

Final Report: Shuswap Farm Stand Trail

Shuswap Tourism

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Prepared by Culinary Tourism Alliance



Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Introduction	4
Context	4
Goals & Objectives	5
Methodology	6
Farm Stand Trail Concept	8
Concept Summary	8
Composition	8
Value Propositions	9
Implementation Framework & Core Activities	11
High-Level Implementation Framework	11
Core Activities	11
Participation Criteria & Processes	15
Participation Criteria & Expectations	15
Business Participation Processes	16
Marketing & Activation	18
Marketing Brief	18
Activation Opportunities	19
Financial and Human Resources	20

High-Level Budget	20
Human Resources	20
Mitigating Potential Risks	22
Measuring Program Success.....	22
Future Evolutions and Growth Opportunities.....	23
Appendices	26
Appendix A: Discussion of Participation Criteria & Expectations	26
Appendix B: Intake Form	30
Appendix C: Draft Survey for Trail Participants	33
Appendix D: Evaluation Template for Shuswap Staff	35

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Land Acknowledgement

The Shuswap is situated within the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Secwépemc people.

Funding Acknowledgement

[Add language and logo from Shuswap Tourism]

Partners

Developing the Shuswap Farm Stand Trail was the outcome of a highly collaborative process that brought together diverse members of the agritourism community from across the destination. Thank you to everyone who contributed to the process. Special thanks go to the Shuswap Tourism project team made up of Morgen Matheson and Stephanie Goodey, and to Jamie Bourne of the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association.



This report was prepared by the Culinary Tourism Alliance, including Ian Worte and Shayan Lallani. The Culinary Tourism Alliance is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to bring people together from across the culinary tourism industry to support the creation of shared food and drink experiences that celebrate the history, heritage, and culture of a destination.

Introduction

Context

In June 2023, Shuswap Tourism requested the support of the Culinary Tourism Alliance (CTA) to enhance the destination's agritourism experiences through the development of a farm stand food trail.¹ The project was conceptualized as part of the Shuswap Region's post-COVID-19 pandemic recovery plan through the creation of a more robust tourism economy. Such an initiative was all the more necessary in light of recent wildfires. Indeed, fortifying the visitor economy can aid in wildfire recovery. Finally, the trail will contribute to the region's long-standing tourism economy.

Interest in agritourism and visiting farm stands has grown in recent years as consumers take a greater interest in food systems, healthy foods, and rural experiences. Farm stand trails have emerged in regions as a type of tourism product that helps rural destinations to attract visitors to their communities and capitalize on these trends. In this context, a trail is an organized tourism initiative with stops at carefully selected businesses who have committed to participating. For the purposes of this initiative, the trail may include interested farm stands, farm shops, or related agritourism businesses.

This food trail would initially serve as a pilot project and feature farm businesses in Electoral Area D (Falkland and Area), with the goal of expanding the trail across the Shuswap region in future years.

¹ Previous iterations of deliverables use "farm gate" in place of "farm stand." These terms are interchangeable.

Goals & Objectives

At the outset of this project, a number of goals and objectives were established.

Goals

1. Strengthen Shuswap Tourism's brand as an agritourism destination.
2. Increase awareness for the quality, diversity, and accessibility of local food through direct farm stand sales in the pilot region of Electoral Area D (Falkland and Area).
3. Attract new visitors and increase visitor spend through inspirational content and enhanced itinerary planning tools.
4. Support farmers by driving increased farm stand sales and/or by supporting them in diversifying revenue through the development of new and enhanced agritourism experiences.
5. Explore the viability of this trail through economic, environmental and social factors.
6. Create opportunities to encourage existing tourist base (e.g., outdoor enthusiasts) to explore the region's agritourism assets.

Objectives

1. Leverage best practices utilized by comparable farm stand trails in other destinations to identify potential frameworks for the trails.
2. Scan the existing electoral area and municipal policies and regulations that could impact the development or investment in a potential trail.
3. Conduct research to get a clear sense of the current farm stand landscape in Shuswap, and the range of farm stand businesses.
4. Identify local stakeholders with a high level of engagement and short-to-medium-term commitment to participating in a farm stand food trail.
5. Collaboratively create a farm stand food trail program framework that resonates with stakeholders and is a sustainable marketing tool for years to come.
6. Position Shuswap for a successful trail launch and provide the tools and resources to manage and maintain the trail.

Methodology

In order to achieve the above objectives, a number of research methodologies were employed to capture stakeholder input and identify challenges, opportunities, and best practices for establishing a successful farm stand trail in the Shuswap region.

Key Informant Interviews

Agricultural Operators and Government

A total of seven semi-structured key informant interviews were conducted to inform this project. Two of these were with agricultural operators forecasted to express a high level of engagement with the project. Another three interviews were conducted with government/economic development staff.

Indigenous Leaders and Knowledge Keepers

To understand the perceived impact of the farm stand trail on Indigenous communities and to discuss any potential challenges, two interviews were conducted with Indigenous leaders and knowledge keepers, specifically from the Neskonlith and Splatshin Bands. An additional meeting was held with representatives from Little Shuswap Lake Band. The format of this meeting was not aligned with that of a key informant interview, but it was a valuable source of information and opportunity for engagement.

