

Tourism Excellence North (TEN) RTO Board Briefing

February 2015

WHAT IS 'TOURISM EXCELLENCE NORTH'?

Tourism Excellence North (TEN) is a tourism development program for Northern Ontario, inspired in part by the success and impact of a similar program led by the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) and its partners in Atlantic Canada. TEN is a suite of 10 training solutions that over time will strengthen the ability of tourism businesses to respond to changes in the marketplace, adapt to quality expectations, develop innovative experiences that raise the bar on visitor value and deliver increased returns for businesses and the destination as a whole. TEN strategically guides investment into tourism development holistically rather than a reactive and ad hoc/project-based approach that can lead to duplication and a lack of net outcomes for the regions. TEN is aligned to support priorities for tourism development in Northern Ontario, specifically Tourism Northern Ontario (TNO) and Explorer's Edge (EE).

Initiated in September 2014, the final plan will be available in late February to support roll-out of the program in the first two years, 2015/16 and 2016/17.

A SNAPSHOT OF THE TEN TRAINING SOLUTIONS

Based on a solid foundation of research, experience and lessons learned from elsewhere, TEN – as its name implies -- incorporates 10 training solutions, shown below. Note that *Case Studies* and *Best Practices* are used for both Operators and Communities/Destinations.

Why Invest in TEN?

- ✓ Operators and communities receive practical, useful advice to improve quality and create new, higher yield experiences and ultimately, more revenues.
- ✓ Strategically advances product development priorities.
- ✓ Operators become engaged in experiential product development.
- ✓ Long-term advancement of the tourism industry in Northern Ontario.

TYPE OF SOLUTION	FOR OPERATORS	FOR COMMUNITIES/ DESTINATIONS
SELF-ASSESSMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides quick, easy to use bilingual tools that provide an introduction to a topic that prompts action to enhance the visitor experience and business opportunities. • Self-administered, free, accessible on the Internet. Support through Enablers and TEN; no customized instructor support. 	Ten Essentials of Successful Travel Products/Experiences	Ten Essentials of Successful Touring Experiences
	Visitor Appeal Assessment Tool	Community Tourism Assessment Index
	Case Studies	Case Studies
GROUP LEARNING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advances knowledge and skills in a particular topic; improves ability to apply learning after training • Face to face training, facilitated by instructor/expert. 	Experience Travel Training for Operators	Enhancing the Visitor Experience for Businesses within their Community
	Best Practices Missions	Best Practices Missions
PERSONALIZED COACHING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guides highly personalized development, supported by a coach/mentor who works through a process to achieve specific goals that enhance the visitor experience. 	Fast-Track Market Readiness (FTMR)	
FOR TOURISM ENABLERS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-person training providing hands-on experience with TEN's priority training solutions. 		TEN Orientation Program

OPERATOR TRAINING SOLUTIONS

A continuum of six training solutions provides public, not-for-profit, and private sector tourism operators at various levels of market-readiness, sophistication and reach with benchmarking tools, opportunity to ‘learn by doing’ and personalized coaching, all tied to strategic priorities at a broader level.

Operator Training Solutions Summary

Ten Essentials of Successful Travel Products/Experiences	<i>Checklist of 10 key integrated factors to measure the quality of the visitor experience.</i>
Visitor Appeal Assessment Tool	<i>High-level assessment of a tourism operation to determine appeal from visitor perspective.</i>
Case Studies	<i>Collection of ‘examples of excellence’, told by the operator, in video and text format, for use on-demand and as part of other training.</i>
Experience Travel Training for Operators	<i>Intense 2-day in-person experiential travel group workshop (12 per), followed by personalized coaching.</i>
Best Practices Missions	<i>Working trips, designed around specific themes, for participants to experience and learn from ‘best in class’.</i>
Fast Track Market Readiness (FTMR)	<i>One-day business improvement program, delivered by specialist while on-site at the operation.</i>

SOLUTIONS FOR COMMUNITIES/DESTINATIONS

Solutions for communities/destinations mirror a similar continuum as that for operators, from tools for benchmarking to group learning with community/destination colleagues.

