



USAID
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Building Economic Sustainability through Tourism Project

FINAL
REPORT

2015-2020



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Cover photo Sabah displays a tray of pastries made at her home in Jerash by a group of visitors she hosted for an agritourism experience.

Credit : Nicolas Awad, USAID BEST

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ACRONYMS

AAUC	Ammon Applied University College
ASEZA	Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority
BEST	USAID Building Economic Sustainability through Tourism Project
DATA	Destination Academy with TripAdvisor
DMO	Destination Marketing Organization
EDP	Enterprise Development Program
IHG	InterContinental Hotel Group
JCB	Jordan Convention Bureau
JETT	Jordan Express Tourist Transportation
JIC	Jordan Investment Commission
JITOA	Jordan Inbound Tour Operators Association
JOHUD	Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development
JRA	Jordan Restaurants Association
JTA	Jordan Trail Association
JTB	Jordan Tourism Board
JTBNA	Jordan Tourism Board North America
KAA	King Abdullah II Award for Excellence
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MICE	Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Events
PAP	Petra Archaeological Park
PDTRA	Petra Development and Tourism Region Authority
RACA	Royal Academy of Culinary Arts
RSCN	Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature
SDC	As-Salt Development Corporation
SME	Small- and Medium-sized Enterprise
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
TCI	Jordan Tourism Competitiveness Index
TedQual	Tourism Education Quality
TSA	Tourism Satellite Accounts
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNWTO	United National World Tourism Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Building Economic Sustainability through Tourism Project

2015 to 2020

Assisted the development of Jordan's tourism sector in partnership with government, private sector and communities



4,748

tourism jobs created



\$116,218,829

leveraged investment in tourism

Facilitated loans for 47 businesses, which created tourism investments totaling \$25.5 million



17

new tourism products developed



52

laws, policies, regulations, and strategies introduced or updated



Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities performance ranking increased under the King Abdullah II Award for Excellence



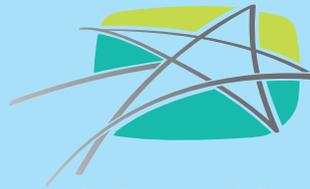
58

new trip circuits or routes developed



19

agritourism experiences established
creating income for 200 people from farming and rural communities



الطرق نحو المهنية

Pathways to Professionalism

45%

of Jordan's 4* and 5* hotels adopted

Pathways to Professionalism

More than 1,100 hotel employees trained



415

people working for 91 service providers

along the Jordan Trail



26

new or enhanced tourism experiences

62 jobs created

by developing As-Salt into a
Distinctive Destination

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Between the last quarter of 2015 and the first quarter of 2020, the USAID Building Economic Sustainability through Tourism Project (BEST) worked closely with government, communities, civil society, and the private sector to develop Jordan's tourism sector. BEST achieved this by increasing and diversifying products and services, increasing investment in the sector, raising service standards and quality of education, and boosting marketing efforts.

Through its various activities and grant support, BEST created 4,748 tourism jobs and leveraged private sector investments of more than JOD 116 million in tourism. By the end of the project, visitors to Jordan, tourism receipts, and the number of people employed directly in the sector increased.

BEST's combined interventions contributed to the development of a sound foundation in marketing, business quality and services, human capital capacity, and investment promotion within Jordan's tourism sector. Although it is difficult to determine what proportion of increase can be attributed to the actions guided by the strategy, it had a significant impact through the introduction of low-cost carriers and wide-reaching digital marketing campaigns that targeted key niche markets. The period between 2016 to 2019 saw a 12 percent increase in visitors to Jordan, a 41 percent increase in tourism receipts, and a 6 percent increase in people employed in the sector. Unfortunately, with the start of the coronavirus crisis at the start of 2020, Jordan's tourism sector came to a halt, as did that of the rest of the world. This has unraveled the five years of dedicated USAID BEST efforts to boost tourism's contribution to Jordan's economy. However, tourism is a resilient sector, and it will offer great potential to revive local economies once the crisis subsides.

Setting aside the global crisis at the start of 2020, the main achievements of USAID BEST per area of work, and the lessons learned, are as follows.

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

In recent years, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities has struggled to operate efficiently, ranking poorly in a 2014-2015 national assessment of public institutions in Jordan under the King Abdullah II Award for Excellence (KAA), the highest level of recognition of quality aiming at improving the quality of national services. Since 2016, BEST has been supporting the ministry to build its capacity for planning and operations and instill core values of a more efficient and effective ministry. As a result of BEST support, the ministry improved its overall score by 23 percent, moving up 46 places over 2014 to 2015 rankings, and the ministry's secretary general received the KAA for secretary generals of government institutions.

ATTRACTING TOURISM INVESTMENT AND INCREASING ACCESS TO FINANCE

BEST worked with the Jordan Investment Commission (JIC) to increase awareness of tourism investment incentives, which were previously unknown to investors across Jordan, through awareness campaigns and investment roadshows in governorates around Jordan. BEST helped promote the commission's tourism investment map and instilled the needed capacity within the commission to better encourage and facilitate investments in tourism. This helped increase investment in tourism, especially in governorates other than Amman, which resulted in improved tourism products and experiences and job creation. As a result of the campaigns and roadshows, 94 businesses with a total investment value of more than \$465 million accessed the tourism incentives. Seventy percent of these businesses are outside Amman.

BEST linked its investment promotion efforts with its work to increase access to finance for tourism small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). BEST established partnerships with six local banks, which created a range of tourism-specific lending products in response to the needs of small and medium tourism businesses around the country. The banks created these lending products to boost domestic private sector investment in tourism that would spur investment in governorates outside Amman, resulting in better tourism products and experiences and creating jobs. The participating banks promoted these loan products, along with available loan

BookAgri CEO Rudaina Haddad takes part in a pastry-making activity with guests at Mrs. Esraa Al Zu'bi's farm in As-Salt.



Photo Credit: Ahmad Qaisieh, USAID BEST

DEVELOPING ASSETS AND EXPERIENCES

guarantee programs, through investment roadshows and campaigns. BEST also provided technical assistance and training to tourism investors to help them access finance and prepare bankable applications. BEST trained bank and loan guarantee program credit officers to boost financial analysis skills and establish strong awareness of Jordan's tourism industry.

BEST's support for promoting tourism investment across the country, increasing access to tourism incentives, establishing sources of financing for tourism, and supporting investors, in coordination with its partners, has increased tourism investment, lending, and created jobs. Since partnering with BEST, banks gave out 47 loans to tourism businesses in Jordan, 50 percent of which are outside Amman, 16 are tourism start-ups, and eight are women-owned businesses. These tourism businesses represent investments of more than \$44 million in tourism in Jordan (\$18.95 million lending plus \$25.3 million equity), which have created more than 600 jobs.

BEST worked closely with the As-Salt Development Corporation (SDC), Greater As-Salt Municipality, and the Al Balqa Tourism Directorate to develop As-Salt as a distinctive destination. As a result of USAID BEST interventions, 33 tourism businesses and experiences were enhanced, nine new businesses were established, walking trails were improved, and seven new guides were certified. As a result of this, 107 jobs were created, 240 people were trained in various areas to enhance their capacity, and the community's awareness of tourism's benefits was raised. Moreover, SDC adopted the Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) model developed with BEST support and is operating as As-Salt's DMO. SDC hosted tour operators on familiarization trips in As-Salt to get the city on their itineraries and attract more visitors. SDC developed a new brand for As-Salt and applied it to print and marketing material.

Nineteen unique agritourism experiences were developed in villages in Al Balqa, Jarash, and Ajloun under the brand BookAgri. These experiences employ 200 local community members in part-time or full-time work, the majority of whom are women. BookAgri beneficiaries have reported revenue increases between 25 percent and 50 percent through agritourism.



Photo Credit: Ahmad Gattieh, USAID BEST

Hikers make their way along the Jordan Trail.

BEST supported the Jordan Trail Association (JTA) in its set-up phase and built its capacity over the years to develop, oversee, and promote the trail and attract visitors to experience the unique and engaging adventures it can offer. This support enabled the Jordan Trail to develop and garner extensive international exposure for Jordan as a top adventure destination, support communities along the trail, and operate to international standards. The JTA engages 91 service providers and created 415 jobs within the 52 villages and towns along the 650-kilometer route from Um Qais to Aqaba. In 2018, the JTA received the World Tourism Award for its work as a platform for socioeconomic development and supporting local communities along the Jordan Trail. In November 2018, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) selected the JTA as the number one tourist enterprise in the Middle East.

BEST supported Jordan Express Tourist Transportation (JETT) to introduce guaranteed tours to serve visitors to Jordan through regular and affordable transportation. Transportation links between main and secondary sites were improved with the introduction of new Jordan

Express Tourist Transportation bus routes connecting Amman to different sites around Jordan, including Jarash, Ajloun and Madaba. JETT also established a “golden triangle” route that connects Aqaba, Wadi Rum and Petra. A daily Amman City Tour with commentary in eight languages is now operational. BEST also helped strengthen JETT’s marketing efforts, including its offline and online presences, and introduced an online booking engine. These routes created much-needed transport links between key tourism sites in Jordan, and between 2018 and 2019, total bookings of JETT routes grew by 32 percent.

BEST worked with the Petra Development and Tourism Region Authority (PDTRA) on developing the nomination file for recognition of Petra Archeological Park (PAP) as one of the [Global Top 100 Sustainable Destinations](#) by the Green Destinations Foundation. As a result, in March 2019, the Green Destinations Foundation recognized PAP as second-place winner of the accolades for its efforts to prevent tourism impact on nature and landscape, culture and tradition, environment and climate, and on host communities.



SUCCESS STORY



EDUCATION AND TRAINING

In partnership with industry, BEST designed the Pathways to Professionalism program to address industry demand for professionally skilled employees. Designed for four-star and five-star hotels, it was piloted through one hotel group at three hotels in 2016, and 56 staff members graduated from the pilot program. It was deemed a success by the hotels and staff, improving skills, offering continued professional development opportunities, and improving staff retention. Over the following years, BEST rolled out the program around Jordan, and hotels in Aqaba, Petra, the Dead Sea, and Amman adopted it. It started with two professions and one training level and is now offered to six hotel professions and four training levels, from those with no qualifications who want to enter hospitality sector to management-level training. As of March 2020, 32 hotels in Jordan have adopted the program, and more than 1,100 hotel staff have been certified. This accounts for almost 9 percent of all hotel employees in Jordan and 45 percent of all four-star and five-star hotels in the country. Pathways to Professionalism is improving service standards throughout the kingdom and creating professional development and job opportunities for Jordanians working in the sector. It has also improved employee retention within participating hotels. In 2019, the program was privatized, and the Jordan Hotels Association took over management of Pathways to Professionalism, thus ensuring long-term sustainability and further expansion. Going forward, in addition to expanding to all four- and five-star hotels in Jordan, the program has the potential to be adapted for restaurants, fast-food operations, commercial bakeries, tour operation companies, and transport companies.

BEST's work to reform tourism and hospitality programs offered by educational institutions in Jordan has enabled two universities and one college to receive international certification through UNWTO's Themis Foundation. This activity sought to address the discrepancies between industry needs and the skills and knowledge that graduates of hospitality programs are equipped with. BEST supported 20

A Pathways to Professionalism trainee practices his customer service skills in a work-based training exercise.



Photo Credit: USAID BEST

percent of the 22 universities in Jordan, and one college, that offer hospitality programs to work toward attaining Tourism Education Quality (TedQual) certification. Two of the five universities and the college received TedQual certification, and the other two universities were still working toward certification by BEST's close. The process of continuous improvement has had an impact on other programs as the result of a better learning environment and teaching skills and certified modules that overlap with other programs. By BEST's close, there were 434 graduates from the certified program who benefitted from improved learning and teaching methodologies. Within the next four years, it is estimated that more than 1,400 students will graduate from the TedQual-certified programs.

DESTINATION EXCELLENCE

BEST helped enhance industry quality standards, certification, and accreditation. All of Jordan's hotels have been classified under the new classification system, and 100 percent of restaurants in Aqaba were "tourist approved" under the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA). A new online classification system was launched following BEST support in its development. The system enables more efficient and accurate assessments and increases efficiency in dealing with hotel owners and investors. BEST supported the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities to establish a new specialized Quality Assurance and Classification Directorate to serve as the implementer of quality assurance standards and to perform monitoring and evaluation of hotel and restaurant classifications across the kingdom.

BEST supported the development of strategies to market Jordan to international visitors.



MARKETING JORDAN

BEST assisted the Jordan Tourism Board (JTB) to develop its 2017 to 2019 and 2020 to 2023 marketing strategies, which guide its work to market the kingdom internationally. The strategies target the highest potential markets for Jordan in a cost-effective way and achieve the best possible return on investment by using cutting-edge marketing techniques. BEST also helped JTB to implement its 2017 to 2019 strategy, which included a large digital component and identified meetings, incentives, conferences, and events (MICE); adventure; and faith tourism as key niches for Jordan. BEST helped JTB with an organizational restructure to more effectively implement the strategies, including setting up a digital marketing unit. The JTB successfully achieved the objectives of its 2017 to 2019 strategy and reached wider audiences and achieved impressive targets and results. The number of airlines flying to Jordan increased, as did frequency of flights, and low-cost carriers began routes to Jordan. Visitor numbers and tourism revenues grew significantly.

BEST supported the establishment of the Jordan Convention Bureau (JCB) in 2017 to attract, facilitate, and support international MICE organizers' planning of successful events in Jordan. The bureau made huge strides and quickly became a well-established convention bureau, with the ability to bid for and win regional and international conferences — a feat that similar bureaus require years to accomplish. JCB achieved this because of the intensive work done through BEST to transfer specialized knowledge to JCB and ensure international best practices are implemented. The commitment and support of JTB management, along with the dedication of the JCB team, helped realize these goals. Compared with 2017 numbers, Jordan saw more than a 100 percent increase in the number of international conferences held in 2018, according to the International Congress & Convention Association 2018 reports and ranking. Only five years ago, Jordan was among the weakest destinations in the number of conferences held per year. In 2018, Jordan hosted 22 conferences — a huge leap in the JCB's first business year — and ranked second in the Middle East after the United Arab Emirates for hosting international association meetings. This was the result of JCB's dedicated effort in seeking out and bidding for international events.



IMPLEMENTATION PROBLEMS, CORRECTIVE ACTIONS, AND DELAY COSTS

USAID commissioned a midterm performance evaluation of BEST in late 2017, and BEST received this report in February 2018. The evaluation found BEST interventions to be effective in general and highlighted that the project's senior staff and high-caliber technical expertise used by BEST was cited as a core strength by many of the key project counterparts, including the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, the JTB, and the Jordan Inbound Tour Operators Association (JITOA). The evaluation also contained several recommendations for BEST to address, including the structure of the contract, adjustments to the technical approach, bolstering of project monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems, streamlining the approach to using grant funds, and focusing on gender.

BEST responded to the evaluation and addressed many of the main challenges that could prevent the project from implementing the recommendations, providing more context derived from first-hand experience. BEST also developed an action plan to address those areas that required additional focus; this plan's central feature was a results matrix tool to measure project progress against outcomes and results. BEST and USAID used this tool to chart progress and ensure that all contract deliverables were achieved. Some of the midterm performance evaluation recommendations, specifically those related to the type of contract and the large number of contract indicators, were factors that were outside BEST's

control barring a contract modification. To strengthen its M&E approach, BEST reviewed the project's activity M&E plan in an attempt to reduce and streamline the project indicators, of which there were more than 40. Unfortunately, all of these indicators were required under the term of the contract, and BEST was not able to reduce the number.

However, BEST revised and designed a more robust M&E system, engaging each of the technical teams to ensure that the project was capturing the relevant reporting data. BEST also audited project achievements against the objectives and indicators to ensure that all project achievements were accurate and that the results going forward were captured and reported in a timely manner. The project also assessed and strengthened its gender component to make it more robust. BEST then implemented several crosscutting gender activities that contributed to both project objectives and wider USAID goals. BEST reviewed its grants program and implementation process and made adjustments to improve the effectiveness of the grant administration process, including streamlining the financial review and reporting procedures, providing additional training to grantees to strengthen their grants management capacity, and ensuring that grant activities were more firmly tied to project outcomes and results and that these results were included in the project's M&E reporting.

On a macro level, Jordan's stagnant economy has challenged BEST's efforts to increase lending to tourism businesses, as has banks' perception of tourism as a high-risk sector. BEST identified the main obstacles faced by tourism SMEs in accessing finance, which included high interest rates, lack of collateral, short grace and repayment periods, and weak capacity to develop feasibility studies and financial projections. BEST also surveyed banks and found that they shied away from funding tourism SMEs due to a perception of high risk linked to the regional political and economic situations and from the weak financial information provided by SMEs. To rectify this, BEST partnered with six banks to offer tourism-specific loan products that address the identified obstacles, including Sharia-compliant ones, and promote them to SMEs. BEST also provided training to strengthen the capacity of SMEs to prepare bankable applications and access lending. BEST trained relevant staff of partner banks to improve their perceptions of the tourism sector in terms of its value and outlook. This has increased willingness among some banks to lend to tourism businesses and organizations.

In November 2018, the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities resigned following an incident involving schoolchildren on a trip near the Dead Sea. The resignation affected project work by delaying input and approvals for several activities, including the National Tourism Strategy, the Restaurant Competitiveness Study Report, new Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities Tourism Committee standard operating procedures (SOPs), Ajloun Trail, and closing out Madaba concession sites.

Best presented the Jordan Tourism Strategy 2019-2022 to the National Tourism Council in June 2019, after extensive efforts and updates since BEST first began working on it in September 2016. Developing the strategy was a lengthy process with many challenges, including securing the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities' commitment to the strategy, the need for extensive consultations to inform the strategy, and the change in tourism ministers. There were also changes in council membership and differing views about the strategic direction for the sector. Towards the end of 2019, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities requested further changes to the strategy, which BEST addressed. By the project's end, BEST submitted the Jordan Tourism Strategy 2020-2025 to the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities for its approval and action. However, because of these extensive delays, planned BEST support for strategy implementation was not possible.

BEST faced challenges in the execution of grants in the forms of operational capacity, cost share, strategic awareness, and timeline delays. For example, the overall experience of working in As-Salt revealed a lack of knowledge in planning and operating tourism experiences among some of the beneficiaries with whom BEST worked. Beneficiaries often focused on procuring tangible items, like equipment, when what they needed more was capacity building and knowledge in operations, marketing, and other areas to create sustainable businesses and experiences. These issues were addressed through additional training in relevant areas; however, ensuring that the knowledge and skills transferred are used and maintained remained a challenge, which SDC strives to monitor and enforce. Several beneficiaries had limited cash flow, and it was challenging to get financial commitments from them to ensure the needed project cost-share.

BEST and SDC addressed this by encouraging in-kind contributions by business owners and their family members if possible, to reduce labor costs. The successful opening of the first café in Hammam Street caused a ripple effect of interest in operating the same type of business in the same areas. To address this, BEST engaged experts to determine the market gaps and help entrepreneurs to customize their business and create unique products and services; beneficiaries were receptive to the support.

An example of a delay in grant work is with the grant to the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD) to introduce Level I Pathways training in Aqaba. This grant involved multiple supporting partners, and there was a delay from ASEZA in providing the promised funding for student travel expenses, and in securing "at work insurance". After three months, neither were funded, and this necessitated obtaining additional funding through industry partners. This was out of JOHUD and BEST's control.

A staircase in the center of the city of As-Salt.



LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES

The tourism access to finance and investment incentives roadshows implemented by BEST in 2017 and 2018 brought together all public and private sector partners to engage directly with investors. This proved to be a highly successful approach and gave credibility to the work, resulting in direct action and impact on investment. This approach of engaging with investors and tourism stakeholders by connecting them directly with local authorities, JTB, the private sector, banks, and others involved directly in the work, was new and has been successful. The best practice learned is to directly involve private, public, and community stakeholders in key activities to achieve joint goals more effectively.

BEST supported the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities to implement a strong M&E system by engaging staff in developing the system, enabling them to identify indicators, set targets, collect information, and take the lead on this work. This ensured that all staff fully understood the system and has been more effective than previous approaches, in which experts collected information in coordination with staff. The best practice learned here is that allowing partners to implement work while providing needed guidance works better in terms of sustainability and knowledge transfer.

Improving tourism education quality to produce a qualified and competitive workforce that can offer standards that meet visitor expectations requires adopting international best practices. BEST supported universities in Jordan to obtain UNWTO TedQual International Certification for their tourism and hospitality programs. This was achieved through curriculum reform that drew on international best practice, introducing career planning modules, improving student and teacher research capacity, and facilitating mid-course and post-graduate internships to

align with industry needs and keep up to date with developments. The key lesson learned is that education reform must begin with higher authorities — in this case, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education Accreditation Commission. Rules and regulations must be aligned, and reform must include all relevant departments within educational institutions (e.g., registration, exam administration, library facilities, information technology capacity, student community groups/unions).

When working with governmental and non-governmental counterparts in producing detailed statistics or completing long-term projects, it is necessary to account for delays and slow movement by partners during work timelines. Although the work can still be completed, doing so within the framework of existing deliverables is a matter of patience, persistence, and planning. The best practice learned is that, for smoother progress, deadlines must be agreed upon at the highest level, and if commitment to the agreed timeframes falls short, project support should be reconsidered or reallocated as needed.

**JORDAN'S TOURISM
BUSINESS ENABLING
ENVIRONMENT TO SUPPORT
COMPETITIVENESS
IMPROVED**



A view of the Treasury in Petra.

ENHANCED GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND ADMINISTRATION FOR GREATER COMPETITIVENESS

The tourism business environment is an important factor in supporting and driving tourism experiences, site management and development, investment, and overall sector competitiveness. BEST worked to enhance Jordan's business enabling environment to catalyze tourism development and growth. Policy and planning form the foundation upon which sectors and economies can develop and flourish. BEST worked with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and tourism stakeholders at the project's onset to identify where support for policy, planning and regulatory reform was most needed. BEST, the ministry, and stakeholders selected several areas, including tour guiding, site management, restaurant classification, tourism master planning and investment in Ajloun, tourism human resource planning, tourism marketing, and tourism sector development at large.

Throughout the life of the project, BEST helped the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities develop 52 new policies, procedural reforms, plans and strategies that improved regulation, planning, and operation and development of Jordan's tourism sector.

SUCCESS STORY

In 2016, BEST drafted SOPs for the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities' industry-based tourism committee that cover all tourism sub-sectors related to approvals for opening, closure, licensing, debarment, and fines of tourism businesses and professions. The Tourism Committee adopted the SOPs in mid-2019, which ensure that the committee follows systematic and transparent procedures for decisions regarding regulations. Changes were made to the Tour Guides Bylaw and Tour Guides Association Bylaw, which will improve the welfare and quality of professional tour guides in Jordan through better regulation of the profession, added specializations that respond to new tourism trends, improved licensing and renewal processes, and more. The Jordan Tourism Strategy 2020-2025 was developed to guide the sector's growth over the coming five years, along with an improved site management bylaw, better tourism human resource planning, and focused marketing strategies. These will help to facilitate tourism development and increase Jordan's competitiveness as a destination. Other legislation, strategies, plans and partnerships are listed in Exhibit I.

