Destination Stewardship:

Leave No Destination Behind

A Destinations International Policy & Response Roadmap

December 2023

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Roadmap

This roadmap is a high-level, visual representation of Destinations International's journey over a long period. It lays the groundwork for more detailed planning, aligning various departments and stakeholders around a shared vision and objectives.

Leave No Destination Behind

The concept of leaving no member—or no destination—behind is pivotal in our efforts in destination stewardship. Destinations vary widely in their resources, expertise, and progress in sustainable practices. Those that are lagging often have the most to lose: they risk deteriorating their cultural heritage, natural landscapes, and social fabric, all of which are key attractions for tourism and vital aspects of local life. If these destinations fall too far behind, the gap between them and more sustainable destinations may widen, exacerbating inequalities and leading to a host of negative outcomes, both locally and globally.

Therefore, Destinations International must ensure that our destination stewardship programs are inclusive and accessible to all members. Tailoring programs to meet different needs not only raises the overall standard but also fosters a sense of community and shared purpose. No destination should be considered too small or too inexperienced to participate in destination stewardship efforts. In bringing every destination up to a higher standard, the industry can move forward in a way that is not just economically beneficial, but also socially just and environmentally sound.

Defining Sustainability

For this roadmap, we anchored this document with the 2030 United Nations (UN) Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aimed at ending poverty, fighting inequality, and tackling climate change. They are a call to action to protect the planet and improve lives, to promote prosperity while protecting the future.

The UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines sustainable tourism as tourism that considers its current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts. Under this definition, sustainable tourism should:

- ✓ Meet the needs of visitors, industry, the environment, and host communities.
- ✓ Protect and enhance opportunities for the future.
- ✓ Maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction.

- ✓ Ensure a meaningful experience for tourists.
- ✓ Raise awareness about destination stewardship issues.
- ✓ Promote sustainable tourism practices among tourists.
- ✓ Preserve and grow regional communities and protected areas.
- ✓ Improve tourists' attitudes toward the environment.
- ✓ Minimize damage through better awareness and consideration of the impact tourists create.

Moving To Stewardship

Sustainability means different things in different contexts and among various populations and individuals. A word that also can be very politically charged, particularly in places like the United States. Finally, the issue can stir up long term conflicts between more economically developed areas and less economically developed areas. For this roadmap, sustainability is seen as part of destination stewardship and the ability to exist and develop without depleting natural resources for the future. It's also the ability to maintain or support a process continuously over time.

Small Steps, Next Steps, Bigger Steps

Small steps, often perceived as modest or incremental, play a pivotal role in initiating transformative change. Each minor action serves as a catalyst, setting forth a ripple effect that gradually builds momentum. In 2023, Destinations International took its first, small steps (Phase One) in destination stewardship and achieved the following as a foundation for future action.

- ✓ Create a Strategic Imperative.
- ✓ Alignment of Our Strategic Initiatives with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- ✓ Formed a Sustainability Working Group.
- ✓ Survey Our Membership.
- ✓ Develop a Roadmap for Destinations International to Tackle the Issues Around Destination Stewardship
- ✓ Recommit to a Remote First Policy for Employees.
- ✓ Use 2023 Annual Convention to Set a Baseline Carbon Footprint.
- ✓ Place An Emphasis on Addressing the Topic of "Stewardship" at the Annual Convention and Vertical Summits.

Building on the collaborative foundation established by Destinations International, there is a compelling imperative to elevate our efforts and take bolder steps toward a visionary future. To lay the groundwork for more detailed planning that aligns various Destinations International departments and stakeholders around a shared vision and objectives, this roadmap identifies an initial list (Phase Two) of 19 possible steps to take. Drawing on the results and lessons from these efforts, the next phase (Phase Three) requires us to set higher goals and implement strategies that will lead to profound and lasting change. To begin the thinking and planning of this phase, this roadmap identifies 12 possible additional steps that could be taken.

PREFACE:

STRATEGIC ROADMAP VERSUS STRATEGIC PLAN

The creation of a "Roadmap" and a "Strategic Plan" are two distinct yet interrelated steps in the process of strategic planning. While they are often used interchangeably, they serve different purposes and are effective at different stages of the planning process.

A roadmap is a high-level, visual representation of the organizational journey over a long period. It lays the groundwork for more detailed planning, aligning various departments and stakeholders around a shared vision and objectives.

A strategic plan offers a detailed outline for how to achieve the organization's mission and vision. It's the tactical guidebook that turns the roadmap into actionable steps.

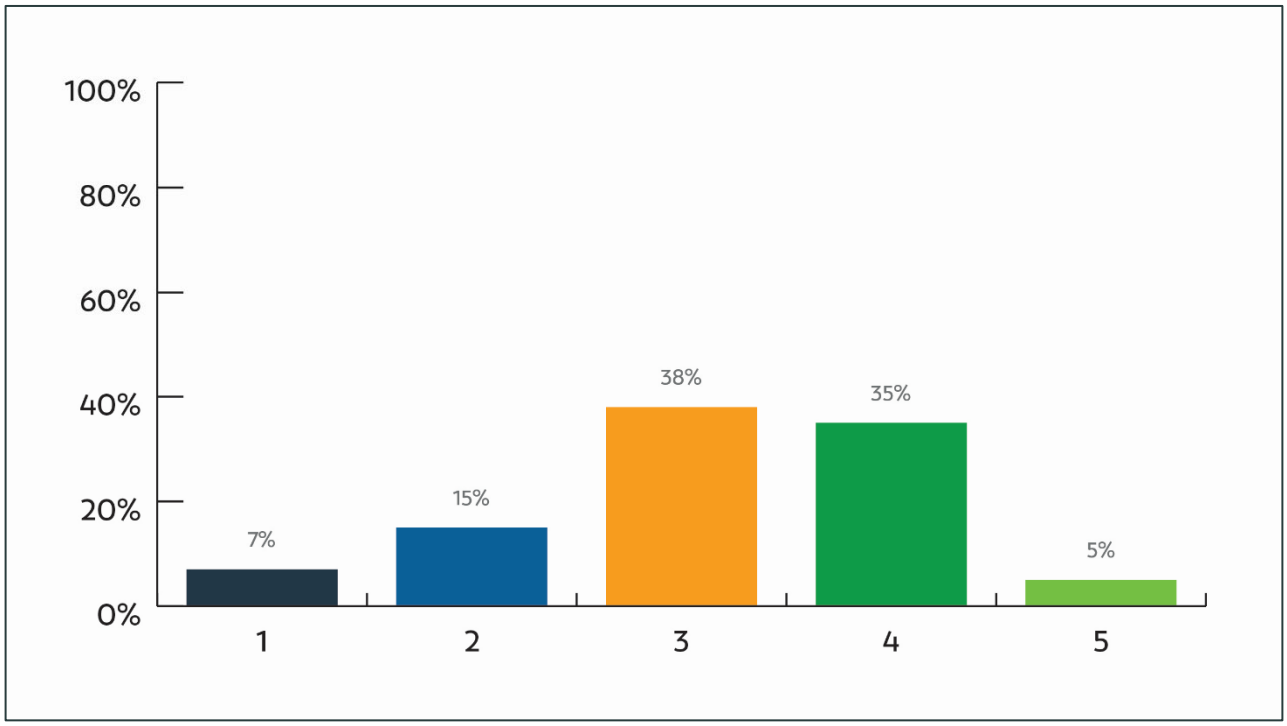
ROADMAP - 2023	STRATEGIC PLAN - 2024
Purpose: The reason why this action is being contemplated includes the need that is to be filled, the expertise DI brings to the equation and the benefit to our membership.	Mission and Vision Statements: Reiteration and potentially a detailed explanation of the organization's core purpose and future aspirations in this area.
Goals and Objectives: Broad targets that the organization aims to achieve.	Strategic Objectives: Specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals.
Areas of Focus: Identifying key areas of focus for which action plans should be created. Key Milestones: Important checkpoints or interim goals.	Action Plans: Detailed steps, timelines, and responsible parties for each objective.
Metrics: Suggestions of potential measurements that goals can be assigned to.	KPIs and Metrics: Ways to measure progress toward strategic objectives.
Dependencies: Elements that need to be in place for milestones to be achieved. Resource Allocation: High-level view of the human, financial, and technological resources required.	Budget and Resource Allocation: Detailed financial planning and resource distribution.

Risks and Assumptions: Initial identification of potential roadblocks or conditions assumed to be in place.	Risk Mitigation Strategies: Comprehensive plans to address identified risks.
Strategic Plan Creation: A discussion for the creating of a 3-year (or similar period) strategic plan for the initial phases.	Review and Update Mechanism: A system for regularly reviewing progress and updating the plan as necessary.

