



ANTARCTIC TREATY  
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## **Workshop on Education – IAATO Education, Outreach and Ambassadorship – Strategic Overview**



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### ***Summary***

This paper details key internal and external initiatives focused on promoting long-term Antarctic stewardship, including guidance for polar communications professionals, campaigns championing Antarctic ambassadorship, polar history, and science with a focus on diversity, and the introduction of Phase 2 of the Antarctic Ambassador Program, focused on capability-building, action-oriented engagement, and sustained community involvement. It also discusses early trial outcomes, expanded outreach to gateway communities, and future plans for scaling and evaluating program impact.

### ***Background***

Education, outreach and ambassadorship are foundational to IAATO's mandate to advocate and promote the practice of safe, environmentally responsible private-sector travel and long-term stewardship of Antarctica. Since 1991, IAATO has invested in training, guidance, and communications that reinforce the Antarctic Treaty System and promote informed engagement by visitors and industry professionals. In recent years, these efforts have evolved to address the growing influence of communications, marketing, and digital media in shaping public understanding of Antarctica.

To support this evolution, IAATO established the Education & Outreach Working Group in 2015 to guide development of the Antarctic Ambassador concept and advise on emerging communications priorities across the association. In 2023, members unanimously endorsed transitioning this group into the Antarctic Ambassadorship Committee, strengthening governance and aligning ambassadorship more closely with IAATO's strategic objectives.

This paper provides a high-level overview of IAATO's education and outreach portfolio and outlines the strategic direction of the Antarctic Ambassadorship Program.

### ***Strategic Education & Outreach Portfolio***

IAATO's education and outreach initiatives are designed to ensure consistency, credibility, and alignment across the membership while responding to emerging risks, opportunities, and stakeholder expectations. Key initiatives include:

#### **For internal audiences:**

- Freeze Frame e-newsletter for IAATO-member field staff (2019 to present)
  - Refreshed in 2024 to provide a stronger operational focus, ensuring more strategic, timely and accessible communication of key updates to IAATO member field staff.
- Avian Influenza Resource Centre (2023 to present)

- A targeted risk-response resource for member operators and field staff, supporting biosecurity compliance and consistent guest communications regarding their obligations as responsible visitors.
- Polar Communicators Forum for member marketing, sales and communications professionals (Introduced 2024)
  - A coordination mechanism that enables member marketing, sales and communications professionals to share intelligence on industry communications, align messaging, and respond collectively to emerging issues.
- Communicating the Antarctic Experience Guide (Introduced 2024)
  - A management tool guiding member marketing, sales and communications activities in alignment with ATCM values and IAATO operational requirements, replacing the 2016 Marketing and PR Guidelines.
- Travelling with Influencers Guide (Introduced 2024)
  - Proactive guidance for member communications, sales, and marketing professionals to manage reputational, operational, and compliance risks associated with influencer content-generation and high-profile guest visibility.
- Marketing Antarctica Guide (Introduced 2026)
  - Guidance for responsible storytelling, expectation management and image use, tailored for third-party communicators working with or on behalf of member operators.
- Antarctic Ambassador Expedition-based Program Tools (Introduced 2024)
  - Standardised resources enabling member operators to deliver consistent, high-quality ambassadorship experiences onboard Antarctic expeditions.

### External audiences

- Ambassadorship Challenge cards (2026 and ongoing)
  - A series of nine-task activity cards of increasing difficulty designed to support Antarctic ambassadors in shaping and growing their ambassadorship efforts outside or beyond an expedition context. Two cards, level 1 “Adelie” and level 2 “Chinstrap”, have been released this year to coincide with Antarctic Ambassadorship Day and are available for download from [iaato.org/antarctic-ambassadors](https://iaato.org/antarctic-ambassadors).
- Ambassadorship resources for Antarctic Gateway schools (Launched 2025)
  - A suite of youth-focused ambassadorship resources designed to inspire and empower children aged 5–10 to take pro-environmental action within Antarctic Gateway communities. The materials, comprising a presentation, interactive bingo activity, and participation certificate, reinforce that collective small actions can drive meaningful global impact. Available in Spanish and English, the suite is accessible to IAATO members via the Field Operations Manual (FOM) and will be distributed to gateway schools during the 2026–27 season.
- Antarctic Ambassadorship Day (2021 to present)
  - A focal point for coordinated, global storytelling; reinforcing IAATO’s stewardship efforts, amplifying ambassador actions and inspiring would-be Antarctic Ambassadors. Held annually on April 24.

