TO-02

NEPCon Sustainable Tourism Standard for Accommodations

The **NEPCon Sustainable Tourism Standard for Accommodations** is recognized by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council for being 100% aligned with the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria. This recognition status means that the full compliance of this standard, will allow NEPCon certified tourism organizations to also comply with this set of global criteria that promotes responsible practices to positively influence the businesses that adopt them, as well as the destinations where their activities are carried out.

The **NEPCon Sustainable Tourism Standard for Accommodation**s is an improved version of the former Rainforest Alliance sustainable tourism standard, that is divided in three fields designed to assess any tourism organization´s performance regarding their business, sociocultural and environmental practices. These fields are in turn divided into principles and criteria, which define in each case, the desired effect of its implementation.

Each criterion has specific indicators which define precise requirements that need to be met or proven by any business interested in attaining the NEPCon Sustainable Tourism Certification.

The indicators of the **NEPCon Sustainable Tourism Standard for Accommodations** are divided into critical (mandatory) and ordinary. All companies applying to achieve NEPCon Sustainable Tourism Certification must comply with at least 70% of ordinary indicators, as well as 100% of critical indicators.

Non-compliance on any of the critical indicators, regardless of the overall result of an audit process, entails a precondition that the applicant organization must resolve before it can be eligible to receive the NEPCon Sustainable Tourism Certification.

The objectives of the NEPCon Sustainable Tourism Standard for Accommodations:

The **NEPCon Sustainable Tourism Standard for Accommodations** is structured around four main objectives:

1. That the biodiversity and ecosystems of tourist destinations are preserved through the implementation of environmental management systems that protect the integrity of ecosystems, promote the rational use of natural resources, the protection of biodiversity and the mitigation of various negative impacts, including those derived from climate change.

2. That the social and cultural development of the communities involved in tourist activities improve; by reinforcing, the economic activities that they are involved in, and as a result, their livelihoods.

3. That tourism activities are carried out fully respecting and appreciating all the local cultural expressions, while at the same time protecting and emphasizing the importance of tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

4. That NEPCon tourism certified businesses position themselves in the international markets thanks to their efficiency and the quality of their sustainable services, developed from the implementation of a business management system that embodies the principles of sustainability as the fundamental basis and philosophy.

Scope of the NEPCon Sustainable Tourism Standard for Accommodations:

The scope of the certification audit will be the organizations physical facilities where activities directly related to the provision of tourism services are carried out; This also includes those areas and facilities located in remote sites and managed or owned by the organization to provide its tourism services.

The effects caused by the implementation of the sustainable management system encouraged by **the NEPCon Sustainable Tourism Standard for Accommodations** can be measured on two levels: impact on the audited organization and impact on the destination by supporting the protection of biodiversity, cultural heritage and the improvement of sustainable livelihoods for the local people.

TO-02 NEPCon Sustainable Tourism Standard for Accommodations - GSTC Recognized June 25, 2019
Nature, Economy and People Connected

Principles of the NEPCon Sustainable Tourism Standard for Accommodations:

Each of the fields of the **NEPCon Sustainable Tourism Standard for Accommodations** is divided in principles that are considered to be the key and relevant sustainability topics that must be reflected on any organization´s sustainable management system to achieve the NEPCon Sustainable Tourism Certification. The first 8 principles are included on the business field and address the efficient structuring of a sustainable business:

1) Sustainable management system;
2) Quality management;
3) Human resource management;
4) Safety management;
5) Communication and marketing management;
6) Food and beverage safety program;
7) Supplier management; and
8) Sustainability Education.

The socio-cultural field is divided in 4 principles that address the social aspects of the employees and the community; as well as the respect and protection of cultural heritage and living culture. The principles are:

1) Contribution to local development;
2) Legal and ethical labor practices;
3) Respect for local cultures and people; and
4) Rescue and protection of historical and cultural heritage.

The environmental field addresses those aspects of business management that have an impact on the use of natural resources, the ecosystems, biodiversity and climate change. The principles are:

1) Climate change;
2) Rational use of water;
3) Rational use of energy;
4) Protection of biodiversity;
5) Conservation of natural areas;
6) Prevention of pollution; and
7) Solid waste management.

All the standard principles are assessed to measure the level of compliance of the audited organization; and as a result, it can be determined whether there is a formal sustainable management system in place or not.

The NEPCon Sustainable Tourism Standard for Accommodations is designed to guarantee and promote the sustainability of accommodation services all over the world and is recognized by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), for being 100% aligned with the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria.

Furthermore, the NEPCon Sustainable Tourism Certification services are managed in adherence to a coherent set of policies and procedures that are designed to warrant transparency, impartiality, objectivity; and most of all, reliability of its results while encouraging the adoption of sustainability within the tourism industry.

In order to be able to attain or keep the NEPCon Sustainable Tourism Certification, all organizations audited with this standard must comply 100% of its critical indicators; and with at least 70% of the overall standard.

As a result of a licensing agreement between NEPCon and Rainforest Alliance Inc., organizations that obtain the NEPCon Sustainable Tourism Certification are eligible to use the Rainforest Alliance Certified™ seal for its public facing certification claims.

For reference, those indicators on the NEPCon Sustainable Tourism Standard for Accommodations that are equivalent to the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria are identified in this document with the following symbol (*), located and found on the right side of the identification number of all applicable cases.

Business Field

Principle E.1.

Sustainable Management System

Outcome

The organization has implemented a long-term sustainability management system that is suitable to its size and scope, addresses all key and relevant sustainability topics (1) and drives continuous improvement.

Criterion E.1.1. (Critical)

The organization has documented the key elements of its sustainable management system.

Outcome

The organization´s sustainable management system is structured through specific documented policies, programs and/or plans that cover all key and relevant sustainability topics (1).

(1) Key and relevant sustainability topics that must be reflected on the organization´s sustainable management system are those included on the text of criterion A1 of the GSTC-I Industry Criteria and any other, not included on that criterion, but encompassed on the principles of the NEPCon Sustainable Tourism Standard for Accommodations.

Indicator E.1.1.1

Vision, mission & sustainable company values are documented in writing.

Indicator E.1.1.2 (Critical) (*)

A written sustainability policy is documented, defining clear goals and objectives to guide the implementation and continuous improvement of the sustainable management system.

Evaluation Requirements

To ensure and guide the effective and long-term implementation of its sustainable management system, the organization must demonstrate that a sustainability policy with clear goals and objectives that are suitable to its size and operational scope, has been formally documented.

The sustainability policy must be the baseline for the development, monitoring and continuous improvement of all written guidance, operational policies, programs and/or plans necessary to consistently implement the sustainable management system.

The specific policies, programs and/or plans from the sustainable management system must demonstrate to cover environmental, social, cultural, economic, quality, health, safety, human rights, risk and crisis management issues, among any others that are -or shall become- relevant for the organization´s sustainability performance and goals.

Indicator E.1.1.3

A written ethics code is documented and applicable to all people related to the organization, to promote the principles of sustainable development.

Criterion E.1.2.

The organization informs customers, staff and other stakeholders about the content, scope and performance of its sustainable management system.

Outcome

The outcomes of the policies, programs and/or plans developed to implement the sustainable management system are optimized through engaging the participation and support of customers, staff and other stakeholders.

Indicator E.1.2.1

Vision, mission, and company values are communicated to customers, staff and other stakeholders to encourage their implementation.

Indicator E.1.2.2 (*)

The sustainability policy is communicated to customers, staff and other stakeholders to encourage its implementation.

Evaluation Requirements

Communication efforts must include internal and external materials to inform on the implemented actions, report on the performance and constantly seek the support of customers, employees and other stakeholders in delivering the organization´s sustainability policy.

Indicator E.1.2.3 (*)

Staff is trained on how to apply the sustainable management system on their daily work tasks.

Evaluation Requirements

There is concrete evidence that demonstrates staff members receive periodic training and guidance on how to implement the organization´s sustainable management system within its working units and daily tasks. Staff members also demonstrate a clear understanding of the organization sustainability goals and their active role and responsibility on delivering them.

Training regarding all key and relevant sustainability topics is facilitated to all staff as part of the ongoing organization´s training plan (See indicator E.3.2.1.).

Principle E.2.

Quality Management

Outcome
The quality of products and services meets the needs of clients and the sustainability market.

Criterion E.2.1.
The organization has documented its quality assurance program.

Outcome
The quality assurance program works efficiently.

Indicator E.2.1.1
Quality and service standards for the various activities performed within the organization are documented in writing.

