

NEXTGEN Tourism

Skills for Tourism Business Succession

Course Curriculum



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1. About Us

Next GEN Tourism is an Erasmus+ KA220-VET cooperation project running from **November 2025 to October 2027**. Coordinated by the **University of Akureyri**, the partnership brings together six organisations from **Iceland, Austria, Slovenia, Ireland, and Germany**. Together, we combine expertise from higher education, vocational education and training, business support, and digital development to help tourism SMEs prepare for sustainable ownership and leadership transitions. Our shared goal is to equip VET educators and tourism businesses with practical, research-based tools that strengthen business continuity, succession planning, and long-term resilience.

Tourism in Europe depends heavily on small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), many of which are family-owned and deeply rooted in local communities. Yet succession remains a major challenge. Many tourism SMEs are not sufficiently prepared, which puts business continuity, jobs, local know-how, and regional resilience at risk. At

the same time, vocational education (VET) and training providers often lack dedicated resources to implement practical, sector-specific succession planning.

Next GEN Tourism responds to this challenge by developing a **Tourism Succession Readiness Competence Framework**, a modular curriculum, educational resources, a digital assessment application, and a knowledge hub. The project is designed to help VET educators, SMEs, and business support actors better understand the competences needed for successful succession in tourism businesses.

Through research, focus groups, expert consultation, testing, and co-creation, the project aims to strengthen VET capacity, improve succession literacy, and support more structured and sustainable transitions in tourism SMEs across Europe.



Háskólinn
á Akureyri
University
of Akureyri

University of Akureyri (Iceland)



MCI Innsbruck (Austria)

*the vision
works*

tw GmbH (Germany)



RAZVOJNI CENTER
SRCA SLOVENIJE

DEVELOPMENT CENTRE
OF THE HEART OF SLOVENIA

Razvojni Center Srca Slovenije
(Slovenia)

momentum
[educate + innovate]

Momentum Marketing Services
(Ireland)

gairmeach
TRAINING

Gairmeach Training (Ireland)

2. Key terms used in this Curriculum

Some terms in succession planning can overlap. This glossary provides short explanations to support clear understanding, especially for non-native English speakers, SME owners and trainers using the curriculum in different contexts.

- 1. Succession readiness:** The extent to which a business, owner and successor are prepared for a future ownership or leadership transition.
- 2. Ownership transfer:** The process of transferring legal ownership or control of the business to a successor, buyer, family member, employee or another party.
- 3. Leadership transition:** The gradual handover of leadership roles, responsibilities, decision-making and authority from the current leader to the successor.
- 4. Governance:** The way decisions, responsibilities and rules are organised in the business, including who has authority to decide what.
- 5. Business continuity:** The ability of the business to continue operating successfully during and after transition, without major disruption to staff, customers, finances or operations.
- 6. Valuation:** The process of estimating the financial value of a business. This may include assets, income, profit, market position, goodwill, debt and future potential.
- 7. Stakeholder relationships:** Important relationships with people and organisations connected to the business, such as family members, employees, customers, suppliers, advisors, local communities, tourism organisations and destination partners.
- 8. ESG:** Environmental, Social and Governance factors. In this curriculum, ESG refers to practical actions that support responsible, sustainable and well-managed tourism businesses.
- 9. Digital transition:** The handover, update or improvement of digital systems and online assets, such as websites, booking platforms, social media accounts, customer databases, online reviews and digital tools.



3. About the Next GEN Tourism Curriculum

The Next GEN Tourism Modular Curriculum supports VET educators, trainers and support actors in helping tourism SMEs prepare for **successful business transitions**.

It translates the Next GEN Tourism Succession Readiness Competence Framework into **practical, flexible learning modules for classroom training, workshops, hybrid formats, online learning and self-paced study**.

Tourism SMEs often face transition challenges related to ownership transfer, leadership change, family and stakeholder relationships, financial planning, staff continuity, branding, destination networks, digitalisation and long-term resilience.

They are also **embedded in destinations and depend on relationships** with local communities, suppliers, public authorities and regional networks. The curriculum, therefore, treats succession not as a single legal or financial event, but as **a structured, long-term transition process requiring strategic, organisational, financial and relational preparation**.

4. Curriculum foundation

The curriculum builds directly on the **Next GEN Tourism Succession Readiness Competence Framework**, which identifies seven core competence areas.

The purpose of the curriculum is to help VET educators teach tourism SME owners, successors and other support actors how to plan and manage business succession in a structured, inclusive and practical way.

It provides educators with:

- modular learning structures
- learning outcomes and assessment tasks
- case studies and practical exercises
- reflection questions and trainer guidance
- tools and templates for SME application.

Next GEN Tourism Succession Readiness Competence Framework



NEXTGEN Tourism

Skills for Tourism Business Succession

The 7 Competence Areas

A practical framework for successful tourism business succession.

1



LEADERSHIP TRANSITION & ORGANISATIONAL CONTINUITY

Preparing a successor, transferring responsibility and ensuring the business can continue to operate confidently as leadership changes.

2



OWNERSHIP TRANSFER, GOVERNANCE & CONTROL

Understanding ownership options, decision-making responsibilities, governance arrangements and the practical steps involved in transferring control.

