

Oregon Rural Tourism Studio



RURAL TOURISM STUDIO

Oregon's Rural Tourism Studio program is designed to help rural communities develop a robust and sustainable tourism economy. By creating diverse, authentic experiences for travelers across the state, Travel Oregon aims to enhance community vitality, contribute to a healthy environment and strengthen Oregon's position as a premier tourism destination.

The Rural Tourism Studio is a professional development program designed to bolster the region's tourism economy by offering hands-on skill-building, planning and product development workshops rich in information and networking opportunities.

The program opens with a powerful, region-wide community visioning event to shape a 15-year vision for how community members want their regional economy to look, with tourism as

a thriving component. Engaging trainers will cover important tourism trends, sustainable tourism best practices and review case studies to stimulate new thinking about a destination. At its core, the program guides participants in designing strategies for developing its niche tourism target markets such as bicycle tourism, culinary and agritourism or cultural heritage tourism. The program concludes with guidance on leveraging regional and state marketing programs and

developing effective action teams to start project implementation.

Sustainable tourism can stimulate the local economy, protect and enhance local resources, and foster community pride. Community leaders, tourism entrepreneurs, tour operators, lodging property owners, outdoor enthusiasts, restaurateurs and anyone with an interest in strengthening the local economy through tourism are invited to participate in the program.



Travel Oregon Forever



PROGRAM GOALS

The goals of the Rural Tourism Studio program are to:

- Raise awareness and understanding of the value of the tourism industry and important trends
- Engage a broad cross-section of the community – including civic and business leaders – in a dialogue to identify strengths and opportunities for capitalizing on trends in the tourism industry
- Spark creativity and enthusiasm in community leaders to contribute to making Oregon a premiere tourism destination
- Connect community and business leaders with resources to help develop new authentic tourism products and leverage local assets
- Develop tourism experiences that will sustain or enhance the geographical character of a place—its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of its residents
- Stimulate new local business development
- Establish positive relationships between community leaders and state, regional and federal organizations working towards the same end goals

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

In order to find out when the program is open for application, please sign up for Travel Oregon's Industry e-Newsletter at <http://Industry.TravelOregon.com>.



PROGRAMMING

Once a community or region is selected to participate in the program, Travel Oregon will work with a local steering committee to customize a local curriculum. The program typically consists of eight 6-hour workshops which will take place in the region over a period of four months.

Core workshop modules that will be delivered as part of the program include:

- Community Tourism Visioning
- Community Tourism Planning
- Rural Tourism Marketing
- Designing Action Teams

Up to four elective workshops can be selected to be included in the program:

- Bicycle Tourism Development
- Nature-based Outdoor Recreation Development
- Culinary and Agri-tourism Development
- Cultural Heritage Tourism Development
- Creating and Producing High Impact Events
- Best Business Practices for Sustainable Tourism
- Developing your Main Street
- Community-based Project Management

Once the series of workshops have concluded, the region will be left with:

- A high functioning regional tourism steering committee
- A 15-year vision for a regional tourism economy
- A simple 3-5 page action plan
- Action teams organized to begin implementation of priority strategies
- Engaged project leaders who can take workshop outcomes and manage timelines, partners, and project deliverables
- Community and business leaders proficient with how to leverage the growing tourism industry to benefit the local economy
- Connections with state and federal organizations

Upon completion of the program, the regional tourism steering committee may apply for one of Travel Oregon's \$10,000 Matching Grants to assist with project implementation. Beyond this one-year grant cycle, Travel Oregon is committed to assisting participating regions with opportunities for additional project grant funding and technical assistance to continue destination development activities.



PRINCIPLES OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

In 2003, the Oregon Tourism Commission commissioned research on national and international best practices in tourism to shape a set of sustainable tourism principles to guide local tourism planning.

Sustainable tourism...

1. Is integrated with and respectful of the culture, homeland, heritage, and people of a place

Tourism enhances communities by increasing local awareness and pride in what makes each place and its people special.

2. Provides a unique and authentic experience for the visitor

Visitors leave satisfied, excited, and more knowledgeable about the locale. They bring new vacation stories home and send friends off to experience the same thing.

3. Generates localized economic development benefits

Diverse opportunities are created for local entrepreneurs, local jobs and many locally owned businesses to grow and reinvest in the community.

4. Generates development that has a balanced and beneficial impact on the environment

Businesses and communities choose green techniques for constructing and operating facilities in a way that conserves resources, utilizes local materials and reduces environmental impacts.

5. Generates revenue that is invested in conserving and enhancing the unique features of the community

A portion of tourism revenue supports efforts such as open space preservation, conservation efforts, educational programs, and social programs.

6. Provides an educational experience for the visitor that leaves them enriched and inspired to create positive change at home

Residents share local knowledge, history, customs and the unique ways in which we do business in a way that has a positive and lasting impact on the visitor.

7. Encourages diverse parties to work together to create new opportunities and to address common challenges

Communities are successful at leveraging and coordinating the efforts of many diverse people and entities.

8. Serves target markets that are profitable, with promising long-term viability

Tourism leaders target market segments most likely to appreciate, respect, and disseminate information about the distinctive assets of the locale.

EXPERTISE

Travel Oregon works with a number of organizations to design and deliver the RTS program. Partners include:

- Future iQ Partners
- Rural Development Initiatives
- Sustainable Travel International
- Great Destination Strategies
- Bricker Consulting
- Altitude Essentials
- International Mountain Bicycling Association
- Alta Planning + Design
- U.S. Forest Service
- Bureau of Land Management
- Oregon State Parks

For more information about the program, visit Travel Oregon's industry website:
<http://Industry.TravelOregon.com/RTS>

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