

TOURISM ABBOTSFORD

**2024 MRDT STAKEHOLDER SATISFACTION
SURVEY REPORT**



**TOURISM
ABBOTSFORD**



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Tourism Abbotsford Stakeholder Survey was conducted to assess stakeholders' familiarity with and satisfaction toward Tourism Abbotsford, while also capturing insights to inform future planning. The survey included both required questions under the MRDT (Municipal and Regional District Tax) guidelines and optional questions designed to enhance our understanding of stakeholder awareness, expectations, and perceived benefits of engaging with Tourism Abbotsford.

The survey was distributed to 220 tourism stakeholders, garnering 77 responses for a 35% response rate. Respondents were asked to provide feedback on a range of topics, including their level of engagement with Tourism Abbotsford's services, programs, and marketing efforts, as well as their perspectives on the city's tourism potential and future growth opportunities.

Results indicate a high level of familiarity and satisfaction among stakeholders: 92.2% reported being either Familiar or Very Familiar with Tourism Abbotsford's services, and 85.3% indicated they were either Satisfied or Very Satisfied with the organization's overall performance.

KEY FINDINGS

Key findings from the survey include:

1. Stakeholders would like to see Tourism Abbotsford play a more active role in community planning and advocacy and contribute to provincial destination management efforts.
2. There is an opportunity to increase stakeholder awareness of existing marketing co-op programs and strengthen recognition of the Handmade and Homegrown brand.
3. Experiences identified as having the highest potential for growth include events, farm-based and culinary experiences, and Indigenous tourism.
4. The top three barriers to tourism growth identified were the lack of hotels, the need for stronger sustainability practices, and concerns about the quality of accommodation.
5. The Tourism Abbotsford team received widespread praise for its dedication, support, and community engagement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the survey results, the following recommendations are being made:

1. Maintain and build on the strong internal culture and external relationships that have positioned the Tourism Abbotsford team as a trusted and valued partner.
2. Advocate for the development of an additional hotel and high-quality accommodation options to support tourism growth and attract major events.
3. Support investment in sports and event infrastructure, helping to position Abbotsford as a competitive host for regional and national gatherings.
4. Enhance transportation and accessibility, particularly transit options between Abbotsford and Vancouver, as well as within the local core.
5. Collaborate with the City of Abbotsford to streamline permitting and regulatory processes that currently create barriers for tourism businesses and events.
6. Expand marketing efforts to include a broader range of businesses and experiences, with an emphasis on hidden gems, underrepresented groups, and niche offerings.
7. Improve communication and coordination around events, enabling earlier planning and stronger collaboration across tourism sectors.



BACKGROUND

The Stakeholder Survey is a standard requirement of the Municipal, Regional, and District Tax (MRDT) Program for communities that voluntarily collect the 3% MRDT. Destination BC administers the program on behalf of the Province of British Columbia and the Ministry of Finance.

The findings from this survey will be included in the 2024 MRDT report and shared with the Tourism Abbotsford Board and 220 stakeholders who were encouraged to participate.

METHODOLOGY

To ensure consistency and comparability with previous years, the survey methodology remains primarily the same, with new questions to capture changes in strategic direction since COVID, these questions have been highlighted with (NEW) next to them. The survey was distributed via an anonymous link shared through an email from Tourism Abbotsford, the stakeholder newsletter, and LinkedIn.

To encourage candid feedback, no contact information was collected, ensuring all responses remained anonymous.

The survey was created using SurveyMonkey, following the basics of the Destination BC survey template. It was sent to 220 stakeholders, including business owners, organizations, and community leaders, in alignment with Destination BC's recommendations.

Survey distribution and reminders followed this timeline:

- February 6, 2025 – Initial Survey Sent Via Email
- February 21, 2025 – First Reminder Email
- March 11, 2025 – Final Reminder Email
- March 17, 2025 – Response Deadline

Following the deadline, responses were reviewed, and data was compiled. Open-ended responses were analyzed to identify key themes and recommendations in an unbiased manner.

AUDIENCE

The survey was distributed via the Tourism Abbotsford to the primary contacts of 220 Abbotsford stakeholders, marketing partners, and community leaders. Respondents were asked to indicate their industry by selecting from the following categories:

- Accommodation
- Arts & Culture
- Attraction/Sightseeing
- Farm Experience
- Food & Beverage
- Transportation
- Shopping

RESULTS

The following report is a detailed breakdown of the compiled results showing average response percentages and written responses.

