

# Understanding the Barriers to Tourism and Hospitality Workforce Recovery and Building Toward Resilience



Since the beginning of the COVID-19 Pandemic, Tourism and Hospitality continues to be among the hardest-hit sectors with regards to employment challenges.

In response, the Tourism and Hospitality Emergency Recovery (THER) project sought feedback from industry leaders from multiple destinations across Canada on the challenges they faced in their recovery efforts. The project developed a playbook of tools, resources and models to help address those challenges. This report highlights the findings and lessons learned alongside industry stakeholders and policymakers. It is a reference point for ideas, insights, tools and solutions that can support tourism recovery and help shock-proof the industry against future disruption.

## Methodology and Approach



The project adopted a multi-faceted and nuanced recovery approach. Various activities were conducted including:



Readiness assessments



Surveying displaced workers and potential talent groups



Understanding regional barriers to the adoption of capacity-building resources and methodologies



Field-testing tools and launching a national communications campaign to address perceptions of the sector as an employer

**This approach was taken to inform comprehensive resilience planning across the Tourism and Hospitality sector.**

## Key Stakeholder Groups



Funders and Policy Managers



Senior Managers from Federal and Provincial Industry Associations



Tourism-focused Organizations across the Country



Employers and Consultants engaged in Sector Workforce Strategy and Planning in their Regions

