

Mission Programs

Center for Sustainable Destinations

About Geotourism Stewardship Councils

A Geotourism Stewardship Council is a nongovernmental or public/private entity. A Council may be national, regional, or local. It may go by any name, or coalesce around an existing group, but has the characteristics described below.

The Council's task is to oversee and advise on the four elements of a geotourism strategy:

- identifying,
- sustaining,
- developing, and
- marketing the geotourism assets of a place.

Council advice and activity should be in keeping with the interests of the communities, with good conservation and preservation practices, and with responsible economic development. The Council encourages appropriate tourism in appropriate places, and discourages inappropriate tourism in unsuitable places. The Council should subscribe to the principles embodied in the Geotourism Charter and in the geotourism definition:

*Tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place —
its environment, heritage, aesthetics, culture, and the well-being of its residents.*

Council activities are intended not only to promote geotourism assets to tourists but also to be a catalyst for local communities—to help them discover their own distinctive tourism assets and provide economic benefits and an incentive for protecting them. The Council should monitor sustainability and ensure that tourist capacity is appropriately managed, while still encouraging maximum benefit from visitor (local spending, etc.) Catalyst activities might include:

- Hosting an annual festival to build local pride and awareness, while garnishing tourism spending in the destination,
- Creating a Geotourism MapGuide with National Geographic or a local university, and extensive local participation,
- Reviewing and providing recommendations on tourism developments and proposals,
- Serving as ongoing gatekeeper and clearinghouse for community-generated geotourism information that is then issued electronically, via the Internet and handheld touring devices.

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Council members should represent the following interests:

- historic preservation
- natural conservation
- communities
- indigenous peoples and other cultural minorities
- traditional arts (craft, music, dance, theater, storytelling, reenactments, etc.)
- destination management and marketing organizations
- farm/restaurant programs, agritourism, Slow Food
- beautification programs (signage, architecture, landscape concerns)
- other stakeholder groups emblematic of the locale
- government (tourism, planning, and environment, for example)
- private businesses compatible with geotourism

Local collaborators and advisors potentially include:

- Geotourism innovators—guides, innkeepers, restauranteurs, tour operators, etc.
- Local arts, craft co-ops, music groups, or other heritage groups
- Agricultural cooperatives, historic preservation groups, conservation organizations (including ecotourism leaders)
- Community leaders or individuals with deep knowledge of the area’s heritage, especially older individuals
- Church groups, school associations, universities, volunteer/charity organizations
- Local geographical or historical author who covers the region
- Historians, naturalists, librarians
- Local minority or heritage groups and experts
- Specialists in locally based food and drink

Proactive people from this list may also be appropriate members for the Council.

Procedures: There is no formal, prescribed method for choosing council members and sustainable funding of council activities. These vary considerably from one place to another, and each place must tailor an approach appropriate to local circumstances. Generally, to ensure continuity, government should not control the Council, although it should have a significant role.

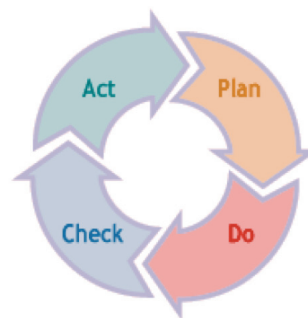
Operationally, the Council can work in a continual cycle:

Plan—Planning, including identifying stewardship aspects and establishing goals

Do—Implementing, including training and information dissemination

Check—Monitoring and progress reviews

Act—Taking corrective action as indicated



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