3



STRATEGIC DIRECTION, SUSTAINABILITY & BUSINESS RENEWAL

Deciding what the future business should look like and identifying what should be protected, improved or changed before transition.

4



FINANCIAL PLANNING & RISK MANAGEMENT

Understanding financial readiness, valuation, funding needs, risks and the financial implications of different transition routes.

5



TOURISM ECOSYSTEMS, MARKET CONTEXT & EXTERNAL PRESSURES

Recognising how seasonality, staffing, destination relationships, customer behaviour, regulation and market change can affect succession.

6



INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSITION & RELATIONSHIPS

Managing family expectations, communication, trust, conflict and the transfer of experience and knowledge between generations.

7



MARKETING & BRANDING

Protecting customer confidence and brand identity while allowing the next owner or leader to develop the business for the future.



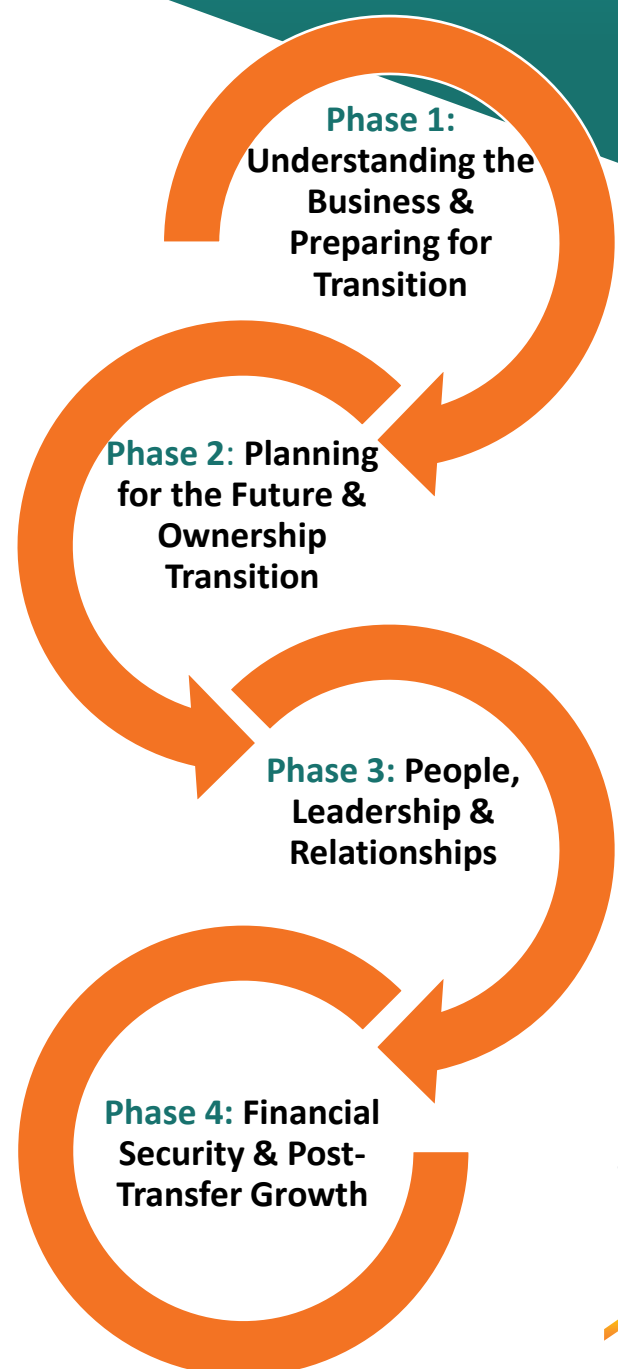
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5. Curriculum Structure: Business Transition Phases

