32% of family room nights to 42% of family room nights between 2019 and summer of 2021.¹⁵ COVID-19 shifted demand to areas perceived to have fewer people, fewer crowds, and open spaces where social distancing would be easier.

Rise in Short-Term Rentals

Airbnb has reframed its marketing and branding to adapt to new pandemic trends, including longer stays, preferences of social distancing, "work from anywhere" policies, and people's transformed lifestyles. Remote work has given people the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of travel without being tied to a particular office, which has resulted in Airbnb's strategy of focusing on delivering guests more flexibility.¹⁶ "Bleisure," or the combination of business and leisure travel, has been at an all-time high due to changing work dynamics. Employees are opting to add one- or two-week vacations to their business trips, bringing along the necessary equipment to work while away.¹⁷ Airbnb has reacted quickly, with 150 upgrades in 2021 and incorporating features for hosts such as Verified Wi-Fi (to test Wi-Fi speed). Airbnb had record earnings in Q4 of 2021 at \$1.5 billion, making it the best year in the company's history.¹⁸ The rise of short-term rentals is a multi-faceted issue, bringing opportunities but also challenges, particularly pressure on local housing markets and reduction in available workforce housing.

Millennial & Gen Z Purchasing Power

Millennials outnumbered baby boomers in 2019. There are now 75 million millennials, making up about 40% of America's working population. The combined population of millennials and Generation Z in the U.S.—those born in the late 1980s to early 2010s—is 166 million, or almost 51% of Americans. The oldest members of Gen Z are entering the workforce and soon these two generations will dominate purchasing power in America. This shift will bring with it new expectations, as these groups are significantly different than older generations. Millennials and Gen Z are more racially and ethnically diverse, more likely to have a college degree, and more familiar and comfortable with technology. They are also more likely to choose destinations that align with their values and to spend money on experiences over things. Destinations will need to rethink how they market to these groups and how their in-market experience meets their expectations.

Responsible Travel

Tied to the growth and influence of millennial and Gen Z travel, travelers are growing more interested in soulful, authentic, and sustainable travel options. They are more conscious of how and where they travel, the impacts they have and the experiences they take with them. A visitor's choice to travel can balance on the sustainability of a hotel, the authenticity of a destination, or any potential adverse environmental impacts of the trip.

Inclusive Travel & Recreation

Systemic discrimination has an important impact on the ways that people travel and the types of travel opportunities that are of most interest to them. For travelers facing structural inequalities, safety is a key part of their travel needs. Examples of safety-focused strategies include providing vacation rentals for Black travelers that are vetted and recommended by other Black travelers, and LGBTQ+ tours, and other cultural history attractions that can signal to visitors that they are in a safe space.¹⁹

In addition, travel organizations need to reflect the diversity of the United States at all organizational levels.²⁰ A survey conducted by the consulting firm MMGY Global found that Black travelers, particularly those in the United States, Canada, Britain, and Ireland, are keenly interested in how destinations and travel service providers approach diversity and have indicated that this approach has an influence on their travel decision-making.²¹

Supply Trends

Sustainable Tourism and Destination Stewardship

An increased focus on the sustainable development of tourism, driven by consumer concerns, industry trends, and community engagement, is leading to new approaches to destination marketing, management, and governance.

Sustainable development of tourism incorporates a strategic perspective as well as concern for immediate needs. It focuses on enhancing the quality of life of resident communities by maximizing benefits from tourism for the local economy, social and cultural life of the destination, and the environment. Finally, sustainable tourism development is collaborative and engages a range of stakeholders, including community members, the tourism industry, and visitors.

Destination Stewardship seeks to balance and meet the economic, environmental, and social/cultural needs of a destination with active participation from the public and private sectors as well as the local community.²² These new approaches address growing concerns that tourism in communities be developed sustainably to contribute to the quality of life of residents.²³

Workforce Shortages

In destinations across America, tourism industry employers are struggling to fill entry-level roles. This labor shortage has alternately been blamed on employers' unwillingness to meet higher wage expectations, lack of childcare options and shifting values and ideas about work that have flourished during the pandemic. In some cases, local housing prices have risen to the point where there simply aren't service industry workers who can afford to live in those places.

In response, many restaurants have reduced the hours or the number of days they are open, and hotels have reduced the number of rooms they make available. Additionally, for many tourism-oriented businesses and destinations, short-staffing may create conditions that erode brand equity as visitor experiences are negatively impacted.

