World Tourism Organization

UNWTO

UNWTO.QUEST
Certification
Handbook

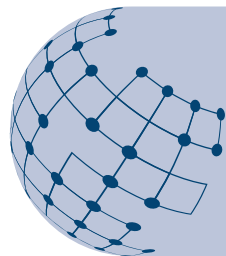2017 Edition

UNWTO QUEST
a DMO Certification System

THEMIS
World Tourism Organization

UNWTO.QUEST
Certification Handbook

2017 Edition

CONTENTS

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is the United Nations agency responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism. It therefore advocates an environmentally responsible and economically viable and equitable tourism development for local communities. It is with UNWTO.QUEST Certification that the UNWTO invigorates the pathway to promote quality and excellence in Destination Management Organizations (DMOs), in tourism development planning, management and monitoring.

As the leading international organization in the field of tourism, UNWTO promotes tourism as a driver of economic growth, inclusive development and environmental sustainability and offers leadership and support to the sector in advancing knowledge and tourism policies worldwide.

UNWTO encourages the implementation of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, to maximize tourism's socio-economic contribution while minimizing its possible negative impacts, and is committed to promoting tourism as an instrument in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), geared towards reducing poverty and fostering sustainable development worldwide.

UNWTO generates market knowledge, promotes competitive and sustainable tourism policies and instruments, fosters tourism education and training, and works to make tourism an effective tool for development through other capacity building activities in over 100 countries around the world.

UNWTO's membership includes **156 countries, 6 Associate Members and over 500 Affiliate Members** representing the private sector, educational institutions, tourism associations and local tourism authorities.

Executive Summary

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), with its UNWTO.Themis Foundation, have developed the UNWTO.QUEST Programme – a Certification System for Destination Management Organizations (DMOs in English or OGDs in Spanish).

The Programme represents an initiative aimed to promote DMO quality and excellence in planning, execution and governance of tourism development. Organizations begin with registration in the Programme which enables them to perform a self-assessment in accordance with standards and criteria promoted by UNWTO.QUEST. This self-assessment is verified by an auditor who issues a pre-audit report after conducting a pre-audit. Based on the level of performance, the DMO may continue to the following phases, either to start with an Improvement Plan (Phase 2) or to request a Certification application (Phase 3).

The implementation lasts approximately twelve months, time in which DMOs participating in the UNWTO.QUEST Programme will work closely together with the UNWTO and the UNWTO.Themis Foundation. They both will provide their technical support and knowledge to achieve a successful process that will result in the Organization's capacity building, consolidation of its leadership and improvement of its competitiveness.

Once UNWTO.QUEST Certification is awarded, the DMO will maintain the label for four years. After that time, the DMO may apply for Certification renewal.
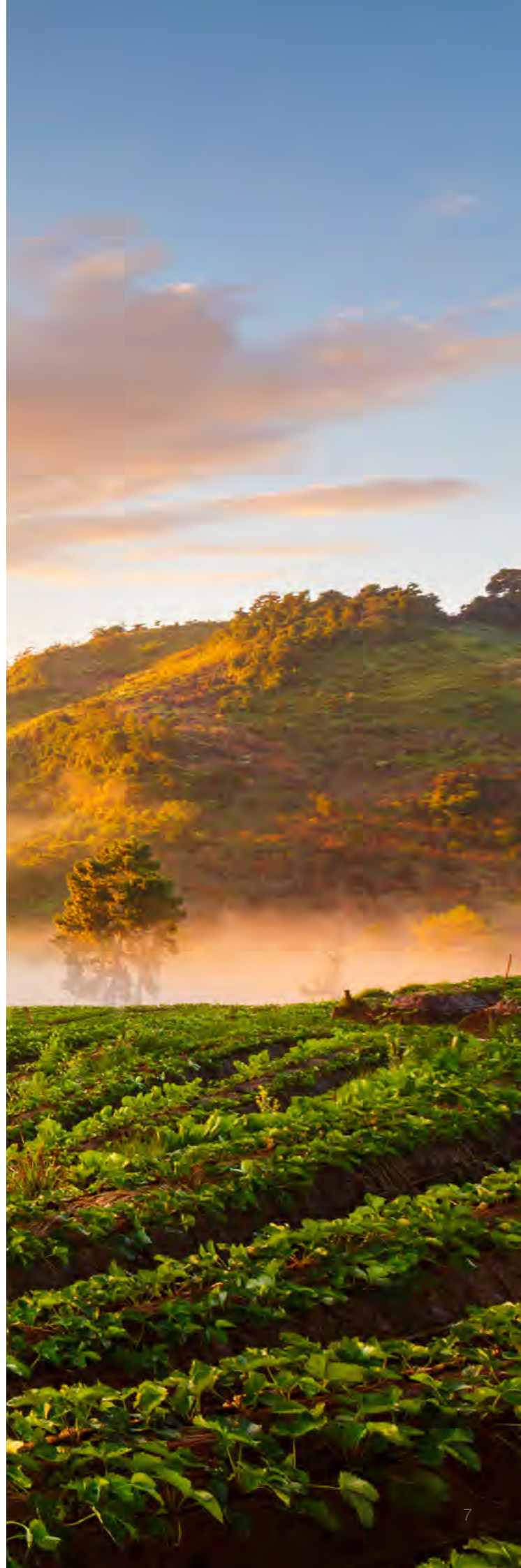
1. Introduction to **UNWTO.QUEST**

1.1 What is the UNWTO.QUEST Programme?

UNWTO.QUEST is a Programme designed by the UNWTO, with its UNWTO.Themis Foundation, to promote **quality and excellence of Destination Management Organizations (DMOs), in planning, governance and performance of tourism development.**

The UNWTO.QUEST Programme is a **strategic tool that allows DMOs to take part in an ongoing improvement process in order to build internal capacities that will add to the competitiveness and sustainability of their destinations.**

Through the UNWTO.QUEST Programme, the UNWTO and its UNWTO.Themis Foundation accompany DMOs in a process aimed to strengthen three key performance areas in destination management: **Strategic Leadership, Effective Execution and Efficient Governance.**

Strategic Leadership

The UNWTO.QUEST Programme allows the DMO to achieve a successful destination management by promoting its leadership in planning, management and governance of tourism development where diverse actors from the industry are involved. Consequently, it accompanies the DMO in the execution of efforts to support interaction and foster synergy with stakeholders, advocating participation and the creation of a collective vision for the destination.

Effective Execution

The UNWTO.QUEST Programme contributes to strengthening the DMO's management capacities, providing practical tools for the efficient use of resources, as well as the design of strategies and performance guidelines related to tourism development, promotion and marketing of destinations.

Efficient Governance

The UNWTO.QUEST Programme allows the DMO to achieve an efficient governance of the destination under the principles of sustainability. The Programme strengthens internal management for efficient coordination and implementation of financial and technical resources to advance the destination's quality and competitiveness.

