



TOURISM FOR A BETTER WORLD

Authenticity & Standards: Upholding CBT's Values

This package is designed to help you as a CBTO create and maintain authentic, high-quality experiences that resonate with customers and honor your community.

Topic 1: Authenticity Preservation

Objective: To help you market your community's unique assets genuinely and avoid "staged" or commodified experiences.

1. **Genuine vs. Tourist Trap:** Understand the difference. An **authentic experience** is one where the tourist observes or participates in the real-life activities of a community. A **tourist trap** is a contrived or modified version of a tradition created solely for tourist consumption.
2. **Highlighting Genuine Assets:** Identify the core cultural, historical, and environmental assets of your community. Instead of creating a special "show," integrate tourists into existing community life. For example, a "cooking class" should teach a genuine local recipe using local ingredients, and be held in a real home or community kitchen, not a commercial stage set.
3. **Community-Led Experiences:** The best way to ensure authenticity is to have the experiences led by community members who are not just tour guides but also artists, farmers, or storytellers. This empowers them to share their knowledge genuinely.
4. **Setting Boundaries:** You don't have to show everything. Define what aspects of your culture are open to tourists and what should remain private. This protects the integrity of your traditions and prevents commodification.

Topic 2: Ethical Storytelling

Objective: To guide you in telling your community's story respectfully, with dignity and accuracy.

1. **Telling Your Story, Your Way:** You are the best source for your community's story. Train your guides to share personal stories and experiences that highlight their role in the community and the tourism product. This builds a personal connection with the tourist.
2. **Respectful Language:** Use language that honors your heritage and avoids stereotypes. For example, use precise names for ethnic groups or historical events instead of generic terms. **Never sensationalize or exploit poverty or hardship** for a more "exotic" narrative. Focus on resilience, pride, and daily life.
3. **Community as Co-Creators:** Emphasize the community's role not just as hosts but as **co-creators** of the tourism product. Explain how their participation directly benefits the community, linking the tourist's experience to a positive social impact.
4. **Truthful Representation:** Be honest in your marketing and descriptions. Do not exaggerate or misrepresent cultural practices or historical facts to make them sound more exciting. **Truthful representation builds trust** and ensures that a customer's expectations align with the reality of the experience.