

## PROGRAM SUMMARY

**Travel Alberta's SHiFT: Transforming Products to Experiences** program is a truly unique tourism industry training curriculum in Canada's tourism industry. It is the crown corporation's most in-depth training programs that exemplifies the power of collaboration in the development, delivery and post-course care of participants enrolled in the program.

The **SHiFT program goal** is to assist Alberta private, public, and not-for-profit tourism businesses and host communities to build the knowledge, skills and abilities to develop innovative visitor experiences that make an emotional connection with travellers, respond to market demand, and strengthens the provincial tourism brand.

The SHiFT program responds to a need for:

- Increasing the inventory of new experiential travel products, throughout Alberta, that respond to the growing market demand for authentic travel experiences that connect travellers to the people, special places, culture and heritage of the destinations they visit.
  - To date, 73 new visitor experiences are directly attributable to the SHiFT program surpassing the 5-year goal of 60.
- Investing in a developing the product development capacity of communities throughout the province.
  - To date, five communities are complete, one is in progress and there is expressed demand by other communities to host SHiFT.

### Learner Impact Testimonial: Newell Regional Tourism Association

The SHiFT program is amazing, if I could go every year I would. I learned so much in such a short period of time.

For me and my personality it is hard to sit and listen to someone lecture you all day. Even if the topic is interesting, I zone out. SHiFT is the opposite! This program is set up to be interactive, have you work with others as a team, and learn with others in your industry.

*Jamie McIntosh, Executive Director,  
NRTA/Marketing Specialist, City of Brooks  
Course Participant SHiFT 5 Sylvan Lake  
[www.visitnewell.com](http://www.visitnewell.com)*



*SHiFT 4: A SHiFT course experiences hosted by Lake Louise Ski Resort. Their culinary team was challenged to create a complete plant-based meal that would broaden the food choices available to visitors and to respond to the growing demand for personal wellness and healthy food options when travelling.*

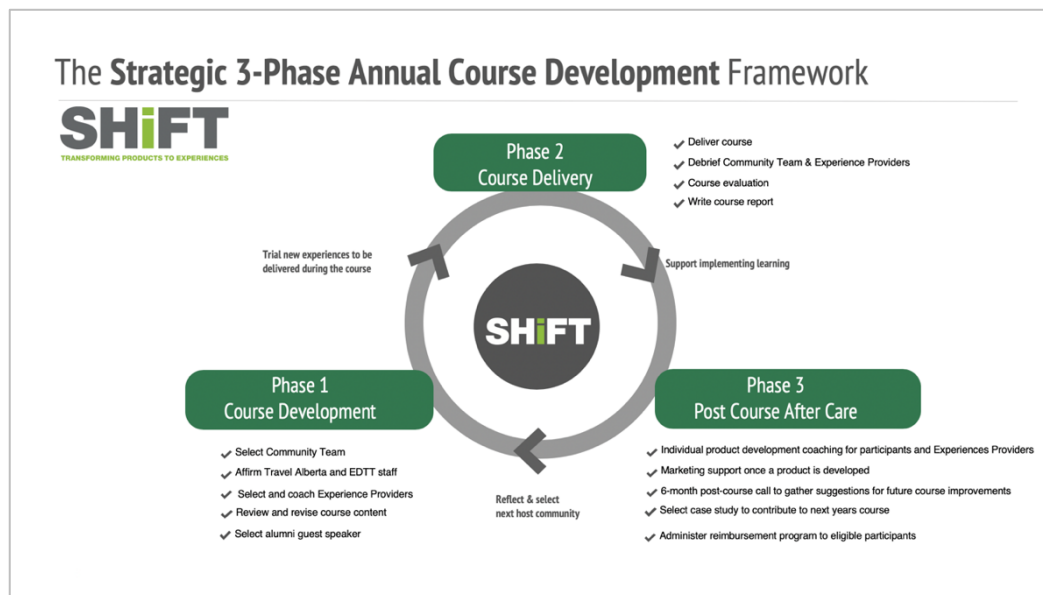
Travel Alberta’s investment in developing the industry’s product development capacity via the SHiFT program should be celebrated for its outstanding commitment to excellence and their:

- Strategic, long-term investment, to commit resources on a renewable 3-year cycle, based on visitor needs and industry demand to continue to differentiate and diversify the visitor appeal of the province of Alberta.
- Partnership with the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism to create a reimbursement program that refunds the \$1000 registration fee for private sector and not-for-profit businesses who have a new visitor experience that meets the SHiFT criteria in market within 12 months of completing the program.
- Leadership demonstrated by the entire Experience Development team before, during and after the SHiFT program.

