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**GSTC-Approved Application**

In order to be reviewed by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) for possible Approval of a sustainable tourism certification program, the program must:

* Use a GSTC-Recognized standard for third-party certification;
* Complete this application form;
* Send to the GSTC:
	+ The completed checklist that follows in this application;
	+ All other relevant documents required to show conformity to GSTC requirements.
* Pay the fee to cover the costs of review of the processes and procedures of the certification program;
* Agree to pay the costs of a witnessed audit if required by the GSTC Accreditation Panel

GSTC will only process this application upon receipt of all requirements, but will work closely with the certification program to clarify the requirements of the checklist.

To achieve Approval, the sustainable tourism certification program to be reviewed must:

* demonstrate transparency, impartiality and technical competence in its certification processes;
* document all procedures as required;
* comply with the rules governing GST Approval of certification programs in the GSTC-Approved Manual.

## GSTC-Approved Manual Version

GSTC-Approved Application version 2.1 is based on the GSTC-Approved Manual version 2.2 dated 1 July 2016. All requirements and fees are correct at 1 July 2016.

### Record of Technical Review – ongoing record of handling of GSTC-Approved Application to be completed by GSTC

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| GSTC-Approved Step Taken | Date completed |
| APPLICATION RECEIVED BY GSTC |  |
| APPLICATION CONFIRMED COMPLETE |  |
| INVOICE RAISED BY GSTC |  |
| INVOICE PAID BY CP |  |
| APPLICATION PASSED TO GSTC REVIEWER FOR ASSESSMENT |  |
| ASSESSMENT PASSED TO CP FOR RESPONSE/REVISION |  |
| REVISED APPLICATION RECEIVED BY GSTC REVIEWER |  |
| ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATION PASSED TO CHAIR OF GSTC ACCREDITATION PANEL |  |
| SUB GROUP APPOINTED TO REVIEW ASSESSMENT AND TAKE DECISION OR REQUEST WITNESSED AUDIT TO INFORM DECISION |  |
| WITNESSED AUDIT CONDUCTED IF REQUESTED |  |
| DECISION CONVEYED TO APPLICANT BY CHAIR OF GSTC ACCREDITATION PANEL |  |

## Summary of Application Process

Please refer to the GSTC-Approved Manual v2.2 for the complete process, policies and procedures applicable. In summary the process is:

* (Optional) Pre-Lodgement advice by teleconference with a member of GSTC Technical Staff.
* Applicant lodges documentation, GSTC Technical Staff confirm a complete application and raise invoice.
* Applicant pays fee and GSTC appoints Reviewer.
* GSTC Reviewer undertakes Assessment of equivalency of the CP against the GSTC-Approved Requirements.
* This draft Assessment is provided to the Applicant:
	+ If any GSTC-Approved Requirements are not addressed, GSTC Reviewer will correspond with the Applicant and the Applicant may revise their application to maximise compliance with the GSTC-Approved Requirements.
* GSTC Reviewer finalises the Assessment which includes a recommendation and forward this to the GSTC Accreditation Panel.
* The GSTC Accreditation Panel Chair appoints three panel members to consider the Assessment. The Panel then evaluates the Assessment and makes a decision which may be:
	+ To request a witnessed audit to inform a final decision;
	+ To confer GSTC-Approved status without conditions;
	+ To confer GSTC-Approved (Conditional) status, setting out those GSTC-Approved requirements for which there is no equivalent procedure in the Applicant's certification program; or
	+ To decline to confer GSTC-Approved status, with a summary of those GSTC-Approved requirements for which there is no equivalent procedure in the Applicant's certification program.

The Chair of the GSTC Accreditation Panel then provides a letter communicating the result to the Applicant.

## Fees for GSTC-Approved Application

The following fees apply for a GSTC-Approved Application. All fees in U.S. Dollars $.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Item |  |
| GSTC-Approved Application (Member) | $7,000 |
| GSTC-Approved Application (Non Member) | $8,000 |
|  Witnessed audit (applies only if required by the Accreditation Panel; this will not be known until late in the review process, meaning that applicants should budget for it but may or may not be required to pay it) | *Audit costs:**$1,000 per day (1 day audit is typical)**$1,000 travel time for the GSTC auditor (charged at half-day rate, see below)**plus travel expenses of the GSTC auditor including hotel, meals, transport, etc.)*  |
| Renewal Minor Changes GSTC-Approved (Renewal) Application (after 2 years) | $800 |
| Re-application fee for major changes to the original granting of GSTC-Approved | Member $4,000Non-member $5,000 |
| Pre-Lodgement advice  | $500 for 3-hour session |

