



GSTC Certification Scheme and Certification Body (CS-CB) Framework version 1.0

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Document History

Version	Date of Approval	Description of Amendment	Affected Section/Page
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Document Controls

This is version 1.0 of the GSTC Certification Scheme and Certification Body Framework, 2024.

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1. Scope and Purpose

This document outlines the steps for implementing the Certification Scheme (CS) – Certification Body (CB) Framework described in the Accreditation Manual for Industry and Destination, respectively. The CS and the CB shall follow the process described in this document when the CB applies for the CS-CB Framework that the CB provides certification services against the GSTC-Recognized Standard on behalf of the GSTC-Recognized standard owner (RSO) as the RSO has decided to be a CS.

2. Definition of Certification Scheme

GSTC Certification Scheme is a certification system that follows GSTC certification requirements, rules, and procedures to certify relevant tourism industries or destinations (as described in the GSTC Accreditation Manuals) against the GSTC-Recognized standard owned and maintained by the system owner.

Note: According to ISO17065 clause 3.9, certification scheme is defined as follows: "certification system related to specified products, to which the same specified requirements, specific rules and procedures apply".

3. Overview of CS-CB Framework

Under this framework, RSOs are classified as Certification Schemes by GSTC. An RSO who uses its GSTC-Recognized standard for certification has the option to adhere to the CS-CB Framework to make its certification program a GSTC-Accredited Certification while maintaining its standard as GSTC-Recognized. This framework entails that RSOs enter into the service agreement with one or more GSTC-Accredited Certification Bodies (ACBs), authorizing the ACB to perform the certification activities, including certification decisions for the clients on behalf of the RSO. This agreement sets out the rules for carrying out certification services on behalf of the CS. By signing a Certification Scheme License Agreement (CSLA) with GSTC, Both entities obtain the right to use the GSTC Certification Scheme Logo.

The CS-CB Framework facilitates the ACBs' certification process on behalf of RSOs. GSTC conducts annual surveillance of these ACBs to ensure ongoing compliance with accreditation requirements during the accreditation cycle. This framework aims

to foster mutual benefits for RSOs and ACBs, leveraging each other's strengths in the market.

3.1. Benefits of CS-CB Framework

3.1.1. Benefits for RSOs

- Gaining GSTC-Accredited status for its certification business/service by partnering with one or more GSTC-Accredited certification bodies. This approach saves time and cost for achieving accreditation independently.
- Taking advantage of marketing benefits by promoting its certification as the highest level of rigorous, transparent, and impartial program. The accredited certification body has been assessed against international requirements (ISO17065) and the GSTC's specific requirements for the tourism industry.
- Providing non-certification activities such as training, and consulting without any conflict of interest, as long as RSOs are not involved in the certification process.
- Gaining the right to use the GSTC Certification Scheme Logo: While RSOs do not initially have the right to use the GSTC Logo, they can obtain this right by signing a CSLA with GSTC when adhering to the CS-CB Framework.



3.1.2. Benefits for ACBs

- Gaining clients who have already certified to the GSTC-Recognized standard or prefer the standard without its own marketing effort.
- Taking advantage of including its name on the certification certificate to gain marketing benefits and increase visibility in the market.
- Taking advantage of using tourism-experienced auditors through the RSOs network

3.2. Overview of Process

- 3.2.1. ① A Standard Owner gains GSTC-Recognized status for their standard.
(For more information regarding the GSTC Recognition Program, please refer to GSTC-Recognized Manual v5.0)
- 3.2.2. ② RSO intending to follow the CS-CB Framework should reach out to one or more ACBs.
- 3.2.3. ③ A service agreement is then established between the RSO and the ACB, addressing the requirements set by GSTC.
- 3.2.4. ④ During this process, the RSO provides training on the standard to the ACB and its auditors. In turn, the ACB prepares the necessary documentation, demonstrating competence in performing certification activities following the required procedures.
- 3.2.5. ⑤ The ACB, once it has obtained the required qualifications, applies to GSTC to extend its technical scope.
- 3.2.6. ⑥ GSTC assesses the application for scope extension submitted by the ACB. (For details, please see Clause 3.3.3. below)
- 3.2.7. ⑦ If GSTC grants the scope extension, the RSO signs a CSLA with GSTC, after which the ACB can commence the certification process for the standard. Once the CSLA is signed, the RSO is classified as a CS by GSTC.
 - 3.2.7.1. By signing the CSLA, the CS agrees to send all clients seeking certification to the contracted ACB(s).
 - 3.2.7.2. By signing the CSLA, the CS agrees not to use the term "certification" for its own activities and not to operate any program providing verification or certification services that could confuse the market.
 - 3.2.7.3. Violation of this requirement shall make the CS status null and void.