MILEPOST ONE:

The Challenge to Leave No Destination Behind

How would you rate your organization as it relates to being proactive in sustainability? (1-Low, 5-High)

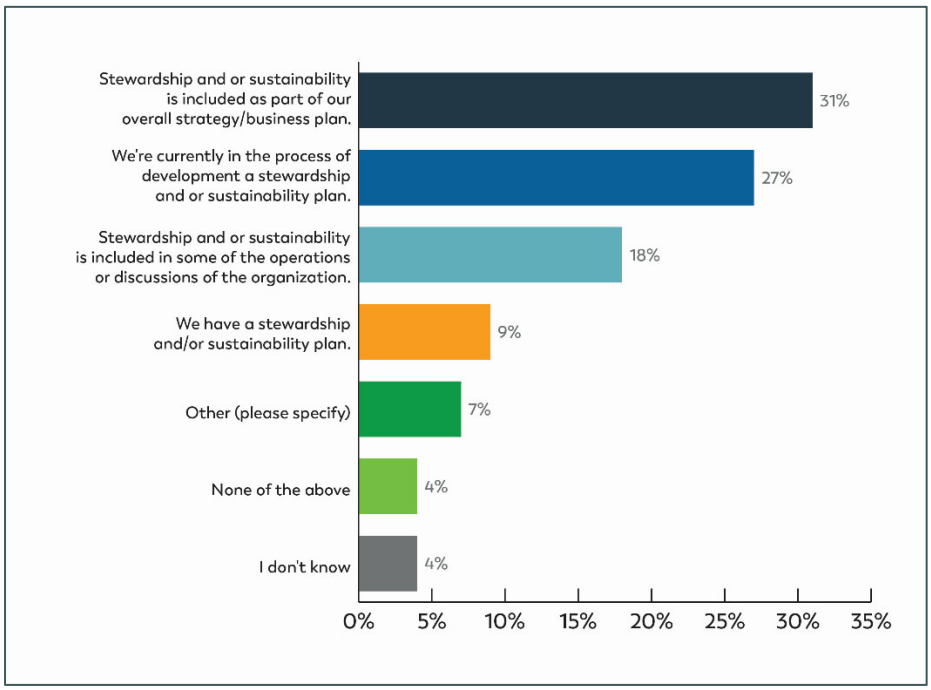


NOTE: Survey Results are from 2023 DI Member Survey on Sustainability

The urgency of addressing destination stewardship in the travel and tourism industry cannot be overstated. As climate change accelerates and social and economic inequalities persist, the need for responsible practices becomes increasingly critical. Destinations worldwide are grappling with issues like over-tourism, waste management, and the exploitation of natural and cultural resources. These challenges have a direct impact on the quality of life for local communities and the long-term viability of the destinations themselves. As we move toward a future where stewardship and sustainability are not just buzzwords but a requirement, taking immediate, collective action becomes imperative.

Designing stewardship and sustainability programs for a diverse membership base presents a unique set of challenges. At one end of the spectrum, we have organizations in the preliminary stages of stewardship work. These members most likely require fundamental education, basic tools, and strong incentives to even consider integrating sustainability into their operations.

Which of the following best applies to your destination organization?



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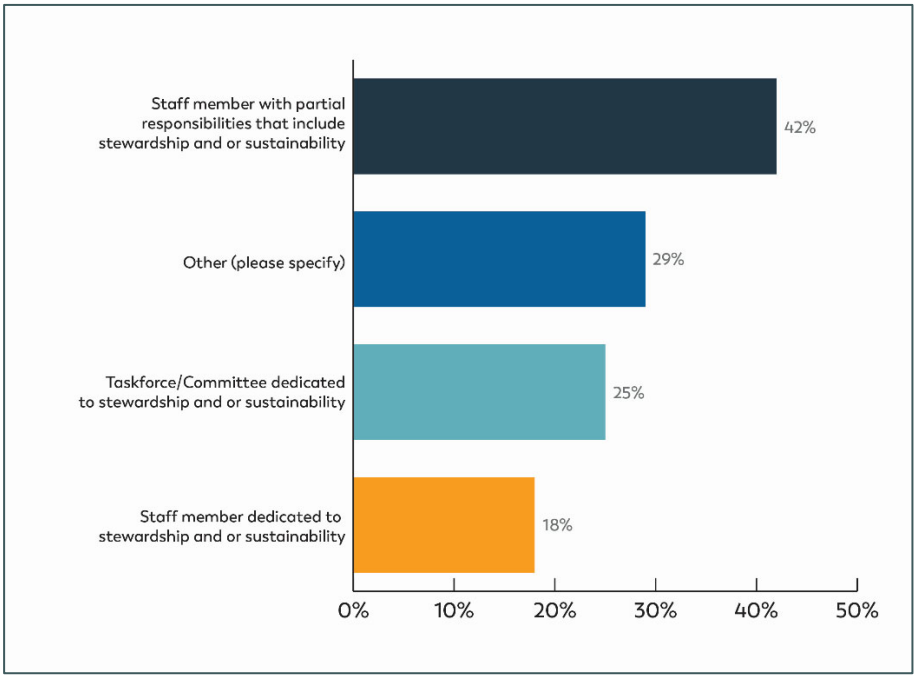
Regarding your organization, which of the following applies?



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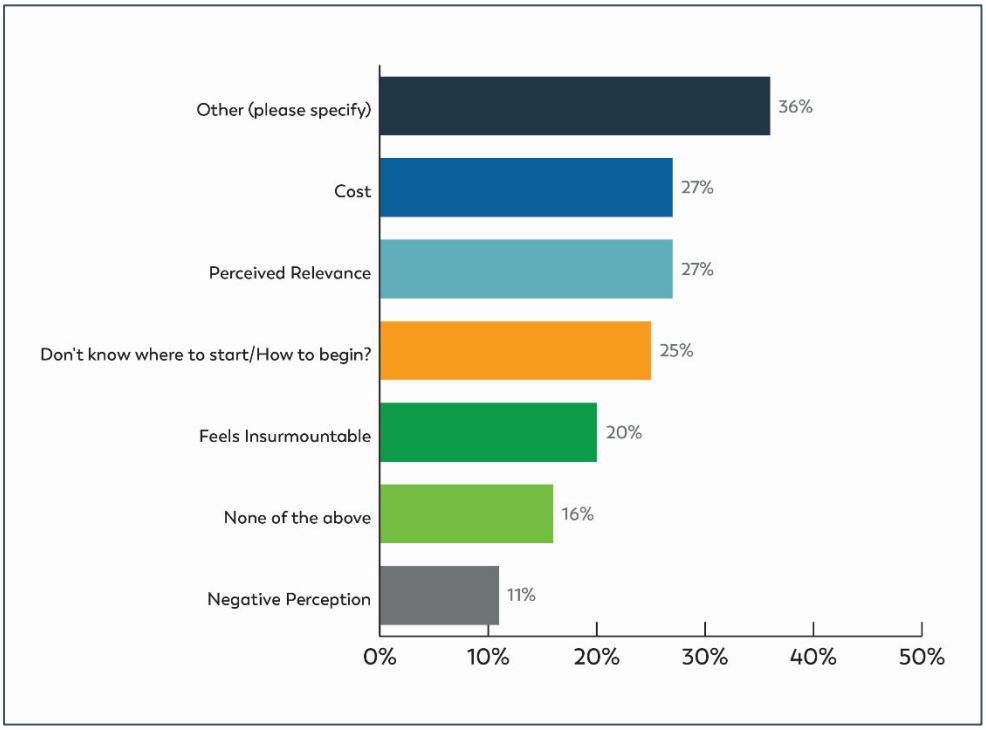
On the opposite end are members that have already made significant strides in destination stewardship —those who have not only implemented advanced practices but may also have developed internal tools and systems. Offering programs that are too basic may alienate these advanced members, whereas highly specialized programs could intimidate or overwhelm those who are just starting out.

Striking the right balance is a delicate task, requiring a tiered or modular approach to program design that can cater to varying levels of engagement and expertise. This will involve creating entry-level educational materials and certifications for beginners, alongside more advanced assessments, and tools for those who are farther along in their destination stewardship journey. Additional complexity arises when considering the three pillars of sustainability—social, economic, and environmental—as organizations may excel in one area while lacking in another. This demands a multi-faceted approach that can provide value to members across different stages of destination stewardship engagement, ultimately aiming to uplift the entire community toward more sustainable practices.

Which of the following challenges/barriers is your destination organization facing in regard to stewardship and or sustainability?



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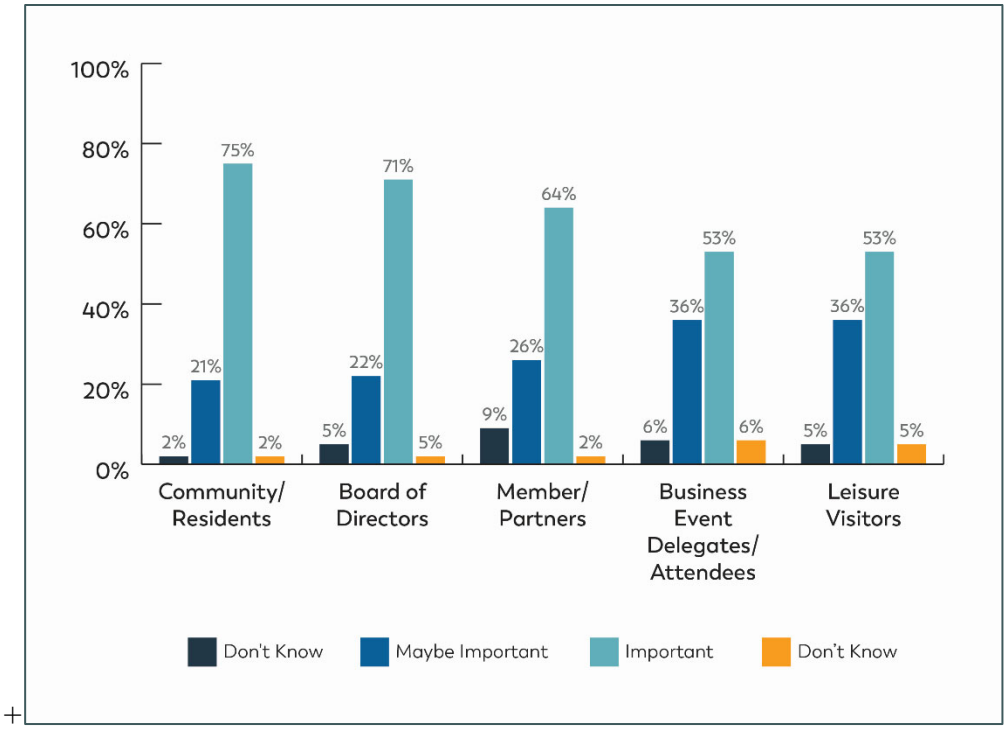
The concept of leaving no member—or no destination—behind is pivotal in this endeavor. Destinations vary widely in their resources, expertise, and progress in sustainable practices. Those that are lagging often have the most to lose: they risk deteriorating their cultural heritage, natural landscapes, and social fabric, all of which are key attractions for tourism and vital aspects of local life. If these destinations fall too far behind, the gap between them and more sustainable destinations may widen, exacerbating inequalities and leading to a host of negative outcomes, both locally and globally.