Indicator E.2.1.2
A formal procedure for taking reservations and following them up is documented in writing.

Indicator E.2.1.3
The reservations procedure includes the collection of information on client expectations and other needs, in order to improve their services and the overall experience.

Indicator E.2.1.4
A preventive maintenance plan is documented in writing, which includes facilities, equipment, and/or vehicles.

Criterion E.2.2.
The organization periodically monitors the results of its operational and maintenance activities, defined within its quality assurance program.

Outcome
Operational perfomance and maintenance activities are continuously tracked and improved as a result of an effective periodical monitoring system.

Indicator E.2.2.1
Records are kept to demonstrate the implementation of the activities on the preventive maintenance plan.

Indicator E.2.2.2
Records are kept on the faults and/or deficiencies reported on the daily operations.

Indicator E.2.2.3
Records are kept to report all corrective actions taken as follow up to the faults and/or deficiencies identified on the daily operations.

Indicator E.2.2.4
Facilities, furniture, equipment, and/or vehicles demonstrate appropriate maintenance.

Indicator E.2.2.5
Facilities, furniture, equipment, and/or vehicles are kept clean and in order.

Indicator E.2.2.6
Cleaning and maintenance activities are carried out at appropriate times to prevent noise and/or inconveniences to clients.

Indicator E.2.2.7 (*)
Consumption records are kept of all used goods and supplies.

Indicator E.2.2.8
Consumption records of goods and supplies include parameters to identify minimal and maximum stocks.

Criterion E.2.3.
The organization implements mechanisms to measure client satisfaction.

Outcome
Client satisfaction is reviewed periodically and incorporated into the continuous service improvement.

Indicator E.2.3.1 (*)
A formal mechanism is implemented to measure client satisfaction and to collect suggestions and/or opinions.

Evaluation Requirements

The mechanism implemented to measure client satisfaction, allows the organization to gather direct feedback about its public environmental and social actions implemented in response to its sustainability policy.

Indicator E.2.3.2 (*)
Client feedback and opinions are reviewed and, when needed, lead to corrective actions.

Criterion E.2.4.
The organization designs and operates its services by ensuring compliance with commonly accepted quality standards.

Outcome
The organization´s quality standards meet and satisfy market standards.

Indicator E.2.4.1
An area is designated to welcome guests.

Indicator E.2.4.2
All staff wear a uniform and a nametag to make it easier to identify them.

Indicator E.2.4.3

A formal guest registration process is implemented.

Indicator E.2.4.4

Every guest has access to potable water.

Indicator E.2.4.5 (*)

As appropriate to the nature of the operation, facilities have the infrastructure or have been adapted to allow accessibility to people with disabilities.

Evaluation Requirements

Clear and accurate information is provided to customers on the available level of accessibility to sites, buildings and/or activities. The implementation of the required actions should take into consideration (though not exclusively nor is it compulsory) what is established in the UNWTO Recommendations on Accessible Tourism for All (2013).

The terms accessibility and disability must be understood based on the definitions found in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006).

Indicator E.2.4.6

Food and dishes that are traditional to the region and/or country are offered.

Indicator E.2.4.7

Food options for vegetarians are offered.

Indicator E.2.4.8

Food options for people with special dietary requirements are available upon request.

Indicator E.2.4.9

Priority is given to the use of fresh food products over those that contain preservatives.

Principle E.3.
Human Resource Management

Outcome

The organization´s productivity and quality of products and services are maximized through the positive staff performance.

Criterion E.3.1.

The organization has documented the key elements of its human resource management program.

Outcome

The human resource management program is organized and efficiently implemented, enhancing equity and avoiding discriminatory practices.

Indicator E.3.1.1 (*)

Job descriptions for all positions are documented in writing and avoid potentially discriminatory job requirements.

Evaluation Requirements

Job requirements are considered to be potentially discriminatory when on a job description the specified conditions of eligibility refer to gender, age, marital status, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation, among others.

Indicator E.3.1.2 (*)

A formal procedure for staff recruitment is documented in writing and implemented avoiding potentially discriminatory practices.

Evaluation Requirements

Recruitment practices are considered to be potentially discriminatory when applicants are rejected or selected for reasons based on gender, age, marital status, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation among others.

Indicator E.3.1.3 (*)

A formal procedure for new staff orientations is documented and implemented.

Indicator E.3.1.4

Records of employment are kept and updated in writing for each employee.

Criterion E.3.2.
The organization has a staff-training program that includes activities to improve technical, operational, and sustainability skills.

Outcome
Engagement, productivity and quality of services are maximized through the improvement of staff sustainable skills.

Indicator E.3.2.1 (*)
Staff training needs are assessed and a formal training plan is developed to address them.

Evaluation Requirements

Training plan must be updated at least once every 12 months. The topics included on the training plan must cover environmental, social, cultural, economic, quality, human rights, health, safety, risk and crisis management and any others that the organization considers relevant to improve job performance and sustainable skills of staff.

Indicator E.3.2.2 (*)
Staff is trained to improve job and sustainable skills.

Evaluation Requirements

There is evidence that staff training activities are carried out (ideally based on the formal plan referred to in indicator E.3.2.1.). Training provided must cover environmental, social, cultural, economic, quality, human rights, health, safety, risk and crisis management and others necessary to improve job and sustainable skills of staff.

Indicator E.3.2.3
The results of the formal training program are evaluated and actions are taken to continuously improve its contents.

Criterion E.3.3.
The organization implements a formal system for evaluating staff performance.

Outcome
Staff performance is periodically reviewed and measures are taken for improvement.

Indicator E.3.3.1
A formal process is implemented for periodical staff performance evaluations.

Indicator E.3.3.2
A formal incentive program is implemented to recognize departments and/or individuals who demonstrate the best performance.

Principle E.4.

Safety Management

Outcome

Physical integrity of the people involved in the organization´ management of services is safeguarded.

Criterion E.4.1. (Critical)

The organization maintains a safety program that is appropriate for its physical and operational environment.

Outcome

The risks, accidents and incidents are minimized through the implementation of an efficient safety program.

Indicator E.4.1.1 (Critical)

A formal risk assessment identifying possible risks that the operation is exposed to, is documented in writing.

Evaluation Requirements

The organization must have a formal risk assessment documented in writing, wherein it identifies and categorizes all the possible natural and anthropogenic risks to which their operations and all parties involved are exposed to.

The formal risk assessment must be drawn up based on the characteristics and conditions of the activities that the organization carries out, as well as those of its facilities. The design and all related strategies to the safety program will depend on the content of this assessment, therefore it is a required document in order to comply with many indicators on this principle.

Indicator E.4.1.2 (Critical)

The risk assessment covers all factors that could affect the safety of clients, employees, third parties and the facilities.

Evaluation Requirements

The organization must prove that its formal risk assessment takes into account, in a clear and accurate manner, all aspects that might affect the physical integrity of its clients, employees, and third parties involved in the supply of services and operations, as well as the facilities.

Although there are variations in each possible case, the non-compliance or partial compliance of indicator E.4.1.1 will affect the score given to this indicator. Likewise, the non-compliance or partial compliance of the requirements of this indicator will affect the score given to indicator E.4.1.3.

Indicator E.4.1.3 (Critical)

Emergency and contingency plans to respond to the situations identified and prioritized by the formal risk assessment are documented.

Evaluation Requirements

Based on the formal risk assessment referred to in indicator E.4.1.1, and taking into account what is also mentioned in indicator E.4.1.2, the organization must show that its emergency and contingency plans have been documented.

Any non-compliance or partial compliance of indicators E.4.1.1 and E.4.1.2 will affect the score given to this indicator. Likewise, in cases where the organization has documented emergency and contingency plans that are not based on the formal risk assessment referred to in indicator E.4.1.1, these will not be adequate in order to fully comply with this indicator.

Indicator E.4.1.4 (Critical)

The formal risk assessment and the emergency plans are periodically reviewed, and updated when needed.

Evaluation Requirements

The organization must prove that the documentation for the formal risk assessment, as well as the emergency and contingency plans are reviewed, and when necessary, are updated at least once every 18 months.

Criterion E.4.2.

The organization has the equipment, supplies, devices & legal support necessary to implement its safety program.

Outcome

Risks, accidents, and incidents are minimized through the implementation of an efficient safety program.

Indicator E.4.2.1

First aid kit(s), containing the appropriate amounts and types of supplies are available for emergencies.

