



Tourism British Columbia Export-Ready Criteria

April 2004

Tourism British Columbia coordinates many international programs that require British Columbia tourism suppliers to meet specific criteria to be considered for participation. These conditions are based on the input of overseas travel trade, tourism product suppliers and receptive tour operators; and have been developed in order to ensure the best possible representation of British Columbia's tourism industry in international markets.

Required Criteria:

Proven Track Record & Safety:

- The supplier must be in business at least one year, with a proven track record for safe and professional operation (measured by the norms of the tourism sector they are operating within).
- The supplier must carry adequate insurance (example: minimum \$3 million liability insurance for an adventure product supplier is recommended. TIP: Discuss this with your receptive operator; sometimes they can add suppliers to their existing policies at nominal cost).
- The supplier's business and required operating licenses must be current.

Inquiries and Reservations:

- The supplier must be able to accept reservations and deal with inquiries by telephone, fax or internet on a year-round basis.
- The supplier must be able to provide confirmation of booking arrangements within 24 hours.

Marketing:

- The supplier must be able to demonstrate an adequate budget and marketing plan that includes international travel trade. Travel trade includes but is not limited to tour operators, wholesalers, receptive tour operators and travel agencies.
- The supplier must be able to demonstrate an adequate knowledge and understanding of the roles played by receptive tour operators (RTO's), tour operators/travel wholesalers, and retail travel agents. This includes an understanding of rack and/or retail pricing, agent commissions and wholesale net rates; and client relationships at each level.
- The supplier must be able to provide travel trade and media clients with 35mm slides, CD ROM or standard computer format images of the product or operation. These are for use in brochures, promotions and editorials.

Contracting and Payments:

- If working with receptive tour operators the supplier must be willing to provide contracted wholesale net rates. As a general guideline, requirements are:
 - 15% off the retail price for day activities and transportation.
 - 20-30% off retail pricing for accommodations (higher discounts are common for volume production).
- The supplier must honour contracted net rates and refrain from raising prices before the expiry of the contracted agreement.
- The supplier must provide detailed pricing and program information at least one year in advance of selling season, i.e. May 2004 for the summer/fall 2005 season.

- It is the responsibility of the supplier to set up billing arrangements with the operator, agency or receptive tour operator.
- The supplier must accept client vouchers as confirmation of payment for reservations.
- 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.

Recommendations for Best Practices:

Though the following suggestions are not essential criteria for participating in Tourism British Columbia's international marketing programs, many of our province's most successful tourism businesses have incorporated these elements into their marketing and operations strategies:

Marketing

- Determine business priorities in terms of group or FIT business. If you plan to pursue group business, consider access by tour buses, parking/turnaround areas, washroom facilities etc. Determine your minimum and maximum group size.
- Provide support (free or reduced rates) for international media and travel trade familiarization tours.
- Consider attending travel trade shows involving international buyers, either in North America or overseas.
- Consider the inclusion of receptive tour operators in your marketing and sales plan, and implement a regular sales call program for these companies if you decide to use this distribution option to develop your international business.
- As your business grows, consider expansion of your sales call program to include overseas contacts as well as Canada or US-based receptive operators.
- Produce video footage of your product or operation for promotional and training purposes.
- Develop a website offering information on your product.

Operations

- Be prepared to adapt to uniqueness of certain overseas markets. Flexibility may be required with regard to last minute bookings and changes, dietary requirements, cultural differences.
- Consider hiring frontline staff that speak the language of the markets you are interested in pursuing.
- Commit to a minimum number of departure/operation dates. International operators are not likely to offer brochure space to a product that operates only 2-3 times per season. Minimum bi-monthly departures are recommended for peak season.
- Provide transportation to/from a nearby gateway for international clients. Overseas visitors rarely have their own transportation, so you will need to provide transfers or public transportation advice from the nearest airport or train station.
- Provide all necessary equipment needed to participate in your program. Overseas visitors do not normally carry their own sleeping bags, fishing rods, etc.

Resources:

Tourism BC's Industry Development department can provide assistance to BC suppliers toward achievement of "export-ready" status. Please refer to www.tourismbc.com under Industry Programs/Business Development for more information.