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# Sustainable tourism — Indicators for organizations in the tourism value chain — Requirements and guidance for use

*Tourisme durable — Indicateurs pour les organisations dans la chaîne de valeur du tourisme — Exigences et recommandations d'utilisation*

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# Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO document should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

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For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), see www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 228, *Tourism and related services*.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user’s national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

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# Introduction

The sustainability approach for tourism organizations should go beyond the implementation of sustainable practices, connecting the results obtained with these practices with the impacts generated by the organization.

Sustainability is directly related to the negative and positive impacts arising from tourism activities. Organizations that want to be more sustainable should establish objectives to either minimize negative impacts or maximize positive impacts, or both. Furthermore, sustainability has an integrated approach, and organizations can contribute to other organizations (private or public) and destinations in terms of sustainability.

Experience in other sectors of the economy shows that effective management depends on a consistent set of indicators. Therefore, this document aims to serve as a source of consultation and guidance for organizations that wish to measure sustainability management performance using indicators.

From this perspective, performance indicators, such as those presented in this document, are essential so that tourism organizations can monitor the results obtained by planning and implementing actions related to significant environmental, social, and economic impacts.

These indicators can be used by tourism organizations that seek to reduce their costs and, at the same time, increase their profitability, putting into practice the concepts of a more sustainable management. This management allows, in the environmental dimension:

— the achievement of greater energy efficiency;

— the optimization of the use of inputs, raw materials and water resources;

— a reduction of waste generation; and

— an increase in the awareness and motivation of employees regarding the preservation of the tourist destination where the organization is located.

In the social dimension, such management engenders:

— better-trained employees;

— reduced turnover;

— improvements in the work environment;

— closer partnerships with suppliers and other related organizations;

— recognition; and

— improvement of the image and reputation, enhancing the destination through community development and protection of its cultural values.

In the economic dimension, improving management provides greater financial health for the company, allowing the development of strategies for greater profitability associated with the growth and development of the business and satisfying the needs of tourists.

Organizations of all types in the tourism sector are increasingly concerned about achieving and demonstrating effective performance in relation to sustainability, managing the impact of their activities, products or services, and taking into account their sustainability policy and objectives.

This behaviour is part of the context of increasingly demanding legislation, the development of economic and social policies, other measures aimed at encouraging the protection of the environment and cultural heritage, and a growing concern among interested parties, in particular customers, in relation to quality and environmental and sociocultural issues.

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Using the methodologies outlined in this document, organizations can enhance their sustainability performance, contribute to the conservation of destinations, and meet the growing demand for responsible tourism practices.

Thus, adopting sustainability indicators as a mechanism to measure compliance with sustainability objectives is an effective way to monitor business performance and ensure that the organization's strategy is working.

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# Sustainable tourism — Indicators for organizations in the tourism value chain — Requirements and guidance for use

## 1 Scope

This document defines and establishes methodologies for a set of indicators to steer and measure the performance of organizations in terms of sustainability.

The requirements and guidance in this document can be used to implement these tourism sustainability indicators.

This document is applicable to any organization in the tourism value chain that wishes to:

a) monitor, measure, analyse and evaluate the sustainability performance of the organization;

b) ensure its conformity with its defined sustainability policy;

c) measure, evaluate and monitor the results of sustainable practices implemented at the organization;

d) evaluate the fulfilment of the established sustainability objectives;

e) monitor compliance with applicable legislation.

## 2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

## 3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminology databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

— ISO Online browsing platform: available at https://www.iso.org/obp

— IEC Electropedia: available at https://www.electropedia.org/

**3.1**
**indicator**
quantitative, qualitative, or descriptive measure

[SOURCE: ISO 37100:2016, 3.5.1]

**3.2**
**destination**
**tourism destination**
geographical area, including cultural, social, economic and environmental aspects, where tourism activities occur, consisting of services, attractions, resources and infrastructures necessary for a tourist experience

**3.3**
**governance**
management of the set of initiatives or actions that express the ability of an organization or organized society to manage matters of collective interest based on the cooperative involvement of social, economic and institutional actors with a view to sustainable territorial development

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**3.4**
**sustainability**
state of the global system, including environmental, social and economic aspects, in which the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs

Note 1 to entry: The environmental, social and economic aspects interact, are interdependent and are often referred to as the three dimensions of sustainability.

