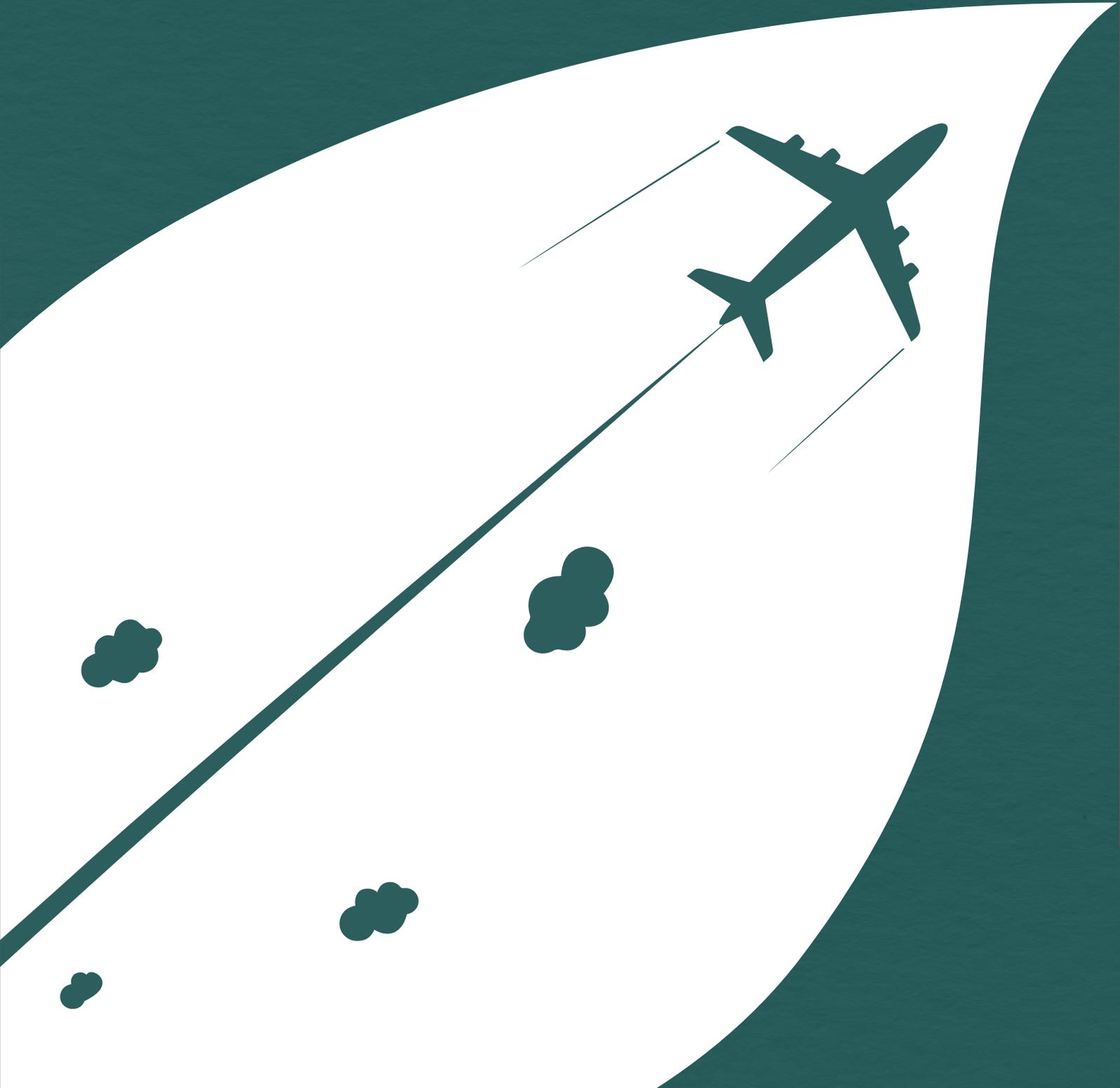




TRAVEL AGENTS & TOUR OPERATORS

SUSTAINABILITY GUIDELINES

PRACTICAL GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTING SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES



FOREWORD

The guidelines have been developed to provide best practice recommendations for sustainability initiatives in key sustainability areas. These are recommendations and the sector is responsible for assessing the feasibility of adopting each initiative and making progress to develop their individual sustainability strategy and policy.



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1. Introduction

The world is changing, and so are the needs of tourists and travellers. Sustainability has become a significant concern for many. According to the Booking.com Sustainable Travel Report 2022¹, 71% of global travellers want to travel more sustainably. In addition, the United Nations World Tourism Organisation’s (UNWTO) Vision for 2030 Agenda firmly positions the need for sustainable tourism. Harnessing tourism’s contribution to sustainability will be instrumental in fulfilling this vision.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has embraced the global trend of sustainability. Key examples include: the UAE Strategy for Domestic Tourism, the UAE Circular Economy Policy and the UAE Net Zero 2050 initiative, as shown in Figure 1. There are many national and local sustainability strategies and initiatives driving the change towards countries sustainable development.



World

UN World Tourism Organization Vision - 2030 Agenda



UN World Tourism Organisation aligned to 17 SDGs.

¹ Booking.com, “Sustainable Travel Report”, 2022 (www.globalnews.booking.com)

Some of those are:



Good Health and well-being



Quality Education



Affordable clean energy



Climate Action



Partnerships for the goals

1.8 B

of average annual growth of international tourist arrivals is expected in Middle East until 2030

5%

of average annual growth of international tourist arrivals is expected in Middle East until 2030

2020

tourist arrivals decreased by 74% while market recovered by 120% in 2021



United Arab Emirates



UAE Net Zero Initiative

Launched in 2020 with an aim to unify local and federal efforts to harness the UAE's tourism resources:
 - Building capabilities, developing policies, plan and programme based partnerships.



UAE Circular Economy Policy

2021: UAE framework for determining the approach to achieving sustainable governance: Promotion of environmental, adoption of clean methods and reduction of environmental stress.



UAE Strategy for Domestic Tourism

2021: UAE sector entities to update their sustainability approach: Investment AED600 Billion in clean and renewable energy sources expected by 2050.

Figure 1: World and UAE trends towards sustainability and eco-tourism

2. Sustainability in the Abu Dhabi Tourism Industry

As the UAE moves towards sustainability, it is imperative to establish and promote Abu Dhabi's leading position as a global destination in eco-tourism and sustainable tourism.

As the regulator of the tourism industry, the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi (DCT Abu Dhabi) is committed to providing a sustainable and responsible tourism industry which is tailored to the regional climate, culture, and available resources. The tourism industry is instrumental in supporting the evolution of Abu Dhabi into a world-class destination.

DCT Abu Dhabi has established a comprehensive sustainability framework for the tourism industry (Figure 2) based on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This is a long-term and forward-looking framework aiming to manage the tourism industry's economic, social, and environmental impacts. It is built upon six destination principles for sustainable development. These have formed the basis for the development of the Sustainable Tourism Guidelines.



Sustainability Framework & Implementation Plan Abu Dhabi Tourism Sector

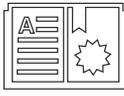
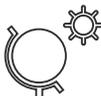
Principle	Initiative		
 Transparent Destination	 Capacity Building	 Sustainable Tourism Award	
 Sustainable Destination	 Sector Commitment	 Sustainable Guidelines	 Event Impact Management
 Unique Destination	 Eco-tourism Marketing		 Local Experience App
 Safe, Accessible Destination	 Sustainable Guidelines	 Sector Commitment	 Event Impact Management
 Inclusive Destination	 Stakeholder Engagement		 Marketing for residents
 Adaptive, Diverse Destination	 Low-Season Marketing		 Climate Change Assessment

Figure 2: DCT sustainability framework

As a result, **the Travel Agents and Tour Operators' Sustainability Guidelines** have been developed, which aim to enhance knowledge and encourage the implementation of sustainability practices and procedures into the day-to-day operational activities across the value chain. The guidelines are the foundation that will shape the future of the tourism industry for travel agents and tour operators sector and establish Abu Dhabi as a leader in sustainable tourism. The guidelines are aligned to the key sustainability areas that are related to the tourism industry.

3. Context and Objectives

The guidelines have been developed to help the sector players in defining their sustainability roadmaps. It outlines initiatives and best practices for the Travel Agents, Guides and Tours and Rental Services (collectively referred to as “TA & TO” henceforth) and equips them with a goal-based sustainability approach.

Table 1 Definitions

Travel Agencies	These operators are located in the destination itself and offer organised trips, holidays packages and other tourism products. These operators do not lead the trips but have partnerships with external tour operators to allow visitors to book and experience relevant packages and services.
Rental Services	These operators offer rental cars, boats, water recreational equipment (e.g., kayaks, jet skis) and more. They can facilitate hourly rental of equipment or rental for the full duration of the visitor’s trip.
Guides & Tours	These operators employ guides and run tours and visits in and around the destination. The tours offered can range from short day trips to fully organized programs for the duration of the visitor’s stay in the destination.

As per the 2022 Sustainable Travel report², 81% of global travellers confirm that sustainable travel is important to them while 33% want to have more locally relevant experiences. Keeping in tune with these global perceptions of sustainability, it is recommended that TA & TO use these guidelines to benefit from successful business practices and contribute to Abu Dhabi’s vision of a sustainable tourist destination.

The guidelines are aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) criteria, and other leading sector initiatives to provide TA & TO of Abu Dhabi a roadmap towards achieving a more sustainable and inclusive business while providing the tourists with an enriching local and authentic Abu Dhabi experience.

