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Western Hospitality in a Changing World: Reimagining Alberta's Compensation Culture

Final Report
December 22, 2025

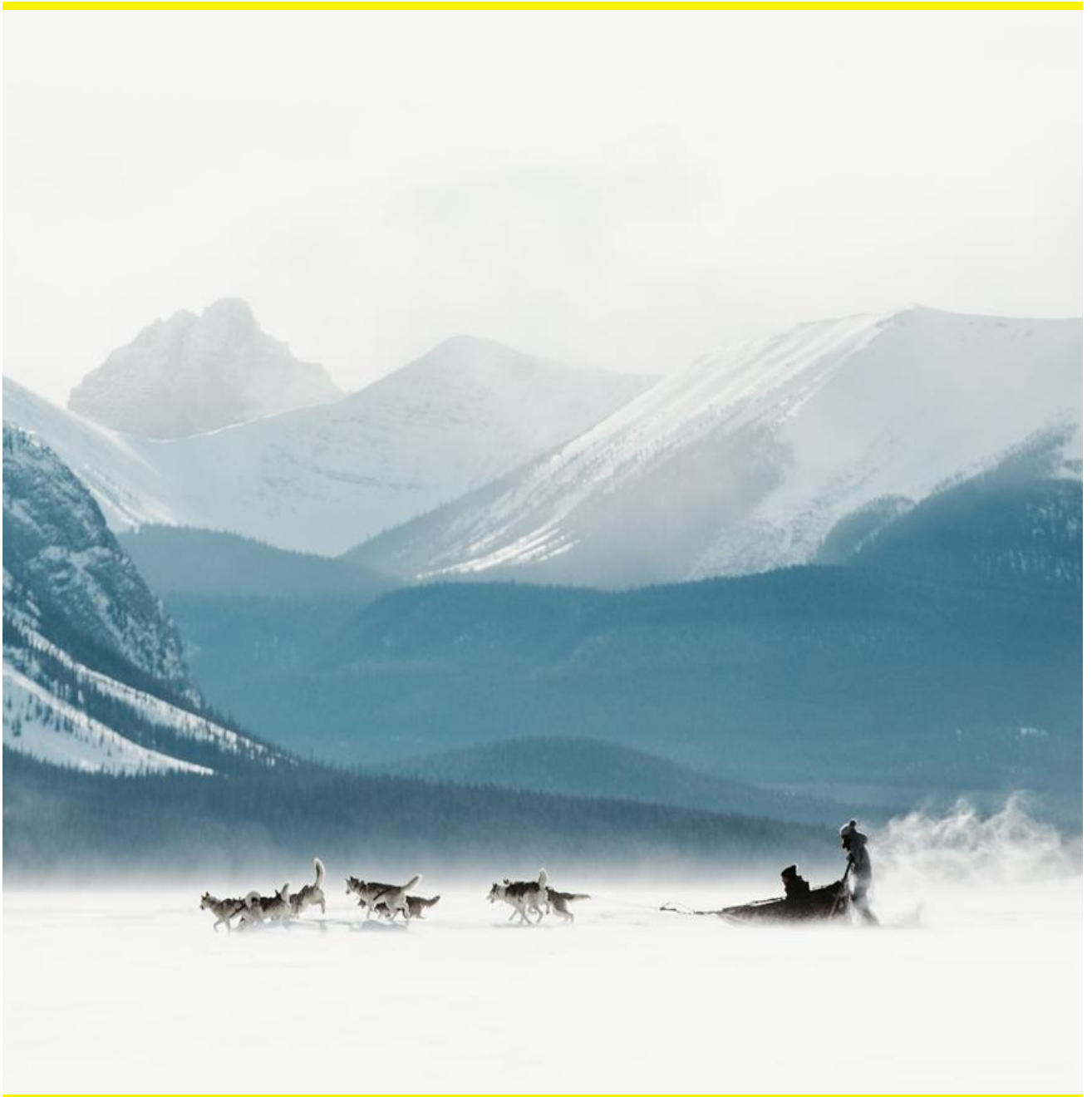
The Province of Alberta is working in partnership with the Government of Canada to provide employment support programs and services.

Canada 

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1. Executive Summary

Alberta's tourism industry stands at a crossroads. Persistent labour shortages, high turnover, and fierce competition from other sectors have created real and urgent pressure on the sector's workforce. Yet these challenges also signal a deeper opportunity to evolve how the industry attracts, supports, and retains its people, not just by offering jobs, but by delivering meaningful, sustainable careers.

Today's tourism industry employees are asking for more transparency, more flexibility, and more purpose. But many face structural barriers that limit their ability to commit to tourism jobs: unaffordable housing, limited access to childcare, and unpredictable schedules. If left unaddressed, these pressures will continue to erode the sector's competitiveness.

This report offers a bold response. It presents a province-wide strategy to reshape Alberta's "compensation culture," the way the tourism industry defines, delivers, and communicates value to its workforce. Developed through in-depth interviews, collaborative workshops, economic modeling, and stakeholder validation, the strategy introduces 23 high-impact initiatives across five strategic pillars:

- **Compensation** — Make pay more transparent, equitable, and responsive to worker needs
- **Training & Development** — Build capability, career clarity, and leadership from within
- **Branding & Reputation** — Shift public perception of tourism jobs from temporary to purposeful
- **Workforce Infrastructure** — Address housing, childcare, and transportation gaps
- **HR Practices** — Improve flexibility, recognition, and schedule stability

The capstone of this work is the launch of Ask Kate (askkate.ca), a first-of-its-kind, Alberta-specific AI-powered advisor for tourism employers. Rather than producing another static toolkit, the project translated strategy into an always-on, operator-facing platform that delivers trusted, confidential,

and locally relevant guidance when and where employers need it.

Kate was developed and validated through direct industry use. During pilot deployment, the platform supported 25 tourism operators across 74 consultations, generating over 1,500 employer interactions. Feedback consistently highlighted the platform's practicality, relevance, and local credibility, reinforcing its value as a day-to-day decision-support tool rather than a policy resource.

Ask Kate delivers:

- An AI-enabled advisor that provides plain-language guidance on compensation, scheduling, benefits, retention, and workforce practices tailored to Alberta's tourism context and based on the challenges and solutions identified in the first phase of this project
- A structured self-assessment experience that helps employers identify the highest-impact actions for their specific business realities
- A curated, vetted resource library with ready-to-use templates, tools, and implementation supports
- A confidence-building decision layer that helps employers act by reducing uncertainty and administrative friction

Designed to augment, not replace, people, Ask Kate supports operators in making better workforce decisions faster. The platform provides a scalable foundation for long-term improvement in workforce outcomes.

With Ask Kate live, Alberta's tourism sector now has more than a strategy, it has an operational system for change. Together, the roadmap and the platform reposition workforce investment not as a compliance exercise or cost to manage, but as a driver of retention, service quality, and competitive advantage for the province's tourism industry.

2. Project Background

2.1 Project Origins

The TIAA Labour Research and Program initiative was commissioned in response to persistent and growing workforce challenges in Alberta's tourism sector. As the industry continues to rebound from the COVID-19 pandemic and adapts to a changing economic and demographic landscape, issues related to recruitment, retention, seasonality, compensation, and housing have become increasingly acute. Recognizing the strategic importance of tourism as a contributor to regional economies, the Tourism Industry Association of Alberta (TIAA), in collaboration with the Government of Alberta and with funding from the Workforce Partnership Program and support from Tourism HR Canada, Indigenous Tourism Alberta, and Travel Alberta, launched this project to develop a deeper understanding of labour market conditions and to co-create a set of actionable solutions.¹

This initiative also emerged from an acknowledgment that improving compensation culture is critical not only for immediate workforce stabilization, but also for enhancing the long-term sustainability and attractiveness of the tourism sector. Stakeholders across the industry from DMOs and operators to educators and workforce partners have expressed a desire for sector-specific tools, data, and supports to guide decision-making and investment in people.

2.2 Objectives

The overarching goal of this report is to strengthen the tourism workforce pipeline in Alberta by identifying, evaluating, and advancing practical strategies that will improve compensation culture and workforce sustainability. More specifically, the project aims to:

- Understand the current state of the tourism labour market in Alberta and key structural barriers to workforce development.

