

**BELIZE**

**TOURISM POLICY**

**2005**



Prepared by:

**Launchpad Consulting**

Belize City, Belize

In collaboration with:

**David M. Russell**

Canada

For

**The Belize Tourism Board**

**Belize City, Belize**

**March, 2005**

## **Acknowledgements**

The consultants would like to thank and acknowledge the assistance of all persons who made information available or took the time to speak with us individually or at any of the workshops conducted as a part of this exercise. In particular we would like to thank the members of the Belize Tourism Industry Association (BTIA), the Belize Hotel Association (BHA), the Tour Guides Association, Belize Cruise Ship Association BCIA/FECTAB, Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT), Belize Audobon Society, Programme for Belize and all other invited guests to the industry workshops. We appreciate the candour and willingness to share.

We would also like to acknowledge and thank from the Belize Tourism Board, Mr. Anthony Mahler, Dr. Vincent Palacio, Mrs. Tracy Taegar-Panton, and Mrs. Janine Ebanks-Alpuche for their facilitation and indulgence and the Ministry of Tourism and the Caribbean Region Human Resource Development Program for Economic Competitiveness (CPEC) for making this worthwhile exercise possible.

# Table of Contents

---

<b>1. THE NEED TO REVIEW THE NATIONAL TOURISM POLICY</b>	<b>5</b>
1.1 The Role of Tourism in Belize	6
1.2 Tourism Sector Performance	6
1.2.1 The Cruise Sector in Belize	7
1.2.2 Belize Stay-over Segment	7
1.2.3 Tourism Expenditures	8
1.3 The Challenge for Belize	9
1.4 The Policy Response – the Opportunity for Belize	10
<b>2. THE TRENDS SHAPING TOURISM POLICY</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1 Market Potential	11
2.1.1 The Growth in Specialty Tour Operators	12
2.1.2 Tourism as a Business	12
<b>3. BELIZE TOURISM POLICY- VISION AND OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>14</b>
3.1 The Vision for Tourism	14
3.2 Critical Success Factors	14
3.3 Guiding Principles	14
3.4 General Tourism Industry Objectives	15
<b>4. POLICY ON PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>17</b>
4.1 Recommended Policy Statements	17
4.2 Belize Positioning	17
4.3 Tourism Product Priorities	18
4.4 Tourism Area Development Priorities	21
4.5 Tourism Product Development Program	21
<b>5. POLICY ON STRENGTHENING TOURISM DESTINATION LINKAGES</b>	<b>26</b>
5.1 Recommended Policy Statements	26
5.2 Developing Destination Linkages	26
<b>6. POLICY ON DESTINATION MARKETING AND PROMOTION</b>	<b>29</b>
6.1 Recommended Policy Statements	29
6.2 Destination Marketing and Promotion	29
<b>7. POLICY ON DESTINATION MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>31</b>
7.1 Recommended Policy Statements	31
7.2 Destination Management	31
7.3 Preparation of a Tourism Master Plan	31
7.4 Destination Management Programs	32
<b>8. ORGANIZING TO IMPLEMENT THE TOURISM POLICY</b>	<b>34</b>
8.1 Who Should be Involved?	34
8.2 Building Capacity in Tourism Institutions	36
8.3 Action Plan for Implementing the National Tourism Policy	39

## **Table of Tables**

<b><u>Table</u></b>	<b><u>Page</u></b>
Table 1 - Tourism Sector Performance	6
Table 2 - Tourism Arrivals by Nationality	8
Table 3 - Tourism Expenditures	8
Table 4 - Forecasted Growth Objectives	15
Table 5 - Sustainable Tourism Objectives	16
Table 6 - Tourism Development Priorities by Area	21
Table 7 - Shareholder Roles in Management of the Tourism Sector	34

## **Table of Figures**

<b><u>Figure</u></b>	<b><u>Page</u></b>
Figure 1 – Destination Management Partnership Model	13
Figure 2 – Export Ready Product Model	22
Figure 3 – Organizational Structure to Implement National Policy	38

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Background

In 1998 Belize developed its first-ever national tourism strategy. The Blackstone Report, as it is commonly referred to, established the context for tourism development within Belize. The result of exhaustive diagnostics and countrywide stakeholder consultations, the Blackstone report called for a moderate growth strategy that aimed for a 4% compound average annual growth rate and an increase of 20,000 in visitor numbers over a five year period; allowing Belize to develop a niche in small-scale rather than mass tourism. The annual total number of visitors was not envisaged to exceed 140,000. At the time the strategy considered a “what if” scenario of 400,000+ visitors and concluded that visitors in such numbers would result in serious environmental and cultural impact and elimination of ecotourism, and as such would be unsustainable.

The report stressed the need for responsible tourism within an approach that embraced the ethics of eco-tourism, but which called for a more proactive approach by the relevant stakeholders to develop, market, and manage Belize’s tourism industry. This orientation it was argued would allow Belize to position itself to satisfy some of the fastest growing segments of the global tourism market, specifically experiential tourism which includes nature, heritage, cultural and soft adventure experiences.

Since the embrace and implementation of the Blackstone strategy, Belize has experienced significant growth in its tourism industry; at times outstripping the regional averages. In particular, Belize experienced exponential growth in the cruise tourism segment. This brought into question the country’s approach to tourism and established new realities within the operating environment.

In the first quarter of 2004<sup>1</sup>, the Belize Tourism Board commissioned a ‘White Paper’ that explored considerations for updating the National Tourism Strategy for Belize. The conclusions inspired agreement on the need for a new national tourism policy and master plan for the country, [See Annex iv for full text of the report].

Subsequent to the completion of the White Paper, in November 2004, the BTB under the auspices of the Caribbean Regional Human Resource Development Program for Economic Competitiveness (CPEC) commissioned the first phase of the Tourism Master Plan Project for Belize. Launchpad Consulting, a local consulting firm with headquarters in Belize City, was engaged along with Mr. David Russell, CPEC’s tourism specialist to revisit the tourism policy process with a view to arriving at a commonly endorsed policy. The specific objectives of the commission along with the complete text of the methodology are available in Annex II.

### *Tourism Sector Diagnostic*

Work began in December 2004 with a series of consultation workshops to familiarize the industry stakeholders with the process and garner feedback for a Tourism Sector Diagnostic. The objective of this report was to structure and set out the key issues impacting

---

<sup>1</sup> The report was completed in May 2004

the sector, with a view to providing the focus for policy discussions and decisions. The report was completed in January 2005 and distributed to industry stakeholders for review and feedback [See Annex III for full text of report]

### ***Recommended Tourism Policy for Belize***

Following the completion and distribution of the Sector Diagnostic, industry stakeholders were invited to convene to consider the issues and arrive at a policy focus for the industry. Feedback from two workshops along with consideration of the evolving issues highlighted in the sector diagnostic collaborated to form the basis for the tourism policies espoused within this report.

In essence the new tourism policy is predicated on the following:

- Several significant changes in the external environment now make it imperative for Belize to revisit and update its policy for tourism. These are:
  - The extraordinary increase in cruise tourism, now forecasted to reach one million cruise visitors by 2005.
  - The impact of cruise tourism on Belize's eco-tourism sites,
  - The opportunity Belize has to capitalize on the growth of the experiential market, given its natural endowments and existing focus.
  - The proximity of Belize to the United States and the opportunity afforded to Belize to offer a quality destination experience together with increased security.
  - The increasing competitiveness that Belize faces globally and regionally.
  - The increasing orientation of competitive destinations to manage their tourism sectors based on business practices, but always within the context of a national vision and tourism policy.
  - Clear gaps in the 1998 strategic development process that must now be addressed. Specifically:
    - The lack of integration of the tourism sector strategy within the overall country economic strategy.
    - The lack of a comprehensive, widely endorsed tourism master plan.

*In sum the challenge for Belize is to focus the commitment to tourism to realize its full potential without jeopardizing either the cruise or stay-over markets and to manifest this commitment in an integrated approach to destination management.*

## ***The Policy***

The adjusted vision for tourism builds on the 1998 vision recommended by the Blackstone Report, refined to reflect today's global tourism market realities and potential.

### ***Vision***

***Belize's tourism vision is to develop a vibrant and progressive tourism industry through a responsible approach which embraces a strong "eco-ethic" and effective destination management that seeks to improve the quality of life for all Belizeans.***

### ***Critical Success Factors***

Fundamental to the success of the vision and policies articulated here are the following critical factors:

- ◆ Government's commitment through the declaration of and positioning of tourism as a national priority sector in its national development agenda;
- ◆ Government's commitment to the broad policies, growth strategies and subsequent tourism master plan;
- ◆ Effective Public/Private sector partnership for the development of policies and strategies;
- ◆ Private sector commitment to establishing export ready products;
- ◆ Involved, informed private sector participation;
- ◆ Access to investment capital;
- ◆ Creating a balance between all sectors of the industry;
- ◆ Institutional strengthening of public and private entities to develop and deliver the tourism master plan.

Failure in any one or several of these areas will undermine tourism development in Belize.

### ***Guiding Principles***

Belize will be guided by several principles to shape how tourism is developed and managed to achieve the country's vision for tourism. These guiding principles are as follows:

1. All tourism activity will be designed to improve the quality of life enjoyed by Belize's citizens;
2. An appropriate balance between the two main segments of the Belize tourism sector; stayover and cruise, will be established to ensure that the destination positioning Belize has established in the global tourism sector is not compromised;

3. Government will foster a positive environment for the tourism sector and meaningful local participation in the sector;
4. Tourism sector planning and management will be based on partnerships and collaboration;
5. Local communities will play a meaningful role in the tourism sector, one that ensures economic, social and cultural benefits to each participating community;
6. Tourism policy and development programs will be integrated with national economic, social and cultural policy;
7. Development of the tourism sector will be market-driven;
8. Government will insist on the application of business practices <sup>2</sup> in the management of the destination.

To support the broad vision, policies related to areas and key issues associated with the sector's development were also recommended and are available in the body of the text or for a quick reference see Annex I.

To realize the policy objectives and carry out the very challenging implementation schedule, organization of the industry should contemplate the following:

- ◆ Involvement by all industry stakeholders;
- ◆ An effective public/private sector partnership;
- ◆ Capacity Building and institutional strengthening of tourism agencies
  - Belize Tourism Council (or successor body)
  - Belize Tourist Board
- ◆ Establish inter-agency coordination mechanisms
- ◆ Strengthening of private sector associations

When the (a) policy is adopted by the GOB and industry, the call to action envisages the development of an action plan for implementation in the short term (within a period of one year) and the development and implementation of a longer term Tourism Master Plan for Belize.

---

<sup>2</sup> Please refer to Section 2.1.3 for an explanation of traditional business practices in destination management



## 1. THE NEED TO REVIEW THE NATIONAL TOURISM POLICY

In 1998 Belize developed its first-ever national tourism strategy based on work undertaken by the Blackstone Corporation. The result of exhaustive diagnostics and countrywide stakeholder consultations, the Blackstone report recommended a moderate growth strategy that aimed for a 4% compound average annual growth rate and an increase of 20,000 in visitor numbers over a five year period; thereby allowing Belize to develop a niche in small-scale rather than mass tourism.

The strategy was guided by a policy that stressed the need for responsible tourism. Such an approach embraced the ethics of eco-tourism but more, it called for a proactive approach by all relevant stakeholders to develop, market and manage the industry with a view to creating a competitive advantage, maintaining environmentally sound tourism, embracing cultural promotion and respect for local cultures, involving local people through community tourism and developing strong linkages with other sectors. This focus has positioned Belize to satisfy some of the fastest growing segments of the global tourism market; i.e. experiential tourism including nature, heritage, cultural and soft adventure experiences, and provided a significant opportunity for the country to strengthen its economy.

While this policy and the resulting strategy has served the country well in the intervening period, several significant changes in the external environment now make it imperative for Belize to revisit and update its policy and growth strategy for the sector. These are:

- The extraordinary increase in cruise tourism, now forecasted to reach one million cruise visitors by 2005.
- The impact of cruise tourism on Belize's eco-tourism sites, which is gradually changing the characteristics of visits to popular cruise tourism sites from eco-tourism experiences to mass tourism experiences.
- The opportunity Belize has to capitalize on the growth of the experiential market, given its natural endowments and existing focus.
- The proximity of Belize to the United States and the opportunity afforded to Belize to offer a quality destination experience together with increased security.
- The increasing competitiveness that Belize faces globally and regionally as destinations seek to develop their competitive advantages and enhance their own tourism sectors to increase market share at the expense of their competitors.
- The increasing orientation of competitive destinations to manage their tourism sectors based on business practices, but always within the context of a national vision and tourism policy.

