



## NORTHERN FOREST RURAL TOURISM ACADEMY

VERMONT • NEW HAMPSHIRE • 2021-22

The Rural Tourism Academy is designed to help communities plan how to best engage with tourism and recreation economies, and how to manage and shape local impact.

### What is the Rural Tourism Academy?

The Northern Forest Center has recognized that tourism and visitation pressures are increasing with a sudden boost in visitation. Many communities are trying to figure out how to adapt and manage a rapidly changing tourism economy. As a result, the Northern Forest Center has created the Rural Tourism Academy (RTA), as a fast-track planning-to-implementation process. This program provides direct technical and financial assistance to help rural communities which have a strong tourism potential or exposure. In particular, the RTA is being offered to rural destination areas that are wrestling with the challenges of growing and managing tourism. Phase 1 of the program exposed participants to emerging global tourism trends and the concept of destination management. Phase 2 of the RTA is focused on “Local Community Planning.”

### HOW DOES PHASE 2 OF THE RURAL ACADEMY WORK?

#### Overall Process Summary - Phase 2 - Local Community Planning

*The Northern Forest Center has created an eight-step process for communities to decide if the Rural Tourism Academy Phase 2 is a good fit; and then to host the local hands-on planning workshops. The outcome will be a clear action plan, with resources to accelerate implementation.*

- STEP 1. ORIENTATION** - Learn more about the Rural Tourism Academy (RTA) by participating in a 2-hour regional meeting together with Northern Forest Center staff.
- STEP 2. DECIDE** - Determine if your community/region is a good fit for the Rural Tourism Academy, and if you want to proceed.
- STEP 3. IDENTIFY LOCAL HOST** - Identify a local host organization that can serve as an on-the-ground champion, if possible.
- STEP 4. FORM LOCAL TEAM** - Form a local Implementation Committee that will work with the host organization, Center staff, and facilitation team to recruit and invite local partners to participate in the Rural Tourism Academy.
- STEP 5. DAY ONE MODULE** - Hold the first one-day Rural Tourism Academy module in your region during the weeks of Oct 25 or Nov 2. This will build a framework for your community plan. (Note: *Dates and format may change in response to prevailing health recommendations*)
- STEP 6. DESIGNING ROADMAP** - Using the outcomes from Day 1, work with Center staff, Implementation Committee, and facilitator to map out next steps for your community.
- STEP 7. DAY TWO MODULE** - Plan and host Day 2 of the Rural Tourism Academy in February – March 2022. This will create a detailed implementation action plan.
- STEP 8. REGIONAL LEARNING LABORATORY (PHASE 3)** - Participate in a regional convening to kick-off a community of practice with other communities across the Northeast Kingdom and northern New Hampshire; to be held in Spring 2022.



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Also visit the RTA portal: <https://lab2.future-iq.com/northern-forest-rural-tourism-academy-portal/>

**Step 1. ORIENTATION**

Learn more about the Rural Tourism Academy (RTA) by participating in a 2-hour regional meeting together with Center staff, and reviewing:

- Review background materials.
- Presentation by Center staff.
- Explore the concepts – ask questions.
- What do you need?
- What can you offer?
- Is your community/region a good fit for the RTA?

**STEP 2. DECIDE**

Guiding Questions to help determine if your community/region is a good fit:

**Your Region**

- Describe your destination region. What do the boundaries look like?
- Does your area include service communities?
- What is the primary asset, attraction, or activity that you believe makes the area a compelling travel or vacation destination?

**Local Leadership**

- Is there a group of organized, committed grass-roots leaders in this region who understand tourism development (as distinct from marketing) and the long-term commitment of time, financial resources and partnerships required to accomplish development work?
- Do these leaders include municipal, business, and non-profit organizations from key service centers in your region?
- Have these leaders worked together on tourism related projects, planning, or trainings?

**Tourism Assets**

- Since attractions lure visitors to a destination, do you have sufficient attractions in the above defined region to keep visitors engaged at least four times the time it took them to travel to your destination?
- Is there a critical mass of lodging facilities open year-round in your area to allow visitors choices for overnight visits?
- Do you have a critical mass of dining choices available year-round – fast food, family /medium price-range, and high-end dining – to offer visitors adequate choices in meal options and dining formats?
- Do you have sufficient public infrastructure such as restrooms, parking, and signage to make visitors feel welcome and comfortable?

**Sustainable Tourism**

- What goals do you hope to achieve through the Rural Tourism Academy?
- What efforts have local partners been involved in regarding sustainable tourism in your region?

**STEP 3. IDENTIFY LOCAL HOST**

Identify a local host organization that can serve as an on-the-ground champion, if possible. Host responsibilities include:

- Manage on the ground logistics (venue, equipment, caterer, etc.)
- Administer and manage local communications, including invitations, registration materials and reminders.
- Work with the Implementation Committee to recruit participants.

**STEP 4. FORM LOCAL TEAM**

Form a local Implementation Committee that will work with the host organization, Center staff, and facilitation team to recruit and invite local partners to participate in the RTA. Expectations of this Committee include:

- Serve as advocates for the RTA in your region.
- Participate in 30-minute planning meetings by Zoom for 4-6 weeks leading up to the RTA in late October/early November.
- Invite and recruit appropriate on-the-ground partners in your region to participate in the RTA.
- Provide local context: name and identify local barriers to participation, flag local concerns/issues that the facilitation team should be aware of in working with the community.

**STEP 5. DAY ONE MODULE**

Hold the first one-day Rural Tourism Academy module in your region during the weeks of Oct 25 or Nov 2. The session will be in-person, and key aspects include:

- One full day of collaborative planning.
- Professionally facilitated with interactive and highly participatory format.
- Center Staff and Facilitation team will be ready to work with your community on next steps following Day 1.

*\*Steps 6-8 to be addressed in more detail later in the process.*



**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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