

2021/22 Partnership Program Guidelines

(May 2021)

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. In addition to reading the Guidelines, you may wish to watch this [video](#) which explains the basic material addressed herein.

This program is not a grant. Matching funds are provided by the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries (MHSTCI) and RTO7 towards partnerships with industry 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.

Expenditure of funds in Partnership Programs is contingent on adherence to the Province's Framework guidelines and Emergency Orders.

Please note that the 2021/22 Partnership Program Guidelines continue to reflect current conditions. In general, this includes investing funds where we think they best benefit the operator, increasing leverages where possible to benefit operators, lowering some of the minimum partner contributions, and giving preference to tourism operators.

The safety of residents, employees and tourists is of paramount importance in all of our efforts to promote your experiences and the region. Advertising may be suspended with little or no notice if directed by the Province of Ontario, local health units or municipalities.

Note also 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 this year 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
- 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).
- 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 cheque, EFT or INTERAC e-transfer).
- NOT be funding from other Ontario Government programs, such as Celebrate Ontario, or Ontario Government agencies such as Destination Ontario, the Ontario Trillium Fund 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 either 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](#)) and the temporary COVID-19 Recovery Support Program are the only capital expenditures that are 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 the free [BGS Tourism Service Excellence Program](#)

- Consider having at least one representative of your organization also complete the [It's Your Shift \(Sexual Harassment & Violence\) Training](#).
- Maintain a current [operator listing](#) on BruceGreySimcoe.com.
- Maintain a current [operator listing](#) with Destination Ontario.
- Sign up for the [RTO7 E-Newsletter](#) (funding updates, announcements, etc.).

Administration Fee

Note: The Administration Fee will again be waived for 2021/22; 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 2021/22). 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 [\(Video\)](#)

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.

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 MHSTCI.

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 not be undertaken in conjunction with the OIP, TIP, FIP or SIP programs, but may be undertaken in conjunction with the Video/Image Development program (although separate applications will be required). Please contact us directly for clarification.

Social Media Advertising (Video & Image) Campaign*

This category provides access to social media advertising (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: As of April 2020, the new Operational Implementation Program 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. Note that this Social Media Advertising program may not be undertaken in conjunction with the OIP, TIP, FIP or SIP programs, but may be undertaken in conjunction with the Video/Image Development program (although separate applications will be required). Please contact us directly for clarification.

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 (including purchase of posts for Great Lakes Waterfront Trust cycling signage for the 2021/22 year). Note that plans and signs must conform to the [RTO7 Wayfinding Signage Standards & Specifications Manual](#) (updated March 2020).

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 all signage projects this year (including these adjunct systems) 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

[Confidence Image Program\(CCI\)](#). Limit two applications per business per year (i.e. one for Spring/Summer/Fall and one for Winter) for 2021/22. If you are doing one CCV and one CCI, these may be done at the same time.

Tourism Operators who are looking for help to advertise their businesses post COVID-19 should apply for the [Operations Implementation Program](#). RTO7 will match \$1,000 of operational expenses with a \$1,000 social media campaign. Limit one application per business for 2021/22.

Other regular RTO7 Programs you may wish to consider:

If you have *invested in capital improvements to your operation and are interested in smaller-scale social media advertising* (that will be crafted through RTO7's Agency of Record), consider the [Tourism Implementation Program](#)

If you have *invested in your festival in order to deliver it in a safe manner, increase visitor spending, reduce overcrowding where there are capacity issues, increase visitor length of stay and/or increase return visits to the region, and are interested in social media advertising* (that will be crafted through RTO7's Agency of Record), consider the [Festival Implementation Program](#).

For a full list of RTO7 Partner Programs, please visit rto7.ca or talk to RTO7 staff about options.

For Bruce County applicants

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

Application Process

Please contact Alex Hogan (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 two weeks), 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 a cheque, electronic funds transfer or INTERAC e-Transfer) is due upon receipt of the invoice (*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, 2022. 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 31/21
○ Experience Development	Aug 31/21
○ Storytelling	Oct 31/21
○ Signage	Sep 30/21
○ French translation	Oct 31/21

Applicants should be aware that RTO7, through funding agreements with the Province is bound by the *Freedom of*

