

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Development of an Ecotourism and Community-Based Strategy, Development Plan and Checklist

SVGUBEC-C-QCBS-1

A. OVERVIEW

The objective of this assignment is to update and expand an **ecotourism and community-based tourism development strategy and create an implementable development plan for St. Vincent and the Grenadines**, leveraging the draft national tourism strategy and the National Economic and Social Development plan (NESDP), and to develop a community-based tourism toolkit and checklist for community businesses. The strategy and development plan will articulate the strategic direction of the ecotourism and community-based sector and will provide a detailed blueprint for Vincentians to maximize the socio-economic and environmental benefits. It will draw from existing research and documents and will be based on thorough research, evidence and broad stakeholder consultation and feedback from tourism and tourism-related industries, government, civil society, communities, and the development community. The toolkit and checklist will leverage available resources from the Caribbean Tourism Organization and adapt them to the local context based on the research and consultations conducted for the strategy and action plan. The strategy and development plan aims to establish a robust and inclusive plan delineating the strategic implementation for the initial three years, as outlined in this Terms of Reference (TOR). To achieve this, the project will employ an iterative and participatory approach designed to foster consensus among both public and private sectors. This approach involves a comprehensive analysis of critical aspects within the industry, encompassing competitive benchmarks. It also entails engaging stakeholders and experts to contribute valuable insights and vision, culminating in the formulation of strategic initiatives and plans. The overarching goal is to harness the full potential of the destination industry effectively.

Ecotourism and community-based tourism have significant potential to enhance the tourism sector, contribute to sustainable economy development, protect natural resources, and support local communities. In line with global sustainability trends, the SVG Ministry of Tourism is prioritizing the development of an ecotourism and community-based tourism strategy to guide responsible tourism development. This policy will serve as a framework to balance economic growth, environmental conservation, and social benefits, ensuring that tourism development aligns with community aspiration and ecological integrity.

B. Unleashing the Blue Economy in the Caribbean

The Blue Economy is defined as an approach to promote sustainable and integrated use of marine resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and job generation while preserving the health of ocean ecosystems. It covers a range of interdependent sectors, including fisheries, coastal tourism, and waste management. Fisheries, for example, provide the hospitality industry with quality and affordable seafood, while the tourism sector supports fisher livelihoods and generates

employment. Waste management, meanwhile, is crucial to the health of fisheries and other marine resources and ecosystems which are, in turn, critical for the beaches and other natural assets that attract holiday makers. Going forward, anticipating and adapting to the impacts of climate change will be an essential component of the blue economy, ensuring that low-carbon and climate-resilient measures are incorporated across sectors to ensure sustainability of marine resources and continued generation of their benefits. The Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (GoSVG) aims to advance the economic, social, and cultural development of the archipelago by realizing the full potential of its blue economy sectors in an integrated and climate-resilient way while protecting the health and biodiversity of its marine space. On its pathway towards blue growth, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG) has devised several projects and strategic plans that helped protect its blue space and grow the island's blue economy.

The World Bank financed Unleashing the Blue Economy of the Caribbean (UBEC) will be implemented as a Series of Projects (SOP) in three distinct five-year phases over a fifteen-year period (each project will have a life cycle of five years) involving multi-sectoral blue economy investments to support Caribbean countries to strengthen their climate resilience and accelerate economic recovery from the impacts of COVID-19. Phase 1 of UBEC, to be implemented between fiscal years 2022 and 2028, involves Grenada, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and the OECS Commission and focuses on three interrelated blue economy sectors: tourism, fisheries, and waste management. The project development objective of the SOP and Phase I is to strengthen the enabling environment for the blue economy, economic recovery, and resilience of selected coastal assets in participating countries and provide immediate and effective response to an eligible emergency.

Phase I of the SOP is designed to foster economic recovery and support marine and coastal resilience in Grenada, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG) by strengthening the sustainability and competitiveness of two critical, interconnected sectors – tourism and fisheries – and one underlying enabling infrastructure service, waste management. The SOP will achieve its objectives by: 1) strengthening regional and national policies and institutional frameworks to bring back business and attract new investments, (2) scaling up innovative financing mechanisms aimed at enhancing employment and productivity in the tourism, fisheries, and waste management value chains through establishment of a regional MSME matching grant program and a regional climate-risk fisheries insurance scheme, (3) supporting investment in coastal infrastructure to reduce risk and leverage private investment in blue economy activities and strengthen climate resilience, and (4) adopting a contingency emergency response mechanism to respond to future extreme weather events.

