



Township of Nipigon Five-Year Tourism Product Development and Marketing Plan

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PREPARED BY



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1.0

Executive Summary

The Township of Nipigon, in partnership with Superior Country’s Nipigon MAT Committee and Destination Northern Ontario (DNO), is developing a comprehensive five-year Tourism Product Development and Marketing Plan to guide its newly implemented Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) program and strengthen Nipigon’s position as a four-season destination.

The five-year plan aims to increase year-round visitation to Nipigon (“heads in beds”) by leveraging the Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) fund to enhance local tourism offerings and marketing.

Tourism is central to Nipigon's economic future. With limited industrial sectors, the community increasingly relies on the service economy and tourism-related visitation to support local businesses and diversify the tax base. Residents overwhelmingly value Nipigon’s natural beauty, its trails, river, Marina, and sense of small-town charm but consistently identify underinvestment, aging infrastructure, and lack of coordinated tourism information as barriers to growth.

Through community surveys, stakeholder interviews, focus groups, and municipal leadership discussions, several priorities were identified:

Three Foundational Deliverables Identified:

1. A dedicated Nipigon tourism website.
Tourism-focused social media channels led by Superior Country.
2. Marina Usage and Development Plan.
3. A Trails strategy led jointly by Superior Country and the Township of Nipigon.

These deliverables will form the backbone of Nipigon's tourism development. The Marina and trails are two of Nipigon's most significant assets, yet both require strategic planning, reinvestment, and improved connectivity to unlock their full potential. Likewise, the absence of a dedicated tourism website and social channels limits Nipigon's ability to provide credible visitor information, promote experiences, attractions and measure digital marketing effectiveness and engagement.

Nipigon's Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) fund estimated at \$75,000 annually creates an opportunity to invest in tourism product development, marketing, infrastructure, and year-round events. This plan will guide the MAT steering committee to develop a MAT Fund framework that channels revenue to the highest impact tourism outcomes (new product/experience development, selective support for events and non profits), with a clear process, transparent criteria, and strong public communications.

A tactical marketing plan will provide direction for short- and medium-term investment in marketing of the Township of Nipigon.

The plan will outline the advertising and overall marketing approach to promote Nipigon, including proposed budget and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).



The key expected outcomes of the marketing plan are to provide a detailed list of tactics that can be deployed over a five-year period. These tactics will provide a clear and precise direction to follow to meet the marketing objectives for Tourism in Nipigon. Decision making on which tactics to prioritize each year will be made by the MAT steering committee based on funds and resources available. The plan will remain fluid and can be adjusted each year to ensure that the priority projects are completed within the timeframe and allocated budget.

This Tourism Product Development and Marketing Plan includes:

- Market research findings.
- Product development priorities.
- A MAT funding framework and Public Relations plan.
- A marketing and digital presence strategy.
- A five-year tactical implementation plan.

2.0 Objectives of the Marketing Plan

Primary Objective

Increase year-round overnight visitation (“heads in beds”), especially in shoulder and Winter seasons (October - May). These months typically yield lower numbers of visitors and present an opportunity to increase hotel occupancy.

Secondary Objectives

- Convert high highway traffic volumes into stop-and-stay visitation.
- Strengthen Nipigon’s digital presence and visitor information ecosystem.
- Improve visitor experience and wayfinding.
- Support community pride through visible reinvestment in waterfront, trails, and downtown environments.
- Maintain a MAT funding system that is simple, transparent, and widely supported.

Marketing Objectives

- Increase awareness of Nipigon as a Tourism destination with identified target markets.
- Leveraging the tourism sector for Nipigon's economic development.
- Launch tourism focused promotional initiatives, develop new products, and foster partnerships.
- Establish measurable metrics to track progress and evaluate results.

2.1 Product Objectives

The main objective is to focus on best bet products and experiences. Invest in products and experiences that align with the provincial recommendations and market research.

This plan will strategically define new tourism products for Nipigon. The focus will be on developing or enhancing existing products, ensuring alignment with broader regional development strategies.

A review of the key existing Tourism products will provide recommendations for future investment and focus on their core products.

2.2 Marketing Communication Objectives

The key objectives will be to improve the brand awareness of Nipigon as a destination to the identified target audiences. The key tourism products will be promoted through the marketing channels both existing and new. The key message will be developed as part of the creative strategy to achieve the marketing communication objectives.

2.3 Key Success Metrics

- Annual growth in overnight stays during shoulder and Winter season (October - May) from tourists and nearby communities.
- Increase in Summer visitation (June – September) from tourists identified in the key geographic markets (section 5.1).
- Support both new and existing events, product development, and selective non-profit tourism initiatives.
- Increase in hiking/walking trail, Marina, and tourist information kiosk usage.
- Website traffic and digital engagement.
- Increased engagement from existing and new visitors.
- MAT applications received and completed successful projects with positive PR stories shared.
- Improved resident attitudes toward tourism investments.

3.0 Situational Analysis

A situational analysis was conducted as the first phase of the project. This provided insight and research into the current situation, existing plans, strategies and marketing that has been completed over the past few years.

The following market research was conducted:

Community members

- Online survey shared to residents of Nipigon.

Business owners, Council members, MAT Committee members, Tourism Partners

- Two focus groups were held in Nipigon with a selection of stakeholders.
- Online survey sent to all business owners, tourism stakeholders.
- Telephone interviews with MAT committee, business owners, Mayor of Nipigon and Superior Country Executive Director.

Regional Strategies - Superior Country & Destination Northern Ontario

- Call with Superior Country and access to regional data on <https://destinationnorthernontario.ca/>

Township of Nipigon

- Review of relevant data, research and marketing activity.

3.1 Marketing Activity

The Township of Nipigon focuses primarily on organic digital media (unpaid) for its marketing and advertising with minimal print advertising. With a limited marketing budget, the activity focuses on key media opportunities. The most effective advertising is with Superior Country with print ads in their annual publications and digital advertising on paid social channels.

This is a list of all Tourism advertising and marketing for Nipigon:

- Print advertising in Superior Country annual publication (full page ad) next to membership map (Fishing).
- Digital listing with Superior Country - (Organic content on Facebook and Instagram).
- Print advertising in the Lake Superior Circle Tour Adventure Guide (full page ad).
- Highway billboards.
- Destination Nipigon Video (YouTube) and Nipigon website.
- Monthly print ads in The Walleye magazine were recently discontinued due to an insufficient return on investment.
- Radio ads for special events have been run on CFNO. The most recent being the Blueberry Blast event.
- Print ads in local paper, Nipigon Red Rock Gazette.

3.2 Digital Marketing Audit (Social media and Website)

The Township of Nipigon uses Facebook as the primary social media channel for all Tourism related messaging. This platform functions primarily as a municipal communication tool, not a tourism or visitor-facing channel. Tourism posts are limited and the audience is not primarily visitors. It is recommended to create new channels on Facebook and Instagram that are for visitors and only feature tourism content. Cross-posting on the existing Township Facebook channel can be done to inform residents of events and other activities.

CURRENT SOCIAL MEDIA PAGES (FACEBOOK)

Strengths

- High trust as official municipal sources.
- Strong followership relative to community size.
- Community-focused updates maintain relevance among residents.
- Regular posting (good consistency).
- Emergency and infrastructure updates help drive engagement among locals.
- Good mix of photos, graphics, and announcements.

