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# Destination Market Readiness

*A Destination Development Program*

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## ***Growing Tourism in Atlantic Canada***

The ACOA Tourism Innovation Action Plan (TIAP) guides tourism development in Atlantic Canada. TIAP is designed to advance Atlantic Canada's tourism competitiveness and capacity by placing a greater emphasis on small and medium enterprise (SME) growth and innovation. The Plan supports business development and capacity building throughout the region. The focus is on clustering, value-added product development, season extension, and mobilizing destinations to leverage the power of the internet and social media. The Accelerated Market Readiness (AMR) program has been developed with the following pillars in mind.



The two pillars of the TIAP are straightforward:

1. **Increase revenues and profits** from tourism efforts and operations by adding value to existing products and experiences, creating new products and experiences, extracting a higher return from visitors, and attracting new visitors.
2. **Season Extension** by working with tourism operators and industry stakeholders to build capacity to extend the season beyond the traditional high season.

**Three core activities are key to achieving tourism growth and are promoted in the TIAP:**

- **Product clustering** focused on geographic areas and sectors within tourism
- **Development of unique, value-added products and experiences** within tourism (e.g., craft breweries, wineries, cycling, outdoor adventure, culinary, etc.)
- **Strengthening online connectivity and digitization**, including innovative marketing approaches that incorporate advocate/influencer marketing, social media strategies, and online advertising

## ***Destination Market Readiness Program (DMR)***

The **DMR** program is a community tourism assessment and business improvement program. **DMR** is designed to enable communities to understand their tourism potential, improve tourism product and engage the broader network of tourism stakeholders in the area.

**DMR** is a three-phased program, ideal for communities who are in the initial stages of tourism planning or who may want to focus planning attention on a key tourism thruster (culinary, outdoor, waterfront, etc.). Communities who undergo the process will better understand their potential to become a sustainable tourism destination. The three phases guide communities through assessment, individual support for tourism operators in the area and broad community capacity building sessions tailored to the needs of the region.

Over the course of approximately six months, a qualified tourism consultant will guide communities through the process, providing tailored insights unique to the tourism industry of the specific area. Combining broad community assessment and capacity building combined with one-on-one business mentoring enables communities to see their tourism potential while improving existing product and strengthening collaboration. Communities will finish the program with a sense of renewed focus on tourism and clear direction to move forward.

**DMR** is best suited to communities who intend to action recommendations and for operators looking to maximize their ability to deliver high quality experiential tourism products. Led by a project committee, participation is required from all tourism stakeholders in the area for optimal results.

### ***Objectives***

- To enable focused tourism development in communities across Atlantic Canada with strategic planning support
- To bring tourism operators together with the support of a qualified tourism consultant, exposing them to new ideas and approaches
- To build innovation and product-cluster expertise within a specific geographic area
- To encourage understanding of tourism trends and how they impact a community and their small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs)

## ***The Phases of DMR***

### **Phase One: Community Tourism Assessment**

The community will engage a qualified tourism consultant to begin a comprehensive assessment process. Using results from the Sustainable Tourism Community Screening Tool, interviews with key stakeholders, onsite visits and high-level digital assessment the consultant will identify opportunities to increase tourism destination potential.

#### **Key Deliverables:**

At the end of phase one communities will receive a summary report outlining the tourism potential of the community including identified opportunities, gaps and areas for improvements. This will include an action item grid that suggests immediate next steps for the community.

### **Phase Two: Accelerated Market Readiness (AMR)**

AMR is an innovative business improvement program that strives to grow Atlantic Canada's tourism industry one operators at a time by offering tourism operators one-on-one expert business coaching. Consultants will conduct site assessments and interviews with individual operators to get an in depth understanding of business operations. Through coaching the operator will receive guidance on implementing actionable, affordable, achievable and measurable initiatives to increase revenues, profits and extend the season.

A group of 5-10 operators typically participates in AMR through the **DMR** program, receiving individualized work plans and mentoring support. Initial site visits and assessments take place in the early weeks of the program, and follow up coaching sessions are scheduled for six months and 12 months after receiving the individualized work plan. A comprehensive AMR program booklet can be found in Appendix A.

#### **Key Deliverables:**

Participating business will receive individualized work plans with actionable recommendations. The organizing community will also receive a top line report following initial site visits and work plan development to highlight commonalities and consistent challenges or opportunities. A top line report will also be provided following the six and 12-month follow up mentoring sessions.



### Phase Three: Capacity Building Sessions

The consultant will identify and recommend topics and associated experts for capacity building sessions based on results from the community assessment and AMR insights. These sessions will be advertised to the broader community of tourism stakeholders in the area.