What level of importance do you feel the following stakeholders have regarding stewardship and or sustainability?



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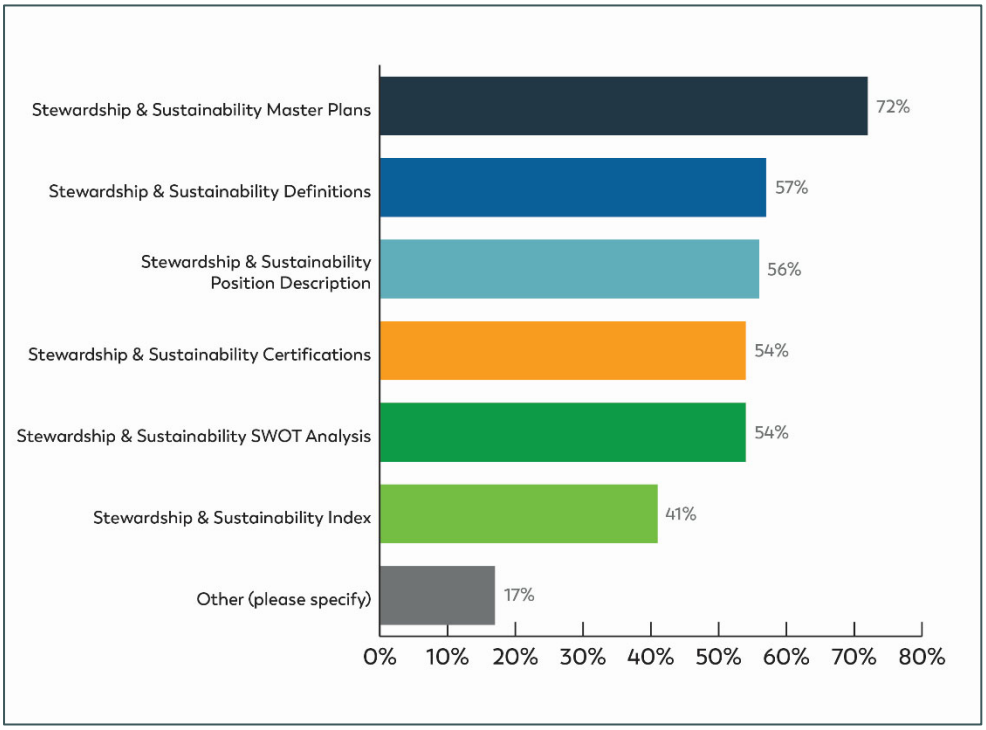
Therefore, Destinations International must ensure that their destination stewardship programs are inclusive and accessible to all members. Tailoring programs to meet different needs not only raises the overall standard but also fosters a sense of community and shared purpose. No destination should be considered too small or too inexperienced to participate in destination stewardship efforts. In bringing every destination up to a higher standard, the industry can move forward in a way that is not just economically beneficial, but also socially just and environmentally sound.

MILEPOST TWO:

Defining The Need

Which of the following do you feel are needed to help destination organizations on their journey of stewardship and sustainability?



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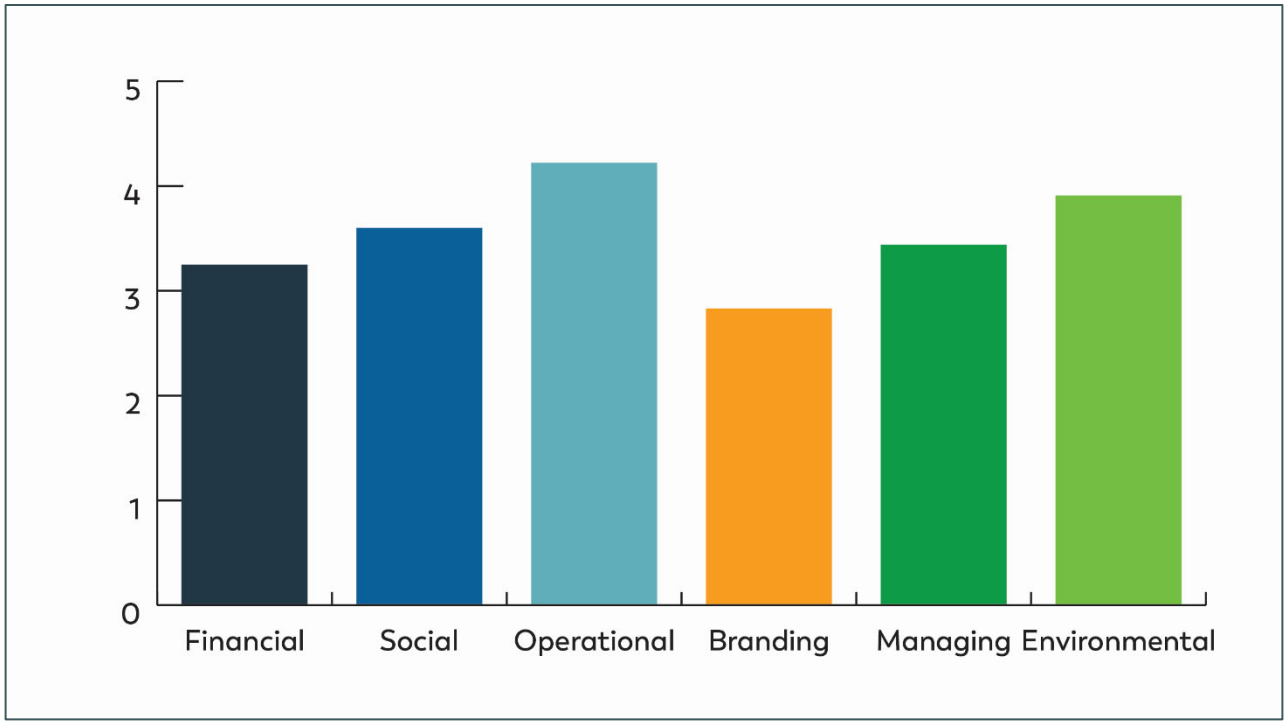
DEFINING SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability means different things in different contexts and among various populations and individuals. A word that also can be very politically charged, particularly in places like the United States. Finally, the issue can stir up long term conflicts between more economically developed areas and less economically developed areas.

While environmental issues have long dominated the subject of sustainability, social matters account for a growing proportion of interest. Individuals have different views of what sustainability means and what issues they care about, and these are reflected in their actions. While the topic is not always top of mind in every destination, it is becoming harder to ignore.

Which of the following best practices around sustainability would help your organization the most soon?



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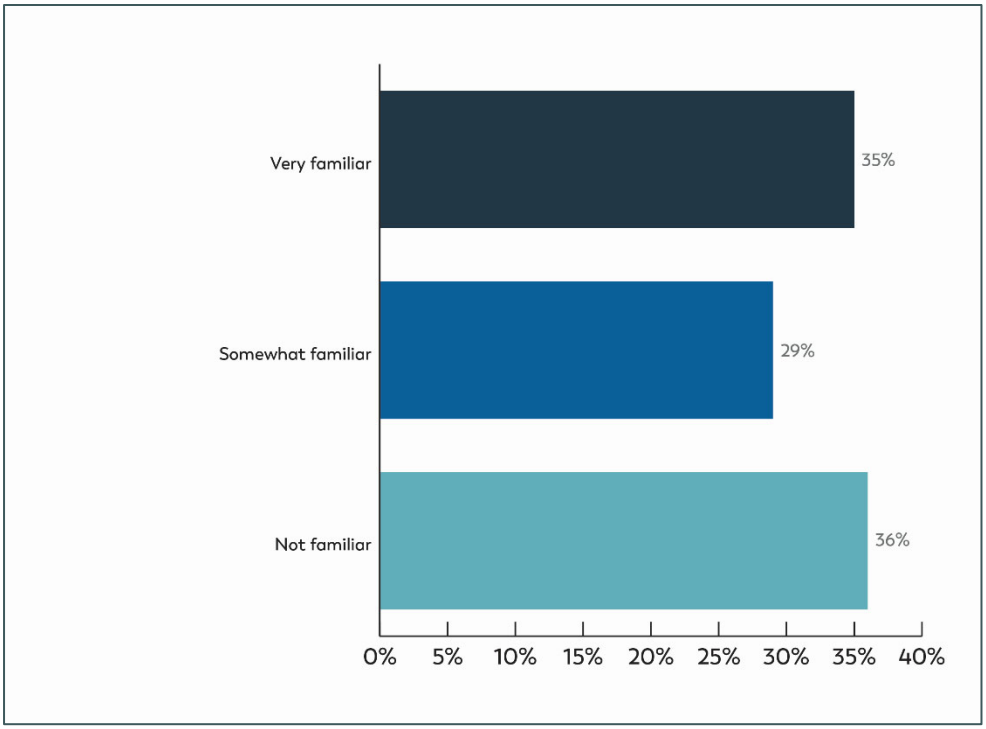
For this roadmap, sustainability is seen as part of destination stewardship and the ability to exist and develop without depleting natural resources for the future. It's also the ability to maintain or support a process continuously over time. In business and policy contexts, sustainability seeks to:

- Prevent the depletion of natural or physical resources.
- Ensure that resources remain available for the long term.
- Ensure that products don't use non-renewable resources, release pollutants, or otherwise harm the environment.
- Ensure that products can be recycled, reused, repurposed, or composted.

Destination stewardship is concerned with:

- Fulfilling the needs of current generations without compromising the needs of future generations
- Ensuring a balance between economic growth, environmental care, and social well-being
- Protecting the planet
- Halting climate change
- Promoting social development

How familiar are you with the UNTWO's Sustainable Development Goals?



