A woman with long dreadlocks and glasses is smiling while filling a clear water filter pitcher at a kitchen sink. She is wearing a blue denim jacket. In the background, there is a large green plant in a terracotta pot and a dish rack with various items. The right side of the image has a solid pink background with white text and a decorative wavy line with stars.

# **Ambassador Program Guidebook**



***The Drink Philly Tap partnership is comprised of passionate organizations and experts who are committed to promoting tap water in Philadelphia.***



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*Background, context,  
and evolution of  
Drink Philly Tap during  
the program's inception,  
first year, and beyond.*



# ***Introduction***



# History of Drink Philly Tap

Drink Philly Tap is an initiative that empowers Philadelphians with information and knowledge to choose drinking tap water over bottled water.

Drink Philly Tap envisions a future where city residents have pride in their water and understand the environmental, financial, and physical benefits of drinking Philly tap.

*Approximately 40% of city residents drink bottled water at home, instead of tap water.*

## The timeline of Drink Philly Tap

PWD begins comprehensive survey work

**2016**

**2017**

Survey results show **42%** of Philadelphians drink bottled water instead of tap

Op-Ed on in the Philadelphia Inquirer draws attention to the issue

Convening of working group

**2018**

**2019**

Launch of Drink Philly Tap

William Penn Foundation provides \$265k grant to launch of Drink Philly Tap

PWD provides in-kind support

More than 10,000 Philadelphians "Take the Tap Pledge"

Survey results show **36%** of Philadelphians drink bottled water instead of tap

**2020**

**2021**

William Penn Foundation funds Participatory Evaluation of the Ambassador Program



Starting in 2016, ImpactED at the University of Pennsylvania and the Philadelphia Water Department (PWD) partnered to survey Philadelphians about our water. Every resident of Philadelphia has been invited to take the surveys each year. Over the last six years, more than 20,000 Philadelphians have participated in this research and shared their opinions about PWD and our water in general. From 2016–2019, the survey consistently found that approximately 40% of city residents drink bottled water at home, instead of tap.

In 2018, a working group convened to address the tap water disparity.

**While 40% of Philadelphians reported drinking bottled water at home instead of tap, Black and Brown Philadelphians, lower income residents, and Philadelphians with lower levels of education drank bottled water at higher rates than other groups.**

The working group, consisting of staff from several City departments, nonprofit organizations, academic researchers, and civic organizations, determined that one of the most effective ways for tap water promotion would be from within the communities with lower rates of tap water consumption at home.

In an effort to promote Philadelphia's safe drinking water, the Drink Philly Tap initiative started in 2019 to empower residents of Philadelphia with information and knowledge to choose drinking tap water over bottled water. Drink Philly Tap was launched by a partnership of passionate organizations and experts who are committed to promoting tap water in Philadelphia. The partnership included ImpactED at the University of Pennsylvania, PWD, the Water Center at Penn (the Water Center), and PennEnvironment Research and Policy Center. Drink Philly Tap was funded by a grant from the William Penn Foundation and in-kind donations from PWD. The William Penn Foundation supported Drink Philly Tap because of their commitment to protecting the local environment and waterways, and reducing stormwater pollution caused by single-use plastic water bottles. After the first year of Drink Philly Tap, the 2020 survey showed that the percentage of city residents drinking bottled water had dropped 36%. The Drink Philly Tap campaign only lasted one year and in 2021, the survey showed that again, 41% of Philadelphians reported drinking bottled water.



## The First Year

During the first year, Drink Philly Tap included the following components:

- ◆ Ambassador Program
- ◆ Branding & Communications Development (including the [website](#))
- ◆ Public Engagement Outreach
- ◆ Strategic Influencer Meetings

While many aspects of Drink Philly Tap were successful, the ambassador program garnered particular attention because of its recruitment, structure, compensation model, and the impact that it had on priority communities.

As a result, over 10,000 Philadelphians signed the Drink Philly Tap pledge to drink tap water instead of bottled water.



*Melinda Martinez,  
Drink Philly Tap ambassador*



*Cynthia Frank,  
Drink Philly Tap ambassador*

## The Ambassador Program

The Drink Philly Tap ambassador program began with a goal of recruiting 25 ambassadors from neighborhoods with high rates of drinking bottled water at home. These ambassadors were educated about Philadelphia's drinking water treatment, delivery, and safety. They were also provided information to answer the most frequently asked questions and misunderstandings about Philly's drinking water to provide accurate information to their communities.



*Michael Wilcox,  
Drink Philly Tap ambassador*

Ambassadors were tasked with engaging members of their community at events sponsored by Drink Philly Tap partners, such as PWD, or on their own accord. A total of 13 ambassadors completed the program, and were paid \$600 for their time on Drink Philly Tap.

The most successful ambassadors were engaged in their communities already and closely aligned with a partner organization (such as Asociación Puertorriqueños en Marcha (APM)). Those ambassadors were able to conduct their outreach at already well publicized events and programs that those organizations sponsored.

The ambassador model worked for Drink Philly Tap, as it allowed the tap water promotion message to come from community members. Ambassadors worked alongside PWD staff or at their own community events. Prior to this, government representatives would often find themselves going to neighborhoods without a local partner. One of the barriers that led to launching the ambassador pilot was community distrust of local government and misinformation spread by traditional news and social media. By having ambassadors speak directly to their neighbors and peers, the skepticism around messaging coming from local government officials or other people without deep relationships in the community is removed.

*A total of 13  
ambassadors  
completed the  
program, and  
were paid \$600\*  
for their time on  
Drink Philly Tap.*

*\*More details provided in the  
[Research Findings](#) section.*

## Our Current Work: Creating the Guidebook

Due to the success of the Drink Philly Tap ambassador program, the William Penn Foundation requested that Drink Philly Tap conduct further research to understand how and why our ambassador program, as well as other environmentally-focused ambassador programs, are successful.

This guidebook is the result of these efforts.

It includes information for implementing ambassador programs and a description of the research process and findings.

If you are considering being an ambassador or creating an ambassador program, you may find the next two sections useful. **Creating Ambassador Programs** shares suggestions for organizations, groups and partnerships on how to create successful ambassador programs for their initiatives. **Tips for Being an Effective Ambassador** provides guidance and real-world suggestions from previous Drink Philly Tap ambassadors on how to be a successful program ambassador.

In the **Research Findings**, you will find an overview of research on ambassador programs (structure, resources, selection, and support for ambassadors), description of ambassador program outcomes and impacts, and findings from the Drink Philly Tap ambassador program.