Exhibit I: Tourism Legislation, Strategies, Plans, and Partnerships Supported by USAID BEST

Legislation	Strategies and plans	Partnerships
Bylaw for MoTA	Jordan Tourism Strategy 2020-2025	Joint Action Plans between BEST and 7 banks and 1 microfund
Legal instructions pertaining to the site management bylaw	Operations Plans for MoTA Tourism Labor Directorate and Tourism Research & Planning Directorate	
Facilitated establishment of NTS unit at MoTA as part of ministry organizational restructure	Jordan Hotels Association Long Term Strategy and Work Plan	Memorandums of Understanding signed between Pathways Advisory Committee and 8 hotels
Joint Inspection Committee Standards Operating Procedures	Human Capital and Training Assessment Plan 2019	
Restaurant Classification Instructions	Distinctive Destination Program	
Regulation of Guesthouses	Jordan Convention Bureau's MICE Activation Plan	
Regulation of Jordan Hotels Association	Jordan Tourism Board's 2017-2019 Marketing Strategy and Digital Marketing Strategy	
Jordan Tour Guide Association bylaw	Jordan Tourism Board's Biblical Faith Strategy, Human Resources Plan, Cooperative Marketing Strategy, Tourism Trade Strategy	
Tour guide bylaw	Ajloun Tourism Masterplan and Investment Project	
ASEZA Tourist Restaurant Classification Regulation	Visit As-Salt's Destination Marketing Organization Strategy and Marketing Strategy	
Legal opinion for the Jordan Museum	Jordan Trail Association Business Plan and Fundraising Strategy	
Instructions for registration and licensing of motorcycles for 2017	Marketing or digital marketing strategies for Sindbad Group, JETT, Mountain Breeze Resort, Jordan Trail Marketing	
Jordan Trail Association Governance Model and Action Plan	Operations and Sustainability Plan	

PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OPTIMIZE RESOURCES AND POLICES



INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND ANTIQUITIES STRENGTHENED

During its five years of operation, BEST provided extensive support to the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities to attain the KAA and improve its performance according to the award model. The award is granted through the King Abdullah II Center for Excellence and is the national reference for quality and excellence among public, private, and business associations; educational service providers; and non-governmental institutions (see box, right). The award focuses on several key areas, including sustainability, customer orientation, and creativity and innovation. BEST built ministry capacity for planning and operations and instilled core values across the organization for longer-term sustainability of a more efficient and effective Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities.

THE KING ABDULLAH II CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE

The King Abdullah II Center for Excellence aims to spread a culture of excellence in Jordan and the region through excellence models/frameworks that are based on international best practices. The center runs the KAA to improve competitiveness within all sectors in Jordan.

BEST helped the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities to identify its weaknesses based on the KAA model and act to address them. Between 2016 and 2018, BEST provided technical support and training to ministry staff, which led to:

- A strategic plan for 2018 to 2020 that focused the ministry's resources and time to efficiently achieve national tourism objectives
- A customized M&E system to ensure effective implementation of executive and operational plans
- SOPs developed for key services
- Instilling an institutional culture of information exchange for better internal and external communications
- A feedback system for employees and customers for improved service
- Best practices for organizational structure, social responsibility, and career welfare
- Strengthened human resource management, which improved employee training and retention

A view of one of Amman's many neighborhood hills.



Photo Credit: Ahmad Qasbiel, USAID/BEST

By 2018, following intensive support from BEST, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities made significant improvements in institutional performance, capacity and planning, internal knowledge sharing, transparency, and overall efficiency. In the ninth cycle of the KAA in September 2018, the ministry rose from being one of the bottom five performers among public entities in Jordan to a ranking in the middle (57 out of 104) and improved its overall score by 23 percent, achieving just below the 25 percent peak improvement recorded by government ministries in this award cycle.

Ministry staff were asked to be part of the KAA assessment process for the first time, which gave them a direct understanding of the requirements for excellence and best practices needed to be a leader in government performance and transparency. Also in 2018, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities' secretary general received the KAA for secretary generals of government institutions for his leadership in implementing improvements at the ministry, which were introduced through BEST support. This was a significant achievement for the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, because it was the first time the government publicly acknowledged the ministry as moving toward excellence through its leadership.

Over its five years of operation, BEST delivered an intensive tailored training program to ministry staff in Amman and all governorates around Jordan and to Department of Antiquities staff to enhance their capacity to ensure sustainability and self-reliance. The program covered key areas of weaknesses identified under the KAA. In total, 317 ministry and Department of Antiquities staff received training, and BEST also provided technical assistance and on-the-job support. BEST contracted the King Abdullah Center for Excellence Training Department to deliver most of the training to ensure that the content was in line with public sector excellence requirements.

In September 2019, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities established an Institutional Development Unit based on a government decision and appointed a director to oversee it in response to a recommendation from the Prime Ministry. The unit is responsible for enhancing institutional performance of the ministry and services it provides by developing procedures and strategies needed to achieve the ministry's vision, M&E progress, and internal processes improvement. With the new unit in place, BEST institutionalized its support to the ministry by transferring knowledge and handing over its role in building ministry capacity to the unit. This ensures sustainability and self-reliance in maintaining and building on the improved performance achieved through BEST's support.

STRONGER INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS TO ACHIEVE TOURISM GROWTH

BETTER PUBLIC INSTITUTIONAL ADMINISTRATION OF ENTERPRISE INSPECTION AND QUALITY CONTROL

Joint Procedural Manual for Awareness, Guidance and Control of Tourism Facilities.



The Cabinet of Ministers approved the Joint Inspection and Quality Control Committee, with representation from 11 government organizations, for the inspection and licensing of tourism establishments. BEST supported the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities to draft Terms of Reference, guidelines, and rules for the operation of this committee to coordinate work among its members. BEST standardized and unified the audit process and procedures, so that instead of 11 different organizations making separate audit visits to each business, the assessment is now unified into one visit. The visit covers areas including classification standards by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, food standards by the Jordan Food and Drug Administration, municipal authority assessments, and safety standards by the Civil Defence. BEST also helped develop SOPs for the Joint Committee and checklists to assist hotel establishments and touristic restaurants to prepare for mandatory cleanliness inspections.

ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM AND PROCEDURAL IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES SUPPORTED

BEST developed the Tourism Enterprises Start-up and Licensing Guidebook for the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, which was published in 2017. It provides start-up tourism enterprises with information on the process and procedures for

licensing and relicensing of existing enterprises, thereby facilitating an improved and transparent business enabling environment. BEST updated the guide early 2019 and distributed it to businesses within the sector.

The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities' Tourism Committee is responsible for licensing and registration of tourism businesses and for imposing penalties for infringement of procedures. BEST supported the committee to structure their system for licensing, registration, and penalties to standardize decision-making and procedures, because implementation and decision-making were previously inconsistent. This has made the process more efficient.

TOURISM WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN GUIDES BEST PRACTICE HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

BEST produced a tourism labour and training needs assessment baseline in 2016 based on data from Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and tourism trade associations. BEST facilitated the establishment of the Tourism and Hospitality Human Capital Development Committee in April 2018. The purpose of the committee is to have human resource managers, directors, and learning and development managers regularly meet with public sector representatives, including educational institutions, to discuss industry-related issues such as recruitment, women's participation and training, and development needs. BEST then assessed the supply and demand for human capital within the tourism sector and produced the Human Capital and Training Needs Plan 2020 – 2023. The plan identifies human capital and training needs across all sectors of the industry and proposes strategic and operational recommendations to the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Higher Education to address the dearth of professional and qualified human capital in the sector that is needed to operate tourism businesses to a satisfactory standard.



PUBLIC-PRIVATE COLLABORATION ON REFORM AND INVESTMENT

FORMULATE PUBLIC-PRIVATE VISION FOR TOURISM GROWTH VIA NATIONAL TOURISM STRATEGY

BEST supported Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and the tourism public and private sectors to identify and respond to a common vision to attract foreign investment and catalyze domestic investment in the form of a five-year national tourism strategy. Although the previous strategy (2011 to 2015) had wide support, private sector stakeholders frequently complained of a lack of implementation and follow-up.

In 2016, BEST initiated a collaboration between the tourism public and private sectors to develop Jordan's third National Tourism Strategy to help guide the development of tourism in Jordan and facilitate its growth. The main goal is to pin Jordan on the map as an attractive destination that offers diverse and unique year-round experiences for visitors while enriching the lives of Jordanians by helping to boost national and local economies. The strategy defined the path toward growing the tourism economy, enhancing visitors' experiences, and striving for competitiveness.

BEST supported the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities to hold regional consultation workshops with governorates and tourism directorates to obtain sector input on the strategy. Participants included representatives from chambers of commerce, mayors of municipalities, local NGOs, community leaders, and private sector investors. BEST then began drafting the National Tourism Strategy for 2017 to 2020, but because of the delays that resulted in changes to the strategy's structure and because of the Ministry

of Tourism and Antiquities' requests for regional consultations, BEST changed the strategy period to encompass 2018 to 2021 and then changed it again to encompass 2019 to 2022.

BEST submitted the final document to the ministry in February 2019. BEST invested extensive time and resources to develop the National Tourism Strategy and in accommodating requests for changes and redrafts to the document and structure. Despite this, the ministry was not able to secure approval and adoption of the strategy. Although the ministry was closely involved from the start, its lack of political commitment to follow through was the main challenge in officially adopting the draft. The change in the minister of tourism in January 2019 played a role in this. There was also a gap in decision-making within the ministry, in terms of the link between the minister and secretary general. The ministry used the submitted strategy as an internal document, but it was never made official.

In October 2019, the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities requested that the draft strategy be updated to cover the period 2020 to 2025 and integrate outcomes from a Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities-led meeting with key sector stakeholders, including the National Tourism Council. BEST updated the strategy accordingly and submitted it to the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities as the Jordan Tourism Strategy 2020-2025.



A restaurant in Aqaba.

Photo Credit: Jordan Restaurant Association

STRONGER TOURISM SECTOR ASSOCIATIONS AND CHAMBERS

SUPPORT TO CLASSIFIED RESTAURANT SECTOR VIA THE JORDAN RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION

BEST awarded a grant to the Jordan Restaurants Association (JRA) to support capacity building of association members, enhance standards of excellence at member restaurants, and improve member services through better communication. In addition, the association was to establish an online career center, enhance guests' dining experience through a restaurant classification system, and improve restaurant competitiveness through a "non-competitiveness study." The goal of these activities is to improve sector capacity to deliver service excellence, improve guest experiences, and create jobs. The JRA enhanced member capacity through a series of safe food handling and hygiene courses for its members, along with first aid courses; customer service courses; and fire, safety, and security courses — a total of 290 restaurant employees in Amman.

In 2017, the JRA amended its bylaws, and grant activities were put on hold until its new board was elected. The new bylaws were published in the Jordan Official Gazette in March 2018, and a new association board was elected in April 2018. Following this, the JRA reactivated its grant activities. With BEST's support, the association prepared restaurant classification standards. However, these were not adopted because the association could not agree with Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and the industry on fees, penalties, and the industry's structure. BEST supported the upgrade of the JRA's website and content, which has improved its capacity to share industry news and information with its members.

In 2019, BEST supported the association to identify the optimum staffing required to deliver service excellence in the restaurant sector around the kingdom. The JRA visited more than 80 restaurants in Petra, Jerash, Ajloun, Aqaba, Irbid, Dead Sea, Fuhais, and Amman. The assessment resulted in the creation of 105 jobs in Aqaba, in addition to an anticipated 95 jobs in Amman and other governorates as restaurants employed more staff to meet service excellence requirements. The JRA also surveyed 14 new restaurants in Aqaba that opened in 2019 in October 2019, resulting in the creation of 213 new jobs.

In 2019, the JRA developed a report on a competitiveness study it conducted with BEST support to identify factors influencing the competitiveness of restaurants in Jordan. The report examined the impact of seasonality on restaurant costs and demand and evaluated the regulatory environment, impact of utility costs, impact of the taxation environment, and government support programs. It also established international comparisons for Jordan against regional competitors in terms of cost and profitability. The JRA presented the competitiveness study to the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and the Tourism Committee (private and public sector representatives under the chairmanship of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities) for approval and action. The ministry and committee identified contentious recommendations within the report relating to tax reduction, duty exemptions, utility costs, and nightclubs. During this period, the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities resigned, and further action was placed on hold until the appointment of a successor. By that time, the JRA decided to pursue this activity independently of BEST, and BEST was no longer involved going forward.



TOURISM INVESTMENT BOOSTED THROUGH THE PROMOTION OF INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

INCREASED DOMESTIC INVESTMENT IN TOURISM PRODUCTS AND EXPERIENCES

In 2016, the government announced a new set of tourism investment incentives that focus on governorates outside Amman and encourage investments in hotels, restaurants, amusement and recreational parks, and conference centers. Prior to this, incentives granted to the tourism sector under the Investment Law were not comprehensive enough to encourage investment in tourism and omitted key enterprises, such as restaurants. Since then, BEST worked intensively with the JIC to boost investment in tourism around the country. In 2017, BEST conducted a baseline survey to determine awareness of tourism incentives across Jordan; it revealed that more than 70 percent of tourism businesses in Jordan were unaware of the government's tourism investment incentives.

In 2017 and 2018, BEST and the JIC implemented a series of roadshows to spread awareness of the tourism incentives offered by the commission, promote the commission's tourism investment map, and create awareness of financing available to tourism businesses through BEST partner banks and loan guarantee programs offered by other stakeholders. BEST also instilled the needed capacity within the commission to better encourage and facilitate investments in tourism. The ultimate objective of this work was to boost domestic private sector investment in tourism, particularly in governorates outside Amman, and create jobs through tourism products and experiences. The

roadshow covered 11 governorates, including Aqaba and Petra, in partnership with ASEZA and PDTRA, respectively. More than 1,100 potential investors attended the roadshows, and 81 expressions of interest were submitted during the sessions. BEST also offered technical assistance and support to help investors access finance. Overall, the campaign roadshows were effective in reaching new and existing investors across Jordan and increasing the awareness of the government's tourism investment opportunities, investment incentives, and the available financing options.

As a follow-up to the baseline survey, BEST re-assessed tourism businesses' awareness of the government's tourism investment incentives in April 2018 and March 2019, revealing that the proportion of businesses who were unaware of the incentives had dropped to 50 percent. A larger proportion of those surveyed also stated that they found it easy to access the incentives than did those in 2017.

Following the roadshows, BEST adopted a targeted approach to support tourism start-ups within specific geographic areas and business clusters. BEST worked with educational and financial institutions and government bodies to establish start-up financing options and bring together the elements needed to encourage and facilitate start-ups. BEST directed these efforts



SUCCESS STORY

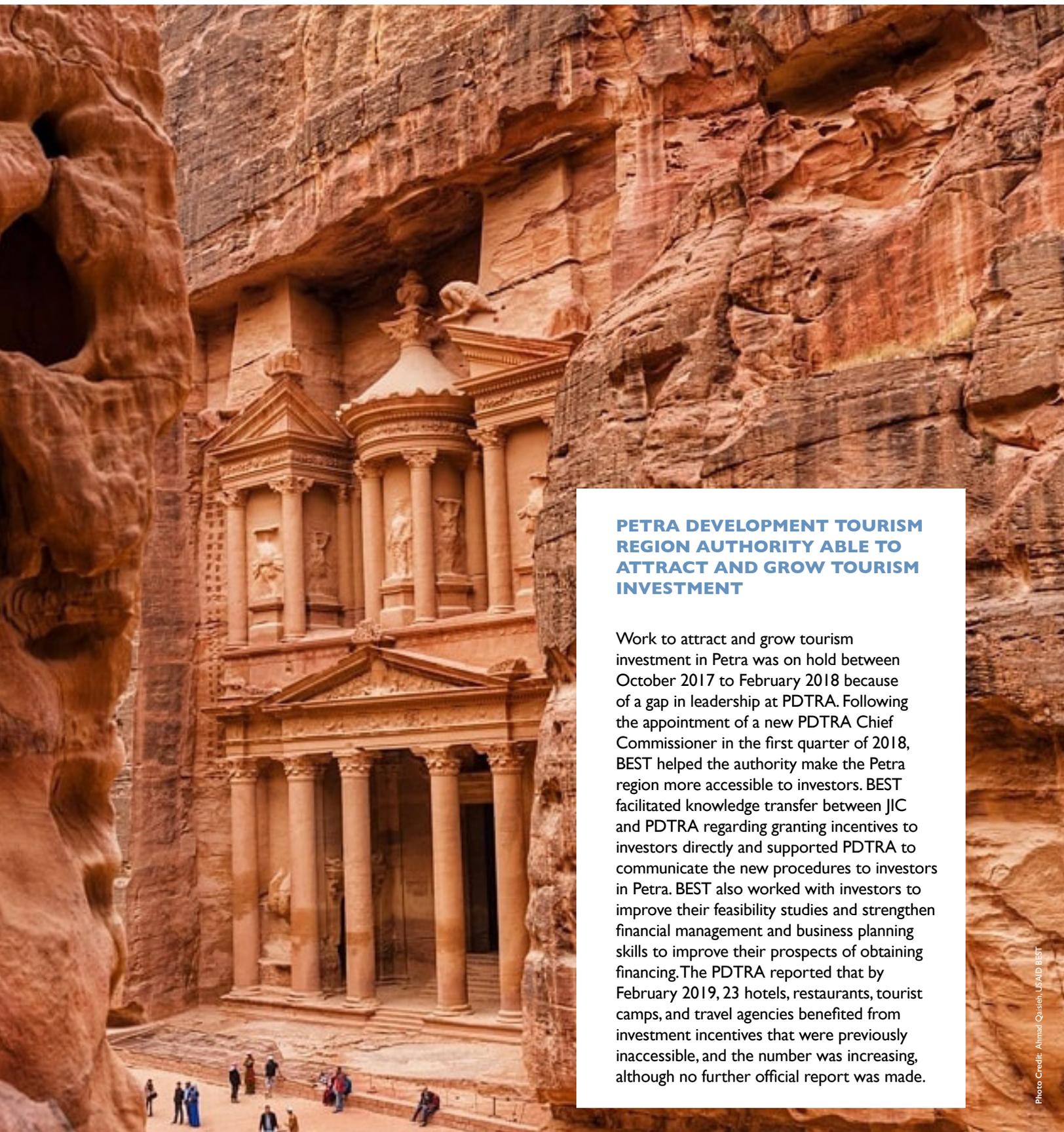
at university students and recent graduates of tourism and hospitality programs to inspire them to start their own tourism ventures and encourage self-directed career development, in addition to entrepreneurs and tourism investors in As-Salt and Wadi Rum. BEST selected As-Salt to complement efforts there to transform it as a distinctive destination, whereas the project targeted Wadi Rum as a result of new investment incentives announced by the government in 2019 for businesses operating in that area.

In 2017, BEST supported the JIC to develop the Terms of Reference for a Tourism Master Plan and Investment Projects for the Ajloun Development Corridor to guide tourism development in Ajloun. The government approved these terms, and BEST supported tendering and evaluation for the master plan. In 2017, the government approved a \$1 million budget for tendering and implementation of the Ajloun Tourism Master Plan.

Overall, BEST's support for promoting tourism investment across the country benefitted 94 tourism businesses, 70 percent of which are outside Amman. New and existing tourism businesses worth more than \$465 million benefited from incentives, leading to the creation of more than 1,700 jobs.



More than one million people visited Petra in 2019, setting an unprecedented record for the ancient city, according to figures from the Petra Development and Tourism Region Authority.



PETRA DEVELOPMENT TOURISM REGION AUTHORITY ABLE TO ATTRACT AND GROW TOURISM INVESTMENT

Work to attract and grow tourism investment in Petra was on hold between October 2017 to February 2018 because of a gap in leadership at PDTRA. Following the appointment of a new PDTRA Chief Commissioner in the first quarter of 2018, BEST helped the authority make the Petra region more accessible to investors. BEST facilitated knowledge transfer between JIC and PDTRA regarding granting incentives to investors directly and supported PDTRA to communicate the new procedures to investors in Petra. BEST also worked with investors to improve their feasibility studies and strengthen financial management and business planning skills to improve their prospects of obtaining financing. The PDTRA reported that by February 2019, 23 hotels, restaurants, tourist camps, and travel agencies benefited from investment incentives that were previously inaccessible, and the number was increasing, although no further official report was made.

TOURISM ASSETS DEVELOPED

A view of As-Salt.



Photo Credit: Aljazeera, USAID BEST

TOURISM RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS CAPABILITY ESTABLISHED

At the start of the project, BEST set out to help the sector establish a tourism research center to provide cutting-edge research reports and data analytics on Jordan's tourism sector performance to support public and private sector decision-making regarding investment, marketing, and operations. BEST consulted with public and private tourism entities to identify what tourism and hospitality data reporting and analysis methods were in place. As a result, BEST determined that there was a need for a dedicated tourism research center in Jordan. BEST then dedicated a budget to support this initiative and assessed interest among private organizations in establishing and operating a tourism research center.

Unfortunately, although the need for tourism research was acknowledged, the private sector had no interest in operating a center, because the funds allocated were insufficient, and the market for the purchase of tourism research on Jordan did not present a viable business opportunity. BEST re-evaluated the options and turned to the public sector; it was decided that the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities would establish a Research and Planning Directorate within its organization, and this could potentially encompass a tourism research center in the future. In July 2019, a new Research and Planning Directorate was approved to operate within the overall organizational structure of Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities. BEST identified the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities' research and analysis needs in terms of human capital, training, software and hardware, and SOPs. Following directorate's set-up, its operation is pending the appointment of a director and department heads, which was delayed because of ministry restructuring that was not completed by project-end.



TOURISM SECTOR DATA AVAILABLE TO INFORM PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

To address a lack of regular publication of useful tourism industry statistics for the business community and policymakers, BEST helped establish and publish tourism baseline figures to enable more accurate measurements of tourism development and to help inform decision-making pertaining to investment, marketing, operations, and human resource planning. Data was drawn from the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, Department of Statistics, JTB, Ministry of Labor, Jordan Central Bank, UNWTO, World Economic Forum, World Travel & Tourism Council and trade associations, the Future Brand Report, IPK International Report, and Trip Advisor – Global Customer Survey. BEST developed a data reference in 2014 and 2015, providing key tourism statistics, and produced it annually through to the end of the project. BEST used this as a reference for project indicators.

GOVERNMENT OF JORDAN USES TOURISM RESEARCH DATA IN DECISION-MAKING

In 2016, BEST supported the Department of Statistics and the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities to implement the International Tourism Visitors Survey. With guidance from BEST, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities established a stakeholder steering committee to guide the execution of the 2016-2017 International Tourism Visitors Survey. BEST helped develop the survey methodology and implementation plan. Between October 2016 and September 2017, 196,000 visitors were surveyed. The Department of Statistics and the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities then published the International Tourism Visitor Survey report in September 2018, with BEST support.