Evaluation Requirements

Available first aid kit(s) must be properly identified, found in accessible areas and ideally must be mobile or portable. They must contain the appropriate supplies for possible emergencies and must avoid medications wherever possible.

Indicator E.4.2.2
Fire extinguishers are readily available at facilities and/or in vehicles.

Evaluation Requirements

Available fire extinguishers must be properly identified, found in visible and accessible areas, and must be in optimum working conditions.

Indicator E.4.2.3
Fire extinguishers contain the proper agent to control the type of fire most likely to occur at the their specific location.

Evaluation Requirements

The type of agent in the available fire extinguishers and the location of these, must comply with the requirements of the formal risk assessment and the emergency and contingency plans. Any non-compliance or partial compliance of indicators E.4.1.1 and E.4.1.3 could affect the score or full compliance of this indicator.

Indicator E.4.2.4
Appropriate communication devices are available to respond to an emergency.

Indicator E.4.2.5
Adequate insurance coverage is in place to cover potential liabilities caused by damages to clients, staff, facilities, and vehicles.

Indicator E.4.2.6
All vehicles used by the organization are equipped with seat belts for each seat.

Indicator E.4.2.7
All boats or vessels used by the organization have a visible sign that states the maximum passenger capacity.

Indicator E.4.2.8
All boats and/or vessels used by the organization have readily available life jackets for the their maximum passenger capacity.

Indicator E.4.2.9

Pack animals used by the organization are in good health, outfitted with proper equipment, and covered under the organization liability insurance.

Indicator E.4.2.10

The organization supports local security programs for tourists, implemented by government agencies, community based organizations, and/or business groups.

Criterion E.4.3.

The organization informs clients, staff, and other parties about its risk management and emergency plans.

Outcome

The implementation of the safety program is maximized through the participation of staff, clients, and third parties.

Indicator E.4.3.1 (*)

Staff is trained on how to implement the emergency and contingency plans.

Evaluation Requirements

The emergency and contingency plans referred to in this indicator are the same as required in indicator E.4.1.3. Therefore, any non-compliance or partial compliance of indicators E.4.1.1 and E.4.1.3, could affect the score and/or full compliance of this indicator.

Indicator E.4.3.2

Drills are implemented for those emergency cases highlighted as more probable, and records of these activities are kept.

Evaluation Requirements

All drills planned and carried out by the organization must meet the requirements of the formal risk assessment and the emergency and contingency plans. Any non-compliance or partial compliance of indicators E.4.1.1 and E. 4.1.3, could affect the score and/or full compliance of this indicator.

Indicator E.4.3.3

Evacuation routes are indicated, using written and/or graphical signs, at all facilities.

Evaluation Requirements

Evacuation routes, as well as the corresponding signs must meet the requirements of what is indicated in the emergency and contingency plans. Any non-compliance or partial compliance of indicators E.4.1.1 and E. 4.1.3, could affect the score and/or full compliance of this indicator.

Indicator E.4.3.4

Safety instructions to follow in case of an emergency are displayed in all operating facilities and vehicles.

Indicator E.4.3.5

Emergency exits are free of obstacles, properly marked and visible in the dark.

Indicator E.4.3.6

Signs are used to warn clients about potential dangers or risks.

Criterion E.4.4.

The organization implements specific safety measures in the kitchen area(s) to prevent accidents.

Outcome

Accidents in the kitchen area(s) are prevented through the implementation of specific safety measures.

Indicator E.4.4.1

People who prepare food follow safety measures when handling hazardous equipment or supplies.

Indicator E.4.4.2

Cleaning and kitchen staff is instructed on the proper use of disinfectant agents.

Indicator E.4.4.3

Kitchen staff uses the appropriate clothing to perform their duties.

Indicator E.4.4.4

Gas cylinders are located at least 1.5 meters away from heat sources.

Indicator E.4.4.5

Kitchen floors are made of impermeable and non-slip material.

Principle E.5.

Communication and Marketing Management

Outcome

The organization´s products and services effectively reach the attention of the sustainable market.

Criterion E.5.1.

The organization implements communication mechanisms to market its brand and the sustainable features and benefits of its services.

Outcome

The organization is effectively positioned in the sustainable market through truthful and accurate communications.

Indicator E.5.1.1

A communication and marketing plan that outlines the basic strategy for promoting the organization´s sustainable profile is documented in writing.

Indicator E.5.1.2

Marketing channels and/or materials are available to communicate and promote the sustainable features of the service.

Indicator E.5.1.3 (*)

Customers are informed in a clear and accurate manner about the sustainable features of the services.

Evaluation Requirements

Marketing materials must provide clear and accurate information about the organization and its services, including features of its sustainable management system. They must not raise false expectations as to what the organization can offer.

Indicator E.5.1.4

All marketing and communication materials are available in at least two languages.

Evaluation Requirements

Marketing and communication materials, in which the organization describes its services and sustainable profile, are required to be available in the language of the host country and in at least one more language of the organization´s choice.

Indicator E.5.1.5 (*)

Recognition of the sustainable business management performance is utilized as a tool for marketing and communication.

Evaluation Requirements

It is required that all tourism organizations certified by NEPCon facilitate to the auditor team, the approval documentation that demonstrates the compliance and adherence to the guidelines of use of the Rainforest Alliance Certified seal in any promotional and informative material where they may use it.

Criterion E.5.2.

The organization ensures that any resellers who promote its services, do it in a truthful manner, communicating the sustainable features and benefits of the services.

Outcome

The entire reselling chain guarantees the accuracy of the information provided to customers.

Indicator E.5.2.1 (*)

Special marketing materials are available to communicate and promote the sustainable features of the services through resellers and promotional events.

Evaluation Requirements

Must be available in at least two languages; language of the host country and another of the organization´s choice. Designed in order to facilitate information and the sale of organization services through resellers. (Preferably available in digital form).

Indicator E.5.2.2 (*)

The marketing materials used by resellers or at promotional events reflect clear and accurate information about the sustainable features of the services.

Evaluation Requirements

Marketing materials must reflect clear and accurate information about the organization and the services it offers, including features of its sustainable management system. They must not raise false expectations as to what the organization can offer.

Criterion E.5.3.

The organization implements mechanisms to achieve client loyalty.

Outcome

Clients remain loyal to the organization by continuing to purchase products and services.

Indicator E.5.3.1

Mechanisms are implemented to categorize the clients' profiles.

Indicator E.5.3.2

Specific actions are implemented to promote client loyalty.

Principle E.6.

Food and Beverage Safety Program

Outcome

Safe and hygienic management of food and beverage products and services is assured.

Criterion E.6.1.

The organization implements specific actions for the safe and hygienic handling of food and beverages.

Outcome

The health of clients and employees is protected by ensuring hygiene management of food and beverages.

Indicator E.6.1.1

Specific procedures are documented in writing to ensure the hygienic handling of food and management of the kitchen area(s).

Indicator E.6.1.2

All water and ice used for food preparation and drinks is potable.

Indicator E.6.1.3

All fruits and vegetables that are used are properly disinfected.

Indicator E.6.1.4

Records are kept to demonstrate the periodic analyses performed to control drinking water quality.

Indicator E.6.1.5

A FIFO method (First In-First Out) is implemented to ensure proper food supplies rotation.

Indicator E.6.1.6

All necessary and adequate equipment is in place to maintain the cold chain for perishable products.

Criterion E.6.2.
The organization ensures that all staff handling food and beverages are trained on food safety.

Outcome
Hygiene in food and beverage products and services is ensured through staff practices and skills.

Indicator E.6.2.2
All personnel entering the kitchen area(s) wear hairnets or hats.

Criterion E.6.3.
The organization implements specific measures to prevent cross-contamination while preparing or storing food products.

Outcome
Food conditions and safety are optimal.

Indicator E.6.3.1
Specific formal procedures are implemented for separately handling uncooked, pre-cooked and cooked food products.

Indicator E.6.3.2
Specific equipment utensils are readily available for separately handling uncooked, pre-cooked and cooked food products.

Criterion E.6.4.
The organization implements specific actions for the safe storage of food supplies.

Outcome
Food conditions and safety are optimal.

Indicator E.6.4.1
Formal procedures are implemented to properly store all food supplies based on their physical characteristics.

Indicator E.6.4.2
Daily monitoring is performed to assess the physical characteristics of perishable food.

Criterion E.6.5.
The organization ensures that its kitchen area(s) and equipment therein are kept clean and free of contamination.

Outcome
Clean kitchen facilities ensure the hygiene and safety of food and beverages.