To ensure a successful implementation of quality standards and criteria in the three areas of performance, the UNWTO.QUEST Programme provides a **progressive implementation methodology that includes continuous support, assistance and monitoring for DMOs.**

As a result of the process, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), awards the UNWTO. QUEST Certification to those DMOs that have proved to comply with at least 70% of the criteria and indicators (standards) of the Programme. The Certification is valid for four years during which DMOs will enjoy world class recognition as organizations certified in quality and excellence in destination management.

At the end of the four year period, UNWTO offers the possibility of Certification renewal to promote the ongoing improvement of the DMO's quality destination management while the destination's competitiveness is enhanced.

Therefore, the UNWTO.QUEST Programme allows implementation of a **comprehensive quality model, that benefits:**

- DMOs, by implementing tools and good practices that strengthen their strategic leadership, effective execution and efficient governance.

- Tourism destinations, by contributing to their competitiveness and sustainability as a result of strategic decisions by the DMO as regards its planning, management and governance.

- Private sector stakeholders, who benefit from the enhancement of management capacities of the DMOs associated with improved and greater synergies and development of public-private partnership building.

- The tourist, who will be able to visit destinations where quality is a strategic and distinctive management feature promoted by DMOs.

UNWTO QUEST
a DMO Certification System

Certification

Private Sector
DMO
Stakeholders
Destinations
Tourists
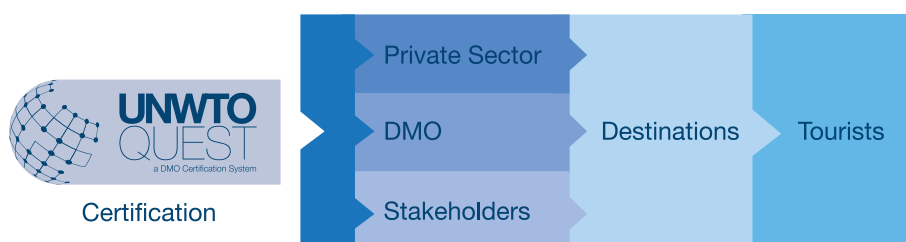
1.2 Objectives

The UNWTO.QUEST Programme has the following objectives:

- Promote DMO quality and excellence in planning, management, and governance of tourism development.

- Provide a framework of standards and criteria to guide and assist DMO in destination management strategies.

- Strengthen DMO commitment with quality and excellence in tourism management.

- Enhance competitiveness and sustainability of tourism destinations through the improvement of DMO strategic planning, management and governance.

- Acknowledge DMO quality and excellence, by awarding the UNWTO.QUEST Certification.

- Consolidate a global network of UNWTO.QUEST Certified DMOs.

1.3 Values

The UNWTO.QUEST Programme promotes the ongoing improvement of the management process related to strategic leadership, effective execution and efficient governance. It fosters the cooperation, integration, and participation of all technical and operational areas within the organization in the implementation process of the Programme, as a strategy for the sustainable development and competitive positioning of the destination.

1.4 Principles

- **Certification and non classification:** UNWTO.QUEST is not a DMO classification programme, it is a quality and excellence Certification. Therefore, it does not rank DMOs based on the score reached in the implementation of standards and criteria. Rather, it provides recognition to the DMO for the implementation of quality processes in destination management.

- **Excellence is the goal to achieve:** standards to obtain Certification are high because they are based on excellence in destination management and only DMOs with audit results above 70% of the maximum score required, obtain the UNWTO.QUEST Certification.

- **Support and guidance in the improvement process:** the UNWTO.QUEST Programme includes various capacity

building activities both online and onsite in order for the DMO to guide the improvement path and thus achieve required Certification standards.

- **Document verification and interaction with DMOs:** to obtain the UNWTO.QUEST Certification, the DMO must systematize destination management documentation and participate in audits, as well as interviews with UNWTO.Themis experts who will support the DMO during the implementation process.

1.5 Eligible Organizations

The UNWTO.QUEST Programme is aimed at destination management organizations:

- From any country, whether or not a Member State of UNWTO.

- With different structures or scopes, including local, regional and national DMOs.

- Of a diverse nature and legal status, including government departments or agencies, as well as statutory agencies, NGOs, private associations or any other type of entity.

To be eligible, the DMO shall:

- Provide proof of being legally constituted in terms of the country´s laws.

- Be acknowledged by the government in their area of jurisdiction as an official tourism organization.

- Be recognized by the national government of their country as an active DMO.

1.6 Benefits for the DMO

Once awarded with the UNWTO.QUEST Certification, the DMO obtains visibility and global recognition as an organization committed to quality and excellence in destination management, having:

- Improved efficiency and expertise in the destination´s governance and management.

- Optimized human resources management and development of professional skills.

- Developed strategies that foster the integration of all the stakeholders (public and private) in the destination´s management.

- Adopted tools for the destination´s innovation, sustainability and competitiveness.

- Undertaken leadership in the tourism destination as regards a strategic planning which may encompass diverse authorities, stakeholders and professionals and promote partnership in the tourism sector to achieve a collective vision of the destination.

1.7 Actors involved in the UNWTO. QUEST Certification

UNWTO Secretariat:

- Promotes the UNWTO.QUEST Programme.

- Maintains official communications with the DMO and the National Tourism Authority of the country.

- Appoints the UNWTO.QUEST Advisory Board.

- Acts as the official entity between the UNWTO.Themis Foundation, the UNWTO.QUEST Advisory Board and the DMO.

- Awards the UNWTO.QUEST Certification.

UNWTO.Themis Foundation:

- Promotes the UNWTO.QUEST Programme.

- Designates UNWTO.QUEST auditors and experts.

- Coordinates the UNWTO.QUEST Programme implementation process.

- Designs the improvement process for the DMO in order to strengthen the three axes of the UNWTO. QUEST Programme.

- Provides training that will allow the implementation of good practices, tools incorporation and reduction of identified gaps, maximizing internal management and compliance with the DMO's goals.