- Surface promising local and global practices and innovations that are adaptable to the Alberta context.
- Engage stakeholders through a highly participatory process to ensure solutions are grounded in lived experience and operational realities.
- Model the potential economic impact of key initiatives on business performance, employee retention, and long-term sector viability
- Deliver a set of strategic recommendations organized around five priority pillars.
- Lay the foundation for a set of resources, tools, and evaluation frameworks to help tourism businesses assess and adopt the strategies most relevant to them. Future phases of work will implement some of these tools.

2.3 Methodology Overview

This project was grounded in a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, drawing from multiple sources of insight:

- Literature and Best Practices Review — A scan of Canadian and international examples of workforce development in tourism and adjacent sectors, with attention to compensation, housing, training, and HR innovation.
- Stakeholder Engagement — Stakeholders contributed their perspectives through in-depth interviews, six workshops, and ongoing dialogue. These included tourism operators, DMOs, economic development agencies, post-secondary institutions, and workforce service providers across Alberta.
- Surveys and Economic Modeling — A workforce survey was conducted to gather quantitative insight into current compensation practices and priorities among Alberta's tourism employers and employees. A set of modeling exercises examined the potential ROI of various initiatives on labour costs, retention, and profitability is also under development.

¹ – The Province of Alberta is working in partnership with the Government of Canada to provide employment support programs and services.

2. Project Background

- Validation and Prioritization — Input from industry leaders was solicited to evaluate and prioritize a curated list of 25 strategic opportunities. This informed the final recommendations and the development of a prioritization matrix.

This participatory, evidence-based approach ensures that the resulting initiatives and tools are grounded in real-world tourism operations and focused on long-term, system-level impact.

3. Current State of the Labour Market

3.1 Labour Market Trends in Alberta Tourism

Tourism is Alberta's largest service industry and a significant employer across rural, urban, and Indigenous communities. The sector spans a wide range of sub-sectors, including accommodations, food and beverage, transportation, attractions, events, and outdoor recreation. While tourism employment has shown signs of recovery since the pandemic, the workforce has not fully rebounded to pre-2020 levels, particularly in rural and seasonal destinations. Industry performance indicates that some of this ongoing shortage has led to both productivity gains and cost escalations.

The tourism workforce is characterized by high levels of part-time, seasonal, and casual employment. Entry-level jobs dominate the industry, and many positions offer limited formal career pathways. Additionally, wages in tourism often fall below those in comparable sectors, which has exacerbated recruitment challenges in a tight provincial labour market.

Key trends include:

- Persistent labour shortages, particularly in frontline service roles.
- Increasing reliance on youth, newcomers, and temporary foreign workers.
- An aging workforce with low replacement rates in rural areas.
- Mismatch between job expectations and job realities (e.g., irregular hours, unpredictable income, limited benefits).
- Limited real and apparent career progression opportunities.

3.2 Systemic Challenges

Beyond sector-specific wage and staffing issues, several systemic barriers are contributing to instability in the tourism workforce. These include:

- Lack of Affordable and Workforce-Oriented Housing — Housing shortages, STR competition, and restrictive zoning policies limit the availability of staff accommodation in many tourism regions, from resort towns to rural hubs.

- Limited Access to Childcare — The lack of flexible, extended-hours childcare creates a barrier for parents, particularly in shift-based roles. Many employers report losing qualified workers due to caregiving conflicts.
- Transportation Gaps — Especially in non-urban areas, lack of public transit or safe commuting options restricts access to tourism jobs for lower-income workers and newcomers.

These structural challenges contribute to high turnover and reduced workforce participation, especially among groups who might otherwise be interested in tourism roles.

3.3 Economic and Demographic Shifts

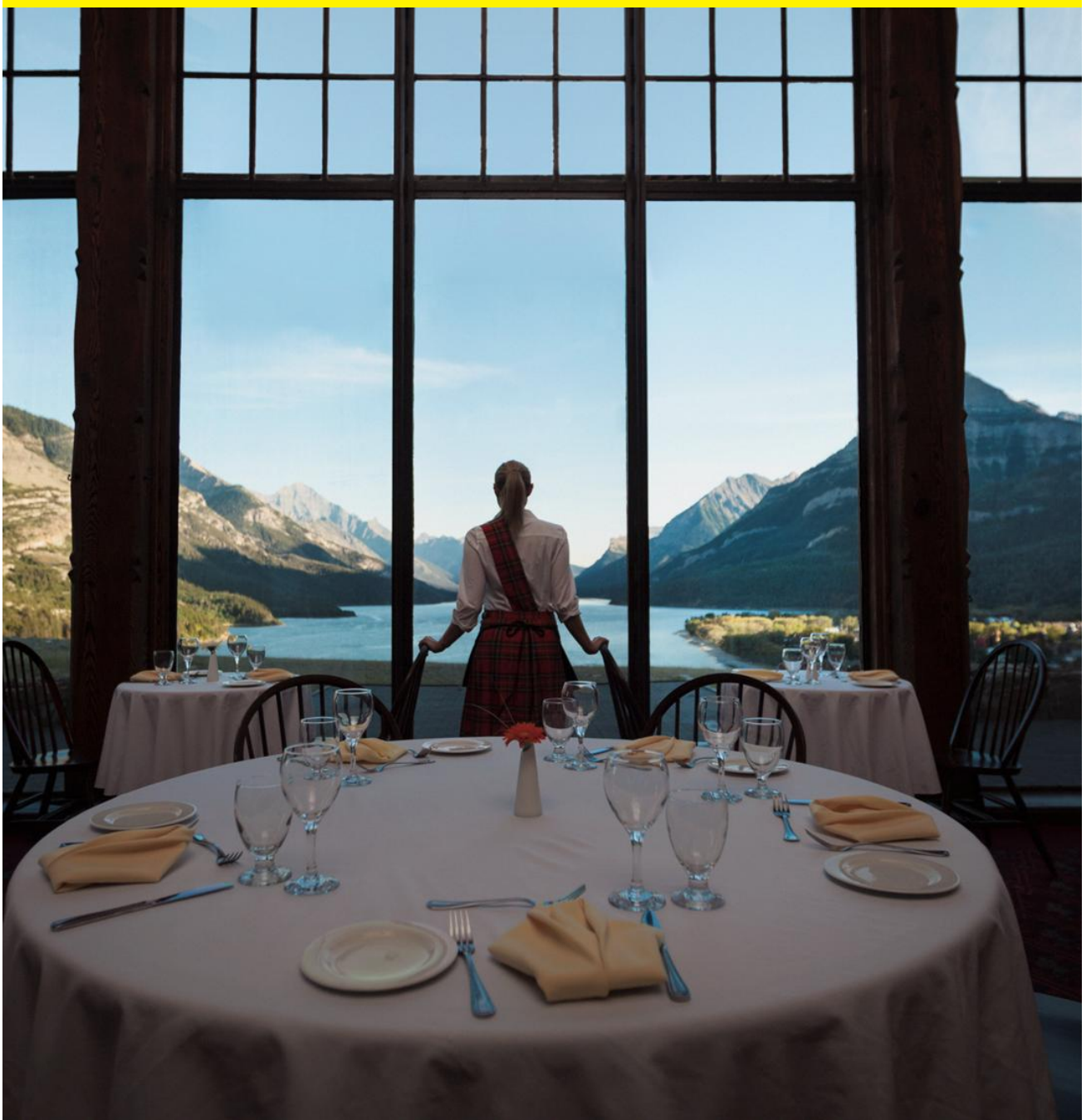
Several broader shifts are also reshaping the labour environment in which Alberta's tourism industry operates:

- Post-Pandemic Workforce Reconfiguration — Many workers who left the sector during the pandemic have not returned. Competing sectors (e.g., construction, logistics, retail) often offer better pay, more predictable hours, or clearer career progression.
- Changing Expectations Among Workers — Younger workers increasingly prioritize flexibility, purpose, and wellness in their employment. Tourism jobs are perceived as lacking in long-term career value or stability, which further constrains attraction.
- Population Growth and Migration Patterns — Alberta has seen strong interprovincial and international immigration in recent years. While this presents an opportunity to recruit new tourism workers, integration support and credential recognition remain barriers.
- Inflation and Cost of Living Pressures — Rising housing and food costs have put additional strain on low-wage workers, making tourism jobs less viable for full-time income earners and forcing many to seek multiple jobs or alternative careers.