The **Appendices** provide a general ambassador program logic model that could be adapted and applied to your own ambassador program and case studies of five different ambassador programs.

*Suggestions for  
organizations, groups,  
and partnerships on  
how to create successful  
ambassador programs  
for their initiatives.*



# ***Creating Ambassador Programs***

# Creating Ambassador Programs

Based on the Drink Philly Tap ambassador program, this project asked the question:

What are the best practices for implementing a successful environmentally-focused ambassador program?

[Take a look at the full guidebook here.](#)

**Below is a list of ideas and key considerations for planning, initiating, and executing an environmentally-focused ambassador program.**

## Planning

### Clarify your “why” and what “success” means to you

**Why:** Why are we doing this? What gaps in our other outreach strategies are we hoping to fill?

**Success:** What are our aims? How will we know we were successful? Who should be involved in defining and evaluating success? What data will help us understand the impact of the ambassador program?

Consider developing a logic model (see the [Research Findings](#) for a sample ambassador program logic model) with all stakeholders to clarify ambassador program goals, desired outcomes, and activities.

### Prioritize compensation

Compensation sends the message that ambassadors’ time and work contributions are valued. It’s important to consider both the administrative process for compensating ambassadors, as well as the amount of compensation. For many organizations, actually figuring out how to get money to ambassadors is a challenge, due to organizational barriers, as well as a potential lack of access to banking resources on the part of ambassadors. See [Research Findings](#) for some ways that Drink Philly Tap and other programs have compensated ambassadors in the past.

*“Be sure to compensate your ambassadors fairly”*

*PWD partner*



## Consider long-term strategy

Since ambassador programs are used as a strategy to build or rebuild community connections and trust, consider long-term strategy from the initial planning phases. Facilitating ambassador programs requires resource commitments (staff time, funding, materials) over time. Although many specific programs are time-bound, it is important to have a strategy for sustainability.

## Ensure staff time and capacity to manage and accompany ambassadors

It is critical to have in-house staff dedicated to supporting the ambassadors on a regular basis and throughout all the phases of the ambassador program. This may include: recruiting and selecting ambassadors, planning and facilitating trainings, administrative tasks (e.g. compensation processes, material distribution), and accompanying ambassadors at community events. For Drink Philly Tap, the most successful events had ambassadors work alongside PWD staff at the Philly Water Bar, providing information and free water while engaging about the tap water message.

## Plan for ambassador program structure

Ambassador program structures vary, including different activities, time, partners, funding models, and compensation. See the [Research Findings](#) for examples of how different ambassador programs were structured in these different categories. Some key considerations related to program structure are:

- ◆ Will the ambassador program be project or issue-specific (across places) or place-based (that can connect with different projects, issues, or campaigns)?
- ◆ Is the ambassador program time-bound or on-going and what are implications for funding needs?
- ◆ Do ambassador recruitment, selection, and support decisions focus on individual ambassadors or ambassador cohorts (size, age, cohort composition)?
- ◆ Do ambassadors fit to program structure or does program structure fit to ambassadors?
- ◆ Does the organization determine program structure then recruit ambassadors or does the organization recruit ambassadors and then determine program structure?



*Drink Philly Tap ambassador Janine Vaughn, engaging with someone at PWD's Philly Water Bar at City Hall in May 2019.*

*"Develop the program with the ambassadors themselves (while paying). The ambassadors know their communities very well."*

*Ambassador Program Advisory Committee member*



## Initiating

### Recruit strategically

Recruiting and selecting ambassadors are critical components of building an effective ambassador program. By collaborating with existing networks or place-based partner organizations, new ambassador programs can work to identify ambassadors with existing connections in the community and streamline recruitment.

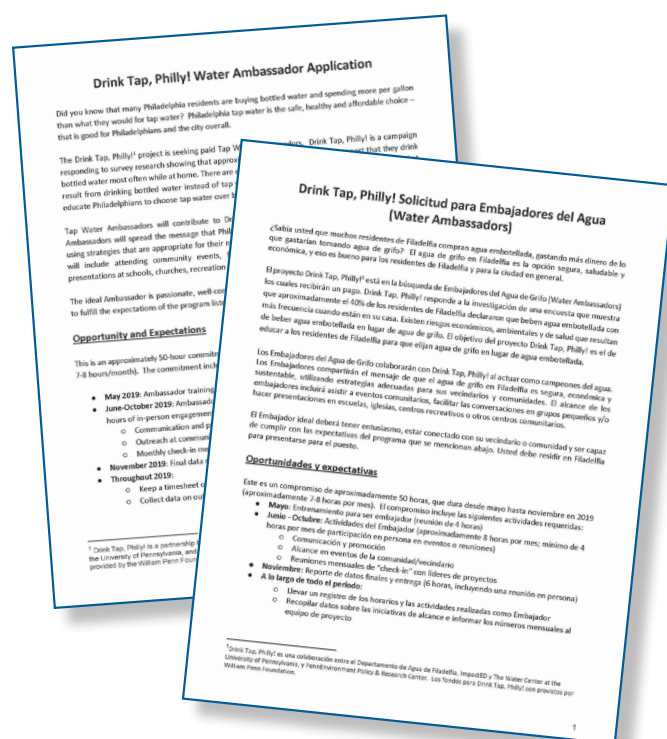
### Connect to existing work, roles, structures

Effective ambassadors and ambassador programs sought ways to build ambassador activities into existing work roles, events, or organizational structures. Instead of initiating a brand new program, seek ways to connect with existing work, roles, and structures with existing community trust to find efficiency and build on existing community connections. For example, several Drink Philly Tap ambassadors already worked as community connectors with Asociación Puertorriqueños en Marcha (APM) in North Philadelphia, one of the neighborhoods with high bottled water consumption in Philadelphia.

Asociación Puertorriqueños en Marcha



Several Drink Philly Tap ambassadors already worked as community connectors with Asociación Puertorriqueños en Marcha (APM) in North Philadelphia.



The application for ambassadors was issued in both English and Spanish to best reach our intended audience.

## Executing

### Listen and be flexible

Build a program structure that allows for ambassador and community members to guide planning and decision-making phases of the program.

- “Leave room for ambassadors to have a say and a role in where we’re headed. Okay, let’s pivot. Listen to your team and ambassadors.”
- “Build room to be able to adapt and pivot based on what you are hearing.”
- “Be responsive to the changes that might come up.”
- “Leave room in the program structure for self-directed action.”

