Written by By Damon Scott For Finance New Mexico
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State tourism departments are assigned a big task: drive visitors to cities, towns and attractions, where tourist dollars can spur the economy. When they’re successful, local businesses get a boost from increased sales.

For the New Mexico Tourism Department, much of selling the state is easy, as the Land of Enchantment’s natural beauty sells itself. And since the department’s 2012 launch of the New Mexico True campaign, businesses can leverage the visibility and heft of the state’s sales efforts by becoming certified as New Mexico True.

While certification is free and offers a way to supplement a company’s advertising and marketing efforts, it comes with some legwork.

Get certified

The tourism department offers an online application that, according to staff, takes about 15 minutes to complete. But before applying, business owners should determine if they meet the “True” criteria. New Mexico True products must be made or manufactured in the state by a licensed New Mexico business. Officials say that doesn’t mean every ingredient or component must be sourced or grown in the state, but the guidelines are strict.

For example, animals and livestock must be born and raised in New Mexico. Similarly, plants and non-meat agricultural products must carry marks or identification that can trace them to the farm of harvest and be verified by a third party certifying organization.

The program is exclusive to New Mexico companies and products, and certifying officials are adamant that products be of high quality.

Tourism officials cite a number of benefits when a business is ultimately accepted into the program. Certified True businesses and products get an online listing and might be selected for feature in New Mexico Magazine or on New Mexico True television. There are retail opportunities through a dedicated e-commerce website and access to a consumer retail-merchandising consultant. The business is authorized to integrate the New Mexico True Certified mark on its packaging and marketing materials, immediately identifying it as part of the program. Additional promotion opportunities are also offered, as are advertising, social media and public relations support.

Recognizable businesses enrolled in the program include Taos Mesa Brewing Co. in El Prado; Bueno Foods headquartered in Albuquerque; and Mesilla Valley Produce in Las Cruces. That’s a small sample; there are more than 150 in all, with more continuously coming on board.

Vivac Winery in Dixon became certified in the program last spring. Michele Padberg, owner and external director of marketing, said the experience has been a positive one.

“Having this certification and use of the logo alerts people instantly to the high quality and legitimately New Mexico product they can expect from us,” Padberg said. “Having the state support us feels amazing. The marketing and PR New Mexico True does for its members is priceless,” she added.

Padberg said that while Vivac is relatively early in the process in terms of seeing tangible results, she encourages other businesses to go through the certification process.

“This is a program that shows that New Mexico has pride in its products. Tying into their ad campaigns and social media simply by having their seal on our products and linking in gives us a much wider audience,” Padberg said.

For more information, visit the certification section of the New Mexico True website at www.ne

wmexico.org
. Or contact Victoria Romejko, coordinator of the Keep New Mexico True program, at (505) 660-4734 or
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