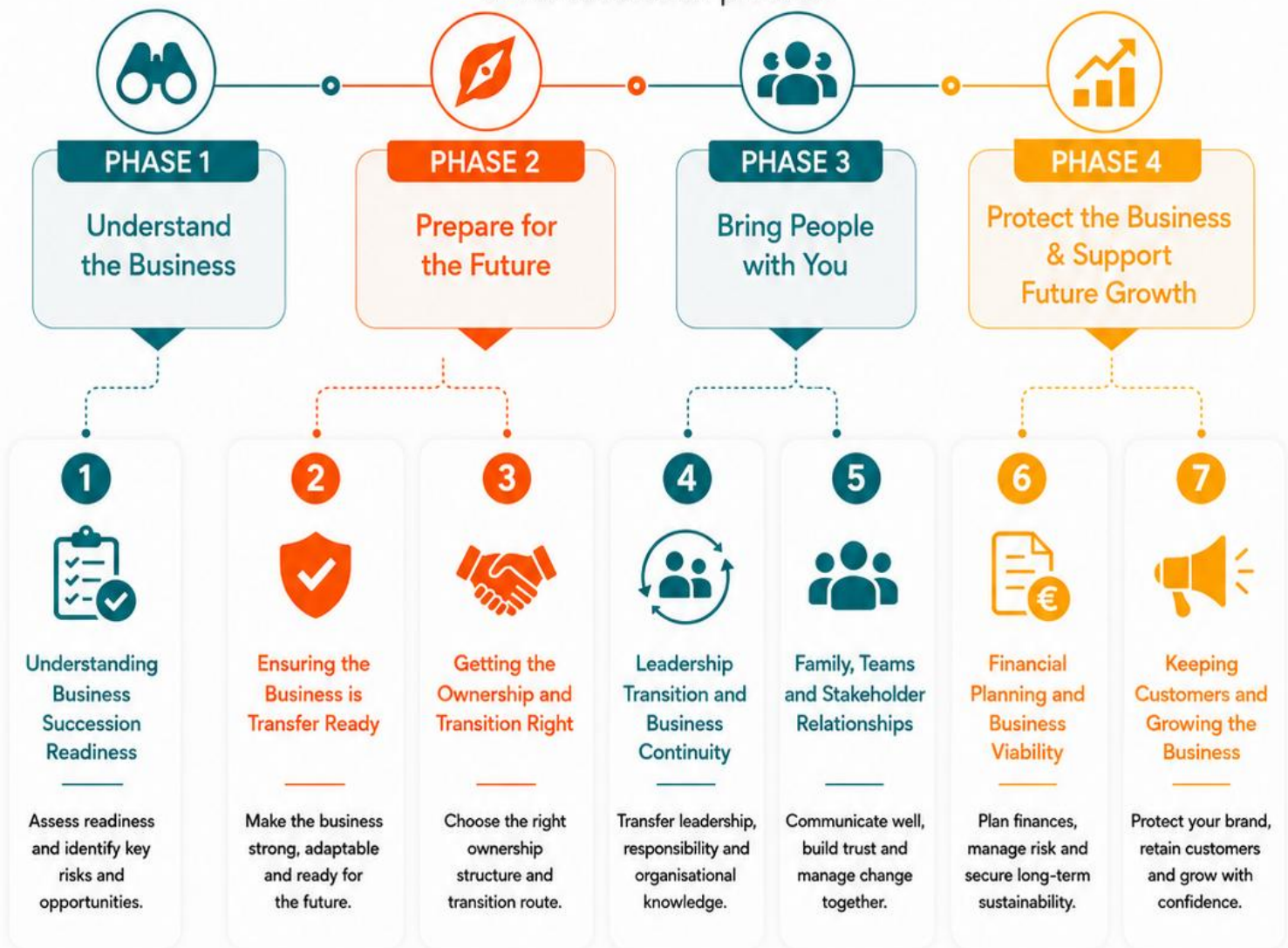
The **Next GEN Tourism Curriculum** is organised into four **Business Transition Phases**, guiding learners step-by-step through the full transition process from understanding the current business situation to ensuring long-term continuity and growth.

Rather than treating succession as a one-time event, the curriculum takes a practical, process-oriented approach that reflects the real challenges faced by tourism SMEs.



Modular Curriculum

A step-by-step learning journey for every stage of the succession process.



Stronger continuity for tourism SMEs



Confident, capable future leaders



Sustainable businesses and destinations



Pass on legacy. Build the future.



DOWNLOAD THE COMPETENCE FRAMEWORK



EXPLORE THE MODULAR CURRICULUM



Learn more at nextgentourism.eu



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Curriculum structure:

Business Transition Phases

Phase 1: Understanding the Business & Preparing for Transition

→ *Where are we now?*

Focuses on understanding the tourism SME's current situation, including its market environment, external pressures, business lifecycle, owner dependency, and initial readiness for succession.

- **Main competence link:** Tourism Ecosystems, Market Context & External Pressures

Phase 2: Planning for the Future & Ownership Transition

→ *Where are we going and how do we get there?*

Supports learners in defining the future direction of the business, including strategic priorities, sustainability, business renewal, ownership options, governance structures, and the practical transition route.

- **Main competence links:** Strategic Direction, Sustainability & Business Renewal, Ownership Transfer, Governance & Control

Phase 3: People, Leadership & Relationships

→ *How do we bring people with us?*

Addresses successor readiness, leadership handover, staff continuity, communication, intergenerational relationships, stakeholder trust, and organisational stability throughout the transition.

- **Main competence links:** Leadership Transition & Organisational Continuity, Intergenerational Transition & Relationships

Phase 4: Financial Security & Post-Transfer Growth

→ *How do we make it work long-term?*

Focuses on financial viability, valuation, risk management, customer and brand continuity, digital presence, market positioning, and long-term competitiveness before, during, and after the transfer.

- **Main competence links:** Financial Planning & Risk Management, Marketing & Branding

5. Curriculum design

Next GEN Tourism Curriculum Structure

The curriculum translates the seven competencies from the **Next GEN Tourism Succession Readiness Competence Framework** into **seven practical training modules**

Phase 1: Understanding the Business & Preparing for Transition

Module 1: Understanding Business Succession Readiness

Core topics:

- Tourism market pressures
- Business lifecycle and transition scenarios
- Succession readiness

Phase 2: Planning for the Future & Ownership Transition

Module 2: Ensuring the Business is Transfer Ready

Core topics:

- Future business model
- Sustainability & Business Renewal
- Destination and community value

Module 3: Getting the Ownership & Transition Right

Core topics:

- Transfer options and ownership models
- Legal planning
- Governance

Phase 3: People, Leadership & Relationships

Module 4: Leadership Transition & Business Continuity

Core topics:

- Successor identification and development
- Leadership handover
- Business stability

Module 5: Family, Teams & Stakeholder Relationships

Core topics:

- Family and stakeholder communication
- Conflict management
- Trust and (tacit) knowledge transfer

Phase 4: Financial Security & Post-Transfer Growth

Module 6: Financial Planning & Business Viability

Core topics:

- Financial readiness
- Business valuation and price expectations
- Financial transition planning

Module 7: Keeping Customers & Growing the Business

Core topics:

- Customer and brand continuity
- Digital transition
- Post-Transfer Growth

6. Profile of target groups and beneficiaries

*The **Next GEN Competence Framework** is designed as an open and adaptable resource, structured to respond to the diverse learning and transition needs of tourism SMEs and their successors. It enables the personalization of learning pathways, acknowledging that succession readiness requirements vary according to socio-economic background, educational level, business origin and ownership structure, enterprise size and performance, as well as strategic growth or continuity ambitions.*

Target groups and beneficiaries include:

- **Primary users**
VET educators, trainers, tourism SME support organisations, business advisors, entrepreneurship and adult education providers, and HEI actors.
- **Wider stakeholders**
Chambers of commerce, development agencies, tourism organisations, policymakers, succession specialists and local communities benefiting from business continuity and regional stability.
- **Final beneficiaries**
Tourism SME owners/managers, family business successors, external and first-time successors, employees, rural business owners, women entrepreneurs and tourism communities.



7. How to use this Curriculum

Flexible Application for VET and Tourism SMEs

The **Next GEN Tourism Curriculum** is designed to be **practical, modular and adaptable** across different learning environments and user needs.

It can be delivered through **classroom-based training, workshops, short training sessions, hybrid/blended learning or self-paced online learning**.

The curriculum is designed to be used with **case studies, practical tools and templates, the digital assessment application and the Next GEN Tourism knowledge hub**.

The curriculum can be used as a **full programme**, guiding learners through all modules as a complete business transition journey. This format is suitable for structured VET programmes, training courses or certification formats.

It can also be used in a **targeted or modular way**. VET educators may select individual modules based on business needs, competence gaps or learner priorities, and integrate them into existing training, mentoring or advisory services.

Entry requirements: There are **no formal prerequisites**. The curriculum is open access and suitable for **VET educators, tourism SME owners, successors, trainers and business support actors**. Modules may be adapted to relevant **EQF/NQF levels**, national validation requirements or local learning contexts.

Each module includes: learning aim, module description, learning outcomes, competence framework alignment, work-based task, case studies, assessment, schedule and resources.

Key Value for Users

- Provides **structured guidance** for complex transition processes
- Supports **informed decision-making**
- Helps reduce risks and improve **business continuity**
- Strengthens long-term **resilience and competitiveness**

8. A four-phase learning pathway

The curriculum can be followed as a full learning journey or used selectively. The Competence Framework provides the foundation, the four transition phases structure the learning process, and the seven modules translate this into practical training. Case studies, tools, the assessment application and the Knowledge Hub support practical application.



The pathway can be followed as a full learning journey or used selectively.

9. Trainer profile & adaptation guidance

Recommended trainer profile

This curriculum can be delivered by trainers, educators or facilitators with experience in one or more of the following areas:

- vocational education and training
- SME support or business mentoring
- entrepreneurship education
- tourism business development
- succession planning
- family business support
- work-based learning facilitation

Trainers do not need to be experts in every topic. However, they should be able to facilitate discussion, guide practical exercises, support reflection and connect learners to appropriate specialist advice when needed.

Use of specialist topics

Some modules include legal, tax, financial, valuation, governance or digital platform topics. These should be treated as **awareness-building topics**.

The curriculum helps learners understand:

- what questions to ask
- what information to prepare
- what risks to recognise
- when expert advice is needed

It does **not** replace professional legal, tax, accounting, banking, valuation or regulatory advice.

National and regional adaptation

Trainers should **adapt** the curriculum to the **national or regional context**.

This includes:

- legal and tax rules
- funding and finance options
- business support services
- tourism structures and destination systems
- examples, case studies and terminology
- relevant EQF/NQF levels or validation requirements

Where possible, trainers should use examples from local tourism SMEs and signpost learners to national advisory bodies, chambers of commerce, accountants, banks, legal advisors, tourism organisations, and business support agencies.

10. Educator frameworks, delivery and adaptation resources

1. Purpose of this section

The following resources support educators in planning, adapting, delivering and assessing the complete Next GEN Tourism curriculum.

They are not part of the subject content of an individual module and should not be repeated in Modules 1–7.

The curriculum may be delivered through face-to-face teaching, workshops, blended learning, online learning, self-paced study and work-based learning. It may also be adapted to different learner needs, national contexts and qualification requirements.

2. Curriculum and competence alignment

- **European Qualifications Framework**
<https://europass.europa.eu/en/european-qualifications-framework-eqf>
- **Cedefop – Learning Outcomes**
<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/themes/learning-outcomes>
- **Cedefop – Defining, Writing and Applying Learning Outcomes**
<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications/4209>
- **Cedefop Learning Outcomes Handbook – PDF**
https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/4109_en_0.pdf

The EQF supports comparison across national qualification systems, while Cedefop guidance helps educators frame teaching and assessment around what learners are expected to know, understand and be able to do.