Indicator E.6.5.1
Kitchen floors are free from cracks or fissures to ease their cleaning and disinfection.

Indicator E.6.5.2
Kitchen walls have smooth, waterproof and light colored surfaces to ease their cleaning and disinfection.

Indicator E.6.5.3
A mechanism is in place for extracting vapors and preventing smoke accumulation and/or bad odors in the kitchen area(s).

Criterion E.6.6.

The organization plans and implements measures to prevent and control pests in the kitchen area(s).

Outcome

Properly planned pest control measures at kitchen facilities ensure the safety of food supplies and products.

Indicator E.6.6.1 (*)

A formal plan for pest control and/or prevention is documented in writing.

Evaluation Requirements

The organization has all the necessary International Chemical Safety Cards (ICSCs) of each chemical agent used in its pest control operations. Furthermore, it proves to have performed an analysis in order to establish that the chemical substances it uses are the least harmful with respect to environmental impact or people´s health.

Indicator E.6.6.2

Kitchen staff know and, if necessary, implements the measures established in the pest control and/or prevention plan.

Indicator E.6.6.3

The pest control and/or prevention plan includes measures based on natural or environmentally friendly actions.

Principle E.7.

Supplier Management

Outcome

Supply chains are defined taking into account sustainability, quality and safety standards among selected providers.

Criterion E.7.1. (Critical)

The organization gives preference to suppliers that apply sustainable practices.

Outcome

The organization's supply chain is enhanced because of preferring suppliers that apply sustainable practices.

Indicator E.7.1.1 (Critical) (*)

A purchasing policy that outlines the preference for sustainable suppliers is documented in writing.

Evaluation Requirements

The general purpose of the purchasing policy is to ensure the implementation of sustainable consumption practices. Its availability and implementation favors the compliance of the rest of the indicators of this principle as well as others in the standard.

Indicator E.7.1.2 (*)

The purchasing policy sets out the parameters to assess and evaluate the sustainable characteristics of contractors, supplies and equipment.

Evaluation Requirements

The organization´s purchasing policy must establish specific and formal procedures and criteria to properly evaluate and select contractors, equipment, devices and supplies and favor the hiring and/or preferential use of those that offer the best characteristics in order to reinforce its sustainable management system.

Indicator E.7.1.3

Records are kept to demonstrate the formal monitoring of the sustainable performance of the regular suppliers.

Evaluation Requirements

In all possible cases, the organization is expected to be able to demonstrate evidence of a follow up to the observations and recommendations resulting from the monitoring of regular suppliers, as well as any improvements achieved.

Indicator E.7.1.4 (*)

Within feasible measures, the organization demonstrates the procurement of certified supplies of sustainable origin.

Evaluation Requirements

The action referred to in this indicator must be demonstrated by way of concrete examples of its implementation. However, the basis of this, is directly linked to the availability of a sustainable purchasing policy; therefore, the non-compliance or partial compliance of critical indicator E.7.1.1, will affect the full compliance of this indicator.

Criterion E.7.2.

The organization gives preference to suppliers that comply with quality and safety practices and standards.

Outcome

The quality and safety of goods and services used is enhanced because of preferrence given to suppliers that comply with these practices and standards.

Indicator E.7.2.1 (*)

Specific actions are taken to give preference to suppliers who meet quality standards.

Indicator E.7.2.2 (*)

Specific actions are taken to give preference to suppliers who meet safety standards.

Indicator E.7.2.3 (*)

Specific actions are taken to give preference to suppliers who meet food safety standards.

Principle E.8.

Sustainability Education

Outcome

People adopt consumption and living behaviors that are based on sustainable principles.

Criterion E.8.1. (Critical)

The organization has documented its sustainability educational program.

Outcome

The organization promotes the adoption of sustainable lifestyles and behaviors through its educational activities for clients, employees and community members.

Indicator E.8.1.1 (Critical) (*)

A sustainability education program is documented in writing, defining activities and goals targeted at clients, staff, and the larger community.

Evaluation Requirements

In order to encourage the adoption of sustainable practices that positively transform the behavior of all persons the organization interacts with, it is expected that a formal program is documented and implemented in order to educate clients, staff and the larger community concerning the most relevant issues of sustainable development.

The program must clearly define its target audiences, as well as the activities it will carry out with each of them. Likewise, it must have a documented schedule or program of activities with formal records that show its implementation.

The Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Tourism standard does not interpret the terms education and training as synonyms. The term education is defined as a series of actions oriented towards inducing and developing intellectual, moral and affective sensibility in persons with respect to nature, cultural diversity and co-habitation rules.

While training is defined as a teaching/learning process through, which staff abilities and skills are developed in order to improve their performance during the accomplishment of certain assignments or tasks related to a job function.

Indicator E.8.1.2

All didactic and support materials are available to implement the actions included in the sustainability education program.

Evaluation Requirements

All didactic or support materials referred to in this indicator are those created or available for the implementation of any activities considered in the sustainability education program referred to in critical indicator E.8.1.1.

Therefore, the non-compliance or partial compliance or critical indicator E.8.1.1, will directly affect the full compliance of this indicator and /or will lead to recommendations from the auditor which must be addressed in order to ensure the proper conformance of its evaluation requirements.

Criterion E.8.2.

The organization implements specific actions to improve the sustainable education of customers, employees and community members at the destination level.

Outcome

Customers, employees and community members at the destination level adopt consumption and living behaviors based on sustainable principles.

Indicator E.8.2.1 (*)

The implementation of activities outlined in the sustainability education program is demonstrated.

Evaluation Requirements

Client participation in projects that encourage and/or support sustainability in favor of the destination and/or community is promoted as part of the activities included on the sustainability education program.

The activities mentioned in this indicator will be the ones contemplated in the sustainability education program referred to in critical indicator E.8.1.1. Consequently, the non-compliance or partial compliance of this critical indicator, will affect full compliance or the score of this indicator.

Indicator E.8.2.2

Records are kept on the participation in the activities that are part of the sustainability education program.

Evaluation Requirements

The records referred to in this indicator are those related to the activities considered in the sustainability education program. Therefore, the non-compliance or partial compliance of critical indicator E.8.1.1 or indicator E.8.2.1, will determine full compliance or the score of this indicator.

Indicator E.8.2.3 (*)

Where those opportunities exist, the organization participates and/or supports initiatives for the sustainable planning and management of its destination.

Socio-cultural Field

Principle SC.1.
Contribution to Local Development

Outcome
Local economy and social well-being are improved through the organization active participation.

Criterion SC.1.1.
The organization has operating practices that contribute to promote local economic development.

Outcome
The organization's operating practices actively contribute to the improvement and reinforcement of the local economy.

Indicator SC.1.1.1 (*)
Local residents are given priority when hiring, avoiding discriminatory practices.

Evaluation Requirements

The job opportunities offered by the organization are fair, avoiding any type of discriminatory practices. Practices considered potentially discriminatory during the recruitment or hiring process are those where applicants are rejected or selected for reasons based on gender, age, marital status, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation among others.

Indicator SC.1.1.2 (*)
Favors the hiring and promotion of local residents for management positions, avoiding discriminatory practices.

Evaluation Requirements

The job opportunities offered by the organization for management positions, either for promotion of existing employees or for new hirings, are fair, avoiding discriminatory practices. Practices considered discriminatory are those where applicants are rejected or selected for reasons based on gender, age, marital status, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation among others.

Indicator SC.1.1.3 (*)

Specific actions are taken to give preference to engaging with local suppliers of goods and services.

Evaluation Requirements

The actions referred to in this indicator must be proven by way of concrete examples of its implementation. However, the basis of these are directly linked to the existence of a sustainable purchasing policy; therefore, the non-compliance or partial compliance of critical indicator E.7.1.1, will affect the full compliance and/or score of this indicator.

Indicator SC.1.1.4 (*)

Specific actions are taken to give preference to engaging with community owned tourism businesses.

Indicator SC.1.1.5 (*)

Clients are encouraged to purchase local goods and services.

Indicator SC.1.1.6 (*)

The purchase of locally made handicrafts and cultural products is promoted to clients.

Criterion SC.1.2.

The organization supports activities that benefit and promote social development of its community.

Outcome

The socio-cultural development of the community is improved through the organization´s operating practices.

Indicator SC.1.2.1 (*)

The organization actively supports the implementation of social activities that are beneficial for its community.

Evaluation Requirements

Ideally, the actions mentioned in this indicator must correspond to a community impact program which has been developed with the consensus of the beneficiaries. It is also admissible for it to respond to specific objectives defined in the organizations sustainability policy (critical indicator E.1.1.2).

