

NBCCP to push community tourism

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SEVERAL communities across the island are set to benefit from grant funding to support community tourism initiatives under the National Best Community Competition and Programme (NBCCP).

Chairperson of the National Steering Committee of the NBCCP, Jacqueline daCosta, said that the grant — to be provided by the Jamaica Social Investment Fund (JSIF) — will be used to train persons in areas “pertaining to the business of responsible community tourism”.

“JSIF has advised that they will be giving us a grant to train persons in eight of these communities as a pilot,” daCosta said, noting that some aspects of training will be done by JSIF.

“We are hoping that the grant will be signed in January here, and the work will begin as soon as we can advertise and do the necessary procurement procedures, et cetera,” she continued.

Among the communities to benefit are Beeston Spring and Treasure Beach in St Elizabeth; Blue Fields in Westmoreland and Sturge Town, St Ann.

According to daCosta, several public and private sector organisations have already engaged the communities and have pledged their support, including some members of the NBCCP.

“We have had some of our members, who are willing to give additional training related to that area of activity and these are NEPA (National Environment and Planning Agency), which will deal with environmental issues, the JCF (Jamaica Constabulary Force) which will give training on the security of the community and visitors, as well as the Jamaica National Building Society (JNBS), which has offered to assist with some amount of financial management training in our communities,” she disclosed.

Additionally, the Tourism Product Development Company Limited (TPDCo) has offered to assist with ‘Team Jamaica’ training, which focuses on a whole range of information on Jamaica, such as its history, culture and people.

She said that some communities have started tourism initiatives, and therefore have some experience in dealing with visitors.

One of the objectives of the training, she added, is to encourage community tourism as a means of job creation. She noted that communities have a lot that they can showcase, adding that visitors want to experience “how Jamaicans live, what they eat and to buy their products”.

“We have a lot of historical churches and sights, scenic views. We have rivers, the sea, cultural activities, a lot of people want to visit schools, they want to take part in games people play, they want to taste the food, the culture, the dances,” she added.

The NBCCP is a community-based initiative organised through the Cabinet Office, which seeks to establish partnerships between communities and those who have technical, professional, spiritual, educational and financial capabilities. The objective is to assist communities in achieving sustainable development and encourage community self-help activities.

Under the NBCCP, hundreds of communities represented by Community Development Committees vie for first, second and third prizes as well as special area prizes, including ‘Best Visitor Experience,’ funded by the Tourism Enhancement Fund.