

# 2023/24 Partnership Program Guidelines

## (Apr 2023)

*You will need to attest in your application to having read these detailed Guidelines. If the documents linked to below do not appear automatically, you may find them in your downloaded documents or reach out to [ahogan@rto7.ca](mailto:ahogan@rto7.ca).*

This program is not a grant. Matching funds are provided by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport (MTCS) and RTO7 towards partnerships with industry partners that we manage and execute jointly and that align with RTO7's mandate, goals, target audiences and activities as found in our current business plan and that encourage collaborations, strategic alignment and leveraging of regional resources to create awareness, visitation, and spending.

**RTO7's offer of the Partnership Program for 2023/24 is contingent upon Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport (MTCS) approval of RTO7's plan.**

**Note that preserving the environment and social fabric in and around our communities is a priority for RTO7 and where possible, we will integrate "Plan Ahead/Book Ahead" messaging into all program criteria.**

**RTO7 reserves the right to limit the number of programs/funds that one stakeholder may receive per year.**

## Partner Eligibility

To undertake a Partnership project, applicants must be:

- Established businesses or organizations (with all required operating permits), including
  - private tourism businesses (note that preference in awarding funds will be given to tourism operators i.e. consumer facing organizations that have direct access to the consumer and rely on that consumer for their income)
  - DMOs (Destination Marketing Organizations), tourism organizations, associations/interest groups, municipalities representing/managing tourism partners in the delivery of a specific project that has direct benefits for the tourism operators
- Capable of demonstrating financial and other capacity to execute the project in partnership (including meeting agreed upon timelines).
- Located within Bruce, Grey & Simcoe Counties
  - organizations outside BruceGreySimcoe (BGS) may apply if there is strong involvement from the relevant BGS stakeholder
- Joint projects with other RTOs will be considered (keep in mind each RTO has their own structure for Partnership programs).
- There must be no outstanding legal issues that would affect the processing and outcomes of this project and collaboration with RTO7.
- Future funding of partners will in part depend on timely completion of the project in question and the final partner report, as well as your responsiveness and communication.

Partner contributions (i.e. matching funds) must

- be cash (provided to RTO7 by EFT, INTERAC e-transfer or cheque).
- NOT be funding from other Ontario Government programs, such as Celebrate Ontario, or Ontario Government agencies such as Destination Ontario, the Ontario Trillium Fund, OMAFRA or other RTOs.

Note that as part of the application, you will need to attest to having read the Guidelines and relevant Application(s), including all informational links. The [Resource Guide](#) we have compiled contains useful information on many topics and you may wish to bookmark or save this document for future reference.

## Project/Partner Requirements

### Project Requirements

- Projects must be conducted by third parties i.e. Partnership funds cannot be used to pay or reimburse partner organizations. Third parties may include one of RTO7's Agencies of Record - H Visual Media, Andrea Hamlin Photography, The Aber Group Inc. for digital advertising, MJ Translation - or a subcontractor identified through an RTO7 led procurement process.
- The only exception to RTO7 leading the procurement process is for Signage projects, in which the municipality/partner procures for suppliers as long as procurements align with [RTO7](#) procurement requirements.
- Signage (conforming to the [RTO7 Wayfinding Signage Standards & Specifications Manual](#)) is the only capital expenditure that is eligible within the Partnership Program.
- 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.

### Partner Requirements

You must:

- Have a website/social media page(s), phone number and email address that are regularly monitored.
- Select one representative only to act as the decision maker and liaison with RTO7 and the Agency of Record or consultant assigned to the project to ensure timely and constructive execution of the project.
- Identify BruceGreySimcoe and the Province of Ontario as partners
  - with logos on website with active links back to [BruceGreySimcoe.com](#) and [destinationontario.com](#) respectively
  - with logos on all printed collateral supported through the program
  - in all press releases related to the project
- Tag @BruceGreySimcoe and @ontariotravel using #brucegreysimcoe on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram posts related to the project.
- Complete a free [Typsy training](#) (applicant and at least one front-line staff)
- Maintain a current [operator listing](#) on BruceGreySimcoe.com.
- Sign up for the [RTO7 E-Newsletter](#) (funding updates, announcements, etc.).