Weaknesses (Critical from a tourism perspective)

- Content is not geared toward visitors — too much resident/admin content.
- Posts frequently include municipal notices (water issues, garbage, council, disruptions) which suppress algorithm performance for tourism-style engagement.
- No social media training for current staff, in terms of metrics and procedures for postings. (images with text ratio - images with more text are not shown to people).
- No clear visitor call-to-actions.
- No tourism branding, aesthetic, or storytelling.
- No seasonal tourism campaigns (Summer, Fall colours, Winter, events).
- No promotion of Marina, trails, attractions, or events from a visitor’s angle.
- No consistent visual identity or brand cohesion.
- No hashtag strategy for tourism reach (#LakeSuperior, #ExploreNWO, #OntarioTravel, etc.).
- Little to no user-generated content being reshared.

Conclusion

The existing Facebook channel should remain a municipal channel, and new tourism-specific channels must be created.

FACEBOOK PAGE

What could be improved (Tourism Perspective)

- Page is not set up for tourism discovery
- There is no:
 - Tourism brand identity
 - Featured attractions
 - “Why visit Nipigon” narrative
 - Tourism-specific content categories
- Resident-focused content drowns out visitor opportunities
 - Examples include:
 - Public notices
 - Infrastructure disruptions
 - Council meetings
 - Safety advisories
 - Garbage collection
 - Facility closures

- No Facebook Events for visitor-facing programming
 - Creating events such as:
 - Farmers' Market
 - Winterfest
 - Trails initiatives are essential for tourism engagement
- Strategic Gap: Residents vs. Visitors
- Nipigon's Facebook channel cannot both: serve residents and attract tourists.
- The existing account is doing its job serving residents well. But is structurally incapable of serving the tourism role needed.
- Recommended to create two dedicated tourism accounts:
 - Facebook: Visit Nipigon
 - Instagram: @visitnipigon

Key Recommendations for Tourism Channels

- Launch new tourism Facebook & Instagram accounts
 - These should:
 - Feature visitor-oriented messaging
 - Use consistent brand templates
 - Include reels, videos, carousels, stories
 - Promote events, trails, itineraries
- Use the municipal channel to amplify (not host) tourism content
 - The Township of Nipigon's official channel can:
 - Share occasional tourism posts
 - Direct traffic to the tourism accounts
 - Highlight MAT-funded initiatives
- Ensure branding & tone differ from the municipal account
 - Tourism tone:
 - Inspirational
 - Photography-forward
 - Action-oriented ("Come stay, explore, try this...")

WEBSITE AUDIT: HTTPS://WWW.NIPIGON.NET/

- The Nipigon website is a resource for residents, businesses and visitors. This is common for communities the size of Nipigon to house all the content on one website.
 - A broad content structure is already in place.
 - The Nipigon site includes a wide range of content categories under main navigation — from “Living Here” to “Invest & Grow” to “Play & Explore” to “Town Hall.”
 - This makes the site truly a “municipal + community + tourism” site which is similar to many small towns in Northern Ontario.
 - Dedicated Play & Explore / Visitor / Tourist sections.
 - There is already a “Play & Explore” section on the site menu that gives Nipigon a foundation for a tourism-oriented navigation section, rather than a purely residents-oriented municipal website.
- ### What could be improved
- Lack of a dedicated, visitor-landing page / tourism-specific landing page.
 - While “Play & Explore” exists, there is no obvious landing page with a “Why visit Nipigon” overview, a strong hero section, imagery, quick links to top attractions, suggested itineraries, seasonal highlights, etc.
 - Visitors coming to nipigon.net will land at the municipal homepage (with news, “I Want To...” menus, contact info) which is heavy on resident-serving content, not appealing as a tourism-first entrance.
 - Because the site serves many administrative, governance, and resident functions, it blurs the experience for potential visitors. This calls for a clean separation with a tourism-specific standalone website.
 - Inconsistent “tourist friendly” marketing tone / design; site feels “municipal document” rather than “destination brochure”.

- The design and copy are clearly oriented toward a municipality serving residents (permits, bills, government, resident services). The photos and copy under “Play & Explore” may be helpful but don’t present a cohesive tourism brand identity or visitor-centric “look and feel.”
- Limited visibility for seasonal offers, events, visitor-centric promotions.
- While there is an “Annual Events” / “Community Calendar” section, there’s no homepage highlight or “featured visitor events / seasons” slider or banner that immediately speaks to travellers.
- For example — no “Winter Activities,” “Fishing Season,” “Fall Colours,” or “Summer Marina & Trails” calls to action visible on the first page. That hurts conversion from pass-through highway traffic.
- No dedicated blog or story-driven content to attract visitors.
- There is no easy-to-find blog, feature story, event highlights, testimonials, or user-generated content showing why Nipigon is a great destination.
- This is a missed opportunity — especially for digital marketing, SEO, and sharing on social media.

Recommendations for the website

- Build a dedicated tourism website to offer a welcoming entry for visitors, showcasing key attractions, experiences, suggested itineraries, events, seasonal promotions, and clear calls to action (e.g., Book a Stay, Explore More, Attend Events).
- Create curated visitor itineraries / packages — e.g. “Weekend Marina + Trails + Lookout,” “Family Paddle + Splashpad + Museum,” “Winterfest + Snowshoe + Culinary,” etc...
- Improve event & seasonal promotion using homepage banners/sliders or seasonal callouts (Fishing season, Fall colours, Winter activities) to capture “why now” interest.
- Develop a blog/feature content stream — highlight stories, seasonal guides, user-generated photos, testimonials, local business features to enrich content and support SEO / social marketing.
- Add fast links for Stay / Eat / Do / Explore / Map / Contact. Actionable CTAs (call to book, view map, get directions) to help visitors convert quickly.

- Ensure mobile-friendly design and user journey from highway traffic to trip planning. Many visitors will arrive via highway; the site should give immediate value without requiring deep navigation.
- Update and expand tourism-relevant imagery and branding.

Conclusion

The existing Nipigon website shows many of the building blocks for a functional community web presence, but when examined through the lens of tourism, it falls short of being a visitor-ready destination site.



3.3 Market Research Analysis

Residents describe Nipigon as a peaceful, scenic, friendly community with unparalleled natural beauty. They take visitors to the Bridgeview Lookout Tower, local trails, Marina, river, and seasonal events.

However, recurring concerns include:

- Lack of restaurants and limited hours
- Outdated or confusing signage
- Insufficient Marina maintenance and amenities
- Inconsistent visitor information online
- Limited shopping or entertainment options
- Community fatigue due to slow-moving improvements

Visitors often arrive by chance while traveling along the Trans-Canada Highway, but few remain longer than a brief stop. Visitors express difficulty finding accurate information, opportunities, or accommodations.

The resident survey provided the following key suggestions to improve Tourism:

- Better accommodations / camping facilities
- More cultural / music focused events
- More Winter activities and events
- Restaurants and food options - lack of dining variety, limited hours
- More shopping / retail / grocery stores
- Improved visitor information and signage



RESIDENT SURVEY INSIGHTS

Across responses, three overarching findings stand out for tourism strategy:

1. Natural Advantage, Underleveraged

Residents deeply value the outdoors and see nature as Nipigon’s greatest draw, but they feel assets like the Marina and trails are poorly maintained and marketed.

