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**COUNTRY
SKILLS
PROFILE
REPORT**



IRELAND



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This executive report presents key findings and recommendations from updated research conducted in Ireland to identify current and emerging skills gaps in the tourism and hospitality sector. The analysis draws on national policy and strategy documents, including the National Skills Bulletin 2024, the Tourism Policy Framework to 2030, the SOLAS Strategy 2025–2029, and the OECD Skills Strategy Ireland Report (2023),

'Primary quantitative research conducted with managers in the sector provided information about current levels of skills, most needed skills for the future and gaps in the sector's workforce'.

complemented by primary qualitative research.

The findings highlight an urgent need to redesign roles and training provision to support Ireland's twin green and digital transition. This requires the integration of sustainability and digital competencies alongside social and

equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) skills to improve workforce retention, sector attractiveness, and long-term resilience.

Skills gaps are compounded by persistent sector challenges, including low wages, seasonality, limited work-life balance, and high operating costs, alongside low participation in lifelong learning, fragmented training provision, and limited recognition of progression pathways, particularly for SMEs.

While agencies such as SOLAS, Skillnet Ireland, and the Education and Training Boards play a central role in skills development, access to accredited and affordable training remains uneven across the sector. Resource constraints, language barriers, and resistance to organisational change further hinder widespread upskilling.

The report recommends strengthening training and skills development through targeted provision in sustainable operations, digital skills, EDI, and employee wellbeing. Key response strategies include improved coordination across training providers, wider dissemination of best practices, expanded use of micro-credentials, and increased availability of free or subsidised courses accessible to both SMEs and large organisations, particularly during low season periods.

At policy level, the report reinforces the importance of maintaining the priorities outlined in the OECD Skills Strategy Ireland, including promoting lifelong learning, strengthening skills governance, and aligning skills supply with future labour market needs. Additional policy measures should focus on reinforcing further and higher education capacity, addressing labour shortages through regional development and international recruitment pathways, promoting rural work placements, and incentivising accreditation and supported upskilling for enterprises.

Overall, a coordinated, inclusive, and future-oriented skills ecosystem is required to support sustainable growth, workforce resilience, and competitiveness in Ireland's tourism and hospitality sector.

INTRODUCTION

The Erasmus+ PANTOUR Project is a European partnership for improving a collaborative and productive relationship between education and industry. PANTOUR is the follow-up project of the NTG project (Next Tourism Generation Skills Alliance; 2018-2022). The PANTOUR project aims specifically at designing innovative solutions to address skills needs in tourism.

With the exploitation of its outputs, PANTOUR seeks to benefit job seekers, employed and unemployed workers from the tourism industry, employers, SMEs, sector associations and policy makers. Therefore, it has dedicated special attention to the reskilling and upskilling of the generic workforce on future skills needs. To be able to achieve this goal, research has been conducted in every country of the project consortium, to investigate the future of tourism, skills gaps between current levels of skills in the tourism industry and the future skills needed in the future.

As a start, up to date information is needed. This will be covered with this Country Skills Profile Report: a comprehensive document, covering one country that provides an in-depth analysis of the general tourism and skills landscape, gaps, needs and workforce capabilities within a particular country. It serves as a valuable resource for policymakers, government officials, employers/employees, and educational institutions to understand the current state of skills and make informed decisions regarding workforce development strategies.

The purpose of this Country Skills Profile Report is to provide on the basis a comprehensive overview of general information of each country in the PANTOUR consortium regarding tourism and tourism employment, i.e., tourism facts & figures and a summary of the current situation regarding the delivery of Digital, Green and Social Skills training provision for the main types of suppliers of education/training.

The original publication from 2024 consists of an online survey and results within each country in the PANTOUR consortium, held among tourism professionals, HR managers and decision makers as well as an inventory of Best Practices The document can be found in the PANTOUR publications.

The publication at hand, consists of updated information as well as results from best practice interviews held in late 2025 for tourism professionals offering an overview of contemporary developments in tourism, trends in tourism employability, and the existing gaps between current levels of skills in the tourism industry and the projected future skills needed towards 2030.

1. GENERAL TOURISM

CHARACTERISTICS, FACTS & FIGURES OF IRELAND

The primary aim of this chapter of this Country Skills Profile report is to elaborate on general information and give a summary of the tourism situation in the country. This is conducted by collecting and analysing data from country sources and summarising these. The analysis is built upon existing online sources, course content, reports, existing research results, articles, books.

1.1 TOURISM FACTS & FIGURES

Tourism globally

The travel and tourism industry is a vast and complex sector that encompasses many industries, including accommodation, transport, attractions, travel companies, and more. The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) estimates that its total contribution to the global economy was \$ 10.9 trillion in 2024, a 10% share of the global GDP, an 8.5% increase from 2023 (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2024). According to the World Tourism Organization (UN Tourism) the number of international tourist arrivals worldwide was 1.4 billion in 2024, an increase of 11% from 2023 or 140 million more international tourist arrivals. This indicates a significant recovery as the global Tourism sector reached 99% of pre-pandemic levels (UN Tourism, 2025). The report also notes a 3% increase in receipts in 2024 compared to 2023, reaching USD 1.6 trillion.

Global employment in the Travel & Tourism sector has also shown a strong recovery in 2024, as the industry supported approximately 357 million jobs, equivalent to 1 in 10 jobs.

Global employment in the Travel & Tourism sector has also shown a strong recovery in 2024, as the industry supported approximately 357 million jobs, equivalent to 1 in 10 jobs. This marked a 6.2% increase compared to 5.6 % in 2019 (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2024). As a forecast, this figure is expected to grow to 371 million in 2025 (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2025).

1.1.1 Contribution of travel & tourism to GDP in Ireland

In 2019, travel and tourism total contribution represented 4.8% of the total Irish GDP, generating revenue of approximately €9.985 billion (Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment., n.d.). In 2024, the contribution to Ireland's GDP is estimated to be €21.5 billion, representing 8.7% of the national economy (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2025a). According to the latest WTTC Economic Impact Irish Factsheet, the sector's total contribution is forecast to be €22.6 billion in 2025, also representing 8.7% of the total GDP. These figures indicate that the sector will surpass pre-pandemic levels and positions it as a powerful economic engine for the economy (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2025a).

In 2023, Ireland's tourism and travel sector was estimated to be a €9.1 billion industry (excluding overseas fares), with €3.1 billion (34%) coming from domestic tourism expenditure and €6.0 billion (66%) from overseas visitor spending (Fáilte Ireland, 2024; Tourism Ireland, 2025). For 2024, domestic spending was estimated at €2.1 billion while international expenditure was €6.03 billion (excluding fares), an increase of 18% and 11% respectively from 2023 (Irish Tourism Industry Confederation, 2025; Tourism Ireland, 2025). According to the WTTC (2025a), the sector accounts for 4.1% of government revenues.

1.1.2 Size and relevance of the subsectors

Aviation sector and travel operators: Air transport in Ireland is an important sector of the economy. Aviation remains the predominant transport mode for visitors. In 2023, aviation's total contribution to employment was 128,200 jobs, including 44,300 jobs being directly supported by the air transport sector and 34,500 jobs generated by tourism supported by aviation (International Air Transport Association, 2024). According to the same report, the aviation sector is not only important for foreign tourism expenditure, but it also acts as an important vector of the economy for goods transportation. In 2023, the aviation sector generated USD 5.6 billion expenditures or 1.0% of the total Irish GDP while tourism supported aviation contributed approximately USD 5.0 billion. Additionally, the volume of imports and exports transported through Irish airports totalled 169,400 tonnes, highlighting the vital role of creating efficient supply chains and driving economic growth (International Air Transport Association, 2024).

Following the post-pandemic's Taskforce for Aviation Recovery (2020) that focused on supporting jobs, rebuilding trust in air travelling, and addressing sustainability, the sector made a significant recovery with 39.2 million passengers traveling to and from the nation's airports in 2023. This represents the highest record of passengers, with flight numbers increasing by 16% when compared to 2022 (CSO, 2024a). 2024 also saw an increase of passenger flux, with Ireland's six international airports servicing approximately 40 million flyers (Irish Aviation Authority, 2025). Current and future efforts include attracting talent (Irish Aviation Authority, 2025), working towards decarbonisation through its ESG Strategy 2024-2030 (daa, 2025), and integrating sustainable aviation fuel in line with EU mandates (daa, 2025; European Commission, 2025).

In terms of turnover, the aviation sector showed strong recovery following the severe impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Irish Travel Agents Association is the official association of travel agents in the country, that serves the leisure market and outbound travel services. Their 2023 annual member survey reported that 75% of Irish travel agents experienced a turnover increase of over 10% compared to 2022 (Irish Travel Trade Network, 2024). In 2023, turnover reached €4.39 billion, up from €3.8 billion in 2022, an increase of 15.5% (Statista, 2025).

Accommodation: It was estimated that in the first quarter of 2025, the Irish accommodation sector comprises 1,664 hotel businesses, representing a 3.8% increase from 2024 (Ibisworld, 2025). While hotel room figures for this year are not yet available, there were approximately 64, 452 rooms recorded in 2023, of which 42.8% were in Dublin (Fáilte Ireland, 2024; Savills, 2023, respectively). The sector has shown recovery in the last couple of years after being severely impacted during 2020 and 2021. While hotel occupancy rate in 2021 was 33%, this rose to 77% in 2023, with 61.6 million bed nights for overseas tourists (Hotel and Restaurant Times, 2022; Fáilte Ireland, 2024, Tourism Ireland, 2024, respectively). As of 2025, there are 59,715 people employed in the Irish accommodation sector, representing an employment growth of 2.7% (Ibisworld, 2025).

Food and beverage: According to Ibisworld (2025a), the market size of the restaurant industry in Ireland in 2024, measured by revenue, was €4.4 billion. The sector's market size is estimated to reach €6.5 billion in 2025, representing a growth of 5.4% from the previous year. This demonstrated an upward trajectory as the market size has grown on average 14.6% per year between 2020 and 2025. The report also states that employment grew by 4% in 2025 as there are currently 79,912 people working in the sector, as opposed to only 78,336 people in 2024.

Visitor attractions and DMOs: The Association of Visitors Experiences & Attractions (AVEA) and the Incoming Tour Operator Association in Ireland (ITOA) are associations that represent DMOs and the Visitor attractions sector in Ireland. AVEA's reports that 114 surveyed attractions supported nearly 6,000 jobs and generated approximately €261 million in revenue from 19.3 in 2023 (AVEA, 2025). It also states that there were over 19.3 million visits to attractions. ITOA has 35 tour operator members across Ireland who delivered 699,000 promotable visitors, or 1.9 million beds nationally in 2024. These visitors spent € 640.2 million, representing 10.5% of Ireland's tourism receipts (ITOA, 2025).

1.1.3 Share of different transportation modes (plane, car, train) in tourism

Ireland is the second largest island of the British Isles group, and the third largest island in Europe (WorldAtlas, 2018). International tourism is possible by airplanes and ferries from France, Spain and the United Kingdom. Domestic transportation is possible by train, tram, bus and car. Although well connected by air, train and roads are the most used ways of travelling on the island. Ireland's road transport network consists of 102,227 km of roads and is the primary link between cities and towns (Worlddata.info, 2025; Oireachtas, 2024). Regional roads comprise 13.1% of all roads, and local roads 81.6% (Department of Transport, 2021).

The country's most used forms of transportation are cars and buses. Guided tours are an important part of the tourism destinations sector development. Ireland's major airports include State Airports (Dublin, Cork and Shannon) and regional airports (Knock, Donegal and Kerry), with the former receiving international flights from Europe, North America, and the Middle East (AerLingus, n.d.).

1.1.4 Arrivals of international versus national tourists

In 2023, Irish residents took 14.3 million domestic trips and there were 6.3 million international tourists (RTÉ News, 2024; Fáilte Ireland, 2024; CSO, 2024). For 2024, Irish residents took 16.6 million domestic trips, representing an 8.2% increase compared to 2023 (CSO, 2025). Similarly, there were 6.6 million international tourists arriving by airports or ferries, amounting to a 5% increase from the previous year (Tourism Ireland, 2025).

Dublin airport handled approximately 3,460,000 visitors (+19.3% compared to August 2023) and Cork airport approximately 340,700 visitors (+10%). For the same year, Shannon airport, received over 2.1 million passengers (+7%) (Shannon Airport Group, 2025) and ferries transported around 213,700 passengers on Irish routes (+12%) (RTÉ News, 2025).

Although there has been growth in visitor expenditure and arrivals, ITIC reports the travel and tourism sector is still some way off to full recovery, highlighting some challenges (Irish Tourism Industry Confederation 2024; 2024a; 2024b):

- Ongoing conflicts in the Middle East and Eastern Europe impacting its performance
- Uncertainty from the U.S. presidential election affecting trade and tariffs from the nation's most important source market
- Subdued global GDP growth, despite easing inflation
- Weak economic performance in key EU markets, especially Germany and the UK
- Current VAT on hospitality services
- Wages cost, recruitment, and retention of employees
- Demanding sustainability agenda
- Capacity constraints, notably the passenger cap at Dublin Airport.

1.2 TRAVEL AND TOURISM'S CONTRIBUTION TO EMPLOYMENT

The Irish tourism and hospitality sector has shown a strong recovery in terms of employment since the pandemic. Reports suggest there were 260,000 people employed before the Covid-19 health crisis in Ireland (Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, 2020). However, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) (2024b) disclosed that in Q3 2024, employment in the Accommodation & Food Service Activities sector, a key component of the tourism industry, rose by 9.2%, with 16,900 jobs.

It is estimated that by the end of 2024 employment neared pre-pandemic levels with 257,900 people working in the Irish tourism and hospitality sector (ITIC, 2025). According to the same report, this substantial increase in employment level places the sector as Ireland's most significant indigenous industry.

During 2022 and 2023, the sector still suffered the pandemic's consequences of temporary closures and layoffs. A significant proportion of employees transitioned to more stable industries, while numerous international ones returned home (Skillnet Ireland, 2025), leaving the industry with a tight labour market and 40,000 vacancies (Fáilte Ireland, 2024a). As a result, the most persistent challenge continues to be the recruitment crisis, especially for skilled workers, with tourism competing against other sectors to retain talent (Workplace Relations Commission, 2024). However, vacancies more than halved in 2023 with 18,000 unfilled positions, indicating that while recruitment and retention have become less difficult, it is still a significant barrier (Fáilte Ireland, 2024b). Reasons include Ireland's ageing and shrinking population, limited career opportunities, restricted mobility, housing and living costs (Skillnet Ireland, 2025; Workplace Relations Commission, 2024).

