



## Visit Kent – Project Brief

Project Title:	Interreg Experience – Development of Peer Networks
Budget:	<b>£22,000 (incl. VAT)</b> This includes the budget for travel & subsistence, based on the EU published allowance rates. The Contracting Party reserves the right to vary the budget at any time during the lifetime of the project.

Brief Owner:	Hollie Coffey, Destinations and Marketing Partnerships Director
Brief Director:	Deirdre Wells, CEO

### Project Overview:

#### Summary:

In light of the current Covid-19 crisis, the tourism, leisure and hospitality industry is having to re-think how to move forward and rebuild business, demand and revenue. Many organisations, both nationally and locally will be forced to re-examine business operations and products, in order to adhere to social distancing measures and respond to changing consumer behaviour. To survive, businesses will need to adapt existing products, collaborate with others in and out of the sector, and reach out to new audiences to recover and drive business growth. The sector has also been shown to be particularly vulnerable due to the seasonality of the visitor economy demonstrating the need for development of off-season product to make businesses more resilient in the future and to deliver more year-round jobs.

As part of the Interreg Channel EXPERIENCE project, Visit Kent has launched the [Experience Development Programme](#) which will work with 125 organisations from across Kent and Medway to help them develop new experiential tourism products for the off-season. We have received over 70 applications for the first round of the programme from a range of businesses including traditional tourism businesses, individuals with a skill they'd like to turn into a new business and businesses from other sectors looking to diversify. Applications are still open for the second round of the programme until the end of December 2020 and will be informed if they have been approved by the end of January 2021.

The programme offers successful applicants a package of support to develop their product concept and take it to market. The support delivered through the programme includes 1:1 business consultation, product testing, content development, product photography, inclusion in B2C campaigns and B2B distribution through travel trade partners.

Following successful award of the 1:1 business consultation contract, Visit Kent are looking for a provider to deliver the next stage of the programme – the development and initial roll out of a peer networking framework. The framework will provide a basis for the Experience programme participants to meet regularly to share best practice, build relationships with their Visit Kent Account Managers, continue to gain support on various professional areas as well as developing local relationships with other businesses. The framework will provide the Visit Kent team with the tools and training to deliver the peer networking effectively and efficiently meetings themselves within existing



resource, supporting the long-term community objectives of the Experience programme in a sustainable manner.

**Background:**

Visit Kent is one of 14 partners from France and the United Kingdom working together on EXPERIENCE, a €23m project co-funded by the Interreg France (Channel) England Programme, which has committed €16m from the European Regional Development Fund. It is led by Norfolk County Council and runs from September 2019 to June 2023.

EXPERIENCE is a major project to boost visitor numbers in the off-peak season through an innovative tourism strategy. New Autumn and Winter 'experiences' will draw in visitors to six areas across England and France: Norfolk, Kent, Cornwall, Pas-de-Calais, Compiègne and Brittany (Baie de Morlaix and Côtes d'Armor).

Local organisations and businesses will be hands-on in creating unique experiences to attract visitors between October and March, in order to extend the tourist season and bring money into local economies year-round. The project will promote the new experiences as individual activities and as part of themed itineraries in a high-profile campaign using cutting-edge marketing techniques.

**'Experiential' tourism**

Traditionally, the marketing approach for tourism across much of England and France has been centred on promoting mass-market locations during peak season, known as 'destination tourism'.

But trends show that travellers are increasingly seeking experiences in which they feel a sense of adventure and discovery by immersing themselves in new cultures and exploring local foods, activities and arts - known as 'experiential tourism'.

This new demand is the inspiration for EXPERIENCE, which will create a new tourism strategy to shift from a 'destination' to 'experiential' tourism approach.

**Sustainable tourism**

The EXPERIENCE approach is based on the principle of sustainable tourism. As well as generating economic prosperity, the project aims to bring benefits to the environment and communities, and to mitigate any impact of increased visitor numbers.

The project will achieve this by enhancing protected habitats, using low-carbon options, e.g. solar and automated lighting and heating, using local suppliers to reduce food miles and opting for recycled materials for signs and surfaces.

Revenue generated in the regions will be fed back into the local economy to protect and maintain its historical and cultural attractions.

**The project will:**

- Offer training to traditional tourist organisations, alongside people with little experience in the tourist trade to identify unique regional selling points
- Create exciting off-season activities and itineraries for day and overnight visitors, themed by regional selling points that are in keeping with the character of a region.
- Use cutting-edge marketing techniques to promote the experiences on offer across the regions in October-March
- Adapt infrastructure for off-season use, such as adding lighting and signs or improving facilities, and 33% of itineraries will be accessible for people with people with additional



physical or sensory requirements. EXPERIENCE also places great importance on the inclusivity of individuals and communities.

- Ensure activities are demand-driven so that off-season growth in visitors is sustainable.