The Great Resignation

A phenomenon of U.S. workers leaving jobs in droves began in 2021 and has received the moniker "The Great Resignation." Many of these people were in service jobs that supported the tourism industry, feeding the ongoing service workforce shortage. Knowledge workers are also leaving their jobs, which may impact destination organizations and management-level positions in the tourism industry.

Rapid ADR Growth at High-End Accommodations

In many destinations, accommodations providers are finding themselves pinched between surging demand for visitation and service-sector workforce shortages. In response, many hotels and other lodging properties have reduced the number of rooms available to be able to operate with fewer employees, while also raising daily rates to compensate. In the short term, these properties are even more profitable than they were in 2019 when they were running a higher occupancy but a lower daily rate. These inflated prices are not likely to be sustainable in the long run. For destinations, this introduces the risk that the costs of lodging will become incongruent with the visitor experience, potentially eroding brand equity in these popular places.

Restaurant Sector Recovery

The U.S. restaurant industry lost \$240 billion in 2020 and more than 110,000 businesses were closed temporarily or for good, particularly those without the backing of large chains or holding group balance sheets. This has shifted the brand, culture, and experience of many destinations while eroding authentic experiences. Preservation of authentic local options and innovative services—like creative outdoor experiences—will be a competitive advantage among travel destinations. As new coronavirus variants have emerged, the restaurant recovery has hit continued obstacles. Meanwhile, staffing shortages are challenging many restaurants to operate at full capacity, and slow or limited service may lead to brand erosion.

Short-Term Rentals

The Short-Term Rental (STR) market has been recovering, with 2021 being a mixed year of some growth fueled by pent-up demand, and some retraction fueled by two virus variants.²⁴ National occupancy for STRs for the year was expected to be 60.3%. AirDNA reported strong demand in 2022 following a growth reaching 19.8% YOY in December 2022, well in excess of the 16.7% YoY growth in November²⁵.

The growth of the STR market has led to both Airbnb and Vacasa undertaking IPOs. In 2020, Airbnb and Vrbo captured a combined 29% of lodging revenue nationwide.²⁶ Challenges to growth for the industry will include rising housing costs, limited available housing stock, community resistance and regulations, and increased hotel competition.

Threats to Natural Assets

Visitation to national and state parks and other outdoor attractions had a huge increase between 2020 and 2022 as travelers looked for destinations that support the need to spread out. Some destinations are rethinking their approach to the visitor industry by decreasing spending on marketing, focusing on responsible use of the outdoors, or spending money on marketing campaigns that try to divert tourists away from sensitive or overused areas. Destinations are also hearing from their local communities that the increase in visitors creates overcrowding and degradation to the natural environment. As one resident put it, "Although no one wants to stop tourism altogether, when we cannot enjoy our own home due to the crowds, we realize that we have become second-class citizens to the tourism industry."²⁷ The trend appears to continue, with the National Park Service reporting 312 million recreation visits in 2022, up 15 million visits (5%) from 2021 and up more than 30% since 2020. In Maine specifically in 2022, state parks experienced the second-highest visitation ever behind 2021 which had record visitation of 3.3 million.

Growing Community Engagement in Tourism Related Issues

Tourism presents a range of impacts on destination communities which can both improve and detract from local quality of life. For example, concerns about crowding, intrusive behaviors, and overtourism have led to bans on cruise ships and Airbnbs in some destinations. In its annual report, Skift noted that communities are key stakeholders in tourism development and that tourism development must lead to improved resident quality of life.²⁸

