



2nd June 2020

Dr. Didacus Jules
Director General, OECS
Morne Fortune, Castries
St Lucia

Dear Dr. Jules,

The Saint Lucia Hospitality and Tourism Association has served the Saint Lucia tourism industry for over 50 years. The COVID-19 crisis has challenged us like no other crisis in our long history.

Because of the fluid nature of the crisis and with no clear end in sight, our work load has been increasing each day and requiring immediate attention and engagement.

At the same time, our members are no longer able to pay their membership dues or other monies due to us. It is questionable when their financial situation will improve, as surely we are expecting a very slow recovery curve which may very well reach all the way into 2022.

The financial situation has forced us to make extremely difficult decisions, downsizing and making staff redundant when in fact, we would need more capacity and the ability to create consultancies around every aspect of the crisis before us with the required attention to detail.

We are therefore writing to you to explore the possibility of obtaining support from your organization that would allow us to successfully address and mitigate the devastating impact of this crisis, research and advocate for solutions, assist and advocate for our members, provide training and education as we must all learn to operate on the basis of the new standards, address the unemployment resulting from business closures, identify new opportunities and linkages with other industries.

There are a number of areas that we must address urgently but lack the financial ability and capacity to do so. These areas reach from activities needed to accelerating recovery, managing the ongoing crisis as it continues to unfold and evolve and preparing for the new normal that “tomorrow” will bring.

Here are some of the areas that require our full attention and input.

Economic Environment

- Research and highlight best practices for economic stimuli that would allow tourism activity to resume and recover
- Ongoing meetings with MSMEs to develop strategies to strengthen them or diversify their product offering
- Promote Buy Local opportunities and create more linkages of local suppliers with tourism businesses

Awareness - Restarting Tourism Activity

- Creating awareness of tourism's significant role for the country's economic recovery.
- Educating the industry and other stakeholders on the measures taken to mitigate risks of a COVID-19 outbreak when re-starting tourism.
- Unify opinion in the country's approach to re-starting tourism activity.
- Unify messages in support of consumer confidence and public perception.

Sustainability and Resilience

- Providing support and advocating for the implementation of sustainable practices across all operations.
- Building resilience of the industry by ongoing outreach and advocacy and identifying funding mechanisms for the private sector.

Training and Education "The New Normal"

- Implement and execute detailed training modules for all tourism businesses to fully prepare and operate under the new tourism health and safety protocols.
- Whilst large hotels may be able to provide such training in house, the majority of the independent businesses rely on the SLHTA to provide them with the necessary knowledge and training.

Human Capital

- With the anticipated slow recovery curve for tourism, it is anticipated that up to 35% of the currently unemployed workforce may not get their jobs back. This requires a strategic approach to commence as soon as possible to catch this outfall and avoid a crisis.

Some of the activities the SLHTA would like to plan for are

- Create special programmes to promote skills development, especially digital skills, for tourism, and particularly for the unemployed.
- Develop and provide upskilling and reskilling training programmes
- Identify new training opportunities geared towards product development and market access for stakeholders working in the areas of culture and creative industries, nature, sports, medical and wellness tourism to create new innovative all-year-around products.

- Develop tourism employment fairs and online platforms.

Tourism Entrepreneurship

Create special programmes to support entrepreneurship in tourism.
This will help to further advance innovation and digital transformation.

Membership Development - Community based tourism

Facilitate community participation in tourism by preparing non -formal tourism businesses to meet new standards and operate in the “new normal”, assisting government in their effort to license these businesses.

As the lead hospitality and tourism private sector association in Saint Lucia, the SLHTA looks forward to meeting with you at your earliest convenience to discuss these matters and opportunities for financial support to undertake them.

Yours sincerely



Karolin Troubetzkoy
President
Saint Lucia Hospitality & Tourism Association