OUR VISION

Our Pacific Islands empowered by and benefitting from sustainable tourism

OUR MISSION

Sustainable tourism development through innovative partnerships
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Foreword

When the Strategic Plan 2020–2024 was endorsed by SPTO members, tourism had been the only economic sector to grow consistently throughout the region since 2013. It was the major driver of economic growth, foreign exchange earnings and employment, and was significantly contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals across the region. Due to the sector’s success, many Pacific Island economies had become heavily reliant on tourism.

The closure of borders and the effective suspension of international tourism in response to COVID-19 has protected many Pacific Island populations from suffering severe health impacts. It has also had severe economic and human impacts in a dramatic loss of revenue and loss of livelihoods.

While the pandemic has had sudden and severe consequences, regional tourism is a constantly evolving landscape during normal times. The Strategic Plan 2020–2024 with its focus on sustainable tourism represented a shift for SPTO from primarily being a regional marketing body to also being a leader in regional tourism policy and development. In the context of an inevitable growth in mass tourism and the severe and escalating impacts of climate change, sustainable tourism needed to be central to SPTO’s role.

COVID-19, with the tragedy and hardship that it currently brings, is anticipated to only be a pause, with the tourism sector expected to bounce back quickly. However, indications are that many of the positive market trends prior to the pandemic will continue, and may even accelerate, including trends towards unique and different experiences, nature-based activities, cultural engagement, and wanting to give more and take less. The adoption and acceptance of digital technology has also rapidly increased, as have consumer expectations of what should be possible online.

As the pandemic abates and borders begin to open, the efforts of SPTO, its members, and partners will be focused on recovery: coordinating development partners’ efforts, supporting national partners to establish evidence-based plans and strategies, sharing best practice, supporting hotels and tour operators to reopen, supporting people to return to jobs, acquiring and using market intelligence and research to promote the region, and encouraging people to travel and travel safely.

In supporting this recovery, it is essential for SPTO to continue to be guided by its strategic priorities. By pursuing sustainable tourism for the region, transforming marketing through digital technologies, and securing the evidence-base for decision-making through research and statistics, SPTO in collaboration with partners can guide a recovery that brings tourism back better, more resilient, and enables Pacific Island economies, people, culture and the environment to thrive.

As the UN World Tourism Organization Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili has noted:

“This crisis is an opportunity to rethink the tourism sector and its contribution to the people and planet; an opportunity to build back better towards a more sustainable, inclusive and resilient tourism sector that ensure the benefits of tourism are enjoyed widely and fairly.”

[Signatures]

HALATOA FUA
Chair of Board of Directors

CHRISTOPHER COCKER
Chief Executive Officer
Executive Summary
Executive Summary

Mandate and Vision
Established in 1983 as the Tourism Council of the South Pacific, the Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO) is based in Suva, Fiji. SPTO has 20 Government members, they are American Samoa, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Nauru, Marshall Islands, New Caledonia, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Rapa Nui, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Wallis & Futuna and the People’s Republic of China. In addition to government members, SPTO has a private sector membership base of around 100 organisations.

The work of SPTO is guided by a new vision and mission for the future:

Our Vision
“Our Pacific Islands empowered by and benefitting from sustainable tourism”

Our Mission
“Sustainable tourism development through innovative partnerships”

2020–2024 Strategic Plan
The 2020–2024 Strategic Plan builds on the Pacific Tourism Strategy 2015–2019 which identified seven priority areas. SPTO will focus on three strategic priorities for this reporting period:

- Marketing the region
- Sustainable Tourism Planning and Development
- Research and Statistics

Four additional priorities will be addressed through innovative partnerships. These are: supporting and promoting investment and product development; improving air access and route development; developing and empowering our Pacific people’s capacity; and cruise and yachting sector development. Organisationally, lead responsibility for these innovative partnerships will be divided between the divisions.

The Strategic Plan requires the SPTO Executive Office to be working closely with staff and members to:

- Drive the overall management and implementation of the Plan;
- Oversee overall institutional support and funding;
- Commit to achieving targets for the three priority areas and innovative partnerships; and
- Implement a robust monitoring, evaluation and learning process to assess progress and to guide decision-making.

And commit to:

- Deliver quality and value-added service to Members by seeking funding for these priorities;
- Ensure that programmes are relevant and viable; and
- Collaborate with innovative and like-minded entities, development partners and regional stakeholders who share and support SPTO’s priorities.

The successful implementation of the Strategic Plan is possible through the cooperation and commitment of members and regional stakeholders. These include donors, development partners, other members of CROP (the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), philanthropic organisations and the private sector.

Measuring Success
A monitoring, evaluation, and learning framework and plan will be developed to accompany this strategic plan. Members will be advised of how SPTO is tracking against key performance indicators through annual monitoring, evaluation and learning reports. SPTO will work in partnership with members to improve the quarterly and annual progress reports that will contribute to a mid-term consultative review in 2022 and end of Plan review in 2024.
Strategic Planning
Context and Process
Strategic Planning Context and Process

Environment and Development Context

Tourism offers the Pacific region significant opportunities for economic growth and shared prosperity. The tourism sector has the potential to play a greater role in the regional economy. It can support sustainable tourism development, facilitate investment and harness synergies between Pacific countries, through sharing resources and the exchange of information.

The tourism sector also contributes directly to supporting member countries’ commitments to the 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including: SDG 5 Gender Equality; SDG 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth; SDG 9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure; SDG 12 Responsible Consumption and Production; SDG 13 Climate Action; SDG 14 Life below water; SDG 16 Peace and Justice and Strong Institutions and SDG 17 Partnerships for the Goals.

Many constraints which impede the development of tourism are common to the Pacific Island countries. Equally, a regional approach and regional solutions can be more effective than the efforts of any one individual country. The intended outcomes and their associated strategies and key activities outlined in this Plan highlight regional solutions, which will support and add value to individual country development efforts.