The **TA & TO Sustainability Guidelines** are a non-binding set of recommendations and initiatives aiming to improve responsible tourism development. To develop this document, 18 different guidelines from global leaders were assessed and benchmarked, including GSTC Criteria, Green Key, Green Globe, and UNWTO. Standards from Dubai Sustainable Tourism were also studied for more understanding on the Middle East region. These guidelines and standards were studied to understand the sustainability requirements in global tourism industry and evaluate gaps and opportunities of sustainability in the Abu Dhabi Tourism industry. A survey with different players, including Travel Agencies and Tour Operators, Cultural and Heritage Sites, Food and Beverage Establishments, Events, Leisure and Entertainment Attractions and Hotel Establishments, was conducted in January 2022 by DCT to understand the current sustainability practice implemented within their operations as a baseline. These studies helped in understanding the gaps and opportunities of how these players can facilitate sustainability practices across Abu Dhabi as tourism destination.

² Booking.com, “Sustainable Travel Report “. 2022 (www.globalnews.booking.com)

To develop the Sustainability Guidelines, the following key steps were undertaken to understand the current state of sustainability the tourism industry in Abu Dhabi. This is shown in Figure 3.

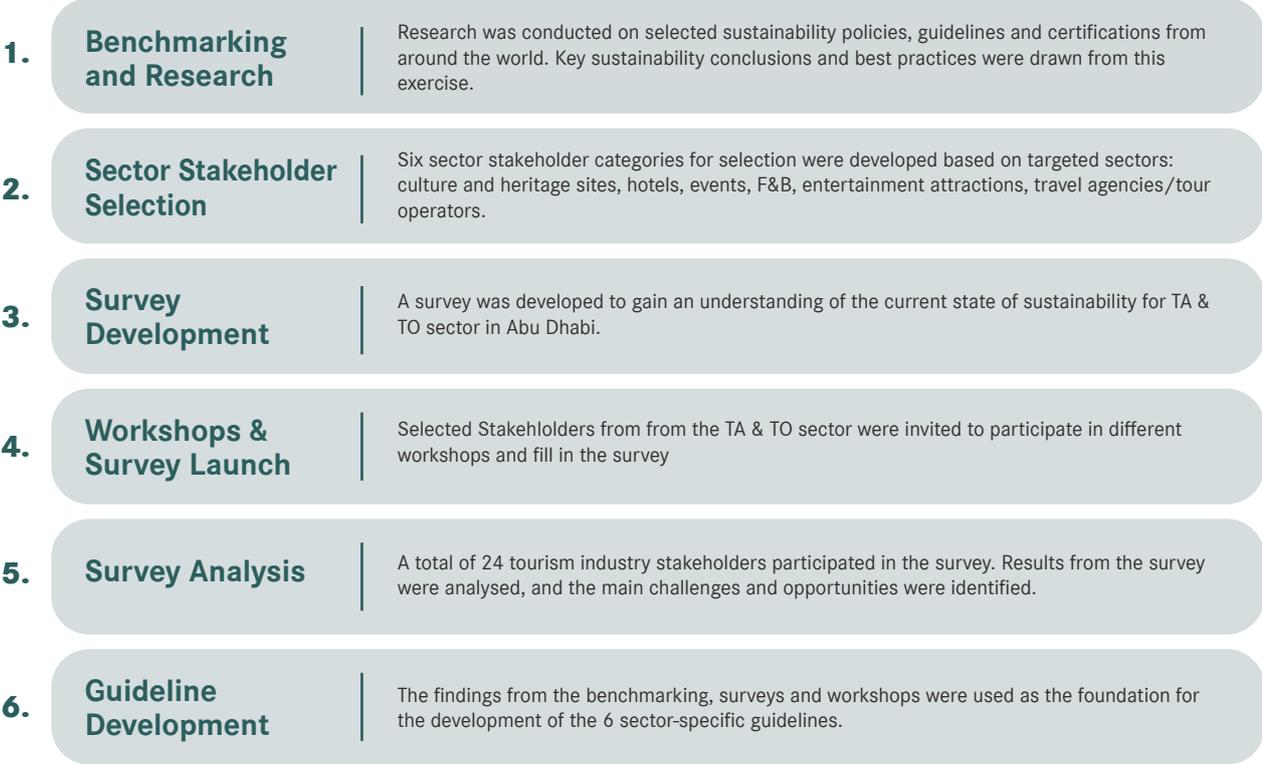


Figure 3: Guideline development process

Key sustainability elements, challenges and opportunities related to sustainable growth and development were identified through the process of surveying selected TA & TO. The survey was structured around the key findings from the benchmarking exercise, whereby an assortment of guidelines were benchmarked against the following criteria, including voluntary versus mandatory guidelines, international and national guidelines, other applicable guidelines and certification schemes and key sustainability elements (e.g., energy management, water management, carbon emissions etc.).

The survey results show that 100% of the surveyed TA & TO in Abu Dhabi consider sustainability to be important. (Figure 4).



Figure 4: Key Survey Findings

Based on the data from the survey conducted for the Events sector, the results indicate that there is a crucial need for solutions to support the establishments in their journey towards sustainability. The most important focus areas identified were environmental risk management, controlling carbon emissions, protecting and preserving biodiversity, prioritising visitor and employee health and safety, adopting sustainable procurement, and enhancing energy, water, and waste management.

The results highlight the challenges to implementing sustainable practices, related to sustainability awareness and expertise, sustainability monitoring, high utility bills, access to sustainable goods, and guest sustainability awareness. These findings can be considered as baseline aspects and initiatives that currently exist within the sector, which emphasises the need for the sector to improve the sustainability performance of the tourism industry.

The focus areas, challenges, and opportunities gathered from responses aided the development of the guideline (Figure 5). The aim of the guideline is to encourage Event Organisers and Venues to be more self-sustainable and emerge as a pioneer in Abu Dhabi’s journey to become a sustainable destination.

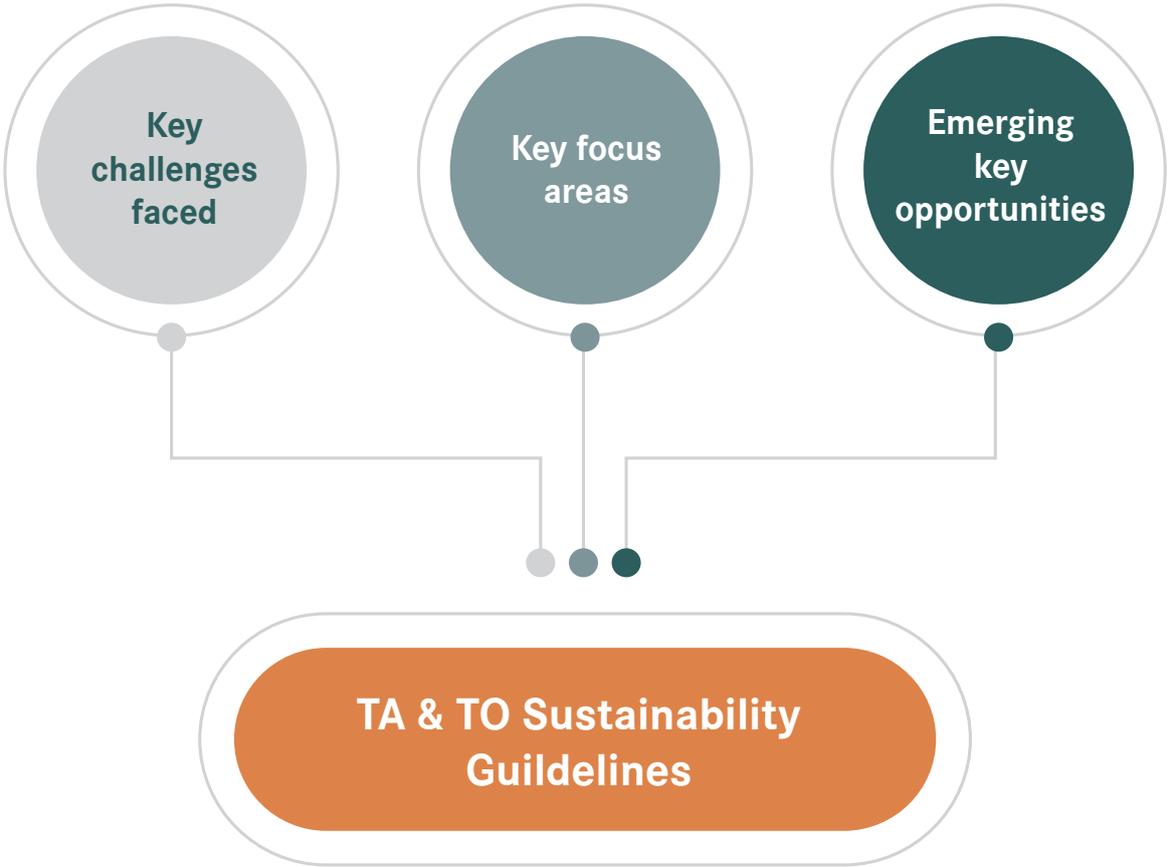


Figure 5: Survey Analysis

4. How to use this guideline?

This section of the guidelines will provide clear steps on how to ensure a successful implementation of the sustainability strategy through the day-to-day operations to contribute towards sustainable development. A summary of the steps is presented in Figure 6, and it is recommended to follow steps 1-5 annually to ensure that the sustainability strategy remains relevant, robust, and aligned with the TA & TO's current sustainability progress.

