

farm & nature tourism



Farm & Nature Tourism Business Development Program

ARTRC

The Australian Regional Tourism Research Centre (ARTRC) is a partnership between the Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre (ST-CRC) and Southern Cross University (SCU).

Within the ST-CRC is a network of 14 universities and more than 20 government and industry partners.

The ARTRC, located on the Lismore campus at Southern Cross University, offers tourism practitioners and organisations in the region education, training and access to a vast management resource centre.

The ARTRC is a valuable resource for regional tourism. Tourism operators in regional Australia are able to benefit from access to targeted research and information on regional tourism best practice.

CONTACT

Australian Regional
Tourism Research Centre

Rose Wright
Extension Manager
E: rose.wright@scu.edu.au
M: 0427 232246

www.regionaltourism.com.au

Farm and Nature Tourism on your Property Business Development Program is an intensive four phase program targeting farmers and rural landowners who are interested in diversifying their Agri-business activities to include tourism as a viable and sustainable economic option.

Conceived by the Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre (ST-CRC) and developed by the Australian Regional Tourism Research Centre based at Southern Cross University, the program is designed to act as a catalyst for the establishment of Agri and Nature-based tourism clusters by in rural and regional communities across Australia.

An interactive workshop program assists farmers to initially evaluate their potential before committing to a more intensive business planning and skills development program.

Since February 2006 the program has continued to gain momentum and in the process setting a high benchmark of achievement in Agri and Nature-based tourism education. Specialist stakeholders including tourism and rural business and industry, university academics and researchers as well as robust support in Local, State and Federal Government agencies has strengthened the Business Development Program's appeal to farmers and rural landowners.

The process of formulating the program is in four phases. Initial work by the ARTRC begins with industry and Government stakeholders to establish direction and provide a foundation for sustainable practice and a supportive planning environment to allow business growth. The second phase is identifying potential candidates for the program through a hands-on Tourism Field Day workshop.

Next, successful candidates are invited to participate in a more intensive one on-one business planning and skills development program. Finally, those candidates are supported with ongoing monitoring and product evaluation.

Phase 1: Establishing direction

Phase 2: Tourism Field Day

Phase 3: Upskilling candidates through Business Development Program

Phase 4: Monitoring and evaluation

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Phase 1: Establishing Direction

Together with industry stakeholders, the ARTRC set to establish the direction and framework for the growth of Agri and or Nature-based tourism businesses. This is achieved through bringing together key stakeholders and decision makers associated with tourism, agriculture, planning; economic and business development; nature and land conservation and management to establish a supportive planning environment for developing Agri and Nature-based tourism businesses in rural and regional areas. From this industry liaison a broad vision is developed for which the foundation of Farm and Nature-based tourism could germinate. This first phase of the Farm and Nature Tourism on your Property Business Development Program provides the foundation for identifying existing Agri and or Nature-based tourism operators, showcasing local best practice case studies and establishing mentoring groups to support and oversee the program and participants.

Phase 2: Tourism Field Day

Implementation of the vision is in two stages, the first Farm and Nature Tourism on your property Field Day. The Tourism Field Day provides participants with an authentic overview of the tourism industry. In essence Stage One is a culling process, designed to provide a realistic picture of what is required to be successful in this highly competitive industry. For tourism businesses to be viable the owners/managers must be committed to high standards of service and business management and be ready to invest the time, money and energy required if they desire success. An individual assessment process indicates the suitability of the participant, their property and the region for Agri or Nature-based tourism. Participants who score well through the screening process are given the option of participating in Stage Two.

Phase 3: Up-skilling Workshops

The next phase of the Business Development Program is Stage Two delivered via a series of workshops and site visits with a business facilitator. The objectives of this stage are to up-skill and inform participants on how the tourism industry works; prepare and research information for the development of a business plan; provide participants with mentoring and support from industry leaders and stakeholders; to reality check their concepts on their property and to identify opportunities they may have been overlooked; to provide them one on one support with a business facilitator and to establish a local Agri and Nature tourism network.

Phase 4: Evaluation

One of the important initiatives from the program is the establishment of a local Agri-tourism network. This group will work closely with local and regional tourism organisations but will provide local support and collaboration for the newly formed industry cluster. Opportunities such as co-operative marketing and promotion, sharing skilled staff and shared reservations systems are all possible by business working closely together to promote their region as a destination for Agri and or Nature tourism. Additionally the Australian Regional Tourism Research Centre will provide continued support to the participants. Over a three year period these up-skilled candidates receive specialist monitoring and ongoing evaluation to assist in nurturing their chosen business activity. They will also be linked to the Australian Regional Tourism Network via the Centre for Regional Tourism Research with ongoing support being provided through an online support network with participants linking up to an online forum as well as receiving current information and trends through the research centre as it becomes available.

