

RTO7's offer of the Implementation Programs for 2023/24 is contingent upon the Ministry of Tourism, Culture & Sports' approval of RTO7's 2023/24 Business 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 in one year. Stakeholders are limited to 1 social media advertising program per season (OIP, SIP, Social Media Advertising) and a maximum of 2 applications per year.

RTO7 will continue to support businesses applying to do very much the same project that was done in the previous year. However, we want to see businesses continue to evolve, learn from campaigns supported by RTO7, and ultimately, stand on their own, therefore RTO7 may not support applications for the same project in 2024/25.

# Sustainability Inclusivity Program Guidelines

## General Program Overview

The Sustainability Inclusivity Program (SIP) is designed for tourism operators in BruceGreySimcoe to promote a new **sustainable** product, experience or initiative, or an **inclusive** business practice they've invested in, by providing a \$2,500 social media advertising campaign. Examples of initiatives that would qualify for SIP include the development of a new experience in the shoulder season, the implementation of a green initiative to reduce environmental impact, or the development of an experience that instills community pride for both residents and visitors. New inclusive business practices include participation in accreditation programs such as Rainbow Registered or Greenstep Canada.

The initiative must achieve at least one of the following:

1. Improve sustainability (environmental, social, financial)
2. Reduce seasonality
3. Increase visitor yield and revenue
4. Increase the length of stay or encourage return visits
5. Implement more inclusion practices in your place of business

Please visit the [Sustainable Tourism website](#) for more information on RTO7's sustainability efforts and the 3 pillars of sustainability (environmental, social, and economic).

## Sustainability<sup>1</sup>

The aim of sustainable tourism is to increase the benefits and reduce the negative impacts caused by tourism for destinations. Long-term sustainability can be achieved by seeking a suitable balance between

- Protecting natural environments, wildlife, and natural resources when developing and managing tourism activities (environmental),

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<sup>1</sup> Definition ideas from UNWTO and the Tourism Foundation.

- Providing authentic tourist experiences that celebrate and conserve heritage and culture (socio-cultural), and
- Creating socio-economic benefits and well-being for host communities through employment and income-earning opportunities (economic).

Sustainable tourism development is a complex and continuous planning process of reinvesting in your most precious assets over time (people, places, and processes). It can build local pride and confidence and requires the informed participation of all relevant local stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership.

It includes moving from a volume to a value-based approach, in which the tourist's experience is more meaningful/satisfying and serves to raise their awareness about sustainability issues and promote responsible and respectful tourism practices on their part.

## Inclusivity

An example of an inclusive workplace: Inclusive workplaces allow people with all kinds of differences and disabilities to feel welcome and valued for their contributions.<sup>2</sup>

Tourists, visitors, and locals should also feel comfortable participating in activities and experiences offered. This should be a welcoming space. Some examples of inclusivity include unconscious bias training, Rainbow Registered accreditation, acknowledging holidays of all cultures, or an EDI (equity, diversity, and inclusion) training program.

## Partner Eligibility

### Who can apply

- Tourism Operator - The term 'tourism operator' is defined as a tourism, festival, heritage, cultural or sport consumer-facing tourism business (nonprofit and for-profit) that has direct access to the tourism consumer and relies on that consumer for their income.
- Established (2 years of operation) as per the Tourism Operator definition above.
- Franchises, DMOs, BIA's Chambers, and Municipalities will be considered on a case on case basis. Please contact RTO7 staff BEFORE applying.
- Festivals wishing to apply, must be a minimum of 2 days in length and encourage overnight accommodation.
- You must be located within Bruce, Grey, or Simcoe Counties.
- Organizations must be legally registered to operate in Ontario.
- **Note that as part of the application, partners will need to attest to having read both the Guidelines and [resource documents](#), including all informational links.**

All projects must be completed before **March 31, 2024**.