2. Desire for Visible Renewal

Streetscape improvements, waterfront investment, and modern amenities (restaurants, lodging, etc.) are viewed as essential to attracting visitors and improving pride of place.

3. Community Fatigue with Inaction

People want momentum; they’re ready for leadership that moves beyond “potential” toward tangible change.

Outliers collectively reinforce these findings, highlighting both the urgency and emotional stake residents place in seeing Nipigon live up to its promise.

COMMUNITY EVENTS AND FESTIVALS

Seen as underdeveloped but with potential to attract visitors.

- Strong recognition for Fall Fishing Festival and Blueberry Blast.
- Volunteers are key to the success of all events. Heavy reliance on existing volunteer groups - need to promote positives of volunteering to younger audiences to grow a new set of volunteers for the future.
- Interest in diversifying event programming: youth, artisan fairs, music festivals, cultural and Winter events.

VFR MARKET (VISITING FRIENDS AND RELATIVES)

- Most people in the focus group will take visiting friends and relatives to the main tourist attractions when they visit. The Bridgeview Lookout Tower and hiking trails were the most common options. They are also taking part in specific experiences such as fishing, water sports (kayak, SUP, canoeing, boating), & trail walking. They attend local events and festivals and eat out at local restaurants.

EXISTING ATTRACTIONS ANALYSIS

Attractions

- Bridgeview Lookout Tower
 - One of the main attractions especially for travellers looking for a quick stop off the highway.
 - Climb the Nipigon lookout tower for great views of Nipigon Bay/Red Rock, the Nipigon River, the Bridge and Lake Helen.
- Nipigon Marina
 - Multiple boat launches, riverside trails and walks, picnic tables, camping and event space.
 - Needs investment to re-vitalize the Marina. RV campground, facilities, parking.
- Paddle to Sea Park and Splash Pad
 - Fun attraction for the kids.
- Nipigon Historical Museum
 - The Museum holds many artifacts from the different stages in Nipigon and the area's development.

- Nipigon Lagoon
 - Visitors can easily launch their kayaks, canoes, or paddleboards from the accessible docking system located at the southern end of the Nipigon Marina, making the lagoon an ideal spot for paddling.
- Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area
 - Operated by Parks Canada - they have a visitor centre in Nipigon which is also a Lake Superior Circle Tour Stamp location. The centre is open year-round.
- Nipigon River Recreational Trail
 - Panoramic views of Nipigon River and Nipigon Bay from three clifftop lookouts. A well-maintained, rugged, wilderness recreation trail.
 - Trailhead located at the Marina with free parking for visitors.

3.4 Stakeholder Insights

STAKEHOLDERS EMPHASIZED:

Product Before Promotion

Stakeholders consistently want new, bookable experiences (guided tours, rentals, Winter and cultural programming / experiences) before spending more on advertising. Marketing will only perform once there's more for visitors to do.

Build a Coordinated Tourism Network

Operators want a unified brand, shared visitor guide, consistent event calendar, and regular business roundtables. Collaboration and communication are more important than bigger ad budgets.

Secure and Direct Funding Toward Impact Projects

The clearest need is investment in infrastructure: Marina upgrades, trail networks, event spaces, and accommodation capacity. Funding should favour tangible improvements that extend the visitor season.

Create “The Nipigon Thing”

Stakeholders crave an identifiable local identity; a story, symbol, or signature experience that businesses and events can build around. This can anchor branding, product design, and merchandising for the next phase of tourism growth.

3.5 Combined Insights

Nature is the Core Brand, but it Needs Activation

Strategic takeaway:

Everyone agrees Nipigon’s greatest strength is its natural setting. The water, trails, and scenery define the community’s appeal.

- Residents said: They value living close to nature, the peace and beauty of the outdoors, and the small-town safety that comes with it.
- Stakeholders said: Nipigon’s “world-class fishing, hiking, and adventure” set it apart, but these assets aren’t packaged into market-ready experiences.

Implication:

Nipigon doesn’t need to reinvent its identity; it needs to activate it. The next step is building guided, rentable, and year-round experiences that turn natural assets into sustained economic activity.

Visible Renewal Builds Pride and Momentum

Strategic takeaway:

Both groups see beautification and physical improvement as visible signs of community pride, progress, and potential.

- Residents said: The town “needs a facelift”. Cleaner streets, improved storefronts, and especially a revitalized Marina were repeated as key priorities. The Marina was described as “a gem that needs fixing” and “an embarrassment if left as is.”
- Stakeholders said: They view the Marina as a cornerstone of Nipigon’s tourism future; a critical piece of infrastructure that could anchor recreation, events, and investment if properly developed. More broadly, they emphasized that infrastructure investment and funding for visible upgrades are essential to attracting visitors and restoring local optimism.

Implication:

The Marina has become the symbolic heart of renewal - its transformation would signal that Nipigon is serious about progress. Early, tangible wins such as Marina improvements, downtown streetscape improvement, and trail enhancements will not only enhance the visitor experience but also rebuild pride and confidence among residents and business owners alike.



Product Before Promotion

Strategic takeaway:

There's widespread frustration with promoting what residents call "the same old things." Both groups want new, high-quality experiences before more marketing spend.

- Residents said: There's "not enough to do". Few restaurants, minimal entertainment, and events that feel repetitive.
- Stakeholders said: Nipigon needs to "develop new tourism products rather than advertising tired attractions." They called for guided tours, charters, cultural experiences, and Winter recreation.

Implication:

Investment should prioritize product development first, then marketing. Building more to see, do, and buy will naturally strengthen Nipigon's story and reputation.

One Voice, One Plan

Strategic takeaway:

Marketing and communication are fragmented, with no single message or shared system tying everything together.

- Residents said: Visitors often “don’t know what there is to do,” pointing to missing signage, outdated information, and inconsistent communication.
- Stakeholders said: Current branding and promotion are “not very effective,” lacking a clear identity or coordinated strategy. They want stronger online visibility and shared tools to promote local businesses and events together.

Implication:

Nipigon needs a cohesive tourism marketing system. A unified brand, an up-to-date central website or information hub, consistent visual and written messaging, and regular coordination between the Township, tourism partners, and local businesses. Everyone promoting Nipigon should be using the same materials, speaking in the same voice, and pointing visitors to the same reliable sources of information.

High Highway Traffic, But Poor Capture

Strategic takeaway:

Participants confirmed that Nipigon benefits from heavy drive-through traffic, especially from Lake Superior Circle Tour travellers and U.S. visitors from Wisconsin and Minnesota.

However, most travellers stop briefly for fuel or photos and move on. Locals noted that Nipigon lacks the attractions, amenities, and accommodations needed to convert pass-through traffic into overnight stays.

Implication:

Marketing and product development should focus on capturing and extending highway traffic through improved signage before town limits, visible roadside attractions, and experiences designed for quick but meaningful engagement.

Operational Gaps Limit Tourism Delivery

Strategic takeaway:

Participants identified staffing and management challenges that limit consistency and visitor experience quality, particularly at the Marina and campground.

- Operations are largely dependent on seasonal student staff. This means key services such as cleaning, enforcement, and customer service fluctuate, and sometimes have gaps.
- One participant noted that changing to later staff hours increased profits, but staffing remains inconsistent.
- There's recognition that a dedicated full-time tourism or recreation role would improve operations and accountability.