The Tourism Satellite Account for Jordan report was produced through a collaboration between MoTA, DoS, the Central Bank of Jordan and USAID BEST.

BEST also helped compile and publish the Tourism Satellite Accounts (TSA) in 2018. The TSA is a tool to accurately measure the contribution of tourism to the national economy, or Jordan's GDP, and it was produced through a collaboration between the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, the Department of Statistics, and the Central Bank of Jordan, with USAID BEST support. The TSA supports better policy- and decision-making, designing marketing strategies, stronger inter-institutional relations, and the ability to evaluate effectiveness of management decisions; it provides a clear measure of tourism in relation to the national economy. The completion of the International Tourism Visitor Survey report was an essential step in preparing the TSA, which was published alongside the International Tourism Visitor Survey results.

TOURISM COMPETITIVENESS INDEX DEVELOPED

BEST supported developing an index for Jordan to help track the country's tourism performance against competing destinations, which allows for more efficient decision-making. The Jordan Tourism Competitiveness Index (TCI) is a tool to measure incremental progress, benchmark Jordan's improvements in tourism competitiveness, and ultimately serve as an effective and integral tool to track progress with the National Tourism Strategy. BEST produced the 2016 TCI results for Jordan and shared them with the tourism sector in September 2017 to enable the sector to map tourism progress and compare strengths and weaknesses to a previous performance. BEST developed the following year's index (2017) in partnership with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and presented it to stakeholders in Jordan in September 2018.

As described above, BEST worked with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities in 2019 to establish a new Tourism Research and Planning Directorate within the ministry. The directorate was formally established in mid-2019 and will now prepare, manage, and publish the TCI, ensuring its sustainability. An index was not prepared for 2019, because the ministry was focused on establishing the directorate. With the new directorate in place, the ministry now has the structure to facilitate research and publication of a TCI for the coming years. This is important, because it monitors and measures the level of competitiveness of Jordan against international destinations based on business-enabling infrastructure and public and private operational management of tourism.

EXISTING TOURISM EXPERIENCES IMPROVED

SUPPORT NATIONAL AND MANDATORY STANDARDS IN HOTELS, RESTAURANTS, AND CAMPS

InterContinental Hotels Group Dead Sea Hotels Hospitality Training Academy Launched

BEST awarded a grant to the InterContinental Hotel Group (IHG) to establish a hospitality training academy within its Dead Sea hotels. BEST linked the academy with Pathways to Professionalism so that the year-long training course at the academy would be aligned with Level I of the Pathways program and ensure consistency in training methods and standards. Graduates of the academy are employed at the Dead Sea hotels and then enter Level I of the Pathways to Professionalism scheme, where they will be on track to receive a nationally recognized certificate. The IHG Hospitality Training Academy was launched in October 2016 through support from BEST, Amman Chamber of Commerce, JOHUD, Ghor Al-Mazra'a Club, and Ta'asheera for Humanitarian Development. Fifty youths from nearby towns and villages commenced training in food and beverage services, food production, and housekeeping.

By the end of the program in March 2018, 40 trainees had progressed to full-time jobs. BEST developed, designed, and translated curricula for the food and beverage service, food production, and housekeeping training programs. BEST also equipped two computer labs for the IHG Academy. This created a total of 48 jobs, eight of which are for trainers.

Small Hotel Upgraded as Best Practice Model for a Four- or Three Star-Classified Hotel BEST awarded a grant to the P Quattro Hotel in Petra in March 2017 to upgrade services at the 29-room family-owned and -operated hotel. BEST developed and printed marketing and guest information materials and procured a specialized oven to help diversify and improve its food offerings. Work was delayed between March and November 2018 because of procurement difficulties regarding suitable costs and quality, and the grant closed in November 2018. BEST support was provided as a model of how to develop a small family hotel to attract international tourism. BEST support increased business for the hotel from international tourists, and by the project's end, the owners of P Quattro Hotel had a 20-room expansion in the works.

▶ A hotel assessor from the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities inspects a room at a hotel in Amman according to the new classification standards.



Photo Credit: USAID BEST

Classification Standards for Tourist Restaurants Updated

BEST updated the new classification system developed under a previous USAID project for Jordan's restaurants to bring it up to date with international standards. The new system introduced new restaurant types and improved hygiene, comfort, and food safety standards to ensure that restaurants meet international best practices. It also allows flexibility, allowing restaurants to meet mandatory minimum standards to be classified and then meet voluntary standards to increase their rating. This change requires an amendment to the current restaurant bylaw, which BEST prepared.

However, in July 2017, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities officially rejected the proposed new restaurant classification system, and the initiative was cancelled for areas under the ministry's jurisdiction. The new system was then shared with the ASEZA, which oversees the hospitality sector in Aqaba and Wadi Rum. The authority decided to adopt the new system, which was published by the government in the legal gazette in 2018. BEST trained assessors from the ASEZA, JRA, and the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities directorate in Aqaba to implement the new standards. By August 2019, the Aqaba authority had completed classifying all tourist restaurants in Aqaba, which include formal, quick service, and casual restaurants and coffee shops.

The Aqaba authority and BEST implemented a series of workshops on safe food handling and hygiene in September 2019 for Aqaba hotel and restaurant management staff. This built their capacity in cascade training of rank staff and improved standards of operations and guest service and their capacity to maintain service excellence.

Support to the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, ASEZA, and PDTRA to Implement Hotel Standards and Classification Systems

Through a grant to Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, BEST supported the classification of all hotels in Jordan under a new hotel classification system. The ministry developed an online hotel classification system and established a classification unit. By April 2018, all hotels in Jordan were classified under the national hotel classification system developed by BEST.

The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities developed its new Quality Standards and Classification Directorate and its Tourism Classification Online System in partnership with the ASEZA, PDTRA, Jordan Hotels Association, and BEST. The new directorate is responsible for monitoring and classifying hotels across the kingdom. The new online system enables hotel investors to efficiently apply for classification, conduct self-assessments, and make appeals if needed. Furthermore, it assists ministry assessors to manage the classification process, ensuring transparency and efficiency to hotel establishment owners in the reporting and auditing process. The new system enables more efficient, accurate assessments and reports and has increased efficiency for hotel owners and investors. BEST also advised on amendments to the Hotels Bylaw to accommodate the new classification standards and new forms of accommodations (boutique hotels, ecolodges, and guest houses), the governance of the Jordan Hotel Association's board, and an appeal process that the ministry will present to the Jordan Hotels Association. The new bylaw was published in January 2020.

Improve Facilities and Expand Hospitality Investments through Advisory and Mentoring Services

This track was initially integrated with hotel classification work, in which BEST and Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities were to provide mentoring and advisory services to hotels working to improve their service standards. The activity direction changed in 2018 because of the industry's reticence on discussing business challenges in public forums and workshops. Stakeholder requests for one-on-one sessions with BEST were deemed too resource-intensive, and BEST instead worked to empower the Jordan Hotels Association to assume a larger advisory and mentoring role to the industry.

In 2019, BEST awarded a grant to the JHA to improve facilities and expand the advisory services it provides for a more efficient and effective service for members. The grant helped the association improve its administrative capacity, introduce training and certification for casual hotel staff, and oversee the Pathways to Professionalism program. BEST also strengthened the organizational capacity of the Jordan Hotels Association and helped put in place an organizational structure and a new business and financial plan to sustain the Pathways to Professionalism program. BEST developed an advisory-mentoring system, including manuals and operating procedures, for the association to use in providing mentoring services to the hotels. The JHA installed new information technology systems, which allows the association to maintain and provide accurate records for its members. Overall, this effort has enabled the Jordan Hotels Association to become a nexus of advice, information, and support for current and future hotels.

Separately, BEST supported Marriott Al Manara, a Luxury Collection hotel in Saraya Aqaba, to create and fill 204 jobs, 40 of which were filled by women. BEST contributed to the creation of these jobs by providing advice and guidance on hotel quality standards and classification, advising on local optimum staffing standards for a five-star luxury class hotel, providing technical assistance in obtaining the necessary licenses and registration certificates from the ASEZA, and providing continued support for recruiting and hiring employees.

Enhance Standards of Camps

BEST worked with local stakeholders to improve standards at tourist campsites in Wadi Rum to ensure that they meet minimum international best practices standards of safety, hygiene, comfort, and environment compliance. BEST reviewed the existing standards and assessed "licensed and non-licensed" campsites in Wadi Rum to map the locations, detail facilities, review current standards, and identify weaknesses. BEST presented an assessment report to stakeholders in Year 4. Based on the assessment, draft Campsites Tourism-Approved Standards, along with Lodges and Eco Lodges Minimum Standards, were developed to unify regulations and standards under ASEZA, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, and Wadi Rum Protected Area Authority. A steering committee with representation from those authorities, in addition to the PDTRA and the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN), was formed to approve the standards. The steering committee agreed to adopt minimum standards for camps, lodges, and eco lodges on a national basis and develop specific regulations for each geographical area. In October 2018, the committee agreed to adopt the finalized Tourism Approved Quality Standards for Desert Campsites and minimum standards for eco lodges. The standards will standardize services and raise quality at camps and lodges around Jordan. They will enhance Jordan's ecotourism offerings, which is more pertinent as global ecological awareness and tourist demand for eco-friendly products and services increase.



Photo Credit: Ahmad Qaisieh, USAID BEST

SUCCESS STORY



USAID BEST and SDC staff inspect a home-visit experience in As-Salt

SOPs Developed for Home Stays and Home Visits

In 2018, BEST produced a Good Housekeeping Guide to Guesthouses for the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities to standardize service levels across the country. The guide supports homeowners to start home-based accommodation businesses for tourists, detailing the housekeeping processes and checklists for guesthouses and homestays. However, publication of the guide was put on hold by the previous minister because of contention from hotel interest groups, which lobbied the ministry to reduce the numbers of guesthouses and Airbnb properties in Jordan. These standards were put on hold as the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities decided to include regulation of informal tourism accommodation providers within the updated Jordan Hotels Association bylaws, which

was put into process. The Cabinet approved the bylaws and published them in January 2020. New classification standards will need to be developed for guesthouses, farmhouses, and homestay accommodation and be incorporated into the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities' and ASEZA's hotel classification standards.

In July 2018, ASEZA confirmed that it will adopt the guidebook's recommendations in Aqaba to address the challenges it is encountering in maintaining quality standards in guesthouse and home stay accommodation. This activity was then put on hold pending further assessment of the guide's impact on the formal tourism accommodation sector by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities. There was no change by the project's end.



Pathways Advisory Committee Chairman Michael Nugent speaks at a ceremony in November 2019 to mark 1,000 staff certified and 500 supervisors trained at hotels across Jordan through Pathways to Professionalism.

PATHWAYS TO PROFESSIONALISM IMPROVES HOSPITALITY SERVICE STANDARDS THROUGH INDUSTRY-BASED TRAINING

Pathways to Professionalism Level 1 Launched in Aqaba for Entry-level Employees

BEST worked with ASEZA and other stakeholders to introduce the industry-based, entry-level training program, Pathways to Professionalism Level 1, in Aqaba. Implementation was delayed when the Aqaba authority withdrew their commitment to cover a monthly stipend for trainees; however, the partner hotels then agreed to cover the stipend. ASEZA, Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development, BEST, and five hotels in Aqaba signed a partnership agreement to pilot Pathways to Professionalism Level 1 in October 2019. The five partner hotels are Intercontinental Hotel Aqaba, Kempinski Red Sea Hotel, Hyatt Regency Hotel in Ayla, Movenpick Resort & Residences Aqaba, and Movenpick Resort & Spa Tala Bay. More than 30 learners, around half of whom are women, took part in the six-month pilot training program. Practical training rotated between three departments: food and beverage services, food production, and housekeeping.

In October 2019, problems arose because of a conflict between ASEZA and the Social Security Fund regarding the coverage of trainees. ASEZA was to pay the monthly social security fees for each trainee for the duration of their training. The Social Security Fund refused their submission because the training stipend is below minimum wage. By January 2020, this issue was resolved through an employer group scheme to provide workplace insurance for trainees. The first batch of Level 1 learners (25 learners, 10 of whom are women) were to graduate at the end of March 2020.

However, this was disrupted by the global coronavirus crisis. Up to that point, Level 1 was a success, and the five partner hotels planned to continue with this program in Aqaba, whereas the Pathways management planned to replicate it at hotels in Amman.

Expand Pathways to Professionalism Level 2 and 3: Increase Number of Professions Available and Increase Number of Learners

Between 2015 and 2020, BEST worked closely with the private sector to implement the Pathways to Professionalism scheme within hotels in Jordan and grow its presence within the hospitality industry (see figure, next page). Pathways to Professionalism launched in 2016 as a joint effort between BEST, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, and the Vocational Training Corporation. It was designed to create jobs, enhance professionalism, and improve standards at hotels in Jordan through an accredited and certified scheme based on national professional standards and structured on-the-job training. The challenge was that, according to 2015 figures, 55 percent of entry-level employees at Jordan's hotels had no formal qualifications, 85 percent of four- to two-star hotels had no formal training programs, and it was estimated that Jordan's hospitality industry will need 20,000 more trained entry-level workers by 2022. Meanwhile, tourism and hospitality education and training centers in the country have only 2,000 graduates each year.

In 2016, BEST piloted an embryonic version of the Pathways to Professionalism program through the IHG's five hotels. The program was a success, and BEST then worked with stakeholders to expand the number of partner hotels and implement Level 2 training for food and beverage service, food production, and housekeeping professions at these hotels. Over the next several years, BEST expanded training to two more professions and created two more levels.

By the project's end, 32 leading hotels in Jordan are partners in the program, and more than 1,100 employees have received Pathways to Professionalism certification, which is nationally recognized through the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and the Jordan Hotels Association and internationally recognized through the International Hotel and Restaurant Association (Paris). Seventeen percent of qualified graduates are women, and the number is growing. Pathways hotels have invested approximately \$21,000,000 in improving the professionalism and skills capacity of employees to deliver improved services to guests and tourists. Hotels have also invested more than half a million hours in upskill and multi-skill training in the workplace.

The Pathways to Professionalism program proves that, when provided with a program designed to suit the industry needs, the private tourism sector will invest resources in building the capacity of youth and women in Jordan to expand the sector.

Launch Pathways to Professionalism Level 4 to Bridge the Supervisory Gap in Industry

To help address a shortage of well-qualified management level staff within Jordan's hotel sector, BEST developed a management/supervisory training program for full-time hotel staff in Jordan. BEST proposed that in-house management training be offered through the nationwide Pathways to Professionalism program by developing Level 4. The Jordan Hotels Association agreed to oversee the Level 4 program as part of its role in managing the overall Pathways to Professionalism training program.

BEST and the Pathways Advisory Committee identified a professional e-learning international program that would be suitable for certifying the Level 4 framework through an international accreditation body. An agreement was reached with FLOW Hospitality Europe and the program was customized for Pathways to Professionalism Level 4. The new level was piloted at six hotels as of January 2020.

Privatize the Pathways Program and Build the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and JHA's Capacity to Maintain the Registry of Learners and Trainers

To ensure the Pathways to Professionalism's sustainability and growth following BEST's conclusion, in Year 4, efforts began to transfer program management to the hotel sector. BEST had been managing the program in coordination with the hotels and the Jordan Hotel Association since its launch. In January 2019, the Pathways Advisory Committee agreed that the Jordan Hotels Association would manage the program going forward, and by April 2019, BEST officially transferred management of the Pathways to Professionalism program to the Jordan Hotels Association as part of the journey toward self-reliance. BEST trained association members to undertake the role of managing the overall program and its expansion, which includes training of Pathways trainers, conducting exams, administrative work, communication with hotels, and program tracking. The association recruited two new staff members to manage Pathways to Professionalism.

In addition, BEST and the King Abdullah II Center for Excellence agreed on quality assurance programs to be adopted by the Jordan Hotels Association to improve its business management frameworks and enhance its reputation on an international level. The King Abdullah II Center for Excellence is the country partner for the European Foundation for Quality Management in Jordan and will agree on a plan of action for it to embrace the processes for achieving management and business excellence frameworks. This is part of strengthening the Jordan Hotels Association's capacity to manage Pathways, and it will be ready for the European Foundation for Quality Management's Foundation Level - Committed to Excellence (involving workshops, a capacity building program, and external assessment).



ENHANCE AND EXPAND EXPERIENCES ON PRIMARY SITES AND TOP FIVE DESTINATIONS

Support Design for Sharif Hussein House Transformation as a New Experience

The activity entailed revamping the existing Sharif Hussein House Museum in Aqaba as a new and engaging experience. The Royal Hashemite Court leads this project, and the Royal Court and ASEZA co-fund it. BEST supported the Royal Court by providing museum interior designs and interpretation, preparing tender documents for physical work, and providing technical support to stakeholders in implementing the schematic designs. BEST helped manage project implementation and collect objects and artifacts for display at the museum.

Although BEST submitted all deliverables for this activity, the activity was extremely slow in moving forward. By the project's end, the museum had not yet opened. The main challenge BEST faced with this activity was the large number of overseers involved and the complex relationships between them. For example, the Sharif Hussein House falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities; however, the Ministry of Public Works handles renovation work, and the Royal Court oversees content development. ASEZA is involved because the museum is in Aqaba. This led to delays, disagreements, and coordination issues among the parties involved.

Thrill-seeking Tourism Offering at the Dead Sea with the Royal Aero Sports Club

A skydive in Jordan.



BEST supported the Royal Aero Sports Club of Jordan (RASCJ) to enhance and expand its facilities and activities at the Dead Sea. BEST supported the physical upgrades needed to improve existing facilities to attract more visitors, including upgrading the hangar to properly and safely house and maintain planes for operating the activities and improving the café facilities. Following this support, RASCJ held a skydive event in 2017, introduced Ultralight scenic flights at the Dead Sea in 2018, and reactivated its hot air balloon operation in Wadi Rum. The club's Dead Sea activities were included in the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities' domestic tourism program (Al

Urdun Ahla) in early 2019. The development created six full-time and three part-time jobs during the period of operation. However, because of an accident in May 2019 with one of the gyrocopters, RASCJ halted its aero-sports activities in the Dead Sea, and by the project's end it was not clear when they would resume.

Enhance Management, Visitor Services, and Experiences at PAP

BEST supported PDTRA to enhance and diversify tourism products and experiences within the Petra region and PAP. BEST awarded an in-kind grant entailing multi-faceted support to PDTRA in 2016. Work was on hold from June 2017 to February 2018 because of a gap in leadership at PDTRA. Following the appointment of a new chief commissioner, grant activities were realigned in May 2018. The agreed activities were completed by December 2018, and the grant was closed.

Provide conservation advisory support to better protect PAP. BEST supported PDTRA to develop its State of Conservation Report, which is submitted to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Centre annually. BEST worked closely with PDTRA and the Department of Antiquities and developed their capacity to prepare the 2017 report, which was submitted early that year. The authority then secured support from the USAID Sustainable Cultural Heritage Through Engagement of Local Communities Project for the following reports.

In July 2018, BEST extended new support to PAP management for conservation and visitor servicing planning. BEST helped to update the Petra conservation plan, trail development plan, and visitor servicing along the main trail. As a result, a priorities action plan was developed for PAP's conservation and cultural resource operations in collaboration with USAID's Sustainable Cultural Heritage Through Engagement of Local Communities Project, UNESCO, and PDTRA, which addressed immediate key issues identified by PDTRA, outlined annual activities, and suggested actions to incrementally strengthen resilience and protect cultural resources. The plan was submitted to PDTRA in September 2018, and BEST took no further action on this track.

Launch Petra handicrafts shop as a one-stop-shop for authentic products. BEST worked with PDTRA and PAP management to establish a handicraft shop at the Petra Visitor Center that sells authentic handicrafts produced in the Petra region. BEST supported interior

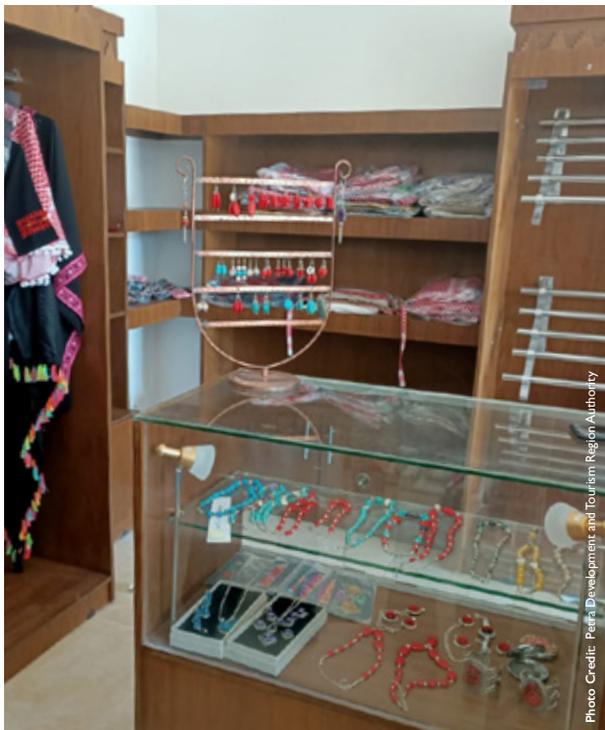


Photo Credit: Petra Development and Tourism Region Authority

The new handicraft shop at the Petra Visitor Center.

design and layout of the shop at the Petra Visitor Center. BEST developed shop operation guidelines and handicraft selection criteria to support the process of selecting high-quality crafts made by local producers and community-based organizations for display at the shop. BEST was planning to support operation and management of the shop once it opened. However, there were delays in this project because of slow interior work and disputes from local community members who were deemed ineligible to display their products. Agreement between PDTRA and the local handicraft cooperatives and artisans was not reached during the grant period, and the grant closed on December 31, 2018. PDTRA completed the work and launched the shop in October 2019, after which BEST provided point-of-sale software and training for the shop staff to ensure the shop's smooth operation. The handicraft shop created two full-time jobs and sells items produced by seven local cooperatives, which created 30 indirect job opportunities for local men and women.

Support rehabilitation of back-exit road to ensure compliance with international practices and standards.

In 2016, USAID and PDTRA developed a set of studies for the rehabilitation of the back-exit road for Petra, along with recommendations and conservation guidelines based on these studies. The purpose of the back-exit road is to ease pressure on the main trail,

specifically the use of the Siq, by providing an alternative exit from the park. The authority hired a contractor to implement the road rehabilitation work, which began in 2016. BEST shared final recommendations with PDTRA before proceeding with additional construction work. Work was stalled because of the PDTRA commissioner's departure in June 2017. In 2018, BEST extended the grant to PDTRA, and BEST provided support to develop the back-exit road operational plan. Proposed solutions were reassessed, and BEST developed an operational plan and governance framework for the shuttle bus service. The assessment report and recommendations were submitted to PDTRA in September 2018 for its review and action. BEST took no further action on this track.