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<sup>2</sup> [www.inclusiveemployers.co.uk](http://www.inclusiveemployers.co.uk)

## Project/Partner Requirements

### Project Requirements:

Stakeholders interested in the Sustainability Inclusivity Program will be required to demonstrate the following:

- You have an active Facebook PAGE (for business) and are actively engaged on the platform (i.e. post at a regular frequency and respond to comments within 24 hours).
- You need to be the Facebook page owner or have access to this individual in order for our social media Agency of Record to schedule the ads to run on your platforms (this can be found under page roles in your page settings).
- You must have current collateral (produced in the last 3 years); high-resolution images (Min 1MB) and/or 1-3 videos (60 seconds or less) that can be used in a social media campaign. See Resource Guide for [best practices](#).
- Your website is mobile-friendly, must be up to date and reflect your current offerings, hours of operation, and contact information.
- Partners will need to have a landing page consistent with what is portrayed in the video/imagery (i.e. a campaign promoting Pride festivities should include folks from the 2SLGBTQ+ community).

RTO7 will match your investment in operational expenses (e.g. mortgage payments, rent, insurance, inventory purchases, etc.) with a \$2,500 social media advertising campaign. You must be able to demonstrate these expenditures by providing proof of payment of the expenditure with the final report. E.g., cancelled cheque, Bank or Credit Card Statement (be sure to black out unrelated amounts on the statement) EFT confirmation, Credit Card receipt, etc. Please note that each expense can only be used once when accessing RTO7 programs. Aside from the operational expenditures invested, there is no cost to the operator. RTO7 will cover the cost of the media spend, additional agency fees, and HST.

### Partner Requirements:

- You must carry liability insurance of at least \$2,000,000 and provide RTO7 with a certificate of insurance to demonstrate this coverage.
- You must attest that there are NO outstanding legal issues that would affect the processing and outcomes of this project and collaboration with RTO7.
- Sustainable business practices and RTO7 supports that when visitors can plan or book ahead, not only does it help to improve the quality of visitors to the region but also helps our stakeholder manage their business more effectively, therefore, plan ahead/book ahead messaging must be included where possible.
- You commit to [monitoring the Facebook/Instagram posts](#) daily for the duration of the campaign.
- [Google Analytics is activated](#) on your website prior to the start of the campaign.
- Select 1 or 2 representatives to act as the liaison with RTO7. These people should be responsible for your social media marketing and can act as the decision-makers. They must have the capacity to execute the project and respond to team communication in a timely manner. Failure to communicate in a timely manner may cause the campaign to be cancelled or fail.
- Once the project is approved, the partner commits to using [Basecamp](#) (RTO7's project management program) for all communications regarding the project.
- Must identify BruceGreySimcoe and the Province of Ontario as partners:
  - with logos on your website with an active link back to BruceGreySimcoe and Discoverontario.com. RTO7 will provide these [logos](#).
  - with logos on all printed collateral supported through the program.

- Social media posts should tag @BruceGreySimcoe and @Ontariotravel (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) and use #brucegreysimcoe and #DiscoverON.
- The applicant and one front-line staff person will complete one of the following [Typsy](#) online training courses: Social Media for Hospitality, Dealing with Difficult Guests, Sustainability 101, or Interacting with Guests. To be completed by March 31, 2024.
- Maintain a current [operator listing](#) on BruceGreySimcoe.com.
- Maintain a current [operator listing](#) on DiscoverOntario.com
- Sign up for the [RTO7 E-Newsletter](#) (funding updates, announcements, etc.).

## Administration Fee

Note: The Administration Fee will be waived for 2023/24; Environics Analytics postal code analysis will still be provided however upon request (free of charge). That said, please still read the links below to markets, [segments](#) and activities that RTO7 targets – note that we are monitoring these, and they are subject to changes/updates as new patterns emerge. Please also see the tourism metrics we encourage you to consider tracking.

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 (this fee is 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 click [here](#).

## Data Collection

This data (if postal code data is 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, types of tourists we are aiming to attract, 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](#).

