

TOOL 10: CAPACITY BUILDING FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Definition

Capacity building is a mechanism to transfer knowledge and equip people with the skills and resources necessary to achieve defined outcomes. In the context of tourism this encompasses a broad spectrum of stakeholders and capacities as many diverse organisations, groups and individuals are involved. This document outlines different approaches to capacity building for sustainable tourism and provides some guiding principles to help with the development and delivery of activities.

What counts as capacity building?

There is often a tendency to think that capacity building is all about training people to do something, however there are many different types of capacities that are needed for tourism to be well planned, operated and managed. Many of these require collaborative working and an understanding of different stakeholder needs as well as greater working knowledge of sustainable principles and practices.

The diversity of stakeholders means that there are often competing / conflicting motivations and agendas when it comes to tourism. Additionally, it is very unlikely that tourism can be changed or improved by one set of actors alone and many interdependencies mean that collaboration is key so it is important to understand that capacity building can play a central role in addressing this complexity.

In fact, capacity building activities to create a shared agenda is often the first and most significant step towards achieving the desired outcomes.

In broad terms, considering both of the following two approaches to capacity building can help when conceptualising the different activities that may be required for your programme.

Shared agenda



Activities aimed at bringing groups together to work on a common agenda, for example:

1. Establishing / strengthening destination management structures such as a destination council comprised of public, private and NGOs
2. Consultation of stakeholders around a particular challenge, collaborative working to address challenges, networking

Stakeholder specific



Activities to support a particular group of stakeholders to develop knowledge and change practices, for example:

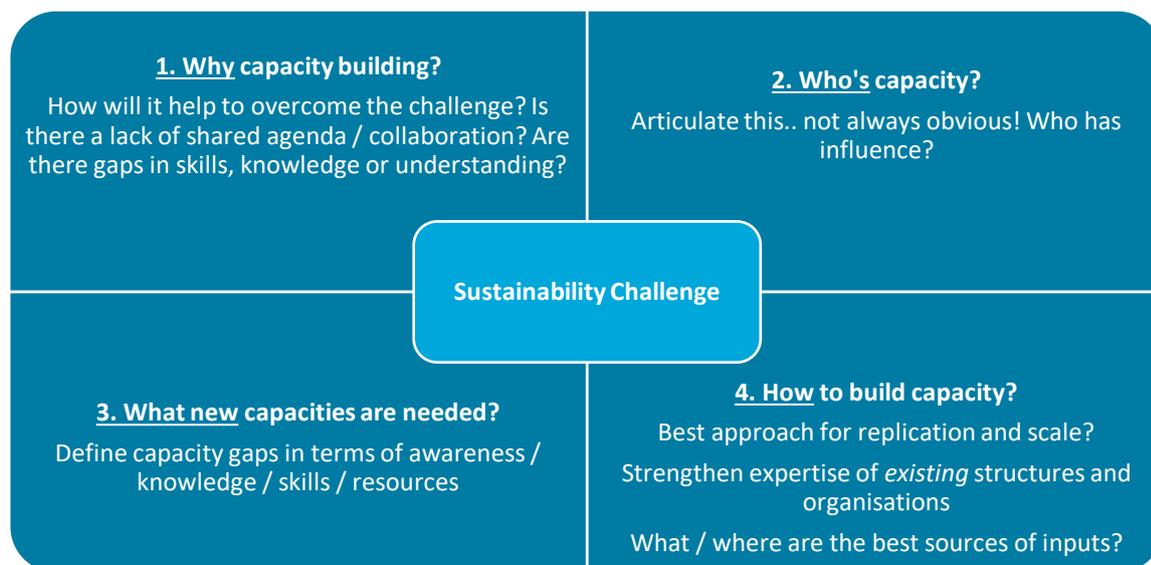
1. Training to help hotels improve environmental performance
2. Networking to facilitate sustainable procurement linkages
3. Workshops or study visits for SME's to learn how to develop / enhance their products

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Defining the capacities required

Tool 9 (Defining Activities) highlighted the importance of revealing the root causes of sustainability challenges and your capacity building activities should be designed to address these.

Here are some further exploratory questions to support this process; there is overlap between the questions and answers, but it does help to ensure that a thorough process has been followed.



Deciding on activities

Here are some guiding principles to help with deciding on capacity building activities:

- **Consult stakeholders to sense check your understanding**, ensure feasibility and to identify any further barriers or enabling factors.
- **Profile audiences and their needs to understand how to engage and develop capacities.** Engagement activities are a key part of capacity building and should not be an 'add-on'. Decide how you will engage target audiences; carefully consider motivations, needs, accessibility and constraints such as time and money.
- **Identify a range of 'sources of input'**. Not all sources have to be 'sustainability experts'. Capacities can be transferred from stakeholders within the group e.g. leading hotels that can provide relatable case studies, study visits to tourism suppliers can facilitate an exchange of understanding. Often the most relatable sources have the biggest impact.
- **Consider how existing organisations with a mandate for capacity building can be strengthened** rather than creating additional structures. This way, the expertise will be built-in and remain with the best-placed organisations for replication / scale.

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Format and design of activities

The method of delivery chosen for capacity building activities should highly depend on the context as well as the factors already highlighted. Figure 1 illustrates the most common types of capacity building activities used to facilitate sustainable tourism.



Figure 1



Figure 2

Figure 2 provides tips for designing capacity building activities and resources. For capacity building to be effective it is critical **that participant needs are properly understood**. This can be achieved through focus groups and interviews and doesn't have to be a time consuming or expensive process, however it will pay off. Understanding the needs will help to ensure that your programme is both accessible to the participants as well as developmental.

It is likely that there will be varying levels of knowledge, skills and experience and so any programme needs to be designed to ensure that there is an opportunity for development and value is created for everyone

Tourism is an industry all about enjoyment and inspiration. Therefore materials and delivery should aim to reflect that. Enjoyment is a key part of learning! Capacity building for tourism professionals must be practical so that new knowledge and skills can immediately be put into practice. Therefore, activities should be interactive with opportunities for application to build confidence and expedite progress.

Finally, as with any activities within your programme capacity building efforts must be measurable. This can be achieved by setting clear and measurable objectives, gathering a baseline and following-up to measure the impact of your actions. Further guidance on monitoring and evaluation is provided in Tool 13.