

## **North State Jobs First – Tourism Sector Activation Plan Strategic Overview Narrative**

### **Target Sector Strategy Brief Overview**

**Tourism Sector: Creating a vibrant network among a growing number of diverse businesses offering recreational, cultural, culinary, educational, and other life-enhancing experiences, effectively marketing those destination-based experiences to all demographics.**

The Tourism Sector was identified as a priority sector for the North State Jobs First Regional Plan because of its potential to tap into the growing surge of Americans eager to engage in outdoor recreation and to grow good-paying jobs in the region. Visit California has reported that the state’s tourism economy generated \$150.4 billion in travel spending last year, surpassing the record \$144.9 billion spent in 2019 before the pandemic halted travel. Tourism created 64,900 new jobs in California in 2023, bringing total industry employment to 1.15 million (98 percent of pre-pandemic employment levels). Nationally, the outdoor recreation economy contributed a staggering \$1.1 trillion to the U.S. economy in 2022, surpassing industries such as mining, utilities, farming, and ranching, and chemical products manufacturing. In California, the outdoor recreation economy generates \$73.8 billion and accounts for 568,000 jobs (Outdoor Recreation Roundtable – ORR). In addition, the Bureau of Economic Analysis found the 2022 outdoor recreation economy grew three times faster than the U.S. economy as a whole.

The Tourism Sector of the North State region has the opportunity to engage with the agriculture and natural resources sectors through many activities, including guided tours; biking, hiking, and equestrian trails; and other outdoor activities. The benefits are multiple. North State residents can engage in physical activity and growing understanding of natural landscapes and their values. The industry’s workforce can be expanded through partnerships with Tribal leaders to enhance connection between Indigenous resource management practices and climate-based and market-based solutions. Tribal-led tourism activities can increase employment, reduce poverty, empower local communities, and spur cultural revival.

The Tourism Sector also can operate as a nexus between hospitality services, visitor experiences, and climate and natural resource preservation. Workforce training will require a cross-sector approach integrating many transferrable skills, including: customer service, biology and biological assessments, GIS mapping, arts and culture, Tribal representation, public administration, restaurants and hospitality, recreation, and management-track positions.

The North State Strategic Plan includes four strategies to advance the Tourism Sector:

**Strategy T-1:** Develop a regionwide network to strengthen and coordinate the marketing of the full diversity of visitor experiences to all demographics.

- Connect and convene North State subregions: Far North (Siskiyou, Modoc, Lassen), Eastern Sierra (Plumas, Sierra), Trinity, and the Valley (Butte, Shasta, Tehama) to identify collaborative opportunities and provide for more comprehensive visitor experiences.
- Develop a regional tourism marketing plan in coordination with Visit California and establish a champion / owner to drive implementation.
- Develop an asset inventory and map of travel experiences, events, and cultural experiences across the North State.
- Create an interactive regional website with strong social media components.
- Promote the region's natural beauty, smaller populations, destination experiences, and varied landscapes and climates.
- Hold focus groups to tailor outreach based on desired activities. Harness the spending power of Gen X and Boomer travelers.
- Elevate the voices of the North State's Tribal partners to expand their role in and benefits from regional tourism.
- Engage Tribal partners in identifying connections within Tourism projects for storytelling, events, and integrating their knowledge on trail maps, historical markers, and electronic platforms.

**Strategy T-2:** Connect, grow, and promote community-based businesses that together provide a full destination-based experience for visitors.

- Identify supporting businesses in the hospitality industry to create visitor packages.
- Identify ways to promote and market packages domestically and internationally.
- Coordinate master agreements between federal, state, and local landowners for better access and shared mutual benefit.

- Explore entrepreneurial and small business opportunities.
- Develop regional, multi-day travel package opportunities.
- Support efforts to modernize fairgrounds and develop Community Resilience Centers to provide continuous community benefits.
- Identify and promote large-scale attractions and events that are unique to the North State beyond outdoor experiences.
- Assess and develop a plan for infrastructure improvement to support attractions, including expanded WiFi availability, rental car facilities, EV infrastructure, transportation systems, insurance solutions, and sanitary waste disposal.
- Demonstrate how the North State is coming together to connect communities, build a more resilient economy, and advance the opportunity and caring community that provides greater visitor experiences and compels visitors to return and even relocate.

**Strategy T-3:** Develop ecology-based experiences to increase understanding, support, and stewardship for the North State’s natural landscape, efforts to adapt to climate change, and reducing carbon emissions.

- Preserve and promote cultural heritage by including Tribal partners in planning and implementation phases. Leverage the Native California initiative.
- Inventory infrastructure needs to support climate adaptive activities such as charging stations, trail systems, informational signage, and shared ride systems.
- Highlight resilience and recovery of North State region post wildfires, including ecological mitigation, land restoration, and habitat protection.
- Address community concerns about the impact on outdoor resources as a result of increased tourism with public relations campaigns, town halls, and other marketing efforts.

**Strategy T-4:** Build resilient tourism projects that integrate and celebrate the North State’s rural landscape and culture.