## Administration Fee

**Note: The Administration Fee will again be waived for 2023/24;** Environics Analytics postal code analysis will still be provided upon request (free of charge). That said, please still review the links to markets and activities that RTO7 targets (below in Data Collection) – note that we are monitoring these, and they are subject to change/updating as new patterns and consumer sentiments emerge.

*All approved partnership applications will require the payment of a \$200.00 administration fee (waived for 2023/24). For a limited time, RTO7 will provide to the primary applicant Environics Analytics analysis of postal code data they provide (a minimum of 500 codes per application). For applications involving multiple partners, if desired, additional partners may have their postal code or mobility data (municipalities only) analyzed at the market rate of \$600.00 per partner (not waived). In some cases, partners wishing to undertake multiple projects may be able to combine their projects where appropriate to avoid incurring multiple administration fees. For questions relating to the Administration Fee, please see the Administration Fee and Admin Fee FAQ.*

## Data Collection

There are a number of tourism metrics we encourage you to consider tracking.

The Environics Analytics analysis of your postal code data (provided codes are provided a minimum of 30 days in advance of your campaign) will be useful to you in your marketing targeting and product development. The markets, segments and activities that RTO7 targets i.e. the geographic audiences and types of tourists we are aiming to attract and activities that RTO7 targets i.e. the geographic audiences and types of activities we promote are outlined [here](#). The data you provide through postal codes will be aggregated across all partners in the longer term to form a clearer, more refined picture of the state of tourism within the region to inform your and our future decision making.

In addition to [postal code data](#), the data that you may be required to include in your final reporting to assess performance will depend on the project and objectives in question. As data is the backbone of good tourism planning, the metrics that are considered most useful to RTO7 and/or stakeholders are elaborated on [here](#) (Performance Metrics) and [here](#) (Importance of Data).

## RTO7 Partnership Program Streams

### Video/Image Development

This category includes development of videos and/or imagery through RTO7's respective Agency(ies) of Record (H Visual Media and Andrea Hamlin Photography) that can subsequently be used in advertising of assets/events, etc. e.g. in the Social Media Advertising Campaign Stream below.

Please note that in-kind recruitment videos to be used in advertising for staff will also be eligible within this category (as well as an in-kind recruitment social media advertising program ([Recruitment Implementation Program](#)) in which to use these videos), assuming this is approved by the Province.

### Storytelling

This category provides opportunities for partners to tell their individual and community stories. With RTO7, you will vet current work samples in order to procure a qualified writer that is familiar with the product/experience and locale that the story is about. Stories will be used by all partners and may be made available to Destination Ontario and MTCS.

### Digital Advertising

For the purposes of this program, digital advertising includes adwords/search, Facebook/Instagram ads,

banner/display ads, etc. to promote assets/events. This category does not include website design, upgrades, etc. Media buys are managed by RTO7's Agency of Record (The Aber Group Inc.).

RTO7 is pleased to extend this offer to past partner campaigns recognizing the momentum that has been established in attracting tourists to the region as well as the challenge to stakeholders to sustain this momentum if this collaborative partnership did not continue.

Note that this Digital Advertising program may be undertaken in conjunction with the Video/Image Development program if timing permits (separate applications will be required). Please contact us directly to discuss.

### **Social Media Advertising (Video & Image) Campaign**

This category provides access to social media advertising (Meta/Facebook, Instagram) using short videos or images developed through RTO7 or your own approved video/image collateral (priority will be given to videos of 60 seconds or less). Media buys are managed by RTO7's advertising agency, The Aber Group. RTO7 has had great success with this in our BruceGreySimcoe campaigns, and the lower buy-in of this partnership provides partners with a low-risk introduction to the benefits of social media advertising as an effective complement to other forms of advertising.

