

**Guidance documents in support of the framework for the
International Year of Sustainable and Resilient Tourism 2027**

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**Capacity Building – Purpose and Criteria for Capacity Building Activities Supporting
the International year of Sustainable and Resilient Tourism 2027 (IYSRT 2027)**

This document provides complementary guidance on the purpose, scope and criteria governing capacity-building activities undertaken in the context of the International Year of Sustainable and Resilient Tourism 2027 (IYSRT 2027). It should be read in conjunction with the overall framework and guidance documents for the International Year, including the Guidance Note on National Committees and other thematic and operational guidance issued by UN Tourism.

For the purposes of the present document, the International Year of Sustainable and Resilient Tourism 2027 is hereinafter referred to as “the International Year”.

The United Nations defines capacity building as the process to develop and strengthen skills and abilities¹. It forms an integral component of the Agenda 2030 and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Understanding that potential target audiences of the capacity building initiatives undertaken within the framework of the International Year will be diverse, from both tourism and non-tourism related backgrounds, for the purpose of this present document, the term “capacity building” refers not only to developing new skills and abilities but also to enhance, strengthen and diversify existing capacities and knowledge.

The present document is intended to support National Committees, or as appropriate, any other national coordination mechanisms established for the same purpose, in identifying, authorising and overseeing capacity-building activities at national and local levels. It aims to ensure that such activities are people-centred, implementation-oriented and catalytic, and that they contribute meaningfully to the objectives, principles and legacy of the International Year, while allowing flexibility in line with national circumstances and priorities.

Capacity-building under the International Year serves as a central delivery mechanism for translating thematic priorities into strengthened institutional capacity and improved conditions on the ground.

This document does not establish a centralised approval mechanism, nor does it replace national decision-making processes or existing institutional arrangements. It provides a common reference framework to support coherence, quality, accountability and shared understanding across capacity-building activities undertaken under the International Year.

I. Capacity Building as a Delivery Mechanism

Sustainability is not a static objective but a continuous process requiring ongoing learning, adaptation and improvement. Resilience has become an essential and overdue dimension of this process, ensuring

¹ United Nations, Academic Impact, available at: <https://www.un.org/en/academic-impact/capacity-building> (26-02-2026)

that tourism systems are capable not only of withstanding shocks but also of advancing their development responsibly and in alignment with broader societal, economic and environmental objectives.

Under the International Year, this strengthened focus places particular emphasis on the capacities of people and institutions to translate principles into practice. Capacity-building therefore plays a central role in enabling implementation, strengthening coordination and supporting informed decision-making.

II. Core Criteria for Capacity-Building Activities Supporting the International year

To ensure coherence, quality and measurable impact across diverse national contexts, capacity-building activities supporting the International Year shall comply with the mandatory criteria set out below and integrate at least two of the optional criteria.

These criteria establish a common minimum standard while allowing flexibility in format, scale and implementation.

2.1. Mandatory Criteria

The following mandatory criteria apply to all capacity-building activities supporting the International Year. These criteria establish a common minimum standard to ensure coherence, quality and measurable impact across diverse national contexts.

1. Policy awareness and system literacy
Participants will jointly identify and discuss relevant national and local policies and strategies. They will examine how these policies connect to international frameworks such as the 2030 Agenda. The aim is to strengthen participants' understanding of how different levels of policy and governance, including both tourism-specific and tourism-related policies, interact (system literacy) and to ensure they are aware of existing policies and how these can align and support each other effectively (policy awareness and coherence).
2. Plurality of development approaches
The activity will present and discuss different established approaches and schools of thought which guide tourism development, management and governance (for example, market-based, product-based or community-led approaches). What are the short, medium and long-term objectives with regard to tourism development at the destination? Which approach would best facilitate achieving these objectives? How can sustainability and resilience be mainstreamed into this process? Rather than promoting a single viewpoint, it will encourage participants to reflect on context-specific trade-offs.
3. Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)-linked action commitment
Each participant will identify two to three relevant SDG targets and publicly commit to carrying out at least one concrete action within their institutional mandate that contributes to a chosen target within a defined timeframe (e.g. 6–12 months).
4. Knowledge multiplication
Participants will commit to sharing the key insights from the activity with at least 10 other people, using simple dissemination materials. This could include, where appropriate, a blog post, social media post referencing the official International Year hashtag, or engagement through print, radio or television media. Knowledge multiplication can be at the national or international level. Dissemination to both tourism-related and non-tourism related audiences is encouraged.