- Promote rural tourism by highlighting unique cultural and natural attractions, supporting local artisans, and developing sustainable tourism practices.
- Invest in tourism infrastructure while preserving the natural environment and cultural heritage.
- Leverage existing tourism partnerships similar to Connected Communities and other trail/bike systems in the eastern side of the region.

## **Tactics**

To advance these strategies, the North State Jobs First collaborative will work to (a) build capacity for functioning together as a region across sectors and geographies and (b) nurture specific assistance to individual projects where needed and feasible.

The region will deploy the following Tourism Sector tactics over the next 12–18 months:

### **1. Activate regional leadership.**

- The collaborative intends to build on the momentum of the Jobs First planning process to foster support and communicate a regional vision for improved economic, social, and climate resiliency. Convenings and convening capacities will be nurtured to continue building trust across communities and their leaders about the value of working collaboratively as a region and to explore potential structures for ongoing collaboration. The Sierra Buttes Trail Stewardship Connected Communities project is a visionary effort led in partnership by federal land managers, SBTS, and community partners to connect 15 mountain towns for economic prosperity through outdoor recreation—an \$887 billion industry. It envisions a recreation-focused lifestyle through community investment, shared stewardship, economic opportunity, and important new local jobs, all strengthening economically disadvantaged communities in California’s Plumas, Sierra, Butte, Lassen, and Nevada Counties, as well as Washoe County, Nevada. This project serves as critical infrastructure, best practices and opportunities for leveraged resources.

### **2. Promote a shared vision.**

- The North State team will conduct follow-up meetings with elected officials and key stakeholders across the 10 counties to share information about Jobs First initiatives and progress in the Tourism Sector, and to explore means of communicating as a region about the North State’s agricultural assets, opportunities, and needs.

### **3. Inventory Tourism initiatives in the pipeline and identify technical assistance needs.**

- The team will develop an inventory of Tourism-related projects in the region, identifying planning and progress as well as common technical assistance needs.

**4. Foster project-focused support where needed and feasible.**

- Based on the inventory of projects in the Tourism Sector pipeline, the North State team will work to identify common challenges and needs that could benefit from additional technical assistance and work to identify ways to provide such assistance.

**5. Foster connections and interaction across the Plan's four priority sectors, including Healthcare, Tourism, Agriculture, and Natural Resources.**

- Partners in the North State Jobs First journey have consistently stated they do not want to work in “silos” and seek to work together. Despite working in different sectors, they know they have challenges in common ranging from supply chains to marketing to workforce to technological advancements, as well as opportunities that could be leveraged and scaled. Their desire to find meaningful ways to tap best practices, share progress, leverage joint opportunities, celebrate milestones, and learn from one another will be nurtured through outreach, communications, field trips, expos, workshops, or other convenings.

**Operating Structure**

The region is exploring a twin path to (a) building capacity for functioning together as a region across sectors and geographies and (b) nurturing technical assistance to individual projects where needed and feasible. Staff members from the North State Jobs First convenors – Sierra Institute for Community and Environment and the North State Planning and Development Collective – are exploring options for advancing these two pathways.

This will be an evolving approach because the region has not benefited from the substantial public and civic funding and infrastructure enjoyed by other parts of the state, such as dedicated and ongoing funding for regional planning of multi-county Metropolitan Planning Organizations, substantial philanthropic investment, access to federal financial support through Community Development Financial Institutions, and support through the California Organized Investment Network. In short, the North State faces a notable lack of investment in its nonprofit and business communities as its starting point.

The Catalyst Projects for the Tourism Sector offer connecting points for this work around regional capacity building and technical assistance. They include:

- Tulelake Cultural Visitor Center
- Outdoor Recreation Industry Sector Partnership
- Mount Shasta Nordic Center Facilities Upgrade Project
- Shasta-Cascade Outdoor Recreational Accelerator

## Resourcing Across the Strategy

- **Rural Marketing Program (Visit California)**
  - Ongoing matching grants and cooperative marketing funds for California's eight rural tourism regions—covering digital ads, campaigns, and local partnerships [industry.visitcalifornia.com](https://industry.visitcalifornia.com).
- **Vibrant Recreation & Tourism Directed Grant Program (Sierra Nevada Conservancy)**
  - Planning and implementation grants focused on sustainable tourism in the Sierra Nevada.
  - Past rounds (2022, 2023) funded public-land access improvements, amenities, and ecosystem protection [law.justia.com+15grants.ca.gov+15grants.ca.gov+15](https://law.justia.com+15grants.ca.gov+15grants.ca.gov+15).
- **Rural Recreation & Tourism Program (Prop 68)**
  - Administered by CA Dept. of Parks & Rec, this bond-funded program supports park construction in rural areas to boost visitor access and local economies .

