

## Artists to discuss business at upcoming local focus group

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Central Counties Tourism says their visitor research indicates that art is a key driver of tourism to the Headwaters' region.

Chuck Thibeault, the Executive Director of Industry Development for Central Counties Tourism told the Free Press, "As part of our 2020-2021 business plan, we want to work with artists across the region to develop compelling new products and experiences that will engage residents and will drive more visitation and revenues to our artists, local businesses and municipalities."

A first step in that initiative will be a focus group to be held at the Best Western Hotel in Orangeville on March 2. Artists of all disciplines and their peers will meet for a group discussion to "brainstorm and formulate a new Arts & Artisans experience" in the region.

In 2010, after the completion of a report studying the competitive business of Tourism in the province of Ontario, Central Counties Tourism was established as a regional tourism organization. The organization is funded by the Ontario government with a mandate to identify "practices that will build a stronger and more competitive tourism industry within the region."

Central Counties Tourism is a non-profit organization run by a voluntary tourism industry board working with established tourism offices in York, Durham, and Headwaters.

On March 2, the tourism board is inviting artists to take part in the focus group to "develop artist-led experiences that will be the catalyst for travel to Central Counties." Chuck Thibeault says, "The objectives for this first meeting include, providing an understanding of how tourism can help artists gain exposure and sell more art; determine what success looks like for artists in the region; determine the barriers and gaps; and determine potential experiences and products that could be developed."

The organization hopes "to increase tourism in the region by promoting and developing unique and competitive tourism products that attract high yield visitors from outside the Central Counties region." Central Counties Tourism "develops marketing and communication plans to highlight the region's unique offerings by developing brand, web, and digital strategy."

The Arts and Artisans focus group will meet at the Best Western Plus, Orangeville Inn & Suites at 7 Buena Vista Drive in Orangeville, on Monday, March 2 from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. The event is free to interested Artists working in the Headwaters region.