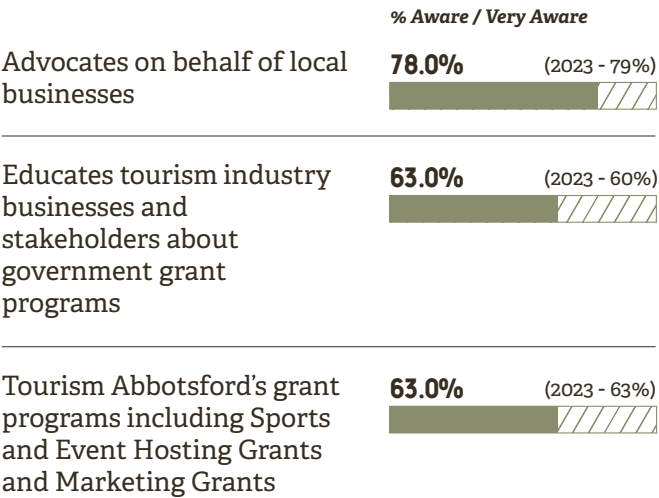
1. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is 'Strongly Disagree' and 5 is 'Strongly Agree,' please rate your agreement with the following statements about Tourism Abbotsford:

	% Agree / Strongly Agree	
I understand what Tourism Abbotsford does for businesses in our community	92.2% (2023 - 88%)	
Has employees that are respectful	94.8% (2023 - 90%)	
Collaborates and consults with the tourism industry on key decisions	80.5% (2023 - 79%)	
Is transparent about its performance	80.5% (2023 - 75%)	
Has employees that are knowledgeable about market changes and issues impacting tourism	85.7% (2023 - 79%)	
Provides leadership and direction to the Abbotsford tourism industry	85.7% (2023 - 83%)	
Informs the tourism industry of its corporate strategy and future direction	85.7% (2023 - 80%)	
Supports our local community and economy	89.6% (2023 - 88.4%)	

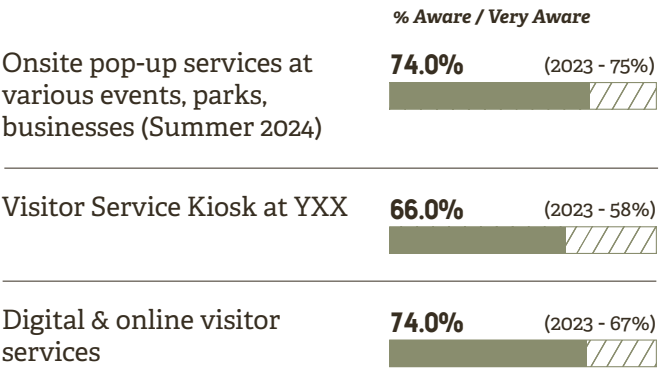
2. On a scale of 1-5, where 1 is 'Not at All Aware' and 5 is 'Very Aware,' how aware are you of the following activities and services that Tourism Abbotsford implemented in 2024?

	% Aware / Extremely Aware	
Tourism Abbotsford Website (New)	93.0%	
Taste of Abby	88.0% (2023 - 88%)	
The Fraser Valley Marketing Campaign	44.0% (2023 - 67%)	
Use of the Handmade & Homegrown Brand	66.0% (2023 - 65%)	
Circle Farm Tour	85.0% (2023 - 83%)	
Go! Abbotsford Events Calendar (New)	77.0%	
Sports & Events Marketing Support (New)	65.0%	
Media Relations	62.0% (2023 - 50%)	
Social Media Channels & Activity	84.0% (2023 - 67%)	
Tourism Abbotsford Newsletter	75.0% (2023 - 73%)	
BC Bird Trail (New)	36.0%	
BC Ale Trail (New)	48.0%	

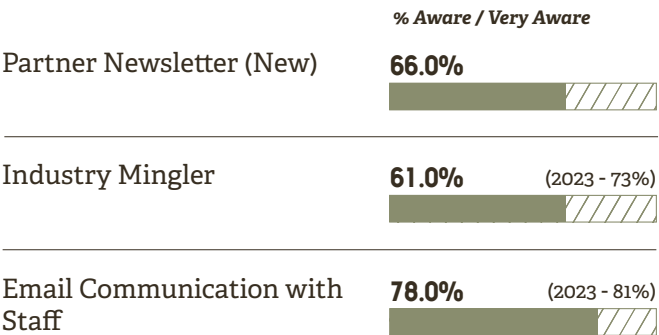
3. On a scale of 1-5, where 1 is 'Not at All Aware' and 5 is 'Very Aware,' how aware are you of the following industry and community activities that Tourism Abbotsford implemented in 2024?



