

Partnership Program Guidelines

Detailed supplement to the 2026/27 program applications

General Partnership Program Information

This program is **not a grant**. Approved projects will align with RTO7's mandate and are managed and executed jointly, leveraging regional resources to create awareness, visitation, and spending. The projects approved must be conducted by third parties i.e. **Partnership funds cannot be used to pay or reimburse partner organizations**.

Applications will be open from February 2, 2026, until February 27, 2026. A second, and potentially limited, intake will be held later in the year only if funds are not fully allocated in this intake. We highly recommend getting applications in before the deadline, regardless of when your project will occur during the year.

Applicants must connect with the RTO7 Team prior to submitting their application.

- Partnership Programs: Alex Hogan 705-441-2931 ahogan@rto7.ca
 - o Schedule a call with me: <https://calendly.com/ahogan-rto7/30min>
- Operations Implementation Program:
 - o Kim Clarke 519-379-2506 kclarke@rto7.ca
 - o Schedule a call with me: <https://calendly.com/kclarke-rto7/30min>
 - o Robyn Hewitt 647-549-2983 rhewitt@rto7.ca
 - o Schedule a call with me: <https://calendly.com/rhewitt-7/30min>

Application Process

If your project is approved (you will be notified by March 31st), a [Collaboration Agreement](#) will be signed between you and RTO7. This document will outline key details such as timelines, performance measurement, and other project expectations.

RTO7 will then issue a Request for Reimbursement for your share of the project cost. Payment — via electronic funds transfer (EFT), INTERAC e-Transfer, or cheque — is due upon receipt of the request, usually prior to the project start date.

- No project expenses incurred before the Agreement is signed, or before April 1, 2026, will be reimbursed.
- Partner contributions must NOT be funding from other Ontario Government programs (e.g. Experience Ontario, Destination Ontario, Trillium, other RTOs, etc.). Be sure to include HST in your figures in the application.
- All projects must be fully completed by March 31, 2027, including submission of your Final Report within 30 days of project completion.

Partner Eligibility

To qualify for an RTO7 Partnership project, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Established businesses or organizations with all required operating permits, including:
 - o private tourism businesses (consumer facing organizations that have direct access to the consumer and rely on that consumer for their income)
 - o DMOs (Destination Marketing Organizations), tourism organizations, associations/interest groups or municipalities managing tourism-related projects that directly benefit local tourism operators

- Must demonstrate the financial and operational capacity to complete the project in partnership, including a high level of responsiveness and meeting agreed upon timelines.
- Must be located within Bruce, Grey & Simcoe Counties
 - Exceptions may be made for organizations outside BruceGreySimcoe (BGS) if there is strong involvement from a relevant BGS stakeholder.
- Joint projects with other RTOs will be considered, but note that each RTO has their own Partnership Program structure.
- Must be legally registered to operate in Ontario and hold all required federal, provincial and municipal permits; must have no outstanding legal issues that could interfere with project delivery or collaboration with RTO7
- RTO7 encourages partners to evolve their approach over time. For the 2026/27 year, repeat applications for identical projects previously supported may not be eligible for funding.

For Bruce County & Simcoe County applicants

Bruce County provides grants to tourism operators through their Spruce the Bruce program. Simcoe County provides grants to municipalities and non-for-profit organizations through the Experience Simcoe County Tourism Partnership Fund (this program closes February 13, 2026). In some cases, RTO7 can leverage these grants with RTO7 funding programs. Please contact RTO7 staff and/or [Bruce](#) or [Simcoe County](#) staff for more details.

If an approved project is delayed/cancelled prior to start, you must advise RTO7 as soon as possible to allow other projects/stakeholders to access funds made available. Any expenses incurred prior to cancellation of a project will be your responsibility.

More Detailed Guidelines for:

[Digital & Social Media Advertising Application](#)

[Video/Image Development Application](#)

[Storytelling Application](#)

[Experience Development Application](#)

[Tourism Wayfinding Signage Application](#)

PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS									
Category	Tourism Wayfinding Signage	Product/Experience Development	Video/Image Production	Digital Advertising	Social Media Advertising	Translation Services	Storytelling	Trade Show	Technology Review/Implementation
Eligible Partners Private and non-private sector tourism operators, DMOs, municipalities, and associations with a primary purpose of supporting the tourism industry, general tourism promotion and tourism product development that occurs within BruceGreySimcoe									
Objective	Improve the visitor experience through implementation of RTO7 signage & wayfinding specifications	Enhance development of tourism experiences (products, training, workforce development, ambassador program development, sustainable tourism certifications and research)	To grow visitation by developing competitive collateral offerings for the partner and the BGS website	To grow visitation by reaching target markets where consumers search for travel information	To grow visitation by engaging target markets through social media	To provide French language translation for services in web and print media	To provide stories of experiences and products that disperse tourists to areas that have capacity for growth	To help tourism operators to attend product appropriate trade shows	To support tourism operators in a) review of their technology needs and assets and b) assisting in implementing the recommendations
Intake Deadline Application: February 27, 2026 – All Programs									
Participation Partner \$: PP \$	\$1 : up to a maximum of \$1	\$1: up to a maximum of \$1	\$1 : up to a maximum of \$1	\$1 : up to a maximum of \$1	\$1: up to a maximum of \$1	\$1: up to a maximum of \$1	\$1: up to a maximum of \$1	\$1: up to a maximum of \$1	\$1: \$1 if approved and consultant work underway by Dec. 31
Example Funding	\$10,000 investment by partner receives \$10,000 from partnership program for a total project of \$20,000	\$15,000 investment by partner receives \$15,000 from partnership program for a total project of \$30,000	\$2,585 investment by partner receives \$2,585 from partnership program for a total project of \$5,170	\$15,000 investment by partner receives \$15,000 from partnership program for a total project of \$30,000	\$7,500 investment by partner receives \$7,500 from partnership program for a total project of \$15,000	\$500 investment by partner receives \$500 from partnership program for a total project of \$1,000	\$1,000 investment by partner receives \$1,000 from partnership program for a total project of \$2,000	\$1,000 investment by partner receives \$1,000 from partnership program for a total project of \$2,000	\$850 investment by partner receives \$850 from partnership program and \$850 from RTO7 for a total project of \$2,550
Partners funding									Review
Minimum	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 1,100 (image)	\$ 12,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 350	\$ 750	\$ 1,000	\$850
Maximum	\$75,000	\$ 30,000	\$ 400 Sustainable Only \$ 1,485 (video package 1) \$ 2,585 (video package 2) \$ 3,630 (video package 3)	\$ 30,000	\$ 12,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 1,500	Review & Implementation \$2,575
Example initiatives or projects	Implement RTO7 wayfinding signage along trail network or road system.	Research into viability of a new tourism product/experience.	Outfitter videos a canoe or paddle board experience or develops a video to recruit employees to the business.	A resort or area advertises a campaign with a combination of display ads, adwords and social media.	An operator promotes an activity through Meta (Facebook & Instagram).	Translating web pages or material that are suited to the French Language market	A DMO or business engages storyteller(s) directing tourists to experiences with capacity for growth	An outfitter rents a booth and attends the Trade Show.	RTO7 agency reviews operator software (e.g. POS, financial/room mgmt...) and offers recommendations (and hands-on support for optimization)

Digital & Social Media Advertising Guidelines

Most Critical: Facebook Page Access

The Aber Group is RTO7's Agency of Record for advertising campaigns. To launch your campaign, The Aber Group will need advertiser access to your Facebook Page so ads can run as sponsored posts from your page. Only someone with "**full control**" access, not partial access, can approve this request.

Conditional approvals will be issued late March/early April, and Aber will send the advertiser access request with instructions to accept the request at the same time. You will have five (5) business days to accept both the advertiser request and the program offer. Failure to do so will result in cancellation of your offer. Please do not assume page access as this could result in the cancellation of your project. Take time now to verify who has full control access to allow time for updates in the back end of your Business Page if required.

Here are some resources if you are unfamiliar with how to determine your Facebook Page access:

[· Facebook Business Requests](#)

[· Resource Guide | RTO7](#)

Please note that you will only be able to accept the request **if you are the owner of the Facebook page, not just an admin.** Please take the time to confirm this **before submitting your application.** If, upon conditional approval, it is discovered that you **do not** have someone with appropriate access to accept Aber's advertiser request, **your application cannot move forward.**

Choosing Your Campaign Type

You may use the application to apply for:

- **Social Media Advertising** – partner contribution of \$2,000–\$12,000
- **Digital Advertising** (which may include social media) - partner contribution of \$12,000–\$30,000

If contributing **\$12,000 or more**, you may choose between a Social Media-only campaign or a broader Digital Advertising campaign. If desired, you may indicate your preference in the application - final confirmation of campaign type and format/structure of your digital campaign will occur during your kick-off call with The Aber Group based on your goals).