Petra Earns New Global Recognition

As a result of BEST support to PDTRA, the Green Destinations Foundation designated the PAP as one of 2019's Global Top 100 Sustainable Destinations. Awards are given to destinations that have effective measures in place to prevent tourism impacts on nature and landscape, culture and tradition, environment and climate, and host communities. The Green Destinations Foundation also shortlisted the park as a top three finalist in the Best of Culture and Communities category. This category rewards global leadership in protecting culture and tradition while involving local communities. According to Green Destinations, Petra received the designation as a result of the successful nomination file Petra authorities submitted in December 2018, which was accomplished with BEST's guidance and support. Following the official announcement of the Top 100 winners, the PAP now has the right to use the Top 100 logo in their marketing activities and material.



DEVELOPMENT OF NEW AND EXPANSION OF NASCENT TOURISM ASSETS AND PRODUCTS SUPPORTED

SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT OF AS-SALT INTO A DISTINCTIVE DESTINATION



▶ BEST worked with stakeholders in As-Salt to develop the city as Jordan's first Distinctive Destination.

33 New Tourism Experiences in As-Salt

- As-Salt Brand Shop revamped: The main outlet for handmade products and crafts produced by more than 70 local artists, mostly women
- SDC Photo Gallery transformed: A key stop for visitors to learn about the city and people and improve the overall tourism experience
- Iskandarani established: The first café along Al Hamam street serving local food and beverages
- Al Gherbal established: The first unique local restaurant catering for large groups
- Jordan Heritage complex: A new bed and breakfast, local produce shop, and restaurant (70 seats)
- Beit Aziz upgraded: Standards were elevated at the city's first bed and breakfast and restaurant

In December 2016, As-Salt was designated Jordan's first Distinctive Destination. The announcement was the culmination of months of work by the five competing destinations of Ajloun, Jarash, Karak, and Madaba, in addition to As-Salt, to identify their tourism strengths and propose areas of development. As the winning destination, As-Salt received Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and BEST support for comprehensive tourism development that will have a positive impact on the town through implementation of its tourism strategy. This included technical support to small and medium tourism enterprises and providing destination marketing support.

From early 2017 through to the project's end, BEST worked closely with the SDC, Al Balqa Tourism Directorate, and As-Salt Municipality to develop the city of As-Salt as a distinctive destination (see box, right). BEST funded and provided technical support for an Enterprise Development Program (EDP) that was implemented in partnership with SDC. The EDP offered a package of training, grant funding, technical support, and improved access to finance to tourism businesses and entrepreneurs in As-Salt to spur tourism activity through new and improved services, facilities, and experiences for visitors. BEST also provided direct grants as part of the EDP to support additional tourism entrepreneurs and businesses in As-Salt and offered extensive support to embed marketing capacity within the SDC and establish a DMO within it.



Jordanian youth take part in a 'Tidy Streets Campaign' to beautify As-Salt.

Photo Credit: Ahmad Qaisieh, USAID BEST



Hala Qaqish hosts visitors at her heritage home in As-Salt for breakfast.

Photo Credit: Ahmad Qaisieh, USAID BEST

As a result, 33 new tourism experiences were created or enhanced through this work, including cafes, restaurants, a bed and breakfast, traditional shops, local home visits, making and painting pottery, and henna art. BEST and SDC enhanced the city's walking trails by introducing engaging experiences and improving pricing and interpretation; guiding manuals were developed, seven local guides were trained, tour pricing was unified, café stops were added to the routes, and shops along the trails were upgraded. The guides were certified according to SDC-developed local guiding standards. Furthermore, BEST worked with the Greater As-Salt Municipality to upgrade two of the oldest streets (Al Hammam Street and Iskafi Street) and Al Ain Plaza in As-Salt downtown by improving shop signage and installing toilet facilities. In total, 178 new shop signs and 172 shop awnings were installed along the streets, and public toilet facilities in Sahet Al Kayyaz and Al Ain plaza were revamped. This improved the aesthetics of these main areas that draw visitors and improved the available facilities.

As part of BEST's capacity building program to elevate standards and services offered in As-Salt, BEST held several training sessions in 2018. Training covered areas including tourist guest courtesy and care skills, safe food handling and hygiene, and food and beverage services quality, and more than 240 local representatives benefited from the training. Furthermore, 15 businesses received customized training to enhance their operations and elevate the standard of their service.



Iskandarani Café in As-Salt.

Photo Credit: Ahmad Qaisieh, USAID BEST

In partnership with the Greater As-Salt Municipality, SDC, and the As-Salt Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, BEST developed and implemented a Tourism Awareness Plan for As-Salt. The awareness campaign raised awareness among the local community about the importance of tourism and the need to respect nature and heritage and keep the city clean. Activities carried out include a photo competition, power breakfasts, painting competitions, a “Tidy Street Campaign” along the two main walking trails, and training of schoolteachers to spread awareness among youth in As-Salt. Social media campaigns reached hundreds of thousands of people online, and more than 3,000 students in As-Salt were reached through awareness sessions.

Following BEST support, visitor numbers doubled between 2017 and 2018. More local entrepreneurs are also showing interest in establishing new services and experiences targeted towards tourism. SDC now operates as the city’s DMO, is responsible for promoting As-Salt locally, and is partnered with the JTB to promote it internationally. This decentralizes marketing efforts and enables local stakeholders to influence marketing reach. A new brand was developed for As-Salt to communicate the city’s tourism message and position it as a distinctive tourism destination in Jordan. SDC ensures that tourism branding within the city meets brand guidelines and that all promotional activities are branded. SDC launched a new website for As-Salt (VisitAs-Salt.com), which promotes the experiences and activities offered in the city and allows visitors to book these online. Video material on As-Salt was produced to support marketing efforts.

To ensure continued tourism growth and development, BEST facilitated partnerships between SDC and the tourism trade. This included an agreement with the Jordan Society of Tour Operators to promote the city of As-Salt to domestic and international visitors. The society organized SDC-hosted several familiarization trips to As-Salt for its members to learn about As-Salt’s main visitor attractions, experiences, and visit packages, most of which were developed with BEST support. Tens of tour operators took part, and the familiarization trips generated several bookings. Other partnerships to develop tourism and drive visitors to As-Salt are underway. This includes one with the JRA and the Jordan Hotels Association to improve restaurants and accommodation in the city.

BEST also supported the Greater As-Salt Municipality to oversee management and operation of the Oqbah bin Nafe’ project through private sector investors. This downtown development includes parking, retail, a visitor information center, and multipurpose spaces. The As-Salt Municipality in collaboration with a private sector operator will manage the project. BEST supported this effort by developing terms of reference for the operation and management contract, which was shared with the municipality to issue.



Brothers Aktham and Abdullah Arabiat were among the youngest business owners to work with USAID BEST.

Events and Activities Attract Visitors to Secondary Destinations

BEST implemented three events in and near the city of As-Salt. These include the As-Salt Spring Festival in April 2018 and “Yawm Al Reef”/Rural Day events in September 2018 and May 2019. The events gave local businesses and producers from As-Salt and nearby exposure to a wider market. They attracted thousands of visitors, and participating vendors reported good turnout, sales, and exposure for their products and goods.

SUCCESS STORY



Jordan Shopping Festival

BEST supported the Amman Chamber of Commerce to organize the first Jordan Shopping Festival, which took place between July and August 2016. BEST's support for the festival focused on connecting tourists and visitors to different events and activities at multiple destinations and secondary sites within Amman through marketing and promotion. Marketing support included social media promotion and production of print materials. BEST also supported the chamber to organize a temporary local handicraft market, in coordination with the Jordan Handicrafts Producers Association, as one of the main festival activities. The market ran from August to October 2016 in Jabal Weibdeh as part of the shopping festival. More than 74 handicraft producers representing individuals and NGOs participated in the market, putting different products on display, including embroidery, jewelry, ceramics, artwork, and artisanal food. More than 7,000 people visited the market, resulting in around JOD28,000 worth of sales. BEST supported event management, promotional material, and equipment for market set-up. The equipment provided to the association enabled it to organize and participate in other bazaars and events to bring its work to market.

Agritourism Experiences Create Jobs in Rural Communities

In 2017, BEST began working with Al-Marj Training and Development Company to create new rural tourism experiences and products. Through a BEST grant and technical support, Al-Marj created the brand Bookagri and developed rural tourism experiences in three villages in Al Balqa. Al-Marj developed 12 unique agritourism experiences in coordination with farmers and rural families in the three villages. These include eight farms and homes offering rural experiences and meals, three bed and breakfasts, and a community garden. These experiences are being sold on the BookAgri platform, which Al-Marj also developed through BEST support. The 12 experiences employ 136 people in part-time or full-time work. The number of employees includes 90 women who produce food items under the brand, 36 people who operate the 12 agritourism experiences in As-Salt, and 10 people directly employed or involved with Al-Marj, including six local guides.



A breakfast feast at Hala Qaqish's home in As-Salt as part of a home visit experience.

SUCCESS STORY



My name is Maysoon Freihat and I am part of the Al Murjan Charity Society



Tourists take part in agritourism activities at Um Nidal's farm near As-Salt.

Photo Credit: Ahmad Galieli, USAID/BEST

SUCCESS STORY



Ma'tan Village (Cela Rural Lodge) Opens as a Cultural and Ecotourism Experience in Tafleeh

BEST awarded a grant to Al Baque'a Tourism Cooperative Society to enhance the Cela Rural Lodge in Ma'tan village in Tafleeh as a hub for offering and operating local tourism activities. Through the grant, the cooperative converted an existing building into a 10-room lodge for tourists. BEST provided design support, furniture, fixtures and accessories, and a solar power system to cover 100 percent of energy needs at the lodge. BEST helped to build the capacity of lodge staff through a series of training courses that covered hospitality, service, food and beverage, housekeeping, safe food handling and hygiene, and guiding skills.

In addition, BEST helped develop an operational plan for the lodge and the services and experiences it offers and made recommendations for the organizational structure and SOPs. A cycling experience was introduced at the lodge in partnership with Cycling Jordan and with BEST support. BEST then helped the Cela Rural Lodge in an online marketing campaign that promoted the lodge as a fun experience for all ages to the domestic market. Other marketing support activities included a media familiarization trip in July 2018, which resulted in great local and regional exposure. The 10-room Cela Rural Lodge created 10 full-time jobs to operate the lodge and around 20 part-time jobs for local guides, food production, and others operating experiences there.

In 2019, BEST awarded a second grant to Al-Marj to build on the success of the work in the Balqa villages and expand agritourism to the north of Jordan. Al-Marj developed new experiences at six farms and rural homes and established a partnership with a local business to sell BookAgri products and offer a new engaging experience related to honey farming and products. These were ready to receive guests in early 2020. The new experiences introduced in the north engage 64 people in part-time or full-time work related to agritourism in Jarash and Ajloun; six full-time jobs were created for farm owners, along with 18 part-time jobs for business providers at the farms and local guides and 40 seasonal jobs for home-based food producers, mostly women.

Al-Marj developed full-day and half-day tour programs that connect activities in the villages of Al Balqa and tours that connect the experiences in the north of Jordan. BookAgri products are available at five shops and ten bazaars and markets around Jordan, mainly Amman. BookAgri beneficiaries have reported revenue increases between 25 percent and 50 percent since joining BookAgri.



▶ Nestled in a forest in Jerash, the Jordan Ranger Camp grew with USAID support from a day-trip venue to a full rural retreat.

Photo Credit: Ahmad Qasbeh, USAID BEST

Tourism Offerings Expanded at Rangers Adventure Camp in Jerash

In January 2018, BEST awarded a grant to Rangers Adventure Camp to develop and promote its EcoView Resort as an ecological camp in the governorate of Jerash. The resort offers cabin lodging, training facilities, and a restaurant that complements the offerings of an adjacent adventure camp owned and operated by the same grantee. BEST supported the design and supply of needed facilities and equipment. The restaurant and training rooms were improved, branding and marketing material was developed, and a website was launched. Staff were trained on basic hygiene, safe food handling and housekeeping, and social media and digital marketing. Eleven local community jobs were created, and the

purchase of local produce from the surrounding community increased. With the conclusion of this intervention, offerings in Jerash have been diversified through the introduction of new accommodation cabins, a restaurant that caters for cabins, camp and individual visitors, and meeting room facilities that offers holding events and activities in a unique location. The camp began receiving bookings for its cabins and training rooms in June 2019 and received around 250 visitors by the end of that year for the facilities. By the beginning of 2020, there were international bookings up to August 2020, prior to the start of the global coronavirus pandemic.

PLACE-CENTERED TRIP CIRCUITS AND TOUR ROUTES DEVELOPED AND EXPANDED

DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION OF THE JORDAN TRAIL SUPPORTED



Hikers take part in the first section of 2018 Jordan Trail Thru-Hike, in the north of Jordan



Photo Credit: Ahmed Qaisieh, USAID/BEST

BEST supported the JTA throughout the life of the project, with two grants and technical support given between mid-2016 and early 2020. BEST helped the association in its set-up phase and built its capacity over the years to develop, oversee, and promote the trail and attract visitors to experience the unique and engaging adventures it can offer.

With BEST support, the JTA was able to way-mark large sections of the trail, build the capacity of local escorts and businesses along the trail, and market it in Jordan and around the world. Support has enabled key income-generating and promotional hikes, including First2Finish, the Jordan Trail Run, and two annual Jordan Trail thru-hikes (see figure, right). These events promote the Jordan Trail, raise funds for the association, and create financial opportunities for the people living in the 52 villages and communities along the trail. BEST also supported four service providers along the trail, to diversify and enhance accommodation and food offerings.

The Jordan Trail gained huge global publicity, which helped strengthen Jordan's position as an attractive adventure destination. In May 2018, the JTA received the King Abdullah II Ibn Al Hussein Decoration for Excellence, one of the highest decorations in Jordan, and the International Institute for Peace through Tourism Award at the Resilience through Tourism Summit 2018. In addition, National Geographic identified the Jordan Trail as one of 21 "Best of the World" destinations for 2018.

BEST's support to the JTA thus enabled development of the Jordan Trail and garnered extensive international exposure for Jordan as a top adventure destination. The JTA has engaged 91 service providers and created 415 jobs among the 52 villages and towns along the 650 km route from Um Qais to Aqaba. In 2018, the JTA was awarded the World Tourism Award for its work as a platform for socioeconomic development and supporting local communities along the Jordan Trail. In November 2018, the UNWTO selected the JTA as the number-one tourist enterprise in the Middle East.

SUCCESS STORY



NEW TOURIST BUS TRANSPORT ROUTES AND CIRCUITS ESTABLISHED



USAID officially awards a grant to JETT to revamp the Amman City Tour and introduce reliable bus excursions around Jordan.

Getting to many sites in Jordan can be a challenge for both locals and tourists who don't have access to private transportation or tour transport. Public transportation, if available, is often unreliable, and taxis and private cars are expensive for travelling outside of cities. To address this challenge, BEST supported JETT to develop convenient, affordable, and guaranteed bus tours that operate on a regular basis regardless of the number of passengers. The purpose was to increase traffic to secondary sites and drive more tourism business to these areas.

JETT introduced 10 new scheduled bus routes and excursions, which link Amman to key locations such as Madaba, Ajloun, Jerash, Petra, and the Dead Sea, along with a shuttle between the Dead Sea and Bethany Beyond the Jordan. Tours between Wadi Rum, Petra, and Aqaba have facilitated greater access within Jordan's "golden triangle." BEST and JETT also worked closely to revamp the Amman City Tour to encourage visitors to spend more time in and explore the capital. The tour's red double-decker buses now travel along a newly developed route that passes through the city's most important sites, from old Amman to new Amman. Audio commentary is available in eight languages.

BEST also supported JETT to market the new routes through online marketing campaigns and the development of a website with a booking engine. Following the campaign and website launch, passenger numbers increased noticeably. Over the period from March 2018 to December 2019, offline bookings doubled mainly for the Amman-Dead Sea-Amman line, the Amman-Petra-Amman line, and the Amman-Jarash-Ajloun-Amman line. Between November 2019 and December 2019, online booking witnessed an increase in sales, reaching its peak in November 2019, with 669 bookings for those same lines; the top three nationalities that booked were Polish, Italian, and Czech.



A JETT open-topped double decker bus used for the Amman City Tour.

GRADUATES PREPARED FOR TOURISM CAREERS AND JOBS THROUGH BETTER TOURISM EDUCATION

IMPROVE UNIVERSITY CURRICULA THROUGH INTERNATIONAL ACCREDITATION



To help address the growing demands of Jordan's tourism and hospitality industry, BEST supported educational institutions in Jordan to reform and modernize their tourism and hospitality programs via the TedQual International Certification offered by the UNWTO's Themis Foundation. The certification is a prestigious assurance of academic quality that seeks to encourage education institutions around the world to enhance their tourism programs. For graduates, the certification affirms that they are equipped with skills and knowledge that meet global standards, thus preparing them for success in the hospitality and tourism industries. The certification process evaluates compliance of tourism education programs with quality criteria defined by UNWTO and with respect to the principles of the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism.

In Jordan, three institutions have been TedQual-certified, including the Royal Academy of Culinary Arts (RACA), Ammon Applied University College (AAUC), and Yarmouk University. BEST provided financial and technical support to AAUC and Yarmouk to enhance their programs and ability to receive TedQual certification through modernizing facilities, improving educational curriculum standards, and promoting scientific research.

AAUC was first awarded TedQual certification in 2014 for its bachelor's degree program in hotel management and was the first institution in the Middle East to receive it. It is also the second institution in Jordan to receive TedQual certification in general, after RACA. With many improvements, AAUC was re-approved in 2018 for an additional three years. Through USAID BEST support, Yarmouk University was awarded the UNWTO TedQual International Certification in 2018 for its bachelor's degree program in tourism management.

UNWTO TedQual-certified programs will build Jordan's competitiveness as a tourism destination through preparing better-educated and better-qualified employees in the industry. The assistance from BEST is part of larger efforts to improve tourism education and develop the workforce within Jordan's tourism and hospitality sectors.

COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY TEACHING SKILLS IN LINE WITH CURRENT INDUSTRY PRACTICES

To boost the teaching skills and capacities of tourism and hotel management professors at the university, Yarmouk University and BEST implemented a "Back to Tourism" program that saw four professors spend five months in the industry, training at the Crown Plaza Hotel in Amman. They learned about the latest practices in hotel management and are reflecting this in their teaching programs to better prepare students for entry into the hospitality job market.

BEST also conducted a series of capacity building workshops for faculty and management from Hashemite University, University of Jordan,

Yarmouk University, Middle East University, AAUC, and Al-Balqa Applied University. The workshops introduced the concept of curriculum development within the international context to align curricula with UNWTO TedQual international certification criteria, covering the framework of a contemporary tourism and hospitality management program curriculum, curriculum assessment and implementing curriculum reform for tourism, and the designing of a "competency-based learning" course syllabus for tourism and hospitality programs.

IMPROVED ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL OFFERINGS AT RACA



USAID BEST awards a grant to the Royal Academy of Culinary Arts to support it to upgrade its programs and attract more students to study culinary arts.

BEST awarded a grant to RACA to reform the academic standards and curriculum specifications for applied degree programs in hospitality and tourism. BEST helped upgrade the registration system and develop a graduate alumnus tracking system, supported the introduction of an e-library, and promoted culinary programs to youth and women in tourism areas outside Amman.

BEST also assisted the academy to prepare its application to the Ministry of Higher Education for becoming an Applied University College. BEST and the King Abdullah II Center for Excellence agreed on quality assurance programs for RACA to adopt to improve its business management frameworks and enhance its international reputation. BEST organized training for RACA on the process of achieving the

center's European Foundation for Quality Management accreditation, modelled their "levels of excellence" measurement tool for future adoption, and outlined the formal and self-assessment processes.

In March 2020, RACA became a technical university college, able to award bachelor's degrees, technical diplomas, and certificates in culinary arts and food and beverage management. This new status is a milestone achievement that places RACA on the global map of leading culinary universities. It adds culinary arts professions to the portfolio of careers available to Jordanian students and allows students to progress through secondary-level to tertiary-level education while also providing a wider range of career and study options.

STUDENTS PREPARED FOR HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM CAREERS THROUGH INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS

To expose Jordanian youth to the tourism and hospitality industry and broaden awareness of the careers available in those sectors, BEST designed and piloted a high school internship program in collaboration with the Crowne Plaza Hotel Amman, Amman Baptist School, and RACA. Through the program, high school hospitality stream (Fundukia) students undergo a 24-week part-time internship at

the Crowne Plaza in Amman, rotating among different departments. The purpose of the program is to attract students to pursue careers in hospitality and tourism and draw awareness to the opportunities and benefits of working in the sector. Twenty-five students so far have completed the program.

CONCESSIONS ESTABLISHED TO PROTECT JORDAN'S ASSETS

MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND ANTIQUITIES TO DEVELOP PRIVATE-SECTOR-LED THEMED FESTIVALS AT JORDANIAN CITIES



Yanni performs at the Amman Citadel, preceded by a press conference, with USAID BEST support.

BEST supported the Friends of Jordan Festivals Company to implement and promote the Citadel Festival 2016, which featured three popular regional and international performers: Yanni, Fire of Anatolia, and Marcel Khalifeh. BEST's support focused on boosting marketing activities and outreach to target local and regional audiences and boost attendance. BEST also contributed to the venue set-up. The event was successful, attracting more than 7,500 people. Thanks to this success in supporting festivals as a means of attracting visitors to Jordan, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities requested BEST's support to engage the private sector in the production and management of themed festivals across Jordan.

MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND ANTIQUITIES SITE MANAGEMENT DIRECTORATE STRENGTHENED

BEST supported the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities to strengthen its Site Management Directorate as part of a multi-faceted grant to the ministry. This included revising the first draft of the legal instructions pertaining to the Sites Management Bylaw between 2015 and 2016. These instructions are a tool for the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities to increase private sector involvement and investment in site development, presentation, and visitor servicing. BEST provided further support on the instructions in 2019, responding to the ministry's request to revisit the instructions and adapt them to the ministry's new vision and direction while ensuring compliance with local legislation.

Furthermore, BEST identified areas that require development within the ministry and assessed the directorate's structure, staffing, and activities and provided recommendations for optimal operation. BEST also contracted a tourism assets development advisor to the Site Management Directorate to help set up the site management unit, facilitating public-private partnerships and knowledge transfer to the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities to build its site management capacity. The

long-term advisor supported the directorate until mid-2018 to ensure its successful institutionalization through accompanying the ministry's team on site assessment visits to prioritize sites for concessions and provide recommendations on operations and procurement.

Moreover, BEST developed SOPs for cultural heritage sites and presented them to the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities' Site Management Directorate and site managers in July 2019. The procedures include a standard site manual and site-specific reports for Jerash, Ajloun Castle, Amman Citadel, and Umm Qais. The manuals are to be adopted as a new way of managing site maintenance (including sanitation standards, grounds care, and facility maintenance operations) and assuming a clear hierarchical management structure. Ministry staff recognized the need for the procedures at sites and that enforcing them will require serious support from the ministry, which did not materialize during the grant timeframe. BEST took no further action.

