



Facilitator's Manual

Empowering Women
Leadership in Tourism,
Leisure & Hospitality



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1. Welcome to We Lead's Facilitator's Manual

Welcome to the Facilitator's Manual designed to empower and inspire leaders in the tourism, leisure, and hospitality sectors to advocate for women's leadership and greater gender balance within the sector.

This manual is designed to serve as a comprehensive guide to develop robust advocacy strategies as well as explain how to integrate Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into leadership practices. It further acts as a guide to how the We Lead's resources can be used to move your advocacy work and campaigns forward.

We hope that this Manual, along with our Guides to Online Campaigning, will bring you the tools to launch your own campaigns to highlight the importance of gender balance in leadership roles and sustainable practices within the tourism sector.



“When the world is silent, even one voice becomes powerful.”

– Malala Yousafzai a Pakistani advocate and activist is best known for promoting education, especially for girls.



2. Working with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals

We Lead's Facilitator's Manual is designed to inspire and guide actors within the tourism sector to plan and carry out campaigns and initiatives that put the spotlight on women leadership and climate change actions. The We Lead project sets out to highlight two SDG goals (No.5 & No.13) and the importance of advocating for initiatives that tackle the issues they outline.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a call to action for all countries to work together to end poverty, improve health and education, and reduce inequality, while also tackling the issues faced by climate change. Each of the 17 SDGs have their own targets to be met (overall 169 targets) in order to achieve said goals. Evidence show that when the SDGs efforts are implemented effectively, they have the ability to bring about positive and beneficial policy changes ([source](#)).

The tourism and hospitality sector can be linked to all 17 SDGs. This is because tourism is not only economically important but can also influence social aspects of communities and has an impact on people's lives – whether you are talking about the tourists themselves or the host communities.



SDGs:

Tourism, Gender Equality & Climate Action

Due to the variety of ways in which tourism and the SDGs interlink, there are therefore many ways in which tourism companies and other stakeholders can align with and/or incorporate the SDGs into their work and initiatives. In the We Lead project we focus on Goal 5 and Goal 13 or Gender Equality and Climate Action, respectively.

Goal 5: Gender Equality

The aim of SDG 5 is to “*achieve gender equality and empower women and girls to reach their full potential*”. What is included in this statement is the need to ensure that women have access to stable employment, reproductive rights, elimination of gender-based violence, and for women to be a real part of decision-making in both public and private spheres.

In this regard, tourism can play a crucial role by empowering women, especially through providing them with job opportunities and income from SMEs in tourism and hospitality-related enterprises. It also links in with SDG 8 which discusses the importance of “productive employment and decent work for all”.

Tourism and hospitality as a sector is already an industry that has a high share of women employed and a long history of tourism entrepreneurs shaping the industry. Therefore, tourism is a great venue for women to take the lead, and be active in important decision-making to tackle the challenges tourism faces, for example regarding climate change.

Goal 13: Climate Action

Tourism contributes to and is affected by climate change, as the sector is very dependent on the environment.

Therefore, tourism stakeholders should play an active role in the global response to climate change. The sector as a whole should therefore aim to reduce its carbon footprint and aim for low carbon growth and healing practices to help tackle one of the most pressing challenges of our time.

Education and training are fundamental pathways to raising awareness of climate change mitigation and actions. Thus, it is **imperative that tourism businesses and organisations focus on educating both employees and customers on climate change and the benefits of sustainable practices in tourism.**



Discussions:



- What steps can your business or organisation take to ensure greater **gender balance and opportunities** in both your daily operations and long-term strategies?



- How does your business or organisation incorporate **sustainable tourism practices**? Have you implemented any sustainability goals into your business strategies?

Further reading:



We delve deeper into how these two goals are interlinked in our [Eye Opener Report on Women Leadership in Sustainable Tourism](#). In the report, we highlight how recent research shows that women are generally more environmentally aware than men, and how greater gender balance in leadership roles can have a positive impact on a company's impact on the climate.