Implication:

This operational insight didn't appear in survey responses. It adds a layer of realism to implementation planning, highlighting that execution capacity (not just vision) is a limiting factor.

Niche Markets Identified

Two niche visitor segments emerged in the discussions:

- "Fishing and hunting spouses" who accompany sports tourists but seek alternative, non-adventure activities.
- Retirees and shoulder-season travellers who visit in early Fall, have more time and disposable income, and prefer slower, culture-based experiences.

Implication:

Neither group was identified in the survey results, but both groups represent low-cost, high-potential markets for short-term experience development. This could include guided walks, artisan pop-ups, culinary features, and light adventure products that don't require major infrastructure development or management.

Operational Realities

- Tourism operations rely heavily on seasonal staffing. This affects:
 - Marina customer service and cleanliness
 - Trail maintenance
 - Event coordination (there is noticeable volunteer burnout in the community)
 - Kiosk updates
 - The reliability of visitor-facing services
 - A sustainable staffing and volunteer model is needed for long-term success



4.0 Opportunity and Issue Analysis (SWOT)

SWOT means “Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats”. It’s a system to help analyze the current marketing landscape in order to create strategies to promote and improve Nipigon Tourism in the future.

STRENGTHS

Exceptional Natural Assets & Location

- Exceptional natural assets: river, trails, lake access.
- Strong reputation for angling (record brook trout) and self-guided fishing/hunting tourism.
- Proximity to Thunder Bay—Nipigon’s most important short-haul market and a key Winter-season audience.
- Bridgeview Lookout Tower as iconic attraction.
- High visibility and capture potential from the Trans-Canada Highway and Lake Superior Circle Tour traffic.

Existing Assets with Strong Potential

- Bridgeview Lookout Tower and walkway under the bridge serve as iconic attractions frequently used by both residents and visitors.
- Trails, lagoon, accessible waterfront viewpoints and the museum are well-liked and offer a strong foundation for branding around nature, culture, and adventure.

Community Culture & Engagement

- Friendly, welcoming resident culture consistently cited as a visitor highlight.
- Longstanding community events (Fall Fishing Festival, Blueberry Blast) contribute personality and tradition.
- Residents express strong pride in natural assets and a desire for Nipigon to succeed as a tourism destination.

WEAKNESSES

Infrastructure Gaps

- Marina lacks essential amenities (electric hookups, showers, flushing toilets, adequate staffing) despite being seen by residents as the community’s #1 development priority.
- Little transient camping and limited accommodations constrain overnight stays—especially during peak months.
- Outdated or insufficient wayfinding/signage creates confusion for visitors navigating the town, waterfront, and trails. Challenges compounded by MTO/TODS regulatory barriers.

Operational Capacity Constraints

- Seasonal staffing shortages at Marina and campground lead to inconsistent visitor experience. Reliance on students limits service windows to July–August.
- Limited internal capacity to update website, manage social media, maintain product listings, and support events.
- Volunteer burnout is widespread; major events rely on too few people. This is a hindrance to new event planning and launching.

Amenities Gap

- Limited dining and retail choices; restricted hours of operation frequently noted by visitors.
- Few rental or guided tourism options (kayak, SUP, charters, tours), reducing market readiness for visitors seeking bookable experiences.
- Downtown appearance and general streetscape need improvements.

Fragmented Visitor Information

- No standalone tourism website or coordinated tourism brand; information scattered across outdated pages or inconsistent social channels.
- Existing highway signage and marketing assets do not effectively communicate “things to do” or inspire visitors to stop.

OPPORTUNITIES

MAT Fund as Major Catalyst

Ability to direct MAT revenue toward:

- Product development (Marina, trails, rentals, Winter assets).
- Event funding for shoulder/Winter seasons.
- Streetscape improvements and downtown revitalization.
- Visitor information modernization (kiosks, signage, website).

High-Potential Product Development Areas

- **Waterfront Redevelopment:** Recognized by residents and stakeholders as the defining project for Nipigon’s future. A professional Marina master plan can anchor long-term tourism growth.
- **Trails Strategy:** Strong local enthusiasm for branding Nipigon as the “Trail Capital of NWO,” supported by residents, operators, and Superior Country.

- **Winter Tourism:** Room to expand Ice Climbing Festival into a multi-day Winterfest; opportunities for snowshoe trails, Winter markets, and shoulder-season events.
- **Events Development:** Interest in new concepts such as Iron Snowman Challenge, Souperbowl, and cultural/heritage/music events. The new Year-round Farmers’ Market could be used as an event catalyst.
- **Meetings & Events:** Nipigon has an opportunity to attract more events and meetings from the Thunder Bay market. Due to typically lower hall/venue rental prices compared to Thunder Bay, Nipigon can help alleviate over-capacity issues during busy periods in the larger city.

Tourist Information Centre

Explore the potential to revitalize the TIC and re-open during the peak season (June – September). It has a prominent highway location and opportunity to engage with visitors and passing traffic.

Marketing & Brand Opportunities

- Launch of a **standalone tourism website** and social channels can immediately modernize Nipigon’s digital presence and unify tourism messaging.
- Strong potential to align with Destination Ontario and DNO product pillars for co-marketing and grant support.
- Ability to capitalize on heavy **highway pass-through traffic** with improved billboards and quick-stop attractions (photo-op feature, roadside wayfinding).

Partnership & Regional Alignment

Collaboration with:

- Superior Country
- Parks Canada
- Red Rock Indian Band
- Tourism Thunder Bay

Funding partnerships: FedNor, CFDC, Parks Canada, DNO, NOHFC and OMAFRA

Visitor Behaviour & Niche Markets

- Strong demand from:
 - Touring market (Circle Tour, RV, motorcycle)
 - Winter/adventure travellers
 - Fishing/hunting market
 - Retirees and Fall travellers with disposable income
 - Spouses of anglers & hunters seeking non-fishing activities

THREATS

Community Perception & MAT Politics

- Early skepticism toward the implementation of the MAT fund remains; visible wins are needed to show the positive impact that MAT will have.
- Some businesses remain disengaged or hostile toward MAT, risking low participation in tourism development initiatives.

Competitive North Shore Landscape

- Nearby communities (Terrace Bay, Red Rock, Schreiber, Greenstone, Rosport, Marathon) continue to improve their tourism offerings and digital presence. Nipigon must differentiate clearly to avoid being perceived as a pass-through community.

Infrastructure & Maintenance Risks

- Ongoing inability to maintain key attractions (Marina, washrooms, tower facilities, trails) threatens visitor satisfaction and reputation.
- Heavy reliance on seasonal staffing could continue to restrict service availability during key seasons.
- Volunteer burnout and declining participation could jeopardize event sustainability.

Regulatory & Cost Barriers

- MTO/TODS signage restrictions impede wayfinding and highway-capture strategy; updating signage remains costly and slow.
- Rising costs in construction, labour, and operational staffing may limit progress on necessary infrastructure projects.

Market & Economic Pressures

- Volatile gas prices impact the touring market.
- Limited accommodations mean that any increase in visitation cannot be fully capitalized on without parallel investment in lodging.



5.0 Target Audience

The target audiences are key to ensuring that all marketing communications are targeted at the audience that is most likely to connect with the marketing. The primary audience is the ideal visitor that is the best bet to target.