Note: The Operational Implementation Program ([OIP](#)) offers social media advertising in exchange for an operator's investment in their operations – you may wish to start by reviewing this program and if it does not meet your needs, then consider this Social Media Advertising Campaign, to which you will contribute cash. Eligible partners (with a cash contribution) may be able to undertake this program and also leverage the OIP program. Contact RTO7 staff ([ahogan@rto7.ca](mailto:ahogan@rto7.ca)) for further information. This program may also be undertaken in conjunction with the Video/Image Development program (although separate applications will be required). Note that RTO7 reserves the right to limit the number of applications per partner. Please contact us directly for further information.

### **Tourism Wayfinding, Trails & Cycling Signage**

Funds are available to conduct a signage plan for installation of RTO7 Tourism Wayfinding Signage, to fabricate and install tourism wayfinding, trail and cycling signs. Note that plans and signs must conform to the [RTO7 Wayfinding Signage Standards & Specifications Manual](#) (updated June 2021).

As signage that gets people more efficiently to their destination supports our sustainability objectives, this program **has been expanded** to allow for support of elements of signage systems that the RTO7 Signage specifications do not address, and that meet the minimum criteria below:

- Provincially recognized and executed in the majority of Ontario's Tourism Regions
- In support of our targeted activities
- Long-lasting, durable construction (RTO7 reserves the right to have an expert review the fabrication specifications to ensure they meet a minimum standard)
- Appropriate design for use e.g. if on roadways, legible at driving speed, etc.
- All signage must be installed as per governmental regulations relevant to the installation. RTO7 does not assume any responsibility for the design, fabrication and installation of the signage

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. Note that adjunct signage projects will be leveraged at \$1:\$0.50 (\$1 Partner funds and \$0.50 of Partnership Funds).

Note that signage projects are most often undertaken by Municipalities or Counties (or by Conservation Authorities or Recreational Organizations) and funding does not apply to any other types/formats of signage or electronic signage. Signage plans are only eligible for those implementing the RTO7 signage system.

## Experience Development

This category is typically for larger projects, often in the planning stages. Funding is available for large-scale product/experience development, sustainable tourism development plans and/or business/destination sustainable certification, to develop marketing plans, for feasibility studies, etc. Research and workforce development projects are also eligible within this category.

## Trade Show Booth Space

Tourism operators may apply for reimbursement of up to 50% of eligible trade show booth space costs.

## French Translation Services

French language translation by Agency of Record (MJ Translation Inc.) of web and print materials relevant/suited to these markets (e.g. beaches or cycling pages for promotion in Quebec).

## Other RTO7 Programs

For a full list of RTO7 Partner Programs, please visit [rto7.ca](http://rto7.ca) or talk to RTO7 staff about options.

## 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 Tourism Simcoe County Tourism Culture & Sport Enhancement Fund. In some cases, RTO7 is able to leverage these grants with RTO7 funding programs. Please contact RTO7 staff and/or [Bruce](#) or [Simcoe](#) County staff for more details.

## Application Process

Please contact Alex Hogan ([ahogan@rto7.ca](mailto:ahogan@rto7.ca)) prior to submitting to ensure eligibility of your proposed idea.

- Complete your application – be sure to **include HST** in your figures.
- If your project is approved (typically you will be notified within a week) a [Collaboration Agreement](#) outlining timelines, performance measurement etc. will be signed by you and RTO7.
- Successful projects will be managed in Basecamp, which allows all parties to track the project's progress.
- RTO7 will send a Request for Reimbursement to you for your share of the project cost. Payment (in the form of an electronic funds transfer, INTERAC e-Transfer or cheque) is due upon receipt of the Request for Reimbursement (*prior* to the project's start). Note that no expenses incurred prior to the signing of the Agreement – or April 1 - will be paid.
- Applications will be accepted on a continual basis (as long as funds remain available). Note that all projects must be fully completed (including your completion of a final report within 30 days of completion) by March 31, 2024. It is strongly recommended that you submit applications before the dates listed below – in particular, Signage and Experience Development projects require significant completion time before year end.
  - Video/Image Production Oct 31/24
  - Experience Development Aug 31/24
  - Storytelling Oct 31/24
  - Signage Sep 30/24
  - French translation Oct 31/24