Online Surveys

An online survey was distributed to a range of agritourism stakeholders. Respondents included those with and without visitor-facing businesses. This inclusive approach was chosen to capture diverse perspectives from across the region. Of the 23 survey respondents, 10 had visitor-facing businesses, while 13 did not. Respondents included stakeholders with farm stands, on-farm shops, artisanal food shops, on-farm accommodations, as well as staff members from farmers' markets and government/economic development organizations.

Comparator Research

Comparator farm stand trails, from Canada and globally, were researched to identify lessons and best practices important to the development of the Shuswap Farm Stand Trail. We examined trail composition, business selection processes and criteria, marketing methods, wayfinding, communicating the availability of amenities and facilities, encouraging respectful visitor behaviour, and engaging with seasonality.

Regulatory Assessment

The objective of the Regulatory Assessment was to identify any regulations or policies that may impact the development or investment in a potential trail. The analysis focused on parking, signage/wayfinding, event restrictions, and permitted uses.

Asset Inventory Compilation & Geographic Analysis

Publicly available data, as well as insight from Shuswap Tourism and stakeholders, was used to create an asset inventory. This data was visualized using Google Maps to conduct a spatial analysis of stakeholder distribution.

Farm Stand Trail Concept

Concept Summary

Basic Concept

The Shuswap Farm Stand Trail (Working Title) is a tourism product that Shuswap Tourism and its partners will use to market the region as an agritourism destination. It will feature farm stands and other agritourism businesses, beginning in Shuswap's Electoral Area D, that are engaged with Shuswap Tourism and are providing a reliable visitor experience that features locally-grown/produced products.

Shuswap Tourism's Role

Shuswap Tourism will be responsible for administering and marketing the farm stand trail. The administration of the trail will involve consistent engagement with trail businesses and potential businesses, processing applications and ensuring businesses meet criteria, and evaluating the success of the trail and collecting participant feedback. Marketing the trail will involve creating a trail brand, providing participating businesses with branded signs and/or decals, developing and hosting a trail webpage, and marketing the trail to visitors via their channels.

Visitor- and Business-Facing Components

The farm stand trail will have both visitor-facing and business-facing components.

For visitors, the farm stand trail will provide the ease and confidence to experience the agricultural region and consume Shuswap-grown/produced products. The trail will provide assurance to visitors that their expectations will be met, and that they will find authentic Shuswap food, products and experiences. It will also make navigation and trip-planning easier.

For businesses, the farm stand trail will offer marketing, promotional and branding benefits, along with confidence that they are meeting Shuswap Tourism's market-readiness standards. The trail will provide businesses with clear, achievable criteria to appear on the trail.

Composition

The Shuswap Farm Stand Trail will be composed of farm stand businesses and other agritourism-related businesses from across Shuswap's Electoral Area D. It will primarily include traditional farm stands, but may also include more sophisticated brick-and-mortar farm shops, and agritourism experiences such as U-Pick or farmers markets. Between the farm stand businesses that are featured on the trail, a diversity of products

should be available so that visitors find a range of products and experiences as they go to different locations (e.g. farm stands focusing on vegetables, orchards, and businesses focused on processed or value-added products).

The trail's initial intake goal is 12 businesses, growing to 16 by the end of the first year (2024). During the second year (2025), the trail will be expanded to include North and South Shuswap (Areas C, F, and G). The third year (2026) will see the trail expanded to include Salmon Arm, Sicamous, and Area E. The development and inclusion of Indigenous experiences will take place in the second and third years.

Farm stand businesses will have to meet a number of basic criteria set out by Shuswap Tourism before joining the trail. Once on the trail, farm stand businesses will be expected to uphold these criteria, and meet basic expectations including remaining engaged with Shuswap Tourism and featuring Shuswap Farm Stand Trail branding following Shuswap Tourism's guidance.

Shuswap Tourism will provide ongoing engagement and guidance to help farm stand businesses maintain standards and expectations. Farm stand businesses that do not meet the basic criteria to appear on the trail can also receive engagement and guidance from Shuswap Tourism as they work to reach the basic standards.

Value Propositions

For Shuswap Tourism

1. Enhances the Shuswap's appeal to visitors, including agritourists.
2. Creates new compelling marketing and activation opportunities for Shuswap Tourism and its partners.
3. Increases the diversity of businesses engaged with Shuswap Tourism.
4. Provides a platform for capacity building to a broader range of tourism businesses so they can create new or enhanced visitor-facing experiences.
5. Creates opportunities to keep outdoor activity tourists in the community longer and bring visitor spending to another sector of the local economy.

For Visitors

1. Facilitates trip planning by providing inspiration and necessary logistical information.
2. Provides confidence that stopping at any trail business will provide an authentic experience that features local foods and products.
3. Creates opportunities to participate in agritourism activities when visiting the Shuswap region for other reasons such as outdoor activities

For Participating Businesses

1. Provides marketing, promotional and branding opportunities to their businesses.
2. Gives businesses the confidence of knowing they are meeting market-readiness standards.

