PROTECTING OUR FUTURE
Cook Islands Sustainable Tourism
Development Policy Framework & Goals

Cook Islands Tourism Corporation
Government of The Cook Islands
COOK ISLANDS SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT POLICY FRAMEWORK AND GOALS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
This Sustainable Tourism Development Policy Framework (STDPF) presents policies and related indicators that can inform a future National Tourism Strategy for the Cook Islands. The focus is on a monitoring and evaluation framework featuring specific policy guidelines and a set of indicators to measure the progress made towards achieving more sustainable forms of tourism development.

The overarching vision for the STDPF is drawn from Cook Islands Tourism: Tourism advances the well-being of resident Cook Islanders in a way that is socially acceptable, economically viable and environmentally sustainable. The Policy Framework is influenced by and draws on the SPTO Regional Tourism Strategy, the Cook Island’s National Sustainable Development Plan and current global best practice in sustainable indicator design. Most importantly the framework and indicators are informed by consultation with a wide range of tourism stakeholders from Rarotonga and Aitutaki. Those consulted range across a number of Ministries, industry sectors and NGOs and also include representatives of the community.

The discussion is framed by seven new sustainable tourism goals: (1) Ensure strong governance, leadership and management; (2) Perpetuate the strong essence of the Cook Islands culture; (3) Develop a strong and sustainable workforce and provide career pathways and employment opportunities for the Cook Islands people; (4) Ensure the protection of the pristine environment through sustainable practices; (5) Adopt a yield driven approach to tourism development – optimising sustainable economic outcomes; (6) Adopt marketing and destination development strategies that promote the unique products and experiences of the Cook Islands in a way that drives sustainable outcomes; (7) Ensure the health, safety and security of all visitors.

Policy guidelines and indicators are presented for each of these goals. A brief outline of what the policy focus is and why it is important is presented. This is followed by indicators designed to measure performance towards meeting policy guidelines. Further details on the indicators are provided in a framework presented towards the end of the document. The STDPF is designed to be a starting point for the development of a more sustainable tourism industry in the Cook Islands: as time progresses so will the range of guidelines and associated indicators.

1. INTRODUCTION: TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE TOURISM
Over the past 50 years the Cook Islands has been the focus of a number of tourism planning, strategy development and performance evaluation exercises. A review of the related literature points to a common theme: the need to balance the need for economic opportunity and growth through tourism development against the importance of sustaining the natural and cultural resources upon which both the people of the Cook Islands and the tourism industry depend.

Over this five decade period there is noticeable evolution in the sense of urgency in the message that is being delivered. While previous tourism strategies have addressed the importance of sustainability as a platform for tourism development there has been little true buy-in on the part of key stakeholders to the underlying concepts. This lack of buy-in partly reflects the fact that the environmental and cultural consequences of unsustainable development did not seem like impending dangers in the past, and partly also because there existed no cost effective way to measure the impacts and implications of the approaches being proposed.

Cook Islands tourism now finds itself scaling new heights in visitor arrivals and for the first time there is very real concern being expressed over the ability of national environmental and cultural resources to sustainably provide for the needs of the tourism industry and Cook Island residents. These challenges are not just evident in Rarotonga but are also present in Aitutaki and other outer islands. The steady (and at times rapid) increase in tourism development is putting a strain on the natural environment and stretching the ‘fabric’ of the society and culture of the Cook Islands.

Tourism is the key driver for economic development in the Cook Islands, contributing over 60% of its GDP. It is vital that a suite of sustainable tourism development policies and related indicators are put in place to build a stronger and more competitive tourism sector, one that can foster strong support from the local community. It is also critical that the policy priority is seen as something that underpins every activity in the tourism experience ‘chain’: encompassing initial marketing messages, the on-island experience and the return home.

The Sustainable Tourism Development Policy Framework has been informed by a broad consultation process with key tourism sector stakeholders in Rarotonga and Aitutaki (see the STDPF Resource Kit for details). The core message to emerge from the consultation is that the time is right for a serious sustainable tourism planning and development process to commence in the Cook Islands – this policy framework represents a starting point. The STDPF is also informed by an extensive review of current policy and related documentation and by global best practice in sustainable indicator development (see the STDPF Resource Kit).

The STDPF takes a SMART approach to indicator development and sustainable tourism planning – Specific; Measurable; Achievable; Relevant; Timely. Research lies at the heart of this approach. It is vital that planning for more sustainable tourism, along with related strategic investment in marketing and product development, be guided by robust evidence.
The overarching vision for the STDPF is drawn from Cook Islands Tourism:

Tourism advances the well-being of resident Cook Islanders in a way that is socially acceptable, economically viable and environmentally sustainable.

The report builds on the essence of the Kia Orana Values Program that lies at the heart of tourism in the Cook Islands.

**Kia Orana**

Kia Orana is the essence of the Cook Islands Maori people and their culture. Just two words, Kia Orana, share our personality, our way of life and our aspirations for the future. The phrase literally means may you live long, or may you have a long and fulfilling life. We want to help our visitors to the Cook Islands to learn how to live a long and fulfilling life the way we do.

**Meitaki**

Meitaki means everything is good, well, and thank you all in one. To be Meitaki is to be feeling great. It is how we share how happy we feel. This is how we want our visitors to feel while they are here with us.

**Mana Tiaki**

Tiaki means keeper or guardian and Mana translates as influence or power. It means guardianship with a sacred purpose, to preserve it for future generations. The keeper has the power or the ability to keep our culture and heritage alive. Mana Tiaki also refers to our responsibility as guardians of these islands and the environment.