According to the World Bank¹, tourism offers significant opportunities for economic growth and shared prosperity for the region. Prior to COVID-19, tourism provided sustained economic, social and environmental development in the region through over 115,000 jobs, an estimated 2.1 million visitors by air, 1 million cruise visitors, USD3.6 billion in exports, and contributing to 8.2% of regional GDP.²

There is substantial variation in the scale of tourism across the 20 Pacific Island countries included in this Plan, along with corresponding differences in capacity, capability and resources. Whilst a small size and isolation can be a disadvantage, the Pacific has the potential to turn these geographic characteristics into advantages, by focusing on tourism which is based on the region’s hospitality, diverse cultures and pristine natural environments. Advances in digital technology provide substantial opportunities for the industry to capitalise on new systems and platforms to gather appropriate data and to better promote the Pacific in the ‘global marketplace’. This Plan supports the increasing adoption of digital approaches in step with broader global ‘digital first’ strategies.

COVID-19: Impact and Recovery

The pandemic has been a shock to the economies of all Pacific Island countries, and has had a tragic impact on livelihoods across the region. While the immediate activities of SPTO, its members, and partners will focus on supporting the recovery of the tourism sector as the pandemic abates, the core priorities of SPTO are even more urgent in order to support a blue and green recovery, that builds back better, and ensures the long term sustainability of the tourism industry.

Planning Process

The strategic planning process was led by the Finance Sub-Committee on the direction of the SPTO Board in October 2018. During the SPTO management retreat in November 2018, managers developed the Plan framework in preparation for the Finance Sub Committee meeting. In January 2019, the Finance Sub Committee reviewed the Pacific Tourism Strategy 2015–2019 and decided on a streamlined Plan that addresses member priorities and is within the scope of SPTO’s resources.

SPTO implemented the strategic recommendations within the Pacific Tourism

Strategy and the Pacific Cruise Tourism Development Strategy during European Development Fund (EDF) 10 which ended in December 2015. Several recommendations were implemented in 2016–2019 despite limited funding resources.

Key highlights during the implementation of the Pacific Tourism Strategy 2015–2019 include:

- **Implementation of Air Access and Route Development**
  This was hampered in part by scarce resources (funding and personnel) within SPTO and the inability to secure an aviation expert to assist SPTO in implementing the priority.

- **Marketing the Region**
  Launch and promotion of SPTO’s new Pacific brand; the development of a marketing and communications strategy; successful coordination of regional trade marketing events and initiation of the transformation of the tourism sector to digital marketing.

- **Cruise Ship Sector Development**
  Cruise visitor surveys were conducted for selected member countries; the Pacific Cruise Strategy and market research were published and port preparedness training workshops conducted in several SPTO member countries.

- **Investment and Product Development**
  SPTO profiled investment opportunities in the tourism sector through the Pacific Trade and Invest network; conducted regional and sub-regional training workshops to enhance the capacity of SMEs and National Tourism Offices (NTOs) to prepare investment ready and bankable proposals, and conducted regional training workshops to build capacity for NTOs and Investment Promotion Authorities (IPAs) on their respective roles and responsibilities. SPTO also promoted and linked national events through regional special events such as the 2019 China Pacific Tourism Year.

- **Research and Statistics**
  Achievements included supporting selected countries’ statistical and tourism data collection through in-country training; building capacity in air and cruise ship visitor exit surveys in selected member countries; publishing of niche market studies and market intelligence reports. Development of the Regional Tourism Resource Centre which has been, maintained and promoted. The division has also been very active in providing technical assistance in-country to member countries who required research & statistics support.

- **Human Resource Development**
  Together, the SPTO team, NTOs and the private sector developed and implemented targeted short term training for the member countries; built trainer capacity and regional partnerships; and developed and supported industry provider relationships.

- **Sustainable Planning and Development**
  A division was established in 2016, followed by the recruitment of a Manager and support staff. SPTO actively sought and secured donor and development partnerships, resulting in outputs that included the sustainable monitoring programme with Sustainable Tourism International (STI), “My Fiji Shark” campaign with UNDP, Pacific Tourism environmental coastal impact guidelines in partnership with SPREP, and the joint SPTO and UNESCO conference conducted in October, prior to the Board and Council meetings in Samoa, 2018.
Implementing the Strategic Plan
The Strategic Plan 2020-2024 takes into account the achievements and lessons learnt during the implementation of the Pacific Tourism Strategy 2015-2019. This Plan will guide SPTO’s engagement with members and partners, and will be implemented through the development of a financial business planning, and detailed annual work plans developed by the SPTO management team. Annual work plans will detail new and ongoing activities aligned to the strategies and key activities detailed in this Plan to achieve the intended outcomes and goals. Progress will be measured through clear indicators and in line with a dedicated monitoring and evaluation plan.

SPTO undertook a short review of the Strategic Plan in early 2021 in response to the impact of COVID-19 and significant progress in implementation, including towards the development of a digital strategy, a sustainable tourism policy framework, and a tourism statistics strategy. The review provided a health-check to ensure the Strategic Plan continues to be fit for purpose and that the frameworks and strategies are in alignment. The review led to a focussing and streamlining of intended outcomes and high-level activities within each priority area.

Figure 1: Relationship of Strategic Plan with associated organization planning processes.
Vision and Priority Areas
Vision and Priority Areas

Vision and Mission
The vision and mission statements for the Pacific Tourism Organisation were endorsed by the Board.

The vision is:
“Our Pacific Islands empowered by and benefitting from sustainable tourism”

The mission is:
“Sustainable tourism development through innovative partnerships”

Defining Constraints
The tourism sector has the potential to play a substantially greater role in the region’s economy. A number of underlying and inter-related constraints impede the development of the sector across the Pacific region. These include:

- The geographic spread and isolation of many Pacific countries and territories
- A small population base and limited domestic capital for investment
- A low level of critical mass, restricting marketing funds and increasing cost of business
- Limited international and domestic air services and high cost of infrastructure and services
- Limited capacity among key public sector tourism related agencies
- Lack of skilled personnel in the private sector and limited training opportunities
- Inadequate conservation of marine and land resources
- Lack of awareness and engagement at a community level and complex land tenure systems
- High vulnerability to natural disasters and climate change impacts.