3. Gives access to a network of supportive, community-focused, like-minded businesses.
4. Provides new opportunities for mutually beneficial business collaborations and partnerships.
5. Help inspire other businesses to become part of the trail, elevating their experiences and growing their businesses.

For Unfeatured (Non-Trail) Businesses

1. Increases pride of place.
2. Increased visitor spend helps bolster the local economy, benefiting local businesses, municipalities, and residents.
3. Increases residents' awareness of the diversity of businesses in their own 'backyards,' encouraging local participation in communities and support for local businesses.

Implementation Framework & Core Activities

High-Level Implementation Framework

The implementation and operation of the trail will consist of five main areas of activity:

- 1. Recruiting and onboarding trail businesses:** This includes ongoing and/or quarterly revision of the stakeholder database, identifying potential businesses to foster relationships with, gain insights about the market, new ideas for marketing, and provide capacity-building or coaching to meet trail criteria.
- 2. Developing trail marketing assets and launch campaign:** Developing the website, creating branding, and producing physical signage or decals. This includes creating profiles for each business, and taking photographs if none are available. This may also include creating an interactive map, or producing video content.
- 3. Marketing and promotions:** Developing and implementing a marketing strategy for the trail. Engaging with partners to market and promote the trail.
- 4. Ongoing engagement, recruitment and capacity building:** Checking in with businesses to get feedback, ensure hours and product availability is up to date, and ensuring standards are being met. Connecting with businesses that may be interested in joining the trail. Providing support and guidance to current and potential trail businesses to help them reach or maintain their standards.
- 5. Evaluating the success of the trail and evolving it as needed:** The first year will be the pilot year for Electoral Area D and adjustments to the concept and framework may be needed. Feedback should be collected from stakeholders and participating businesses on an ongoing basis and at the end of the first year. After the first year, it can be determined whether it is feasible to expand to the wider Shuswap region.

Core Activities

This section describes in detail all of the core activities necessary for Shuswap Tourism to launch, operate and maintain the trail. A summary of the proposed program's core activities for the first three years is proposed in **Table 1** below.

Table 1 - Programming Summary for the First 3 Years

Month / Year	Activities	Estimated Staff Resources (Person Days/Month)
Jan - April 2024	-Outreach to potential participants -Marketing plan development -Website development	5
May 2024	-Participant recruitment and onboarding -Soft launch of trail and start of marketing campaign	6
June 2024	-Capture of consumer and business feedback	2
July 2024	-Trail launch event	3
Aug - Oct 2024	-General activities	3
Nov - Dec 2024	-Annual reporting on success and impact of trail -Assess opportunities for improvement and evolution -Budgeting -Annual marketing planning	3
Jan - April 2025	-Plan for expansion to North and South Shuswap (Areas C, F, and G) -Expand asset inventory to incorporate businesses within expansion areas -Recruitment for trail expansion -Initiate Indigenous experience development (ongoing)	5
May 2025	-Participant recruitment and onboarding	3
June - Oct 2025	-General activities	2.5
Nov - Dec 2025	-Annual reporting on success and impact of trail -Assess opportunities for improvement and evolution -Budgeting -Annual marketing planning	3
Jan - April 2026	-Plan for expansion to Salmon Arm, Sicamous, and Area E	6

	-Expand asset inventory to incorporate businesses within expansion areas -Recruitment for trail expansion -Launch Indigenous experiences developed in 2025	
May 2026	-Participant recruitment and onboarding	3
June - Oct 2026	-General activities	2.5
Nov - Dec 2026	-Annual reporting on success and impact of trail -Assess opportunities for improvement and evolution -Budgeting -Annual marketing planning	3

General Activities

General activities refers to the day-to-day tasks that Shuswap Tourism will undertake to maintain the trail. These would only take up a few hours or days per month.

Such activities include:

- Ongoing engagement with operators (e.g., collecting and updating information on opening times and product availability, responding to inquiries, providing guidance)
- Onboarding new businesses, which would include ensuring they are listed on trail website and that businesses place signage
- Sharing businesses supports and resources with trail businesses as they arise
- Identifying marketing and media opportunities to promote the trail
- Locating and applying for grants to fund the trail's expansion
- Updating asset inventory and business information as business operations change or new/prospective farm stand businesses are identified
- Encouraging collaboration or partnership between businesses and stakeholders

Operator Recruitment and Engagement

The first activities that Shuswap Tourism will undertake are engaging and recruiting businesses to feature on the trail at its launch. This will involve:

- Raising awareness of the trail and its expectations among agritourism stakeholders in Area D
- Reaching out key agritourism operators to gauge interest and encourage them to join

- Processing applications and selecting the first wave of trail participants
- Onboarding participating businesses

Recruitment and engagement will continue to be core activities throughout the life of the trail, as businesses can be added at any time. As the trail expands geographically over the following two years, it will continue to be a major responsibility, particularly in the Winter season. It will be important to have consistent and ongoing engagement between Shuswap Tourism staff and participating/prospective businesses. Relationships between operators and the Shuswap Tourism staff who are coordinating the trail will be essential to the program's continued success.