3. Current State of the Labour Market

Together, these dynamics create a complex and urgent need for tourism employers to rethink how they attract, compensate, and retain workers, not just through higher wages, but through holistic improvements to workplace culture, predictability, flexibility, and career growth.

To execute the Government's vision of a \$25B visitor economy, Alberta will need an additional 100,000 tourism workers by 2035. Tourism as a career path has never been packaged and sold as a competitive advantage in the province. British Columbia sells outdoor careers, oenology, and culinary expertise. What is Alberta's competitive advantage?



4. Stakeholder Engagement

4.1 Engagement Activities

Stakeholder input has been central to this project, both as a source of qualitative insights and as a part of the quantitative primary research. Engagement activities were designed to capture a wide range of voices across Alberta's tourism industry and to ensure that the proposed strategies and tools were grounded in lived operational experience. The engagement process included:

- **21 In-Depth Interviews** with tourism operators, DMOs, sector associations, educators, workforce service providers, and community organizations.
- **Six Facilitated Workshops** involving over 20 industry stakeholders focused on:
 - Identifying compensation challenges and workforce gaps
 - Reviewing global best practices
 - Validating and prioritizing potential solutions
- **Follow-up Discussions** with key stakeholders to refine the initiative list and explore implementation considerations.
- **An Industry Employer Survey** where industry employers were surveyed on qualitative and quantitative elements of their compensation culture
- **An Industry Employee Survey** where more than 300 current, former, and prospective industry employees provided input on their perceptions and experiences with compensation culture in Alberta's tourism industry.

This engagement was intentionally participatory and solution-focused, offering stakeholders multiple entry points to shape the strategy and identify functional tools.

4.2 Core Themes

Several recurring themes emerged consistently across interviews, workshops, and survey responses:

- **Retention Challenges Are Outpacing Recruitment Issues** — While finding workers is still difficult, employers are increasingly focused on reducing turnover and improving workplace experience to keep staff.
- **Tourism Jobs Are Still Perceived as Temporary or Transitional** — Many workers, especially youth and newcomers, view tourism as a stopgap, not a long-term career option, due to low wages, lack of benefits, and minimal upward mobility.
- **Employers Want to Offer More but Face Structural Constraints** — Business owners express willingness to improve compensation, flexibility, and training but are often constrained by seasonality, margins, and policy limitations (e.g., regulations, benefits access for part-time staff).
- **The Concept of "Compensation" Is Expanding** — Stakeholders emphasized that fair compensation goes beyond pay. It includes schedule predictability, training, recognition, and access to housing or childcare.
- **Interest in Collaboration Is High** — Many employers voiced strong interest in pooled benefit models, shared housing, joint recruitment efforts, and sector-wide recognition programs, especially when facilitated by neutral organizations like TIAA or DMOs.

These themes shaped the design of the 25 initiative options and informed the structure of the final recommendations.

5. Key Challenges and Barriers

Alberta's tourism industry faces a layered set of barriers that inhibit the recruitment, retention, and development of a sustainable workforce. These challenges cut across structural, operational, and social domains, and differ in intensity across rural and urban contexts, seasonal vs. year-round operators, and small vs. large businesses. While some barriers are deeply embedded in the broader labour market, others are specific to the tourism sector's characteristics and public perception.

5.1 Employer-Level Barriers

Cost Pressures and Thin Margins

Many tourism operators, particularly small and seasonal businesses, operate with limited margins that make it difficult to take the risk to raise wages or offer additional benefits. These cost pressures are compounded by inflation, seasonality, and regulatory requirements that may not be aligned with tourism business models.

Limited HR Capacity and Expertise

Many businesses lack dedicated HR professionals, relying instead on owner-operators or seasonal managers to handle hiring, training, scheduling, and compliance. This often results in inconsistent onboarding, poor documentation, and informal scheduling practices that reduce employee satisfaction and increase turnover.

Inability to Differentiate as Employers of Choice

Without sector-wide support, many businesses struggle to position themselves as quality employers. They may lack the tools or capacity to develop compelling compensation packages, articulate career paths, or invest in training, especially compared to larger companies or other sectors offering more predictable employment.

5.2 Workforce-Level Barriers

Scheduling Unpredictability and Inflexibility

Unpredictable hours, last-minute shift changes, and a lack of guaranteed hours are major deterrents for workers. These challenges disproportionately affect

caregivers, students, and those working multiple jobs, pushing them toward sectors with more stability.

Lack of Benefits for Part-Time or Seasonal Roles

Many tourism workers do not receive extended health, dental, or retirement benefits due to eligibility thresholds or employer cost constraints. This creates vulnerability and leads many to leave the sector for more secure options.

Housing and Transportation Barriers

Especially in mountain towns and rural destinations, affordable and accessible staff housing is severely limited. Many workers cannot afford to live near their job sites or lack reliable transportation (making commutes over 30 minutes unrealistic), reducing the pool of available labour and exacerbating turnover.

Perceptions of Tourism Work as Low-Value or Temporary

Despite the industry's cultural and economic importance, many Albertans still view tourism jobs as "starter" or "fallback" positions. The sector's lack of visible career pathways, professional development, and recognition contributes to this perception, making it difficult to attract workers with long-term potential. The industry's people management skills struggle to support employees in their first jobs.

5.3 Structural and Policy Barriers

Zoning, Bylaws, and Housing Regulation

Current municipal regulations often restricts creative staff housing solutions like dormitory-style units, seasonal modular developments, or shared accommodations. In some communities, short-term rentals have reduced long-term housing availability, directly impacting the tourism labour supply. In many cases, the regulatory burden makes the development of entry-level staff accommodation far too risky for capital providers.

5. Key Challenges and Barriers

Childcare Incompatibility with Tourism Hours

The availability of licensed childcare with extended or weekend hours is extremely limited. Workers with young children, especially single parents, are often unable to remain in the industry due to the lack of flexible or affordable childcare options near work.

Immigration and Labour Mobility Constraints

Barriers to recognizing foreign credentials, delays in work permit processing, evolving federal policies and targets, and insufficient access to provincial nominee programs restrict access to qualified labour. While immigration is viewed as a critical labour source, the current system is not responsive to seasonal or regional workforce needs. Nor has industry had access to temporary worker or immigration streams that have been durable or stable for more than five year increments.

Lack of Sector-Specific Incentives and Programs

Tourism often falls through the cracks in workforce policy and investment frameworks. Existing subsidies, grants, or training programs may not align with the realities of short-term or part-time employment, making it harder for employers and workers to benefit.

Taken together, these barriers help explain why traditional workforce solutions such as job boards, basic training subsidies, or minor wage increases have had limited impact on labour market outcomes. Addressing them requires a coordinated approach that reimagines how compensation, housing, recognition, and professional development are delivered and perceived across the sector.



6. Strategic Recommendations

6.1 The Five Strategic Pillars

Through the research and engagement, phases of this project, five strategic pillars emerged as foundational to improving Alberta's tourism compensation culture. These pillars were developed through synthesis of global best practices, stakeholder priorities, and the systemic barriers outlined in previous sections. They serve as both thematic categories and investment pathways for short-, medium-, and long-term action.

Each pillar reflects an area where thoughtful, targeted intervention can unlock higher productivity, stronger retention, and greater career appeal for tourism work in Alberta.

Pillar 1: Compensation

This pillar includes strategies to increase the transparency, equity, and perceived value of total compensation. While raising wages is often constrained by thin margins, there are multiple levers available to improve how compensation is structured, communicated, and delivered, including shift premiums, pooled benefits, and service-inclusive pricing models. These strategies recognize that compensation must be redefined not only in financial terms, but in how it supports worker security and dignity.

Pillar 2: Training & Development

Workforce development in tourism is often informal or inconsistent, particularly for frontline roles. This pillar includes initiatives that expand access to training (especially soft skills and people management), connect students to paid experience, and build recognized career pathways. A key focus is ensuring that training translates to mobility, pride, and long-term workforce attachment, not just compliance or minimum upskilling.

Pillar 3: Branding & Reputation

Tourism jobs are often undervalued or misunderstood by jobseekers, parents, and even employers themselves. This pillar includes strategies to reshape how tourism work is portrayed through career path campaigns, refreshed photography, recognition programs, and stronger

partnerships with schools. It acknowledges that improving compensation culture also requires improving how the sector defines and communicates its value as an employer.

