REGIONAL INITIATIVE TEMPLATE

Please complete each section below.

1. Contact Details

Please provide the following contact details:

Name of individual or group submitting initiative	South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO)
Name and position of primary contact	Ilisoni Vuidreketi Chief Executive Officer
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2. Name of Initiative

South Pacific Destination Alliance (SPDA): Regional Sustainable Tourism Initiative

3. Background and Rationale

You may consider: What is the issue being addressed by this initiative? What are the causes of this issue? Are there relevant studies that have been carried out to support the issue? Are there links to national, regional or international goals/policies?
Please limit your response to no more than 750 words.

The South Pacific is a region of considerable biodiversity and conservation importance, with 30,000 island and islets that are home to some of the planet's most diverse ecosystems, unique species, and human cultures. However with high biodiversity comes high environmental vulnerability. The resilience of the islands' ecosystems is under threat from overfishing, deforestation, ocean acidification, climate change, and habitat destruction[1].

It is widely recognized that the long-term health and economic wellbeing of the region depends on the ability of its island nations to develop and sustain tourism, economically, environmentally, socially, and culturally. Tourism is the only economic sector that has grown consistently across the region over the last five years and it plays a major role in poverty alleviation and environmental protection[2]. Island nations across the region share a common objective, which is to scale the positive impacts of travel and tourism in order to achieve more sustainable development and improve the lives of residents.

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[1] According to the World Bank, 20 countries in the world with the highest average risk of disaster, eight are Pacific island countries: Vanuatu, Niue, Tonga, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Solomon Islands, Fiji, Marshall Islands, and the Cook Islands. The World Bank (2014) www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2012/06/04/acting-today-for-tomorrow-a-policy-and-practice-note-for-climate-and-disaster-resilient-development-in-the-pacific-islands-region

[2] SPTO (2014) Pacific Regional Tourism Strategy 2015-2019 Draft. Pacific Regional Tourism Capacity Building Programme (PRTCBP), Trip Consultants;

Across the region, tourism is the single most important driver of job creation, foreign exchange earnings, investment creation, and GDP.[3]Tourism contributed an estimated 10.7% of the region's total GDP in 2013.[4]Tourism can also conserve parks and marine protected areas, enhance and develop tangible and intangible cultural heritage (e.g., handicraft industry and agriculture), and increase connectivity within and outside the region.

However, poorly managed tourism, can exacerbate environmental challenges, and increase social, cultural and population pressures. Unmanaged growth of tourism threatens terrestrial, cultural and marine resources and reduces the next generation's opportunities for income generation. By 2050, under a 'business-as-usual' scenario, projected tourism growth rates will increase global energy consumption by 154 percent, greenhouse gas emissions by 131 percent, water consumption by 152 percent, and solid waste generation by 251 percent[5].

In the South Pacific, large-scale clearing and reclamation of mangrove forests for resort and tourism infrastructure development has affected the health of coral reefs in many islands. Improper wastewater treatment standards in resorts and effluent runoff to coastal waters has resulted in high nutrient concentrations and incidences of algae growth. This has resulted in a further reduction of fish stocks and coral biodiversity. By 2030, if this pattern continues, 75% of the region's fisheries will be unable to meet local needs[6].

Since the 1990s, Pacific Island countries have highlighted the need for sustainable development of tourism resources and better systems for evaluation and management of tourism performance in their national tourism plans and strategies. This has been further emphasised in regional policies such as the Pacific Plan, EDF10 Regional Strategy Paper 2008-2013, the 2011 Waiheke Declaration, Pacific 2020, and the Asia and the Pacific Roadmap for 10YFP implementation, among others.

In practice, the main challenges facing the region are the lack of institutional capacity and effective frameworks to plan manage and monitor sustainable tourism development. In order to address this reality, stakeholders with divergent interests must be brought together to reach a shared vision of the balance between present and future benefits, tourism's negative impacts and how to minimize them, and the interrelationship between human activities and the natural environment. The active participation of local communities in tourism policymaking, planning, management and monitoring can help to ensure support at the local level, the appropriate distribution of socioeconomic benefits, and the effective mitigation of negative impacts.

