

Gold Standard Self Assessment for DMOs – 2014

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The Gold Standard: An official DMO must be an accurate, up-to-the-minute, one-stop shop for information required to experience a destination, making it fast, easy and simple for an average adult to discover and learn about *all* local activities, attractions, guest amenities and services in an objective manner.

The accreditation program advanced by Destination Marketing Association International is a giant step forward, but it does not mandate 18 critical Gold Standard elements that are required for DMO Gold Standard certification.

The official DMO for a community should be the ultimate, undisputable authority on tourism-related information. When a DMO reflects the Gold Standard, it provides all the necessary information to sell and service visitors, and continue a relationship with them in the future. A Gold Standard foundation maximizes the economic potential of marketing and sales efforts.

This assessment evaluates your DMO's adoption of the Gold Standard by quantifying ten steps in the process with specific metrics on a scale of 0-18 points based on the projected ROI. Give your DMO a "0" if a step is not addressed. Award part of the allotted points if a step is partially accomplished. The maximum points should only be allocated if the step is fulfilled as outlined.

1. **Destination Audit.** Do you conduct a written audit of *all* destination activities, attractions, amenities and services every 3-5 years with broad-based community input into the process? (4 points) Do you investigate activities and attractions 1½-2 hours outside of your official political boundaries? (3 points) *How does your DMO rate? Assign a score from 0-7 points:* _____

2. **Visitor Study.** Do you commission a statistically valid email survey of travelers from principal markets every 3-5 years for a complete snapshot of who is (is not) visiting? (6 points) Do you benchmark the popularity and appeal of all activities and attractions identified in the Destination Audit? (3 points – *large MSAs may require a separate survey*) Do you benchmark consumer awareness and satisfaction to track the DMO/destination effectiveness over time? (2 points) Do you create statistically valid visitor profiles for each month of the year? (1 point) *How does your DMO rate? Assign a score from 0-12 points:* _____

3. **Photography.** Do you own complete rights to high quality, color, thematic images of your most striking geological features and priority activities/attractions identified in your Visitor Study? (8 points) Do you feature people experiencing memorable interactions in your key photo images, telling an emotional story within a story that travelers can identify with? (5 points) Do you have a formal program to build and refresh your image library? (2 points) *How does your DMO rate? Assign a score from 0-15 points:* _____

4. **Destination Website.** Do you offer a "one-stop shop" website with all the information a visitor needs to know about *all* activities, attractions, guest amenities and services identified in your Destination Audit, including hours, prices, maps and photos, so it is a virtual destination encyclopedia? (11 points) Is your website organized to be fast, easy and simple to research with no more than 25 links per page, 12 options per menu, and 4-5 clicks to reach any webpage? (2

points) Did you conduct a keyword analysis and build optimized pages for the most important topics identified in the Visitor Study to make them easy to find on the Internet? (2 points) Do you have a responsive design? (2 points) Do you maintain the official community event calendar? (1 point) *How does your DMO rate? Assign a score from 0-18 points: _____*

5. **Information Specialist.** Do you have a full-time staff member, or the equivalent, dedicated to researching, confirming and updating all information about the destination? (3 points) Is every published fact by the DMO checked at least every six months? (3 points) *How does your DMO rate? Assign a score from 0-6 points: _____*

6. **Visitors Guide.** Do you produce an official Visitor Guide at least once per year with high quality photos, concise, well-organized editorial and maps highlighting the most popular activities and attractions identified in the Visitor Study? (4 points) Do you distribute at least 100,000 copies, mail out copies in response to requests within 3 days, and make it downloadable from DMO website? (2 points) Are all activities, attractions and lodgings listed with hours, addresses, times & prices to simplify planning efforts? (1 point) Is advertising limited to no more than 40 percent of editorial content with the DMO website listed on every spread? (1 point) *How does your DMO rate? Assign a score from 0-8 points: _____*

7. **Social Media.** Do you maintain a Facebook & Twitter page for the destination and monitor content, respond to inquiries and engage users daily? (4 points) Have you cultivated at least 25,000 “likes” / followers on Facebook & Twitter? (2 points) Do you integrate social media into your website, including a YouTube Gallery? (1 point) *How does your DMO rate? Assign a score from 0-7 points: _____*

8. **Visitor Center.** Do you provide a Visitor Center clearly identified with wayfinding signage off the most traveled road into the destination, or adjacent to its most popular visitor attraction, with clean bathrooms and a comprehensive collection of area literature? (4 points) Is it open seven days a week with knowledgeable information specialists, who receive monthly training, to explain and sell the destination? (3 points) Do you offer daily tour and event information, and hotel, restaurant & tour reservations? (1 point) *How does your DMO rate? Assign a score from 0-8 points: _____*

9. **Email.** Does your website have a prominent, easy method throughout the website for visitors to “opt in” for targeted email news and features about the destination’s most significant interest areas, and do you distribute quality information to subscribers on a regular, scheduled basis? (9 points) *How does your DMO rate? Assign a score from 0-9 points: _____*

10. **Destination Brand.** Have you cultivated an authentic brand that communicates a unique emotional attractiveness and theme for the destination and integrated it into all your marketing efforts including ads, brochures, photos, Visitor Center, website, etc.? (7 points) Did you engage a broad swath of the community to develop and champion the brand identity? (2 points) Did you test the creative elements of the brand with travelers and residents to ensure strong and popular support? (1 point) *How does your DMO rate? Assign a score from 0-10 points: _____*

Total for Gold Standard steps 1-10: _____

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| 90-100 | Excellent |
| 75-90 | Good |
| 60-74 | Acceptable |
| 45-59 | Borderline |
| 44 or below | Ineffective |