Marketing, Promotion and Creating Value

For the Shuswap Farm Stand Trail to be successful, it is crucial that businesses see tangible benefits. Providing marketing and cross-promotional opportunities are the best ways to create value for stakeholders. Participating businesses should be featured in the marketing and promotional channels that Shuswap Tourism already uses to promote agritourism.

Some tangible marketing opportunities that Shuswap Tourism could commit to providing include:

- Paid consumer-facing marketing campaigns (social media or otherwise) showcasing each of the farm stands and their proprietors
- Customized page on Shuswap Tourism's website for each participating business, detailing the story of businesses and their owners
- Directing media to trail businesses when opportunities arise
- Creating video content or other media to promote trail businesses

Shuswap Tourism should go further and identify marketing opportunities through partnerships with stakeholder organizations (e.g., Destination BC, Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association). Identifying these opportunities will be an important core activity for Shuswap Tourism staff.

Another opportunity for Shuswap Tourism to create value for participants is by supporting trail businesses in pursuing certifications that will enhance their agritourism businesses. These could include Living Wage for Families BC and Rainbow Registered.

Evaluation

Conducting annual evaluations of the trail is essential to its continued evolution and improvement. Towards the end of each year, Shuswap Tourism should conduct a thorough evaluation. This would include survey participating businesses to evaluate the trail's reception and obtain suggestions for improvement, documenting KPIs, and

collecting staff and stakeholder feedback. Further details on the evaluation process can be found in the **Evaluation & Evolution** section below.

Participation Criteria & Processes

Participation Criteria & Expectations

Setting participation criteria (requirements to be met before joining) and participant expectations (requirements after joining) are crucial to pillars of any tourism trail. By clearly outlining these criteria and expectations, Shuswap Tourism can ensure that participating farm stand businesses are providing a consistent experience to visitors, and that visitor expectations are met.

Businesses will not be expected to pay an annual fee to appear on the trail as of the trail launch. Shuswap Tourism could consider participation fees in future years.

Below are the Basic Criteria to join the trail, and Basic Expectations Upon Joining. A discussion of these can be found in **Appendix A**.

High Level Criteria & Expectations

Criteria to Join:

1. Business has consistent opening days and hours.
2. An open/closed sign is clearly posted at the farm stand.
3. Farm stand itself, or a clear sign, is easily visible to passing drivers, while also complying with municipal regulations surrounding size and placement.
4. Visitors can safely park at the business, whether it be in a designated parking area, in a wide driveway, or on a wide roadside shoulder.
5. For on-farm businesses: Products are available that are grown or produced on the property or the local area.
6. For potential off-farm businesses: Products are available that are locally-grown or produced, or feature local ingredients.

Expectations Upon Joining:

1. Business shares available payment methods with Shuswap Tourism and on any online channels they might have.
2. Opening times are shared with Shuswap Tourism and on any online channels or signage that the business might have.
3. Opening times are communicated promptly as they change through the seasons.
4. Business shares with Shuswap Tourism a list of products that are normally available, and estimated dates for when seasonal products can be expected to be available.

5. Business provides Shuswap Tourism with regular updates on what products are available and when they can be expected to be available.
6. Business displays trail branded signage and decals as instructed by Shuswap Tourism.

Business Participation Processes

Recruitment & Application Process

Recruitment and onboarding farm stand businesses is expected to occur on an ongoing basis rather than enforcing a specific application deadline at some point in the year. This will make it easier for Shuswap Tourism to gradually raise awareness and grow the farm stand trail.

Evaluation Process

Prospective businesses will be asked to fill out an online intake form in order to be considered for the trail (the form can be found in **Appendix B**). Shuswap Tourism staff should commit to reviewing intake forms within a week of receipt. Shuswap Tourism staff will review the form to ensure that the business meets the participation criteria described above. If the criteria in the form are not met, staff can work with the business to support them in understanding and meeting the criteria. If the criteria are met, Shuswap Tourism staff would then schedule an in-person visit to the property to ensure that it does indeed meet the criteria, and there are no safety concerns. If all criteria are met and safety concerns resolved, Shuswap Tourism will approve the application and onboard the business.

Onboarding Process

The onboarding process has a few key components. First, Shuswap Tourism should communicate the expectations for businesses upon joining the trail (as described above) and answer any questions or concerns about meeting the ongoing expectations. Shuswap Tourism would then provide the business with any branded signage or decals, and add businesses to the trail website and any other relevant materials. It may be helpful for Shuswap Tourism to commit to a standardized social media post every time a new business joins the trail.

Renewal Process

The renewal process should be very simple for trail businesses. Either through conversations or a resubmission of the online intake form, Shuswap Tourism should ensure that the business is continuing to meet the participation criteria. Shuswap Tourism staff can also use the annual renewal as an opportunity to discuss any issues

with meeting expectations, or opportunities for businesses to improve their experiences. A property visit should only be needed if there is reason to believe that criteria or expectations are no longer being met.

Removal of Trail Businesses

Shuswap Tourism should reserve the right to remove any business from the trail at their own discretion. Reasons for removal could include failure to keep up standards or expectations, consistently negative visitor experiences, or problematic behaviour by business owners or staff (e.g. offensive language or social media posts). Upon removal, it should be communicated to the business that they must promptly remove any trail branding from their property or their own social media accounts or websites.