Pillar 4: Workforce Infrastructure

No matter how good the job offer, workers cannot stay in a sector if they lack access to housing, transportation, or childcare. This pillar focuses on the enabling conditions that make tourism work viable, especially in rural and seasonal communities. These initiatives often require cross-sector collaboration (e.g., municipalities, housing providers, community orgs.) and should be viewed as foundational infrastructure, not "extras."

Pillar 5: HR Practices

Behind every strong workplace is a set of intentional, people-focused practices. This pillar includes initiatives that improve how tourism businesses hire, schedule, communicate, and support their staff. It emphasizes low-cost, high-impact strategies such as predictable scheduling, flexible work pilots, and recognition programs that can improve retention even when wage increases are not feasible.

Together, these five pillars provide a structured approach for aligning business operations, policy, and workforce development initiatives toward a shared vision of a more stable, respected, and rewarding tourism labour market.

6.2 Prioritization Matrix

While all 23 recommended initiatives represent opportunities for positive change, stakeholders and project partners emphasized the need for a clear, practical framework to guide investment, action, and support. Many tourism businesses, especially smaller and seasonal operators, need help identifying which strategies are most realistic and impactful for their unique context.

To support this, we developed a Prioritization Matrix that evaluates each initiative across six criteria. These were informed by client feedback and refined through stakeholder workshops.

6. Strategic Recommendations

Evaluation Criteria

- Overall Fit – Does the initiative align with Alberta’s tourism labour needs, values, and operational realities?
- Ease of Implementation – How feasible is it for businesses to adopt this practice quickly, with minimal expertise or risk?
- Cost to Implement – What is the relative financial investment required for individual businesses or the sector?
- Applicability – Is the initiative relevant to a wide range of operators (e.g., rural, urban, seasonal, large)?
- Likelihood of Measurable ROI – Will the initiative likely lead to measurable improvements in retention, revenue, or productivity? (To be refined in more detail for piloted opportunities.)
- Scalability - Can the initiative be expanded or adapted easily to different sizes, regions, or business models?

Using the Matrix in Practice

The prioritization matrix also provides a foundation for:

- A self-assessment tool, allowing businesses to identify which initiatives are best aligned with their needs and capacity
- An implementation roadmap that groups initiatives by complexity and investment level
- Funding and partnership targeting, ensuring limited resources are focused on high-ROI, high-feasibility strategies.

Together, this tool shifts the project from strategy into practical action, allowing tourism businesses of all sizes to make informed, confident decisions about improving their workforce practices.

6.3 Financial Impact Framework

To help evaluate each initiative’s business value, we assessed its expected impact across four key financial dimensions:

- Overall Profitability - The initiative’s potential to generate a net-positive return by reducing costs or increasing revenue. Profitability considers both direct and indirect financial outcomes, including lower turnover costs, fewer unfilled shifts, greater staff productivity, and enhanced customer loyalty. It also accounts for the initiative’s cost and ease of implementation.
- Employee Recruitment - How effectively the initiative supports attracting qualified candidates into open roles. Initiatives that improve visibility, employer branding, job quality, or career appeal tend to score high here. Recruitment impact reflects whether the initiative makes tourism jobs more attractive, inclusive, or accessible to a wider pool of applicants.
- Employee Retention - How strongly the initiative is expected to reduce turnover and extend staff tenure. High-retention initiatives are those that increase fairness, stability, benefits, engagement, or recognition. Strong retention reduces hiring costs, improves service continuity, and allows employers to invest more confidently in skill development.
- Customer Satisfaction - The extent to which the initiative is likely to improve the guest experience through better service. This category reflects how workforce improvements (e.g., staff morale, soft skills, supervision quality) translate into higher-quality interactions, consistency, and satisfaction for visitors, which can drive repeat business and brand reputation.

1.1

Tip-Tracking and Distribution Tools

Use technology to distribute tips fairly and transparently.

Initiative Detail

In many tourism workplaces, particularly restaurants, hotels, and tour and activities providers, tips are a major part of employee compensation, but they are often managed informally. This initiative encourages the adoption of digital tools that track, pool, and distribute tips in a transparent and compliant way. These systems can reduce confusion, improve fairness between front- and back-of-house roles, and help businesses comply with payroll legislation. For workers, tip transparency increases trust and understanding of how their income is earned. For employers, it reduces administrative effort and minimizes conflict around pay equity and fairness.

Alignment with Compensation Culture

This initiative highlights the need to treat tips not as optional or informal bonuses, but as an essential component of tourism compensation that deserves clarity and structure. It reframes compensation transparency as a shared responsibility, one that builds trust, reduces conflict, and supports equitable income distribution. In doing so, it helps normalize more professional and accountable compensation systems across the sector.

Prioritization Matrix

Criteria	Rating
Overall Fit	High
<i>Ease of Implementation</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Cost to Implement</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Applicability</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Likelihood of Measurable ROI</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Scalability</i>	<i>High</i>

Financial Impact Framework

Area of Impact	Expected Impact
Overall Profitability	Medium
<i>Employee Recruitment</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Employee Retention</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Customer Satisfaction</i>	<i>Medium</i>

Potential Functional Tools

- 1. Tip Tech Platform Comparison Sheet** — A one-page comparison of digital tip-tracking systems including features, pricing, and compliance details for Alberta operators.
- 2. Tip Pooling Policy Template** — A sample document outlining how tips are tracked, pooled, and distributed in line with provincial regulations and employee agreements.
- 3. Tip Transparency Rollout Toolkit** — Includes posters, FAQs, and manager talking points to help introduce digital tip tools and increase employee confidence.
- 4. Compliance Factsheet** — A factsheet helping operators understand how to use CRA-compliant language and systems.

1.2

Standardized Total Compensation Statements

Help employees understand the full value of what they earn, beyond the hourly wage.

Initiative Detail

This initiative proposes the development and adoption of standardized “total compensation statements” that clearly communicate to tourism workers the full value of what they receive from their employer, including wages, tips (if applicable), bonuses, benefits, RRSP matching, housing subsidies, training opportunities, taxable- and non-taxable benefits, and non-monetary perks. These tools are designed to improve transparency and perceived value, especially in contexts where workers may focus solely on hourly wages without recognizing other forms of compensation. Total compensation statements can also support internal equity, clarify employer brand, and reduce turnover by increasing workers’ understanding of what they’re actually earning.

Alignment with Compensation Culture

This initiative directly supports the redefinition of labour costs by shifting the employer–employee conversation from “how much am I paid per hour?” to “how much is my full employment package worth?” It positions labour investments such as health benefits, paid training, or housing subsidies as part of a strategic compensation portfolio, rather than as disconnected expenses. This can help justify retention investments while improving employee loyalty and alignment.

Prioritization Matrix

Criteria	Rating
Overall Fit	High
<i>Ease of Implementation</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Cost to Implement</i>	<i>Low</i>
<i>Applicability</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Likelihood of Measurable ROI</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Scalability</i>	<i>High</i>

Financial Impact Framework

Area of Impact	Expected Impact
Overall Profitability	Medium
<i>Employee Recruitment</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Employee Retention</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Customer Satisfaction</i>	<i>Medium</i>

Potential Functional Tools

- 1. Total Compensation Statement Template** - A downloadable template that allows employers to input wages, benefits, bonuses, and perks, and generate a one-page summary for employees. Could include sample text for explaining common benefit types.
- 2. Companion Explainer Guide for Employers and Employees** - A short, visual guide that explains why total compensation matters, how to use the statement, and how to talk about it with staff.

1.3

Shift Differential Compensation

Reward staff who work evenings, weekends, and holidays with targeted pay premiums.

Initiative Detail

To address the challenge of staffing less desirable shifts such as evenings, weekends, and holidays, this initiative recommends the use of standardized or encouraged shift premiums. Providing additional compensation for these time slots can help balance scheduling needs, improve fairness, and reduce burnout. Many tourism employers already rely on flexible scheduling, but few offer monetary recognition for it. By introducing a consistent model, employers can better retain staff and improve operational continuity during peak visitor times.