The Cook Islands Sustainable Tourism Development Policy Framework is aligned to tourism objectives at regional (SPTO - South Pacific Tourism Organisation), national (NSDP – National Sustainable Development Plan) and sectoral (CITMC - Cook Islands Tourism Marketing Corporation Act 1998) scales. The document reflects the key messages underpinning these three documents – emphasizing the need to inspire growth and empower local people and promote and develop tourism in a manner that is economically viable, environmentally sustainable and socially acceptable. The range of indicators presented in the Cook Islands National Sustainable Development Plan represent an important broader backdrop to the tourism indicators presented in the STDPF.
MATENGA  Passion for our industry
Matenga is passion. We show passion for our island homes, our environment, our traditions and culture, our people and their dreams and aspirations. We share that passion with our visitors through authentic and genuine experiences that reflect the unique character of each of our islands.

AU AKATERANGA TIAKI – PRINCIPLES AS GUARDIANS
How we develop and grow the tourism industry in union with how we develop as a nation.

AKONO I TE AO RANGI  Preserve our natural environment
AKONO denotes using our natural resources sustainably to prevent loss or damage. We are responsible for the continued sustainable use and development of our natural resources.

PEU MAORI  Traditions, customs and lifestyle
The word PEU means not only tradition and custom but also lifestyle and culture. MAORI means indigenous, being a native of the land.

The traditions and lifestyle of people indigenous to the Cook Islands must be respected. Our visitors are immersed in our traditions and way of life as they come to appreciate and value our rich culture and history.

TURANGA EVANGELIA  Respect for all religious beliefs
TURANGA here refers to an important status, and EVANGELIA means religion.

We enjoy freedom of religion in the Cook Islands and so have deep respect for each other’s beliefs. We encourage courtesy and respect amongst our visitors for the religious customs of Cook Islanders while not imposing our own religious beliefs on others.

TUPURANGA TANGATA  Development of our people
TUPURANGA means to grow or develop and TANGATA means people.

Investing in our people is important to foster talent in the industry and community. Through this value we celebrate and reward the essential ingredient in the tourism recipe – our people.

iii. SUSTAINABLE TOURISM GOALS
The following Sustainable Tourism Goals underpin the STDTP and guide the structure of the policy framework:

GOAL 1  Ensure strong governance, leadership and management to guide the sustainable development of the tourism sector

GOAL 2  Perpetuate the strong essence of the Cook Islands culture to sustain the distinctiveness of its people and their identity

GOAL 3  Develop a strong and sustainable workforce and provide career pathways and employment opportunities for the Cook Islands people

GOAL 4  Ensure the protection of the pristine environment through sustainable practices

GOAL 5  Adopt a yield driven approach to tourism – optimising sustainable economic outcomes

GOAL 6  Develop marketing and destination development strategies that promote the unique products and experiences of the Cook Islands in a way that drives sustainable outcomes

GOAL 7  Ensure the health, safety and security of all visitors
A Whole of Government Approach will underpin future sustainable tourism development

An Executive Tourism Working Group is formed. The leaders of key Ministries that link to tourism meet on an agreed basis to discuss issues affecting this multi-faceted industry. This will raise broader awareness of tourism across government and assist in developing coordinated approaches to challenges and opportunities as they arise. A similar model, featuring a Tourism Advisory Group, is being adopted in Atutaki and could be developed in other outer islands as tourism opportunities grow.

- Executive Tourism Working Group is formed and meets twice a year. Tourism groupings develop more formal structures in the outer islands.

A Whole of Industry Approach supports future sustainable tourism development

To achieve sustainable tourism development requires a concerted and coordinated effort from industry. A clear tourism-focused industry voice needs to be developed at a national and individual island level. The Chamber of Commerce, Tourism Industry Council and other stakeholders must look to mechanisms that can provide a more effective single voice for the private sector in Rarotonga and the outer islands and which can attract interest from smaller operators and any business that is linked to tourism.

- A unified tourism voice for industry is developed through a new body or a combination of existing bodies.

A pathway toward mandatory accreditation of tourism operations in the Cook Islands.

The time has also come for a look at industry accreditation and the role that it can play in moving tourism towards a more sustainable development pathway. All tourism businesses should, by law, be accredited to ensure that standards are being met. It is acknowledged that the current accreditation scheme is voluntary, however a pathway toward mandatory accreditation should be put in place. Without such an approach true development of a more sustainable tourism industry will be difficult to achieve.

- Percentage of tourism businesses accredited
- Accreditation processes are strengthened and refined to link with the STDPF goals and indicators.

Reliable and robust research will underpin the STDPF and future tourism planning in the Cook Islands.

Good data allows decision-makers to monitor the key elements that determine destination attractiveness and competitiveness. The data provide a barometer through which to measure the performance and sustainability of the industry. Visitor, business and community surveys provide vital insights and can be adapted to gain deeper insights into Outer island tourism.

- Consistent running and provision of visitor, business and community surveys
- Survey design, implementation and analysis skills developed among CIT and Statistics Staff to facilitate future in-country analysis
- The future integration of tourism related questions in the Census
- Mandate collection of occupancy data as part of accreditation
- Develop outer island specific research

Broader awareness of the tourism industry among all stakeholders is developed

Community, business and government groups require a better understanding of tourism and the benefits, opportunities, costs and challenges that are associated with it. While research based data is useful it must be translated into usable outcomes and resources.