Defining Priorities
To address the constraints and develop markets, the Plan will focus on three core priorities that were originally identified in the Pacific Tourism Strategy 2015-2019. These are:

- Marketing the Region
  To market our unique Pacific region to achieve sustainable tourism growth.
- Sustainable Tourism Planning and Development
  To encourage and support sustainable tourism development in the Pacific through the coordination of targeted awareness and outreach, ingraining the principles of sustainable tourism planning, and the development of strategic partnerships.
- Research and Statistics
  To ensure timely and quality statistics and research, through collaborative partnerships, are readily available to all tourism stakeholders for decision and policy making.

The remaining priorities will be addressed through innovative partnerships developed and strengthened by SPTO. In these areas SPTO will advocate on behalf of members, coordinate, support and collaborate, but activities will be led by partners with the technical expertise and mandate to deliver change. The innovative partnership priority areas are:

- Cruise and Yachting Sector Development
  To develop sustainable cruise and yachting tourism in the Pacific.
- Supporting and Promoting Investment and Product Development
  To support investment in sustainable tourism products in the Pacific.
- Improving Air Access and Route Development
  To support access improvements and expansion of Pacific air services.
- Developing and Empowering Our Pacific People’s Capacity
  To contribute to the strengthening of tourism human resource development by improving its quality, access and coordination across the region.
Selection of Priorities
Given the diverse economic capacity and varying development needs within the membership of SPTO, the strategic priorities and innovative partnerships for the 2020-2024 Plan were selected on the basis of the existing tiers by annual arrivals shown below. Similarly, the key activities proposed within this plan will be developed and delivered according to members' varying capacity and needs. SPTO recognises that there are significant opportunities for learning and sharing of best practice between NTOs and between private sector members across these tiers.

Programme Implementation Pillars
To support and implement the strategic priorities and innovative partnerships, four implementation pillars cut across all the priority areas. They are intrinsic to achieving the planned outcomes and require coordination and joined-up working across SPTO’s divisions. The four pillars are:

• Partnerships
• Sustainable practices
• Research and knowledge management
• Capacity building
## Member Countries’ Partnerships

The implementation of the Strategic Plan is possible through support from and collaboration with members and partners. Furthermore, the efforts of SPTO to achieve goals and outcomes will require support from donors and development partners.

The following table sets out the roles and responsibilities expected of SPTO, its members, and partners.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEMBERS AND PARTNERS WILL...</th>
<th>SPTO WILL...</th>
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<tr>
<td>Work collaboratively to address regional tourism issues and priorities.</td>
<td>Facilitate regional collaboration and coordination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitate the work of SPTO by communicating their national priorities for policy and technical assistance and national-level drivers.</td>
<td>Work together with members and partners to address national and regional priorities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop national policies and implementation plans; where necessary seek guidance and advice from SPTO such as lessons learned; where possible work with SPTO to integrate regional implementation plans at the national level.</td>
<td>Work with members and partners to tailor policy and technical assistance, and support national or regional on-ground delivery that meets national priorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinate approaches between government, civil society, philanthropic organisations and the private sector to help achieve the goals of the Strategic Plan.</td>
<td>Secure regional funding and programme partnerships that respond to members’ needs; coordinate and advocate the region’s interests in global forums; liaise with potential partners to provide coordinated assistance to members or groups of members.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintain national capabilities of NTOs and the private sector.</td>
<td>Build on and assist national governance capabilities and institutions by being a regional knowledge hub.</td>
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<td>Provide feedback to SPTO on market research information that is needed.</td>
<td>Conduct external research on trends and emerging opportunities that will assist the members plan and make decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gather national tourism data and information and, where possible, make it available to SPTO.</td>
<td>Build on national tourism data and information from members or other sources to provide regional tourism data; gather, store, provide access to, and analyse regional data and information as well as transition to impact monitoring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop and maintain skilled human resources and commit sufficient resources from national budgets to support and sustain national tourism programmes.</td>
<td>Through innovative partnerships, help members maintain skilled human resources and assist members to strengthen their institutions through capacity building at national and sub-regional levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborate bilaterally with development partners to help deliver goals in the Strategic Plan; seek guidance from SPTO on links with development partners; support SPTO to identify opportunities for regional coordination of development assistance.</td>
<td>Advise and consult with development partners on priorities and opportunities based on the Strategic Plan; foster links between members and development partners; identify opportunities for regionally coordinated development assistance based on member-defined needs; participate with other CROP organisations in securing regional funding opportunities.</td>
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Strategic Priorities and Innovative Partnerships
Strategic Priorities and Innovative Partnerships

This section of the Strategic Plan focuses on the priorities and innovative partnerships that SPTO will implement. It provides a framework for the development of specific strategies, frameworks and policies for the strategic priorities, as well as for annual work programmes through identifying strategies and key activities to achieve intended outcomes.

For the period of this plan, 2020–2024, SPTO will focus resources on three core strategic priorities, with four additional priority areas addressed through a focus on innovative partnerships. The three core strategic priorities are:

- **Marketing the Region**
  To market our unique Pacific region to achieve sustainable tourism growth.

- **Sustainable Tourism Planning and Development**
  To encourage and support sustainable tourism development in the Pacific through the coordination of targeted awareness and outreach, ingraining the principles of sustainable tourism planning and the development of strategic partnerships.

- **Research and Statistics**
  To ensure timely and quality statistics and research, through collaborative partnerships, are readily available to all tourism stakeholders for decision and policy making.

The classification of additional priority areas as innovative partnerships is recognition that the core technical expertise required to deliver results in these areas lies with other agencies and institutions, and that major outcomes are at the limits of SPTO’s sphere of influence.

- **Improving Air Access and Route Development**
  To support access improvements and expansion of Pacific air services.

- **Developing and Empowering Our Pacific People’s Capacity**
  To contribute to the strengthening of tourism HRD by improving its quality, access and coordination across the region.

SPTO will build and strengthen partnerships within these areas with development partners, Pacific regional organisations, bilateral and multilateral donors, and international and national NGOs, and establish itself as a valued connector, facilitator and knowledge broker to the benefit of members.

