

Ambassador Program Evaluation Summary

Fourteen Ambassadors completed the Evaluation.

Respondents were asked to use the following scale to answer the first nine questions (in bold below) Comments respondents made on their form are included.:

Agree					Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	

1. The training I received prepared me well for my role as an ECGA Ambassador.

1: 10
2: 2
3: 3

Comment: "I commented a couple of times that the training and materials I received far exceeded what I've had in some business experiences."

2. The training provided me with the guidance I needed to select appropriate venues.

1: 8
2: 4
3: 2

Comment: "There were helpful brainstorming discussions at the training session."

3. The materials provided helped me to meet my goals as an ECGA Ambassador.

1: 9
2: 4
3: 1

4. I am satisfied with the level of staff support I received.

1: 12
2: 2

5. I found the report form easy to use

1: 8
2: 3
3: 2
4: 1

6. I felt connected with the State Committee/State Committee Chair for my state.

1: 8
2: 2 (Ambassadors in NH and RI)
3: 2 (Ambassadors in ME and CT)
4: 1 (Ambassador in MA)
N/A: 1

Comment from an Ambassador in MA: “N/A – really had no contact after the training session, but this didn’t present a problem.”

7. I enjoyed working as an ECGA Ambassador.

1: 10
2: 4

Comment: “I received many positive responses from audiences.”

8. I felt I made a real contribution to building support for the ECG and other trails and encouraging people to use trails.

1: 8
2: 2
3: 3
4: 1 – “My time was more limited than I expected due to travel. The fact that I didn’t have as much impact as I’d liked was my own fault – not ECGA’s.”

9. I would like to continue to serve as an Ambassador.

1: 9
2: 3
3: 1
N/a: 1

Below are comments elicited by the following statements (**in bold**). In a couple of cases, I have responded to the Ambassador's comments. My responses are in italics.:

- 1. A few individuals did not submit reports. I am not sure whether these individuals decided being an Ambassador was not for them after all, couldn't find room in their schedules or did work as Ambassadors but did not send in reports*. Can you please help by commenting on how you would improve the reporting process?**

Responses to statement #1:

- “It's hard to tell why someone wouldn't submit reports. Linda's reminders were gentle but persistent. It's possible some of the reminders were filtered by spam filters and never got through.”
- “I felt the reporting process was fair, reasonably brief and adequately comprehensive. Keep it electronic, not hard copy.”
- “The form is fine. Perhaps there should be an Ambassador's page at www.greenway.org where we can find forms and other information. If such a page existed, then one could also have an online form.”**
- “I think having an online form** would help. Word documents can be rather clumsy.”
- “Make it a fill-in pdf on your website.**”
- “I would contact and ask if they have had occasion to do events.”
- “Works good for me, I just need to have more patience with computers.”
- “A quick unstructured e-mail is easier simply stating what I did. ECGA seemed pleased with my attempts to summarize.”
- “Figure out a different way to access the demographic facts. I felt very uncomfortable asking women to express their age.”
- “I didn't see any problems with the report form.”
- “Some of the “venues” at which I am able to mention ECG are not what I would call true opportunities for representing ECG, so I did not bother to report on them. Also, many times it is a repeat appearance at the same venue, at which I will mention ECG again, but that does not seem worthy of reporting on the current form either.”
- “Make it simpler. We can't remember all the information asked for on the form. You are very busy talking to interested people and can only provide estimates of

numbers and their concerns or interests. Thinking back, it would have been beneficial to have people sign up for more information and forward the sign-up sheet to the ECG.”

“ I think it was fine. The process offered electronic and paper methods. No changes needed.”

** I found that in at least two cases people had done work, but had not reported it*
*** Tanja did put a form on the Greenway website, which a couple of Ambassadors did use.*

2. Now that you have worked as an Ambassador, do you have any suggestions that would help us improve the training for future Ambassadors?

Responses to question #2:

“ No, the training was excellent. It could best be characterized as “preaching to the choir”. It got, what I thought, was an enthusiastic response, was very well organized, etc. but at the venues where I “presented” (that really is too strong a word for what I have been doing), there are many non-cyclists not really interested in the ECG in particular or cycling in general.”

“ No suggestions” x 2

“ One thing that I was a little intimidated about setting up was a full-fledged lecture, perhaps at the library. I’d have felt better about doing it if I’d had a partner.”