- Regular industry updates are available through the CIT website and other mechanisms (e.g. workshops, school visits) for all stakeholders

A User pays approach is tested and adopted to generate funds that can support key environmental and cultural policy initiatives relating to sustainable tourism development

There is a growing trend around the world to channel funds from visitors to help protect the resources that they consume. A voluntary scheme has been introduced in the Cook Islands and is known as the ‘Mana Tiaki Program’. If conducted in a transparent and non-intrusive way research shows visitors are willing to contribute.

- National and/or Island specific user payer systems are developed, tested and implemented
- Amount of revenue available for transparent use in environmental/sustainable development initiatives
The community experience of tourism must be better understood and valued alongside the visitor experience. Hosts are not just the property owners and restaurant staff who visitors interact with – they are the broader host community in all its forms. It is vital that communities throughout the Cook Islands benefit directly from tourism and that they are aware of the benefits (and potential costs) the industry brings. To understand community awareness of and links to tourism, it is vital to put in place ongoing community-focused research on any islands exposed to tourism development.

- **Community support for tourism.** The percentage identifying as strongly supportive or showing limited support.
- **Community impacts of tourism – local identification of benefits and costs (%)**

Maximise opportunities for visitors to understand and learn about heritage in all its forms. If community are to benefit from tourism it is vital that they have opportunities to link to the industry directly through appropriately developed and managed products and experiences. An increase in visitors engaging in appropriate forms of community-focused tourism will support the growth of local jobs and income and also enrich the visitor experience. This is particularly vital in the Outer Islands where the opportunity exists to build on dimensions of everyday life and culture that offer a point of difference to Rarotonga.

If cultural heritage sites are to be linked more effectively into the tourism experience they require protection, maintenance, and interpretation. Tourism can play an important role in assisting to fund such sites.

- **Percentage of visitors engaging in culturally immersive activities**
- **Visitor satisfaction with culturally immersive activities**
- **Number/percentage/range of tourism products and/or experiences featuring community/cultural elements**
- **Amount of user pay funding going to protect heritage sites**

The Kia Orana Values program is sustained and developed.

The Kia Orana Values program is a vital tool to reinforce the important links between community, culture, and sustainable tourism development. It is important that the early gains achieved by this program are sustained through ongoing investment. The success of the approach can be monitored through the community research discussed earlier in this section.

- **Funding continues for the Kia Orana program and grows with visitor numbers or as issues require intervention.**

Cultural heritage and intangible heritage are key elements of the tourism industry in the Cook Islands, underpinning the unique sense of place that the country, and each of its islands, offers visitors. Land lies at the heart of culture and visitors not only experience the terrestrial resources on offer but also the cultural dimensions, museums, creative arts and intellectual property that are important elements of the Cook Islands experience. While it is vital to ensure that everyday life and culture of local people is shared with visitors this must be done in an appropriate fashion that is informed by the community itself.
C. GOAL THREE: HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Human resources are critical to the future development and sustainability of the Cook Islands tourism industry. Tourism is, in turn, vital to the development of our people. Human resource development lies at the heart of Matenga or creating a Passion for the industry and it is this passion that can lead to fulfilling careers in Tourism.

- **Enhance local Cook Island Maori involvement in the tourism sector**

  There is no doubt that industry struggles to attract and retain Cook Island Maori workers. The inability to hire local residents leads to growing demand for international labour and there is increased pressure for the adoption of short term labour contracts/working holiday schemes. While the latter may be necessary in the longer term and during peak seasons, it is essential that the number of Cook Islands Maori staff grow in number – for both the visitor experience and the creation of work and income opportunities. There should also be opportunities communicated to the Cook Islands community overseas to encourage return migration.
  
  - Percentage of tourism workforce Cook Island Maori and number entering workforce
  - Number of school leavers entering the industry or moving into relevant training

- **Increase the role of women in tourism**

  It is important to find ways to engage women in tourism whether it be in the formal sector or through more informal activities such as handicraft production. It is critical also to ensure that women are well represented among entrepreneurs, managers and business owners within the sector. It will be essential to target women in the development of aspirational stories related to career pathways.
  
  - Percentage of tourism workforce that is female
  - Percentage of tourism businesses owned/managed by women

- **Improve the match between industry skill needs and training provision and grow and promote career pathways in tourism and related sectors**

  Tourism needs to feature across the school curriculum and needs to be introduced to children from a young age. It is vital that tourism specific case material be integrated into the broader curriculum above and beyond tourism specific courses. This approach needs to be backed up with a clearer sense being provided of the career pathways that can stem from longer term engagement in the sector.
  
  - Percentage of overall curriculum that features tourism content
  - Percentage of students having access to tourism programs at upper levels of study
  - Number of aspirational stories developed that feature tourism career pathways
  - Percentage of industry saying skills needs are being met from local labour

- **Develop employment data to support better decision making**

  Good employment data remains critical if we are to gain clearer insights into the industry’s performance and also the experience of its workforce.
  
  - Continue to develop the Business Confidence Index (BCI) to incorporate further relevant labour related information
  - Develop dimensions of the community attitude survey to gather insights into worker experiences and perceptions and/or implement a workforce satisfaction survey.
  - Conduct tracer studies to support the development of career pathway stories
D. ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

The Kia Orana value Akono i Te Ao Rangi – Preserve our natural environment - is central to the sustainable development of tourism in the Cook Islands. The potentially fragile nature of the resource base upon which tourism depends and the need for coordinated efforts across all agencies to manage environmental challenges must be addressed.