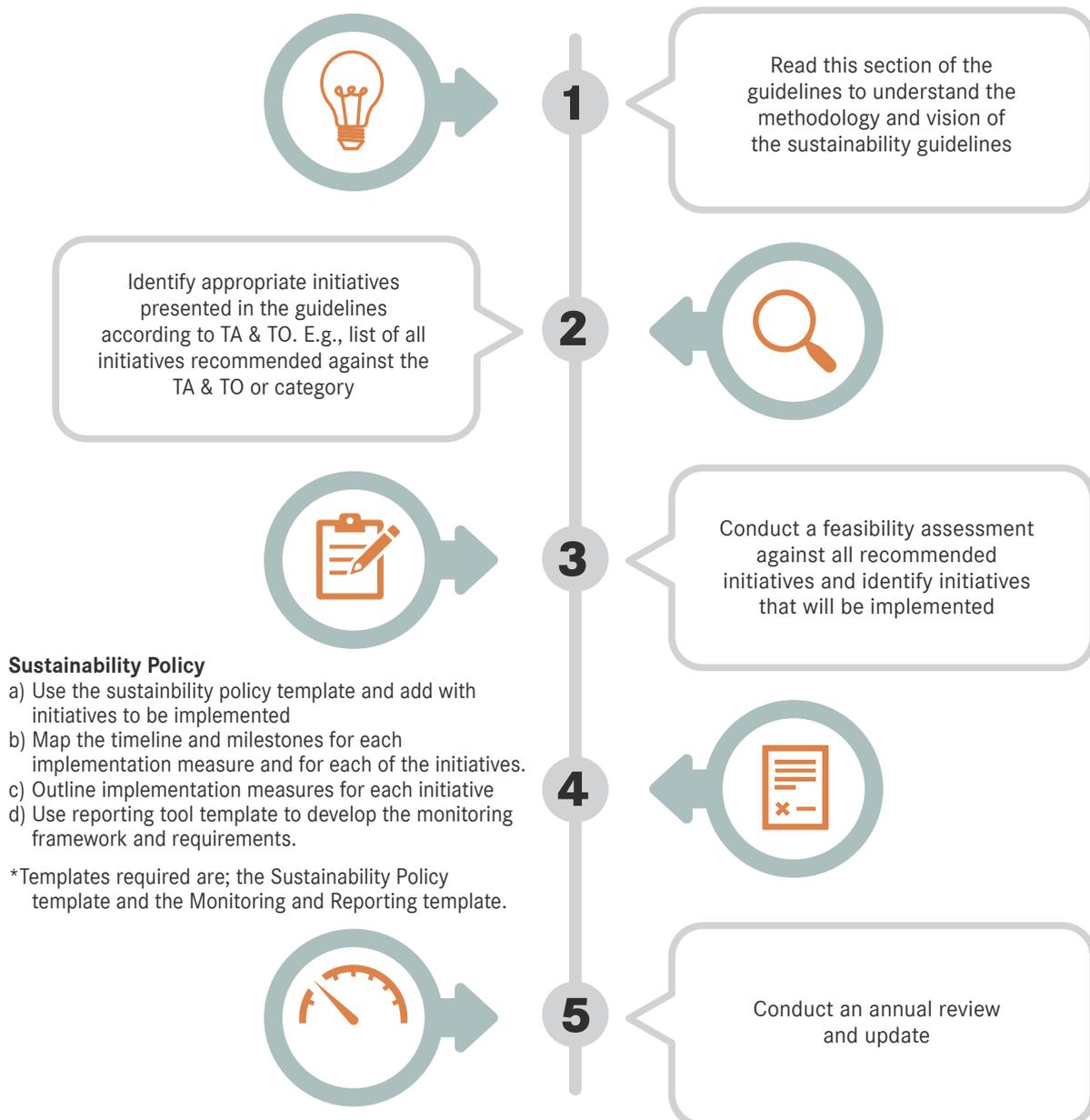


Figure 6: Steps to use the guideline

5. Sustainability Categories and Key Initiatives

There are five different sustainability categories, Energy and Environment, Sustainable and Local Procurement, Social and Culture, People, and Resilience and Risk Management, which are defined in Table 2.

Table 2: Five Sustainability Categories

Sustainability Category	Definition
A. Energy and Environment	Sustainable energy and environment management initiatives to provide solution for sustainable energy, water and waste management, environment protection and carbon management.
B. Sustainable and Local Procurement	Sustainable procurement initiatives that give preference to local and environmentally friendly goods.
C. Social and Culture	Initiatives to promote Social and Cultural heritage of Abu Dhabi through tourism industry.
D. People	Initiatives focussing on empowerment of employees in the tourism industry.
E. Resilience and Risk Management	Initiatives focussed on identifying and managing the risks associated with the TA & TO in the tourism industry.

Key initiatives under each sustainability category

The key initiatives presented in Figure 7 were comprehensively identified and developed, ensuring alignment with Abu Dhabi’s sustainability pillars and agenda. These guidelines cover holistic sustainability development and specific measures for environmental and social pillars, whilst considering under each applicable category the key vision for Emiratisation, financial stability and growth and governance (including data collection, monitoring, and reporting). Initiatives have been carefully tailored based on the TA & TO classification. This document provides guidance on implementing the suggested initiatives based on the classification and is designed to provide cost-effective solutions that can help induce a positive impact on the overall sustainability performance.



Figure 7 Sustainability initiatives

The following sections will provide further detail on the above-mentioned key sustainability measures and details the opportunities and benefits that result from the implementation of these practices.

6. Estimation and Prioritisation Process



Estimate cost and effort of the initiative

- 1 Prioritise estimated initiatives
Low estimation → high priority for all TA & TO categories
- 2 High estimation → Low priority for all TA & TO categories



✓ Priority 1 ✓ Priority 2

TA & TO

Time	Cost	Travel Agencies	Guides & Tours	Rental Services
LOW	LOW	✓	✓	✓
LOW	MEDIUM	✓	✓	✓
MEDIUM	LOW	✓	✓	✓
LOW	HIGH	✓	✓	✓
HIGH	LOW	✓	✓	✓
MEDIUM	MEDIUM	✓	✓	✓
MEDIUM	HIGH	✓	✓	✓
HIGH	MEDIUM	✓	✓	✓
HIGH	HIGH	✓	✓	✓

Figure 8: Initiative priority mapping for TA & To categories

To determine if an initiative is Priority 1 or Priority 2:

- **Estimation:** Cost and effort of each initiative was estimated as Low, Medium, and High.
- **Prioritization:** Priority matrix was developed based on cumulative score from Estimation stage and based on matrix priorities were assigned for each TA & TO category.

For further understanding on cost and effort estimation of each initiative please refer to **Annex A** provided with this guideline.

The recommended sustainability initiatives are categorised into two categories, “Priority 1” and “Priority 2”. It must be emphasised that the sustainability guidelines are not mandated and aim to present a framework on how the industries can progress on their sustainability journey. The two categories are defined as below:

✓ Priority 1	All TA & TOs identified in orange should aim to target and implement the identified initiatives
✓ Priority 2	Where the TA & TO has been identified in dark green, it is encouraged that the operator investigates the feasibility of implementing the initiative to surpass expectations
✗ Not Applicable	

All TA& TO should aim to target Priority 1 initiatives marked in ✓ for implementation as per their category. Whereas the initiatives marked in ✓ are encouraged to be considered for implementation and assess their feasibility to surpass expectations. To calculate the estimations on time and costs, several assumptions were applied considering the uniqueness of the Abu Dhabi, Al Ain and Al Dhafra regions.

The typical tour operator office space is 500 sqm³. To calculate the benefits, market research was conducted to establish average prices for mid-range operators.

³ Based on AESG Research: Assumptions based on review of floor plans provided in property websites and size of offices presented on google maps.

7 Sustainability Initiatives Prioritisation



A. Energy and Environment.



A.1 Energy Management

How can TA & TO achieve energy and environmental sustainability?

TA&TO role is critical to achieve energy and environmental sustainability due to the nature of their operations and activities. The transport sector carbon emissions amounted to 16% of the country's total emissions.

TA&TO operate across many destinations and taking a step towards a more sustainable path, the impact of their activities and operations will reduce the severe implications of carbon emissions and energy waste on the environment.

Initiatives applicable to TA & TO

Sustainability Initiatives

TA & TO Categories

1. Install efficient lighting solutions.	Travel Agencies	Guides & Tours	Rental Services	
	1.1 Install LED lights depending on the desired brightness level wherever applicable (a 9W LED is equivalent to a 45 W incandescent bulb output).	✓	✓	✓
1.2 Install motion sensor and timers for lighting. For instance, in regularly occupied spaces like office area. install daylight sensors to automatically adjust lighting levels to reflect the daylight levels and use of the space (e.g., if no one is utilising the space the lights will switch off).	✓	✓	✓	
2. Conduct energy efficiency awareness campaign.	Travel Agencies	Guides & Tours	Rental Services	
	2.1 Train staff annually on energy efficiency and how to become more efficient, including office equipment management.	✓	✓	✓
	2.2 Create digital and reusable training materials, such as guidebooks and leaflets, depending on the type of event (e.g., how much energy can be saved by using energy efficient lighting, a list of energy efficient appliances, etc.).	✓	✓	✓
	2.3 Place multi-use or permanent energy usage signage throughout the establishment (e.g., turn off lights by the light switch, switch off computer after usage).	✓	✓	✓
2.4 Utilise digital tools (such as eTEACHER) to increase efficiency in energy management and highlight energy consumption reduction areas.	✓	✓	✓	

3. Enhance cooling efficiency for permanent establishments.	Travel Agencies	Guides & Tours	Rental Services
3.1 Install efficient chillers.	✓	✓	✓
3.2 Install temperature control of central cooling and ventilation.	✓	✓	✓
3.3 Check thermostat temperature regularly to be maintained at 18-23 degrees in regularly occupied spaces.	✓	✓	✓
3.4 Inspect ductwork and windows for leakage bi-annually.	✓	✓	✓
3.5 Install digital management solution that monitors energy consumptions.	✓	✓	✓
4. Purchase efficient appliances and equipment, such as ESMA 5- and 4-star appliances.	Travel Agencies	Guides & Tours	Rental Services
4.1 water cooler.	✓	✓	✓
4.2 AC split units.	✓	✓	✓
4.3 Television.	✓	✓	✓
5. Purchase more efficient appliance in the market, based on their catalogue rating and establishment design specifications.	Travel Agencies	Guides & Tours	Rental Services
5.1 Vacuum cleaners.	✓	✓	✓
5.2 Computers and printers.	✓	✓	✓
6. Invest in renewable energy solutions.	Travel Agencies	Guides & Tours	Rental Services
6.1 Install solar water heaters.	✓	✓	✓
6.2 Install solar PV wherever possible like rooftops and garden area.	✓	✓	✓
6.3 Purchase renewable energy certificates from Emirates Energy and Water Company (EWEC).	✓	✓	✓

[Note: Please refer to Annex A for higher level cost, effort, and responsibilities for each initiative]

[Note: Please refer to Annex B for monitoring KPIs]

* ESMA expands its energy efficiency programme, TA & TO are advised to keep checking the updates for inclusion of more appliances.