4. On a scale of 1-5, where 1 is 'Not at All Aware' and 5 is 'Very Aware,' how aware are you of the following Visitor Services activities that Tourism Abbotsford implemented in 2024?

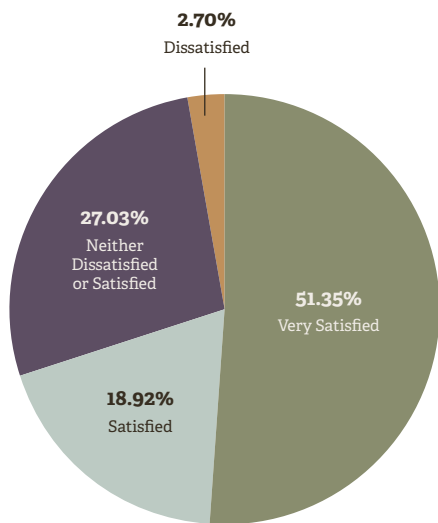


5. On a scale of 1-5, where 1 is 'Not at All Aware' and 5 is 'Very Aware,' how aware are you of the following communication activities that Tourism Abbotsford implemented in 2024?



6. Overall, how would you rate your satisfaction with Tourism Abbotsford's use of MRDT funds?

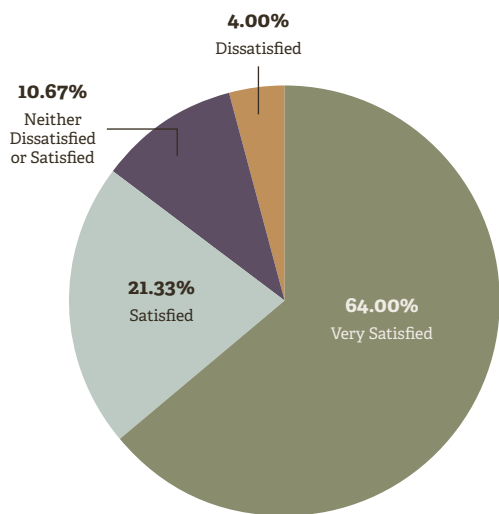
70% of survey stakeholders reported feeling Satisfied or Very Satisfied (2023 - 73%)



0.00% Very Dissatisfied

7. Taking everything into account, how satisfied are you with the overall performance of Tourism Abbotsford?

85% of Stakeholders surveyed were Satisfied or Very Satisfied (2023 - 88%).



0.00% Very Dissatisfied

8. If you rated below 'Satisfied,' what can Tourism Abbotsford do to enhance your satisfaction?

"Communication, collaboration and genuine interest in boosting our community."

"Continue to engage the City to ensure accessibility in our city. (MSA MRC arenas , a working elevator at ARC, sufficient permanent disability parking at Abbotsford Centre). These public spaces in Abbotsford are in noncompliance with BC Accessible Act. The grace period to complete projects was (if I remember correctly) September 2024."

"Too much focus on activities for residents—need to focus on activities that result in overnight stays by visitors from outside of the market."

"Attract more outside events, and promote local amateur sport."

"A very professional and inspired team."

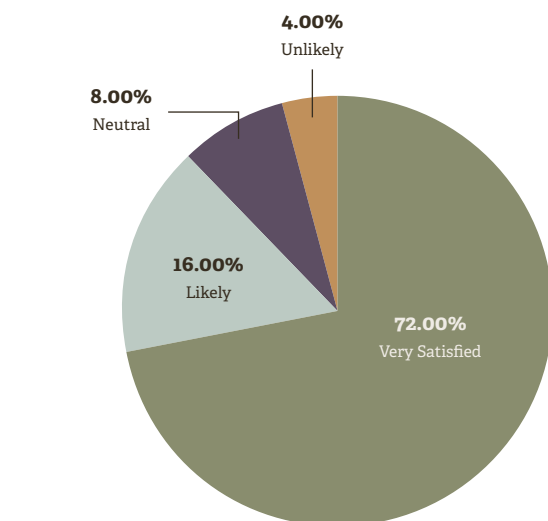
"More communication overall, I have very little understanding of anything tourism Abbotsford does outside of 2 events we have been involved in."

*** See Appendix A for all responses to this question.**



9. How likely is it that you would recommend Tourism Abbotsford's as a marketing platform and resource to a colleague or another tourism related business in Abbotsford?