Responsibility for the innovative partnerships is shared between different teams within SPTO.

The additional priorities addressed through four innovative partnerships, are:

- **Cruise and Yachting Sector Development**
  To develop sustainable cruise and yachting tourism in the Pacific.

- **Supporting and Promoting Investment and Product Development**
  To support investment in sustainable tourism products in the Pacific.
Strategic Priorities

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: MARKETING THE REGION

Goal: To market our unique Pacific region to achieve sustainable tourism growth

Market intelligence suggests consumer trends towards unique and different experiences, nature-based activities, escaping the crowd, cultural engagement, and wanting to give more and take less will continue to grow. The Pacific is well-placed and effective marketing is integral to maintaining market share and taking advantage of these trends in order to sustainably grow tourism to Pacific Island destinations. SPTO’s regional marketing, promotions and communications are aimed at collectively achieving the individual unique selling points and aspirations of Pacific Island member countries. In particular, SPTO has a key role in amplifying the marketing reach and capacity of those members with the most limited resources.

The digital landscape in the Pacific is rapidly evolving. National tourism offices (NTOs) have increasingly reliable and fast connectivity, the digital expectations of industry partners and consumers are ever higher, and there are an increasing range of digital tools being utilised to drive reach, gather intelligence, target messaging, and boost conversions. In recognition of this digital transformation, SPTO will establish a robust digital marketing strategy aligned to the digital needs, capacities and capabilities of its country and private sector members. While a shift to digital marketing reflects global ‘digital first’ trends, SPTO will develop an inclusive approach that continues to give voice to members with more limited digital capability, provides opportunities for training and skills development, and establishes technical back-stopping support. SPTO cannot achieve this alone and will identify and strengthen partnerships, and work collaboratively to progress a digital agenda. SPTO’s marketing activities will align with the sustainable tourism policies endorsed by members and ensure coordinated advocacy on sustainability issues. Marketing assets and materials will be shaped by sustainable destination management plans and relevant guidelines, particularly in relation to social and cultural sustainability, as well as with reference to the unique identity of each Pacific Island member. Marketing differentiated destinations while also marketing the region collectively will be a focus of SPTO’s marketing strategy, which will seek to include innovative use of Pacific storytellers to achieve this.

Marketing activities will also intersect with SPTO’s research and statistics function, with data collection, analysis and market intelligence providing an evidence-base for marketing decisions.

The planned outcomes and high-level activities set out in this Strategic Plan seek to establish SPTO as a digital marketing leader for the region, that will improve the marketing services provided to members, support technological advancements in regional marketing and communications, build a strong regional brand, and nurture partnerships with public and private sector stakeholders.

As the region recovers from the impact of COVID-19, indications are that many of the market trends prior to the pandemic will continue, and may accelerate. The adoption and acceptance of digital technology has increased, as have consumer expectations of what should be possible online. The strategic direction provided by this plan will build long term resilience to future shocks, and in the immediate-term SPTO will tailor its marketing activities to support the restart and recovery period.
## Strategic Priority 1: Marketing The Region

**Goal:** To market our unique Pacific region to achieve sustainable tourism growth

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<th>OUTCOMES</th>
<th>STRATEGIES / KEY ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>INDICATORS</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| 1.1 | SPTO, NTOs and private sector members have improved digital proficiency, including improved management of digital systems for marketing | • Assess the varying capacities and capabilities of SPTO and NTOs in relation to digital marketing and develop responses including through a digital strategy  
• Establish and coordinate partnerships with providers to co-design and deliver a long-term digital capability building programme for SPTO and NTOs through skills development, training, education and the sharing of knowledge appropriate to each entity  
• Develop the digital marketing capacity of the SPTO secretariat  
• Establish back-stopping support, advanced training and ongoing technical advice services within SPTO or through partnerships for NTOs and private sector members  
• Identify and create opportunities for sharing of knowledge and best practice including peer-to-peer learning | • % of members responding valuing the implementation of the digital marketing strategy positively  
• # of members categorised as digitally proficient or higher as defined in the Digital Economy Tourism Initiative report |
| 1.2 | SPTO, NTOs, and private sector members have a strong digital presence and demonstrate increased engagement in digital marketing | • Assess the digital marketing needs of SPTO and NTOs in relation to tools and platforms and develop responses including through a digital strategy  
• Identify preferred technology platforms and assess options for collaboration, including ways to maximise the purchasing power of members  
• Strengthen the online presence of SPTO, NTOs, and private sector members using owned, paid and earned media  
• Support and coordinate the participation of NTOs and SPTO industry members in virtual or hybrid events, where appropriate | • % of SPTO members actively using digital marketing platforms  
• % of members responding valuing the implementation of the digital marketing strategy positively  
• # of virtual trade shows that SPTO members participate in annually |
| 1.3 | The Pacific is highly visible in major source and emerging markets as a sustainable tourism destination | • Develop a marketing plan with a hybrid approach in line with the proposed digital strategy  
• Identify and develop strategic partnerships to support NTOs to develop and amplify their point of difference, including through niche marketing, destination differentiation research, and empowering Pacific storytellers  
• Coordinate digital marketing activities that are mutually beneficial  
• Enhance promotion of the Pacific brand through a positive futures narrative to solidify the positioning of the Pacific Islands as a leading sustainable tourism destination in the global market  
• Leverage data and analytics to measure and continually improve marketing outcomes | • % increase in audience engagement on digital platforms  
• # and types of marketing activities delivered  
• % of key informants who perceive the Pacific brand to be highly visible in source markets |
STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Goal: To encourage and support sustainable tourism development in the Pacific through the coordination of targeted awareness and outreach, ingraining the principles of sustainable tourism planning, and the development of strategic partnerships.

