



TOURISM
NOVA SCOTIA 

WORLD-CLASS EXPERIENCE
EXCELLerator PROGRAM



World-Class Experience EXCELLerator Program

The Opportunity

Want to create unique experiences that generate buzz, appeal to new visitors and showcase the best of Nova Scotia to the world? So do we. Let's collaborate through this pilot program to create excellent experiences at an accelerated pace. Kick-start an EXCELLerator concept idea in February, fine-tune with the Tourism Nova Scotia team through the spring and summer – with research, development, marketing and sales insights. You'll plan and test the experience and we'll capture marketing assets by October 2018 to share with potential visitors in upcoming promotions. Are you ready to develop Nova Scotia's next world-class experience?

What is a world-class experience?

World-class experiences authentically connect visitors with our culture, heritage, terroir and coastal landscapes, in a way that generates buzz and builds on Nova Scotia's cachet as a vacation destination. They are uniquely Nova Scotian and offer exciting and new ways to experience icons and destinations, while showcasing opportunities for outdoor adventure, seacoast exploration, and immersion in our cultural and culinary offerings. World-class experiences have an undeniable WOW factor that sets them apart, motivating visitors to choose Nova Scotia.

ON THE COVER: Celtic Music Interpretive Centre, Ocean Ceilidh & Seafood



"The Tourism Nova Scotia team worked with us from beginning to end in shaping our idea into a world-class experience that we are proud of. They allowed us the freedom to develop something that fit within our organization's mandate while providing invaluable guidance along the way to ensure our experience included all the elements needed to appeal to the Free Spirit travel market." - Cheryl Smith, Executive Director for Celtic Music Interpretive Centre



Why focus on experiences?

To reach the tourism industry's goal of doubling tourism revenues to \$4 billion by 2024, new is necessary. New ideas, new collaborations and new experiences that differentiate Nova Scotia from destinations around the world will attract new visitors. By creating experiences that align with travel values of our target markets, and combining entrepreneurial spirit with Tourism Nova Scotia's research, development, marketing and sales insights, our industry will achieve success through a collaborative focus on world-class experiences.

We'll attract first-time visitors by leading with our strengths, including our sea coast, marine wildlife, National Parks, UNESCO World Heritage Sites, and icons like the Halifax waterfront, Peggy's Cove, the Cabot Trail, Lunenburg and Bay of Fundy. The emergence of Nova Scotia's wineries and breweries, our award-winning chefs, and our rich local culinary resources provide significant opportunities for new purchaseable experiences, like Dining on the Ocean Floor at the site of the world's highest tides.

Tourism Nova Scotia launched the pilot EXCELLerator Program in 2016, focused on experience development and market-readiness targeted to the Free Spirit traveller, a priority Explorer Quotient segment. In 2018, we're seeking more businesses and partners that can quickly develop excellent experiences of world-class caliber.

Who's our target market?

The EXCELLerator Program focuses on developing experiences that appeal to the Free Spirit, an Explorer Quotient (EQ) segment. Tourism Nova Scotia has adopted Destination Canada's segmentation tool, EQ, to inform development and marketing initiatives. EQ moves beyond traditional demographic market segmentation (age, gender, income, etc.) and segments the market based on travel values.

The Free Spirit Traveller

Tourism Nova Scotia targets three EQ segments: Authentic Experiencers, Cultural Explorers and Free Spirits. We are doing a great job attracting Authentic Experiencers and Cultural Explorers, but Free Spirits are currently under-represented among the Nova Scotia visitor population. Free Spirits are an important segment for Nova Scotia because they tend to travel more, spend more while on vacation, and love to share, helping raise awareness of Nova Scotia. Although our natural assets are a great fit for this segment, more high-end, more gourmet and more active experiences that leverage our competitiveness are needed. In order to attract more Free Spirits to Nova Scotia, we need to up our game and develop experiences that will motivate Free Spirits to travel to Nova Scotia.

Free Spirits' enthusiasm for life extends to travel; they love to travel and they love to share their travel experiences. They seek to travel in style and relish being indulged and pampered.



What motivates Free Spirits to travel?