While these factors alone justify updating the national tourism policy, there were also clear gaps in the 1998 strategy development process that must now be addressed.

One is the lack of integration of the tourism sector strategy within the country economic strategy. Without such integration, it is much more difficult to align decisions in government policy areas such as infrastructure, air access, investment promotion, export development, and community and regional development. Tourism is an export industry and a tourism policy fully integrated with the country's economic policy will maximize effectiveness and help to assure implementation.

The other is the lack of a comprehensive, widely endorsed tourism master plan. While the 1998 tourism policy and strategy established government's position and the growth agenda for the tourism sector, the translation into investment programs and specific actionable plans for development of priority areas did not occur. These investment programs should have shaped the country's economic development strategy and capital budgeting/financing programs and defined the blueprint for industry development. These would include programs to assist industry with product development and achieving export ready status, strengthening of destination management and marketing including modernized technology use, and integration with policies and programs of other economic sectors to maximize synergies.

### 1.1 The Role of Tourism in Belize

Belize has significant tourism resources. The Belize tourism product appeals to a combination of adventure and nature/cultural/heritage markets. The product for which Belize built its reputation is diving and snorkelling along the extensive barrier reef. However, Belize also boasts other attractions such as the rainforest, archaeological sites and diverse cultural inhabitants. Belize estimates that tourism is about 16%<sup>3</sup> of the country's GDP or 66%<sup>4</sup> of receipts from all services. This is a significant contribution and places the tourism sector at the forefront of the country's economic activity.

### 1.2 Tourism Sector Performance

The Belize tourism sector generated over 1,000,000 visitors in 2004, the majority (79%) of which were cruise passengers. The remainder were tourist arrivals at Belize's airport or border points within Belize.

**Table 1 – Tourism Sector Performance<sup>5</sup>**

Segment	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Tourist Arrivals – Airport	108,568	115,089	131,634	133,774	129,675	151,978	162,675
% of (non-cruise) Tourist Arrivals -	61.7%	63.7%	67.2%	68.3%	65.0%	68.9%	70.5%
Tourist Arrivals – Border Points	67,486	65,706	64,132	62,181	69,846	68,596	68,157
Tourist Arrivals Total (non-cruise)	176,054	180,795	195,766	195,955	199,521	220,574	230,832
Cruise ship Arrivals	14,183	34,130	58,131	48,116	319,690	575,196	851,436

<sup>3</sup> Using 2002 figures, [www.belizetourism.org](http://www.belizetourism.org)

<sup>4</sup> last complete year 1999, [www.belizetourism.org](http://www.belizetourism.org)

<sup>5</sup> Tourism & Travel Statistics, 2003, 2004 figures courtesy Anthony Mahler, Director Product Development Unit, March 2005.

% of Total Visitor Arrivals	7.5%	15.9%	22.9%	19.7%	61.6%	72.3%	78.7%
Total Visitor Arrivals (Tourist plus Cruise)	190,237	214,925	253,897	244,071	519,211	795,770	1,082,268

Cruise passenger arrivals at 851,436 (2004) places Belize as one of the most popular cruise destinations in the Caribbean exceeding visitation by most other Caribbean countries of a similar size. It also brings with it special challenges that Belize must address in order to take advantage of the benefits cruise tourism has to offer on the one hand while ensuring the quality of the Belize tourism destination and the integrity of its product on the other.

### **1.2.1 The Cruise Sector in Belize**

Over the last four years, cruise tourism has exploded in Belize with arrivals reaching a record high in 2004 of 851,436. There were 406 cruise ship calls into Belizean ports in 2004, a 29% increase (315) in cruise ship calls over 2003<sup>7</sup>. In 2005 the numbers are expected to reach or exceed 900,000. This growth is expected to continue given the interest and investment of prominent North American cruise lines.

Even though the rate of disembarkation in Belize at 80% is higher than the rates in other Caribbean destinations, the average expenditure for cruise passengers in Belize at \$US 45.00 is roughly 57% below the Caribbean average. And, Belize has the lowest rate of disembarkation for crew members. This is the direct result of a lack of shopping amenities and other on-shore entertainment.

Belize's main attraction as a cruise destination resides in the diversity of tours on offer. According to the BTB, approximately 60% of all passengers purchase tours from the cruise lines, this is roughly 25% more than for the rest of the Caribbean. One feature contributing to the higher than average disembarkation rate, is the relatively low head tax. Belize is below the industry average at US \$7.00 per head. The average in the Caribbean is US \$8.44 per head.

### **1.2.2 Belize Stay-over Segment**

The Belize stayover segment is served by 506<sup>8</sup> accommodation facilities offering a total of 5,151<sup>9</sup> rooms. With an average size of 10 rooms per operation, the Belize tourism sector is dominated by smaller properties. Other than the Radisson Fort George and the Belize Biltmore Best Western, there are no signature flagged properties in Belize, unlike most other Caribbean destinations. Properties falling under the definition of "hotels" as per the *Hotels and Tourists Accommodations Act* comprise 25% of Belize accommodation facilities with a further 10% comprising lodges and inns. The remainder are smaller properties including guest houses, bed and breakfast facilities, apartments, cabanas, villas and other accommodation.

<sup>6</sup> This section relies significantly on the information provided in the BTB Internal Document entitled "A Comparative Analysis of Cruise Tourism in the Caribbean by Anthony Mahler, October 2003.

<sup>7</sup> Tourism & Travel Statistics, 2003, *ibid*

<sup>8</sup> (2004), Figure courtesy of Anthony Mahler, Director Product Development, March 2005

<sup>9</sup> *ibid*

The Belize Tourism Board estimates that there are approximately 125 export ready facilities in the country. This leaves over 381 operations that require some product upgrading in order to meet export ready standards, a major challenge for the tourism sector.

The Belize tourism sector is dominated by the US market which in 2004 comprised roughly 60% of all stayover arrivals. Europeans find Belize a popular destination, providing 12% of Belize stayover visitors in 2004. These two markets together produce 72% of Belize's customers.

**Table 2 – Tourism Arrivals by Nationality<sup>10</sup>**

Tourism Arrivals by Nationality	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
American	87,991	92,695	104,717	106,292	104,603	127,288	137,367
European	25,638	24,746	27,674	29,735	29,115	33,528	32,767
Canadian	9,416	8,430	9,205	9,492	9,185	9,831	11,926
Belizean living abroad	13,104	14,545	14,106	12,999	11,896	7,799	7,698
Guatemalan	9,631	12,162	17,313	15,652	21,184	17,632	15,949
Mexican	8,877	8,258	8,688	7,739	8,413	6,312	6,851
Other	21,397	19,959	14,062	14,045	15,126	18,182	18,274
<b>Total</b>	<b>176,054</b>	<b>180,795</b>	<b>195,766</b>	<b>195,955</b>	<b>195,521</b>	<b>220,572</b>	<b>230,832</b>

Note: Totals may not add up due to rounding.

### 1.2.3 Tourism Expenditures

The tourism sector generated an estimated US \$172.7 million in direct visitor expenditures in 2004. The visitor expenditure performance for the last several years is shown below.

**Table 3 – Tourism Expenditures<sup>11</sup>**

Revenue Indicator	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Tourism Expenditures (US\$ millions)	108.3	111.5	120.2	120.5	132.8	155.7	172.7
Estimated Cruise Expenditures (US\$ millions) <sup>12</sup>	0.2	0.6	2.2	1.8	12.2	22.0	32.6
Percent Cruise Segment of total expenditures	0.2%	0.5%	1.8%	1.5%	9.2%	14.1%	18.9%
Tourism as a % of GDP	15.7%	15.2%	14.5%	13.9%	14.3%	15.8%	15.4%

Assumes US \$20 (1988-99) and US \$45 (2000-2004) direct spending in Belize per cruise passenger arrival

<sup>10</sup> Tourism & Travel Statistics, 2003, 2004 figures courtesy Anthony Mahler, Director Product Development, March 2005.

<sup>11</sup> Tourism & Travel Statistics, 2003, 2004 figures courtesy Anthony Mahler, Director Product Development, March 2005.

The expenditures to date demonstrate the importance of the stayover market for Belize, with cruise contributing about 19% in total direct tourism expenditures in 2004 as compared to 81% for stay-over visitors.

For Belize, tourism offers a comparative advantage given the need for a diversified economy and limited opportunities available in other economic sectors. As such the tourism sector must be given greater priority by all stakeholders.

But the motivation for investing in tourism extends beyond direct benefits in a stronger tourism sector. A vibrant tourism industry can make a major contribution to other sectors and can improve the environment for commerce generally. For example, a decision to upgrade the road system has a positive influence on the tourism sector, fostering more exploration of the country. An aggressive destination marketing campaign increases awareness of the country, its exports, its economic opportunities and investment possibilities. Tourism expenditures at nature, heritage and cultural sites can contribute to funding for reinvestment in these sites to protect core values and enhance the visitor experience. Communities can diversify their economies by offering market-driven tourism experiences and generating visitor expenditures within their communities.

### **1.3 The Challenge for Belize**

The overriding issue for the tourism sector and its future is the absence of a focused commitment to tourism. This is not meant to suggest that the government does not recognize the importance of tourism and has not made a commitment to tourism, but rather that the commitment has not been focused to capture the full potential of the sector.

The period since the 1998 policy and Blackstone strategy suggests a perceptible element of incongruity between the planned and actual growth scenarios. Since the embrace and implementation of the Blackstone strategy, Belize has experienced significant growth in its tourism industry in both the stayover and cruise segments; at times outstripping the regional averages. In particular though, Belize experienced exponential growth in the cruise tourism segment.

Visitor information for the more popular cruise passenger attractions reveals the product challenge that Belize is facing. If one assumes an average cruise visitation at 150 days per year (roughly 3 days per week)<sup>13</sup> then Altun Ha<sup>14</sup> visitation on those days amounts to about 650 persons per day and more if 2004 visitation figures are maintained.

In effect, on port call days Altun Ha is transformed from an eco-tourism site to a "mass tourism" site. This is an issue of concern to those who strive to preserve the destination's pristine natural resources. But the issue extends beyond site integrity and resource protection. Stayover markets attracted to Belize for its world-class nature, heritage and cultural resources do not expect to see sites overrun with hundreds of tourists. Therefore, a balance has to be achieved that meets the needs of cruise markets as well as stayover visitors. If Belize does not establish a clear policy specifying which sites are appropriate for cruise passenger visitation of this level and under what conditions (carrying capacities), then the stay-over market for heritage, nature and

---

<sup>13</sup> verified with the BTB, courtesy Anthony Mahler, Director of Product Development, March 2005

<sup>14</sup> a popular archaeological site app. 32 miles from Belize City

cultural tourism will be compromised through site overuse and the degradation of natural endowments.

As a nature destination, Belize faces considerable competition from other global destinations (e.g. the Amazon area, Costa Rica, etc.). In order to compete effectively, Belize must position its destination and its product to meet the needs and expectations of this specialty market and to select those segments within that market that the country can best offer a comparative advantage. This also includes competitive positioning within the Caribbean and Central America.

Additionally, Belize must embrace and sustain an integrative approach to destination management. While the legal instruments and institutional structures are in place, many of the mechanisms and tools that support effective destination management present challenges for Belize. For example, there is a need for an updated policy that reflects national priorities and consensus for tourism development. Modern regulations governing tourism standards and improved coordination between the department's and ministries that ensure tourism's interests are also needed. In addition while the Government of Belize clearly recognizes the importance of tourism, it has not declared or positioned tourism as a priority sector through the use of a national development agenda that has its foundation in a common, clear vision for future economic, social and cultural development.