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2030 UN AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

For this roadmap, we anchored this document with the 2030 United Nations (UN) Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aimed at ending poverty, fighting inequality, and tackling climate change. They are a call to action to protect the planet and improve lives, to promote prosperity while protecting the future.

Adopted unanimously in 2015 by all UN Member States and effective January 1, 2016, the 2030 Agenda with its 17 SDGs, 169 targets, and 231 unique indicators shapes the direction of global and national development policies and offers new entry points and opportunities for bridging the divide between human rights and development. It serves as the overall framework to guide global and national development action.

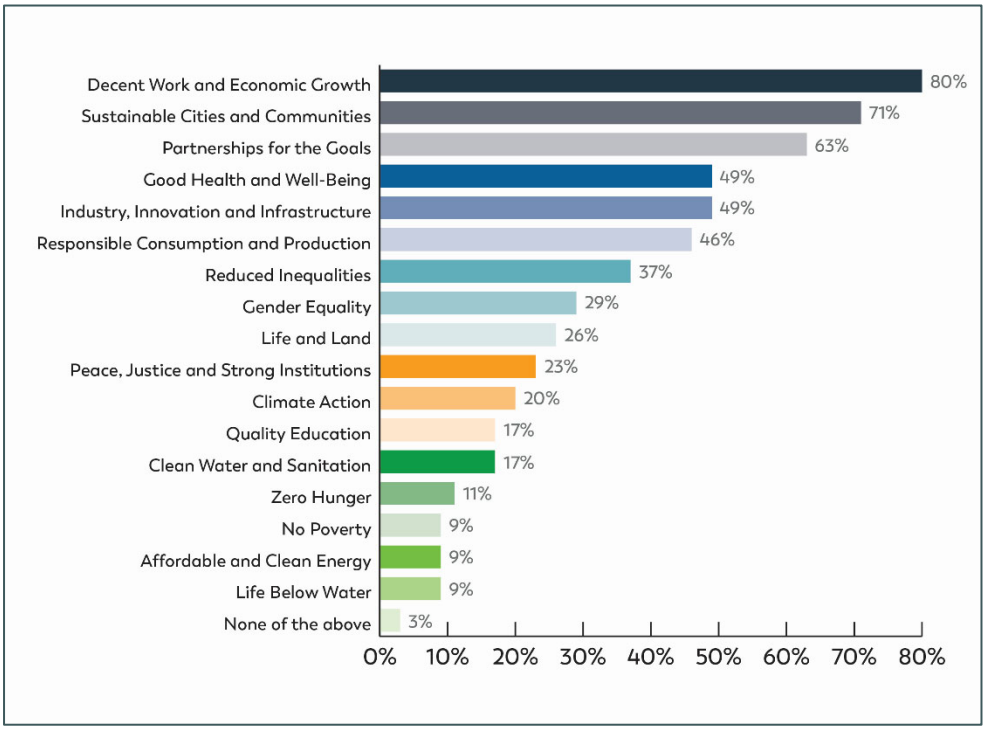
The 2030 Agenda is unequivocally anchored in human rights and is explicitly grounded in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR), the international human rights treaties as well as other instruments such as the Declaration on the Right to Development. The SDGs "seek to realize the human rights of all" (Preamble, 2030 Agenda) and are universally applicable to all people in all countries, including both developed and developing countries.

The UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals

1. **No Poverty**: End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
2. **Zero Hunger**: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.
3. **Good Health and Well-being**: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all and all ages.
4. **Quality Education**: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
5. **Gender Equality**: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
6. **Clean Water and Sanitation**: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
7. **Affordable and Clean Energy**: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all.
8. **Decent Work and Economic Growth**: Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.
9. **Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure**: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation.
10. **Reduced Inequality**: Reduce inequality within and among countries.
11. **Sustainable Cities and Communities**: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.
12. **Responsible Consumption and Production**: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
13. **Climate Action**: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

14. **Life Below Water**: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development.
15. **Life on Land**: Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, manage forests sustainably, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.
16. **Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions**: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.
17. **Partnerships for the Goals**: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

Of the 17 SDGs, which do you believe your organization can have the biggest impact on?



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DEFINING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

The UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines sustainable tourism as tourism that considers its current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts. Under this definition, sustainable tourism should:

- Meet the needs of visitors, industry, the environment, and host communities.
- Protect and enhance opportunities for the future.
- Maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction.
- Ensure a meaningful experience for tourists.
- Raise awareness about destination stewardship issues.

- Promote sustainable tourism practices among tourists.
- Preserve and grow regional communities and protected areas.
- Improve tourists' attitudes toward the environment.
- Minimize damage through better awareness and consideration of the impact tourists create.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AND THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY

The 2022 International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report showed that scientific evidence unequivocally indicates that climate change is a threat to human wellbeing and the health of the planet, and that "any further delay in concerted global action will miss a brief and rapidly closing window to secure a livable future."

To achieve goals set forth in the Paris Climate Agreement, the travel sector must implement far-reaching and rapid efforts to reduce emissions, restore and protect nature, and support local communities as they adapt and build resilience to climate impacts.

The Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism has identified regeneration as one of five shared pathways (Measure, Decarbonize, Regenerate, Collaborate, and Finance) for the industry, and there is untapped potential for tourism to embrace regenerative business models that address both the causes and consequences of climate change by simultaneously supporting the resilience of communities and protecting natural ecosystems.

The travel industry is one of the largest and fastest growing sectors in the world and it contributes 10% of global GDP, 7% of global exports and accounts for one in every 10 jobs worldwide. Its capacity to attract significant investment, generate jobs, increase exports, and adopt new and emerging technologies makes it an important pillar for economic growth and development, particularly for least developed countries (LDCs) and small island developing states (SIDS).

However, this growth is not without its impacts. Travel is estimated to be responsible for 8% to 10% of global greenhouse gas emissions. UN Environment research has indicated that the tourism sector's consumption of key resources – energy, water, land, and materials (such as fossil fuels, minerals, metals, and biomass) – is growing commensurately with its generation of solid waste, sewage, loss of biodiversity, and greenhouse gas emissions. In a 'business-as-usual' scenario, tourism would generate through 2050 an increase of 154% in energy consumption, 131% in greenhouse gas emissions, 152% in water consumption and 251% in solid waste disposal. This is why destination stewardship must now define travel's development in the 21st century.

The travel industry's impacts on the environment are multifaceted, spanning from direct effects like carbon emissions from transportation to indirect consequences on local ecosystems. Here's an overview:

- **Carbon Emissions**: One of the most prominent impacts is the carbon footprint from transportation. Air travel, in particular, accounts for a significant portion of global carbon emissions. Cars, buses, and cruise ships also contribute.
- **Responsible Tourism**: Popular tourist destinations often suffer from the effects of over-tourism. This can lead to excessive waste, strain on natural resources, degradation of natural habitats, and increased wear and tear on historical and cultural sites.

- **Waste Production**: Tourists can generate a substantial amount of waste, including plastics. In areas without robust waste management systems, this can result in pollution of land and waterways.
- **Water Usage**: Hotels and resorts, especially those in arid regions, can consume vast amounts of water. This can deplete local water supplies and strain resources that local communities rely on.
- **Land Degradation**: Construction of hotels, resorts, and other infrastructures can lead to deforestation, disruption of local ecosystems, and loss of biodiversity. Activities like trekking and camping, if not done sustainably, can also degrade land and disturb wildlife.
- **Marine Ecosystems**: Water-based activities, such as diving, boating, and fishing, can damage coral reefs, disturb marine life, and contribute to ocean pollution.
- **Local Pollution**: Increased vehicle traffic in tourist destinations can elevate pollution levels. Additionally, the energy consumed by large hotels and resorts can lead to increased emissions if sourced from non-renewable sources.
- **Cultural Impacts**: The influx of tourists can sometimes lead to a loss of cultural authenticity. Over time, local traditions and practices might be commercialized or altered to cater to tourist preferences.
- **Wildlife Disturbance**: Tourism can disturb local fauna. For example, boat traffic can affect marine species, and human presence can alter the natural behaviors of land animals.

While the travel industry does have environmental challenges, it's worth noting that there is a growing awareness and shift towards sustainable travel. Many organizations, governments, and businesses are implementing practices to mitigate these impacts, promote eco-tourism, and ensure that tourism benefits both visitors and the destinations they explore.

SOCIAL STEWARDSHIP AND THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY

Destination organizations, with their pivotal role in shaping the travel and tourism landscape, can significantly influence social sustainability. Social sustainability pertains to the preservation and enhancement of the well-being of current and future generations. Here are areas where destination organizations can have a tangible impact:

- **Community Engagement**: Involving local communities in decision-making processes ensures that tourism development aligns with their needs, aspirations, and cultural values. This democratic approach fosters a sense of ownership and inclusivity.
- **Cultural Preservation**: Destination organizations can promote and support initiatives that celebrate and conserve local culture, heritage, and traditions, ensuring they are not lost or commercialized due to tourism.
- **Local Employment**: Prioritizing the employment of residents in tourism-related jobs can help distribute the economic benefits of tourism within the community, reducing income disparities.