To implement the UNWTO.QUEST Programme, the UNWTO Secretariat and the UNWTO.Themis Foundation engage the following actors:
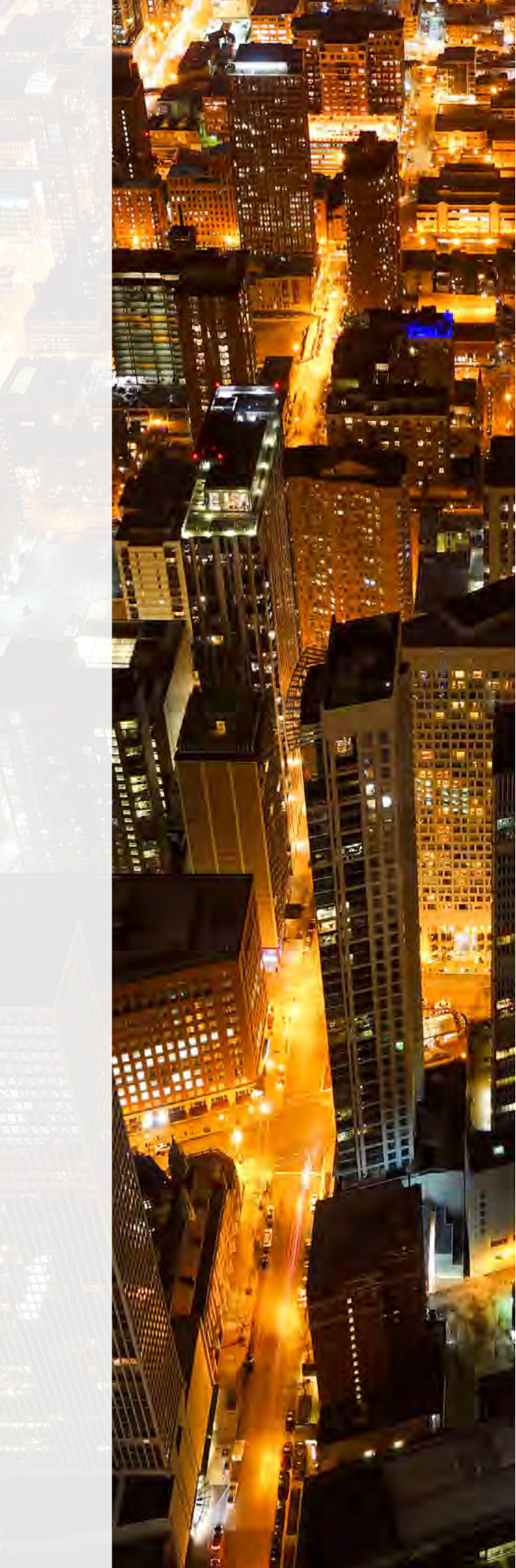
- **UNWTO.QUEST Advisory Board** is a multidisciplinary external committee integrated by experts, responsible for audit report revision and validation and for making recommendations to the UNWTO Secretariat. This committee advises UNWTO on UNWTO.QUEST Certification criteria and validates the results of the Certification process, ensuring the highest technical standards, objectivity, efficiency and transparency.

- **UNWTO.QUEST Auditor:** an expert appointed by the UNWTO.Themis Foundation to support and guide the DMO in the Programme implementation process. Auditors will be responsible for conducting the pre-audit and audit, in order to verify compliance with the required quality standards and criteria.

- **UNWTO.QUEST Expert:** an expert appointed by the UNWTO.Themis Foundation to accompany and train the DMO through Phase 2. Improvement Process of the Programme. The expert will be responsible for providing the DMO with training in order to improve Strategic Leadership, Effective Execution and Efficient Governance.

2. Phases of the
UNWTO.QUEST Programme

The Certification process comprises three phases, each with specific processes:

01
Initial Self-Assessment

Registration
Online Self-Assessment €
Pre-Audit €

UNWTO QUEST a DMO Certification System **Pre-Audited**

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - >
4 months

02
Improvement Process

Improvement Plan €
Training
Certification Request

UNWTO QUEST a DMO Certification System **Trained**

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - >
6 months

03
UNWTO.QUEST Audit and Certification

Audit €
Validation by Advisory Board
Certification

UNWTO QUEST a DMO Certification System

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - >
2 months

The path to follow for the DMO is subject to the outcome from the pre-audit in Phase 1.

The following diagrams show the two possible processes of implementation to obtain the UNWTO.QUEST Certification.

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	UNWTO QUEST a DMO Certification System	UNWTO QUEST a DMO Certification System
- - - - - >	- - - - - >	- - - - - >		
4 months	6 months	2 months	Certification	Certification renewal

Phase 1	Phase 3	UNWTO QUEST a DMO Certification System	UNWTO QUEST a DMO Certification System
- - - - - >	- - - - - >		
4 months	2 months	Certification	Certification renewal

2.1 Phase 01: Initial Self-Assessment

Length: 4 months

Phase 1 encompasses three processes:
Registration, Online Self-Assessment and Pre-Audit.

The goal of this first phase is to determine the DMO's starting position through an online self-assessment.

The DMO starts by submitting the UNWTO.QUEST Programme online registration form, then the DMO conducts an online self- assessment to obtain a first diagnosis and to gather and classify DMO documents in accordance with the quality standards promoted by the Programme.

This phase continues with the UNWTO.QUEST pre-audit carried out by the auditor.

01
Initial Self-Assessment

Registration

Online Self-Assessment   €

Pre-Audit   €

UNWTO QUEST
a DMO Certification System | **Pre-Audited**

4 months

2.1.1 Registration

The first step is online registration. The DMO must complete the online registration form (see Annex I) and attach the following documentation:

- Support Letter from the National Tourism Authority (NTA) in order to determine that the entity is legally constituted as a Destination Management Organization. The letter must be attached in .doc or .pdf format (See Annex II).

Once the registration is complete, the UNWTO. Themis Foundation verifies the information submitted by the DMO in a maximum period of two weeks. The DMO will receive notice of approval by email.

If the registration is not approved, the UNWTO.Themis Foundation will communicate with the DMO to explain the decision's reasons and will explore possible solutions.

2.1.2 Online Self-Assessment

Once the information is received and the corresponding payment is made (the UNWTO.Themis Foundation will timely inform the DMO of available payment conditions), the UNWTO. Themis Foundation will provide the DMO with the online self-assessment form. The self-assessment allows the the DMO to verify its current level of performance based on the standards and criteria promoted by the Programme. This self-managed process provides a picture of the DMO's performance with respect to the three areas of the UNWTO.QUEST Programme: Strategic Leadership, Effective Execution and Efficient Governance.

The online self- assessment contains:

- Success Criteria that include statements (indicators) that must be qualified by the DMO with a score from:

o Not applicable

o 1 to 5 if mandatory, support document

o 1 to 3 if desirable, support document

The highest score to obtain is 564 points as shown in the following table:

Area / Axis	Highest Score
Strategic Leadership	169
Effective Execution	241
Efficient Governance	154
Total Highest Score	564

- There is a field for the DMO to enclose requested documentation supporting selected punctuation.

It is important to stress that all submitted documents are confidential, access is only granted to the user, the UNWTO Secretariat, the UNWTO.Themis Foundation, the Auditors, and the Advisory Board. Information will be used only for the purpose of UNWTO.QUEST Certification. File extensions that can be attached online are:
.jpeg, .doc, .xls, .pdf.

The DMO has up to six weeks to submit all the information, with the possibility of an extension if needed.

Within this period, the self-assessment must be done and all the available documents submitted. No changes or submissions can be made after the closing date.

Note:
All submitted documents and information provided are confidential, access is only granted to the user, the UNWTO Secretariat, the UNWTO.Themis Foundation, the Auditors, and the Advisory Board. Information will be used only for the purpose of UNWTO.QUEST Certification.