ENSURE THE PROTECTION OF THE PRISTINE ENVIRONMENT THROUGH SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

» General environmental quality in Rarotonga and Aitutaki is vital to tourism and the industry must play a role in protecting this resource.

Muri and Aitutaki Lagoons are a vital component of the Cook Island’s tourism industry with their images integral to marketing efforts and their waters hosting an array of visitor experiences and products. Recent algal blooms have highlighted the importance of collective evidence based approaches to solving environmental degradation and similar approaches need to be adopted for all challenges to environmental quality.

• Visitor comments on general environmental quality
• Percentage of businesses complying with Environmental Warrant of Fitness.

» The Environmental Impact Assessment process is applied to all new tourism products that have the potential to disrupt or damage the environment

As the range of tourism products develops it will be important to ensure that new products have an effective EIA conducted – this is especially the case for water or land based products that do not feature permanent structures (e.g. lagoon based activities and terrestrial trail development).

• The percentage of new tourism developments that complete an EIA

» Increased use of bicycles, hybrid/electric rental vehicles and public transportation by visitors and the tourism industry

Growing congestion on the roads of Rarotonga threatens the health and well-being of both visitor and resident alike. There is no question that traffic congestion significantly reduces the pristine Pacific allure of Rarotonga. Cycling in particular also enables a slower more interactive form of tourism. These are just some of the reasons to focus on shifting visitors towards bicycles, electric vehicles or public forms of transport. Over time this may become a marketable point of difference for the Cook Islands.

• percentage of visitors using car, cycle or public transport
• percentage of rental transport hybrid or electric.

» Reduce waste generated by tourism related activities and raise awareness

There are numerous initiatives being put in place to reduce waste and improve its management. The accreditation system represents an important tool to ensure that tourism operators minimize waste production while also educating visitors.

• percentage of businesses undertaking waste reduction approaches
• percentage of visitor comments on waste/rubbish

» Enhance water conservation through improved measures and education

There are concerns around current and future water availability on Rarotonga, Aitutaki and Atiu. It is vital that the industry contribute to efforts to reduce water use and the accreditation system represents a model to achieve these goals.

• percentage of businesses undertaking water conservation approaches, including visitor information/education

» Tourism development should occur in a fashion and at sites that minimises exposure to the risks of climate change.

The area of climate change and community resilience is dealt with in some detail by the NSDP. The critical issue for tourism is not just how buildings are constructed but where and certainly it is important to encourage investment away from areas that appear to be most vulnerable to sea level rise and cyclone damage.

• percentage of tourism plant and product located in highly vulnerable settings is reduced

» Continue to grow and enhance the Vaka Pride and other community focused environmental improvement programs

The Vaka pride program is an important initiative recently designed to enhance the engagement between communities and the environment they share with visitors. It has recently been expanded to Atutaki and represents an important tool to support Tourism’s contribution to the environment.

• Funding and expansion of Vaka Pride continues to grow.
• Scorecard of every Vaka Pride and Te Vaka O Ru competition.
E. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

As a major contributor to the Cook Islands economy tourism has a critical role to play in the achievement of the key NSDP goals of equity, income distribution and the alleviation of economic hardship. Tourism also has a vital role to play in shaping future rises in income, and is at the heart of attempts to increase real GDP and develop and promote economic stability.

» Tourism industry targets are focused on visitor yield not simply visitor arrivals

An integral part of having a sustainable tourism industry is receiving a healthy mix of visitors of different types and increasing yield from all groups. If visitor spend can be increased per day then it is not as necessary to grow visitor numbers at a potentially unsustainable rate. The key to enhancing yield is to provide good value for money – and this is achieved through developing unique and sustainable local experiences. Other variables of significance include return visitation, length of stay, satisfaction and likelihood of recommendation.

- Yield per visitor per day (spend in country / pre-paid) including yacht and cruise
- Percentages: return visitation; likelihood of recommendation; length of stay; satisfaction

» Grow and enhance linkages between tourism and local agriculture and handicrafts

Tourism can play an important role in supporting other sectors of the economy through the creation of linkages to key suppliers. Linkages to the agriculture and handicraft sectors are particularly important ways to generate benefits for local community and women.

- Trends in visitors comments on availability and quality of local food and handicrafts
- Visitor spend on local food and handicrafts
- Availability of local produce and cuisine on menus
- Development of food and agriculture related tourism experiences

» Build awareness of cruise and yacht sectors and develop effective yield driven strategies

While there is relatively limited cruise and yacht traffic to the Cook Islands there is little doubt that this is an area with potential for future growth and that needs it needs be managed carefully.

- Develop data collection strategies for yacht and cruise visits
- Build local stakeholder awareness of cruise/yacht opportunities (percentage aware)
- Focus on increasing yield from yacht/cruise visitors (spend per visit)

» Enhance economic development in the Outer islands within the constraints of local labour, infrastructure and environmental resources

The International Visitor Survey (IVS) has revealed, from the perspective of both visitor yield and length of stay, the national economic value of developing outer island tourism. There is a particularly pressing need to build awareness and knowledge of the industry in the outer islands and a need to build human resources/capacity in a way that can link tourism to the cultural and environmental diversity found in these destinations.

- percentage of visitors that travel to Outer islands
- Outer island tourism product development – total number of products; number of products that feature local culture, way of life; food etc
- Visitor Yield in Outer islands – spend per visitor per day
- Outer island research, for example development of ‘spin-off’ questions in the IVS

» Human resource development lies at the heart of Matenga or creating a Passion for the industry and it is this passion that can lead to fulfilling careers in Tourism.