SUPPORT THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND ANTIQUITIES TO ENGAGE THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN SITE MANAGEMENT

Dead Sea Panorama

The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and a private sector operator signed a concession agreement for the management and operation of the Dead Sea Panorama for a total contract value of JOD 360,000 over a duration of five years. The concession opportunity was facilitated through BEST support to the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities' Site Management Directorate to prepare and issue new investment opportunities for the private sector to manage and operate tourism sites. The concession created 23 full-time job opportunities.

Other Opportunities

BEST supported the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities to issue and award five more concessions to engage the private sector in managing and operating tourism sites (see box, right). These agreements are of a total value of JOD 62,150 for operating the Pella Rest House and Restaurant in Irbid, Ishtafeina Park in Ajloun, Shobak Visitor Center Cafeteria and Showroom, Qatranah Castle's Visitor Center Cafeteria and shops in Karak, and the Lowest Point on Earth Cafeteria over the next five years.



123 Jobs Created Through Concessions

Dead Sea Panorama	23
Pella Rest House and Restaurant	5
Shobak Visitor Center Cafeteria and Showroom	2
The Lowest Point on Earth Cafeteria	3
Fanillah Showroom	2
RSCN Nature Shop	2
Ishtafeina Park	8
Qatranah Castle's Visitor Center and Shops	4
Dar As-Saraya	8
Beiruty House	3
Tourism sites cleaning contract	72



Have you been to the Citadel Café at the Amman Citadel?

The Citadel Café was revamped to reflect the spirit of downtown Amman.



Photo Credit: Citadel Café website

Citadel Café in Amman

Between 2017 and 2018, BEST supported the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities to revamp the Citadel Café to improve the visitor experience and product offerings at one of Jordan's popular tourist attractions and to introduce a model for private sector operation of tourism sites, which can be replicated at other sites. BEST awarded a grant and provided technical support to the private café operators, through which a new design concept was developed, along with brand and packaging material, and needed equipment was procured or upgraded. The café operators and staff were trained on menu development and pricing, visual merchandizing and product display, safe food handling and hygiene, and shelf life of menu items. BEST also helped develop a new concession agreement between the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and the private sector operator of the café, which focuses on elevating the level of services offered at the site. The revamped Citadel Café opened in mid-2018 as a model concession with Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities through the overall upgrade and enhancement of the space, operation, and offered experience, which in turn has resulted in increasing sales and revenue for the operators. The café is a prototype for guiding the management and implementation of services offered at other tourism sites across Jordan that will be concessioned to the private sector to manage.

Madaba Investment Opportunities

As part of BEST support to the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities' concession tourism sites and the ministry's paradigm shift to concession tourism sites to the private sector, BEST supported the promotion of new investment opportunities in Madaba, starting with the Dar Al-Saraya Building, Beirut House, and two shops at the Madaba Visitor Center in April 2018. Expressions of interest were submitted in May 2018 and were followed by eight technical and financial offers from qualifying bidders. As a result, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities awarded the two shops at the visitor center: the first to the RSCN to develop a "Nature Shop" and the second to the local entrepreneurial clothing brand Fanillah to operate it as its third outlet within Jordan and the first outside Amman. Dar As-Saraya will be developed as a heritage lodge with a restaurant on its terrace while showcasing handicrafts, artwork, and a library on its ground floor, whereas Beirut House will be developed as a restaurant serving authentic food and beverages with live performances and engaging experiences. Since January 2019, this activity has been inactive pending new concessions by the Site Management Directorate.

Tourism Sites Cleaning

In January 2019, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities awarded a major cleaning contract to a local company to manage 23 archaeological sites and visitor centers around Jordan as a means of elevating the experience and hygiene standards at Jordan's sites. BEST supported outsourcing the cleaning of tourism sites to the private sector, and in this case, the contract created 72 new jobs. BEST's involvement came as part of support to guide and facilitate the execution of public-private partnerships transactions.

Support the Upgrade of the Ottoman Building in Jerash

BEST supported the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities to develop the Ottoman Building, an Ottoman-era prison located in Jerash, and present the history of the building and the Ottoman Empire and establish an interpretation centre and café there. BEST developed schematic designs and supported artefact selection. BEST completed its role; however, the ministry moved slowly on this initiative and by the project's end, it was still in the works.

AJLOUN VISITOR CENTER RESTAURANT ENHANCED



The staff of Summaga Café in Ajloun.

The ministry granted a concession contract to Al Kifah Cooperative Society to take over operation of the restaurant located on the terrace of the Ajloun Visitor Center. BEST awarded a grant to Al Kifah to support its plan to revamp the restaurant space, enhance dishes and presentation, introduce an authentic and quality food experience, and support marketing activities. BEST helped the society to develop the full café experience and brand, which entailed redesigning and upgrading the space and furniture; enhancing the food offering, menu, and presentation; upgrading the operating equipment; creating a brand; and supporting marketing activities. As a result, Al Kifah developed and introduced the brand “Summaga” to the public.

The upgraded venue is a relaxed all-day café, restaurant, and shop that offers an authentic taste of Ajloun. The Summaga Café sources ingredients from a network of

25 organic farms managed by the society and uses them for the dishes served at the café and available for sale there. The café is the main sales channel for Al Kifah's produce and is the primary income generator for 41 families comprising 64 individuals.

BEST also supported the listing of Summaga Café on “The Meaningful Travel Map of Jordan,” which identifies unique travel experiences that benefit local communities. The JTB and Tourism Cares launched this travel map during the Tourism Cares with Jordan conference, during which around 50 conference delegates visited the café for a meal as part of their tour. As a result of this exposure, Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah visited Al-Kifah Cooperative Society and Summaga Cafe on August 26, 2018. Her visit was covered widely on local and international media channels and was featured on Her Majesty's online social media channels.

SMES LINKED TO LARGER FIRMS

BEST linked the operators of Mountain Breeze biking trail with BookAgri to offer an agritourism experience. Bikers are now able to arrange to stop for a meal at a village home, which can accommodate up to 20 guests, and take part in a halaweh-making experience. BookAgri has also connected with the Matoon store, which sells herbs and spices, in Amman, and it has now dedicated a display section for BookAgri products produced by farming families in As-Salt, giving them a permanent sales point in the capital. Women from the Al Marjan cooperative, a member of BookAgri, have also begun catering for guests at two BookAgri farms.

**SOURCE MARKETS
DEVELOPED**

JORDAN'S TOURISM MARKETING AND SALES MORE EFFECTIVE

SUPPORT JTB'S ROLE AS THE LEADER IN DESTINATION PROMOTION AND HELP ACHIEVE STRATEGY GROWTH GOALS



A tourist looks over the ancient theatre in Petra.

Three-year Strategies Guide JTB Efforts

BEST helped develop the JTB's 2017 to 2019 marketing strategy. BEST support enabled the JTB to acquire customized research from FutureBrand on the brand health and positioning of "Brand Jordan" to feed into the strategy. TripAdvisor conducted the perception research on Jordan in July 2016 using its Global Panel Survey. The JTB officially adopted the 2017 to 2019 strategy in December 2016. The strategy guided the tourism board's work over three years to market the Kingdom internationally by targeting the highest potential markets for Jordan in a cost-effective way and achieve the best possible return on investment. It focused on markets with highest potential yield and responsiveness and used cutting-edge marketing techniques. The strategy included a large digital component, an area in which JTB was previously weak, and MICE. It also identified adventure and faith tourism niches as key to Jordan, along with specific geographic source markets. It proposed a new business model for the JTB to optimize strategy implementation. BEST offered ongoing support for strategy implementation throughout those three years.

BEST helped JTB implement its organizational restructure and improve its human resources management to support the new JTB business model developed to implement the strategy. The new structure created clearer internal channels and enabled more efficient implementation. JTB set up a digital marketing unit, which immediately formed alliances with TripAdvisor and other key digital tourism platforms.

BEST also supported the JTB's "take-to-market" approach, helping to plan activities that targeted tactical source markets, niches, and segments. BEST developed a strategy to guide the JTB's market-based representatives' efforts in approaching target source markets and drafted a separate strategy for targeting tour operators. BEST also worked on geographic market action plans, recruitment of a digital agency, and activating digital tools. BEST helped finalize the JTB's digital activation plan and its advocacy plan and built the JTB's capacity to implement the plans and strategy.

The JTB successfully achieved the objectives of its 2017 to 2019 strategy, which transitioned its marketing approach from being primarily location-based to interest-based. As a result, the board reached wider audiences and achieved impressive targets and results. The number of airlines flying to Jordan increased, as did frequency of flights, and low-cost carriers began routes to Jordan. Visitor numbers and tourism revenues grew significantly. Between 2016 and 2019

saw a 12 percent increase in visitors to Jordan, a 41 percent increase in tourism receipts, and a 6 percent increase in people employed in the sector. Although it is difficult to determine what proportion of increase can be attributed to the actions guided by the strategy, it nonetheless had a significant impact through the introduction of low-cost carriers and wide-reaching digital marketing campaigns that targeted key niche markets.



To build on this success, in early 2019, BEST began support to develop the JTB's 2020 to 2023 strategy and action plan. BEST adopted a new strategy approach that focused on consolidating efforts, targeting markets served by low-cost carriers, expanding the segmentation model of the previous strategy, and further boosting digital marketing. To maintain momentum and to support the JTB on its journey toward self-reliance, the strategy update revisits Jordan's market segmentation model and incorporates the JTB's new brand. The update also highlights the importance of international partnerships for fortified marketing and promotional efforts, targeted campaigns, and other activities to strengthen Jordan's positioning as a desirable destination. In September 2019, BEST held industry meetings, consultations, and focus groups to feed into the strategy development. BEST incorporated their input and submitted the strategy to JTB at the end of 2019. The strategy will assist JTB to grow and continues to effectively promote Jordan as a tourism destination.

Advocacy and Governance Strengthened as Key Drivers for Effective Strategy Implementation

Part of the JTB strategy was to develop a new advocacy model to address challenges to convening regular board meetings, represent the industry through membership, and improve the overall capacity of the board. BEST supported work to improve the JTB's board governance, revisiting and amending bylaws, and these challenges have now been addressed. The JTB's governance structure has been improved and its capacity is strengthened. Decision-making has improved, and private and public-sector industry representation has been expanded. The JTB appointed a vice chairman, which enables the board to convene on a regular basis to make timely decisions. Additionally, specialized committees have been created within the board to advise on specific topics. These changes are in accordance with best practice for organizations of similar nature and structure.

With support from BEST, the JTB made great strides in effective implementation of board governance key principles and international best practice. Since the assessment conducted in July 2018 and the implementation of the action plan put forth by BEST, the board's rating has moved to more than 80 percent, meaning that it has successfully achieved level one in implementing international board governance best practice. The work done improves its overall performance and effectiveness and is an achievement for the JTB, which was recognized for successfully achieving level one in record time at a U.K. event hosted by The Governance Forum in November 2019.

Board Governance Among Industry Entities Strengthened

To improve board governance among industry entities for greater effectiveness and efficiency, BEST held a training workshop on board governance for JTB board members and executive officers of key tourism associations in Jordan in 2018. The workshop covered key corporate governance principles, best practice based on governance codes from around the world, and good governance frameworks. The workshop also provided case studies and examples of effective and ineffective governance practices. Attendees included board representatives of JTOA, Jordan Society of Tourism & Travel Agents, Jordan Hotels Association, JRA, Jordan Handicraft Producers Association, and the JTA.

Support JTB to Attract Wider and New Segments in North America

BEST helped promote Jordan as a travel destination in North America by supporting the JTB North America (JTBNA) to implement consumer- and industry-focused programs and activities to boost the perception of Jordan as a safe and desirable destination. BEST supported the JTBNA's online marketing efforts with National Geographic, Matador Network, and CMD Productions to reach the North American market.

JTB partnered with National Geographic and Matador Network to develop and distribute a series of highly targeted shareable content featuring Jordan for dissemination in the United States of America and Canada. BEST also supported the JTB to procure interactive 360-degree virtual photos, video content, and virtual tours and to make this content freely accessible to the Jordanian tourism trade. As a result of

the collaboration with Matador Network, visual content was created that captured Jordan's beautiful landscapes, popular tourist attractions, and the hospitality of its peoples. In December 2016, Matador Network released three videos on Jordan across its social media channels and achieved over one million online impressions. Jordan topped Matador Network's annual list, "The World's Best Places to Travel," for 2017.

In February 2017, National Geographic launched the editorial hub "Jordan's Journey of a Lifetime" in collaboration with JTBNA. The editorial platform illustrated how Jordan is culturally rich and unique with many desirable travel destinations. It included digital advertisements, videos, stories and articles, travel tips, photo galleries, social media content, and an interactive map of Jordan. "Jordan's Journey of a Lifetime" campaign reached more than 100 million prospective travelers worldwide.

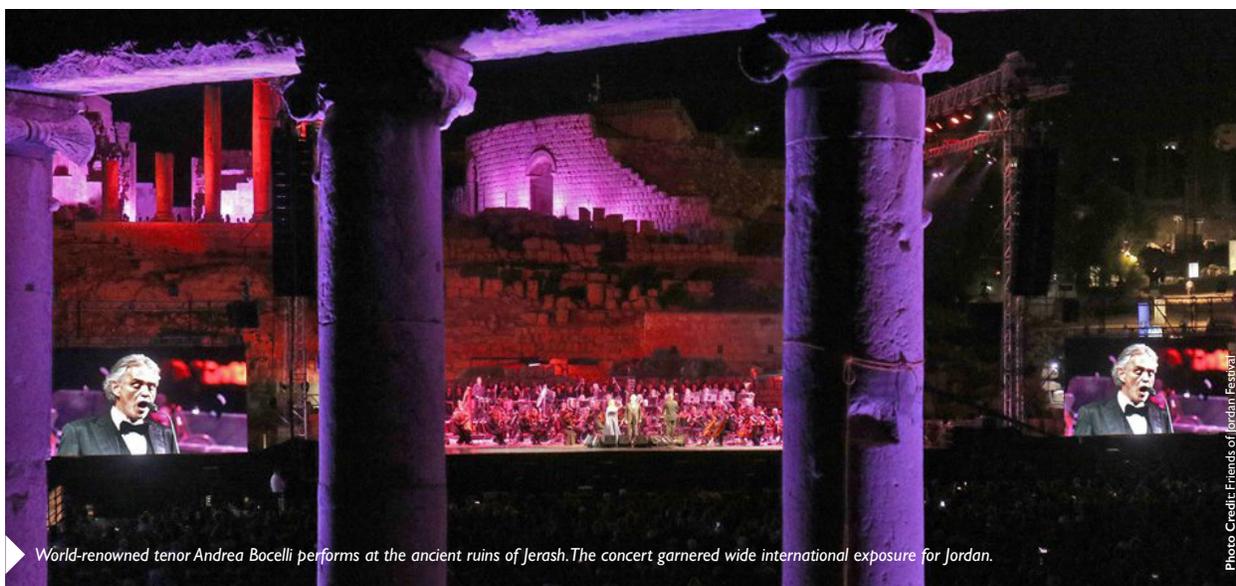
Also in that year, CMD Productions produced a series of educational and informative online material (e.g., videos, presentations, brochures) on Jordan's tourism offering. Content was primarily directed toward source market tourism trade representatives (e.g., travel agents, tour operators, group leaders) and consumers in source markets as well. Together, the campaigns achieved more than 20 million impressions and an 85 percent rate of positive sentiment (online comments and feedback). These results helped reshape Jordan's image in the international marketplace and raise its stature and image of stability and safety.

Expand Pool of Qualified International Tour Operators and Travel Agents to Sell Jordan

Under a previous tourism project, USAID created an online travel agent academy with TravAlliance and JTB through which 1,000 U.S. travel agents were trained and certified as "Jordan specialists." BEST supported the JTBNA to update the course material for an online travel agent academy and helped promote it to international tour operators. In August 2019, 150 tour operators were reported as having completed the online training course since late 2018.

MARKETING TO ATTRACT TOURISTS FROM KEY SOURCE MARKETS ENHANCED

SOURCE MARKETS AND MEDIA PORTRAY JORDAN AS A DESIRABLE AND STABLE DESTINATION



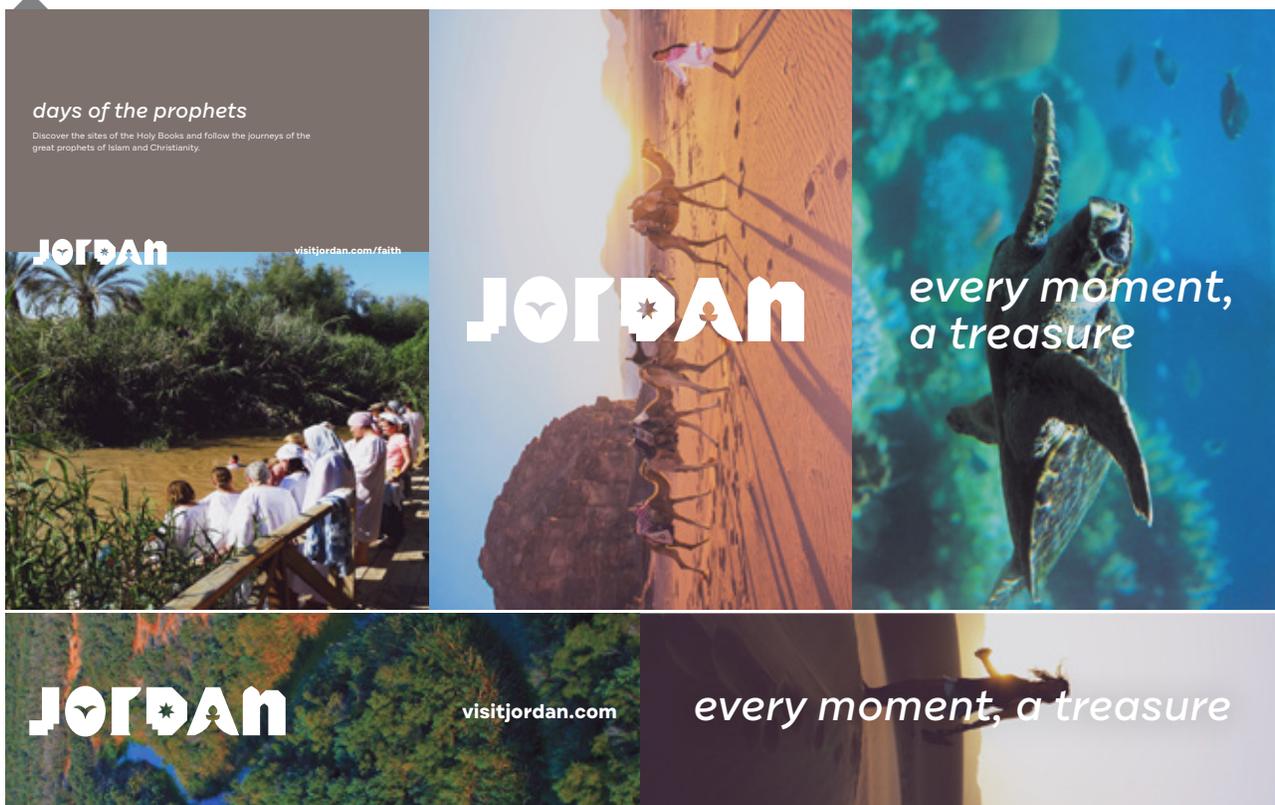
Enhance Destinations' Capability and Resilience to Respond to Crises

BEST helped build the JTB's communications and marketing capacity in destination crisis management through knowledge transfer from specialized crisis management consultants, interactive training sessions for JTB staff, and development of a crisis management plan that was fully aligned with the JTB's digital marketing strategy at the time. This assisted JTB's efforts to position Jordan as a safe and desirable destination, specifically after the Arab Spring. As a result of this work, Jacobs Media Group and event organizers selected Jordan to host the Resilience through Tourism Summit in collaboration with the JTB, Jacobs Media Group, and Travel Weekly. The event took place in June 2018 and attracted 250 local, regional, and international delegates and speakers, focusing on crisis management and communications within the tourism industry, presenting Jordan as a case study of a "resilient" destination.

Support International Public Relations and Marketing Efforts for High-Profile Events and Festivals

BEST supported several major events in Jordan that garnered positive exposure for the country through international media and marketing campaigns. BEST supported Friends of Jordan Festivals to market and promote the Andrea Bocelli concert, which took place in September 2017. The event leveraged JOD1,655,316 in private sector funds, and media and public relations stories generated around five billion online impressions through different online channels in 73 key source markets and 25 new markets. BEST supported the JTB to host the annual [Tourism Cares Conference](#) in February 2018. Around 70 high-profile tourism industry delegates attended the conference, and 40 of them stayed on for a post-conference tour of Wadi Rum, Aqaba, and Amman. The Equal Playing Field Jordan Quest took place in April 2018, promoting quality for women's football. This high-profile event saw players from more than 25 countries around the world come to Jordan for a weeklong series of events in Jarash, Petra, and Wadi Rum that 700 girls from the communities and refugee populations attended. The activity concluded in Ghor

The new Jordan Brand was developed with USAID BEST support.



Al-Safi near the Dead Sea with a football match that set the world record for playing the lowest-altitude FIFA regulation match. The event gained wide international exposure on major news sites such as [CNN](#), the [Guardian](#), and [ABC](#). Further coverage on sports-related sites like [Sportanddev](#) and [Goal](#) also broadcast the successes of their journey through Jordan. ESPN broadcast the Dead Sea match live, with viewership numbers of around one million. There has also been widespread social media coverage of the event through participant documentation and support from organizations like FIFA.

BEST supported the Jordan Festival in August 2018 at the Amman Citadel, which was organized by Friends of Jordan Festivals. The performing lineup included Tom Jones, Tom Odell, Guitanai, Emel Mathlouthi, and Riham Abdel Hakim.

A New Brand for Jordan

BEST supported the JTB to develop a new destination brand for Jordan, which is multifaceted and fully aligned with the tourism board's strategy and speaks to motivations-based target

audiences. By the project's end, BEST developed and submitted a new brand to the JTB for launch and roll-out. The brand is based on an "emotional quotient" model to attract visitors based on their interests. It aligns with the board's new approach to target source markets, focusing on the intrepid traveler in addition to the faith and adventure markets. The new brand supports the JTB's work to effectively market Jordan to potential visitors as an attractive tourism destination.

JTB and Industry Use Cooperative Marketing

Cooperative marketing involves engaging the private sector in promotion and coordinating marketing activities to contribute to the country's investment in marketing Jordan as a destination. BEST worked with the JTB, local tour operators, and DMOs to implement cooperative marketing efforts.

Support Ability to Develop and Increase Marketing Opportunities to Leverage Private Sector Funding

BEST reviewed the JTB's approach to cooperative marketing and, in December 2019, made recommendations on the most efficient and effective approach to leverage private sector funding to market Jordan. The recommendations give them a better understanding of why to pursue private sector contributions, the mechanisms for doing so, and accounting for it in financial reporting. BEST worked with the board to develop a cooperative marketing plan. Previously, the JTB's cooperative marketing entailed support to international trade, with counterpart contributions not considered a part of their marketing spend. There were no clear criteria for identifying and selecting the cooperative efforts; nor was there a system to monitor and evaluate the success of these cooperative partnerships. The JTB now has criteria for selecting partnerships to ensure that efforts are aligned with the board's overall marketing strategy and tools to monitor and assess results and impact.