“ Specifically detail the sequence of actions necessary to secure names of new, or potential, members of the organization. What’s the best way(s) to get commitment from interested people?” What state along the ECG has the greatest number of paying supporters? And what are the volunteers in that state doing?”

“ I’ve been enmeshed with ECGA for ten years. It’s hard to separate what I learned casually from the formal training. The material was complete, but days are too short to study after the formal training is past. Perhaps a refresher teleconference months after the training might help. Sharing what others found good and challenging.”

“ I think you are dealing with many types of personalities for Ambassadors. Each has their own specific concept that drives their motivation for their personal reason to participate in the program. Keep doing what you are doing.”

“ As part of the training, an event display could be set up and Ambassadors in training could role play to develop technique.”

“ Regional sites would be easier.”

“ I didn’t need nor receive much training. Travel distance from Downeast Maine are too great to do much.”

“ I felt well prepared for the role after training. Don’t fail to provide updated info, re: progress of constructed trail, anticipated projects, etc.”

“ The hardest part about being an Ambassador was identifying venues to give presentations. Perhaps this would be more successful if people worked in pairs. Linda did a lot of excellent work in setting up opportunities for us to have a table at outdoor events.”

“ No. Training was great.”

“ I thought the training for being an Ambassador was top notch and very much enjoyed the session. The materials were wonderful and every place I have given a presentation people were very impressed with the posters and handouts.”

- 3. Not many Ambassadors gathered names ECGA could use to invite people to become members. As a membership organization, we rely on members to help support our work in many ways. Can you help us understand why most of you did not collect this information? Was it not emphasized enough during the training? Is it something you felt uncomfortable doing? Are there other reasons?**

Responses to Question #3:

“ It was something I forgot to do, so emphasizing it more in training would help. Perhaps as part of the materials you give Ambassadors could be a membership signup sheet.”

“ I do think this needs more emphasizing. It’s also a bit unclear what members are expected to do other than contribute money. I think there should be some activities or events that involve the members of a given region to build up a sense of group belonging.”

“ Probably needed more emphasis on this as part of training. The mission as I understood was to spread the word; I didn’t hear the emphasis on recruiting potential members.”

“ We hand out the membership forms to people at the meetings. People can opt in to ECGA if they would like. We can also encourage membership in future newsletters and emails. Like a lot of list managers, however, I am very reluctant to give out a list, expose people to unsolicited email and postal mail and thus alienate them.”

“ Many of the venues were not conducive to doing that. Also a membership card might be a help.”

“ A sign-up sheet is a necessity and should be forwarded to the ECG. The ECG should create a sign-up form with an ECG logo and information desired by the ECG.”

“ It was not emphasized. I would suggest a sign up sheet be developed and passed out to Ambassadors. This would lead to getting names etc. of anyone who showed some interest.”

“ Even when Eric Weis came down to CT, we didn’t use a list to collect names. If ECG can provide a printed list we (Ambassadors) can pass around at events, with places for people’s names, addresses, emails – that would be helpful.”

“ ETA has the same problem. We need the names for both organizations. We missed the polls on election day, a great opportunity. I’m as guilty as anyone.”

“ I didn’t show up at any gathering with a sign-up sheet. I handed out the “Become an ECGA member” flyer expecting the individuals to fill it out and send it in themselves.”

“ After my first session, when I got just a few sign-ups, I put the same form out – so people could see that there were already some sign-ups and didn’t feel as reluctant to be the first. I think people are reluctant to sign up for anything, unless they are really really interested in it. We all get so much spam and other not-really wanted e-mail. It seems to take a little convincing to get people to divulge an e-mail address...they have to believe they’ll receive information, not only requests for donations. Some people who initially didn’t want to register themselves relented after I talked with them a little and sort of reassured them that the ECGA was a real thing and not a spam-collector.”

“ I only did one event. At that particular event there were a lot of people (adults and kids) milling around our table and each contact was very brief. I don’t think I could’ve gotten names, even had I remembered we were supposed to.”

4. If you did not feel connected to the State Committee/State Committee Chair for your state, can you suggest ways we could improve the situation?

Responses to Question #4:

“ No suggestions. Bill O’Neill does a good job, but he has many irons in the fire.”

“ Maybe have a get-together after the training session, or set up a blog or similar forum.”

