

Destination AKL Recovery Plan

Auckland Visitor Economy's Response to COVID-19

A unified response to COVID-19

The impacts of COVID-19 have hit Tāmaki Makaurau’s visitor economy hard, forcing many to make difficult decisions in order to maintain viability and relevance in the face of an uncertain economic outlook. In some instances, the immediacy and scale of the economic fallout has resulted in businesses ceasing to operate altogether.

The reality is, however, that Auckland is yet to feel the full economic impact of COVID-19; further challenges lie ahead in a highly constrained business environment with projections suggesting that as many as 50,000 jobs in the visitor economy could be lost to Auckland.¹

A great deal of remedial action is already underway across both the public and private sectors, underpinned by a general consensus that we need to work more efficiently and collectively to re-establish our visitor economy.

Guided by the principles of kotahitanga, kaitiakitanga and manaakitanga – as well as the strong foundations of the *Destination AKL 2025* strategy – ATEED has engaged with a broad range of industry players and wider stakeholders to develop this first-stage recovery plan to support Auckland’s re-emergence as a more resilient and sustainable domestic and international destination.

The overall intent of this plan is to provide leadership to the Auckland visitor economy by guiding an urgent and unified response to the far-reaching impacts of COVID-19. The recovery plan outlines 25 tangible actions to be enacted over three-time horizons, spanning from now through to late 2021. These actions are anchored to the original *Destination AKL 2025* strategy; however, they have been re-vised and sharpened to account for the changing environment. A more substantive, long-term plan will be developed over time to align with the National Tourism Recovery Plan, which Tourism New Zealand is overseeing.

As with the *Destination AKL 2025* strategy, our success will be dependent on all interested parties aligning their efforts if we are to optimise Auckland’s recovery and avoid working at cross-purposes. By working together, we can achieve our vision for Tāmaki Makaurau to be one of the world’s most sustainable places to live, work and visit.

Given the volatility of the current COVID-19 operating environment, this recovery plan will be a ‘living’ document which is regularly reviewed and adapted to reflect changing circumstances and to monitor our progress.

A pathway forward

In any significant crisis, it is natural human impulse to want things to go back to normal or to the way they were before. However, Auckland has a window of opportunity to take immediate and bold action if it is to emerge as a thriving and more resilient destination that enriches the lives of our people and our visitors. It is fair to say the decisions we make now will shape our industry for many years to come.

As the re-emergence from lockdown gathers pace, the resumption of international travel remains a key objective; initially with targeted high-value visitors such as international students, culminating in the eventual return of international leisure visitor markets. While this vital work progresses, our immediate focus needs to be on stimulating local demand, appealing to Aucklanders to explore their own region in order to build confidence in Auckland’s ability to rise again.

Beyond stimulating local demand, our next opportunity is to appeal to visitors within a three-hour drive radius of Auckland. The self-drive market presents as ‘low hanging fruit’ to actively encourage first, as we need to get locals and regional visitors experiencing greater Auckland.

As visitor confidence builds, we will then actively promote Auckland to those who can travel by air (first domestic fly, then short-haul and finally long haul). A recent poll by Kantar Research identified Auckland as the top domestic destination for kiwis to visit. We must capitalise on being New Zealand’s only global city experience by showcasing our broad range of

¹ Estimated total tourism job losses from April – December 2020 is 46-55k according to a report “Estimated Impact of Coronavirus on Auckland’s Visitor Economy”, prepared by Stafford Strategy for Auckland, Tourism Events & Economic Development prepared in April 2020.



products, experiences, and events. This will also set strong foundations for the Australian market ahead of the establishment of a trans-Tasman bubble.

While the extent of COVID-19's impact on the events planned for next year is yet to be fully determined, 2021 looms as a much-needed opportunity to showcase Auckland to a global audience of future visitors, investors, and businesses. Work is well underway to ensure the 36th America's Cup and New Zealand's hosting of APEC 2021 Leaders' Week in November 2021 – as well as the wider suite of scheduled events – provide a worthy legacy by connecting our region as much as possible with global markets and showcasing its resilience and innovation.

We continue to partner ngā mana whenua o Tāmaki Makaurau in an authentic demonstration of Auckland as a bicultural and inclusive city and to ensure all communities can participate in 2021's major events programme. However, we are mindful of the need to adapt aspects of activity to prevailing conditions and restrictions that may remain in place in 2021 as a result of COVID-19.