Applicant Information

|  |
| --- |
| Name of the certification program:       |
| Name of the GSTC-Recognized standard that is used for certification:       |
| Organization with ownership of intellectual property of the standard:       |
| Organization that conducts the certification (certification body):       |
| Legal representative (person authorized to sign contracts on behalf of the program):       |
| Contact person:       |
| Contact information: |
| Email:       |
| Website:       |
| Telephone: +      |
| Mailing address:       Country:       |
| Physical address at which the key activities of the program take place:       |
| Standard is used for: [ ]  Third-party certification [ ] Verification [ ]  other (please specify?       |
| Scope of certification offered to applicants (types of businesses or activities covered):       |
| Geographic coverage (countries or regions where the certification program operates):       |
| Year that the organization began certification:       |
| Number of certificates issued: Hotels and other lodging establishment:       Tour operators:       Destinations:      Other (please specify:       |
| Languages for which the certification program's standard is GSTC-Recognized:       |
| Languages for which the certification program undertakes certification:       |

My organization pledges that it:

* possesses legal ownership of, or the right to use, the GSTC-Recognized standard which is certified against;
* will inform the GSTC Accreditation Panel of any substantial changes to the ownership of the certification program;
* will give the GSTC all updated versions of the standard within 10 days of it being updated;
* has documented rules for certification;
* will abide by GSTC’s requirements for GSTC-Approved status;
* will follow the processes specified in the GSTC-Approved Manual v2.2 in the event of a complaint or an appeal;
* will use the GSTC-Approved logo in accordance with the GSTC-Approved Logo Terms and Conditions (See GSTC-Approved Manual) and only promote our GSTC-Approved status in accordance with agreed promotional statements; and
* will offer the GSTC-Tick logo to certified clients in accordance the GSTC-Tick Logo Terms of Issuance (which includes always distributing the GSTC-Tick Logo Terms and Conditions along with the GSTC Tick Logo).

Name:

Organization:

Date:

# Documentation Requirements

## Document Checklist

Please use this list (as set out in the GSTC-Approved Manual) as a checklist to ensure the relevant documents are attached. This documentation can be single specific documents, or the information can be in different documents and records. In the latter case a simple cover document is required, describing the relationship between the other documents submitted.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Aspect | 🗹 or 🗷 |
| A formal statement, signed by the CP chief executive officer (CEO) or board/committee chairperson, ensuring that all the GSTC-Approved Requirements and other aspects of the GSTC-Approved Manual v2.2 are met and that the Certification Programme assumes formal responsibility to remain in conformity with the GSTC-Approved Requirements. |  |
| An overall description of the CP. |  |
| Public promotion of the CP, brochures, extracts of web pages, social media etc. |  |
| The rules of the CP (the formal document that establishes the programme) |  |
| Structure and responsibility (clause 3 of the GSTC-Approved Manual) |  |
| Scope and accessibility (clause 4 of the GSTC-Approved Manual) |  |
| Policies and practices about impartiality and conflict of interest (clause 5 of the GSTC-Approved Manual) |  |
| Financial stability and liability (clause 6 of the GSTC-Approved Manual) |  |
| Professional capacity (clause 7 of the GSTC-Approved Manual) |  |
| Policies and practices for information and confidentiality (clause 8 of the GSTC-Approved Manual) |  |
| Description of the certification process (clause 9 of the GSTC-Approved Manual) |  |
| Procedures for renewal, monitoring and termination (clause 10 of the GSTC-Approved Manual) |  |
| Procedures to deal with appeals and complaints (clause 11 of the GSTC-Approved Manual) |  |
| Description of the management system (clause 12 of the GSTC-Approved Manual) |  |
| Languages (clause 13 of the GSTC-Approved Manual) |  |
| Curriculum vitae or a description of the competence, qualification, education and experience of the CEO and relevant personnel involved in the management of the CP |  |
| Documentation describing how the CP ensures and demonstrate compliance with the professional capacity required for a CP as set in clause 7 of the GSTC-Approved Manual shall include: |  |
| Competence criteria for personnel involved in the certification process |  |
| A description of the procedures to manage and perform audits |  |
| How competence of the personnel is managed and monitored |  |
| CV or a description of competence/qualification, education and experience of the personnel responsible for the technical management of the CP |  |
| A description of the CP’s policies and procedures to use and protect its certification marks, including licensing |  |

## Schedule of GSTC-Approved Application Support Documents

1. Please complete the following schedule of the documents attached to the Application.
2. Documents should be named Attachment X: Document Name vX.x (version) or XXMMYYYY(date).
3. Documents should be in PDF form.

