



Newfoundland and Labrador's

Tourism Assurance Plan



Tourism Assurance Plan



Delivering on Promises

Today's tourist is far more travel-savvy than in the past, demanding that experiences and services match their expectations. While an individual's or group's specific expectations are likely to differ depending on their particular interests and on a business's promotions and prices, all travelers have come to expect a minimum standard of professionalism and services. These minimum expectations can range from the business being properly licensed to providing timely responses to inquiries, to name just a few.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Tourism Board is leading the effort to elevate the quality of tourism services and attractions available in the province. By establishing common minimum standards, industry partners are aiming to promote tourism organizations that provide quality travel experiences and assist tourism services and attractions improve the way they operate. In the future, these standards must be met in order for tourism services and attractions* to participate in provincial marketing and development initiatives, qualify for membership in Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador (HNL) and participate in partnership/membership activities with regional Destination Management Organizations (DMOs).

To ensure that Newfoundland and Labrador's tourism industry is able to remain competitive with other national and international destinations, a new Tourism Assurance Plan (TAP) has been developed. TAP is the first step in providing assurance to travelers about the quality of tourism services and attractions being promoted in the province. All partners of the NL Tourism Board have endorsed this plan and will collaborate, in the future, to enhance quality assurance standards for specific sectors of the industry. This strategy will come into effect May 31, 2014 for all promotional and marketing programs. The TAP deadline for the Outfitting sector is December 31, 2014.

*The TAP is applicable to only those services and attractions that complete a Tourism Operator Profile (TOP) form. Please refer to Frequently Asked Questions for more information.

Newfoundland and Labrador's Tourism Assurance Plan is designed to elevate traveler confidence in local tourism services and attractions by ensuring that all organizations promoted in Newfoundland and Labrador meet common minimum standards.





General Requirements: All Tourism Services and Attractions

To be included in provincial/industry membership and partnership opportunities in Newfoundland and Labrador, all tourism services and attractions must meet the following five requirements:

1. ***The ability to communicate and receive messages from customers by telephone, email and an online presence; and at a minimum, accept credit and/or debit card payment* and respond to inquiries on a daily basis.***

Effective and reliable communications increases consumer confidence in a business's ability to meet expectations and provide a memorable experience. Customers may be choosing between an experience provided by your business and a competitor or another destination. Timely, effective communication with a prospective visitor can mean the difference between losing or gaining a sale.

2. ***Possess and maintain valid licenses, permits and all other regulatory requirements to operate.***

Licenses and permits are necessary and required by law. Operating without the necessary approvals puts customers and operators at risk. Organizations must meet municipal, provincial and federal government regulations and policies that apply to their particular sector of the tourism industry.

3. ***Maintain current and sufficient levels of liability insurance. Proof of insurance to be provided upon request.***

Liability insurance is vital to the success of a business, as unexpected legal expenses or judgments following an unforeseen accident can potentially drive a business and its owners into bankruptcy. Insurance is a consumer expectation; it protects the owner's investment and increases the long-term stability of operations. This type of insurance also demonstrates an organization's commitment to managing risk to its customers and other partners, which can increase their confidence in an operation and translate into increased sales and additional opportunities.





4. *Must deliver actual experiences or services being promoted and/or offered to the consumer.*

Promotions and advertisements represent a promise to the consumer. If the experiences or services do not match the promotion, the credibility and reputation of not only that business, but the entire Newfoundland and Labrador tourism industry could be put at risk. Organizations must accurately portray, deliver and honor the products and services promoted in their marketing and communications. They are also responsible for treating their customers fairly, with courtesy and do everything possible to resolve any situation with honor and integrity.

5. *Must be in good standing with Tourism Assurance Plan's complaints procedure.*

Occasionally, despite best efforts, a business or employee may fail to meet a customer's expectations. In these circumstances, modern travelers also expect that their complaints and concerns will be heard and dealt with quickly.

To meet this expectation, a new complaint handling procedure will be in effect. Should any partner receive a complaint about a tourism service or attraction, that operator will be notified promptly, to provide the opportunity to resolve the concern. The complaint will be assessed for legitimacy and will be referred to other agencies or government departments, if appropriate.

However, if three legitimate complaints are received and remain unresolved within a two-year period, that service or attraction may be removed from marketing and partnership programs. The operator would be notified about this removal in writing, along with the conditions that will need to be met to be included in future marketing and partnership efforts.



Special note for businesses involved with travel trade:

Working with the travel trade to sell to international consumers requires some additional practices on the part of the business. Because tour operators are typically assembling their product offers and associated promotional materials well in advance of tour dates, prices should be available at least six months in advance.

To meet the needs of the lucrative travel trade market, in addition to the above standards, businesses involved with travel trade should be able to acknowledge inquiries and bookings within 24 business hours of receipt. They should also be able to offer commissionable pricing six months in advance and be prepared to honor commissionable pricing once it has been published.

Business owners should fully understand commissionable pricing to avoid misrepresentation and protect their bottom line.



Frequently Asked Questions:

How will the Tourism Assurance Plan minimum standards be monitored?

Every year, TCR sends a Tourism Operator Profile document (TOP) to every tourism service and attraction in its contact database. This document requests information about the business and what it offers consumers.

The TOP is then used to populate TCR's publications and website and is used as a reference tool for the Department's marketing initiatives.

The TOP will provide businesses with the opportunity to verify that it meets the standards set out in the TAP. The TOP will be amended to reflect the new TAP standards. The deadline for operators to meet the five minimum standards is May 31, 2014 and December 31, 2014 for the Outfitting sector. The intent is to provide operators that currently do not meet the standards time to address the items they need to work on and access resources, if necessary, to assist them with meeting the standards. The steering committee has been established and is responsible for overseeing the TAP program. Periodic checks will be made to ensure the information provided on the TOP form is valid. Proof of insurance, licenses and other regulatory requirements may be requested.

Please note if TCR does not receive a completed TOP by the deadline date they may not be able to include a business or promotions in its publications and/or on its website. It's imperative that a completed TOP is returned to TCR to secure a business's presence in the department's marketing materials.

What happens if I don't meet all of the standards?

A business that does not currently meet the TAP standards is advised to contact their DMO for further clarification on the TAP program, what resources are available to meet the standards as well as discuss individual business needs. It should be noted that when operators complete their TOP form for 2014, it will reflect the TAP standards. The deadline is May 31, 2014 and December 31, 2014 for the Outfitting sector.

Who is the Newfoundland and Labrador Tourism Board?

The NL Tourism Board is a strategic private-public partnership. Its mandate is to advise on the implementation of *Uncommon Potential: A Vision for Newfoundland and Labrador Tourism (Vision 2020)*. It is a collective comprised of representatives from HNL, TCR, the Department of Innovation, Business and Rural Development (IBRD), Destination St. John's, Go Western Newfoundland, Adventure Central, Destination Labrador, Eastern Destination Management Organization and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA).



Where I can get more information on TAP?

Please contact:

Destination St. John's
1-877-739-8899
info@destinationstjohns.com

Legendary Coasts of Eastern Newfoundland
709-595-3020
info@legendarycoasts.com

Adventure Central Newfoundland
1-888-489-2366
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Go Western Newfoundland
709-639-4787
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Destination Labrador
709-896-6507
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Newfoundland and Labrador Tourism Board
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