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[3] IMF Working Paper (2014) Pacific Island Countries: In Search of a Trade Strategy, IMF Asia Pacific Department. ; Scheyvens, R & Russell, M (2009) Tourism and Poverty Reduction in the South Pacific, Massey University.
[4] Statistic includes all Pacific Island Forum member-states (Pacific SIDS + Australia and New Zealand).
[5] UNEP (2011) Towards a Green Economy: Pathways to Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication
[6] Conservation International (2014) Biodiversity Hotspots, Pacific Oceanscape. Retrieved from: http://www.conservation.org/where/pages/pacific-oceanscape.aspx

4. Description

Please provide a brief overview of this initiative. Try to address the following: Does this initiative contribute to a positive change to the region? What makes this initiative of importance to the Pacific region as a whole? Who would implement this initiative? Who are the main beneficiaries? Are regulatory or legislative changes required at the national level to implement this initiative? How would the initiative be funded? Has this initiative been carried out previously? What are the key risks in implementing this initiative? Are there any complementary projects and programmes currently active? What is the proposed timeframe for this initiative? How would the initiative be sustained over the proposed timeframe?
Please limit your response to no more than 750 words.

Importance of the Initiative

When tourism is well managed and effectively engages local stakeholders it can play a critical role in strengthening communities, decreasing coastal and marine impacts, and enhancing regional competeveness and economic growth.
The aim of the South Pacific Destination Alliance (SPDA) is to help leaders to mainstream sustainable tourism policies and practices into destination and business planning, policy, and management across the region. The SPDA is a three-year program which leverages proven tools for sustainable destination management, and provides local, national, and regional organizations with the training needed to be successful in collectively achieving regional sustainable development goals.

Contribution and Beneficiaries

The initiative will initially be implemented in five destinations. SPTO and local partners in the tourism and civil society sector will be trained and provided with the tools to more effectively undertake the following activities:
- Destination diagnostic and marine value chain assessment
- Marine and coastal tourism action planning workshops
- Sustainable tourism monitoring
- Sustainable tourism marketing and communications
- Travel philanthropy and sustainability standards program development

The main beneficiaries of this program are SPTO, destinations, businesses and local residents. Expected outcomes from the first five destinations include:
- Strengthened capacity of regional tourism body SPTO
- Regional impact monitoring dashboard
- Establishment of regional sustainability standards
- 5 improved marine tourism policies
- 25 new or improved tourism businesses
- 100 new jobs
- $500,000 in increased visitor spending
- $100,000 raised in visitor contributions

Implementation and Coordination

SPTO will act as the regional coordination point for the project, and will be responsible for the organization of regional meetings and arrangements and coordination with destination pilots. SPTO will also coordinate with identified donors and partners, and will provide support for project communications, marketing and communications. SPTO will have one staff member assigned to the project, who will be trained in destination monitoring and marine tourism standards.

SPTO will partner with Sustainable Travel International to implement the initiative over three years, thereafter it will take over full implementation. Sustainable Travel International is a globally recognized non-profit with a mission to improve lives and protect places through tourism. The organization has developed a toolkit for sustainable destinations, and has a long track record of successfully managing large-scale regional sustainable tourism initiatives worldwide, including the Sustainable Destination Alliance of the Americas (SDAA) and the Mesoamerican Reef Tourism Initiative (MARTI).

Each of the five pilot destinations will be responsible for identifying a Destination Liaison, a Marketing and

Communications Lead and a Monitoring point person. Sustainable Travel International will build the capacity of the destination team throughout the initial three-year program.

Regulatory or legislative changes

No regulatory or legislative changes are required at the national level to implement this initiative. The initiative will provide national governments with tools, resources and improved capacity to design and implement their own sustainable tourism sector strategies and strengthen their own policies.

Funding

The project will cost approximately US$1.2M to implement over three years in five destinations. Each of the destinations will be asked to contribute a 20% co-finance match for project implementation costs in a combination of cash and in-kind. This is equivalent to $12,000 per year per destination.

