

Terms and References

UN Tourism Social Innovation Challenge

Country of Execution: Global

Title of the Project: UN Tourism Social Innovation Challenge

1.) Introduction and Background:

As tourism continues to be a cornerstone of economic growth globally, new challenges and opportunities arise in the face of evolving global dynamics, climate change, and shifting social needs. In 2023, tourism accounted for 10.4% of global GDP and provided 319 million jobs, representing 10% of total employment worldwide. This sector's economic footprint is vast, generating over \$9 trillion in economic output annually. However, the complexities of achieving sustainable growth, fostering inclusive practices, and minimizing environmental impacts require innovative approaches that address both local and global challenges.

This Global Social Innovation Challenge seeks to identify and support groundbreaking startups, scaleups, and entrepreneurs who are driving change in three key areas: Community-based Tourism, Inclusivity & Accessibility, and Green Projects. The challenge invites innovative solutions that enhance the tourism ecosystem through sustainable practices, inclusivity, and community empowerment. By focusing on these three pillars, the challenge aims to support initiatives that not only create economic opportunities but also promote equality, sustainability, and the preservation of cultural heritage and natural resources.

Selected finalists will be invited to pitch their solutions at the UN Tourism Tech Adventures and benefit from the UN Tourism Innovation Network, including potential access to finance, pilot projects, and global visibility.

2.) The Challenge:

UN Tourism proposes the launch of a Challenge designed to identify and develop innovative startups worldwide. This Challenge will culminate in a high-profile final Pitch Challenge, known as the "Tourism Tech Adventures (TTA)." The finalists (2 per category, 6 in total) selected by UN Tourism and its partners, will be invited to participate in said event. The overarching goal is to collaboratively source, nurture, and support startups that will help position the winning startups at the forefront of tourism technology, with a strong emphasis on sustainability, inclusiveness, and green solutions for social impact.

The initiative will foster social innovation and promote new business models and technologies, creating a dynamic ecosystem that not only meets current demands but also anticipates future tourism trends.

Key objectives include:

- **Innovate:** Support solutions that empower communities, enhance accessibility, and promote green tourism practices.

- **Adopt:** Encourage widespread adoption of inclusive, accessible, and sustainable tourism practices.
- **Collaborate:** Foster partnerships between governments, industries, entrepreneurs and civil society organizations to drive social innovation through global tourism transformation.
- **Identify,** train and support groundbreaking startups, scaleups, entrepreneurs and talented individuals who are driving change in three key areas: Community-based Tourism, Inclusivity & Accessibility, and Green Projects.
- **Provide** the dedicated academic competences and skills to develop these leaders and entrepreneurs to enable them to develop and scale-up new products and services within Tourism.
- **Sustain:** Promote long-term solutions that balance economic growth, environmental preservation, and social equity within the tourism sector.
- **Scale:** Identify and accelerate scale innovations with the potential for global impact in building a more inclusive, sustainable, and resilient tourism industry

Through this comprehensive approach, the Tourism Tech Challenge and the TTA Pitch Challenge aim to drive forward-thinking advancements in the tourism sector.

Social Innovation Challenge

Four months before the event there will be a launch of a call for innovative startups from around the world to present solutions to specific challenges in sustainability, inclusiveness, and green solutions for social impact. Entrepreneurs who apply will be evaluated based on feasibility and scalability criteria by a defined committee, following the successful methodology applied in UN Tourism's Innovation programs.

This Challenge will have three categories based on the needs and critical points of the sector, accepting submissions from startups and traditional companies or corporations on the themes community-based tourism, sustainability, inclusiveness, accessibility, and green projects.

For these categories, standout initiatives that meet the required characteristics and excel in their potential to contribute to the recovery and transformation of tourism will be selected. These initiatives will have the opportunity to pitch their ideas at the UN Tourism Tech Adventures innovation forum.

3.) Conditions for Participation:

This challenge is open to entrepreneurs, whether individuals or legal entities, who are of legal age and have the legal capacity to enter into contracts, and whose representatives have not been convicted by a final judgement for intentional crimes, with a penalty of six months or more, insofar as the criminal responsibility has not expired.

