



Tourism Ambassadors: How-to Guide



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Tourism Ambassadors: How to Guide

Introduction

The aim of any Ambassador programme is to recruit and train a number of suitable individuals to act as a welcoming host and a source of information for a destination.

A Tourism Ambassador:

- Is an expert on all things around them or a beacon of knowledge.
- Is also a local who is passionate about their area and is dedicated to revealing its hidden gems to visitors.
- Is well placed to provide a unique and authentic experience to visitors generating word of mouth recommendations.
- Understands the importance of the local tourism economy.

Benefits to your destination

A Tourism Ambassador programme can enhance, develop or deliver Destination Management objectives and potentially:

- Enhance the visitor experience
- Increase footfall and extends length of stay
- Increase visitor spend and length of stay, therefore increasing economic impact
- Improve product/local knowledge & customer service skills
- Facilitate active networking, locally & nationally
- Improve communication within and between destinations
- Help business development
- Support the visitor economy
- Encourage repeat visitors

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Visit Wales Minimum Standards

- The Tourism Ambassador programmes should require attendance at an initial training programme (comprising at a minimum 2 days training) in order for an individual to become an Ambassador. Some destinations may choose to require a greater commitment.
- That the initial training programme incorporates Customer Service Training.
- That the initial training programme covers product knowledge, sense of place, destination management issues and brand values.
- That the scheme issues Tourism Ambassador certificates and/or allows the use of a Destination Ambassador logo only to those who have completed the initial training within 12 months.
- That these certificates/logos expire after 12 months unless additional training is completed.
- That tourism destinations and Tourism Ambassadors define what additional training is required (current schemes require an additional day per year) in order to have the certificate and/or use of the logo kept alive.
- For a business to use the Tourism Ambassador logo, it should have at least 50% of its permanent front of house staff as Tourism Ambassadors. It should agree to cascade on as much as possible of this training to any temporary or back of house staff it employs. It will be sufficient for the business to agree to these terms, rather than the scheme having to police it.
- The scheme is supported by networking events and on-going communication between participants.
- The scheme is clearly identified as a component of the Destination Action Plan.

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Ambassadors are interested individuals who might be local residents, employees, business owners or other stakeholders within the tourism industry.

Tourism Ambassadors embody the ideals of locally grown tourism. Including local tourism providers, stakeholders and communities in any tourism development and ensuring that the local community enjoys a fair share of the benefits.

Training gives Ambassadors in depth destination knowledge, empowering them to effectively promote, enhance and develop their area. With the right training they become passionate spokespeople for their destinations with the abilities to encourage visitors to:

- See the appeal of their areas
- Want to stay for longer
- Return for another visit

Training should highlight to the participants how important the tourism industry is to the local and national economy and their role as Ambassadors in contributing towards its success.

Having a long-term goal in place is essential to the sustainability of your programme.

In the initial phase of setting up a Tourism Ambassador programme, clarify your destination's long term goals and design an Ambassador programme to help to fulfil these goals. For example, your main aim as a destination could be to improve the link between tourism businesses and local/regional attractions. If so, this has implications for targeting recruitment, the content of the course offer and activities you might wish to provide. The Destination Management Plan for the area should set the tourism goals for the area and identify the key stakeholder groups within the destination.

[Click here for more information on Destination Management.](#)

A Tourism Ambassador Training programme should clearly link to the corresponding Destination Management Plan. In the process of completing their training, individuals coming from different sectors and organisations can be encouraged to engage with destination management in their area.

An Ambassador scheme can provide a framework that improves social, cultural and economic life within a destination by creating a network of Ambassadors linking the many and varied aspects of the tourism economy.