Finally, as New Zealand's largest city, Auckland's approach will be critical to the gradual re-emergence of other regions and the country overall. Pre-COVID-19, the region represented 1/3 of New Zealand's tourism GDP; we have an opportunity and a responsibility to kick start our visitor economy quickly and efficiently and to then encourage the reactivation of surrounding regions. New partnerships will be necessary to ensure that the respective efforts of regions competing for visitors is able to be managed to best effect.

The roles of ATEED and the Destination AKL 2025 Industry Leaders Group

The development of this recovery plan was initiated by Auckland Tourism, Events & Economic Development (ATEED) – Auckland's economic development agency – on behalf of Auckland's destination industry. The plan has been overseen and endorsed by the Destination AKL 2025 Industry Leaders Group (ILG), which continues to meet regularly.

ATEED sees its role as a facilitator and partner with industry and government to drive the re-activation of our visitor economy and, through this, the visitor economies of the wider region so our regional neighbours can sustainably activate their visitor economies as well. ATEED will work alongside the ILG to ensure that industry and government are working in unison to deliver workable solutions.

It's important to note that although ATEED will have a key role in supporting the enablement of the plan, we are in the midst of resetting our organisational focus as a result of budgetary pressures (including the loss of the funding generated by the APTR) and revised Council/city priorities. It is expected that this process will further impact our resourcing in the short-medium term.

With a new Statement of Intent currently in development, it is anticipated that ATEED will prioritise its funding and resources to activate the areas of this plan that align with the following four key themes:

- **Driving investment into Auckland.** ATEED is expanding its efforts to bring needed capital into Auckland. Working with private sector and central government, attracting investment into our region, and encouraging the redistribution of existing investment where this is sensible to do so.
- **Rebuilding the regional economy from the neighbourhood up.** Borders, supply chains, and consumer demand have all been impacted dramatically by COVID-19 but ATEED's role is very limited in these areas. Instead, ATEED will work to restart business at the local level which may result in some areas kick starting activity before others.
- **Showcasing a vibrant and resilient Auckland.** In a world of uncertainty, Auckland has a unique opportunity to emerge as a thriving and more resilient destination. Showcasing the cultural/creative richness of Auckland will be a part of our response as culture can provide a critical counter-narrative to declining business and consumer confidence. And we have the opportunity to reinforce that Auckland is the largest Pacific Island destination hub in the world, so attracting visitors to come to Auckland, to experience all of the Pacific, is going to be important when the time comes to reactivate international visitor interest.

- **Supporting innovation and productivity.** New challenges require new solutions - the companies that survive the coming recession, and the new ones that will emerge, will be the ones able to innovate and increase productivity. ATEED has an enabling role to play in accelerating innovation in Auckland and helping to reduce “red tape” and other barriers wherever possible.

However, the delivery of this plan cannot fall to ATEED alone. The ILG and the Auckland region will need to work closely together to achieve the desired outcomes, so the actions in this plan are also for the industry to own.

Success measures

The success of our collective efforts will be the return of a thriving and resilient visitor sector for Auckland, which will include both financial and non-financial measures of impact.

To track progress, specific measurable short-term targets will be developed, and updated in this document once agreed.

Revised key focus areas

The key focus areas in the *Destination AKL 2025* strategy have been revised and sharpened to focus on the immediate challenges we face as a sector. This has enabled us to identify those areas where we need to re-orient and re-focus efforts to respond to the financial and economic impacts of COVID-19.