Marketing & Activation

Marketing Brief

Concept

Tourists increasingly seek opportunities to partake in taste-of-place experiences at the destinations they visit. Experiences incorporating a culinary component allow visitors to learn about the people, produce, and processes behind the products they are consuming. They also foster an appreciation for local foodways, in turn encouraging tourists to support local businesses even after they return home.

The Shuswap Farm Stand Food Trail is a consumer-facing product that increases awareness of agricultural processes in the Shuswap Region. It seeks to attract visitors from urban centers like Vancouver and Calgary, providing them with a practical tool to use for trip planning. It will also appeal to locals interested in discovering the benefits of buying local in the space they call home.

Visitors on the trail can expect a unique cultural experience highlighting the Shuswap's rich agricultural sector. They might stop at a farm stand offering freshly picked fruits, where they will learn about the operator's story and become immersed in the entrepreneur's family history. The following stop on their journey may be a farmers' market frequented by local chefs in search of ingredients for use in their signature dishes. Visitors will experience a high level of customer service and reliability.

Naming the Trail

The working title is Shuswap Farm Stand Trail. Shuswap Tourism could consider adopting a trail title that leverages more dynamic, captivating language to entice visitors in ways similar to comparator trails, for example the Greater Victoria Flavour Trails or Westside Farm Loop.

Brand Inspiration

The Comparator Report provides examples of branding from comparator trails. These can be consulted for best practices on agritourism trail branding that engages visitors and retains their attention.

Target Markets

Important target markets for the Shuswap Farm Stand Trail include culinary and agritourists, as well as visitors interested in cultural authenticity and the outdoors. Urban centers are key target markets for agritourism experiences as these provide city residents with opportunities to escape daily routine, and to learn where their foods

come from. Vancouver, Kelowna, and Kamloops are important target markets within British Columbia. Calgary represents an important Alberta target market.

Activation Opportunities

There are a number of ways that a trail can be activated for consumers on different mediums, including through interactive websites, mobile apps or printed materials. Trail operators can use storytelling, video, thematic or seasonal itineraries, or gamification to provide visitors with inspiration or incentive to visit trail businesses.

Depending on how trail businesses are dispersed, the trail can also be mapped out on a specific route or circuit that links the businesses together. This is something that Shuswap Tourism will have to determine once the trail businesses are identified.

Shuswap Tourism has developed a website that will be used to activate the trail. This website can be used to market the trail and provide visitors with navigation information. The website should also feature profiles of each participating business. These profiles should include photographs or videos, up-to-date information on hours and product availability, seasonality, visitor amenities, and descriptions of each business that highlight their unique offering or stories.

Activations could also take the form of special events or tours. Shuswap Tourism has indicated that a launch event is being planned for 2024. Regular events throughout the year, or campaigns connected to existing festivals and events in the region could also be opportunities for activations. Media or FAM tours could be utilized by Shuswap Tourism as a means of raising awareness of the trail, as could consumer-oriented tours attached to a specific date or weekend.

Financial and Human Resources

High-Level Budget

Required Financial Resources

The annual budget should account for the following costs:

- Creation of marketing assets to promote the trail to visitors
 - Signage
 - Brochures
 - Website
 - Branding
- Development and execution of trail marketing campaigns including paid advertisements

Potential Future Financial Resources

In future, Shuswap Tourism could consider budgeting for the following:

- Creation of recruitment materials to recruit businesses (e.g. printed information material or application forms)
- Dedicated temporary staff member to coordinate the trail (e.g. an intern who could coordinate business engagement and promotion activities)

Human Resources

This section outlines how much staff time Shuswap Tourism should expect to dedicate towards launching and maintaining the trail project over the different stages. The estimated number of person days for these activities is detailed in the **Core Activities** section.

Before Trail is Launched

A substantial portion of the human resources required for the Shuswap Farm Stand Trail would be needed in early stages of the first year. A Shuswap Tourism staff member will need to conduct outreach and meet with businesses to pitch the trail and encourage them to sign-up. During these early months, Shuswap Tourism should expect to dedicate several days per month to conducting outreach with businesses, processing applications, conducting site visits, and overseeing the development of a marketing campaign for the trail. Staff may also need to dedicate time to help businesses articulate their stories in a format that can be used in promotional materials.

After Trail is Launched

Once the trail has been launched, Shuswap Tourism staff should expect to dedicate a few days per month to general activities (as described in **Core Activities**). During and leading up peak months for agritourism in the Shuswap (May to October), staff should expect to spend more time on ensuring business information is up-to-date, and marketing and promotion efforts to maximize visitor awareness of the program.

Ongoing Recruitment & Renewals

On an annual basis, program participants will need to renew their commitment to the trail and prove that they still meet the criteria. Shuswap Tourism should budget enough time to connect with each business in a method that suits them best (in-person, by phone, or via email). Similarly, time to meet with prospective businesses will be required. Shuswap Tourism should aim to provide clear and constructive feedback and recommendations to businesses who fail to meet the criteria so that they can work towards joining in the following recruitment cycle.