## Key Objectives

- To support businesses to develop concepts into market-ready off season experiential products for visitors.
- To help businesses and the visitor economy to become more resilient through a stronger off-season product offer.
- To help businesses adapt and diversify their product offering or market in response the changes in consumer behaviour as a result of covid-19.
- To encourage collaboration between traditional and non-traditional tourism businesses and build long-term relationships with businesses.
- To help drive a strong more sustainable recovery for the Kent visitor economy and protect jobs in the sector.
- Provide a structured framework for businesses on the product development programme to ensure continued engagement.
- To build capacity and skills within the team to develop a long-term sustainable network.

## Mandatory Requirements

- Peer Network design and development to create a format and playbook
- Development of questioning and discussion topics for each theme – 8 sessions throughout the term of the Peer Networks Apr 21 – Jan 23
- Creation of draft communications and marketing collateral
- Creation of template slides and collateral for each session
- Design and delivery of training for 10 Account Managers
- Delivery of 3 x pilot peer network sessions with breakout sessions

## Project Specifics

### Project Timelines

The following deadlines are based on the Experience Development Programme application deadlines and wider activity that will be delivered as part of the EXPERIENCE project. All work needs to be completed by 31<sup>st</sup> May 2021.

- 18/01/2021 Contract start date
- W/C 18/01/2021 Kick off meeting to agree approach to framework
- 29/01/2021 All dates set for pilot networks
- 26/02/2021 First draft of playbook, communications and collateral
- 15/03/2021 Final playbook, communications and collateral delivered
- 31/03/2021 All training delivered



- 30/04/2021 All three pilot networks delivered
- 14/05/2021 Feedback provided to Account Managers and any adjustments made to framework

### Peer Networking Sessions

- The peer group structure will be by split across three regional geographical areas; North, West and East Kent. with circa. 40 businesses per network
- These sessions would initially be open to businesses on the product development programme but may be opened out to wider businesses at a later stage
- The groups meet on a regular basis to engage in a group wide session about a specific subject such as online booking or digital marketing, then break-out into smaller groups which will be led by a facilitator from Visit Kent
  - 1.5 – 2hr sessions with a topic focus and guest speaker.
  - 1 hr Account Manager 1:1 drop-in session after main session.
  - Virtual delivery using Zoom Rooms or Teams Breakout.
  - 8 x quarterly sessions between Apr 21 – Jan 23 to align with the Experience Programme timeframe.
- The groups will meet for around 2 hours on a quarterly basis
- The topics that we expect to cover in the peer networking sessions include:
  - Sustainability
  - Book-ability
  - Distribution
  - Accessibility
  - Pricing
  - Upscaling

### Training

Visit Kent Account Managers should be provided with training to increase capacity and skills to deliver the peer networks independently. The provider should propose an approach to delivering training which will:

- Be available for up to 10 participants
- Build confidence within the team to facilitate business discussion and use questioning to increase engagement in the session
- Help staff to manage challenging questions and discussion topics more confidently
- Provide resources that will be available to refer to following the sessions.

### Playbook, collateral and communications

The resources developed by the provider should provide a clear framework as well as practical tools to deliver the sessions and communicate with participants. The idea is that this will reduce the internal resource required to deliver the sessions throughout the programme. This should include:

- Draft communications
- Marketing collateral
- Sample questions and discussion topics for each theme
- Template slides for each session
- Collateral/resources for each session



## Project Considerations/ Important Notes

- Visit Kent will approve applications for the experience development programme in two rounds with the second group being approved at the end of January 2021.
- The Experience Development Programme doesn't provide cash grants to the businesses but delivers a package of support to take the product to market.
- Visit Kent will allocate an account manager to each business on the experience development programme
- Visit Kent is working closely with the following Local Authorities that have provided match funding for the project and businesses from these areas have been prioritised in the programme: Ashford Borough Council, Canterbury City Council, Dover District Council, Folkestone and Hythe District Council, Gravesham Borough Council, Medway Council, Thanet District Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. Kent County Council has also provided match funding to the project.
- Kent Downs AONB are also a partner in the Interreg Experience project and have a focus on cycling, walking and equine products.
- Visit Kent has conducted a product gap analysis as part of this project to identify strengths and opportunities. Wider destination and consumer research is also available.
- Businesses are required to provide Visit Kent with measurement data, participate in case studies and host familiarisation / press trips as part of the project requirements and evaluation.
- Interreg Experience will measure the economic, social and environmental impact of the project and the visitor economy in the pilot areas.
- Product testing will take place with consumers, travel trade and digital product testing will take place as part of the project and feedback will be provided to the businesses on the programme.
- Visit Kent are working closely with VisitEngland on encouraging businesses to sign up to their TXGB distribution system, are working with Airbnb Experiences and have established relationships with travel trade and MICE distributors.
- Visit Kent will deliver photography for participating businesses and will include the product in B2C campaigns and B2B distribution activity through the project.
- A wider training programme will also be delivered through the project and businesses will be encouraged to participate.



## Instructions to Tenderers

### Tender Documents

The detail of this document is to be treated as private and confidential and for use only in connection with this tender process. Copyright of all tender documents, including any amendments or further instructions, shall remain with Visit Kent.

### Preparation of Responses

The information contained within this document should be regarded as a statement of Visit Kent's current position as it is able to determine at this time. Tenderers must carefully examine and consider the brief and satisfy themselves of the appropriateness and validity of any information provided. In submitting a response, tenderers shall be deemed to have read and understood all of the tender documents.