SHiFT is truly a one-of-a-kind program in the tourism industry in terms of experiential learning, integrated and progressive skills and knowledge development, all targeted towards ensuring an amazing 4-day immersive course that inspires new tourism products to market within 12 to 24 months.

What is exceptional about the SHiFT program, from a designing curricula perspective, is that the program goes far beyond a typical focus on just course participants.

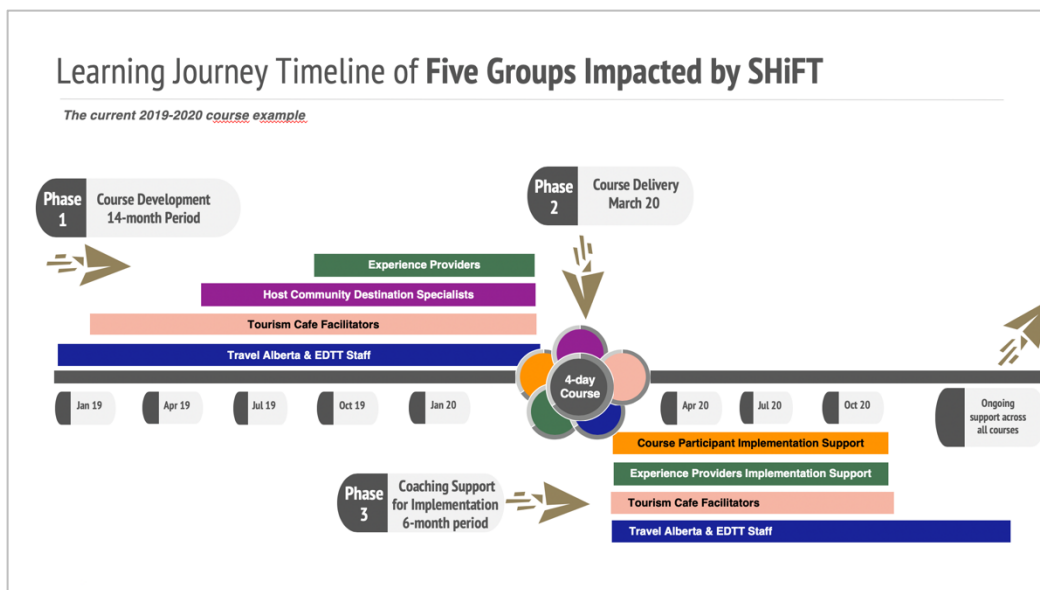
A strategic 3-phased instructional design, combined with an experiential learning methodology, impacts five learner groups, including the program sponsor and contracted subject matter experts.



And, as the program is hosted in a new community each, the capacity of a Community Team of tourism professionals is developed to ensures the legacy of the learning, and support to implementation, continues.

The **performance and learning innovation** for the SHiFT program resides the programs innovative instructional design that inspires learning for five distinct groups of tourism professionals, all contributing to the program and benefitting the program.

The experiential learning methodology, during Phases 1 and 2. The careful selection of tourism businesses to become Experience Providers, develop new visitor experiences, and then incorporate these into the course in Phase 2 has a profound impact on the course participants. It builds capacity that is sustained in the Host Community after the SHiFT program and contributes to the program goal of increasing the number of new visitor experiences to market annually. This 22-month program is designed to support three phases of development.



### Learner Impact Testimonial

The SHiFT Program is by the far the most innovative and effective course I have participated in throughout my 20-year career in the Tourism Industry. The program facilitates “outside the box” learning by exposing the participants to experiential tourism and hands-on experiences. The facilitators work with local tourism operators, encouraging them to think about taking their businesses to the next level by creating unforgettable experiences for the SHiFT participants. The SHiFT participants (Shifties) enjoy an amazing experience and the local tour operators’ benefit from a “post experience” evaluation from the Shifties. The tour operators create new marketable experiences and the Shifties learn how to actively engage with local history, people, culture and food to create new experiences for their own tourism businesses. It is a brilliant concept and it works exceptionally well! I came away with many new ideas for my business and in less than one year have implemented two new experiences.

*Terri Kinsman, Owner – Rocking R Guest Ranch  
Sylvan Lake SHiFT 5 Course Participant*

**Superior quality** is ensured by multiple evaluative touchpoints each year including:

- Exit interviews with all host community team members and Experience Providers.
- Reflections from Travel Alberta and the Tourism Café who also bring accumulative knowledge of past programs.
- Substantive participant course evaluations.
- An annual curriculum review.
- Updating, 25% - 30% of the content each year to incorporate current research, align strategically with the new Host Community, build on lessons learned from previous years, and include more alumni examples which add immense credibility.
- All content created by the Tourism Café is reviewed by Travel Alberta and their corporate communications team.



