



A Sense of Ireland

30 September – 6 October 2018

Project Summary - A Sense of Ireland:

Background

Research consistently identifies that skills shortages are impacting growth within the tourism sector and set to intensify in the future. The hospitality industry faces a shortage of suitably skilled staff to recruit, and SMEs have limited time and opportunity to develop their own skills. Many based in rural where face the additional challenge of spending long periods of staff time outside of the workplace. With careful planning, timing and a strong rationale, they can participate and benefit from a focused 7 day intensive study-tour programme.

Objectives

The project focus was learning and skills development in food tourism, local products and outdoor activity to create Sense of Place. It was designed:

- to exchange expertise and best practice in training development and delivery in relation to food tourism and provision of outdoor activities;
- to explore the transferability of expertise and examples of best practice and how they can be used in vocational training in UK tourism;
- to give trainers the chance to look beyond their own working environments and develop a European approach to training;
- to exchange expertise and best practice in mechanisms used to motivate the tourism industry to participate in training and education;
- to improve the recognition of skills within the European tourism industry encouraging tourism businesses and higher education sectors to work together to develop current, relevant and fit for purpose qualifications;
- to build the foundation for new partnerships and facilitate future exchange/work placement activities.

Participants

There were 25 staff from food and/or tourism organisations with internal vocational training programmes, higher education and independent training providers (SMEs). All had a direct training and development role, with an appropriate teaching qualification or proven track record in training delivery.

Activities

A mix of individual and group learning opportunities was designed to meet the project objectives. These included visits to exemplar businesses and organisations; two seminars with presentations by expert speakers, group work to prepare case studies and workshops on topic themes chosen for relevance to the participants. Each site visit was used to carry out Mystery Shopper assessments and both seminars afforded opportunities for formal networking to facilitate growth of contacts. Lastly

the informal networking provided the richest source of knowledge transfer, contact exchange, business trouble shooting and peer to peer problem solving.

Methodology

Pre-visit preparation, travel, health and safety and financial arrangements were delivered by The Ayrshire Chamber, as was post visit evaluation and dissemination activity monitoring. Both the Host and Intermediary partners provided local assistance relating to accommodation, site visits, transportation, speakers and eating arrangements. The programme was developed jointly between The Ayrshire Chamber, Donegal Local Enterprise Office and South Dublin Chamber.

Results / Impact

The learning journey enabled participants to gain from their own observations, the shared observations of their groups and from interacting with other group members. Evaluation feedback obtained after the visit shows training/sharing/mentoring occurred over 250+ times and reached nearly 24,000 people. The visit enabled discussion and knowledge sharing, and the case studies gave the higher education sector new, relevant and updated information to shape future curricula. The mystery shopping exercise helped participants relate the experience to their own places of work, especially interaction with people. The workshops challenged current thinking and explored new ways of co-operation and service delivery.

Outcomes

Work completed by the participants in the form of their case studies, as well as their personal and professional learning, has been widely disseminated through businesses, networks, local and regional and national public sector organisations. Higher education participants have integrated their acquired knowledge into relevant teaching plans and to shape future planning and development. New geographic clusters evolved, with participants newly confident to reach out to each other for support, ideas and suggestions. Active group communication continues via social media, showing support for professional and personal achievements, new events, business development activities and requests for additional skills training.

Longer-term

The participants continue to put their knowledge, skills and competences into practice, and have become more confident working in partnership with Ayrshire Chamber and with each other. Overall, this project has contributed to strengthening the competitiveness of the Scottish, and European tourism industry.



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