In either case, involvement in the activities referred to in the indicator must be proven through formal action with clear documentation of the level of participation.

Indicator SC.1.2.2 (*)

In-kind or cash contributions are made for the execution of projects that are beneficial for the community.

Evaluation Requirements

Ideally, the contributions referred to in this indicator must correspond to a community impact program which has been developed with the consensus of the beneficiaries. It will also be admissible if it responds to specific objectives defined in the organizations sustainability policy (critical indicator E.1.1.2).

In either case, any contributions made by the organization, of any kind, must be established through precise records and as a formal and constant action.

Indicator SC.1.2.3

The organization promotes the participation of its employees in community activities for social and cultural benefit.

Principle SC.2.

Legal and Ethical Labor Practices

Outcome

The well-being of employees is improved through labor practices that protect their rights, comply with legal requirements and abide by ethical principles.

Criterion SC.2.1. (Critical)

The organization has labor practices that respect employee rights and comply with the applicable regional, national, and international work legislation.

Outcome

Employee rights are respected and labor conditions are in compliance with any applicable regional, national, and international work legislation.

Indicator SC.2.1.1 (Critical) (*)

Individual employment contracts are signed to formalize the employment relationship with its workers.

Evaluation Requirements

The organization must demonstrate that it has signed formal employment contracts with all its employees, making sure that these fulfill all legal requirements established in the current legislation that applies, and showing that each employee has received a signed copy of their employment contract.

Indicator SC.2.1.2 (Critical) (*)

Legal records are kept to demonstrate timely payment of salaries and wages.

Evaluation Requirements

In order to demonstrate compliance with this critical indicator, the organization must provide relevant documentation as proof of the timely payment of salaries and wages to all its employees. The audit team could request to examine the payrolls as far back as 12 months previous to the date the audit is carried out.

Indicator SC.2.1.3 (Critical) (*)

Records are kept to demonstrate timely payment of the corresponding contributions to the national social security system.

Evaluation Requirements

In order to prove compliance with this critical indicator, the organization must provide receipts as proof of timely payments of the corresponding contributions to the national social security system. The audit team may request to examine receipts of payments of up to 12 months previous to the date of the audit.

Indicator SC.2.1.4 (Critical) (*)

The organization demonstrates that all its employees are -at least- paid the legally established minimum or living wage.

Indicator SC.2.1.5 (Critical) (*)

The organization provides all legally stipulated employment benefits in addition to the salary.

Evaluation Requirements

The organization demonstrates that its employees are compensated for any overtime worked; and that their working day does not exceed the maximum hours stipulated by the International Labour Organization. Furthermore, there is evidence that all their employee's benefit from annual paid leave.

Besides the above, the organization must also demonstrate that it complies with providing to its amployees, any other legally stipulated employment benefits established in the national or regional legislation.

Indicator SC.2.1.6 (Critical) (*)

Internal employment policies are documented in writing and well known by all employees.

Criterion SC.2.2. (Critical)
The organization ensures a discrimination free working environment, equal working conditions for all employees and restricts child labor.

Outcome
Job quality is improved by providing fair and safe working conditions to all employees, while restricting child labor.

Indicator SC.2.2.1 (Critical) (*)
Labor rights of pregnant, post-partum, and breastfeeding women are respected.

Evaluation Requirements

The organization proves to have a formal policy in place to ensure the rights of pregnant, post-partum and breastfeeding employees. This policy is known by the employees and is in adherence to all applicable legal requirements.

Indicator SC.2.2.2 (Critical) (*)
Child labor is restricted in all activities related to the organization´s operation (under 14 years of age).

Evaluation Requirements

The organization demonstrates it has formal practices for any direct and indirect recruitment through its suppliers, wherein child labor is restricted, and these are in adherence to what is established in conventions 138 and 182 of the International Labour Organization.

Indicator SC.2.2.3 (Critical)
The recruitment or hiring of foreigners complies with all applicable legal requirements.

Indicator SC.2.2.4 (Critical) (*)
Specific measures are taken to ensure ethnic and gender equity amongst all employees.

Evaluation Requirements

The organization demonstrates to have formal policies as well as specific practices in place to promote equity amongst all employees. Those policies and practices also prevent, and when necessary, objectively manage, any form of discrimination, including gender, race, religion, disability or any other.

Criterion SC.2.3. (Critical)

The organization ensures that working conditions protect the physical and emotional well-being of its employees.

Outcome

Job quality is improved by providing a safe and secure working environment that protects the physical and emotional wellbeing of employees.

Indicator SC.2.3.1 (Critical) (*)

Areas designated for staff are well maintained and provide a healthy and safe environment.

Indicator SC.2.3.2 (Critical) (*)

Staff wears appropriate equipment that is necessary to protect their physical integrity while performing their duties.

Principle SC.3.

Respect for Local Cultures and People

Outcome

Local people maintain and value their traditional lifestyles and socio-cultural manifestations.

Criterion SC.3.1. (Critical)

The organization ensures customs, traditions, and socio-cultural manifestations of its community are respected.

Outcome

Local people maintain and value their customs, traditions, and socio-cultural manifestations.

Indicator SC.3.1.1 (Critical) (*)

The organization informs its guests on how to properly behave when visiting sites of cultural importance or interact in public and private spaces of local life.

Evaluation Requirements

The organization provides its customers with a code of conduct or recommended behavior guidelines to follow when interacting in public and private spaces of local life and/or when they visit sites of historical and/or cultural importance.

The content of the behavior guidelines seeks to minimize adverse impacts and maximize visitor fulfilment by following good practice guidance regarding responsible visitation.

Ideally this should be presented in the form of a code of conduct available to all customers. However, it is also acceptable if this is implemented though activities derived from the sustainability education program referred on critical indicator E.8.1.1.

Indicator SC.3.1.2 (*)

A documented code of conduct for activities at indigenous and/or local communities has been developed and implemented with the collaboration and consent of the affected communities.

TO-02 NEPCon Sustainable Tourism Standard for Accommodations - GSTC Recognized June 25, 2019
Nature, Economy and People Connected

Indicator SC.3.1.3 (Critical) (*)

The organization implements specific measures to prevent socially harmful conducts within the business operation.

Evaluation Requirements

In order to fully comply with this critical indicator, the organization must be able to demonstrate the following:

a. It has documented its policy (ies) relevant to these issues..

b. It has documented the procedures in order to make their relevant policy (ies) operational.
c. Employees are trained on the policies and procedures mentioned previously.

d. Employees show that they understand the scope of these policies and the related procedures.
e. That the policy (ies) are publicly available to be reviewed unrestricted by anyone interested (employees, clients, guests or third parties).

It is generally understood that situations of social harm are those that undermine or infringe upon the integrity of persons or the local community, among these; discrimination in any form, misogyny, exploitation, and any activities related to human trafficking, or consumption of illicit drugs, among others.

Indicator SC.3.1.4 (Critical) (*)

The organization implements specific measures to prevent commercial, sexual or any other form of exploitation of children and adolescents.

Evaluation Requirements

In order to fully comply with this critical indicator, the organization must be able to demonstrate the following:

a. To have documented its policy relevant to this issue; or to have adhered to any of the global codes that apply (WTO, UNICEF or ECPAT).

b. To have documented the procedures in order to make the policy operational; or to have adhered to the procedures of any of the global codes that apply (WTO, UNICEF or ECPAT).
c. Employees are trained on the policies and procedures defined and/or embraced.

d. Employees show that they understand the scope of this policy or code, and the related procedures.
e. That its policy, or declaration of commitment, is publicly available to employees, clients, guests and third parties.

Absence of any of the above mentioned elements will prevent the organization from complying with the present indicator until the oversight found has been amended.

Indicator SC.3.1.5

The organization respects its employee's right to speak their languages and wear their traditional ethnic or regional attire.

Indicator SC.3.1.6 (Critical)

Local residents are not denied the right to access historical, cultural and/or spiritual sites of importance to their people.

Indicator SC.3.1.7 (Critical) (*)

Activities of the operation do not jeopardize the provision of basic services to neighboring communities.

Evaluation Requirements

The organization demonstrates that its activities do not affect the livelihoods, for work and subsistence, of the local people, respecting whenever it applies, the unrestricted use of local resources, rights of way and/or access, access to housing etc.

Indicator SC.3.1.8

The organization assesses the satisfaction level and evaluates complaints from the local community, regarding the activities promoted to its benefit.