#### **1.4 The Policy Response – the Opportunity for Belize**

Given the history of tourism in Belize, an approach is recommended which combines policy with a call to action. The importance of the tourism sector to Belize's economy underscores the need for a focused program to facilitate growth in the tourism sector in a manner that ensures social, economic and cultural benefits for Belizeans. For this reason, a Belize Tourism Policy is recommended that is characterized by:

- a vision and policy for tourism that is based on how tourism can contribute to Belize's social, economic and cultural needs including specific targets for growth (such as improving occupancy levels);
- international standards and best practices;
- a balance among all sub-sectors
- an orientation to sustainable tourism, with meaningful involvement of communities;
- a focus on generating widespread commitment to the tourism targets identified in the policy; and
- an emphasis on action.

## 2. THE TRENDS SHAPING TOURISM POLICY

Several key global and regional trends and issues are reshaping tourism policy throughout the Caribbean and Central America region. Those that are particularly relevant to Belize are summarized below.

### 2.1 Market Potential

The tourism market worldwide is changing. Areas of greatest growth are now in markets that offer a more diversified product including nature, heritage, and cultural tourism, cruise tourism and adventure tourism. Characterized as a trend towards "experiential tourism", it is recognized by industry leaders and observers as one of the primary motivations for tourism travel. Highlights of these global market segments include the following:

- Globally, the WTO estimates that 37% of all international trips include a culture/heritage component and that the market is growing at an annual rate of 15% or more.
- 81% of U.S. travellers who travelled in the past year or 118 million adults, are considered historic/cultural travellers. These travellers include historical or cultural activities on almost 217 million trips in 2002, up 13% from 192 million in 1996.<sup>15</sup>
- TIA and the National Geographic Traveler identified a consumer market of 55 million "geo-tourists" – defined as consumers whose attitudes, behaviours and travel habit profiles show a high incidence of travel and a distinct preference for culturally and socially-related travel.<sup>16</sup>

TIA, together with its research partner National Geographic Traveler, suggest that the geo-tourist market estimate of 55 million could grow to over 100 million with a further 58 million travelling Americans also moving in the direction of the "geo-tourist" or "sustainable tourist" category.

The WTO 2020 Vision for Tourism (2001) reports on 10 "hot" market segments for tourism. These are:

- sun and beach tourism;
- sports tourism;
- adventure tourism;
- nature-based tourism;
- cultural tourism;
- urban tourism;
- rural tourism;

---

<sup>15</sup> Travel Industry Association of America and Smithsonian Magazine, 2002, The Historic/Cultural Traveler (2002 Edition).

<sup>16</sup> Travel Industry Association of America and National Geographic Traveler, 2002, The Geo-tourism Study, Phase 1.



- cruises;
- theme parks;
- meetings and conference tourism.

While Belize cannot compete in all 10 of these hot segments, Belize can offer a competitive product in several, such as:

- Adventure Tourism – estimated by the WTO to grow at rates of 15-20% per year over the next several years. While the WTO notes these are order of magnitude estimates, it is generally acknowledged that adventure tourism will exceed the global tourism growth rate of 4.5% per year.
- Nature-Based Tourism – offering a similar growth potential at 20% annually according to the WTO.
- Cultural Tourism – here, the WTO estimates that cultural tourism constitutes about 10% of all tourism arrivals globally. It includes the range of experiences from heritage and architectural tours to music festivals and performing arts activities. The WTO suggests that:

*" Cultural tourism is growing in popularity faster than most other tourism segments, and certainly faster than the rate of growth of tourism worldwide." Whilst there are few statistics covering a global perspective, several countries have undertaken studies which show that arts and cultural activities are growing in popularity faster than the growth in visitor arrivals, and arts and crafts are tourists' most popular purchases."*

- Community Tourism – where the markets are demonstrating a growing interest and a variety of tour operators are now offering community tourism and related projects such as agro-tourism, rural tourism and cultural tourism in a rural context.
- Cruise Tourism – One of the fastest growing segments in the industry

The Belize product and global market trends are indeed well matched.

### **2.1.1 The Growth in Specialty Tour Operators**

The market trends described above have resulted in significant growth in specialty tour operators globally. This is an area offering considerable potential for Belize, as evidenced by a 2004 survey of tour operators (34) who indicated their interest in expanding their business in Belize and/or introducing new business to Belize. That enthusiastic response concerning Belize provides empirical evidence that any destination with experiential product should be considering lasting relationships with the specialty tour operator community as part of its destination promotion program. It also indicates that Belize is well positioned for this growing market area, seeking to offer their customers nature, heritage, cultural and adventure tourism packages.

### **2.1.2 Tourism as a Business**

In today's global economy, many tourism destinations are adopting business practices in their approach to destination management. This involves a market-driven orientation that considers visitor expenditures and spin-off benefits generated in the destination as



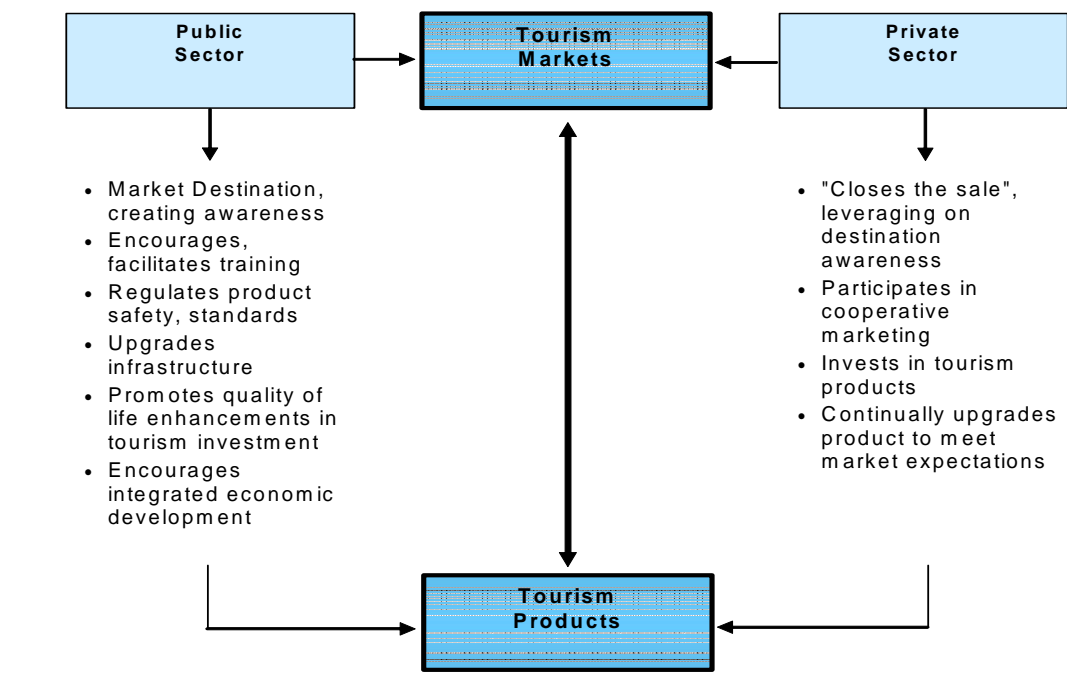
the “revenues of the business” and management of the revenue stream through the implementation of traditional business practices such as; delivering market/export ready products, marketing, quality control, maintaining a competitive edge, application of sound ethical and environmental practices, responsible fiscal policies and management of external relationships.

The underlying principle behind this approach is that success in today's global tourism environment comes through recognition of tourism as an export industry. Just as one would approach agricultural exports, technology exports and manufactured goods in seeking to increase exports, tourism requires:

- attention to international market (including niche market) expectations;
- adherence to international standards and pursuit of best practices;
- the normal requirements expected for international business relationships;
- market intelligence and knowledge of market trends;
- strategic marketing; and
- regular performance monitoring.

Managing the sector as a business implies a partnership between the public and private sectors, with the public sector creating and facilitating the need for cohesive, effective destination management and marketing of the destination; and the private sector providing the promised experiences and investing in the sector to continually meet changing market expectations.

**Figure 1 - Destination Management – Partnership Model<sup>17</sup>**



<sup>17</sup>Note that investment in tourism products assumes investment in capacity building including employee training

### **3. BELIZE TOURISM POLICY- VISION AND OBJECTIVES**

#### **3.1 The Vision for Tourism**

The vision for tourism builds on the 1998 vision recommended by the Blackstone Report, refined to reflect today's global tourism market realities and potential.

#### **Vision**

*Belize's tourism vision is to develop a vibrant and progressive tourism industry through a responsible approach which embraces a strong "eco-ethic" and effective destination management that seeks to improve the quality of life for all Belizeans.*

#### **3.2 Critical Success Factors**

Fundamental to the success of the vision and policies articulated here are the following critical factors:

- ◆ Government's commitment through the declaration of and positioning of tourism as a national priority sector in its national development agenda;
- ◆ Government's commitment to the broad policies, growth strategies and subsequent tourism master plan;
- ◆ Effective Public/Private sector partnership for the development of policies and strategies;
- ◆ Private sector commitment to establishing export ready products;
- ◆ Involved, informed private sector participation;
- ◆ Access to investment capital;
- ◆ Creating a balance between all sectors of the industry;
- ◆ Institutional strengthening of public and private entities to develop and deliver the tourism master plan.

Failure in any one or several of these areas will undermine tourism development in Belize.

#### **3.3 Guiding Principles**

Belize will be guided by several principles to shape how tourism is developed and managed to achieve the country's vision for tourism. These guiding principles are as follows:

1. All tourism activity will be designed to improve the quality of life enjoyed by Belize's citizens;
2. An appropriate balance between the two main segments of the Belize tourism sector; stayover and cruise, will be established to ensure that the

destination positioning Belize has established in the global tourism sector is not compromised;

3. Government will foster a positive environment for the tourism sector and meaningful local participation in the sector;
4. Tourism sector planning and management will be based on partnerships and collaboration;
5. Local communities will play a meaningful role in the tourism sector, one that ensures economic, social and cultural benefits to each participating community;
6. Tourism policy and development programs will be integrated with national economic, social and cultural policies;
7. Development of the tourism sector will be market-driven;
8. Government will insist on the application of business practices <sup>18</sup> in the management of the destination.

### 3.4 General Tourism Industry Objectives

#### Growth Objectives

Belize has experienced significant expansion of the cruise sector in the last 5 years. This is anticipated to level off at about one million passengers per year in the future. The growth potential for Belize therefore is found in the stayover segment, where Belize's product is well matched to global market trends. Moreover, Belize has a diverse tourism product ranging from Caribbean sun, sea and sand to extraordinary nature, heritage and cultural resources. Thus Belize potential includes not just growth in these areas but also the creation of vibrant resort areas and communities from which nature, heritage/cultural and adventure experiences can be staged. This can be achieved within the framework of a sustainable tourism sector.

In this context, the objectives for growth in Belize tourism sector are forecasted to increase in the next 10 years (by 2015) to US \$279.2 million per year. The forecasted growth by main tourism segment is shown below:

**Table 4 – Forecasted Growth Objectives to 2015**

Market Segment	Current (2004) Expenditures (\$US)	% of Total	2015 Target (\$US)
Stayover	\$140.1 million	81%	\$ 239.6 million
Cruise Arrivals	\$32.6 million	19%	\$ 39.6 million
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$172.7 million</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$279.2 million</b>

In the case of the cruise sector, Belize has nearly reached a stable level of visitors (2004) and the expenditure increases will include increased spending per passenger.

<sup>18</sup> Please refer to Section 2.1.3 for an explanation of traditional business practices in destination management

## Sustainable Tourism Objectives

Sustainable tourism encompasses tourism development, management and other tourism activity that optimizes the economic and social benefits available in the present without jeopardizing the potential for similar benefits in the future. In other words, it must contribute to social, heritage and cultural, and environmental management aspirations of the nation in addition to the economic contribution that tourism makes.