Benefits:

- Installing efficient lighting systems including LED bulbs, daylight harvesting systems and motion sensors can save between 2,000 and 4,000 AED per month for an average 500 sqm TA & TO office/agency. (This was done considering four 25 AED 90% efficiency LED bulb combined with motion and daylight sensors that can vary from 20 AED to 70 AED installations in each room)⁴.
- Providing sustainability training aims to achieve energy efficiency, cost saving, improve reputation, and increase awareness.
- Installing cooling systems equipped with efficient chillers, temperature control systems coupled with regular ductwork inspection can result in savings of up to 35%.
- Using ESMA rated appliances can save anywhere between 30% - 75%.
- Solar heaters and Solar PV systems can have a payback period of 5 years post installation. These systems can cover a significant portion of the energy bill, depending on the size of the Solar array installation.
- Purchasing Renewable Energy Certificates can be accomplished to develop the clean energy portfolio. This should be a consideration especially when renewable energy installation is not feasible, or when there are emissions that can be difficult to decarbonise and offset. It should be emphasised that this scheme operates as an auction and price points cannot be disclosed in these guidelines.

⁴ Based on AESG research: data from several online retailers and bulk suppliers to create market average.

Local References:

- Estidama Pearl rating system: Estidama is a building design methodology for constructing and operating sustainable buildings. Under Estidama, energy management is a key factor to obtain the Pearl rating.
- Abu Dhabi Stock Exchange Guidance (ADX): ADX has developed guidance on the adoption of Environment, Social, and Governance (ESG) among its listed companies and investors alike. TA & TO can use the monitoring framework for the initiatives presented in these guidelines as part of ADX sustainability reporting.
- AD Environmental vision 2030: Achieving sustainable energy management will support the sustainable development of Abu Dhabi economy.
- Travel And Tourism Agencies Council (ATTAC): Guides and assists TA & TO in enhancing capabilities and to provide better travel services to the public.

Tips:**ESMA energy efficiency standards:**

As part of the UAE Ministry of Industry and Advanced Technologies, ESMA (Emirates Standardization and Metrology Authority issues the Energy Efficiency Labels for appliances). TA & TO should ensure that all appliances have high ESMA star rating (5 or 4 stars).

The list of the approved appliances can be found here: <https://moiat.gov.ae/en/>

**Clean Energy Certificates:**

Clean Energy Certificates are an innovative programme that allows Abu Dhabi consumers to certify the source of their clean energy usage and empowers them in achieving their sustainability goals. EWEC owns and sells all Clean Energy Certificates for solar and nuclear generated electricity in Abu Dhabi, supporting the UAE's climate change goals as part of the UAE Energy Strategy 2050.

How can I purchase Clean Energy Certificates?

To track and verify clean energy consumption, please contact the EWEC Clean Energy Certificates team at: CleanEnergyCertificates@ewec.ae

Further Reading:

1. OneClick LCA [information](#) and [pricing](#)
2. [eTEACHER](#)



A.2. Water Management System

Developing a water conservation plan and purchasing water-efficient appliances reduces both operating costs and overall environmental impacts. In the UAE, due to its geographical location, it is very important for sector to conserve water wherever possible.

Initiatives applicable to TA & TO

Sustainability Initiatives

TA & TO Categories

1. Ensure regular water systems maintenance and leak prevention inspections, where applicable.	Travel Agencies	Guides & Tours	Rental Services	
	1.1 Inspect pipes, faucets drainage and other water fittings to ensure there's no water leakage, if applicable.	✓	✓	✓
2. Conduct water conservation awareness campaign.	Travel Agencies	Guides & Tours	Rental Services	
	2.1 Train staff on water efficiency and management annually.	✓	✓	✓
	2.2 Create guidebooks, leaflets or booklets on efficient water management either in digital format or by printing eco-friendly paper.	✓	✓	✓
	2.3 Post signage on water conservation with instructions on how to consume less water in bathroom facilities, kitchen area, pantry, etc.	✓	✓	✓
2.4 Use digital tools to calculate the water consumption (e.g., Estidama Water Consumption Calculator).	✓	✓	✓	
3. Install efficient and smart water fittings.	Travel Agencies	Guides & Tours	Rental Services	
	3.1 Install hand basin faucets with flow rate at 1.5-2 l/min or less.	✓	✓	✓
3.2 Install toilet with flush flow rate at 2-4 l/min and bidet flush flow rate at 9.5 l/min or less.	✓	✓	✓	
4. Install water refill stations or portable water dispensers.	Travel Agencies	Guides & Tours	Rental Services	
	4.1 Provide multi-use drinking glasses/bottles. Do not offer single-use options e.g., in the office.	✓	✓	✓
	4.2 Have water filters installed.	✓	✓	✓
	4.3 Provide sustainable water solutions.	✓	✓	✓
4.4 Encourage partnering with restaurants and hotels to offer filtered water to refill bottles.	✓	✓	✓	

[Note: Please refer to Annex A for higher level cost, effort, and responsibilities for each initiative]

[Note: Please refer to Annex B for monitoring KPIs]

* This initiative is applicable only if the property has a pool.

Benefits:

- Regular inspections and monitoring, installation of efficient water fixtures and fittings can lead to 20% savings on water use (This was obtained using efficient/low flow appliances with efficiencies ranging from 10% to 20%)⁵.
- Smart and drip irrigation system can offer savings of around 100 AED for every 1,000 sqm of irrigable land (calculated using sector average irrigation rate of 20 L/sqm, system cost of around 600 AED with an efficiency of up to 60% and the latest (ADDC, 2020) utility price of water).
- Regular inspection reduces risks of scaling, corrosion, contamination and other problems to your business which could rupture pipes, inhibit your water flow, or damage equipment that requires a certain water quality.

UAE and Abu Dhabi Regulations:

- Estidama Pearl rating system: Estidama is a building design methodology for constructing and operating sustainable buildings. Under Estidama, water management is a key factor to obtain the Pearl rating.
- ADX: If TA & TO are listed on the ADX make sure that it follows ESG guidance. They can use the monitoring framework for the initiatives presented in these guidelines as part of ADX sustainability reporting for water management.
- Travel And Tourism Agencies Council (ATTAC): Guides and assists TA & TO in enhancing capabilities and to provide better travel services to the public.

Local References:

- AD Environmental vision 2030: Achieving sustainable water management will support the sustainable development of Abu Dhabi's economy.
- ESMA EESL programme certified products: all water fixtures and water consuming appliances must be approved by ESMA in order to operate them in the UAE.

Further Reading:

1. [Estidama Water Consumption Calculator](#) – follow this link for further information and instructions on how to calculate indoor and outdoor water consumption and how to improve on water consumption.

⁵ Based on AESG's research: Efficient/low flow appliances with efficiencies ranging from %10 to %20.



A.3. Waste Management System

In the era of green economy and green strategies in the UAE, a robust waste management system for the sector would benefit not only the environment but also the sector itself. It is essential for the sector to have a waste management system that focusses on reducing waste, reusing useful materials, and recycling them.

The TA & TO sector must prioritise a robust waste management strategy to tackle the increase in waste generated by their tours and operations and curb the risks to the environment.