In attracting and/or facilitating investment it is critical that relevant agencies evaluate the proposal against the key infrastructural and human resource constraints that characterise the local context. It will also be important to evaluate future investment performance in terms of jobs, income, linkage creation and other sustainable tourism development indicators included in accreditation processes.

- Investment prioritized and evaluated on the basis of local infrastructure availability, longer term economic performance/local benefits and evaluated through accreditation.
GOAL #6

ADOPT MARKETING AND DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES THAT PROMOTE THE UNIQUE PRODUCTS AND EXPERIENCES OF THE COOK ISLANDS IN A WAY THAT DRIVES SUSTAINABLE OUTCOMES

F. MARKETING AND DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

In order to achieve the goals outlined above it is vital that the focus not just be on what happens once the visitor arrives – but also how their expectations are shaped before they arrive and what destination development supports the visitor experience.

» Focus marketing and product development initiatives on increasing visitor yield rather than simply bed nights or arrivals.

Destination marketing and product development must work hand in hand to provide the type of experiences that can enhance visitor satisfaction, increase yield and support more sustainable development outcomes.

- Audit marketing materials to evaluate the presence of material focused on local food, handicrafts, cultural and other areas prioritised for local linkage. Also audit marketing of outer island experiences.
- Review product development initiatives - what percentage are focused on products that will generate high levels of local economic linkage and local employment. Ensure that information is available in emerging market languages that reflects the broader sustainable tourism development dimensions outlined in this framework.

» Focus on (RoMI) as well as Cost of Acquisition (CoA)

While CoA is a valuable tool to reveal the cost per visitor of marketing spend the introduction of a Return on Marketing Investment approach adds an additional dimension. In effect this approach factors in the differential income generated by specific markets: thus while cost of acquisition may be relatively high for long haul travellers their per-person spend is higher than shorter haul visitors.

- Introduce a simple RoMI measure for different markets to complement existing CoA analysis.

» Tourism planning and policy making will embrace outer island dimensions of the Cook Islands tourism product

There is considerable opportunity to develop and market stories around everyday life and cultural/environmental experiences in the Outer islands. There is a need to tell these unique stories and to build on the interest expressed by visitors in engaging in deeper cultural experiences. Such an approach not only builds income and employment opportunities on the Outer islands but also increases national length of stay and overall yield.

- Increasing amount/percentage of information and marketing materials featuring Outer island experiences.
- Relative marketing spend on Outer island dimensions increases over time

» Continue to develop and diversify air linkages to international markets and grow domestic service within the Cook Islands. Ensure that any such development is first assessed against existing infrastructure and local capacity.

Air links are the life blood of the tourism industry in the Cook Islands both in terms of international links and the domestic distribution of travellers. It will be important to develop links in the future to ensure sustainable visitor flows and diversify markets and gateway access. The recent growth in flights has shown, however, that care must be taken to prepare for and manage increased numbers before they arrive, and due consideration must be given to the following features:

- Can existing resources and infrastructure handle projected visitor arrival increases?
- If a new or emerging market is being developed are their sufficient trained workers and business owners and sources of information to be able to manage the increased numbers?

» Work with industry and other stakeholders to develop disaster response marketing strategies to enable a fast response to devastating events.

Natural disasters, disease and terrorism all represent distinct threats to the demand for Cook Islands tourism. It is vital that worst case scenario driven strategies be developed and prepared for in the event of such an occurrence. Coordinated use of social media and other platforms by government, industry and community will be required to provide clear and consistent information and to encourage post-event ‘bounce-back’ as soon as possible. Specific strategies should also exist for Outer islands.

- Development of new/enhancing of existing media response plans at a national and island specific scale.

GOAL #7

INITIATING AND DEVELOPING TURIS+M DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS THAT DRIVE SUSTAINABLE OUTCOMES

TOURISM POLICY GUIDELINES AND INDICATORS
G. HEALTH, SAFETY AND SECURITY

The health and well-being of the visitor to the Cook Islands is a critical factor in the development of a more sustainable tourism industry. While there are many facets that can drive policy and indicator development in this area the focus here is on the key issues highlighted and prioritised in consultations.

» Tourism plays a key role in lobbying for and supporting the creation of a more coordinated emergency response system

Emergency response is a critical area for tourism – not just in terms of cyclone and other natural disaster response - but also in terms of any form of unexpected tourism related accident. There are currently 3 groups involved in emergency response: Police, Emergency Management Cook Islands and the rescuers themselves (airline, vessels). Coordination between these groups could be improved – perhaps in the form of an integrated First Response Centre. A disaster management plan is also an essential component of the all industry accreditation approach.

• Review of emergency incident response time and effective outcome of responses
• Cyclone/disaster plans in all businesses

» All visitors are well prepared for the Cook Islands’ health and safety environment.

There is a need to focus on the preparation of visitors for their stay in the Cooks – do they have medical insurance? Are they aware that an ambulance trip will cost money? With increasing numbers of visitors booking through the internet is should be a priority to make this information available to visitors through easily accessible means.

• Review and audit online resources to ensure a clear and consistent message is reaching visitors about health insurance and potential health related costs

» Compulsory helmets for all visitors renting a motorcycle

In support of the NSDP’s focus on improving health and promoting healthy lifestyles it is important that efforts are made to reduce health related incidents for visitors. There is a particular opportunity to focus on reducing injuries through driving accidents and particularly motorcycle injuries. It will be important for marketing materials to reflect this focus and for rental companies and police to assist in enforcement.