### Learn from ambassadors and facilitate learning between ambassadors

While ambassadors appreciated the training opportunities they participated in and learning from the trainers, they also expressed a desire for additional opportunities to network and learn from one another. Consider intentional ways for ambassadors to build connections with each other and project partners, and build opportunity for ambassadors to share their learnings and train future cohorts.

*“Leave room for ambassadors to have a say and a role in where we’re headed. Listen to your team and ambassadors.”*

*Ambassador Program Advisory  
Committee member*

## Recognize & celebrate work and accomplishments of ambassadors

Build in communication touchstones to share feedback on program progress and success metrics, allowing ambassadors to understand their roles in programmatic success. Seek ways to recognize and celebrate the work and accomplishment of the ambassadors.

For example, Drink Philly Tap planned monthly dinners or happy hours to celebrate together.



*Informal monthly get-togethers gave the ambassadors a chance to catch up, celebrate their success, and debrief.*

## Set up ambassadors for future success

Set the ambassadors up to leverage transferable professional skills for future jobs or career possibilities. Intentionally plan for and identify opportunities and/or resources that the ambassadors can connect with directly after the completion of the ambassador program for future plans and career pathways.

*Guidance and  
real-world suggestions  
from previous  
Drink Philly Tap  
ambassadors on how to  
be a successful program  
ambassador.*



# ***Tips for Being an Effective Ambassador***

# Tips for Being an Effective Ambassador

Based on the Drink Philly Tap ambassador program, this project asked the question:

What are the best practices for implementing a successful environmentally-focused ambassador program?

[Take a look at the full guidebook here.](#)

Who better to share tips and advice for future ambassadors than the Drink Philly Tap ambassadors themselves?

**Below is a list of top tips for future ambassadors. Most of what's here is what we heard directly from Drink Philly Tap ambassadors in their own words.**

## *Applying to the ambassador program*

### Find your “why”

Spend some time clarifying why you want to be an ambassador and what will help you to stay motivated when challenges arise.

- ◆ “Find a reason you want to do the work besides the money. Connect your passions to the actual project. You will need to tap into that passion when things go wrong. It will motivate you through bad weather and other issues that come up.”

### Evaluate whether this role is a good fit for you

- ◆ Are you comfortable approaching people and initiating conversation?
- ◆ Are you excited to learn more about the topic issue and share what you learn with your community?
- ◆ Will you be able to build off of your existing connections and network in your community?
- ◆ How can you apply what you learn as an ambassador in your own community?

*“Connect your passions to the actual project. You will need to tap into that passion when things go wrong. It will motivate you through bad weather and other issues that come up.”*

*Drink Philly Tap  
ambassador*

## Training

### Trust the training

- ◆ Use the information that is provided. Get to know the information. It will make you feel more confident.
- ◆ Be familiar with the information enough to make it your own and make it fun.
- ◆ Be open to learning new information and educate yourself.



*Three Drink Philly Tap ambassadors serving the community at an event in Overbrook, Philadelphia in June 2019.*

### Partner with fellow ambassadors and other community organizations

- ◆ Try to connect with peers in the program and be open to learning from one another.
- ◆ Seek out ways to work alongside staff from the organization(s) facilitating the ambassador program. Working alongside a seasoned partner and trained staff can reduce misinformation while the ambassadors bring forth their authenticity and local connections to events.
- ◆ Partner with organizations whose services are connected to the topic or issue. For example, one Drink Philly Tap ambassador described an experience partnering with an organization that sold produce: “During interactions with community members, we reflected on how tap water is used to grow fruits and veggies and we used tap water to wash fruits and veggies—it’s all connected.”

Many Drink Philly Tap ambassadors worked alongside PWD staff at events, and enjoyed having the ability to tap into partner props, such as the Philly Water Bar. It’s a vibrant pop-up, serving tap water with messaging about the benefits of drinking tap while people sample the water.



## Engaging with your community

### Be positive

- ◆ Have a positive attitude! People are more receptive to the information if you approach the interaction positively. It can make you more effective.
- ◆ Enjoy yourself—let them know the experience of being in an ambassador program is fun and engaging.

### Be yourself

- ◆ Go off script, make it personable, tailor it to what the person might like. Be genuine.
- ◆ Bring your own related experience to make it a true conversation. Do not just share facts and figures. Ease people into the conversation—have a real dialogue.
- ◆ Be comfortable—this will make it a better and more engaging experience.

### Be honest

- ◆ Admit if you don't know it, and then look it up or ask a staff representative. This will build rapport and make you seem human. Making sure the information you are sharing is accurate and correct is extremely important to make sure the message is clear and consistent.

### Connect, connect, connect

- ◆ Build rapport with everyone—make many connections and relationships with people.
- ◆ Be open to meeting new people and getting to know fellow ambassadors and other community members.

*"Go off script, make it personable, tailor it to what the person might like. Be genuine."*

*Drink Philly Tap  
ambassador*



*Overview of the in-depth  
research on ambassador  
programs, including  
structure, resources,  
selection & support for  
ambassadors*



# ***Research Findings***

# What is an ambassador program?

Ambassador programs create a bridge between an outside institution (e.g. nonprofit, government, or utility) and a community of focus to build or rebuild community connections and trust by engaging community members in outreach and education about a topic or issue.

Ambassador program structures vary, including: activities, time, partners, funding models, and compensation. [A detailed logic model for ambassador programs is in Appendix A.](#)

The table below describes the structure and components of Drink Philly Tap, and examples for how other ambassador programs can be developed.