Note 2 to entry: Sustainability is the goal of *sustainable development* (3.5).

[SOURCE: ISO Guide 82:2019, 3.1]

**3.5**
**sustainable development**
organizing principle for achieving human development goals while at the same time sustaining the ability of natural systems to provide the natural resources and ecosystem services upon which the economy and society depend

Note 1 to entry: The desired result is a state of society where living conditions and resources are used to continue to meet human needs without undermining the integrity and stability of the natural system.

Note 2 to entry: Sustainable development can be defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

[SOURCE: ISO 23405:2022, 3.1.2]

**3.6**
**sustainable tourism**
tourism sector that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, employees, the industry, host communities and climate change among others, while working closely with interested parties on the implementation of *sustainability* (3.4) policies

[SOURCE: ISO 23405:2022, 3.1.3]

**3.7**
**sustainability aspect**
activities, elements, practices, products or services of organizations and other providers in the tourism sector which can interact with the dimensions of *sustainability* (3.4) (environmental, social and economic)

Note 1 to entry: A significant aspect of sustainability is one that has or can have a significant impact.

Note 2 to entry: Some examples of sustainability aspects are energy and water consumption, solid waste generation or recyclable packaging.

[SOURCE: ISO 23405:2022, 3.1.4]

**3.8**
**sustainability objective**
intent to achieve global *sustainability* (3.4), resulting from the sustainability policy that an organization or destination sets itself to achieve, being quantified whenever possible

[SOURCE: ISO 23405:2022, 3.1.5]

**3.9**
**impact on sustainability**
change to the environment, society or economy, wholly or partially resulting from an organization's *sustainability* (3.4) aspects

Note 1 to entry: Impacts on sustainability can be adverse or beneficial.

[SOURCE: ISO 23405:2022, 3.1.4]

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**3.10**
**interested party**
**stakeholder**
*person* (3.12) or organization that can affect, be affected by, or perceive itself to be affected by a decision or activity

Note 1 to entry: In this document, a person can be considered as a tourist, client, participant, guest, customer, visitor, workers or a member of the local community, among others

[SOURCE: ISO 21401:2018, 3.17, modified — note 1 to entry has been added.]

**3.11**
**tourism value chain**
sequence of primary and support activities which are strategically fundamental for the performance of the tourism sector

**3.12**
**person**
individual who impacts the *sustainability* (3.4) of the organization and is considered to calculate the indicator

Note 1 to entry: A person can be a tourist, customer, visitor, guest, traveller, participant, employee, supplier and other user.

**3.13**
**solid waste**
non-soluble, discarded solid materials, including sewage sludge, municipal garbage, industrial wastes, agricultural refuse, demolition wastes and mining residues

[SOURCE: ISO 37120:2018, 3.13]

# 4 Approach for indicators of sustainable tourism

## 4.1 General

Experience in other sectors of the economy shows that effective management depends on a consistent set of indicators. Therefore, this document aims to serve as a source of consultation and guidance for organizations that wish to measure sustainability management performance using indicators.

Indicators should be used and adopted in close accordance with:

— the sustainability objectives established by the organization,

— the Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs) established by United Nations (UN), and

— environmental, social and governance (ESG) criteria and reporting, if applicable.

Considering these aspects, indicators shall be defined for the three dimensions of sustainability (environmental, socio-cultural and economic). The proposed indicators can be considered as the basis for each organization. Thus, it will be possible for certain organizations to use indicators other than those proposed in this document.

Indicators shall be clear, understandable, measurable, comparable, repeatable and reliable.

The implementation of the indicators has a direct relationship with the governance of the organization and the destination; therefore, it should be considered as a success factor for sustainable development.

NOTE In this document, most indicators are quantitative.

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