More intensive staff resources will be required in the first quarter of the second and third years, in alignment with plans to expand the Shuswap Farm Stand Trail. During these stages, a full-time staff member should be dedicated to updating the asset inventory, conveying information about the trail to businesses in areas earmarked for program expansion, and to onboard those businesses. Additionally, extra capacity should be allocated to intensified marketing efforts during the initial months of the second and third years, directed towards promoting the trail to additional potential participants.

Evaluation & Future Considerations

Evaluation of the trail will take place annually in November and December and Shuswap Tourism staff can expect to dedicate a few days per month to this process during this period. During this time, Shuswap Tourism should budget time to send participants a survey to evaluate their trail experience (**Appendix C**). Simultaneously, Shuswap Tourism staff involved with the trail will be asked to complete an evaluation to register their feedback pertaining to the initiative (**Appendix D**).

Evaluation & Evolution

Mitigating Potential Risks

Expectation management risks: Any program that engages and offers benefits to businesses risks not meeting their expectations. Businesses may feel that they are not benefiting from participating in the trail, or that it is requiring too much of their time. These risks have been addressed by ensuring business expectations are clear from the outset when they are approached about participating in the trail.

Engagement risks: In any program that relies on the engagement and participation of people, organizations or businesses, there is a risk that participants will become disengaged. This risk has been addressed in the program structure by ensuring that the trail coordinator practices effective account management, contacting businesses multiple times throughout the year, not just once a year at renewal time. Frequent contact allows Shuswap Tourism to remain responsive to needs and share updates about new marketing opportunities and successes happening across the trail and other programs.

Consistency risks: Trail participants should exemplify market-ready agritourism experiences in the Shuswap Region. There is always a possibility however, that conditions could change that lead to the business no longer meeting the participating criteria. For example, a business could move, close, or be sold (trail partnership status should not be transferable to new owners), priorities could shift, or operational hours could change. This risk is addressed in the program through the one-year participation cycle, providing an opportunity to reassess businesses on the trail at renewal time to ensure they still meet the trail's standards.

Measuring Program Success

Critical to the success of the trail as a long-term tourism marketing and development asset is conducting regular reporting which evaluates several factors related to customer awareness and satisfaction, trail use, and impact for participating businesses.

Monitoring and evaluating the program is an ongoing process. A more formal reporting system should be established at least annually. In the first years of the trail, Shuswap Tourism should aim to establish baseline data, against which performance can be measured in future years.

The following table recommends some of the key performance indicators that Shuswap Tourism can use to evaluate the trail's success:

Indicator	Source
Website traffic: e.g. Sessions, Users, Avg Session Duration, Bounce Rate	Shuswap Farm Stand Trail webpages, benchmarking against other consumer-facing trails and industry averages
Customer satisfaction & feedback: Over all experience, quality of experience at each stop, Net promoter score	Surveying consumers at trail businesses Businesses could post a QR code onsite that leads to an online survey
Business satisfaction & feedback: perceived value, increase visitation, # new connections/collaborations, increased sense of community, etc.	Survey for operators to complete at the end of the year sharing their perceptions of benefits to participating, new promotional ideas, and identifying areas for improvement or further support Conversational feedback
Business participation: # Businesses on the trail, renewal rate, # new applications and inquiries	Applications received annually
Business engagement: promoting the fact that they are on the trail, participating in additional promotions and showing up to organized events pertaining to the trail	Response rate to Shuswap Tourism outreach via email, phone, or other avenues Promote trail participation on their website, onsite, and on social media (tags or hashtags)

Future Evolutions and Growth Opportunities

Creating Networking and Collaboration Opportunities

Shuswap Tourism should consider getting trail business operators together for regular networking sessions or workshops. This could take the form of an annual or semi-annual meeting. Creating opportunities to share ideas and collaborate can be an excellent way of adding value to participants. This networking and collaboration could yield many benefits such as new collaborations or product development, the sharing of ideas to improve the trail, and improved satisfaction with the trail. Shuswap Tourism could also use it as an opportunity for capacity building and raising the market readiness of trail businesses.

Expansion

For reasons discussed above, it is important that the Shuswap Farm Stand Trail start with manageable scope, objectives, and expectations. There are many opportunities for growth of the program in the future. These could include:

- Expanding the pilot to include other areas of the Shuswap.
- Expanding the number of businesses on the trail, with special care taken to ensure that increased numbers do not dilute experience quality.
- Broadening the scope of the trail to include more diverse types of businesses including restaurants.
- Building capacity by offering training to businesses aspiring to be on the trail. For example, by providing feedback on applications that fell short of meeting the criteria and recommendations.
- Encouraging the participation of Indigenous operators, for example by facilitating partnerships between Indigenous chefs and knowledge keepers with non-Indigenous farm stand operators.

Funding Opportunities

Finding new sources of funding will be crucial for Shuswap Tourism to be able to expand the trail. Identifying grants and submitting applications will have to be a regular activity for staff. Shuswap tourism could also look to sources such as the MRDT.

Shuswap Tourism could consider in future years asking businesses to contribute an annual participation fee to be included in the trail. It is common practice among food trails to require an annual participation fee of a few hundred dollars. Shuswap Tourism's approach of not requiring participation fees in inaugural year is a good practice for ensuring there are no barriers to businesses joining and getting the trail off the ground.