The projects can focus on various methods, processes, governance structures, social impact initiatives, technological applications, or other forms of innovation. Specifically, entrepreneurs, startups, scaleups, tourism companies, and organizations should meet the following criteria:

- Have an innovative and/or disruptive nature;
- Offer sustainable and value-added solutions for the tourism sector;
- Leverage new technologies and innovative solutions in community-based tourism, accessibility, and/or green projects;
- Have a potential for growth, scalability, and application;

- Preferably have a minimum viable product (MVP). However, projects that are ready to be developed, in later stages of the idea phase will also be considered;
- Have a structure business plan;
- Contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Specific Conditions of the Scholarships offered by SOMMET Education

In line with the SDG 4 - Education 2030 goal, targets and framework of action, Sommet Education Foundation will focus on scholarships for youth and talents from disadvantaged backgrounds and vulnerable situations as well as lifelong learning and women empowerment.

Finalists must meet at least one of the following eligibility criteria:

- Persons being supported or enrolled already in a program provided by United Nations Program agencies (UNESCO, UNHCR, UNICEF, UN Tourism...),
- Persons already supported by a non-governmental organization
- Persons with refugee or asylum seeker status,
- Persons with disabilities,
- Persons, parents or guardians beneficiary from State social welfare,
- Persons beneficiary from a social support program financed by States, local authorities, businesses, foundations
- Persons beneficiary of a secondary merit base scholarship
- Persons beneficiary of a secondary scholarship
- Persons eligible for a state or federal grant
- Persons coming from the least developed countries as per the UN list with a focus on Sub-Saharan African countries, India and China.
- Demonstrated financial need (Income Documentation: Recent payslips or employment letter (if employed), Tax return (if available/applicable), Unemployment or social assistance documents, Bank statements showing limited financial resources. Proof of Household Situation :Family income breakdown (if dependent on parents or spouse), number of dependents or children supported.

4.) Requirements:

4.1 Designed to encourage companies to collaborate on major issues facing the tourism industry, the UN Social Innovation Challenge allows projects, entrepreneurs, scaleups, tourism companies, organizations and startups to present their ideas for the categories below. Applicants will be evaluated based on the following criteria by a dedicated committee, using the successful methodology applied in UN Tourism's Innovation programs:

- Innovation Potential: The originality and novelty of the proposed solution, focusing on how the innovation brings fresh perspectives and groundbreaking approaches to the tourism sector.
- Feasibility: The practicality and viability of implementing the solution, with consideration for technical, operational, and resource-based aspects that ensure its successful execution.
- Scalability: The potential for the solution to be expanded and applied on a larger scale, demonstrating adaptability to diverse markets and readiness for growth.
- Collaboration Synergy: The effectiveness and complementary strengths of the startup and corporate partnership, evaluating how the collaboration enhances the development and impact of the solution.

4.2 Categories:

1. Community-based Tourism:

This category seeks solutions that empower local communities across the globe. Innovations should focus on creating projects and platforms that actively involve local communities in cultural and tourism initiatives. These should prioritize women's participation in tourism, promote gender equality, encourage youth participation, and support rural development and agrotourism. Additionally, projects should emphasize ecotourism, the preservation of cultural heritage, and the promotion of creative industries, and gastronomy, ensuring that these initiatives generate inclusive economic opportunities—such as job creation in local communities and support for creative entrepreneurs—while preserving natural ecosystems, reducing carbon emissions, and promoting sustainable resource management.

2. Inclusivity & Accessibility:

This category welcomes innovations that enhance accessibility in tourism for people with or without disability, seniors and travellers with specific access requirements and their families. It looks for solutions aimed at designing accessible experiences, developing assistive technologies, or providing inclusive services. By fostering universal access to tourism facilities and products, these solutions create a more inclusive industry that benefits travellers and local communities while bringing along new sources of revenue for destinations.

