Greetings!

**Getting involved in Public Policy Participation Process**

Did you know that you have a right to be consulted as stakeholder, but more so as a citizen by the government? Public policy participation is based on the premise that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.

Beyond running your tourism business enterprise, you can benefit your community in another fundamental way – by participating in public policy processes. As a stakeholder in the tourism industry, you have a powerful voice that can create far more impact than the business you operate. Sometimes business operators shy away from the public policy process for fear that it might alienate clients or create an impression that you are engaging in active politics. However, nothing could be further from the truth.

Public policy participation is the decision making process whereby citizens, civil society and other interested parties influence the development of government laws, regulations and policies which affect them.

This process is usually steered by the government which calls upon relevant stakeholders and interested parties from the general public to seek their input, feedback, create awareness, disseminate information or gain public support on certain bills, policies, master plans or strategies before they are assented to law or regulations.

This process can take months or years depending on several factors one of them being public interests. For example, before the recently enacted law on Plastic Ban was passed, the Ministry
of Environment involved various stakeholders and the public in order to create awareness and gain public support.

Why is it important for you to participate?

- Public policy participation creates fair policies/laws which reflect the real needs of the people/business/community
- The process facilitates a cross-sector dialogue and the stakeholders are able to reach consensus with the government
- It ensures there is legitimacy in the proposed legislation or regulation
- It creates awareness on government intentions, increases public-private partnership, ownership and responsibility in implementation
- It strengthens democracy – that is, it prevents conflicts between the public and government, while increasing confidence in public institutions
- The process creates sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all stakeholders

Through public policy participation, you have access to information on government development plans, priorities, budgets, and any other relevant information that may be of interest to you as a stakeholder/citizen. The government is also required by law to consult its citizens as a form of creating dialogue and partnership. It is in such forums that the government gets a chance to get your opinion, comments, views or feedback on pertinent issues that could be affecting your community/business.

Why we emphasize on the need to participate in public policy process:
Currently, most Counties are in the process of developing their County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) 2018 – 2022. According to the County Governments Act 2012, the County Governments are obligated to engage relevant stakeholders to seek input towards the County’s next five years’ development strategy.

In this regard, are you aware/informed/actively engaged in your County’s CIDP process? Is your business/organization/conservancy/community association represented in the public participation process? As a tourism player, you are a key stakeholder and you have a right to be involved in the decision making process that will ultimately affect you in one way or another in your business operations (e.g. licensing, permits, operating fees, regulations or policies that may be introduced, etc.).

The Ministry of Tourism is also set to release the Tourism Strategy 2030 which provides a guiding framework and strategic pillar towards tourism product development and innovation.

Consider taking an active role in National or County government public participation calls which have an impact in your field. Next time you see a public participation call either in the newspapers or other media, why don’t you take up your citizen role and participate?