Indigenous Experience Development

Important to the trail's evolution will be its ability to provide participation opportunities to Indigenous peoples, who have traditionally been underrepresented in agritourism ventures. Shuswap Tourism has already started this process by engaging with multiple local Indigenous groups to obtain their input on the initial trail development.

During the first year, Shuswap Tourism should keep these organizations informed of developments to the trail's rollout. Initial discussions on partnership opportunities may take place during that time. Shuswap Tourism should engage the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association (TOTA) in these efforts, as TOTA has been an important partner in advancing discussions with Indigenous groups within the Shuswap.

By the second and third years, Shuswap Tourism should work to action these discussions, with the goal of providing meaningful opportunities for Indigenous peoples to articulate

their cultures in the context of local agritourism. This may include, for example, creating opportunities for Indigenous food product makers to sell through farm stands already on the trail, or facilitating partnerships between Indigenous chefs and non-Indigenous farmers to create a bookable workshop or tasting experience.

Appendices

Appendix A: Discussion of Participation Criteria & Expectations

Basic Criteria Discussion

Opening Times are Consistent, Clear and Communicated

Market readiness is fundamentally about ensuring that visitors will have the experience they were expecting when they visit a destination. The minimum criteria that farm stands should meet in order to participate in the trail is that their opening times are consistent, clear and communicated.

Specific Criteria:

1. **Business has consistent opening days and hours.**
2. **An open/closed sign is clearly posted at the farm stand.**

Farm Stand and/or Clear Sign is Visible to Drivers

One of the challenges that can be encountered in rural areas is actually being able to find a specific location. Farm stands can be difficult to spot on rural roads, and occasionally do not appear accurately on Google Maps. A basic criteria for participating in the trail is that a farm stand sign or the farm stand itself is visible from the road.

Specific Criteria:

3. **Farm stand itself, or a clear sign, is easily visible to passing drivers, while also complying with municipal regulations surrounding size and placement.**

Safe Parking is Available

Most visitors to farm stands will be driving, which means they will need a safe place to park when visiting. As roadside parking can be an option depending on the road, this does not necessarily mean that having a designated parking area on-property is a requirement for participation in the farm stand trail. At a minimum, visitors should be able to park safely on the roadside, or in the farm driveway. Shuswap Tourism should therefore ensure that visitors to any participating business will have the ability to park safely.

Specific Criteria:

- 4. Visitors can safely park at the business, whether it be in a designated parking area, in a wide driveway, or on a wide roadside shoulder.**

Locally Grown Products/Ingredients are Available or Used

Agritourists, and tourists generally, visit farm businesses because they want an authentic farm experience, to buy products directly from the farm where they are grown, to learn about food production, and to interact with farmers. A basic criteria for the Farm Stand Trail is that products are available that are either grown or produced on the same property, or in the local area. Shuswap Tourism should confirm this is the case with potential participants.

Specific Criteria:

- 5. For on-farm businesses: Products are available that are grown or produced on the property or the local area.**
- 6. For potential off-farm businesses:² Products are available that are locally-grown or produced, or feature local ingredients.**

Basic Expectations Upon Joining

Once a farm stand business joins the trail, they will be expected to uphold basic standards and fulfill certain expectations. The following are the basic expectations for participating businesses.

Available Payment Methods Are Shared

Visitors need to be aware of available payment methods before visiting a farm stand business. While farm stands do not need to offer a variety of payment methods, they should at a minimum share available payment methods with visitors and the Shuswap Tourism team.

Specific Expectation:

- 1. Business shares available payment methods with Shuswap Tourism and on any online channels they might have.**

² This would be dependent on whether Shuswap Tourism chooses to include non-farm businesses such as off-farm retail or restaurants.

Up-to-Date Opening Times Are Shared

As opening days and times may change, particularly at different points in the farming season, it is important that these changes are communicated so that visitors always see the correct hours. Farm stand businesses are expected to share updated hours with visitors via their online channels, on any relevant signage, and with the Shuswap Tourism team.

Specific Expectations:

- 2. Opening times are shared with Shuswap Tourism and on any online channels or signage that the business might have.**
- 3. Opening times are communicated promptly as they change through the seasons.**

Availability and Seasonality of Products Are Shared

Visitors want to have an idea of what products are available at a farm stand business before they decide to come. Given the seasonal nature of farming, it would not be reasonable to expect participating businesses to guarantee product availability or to provide day-by-day updates on what is available. They can, however, provide information about what products they grow/produce, what they generally have available for sale, and when these products tend to be in season. Sharing this information upon joining the trail and providing updates at a reasonable interval will be a requirement for participating businesses.

Specific Expectations:

- 4. Business shares with Shuswap Tourism a list of products that are normally available, and estimated dates for when seasonal products can be expected to be available.**
- 5. Business provides Shuswap Tourism with regular updates on what products are available and when they can be expected to be available.**

Shuswap Tourism Branded Signage and Decals Are Properly Displayed

Trail branding will be an important tool for both marketing the Farm Stand Trail and providing tourists with assurance that they are visiting an accredited trail business. Ideally this would include branded roadside signs, and possibly decals. Participating businesses will be required to display these appropriately based on Shuswap Tourism's guidance.