Principle SC.4.

Rescue and Protection of Historical and Cultural Heritage

Outcome

Tangible and intangible historical and cultural heritage is valued and protected to ensure its preservation.

Criterion SC.4.1.

The organization ensures respect and protection of tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

Outcome

Local stakeholders preserve and protect their tangible and intangible historical and cultural heritage.

Indicator SC.4.1.1

The organization provides information to its guests about the history, culture and traditions of the region.

Evaluation Requirements

Information provided must be available in at least two languages, the language of the host country and any other of the organization´s choice. Likewise, it should be related and be relevant to the region or place where the organization is located, or where its operations take place.

Indicator SC.4.1.2 (*)

The organization has the consent of local and/or Indigenous communities for their inclusion in tourism activities.

Indicator SC.4.1.3 (*)

The organization encourages guests to visit local communities or historical sites and/or to participate in traditional activities of the region.

Evaluation Requirements

Apart from the encouragement mentioned in this indicator, the organization also shares with guests codes of conduct that must be observed when visiting sites of historical importance, of cultural heritage, and/or when interacting in cultural activities of the region and/or organization´s location.

Ideally, this action could be demonstrated through the existence and public availability of a code of conduct especially documented to this end, as is mentioned in critical indicator SC.3.1.1.

Indicator SC.4.1.4 (*)

The organization formally supports research, management and/or protection activities at a cultural heritage site of archaeological, historical and/or sacred importance.

Evaluation Requirements

Ideally, these actions must correspond to specific objectives defined in the organization´s sustainability policy (Critical indicator E.1.1.2). However, even when contributions made are not linked to the sustainability policy, these must consist of clear records and a formal and constant action, regardless of the kind of contribution made.

Indicator SC.4.1.5 (*)

The organization does not participate in activities that imply or promote illegal trade, trafficking, and/or exploitation of protected cultural assets; it has the proper permits in place for exhibitions.

Criterion SC.4.2.

The organization includes representative elements of the local culture as part of the design of its products and services.

Outcome

Local culture is preserved by incorporating its representative elements in the design of the organization´ products and services.

Indicator SC.4.2.1 (*)

The organization incorporates elements of local art, architecture, or cultural heritage in its operations, design and decoration, while respecting the intellectual property rights of local communities.

Indicator SC.4.2.2 (*)

Specific measures are taken to ensure that facilities or buildings do not cause alterations to historical, archaeological, and/or sacred heritage sites.

Environmental Field

Principle A.1.
Climate Change

Outcome
The organization's negative impact on climate is minimized; adaptation is fostered in the operation, community, and destination.

Criterion A.1.1.
The organization takes action to promote the adaption of its operations and destination to climate change.

Outcome
The vulnerability of the organization and the destination to extreme climatic events is minimized.

Indicator A.1.1.1 (*)
The organization informs its clients, staff, and community members about the climate change phenomena.

Evaluation Requirements

It is expected that all information presented by the organization educates the audiences about the climate change phenomena. That it explains its impacts and offers recommendations in order to adapt to its effects as well as ways to reduce and/or compensate for these (e.g.: through the use of alternative means of transport, participating in reforestation activities, rational use of energy, etc.).

Ideally, this action should be implemented through activities derived from the sustainability education program mentioned in critical indicator E.8.1.1.

Indicator A.1.1.2
The organization participates in initiatives that promote the adaption of the destination and its operations to the effects of climate change.

Criterion A.1.2.
The organization mitigates the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions generated from its operations.

Outcome
The negative effects on climate resulting from the organization's operation are minimized through reduction and/or compensation of its GHG emissions.

Indicator A.1.2.1 (*)
Records are kept to demonstrate that GHG emissions caused by the organization's operations are measured.

Evaluation Requirements

GHG emissions caused by the organization´s operation are measured (to the extent possible) and formal records are kept; emissions from direct sources (e.g.: operations, equipment, activities), and from indirect sources (e.g.: purchases, transportation of clients).

Ideally, the carbon footprint (GHG emissions minus compensations) is monitored as part of the organization´s GHG emissions estimation, with definite plans and actions to be taken in order to avoid an increase each year.

Indicator A.1.2.2 (*)
Specific actions are taken to reduce and/or compensate the GHG emissions caused by the organization´s operation.

Evaluation Requirements

Based on its records of GHG emission measurements, the organization shows it plans and takes formal action to reduce or eliminate emission sources, as well as actions to compensate for these when elimination is not an option.

The use of any refrigerant classified as an ozone depleting substance, will only be acceptable in cases where the organization has a formal plan in place for its substitution or complete elimination within a period of no more than 5 years; and when it demonstrates in a quantifiable manner that its use does not exceed 30% of operational requirements.

Indicator A.1.2.3 (*)
The organization actively seeks and encourages the use of cleaner and more resource efficient transportation alternatives among customers, employees, suppliers and for its own operations.

Principle A.2.

Rational Use of Water

Outcome

Water consumption is managed efficiently to avoid degradation of the resource, its quality and future availability are not put at risk as a result of the organization´s activities.

Criterion A.2.1. (Critical)

The organization plans the rational use of water to minimize overall consumption and monitors the results of this effort.

Outcome

A water rational use plan is in place, works efficiently (maximizing positive impacts and minimizing the negative); and drives continuous improvement.

Indicator A.2.1.1 (Critical) (*)

An action plan for water rational use and saving is documented in writing.

Evaluation Requirements

Water risk is assessed and actions for rational use and consumption are planned accordingly. In areas where water risk is high, the water rational use plan outlines specific stewardship actions and goals to be implemented and monitored for continuous improvement.

The water rational use plan must also include the following: a) clear description of the key actions implemented to reduce water consumption and/or keep it within levels deemed acceptable; b) procedures for continuous monitoring and measuring of water consumption; and c) actions to encourage water rational use amongst customers and employees.

The water rational use plan must also specify which water sources the organizations uses (e.g.: municipal, governmental, private, etc.) and demonstrate that water sources are sustainable and do not adversely affect environmental flows.

Indicator A.2.1.2

Goals have been set to reduce or keep water consumption within rational use levels.

Indicator A.2.1.3

A specific organizational unit or staff member is appointed to implement the actions defined on the water rational use plan and to assess its results.

Criterion A.2.2. (Critical)
The organization implements specific actions to track its use of water and to improve and promote the rational use of this resource.

Outcome
Water use is improved because of implementing actions to reduce overall consumption and engage customers and staff in supporting the organization´s saving efforts.

Indicator A.2.2.1 (Critical)
Meters are installed to measure water consumption.

Indicator A.2.2.2 (Critical) (*)
The organization monitors and keeps records of its water consumption.

Evaluation Requirements

The water consumption records must reflect the guest-consumption-source relation for the period given as evidence. Likewise, the records must include data for the 12 months previous to the audit. Nonetheless, during initial assessments, it will be conditionally accepted that the organization provides only 6 months of consumption records.

Indicator A.2.2.3 (Critical) (*)
The organization assesses the results of its water consumption records to continuously improve its performance.

Evaluation Requirements

The consumption records required in indicator A.2.2.2, must provide data of at least 6 months previous to the audit in order to assess, and in suitable cases, grant compliance for this indicator.

It must show that assessments of water consumption results are carried out at least once a year, describing the way in which these are completed and the actions that derive from these, at least on the planning level (there is no specific format available for this process).

Indicator A.2.2.4 (*)

Water saving devices are used to reduce consumption in all possible areas.

Evaluation Requirements

In order to comply fully with this indicator, the organization must prove in a clear and measurable manner that the use of water saving devices is applied to at least 75% of its facilities where this is possible.

Indicator A.2.2.5 (*)

Signs and information are available to encourage customers and staff participation in the organization's water saving efforts.

Criterion A.2.3.

The organization ensures that its water sources are sustainable, efficiently managed and do not adversely affect any environmental flows.

Outcome

Water sources degradation is prevented to preserve their quality and future availability.

Indicator A.2.3.1 (*)

Specific actions are taken to ensure the rational use of the organization´s water sources.

Evaluation Requirements

The organization must demonstrate the implementation of formal actions to responsibly manage water sources under its control; without compromising the future availability of the resource, nor affecting natural water flows or streams.

As stated in critical indicator A.2.1.1, in areas where water risk is assessed as high, the water rational use plan must outline the specific actions and goals that are implemented to prevent negative effects over water sources controlled and/or used by the organization.

Indicator A.2.3.2

Specific actions are taken to prevent potentially polluting activities near water sources.

