ecoram

(ECOTOURISM RAPID ASSESSMENT MODEL)

a simple guide to assessing 'great' ecotourism business ideas

TOURISM
QUEENSLAND

ecoram

Ecotourism (and the closely related nature-based tourism) is a booming segment of the broader tourism industry. There are a lot of people who have 'great ideas' for starting an ecotourism business at their special rainforest/beach/waterway/outback site, or in their region or shire. ECORAM has been developed to help people with limited or no specialist tourism knowledge to better understand the potential of their ecotourism business idea.

What is ECORAM?

ECORAM highlights important issues that will need to be addressed to develop environmental tourism ideas in terms of:

1. The natural attributes of a site or region - the ATTRACTION;

2. The people who will visit the site or region and hopefully pay for the experience - the TARGET MARKET; and

3. Any construction or physical resources required to bring the Attraction and the Target Market together - the INFRASTRUCTURE.

ECORAM has been developed using a simple 'checklist' format to highlight the key elements that need to be satisfied at a site, or in a region, if a tourism operation is to succeed. ECORAM is just as applicable to nature-based tourism ideas as it is to ecotourism ideas. (The term used to describe both ecotourism and nature-based tourism is 'environmental tourism'.)
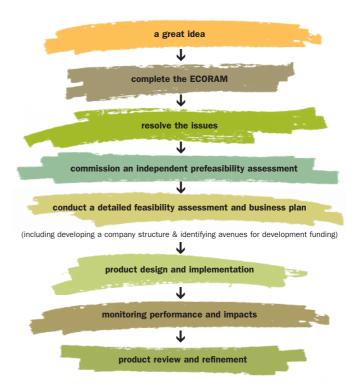
Why use the ECORAM?

ECORAM can assist people with a 'great idea' by focusing their attention early in the development process on any strengths or weaknesses of the business concept. The project's strengths can then be further developed, while its weaknesses will need to be:

* resolved before the concept can take the next step to becoming a reality;

* managed as part of the business operation; or

* accepted as a fundamental barrier to the 'great idea' ever being developed.

When should the ECORAM be used?

Completing the ECORAM and addressing any weaknesses identified for the project should be the first step in developing the concept into a profitable, sustainable environmental tourism business. The following flow chart sets out the basic steps in developing a tourism business.

a great idea
↓
complete the ECORAM
↓
resolve the issues
↓
commission an independent prefeasibility assessment
↓
conduct a detailed feasibility assessment and business plan

(including developing a company structure & identifying avenues for development funding)
↓
product design and implementation
↓
monitoring performance and impacts
↓
product review and refinement

Who should use the ECORAM?

Anyone who has an idea for an environmental tourism business would find ECORAM useful, including:

* property owners, including rural producers, looking to diversify their income;

* local authorities wanting to guage to the tourism potential of their area;

* protected area managers who want to better understand and develop the tourism potential of protected areas or regions; and

* existing tourism operators looking to expand their current business, or establish a new business.

The ECORAM process is applicable to site specific, destinational and regional scale assessments.

How does the ECORAM work?

The ECORAM was not designed to be completed in five minutes, or in a single sitting. If you intend to invest the considerable time and money required to set up a small business, you need to invest time in planning that business.

The ECORAM has been designed to help you assess your 'great idea' based on the information you already have, and to identify what information you will need to access from elsewhere. It will also assist you to identify any issues that need to be solved to complete your business 'big picture'.

There are people who can help you complete the ECORAM and provide you with the necessary information and expert advice needed to answer the questions that may come out of the assessment. Suggestions of who to contact for assistance are listed beside each major category - Environmental, Market and Infrastructure Issues.

However, good advice is rarely free. Be prepared to pay for environmental / business consultants to provide you with information you will need, if not to complete the ECORAM, then definitely in the next stage of developing your business idea.

To get the most out of the ECORAM you will need to be objective about your business idea and its potential. It's best to complete the assessment yourself, and then guage your assessments against the views of a third party/ies whose judgement you respect. It is human nature to become enthusiastic about a project and independent third party input is often very valuable.

Is the concept sustainable?

A great way to check whether your idea will meet current industry standards for sustainability is to purchase and complete the accreditation criteria for the Nature and Ecotourism Accreditation Program, the national industry-led accreditation program for ecotourism and nature-based tourism operators. This can be obtained from the Ecotourism Association of Australia on telephone (07 3229 5550) or email: **mail@ecotourism.org.au**

However, just because your idea doesn't fit the industry standards for ecotourism or nature-based tourism, it doesn't mean it might not be a successful business.