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Getting Started: How to set up your programme

1. Identify what exactly the Tourism Ambassador programme hopes to achieve, outlining the **scope, aims and objectives** i.e. how many businesses/participants to involve, which activities will fulfil proposed aims and objectives, will it require further funding, how it will link with the local Destination Management Plan if a strong link isn't already formed.
2. Consider the **costs associated** with establishing a Tourism Ambassador programme and whether you have sufficient budget to cover these costs. If not, consider potential sources of funding. Associated costs might include: Development of course content, Recruitment of participants, Marketing, Training delivery, venue and catering costs, Training accreditation, equipment for training (projector, screen, marketing), printing, evaluation.
3. Based on previous successful Ambassador schemes it is recommended that **2-3 years** is required to get an Ambassador programme properly established.
4. Consider whether you have sufficient staff, with the right expertise to run the programme in-house or whether additional staff or external contractors need to be brought in to develop, oversee and coordinate the programme. **Staff must be fully aware of the long term goals and aims.**
5. Consider which partnerships need to be developed to maximise the benefits of the programme. Potential partners **should be involved** in the local Destination Management Planning process.
6. Set out the **requirements** to become a Tourism Ambassador and the **content** of the training.
7. Set out the **purpose** of the training and the tasks/roles that the Tourism Ambassadors will be expected to fill.
8. Set aside **time and resources** for preparation of marketing materials.
9. Determine **clear locations** for Ambassador activity.

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The Wrexham North East Wales Tourism Ambassador scheme demonstrated best practice in researching other Ambassador programmes as well as engaging in extensive consultation within their Destination Management partnership before establishing their own initiative.

For more information see the Wrexham Tourism Ambassadors Case Study, also on DM Wales.



Recruitment:

Who should be involved and why, the area in question, and how you will publicise your programme.

- Determine the categories of individuals that you would like to attract for training.
- Determine how many training opportunities and locations should be provided and the dates and times when training will take place.
- Distribute marketing materials to tourism associations or initiatives to make people aware of the programme and what it has to offer.
- Make direct contact with people you would like to recruit.

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Training, learning & engagement:

Why is training important, how it can improve your destinations for both visitors and businesses while meeting Visit Wales' recommended minimum standards.

Identify your specific training requirements and decide whether you will procure training consultants to develop and deliver an Ambassador programme or whether this work could be done in-house. It is likely that part of the work could be outsourced and other aspects kept in-house. For example, the course could be developed in-house but delivered by a training consultant.

In 2014 Cardiff Airport demonstrated their commitment in training through launching a staff coaching programme as a part of their *Straight 'A's* initiative together with an Ambassador scheme. ***For more information see the Cardiff Airport Tourism Ambassadors Case Study, also on DM Wales.***

cardiff airport 
maes awyr caerdydd

Database Management:

Keeping a record of all involved

- Keep a record of all individuals who have expressed an interest in becoming part of your Ambassador programme.
- Develop, maintain and manage a database of all Ambassadors who have attended your programme.
- Recorded data should include name, address, postcode, telephone & email address. There is also an opportunity for you to gather other useful information such as websites, social media, and specific interests.
- A data protection licence (according to Data Protection Act 1998, which defines UK law on the processing of data) must be researched prior to collecting personal data.
- Data must not be collected without consent from the person, and a statement on your form to say that this data will not be used for any other purposes.
- It is important to have a prolific database management in place to keep Ambassadors records up to date, especially contact information.
- Having database management in place will help you improve and sustain relationships and future partnerships with Ambassadors.

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Communication:

Getting people to know about your Ambassadors

- Communication is key to any Ambassador programme.
- It is important to communicate with Ambassadors on a regular basis, this will help with relaying any important/interesting information to Ambassadors.
- Ambassadors – whether they are businesses or volunteers – should be provided with information about the programme, tourism or destination development.
- Contact can take place in various forms, regular e-bulletins or news stories are a good way of providing information about your programme; it also gives them an opportunity to get involved in destination activities and provide information about their particular interest or business.
- Consider other forms of innovative communication, such as social media channels, blogs or 'vlogs' (video blogs) or websites.
- Communicating externally can help with publicising your Ambassador programme (if required) to the media and public, i.e. through print/broadcast media
- Consider creating your own communication plan – this will help you keep track of your communication activities and set a timetable for agreed actions to take place.

The Brecon Beacons National Park Ambassador programme has developed a very effective way of communicating with Ambassadors and keeping them up to date with additional training opportunities and events within the area.