## Project Partners

Project Lead 

### Project Funders

Canada  Centre des Compétences futures

### Research and Technical Advisory Partners

### Provincial Partners

### Data Modelling Partner

The Conference Board of Canada

### Technology Solution Partners

### Communications Partners

### Business Diagnostics Partner



### Field Testing Partner



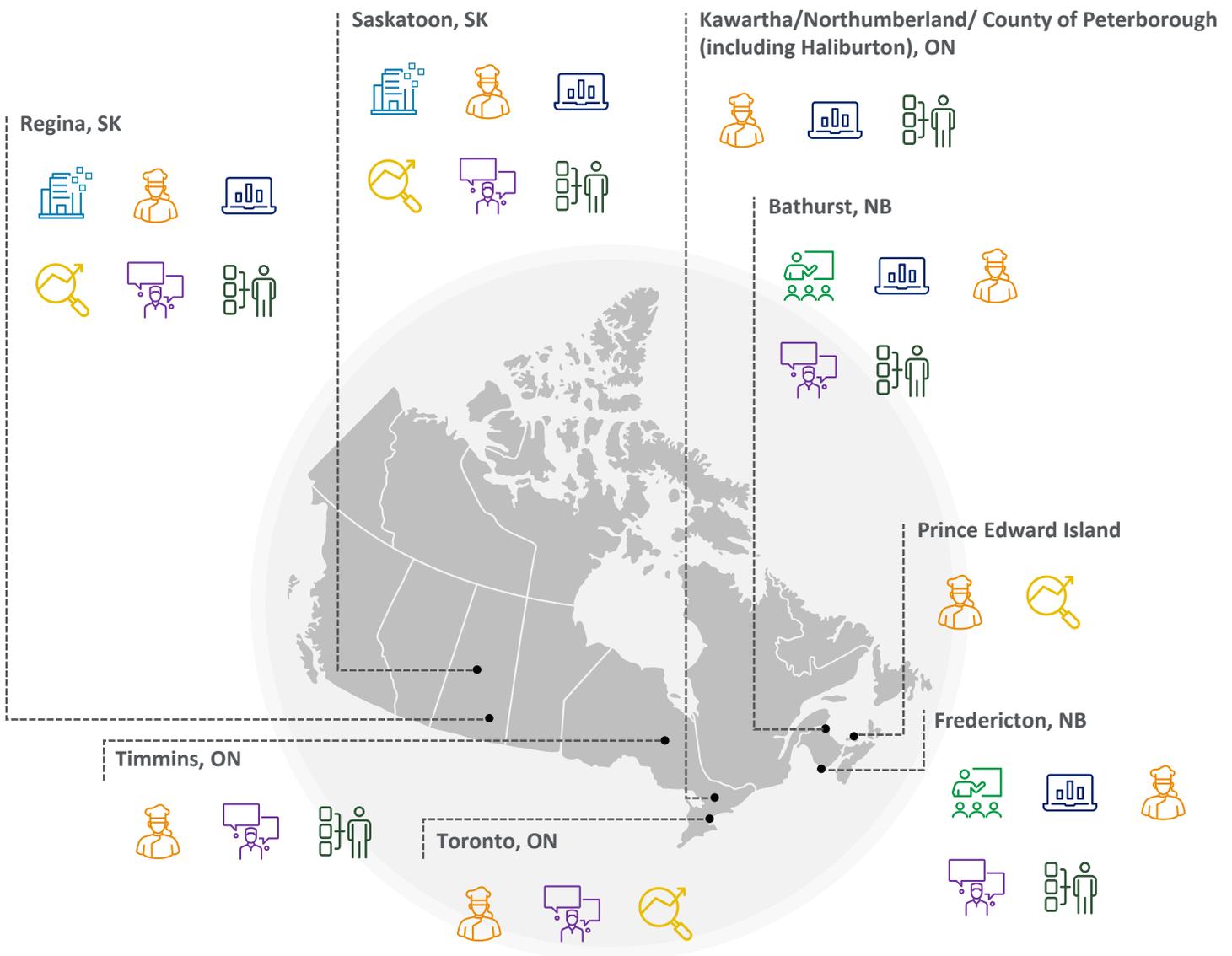


# Understanding the Barriers to Recovery

Through the project, Blueprint, a THER partner, prepared a series of Snapshot Reports featuring the findings of their readiness assessment and the challenges to recovery identified by stakeholders in the destination. In preparation for this final report, OTEC and Deloitte hosted check-ins with participating stakeholders, to confirm the status of ongoing challenges across participating provinces and regions.

The map below provides a visual snapshot of the regions where consultations were conducted and the key challenges identified. Additional detail can be found in the report - Understanding the Barriers to Tourism and Hospitality Workforce Recovery and Building Toward Resilience: Background Report.

-  **Remote Training Infrastructure**
-  **Fragmentation among Industry Networks**
-  **Worker Attraction/Retention**
-  **Lack of Relevant Data**
-  **Operators Adapting to Changing Market**
-  **Lack of Communication with Workers**
-  **Changing Skills Demands**





# Foundations to Build On

The THER Playbook, designed by OTEC, in collaboration with project partners and stakeholders, provides the Tourism and Hospitality sector with tested tools and solutions for ongoing recovery. Each tool in this toolkit was developed to address a specific challenge or series of challenges.

The following provides a snapshot of how key challenges are divided by stakeholder groups, along with how the THER solutions mapped against these key challenges. Additional detail can be found in the report - Understanding the Barriers to Tourism and Hospitality Workforce Recovery and Building Toward Resilience: Background Report.



**Funders and Policy Managers**



**Federal and Provincial Industry Associations**



**Tourism-focused Organizations**



**Employers and Consultants**



## Tourism Workforce Challenges

## OTEC Solutions: Developed and Tested



**Remote training infrastructure** - Displaced workers are losing attachment to the Tourism and Hospitality industry.

AI-based Labour Market Navigation and Employment Platform (CareerAtlas)



**Fragmentation among industry networks** - Tourism workforce recovery is a dynamic challenge, requiring data, communications, technology and a range of stakeholders all working together with a single vision.

Strategic Workforce Planning



**Worker attraction/retention** - Concerns that displaced workers will not return to the sector – poor image of Tourism as a career choice.

Career Awareness Campaign and Toolkit



**Lack of Relevant Data** - Destinations need local real-time labour market information and economic forecasting data for decision-making.



Real-time Tourism Revenue and Forecasting Platform (Destination Dynamics)



**Operators adapting to changing market** - Small and medium operators need tools to make strategic pivots to adapt to the new normal.