1. Sustainable Travel Study: Consumer Attitudes, Values, and Motivations in Making Conscientious Choices, Expedia Group Media Solutions, 2022.
2. State of Sustainability in the Global Business Travel Sector: Perceptions, Priorities, and opportunities to guide a greener future for business travel, Global Business Travel Association, 2022.
3. <https://www.ustravel.org/research/travel-forecasts>
4. <https://www.destinationanalysts.com/insights-updates/>
5. <https://longwoods-intl.com/news-press-release/american-travel-sentiment-study-wave-70>
6. <https://morningconsult.com/2022/03/03/when-it-comes-to-travel-blended-is-the-new-business/>
7. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-07-30/the-travel-agent-is-back-how-to-know-if-you-need-one-duringcovid>
8. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-07-30/the-travel-agent-is-back-how-to-know-if-you-need-one-duringcovid>
9. <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20200203-how-the-wellness-industry-is-taking-over-travel>
10. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/everettpotter/2017/08/16/transformed-by-travel-transformational-travel-takes-off/?sh=65432fe21baa>
11. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/larryolmsted/2022/02/21/the-future-of-travel-and-active-traveltrends-and-expert-tips/?sh=77941ac5f3ae>
12. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/larryolmsted/2022/02/21/the-future-of-travel-and-active-traveltrends-and-expert-tips/?sh=77941ac5f3ae>
13. <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/travel-logistics-and-transport-infrastructure/our-insights/covid-19-tourism-spend-recovery-in-numbers#>
14. <https://news.airbnb.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2021/05/Airbnb-Report-on-Travel-Living.pdf>
15. <https://news.airbnb.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2021/05/Airbnb-Report-on-Travel-Living.pdf>
16. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/suzannerowankelleher/2022/03/12/covidCOVID-changed-business-travel/?sh=3e7d636653a0>
17. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/suzannerowankelleher/2022/03/12/covidCOVID-changed-business-travel/?sh=3e7d636653a0>
18. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/suzannerowankelleher/2022/03/12/covidCOVID-changed-business-travel/?sh=3e7d636653a0>
19. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/27/travel/black-travelers-diversity-inclusion.html>
20. <https://www.fodors.com/news/news/heres-how-the-travel-industry-can-take-the-lead-in-fighting-asian-hate>
21. <https://industry.traveloregon.com/opportunities/events/conferences/oregon-governors-conference-on-tourism/bipoc-diversity-in-travel-consensus/>
22. Towards Destination Stewardship: Achieving Destination Stewardship through scenarios and a governance diagnostics framework, WTTC, 2021.
23. Megatrends Defining Travel in 2022, Skift, 2022.
24. <https://www.airdna.co/blog/2022-forecast-us-short-term-rental-outlook-report>
25. <https://www.airdna.co/monthly-market-review>
26. <https://www.hospitalitynet.org/opinion/4103832.html>
27. <https://www.sfgate.com/hawaii/article/overtourism-maui-hawaii-hana-audio-tours-travel-16338529.php>
28. Megatrends Defining Travel in 2022, Skift, 2022.



The Vision for The Maine Experience in 2032



We envision the future Maine Experience will enjoy destination assets, both old and new, that reflect committed stewardship of our most cherished places and experiences that align with our ethos and way of life. We imagine the Maine of 2032 to be the premier off-the-beaten-path destination for all who possess a love of nature and a passion for adventure. Future residents and visitors will enjoy Maine year-round, with outdoor activities across all seasons and ample access to recreational equipment and gear, places to eat, and places to stay. Maine will be known as a place where people of all backgrounds and ages can venture to find themselves and be one with the outdoors.

Maine's coastline and forests will continue to be the heart of the Maine experience. Maine's reputation will go beyond the outdoors to showcase its thriving arts & culture scene through established and new museums and art galleries. There will be new opportunities for visitors to learn about Maine's multifaceted history and ethnic fabric, including experiences to learn about and engage with Maine's indigenous communities and cultures.

Maine will be renowned for its revived downtowns and Main Streets, featuring local boutiques and talented 'makers' that put their passion into every product they create. Our culinary scene will include many farm-to-table experiences, where visitors can educate themselves on Maine's farming community while tasting fresh produce and food offerings at the farm. Maine will have an array of public markets and locally owned restaurants where visitors and locals can enjoy its world-renowned seafood.

A successful future for The Maine Experience will include access to robust infrastructure advancements. Consistent statewide broadband access will enable more visitors to work remotely, allowing them to envision Maine as their permanent home. Expanded roads and public transportation will provide visitors and residents with fast and safe access to rural areas of the state. Advances in infrastructure and technology will broaden transportation options from metropolitan hubs, such as New York and Boston, inviting visitors to escape the hustle-and-bustle in a blissful Maine getaway centered around charming, authentic towns and unspoiled nature.

We envision a future for Maine that ignites a sense of curiosity and adventure that inspires generations.



Vision

Maine ignites a sense of curiosity & adventure that inspires generations.



Mission

We pursue economic vitality for Mainers in balance with healthy communities and the natural environment through responsible marketing, community advancement, and fostering collaboration among Maine's tourism partners.