- Seeing beautiful coastline and beaches
- Visiting well-known natural wonders
- Swimming/tubing/waterskiing
- Sunbathing
- Staying at a waterfront resort
- Visiting world heritage sites
- Visiting national/provincial parks to see wildlife

What activities do they like when visiting a destination?

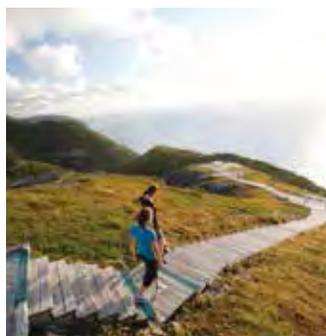
- Experimental and adventurous, they enjoy authentic local experiences that allow them to learn what life is really like at a destination and interact with locals
- Have a high appreciation of natural landscapes
- Love to share (social media)
- Look for the highlights at main attractions
- Enjoy dining at restaurants featuring local ingredients
- Travel is a time to escape their lives back home, to let loose and enjoy themselves
- Love trips that offer fun, exciting experiences with some learning on the side and make them feel pampered through luxuries
- Love luxury and high-end experiences that are shared with others
- Drawn to more active physical activities when on vacation (cycling, rock climbing, overnight hiking, horseback riding)

For more information on Free Spirits and EQ, see:

<https://tourismns.ca/research/explorer-quotient>

What type of traveller are you? Discover your EQ type!

<https://quiz.canada.travel/caen>



How EXCELLerator works

Program Overview

Together, Tourism Nova Scotia and successful applicants will create new, saleable experiences that grow our destination profile, influence visitation and increase tourism revenues. Backed by market research, experience concepts tested with the Free Spirit segment are at the core of this program, inspiring the development of uniquely Nova Scotian experiences that will motivate travel to Nova Scotia (see EXCELLerator Concepts on pages 6-8).

Note: this is not a funding program – the focus is on collaboration of expertise and co-investment of respective resources.

Tourism Nova Scotia will provide successful applicants with:

- Experience development coaching: a Tourism Nova Scotia experience champion will connect you with tourism expertise and help you navigate the experience development process from concept to market-readiness.
- Market insights, including Explorer Quotient training focused on the Free Spirit segment to help you make strategic decisions and investments.
- Marketing assets, including photography, for the new experience specifically produced to appeal to the Free Spirit traveller. Creative production and execution managed by Tourism Nova Scotia.
- Inclusion in Tourism Nova Scotia's promotions in 2019-20 and beyond, including NovaScotia.com, social media channels, and the Nova Scotia Doers & Dreamers Travel Guide.
- Access to sales and media expertise to best navigate relevant sales channels, including travel trade, and to best position your experience to travel media.



Successful applicants will:

- Commit to an accelerated experience timeline, developing and testing their experience in Spring/Summer 2018 to allow marketing assets, such as photos, to be captured by Tourism Nova Scotia by October 2018.
- Be responsible for a minimum of 50% of the costs (staff, materials, food, equipment, transportation, etc.) to deliver a staged experience for the photoshoot.
- Manage development of the experience, testing, delivery, promotions and benchmarking, be responsible for associated costs and impacts on business operation (such as staff training, website updates) and partners, and assume all risk associated with the experience.
- Begin selling experiences in 2019 and commit to intention to offer a minimum of four times per year for three years.
- Complete project reporting for Tourism Nova Scotia, including number of first-time visitors to Nova Scotia who took part in the experience, updates on the success of the experience (such as media exposure), business growth (such as new partnerships, staff expansion, revenue increases), and program feedback. Reporting is mandatory.
- Participate in two professional development workshops in 2018 and experience coaching sessions with Tourism Nova Scotia for the duration of the program.





EXCELLerator Concepts

Tourism Nova Scotia tested more than 20 EXCELLerator experience concepts with Free Spirits. The following 15 concepts have been identified as experiences with the greatest potential to motivate Free Spirits to visit Nova Scotia. How will you make one of these ideas shine?

* Eleven concepts below were developed in 2016 and 2017 by program partners with entrepreneurial spark! These concepts can also be developed in 2018, providing they are distinctive from 2016 and 2017 partner experiences, offering visitors more diverse opportunities that meet Free Spirit preferences, including featured activities or locations. For more information on 2016 and 2017 partner experiences, see <https://tourismns.ca/excellerator-program>.

