

## Tourism Destination Area Process: Next Stage

In October 2004, the Tourism Partnership Council developed and released the Tourism Destination Area (TDA) process and resource kit as a first step towards advancing the Vision for Tourism recommendation:

*Support and enhance the development of Tourism Destination Areas that have existing infrastructure that can each generate 300,000 - 600,000 visitors annually.*

The TDA resource kit is a tool for strategic tourism development to assess the current state of readiness against critical elements for destination development.

Development of tourism destination areas is a **community-driven** process fueled by leaders and industry operators collaborating to build on what they have - and make it better. Remember visitors want to enjoy memorable locales and experiences, quality services and welcoming residents - they do not see our geographic or organizational boundaries.

One of the most important results of the TDA process has been the remarkable interest and uptake from communities throughout the province. The process has been the catalyst for communities and groups to come together from a tourism perspective, discuss and agree on plans for their future tourism growth. Based on the feedback from inquiries, additional info sheets including a template for the development of an Action Plan have been added to the resource kit (available on [www.nstpc.com](http://www.nstpc.com))

### Next Stage in the Process

We knew that Tourism Destination Areas would be an evolving process. We have prepared a tiered-model approach towards evaluating progress and identifying opportunities to assist groups as they advance to the next stage of their development.

**Stage I** destinations are communities who are taking the first step in the Tourism Destination Area process by working together to raise the bar of tourism excellence in their destination. These destinations are focused on completing the self-guided workbook and preparing a tourism plan of action to further their growth.

After reaching this stage in the process, an Evaluation Team will assess the workbook and action plan. Based on the results, the evaluation team will determine next steps and identify opportunities to assist the destination in advancing their strategic tourism priorities.

**Stage II: Developing Destinations** are capable of meeting the TDA Critical Elements and are committed to growing their destination by advancing through the process.

Realizing that some communities may not yet have the capacity to be a stand alone tourism destination area, we recognize **supporting communities** still have the opportunity to advance their tourism assets and activities by raising the bar and enhancing visitors' experiences. In some cases, supporting communities may play an important role in partnering with adjacent destinations

to offer activities and experiences. We will work with these supporting communities to identify opportunities to further their growth and development.

We encourage all destinations to work through this process to be the best that **The Tourism Destination Area Resource Kit**, a tool to help advance destination development at the community level, was launched in the fall of 2004. Every community in Nova Scotia can benefit by completing the self-guided workbook in the resource kit.

If your community has already done so, congratulations!

Your working group has used the self-guided workbook to record your area's tourism activity levels, establish benchmarks for measuring progress and have demonstrated a level of collaboration. **So, what's next?** Now you must analyze the results of the workbook to plan what might be pursued to further improve tourism activity in your area. Follow the next steps as they will guide your actions and help advance your tourism goals.

2. What would your destination like to accomplish?

Using the results from the self-guided workbook, your destination is ready to develop a tourism action plan. An action plan is a detailed document describing the actions and steps necessary to achieve desired outcomes.

It is very important to have your plan in writing as it impels you to clearly communicate your steps for implementation and will serve as a benchmark of your accomplishments.

Ask yourself, what would your destination like to accomplish and who will be responsible for completing the tasks to achieve these outcomes? To

you can be. Start now by completing the following steps:

1. Complete the TDA Self-Guided Workbook

answer these questions, an easy to use template has been designed to assist your destination titled **Developing a Tourism Plan of Action**. The template is available online at [www.nstpc.com](http://www.nstpc.com) Complete the template as it will guide you through the actions necessary to ensure your plan contains task assignments, milestones, time lines and resource allocations to keep you focused on achieving results. You are now ready for the next step of the process.

### 3. Share Your Progress

Your workbook results and action plan will identify your tourism goals and objectives and describe specific actions necessary to advance your destination in the destination area process. Contact Sharon Shaw, Tourism Destination Areas coordinator, at 902-424-7577 or [shawse@gov.ns.ca](mailto:shawse@gov.ns.ca) to determine if you are ready to send your completed workbook and action plan.

When ready, your results will be reviewed by an industry-public sector evaluation team to assess your level of destination readiness against the TDA Critical Elements. This assessment will determine whether you are ready to proceed to the next stage. As part of the review process, specific deliverables will be identified for your destination based on your objectives. Together we will work on matching resources to meet your needs in growing your destination.

## Deliverables for Stage II Developing Destinations:

If you have advanced to this stage, there are a number of resources available and others currently under development. We will work with you to match available resources based on the strategic development priorities of your destination. Deliverables for Stage II: Developing Destinations include:

**Identified staff support.** A project officer will be identified to assist your destination in receiving the full benefit of programs, services and in-house expertise to address your strategic priorities. The project officer will work with you to find the right fit and make the connection with staff in areas of development, research, partnerships, sales, media relations, and marketing. These are not dedicated staff resources but rather expertise and guidance to assist your group in advancing your strategic priorities. As this is a *community-driven* process, **responsibility of implementation remains with the destination.**

### Research Workshops

To successfully market your destination; you need to know who comes to visit and why? How do you track this type of information for your destination? Stage II developing destinations will have the opportunity to learn more about gathering visitor information at research workshops. These workshops will be customized to your destination. They will provide the tools to assist you in learning about your current visitors and potential markets.

### Destination Mystery Shop (Under development)

Once your destination has been evaluated and recommendations are made, your destination will want to take

## Tourism Development Investment: Destination Development Program

Projects submitted under the TDI: Destination Development Program are assessed against an evaluation criteria. Projects clearly linked to a Developing Destination's action plan will be a high priority for investment support.

advantage of the Destination Mystery Shop! Discover the strengths and weaknesses of your destination from a visitors' perspective. We will partner with you to offer the mystery shop because it uses a trained anonymous source to secretly visit your destination to determine in what areas, if any, you need to improve or to confirm your best practices. The aim of the shop is to provide useful information to those involved in destination management by assessing the quality of the visitors' experience. This is an impartial SWOT analysis of the visitors experience in your destination. Knowing how the visitor perceives your destination can be an eye-opening experience that will either confirm or challenge your tourism readiness! The mystery shop results should be used to further enhance your planning.

### Marketing Audit (Under development)

There are many ways to market your destination. Does your destination offer marketing material that will attract visitors to your location? Do you simply list activities or do you tell visitors why they should experience them? Is there continuity in your marketing messages, materials and marketing theme? The Marketing Audit will assess how effectively your destination is marketing itself. It will provide valuable insight into what works and what doesn't while you discover how to set yourself apart from

the competition.

### **Professional Development and Training Opportunities**

There are several industry training and development opportunities available for you. These opportunities provide insight on how to deliver top notch experiences to your visitors. Once the needs of your destination have been evaluated, we will recommend the most appropriate human resource and industry development programs available. An array of the most suitable training programs will be available to help you become the best that you can be. Or, if your destination has a specific training

need, we will work with you to design and deliver appropriate workshops.

### **Evolving Destination Development Process**

Through this process of reviewing TDA workbooks and Tourism Plans of Action, we will learn more about the development needs of destinations to assist them in accomplishing their goals. We recognize that destinations are at various stages of tourism readiness and have various requirements for growth. As the TDA process evolves, we will develop additional deliverables based on these recognized needs.