Primary

- 40 plus touring segment – auto, RV and motorcycle (Lake Superior Circle Tour travellers)
 - The retiree segment is important to target especially in the shoulder seasons

Secondary

- Families with children aged 0-18
- Age 24-45 outdoor adventure seekers – Nature & Adventure
- VFR (Visiting Friends and Relatives) – local awareness amongst residents. This audience covers all product pillars.

5.1 Target Markets

Geographic target markets have been prioritized by season to ensure marketing budgets are spent in the key seasons that the geographic audience will most likely visit.

GEOGRAPHIC MARKETS

Domestic

- Thunder Bay and nearby NW Ontario communities – primary focus on events, activities and experiences
 - All year-round Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall - Thunder Bay and nearby NW Ontario communities - Primary
- Ontario – GTA and Ottawa - Secondary
 - Summer / Fall
- Manitoba - Secondary
 - Summer / Fall
- Quebec – Secondary
 - Summer / Fall

U.S.

- U.S. Midwest (Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan) - Primary
 - Summer / Fall

Overseas Markets

Leverage any marketing opportunities through Destination Canada, Destination Ontario partnerships or Media Familiarization Tours. Overseas marketing would be done in partnership with an organization that already has a marketing foothold in the market. No marketing budget should be allocated from Nipigon for advertising to the Overseas audience.



6.0 Marketing Mix

The marketing mix is a combination of product, price, place and promotion that is used by Nipigon to differentiate itself as a tourism destination from other potential destinations that visitors would be deciding upon.

6.1 Tourism Key Product Pillars

BEST BET PRODUCTS

The best bet products are those products and experiences that are in high demand by visitors and those recommended to focus on for product development and marketing promotion.

Primary:

- Touring - Auto, RV and Motorcycle
 - Highway traffic and Lake Superior Circle Tour travellers offer strong market potential.
 - Lake Superior Circle Tour is a specific product to focus on for this sector. Nipigon is a Lake Superior Circle Tour stamp destination.
- Nature & Adventure
 - Trails, paddling, hiking, lookouts, and four-season recreation shape Nipigon's identity.

- Fish & Hunt
 - Nipigon River angling is world-renowned and a major draw.

The Northern Ontario Product Development Strategy lists Auto & RV Touring as a primary area of focus for product development.

The Lake Superior Circle Tour is a world-renowned auto, RV and motorcycle route.

Secondary:

- Culture & Heritage (events)
 - Farmers' Market, Nipigon Historical Museum, Edge Arts Studio and Gallery, artisan events, festivals, and Indigenous partnerships support cultural tourism.

6.2 Product Development Strategy

Building year-round, market-ready experiences that turn Nipigon’s natural strengths into measurable visitor growth.

Nipigon’s Product Development Imperative

Nipigon’s tourism identity is rooted in its natural assets, strategic highway location, and potential for four-season outdoor recreation. Residents and stakeholders consistently described Nipigon as a place with exceptional natural beauty, trails, and water access, yet acknowledged that these assets remain under-leveraged, under-maintained, or disconnected from the visitor experience.

Across all research inputs—resident surveys, stakeholder surveys, focus groups, and interviews—five themes emerged:

1. Nature is Nipigon’s strongest advantage, but it lacks structured, bookable visitor experiences.
2. Infrastructure shortcomings (Marina amenities, trail signage, downtown appearance, camping) directly limit tourism growth.

3. Visible improvements are needed to rebuild community pride and demonstrate the value of the MAT.
4. Product before promotion – stakeholders want tangible, high-quality experiences before increased advertising.
5. Season extension opportunities (Fall, Winter, early Spring) are critical to increasing “heads in beds,” as summer occupancy is already near capacity.

Product development should prioritize infrastructure readiness, experience creation, wayfinding upgrades, and amenity improvements that allow Nipigon to deliver a competitive visitor experience aligned with Destination Northern Ontario’s four pillars (Fish & Hunt, Nature & Adventure, Touring, Culture & Heritage).

This plan proposes three core deliverables required for long-term competitiveness, followed by additional product initiatives that respond directly to research findings.

PHASE 1 PRIORITY DELIVERABLES

Marina Usage and Development Plan

The development of a comprehensive plan for the Marina and waterfront is a critical next step that requires the expertise of a specialized consultant. This plan should encompass not only the physical infrastructure of the Marina—including docks, launch facilities, and necessary amenities—but also a broader vision for the entire waterfront area.

The plan will include the following:

1. Needs Assessment: Evaluating the current state of the Marina, identifying necessary upgrades, and determining the needs of various user groups (e.g., local boaters, transient visitors, commercial operators).
2. Conceptual Design: Developing detailed conceptual designs for the Marina layout, public access areas, landscaping, and potential commercial/recreational development along the waterfront.
3. Feasibility Study: Analyzing the financial viability of proposed developments,

including preliminary cost estimates, potential revenue streams, and funding options.

4. Stakeholder Consultation: Leading public engagement and consultation with local businesses, residents, Indigenous communities, and relevant government agencies to ensure the plan aligns with community objectives and regional priorities.
5. Regulatory Compliance: Ensuring all proposed developments adhere to environmental regulations, zoning bylaws, and other relevant provincial and federal legislation.

The resulting plan will serve as the foundational document for securing funding, obtaining permits, and guiding the future development and operation of the Nipigon Marina and its surrounding waterfront assets.

The comprehensive Marina plan is required to address the following:

- Land-use and layout
 - Zones for events, rentals, outdoor vendors, and programming

- Amenity restoration (showers, flushing toilets, potable water, power hook-ups, etc.)
- Rental opportunities
 - Kayak/SUP/canoe rentals
 - Fishing and charter pick-up
 - Outfitter/guide-services base
 - Seasonal concessions
- Signage, parking, pricing clarity and visitor flow
- Connection to trails. Full integration with the Trails Strategy
 - Funding Pathways: MAT (product allocation), Township capital budget, FedNor, Parks Canada (interest expressed), CFDC
- Branding and naming conventions. Review and develop the promotional message, "Trail Capital of NWO," as a unique and compelling selling point
 - Identify and promote some trails specifically for snowshoeing and fat biking
- Four-season usability improvements
 - Snowshoe-specific loops, fat bike routes
 - Winter grooming strategy
 - Plowed access points and parking
- Maintenance planning and operations review
- Cycling strategy (Cycling study already completed for the region which included Nipigon)
 - Promote the cycle and ride itinerary that is listed on the Superior Country website.
 - Explore new cycling opportunities that could be developed and promoted? e.g. mountain biking, fat biking & gravel biking.
 - Review potential mountain bike trails as part of multi-use trail system e.g. Kama Cliffs Trail.

Trails Strategy (High Strategic Priority)

To be developed with Superior Country. Scope includes:

- Unified trail signage
- Mapping, wayfinding and digital integration
 - Paper maps + interactive web maps
 - QR codes linking to itineraries, safety notes, difficulty ratings

Strategic Outcomes

- Supports hiking, trail running, mountain biking, fat biking, snowshoeing
- Builds shoulder/Winter tourism
- Strengthens Nipigon’s identity as a recreation hub

MAT Supported Product Development Fund

Supports creation of new tourism experiences by businesses, nonprofits, or community groups.

Recommended eligible project types:

- Investment towards improving or maintaining a tourism product or service.
- Creation of a new event.
- Grow or improve an event, in a sustainable manner.
- Community promotion initiative.
- Development of a new experience or package.