Highest priority for development

The Top Three most popular experiences in Free Spirit testing:

Your Own Island: Overnight Adventure *

Imagine having one of the hundreds of islands that dot Nova Scotia's 7,600 km coastline all to yourself! Bring your friends or family for a night of camping under the stars, lulled to sleep by the whispers of the waves. Don't worry about supplies - everything is provided - all you have to do is enjoy yourself. Wake up to sea breezes and fresh salt air, amazed by the beauty of your surroundings.

Nova Scotia's Ultimate Lobster Feast *

Indulge in Nova Scotia's fresh lobster, prepared like you've never experienced! Foodies will delight in these expertly-prepared gourmet delicacies. Meet the lobster fishers and chefs, and get the inside story, from sea to table, of Nova Scotia's most famous food.

Taste of Halifax's Hottest Restaurants *

Halifax loves foodies, and foodies love Halifax! Our restaurant culture celebrates the best of Nova Scotia's chefs, food, wineries, micro breweries and craft distilleries. Explore Halifax's hottest restaurants on this exclusive tour showcasing the best food and drink in the heart of the city.

Lighthouse Bites: Beacons of Taste *

What better way to enjoy Nova Scotia's seafood bounty than prepared by a personal chef with a passion for local flavours, served to you in a stunning seaside setting at one of Nova Scotia's majestic and historic lighthouses. Capture a shot of these exquisite plates, sure to make your friends back home salivate!

Stellar Stargazing Feast and Hike *

You haven't seen stars until you've seen them in Nova Scotia's designated dark sky zone. Fuelled by a constellation-inspired feast featuring locally sourced food and drink, enjoy an exhilarating and star-studded night hike.



Acadian Kitchen Party *

Fishing villages along the shores of Nova Scotia come alive with joie-de-vivre in lively kitchen parties featuring music and song. Be tantalized by local flavours, as our regional musicians regale you with songs and stories at restaurants offering authentic Acadian dishes from their kitchens, including the freshest seafood you've ever tasted caught off these very shores.

Rhythm of the Trail in Celtic Cape Breton *

Get your feet moving to the music with bagpipers, step dancers, and fiddles serenading your Cape Breton Island trail adventure – you can choose to hike or bike the trail. Try some new steps as you're swept up in the captivating rhythm of this seaside trail, and inspired by nearby pubs, Celtic music, and charming communities of friendly folk. Will your next stop be the local square dance?

Pop-up Vineyard Dinner Overlooking a World Heritage Site *

Step in to a vineyard bathed in the warmth of late-afternoon sun for an exclusive, pop-up gourmet meal. Taste our terroir, from local harvests to award-winning wines, as you dine al fresco in the stunning beauty of a Nova Scotia vineyard, overlooking the Landscape of Grand Pré, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Enjoy sparkling wine as the stars begin to twinkle, toasting this perfectly enchanting evening.

Nova Scotia on the Rocks: A Craft Distillery Experience

Overlooking an historic Nova Scotia waterfront, learn local legends of distillers past, and meet our present craft distilling team as they take you through a day in the life of a Nova Scotia distiller. Taste our portfolio of products, perfectly paired with local food, and take home a bottle of your favourite flavour to share with friends and family.

Coastal Hiking and Glamping *

After completing an amazing Nova Scotia coastal hike, return to the comfort of your very own canvas glamping tent by the sea, and be lulled to sleep by the sound of the waves. Don't worry about bringing anything – your glamping tent will have everything you need for an amazing supper and night by the sea.





Bay of Fundy Tidal Thrills of a Lifetime *

Your Nova Scotia vacation isn't complete without experiencing the world's highest tides in the Bay of Fundy, home to one-of-a-kind adventures that can't be had anywhere else on Earth! Adrenaline seekers can ride wild rapids and surges up to 8 feet high while tidal bore rafting in a Zodiac boat. Follow this with body sliding on the Bay of Fundy mud flats for a uniquely Nova Scotian clay treatment.

Tidal Bay Wine Tasting Adventure *

Treat your senses to Tidal Bay, Nova Scotia's award-winning appellation white wine, distinctively crafted by a dozen local wineries. In this exclusive tour to three vineyards, complemented by perfect pairings of local cheeses, charcuterie and seafood, take on the challenge of identifying Tidal Bay in a blind tasting. Be the first of your friends to discover this signature fresh, crisp, bright wine, with a hint of coastal breezes.