1.3 DIRECT AND TOTAL CONTRIBUTION OF TOURISM TO GDP IN 10 YEARS' TIME

ITIC developed the VISION 2030 strategy with the aim of growing the Irish tourism industry which includes ambitious targets aiming for the industry such as contributing €15 billion to the national economy, providing €3.5 billion tax revenue annually, and directly supporting to 350,000 jobs by 2030 (Irish Tourism Industry Confederation, 2023a). The strategy also mentions that the sector's overall value has the potential to increase by 50% by the end of the decade, driven by a 24% increase in the volume of domestic and international visitors. To meet demand, the industry would require up to 7 million additional air and sea transport seats and 14,000 more tourist accommodation rooms. For the year 2025, it is forecasted that international tourism will growth by 3% to 5%, compared to last year (UN Tourism, 2025).

WTTC (2025) predicts global travel & tourism to increase by 3.5% annually between 2025 and 2035, outpacing the general economy's 2.5% growth (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2025b). In addition, it is estimated that by 2035, travel and tourism will account for 11.5% of global GDP by providing USD 16.5 trillion into the global economy. Ireland also forecasts that international tourist arrivals will increase by 3%_to 5% in 2025 (Tourism Ireland, 2025a). Ireland's GDP is forecast to grow by 2.5% in 2026, following growth rates of 3.4% in 2025 and 1.2% in 2024 (European Commission, 2025a), which includes the recovery and growth of the tourism and hospitality.

Latest data reports that in 2023, the total contribution of travel and tourism to Ireland's GDP was €19.3 billion, approximately 17.7% higher than in 2019 prior to the pandemic. In 2024, it was estimated that this figure would reach €20.4 billion (Statista, 2025a). According to the latest WTTC Economic Impact Irish Factsheet, the sector's total contribution is forecast to be €22.6 billion in 2025, with revenue increasing by 5%-7%, representing 8.7% of the total GDP. In addition, ITIC estimates that in 2025, 70% of Ireland's tourism economy will be supported from international visitation (Irish Tourism Industry Confederation, 2024). However, several global challenges could impact discretionary spending and trust including ongoing military conflicts in the Middle East and Eastern Europe, energy market volatility, inflation, the soaring cost of living and higher interest rates (ITIC, 2024). These factors may diminish spending in Ireland's key tourism markets (Fáilte Ireland, 2025).

1.4 DIRECT AND TOTAL CONTRIBUTION OF TOURISM TO EMPLOYMENT OF TOURISM IN 10 YEARS' TIME

Travel and tourism are expected to provide over 460 million jobs worldwide, or 1 in 8, by 2025 (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2025a).

Another WTTC report forecasts that the sector in the EU alone will support over 30 million jobs and create 4.5 million additional roles by 2035 (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2025). In Ireland, the ITIC's latest Review and Outlook 2024-2025 report (Irish Tourism Industry Confederation, 2024) shows that the industry remains the largest regional employer, supporting roughly 257,900 people in 2024, as previously mentioned in sections 1.1.1 and 1.2. Total employment in the State grew by 2.6% between Q4 2023 and Q4 2024, reaching 2.78 million people (CSO, 2025a). ITIC's VISION 2030 strategy predicts that the Irish tourism industry should expect a rise of earnings to €15 billion euros, and a 37% rise in employment from an estimate of 254,000 people in 2023 to 350,000 people in 2030.

1.5 MAIN FOCUS POINTS OF NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR TOURISM

The policy document Tourism Policy Framework to 2030 (Department of Culture, Communications and Sport, 2024) is the main national strategy document related to tourism and travel in Ireland, setting a strategic direction for sustainable development until the end of the decade. With 61 policy proposals, the framework aims to balance environmental and social considerations with economic growth. Guiding principles as directly stated in the document include:

- “Protect and enhance Ireland’s natural assets and environmental quality
- Ensure that tourism contributes to meeting commitments on climate change
- Support balanced economic development and employment
- Prioritise the economic value per visitor over volume of tourists visiting
- Minimise any negative impacts of tourism on host communities
- Encourage innovation within the tourism sector to ensure improved visitor satisfaction.” (Department of Culture, Communications and Sport, 2024, pg. 21)

More specifically and using sustainability as a core pillar, it sets to achieve an annual revenue growth of 5.6% by 2030 from both domestic and overseas

visitors that bring the highest amount of revenue for the lowest carbon footprint. To maximise local benefits, the framework urges tourism agencies to consider seasonality, employment quality and regional balance to avoid negative impacts. The Tourism Policy Framework to 2030 (Department of Culture, Communications and Sport, 2024) has established guidelines to align with biodiversity targets such as reducing waste and tourism-associated emissions with each overnight visitor by 60% to ensure the nation remains a sustainable destination by the end of the decade.

To achieve this, Fáilte Ireland also developed plans to invest over €14.5million in 11 new tourism projects for 2025 that prioritise sustainability and highlight Ireland's cultural heritage, including destination development and domestic marketing (Fáilte Ireland, 2025). To attract more visitors and improve their experience year-round, key national festivals and events will be supported in off-peak seasons such as New Year's Festival Dublin, St Patrick's Festival, and Púca in Co. Meath. Given that Halloween was originated in Ireland, an additional €600,000 will be invested in promoting October as the ideal month to visit.

They also aim to soften cost pressures in businesses while increasing revenue by offering support in four key areas: digitisation, climate action, people and performance, and commercial resilience. Businesses are encouraged to incorporate these areas into their operations to improve tourists' satisfaction as well as adapting to ever-changing visitors' needs. In tandem, Tourism Ireland is also launching its new global advertising campaign across 13 source markets for 2025 which will focus on positioning the country as a 'bucket list' and value-added destination (Tourism Ireland, 2025b). The strategy leverages AI to optimise consumer research behaviour and promote exploration of Ireland

through digital engagement. Lastly for 2026, according to the consultancy company Crowe, Ireland is creating its Programme for Government to support the tourism industry by reducing the VAT rate from 13.5% to 9% from food-base hospitality, enhance scenic routes such as the Wild Atlantic Way to attract eco-conscious visitors, improving transport infrastructure and airport connectivity, and promoting the surrounding islands as niche destinations (Asher, 2025).

In relation to skills and delivery of training, both the Tourism Policy Framework to 2030 and Fáilte Ireland's 2025 guidelines seek to build well-paid, rewarding and sustainable careers (Asher, 2025; Department of Culture, Communications and Sport, 2024; Fáilte Ireland, 2025). In collaboration with the Department of Further and Higher Education and funded by the National Training Fund, courses will be available to employees. The Tourism Policy Framework to 2030 prioritises employment growth to reduce labour shortages and provide quality jobs in both urban and rural areas. In its 2025-2029 strategy, the state agency responsible for skilling the workforce, SOLAS, seeks to establish specialist further education and training centres to meet SMEs' upskilling needs in crucial industries, including tourism (SOLAS, 2025).

1.6 COUNTRY-SPECIFIC CHALLENGES AND DEVELOPMENTS IN TOURISM

Although the tourism and hospitality industry has shown significant recovery in terms of employment since the Covid-19 pandemic, the tight labour market and skills development remain challenges. From 2022 to 2023, vacancies significantly diminished from 40,000 to 18,000. As mentioned earlier, sourcing candidates for management and leadership positions is a concern for employers (SOLAS, 2024). The increasing adoption of AI and other technological advancements demands upskilling in digital capabilities to stay competitive and meet customers' needs (Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, 2023). The emphasis from both the Irish and EU governments on sustainability requires the tourism workforce to acquire and enhance their environmental stewardship and sustainability skills (Department of Culture, Communications and Sport, 2024).

To retain talent and increase employee satisfaction, strategies focus on promoting a clear career or has been reemployed in another position (HOTREC, 2022). This situation has created an urgent need for all basic professional skills and skills related to digital changes and environmental sustainability.

Retaining talent in the long term, and reskilling and upskilling the workforce, are, therefore, important actions to guarantee the development of the tourism and travel industry in the coming years in Ireland.

beverage sector, in which 62.5% per cent of the workforce has left after Covid-19 progression, offering flexible hours and improving working conditions (Fáilte Ireland, 2024b). SOLAS (2024) uncovered that food and accommodation remain the most fragile subsectors. The Restaurants Association of Ireland (2024) reports that 612 food-related businesses permanently close between September 2023 and August 2024, due to the high VAT rate increase, operating costs and wage pressures. As a consequence, these subsectors have the highest turnover staff rate, leading to hundreds of unfilled positions. This situation has created an urgent need for all basic professional skills related to digital changes and environmental sustainability. Retaining talent in the long term, and reskilling and upskilling the workforce, are, therefore, important actions to guarantee the development of the tourism and travel industry in the coming years in Ireland.

In relation to challenges in developing skills for tourism in Ireland, the National Skills Bulletin 2024 identified skills shortages as a persisted challenge across several industries, including hospitality and tourism (SOLAS, 2024). The Bulletin states that the short length of hospitality roles' perception negatively impact the attractiveness of the industry. Demand for employment will depend on inflation levels, continued increase of overseas visitors, and the cost of doing business. The National Skills Bulletin 2024 constantly alludes to the need of the workforce to adapt to the rapidly changing green and digital transitions.

Some of the other challenges for the development of a skilled workforce mentioned in the Bulletin include:

- The supply of skills to address the labour shortage, as employers face difficulties when securing candidates with the right balance of experience, qualifications and skills.

- Emphasis on lifelong learning to maintain competitiveness, productivity, and align employees with the digital and green economic demands.
- Ensuring Ireland has an agile and responsible skills ecosystem.
- Increasing partnerships to approach skills development, with insights and data from different stakeholders.
- Bridging the declining number of students enrolling in higher education in tourism and hospitality courses and the demand for managers and leadership positions (SOLAS, 2024).

To address these challenges, the National Skills Bulletin 2024 recommends:

- Creating targeted policies to increase international recruitment
- Support lifelong learning and continuous development of the existing workforce
- Strengthen higher education and training for occupations with strong labour demand
- Promote regional skills development to increase employment in rural areas.

The government and other organisations have already started to address some of these suggestions. For example, the Irish government is investing €20 million in a skills package for 2025 to upskill and reskill the workforce nationwide. The Fingal Skills Strategy 2024-2029 (Fingal County Council, 2025) fosters collaboration and the exchange of good practices between industry, training providers, and education to anticipate future skills needs. Another example of collaboration is the Pact for Skills (2024) that addresses local skills shortages to create tailored regional initiatives. Partnerships among industry players are being promoted, such as the Restaurant Association of Ireland (2023), which is bringing together training providers and industry partners to promote micro-credentials in digital skills. Lastly, to reduce economic and regional disparities, the National Strategic Framework for Lifelong Guidance 2024-2030 offers a unified guidance system to allow lifelong access, inclusion and quality assistance for all individuals (Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (INOUE), 2024).

Employment personal advisors help employers by promoting schemes and advertise vacancies, creating a tailored career path with jobseekers based on their needs and skills, providing access to education where skills gaps and emerging labour market needs align, and assist jobseekers to secure and maintain their positions.

The Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science's (2023) states that employers are concerned about the labour shortages and skills gaps. While lifelong learning participation is above EU average, it is not meeting upskilling and reskilling performers. Furthermore, the OECD Skills Strategy Ireland Report (2023) uncovered several important findings that affect the hospitality and tourism sector. It states that due to the rapid rate at which the Irish economy is shifting, young employees lack several skills to adapt to these changes. COVID-19 made digital skills a prerequisite for Irish employees as the skills to adapt to these changes. COVID-19 made digital skills a prerequisite for Irish employees as the crisis accelerated the digitalisation of learning and work. Similarly, green skills will become critical to adapt to climate change, reverse global warming and prevent further biodiversity loss and pollution. Furthermore, social skills will continue to be a critical driver of well-being and strong economic performance.

Lastly, the OECD Skills Strategy Ireland Report (2023) argues that students will need to graduate from higher education with both the skills necessary in the labour market today as well as those for tomorrow. Adults will need to constantly upskill and reskill to assume new tasks and modes of work. To address this, the OECD Skills Strategy Ireland Report (2023) concentrates on securing balanced and responsive supply of skills, with a focus on fostering lifelong learning; strengthening governance across a skills ecosystem; enhancing skills to drive innovation.

2. CURRENT SKILLS TRAINING DELIVERY IN IRELAND

2.1 DIGITAL SKILLS

The National Skills Strategy 2025 is the national document related to skills development and training in the country and emphasises life-long learning. With active involvement from employers, the strategy responds to the training needs of society, SMEs, the economy, and learners through quality education, with a particular focus on digital skills (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025). A relevant report on Ireland's skills strategy, the OECD Skills Strategy Ireland: Assessment and Recommendations (2023), reinforces the government's aims to provide policy strategy to develop Ireland's training and higher-level education by creating an inclusive learning society to support people to reach their full potential, also highlighting digital skills as a core priority. Both documents seek to prepare the nation's workforce to meet the challenges of the ever-changing world by building skills and talent, supporting inclusion, creating global engagement, and promoting research, innovation, and science, with a special focus on digital skills. This is a testament to how government strategies related to innovation and digitalisation are emphasising the demand for new knowledge and skill sets.

"The government is committed to ensuring Ireland continues to be a digital leader in Europe, and globally...We will continue to build on Ireland's long-standing reputation as a technology hub to become a vibrant location for AI innovation" - Ireland's Taoiseach (Department of Further Education, Research, Innovation and Science, 2025).

Another important national document that will set the direction for the development of digital skills through lifelong learning is the Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy for 2025-2029 (Eurydice, 2025). Its previous strategy, 'Transforming Learning 2020-2024,' developed opportunities under three strategic pillars: building skills, fostering inclusion and facilitating pathways (SOLAS, n.d.). Using these pillars as a guide, the government requested a third national strategy for 2025-2029 and is currently being developed to ensure that learners acquire skills to adapt to the ever-changing job market (Eurydice, 2025). The formulation includes a wide-ranging public consultation process with stakeholders in Government departments, agencies, enterprises, education providers, learners, and representative groups to inform it and establish a clear vision for digital growth and transformation over the next 5 years (SOLAS, n.d.).