Position

The Maine Office of Tourism is a state agency that leads, convenes, and advances the state's tourism economy by providing resources and education to strengthen the tourism industry, fostering a culture of stakeholder collaboration, and developing strategy and best practices to promote and enhance the Maine experience for all.



Values

1. We are **passionate** about sharing Maine's extraordinary beauty and culture with the world.
2. We are **resourceful** in our work to support the people and places that make Maine one of a kind.
3. We are responsible **stewards** of Maine's communities, culture, resources, and natural assets.
4. We strive to **help** others in their efforts to advance the prosperity of Maine.
5. We cherish **teamwork** and collaboration as vital pathways to the successful attainment of our Vision for Maine tourism.

Stewardship Principles



In recent years there has been increasing scrutiny on the rationale of tourism promotion. While traditional thinking has assumed that growing numbers of visitors leads to increased economic benefits for destinations, communities are increasingly recognizing that to achieve the best possible outcomes from tourism, work must be done to optimize the benefits in balance – economic, social, and environmental.

The intended outcome of tourism promotion is to ultimately improve the quality of life of the people of Maine. Quality of life in communities is often described as a strong economy, a rich cultural and social life, and a healthy environment. It's important to recognize that dimensions of quality of life are embedded in discussions of sustainability and destination stewardship. Sustainable tourism and destination stewardship require a portfolio of actions—planning, programming, and performance management—that each contribute to the quality of life in Maine communities.

The Maine Office of Tourism believes that it is our responsibility to the people and places of Maine to act as catalysts and advocates for the things that make our state unique, to protect and sustain many generations beyond us. To that end, we commit to:



Empowering the industry through collaboration and education



Cultivating a unified brand and elevated visitor experience



Educating through impactful storytelling that captures the multi-faceted historical and cultural identity of Maine's communities



Preserving and celebrating the authentic character of Maine



Encouraging responsible practices and behaviors that protect the flora, fauna, and aquatic environments that are central to Maine's vitality



Balancing the promotion of Maine's iconic popular destinations with Maine's lesser-known hidden gems



Safeguarding Maine's natural assets, resources, and off-the-beaten-path locations



Upholding Maine's authenticity by showcasing Maine's local makers, artists, farmers, fishermen, and other independently owned businesses



Empowering Maine's tourism workforce to reinforce their confidence in career choice and livelihood



Destination Management Plan





Destination Management Imperatives describe the large areas of focus that the Maine Office of Tourism and its partners will work on to ensure the long-term vitality of the Maine experience for visitors and residents. This section provides details on each Imperative, including why each Imperative is important, which Initiatives will be undertaken, and how MOT will measure the Plan's success. MOT will manage implementation of these initiatives and the Plan as a whole.



Imperative 1
Optimize Long-Term Economic Impact



Imperative 4
Prioritize Collaboration and Partnership



Imperative 2
Promote Destination Stewardship



Imperative 5
Enhance Organizational Effectiveness



Imperative 3
Advance Destination Development



Imperative 1

Optimize Long-Term Economic Impact



For Maine to remain a premier destination for visitors, it must sustain quality of life for its residents. Seasonal visitation and lack of easy access to many parts of the state threaten the state's economy and require action.

Initiatives

- 1.1 Amplify the essence of Maine to attract travelers who are best aligned to Maine's experiences and ethos.
- 1.2 Invest in marketing intelligence to improve effectiveness and enhance return on investment.
- 1.3 Prioritize diversification of travelers to and within Maine.

Measures of Success

- Increased length of stay
- Increased per visitor spend
- Increased diversity of visitors
- Increased return on investment
- Increased shoulder season and off-season visitation
- Increased market share within New England



Imperative 2 Promote Destination Stewardship



Iconic, well-known areas of Maine are huge tourism drivers and continue to see an influx of visitors year over year. Ensuring that these areas do not lose their unique charm and are taken care of by visitors and residents must be a top priority.

Initiatives

- 2.1** Build awareness of Maine's destination stewardship principles among residents, travelers, and stakeholders to encourage engagement and adoption.
- 2.2** Develop and evolve industry programs to encourage destination stewardship.

Measures of Success

- Increased stakeholder awareness of destination stewardship
- Increased number of communities who pledge to stewardship principles
- Improved resident tourism sentiment score
- Increased media coverage of destination stewardship



The quality and authenticity of the Maine Experience requires intentional management and maintenance of our rich cultural, historical and community assets, in combination with the strategic development of necessary infrastructure and amenities that will ensure a quality experience for residents and visitors alike.

