



**Agenda Item:** Certified Galveston Ambassador Update

**Background:** Since 2014, Visit Galveston has offered the international Certified Tourism Ambassador™ (CTA) program through a third party. As of today, the program has 476 current CTAs. The program was the first of its kind Visit Galveston offered to tourism partners with the intention to teach them about customer service, the tourism industry, economics of tourism and for networking.

For the first few years the CTA program was in place, it accomplished the results it set out to do, as mentioned above. While it was beneficial that CTA is an international program and offered participants the opportunity to connect with many other Ambassadors, its international nature was also a detriment. Its operators were rigid and did not allow for affiliated organizations to stray from its generic teaching materials.

During the pandemic, the CTA program changed to an online platform. Upon close review, the new format was discovered to have many limitations including reporting, limited partner offerings and was not user friendly. It was then the Visit Galveston staff formulated the idea for a program that was more Galveston-centric and could be owned and refined in-house.

The Certified Galveston Ambassador program will allow for customizable class options, additional training platforms such as on-line classes, podcasts, video tours, community forums, and specialized tracks (history, environmental/nature tourism, DEI/accessibility, hospitality, etc.). It will also provide a continuing education portal that Certified Galveston Ambassadors can access as a resource of information. Currently staff is working with local Galveston experts to complete the buildout of the course curriculum, certification program and the portal resources.

The goal is to have the new program ready to roll out in the first quarter of FY 2024. The certification process will take an additional 8 to 12 weeks to receive once all documentation is submitted to the certifying body - IACET.

**Funding Source:** \$10,000 from TD 63 5167, this covers the fees associated with obtaining Visit Galveston's own certification program through IACET as well as a intuitive user friendly platform to manage and engage Ambassadors through Kajabi.

IACET requires Visit Galveston to renew the certification every 3 years. The Kajabi platform renewal will be on a yearly basis at \$4,000, which is a cost savings from the current platform of \$6,000.

Currently Visit Galveston allocates \$11,500 for the Certified Tourism Ambassador program, which covers the Certification Program, platform and fees associated with each CTA member.