To remain a global digital leader, the Government of Ireland (2024) is currently updating its National Digital and AI strategy 2025. The strategy will incorporate policies to strengthen digital literacy across all education levels and create an actionable path to harness AI to improve the economy, the lives of the Irish citizens and enhance competitiveness by accelerating the digitalisation of enterprises and public services to respond to systemic changes. According to SOLAS (2024a), Ireland is engaging with the European agenda to advance the reskilling and upskilling of its workforce in response to the green and digital transition, where IT and data information support the shift to a greener, decarbonised and more sustainable world. The National Skills Bulletin 2024 highlights that the twin transition is heavily impacting the labour market, with industries being reshaped by sustainability targets and technological advancements (SOLAS, 2024). The most recent numbers from 2024 state that there were over 37,000 enrolments in SOLAS' Online learning platform, representing an increase of 47% compared to 2023. In addition, over 25,000 upskilling training places in sustainability and digital skills were taken by employees (SOLAS, 2025a).

With the rapid technological advancements and the rise of AI, the National Skills Bulletin 2024 states that "Workers must continuously upgrade their digital competencies to remain relevant in this changing environment."

In addition, 59% of Irish managers believe that the accelerating impact of the digital and green transitions will call for a new set of skills in the coming years (Skillnet Ireland, 2025a). Key documents and reports uncovered the current digital gaps specific to the hospitality and tourism industry. These sources highlight the urgent need to invest in the following digital training skills:

- Advanced computer and digital literacy (SOLAS, 2024)
- AI Systems to such as chatbots, dynamic pricing and AR/VR tours (Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, 2025)
- Data entry capabilities (Fáilte Ireland, 2024c)
- Digital marketing & communication, including social media management, search engine optimisation, user experience and visualisation (Fáilte Ireland, 2024c)
- Big Data Analytics and AI data-driven decision-making, including revenue management, market trends, and operational performance (Fáilte Ireland, 2024c)
- Cybersecurity and data privacy compliance across digital operations (Skillnet Ireland, 2025)
- Green digital skills (Skillnet Ireland, 2025)
- Adaptation to mobile technologies, including personalised recommendations, check-ins, bookings, customer experience (Skillnet Ireland, 2025)

In recent years, new digital courses and modules specific for tourism and hospitality have been developed at various NFQ levels (Diploma and Higher Education). For example, TU Dublin (TU Dublin, n.d.), University of Galway (n.d.), Dundalk Institute of Technology (n.d.), and Munster Technological University (n.d.) have integrated digital modules into their tourism and hospitality curricula such as Digital Literacy, Tourism and Technology, Data Analysis, Content Management, Web Development, Creative Design, among others. In 2023, Fáilte Ireland (n.d.) also launched its LearnIFI platform that provides tourism courses online led by experts. In relation to digital skills, courses include digital marketing, data-driven management for tourism businesses, and online visibility. This reflects the sector's growing efforts to enhance digital competencies tailored to its workforce.

The World Economic Forum (WEF) highlights that the green and digital transition offers unique opportunities to combat climate change through digitalisation and AI. As a result, it is imperative to invest in talent that can acquire and apply these skills (World Economic Forum, 2025). As key challenges and implications, the Tourism Policy Framework to 2030 seeks to improve communication and the understanding of sustainability in the sector by constantly monitoring businesses' climate action journey to better identify future green skills gaps (Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, 2024). The framework suggests actions for FET skills centres and higher education to train culinary, hospitality, and tourism employees such as: Exploring collaborations between Bord Bia, Skillnet, and universities to develop additional green skills micro-credential and modules.

- Integrating sustainability into training programmes for all level employees
- Offering subsidies training workshops and other financial incentives
- Sharing knowledge of environmental best practices
- Providing clear information on sustainable development through events and expert advice

2.2 GREEN SKILLS

Ireland's Climate Action Plan 2024 is the main policy that drives Ireland for a decarbonised economy and a just transition. This document is in its third annual update to the national Climate Action Plan and outlines a roadmap to meet Ireland's climate objectives. Examples of actions include a 51% reduction in greenhouse emissions by 2030 and net-zero emissions by 2050. The policy also includes educational, training and reskilling opportunities to develop sustainability and environmental management skills in tourism and travel, with the aim of responding to the Green Deal and other environmental actions, at both European and national levels (Government of Ireland, 2024).

Building from previous policies and using the Climate Action Plan 2024 as a base, the new 2024 Irish Tourism Policy Framework was published by the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media which includes

strategic objectives to create a thriving and resilient sector for the period to 2030 (Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, 2024).

Using the three pillars of sustainability, the framework emphasises the importance of embedding environmental and social measures alongside economic growth to ensure balanced development within the sector. The following are guiding principles specific to environmental policies:

- Protecting Ireland's environmental quality, biodiversity and natural resources
- Ensuring the sector aligns with national and international environmental commitments to combat climate change
- Working toward Ireland being recognised as a sustainable destination
- Fostering innovation in the sector
- Embedding circularity, recycling, and waste prevention
- Addressing transport associated emissions

Various strategies have highlighted the need to embed sustainability into curricula and provide environmental training to equip the future tourism workforce with essential green skills. For example, Fáilte Ireland's subsidised Climate Action Programme aids businesses reduce costs and improve efficiency while working toward lowering their environmental footprint through governmental grants and funding opportunities. Tourism businesses also receive ongoing support for a minimum of three years from expert advisors to device tailored climate action plans (Fáilte Ireland, 2025). Additionally, Fáilte Ireland also launched its fully sponsored EU Just Transition Tourism Learning Network Programme in 2024. This is a collaborative learning scheme for tourism businesses, professionals, agencies and communities for the successful development of regenerative tourism through structured learning, seminars and personal insights (Fáilte Ireland,n.d.-a). SOLAS Green Skills 2030 is the primary national document that analyses skills needs and provision related to the green transformation. Developed by the national agency for skills and education in further education institutions, Green Skills 2030 is the first national FET strategy for the green transition.

It aims to equip education providers with the tools needed to respond to emerging green skills demands. In addition, it analyses national and international sustainable policies and strategies to inform various FET green skills programmes for specific sectors and occupations, including tourism and hospitality. It highlights that organisations in the sector should equip their current and forthcoming workforce with the skills and competencies required for the green transition (SOLAS, 2024b). The second most relevant report is Ireland's Talent Landscape 2025 Future Skills Challenges of Irish Business. It surveyed over 500 Irish businesses to identify emerging green skills needed to achieve climate change reduction goals across various industries (Skillnet Ireland, 2025a). It is mentioned that more than two-thirds of Irish businesses recognise the upskilling in green competencies crucial for growth. Common findings between both documents include the need to develop and support enterprise innovation related to the green transition and identifying the training and skills needs as the economy lowers its carbon reliance. The recommended green skills that apply to the tourism and travel industry are:

- Understanding of green skills and biodiversity to acquire a deeper comprehension of sustainability and its application to operations, conservation and green economy
- Sustainability implementation in supply chain management, responsible consumption/ production and regenerative tourism practices
- Building and retrofitting skills to implement energy saving practices in tourism establishments and carbon reduction
- Integrating sustainability into FET programmes to ensure that sustainability principles are integrated into all modules and trainings
- Promoting awareness of training opportunities among tourism businesses to ensure they are imparted to upskill their workforce
- Circular economy practices such as waste management and recycling
- Adaptation to climate action requirements and consumers' demand for eco-friendly operations
- Sustainable transport and logistics skills

- Corporate sustainability strategy skills to develop and implement strategies aligned with national and international frameworks
- Water Management skills for efficient use, wastewater treatment and conservation

It is important to highlight that SOLAS updated various programmes in its Green Skills 2030 strategy to continue the upskilling in existing green skills as well as training in a new range of green skills (SOLAS, 2024b):

- Environmental Sustainability in the Workplace designed to boost awareness about environmental sustainability issues
- FET micro-qualifications in green skills for businesses, including Lean Practice for Sustainable Business, Resource Efficiency in the Workplace, The Circular Economy, Sustainable Procurement, and Greening the Supply Chain
- SustainABILITY Awareness seeks to raise climate actions and social justice to implement effective change

Therefore, recent skills policies and plans related to the twin transition aim to boost sustainable growth, increase awareness of practices related to a greener economy, and put into practice the Climate Action Plan 2024. There have been visible efforts by public authorities and private organisations in creating new training and courses related to green skills across various sectors in Ireland. While steps have been taken to introduce green content into tourism and travel training, this remains a key area of focus in the sector.

Building on these efforts, changes in the development of green skills in the sector can be noted in the wide range of courses offered by higher education institutions in Ireland. Since 2023, TU Dublin offers at least one sustainability module for all incoming students of all disciplines, with multiple being offered across their tourism and hospitality management programmes (TU Dublin, n.d.-a; TU Dublin, n.d.-b). Likewise, Munster Technological University has incorporated sustainability courses into its tourism and hospitality department (MTU, n.d.).

A dedicated undergraduate programme in Griffith College called Sustainable Tourism Management has also been recently launched (Griffith College, n.d.). In terms of industry training, Fáilte Ireland's LearnIFI platform has content on resource efficiency management and on-demand webinars on regulatory frameworks for the EU green claims and corporate sustainability communications (Fáilte Ireland, n.d.-b). It also has a dedicated section for climate action where one-on-one advising allows businesses to develop tailored training opportunities to upskill their staff to improve sustainability in operations (Fáilte Ireland, n.d.-c). This indicates a step in the right direction from education providers to bridge the gap between green theory and practice.

As key challenges and implications, the Tourism Policy Framework to 2030 seeks to improve communication and the understanding of sustainability in the sector by constantly monitoring businesses' climate action journey to better identify future green skills gaps (Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, 2024). The framework suggests actions for FET skills centres and higher education to train culinary, hospitality, and tourism employees such as:

- Exploring collaborations between Bord Bia, Skillnet, and universities to develop additional green skills micro-credential and modules.
- Integrating sustainability into training programmes for all level employees
- Offering subsidies training workshops
- Sharing knowledge of environmental best practices
- Providing clear information on sustainable development through events and expert advice

To conclude, the Green Skills 2030 highlights several challenges related to the future development of green skills in tourism and hospitality (SOLAS, 2024b). There is a need to continue to contextualise and develop additional programmes tailored to the sector's needs and to actively raise awareness on the benefits and importance of green skills included in the higher education curricula and training offerings.

The rapid evolution of the green digital transition also demands education and training providers to anticipate future green skills and react accordingly to the emerging needs as well as integrating both aspects into daily operations.

2.3 SOCIAL SKILLS

The development of sustainable practices related to people and culture are central features of Ireland's new Tourism Policy Framework 2030. As mentioned in the previous section, this framework uses the three pillars of sustainability: environmental, economic and social, as core pillars and emphasises developing social skills to support industry growth through local development and community wellbeing (Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, 2024). The guiding social policies in the Tourism Policy Framework include:

- Fostering innovation in the sector
- Maximising social benefits on host communities, and minimising negative impact of tourism
- Giving precedence to economic values per visitor over number of visitors
- Enhancing the regional and seasonal distribution of Tourism
- Ensuring convenient access for all
- Facilitating rewarding careers and sustainable employment in the sector
- Celebrating Ireland's culture and heritage

Another document that is guiding the sector's commitment to sustainable development is the Green Skills 2030. Although the strategy mainly focuses on green skills, the document also highlights the importance of transversal skills to equip employees with the necessary tools to adapt to the evolving market needs and diverse workplaces (SOLAS, 2024b). Tourism and hospitality stakeholders identified the following social skills, ranked in order of importance:

- Customer service
- Leadership

- Change adaptation
- Proactive thinking
- Teamwork dynamics
- Time management
- Stress Management

Equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) have emerged as a key area of focus in the context of social development. In 2023, Fáilte Ireland demonstrated its commitment to EDI strategy by engaging with the Irish Centre for Diversity's Investors in Diversity programme. Moreover, Fáilte Ireland has also partnered with expert organisations to create work opportunities for marginalised groups in Ireland, including people with different abilities, refugees, asylum seekers, among others (Fáilte Ireland, n.d.-d). As part of its commitment to championing EDI, Fáilte Ireland aims to position the nation as a leader in accessible and inclusive tourism and has developed important policies and trainings to reflect this. Through its 'Access for Success' initiative, the agency provides guidance to Irish hotels on how to deliver accessible and inclusive hospitality experiences for all (Fáilte Ireland, n.d.-e).

- Induction and onboarding of which topics include diversity and inclusion, solving problems through feedback, and introduction to health & safety in the workplace
- Human Resources of which topics include dignity at work, as well as equality and diversity
- Personal Development / Effectiveness of which topics include communicating clearly and achieve improved performance through curiosity
- Management and leadership skills of which topics include mental health guide for managers, managing employee wellbeing and coach your team to success with GROW
- Customer Service of which topics include introduction to customer service, how to be customer driven, and assessing the customer

Fáilte Ireland has historically recognised language training, customer care, cultural differences, managing diversity, religious diversity, and intercultural awareness as essential training requirements for tourism organisations. The agency has also updated its social skills training content on its LearnIFI platform to integrate EDI policies (Fáilte Ireland, n.d.). There is a dedicated section for accessible and inclusive tourism supports for businesses including an introductory guide, best practices in accessible communications, inclusive recruitment, employment toolkit, and EDI business insights (Fáilte Ireland, n.d. f). The specific courses include (Fáilte Ireland, n.d. g):

In terms of higher education and FET, the most commonly cultural skills seen in the curricula include the acknowledgement of heritage, local culture and languages. However, the explicit mention of cultural diversity, inclusion and equality skills are still rare in their curricula. Nonetheless, universities such as TU Dublin and the University of Galway have demonstrated their commitment to social sustainability by embedding global responsibility as a graduate attribute and integrating principles of social justice and ethics into tourism and hospitality modules (TU Dublin, n.d.-c; University of Galway, n.d.).

For example, intercultural awareness, diversity management and leadership are delivered across various TU Dublin programmes as well as staff development workshops (TU Dublin, n.d.-d). This demonstrates that the training landscape for social skills is growing in the sector, with room for improvement. For instance, no higher education course was identified that specifically covers inclusion and accessibility in tourism and hospitality, although topics such as tourism for an ageing population and the inclusion of people with disabilities are addressed in European policies (AccessibleEU, n.d.).

This secondary research identified several key social skills challenges and implications. Although there has been an increase in soft skills and EDI training in the sector, most courses only cover a standard list of social skills, including communication, leadership, customer care, teamwork, and client management. Therefore, educational institutions still need to reflect the newer social and cultural skills in their curricula such as those currently offered by Fáilte Ireland on its LearnFi platform. Additional gaps remain across FET, higher education, and public agencies, as no courses were identified that address LGBTQ+ communities, migrants, or promote competencies in social progress, bias reduction, neurodiversity inclusion, or bullying and harassment prevention. These key issues should be addressed by PANTOUR's strategic plan to highlight the importance of creation of content and training addressing social and cultural skills.