## Program Opportunities

### Social Media Marketing Support

Eligible partners will receive the following per new investment:

- \$2,500 of social media advertising that will show as sponsored ads from the partner's social media platforms (Facebook and Instagram).
- The sponsored ads will have a call to action that will direct visitor traffic to the operator's website home page or Facebook page.
  - The \$2,500 ad spend is applicable to HST and Agency Fees. **RTO7 will cover the full cost of the campaign including HST and additional Agency Fees. There is no cost to the partner.**

## Facebook/Instagram Sponsored Posts

- Maximum 6 ads can be created.
- Minimum 5, maximum of 10 [current images](#) and/or 1-3 videos must be provided for use in the campaign. Images MUST be high resolution (min 1MB) and videos should be 60 seconds or less.
- The RTO7 Program Coordinator will be your point of contact and will liaise between the partner and the Agency of Record.
- The Agency of Record will write the ad copy and create the sponsored ads using the information provided in your application and during your application review call with the RTO7 Program Coordinator.
- You must add the RTO7's Agency of Record, The Aber Group, [as advertisers to your Facebook page](#). An invitation will be sent by The Aber Group which can only be accepted by the Facebook page owner. This will allow the Agency of Record to create and schedule the partners sponsored ads.
- The sponsored ads will run for approximately 4 weeks.
- [You are responsible for managing comments from the post daily](#) with accurate and positive engagement.
- You will receive a final report following the campaign that details
  - Impressions
  - Reach
  - Click Through Rate (CTR)
  - Total Clicks
  - Cost Per Click (CPC)
  - Reactions/Comments/Shares/Saves
  - Total Spend.
- You will receive support from RTO7 staff to develop the demographic and geographic targeting, as well as interests for each of the ad campaigns.
- You will receive one midterm report approximately halfway through the campaign highlighting performance to date.
- Please note that targeting will not change for the duration of the campaign unless results are far less than anticipated by the agency and/or RTO7.

Partners who use third-party agencies for social media marketing are eligible for this program however we will communicate/work with ONLY the lead partner and NOT the third-party agency.

**Applications will be accepted on an ongoing basis until January 31, 2024, or until the program is fully subscribed.**

## Examples of Ways to Qualify for SIP

The following are some ideas of sustainable initiatives that you *could* implement in order to qualify for SIP:

### Business Operations and Planning

- Have membership, support, and/or training through sustainability organizations (e.g. Sustainable Tourism 2030).
- Evidence of action to lower footprint (i.e. monitoring of utility consumption and waste production appropriate for business size or taking action to lower carbon footprint).

- Have dedicated financial efforts for assessing and managing environmental risks and impacts (including climate risks).
- Become a Rainbow Registered business.
- Recognize all cultural holidays.
- Provide Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion training.

### **Tourist Information and Promotion**

- Provide product packaging and/or cross-marketing of at least 1 other tourism attraction and service within BruceGreySimcoe that can extend stay, increase expenditures, and diversity of experience during times that you have excess capacity.
- Use diverse people in your promotional materials.

### **Tourist Experience & Sense of Place**

- Marketing campaign to encourage tourists to reduce consumption and waste, reduce environmental impacts, and/or green alternatives.
- Marketing campaign to encourage responsible and/or respectful tourism.
- Take measures to reduce the impact on surrounding land and biodiversity (i.e. plant native species, reduce paved area, install bird feeders).
- Long-term planning for maintenance, expansion, and product development for tourists and potential tourist increase (i.e. washrooms, parking, etc.).
- Include Indigenous language and/or local cultural content in promotional materials.

## **Other RTO7 Programs**

If you have cash that you would like to add to the social media advertising campaign in order to increase its size and scope, please see the [Partnership Program Social Media Advertising](#).

If partners are looking for visual assets (photo or video), please apply through [RTO7's Video/Image Production](#) category under the Partnership Program portfolio.

Tourism operators looking for assistance in promoting their business through social media marketing should consider the [Operations Implementation Program](#).

Stakeholders who would like to promote job opportunities through their social media platforms may apply to the [Recruitment Implementation Program](#).

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

## For Bruce County Applicants and Simcoe County Applicants

Bruce County provides grants to tourism operators. In many cases, RTO7 is able to leverage these grants with RTO7 funding programs. Please contact RTO7 staff and/or [Bruce](#) staff for more details.

Non-profit applicants from Simcoe County may be eligible for the Tourism, Culture & Sport Enhancement Fund. Please contact Tourism Simcoe County staff for more details.

Applicants should be aware that RTO7, through funding arrangements with the Province, is bound by the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c.f 31, 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 the Act.

Partners agree 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 the purpose(s) intended.