- **Education and Training**: By investing in education and training programs for local residents, destination organizations can ensure that the community is equipped with the skills needed to thrive in a tourism-centric economy.
- **Safety and Security**: Ensuring that both tourists and locals feel safe is crucial. Destination organizations can collaborate with local law enforcement and other stakeholders to create a secure environment.
- **Gender Equality**: Promoting gender equality in the tourism sector, from leadership roles to grassroots operations, can lead to more balanced and inclusive growth.
- **Child Protection**: Destination organizations should advocate against child labor and exploitation in the tourism industry and promote awareness among travelers about responsible interactions with local children.
- **Support for Local Entrepreneurs**: By supporting small-scale, local enterprises and destination organizations can ensure that more tourism revenue stays within the community, fostering local innovation and entrepreneurship.
- **Accessible Tourism**: Ensuring that tourism facilities and experiences are accessible to people with disabilities fosters inclusivity and broadens the reach and benefits of tourism.
- **Responsible Marketing**: Destination organizations should ensure that their marketing and promotional activities present an authentic, respectful, and non-stereotypical image of local cultures and communities.
- **Conflict Resolution**: In areas with historical or ongoing conflicts, destination organizations can play a role in facilitating dialogue and understanding, using tourism as a bridge for peace and reconciliation.
- **Health and Well-being**: In collaboration with local health departments, destination organizations can ensure that tourists are well-informed about health precautions. They can also support initiatives to enhance local health infrastructure, benefiting both residents and visitors.

By focusing on these areas, destination organizations can help foster environments where tourism leads to enhanced well-being, cultural preservation, and inclusive economic growth for local communities, ensuring that the impacts of tourism are positive and long-lasting.

ECONOMIC STEWARDHIP AND THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY

Destination organizations play a crucial role in fostering economic sustainability within the travel and tourism sector. Economic sustainability ensures that tourism provides long-term benefits to local communities without causing harm or depleting resources. Here are areas where destination organizations can be stewards and influence economic sustainability:

- **Local Business Support**: By promoting and supporting local businesses, destination organizations can ensure that a greater proportion of tourism revenue remains within the community, benefiting local entrepreneurs and artisans.
- **Diversified Tourism Offerings**: To avoid over-reliance on a single type of tourism (like beach tourism or eco-tourism), destination organizations can promote a diverse

range of attractions and activities. This approach helps in distributing tourism benefits and reduces vulnerability to market fluctuations.

- **Seasonal Spread**: To combat seasonality challenges, destination organizations can develop and market off-peak and shoulder-season attractions, ensuring steady income and employment throughout the year.
- **Sustainable Pricing**: Establishing fair pricing structures for tourism services can ensure that local businesses remain profitable without exploiting tourists or undercutting competition.
- **Capacity Building**: Offering training and capacity-building programs for local businesses ensures they are well-equipped to cater to tourists and adapt to changing market conditions.
- **Infrastructure Development**: Investing in sustainable infrastructure, such as efficient transportation systems and renewable energy sources, can enhance the tourism experience and reduce long-term operational costs.
- **Tourism Taxes and Reinvestment**: Implementing tourism taxes or levies and ensuring their reinvestment into local infrastructure, conservation, and community development can provide sustainable financial resources.
- **Partnerships and Collaborations**: Building partnerships with stakeholders, including local businesses, NGOs, and governmental bodies, can pool resources and expertise to drive sustainable economic growth.
- **Fair Employment Practices**: Promoting fair wages and working conditions in the tourism sector can improve the quality of life for employees and reduce staff turnover.
- **Crisis Management and Resilience**: Establishing strategies for crisis management, such as natural disasters or economic downturns, ensures the destination can recover swiftly and maintain economic stability.
- **Research and Market Analysis**: Conducting regular research and market analysis helps destination organizations understand tourist preferences, emerging trends, and potential challenges, allowing them to adapt strategies accordingly.
- **Sustainable Supply Chains**: Encouraging and supporting tourism businesses to adopt sustainable supply chain practices can reduce costs and environmental impacts while ensuring ethical sourcing.
- **Attracting Sustainable Investment**: Destination organizations can play a role in attracting investments that align with sustainable development goals, ensuring long-term benefits without compromising the destination's integrity.

By focusing on these areas, destination organizations can build a resilient economic foundation for their communities, ensuring that tourism remains a source of prosperity and well-being for current and future generations.

CIRCULARITY VERSUS REGENERATIVE STEWARSHIP

While striving for a destination stewardship approach, many have begun to question the approach as too late or not enough. They are looking for a clearer way forward. The focus is shifting from circularity destination stewardship to regenerative destination

stewardship. While circularity focuses on minimizing waste and optimizing resource use within existing systems, regenerative goes beyond this by actively restoring and replenishing ecosystems and communities. It recognizes the interconnectedness of ecological and social systems and aims to create solutions that benefit both.

By embracing regenerative destination stewardship, many argue that we can go beyond minimizing harm to actively fostering positive impacts on the environment and society. Destinations International encourages organizations to foster regenerative destination stewardship, when possible, in their destinations.

MILEPOST THREE:

Defining The Role of Destinations International

THE DESTINATIONS INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION

Destinations International is the world's largest and most reliable resource for destination organizations. In short – Destinations International educates, equips, and empowers our members to grow the success of their destinations and to excel professionally.

We believe that destination organizations positively impact local communities as a dynamic place to visit, live and work. As such, Destinations International, the global association for destination professionals, elevates tourism by educating, equipping, empowering, and connecting its members to better fulfill their missions and achieve positive results around the world.

OUR FOUR PILLARS

Destinations International achieves the organization's mission through the following four pillars or areas of focus. These pillars are the fundamental core deliverables that guide Destinations International's operations, strategy, and decision-making. These pillars act as the organization's support, providing a clear vision on how our organization delivers on our brand promise, interacts with stakeholders, and contributes to the growth of the destination organization community.

- **Community**

  Destinations International fosters a strong, global community of professionals and promotes the exchange of information, knowledge, and best practices. Our over 800 member organizations and business partners from across the globe connect to exchange knowledge, best practices, and network with each other to help their individual communities thrive.

- **Advocacy & Research**

  Destinations International is the collective voice of destination organizations, empowering destinations on issues big and small. We strive to be champions for our members and recognize the importance of keeping our members abreast of the challenges and opportunities presenting themselves in the marketplace. We educate, equip, and empower our members to advocate on behalf of their destination organizations and their communities. We use our collective voice to elevate and activate these efforts. Finally, we are expanding industry knowledge, introducing new ideas and developing relevant research and data.

- **Professional Development**

  Destinations International is the definitive resource for professional development within the destination marketing and management industry. We offer ongoing educational opportunities both in person and online and are committed to providing professional development and lifelong learning for our members.

- **Destination Tools**

  Destinations International offers a suite of products built on best practices, insights, and research. We work to raise the effectiveness of destination organizations; increase relevancy among the destination's community; raise the level of professionalism through certification and accreditation; and provide actionable best practices and strategies for the sustainable success of destinations.

WHY NOW? THE BOARD DIRECTIVE

While the first five strategic goals could be enough to justify an effort in destination stewardship, it is the sixth strategic goal that drives this document. As part of the 2023 Destinations International Business Plan, Destinations International pledged to create a comprehensive sustainability roadmap to develop member resources.

Sustainability is commonly described as having three dimensions: environmental, economic, and social. These plans can also be referred to as an ESG plan (environmental, social and governance). Knowing that tourism can play a significant role in delivering

sustainable solutions for people, the planet, prosperity and peace, Destinations International seeks to define what sustainable models look like for destination organizations and create educational content, tools, and resources to benefit our global membership.

WHY US? THE BUSINESS CASE

As the quest for destination stewardship begins to shape how organizations, institutions and households operate, there are many benefits to adopting a progressive destination stewardship agenda. Here are reasons why sustainability programs can help Destinations International fulfill our mandates:

- **Attract and Retain Members**: destination stewardship programming increases the value and relevance of Destinations International to current and prospective members.
- **Enhance Innovation**: Cost-effective destination stewardship collaborations can result in industry innovation, enabling the industry to improve its collective impacts while driving business and operational benefits.
- **Build Positive Government and Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Relations**: Associations that increase their sustainability expertise are better positioned to contribute positively to regulatory initiatives by government and other agencies and to engage constructively with NGOs and other stakeholders.
- **Identify Industry Priorities**: Many generic global sustainability initiatives and standards are now available and this in turn can make priority-setting for members difficult. An industry approach can assist member organizations to develop an industry-relevant model tailored to the sector's most material risks and opportunities.
- **Fulfill Association Goals**: Typically, association goals include assisting members to be competitive and profitable. Destination stewardship is one tool to enhance member profitability and competitiveness.
- **Build Industry Reputation and Brand**: A stewardship program demonstrates our industry's commitment to sustainable practices, leadership on corporate social responsibility (CSR) and the implementation of the Community Shared Value approach. It can build positive stakeholder relationships with customers, communities, NGOs, suppliers, and others. In doing so, it enhances the sector's social license to operate and grow.

THE DESTINATIONS INTERNATIONAL APPROACH

Destinations International staff have developed an approach to identifying issues and problems and creating strategies, tools and solutions that are community-centered and grassroots-activated.

1. Community-Centered

Destinations International is a believer in the power of community. It is one of our four core pillars along with Advocacy & Research, Professional Development, and Destination Tools. Indeed, we would suggest that it is the most important of those four core pillars. It is truly a

strong, global community of professionals that promotes the exchange of information, knowledge, and best practices across the globe to help each one of our member's individual communities thrive. Our events, our website, our online community, and our committees are just a few examples of ways we help foster this community. And each one of our members, connecting with their peers helps build this community - connection by connection.

2. Grassroots-Activated

Destinations International is also a believer in using a grassroots approach whenever possible. By this we mean that problems and issues are identified by destination organizations, and policies, tools and other solutions are created with the involvement of destination organizations. It takes a bit longer to operate this way, but the result is almost always better and more relevant. Our events, online community, committees, and special taskforces are just a few examples of ways we help foster this grassroots approach.

3. Leveraging Existing Solutions

Destinations International believes in utilizing established best practices, frameworks, and resources where they exist and have already been proven effective. Instead of starting from scratch or attempting to develop entirely new approaches, we believe that we can build upon the foundation of existing initiatives, tools, and knowledge. This approach not only saves time and resources but also ensures that our members are benefiting from the collective experience and wisdom of a broader community. By leveraging what's already out there, adapting as needed, Destinations International can more efficiently and effectively advance their goals and focus our limited resources on those policies, tools and other solutions that need to be created from scratch.