## Dependencies and Risks

### Key Dependencies

#### 1. Natural and Cultural Assets

- Health of natural landscapes (e.g., forests, beaches, parks)
- Preservation of cultural and historic sites
- Climate stability and wildfire management

#### 2. Infrastructure

- Transportation (airports, roads, public transit)
- Hospitality (hotels, restaurants, attractions)
- Digital infrastructure (online booking, marketing platforms)

#### 3. Workforce

- Skilled labor in hospitality, guiding, food service, and customer service
- Seasonal and affordable housing availability for workers

#### 4. Regulatory Environment

- Land use, zoning, and permitting
- Environmental regulations (coastal, fire, emissions)
- Visa and immigration policies for international tourism

## 5. Public Safety and Health

- Emergency response systems (especially for fire, earthquakes)
- Public health infrastructure (e.g., pandemic preparedness)
- Visitor safety perception

## 6. Marketing and Promotion

- Funding and coordination from state and local tourism boards
- Reputation management (reviews, media coverage)
- Events and destination branding

## 7. Economic and Business Ecosystem

- Support for small tourism businesses
- Access to capital and technical assistance
- Interdependence with agriculture, wine, and outdoor recreation sectors

## Key Risks

- **Environmental Risks:** Climate change, natural disasters, and resource overuse threaten destinations.
- **Economic Risks:** Recession, inflation, and currency shifts reduce travel demand.
- **Health & Safety Risks:** Pandemics, disease outbreaks, and food/water safety issues disrupt tourism.
- **Political Risks:** Instability, travel restrictions, and regulatory changes impact access and operations.
- **Market Risks:** Changing preferences, over-tourism, and reputational damage affect demand.
- **Technological Risks:** Cyberattacks, outdated systems, and overreliance on platforms reduce resilience.
- **Workforce Risks:** Labor shortages, skill gaps, and employee unrest hinder service quality.



## Activation Plan: Tactical Workplan

<b>Tactic and Overview</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
<b>Tactic 1</b>  Activate regional leadership.	Convene subcommittee for the tourism sector and include additional practitioners and partners to deepen working relationships, review funded projects, and expand tactics for implementation of the Regional Strategic Plan.  Hosting regular meetings (HRTC, subcommittees, advisory committees).  Facilitating peer-to-peer introductions and networking opportunities.	Co-convening Team with sub committees  Convening of full HRTC  Meetings with key health sector stakeholders	Quarterly through September 2026   As needed
<b>Tactic 2</b>  Promote a shared vision.	Build upon the community capacity workshops completed throughout the planning process. Host workshops in each of the 10 counties to engage the Regional Strategic Plan, connect funded awards with existing and new partners, seek assistance to improve unfunded projects to move toward eligibility for funding or to collaborate with other projects.  Develop regular cadence of outreach to entire North State region; newsletter, social media, video projects.	Advisory Committee and HRTC with co-convening team support	Beginning June 2025
<b>Tactic 3</b>  Inventory agriculture	Through the community capacity workshops and HRTC meetings, conduct an inventory of needs of	Advisory Committee and HRTC with co-	Beginning June 2025





projects in the pipeline and identify technical assistance needs.	individual counties, subregional areas and the entire region.  Identify scalable/replicable solutions to share in best practices expo.	convening team support	
<b>Tactic 4</b>  Foster project-focused support where needed and feasible.	Assess funded projects needs and growth opportunities. Identify expertise within the co-convening team, subcommittees, advisory committee, and HRTC members. Review unfunded projects to determine needs and connect with resources.	Advisory Committee and HRTC with co-convening team support	Beginning June 2025
<b>Tactic 5</b>  Foster connections and interaction across the Plan's four priority sectors, including Healthcare, Tourism, Agriculture, and Natural Resources.	Complete a best practices expo with regional projects from all key sectors convening in person to share best strategies, programs and practices that can be shared and retooled across sectors. This is a request from our region and breaking silos and sharing best practices that are working within the north state context is a goal of our continued efforts. This expo will be an in person day long gathering.  Complete in person convenings including the full regional HRTC.  Identify key leaders to facilitate relationships between sectors, for example, natural resources partners focused on tourism or recreation who can also partner with health sector for multi benefit outcome (e.g. healthy community development, tourism		Fall 2025 - in person best practices expo  In person HRTC mid-summer

	<p>sector growth, improved natural resource management.</p> <p>Identify project with cross sector impact and coordinate regional expertise and capacity to elevate project impact for example community resilience hubs that serve as deployment hubs for natural disaster response and serve as regional healthcare and health promotion hubs.</p>		
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## Goals and Metrics Across the Strategy

### Sector-level outcomes

1. Number of quality primary and secondary jobs
2. Growth in tourism education institutions and graduates
3. Training and upskilling programs initiated within the region
4. # of cross regional tourism workforce training partnerships
5. # of cross sector tourism promoting projects and/or partnerships (e.g., ag-tourism)

### Shorter term progress measures

1. Number / percentage of technical assistance needs adequately met
2. Number and progress of projects in the pipeline (based on inventory)
3. Number and median income of project-related jobs.

### Expectations for reporting progress on measures

1. Quarterly stakeholder gathering
2. Newsletters and storytelling strategy
3. Annual regional in-person meeting of cross-sector leaders (linked with a quarterly regional convening meeting)