3. Work-based and applied learning

- **Cedefop – Work-Based Learning and Simulations**
<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vert-toolkit-tackling-early-leaving/intervention-approaches/work-based-learning-and-simulations>
- **Cedefop – Inclusive Work-Based Learning Environments**
<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vert-toolkit-tackling-early-leaving/intervention-approaches/inclusive-work-based-learning-environments>

4. Inclusive and accessible delivery

- **CAST Universal Design for Learning Guidelines**
<https://udlguidelines.cast.org/>
- **CAST UDL Guidelines Downloads**
<https://udlguidelines.cast.org/more/downloads/>
- **VisitEngland Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Toolkit**
<https://www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/make-your-business-accessible-and-inclusive/visitengland-accessible-and-inclusive>

Universal Design for Learning supports educators in offering different ways for learners to engage with content, access information and demonstrate their learning.

10. Educator frameworks, delivery and adaptation resources

4. Common digital delivery tools

professional advice.

These platforms may be used for group exercises, mapping, brainstorming, reflection and action planning:

- **Miro Template Library**
<https://miro.com/templates/>
- **Mural Template Library**
<https://www.mural.co/templates>
- **Canva Whiteboard Templates**
<https://www.canva.com/online-whiteboard/templates/>

These general platform links should appear here only. Individual modules may link to a specific template, such as a SWOT, stakeholder map or RACI matrix, where it directly supports a module activity.

5. Assessment and educator adaptation

Educators should adapt:

- examples and case studies;
- delivery time and format;
- language and terminology;
- assessment evidence;
- legal, financial and taxation references;
- tourism-support organisations;
- national EQF/NQF arrangements.

Legal, taxation, accounting, valuation and financial content should build awareness and help learners prepare questions for specialists. It should not be presented as a replacement for

Curriculum Document Guide

The Seven-Module Curriculum Is Organised into Four Documents

Each document covers
one phase of the
tourism business
succession journey.





The Seven-Module Curriculum Is Organised into Four Documents

The Next GEN Tourism Curriculum is organised into four connected documents. This first document provides an overview of the curriculum, its structure, and guidance for educators. The remaining three documents each cover one phase of the tourism business succession journey.

Document 1 **Curriculum Overview**

Introduces the curriculum, learning pathway, target groups and delivery guidance.

Phase 1 — Understanding the Business & Preparing for Transition
Covers Module 1.

Document 2
Phase 2 — Planning for the Future & Ownership Transition
Covers Modules 2 and 3.

Document 3
Phase 3 — People, Leadership & Relationships
Covers Modules 4 and 5.

Document 4
Phase 4 — Financial Security & Post-Transfer Growth
Covers Modules 6 and 7.

Welcome to Part 1 of the Next GEN Tourism Curriculum

Phase 1 Understanding the Business & Preparing for Transition

This part introduces the foundations of tourism SME succession readiness and prepares learners to assess the business context, transition pressures and early planning needs.

Modules in this part



Module 1: Understanding Business Succession Readiness

Core topics

- ✓ Tourism market pressures
- ✓ Business lifecycle and transition scenarios
- ✓ Succession readiness