88% of surveyed stakeholders responded Likely and Very Likely (2023 - 71%).



0.00% Very Unlikely

10. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is 'Strongly Disagree' and 5 is 'Strongly Agree,' please rate your agreement with the following statement:

Tourism Abbotsford's activities advance or support growth of the visitor economy

% Agree / Strongly Agree

88.0% (2023 - 88%)

11. In your opinion, what are the top barriers to growth in the tourism industry in Abbotsford? List up to three barriers.

- 1. Infrastructure Deficiencies** (Hotels, Facilities, Transportation, Signature Events)
- 2. Regulatory & Municipal Barriers** (Red Tape, Permit Applications, OCP updates, ALR Restrictions)
- 3. Perception & Economic Factors** (Lack of Available Funding, Cost of Facilities, Economic Climate, and Lack of Disposable Income)

** See Appendix B for all responses to this question.*

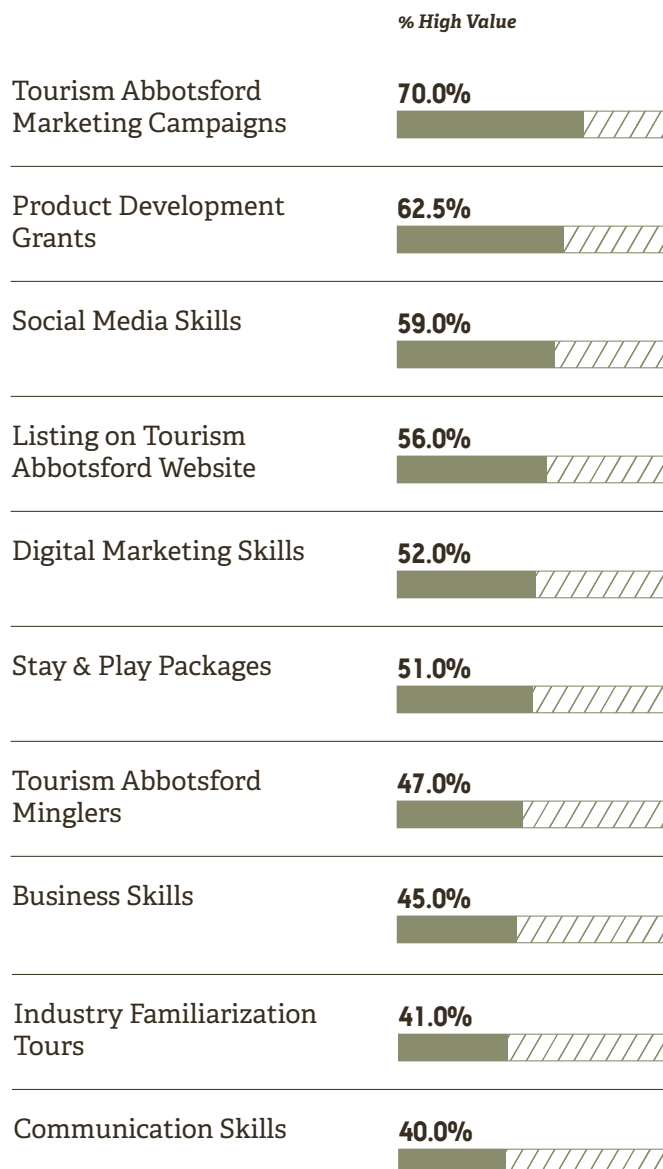
12. How much potential growth do you think each of the following products of experiences have in Abbotsford? These are listed highest to lowest for potential initiatives as completed by the survey:

	% Potential to Grow / Strong Potential to Grow	
Events	93.0% (2023 - 93%)	
Farm-Based Experiences	87.0% (2023 - 85%)	
Outdoor Recreation (New)	87.0%	
Culinary Experiences	84.0% (2023 - 83%)	
Indigenous Tourism	82.0% (2023 - 85%)	
Accessible Tourism	78.0% (2023 - 79%)	
Local Shopping/Markets	74.0% (2023 - 77%)	
Arts & Cultural Products	69.0% (2023 - 87%)	

