

WORLD-CLASS EXPERIENCE EXCELLERATOR PROGRAM

2020



TOURISM
NOVA SCOTIA 



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 exciting program to create excellent experiences at an accelerated pace. Kick-start an EXCELLerator concept idea this spring, fine-tune with the Tourism Nova Scotia team through the summer – with research, development, marketing and sales insights. You'll plan and test the experience and we'll capture marketing assets to share with potential visitors through your promotions and ours. Are you ready to develop Nova Scotia's next world-class experience?

Apply by February 3, 2020 to be part of this award-winning program, recipient of the 2019 Canadian Tourism Award for Innovation.

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 demand for Nova Scotia as a vacation destination. They are uniquely Nova Scotian experiences and offer exciting and new ways to explore our 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: Cape LaHave Adventures: LaHave Islands Glamping Adventure



"We were initially motivated to participate in EXCELLerator for the great video and photos we would be able to capture. The program helped us reach a new market for our business and generated great media coverage for us that not only helped sell this experience, but promoted our business overall. We accessed the research and coaching from the team at Tourism Nova Scotia to grow our business."

*Sarah Hrdlicka, Co-owner
Cape LaHave Adventures*



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 seacoast, marine wildlife, National Parks, UNESCO World Heritage Sites, and icons like the Halifax Waterfront, Peggy's Cove, Cabot Trail, Lunenburg and Bay of Fundy. Nova Scotia's wineries, breweries, and distilleries, 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 2020, we're seeking more businesses and partners that can quickly develop excellent experiences of world-class caliber to take to market for 2021.

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 (such as age, gender, income) 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. Nova Scotia is doing a great job attracting Authentic Experiencers and Cultural Explorers, but Free Spirits are currently under-represented among our 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 as a destination. Although our natural assets are a great fit for this segment, more high-end, more gourmet and more active experiences that leverage our competitive strengths are needed. In order to attract more Free Spirits, we need to up our game and develop experiences that will motivate 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? <https://quiz.canada.travel/caen>



How EXCELLerator works

Program Overview

Together, Tourism Nova Scotia and successful applicants will create new, purchasable 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 6-9). **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 advisor 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 focussed on the Free Spirit segment to help you make strategic decisions and investments.
- Marketing assets, including photography and video, 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 2021-22 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 this year to allow marketing assets, such as photos, to be captured by Tourism Nova Scotia in 2020.
- Be responsible for the cost of delivering a staged experience for the photo and video shoot (eg. staff, materials, food, equipment, transportation, etc.)
- Manage development of the experience, testing, delivery, marketing and promotions and benchmarking.
- Be responsible for associated costs and impacts on business operation (such as staff training, website updates, equipment purchase), partner selection, and assume all risk associated with the experience.
- Begin selling the experience in 2021 and commit to the intention to offer the experience 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 2020 and experience coaching sessions with Tourism Nova Scotia for the duration of the program. Participation is mandatory.
- Participant will provide a minimum of two complimentary spots annually in the EXCELLerator experience for qualified media and travel trade participants who are a part of familiarization (FAM) tours as identified by TNS.



EXCELLerator Concepts

Tourism Nova Scotia has validated experience concepts with Free Spirits and the following have strong potential to motivate visits to Nova Scotia. How will you make one of these ideas shine?

Note: Concepts marked with an asterisk () have been developed by previous program partners. If you're considering developing one of these concepts, ensure your application is distinctive from previous partner experiences, offering visitors more diverse opportunities that meet Free Spirit preferences, such as featured activities or locations. For links to previous partner experiences visit:*

<https://tourismns.ca/excelleratorprogram>

Your Own Island Adventure *

Imagine having one of the thousands of islands that dot Nova Scotia's 13,300 km coastline all to yourself! Enjoy a day of adventure and delicious Nova Scotia food and drink on your very own island. Everything is provided – all you have to do is enjoy yourself.

Coastal Hike & Waterfalls

Hike along a mountain plateau with sweeping views of the open ocean. Trek a forested gorge to majestic waterfalls. This challenging multi-day, guided hike in Nova Scotia's wilderness takes you where few venture and provides all you need, from cozy overnights to locally-sourced meals.

Seafood Lovers' Tour

Indulge in Nova Scotia seafood! From our famous lobster and decadent seafood chowder to freshly-shucked oysters, local scallops and Cape Breton snow crab, taste your way behind-the-scenes for an insider's view of the people who harvest and celebrate our world-class seafood.

Whale Tales

Set sail for an exclusive whale watching tour! Join a marine biologist to document whale migration routes off Nova Scotia's coast. Observe magnificent whale species in their natural habitat, help conservation efforts, and enjoy a local, gourmet picnic at sea with the crew.

From Ocean Floor to World's Highest Tides: Explore the Bay of Fundy

Explore the Bay of Fundy coast with a gourmet seaside picnic, and private ocean floor adventure. Local experts share exclusive insights on the ocean floor ecosystem, guide hikes to amazing rock formations shaped by the sea and to islands eroded by the world's highest tides.

