GSTC®

Global Sustainable Tourism Council

Development of the
Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC)

MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) Criteria

Terms of Reference

Document Control

This is version 1.0 of the Terms of Reference for the GSTC MICE Criteria, 2023.

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1   Introduction

1.1   Development of the GSTC MICE Criteria

The purpose of this Terms of Reference document is to set out the need and requirements for the development of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) Criteria for Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (hereafter referred to as the GSTC MICE Criteria) and the processes to be followed.

The GSTC MICE Criteria will be developed with the input of relevant stakeholders in the field of MICE.

This document provides an overview of the background and context of the MICE Criteria including a) the proposed scope and the intended geographic application; b) justification of the need for the standard including: an assessment of the most important sustainability issues falling within the scope of the standard; an explanation of whether the proposed standard will meet an expressed need; and documentation of other standards operating or in development that meets all or in part of the expressed need; c) clear social, environmental and economic outcomes that the standard seeks to achieve and how those are linked to the GSTC's intended change; d) an assessment of risks in implementing the standard and how to mitigate these, including: identification of factors that could have a negative impact on the ability of the standard to achieve its outcomes; unintended consequences that could arise from its implementation; and possible corrective actions that could be taken to address these potential risks. (ISEAL Impacts Code 7.6 and 7.4); and e) decision-making procedures, including how decisions are made and who makes them.

A final section of the document outlines the stages that will be followed in the revision process.
The whole process of development and revision will be overseen by the International Standards Committee (ISC) of the GSTC.

The development and content of these Terms of Reference meets the requirements of the ISEAL Standard-Setting Code of Good Practice (Version 6.0), referred to below.

1.2　ISEAL Standard-Setting Code

ISEAL is a non-governmental organization whose mission is to strengthen sustainability standards systems for the benefit of people and the environment. ISEAL is the global leader in defining and communicating what good practice looks like for sustainability standards through guidance and credibility tools, which include three Codes of Good Practice. ISEAL is currently revising and integrating the ISEAL Impacts, Standard-Setting, and Assurance Codes, along with essential practices from the ISEAL Sustainability Claims Good Practice Guide, into one single Code of Good Practice[1] . The GSTC MICE Criteria Development is developed based on the following three codes:

- o   ISEAL Standard-Setting Code of Good Practice Version 6.0.
- o   ISEAL Assurance Code of Good Practice Version 2.0.
- o   ISEAL Impact Code of Good Practice Version 2.0.

GSTC MICE Criteria Development TOR

ISEAL members include many of the world's most respected standard-setting organizations and accreditation bodies. They drive the sustainability standards movement forward across various sectors, improving its effectiveness and increasing its impact. To become a member, organizations must meet ISEAL's membership and code compliance requirements and progress through ISEAL's membership application process.

The GSTC is currently a Community Member and aspires to make sure the development process follows the ISEAL Code of Good Practice: Setting Social and Environmental Standards, Version 6.0 – December 2014 for MICE Criteria Development. Internally the development process and procedures follow the GSTC Standard Setting Manual version 3.0.

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[1] https://iseal.org/get-involved/resources/iseal-code-good-practice-first-consultation-draft-excel

2   Background and Context

2.1   MICE and Sustainability

Sustainability is becoming an increasing concern for travelers. Awareness is growing about the negative impacts of huge emissions of air travel, environmental damages, and over-tourism. Especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, travelers are beginning to think about changing their travel patterns. According to the report by World Travel & Tourism Council and Trip.com Group[2] In 2022, 69% of travelers were actively seeking sustainable travel options and 75% of travelers were considering traveling more sustainably in the future and nearly 60% have chosen more sustainable travel options in the last couple of years.

Major tourism companies, airlines, hotels and other accommodation providers are seeking business opportunities in supplying sustainable and green products and services. For example, to reduce their contributions to climate change, travel companies are removing flights with excessive emissions of GHG or where possible, replacing flights with other transport means. Hotels and accommodations are working towards enhancing water stewardship.

The changing trend is not only affecting hotels and tour operators, but also other sectors in the tourism industry. Every day in every country there are dozens of events and exhibitions planned that generate a significant impact on the environment. In 2021, the global MICE market size was estimated at USD 658.5 billion and is anticipated to expand at a CAGR (compound annual growth rate) of 6.6% from 2022 to 2030[3]. As companies plan for MICE events to promote their businesses thereby driving local tourism, this reaffirms that the MICE industry can play a significant role in sustainability.