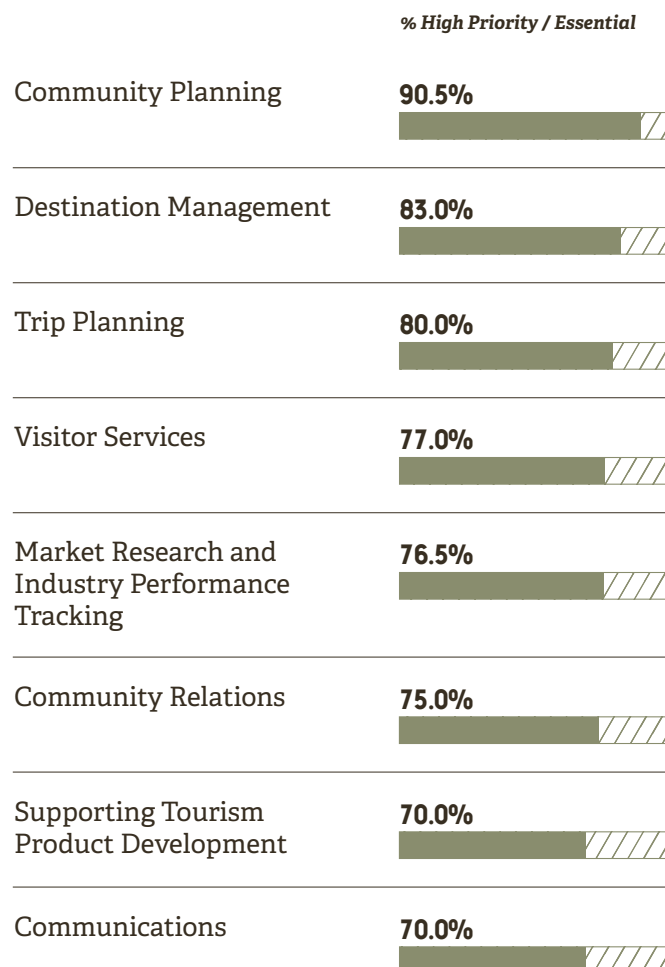




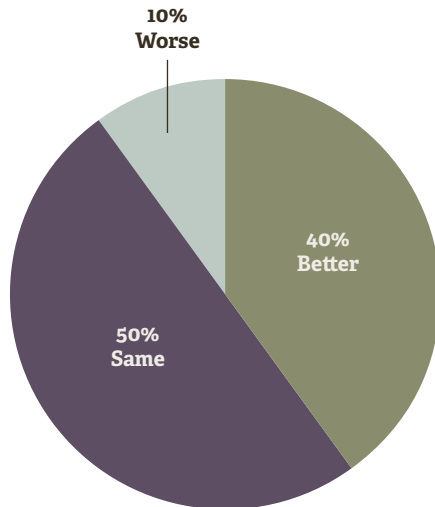
13. Which of the following would provide value to you and your business in the next 12 months on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being highest value.



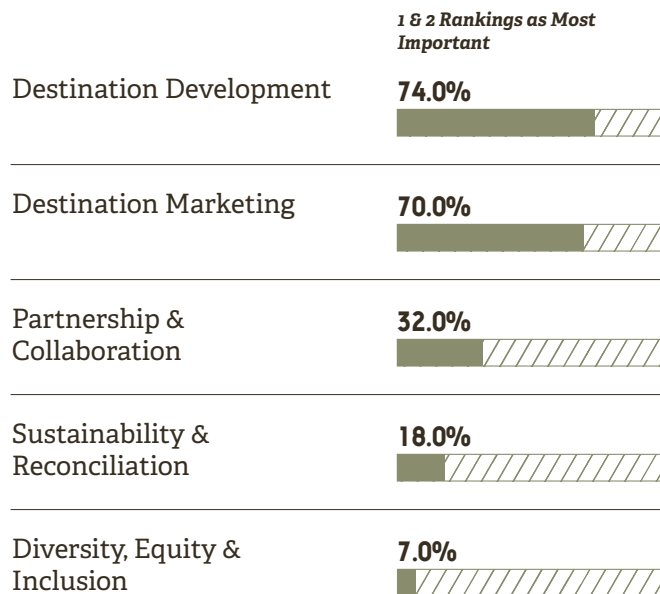
14. In your opinion, how much priority should Tourism Abbotsford assign to each of the following programs? These are listed highest to lowest for potential initiatives as completed by the survey (NEW):