Dive for Your Dinner

Gear up for your ocean adventure in nature's aquarium. After a short boat ride to a sheltered island cove, dive-in to the pristine sea for a guided snorkeling tour. Swim and fish for wild scallops. Back on land, be amazed as your chef prepares these delicacies to perfection!





Walk on the Wild Side Eco-Tour

Feel your heart pound as you hear leaves crunch on the forest floor. Is it the majestic moose, a black bear or a squirrel? Grab your camera and snap a picture of Canadian icons. This thrilling, small group eco-tour adventure takes you on a coastal wilderness trek through Nova Scotia's pristine forests.

Beachside Campfire Ceilidh *

As the sun sets on the spectacular shores of Nova Scotia, enjoy a gourmet chef prepared meal featuring regional delicacies and drinks. Local musicians will have you kicking-up your heels to authentic fiddle music around the bonfire.

Ocean Indulgence *

Indulge in the ultimate seaside spa experience at a luxurious resort perched on the ocean's edge. Energizing treatments draw on sea salt, kelp, clay and shoreline botanicals sourced from Nova Scotia's 13,000 km coastline. Later, savour a gourmet meal showcasing the best of our land and sea.

Sail Nova Scotia's Coast *

Feel the wind in your sails on this exclusive tour of Nova Scotia's stunning coastline—venture between colourful fishing communities and pristine islands. Hold the sails and 'learn the ropes,' then glide into a sheltered, sandy cove to swim and explore the seashore.

Tidal Bay Wine Tasting Adventure *

Treat your senses to Tidal Bay, Nova Scotia's award-winning signature white wine on this exclusive tour of vineyards, perfectly paired with local cheeses, charcuterie, and seafood. Identify Tidal Bay in a blind tasting and be the first of your friends to discover this crisp, bright wine.

Mountains Meet Sea: Cross Country Ski Adventure

Escape to Nova Scotia for a cross country ski adventure where the mountains meet the sea. Watch for local wildlife, from majestic moose to soaring seabirds. Savour delicious seafood and local live music, before relaxing in your cozy room overlooking the ocean.

Lobster Fishing Expedition

Get the inside scoop on Nova Scotia's famous lobster fishing industry. Join the crew, hopping aboard an authentic fishing boat for a half-day adventure. Catch insider tips on lobster fishing before choosing your dinner. Back on shore, top your day with a fresh lobster feast.





Apple of Your Eye: Cider Adventure

Home to Honeycrisps and Galas, Nova Scotia is the perfect place for your exclusive apple-inspired culinary adventure. Savour rare and world-famous apples, and uniquely Nova Scotian cider varieties. Explore a centuries-old apple orchard near the Bay of Fundy with a local cidemaker and take a behind-the-scenes cidery tasting tour before your gourmet, locally-sourced, apple-inspired feast.

Frosted Coastal Adventure

Witness waves meeting ocean-swept beaches and granite islands dotting Nova Scotia's coast. Explore this captivating landscape, touched by sparkling frost or a dusting of snow. Choose to hike, snowshoe or ski as weather permits. Nestled by the ocean, indulge in a gourmet, local lunch around the fire to fuel your wilderness escape.

Nova Scotia Surfing Adventure

Catch a wave at one of Canada's top surfing beaches, just minutes from downtown Halifax. Suit up and grab a board for an unforgettable surf with local experts on our amazing breaks. Your personal guide will capture your Atlantic Ocean surfing adventure to share with your friends!

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.

Stellar Stargazing Feast and Hike *

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

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!

Pop-up Vineyard Dinner Overlooking a World Heritage Site *

Step into 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.

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.

Nova Scotia's Ultimate Lobster Feast *

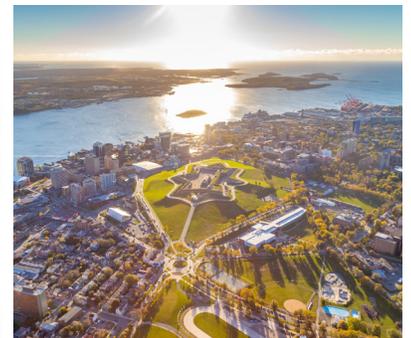
Indulge in Nova Scotia's fresh lobster, prepared like you've never experienced! Foodies will delight in these expertly-prepared gourmet delicacies. Meet the lobster fishers and chefs, and get the inside story, from sea to table, of Nova Scotia's most famous food.

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?

Gourmet Concert at a National Historic Site

Surround yourself in uniquely Nova Scotian ambiance at this one-of-a-kind evening. Mingle with musicians and savour local food and drink, all wrapped in the fortress walls of a Canadian National Historic Site.





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, Tourism Nova Scotia and have no outstanding obligations or legal concerns.



Application & Evaluation

Apply now at:

<https://tourismns.ca/excellerator>

Applications will be accepted until **February 3, 2020 at 12pm (noon)**.

You are encouraged to connect with our team to discuss your application in advance of the deadline.

Contact information:

Heather Yule, Manager, Experience Development
heather.yule@novascotia.ca

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 into 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 the experience. Participant assumes all risk and liability with developing, marketing, and delivering the experience.