Ambassador Program Factors	Examples:	Drink Philly Tap
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Media &amp; outreach</li> <li>Community events</li> <li>Individual and small group interactions</li> <li>Materials distribution</li> <li>Trainings</li> <li>Resident surveys</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community events</li> <li>Individual and small group interactions</li> <li>Materials distribution</li> <li>Trainings</li> </ul>
Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Duration of program</li> <li>Amount of regular time commitment</li> <li>Frequency of activities</li> <li>On-going or time-bound</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May–October</li> <li>4 hrs per month</li> <li>\$80 per month (with start and end bonus)</li> </ul>
Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administrative partner</li> <li>Place-based partner</li> <li>Strategic influencers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Philadelphia Water Department (PWD),</li> <li>The Water Center at Penn</li> <li>PennEnvironment</li> <li>ImpactED</li> <li>Community based organizations</li> <li>Local businesses</li> </ul>
Funding models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grant funded</li> <li>Organization funding</li> <li>Diversified or single source</li> <li>Multi-year</li> <li>Matched</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grant funded with additional resources matched by PWD</li> </ul>
Compensation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compensated ambassadors or unpaid volunteer ambassadors</li> <li>Form</li> <li>Frequency</li> <li>Amount</li> <li>Process</li> <li>Other benefits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yes</li> <li>Human subject research payments</li> <li>\$80/month</li> <li>\$600 total compensation</li> </ul>

The [Ambassador Program Case Studies \(see Appendix B\)](#) show the variation in structure across several ambassador programs including: Stormwater Ambassadors (Grounded Strategies), APM Community Connectors (Asociación Puertorriqueños en Marcha), Community Resource Corps (City of Philadelphia AmeriCorps Program), Master Watershed Stewards (Clean Water Fund), and Green Ambassadors (Overbrook Environmental Education Center).

## Considerations across ambassador program structures:

Below is a list of questions to consider when developing an ambassador program

- ◆ **Issue-specific or place-based:** Will the ambassador program be project or issue-specific (across places) or place-based (that can connect with different projects, issues, or campaigns)?
- ◆ **Time-bound or on-going:** Is the ambassador program time-bound or on-going and what are implications for funding needs?
- ◆ **Individual ambassadors or ambassador cohorts:**  
Do ambassador recruitment, selection, and support decisions focus on individual ambassadors or ambassador cohorts (size, age, cohort composition)?
- ◆ **Flexible structure or firm plan:** Do ambassadors fit to program structure or does program structure fit to ambassadors? How much or what parts of the structure and activities are set by the program plan or determined by ambassadors themselves (number of hours, types of events)?
- ◆ **Sequence of ambassador involvement:** When do ambassadors themselves begin program planning participation? Does the organization determine program structure then recruit ambassadors or does the organization recruit ambassadors and then determine program structure?

# What contexts are ambassador programs best suited for?

## Community connection & trust

Ambassador programs are used as a way to build or rebuild connections and trust in order to pursue the desired ambassador program impacts. Community connections and trust repeatedly came up across multiple stakeholder groups:

- Related to context or demand to launch ambassador programs,
- As a critical selection criteria for ambassadors (individual level),
- As a reason and criteria for collaboration with place-based partners (organizational level), and
- As a goal of ambassador programs.

### In the case of Drink Philly Tap,

A desire to improve community connections and trust was an explicit reason to initiate the Drink Philly Tap ambassadors program.

One of the reasons for launching the ambassador pilot was community distrust of local government and misinformation spread by traditional news and social media. By having ambassadors lead engagement with their neighbors and peers, the skepticism around messaging coming from local government officials or other people without deep relationships in the community is removed.

The ambassador model worked for Drink Philly Tap as it allowed the tap water promotion message to come from community members instead of only from the representatives from local government.

# What resources are needed to implement an effective ambassador program?

## Material resources

From ambassadors and ambassador program representatives we heard about the importance of the following materials:

- ◆ Printed and written materials with relevant educational information in simple language, with photographs, graphics and relevant translations.
- ◆ Give-aways or interactive and experiential props to help ambassadors initiate conversation and interactions in a way that feels natural.

### In the case of Drink Philly Tap,

Drink Philly Tap ambassadors described the importance of printed and written materials to share information and the presence of the PWD team with them at events to engage with community members. Specifically, Drink Philly Tap ambassadors identified the Philly Water Bar and the opportunity to give out water samples for tasting as very effective ways to interact with community members.



*Drink Philly Tap ambassadors behind PWD's Philly Water Bar at an event in August 2019.*

## Ambassador compensation

There were a variety of compensation models for paying ambassadors. See the [Ambassador Program Case Studies](#) for specifics about compensation for several different ambassador programs.

### Potential Models

- ◆ **Frequency (when)**
  - \$1500 stipends paid in installments at various checkpoints during the program
  - Weekly or monthly hourly pay
  - Pay by milestone and capstone completion
- ◆ **Form of compensation (what)**
  - Health benefits
  - Other benefits like Septa cards, grocery gift cards, etc
  - Gift cards to focus group participants
- ◆ **Process (how)**
  - Contracting with other organizations or entities who pay the ambassadors directly (rather than the ambassador program host organization)
  - Direct deposits to bank accounts
- ◆ **Amount (how much)**
  - While many ambassador programs pay \$15/hr, some programs provide no compensation



### **In the case of Drink Philly Tap,**

Drink Philly Tap ambassadors were compensated at the completion of the six month ambassador program through a human subjects research payment through the University of Pennsylvania. They could earn up to \$600 over the course of the calendar year. The threshold of \$600 was determined the maximum amount by the University for human subjects payments, which does not require the collection of a W-9 or any other tax information. We chose to pay ambassadors as human subjects because this was a pilot program and we were collecting data from them at each stage. Additionally, we did not want the collection of tax information to serve as a barrier for any ambassadors. They were compensated \$80/month for four hours/month of time and also received a start and end bonus. The payment was issued as a Greenphire ClinCard.

### ***Long-term strategy for sustainability***

Since ambassador programs are used as a strategy to build or re-build community connections and trust, consider long-term strategy from the initial planning phases. Facilitating ambassador programs requires resource commitments (staff time, funding, materials) over a period of time. Although many specific programs are time-bound, it is important to have a strategy for sustaining funding and ongoing support for the program. Some examples may be building ambassador programs into operating costs, multi-year grant-funded projects, or finding sponsorship from corporate partners.

### **In the case of Drink Philly Tap,**

Long-term strategy for funding and sustainability is a challenge for Drink Philly Tap. The Drink Philly Tap ambassador program had funding and support for a one-year pilot from the William Penn Foundation, but was unable to secure funding beyond the pilot year. Drink Philly Tap ambassadors and partners have expressed a strong commitment to the program and a desire for continued programming if resources are available.

# How can organizations most effectively select and support ambassadors?

## Most important ambassador capacities

When asked about important ambassador capacities or selection criteria, across stakeholder groups we heard about community connections and trust.

In addition to a strong focus on trust and connections, ambassadors themselves described things that helped them (or presented challenges for them) related to the following selection criteria for ambassadors:

- ◆ Follow through and good communication skills,
- ◆ Experience and comfort level approaching people and initiating contact,
- ◆ Opportunity to incorporate ambassador activities into an existing role or participation with an organization,
- ◆ Strong desire to help their community and ensure their community has information, and
- ◆ Experience of having transitioned ideas and behaviors related to the call to action. This personal experience can help the ambassador understand the hesitance or questions that community members may have about the topic.