In a survey conducted by AMEX Global Business Travel, 83% of travel and meetings professionals say their organizations take sustainability into account when planning meetings and events. Planning for and practicing sustainable events is inevitable in order to perform resilience and agility.

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[2] A world in motion: shifting consumer travel trends in 2022 and beyond

[3] Grand View Research, MICE Market Size, Share & Trends Analysis Report, By Event Type (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions), By Region (North America, APAC, Europe, Central & South America, MEA), And Segment Forecasts, 2022 – 2030.

Further, the sustainability of events and exhibitions does relate to the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the UN General Assembly which also focuses on Goal 12 (sustainable consumption and production patterns).

Sustainable MICE can play a significant role in the following measures:

- o   Reduce the use of plastics and reusing materials instead of single use.
- o   Reduce energy and water consumption.
- o   Reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- o   Encourage sustainable mobility.
- o   Avoid noise and pollution.
- o   Reduce food waste.
- o   Use environmentally conscious food and products.
- o   Support local employment without discrimination.
- o   Support local and young entrepreneurs.
- o   Promote local culture and cuisine.
- o   Make supply chains more sustainable; and
- o   Increase residents' involvement.

Sustainable tourism requires an approach to tourism development and management that recognizes and responds to these responsibilities and opportunities. Given the ever-growing size of the MICE market and the increasing demand for sustainable tourism, there is a need for global guidelines that inform sustainable practices that subsectors of MICE must follow.

To date there are no globally adopted standards or criteria for the MICE industry. A few organizations have worked toward introducing MICE standards to make a more sustainable MICE industry but there are no globally agreed standards. There is a need to create an international standard for the MICE industry also linked to sustainable standards.

2.2   Global Sustainable Tourism Council

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council is a global, multi-stakeholder membership organization dedicated to setting baseline sustainability standards for travel and tourism and applying the standards as an Accreditation Body that governs certification of sustainable products.

Born as a strategic coalition of partners (the UN Foundation, the UN Environmental Program, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Sabre Holdings and Rainforest Alliance, supported by many others), the GSTC brings together businesses, governments, non-governmental organizations, academia, individuals and communities engaged in and striving to achieve best practices in sustainable tourism. The GSTC serves as the international body for promoting education, understanding, and adoption of sustainable tourism practices.

The GSTC's vision is for tourism to fulfill its potential as a vehicle for social, cultural, and economic good while removing and avoiding any negative impacts from its activities in terms of environmental and social impacts.

It seeks to achieve this by:

- o   Developing Global Standards.
- o   Serving as the Accreditation Body for sustainability in travel and tourism.
- o   Helping destinations to become more sustainable.
- o   Promoting market access.
- o   Increasing knowledge.

2.3   GSTC Criteria

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council currently has two sets of established and managed global sustainable standards, known as the GSTC Criteria. These are the globally-applicable guiding principles and minimum requirements that any tourism business or destination should aspire to reach in order to protect and sustain the world's natural and cultural resources, while ensuring tourism meets its potential as a tool for conservation and poverty alleviation. They were developed, and continue to be periodically revised, through extensive public consultation throughout the globe, in both developed and developing countries, striving to adhere to the Standard-Setting Code of the

ISEAL Alliance. They serve as vital tools for elevating good practice and policy, as well as driving market demand, by all players in travel and tourism.

The GSTC Criteria have been built on decades of prior work and experience around the world, taking into account the numerous guidelines and standards for sustainable tourism from every continent.

They are arranged in four pillars:

1. Sustainable management.
2. Socioeconomic sustainability.
3. Cultural sustainability.
4. Environmental sustainability (resource consumption, reducing pollution, conserving biodiversity and landscapes).

The Criteria are the minimum, not the maximum, which businesses, governments, and destinations should achieve to approach social, environmental, cultural, and economic sustainability. Since tourism destinations each have their own culture, environment, customs, and laws, the Criteria are designed to be adapted to local conditions and supplemented by additional criteria for the specific location and activity.

The GSTC Strategic Plan 2020 states that the GSTC will continue to promote widespread application of the GSTC Criteria as global baseline standards and maintain them for relevance to current market conditions.