Communities Destinations Solutions Summary

Ten Essentials of Successful Touring Routes	<i>Checklist of 10 key integrated factors to measure the quality of the visitor experience on a touring route.</i>
Community Tourism Assessment Index	<i>Assessment tool to determine level of readiness and potential of a community to undertake tourism development.</i>
Case Studies	<i>Collection of ‘examples of excellence’, told by the community partners, in video and text format, for use on-demand and as part of other training.</i>
Enhancing the Visitor Experience for Businesses within their Community	<i>Intense 3.25-day in-person experiential travel group workshop (24 per) for community operations and enablers.</i>
Best Practices Missions	<i>Working trips, designed around specific themes, for participants to experience and learn from ‘best in class’.</i>

THE ENABLERS¹

The Enabler orientation session will familiarize tourism support agencies (e.g. government departments with a tourism mandate, senior tourism managers, front line account managers and economic development personnel) with tourism-specific tools, solutions and knowledge transfer to facilitate a proactive approach in collaborative investment with the tourism sector. The primary focus of the orientation session is on understanding how to use the self-assessment tools with their clients/stakeholders and to linking their clients/stakeholders to other TEN solutions.

THE BUSINESS MODEL

The proposed Business Model addresses operational, management and financial elements for TEN, designed to be effective, efficient and transparent. Highlights follow.

- TEN will be led by a five person Management Committee (MC) to oversee operations, with accountability to funding partners. Recommended profile for the MC composition includes Board Chair or designate and Executive Directors for each of TNO and EE and one member at large.
- There is a need for one full-time staff function to facilitate, coordinate and report on TEN.
- TEN should be positioned within TNO operations as an independent, stand-alone unit, to take advantage of existing not-for-profit designation and ensure timely start-up of TEN.
- TEN training solutions will be led by pre-qualified, independent specialists, who bring knowledge and appreciation of the unique characteristics of tourism across Northern Ontario as well as knowledge from other jurisdictions.
- A dedicated TEN web portal will be established showcase all TEN solutions including posting of bilingual self-assessment tools, group learning and personal coaching opportunities. A separate section of this training portal will direct industry to training solutions offered by other organizations that are not part of TEN.

IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES

A detailed implementation plan outlines priorities for the first three years of operation. Highlights from Year One, 2015/16 are detailed below, establishing momentum for successful implementation of TEN.

Year One *Operational* Priorities

- Secure funding partners and agreements.
- Establish the TEN MC and governance structure.
- Establish an office and hire a program manager.
- Secure the cadre of resource specialists to deliver the advanced training solutions.
- Host industry launch of TEN.

¹ In the tourism industry, an enabler describes businesses, organizations, and government entities that provide financial, human, technical resources and/or in-kind support to operators. Examples include: Regional Tourism Organizations (RTOs), Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs), Economic Development Organizations (EDOs), government departments' staff or policy makers.

Year One Program Priorities

- Design, produce and pilot test the four bilingual Self-Assessment Tools.
- Create the TEN training web-portal to post Self-Assessment Tools, program information, registration, and communications.
- Run 2 TEN Orientation sessions with key enablers in both TNO and EE to test Self-Assessment Tools, inform them about TEN, the training plan, and the planned roll-out to garner their support and respond to any questions.
- Pilot test Fast Track Market Readiness in 2 locations/cohorts, for full implementation in Year Two; build in video-recording of participating operators to be used in subsequent marketing of FTMR.
- Produce and release 2 Case Studies.
- Develop the framework for, and focus of the preferred Best Practices Mission to be hosted in Year Two.
- Develop detailed curriculum for experiential travel training programs (individual/community) for delivery in Year Two.

FINANCIAL PARAMETERS OF TEN

Projected full costs for the first two years of operation of TEN (before any revenue generated by participant fees for Group and Personal Coaching) reflect the proposed operational model and implementation priorities outlined above.

	Year One April 2015 – March 2016	Year Two April 2016 – March 2017
Operations	\$180,000	\$145,000
One Time Development Costs	\$140,000	--
Delivery of Training Solutions	\$66,000	\$325,000
Total	\$386,000	\$470,000

A review of best practices from a range of jurisdictions noted that stable, partnered and multi-year sustained financial support is a prerequisite to success. A partnered approach in Northern Ontario, with core investment from each of TNO and EE, will lay the groundwork for investments from a range of other agencies and partners to establish and roll-out TEN.

The potential is great. Now is the time to invest together to implement TEN.

Questions, Comments Welcome

Please contact

Jill Vandal,

Partner, ^{the} Tourism Company

jill.vandal@tourismco.com