C. ADDRESSING THE NATIONAL CHALLENGE

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is an archipelagic state in the Lesser Antilles. A nation with a population of over 110,000¹, approximately 92% of whom live on mainland Saint Vincent and most of the population is concentrated on a narrow coastal strip, within 1km of the coastline. Its land area is ca. 350km², but the 7,800km² of coastal shelf and its sea beyond, are rich in marine resources, including coral reefs, seagrass beds, mangroves, fish, shellfish, marine mammals, minerals, sandy beaches and rocky shores². These marine resources support a national economy based largely on

¹ Statistical Office of St Vincent and the Grenadines – Mid-Year Household Population Estimates by Age and Sex

² Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, 2019. National Ocean Policy.

tourism, which, before COVID-19, contributed³ over 28% of GDP and has in the last three decades replaced agriculture and banana export as the main economic activity.

Unfortunately, these marine resources are under threat from unregulated coastal development, pollution, including plastic pollution, soil erosion, overfishing, and ocean acidification. Rapid coastal development driven by a strong tourism market, particularly in the south of Saint Vincent, on the islands, and along coastal roads built on the highly permeable volcanic soil; means that landslides and destruction of coastal habitats are not uncommon. Additionally, the widespread use of pesticides and the discharge of untreated wastewater into the sea are particularly damaging to coastal habitats, including coral reefs, which are estimated to provide a value of US\$24m to the tourism industry every year⁴. While conservation efforts in SVG have increased over the last decade, resulting in the protection of 95km² of marine and coastal areas under one of the country's seven designated Marine Protected Areas (MPA) and/or marine conservation areas, the marine space officially protected for conservation remains less than 0.5% of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)⁵.

These threats are amplified by the fact that SVG, like other Small Island Developing States (SIDS), already faces challenges linked to its geographical location and size, including a strong reliance on tourism as its economic driver, a high dependency on the import of food and energy, limited capacity to effectively manage and sustainably exploit its large marine area and its resources, and a vulnerability to external shocks. The volcanic origin of Saint Vincent, its location near the hurricane belt, and the low-lying geography of the Grenadines make the country vulnerable to soil erosion, sea-level rise, and natural disasters, as evidenced by the recent eruption of La Soufriere volcano. These events, compounded by a narrow economic base, mean that GDP growth has been volatile and SVG's economic future remains burdened with uncertainty.

However, the natural capital of SVG is large, and it holds great potential to support the development of a blue economy that can set SVG apart and provide a path for sustainable development.

D. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In the wake of the pandemic, St. Vincent and the Grenadines is compelled to chart a path toward economic sustainability, and within this landscape, there lies a promising niche—ecotourism and community-based activities. The island's volcanic terrain and the presence of 32 islands and cays offer a unique canvas for the development of ecotourism and community-based ventures. However, the current state of community-based tourism activities is marked by fragmentation, highlighting the urgent need for well-structured initiatives. Guiding principles must prioritize collaboration among government entities, local communities, the private sector, and NGOs. Empowering local communities through capacity-building programs is pivotal, ensuring that residents are equipped with the necessary skills to actively participate in and benefit from these initiatives. Cultural preservation should be woven into the fabric of these endeavors, celebrating the country's rich heritage, and integrating local customs into the experiences offered to visitors.

Economic diversification becomes a reality through encouraging entrepreneurship and investing in sustainable income-generating opportunities. Upholding environmental conservation through strict

³ World Travel & Tourism Council, 2020

⁴ The Nature Conservancy - Mapping Ocean Wealth Explorer

⁵ Author calculations based on the list of officially designated sites and the total area of each site, as published by the National Parks, Rivers and Beaches Authority website.

guidelines and responsible tourism practices is paramount. Comprehensive product development, strategic marketing, effective monitoring, and a robust regulatory framework inclusive of recovery initiatives which would constitute essential pillars. Collectively, these guiding principles aim to establish a holistic and sustainable approach to ecotourism and community-based activities, harnessing the diverse offerings across St. Vincent and the Grenadines' islands and cays.

E. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this consultancy is to work with the GoSVG and the Ministry of Tourism to craft a strategic vision for ecotourism and community-based tourism development that delivers positive economic, social and environmental outcomes and to create an implementable and detailed development plan and tools to assist the GoSVG in effectively and efficiently implementing this strategy.

With this in mind, the objectives of the assignment are to:

- Map the opportunities and challenges for development of ecotourism and community-based tourism
- Craft a detailed ecotourism and community-based tourism strategy and development plan including identification of specific destinations and products for development, recommendations on their development, packaging of itineraries, and detailed marketing plans.
- Create an ecotourism and community-based tourism toolkit and checklist for community businesses.

F. SCOPE OF WORK

Map the opportunities and challenges for development of ecotourism and community-based tourism

1. Inception Report including situation analysis, desk research and regulatory review
 - a. The consultant is expected to engage in an initial briefing with the Project Coordinator/Project Implementation Unit, the staff of the Ministry of Tourism and Economic Planning Division and other key stakeholders to discuss the scope of the work to be undertaken, and any other pertinent issues.
 - b. Review and assess the existing draft national tourism strategy with a focus on the community-based tourism section
 - c. Review other relevant documents such as the National Economic and Social Development plan (NESDP)
 - d. Conduct a review of existing and proposed policies, regulations and guidelines to understand which oversee and guide ecotourism and community-based tourism. Identify potential conflicts or challenges stemming from these regulations.
 - e. Assess current ecotourism and CBT initiatives within the region, including an analysis of their economic, environmental, and social impacts.
 - f. Conduct a stock take of existing ecotourism and community-based tourism development programs and support services. This should include financing and grant opportunities.
 - g. Refine the proposed methodology covering the below steps including a detailed stakeholder consultations plan and a list of potential stakeholders to consult.

2. Measure and analyze the demand and assess market trends
 - a. Using existing national and regional data and available trends reports, understand the demand for ecotourism and community-based tourism in SVG;
 - b. Interview tour operators, hotels, and industry associations to determine other existing and potential ecotourism and community-based tourism assets, businesses and products that could be developed
 - c. Produce a report that measures and analyzing demand for ecotourism and community-based tourism in SVG including current demand and demand forecasts over the next 10 years. This should include number of visitors and estimated revenue per visitor including understanding of how much visitors pay per ecotourism and community-based tourism experience.
3. Map and assess the supply of ecotourism and community-based tourism assets, businesses and products
 - a. Leverage available research online and through reports to identify the presence of existing ecotourism and community-based tourism businesses and products.
 - b. Interview tour operators, hotels, and industry associations to determine other existing and potential ecotourism and community-based tourism assets, businesses and products that could be developed.
 - c. Host consultations: Consultations should include representatives of tourism operators, local communities, local entrepreneurs, relevant NGOs, conservation agencies, including protected area personnel and relevant government ministries throughout St. Vincent and the Grenadines.
 - d. Summarize the attitudes, awareness and perception of ecotourism and community-based tourism at the community level, existing experience, concerns and level of interest and possible opportunities and pitfalls.
 - e. Verify and further add to the stock take of ecotourism and community-based tourism support programs and services to create a comprehensive list. This should include financing and grant opportunities.
 - f. Create a comprehensive list of existing and potential ecotourism and community-based tourism assets, products, experience and businesses.
4. Identify barriers to development looking at business capacity, policies and regulations, infrastructure, and market conditions (e.g. market access, competition, etc.)
 - a. Based on the market demand assessment and mapping and assessment of the supply identify the critical barriers to improvement of existing ecotourism and community-based tourism and the development of new experiences including, but not limited to, trunk infrastructure, community based and tourism infrastructure in the site, policy and regulations, product and service type and quality, market orientation, business structure and management, distribution channels, etc.
5. Craft a detailed ecotourism and community-based tourism strategy and development plan including identification of specific destinations and products for development, recommendations on their development, packaging of itineraries, and detailed marketing plans.
 - a. Draft an ecotourism and community-based tourism strategy using the draft national tourism strategy and its background documents, stakeholder consultations, and the mapping of opportunities and challenges
 - b. Draft a development plan that lays out specific activities and actions required to achieve the vision of the strategy (see details in scope of work below). Translate the