• Number of visitor road accidents is reduced
• Visitor admissions/use of ambulance is reduced

» Reducing the incidence of stray dogs and related accidents

If visitors are to be encouraged to leave their vehicles and walk or cycle it is essential that continued efforts be made to reduce the incidence of dogs running loose onto footpaths and roads. A reduction in stray dogs will also have an impact on road related accidents for cyclists and scooter riders and will increase the likelihood of localised economic interactions.

• Percentage of visitors reporting negative experiences with dogs

» Recording crime against tourists and reducing the prevalence of such crime.

Police statistics on tourist related crime will be beneficial in developing the tourism sector. Such data not only indicate where safety measures and education are needed but also represent a barometer of community tensions/attitudes towards tourism.

• Regular (6 monthly) updates on core crime statistics relating to tourism
### 4. MONITORING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

#### Whole of Government/Industry approach: Number of meetings per year
- Bodies are formed by Government and Industry to enable more coordinated responses
- 1-2 meetings by end of 2017Govt and Industry groups

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<tr>
<td>User-pays funds for environment protection</td>
<td>Funds generated through tax or donation based systems</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Fund in place and working at local/national scales. Amount generated increases over time.</td>
<td>Fund</td>
<td>Regular reports</td>
<td>Range of stakeholders from NGO through to Govt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### CULTURE AND HERITAGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Target &amp; Goals</th>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Freq. Report</th>
<th>Key Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community awareness of and support for tourism (%)</td>
<td>Awareness of and support for the tourism industry at an individual and community level</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Strengthening awareness of the industry</td>
<td>Comm. Survey</td>
<td>B-Annual</td>
<td>CIT and other partner Ministries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community involvement in tourism %</td>
<td>Direct involvement in tourism or exposure to it</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Increased direct and/or indirect involvement with the industry</td>
<td>Comm. Survey</td>
<td>B-annual</td>
<td>CIT and other partner Ministries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community perceived impacts of tourism %</td>
<td>Perceived impact on income, Quality of life etc</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Increased sense of positive impacts, reduction in negative perceptions</td>
<td>Comm. Survey</td>
<td>B-annual</td>
<td>CIT and other partner Ministries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitor engagement with cultural experiences</td>
<td>Visitor interaction with key cultural activities</td>
<td>2013 activity rates</td>
<td>Growth in % of visitors undertaking culturally immersive activities</td>
<td>IVS</td>
<td>Qtrly</td>
<td>CIT and other partner Ministries/users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitor satisfaction with cultural experiences</td>
<td>Visitor interaction with key cultural activities</td>
<td>2013 satisfaction rates</td>
<td>Sustained yield increase of 4%</td>
<td>IVS</td>
<td>Qtrly</td>
<td>CIT and other partner Ministries/users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitor attitudes to local people</td>
<td>How do community and local people feel the appeal of aspects of visit</td>
<td>2012/3</td>
<td>Increase in those stating local people and community dimensions were appealing aspects of visit</td>
<td>IVS</td>
<td>Qtrly</td>
<td>Statistics, CIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of products offering cultural experiences</td>
<td>The range of cultural products available to the visitor.</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Increased number of available products with cultural focus</td>
<td>CIT</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>CIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of User pays funding for heritage</td>
<td>The amount of user pays funding that is transferred to heritage attractions</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Increased amount of user pays funding to heritage</td>
<td>Fund agent</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>CIT, Fund agents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kia Orana Values</td>
<td>Kia Orana program continues</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Increased budget and outcomes</td>
<td>Kia Orana data</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>CIT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Target &amp; Goals</th>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Freq. Report</th>
<th>Key Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% Cook Island Maori/ Female workers</td>
<td>% of tourism workforce that are Cook Island Maori/female</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Increase the percentage number of Maori/women in the workforce</td>
<td>BCI</td>
<td>Semi-Annual</td>
<td>CIT, other Ministries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of curriculum featuring tourism content</td>
<td>What % of the curriculum features tourism cases/themes?</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>To increase the percentage of school programs that feature tourism in some way</td>
<td>Edu data</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>CIT, Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of students having access to tourism programs</td>
<td>What % of students have access to tourism programs</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>To increase availability of tourism focused courses at secondary level</td>
<td>Edu data</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>CIT, Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of school leavers entering the industry or further training</td>
<td>What is the transition from school into the sector or training</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Grow number of school leavers moving into training or industry</td>
<td>Edu Data, Tracer study</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>CIT, Education, CIT, Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of industry saying skills needs are met</td>
<td>How does industry feel about the match between demand and supply</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Increased business confidence in ability to have labour/training needs met</td>
<td>BCI</td>
<td>Semi-Annual</td>
<td>CIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of career pathways stories</td>
<td>A series of career pathway stories are developed</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Build stories of success and development through tourism, ensure that mix of skills, careers, gender etc are portrayed</td>
<td>Web audit, Tracer Study</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>CIT, Education, Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of businesses owned/managed by women</td>
<td>% of local tourism operations owned/managed by women</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Increase the percentage number of women owning, managing businesses in the sector</td>
<td>BCI</td>
<td>Semi-Annual</td>
<td>CIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop labour force research and data</td>
<td>Increase data collection activities around labour force</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Build on data collected from other sources. Increase the range of data</td>
<td>BCI</td>
<td>Cont.</td>
<td>CIT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
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<th>Key Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visitor comments on environment (+ -)</td>
<td>Visitor feedback on environmental dimensions of their visit – qualitative &amp; quantitative</td>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>To reduce negative feedback on environmental quality</td>
<td>IVS Cont. Qtrly</td>
<td>CIT and other partner Ministries/users</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of visitors using car, cycle or public transport</td>
<td>Percentage of visitors who make use of these transport forms.</td>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>Greater public transport/ zero emission transport, fewer car rentals</td>
<td>IVS Cont. Qtrly</td>
<td>CIT and other partner Ministries/users</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of rental transport hybrids or electric</td>
<td>Percentage of vehicles for rent that are zero emission or electric</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Increasing % of rental vehicle stock is electric</td>
<td>Rental Annual</td>
<td>CIT and Industry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of tourism developments complying with EIA standards</td>