*If many large documents are included, GSTC will advise a file transfer repository (most likely Box) for the applicant to upload their files.*

|  |
| --- |
| *Example: Attachment 1: Seriously Green Certification Program Management Manual v2.4* |
| Attachment 1: |
| Attachment 2:  |
| Attachment 3: |
| Attachment 4: |
| Attachment 5: |
| Attachment 6: |
| Attachment 7: |
| Attachment 8: |
| Attachment 9: |
| Attachment 10: |
| Attachment 11: |
| Attachment 12: |
|  |
|  |

*Add more attachments in rows as required!*

##

## GSTC-Approved Requirements - Example Matrix

Applicants only complete the two middle columns (black text).

Please include as much specific detail as you can.

| **GSTC-Approved Requirement**See GSTC-Approved Manual for full text of requirements | **Certification Program Reference**Include clause/page reference and clearly cited documents.(Include identifying number and text of all policies, practices, procedures) | **Explanation and Justification**(Include commentary, justification, examples on how the certification program complies with the GSTC-Approved Requirement. | **GSTC Assessment**(GSTC USE ONLY) |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| NOTES | Include clause/page reference and clearly cited documents.(Include identifying number and text of all policies, practices, procedures) | *Include commentary, justification, examples on how the certification program complies with the GSTC-Approved Requirement*. |  |
| 3.1 The CP shall be, or shall be part of a legal entity.  | Attachment 12: Seriously Green's Certificate of Incorporation in Country  |  |  |
| 3.5.3 Agreement is signed by both parties prior to initiating the certification process.  | Attachment 9: Example Seriously Green application form and agreement | *See end of agreement for signatures blocks, CEO of Seriously Green signs after receiving application to make an agreement signed by both parties.* |  |
| 4.1 The CP shall assess the conformity of the client’s tourism services against the requirements of a GSTC-Recognized Standard.  | Attachment 4: Seriously Green CriteriaAttachment 5: Seriously Green GSTC-Recognized letter dated 14 March 2009 |  |  |
| 4.1.1 All criteria in the GSTC-Recognized Standard which are equivalent to the GSTC Criteria must be mandatory for conformity. | Attachment 3: Seriously Green Application Book, clause 1.3 states:"All criteria must be addressed, if a criteria is not applicable explain why." | *All criteria are mandatory, with some allowing additional bonus performance for the "seriously gold" level.* |  |
| 5.1 The CP shall have a written policy which expresses its commitment to impartiality, confidentiality, and the objectivity of its activities. | Attachment 2: Seriously Green Integrity Policy clause 3.4.5, page 6) | *Policy commits to "independent objectivity" (re impartiality and objectivity.* |  |

## GSTC-Approved Requirements: Application Matrix

Applicants only complete the two middle columns (black text).