Initiatives

- 3.1** Establish and maintain a robust & accurate inventory of tourism assets.
- 3.2** Support and expand programs that improve tourism experience and facilitate product development.
- 3.3** Advocate for necessary infrastructure investment.

Measures of Success

- Optimized number of tourism-ready assets in target categories and locations
- Improved quality rating of existing assets and infrastructure
- Increased traveler Net Promoter Score¹

¹The Net Promoter Score is a measurement of consumer loyalty and whether Maine's visitors are likely to recommend Maine as a travel destination.



Imperative 4

Prioritize Collaboration and Partnership



MOT will need to partner with adjacent organizations to accomplish larger goals that require a collective effort. Acting as a liaison for the industry to collaborate with partner organizations, such as the Department of Transportation, Department of Agriculture, Department of Outdoor Recreation, Hospitality Maine, etc. will ensure a more unified effort.

Initiatives

- 4.1 Evaluate & expand stakeholder communication & engagement strategy.
- 4.2 Build partnership network & identify collaboration opportunities.

Measures of Success

- Increased partner engagement in MOT programs
- Improved impact and efficiency of MOT programs (more partners served with same or fewer resources)
- Increased number and diversity of new stakeholders and partner organizations
- Increased number of collaboration projects between stakeholders
- Increased stakeholder understanding and awareness of MOT's function



The Maine Office of Tourism is dedicated to evolving its leadership approach in order to ensure its team fosters a healthy organizational culture and is equipped to do its best work.