Applicants

- Local businesses
- Nonprofits
- Event organizers
- Community groups

It is recommended that two different application forms be developed – one for businesses and one for all other proponents, who would be mainly volunteer based and not for profit.

The fund requires development of:

- Formal funding guidelines
- Application criteria
- Public reporting model showing how MAT dollars are used

The MAT Product Development Fund gives Nipigon the ability to stimulate product creation without staffing it all internally.

Product Development Investment Opportunities

This list provides the product development options identified in the research.

Event Development – High Priority

Stakeholders and residents identified strong interest in new and revitalized events that:

- Occupy Winter and shoulder seasons
- Reflect Nipigon’s culture, food, trails, and outdoor identity

Farmer’s Market

This is a new event recently approved by council that will be held at the Nipigon Community Centre all year round. This event matches the interest from the community in more artisan and community events. It is recommended during the summer months that the market is held outdoors. Promotion of this event can focus on close haul markets and people travelling on highway 11/17. Posters and motel cards can also be used locally to promote the market and online media for the close haul markets.

New Event Ideas (aligned with research)

- Expand on Ice Climbing Festival to include additional activities to create a larger winter event.

- Winter light installations – Light Up Nipigon run by the Township of Nipigon with support from volunteers.
- Iron Snowman Challenge- a type of extreme winter sports event that could include cross country skiing, skating, snow shoeing and/or running.
- Souperbowl
- Music Festival
- Heritage Days
- Moonlight Madness Winter shopping night event (late November early December) – strong support for this to return in research.

Events must be driven by external groups, with MAT providing support and funding only.

Downtown & Highway Corridor Improvements – High Priority

Residents repeatedly emphasized:

- Need for streetscape improvements
- Better signage
- Improved first impressions from the Trans-Canada Highway

Opportunities: Low Priority

- New photo-worthy roadside attraction (giant brook trout idea)
- Themed wayfinding from Highway → Downtown → Waterfront → Trails
- Window decals and maps for retail

Improved corridor appeal directly affects highway capture.

Cultural & Heritage Experiences – Medium Priority

Gaps identified:

- Limited cultural programming
- Indigenous collaboration opportunities

Opportunities:

- Interpretive panels along trails and waterfront
- Collaborative programming with Red Rock Indian Band (e.g., storytelling walks, artisan showcases)
- Historical downtown walking tour signs

Guided & Bookable Experiences – Medium Priority

Stakeholders strongly called for guided products before more advertising.

Possible experiences:

- Guided hikes (beginner to advanced)
- Nature interpretation walks (flora, geology, wildlife)
- Photography tours
- Learn-to-fish or fly-casting clinics
- Winter stargazing nights

These are low-cost, high-impact and can be delivered through MAT funded community groups or businesses.

6.3 Place and Price Considerations

Place (Distribution, Access, Visitor Journey)

In tourism marketing, place refers to how visitors access information, navigate the community, and engage with Nipigon’s products and experiences. Unlike traditional industries, “place” is not a physical storefront but the sum of all touchpoints a traveler encounters before and during their visit.

For Nipigon, strengthening place means improving the visitor journey from highway to downtown to waterfront, and ensuring information is available, accurate, and consistent across all channels.

Key Place Considerations for Nipigon:

- **Highway Capture:**
 - Clearer signage, updated billboards, and more compelling highway messaging are essential to convert travelers from “passing through” to “pulling off.”
- **Integration with Regional Routes:**
 - Nipigon sits at a critical juncture on the Trans-Canada Highway and Lake Superior Circle Tour. Aligning with these established travel patterns — and ensuring Nipigon appears as a clear stop along them — expands the community’s effective distribution network.
- **Centralized Visitor Information:**
 - With the transition to digital kiosks, a standalone tourism website, and unified event listings, Nipigon can modernize how visitors discover its attractions. Each distribution channel (website, kiosks, social media, print collateral) must lead to the same accurate, visitor-ready information.
- **Wayfinding & On-the-Ground Experience:**
 - Place also includes the physical movement of visitors through Nipigon. Improving wayfinding to the Marina, tower, trails, museum, and downtown ensures visitors can easily navigate with confidence. This directly impacts visitor satisfaction and length of stay.

Strengthening place ensures that Nipigon’s attractions are not just compelling, but discoverable, accessible, and easy to experience.

Price (Value, Transparency & Visitor Expectations)

Price, within the tourism marketing mix, is about clarity, perceived value, and alignment with visitor expectations. For Nipigon, price also reflects whether the cost of experiences or amenities matches the quality delivered.

Clear, consistent pricing helps reduce friction, especially for highway travelers who make quick decisions.

Key Price Considerations for Nipigon:

- **Marina Pricing Transparency:**
 - One of the strongest themes from leadership interviews was the need for clear, visible, and consistent Marina pricing for day-use, long-term parking and boat launches . Visitors frequently turn around when pricing is unclear, even when capacity exists. Establishing transparent pricing signage and digital listings is a high-impact improvement.
- **Competitive Value Positioning:**
 - Nipigon’s accommodations and activities serve a drive-through market comparing multiple North Shore communities. Ensuring pricing is seen as fair and aligned with the quality of service particularly at the Marina and campground, supports visitor confidence and return visits.

- **Event & Experience Pricing:**
 - As new events and experiences emerge (e.g., guided hikes, Winter activities, workshops), pricing should reflect accessibility for local audiences while capturing appropriate value from visitors. Transparent pricing also supports MAT fund applications and reporting.
- **Alignment with MAT Framework:**
 - MAT-funded improvements (e.g., streetscape improvements, amenities, kiosks, signage) enhance the perceived value of Nipigon as a destination. This translates into increased willingness to pay for accommodations, activities, and experiences. Pricing and MAT outcomes should be clearly linked in communications to reinforce return on investment.

By addressing price strategically, Nipigon ensures visitors feel they are receiving strong value for their stay, reducing barriers to participation and improving overall competitiveness along the North Shore.



6.4 Marketing and Promotion Strategy

Promotion is vital to positioning the best bet products to the best bet markets. The promotional strategy should look at activity by each season. As there is a significant difference between the experiences for each season the promotional campaigns should reflect this. The timing of marketing promotion will be aligned with product development improvements. This is detailed in the implementation plan with activity increasing over the five-year period.

Spring / Summer Season

This season should be the primary focus of promotional activity. It has the largest market and potential for visitor growth. Advertising should start in the Winter to allow visitors to make plans to visit in the Spring. Target the touring and nature and adventure markets by promoting the activities, events and experiences available in Nipigon. Include specific promotions for the Lake Superior Circle Tour under the touring sector.

Fall Season

The Fall months represent a highly significant season for attracting a key segment of the touring audience to Nipigon. This period appeals to visitors seeking sensory, outdoor, and experiential travel. The strategic focus for promoting Nipigon during the Fall should center around three themes: the stunning natural environment, Fall colours, and a diverse range of activities and experiences tailored to this season.

Winter season

This season will target close haul audiences primarily Thunder Bay to promote events, Winter activities and experiences.

6.5 Marketing Tactics

Standalone Tourism Website (Launch 2026)

A central hub for:

- Activities, Experiences and Attractions
- Business listings
- Itineraries
- Trail maps
- Events calendar
- Experiential blogs
- Downloadable guides
- Metrics tracking

Tourism Social Media (Launch 2026)

Launch and manage:

- Tourism Facebook page
- Tourism Instagram account

Content will be visitor-focused and seasonally aligned.