- development plan into an implementable action plan mapping out specific actions and mapping them to potential resources.
- c. Formulate strategies, action plan for the development and promotion of feasible products and packages related to community private and public partnership, independent community-managed enterprises and individual local enterprises.
 - i. Identify potential ecotourism products and packages to boost the economy and promote tourism as a viable economic option, paying particular attention to those that can be delivered through a community-private sector partnership:
 - ii. Identify incentives for businesses that create jobs in eco-tourism, invest in infrastructure projects that promote sustainability, such as public transportation systems or green building such as hiking trails, wildlife sanctuaries, and eco-lodges initiatives.
 - d. Propose a capacity building plan and training program that fosters understanding between cultures:
 - i. Recommend cultural exchange programs that facilitate interactions between people from different backgrounds and promote mutual understanding and appreciation.
 - ii. Identify initiatives that celebrate diversity and promote cross-cultural dialogue through arts, music, literature, and festivals.
 - iii. Identify educational programs in schools and communities that can foster a sense of responsibility for natural environment and cultural heritage.
 - iv. Identify measures for ongoing access to advice and support in the development, management and marketing of the ecotourism products and services;
 - e. Propose measures to improve environmental outcomes of ecotourism and community-based tourism and to conserve natural resources and preserve cultural heritage. These should be for both communities and tour operators:
 - i. Propose incentives for businesses that adopt sustainable practices or use renewable resources, such as recycling programs or energy-efficient upgrades, that promotes ecotourism and encourage preservation of intangible cultural assets:
 - ii. Put forward recommendations for additional and priority research and development in ecotourism initiatives:
 - iii. Recommend regulations that limit resource extraction and promote recycling and reuse.
 - iv. Propose public education campaigns to raise awareness about environmental issues and the importance of conservation.
 - f. Recommend funding agencies that could provide grants to small businesses that implement energy-efficient practices or develop sustainable eco and community-based tourism products.
 - g. Design a system for monitoring and evaluation of the strategy and plan.
 - h. Host consultations on the draft strategy and development plan to gather feedback and gain verification.
 - i. Finalize the strategy and development plan in partnership with the Ministry of Tourism and other key stakeholders
6. Create an ecotourism and community-based tourism toolkit and checklist for community businesses

- a. Identify and review existing resources on ecotourism community-based tourism, especially from the CTO
- b. Assessed in context to the local condition including market demand, supply of existing products, and business regulations.
- c. Identify gaps or misalignments with the SVG local context
- d. Address those gaps by creating a localized version of tools to create a community-based tourism toolkit and community business checklist. The checklist should provide detailed guidance on how a community business can register as a formal business in SVG.

G. Deliverables and Timelines

The Project expects detailed reports with findings from the study in both PPT and narrative format. The project is expected to be delivered within seven months of the contract award.

| Deliverable/Action | Expected timeline |
|---|---|
| Concise Inception Report with updated methodology including work plan, the template/structure of the ecotourism and community-based strategy and development plan, list of proposed stakeholders to consult, sources and methods for data collection, regulatory review summary, and stock take of existing ecotourism and community-based tourism development programs and support services. | Within 2 weeks of commencement (signing the contract) |
| Demand and supply assessment and barriers report including demand and market trend analysis and forecasts, summary of consultations, stock take of ecotourism and community-based tourism support programs, services, and financing options, and comprehensive list of existing and potential ecotourism and community-based tourism assets, products, experiences and businesses, and critical barriers to development. | Within 12 weeks of commencement |
| Draft detailed ecotourism and community-based tourism strategy and development plan including identification of specific destinations and products for development, recommendations on their development, capacity building plan, packaging of itineraries, marketing recommendations, measures to promote environmental and cultural responsibilities, resourcing recommendations, monitoring and evaluation plan, etc. Report will encompass all aspects as described in the scope of work above. | Within 24 weeks of commencement |
| Final detailed ecotourism and community-based tourism strategy and development plan including summary of verification consultations. | Within 28 weeks of commencement |
| Ecotourism and community-based tourism toolkit and checklist for community businesses | Within 30 weeks of commencement |

All reports and outputs shall be submitted to the UBEC Project Coordinator, PS Tourism, Director of Tourism and UBEC Tourism Focal Point/Liasion Officer in electronic form by email.

