

SOCIAL IMPACT INSIGHTS BRIEF

YEAR OVER YEAR ANALYSIS: 2023-2025

Social impact progress across destination organizations is accelerating, but not consistently.

From 2023 to 2025, Destinations International's Social Impact Assessment tracked how destinations have embedded social impact across seven dimensions of practice. With an average of 150 organizations participating annually, year-over-year data provides a view of how these practices are evolving and the conditions that influence how progress builds over time.

Results show that destinations are advancing across multiple dimensions, as gains reflect growing leadership commitment and intentional community alignment. However, progress is not consistently supported by internal systems required to sustain and scale impact. Fewer destinations have implemented policies, ownership, governance or budgeting structures to operationalize impact in the long term. Patterns across destination organization size and region reinforce this further.

Together, these findings indicate that in aligning leadership commitment and organizational culture with formalized systems, destination organizations can demonstrate greater maturity and more consistent progress across social impact practices.

What Matters Most

Formalizing impact beyond intention is a key gap

Many destination organizations demonstrate strong commitment and activity, but fewer have clearly defined ownership, measurement or processes to sustain impact. This limits consistency and scalability.

Sustained impact requires aligning structure and culture

Progress is taking shape through formal systems in some organizations and strong cultural alignment in others. Destination organizations that integrate both are better positioned to turn intention into sustained outcomes.

Leadership commitment enables integration and consistency

Organizations with visible, engaged leadership are more likely to connect strategy, culture and operations, resulting in impact progress across dimensions.

What This Means for Your Destination

Understand where your impact efforts are gaining traction

Use these insights to consider where your destination organization is making progress around social impact practices, and where efforts may be less consistent or harder to sustain.

Strengthen the internal conditions that support impact

As you advance work across the four pillars of social impact, focus on the internal conditions that help efforts take hold, such as clear ownership, defined processes and alignment across teams.

To learn more about DI's forward-looking approach to social impact measurement, click [here](#).

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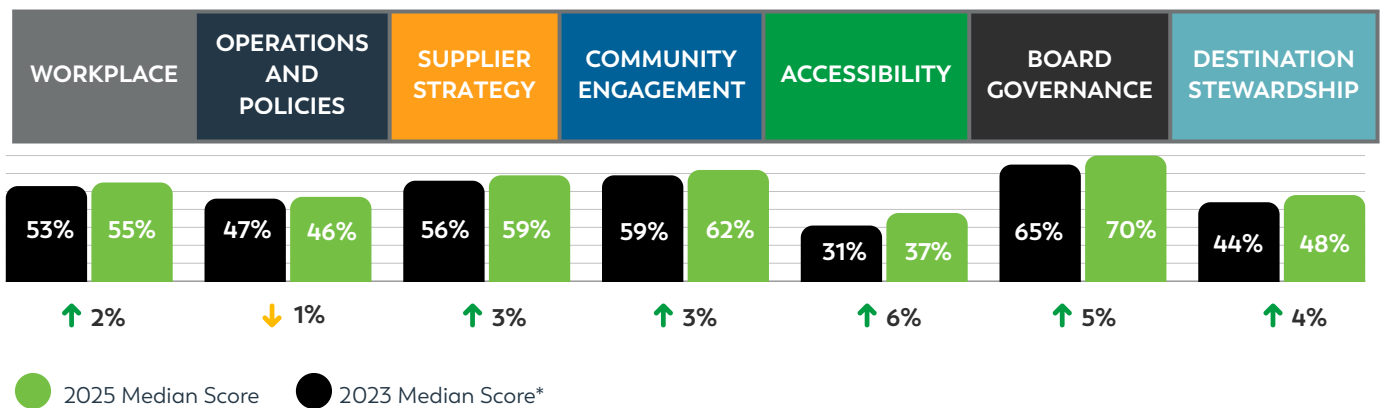
Seven Dimensions of Practice

WORKPLACE	OPERATIONS AND POLICIES	SUPPLIER STRATEGY	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	ACCESSIBILITY	BOARD GOVERNANCE	DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP
Assesses how practices of welcoming and belonging are integrated into company culture.	Assesses creation of foundational structures for developing impact-led strategies as well as recruitment and retention efforts within organization.	Assesses the vendor and supplier RFP process, representation and selection criteria.	Assesses organizational approach to engaging all members of the community.	Assesses organizational approach to understanding and creating accommodations for people who need additional assistance in destination.	Assesses how the board reflects and supports organization's commitment to social impact.	Assesses how organization upholds its responsibility to the broader community.

