

Exceptional Experience

NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR



Tip Sheet



Your Guide to Preparing, Applying, and Succeeding

Step 1: Understand What Makes an Experience “Exceptional”

Before applying, take time to look at your experience from your guest’s eyes.

Exceptional Experiences are built on five key categories:

1. The Experience – Is it authentic to Newfoundland and Labrador?
Does it include a “wow” moment that guests remember and share?
2. The Delivery – Are your people trained, welcoming, and consistent?
3. Health, Safety & Comfort – Are you proactive about guest safety and comfort at every step?
4. Operations – Do your systems (bookings, payments, website, response time) show professionalism and trust?
5. Feedback – Do you evaluate and improve your experience based on what guests say?

Tip: Read the *Experience Provider Handbook* section that matches your type of business (tour, restaurant, accommodation, attraction) and note examples that fit your operation.

Step 2: Complete the Self-Assessment

This is your dry run before the formal application. It helps you identify strengths and gaps.

How to get the most from it:

- Be honest. The self-assessment isn’t graded — it’s your planning tool.
- Mark “unsure” items. These point to areas where Hospitality NL or your DMO can help.
- Check your documentation. Do you have written safety briefings, staff training plans, rate policies, or guest service procedures? If not, use the templates in the toolkit to build them.
- Ask your team. Frontline staff often notice where guests hesitate or ask the same questions — that’s where you can improve flow and clarity.

Tip: If you meet about 70% of the criteria, you’re likely ready to move to the application stage.

Step 3: Preparing Your Application

The application is evidence-based — evaluators want to see your commitment to quality.

Gather these materials before you start:

- Outline of your full guest experience (arrival to farewell)
- Staff training plan or proof of customer service training
- Risk management plan (with table of contents)
- Booking, cancellation, and rate policies
- High-quality photos or short videos that show your experience
- Copy of your safety briefing and maintenance procedures
- Your business listing links (Tripadvisor, Google, etc.)

Tips for a strong submission:

- Keep your answers specific. (“Guests are greeted by name and offered tea from local foragers” is better than “We welcome guests warmly.”)
- Show how your experience reflects people, place, and culture.
- Describe your “wow” factor — the small moment that makes guests say, “Only here.”
- Double-check that your website, photos, and description all match what the guest actually receives.

Step 4: Evaluation Process

Your application will be reviewed by a trained evaluator using the Evaluation Tool.

They look for evidence that criteria are met and may contact you for clarification or a short interview.

To prepare:

- Be ready to discuss how you maintain quality through the season.
- Have someone from your team join the interview — evaluators like hearing how staff contribute to the guest experience.
- Keep your digital assets (photos, website, Tripadvisor listing) updated — evaluators will check them.
- Be open to feedback. Evaluators often share practical improvement suggestions.

Tip: Think of this as a coaching step, not an inspection.

Step 5: After Designation

Once you're designated as an Exceptional Experience Provider, your work shifts to maintaining and sharing that standard.

You'll need to:

- Participate in a brief annual audit (form and short interview).
- Submit updated information if your experience changes.
- Continue collecting and responding to guest feedback.
- Keep staff trained on delivery, safety, and customer service.

Pro tip: Schedule a short "end-of-season reflection" with your team — what wowed guests most? What issues came up repeatedly? Build your next season's plan from that list.

Step 6: Making the Most of Your Designation

Once approved, your experience will be promoted through the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation's marketing channels — but your story is your best marketing tool.

Ways to leverage your designation:

- Add the Exceptional Experience mark to your website, signage, and email signature.
- Share your designation on social media with photos of real guests enjoying your experience.
- Collaborate with your DMO on media or trade opportunities.
- Keep your visuals current — new photos every season make a difference.

Common Pitfalls to Avoid

- ✗ Submitting before your team is fully trained.
- ✗ Missing simple policies (rate, cancellation, or maintenance) that evaluators require.
- ✗ Inconsistent information across your website, brochure, and social media.
- ✗ Treating the self-assessment as a formality rather than a chance to improve.

Need Help? Your Regional Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) and Hospitality NL are ready to guide you through each step.

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