Alignment with Compensation Culture

This initiative positions flexibility and availability as compensation-worthy contributions, expanding the definition of value beyond static wage rates. It recognizes the true costs of irregular work schedules and enables operators to more fairly invest in employee effort and lifestyle disruption. It also creates an opportunity for transparency and trust in scheduling processes.

Prioritization Matrix

Criteria	Rating
Overall Fit	High
<i>Ease of Implementation</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Cost to Implement</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Applicability</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Likelihood of Measurable ROI</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Scalability</i>	<i>High</i>

Financial Impact Framework

Area of Impact	Expected Impact
Overall Profitability	Medium
<i>Employee Recruitment</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Employee Retention</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Customer Satisfaction</i>	<i>Medium</i>

Potential Functional Tools

- Shift Premium Rubric** — A simple spreadsheet or web tool to help employers decide how to calculate extra pay for off-peak shifts based on hours, role, and business capacity.
- Model Policy Template** — A ready-to-use document that outlines how shift premiums can be fairly implemented, communicated, and tracked.

1.4

Benefits for Part-Time and Seasonal Workers

Make health and wellness benefits accessible to workers at smaller tourism businesses.

Initiative Detail

Many tourism operators rely heavily on part-time and seasonal employees, many of whom do not qualify for traditional benefits packages. This initiative explores how to expand access to benefits such as health, dental, mental wellness, and RRSP matching through pooled models, targeted subsidies, or custom-designed offerings for short-term and flexible workers. By improving perceived and actual job quality, these benefits can boost retention and reduce workforce churn in key operational periods.

Alignment with Compensation Culture

This initiative redefines compensation by treating access to benefits as a core employment entitlement, not a perk reserved for full-time staff. It reflects an investment in workforce wellness and stability, rather than seeing high turnover as an inevitable cost of seasonal operations. It also supports equity by offering the same protections to often-excluded categories of workers.

Prioritization Matrix

Criteria	Rating
Overall Fit	High
<i>Ease of Implementation</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Cost to Implement</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Likelihood of Measurable ROI</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Scalability</i>	<i>Medium</i>

Financial Impact Framework

Area of Impact	Expected Impact
Overall Profitability	Medium
<i>Employee Recruitment</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Employee Retention</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Customer Satisfaction</i>	<i>Medium</i>

Potential Functional Tools

- 1. Pooled Benefits Program Guide** — A simple explainer for how small or seasonal operators can join group plans or co-op-style benefit pools.
- 2. Benefits Readiness Checklist** — A quick-assessment tool to help businesses evaluate whether they're ready to offer part-time/seasonal benefits and what options suit them best.
- 3. Subsidy Navigation Toolkit** — A short guide listing public or nonprofit subsidies and programs that can offset costs for offering extended health or mental wellness benefits (e.g., Wellness Together Canada).

2.1 Soft-Skills Micro-Credentialing

Provide fast, stackable training in the human skills that matter most, leveraging existing content first.

Initiative Detail

Tourism workers thrive when they excel in soft skills like communication, problem-solving, and teamwork, yet these capabilities are often undervalued or assumed. This initiative introduces short, stackable micro-credentials that recognize and reinforce these essential skills. Delivered online or in-person, micro-credentials can serve as a low-barrier training option for new hires, youth, or those looking to advance. They also offer employers a way to validate capabilities during hiring or promotion. By formalizing soft skills development using existing tools and in partnership with Tourism HR Canada, this initiative helps raise service quality while supporting staff confidence, mobility, and long-term attachment to the industry.

Alignment with Compensation Culture

Soft skills have long been undervalued in compensation systems, despite being essential to service quality. This initiative helps redefine compensation as inclusive of non-technical capabilities, such as communication, empathy, and adaptability, and formalizes them through recognition and training. It supports a broader understanding of workforce value that extends beyond hard skills or tenure alone.

Prioritization Matrix

Criteria	Rating
Overall Fit	High
<i>Ease of Implementation</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Cost to Implement</i>	<i>Low</i>
<i>Applicability</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Likelihood of Measurable ROI</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Scalability</i>	<i>High</i>

Financial Impact Framework

Area of Impact	Expected Impact
Overall Profitability	Medium
<i>Employee Recruitment</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Employee Retention</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Customer Satisfaction</i>	<i>High</i>

Potential Functional Tools

- 1. Soft Skills Badge Series** — A set of industry-standard, short, stackable credentials for core tourism competencies like communication, teamwork, and adaptability. (Ideally using pre-existing content.)
- 2. Micro-Credential Quiz Modules** — Short interactive assessments that workers can complete online to earn soft skills recognition. (Ideally using pre-existing content.)
- 3. Employer Guide to Using Micro-Credentials** — A brief for managers on how to incorporate micro-credentialing into hiring, onboarding, and performance reviews.

2.2

Leadership Training for Managers

Train supervisors to lead with empathy, clarity, and consistency.

Initiative Detail

This initiative provides access to targeted training for front-line supervisors and mid-level managers in tourism workplaces, roles that often make or break the employee experience. Many tourism managers are promoted internally without formal leadership development, resulting in communication breakdowns, inconsistent standards, or missed retention opportunities. The training would focus on practical, people-focused skills: giving feedback, resolving conflict, building trust, and supporting staff mental health. Equipping managers with these capabilities not only improves team performance but also helps foster a culture of respect, accountability, and recognition. These training modules already exist through Tourism HR Canada and other partners, so this work should spread knowledge and availability.

Alignment with Compensation Culture

This initiative shifts the compensation conversation from “what do employees earn?” to “what kind of leadership do they receive?” It recognizes that the quality of supervision is a major factor in job satisfaction, retention, and workplace culture. Investing in leadership training is a form of indirect compensation, one that strengthens internal systems and builds a more respectful, consistent, and productive work environment.

Prioritization Matrix

Criteria	Rating
Overall Fit	High
<i>Ease of Implementation</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Cost to Implement</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Applicability</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Likelihood of Measurable ROI</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Scalability</i>	<i>High</i>

Financial Impact Framework

Area of Impact	Expected Impact
Overall Profitability	High
<i>Employee Recruitment</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Employee Retention</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Customer Satisfaction</i>	<i>High</i>

Potential Functional Tools

- 1. People Manager Micro-Course Pack** — A short series of 10–20 minute online modules on coaching, communication, and managing frontline teams. (Ideally using pre-existing content.)
- 2. Tourism Supervisor Bootcamp Toolkit** — A slide deck and facilitation guide to deliver in-house or DMO-hosted training sessions for new managers.
- 3. Supervisory Self-Assessment Checklist** — A printable tool to help team leads identify growth areas and track progress on key leadership skills.

2.3

Promote Existing Online Training Resources

Curate and share low-cost learning tools already available to employers.

Initiative Detail

Rather than building new programs from scratch, this initiative focuses on surfacing, organizing, and promoting high-quality tourism training resources that already exist, including free and low-cost courses on safety, customer service, accessibility, and supervisory skills. By curating a central training hub and providing simple guidance on what to use and when, this initiative helps time-strapped employers improve both their employment processes and staff capabilities without major investment. It also supports smaller operators and rural businesses that lack access to formal HR departments or in-house trainers. Making training easier to find and adopt is a key step in raising overall sector professionalism.

Alignment with Compensation Culture

This initiative aims to connect employers with existing resources that can help them improve their compensation culture and provide training to their employees.

Prioritization Matrix

Criteria	Rating
Overall Fit	High
<i>Ease of Implementation</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Cost to Implement</i>	<i>Low</i>
<i>Applicability</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Likelihood of Measurable ROI</i>	<i>Low</i>
<i>Scalability</i>	<i>High</i>

Financial Impact Framework

Area of Impact	Expected Impact
Overall Profitability	Medium
<i>Employee Recruitment</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Employee Retention</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Customer Satisfaction</i>	<i>Medium</i>

Potential Functional Tools

- 1. Alberta Tourism Training Directory** — A curated list of free or low-cost online training platforms relevant to tourism, sorted by topic and skill level. (Included in the online portal.)

2.4 Paid Practicum Opportunities

Help students gain paid, real-world experience in tourism settings.