- “ The NH State Committee is Great! The amount of energy and effort they invested was noticeable.”
- “ I suppose a call once every two months would have been good. A call not an email.”
- “ Perhaps an e-news update every quarter with the ECGA Maine news from Maggie, and within each state a similar summary to Ambassadors and to ECG members.”
- “ No, Bill O’Neill is great!”
- “ I do feel well connected but it would be good for all state Ambassadors to get together with State Chair to discuss successful methods and ideas.”
- “ Known Bill for years, he and I do very well together”
- “ Yes, they make a real effort to come to our meetings.”
- “ I feel very connected to the Maine State Chair! (Maggie)”
- “ I attended several monthly meetings of the Greenways Alliance of RI. GARI is an umbrella for a variety of organizations involved in bicycle paths and other greenway issues. While the GARI members are all friendly and inviting, I felt somewhat out of place since I was attending as an interested individual (an ECGA Ambassador) and not as a representative of a group or organization.”
- “ Perhaps a personal email to all Ambassadors in a state once a quarter.”
- “ I feel well supported by ECG staff and by state committees.”

5. Overall, would you say your participation in the Ambassador Program was a satisfying experience for you? Please provide at least a one sentence explanation of why you answered yes or no.

Responses to statement #5:

- “ Yes. I did think it was satisfying. I always received a positive response and people were very happy to learn more about the ECG.”
- “ Very satisfying. It’s something I had already been doing, so maybe reports, etc. were just overlooked.”
- “ It was not as satisfying as I had hoped. Although I tried to make some speaking arrangements at local libraries and professional clubs, etc., the logistics and

scheduling proved daunting. I would lose momentum and then get behind when I ran into a particularly busy stretch at work. I did attend a few events in downtown Providence with a table and literature, but the attendance and interest at these events was minimal and frankly disheartening.”

- “ Yes. You can only sell what you believe in, and for many rational, defensible, and fun to explain reasons, the ECG makes sense. I felt good about spreading the word, and most folks like hearing about it.”
- “ Yes. Promotion of the ECG provides a broader context for people who are excited about a local trail. Connectivity of trails intensifies their use.”
- “ Yes – being the president of the Farmington Valley Trails Council I spent a lot of time this year explaining the role of the ECG vs. our role on the ground.”
- “ Yes, it gave me a chance to meet like minded people”
- “ I had a great time, discovering the specific trail through CT. A bit frustrating how long it takes to even make baby steps for permanent markings, that is a part of the reason I made white pine tree arrows with green ECG letters on about 120 miles of the 200 miles of trail in CT. Met a lot of great people most interested in being outside and on the trail.”
- “ Yes, I was surprised at the number of people who had heard of the ECG, but didn’t know much about it. Also people from outside Maine that knew about the ECG and wanted more information (newsletters were great for people to learn more about the ECG) Recent newsletters should be more easily available.”
- “ Yes. Selling the ECG makes it easier to sell the Eastern Trail. The vision is so much bigger it impresses people who think the ET is a crazy dream by contrasting it to an even bigger (crazier) dream. And it’s great to show examples of progress in both cases.”
- “ Yes, and it’s a tough road ahead. We’re a vehicle culture; moving about without a car isn’t second nature; it requires both an educational and experiential reality among interested parties.”
- “ Like most people, I was a little reluctant to get involved and make the time/effort commitment....but my experiences have been rewarding to say the least. First, there’s the “Wow!” response when people hear the scope of the ECGA project...3,000 miles! Key West to Canada! Those phrases really grab attention. Then, you bring the discussion back to the local level – talking about the benefits of a rail-trail or community recreation path that might be only a fraction of a mile long, yet gives people the opportunity to get to places they want to go without a car. I didn’t encounter a single anti-trail skeptic, though I know they exist. To put it simply, it’s fun to talk to people about something you

feel positive about, and it's fun to get their interest.”

“ No, I would not say it has been a satisfying experience for me. In fact, with all the emails from ECA and what responses I see from other CT Ambassadors, I will say I feel like I contributed very little, and that is not satisfying...”

“ Yes, particularly because the program was so beautifully and thoroughly well organized.”

6. Was there anything that surprised you about being an Ambassador, e.g., people's reactions?

Responses to Question # 6:

“ No, not really” x 8

“ No, It's fun to be with people who care about the cause and naturally feel motivated to help spread the word.”

“ One of the public meetings that CCROG put on in Hartford had one individual that was very loudly opposed to bicycle paths. It was a shock to me, that someone actually opposed the “other” mode of transportation concept.”

“ Some of our old rank and file were unhappy that ECG seemed to be trying hard to usurp our authority in certain instances. I was able to smooth over most of it.”

“ My experience with the Eastern Trail has prepared me for a variety of reactions, mostly positive.”