Finally, it is important to mention a few initiatives under development. The Higher Education Authority created a funding opportunity to support EDI initiatives across Irish Universities, such as developing projects to advance gender and race equality and embed it in their curricula (HEA, 2024). Understanding the importance of fostering an equal society, government policy is also enhancing tourism working conditions and fair pay. Fáilte Ireland outlines that a key sectoral focus is to allow more working flexibility and career progression to enhance staff retention for its long-term sustainability (Fáilte Ireland, 2024).

Lastly, Skillnet Ireland (2025a) mentioned that by prioritising skills development and embracing change, businesses can secure a prosperous future for its workforce.

3. BEST PRACTICES

UPSKILLING AND RESKILLING

This document updates the [2024 Ireland Skills Profile](#) and is based on evidence from the SSIM published on the [PANTOUR website](#). This revised edition relies exclusively on best practices as the primary method for data collection. In each country that is represented in the PANTOUR consortium, partners have each selected, analysed and interviewed **10 best practices** in upskilling, reskilling, attracting/retaining staff in the five tourism sub sectors. The goal of the analysis is to have an inventory of innovative initiatives, projects, programs, philosophies, tools, methods, ideas, solutions, and concepts in relation to upskilling, reskilling, attracting, and retaining staff in order to improve the knowledge on digital, social, and green skills development in tourism. A Best Practice in upskilling, reskilling, attracting staff has all or many of these characteristics:

1

It has a clear goal.

2

It purposely addresses the bridging of existing skills gaps and future skills needs in tourism.

3

The organisation and individual staff members have a set of core values that strengthen their dedication, morale, and resolve a shared sense of purpose for the work.

4

It looks at urgent skills development challenges and human capital in their context – on macro level (sustainable/digital transition in tourism), sector/subsector level or skills level (digital, social, green skills).

5

It targets the underlying causes in addition to the challenge in upskilling and reskilling, attracting/retaining.

In the following sections, a short overview and analysis will be provided of each of the Best Practices investigated in the frame of the PANTOUR project. This report includes updates to five best practices from the previous report and introduces five new best practices.

As a large hotel group, Dalata has a large array of resources to provide employees with training for different needs, and green, digital and social skills training are at the core of the Academy development programmes.

3.1 Dalata Academy: Best Practice in Digital and Green Skills

3.1.1 Background information

The [Dalata Academy](#), which was created in 2018, consists of set of education and training programmes aimed at employees of the Dalata Hotel group. The group, which was formed in 2007 in Dublin, has two major brands, Clayton Hotel and Maldron Hotel as well as a few unique and boutique hotels. The organisation has grown to acquire more than 50 hotels in Ireland, the United Kingdom, Germany and the Netherlands. The Academy supports employee career development through inhouse training, online training and externally accredited programmes.

The Academy's initial offerings focused on the HR area but expanded to encompass a number of different streams including operations, sales, and finance. Attracting and retaining talents a key focus of the organisation, which has been nominated one of the best places to work in The Caterer's 30 list and awarded the Investors in Diversity accreditation in 2023 from the National Diversity and Inclusion Awards in Ireland.

3.1.2 Analysis and overview

Key principles

The Dalata Academy is a development and learning initiative with over 12 programmes in different areas of hospitality. It is underpinned by a sustainable business framework which has three main pillars: *people, planet and society*, to establish clear priorities in sustainable management.

Because people are one of the organisational priorities, their development programme has a strong focus on wellbeing, diversity and inclusion, targeting important social priorities driven by 'a *culture of integrity, fairness and inclusion*'.

The Dalata sustainable management framework is divided into:

- *People*: inclusion and diversity, learning, development and succession, labour practices, health, safety and security
- *Planet*: carbon emission, energy management, water stewardship, waste management, biodiversity
- *Society*: sustainable procurement, circular economy, charity partnerships, employability, community engagement

The approach to skills development focuses on providing a quality career pathway for employees, allowing them to choose different routes to upskilling so that they can become supervisors or managers. The approach also facilitates horizontal mobility between different sectors of the organisation. As a large hotel group, Dalata has a large array of resources to provide employees with training for different needs, and green, digital and social skills training are at the core of the Academy development programmes.

The Dalata Graduate Programme is one of the programmes offered by the Academy, with **7 streams of opportunity (hotel operations, hotel events, marketing, revenue, hotel finance, corporate sales, human resources)**. The programme facilitates graduates to build on their qualifications by combining on-the-job training, workshops, and structured project work. This programme aims to foster leadership and management skills.

The Academy also offers mentoring programmes, group training programmes, and other programmes such as virtual courses to enhance skills. These include head chef training, a strategic leadership programme, chef apprenticeships, a trainee management programme, a head of department programmes, and a senior management and leadership programme for general management. The ample resourcing and support for development is the strength of the Academy, making this a best practice in the accommodation and food and beverage sectors.

Examples and case studies

One training example would be food waste management. As the organisation has a target of reduce food waste in 15% until 2026, the programme provides internal training for kitchen staff that aims to develop skills related to measurement of waste, guest recycling, supplier's engagement for packing, among others skills that help to reduce carbon emission and waste. Another example are the Dalata Biodiversity Workshops, in which participants go through workshops to gain knowledge and understanding of biodiversity, understanding for example landscape of biodiversity frameworks and targets, and assessing Dalata's most significant impacts, dependencies, risks and opportunities on developing biodiversity standards.

Potential pitfalls and challenges

Covid-19 has been an identified as a challenge, but it also opened opportunities for learning, since it resulted in rapid development of online learning courses for all employees as part of the Dalata Academy programmes.

Additionally, the Covid-19 health crisis proved challenging for staff retention, which continues to be an issue in the sector. To address this challenge, the organisation has focused on supporting staff and accommodating different needs, as highlighted by one of its Executive Chefs: *'for retention, training and development is key'*. Providing training, opportunities for growth and emphasising wellbeing has allowed the organisation to create a positive work environment for its employees.

Educating guests about sustainability has also been a challenge. As changes reduced its use of paper and now utilises a total digital environment from kitchen to reception, and it also reduced use of water in all hotels.

Benefits and outcomes

The benefits of the Academy have been seen in terms of retention of staff and of achieving the targets for sustainability established in their framework. The sustainable practices in place have also been beneficial and the Academy has also been successful in providing opportunities for growth to employees.

Measuring success

According to [Dalata Hotel Group's Half Year Report from 2023](#), the organisation has seen a positive return of guests after covid-19 in the first semester of 2023. The company has been awarded this year with the Investors in Diversity Silver Mark, which recognises sustainability as a strategic growth point. It also has reduced its emission of carbon by 24% compared to the first semester of 2019. The company has also 519 employees currently on award-winning graduate and development courses, and 59,375 Dalata Online courses were completed by staff in the first half of 2023.

Responsibility and accountability

The Dalata Academy is an HR initiative for development and learning, with different sectors involved, and it counts with multiple individuals that work with the development programmes across countries. There is a mix of internal and external training, and chefs and hotel managers that participate actively in training staff in the multiple courses and development initiatives that it provides. The Dalata Hotel Group Ltd is a large multinational organisation, with approximately 5,400 employees, all of whom can take advantage of the education and training offered by the Academy.

References and external resources

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Social and
Environmental
Sustainability

Development and
Learning

Positive
Workplace
Practices

Conclusion

The Dalata Academy is a programme created by the hotel chain that enables employees to grow through its upskilling and reskilling programmes. It has clear goals related to social and environmental sustainability, and also provides employees with opportunities for leadership in the various programmes and courses it provides. The Academy is an example of a successful learning and development initiative in hospitality, with a focus on promoting positive workplace practices that has assured retention of employees.

"[LearniFI is] a demo resource for us a learning tool for all departments...It's helped team members who are proactive about their growth."

- Sinead O'Toole from The Mespil Hotel

3.2 Fáilte Ireland's LearniFI: Best Practices in Green, Digital, and Social Skills

3.2.1 Background information

[Fáilte Ireland](#) is the National Tourism Development Authority of Ireland, established under the National Tourism Development Authority Act, 2003 with the aim of coordinating all aspects of tourism in a streamlined manner. This government agency has multiple locations across Ireland and employs approximately 400-500 people.

As the National Tourism Development Authority, Fáilte Ireland's role is to support the long-term sustainable growth in the economic, social, cultural and environmental contribution of tourism to Ireland. Fáilte Ireland works in partnership with Government, State agencies, Local Authorities, representative groups and industry, to develop tourism across Ireland by creating destination development plans and networks, investing in infrastructure, activities, visitor attractions and festivals. Fáilte Ireland also provides consumer and buyer insights, mentoring, business supports, training

- Seasonality: changing the industry's products and experiences to make Ireland attractive to tourists through the entire year
- Regionality: focusing on traditional and rural areas as well as expanding new spots across the island to provide employment and ensure long-term sustainability of the industry through its Regional Development Strategies
- Brand Building: attracting visitors through the development and marketing of Fáilte Ireland's Regional Experience Brands

Fáilte Ireland's eight strategic pillars include: survive to thrive, support tourism careers, accelerate domestic tourism, opening the outdoors, digital that delivers, destination, development & distribution, driving climate action, delivering excellence.

Strategic rationale for the creation of LearnIF

A key focus of Fáilte Ireland's work is on building the competitiveness and resilience of businesses and ensuring that the sector has the skills and knowledge it needs both now and into the future.

Following the tourism sector reopening after the pandemic, attracting and retaining talent was a key challenge facing businesses in their recovery from Covid-19. To understand the scale of the challenge, Fáilte Ireland conducted comprehensive research into the post-pandemic tourism labour market. Key findings included:

- 40,000 vacancies across all levels, with acute retention challenges.
- Poor working conditions and management practices driving talent out of the sector.
- A critical skills gap at management level, with many promoted without adequate training.
- Lack of HR capacity among smaller operators to address these challenges.
- One-third of businesses at risk of closure due to staffing issues.
- Sector-wide competitiveness and growth threatened by talent shortages

In response, Fáilte Ireland launched a three-pronged Tourism Careers strategy to:

1. support businesses to meet their immediate recruitment needs,
2. Rebuild skills and capability lost during the pandemic, and
3. Drive long-term cultural change to attract and retain talent.

[LearniFI](#), an online learning platform for the tourism sector, was launched as the key vehicle for delivering on the second objective: rebuilding capability at scale. Fáilte Ireland recognised that traditional training models could not deliver at the scale or speed required to support tourism recovery. LearniFI was launched as a flexible, digital platform to enable employers, particularly SMEs, to onboard, upskill, and retain staff efficiently while empowering employees to take ownership of their development and learn at their own pace guided by best-in-class digital learning practices.

By centralising Fáilte Ireland's learning supports into one accessible platform, LearniFI directly addresses a clear business need- enabling resource-poor SMEs to onboard and upskill staff more effectively, reduce turnover, and improve service quality - ultimately driving business performance.

Since 2023, LearniFI has engaged over 11,000 learners, representing a 905% year-on-year increase with 52,000 courses completed and an exceptional learner satisfaction rating of 4.93/5 stars. This demonstrates rapid adoption and effectiveness.

Focus on skills of the future

Fáilte Ireland offers over 250 tailored business supports through LearniFI, designed to meet the diverse needs and development stages of industry businesses. Its flexible delivery formats, including national webinars, in-person workshops, peer networking events, immersive learning journeys, self-paced digital courses, bite-sized microlearning as well as blended programmes, ensure businesses receive the right support, in the right way, at the right time for maximum engagement and impact.

These extensive resources and initiatives are organised around five strategic pillars, aligned with Fáilte Ireland's corporate strategy, aimed at strengthening and future-proofing the tourism and hospitality sector:

- **Commercial Resilience:** Practical tools and expert guidance that help businesses enhance financial sustainability, manage costs efficiently, and navigate evolving market conditions.
- **People and Performance:** Programmes dedicated to workforce development, leadership growth, and operational excellence to boost team capability and deliver exceptional service.
- **Climate Action:** Supports focused on reducing environmental impact, improving energy efficiency, and aligning with Ireland's ambitious sustainability goals.
- **Industry Digitalisation:** Resources to accelerate digital transformation, encompassing e-commerce, online marketing, and leveraging data for smarter business decisions.
- **Accessibility and Inclusion:** Initiatives to foster inclusive tourism experiences by ensuring accessibility for all visitors, reinforcing Ireland's reputation as a welcoming destination.
- The full breadth of business supports available to industry can be found at Fáilte Ireland's Business Support Hub - <https://supports.failteireland.ie/>

Examples and case studies

LearnIFl platform has been used to deliver strategic, sector-critical programmes to over 1,500 businesses, focusing on key areas like 'Digital that Delivers' (digital skills) and 'Just Transition' (green skills). Furthermore, it has been instrumental in rebuilding management capability, upskilling over 3,000 managers. A specific success metric is the 6,300+ learners who completed structured onboarding courses, directly addressing the challenge of high early turnover by providing consistent, high-quality induction. An industry testimonial was provided by Sinead O'Toole from The Mespil Hotel.

She highlights LearnIFI's role in retention and career development by upskilling team members who are proactive about their growth. The hotel incorporated a specific programme into their operations, leading to positive customer feedback, showing a direct link between upskilling and service quality. The platform also directly tackles the lack of clear career pathways. It helps employees like Aoife, a Sales and Marketing Executive, understand the skills needed to progress to a Manager role. By providing accessible, recognised learning, LearnIFI enables employees without formal qualifications to build confidence and advance, changing the perception of tourism from a short-term job to a viable career.

Potential pitfalls and challenges

Several challenges were identified from LearnIFI:

- **Low Participation in Lifelong Learning:** A national challenge means there can be inherent resistance or apathy towards continuous training.
- **Fragmented Training Landscape:** Prior to LearnIFI, numerous unconnected training options created confusion for employers and employees, making it difficult to see a coherent path.
- **Engagement and Buy-in:** Ensuring both SMEs (who may lack resources) and individual employees see the value and actively engage with the platform is a constant challenge.
- **Lack of Recognised Progression Pathways:** Without a clear link between learning and career advancement, training can be perceived as a "tick-box" exercise rather than a strategic investment.