5. Reporting

The organisers of the activity will submit a short, standardised report confirming implementation of the criteria and summarising commitments planned to be implemented and dissemination undertaken. Modalities will be specified separately.

2.2. Optional Criteria

In addition to the mandatory criteria set out above, capacity-building activities supporting the International Year shall integrate **at least two of the following optional criteria**. These criteria are intended to reinforce practical application, cross-sector coordination and sustained impact beyond the duration of the activity. They allow flexibility in design while ensuring that activities contribute meaningfully to implementation and legacy.

1. Application to a real-world challenge

The activity will apply learning to a concrete national or local policy, planning or operational challenge, informed where possible by existing data, assessments or evidence within the participants' context.

Example:

- Applying resilience principles to an existing coastal tourism strategy;
- Reviewing how an existing destination management plan aligns with SDG 12.

2. Cross-sector engagement

The activity will include structured interaction with actors beyond the tourism administration (e.g. environment, culture, finance, local government, community representatives) to strengthen coordination and shared ownership.

3. Barrier identification and problem-solving

Participants will analyse existing tourism or tourism-related policies to identify at least one key institutional, regulatory or behavioural barrier to effective implementation and discuss practical, actionable approaches to address this barrier within their sphere of influence.

Example:

- Identify regulatory bottlenecks;
- Recognize gaps in institutional coordination;
- Identify budgetary or data constraints.

4. Development of a practical output

Participants will develop a short practical proposal, action outline, implementation roadmap or similar deliverable during the activity, designed to facilitate subsequent institutional uptake or policy integration. It can, but does not necessarily, be linked to (3) above.

Example outputs:

- A monitoring checklist;
- A policy recommendation brief;
- A stakeholder engagement plan.

5. Follow-up mechanism

The activity will include a follow-up exchange, reflection session or progress check within a defined period (e.g. 3–6 months) to support continued application of learning.

6. Inclusion and accessibility lens

Participants will assess how proposed actions contribute to improved inclusion, shared benefits and accessibility within tourism systems, including, where relevant, the participation of women, youth, local communities, indigenous peoples or small and

medium-sized enterprises and other local value-chain actors; the more equitable distribution of economic and social benefits; and improved physical, digital or informational accessibility for persons with disabilities and other specific needs.

7. Assessment of trade-offs

Participants will assess potential trade-offs and possible adverse effects associated with proposed actions and discuss mitigation or adjustment approaches to strengthen long-term sustainability and resilience.

III. Recognition and Reporting

Capacity-building activities that wish to be presented as supporting the International Year must receive prior authorization from the relevant National Committee.

If no National Committee exists, authorization shall be provided by the competent national tourism authority, or as appropriate, in line with national institutional arrangements.

In exceptional cases where neither mechanism is available, authorization may be granted by the UN Tourism Secretariat in consultation with the Member State concerned.

Capacity-building activities supporting the International Year must comply with all mandatory criteria and integrate at least two optional criteria outlined in this document.

Organisers of activities supporting the International Year shall submit a brief, standardised report to the authorizing body, confirming implementation of the applicable criteria and summarising key outcomes, participants' commitments, and dissemination efforts.

The authorising body shall ensure that the information in these reports is transmitted to, or made accessible by, the UN Tourism Secretariat for global aggregation, knowledge-sharing and visibility of activities supporting the International Year.

Aggregated information may be used to showcase good practices and to assess the overall legacy of the International Year. Specific reporting procedures, including formats and mechanisms to facilitate global visibility, will be provided separately in the communications guidance for the International Year.

Capacity-building activities implemented in cooperation with international organizations, development partners or other external entities, including those financed or co-financed by such partners, may also be presented as supporting the International Year, provided that they comply with the criteria in this document and are authorized according to the procedures above.

The involvement of external partners does not change the requirements established in this document. Reporting obligations remain applicable irrespective of the source of financing.