Highway Capture Program

Includes:

- Redesigned billboards as part of sign plan / audit
- Pull-off signage
- Photo stops (e.g., brook trout feature)
- Trailhead micro-attractions

Digital Asset Collection

Photography and video capturing:

- Marina
- Trails
- Attractions (Bridgeview lookout tower etc...)
- Events
- Seasonal experiences

Visitor Information Kiosks

Kiosks must sync with:

- Events
- Trails
- Maps
- Business listings
- Visitors' website

Seasonal Campaigns

Spring/Summer – Adventure, touring, fishing, events, Marina

Fall – Trails, touring, events, fish & hunt

Winter – Winterfest, snowshoeing, ice climbing

Annual Visitor Guide

Refresh the existing annual Nipigon Visitor Guide (print + digital). Include cover design, page layout, new digital assets. Explore the potential to create a French version of the guide.

6.6 Media Plan

In the current marketing landscape, utilizing a mix of both traditional and digital media typically will produce the best results. This is particularly true when a variety of age demographics make up the primary and secondary target markets. Digital media can be geo targeted to specific audiences, allowing the target market to be reached more effectively. Print advertising is particularly effective when attempting to gain awareness within a niche or specific market. This form of marketing typically exposes you to individuals who may already be interested in your brand and are interacting with print media that are related to your services.

To effectively reach both primary and secondary target markets, we recommend exploring the following:

Print: Lake Superior Circle Tour Adventure Guide and Superior Country Member Map

- These print publications are suggestions based upon their content, the markets they appeal to, and their distribution locations.

Digital: Meta (Facebook & Instagram), Google Ads, Sponsored Blog writeups.

- These digital platforms are recommended based on their overall effectiveness, ability to geo target specific markets, and appeal to the target audiences.

The recommendation for the annual budget for paid media will be in the range of \$10k – 15k.



7.0 Organizational Partnerships

Organizational Partnerships are often a vital piece of marketing strategy. These relationships, when cultivated strategically and effectively, can be leveraged to provide benefits to both parties. Being intentional about which partnerships you place time and resources behind is key to the success of this strategy. Below we have outlined some of the organizations that were mentioned during our research / the course of this project.

- Superior Country – MAT fund administration, marketing alignment, ongoing marketing assistance, visitor website and social media management.
- Destination Northern Ontario – signage, trail standards, pillar alignment.
- Parks Canada
- FedNor
- NOHFC
- Red Rock Indian Band – cultural partnerships.
- Local nonprofits – events & programming.
- Business community – rentals, dining, attractions.
- Superior North CFDC – community economic development.
- Nipigon Business Roundtable – communication and alignment hub.

8.0 MAT Priorities - 2026-27

2026 MAT PRIORITIES

- Winter & shoulder season event support.
- Small business streetscape improvement grants.
- Marketing support for tourism-aligned ≥private businesses.
- Wayfinding improvements (especially Portage Trail, Marina).
- Updated billboards with real visitor-ready visuals.
- Farmers' Market year-round programming promotion.

2027 MAT PRIORITIES

- Marina visitor-readiness (signage, pricing clarity, amenities).
- Rental partnerships (kayaks, bikes, snowshoes).
- Cultural programming support.
- Experience development grants.
- Trail system branding & promotion (“Trail Capital”).



9.0 Implementation Plan

HOW TO USE THE FIVE-YEAR MARKETING TOOLS AND TACTICS

An implementation plan has been designed as a fluid comprehensive guide to understanding, managing and implementing each of the recommended marketing tactics.

Each marketing tactic is prioritized as: high, medium or low. The plan is designed to be fluid so priorities can be changed as well as the timeline and year for each tactic to be deployed.

It is not a recommendation that all the marketing tactics should be completed within the five-year timeframe. A realistic list of achievable tactics should be the main priority which is based on available resources and budget for implementation.

The plan should be reviewed quarterly and adjusted accordingly based on achievements made with the projects underway for that year.

The implementation plan includes the following key information for each marketing tactic that will guide the Township of Terrace Bay through the process of their execution:

- Project objective
- Required initiatives and activities
- Responsibility / project management
- Potential partnerships / resources
- Timeline divided by quarters
- Estimated annual budget / cost for each five years
- Measurement metrics

10.0 MAT Communications & PR Program

To address negativity around MAT and clearly show impact, Nipigon will implement a robust PR model.

PR Tools and Requirements

- Whiteboard cheque presentations to recipients (public photo moment).
- Media releases.
- MAT banner required at all funded events.
- Annual MAT Impact Report, presented publicly and online.
- MAT-funded project showcase page on the tourism website.
- Quarterly updates shared through Township & Superior Country channels.
- Mandatory reporting from recipients, scaled to project size.

Success will be measured by increases in MAT applications, visibility of MAT-funded projects, and year-over-year improvement in community sentiment tracked through surveys.



11.0 Guiding Principales for MAT Allocation

Based on stakeholder input, community surveys, and committee direction:

1. MAT should create new reasons to visit Nipigon, not only support existing events.
2. Prioritize shoulder & Winter seasons for maximum economic impact.
3. Ensure fairness between nonprofits, events, and private business applicants.
4. Make early wins visible to residents.
5. Ensure transparency in how funds are allocated and evaluated.
6. Align all funding with DNO's pillars (Fish & Hunt, Touring, Nature & Adventure, Culture & Heritage).



12.0 Implementation Plan (Strategic Overview)

A detailed implementation spreadsheet outlining budgets, KPIs, timelines, and responsibilities will be developed following approval of this marketing plan.

Year 1

- Build and launch tourism website
 - Superior Country lead with Township of Nipigon assisting.
 - Website live for end of Qtr 2 – 2026.
 - Track website visits and page interactions to set future KPIs.
- Launch tourism social channels
 - Superior Country lead with Township of Nipigon assisting.
 - Setup both channels by end of Qtr 2 – 2026.
 - Content plan and execution will be ready for launch.
 - Track new followers and engagement to set future KPIs.
- Develop & launch MAT funding guidelines and funding streams
 - Superior Country and MAT Committee to lead and launch by end of Qtr 2 - 2026.
- Begin Marina plan/strategy (hire consultants)
 - Township of Nipigon to lead this and release an RFP by end of 2026. The RFP timeline aligns with available funding cycles and property constraints.
- Begin Trails Strategy
 - Superior Country as lead with assistance from Township of Nipigon – have strategy completed by end of Qtr 3 - 2026.
- Wayfinding Strategy
 - Township of Nipigon as lead with assistance from Superior Country – wayfinding strategy, which includes an audit, complete by end of - 2026.

- Farmers' Market promotion
 - Township of Nipigon as lead, with assistance from Superior Country – promotional materials in market by end of Qtr 1 - 2026.
- Begin asset collection (photos and video)
 - Superior Country lead – start collecting content in Qtr 3 – 2026 – Ongoing.
- Annual business survey – gather insight into effectiveness of tourism marketing, product development and the MAT fund.
 - Township of Nipigon as lead – survey sent at the end of Qtr 4 – 2026.
- Seasonal promotional marketing campaigns
 - Superior Country to lead – launch promotional campaign.
 - Measure impact of promotional campaigns.