Principle A.3.

Rational Use of Energy

Outcome

Energy consumption is managed efficiently and the use of alternative sources for clean generation is maximized.

Criterion A.3.1.

The organization plans the rational use of energy and monitors the results of this effort.

Outcome

An energy rational use plan is in place, works efficiently (maximizing positive impacts and minimizing the negative); and drives continuous improvement.

Indicator A.3.1.1 (*)

An action plan for rational energy use and energy saving is documented in writing.

Evaluation Requirements

An annually updated plan, that includes at least the following: a) intended actions in order to reduce consumption and/or keep it within levels deemed acceptable by the organization; b) procedures for formal consumption monitoring; c) actions to encourage rational energy use among clients and employees.

The savings and rational use energy plan must identify the sources of energy supply used by the organization, defining percentages of renewable versus nonrenewable energy.

Indicator A.3.1.2

Goals have been set to reduce or keep energy consumption within rational use parameters.

Indicator A.3.1.3

A specific organizational unit or staff member is appointed to implement the actions defined on the energy rational use plan and to assess its results.

Criterion A.3.2.
The organization implements specific actions to track its energy consumption and to improve and promote the rational use of this resource.

Outcome
The organization's energy consumption is reduced and does not jeopardize the provision of this resource to the surrounding communities.

Indicator A.3.2.1
Meters are installed for different operational areas to measure energy consumption.

Indicator A.3.2.2 (*)
The organization monitors and keeps records of its energy consumption.

Evaluation Requirements

The energy consumption records must reflect the guest-consumption-source relation for the period given as evidence. Likewise, the records must include data for the 12 months previous to the audit. Nonetheless, during initial assessments, it will be provisionally accepted that the organization provides only 6 months of consumption records.

Indicator A.3.2.3 (*)
The organization assesses the results of its energy consumption records to continuously improve its performance.

Evaluation Requirements

The consumption records required in indicator A.3.2.2 must provide data of at least 6 months previous to the audit in order to assess, and in suitable cases, grant compliance for this indicator.

It must show that assessments of results of energy consumption are carried out at least once a year, describing the way in which these are completed and the actions that derive from these, at least on the planning level (there is no specific format available for this process).

Indicator A.3.2.4

The purchasing policy includes criteria to favor the acquisition of energy efficient equipment and saving devices.

Evaluation Requirements

In order to be able to comply with this indicator, the organization must have documented a sustainable purchasing policy required in critical indicator E.7.1.1. Likewise it must be able to prove that this policy defines specific technical criteria for the assessment and acquisition of energy efficient equipment and devices.

Indicator A.3.2.5 (*)

Specific measures are taken to minimize heat and cold losses.

Evaluation Requirements

Thermic insulation of hot water pipes, formal procedures for the use of cold storage rooms and concrete actions that prevent energy loss (heat), such as hot water recirculation system, etc.

Indicator A.3.2.6 (*)

Energy efficient equipment and energy saving devices are used to reduce consumption where possible.

Evaluation Requirements

In order to comply fully with this indicator, the organization must prove in a clear and quantifiable manner that the use of energy saving devices and energy efficient equipment, is applied to at least 75% of all possible cases.

Indicator A.3.2.7 (*)

Specific actions are taken to ensure equipment and devices that consume energy are turned off when they are not in use.

Indicator A.3.2.8 (*)

Signs and information are available to encourage client and staff participation in the organization's efforts to save energy.

TO-02 NEPCon Sustainable Tourism Standard for Accommodations - GSTC Recognized June 25, 2019
Nature, Economy and People Connected

Criterion A.3.3.

The organization takes advantage of natural dynamics and alternative sources to generate energy.

Outcome

The pollution caused by energy consumption is reduced by using alternative sources for clean energy generation.

Indicator A.3.3.1

The organization takes advantage of natural light, heat, and ventilation to reduce energy consumption in their facilities.

Indicator A.3.3.2 (*)

The organization uses renewable sources or alternative technologies to source energy needs at its facilities.

Indicator A.3.3.3 (*)

The organization increases the use of renewable sources or alternative technologies to source energy needs at its facilities.

Principle A.4.

Protection of Biodiversity

Outcome

Natural ecosystems are protected and the loss of biodiversity is prevented.

Criterion A.4.1. (Critical)

The organization prevents and/or reverses any negative conversion of ecosystems as a result of its operations.

Outcome

The planning and operation of all tourism activities, including the development of any infrastructure takes into account the capacity and integrity of the natural surroundings.

Indicator A.4.1.1 (Critical) (*)

Activities, operations and development of any infrastructure do not imply actions that produce any negative conversion of ecosystems.

Evaluation Requirements

The organization must show that formal actions are taken to prevent negative conversion of the ecosystems located in the natural surroundings of the area where its facilities and/or operations takes place. These actions must respond to formal environmental management tools based on the results of periodical assessments of the environmental risk factors and impacts.

Environmental management tools must clearly outline foreseen measures to reduce environmental risks and mitigate and/or compensate negative impacts. The planning, siting, design, construction, renovation, operation and demolition of any infrastructure must be considered, and its impacts prevented.

Indicator A.4.1.2 (Critical) (*)

The organization recovers and/or compensates any negative conversion of ecosystems caused by its infrastructure and/or operations.

Evaluation Requirements

The organization must demonstrate, through concrete evidence, that measures are taken to address any negative impacts, or any environmental risks caused by its operations and/or infrastructure. It must implement recovery or compensation actions from any negative impacts. These actions must respond to formal environmental management tools.

Indicator A.4.1.3 (*)

Rainwater disposal or diversion is managed responsibly.

Indicator A.4.1.4

Firewood used comes from sustainably managed sources.

Criterion A.4.2.

The organization guarantees the protection of native flora and fauna species.

Outcome

The biodiversity of native flora and fauna species is protected.

Indicator A.4.2.1 (*)

The organization does not, in any way participates in, or supports activities involving the acquisition, captivity, display and/or breeding of wild animals, unless they are part of legally established and regulated programs.

Evaluation Requirements

Organization must demonstrate to have all applicable legal permits and licenses for the activities and/or programs involving the use of wild animals. Personnel responsible for managing the activities and/or programs is properly trained and suitable equipped for the job. It also demonstrates compliance with any regulations that applies for the role.

Housing, care and handling of all wild and domestic animals must demonstrate to meet the highest standards of animal welfare. Noncompliance with this indicator or its evaluation requirements may lead to a non-certification decision or to the suspension of an active certificate.

Indicator A.4.2.2 (*)

The organization does not use or trade with threatened or endangered species.

Indicator A.4.2.3 (*)

Wildlife is not fed, except through planted vegetation that provides a natural food source.

Indicator A.4.2.4 (*)

Guests are informed about the adverse impacts caused by feeding wild animals.

Indicator A.4.2.5 (*)
The lighting of the organization´s facilities and/or activities does not affect the habitat and behavior of wildlife.

Indicator A.4.2.6 (*)
The organization does not generate nor allow excessive noise that alters the behavior of wildlife.

Criterion A.4.3.
The organization avoids or reverses the introduction of invasive exotic species.

Outcome
Ecosystems are protected from the invasion of exotic species.

Indicator A.4.3.1 (*)
The organization does not use exotic species (plants or animals) that may alter natural ecosystems.

Indicator A.4.3.2 (*)
Preference is given to the use of native plants for landscaping.

Principle A.5.

Conservation of Natural Areas

Outcome

Natural areas, land and water, are protected, due to their importance in the conservation of biodiversity and other benefits associated to cultural, scientific landscape and environmental services.

Criterion A.5.1.

The organization supports conservation efforts of natural protected areas and follows appropriate guidelines for the management and promotion of visits to those natural sites.

Outcome

Natural protected areas, land or water, are preserved and visits to those areas are managed to minimize any adverse impacts and maximize visitor fulfilment.

Indicator A.5.1.1 (*)

The organization formally supports or directly maintains the conservation of a natural area, either public or private.

Evaluation Requirements

Ideally, these actions must correspond to specific objectives defined in the organization´s sustainability policy (Critical indicator E.1.1.2). However, even when this is not the case, these actions must include, regardless of type, clear records that prove that this is a formal and constant action in favor of a protected natural area for conservation or investigation purposes.

Indicator A.5.1.2 (*)

The organization informs its customers on how to behave responsibly when visiting natural and conservation areas.

Evaluation Requirements

The organization provides its customers with a code of conduct or recommended behavior guidelines to follow when visiting any natural conservation or protected area. The content of the behavior guidelines seeks to minimize adverse impacts and maximize visitor fulfilment.

