

**Workshop: Community Based Tourism and Development:  
Consultative Meetings with Industry Practitioners  
The World Bank  
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**BED AND BREAKFAST ACCOMMODATIONS & NICHE MARKET DEVELOPMENT: THE IRISH EXPERIENCE AND METHODOLOGY**

**Matthew McNulty,**

International Development Ireland, described Ireland's methods in developing and supporting bed and breakfast accommodations, while he was head of the Irish Tourism Board.

He said Ireland recognized early on that they should focus on developing small scale lodgings to fit its sustainable tourism strategy. Therefore a system had to be built to support such small businesses, especially to help them access an international market. In order to do this, they formed an association of bed and breakfasts that marketed as a group through the internet to various specialty interest groups.

Believing that travelers like the people-to-people contact of living with a family, the Tourism Board limited bed and breakfast facilities to six bedrooms or less. Homeowners who wished to rent out rooms needed small loans to pay for additions to their existing structures or to add toilets and showers. Loans made for this purpose had a less than one percent default rate.

He noted, if you want sustainable development, you have to have sustainable strategies. Ireland's strategy was to go after niche markets. In order to help communities, they provided study tours and advice on ways for communities to showcase themselves and emphasize their unique qualities. He made the following points about niche marketing:

- \* Focus is the most effective marketing tool. The more one focuses, the more effective one can be. Hence niche marketing makes the most sense.
- \* It is impossible for new entrants to achieve better than average sustainable growth without niche marketing.
- \* To niche market successfully, a core message must be developed by someone who is expert in the segment being targeted.
- \* The reasons for targeting niche markets include:
  - They are easier to communicate with than the mass market
  - They generate repeat business
  - They grow rapidly through word of mouth
  - They are high yield
  - They are flexible in the timing of their travel.
- \* To be successful in tourism, the market has to be there, so create the market first and then develop the product.
- \* While a destination focuses on creating an international market, initially tourists from within the country and nearby countries will generate the tourism business and provide the revenue for growth.

Regarding the design of community based tourism, McNulty noted:

- \* Consensus is important, but the lack of it shouldn't stop development.
- \* It is important to build in a bit of success at the beginning of the program because the sense of accomplishment creates momentum.