MEMBERSHIP

Overview

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council represents a diverse and global membership, of travel and tourism constituents. Its members come from all regions of the world, represent all sectors and categories. The current chapter defines membership as well as describes the membership application process, benefits, and rights and obligations of the members.

Member Categories

The GSTC is comprised of the following member categories:

Travel & Tourism industry

This includes businesses with travel & tourism related operations, such as tour operators, accommodation providers, restaurants, tourism attractions, travel agencies, travel guides, transport companies,

Certification bodies

This includes organizations that provide sustainable tourism certification services (have the authorization to provide written assurance and logo provision to certify that a tourism product, service, company, process or management system conforms to specific requirements).

Travel and Trade Associations

This includes membership organizations dedicated to promoting tourism including associations for travel professionals and entrepreneurs involved in the travel and tourism industry. .

### Public Authorities

This includes local, regional and national authorities, including Ministries of Tourism, Tourism Boards, Departments of Trade, Culture and Leisure, Ministries of Environment or other relevant government entities.

Intergovernmental organizations

[Organization](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organization)s composed primarily of [member states](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sovereign_state), whose mandate focuses on tourism and other development issues.

NGOs

This includes all non for profits and non-governmental organizations that deal with tourism and/or sustainable production and consumption.

Academia

This includes technical schools, research institutions, colleges and universities with tourism education, training or research institutions.

**Supporting businesses**

Businesses that relate to, promote, supply or provide services to the travel and tourism industry, these include consulting firms, media, communication companies, building and construction businesses, insurance companies, and others. This category encompasses all businesses that do not directly provide travel and tourism services.

Individuals

Individual consultants / experts / professionals with a vested interest in the tourism industry, and knowledge of the sustainable tourism sector, not affiliated to an organization.

Regional representation

The GSTC seeks to represent the interest of its global constituency and therefore strives for a balanced regional representation. The GSTC defines regions based on the UNWTO classification: Africa, Americas, East Asia and the Pacific, South Asia, Europe, Middle East.

Members operating in 3 or more regions of the world will be considered global.

Member Criteria

A set of basic and general member selection criteria has been developed to be abided by all members, irrespective of membership category. Specific criteria per individual category apply. In addition there are criteria based on certain types of management of organizations.

Member Commitments

* Commit publicly to the mission and objectives of GSTC;
* Provide written evidence that they support and publicly promote GSTC as an organization, its aims, activities, principles and criteria;
* Do not execute activities in such a way that compromises the reputation of the GSTC or has a negative impact on GSTC;
* Demonstrate commitment to the adoption of the international standards developed by GSTC as applicable and start integration of the criteria to its policies within 12 months.
* Aim to use GSTC in procurement and supply chain practices;
* Not have any conflict with GSTC;
* Pay their dues for any year by the first day of the calendar year; intergovernmental organizations will be exempt from this membership requirement;
* Follow the guidelines for display and use of the logo of GSTC; and
* Remain in good standing, not have been expelled from GSTC within two years of application, and not be currently promulgating statements opposing GSTC.
* Adhere to the World Tourism Organization (“UNWTO”) Global Code of Ethics;
* Provide accurate and objective information to its constituency regarding its sustainability practices.

**Category Membership Requirements**

The following are the specific requirements for particular categories of members.

**Travel & Tourism Industry members must:**

* Have a genuine commitment to continuous improvement on their environmental, social and cultural performance, including active approval and continued commitment at senior management level as demonstrated by a letter of intent signed by a CEO or equivalent decision maker
* Demonstrate existence of a corporate policy towards sustainable tourism or commit to establishing a policy, aligned with GSTC, within 12 months of joining GSTC, or be certified by a GSTC-accredited body
* Hold appropriate license/registration to operate.