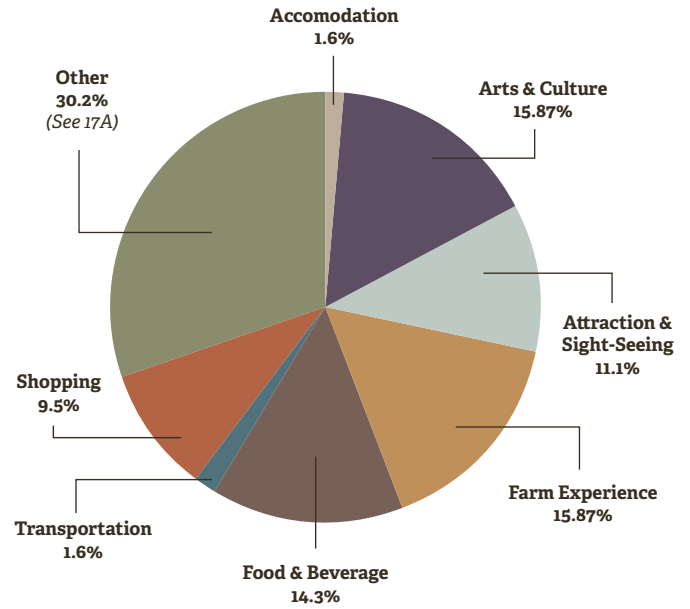
15. How would you rate tourism levels in 2024 compared to previous years?



16. How would you rank the following Tourism Abbotsford initiatives, 1 being the most important. These are listed highest to lowest for potential initiatives as completed by the survey (NEW):



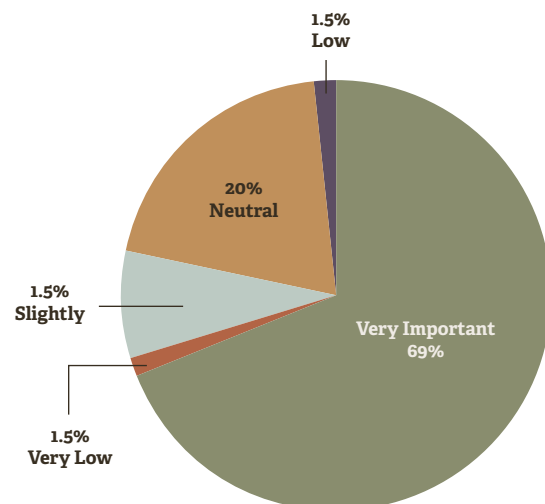
17. Please identify the tourism sector you primarily conduct business in.



17A. If you voted 'OTHER,' please specify what type of business or organization.

- Venue
- Entertainment
- Marketing/Media
- Business support
- Education
- CDMO
- Small Business
- Recreation/Outdoor Activity
- Sports
- Government
- Tournament Host

18. How crucial is support from local residents to your organization's efforts? 5 being very important.



19. The last words are yours:

"The Tourism Abbotsford team consistently goes above and beyond with their innovative initiatives and impactful campaigns. Their dedication to promoting our local tourism industry is evident in everything they do. It's clear they genuinely care about incorporating community input to guide their future efforts. It's always exciting to see the positive changes and creative projects they bring to life!"

"Tourism Abbotsford needs to be a stronger advocate for the local tourism industry directly with City officials and departments. Logistical roadblocks including overly-onerous processes to obtain appropriate permits and approvals make it difficult to attract and maintain healthy tourism businesses. A lack of strong City support for tourism businesses that drive significant visitor traffic and economic impact is short-sighted and detrimental to building a vibrant, attractive community."

"Build the much needed infrastructure and people will come!"

"I think tourism Abbotsford does a great job. The print media, digital media, events, pop ups, minglers etc. I also think it's important to encourage Abbotsford residents to be tourists in their own home town...so that hand made home grown slogan has a nice ring to it."

"I would love to see more support for organizations that aren't always the "top money makers" or aren't part of a grant program. I feel like sometimes I see the same locations or places appearing on social media rather than the hidden gems or places that would benefit more from recognition. I also would love to see there be some sort of collaboration minger/meeting for hotels and other organizations to come together to create collaborations for hotel stays etc. I've asked for information on how to go about doing that and unfortunately didn't receive any guidance or who to connect with."

*** See Appendix C for all responses to this question.**



APPENDIX A

8. If you rated below 'Satisfied,' what can Tourism Abbotsford do to enhance your satisfaction?

"Understand vision and performance."

"Communication, collaboration and genuine interest in boosting our community."

"My business has not had an personal benefit from Tourism Abbotsford."

"New premises."