Despite the downturn due to COVID-19 tourism will continue to be a significant contributor to many Pacific Island economies. Visitor numbers to the Pacific islands are forecast to grow in the long term as tourism is used to drive economic growth and countries look to new source markets. Whilst the future ultimately looks promising with the accrual of benefits to the Pacific economy and potential for increased employment opportunities, our Pacific islands are small and susceptible to the adverse impacts of climate change and natural disasters. The capacity of our fragile environment and ecosystems to cope with increased pressure from rising visitor numbers and development will be weakened, if not planned well. Similarly, the unique and diverse cultures across the Pacific are vulnerable to the negative impacts of tourism, but with adequate planning they can be supported to thrive. The COVID-19 pandemic has also highlighted the vulnerability of tourism to external events, the economic risks of dependency on the sector, and the very real impact on the livelihoods of our Pacific People.

The right balance is difficult to achieve. Sustainable approaches can make a difference and will help ensure that Pacific Islands derive economic and social benefits from tourism while conserving the environment on which tourism depends alongside safeguarding and valuing Pacific people and our diverse cultures. SPTO’s regional efforts will be focused on supporting Pacific Island countries to realise tourism opportunities that ensure economic, social, cultural and environmental sustainability for the Pacific. These four pillars of sustainable development are interconnected and demand focused support, planning and resources to ensure that tourism can become a tool for positive change in our region.

Achieving sustainability in Pacific tourism is a long-term commitment. Success is dependent on the collective effort of our member countries, the private sector, development partners, Non-Governmental Organisations, other relevant stakeholders, and SPTO. Active participation in regional efforts whether it be in information-sharing, policy development, capacity building and knowledge management or investment in the delivery of programmes will contribute positively to ensuring that the Pacific is a sustainable tourism destination for all to enjoy, discover and respect.

Resources are limited. However, through strong innovative partnerships and support from development partners, we can make real changes that will impact progress on the ground, responding to national and regional priorities and collectively contributing to the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.
## Strategic Priority 2: Sustainable Tourism Planning and Development

**Goal:** To encourage and support sustainable tourism development in the Pacific through the coordination of targeted awareness and outreach, ingraining the principles of sustainable tourism planning, and the development of strategic partnerships

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<th>INDICATORS</th>
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| 2.1 | Economic, social, cultural and environmental sustainability goals and priorities are established and endorsed by members and regional partners | • Consult with members and partners on shaping the future of tourism in the Pacific through the lens of sustainability  
• Identify appropriate sustainability goals and priorities and develop an inclusive regional sustainable tourism policy framework to support their achievement  
• Advocate for the adoption and endorsement of a regional sustainable tourism policy framework through ongoing engagement with members, regional partners, and development partners, including through the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Leadership Summit  
• Provide input and support to aligned regional strategies and frameworks, particularly in relation to cultural preservation, social inclusion, conservation, disaster preparation and management, and green and blue growth | • % of members responding valuing the strategic goal positively  
• # of stakeholders engaged in dialogues and sharing learnings |
| 2.2 | Sustainable tourism goals and priorities are mainstreamed into national and local tourism development plans | • Be a leading voice on sustainability and advocate with national partners, industry partners and development partners for the implementation of agreed actions within a sustainable tourism policy framework  
• Provide technical assistance to integrate sustainable tourism goals and priorities into national plans and to build on existing national standards  
• Identify and collaborate with partners to develop appropriate best practice standards, with a view to establishing a sustainable tourism quality assurance scheme and encourage responsible tourism | • # of member countries that have included sustainability in their National Tourism Development Plans  
• # of sustainable tourism initiatives implemented by members |
| 2.3 | National partners have the capacity and capability to advocate for and implement sustainable tourism goals and priorities | • Provide platforms for national partners, the private sector and stakeholders to discuss priority sustainability issues and share best practice, including regional dialogues and peer-to-peer learning  
• Partner with training providers and identify opportunities for systematised training and skills development for members, including through access to digital technologies  
• Identify opportunities and strengthen partnerships to support the growth of quality sustainable tourism products, including through support to utilise digital marketing and digital technologies | • # of stakeholders accessing digital technologies to engage in e-learning, dialogues and sharing learnings  
• # of NTOs providing a budget for sustainable tourism development |
2.4 National partners are supported to implement sustainable tourism goals and effect change

- Support the implementation of goals through the development of sustainable tourism planning and management guidelines
- Work with partners to assess the tourism investment landscape and opportunities for investment, including blue/green financing
- Support the development of measures to monitor progress towards sustainability goals and priorities to inform policy and decision-making
- Support the embedding and amplification of sustainable and responsible tourism messaging in regional and national level marketing strategies, presenting a positive futures narrative, including through Pacific storytellers
- Strengthen partnerships to support members to build resilience to disasters and shocks to maintain progress and view recovery through the sustainable tourism lens

| # of SPTO coordinated sustainable tourism projects and programmes on the ground |
| % of members perceiving growth in sustainable tourism |
| # of members implementing the Pacific Tourism Statistics Strategy |
| # of sustainable tourism initiatives implemented by members |
STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: RESEARCH AND STATISTICS

Goal: To ensure timely and quality statistics and research, through collaborative partnerships, are readily available to all tourism stakeholders for decision and policy making

Effective planning, policy development and strategic decision-making depend upon a relevant and reliable evidence-base. Timely and quality statistical information, market intelligence, and targeted research are critically needed at national and regional levels to provide this evidence-base, combined with appropriate systems and platforms to connect the information to those who need it. The impact of Covid-19 on Pacific Island economies has highlighted the importance of relevant data and statistics in measuring this impact and planning for recovery.

SPTO will consult with members to assess the needs, challenges and gaps in relation to tourism statistics and research in order to develop a tourism statistics strategy. The review will also consider the platforms and systems used to provide information to members, and options for utilising new digital technologies will be explored. Aligned to the development of sustainable tourism policies, SPTO will work with partners to identify appropriate measures of sustainability in order to track the region’s progress in the tourism sector.

SPTO is an aggregator and quality assurer of tourism data within the region, and will become the hub of Pacific tourism research and information. Recognising that national partners are at differing stages of statistical development, SPTO will work closely with tourism offices, statistics offices, and technical experts to develop and strengthen systems for data collection and analysis and support the skills development of statistics officers. SPTO will also strengthen relationships with regional partners, who have a mandate in the area of statistics, to build SPTO’s capacity and ensure coherence with regional statistics programmes, including the Pacific Community (SPC) and the Pacific Data Hub.