The community undergoing **DMR** will have a separate budget for these sessions and will be responsible for organizing content based on recommendations from the consultant.

#### Key Deliverables:

The primary consultant will provide a summary of the capacity building sessions including feedback from participants. Considerations for future training will also be provided.



## Roles and Responsibilities

DMR Stakeholder and Role	Responsibilities
<b>ACOA: Tourism Atlantic</b> <i>Program champion, custodian and strategic link to ACOA's Tourism Innovation Action Plan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Maintains <b>DMR</b> Program and associated materials for relevance</li><li>● Educates ACOA regional offices and potential partners on <b>DMR</b></li><li>● Undertakes regular and meaningful evaluation of the program</li><li>● Investigates consultant qualifications for <b>DMR</b> and ensures consultants have access to up-to-date materials needed to deliver the program effectively</li></ul>
<b>ACOA Regional Office</b> <i>Regional program champion and ACOA partner in AMR project</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Understands <b>DMR</b> and recommends regional utilization</li><li>● Provides an overview of the <b>DMR</b> program to the community using the program booklet</li><li>● Supports the community in the development of its funding application</li><li>● Provides stakeholders with relevant program materials</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Supports the community throughout the project, including participating in the initial meeting with the consultant and review of any deliverables</li> <li>● Retains project information, including evaluations, assessments, reports, Operator AMR Coaching Reports, Market Readiness Work Plans, and incorporates into client files where appropriate</li> </ul>
<p><b>Community</b> <i>DMR project coordinator and strategic link to local or regional tourism plan(s)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Overall project coordinator</li> <li>● Prepares application for funding to ACOA and other funders</li> <li>● Establishes and coordinates a Project Committee</li> <li>● Promotes the program</li> <li>● Leads the phases of the <b>DMR</b> including contracting a consultant, facilitating any assessment requirements, recruiting operators for AMR, introducing consultant to key stakeholders, coordinating capacity building sessions, organizing project committee to review assessments and reports</li> <li>● Ensures all assessments and reports prepared by the consultant are sent to ACOA account manager</li> </ul>
<p><b>Consultant</b> <i>Responsible for key deliverables, acts as coach and mentor to operators in AMR program, overall sounding-board</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Meet with community/Project Committee for project overview and review of current tourism initiatives</li> <li>● Conducts regional research</li> <li>● Provides the Proponent with bio for email introduction to stakeholders</li> <li>● Schedules site visit and conducts assessment</li> <li>● Prepares community assessment including opportunities to increase tourism development potential and clear action items with defined next steps</li> <li>● Follows the AMR Process as defined in Appendix A</li> <li>● Develops coaching reports and work plans and reviews them with Operators through the AMR program</li> <li>● Conducts 6 and 12 month coaching sessions with Operators who participate in AMR</li> <li>● Develops recommendations for capacity building sessions, and summary report once sessions have been completed</li> <li>● Leads meetings with Project Committee to review assessment, AMR topline insights and plans for capacity building sessions</li> </ul>
<p><b>Operators</b> <i>Implementer of recommendations from assessment, AMR and capacity building insights</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Engage with consultant to provide assessment information and interviews as required</li> <li>● Enable site visits in the assessment phase for the consultant to better understand the tourism context in the community</li> <li>● Those participating in AMR sign MOU with organizing community and commit at least ten hours to the program including initial site visits, discussions with the consultant, review of the work plan and follow up mentoring sessions</li> <li>● Attend community capacity building sessions and provide feedback</li> <li>● Completes any evaluations of the program</li> </ul>
<p><b>Project Committee</b> <i>Monitor the project, work with consultant as required</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Assists consultant in finding required information for the assessment</li> <li>● Reviews assessment and provides feedback to the consultant</li> <li>● Supports recruitment of optimal operators for the AMR program</li> <li>● Meets with consultant following the coaching sessions to discuss topline reports</li> <li>● Works with relevant stakeholders to develop capacity building sessions and plans for future tourism development</li> </ul>

## DMR Budget

The total budget for **DMR** may vary based on the number of Operators participating in AMR, as noted below.

### Sample Budget with 5 Operators in AMR:

Costs		Financing	
Overall Assessment	\$3,500	AMR Registration Fees (5 operators @ \$400 per operator)	\$2,000
AMR (5 Operators @ \$3,200 per operator)	\$16,000	ACOA/Province/In-Kind/Other	\$29,500
Capacity Building Sessions	\$10,000		
Admin	\$2,000		
<b>Total Costs:</b>	<b>\$31,500</b>	<b>Total Financing:</b>	<b>\$31,500</b>