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RESPONSIBLE TOURISM INSTITUTE

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Stakeholder and Expert Participation and Consultation Procedure

Document Control

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1. Purpose and Scope

This procedure establishes how the Responsible Tourism Institute (RTI), in its capacity as owner of the Biosphere Scheme, incorporates stakeholder participation into the processes for the development, review or modification of the requirements, rules and other documents that form part of the Scheme.

The procedure applies to the development, review or modification of the Biosphere Requirements and, where relevant due to the nature or scope of the changes, to the rules and other elements that form part of the Scheme.

2. Responsibility of the Scheme Owner

The Responsible Tourism Institute (RTI), as owner of the Biosphere Scheme, is responsible for its development, maintenance and review, as well as for establishing and maintaining the requirements, rules and other elements that form part of it.

In exercising this responsibility, RTI incorporates the participation of experts and relevant stakeholders in the development and review of the Scheme, in accordance with the scope established in this procedure.

3. Identification of Stakeholders and Experts

RTI identifies the relevant interests to be considered in the development and review of the Biosphere Scheme, in order to incorporate the relevant perspectives and knowledge into its development and evolution.

For these purposes, the following interests are considered:

- a) **Entities subject to assessment and certification.** Represents the perspective of companies, destinations and other entities to which the requirements and rules of the Scheme apply or may apply.
- b) **Tourism destination management and governance.** Represents the perspective of entities responsible for the planning, management, coordination or tourism governance of destinations.
- c) **Scientific and technical knowledge.** Represents the specialised knowledge required to provide a basis for and support the development and review of the requirements and other technical elements of the Scheme.
- d) **Users and consumers of tourism services.** Represents the perspective of individuals who purchase or use the services of entities subject to certification and who may take into account information associated with Biosphere certification.
- e) **Conformity assessment.** Represents knowledge and experience in standardisation, auditing, certification and conformity assessment, particularly in relation to the ability of the Scheme requirements and rules to be assessed objectively and consistently.

4. Representation and Participation of Stakeholders and Experts

4.1 Representation of Interests

For each of the identified interests, RTI identifies the organisations, groups or profiles best suited to provide the corresponding perspective.

The identification of potential representatives takes into account the interest they may represent, their connection with that interest and their ability to contribute knowledge or experience relevant to the development or review of the Scheme.

4.2 Consultation with Experts

RTI identifies and consults experts where the nature or specialised nature of the subject under development or review requires specific knowledge.

Experts are identified on the basis of their knowledge, experience or technical competence in the subject matter of the consultation.

4.3 Participation Mechanisms

Participation takes place through meetings, consultations, review of proposals or documents, requests for comments or other mechanisms appropriate to the nature and scope of the matter under development or review.

RTI provides the stakeholders and experts consulted with the necessary information on the subject matter of the consultation and the means to submit their contributions.

5. Development, Review and Modification of the Scheme

5.1 Initiation of the Process

The development of new elements of the Scheme or the review or modification of existing elements is formally initiated by RTI when a need justifying the initiation of the process is identified.

This need may arise, among other factors, from developments in technical and scientific knowledge, regulatory changes, information arising from the application of the Scheme, contributions received from stakeholders or experts, or other circumstances relevant to its maintenance and evolution.

5.2 Preparation of the Proposal

RTI prepares an initial proposal for development, review or modification, defining its purpose and scope and considering the relevant information according to the subject matter of the process.

In preparing the proposal, account is taken of the background and rationale that gave rise to the process, as well as any relevant technical, scientific or regulatory information or information arising from the application of the Scheme.

5.3 Participation and Consultation

Once the initial proposal has been prepared, RTI determines, in accordance with Sections 3 and 4, the relevant interests and expertise according to the subject matter of the process and carries out the corresponding consultations with their representatives and experts.

The contributions received are incorporated into the process for analysis and consideration in accordance with the following section.

5.4 Consideration of Contributions

RTI analyses the contributions received and takes them into account in preparing the resulting proposal.

Where, as a result of this analysis, changes are introduced which, due to their nature or scope, require further consultation, RTI carries out a new consultation with the relevant stakeholders or experts.

5.5 Approval

Once the development, review or modification process has been completed, the resulting proposal is submitted for approval in accordance with the responsibilities established by RTI.

6. Publication and Communication of Changes

Once approved, the new elements or resulting modifications are incorporated into the current documentation of the Biosphere Scheme.

RTI publishes or communicates the changes, as appropriate, to stakeholders and other relevant recipients.

7. Records and Traceability

RTI maintains records of the Scheme development, review or modification processes in order to preserve the traceability of the participation and consultation carried out.

These records include, as appropriate, the stakeholders and experts consulted, the contributions received and how they were taken into account in the process.