Plaza Tours Targets Faith and MICE Business

BEST supported Plaza Tours to attract visitors from the U.K. faith market and MICE business from Dubai, Algeria, Russia, and Lebanon in collaboration with other tour operators and hotels in Jordan. BEST support enabled Plaza Tours to attend trade shows relevant to its target markets, with the goal of expanding its distribution channels and increasing sales. To reach the Dubai market, Plaza Tours took part in MICE Arabia, one of the region's premier MICE shows, in March 2017. At the show, Plaza Tours promoted Jordan as a MICE destination and met with more than 50 organizations; seven bookings were made during the event, and future interest in Jordan was expressed. In September 2017, Plaza Tours conducted a sales mission to the United Kingdom to promote Jordan's faith and MICE offerings. The sales team from Jordan connected with 55 travel agents and tour operators.

Karma House Targets South America

BEST supported Karma House, a Jordanian inbound tour operator and Destination Marketing Company, to implement cooperative marketing activities that targeted the South American market. This enabled Karma House to participate in Travel Week Brazil and conduct sales missions in Brazil and Argentina to promote and sell Jordan to the South and Latin American markets. It reached more than 200 tour operators and travel agents, which expanded its travel agent network to new markets.

JITOA Promotes Incentive Travel to Jordan

With BEST's support, JITOA organized a MICE promotion event in Dubai in September 2017, meeting with companies and organizations that operate or undertake MICE travel. The Jordan delegation included 15 representatives from hotels, tour operators, and the JTB. BEST also supported a JITOA-led Jordanian delegation to participate in an international MICE show in Turkey to increase awareness about Jordan as a MICE destination and boost sales. More than 200 meetings were conducted with international MICE buyers. Through support from BEST, JITOA also developed its 2020 to 2023 strategy, which focuses on the association's sustainability and self-reliance.

Support the Creation and Development of a New Engaging MICE Attraction at a Secondary Site

Through BEST support, Mountain Breeze Resort in Jal'ad near As-Salt upgraded its facilities, built meeting facilities, and is equipped to cater for small- to medium-sized meetings of up to 100 people. More than 150 meeting room bookings were made within the first six months after completing work. BEST also developed the digital marketing capacity of the management and sales teams, along with a digital marketing plan to guide efforts in marketing the resort. BEST facilitated online booking, and reservations made online now make up 30 percent of total bookings. BEST also helped develop cycling routes in the area that link with local communities, which increased business by 20 percent.



Jordanian tour operators meet with Scandinavian counterparts at a roadshow organized by JITOA

Photo Credit: JITOA

Positioning Jordan as a Motorcycle Sports Destination

Through a grant to the Royal Motorcycle Club of Jordan, BEST supported the Jordan Riders Rally between 2016 and 2018, which attracted 1,300 regional and international riders to Jordan and was covered extensively by local and regional media. Because of its success, the Jordan Riders Rally is now officially endorsed by the International Motorcycle Federation and is shared on its calendar of events as the prime motorcycle event in the region. The Jordan Riders Rally has now become a sustainable annual event. Also, through BEST support, the Royal Motorcycle Club of Jordan upgraded its website as a source of information on motorcycling in Jordan and mapped five new motorcycle routes in Jordan, including one off-road route.

Participation in The Meetings Show 2019 in London

BEST facilitated a partnership between JITOA and the JCB unit to participate in the Meetings Show in London in June 2019 along with five local tour operators and service providers. The trade show attracts more than 600 exhibitors and 4,500 attendees from around the world, including agency buyers, in-house planners, associations planners, and media. The Jordanian delegation garnered extensive exposure for and interest in Jordan, creating great publicity for Jordan as a MICE destination.

Roadshow in Scandinavian Markets

JITOA and JTB are seeing an increase in visitors from the Scandinavian region. With direct flights linking Copenhagen to Jordan since mid-2018, Jordan has proven to be a desirable leisure destination for the Scandinavian market. Scandinavian countries represent lucrative markets for Jordan, with tourists from Denmark spending an average of almost seven nights in the country for leisure and vacation and those from Sweden spending an average of 7.5 nights for the same purpose. To promote Jordan as a tourism destination within these markets and increase tourist arrivals from Denmark and Sweden, BEST supported JITOA and members of the tourism trade to implement successful roadshows in Copenhagen and Stockholm in September 2019. Representatives from 19 leading tour operators and hotels in Jordan, and airlines that connect Scandinavian countries to Jordan, took part in the roadshows. More than 60 Danish and Swedish travel agents and tour operators attended the events, which the local media covered, and learned about Jordan's tourism offerings. Given the wide interest in Jordan from these two markets, event attendees were expecting to see a significant increase in the number of travelers from the Scandinavian market.



Three Star Wars cast members tour Jordan ahead of the movie premiere in December 2016.

DIGITAL MARKETING DRIVES GROWTH

Strategic Partnership with TripAdvisor Boosts Digital Reach and Marketing

To help the JTB significantly expand its digital and social media reach, BEST facilitated a deal with TripAdvisor whereby it will grant the JTB \$250,000 worth of free advertising on its platform. In addition, BEST agreed with TripAdvisor to hold its upcoming Destination Academy with TripAdvisor (DATA) conference in Jordan in early 2018. The conference discusses digital marketing trends and outlook for destinations at the tourist board level. This is the first time DATA will be held in the Middle East, and Dubai was a main contender for the location. Because of BEST's facilitation, TripAdvisor selected Jordan for the 2018 meeting, which brought in representatives from tourism offices in the region. BEST supported the event and requested that a post-DATA event be organized and made open to the local industry so they can benefit and learn the latest trends and innovations in digital and social media marketing.

TripAdvisor is the largest platform for travel reviews, and through this partnership, the TripAdvisor campaign advertised Jordan to a large audience of potential travelers around the world. The campaign launched in June 2017 and has been highly successful. It sought to increase the number of users engaging with Jordan content on TripAdvisor to help drive conversion to bookings.

According to TripAdvisor, there were fantastic levels of engagement for all markets featured in the campaign; it saw a 46 percent increase in unique sessions looking at Jordan on TripAdvisor between June and August 2017 in comparison with the same time in the previous year.

JTB Learns International Best Practices in Digital Destination Management

The Digital Academy with TripAdvisor conference took place in February 2019, based on the request of participating DMOs and regional tourism boards. Five DMOs participated from Lebanon, Ras Al Khaimah, Oman, Egypt, and Jordan. Supported by BEST, the JTB prepared a program that included stops in Amman, Petra, the Dead Sea, and an interactive farm-to-table experience in Ghor Al Safi. TripAdvisor and e-Tourism Frontiers led informative sessions that discussed the growing importance of user-generated content in travel planning and analysis of the latest data trends from TripAdvisor. BEST influenced TripAdvisor's decision to hold this event in Jordan, and both the JTB and TripAdvisor contributed funding to hold it. JTB staff attended and broadened their knowledge and technical capacity in digital marketing.

CAPITALIZE ON FILM INDUSTRY TO PROMOTE JORDAN INTERNATIONALLY

BEST supported the Royal Film Commission to position Jordan as a filming destination for the lucrative international film industry and to capitalize on the exposure of major movies filmed in Jordan to increase demand and interest in the country. The Royal Film Commission promoted Jordan as a filming destination at three international filming festivals (Cannes Film Festival, Association of Film Commissioners International Locations Show in Los Angeles, and Dubai Film Festival), reaching dozens of production houses and location scouts. As a result, a French movie production confirmed that it will film an upcoming project in Jordan.

BEST then supported the Royal Film Commission to host film producers and location scouts, including executives from Disney and Netflix, on a familiarization trip to Jordan to learn about its diverse film locations. Participants were impressed by the diversity of Jordan as a filming destination, and the trip feedback was positive. Disney selected Jordan as the filming location for its Aladdin following the trip.

In August 2017, the Royal Film Commission held its first conference to discuss positioning Jordan as a desirable film tourism destination, during which it launched a three-year strategy for boosting film tourism in Jordan. The commission developed this strategy in cooperation with the JTB, supported by BEST.

BEST supported the JTB to produce a video on Wadi Rum that capitalized on the movie *The Martian*, which was filmed there. The tourism board shared the video through its social media channels and achieved millions of views. BEST supported Monaco Business Development in capitalizing on the release of the blockbuster movie *Star Wars: Rogue One*, which was partially filmed in Wadi Rum. BEST supported a publicity activity in which three *Star Wars* cast members toured Jordan and shared their experiences with fans and targeted segments across digital and social media channels. This tour corresponded with the movie's premiere in Jordan in December 2016.

JORDAN'S STRATEGIC NICHE SEGMENTS IN SOURCE MARKETS STRENGTHENED

SUPPORT JTB AND TRADE TO DEVELOP AND GROW FAITH TRAVEL TO JORDAN

JTB Biblical Travel Destination Plan Finalized

BEST supported the JTB to develop a biblical destination strategy and action plan to promote Jordan as a faith-based destination. BEST finalized the biblical faith strategy and submitted it to the JTB in August 2019, who created a dedicated department based on the strategy.

Going on Faith with JTBNA



BEST supported the JTB to host a “Going on Faith” biblical familiarization trip in November 2018 for 12 tour operators that sell faith and classical itineraries in North America. The trip covered the main biblical and cultural sites in Jordan and facilitated networking between participants and local tour operators. The workshop was an opportunity for local sellers and international buyers of faith itineraries to discuss challenges and ways to successfully collaborate. The board reported positive feedback from the international tour operators who took part, based on pre- and post-trip surveys they completed; 75 percent of participants reported a change in their perception of Jordan as a faith destination and confirmed that Jordan will be added to their 2019 and 2020 itineraries following the familiarization trip. 63 percent also thought that Jordan was rich enough to be sold as a stand-alone destination, and 25 percent reported confirmed bookings to Jordan during the first half of 2019 as a result of the familiarization trip.

JITOA Sales Mission in Poland

BEST supported JITOA and tourism sector representatives and trade to take part in a roadshow in Poland in 2018 to promote Jordan as a faith, MICE, and leisure destination. Three roadshows were then implemented to capitalize on the Ryanair routes that began operating to and from Jordan in 2018. As a result, Jordan was introduced to more than 60 Polish travel agents and tour operators, along with MICE buyers and international MICE event management companies. Several articles were published about Jordan, and a TV report was produced on one of the leading pilgrimage programs in Poland. In April 2019, JITOA and the JTB reported bookings for 2019 to Jordan as a result of the roadshow. BEST's investment of \$13,000 in the roadshow yielded more than \$100,000 in tourism business in just three months.

Following the roadshows, BEST supported both parties to implement a consumer-focused promotional campaign in Poland to grow the Polish market to Jordan. The campaign, which ran in the last quarter of 2019, included familiarization trips and roadshows, in addition to a video to promote faith tourism in Poland via social media channels. The campaign ran at the end of 2019 and early 2020, and BEST's technical support to JITOA to implement activities that contribute to its self-sufficiency and sustainability continues while financial support is being phased out.

Targeting Egypt's Coptic Market

BEST supported the JITOA to promote Jordan to the Coptic market in Egypt in 2017. This Minister of Tourism and Antiquities in partnership with the JTB led this activity. The Jordanian trade delegation met with 54 Egyptian tour operators and a high-level Egyptian delegation headed by the Coptic Pope. The response from the Egyptian delegation was positive, and four articles were published about the event and Jordan in three local papers and via Noorsat TV, a specialized religious satellite station.

SUPPORT THE JTB'S EFFORTS TO LAY FOUNDATION FOR MORE COMPETITIVE WELLNESS TOURISM

In February 2019, BEST assessed Jordan's wellness sector and consulted tourism and wellness representatives, including hotel and spa managers, tour operators, heads of tourism associations, the JTB, and the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities for a better understanding of the sector, its challenges, and its opportunities. The wellness tourism assessment report indicated that there is value in promoting Jordan as a wellness destination. Thus, this segment was incorporated in the JTB strategy for 2020-2023 and BEST developed a wellness plan to guide the short-, medium- and long-term vision and actions for



Photo Credit: Jordan Tourism Board

SUPPORT THE JCB AND GROW MICE TRAVEL TO JORDAN



Photo Credit: Ahmad Qasbiel, USAID BEST

The JCB was launched in August 2017 to coordinate efforts to attract international MICE to Jordan and facilitate support for organizers. One of the 2016 to 2019 JTB marketing strategy's key recommendations was to set up a convention bureau. BEST assisted the JTB to establish the new bureau, including developing SOPs, internal bylaws, and a business plan. BEST also helped build capacity within the JTB for operating the convention bureau.

Since its launch, the JCB has made huge strides in becoming a well-established convention bureau, with the ability to bid for and win regional and international conferences — a feat that similar bureaus require years to accomplish. This was achieved because of the intensive work done through BEST to transfer specialized knowledge to JCB and ensure that international best practices are implemented. The commitment and support of JTB management, along with the dedication of the JCB team, helped realize these goals. Compared with 2017 numbers, Jordan has

seen a more than 100 percent increase in the number of international conferences held in 2018, according to the International Congress & Convention Association 2018 reports and ranking. Only five years ago, Jordan was among the weakest destinations in the number of conferences held per year. In 2018, Jordan hosted 22 conferences — a huge leap for the destination in its first winning business year after the JCB's establishment. Jordan also ranked second in the Middle East after the United Arab Emirates for hosting international association meetings, outranking well-developed countries such as Oman, Qatar, Iran, and Israel.

BEST supported the JCB to develop a Meeting Planners Guide, launched in August 2019, which serves as a resource for organizations or associations looking to hold events in Jordan. BEST also developed a JTB MICE strategy for 2020 to 2023. The strategy is a roadmap for the tourism board's activity to grow MICE tourism in Jordan.

EXISTING SALES AND DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS IN SOURCE MARKETS STRENGTHENED

BEST supported JTOA to conduct 12 power breakfast meetings with keynote local and international high-level speakers who shed light on topics that concern and affect the tourism industry. These covered key markets for Jordan, including Italy, France, Turkey, Brazil, Ireland, and the United Kingdoms. Hundreds of industry representatives attended, including

hotel representatives, tour operators, development companies, government organizations, and NGOs. The meetings focused on potential ways of increasing tourist arrivals to Jordan from these markets, highlighted new trends and opportunities, and shared traveller statics and traveller behavior information.

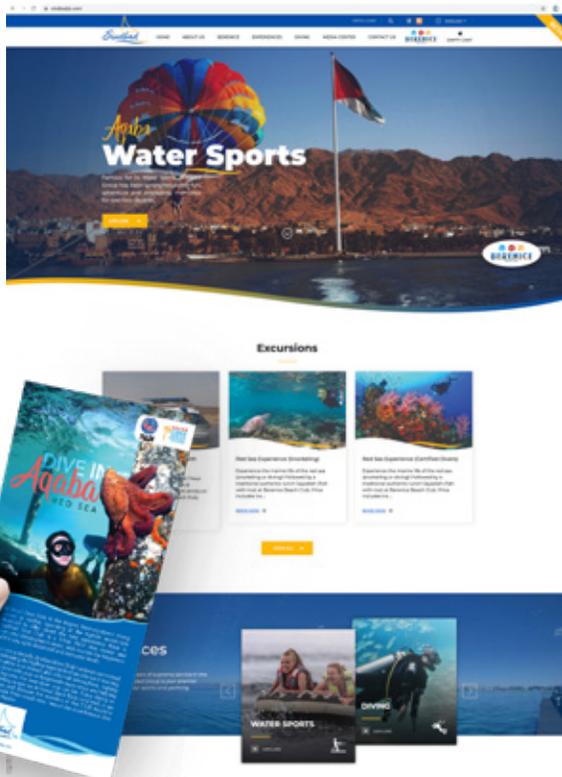
SUPPORT EFFORTS TO POSITION JORDAN AS AN ADVENTURE DESTINATION

BEST supported the AdventureNEXT Near East Conferences in Jordan in 2017, 2018, and 2019. As reported by the Adventure Travel Trade Association, which implemented the conferences, more than 5,300 travelers visited Jordan in 2017 and 2018 through AdventureNEXT buyers. They stayed for an average of eight days and spent an average of \$1,265 per traveler. Results of the 2019 conference, which was held in Aqaba, indicate that more than 220 adventure travel industry professionals from more than 25 countries took part, in addition to 30 curated international travel media representatives. There was an 88 percent overall satisfaction with the event, and an average of 18 valuable business connections were made by each delegate. Also, 98 percent of international buyers expressed a firm interest in adding new products from Jordan to their offered itineraries or expanding the Jordanian experiences sold.

BEST SUPPORT = SUCCESS

To promote tourism experiences and products, BEST facilitated the participation of Summaga and BookAgri in the 2018 Adventure Travel and Tourism Association conference. They displayed their products and gained exposure to international and local adventure travel tour operators, which led to an increase in the number of package tour visitors.

INCREASE AQABA'S COMPETITIVENESS IN ATTRACTING ALL-INCLUSIVE MARKET SEGMENTS THROUGH IMPROVED AND NEW PRODUCT OFFERING

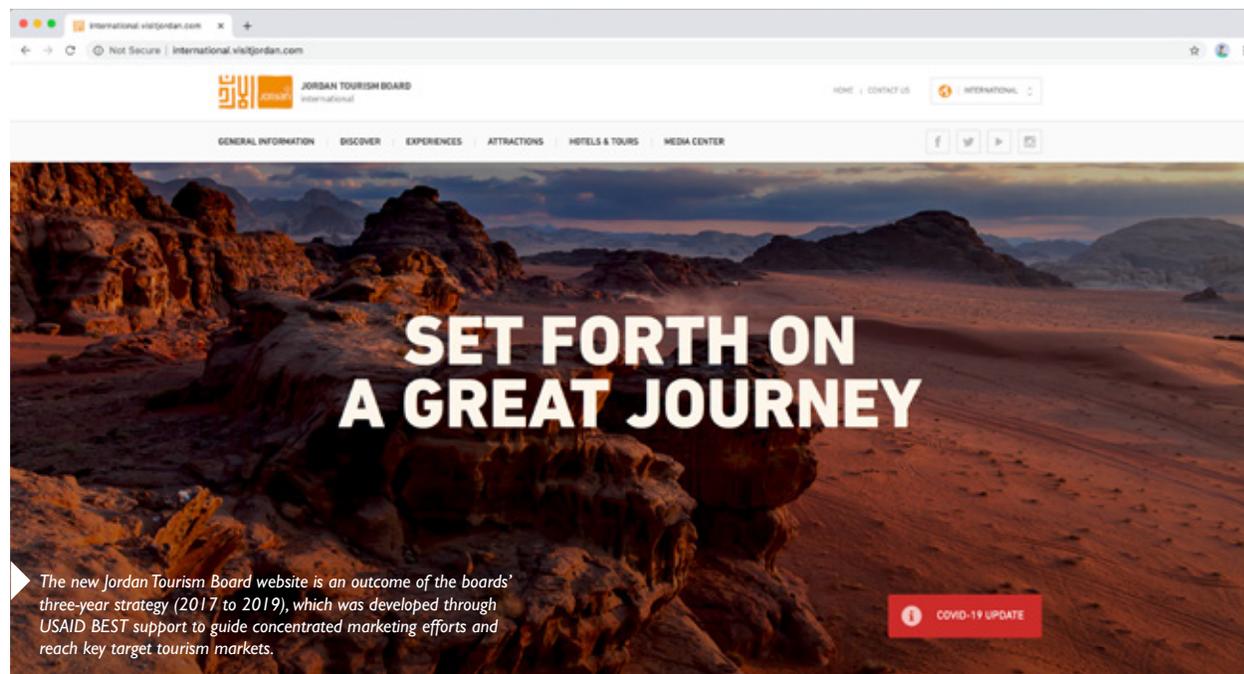


To increase the competitiveness of Aqaba as a destination by enhancing products and marketing, BEST supported the Sindbad Group, a tourism service provider in Aqaba, to introduce and market new services, tourism products, and experiences. This enabled the group and local tour operators to offer more competitive packages to the underserved all-inclusive market. Sindbad Group launched its new website in April 2019, which provides information on and allows bookings for the tourism products and services that the group offers in Aqaba. Handheld tablets were procured for the group's on-the-ground sales team to receive and process bookings via the new website, which supports real-time bookings. BEST also helped develop a marketing plan for the Sindbad Group, along with new branding and marketing material to promote its activities and services. Sindbad Group participated in the Birmingham Dive Show 2016 and Moscow Dive Show 2017 to attract business to Aqaba and introduce its new experiences. BEST also supported development of the Aqaba Kitchen, an authentic cooking experience at Berenice Beach Club. The kitchen opened in April 2019 and has become popular among tour operators as a new activity for tourist groups.

USAID BEST supported Sindbad Group in Aqaba to develop marketing materials.

JORDAN'S TRAVEL AGENT AND TOUR OPERATORS' NETWORKS EXPANDED AND CULTIVATED

EXPAND JTB'S ONLINE NETWORKS PROMOTING AND SELLING JORDAN



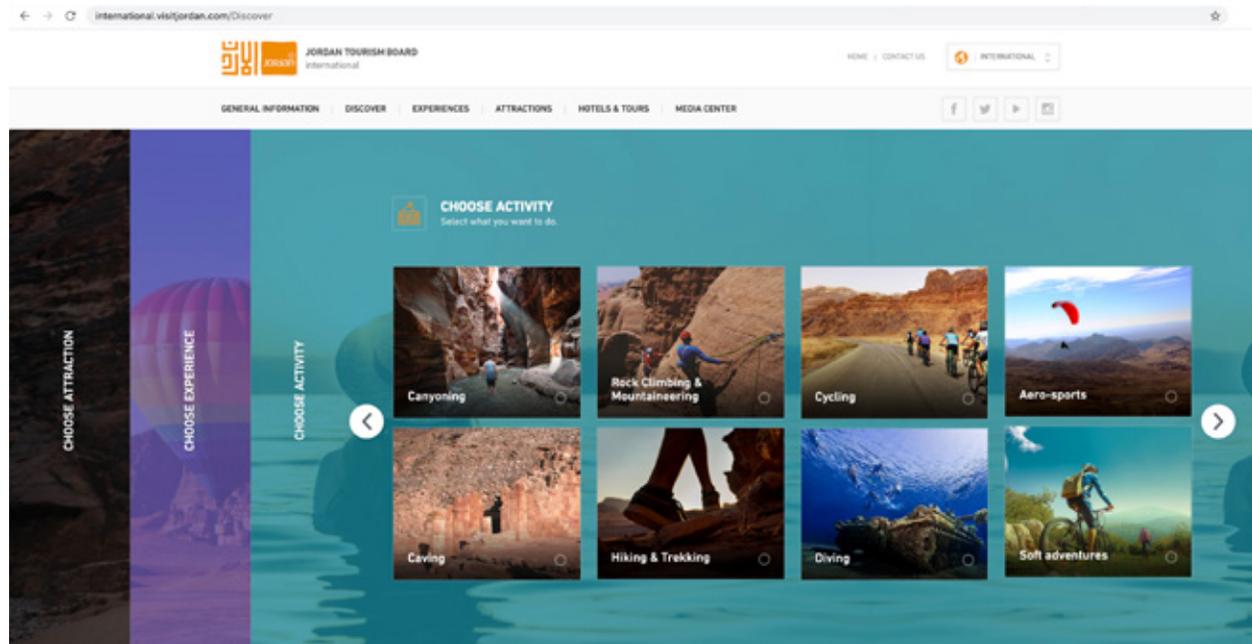
As discussed above, in 2018, BEST facilitated an agreement wherein TripAdvisor would support JTB's global promotional efforts by implementing three targeted campaigns. These ran between June 2018 and March 2019. The first campaign focused on low-cost carriers to Jordan, specifically Ryanair, and targeted markets served by the airline. Through this partnership, Jordan was advertised to TripAdvisor's audience of 450 million travelers around the globe, resulting in a 34 percent overall year-on-year increase in engagement with Jordan content online and a 34 percent uplift in unique sessions looking at Jordan-related content online.