**Certification bodies must:**

* Ensure certification programs align with GSTC criteria aiming at begin the accreditation within 12 months
* Aim to achieve accreditation by GSTC criteria within 24 months of membership
* Demonstrate compliance with basic GSTC accreditation requirements as outlined in the accreditation manual. Non-compliance will result in loss of membership, unless justified (based on procedures outlined in the accreditation manual)
* Comply with the provisions concerning the use or display of the accreditation logo

**Public Authorities must:**

* Have a commitment to adopt GSTC international criteria, within 24 months, in avenues that promote sustainability measures (i.e., as education- and awareness-raising tools; as a voluntary standard; as a means to embed GSTC in government-owned certification programs or grading systems)
* Encourage local industry to improve sustainable performance of operations
* Incorporate sustainable product offering in marketing efforts

**Intergovernmental Organizations should, where possible:**

* Demonstrate a commitment to disseminate information about sustainable tourism and actively promote sustainable tourism criteria
* Establish procurement policies using GSTC criteria when relevant

**NGOs must:**

* Demonstrate commitment to participate actively to disseminate information about sustainable tourism and promote relevant criteria and research on positive actions to their own member/partner base
* Demonstrate interest or proven experience in tourism activities
* Hold a certificate of incorporation/registration document, articles of incorporation or other documents showing proof of nonprofit status, granted by the government where the nonprofit is located

**Academia must:**

* Apply for membership through a nationally accredited public or private academic or research institution[[1]](#footnote-1)
* Agree to utilize or adapt the GSTC educational modules/programs to promote awareness and use of sustainable tourism principles
* Adhere to best practices and ensure that academic members within the institution meet member obligations
* Demonstrate the ability to advance the objectives of GSTC through its education network

**Individuals must:**

* Be an individual professional managing or engaged in the promotion of sustainable tourism
* Hold, or have held, a position of responsibility in the tourism industry
* Demonstrate a record of significant contributions in tourism activities

Benefits

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council is a membership led organization. Members define the work of the organization through active participation. Membership allows organizations to drive discussions on sustainable tourism, shape global criteria and define credibility for multiple tourism sectors. Members have access to education and training tools to help harness the power of the GSTC Criteria. Membership helps position organizations in the global marketplace through the GSTC Market Access program. Members also have direct access to networking and partnership opportunities through the Members’ Only section on the GSTC website, social media outlets and at the GSTC Annual Membership Council meeting.

The GSTC values and requires its members’ input in shaping the work of the GSTC and will provide them with the following benefits:

Empowerment through participation:Members have the opportunity to be involved in key decision-making processes that shape the work of the GSTC program and the sustainable tourism sector and standards. This includes:

* Through the membership council, members will have a voice on issues that pertain the vision and mission of the organizations.
* Elect a Board that represents their interests.
* Participate in the development of international standards.
* Participate in strategic planning and implementation through the working groups, if elected.
* Direct internal organizational access to Board members and senior officers.

Fostering partnerships amongst a network of sustainable tourism professionals and stakeholders at the local, regional and national level:

* Networking opportunities – Members will be able to attend council meetings that bring common stakeholders together (i.e. tourism business, government agencies, NGOs, NTOs, academia etc) to meet and exchange ideas on how their involvement in the GSTC has impacted their work and specific sector.
* Have exclusive access to a member online platform for exchange of information and business opportunities.
* GSTC will work as a broker to increase the visibility of member organizations’ and their compliance with the GSTC Criteria and their contributions and services through raising market and media awareness.
* Have access to UN partners

Facilitating access to tools and educational resources: members will have exclusive access to:

* Procedures and tools for implementing or applying the GSTC criteria.
* Access to an extensive digital resource library of information on sustainable tourism.
* General educational material based on the GSTC criteriato support tourism businesses seeking to become more sustainable, seeking to apply the GSTC criteria or looking for certification.
* Educational material on accreditation to support certification programs in the process of achieving accreditation from the GSTC.
* Material for traveler education for customer interfacing staff to inform about sustainable option and practice.
* Educational training activities made available through GSTC partner trainers to build the capacity of member organizations to improve their sustainability efforts.

Foster Market Access opportunities: members will be able to:

* Have their GSTC accredited and verified tourism product recognized through a GSTC solution that provides these products access to various distribution channels.
* Have access to assessment and measurement opportunities for small businesses that may not have the resources to seek certification. Establish relationships with distributing companies, travel agencies, tourism boards, associations and other to actively promote GSTC accredited product.
* Establish relationships with distributing companies, travel agencies, tourism boards, associations and others to actively promote GSTC-accredited products;
* Gain visibility by promoting their organizational logo on the GSTC website; and

News and Information

* GSTC will showcase sustainable tourism best practices that adhere to the GSTC Standard and will provide up to date news and information.
* The GSTC online web platform will give access to a membership area with newsfeeds, social networking and domestic and international reach to GSTC members.