Growth in the tourism sector must take place in the context of sustainable tourism objectives that serve to ensure that investment in tourism always contributes to the quality of life of Belize's citizens. The sustainable objectives for the tourism sector that form part of this national tourism policy for Belize are as follows:

**Table 5 – Sustainable Tourism Objectives**

<b>Contribution by Tourism To:</b>	<b>Objectives</b>
Social and Economic Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of increased job and business opportunities in tourism;</li> <li>• Identification and exploitation of enhanced linkages, in agriculture, arts and crafts, entertainment and music, and services sectors;</li> <li>• Widespread involvement of communities in the tourism sector including community resource management;</li> <li>• Increased and improved training and creation of career paths for youth to enter the tourism sector.</li> </ul>
Heritage/Cultural Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protection of heritage and cultural resources with particular attention on community-based resources;</li> <li>• Generation of tourism revenues for Belize cultural enterprises and groups; and</li> <li>• Fostering of pride in, and support for, Belize's culture.</li> </ul>
Environmental Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced commitment to Belize's nature resources including consideration of Green Globe certification;</li> <li>• Enhanced interpretive programs at nature sites;</li> <li>• Development and enforcement of protection policies for Belize's marine endowments and coastline routes;</li> <li>• Development and enforcement of land use policies that protect Belize's environment, scenic corridors and national heritage and protected sites;</li> <li>• Development and enforcement of carrying capacities</li> </ul>

## 4. POLICY ON PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

### 4.1 Recommended Policy Statements

<b>Policy Area: Product Development</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Belize will maintain its positioning as an adventure destination.</li><li>2. Belize will place a priority on strengthening the competitiveness of the stay over market segment, encourage its growth and seek to develop additional niche markets while ensuring that the adventure destination positioning is not compromised.</li><li>3. Belize will ensure a high quality experience for cruise visitors without compromising the country's positioning as an 'eco-tourism' destination and will designate selected sites as primarily cruise market sites. The private sector will be encouraged to develop attractions and experiences primarily for cruise passengers.</li><li>4. Belize will develop an accommodation development program that is aimed at enhancing competitiveness of the accommodation sector of which an important component will be the development of destination strategies specific to properties that are unable to meet export ready status.</li><li>5. Belize will develop a sustainable approach to human resources development for the tourism sector, working in collaboration with educational institutions and ensuring that training programs are well matched to the objectives of Belize's tourism product development program.</li><li>6. Belize will develop and adopt an export ready policy for accommodations, travel infrastructure and attractions.</li><li>7. Belize will modernize the tourism investment regime to become competitive with the rest of the Caribbean region.</li></ol>
---	---

### 4.2 Belize Positioning

As "mother nature's best kept secret", Belize is positioned as an adventure destination. This positioning has served Belize well and best reflects the character of the

destination. Therefore, it is recommended that the policy of the Government of Belize be to maintain this positioning.

### **4.3 Tourism Product Priorities**

Currently, Belize tourism is characterized by two main product segments; stayover and cruise.

#### Stayover Segment

The stayover segment offers Belize several advantages including a higher economic contribution per visitor than the cruise segment, and the potential to distribute economic benefits to all parts of the country. Belize will place a priority on strengthening the competitiveness of the stayover market segment and encouraging its growth. The stayover market segment includes a number of niches that have proven successful for Belize. These are; adventure, nature, heritage/cultural and marine tourism including diving/snorkelling and sportfishing.

#### Additional Niche Markets

These should continue to be priorities for Belize in the stayover segment. In addition, Belize should seek to develop additional niche markets including:

- community tourism;
- meetings/conventions/business (particularly in Belize City);
- yachting;
- touring – the designation and marketing of touring routes to foster independent touring throughout Belize; and
- specialty resorts/spa developments that take advantage of the Belize Caribbean sea location and also serve as staging locations from which to explore Belize.

Initiatives on community tourism are already underway within the Belize Tourism Board and advertising to the meetings and conventions market should be accelerated. The yachting potential for Belize should be explored to identify how, where and under what conditions Belize could attract a significant yachting sector.

In the case of independent touring potential, the variety of tourism products throughout Belize presents the country with a superb opportunity to strengthen its touring market and position Belize as a country in which one can "explore" communities, nature, and historic/cultural areas. This also complements Belize's positioning as part of the Ruta Maya product. To support this product, Belize should develop tourism routes and policies related to the associated infrastructure to ensure signage, road infrastructure and tourism infrastructure support along the road system that meet the expectations of the market and adhere to international standards.

Belize should explore the potential in the accommodation's sector to include branded resorts and related amenities. This will offer Belize the opportunity to diversify its product, strengthen destination recognition, and provide additional, upscale markets for

Belize's attractions and experiences. The locations for such resort development must be planned to ensure that the Belize tourism positioning is not compromised.<sup>19</sup>

### Cruise Segment

The cruise segment in Belize delivers over 800,000 persons per year (2004). It is forecast to level off at about 1,000,000 passengers per year – the current capacity limit for Belize's cruise infrastructure. Belize adopted a cruise ship policy in 2000 to guide the development of the cruise sector in Belize. Approved at a time when the cruise sector was relatively small, events quickly overtook the policy when, by 2002, cruise lines made 200 calls to Belize's port, carrying approximately 320,000 passengers. During the period from 2000-2003, significant investments were made in cruise facilities including a modern cruise terminal, construction of tenders, purchase of additional buses, and the opening of new attractions. The policy was updated in 2003 and its purpose and objectives remain relevant today.

**Statement.** The cruise tourism policy of the Government of Belize provides the guidelines and principles for the management of the cruise sector's growth and development in an environmentally responsible and sustainable manner.

**Purpose.** The cruise tourism sub-sector is expected to assist in the development of tourism in Belize, by optimizing its contribution to the Belizean economy, while ensuring that the growth is environmentally and socio-culturally sustainable.

**Objectives.** The objectives of the cruise tourism policy are:

- to manage the number of cruise ship calls and passenger arrivals in a sustainable manner based on properly researched acceptable visitation limits for the available tourism sites in Belize;
- to optimize the revenues generated from cruise passengers;
- to increase the overall benefits from cruise tourism by creating and strengthening inter-sectoral linkages, whereby cruise lines source needed supplies of goods and services from Belize suppliers;
- to expand the absorptive capacity of the country by developing existing and new visitor attractions;
- to further develop present port facilities and to explore other ports (e.g., Punta Gorda, Big Creek, Placencia,);
- to identify suitable anchorage sites on the coast of Belize; and
- to develop and implement appropriate promotional programs that effectively convert cruise passengers to overnight visitors.

**Guiding Principle.** The growth rate in daily distribution shall respect the integrity of Belize as being an eco-cultural tourism destination as well as ensuring the safety of visitors. In practice, this means that the visitation capacities established for all sites shall be respected and adhered to.

---

<sup>19</sup> In this regard, it is noteworthy that Costa Rica has successfully accommodated branded resort development while still maintaining its reputation as a major nature and adventure destination. Lessons learned from Costa Rica's experience can be insightful for Belize as it proceeds to move from policy to practice in this area.

The remainder of the Belize cruise ship policy addresses environmental compliance, anchorage and pilotage, cruise tourism passenger activities, visitation limits, liability, application process, forms for discussion, monitoring and guidelines for cruise ship visitation in Belize.

### Cruise Ship Policy Updates

The cruise tourism policy anticipated a daily visitation limit of 8,000 cruise passengers for Belize City. Agreements are now in place to provide a cruise sector that is relatively stable going forward at about one million passengers per year. Therefore, the focus should be on ensuring a high-quality experience for these visitors to Belize without compromising the country's positioning (as the cruise ship policy itself recognizes) as an "eco-cultural tourism destination".

Taking into account recent trends, and the need to further strengthen the contribution of the cruise ship sector to Belize's cultural and social development, some refinements of the cruise ship policy are required.

Belize should focus on ensuring a high-quality destination experience for cruise passengers ranging from their arrival at the Belize waterfront to exploration of Belize nature sites. In order to limit conflicts between stayover and cruise markets, Belize should apply a two prong policy approach:

1. Designate selected sites as primarily cruise market sites and ensure that the stayover market (travel trade and intermediaries, and customers) is informed of these designations;
2. Encourage the development of private sector attractions and experiences catering primarily to cruise passengers that provide a quality product and in appropriate areas that do not conflict with stayover markets;

The Belize Cruise Ship Policy provides for a daily visitation limit of 8,000 cruise passengers. This is now being exceeded on some days during the cruise season<sup>20</sup>. With the increase in cruise tourism there is a need to address capacity issues at all sites. Belize should review and establish interim capacity limits immediately and refine these as required during the tourism master planning process.

Cruise passengers visiting Belize have one of the lowest per passenger spending levels in the region. Belize should also pursue strategies to increase per person spending by cruise passengers through improvements to the waterfront shopping experience, and additional cruiseship activities in Belize City such as arts and crafts markets and festivals, city tours, and local cuisine and other entertainment.

The cruise market includes segments that are well-matched to Belize product strengths in the areas of adventure, nature, heritage and culture. Typically catering to a market that prefers smaller ship sizes than the norm, Belize should seek to foster business with these cruise lines, recognizing their match to the Belize tourism product.

---

<sup>20</sup> According to A. Mahler from the BTB, this is mostly because cruise ship applications were submitted prior to the completion of the revision of the cruise policy.



#### 4.4 Tourism Area Development Priorities

Belize has been classified into nine tourism destinations by the Belize Tourism Board. The focus for tourism development will vary by area. For the purposes of this national tourism policy, the guidelines for tourism development priorities by area are shown in the table below.

**Table 6 – Tourism Development Priorities by Area**

Area	Cruise Segment	Stayover Segment					
		Nature Tourism	Marine Tourism	Adventure Tourism	Heritage/Cultural Tourism	Sun, Sea & Sand	Meetings & Conventions
Belize District	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓
Ambergris Caye		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Caye Caulker		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Cayo		✓		✓	✓		✓
Corozal		✓	✓	✓	✓		
Orange Walk		✓		✓	✓		
Stann Creek	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Placencia		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Toledo	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Outer Islands		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Particular attention in the short term should be placed on strengthening Belize City as a cruise tourism product, and rationalizing the relationship between the cruise and stayover market segments in those areas where cruise is a priority experience.

#### 4.5 Tourism Product Development Program

Priorities for the Belize tourism product development program to meet national policy objectives are described below.

##### Export Ready Considerations

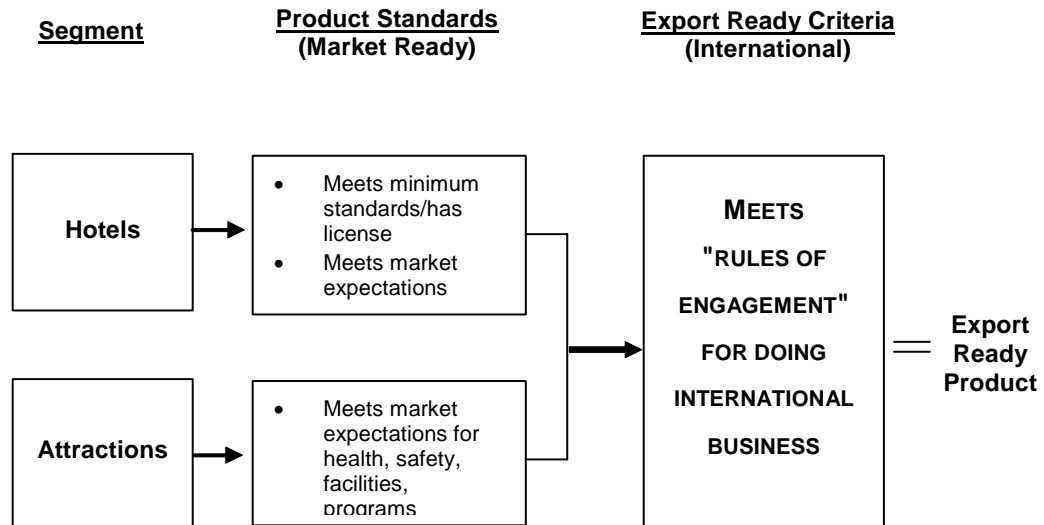
The tourism sector is essentially an export sector. When one considers the experience of other economic sectors such as manufacturing and agriculture, it is clear that products that do not meet international standards cannot be exported internationally. Countries have a variety of programs to "classify product" in terms of export readiness. A common example uses a tiered system with Tier 1 being export ready, Tier 2 being near export ready, and Tier 3 requiring significant upgrading and investment. "Export ready" for the tourism sector includes not only product standards but also includes the requirements for doing business with the international travel trade. This is important for participating in international marketing programs and packaging arrangements and is illustrated below.

