

Exceptional Experience

NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR



**Frequently Asked
Questions**



General Information

Q: What is the Exceptional Experience Program?

A: The Exceptional Experience Program is an initiative that enables tourism providers in Newfoundland and Labrador to demonstrate their commitment to exceeding guest expectations. Providers must meet specific criteria in customer service, business practices, health and safety, and overall experience delivery.

Q: Who is eligible to apply?

A: Any TAP-approved tourism provider offering a guest experience—such as activities, attractions, accommodations, or restaurants—that has been in operation for a minimum of one year.

Q: What are the categories of criteria?

A: The program criteria are divided into five categories:

1. Experience
2. Delivery
3. Health, Safety & Comfort
4. Operations
5. Feedback

Q: How do I participate?

A: Contact your DMO or Project Manager, they will send you a self-assessment form to complete, which will identify your stage of readiness. If you meet all the criteria, an evaluator will be assigned to meet with you and confirm that all criteria are met.

Q: Do I receive a designation just by applying?

A: No, the designation is awarded when all criteria are met.

Q: Do I receive the designation as an operator?

A: No, the designation is awarded to the actual experience. An operator can apply to have more than one experience designated.

Criteria & Standards

Q: What does TAP approval mean and why is it required?

A: TAP (Tourism Assurance Plan) establishes minimum tourism standards within the province. Providers must be TAP-approved prior to applying for Exceptional Experience designation.

Q: What makes an experience authentic to Newfoundland and Labrador?

A: An experience is authentic when it reflects local people, place, and culture, for example, serving local food, incorporating traditional music, or highlighting regional history.

Q: What is a “wow” factor?

A: A “wow” factor is a memorable or surprising element within the experience that delights guests and exceeds expectations.

Q: What staff training is required?

A: Staff must receive ongoing training in hospitality, customer service, storytelling, cultural or natural knowledge (as applicable), and managing difficult situations.

Q: What health and safety measures are required?

A: Providers must implement:

- Safety briefings at the start of each experience
- Risk management and emergency plans
- Team training on safety and emergency response
- Incident report forms and reporting processes
- Regular cleaning and maintenance procedures

Q: What happens if I do not meet all the criteria?

A: Working with your DMO, coaching will be provided in the areas not met.

Operations

Q: What guest service standards must be followed?

A: Providers must:

- Respond to inquiries within 48 hours
- Provide booking confirmations within 24 hours
- Maintain clear booking and cancellation policies

Q: Are electronic payments required?

A: Yes. Providers must accept credit card payments or offer an alternative secure electronic payment method such as Square or e-transfer.

Q: What online presence must providers maintain?

A: All providers must have:

- A functioning website with “Book Now” capability
- A listing on at least one third-party review site (e.g., Tripadvisor, Google)
- At least one active social media account for business purposes

Q: Are providers required to market outside the province?

A: Yes. Providers must demonstrate active marketing to non-resident markets that align with Newfoundland and Labrador’s key target audiences.

Q: Is a sustainability policy required?

A: Yes. Providers must demonstrate at least one practical sustainability effort, such as reducing waste, supporting local suppliers, or offering refillable water stations.

Feedback & Evaluation

Q: How should guest feedback be managed?

A: Providers must:

- Conduct regular evaluations of their own experience
- Collect and respond to guest feedback, including online reviews
- Have a documented process for resolving complaint

Q: How quickly should complaints be addressed?

A: Negative feedback should be acknowledged immediately, with issues resolved as quickly as possible, ideally within 24 hours.

Q: What ratings are expected?

A: Providers must consistently achieve very good or excellent ratings on third-party review sites.

Code of Ethics

Q: What commitments are required under the Code of Ethics?

A: Providers must agree to operate with:

- Honesty, fairness, and integrity
- Compliance with laws and regulations
- Professionalism and respect in all dealings
- A strong culture of guest safety
- Commitment to environmental, cultural, and economic sustainability

**Further details on each of the above noted items are available in the
*Handbook for Experience Providers***