- Inclusive Communications Campaigns (2020– present)
  - Strategic initiatives (Polar Pride, Black History Month, Women’s History Month) share Antarctic stories from traditionally underrepresented communities and champion diversity as integral to the evolution of Antarctic engagement.
- IAATO Antarctic Expedition App (launched 2025)
  - A scalable digital platform providing authoritative, offline-accessible operational and educational content for both IAATO member field staff and guests. The IAATO Antarctic Expedition App is available for free download now on the App Store and Google Play.
- Gentoo News (2025 - present)
  - Bi-monthly e-newsletter supporting an ongoing conversation with all Antarctic Ambassadors, whether they have taken part in the expedition program or are self-motivated with no prior or planned travel to the region. Gentoo News is a companion to IAATO’s Antarctic Ambassadors’ Facebook community group, launched in 2024.

### ***Antarctic Ambassadorship Program: Strategic Development (2025-26)***

At the 2025 IAATO Annual Meeting in Cascais, members formally embedded Antarctic Ambassadorship into IAATO’s bylaws, elevating it from a voluntary program-based initiative to a core strategic commitment. The revised bylaw articulates a clear expectation that IAATO members will cultivate Antarctic Ambassadors—individuals who advocate for Antarctic protection through informed, responsible action—independent of their company’s commercial objectives.

This governance milestone coincided with the trial implementation of Phase 2 of the Antarctic Ambassador Expedition Program during the 2025-26 season. Phase 2 shifts the program from awareness-raising to capability-building, with four strategic priorities:

#### **1. Capability and Consistency**

Strengthen expedition staff capacity to facilitate informed dialogue on Antarctic issues and to support guests in developing ambassador competencies, such as sharing their Antarctic ambassadorship experience with others and speaking about Antarctic-related topics once home, ensuring consistent delivery across operators.

#### **2. Action-Oriented Engagement**

Translate complex Antarctic challenges such as climate action, sustainability and microplastic pollution into clear, achievable pathways for individual action, reducing barriers to engagement and avoiding inaction driven by uncertainty.

#### **3. Structured Participation Pathways**

Move beyond inspiration by offering defined opportunities for continued involvement, such as digital events, challenges and citizen science projects, developed in collaboration with polar partners, educational institutions, and civil society (third sector) organisations.

#### **4. Community Continuity**

Extend engagement beyond the voyage by strengthening post-expedition networks and connecting ambassador communities with expert knowledge and trusted resources. This work began last year with the introduction of IAATO's Antarctic Ambassador Facebook community group.

### ***Trial Activities and Early Insights***

Phase 2 trials introduced facilitated “Ambassadors’ Corner” and “Ripple Hour”, conversation-based activities designed to shift engagement from passive learning to reflective participation. Early feedback indicates strong guest interest, high guide engagement, and clear potential to deepen understanding of complex issues such as climate change, area protections, and the future of Antarctic tourism.

Participating operators are conducting post-season evaluations to help refine and support a coordinated, association-wide rollout in 2026-27.

### ***Gateway Communities: Strategic Outreach***

In parallel, this season, IAATO has expanded ambassadorship beyond expedition contexts through targeted educational resources for children in Antarctic gateway communities. Developed jointly by the Antarctic Ambassadorship and Antarctic Gateway Committees, these resources, available in English and Spanish, reinforce global interconnectedness and position children aged 5-10 in gateway communities as active stakeholders in Antarctic stewardship.

### ***Future Direction and Evaluation***

Looking ahead, IAATO will focus on scaling Phase 2 of the Antarctic Ambassador Program across the membership in 2026-27 while strengthening evidence-based evaluation. Continued collaboration with the GUIDE-BEST project, part of the Polar Tourism Research Program Assessment of Impacts and Responses (PT Repair), will provide critical insights into ambassador motivations, behaviours, and long-term impact, enabling IAATO to refine the program and maximise its contribution to Antarctic protection.

During this season, GUIDE-BEST has been exploring who IAATO's existing ambassadors are, what motivates them, and where their enthusiasms lie in terms of ambassadorship. This will help identify and inform opportunities to evolve the program and its resources, specifically catering to the groups and themes identified in the community.