Strategic Business Assessment Tool



**Lack of communication with workers** - Employment and workforce training partners need virtual delivery infrastructure to support job seekers.

Community for Tourism and Hospitality Workers (Worker Registry)



**Changing skills demands** - Workers have drifted away from the sector which is resulting in the loss of a talented and engaged workforce.

Curated employer and employee driven training



## Preparing to Thrive

The solutions developed can be used by different stakeholder groups and adapted to different regional needs. They open up opportunities for enhanced collaboration between stakeholders and regions across the country. Next steps need to include further collaboration on capacity-building, particularly on workforce development challenges, in order to drive a more resilient Canadian Tourism and Hospitality sector. OTEC recommends that further alignment in funded recovery programming is encouraged to enhance the adoption of resiliency tools and resources, and to support coordinated efforts to tackle similar challenges faced across regions.

### Call to Action

THER's work has found that we must continue to strengthen the ability of the Tourism and Hospitality sector to recover and be ready to respond and bounce back when disruptions hit. There is work to be done by at least four groups of key stakeholders, as highlighted below:



#### Funders and Policy Managers

- Ensure that workforce recovery investments and strategies are informed by multi-level consultations and are designed based on the unique needs of local businesses and stakeholders.
- There is an urgent need for continued investment in the sector to support impacted businesses, protect livelihoods, and realize the economic opportunities forecasted over the next 5 years.
- All business is local: Grassroots engagement and scalability are not mutually exclusive. Local businesses and industry stakeholders are highly informed and can be supported within larger workforce strategies if they are engaged in authentic local adaptation.
- Rapidly changing labour markets demand room in the funding landscape for more agile project methodologies and contractual outcomes. By effectively layering research, consultation, intervention design and evaluation, workforce innovation projects can bring both knowledge and solutions to the market far more quickly.
- Supporting the unique workforce needs of small owner-operators is time and resource intensive when compared to corporate workforce development partnerships. Dedicated workforce programming streams are needed to support this critical segment of the economy. Particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.



#### Tourism-focused Organizations

- Ensure engagement and partnership development is based upon clear and transparent reciprocity and that local businesses and industry stakeholders are recognized for their expertise and influence within their given markets and communities.
- Businesses and destinations need/demand real-time, local, data and forecasting to support recovery planning and critical business decisions.
- Fragmentation invites duplication and inefficiency. Champion grassroots engagement, consultation and coordination while pursuing broader collaboration and partnerships that can accelerate recovery strategies through the adoption of proven or emerging solutions, economies of scale, and/or sharing of best practices.



#### Employers and Consultants

- Worker attraction and retention must extend beyond messaging and campaigns and address the workplace experience itself.
- Training and professional development must keep pace with worker demands as well as employer demands.
- Small business networks can achieve the market intelligence, resources, and economies of scale enjoyed by their larger corporate counterparts by plugging into their local workforce strategies and coordination structures.



#### Federal, Provincial and Regional Associations

- Negative perceptions of the industry must be addressed at every level with a coherent and aligned set of voices. Career awareness programs are launching across Canada and collaboration frameworks must be developed to help cascade industry's message clearly at each level.
- Technology can provide personalized, scalable, employment and career support for tourism workers. It can also be leveraged by competitors to draw workers out of the industry if not properly deployed.
- Tourism organizations at the national, provincial and local level can align vertically and/or horizontally toward scaled solutions if the terms of engagement are clear, authentic, and reciprocal.

Collective efforts will lead to stronger sector resiliency overall. Now is the time to further collaborate, to better plan, prepare, and continue to strengthen capacity. This report provides a snapshot of THER findings, solutions and recommendations for next steps. A more in-depth picture of how these recommendations were uncovered can be found in the report - Understanding the Barriers to Tourism and Hospitality Workforce Recovery and Building Toward Resilience: Background Report.

For further information about this research, analysis and solutions, please contact: [info@otec.org](mailto:info@otec.org).