| **GSTC-Approved Requirement**See GSTC Manual for full text of requirements | **Certification Program Reference**Include clause/page reference and clearly cited documents.(Include identifying number and text of all policies, practices, procedures) | **Explanation and Justification**(Include commentary, justification, examples on how the certification program complies with the GSTC-Approved Requirement. | **GSTC Assessment**(GSTC USE ONLY) |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 3 Structure and Responsibility  |  |  |  |
| 3.1 The CP shall be, or shall be part of a legal entity.  |  |  |  |
| 3.2 The CP shall be able to show that it owns, or has the right to use, a GSTC-Recognized certification standard and any associated trademarks and labels. |  |  |  |
| 3.3 The CP shall document its governance and operational structure. Documentation shall identify the board, committee or personnel responsible for:  |  |  |  |
| 1. Development of policies and procedures;
 |  |  |  |
| 1. Supervision of implementation of procedures;
 |  |  |  |
| 1. Supervision of finances;
 |  |  |  |
| 1. Performance of evaluation activity;
 |  |  |  |
| 1. Making decisions on certification;
 |  |  |  |
| 1. Delegation of authority and contractual arrangements;
 |  |  |  |
| 1. Handling of complaints and appeals.
 |  |  |  |
| 3.4 The CP shall be responsible for decisions on the granting, maintaining, extending, suspending or withdrawing of certification. |  |  |  |
| 3.4.1 Authority to take decisions on these matters may be delegated to individuals or a committee. |  |  |  |
| 3.5 The CP shall have a legally enforceable certification agreement with its clients. |  |  |  |
| 3.5.1 a) Agreement sets out responsibility of the CP to carry out an effective and impartial certification procedure |  |  |  |
| 3.5.1 b) Agreement includes responsibility of CP to communicate any changes in the standard and requirements to clients |  |  |  |
| 3.5.1 c) Agreements includes responsibility of CP to provide information to clients on its certification procedures. |  |  |  |
| 3.5.2 a) Agreement sets out the responsibilities of the client, including conformity with the recognized standard and relevant certification requirements; |  |  |  |
| 3.5.2 b) Agreement sets out responsibilities of the client for correct communication of the meaning of the certification, avoiding misleading claims and withdrawing reference to certification following any termination; |  |  |  |
| 3.5.2 c) Agreement includes client responsibilities for recording, handling, and informing the CP of complaints and corrective actions taken relating to compliance with the certification requirements;  |  |  |  |
| 3.5.2 d) Agreement includes telling the CP of any changes that may affect compliance with certification requirements within ten days of them occurring; |  |  |  |
| 3.5.2 e) Agreement includes client responsibilities for provision of all necessary information and arrangements for the certification audit process; |  |  |  |
| 3.5.2 f) Agreement includes allowing the CP and the GSTC access to the client’s premises, personnel and records for the purpose of audit.  |  |  |  |
| 3.5.3 Agreement is signed by both parties prior to initiating the certification process.  |  |  |  |
| 4 Scope and Accessibility |  |  |  |
| 4.1 The CP shall assess the conformity of the client’s tourism services against the requirements of a GSTC-Recognized Standard.  |  |  |  |
| 4.1.1 All criteria in the GSTC-Recognized Standard which are equivalent to the GSTC Criteria must be mandatory for conformity. |  |  |  |
| 4.2 A CP may certify against the GSTC-Recognized Standard that it owns or has the right to use. |  |  |  |
| 4.3 The CP shall define the scope of the certification, specifying those services and locations that have been assessed against the recognized standard. |  |  |  |
| 4.4 Where a client provides multiple tourism services, the certification document will identify the services that have been certified, and the CP will ensure that the client limits its claims of certification and use of logos and marks to the certified services.  |  |  |  |
| 4.5 The policies and procedures adopted by the CP shall be non-discriminatory.  |  |  |  |
| 4.6 The CP shall make its services available to all applicants whose activities fall within its declared field of operation.  |  |  |  |
| 4.6.1 Access to certification shall not be conditional upon the size of the client or membership of any association or group  |  |  |  |
| 5 Impartiality and conflict of interest |  |  |  |
| 5.1 The CP shall have a written policy which expresses its commitment to impartiality, confidentiality, and the objectivity of its activities. |  |  |  |
| 5.2 All personnel and committees, either internal or external to the CP, who could influence certification activities, shall declare that they will act impartially and not allow any commercial, financial or other pressures to compromise their impartiality. |  |  |  |
| 5.3 All personnel, internal or external, shall be required to reveal any situations that may present them or the CP with a conflict of interest |  |  |  |