4. Building Partnerships

Destinations International embodies the essence of collaboration, with its core foundation rooted in the synergistic alliance between its members. This inherent spirit of partnership is not only a testament to the strength and unity of its membership but also serves as a guiding principle when venturing into new terrains. As the organization broadens its horizons and engages with diverse communities, the ethos of partnership becomes even more pivotal. By harnessing collective expertise and fostering open dialogue, Destinations International is better poised to discern emerging challenges and innovate effective solutions. In an ever-evolving landscape, it's this commitment to collaboration and mutual growth that ensures the organization remains at the forefront of sustainable and impactful change.

5. Leading By Example

Destinations International holds a unique position of authority and responsibility granted to it by its members. By leading by example, we not only underscore the urgency and significance of an issue, but we also set a tangible benchmark for others to emulate. This proactive leadership fosters a culture of responsibility and drives collective action. Moreover, by embodying the principles we promote, we gain credibility and trust, further inspiring and mobilizing our members to prioritize and integrate sound practices into their core strategies and operations.

6. Social Inclusion

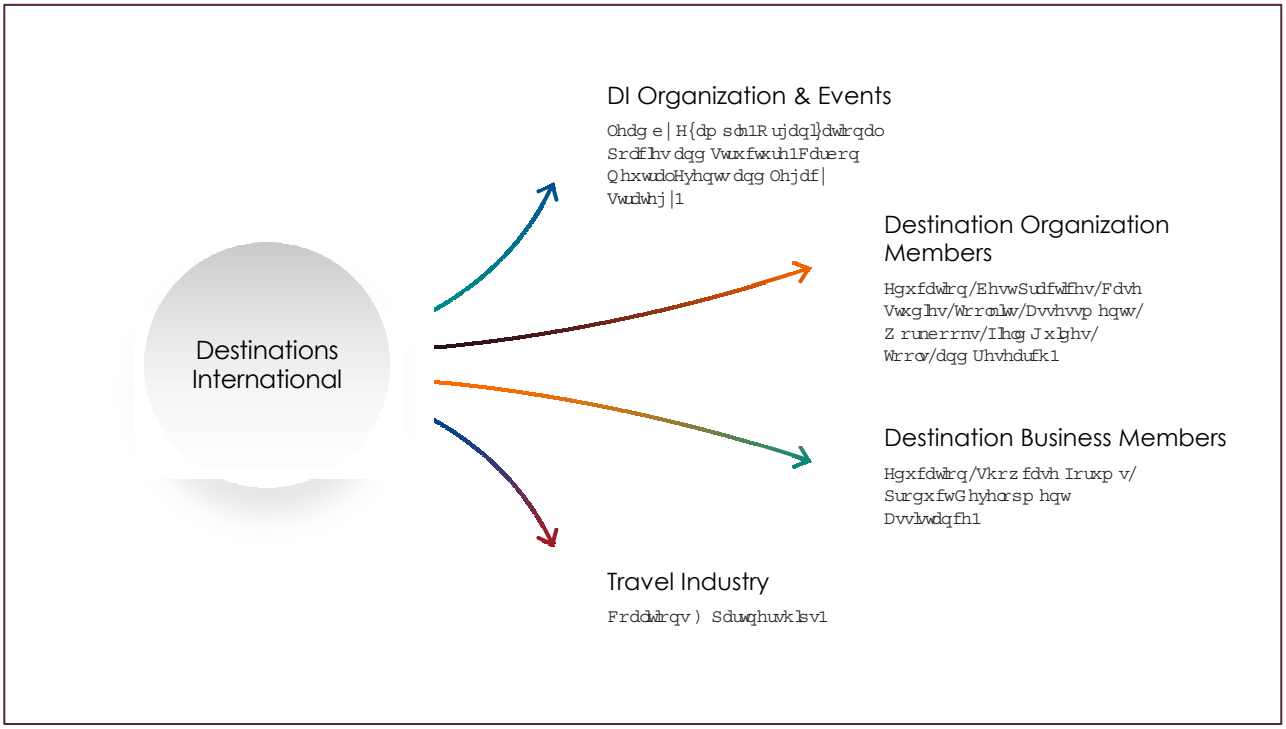
Destinations International is committed to creating spaces and places in the travel industry that promote a true sense of welcoming and belonging for people of all backgrounds and abilities. We recognize the diversity of identities that exist in this world, and through this thought leadership, our social inclusion approach includes a variety of topics such as accessibility, stewardship, community representation, crime and safety, homelessness, and immigration, all of which influence visitation, are critical to economic growth, and have an impact on the vitality of a destination. While it is not the responsibility of a destination organization to solve these challenging issues, they can have a positive impact and influence upon the outcome of such complex topics.

We recognize that the enabling environment of every destination is unique and may require varied approaches to make progress. To meet our member needs we take time to listen to our member challenges, opportunities, and successes, developing brave spaces for discussion to take place, ensuring all verticals of our work incorporate these principles. We collect data and feedback to produce research, create measurable tools to help our members implement initiatives with accountability, curate education and resources, develop self-paced certificate programs, partner and collaborate with organizations and experts to offer niche programming, tailor facilitated dialogues, conduct training, organizational assessments, strategic roadmaps, and related services to provide our members with trusted guidance for true economic and social transformation.

MILEPOST FOUR

Goal

Destinations International's goal is to champion sustainable growth within the travel industry by embedding eco-conscious practices within our internal operations and equipping our member destination organizations with the policies, best practices, education, content, and tools that they need. Through this we will ensure that our collective actions foster a responsible, inclusive, and prosperous future for all destinations and their communities. We will accomplish this through a community-centered, grassroots -activated approach that leverages existing knowledge and solutions and develops partnerships with our business members and other associations in the travel space. This will be the legacy of Destinations International and our members.



This roadmap is a multi-year approach and the speed of it can be accelerated through the addition of resources (money, people, etc.), the ease of adapting and leveraging existing solutions, and strategic partnerships with our members and travel-related associations.

MILEPOST FIVE:

Small Steps – 2023

Small steps, often perceived as modest or incremental, play a pivotal role in initiating transformative change. Each minor action serves as a catalyst, setting forth a ripple effect that gradually builds momentum. Over time, these cumulative effects coalesce, emboldening individuals or organizations to undertake more ambitious challenges with confidence. The success derived from each small step not only garners tangible progress but also fosters a culture of perseverance and adaptability. As these steps compound, they lay a robust foundation, making the path for larger, bolder initiatives clearer and more attainable. Thus, it's the cumulative power of small, consistent efforts that often paves the way for monumental shifts and breakthroughs.

In 2023, Destinations International took its first, small steps in destination stewardship and achieved the following as a foundation for future action.

¤ Create a Strategic Imperative

The following was added to the 2023 Destinations International Strategic Goals: "Create A Comprehensive Sustainability Plan and a Roadmap to Develop Member Resources." Sustainability is commonly described as having three dimensions: environmental, economic, and social. These plans can also be referred to as an ESG plan (environmental, social and governance). Knowing that tourism can play a significant role in delivering sustainable solutions for people, the planet, prosperity and peace, DI will seek to define what sustainable models look like for destination organizations and create educational content, tools, and resources to benefit our global membership.

¤ Alignment of Our Strategic Initiatives with the UN Sustainable Development Goals

In 2023, we reviewed our strategic initiatives alongside the 17 UN SDGs and chose development goals that aligned with each initiative. This action was acknowledged by our global membership and members in the United States who incorporate the SDGs into their sustainability strategies. For members who are not well versed with the SDGs, our alignment offered exposure and awareness to the fact that these goals have been created and are available to use.

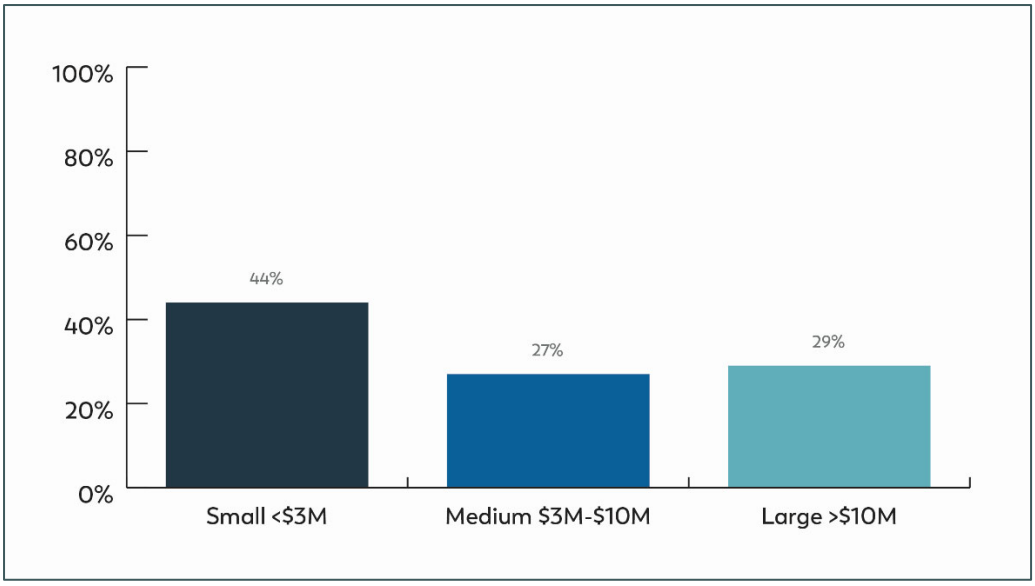
¤ Formed a Sustainability Working Group

A Taskforce of the Advocacy Committee was set up to begin discussion of the topic and to create and issue a survey the membership on the topic of sustainability to gage where they are in the move to sustainability and destination stewardship and where they needed help. The taskforce reported out at the 2023 Advocacy Summit.