Note: The [Operational Implementation Program \(OIP\)](#) offers social media advertising in exchange for an operator's investment in their operations – if you do not have cash to contribute, and are interested in a modest campaign, you may wish to start by reviewing this program.

Aber Responsibilities

- Draft ad copy using your website, collateral and insights from the kick-off call

- Provide one round of edits after your review (straightforward copy tends to outperform highly stylized or clever ad content)
- Once copy is approved, Aber will execute the campaign

Partner Responsibilities

You are responsible for the overall **strategy and creative** behind your campaign. This includes campaign planning and creative delivery:

- Know your goals, messaging, and visual approach before applying
- Can range from a concept with images/messages to full blown ‘ads’
- Provide 5–10 high-resolution images (minimum 1MB)
- Include **at least one video (≤30 seconds), ideally in multiple formats**

Imagery Specs

You are responsible for providing the visual collateral for your campaign. The Aber Group will not edit the collateral you provide, so it must be “camera ready” (see resources below to assist with this). While not mandatory, to ensure your campaign assets display across all Meta placements (Feeds, Stories, Reels, etc.), please follow the best practices below.

Note that **image quality is most important** - if the different specifications below cannot be provided, The Aber Group will do their best to crop your high quality images to fit different formats, however please be aware that your ads may not serve in all placements, and your creatives may display unintended cuts when resized, especially if they are text heavy.

Please provide assets in the following formats (click [here](#) for more info and help with how to do this):

Images:

- 1440×1440 px (1:1)
- 1200×628 px (1.91:1)
- 1440×2560 px (9:16)[SEP]

Format: JPG or PNG | Max size: 30 MB | Min quality: 1080p (1440p preferred)

Videos:

- 1440×1440 px (1:1)
- 1200×628 px (4:5)
- 1440×2560 px (9:16)[SEP]

Format: MP4 or MOV | Max size: 4 GB | Length: 15–30s | Min quality: 1080p (1440p preferred)

Best Practices

- Keep text to under 20%

- Ideally a combination of vertical and horizontal images are preferred
- Consider using visible logos on imagery to build brand recognition
- Real people in relatable scenes work better than abstract or object-focused imagery
- Organic looking, authentic visuals often outperform posters or those that appear AI generated

Comment Management on Meta

- Partners are responsible for moderating ad comments daily
- The Aber Group cannot disable or manage comments
- Some campaigns (e.g. 2SLGBTQIA+ events, Share the Road) should be prepared to monitor comments constantly - if you want to hide or block comments, this must be done by your Facebook Page Admin

Campaign Timeline & Responsibilities

You'll need at least **6 weeks** between your kick-off call and the campaign launch date. Partner delays in approvals or asset delivery may cause launch delays.

The chart below outlines key campaign activities, responsibilities and sequencing:

#	Action	Deadline	Responsibility
1	Conditional project approval	<i>By Late March/early April</i>	RTO7
2	Partner accepts page access requested by Aber (if unable to accept, conditional project approval is revoked)	<i>Within five business days of request</i>	Partner
3	Signing of Project Agreement (conditional until RTO7's TPA with Province is signed)	<i>Within 5 business days of receipt</i>	Partner & RTO7
4	Submit 50% share of project cost to RTO7	<i>Within 30 days of receipt</i>	Partner
5	Provide Partner & Aber with Basecamp project access	<i>6 weeks before launch</i>	RTO7
6	Hold brief (30-minute) kick-off call	<i>6 weeks before launch</i>	Partner, RTO7 & Aber
7	Share overall campaign information + creative specifications with Partner via Basecamp	<i>Immediately after the briefing</i>	Aber
9	Prepare Media Plan (for projects \$24,000 and up) and send it to the Partner for approval	<i>4 weeks before launch</i>	Aber
10	Approve Media Plan if applicable	<i>1 week after receiving the Media Plan</i>	Partner & RTO7

11	Upload finalized Campaign Landing Page + Creatives to Basecamp for Aber	<i>3 weeks before launch</i>	Partner
12	Develop ad copy and submit it for partner approval	<i>2 weeks before launch</i>	Aber
13	Approve ad copy	<i>1 week after receiving the ad copy and 1 week before launch</i>	Partner & RTO7
14	Upload and schedule campaign	<i>After ad copy approval</i>	Aber
15	Send campaign preview links	<i>1 day after launch</i>	Aber
16	Send daily dashboard link	<i>1 week after launch</i>	Aber
17	Send final reporting	<i>4 weeks after campaign end date</i>	Aber
18	Complete final partner report	<i>Within 30 days of receipt of Aber final report</i>	Partner