The two sets of the GSTC Criteria are:

1. **GSTC Industry Criteria**, abbreviated as GSTC-I, relating to the sustainable management of the private sector travel industry, focusing currently on Hotels and Tour Operators.

2. **GSTC Destination Criteria,** abbreviated as GSTC-D, relating to the sustainable management of tourism destinations and intended for public policy-makers and destination managers.

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With the two sets of Criteria, the GSTC intends to raise awareness and education levels of all travel and tourism players of sustainable tourism concepts in order to support sustainable consumption and production.

Both sets of Criteria, together with associated Performance Indicators, are publicly available for download from the GSTC website. While the official language of the GSTC Criteria is English, translations into a number of languages are available. The GSTC-I was last revised in 2016, while The GSTC-D was first released in 2013 and updated in December 2019.

3   GSTC MICE Criteria

3.1   Need and Justification

The two GSTC Criteria sets can be used as a tool for businesses and sustainable management organizations to reflect upon the economic, social, and environmental impact coming from their activities. Yet the tourism industry and its activities are growing every day with tourism having a significant impact on many other industries and businesses. Clearly, there is a need to widen the scope of the GSTC Criteria and study the impacts of tourism on many other industries.

The MICE industry is having a significant impact on the environment, as companies organize events and exhibitions for the promotion of the local region as well as branding of their products. With the rise of the awareness that the world should aim to be a greener place, more and more entities are organizing their activities and businesses around sustainability. These events at the local destination are attracting people to travel to and visit the local destination. Yet there are considerable negative impacts that these people bring with them when they travel to that local destination without awareness. When events are not organized or controlled carefully these can bring serious negative impacts to the surrounding environment such as pollution and traffic from transportation, and excessive energy and water consumption.

Transportation availability, infrastructure development and visitor facilities and many others are essential elements in the planning, developing and promotion of events and exhibitions. Although events and exhibitions might be driving growth in tourism, they do not always bring synergy effects. Acknowledging the fact that these two are inseparable, the knowledge of sustainable tourism

principles and practices must come together with input from the MICE industry to create a standard to ensure that these functions are designed and implemented in ways that fully comply with sustainable principles and practices.

In the last decades, the engagement of the MICE industry to the development of the tourism sector has been gradually growing and therefore its contribution to tourism development cannot be separated.

This explains the need of the MICE Criteria in relation to tourism development and calls for the development of the GSTC MICE Criteria to ensure sustainable MICE industry development.

3.2   Scope of the Criteria

The GSTC MICE Criteria is designed for covering the three sub-sectors of venue, event organizer, and event/exhibition. They are defined as follows:

- o **Venue:** A closed or open place, operated or owned by a person or institution, which is designated for events, exhibitions, meetings, and conferences.
- o **Event organizer:** An individual professional, team, or organization who plans, organizes, or is contracted to organize, and manages events for individuals, businesses, organizations, and other clients. It is also known as an event planner.
- o **Event/Exhibition:** A specific occasion for which people are convened for a limited time (usually days or weeks) for a specific purpose. The event/exhibition is owned by a person, body, committee or institution, which is responsible for its management.

The GSTC MICE Criteria shall be applicable to all regions around the world and shall include groups with disadvantaged groups such as under-represented and/or under-engaged groups due to language, technology, or other barriers.

The content of the GSTC MICE Criteria is designed to meet the full range of managerial, economic, socio-cultural and environmental issues affecting the sustainability of the MICE industry. The future revision should reflect new trends and sustainability challenges faced by them.

3.3 Objectives and Uses

The MICE Industry is able to make use of the GSTC MICE Criteria in a variety of ways. For example, they may:

o Serve as basic guidelines for planning sustainable MICE.

o Help business travelers identify sound sustainable MICE.

o Serve as a common denominator for information media to recognize sustainable MICE industry and inform the public regarding their sustainability.

o Help certification and other voluntary MICE industry programs ensure that their standards meet a broadly accepted baseline.

o Offer governmental, non-governmental, and private sector programs a starting point for developing sustainable tourism requirements in MICE.

o Serve as basic guidelines for education and training bodies, such as MICE related schools and universities.

3.4 Outcomes

The intended outcome of the existence and application of the GSTC MICE Criteria is for industry players to plan for more sustainable venues and events, understand the basic elements for maintaining management processes for sustainability, and implement sustainable practices based on the MICE Criteria.