Initiatives applicable to TA & TO

Sustainability Initiatives

TA & TO Categories

Sustainability Initiatives		TA & TO Categories		
1.	Start by designing a waste management strategy, and establish a waste disposal hierarchy - reduce, reuse, and recycle (targeting paper, plastic, water).	Travel Agencies	Guides & Tours	Rental Services
	1.1 Encourage reduce, reuse, and recycle practices (targeting paper, plastic, water).	✓	✓	✓
2.	Conduct waste management awareness campaign.	Travel Agencies	Guides & Tours	Rental Services
	2.1 Train staff annually on waste generation reduction and waste disposal focusing on reduction, reusing, recycling and proper disposal through segregation of waste for disposal.	✓	✓	✓
	2.2 Develop training materials (e.g., guidebooks and leaflets on waste management explaining the importance of waste segregation, creative ideas for reusing waste, etc.).	✓	✓	✓
	2.3 Post waste segregation signage on bins for recyclable materials, glass, paper cardboard, cans, plastic, organic etc., placed strategically at areas with high visitor influx.	✓	✓	✓
3.	Manage waste produced during trips.	Travel Agencies	Guides & Tours	Rental Services
	3.1 For trips and tours carry reusable deflectable segregation bins or biodegradable bins (instead of plastic garbage bags for dry (like bottles, paper, plastic) and wet waste (organic waste, leftover food etc), other waste can be segregated after the trip as per the recyclability of the waste.	✓	✓	✗
	3.2 Provide the guest with instructions on how to use the wet and dry bins for waste disposal.	✓	✓	✗
	3.3 Reward guests with prizes for not littering and using the bins correctly.	✓	✓	✓
4.	Reduce and gradually eliminate the use of single use plastic.	Travel Agencies	Guides & Tours	Rental Services
	4.1 Eliminate use of single-use cups at water dispensers, plastic cutlery and food containers (where applicable), instead replace it with firstly multi-use, and if not applicable recyclable or biodegradable ones.	✓	✓	✓
5.	Promote the use of refillable amenities.	Travel Agencies	Guides & Tours	Rental Services
	5.1 Place water refill stations in the area, with multi-use/recyclable cups. This would reduce consumption of packaged drinking water.	✓	✓	✓
	5.2 Place refillable soap dispensers (kitchen/pantry, toilets), sanitiser dispensers (throughout office and regularly occupied spaces), washing up liquid dispensers (kitchen/pantry), so the containers do not need to be replaced after use.	✓	✓	✓
6.	Engage in creative recycling initiatives.	Travel Agencies	Guides & Tours	Rental Services
	6.1 When designing guest common areas, consider using upcycled waste to design interiors (e.g., transforming waste into a decor item or furniture).	✓	✓	✓
	6.2 Develop a Green Cleaning Manual which identifies eco-friendly chemicals for cleaning for hazardous waste management.	✓	✓	✓
	6.3 Co-ordinate with Tadweer on waste recycling and composting initiatives.	✓	✓	✓

[Note: Please refer to Annex A for higher level cost, effort, and responsibilities for each initiative]

[Note: Please refer to Annex B for monitoring KPIs]

Benefits:

- Placing waste segregation bins will provide the option of recycling waste through the correct streams, which will lead to landfill diversion. Additionally, the waste can be sold for additional revenue or reused in a waste-to-value scheme.
- Installing water filling stations can save up to 95% on water costs⁶.
- Switching to refillable amenities such as soap dispensers can offer savings of up to 92%. (Based on the price of the bottled soap estimated at 131/L, the price of refill soap estimated at 10.6/L)¹⁷.
- Finding new sources of revenue where waste products can be sold to other businesses to reuse or recycle.
- Proper waste removal helps improve air and water quality as well as reduces greenhouse gas emissions.
- Managing the waste smartly will help conserve natural resources including minerals, water and wood.

Local References:

- Estidama Pearl rating system: Estidama is a building design methodology for constructing and operating sustainable buildings. Under Estidama, waste management is a key factor that TA & TO can develop in order to obtain the Pearl rating.
- ADX: TA & TO can use the monitoring framework for the initiatives presented in these guidelines as part of ADX sustainability reporting for waste management.
- AD Environment Vision 2030: Achieving sustainable waste management will support the sustainable development of Abu Dhabi economy.
- The UAE issued Cabinet Resolution No. (39) regarding the executive regulations of Federal Resolution No. (12) of 2018 on the integrated waste management that seeks to regulate the waste management process and standardise the mechanisms and methods of waste disposal. It is considering, waste to energy, disposal of hazardous waste, wastewater treatment etc.
- Travel And Tourism Agencies Council (ATTAC): Guides and assists TA & TO in enhancing capabilities and to provide better travel services to the public.

⁶ Based AESG’s research: Wholesale bottled water prices at 0.3AED/L, latest utility prices of water by ADDC in 2020,

¹⁷ Based on AESG’s research: Studies made using data from several online retailers and bulk suppliers to create market average.



A.4. Green and Sustainable Transportation

Transportation remains one of the biggest emitters of carbon dioxide emissions in the UAE. For the TA & TO sector, managing transport emissions is crucial, as transportation is providing accessibility to the visitors to reach their destination is a major operational activity, city tours, sourcing of daily supplies etc. Below are some of the key areas where the TA & TO sector can become more sustainable.

Initiatives applicable to TA & TO

Sustainability Initiatives

TA & TO Categories

	Travel Agencies	Guides & Tours	Rental Services
1. Promote alternative use of transport.			
1.1 Promote the use of public transport and provide visitors with a map of public transport and directions on how to use it to get to the TA & TO location.	✓	✓	✓
2. Promote employee carpooling and use of public transport.			
2.1 Encourage employees and staff to use public transportation.	✓	✓	✓

3. Ensure regular maintenance of vehicles for efficiency.		Travel Agencies	Guides & Tours	Rental Services
3.1	Perform regular maintenance on vehicles to ensure they are operating efficiency and effectively.	✓	✗	✓
3.2	Inspect for air leakage in the vehicles to ensure no cooling/heating energy is lost.	✓	✗	✓
3.3	For owned or leased fleet like boats, helicopters, cars and other vehicles, operate in a way that it is fuel efficient.	✓	✗	✓
4. Install EV chargers in parking.		Travel Agencies	Guides & Tours	Rental Services
4.1	Install EV chargers in the parking area of the permanent office/building (if applicable).	✓	✗	✓
5. Purchase or lease electric/hybrid vehicles as part of your fleet operations where appropriate.		Travel Agencies	Guides & Tours	Rental Services
5.1	Provide visitors an option of electric carts, bicycles, buggies etc., for shorter distances.	✓	✓	✓
5.2	Purchase or lease electric/hybrid vehicles as part of the fleet operations where appropriate.	✓	✗	✓

[Note: Please refer to Annex A for higher level cost, effort, and responsibilities for each initiative]

[Note: Please refer to Annex B for monitoring KPIs]

Benefits:

- Purchasing a six-car fleet of hybrid vehicles can save a TA & TO sector up to 80% on fuel costs (based on the average fuel cost in Abu Dhabi in the last 3 months, which is 3.7AED/L – to account for volatility – As well as average miles per gallon or MPG value for cars in the sector (24.2 mpg), average energy consumption per range figures of EVs at 0.2 kWh/km, ADDC's EV tariff of 0.3AED/kWh)⁷.
- Promoting the use of public transport, employee carpooling and individual use of green transportation will significantly reduce the carbon footprint across Scope 1 and Scope 3 (as transportation accounts for 49% of tourism industry's emissions according to the World Travel & Tourism Council)⁸.
- Sustainable public transportation is 10 times safer per mile than driving a personal vehicle into the city. Moreover, commuters can reduce their chance of being involved in a crash by more than 90% by using public transit⁹.

Local References:

- ADX: Use the monitoring framework for the initiatives presented in these guidelines as part of ADX sustainability reporting for sustainable transportation.
- AD Environment Vision 2030: Achieving sustainable transport management will support the sustainable development of Abu Dhabi economy.
- Abu Dhabi sustainable transport mobility strategy.
- Travel And Tourism Agencies Council (ATTAC): Guides and assists TA & TO in enhancing capabilities and to provide better travel services to the public.

⁷ Based on AESG's research : Average fuel cost in Abu Dhabi in the last 3 months is 3.7AED/L – to account for volatility – As well as average miles per gallon or MPG value for cars in the industry (24.2 mpg), average energy consumption per range figures of EVs at 0.2 kWh/km, ADDC's EV tariff of 0.3AED/kWh as well as an average of one 12km trip per day based on Moovit Transport Index, www.moovit.com

⁸ World Travel & Tourism Council, "A Net Zero Roadmap for Travel and Tourism", 2021, (www.wttc.org)

⁹ Environment, "8 Main Benefits of Sustainable Transportation", 2020, (www.environment.co)



A.5. Environmental Protection

Protecting the local environment and native ecosystems is critical for the tourism industry in Abu Dhabi, given the large number of vulnerable plants, animal species and habitats¹⁰. For example According to Environmental Agency Abu Dhabi (EAD) experts, Abu Dhabi contains 34 different types of hard corals 17 different types of birds that are endangered. Abu Dhabi is home to 436 native plant species, including the national tree of the UAE, the ghaf¹¹. The tourism industry should ensure the protection of the local environment across all its operations and value chain.

Initiatives applicable to TA & TO

Sustainability Initiatives

TA & TO Categories

	Travel Agencies	Guides & Tours	Rental Services
1. Ensure protection of local flora and fauna during trips and tours.			
1.1 Ensure that no pollution or spillage in the local environment is caused during the trip.	✓	✓	✗
1.2 Ensure that the tourist spot is clean, and no plastic or other waste is left behind.	✓	✓	✗
1.3 For beach protection, contact EAD for support to protect Abu Dhabi's endangered coral reefs.	✓	✓	✗
1.4 If the service company has animals as a part of the team, ensure they have access to the five freedoms outlined in the Global Welfare Guidance for Animals in Tourism, which are: access to food and water, a suitable living environment, good health, an opportunity to exhibit natural behaviours and protection from fear and distress.	✓	✓	✗
2. Environmental Protection awareness campaign.			
2.1 Train staff on environmental protection (e.g., how to reduce environment pollution, mobilising people for beach clean-up, etc.).	✓	✓	✓
2.2 Provide information and training materials - e.g., guidebook and leaflets on flora and fauna protection, planting native trees of UAE, etc.	✓	✓	✓
2.3 Place leaflets and signage on littering and tampering, endangered species and plants protection, etc.	✓	✓	✓
3. Plant native trees and plants in the surrounding area to promote biodiversity.			
3.1 Plant native trees and plants such as Ghaf tree and White Saxual in the surrounding area, to promote biodiversity.	✓	✓	✓
4. Develop a climate resilience action plan, which outlines measures on how to adapt to climate change issues.			
4.1 Can be conducted through a third-party, or alternatively LEED has an established Climate Change Action Plan template.	✓	✓	✓

[Note: Please refer to Annex A for higher level cost, effort, and responsibilities for each initiative]

[Note: Please refer to Annex B for monitoring KPIs]

Benefits:

- Ensuring the protection of flora and fauna can enhance Abu Dhabi's biodiversity. Planting native trees will also preserve and enhance this biodiversity.
- This is a long-term investment on the environment to keep it resilient and attract more visitors in the future.
- Planting trees has the direct effect of reducing atmospheric CO2 since each individual tree directly sequesters carbon from the atmosphere through photosynthesis.
- A balanced ecosystem results in rain and slows down the effects of climate change because large forests can influence the weather patterns and creating their own microclimates, hence increasing tourism.

