

# Discussion Plan for Formulating a Strategic Blueprint for the Canadian Association of Tour Operators (CATO)

**Objective:** To develop a comprehensive strategic blueprint that aligns with the goals and vision of the Canadian Association of Tour Operators, enhancing its role and supporting its members effectively. This structured approach will ensure that the strategic planning discussion is productive, inclusive, and aligned with the goals of the Canadian Association of Tour Operators.

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## 1. Introduction

- **Purpose of the Meeting:** Outline the need for a strategic blueprint and its importance for CATO. (*To be kept in mind all along the discussion*)

- Set clear directions .....
- Improve our value proposition .....
- Identify specific action items and activities.....
- .....

- **Expected Outcomes:** A clear framework for the strategic plan, including goals, initiatives, and timelines.

## 2. Current State Analysis

- **Review of Existing Strategies:** (*VERY LIMITED AT THE PRESENT TIME...*)

- Discuss current strategic initiatives and their effectiveness.
- Identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis).

- **Member Feedback:** (*see Jan. 2024 Survey Report*)

- Gather insights from members regarding their needs and challenges.

- *Develop a survey to be completed at workshop in Alentejo (reference to last exec. Meeting)*

*What does CATO mean to you?*

*What would you like to see more/less of from CATO (future state)?*

*Vision / mission - our passion / our why?*

*Reimagine our brand and positioning.*

*Discuss recent trends in the travel industry affecting operators.*

*Fair play and code of ethics*

## 3. Vision and Mission Alignment (*WE DO NOT HAVE A MISSION & VISION STATEMENTS!?*)

- **Revisit CATO's Vision and Mission:**

- Ensure alignment with current industry trends and member expectations.

- **Future Aspirations:**

- Brainstorm potential changes or enhancements to the vision and mission statements.

## 4. Strategic Goals Development

- **Identify Key Focus Areas:**

- Marketing and Promotion

- Member Support and Resources
- Advocacy and Policy Influence
- Sustainability and Responsible Tourism

**- Set SMART Goals:**

- Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound goals for each focus area.

## 5. Action Plan Formulation

**- Initiatives and Programs:**

- Develop specific initiatives to achieve each strategic goal.
- Assign responsibilities and resources needed for implementation.

**- Timeline:**

- Create a timeline for the rollout of initiatives, including milestones for progress tracking.

GOALS	INITIATIVES	TIMELINES
Increase revenues	Membership drive / fees Events Golf Tournament Etc.	
Members' Engagement	Communication strategy/plan Meetings on various topics Networking opportunities* (survey) Etc.	
Trade and Learning development	Collaboration with USTOA	
Networking Opportunities	Build an annual calendar	
Advocacy		
Communication		
Etc.		

## 6. Evaluation and Monitoring

**- Performance Metrics:**

- Establish key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure success.

**- Feedback Mechanisms:**

- Discuss how to gather ongoing feedback from members and stakeholders.

## 7. Communication Strategy

**- Internal Communication:**

- Plan for keeping members informed about the strategic blueprint and its progress.

**- External Communication:**

- Develop strategies for promoting CATO's initiatives to the broader travel community and stakeholders.

## 8. Conclusion and Next Steps

**- Summarize Key Points:**

- Recap the main discussions and decisions made during the meeting.

**- Action Items:**

- Assign tasks and set deadlines for the next steps in the strategic planning process.

**- Schedule Follow-Up Meeting:**

- Determine a date for the next meeting to review progress and make adjustments as necessary.

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**Preparation for Participants:**

- Review current CATO strategies (*Doesn't exist...*) and member feedback.
- Come prepared with ideas for potential goals and initiatives.
- Be ready to discuss industry trends and their implications for CATO.

**Materials Needed:**

- SWOT analysis templates
- Current strategic plan documents
- Member feedback summaries
- Whiteboard or digital collaboration tools for brainstorming

This discussion plan aims to foster a collaborative environment where all stakeholders can contribute to shaping the future of the Canadian Association of Tour Operators.

## SWOT analysis (*Draft*)

This **preliminary** SWOT analysis provides a first overview of the Canadian Association of Tour Operators internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and threats in the travel industry landscape.

### **Strengths:**

1. **Industry Expertise:** CATO has a wealth of knowledge and experience in the travel (tourism) sector, providing valuable insights and resources to its members. (???)
2. **Networking Opportunities:** The association fosters connections among tour operators, suppliers, and stakeholders, enhancing collaboration and business opportunities.
3. **Advocacy:** CATO represents the interests of its members at various levels of government, influencing policies that affect the travel industry.
4. **Training and Resources:** The association offers training programs, workshops, and resources that help members improve their operations and service offerings.

### **Weaknesses:**

1. **Limited Membership Base:** CATO may face challenges in expanding its membership, particularly among smaller or newer tour operators who may not see the immediate value.
2. **Dependence on Tourism Trends:** The association's success is closely tied to the overall health of the tourism industry, which can be volatile and affected by external factors such as economic downturns or global events.
3. **Resource Constraints:** As a non-profit organization, CATO may have limited financial resources to invest in marketing, technology, or member services.