Year 2

- Begin some Marina upgrades
 - Township of Nipigon lead – first minor upgrades for end of Qtr 2 - 2027.
- Content strategy for social media channels
 - Superior Country lead – ready to launch for end of Qtr 2 – 2027.
 - KPI's setup for measuring engagement.
- Launch new or expanded Winter event (Light Up Nipigon)
 - Township of Nipigon to identify a group that will lead the event organization. Have first event ready for end of Qtr 4 - 2027.
- Finalize trails signage and mapping
 - Superior Country to lead. Updated mapping and signage in place for end of Qtr 2 – 2027.
- Superior Country to lead Township of Nipigon tourism map brochure refresh and print.
- Seasonal promotional marketing campaigns
 - Superior Country to lead – launch promotional campaign.
 - Measure impact of promotional campaigns.

Year 3–4

- Marina capital improvements
 - Township of Nipigon as lead – improvements complete by end of Qtr 2 - 2029.
- Trail promotion plan and execution
 - Superior Country to lead – promotions in market Qtr 2 – 2028.
 - Setup trail use tracking system to measure number of daily users.
- Seasonal promotional marketing campaigns
 - Superior Country to lead promotional campaign and repeat for key seasons in 2028 and 2029.
 - Measure impact of promotional campaigns.
- Broader event development
 - MAT Committee to coordinate and promote the opportunities of the MAT fund for new events.
 - Measure applications and number of new events launched in 2028 & 2029.
- Cultural programming expansion
 - Township of Nipigon to lead – aim for one new program to launch Qtr 3 – 2028 .
- Integrate kiosk updates into routine operations
 - Township of Nipigon to lead – ongoing updates for each qtr in 2028 & 2029.

Year 5

- Review full tourism plan
 - Superior Country and Township of Nipigon to lead – review plan in Qtr 1 – 2030.
 - Decide if an updated plan is required for next five years.
- Support rental and guided experiences
 - Superior Country and Township of Nipigon with assistance from MAT Committee. Aim to have one new rental or guided experience private sector business operational by end of Qtr 2 - 2030.

- Tourism effectiveness market research - residents, businesses, council and other stakeholders
 - Township of Nipigon to lead. Send online survey to residents and businesses. Hold focus groups with key stakeholders. Complete this by end of Qtr 1 - 2030.
- Refresh marketing strategy and plan
 - Superior Country as lead – determine what changes are needed to the marketing strategy. Have a new refreshed strategy and plan ready to launch at the end of Qtr 4 – 2030.
- Evaluate MAT program and adjust categories if needed
 - Superior Country and MAT Committee to lead. Evaluation complete by end of Qtr 1 – 2030. Any adjustments made by end of Qtr 2 - 2030.



13.0 Recommendations

13.1 Priority Recommendations

In addition to the three foundational deliverables outlined in the Executive Summary, this section identifies four priority focus areas required for successful implementation that should be implemented in the first two years. These are foundational elements required before larger campaigns or product development efforts can be successful.

1. Build and Launch a Standalone Tourism Website (High Priority, Year 1)

A dedicated tourism website is essential for unifying Nipigon’s tourism communications, improving visitor navigation and centralizing event information.

2. Marina Usage & Development Plan (High Priority, Year 1–2)

The Marina is one of Nipigon’s highest-impact tourism opportunities, identified repeatedly in surveys and stakeholder sessions as both a strength and a point of frustration. A coordinated plan is required before investment.

3. Trails Strategy (High Priority, Year 1–2)

Trails are Nipigon’s most consistently praised asset and the community’s strongest branding opportunity (“Trail Capital of NWO”). A coordinated strategy will unify signage, branding, and user experience.

4. Manage the MAT Tourism Development Fund framework and Rollout (High Priority, Year 1)

Nipigon’s MAT program will be highly visible and must demonstrate early success to address negativity and build community support.



13.2 Operational Recommendations

Improve Staffing Model for Tourism Operations

Tourism operations (Marina, campground, kiosks, events, visitor information) require a more consistent and professional staffing structure.

Recommendations

- Hire a seasonal Tourism Operations Lead (April–October) to oversee Marina, campground, kiosk content, and visitor information.
- Reduce reliance on student-only staffing.

Staff Training for Consistency and Service Quality

Poor customer service or inconsistent operations can negate marketing efforts.

Recommendations

- Implement a standardized training program for all seasonal staff, covering:
 - Customer service & tourism ambassador training
 - Safety procedures
 - Marina operations
 - Visitor FAQs
 - Event support
- Provide staff with a Visitor Experience Handbook, including up-to-date local information.
- Train staff to promote key attractions and events consistently.
- Train staff on social media management, content planning and delivery.

13.3 Highway Capture & Signage Recommendations

Highway traffic remains Nipigon's largest untapped market. Improving physical communication is essential.

Redesigned Billboards

Billboards are a high-impact asset and currently underperform by focusing on niche imagery.

Recommendations

- Develop a Signage Plan. Complete a full sign/billboard audit to evaluate the following: effectiveness, content/message, location and need for each sign. Potentially remove some signs or move locations based upon the results of the sign audit.
- Update some billboards with more effective visuals and messaging.
- Use bold, action-driven headlines.
- Ensure consistent branding across all highway signage.

- **Unified Wayfinding System**

Wayfinding is fragmented, inconsistent, and confusing.

Recommendations

- Develop a Town-wide Wayfinding Master Plan, coordinated with:
 - MTO/TODS regulations
 - Trail signage
 - Marina signage
 - Urban navigation
 - Digital kiosk
- Reduce duplication and ensure clear paths from highway → downtown → waterfront → trails.

Integration with Kiosks, Waterfront & Trails

Digital and physical signage should mirror one another.

Recommendations

- Ensure kiosks display:
 - Current events
 - Trail maps
 - Business listings
 - Marina information
- Add QR codes linking to the tourism website.
- Ensure kiosk branding matches billboard and website identity.

13.4 Community Engagement Recommendations

Tourism growth requires alignment among businesses, volunteers, and residents.

Annual Business Survey

Strong demand from operators indicates a need for ongoing communication.

Recommendations

- Send an annual tourism survey to operators, nonprofits, and community groups.
- Create a shared tourism mailing list for regular updates.

MAT Updates Through Effective PR

MAT acceptance requires transparency and storytelling.

Recommendations

- Share quarterly updates through:
 - Website
 - Social media
 - Local media (media release)
 - Township newsletters

- Highlight early successes (grants awarded, visible improvements).
- Promote community pride by sharing “Before/After” visuals.

13.5 Recommendations for Early Wins (Year 1)

These actions can be completed quickly, build confidence, and demonstrate visible progress:

- 1. Launch Tourism-focused social channels**
- 2. Design, Develop, and Launch the New Tourism Website**
- 3. Promote the New Year-Round Farmers’ Market**
A new community event
- 4. Photography Collection**
- 5. Publish MAT Guidelines & Application Process**
Build community trust and reduce confusion

13.6 Additional Recommendations (Longer-Term)

- Volunteer recruitment strategy, with cross-generational knowledge transfer.
- Explore partnerships with Destination Northern Ontario, Parks Canada, Red Rock Indian Band.
- Pursue grants to support product development, Marina upgrades, trails planning, and staff resources.
- Develop marketing materials and plan for hosting conferences and events. Specifically, focus on leveraging the Thunder Bay market to grow a tourism-driven event economy for Nipigon.