| 5.4 The CP shall document an assessment of risks to impartiality and potential conflicts of interest, together with measures taken to eliminate or minimise these risks and conflicts.  |  |  |  |
| 5.5 The organisational structure of the CP shall include a mechanism to ensure implementation of the CPs impartiality policy.  |  |  |  |
| 5.6 Neither certification evaluations nor certification decisions shall be undertaken by anyone whose impartiality may be compromised by having provided consultancy to the client.  |  |  |  |
| 5.7 Prior to and during the certification process the CP shall not give prescriptive advice to a client in a form and to a level of detail that could compromise its ability to undertake an impartial certification. |  |  |  |
| 5.8 The CP may provide general information to assist tourism service providers strengthen the sustainability of their operations and to understand and comply with the GSTC-Recognized Standard, through publications, seminars, training courses and other activity, provided this is not seen as part of the certification process and is open to all existing or potential clients. |  |  |  |
| 6 Financial Stability and Liability |  |  |  |
| 6.1 The CP shall be able to demonstrate that it has the cash flows required to remain in business for the life of certificates issued.  |  |  |  |
| 6.1.1 Cash may come from operations and subsidy from government or other sources. |  |  |  |
| 6.1.2 Where financial stability depends on subsidy, this should be covered by documented agreement. |  |  |  |
| 6.2 The CP shall evaluate its liability risks and demonstrate that it has adequate arrangements to cover liabilities arising from its operations.  |  |  |  |
| 7 Professional Capacity |  |  |  |
| 7.1 The CP shall ensure that personnel, internal and external, used in the certification process are competent to perform their functions and shall document how this is achieved. |  |  |  |
| 7.2 The CP shall use auditors who have professional qualifications and experience in certification, auditing and in sustainable tourism.  |  |  |  |
| 7.2.1 Auditors shall have an undergraduate degree in environmental, sustainability, management and/or tourism disciplines, or have a minimum of five years’ experience in an environmental discipline and/or sustainable tourism |  |  |  |
| 7.2.2 Auditors shall have qualifications in environmental auditing, or have at least 5 years’ experience in developing and/or managing a sustainable tourism certification program; and |  |  |  |
| 7.2.3 Auditors shall have at least five years’ experience in sustainable tourism or an awareness of sustainable tourism (e.g. from training provided by the GSTC, the CP or other suitable training program). |  |  |  |
| 7.3 Auditors must have documented awareness of the GSTC-Recognized standard. |  |  |  |
| 7.3.1 Such documentation may be provided by the CP as a result of training provided by the CP or through work as an assistant auditor for the CP. |  |  |  |
| 7.4 A CP must provide suitable evidence of its auditors’ qualifications and experience: |  |  |  |
| ***7.4.1 (< 5 auditors)****Where a CP has less than five auditors, a resume (CV) and certificates/qualifications of existing auditors shall be provided as evidence. The selection criteria/qualification requirements and any in-house training/awareness program for engagement of new auditors shall be submitted.* |  |  |  |
| ***7.4.2 (5 or more auditors)****Where a CP has 5 or more auditors, the selection criteria/qualification requirements and any in-house training/awareness program for engagement of new auditors shall be submitted. A table summarizing existing auditors’ qualification against 7.2 is required and CVs and qualifications of three auditors are required.* |  |  |  |
| 7.4.3 CPs are encouraged to implement capacity building among auditors, including sharing of information and developing new auditors. |  |  |  |
| 7.5 Auditing personnel may be employed directly by the CP or be independent personnel working under contract to the CP.  |  |  |  |
| 7.6 The CP shall only outsource certification activities to external bodies that fulfil the same requirements specified in this section of GSTC Approved Manual as the CP itself, or that complies with the GSTC Accreditation manual requirements for a certification body. This includes outsourcing to an external body to provide auditing services. |  |  |  |
| 7.6.1 The CP shall take responsibility for all outsourced activities |  |  |  |
| 7.6.2 The CP shall have legally enforceable agreements with all bodies that provide outsourced services. |  |  |  |
| 7.6.3 The CP shall have procedures for checking that such bodies are adhering to this agreement and for taking any necessary corrective action. |  |  |  |
| 7.7 Personnel involved in the certification process shall sign a document that commits them to abide by the rules of the CP, including matters relating to confidentiality and conflict of interest. |  |  |  |
| 7.8 The CP shall identify the training needs of personnel and provide training to ensure that they are competent to fulfil their functions. Personnel shall understand the GSTC-Recognized standard used and other requirements for certification.  |  |  |  |