*"Since I was able to talk about my opinion on tap water shifting, I think I was better able to talk to other people."*

*When asked what helped them be a successful ambassador, a Drink Philly Tap ambassador described how the experience of having changed their own ideas about drinking tap water helped them to connect with community members.*

## In the case of Drink Philly Tap,

**When asked about important ambassador selection criteria, Drink Philly Tap ambassadors themselves described the importance of existing trust on the individual and organizational level.**

Ambassadors described community connections and trust both in terms of an individual's prior meaningful interactions with community members of the target population and existing involvement in organizations that are trusted in the community.

Highlighting the importance of connections in community and trust, in the case of the Drink Philly Tap ambassador program, the most effective ambassadors were engaged in their communities already and closely aligned with a partner organization such as Asociación Puertorriqueños en Marcha (APM). Those ambassadors were able to successfully conduct their outreach at organization-sponsored events.

**Drink Philly Tap ambassadors described additional characteristics that made them effective in their role as ambassador:**

- ◆ **Effective communicator and listener**—"I was able to repeat back what they were saying to confirm understanding."
- ◆ **Knowledge about the topic**—"The most important thing that made me an effective ambassador was being well informed about the information, having documents & water to share, becoming more informed and converting completely to drinking tap water."
- ◆ **Collaborative**—"Partnering and working well together. We were able to balance each other's strengths. Being able to share responsibilities and tasks (for example, table together). Connected with others at the monthly trainings—exchanged numbers and planned events together."

## Key program components to support ambassadors

From ambassadors and ambassador program representatives we heard about the importance of the following program components:

- Connections to planned community events,
- Accompanying ambassadors at community events,
- Training opportunities, and
- Feedback on any specific metrics of success for the program.

Specifically related to training opportunities, ambassador program representatives reported that all programs did provide orientation and training. Topics included: subject matter education, community organizing, evaluation, interpersonal skills, and “Your Why.” When prompted to identify the most important training, ambassador program representatives listed:

- History & goals of the program
- Ability to communicate & motivate action
- How to engage community members in meaningful conversation
- Building connections—how to engage with overlapping community groups and agencies
- Trainings tailored to the interests and skill sets of ambassadors
- Equitable engagement strategies, trauma-informed practices in community engagement

## In the case of Drink Philly Tap,

Drink Philly Tap ambassadors shared that connections to **planned community events** and access to written documents or updated information (e.g. list or calendar of planned events) were really important to them. In addition, having representatives from **PWD accompanying** them at events provided needed support to share information and answer questions.

While the focus was on skill building or learning from “the trainer,” there could also be more opportunity to focus on team building and networking. Drink Philly Tap ambassadors appreciated the **training opportunities** and shared a desire for more opportunities to learn from one another and network.

We did hear a desire to understand more about **ambassador program progress** from one Drink Philly Tap ambassador who commented about the “total number of pledges received” and shared that “those final number had not been shared.”

*“Meetings where we could hear and learn from other ambassador’s experiences were really helpful.”*

*A Drink Philly Tap ambassador described the most important training opportunities.*

*Description of outcomes &  
impacts of ambassador  
programs and findings from  
the Drink Philly Tap  
ambassador program.*



# ***Impacts & Outcomes***



# Impacts

## Ambassador program desired impacts focused on:

- Behavior change related to the topic or call to action,
- Increased civic engagement, and
- Improved community connections and trust.

## *Behavior change related to the topic or call to action*

Ambassador programs engage community members as ambassadors in outreach and education about a topic or issue in order to increase awareness and knowledge and, ultimately, lead to behavior change related to the specific topic or issue (e.g. drinking tap water instead of bottled water). Ambassador programs seek to change not only behaviors of ambassadors themselves who directly participate in the program, but also of community members more broadly.

### In the case of Drink Philly Tap,

Community members reported behavior change related to the topic or call to action.

When asked about behavior change related to drinking Philly tap water, respondents reported that they do the following “more often” than before signing the Drink Philly Tap pledge:

Behavior change	% of respondents
Drink tap water at home instead of buying bottled water	<b>58%</b>
Carry a reusable water bottle when out	<b>67%</b>
Ask for tap water when offered bottled water	<b>51%</b>
Ask friends and family to drink tap water at home instead of buying bottled water	<b>53%</b>
Ask friends and family to carry a reusable water bottle when out	<b>47%</b>
Ask friends and family to ask for tap water when offered bottled water	<b>36%</b>

## Increased civic engagement

Civic engagement is defined as “working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make that difference”<sup>1</sup>. Ambassador programs aim to increase civic engagement of community members and ambassadors who participate in the programs.

### In the case of Drink Philly Tap,

**Community members reported increased civic engagement.**

When asked if signing the Drink Philly Tap pledge motivated them to improve their community or the environment, 62% of respondents said “yes.”

The majority of those responses focused on:

(1) participating in more community service

*“We did a clean up project in our neighborhood, and were able to recycle a ton of plastics.”*

(2) education (such as encouraging people not to buy bottled water).

*“It allowed me to reach out to the community and try and educate them how toxic plastic water bottles really are. I gained new friendships as a result.”*

**Drink Philly Tap ambassadors reported increased civic engagement.**

When asked about how they think they benefited from participation in the program, Drink Philly Tap ambassadors commented:

*“Opportunities to communicate my beliefs related to the financial and environmental issues related to bottled water.”*

*“Share personal passion for the environment.”*

*“Helped open the eyes of her neighbors and make them think differently.”*

*“The community impact of sharing the knowledge about benefits of tap vs bottle. Being able to share helpful information to the community felt good.”*

*“Getting the info out to the community. Being able to properly inform people about the information and resources available related to the Philadelphia Water Department.”*

*“Opportunities to communicate my beliefs related to the financial and environmental issues related to bottled water.”*

*Drink Philly Tap  
ambassador*

<sup>1</sup> Ehrlich, T. (Ed.) (2000). Civic Responsibility and Higher Education. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group

## Improved community connections and trust

Ambassador programs are often initiated in response to an identified lack of community connections and trust between an outside institution (e.g. nonprofit, government, or utility) and a community of focus and seek to improve community connections and trust through the program.