3. Integrate the Principles of the SDGs into your Leadership Practices

Sustainability cannot just be used as an empty buzzword. To ensure that your tourism business or organisation is actively working towards minimising the negative impact of travel and developing sustainable practices – **sustainability must be incorporated into all aspects of the business...Especially leadership.**

Leaders for sustainability are employees who want to and can strategise long-term sustainability plans and deliver on them. They can look at the company as a whole with the lens of sustainability and pinpoint where action can be taken and have the drive to see the work through.



Sustainability leaders are *"individuals who are compelled to make a difference by deepening their awareness of themselves in relation to the world around them. In doing so, they adopt new ways of seeing, thinking, and interacting that result in innovative, sustainable solutions."*

- The Sustainability Leadership Institute



3. Integrate the Principles of the SDGs into your Leadership Practices (cont.)

In order to be a sustainability leader and integrate the principles of the SDGs into your work, you need to have a clear idea of what you want to achieve within your company or organisation and how you will measure your progress. There will be obstacles along the way, so it is important to be flexible and not afraid to experiment to find what works for your workplace.

To be a sustainable company, you need to **make sustainability a part of your brand** and ensure that the company as a whole reflects these values. Furthermore, **transparency is very important** in creating trust and credibility, so communicate your efforts to your employees, customers, and other stakeholders and let them know why these efforts are important.

Finally, one of the best ways to encourage sustainable practices is to lead by example and thereby inspire others to follow. Always look for new ways to improve, and learn from both your successes and mistakes in order to continuously improve your sustainability practices over time.



Further reading

- [Blueprint for SDG Leadership](#)
- [Sustainable Development Goals: How to integrate the SDGs in 4 steps](#)
- [Sustainable Leadership: Linking theory and practice](#)
- [Role of local leadership in attaining Sustainable Development Goals](#)



All advocacy is, at its core, an exercise in empathy

- Samantha Power
Administrator of the US Agency for
International Development



4. What is advocacy?

Advocacy is when you choose to **actively promote a cause or a principle**, and you take deliberate actions that lead to you reaching your selected goals.

It does not necessarily involve confrontation or conflict, but it does involve bringing awareness of the cause to those who have the power to make the changes you would like to see happen – as well as to those who can help amplify your message.

The key to successfully advocating for a certain issue or cause is to **know the subject matter well and develop a clear message you want to communicate** to your intended target audience. In the next section, we will go over some useful tips and tricks on how you can plan and launch your own successful campaign or initiative.

5. Build your campaign step-by-step

1. Gain an understanding of the issue(s)

Before any advocacy begins, it is important to develop a deeper understanding of the issues and problems at hand to be as effective as possible in your advocacy work.

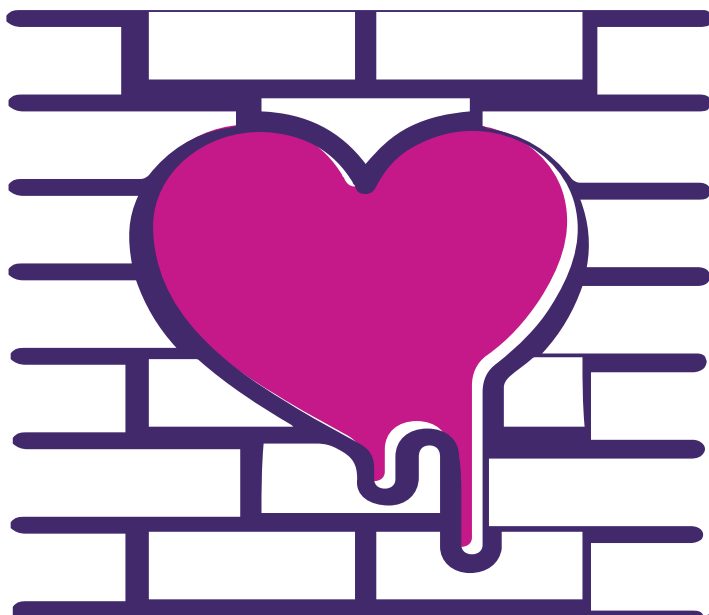
- **What are the main issues?**
- **Who are they affecting the most?**

Another important aspect to keep in mind before any advocacy work or campaigning begins is to have clear goals in mind.