2.1.3 Pre-Audit

The pre-audit is conducted by a UNWTO.QUEST Auditor through a review of the self-assessment done by the DMO and through verification and analysis of submitted documents. The pre-audit process involves the identification of gaps and improvement opportunities in order to comply with the standards and criteria of the UNWTO.QUEST Programme.

The participation of a UNWTO.QUEST Auditor adds objectivity to the self-assessment process made by the DMO, providing relevant insights to continue the route towards Certification.

Upon receipt of all the online self-assessment information and after the corresponding payment is made, the UNWTO.QUEST Auditor has four weeks to conduct the pre-audit. This pre-audit is performed on line. The DMO may request an onsite audit at a corresponding additional cost.

After that, the UNWTO.QUEST Advisory Board has four weeks to validate the pre-audit results. As a final outcome, the DMO will receive a set of recommendations and suggestions for improvement identified in the pre-audit report.

This instance is not binding and is not a guarantee for obtaining Certification.

Results may lead to two possible scenarios:

- **Scenario 1: Pre-audit results in 70% or more, of compliance with the standards and criteria of the UNWTO.Quest Programme, from a 564 possible score (395 or more).**

  Option 1:
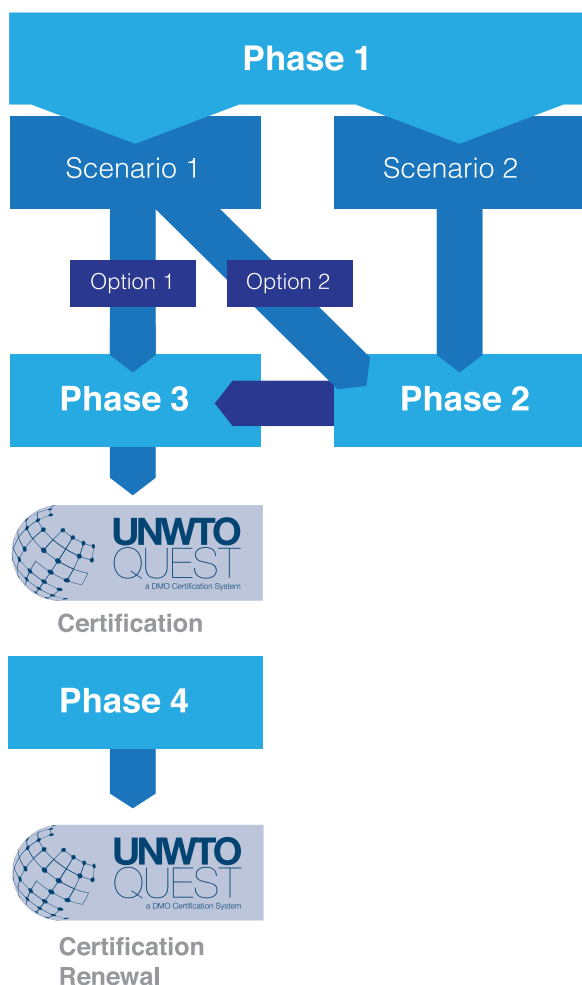 The DMO requests an audit (Phase 3)

  Option 2:
  The DMO requests to continue to the Improvement Process (Phase 2)

- **Scenario 2: Pre-audit results in less than 70% of compliance with the standards and criteria of the UNWTO.Quest Programme, from a 564 possible score (394 or less).**

  The DMO shows partial compliance with the standards and criteria of the UNWTO.QUEST Programme and requires support from the UNWTO.Themis Foundation to meet them successfully. Therefore, the DMO is able to continue to Phase 2.

In both scenarios, the DMO has completed Phase 1 by obtaining the ¨Pre-Audited DMO¨ Label and shall notify the selected option to the UNWTO.Themis Foundation, (either continue to Phase 2 or Phase 3).

Phase 1

Scenario 1   Scenario 2

Option 1   Option 2

Phase 3   **Phase 2**

UNWTO QUEST
a DMO Certification System

Certification

Phase 4

UNWTO QUEST
a DMO Certification System

Certification Renewal

- Clarification -
It is important to point out that the score is the highest possible with no "Not Applicable" situations. When ¨Not applicable¨ situations are experienced, the points will be subtracted from the highest possible score.

2.2 Phase 02: Improvement Process

Length: 6 months

Phase 2 is structured in three processes: **Improvement Plan, Training and Certification Request.**

The aim of this stage is to accompany the DMO in an **improvement process** oriented to enhance the three areas of the UNWTO.QUEST Programme: Strategic Leadership, Effective Execution and Efficient Governance.

The UNWTO.Themis Foundation will provide the DMO with various capacity building activities and initiatives that will enable the DMO to implement good practices, adopt tools and reduce identified gaps in order to maximize internal management as well as the achievement of the DMO's goals.

02

Improvement Process

Improvement Plan   €

Training

Certification Request

UNWTO QUEST **Trained**
a DMO Certification System

6 months
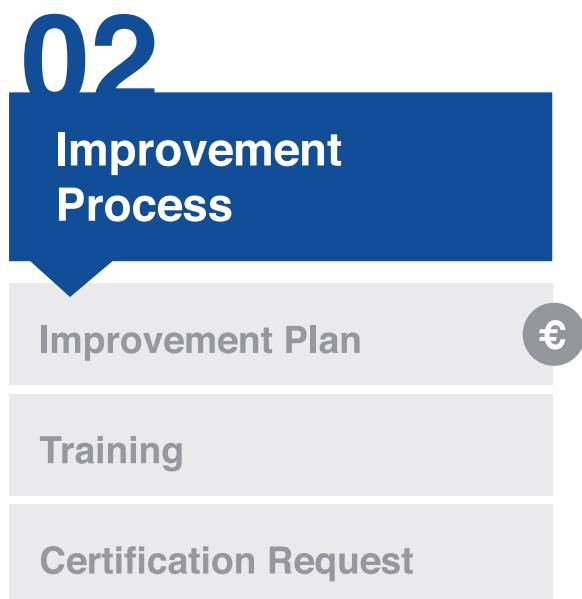
2.2.1 Improvement Plan

Phase 2 starts for those DMOs in Option 2 of Scenario 1 or in Scenario 2. DMOs must make the corresponding payment for costs of this Phase to have access to the services thereby included.

Based on the recommendations, findings and improvement opportunities resulting from the pre-audit, the DMO and the UNWTO.Themis Foundation design in four weeks the online work programme for the Improvement Plan to enhance the DMO's capacities and performance, in order to align them with UNWTO.QUEST Programme standards and criteria.

The work program for the Improvement Plan has a timeline and budget scope, and identifies the DMO's participating actors and areas.

2.2.2 Training

This stage includes online capacity building activities and initiatives for a period of 16 weeks.

