

RTO7's offer of the Implementation Programs for 2024/25 is contingent upon the Ministry of Tourism, Culture & Sports' approval of RTO7's 2024/25 Business Plan.

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. For a longer list of accredited programs, please click [here](#).

The initiative must achieve at least one of the following:

1. Improve sustainability (environmental, social, economic)
2. Reduce seasonality
3. Increase visitor yield and revenue
4. Increase the length of stay or encourage return visits
5. Implement more inclusive or accessible 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).

Sustainability¹

The aim of sustainable tourism is to increase the benefits and reduce the negative impacts caused by tourism for destinations. The UN World Tourism Organization defines sustainable tourism as "tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities."

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.²

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 or Rick Hanson accreditation, acknowledging holidays of all cultures, or a DEIA (diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility) 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.
- 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.
- The product, experience, festival etc. 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, 2025**.

RTO7 reserves the right to limit the number of programs/funds that one stakeholder may receive per fiscal year. Stakeholders are limited to 1 social media advertising program per season (OIP, SIP, Partnership Program Social Media Advertising).

RTO7 will maintain support for operators that undertake projects closely resembling those completed in the prior 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.

² 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).
- In order to launch the campaign, you will need to allow The Aber Group to act as an advertiser on your page. In the new Pages experience on Facebook, only individuals with “full control” (not partial) will be able to accept or assign task access. If you have [Facebook access](#) to a Page, you can view your access.

To view your Page Access on Facebook:

- Log into Facebook, then click your profile photo in the top right
 - Click see all profiles, then select the page you would like to switch into
 - Click your Page profile photo on the top left side to go onto your Facebook Page
 - On the left bar that now appears, click settings
 - From there, click the New Pages Experience that appears on the left bar
 - Under People with Facebook Access, click your profile to see your access levels. Page Owners will have profiles that say that have full control and will be able to accept access invitations.
- 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 copies of invoices and proof of payment of the expenditure (e.g., cancelled cheque, or e-transfer confirmation) with the final report. 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 (unless you are unable to find the person with full control of the Facebook Page, then the \$200 admin fee applies). 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 and you can legally operate in Ontario.
- You will engage in [sustainable tourism](#) practices as outlined on our website. 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.
- The partner and one front-line staff person will complete a [Typsy](#) online training course. If you have not completed one yet, we recommend Social Media for Hospitality, Dealing with Difficult Guests, Sustainability 101, or Interacting with Guests. All partners must complete at least one course by March 31, 2025. RTO7 staff may ask for a review/testimonial on the courses completed.
- 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.)
- You are required to complete a final report and supply copies of invoices demonstrating proof of \$1,000 of expenses (receipts) within 30 days of the completion of the project. **Failure to do this may result in ineligibility to participate in RTO7 programs in the future.**

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.

Campaigns take approximately 3-4 weeks to set up and launch so please ensure you have included enough lead time. A faster turnaround may be available upon request, however, high-resolution images and/or videos, messaging and your landing page MUST be ready to share at the time of the application.

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, unless you are unable to accept the advertiser request.**
- To conduct A/B testing in Meta Business Manager, a minimum of 6 ads will 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.
- An RTO7 staff person 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 RTO7.

- In order to launch the campaign, you will need to allow The Aber Group to act as an advertiser on your page. In the new Pages experience on Facebook, only individuals with “full control” (not partial) will be able to accept or assign task access. If you have [Facebook access](#) to a Page, you can view your access. You will be required to indicate this in your application. To view you Page access on Facebook, follow the steps outlined above. NOTE: **If you do not have full control of the Facebook Page, and cannot determine how to move forward at this stage of the program, the campaign will need to run through the BruceGreySimcoe platforms and you will be required to pay a \$200 administrative fee.**
- 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.
- Targeting will not change for the duration of the campaign unless results are far less than anticipated by the agency and/or RTO7.

Applications will be accepted on an ongoing basis until January 31, 2025, 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 to qualify for SIP:

Economic Sustainability

- Have dedicated financial efforts for assessing and managing environmental risks and impacts (including climate risks).
- Long-term planning for maintenance, expansion, and product development for tourists and potential tourists increase (i.e. washrooms, parking, etc.).

Social/Cultural Sustainability

- 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.
- Ensure your promotional materials reflect a broad spectrum of individuals from various backgrounds.
- Marketing campaign to encourage responsible and/or respectful tourism
- Implement Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) policies and training.

- Recognize all cultural holidays.
- Have membership, support, and/or training through sustainability organizations (e.g. GreenStep, Green Key, Rainbow Registered, Rick Hansen Foundation etc.)
- Include Indigenous language and/or local cultural content in promotional materials.

Environmental Sustainability

- 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).
- Marketing campaign to encourage tourists to reduce consumption and waste, reduce environmental impacts, and/or green alternatives.
- Have a staff tree planting or litter clean-up day.
- Take measures to reduce the impact on surrounding land and biodiversity (i.e. plant native species, reduce paved area, install bird feeders).

Administration Fee

The \$200 Administration Fee will again be waived for 2024/25 (unless you cannot accept the Facebook request from The Aber Group). Environics Analytics postal code analysis will still be provided upon request (free of charge) for project partners. 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 as new patterns and consumer sentiments emerge.

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 data analyzed at the market rate of \$600.00 per partner (not waived). In some cases, partners wishing to undertake multiple projects may 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 several tourism metrics we encourage you to track.

The Environics Analytics analysis of your postal code data (if codes are provided a minimum of 30 days in advance of your campaign) will be useful to you in targeting for the campaign and also with 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).

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 Indeed may apply to the [Recruitment Implementation Program](#).

For the full list of programs, please visit 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 can 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 (closed for 2024). 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.