Nonetheless, LearnIFI's strategy provides a blueprint for overcoming these obstacles:

- **To overcome low participation:** Adopt a mobile-first, micro-learning approach such as bite-sized courses (5-7 minutes) that can be completed during quiet times. The aim is to lower the barrier to entry and fit into busy shift patterns.
- **To overcome fragmentation:** Create a centralised, sector-specific platform. LearnIFI is a single go-to resource for tourism skills, bringing

- To drive engagement: The 4.93/5-star rating and 75% active learner engagement were achieved by making learning rewarding and relevant coherence and scale. to daily jobs. Promoting success stories (like The Mespil Hotel) also builds buy-in.

Benefits and outcomes

Organisations adopting a practice like LearnIFI can expect a range of tangible benefits for SMEs, employers, employees and the sector in general. Employers and SMEs have seen improved business performance. A more skilled workforce can lead to better customer service, directly addressing issues that impact sector reputation. In addition, they have witnessed improved talent development & retention due to its ability to identify high-potential staff and support meaningful career conversations. Lastly, they have access to cost-effective training. A scalable digital solution can be more affordable for SMEs than developing in-house training programmes. Employees observe clear pathways for career progression and accessible learning, especially for those without formal qualifications. LearnIFI also empowers individuals to proactively manage their skills and career growth, taking ownership of their own development. Employees also have reported increased confidence and job satisfaction. This is because mastery of digital, green, and social skills (among others including people management etc) leads to greater competence and engagement. Sectoral benefits include systematically closing critical gaps in management, digital, and green skills, addressing skills gaps at a scale. The platform also helps rebrand the tourism sector as a career of choice with recognised development pathways, enhancing professionalism.

Measuring success

LearnIFI's success is measured through a multi-layered set of KPIs that cover reach, engagement, impact, and strategic alignment:

Adoption and Reach Metrics:

Number of Registered Learners (e.g., 11,000+).

Number of Businesses Engaged (e.g., 1,500+).

Year-on-Year Growth (e.g., 905% increase).

Engagement and Learning Metrics:

Course Completion Rates (e.g., 52,000 completions).

Active Learner Rate (e.g., 75% - a best-in-class benchmark).

Learner Satisfaction Scores (e.g., 4.93/5 stars).

Strategic Impact Metrics:

Upskilling in Priority Areas: Number of completions for targeted programmes (e.g., Digital, Green/Just Transition, Management).

Responsibility and accountability

Fáilte Ireland's Tourism Careers team holds ultimate accountability for the strategic direction, funding, and alignment of LearnFI with national tourism and skills development priorities. This includes setting KPIs, monitoring impact, and ensuring the platform supports broader goals like sustainability and digital transformation. Fáilte Ireland works closely with industry partners like the IHF HR Fora to ensure LearnFI reflects real-world needs, flexing the offering to address pain points and skills gaps. The organisation also contributes to the Pact for Skills tourism working groups and attend national forums such as the National Skills Council to stay aligned with emerging trends and share insights across Europe. The organisation's technology partner, Aurion Learning, ensures platform stability, delivers new features, and manages data security. Fáilte Ireland report quarterly to its internal matrix team, using Power BI to track performance against KPIs and share outcomes with stakeholders. While individual learners are not formally accountable, the platform is designed to empower them, offering clear pathways, recognition, and a direct link between learning and career progression.

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Future Skills
Development

Sustainability and
resilience

Digital Learning

Conclusion

Fáilte Ireland shares several practical lessons for stakeholders who wish to implement LearnIFI and upskill their workforce. The organisation recommends starting with a clear "Why". LearnIFI was a direct response to a post-pandemic crisis. A compelling, shared sectoral challenge can catalyse action and secure initial buy-in from stakeholders. Digital delivery is non-negotiable for scale and accessibility. It is a way to effectively reach a geographically dispersed workforce. Upskilling and attraction/retention are two sides of the same coin. The platform is as much a recruitment and retention tool ("we invest in you") as it is a training tool. This dual purpose maximises its impact. Combining a clear purpose, digital scalability, and a focus on both upskilling and retention ensures initiatives like LearnIFI deliver lasting value.

The Code of Practice was designed as an initiative to create capability within enterprises to achieve sustainability with a framework of practices, from conserving natural resources and cultural heritage to working collaboratively to develop the geopark as a sustainable destination.

3.3 Geopark Code of Practice for Sustainable Tourism: Best Practice in Green Skills

[The Geopark Code of Practice for Sustainable Tourism](#) was first developed as part of the Life Programme, created by the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark with EU Funding (2012-2017). It aimed to support tourism businesses across the entire Burren region in their development of sustainable practices. The Code of Practice was designed as an initiative to create capability within enterprises to achieve sustainability with a framework of practices, from conserving natural resources and cultural heritage to working collaboratively to develop the geopark as a sustainable destination. Since then, the Geopark has certified more than 100 businesses. The Code includes 6 key good practices, which have been fundamental in certifying businesses in sustainable practices in the County Clare region.

3.3.1 Background information

The Code of Practice was developed with EU LIFE funding in the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark, Co. Clare, Ireland. The code includes 6 areas of key good practices, establishing benchmark standards in: environmental management, collaboration to develop a sustainable destination, conservation of natural resources and heritage, offering quality information for the interpretation and communication of stories, working to ensure vibrant communities, contributing to the local economy and strengthening livelihoods.

The Code started as a project and has developed into a certification provided by Geopark, in which businesses in the region commit to developing best practices with several actions.

The initiative was developed through practices to train, qualify and certify small businesses in County Clare in sustainable practices. As it was difficult and expensive for small businesses to gain certification in sustainability practices, the activities developed by the Code counted training for those practices, such as in conservation, how to support the local economy and community activities, how to gain knowledge on heritage and the environment and how to reduce the carbon footprint. It also offered mentoring activities. To be certified, businesses must adhere to the code and show how they measure and take action to reduce environmental impacts. After piloting it, business engagement started to grow, and new businesses continued to adopt the Code of Practices. Certification of Completion is given to the businesses who have submitted to the Code of Practice. A third party evaluates the submissions and at the time of publication, 110 businesses have signed up to the Geopark Code of Practice.

3.3.2 Analysis and overview

Key principles

The key principles of the Code of Practice are:

- Working together (collaboration with stakeholders to develop a sustainable tourism destination)
- A Cared-for Landscape (participating in conserving natural and cultural heritage)
- A vibrant community (working to ensure that tourism makes contributions to the community)
- A well-understood heritage (offering information to interpret and communicate stories to visitors)
- Strengthening livelihoods (contributing to the maintenance and support of local employment)

- Sustainable environmental management (includes targets to be reviewed annually on waste and water and energy management)
- An online system that guides businesses through a step-by-step approach to implementing actions to adhere to the Code has also been developed.

Examples and case studies

The Code of Practice was a successful initiative as more than one hundred tourism and hospitality businesses adopted the code and developed sustainable practices in the region. Among examples of businesses that have adopted the Code of Practice is the [Heart of Burren Walks](#). This tour company offers programmes with high-quality interpretative experiences of the landscape, including a heritage education programme for school pupils and people with physical and intellectual disabilities and interpretation of the pilgrimage landscape. Another example of a business certified in the Code was The [Burren Nature Sanctuary in Kinvara](#), that adopted the Code of Practice in 2013. They developed practices such as onsite interpretation, and undertook a train-the-trainer programme for the conservation of trails and parks in the region. After the training, they started to develop visits for primary school children to the sanctuary, providing information on environmental awareness, and education on conservation.

Potential pitfalls and challenges

Continuous engagement can be difficult after years, and there are challenges related to businesses following the best practices as they all go through regular evaluation. The code also could have been used to its full potential if there were more dissemination activities and supports for small businesses to develop communication pieces and online information. Building websites with information on their sustainable practices and online engagement are important actions that could have been implemented to help develop more awareness of the Code of Practice.

Benefits and outcomes

The Code was created for businesses to view their value and potential and develop sustainability in the region.

Some businesses no longer follow the code; some continue and are constantly evaluated. Benefits are also seen in guests' and visitor's positive feedback and the increased number of visitors, assuring the sustainability of these practices. Outcomes include the promotion of economic sustainability for the community, the reduction of environmental impacts in tourist destinations, and the development of environmental awareness through education on those impacts.

Measuring success

Having about 110 tourism businesses trained is a considerable achievement for a project. The original project had a 5-year framework, but businesses continued to follow the code and apply for certification over the years. Engagement is still high and also indicative of the success of the Code. Several case studies on the [website](#) show that successful initiatives can lead to a transformational attitude regarding sustainability.

Responsibility and accountability

The Code of Practice was developed as part of the Life Programme Fund in 2012. It started as a programme that looked to produce eco-certification and support businesses in natural resources management.

The creation of the project framework, piloting, and training was achieved through collaboration between the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark administrative and educational team, educators, public bodies, experts, and tourism businesses.

References and external resources

<https://www.burrengeopark.ie/>

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[https://www.clarecoco.ie/your-council/\[news\]/burren-and-cliffs-of-moher-bids-for-redesignation-as-unesco-global-geopark.html](https://www.clarecoco.ie/your-council/[news]/burren-and-cliffs-of-moher-bids-for-redesignation-as-unesco-global-geopark.html)



Sustainable
Communities

Code of Practices

Responsible Tourism

Conclusion

The Geopark Code of Practice in Sustainable Tourism is recognised nationally and internationally as an example of sustainable management practices in tourism. Many businesses have since been certified, shared the same vision, and developed many practices contributing to responsible tourism development in the County Clare region. The initiative also has the potential to be replicated in other regions, as the Code of Practices offers a framework that could be transferrable and adapted to different destinations, connecting visitors' attractions and tourists on sustainable practices that benefit the communities.

“Sustainability is at the heart of everything we do-from sourcing seasonal Irish produce to minimizing food waste”

3.4 Glas Restaurant: Best Practice in Green Skills

[Glas Restaurant](#) is a vegetarian and vegan fine-dining restaurant located in the heart of Dublin that uses seasonal vegetables and Irish produce to create sustainably sourced gourmet food. As of 2024, Glas became Ireland’s first fully [gluten-free](#) fine-dining restaurant. The restaurant has won [awards](#) for its green practices, including Best Vegetarian Restaurant in the RAI Awards 2023, Best Practice in Gluten Free Catering from the Coeliac Society of Ireland, and Dublin’s Best Sustainable Restaurant in the [RAI Awards 2025](#).

3.4.1 Background information

Glas centres on green sustainable practices by delivering quality food sourced from local farmers and seasonal ingredients. It aims to redefine vegetarian dining as accessible and satisfying for everyone to enjoy. Glas also seeks to minimize food waste by using every part of each vegetable.

This best practice began as an innovative idea to establish a vegetarian restaurant at a time when Ireland had none. Glas views skills development as crucial for inspiring future chefs to adopt sustainable practices. In its fast-paced kitchen, employees gain experience that supports their professional development, whether progressing to another restaurant or opening their own.

Within Ireland's small fine-dining sector, Glas takes pride in teaching staff to embed practices such as reducing carbon emissions and working toward zero-waste, while also enhancing the quality of food delivered to customers.

3.4.2 Analysis and overview

Key principles

Glas champions the following key principles:

Green sustainability: the core principle that guides all operations. Glas sources approximately 92% of its products from local producers to reduce carbon emissions. The restaurant also seeks to have zero-waste, currently achieving around 1–2%.

Social sustainability: Glas supports small suppliers who have the same green principles, maintain quality produce, and avoid fertilisers or other harmful practices that impact the planet. The restaurant values fairness and does not negotiate lower prices, helping farmers sustain their operations.

Inclusivity: Glas focuses on providing gourmet plates for customers that have dietary restrictions including, gluten-free, vegetarian and vegan dishes.

Green skills training is primarily imparted among kitchen staff. They are educated on where they source the ingredients for the current dishes. The menu changes every 5 to 6 weeks, adapting to the season. The chef trains them to use all parts of the produce and encourages creativity to devise ways to reuse leftovers and enhance circular operations. As part of their training, new innovative ideas are welcome and tested as part of a self-learning process. Glas believes that in the future, the main skill to enhance sustainability in kitchens will be awareness. Therefore, it is key to motivate workers in the food and beverage industry understand and stay updated on the various upcoming methods to embed environmentally friendly practices across operations.

Examples and case studies

An example of encouraging creativity and innovation is using coffee grounds to make chocolates as an after-meal delicacy to guests. Additionally, scraps of food are reused to make sauces, dehydrated dish decorations, or composting.

Glas also supports small Irish producers across the country, notably Cork, Wicklow, and Galway.

Potential pitfalls and challenges

The main challenges identified were high staff and rent cost. In Ireland, many restaurants are unable to keep operating due to these constraints. Another barrier is the equipment cost needed to maintain sustainable and innovative practices. New green methods are constantly emerging, and upgrades are needed. Additionally, it is difficult to be “fully sustainable” as packaging waste is unavoidable. Finally, small farmers produce limited batches of fruits and vegetables, and Glas must constantly search for additional seasonal Irish growers to meet client demand.

Benefits and outcomes

Glas trains its staff in green sustainable practices so these skills are transferable to other restaurants. This enables former staff to train their own teams and spread sustainability throughout the food and beverage sector. For example, a former head-chef opened a vegetarian restaurant in Portugal with similar practices. Another benefit is receiving positive public reactions and attracting gastronomic tourists. For instance, visitors from the United States and other parts of Europe often make reservations due to Glas’s sustainable certification and celiac-friendly dishes. Customers regularly praise the restaurant’s commitment to sustainability and eco-friendly practices. Lastly, a notable benefit is contributing to a greener world by lowering carbon footprint and encouraging staff, by example, to do the same.

Measuring success

Although there are no specific metrics, the success of Glas’ sustainable practices is reflected in positive customer feedback and social media reviews. Additionally, many former employees have moved on to other restaurants, sharing and inspiring the adoption of green practices both in Ireland and abroad. Its nearly six years of continued operation also stand as a success statement. Finally, food waste is almost non-existent, compared to other restaurants.

Responsibility and accountability

The two owners and the head chef share responsibility for implementing sustainable practices across all operations. The owners are accountable for the front-of-house staff, HR, sustainable decorations, and business costs, while the head chef is primarily responsible for food and kitchen practices. Glas believes that for sustainable practices to work, it is necessary to raise awareness of the benefits of avoiding high-intensity farming, as it improves soil health and ensures long-term sustainability.