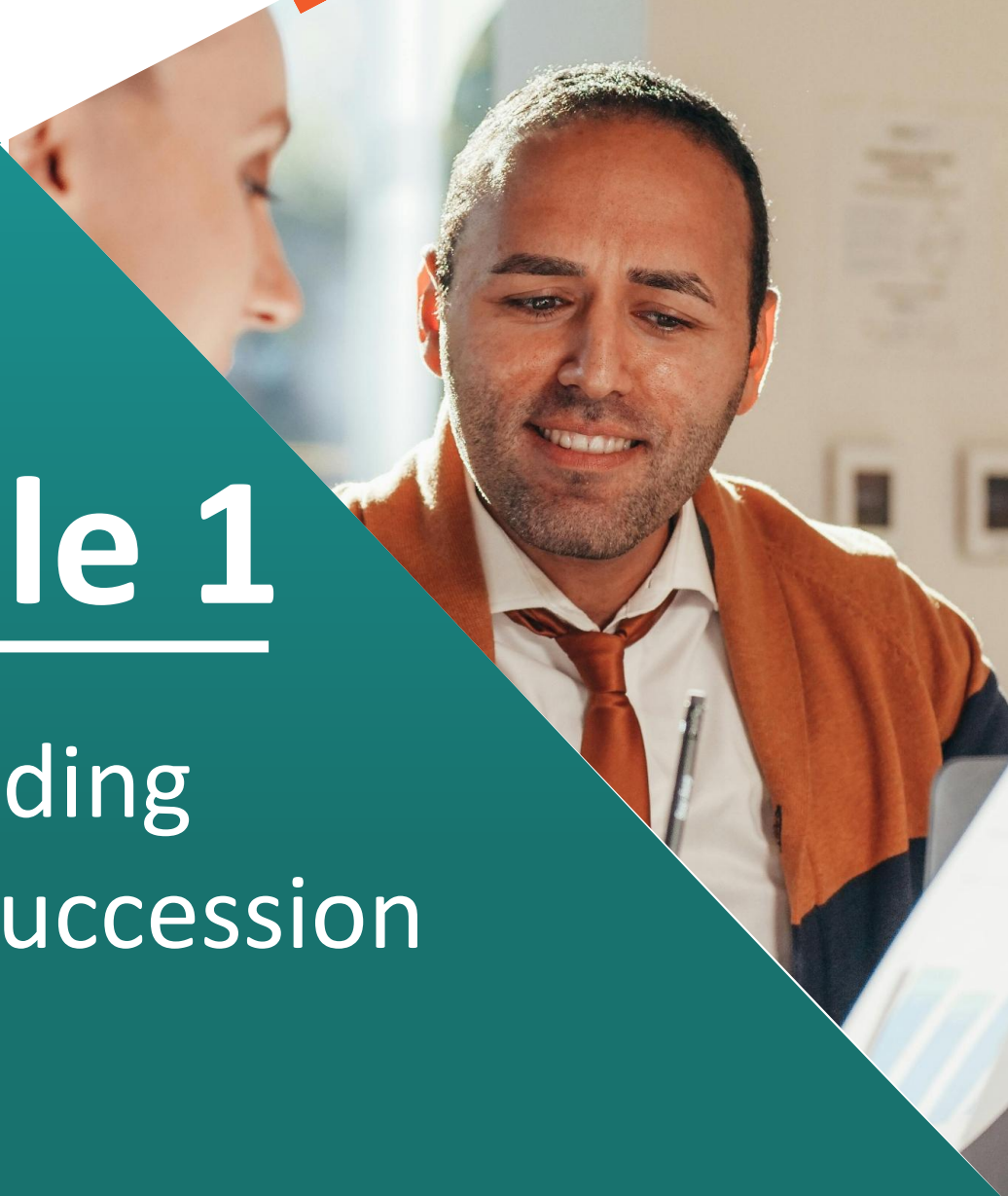
PART 1
PHASE 1

Phase 1

Understanding the
Business & Preparing for
Transition

Module 1

Understanding
Business Succession
Readiness



PHASE 1

Understanding the Business and Preparing for Transition

Module 1

Understanding Business Succession Readiness

1. Module Descriptor

Module Code	M1	Indicative EQF Level	EQF Level 4
Indicative ECTS Workload	0.5 ECTS	Total Learner Workload	12–15 hours
Delivery Mode	Hybrid, Online, Face to Face/On Campus, Distance Learning, Blended Learning, Work-Based Learning, Self-Paced Learning		
Target Learners	VET educators, trainers, tourism SME owners, successors, family business members, business advisors, legal/tax support actors, SME mentors and learning facilitators working with business continuity and succession.		

Module 1



Key Objective

Establish a shared diagnostic starting point for succession-readiness learning in tourism SMEs.



Key Learning Outcome

By the end of this module, learners will be able to:



Explain the tourism and market context of an SME



Identify likely transition scenarios



Assess readiness gaps



Define initial actions for structured transition preparation

2. Module Rationale & Context

Purpose & Learning Aim

To establish a shared diagnostic starting point for succession-readiness learning in tourism SMEs.

By the end of the module, learners should be able to analyse the tourism ecosystem and market context of a tourism SME, identify likely transition scenarios, assess readiness gaps, and define initial actions for structured transition preparation.

Module Description

This module is the **core introductory module** and starting point for business transition and succession in tourism SMEs. It helps learners understand the current position of the business by examining the **tourism ecosystem, market pressures, business lifecycle, succession readiness, and possible transition scenarios**.

It prepares learners to take the first step so that later decisions about strategy, ownership, people, operations and finance are based on actual business conditions rather than assumptions. From the beginning, learners are encouraged to think **strategically** rather than reactively.

The module helps learners understand where a tourism business currently stands, how internal and external factors influence transition readiness, and what initial actions are needed to support a sustainable and well-prepared transition process.

3. Topics Covered (4)

- 1. Introduction to Succession & Transition Planning**
Understanding why early planning matters for business continuity and resilience
- 2. Tourism Ecosystem & Market Pressures**
Exploring the external pressures that influence transition readiness
- 3. Tourism SME Business Lifecycle & Transition Readiness**
Assessing the business’s current stage and readiness for succession
- 4. Transition Scenarios & Planning**
Comparing possible transition routes and identifying the first steps

4. Learning Outcomes

By the end of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Explain how tourism ecosystems and external pressures influence SME performance and transition decisions.
2. Identify and explain how key tourism pressures, including seasonality, labour constraints, customer behaviour and destination dynamics, may affect succession readiness.
3. Identify different business lifecycle stages and typical transition scenarios.
4. Assess the transition readiness of a business using practical indicators such as ownership clarity, operational dependency and market position.
5. Assess specific external risks and opportunities using a structured succession-readiness tool.
6. Recognise the importance of early, structured and proactive transition planning.

5. Competence Framework Alignment

Framework	Competences Addressed (Knowledge, Skills, Responsibility & Autonomy)
Recognise succession as part of long-term business resilience.	Knowledge: Explain the importance of succession planning in tourism SMEs. Skills: Identify key reasons why tourism businesses delay succession planning.
Assess how these pressures affect business continuity.	Knowledge: Describe tourism-specific pressures affecting business transition. Skills: Analyse challenges such as seasonality, staffing, visitor demand, and destination change.
Select suitable transition pathways for different SME contexts.	Knowledge: Identify common transition scenarios. Skills: Compare family succession, sale, employee takeover, partnership and closure options.
Recommend first steps to improve transition readiness.	Knowledge: Understand succession readiness. Skills: Use a simple readiness checklist to assess a tourism business.