We are currently seeking financing from corporations, foundations, destinations, supporters, and trade associations to join the Alliance in order to strengthen the potential for collective regional impact and to raise funds for the remaining project costs.

Existing initiatives, complementary projects and programmes

The initiative is modelled after existing regional initiatives, such as the Sustainable Destinations Alliance for the Americas (SDAA), launched in early 2014 and led by Sustainable Travel International. It is directly aligned with the Pacific Regional Tourism Strategy 2015-2019, The Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Policy, and country specific plans such as the Samoa Tourism Sector Strategic Plan.

Key risks

The key risk identified is that all stakeholders must agree on a shared vision and action plan. This risk is mitigated by the project's collective impact methodology (see 6. Additional Information), and the establishment of destination stewardship councils (DSCs) who through a participatory planning process develop a shared management system to govern the project and oversee implementation.

Proposed timeframe

The pilot demonstration project will run for three years in five destinations (see 6. Additional Information).

Sustainability over the proposed timeframe

Sustainable Travel International will provide key stakeholders with guidance and support throughout the process; will encourage the use of tools and training methods on a royalty free, perpetual basis beyond the horizon of the initiative; and will support the destinations/region with implementation of the action agenda and raising necessary funds to address areas of need.

5. Alignment to Regional Vision, Values and Objectives

Briefly describe how your initiative supports the vision, values and objectives set out in the Framework for Pacific Regionalism. These can be found in the Framework for Pacific Regionalism document or in the submissions guideline document.

Please limit your response to no more than 500 words

The objective of the SPDA is to build regional collaboration to improve the sustainable management of destinations, intensify impacts at a large scale, attract regional investment and resources, enhance cooperative decision -making, and strengthen implementation capacity to increase global competitiveness and visitation. The overarching aim of the South Pacific Destination Alliance (SPDA) is to leverage tourism for the protection of land and marine resources in the region, while improving the lives of at least 150,000 Pacific Island inhabitants by 2018.

Sustainable management of destinations involves balancing the needs and demands of visitors, industry, local communities, and the natural environment through participatory planning, stewardship, and on -going monitoring in order to achieve equilibrium between economic, social, and environmental sustainability. The four key pillars of destination sustainability are:

- Destination management
- Community involvement and benefits
- Conservation of natural and cultural heritage
- Environmental protection

The fundamental principle of sustainable destination management is shared responsibility. No single stakeholder group is solely responsible for generating adverse impacts, preserving their destination's natural and cultural heritage, or defining destination priorities. To instill a sense of collective responsibility, multi-sector collaboration is essential. It fosters awareness and appreciation of collective ownership of the resources on which the sector and local communities depend—thereby helping to catalyze the change needed to keep tourism destinations' natural and cultural assets healthy and their tourism industries thriving.

The Alliance will therefore create a framework for achieving collective impact at the regional level that engages local stakeholders and organizations who have the potential to contribute. The framework will strengthen the ability of tourism destinations and regional actors to address complex issues, identify and address destination vulnerabilities and plan for sustainable growth. Together, stakeholders will develop tailored solutions for sustainable destination growth, management, and monitoring that strengthen the health of the entire region's human and natural resources.

Expected project outcomes for participating destinations will include:

- ☐ Improved institutional coordination, effectiveness and capacity to deliver on tourism sector goals and strategies
- ☐ Development of a shared vision and roadmap to achieve a vibrant, well-managed, competitive tourism industry.
- ☐ The establishment of transformative leadership at all stakeholder levels to spearhead the adoption of destination priorities and plans
- ☐ Increased sustainable tourism and infrastructure investment through inclusive tourism development focused on long-term destination viability and green growth
- ☐ A more resilient tourism sector with protected natural and cultural assets and quantifiable improvement in people's livelihoods

To ensure the desired outcomes are achieved key performance indicators will be defined and a simple and effective monitoring and evaluation system will be used to inform progress and track results over time. Special emphasis will be placed on providing partner countries with tools and resources that can be utilized beyond the horizon of the project.

6. Additional Information

Please provide or attach additional information in support of this initiative.
Please limit your response to no more than 5 pages.