3. Green Projects:

This category invites startups and tourism companies leading innovative initiatives that promote sustainability and regeneration across multiple areas. This includes environmentally responsible tourism solutions that reduce carbon emissions, enhance energy efficiency, manage waste or generate circular economy solutions, and promote sustainable and smart infrastructure. Additionally, initiatives that support the conservation of protected areas, like national parks and biosphere reserves, are encouraged, as well as efforts to contribute to the regeneration of ecosystems, biodiversity, and communities through tourism experiences.

4.3. Key Requirements

Selected initiatives will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Proven Innovation: Deployment of solutions that showcase significant technological advancements relevant to tourism's recovery and transformation.
- Scalability and Global Impact: The ability to scale solutions across markets, with clear potential for global adoption.
- Sustainability and SDG Alignment: Demonstrated commitment to sustainability, contributing to environmental conservation and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Collaboration Effectiveness: Strong partnerships between startups and corporations, ensuring that their collaboration results in enhanced innovation and market impact.
- Market Readiness and Customer Fit: Evidence of customer demand, market fit, and readiness for real-world implementation.
- Financial Stability: Robust financial backing and a solid business model to support long-term growth.

- Innovation Ecosystem Engagement: Participation in multi-stakeholder collaborations to ensure broader adoption and integration within the tourism sector.

Standout initiatives (6) that meet the criteria below will be invited to pitch their solutions at the "UN Tourism Tech Adventure" (TTA), providing a unique opportunity to present to an audience of industry stakeholders, investors, and policymakers.

4.4 Purpose

- Encourage the development of cutting-edge solutions for the modernization and recovery of the tourism sector through collaborative new business models and technologies, leveraging the strengths of both startups and large corporations.
- Gather representatives from tourism innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystems, including startups and large corporations, to share knowledge, business models, and success stories, fostering a collaborative environment for mutual growth and innovation.
- Stimulate synergies between public sector entities, startups, academia, corporations, investors, and accelerators.
- Foster a strong culture of investment in tourism with the participation of venture capital and corporate financing.
- Strengthen the Bahamas' positioning on the global tourism innovation map.

4.5. Exclusion from participation

Participants who initially or at any moment during the Challenge fail to comply with any of the requirements established in these terms and conditions shall be excluded from said Challenge and from any potential service or prize they would have received through their participation.

Employees of UN TOURISM may not participate. Minors are excluded from participating in the challenge.

UN TOURISM shall not be liable for any false, inaccurate, obsolete, incomplete or erroneous data submitted by the participants. In such cases, the participant shall be automatically excluded from the challenge and lose the right to the enjoyment of the prize.

UN Tourism reserves the right of accepting or removing from the Challenge, without prior notice, any participants who, in their opinion, act fraudulently, in an abusive manner, or in a manner contrary to the spirit of the Challenge, the principles of the United Nations or the law, third-party rights and/or good faith. Likewise, any participant or related person whose action may be contrary to the reputation or good name of UN Tourism may be removed from the Challenge. None of the abovementioned actions shall entitle any potential or excluded participants to make claims against UN TOURISM for any damages, expenses incurred, or otherwise.

5.) Application Process

Startups which comply with all the requirements described in section 4 "requirements" can apply to this challenge by selecting one of the categories of section 4.2. above.

Although projects commonly contribute to more than one objective, the category in which the positive impact is expected to be stronger should be selected. To become a Participant, applicants shall complete the Online registration form available on the website.

Applicants shall complete in English all required fields requested in the form. The data that participants provide when registering in the program must be true, and therefore any participants whose data is incorrect, or incomplete shall lose any option to participate in the program and to receive any service.

UN TOURISM will use the contact information provided through the online registration to contact participants. UN TOURISM will not be responsible for incomplete or incorrect contact information.

6.) Schedule:

September 2025:

Launch of Call for Applications: Announcement and opening of the application process for the startup Challenge.

September – December 2025:

Promotion and Outreach: Active promotion of the Challenge through various channels to attract high-potential startups.

Webinars and Info Sessions: Conduct webinars and information sessions to guide potential applicants on the application process and Challenge details.

8 December 2025:

Application Submission Deadline: Closing date for startups to submit their applications.

December 2025:

Initial Screening: Review and initial screening of all submitted applications to shortlist high-potential startups.