6. Module Structure & Topics

Topic 1: Introduction to Succession & Transition Planning

Keywords: Succession and transition planning, business, continuity, seasonality, jobs, local economy, family legacy, visitor experience, business resilience, takeover, risk management, destination reputation.

Overview: This Topic introduces learners to the concept of succession and transition planning within tourism SMEs and explores why planning for the future is essential for long-term business continuity and resilience. Learners will examine how effective transition planning helps protect jobs, sustain local economies, preserve family legacy, and maintain positive visitor experiences while preparing tourism businesses for future ownership or leadership change.

What is Covered

1. What succession and transition planning means in tourism SMEs
2. Why tourism businesses often delay planning for transition
3. The importance of continuity for staff, guests, suppliers, and destinations
4. Common transition pathways: family succession, sale, partnership, employee takeover, closure
5. Risks of poor or unplanned transition
6. The role of succession in sustainable tourism development and business resilience

Aim: Learners will understand what succession and transition planning mean in tourism SMEs, why early planning matters, and how unplanned transition can affect staff, guests, suppliers, families and destination reputation.

Topic 2: Tourism Ecosystem & Market Pressures

Keywords: Tourism ecosystem, market pressures, seasonality, rural location, labour shortages, visitor behaviour, destination pressures, customer expectations, regulation, digitalisation, sustainability, local economy.

Overview: This Topic helps learners understand the wider environment in which tourism SMEs operate.

Tourism businesses do not operate alone. They are influenced by customers, employees, suppliers, destinations, local communities, public authorities, online platforms, transport systems and wider market trends. These external factors can strongly affect whether a business is ready for transition.

Learners explore how tourism-specific pressures such as seasonality, rural location, staff shortages, changing guest expectations, digital visibility, sustainability demands and destination reputation can affect succession readiness. A business may seem stable today, but external pressures can make transition more difficult if they are not recognised early.



Topic 2 contd.

This Topic helps learners look beyond the owner and the internal business. It shows that succession readiness also depends on market conditions, destination context and the ability of the business to adapt to change.

What is Covered

1. What the tourism ecosystem means for SMEs
2. How tourism SMEs depend on customers, staff, suppliers, destinations and local communities
3. Seasonality and its effect on income, staffing and planning
4. Rural or peripheral location challenges
5. Labour shortages and skills gaps
6. Changing visitor expectations and customer behaviour
7. Destination reputation and local tourism development
8. Digitalisation, online visibility and booking platforms
9. Sustainability and responsible tourism expectations
10. External risks and opportunities that may affect transition timing

Aim: Learners will analyse how tourism ecosystem factors and market pressures influence SME performance, business continuity and succession readiness.

Topic 3: Tourism SME Business Lifecycle & Transition Readiness

Keywords: Business lifecycle, start-up, growth, maturity, renewal, decline, transition, exit, succession readiness, owner dependency, systems, documentation, customer base, leadership, finance, legal preparation.

Overview: This Topic helps learners understand where a tourism SME is in its business lifecycle and how this affects transition readiness.

Tourism SMEs can be at different stages: start-up, growth, maturity, renewal, transition or exit. Each stage creates different succession challenges. A growing business may need new structures, finance or leadership capacity. A mature business may need renewal before transfer. A business in decline may need urgent action before it can be sold or passed on.

Learners also explore the meaning of succession readiness. A business is not ready for transition only because the owner wants to step back. Readiness depends on many practical areas, including leadership, finance, legal preparation, business systems, customer base, staff knowledge, supplier relationships and documentation.

This Topic encourages learners to identify readiness gaps early, before major ownership or leadership decisions are made.

Topic 3: contd.

What is Covered

1. Business lifecycle stages: start-up, growth, maturity, renewal, decline, transition or exit
2. Why lifecycle stage affects succession options
3. Signs that a business is ready or not ready for transition
4. Owner dependency and key-person risk
5. Leadership and successor readiness as early indicators
6. Financial readiness and basic business stability
7. Legal and administrative preparation
8. Business systems, documentation and procedures
9. Customer base, reputation and market position
10. Knowledge transfer and operational continuity
11. Initial succession readiness indicators

Aim: Learners will identify the lifecycle stage of a tourism SME and assess its initial succession readiness using practical business indicators.

Topic 4: Transition Scenarios & Planning

Keywords: Transition scenarios, family handover, external sale, employee takeover, partnership, merger, closure, succession pathway, transition planning, early action, readiness gaps, risk reduction.

Overview: This Topic introduces learners to the different transition scenarios that may apply to tourism SMEs.

Not every business will follow the same succession pathway. Some businesses may transfer to the next generation. Others may be sold to an external buyer, taken over by employees, continued through a partnership, merged with another business, or closed if no viable transition route exists.

Learners explore how different scenarios create different risks, opportunities and planning needs. For example, a family handover may require communication and role clarity. An external sale may require valuation, documentation and due diligence. An employee takeover may require financing and training. Closure may require responsible exit planning.