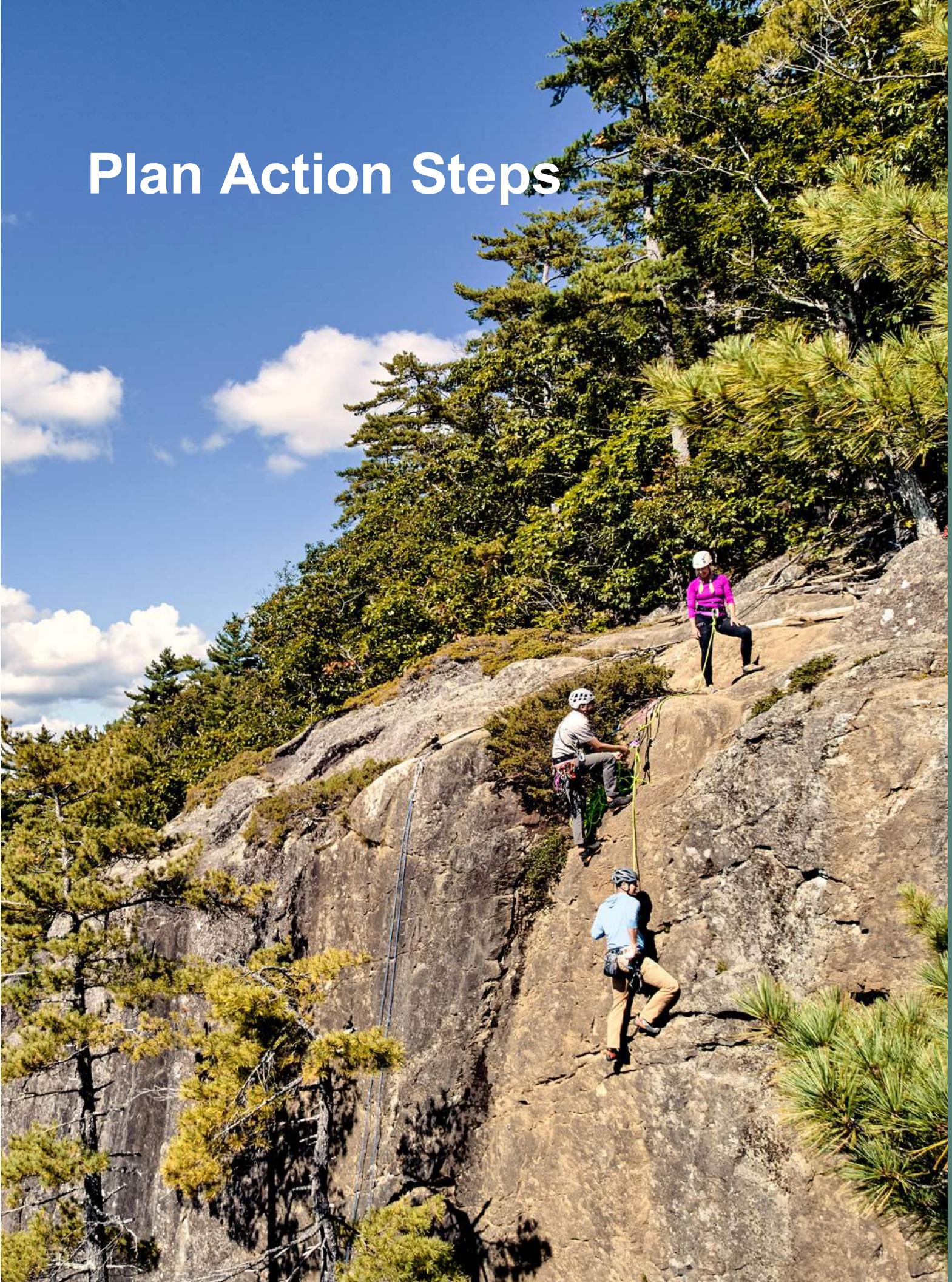
Initiatives

- 5.1** Align MOT team tools and resources in support of strategic priorities.
- 5.2** Foster positive and productive MOT team culture and work processes.
- 5.3** Strategically invest in MOT staff professional development.

Measures of Success

- Improved employee engagement score (Q12)
- Increased stakeholder satisfaction of MOT

Plan Action Steps



Phase 3: Get Moving

In the third and final phase of planning, we turn our attention to the ongoing implementation of the specific actions and priorities the Plan identifies as critical to achieving the Vision for the Maine Experience. Over the next 1-2 years, the Maine Office of Tourism and our partners will undertake a set of strategic actions, combining immediate action steps for urgent issues with ones designed to lay the groundwork towards building a strong and balanced tourism economy in Maine. The plan is designed to evolve and form the foundation of a 5-year strategic plan for 2024-2028.

Imperative	Initiative	Action Steps	
 Optimize Long-Term Economic Impact	1.1 Amplify the essence of Maine to attract travelers who are best aligned to Maine's experiences and ethos.	1.1a	Refresh Maine brand look and feel
	1.2 Invest in marketing intelligence to improve effectiveness and enhance return on investment.	1.2a 1.2b 1.2c 1.2d	Redesign VisitMaine.com Create new travel planning content Develop standard reports Utilize data to inform strategic decision making Investigate and implement new data programs Align existing research to Destination Management Plan
	1.3 Prioritize diversification of travelers to and within Maine.	1.3a 1.3b 1.3c	Determine accessibility capabilities and limitations Conduct diversity training for MOT staff and industry stakeholders Research and develop diverse and inclusive marketing and PR plan
 Promote Destination Stewardship	2.1 Build awareness of Maine's destination stewardship principles among residents, travelers, and stakeholders to encourage engagement and adoption.	2.1a 2.1b 2.1c	Integrate sustainable travel opportunities into MOT marketing Track positive economic impact in Maine, and adverse impacts on the environment Develop communication plan for sharing
	2.2 Develop and evolve industry programs to encourage destination stewardship.	2.2a 2.2b	Create statewide stewardship messaging and tools for business and industry use Help communities create community stewardship projects for residents and visitors