### In the case of Drink Philly Tap,

**Community members and Drink Philly Tap ambassadors described improved connections or trust in Drink Philly Tap partner organizations.**

When asked about the impact of interacting with someone from the Drink Philly Tap team, multiple community members commented about changes in their perspective and connection with PWD.

*“Helped to build my trust in PWD.”*

*“That PWD cares about our community”*

One Drink Philly Tap ambassador described how an ambassador program can change the perception of an organization or institution:

*“Made Penn look more environmentally conscious and PWD look more human and not just a bill to pay.”*

*“Helped to  
build my trust  
in PWD.”*

Community  
member

# Outcomes

To pursue these long-term impacts, we explored the following outcome areas:

- ◆ Topic or issue area awareness and knowledge,
- ◆ Professional skill development, and
- ◆ Understanding and perception of organization(s).

## Topic or issue area awareness and knowledge

Ambassador programs aim to increase awareness and knowledge about the topic or issue area for ambassadors and community members.

### In the case of Drink Philly Tap:

Community members reported increased knowledge about Philly drinking water.

- ◆ While 40% of survey respondents reported learning something new about Philly's drinking water from signing the Drink Philly Tap pledge, 58% of nonwhite respondents reported learning something new.
- ◆ Of those who reported learning something new, 49% of the responses focused on their learning about water treatment and filtration quality.

*"I learned more about the process of water purification in the public water system."*

Drink Philly Tap ambassadors reported increased knowledge about the environmental and financial issues related to bottled water (vs. tap water).

*"Getting additional knowledge about testing water and other important tips and knowledge about water issues in their homes."*

## Professional skill development

From the perspectives of funders and ambassador program representatives, professional and skill development is an important component for ambassadors participating in programs.

Professional development includes:

- ◆ Learning new skills
- ◆ Apply new skills in new settings
- ◆ Learn to effectively communicate with peers
- ◆ Individual is getting tangible benefits for education and career path, and
- ◆ Tangible employment.

### In the case of Drink Philly Tap:

**Drink Philly Tap ambassadors described the most important trainings from their experience:**

Initiating interaction

*“How to get people to engage in one on one conversations.  
How to engage and then ease people into these conversations.”*

Rapport building with community members

*“How to share information without forcing them to change their opinions immediately.”*

Learning about other organizations and work underway

*“Interactions and partnerships with other organizations—learning what others are doing to save their environment.”*

Facilitating connections with other ambassadors, organizations, or community events

*“Ability to go to each other’s events. Can see what worked with others. Especially if there are different personalities...learn how others approach their work and learn different ways to be a successful ambassador.”*

## Understanding & perception of organization(s)

As related to organizations, we heard about the ways that ambassador programs can serve as bridges between organizations and community members, build or rebuild trust, and possibly shift community perceptions of the organizations. It is important to consider the branding or face of an ambassador program or campaign and how it may influence receptiveness of community members.

### In the case of Drink Philly Tap:

The Drink Philly Tap ambassador program included several partners: The Philadelphia Water Department, The Water Center at Penn, ImpactED, and place-based partner organizations.

#### **Community members reported improved perception of the Philadelphia Water Department (PWD).**

When asked about the impact of interacting with someone from the Drink Philly Tap team, multiple community members commented about their perception of PWD:

*“[The] Philadelphia Water Department is dedicated to helping improve the city by making it cleaner and greener.”*

#### **Drink Philly Tap ambassadors reported better understanding about the resources and services available through PWD (e.g. testing your house’s water for free).**

*“Being able to share the flyers and Water Quality Reports. Understanding of how to get testing for free and sharing that information out to their communities.”*



*Considerations  
for funders and  
recommendations for  
future research*



***Now what?***

# Now what?

## Communication

Ambassador programs involve multiple stakeholder groups or audiences. How can the learning from this project be shared effectively with different audiences? What multimedia resources would be helpful to share the learning?

## Considerations for funders

### Network of ambassador programs?

We heard about the development of a diversified workforce pipeline as a desired impact of ambassador programs. The impacts of behavior change related to a specific topic or issue area and increased civic engagement can be pursued to some degree through one specific ambassador program. That being said, development of a diversified workshop pipeline calls for strategic support for multiple ambassador programs and even funds for facilitation and support for ambassador programs to work together.

### Funding for what?

Ambassador programs often secure funding for a specific issue area or time period; however, many of the challenges described by ambassador program representatives could be mitigated with funding for on-going ambassador programs. Instead of recruiting, selecting, and training ambassadors for each issue, program, or time period, an on-going pool of ambassadors with deep connections in their community could support organizations in facilitating and implementing a new ambassador program.

Recruiting, selecting, training, supporting, and accompanying ambassadors takes significant organizational staff capacity throughout the different phases of programming. Resources that directly support staff to focus on the ambassador programs is important to ensure ambassador effectiveness.

## How can ambassadors be compensated for program planning?

Too often organizations or programs may be asked to plan and make decisions about the ambassador program in order to seek funding before incorporating ambassadors into the program. How can funding structures build in flexibility to ensure that organizations and programs can compensate ambassadors to drive planning and decision-making for the ambassador program instead of only joining for implementation (when many critical decisions have already been made)?

## How can funders support the sustainability of ambassador programs they fund?

Keeping the momentum of ambassador programs going can be a challenge! Ambassador programs not only need structure and committed staff, but funding as well. Funders should consider the implications of providing short-term grants to programs, and consider ways to support programs in continuing to secure future funding opportunities.

## **Recommendations for future research**

### **Compensation**

Compensation for ambassador programs is critical, but worth deeper consideration and reflection related to:

- ◆ Implications of paying for services that may also be part of volunteering
- ◆ Amount of payment
- ◆ Feasibility of payment
- ◆ Implications of payment
- ◆ Implications on program and activity sustainability

**How can we better understand long-term implications of compensation beyond the ambassador program time frame?**

### **Diversified workforce pipeline**

According to funders we interviewed, ambassador programs are successful if ambassadors gain useful professional skills, continue to increase their civic engagement, and become employed in relevant sectors.

**How can we understand long-term ambassador engagement and employment pathways and outcomes?**

### **Impacts of ambassador programs on actual behaviors and actions**

What people do is often different from what people say. In this report, we rely on community members' self-reporting about their behaviors related to drinking tap water. In an ideal world, we could observe how individual people or households changed their water drinking behaviors. Future ambassador programs should consider multiple ways of understanding behavior changes and actions.