Each of the deliverable report listed above shall be provided in draft form, to which Ministry of Tourism through the PIU will provide comments within two weeks. The final version of each of the deliverables will then be resubmitted by the consultant within two weeks upon receipt of the Client's comments unless otherwise specified by the Client and take into account and address the comments provided. The submission must be a comprehensive report comprising the work conducted by the Consultant, the challenges encountered, and actions taken to address the challenges. The deliverable

for each task should be set out as an Annex to report covering all the elements of the goal and objectives of the assignment as agreed during the inception meeting.

All deliverables shall be in English, with all relevant data sources clearly and comprehensively cited. The Project will require regular project update meetings (teleconference) during project implementation. Please note that more than one revision of the draft report may be required to address all Project comments.

Travel and Personnel

The Consultant will be expected to make at least 2 trips to St Vincent and the Grenadines for this assignment to conduct board consultations with stakeholders. The Consultant will be responsible for providing all personnel and equipment necessary for carrying out the services, and for their accommodation and transport.

Project Management and Reporting

The Consultant will report to the Project Manager of UBEC for this assignment and coordinate closely with the Ministry of Tourism and the Economic Planning Division in the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Information Technology. The consultant or subcontractors shall not be changed without the specific consent of The Project. Any deviation in the methodology, scope, personnel or budget from that accepted in the consultant's contract must be approved in writing by the UBEC PIU before such change takes effect. All deliverables will be approved for quality and technical input by the Ministry of Tourism and the UBEC Project Implementation Unit.

Confidentiality Statement

All data and information received from GoSVG for the purpose of this assignment are to be treated confidentially and are only to be used in connection with the execution of these Terms of Reference. All intellectual property rights arising from the execution of these Terms of Reference are assigned to GoSVG. The contents of written materials obtained and used in this assignment may not be disclosed to any third parties without the expressed written authorization of GoSVG.

Proposal Requirements

- Consultant name and any identify subcontractors will be clearly identified in the proposal
- Proposed methodology including specific areas of investigation. At a minimum, it should include a review of ongoing works on ecotourism development and promotion in SVG, close consultations with community and other stakeholders, understanding of environmental and social risks, data collection methods, analysis methods, and available resources.
- Proposed list of stakeholders to consult
- Best practice examples of community-based tourism strategies and action plans
- Demonstrated understanding of the community-based tourism resources at the Caribbean Tourism Organization.
- Comprehensive CVs of all professional personnel to participate in the assignment should be included

Firm Qualifications:

It is expected that the firm should have the following qualifications.

- Relevant Experience:
 - The consulting firm should have a minimum of 10 years of experience specializing in sustainable tourism, ecotourism and community-based tourism strategy and product development projects.