¤ Survey Our Membership

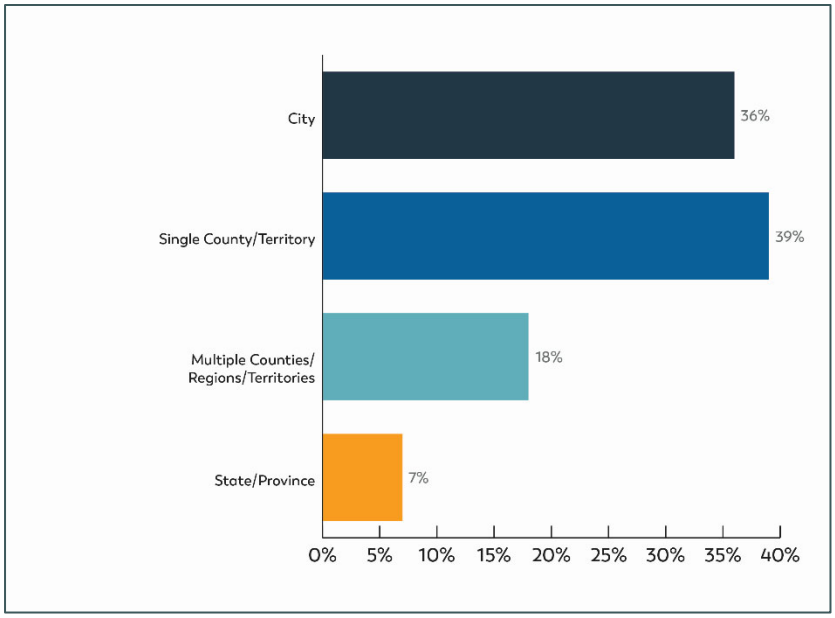
During the third quarter of this year, Destinations International took a survey crafted by the Sustainability Taskforce and pushed it out to our membership. Over 100 members responded with approximately 10 percent from outside North America and 10% from Canada. The remainder came for the United States. As the next three images show, the survey represented a cross section of our membership.

Annual Operating Budget Range



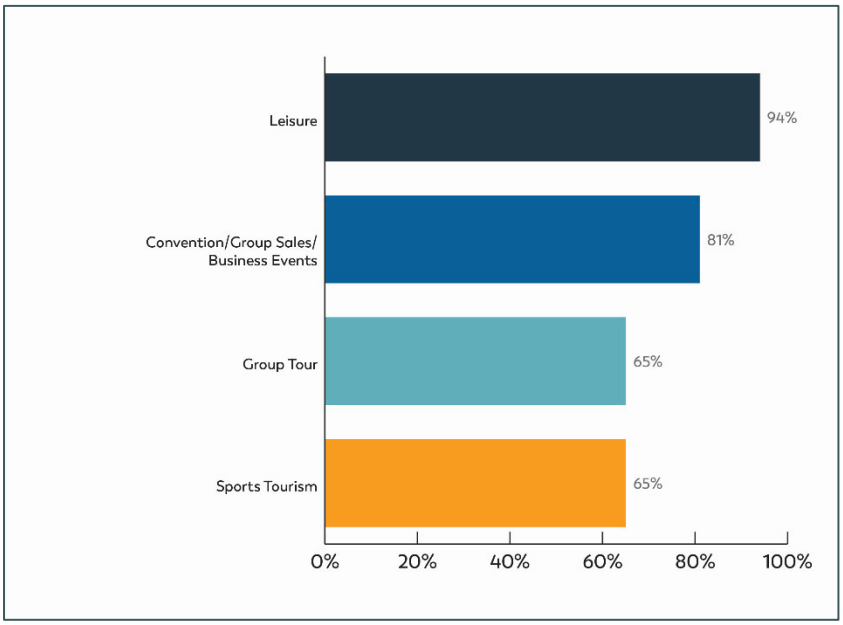
NOTE: Survey Results are from 2023 DI Member Survey on Sustainability

Promotional Geography



NOTE: Survey Results are from 2023 DI Member Survey on Sustainability

Promotional Responsibilities



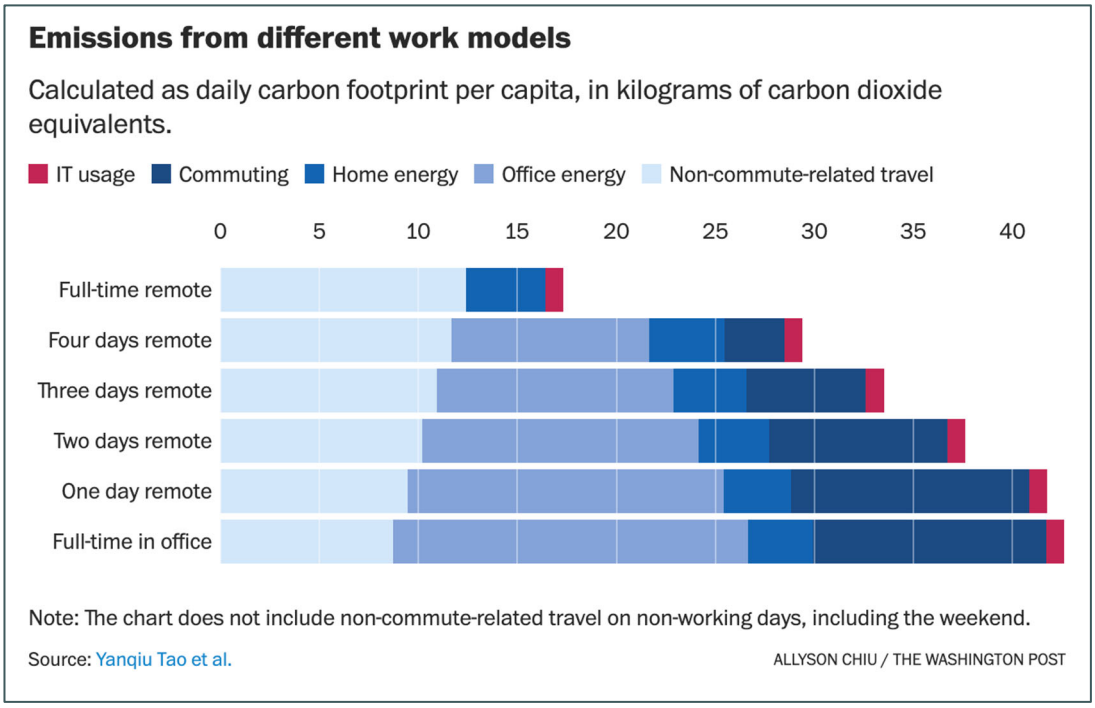
NOTE: Survey Results are from 2023 DI Member Survey on Sustainability

- **Develop a Roadmap for Destinations International to Tackle the Issues Around Destination Stewardship**

  This roadmap has been drafted by staff after consultation with members and is being presented to the Board of Directors of the Association and the Board of Trustees of the Foundation in December 2023

- **Recommit to a Remote First Policy for Employees**

Fully remote workers could produce less than half the climate-warming emissions of people who spend their days in offices, according to a recent study published in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. Use a "Nearest Staff Attends Meetings" approach whenever possible to minimize airplane emissions related to travel. Explore alternative travel modes (train, electric car, etc.) when an option. Maximize events with multiple staff present to have one-off topic specific meetings in the margins.



- **Use 2023 Annual Convention to Set a Baseline Carbon Footprint**

To accomplish this Destinations International hired Maritz Global Events to provide an event-level solution to help Destinations International with the following:

- ✓ Understanding Carbon Footprint of the Annual Convention: improved design of next event, based on a holistic view of impacts across hotel, transportation, and all third-party partners. Providing insight into your events, thereby supporting our organization's stewardship goals.
- ✓ Budget + Environmental Savings: identify areas such as reduced food waste and single-use plastics, as well as reduced emissions in general, e. g. local sourcing vs. trucked-in supplies.

- **Place An Emphasis on Addressing the Topic of "Stewardship" at the Annual Convention and Vertical Summits**

- ✓ Destination stewardship content was created for the CEO Summit, Annual Convention, Advocacy Summit, and EDI Summit.

MILEPOST SIX:

Next Steps

Building on the collaborative foundation established by Destinations International, there is a compelling imperative to elevate our efforts and take bolder steps toward a visionary future. The momentum generated by our initial efforts is a testament to what collective effort can achieve. But in a dynamic, globalized world, resting on past laurels is not an option. To remain at the forefront of change and innovation, it's essential that we harness this momentum and channel it into more ambitious goals and groundbreaking initiatives.

Action Recommended	Description of Recommendation
#1 Administration: Evaluate becoming a Signatory of Net Zero Carbon Pledge for the Events Industry, the Sustainable Tourism 2030 Pledge and the Glasgow Declaration: Climate Action in Tourism	By becoming a signatory to these or others, DI would be committing to sustainability in every aspect of its operations, understanding the importance of educating its team members & collaborating throughout the entire industry to facilitate swift and essential progress towards reducing the overall carbon footprint of travel.
#2 Community Development: Extend the Stewardship Taskforce	Extend the life of our current taskforce but expand its membership and reach by pulling taskforce members from multiple committees including Advocacy, EDI, Professional Development, DMAP Board, CDME Board and Alumni, 30 Under 30 Alumni. Evaluate the idea of making it a standing committee in 2025
#3 Community Development: Develop Online Destination Stewardship Community	Create a virtual space where individuals with a shared interest in destination stewardship can come together to communicate, collaborate, and build relationships. Special virtual meet ups will be scheduled around specific topics and presentations.

