

Building Capacity in Ecotourism: The Conservation International and George Washington University Ecotourism Learning Program

Within the world's biodiversity hotspots, poverty is driving people to pursue livelihoods that often destroy the very natural resources on which they rely. Increasingly, governments, local communities, and NGOs are pursuing ecotourism as part of the solution. Field practitioners and program managers need tools and approaches for designing and implementing ecotourism programs that truly address conservation issues and create needed jobs and income opportunities.

Program Objectives

To meet the urgent need for ecotourism capacity building and training, CI has partnered with the George Washington University (GW), a leader in ecotourism and sustainable tourism education, to develop the Ecotourism Learning Program. CI and GW have based the program on collective experience with ecotourism development for the past 25 years. The approaches and concepts presented are designed to increase the pool of practitioners and ecotourism development service providers and provide them with the skills, tools, and capacity to:

- Take holistic approaches to developing ecotourism, from assessing feasibility to designing and implementing projects, and fundraising.
- Help partners better define how ecotourism can fit into biodiversity conservation strategies including those related to poverty alleviation and socio-economic development.
- Improve the delivery and quality of ecotourism capacity building and technical assistance available to local communities in high biodiversity areas.

Course Information and Delivery

The Ecotourism Training Program includes six core courses, one elective, and an orientation course for local training institutions. A full outline is attached (see page 3).

Each customized course includes manuals, worksheets, case studies, PowerPoints and presentations from successful cases. CI and GW can deliver courses through distance learning or in a "blended" format (where the first half of the course is delivered in a classroom setting and the remainder of the course is taught through GW's internet-based distance learning system called Blackboard). Participants who complete the six core courses will receive a CI-GW Tourism Certificate. Participants who successfully complete each course will receive a letter of completion from GW.

GW's Tourism Training programs are TedQual certified. TedQual is a certification scheme for tourism education programs, run by the World Tourism Organization, a specialist agency of the

United Nations. See <http://www.world-tourism.org/education/council/menu.html>.

Participants

CI and GW recommended these courses to: community extensionists, economists and other development specialists, park and protected area managers, government officers, educators, and program managers and directors of non-government organizations and private associations. CI and GW select the participants in the trainer orientation program according to their demonstrated capacity to become effective trainers.

Local Education Institutions

CI and GW, through the Ecotourism Learning Program work with local education institutions to certify them to provide ecotourism education in their regions. In this way, practitioners will have access to ecotourism training, ensuring a future of qualified people who can implement ecotourism development.

CI – GW Ecotourism Training Courses

Course 1: Sustainable and Ecotourism Concepts

- Tourism, Sustainable Tourism and Ecotourism Concepts (Includes: LAC, Impacts, Carrying Capacity Concepts)
- The Ecotourism Industry, Structure and Market Trends and Basics
- Tourism's Role in Community Development
- Tourism's Role in Biodiversity Conservation
- Integration of Tourism with Park and Protected Area Management
- Overview of Policies and Strategies that Impact Tourism Development

Course 2: Tourism Assessments

- Introduction to the Assessment Process
- Involving Stakeholders
- Attractions, Site and Infrastructure Analysis
- Market Demand Analysis
- Supply and Competitiveness
- Human Resource and Capacity Needs
- Socio-Economic and Cultural Considerations (and their relationship to biodiversity)
- Gauging Tourism and Biodiversity Conservation and Environmental Impacts
- Recommendations and Reporting

Course 3: Product Development *(taken with Marketing Course)*

- Introduction to Ecotourism Product Development
- Target Markets and Product Development (factors and considerations).
- Product Innovation (identification of resources, benchmarking, competitiveness, etc)
- Nexus with Marketing and Management

Course 4: Tourism Marketing

- Consumer Motivations
- Destination Image and Consumer Behavior
- Segmentation and Targeting
- Positioning, Perceptual Mapping and Branding, Partnerships, Pricing, Promotion, Place, and Tourism Distribution Channels
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Electronic Marketing and Database Mgmt

Course 5: Project Design and Management

- Principles of Project Management
- Project Planning
- Project Implementation
- Project Management Software and Tools (i.e. financial planning tool)
- Risk Management
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Adaptive Management

Course 6: Elective Courses

Choose from one of the following:

- Enterprise Planning
- Marine and Coastal Ecotourism
- Ec lodge Development
- Environmental Management and Social Responsibility for Destinations
- Safety and Security
- Cultural Heritage Tourism I
- Event Management Courses -see www.gwu.edu/dmp

Course 7: Fundraising

- Accessing funding for Tourism
- Proposal Development
- Funding Sources – Multi and Bi-laterals, Public Funding, Foundations and Private Donors
- Partnering and Joint fundraising,
- Private sector – joint ventures

Course 8: Ecotourism Training – Introduction to Becoming a Trainer

- Human Learning Behavior
- Teaching Techniques
- Integrating Activities
- Administering a Course