- Demonstrated experience in conducting research for strategy creation for ecotourism and community-based tourism.
- Demonstrated comprehensive understanding of the tourism industry, including its dynamics, trends, challenges, and opportunities and how ecotourism and community-based tourism differs from traditional tourism.
- Proven track record of delivering high-quality consulting services to international organizations, government agencies, and private sector clients.
- Experience working on projects in the Caribbean region, particularly in the marine tourism sector and with multilateral development organizations.
- **Technical Expertise:**
 - In-depth understanding of tourism, market dynamics, and industry trends, with knowledge of sustainable tourism practices and environmental management.
 - Demonstrated experience in developing ecotourism and community-based strategy with at least one (1) previous project completed within the last five (5) years.
 - Demonstrated experience of developing ecotourism and community-based tourism businesses including business planning, capacity building, product development and marketing.
 - Experience developing joint venture investments and working with communities on tourism development through partnerships.
 - Market research experience including analyzing tourism market trends, consumer behavior, demand patterns, competitor analysis, and identifying niche markets or emerging trends.
 - Ability to identify, assess, and mitigate various risks associated with tourism development, including environmental, social, cultural, economic, and safety risks. It includes conducting risk assessments, developing risk management strategies, and implementing measures to minimize potential negative impacts.
- **Multidisciplinary Team:**
 - The consulting firm should have a multidisciplinary team of experts with diverse backgrounds and expertise relevant to the project objectives.
 - See below for list of team members that must be included in the proposed team.
 - The firm should have access to a network of subject matter experts and industry practitioners who can provide specialized knowledge and insights as needed.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:**
 - Demonstrated capability in stakeholder engagement and consultation processes, including conducting interviews, focus group discussions, and workshops with diverse stakeholders.
 - Experience in building consensus among government agencies, industry associations, private sector entities, NGOs, and community organizations.
 - Ability to facilitate participatory decision-making processes and incorporate stakeholder feedback into project deliverables.
- **Project Management Skills:**
 - Strong project management capabilities, including planning, monitoring, and evaluation of project activities, timelines, and budgets.
 - Experience in risk management, quality assurance, and client relationship management to ensure project success and client satisfaction.
 - Ability to prepare clear, concise, and actionable reports, presentations, and policy briefs that communicate complex information effectively to diverse audiences.

Specific Experts for the Team:

A minimum the team should include the following expertise.

- **Project Manager:**

- Senior level project manager with 15 years of experience and proven experience in project management, including planning, implementation, and monitoring of complex projects in the tourism or economic development sectors.
- Master's degree in a relevant field such as Tourism Development, Business Administration, Economics, International Development, or a related discipline. A Bachelor's degree with substantial work experience (10+ years) in a related field may also be considered.
- Demonstrated experience in tourism development and strategy creation.
- Strong leadership and interpersonal skills, with the ability to coordinate and motivate multidisciplinary teams to achieve project objectives.
- Excellent communication and stakeholder management skills, with experience in engaging with government agencies, private sector entities, and international organizations.
- Proficiency in project management methodologies, with a track record of delivering projects on time and within budget.
- Knowledge of tourism industry dynamics, regulatory frameworks, and sustainable development practices.
- Tourism Private Sector Investment Expert:
 - Minimum of a Master's Degree in Tourism, Sustainable Tourism, Businesses, International Development, or another related field. A Bachelor's degree with substantial work experience (10+ years) in a related field may also be considered.
 - At least 10 years of experience in the field of sustainable tourism, ecotourism and community-based tourism, with direct and relevant project experience in ecotourism and community-based strategy.
 - Expertise in **destination development strategies** for tourism, particularly in remote or emerging destinations.
 - Knowledge of sustainable tourism practices, environmental conservation principles, and community-based tourism initiatives.
 - Excellent communication and interpersonal skills, with the ability to engage with diverse stakeholders and facilitate consensus-building.
 - Familiarity with tourism policy frameworks, regulatory compliance, and industry standards development.
 - Strong analytical skills and attention to detail, with the ability to evaluate investment opportunities and develop recommendations for maximizing returns and mitigating risks.
 - Proven track record in strategy development for tourism or related sectors.
 - Experience in conducting market research, analyzing data, and generating insights into tourism market trends, consumer behavior, and demand patterns
 - Strong understanding of environmental conservation and community development.
- Environmental Expert:
 - Advanced degree in environmental science, marine biology, conservation biology, or a related discipline.
 - Expertise in assessing environmental impacts, ecosystem management, and marine conservation strategies.
 - Expertise in identifying, assessing, and mitigating various risks associated with tourism development, including environmental, social, cultural, and safety risks.
 - Strong written and verbal communication skills, with the ability to communicate complex environmental concepts to diverse audiences.
- The team should also bring relevant regional experience
 - Demonstrated experience working in **Small Island Developing States (SIDS)**, particularly in the Caribbean region, would be highly advantageous.

- Understanding of **blue economy principles** and sustainable tourism practices aligned with environmental conservation, resilience to climate change, and community engagement.