Partnerships will be strengthened with national and regional research institutions, with a focus on ensuring that members’ research needs are prioritised and members’ capacity is built through on-going engagement.

The activities within SPTO’s research and statistics function support both sustainable tourism planning and development outcomes, and marketing outcomes. Support in this area strengthens the foundations on which future planning and policy decisions will be made.
### Strategic Priority 3: Research and Statistics

**Goal:** To ensure timely and quality statistics and research, through collaborative partnerships, are readily available to all tourism stakeholders for decision and policy making.

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<th>OUTCOMES</th>
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| 3.1 | National and regional tourism statistics and statistical systems are strengthened to meet the needs of SPTO, its members and partners | • Assess the utilisation of tourism statistics by members and others, alongside the associated needs, challenges, capacity gaps, and resource allocation  
• Consult on and develop an inclusive tourism statistics strategy in response to the assessment that incorporates alignment with the Pacific’s Ten-Year Pacific Statistics Strategy 2010–2020, UNWTO’s Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism programme, and considers opportunities provided by the evolving digital landscape in the Pacific  
• Aligned to a sustainable tourism strategy, develop an agreed core set of indicators, appropriate to member’s varied capacity, to measure the sustainability of tourism and publish on a regular basis  
• Build and strengthen partnership with international and regional agencies, including the Pacific Community’s Statistics for Development Division, to align programmes, improve coordination and resource allocation, and identify appropriate data management systems and technologies  
• Support members to establish national tourism statistics working groups, establish a regional tourism statistics reference group and provide appropriate guidance and technical support to countries | • # of members implementing the Pacific Tourism Statistics Strategy  
• % of members reporting that they find regular research and statistical bulletins useful |
| 3.2 | National and regional policy, planning and strategy development is supported by quality, timely, relevant, and accessible research and statistics products | • Identify and implement a range of communication channels, utilising digital technologies, to inform, share and promote activities and products, including market intelligence reports, forecasts, and progress towards advancing sustainable tourism  
• Review the Regional Tourism Resource Centre with consideration to its functionality and its effectiveness in connecting members to relevant research and statistics  
• Identify options and partnerships for improving key tourism data, its breadth and depth, including measuring community sentiment about tourism, and support members to develop roadmaps for improving statistical information base | • # of member countries that regularly receive periodic data, research analysis and information  
• % of members that report using evidence to support decision-making |
| 3.3 | SPTO and its members have the skills, knowledge, and systems to effectively collect, collate, analyse and quality assure relevant data | • Support members to document country processes and procedures for the production of tourism statistics  
• Provide platforms for members and partners, such as the Pacific Community, to discuss and share best practice, including through peer-to-peer learning  
• Build partnerships with relevant organisations and training providers to develop and deliver programs to meet identified skills gaps and improve statistical and digital capabilities, including through e-learning training programs | • # of new tourism research or statistics partnerships or shared projects initiated  
• # of member countries using digital skills and platforms to effectively collect, collate and share statistics and research |
Innovative Partnerships

INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIP 1: CRUISE AND YACHTING SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

Goal: To develop sustainable cruise and yachting sectors in the Pacific.

The cruise industry is highly complex, time-sensitive, relationship dependent and numbers driven. Ease of doing business is an influencing factor in cruise lines choosing between two ports of call with similar attributes and infrastructure. Economic benefits of a cruise ship call extend far beyond the direct benefits to those involved.

For the Pacific, the cruise industry is significant in four important respects: in its sheer scale and its geographic coverage of the Pacific region; for its recent growth and its future potential\(^3\); in the contribution it makes to the economies of many Pacific Island countries; and for its opportunity to build on past successes to improve valuable tourism revenues.

In 2015, SPTO adopted the Pacific Cruise Tourism Development Strategy (PCTDS) for 2015 to 2019 in the pursuit of this shared vision:

A unified Pacific region that sees steady, sustainable growth in cruise tourism, enhancing its global reputation and benefiting its people, the cruise lines and their guests.

The strategy’s purpose was to guide SPTO, as the lead regional organisation, to:

- Coordinate the region’s collaborative cruise development efforts;
- Assist individual Pacific Island countries with their cruise capability, knowledge, readiness and ability to access benefits; and
- Foster close links between PICs and the cruise industry.

At the same time as delivering benefits, the scale of the cruise industry and the potential local impacts of cruise ships on small island populations requires planning and investment to ensure benefits are shared locally and impacts are sustainable. The cruise industry is also a major employer and there may be opportunities through organised labour schemes for employment opportunities for Pacific Islanders to be increased.

Yachting tourism has a lower impact, can result in high average in-county spend, supports related marine industries, and can spread economic benefits to remote communities. Yachts may also visit numerous Pacific Island countries and territories on long voyages or on repeat voyages. Planning and investment can also build on growth in this sector, including the luxury super-yacht sector, and contribute to long term sustainability. Yachting is also important to diversification within the tourism industry, as is evident during the COVID-19 pandemic where yacht visitors are some of the only international tourists to many Pacific Island destinations.

The benefits and risks can be magnified for Small Island States and Territories (SIST) and SPTO has a key role to play as a focal point and coordination body in this area to support members engage and advocate while also providing guidance to manage risks related to sustainability. Through new and strengthened partnerships SPTO will build credibility and become a valued voice within these sectors.

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### Goal: To develop sustainable cruise and yachting tourism in the Pacific

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| 1.1 | Sustainable cruise and yachting tourism is promoted | • Develop and agree a SPTO position statement on sustainable cruise tourism in line with a sustainable tourism policy framework and including the development of sustainable cruise tourism guidelines, with particular reference to expedition cruises and the perspectives of Small Island States and Territories  
• Strengthen partnerships in the cruise and yachting sectors, with relevant associations, industry bodies, and companies  
• Foster collaboration with partners to support members to develop the necessary facilities, shore operations and excursions, policies and procedures, as well as conduct appropriate community consultations, in line with a sustainable tourism policy framework and the key principles of the Pacific Cruise Tourism Development Strategy | • # of partnerships formal or informal relating to the cruise and yacht sectors  
• # of forums attended relating to the cruise and yacht sectors  
• % of key informants perceiving SPTO to be successfully representing members’ interests |
INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIP 2: SUPPORTING AND PROMOTING INVESTMENT AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

Goal: To support investment in sustainable tourism products in the Pacific

Tourists’ needs and behaviours are constantly changing. Tourists demand quality experiences and value for money. According to PATA the new traveller is seeking a wow/unique experience in the destinations they are visiting. They are also seeking culturally rich experiences, quieter and more discreet experiences, “off the beaten track” destinations, and unspoilt nature. They are becoming more environmentally responsible and would like to give back to communities.