- **What is the desired outcome?**
- **How can you best reach your target audience?**
- **How can you inspire people to join in on your campaign?**

By answering these questions and immersing yourself in the issues that you want to address, you can begin to shape the kind of awareness campaign that will help you reach your goals. Ensuring greater gender equality and incorporating sustainable practices in the tourism and hospitality sector can seem like a big undertaking. Therefore, it is important to **develop a good plan and have some clear goals in mind**.

While you probably already broadly know why issues around gender equality and climate action are important, it is important to delve deeper into the specific issues you want to address and arm yourself with extra knowledge about the issues and how they affect your community. **Armed with knowledge** you are better able to get your message across, persuade others to join your cause, and answer any questions that might arise along the way.





1. Gain an understanding of the issue(s) (continued)

Further reading:

We Lead's Open Education Resources (OERs) were created to address:

- The gender disparity in the Tourism, Hospitality & Leisure (THL) sectors across Europe, especially in leadership roles
- The missing interlinkage between gender and climate change which may hinder effective green transition initiatives within the labour market.
- The unequal access in decision-making processes on climate action and the need to gain the important contributions of underrepresented people and women in their wide diversity, as experts, decision-makers, consumers, carers, educators and stakeholders.
- The high level of foreign/migrant labour within the tourism sector, that is currently increasing for all EU countries due to the large number of migrant women & children that have fled from regions of conflict.

The OERs are therefore a great place to start if you want to delve deeper into these issues and gain the necessary background knowledge for your own initiatives relating to gender balance and sustainable practices within the tourism sector!





2. Know your target group(s)

The target audience for your campaign or initiative is those you want to influence and/or educate on sustainable tourism practices or the importance of gender balance.

So before starting, you should know who it is you are trying to reach with your message, as it can help you to better reach and interact with your target audience once the campaign or initiative is underway.

Your target groups can:

- be found within your own organisation/business, local tourism network, or your customer base.
- be women working in tourism, potential customers, other tourism businesses, municipalities, or any other relevant stakeholders.

Once you have defined your target audience, you can begin to get to know them and shape your strategy and the content of your message.



Further reading:

- [Communicating Respect: Know Your Audience](#)
- [Target audience: What it is and how to find yours](#)





3. Collaboration can be very beneficial to amplify your message

Finding like-minded businesses, groups, or organisations to cooperate with can be very a powerful way to amplify a message to a broader audience and demonstrate a willingness to put on a united front to tackle the issues at hand. **The more voices added, the more likely it is that the campaign message is heard.**

When finding collaborators, here are some questions you might want to consider:

- **What do you want to achieve with the collaboration?**
- **What do you need help with?**
- **What skills, expertise, or resources are you looking for?**

It is good to have a clear vision of what you want to achieve with your collaboration to make it as successful as possible. Whether it is sharing resources, ideas, or audiences, a good collaboration can help maximise your reach and get your message across to the people you want to hear it.



Further reading:

- [A quick guide on business collaboration: Best practices, types and tools you should use](#)
- [How do you find and contact collaborators for your project?](#)
- [How to establish a collaboration](#)
- [What makes advocacy collaboratives successful?](#)



4. Developing a plan

Tourism businesses, organisations, and other stakeholders that want to start a campaign need to define the goals of the campaign and split them down into specific steps. Breaking down the overall goals into smaller manageable steps can help keep the campaign on the right track. It can also be beneficial to **split them into:**

a) long-term, b) intermediate, c) short-term goals.

When writing out your campaign goals and their criteria, it can be helpful to keep the acronym **SMART** in mind.

- **Specific:** Be as specific as you can about your goals, what you want to achieve, for whom, why and what your timeline looks like.
- **Measurable:** Define how you are going to measure the progress and success of your campaign. This can also be a great way for you to see what and how much you have been able to achieve.
- **Achievable:** Set realistic goals for your campaign. Be ambitious but also realistic. What can you achieve with the time and resources available to you?
- **Relevant:** Make sure that all your goals are working towards the same end and this will help you achieve your overall mission with the campaign.
- **Time-based:** Set an end date for your campaign. Having a specific date to work towards stops you from losing focus along the way.