Figure 2

---

## Export Ready Product – the Tourism Sector

---



This concept is particularly important for Belize because the majority of its tourism product is *not* export ready. These products should typically not be included in the international destination marketing and promotion campaigns since they will compromise Belize's reputation with the international travel trade. This Policy sets a direction concerning the development of more export ready products in Belize and the resulting Tourism Master Plan will include the development of specific programs aimed at helping operators to achieve export ready status across a wider spectrum of tourism activities.

It is important to note that export ready applies not only to accommodation but also to attractions and experiences offered to the international tourism market. While hotel standards have a long history and are relatively well-known, the question of market ready standards is less clear when it comes to attractions and experiences.<sup>21</sup>

### Accommodation Development

Adoption of an export ready approach for tourism in Belize as described above enables the creation of a comprehensive accommodation development strategy. Such a strategy is critical to resolve quality issues in the accommodation sector and more appropriate matching of destination marketing strategies with differing levels of product quality. The basic issue involves the approach Belize should take in enhancing its accommodation plant. At present, it is estimated that about 125 properties of the 506 property accommodation sector in Belize can be deemed "export ready". Many of the "non-export ready" properties can be moved to export ready status with minor

---

<sup>21</sup> Market ready product refers to product that generally meets accepted international standards. For example, in the hotel industry most destinations worldwide follow the general provisions of the AAA or AA systems. Export ready product refers to product that is "market ready" and also has the capacity and knowledge/skills to engage in tourism packaging at an international level. For non-hotel products, the benchmark is less clear and will be a function of the needs and expectations of fully independent travellers (FIT) and tour operators delivering customers to the product in question.

interventions. Others will require significantly more investment and still others may be inappropriate as tourism accommodation facilities. Some of the non-export ready properties already serve a budget market and may well wish to stay with that market. Others wish to access financing to improve their quality and cater to a more up-scale market.

The policy of Belize should be to develop an accommodation development program that is aimed at enhancing competitiveness of the accommodation sector based on export ready policies and standards. An important component of this program will be the development of destination marketing strategies specific to those properties that are unable to meet export ready status. In these cases, consideration will be given to marketing such properties to budget market segments.

As part of the implementation process for the accommodation development strategy, Belize should adopt a best practice approach to the development of product quality/standards for the hotel sector. Adoption of such standards will be preceded by a review of available standards globally to determine which system is most appropriate for Belize. The accommodation development program will include provisions for improved access to financing and incentives. Appropriate strategies and mechanisms will be developed in consultation with financial institutions.

#### Attractions Development

Belize has a well-developed attractions sector, many of which are run by organizations such as the Belize Audubon Society and other NGOs. In order to ensure competitive attractions on a sustainable basis, Belize should work with attraction owners/managers to develop a consistent set of management and service standards taking into account the quality of the experience in the context of market expectations and global standards, hospitality, interpretive content, visitor amenities and entertainment.

Attractions will also be subject to the export ready program providing the tourism industry and the international travel trade clear information on Belize's premier attractions. The export ready program will be applied to both public and private sector operated attractions.

#### Tourism Services

Belize has one of the premier tour guide training programs in the Caribbean and will continue to support and refine that program to ensure international competitiveness. Annual reviews of tour guide standards and certification processes should be undertaken to foster compliance with export ready standards for tour operations.

#### The Role of Belize City in Cruise Tourism

The Belize City experience has come under criticism recently, particularly from cruise passengers<sup>22</sup> concerning the quality of their visitor experience in Belize. Belize should develop a strategy for Belize City to strengthen its contribution to the tourism sector, fostering spending by cruise passengers and enhancing Belize City's reputation in the marketplace. Specific actions that will be considered for the Belize City tourism enhancement program will include:

---

<sup>22</sup> Information from Cruise Passenger Surveys conducted by the BTB in 2004.

- an annual high season arts and cultural program including such events as arts/crafts and music festivals;
- provision for an arts and crafts “market” area offsite from the waterfront cruise passenger landing area to foster more exploration of Belize City;
- information for visitors on the history of Belize arts and crafts, what is available, what to look for and premier artists;
- information for visitors on local cuisine and the development of a local cuisine program; and
- strengthen heritage protection programs including incentives to owners;
- improved signage.
- develop designated touring routes;
- development of a heritage zone;
- improved quantity and quality of entertainment;
- improvement in sanitation, health and safety.

#### Community Tourism

Community tourism has significant potential for Belize. The 2004 survey of specialty tour operators interested in community tourism identified over thirty operators who wish to explore business potential in the country. Properly executed, community tourism can generate economic development opportunities, business opportunities, and revenue generation for community tourism enterprises. Community tourism is a priority of the Government of Belize and community tourism development should be guided by the following principles:

- meaningful involvement of communities and their citizens in tourism activities;
- assisting communities to determine how they wish to engage in the tourism sector, tourism planning and facilitation of community tourism enterprise development; and
- consideration for community-based resource management linked to the tourism sector that provides revenue sources for the community.

Belize should develop a comprehensive community tourism development program pursuant to the policy related to product development.

#### Disaster Preparedness

Belize should develop a disaster preparedness program for its tourism sector that it can apply when necessary to reduce the scope and the extent of negative impacts from such disasters. This will be developed in collaboration with emergency preparedness authorities and should focus on proper communication programs and evacuation routes.

#### Human Resources Development (HRD)

In the last several years, Belize has been able to deliver an HRD program for the tourism sector through funding support from the Canadian International Development Agency and the Inter-American Development Bank's Multilateral Investment Fund. The

country has developed and is in the process of implementing a sustainable HRD program within the Belize Tourism Board that is linked to the formal education system and other training agencies in Belize. The policy of the government is to develop a sustainable approach to human resources development for the tourism sector, working in collaboration with educational institutions and ensuring that training programs are well-matched to the objectives of the tourism product development program for Belize.

### Safety and Security

Steps must be taken to upgrade the security conditions at Belize's border crossings and port facilities. The government should pursue a comprehensive program for enhancing safety and security in the tourism sector and at entry points to the country. This will include ensuring an aligned approach to safety and security among the existing network of law enforcement agencies and between these agencies and tourism stakeholders, and improving the effectiveness of these agencies.

### Tourism Awareness Programs

Tourism awareness programs are a fundamental component of tourism sector growth and expansion. In Belize these programs should be strengthened and extended into the primary and secondary school systems. In addition, Belize should develop a tourism awareness workshop for government agencies and private sector entities to inform their representatives about tourism's contribution to the Belize economy, the benefits tourism generates for Belize in social, environmental and cultural areas, the plans for tourism sector growth including objectives, and the need for cooperation and coordination.

### Modernizing the Tourism Investment Regime

Belize is one of the few countries in the Caribbean that does not have a separate tourism investment incentives regime. Currently, Belize tourism investment incentives are encompassed in a broader incentives regime related to all economic sectors. The Belize Tourism Board has initiated a program to create a specific tourism incentives regime comparable to other Caribbean jurisdictions.

Belize should continue to pursue a comprehensive modernization program for tourism investment incentives to ensure competitiveness with its Caribbean counterparts. This is regarded as essential to demonstrate commitment to growing the tourism sector and facilitating tourism sector

## 5. POLICY ON STRENGTHENING TOURISM DESTINATION LINKAGES

### 5.1 Recommended Policy Statements

<b>Policy Area:</b> Destination Linkages	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Belize will declare tourism a priority sector and will work with policymakers and technicians from each productive sector to establish the linkages and develop a framework for action.</li><li>2. Belize will ensure an integrative and consultative approach to policies and activities related to the environment, heritage and cultural resources, land use and planning, and physical infrastructure.</li><li>3. Belize will ensure competent and sufficient regulators and regulatory systems in all areas that impact the successful implementation of the tourism policy including but not limited to, the enforcement of carrying capacities, cruise ship docking and other environmental regulations.</li></ol>
--	--

### 5.2 Developing Destination Linkages

In order for tourism sector objectives to be met, development of the destination from a tourism perspective must be coordinated with the administrative functions of the Government of Belize. This includes integration with the country's economic strategy, policy alignment with such areas as heritage and cultural resource management, and capacity building in government agencies.

#### Tourism as Part of Belize's Economic Strategy

The trajectory for Belize's tourism industry is inextricably linked to the GOB's national development program. Planning the sector's future requires recognition and assimilation of its contribution into the national development agenda. The Government of Belize through the established tax infrastructure has committed to an investment in tourism of approximately \$7 - 9M (BZD) per year to 2004. While this has provided for the growth and development of the industry thus far, more effort is needed to position tourism as a national priority sector.

As such the Government of Belize in the next update to its Medium Term Economic Strategy should declare tourism a priority sector and work with the policymakers and technicians from each productive sector to establish the linkages (where relevant) and develop a framework for action to exploit these linkages for the benefit of all involved. In addition, GOB should also express its commitment to tourism as a priority sector as a part of the tourism master plan process, called for later in this policy. Government should also formally commit to an integrated approach to the development of a national vision and action plan with commonly derived and understood objectives for economic, social and cultural development. The national development agenda will clearly identify and position

the priority sectors, identify the linkages between sectors and develop specific and measurable objectives based on these linkages.

In the case of tourism, government and financial experts should consult the Tourism Master Plan and allow it to inform their decision making on social and infrastructure programs and public investment decisions at each annual budget review. With specific reference to the tourism sector, every effort should be expended to ensure that the development of an internationally competitive tourism product is not compromised.

#### Linkages Fostering Micro-Enterprise Development

Tourism is recognized internationally as offering significant markets for micro-enterprise development in such areas as agriculture, culture, arts and crafts, and local events and festivals. In Belize, these linkages should be strengthened and innovative ways to enhance micro-enterprise participation in tourism should be developed. Initiatives such as local cuisine programs in restaurants, a “seal of quality” program for Belize arts and crafts, celebration of premier Belizean artists through articles, website features, brochures and other communication channels, and comprehensive linkages between tourism and cultural events and festivals should be pursued.

#### Integrated Tourism Development Policies

An internationally competitive tourism product is possible only if sector activities are reconciled and linked to the policies and activities of government in other areas that impact and/or support the product. For example, it is important for the tourism sector to provide input on government decision-making processes related to:

- land use plans; (Physical Development Plans for the Country)
- waste management strategies;
- planning of parks and protected areas;
- safety and security;
- Investment agreements;
- leasing of marine resource areas;
- concession agreements related to resources of interest to the tourism sector and the like.

As such, having declared tourism a priority sector and having examined the linkages between tourism and national development objectives and the attendant impact on decisions related to public spending, GOB should ensure an integrative and consultative approach to policies and activities related to the environment, heritage and cultural resources, land use and land use planning, and physical infrastructure. Mechanisms for coordination between the Belize Tourism Board and government agencies responsible for such areas should be established and implemented as part of the annual planning and budgeting process required of all government agencies.

Of particular concern in aligning public sector policies and programs with tourism policy is the matter of Belize community tourism development and the touring routes that Belize can offer. Both require special attention to land and resource use policies, heritage and cultural protection programs, new ways of thinking about the role of highways and ports/marinas in terms of their role in facilitating national tourism policy and

considerations for setting infrastructure development priorities. While the tourism master plan will address these questions in detail and in cooperation with appropriate government agencies, this national tourism policy recognizes the importance of these linkages to the success of the sector and the contribution it can make to Belize.

This integration is also important for investment. Approved land use plans and resource management programs provide additional certainty for investors that rely on protection of resources and scenic values and designation of tourism areas with attendant planning and design policies that enhance the product quality. Therefore the GOB should foster the creation of a land use and resource management plan in collaboration with the tourism sector. This plan should include specific provision to ensure that the national interests as they relate to a healthy and vibrant tourism sector are reflected in the plan.

#### Capacity Building and Government Agencies

Where policy enforcement and/or regulation of attendant areas such as environment, culture and use of land and waterways, is the responsibility of a government ministry or department within a ministry, government should ensure transparent, credible, consistent, regulation of these attendant areas. Government should resolve to provide the appropriate resources to regulatory agencies requiring institutional strengthening.