“ The reactions of most people about the ECGA were very positive.”

“ Again, it was overwhelmingly positive. I think during the training I was prepared for more “crazies” but I didn't encounter any of those people.”

7. Did you encounter many negative reactions to your message and if so could you briefly describe them?

Responses to Question # 7:

“ No” x 7

“ None that I recall. People like the ECG.”

“ There is resentment in this region about loss of rails due to rail-to-trail, but the tracks had not been used for more than 20 years.”

“ I think more thought needs to be put into what \$\$ earmarked to ECG actually do

Even I had trouble sometimes explaining “advocacy” (which is what we do on a regional level among a lot of other things) on a national level trickling down to the trail user.”

“ One of the public meetings that CCROG put on in Hartford had one individual that was very loudly opposed to bicycle paths. It was a shock to me, that someone actually opposed the “other” mode of transportation concept.”

“ Maybe one, I don’t really recall related comments. Some people hate everything and they voice their message. Nothing we can do about that.”

“ None. Mostly just apathetic.”

“ None. Except it’s an impossible dream to many people. We’re showing them.”

8. Additional Comments about the Ambassador Program:

Responses to #8:

“Thanks REI and I thank you for the opportunity to raise awareness.”

“ I think it’s helpful to pose as an advocate for all sorts of trails or recreation paths, not only the East Coast Greenway. And this actually fits well with the ECGA mission since most of the long-distance trails seem to be constructed one small segment at a time, by local community organizers. So we’re not competing with or belittling their efforts, rather, we’re all doing the same thing, working toward the same goal. At the other end of the spectrum, I’m interested in the National Bicycle Network, of which the ECG is a part. More broadly, I’m looking for a network of non-motorized pathways, not solely bicycle-oriented. So I guess I’m advocating the “big umbrella” concept (and it seems to work when giving ECGA presentations).”

“ This has not been an easy form to complete. I think it is probably feedback that is necessary for reporting to REI, who, if I remember correctly, is funding this initiative. But as an Ambassador, it is a little tedious, unless I was retired and this is the only activity I am involved in.”

“ I just hope to be able to set up a few more events this Spring.”

“ Thanks for being there as an umbrella alliance. ECGA makes it easier to build the ET.”

“ I would like to see some basic ECG information available for us (or at least me) that could be posted in kiosks. This would be UV inhibiting paper and print. I am amazed at how poorly the basic information about the ECG is posted in existing kiosks on the trails...”

- “ I would suggest that if someone signed up and paid to become a member at an Ambassador event that they be given an ECG cap as an incentive (this could be tried at a couple of events first before making it universal).”
- “ I truly wish I had been more effective and engaged than I was. One suggestion I would make is that it might be a good thing to bring the Ambassadors and volunteers in a certain region together periodically. It’s easy to feel isolated from others in the group, and in my opinion people volunteer in part out of a need for community and sharing with others. The way the Ambassador Program is currently set up, we each kind of work on our own. As I mentioned earlier, I think it is also unclear what “membership” in ECGA means. I believe there need to be more concrete activities for people to get involved in besides contributing money and sending letters to local papers, etc. “
- “ One thought that has been going through my mind of late is this. Amidst this severe economic downturn a lot of discussion has begun to turn towards government investment in our nation’s infrastructure. People have begun to mention the major civic works projects (e.g., CCC) undertaken during the 1930’s. I would love to see Congress and the new Obama Administration take up the cause of greenways as a way of investing in alternative transportation and energy-saving measures, with the added benefit that it would put unemployed people to work on socially valuable projects. Does ECGA have a lobbying arm or advocacy committee that might organize a push in this direction?”
- “ Newsletters were very popular with interested people. They could take them home and hopefully respond with a membership.”
- “ A slide show of ECG pictures on a digital picture frame would certainly attract more people to booths.”
- “ Maggie and I have had opportunities to show the ECG 2004 slide show numerous times. We have an idea of creating a new slide show of the ECG showing up-to-date pictures of trails from Maine to Florida (this slideshow would include suitable bouncy music and trail identification by state). We have opportunities in Maine for showing such a show and think it would be beneficial to the ECG Ambassadors in other states”
- “ Are recent pictures of ECG trails in all states available to us for a slide show draft?”
- “ While we often shake our heads over federal, or state, or local projects, the ECG is a project that most agree makes sense for many reasons. It’s been a pleasure being associated with the ECGA, my support will continue.”