| 7.9 The CP shall establish procedures for monitoring personnel performance. This should involve review of audit reports, feedback from clients and observation of audits. The results of this monitoring shall be communicated to auditors together with any recommendations to improve performance. |  |  |  |
| 7.10 The CP shall maintain a record of all personnel used, including their relevant qualifications, level of experience, training received and, for organizations with 20 or more employees, performance appraisals.  |  |  |  |
| 8 Information and Confidentiality |  |  |  |
| 8.1The CP shall make publicly available and easily accessible, without charge, information on the following: |  |  |  |
| 8.1.1 The CP, its location(s) and contact details. |  |  |  |
| 8.1.2 The rules for granting certification and the evaluation procedures and certification process. |  |  |  |
| 8.1.3 A description of the charges made to clients. |  |  |  |
| 8.1.4 A description of the rights and duties of certified clients in how they should refer to the certification and identify themselves with it. |  |  |  |
| 8.1.5 Information about how to make complaints and appeals and how these will be handled. |  |  |  |
| 8.2 The CP shall identify the GSTC-Recognized Standard(s) to which certification is offered.  |  |  |  |
| 8.3 The CP shall provide certified clients with a formal, signed certification document which identifies: |  |  |  |
| 8.3.1 The name and address of the CP and of the client. |  |  |  |
| 8.3.2 The services covered by the certification. |  |  |  |
| 8.3.3 The GSTC-Recognized Standard(s) to which the services comply.  |  |  |  |
| 8.3.4 A unique record number or code. |  |  |  |
| 8.3.5 The dates of granting and of expiry of the certification |  |  |  |
| 8.4 The CP shall provide clients with rules on references to the certification that can be made by clients and the use of any certification mark or logo.  |  |  |  |
| 8.5 Any mark or logo shall be traceable to the CP. |  |  |  |
| 8.6 The CP shall monitor and control the use of any mark or logo and any references made to the GSTC-Recognized Standard and shall take action to deal with any incorrect or misleading use.  |  |  |  |
| 8.6.1 Monitoring and control shall address any use of the certification logo or mark by un-certified parties, and discontinuation of use where certification has been terminated or withdrawn |  |  |  |
| 8.7 The CP shall keep up to date a directory with details of all services certified by them and shall make this publicly available and easily accessible. |  |  |  |
| 8.8 The CP shall develop and implement a written policy which expresses its commitment to confidentiality. This shall include:  |  |  |  |
| 8.8.1 Informing its clients of the information it intends to make public.  |  |  |  |
| 8.8.2 Requiring all personnel to abide by the confidentiality policy. |  |  |  |
| 8.8.3 Informing the clients of any information that it may be required to make available by law. |  |  |  |
| 8.8.4 Agreeing with the client on the release of any information required for other purposes, such as handling complaints. |  |  |  |
| 9 Certification Process |  |  |  |
| 9.1 The CP shall have a consistent, systematic and documented process for conducting evaluation of clients and determining whether or not to grant certification.  |  |  |  |
| 9.2 Upon receipt of an application for certification, the CP shall:  |  |  |  |
| 9.2.1 Ensure that the client is fully aware of the process and costs |  |  |  |
| 9.2.2 Clarify the certification required and the scope of activities to be covered |  |  |  |
| 9.2.3 Obtain initial information about these activities, relevant to planning the evaluation |  |  |  |
| 9.2.4 Reach agreement to proceed |  |  |  |
| 9.2.5 Plan the evaluation process. |  |  |  |
| 9.3 The CP, or sub-contracted body, shall select personnel to carry out the evaluation.  |  |  |  |
| 9.3.1 Personnel shall not be selected by the client, but clients shall be given the opportunity to raise any objections about personnel selected, for example on grounds of conflict of interest. |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 9.4 Audit personnel shall obtain documentary evidence from the client on its policies, activities and performance concerning the different components of the standard.  |  |  |  |
| 9.4.1 Audit personnel should draw any significant concerns about the conformity of documentation to the client, and may request further information.  |  |  |  |
| 9.4.2 A period may be allowed for non-conformities to be addressed and reported to the CP.  |  |  |  |
| 9.5. Audit personnel shall conduct a visit to the premises of the client. 10.5.1 The visit shall involve: |  |  |  |
| 9.5.1.a) The visit shall involve interviews with key personnel;  |  |  |  |
| 9.5.1.b) The visit shall involve obtaining objective evidence that demonstrates conformity or non-conformity with the GSTC-Recognized Standard and other certification requirements |  |  |  |
| 9.5.1.c) The visit shall involve observation of the premises where the tourism service are delivered. |  |  |  |
| 9.6 Audit personnel may undertake consultation with stakeholders within or external to the client to clarify aspects of the client’s activity and performance.  |  |  |  |