Proposed Methodology

Since 2002, Sustainable Travel International has provided technical assistance to nearly 100 destinations worldwide. Each aspect of our methodology has been refined over time and contextualized in tourism businesses and destinations of all sizes in order to foster self-reliance and generate tangible results. We are skilled at bringing together key stakeholders from the private, public and civil sectors, and at a national, regional and community level, to engage in participatory assessment, visioning, action planning, monitoring and reporting.

Collective Impact Initiatives are long-term commitments by a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving complex social and/or environmental problems. Their actions are supported by a shared measurement system, mutually reinforcing activities, and ongoing communication, and are staffed by an independent backbone organization. This process requires inter-departmental collaboration at a government level, participatory prioritization of quick win and longer term projects, and capacity building of key stakeholders.

Figure 1: Collective Impact methodology, FSG, 2011

The following five minimum requirements are based on a time- tested methodology to achieve collective impact. All are required to produce alignment and result in collective success.

- **Common Agenda & Stake.** All participants must have a shared vision for change that includes a common understanding of the problems, risks and vulnerabilities and a joint approach to and stake in solving/addressing each through agreed upon actions and priorities. This requires a commitment from leaders at all levels to remain active and engaged throughout the process.

- **Shared Measurement System.** All participants must agree on the ways success will be measured and reported, utilize a shared monitoring system, and consistently collect data, and measure and report on the results at a destination and regional level and across all participating organizations. This ensures that all efforts remain aligned, everyone is held accountable, and all parties can learn from one another's successes and failures.

- **Mutually Reinforcing Activities.** All participants must undertake the specific set of activities at which they excel or that are aligned with their mandates in a way that supports, mutually reinforces, and is coordinated with the differentiated actions of others at a regional level.

- **Continuous Communication & Engagement.** All participants must learn to trust one another and gain an appreciation of the common motivation behind their different efforts. This requires regular meetings, utilization of a common vocabulary, support from external facilitators following structured agendas, and an institutional mechanism in the form of destination stewardship councils; stakeholders in each destination including community leaders, private sector, government, and NGOs are tasked with ensuring accountability and overseeing the implementation of the action plans.

  Trust is gained over time as quick-win projects are completed and participants see their interests are considered and decisions are made on the basis of objective evidence and the best possible solution to any given problem. By starting with quick win projects, which require little time or finances to implement, destination stewardship councils typically quickly develop a shared belief in collective impact, and increased trust and support for the action plan.

- **Supporting Organizations.** All participants require a supporting infrastructure to foster collaboration in the form of a separate organization that has a dedicated staff with very specific skillsets to serve as project and data manager and facilitator. In this project initiative this organisation will be SPTO.

Project Activities

The initiative comprises of the five (5) broad activities outlined below which will contribute to both country- level and regional collective impact. Individually tailored approaches will be provided in each destination to address the unique set of challenges and opportunities, ultimately allowing each destination and Pacific Island State to embark on their own journey to sustainable tourism development.

Activity 1: Destination Diagnostic and Marine Value Chain Assessment

The objective of the Diagnostic is to conduct a baseline review of tourism policy with particular emphasis on the marine and coastal zone. The diagnostic includes a review of policy and planning situation, achievements to date, and a thorough understanding of sustainability initiatives for marine and coastal tourism. The diagnostic will help participating destinations and the regional supporting organization to identify and monitor environmental risks, and establish their own priorities with a focus on marine and coastal tourism. The Value Chain assessment will identify tourism's existing and potential social impacts, via an analysis of marine and coastal products, opportunities, gaps and constraints to local community SME development.

This country-level destination data will be aggregated to create a regional sustainability snapshot that will enable SPTO to monitor destination health across the region. This baseline data will also form the framework to enable SPTO to monitor and evaluate project impacts, establish best practices, disseminate lessons learned, and facilitate information exchange and cooperation across the region.