 <p>Advance Destination Development</p>	3.1 Establish and maintain a robust and accurate inventory of tourism assets.	3.1a 3.1b	Engage with community, regional representatives, and other state agencies to gain insight into shared data use Build SOP for continued data growth and maintenance
	3.2 Support and expand programs that improve tourism experience and facilitate product development.	3.2a 3.2b 3.2c 3.2d	Develop introduction to tourism experience and product development for regions, local organizations, industry associations, etc Examine and continue Community Destination Academy to identify opportunities for expansion Re-visit destinations that have completed Community Destination Academy programs to evaluate progress and needs Expand existing grant program to help communities incorporate stewardship programs
	3.3 Advocate for necessary infrastructure investment.	3.3a	Engage other state agencies that develop infrastructure (Maine Dept. of Transportation, Parks & Lands, etc.)
 <p>Prioritize Collaboration and Partnership</p>	4.1 Evaluate and expand stakeholder communication and engagement strategy.	4.1a 4.1b 4.1c	Conduct analysis of current engagement tactics (industry newsletter, Governor's Conference on Tourism, stakeholder group meetings) Enhance formats to be more interactive and engaging Develop success measurements and set benchmarks
	4.2 Build partnership network and identify collaboration opportunities.	4.2a 4.2b 4.2c	Engage and align with stakeholder partners Engage and align with state agency partners Engage and align with marketing partners
 <p>Enhance Organizational Effectiveness</p>	5.1 Align MOT team tools and resources in support of strategic priorities.	5.1a 5.1b	Identify and implement the most appropriate shared work processes and tools Explore opportunities to improve diversity among vendors
	5.2 Foster positive and productive MOT team culture and work processes.	5.2a 5.2b 5.2c	Conduct regular out-of-office retreats Create detailed descriptions of Values for implementation Conduct training on work styles and utilize learnings in daily work
	5.3 Strategically invest in MOT staff professional development.	5.3a 5.3b	Explore existing and new professional development opportunities Create and maintain a consistent schedule of in-person MOT staff meetings that include team professional development

Core Planning Team

- **Steve Lyons** – Director, Maine Office of Tourism
- **Hannah Collins** – Deputy Director, Maine Office of Tourism
- **Donna Moreland** – Destination Development Specialist, Maine Office of Tourism
- **Jennifer Geiger** – Communications Manager, Maine Office of Tourism
- **Chiara Moriconi** – Senior Tourism Officer, Maine Office of Tourism
- **Karen Carberry Warhola** – Director, Maine Film Office
- **Micki Mullen** – Marketing Manager, Maine Office of Tourism
- **Christine Bratcher** – Development Project Officer, Maine Office of Tourism
- **Abbe Levin** – Cultural Tourism Consultant
- **Charlene Williams** – President, Marshall Communications and long-time MOT collaborator
- **Carolann Ouellette** – Director, Department of Outdoor Recreation

Consultant Team

- **Michelle Janke** – Partner, Coraggio Group
- **Sara Meaney** – Principal & Travel & Tourism Practice Lead, Coraggio Group
- **Ninwa Hanna** – Associate Principal, Coraggio Group
- **Dr. Jonathon Day** – Sustainable Tourism Expert
- **Joseph St. Germain** – President, Downs & St. Germain Research
- **Phillip Downs** – Senior Partner, Downs & St. Germain Research

Acknowledgements

The Maine Office of Tourism and the State of Maine wish to thank the following individuals who collectively dedicated hundreds of hours to the creation of this Plan:

Advisory Group

- **Charlene Virgilio** – Executive Director, Four Directions Development Corp.
- **Matt Lewis** – President & CEO, Hospitality Maine
- **Greg Dugal** – Former Director of Government Affairs, Hospitality Maine
- **Tony Cameron** – CEO, Maine Tourism Association
- **Kathy Dyer** – Executive Director, Maine Campground Owners Association
- **Mike Wilson** – Sr. Program Director, Northern Forest Center
- **Tracy Michaud** – Assistant Professor and Chair, Tourism & Hospitality Program, University of Southern Maine
- **Lynn Tillotson** – President & CEO, Visit Portland
- **Alf Anderson** – Executive Director, Bar Harbor Chamber of Commerce
- **Warren Whitney** – Land Trust Program Director, Maine Coast Heritage Trust
- **Rauni Kew** – PR & Green Program Director, Inn by the Sea
- **Andrew Cutko** – Director of Parks & Lands, Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
- **Rex Turner** – Outdoor Recreation Planner, Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
- **Russell Walters** – President, Northern Outdoors Adventure Resort
- **Lucas St. Clair** – Elliottsville Foundation, Katahdin Woods & Waters National Monument
- **Corporal Kristopher MacCabe** – Landowner Relations, Dept. of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife
- **Matthew Drost** – Regional Planner, Maine Department of Transportation
- **Linda Nelson** – Economic & Community Development Director, Town of Stonington, Cultural Alliance of Maine
- **Scott Riccio** – President, Owner & Founder, Northeast Charter & Tour Company
- **Don Kleiner** – Master Maine Guide, Maine Outdoors
- **Sebastian Belle** – Executive Director, Maine Aquaculture Association
- **Afton Vigue** – Outreach & Development Specialist, Maine Aquaculture Association
- **Sarah Demers** – Director, Land for Maine's Future Program

Maine
VISITMAINE.COM