Video & Image Development Guidelines

Image Ownership

- The images and videos collected through the Partnership Program will be co-owned by the partner and RTO7. RTO7 reserves the right to use these assets for marketing purposes, including but not limited to the website, advertising campaigns, and YouTube, without needing further permission from the partner. This provides partners with valuable free exposure as their assets are showcased in BruceGreySimcoe's extensive advertising efforts. Additionally, these assets may be shared with the Ministry of Tourism, Culture & Gaming and Destination Ontario for similar promotional purposes, significantly broadening the reach and visibility of the partner's offerings. If RTO7 intends to use the content for purposes beyond these platforms, the partner will be informed.
- All video provided will be licensed to the relevant partner and Regional Tourism Organization 7 for a period of 3 years (thereafter, in order to minimize partner costs, H Visual Media will have access to the raw footage)
- Video will be posted to the BGS website (video galleries as are appropriate to the video and to BGS YouTube channel)
- Previous Partnership videos (amongst others) may be viewed on BruceGreySimcoe's [YouTube page](#)
- Partner is responsible to post video(s) to partner's website and YouTube channel

Scheduling

- Brian and/or Andrea will give you available dates to choose from within your proposed window. You will then have 7 days to confirm your chosen date with all parties (i.e. to confirm models, shoot locations, etc.); after 7 days the date will again become available to others booking shoot dates.
- Shoot dates are all full days - we cannot accommodate half day shoots, so it will be important to plan accordingly to make the most of your available time
- Rescheduling of a shoot due to clearly inclement weather the morning of a shoot will be accommodated when agreed to by both parties; rescheduling as a result of models cancelling or fall colours not being at their absolute peak, etc. will be subject to a \$300 fee, payable prior to release of imagery
- If planning a winter shoot (which we encourage), you may wish to consider a backup plan in the event that weather does not cooperate - are there non-weather dependent winter activities you might profile instead or in addition to those dependent on ideal wintery weather

Models

- You will be responsible for ensuring dedicated models are lined up (and confirmed just prior to shoot day) - please don't rely on whoever happens to be in the area that day - arrange all models in advance, know what emotions you are trying to capture and do some research (review online profiles) to try to match the model's demographic to the audience you are trying to attract
- Click [here](#) for some suggestions if you are challenged finding models (occasionally finding models becomes very challenging - if this is the case, please reach out to us as we have developed a database of interested individuals and may be able to help)

- As appropriate, RTO7 encourages the use of a diversity of models, including those that self-identify as Indigenous, Visible Minorities, Persons with Disabilities, Women, 2SLGBTQ+
- You will collect signed model and operator releases prior to the shoot using the [release](#) provided by H Visual Media/Andrea Hamlin Photography

Shoot Locations

- Your shoot should tell a cohesive story e.g. following someone through town vs. relying on the team to spontaneously shoot empty storefronts or trails (pre-planning with the team here is invaluable)
- RTO7 encourages depiction of assets that will result in revenue generation for tourism operators (i.e. we are more likely to approve/promote activities that are associated with businesses that stand to benefit e.g. a tour guide, an outfitter, etc. than simply beautiful vistas or free hiking trails) and an increased respect for the local environment and communities
- When required and appropriate (e.g. a shoot with significant travel time is consecutive days in a row and the shoot day runs late), the Partner is requested to provide paid accommodation for photographer/videographer if possible

Key Activities, Milestones & Responsibilities

The following is an approximate sequence of events for the shoot you will be undertaking if approved:

1. Project evaluation and approval – RTO7
2. Project (Collaboration) Agreement – RTO7 & Partner; logos on Partner website; Topsy training completed by partner
3. Submit 50% share of project cost to RTO7 - Partner
4. Planning call with Brian's team and/or Andrea to confirm project objectives, shoot dates, desired deliverables, required delivery dates, models, etc. – Partner & Brian/Andrea
5. Partner prep for shoot (alerting stakeholders, lining up models, getting releases signed, etc. etc.) - Partner
6. Project shoot(s)
7. Delivery of collateral, as agreed to, following editing - Brian/Andrea
8. Final reporting to RTO7 - Partner

Storytelling Guidelines

Detailed supplement to the RTO7 Storytelling Application

Choosing The Story

- Please keep in mind that although the story to be developed is intended for awareness, sustainability and revenue generation by tourism operators is of key importance and should therefore be considered in what you are promoting to your target audience e.g. we are more likely to approve/promote stories that relate to businesses that stand to benefit e.g. a tour guide, an outfitter, etc. than simply beautiful vistas or free hiking trails.