The GSTC is committed to ensuring that sustainable tourism best practices are adopted and implemented by the industry and the traveling public[4]. With the development of the MICE Criteria, the GSTC will add a new training program on MICE. This is an expansion of the Sustainable Tourism Training Program which will provide more access to more tourism players.

The above are the GSTC's intended impacts through the activities of Global Criteria Development and training on the Criteria.

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[4] https://www.gstcouncil.org/about/gstc-impact/

3.5   Risks

Risks may arise from the use of the GSTC MICE Criteria. These are summarized in the table below with mitigation approaches identified (Table 1).

Table 1. Risk and mitigation plan.

RISK	MITIGATION
Some MICE sub-sectors such as video/audio equipment, food and beverage, transport, etc. are not developed as separate Criteria sets. The GSTC MICE Criteria will cover three sets of Criteria for the venue, event organizer, and event/exhibition.	The GSTC MICE Criteria will include requirements for covered subsectors to provide sustainability guidance to noncovered subsectors.
The criteria may allow some organizations, especially small and micro businesses in MICE to fall short in meeting aspects of tourism sustainability.	Ensure that the criteria are fully comprehensive of sustainability issues and are sufficiently challenging to stimulate improvements regardless of business size.
Already existing standards may perceive the new GSTC MICE Criteria as a competitor.	The GSTC will clearly position the GSTC MICE Criteria in the market and provide clear guidance on who they best apply to. Also including MICE standards in the GSTC Recognition Program as long as they are equivalent to the global requirements.
Not many globally acknowledged incentives in the tourism market.	Develop a global sustainable MICE Certification Program under the GSTC Sustainable Tourism Certification Scheme.

4   Standard-Setting Process

## 4.1   Approach to the GSTC MICE Criteria Development

It is proposed to take a practical approach to developing standards for the MICE industry in order to respond to the demand of the market. With the MICE Criteria, the GSTC promises to act on its mission to deliver on impacts such as:

- o   Inform MICE industry players of issues and actions to engage in sustainable events.
- o   Provide effective guidelines to the marketplace.
- o   To comply with universal principles.

Instead of drafting a completely new standard, the MICE Criteria will start off by using the GSTC-I Criteria as its basis. Already two workshops were conducted in Gunsan, South Korea in September 2022 and Sevilla, Spain in December 2022 to gather the very first comments on the MICE Criteria.

4.2 Criteria Development Process

A visual for the Criteria development process is shown below (Figure 1).
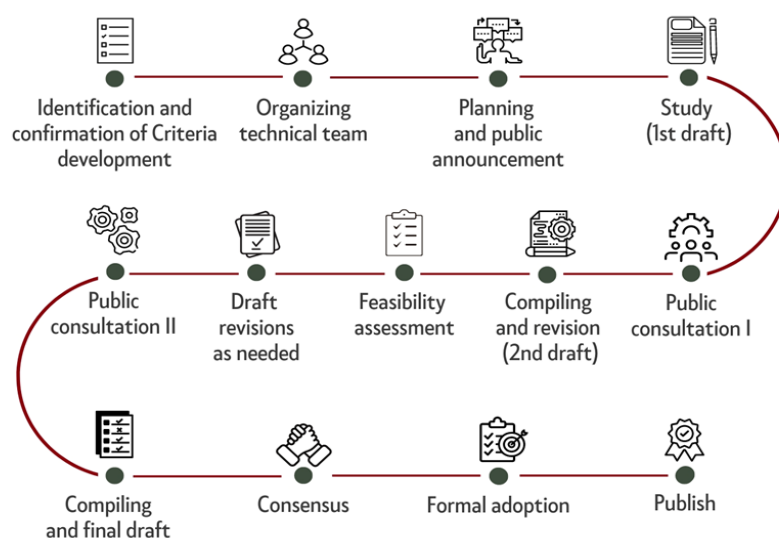
The tasks by each step are as follows:

1) Confirmation of the MICE Criteria Development

- o   Public announcement of the collaboration between the GSTC and key contributor(s) on the development of the MICE Criteria ("Public Announcement").

2) Organizing the MICE Criteria Development Technical Team

o   The GSTC internal experts and external organizations/expert(s) from MICE Industry (GSTC Assurance Director manages the process and experts work on making an initial draft).

