

MARKET-READINESS GUIDELINES

Market-Readiness Guidelines assist tourism operators in ensuring that their experiences, products and services are ready for the tourism market.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, there are different types of market-readiness guidelines:

1. **The Tourism Assurance Program (TAP) – Page 1**
2. **General Market-Readiness Guidelines – Page 2**
3. **Export Ready/Travel Trade Readiness Guidelines – Page 5**

1. TOURISM ASSURANCE PROGRAM (TAP)

The **Tourism Assurance Program (TAP)** establishes common minimum standards for all tourism establishments in Newfoundland and Labrador to provide quality travel experiences and assist tourism services and attractions improve the way they operate. These standards must be met in order for tourism services and attractions to participate in provincial marketing and development initiatives and participate in partnership/membership activities with Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador (HNL), regional Destination Management Organizations (DMOs).

1. The ability to communicate and receive messages from customers by telephone, email and an online presence (website, facebook business page); and at a minimum, accept credit and/or debit card payment (e-transfers acceptable) and respond to inquiries on a daily basis.
2. Possess and maintain valid licenses, permits and all other regulatory requirements to operate.
3. Maintain current and sufficient levels of liability insurance. Proof of insurance to be provided upon request.
4. Must deliver actual experiences or services being promoted and/or offered to the consumer.
5. Must be in good standing with Tourism Assurance Plan's complaints procedure.

For more information on the Tourism Assurance Plan visit: <https://hnl.ca/resources/tourism-assurance-plan/>

2. GENERAL MARKET-READINESS GUIDELINES

A tourism operation that actively markets to potential visitors, communicates with potential visitors year-round and is ready to accept advanced reservations should also strive to meet expectations for serving the non-resident visitor market.

Communicating with Visitors

Telephone

- Professional greeting
- Ability to receive and respond to messages
- Respond to calls/messages within 24 hours
- A detailed message if you are out of the office but will be returning at a specified, later date and message provides an alternate method of contact
- Separate business line (used solely for the business)

Email

- Professional greeting
- Professional email address (example: businessname@businessname.com)
- Respond to messages immediately
- A detailed message if you are out of the office and when you will respond, provide specific date.
- Provides customer service in friendly, professional manner.

Online Presence/Social Media

Operators should engage with Newfoundlandlabrador.com and on NL Tourism social media channels. Use #ExploreNL, #NLtweets, and #Icebergtweets and engage in conversations on NL Tourism social media channels.

Newfoundlandlabrador.com Listing

- Use 'Descriptions' section wisely: describe the experience that customers will get.
- High-definition images (videos and photos)
- Add TripAdvisor link
- Provide content in others areas of nl.com including other experiences, programming and offerings
- Basic information such as:
 - Business name
 - Contact information (email, telephone number, mailing address, location)
 - Ensure accurate map coordinates for your business location
 - Business overview/synopsis of products and/or services
 - Hours of operation
 - Rates, if applicable
 - Amenities, if applicable
 - Booking instructions (how to make a reservation, purchase the experience)

Website

- Professional business domain name
- Responsive (mobile friendly)
- Online booking (if applicable)
- E-commerce (if applicable)
- High-definition images (Videos and photos)
- Links to social media
- Active engagement and updating with current, relevant content
- Basic information such as:
 - Business name
 - Contact information (email, telephone number, mailing address, location)
 - Business overview/synopsis of products and/or services
 - Hours of operation/dates
 - Pictures/videos
 - Rates, if applicable
 - Amenities, if applicable
 - Booking instructions (how to make a reservation, purchase the experience)

Facebook Page

- Business name in address
- Active engagement in conversations
- High-definition images (Videos and photos)
- Regular updates with current, relevant content
- Basic information such as:
 - Business name
 - Contact information (email, telephone number, mailing address, location)
 - Business overview/synopsis of products and/or services
 - Hours of operation/dates
 - Pictures/videos
 - Rates, if applicable
 - Amenities, if applicable
 - Booking instructions (how to make a reservation, purchase the experience)

TripAdvisor

- Sign up for Business Account
- Respond professionally to comments
- Active engagement in conversations
- High-definition images (Videos and Photos)
- Encourage guests to leave comments/ratings
- Basic information such as:
 - Business name
 - Contact information (email, telephone number, mailing address, location)

- Ensure accurate map coordinates for your business location
- Business overview/synopsis of products and/or services
- Hours of operation
- Rates, if applicable
- Amenities, if applicable
- Booking instructions (how to make a reservation, purchase the experience)

Business Operations

- Provide a published pricing policy
- Have a published consumer billing, payment, and cancellation policy
- Have a marketing strategy and marketing materials such as website/social media, brochure or rack card
- During operating season, maintain a 24 hour response time; or less, to inquiries and a 24 hour response time to reservation/booking requests
- Be prepared to communicate and accept reservations by telephone, fax and/or e-mail and provide same day confirmation of booking arrangements
- Have high resolution images and video footage for promotional and training purposes
- Have frontline staff people that are trained in customer service
- Have an inventory of products available that are reflective of market demand
- Provide support (free or reduced rates) for international media and travel trade familiarization tours
- Site should be regularly maintained, including beautification, landscaping, onsite maintenance, including:
 - Clear Welcome and directional signage
 - Clean washrooms
 - Friendly embrace and welcome staff
 - Opportunities for photos/selfies
 - Access to Free wi-fi
 - Onsite and lighted parking area
 - Cleanliness is paramount; site should be spotless and tidy
 - Comfortable clean furniture
- Offer currency exchange rates consistent with industry norms
- If you plan to pursue group business, ensure you are able to accommodate and adapt to the needs of the market (e.g. tour bus access and parking, washroom facilities, maximum group size, group pricing, and frontline staff that speak the language of your target markets)

3. EXPORT/TRAVEL TRADE MARKET-READINESS GUIDELINES

Export Ready/Travel Trade Ready refers to tourism suppliers of services, attractions, experiences that are ready to market to the international market by working with Travel Trade (tour operators or online travel agencies, such as Booking.com, Expedia, etc.).

Export Ready/Travel Trade Ready tourism services, attractions and experiences meet the Tourism Assurance Plan minimum standards and general market-readiness standards in addition to additional market-readiness guidelines listed below.

Basic Expectations of Travel Trade

Tourism suppliers understand:

- travel trade distribution channels
- established commissions and or net rates structure
- the roles played by receptive tour operators, tour operators, travel wholesalers, and retail travel agents
- rack or retail pricing, agent commissions and wholesale net rates at each level
- laws that affect/impact their clients in each market

Tourism suppliers provide:

- flexible, reliable booking systems and billing accuracy
- booking policies cancellation, allocations and yield management
- year round representation, availability and support
- 24 hour response times with information, not just 'thank you for your message'
- high-level of service and consistent product experience
- billing arrangements with the tour operator, wholesale agency or receptive tour operator
 - Invoicing operator for payment to be remitted within 30 days is the standard
 - It is not feasible for an international operator to provide separate deposits and/or payment for each booking

Additionally, tourism suppliers must:

- be in operation for at least one year with a history of providing professional services
- have a proven record using export ready pricing structures
- be willing to provide contracted wholesale rates and thus offer commissionable product
 - 10- 25% off the retail price for tour packages day, activities and transportation and accommodation products
 - Contracted wholesale rates and conditions must be honoured and sellers must refrain from raising prices and changing conditions before the expiry of the agreement
- participate in co-op marketing and sales plan programs