Applicants should be aware that RTO7, through funding agreements with the Province is bound by the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (Ontario) and that any information provided to the Province in connection with the Project or otherwise in connection with the Agreement may be subject to disclosure in accordance with that Act, as amended from time to time, and that any information provided to RTO7 in connection with their application, project or agreement may be subject to disclosure in accordance with the requirements of that 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.

PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS Category	Tourism Wayfinding Signage	Product/Experience Development	Video/Image Production	Digital Advertising	Social Media Advertising	Translation Services	Storytelling	Recruitment Video/Image
Eligible Partners	Private and non-private sector tourism operators, DMOs, tourism organizations, municipalities, and associations with a primary purpose of heritage tourism, cultural tourism, sport tourism and general tourism promotion and 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 and research)	To grow visitation by developing competitive collateral offerings for the partner and the BGS website.	To grow visitation by reaching targets markets where the consumers search most for information about a possible destination	To grow visitation by reaching targets 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 provide assistance to tourism operators in the recruitment of staff
Additional RTO7 funding?	NO	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO
Participation Partner \$: PF \$: RTO7\$	\$1 : up to a maximum of \$1.00	\$1: up to a maximum of: \$0.75	\$1 : up to a maximum of \$1:\$1	\$1 : up to a maximum of \$1	\$1 : up to a maximum of \$1:\$1	\$1: up to a maximum of \$1	\$1 :up to a maximum of \$1:1	\$1 expenses: up to a maximum of \$1
Example Funding	\$10,000 investment by partner receives \$10,000 from partnership fund for a total project of \$20,000	\$10,000 investment by partner receives \$7,500 from partnership fund for a total project of \$17,500	\$900 investment by partner receives \$900 from partnership fund plus \$900 from RTO7 for a total project of \$2,700	15,000 investment by partner receives \$15,000 from partnership fund for a total project of \$30,000	\$1,000 investment by partner receives \$1,000 from partnership fund plus \$1,000 from RTO7 for a total project of \$3,000	\$1,000 investment by partner receives \$1,000 from partnership fund for a total project of \$2,000	\$1,000 investment by partner receives \$1,000 from partnership fund plus \$1,000 from RTO7 for a total project of \$3,000	Matching Operational &/or Capital Expenses by partner receives \$4,710 from partnership fund for a total project of \$4,710
Partners funding Minimum	\$5,000	\$ 5,000 (\$350 min for sustainability certification programs)	\$ 900 (video) \$ 1,015 (image)	\$ 7,500	\$ 500	\$ 350	\$ 500	\$4,710 (matching)
Maximum	\$50,000	\$30,000	\$ 4,000	\$20,000	\$ 7,500	\$1,000	\$ 5,000	\$4,710 (matching)
Example initiatives or projects	Implement RTO7 wayfinding signage along trail network or road system.	Research into viability of a new tourism product/experience.  Undertaking business or destination sustainability certification	Outfitter videos a canoe or paddle board experience.	A ski resort develops and advertises a campaign digitally.	An operator promotes an activity through social media.	Translating web pages or material suited to the French Language market	DMO develops and implements story telling of experiences that directs tourists to activities that have capacity for growth	An outfitter develops video to seek job applicants
Submissions Accepted	Mar. 1 to Sep. 30, 2023	Mar. 1 to Oct. 31, 2023	Mar. 1 to Oct. 31, 2023	Mar. 1 to Aug. 31, 2023	Mar. 1 to Oct. 31, 2023	Mar. 1 to Oct. 31, 2023	Mar. 1 to Oct. 31, 2023	Mar. 1, to Dec. 31, 2023