In terms of digital marketing, the JTB's social media performance has seen unprecedented growth and tactical engagement with audiences from top-tier source markets, competing with well-funded and competitive tourism boards in the region such as Dubai, Israel, Oman, and Egypt. As discussed previously, BEST also supported the JTB to host the DATA conference in February 2019, which attracted DMOs and tourism boards across the region to discuss the importance of user-generated content in travel planning; the challenges of curating content; impacts of social media outlets on destinations; and mobile, tablet and location-based marketing techniques. It was the first iteration of the event held in the Middle East, and TripAdvisor selected Jordan to host because of the JTB's strong digital marketing performance.

In July 2019, supported by BEST, the JTB launched a \$500,000 global digital marketing campaign with TripAdvisor to inspire interest in Jordan and convert interest to travel. The campaign targeted key source markets and segments for Jordan as identified in the 2017 to 2019 destination marketing strategy. The worldwide campaign used tailored content and reached millions of people from Jordan's target markets and segments.

The JTB launched its new "Visit Jordan" website in May 2019. The new site uses the latest travel website technologies to ensure a state-of-the-art user experience. BEST supported the JTB to develop the site, which allows users to navigate through what Jordan has to offer based on their interests and to browse user-generated content from visitors to Jordan. The website channels interest through to local and international trade to maximize opportunities and convert interest into bookings. The site is available in English, Arabic, and six other languages to cater to a wider international audience of Jordan-bound visitors.

REVAMP THE JTB WEBSITE TO BE CONSUMER-FOCUSED AND CONVERSION-READY



The new Visit Jordan website caters to niche market visitors and is available in eight languages.

BEST supported the JTB to develop a more consumer-focused website, which allows for motivation-based navigation, so users can explore what Jordan has to offer based on their interests and browse user-generated content to from travelers who have visited Jordan. It provides extensive information on Jordan's tourism sites and attractions and presents users with a wide range of community-based experiences and social enterprises around Jordan for those seeking

experiences that directly benefit local communities. Interest in travel to Jordan is channeled to local and international trade to maximize opportunities for converting interest into bookings. The new website is an outcome of the JTB's 2017 to 2019 strategy, developed through BEST support to guide concentrated marketing efforts to enable Jordan to reach its target tourism markets directly.

ENHANCE TRADE'S ABILITY TO PROMOTE AND SELL JORDAN ONLINE

BEST supported JITO to create an interactive website that enables the association to communicate with and support its members and promote their activities. Furthermore, BEST partnered with the JTB to support hotels to do better business online and identify potential opportunities for them to expand their online reach. BEST introduced new tools for managing online bookings and inventory and provided hotels with the needed software and technical training.

HOLD INDUSTRY CONSULTATION ON DIGITAL AND SOCIAL MARKETING

BEST implemented a series of consultations and focus group meetings with tour operators, hoteliers, tour guides, and digital marketing and social media service providers. The output of the focus groups helped inform the development of a digital and social media development plan for the sector and a planned digital and social media conference.

TRADE'S SALES EFFORTS TO GROW DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS AND INCREASE SALES SUPPORTED

EXPAND BUSINESS MODEL OF EXPERIENTIAL RESTAURANT IN MADABA THROUGH DIGITAL MARKETING

Through BEST's support, the Food Basket (Hikayet Sitti) restaurant in Madaba adopted digital and social marketing tools and expanded its sales channels to engage with tour operators and agencies and target consumers directly. BEST helped to develop an activities program that Food Basket marketed and sold directly to clients and through tour operators.

As a result of grant-supported online and offline marketing efforts, Food Basket reported a 60 percent increase in bookings, a 15 percent increase in bookings from international tourists, and that 40 percent of all bookings now include an activity.

PROMOTE TOURISM EXPERIENCES IN JORDAN TO AIRPORT ARRIVALS

BEST worked with Kassab Media to run a month-long marketing campaign that featured advertisements highlighting local tourism experiences in the arrivals terminal at Queen Alia's International Airport in 2018. BEST identified local initiatives and community-based projects to be featured, including Food Basket, the Jordan Trail, BookAgri, and the "Meaningful Travel Map of Jordan."

PROMOTE JORDAN'S TOURISM SOCIAL ENTERPRISES TO TRADE AND CONSUMERS

BEST supported the JTB to develop the "Meaningful Travel Map of Jordan"; 25 "meaningful" experiences are featured on the new JTB website for tour operators and consumers to explore and add to their itineraries. BEST assessed the 25 listed experiences and determined what marketing, operational, on-site, or other gaps are to be addressed for these experiences. BEST compiled the results in an assessment report and submitted it to the JTB for its action.



The Meaningful Travel Map of Jordan is a resource for travelers and the travel industry that promotes experiences across Jordan.

REPOSITION PANORAMA DEAD SEA COMPLEX AS A MICE VENUE

BEST supported Al Hidan Tourism Company to market activities for the Panorama Dead Sea Complex, which it operates. The brand was updated to ensure that it is communicated in a consistent manner. BEST designed new business brochures and implemented service quality training and capacity building for staff, along with social media marketing training. Al Hidan Tourism Company launched its new website, which targets

international visitors and provides detailed information about the facilities and signature experiences offered at the Panorama Complex. The company implemented social media and radio campaigns, reaching an audience of more than 180,000. Following BEST's support, visitors to the Panorama complex increased, and 24 new staff members were employed, 20 of whom are full-time and are from communities nearby.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

In 2019, BEST began support to the JTB and Greater Amman Municipality to develop the “Amman Heritage Walk (Amman Trail).” The purpose of the trail is to draw the attention of residents and tourists to downtown Amman, which has a rich heritage, culture, and history and to increase the length of visitors’ stays in Amman. BEST assisted route planning and developed content for the trail.





Photo Credit: Ahmad Qasbi, USAID BSI

**INCREASED ACCESS
TO FINANCE**

ACCESS TO FINANCE FOR SMALL- AND MEDIUM-SIZED TOURISM ENTERPRISES INCREASED



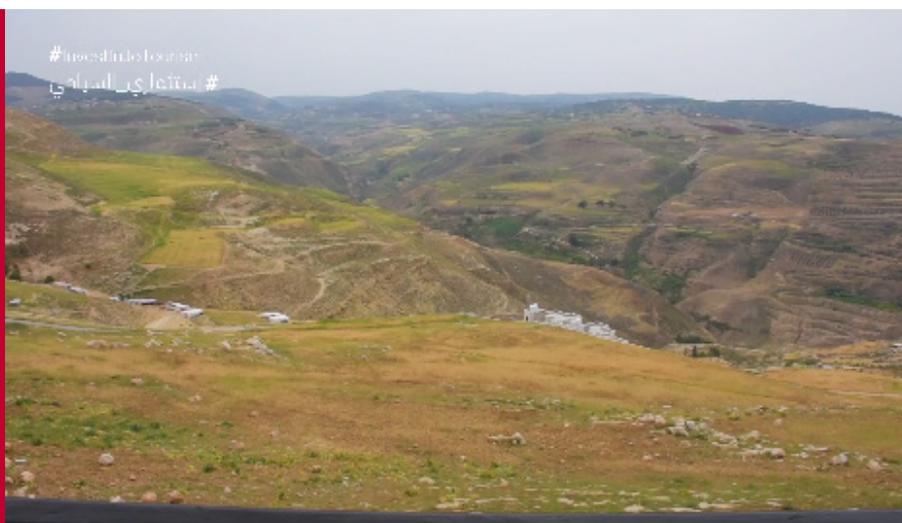
Attendees at a tourism incentives and access to finance roadshow event in Karak.

In partnership with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and the Jordan Federation of Tourism Associations, in 2016, BEST surveyed tourism businesses, investors, and entrepreneurs around the country to identify their finance needs and their impediments to accessing finance. BEST identified and shared the main challenges that Jordan's tourism sector faces in accessing finance for business and investments with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and industry partners and stakeholders.

To address the challenges, BEST identified the available tourism lending products and explored opportunities for partnership with local banks. At first, financial institutions in Jordan were generally apprehensive about the tourism industry, citing the marked downturn in visitors since 2010. To address this, BEST partnered with the USAID Jordan Loan Guarantee Facility to train credit officers and relationship managers at partner banks to boost their financial analysis skills and establish strong awareness of Jordan's tourism industry. Bank staff were educated as to the state of the national tourism sector and about its performance, trends, and outlook. Staff were also encouraged to practice financial analysis of loan applications as per international best practices and focus on "cash-flow" based lending as opposed to current "assets" based lending practices.

BEST partnered with the Housing Bank to increase financing for tourism, and the bank customized a tourism loan product. This was successful, because it boosted access to credit for small-sized tourism enterprises, particularly outside of Amman. It addressed tourism sector needs by considering the seasonality of operations and offers flexible terms, preferential interest rates, and loan guarantee schemes through the USAID Jordan Loan Guarantee Facility. As a result, other banks showed interest in tourism, and BEST partnered with five more banks over the course of the project to develop loan products customized for the tourism industry. Four new tourism loan products were developed, including two based on Islamic financing. Through these partnerships, existing lending facilities and products were customized, and new ones were developed and promoted to tourism SMEs.

Since their partnerships with BEST, the banks gave 47 loans to tourism businesses in Jordan; 50 percent of them are located at governorates outside Amman, 16 are tourism start-ups, and eight are female-owned businesses. Efforts to improve access to finance for tourism businesses have led to more than \$44 million worth of investments in tourism in Jordan (\$18.95 million lending plus \$25.3 million equity), leading to the creation of more than 600 jobs.



A MORE DIVERSE LENDING PORTFOLIO FOR TOURISM ENTERPRISES

Through market research, BEST found that tourism micro-businesses looking for financing were challenged in obtaining the guarantees and collaterals needed to obtain financing. To cater to the informal tourism sector, BEST partnered with the Microfund for Women to customize existing lending facilities and develop new ones for tourism micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises. BEST facilitated a partnership between Microfund for Women and Jordan Loan Guarantee Corporation to guarantee Microfund's first tourism-

focused microlending product in Jordan — Intilaqati Siyahi. BEST also partnered with the Microfund for Women and SPARK to offer interest-free loans of up to JOD10,000 to four tourism entrepreneurs in As-Salt. This was Jordan's first tourism-focused microlending program, and recipients were selected through a competition. SPARK is an organization that works to increase the number of sustainable job opportunities and economic prospects for people in conflict-affected societies and facilitates start-up businesses.

TARGETED LENDING PRODUCTS TO TOURISM ENTERPRISES PROMOTED

BEST implemented tourism investment and incentives roadshows across Jordan in partnership with the JIC in 2017 and 2018. More than 1,100 existing and potential investors in 11 governorates took part. BEST partner banks, USAID Jordan Loan Guarantee Facility, the Jordan Loan Guarantee Corporation, the Development & Employment Fund, and IRADA participated in the roadshows. Attendees learned about the tourism loan products available to them and tourism products on offer by participating partner banks. BEST and partner

stakeholders also implemented a series of tourism investment and access to finance awareness sessions for college and university students and graduates in Year 4. Details on this are in section C.4.2.1.1. To increase demand for tourism lending products offered by its partner banks, BEST also supported social media campaigns to market tourism lending products developed by the Housing Bank and Safwa Islamic Bank and to boost demand for tourism lending.

SME CAPACITY TO ATTRACT LENDERS AND INVESTORS IMPROVED

During the cycle of this project, BEST provided extensive technical support to tourism enterprises to develop sound business plans to apply for lending facilities. BEST developed a new tourism SME training program to provide tourism ventures with guidance on developing business models and plans, assist existing tourism businesses to improve competitiveness and performance, and direct both to sources of financing. Eleven program workshops were held across Jordan, and more than 200 tourism entrepreneurs,

business operators, and investors took part. BEST also developed and maintained a guide on sources of financing for Jordan's tourism sector that details lending products available in the market to ensure prospective tourism borrowers are aware of the financing available to them. BEST disseminated the guidebook to partners and stakeholders, including the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and JIC, to publish on their web sites and give out to investors.

SUCCESS STORIES

YOUNG SALTI WOMAN LAUNCHES ARTISTIC EXPERIENCE IN AS-SALT, JORDAN

BALQEES ENGAGES VISITORS TO AS-SALT IN A CULTURAL EXPERIENCE

SUCCESS STORY

Photo credit: Lisa MacKenzie 2019

Balqeess, a painter and henna artist in As-Salt, is one of several grant recipients in her community. By offering new tourism experiences in As-Salt, they are contributing to efforts to make the city a more attractive tourism destination.

“The project could create work opportunities for women and girls and help them as it has helped me.”



Balqees Abbadi is a university student from As-Salt with a passion for painting and henna. She used to work out of a small space off one of the steep and narrow roads of As-Salt, a heritage-rich city known for its hills and old buildings with impressively arched windows and doorways. Balqees worked as a freelance henna artist and sold her paintings at events to supplement her family's income. However, with insufficient space and income, her activities and options were limited.

USAID BEST's work with local stakeholders to enhance tourism offerings in As-Salt inspired Balqees to bring forth a business idea to engage visitors and share heritage; she decided to launch a hands-on artistic experience for visitors to the city. With support from USAID BEST, Balqees began operating out of Gherbal Restaurant. With time and a growing desire for more space, Balqees refined her unique business idea and set up a space of her own.

“I have loved to draw and paint since I was young, but I wanted to draw henna. While you can get henna tattoos at beauty salons, until now there has not been a shop dedicated to henna as a way to share our cultural heritage with visitors,” explained Balqees

In October 2019, Balqees' shop was ready to receive visitors to view her artwork, learn about the culture and history of henna, get a henna tattoo, enjoy local refreshments, and paint on a pillowcase or t-shirt to take home. Her new space can accommodate large groups. Large painted scenes of As-Salt

and portraits of older Jordanian women stitching the Jordanian head scarf, the shemagh, spatter the walls, and her place is well equipped with bags of henna, paints in every color, and various other art pieces, crafts, and products.

Balqees is hopeful about the development of As-Salt, her shop, and creating opportunity for others. She says, *“Someday, my goal is that all cultural heritage locations in As-Salt will have a ‘Balqees Henna’ corner. I feel this would open work opportunities for women and girls, and that this project would help them as it has helped me.”*

Balqees is one of several entrepreneurs and business owners in As-Salt who received support from USAID BEST and the Salt Development Corporation (SDC) as part of an initiative to develop the city into a distinctive destination. In December 2016, As-Salt was chosen as Jordan's first Distinctive Destination, a program implemented by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and supported by USAID BEST to transform cities with tourism potential into attractive destinations. USAID BEST developed 27 projects with the SDC and local communities. From restaurants to pottery studios, Balqees and other grant recipients are leaders in their communities contributing to the development of As-Salt as an attractive and unique tourist destination.

OPTIMIZING RESOURCES AND POLICIES OF PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

SUCCESS STORY

STRENGTHENING THE INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND ANTIQUITIES

Photo credit: BEST project staff 2018

Previous MoTA Secretary General Issa Gammoh leads a team exercise at the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities in preparation for the 2018 KAA audit

“This has helped us run more efficiently and effectively, and there has been an unprecedented team spirit among ministry staff in adopting the new systems and working towards greater success.”



Jordan's Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA) is tasked with overseeing and developing the country's tourism sector, protecting its heritage and engaging the private sector in tourism. In recent years the ministry had struggled to operate efficiently and in a 2014-2015 national assessment of public institutions in Jordan, which takes place every two years as part of the King Abdullah II Award for Excellence (KAA), MoTA ranked relatively low in terms of performance. The King Abdullah II Award for Excellence (KAA) is the highest national reference for quality and excellence among public, private, and business associations, educational service providers, and non-governmental institutions.

To help improve this situation, between 2016 and 2020 USAID BEST provided intensive support to MoTA, with firm commitment from ministry leadership, to build its capacity for planning and operations and instill core values across the organization to sustain a more efficient and effective ministry over the long term.

USAID BEST supported the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities to improve its institutional performance based on the KAA model and develop a strategic plan for 2018 to 2020 to achieve national tourism objectives more efficiently. The project enhanced the ministry's planning and operations capacity and provided technical support and training to ministry and Department of Antiquities staff around Jordan to ensure sustainability and self-reliance for a more efficient and effective Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities.

“Previously we produced project plans without taking into account specific considerations or issues. Because of our training, we're now able to work out detailed risk management plans and know how to classify [risks];” said Maha Abu Sham'ah, Information Officer for the Directorate of Labor Market Development and Tourism Awareness.

USAID BEST also assisted the development of standard operating procedures (SOPs) for key services to improve efficiency, raise service quality and productivity, facilitate cross-training of ministry personnel, and improve knowledge transfer between offices. This, along with a new feedback system and the strengthening of human

resources management, has helped instill a stronger culture of accountability, communication and responsiveness between ministry departments and the general public. USAID BEST also supported the implementation of a strong monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system, enabling ministry staff to identify indicators, set targets and collect information.

According to Ruba Goussous, Manager of the ministry's Aqaba Tourism Directorate, *“I now know how to better plan projects and set budgets and indicators, and to ensure they fall within the ministry's overall strategy. Because of the training I'm now equipped to do these things within the greater framework of the ministry's national strategy.”*

Following USAID BEST support, the ministry rose from being one of the bottom five performers among public entities in Jordan to a middle ranking position at its next assessment in 2018. Following their improvement, ministry staff were involved in the KAA assessment process for the first time, and the secretary general at the time was recognized for implementing the improvements that had been introduced through USAID BEST support. USAID BEST helped the ministry to establish an Institutional Development Unit, which was formalized in September 2019, to maintain and build on the improved performance achieved through BEST's support.

“USAID worked closely with us to help the ministry transform its operations, processes and planning and align them with international best practice. This has helped us run more efficiently and effectively, and there has been an unprecedented team spirit among ministry staff in adopting the new systems and working towards greater success,” said H.E. Issa Gammoh, previous MoTA Secretary General (until 2019).

The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities plays a direct and important role in the tourism sector by developing site management and development, experiences, investment, and the sector's competitiveness. In improving institutional performance, capacity and planning, internal knowledge sharing, transparency, and overall efficiency, the foundations on which Jordan's tourism sector rests can flourish and strengthen.

AGRITOURISM EXPERIENCES CREATE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

SUCCESS STORY

**PROMOTING
AGRITOURISM
EXPANDS TOURISM
OFFERINGS AND
CREATES JOBS**

Photo credit: Ahmad Qaisieh 2018

Um Nidal (right) shows Rudaina Haddad how to milk a goat, one of the experiences offered at her farm near As-Salt.

“Tourists were going to sites in As-Salt, Jerash, and Ajloun, but the local community never felt the economic impact. No one had engaged them. Agritourism in Jordan engages the local communities and creates jobs.”

Um and Abu Nidal are farmers in the Al Balqa region of Jordan, a rural area near As-Salt that offers limited economic opportunities outside of agriculture. However, farming can be a capricious livelihood.

“We face a lot of challenges in our work. Some years it is drought and other years feed prices and vaccines can be very high,” explained Abu Nidal.

In 2017, USAID BEST supported Al-Marj Training and Development Company to create rural tourism experiences and launch BookAgri.com as a brand and platform to offer these activities and promote local farm produce and homemade food products. As well as helping to address the economic concerns of rural families like Um Nidal's, agritourism created local experiences where visitors can engage with Jordanian families.

Rudaina Haddad, CEO of Al-Marj and founder of BookAgri, worked as a tour guide and realized the agritourism gap before driving its development in Jordan. She explained, *“There were no agritourism destinations (in Jordan) prior to BookAgri. Classical tours lack human contact and don't touch upon the richness of society, the cultural heritage, or our natural resources. Tourists were going to sites in As-Salt, Jerash, and Ajloun, but the local community never felt the economic impact. No one had engaged them. Agritourism in Jordan engages the local communities and creates jobs.”*

Um Nidal's family was one of a dozen in Al Balqa that, between 2017 and 2019, received support through Al Marj with USAID assistance to develop agritourism experiences at their farms. Visitors take part in activities like collecting free range eggs, milking goats, churning butter, and more. In addition, local women produce homemade food products that are sold under the BookAgri brand at markets, bazaars and a permanent sales outlet. The families working with BookAgri have an additional income channel. With Um Nidal's for example, family debt was paid,

and revenues from agritourism contributed to the children's tuition fees. In the high season, Um Nidal's family farm sees 250 to 300 visitors, which more than doubles their income during those months.

The agritourism initiative was a success, for both the hosts and the visitors. It diversified tourism products and experiences in Jordan, and enabled tourists to engage with locals and learn about their agricultural lifestyles and heritage. Rudaina decided to expand BookAgri to the north of Jordan and in 2019 USAID BEST supported Al Marj to establish seven new experiences at family homes and farms in Jerash and Ajloun.

Overall, USAID BEST supported Al Marj to establish 19 unique agritourism experiences in coordination with farmers and rural families in villages in Al Balqa, Ajloun and Jerash, and to package and sell local food products under the BookAgri brand. This work created more than 200 full and part-time jobs, most of which are held by women. In addition, beneficiaries reported revenue increases between 25% and 50% since joining BookAgri.

Rudaina explained, *“BookAgri has a positive impact on the partnering agricultural community. It increased the economic value of the farms and the products, which are now packaged and branded.”* She added, *“They (As-Salt agritourism providers) have become integral parts of a project that is expanding across the country. It is a chain of success and the women involved have additional income and know they are part of a community that is growing.”*

Becoming part of the tourism industry has transformed the lives of many farmers and rural families in Jordan, not just financially.

“I am now able to tell my story and the story of our heritage as a result of the global exposure gained through being visited from people from different countries and different walks of life. This wouldn't have been possible otherwise,” says Um Nidal.



IMPROVING AWARENESS OF INCENTIVES FOR TOURISM BUSINESSES IN JORDAN

PROMOTING NATIONAL INITIATIVES BENEFITING JORDAN'S TOURISM SECTOR

SUCCESS STORY

“The incentives present new and relevant considerations for tourism businesses and investors. They benefit investors and entrepreneurs, afford new work opportunities for local communities and improve the economic conditions.”

