

*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.

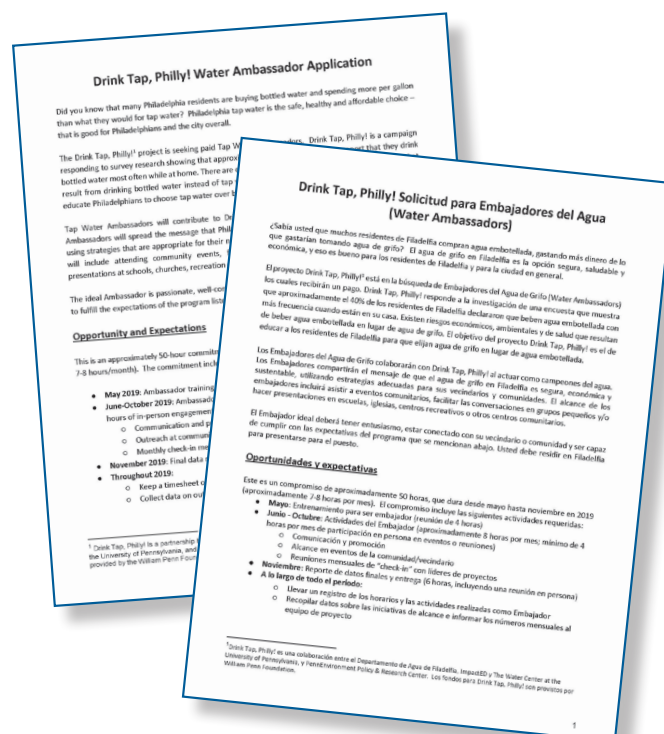
### Connect to existing work, roles, structures

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.