- **Training:** training sessions are scheduled to approach specific topics of the UNWTO.QUEST Programme areas. Prior to the sessions, theoretical contents will be provided to the DMO in self-learning formats to enable the in-depth study of topics involved. There may be online or onsite sessions, where theory and technical contents necessary to successfully comply with the standards and criteria of the UNWTO.QUEST Programme are presented.

  Trainings grouped by the areas of the Programme are aimed to facilitate the progressive implementation by the DMO of each action proposed by the UNWTO. QUEST.

- **Online training:** UNWTO.Themis Foundation coordinates with the DMO specific hours and days for online training.

  Training sessions are conducted via the online platform and/or the most appropriate online communication medium for the DMO and the experts, for sessions of two hours each approximately, so that the DMO will be able to make consultations with the UNWTO. Themis Foundation technical team and monitor the implementation progress.

The DMO has permanent email support, with no need to wait for the date scheduled for the conference.

- Nota -

When considered necessary, the DMO may request additional stages of capacity building and training upon payment of additional costs.

2.2.3 Certification Request

Upon completion of the necessary improvements, the DMO will have two weeks to update the final documentation and send it to the UNWTO.Themis Foundation. Once the submission is complete, the DMO must confirm the desire to forward the information with the ¨send¨ option. This action may not be modified. At the end of Phase 2, the DMO will obtain the ¨Trained DMO¨ Label.

2.3 Phase 03: Audit and UNWTO.QUEST Certification

Length: 2 months

Phase 3 is structured in three processes: **Audit, Validation by the UNWTO.QUEST Advisory Board and Certification.**

The aim of this phase is that the DMO undergoes the **audit** process in order to obtain the **UNWTO.QUEST Certification.** DMOs enabled to enter this Phase are those already qualified in Phase 1 and in Phase 2.

03

UNWTO.QUEST Audit and Certification

Audit   €

Validation by Advisory Board

Certification

2 months

2.3.1 Audit

To begin Phase 3, the DMO shall make the payment corresponding to the amount which enables the Audit (Point 2.3.1) and the UNTWO.QUEST Advisory Board Validation (Point 2.3.2.)

A. Designation of the UNWTO.QUEST auditor

The UNWTO.Themis Foundation designates a UNWTO.QUEST auditor (or a team of auditors, depending on the size of the DMO) and forwards to him/her the submitted documents that allow for a detailed knowledge of the DMO's features and therefore, he/she can start an audit plan.

B. Audit coordination

The UNWTO.Themis Foundation informs the DMO of the tasks to be performed by the UNWTO.QUEST auditor, coordinates the date for the audit and sends the DMO the tasks to be conducted:

• Name of the UNWTO.QUEST auditor.

• Objectives and scope of the audit.

- Definition of time to be spent in each verification or proofs review.

- Definition of the issues and tasks to be done according to the DMO´s areas or processes.

- Scheduled date to start and to complete each task from exploration to finalization.

C. Audit execution

The onsite audit lasts between three to seven days and its goal is to verify the correct implementation of the UNWTO.QUEST Programme, through a visual check, document verification and interviews.

The following actions are performed during the audit process:

- Opening meeting, where the audit plan is confirmed and a brief summary of the activities to be carried out is provided.

- Interview with the policy-technical responsible person and other leaders.

- Observation of operation and working environment.

- Gather, review and verify registries and documents as established by the general audit plan.

- Visits to information centers, completion of at least one tour, contact and interaction with local population, among other possible activities to obtain detailed knowledge of the destination.

- Identify recommendations, findings and improvement opportunities.

- Closing meeting, to present conclusions from DMO audit.

D. Audit report

Upon conclusion of the audit, the UNWTO.QUEST auditor makes an audit report with the outcome and conclusions, stating the level of compliance with UNWTO.QUEST Programme standards and criteria. For that purpose, the UNWTO.QUEST Auditor has two weeks.

The report shall provide a complete, clear and precise register of the audit, including or making reference to the following:

- Identification of the DMO.

- Identification of the DMO´s policy-technical responsible person.

- Destination information.

- Goals and scope of the audit, mainly identifying units inside the organization and processes audited during the audit.

- The audit plan, including dates and places or areas where the audit activities were conducted.

- Identification of the designated UNWTO.QUEST Auditor.

- Audit findings.

- Conclusions and recommendations from the audit.

- Standards and assessment criteria according to their relevance and quantification.

- Areas not covered during the audit process.

2.3.2 Validation by the UNWTO.QUEST Advisory Board

The UNWTO.Themis Foundation forwards the UNWTO.QUEST auditor´s report to the UNWTO.QUEST Advisory Board for its review and validation in a period no longer than four weeks.

Once the review and validation are done, the UNWTO.QUEST Advisory Board recommends the UNWTO Secretariat to start the Certification process for those DMOs that have successfully achieved the UNWTO.QUEST Programme standards and criteria.
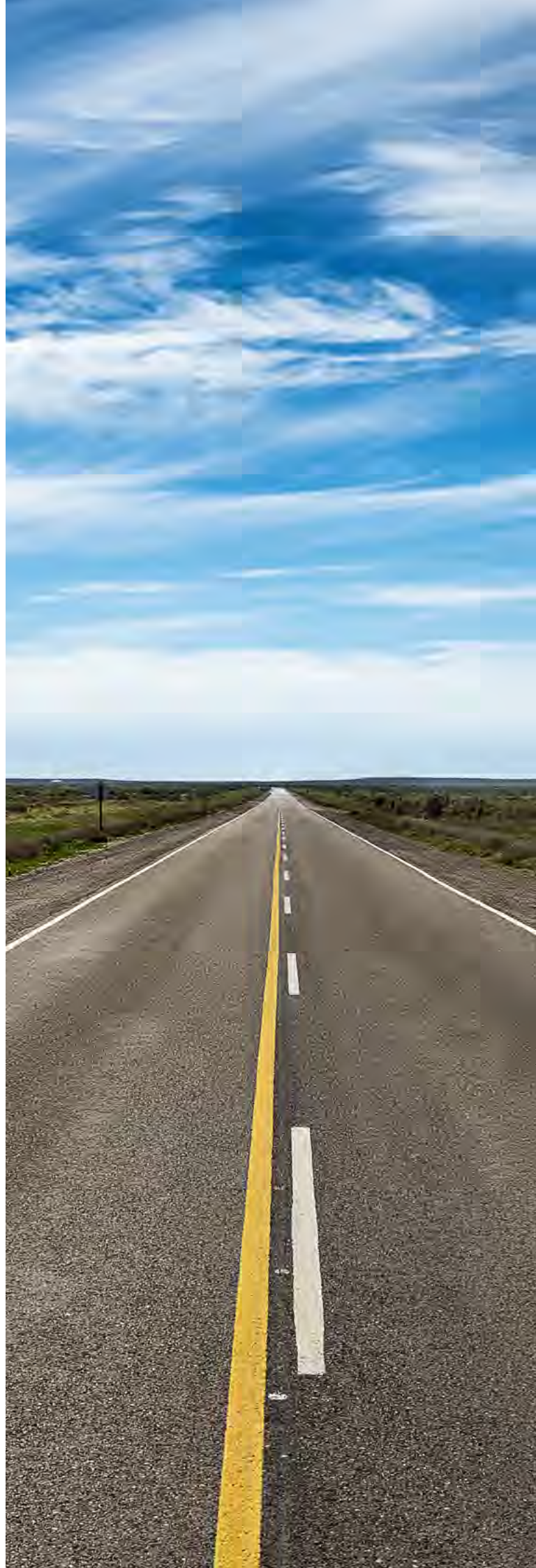
2.3.3 Certification

If the DMO complies with the UNWTO.QUEST Programme standards and criteria, a "UNWTO.QUEST Certification", valid for four years, will be issued.