Action Recommended	Description of Recommendation
#4 Administration: Develop and Implement a DI Internal Operations Stewardship Plan (more details at the end of this section)	Factors would include Environmental Impact Assessment, Stakeholder Engagement, Goal Setting, Implementation Strategy, Monitoring & Reporting, Budgeting & Funding.
#5 Administration: Develop and Implement a DI Events Stewardship Plan (more details at the end of this section)	By integrating sustainable practices into all aspects of our event planning and production, we can contribute to a greener and more socially responsible world. These include Venue Selection, Travel, Catering, Waste Reduction, Energy Conservation, Water Conservation, Green Giveaways, Donations, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Economic Impact.
#6 Partnership Development: Project Partners & Grant Funding Identification	Identifying potential funding sources and leveraging partnerships with other organizations and collaborations with DI Business Members and other possible venders (such as GSTC). Several aspects of this plan depend on various levels of success in this area.
#7 Tool Development: "Getting Started / First Steps" Toolkit	Focusing on organizations in the preliminary stages of understanding destination stewardship, both in terms of its significance and its practical implications. These members most likely require fundamental education, basic tools to educate others, checklists of simple ways to begin to make progress, and strong incentives to even consider integrating destination stewardship into their operations. Most of all, they need to be able to answer the question – How do I get started? And show how even small steps can drive momentum to bigger steps.
#8 Content Development: Position Descriptions and RFP Scope of Services.	Focusing on organizations in the preliminary or secondary stages of understanding destination stewardship planning and programs. Giving our members examples of job description for in-house staff to oversee destination stewardship programs as well as scopes of service for RFPs for outside assistance.

Action Recommended	Description of Recommendation
#9 Tool Development: Community Engagement Toolkit	Focusing on organizations in the preliminary or secondary stages of destination stewardship planning including specific tools, strategies and suggested activities built around community engagement and building community support to overcome a lack of community understanding or support.
#10 Content Development: Definitions & Examples	Focusing on organizations in the preliminary stages of understanding destination stewardship. A thorough collection of definitions of terms with examples of those terms in practice.
#11 Content Development: Best Practices & Case Studies	Best practices serve as guiding principles, offering standardized approaches that have been proven to produce optimal results. While best practices provide the theoretical framework, case studies bring these principles to life by illustrating them in real-world contexts.
#12 Content Development: Annual Meeting and Summit Sessions	Build out destination stewardship related sessions and learning opportunities at the DI Annual Convention and Vertical Summits.
#13 Content Development: Regular Blog Posts	Identify as a "Significant Issue and Strategic Opportunity" and develop regular destination stewardship related content in blog post form. Use the blog to highlight key dates and member accomplishments.
#14 Content Development: Regular Webinar Series	Develop a regular schedule of destination stewardship related webinars. Use webinars to bring in subject matter experts as well as members to highlight strategies and accomplishments.
#15 Content Development: Begin Work on destination stewardship and Regeneration Workbook for delivery in 2025	The Destination Stewardship Workbook will advance the content beyond blog post, articles and tool kits to create a values-based approach to developing sustainability and regenerative plans and actions.

Action Recommended	Description of Recommendation
#16 Research: Stewardship Research	TBD
#17 Research: DI & CityDNA Joint Accessibility Study	A joint effort between DI and CityDNA to identify best practices and case studies in travel accessibility. Focus is on Europe and North America.
#18 Administration: Hire Director of Education, Destination Stewardship Strategies	Hire a subject matter expert to guide and coordinate all DI stewardship efforts.
#19 Content Development: Begin Development of Stewardship Education Program	DI certificate education programs serve several critical roles in professional development and industry advancement including Skill Development, Standardization, Credibility & Recognition, Networking, Career Advancement, Membership Engagement, Knowledge Update, and Community Development.

More Information

#5 Develop and Implement a DI Internal Operations Sustainability Plan

Factors would include Environmental Impact Assessment, Internal Staff Education, Stakeholder Engagement, Goal Setting, Implementation Strategy, Monitoring & Reporting, Budgeting & Funding.

- **Environmental Impact Assessment**: Assessing DI's environmental impact. This involves identifying areas where DI can reduce its carbon footprint, conserve natural resources, and minimize waste.
- **Internal Staff Education:** Provide team education on the importance of sustainability and stewardship efforts for the organization and how they can make an impact as individuals. We will hold discussions to uncover what the team may already be doing and offer suggestions on how they can reduce their carbon footprint.
- **Stakeholder Engagement**: Engaging stakeholders to communicate the goals and objectives of the plan, soliciting feedback, and promoting buy-in.
- **Goal Setting**: Setting clear and measurable sustainability goals. Goals should be specific, realistic, and achievable within a defined timeframe. Examples include reducing energy consumption, increasing recycling rates, and decreasing water usage.

- **Implementation Strategy**: Developing an implementation strategy involving identifying specific actions, assigning responsibilities, and developing a timeline for implementation.
- **Monitoring and Reporting**: Monitoring progress and reporting on sustainability performance. Regular monitoring allows DI to track progress toward its goals and identify areas where further action is needed.
- **Budgeting and Funding**: Allocating sufficient resources to support sustainability initiatives. This includes budgeting for sustainability initiatives, identifying potential funding sources, and leveraging partnerships and collaborations.

#6 Develop and Implement a DI Events Stewardship Plan

The events industry makes significant impacts on the environment in many ways, including food waste, single-use materials, etc. By integrating sustainable practices into all aspects of our event planning and production, we can contribute to a greener and more socially responsible world. These might include:

- **Venue Selection:** The first step in organizing a sustainable event is to choose a venue committed to sustainability. Look for venues that have environmental initiatives in place, such as recycling, composting, and the use of renewable energy sources. An important certification to look out for is LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), which signifies a commitment to green building practices.
- **Travel:** Encourage attendees to minimize their carbon footprint while at our events by walking, carpooling, using public transportation, or biking.
- **Catering:** Select caterers who prioritize sustainability by using locally sourced, seasonal, and organic food options, opt for compostable or biodegradable plates, cups, and utensils instead of disposable plastic to reduce waste generated by the event.
- **Waste Reduction:** Implement recycling and compost bins throughout the event space to encourage attendees to dispose of waste properly. Minimize paper use by providing digital versions of event programs and marketing materials. Be mindful of accessibility needs that may require the use of physical materials.
- **Energy Conservation:** Utilize energy-efficient lighting and equipment, such as LED lights and Energy Star-rated appliances. Make sure to turn off unnecessary lights and equipment when not in use to conserve energy.
- **Water Conservation:** Encourage attendees to conserve water by providing water stations instead of bottled water. Choose venues with low-flow faucets and toilets to minimize water usage.
- **Green Giveaways:** Consider offering sustainable and eco-friendly giveaways, such as reusable water bottles or tote bags made from recycled materials. This not only promotes sustainability but also provides attendees with useful and environmentally friendly items.
- **Donations:** Instead of letting leftover food, flowers, or decorations go to waste, donate them to local hospitals, charities, or nonprofit organizations. This not only reduces waste but also supports the community.
- **Social Inclusion:** When planning your event, prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion. Ensure gender balance and pay equity when selecting speakers and entertainment. Consider working with vendors that are owned or led by minorities, women, or gender-diverse individuals. Suggest local CSR opportunities to expose visitors to community

driven engagements. Ask if there are qualified local speakers to provide local thought leadership related to the DI event.

- **Economic Impact:** Events can support economic growth by purchasing directly from micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises. Encourage event attendees to support local businesses by providing maps and descriptions of nearby restaurants and shops. Consider buying gifts from social enterprises or bringing in food trucks for event functions.

Creating successful sustainable events requires a holistic approach that considers the environmental, social, and economic impacts of every aspect of event planning and production.

MILEPOST SEVEN:

Bigger Steps

There's an urgent need for Destinations International and its members to move from incremental progress to transformative action. The momentum generated by our collective efforts will place us at a critical juncture where the aspirations of the past must be translated into the bold actions of the future. Drawing on the lessons of past successes and the insights of real-world applications, the next phase requires us to set higher goals and implement strategies that will lead to profound and lasting change.

Action Recommended	Description of Recommendation
#1 Content Development: Annual / Bi-Annual / Quarterly Best Practices & Case Studies Report	Build best practices and case studies into a regular report with increasing frequency.
#2 Content Development: Stewardship Program Workbook	Building off work from previous year, finalize and issue the workbook.
#3 Content Development: Stewardship Program Field Guide	Building off the workbook, create and release an extensive "How To" field guide that addresses a range of circumstances.
#4 Content Development: Additional Professional Development Certificate Program(s)	Develop a more focused DI certificate program, building off previous ones, to benefit individual professionals and contribute to the overall growth and standardization of a sustainable industry.

Action Recommended	Description of Recommendation
#5 Tool Development: Sustainable Organization Accreditation	Develop a formal, independent accreditation to verify that a destination organization's destination stewardship program meets established quality standards and is deemed competent to carry out specific required responsibilities and tasks.
#6 Community Development: Stewardship Award Program	Recognize and celebrate outstanding achievements, innovations, and contributions within the destination stewardship field.
#7 Tool Development: Destination Stewardship Impact Calculator	TBD (building off the concept of the successful Event Impact Calculator ether as an additional module or a new calculator)
#8 Tool Development: Community Engagement Field Guide	Building off the workbook, create and release an extensive "How To" field guide that addresses a range of circumstances.
#9 Tool Development: Stewardship Assessment Tool	Develop an online stewardship assessment tool for destination organizations that is a structured instrument or methodology designed to evaluate specific aspects of an organization's sustainability performance, processes, or capabilities, providing insights and data that guide decision-making, improvements, and strategic planning.
#10 Research: Ongoing Stewardship Research	TBD
#11 Content Development: Continue Blog Posts, Webinars, Case Studies and best Practices Publications,	Continue the regular and frequent publication of destination stewardship-related content.

Action Recommended	Description of Recommendation
and Annual Meeting and Summit Sessions	
#12 Administration: Hire Manager of Education, Destination Stewardship Strategies	Hire a subject matter expert to assist the director in guiding and coordinating all DI destination stewardship efforts.