3) Planning and public announcement: Developing Term of Reference following the ISEAL Standard-Setting Code

o   Summary of the TOR for the standard, including a. the proposed scope, objectives, and justification of the need for the standard; b. steps in the standard-setting process, including timelines and clearly identified opportunities for contributing; and c. decision-making procedures, including how decisions are made and who makes them.

4) Study of the 1st draft: Preliminary study and preparation of a draft outline

o   Compilation of the criteria for all known standards and guidelines for the sector and related activities to determine common elements.

o   Sharing preliminary results (a draft set of criteria) with the GSTC internal expert groups and outside experts in the sector.

5) Public consultation I: Public consultation on the 1st draft

o   Development of a list of MICE stakeholder groups within the subsectors, based on the Criteria's scope.

o   Making separate lists of Key stakeholder groups that are directly affected.

o   Conducting Online and Offline consultation.

o   Inviting all stakeholders to make their inputs on the GSTC website.

o   Reaching out to under-engaged and under-represented groups by two international NGOs

o   Conducting Focus Group workshop(s), interview(s), email communications, etc. (i.e., practitioners in the relevant sectors).

6) Compiling and revision of 2nd draft

o   Compiling all comments from the consultation.

o   Refining the draft for feasibility assessment.

7) Feasibility assessment: Applying the 2ⁿᵈ draft to the field and refining it and prepare 3ʳᵈ draft development for the public consultation

- o The systematic analysis and thoughtful evaluation of a potential Criteria's benefits to the field as well as anticipated impediments to their adoption and implementation by the relevant sector(s) (feasibility and auditability of requirements in the draft Criteria).
- o Voluntary participation from the MICE Industry.

8) Public consultation on the 3ʳᵈ draft

- o Public sharing of SYNOPSIS of the comments from the 1st public consultation and the GSTC responses.
- o Sharing the 3rd draft.
- o Online and Offline consultation.
- o Stakeholders' input via the GSTC website.
- o Consultation with Key stakeholders.
- o Consultation with disadvantaged groups.

9) Compiling and final draft: Compiling all comments from the public consultation and refining the final draft

- o Public sharing of SYNOPSIS of the comments from the 2nd public consultation and the GSTC responses.

10) Consensus on the final draft

- o ISC's review of the draft and agreement on accepting it as the final version.

11) Formal adoption: The GSTC Board of Directors' formal adoption of the final draft

- o Making sure that stakeholders' views are reflected in decision-making.

12) Publish

- o New Criteria are published promptly and made available for free in electronic format.
- o Making hard copies of public summaries, standards, and other related materials available upon request.
- o Standards and supporting documents shall each include:
  - ✔ Contact information on the GSTC

✔ The formal status of the document

✔ The official language(s) and

✔ A note that, in the case of inconsistency between versions, reference shall default to the official language version

Below is the timeline of each of the 12 steps of the Criteria development (Table 2).

Table 2. Timeline of MICE Criteria Development.

TASK	TIMELINE	OUTPUT	BY
1. CONFIRMATION of MICE Criteria Development	Year 2022		GSTC Board of Directors
2. ORGANIZING MICE Criteria Development Technical Team	January 1st ~ March 15th	Initial draft drafted by the GSTC internal experts (GSTC staff) and external experts	GSTC Secretariat
3. PLANNING and PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT: Developing Term of Reference following ISEAL Standard Setting Code	March 16th ~April 5th	Public announcement and information sharing	Technical Team International Standards Committee (ISC) GSTC Secretariat
4. STUDY (1ST DRAFT) Preliminary study and preparation of a draft outline	April 6th ~ June 15th	Draft set of criteria (compilation of criteria)	Technical Team
5. PUBLIC CONSULTATION I Public consultation on the 1st draft	June 16th ~ August 16th	Key stakeholder list and consult with them doing FGI, workshops, interview etc.	Technical Team
6. COMPILING and REVISION OF DRAFT (2ND DRAFT)	August 16th ~ September 15th	Draft for feasibility assessment	Technical Team
7. FEASIBILITY ASSESSMENT Applying the 2nd draft to the field and refining it	September 16th ~ November 15th	Draft of the outcome of the feasibility assessment with comments from Advisory group	Technical Team
8. PUBLIC CONSULTATION II Public consultation on the 3RD draft	November 16th ~ December 15th	Consultation review based on the 2nd draft	Technical Team

