

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 September 14, 2026, until September 28, 2026.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to connect with the RTO7 Team prior to submitting their application.

- Alex Hogan 705-441-2931 ahogan@rto7.ca
 - o Schedule a call with me: <https://calendly.com/ahogan-rto7/30min>
- Kim Clarke 519-379-2506 kclarke@rto7.ca
 - o Schedule a call with me: <https://calendly.com/kclarke-rto7/30min>
- 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 October 12th), 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 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 (including campaigns) must be fully completed by March 31, 2027

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
 - o 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.
- 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](#)

[Storytelling Application](#)

[Experience Development Application](#)

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 in early October, 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 (for winter). 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).

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)
- Ideally 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)^[L]_{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)^[L]_{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. Your campaign must be completed by March 31, 2027 at the latest.

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

#	Action	Deadline	Responsibility
1	Conditional project approval	<i>By early October</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	<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

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

- Choice of storyteller may be suggested by the Partner, with RTO7 approval; if the Partner does not have a suggested storyteller, RTO7 will help to source an appropriate 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

Launch-Ready 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. This intake is focused on **launch-ready** experience development, meaning you just need a bit of support to get your experience visitor-ready.

RTO7 can help fund specialized third-party services required to develop, test or launch a new visitor experience. Partners contribute 50% of eligible project costs, along with the staff time and operating resources required to bring the experience to market. Please note that RTO7 can not pay for operational or capital expenses and funds must flow to a third-party, not the partner.

Projects should result in a new, market-ready visitor experience that can be launched by March 31, 2027.

Strong applications will demonstrate how the project can contribute to one or more of the following short-term impacts:

- Generate incremental visitation to BruceGreySimcoe.
- Encourage visitors to stay longer and spend more in the region.
- Build demand during late fall, winter and early spring.
- Prepare a new visitor experience or tourism product for the 2027 season.
- Create collaboration between tourism businesses or communities.
- Develop more weather-resilient visitor experiences.
- Incorporate or support overnight accommodations.
- Strengthen tourism offerings, including arts and culture, culinary experiences, wellness and spas, skiing and winter recreation.
- Reach new audiences and markets.

These examples are intended as guidance and are not an exhaustive list.

Eligible activities could include:

- Hiring a subject matter expert to develop programming, interpretation or storytelling for an experience.
- Third-party testing or evaluation of a newly developed visitor experience.
- Working with an experienced third party to bring three or more businesses together to develop a coordinated, purchasable visitor experience.
- Photography or video required to launch and market a newly developed experience.

Partner minimum contribution: \$5,000

PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS

	Tourism Wayfinding Signage	Product/Experience Development	Video/Image Production	Digital Advertising	Social Media Advertising	Translation Services	Storytelling	Trade Show	Technology Review/Implementation
Category									
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	Finalize development of tourism experiences	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: \$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 Minimum	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 1,100 (image) \$ 1,485 (video package 1)	\$ 12,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 350	\$ 750	\$ 1,000	Review \$850
Maximum	\$75,000	\$ 30,000	\$ 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.	Hiring a subject matter expert to develop programming, interpretation or storytelling for an 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)