Announcement of Shortlisted Startups: Public announcement of the startups that have been shortlisted for the next round.

Quarter 1 of 2026:

On-site Mentoring & Final Pitch Challenge: Intensive preparation for the final pitch, including mock sessions and feedback from mentors. At the TTA Startups present their pitches to a panel of judges, including leading corporations, investors, and key stakeholders. Winners are announced, and strategic partnerships are facilitated.

Mid2026:

Post-Event Follow-Up: Follow-up with winners and participants to ensure ongoing support and track the implementation of their solutions.

7.) Selection Process and Criteria

7.1. A panel of experts from UN TOURISM and the partners of the Challenge will evaluate the proposals based on innovation, sustainability, inclusiveness, and green solutions for social impact.

7.2 Evaluation Criteria

Each criterion is scored from 1 to 4 with 1 being the lowest and 4 the highest:

Criteria	Details	Score de 1 a 4
1. Innovation and Creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Originality of the Project: Degree of innovation and creativity in the proposal. • Integration of Technology: Digitalization of the project and use of technologies. • Disruptive Business Models: Implementation of business models that could transform community tourism. • Prototype Implemented and Validated: Whether it has a robust or light prototype, but one that presents iteration and improvement opportunities with users/communities. 	
2. Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecological Impact: Measures to reduce carbon footprint and protect local ecosystems. • Conservation Practices: Strategies to promote biodiversity and the conservation of natural resources. • Use of Renewable Energy: Implementation of clean and sustainable energy sources. • Alignment with the SDGs: Contribution of the project to at least one of the SDGs established by the UN. • Impact Measurement: Availability of metrics and indicators to evaluate the impact on the SDGs. • Long-Term Sustainability: Potential of the project to generate lasting positive effects on the SDGs. 	
3. Benefits for the local community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Job Creation: Potential of the project to create jobs in the community. • Community Empowerment: Level of participation and decision-making of community members. • Improvement of Community Quality of Life: Contributions to the wellbeing and quality of life of local residents. • Building Resilience: Measures to strengthen community resilience to economic, social, and environmental impacts. 	
4. Scalability and Internationalisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion Potential: The project's ability to grow and be replicated in other areas and countries. • Adaptability to Different Contexts: Flexibility of the model to adapt to different communities and regions. • Resource Efficiency: Optimization of resource use for expansion. • Implementation Plan: Clarity and robustness of the execution plan and schedule. • Ability to Attract Partners: Potential to involve strategic partners and stakeholders and have clear investment amounts and return indicators. • Market Analysis: Understanding of the target market and its behaviour. 	

<p>5. In line with the SDG 4 - Education 2030 goal, targets and framework of action, Sommet Education Foundation will focus on scholarships for youth and talents from disadvantaged backgrounds and vulnerable situations as well as lifelong learning and women empowerment.</p>	<p>Finalists must meet at least one of the following eligibility criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persons being supported or enrolled already in a program provided by United Nations Program agencies (UNESCO, UNHCR, UNICEF, UN Tourism...), • Persons already supported by a non-governmental organization • Persons with refugee or asylum seeker status, • Persons with disabilities, • Persons, parents or guardians beneficiary from State social welfare, • Persons beneficiary from a social support program financed by States, local authorities, businesses, foundations • Persons beneficiary of a secondary merit base scholarship • Persons beneficiary of a secondary scholarship • Persons eligible for a state or federal grant • Persons coming from the least developed countries as per the UN list with a focus on Sub-Saharan African countries, India and China. • Demonstrated financial need (Income Documentation: Recent payslips or employment letter (if employed), Tax return (if available/applicable), Unemployment or social assistance documents, Bank statements showing limited financial resources. Proof of Household Situation :Family income breakdown (if dependent on parents or spouse), number of dependents or children supported. 	
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7.3. Based on the above-mentioned criteria, initial screening and filtering of all applying entities will be carried out through the UN Tourism website. The first pre-selection will yield between 30 to 50 startups and corporations that will go through the next step.