The Pacific is well positioned to further develop products to suit the new traveller, but the ability to offer value for money is fundamental to competitive advantage. If yield is to increase, then the Pacific needs to ensure that quality experiences are delivered at the right price. Strategies to attract higher-value visitors at lower yields are equally dependent on quality experiences.

The tourism sector in the Pacific is lacking in many areas of product quality standards and codes of conduct for accommodation, activities and tour products. Furthermore, lack of attractive investment incentives and projects, complex land tenure laws, lack of training opportunities or in-country training programs also constrains product and service development. Many Pacific countries are most suited to small scale sustainable tourism, which can increase local benefits as well as have limited environmental and cultural impacts.

The Pacific is well placed to target the new traveller, but in many of the islands a greater quality and depth of product with greater value for money is required to meet market demand. Product and service development requires an understanding of the new traveller’s aspirations, motivations and values. New products and services should therefore focus on enhancing visitor experiences by developing and creating unique product offerings based on the attractive environment, rich cultures, friendliness and safety of the Pacific Islands.

Through a partnership approach SPTO will connect members to investment opportunities, and product development expertise to support the evolution of tourism experiences of ever greater quality that draw on the unique identities of Pacific Island countries and territories. Market intelligence into changing trends will be identified and shared with members and partners.
Innovative Partnership 2: Supporting and Promoting Investment and Product Development
Responsibility: Sustainable Tourism Planning and Development Division

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| 2.1| Improved quality and availability of sustainable tourism experiences through increased investment and product development support | • Identify and strengthen partnerships with donor agencies, multilateral agencies, and regional partners, including the Pacific Trade and Invest Network, to act as a connector and knowledge broker for members  
• Identify and strengthen partnerships with technical experts and training institutions, as well as between public and private sector members, to understand what makes a quality sustainable tourism product and share best practice | • # of partnerships formal or informal relating to investment and product development  
• # of forums attended relating to investment and product development  
• % of key informants perceiving SPTO to be successfully representing members’ interests |
INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIP 3: IMPROVING AIR ACCESS AND ROUTE DEVELOPMENT

Goal: To support access improvements and expansion of Pacific air services.

The vast majority of visitors arrive in the Pacific region through air travel via a limited number of airports in Australia and New Zealand and a small number of other gateways in the Pacific rim countries such as the US, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, Shanghai and to a lesser extent the Philippines and Indonesia. The main gateways into the wider Pacific are Nadi, Auckland and Sydney airports and to a lesser extent Port Moresby.

The development of tourism in the Pacific continues to be constrained by the relatively high cost of air travel, limited schedules and the limited number of routes offering direct connections. The same factors apply to intra-regional travel and are a further constraint to island hopping opportunities within the Pacific region.

Improved air access is a key component for tourism development to be realised in the Pacific. Without air access tourism would be almost non-existent in the region. It is the single most important driver for tourism development in the Pacific, particularly in the major destinations and it is also equally as important for up-and-coming tourism destinations such as many Small Island States and Territories that are seeking to increase tourist arrivals. Positive developments in the provision of competitive airfares are evident in some Pacific countries such as the Cook Islands, Samoa, Vanuatu, PNG, French Polynesia and New Caledonia.

Options to support new services and airline routes for many Pacific Islands are limited by:

- a low level of market demand
- the current air services regulatory environment
- a lack of inter-regional and intra-regional airline cooperation
- inadequate airport infrastructure.

The successful development of a more competitive, efficient and comprehensive aviation sector is a critical issue which is intrinsic to the future direction of tourism in the region. Additional frequency of air services on existing routes will primarily be driven by the growth in demand which is expected to bounce back quickly once travel reopens after the pandemic. Increased demand will stem not only from the traditional holiday market but will also include niche segments such as eco-tourism and other sustainable tourism niches. Increased demand will require additional commitment to both national and regional level tourism marketing campaigns by the public and private sector stakeholders.

A structured programme of collaboration and relationship development aimed at growing traffic on existing routes as well as new services needs to occur. The successful promotion and development of new services is a complex task involving many stakeholders and a wide range of intermediaries, with SPTO well-placed to coordinate and support advocacy on behalf of members in key forums.
Innovative Partnership 3: Improving Air Access and Route Development
Responsibility: Executive Office

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| 3.1 | SPTO in collaboration with national partners are advocating for improved air access and route development in key forums to grow the tourism sector | • Identify and strengthen partnerships with key industry partners, representative bodies, regional and international associations and technical experts (e.g. ASPA, IATA, ICAO, PASO) to act as a connector and knowledge broker for member advocacy  
• Support the representation of national partners, with a focus on Small Island States, at appropriate forums including the Pacific Regional Aviation Ministers’ Meeting | • # of partnerships formal or informal relating to air access  
• # of forums attended relating to air access  
• % of key informants perceiving SPTO to be successfully representing members’ interests |
Pacific peoples are the main asset of the tourism sector. As such they should also be the main beneficiaries, and why SPTO’s vision is focused on “Empowering our Pacific People.” The natural warmth and hospitality of people, strong cultural and family values, as well as relaxing and stress free lifestyles can be something that the tourists can learn from. It is Pacific people and Pacific culture that set the region apart from competing destinations.

At the same time, many people in the Pacific lack the skills required to fully benefit from tourism because training opportunities are hard to access or in short supply. Conflicts often arise between traditional cultural obligations and business or workplace requirements. Institutional capacity is also weak in many of the Pacific Islands resulting in inefficiencies and unfulfilled mandates.