References and external resources

<https://glasrestaurant.ie/>

<https://glasrestaurant.ie/2025/05/21/glas-wins-award-for-best-sustainable-practices/>

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<https://irishrestaurantawards.com/dublins-best-restaurants-pubs-and-cafes-announced-as-finalists-for-the-irish-restaurant-awards-2025/>

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Green Skills

Zero-Waste
Initiatives

Kitchen Sustainable
Practices

Conclusion

Glas restaurant's approach to sustainability and staff training is an innovative model in the hospitality sector. It enables employees to learn essential green skills, particularly in the kitchen, through hands-on approach, demonstrating that sustainability in vegetarian fine-dining is achievable through local sourcing, zero-waste initiatives, and staff engagement. This focus on ethical and environmental standards has created a successful business with positive public recognition and financial viability. Most importantly, it develops highly skilled employees who are equipped to transfer and implement similar green skills in their future careers.

“The best practice aims to guide and motivate to change people’s mindset in relation to their role in supporting a sustainable development of the industry, to think about the environment and climate change, to understand consequences of actions, and to apply better practices.”

3.5 My Green Butler: Best Practice in Digital and Green Skills

[My Green Butler](#) blends on-the-job learning with gamified online training, creating an integrative behaviour adaptation platform for sustainable hospitality. Utilising cloud technology, the service provides real-time updates that aid in resource conservation, resulting in cost savings and reduced carbon emissions. The service elevates environmental awareness through eLearning training, offering employees eco feedback on their resource use and allowing them to observe the tangible impact they make. Guests, too, enhance their knowledge with the guidance of a virtual green butler, making savings and experiencing the positive results they contribute to.

3.5.1 Background information

This innovative best practice is a behaviour adaptation platform that delivers real-time information to hospitality users (managers, employees, and guests) through a smart system-integrated app. Offering insight on energy and water cost reduction, waste management, and carbon emission reductions, it goes beyond providing practical information and learning tools. My Green Butler’s approach makes sustainability practical, fun, and interactive, facilitating immediate and sustained behaviour change among users. My Green Butler was trialled before COVID-19 using the science-based framework of a doctoral research study started as a project by Christopher Warren in 2018.

Christopher worked extensively in the hospitality sector, in offering solutions through training for sustainability, and in responsible tourism. The best practice aims to guide and motivate to change people's mindset in relation to their role in supporting a sustainable development of the industry, to think about the environment and climate change, to understand consequences of actions, and to apply better practices. It also offers training on skills on how to understand and act in a more sustainable way.

The eLearning training modules are varied. In the flagship training course - Understanding and Applying Sustainability for Hospitality - the modules begin with an introduction to sustainability in the context of the global imperative to tread lighter at home and at work. It then moves on to teach about energy and water usage in hotels, along with how to reduce the consumption of both without affecting guest comfort. A further module discusses how to manage waste effectively with a focus on preventing waste generation in the first place. In addition, there are modules on how what we buy and how we travel affect the overall sustainability success of a tourist accommodation, and the last module covers how to confidently engage guests, guiding them to reduce consumption without affecting the quality or comfort of their stay.

Since 2024, the organisation has extended this content to several tourist accommodation providers. Additionally, My Green Butler has begun to provide advice to the World Sustainable Hospitality Alliance. They are currently seeking alliances in Europe to expand their training to more properties.

3.5.2 Analysis and overview

Key principles

The key principles of this best practice are :

- To commit to applying responsible tourism principles, promoting awareness and engagement to deliver environmental sustainability
- To provide holistic solutions to guide guests and employees in the accommodation sector in optimal sustainable practices
- To empower owners and managers of tourist accommodations to progress their sustainability ambitions

- To motivate everyone, the managers, staff, guests and suppliers, in sustainability with results-driven progress presented in a fun, gamified manner
- To commit to sustainable goals through learning, resource sharing, interaction, and commitment

Examples and case studies

23 hotels and guest houses have already benefitted from My Green Butler, and one case-study is the [Crystal Creek Meadows Cottages](#) in the Kangaroo Valley (New South Wales) in Australia. The accommodation is a family-owned business that has won multiple environmental awards in Australia and has been working with My Green Butler since 2018. Since using the platform, they reduced the carbon footprint by over 20%, electricity by 30%, firewood by 38% and water and gas consumption by over 20%.

The main benefit of My Green Butler is that it informs guests about their environmental impact and offers easy solutions as guidance, therefore benefitting both guests and staff. Guests also receive information about their carbon footprint and consumption, generating a change of mindset and behaviour. The accommodation provider's adoption of My Green Butler's best practices led to increased guests and positive reviews, making it a successful sustainability case in hospitality.

Potential pitfalls and challenges

As this best practice can be customised for each client, some challenges were detected in producing and adapting the training for each business. In addition, locations with poor internet connection also pose a challenge for the online training format. The final cited challenge is staff turnover in hospitality, requiring constant engagement and reskilling.

Benefits and outcomes

The benefits of this best practice are:

- **Real-time Visibility:** The platform offers clear, real-time insights into the impacts of guests' stays in the accommodation.

- **Innovative Sustainability Engagement:** This best practice introduces an innovative and user-friendly approach to thinking and engaging in sustainability actions through technology.
- **Skill Training Commitment:** Committed to enhancing sustainability skills in the hospitality sector, the practice provides training on relevant skills, ensuring an optimally skilled workforce.
- **Education and Awareness:** As a digital tool, this best practice prioritises education and awareness, delivering efficient solutions that benefit guests, employees, managers, and the surrounding community.

Measuring success

The best practice has successfully achieved its goals of training staff in sustainability and reducing emissions in the multiple accommodation providers that have adopted it. The clients have seen benefits in reducing costs and reported more engagement from guests and employees providing positive feedback on using the platform. Crystal Creek Meadows demonstrates significant savings, including 38% in bioenergy, 33% in electricity, 20% in gas, and a 21% reduction in water and food waste. The skills development platform has further delivered outcomes such as achieving over 35% savings at Daintree Wilderness Lodge in Queensland, a 24% reduction in energy usage at timeshare properties in the UK, and similar positive results at a self-contained accommodation in France.

Responsibility and accountability

My Green Butler team includes a training manager, skilled developers, a marketing manager, a research manager, and a success manager overseeing daily operations, engagement, and research on the platform. Founder and Chief Scientific Officer, Christopher Warren, along with Sarah Habsburg-Lothringen, Director of Training and Success, are actively involved in responsible tourism networks, further enriching their commitment to sustainable practices.

References and external resources

<https://mygreenbutler.com/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IU5vAdhK1eQ>

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<https://www.canberrabusinessnews.com.au/who/the-entrepreneurs/751-my-green-butler-%E2%80%93-tourism-with-the-environment-at-its-heart.html>

<https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/knowledge-centre/projects/recognition-our-responsible-consumption-and-production-project-my-green>



Gamification
training

Digital Innovation

Green skills

Conclusion

My Green Butler is a best practice example that seeks to produce responsible and sustainable actions through gamification and practical online learning modules. It provides eLearning training on sustainability for employees in the hospitality sector, and it seeks to challenge the traditional training offer by providing a modern, digital, and interactive alternative. Successfully implemented by various clients, this best practice tool exemplifies a solid method and philosophy that adhere to the sustainable tourism business requirements that are fundamental to the industry today.

“There’s a lot going on and not everyone would be aware of everything that’s happening, so [we need] to ensure that staff understand what we’re doing and ...if they’re ever asked by visitors, they could communicate ... to the visitors as well.”

3.6 Powerscourt Estate: Best Practice in Green Skills

[Powerscourt Estate](#) is a heritage property that combines cultural visits, architecture and natural landscapes in Enniskerry, County Wicklow, Ireland. The Estate’s most characteristic elements are the gardens and the Powerscourt Waterfall. The former were named by National Geographic as the [third most beautiful garden](#) in the world, while the latter is the highest waterfall in Ireland. Additional visitor’s attractions include the Powerscourt house, distillery, golf courses and a visitor centre. Powerscourt Estate was the first major Irish [visitor attraction](#) to be certified by Sustainable Travel Ireland, using criteria recognised by the [UN Global Sustainable Tourism Council](#).

3.6.1 Background information

Powerscourt Estate has historically engaged with sustainability practices, including tree, water, and green management for over 800 years. In recent decades, the Estate has incorporated innovative environmental measures such as energy upgrades and building management systems, including the installation of EV chargers, solar arrays, heat pumps, and electricity optimisation. Powerscourt Estate has also enhanced their biodiversity efforts by reducing mowing, creating wilding areas, restoring native wildflowers, and implementing companion planting to minimise chemical use.

Sustainability is regarded as central to its operations as the success of Powerscourt’s gardens and visitor experiences depends on its biodiversity and landscapes.

3.6.2 Analysis and overview

Key principles

The Estate is guided by the following principles:

Sustainable resource management: Powerscourt Estate integrates energy, waste, and water efficiency with building management to maximise sustainable operations. Their decarbonisation efforts have earned them certifications, awards and public recognition.

Biodiversity and ecological stewardship: The Estate combines biodiversity practices to protect and enhance their natural attractions.

Awareness and engagement: The Estate combines awareness and engagement for staff and guests to ensure they understand the reasons for championing environmental practices and act as sustainability ambassadors.

By combining the key principles, traditional training and the unique method of biodiversity walks, Powerscourt Estate aims to provide staff with knowledge, raise their awareness of the ecological importance of these initiatives, and build long-term resilience for its natural assets. In addition, staff are equipped to communicate these practices and their value to guests. The Estate uses two types of methodologies for staff training. The Sustainable Network and Failte Ireland provide training content and skilling certifications. The latter is particularly important as complying with this training is of essence to participate in Failte Ireland's climate action plan. In addition, Powerscourt Estate has innovated training delivery by educating staff through 'biodiversity walks,' which are also offered to the public. The walks stand apart from traditional training by helping employees understand operations and communicate sustainability practices to visitors.

In addition, Powerscourt Estate has innovated training delivery by educating staff through 'biodiversity walks,' which are also offered to the public. These are an informal and experiential-based learning method where staff directly observe sustainability initiatives and understand their impact. The walks stand apart from traditional training by helping employees understand operations and communicate sustainability practices to visitors.

A key skill considered by the organisation important for the future across the tourism industry will be communication in the context of green sustainability, ensuring employees can clearly explain sustainability initiatives and complex concepts, such as circular economy, to visitors in a simple, relatable way. For sustainability to truly advance, the organisation also reinforces the exchange of good practices among similar visitor attractions to enhance the application of sustainability knowledge to business tourism decisions.

Examples and case studies

Powerscourt Estate launched their own '[Working with Nature Awards](#)' to acknowledge achievements in biodiversity and sustainability from those people and communities who are committed to protecting nature including Pollinators, Biodiversity & Rewilding, Nature Media and Nature Education & Wellbeing. This initiative received public recognition, and its fourth category is considered important to advance environmental education across Ireland. Additionally, the Estate receives positive feedback on its biodiversity walks both from customers and employees.

Potential pitfalls and challenges

The Estate has found challenges in looking for external programmes for sustainability training given the numerous options. Additionally, practical barriers include seasonal workload, limited resources, and the availability of operational employees. Offering training is difficult during the summer season due to time restrictions and meeting visitor demand. As a result, training can only be offered during low season, limiting engagement from different staff groups. Looking at developing a positive kitchen culture, this university module promotes new habits and zero tolerance for bad habits/unfavourable practices in the kitchen environment.

Equality, fairness, respect and teamwork skills are key aspects of the learning process. Students also create self-awareness, and realise new skills such as creativity, self-awareness and self-confidence. Building meaningful and positive relationships, how to respect others, and how to work as a team member are also benefits of the project.

This benefits graduates as a new culture in the kitchen is welcomed to ensure the attractiveness of the profession.

Benefits and outcomes

The main benefit of these green initiatives is the high level of staff awareness and engagement. Staff are empowered to design and deliver new nature-based experiences. There is also high level of customer engagement that seek out sustainability-related experiences as shown by sold-out events. By aligning green staff upskilling and unique environmental experiences for all stakeholders, Powerscourt Estate has reinforced its reputation as a leader in sustainability and biodiversity.

Measuring success

Powerscourt Estate measures their success based on feedback from both employees and visitors. The Estate is particularly interested in hearing about the sustainability experience from their biodiversity walks and tree trails.

Responsibility and accountability

The Sustainability Marketing Communications Manager oversees the successful implementation of green practices, while the HR Manager is responsible for staff green skilling. In addition, the operations team applies the knowledge gained through training and is therefore accountable for the Estate's biodiversity outcomes.

References and external resources

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Biodiversity Walks

Workplace Wellbeing

Sustainable
Resources
Management

Conclusion

Powerscourt Estate's enhances sustainability awareness and engagement through both traditional and innovative education aimed for staff and visitors. Through initiatives such as biodiversity walks, training certification, and the Nature Education & Wellbeing Award, staff upskill in green sustainability knowledge. Through this practical approach, employees acquire the necessary tools to communicate the importance of green management to visitors, including companion planting, environmental enhancement, and resource efficiency. The Estate's commitment to environmentally friendly practices has resulted in sold-out events, positive feedback, and effective client-employee interactions.

“...We understood that tourism is a huge source of emissions in Ireland... if we're going to address that, [tour operators] need to understand what it is that their business contributes. [They need to] understand how they can...reduce those contributions.”

3.7 Sustainable Tourism Network: Best Practices in Green Skills

[The Sustainable Tourism Network](#) is the longest-running and leading members organisation in Ireland that train tourism businesses, including tour operators. Although its headquarters are located in Newtownmountkennedy, County Wicklow, they have members all over the country. The Sustainable Tourism Network was born from a tour operator company, giving it an internal understanding of the subsector's needs. The founder recognised that the tourism industry is a significant source of emissions in Ireland and wanted to help businesses embrace sustainability as a core part of their operations.

3.7.1 Background information

The Sustainable Tourism Network offers training to increase tour operators' understanding of sustainability and supports the implementation of day-to-day solutions. Its programmes are tailored to small, micro, and SMEs, which often lack the resources for a dedicated sustainability team. In addition, it helps members develop internal green policies on carbon, water and waste reduction, energy efficiency, as well as nature and cultural heritage management. The Network also offers globally recognised certifications under the Global Sustainable Tourism Council such as B Corp certification.

3.7.2 Analysis and overview

Key principles

The Sustainable Tourism Network considers the following to be their key principles:

Tailored approach: The Network adapts its training to the needs, size, and type of each tour operator. Instead of offering generic courses, it engages in in-depth discussions with each organisation to understand their challenges and objectives to provide the tools, strategies, and knowledge needed to advance sustainability effectively.

Sustainability Triad: The Sustainable Tourism Network is guided by the three pillars of sustainability: people, planet and profit. It incorporates this philosophy into their daily operations, training content, and certifications.

UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Alignment: All training content is developed to advance the SDGs, ensuring sustainability efforts contribute to global goals of reducing environmental impacts, supporting local communities, and protecting cultural and natural heritage

The training content formulated by the Sustainable Tourism Network is designed to increase the profitability and efficiency of small and medium-sized tour operators to develop essential sustainability skills, such as to reduce negative environmental impact, engage all stakeholders, and anticipate changes in legislation affecting SMEs, such as the Green Claims Directive. The Network provides adapted knowledge in three main [areas](#): tailored, needs-based training, certification pathways, and practical support in the following topics:

- Communication and Marketing
- Governance
- Carbon & resource management
- Nature & biodiversity
- Sustainability in a digital world
- Culture & heritage

- Socially responsible businesses
- Preparation for a wide range of international certifications

The Network has identified emerging future skills needs and communicates their importance to tour operators. The organisation believes that key future skills will include effective communication with tour operators' value chain and customers, as well as deepening sustainability knowledge. Tour operators will need to highlight the importance of green practices to their suppliers, wholesalers and customers, especially if they lack commitment to sustainability. This may require influencing external stakeholders to embed environmentally friendly practices into experiences. Additionally, it will become critical for tour operators to develop strategies that address sustainability issues related to their offerings, such as food waste management at large events, sustainable transport access, and the creation of environmentally responsible tour experiences. The Network provides tour operators with the necessary information to start developing these skills.

Examples and case studies

The Sustainable Tourism Network recalls that in 2024, it provided green skills development for an Irish tour association whose goal was to acquire an ambitious certification. Following its methodology of identifying needs and challenges to provide tailored content, the Network developed a training plan covering key areas such as energy management, waste management, people, and biodiversity. This enabled the association to break down the certification process into steps, first securing individual awards in areas like biodiversity or culture and heritage, and then completing the full programme and achieving certification. The process was mutually beneficial as the Network learned valuable insights from working closely with the tour operator. At the same time, it provided practical skills and shifted the tour operator's mindsets by helping them recognise that they were not 'just a middle person' but could actively contribute to sustainability within their businesses.

Potential pitfalls and challenges

According to the Network, many tour operators consider themselves as intermediaries with limited power to influence clients or suppliers to adopt sustainability in their offerings. Most small and medium operators also lack the resources for a dedicated sustainability team to ensure green practices are respected by their entire value chain. This challenge is aggravated by the limited availability of sustainable suppliers, such as transport providers, which prevents operators from fully embedding green practices. Finally, small operators face resource constraints in both time and money.

Benefits and outcomes

Tour operators that participate in the training recognise that prioritising sustainable skills has strengthened cohesion within their operations and teams. Because all tailored approaches are rooted in the three pillars of sustainability, every aspect of the business benefits. Under the profit pillar, measures such as energy and waste management help companies save money while reducing their environmental impact. From the people side, employees embrace sustainability efforts through community outreach, biodiversity projects, and conservation activities. A sense of belonging has been reported to generate goodwill, strengthen employee commitment, and improve overall organisational culture and wellbeing. Finally, thanks to the Network's structured training approach and guided certification pathways, tour operators have become more aware of how to reduce emissions, embed green practices into their operations, and seek out suppliers who do the same to jointly advance sustainability.

Measuring success

Success was initially measured through strict criteria to obtain six sustainability awards, providing clear and structured KPIs. Once completed, Irish tour operators achieved certification. With the introduction of the EU Green Claims Directive, metrics now involve pursuing internationally recognised frameworks and meeting global sustainability standards, such as B Corp certification.

Responsibility and accountability

In the Sustainable Tourism Network's experience, the responsibility of pursuing, maintaining and disseminating green skilling varies by organisational size. In small companies, the owner or volunteers generally manage the sustainability efforts. In medium and large-sized companies, a Green Team of middle managers ensure compliance, communication and coordination across internal operations and the value chain.

References and external resources

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Touroperators
Training

Sustainable
Practices

Green
Skills

Conclusion

The Sustainable Tourism Network’s approach to sustainability and green skills training represents an innovative model for tour operators. Using the pillars of sustainability and the SDGs, the training addresses the social, environmental, and financial needs of operators while achieving global objectives. The Network empowers them to embed sustainability and influence their value chain. It provides the tools to deepen their understanding and create strategies for implementation. Tour operators who have participated in the training report that the tailored content strengthens business operations, reduces environmental impacts, and fosters employee engagement.

“Benefits for this best practice include staff retention, being healthier, more creativity, and see the kitchen environment as a holistic manner, with a positive mindset creating a good work environment.”

3.8 BEST PRACTICE: The Chef Network

This best practice focuses on the creation of a collaborative network of chefs who look to contribute to the professional development of chefs, bringing positive changes to the kitchen environment. [The Chef Network](#) aims to promote a change of mindset in relation to food production, supply and consumption, promoting interaction of the local community and restaurant owners and educating young chefs on work practices.

3.8.1 Background information

The initiative started in 2016 with a group of chefs looking to focus on positive kitchen culture and promote the best practices done by so many chefs. One of the inspirations for this practice was the Social Gastronomy movement, a global movement of chefs that looks at food consumption and production in a sustainable way, fostering inclusive communities and creating positive social changes. Social gastronomy also engages people to leverage skills for social good and addresses social inequalities, co-creating food systems.

The change in how kitchens are perceived as a high-pressure environment is also important for developing this best practice. This community of chefs started to look at all aspects of society and the local economy to create a good kitchen environment. These actions are replicated with a social perception of the importance of connections and ties among all people involved in food.

3.8.2 Analysis and overview

Key principles

The Chef Network created a charter to encourage positive changes in the kitchen. The principles of the Charter are:

- Build a Positive and Encouraging Environment
- Nurturing Camaraderie and Team Spirit
- Promoting Learning and Development
- Prioritising Work-Life Balance
- Give back to the chef community and contribute to a positive future for the industry.

This Charter is present on their [website](#) and includes among its practices for example, encouraging collaboration and creativity, mentoring and training, meeting and communicating with the team, dealing with issues and conflicts, promoting wellbeing, and sharing knowledge and skills. The key principles are applied in practice by chefs, many with years of experience, who replicate these principles with staff in the kitchen.

Examples and case studies

The Chef Network has created events for training, mentorship and collaboration of practices. One is the Open Kitchen Week, in which chefs open the kitchen doors to students and the Young Chef Ambassador Programme, in which five young chefs are trained and mentored to work with best sustainable practices and local production.

Potential pitfalls and challenges

Challenges in establishing this new kitchen approach are especially related to changing the mindset of people embracing those changes. Skilling young chefs with good practices is also an aspect to consider because there is a need to change the culture in the kitchen, so a lot of informational and educational activities need to be set up to change this reality.

Benefits and outcomes

Benefits for this best practice include staff retention, being healthier, more creativity, and see the kitchen environment as a holistic manner, with a positive mindset creating a good work environment. The education is the primary motivation behind this practice, and education on food culture, or people speaking about their best practices for example.

Measuring success

This best practice has been successful so far, which is possible to see with:

- Engagement with chefs at events and large catering exhibitions;
- Running industry forums for student chefs in the colleges;
- Including young chefs on their working council, where they give feedback and get a chance to implement change.

Responsibility and accountability

The Chef Network is a network of chefs looking to create a transformational mindset related to work in the kitchens/restaurant sector. It is a network led by Irish chefs to promote the industry as a viable career and to retain talents as much as possible. The charter was 'developed by chefs for chefs', and the group is setting up several actions involving partners in the industry (from local producers to bigger food and training organisations in the country).

References and external resources

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<https://www.irishexaminer.com/lifestyle/people/arid-41224030.html>



Wellbeing

Network and
collaboration

Positive Work
Practices

Conclusion

The Chef Network is a good and important example of best practice in the food and beverage sector, as it promotes changes in how the kitchens and the chef profession are perceived. For this, many talented young and recognised chefs in the country have been meeting to understand and bring together solutions such as training programmes, awards, symposiums and open kitchen weeks, with a transformational mindset and bringing good practices for the sector.

“EDI training is absolutely essential, and it must be repeated. The world changes and even if someone already took the training 7 years ago, they need to do it again. You have to constantly train this.”

3.9 The Conrad: Best Practices in Social Skills

The [Conrad Hotel](#) is a 5-star luxury hotel Dublin’s city centre that blends modern elegance with Irish heritage. The hotel is part of the Hilton Group and seeks to provide memorable experiences for guests. It currently holds a [Forbes award](#) for luxury service, dining experiences, and exceptional accommodation.

3.9.1 Background information

The Conrad is committed to social responsibility and community engagement, integrating equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) across its operations. Staff members are constantly trained to ensure inclusivity and equality at all levels through Hilton University, using Forbes standards to guide the courses development. For example, The Conrad offers annual training in unconscious bias. The hotel also partners with various local organisations to provide employment opportunities that enhance community participation and social inclusion. Through its [Barista Academy](#), the Conrad and Down Syndrome Ireland provide training for adults with Down Syndrome to work in the hotel’s restaurants. The Hilton Group provides resources to support these trainings and initiatives.

The Conrad provides EDI training to set clear expectations for behaviour and inclusion, ensuring dignity and respect across its diverse workforce. This training was developed in response to the evolving nature of both EDI and society. While this movement has exponentially grown in recent years, The Conrad considered it important to begin implementing it early to truly make a difference, ensuring staff feel valued and providing a workplace where they are treated with dignity. Given the rapid development of all sectors due to technological changes and globalisation, the hotel considers skills development essential for helping employees adapting accordingly.

3.9.2 Analysis and overview

Key principles

The Conrad's EDI training is guided by the following:

Hilton's mission, vision and values: As part of the Group, The Conrad [values](#) hospitality, integrity, leadership, teamwork, and ownership, and aims to be part of the 'most hospitable company in the world.' This entails creating meaningful opportunities for team members and thus emphasise inclusion and equity for all. The Conrad also provides constant training to maintain a consistent and excellent service quality.

'Travel with Purpose': Following Hilton's CSR framework, The Conrad has autonomy to tailor its approach to inclusion based on the local context, deciding how to engage with communities and motivate staff to feel valued while upskilling.

Genuine commitment: Although the Conrad has internal policies to meet EDI targets, the hotel seeks meaningful engagement to create a positive social impact among its workforce and community.

The Conrad believes that in the future, luxury accommodation providers will need to integrate AI and other emerging technologies with strong social and interpersonal skills. The latter are crucial for continuing to connect with people. Given that AI will reduce the workload of front-of-house workers, the hotel sees an opportunity for employees to create memorable and personalised guest experiences, leveraging technology to enhance service.

In addition, EDI training is important to continue to help an international workforce adapt to different cultural contexts. The programme facilitates graduates to build on their qualifications by combining on-the-job training, workshops, and structured project work. This programme aims to foster leadership and management skills.

Examples and case studies

A concrete example of how EDI training has advanced skills at the Conrad comes from their women's empowerment workshop. It highlighted that women felt they could come forward when they noticed that comments and behaviours that did not correspond to the organisation's inclusivity culture, strengthening female empowerment.

The training helped the entire team at the Conrad to engage with staff in sensitive topics, reinforcing their culture of dignity and respect and increasing inclusivity. In addition, staff became more confident in speaking up. The Conrad believes that imparting these trainings and workshops is essential to enhance social sustainability.

Potential pitfalls and challenges

One of the main challenges in implementing EDI training is language barriers. English is the second language for many of the Conrad's diverse and international team members which can make upskilling more difficult. Lastly, some generational differences exist as some may not fully understand the perspectives or experiences of a diverse workforce.

Benefits and outcomes

The main benefit observed from EDI trainings is the positive impact on its organisational culture. Upskilling in this regard has helped create a sense of safety, security, and dignity, particularly among vulnerable staff. In addition, it demonstrates the importance of a workplace where employees feel valued, so that if they move to another company, they have a solid foundation for what to look for in a job. A key lesson is that EDI training is essential and must be constantly reinforced, as the world and society continue to evolve.

The Conrad also highlights the importance of training middle and upper managers on EDI to equip them to detect and address inappropriate behaviour in staff, while understanding how to be more inclusive as managers.

Measuring success

Hilton uses measurement instruments and monitoring to understand staff engagement and needs to identify areas of concern to be addressed in training. For example, an annual anonymous employee engagement survey is conducted with 65 questions, 10 of which specifically focus on EDI. These include whether employees feel they fit in, can be themselves, are treated fairly, and feel supported in addressing mental health issues. Hilton establishes regional EDI score targets, and in 2024, The Conrad surpassed its 85% minimum target. This allows The Conrad to track progress annually and assess the impact of EDI training and initiatives.

Responsibility and accountability

The HR department is responsible for implementing EDI training. The department engages in an initiative called 'EDI champions' where staff members are chosen and displayed on noticeboards, so employees know who to approach. The general manager is accountable for ensuring that department heads maintain EDI standards and meet KPIs.

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https://www.instagram.com/conrad_dublin/?hl=en



Inclusion and
Equality

Metrics and
monitoring

Wellbeing in the
Workplace

Conclusion

The Conrad's approach to EDI, social responsibility and community engagement is a testament on how to skill and upskill hospitality and tourism employees to advance inclusion and equality. The Conrad focuses on delivering consistent and tailored training to meet current and future skills needs. Through EDI upskilling, the hotel equips its workforce to impart these skills. This approach demonstrates that EDI can help enhance service delivery in a hospitality setting by creating an organisation where employees feel valued and empowered.

“Looking at developing a positive kitchen culture, this university module promotes new habits and zero tolerance for bad habits/unfavourable practices in the kitchen environment. Equality, fairness, respect and teamwork skills are key aspects of the learning process.”

3.10 The Mindful Kitchen Project: Best Practice in Social Skills

[The Mindful Kitchen](#) is an innovative project focusing on the wellbeing of chefs, with training aimed at Culinary Arts 1st and 2nd-year students at the School of Culinary Arts and Food Technology at Technological University Dublin. The project, through applied learning modules, aims to bring awareness to the importance of building a positive and respectful work environment in kitchens, as well as generating a creative space for students and developing skills related to such self-awareness, relationship building, communication skills, creativity, social gastronomy and food sustainability.

3.10.1 Background information

This best practice started in 2019 with a teaching module with a mindfulness approach in the Tallaght campus at Technological University Dublin designed by Senior Lecturer Annette Sweeney with the support of the entire teaching team. Mindfulness was introduced into the curriculum in response to some young chefs' feedback on the emotional impact of working in fast-paced and demanding kitchen environments. Using an innovative methodology in the undergraduate program, Annette and colleague Denise Murray designed a module with new techniques to promote self-reflection, self-care and creativity. The aim is to empower chefs to cultivate positive habits and personal sustainability in professional kitchens. The approach proved successful with the result that now mindfulness, social gastronomy and sustainability underpin many elements of the undergraduate culinary programme.

