

# Introduction



## Message from the Port of Seattle

When the Port of Seattle introduced its Century Agenda in 2012, it created a clear vision for

the organization to be a positive force for Washington's economy and its people. Among the ambitious goals outlined in the plan are promoting tourism, becoming the greenest port in North America, and becoming a model for diversity, equity and inclusion.

With those goals in mind, the Port's tourism department sponsored the State of Washington Tourism's Responsible Outdoor Travel Summit in 2022 to advance conversations around tourism's impact on the environment, destination stewardship and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). The Port brought in the internationally recognized experts at the Travel Foundation and Tourism Cares to help bring those messages to Washington's tourism industry.

Developing this Responsible Tourism Handbook is a follow-up on commitments made at the Summit to take action. In it, you will find inspiration and practical guidance on how your organization, region, or community can help usher in a better version of the tourism industry that works for all Washingtonians.

We hope the contents of this handbook will be a foundational tool that will help your organizations drive the positive impact of tourism not just economically but also environmentally and socially.



## Message from State of Washington Tourism

Washington's statewide tourism program was re-built amid the COVID-19 pandemic, informed by

tourism's deep need for recovery, visitation management and stewardship planning and development.

State of Washington Tourism (SWT) adopted a strategic position around responsible travel, beginning with a values-based destination brand platform and consumer campaigns targeting responsible travelers. Robust destination development and management programs were created to bolster the tourism industry and rural and underserved communities. And SWT inaugurated the Responsible Outdoor Travel Summit, with foundational sponsorship from the Port of Seattle, to convene thought leaders in travel and tourism, recreation and conservation.

We look forward to continuing and expanding these partnerships and hope this Responsible Travel Handbook provides a framework for your initiatives.



## Message from the Travel Foundation and Tourism Cares

Congratulations on taking this step! At the Travel Foundation our mission is to support tourism leaders like you in having the tools you need to ensure your community is truly benefiting from tourism. And at Tourism Cares, we unite the travel industry to be a catalyst of positive social, environmental and economic impact for the people and places of travel. This handbook, alongside the associated worksheet exercises, offers you the building blocks to help you identify ideal outcomes and incorporate tested approaches to creating a more responsible, inclusive, sustainable, and vibrant future of tourism in your community.

What the COVID-19 pandemic taught us, and what our changing economic, environmental, and social



Washington Beer Awards, Yakima Valley, Courtesy of State of Washington Tourism

challenges are constantly reminding us, is that we have to be prepared for uncertainty. If tourism is to do its part in contributing to vitality and prosperity, it is essential to support the small businesses that fuel the travel experience, the environmental resources, and the diverse and vibrant communities that we all depend on. It will also be critical to innovate and fund adaptation strategies which respond to changing trends and expectations from local, national and global influences, as well as develop a deep understanding of the varied impacts tourism has on our communities.

There are three crucial factors to this adaptation which we cover in this handbook.

- First, the shift towards a stewardship model, where community needs are placed at the center of tourism planning and management.
- Second, new, balanced measures of success beyond a focus on visitor numbers to a focus on the value that tourism brings, including its contribution and impacts on the natural environment and community wellbeing.
- Third, collaboration - we all need to align towards more collective action.

This handbook explores these three elements more deeply and offers advice and tips that will help you build resilience into your organization's plans and day-to-day decision making. The time to adapt is now. By working through this manual and by coming together to solve the challenges we all face, we can help to ensure that tourism is part of the solution, and truly a force for good for our communities and our world.

## Aims and Goals of this Handbook

This guidebook provides details and tools that can help tourism organizations including destination marketing and management organizations (DMOs), government



Mudhouse Pottery painting, Courtesy of Visit Issaquah

departments and agencies, chambers of commerce, trade and industry associations, and tourism businesses within the state of Washington to develop and promote responsible tourism and enhance knowledge and skills in destination management.

The handbook provides tourism professionals and volunteers alike with professional development resources that can help them understand and deliver on new and evolving challenges and opportunities in sustainability, responsible outdoor recreation, diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility and destination stewardship.

This handbook will assist organizations to ask and answer the important questions and provides guidance on identifying and addressing impacts through action planning, better enabling them to respond to local and global trends and becoming more resilient to future shocks.

In particular, it aims to:

- Build capacity of organizations responsible for tourism marketing and management.
- Equip readers with the knowledge and skills required to develop action plans.
- Build overall destination stewardship capacities
- Address destination vulnerabilities.
- Build resilience to the threats of climate change.
- Ensure ongoing impacts are understood and strategies are in place to better manage future impacts.
- Facilitate the development of tourism product offers to meet changing market demands.

Vancouver Washington, Courtesy of Traveling While Black

- Establish the foundation for enhancing tourism products and marketing in line with equity and destination stewardship principles.
- Create greater opportunities for all community members to benefit from tourism.
- Build stronger and resilient local supply chains.
- Align marketing and promotional strategies with impact management, inclusivity, and stewardship.
- Foster greater collaboration amongst tourism organizations and community members.

## How to Use this Handbook

This handbook provides a wealth of up-to-date information and practical guidance to equip readers with the knowledge and tools needed to develop an action plan – and start taking action immediately.



### WORKSHEET

**There is a companion workbook that includes worksheet activities to support you to put the information and learning into practice. When you see this icon, that's an indicator that there is a companion worksheet for that section.**

It starts with background information on the concepts of global challenges facing tourism, diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA), sustainable tourism standards and destination stewardship principles. An overview of the current situation in Washington tourism is provided for context as well as lists of organizations doing

work within each important area of responsible travel in the state so that organizations can turn to local partners to get started on new initiatives right away. An in-depth section on DEIA is included and readers can choose to go straight there if that is the immediate priority. Likewise, readers may choose to focus on sections regarding managing impacts or developing an action plan. The most important way to use the handbook is as a reference tool – both a starting point and something to go back to for ideas over time.

## A Handbook Rooted in the Future of Tourism Coalition Guiding Principles

In the immediate onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Travel Foundation along with Tourism Cares and four other international tourism NGOs including the Center for Responsible Travel (CREST), Sustainable Travel International, Green Destinations and the Destination Stewardship Center, set up a coalition to align industry behind a shared vision for a better future of tourism. The Future of Tourism Coalition (FOTC) sets out 13 guiding principles to guide efforts by tourism businesses and destinations to make the better future of tourism a reality. Tourism organizations can become signatories to the Guiding Principles, enabling them to join the community platform which provides a space for knowledge-sharing, toolkits, and connecting with others on their journeys.

Learn more at <https://www.futureoftourism.org/>

*Throughout the handbook, these icons appear, referring to how the topics are related to each guiding principle.*