Human resource development must underpin the future development of tourism in the region and capacity building is a core implementation pillar and recurring component in all parts of this strategic plan. SPTO will seek to ensure training through partners or training coordinated by SPTO is accredited by an appropriate body as a means of adding value.

A well trained, motivated and efficient workforce can improve employment levels, enhance product quality and visitor experience, increase visitor yields, and support sustainable management of the sector. Human resource development and well targeted training can boost tourism industry profitability, increase work retention and enhance the ability of business and government to meet labour needs.

Through this innovative partnership priority area, SPTO will seek out and collaborate with key agencies and regional and national training providers to support the needs of members and ensure that all the capacity building components within this plan across priority areas are given clear focus and support.

### Innovative Partnership 4: Developing and Empowering Our Pacific People’s Capacity

**Responsibility:** All Divisions

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<th>Goal: To contribute to the strengthening of tourism human resource development by improving its quality, access and coordination across the region</th>
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<td><strong>STRATEGIES / KEY ACTIVITIES</strong></td>
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<td>Identify and strengthen partnerships with donor agencies, development partners, and key national and regional educational and training institutions, including USP and APTC, that support capacity building through SPTO’s three core strategic priority areas: sustainable tourism planning and development; marketing the region; and research and statistics</td>
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<td>Identify opportunities to utilise Pacific tourism experts, including through peer-to-peer dialogues for learning and sharing of best practice between members at the national and sub-national levels, between private sector members, and between the public and private sectors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• % of key informants perceiving SPTO to be successfully representing members’ interests</td>
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Implementation and Monitoring
Implementation and Monitoring

Capacity and structure of SPTO
SPTO collaborates with other regional organisations that also address tourism development within their mandates. The implementation of the Plan requires a high level of cooperation and risk management between SPTO’s stakeholders. These stakeholders include government and private sector members, donor agencies, National Tourism Organisations, civil society and the private sector.

SPTO is the lead agency with overall responsibility for implementation and coordination of the Strategic Plan and will provide the organisation services required to support implementation. In doing so, SPTO will be guided by six key values:

- Accountability - To our stakeholders
- Partnership - Working as a team
- Leadership - Setting the agenda for
- Sustainable Pacific Tourism
  - Integrity - Doing what is right
  - Commitment - Consistent delivery of our services
  - Professional - Being respectful and respected

The three strategic priorities align to the core services of SPTO, which are Marketing, Research and Statistics, and Sustainable Tourism Planning and Development. However, drawing on the four implementation pillars (partnerships, sustainable practices, research and knowledge management, and capacity building) SPTO understands and promotes the cross-cutting and intersecting nature of many activities. SPTO seeks to connect, share and learn across disciplines and work plans.

Figure 3 outlines how the Strategic Plan will be implemented and monitored.

Figure 3: SPTO Member-Secretariat Partnership for Implementing the Strategic Plan
Strengthening Regional Linkages
SPTO will facilitate a strengthened regional approach to develop tourism. This approach will support and complement national development efforts through the sharing of scarce resources, lessons learnt and valuable knowledge, the development of increased market awareness, and building the capacity of the Pacific people.

Recently, there has been a continuous drive to improve CROP coordination, particularly with the strong competition from multilateral organisations in terms of sourcing funds for regional development. SPTO will endeavour to engage public and private sector stakeholders to fully support the implementation of this Strategic Plan to ensure that the benefits are realised.

Funding the Strategic Priorities
In order to successfully implement the Strategic Plan, finance resourcing is important. SPTO has been heavily dependent on membership fees from the Government members and EU funding since its establishment in 1983. It is increasingly challenging to secure long term funding from development partners and donors.

To address the financial constraints, SPTO has developed a sustainable financing strategy to improve its financial base and seek alternative sources of core and project funding. These include inviting non-Pacific Island Countries or Territories to become members; diversifying its funding base through engaging donor agencies, development partners, corporate entities and philanthropic...
organisations to partner for programs; generating revenue through its digital tools; and building and strengthening SPTO’s private sector and corporate sponsorship base.

Where new funding partnerships are identified at a project or programme level, SPTO will work with the partner to ensure that activities and planned outcomes contribute to and align with the core strategic priorities and existing outcomes in this Strategic Plan.

To provide further efficiencies, SPTO will also review its organisational structure, upskill staff and upgrade hardware and software to support its drive to digitise the region’s tourism industry.

**Monitoring Evaluation and Learning**

SPTO as the lead agency has the overall responsibility for implementation and monitoring of the Strategic Plan. Each strategic priority and innovative partnership has goals, planned outcomes and key performance indicators.

Progress towards the goals and outcomes of the Strategic Plan will be measured against key performance indicators with targets established through a dedicated MEL plan. Progress will be formally reported on through bi-annual reporting to the Board of Directors and annually to the Council of Tourism Minister’s meetings. This will be supplemented by progress reports provided by SPTO to Board members on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis.

A mid-term review of the Strategic Plan will be held in 2022 and will involve regional and partner organisations as well as Members. The review will evaluate progress being made towards planned outcomes and goals, and identify evolving global and regional issues that may need to be addressed through adjustments to activities, or through more fundamental changes to activities, or through more fundamental changes to activities, or through more fundamental changes to activities, or through more fundamental changes to activities.

It is essential that the responsibility for achieving outcomes is shared between SPTO and members to enable change at both regional and national levels.

Accordingly, members will be expected to monitor their own activities and provide annual country reports or responses to relevant data requests and surveys. The data provided through such reports and surveys is integral to performance monitoring, evaluation and learning. Continual learning and improvement is a key component of SPTO’s MEL strategy and framework. Monitoring is important for tracking progress, but evaluating what is happening and why, whether positive or negative, and supporting organisational learning from the evaluation, is central to SPTO being valued by both its members and partners.

SPTO will also develop a risk management framework that will quantify and address risks that threaten the achievement of the strategic priorities. The risk framework will identify measures and approaches to implement in order to mitigate the risks.
For additional information, please do not hesitate to contact:

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