"In-Season U-Pick Calendar – Add a seasonal U-Pick calendar to the website, similar to the one on Tourism Kelowna's site, to help visitors plan their trips around fresh local produce. Promote VIA Rail's The Canadian – Highlight VIA Rail's transcontinental service, which has convenient pick-up and drop-off points in Mission (eastbound) and Abbotsford (westbound), making rail travel to the region more accessible. Feature Walkable Shopping Districts – Reinstate the delightful walking shopping areas on the Tear Away maps, as they were previously a valuable resource for visitors. E.g., highlight these areas in yellow. Restore the Visitor Information Centre (VIC) on Sumas Way – VIC numbers are up across BC, yet Abbotsford's declined due to highway sign removal. Bringing back the Sumas Way VIC would better serve visitors and improve engagement. Improve Air Terminal VIC Placement & Signage– The VIC at the airport should be relocated along the wall to the right of the domestic arrivals door for better visibility. Additionally, TAS should acquire the largest backlit signs on that wall to showcase Fraser Valley attractions. The backlit signage around the baggage belt should also be utilized to highlight tourism experiences in the Vancouver, Coast & Mountains region. There should be way-finding signage to the VIC in the terminal from the bus stop for Ebus, Mt. Man Mike's, Rider Express, etc."

"Offer Turn-Key Travel Packages – TAS should partner with a travel agency to develop and sell curated, turn-key Abbotsford & Fraser Valley travel packages, making it easier for visitors to book complete experiences. E.g., a white-label service using the TAS brand."

"Increase Call-to-Action Promotions in Alberta – More bookable travel packages to Abbotsford & Fraser Valley should be marketed in Alberta to support airline routes and promote VIA Rail's The Canadian, encouraging travel from Edmonton and other prairie cities."

"Bus 66 VIC - I'd like to see a summer seasonal pop-up VIC at the Bus 66 High Street Stop. More Metro Vancouver visitors are coming to the Fraser Valley via Bus 66. SuperHost - I'd like to see more tourism businesses in Abbotsford become SuperHost certified. SuperHost-certified businesses should receive a special placement with a symbol on the TAS website. Perhaps UFV could help with a certification training program."

"Website Accommodation Listings - The information about accommodation operators on the website is not useful. It should feature the number of units by type (e.g., Q, QQ, kitchenettes accessible rooms), amenities (e.g., pool, gym), pet-friendly, AAA and Canada Select Ratings, nearest transit stop numbers, distance from the air terminal and VIA Rail platforms, etc. This makes planning travel, particularly group travel, easier. The current format offers no value."

"Unsure. I would have rated very satisfied, but I have not kept up on what they are doing so it is on my end."

"Attract more outside events and promote local amateur sport."

"Continue to engage the city to ensure accessibility in our city. (MSA MRC arenas, a working elevator at ARC, sufficient permanent disability parking at Abbotsford Centre). These public spaces in Abbotsford are in noncompliance with the BC Accessible Act. The grace period to complete projects was (if I remember correctly) September 2024."

"More communication overall, I have very little understanding of anything tourism Abbotsford does outside of 2 events we have been involved in."

"While I recognize its contribution to other organizations, Tourism Abbotsford provides little benefit or value for my specific organization as we do not fit TA's overall brand strategy. TA would need to increase the value it offers to my specific organization to increase my personal satisfaction with its performance."

"Too much focus on activities for residents--need to focus on activities that result in overnight stays by visitors from outside of the market."

"A very professional and inspired team."

APPENDIX B

11. In your opinion, what are the top barriers to growth in the tourism industry in Abbotsford? List up to three barriers.

1. **Infrastructure Deficiencies** (Hotels, Facilities, Transportation, Signature Events)
2. **Regulatory & Municipal Barriers** (Red Tape, Permit Applications, OCP updates, ALR Restrictions)
3. **Perception & Economic Factors** (Lack of Available Funding, Cost of Facilities, Economic Climate, and Lack of Disposable Income)

RESPONSE 1 answers Note: 2 and 3 are not included but were added to the top three barrier summary above):

- Lack of Hotels
- Sustainability
- Quality of accommodation
- Red tape
- People don't really think about coming to Abby for something cool to do—it's not "sexy".
- Economy
- Facilities (Eg. Large scale sport facility to host major tournaments)
- Disconnect in connecting to cultural events
- Funding
- Easy Transport from Vancouver to Abbotsford
- City hall - permit applications etc – bureaucracy
- Lack of first class, multi-purpose sports facilities and large outdoor event spaces
- Support for small business
- Inflation
- City regulation and red tape
- Resistance to collaboration
- Advertising in community papers in outside markets
- Tourism destination markers and industry clarity as leaders in ag or breweries
- Land use
- Transportation
- City of Abbotsford requirements and regulations
- Transportation
- Lack of infrastructure to draw tourists/events
- More resources to help businesses provide Accessible Tourism
- A lack of transit frequency and station shelters/benches in the core urban area.
- Infrastructure to host events
- Lack of easy transit between Abbotsford and Vancouver
- Tourism Abbotsford Stakeholder Survey