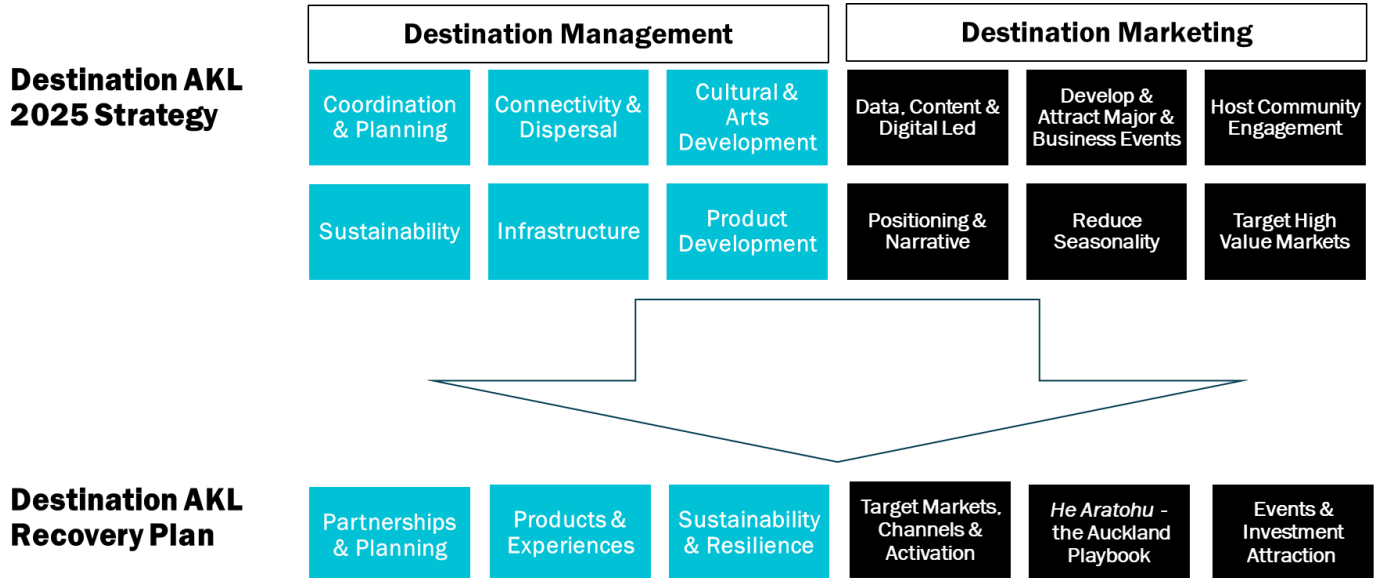


Diagram 1: Destination AKL 2025 – revised key focus areas

DESTINATION MANAGEMENT

Partnerships & Planning

COVID-19 has increased the need for collaboration and partnerships to rebuild our tourism sector.

We need to recalibrate industry capability and infrastructure together to support the needs of Aucklanders and its visitors.

Products & Experiences

Foster innovation and investment into authentic, new, and existing products and experiences to cater to our new environment and target markets.

Sustainability & Resilience

We need to re-build in a way that will not compromise economic, social, and environmental sustainability principles.

We must develop and act on stronger resilience plans to withstand future shocks.

DESTINATION MARKETING

Target Markets, Channels & Activation

We need to redefine our markets and segments based on their ability and propensity to travel.

We need a new strategic approach to reach our new audiences and driving multi-layer activations.

He Aratohu - the Auckland Playbook

Tāmaki Makaurau has a clear point of difference and USP; we need to make sure our new audiences see and want this.

We need to use the Auckland Playbook to guide all our activity, so that over time, with authentic and aligned messaging, Auckland’s reputation emerges stronger than ever.

Events & Investment Attraction

Foster innovation in major and business events to support recovery within the restrictions COVID-19 creates.

We need to work together to attract needed capital into our region.

Recommended Actions

The following recommended actions are directly aligned to the revised focus areas and have been framed up in three-time horizons; within the next three months, within 3-6 months and within an 18-month period.

Table 1 provides an indication of the prioritisation of each recommended action and an indication of who will need to be involved if we are to succeed. The recommended actions are non-exhaustive and will continually be reviewed and adapted to reflect changing circumstances.

The ILG will continue to meet on a regular basis to oversee progress and will be an active voice in advocating for the desired outcomes, to inspire industry and to ensure a whole of government effort is created.

Table 1: Delivering the recovery plan

KEY:

Urgent: 0 – 3 months

Short-term: 3 – 6 months (planning to start now)

Medium-term: 6 – 18 months (planning to start now)

*Proposed lead(s)

