



## Actively Green Program Governance Manual Introduction

---

### Where

- The tourism destination of Vail, Colorado
  - The tourism destination of Vail, Colorado includes the boundaries of the Town of Vail and Vail Mountain Resort ski area, a total of 69,987 acres. The destination is located within the 2.3 million acre U.S. White River National Forest in Colorado.
  - The Town of Vail is situated along US Interstate 70 between Denver and Grand Junction, and is home to Vail Mountain Resort, one of the largest ski areas in North America. Vail is in a high-alpine valley, is roughly 4.6 square miles and is surrounded by the White River National Forest in a mixed conifer and aspen forest. The Gore Creek watershed is entirely within the destination boundaries. The Town of Vail has 5,483 permanent residents per the 2016 census estimate, and an annual visitation of 2.8 million people. During the day, the town's population can swell with additional seasonal workforce to meet tourism demands. The town's mission is to: "Grow a vibrant, diverse economy and community and preserve our surrounding natural environment, providing our citizens and guests with exceptional services and an abundance of recreational, cultural and educational opportunities." Vail Resort, at over 5,000 acres, is one of the largest ski areas in the country and is consistently rated as one of the best ski areas in North America; it truly is "like nothing on earth."
  - Participation in the Actively Green Business Training and Certification Program is extended beyond the destination boundaries to include any business within the limits of Eagle County, Colorado.

### What

- **Actively Green Business Training & Certification Program**
  - Actively Green is a sustainability training and certification program for businesses, including hotels and tour operators. Actively Green provides a framework of sustainable business criteria and performance indicators that support any business in elevating performance with the use of best management practices specific to sustainability principles, engaging employees in meaningful initiatives, enhancing their marketing and success stories with customers, and recognition as a community leader.
  - The Actively Green standard is "Recognized" by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council and includes criteria based on many other accepted principles and guidelines including those developed with input from the U.N. World Tourism Organization. A business must use both systematic and incremental processes to meet the criteria within Actively Green and achieve certification through a desk assessment (Bronze level) and/or an onsite audit (Intermediate levels).



- Certified businesses receive access to marketing benefits, direct step-by-step assistance, and are added to a network of sustainability leaders in the program. Certification lasts three years, is verified by staff at Walking Mountains Science Center or a third party auditor for intermediate levels, and is indicated by a certificate and decal displaying the year of current certification.
- Walking Mountains Science Center maintains and facilitates use of the Actively Green standard. Professional staff are available to support businesses along any stage of their sustainability journey; through introductory and advanced level trainings, one-on-one coaching sessions, developing action-plans, industry-specific workshops, providing resources in sustainability best practices, and navigating the pathway to certification.
- **Mountain IDEAL**
  - The Mountain IDEAL is a sustainability standard and certification program for mountain resort communities. The Mountain IDEAL provides a framework of sustainable tourism criteria and performance indicators that support any mountain destination in elevating its sustainability performance, stakeholder engagement, collaboration, and recognition as a global leader.
  - The Mountain IDEAL is an internationally credible and scientifically-based standard that elevates sustainability values any destination would aspire to. Sustainable mountain resort communities actively practice and promote the IDEAL code of conduct with destination guests and community members. IDEAL stands for:
    - **Innovation**—Try something new. Support innovative local businesses, restaurants, artisans, food producers, and musicians. Make a difference. Celebrate and create positive change.
    - **Diversity**—Protect mountain heritage and precious wildlife. Discover how people from around the world make the community unique. Embrace natural and cultural diversity.
    - **Education**—Elevate learning experiences about ecology, economy, and social equity. Learn with others, and educate the community along the journey to sustainability.
    - **Authenticity**—Develop and seek out meaningful authentic experiences. Celebrate the special character and history of the mountain community. Enhance well-being and foster new friendships.
    - **Leadership**—Empower the community, the destination management team, local businesses, and others. Do good together. Be leaders. Lend a hand. Support the community's shared visions of a flourishing future.
  - The Mountain IDEAL is "Recognized" by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council and includes criteria based on many other accepted principles and guidelines including those developed with input from the U.N. World Tourism Organization. The criteria within Mountain IDEAL provide a framework used for education and outreach, economic development, policy development, action planning, measurement, evaluation, and as a basis for destination-level certification by a qualified auditor. Having a business sustainability certification program (e.g., Actively Green) is a requirement of the Mountain IDEAL.



## Who

- Walking Mountains Science Center (WMSC) is the body that owns the Actively Green Standard and administers the Actively Green Program. It is the certification body for the Actively Green eco-label.
  - Mission- To awaken a sense of wonder and inspire environmental stewardship and sustainability through natural science education.
  - Vision- We envision an Eagle Valley where everyone understands the science of nature and is inspired to take action as an environmental steward.
  - WMSC Staff Roles and Responsibilities- Walking Mountains Science Center provides outreach, advisory, and assessment services to business clients. In addition, Walking Mountains Science Center, in keeping with its responsibilities, agrees to:
    - Establish a relationship with Clients, enroll Clients into the program, and provide general information to assist tourism service providers in strengthening the sustainability of their operations. Walking Mountains Science Center is also responsible for understanding and complying with the GSTC-Recognized Standard and explaining this process to Clients through publications, seminars, training courses and other activities—provided these are not seen as part of the certification process and are open to all existing or potential clients. Staff involved in advisory services shall not be involved in assessment and evaluation responsibilities. Further, staff involved in assessment and evaluation responsibilities of the Certification Body shall also not give prescriptive advice in a form and to a level of detail that could compromise its ability to undertake an impartial certification.
  - As it pertains to the silver or gold level Actively Green Certifications, Walking Mountains Science Center staff will:
    - Contract third party Actively Green-Approved Assessors for assignments.
    - Establish a relationship between the Assessor and the Client.
    - Provide the assigned Assessor access to the following:
      - Online Actively Green Framework and Client Assessment
      - Actively Green Application files
      - Completed Benchmarking Tables
      - Completed Self-Assessment
      - Completed Affidavit
      - Completed Certification Contract
    - Resolve any conflicts between the Assessor and the Client.
    - Address and document complaints and appeals.
    - Conduct annual monitoring of certified Clients.
    - Provide the Assessor with GSTC-relevant assessment procedures.
    - Communicate to the Assessor the requirements of the Assessor “Code of Conduct” and the Actively Green “Code of Conduct.”



- Establish, direct, administer and maintain the Actively Green Business Training & Certification Program and all Actively Green Eco-Certification Standards and inform certified Clients and Assessors of any change to the standard within 90 days of said change.

## **Why**

- Purpose of Program- The Actively Green Program is a way for local businesses to incorporate sustainability into their work and to receive recognition for their efforts. By meeting the criteria and setting goals for the future, these businesses are improving efficiency, customer satisfaction, employee engagement, and leading the way toward protecting the natural environment around us. This program ensures that the operations of the involved businesses are designed to benefit the community, the environment, and the business's bottom line.
- Objectives of Certification- The certified business will understand sustainability best practices as they relate to business, and they will have a formal set of policies and procedures that demonstrate this understanding. The business will not only share and abide by these practices internally, among all levels of staff, but it will also share its efforts with its customers and the general public. Each certified business contributes to supporting a network of organizations that are also incorporating sustainability, and who prioritize making economic transactions with other sustainable businesses when possible. Certification adds each business into a network of others working to better our area and to achieve county-wide climate goals as well as global recognition for the Vail Destination.