7.4. An Expert Committee will be appointed by UN TOURISM. It will be composed of an international network of investors, entrepreneurs and experts from other UN agencies, UN TOURISM Member States, Affiliate Members and other strategic allies. The Committee members will be decided based on the final number of applications received. This Committee will evaluate the filtered projects and will carry out the selection of each winner. Decisions made by the Committee are final.

7.5 The evaluation process is strictly based on the specific project, not on other initiatives developed by the participants or their previous background. If the evaluation of the specific project reveals irregularities, the application will be disqualified.

8.) Benefits

Benefits will include:

- 6 Scholarships offered by the SOMMET Education Foundation for the finalists of the Challenge (conditions see Annex I)
- Pitch at UN Tourism Demo Day for the 6 finalists

- Access to 90+ Investors;
- Access to Top Corporations in 160+ Countries;
- Curated mentorship programmes;
- Potential pilot project with private sector collaborators and institutions from the global network of UN Tourism;
- **Plug and Play benefits:**
 - Registered profile on Playbook;
 - Invitation to the Silicon Valley Summit (accommodation and flights to be covered by the startup);
 - Access to talent and synergies with Plug and Play's portfolio;
- Scholarships from the UN Tourism Online Academy.

9.) Industrial and Intellectual Property and Personal Data Protection

In case the processing of personal data is required due to the development of the Program, the organizers of this Program assume the following commitments:

- To use the data provided only for the purpose of the call.
- To ensure that authorized persons for processing personal data (UN TOURISM) will commit to respecting confidentiality and that the data will not be shared with third parties without the participants' authorization.
- To take all necessary measures to offer an appropriate level of security to the risks that may arise from processing personal data, ensuring their security and integrity, as well as preventing their alteration, loss, accidental or unlawful destruction, processing, disclosure, or unauthorized access.

Plug and Play and any other data processor will follow the protection obligations established by applicable regulations. The participant may exercise their rights of access, rectification, cancellation, and opposition by sending a postal mail to the Organizer's address provided in the header of these Terms and Conditions or by sending an email to comm@UNTourism.org to contact the Organizer, indicating the right they wish to exercise and attaching a copy of their Passport, National Identity Document (DNI), or equivalent documentation.

- The participant expressly consents, solely by participating in the Program presented here, that UN TOURISM may use their name for the purpose of announcing the winning project to the other participants, without any remuneration in their favor.

When submitting applications, project promoters guarantee that:

- The projects are original to their authors and/or they have free disposal or ownership over them. Participants agree to indemnify and hold the organizers harmless against any legal actions, claims, or demands regarding intellectual property rights or personal data of third parties related to the projects they present.
- If the projects result from the collaboration of several participants, the project will be treated as a collaborative work, with the resulting rights belonging to all of them as co-authors.
- The participant authorizes UN TOURISM to upload the project summaries to their respective official websites and agrees that website visitors will have access to such information according to the website's terms of use.
- The participant authorizes UN TOURISM to use the name and title of their project, with no time limit, to be mentioned on the website or for any actions or events related in any way to UN

TOURISM, as well as for inclusion in UN TOURISM's historical records and various media linked to the program.

- UN TOURISM will not claim any ownership of the information provided or any industrial or intellectual property it may contain. The participant does not assign any industrial or intellectual property rights derived from the projects to UN TOURISM.
- The participant expressly authorizes UN TOURISM to use their data to provide information about events and activities that may be of interest.
- Participants accept the transfer of their data to UN TOURISM after the competition ends.

10.) Final Considerations

This Program may be modified, interrupted, and/or cancelled if justified circumstances require it. Likewise, UN TOURISM reserves the right to declare all or some of the benefits void if no project meets the expected quality according to the decision team's criteria. UN TOURISM is not responsible for any deficiencies in the platform or problems related to computers, networks, or any other cause that may result in the loss, damage, or delay of entries.

11.) Applicable Law and Dispute Resolution

These Terms and Conditions will be interpreted in accordance with the general principles of international law, excluding any specific national law.

Nothing within these Terms and Conditions or related to them shall be understood as a waiver of UN Tourism's prerogatives and immunities.

