



From Information to Business



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Ask an Information Officer

I'm starting a tourism business in Nova Scotia. Where can I get statistics for my business plan?
Julie Penwarden

Statistical research is one of the most important parts of the business plan because it gives you an overview of the market history and provides a good indication of where to set your expectations. From these numbers, you can estimate your potential sales revenues and formulate sales projections.

Whenever clients request tourism statistics, the first place I always suggest is the Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage. Their web site provides a wealth of information specific to the Nova Scotia economy.

Tourism overviews are published a few times a year and provide highlights and monthly breakdowns of performance in the industry. Read about global and national factors affecting road, air, and overseas travel in September's edition

The site also features statistics for the past six years in the following categories:

- visitor entries
- accommodation activity
- average room rates
- campground activity
- number of cruise ship passengers
- airport activity
- gallery museum, and park attendance
- golf activity

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Business Article

Starting an Accommodation Business in Nova Scotia
Jaime Wombolt

Nova Scotia's wealth of natural beauty and extensive coastlines, as well as its vibrant and colourful history, make it an ideal tourist destination, and therefore a perfect location for a seasonal tourism operation. And, as the vast majority of tourists need a place to stay when they visit our beautiful province, what better than an accommodation business!

There are several different types of accommodation business that are commonly found in most parts of Nova Scotia – bed and breakfasts, cottage or cabin rentals, hotels, motels, and campgrounds. For whichever type of lodgement you choose to open, there are licenses and permits to obtain, and regulations with which to comply.

The regulating body for accommodations in Nova Scotia is the Tourism Division of the Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage. These regulations are based upon the *Tourist Accommodations Act and Regulations*. Anyone wishing to operate an accommodation in the province should be familiar and willing to comply with this act. The regulations vary somewhat depending on whether the accommodation is a campground or has a fixed roof. An exhaustive list of the licensing requirements is available on the web site, but here are a few things to consider:

- Fixed Roof Accommodation application

- Municipal zoning approval
- Fire safety requirements
- Water quality
- Food service facility compliance
- Commercial tax
- Sales tax
- Approval to erect signs

For both Fixed Roof and Campground Accommodations, owners/operators must submit a Monthly Occupancy Return Form. This is important for the Tourism Division to track visitor numbers and maintain statistics on Nova Scotia's tourism industry.

The Tourism Division publishes extensive guides entitled: "A Guide to Starting and Operating an Accommodation Business in Nova Scotia" and "A Guide to Starting and Operating a Campground Business in Nova Scotia". These documents are valuable resources for any potential accommodation owner or operator.

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Ask an Information Officer

This allows you to analyze important information, such as occupancy rates, that will affect your bottom line. If Nova Scotia isn't specific enough for you, the site includes regional overviews of seven different areas of the province.

A second resource that is useful for tourism statistics is the Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia (TIANS), as highlighted as our Feature Web Site for this month. TIANS provides recent Nova Scotia tourism statistics that would be of value to your business plan.

Another resource for research and statistics is the Canadian Tourism Commission. They offer information on market and product knowledge and industry trends. Some of the publications from the Canadian Tourism Commission are also available in our library at the Canada/Nova Scotia Business Service Centre.

Check out industry news, statistics, and industry profiles on Strategis' web site. You can read travel headlines from the Association of Canadian Travel Agencies or media releases from the Tourism Industry Association of Canada.

If you require further direction in writing your business plan, you can refer to the Development Guides listed on the Department of Tourism, Culture, and Heritage's web site. You can also obtain sample business plans from the Canada/Nova Scotia Business Service Centre by calling 1-800-668-1010 or emailing halifax@cbsc.ic.gc.ca.

Business Article

After you have had your property inspected and licensed, there are numerous organizations and programs in the province to assist you in continuing to develop your business. The Tourism Division's Visitor Services Programs provide excellent examples of ways to further develop and promote your accommodation business after it has been licensed. These include the "Ici, on parle français" signage program for business that provide services in both of Canada's official languages, and the "Fair and Friendly Exchange Program" for visitors from the US.