| 9.6.1 Audit personnel should undertake consultation where there is significant doubt about the sufficiency, quality, or veracity of information supplied by a client.  |  |  |  |
| 9.6.2 The client shall be informed in writing about any stakeholder consultation undertaken.  |  |  |  |
| 9.7 At the end of the visit, Audit personnel shall have a closing meeting with the client to present the findings of the audit process.  |  |  |  |
| 9.7.1 Audit personnel should explain any observed non-conformity with the GSTC-Recognized Standard and other requirements or areas where improvement could be made. |  |  |  |
| 9.7.2 Audit personnel should seek clarification and comment from the client, and a commitment as to when any non-conformities identified are to be addressed.  |  |  |  |
| 9.7.3 Audit personnel should explain to the client that this exchange of information does not predetermine the outcome of the certification decision. |  |  |  |
| 9.8 Audit personnel shall prepare a written report of audit. |  |  |  |
| 9.8.1 The report sets out the process of the audit, including dates, documents scrutinised and interviews held. |  |  |  |
| 9.8.2 The report identifies areas of non-conformity with the standard. |  |  |  |
| 9.8.3 The report may include comments and recommendations relevant to the decision on whether to grant certification. |  |  |  |
| 9.8.4 The report provides sufficient detail to enable a certification decision to be taken. |  |  |  |
| 9.8.5 The report is made available to the client, in full or in summary form |  |  |  |
| 9.9 The CP shall invite the client to correct any non-conformity identified within a specified time period and inform the CP when this rectification has been completed.  |  |  |  |
| 9.9.1 The CP shall then implement a suitable re-evaluation process to verify conformity in these areas.  |  |  |  |
| 9.10 The CP shall assign one or more individuals to review all information and results from the evaluation and make a decision on whether or not to grant the certification.  |  |  |  |
| 9.10.1 This decision shall be documented.  |  |  |  |
| 9.10.2 Individuals involved in making this decision shall not include those involved in undertaking the audit. |  |  |  |
| 9.11 The CP shall communicate to the client the results of the decision.  |  |  |  |
| 10 Renewal, Monitoring and Termination of Certification |  |  |  |
| 10.1 The certification’s validity shall be not greater than three years from the date on which it was granted as shown on the certification document.  |  |  |  |
| 10.1.1 Should the certification validity be greater than two years, the CP shall undertake at least one on-site visit to monitor the performance of the client during this period. |  |  |  |
| 10.2 The CP should notify the client of the need for renewal of certification in sufficient time for a re-certification process to be carried out prior to the end of the current validity period. |  |  |  |
| 10.3 Certification renewal shall follow the requirements for certification set out in this manual. |  |  |  |
| 10.4 If certification has not been renewed by the expiry date, the CP shall terminate the certification.  |  |  |  |
| 10.4.1 The CP shall inform the client that it is no longer certified and require that it removes all references to its previous certification.  |  |  |  |
| 10.4.2 The CP shall monitor the client’s conformity with instructions in 10.4.1 for a period of twelve months or longer.  |  |  |  |
| 10.4.3 The CP shall adjust its records and make publicly available information to reflect this termination. |  |  |  |
| 10.5 The CP shall carry out monitoring of a certified client’s activities to check that conformity with the standard is being maintained.  |  |  |  |
| 10.5.1 Monitoring shall include a requirement that the client undertakes an annual self-assessment and prepares a report and statement of compliance.  |  |  |  |
| 10.6 Should the CP have any concerns about the client’s conformity with the standard, as may arise from monitoring, notified changes, complaints (see section 11) or other information received, it should investigate the situation and if necessary instigate a re-certification process.  |  |  |  |
| 10.7 The CP shall have the right to suspend or terminate the certification upon finding any non-conformity. The CP shall inform the client of the reasons for suspension or termination and take action as specified in 10.4.  |  |  |  |
| 11 Appeals and Complaints |  |  |  |
| 11.1 The CP shall record all appeals and actions taken to resolve them. |  |  |  |
| 11.2 The CP shall have a documented appeals procedure for receiving, evaluating and making decisions about appeals made by clients against the certification decision. This procedure shall include: |  |  |  |
| 11.2.1 Acknowledging receipt of the appeal |  |  |  |
| 11.2.2 Investigating the appeal in a timely manner |  |  |  |
| 11.2.3 Gathering any necessary information |  |  |  |
| 11.2.4 Making a decision on the appeal, which should be approved by an individual(s) not involved with the original certification decision |  |  |  |
| 11.2.5 Informing the appellant of the outcome of the appeal |  |  |  |
| 11.2.6 Taking all necessary actions to resolve any issues arising. |  |  |  |