Candlelight Concerts: Halifax Citadel National Historic Site

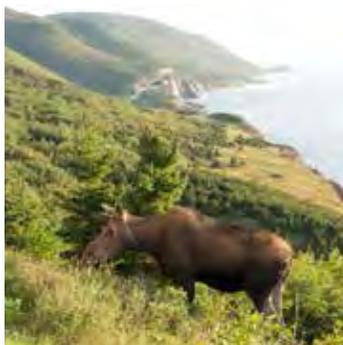
Surrender to the sounds of an exclusive outdoor concert featuring the best Nova Scotia musicians. Surround yourself in ambience at this one-of-a-kind concert, bathed in candlelight and wrapped in the walls of the Halifax Citadel National Historic Site, a star-shaped fortress in the heart of Nova Scotia's capital city.

Beach-Side Campfire Ceilidh

As the sun sets on the spectacular shores of Cape Breton Island, enjoy a gourmet chef-prepared meal featuring local delicacies. Fresh from a quick class with your personal dance instructor where you learned local step dance and square dance figures, you've worked up an appetite. Delight in putting on an after-dinner show for your friends, complete with authentic Cape Breton music around the campfire.

Call of the Moose: Exhilarating Eco-Tour

Feel your heart pound as trees around you rustle and branches snap. Holding tight to your camera, get ready to capture a picture of the majestic moose, a Canadian icon. Spotting your first moose is a guaranteed rush! This thrilling adventure in rugged coastal wilderness takes you on a trek through Nova Scotia's pristine forests and bogs on this small group eco-tour – not for the timid!

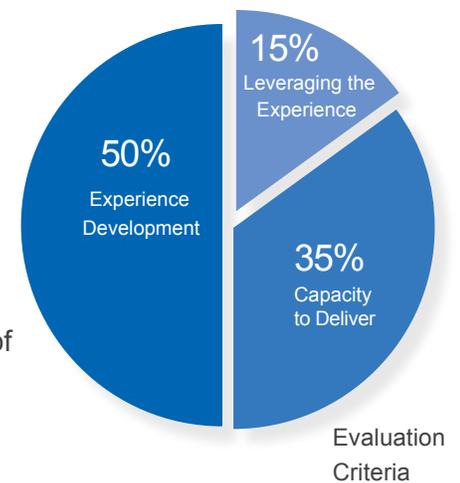


Apply to the EXCELLerator Program

Use your entrepreneurial spirit to create a captivating experience that will get people talking and bring you new visitors. Tell us why you're the best choice to develop, implement and take a new world-class experience to market. How will you take a concept from idea to reality, and make it shine brightly?

To be eligible, participants must:

- Have the capacity to develop and deliver a world-class experience. No funding will be provided to develop, test, or operate the experience.
- Take an experience concept and infuse it with WOW factor.
- Intend to offer the experience a minimum of four times per year over three years.
- Reach performance milestones set by Tourism Nova Scotia to continue through the program, including development and market-readiness requirements and reporting milestones.
- Be an established operator for at least one year.
- Be in good standing with the provincial Registry of Joint Stock Companies and have no outstanding obligations or legal concerns.



Evaluation Criteria

Apply now at www.tourismns.ca/excellerator

Applications will be accepted until **February 28, 2018** at 4pm. Up to 10 partners will be selected to participate.

Applications will be reviewed and evaluated by Tourism Nova Scotia staff. The review and evaluation of applications will take approximately four weeks. Although an applicant may be eligible, eligibility does not guarantee acceptance into the program. Information submitted is not proprietary. Tourism Nova Scotia may have considered ideas similar to your concept. Note that more than one application may be selected per concept. Advice on the outcome of your application is available after a formal decision has been made and communicated to you in writing.

If successful, partners will enter in to a written contract with Tourism Nova Scotia and be required to deliver on the experience concept as jointly identified. Market research does not guarantee success of experience. Participant to assume all risk and liability with developing and delivering the experience.

Contact information

tourismdevelopment@novascotia.ca or 902-798-6777