Tenderers are required to provide a complete response to this brief.

Response to brief must demonstrate as a minimum:

1. Experience in delivering Peer Networking design and development with SMEs to support adaptation and diversification.
2. Experience of providing facilitation training
3. An understanding of the current challenges faced by businesses in the visitor economy as a result of Covid-19.
4. An understanding of the wider objectives of the Interreg Experience project and Experience Development Programme
5. The ability to deliver three pilot peer networking sessions and training for account managers
6. Capacity to manage the project within the timelines set – demonstrate how would you deliver the project and key personnel.
7. Costs – showing breakdown of costs including expected number of days to be spent on each activity

Failure to provide complete information may result in your bid being rejected.

### Tender Timetable

Tender Submission Date: 8th January 2021 - All tenders must be received by 18:30

Contract award: 15<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Contract start date: 18<sup>th</sup> January 2021

During the tender evaluation period Visit Kent may shortlist a number of tenderers. Shortlisted tenderers may be asked to attend a virtual interview with the evaluation team and/or deliver a virtual presentation. Tenderers should be prepared to accommodate either or both of these requests. Exact dates will be notified nearer the time if required.

### Submission of Response

Tenderers should submit a single copy of their response, the response submission form, tender questionnaire and supporting documentation.

The response to brief **must** be no longer than 4 x A4 pages. Directly emailed submissions **must** be less than 10mb in size and receipt will be acknowledged.

Responses must be received by the return date and time stated above via email with the subject line "Experience peer network response" to [hollie.coffey@visitkent.co.uk](mailto:hollie.coffey@visitkent.co.uk)



### Evaluation procedure

The quotations will be evaluated on the basis of the **economically most advantageous offer**; this allows Visit Kent and partners to take account of various elements such as quality, technical merit and relevant experience.

Submissions from contractors who have not met the requirements in the tender questionnaire will not be considered further.

Returned quotations that have met the requirements in the tender questionnaire will be evaluated based on the criteria set out in the table below:

<p><b>Cost - 30%</b> (The lowest priced quotation will be awarded maximum points and all other quotations awarded points in proportion)</p>	<b>30%</b>
<p><b>Quality – 70%</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Criteria 1 – Experience and access to required expertise</li> <li>Criteria 2 - Capacity and ability to deliver the work</li> <li>Criteria 3 - Demonstrable understanding of the aims and objectives of the brief and an appreciation of issues</li> <li>Criteria 4 - Recommended approach and quality of offer</li> <li>Criteria 5 - Provision of a top-line plan of action for each part of the above-mentioned assignment and a timetable</li> <li>Criteria 6 – Demonstrable understanding of the wider context of the project</li> </ul>	<p>10%</p> <p>10%</p> <p>10%</p> <p>20%</p> <p>10%</p> <p>10%</p>

Each of the Quality sections within this submission will be scored based on the method detailed below:

Exceptional demonstration by the Tenderer of the relevant ability, understanding & skills required to provide the service with evidence to support the response, where appropriate.	5 – Excellent
Good demonstration by the Tenderer of the relevant ability, understanding & skills required to provide the service with evidence to support the response, where appropriate.	4-Good
Contains minor shortcomings in the demonstration by the tenderer of the relevant ability, understanding & skills required to provide the services with evidence to support the response, where appropriate and/or is inconsistent or in conflict with other proposals with little or no evidence to support the response.	3–Minor Reservations
Satisfies the requirement but with considerable reservations of the Tenderer's relevant ability,	1–Serious Reservations





understanding & skills required to provide the services, with little or no evidence to support the response.	Submissions which receive a '1 – serious reservations' will not be considered further
No response provided.	0–no score – Fail  Submissions that 'Fail' will not be considered further

If there appears to be an arithmetical error in a submission or supporting information, Visit Kent shall, at its discretion, either disregard the quotation or invite the Contractor to amend, confirm or withdraw its bid. Except in the case of arithmetical errors, if any other error is found the Contractor will be invited to either stand by the original uncorrected quotation or to withdraw.

### **Visit Kent Not Bound**

Visit Kent does not bind itself to accept the lowest or any tender for all or any part of the requirement and will not accept responsibility for any expense or loss which may be incurred by any tenderer in the preparation of the response.

Any discussions or correspondence between Visit Kent and tenderers shall be conducted without any obligation whatsoever by Visit Kent to enter into or become bound by any contract.

Visit Kent will not be bound by any contract until the Contract is embodied in a formal document and signed by all parties.

### **Contract Award**

Visit Kent may decide at its sole discretion to:

1. Award the contract to more than one supplier if it is felt that this would achieve best value
2. Not to award the contract at all
3. Award only part of the intended contract
4. Discontinue the process at any time without liability

### **Questions about the brief**

If you need any further assistance or have any queries about the process, please contact Hollie Coffey.

Tel: +44 (0)1227 812900

E-mail: [hollie.coffey@visitkent.co.uk](mailto:hollie.coffey@visitkent.co.uk)

Any questions relating to the services must be raised via e-mail.