Such Certification is sufficient evidence that the DMO has, among other things, achieved:

- Improved efficiency and professionalization in governance and destination management.

- Developed and enhanced human resources training and professional skills.

- Fostered innovation in the destination.

- Integrated public and private actors in planning and management activities and enhanced a destination's collective vision.

- Incorporated good practices and knowledge towards an ongoing improvement in the destination´s management.

3. UNTWO.QUEST
Certification Renewal

Length: 2 months

At this stage, the certified DMO may start the **Maintenance audit process** (not mandatory) 24 months after being awarded with the UNWTO.QUEST Certification and then 24 months later, start the **UNWTO. QUEST Programme Certification Renewal**

UNWTO.QUEST
Certification
Renewal

Maintenance Auditt €

Renewal Audit €

Certification Renewal €

3.1 Maintenance Audit (not mandatory)

Twenty four months after obtaining the UNWTO.QUEST Certification, the DMO receives a reminder by mail about the maintenance audit. This is optional, not mandatory. The DMO may request additional capacity building activities as needed. Costs will depend on the needs stated by the DMO.

3.2 Renewal Audit

Six months before the 48th month of the Certification term, the DMO receives a mail reminder of the audit to renew the Certification.

The renewal process starts after the four year period comes to term. It lasts approximately eight weeks and includes the following stages:

- Submission of updated data online to the UNWTO. Themis Foundation (two weeks). After the upload is finished, the DMO must confirm the wish to submit

the information with the ¨send¨ option. Thereafter the information may not be modified, nor will additional information sent by the DMO be accepted.

- Certification renewal online training (two weeks)

- Audit (three to seven days). It is aimed to verify implementation of the UNWTO.QUEST Programme and the existence of documental evidences.

- Corresponding payment of costs which might be involved.

The audit implies:

A. Designation of the UNWTO.QUEST auditor

The UNWTO.Themis Foundation designates a UNWTO.QUEST auditor and forwards to him/her documents submitted by the DMO, that will allow for detailed knowledge of the DMO's features and to prepare an audit plan.

B. Onsite audit coordination

The UNWTO.Themis Foundation informs the DMO of the tasks to be performed by the UNWTO.QUEST auditor, coordinates the date for the audit and sends the DMO tasks to be conducted:

- Name of the UNWTO.QUEST auditor.

- Audit goals and scope.

- Definition of time to be spent in each verification or evidence review.

- Definition of the issues and tasks to be done according with the DMO's areas or processes.

- Scheduled date to start and to complete each task from exploration to finalization.

C. Audit execution

The onsite audit lasts between three to seven days and its goal is to verify the correct implementation of the UNWTO.QUEST Programme through a visual check, document verification and interviews.

The following actions are performed during the audit process:

- Opening meeting, where the audit plan is confirmed and a brief summary of activities to be carried out is provided.

- Interview with the policy-technical responsible person and other leaders.

- Observation of operation and working environment.

- Gather, review and verify registries and documents as established by the general audit plan.

- Visits to information centers, completion of at least one tour, contact and interaction with local population, among other possible activities to obtain detailed knowledge of the destination.

- Identify recommendations, findings and improvement opportunities.

- Closing meeting, to present conclusions from the DMO's audit.

D. Audit report

Upon completion of the audit, the UNWTO.QUEST auditor prepares an audit report with the outcome and conclusions, stating the level of compliance with the UNWTO.QUEST Programme standards and criteria. For that purpose the UNWTO.QUEST Auditor has two weeks.

The report shall provide a complete, clear and precise register of the audit, including or making reference to the following:

- Identification of the DMO.

- Identification of the DMO policy-technical responsible person.

- Destination information.

- Goals and scope of the audit, mainly identifying units inside the organization and processes audited during the audit.

- The audit plan, including dates and places or areas where the audit activities were conducted.

- Identification of the designated UNWTO.QUEST auditor.

- Audit findings.

- Conclusions and recommendations from the audit.

- Standards and assessment criteria according to their weight and quantification.

- Areas not covered during the audit process.

The UNWTO.Themis Foundation forwards the UNWTO.QUEST auditor's report to the UNWTO.QUEST Advisory Board for its review and validation, in a term no longer than four weeks.

The results from the audit may be:

- **UNWTO.QUEST Certification Renewal:** after validation of the audit report, the DMO receives a notification confirming renewal of the UNWTO.QUEST Certification. The UNWTO.QUEST Advisory Board recommends that the UNWTO Secretariat start the Certification renewal process for the DMO.

- **Termination of UNWTO.QUEST Certification:** if the audit is not approved, the result of the audit, that the DMO will not be able to maintain Certification, is officially communicated to the DMO. However, an improvement plan will be offered and a year after that, the DMO may apply again for an audit (Phase 3) or may start the process from Phase 2.

3.3 Certification Renewal

If the DMO complies with the UNWTO.QUEST Programme standards and criteria, a new **"UNWTO.QUEST Certified DMO"** Certification valid for four years will be issued with the possibility of Certification renewal.

To fulfill all stages in Phase 4, the DMO shall make the corresponding payment.
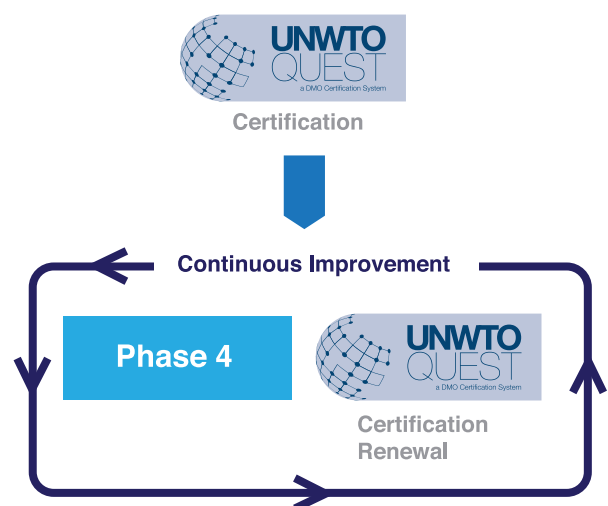
4. Evaluation criteria

The following section provides an outline of the basic criteria and indicators to be used to evaluate and certify Destination Management Organizations based on each axis of the Programme.