Both Annette and Denise were awarded the Jennifer Burke Award for innovation in Teaching and Learning 2019 for *The Mindful Kitchen 'Health and Well-being for Chefs'* module. Annette won the 'Highly Commended Innovator of the Year award 2022' in the *Food & Wine Restaurant of the Year Awards* with this project.

3.10.2 Analysis and overview

Key principles

The Mindful Kitchen Project uses positive psychology and mindful teaching methods to engender a mindful and awareness approach to produce innovative professional culinarians. The mindful approach seeks to strengthen positive emotions in classes to promote awareness of the best practices in professional kitchens and food businesses. The modules also focus on skilling chefs to embrace cultural changes in the kitchen environment. The project connects with the social gastronomy movement, where organisations and people use food to transform communities and create positive social changes. Sources of inspiration for the programme were Food on the Edge international chef symposium, [The Chef Network](#), in which many chefs share best practices on social gastronomy, sustainability and good practices in kitchens. , Because new generations of chefs are looking for employers that care for wellbeing, leadership in kitchens and the urge to change negative perceptions of some kitchen work environments were also sources of reflection.

Examples and case studies

With an innovative approach in culinary education, encompassing applied learning and co-creation, the module was developed with two perspectives: Firstly, how students can create a mindful space in the kitchen. A 'mindful toolkit' containing tools, such as breathing exercises, use of music, relaxation, focus on photography and nature was used. From this, students are encouraged to be mindful in preparing, cooking, presenting food. Sustainable kitchen practices are promoted, ie. provenance of food, and waste management.

Using mindful pedagogy for creativity is a key component of teaching and learning activities. Secondly, students discuss and debate professional kitchen leadership styles and chef self-care within the modern kitchen.

Potential pitfalls and challenges

Potential challenges are fundamentally related to changing a work culture that has been regarded since the 19th century as high-pressure and hierarchical, to a new positive mindset with techniques and skills development that value meaningful and respectful relationships. This puts the student/young chefs in the centre of a cultural transformation that is needed and welcomed today in the food and beverage sector.

Benefits and outcomes

Looking at developing a positive kitchen culture, this university module promotes new habits and zero tolerance for bad habits/unfavourable practices in the kitchen environment. Equality, fairness, respect and teamwork skills are key aspects of the learning process. Students also create self-awareness, and realise new skills such as creativity, self-awareness and self-confidence. Building meaningful and positive relationships, how to respect others, and how to work as a team member are also benefits of the project. This benefits graduates as a new culture in the kitchen is welcomed to ensure the attractiveness of the profession.

Measuring success

This project was piloted for the first year, and because of its success among students, with positive feedback reviews, another module was co-created by students and lecturers. Currently, a 3rd module is being developed, which is related to kitchen sustainability, engaging sustainability and creativity. The project is also linked now to more university modules on a Master's degree, and other external dissemination activities are being developed about the topic. These modules can be applied in any hospitality space. Evidence on the impact of the 'health and wellbeing for chefs' module is currently being measured as part of a PhD dissertation.

Responsibility and accountability

This best practice was originally developed, coordinated, and piloted by Senior Lecturer Annette Sweeney with colleagues from the School of Culinary Arts and Food Technology at Technological University Dublin, and since its launch in 2019, it is entering new phases of development. TU Dublin fully supports these programmes, and now it has also been externally funded for further development of activities. Through new actions, partnerships and with Food on the Edge (which is now a patron of the project), the Chef's Network activities and partnerships, further actions are being envisioned by Annette and the lecturing team on the Tallaght campus.

References and external resources

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<https://www.tudublin.ie/explore/news/industry-recognition-for-annette-sweeneys-innovative-approach-to-culinary-arts-education-at-tu-dublin.html>

Publication regarding the Project on the Dublin Gastronomy Symposium Annals (2020):

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Mindful and
Transformational
Pedagogies

Wellbeing
Practices

Positive Work

Conclusion

The best practice has an educational approach and an industry (applied) approach and has applied informal mindful pedagogy, bringing an innovative interface between positive psychology and culinary arts education. It is the first programme in Europe and one of the first in the world related to bringing mindfulness techniques to the training of young chefs as a university module. The project tries to change the mindset related to the hierarchy in the kitchen and helps students to lead a positive work environment.

SKILLS SYNTHESIS

A skilled workforce is essential for the sustainable growth competitiveness of the tourism sector



The findings presented in this report serve as a roadmap for policymakers, educators, and industry stakeholders to collaborate effectively in shaping the future of tourism workforce development.

In essence, the PANTOUR Country Skills Profile Reports serve as a call to action, urging stakeholders to prioritize skill enhancement initiatives and embrace innovative practices to ensure the continued success and resilience of the tourism industry in the years to come.

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Appendix 1. Examples of Digital training providers

Training provider name: Technological University Dublin
Website: https://www.tudublin.ie/study/undergraduate/courses/tourism-and-digital-marketing-tu953/
Type of provider: Higher Education Institution/Level 8 NFQ Ireland (Honor Bachelor degree)
Covered skills types: Course: Tourism and digital marketing Disciplines: Digital 1, Digital 2, Tourism and Technology, Data Analysis, Digital 3, Digital 4. Being digitally literate <ul style="list-style-type: none">• general computer literacy• basic office application use (text processing, spreadsheet use, presentation software)• e-mail and chat• data entry capabilities• social media use online marketing & communication <ul style="list-style-type: none">• social media use• web-based communications• digital marketing & communication; (big) data analytics <ul style="list-style-type: none">• digital business analysis and data-driven decision making (increased offer of personalised tourism services and take-up of data-driven destination management tools);
Methods of delivery of this provider Modules/In person (4 years)

Training provider name: Ballaghaderreen Further Education Centre, Boyle
Website: https://www.fetchcourses.ie/course/finder?sfcw-courseId=348703 https://www.facebook.com/BallaghLTI/

<p>Type of provider: Further Education Provider – Level 4 NFQ Ireland (leaving Certificate, Post-Secondary)</p>
<p>Covered skills types Course: Tourism, Customer Service & ICT Skills Level 4 - Boyle</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being digitally literate • general computer literacy • basic office application use (text processing, spreadsheet use, presentation software) • e-mail and chat • data entry capabilities • social media use • mobile technologies • ICT skills • web & app development • programming • digital design and data visualization
<p>Methods of delivery: Class/training with certification (1 year)</p>

<p>Training provider name: College of Further Education and Training, Ennis</p>
<p>Website: https://collegeoffet.ie/ennis-campus/</p>
<p>Type of provider: Further Education Provider – Level 5 NFQ Ireland (Leaving certificate, post-Secondary)</p>
<p>Covered skills types: Course: Tourism and Business Being digitally literate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • general computer literacy • basic office application use (text processing, spreadsheet use, presentation software) • e-mail and chat • data entry capabilities • social media use <p>(specifically, the courses: ICT skills, computer applications, payroll manual and computerised, and bookkeeping manual and computerised)</p>
<p>Methods of delivery: Modules/In person (2-year course)</p>

Appendix 2. Examples of 'Green' training providers

Training provider name: Sustainable Travel Ireland
Website: https://www.sustainabletourismnetwork.ie/training-programmes//
Type of provider Not-for-profit organisation
Covered skills types Carbon & Resource-efficiency: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• reduce the use of raw materials, energy, and water consumption, increase the use of renewable energy• adopt various preventative measures and recycling practices to minimise waste, in particular plastic and food waste• apply the principles of sharing economy• utilise sustainable procurement practices Nature & biodiversity: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• understand the concept of carrying capacity and how to sustain it• understand governmental planning systems ensuring carrying capacity and collaborate with local government• use natural resources sustainably in tourism products: products related to nature conservation, responsible animal interactions, use of nature protected areas
Methods of delivery: Online training/In-person training with International/Independent Certification (not present in the NFQ Ireland)

Training provider name: Fifty Shades Greener and the Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality
Website: https://www.fiftyshadesgreener.ie/the-green-manager

Type of provider:

Private training provider

Covered skills types:

Resource-efficiency

- reduce the use of raw materials, energy, and water consumption, increase the use of renewable energy
- adopt various preventative measures and recycling practices to minimise waste, in particular plastic and food waste
- apply the principles of sharing economy
- utilise sustainable procurement practices

Climate change and transition to low carbon economy

- identify the influence of environmental conditions to safety of tourists and prevent the potential risks
- assess and create solutions to combat the change in environmental resources used in product development
- identify the sources of greenhouse gas emissions in tourism companies and implement procedures to reduce them
- calculate the Carbon Footprint generated by company's actions and make plans how to reduce and compensate it
- promote the sustainability of transport from tourists' and supply chains' perspective

Environmental management

- set environmental objectives
- integrate the specifics of environmental legislation into company's actions
- adopt an environmental management system to plan, act, and monitor
- apply and manage sustainability certification schemes
- use digital technologies to integrate smartness and sustainability
- redesign supply chains
- increase cooperation with the local stakeholders

Methods of delivery:

Online training and corporate training (in-person) (provides certification level 4 NFQ Ireland , Post-secondary)

Training provider name:

Programme Skills to Advance/SOLAS (delivered by local ETBS)

Website: https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/f2284d29d3/solas-skills-to-advance-brochure-final-web-solas-version.pdf
Type of provider: Vocational/Further Education Institutions
Covered skills types: Green/sustainability (not specified)
Methods of delivery (i.e., online/class; modules/courses/training, certification): Levels 5 and 6 (NFQ Ireland – Post-secondary certification, 3 to 8 months)

Training provider name: North Connaught College of Further Education
Website: https://northconnaughtcollege.net/tourism-2/
Type of provider: VET provider/Further Education /Level 5 NFQ Ireland
Covered skills types: Course: Tourism and Ecotourism Resource-efficiency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduce the use of raw materials, energy, and water consumption, increase the use of renewable energy • adopt various preventative measures and recycling practices to minimise waste, in particular plastic and food waste • apply the principles of sharing economy Conservation of biodiversity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand the concept of carrying capacity and how to sustain it • understand governmental planning systems ensuring carrying capacity and collaborate with local government • use natural resources sustainably in tourism products: products related to nature conservation, responsible animal interactions, use of nature protected areas • minimise pollution Sustainability communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set environmental objectives • integrate the specifics of environmental legislation into company's actions • adopt an environmental management system to plan, act, and monitor • apply and manage sustainability certification schemes

- use digital technologies to integrate smartness and sustainability
- redesign supply chains
- increase cooperation with the local stakeholders

Methods of delivery:

Class/In-person (8 weeks)

Training provider name:

Petersburg OETC - Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board

Website:

<https://gretb.ie/further-education-training/course-finder/?sfcw-courseId=381382>

Type of provider:

VET Provider/Further education/Level 4 NFQ Ireland

Covered skills types:

Course: Certificate in Environmental Sustainability Management in Hospitality (Level 4)

Resource-efficiency

- reduce the use of raw materials, energy, and water consumption, increase the use of renewable energy
- adopt various preventative measures and recycling practices to minimise waste, in particular plastic and food waste
- apply the principles of sharing economy
- utilise sustainable procurement practices

Climate change and transition to low carbon economy

- identify the influence of environmental conditions to safety of tourists and prevent the potential risks
- assess and create solutions to combat the change in environmental resources used in product development
- identify the sources of greenhouse gas emissions in tourism companies and implement procedures to reduce them
- calculate the Carbon Footprint generated by company's actions and make plans how to reduce and compensate it

Environmental management

- integrate the specifics of environmental legislation into company's actions
- adopt an environmental management system to plan, act, and monitor

Methods of delivery:

Class/In-person – with certification (Post-secondary Level 4 NFQ – 16 weeks)

Appendix 3. Examples of Social/Cultural training providers

Training provider name: Universal Access
Website: https://universalaccess.ie/
Type of provider (see list above): Private organisation/training provider About the company: a training and consultancy provider with clients in the hotels industry and Failte Ireland, specialised in accessibility and inclusion of people with disabilities.
Covered skills types: Course: Training in Disability Awareness, Accessibility and Universal Design <ul style="list-style-type: none">• showing a positive attitude, respect, inclusivity, and intercultural sensitivity;• making appropriate contact and active listening skills;• competences that promote social progress which recognizes the needs of everyone;• accessible tourism provision for those with disabilities;
Methods of delivery: Class/group training (in-person) (don't provide certification)

Training provider name: TU Dublin
Website: https://www.tudublin.ie/study/undergraduate/courses/tourism-and-digital-marketing-tu953/
Type of provider: Higher Education Institution
Covered skills types:

<p>Course: All tourism modules in the School of Tourism and Hospitality Management – Year 1 (discipline: Intercultural Awareness)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cross-cultural understanding, supporting diversity, gender and racial equality; • showing a positive attitude, respect, inclusivity, and intercultural sensitivity;
<p>Methods of delivery: In-person class (Certification – Level 8 NFQ Bachelor with Honours Degree) – One-semester discipline</p>

<p>Training provider name: Irish Centre for Diversity</p>
<p>Website: https://irishcentrefordiversity.ie/</p>
<p>Type of provider: Private organisation/training provider About the company: an organisation specialised in diversity training for several industry partners, educational institutions (higher education) and city councils and chambers, including in the tourism, hospitality and travel sector.</p>
<p>Covered skills types:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • competences for managing personal relationships, demonstrating empathy, and cooperating with others; • showing a positive attitude, respect, inclusivity, and intercultural sensitivity; • making appropriate contact and active listening skills; • competences that promote social progress which recognizes the needs of everyone; • accessible tourism provision for those with disabilities; • cross-cultural understanding, supporting diversity, gender and racial equality; <p>Other covered skills training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive leadership • Diversity and inclusion • Unconscious bias • Cultural Awareness • Disability in the workplace • Gender equality • Creating a culture of dignity and respect in the workplace
<p>Methods of delivery: Online/In-person and group (company) training</p>

Training provider name: Mayo College of Further Education and Training
Website: https://mayocollege.ie/course/vtos-achill-tour-guiding/
Type of provider: Further education/vocational education provider
Covered skills types: Course: National Tour Guiding Course <ul style="list-style-type: none">• interpersonal and intrapersonal skills;• making appropriate contact and active listening skills; Other covered skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communication Skills• Group Management and Team Working
Methods of delivery: Level 6 course NFQ Ireland/in-person class/Programme especially designed for return workers (2 years)