## 6. POLICY ON DESTINATION MARKETING AND PROMOTION

### 6.1 Recommended Policy Statements

<p><b>Policy Area:</b> Destination Marketing and Promotion</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Destination promotion will be financed at a competitive level.</li><li>2. Destination marketing will strengthen its reliance on business practices to include tourism sector forecasts, market research and intelligence, annual reviews of marketing effectiveness and competitive use of technology for destination marketing and information resources for travel and intermediaries.</li><li>3. Belize will place a greater emphasis on speciality niche marketing consistent with the tourism product in Belize. This will include the development of sustained and collaborative relationships with the specialty tour operator community, travel intermediaries and trade partners and facilitation of business relationships between these communities and Belize suppliers.</li><li>4. The market-driven orientation to destination marketing will be strengthened. This will include creation of a market intelligence database profiling the primary Belize customer segment in nature, adventure, and historic/cultural areas.</li><li>5. Destination marketing programs will focus on export ready products for international and regional markets.</li></ol>
--	---

### 6.2 Destination Marketing and Promotion

Although Belize has an annually updated marketing plan, it does not have a formal destination marketing strategy that is reviewed annually, assessed for effectiveness and regularly informed by market intelligence. It is critical that destination promotion be elevated to a higher standard, preferably patterned from competitive business practices.

The tourism destination management model employed and accepted worldwide<sup>23</sup> encourages public sector responsibility for destination marketing and promotion to create market awareness of the *destination*<sup>24</sup>, which private sector operators are encouraged to

<sup>23</sup> Please refer to Section 2.1.3 and Figure 1 for more information on this approach to destination management

<sup>24</sup> As opposed to individual properties an/or attractions

exploit to increase the attractiveness of their individual properties and/or attractions. Key features of GOB's policy for destination marketing and promotion should be as follows:

1. Destination promotion will be financed at a level competitive with other Caribbean and Central American countries;
2. Destination marketing will strengthen the reliance on business practices including annual marketing plans, tourism sector forecasts, market research and intelligence, and annual reviews of marketing effectiveness and competitive use of technology for destination marketing and information resources for travel intermediaries;
3. Belize will place a greater emphasis on specialty niche marketing consistent with the tourism product in Belize. This will include the development of sustained and collaborative relationships with the specialty tour operator community and facilitation of business relationships between these operators and Belize suppliers;
4. The market-driven orientation to destination marketing will be strengthened. This will include creation of a market intelligence database profiling the primary Belize customer segment in nature, adventure, and historic/cultural areas.

#### A Focus on Marketing Export Ready Products

The marketing program should focus on export ready products for international and regional markets. This policy will include the development of partnerships with specialty tour operators, facilitation of tour operator relationships with Belize operators, and identification of specialty market requirements on a regular basis for use by industry to enhance their competitiveness. For those tourism markets in Belize that are not export ready, a "budget" marketing strategy will be developed and implemented while they are working to achieve export ready status.

#### Industry Partnerships

In the short term, the destination marketing program should implement an aggressive campaign in cooperation with industry to immediately strengthen relationships with the specialty tour operators, establish a sound market intelligence database in this area, and develop a program to increase business with this segment.

#### On-Line Marketing Effectiveness

Technology is recognized as one of the driving forces in the global tourism industry. Belize should assess its requirements for enhancing the effectiveness of its on-line marketing mechanisms to better serve both consumers and the travel trade with whom Belize interacts. Consistent with Belize's intent to strengthen its relationships with international specialty tour operators, the destination marketing technology tools should be reviewed to maximize the effectiveness of web-based information to assist the international travel trade and media in doing business with Belize.

## 7. POLICY ON DESTINATION MANAGEMENT

### 7.1 Recommended Policy Statements

<b>Policy Area:</b> Destination Management	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Belize will strengthen its destination management agency (BTB) and its partnership with the Belize tourism industry.</li><li>2. Belize will conduct tourism destination management utilizing business planning principles.</li><li>3. Belize will establish a performance monitoring program that provides annual performance data on the contribution of tourism to the economy and establish an annual performance reporting system that tracks key indicators of tourism sector performance and assesses the country's progress against tourism related economic development issues.</li></ol>
--	--

### 7.2 Destination Management

The tourism sector has experienced substantial growth in destination management agencies throughout the world. These agencies are typically funded by government and serve as partners with the private sector to implement national tourism policy and objectives established by government. Increasing competition in the tourism sector, more sophisticated consumers, and greater market interest in exploring and learning about the destination are all converging to demand a destination management agency function that is not only concerned with destination marketing and product development but also linkages to other economic sectors, involvement in physical planning, heritage and cultural resource protection and natural resource protection, and a much greater emphasis on performance monitoring and assessment.

In this context, Belize will need to strengthen its destination management agency (the BTB) and its partnership with the private sector and other stakeholders to enhance the competitiveness of the country's tourism sector.

### 7.3 Preparation of a Tourism Master Plan

Belize is facing many tourism development challenges involving land and marine use, infrastructure, resource use and visitor impacts. The national policy guidance provided herein sets the vision, objectives and policies for the sector. To provide the tourism sector with further support, and to translate policy into practice, the preparation of a tourism master plan by the Belize Tourism Board is essential.

The Tourism Master Plan will build on the results of the Phase 1 policy development and be guided by the priorities and directions established in the policy document. Particular attention in the preparation of the Tourism Master Plan will be paid to:

- the preparation of area plans from a tourism perspective but integrating considerations related to quality of life for local citizens;
- Integrating tourism development policies in areas such as waste management, land use, security, and investments;
- local community planning processes to assist communities with development of community tourism products;
- development of carrying capacity limits (or similar mechanisms) for nature and heritage/cultural sites including an orderly process for adjusting these, taking into account stakeholder input;
- refined product development programs and tourism infrastructure priorities together with development of a comprehensive investment program for the next five years based on the results of the priority area development policies; and
- full specification of destination management requirements including capacity building where necessary.

The emphasis will be placed on executing the National Tourism Policy with specific plans and programs for tourism product development, area plans including community tourism, and strengthening national tourism policies to better integrate these with economic, social/cultural and infrastructure policies of the country. The Master Plan will include a comprehensive program for destination marketing and management and will be implemented by the Belize Tourism Board, working with other ministries and agencies and the tourism industry, respectively. The Master Plan will include an investment program that forms part of the country's capital budget and donor funding programs.

#### **7.4 Destination Management Programs**

The national tourism policies on product development and destination marketing form an integral part of the national destination management programs. In addition to these, the destination management agency should strengthen its program delivery in several areas.

##### Business Planning

In 2004, the Belize tourism sector was a US\$173 million business. It is an export business and requires that the quality of the products and services meet international market expectations. Belize will strengthen its investment in product development and destination marketing to achieve better results from the tourism sector, and orient its tourism programs and activities to ensure that tourism meets national social, economic and cultural objectives.

##### Performance Monitoring

Currently, economic impact data on the contribution of tourism to the Belize economy is not readily available or easily accessible. The Government of Belize should establish a performance monitoring program that provides government and industry with annual performance data on the contribution of tourism to the economy, consistent with international reporting standards.

In addition to economic data, Belize should establish an annual performance reporting system that tracks key indicators of tourism sector performance and assesses the country's progress against economic development issues relevant to tourism including:

- distribution of economic benefits throughout Belize;
- participation by communities in the tourism sector;
- creation of new businesses and employment opportunities in tourism; and
- strengthening of linkages between tourism and other economic sectors including agriculture, arts and crafts, cultural activities, etc.

#### Tourism Management Information System for Industry

To assist the Belize tourism industry in planning their business strategies and enhancing their competitiveness, Belize should strengthen its web-based information resources for industry to encompass performance monitoring reports and supporting data, legislation, policies and programs of the Belize Tourism Board and related agencies, program information including participation requirements, market intelligence information, etc. This database is intended to provide a cost effective alternative for ensuring that industry has full access to the government's destination management activities.

## 8. ORGANIZING TO IMPLEMENT THE TOURISM POLICY

### 8.1 Who Should be Involved?

Tourism in all destinations worldwide touches on the lives of all citizens. Each group within society, in addition to the roles of government agencies in the private sector, also has a role to play. It will be government's responsibility to ensure that all stakeholders have a voice in the challenge involved in growing the tourism sector and that all facets of society receive benefits from tourism.

The roles of stakeholders are summarized below.

**Table 7 – Stakeholder Roles in Management of the Tourism Sector**

Stakeholder	Role
National Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism policy and planning</li> <li>• Providing an appropriate enabling environment for tourism including legislation, regulations</li> <li>• Destination marketing</li> <li>• Capacity building</li> <li>• Tourism product standards</li> <li>• Coordination and integration with government processes including economic policy development and planning, capital budgeting, land use planning, resource protection, cultural protection</li> </ul>
Tourism Private Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invest in the tourism sector.</li> <li>• Operate and manage plant efficiently and profitably</li> <li>• Advertise and promote</li> <li>• Upgrade skills of workforce</li> <li>• Continuously refurbish plant/equipment</li> <li>• Satisfy customer needs</li> <li>• Collaborate with the government in planning promoting and marketing</li> <li>• Involve local communities</li> <li>• Operate according to appropriate standards</li> </ul>
Local Government, Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize to take advantage of tourism opportunities</li> <li>• Work with national government in the private sector to develop tourism products</li> <li>• Capacity building</li> <li>• Respond to tourism in a way that enhances quality of life within the community and ensures that there are direct benefits to the community</li> <li>• Develop roles in tourism activities that do not compromise the heritage and culture of the community</li> <li>• Adopt environmental management practices</li> </ul>
Non-Tourism Government Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporate and reflect the vision for tourism, tourism sector objectives and the national tourism policy in the plans and activities of agencies</li> <li>• Participate in coordinating activities with the national tourism agency</li> <li>• Ensure that the tourism interest is always addressed in</li> </ul>

Stakeholder	Role
	policy and planning.
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness building</li> <li>• Fostering positive attitude towards tourism and positive image of destination</li> <li>• Professional approach to tourism sector issues, incidents</li> <li>• Information sharing</li> </ul>
NGOs/Civil Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Including special interest groups (eg, heritage, environment), labour, women, youth</li> <li>• Mobilization</li> <li>• Awareness building</li> <li>• Information sharing</li> <li>• Facilitating partnerships</li> </ul>
International Partners (Including , international media, int'l educational institutions, travel trade, international and regional donor agencies, International and regional tourism associations, internationally recognized special interest groups i.e. heritage, environment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring, Information sharing, facilitating partnerships, access to investment capital,</li> </ul>

A modern tourism sector operates on a partnership basis with the public sector providing destination management and marketing and the private sector providing product investment and sales. Belize has already well established institutional structures that are designed to facilitate that partnership. This includes:

- the Belize National Tourism Council – designed to provide oversight and guidance on the implementation of national tourism policy and a link between central government and the Belize Tourism Board;
- the Belize Tourism Board – the country's destination management agency providing both marketing and product development as well as training and performance monitoring; and
- private sector associations, including the Hotel Association and the Belize Tourism Industry Association – providing a voice for industry.

The legislative authorities for Belize's tourism sector management have recently undergone a significant modernization effort in the last 10 years. With the exception of the investment incentives regime, the legislation generally meets modern competitiveness standards.

While the structures are appropriate, the issue facing tourism sector management relates to capacity of both the public and private sectors.

## 8.2 Building Capacity in Tourism Institutions

In order to foster a stronger relationship between government's destination management functions and the private sector, several initiatives are required. The Belize National Tourism Council should be revitalized or a similar coordinating body created to provide a forum for partnership discussions within the public and private sectors and guidance on tourism policy implementation. Legislation should be revised or developed to provide for the appropriate institutional structure to meet future requirements for tourism sector management. In the interim, a tourism council should be appointed comprising representatives from private sector associations, the Government of Belize, and ex-officio representation from the CEO of Finance, Environment and Culture.

The role of the coordinating body will be to:

- review annual destination management business plans and the annual destination promotion and marketing plan for Belize, providing recommendations to the Belize Tourism Board and to government, as appropriate;
- review and refine the National Tourism Policy from time to time to better meet the vision for tourism;
- to provide an annual forum for industry and government to review the "state of the tourism sector" and plan the way forward for the next year and into the future;
- provide input to the Tourism Master Plan and facilitate its completion.