Where do you start?

The Personal Considerations section presents **some** issues you should consider before committing yourself to developing and conducting a tourism operation. This section assists you to focus on your abilities, motivations and expectations for the business. It is suggested that you work through the Personal Considerations section before moving on to the ECORAM itself.

The ECORAM is broken up into three categories - **Environmental, Market** and **Infrastructure Issues**. Each category uses a list of questions to focus your thinking, identify specific areas of your 'great idea' which are strengths or weaknesses, and identify any additional opportunities or threats that you may not have considered.

This list of questions is not exhaustive. Please feel free to add your own questions which may be specific to your business.

ECORAM is a personal assessment of your business idea, so you can adjust the questions to best suit your situation. For each question asked, record the following assessments:

1 For each Issue/Element, provide as much detail as you can. This will help you to define your business concept and identify any potential weaknesses in your idea.

2 Indicate the Importance of each relevant issue to the success of your 'great idea' using **Low, Moderate** or **High** rankings. Give the reason for your assessment.

3 Indicate the relative difficulty to resolve the issue using a three point scale from **No Major Challenges, Moderate Challenges** to **Severe Challenges**. Give the reason for your assessment.

4 Provide details on the Strengths and Weaknesses of the issue here, and record a way to progress these issues under Action.

This Action assessment will provide you with a guide of how to progress each issue, while the combination of Low, Moderate or High ranking and No Major Challenges, Moderate Challenges or Severe Challenges ranking will provide you with some idea of which issues you will need to tackle first.

Remember that ECORAMs for different business ideas cannot be compared, and it is a good idea to get someone you trust, but who isn't close to your business idea, to go through your assessment with you.

ecoram *Let's work through an example...*

Your 'great idea' may involve taking visitors for a 4WD-based bird watching tour to a specific region in Far North Queensland that is inaccessible by normal vehicles. The group would go bird watching early in the morning to see the local native bird life, with the highlight being the opportunity to spot an internationally known endangered species found only in this area. After bird watching, the group would enjoy a bbq breakfast using locally produced products.

In the Detail section, record information about the endangered bird such as its conservation status, known location, any research that's been done. How abundant is the bird in the area you will be accessing? Are they easy to find? How reliable will your sightings be? How will the bird watching activity affect the animals?

Being able to see this bird in the wild is the most significant point of difference between your business and other tours operating in the region. You would select a **High** ranking in the **Importance** box and write down your reason for this assessment.

From here you need to select a **Challenge Rating** for relying on the endangered bird to establish your business. Your tour concept would provide an exceptional experience for tourists which complements their visit to the region.

However, after contacting the managers of the land where the endangered bird is found to discuss your business idea, you discover you need to present them with further information regarding the potential impacts of the activity before they will consider issuing a permit. The land managers have just begun a recovery management program for the birds and are not enthusiastic about permitting what they consider to be an activity with potentially negative impacts. If the land managers remain unwilling to issue a permit, you might need to investigate another location for your tour. You might select a Challenge Rating of **Severe Challenge** and again, note down your reasons.

When filling out the Strengths, Weaknesses and Actions sections you need to think about how the icon feature impacts on your business and vice versa… How significant will the potential sighting of the endangered bird be to attracting your market? Will you be allowed to conduct your tour here? What action do you need to take to ensure you can undertake your tour in this area and not adversely impact on the endangered species?

The more thorough you are in this section, the more valuable and realistic your Action outcome will be.

Don't forget to begin assessing your 'great idea' by completing the **Personal Considerations** *section!*

category 1:

Assistance may be obtained from: local Qld Parks & Wildlife Service Officers, Qld Muesum, local environmental groups such as Qld Wildlife Preservation Society, birdwatching groups etc, the National Trust, local Department of Natural Resources, local Indigenous groups, historical groups, Landcare groups, universities conducting research in the area etc.