The expected outputs include:
- Rapid Sustainable Destination Diagnostics will be undertaken in each of the five (5) pilot destinations.
- Establishment of a regional sustainability snapshot and information database

Expected outcomes include:
- Improved marine tourism policy and protection
- Development of greater awareness and understanding of marine and coastal tourism amongst policy makers
- Identification of opportunities for improved environmental management in marine tourism SMEs
- Identification of opportunities for improved community value chain integration
- Establishment of a regional sustainable tourism database

Activity 2: Marine Tourism Action Planning & Destination Stewardship Councils

Government, private sector, civil society and community leaders will be identified and brought together to form multi-stakeholder Destination Stewardship Councils (DSC) in each pilot destination to foster shared responsibility for destination management, and to lead on-going monitoring and action plan implementation to improve environmental management of marine tourism and identify opportunities for increased community benefit from marine and coastal tourism.

The DSCs will review the results of the diagnostic and value chain assessments and, through a participatory planning process, consensus will be gained on what the marine and coastal tourism priority issues, opportunities, risks and threats are. A shared vision and sustainable tourism action plan will be created which will identify short, medium, and long-term actions, 'quick-win' projects; tasks, responsibilities and timelines. This plan will also include recommendations to support implementation and harness external funding opportunities, and will clearly delineate the knowledge, capacity building, and technical assistance needed for the action plan to be successful. Best practices and lessons learned will be shared across the region.

The expected outputs from action planning include:
- Destination Stewardship Councils will be formed (where it does not exist) in each pilot destination to guide implementation of the destination action projects.
- At least three action projects will be planned and implemented in each of the five (5) tourism destinations.

Expected outcomes include:
- 50 businesses using improved environmental and social practices
- 100 new jobs
- Increased marine tourism visitor experience

Activity 3: Capacity Building and Market Access

This activity includes the design and implementation of an on-line sustainable tourism professionals course and an SME market access initiative to connect small businesses to inbound operators. The objective of this component of work is to i) up-skill a core group of local stakeholders with leadership capacity to implement good sustainability practices and projects in the long-term ii) facilitate market access to marine tourism SMEs through facilitated business training, product development assistance and matchmaking.

The expected outputs from the first three (3) years of the initiative are listed below.
- A customized curriculum will be developed for a South Pacific Sustainable Tourism Professionals on-line course.
- Three-day training course will be held in each pilot destination in year one.
- A two-day refresher course will be held in year two and three.
- A two-day market access forum will be held in each destination in year two.

The expected outcomes are:
- 100 destination stakeholders trained as sustainable tourism professionals
- 50 businesses attend market-access forum
- 25 businesses report positive revenue benefits

Activity 4: Sustainability Marketing and Communications

The objective of this component of work is to help foster dialogue about how the South Pacific region and its tourism destinations can enhance their competitiveness through sustainability story telling. Successful practices and real-life stories of impact, in addition to lessons learned, will be collected from each pilot destination. Examples such as farm to table tourism initiatives in Samoa and marine tourism projects in Palau will be disseminated regionally and internationally, in order to leverage competitive market advantage and foster greater understanding about how to make sustainability actionable among destination decision-makers throughout the South Pacific and globally.

The expected outputs from the first three (3) years of the initiative are listed below.
- Three regional destination stewardship roundtable meetings will be held order to share results, destination experiences and lessons learned
- A sustainability positioning platform and communication strategies will be developed for and launched within the five (5) pilot destinations.
- At least ten (10) press releases and social media content will be developed for and disseminated to various audiences, including travel trade and international media.
- Ten (10) stories of positive impact from pilot destinations will be developed and distributed through destination- and regional-level marketing and promotion agencies, as well as through partner marketing channels.

The expected outcomes are:
- $500,000 in increased visitor spending
- Increase in visitor satisfaction levels

Activity 5: Destination Monitoring System

The objective of this component of work is to design and implement a cloud-based destination sustainability monitoring system (DMS) . The DMS has already been developed and piloted extensively by Sustainable Travel International in other parts of the world including the Caribbean, East Africa and Northern India. It will be customizable for each destination according to their priority indicators, but will also include common core indicators to enable regional comparison and tracking by SPTO. The DMS It is a simple system to improve accountability, decision-making destination management by recording and tracking changes occurring at a destination level over time.