| 11.3 The CP shall record all complaints and actions taken to address them.  |  |  |  |
| 11.4 The CP shall have a documented complaints procedure for receiving, evaluating and making decisions about complaints against the CP or against a client. This procedure shall include:  |  |  |  |
| 11.2.1 Acknowledging receipt of the complaint |  |  |  |
| 11.4.2 Confirming whether the complaint relates to the certification scheme |  |  |  |
| 11.4.3 Investigating the complaint in a timely manner |  |  |  |
| 11.4.4 Drawing the complaint to the attention of any client involved |  |  |  |
| 11.4.5 Gathering any necessary information |  |  |  |
| 11.4.6 Making a decision on the complaint, which should be approved by an individual(s) not involved with certification activities related to the complaint  |  |  |  |
| 11.4.7 Informing the complainant and client of the outcome of the complaint |  |  |  |
| 11.4.8 Taking all necessary action to resolve issues arising. |  |  |  |
| 12 Management System |  |  |  |
| 12.1 The CP shall have a management system that is described in a manual or a set of linked documentation, which:  |  |  |  |
| 12.1.1 Is appropriate to the size and complexity of the organization[[1]](#footnote-1)*For small organizations, a complex system is not required, but the seven basis areas of ISO/IEC 17065 should each have policies and procedures.* |  |  |  |
| 12.1.2 May be in any form of media |  |  |  |
| 12.1.3 Should include the CPs objectives and the policies and procedures for managing and operating it.*The policies and procedures should not impose an excessive burden on the certification program, but must ensure that records of all actions taken with respect to clients are documented and that these documents are handled according to established policies and procedures, as well as the records of training, decisions, appeals, etc.* |  |  |  |
| 12.1.4 Shall be accessible to relevant personnel and be understood by them. |  |  |  |
| 12.2 The CP shall have procedures for the control of documents. These shall cover the adequacy, updating, changing, identity, legibility, use, distribution, removal and disposal of documents. *It is essential, even for the smallest organization, that all documents are properly managed.* |  |  |  |
| 12.3 The CP shall have procedures for the control of records. These should cover the identification, storage, protection, retrieval, retention and disposal of records. *Records can be digital or on paper.* |  |  |  |
| 12.4 The CP shall conduct a regular internal audit of its procedures to verify that the management system is effectively implemented. *For very small organizations, this can be conducted as a group effort of all personnel. ISO 19011 provides guidelines for conducting internal audits.* |  |  |  |
| 12.4.1 Internal auditors shall not audit their own work. |  |  |  |
| 12.4.2 Results of internal audits shall be made known to personnel with the responsibility for the areas that have been audited. |  |  |  |
| 12.5 The CP shall review the continuing suitability of its management system at least once every 12 months. The review shall be based on information from a variety of sources, including internal audit, inputs from personnel, feedback from clients, complaints and appeals. *For very small organizations, this can be conducted as a group effort of all personnel.* |  |  |  |
| 12.6 The CP shall take action to address actual and potential weaknesses in its operations, including non-conformities with the requirements of this section. The actions taken and the results achieved shall be recorded.  |  |  |  |
| 12.7 The CP should gather and record evidence on the impact that the presence of the certification scheme has had on its clients and their sustainability policies and actions.  |  |  |  |
| 13 Languages |  |  |  |
| 13.1 A CP may only certify using languages for which there is a GSTC-Recognized standard. |  |  |  |
| 13.1.1 The auditor must be proficient in that language. |  |  |  |
| 13.2 In the event an enterprise or destination being certified has a business language for which there is a GSTC-Recognized standard, however a sizable proportion of the staff of the enterprise/destination being audited speak mainly another (local) language, the auditor may undertake the Audit accompanied by a capable translator. |  |  |  |
| 13.2.1 In this event it is expected that the vast majority of documents are in the language of the GSTC-Recognized standard, and only spoken word translation is required. The enterprise/destination may use local language documents for training/awareness/management purposes with its staff and stakeholders, these may be translated to the language of the GSTC-Recognized standard by the enterprise/destination for the auditor’s review. |  |  |  |
| 13.3 In the event an auditor does not speak the language of the enterprise/destination an audit may be completed only with certified translation of key documents and using a translator during the audit. |  |  |  |

1. Guidance on management system requirements for very small organizations is shown in italics. For further guidance, see ISO/IEC 17065. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)