Further Reading:

1. Abu Dhabi's [native plant](#) species.
2. There are several further laws relating to environmental protection that TA & TO are expected to comply with, read [UAE legislation on environmental protection](#)

¹⁰ Earth's Endangered Creatures, Endangered species (www.earthsendangered.com)

¹¹ Environment Agency Abu Dhabi, Discover our biodiversity (www.ead.ae)



A.6 Carbon Management

The global tourism industry accounts for around 8% of global carbon emissions¹² and this is set to increase. Tourism, like other industries, has a responsibility to manage its impact on the planet. Reducing the sector's carbon footprint contributes towards mitigating the devastating effects of climate change, which has a cascade effect on public health and the environment. Abu Dhabi's arid climate makes it vulnerable to extreme weather changes such as an increase in temperature, which in turn leads to a reduction in the number of visitors travelling to Abu Dhabi. Carbon management has significant importance and investing in carbon management results in innovative and more environment-friendly solutions that will protect the planet.

Initiatives applicable to TA & TO

Sustainability Initiatives

TA & TO Categories

1. Calculate footprint through monitoring operations and outlining the emissions related to each operation.	Travel Agencies	Guides & Tours	Rental Services	
	1.1 This can be done through digital tools (such as one Click LCA, IES).	✓	✓	✓
2. Identify carbon hotspots in the operations.	Travel Agencies	Guides & Tours	Rental Services	
	2.1 Emissions related to visitor arrivals, departures, tour operation, pickups or sourcing of materials for day-to-day operations.	✓	✓	✓
3. Develop a pathway to Net Zero.	Travel Agencies	Guides & Tours	Rental Services	
	3.1 Identify carbon reduction measures.	✓	✓	✓
	3.2 Set carbon reduction targets.	✓	✓	✓
	3.3 Offset residual emissions.	✓	✓	✓

[Note: Please refer to Annex A for higher level cost, effort, and responsibilities for each initiative]
 [Note: Please refer to Annex B for monitoring KPIs]

Benefits:

- Calculating a carbon footprint through a digital tool can identify GHG hotspots, thus enabling carbon emission reduction and reporting.
- With the rise of eco-tourism, a carbon conscious TA & TO would attract more visitors and potentially benefit from carbon taxes.
- Benefit from the establishment of long-term partnerships with local and government bodies that are working towards a net zero economy.

Local References:

- UAE Net Zero 2050: The UAE has pledged to have net zero emissions by the year 2050. TA & TO can be aligned with this strategy by aiming to reduce their emissions.
- Whilst there are no laws mandating carbon reporting at the time of writing these guidelines, it is expected that there will be requirements in the future. Therefore, we recommend that TA & TO should establish procedures to report their carbon emissions.
- Travel And Tourism Agencies Council (ATTAC): Guides and assists TA & TO in enhancing capabilities and to provide better travel services to the public.

Further reading:

1. [GHG protocol](#) – for further information and definitions of GHG Scope emissions and classifications and methods of calculation.

¹² World Economic Forum, "Tourism is responsible for a staggering 8% of global greenhouse emissions", 2018 (www.weforum.org)



B. Sustainable and Local Procurement



B.1 Sourcing of Local, Sustainable Goods

How can TA & TO procure sustainably?

Sustainability should not be considered solely within the remit of company itself, but must go beyond its boundaries, throughout the entire supply and value chain in which it operates and collaborates. Research has shown that customers are having increased consideration of the products they consume, including environmental and social sustainability¹³. The sector within Abu Dhabi can respond to this by applying the key procurement initiatives outlined below.

Initiatives applicable to TA & TO

Sustainability Initiatives		TA & TO Categories		
		Travel Agencies	Guides & Tours	Rental Services
1.	Design a sustainable procurement plan and policy to support sustainable purchases.			
	1.1 Create a requirements checklist for identifying sustainable suppliers (within the sustainable procurement strategy) and collaborate and partner with contractors that meet the sustainability criteria for radical maintenance work or infrastructural changes.	✓	✓	✓
2.	Whenever possible purchase products with less disposable packaging and opt to purchase products that are packaged more sustainably (reusable/ recyclable cardboard packaging or recycled packaging).			
	2.1 For example, avoid buying products with heavy outer plastic packaging.	✓	✓	✓
3.	Purchase eco-friendly products that do not contain a high amount of hazardous chemicals.			
	3.1 General cleaning products, bathroom soap, and where applicable, washing up liquid, detergent. Bamboo cleaning equipment (e.g., scrubs, cloths, mops).	✓	✓	✓
4.	Partner with local suppliers.			
	4.1 Purchase souvenirs, food items and other products for trips.	✓	✓	✗
5.	Source environmentally preferable options.			
	5.1 Including products/packaging that contain recycled content (pre- and post-consumer), products/packaging that contain reusable/multi-use materials or are compostable/biodegradable.	✓	✓	✓

[Note: Please refer to Annex A for higher level cost, effort, and responsibilities for each initiative]
 [Note: Please refer to Annex B for monitoring KPIs]

¹³ Deloitte, “Shifting sands: How consumer behaviour is embracing sustainability” (Available: www2.deloitte.com [accessed: 22/08/2022])

Benefits:

- Purchasing locally sourced products yield multiple benefits including support of local businesses, reduced emissions from product transport and reduced damage during transportation.
- Purchasing environmentally preferable options would reduce carbon emissions, waste, and encourage sustainable behaviour.
- When offering a seasonal menu with locally sourced ingredients, transportation requirements, food waste and spoilage are reduced. It also opens up an opportunity to partner with local farmers.
- Sourcing fresher produce will ensure higher quality products.
- Growing local varieties of food preserves local genetic diversity.

Local References:

- ADX: TA & TO can use the monitoring framework for the initiatives presented in these guidelines as part of ADX sustainability reporting for sustainable procurement.
- Supporting suppliers who are committed to the development of UAE Nationals
- Travel And Tourism Agencies Council (ATTAC): Guides and assists TA & TO in enhancing capabilities and to provide better travel services to the public.



C. Social and Culture



C.1 Promoting Local Heritage, Culture, and Art

How can TA & TO achieve social and cultural sustainability?

Rapid urbanisation and modernisation have had considerable effects on the culture and built environment of Middle East. The impact of these trends on the region's cultural sites means protecting cultural heritage is now a high priority. Highlighting the best the region has to offer will create an authentic experiences for the guest, and partnering with the local community creates tourism benefits for the region as a whole.

Initiatives applicable to TA & TO

Sustainability Initiatives		TA & TO Categories		
1.	Celebrate and support national events and holidays.	Travel Agencies	Guides & Tours	Rental Services
	1.1 Plan celebrations for UAE National Day, Ramadan, Eid.	✓	✓	✓
	1.2 Offer promotions and discounts on experiences and tours during the holidays.	✓	✓	✓
	1.3 Host events to celebrate the days or put an offer/deal on for the occasions.	✓	✓	✓
2.	Play local music, serve local food and drinks, and put up traditional Abu Dhabi decorations and arts, to promote local artists and artisans.	Travel Agencies	Guides & Tours	Rental Services
	2.1 Put up local decorations and crafts in visitor areas, play local music in waiting areas or outdoor premises, serve complimentary local snacks to visitors.	✓	✓	✓
3.	Promote cultural and heritage sites as tourist destinations.	Travel Agencies	Guides & Tours	Rental Services
	3.1 Provide leaflets and maps with information about the cultural and heritage sites.	✓	✓	✓
4.	Support local tours and guides through partnerships.	Travel Agencies	Guides & Tours	Rental Services
	4.1 Organise tours for visitors to cultural sites in Abu Dhabi (e.g., Qasr Al Hosn, Louvre Abu Dhabi, Emirates Heritage Village, etc.).	✓	✓	✓

[Note: Please refer to Annex A for higher level cost, effort, and responsibilities for each initiative]

[Note: Please refer to Annex B for monitoring KPIs]

Benefits:

- Raising awareness about the value and importance of the cultural heritage of Abu Dhabi contributes towards a sustainable future by maintaining and preserving this heritage.
- Promoting local culture and heritage strengthens the relationship between the visitors and the local community.
- Conserving resources and reducing waste.

Local References:

- UAE laws on the preservation of cultural heritage.



C.2 Promoting Sustainability with Visitors and Local Community

As more travellers seek to have unique and local experiences, it will be important to provide the visitors with an experience which is at the heart of these efforts through engagement with local communities, local artists, etc. It is important that TA & TO engage with the local community and visitors to facilitate the diffusion of knowledge covering sustainability initiatives, including those that lead to net-zero, sustainability development and where these measures contribute towards the well-being of people and the planet.