The expected outputs from the first three (3) years of the initiative include:

- Agreed-on sustainable tourism indicators for the five destinations
- A destination sustainability monitoring system in each destination which can be accessed online and is administered by trained SPTO staff
- SPTO will be trained in the administration and management of the destination sustainability monitoring framework, which will include disseminating the results regionally.

The expected outcomes are:

- Establishment of a comprehensive regional destination monitoring system
- Improved collection of destination-level and regional sustainability data
- Tracking of SDGs/post 2015 development goals
- Improved data-driven decision-making across the region

Activity 6: Standards and Philanthropy

The objective of this last output is to provide the pilot destinations with tools that will help sustain sustainability momentum over time. The standards work will help ensure small marine and coastal businesses have a point of reference for sustainable operations and that SPTO has a regional database of information on standards. The philanthropy work will provide a source of funds for ongoing sustainability work.

The expected outputs from the first three (3) years of the initiative include:

- Two or more pilot destinations will have updated and improved sustainability standards for tourism businesses.
- Two or more pilot destinations will have active traveller philanthropy programs generating funds for sustainability action projects.
- SPTO will have a database of businesses meeting regional sustainability standards and will be equipped with
  the capacity and tools to continue

the work The expected outcomes are:

- $100,000 in visitor donations
- 25 businesses using more environmentally sustainable practices

Table 1. Three-Year Output and Outcomes Timeline

ACTIVITY	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES/RESULTS	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3
1. Destination Diagnostic and Marine Value Chain Assessment	Rapid Sustainable Destination Diagnostics will be undertaken in each of the five (5) pilot destinations. Establishment of a regional sustainability snapshot and information database	Improved marine tourism policy and protection Development of greater awareness and understanding of marine and coastal tourism amongst policy makers Identification of opportunities for improved environmental management in marine tourism SMEs Identification of opportunities for improved community value chain integration Establishment of a regional sustainable tourism database	▓		
2. Marine Tourism Action Planning & Destination Stewardship Councils	Destination Stewardship Councils will be formed (where it does not exist) in each pilot destination to guide implementation of the destination action projects. At least three action projects will be planned and implemented in each of the five (5) tourism destinations.	50 businesses using improved environmental and social practices 100 new jobs Increased marine tourism visitor experience	▓		

Component	Outputs	Outcomes/Indicators	Timeline
3. Capacity Building and Market Access	A customized curriculum will be developed for a South Pacific Sustainable Tourism Professionals on-line course. Three-day training course will be held in each pilot destination in year one. A two-day refresher course will be held in year two and three. A two-day market access forum will be held in each destination in year two.	100 destination stakeholders trained as sustainable tourism professionals 50 businesses attend market-access forum 25 businesses report positive revenue benefits	
4 Sustainability Marketing and Communications	Three regional destination stewardship roundtable meetings will be held order to share results, destination experiences and lessons learned A sustainability positioning platform and communication strategies will be developed for and launched within the five (5) pilot destinations. At least ten (10) press releases and social media content will be developed for and disseminated to various audiences, including travel trade and international media. Ten (10) stories of positive impact from pilot destinations will be developed and distributed through destination- and regional-level marketing and promotion agencies, as well as through partner marketing channels.	$500,000 in increased visitor spending Increase in visitor satisfaction levels	
5. Destination Monitoring System	Agreed-on sustainable tourism indicators for the five destinations A destination sustainability monitoring system in each destination which can be accessed online and is administered by trained SPTO staff SPTO will be trained in the administration and management of the destination sustainability monitoring framework, which will include disseminating the results regionally.	Establishment of a comprehensive regional destination monitoring system Improved collection of destination-level and regional sustainability data Tracking of SDGs/post 2015 development goals Improved data-driven decision-making across the region	
6. Standards and Philanthropy	Two or more pilot destinations will have updated and improved sustainability standards for tourism businesses. Two or more pilot destinations will have active traveller philanthropy programs generating funds for sustainability action projects. SPTO will have a database of businesses meeting regional sustainability standards and will be equipped with the capacity and tools to continue the work	$100,000 in visitor donations 25 businesses using more environmentally sustainable practices	