Initiative Detail

This initiative supports the creation (or broader rollout) of short-term, paid practicum placements for students enrolled in tourism and hospitality programs. Unlike unpaid internships, paid practicums recognize the value of student labour while giving employers a chance to trial future hires in real-world environments. Practicum programs are especially effective at bridging the gap between education and employment, and they can be tailored to local workforce needs. For tourism operators, this initiative provides early access to skilled, motivated talent; for students, it creates momentum toward full-time roles in the sector and helps build confidence through relevant, supervised experience.

Alignment with Compensation Culture

By offering wages to students during practical learning placements, this initiative reinforces that time, effort, and experiential learning have value, even at the earliest stages of employment. It expands the definition of compensation to include developmental support and early access to paid opportunity, signaling to emerging workers that tourism values growth and fairness from day one.

Prioritization Matrix

Criteria	Rating
Overall Fit	High
<i>Ease of Implementation</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Cost to Implement</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Applicability</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Likelihood of Measurable ROI</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Scalability</i>	<i>High</i>

Financial Impact Framework

Area of Impact	Expected Impact
Overall Profitability	Medium
<i>Employee Recruitment</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Employee Retention</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Customer Satisfaction</i>	<i>Medium</i>

Potential Functional Tools

- 1. Pre-Arranged Practicum Partnerships** – Practicum partnerships developed by TIAA and educational partners that employers can apply to join.
- 2. Practicum Agreement Template** — A standardized agreement to formalize expectations between schools, employers, and students for short-term, paid placements.
- 3. Tourism Practicum Job Ad + Onboarding Kit** — A customizable job posting, onboarding checklist, and suggested learning plan for employers hosting student placements.

2.5

Expand Apprenticeships in Tourism Roles

Build formal pathways into tourism careers through hands-on, paid training.

Initiative Detail

This initiative proposes the development of formal apprenticeship pathways for tourism-aligned occupations such as culinary, front desk operations, guiding, and guest services. Modeled after trades and skilled service careers, these apprenticeships would combine paid on-the-job training with structured learning outcomes and industry certification. For employers, apprenticeships offer a way to build talent internally and reduce onboarding costs over time. For workers, especially youth and newcomers, they provide a clear entry point into meaningful careers with long-term potential. Establishing formal tourism apprenticeships can also raise the perceived professionalism of the sector as a whole.

Alignment with Compensation Culture

This initiative redefines compensation by tying labour investment to long-term skill development and professional recognition. It promotes the idea that paying people to learn is not a cost, but a future-facing investment in retention, quality, and leadership. Apprenticeships formalize learning as part of compensation, helping to shift tourism from a “transient job” mindset to a recognized career-building pathway.

Prioritization Matrix

Criteria	Rating
Overall Fit	High
<i>Ease of Implementation</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Cost to Implement</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Likelihood of Measurable ROI</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Scalability</i>	<i>Medium</i>

Financial Impact Framework

Area of Impact	Expected Impact
Overall Profitability	High
<i>Employee Recruitment</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Employee Retention</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Customer Satisfaction</i>	<i>Medium</i>

Potential Functional Tools

- 1. Apprenticeship Role Profile Templates** — Sample descriptions of apprenticeship roles in culinary, guiding, guest services, and other tourism occupations, including responsibilities and learning outcomes.
- 2. Employer Guide to Hosting Apprentices** — A practical guide explaining how to onboard, supervise, and evaluate apprentices in a tourism business.
- 3. Apprenticeship Career Pathway Map** — A visual diagram showing how entry-level roles can lead to supervisory or senior positions through apprenticeship programs.

3.1

Leverage “Western Culture” Identity in Employer Branding

Use Alberta’s cultural values (notably hospitality, grit, and pride) to recruit with purpose.

Initiative Detail

This initiative invites tourism businesses to embed Alberta’s unique “Western culture,” built on hospitality, independence, and pride of place, into their employer brands and recruitment efforts. By leaning into shared regional values and stories, employers can differentiate themselves in a crowded labour market and attract workers who are drawn to purpose and community. This could take the form of brand toolkits, employer story libraries, or campaign templates that tie company identity to the broader cultural identity of Alberta as a place to work, live, and grow.

Alignment with Compensation Culture

Embedding Alberta’s hospitality values into employer branding helps shift compensation from a transactional to a cultural conversation. It reframes employment as participation in something meaningful and locally rooted, adding identity, connection, and pride to the compensation experience. This deeper sense of value strengthens employee commitment and helps businesses stand out.

Prioritization Matrix

Criteria	Rating
Overall Fit	Medium
<i>Ease of Implementation</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Cost to Implement</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Likelihood of Measurable ROI</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Scalability</i>	<i>High</i>

Financial Impact Framework

Area of Impact	Expected Impact
Overall Profitability	Medium
<i>Employee Recruitment</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Employee Retention</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Customer Satisfaction</i>	<i>Medium</i>

Potential Functional Tools

- 1. Tourism Employer Brand Identity Toolkit** — A guide to help businesses define and express their values (e.g., grit, hospitality, pride) in recruiting and HR materials.
- 2. Sample Job Ad Language Infused with Alberta Voice** — Pre-written paragraphs employers can insert into postings that evoke Alberta’s unique tourism character.
- 3. Team Culture Worksheet for Internal Use** — A tool for managers and staff to identify and celebrate their workplace’s distinct culture and how it fits within the broader western hospitality culture.

3.2

Alberta Tourism Career Path Campaign

Showcase real stories that prove tourism can be a long-term career.

Initiative Detail

This initiative proposes a coordinated marketing campaign that highlights real career journeys in Alberta’s tourism sector, from entry-level jobs to leadership roles. By featuring authentic stories of growth, purpose, and progression, the campaign aims to challenge the perception that tourism jobs are dead-end or temporary. It would target students, parents, and mid-career switchers through digital storytelling, social media, and destination-aligned content. The initiative also helps employers position themselves as part of a larger, values-based industry, improving both attraction and retention in an increasingly competitive labour market.

Alignment with Compensation Culture

This initiative supports a culture shift in how compensation is perceived, from a narrow view of short-term wages to a long-term vision of growth, purpose, and progression. By showing how workers build careers in tourism, it redefines the employer value proposition as one that includes development, advancement, and pride. It helps position compensation as more than just pay. It’s belonging, opportunity, and identity.

Prioritization Matrix

Criteria	Rating
Overall Fit	High
<i>Ease of Implementation</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Cost to Implement</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Applicability</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Likelihood of Measurable ROI</i>	<i>Low</i>
<i>Scalability</i>	<i>High</i>

Financial Impact Framework

Area of Impact	Expected Impact
Overall Profitability	Medium
<i>Employee Recruitment</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Employee Retention</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Customer Satisfaction</i>	<i>Medium</i>

Potential Functional Tools

- Tourism Career Story Series** — A set of short written or video profiles showcasing real Alberta tourism workers who have advanced from frontline roles to leadership.
- Career Ladder Posters and Infographics** — Visual tools for breakrooms, job fairs, and classrooms showing common tourism career pathways.
- Social Media Toolkit for Employers** — Suggested captions, hashtags, and assets for businesses to promote tourism career stories on their own channels.

3.3

Build Partnerships with Students

Connect earlier with students to position tourism as a first choice.

Initiative Detail

This initiative encourages deeper collaboration between tourism employers and Alberta's education system, from high schools to technical and post-secondary institutions. It promotes tourism-focused curriculum modules, classroom presentations, career fairs, and mentorship programs that expose students to the sector's opportunities before they enter the workforce. Job shadows, guest lectures, and field placements can also help students experience tourism work firsthand. By building these connections early, the initiative helps reshape how young Albertans view tourism: Not just as a job, but as a meaningful, values-driven career path.

Alignment with Compensation Culture

Early exposure to tourism as a viable career path expands the concept of compensation to include mentorship, skill-building, and future potential. This initiative helps cultivate informed, motivated entrants into the sector who understand that value extends beyond base pay. It fosters a proactive compensation culture where learning and employer engagement start before the first shift is worked.

Prioritization Matrix

Criteria	Rating
Overall Fit	High
<i>Ease of Implementation</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Cost to Implement</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Applicability</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Likelihood of Measurable ROI</i>	<i>Low</i>
<i>Scalability</i>	<i>Medium</i>

Financial Impact Framework

Area of Impact	Expected Impact
Overall Profitability	Medium
<i>Employee Recruitment</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Employee Retention</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Customer Satisfaction</i>	<i>Low</i>

Potential Functional Tools

- 1. "Tourism in the Classroom" Curriculum Module** — A plug-and-play classroom resource for teachers to introduce tourism careers using real-world examples.
- 2. School Visit Slide Deck and Talking Points** — A customizable presentation that employers or DMOs can use when speaking to students.
- 3. Student Experience Planning Toolkit** — A guide for hosting job shadows, tours, or guest lectures, including consent forms and safety tips.