12.) Use of Name, Emblem, and Logo

Participants will not use in any way the name, emblem, or official seal of UN Tourism or the United Nations, or any abbreviation of the name of UN Tourism or the United Nations, in relation to their businesses or any other domain, without prior written authorization from UN Tourism. Under no circumstances will authorization be granted to use the name, emblem, or official seal of UN Tourism or the United Nations, or any abbreviation of their names, for commercial purposes. This obligation does not end with the termination of the Challenge.

13.) Indemnity and Limitation of Liability

UN Tourism will not be responsible under any circumstances for loss, direct, indirect, or accidental damage, liability, or expense incurred or suffered by the participant and alleged to be a consequence of the Challenge or related to it.

Participants agree to indemnify UN Tourism and hold it harmless from any legal responsibility, claims, losses, damages, and expenses that may arise, directly or indirectly, as a result of this Challenge or in relation to it, including but not limited to any infringement of intellectual property rights or other rights of third parties related to the submitted projects.

14.) Acceptance of Terms and Conditions

Participation in the Challenge implies full acceptance of these Terms and Conditions. The failure to accept any part of these Terms and Conditions will result in non-participation in the challenge, and if selected and/or awarded, automatic renunciation of recognition.

Annex I: Conditions of the Scholarships offered by SOMMET Education

The Foundation shall offer to the Top (6) finalists of the Challenge:

The following full scholarship on one of the program listed below at Les Roches Marbella (hereinafter the “Contribution”) or similar depending on student’s profile, project and availability to study, as selected by the Foundation and agreed by the finalist:

- Executive Master of Advanced Studies in International Hotel Management
- Diploma of Advanced Studies in International Hospitality Management
- Diploma of Advanced Studies in Marketing Management for Luxury Tourism
- Executive Diploma of Advanced Studies in International Hotel Management
- Diploma of Advanced Studies in Golf Management

As further described in Annex II: Full scholarship for the purpose of this agreement shall mean 100% scholarship on the following fees:

- Tuition fees
- Full accommodation (single or double room depending on availability) and full board in the Marbella campus for the duration of the selected program
- Flights are not included
- Accommodation and board are not included for the duration of the internship or capstone project.

The finalist shall comply with all then-current Les Roches selection criteria and admissions requirements (including but not limited to academic requirements, English language level, immigration/visa requirements in the host country, health insurance...) and follow the guidance and support of the Les Roches’ regional enrolment team.

The Foundation and Les Roches will take the final decision in relation to all finalists and have the right to deny admission to finalists that they deem academically unsuitable or for any other reason whatsoever.

For the avoidance of doubt:

- this scholarship cannot be combined with any other scholarship or any other advantage that would be provided by Sommet Education institutions.
- The Contribution will be valid for three (3) intakes upon finalists announcement. Contributions may not be sold, transferred, refunded or rescheduled to dates not within the fulfilment period set forth above. The Foundation shall have no liability to any finalists who is unable to use the prize for any reason within the fulfilment period.
- UN Tourism shall appoint one (1) member of the Foundation as part of the Selection Committee for the Challenge

In line with the SDG 4 - Education 2030 goal, targets and framework of action, Sommet Education Foundation will focus on scholarships for youth and talents from disadvantaged backgrounds and vulnerable situations as well as lifelong learning and women empowerment.

The Foundation will therefore transparently target its support to:

- Persons being supported or enrolled already in a program provided by United Nations Program agencies (UNESCO, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNWTO...),
- Persons already supported by a non-governmental organization
- Persons with refugee or asylum seeker status,
- Persons with disabilities,
- Persons, parents or guardians beneficiary from State social welfare,

- Persons beneficiary from a social support program financed by States, local authorities, businesses, foundations
- Persons beneficiary of a secondary merit base scholarship
- Persons beneficiary of a secondary scholarship
- Persons eligible for a state or federal grant
- Persons coming from the least developed countries as per the UN list with a focus on Sub-Saharan African countries, India and China.
- Demonstrated financial need (Income Documentation: Recent payslips or employment letter (if employed), Tax return (if available/applicable), Unemployment or social assistance documents, Bank statements showing limited financial resources. Proof of Household Situation :Family income breakdown (if dependent on parents or spouse), number of dependents or children supported.