<td>Trails, underwater activities etc</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Apply EIA to all tourism products and experiences that are not fixed in site</td>
<td>Accred Annual</td>
<td>CIT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of businesses with water conservation measures</td>
<td>Dual flush toilets and other approaches and tourism education</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Part of accreditation. Expand range of businesses accredited</td>
<td>Accred Annual</td>
<td>CIT and Accreditation program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of visitors commenting on waste</td>
<td>Visitors discuss least appealing aspects of visit – incl. waste</td>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>Reduction in % of negative comments on waste/garbage</td>
<td>IVS Qtrly Annual</td>
<td>CIT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of tourism enterprises engaged in waste minimization incl. education</td>
<td>Business actively engages in cutting waste and educates clients</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>100% engagement by industry in waste minimization Accreditation</td>
<td>BCI, Ind Assoc Accred Annual</td>
<td>CIT Accreditation program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of tourism plant in areas vulnerable to climate change</td>
<td>Reduce % of tourism plant located in places vulnerable to GCC</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Build GCC resilient and well planned industry that</td>
<td>Co Office etc As needed</td>
<td>CIT/ Co Office/ Infrastructure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaka Pride program expands and budget increases Improvements in Vaka Pride scorecard</td>
<td>Strengthening local program/ initiatives to enhance environment Vaka Pride scorecard results</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Number of vaka pride participants grows Improve scores, improved environment</td>
<td>CIT Annual</td>
<td>CIT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visitor Yield</td>
<td>Visitor spend per person per day</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Visitor spend increase of 3-4%</td>
<td>IVS Cont. Qtrly</td>
<td>CIT and other partner Ministries/users</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return Visitor % Length of Stay etc</td>
<td>Expressed desire to return Av. L. of stay</td>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>Consistent or rising % return % Rising L of Stay</td>
<td>IVS Cont. Qtrly</td>
<td>CIT and other partner Ministries/users</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business supply linkages</td>
<td>Business data collected</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>BCI Increased linkages to local economy</td>
<td>BCI Semi-annual</td>
<td>CIT, CoC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment impacts</td>
<td>Measurement of the broader economic benefits of investment</td>
<td></td>
<td>Time of investment Local employment Local economic linkages</td>
<td>Accreditation As needed</td>
<td>CIT, BTIB, Accreditation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitor Comments on availability of local food/Handicrafts</td>
<td>Review trends in comments from visitors that focus on food/Handicrafts</td>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>Increase in positive feedback and decrease in negative</td>
<td>IVS Qtrly Annual</td>
<td>CIT, other ministries (eg Agriculture)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitor spend on local food/ handcrafts</td>
<td>Data on in country and prepaid spend</td>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>Increased spend on local food</td>
<td>IVS Qtrly Annual</td>
<td>CIT, other ministries (eg Agriculture)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of food experiences &amp; products</td>
<td>The number of tourism offerings that focus on agri-tourism</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Increased role of food and food production in visitor experiences</td>
<td>Accred BCI Annual</td>
<td>CIT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local food linkage</td>
<td>Local food and cuisine in menus</td>
<td>2015/16 audits</td>
<td>Sustained increase in local food in menus</td>
<td>Web audit Cont. Qtrly</td>
<td>CIT and other partner Ministries/users</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cruise/Yacht Yield</td>
<td>Spend in country by cruise and yacht visitors</td>
<td>Data collection required 2018</td>
<td>Implement ongoing data collection</td>
<td>IVS adapt Cont. Qtrly</td>
<td>CIT and other partner Ministries/users</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of cruise and yacht tourism</td>
<td>Support for/ awareness of cruise/yacht tourism</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Implement ongoing data collection</td>
<td>CIS Bi-Annual</td>
<td>CIT and other partner Ministries/users</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outer island research</td>
<td>Enhanced research to inform decisions</td>
<td>2012/13 Survey data mining</td>
<td>Data on the tourism industry in the outer islands</td>
<td>BCI Ongoing</td>
<td>CIT, Local Government</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitor Yield in Outer islands</td>
<td>Visitor spend in outer islands</td>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>Visitor spend increase of 4%</td>
<td>IVS Cont. Qtrly</td>
<td>CIT and other partner Ministries/users</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of visitors travelling to Outer Is.</td>
<td>Flow of visitors to outer islands</td>
<td>2012/13 flows</td>
<td>Steady increase based on infrastructure</td>
<td>IVS Pass-port Qtrly Annual</td>
<td>CIT and others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Marketing and Destination Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Return on marketing investment</td>
<td>Marketing investment; yield per person</td>
<td>2015/16 data</td>
<td>Increase RoMI by specific market sources</td>
<td>IVS, CIT</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>CIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing materials support local linkage creation</td>
<td>Extent marketing materials promote linkages to food, culture</td>
<td>2017 web audit</td>
<td>Greater cultural content in web marketing campaigns</td>
<td>Audit</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>CIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Marketing materials support outer islands</td>
<td>To what extent do marketing materials promote outer islands</td>
<td>2017 web audit</td>
<td>Greater outer island content in web and other marketing campaigns</td>
<td>Web-Audit</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>CIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing materials provide sustainable tourism info in emerging market languages</td>
<td>Relevant material to support sustainable tourism is available in emerging market languages</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Build the range and amount of content available in emerging market languages</td>
<td>Web audit</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>CIT and other partner Ministries/Users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop/Refine Rapid Marketing Response plan for Disasters</td>
<td>Enhance/create stronger plans to respond to disaster scenarios</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Build the range and strength of possible responses</td>
<td>CIT</td>
<td>Bi-Annual</td>
<td>CIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%/No. of product that is highly linked to local economy</td>
<td>Product dev. supports economic linkage in areas</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Growth in number and range of highly linked, culturally immersive product</td>
<td>Accred</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>CIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%/No. of product that is outer island focused</td>
<td>Product dev. supports Outer Is. and culturally immersive tourism</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Growth in number and range of outer island product offerings</td>
<td>Accred</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>CIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased air linkages international and domestic</td>
<td>Build stronger and sustained air links BUT grow links only at a rate that reflects current capacity</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Review all proposed air links in terms of impact on current carrying capacity for tourism. Grow all air links in a considered fashion</td>
<td>Various</td>
<td>As needed</td>
<td>CIT, all related Ministries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of User pays funding for heritage</td>
<td>The amount of user pays funding that is transferred to heritage attractions</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Increased amount of user pays funding to heritage</td>
<td>Fund agent</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>CIT, Fund agents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Health, Safety and Security