*Onsite and offsite learning opportunities.*

## The Program 6-Year Performance Targets

6-year Targets	Progress at End of Year 5
New SHiFT inspired visitor experiences directly attributable to the SHiFT program. The goal is 12 per year, 60 by year five.	Exceeded: 73 to date
Invest in and support tourism development in 6 Alberta locations representing diverse communities/cities to host the program (e.g. urban, rural, iconic, developing).	5 complete, 1 in progress including 2 iconic destinations, 2 rural communities in development, 2 major cities
Train 144 tourism industry professionals.	119 to date
Develop the experiential travel training and coaching capacity of 6 Travel Alberta staff.	Exceeded: 8
Develop the experiential travel training and coaching capacity of 2 provincial Economic Development, Trade and Tourism staff.	Exceeded: 4 3 to date, 1 (in progress)
Develop the experiential travel training and coaching capacity of 20 Host Community tourism and economic development professionals.	Exceeded: 32 SHiFT 1-Jasper – 5 SHiFT 2-Edmonton: 4 SHiFT 3-Drumheller: 7 SHiFT 4 – Banff& Lake Louise: 6 SHiFT 5 – Sylvan Lake: 5 SHiFT 6 (in progress) – Calgary: 5
Coach a minimum of 24 SHiFT Experience Providers.	Exceeded, 26 to date: Jasper (5), Edmonton (6), Drumheller (5), Banff and Lake Louise (4), Sylvan Lake (6) and 4 in progress.
A minimum of 12 VIPs join the course for the final evening and the graduation ceremony to meet the course participants and join in one new tourism experience designed for the course.	11 to date
Generate 4 Canadian Signature Experiences	3 to date
Produce 6 tourism operator case studies.	5 to date, 6 <sup>th</sup> in progress
Create a closed Facebook group to build the network of participants, community team members and course alumni to continue to exchange ideas and share information.	June 2016 – 98 opt in individuals to date

Additionally, while a program objective was to attract participants from all over the province to the program, no specific geographic target was set. After five courses, people from 44 cities and towns have participated in the program.



### Unanticipated measures of success include:

- Annual waiting lists to register for the program and become a host community
- Canadian brand recognition for the program.
- Creating a shorter 1-day Experience Essentials course to extend select content to a wider audience
- Participants from 44 communities around the province.



## HELPFUL TERMINOLOGY

Appreciating the review panel may not be familiar with tourism training terms. Key terms and definitions used by the program are provided to assist the review committee. If time is pressing, those highlighted in green are ‘must reads’ for these terms are used throughout the application and will enhance understanding of the many individuals impacted by this program over a 22-month period.

Industry Term	Description
Community Team	Is a group of approximately 8 to 10 tourism professionals comprised of people from three specific groups: Travel Alberta (the program sponsor and industry support team), Economic Development, Trade and Tourism (responsible for destination development and the reimbursement program) the Tourism Café (the program designers, developers and facilitators) and 4 to 6 destination specialists from the Host Community. This group works in collaboration during the 9-month period leading up to the delivery of the course to support the development process and coach local area businesses to become a SHiFT Experience Providers.
EDTT	The acronym for the Alberta Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
Experience Coach	Refers the group of individuals who work together to coach a pre-qualified tourism business to develop and showcase a new travel experience within the course each year. There are three types of coaches: (1) The contracted course facilitators who lead the process and develop the coaching materials; (2) The Travel Alberta and Economic Development, Trade and Tourism coaches representing the client needs for industry development and encouraging development aligned with travellers’ demands as evidenced by provincial research; and (3) In-destination coaches from the Host Community who provide the valuable ‘on-the-ground, in-community’ support, context and insights. Most often, this is their first time coaching an experience provider, so they are both a learner and a co-coach with the contracted facilitators and Travel Alberta.
Experience Development	Is the term used to describe the process of identifying a new, revenue-generating visitor experience to be developed and delivered for the SHiFT course. Five pre-qualified businesses engage in a series of coaching sessions to develop their experience concept, pilot their new experience with the Community Team, refine the experience based on feedback from the pilot delivery, cost/price the experience, deliver the experience during the course, participate in a course debriefing meeting, then are supported by Travel Alberta to further refine and take the experiences to market.