Choosing A Storyteller

- RTO7 and the Partner will jointly vet current work samples from qualified writers that are familiar with the product/experience and the locale the story pertains to and/or have a following that aligns with the demographic the Partner is seeking to attract
- Successful writers will contract directly with RTO7

Deliverables

- An important part of this program is that partners consider how the story will be distributed once it is complete. Depending on the storyteller, distribution may or may not be built in (e.g., an influencer sharing with their audience versus a writer without a publication outlet), so partners should be prepared to identify additional ways the story will be shared beyond distribution by RTO7 and the partner alone.
- Resulting ‘stories’ will be used by the Partner, RTO7, and the Storyteller and may be made available to Destination Ontario and MTCG as well for print publications, web applications and other digital advertising
- Both writer and Partner will be expected to report on their respective performance measurements (sample metrics outlined in application) as part of the final project report.

Key Activities, Milestones & Responsibilities

The following is an approximate sequence of events for the campaign you will be undertaking if approved:

1. Project evaluation and approval – RTO7
2. Project Agreement – RTO7 & Partner; logos on Partner website; Topsy training completed by partner
3. Submit 50% share of project cost to RTO7 - Partner
4. Kick-off call with storyteller to confirm/negotiate project objectives, deliverables, deadlines, posting schedules, performance measurement, etc. - RTO7, Partner & Storyteller
5. Planning and logistics for visit (if applicable) - Partner & Storyteller
6. Drafts provided to RTO7 & Partner for review - Storyteller
7. Requested edits made - Storyteller
8. Posting of final deliverables according to schedule - Storyteller
9. Sharing of stories or other planned distribution - Partner, RTO7 & Storyteller
10. Final reporting including performance metrics - Storyteller
11. Final partner reporting and analytics to RTO7 - Partner

Experience Development Guidelines

Experience Development projects can take many forms - speak to RTO7 staff regarding whether your idea fits within this category of the program.

Sustainability Credential Projects

As part of RTO7's focus on sustainability of tourism, sustainability-related credentials are encouraged - specific proposed credentials will be reviewed on a case by case basis. TIAO and RTO7 participate in [GreenStep Sustainability Certifications](#). RTO7 commits to covering a portion of the recurring annual costs associated with maintaining credentials for a 3 year period.

Attendance at the IMPACT Travel & Tourism Conference

50% of ticket price only may be reimbursed upon receipt of a partner summary of learnings, insights, future action items as a result of attendance at this bi-annual conference (next held in 2027)

- Note that in most cases, Experience Development projects involve procurement of a supplier by RTO7 and project management by RTO7 (both working closely with the Partner)
- For those proposing/undertaking planning/feasibility projects/exercises, sustainable tourism practices must be addressed in a meaningful manner within the plan/study.

Tourism Wayfinding Signage Guidelines

- Please note that the RTO7 Wayfinding Specifications are NOT camera-ready artwork and that the Partner will be responsible for costs associated with developing this. You may be required to share some of your camera-ready artwork with RTO7 (for the purposes of developing a database of editable signage templates to assist stakeholders in future).
- Adjunct Signage systems include elements of tourism wayfinding and trails signage that the RTO7 Signage specifications do not address, and that are
 - Provincially recognized and executed in multiple Ontario Tourism Regions.
 - In support of RTO7's targeted activities.
 - Long-lasting and durable in construction (RTO7 reserves the right - at applicant's cost - to have an expert review the fabrication specifications to ensure they meet a minimum standard).
 - An appropriate design for the use e.g. if on roadways, legible at driving speed, etc.
 - Installed as per governmental regulations relevant to the installation. RTO7 does not assume any responsibility for the design, fabrication and installation of the signage.
 - Purchase of posts (U Channel or wooden as outlined in the RTO7 specs) are eligible for these adjunct signs.
 - Examples of this might include some Bruce Trail signage, Conservation Area signage, Great Lakes Waterfront Trail signage, etc.
 - Contact us for consideration if you think your system may be eligible.
 - TODS Provincial highway wayfinding signage is not eligible.