**How can we better understand behavior change and actions beyond self-report?**

*Description of the  
research methods &  
data collection process*



# ***Methodology & Approach***

# Our Methodology & Approach

## Guiding Research Question

What are best practices for implementing a successful environmentally-focused ambassador program?

## Methods

Generally, our evaluation process includes:

- ◆ Phase 1: Research & Strategy
- ◆ Phase 2: Data collection & Analysis
- ◆ Phase 3: Sharing & Reporting

We conducted a participatory evaluation, which is an evaluation of a program or project that involves the stakeholders of a program or project in the evaluation process. In the case of Drink Philly Tap, we were able to have one of the Drink Philly Tap ambassadors as a full member of our research team throughout the entire evaluation.



## Advisory committees

In addition to the Drink Philly Tap partners (PWD, The Water Center, & ImpactED) in order to facilitate intentional participation and decision-making throughout the process, we formed an Ambassador Advisory Committee and Ambassador Program Advisory Committee composed of ambassadors themselves as well as representatives from organizations with ambassador programs.

Responsibilities included:

- Supporting and participating in evaluation activities (as relevant)
- Providing suggestions on how to incorporate feedback from the program research and evaluation efforts
- Sharing input on final deliverables and the final event

Advisory committee members received an organizational and/or individual honorarium to recognize their participation and contributions to this project.

### Drink Philly Tap Ambassadors Advisory Committee

- Leon Sanford
- Luz Crespo
- Monika Davis
- Victoria Lomax
- Cynthia Frank
- Janeen Vaughn
- Janice Bevels
- Jewel Harris

### Ambassador Programs Advisory Committee

- Asociación Puertorriqueños en Marcha (APM)
- City of Philadelphia AmeriCorps Program
- Grounded Strategies
- Master Watershed Stewards Program
- Clean Water Fund
- Overbrook Environmental Education Center

## Data collection overview

In all phases of the evaluation project, we sought participation by multiple stakeholder groups. Over the course of the participatory evaluation, we engaged in: stakeholder engagement conversations, interviews and survey, meaning-making sessions, and guidebook creation.

### Stakeholder engagement conversations

**Stakeholders inform what types of data to collect, how, and from whom.**

During this phase, we reached out to people with experience with either: the Drink Philly Tap ambassadors program, an environmentally-focused community ambassador program in Philadelphia, or a tap water ambassador program in another city. In addition to Drink Philly Tap partners and Drink Philly Tap ambassadors, during this phase we completed six conversations with organizational representatives.

### Interviews and survey

**Stakeholders respond to key questions and share from their experiences.**

During this phase, we completed: 9 interviews with Drink Philly Tap ambassadors, 5 interviews with ambassador program representatives, 4 interviews with funders, and collected 284 survey responses from community members who had signed the Drink Philly Tap pledge.

### Meaning-making sessions

**Stakeholders participate in interpreting the data and determining the recommendations and lessons learned.**

During this phase, we facilitated meaning-making sessions to interpret what we're learning with: (1) Drink Philly Tap partners (PWD, The Water Center, & ImpactED), (2) Ambassador Advisory Committee, and (3) Ambassador Programs Advisory Committee.

## Guidebook & recommendations

**Stakeholders influence how the findings and recommendations are communicated with multiple audiences.**

During this phase, we sought specific feedback on the draft guidebook and considerations for future ambassadors and ambassador programs from: (1) Drink Philly Tap partners, (2) Ambassador Advisory Committee, and (3) Ambassador Programs Advisory Committee.

## Limitations

### Self report is not necessarily actual behaviors and actions

It is important to remember that what people say might be different from what they do. In this report, we heard about the impacts that Drink Philly Tap and other programs had on community members and ambassadors, but did not actually get to observe how community members' drinking water habits changed in practice. Future ambassador programs should consider ways to measure impact beyond participant-reported behaviors.