Initiatives applicable to TA & TO

Sustainability Initiatives

TA & TO Categories

	Travel Agencies	Guides & Tours	Rental Services
1. Partner with non-profit associations to organise events for raising money for local causes and charities.			
1.1 Obtain the required licence from a competent authority such as the Ministry of Community Development to organise a fund-raising event.	✓	✓	✓
2. Raise awareness about the sustainable solutions in the tourism industry.			
2.1 Provide a space in the main entrance areas, and on the website to showcase what sustainability initiatives have been implemented.	✓	✓	✓
2.2 Guides and tours can organise a sustainability "scavenger hunt" where visitors try and find sustainability initiatives throughout the site and win a prize if all are found/collected.	✓	✓	✗
3. Raise visitor awareness of their environmental and social impact.			
3.1. Raise awareness through campaigns, leaflets, signage for waste disposal, etc.	✓	✓	✓
4. Collaborate with local performing artists and artisans.			
4.1 Collaborate with local artists and artisans to showcase their crafts or a local musician to play music for the visitors.	✓	✓	✓
5. Align with local initiatives and NPOs to design programmes to engage visitors and locals on sustainability.			
5.1 Incorporate guidelines and advice from the UAE Ministry of Climate Change and Environment.	✓	✓	✓
5.2 Incorporate guidelines and advice from Emirates Environmental Group.	✓	✓	✓
6. Conduct visitor surveys.			
6.1 Conduct surveys with visitors to understand their satisfaction and expectations on sustainability initiatives and learn if they would revisit and recommend the agent or operator to others.	✓	✓	✓
7. Ensure integration of international programmes and certifications to attract tourists that prefer sustainable lodging options.			
7.1 Ensure integration of international programmes like ISO140001 Environmental Management System, Green Key, Green Globe, Earth Check, ISO 50001 Energy Management System.	✓	✓	✓
8. Co-develop, and co-design products inspired by local crafts in collaboration with local artisans and artists.			
8.1 Promote and sell local souvenirs by partnering with local artists and artisans.	✓	✓	✓

[Note: Please refer to Annex A for higher level cost, effort, and responsibilities for each initiative]

[Note: Please refer to Annex B for monitoring KPIs]

[Note: For events organisation, please refer to the Event Sustainability Guidelines]

Benefits:

- Research from Booking.com has shown that visitors prefer more sustainable options, hence by informing the guides, local community and visitors which sustainability initiatives have been implemented the reputation of the site will benefit.
- Increased partnerships with local artists and artisans will result in exposure and recognition while generating additional revenue.
- Collecting guest feedback would allow TA & TO to undergo continuous improvements and encourage recommendations and revisits to the TA & TO.
- By raising awareness in local communities of environmental concerns, people will be encouraged to protect the environment and wildlife.
- It increases funding for nature conservation and protection.



C.3 Engaging in Educational Programmes

The younger generations are very conscious about climate change and take great responsibility for their impact on the environment. As such, today's youth are aware of which businesses are operating in a sustainable manner. Therefore, it is especially important for tourism industry to improve its sustainable practices within the culture and heritage sectors.

Initiatives applicable to TA & TO

Sustainability Initiatives

TA & TO Categories

	Travel Agencies	Guides & Tours	Rental Services
1. Partner with educational institutions to engage with educational institutions to promote community, culture and heritage.			
1.1 Partner with educational institutions to organise field trips to cultural and heritage sites in Abu Dhabi.	✓	✓	✓
2. Collaborate with schools to plan trips for students to participate in various activities related to sustainability.			
2.1 Organise activities for students such as tree planting, beach clean-ups, desert clean-ups, etc.	✓	✓	✗
3. Partner with Emirates Heritage Club or the General Women's Union to organise workshops for students.			
3.1 Organise traditional activities for students (e.g., handicrafts, cooking, coffee making, etc.).	✗	✓	✗

[Note: Please refer to Annex A for higher level cost, effort, and responsibilities for each initiative]

[Note: Please refer to Annex B for monitoring KPIs]

Benefits:

- Educating students and the local community on the local culture reinforces the importance of preserving Abu Dhabi's cultural heritage.
- Through educational programmes, tourists and the younger generation (including residents) will become more aware and enthusiastic about social sustainability in Abu Dhabi.
- Hosting workshops/classes on local art, craft, and food can help build a stronger relationship with visitors, and encourage more revisits and recommendations.
- It promotes a healthy lifestyle and assists in addressing many health issues which students are going through.
- Environmental learning prepares the students for future careers and provides them with the required skills to become professionals in the sector.



C.4 Improving Accessibility

Despite the global population of People of Determination, the lack of awareness and information is one of the major obstacles visitors face whether they are a Person of Determination or a companion or family member. Universal access is a key factor in social sustainability to ensure the needs of People of Determination are addressed and fulfilled.

Initiatives applicable to TA & TO

Sustainability Initiatives

TA & TO Categories

	Travel Agencies	Guides & Tours	Rental Services
1. Ensure provision of lactation room for women, and gender-neutral baby changing stations.			
1.1 Provide nursing mothers with a private lactation room and baby-changing stations should be gender-neutral.	✓	✓	✓
2. Organise staff training on accessibility provisions for visitors bi- annually.			
2.1 Train staff on how to support/ provide assistance to a person of determination.	✓	✓	✓
2.2 Provide behavioural and etiquette training on, for example, how to speak without using labels to a person of determination.	✓	✓	✓
3. Improve provisions for People of Determination.			
3.1 Provide ramps for easier access to entrance (or wherever required at any elevated spot).	✓	✓	✓
3.2 Ensure information in raised text/ numbers and braille on elevators, signages, vehicles etc.	✓	✓	✓
3.3 Ensure accessible parking spaces is marked with People of Determination priority signage and should be close to the main entrance.	✓	✓	✓
3.4 Ensure visible and accessible signage and directions.	✓	✓	✓
3.5 In accessible bathrooms, provide a fixed horizontal and vertical grab rail beside the toilet to assist in standing/sitting and a pull-cord alarm should be installed.	✓	✓	✓
3.6 Ensure there are sufficient vehicles with wide entrance and low-rise accessible seats.	✓	✓	✓
3.7 Provide the option of requests for accommodation or an accommodation statement to allow visitors to address the specific needs of people of determination while visiting an event (e.g., providing a list or checkbox to indicate their specific needs).	✓	✓	✓

[Note: Please refer to Annex A for higher level cost, effort, and responsibilities for each initiative]

[Note: Please refer to Annex B for monitoring KPIs]

Benefits:

- Providing visitors with better accessibility, TA & TO would build a distinguished brand and encourage customer loyalty.
- Visitors would choose TA & TO with enhanced accessibility features for their visit.
- Provisions for people of determination, as well as staff training on the matter would create independence for people with determination.
- Enables people with disabilities to move around independently and access day to day services through the event and hence improve their trust in the business.

Local References:

- Follow all the mandatory guidelines outlined in the [DCT TA & TO classification manual](#).
- TA & TO must also comply with Abu Dhabi building codes and the requirements set out in Chapter 11 on building accessibility (and appendix E).
- UAE national policy for empowering People of Determination.
- UAE People of Determination protection from abuse policy.
- Travel And Tourism Agencies Council (ATTAC): Guides and assists TA & TO in enhancing capabilities and to provide better travel services to the public.



D. People



D.1 Staff Empowerment

How can TA & TO achieve social and cultural sustainability?

Securing a workforce for the future has long been a challenge for the tourism industry. Research has shown that lack of career progression is one of the main reasons people leave the sector, and although training and development cannot always combat this directly, investment in employees and a robust training and development strategy can help the situation.

Initiatives applicable to TA & TO

Sustainability Initiatives

TA & TO Categories

	Travel Agencies	Guides & Tours	Rental Services
1. Conduct annual trainings for employees for their personal and professional development.			
1.1 Online and/or in-person, management courses, for example time management courses.	✓	✓	✓
2. Provide career path and milestones for employee professional development and promotion.			
2.1 Set in place a structured review and development programme including bi-annual "performance reviews" where development goals and objectives are set and performance reviewed against KPIs (e.g., receiving no complaints about housekeeping, 100% room cleaning rate etc.).	✓	✓	✓
3. Conduct a human rights awareness training for employees.			
3.1 Schedule human rights training on an annual or bi-annual basis and record the number of hours.	✓	✓	✓
4. Develop an anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policy and provide bi-annual training. Having anti-harassment/discrimination policy promotes a sustainable workforce and working environment which directly improves work efficiency, retainment, and development.			
4.1 Schedule harassment and discrimination on an annual or bi-annual basis and record the number of hours.	✓	✓	✓
5. Provide employee reporting channel to raise issues related to sustainability and develop a process to resolve these issues.			
5.1 Place an anonymous feedback box or a space in company's intranet.	✓	✓	✓
6. Incentivise employees to perform on sustainability (by setting it as a KPI for employees) via appropriate tools like staff award system.			
6.1 Provide incentives for using public transport to commute, waste segregation, reduction in water consumption, being energy efficient (like running a full dishwasher and washing machine), etc.	✓	✓	✓

[Note: Please refer to Annex A for higher level cost, effort, and responsibilities for each initiative]

[Note: Please refer to Annex B for monitoring KPIs]

Benefits:

- Employee engagement initiatives and programmes will contribute towards the improvement of staff performance and reduction of absenteeism and will increase the TA & TO’s ability to attract and retain talented employees.
- Developing an anti-harassment and anti-discriminatory policy will establish a safe working space for employees.
- Empowerment helps create a positive, open environment that leads to maximum productivity.
- Improves employee branding, so they act as brand ambassadors and present the company in the best light possible.
- Flattens the company’s hierarchy which eliminates micro-managing and the excess management layers to improve communication and increase transparency in the workforce.

Local References:

- All UAE employment [laws](#).
- Worker’s rights international agreements.
- Travel And Tourism Agencies Council (ATTAC): Guides and assists TA & TO in enhancing capabilities and to provide better travel services to the public.