Photo credit: USAID BEST 2019

Investors in Wadi Rum discuss details of newly available tourism incentives with JIC representatives.

In 2016, the Jordan Investment Commission (JIC) launched a set of new tourism investment incentives for the tourism sector to encourage investment in governorates outside of Amman (excluding development zones) through customs duties exemptions, reduced sales tax and an income tax freeze.

“The incentives present new and relevant considerations for tourism businesses and investors,” said Bilal al-Hamouri, Director of Incentives and Facilitation Directorate at the Jordan Investment Commission. *“They benefit investors and entrepreneurs, afford new work opportunities for local communities and improve the economic conditions,”* he added.

However, few tourism investors were initially aware of them, due to a lack of capacity at JIC to promote them to the private sector. In 2017, USAID BEST conducted a baseline survey and determined that only 26.32% of tourism businesses were aware that these benefits were available to them, while 18.75% considered the incentives easy to access.

To encourage investment in the tourism sector, USAID BEST worked intensively with JIC and other government bodies to spread awareness of these incentives across Jordan. USAID BEST designed and implemented rolling tourism incentives awareness campaigns throughout 2017 and 2018, which reached more than 800 investors and other stakeholders through live roadshows and social media campaigns, leading to increased awareness and access to the incentives.

“USAID BEST’s organizational ability was instrumental in touring the country during roadshows,” praised Bilal, adding that *“the campaign would not have run as smoothly as it did.”*

As a result of USAID efforts, a follow-up survey in 2019 determined that the proportion of businesses aware of the incentives had doubled, as had positivity regarding the ease of procedures in accessing the incentives.

Investors reacted positively to these events, and by March 2020, it was reported that 94 new and existing tourism businesses worth more than \$465 million had invested \$44 million in tourism in Jordan. The majority of businesses, 70%, were operating outside of Amman, the country’s economic hub, and the investments had led to creation of more than 2,300 jobs.

“Such programs help investors find suitable financing for setting up their businesses,” said Dr. Sulaiman Al-Farajat, Commissioner of the Petra Development and Tourism Region Authority (PDTRA). *“Petra is witnessing high visitor numbers and investments in the tourism sector, mostly in hotels, as the area needs more hotel rooms to accommodate the increase in visitors,”* he added.

Awareness of incentives for tourism particularly spread in the Petra region, where in 2016, the Petra authorities had developed their own incentives to attract investors that included customs exemptions and reduced income and sales taxes; the tourism body lacked the capacity to distribute these incentives to prospective investors.

“We reached out to USAID BEST to work with us in presenting the incentives to investors,” said Hassan Lawama, Manager at the PDTRA. *“The reception to the sessions we held were very positive, with a high turnout at both sessions held in Petra. The interest by investors in not only accessing incentives but also receiving assistance with other factors like feasibility studies. These are things that strengthen the prospects and sustainability of their businesses in the long term,”* Hassan mentioned.

USAID BEST facilitated a partnership between PDTRA and the Jordan Investment Commission, wherein the latter granted incentives on their behalf in an interim solution while PDTRA developed procedures for granting tourism investment incentives. This included the establishment of a ‘one-stop shop’ site to manage both the incentives and investors. Once developed, USAID BEST supported the Petra authorities in conducting awareness sessions for tourism investors, providing information on how to invest and what investment incentives were available for tourism enterprises. As of 2020, 23 hotels, restaurants, tourist camps, and travel agencies were benefiting from the PDTRA-specific investment incentives.

USAID BEST worked to increase access to finance for tourism enterprises and entrepreneurs and strengthen their ability to access capital for tourism ventures. As a result of the investment incentives campaign, tourism businesses and investors are taking advantage of previously unavailable support to grow and sustain their operations.



JORDAN TRAIL PLANTS HASHEMITE KINGDOM ON THE ADVENTURE TOURISM MAP

**650-KILOMETER
MULTI-TERRAIN
HIKING TRAIL
AMONG RE-
GION'S PREMIER
ATTRACTIONS**

SUCCESS STORY



Photo credit: Ahmad Qaisieh 2019

The Jordan Trail benefits 190 families that live along it, as more than 675 people work with 94 service providers that offer camp and homestay accommodation, guiding, meals and transportation.

“We first worked to create demand internationally, which gave us the credibility to engage communities along the trail and help them improve their offerings.”



Jordan is famed for archaeological sites that portray the country’s rich history, cultural heritage, and religious relevance. However, the Hashemite Kingdom also boasts a spectrum of natural environs, including rugged wadis (canyons) and cliffs and breathtaking scenery, that have become the nexus of an increasingly popular adventure tourism attraction known as the Jordan Trail.

A 650-kilometer multi-terrain hiking trail that runs the length of the entire country, the Jordan Trail was initially established by a group of hiking enthusiasts. The potential of the trail soon became clear, and in 2016 the Jordan Trail Association (JTA) was formally established to manage and maintain it.

USAID BEST provided support to the JTA from the onset, helping it become established and building its capacity to oversee and manage the trail. Support included developing a five-year strategic business plan for the association, route planning and waymarking of the trail itself, and capacity building, training and technical support for guides, local escorts and association employees. USAID BEST also helped establish standards of service along the trail and supported key income-generating and promotional hikes, allowing the JTA to operate independently and sustainably.

“USAID BEST was the first to acknowledge JTA’s potential and believe in its goals and objectives,” stated Bashir Daoud, Chief Executive Officer of the Jordan Trail Association. He added, *“Without the support of USAID BEST, the Jordan Trail Association would not have achieved so much in such a short time or laid the foundations for its future sustainability.”*

In 2018, National Geographic magazine name the Jordan Trail to its list of the best tourism destinations. As the trail has attracted more hikers, an increasing number of locals have been employed by service providers. In 2017, roughly 200 people were employed along the trail, and by March 2020 this number had risen to 675, including jobs as guides and outfitters, and local hosting of campsites and homestays. These services enable hikers to enjoy local food, explore historical sites, or have an authentic adventure in some of Jordan’s diverse terrains.

“We first worked to create demand internationally by promoting the trail as an attraction,” stated Daoud. He noted that the resulting influx of visitors *“gave the credibility by which to engage communities along the trail and provide training to help them improve their offerings.”*

He added, *“Our relationship with the Jordan Tourism Board has grown stronger over the years. They see the effect that promoting the Jordan Trail has on the overall promotion of Jordan, and our new three-year marketing plan will only strengthen that relationship and our cooperation.”*

Between 2016 and 2019, the Jordan Trail generated more than \$22.3 million for Jordan, of which more than 65% was retained by the local communities along the trail. Hundreds of international and Jordanian visitors have hiked along the trail and it has been written about in more than one hundred local and international publications.

INDUSTRY-BASED TRAINING PROGRAM ENCOURAGES AND EQUIPS HOSPITALITY PROFESSIONALS IN JORDAN

SUCCESS STORY



**HOSPITALITY PROFESSIONALS
TRAIN ON-THE-JOB TO ELEVATE
LEVELS OF SKILL AND SERVICE AND
MEET CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS**

Photo credit: USAID BEST 2019

Nisreen Ramahi, a graduate of Pathways to Professionalism Level 3, works with her team at the Arjaan Amman Rotana hotel in Jordan.

“I did not make as much money working in retail and sales. The salary I receive working in the hospitality sector is better, so I am able to spend more on myself and help my family financially.”



Nisreen Ramahi worked in clothing retail stores before a friend encouraged her to join the hospitality sector. In 2017 she changed careers and found a job at Arjaan Amman Rotana working in food service. She began by taking food and beverage orders and gradually worked her way up to managing a team.

Nisreen explained, *“Over the past two years, I’ve risen in the department. I started doing tasks that were not asked of me because I wanted to learn more and improve myself. There is always new information and things to learn.”*

Nisreen was one of the many entry-level employees working in Jordan’s hotels who have no formal qualifications and constitute 55% of the 20,000 workers in the accommodation sector. With approximately 28 new four- and five-star hotels scheduled to open in the Kingdom between 2019 and 2023, it is estimated that an additional 8,500 jobs will be created. To meet the growing demands of the hospitality sector and respond to the challenge of employing skilled workers, USAID BEST partnered with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and the Jordan Hotels Association to design and introduce an industry-based training program, Pathways to Professionalism, in 2016.

Offering four levels of on-the-job training and certification for hotel employees in food production, housekeeping, and food and beverage service, Pathways to Professionalism provides learners and trainees with the opportunity to advance their professional development while continuing to work.

Nisreen says, *“I wanted to participate in Pathways to Professionalism to strengthen my career. After completing Level 2, I decided to apply for Level 3 because I wanted to learn more and develop my career further. I wanted to have specialized*

experience from completing two Pathways to Professionalism levels.”

Furthermore, the opportunity to continue learning was empowering for Nisreen and improved her income. *“I did not make as much money working in retail and sales. The salary I receive working in the hospitality sector is better, so I am able to help my family financially,”* she notes with pride.

Since the Pathways program began, USAID BEST supported the successful certification of more than 1,100 graduates and training of 500 supervisors within Pathways to Professionalism-registered hotels. Those certified make up 45% of Jordan’s four- and five-star hotel staff, and 17% of them are women. This exceeds the national proportion of women employed in the tourism sector, which is 11%.

By early 2020, there were 32 major international branded hotels in Amman, Petra, Aqaba, and the Dead Sea participating in the Pathways to Professionalism program. The program is locally accredited through the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and the Jordan Hotels Association and is certified internationally through the International Hotels and Restaurants Association. The participating hotels have invested more than JD 15 million (US\$ 21 million) in developing and training Pathways to Professionalism employees. Hotels have also invested more than half a million hours in upskill and multi-skill training in the workplace,

In 2019, USAID BEST transferred management of the program to the Jordan Hotels Association to continue developing and growing the program across Jordan’s hotels. Pathways to Professionalism will continue to expand and contribute to service standards improvement, service excellence and career development in Jordan.

TOURISM EDUCATION IN JORDAN ALIGNS WITH SECTOR NEEDS AND INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

IMPROVING TOURISM PROGRAMS CREATES OPPORTUNITY AND STRENGTHENS THE SECTOR

SUCCESS STORY



Photo credit: AAUC 2019

Students at the Amman Applied University
College library in Amman.

“Our students will now compete on a local, regional and international level.”



Tourism is one of the largest employers in Jordan, directly employing more than 53,000 people. The hotel sector alone accounts for around 40 percent of those jobs. With multiple new developments in the pipeline, it is projected that approximately 19,900 new hotel and restaurant jobs will be created between 2019 and 2024¹. Although the demand for skilled labor for the tourism and hospitality sector is growing, employers report a lack of skilled workers, highlighting a gap between the supply of skilled workers, and industry employment demands and standards.

To align hospitality programs with sector needs and improve skills standards, USAID BEST enhanced tourism and hospitality education in Jordan, primarily at university and collegiate level. USAID BEST supported academic institutions, including Yarmouk University, Hashemite University, Ammon Applied University College (AAUC), and the Royal Academy of Culinary Arts (RACA), to strengthen their tourism and hospitality programs and achieve awards of excellence.

Through USAID BEST assistance, Yarmouk University modernized its tourism program facilities, improved educational curriculum standards and scientific research, and as a result was awarded United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Themis TedQual certification for the first time in 2018 for its BA in Tourism Management. This prestigious international certification recognizes institutions for their dedication to continuous excellence improvement, academic quality, institution-employer communication, and preparing students to transition into the workforce. Certification puts the programs and graduates on par with more than 70 other educational institutions worldwide.

“Our students will now compete on a local, regional and international level,” said Professor Muhammed Shunnaq, Dean of the Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management, Yarmouk University. He added, “They will also have opportunities equal to

those provided by higher education degrees from distinguished universities that have also acquired this certification from UNWTO.”

In addition, AAUC received UNWTO TedQual certification in 2018 for an additional three years with USAID BEST support. AAUC was first awarded the certification in 2014 for its bachelor’s program in hotel management, the first institution in the Middle East to do so. The Hashemite University and University of Jordan also received assistance from USAID BEST to assess readiness for international certification.

With USAID BEST support, in early 2020 RACA officially became a technical university college able to award bachelor’s degrees, as well as technical diplomas and certificates in its specialized area of culinary arts. BEST also supported RACA to attain a King Abdullah II Center for Excellence (KACE) – ‘European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Committed to Excellence’ award. RACA is the first education institution in Jordan to successfully achieve this prestigious accreditation. KACE - EFQM Committed to Excellence is an assessment and recognition scheme that enables RACA to deliver better results and guide the academy on its education excellence journey.

“RACA believes in being an active part of Jordanian leadership’s vision in inducing entrepreneurship, job creation, women’s empowerment and capacity building,” said RACA Director Chef Jacques Rossel, highlighting that *“the support of USAID BEST over the years has been a tremendous assistance for the academy to grow and become more relevant to what the hospitality industry in Jordan needs.”*

Yarmouk University, Ammon Applied University College, and the Royal Academy for Culinary Arts will continue to train and equip the tourism and hospitality workforce in Jordan in the years to come. By attracting students to professions in tourism and delivering high-quality academic programs that prepare students for employment, institutions are playing their part in meeting the needs of the tourism industry in Jordan.

¹ Based on early 2020 figures and projections, prior to the global coronavirus crisis.

TOURISM CREATES JOBS AND ENGAGES THE COMMUNITY OF AS-SALT TO TRANSFORM THEIR CITY INTO A DISTINCTIVE TOURISM DESTINATION

AS-SALT DEVELOPS INTO AN ATTRACTIVE DESTINATION WITH DOZENS OF NEW AND UPGRADED TOURISM EXPERIENCES

SUCCESS STORY



Photo credit: USAID BEST 2019

A local man plays backgammon in As-Salt, Jordan's first Distinctive Destination.

“Visitor numbers increased by 25% following USAID BEST support. Families and individuals were engaged in the sector as tourism created jobs for them.”

As-Salt, located 35 kilometres from Amman, is known for its Ottoman-era heritage, narrow winding streets, 19th century homes, and quaint staircases. In 2017, As-Salt became Jordan’s first Distinctive Destination through a program implemented by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA), with USAID BEST support, to develop nascent tourism destinations in Jordan and increase visitation and spending.

To develop As-Salt into an attractive tourism destination, USAID BEST and MoTA supported comprehensive tourism development, which was implemented by local stakeholders including the Greater As-Salt Municipality, Salt Development Corporation (SDC), and Al Balqa Tourism Directorate. USAID BEST assistance focused on three areas. The first was to build the capacity of SDC to operate as a ‘destination management organisation’ to oversee tourism development and market and promote visitation to the city. Secondly, the project provided a small grants program for local enterprises to upgrade existing tourism-related businesses and develop new experiences and visitor attractions. The third area entailed engaging the community through a tourism awareness campaign that included a painting competition for youth and a tidy streets campaign to beautify the streets of the city, among other activities.

According to Khaldoun Khreisat, General Manager of Salt Development Corporation, *“The Distinctive Destination Program had a great impact on As-Salt by developing existing tourism establishments*

and creating new tourism businesses. This support created job opportunities and engaged the local community as a core part of the sector.”

Through USAID BEST support, 33 experiences were enhanced or introduced in As-Salt. These range from pottery making, to home visits in heritage houses, to cafés and restaurants and guided walking tours. The project also supported stakeholders to enhance the city walking trails, train local guides, upgrade the main street included in all trails, and revamp the As-Salt Brand Shop, which serves as the main channel for hand made products and crafts produced by more than 70 local artists, most of whom are women. Furthermore, USAID BEST elevated standards and services offered in As-Salt through training for more than 240 local entrepreneurs, business owners and staff to enhance their operations. The project also helped design a new visual identity, marketing materials and a website for the city.

“Visitor numbers increased by 25% following USAID BEST support. Families and individuals were engaged in the sector as tourism created jobs for them. Support also helped increase awareness among the local community at large of the importance of tourism and the tourism assets that As-Salt has to offer,” said Khaldoun.

USAID BEST’s work in As-Salt created 107 new direct jobs and spawned wider interest among the local community in engaging in the sector, whether through jobs, start-ups, expanding existing businesses or converting heritage homes into tourism enterprises.



BETTER ACCESS TO FINANCE FOR TOURISM INVESTORS AROUND THE COUNTRY

NEW LOAN PRODUCTS CUSTOMIZED FOR TOURISM, WITH A FOCUS ON SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES

SUCCESS STORY



Photo credit: Reem Katami 2019

A potential tourism investor attends a business and financial training session in Ajloun in November 2019.

“We are proud of this partnership and our contribution to improving the local economy and creating jobs for citizens.”



Creating opportunities for tourism businesses in Jordan to launch or grow is crucial for the sector's development. One of the main challenges that tourism enterprises face is a perception by financial institutions that tourism is a high-risk investment. This limits their access to financing.

To overcome this obstacle and diversify tourism lending options, USAID BEST addressed the misperception within financial institutions regarding tourism and increased lending to the sector. USAID BEST partnered with six local banks to develop tourism-specific lending products in response to the needs of small and medium tourism businesses around the country. These products were created to boost domestic private sector investment in tourism and spur investment in governorates outside Amman, creating jobs and better tourism products and experiences.

The new loan products, along with available loan guarantee programs, were promoted through the investment roadshows and campaigns. USAID BEST and partner banks implemented several activities to help tourism entrepreneurs and investors to successfully apply for financing. This included business and financial training and tourism awareness sessions for applicants and bank employees. Following these partnerships, the banks reported more interest in reviewing tourism applications.

According to Shatha Bdair, SME Relationship Manager at Bank Al Etihad, *“The sessions were very useful and introduced new information regarding the potential of tourism in recent years since downturns from 2010. One of the issues banks face when supporting tourism enterprises is just how much our applicants*

know regarding the tourism sector and how well they present their business plan and market research. USAID BEST assisted us by helping applicants to develop such materials. In doing so, we are more able to financially back the sector.”

Safwa Islamic Bank developed an Islamic financing program for the tourism sector. According to Ashraf Al-Hwaidi, Head of Small Business for the Safwa Islamic Bank, *“The development of our finance program came as we were expanding our presence in tourism-friendly regions like Aqaba and Jerash. Our employees benefited heavily from the trainings USAID carried out, which helped inform the framework of their new financing program, launched in August 2019, and maintain grace and repayment periods that consider the seasonality and variability of tourism enterprises.”*

Since partnering with USAID BEST, the banks gave out 47 loans to tourism businesses in Jordan, 16 of which were for tourism start-ups, and 8 for women-owned businesses. Half of the loans were for tourism businesses outside Amman. Efforts to improve access to finance for tourism businesses led to more than \$44 million worth of total investments in tourism in Jordan and created more than 600 jobs.

In tackling the banking sector's awareness of tourism's potential, the accessibility of financing and general business climate for tourism improved. Projects and proposals previously deemed 'un-bankable' were reevaluated following USAID BEST's work. Increased access to finance helped several tourism businesses, investors and entrepreneurs to grow and sustain their businesses or launch new products to attract tourists and visitors to Jordan.

ANNEX

PROJECT MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Indicator	LOP Totals	LOP Target	% Achieved
Number of jobs created in tourism sector	4,748 ⁽¹⁾	17,000	28%
Percent change in female participation in tourism workforce (TCI)	1.03 % ⁽²⁾		
Number increase in tourism arrivals (TCI) (NTS)	23.5% higher than baseline 4,584,656	20% higher than baseline 4,454,680	102%
Percent change in tourism receipts (TCI) (NTS)	15.69 % ⁽³⁾		
Amount of Private Sector Investment leveraged in targeted sectors as a result of USG assistance	116,218,829 \$	50,000,000 \$	232%
Ratio of private sector to public sector funds in USG-supported PPPs	923 % ⁽⁴⁾		
Number of working groups formed to resolve specific issues	56	30	186%
Number of national-sub-national institutional coordination activities on tourism-related initiatives implemented	9	8	112%
Score on the Tourism Competitiveness Index (TCI)	2.43		
Number of laws, policies, strategies, plans, agreements, or regulations addressing private sector competitiveness in development stages of analysis, drafting and consultation, legislative review, approval or implementation as a result of USG assistance	52	10	520%
Number of new incentive programs promoted for implementation by the GoJ to spur tourism sector investments and job creation	1	1	100 %
Percent of Jordanian businesses reporting ease in accessing GoJ tourism incentives and tourism promotion efforts	22.79%	20% ⁽⁵⁾	113%
Person hours of training completed in business enabling environment supported by USG assistance	4,328.35	10,184	43%
Number of project-supported business associations and chambers in the tourism sector strengthened, more-inclusive and financially sustainable	8	21	38%

(1) Gross number of jobs created

(2) Average during life of project

(3) Average during life of project

(4) Annual2020

(5) Annual target

Indicator	LOP Totals	LOP Target	% Achieved
Number of capacity building recommendations from JTB strategy supported	11	10	110%
Number of performance improvement recommendations undertaken based on King Abdullah II Award for Excellence assessment report	17	7	242%
Number of top tourist destinations improved to provide enriched tourist experience	11	5	220 %
Number and value of tourism concessions developed	1,777,754.24\$ (11)	800,000 \$ (5)	222%
Number of hotels, restaurants, and desert camps classified (TCI)	221	LOP Target 100% of Hotels, 80% of Restaurants	100% ⁽⁶⁾
Number of new tourism products developed	17	10	170%
Number of primary site offerings that have been expanded and linked to hotels	17	13	131%
Number of new trip circuits and routes developed	58	5	1160%
Number of university tourism-related program curricula developed or improved to match the skills demanded by the market	6	6	100%
Number of students completing the developed/ improved tourism-related program curricula	758	600	126%
Number of travel agents and tour operators attracting tourists to Jordan	57	85	67%
Number of key source markets portraying Jordan as a desirable and stable tourism destination in the media	120	100	120%
Number of source market residents targeted by marketing and promotional campaigns	6,308,314,408	108,397,625	5820%
Percent of cooperative marketing used by JTB to fund marketing activities	50.52% ⁽⁷⁾	20%	251%
Number of marketing and promotional plans developed for JTB	5	4	125%
Number of sales and distribution channels in source markets maintained or strengthened	588	710	83%

(6) Based on MoTA letter

(7) Average during life of project

Indicator	LOP Totals	LOP Target	% Achieved
Number of travel agents trained	957	900	106%
Number of new markets in which travel agent network is promoting Jordan	94	18	522%
Number of firms that have successfully accessed credit, private equity (or both) as a result of USG assistance	47	65	72%
Amount of equity invested in tourism activity assisted firms	25,528,511.43 \$	\$4,018,000	635%
Number of new loan products targeting tourism sector firms introduced by banks	5	4	125%
Number of ventures supported by start-up capital funds	20	50	40%
Number of participants completing USG-funded business training	2,940	330	891%
Number of women and girls benefitting from new or improved USG-supported social services targeted at women and girls	609	109	559%
Percentage of female participants in USG-assisted programs designed to increase access to productive economic resources	10.76% ⁽⁸⁾	10 %	107%
Number of vulnerable people with increased access to productive assets as a result of USG assistance	941	700	134%

(8) Average during the life of project



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