From a global perspective, the Belize tourism sector is relatively immature. With some notable exceptions, there is relatively limited awareness in industry of international trends, standards requirements, the role tourism can play in generating economic benefits throughout the economy, programs to facilitate linkages to other economic sectors, and competitiveness issues. To meet national tourism objectives, the capacity building approach must encompass the Belize Tourism Board itself and industry through its private sector associations.

**Belize Tourism Board.** While it is recognized that the Belize Tourism Board is currently one of the better funded and resourced agencies in Belize, the agency is under-resourced to face the challenges that lay ahead. In both destination marketing and tourism product development areas, strengthening must take place. Belize should increase budget resources for the BTB consistent with the requirements of this National Tourism Policy in the short term and the Tourism Master Plan in the longer term. Belize should seek to establish a sustainable funding mechanism that encompasses core government funding together with government revenues generated by the tourism sector to meet the requirements for tourism sector growth set out in this policy.

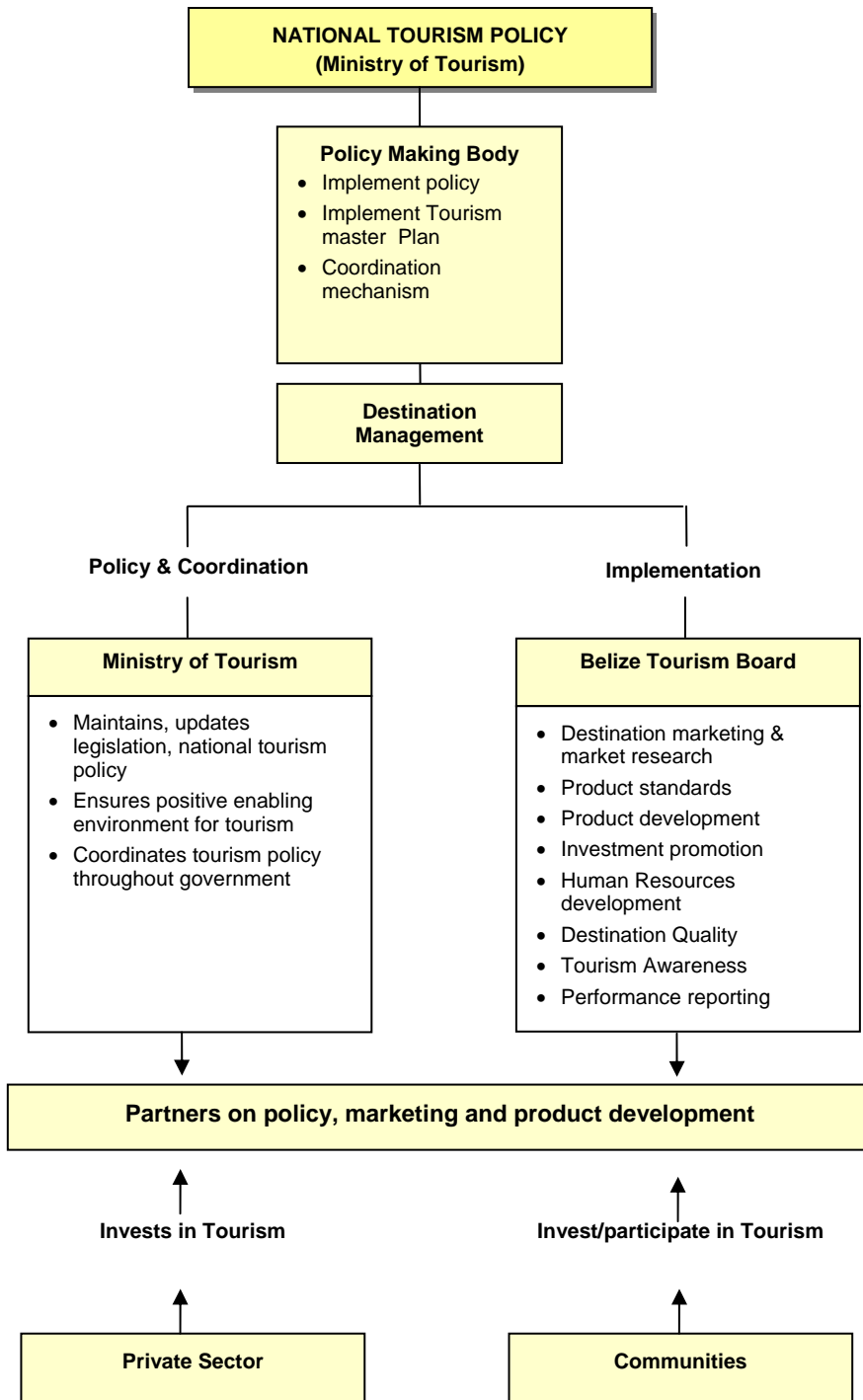
**Inter-Agency Coordination.** Inter-agency coordination is essential for the tourism sector. At the present time, investments in activities ranging from infrastructure to marine management are being made without input from the tourism sector. Government recognizes that this can ultimately compromise the potential for the tourism sector and therefore regards inter-agency coordination as one of the primary purposes of the Belize National Tourism Council or its successor.



**Strengthening the Private Sector Associations.** National discourse on the tourism sector and its potential to enhance the quality of life of Belize's citizens is best achieved from a common and globally relevant level of understanding of tourism trends and where Belize fits in the context of these trends. Therefore, the Belize National Tourism Council (or its successor), with the support of the Belize Tourism Board, will undertake awareness programs with the industry on tourism sector development, and provide information resources on-line for industry stakeholders.

If organized and resourced appropriately, Belize's tourism sector policy structure should realize the following form. Although represented as a linear structure, the intent is to encourage the opportunity for maximum interaction and discourse between policymakers, practitioners, civil society and the wider citizenry.

Figure 3: Organizational Structure to Implement the National Tourism Policy



### **8.3 Action Plan for Implementing the National Tourism Policy**

The Belize Tourism Board will be charged with implementing (and coordinating where appropriate) the National Tourism Policy, working with the advice of the Belize National Tourism Council or a similar coordinating body. It will be the role of the Council to review progress on implementation and advise the Belize Tourism Board and Government on recommended modifications and adjustments.

For this purpose, an action plan for implementing the National Tourism Policy has been prepared and will be used by the BTB and the Tourism Council to guide implementation in the short term. On completion of the Tourism Master Plan it is anticipated that the Master Plan will form the blueprint for guiding the development of the industry consistent with the National Vision and Objectives for Tourism.

### References:

- 1) A Tourism Strategy Plan for Belize, Blackstone Corporation
- 2) Belize Cruise Ship Policy, 2003
- 3) Belize Tourism Board Revised Cruise Ship Schedule 2004
- 4) Mid Term Economic Strategy 2003-2005, Government of Belize, July 2002
- 5) Tourism Sector Diagnostic, Launchpad Consulting, January 2004
- 6) Tourism & Travel Statistics, 2003
- 7) Travel Industry Association of America and Smithsonian Magazine, 2002,
- 8) The Historic/Cultural Traveler (2002 Edition).
- 9) Travel Industry Association of America and National Geographic Traveler, 2002, The Geo-tourism Study, Phase 1.
- 10) World Tourism Organization, Tourism 2020 Vision, Volume 7, Global Forecasts and Profiles of Market Segments, 2001
- 11) Belize Tourism Board Website @ [www.belizetourism.org](http://www.belizetourism.org)

### Personal Communication

- 1) Anthony Mahler, Director Product Development
- 2) Dr. Vincent Palacio, Director Training Unit
- 3) Mrs. Tracy Taegar – Panton, Director of the Belize Tourism Board
- 4) Mrs. Valerie Woods – Director Protected Areas Conservation Trust (via email)
- 5) Tourism Policy Stakeholders via two industry workshops (names can be provided upon request)

**Annexes**

Annex I: Chart of Policy Recommendations

Annex II: Commission Methodology

Annex III: Tourism Sector Diagnostic

Annex IV: White Paper

## Annex I – Chart of Broad Policy and Policy in Issue Areas

### Vision

*Belize's tourism vision is to develop a vibrant and progressive tourism industry through a responsible approach which embraces a strong "eco-ethic" and effective destination management that seek to improve the quality of life for all Belizeans.*

<p><b>Policy Area:</b> Product Development</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Belize will maintain its positioning as an adventure destination.</li> <li>2. Belize will place a priority on strengthening the competitiveness of the stay over market segment, encourage its growth and seek to develop additional niche markets while ensuring that the adventure destination positioning is not compromised.</li> <li>3. Belize will ensure a high quality experience for cruise visitors without compromising the country's positioning as an 'eco-tourism' destination and will designate selected sites as primarily cruise market sites. The private sector will be encouraged to develop attractions and experiences primarily for cruise passengers.</li> <li>4. Belize will develop an accommodation development program that is aimed at enhancing competitiveness of the accommodation sector of which an important component will be the development of destination strategies specific to properties that are unable to meet export ready status.</li> <li>5. Belize will develop a sustainable approach to human resources development for the tourism sector, working in collaboration with educational institutions and ensuring that training programs are well matched to the objectives of Belize's tourism product development program.</li> <li>6. Belize will develop and adopt an export ready policy for accommodations, travel infrastructure and attractions.</li> <li>7. Belize will modernize the tourism investment regime to become competitive with the rest of the Caribbean region.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Policy Area:</b> Destination Linkages</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Belize will declare tourism a priority sector and will work with policymakers and technicians from each productive sector to establish the linkages and develop a framework for action.</li> <li>2. Belize will ensure an integrative and consultative approach to policies and activities related to the environment, heritage and cultural resources, land use and planning, and physical infrastructure.</li> <li>3. Belize will ensure competent and sufficient regulators and regulatory systems in all areas that impact the successful implementation of the tourism</li> </ol>

	<p>policy including but not limited to, the enforcement of carrying capacities, cruise ship docking and other environmental regulations.</p>
<p><b>Policy Area:</b> Destination Marketing and Promotion</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Destination promotion will be financed at a competitive level.</li> <li>2. Destination marketing will strengthen its reliance on business practices to include tourism sector forecasts, market research and intelligence, annual reviews of marketing effectiveness and competitive use of technology for destination marketing and information resources for travel and intermediaries.</li> <li>3. Belize will place a greater emphasis on speciality niche marketing consistent with the tourism product in Belize. This will include the development of sustained and collaborative relationships with the specialty tour operator community, travel intermediaries and trade partners and facilitation of business relationships between these communities and Belize suppliers.</li> <li>4. The market-driven orientation to destination marketing will be strengthened. This will include creation of a market intelligence database profiling the primary Belize customer segment in nature, adventure, and historic/cultural areas.</li> <li>5. Destination marketing programs will focus on export ready product for international and regional markets.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Policy Area:</b> Destination Management</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Belize will strengthen its destination management agency (BTB) and its partnership with the Belize tourism industry.</li> <li>2. Belize will conduct tourism destination management utilizing business planning principles.</li> <li>3. Belize will establish a performance monitoring program that provides annual performance data on the contribution of tourism to the economy and establish an annual performance reporting system that tracks key indicators of tourism sector performance and assesses the country's progress against tourism related economic development issues.</li> </ol>

Annex II – Methodology

**Phase One – Tourism Master Plan Project**  
**Preparation of Belize’s National Tourism Policy**

**Work Plan of Activities**

Prepared by:

***Launchpad Consulting***

Belize City, Belize

For:

The Belize Tourist Board

Belize City

September 8, 2004



The information provided in this proposal includes approaches, data, and concepts that shall not be disclosed outside of this application process and shall not be duplicated, used, or disclosed - in whole or in part - for any purpose other than to evaluate this application. If however a contract is awarded to Launchpad Consulting as a result of or in connection with its application, then the contracting agency shall have the right to duplicate, use or disclose the approaches, data, and ideas but only to the extent provided in the resulting contract. The approaches, data, and concepts subject to this restriction are contained in all pages of the proposal inclusive of the appendices.

## 1.0 Background

In an attempt to stimulate and develop growth in the tourism sector, in 1998 the tourism industry in Belize developed a strategy and action plan. Underpinning the strategy was the industry focus of “responsible tourism” the objective of which was to stimulate economic growth and contribution of the sector while protecting the country’s environmental and heritage resources and ensuring benefits to the local people.