Membership Rights

The members of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council shall have the following rights:

* The right to attend the Membership Council meetings;
* The right to bring matters or other business to the attention of the GSTC for consideration at the Membership Council meeting, in accordance with the notice of provisions established in the current articles;
* The right to have access to Board and senior officials of the GSTC;
* The right to nominate or second a person for election to the Board of Directors of the GSTC;
* The right to vote with each member having the right to one vote.  The voting member must be in good standing and must have paid the annual dues.
* The right to be selected to a working group if they have the appropriate qualifications.
* The right to use the GSTC member logo if compliant with the terms and regulations and brand guidelines for GSTC logo use.
* Access to the member only section.
* Access to education and training tools at no cost or reduced cost.

Application Process

Any organization that aligns with the above detailed categories, and meets the requirements of the GSTC, has the right to submit an application for membership to the GSTC Secretariat.

Application

Each member will have to submit a membership application to the Secretariat. It will be encouraged to submit the application online to facilitate the process. The membership application can be found on www.gstcouncil.org

Review

Membership applications will be reviewed by the Secretariat as they are received. If necessary, the Secretariat will request additional information from the applicant.

The Secretariat will assess whether (i) the organization is bona fide; (ii) if there are any existing social, environmental or legal grievances; and (iii) if the candidate genuinely supports GSTC and its activities. The Secretariat may request additional information that can aid in establishing the membership, if necessary.

In the case the applicant does not comply with Section 5.2 of the By-Laws, the Secretariat will present the case to the Membership Committee for review. The Membership Committee will review and request necessary information to make a final recommendation.

Approval

If the application is approved, the Secretariat will communicate the approval to the applicant, provide such applicant with the rules and regulations, indicate the applicable fee and invite such applicant to participate actively with GSTC.

After the applicant has paid the dues to the Secretariat, the Secretariat will activate the benefits for members including access to member only sections of the website and other benefits.

Declining membership

If membership is denied, the applicant will receive a communication stating the reasons for denial. If these reasons can be addressed to the satisfaction of GSTC and the applicant wishes to resubmit an application, that new application will be considered within the normal processes for new applications.

If applicants feel their membership application was unjustly denied, they may appeal within 30 days of receiving notice, to the Board of Directors. Applicants will provide necessary to documentation to justify the appeal. The Board of Directors will resolve the appeal at their next regularly scheduled meeting and provide a response to the applicant.

Application Timeline

* Membership application submission – accepted on a rolling basis.
* Review of membership applications by the Secretariat on a rolling basis.
* Decision and communication to applicants – within 4 weeks of receiving the application
* Approved members – will become full members upon receipt of rules, regulations, submission of necessary documentation, and payment of fees.
* Non-compliant applicants- the Secretariat will contact the applicant within 1 week of the applicant’s assessment to request missing information. If there are social, environmental or legal grievances, the Secretariat will submit the applicant’s assessment to the Membership Committee for a 2-week review process. After 2 weeks, the Membership Committee will submit their final recommendation to the Secretariat. The Secretariat will communicate the decision to the applicant.

New Members

Once admitted to membership each new member shall ensure that an announcement of its admission is circulated to its own membership with a view to disseminating the objectives of GSTC and following the guidelines provided by the GSTC.

Members shall promptly inform the GSTC Executive Director of any important change in the information supplied in support of their application for membership, which may affect their eligibility for membership or the category to which they should belong.

The GSTC will support new members in communicating their membership to their constituents. A press release template will be sent to new members by the Secretariat to announce their membership. Final press release language must be reviewed and approved by the Secretariat before it is publicly distributed. The Secretariat shall maintain a final copy on file.

Within the first 4 weeks following acceptance as a member, the Secretariat will contact the new member and walk through the benefits, rights and commitments that the members has signed up to, to ensure that deliverables are provided within assigned times.

**Renewal**

Membership status will resume yearly. Members will provide an update on their activities and their commitments towards promoting the GSTC and the criteria. Members will be invoiced for the next year’s dues if they have not been in violation of any of the policies and are compliant with requirements. Should a member wish to withdraw, it will need to follow the resignation policy.