Ideally this should be presented in the form of a code of conduct available to all customers. However, it is also acceptable if this is implemented though activities derived from the sustainability education program referred on critical indicator E.8.1.1.

Criterion A.5.2.
The organization complies with all regulations applicable to its operations within natural protected areas.

Outcome
Regional, national and international regulations for activities within natural protected areas are met to guarantee the protection of these ecosystems.

Indicator A.5.2.1 (*)
The organization is in compliance with all regulations applicable within the natural protected areas where it performs tourist activities.

Indicator A.5.2.2 (*)
The organization has all the required permits and or licenses to operate within a natural protected area.

Principle A.6.

Prevention of Pollution

Outcome

Pollutants generated by the organization are properly disposed of, to protect biodiversity and human health.

Criterion A.6.1. (Critical)

The organization does not affect water, soil, and/or air with contaminanting substances used, produced, or generated by its operations.

Outcome

Water, soil, and/or air are not affected negatively by pollutants used/generated by the organization.

Indicator A.6.1.1 (*)

Preference is given to the use of biodegradable and/or environmentally friendly cleaning and personal hygiene products.

Evaluation Requirements

The organization has the necessary International Chemical Safety Cards (ICSCs) of all chemical agents used in its cleaning and hygiene tasks. Furthermore, it shows to have carried out an assessment in order to determine whether the chemical substances used are the least harmful for the environment as well as for human health.

Despite the above mentioned, in cases where the use of chemical substances classed as highly hazardous cannot be avoided, the organization must demonstrate that its use and application is controlled, and in adherence to formal procedures to reduce potential risks to human and environmental health and safety.

Indicator A.6.1.2 (Critical) (*)

The use of hazardous substances that are toxic to humans and the environment is avoided.

Evaluation Requirements

The organization must prove that all the different cleaning, maintenance, fumigation and similar activities, abstain from the use of substances classed as highly hazardous according to the World Health Organization recommended classification of pesticides by hazard.

Nonetheless, in cases where the use of chemical substances classed as highly hazardous cannot be avoided, the organization must demonstrate that its use and application is controlled, and is in adherence to formal procedures to reduce potential risks to human and environmental health and safety.

Indicator A.6.1.3 (*)

Preference is given to the use of natural or organic products for the maintenance of green areas, minimizing the use of agrochemicals.

Evaluation Requirements

The organization has the necessary International Chemical Safety Cards (ICSCs) of all chemical agents used for the various maintenance tasks of green areas. Furthermore, it shows to have carried out an assessment in order to determine whether the chemical substances used are the least harmful for the environment as well as for human health.

Nonetheless, in cases where the use of chemical substances classed as highly hazardous cannot be avoided, the organization must demonstrate that its use and application is controlled, and is in adherence to formal procedures to reduce potential risks to human and environmental health and safety.

Indicator A.6.1.4

Specific actions are taken to properly manage all toxic and/or hazardous waste.

Criterion A.6.2.

The organization mitigates the polluting effects caused by its wastewaters.

Outcome

The polluting effects caused by wastewaters are identified and mitigated.

Indicator A.6.2.1 (*)

A wastewater treatment system is in place and works efficiently.

Evaluation Requirements

All wastewater produced from the organization´s operations are deposited into a wastewater treatment system avoiding negative or adverse effects to any fragile ecosystems, the local population and the environment.

In cases where it applies, it is also acceptable to deposit the wastewater into the local treatment system, approved by the country´s government, state or municipality.

Indicator A.6.2.2 (*)

Records are kept to demonstrate the timely maintenance of the wastewater treatment system.

Principle A.7.

Solid Waste Management

Outcome

Negative impact from solid waste disposal on ecosystems and human health is minimized.

Criterion A.7.1. (Critical)

The organization plans the reduction and responsible management of its solid waste.

Outcome

A solid waste reduction and management plan is in place, works efficiently (maximizing positive impacts and minimizing the negative); and drives continuous improvement.

Indicator A.7.1.1 (Critical) (*)

The solid waste management plan is documented in writing.

Evaluation Requirements

An updated plan is in place and it covers the following topics: a) description of all key actions implemented by the organization to reduce waste; b) procedures for reusing, recycling and/or responsible final disposal in those cases where reduction is not feasible; and c) actions to encourage reduction and responsible management of waste among customers and employees.

The waste management plan must -at least- outline specific procedures for the reduction and/or responsible management of the following types of waste: a. Organic (dry and wet and including food waste); b. Inorganic and recyclable (e.g.: glass, cans, paper, aluminum, cardboard, plastic); c. Construction; d. Non-traditional (e.g. electronics, etc.); and e. Toxic or hazardous.

Indicator A.7.1.2

Staff is trained on the importance and the implementation of the solid waste management plan.

Indicator A.7.1.3 (*)

The purchasing policy defines the selection criteria for rejecting and reducing supplies that produce more waste.

Evaluation Requirements

In order to comply fully with this indicator, the organization must have documented the sustainable purchasing policy required by critical indicator E.7.1.1. Furthermore, it must demonstrate that this policy includes selection criteria aimed at reducing the consumption of supplies that produce more waste.

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Nature, Economy and People Connected

Criterion A.7.2.

The organization implements specific actions to reduce its solid waste.

Outcome

The amount of solid waste produced by the organization is reduced through adopting consumption practices that prefer the use of environmentally friendly products and goods.

Indicator A.7.2.1 (*)

Wherever possible, preference is given to supplies purchased in bulk, reducing the use of small individual packages.

Evaluation Requirements

The action referred to in this indicator must be proven through statistical data and concrete examples of its implementation. However, the foundation of this is directly linked to the existence of a sustainable purchasing policy; therefore, the non-compliance or partial compliance of critical indicator E.7.1.1, will have a direct effect on the full compliance of this indicator.

Indicator A.7.2.2 (*)

Reusable, refillable, and/or recyclable containers and devices are used for products/supplies in small individual packages.

Evaluation Requirements

The action referred to in this indicator must be proven through statistical data and concrete examples of its implementation. However, the foundation of this is directly linked to the existence of a sustainable purchasing policy; therefore, the non-compliance or partial compliance of critical indicator E.7.1.1, will have a direct effect on the full compliance of this indicator.

Indicator A.7.2.3

The organization uses recycled paper. FSC certified paper or paper certified by another independent certification is acceptable as long as responsible sourcing of materials is assured.

Evaluation Requirements

The action referred to in this indicator must be proven through statistical data and concrete examples of its implementation. However, the foundation of this is directly linked to the existence of a sustainable purchasing policy; therefore, the non-compliance or partial compliance of critical indicator E.7.1.1, will have a direct effect on the full compliance of this indicator.

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Indicator A.7.2.4 (*)

The organization avoids the use of disposable materials.

Evaluation Requirements

The action referred to in this indicator must be proven through statistical data and concrete examples of its implementation. However, the foundation of this is directly linked to the existence of a sustainable purchasing policy; therefore, the non-compliance or partial compliance of critical indicator E.7.1.1, will have a direct effect on the full compliance of this indicator.

Indicator A.7.2.5 (*)

Records are kept on the amount, and type of all waste generated by the organization.

Evaluation Requirements

The amounts of waste monitored and included on the records must consider -at least- the following types: a. Food waste; b. Recyclable waste (e.g.: glass, cans, paper, aluminum, cardboard, plastic); c. Construction; d. Non-traditional (e.g. electronics, etc.); and e. Toxic or hazardous.

Criterion A.7.3.

Waste generated by the operation is recycled and properly disposed of.

Outcome

Proper disposal of solid waste reduces the negative effects to ecosystems and human health.

Indicator A.7.3.1

The areas where solid waste is generated have containers for the proper separation.

Indicator A.7.3.2 (*)

All waste generated in the organization is separated for proper management or disposal.

Indicator A.7.3.3

There is a clean and tidy area where waste is stored prior to final disposal.

Indicator A.7.3.4 (*)

Waste collection services hired are safe and legal.

Indicator A.7.3.5

When possible, construction residues are reused.

Indicator A.7.3.6

Construction residues and non-traditional waste are disposed of in an environmentally proper manner.

Indicator A.7.3.7

Signs and information are available to encourage client and staff participation in the organization's efforts to reduce and manage waste responsibly.

Indicator A.7.3.8 (*)

The organization aims at all inorganic waste that has been separated going to recycling or being reused.

Indicator A.7.3.9

All produced organic waste is properly managed.