### **Opportunities:**

1. **Growing Tourism Market:** With an increasing interest in travel and tourism, CATO can capitalize on this trend by promoting its members and their offerings.
2. **Digital Transformation:** Embracing technology and digital marketing can enhance member visibility and streamline operations, attracting a broader audience.
3. **Sustainable Tourism:** There is a growing demand for sustainable travel options. CATO can lead initiatives that promote eco-friendly practices among its members.
4. **Partnerships:** Collaborating with other tourism organizations, government bodies, and international associations can enhance CATO's influence and reach.

### **Threats:**

1. **Economic Uncertainty:** Economic fluctuations can impact consumer spending on travel, affecting the viability of tour operators.
2. **Competition:** The rise of online travel agencies and alternative travel platforms can pose a

threat to traditional tour operators.

3. **Regulatory Changes:** Changes in government regulations or travel policies can create challenges for tour operators, requiring CATO to adapt quickly.

4. **Global Events:** Events such as pandemics, natural disasters, or geopolitical tensions can severely disrupt the tourism industry, impacting CATO and its members.

## **CATO's CODE OF ETHICS (*Draft*)**

**This code of ethics aims to promote fair competition, transparency, respect for customers, compliance with laws, environmental responsibility, professionalism, conflict of interest management, and continuous improvement within the Canadian Association of Tour Operators and its members.**

1. Fair Competition: Members of the Canadian Association of Tour Operators shall engage in fair competition practices, refraining from any actions that may harm or undermine the competition in the industry.
2. Transparency: Members shall provide accurate and transparent information to consumers regarding their tour packages, pricing, and services, ensuring that customers can make informed decisions.
3. Respect for Customers: Members shall treat customers with respect, honesty, and integrity, ensuring that their needs and preferences are prioritized in all interactions.
4. Compliance with Laws and Regulations: Members shall comply with all relevant laws and regulations governing the tour operator industry, ensuring ethical conduct in all business practices.
5. Environmental Responsibility: Members shall prioritize sustainable and environmentally-friendly practices in their operations, minimizing the impact of tourism on local ecosystems and communities.
6. Professionalism: Members shall uphold high standards of professionalism in their interactions with customers, partners, and other stakeholders, maintaining a positive reputation for the industry.
7. Conflict of Interest: Members shall avoid conflicts of interest and disclose any potential conflicts that may arise in their business dealings, ensuring transparency and fairness in all transactions.
8. Continuous Improvement: Members shall strive for continuous improvement in their services, seeking feedback from customers and implementing measures to enhance the overall customer experience.

# CODE OF ETHICS

The Council of **Australian Tour Operators (CATO) members adhere** to the highest standards in development and delivery of global travel product.

Members of CATO pledge themselves to conduct their business activities in a manner that promotes the ideal of integrity in travel and agree to act in accordance with the principles of the CATO Members Code of Conduct.

In a world of dynamic change, travellers are faced with a myriad of choices for transportation and accommodation along with other travel services and arrangements.

Membership comprises of two categories – Full Members and Associate Members.

## **Full Members**

Australian based, tour operators and wholesalers.

CATO full members must provide their travel product/s to the standard and value expressed in their advertised programmes and in-line with their terms and conditions.

## **Associate Members**

CATO Associate Members are product and/or service providers to CATO full members as well as other travel related entities that are not eligible for CATO full membership. These organisations are expected to contribute to the objectives and activities of CATO by way of involvement or interest in the Australian travel industry.

## **Accuracy**

CATO members must aspire to be factual and accurate when providing information or describing facilities or services they provide and the services and facilities of any operator they utilise or represent. Members are expected to ensure that employees

and external agents offer true and accurate advice and services, by being fully informed about the products, destinations and various facets of the product they promote and sell.

### **Affiliation**

CATO members will not falsely represent a person's affiliation with their company.

### **Compliance**

CATO full members will abide by all Federal, State and local laws and regulations.

### **Confidentiality**

CATO members will treat every client transaction confidentially and will not disclose any information without the permission of the client, unless required by law.

### **Consumer Confidence**

CATO members will use every effort to protect their clients against any fraud, misrepresentation or unethical practices, which may arise in the travel industry.

### **Co-operation**

CATO members will cooperate with any enquiry conducted by CATO to resolve any dispute involving consumers or another member.

### **Disclosure**

CATO full members will provide complete details about terms and conditions of all or any travel service or provision, including cancellation and service fee obligations, before accepting payment for the booking.

### **Education and Training**

CATO offers training seminars for its members to encourage best business practice within their organisation.



**Notice**

CATO full members will promptly advise the client or their agent, of any change in itinerary, services, features or price in line with the members booking conditions.

**Qualifications and Professionalism**

CATO members are encouraged to provide ongoing education to their employees and external agents to ensure their continued professional development.

**Responsiveness to complaints**

CATO members will respond in accordance with their Customer Complaint Policy Handling Procedures.