



Guidelines for National Government Authorities

to Apply the GSTC Framework

to Public Policy for Tourism Development & Promotion



Global Sustainable Tourism Council

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Background: Tourism public policy-makers and destination managers wish to include effective and credible sustainable tourism policies in their strategic plans. The GSTC offers support to public sector authorities in the development of broadly-applied policies and institutional structures that ensure sustainability in tourism and destination management is systematized, coherent, put into practice, measured, and monitored.

Many national and provincial governments are interested in applying the GSTC framework. This document is intended to serve as a guideline for how the GSTC Criteria and the GSTC framework assists governments around the world in creating clarity in their sustainable development and promotion policies and practices.

Why Use the GSTC Framework:

1. Sustainability standards are necessary to define sustainable tourism for all stakeholders. This avoids the confusion that is very common regarding the meaning and scope of “sustainable tourism” (also known as “responsible tourism/travel”).
2. While most countries have some amount of policies and good practices in sustainability, many of those policies and practices are not comprehensive. Use of the GSTC framework creates order, harmonization, and consistency, allowing for more widespread adoption and application of policies.
3. The GSTC Criteria serve as global baseline standards, recognized as such universally and created by an inclusive, global process that adheres to the standards-setting code of the ISEAL Alliance.
4. The GSTC Framework is for national or regional bodies to develop standards or to endorse existing NGO or private-sector standards. Application of the GSTC Framework assists in creating a systemized approach to utilizing multiple standards available in a country.
5. Market benefits of applying the GSTC framework are growing, due to the rising awareness of GSTC and to industry leaders moving toward preferred procurement of sustainable product. For example, TUI Group encourages hotels in their supply chain to gain sustainable certification per the GSTC Framework; and Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines requires that all operators of their global land tours (shore excursions) become certified according to the GSTC framework by the year 2020.

How to Use the GSTC Framework:

1. Become a GSTC member organization in order to gain full access to GSTC resources, and to publicly proclaim intentions to enhance sustainable tourism policy and practices per international standards.
2. Work with GSTC to create a customized plan, which may utilize some or all of the following components:
 - a) **Focus Group Discussion** - GSTC offers a one-time visit by a high-level GSTC leader (Technical Director, CEO, or Chair/Vice-Chair of the Board) and the GSTC Country Representative to meet for one day or less at no charge to member organizations to recommend policy approaches. Topics will include how to build new or strengthen existing national frameworks of standards and certification, encouraging private sector uptake of certification, enhanced management for sustainable destinations, and policies to promote public sector and private sector sustainable practices.

(Travel expenses are to be supported by the member organization, but GSTC will not charge a fee for this session.)
 - b) **Webinars** – GSTC will make available to member organizations customized webinars to instruct policy-makers on the GSTC framework and to answer their questions.
 - c) **Leadership Training** - GSTC will conduct a 2-day training program designed to inform leading authorities from the national Ministry/Department plus designated regional authorities. The primary purpose of this session is to inform public authorities of what is required for destinations to become sustainable in terms of their local management structure and to recommend a framework for national policy that supports sustainable destination development.
 - d) **Signing Ceremony – Initial Agreement and/or Celebrations of Milestones** - Conduct a signing ceremony of a document whereby national authorities pledge to adhere to GSTC Criteria to the best of their abilities in the management of the destinations within its jurisdiction and to follow the agreed-upon Action Plan.
 - e) **Sustainable Tourism Training Program** - GSTC authorized trainers conduct one or more classroom training classes with optional field trips designed to inform stakeholders from the public sector, private sector, NGO's, academia, or other tourism stakeholders in the core concepts of sustainability using the GSTC Criteria.
 - f) **Harmonize Standards** – Work with the GSTC to ensure that any existing or planned national or subnational standards and certification programs are aligned with the GSTC Criteria and the GSTC framework.

- g) **Destination Planning for Sustainability**- A GSTC expert interviews local authorities on current policies and practices, supplemented with research and analysis, to produce a high-level report on steps necessary to take for enhancing sustainability policy and practice. This evaluation is designed for general planning purposes, not necessarily related to a process of certification, but could be adopted later by a Certifying Body as the first step of a certification process.
- h) **Formation of a Destination Sustainability Management Committee/Council at Leading Destinations** - A GSTC expert participates in the initial meeting of a formal group established to adhere to GSTC-D Criterion A2 and its indicators.
- i) **Encourage and Promote Sustainable Certification by Hotels and Tour Operators** – In order to make local or national supply chains more sustainable, hotels and transport and tour operators should become certified sustainable. Destination managers can support and encourage that in a variety of ways. Offer training workshops for the private sector on why and how to gain certification. Create low-cost rewards programs for them by providing some level of market recognition for their accomplishments.

Publicizing Progress and Accomplishments: Throughout the membership period, GSTC will release appropriate external communications relating to the discussions and planning. After the initial announcements regarding intentions and planning, GSTC encourages and offers support to announce progress and accomplishments, such as:

- ✓ Adoption of national or provincial policy frameworks that encourage actual practice and implementation
- ✓ Specific destinations being certified sustainable
- ✓ Establishing targets for private sector hotel and tour operator certification
- ✓ Private sector accomplishments, for example, 50% of hotel capacity at a destination being certified as sustainable