

REGIONAL TOURISM ORGANIZATION 7

EXPERIENCE IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

2017/18

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>DEFINITIONS</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>TOURISM EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>BASIC ELIGIABILITY CRITERIA (“MARKET READY”)</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Who can apply: .....	5
Requirements:.....	5
Target Markets .....	5
Targeted Activities.....	6
<b>EXPERIENCE PROJECTS (“EXPERIENCE READY”)</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>EXPERIENCE / PRODUCT IMPLEMENTATION FUNDING</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>INELIGIBLE CONTRIBUTIONS AND EXPENSES</b> .....	<b>7</b>

## EXPERIENCE IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

The Experience Implementation Program is designed to help **coach and educate** stakeholders within BruceGreySimcoe and potentially **fund** experiences and products to get them to market.

### DEFINITIONS

**Product** - A good, activity or service that is delivered to consumers with a moderate level of differentiation, is available to a fairly wide market and is focused more on cost-based pricing or is free. For example, a self-guided culinary touring route or guided interpretive hike through a park.

**Experience** – Experiential travel engages visitors in a series of memorable travel activities, revealed over time, that are inherently personal, engage the senses, and make connections on an emotional, physical, spiritual, social or intellectual level<sup>1</sup>. For example, writing a song with a Juno award winning songwriter, a behind the scenes tour at a museum where you can touch important historical objects or hunting for wild mushrooms with a local guide and using them to cook a soup for lunch.

**Coaching** – This involves working with experience/product providers or groups to work through the steps in the development cycle. This could include brainstorming to find the right partners, using the experience development templates, helping to create action/marketing plans to bring products or experiences to market, or asking the relevant questions to shift thinking. This would involve helping to drive the process forward, but as a “guide on the side”. The stakeholder takes the lead in seeing the project through to completion.

### TOURISM EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST

The Tourism Experience Development Specialist (TEDS) can assist a variety of stakeholders develop or augment products and experiences that help differentiate BruceGreySimcoe from regions in Ontario. The goals for any project should include at least one of the following;

- Increase length of stay
- Increase yield per visitor
- Encourage visitors to return more frequently.

Program opportunities include:

- Coaching (approximately 10 hours per project)
- Tools and templates to assist with the development process
- Marketing support through matching funds on approved expenses (1:1 with a minimum partner contribution of **\$500** to a maximum of **\$2,500**) for **new** products and experiences or **enhancements** to existing products or experiences. Proof of purchase (copy of invoice) must be provided upon request by specified deadline to be eligible for reimbursement. Failure to meet this requirement will result in non-reimbursement from RTO7 for these expenses.

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<sup>1</sup> Nancy Arsenault, (2004). *Defining Tomorrow's Tourism Product*.

- Education to shift thinking - moving to a more experiential focus from product development, training on consumer segmentation or marketing support

Festival organizers interested in support should refer to the [Festival Implementation Program](#).

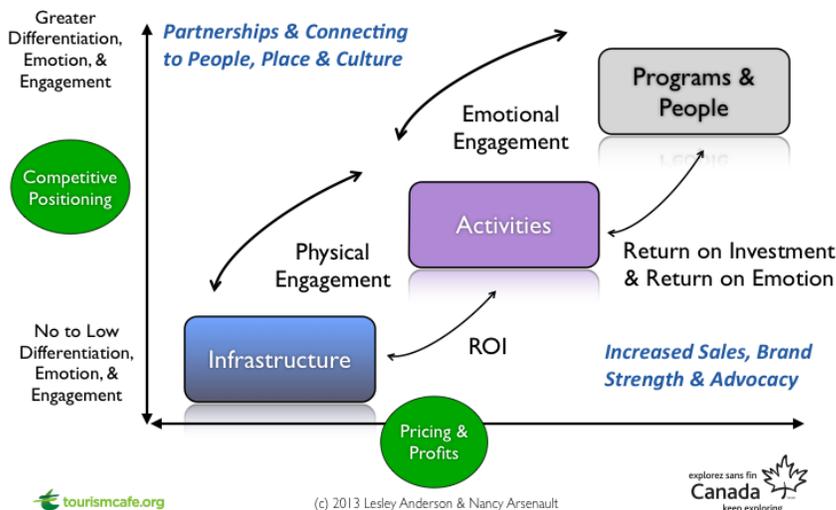
In order to participate within the program, some minimum standards must be met to meet the needs of today's visitors. Experience and Product implementation will follow the same base criteria (see basic eligibility criteria below). Product implementation projects will target a fairly wide market and focus on activities and services (as defined above). These can be guided or self-guided. Examples of product implementation projects might include route development for a paddling or cycling, culinary trail or guided tour. Product implementation projects will only be required to meet the basic criteria for support.

If projects are larger in scope requiring a feasibility study, in-depth research or a substantial marketing investment, RTO7's Partnership Program could be a more suited avenue under the [Experience Development Category](#).