Further reading:

- [Developing strategic and action plans](#)
- [How to write SMART goals \(plus examples\)](#)



5. Communicating your message

There are a variety of ways to communicate a message and it is important to find the best medium to deliver it.

Finding the best way to communicate your message in a way that fosters mutual understanding and inspires people to get involved with your campaign – whether you are communicating your business' sustainable practices or advocating for greater gender balance.

Points to keep in mind

- **Purpose & message:** Be clear about what it is you are communicating to avoid misunderstandings.
- **Medium for communication:** How do you plan to communicate your message? Choosing the medium of how you are going to deliver you message can affect how it is received. Are you organising a social media campaign? Organising a workshop? The medium should shape the tone and style of your communication.
- **Delivering the message:** Choose your language, words, imagery, and even sounds (e.g. for a video) with intention. The more thought you put in how you deliver your message, the less room there is for error.
- **Interaction and feedback:** In your communication plan, incorporate ways for your audience to interact with your campaign and give you feedback. This can help you make sure your message is being received how you wanted it to be and can help strengthen your overall goals and your relationship with your audience.



Further reading:

- [Getting your message out: 10 communication practices for changing times](#)
- [Communicating the message](#)
- [Communicating with purpose](#)



5. Communicating your message (continued)

Developing good communication skills to engage with your employees, team members, and audience is important and there are various ways you can achieve your goals through clear and engaging communication. Don't be afraid to be innovative and find creative ways to interact and engage with people.

Active listening skills

Active listening is one of the most important skills we can adopt. It takes practice and patience, as we can be prone to start thinking about the next thing to say while others are speaking. **Active listening is about building a connection with your employees, collaborators, and your audience.** When working in a team towards a shared goal, active listening can help make communication between team members more effective and help resolve interpersonal conflict. Being open to what others have to say can foster new ideas and more efficient ways of doing things.

Negotiating

Using negotiation as a strategy to communicate with your team or collaborators can be an efficient way to avoid unnecessary arguing and help move a project along by finding solutions that lead to your desired outcomes. It can help a team to examine a problem from all sides and come to a compromise that benefits and adds value to the overall goals of your campaign.



Further reading:

- [Active listening skills in leadership](#)
- [How to develop negotiation as a leadership skill](#)
- [The Importance of negotiation skills for leaders](#)



5. Communicating your message (continued)

Storytelling

Telling a story is a useful tool for tourism businesses and organisations to engage with their audience. Stories are a great way to capture people's attention, create a connection, and inspire people to take action. **Don't be afraid to get personal!**

You can use different formats such as video, audio, text, or graphics to get your story across, but it is important to use vivid imagery, language, and examples to fully immerse your audience in your narrative. Throughout, it is important that your storytelling is authentic and reflects the principles you want to highlight in your campaign.

Online campaigns

Online campaigns are a great way for tourism businesses and organisations to make their message visible to the intended target audience. The campaign can be highlighted through various online mediums such as social media, online magazines and newspapers. It can also be an effective way to get people to engage with the campaign and help spread awareness of the issue(s) thereby reaching even more people.

Check out → We Lead's guide to online campaigning – as further reading

Further reading:

- [The power of business storytelling: Hear ideas from 9 experts](#)
- [Storytelling and the art of advocacy](#)
- [The role of storytelling in digital advocacy](#)



6. Campaigns and initiatives aimed at empowering women's leadership and sustainable travel



Empowering women leaders in the tourism sector is essential for promoting gender equality, economic growth, and sustainable development worldwide.

The initiatives below, among others, play a crucial role in promoting women's leadership and empowerment in the tourism sector, ultimately contributing to more inclusive and sustainable tourism development worldwide. **We encourage you to visit their websites and learn more about their work and be inspired!**

UN Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs): UN Women promotes gender equality and women's empowerment in the workplace through the WEPs. These principles provide guidance for businesses to empower women in leadership positions, including within the tourism industry.

Global Tourism Women's Empowerment Network (GTWEN): GTWEN is a global network dedicated to advancing women's leadership and entrepreneurship in the tourism sector. It provides resources, mentorship, and networking opportunities for women working in various aspects of the tourism industry.

Women in Travel CIC: Women in Travel CIC is a social enterprise dedicated to empowering women in the travel and tourism industry. They offer mentorship programs, networking events, and advocacy initiatives to support women's leadership and career advancement.

Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) - Gender Equality in Tourism: GSTC promotes gender equality and women's empowerment in sustainable tourism development. They provide guidance and certification programs to help tourism businesses integrate gender-responsive policies and practices into their operations.

International Women in Travel & Tourism Forum (IWTTF): IWTTF brings together women leaders and stakeholders from the travel and tourism industry to discuss challenges, share best practices, and advocate for gender equality. It provides a platform for networking, mentorship, and collaboration to advance women's leadership in tourism.

Campaigns and initiatives aimed at empowering women leadership and sustainable travel (cont.)

Tourism businesses, Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) and other stakeholders can have a great impact on how people travel and the choices they make while on their holidays. Various tourism organisations have launched creative and impactful campaigns to highlight the importance of sustainable travel and raising awareness among tourists about the impact they can have.

Simply Feel Good: An award-winning campaign, first launched by Visit Germany in 2021, that highlights how travellers can visit Germany in a sustainable yet enjoyable way.

Community Conscious Travel: is the World Travel & Tourism Council's latest global campaign aimed to raise awareness and protect the balance between the quality of life for residents, the experiences of tourists, and the destination's environment.

Keep the Fun Going: Was a sustainable tourism campaign launched in 2019 by the Department of Tourism in the Philippines which aimed to encourage tourists to "practice eco-friendly travels" by setting gamified challenges for them.

Travel Matters Campaign: An ongoing campaign by a UK tourism company who are committed to sustainable travel and educating both like-minded businesses and their customers on how to minimise the negative impacts of tourism.

7. Be inspired!

Useful links and resources

We have gathered some useful and interesting articles, reports, blog posts, podcasts, and other resources to help inspire you in your advocacy work and campaigning for gender equality and sustainable practices in the tourism sector!

Reports and articles

Sustainability:

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals through Tourism – Toolkit of Indicators for Projects:

- <https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/10.18111/9789284424344>
- <https://www.unwto.org/tourism4sdgs>
- <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/14/5/2561>
- <https://enterclimate.com/blog/sustainable-tourism-practices/>
- <https://ecocart.io/sustainable-tourism-marketing-strategies/>

Gender and tourism:

- <https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284420384>
- <https://www.unwto.org/gender-and-tourism>
- <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2211973621000337>



Be inspired! Useful links and resources

Podcasts

[The Broad Experience" / Ashley Milne-Tyte](#)

A podcast that addresses issues such as sexism, work-life balance, and the unique experiences of women in the world of work.

["She Leads" / Amanda Blesing](#)

Amanda interviews women leaders from various sectors and discusses issues of leadership, success and the challenges women face in their careers.

[Sheryl Sandberg: "Why we have too few women leaders"](#)

Facebook's Chief Operating Officer Sheryl Sandberg offers insights and advice on how women can succeed in their careers.

[Elizabeth Gilbert: "Success, failure and the drive to keep creating"](#)

Author Elizabeth Gilbert talks about the creative process and leadership, with lessons applicable to women in tourism who are navigating the challenges of the industry.

[Women we watch in tourism](#)

Women We Watch is the first global podcast featuring women leaders in Tourism and Hospitality business and their achievements in entrepreneurship, gender equality, innovation, crisis management and so much more. Each Episode presents the professional journeys of these women leaders, their business models, experiences, leadership qualities and practical transferable strategies for listeners.

[Use your voice, vote and wallet for climate action](#)

In a conversation from 2021 with TEDWomen curator Pat Mitchell, Halla Tómasdóttir urges us all to recognize our power and to use our voice, vote and wallet to catalyze meaningful climate action. Halla Tómasdóttir was elected as Iceland's new president in June 2024.



Be inspired!

Useful links and resources

[We Lead's Good Practice Compendium](#)

We Lead's Good Practice Compendium offers stories from women leaders within tourism in the countries participating in the We Lead Erasmus+ project. By sharing stories from women engaged in different leadership roles within tourism we hope to both inform and inspire future female leaders as well as creating awareness within the sector about the importance of women's leadership in reaching the goals of sustainable and climate-responsible tourism.