The plan aimed for a 4% compound average annual growth rate and an increase of 20,000 in visitor numbers over a five year period allowing Belize to develop a niche in small-scale rather than mass tourism. The annual total number of visitors was not envisaged to exceed 140,000. At the time the strategy considered a “what if” scenario of 400,000+ visitors and concluded that visitors in such numbers would result in serious environmental and cultural impact and elimination of ecotourism, and as such would be unsustainable.

By the end of 1998, stay over visitors alone exceeded growth predictions by roughly 36,000 and total visitor numbers rose from 190,237 in 1998 to an unparalleled 746,905 in 2003<sup>25</sup>. Cruise tourism, which the 1998 strategy did not contemplate, accounted for 77% of the total. In contrast stay over numbers had by 2003 declined by 2.5%. In 2004, close to a million visitors are expected, the majority courtesy of cruise tourism, and direct contribution to GDP is expected to be roughly 15%.

Actual visitor composition and numbers since 1998, suggest a significant departure from the long term growth strategy endorsed by the country in 1998. Recognizing the inconsistencies, in 2004, Belize commissioned a White Paper to highlight the attendant issues, market trends and policy gaps as a first step to discussion on the way forward. The conclusions inspired agreement on the need for a new national tourism policy and master plan for the country. Provided below is Launchpad Consulting’s proposal to administrate phase one of the Master Plan project, the preparation of Belize’s national tourism policy, in accordance with the Terms of Reference provided for the commission.

## 2.0 Commission Objectives

The key objectives of the commission are:

- Using the 1998 strategy as a reference, develop a national tourism policy which addresses the cruise vs stay over tourism conundrum and includes:
  - A vision statement and performance objectives which are based on and include:

---

<sup>25</sup> Numbers courtesy of Tourism White Paper, completed May 2004

- Careful consideration of the social, economic and cultural development of the country and a determination of the new policy's contribution to these
- Destination positioning and international standards regulations
- Tourism product development objectives including infrastructure requirements
- Recommendations for tourism destination management which include:
  - A recommendation for tourism area plans and priorities for completion of these plans
  - A recommendation for carrying capacities for visitation to natural, historic and cultural sites or similar policy measures to be used as guidelines and refined during Phase 2.
  - Government's role in the management of the destination
  - Private sector role and responsibilities

### 3.0 Approach

Global imperatives and national priorities, clearly insist that Belize seek out and adopt new approaches to development of its burgeoning travel and tourism sector. Unprecedented and relatively uncharted growth over the past six years suggest a dangerous liaison with sustainability and an urgent need to contemplate the choices and select and employ the choice best suited to the country's national development objectives. The question of tourism policies is about the choice of resources to be tapped, used, developed and enhanced for tourism development in combination with the desired or expected economic and social results. Tourism policies must refer to the comprehensive reality of tourism supply and demand and in several cases there must be a combination of policies to sustain growth. In defining tourism policy the questions that must be asked and answered are:

- What are the activities that provide for tourist satisfaction and demand?
- What are the needs of these travellers and visitors?
- How can these needs be satisfied in an optimal manner considering the economic, social and environmental perspectives?

In the case of Belize, the challenge is to move from the existing approach to one that can integrate the current social, economic and environmental imperatives. In addition the country needs to design new approaches to managing tourism in a more systematic and dynamic way. This is a mammoth task that relies significantly on two key initiatives; a thorough contextual diagnostic to accurately represent the issues and focus the discussion and productive dialogue with and between the industry's stakeholders.

Launchpad recommends the following approach to the administration of this commission. Worthy of note is that the approach assumes input from an international tourism specialist as defined by the terms of reference and thus anticipates a collaborative effort between Launchpad and the specialist to satisfy the objectives for the commission.

### 3.1 Phase I - Kick-off/Preliminary Event

**Objectives:**

(i) To sensitize all industry stakeholders on the issues affecting the sector and establish the context for policy development;

(iii) Familiarize industry stakeholders with the activities of the commission and establish the framework for subsequent dialogue and input.

Methodology

Since the country's master plan will be based on the policy established from this effort, the commission must contemplate the ways, and use every opportunity to engage the sector's stakeholders to ensure the most widely endorsed policy initiative. To this end, the consultants will develop a presentation based on the 1998 Blackstone Report and the subsequent sector White Paper, for delivery at the first of two workshops with industry and government stakeholders. The presentation will attempt to succinctly present the issues including global, regional market trends, policy gaps, policy space, tourism as a priority sector, planning under a multi-stakeholder approach, standards, biodiversity and the need for a new model for destination management. In addition, the presentation will review the objectives and activities of this commission and explain the master plan process and the relationship between this and the master plan initiatives. The objective is to familiarize the stakeholders with the contextual issues and framework, secure consensus about the relevant issues and allow them to prepare for the subsequent policy consultations.

The workshop is anticipated to be a half day event, in Belize City involving at least one participant from all the key stakeholders groups and agencies, including civil society, and religious and private sector membership organizations. Invitations should also be extended to the local food, utility and transportation providers. If interest is overwhelming perhaps two half day workshops could be considered.

It is anticipated that the selection of participants and all other administrative arrangements will be coordinated by the Belize Tourist Board as the sponsor agency and as such these activities have not been factored into the activity schedule or costs associated with the commission. Involvement and the presence of the oversight committee and the tourism specialist is anticipated and considered necessary.

### 3.2 Phase II – Tourism Sector Diagnostic

**Objectives:**

(i) Assess and where possible quantify social/cultural, economic and environmental impact of the unplanned growth that has occurred in the sector;

(ii) Assess Belize's marketing budget expenditures from 1998-2003 and the impact on tourism growth. Review perceived market

position and answer the question; has the market image of Belize been altered in light of recent growth?

(iii) Assess the issues involved in cruise tourism (mass tourism) vs. stay over tourism in relation to the 1998 strategy and determine whether they can co-exist

(iv) Provide an assessment of issues and opportunities facing the Belize tourism Sector. Identify the policy choices (alternative growth scenarios) and establish the issues for discussion with the industry's stakeholders.

### Methodology

To provide the most informed policy making mechanism, upon conclusion of the workshop the consultants will begin work immediately on the tourism sector diagnostic. Research design contemplates both primary and secondary information from a number of agencies and individuals involved in the domestic, regional and international tourism sector. Compiled tourism statistics, site information, and feedback from industry practitioners are critical. Launchpad anticipates telephone and personal interview discussions with practitioners involved in both cruise and stay-over tourism, government agencies and departments monitoring the environmental, social and economic impact of both types of tourism, including if available the degree and type of leakages from each type of tourism. Note that the timeframe does not allow for an involved primary research effort and thus the availability of relevant industry, social, cultural and environmental data is essential. Launchpad's research will seek to address the following issues:

- Assessment of the social/cultural, economic and environmental impact of the unplanned growth
- Assessment of Belize's marketing budget expenditure from 1998-2003
- Together with the specialist, assess the issues and opportunities facing the sector, identify the policy choices and issues for discussion with the industry's stakeholders

The information compiled by Launchpad will be analysed and presented in a report to the oversight committee and the tourism specialist.

It is anticipated that the tourism specialist will research and provide analysis on market perceptions from international tour operators and wholesalers. He/she will also provide the contextual framework for the industry-wide cruise vs. stay-over tourism debate, answer the question of whether the two have been able to co-exist in other jurisdictions, and provide lessons learned and recommendations on the way forward given the 1998 strategy. He/she will also together with Launchpad consultants and based on the results of the joint research efforts, identify the policy choices, establish the issues for discussion, aggregate the research results and

prepare the final report Upon compilation of the aggregated information<sup>26</sup> Launchpad will prepare a presentation for delivery at the policy consultation workshop/s.

### 3.3 Phase III- Policy Consultation Workshops

**Objectives:** (i) Secure inter-sectoral input in tourism sector policy

Methodology:

Completing this phase requires close collaboration between the consultants and the sponsor organization to design workshop complexion and delivery schedules. After consultation, the consultants will rely on the sponsor organization to advertise the workshops, extend invitations if considered necessary, arrange for venue, participant hospitality, and equipment. A conference type approach/atmosphere is highly recommended to allow controlled interventions and discussions. Thus the venue should be able to accommodate<sup>27</sup> 15-20 delegate stations with a microphone at each station, projectors, white screen, flip charts and podium. All workshops have to be recorded and videotape is the recommended media<sup>28</sup>. Launchpad will design the workshop, provide presentation, handouts and all background information, and will moderate and facilitate the sessions. Please note that costs associated with workshop administration, conferencing equipment and recording are not included in this proposal.

Invitations will be issued to all major stakeholders from across the country to attend the policy workshops in Belize City. For efficiency and effectiveness, workshop participants should not exceed twenty (20) people per workshop<sup>29</sup> and should provide for representation from each stakeholder group at each workshop. Recommended composition is as follows: representation from cruise and stay-over tourism practitioners (at least two from each), local government, the BTB and Ministry of Tourism, Audubon society and other environmental organizations, travel agents, local BTIA and BHA, BNTOA, BCIA chapters<sup>30</sup>. If the stakeholder group exceeds the recommended 15-20 per workshop, two four hour workshops are recommended. It is necessary at each workshop to secure statements of support for the initiative from local representatives of both the public and private sectors. At the conclusion of the workshops the consultants will provide a written report to the oversight committee, detailing the activities and results.

---

<sup>26</sup> i.e. that of Launchpad and that of the tourism specialist

<sup>27</sup> alternatively it can be hired on

<sup>28</sup> however voice records will also serve the purpose

<sup>29</sup> this is the upper limit and effort to reduce this will be appreciated. It is appreciated that the numbers will vary depending on the region

<sup>30</sup> We realize and in fact expect overlaps as the same representative may be a sector practitioner as well as an organization representative.

### 3.4 Phase IV - Project Completion

**Objectives:** (i) Provide policy recommendation to sponsor organizations and sector stakeholders

Methodology:

Workshop conclusion introduces the final stage of the commission which is to consolidate and analyze the findings over the course of the consultancy and use this to provide a policy recommendation for the country. The choices made in the policy recommendation will then drive the recommendations for destination management which itself will contemplate a recommended approach to destination management, the linkages between tourism and the socio-economic and environmental priorities and the roles and responsibilities of key players in the sector. Launchpad will seek to address the following commission objectives:

- Preparation of a vision statement and performance objectives
- Assessment of the social, economic and cultural development issues of the country and a determination of the new policy's contribution to these
- Recommendations for destination positioning and international standards regulations
- Tourism product development objectives including infrastructure requirements

Given the specific tourism related expertise of the specialist it is anticipated that he/she will be responsible for:

- Recommendation for a tourism destination management model (based on the vision)
- A recommendation for tourism area plans and priorities for completion of these plans
- A recommendation for carrying capacities for visitation to natural, historic and cultural sites or similar policy measures to be used as guidelines
- Government's role in the management of the destination
- Private sector role and responsibilities

It is anticipated that as in phase II, the specialist will be responsible for aggregating the information into the final report for presentation to the stakeholders. At the conclusion of this process a presentation will be prepared by Launchpad for delivery at the second inter-sectoral/public workshop of the commission, which will again be arranged by the sponsor agency. Again it may be necessary to consider two or more sessions given interest.

### 4.0 Conclusions

In sum Launchpad anticipates roughly fifty (50) days of work, consuming the efforts of two consultants. Given the importance of the commission to both the successful conclusion of the master plan project and to Belize's national development, what is suggested here is the time and effort considered necessary to

suitably satisfy the objectives of the project and deliver the calibre output that is Launchpad's hallmark. We advise that wherever it is possible to accelerate the process without compromising the output, we will do so.

It is important to note that commission objectives depend to a large extent on the input of a tourism specialist. Given the specialities of the consultants involved, a possible distribution of commission responsibilities has been suggested here. Launchpad's proposal is in fact based on this distribution of responsibilities and adjustments to these responsibilities will have to be discussed and considered for correlating adjustments to time and cost estimates. Note that in keeping with the recommendations of the sponsor organization, the responsibility for the final output in phase II and for the project resides with the tourism specialist suggesting that successful completion of the commission is underpinned by the successful synchronization of the responsibilities. Consultation and coordination of the activities by the specialists involved is a necessary first step and should be completed as quickly as possible.