Year-Over-Year Trends Across Dimensions

Reflecting broader patterns across the industry, results show progress in five of the seven measured dimensions. Despite differences in scores from one dimension to the next, strongest gains occurred in accessibility (+7) and board governance (+5), followed by continued growth in community (+3) and supplier strategy (+3). These gains reflect increased investment in areas tied to access, representation and community engagement.

Operations and Policies declined (-3), suggesting that while destinations are continuing to advance across multiple dimensions, the internal systems that underpin long-term accountability vary across destinations.



A "mature" score is 70% or higher. Scores between 55% to 69% demonstrate early stages of embedding impact practices. Board Governance and Destination Stewardship were measured beginning in 2024.*

To better understand how social impact takes shape across destinations, we can look at leading practices where organizations demonstrate the most consistency.

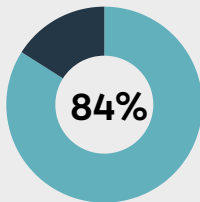
The following insights represent 2025 data, based on practices taken in the prior 12 months.

SOCIAL IMPACT INSIGHTS BRIEF

Strengths Across Dimensions (2025)

WORKPLACE

Leadership commitment is a visible organizational strength.



84% of destinations say leaders demonstrate a commitment to impact by fostering a welcoming work environment, up 8% from 2023.

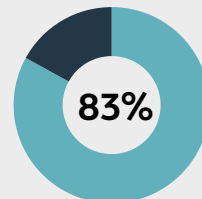
For nearly half of destinations, the leader of impact initiatives is senior-level with other responsibilities.

OPERATIONS AND POLICIES

Recruitment and retention practices are becoming increasingly intentional.

83% of destinations evaluate and write job descriptions to remove bias, up 8% from 2023.

Benefits such as paid family leave, PTO, health/retirement, and flexible schedules are broadly offered. These practices reflect a growing emphasis on building more supportive workplace environments.



SUPPLIER STRATEGY

Impact considerations are being integrated into supplier decisions, even without formal strategies.

When selecting vendors or suppliers, 40% of destination organizations often or always consider their commitment to impact.

61% often or always consider vendors of varied backgrounds, up 14% from 2023.

A horizontal bar chart with a dark blue bar and a teal segment. The number '40%' is displayed inside the teal segment.

40%

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement is a consistent, leading area of practice.

A horizontal bar chart with a dark blue bar and a teal segment. The number '80%' is displayed above the teal segment.

80%

More than 80% of destinations say they take an intentional approach when working with their communities. 86% say their external messaging reflects visitors of different backgrounds. This remains consistent from 2023.

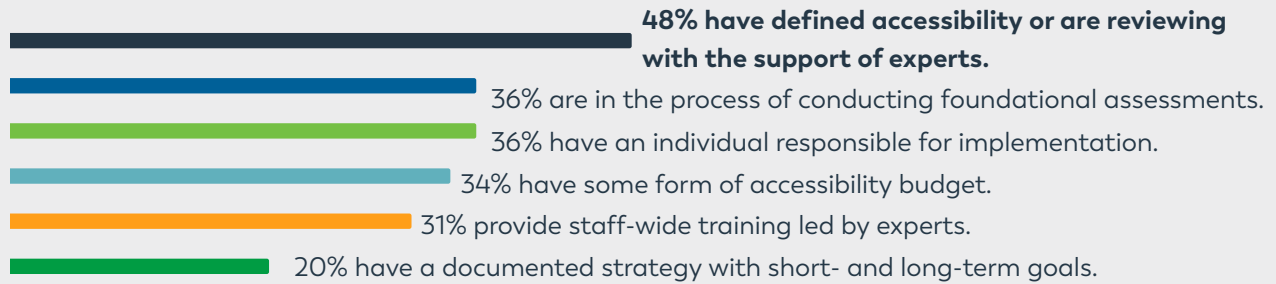
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Strengths Across Dimensions (2025)

ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility efforts are gaining structure and momentum.

