

Guideline for GSTC-Recognized Standard Owners: Compliance Process for the Revised GSTC Industry Standard – Inclusion of Indicators

Purpose

This document provides guidance for owners of GSTC-Recognized Standards on how to transition to the revised GSTC Hotel Standard and GSTC Tour Operator Standard, where **indicators will become mandatory** for GSTC certification.

Background

GSTC aims to review its standards on a regular basis, and revise when needed. The revised GSTC Standards for hotels and tour operators, planned to be published on December 1st, 2025, introduce two key changes:

1. GSTC Hotel Standard and Tour Operator Standard will have their own criteria and indicators.
2. **Indicators will become mandatory for GSTC Certification.** Previously, Recognition was based solely on criteria alignment which will remain for standards used for non-certification purposes.

Compliance Roadmap

To address varying use cases, GSTC will apply a dual approach:

1. Recognized standards are used for non-certification or national (endorsed) programs
2. Recognized standards that are used for certification

Roadmap 1 for Recognized standards are used for non-certification or national (endorsed) programs

For standards owners who are private organizations:

- a. If a Recognized Standard is used for non-certification purposes, such as internal improvement or consultation, it may remain equivalent to the criteria in GSTC Standards.

For standards owned who are legitimate national public authorities or their designated agent endorsed by that legitimate public authority:

- a. If the standard is used for non-certification purposes, it may remain equivalent to the criteria in the GSTC Standard(s).

Roadmap 2 for Recognized standards that are used for certification

For standards owners who are private organizations:

- a. If a Recognized Standard is used for the GSTC Certification, it shall include the contents of GSTC indicators in its standard.

For standards owned who are legitimate national public authorities or their designated agent endorsed by that legitimate public authority:

- a. If the standard is used for the GSTC Certification, it shall include the contents of the GSTC indicators.
- b. If the standard is used for its own certification but not for the GSTC Certification (*which is applicable only to standards endorsed by public authorities*), It may update the standard to be equivalent to the criteria of the revised GSTC standard(s). But GSTC encourages the public standard owner to update the standard(s) to be equivalent to both the criteria and indicators, in case they have a plan for applying for the GSTC accreditation in the future.

Note 1: Recognized standards that comply only with the GSTC criteria are not eligible for the GSTC certification and cannot be used by the GSTC-accredited certification bodies, but they may be used for non-certification purposes.

Note 2: In the previous version, a single set of criteria applied to both hotels and tour operators, enabling both scopes to be addressed within one matrix. In the revised version, as the criteria and indicators for hotels and tour operators are now distinct, separate applications shall be submitted for each standard.

Note 3: Standard owners who directly adopt the GSTC Standard should submit a request to GSTC to begin using the new version once their internal operational preparations are complete. If the standard will be used in a language other than English, the standard owner is responsible for providing a certified translation, which must be submitted along with the request.

Note 4: The required documentation for compliance will be provided by GSTC, and a two-year period will begin with the publication of the compliance application documents.

Associated Fees

As a technical review and approval decision by the Recognition Decision-Making Committee (RDMC) is required during the compliance process, the associated fee will be charged to the standard owners.