Specific Expectation:

- 6. Business displays trail branded signage and decals as instructed by Shuswap Tourism.**

Appendix B: Intake Form

Introductory Text

Promoting and supporting our local food systems, food security, fresh local agricultural products, the farming economy, and agri-tourism in our region.

Shuswap Tourism is looking to create an opportunity to develop compelling visitor experiences that will continue to grow tourism in the Shuswap region as a four-season destination. This intake form will be your application to be listed on the Farmgate Trail. After you fill out the form, we will connect with you to discuss your experience, help you with ideas, and book a site tour of your experience.

We really appreciate all of your input so far and look forward to meeting you all this Spring!

Best Regards,
Shuswap Tourism Team

*Linked is the informational brochure for reference
[Farmgate Information Brochure](#)

Questions

Please enter your name **[Short Answer Box]**

Please enter your address **[Short Answer Box]**

Email **[Short Answer Box]**

Phone number **[Short Answer Box]**

List farm name (if applicable) **[Short Answer Box]**

List any and all of your social media handles (if applicable) **[Short Answer Box]**

Please describe your farm experience **[Long Answer Box]**

Will your experience be IMMERSIVE or ROADSIDE (Please see information sheet for details) **[Multiple Choice]**

1. Immersive
2. Roadside
3. Other

How will you be accepting payment? **[Select All That Apply]**

1. Cash
2. Point of Purchase Machine
3. Electronic Fund Transfer (e.g., Interac)
4. Honour Box
5. Other

Do you have pictures we can use on our website that shows/explains your offering?
[Multiple Choice]

1. Yes
2. No

What months of the year do you expect to be open? **[Select All That Apply]**

1. January
2. February
3. March
4. April
5. May
6. June
7. July
8. August
9. September

- 10. October
- 11. November
- 12. December

During your season of operation, which days of the week do you expect to be open?

[Select All That Apply]

- 1. Monday
- 2. Tuesday
- 3. Wednesday
- 4. Thursday
- 5. Friday
- 6. Saturday
- 7. Sunday

Briefly describe which product(s) you expect to offer for sale. **[Long Answer Box]**

Is there anything else we should know about your experience? **[Long Answer Box]**

Appendix C: Draft Survey for Trail Participants

Introductory Text

You are receiving this survey because your business participates in the Shuswap Farm Stand Food Trail, operated by Shuswap Tourism.

This survey is intended to help us understand your experience with the trail, including opportunities for improvement. Your responses will be used to optimize the trail for participating businesses in the years to come.

Please consider completing this survey, which should take no more than 5 minutes of your time. We would appreciate your input.

Thank you for helping us ensure that the Shuswap Farm Stand Trail continues to serve the needs of our community.

Best Regards,
Shuswap Tourism Team

Questions

1. Please enter your name **[Short Answer Box]**
2. Please enter your address **[Short Answer Box]**
3. Email **[Short Answer Box]**
4. Phone number **[Short Answer Box]**
5. List business name **[Short Answer Box]**
6. Please rate the following statement on a 10-point scale (10 = Strongly Agree / 1 = Strongly Disagree): Membership with the Shuswap Farm Stand Trail has been useful for my business. **[10-Point Scale]**
7. What does the Shuswap Farm Stand Trail do well? **[Long Answer Box]**
8. What are some opportunities to improve the Shuswap Farm Stand Trail? **[Long Answer Box]**
9. How has your business benefited from trail membership? **[Long Answer Box]**
10. How has being a member of the Shuswap Farm Stand Trail affected your visitor numbers and sales? Please expand, if possible. **[Long Answer Box]**
11. Are there any other benefits you would like to see the trail offer to participating businesses? **[Long Answer Box]**
12. Do you have any final feedback on the Shuswap Farm Stand Trail? **[Long Answer Box]**

Appendix D: Evaluation Template for Shuswap Staff

Introductory Text

You are receiving this survey because you are a Shuswap Tourism staff member who was involved with the Shuswap Farm Stand Trail.

This survey is intended to help Shuswap Tourism evaluate staff experiences with the Shuswap Farm Stand Trail over the past year. Your responses will be used to optimize the trail to meet and exceed key performance indicators (KPIs) in future years.

Questions

Please answer the following questions as they pertain to your experience with the Shuswap Farm Stand Trail over the past **one year**.

1. How many applications were received from businesses interested in joining the trail this year? **[Short Answer Box]**
2. How many new businesses were added to the trail this year? **[Short Answer Box]**
3. Have there been any challenges to recruiting the target number of businesses? **[Long Answer Box]**
4. Please describe any progress made on Indigenous experience development and partnerships this year. **[Long Answer Box]**
5. Please describe feedback from businesses about the trail, including any specific testimony if available. **[Long Answer Box]**
6. How many media inquiries, if any, have been made pertaining to the trail this year? **[Short Answer Box]**
7. How many FAM tours, if any, have been conducted pertaining to the trail this year? **[Short Answer Box]**