



TOURISM FOR A BETTER WORLD

Introduction to Community Tourism and Hospitality Industry Management for CBTOs

This is a practical guide for Community Based Tourism Organizations (CBTOs) to understand and manage their tourism businesses effectively. Drawing inspiration from the sustainable development work of the **Kitara Foundation** and the digital market access provided by **Equera**, this focuses on making your tourism venture successful, equitable, and easy to manage.

1. What is Community Based Tourism (CBT)?

CBT is a unique model of travel that places the **local community at the centre** of the tourism enterprise. It's a tool for development, not just a business for profit.

A. The Definition of CBT (The Kitara Foundation View)

CBT is an approach where:

1. **Ownership and Control:** Local residents (the community) have the **significant ownership, management, and control** over the tourism activities. You are the boss!
2. **Equitable Benefits:** A **substantial portion of the income** is kept within the community and shared fairly. This income supports jobs, cultural preservation, and communal projects (like schools or water).
3. **Authentic Experience:** Visitors come for an **authentic, immersive experience** of your local culture, heritage, and way of life, often going beyond the typical safari or hotel stay.

CBT vs. Conventional Tourism:

- **Conventional:** A large hotel chain (external investor) owns the business, and most profits leave the community (leakage).⁷ Locals are mainly employees.
- **CBT:** The **CBTO** (cooperative or association) owns the business, and profits stay local.⁸ Community members are hosts, entrepreneurs, and decision-makers.⁹

B. Your Core Product: Authenticity

Your most valuable asset is what makes your community **unique**. This is what travelers are willing to pay for.

- **Culture:** Traditional music, dances, storytelling by elders, unique ceremonies, and local languages.¹⁰
- **Skills & Crafts:** Traditional cooking classes, weaving workshops, local farming/agro-tourism experiences, and craft making.¹¹
- **Nature:** Guided nature walks, traditional healing plant identification, bird watching led by local experts, and conservation efforts (ecotourism).¹²

2. Hospitality Management for a CBTO

Hospitality means making a guest feel welcome, safe, and valued. For a CBTO, it is about combining professional standards with genuine warmth and respect for your home.

A. The 3 Non-Negotiables (Quality Standards)

Simple and authentic does **not** mean low quality. These standards must be met consistently:

1. **Safety and Security:** Ensure all guests are safe. All guides must be properly trained in first aid and emergency procedures. Secure valuable guest possessions.
2. **Hygiene and Sanitation: Cleanliness is the most important factor.** Accommodations (homestays, tents) must have clean bedding and surfaces. Food preparation must follow safe practices. Clean, functioning toilets and hand-washing facilities are essential.
3. **Reliability and Consistency:** What you advertise is what you deliver. If a tour starts at 8:00 AM, it must start at 8:00 AM. **Word of mouth is your best marketing**, and unreliability is your worst enemy.

B. Training Your Team (Capacity Building)

The Kitara Foundation model emphasizes equipping local people with professional skills.

Training must focus on:

- **Customer Service:** How to greet a guest, manage expectations, handle questions politely, and accept feedback gracefully.
- **Guiding and Interpretation:** Guides must be able to **interpret** the culture (explain the *meaning* of a tradition) and environment, not just point out things. They are storytellers!

- **Food Preparation:** Training in safe food handling, nutrition, and catering for common guest needs (e.g., vegetarian meals, allergies).

3. Operations Management: The Role of Equera

Tourism is a global business, and effective management requires a link to the world market. This is where digital platforms like **Equera** are essential.

A. Bridging the Digital Gap

- **Market Access:** Rural CBTOs are often invisible to international travelers. Equera provides a platform to list your products and be visible to the global market, without needing a dedicated marketing office.¹⁶
- **Booking Management:** Managing bookings (dates, availability, payments) using pen and paper is slow and error-prone. Platforms automate this process, allowing you to manage bookings simply using a basic phone or tablet, often through familiar apps like **WhatsApp**.

B. Seamless Financial Management

Digital tools automate the crucial steps of equitable benefit sharing:

Function	Traditional Paper System	Digital System (via Equera/Spreadsheet)
Booking	Guest calls CBTO leader; leader writes it in a book; payment is cash.	Guest books and pays online; CBTO receives instant notification on phone.
Allocation	Manual calculation of shares (wages, CDF, dividends) that takes hours and can lead to arguments.	System automatically calculates and logs the Community Development Fund (CDF) share and individual member shares.
Payouts	Leader travels to pay members in cash.	Payouts made directly to mobile money wallets , creating a clear, instant, and transparent record of income for each member.

The integration of **Kitara Foundation’s empowerment training** with **Equera’s digital infrastructure** allows CBTOs to focus on being great hosts while ensuring the business side—bookings, money, and accountability—runs smoothly.

4. CBTO Management: Governing for Sustainability

To ensure your tourism venture lasts and benefits the community, focus on these management pillars:

1. **Clear Governance:** Elect a **CBTO Management Committee** with defined roles (Chair, Secretary, Treasurer). Hold regular, publicized meetings where decisions are made openly.
2. **Transparent Finances:** The **Equitable Benefit-Sharing Mechanism** (clear rules for how money is split) must be written down and followed strictly. Use the digital system to show the community exactly where the money comes from and where it goes.
3. **Community Consensus:** Tourism decisions must have the broad **consent of the community**. Activities should respect local customs, involve elders in planning, and protect cultural sites.¹⁸ Tourism should make your community proud, not change it in ways that make people uncomfortable.

Kitara Foundation plays a pivotal role in supporting Community Based Tourism Organizations (CBTOs) by implementing a holistic, community-centric model that ensures tourism serves as a tool for genuine socio-economic development. Their support focuses heavily on **Capacity Building and Training**, equipping local residents, especially women and youth, with essential skills in product development, hospitality standards, financial literacy, and guiding techniques. Furthermore, the Foundation assists with **Infrastructure and Product Enhancement**, helping communities develop unique, authentic cultural and nature-based experiences while improving basic facilities like access trails and sanitation at remote sites. Crucially, they address the major challenge of **Market Access** by creating linkages between the CBTOs and mainstream tour operators and digital platforms, ensuring that the economic benefits flow directly to the communities, thereby maximizing the "fair share of profits" that is reinvested into communal projects and conservation efforts.