Despite a baseline of 38%, a growing number of destinations are moving toward defined practices.

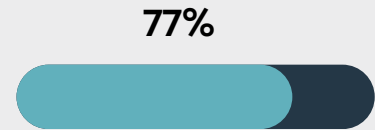


BOARD GOVERNANCE

Governance combines structured practices with community representation.

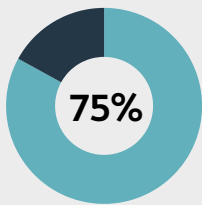
77% have a board recruitment strategy in various stages of development or already in place. 30% are making improvements, while 28% say their strategy is comprehensive, up 5% and 6% from 2024.

78% actively recruit board members of different backgrounds and abilities, up 9% from 2024.



DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP

Destination stewardship is taking on greater importance across organizations.



75% engage with community organizations to focus on stewardship efforts, up 3% from 2024.

More than 60% of boards and staff members understand the meaning and value of stewardship, with staff understanding increasing by 6% since 2024.

Advancing the outcomes of social impact depends on how destination organizations connect two critical elements: leadership across the destination, both within the organization and externally in the community, and supporting systems.

How these conditions takes shape can vary by organizational size and region.

SOCIAL IMPACT INSIGHTS BRIEF

Impact Practices by Destination Size (2025)

Differences by organizational size reveal how capacity, structure and resources shape a destination's ability to operationalize social impact. Across all operating budgets, destinations are demonstrating meaningful progress. Smaller organizations tend to excel in culture and stewardship, while medium and large destinations advance more quickly in structured strategies, accessibility planning and visitor experience initiatives.

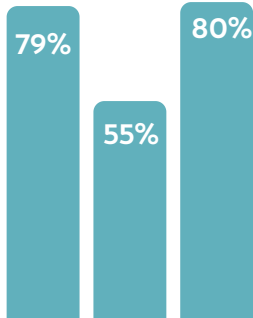
VERY SMALL DESTINATIONS



Annual operating budget under \$1M USD



Assessment sample size n=22 (n=21 in 2023)



79% have objectives to create an impactful work culture. (-10% from 2023)

55% field employee engagement surveys. (+2% from 2023)

80% of teams understand the meaning and value of destination stewardship. (+30% from 2023)

SMALL DESTINATIONS



Annual operating budget between \$1-3M USD

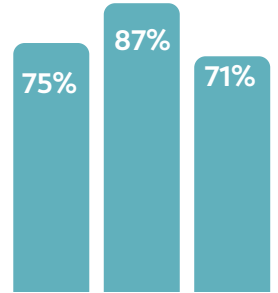


Assessment sample size n=37 (n=24 in 2023)

75% offer or encourage employees to take emotional intelligence training. (+75% from 2023)

87% intentionally engage with community groups. (+2% from 2023)

71% have a dedicated leader overseeing stewardship initiatives. (+10% from 2023)



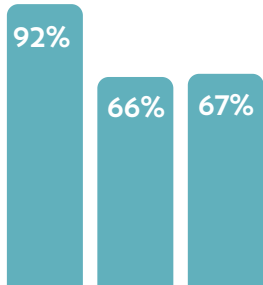
MEDIUM DESTINATIONS



Annual operating budget between 3-10M USD



Assessment sample size n=13 (n=125 in 2023)



92% have impact strategies designed to improve business outcomes. (+29% from 2023)