3.4 Refresh Industry Photography

Modernize the visuals used to attract talent to reflect today's workforce.

Initiative Detail

This initiative calls for a sector-wide update of tourism industry photography, replacing dated or generic stock images with authentic, Alberta-specific visuals that reflect the diversity and energy of today's tourism workforce. Photography influences how workers see the sector and whether they can see themselves in it. A refreshed image library would feature real staff in action, behind-the-scenes moments, and non-traditional roles, with attention to inclusive representation. Shared access to these photos would help DMOs, operators, and associations improve recruitment materials and industry branding with minimal individual cost.

Alignment with Compensation Culture

This initiative supports a broader compensation culture by influencing how workers visualize their role, identity, and potential in the sector. By portraying tourism work as diverse, dynamic, and dignified, it reframes how compensation is perceived — not just in wages, but in belonging, image, and purpose. It helps correct visual signals that may otherwise devalue the industry in the eyes of potential recruits.

Prioritization Matrix

Criteria	Rating
Overall Fit	High
<i>Ease of Implementation</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Cost to Implement</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Applicability</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Likelihood of Measurable ROI</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Scalability</i>	<i>High</i>

Financial Impact Framework

Area of Impact	Expected Impact
Overall Profitability	Low
<i>Employee Recruitment</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Employee Retention</i>	<i>Low</i>
<i>Customer Satisfaction</i>	<i>Low</i>

Potential Functional Tools

- 1. Alberta Tourism Image Bank** — A curated collection of royalty-free photos showing real, diverse Alberta tourism workplaces and teams.
- 2. Photo Submission & Consent Guide** — Instructions and forms for employers to submit staff photos safely and inclusively for sector-wide use.
- 3. Editable Recruitment Templates with Modern Images** — Canva or PowerPoint templates for job ads and posters featuring refreshed visuals.

4.1

Employee Housing Best Practices Toolkit

Share examples of staff housing that work, from modular to co-op.

Initiative Detail

Many Alberta tourism destinations, especially rural and resort communities, struggle to find and retain staff due to limited local housing. This initiative proposes a practical toolkit that showcases successful employee housing models already in use across the province and beyond. Examples might include employer-leased apartments, modular housing, staff co-ops, or employer-community partnerships. The toolkit would include case studies, zoning workarounds, financial models, and planning templates. Sharing what works helps reduce trial-and-error for individual operators and supports coordinated, cross-sector responses to this foundational workforce issue.

Alignment with Compensation Culture

Housing is a foundational part of compensation, especially in high-cost or rural destinations. This initiative positions housing access not as a fringe issue, but as a core element of what makes tourism jobs viable. By surfacing and sharing proven housing solutions, the toolkit helps normalize non-wage supports as part of an expanded compensation culture.

Prioritization Matrix

Criteria	Rating
Overall Fit	High
<i>Ease of Implementation</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Cost to Implement</i>	<i>Low</i>
<i>Applicability</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Likelihood of Measurable ROI</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Scalability</i>	<i>High</i>

Financial Impact Framework

Area of Impact	Expected Impact
Overall Profitability	Medium
<i>Employee Recruitment</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Employee Retention</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Customer Satisfaction</i>	<i>Medium</i>

Potential Functional Tools

- 1. Tourism Housing Solutions Casebook** — A collection of Alberta-based and national case studies covering employer-leased units, modular builds, and staff co-ops.
- 2. Housing Option Decision Tree** — A visual tool to help employers assess which housing model best fits their needs, size, and region.
- 3. Sample Employer-Lease Agreement Template** — A starting point for businesses to lease housing units for employee use, including clauses for turnover and damage deposits.

4.2

Shared Ownership or Cooperative Models for Housing

Pool resources to build or buy workforce housing collectively.

Initiative Detail

While the implementation of this initiative is out of scope for this project, many individual operators lack the capital to invest in staff housing on their own but could participate in pooled or cooperative models. This initiative supports the development of shared-ownership housing solutions where multiple businesses, DMOs, or community partners co-invest in building or acquiring units for employee use. Legal, financial, and governance frameworks would be developed to support replication. This approach enables broader participation in housing solutions, spreads risk, and ensures that tourism-related housing remains in the hands of those who need it most.

Alignment with Compensation Culture

This initiative frames housing as a long-term compensation asset, something that can be collectively built, stewarded, and used to stabilize employment. It redefines employer investment from individual units to sector-led housing solutions, expanding the idea of compensation into shared infrastructure that supports whole communities.

Prioritization Matrix

Criteria	Rating
Overall Fit	High
<i>Ease of Implementation</i>	<i>Low</i>
<i>Cost to Implement</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Likelihood of Measurable ROI</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Scalability</i>	<i>Medium</i>

Financial Impact Framework

Area of Impact	Expected Impact
Overall Profitability	Medium
<i>Employee Recruitment</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Employee Retention</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Customer Satisfaction</i>	<i>Low</i>

Potential Functional Tools

(out of scope in this project)

- 1. Tourism Housing Co-Ownership Feasibility Calculator** — An Excel tool to test financial viability of multi-employer or shared housing projects.
- 2. Co-Ownership Governance Framework Template** — Sample bylaws, ownership structures, and responsibilities for pooled housing ventures.
- 3. Legal + Zoning Brief: Shared Staff Housing Models** — An explainer document for employers and partners considering cooperative or joint housing approaches.

5.1

Predictable Scheduling Commitments

Give workers more notice, stability, and input into their schedules.

Initiative Detail

Unpredictable schedules are a major contributor to burnout, absenteeism, and turnover in the tourism sector. This initiative encourages employers to adopt voluntary commitments around schedule consistency, such as providing 7–14 days’ advance notice, minimizing last-minute changes, or offering fixed scheduling options. These small changes can significantly improve work–life balance, especially for workers with caregiving responsibilities, second jobs, or school commitments. Predictable scheduling also strengthens trust and communication between management and staff, which in turn improves morale, reliability, and retention, even in low-margin environments.

Alignment with Compensation Culture

This initiative positions schedule stability as a form of compensation, not just a logistics function. Predictable scheduling gives workers control over their time, supports mental health, and reduces the chaos that drives turnover. By formalizing scheduling fairness, employers can improve job quality without raising wages, reinforcing compensation as an experience, not just a paycheck.

Prioritization Matrix

Criteria	Rating
Overall Fit	High
<i>Ease of Implementation</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Cost to Implement</i>	<i>Low</i>
<i>Applicability</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Likelihood of Measurable ROI</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Scalability</i>	<i>High</i>

Financial Impact Framework

Area of Impact	Expected Impact
Overall Profitability	Medium
<i>Employee Recruitment</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Employee Retention</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Customer Satisfaction</i>	<i>Medium</i>

Potential Functional Tools

- 1. Fair Scheduling Pledge Template** — A customizable letter that outlines minimum scheduling notice, stable hours, and employee input.
- 2. Tourism Scheduling Planner (Excel Template)** — A simple shift-planning tool that helps managers post consistent schedules 1–2 weeks in advance.
- 3. Internal Scheduling Best Practices and Policy Toolkit** — Includes a policy template, communications plan, and FAQs to support implementation of predictable scheduling practices.
- 4. Partnership with Existing Online Tools** — A partnership with an existing provider to roll out the capability to members.

5.2

Benefits and Financial Literacy Campaigns

Help workers understand and use their pay, benefits, and deductions.

Initiative Detail

This initiative aims to improve financial confidence among tourism workers by bundling benefits education with basic financial literacy tools. Many employees, especially youth, newcomers, and seasonal workers, don't fully understand pay stubs, benefits enrollment, tax filing, or how to use employer-provided programs. By offering short, accessible resources on budgeting, taxes, credit, and benefits usage, employers can help workers feel more in control of their finances. Financial literacy boosts trust, increases benefits uptake, and can reduce stress that negatively affects performance and retention.