TASK	TIMELINE	OUTPUT	BY
9. COMPILING and Final DRAFT Compiling all comments from the public consultation	December 16th ~ January 15th 2024	Refining for final draft	Technical Team
10. CONSENSUS Consensus on the final draft.	January 16th ~ February 15th 2024	Agreement between Technical Team and ISC on the final draft	Technical Team and ISC
11. FORMAL ADOPTION GSTC Board of Directors' formal adoption of the final draft	End of February 2024	Review of final draft by GSTC Board of Directors	GSTC Board of Directors
12. PUBLISH		New criteria published as electronic format	GSTC Secretariat

4.3 Stakeholder Mapping

MICE Businesses

There are different types of businesses in the MICE industry such as convention center/bureau and other types of venue providers, hotels, event planning companies, travel agencies, catering service providers, Audiovisual and technology companies, transport service providers, etc.

Public Sector for MICE

The public sector plays an important role in the MICE industry, particularly in the areas of tourism, economic development, and destination marketing. Public sector organizations such as government agencies and tourism boards often work to promote their cities or regions as destinations for MICE events, and they may provide support and resources to event organizers to help attract and host these events.

Some examples for the public sector for MICE are destination marketing organizations, convention, and visitor Bureaus, government agencies providing regulatory oversight, issuing permits, or ensuring compliance with safety and health regulations, and public facilities such as convention centers, sports arenas, and exhibition halls that may be owned or operated by government entities.

MICE Standard Owners and Certification Bodies

There are organizations that have developed, used, and/or certified the MICE industry. They play an important role in promoting best practices and sustainability in the MICE industry. By setting standards and providing certification, these organizations help to improve the quality and safety of MICE events, protect the environment, and promote responsible business practices in the industry.

MICE Association and Academia

The MICE industry is supported by domestic, regional, or international associations and academic institutions that provide resources, research, and education for the industry. These organizations are instrumental in advancing the knowledge, skills, and professionalism of MICE professionals and promoting the growth and sustainability of the industry.

Business Travelers

The MICE industry relies heavily on business travelers to attend and participate in these events, as they provide valuable opportunities for companies to connect with clients and other industry professionals, showcase their products and services, and generate new business leads. Business travelers in the MICE industry are typically individuals who travel for business purposes related to MICE. They may include executives, salespeople, marketing professionals, event planners, and other business professionals who attend or organize events such as trade shows, conferences, meetings, or incentive travel programs.

Business Travel Agencies

Business travel agencies play an important role in the MICE industry by providing travel and logistical support for MICE events.

Business travel agencies work with the MICE industry in the following areas: Group travel and accommodation(e.g. arranging flights, transportation, and hotel accommodations for attendees), event planning and logistics(e.g. coordinating venue selection, catering, and AV equipment, as well as managing on-site logistics during the event), technology and data management(e.g. online registration and payment systems, data analysis and reporting tools to help organizers track attendance and measure the success of the event), risk management(e.g.

travel insurance, emergency response planning, and crisis management services in case of unexpected events or emergencies).

Destination Communities

The MICE industry can have a significant impact on the local community, both positive and negative. Local communities are essential partners in the MICE industry, and their involvement is critical to the success of events and the sustainability of tourism in the long term.

Destination Enterprises not directly involved in MICE

Destination enterprises that are not directly involved in the MICE industry still connect with and benefit from the industry in a number of ways such as Increased demand for goods and services, increased awareness of the destination, opportunities for networking and collaboration, or improved reputation and branding. These can have a positive impact on the local economy and the quality of life for residents. Destination enterprises have an important role to play in supporting its growth and development regardless of their direct involvement or not.

Public (Potential Customers to the MICE industry)

The public is directly and indirectly involved in the MICE industry through attending MICE events as delegates or participants, providing feedback and input on MICE such as through surveys or focus groups, etc.

Disadvantaged Groups

For the GSTC MICE Criteria Development, the Disadvantaged Groups are defined as under-engaged and underrepresented groups due to barriers such as linguistic, geographic, technical, and other difficulties/barriers. Disadvantaged groups will be reached out to get their input in the GSTC MICE Criteria Development.

4.4 Guiding principles

This standard-setting process adheres to the guiding principles described in the GSTC Standard Setting Manual version 2.0 as follows:

Collaboration - Governments, businesses, and civil society organizations, including other sustainability systems, that are working towards shared sustainability objectives. It actively seeks alignment, establishes partnerships, and shares learning to improve efficiency and direct or systemic impacts.