issue/element	importance low, medium, high	challenge rating no major challenges, moderate challenges, severe challenges	assessment
1.1 Is there an ICON environmental element to attract visitors to your site? **Detail:** Potential sightings of the endangered White-faced Reed Whistler will be used to promote the tour to experienced bird watchers from around the world.	HIGH **Reason:** There are many other bird watching tours operating in this region and potentially sighting this bird will make my tour stand out from the rest.	SEVERE CHALLENGES **Reason:** The land managers will not issue a permit for my tour until I can prove there will be no advserse impacts on the endangered bird.	**Strengths:** Endangered bird is internationally known and sightings are highly sought after. I have experience running tours in other ecologically sensitive areas. **Weaknesses:** Land managers need reassurance that tours can be conducted without impacting on bird breeding. **Action:** Will work with land managers to develop a visitor management plan for the area, including impact monitoring on bird species

personal considerations

For a more thorough look at what it takes on a personal level to run a small tourism operation, it is recommended that you obtain a copy of Tourism Queensland's *Tour Operator Tool Kit* which features a chapter titled **Initial Groundwork Before Starting**. For further information on the Tool Kit call (07) 3535 5273, or look up the Tourism Queensland Publications website: www.tq.com.au/hwchy/publications.htm

Why do you want to run an environmental tourism business?	
What experience do you have in this business, in the tourism industry generally and in environmental management?	
Are you aware of the structure of the tourism industry in Queensland, and how the Regional Tourist Organisations and Tourism Queensland can help you?	
Have you visited similar tourism operations to that which you are proposing to learn what is involved in the business?	
Have you had any training in business management?	
What role do you intend playing in the business?	
How well do you relate to people you have only just met?	
Do you have good negotiating, public relations, communications and selling skills?	
Are you prepared to work long and hard, manage risk and stress, and work with and manage others?	
What family support do you have - can you and they cope with uncertainty?	
Do you have sufficient funds for your personal needs until the business starts making a profit? This is generally between 3 and 5 years.	
How much money can you put into the business?	
Where else can you obtain funding for your business?	
What security can you offer for a loan?	

environmental issues

Don't forget that all issues have the potential to be challenges for developing your business idea. Make sure you do your research thoroughly and contact all the relevant people, and don't underestimate the significance of any potential impediments.

Assistance may be obtained from: local Qld Parks & Wildlife Service Officers, Qld Museum, local environmental groups such as Wildlife Preservation Society of Qld, birdwatching groups etc, the National Trust, local Department of Natural Resources and Mines, local Indigenous groups, historical groups, Landcare groups, universities conducting research in the area etc.

issue/element	importance low, medium, high	challenge rating no major challenges, moderate challenges, severe challenges	assessment
1.1 Is there an ICON environmental element to attract visitors to your site? (This could be a particular plant, animal, landscape, Indigenous or European heritage element which people would immediately identify with your region.) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:
1.2 Are there any significant plants on your site? (Consider such things as uniqueness, diversity, abundance, seasonality, accessibility & conservation status. Are these plants sensitive to visitor impacts?) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:

issue/element	importance *low, medium, high*	challenge rating *no major challenges, moderate challenges, severe challenges*	assessment
1.3 Are there any significant animals on your site? (Consider such things as uniqueness, diversity, abundance, seasonality, accessibility & conservation status. Are these animals sensitive to visitor impacts?) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:
1.4 Are there any significant landscape values on your site? (Are these values or elements formally acknowledged or protected & how accessible are they? Are they sensitive to visitor impacts?) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:

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environmental issues CONTINUED

issue/element	importance *low, medium, high*	challenge rating *no major challenges, moderate challenges, severe challenges*	assessment
1.5 Are there any significant Indigenous values on your site? (Have the traditional owners been consulted regarding access/ interpretation of the values? Is it appropriate for a non-Indigenous person to be presenting these values? For further information on native title claims, contact Native Title Services within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:
1.6 Are there any significant European values on your site? (Are these values formally recognised by the National Trust or a local historical group? How accessible are they to visitors?) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:

issue/element	importance *low, medium, high*	challenge rating *no major challenges, moderate challenges, severe challenges*	assessment
1.7 Has the area in which you wish to operate been professionally assessed? (Professional assessment may help identify significant values, & determine how these are presented & managed.) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:
1.8 What activities will visitors undertake on the site/route and where? (If planning a tour, you need to think through what stops you will make & what your guests will do or see at each one. If planning accommodation, you need to think about what activities your guests will be able to do & where they will be allowed to go.) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:

environmental issues

issue/element	importance low, medium, high	challenge rating no major challenges, moderate challenges, severe challenges	assessment
1.9 Will there be significant visitor impacts associated with these activities? (For example, will guests always be taking the same route on bushwalks, potentially leading to soil compaction or erosion?) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:
1.10 Will there be any other significant environmental impacts to be considered? (Identify impacts that may result from construction of access roads, paths, buildings, toilet amenities, cooking amenities or accommodation. Consider waste disposal & energy sources.) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:

environmental issues

issue/element	importance low, medium, high	challenge rating no major challenges, moderate challenges, severe challenges	assessment
1.11 Can these impacts be managed? (Indicate what will be done to mitigate or minimise the impacts.) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:
1.12 Are there any climatic/seasonal factors that will influence impacts & how will this be managed? (For example, if your region experiences a wet season, will 4WDs still be able to access dirt roads with steep slopes without causing severe road damage.) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:

issue/element	importance low, medium, high	challenge rating no major challenges, moderate challenges, severe challenges	assessment
1.13 What significant features need interpretation? (Will it just be the wildlife or fauna, or will you interpret the Indigenous heritage of a site or the past land uses?) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:
1.14 What educational/interpretive information will be provided? (Consider sources of information for interpretation & who & how information will be presented.) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:

environmental issues

issue/element	importance *low, medium, high*	challenge rating *no major challenges, moderate challenges, severe challenges*	assessment
1.15 What contribution will the business make to conservation of the environment? (Consider if the operation will assist with protection, management or presentation of the values being exploited.) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	**Strengths:** **Weaknesses:** **Action:**
1.16 What is the tenure of the area you wish to access? (Who owns/manages the land & do you need special permission to access it? Are there any zoning issues?) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	**Strengths:** **Weaknesses:** **Action:**

environmental issues

issue/element	importance low, medium, high	challenge rating no major challenges, moderate challenges, severe challenges	assessment
1.17 Will there be any conflict of interest with existing/neighbouring land uses or land holders? (Consider the impacts of your business on others, & vice versa.) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:
1.18 How will you involve the local community in the project, & what will the community gain from the project? (Consider using locally produced products, asking the local school to be involved in research or monitoring programs, employing local 'identities' as guides etc.) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:

market issues

issue/element	importance low, medium, high	challenge rating no major challenges, moderate challenges, severe challenges	assessment
2.1 What visitors are currently coming to your region/area? (Consider the market profile [eg families, driving, retired, back-packers etc], numbers, how long they stay, expenditure, where they come from, what they do, where they stay, how they travel to your region & within your region, & any historic trends.) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:
2.2 What image does your region/area have? (Do visitors already come to your region/area for environmental tourism experiences, or is your region known for other attractions?) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:

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issue/element	importance low, medium, high	challenge rating no major challenges, moderate challenges, severe challenges	assessment
2.3 Is your business idea complementary to the region's primary image/market? (For example, if people currently only come to your region for day visits, starting up a small scale accommodation operation will be both a strength and a weakness.) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:
2.4 What is the scale of existing environmental tourism & general tourism operations in your region/area? (Are most businesses small, family run operations, or large corporate businesses?) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:

issue/element	importance *low, medium, high*	challenge rating *no major challenges, moderate challenges, severe challenges*	assessment
2.5 What is the state/type/amount of existing tourism infrastructure? (Consider transport to your region, accommodation, support services & retail services.) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:
2.6 How close is your business to major tourism gateways? (Are you close to an international, national or domestic gateway such as an airport or major highway?) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:

issue/element	importance low, medium, high	challenge rating no major challenges, moderate challenges, severe challenges	assessment
2.7 Will your site give you access to passing trade? (Are people travelling straight past your door, or will you need to divert tourists from their normal routes to your business?) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:
2.8 How close is your business to a major catchment population? (If your business is relying on referrals, local trade, or free & independent travellers, then you will need to be within a couple of hours travel of a large population base or major tourist route.) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:

issue/element	importance *low, medium, high*	challenge rating *no major challenges, moderate challenges, severe challenges*	assessment
2.9 Is the tourism in your region/area seasonal? (Consider climate factors, special events such as festivals, etc.) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:
2.10 What is the target market/s for your business? (Consider specifically who would pay for your product & if these people will have special needs.) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:

issue/element	importance *low, medium, high*	challenge rating *no major challenges, moderate challenges, severe challenges*	assessment
2.11 What percentage of the current tourism market in your region/area is your specific target market? (Consider if your target market is already coming to your region/area, or if you will need to create a new market.) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:
2.12 What percentage of the current market in your region/area do you expect to capture? (Consider the size of the market in your region/area & any competing tourism products. For example, if your target market is only 15% of the current tourism market to your area, and this equates to only 1000 people per year, can you realistically expect to capture enough people to make your business profitable?) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:

market issues CONTINUED

issue/element	importance *low, medium, high*	challenge rating *no major challenges, moderate challenges, severe challenges*	assessment
2.13 What competing operations exist in your region/area & in the state and what visitor numbers are they getting? (Who else has your market cornered?) **Detail:**	**Reason:**	**Reason:**	**Strengths:** **Weaknesses:** **Action:**
2.14 Are there support services in your region/area for the visitors to your business? (Consider the standard/amount of accommodation, restaurants, retail etc that your visitors will require.) **Detail:**	**Reason:**	**Reason:**	**Strengths:** **Weaknesses:** **Action:**

issue/element	importance *low, medium, high*	challenge rating *no major challenges, moderate challenges, severe challenges*	assessment
2.15 What opportunities are there for creating alliances with existing tourism enterprises (eg accommodation providers & tour operators) in your area? (For example, will the local tourist information centre take bookings for you? If your product is a full day tour, can you market cooperatively with a local accommodation provider?) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:
2.16 What features make your business different to the others in your region/ area? (Consider what will make visitors pay for your product compared to the alternative products which are already offered.) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:

issue/element	importance *low, medium, high*	challenge rating *no major challenges, moderate challenges, severe challenges*	assessment
2.17 What price will your target market pay for your product? (Consider your market - are they price sensitive and do enough of them already travel to your region? Are you expecting the current 3 star market to pay 5 star prices?) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:
2.18 Is there potential for conflict with other site/facility users? (If the site you wish to use is favoured by local bird-watchers, will they be disturbed by your early morning mountain biking tour which goes past one of their favourite hides?) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:

market issues CONTINUED

issue/element	importance *low, medium, high*	challenge rating *no major challenges, moderate challenges, severe challenges*	assessment
2.19 How will your business contribute to the community in which you are operating? (Consider local employment & training opportunities, joining the local tourism association etc.)			Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:

infrastructure issues

Don't forget that all issues have the potential to be challenges for developing your business idea. Make sure you do your research thoroughly and contact all the relevant people, and don't underestimate the significance of any potential impediments.

Assistance may be obtained from: Ecotourism Association of Australia, Tourism Queensland, local government planners, Department of State Development SmartLicence centre, Environment Australia, etc.

issue/element	importance low, medium, high	challenge rating no major challenges, moderate challenges, severe challenges	assessment
TRANSPORT			
3.1 What type of people-movers will be required? (Identify transport requirements to and/or within the site, and any environmental impacts these may have.) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:
3.2 How will the people-movers be maintained? (How will you arrange maintenance scheduling to ensure a vehicle is always available when required? Will any specialist skills be required to maintain these vehicles?) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:

issue/element	importance *low, medium, high*	challenge rating *no major challenges, moderate challenges, severe challenges*	assessment
TRANSPORT continued			
3.3 Do roads/tracks/routes already exist, and if so, what condition are they in? (Do you have appropriate access routes to the places you intend taking visitors? Are they suitable for the vehicle you intend to use? Will they need to be upgraded before traffic can be increased?) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:
3.4 Will new roads/tracks/routes be needed? (Do you have existing access to the parts of the property/tour stops suitable for your selected transport? If not, what will be required to construct this access?) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:

infrastructure issues CONTINUED

issue/element	importance low, medium, high	challenge rating no major challenges, moderate challenges, severe challenges	assessment
TRANSPORT continued			
3.5 How will road/track/route maintenance be managed? (Who will be responsible for maintaining the access routes to your sites/venue? If it is you, what staff/equipment resources do you have? If it's someone else's responsibility, how often will maintenance be carried out?) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:
3.6 Will provision be made for people with mobility problems? (Will physically disabled, visually impaired, older people or young children need to be catered for?) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:

infrastructure issues CONTINUED

issue/element	importance *low, medium, high*	challenge rating *no major challenges, moderate challenges, severe challenges*	assessment
APPROVALS/SUPPORT			
3.7 Will an Environmental Impact Study/ Statement be required by either Federal, State or local authorities? (For example, major projects which will potentially affect significant environmental sites or species may need to do an environmental assessment under the Federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:
3.8 Are any Federal approvals required, or support available? (You could start your search for information by contacting your local Federal member, or looking up the Environment Australia website.) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:

infrastructure issues CONTINUED

issue/element	importance *low, medium, high*	challenge rating *no major challenges, moderate challenges, severe challenges*	assessment
APPROVALS/SUPPORT continued			
3.9 Are any State approvals required, or support available? (You could start your search for information by contacting your local State member, Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service office or SmartLicence centre.) **Detail:**	**Reason:**	**Reason:**	**Strengths:** **Weaknesses:** **Action:**
3.10 Are any Local Government approvals required, or support available? (You could start your search for information by contacting your local council.) **Detail:**	**Reason:**	**Reason:**	**Strengths:** **Weaknesses:** **Action:**

infrastructure issues CONTINUED

issue/element	importance *low, medium, high*	challenge rating *no major challenges, moderate challenges, severe challenges*	assessment
APPROVALS/SUPPORT continued			
3.11 What support is available from local environmental or historical groups? (Do any of these groups offer support in the form of revegetation work, fauna surveying, historical information etc?) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:
3.12 What public liability and workplace safety requirements must be met? (You could start by contacting the Queensland Department of Industrial Relations Workplace Health & Safety Infoline on 1300 369 915.) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:

infrastructure issues CONTINUED

issue/element	importance low, medium, high	challenge rating no major challenges, moderate challenges, severe challenges	assessment
STAFFING			
3.13 How many staff will be required? (Consider staff required to ensure continuity of service during illness and leave. Relief staff need to be as skilled as permanent staff.) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:
3.14 Is there a pool of local staff to draw on? (Consider the remoteness of the location and incentives required to attract and retain suitably qualified staff.) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:

issue/element	importance *low, medium, high*	challenge rating *no major challenges, moderate challenges, severe challenges*	assessment
STAFFING continued			
3.15 What level of training will staff require? (Consider training requirements and if these are available locally.) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:
3.16 Will staff require accommodation on site? (If you need to accommodate staff on site, you will need to consider their quarters, energy & water require-ments, fringe benefits tax implications etc in the construction and management of the project. If it is a remote site, you may need to consider entertainment and communication facilities for staff.) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:

infrastructure issues CONTINUED

issue/element	importance *low, medium, high*	challenge rating *no major challenges, moderate challenges, severe challenges*	assessment
INFRASTRUCTURE			
3.17 What site infrastructure and services will be required? (For example, will you need new buildings, site infrastructure such as picnic tables or barbecues, walking tracks, toilets, disabled access facilities etc?) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:
3.18 If existing infrastructure is to be used, can it cope with the increased usage? (Consider whether you have enough seating, sufficient toilets, will the existing dirt carpark need to be paved etc.) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:

issue/element	importance *low, medium, high*	challenge rating *no major challenges, moderate challenges, severe challenges*	assessment
INFRASTRUCTURE continued			
3.19 Will you need to obtain professional site design advice? (Consider infrastructure placement, scale, size, energy requirements, landscaping, council/govt approvals that may be required etc.) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:
3.20 What are the water requirements, how will water be supplied and can water usage be minimised? (Consider requirements for potable and non-potable water. To minimise water use, can you install dry composting toilets, reuse grey water etc?) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:

infrastructure issues CONTINUED

issue/element	importance *low, medium, high*	challenge rating *no major challenges, moderate challenges, severe challenges*	assessment
INFRASTRUCTURE continued			
3.21 What energy requirements will the site have and how will the energy be generated? (Consider whether you have access to mains power, or will you need to consider solar, wind or generator power?) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:
3.22 How will you dispose of solid waste? (Consider how you will deal with recyclable rubbish and food scraps. Will you be composting? Can you establish a worm farm? How will rubbish be removed from a remote site?) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:

infrastructure issues CONTINUED

issue/element	importance *low, medium, high*	challenge rating *no major challenges, moderate challenges, severe challenges*	assessment
INFRASTRUCTURE continued			
3.23 How will you dispose of liquid waste? (Can you treat waste on-site or will it need to be removed? What costs will be involved?) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:
3.24 How will maintenance of infrastructure/technology be managed? (Consider the remoteness of the site, reliability of systems, availability of expert assistance etc.) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:

infrastructure issues CONTINUED

issue/element	importance *low, medium, high*	challenge rating *no major challenges, moderate challenges, severe challenges*	assessment
INFRASTRUCTURE continued			
3.25 Will overnight accommodation be required, and what style? (What type of accommodation will be appropriate: tents, permanent tents, cabins or resort style accommodation. How will this affect energy and water requirements for the site? How will this impact visually on the site?) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:
3.26 Will new or alternative technologies be used on site to minimise/manage impacts? (Consider the technologies/strategies used by similar developments and what is appropriate for your environment.) **Detail:**	Reason:	Reason:	Strengths: Weaknesses: Action:

ecoram

How do I interpret ECORAM?

After completing the ECORAM, you will have a series of actions that you will need to prioritise based on your assessment of their importance to developing your business idea and the challenge rating you selected.

Completing the ECORAM will hopefully have given you an idea of which issues you will need to address now to ensure your business idea can be developed, and which issues can be addressed as you work through your business idea. You should also have a better idea of the sort of information you will need to source in the future.

There is no way to score one issue in comparison to another. Even issues which you rated as having a 'low' importance to your business idea, and which you gave a 'no major challenge' rating could still be very time consuming to resolve.

Only you can make these decisions, and you can also choose to seek advice from professionals about what can be done to resolve or manage these issues. Remember - **BE OBJECTIVE.**

Useful Publications

There are a number of self-help guides published by Tourism Queensland that you may find useful. These are available for purchase from the website: www.tq.com.au/hwchy/publications.htm or by contacting the appropriate departments directly.

Available from the Industry Planning Department (telephone 07 3535 5273) -

Grow Your Ecotourism Business	$75.00
Tour Operator Tool Kit	$20.00
Innovation in Interpretation	$15.95 (current operators), $24.95 (non operators)
Outback Interpretation Manual	$20.00
Getting Started Online	$20.00

Available from the Destination Development Department (telephone 07 3535 5426) -

Tourism Project Feasbility Guide	$20.00

Note: Prices do not include postage and handling.

The Nature and Ecotourism Accreditation Program (NEAP) has very rigorous accreditation criteria which is available for purchase from the Ecotourism Association of Australia (EAA). Even if you're not intending to apply for accreditation under this program, the criteria provides a good checklist for your business with regard to environmental sustainability, interpretation, working with local communities, customer satisfaction, responsible marketing and contributing to conservation. **The criteria can be obtained from the EAA by telephone (07 3229 5550) or by email: mail@ecotourism.org.au**

A final reality check

ECORAM is not a business plan nor a prefeasibility study. You will need to get advice and assistance from many people before your idea can become a reality, including accountants, business planners and tourism experts. However, hopefully now you have a better idea of where you want to go and what opportunities and obstacles await you.

After completing an ECORAM, some 'great ideas' will go on to become viable, sustainable businesses, others will remain just 'great ideas', and still others will be rethought and emerge as variations of the original idea. All of these are positive outcomes for you, your family and community and the Queensland tourism industry generally.

Unfortunately, after completing an ECORAM some 'great ideas' will be developed into tourism businesses that fail. ECORAM was designed to minimise the potential for this negative outcome but is not infallible. To make the most of it you must complete it honestly and objectively, taking the time to research the different elements that will affect your business.

Lark Quarry Dinosaur Tracks, near Winton

notes

www.tq.com.au

Contact Websites:

Bureau of Tourism Research
www.btr.gov.au

Central Queensland University
www.cqu.edu.au

Department of Natural
Resources & Mines
www.dnr.qld.gov.au

Department of State Development
www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au

Ecotourism Association of Australia
www.ecotourism.org.au

Environment Australia
www.environment.gov.au

James Cook University
www.jcu.edu.au

Queensland Landcare &
Catchment Management
www.landcareqld.org.au

Qld Museum
www.qmuseum.qld.gov.au

Qld Parks and Wildlife Service
www.env.qld.gov.au/environment/park

Qld University of Technology
www.qut.edu.au

Qld Wildlife Preservation Society
www.wildlife.org.au

Regional Tourist Organisations
www.tq.com.au/qtid/rta.htm

The National Trust
www.nationaltrustqld.org

Tourism Queensland
www.tq.com.au

University of Queensland
www.uq.edu.au

University of Southern Queensland
www.usq.edu.au

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