D.2 Diversity and Inclusion

Research has shown that lack of career progression is one of the top reasons people leave the sector, and although training and development cannot always combat this directly, investment in employees and a robust training and development strategy can help. Also, staff with different regional and cultural backgrounds and an overall diversity of employees can lead to better problem-solving, higher occupancy and increased profits¹⁴.

Initiatives applicable to TA & TO

Sustainability Initiatives

TA & TO Categories

	Travel Agencies	Guides & Tours	Rental Services
1. Have a representative workforce of women, different nationalities, and people of determination through hiring and retention policies that encourage diversity.			
1.1 Work towards a diverse workforce across all levels, do not discriminate in the hiring process against race or people of determination and reflect this in a policy.	✓	✓	✓
2. Implement an Emiratisation strategy. Encourage and train the local population, especially women, to join the tourism industry.			
2.1 When marketing for jobs, encourage women and all ethnicities to apply, target Emiratis (especially Emirati women) through the job description.	✓	✓	✓
3. Put policies are in place to ensure equal pay for equal work.			
3.1 Through an equality policy, stipulate that regardless of gender, nationality or ability we will pay all employees equally for equal work and roles.	✓	✓	✓
4. Encourage representation of women and People of Determination in senior leadership and boards.			
4.1 When hiring and promoting employees, ensure inclusion of women and People of Determination in senior leadership and management.	✓	✓	✓

[Note: Please refer to Annex A for higher level cost, effort, and responsibilities for each initiative]
 [Note: Please refer to Annex B for monitoring KPIs]

¹⁴ McKinsey & Company, “Diversity wins: How inclusion matters”, 2020, (www.mckinsey.com)

Benefits:

- A diverse and gender balanced workforce enables the TA & TO to have a wider talent pool with varied perspectives, which improves productivity, company image and overall management.
- According to survey research, 66% of organisations believe that diversity enhances innovation¹⁵.
- According to research, a diverse team makes decisions 60% faster than non-diverse teams, and teams with age, gender, and geographic diversity make the right decision 87% of the time, compared to 58% of all-male teams¹⁶.

Local References:

- [Emiratisation programmes and initiatives in Abu Dhabi](#)
These include:
 - “Training for Work” initiative, launched by Human Resources Authority, aims at developing job seekers’ skills by providing training opportunities in government entities and companies.
 - Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation aimed to provide more than 15,000 suitable jobs for Emiratis in the private sector by the end of 2018.
 - “Absher”, an initiative supervised by the Ministry of Presidential Affairs and implemented by the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation to encourage Emiratis to work in the private sector.
 - Khebraty, a programme to attract Emirati students who wish to explore the tourism sector and are able to work for 20 hours per week in a tourism company.
- Travel And Tourism Agencies Council (ATTAC): Guides and assists TA & TO in enhancing capabilities and to provide better travel services to the public.
- [UAE law on equal wages for women and men](#) amendments

¹⁵ EW Group, “The benefits of diversity and inclusion in the workplace”, (www.theewgroup.com)

¹⁶ EW Group, “The benefits of diversity and inclusion in the workplace”, (www.theewgroup.com)



E. Resilience and Risk Management



E.1 Health and Safety

Health and safety is an important consideration for any workplace as it is essential to keep both workers and visitors safe. To run an effective TA & TO site/property, it's important to have a health and safety checklist based on the mentioned initiatives below to conduct inspections quickly and efficiently.

Initiatives applicable to TA & TO

Sustainability Initiatives		TA & TO Categories		
		Travel Agencies	Guides & Tours	Rental Services
1.	Employee engagement and workshop to improve physical and mental health of employees.			
	1.1 Organise health and well-being events/retreats.	✓	✓	✓
	1.2 Promote annual health check-ups for all employees.	✓	✓	✓
2.	Provide medical assistance.			
	2.1 Align with OSHAD COP4 and provide medical rooms, first aid kits and assistance like CPR (at least one staff could be trained in CPR).	✓	✓	✓
3.	Develop a future pandemic/epidemic action plan.			
	3.1 Develop a future pandemic/epidemic action plan. The site/group can develop a flexible plan (e.g., supply of gloves, antiseptic, first aid kit) that can easily be tailored to instructions from Abu Dhabi Public Health Centre.	✓	✓	✓
4.	Install sensors and periodically check noise, water, and air quality for visitors and employee safety.			
	4.1 Ensure a quarterly quality check of the mentioned for safety.	✓	✓	✓
5.	Enforce Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC) and formaldehyde content limits.			
	5.1 Consider paint/coatings, adhesives/sealants, and carpets (where applicable). Ban asbestos and ozone depletion products and limit content for refrigerants. These can be stored in containment areas then disposed of correctly.	✓	✓	✓
6.	Provide mental health counselling for employees.			
	6.1 Have provisions for employees to reach out for mental health help and take assistance from mental health counsellors. Ensure a safe and healthy workspace.	✓	✓	✓

[Note: Please refer to Annex A for higher level cost, effort, and responsibilities for each initiative]

[Note: Please refer to Annex B for monitoring KPIs]

Benefits:

- Providing health and safety support would reduce cost associated with accidents.
- Providing physical and mental health support to employees would improve employee well-being and business efficiency.
- Demonstrating a commitment to sustainability and corporate social responsibility, which includes health and safety dedication, will attract investors to the company.
- Having a robust health and safety plan keeps all staff aware of current legal requirements, which improves the company's regulatory compliance and lowers the risk of being fined.

Local References:

- [UAE laws on health and safety at the workplace](#)
- [Electronic Public Health Pest Control Services](#)- DCT and Tadweer directs all tourism and TA & TO use Pest Control E-contract system to ensure effective and safe public health.
- Travel And Tourism Agencies Council (ATTAC): Guides and assists TA & TO in enhancing capabilities and to provide better travel services to the public.

**E.2 Risk Mitigation and Resilience**

Risk management ensures that a business is prepared for any potential threats and events, this covers health and safety, as well as any global events (e.g., COVID19-). Resilience refers to the development, preparedness and mitigation measures considered for scenarios such as climate change, pandemics, health and wellbeing and sustainable growth. It is important to provide benefits and empower staff across multiple financial and non-financial dimensions to create value and manage the risks and opportunities associated with economic, environmental, and social developments.

Initiatives applicable to TA & TO**Sustainability Initiatives****TA & TO Categories**

	Travel Agencies	Guides & Tours	Rental Services
1. Develop an ethics and anti-corruption policy.			
1.1 Develop a policy on ethics and anti-corruption and make sure employees are informed.	✓	✓	✓
2. Identify risk and have management and escalation procedures covering, at the minimum, people, assets, community, and environment.			
2.1 Conduct annual risk management policies reviews, involve stakeholders and where applicable utilise a third-party to conduct an assessment.	✓	✓	✓
3. Develop a risk register for the four categories (people, assets, community, and environment) and a system to monitor performance on regular basis.			
3.1 Conduct an impact assessment on all four categories (hire a third-party if applicable) and develop a monitoring framework after involving all stakeholders.	✓	✓	✓
4. Site environmental protection and risk management.			
4.1 Ensure the site is assessed and inspected before a group attends the site. Ensure that the site is left in the way it was found, including removal of litter, inspecting the condition of plants and trees.	✓	✓	✓
5. Site people protection and risk management.			
5.1 Before arriving on site or location, brief the visitors of the potential risks (e.g., in a wadi there may be hazards while walking) and advise the visitors on safety precaution measures.	✓	✓	✓

6. Site asset protection and risk management.	Travel Agencies	Guides & Tours	Rental Services
6.1 Ensure operator of the asset has clearly communicated the potential risks to the sector before visiting and organising guides and tours. These potential risks should be communicated to visitors before arrival.	✓	✓	✓
7. Invest in artificial intelligence, financial and climate related models to better predict the future.	Travel Agencies	Guides & Tours	Rental Services
7.1 Hire a third-party assessment consultant to perform software analysis to highlight any potential future impacts. Regularly review.	✓	✓	✓

[Note: Please refer to Annex A for higher level cost, effort, and responsibilities for each initiative]
 [Note: Please refer to Annex B for monitoring KPIs]

Benefits:

- Having an ethics and anti-corruption policy will lead to better staff engagement and enhanced reputation.
- A risk management strategy will help identify risks that are not apparent and protect the business from unforeseen liabilities.
- According to McKinsey’s survey about the pandemic’s impact on corporate resilience, a better risk governance model is key for efficient and effective decision making and crisis management¹⁷.
- It builds early-warning systems in place so actions will be promptly and confident which is an extra line of defence during a crisis.
- Having a resilience plan reduces stress within the organisation and this in turn improves job satisfaction and productivity.

¹⁷ McKinsey & Company, “From risk management to strategic resilience”,2022, (www.mckinsey.com)

8. Conclusion

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide a roadmap and approach for the industries to contribute towards making tourism in Abu Dhabi more sustainable. By becoming a sustainable tourism destination, Abu Dhabi will maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction and ensure a meaningful experience to all visitors and tourists. In conjunction with raising tourist awareness about sustainability issues, tourists will also get an authentic local experience of UAE culture and heritage. Furthermore, sustainable practices create a positive impact on visitors and increase their likelihood of returning to the destination. Going green leads to better loyalty, word-of-mouth marketing and higher customer satisfaction.

Sustainable tourism can be achieved through applying the recommendations and sustainability initiatives presented in these guidelines. Each TA & TO should use these guidelines and develop their own sustainability journey/roadmap towards the vision of making Abu Dhabi a sustainable destination. Moving forward, the TA & TO sector should refer the Monitoring and Measuring templates provided in annexure B with these guidelines for supporting metrics and KPIs for suggested initiatives. The template would help monitor initiatives, analyse the gaps, and track progress towards the set targets to achieve sustainable excellence.