- Shortage of transportation options to get to visitor sites
- Too focused on being a country town
- Indoor recreation
- Inability to host events that highlight "Farm to Fork" opportunities
- Money
- Highway
- Lack of support from the City for new tourism product development
- Hotel space
- Lack of Recreation Facilities
- Funding
- Economic climate
- Large geographical area
- Housing issues
- Lack of Development (Other Communities out growing us)
- The municipality and the difficult working with them.
- Facilities
- Need more sports facilities
- Competition communities
- Current economy effect on consumers
- Financially accessible art/event spaces
- the state of the economy
- Lack of support from City officials & departments
- Lack of or minimal support from the City of Abbotsford
- City Process and OCP updates



APPENDIX C

19. The last words are yours:

"The team is doing a fantastic job with the resources they have to date. The team is extremely engaging and supportive. Keep up the good work!"

"An excellent survey. Good development will come from the results of this survey. Keep up the good work."

"You guys are amazing! It's a joy and privilege to work with you. Keep up the great work—and thank you!"

"Love the team culture you provide as it impacts positively to partners"

"As a non profit sports association, we want to attract large scale youth tournaments and events to our City, but we cannot do that without the help of Tourism Abby, as well as City Parks and Rec Dept. to provide more sports infrastructure in our City. Abbotsford is 25 years behind when it comes to solid sports infrastructure."

"Your presence in the community has grown amazingly over the last few years. Awareness to local residents is an area for growth."

"Go Abbotsford! I have seen in the last couple of years of the 'gentle' push we needed to create opportunities for growth, inclusion and bring people into our community for Abbotsford attractions."

"I would love to see more support for organizations that aren't always the 'top money makers' or aren't part of a grant program. I feel like sometimes I see the same locations or places appearing on social media rather than the hidden gems or places that would benefit more from recognition. I also would love to see there be some sort of collaboration mixer/meeting for hotels and other organizations to come together to create collaborations for hotel stays etc. I've asked for information on how to go about doing that and unfortunately didn't receive any guidance or who to connect with."

"I think tourism Abbotsford does a great job. The print media, digital media, events, pop ups, minglers etc. I also think it's important to encourage Abbotsford residents to be tourists in their own home town...so that hand made home grown slogan has a nice ring to it."



"A passionate group that always has the time to help - great team!"

"Claire and Connie rock"

"Love the Tourism Abbotsford team! They go above and beyond the call of duty."

"Good work everyone"

"Tourism Abbotsford does wonderful things for Abbotsford and is comprised of a fantastic and dedicated team!"

"Tourism Abbotsford's contribution to the community is awesome. Thank you for all you do. Great staff and service."

"Thank you for your work"

"I am so impressed with the team at Tourism Abbotsford! Your support over the past year has been invaluable to our business and I can not wait to see what all your hard work will bring to our community in 2025."

"Build the much needed infrastructure and people will come!"

"The collaboration between our organization and Tourism Abbotsford has been very meaningful"

"Tourism Abbotsford is one of key players in community life."

"Appreciate your support"

"The team at Tourism Abbotsford are the BEST"

"Keep up the GREAT work!"

"Thank you."

"Seems like we don't get enough information about upcoming events that we may want to participate in and usually get last minute invites to the couple events we do go to. Better, farther out planning and more opportunities to be in attendance at more community events would be great."

"Local tourism is so important! I participate in many more local opportunities based on TA promotions"

"Develop our trail networks. Invest in our outdoor recreation. Get the city of abbotsford to actually do something for a change."

"Thanks for all that you do to promote Abbotsford."

"Tourism Abbotsford needs to be a stronger advocate for the local tourism industry directly with City officials and departments. Logistical roadblocks including overly-onerous processes to obtain appropriate permits and approvals make it difficult to attract and maintain healthy tourism businesses. A lack of strong City support for tourism businesses that drive significant visitor traffic and economic impact is short-sighted and detrimental to building a vibrant, attractive community."

"Audrey is AWESOME"

The Tourism Abbotsford team consistently goes above and beyond with their innovative initiatives and impactful campaigns. Their dedication to promoting our local tourism industry is evident in everything they do. It's clear they genuinely care about incorporating community input to guide their future efforts. It's always exciting to see the positive changes and creative projects they bring to life!"







ABBOTSFORD

HANDMADE & HOMEGROWN