66% have mechanisms in place to receive visitor feedback and create welcoming environments. (+3% from 2023)

67% are actively marketing to disabled travelers. (+37% from 2023)

LARGE DESTINATIONS



Annual operating budget above \$10M USD

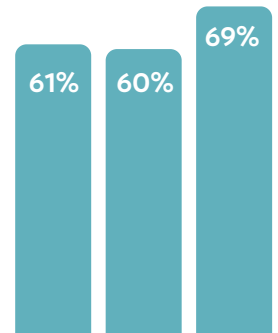


Assessment sample size n=22 (n=85 in 2023)

61% have developed an inclusive sales strategy. (+10 from 2023)

60% provide accessibility training to members and partners. (-6% from 2023)

69% market their stewardship efforts. (+19% from 2023)



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How Social Impact Varies Across North America (2025)

Geography further shapes how destinations approach social impact. Regional patterns from 2025 highlight distinct strengths shaped by policy environments, local priorities and community partnerships.

CANADIAN DESTINATIONS



Assessment sample size n=10

100%

Have strategies to attract and retain diverse talent.

100%

Actively support impact-related causes in the community.

89%

Have mechanisms in place to receive visitor feedback and create welcoming environments.

75%

Educate visitors on how to travel responsibly.

US: SOUTHEAST DESTINATIONS



Assessment sample size n=20

82%



Encourage or offer emotional intelligence training for employees.

89%

Have an inclusive marketing strategy.

61%

Have an accessibility budget.

US: NORTHEAST DESTINATIONS	US: PACIFIC DESTINATIONS	US: WEST & SOUTHWEST DESTINATIONS	US: MIDWEST DESTINATIONS
 <p>Assessment sample size n=6</p>	 <p>Assessment sample size n=16</p>	 <p>Assessment sample size n=16</p>	 <p>Assessment sample size n=21</p>
<p>83%</p> <p>Offer phased return from maternity and paternity leave.</p>	<p>83%</p> <p>Have dedicated inclusion sales and marketing initiatives</p>	<p>100%</p> <p>Educate visitors on how to travel responsibly.</p>	<p>88%</p> <p>Engage with community organizations that focus on stewardship efforts.</p>



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Improving Social Impact: Four Areas for Focus

Despite year-over-year progress, several cross-industry gaps continue to surface, indicating that behavioral change is outpacing strategic design. The following gaps are recommended opportunities for destination organizations, regardless of size, to strengthen both internal practices and external alignment with community and visitor expectations.



STRENGTHEN INTERNAL CAPACITY BUILDING

Capacity is necessary to support consistent social impact progress. Develop tools for unbiased hiring and succession planning, establish clear ownership and processes and adopt practices to support employee belonging and impact implementation.



FORMALIZE SUPPLIER STRATEGY PRACTICES

Formalize procurement practices to align supplier selection and engagement with economic opportunity and community impact goals. Establish clear guidelines, accountability and consistent application.



INVEST IN ACCESSIBILITY

Move beyond ad hoc approaches by defining accessibility strategies, engaging experts and establishing ownership for implementation.



EXPAND THE INFLUENCE OF STEWARDSHIP

Strengthen how stewardship is communicated to visitors and stakeholders to build awareness, encourage shared responsibility and support adoption of responsible behaviors.

Intention alone is not enough to ensure tangible outcomes for social impact. Destination organizations that invest in strong internal systems organizational alignment will be best positioned to translate progress into sustained practice.

These findings reinforce the need for a more integrated approach to social impact, one that moves beyond individual initiatives and connects these practices to outcomes of community vitality and sustainable economic growth across four pillars: economic opportunity and growth, community impact and well-being, responsible tourism and stewardship and access and participation.

As a result, Destinations International is aligning its Social Impact framework to an integrated measurement system. This work marks the next phase of evidence-based measurement, enabling destination organizations to clearly connect their social impact practices to outcomes, sustain progress over time and demonstrate its value to community and industry stakeholders.