4.1 DMO Key Performance Areas

The following three axes were identified as key performance areas in all destination management organizations:

- **Strategic Leadership** in destination management, that is, harnessing stakeholder efforts and energy towards a collective vision, mapping a strategy for achieving the vision, communicating and advocating the advantages and principles of effective tourism management, promoting public-private partnerships, etc.

Management of a tourism destination requires the DMO's presence and leadership, providing the principles, values and strategic vision that will guide the whole process. In this context, it is imperative for the DMO to guarantee a sustainable management of the destination, under an environmental, social and economic approach, responsible with its surroundings.

Leadership also entails setting forth short term and long term policy bases for the decision making process in tourism, and for facing any possible challenges and crisis situations that may arise. For this reason, it is essential to manage and analyze statistics and trends of the tourism sector to foresee events and therefore be able to act promptly and responsibly towards them.

Another important strategic leadership challenge facing DMOs is coordinating and promoting synergy among the sector stakeholders in pursuit of public-private partnerships and a favorable future scenario.

To undertake the leadership role of a tourism destination also requires focusing on the local community, making sure of their inclusion in participative processes, in order to assure a mutually beneficial relationship and the promotion of a tourism culture in the destination.

The DMO shall lead the following issues:

o Coordination

o Policy

o Values

o Vision

- **Effective Execution** of relevant destination management tasks, as well as clarity on the DMO's roles in relation to other tourism organizations and the execution of the DMO's agreed roles, which may include destination marketing, destination brand custodianship, product and entrepreneurism enhancement, investment promotion, visitor services, quality monitoring, human resources development, etc.

Once the policy lines to develop the tourism destination are established, the DMO advances in the execution of the tasks under its realm, according to the official mandate.

The DMO's effective execution encompasses knowing and leading the DMO's duties and roles and having the appropriate and necessary organizational structure to be able to perform them. It is also important to direct such execution through a strategic plan, which may provide the framework and strategic vision, as well as a number of specific operational plans that may systematize actions and available resources for each management area. DMO duties, among others are:

o Tourism sector regulation;

o Destination marketing;

o Product and appropriate tourism experience development;

o Fostering innovation and entrepreneurism;

o Investment promotion;

o Visitor services and assistance;

o Tourism quality assurance across the chain value;

o Human resources development, among others.

- **Efficient Governance** of the destination management system includes providing awareness and guidance for the industry on quality and excellence, promoting sustainable and ethical tourism, and efficient and transparent corporate governance (e.g. financial, administrative and HR practices), a speedy/flexible execution, performance monitoring, evaluation, management, etc.

Being tourism a social phenomenon in continuous growth, governance has begun to emerge as a relevant and referential issue in the field.

Governance in tourism has two specific dimensions:

o **Directive capacity of government**, determined by **coordination and collaboration** as well as by the participation of networks of stakeholders.

o **Directive effectiveness**, determined by institutional skills and resources that support the ways in which processes are conducted to define goals and search for solutions and opportunities for relevant stakeholders, and by the provision of tools and means for their joint execution.

Collaboration Among stakeholders´ network	Institutional Skills
Directive Action	**Effective Direction**
Coordination of stakeholders` network	Institutional Resources

Leadership and management of a tourism destination require effective financial, administrative, and human resources and transparent governance by the DMO. The tourism industry's current context and dynamics also require a prompt and flexible execution, management monitoring and assessment systems.

An efficient governance in tourism will entail considering locally and internationally accepted governance principles and acting based on its tasks and mandates. The DMO will also be responsible for the efficient and effective attainment of (financial, human, technical, among other) available resources.

4.2 Structure of Evaluation Elements

The following self-explanatory diagram shows the evaluation system and its elements:

1 Key Performance Areas of DMOs

Strategic Leadership	Effective Execution	Efficient Governance

2 Success Criteria for each key performance area

What must DMOs do well to be successful in each of these areas?

3 Success Indicators for each criteria

What should be measured to rate success in each criteria?

4.3 Scoring System

The Programme is divided into three major areas: **Leadership, Execution and Governance** of the DMO. Each of these areas has **Success Criteria, Success Indicators and Support Documents**.

Support Documents/Proofs may be Mandatory or Desirable.

Evidence is considered, specifically, at two levels:

a. Mandatory evidences which are considered of utmost importance, taking into account the DMO's specific mandate.

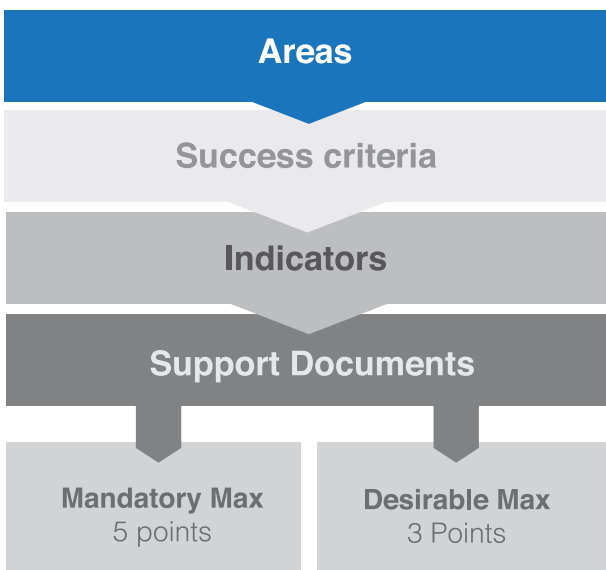b. Evidence considered desirable, and representing good practice.

Evidence should include:

- Internal official documentation.

- Multimedia material (videos, pictures).

- Electronic or printed press reports.

- Comments on interviews between auditors and relevant stakeholders.

- Any other accredited source.

Mandatory elements have a maximum score of 5, while desirable have a maximum score of 3. Based on the level of compliance of each support/proof document, the DMO or the auditor must determine a score range between three scales: High, Moderate, Limited or Not Applicable.

Level of compliance	Mandatory	Desirable
Not Applicable	0	0
Limited	1	1
Moderate	3	2
High	5	3

An explanatory diagram is shown below:

Areas
Success criteria
Indicators
Support Documents

Mandatory Max 5 points	Desirable Max 3 Points

The DMO or the auditor, based on the corresponding phase, will determine the score that corresponds to each indicator. Upon completion of the self-assessment, pre-audit and/or audit, the total score of each area will be added.