Key focus area	Recommended action	Who	When
Partnerships & Planning	1. Lobby Government re border control policy <i>For example: NZ/Australia bubble and “smart border” including high value international students and identifying the city outcomes of a smart border for major event participants and competitors and to ensure that Auckland is positioned as a bubble destination, not merely a gateway.</i>	ILG* ATEED MBIE	Urgent/in progress
	2. Lobby Government re permissible Major Events and Business Events at each alert level to provide clarity for the industry <i>For example: recalibrating the scale of events to ensure our event operators and industry can grow new events which fit within the COVID-19 operating protocols, and which might include initiatives such as offering a series of smaller component functions but for the same overall event. And focussing in on Trans-Tasman event opportunities.</i>	ILG* CINZ Events industry MBIE	Urgent/in progress
	3. Provide resources and connections to our Auckland businesses through the Regional Business Partner programme <i>For example: Help eligible small and medium businesses to grow and innovate by making it easier to access business support.</i>	ATEED* NZTE TIA	Urgent/in progress
	4. Provide the visitor workforce with critical support and guidance through Go with Tourism <i>For example: Go with Tourism will connect displaced workers with upskill and reskill opportunities.</i>	Go with Tourism Education providers MBIE TIA	Urgent/in progress
	5. Activate Auckland’s night-time economy in collaboration with the local business communities and the hospitality, arts/culture, and retail sectors. <i>For example: Work across the hospitality and retail sectors to create a night-time campaign proposition and remove barriers to participating in night-time activity. This will not only benefit visitors but will also benefit locals and help generate more positive perceptions of the city centre by Aucklanders.</i>	ATEED* ILG* AT BIDs Hospitality NZ Restaurant Assn RFA	Urgent
	6. Create effective communication channels for dialogue and alignment with industry, government, and mana whenua to ensure a collective	ATEED* Mana whenua MBIE	Urgent

Key focus area	Recommended action	Who	When
	<p>approach to recovery and to avoid the possibility of working at cross-purposes</p> <p><i>For example: Establish more effective real-time industry communications such as a central online Destination AKL hub</i></p>	NZ Māori Tourism RTNZ TIA TNZ	
	<p>7. Ensure the needs of the visitor economy are considered and integrated into “shovel ready” infrastructure development as determined by central government</p> <p><i>For example: Work with Auckland Transport and other key agencies to advocate for transport projects that provide greater city-wide connection, aiming to fast track priority projects with central government funding support.</i></p>	ILG* ATEED AT MBIE	Urgent
	<p>8. Enable strategic public and private sector partnerships both within and beyond the Auckland visitor economy to ensure a whole of city approach to recovery</p> <p><i>For example: Leverage our existing partnership with Northland Inc and look to establish partnerships with Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Wellington, Christchurch, and Queenstown. Leverage Auckland’s existing Sister City relationship with Brisbane.</i></p>	ATEED* ILG*	Short-term
	<p>9. Foster and promote greater innovation within Auckland’s future visitor economy, aligning with the ‘re-imagining’ National Tourism Recovery Strategy, where practicable</p> <p><i>For example: Workshops to bring stakeholders both within and beyond the visitor economy together to champion and drive innovation.</i></p>	ATEED* ILG* TNZ* MBIE Industry	Short-term
Products & Experiences	<p>10. Undertake a comprehensive audit of businesses within the sector to determine who remains viable</p> <p><i>For example: Gauge from industry if and when tourism businesses will re-open so we can determine what is needed to support them specifically, and at the same time, quantify the likely impact of those who, for whatever reason, will not be able to reopen successfully.</i></p>	ATEED* Industry	Urgent
	<p>11. Identify and advocate for support of Auckland’s new and existing Strategic Tourism Assets</p> <p><i>For example: taking action to improve access and address affordability to the Hauraki Gulf and other areas around Auckland, expediting the opening of attractions such as the All Blacks Experience and WETA Workshop, proposed Māori cultural centre, etc.</i></p>	ATEED* MBIE	Urgent
	<p>12. Foster innovation to adapt existing and develop new commissionable products, experiences to drive local and domestic visitation. Products must be authentic and leverage Auckland’s unique offerings (Māori and Pacific cultural/arts, vibrancy) and support our sustainability goals</p> <p><i>For example: Deliver a programme of work focusing on product development, content development and capability building for Māori tourism operators.</i></p>	ATEED* NZ Māori Major and business event organisers Tourism Mana whenua Industry	Urgent
Sustainability & Resilience	<p>13. Develop a simple set of climate and sustainability principles to ensure recovery priorities do not conflict with sustainability objectives</p> <p><i>For example: Determining whether an event we are attracting or supporting is a high emitting event that goes against Auckland’s emissions targets.</i></p>	ATEED* ILG	Short-term