# ***Appendices***

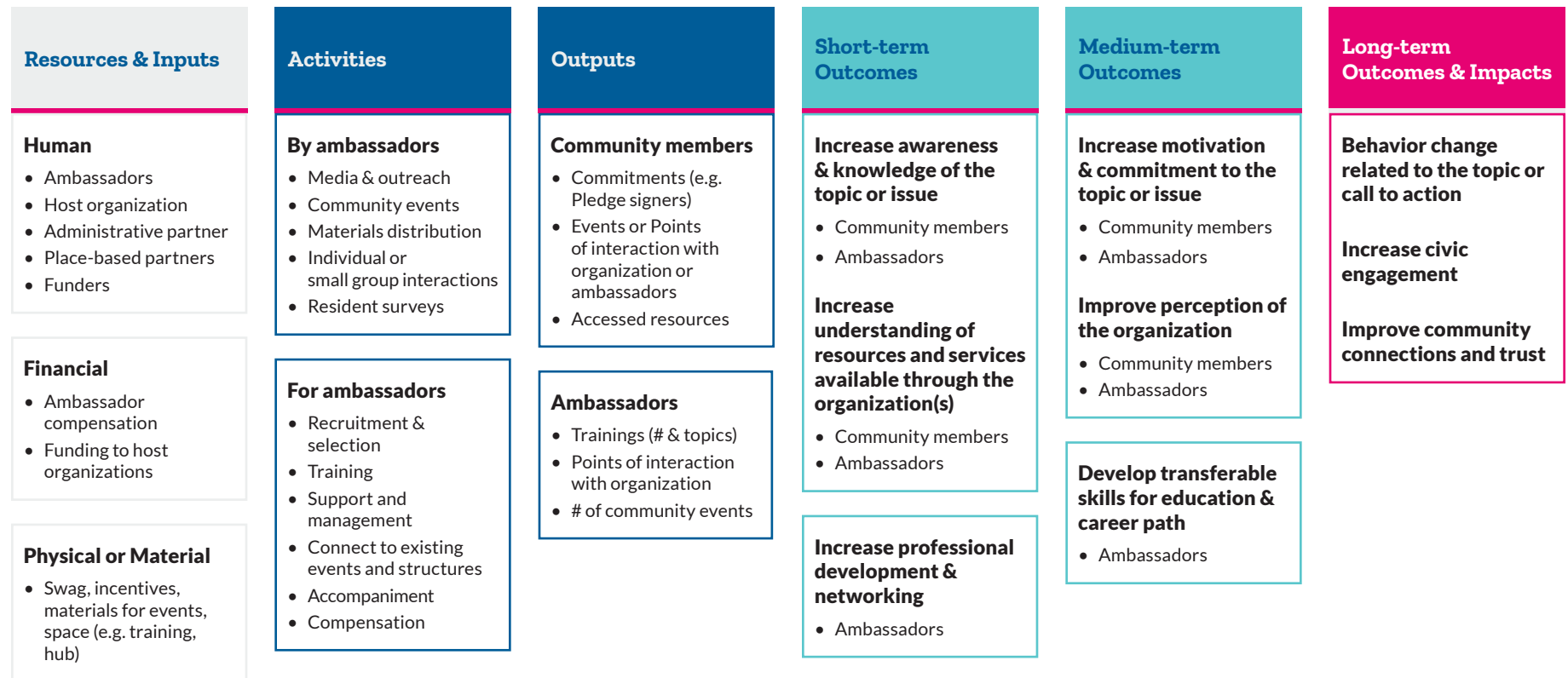
A: Ambassador Program Logic Model

B: Ambassador Program Case Studies

## APPENDIX A:

# Ambassador Program Logic Model

Ambassador programs create a bridge between an outside institution (e.g. nonprofit, government, or utility) and a community of focus to build or rebuild community connections and trust by engaging community members in outreach and education about a topic or issue.



## APPENDIX B:

# Ambassador Program Case Study:

## Stormwater Ambassadors (Grounded Strategies)

Ambassador Program Factors	Stormwater Ambassadors
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trainings + discussion</li> <li>• Materials distribution</li> <li>• Survey collection</li> <li>• Community meeting attending and/or presenting updates</li> <li>• Capstone projects including events or green stormwater project implementation (rain garden, roof capture set-ups, etc.)</li> </ul>
Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6–8 mo.</li> <li>• ~0–4 hr/wk</li> <li>• Quarterly activities</li> </ul>
Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pittsburgh Water &amp; Sewer Authority (PWSA)</li> <li>• Allegheny County Sanitary Authority (ALCOSAN)</li> <li>• 3 Rivers Wet Weather, Upstream PGH</li> </ul> <p><b>Place-based:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operation Better Block</li> <li>• East Hills Consensus Group</li> <li>• Larimer Green Team</li> <li>• Hazelwood Initiative</li> <li>• Negley Run Watershed Association</li> <li>• 9 Mile Run Watershed Association</li> </ul>
Funding models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grant funded</li> <li>• Single source</li> </ul>
Compensation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes, payments issued based on completion of milestones at rate of \$15/hr for projected time commitment</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX B:

### **Ambassador Program Case Study:**

#### **APM Community Connectors (Asociación Puertorriqueños en Marcha)**

<b>Ambassador Program Factors</b>	<b>APM Community Connectors</b>
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Door to door outreach</li><li>◆ Phone banking</li><li>◆ Canvassing</li><li>◆ Community events</li><li>◆ Project development and implementation</li><li>◆ Professional development opportunities</li></ul>
Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Year-round</li><li>◆ 5–20 hours a week depending on connector availability and program needs</li></ul>
Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC),</li><li>◆ Asociación Puertorriqueños en Marcha (APM)</li></ul>
Funding models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Grant funded</li><li>◆ One primary source and smaller sources written into other department grants</li></ul>
Compensation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Yes</li><li>◆ Paid per hour worked on a monthly basis</li></ul>



## APPENDIX B:

### **Ambassador Program Case Study:**

#### **Community Resource Corps (City of Philadelphia AmeriCorps Program)**

<b>Ambassador Program Factors</b>	<b>Community Resource Corps AmeriCorps</b>
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Anti-poverty resource connection through outreach, follow up, and confirmation of receipt</li><li>◆ Professional development and career connection for members</li><li>◆ Coordination of outreach efforts and resource connection for the City of Philadelphia.</li></ul>
Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Year long commitment of 1200 hours</li><li>◆ Approximately 30 hours a week.</li></ul>
Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ City of Philadelphia departments</li><li>◆ AmeriCorps</li><li>◆ Community based organizations</li><li>◆ Open to additional partners as we build and grow this program</li></ul>
Funding models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Grant funded</li><li>◆ AmeriCorps funded, and funded through a cost share model with City departments</li></ul>
Compensation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Yes</li><li>◆ Yearly stipend that breaks down to ~\$15/hour</li><li>◆ Issued biweekly</li></ul>

## APPENDIX B:

### Ambassador Program Case Study:

#### Master Watershed Stewards (Clean Water Fund)

Ambassador Program Factors	Master Watershed Stewards
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trainings</li> <li>• Community education</li> <li>• Outreach events</li> <li>• Presentations</li> <li>• Hands-on demonstrations and restoration projects</li> <li>• Creating educational materials and research</li> </ul>
Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Year-round ongoing, after a 3-month (40 educational hours) training</li> <li>• 50-hour per year commitment during first year, then</li> <li>• 20 hours per subsequent year;</li> <li>• 10 hours continuing education per year.</li> <li>• All based on ambassador's available time.</li> </ul>
Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Penn State Extension,</li> <li>• PWD</li> <li>• Philadelphia Parks &amp; Rec</li> <li>• Fairmount Parks Conservancy</li> <li>• Watershed organizations</li> </ul>
Funding models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grant funded, varies depending on available grants</li> </ul>
Compensation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No compensation</li> </ul>
Other	<p><i>This is a fairly new program in Philadelphia. It was introduced right before the Covid pandemic began to affect public interaction. There will likely be some modifications to the program, in response to our experimenting with online and hybrid programming, as well as DIY ambassador activities that are decentralized.</i></p>

## APPENDIX B:

### **Ambassador Program Case Study:**

#### **Green Ambassadors (Overbrook Environmental Education Center)**

<b>Ambassador Program Factors</b>	<b>Green Ambassadors</b>
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>♦ Outreach</li><li>♦ Tabling</li><li>♦ Online presentations</li><li>♦ Training webinars and seminars</li><li>♦ Home walk-through audits and soil sample collection for lead testing</li></ul>
Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>♦ 5 hour training program</li><li>♦ Community meeting attendance</li><li>♦ 3–5 hours a week</li></ul>
Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>♦ Energy Coordinating Agency</li><li>♦ Neighborhood Advisory Council</li><li>♦ PWD</li><li>♦ Committee for Excellence in Toxicology (University of Pennsylvania)</li></ul>
Funding models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>♦ Grant funded with contractual and in-kind support from PWD</li></ul>
Compensation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>♦ No compensation</li></ul>