For more information see the Brecon Beacons Tourism Ambassadors Case Study, also on DM Wales.



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Moving Forward: Sustainability, CPD, legacy – how to make your Ambassador programme sustainable and how to keep it making a difference in your destination

- Your Ambassador scheme should have a long term, sustainable vision which extends after the end of establishing the project; especially if it has been set up by accessing to a particular funding stream.
- Consider your exit strategy. Who could continue to deliver the scheme?
- Identify the costs associated with certain elements of the service and how it would be delivered post funding (if applicable) – can they be delivered on a smaller budget? Or would they require ongoing support?
- Re-evaluate the scope, aims and objectives of your Ambassador scheme on project completion – this can help with identifying way forward.
- To maintain momentum and interest from Ambassadors consider a scheme for Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to provide structure to their progression as an Ambassador.

One programme that does this well is Visit Kent and Kent Greeters. They have successfully kept their initiative going since the success of the London Olympics in 2012. ***For more information see the Kent Greeters Case Study, also on DM Wales.***



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More about the Visit Wales Minimum Standards

It is recommended that in order to achieve recognition by the Welsh Government and Visit Wales as a Tourism Ambassador scheme (and therefore able to attract public sector investment and/or endorsement), the following minimum standards must be met.

It is anticipated that these standards will be used in judging the eligibility for funding under e.g. Coastal Communities Fund, the Rural Development Programme, other EU funding programmes or use in Visit Wales marketing material.

Why the minimum standards are important

The benefits of a minimum of two days training which incorporates Customer Service are:

- It keeps standards high within the tourism sector, placing emphasis on key skills in important areas such as customer service.
- It is a way to protect the reputation of tourism businesses, encouraging staff members to take responsibility in actively offering improved customer service, in turn creating a positive visitor experience.

- By having a minimum of two days of training it gives the Ambassadors a chance to bond and share experiences, setting the tone of cooperation and friendliness for the programme moving forward.
- Destinations can work towards achieving a WorldHost recognition if a certain number of businesses participate, further demonstrating to the visitor the standards and benefits obtained above.

The benefits of training to include sense of place, brand values, product knowledge and destination management issues are:

- It gives Ambassadors further knowledge about key features within the local destination which can be shown to visitors – information that may be previously unknown to them.
- It offers them a chance to contribute to the destination management of their area.
- It promotes pride and commitment to their area.
- It develops their awareness and knowledge of all aspects of the tourism industry.

[Click here for more information on Sense of Place.](#)

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Fully trained Ambassadors receiving certificates and use of Destination Ambassador logo promotes a sense of accomplishment and belonging to a successful growing network of like-minded Ambassadors. By giving the programme a brand and identification, visitors can see this when visiting each trained business/attraction (i.e. with stickers/logos etc). It adds depth and longevity to a Tourism Ambassador Programme and helps make the public aware of who and what Ambassadors are when visiting a destination.

To keep their Ambassador status current, it is suggested that fully trained Ambassadors should pursue continued professional development yearly after initial training. This will maintain the high standard reached by Ambassadors with the initial training. It will keep Ambassadors up to date with destination developments and initiatives. It is a way to develop and deliver new training courses for the tourism industry within a destination.

Supporting the scheme with networking events adds value by giving the Ambassadors a chance to experience some of the destination's attractions for themselves, maintaining their awareness of what the area has to offer the visitor. It is also an encouraging method of promoting cross-industry working; further developing partnerships which are often difficult to maintain during their day-to-day running of their respective businesses. It develops a good foundation for further learning, forming best practice and demonstrating pride of a destination. These events can focus on smaller, more local groups or can be hosted at a larger, more regional/national scale.

Developing different forms of innovative communication among Ambassadors.

Conventional communication methods such as face-to-face, events and training workshops can be supported with other modes of digital communication, including social media groups, online blogs and video technology. This is a very effective way to keep people up to date with changes or developments or new initiatives within a destination. It is also a good way to advertise other training or networking opportunities to all fully trained Ambassadors and new Ambassadors.