Key focus area	Recommended action	Who	When
	<p>14. Develop a series of climate and sustainability actions in collaboration with key partners that will guide the visitor economy's recovery towards a more resilient, adaptable and low impact (regenerative) sector</p> <p><i>For example: Initiatives could be to engage local communities in the development of localised regeneration projects involving visitors. Another example might be capability building that support businesses to prepare for the physical climate impacts (resilience building) and support their transition to low environmental impact options.</i></p>	ATEED* Industry	Medium-term
Target Markets, Channels & Activation	<p>15. Activate an Auckland business campaign to support Auckland businesses and provide a platform for areas within Auckland to support the same messaging</p> <p><i>For example: ATEED will support a campaign targeting Aucklanders and Auckland businesses to encourage economic activity across five priority sectors.</i></p>	ATEED* Auckland business community BIDs Local Boards	Urgent/in progress
	<p>16. Leverage Tourism New Zealand's domestic campaign to drive immediate travel to Auckland</p> <p><i>For example: ATEED will support TNZ in campaign planning for the domestic market and join TNZ initiated campaigns.</i></p>	ATEED* TNZ*	Urgent/in progress
	<p>17. Provide opportunities for industry to participate in marketing campaigns across all visitor segments and assist in marketing Auckland to a domestic audience</p> <p><i>For example: ATEED will develop a campaign which encourages use of Auckland's extensive accommodation and food and beverage infrastructure, which will also help to build the night-time economy.</i></p>	ATEED* Industry	Urgent
	<p>18. Activate targeted campaigns to support local food and beverage businesses and in conjunction with other regions, build Auckland and New Zealand's reputation as a food and beverage destination</p> <p><i>For example: Developing an iconic Auckland eats campaign showcasing 100 hero dishes across Auckland.</i></p>	ATEED* Hospitality NZ Restaurant Assn	Urgent
	<p>19. Use data and insights to determine and understand our new audience across all visitor segments, their ability and propensity to travel and the channels they use to make travel decisions</p> <p><i>For example: Re-focusing the Auckland Visitor Survey on domestic visitors first and then Australia (NZ/Australia bubble opens).</i></p>	ATEED*	Urgent
	<p>20. Develop action plans for key target markets to ensure we are ready for the systematic re-opening of international borders, starting with an action plan for Australian visitation ahead of the establishment of a trans-Tasman bubble</p> <p><i>For example: Auckland needs to be actively targeting not only the eastern seaboard cities leisure market, but also VFR and business especially. This will need a highly focussed campaign which leads up to the Trans-Tasman bubble being activated. There will be strong competition from many regions in New Zealand to take market share.</i></p>	ATEED* AIAL Air NZ	Urgent
	<p>21. Develop a customer acquisition action plan to build a multi-layer and ongoing relationship with our visitors. This will help inform us about the channels our visitors use to find information, and the type of content we need to produce to enhance the visitor experience and create additional value for Auckland</p>	ATEED*	Short-term

Key focus area	Recommended action	Who	When
	<i>For example: Using data collected for people who attend Elemental AKL or a food related business event to better promote future food and cultural events.</i>		
Te Aratohu - the Auckland Playbook	22. Use the Auckland Playbook to guide all our activity, so that over time, with authentic and aligned messaging, Auckland's reputation emerges stronger than ever <i>For example: Continue to engage Auckland businesses, residents, and visitors to share Auckland's unique positioning and narrative with the world.</i>	ATEED*	Short-medium term
Events & Investment Attraction	23. Confirm dates for postponed major events and business events to retain benefits and give confidence to the industry <i>For example: World Surf League and Elemental AKL.</i>	ATEED* MBIE* Events sector	Urgent/in progress
	24. Continue to plan for 2021 major events and leverage activity which presents significant opportunities to spotlight Auckland as a destination and a place to invest <i>For example: ATEED will continue to plan for regional activations including a pop-up AKL market showcasing food and beverage.</i>	ATEED* Mana whenua	Short-term
	25. Promote innovation and the use of technology in major and business events to operate effectively in our new environment, and create and enable locally grown major event and business event solutions <i>For example: Auckland will host the 2020 Sal's NBL over June/July to boost the local events sector and promote the region domestically, ATEED is also exploring the concept of an "Auckland Symposium" - a showcase of Auckland and its sectors and city, and other locally grown events such as music activations live-streamed across the region.</i>	ATEED* Events sector RFA	Short-term