3.3. Checklist and Steps

- 3.3.1. The CS signs a service agreement with the ACB:

- 3.3.1.1. The CS agrees to no longer manage or provide auditing and certification services.
 - 3.3.1.2. The agreement sets out the rules for auditing and certification services on behalf of the CS.
 - 3.3.1.3. The CS and CB agree on the role of CS auditors in the accredited process, which is in line with the main principle that the CS shall not be involved in the certification and that the entire process shall be carried out only by the CB on behalf of the CS. If the CS auditors continue to audit under the CS-CB Framework, they must qualify as GSTC auditors following the GSTC Accreditation Manual requirements, and no conflict of interest shall be secured.
 - 3.3.1.4. The CS can sign a service agreement with one or more ACBs to perform the auditing functions and certification decisions for the certification of clients.
- 3.3.2. Licensing Agreement GSTC-CS / GSTC-CB:
- 3.3.2.1. The CS enters into a Certification Scheme Licensing Agreement (**CSLA**) with the GSTC, which provides rules of engagement for the GSTC logo and trademark usage.
 - 3.3.2.2. The CB enters into a Certification Body Licensing Agreement (**CBLA**) with the GSTC, which provides rules of engagement for the GSTC logo and trademark usage for its own clients and for clients of any and all certification schemes that contract with the Accredited CB to conduct certification/auditing functions on their behalf.
- 3.3.3. The CB submits an application for an extension of the technical sub-scope to GSTC:
- 3.3.3.1. The CB shall indicate and provide the evidence regarding the GSTC-Recognized Standard owned by the respective CS.

- 3.3.3.2. The Standard of the CS shall be GSTC-Recognized Standard. If the GSTC-Recognized status is expired, the CS shall re-apply or renew the GSTC-Recognized status of the standard in accordance with the GSTC Recognition Manual v5.0.
- 3.3.3.3. Tour Product is a part of the technical scope of the Tour Operator and does not require additional technical scope and separate application process if the Recognized standard is for tour operators and the certification scheme covers tour operator certification.
- 3.3.4. GSTC reviews the application:
 - 3.3.4.1. To determine the duration and type of assessment needed.
 - 3.3.4.2. For technical scope extensions, a desk review is required. Whether witnessing is necessary will be determined based on structural similarities between the GSTC Criteria and the Recognized standard. This review will be conducted by the GSTC, including the Recognition assessor and Assurance Director.
 - 3.3.4.3. The extension of the geographical scope of the Recognized standard (a separate process will be required) and its certification can be assessed after the approval of the CS-CB Framework, followed by a desk review.
- 3.3.5. GSTC carries out a desk review to assess the CB's readiness of the certification using the CS's GSTC-Recognized standard.
 - 3.3.5.1. Major non-conformities identified during the desk review shall be satisfactorily closed before the witnessing.
- 3.3.6. GSTC carries out a witnessing to assess the CB's capability of auditing to the GSTC-Recognized standard.

- 3.3.6.1. Major non-conformities identified during the witness assessment shall be satisfactorily closed by the agreed due date or within 90 days.
- 3.3.7. The Assurance Panel reviews and makes a final accreditation decision based on the assessment report.
- 3.3.8. Upon a positive GSTC decision, the CS-CB Framework will come into effect.
- 3.3.9. The Accredited CB shall be responsible for carrying out the certification audit and making the certification decision against the GSTC-Recognized Standard owned by the CS. The CS will remain the owner of the standard but will not be involved in any part of the certification process.

4. Associated Documentation

- 4.1. The latest version of the GSTC Accreditation Manual for Certification of Hotel/Accommodation & Tour Operator.
- 4.2. The latest version of the GSTC Accreditation Procedure.