You can also register to be a part of the Check In Nova Scotia service, where tourists can get information about, and book, accommodations. Another way to promote your site is through Canada Select Nova Scotia. Canada Select is a National Accommodation Rating Program that helps visitors choose accommodations based on various criteria. The Tourism Division also provides free distribution of tourism business brochures and literature to all of their Visitor Information Centres throughout the province, provided that the literature meets some eligibility criteria, and that operators deliver the literature to the distribution centre. You can view the guidelines on the Tourism Division web site.

The Department also produces a Tourism Partnership Opportunities publication in conjunction with the Nova Scotia Tourism Partnership Council, in which tourism operators can participate in various advertising, marketing, and promotion programs to help develop their products.

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Our Mission

To improve the start-up, survival and growth rates of small- and medium-sized enterprises by giving business people in every part of Nova Scotia access to accurate, timely and relevant information and referrals

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Featured Website

TIANS – Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia

Kenneth Conrad

True to its slogan, “The Voice of Tourism,” the Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia seeks to advocate on behalf of the more than 6,500 businesses that comprise the organization, with the goal of improving the tourism industry’s prospects in the province.

Formed in 1997, TIANS has strategic alliances with three organizations that represent the majority of tourism-based businesses in the province; the Adventure Tourism Association of Nova Scotia; the Campground Owners Association of Nova Scotia; and the Nova Scotia Bed and Breakfast Organization. Sustainable tourism is another priority, and TIANS aims to inform tourism operators, as well as the public, about environmentally-friendly practices. TIANS also provides a link to www.tourismtalent.com, which posts career opportunities in the tourism and hospitality industries throughout Nova Scotia.

The web site provides an application form for tourism operators who wish to become a part of TIANS. Membership fees vary based on the amount of revenue that the business generates, but all members are eligible to receive discounts on essential products and services such as gasoline, insurance, and communications technology, from various partners affiliated with TIANS. As well, listings of all organizations affiliated with TIANS are posted on the web site, resulting in a greater public profile for these businesses.

Whether you’re interested in becoming a member of TIANS, looking for a job, or just searching for information on the tourism industry, www.tians.org is a great resource to have.

Hot Picks

The following books are available from the Canada/ Nova Scotia Business Service Centre Library. These books may also be available in our resource centres, located throughout the province.

Cultivating Agritourism: Tools and Techniques for Building Success

Williams, Peter, Lack, Kathryn, Smith, Kim

Ever hear of the term Agritourism? Know what Agritourism means? If not, you’re not alone, but don’t fear because thanks to this fascinating guide, you will be no longer left in the dark! This book helps in the evaluating, planning and managing processes that come with an Agritourism business opportunity.

Contents of the Guide:

- What is Agritourism?
- The Agritourism Markets
- The Evaluation Process
- Government Policies/Regulations
- Creation of a Business Plan
- How to Market
- Customer/Employee Relations
- Insurance Info
- Quality of Products/Service

A Guide to Marketing Your Nova Scotia Tourism Business

The Economic Planning Group of Canada

This guide is one in a series of tourism development manuals commissioned by Tourism Nova Scotia. The guide teaches an effective do-it-yourself marketing technique relating to small and medium-sized inde-

pendent tourism operations. Useful to potential, new, and established tourism operators, the guide also deals with other kinds of tourism businesses, such as campgrounds, restaurants, roofed accommodations, etc.

Contents:

- The Marketing Plan
- Pricing
- Advertising and Promotion
- Brochures and Other Collateral Materials
- Direct Sales (Personal Selling)
- Other Important Marketing Methods for Nova Scotia Tourism Operators
- An Introduction to Packaging for Nova Scotia Tourism Operators
- Marketing Through the Travel Trade

Internet Marketing for Your Tourism Business: Proven Techniques for Promoting Tourist-based Businesses over the Internet

Sweeney, Susan

These days, simply having a website on the internet just isn’t enough to attract potential customers to your tourism operation. You must learn how to transform visitors to your website into paying customers. That’s where this guide can help you with the development of your tourism business. It doesn’t matter if you’re operating a country inn or a campground, this guide will help any tourism operator increase their bookings via proven techniques and strategies.

Contents:

- The Principles of Marketing
- Web Site Design
- Designing Your Site for Search Engine Prominence
- The Advantage of E-mail
- Advertising Online

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Hot Picks

- Generating Return Customers
 - Online Publications
 - Virtual Touring with Webcasting
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