

THE BENEFITS OF A GOOD COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT PLAN

Community engagement and support is an essential part of being a sustainable business because it offers so many benefits to you, your staff, your guests and your community. These include:

- Better relationships with your neighbours and other members of your community.
- Staff can feel proud of the company they work for and it can offer ways for them to help with your initiatives.
- Guests can feel better about staying with a company that cares about the people in the destination they are visiting.
- It provides you with good stories to share on social media, marketing materials and in your sustainability report.

THE AREAS YOUR PLAN SHOULD COVER

Your plan should cover each of the following aspects of community engagement and support:

- Supporting the local economy
- Respecting and protecting local culture, traditions and way of life
- Supporting community improvement initiatives
- Supporting and protecting access to essential resources and services

Here is some more detail of the things you should do for each area. Items in **bold text are minimum Travelife requirements** and you should also try to do at least one or more of the things that are not in bold under each heading.

SUPPORTING THE LOCAL ECONOMY

- **Buying products and services from locally owned and operated businesses.**
- Supporting local entrepreneurs by selling or displaying their products.
- Getting involved with local economic development initiatives and organisations such as a chamber of commerce or a tourist office.
- **Encouraging your guests to visit locally owned attractions and activities.**
- **Encouraging your guests to dine and shop outside of your property.**

RESPECTING AND PROTECTING LOCAL CULTURE, TRADITIONS AND WAY OF LIFE

- **Providing information to guests about local customs and traditions, and how they can respect them.**
- Featuring traditional local dishes or beverages on your menus, and it is a good idea if somewhere on your menu you explain the history and significance of them.
- Featuring art, crafts, music and architecture from local culture.
- Supporting initiatives that are dedicated to protecting local culture and traditions, such as donating money, time or other forms of support to their cause.
- **Ensuring that your day-to-day operations do not negatively impact on the traditional way of life in your community.**
- **Ensuring that any new building or renovation work does not negatively impact on the traditional way of life in your community.**
- **Depending on your destination, it is best practice to consult with leaders or representatives from local cultures to ensure that you are correctly interpreting their traditions, art, food and so on. This is a minimum Travelife requirement if you have indigenous peoples in your area.**

SUPPORTING INITIATIVES THAT IMPROVE THE COMMUNITY

Providing donations of time, money or other services and support to initiatives in any of the following areas:

- Education
- Healthcare
- Beautification
- Facilities and services for vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly, the homeless etc.
- Clean-up projects such as beach cleans, picking up litter in parks
- The establishment or protection of community facilities such as libraries, parks, leisure centres
- Projects that improve living conditions such as new housing, road improvements and access to essential services
- Attending and engaging with community meetings
- Active involvement with any community initiatives, discussions or meetings around tourism development and tourism management.

PROTECTING ACCESS TO ESSENTIAL RESOURCES, SERVICES AND LIVELIHOODS

Travelife requires that all Members ensure that any new building, renovation work and your day-to-day operations do not prevent community access to any of the following:

- Essential resources such as water, energy and waste disposal
- Essential services such as education and healthcare
- Essential resources such as water, electricity, education and healthcare
- Access to livelihoods such as fishing and farming
- If your business has carried out historical building work or made past decisions that prevented access to essential resources and services, you must put steps in place to remedy that. For example, if your business operations prevented access to medical care that was previously available, then you should provide medical care to those members of your community that are affected, or fund an alternative.

OTHER IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

What are your unique needs?

For some properties, community engagement will be very simple to implement and for others it will be more complex. What you do depends on the size of your property and the destination you are in. For example, a large business has a greater impact on its community, so it has more responsibility than small businesses. Also, if you are in a remote location where the majority of local people are indigenous, you will have very different considerations than a hotel by a major international airport. You will need to do more research about how to protect indigenous peoples whereas an airport hotel might be more concerned with things like internships for local students and supporting local charities.

What issues concern your community the most?

The best policy and plan will address things that are of unique concern to your community. We strongly suggest that you consult with your staff, read local news and talk to community leaders about what these issues might be before you decide on your plans and objectives. That way you can ensure you are having a meaningful impact on your destination.

Keep records

A Travelife auditor may ask to see evidence that you have implemented community engagement and support initiatives. Be sure that you have records of all of your activities available to show them.