**DRAFT Tour Operator On-Site Audit Guidance**

**Relating to Sections 13 and 14 of the GSTC Accreditation Manual v2.4**

**Purpose of this Document**

GSTC recognizes the large variety of types of Tour Operators, tours, excursions, and supply chains for each. The guidance provided herein applies to on-site audits for all types of tour operations *except* where more specific guidance is provided for specific types of operation.

Ideally, on-site audits are conducted in some combination of head-office visit and field audits of a sampling of suppliers. Certification Bodies shall use their best judgment in planning and executing on-site audits by balancing the preference to sample as many supplier components and review as many management procedures with the limitations of the time requirements of on-site supplier review.

The merit of on-site visits to head offices of Certification Bodies is an established procedure by accreditation services in all sectors. This document will focus not on that but on guidance for that portion of the on-site audit that includes some amount of observation and review of the performance of relevant suppliers to the Tour Operator being certified.

The purpose of the supplier review is to assess the degree to which the Tour Operator contracts with suppliers provides supplier guidance with reasonable consideration to sensitive issues included within the GSTC Criteria. *The suppliers and the products are NOT being comprehensively reviewed to the full GSTC Criteria and this procedure is NOT to be considered product certification or supplier certification.*

In addition to this guidance document, the Certification Body and the Tour Operator are directed to adhere to the general principles provided in the report titled “Supply Chain Engagement for Tour Operators” published by the Tour Operator Initiative (TOI) in the year 2004

NOTE: TOI formally merged with GSTC in 2015 and this publication’s copyrights are now the property of GSTC.

**Guidance from GSTC**

**On-Site Audit Duration:**

Minimum of 8 hours in the field per “audit day” (guidance on frequency is outside the scope of this guidance document)

**Sampling Overview:**

The sampling is based on volume and risk. “Tours” or “Excursions” [KM1] are not sampled; rather, the suppliers and components (attractions, transport vehicles, etc.) are sampled and analyzed [KM2] .

**Sampling size:**

1 - Calculate the total number of tour suppliers currently under contract to provide services to operate some or all elements of tour products offered by the TO during the most recent 12-month period. Calculate the square root of that number, and use that number as the sample size for desktop review.

2 - During the desktop review of those tour products, identify “suppliers of interest” based on the sampling selection guidelines below. From those, identify the most frequently used suppliers to create a list of suppliers and activities for the on-site audit to draw from.

3 - For each one-day/8-hour+ audit, select a minimum of 3 suppliers [KM3], with at least 2 based on the selection guidance provided here, and at least 1 selected at random. Select as many more than the minimum of 3 allow based on travel time and observation time [KM4]. Consider 3 the absolute minimum number; strive for 5+ and as many as possible.

**Sampling selection process:**

Given time limitations, the audit must prioritize time spent based on impacts, according to the following criteria:

-       Volume of visitors using particular services of a particular supplier

-       Sensitive environmental issues including but not limited to:

-       Criteria D2.1 and D2.2 on greenhouse gas emissions by transport vehicles, studying which vehicles are used most frequently by the transport provider for the larger-sales-volume tour products KM5] .

-       Criteria D3.4 on Wildlife Interaction and D3.5 on Animal Welfare. Whale-watching is an example of a sensitive environmental issue. The audit should assess whether the excursion operator adheres to internationally-recognized good practices for viewing whales to ensure their welfare [KM6].

-       Criterion D3.3 on Visits to Natural Areas and Criterion C2 on Cultural Heritage sites. Audits should include visits to any sites that are known specifically to be under threat from tourism impacts.

-       Criterion B5 on Exploitation and Harassment. Child labor practices are an example of a social issue to observe; therefore tour components that may attract violators of child labor laws should be observed to identify possible violations of local and national laws.