Experience implementation projects must meet some additional requirements (see experience projects below) as they will create stronger emotional engagement, have a higher yield per person and appeal to niche markets (see figure below). Examples of projects might include an art class within a unique setting, a make your own appetizer at a local restaurant using local ingredients, or a song writing session with a local songwriter. Experiences should be targeted towards the tourism market and should aim to:

- Increase length of stay
- Increase repeat visits
- Increase visitor spending and/or
- Reduce seasonality

### Benefits from Raising the Bar on Engagement, Personalization, Connections & Value



## BASIC ELIGIABILITY CRITERIA (“MARKET READY”)

### Who can apply:

- Private tourism businesses
- Destination Marketing Organizations
- Tourism Organizations/Associations hoping to develop a new product or experience within BruceGreySimcoe
- Municipalities/Conservation Authorities

### Requirements:

- Businesses or organizations must be established and be able to demonstrate the capacity (financial and otherwise) to execute the project
- Able to execute and meet agreed upon timelines
- Organizations must be legally registered to operate in Ontario
- Tourism businesses/organizations outside BruceGreySimcoe (e.g. a provincial association) can apply as long as there is strong involvement from a relevant BruceGreySimcoe stakeholder and part of the experience or product must be within the geographical boundaries of BruceGreySimcoe
- Carry liability insurance
- All required operating permits (federal, provincial and/or municipal)
- Have a website/social media page, phone number and email address that are regularly monitored
- Identify BruceGreySimcoe and Ontario as partners on website with active links back to BruceGreySimcoe.com and ontariotravel.net respectively
- Identify BruceGreySimcoe as a partner in all press releases related to the product or experience
- Social media posts related to the product or experience tag @BruceGreySimcoe on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram
- Identify BruceGreySimcoe and Ontario as partners on all printed collateral supported through the program
- Complete the free BruceGreySimcoe Service Excellence online training program prior to submitting an application. Program information can be found [here](#)
- Maintain a current operator listing on BruceGreySimcoe.com
- Join the RTO7 E-Newsletter <http://rto7.ca/Public/Special-Pages/Mailing-List-Signup>

Marketing for products or experiences should fit with the existing targets of RTO7.

### Target Markets

#### Geographic targets

- Greater Toronto Area
- Southwestern Ontario
- BruceGreySimcoe
- Near market US (Michigan, New York)
- Quebec (beaches, camping, touring, cycling)

[OTMPC/RTO Consumer Segmentation Targets \(Ontario and US\)\\*](#)

- Up & Coming Explorers
- Connected Explorers
- Nature Lovers
- Sports Lovers
- Pampered Relaxers
- Knowledge Seekers (mostly focused on experiences)

\*You must sign into [www.rto7data.ca](http://www.rto7data.ca) to access profile details.

Best bet activities within BruceGreySimcoe have been identified through various studies and reports. Projects that are focused on these activities will be given priority.

**Targeted Activities**

- Art
- Culture
- Culinary
- Camping
- Cycling
- Golf
- Trails
- Resorting
- Skiing
- Waterways (beaches, paddling, surfing, fishing, boating, touring)
- Outdoor Winter Adventures

Priority will be given to projects that involve multiple stakeholders and/or action existing research that RTO7 has supported.

## EXPERIENCE PROJECTS (“EXPERIENCE READY”)

Experience Implementation Projects will engage visitors on an intellectual or emotional level and therefore, will require more development than products (For example, developing the experience story and creating “WOW” moments). The threshold for “experience ready” is greater than being a product being “market ready”. Experiences must meet the basic eligibility criteria as well as satisfy the following requirements:

- Must identify which area the experience will focus on or combination of
  - Art
  - Culture
  - Nature
  - Culinary<sup>2</sup>
- Goes beyond the traditional tourist path
- Dives deeper in to authentic, local culture
- Connects with people and enriches their lives

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<sup>2</sup> Four realms of an experience, Earth Rhythms, Inc.

- Engages visitors in memorable travel activities that are inherently personal, engage senses or makes connections
- Tells the story of the place, person or product

## EXPERIENCE / PRODUCT IMPLEMENTATION FUNDING

There is an opportunity for funding at a 1:1 ratio to help advertise products and experiences to increase the likelihood of success. This is in addition to coaching provided by RTO7. The minimum partner buy-in for the program is \$500 and \$2,500 is the maximum. For example, the partner contributes \$1,000 and RTO7 contributes \$1,000 for a total of \$2,000. Payment will be done retroactively. The partner **must** be able to cover all expenses up front. RTO7 will submit payment of the approved amount upon receipt of the invoice from the partner with accompanying proof of approved expenses, copies of invoices for eligible expenses must be submitted by date specified by TEDS to qualified for payment. All expenses must be approved by RTO7 prior to the start of the project. **All approved funds must be spent and RTO7 invoiced by March 31, 2018.**

Project partners who wish to access this funding should have prepared the following **prior** to submitting an application:

- Have an idea they wish to develop and have done some work to determine the feasibility of it
- Are able to commit staff resources to seeing the idea executed
- Completed basic market research (For example, completed comment cards, trip advisor comments, or other sources of customer feedback).
- Determined what the goal(s) is(are) following the project (For example, create a new revenue source for a slower season, create a new partnership, or creation of a new experience for an existing product)
- Have supplier quotes for advertising/promotional expenses
- Have an existing sustainability plan or are willing to develop one as part of the program

Funding is available for marketing of products/experiences (capital costs are ineligible). Some examples for funding could be logoed swag, collateral material development or digital marketing and creative development costs.

## INELIGIBLE CONTRIBUTIONS AND EXPENSES

- Grants and flow-through to partner/other organizations
- Charitable funding
- Donations to political parties or lobby groups
- Capital expenses (RTO7 Tourism Wayfinding Signage expenses can be applied for through the Partnership Program)
- Prize money and performance fees
- Funding from Ontario Government programs, such as Celebrate Ontario, or Ontario Government agencies such as the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation or other RTOs
- In-kind donations
- Funds given to organizations for operating funds such as salaries and wages or to a political party

**Applications will be accepted on an ongoing basis until December 31, 2017 or until the program is fully subscribed.**

Applicants should be aware that RTO7, through funding agreements with the Province, is bound by the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.O. c.f. 31*, as amended from time to time, and that any information provided to RTO7 in connection with their application may be subject to disclosure in accordance with the requirements of the Act.

Partners to permit RTO7, if required, to verify/audit information submitted (at the discretion of the Province) to ensure that it is complete and accurate, and that funds were used for purpose(s) intended.