Likewise, cases in which it is stated that a success indicator is not applicable to the DMO, should be analyzed. The following table identifies the level of compliance for each score level:

Level of compliance	
Not Applicable	The indicator is not applicable to the audited DMO. Subtracts 3 to 5 points from the highest scoring criteria
Limited	The DMO understands the criteria's concept but has not implemented, made and/or documented any action
Moderate	The DMO has registries and documentation that prove a partial implementation of the indicator
High	The DMO has registries and documentation that prove complete development and implementation of the indicator

The highest score for each of the three performing areas and for the whole UNWTO.QUEST are as follows:

Area / Axis	Highest Score
Strategic Leadership	169
Effective Execution	241
Efficient Governance	154
Total Highest Score	564

5. **UNWTO.QUEST**
Programme implementation and Certification costs

The cost of the Online Self-Assessment for the UNWTO.QUEST Programme Certification process for Phase 1 is the same for all DMOs.

Other costs may vary considering the DMO´s size and country of origin. Costs related to additional training or capacity building activities that may be requested by the DMO (Phase 2 and 4), will represent any additional value to be determined as required by the DMO.

With respect to the size of the organization, costs are determined considering the number of technicians in the DMO´s staff as follows:

• Up to 10

• Between 11 and 30

• 31 or more

With respect to the country of origin, the classification of countries of the United Nations Programme for Development (UNPD) is taken as a reference, according with the Human Development Index (HDI)[1], being:

• Very high human development (VHHD) and High human development (HHD)

• Medium human development (MHD)

• Low human development (LHD)

Based on the consideration that the DMO will implement the whole Programme or some Phases, the UNWTO.Themis Foundation offers an estimated cost for each stage including the corresponding services.

Thus, the cost structure of the UNWTO.QUEST Programme for each phase, is as follows:

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1. United Nations Program for Development (UNPD) (2014). http://www.undp.org

01

Initial Self-Assessment

Phase 1 presents two moments of payment:

1. When the DMO desires to enter the Self-Assessment phase (section 2.1.2 of this Handbook).

Fixed cost is the same for any type of DMO, at € 500.

2. When the DMO requests a Pre-Audit (Section 2.1.3).

DMO Staff and Management / UNDP Index	0-10	11-30	31+
HHD/VHHD	6,600 €	7,260 €	7,920 €
MHD	6,000 €	6,600 €	7,200 €
LHD	5,400 €	5,940 €	6,480 €

Services included in payment of costs involved in Phase 1 include:

● Verification and analysis of the DMO's technical and legal documentation, submitted during the registration process.

● Possibility of completing a self-assessment of the DMO according to the latest UNWTO criteria and indicators.

● Completion of a pre-audit of the DMO by an international auditor with indicators and criteria from the three DMO work areas.

● Report by the UNWTO.QUEST Auditor: results from the pre-audit identifying gaps and improvement opportunities to meet the Programme standards and criteria.

02

Improvement Process

Phase 2 presents one moment of payment:

1. When the DMO decides to start Phase 2 with the Improvement Plan (Section2.2.1) and its corresponding processes.

Diverse options of time schedules are provided below, based on results from the pre-audit considering training needs required by the DMO.

DMO Staff and Management / UNDP Index	20h.	40h.	80h.	120h.
HHD/VHHD	3,300€	6,600€	13,200€	19,800€
MHD	3,000€	6,000€	12,000€	18,000€
LHD	2,700€	5,400€	10,800€	16,200€

Services included in payment of Phase 2 costs, encompass:

● A working timeline and budgetary plan for the DMO.

● Stages of online and/or onsite training.Other online or onsite capacity building activities.

● Training material, translated into one of the UNWTO official languages.

● Access to UNWTO E-Library.

● Possibility of updating the self-assessment form and sending the most recent documentation to the UNWTO.Themis Foundation for the audit.

- Note -
When considered necessary, the DMO may request in situ training and capacity building upon payment of additional costs.

03

UNWTO.QUEST Audit and Certification

Phase 3 presents one moment of payment:

1. When the DMO requests the Audit. (Section 2.3.1).

DMO Staff and Management / UNDP Index	0-10	11-30	31+
HHD/VHHD	7,700 €	8,470 €	9,240 €
MHD	7,000 €	7,700 €	8,400 €
LHD	6,300 €	6,930 €	7,560 €

Services included in payment of Phase 2 costs, encompass:

● DMO Audit.

● Audit report with DMO assessment results validated by the UNWTO.QUEST Advisory Board.

● UNWTO.QUEST Certification for those DMOS who have obtained a score of 70% or higher out of the maximum number of points possible according to the criteria and standards of the UNWTO.QUEST Programme.

- Note -

Values are shown in euros (€)

Costs do not include the following items:

- Logistic costs (international and/or national transportation, lodging, and daily subsistence allowance of UNWTO.THEMIS Foundation experts during the process of implementation and Certification, technical visits and other internal logistic costs).

- Training material translated to non-official UNWTO languages.

- Printed training material for audits and workshops.

5. Annex

Annex I: UNWTO.QUEST Programme Registration Form

Welcome to the Registration Form of the UNWTO.QUEST certification!

We would appreciate if you could fill out the form, especially mandatory fields (*) and attach all required documents. In case you do not have the required documentation at the time of filling out this form, you can send it later.

Thank you very much!

A. INSTITUTION DATA

Name of the institution *

Year of establishment *

Destination represented by the institution *

Type of institution *

- Ministry
- Department
- Public company
- Private entity
- Mixed entity
- Other (please specify/indicate)

Total number of employees *

Approximate budget in USD *

- Below $ 100,000
- Between 100,000 and 1 million USD
- Between 1 million and 10 million USD
- Above 10 million USD

Annex II: Model Letter of Support by the National Tourism Authority (NTA)

_____^v

UNWTO.QUEST CERTIFICATION

Letter of Support by the National Tourism Authority

World Tourism Organization,

Acting in my capacity as _____ⁱ of the _____ⁱⁱ, I hereby provide official support for the candidacy of the Destination Management Organization_____ⁱⁱⁱ to participate in the UNWTO.QUEST program with a three axis structure: strategic leadership, effective execution and efficient governance, with the aim to obtain the UNWTO.QUEST Certification, promoted and held by the World Tourism Organization and the UNWTO.Themis Foundation.

In recognition thereof, I sign in _____^{iv} on _____ 20__.

Signature _____

Seal _____

ⁱ Provide name of Position of the National Tourism Authority official
ⁱⁱ Provide name of the National Tourism Authority
ⁱⁱⁱ Indicate the name of the DMO
^{iv} Indicate city and country
^v Insert National Tourism Authority letterhead and logo

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), a United Nations specialized agency, is the leading international organization with the decisive and central role in promoting the development of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism. It serves as a global forum for tourism policy issues and a practical source of tourism know-how. Its membership includes 158 countries, 6 territories, 2 permanent observers and over 500 Affiliate Members.
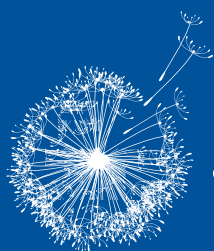
2017
INTERNATIONAL YEAR
OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM
FOR DEVELOPMENT

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