Renewal notices will be send twice a year. For members that joined in the first semester, renewal notices will be sent in January and payment is expected within a month time. For members that joined in the second semester renewal notices will be sent in July and payment is expected within a month’s time.

Renewal will be accompanied by a report indicating the progress towards accomplishing the commitments to GSTC.

Resignation

Any member may resign by filing a written resignation with the GSTC; however, resignation does not relieve a member from liability for dues accrued and unpaid as of the date of the resignation.

Transferring membership

When a company is taken over or is sold it will not automatically transfer the membership of the GSTC. The member needs to provide immediate notification to the GSTC of the sale or transfer of the business to alternative owners. Once the new owners are in place they should submit a request for consideration of “transfer” of the GSTC membership, within 2 months of taking possession. The GSTC will review and submit the request to consideration of the Board at its scheduled GSTC member review sessions.

**Destitution of members**

If a member engages in activities contrary to the interests of GSTC or no longer meets the membership criteria, a destitution process may be initiated by the Board or by recommendation of an individual member (supported by a minimum of two other members). The Board will allow the opportunity for existing members to challenge the membership of fellow members on grounds of their noncompliance with GSTC By-laws and Operational Manual.

Any proposed destitution or suspension of a member must be presented to the Board in writing accompanied by a justification. The Board will consider the matter and if the complaint is substantial it shall request the member to present within four months a written explanation of the reasons why, in its opinion, suspension or destitution is not justified.

After examining the arguments presented by the member, or in the absence of such arguments, the Board shall inform the member whether it proposes to invite the Membership Council to vote on the suspension or destitution of the member. If within two months of the notification of this proposal the member does not inform the Executive Director in writing of its opposition, the member will be considered to have withdrawn from the membership of GSTC. If the member does oppose the proposal, the Board shall submit the proposal together with the arguments of the member to a vote of the Membership Council, which will be final.

The rights of a member shall be automatically suspended when the dues of that member are nine months in arrears. If the dues are one year in arrears, the member is considered to have withdrawn from GSTC. If a former member who is considered to have withdrawn from membership seeks readmission to membership, all dues outstanding at the time of withdrawal must be paid first. After this has been done, the member may be readmitted at the discretion of the Board without having to complete application procedures for new members.

Membership payment

Payment is required to be a member in good standing. Payment will occur upon application for new members or upon receipt of notice of renewal, which will occur in January and July. Membership dues are calculated as follows

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Category | Annual Fee(in US Dollars) | |
| Individuals |  |
| Individual members with no affiliation to an organization or their own company | $100 |
| For-profit organizations: |  |
| Micro (<1million US$ turnover) | $100 |
| Very small (<10 million US$ turnover) | $300 |
| Small (<30 million US$ turnover) | $500 |
| Medium (30-100 million US$ turnover) | $1,000 |
| Large (100 million – 500 million US$ turnover) | $2,500 |
| Very Large (>5,000 US$ turnover) | $5,000 |
| **Not-for-profit organizations:** |  |
| Micro (<1million US$ budget) | $100 |
| Very small (<5 million US$ budget) | $150 |
| Small (<30 million US$ budget) | $250 |
| Medium (<100 million US$ budget) | $500 |
| Large (<500 million US$ budget) | $1,500 |
| Very Large (>500 million US$ budget) | $2,500 |

**Membership Management**

The success of the GSTC will depend on the active engagement of its members and strategic partnerships to accomplish its goals. The GSTC Secretariat is responsible for managing GSTC member retention and satisfaction. It is also responsible for ensuring that GSTC members are meeting membership obligations and receiving member benefits. The following outlines the GSTC member check-in and follow-up procedures that will allow the GSTC to engage and communicate with members effectively while meeting the GSTC vision and membership outreach goals.

Upon completion of the membership process, new members will receive a membership package with information regarding the GSTC, draft press release, working groups, procedures and any additional required information. The Secretarial will establish contact with the members and lay out a plan for the upcoming year to achieve them meet their sustainable tourism goals and ensure their active involvement in GSTC.

This plan will serve upon completion of the first year to review accomplishments and establish new goals for the upcoming year. Periodic communication will provide support to members.

1. Only nationally accredited public or private academic or research institutions may be considered for GSTC membership. The qualified institution may apply for membership, even though it will likely be prompted to do so by a single division (i.e., tourism program) within the academic institution. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)