Tourism Skills+Jobs | Sustainability Training for Tourism Professionals [1]

Industry Survey: Share Your Insights and Experiences

TrainingAid is conducting research on the current landscape of (online and offline) training opportunities in sustainability for tourism professionals, and seeking input from industry stakeholders [2].

What: A short online survey on sustainability training and skills development opportunities for tourism professionals.
Why: Because investing in skills is key to safeguarding our industry’s sustainable future.
Who: Tourism industry employers and industry professionals (both private and public sectors).
When: Through December 20th, 2019

Research Objectives: Key Questions and Expected Outcomes

The goal of this research is to understand the current landscape of sustainability training and skills development options for tourism professionals, and to provide practical insights into the challenges and opportunities in making sustainability skills a priority across different sectors of the global tourism industry. In addition to an online survey of tourism industry employers and employees, the research project will include an analysis of existing training programs and of descriptive data on stakeholder perspectives gathered through in-depth interviews.
Based on these approaches, we aim to present insights into the following key questions:

State of the industry:

- How do tourism industry employers and employees perceive the value of sustainability-related knowledge, skills and experiences?
- How are sustainability skills being addressed by training programs and skills development opportunities for tourism industry professionals?
- Where is the gap in the “supply and demand” of sustainability skills in the tourism industry jobs?

Practical examples:

- What are some examples of sustainability training and skills development opportunities currently available for tourism professionals?
- What do tourism businesses and organizations consider most important when it comes to sustainability skills?
- What specific benefits can sustainability training provide, and for which stakeholder groups?

Challenges and opportunities:

- How can sustainability training opportunities be improved for tourism industry professionals?
- How can tourism businesses and organizations improve their efforts in sustainability training and skills development?
- How can tourism industry stakeholders help enhance the benefits of sustainability-related skills?

The outcome of this research will be a report, to be made available through our website, on key findings about sustainability training and skills development opportunities for tourism professionals, and ideas and recommendations on how tourism industry organizations can benefit from and help enhance such opportunities.

Our report will offer tangible and practical recommendations, which may be applied to future research projects and training and education initiatives.

**Why Skills and Jobs? Why Sustainability?**

The World Tourism Day theme in 2019 is “Tourism and Jobs: a better future for all”.

In addition to being an important driver of employment and job-creation opportunities, tourism is a people-led and people-focused industry enriched by the individuals who work in this diverse sector. So training for tourism professionals is about investing in the people, and in turn empowering them to create “a better future for all” through tourism.
Investing in people’s potentials [4] is at the core of everything we do at TrainingAid. It is the knowledge, skills and experiences of the individuals who create, promote and deliver travel experiences that make the job-creating, growth-enabling power of tourism possible.

To celebrate tourism’s contributions to a more sustainable future, and to promote positive solutions, our research project, "Tourism Skills and Jobs: Sustainability Training for Tourism Professionals," focuses specifically on sustainability-related training and skills development opportunities within tourism industry organizations.

**Background: Tourism Skills and Jobs Research 2016**

In 2016, we published the first report “Tourism Skills and Jobs,” which explored the learning and professional development needs in the tourism industry, and identified key challenges and needs for improving training programs and skills development opportunities. A summary of the study’s findings and key recommendations, as well as the full report, can be found here [5]. We’ve developed an infographic [6] based on the research findings.

The six recommendations of the 2016 study were:

1. **Take advantage of MOOCs as lifelong learning and corporate learning programs:** Tourism industry organizations may adopt the lifelong learning approach to support their employee training programs. The fact that MOOCs are already widely recognized by tourism professionals, combined with the open and (usually) free nature of MOOCs may make these courses attractive options for tourism industry organizations.

2. **Social learning - Make people at the center of training goals and learning experiences:** Making learning social is a key to successfully implementing an eTraining program. Depending on your learning goals, "social" may mean utilizing social media tools, incorporating game-based learning techniques, or blending online and in-person learning activities. The key is to make the learners at the center of the learning experience and to make the eTraining program engaging and meaningful in the context of who needs and wants to learn what and - importantly - why.

3. **Make sustainability skills a priority:** Making sustainability a priority in organization-wide skills development efforts will help create an environment where employees are more engaged and motivated. At the industry level, an important solution is for those organizations that are actively engaged in sustainability to show initiative in highlighting the need and relevance of sustainability skills in practice, so that their own employees may be inspired to be more proactively engaged, and that others in the industry may start to see sustainability as a business priority as well.

4. **Not just technical skills - don’t forget soft skills:** Soft skills such as effective interpersonal communications, work ethics, teamwork and collaboration are a critical part of tourism industry job performance. Some of these positive attributes may be "natural" to people and difficult to instill if someone does not possess such qualities. It is, however, not only possible, but also important for companies to invest in skills training that addresses soft skills, as well as “hard skills” that are specifically related to employees’ positions and tasks.

5. **Help employees identify opportunities for professional development:** While allowing employees to seek learning opportunities is a great approach, it is also important for the employee to help with the process of identifying skills development needs and opportunities, as many professionals are busy with their day-to-day obligations and may find it difficult to proactively seek learning opportunities, let alone knowing what skills would be valuable to their job roles.
6. **Think outside of the tourism box**: Seek the best opportunities for your team’s specific needs and goals, within and outside of travel and tourism. Many important soft and hard skills for tourism industry professionals are not specific to the tourism industry, but rather, broad transferable professional skills and competencies. It’s important for tourism organizations, therefore, to consider training and skills development opportunities outside of the tourism industry, given that the best opportunities may be available in other industries.

Our new "Skills and Jobs" study will explore some of these key recommendations and how they can be applied specifically to the context of sustainability training for tourism professionals.
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