



GSTC Whistleblowing Policy for Accreditation

version 1.0

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Document History

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Document Controls

This is version 1.0 of the GSTC Whistleblowing Policy for Accreditation, 2024.

Document Approval: GSTC Global Assurance Director

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The Global Sustainable Tourism Council

www.gstcouncil.org

1. Purpose and Scope

- 1.1. The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) is committed to conducting its organizational activity fairly, honestly, transparently, and in compliance with all legal and regulatory obligations.
- 1.2. This policy aims to provide a clear mechanism for stakeholders to report suspected wrongdoing, ensuring that all reports are treated with confidentiality and fairness.
- 1.3. This policy applies to all GSTC stakeholders, including employees, auditors, certified organizations, and external partners.

2. Reporting Wrongdoing

- 2.1. All stakeholders are encouraged and empowered to report any wrongdoing or concern they may have.
- 2.2. Reporting should be made in good faith, based on reasonable grounds for believing that the disclosed information indicates wrongdoing.
- 2.3. GSTC ensures that concerns will be taken seriously and investigated thoroughly, with appropriate action taken as necessary.

3. Confidentiality and Protection from Retaliation

- 3.1. GSTC is committed to protecting the identity of whistleblowers. Any individual who reports wrongdoing in good faith can do so without fear of reprisals, even if their concerns are ultimately found to be mistaken.
- 3.2. GSTC complies with all applicable laws prohibiting retaliation against whistleblowers.
- 3.3. GSTC will make every effort to protect the whistleblower's identity.
- 3.4. When evidence provided by the whistleblower could expose their identity, GSTC will re-collect the evidence through alternative methods. If this is not possible, GSTC will avoid using the evidence unless it is critical to the case. In such instances, the whistleblower will be notified, and their consent will be sought if their identity is known.

4. Reporting Process

- 4.1. Whistleblowers can report their concerns to the GSTC through the [GSTC Grievance Mechanism](#).
- 4.2. GSTC encourages the timely reporting of any suspected or actual misconduct related to the activities of:
 - 4.2.1. Certification Bodies;
 - 4.2.2. Recognized Standard Owners;
 - 4.2.3. Certified Organizations;
 - 4.2.4. GSTC's internal operations; and
 - 4.2.5. Any other relevant entities involved in GSTC-related activities.
- 4.3. Whistleblowers shall provide sufficient details to allow GSTC to investigate the concern effectively.

5. Investigation and Response

- 5.1. Upon receiving a report of suspected wrongdoing, GSTC will:
 - 5.1.1. Acknowledge receipt of the report (if contact details are available);
 - 5.1.2. Conduct an appropriate investigation to assess the validity of the concern;
 - 5.1.3. Maintain confidentiality throughout the process, sharing only necessary information with relevant parties involved in the investigation; and
 - 5.1.4. Keep the whistleblower informed about the progress of the investigation, to the extent possible without compromising confidentiality or the investigation process.

6. Misconduct Covered by the Policy:

- 6.1. This policy covers the reporting of any concerns regarding:
 - 6.1.1. Fraud, corruption, or financial misconduct;

- 6.1.2. Breaches of agreement, ethical guidelines, or any regulatory requirements set by GSTC;
- 6.1.3. Actions that endanger public safety or the environment;
- 6.1.4. Unethical behavior by Certification Bodies, Recognized Standard Owners, Certified Organizations, or GSTC personnel; and/or
- 6.1.5. Any other activities that could harm the reputation, credibility, or operational integrity of GSTC.

7. Encouraging a Culture of Openness

- 7.1. GSTC promotes a culture of openness and transparency, where stakeholders feel confident in raising genuine concerns.
- 7.2. GSTC remains committed to handling all reports with professionalism and diligence, ensuring that corrective actions are taken when necessary.