This Topic helps learners understand that transition planning should start before a final decision is made. The aim is to identify possible pathways, realistically compare them, and define the initial actions needed to prepare the business.

Topic 4 contd.

What is Covered

1. Common transition scenarios in tourism SMEs
2. Family succession or intergenerational handover
3. External sale to a buyer
4. Employee takeover or management buyout
5. Partnership, merger or shared ownership
6. Closure or responsible exit
7. How different scenarios affect staff, customers, suppliers and destination partners
8. Risks and opportunities linked to each scenario
9. Early planning actions for each transition route
10. Choosing first steps before detailed ownership planning in Module 3

Aim: Learners will compare possible transition scenarios for a tourism SME and identify initial planning actions to improve readiness.



Module 1

Development Framework

From Module Overview to Applied Delivery

This section outlines how Module 1 can be delivered in practice. It introduces suggested learning activities, assessment approach, recommended time allocation and supporting resources that will help learners apply their knowledge in real tourism business contexts.

❖ In this Topic



1. Practical Learning Exercises

- Case study discussion:** Learners review a tourism SME facing succession uncertainty and identify risks.
- Readiness checklist:** Learners complete a simple business succession readiness checklist.
- Group Mapping Exercise:** Learners map the lifecycle stage of a tourism business and identify future options.
- Scenarios Reflection Task:** Learners identify one real tourism business and describe what might affect its transition.

2. Work-Based Learning Task

Learners apply the module to a real or realistic tourism SME. They may use their own business, a local business, or a case study.

Learners answer:

- What stage is the business at?
- Is there a clear future plan?
- What are the main risks if the owner leaves?
- What knowledge, systems or relationships need to be protected?
- What first action would improve succession readiness?

3. Case Studies

Case studies reflect realistic tourism SME transition scenarios and encourage practical problem-solving and discussion.

Case Study	Focus Area	Example Learning Themes
Family-Run Guesthouse Transition	Family succession and leadership handover	Communication, successor readiness, maintaining business continuity
Rural Adventure Tourism Business	Owner retirement without successor	Business valuation, sale options, destination impact
Seasonal Tourism SME	Staffing and operational continuity	Workforce retention, resilience planning, succession risks
Boutique Hotel Expansion	Growth and governance challenges	Leadership structure, investment, strategic planning

4. Assessment

Assessment Method	Description & Evidence
Short written reflection	Learners reflect on the importance of succession planning in tourism SMEs and identify common transition challenges affecting tourism businesses. Evidence: A 500-word reflection discussing risks such as seasonality, staffing shortages, ageing owners, or changing visitor expectations in a local tourism business.
Group presentation	Learners work in teams to analyse a tourism business transition scenario and present practical recommendations. Evidence: A presentation analysing a family-run guesthouse where the next generation is unsure about taking over the business, including suggested transition options and risks.
Readiness checklist	Learners complete and interpret a succession readiness checklist for a tourism SME to identify strengths, gaps, and future priorities. Evidence: A completed checklist assessing areas such as financial readiness, leadership succession, legal preparation, digital systems, and knowledge transfer, followed by short recommendations.
Work-based learning task	Learners apply learning in a real or simulated tourism business environment through observation, interviews, or practical analysis. Evidence: Conducting a short interview with a tourism SME owner about future business plans and producing a brief report outlining succession risks, opportunities, and recommended next steps.

5. Suggested Schedule

Total: 12–15 learning hours

Activity	Hours
Facilitated teaching/workshop	3
Group exercises and case studies	2
Independent reading/reflection	2
Work-based learning task	3–5
Assessment preparation/completion	2-3
Total Hours	12- 15

6. Expected Module Learning Outcome

By the end of this module, learners will produce a **Tourism SME Succession Readiness Snapshot** outlining the business context, key tourism pressures, lifecycle stage, possible transition scenarios, succession readiness level, and three practical actions to improve business continuity and transition preparedness.

7. Resources & Learning Materials

Key readings and reference materials

- [Tourism HR Canada – Succession Planning](#)
- [Tourism HR Canada – Succession Planning Guidebook](#)
- [OECD Tourism Trends and Policies 2024](#)
- [Fáilte Ireland Tourism Careers Research 2025](#)
- [Family Firm Succession in Tourism and Hospitality](#)
- [Family Tourism Business Succession in Alpine Regions](#)

Videos and applied examples

- [What Actually Breaks Succession Plans](#)
- [What Is Succession Planning?](#)
- [Why Generational Knowledge Transfer Is a Tourism Asset](#)

Practical tools and templates

- [PEST Analysis Template](#) – adapt as a Tourism External Pressures Scan
- [Stakeholder Map Template](#) – adapt as a Tourism Ecosystem and Dependency Map
- [NSW Business Continuity Plan Guide](#) – use to support an Owner Dependency and Key-Person Risk Checklist

7. Resources & Learning Materials

Practical tools and templates

- European Commission – SME Continuity and Exit – use to support a Transition Scenario Comparison Matrix
- Miro Priority Matrix – adapt as a Succession Readiness Prioritisation Tool
- Miro Action Plan Templates – adapt as a Succession Readiness First Actions Plan



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