Alignment with Compensation Culture

This initiative helps workers access the full value of what they already earn. By making pay stubs, deductions, and benefits easier to understand, it ensures that compensation is not just delivered, but also perceived and utilized. Financial literacy enhances trust, boosts benefit uptake, and increases the impact of existing investments in employee support.

Prioritization Matrix

Criteria	Rating
Overall Fit	High
<i>Ease of Implementation</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Cost to Implement</i>	<i>Low</i>
<i>Applicability</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Likelihood of Measurable ROI</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Scalability</i>	<i>High</i>

Financial Impact Framework

Area of Impact	Expected Impact
Overall Profitability	Medium
<i>Employee Recruitment</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Employee Retention</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Customer Satisfaction</i>	<i>Medium</i>

Potential Functional Tools

- 1. “Know Your Pay” Orientation Slides** — A set of editable onboarding slides that explain pay stubs, deductions, benefit enrollment, and budgeting tips in plain language.
- 2. Financial Literacy Mini-Guides** — A series covering topics like saving for taxes, understanding credit, and using group benefits.
- 3. Tourism Benefits Explainer Handout** — A one-page overview of common benefit offerings (e.g., health, dental, RRSP match) with explanations tailored for tourism workers.

5.3 Flexible Work Weeks

Test four-day weeks or flex hours in high-volume tourism roles.

Initiative Detail

This initiative supports tourism businesses in piloting alternative scheduling models, such as compressed workweeks, job sharing, or flexible shift blocks, where operationally feasible. While not every role can support flexible hours, pilot projects can help identify where worker preferences and business needs align. Flexible models may improve retention, reduce fatigue, and support mental well-being without reducing productivity. For example, a four-day workweek could be paired with extended shifts or staggered teams. Demonstrating the viability of these models could unlock new talent pools and modernize tourism's employment appeal.

Alignment with Compensation Culture

Flexible scheduling challenges the assumption that compensation is fixed and inflexible. By experimenting with alternative work arrangements, this initiative supports the idea that productivity, satisfaction, and performance can be optimized through human-centered design, not just financial incentives. It recognizes that time, control, and energy are valuable currencies in today's labour market.

Prioritization Matrix

Criteria	Rating
Overall Fit	Medium
<i>Ease of Implementation</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Cost to Implement</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Applicability</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Likelihood of Measurable ROI</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Scalability</i>	<i>Medium</i>

Financial Impact Framework

Area of Impact	Expected Impact
Overall Profitability	Medium
<i>Employee Recruitment</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Employee Retention</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Customer Satisfaction</i>	<i>Low</i>

Potential Functional Tools

- 1. Flexible Work Model Feasibility Guide** — A checklist-driven tool to help employers assess whether compressed weeks, job-sharing, or flex shifts are viable in their operation.
- 2. Flexible Work Week Best Practices Document** — A summary of best practices from successful tourism and hospitality employers that use alternative schedules.

5.4

Recognition Programs Across the Sector

Celebrate tourism workers regularly to build pride and retention.

Initiative Detail

This initiative proposes the development or expansion of formal recognition programs that spotlight outstanding tourism employees from front-line staff to behind-the-scenes contributors. Recognition could include social media features, peer-nominated awards, milestone celebrations, or integration into larger destination campaigns. Programs like the upcoming TIAA GRIT Awards provide a starting point for sector-wide momentum. Consistent recognition builds morale, encourages loyalty, and reinforces tourism as a respected and purpose-driven career path. When done publicly, it also helps shift public perceptions about the professionalism and value of tourism work.

Alignment with Compensation Culture

Recognition is a powerful and often overlooked form of compensation. This initiative frames praise, visibility, and celebration as part of the employment value proposition. By building systems that regularly acknowledge tourism workers' contributions, the sector can improve morale, reduce turnover, and increase retention without changing base pay.

Prioritization Matrix

Criteria	Rating
Overall Fit	High
<i>Ease of Implementation</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Cost to Implement</i>	<i>Low</i>
<i>Applicability</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Likelihood of Measurable ROI</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Scalability</i>	<i>High</i>

Financial Impact Framework

Area of Impact	Expected Impact
Overall Profitability	Medium
<i>Employee Recruitment</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Employee Retention</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Customer Satisfaction</i>	<i>Low</i>

Potential Functional Tools

- Tourism Star Nomination + Recognition Kit** — Includes a nomination form, printable certificate template, sample thank-you scripts, and promotion tips.
- Recognition Program Starter Playbook (For Employers or DMOs)** — A how-to guide for launching low-cost or peer-nominated awards, tailored to small businesses.
- Social Media Recognition Toolkit** — Includes graphics, sample captions, and hashtags to publicly celebrate staff accomplishments and build sector pride.

7. Kate: Findings & Outcomes



Knowledge & Advice for Tourism Employers

The next phase of this project marked a significant evolution from building a static online portal to piloting and launching a first of its kind, AI-powered HR advisor tailored to Alberta's tourism sector. This dynamic tool, named "Kate" (**K**nowledge and **A**dvice for **T**ourism **E**mployers) is designed to support tourism operators, especially small and medium-sized businesses without dedicated HR staff, by delivering relevant, curated HR content in a conversational and accessible format.

7.1 Pilot Chatbot Deployment

The AI advisor was tested in September 2025 by 25 tourism operators representing 16 diverse business types and regions. During the pilot, participants sent 1,509 messages across 74 conversations (20.4 messages per conversation, on average). During this pilot:

- **Content Sources** included Tourism HR Canada, Government of Alberta Employment Standards, Occupational Health & Safety, the Workers Compensation Board, and TIAA's existing tools.
- **Functionality** will focus on answering questions, surfacing toolkits and tip sheets, and helping users navigate HR topics like recruitment, retention, and workplace safety.
- **Feedback Loops** will include post-interaction surveys via SurveyMonkey and tracking of user behavior to identify content gaps and opportunities for improvement.

7.2 Content Integration & Curation

Kate draws from a regularly updated content set curated specifically for Alberta's tourism industry. This includes:

- Toolkits, tip sheets, case studies, and HR policies.
- Video transcript content and compliance documentation.
- User-submitted resources, allowing the tool to evolve based on frontline needs.

A Google Sheets-based content management system allows the team to add and update materials in real time.

7.3 Brand Development & Landing Page

To ensure strong uptake, a dedicated Alberta brand identity has been developed (and is available at askkate.ca). This includes:

- A tool name, logo, and visual identity that reflects Alberta's western hospitality and practical HR approach.
- A professionally designed website, providing intuitive access and a clear explanation of how to use the chatbot.
- Language and visuals tailored to tourism operators, especially SMEs, distinguishing it from generic HR platforms.

7.4 Full Rollout

Insights from the pilot informed a broader, public-facing version of the tool, which launched on December 1, 2025. Planned future enhancements include:

- Automated legislative updates and customizable ROI calculators.
- Integration of HR leaders' voices and case-based guidance.

The overall goal is to normalize the use of HR tools and improve compensation practices by offering support that feels relevant, accessible, and time-saving for businesses navigating complex workforce challenges.

Next Steps

Alberta's tourism sector is powered by people, and its long-term success depends on how the industry invests in its workforce. This report has outlined the case for strengthening compensation culture across the province, grounded in the lived experiences of tourism employers, workers, and community partners. It has surfaced 23 practical, evidence-informed initiatives that are ready for adoption, adaptation, or pilot testing, organized under five strategic pillars that address both immediate and systemic challenges. Most importantly, it has spurred the development of Kate – Alberta's first of its kind HR AI chatbot designed specifically for tourism industry employers.

But the real work begins now.

The strategies in this report are not meant to sit on a shelf. They are intended to be used, shaped, and scaled by businesses, DMOs, associations, and policymakers working together to build a more sustainable and respected tourism workforce. Kate must continuously be updated to ensure content remains relevant and keeps Alberta's tourism industry on the cutting edge of HR practices.

Improving compensation culture is not just about increasing pay. It's about rethinking how we define value, fairness, and investment in people, especially in a sector built on service, experience, and connection. With the right support, Alberta's tourism industry can become a national leader in workforce innovation, proving that good jobs and strong businesses go hand in hand.

The foundation is here. The priorities are clear. What comes next is collective action.



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The Province of Alberta is working in partnership with the Government of Canada to provide employment support programs and services.