<table>
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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disaster Response effectiveness</td>
<td>Performance in response to emergency situations</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Improving response effectiveness</td>
<td>Emer serv.</td>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>CIT and emergency response services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of operators with disaster plans in place</td>
<td>Businesses have clear and workable cyclone/disaster response plans</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Increased number of businesses with plans – rising to 100%</td>
<td>CIT Acc.</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>CIT Accreditation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online info. easily available on health care costs etc</td>
<td>Increase the number of visitors aware of the health care costs in the Cook Islands</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Prepared visitors for Disasters</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>CIT Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitor read accidents</td>
<td>Vehicular and cycle accidents reported</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Implement ongoing data collection</td>
<td>Police reports</td>
<td>Semi-annual</td>
<td>Police, CIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of visitors using helmets</td>
<td>Visitors using helmets when using motor cycle and bicycle</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Reduce number of visitor complaints</td>
<td>Rental Cos</td>
<td>Semi-annual</td>
<td>Rent vehicle sector, CIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitor admissions/use of ambulance</td>
<td>Records of visitors using medical services</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Increase the % of tourism plant that features access friendly design and increase access related information available online</td>
<td>Intaff CIT</td>
<td>B-Annual</td>
<td>Intaff CIT Accreditation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of new and existing tourism businesses that are access friendly</td>
<td>Increase the accessibility of the Cook Islands tourism industry</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Increase the % of tourism plant that features access friendly design and increase access related information available online</td>
<td>Intaff CIT</td>
<td>B-Annual</td>
<td>Intaff CIT Accreditation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Facilities and buildings with access features</td>
<td>Accessibility audit – access and internal fittings</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>More information provided to the visitor about accessibility options</td>
<td>Phys. Audit</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>CIT, Intaff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of properties highlighting accessibility in marketing</td>
<td>More information provided to the visitor about accessibility options</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Ensure sustained development in accessibility for visitors</td>
<td>Web audit</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>CIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction in visitor reports of dog related issues</td>
<td>Stray dogs annoy visitors on the road and foot paths</td>
<td>2012 onward</td>
<td>Reduction in IVS data showing visitor dissatisfaction with stray dogs</td>
<td>IVS</td>
<td>Qtrly</td>
<td>CIT Esther Honey Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitor related crime %</td>
<td>Tourism related crime reported to the police</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Reduce in crime and improved community–visitor relations</td>
<td>Police Crime Stats</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Police, CIT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A focus on sustainability must lie at the centre of all future tourism planning in the Cook Islands. This Sustainable Tourism Development Policy Framework represents a simple starting point upon which a more comprehensive and better resourced Tourism Master Plan for the Cook Islands can be developed.

Whether tourism continues to grow in the Cook Islands, or experiences a downturn, challenges will inevitably be faced in attempting to achieve more sustainable forms of development.

The critical thing is to be able to respond to these challenges in a resilient and effective fashion. To do so requires a coordinated effort across government and industry and a realisation that “we are all in this together”. There is a need for a common focus and vision backed up by robust evidence-based indicators of industry performance.

While the recent growth in visitor numbers has been welcomed by many, and has created important income and employment opportunities for the country, there is no question that both industry and community have concerns about the ability of current levels of infrastructure and labour to meet visitor demand.

There is also a strong sense that “Tourism needs to provide more opportunities for local people” and that a “Closer partnership between tourism and community is needed”. In this respect it is vital to not only monitor the environmental and economic performance of the industry but also its ability to create sustained benefits for the local population.

In the end what is critical is “trust, understanding and responsibility” between the visitor and the host. Underpinning both the Kia Orana Values program and the STDPF is the core principal of Tupuranga Tangata – Development of our people.

It is critical that the Cook Islands community see the benefits of tourism flowing into jobs, income and opportunity and that the industry does not degrade local quality of life: if tourism works for the people, then the people will work for tourism.

CONCLUSION