Continual Improvement - Objectives, strategies, and performance of the tools and system are regularly reviewed by which the impacts and outcomes are evaluated. Lessons learned from the continual improvement process are for improvement purposes that respond to new evidence, stakeholder input, and external changes, adapting its strategies to improve its impacts and remain fit for purpose.

Measurable Progress - Quantitative or qualitative tools that are relevant to achieving sustainability objectives, whereby progress towards objectives are measured over time. The sustainability system of the GSTC collects and analyzes the data it needs to measure and understand. Measuring the progress ensures that the user of the data is directed toward the sustainability objectives.

Reliability - Information is consistent and tools are designed in a way so that they can be implemented and assessed with consistency. Reliability ensures assessments of users' sustainability performance are competent and accurate and that these assessments support any claims it allows users to make.

Rigor - All components of a standard system are structured to deliver quality outcomes. Standards are set at a performance level that results in measurable progress towards the scheme's sustainability objectives, while assessment of compliance provides an accurate picture of whether an entity meets the standard's requirements.

Stakeholder Engagement - The sustainability system of the GSTC empowers stakeholders to participate in decisions and hold the system to account. Balanced and diverse group of stakeholders are involved in decisions that will affect the system (or the building of the GSTC Criteria). Stakeholder engagement is essential and provides clear and transparent feedback that guarantees adaptation to the whole system. It shall be a fair, impartial and accessible mechanism for resolving complaints and conflicts.

Sustainability Impacts - Results that deliver what achievements have been met to what has been measured. The sustainability impact communicates the strategies for achieving objectives involving social, environmental, economic and cultural aspects of current scientific evidence and international norms when relevant. It is adapted to local or sector-specific conditions where this helps improve impacts.

Transparency - Important information is publicly available and easily accessible, while protecting confidential and private information. Stakeholders can further understand and evaluate the system's processes, decision-making, results and impacts. Through openness and honesty stakeholders have the necessary information and resources they need to actively participate in decisions or raise concerns.

4.5. MICE Criteria Development Process Management

GSTC Technical Team

The GSTC Technical Team will consist of internal experts and external experts. The internal experts are the GSTC staff including the Global Assurance Program Director, Asia-Pacific Region manager, and the Project manager.

The three external experts were contacted based on their experience in sustainability programs and events and their professionalism in MICE and international settings. The role of the external experts is to provide guidance to the overall process by engaging with the internal experts at the first stages of the Criteria development and perform as experts the drafts, consultation, and the review process. The external experts will be the facilitators for each of the draft development and consultation stages.

Overall, the GSTC Technical Team is responsible for the whole process and communication with internal and external stakeholders. The final work of the Technical Team will be approved by the GSTC Board.

Advisory Group

The GSTC will invite a maximum 10 globally important organizations from both public and private sectors to the MICE Criteria Development Advisory Group.

The role of the advisory group is to provide their high-level feedback and comments to the Technical Team. As leaders in the field, they will be asked to share key stakeholders' contact information so the Technical Team can engage them in the Criteria Development Process and to encourage the MICE industry to participate in the Public Consultation and Feasibility Assessment. Apart from this role, they are asked to attend the online meeting for each phase of the development.

Key Stakeholders Group

Key players in the MICE industry with their business volume and roles will be identified as key stakeholders. Representatives from three sub-sectors of venue, event organizers, event/exhibition and other stakeholders will be invited as key stakeholders. These key stakeholders shall give input based on their experience/knowledge and insights from international and national MICE venues and events.

Disadvantaged Group Consultation

The GSTC will outsource disadvantaged group consultation. To cover the global geographical scope of 5 continents, the GSTC will make contracts with two international NGOs working in different regions. The contracted organizations will conduct disadvantaged group consultation on behalf of the GSTC Technical Team.

GSTC International Standards Committee

The International Standards Committee shall oversee the development process of the GSTC MICE Criteria in all its forms in accordance with the ISEAL Alliance Standards Setting Code. Any disputes on management approach between the Committee and the Secretariat shall be resolved by the Board.

GSTC Board

The GSTC Board is responsible for governance oversight of the Corporation's mandate, program of work, and operations. The Board will give final approval to the new MICE Criteria, as proposed by the International Standards Committee.

#END#