

North Lake Tahoe-Truckee
Welcoming Places Initiative

Program Participant Guidebook



“The Welcoming Places movement is about every organization’s obligation to the heart of the community, creating places where all citizens feel included and have a contribution to make. When businesses, non-profits and civic groups align around these strategies, powerful results happen”



WELCOME!

Introduction to the Welcoming Places Initiative handbook!

Thank you for your interest in our initiative. We are proud to be the first community collaborative group in California to design and implement a *WELCOMING PLACES* initiative. This booklet provides an overview of the initiative, along with instructions and necessary documents for becoming a certified participant. Qualifying participants will receive a *WELCOMING PLACES* emblem to post in a prominent location in their business, receive recognition at local business and civic events, as well as have access to a series of employee training and orientation materials.

What is Welcoming?

Welcoming is the “initial and on-going interactions with people and environment that result in a feeling of belonging and a willingness to engage.” Whatever your business, whether retail, non-profit or civic, you must engage with customers as a vital part of your success. Underneath all customer service strategies is one fundamental goal: for your customer to feel welcome enough to engage with your business initially, and keep coming back for more. The next page describes the two interconnected themes which make this initiative important to pursue.

Why are we doing this?

Providing excellent customer service, while important, is simply not enough in this fast changing business world. What's next? The answer is shifting from a customer service focus to a *Welcoming Places* focus. As businesses, non-profits and civic groups, if we embrace the Welcoming Places movement, we will enhance quality and performance within our organizations, increase customer and client satisfaction, and improve relations between other businesses, organizations and the general community. In this era of “customer-first” business strategies, our *Welcoming Places* initiative will be the cornerstone of our intention to welcome both visitors and local citizens in a way that keeps them coming back to our community for what they need.

The *Welcoming Places* movement is about every organization's obligation to the heart of community, creating places where all citizens feel included and have a contribution to make. When business, non-profits and civic groups align around these strategies, powerful results happen.

In presenting this exciting new community initiative, we recognize and thank Bruce and Gina Anderson and their colleagues at Community Activators for providing the foundation, inspiration, and encouragement for this project.

“What Do Customers Really Want?”

Level One: Processing

Getting the customer through the process of the transaction.

Level Two: Customer Service

Support to your customer that makes the transaction go smoothly.

Level Three: Customer Experience

Creation of emotional connections through the use of superior information and systematic empathy.

What Customers Really Want
Scott McKain

Convergence of Civic, Social Service and Commerce Movements



The Four Domains of Welcoming Places

Strategy One: Storefront and Interior

In both communications and our physical surroundings, research shows that we all make an initial decision about how to respond within just a few seconds. That initial response can determine whether you have an interested customer, someone who is unimpressed, or—even worse—wary of what they are walking into. How does your storefront look on first glance? Creating a welcoming appearance is not about fancy buildings—it is primarily about the small touches that invite people in, whether it's a welcome sign, bright lighting, or making sure your store is physically accessible. All the small touches add up to a larger message of hospitality that customers “feel” at both a visual and instinctual level. Your first opportunity to make a connection comes with the customer's first look at your business.

Strategy Two: Community Engagement

It's time to break the common myth that businesses only care about making money. Not true! Businesses are run by community members who have as much of an interest in the well-being of the community as all other citizens. Business owners and their employees drive on our streets, have kids in schools, and are just as involved as other citizens in the life of the community. This strategic area builds on the benefits of increased visibility for your business' involvement in the community, and offers suggestions that will give you an opportunity to meaningfully participate in ways that promote your interests.

Strategy Three: Customer Interactions

Much more than a friendly greeting, being a welcoming business invites customers to feel acknowledged and helped at every point of involvement with your enterprise. Business owners and their employees don't have to learn how to be welcoming, they just have to remove the hidden barriers to hospitality that often go unnoticed because they are “the way things are done around here.” This strategy area encompasses everything from asking employees and customers how your business could be more welcoming to how you handle customer complaints.

Strategy Four: Employee Support

There is substantial evidence demonstrating that employees will not be more welcoming to customers than they themselves feel welcome and valued as employees. It is also true that wages, while important, are not the number one indicator of employee satisfaction. Employees want the same things that all of us want—to be listened to, have their genuine talents and abilities acknowledged, to be in productive and peaceful relationships with those around them, and have opportunities to help business owners solve problems and celebrate accomplishments.

Four Easy Steps to Becoming a Welcoming Place

Prior to formally entering the program:

At least one owner or manager of your business or organization will attend a WELCOMING PLACES workshop to learn the basics. This background will help you to understand the Welcoming Places Inventory and how to rate and improve your score. For information about other training opportunities, contact one of our project coordinators.

Step One: Review the guidebook

Sit down, grab a cup of coffee, and review this guidebook to familiarize yourself with the concept of welcoming and the steps to becoming a *WELCOMING PLACE*.

Step Two: Fill out the Agreement to Participate

On the next page, you'll find an *Agreement to Participate* in the North Lake Tahoe-Truckee Welcoming Places Initiative. Today, or as soon as you're ready, complete this Agreement. It must be signed by the owner, manager, chief executive, chairperson or other appropriate leader of your business or organization. When completed and signed, provide it to one of the designated project coordinators. See page 8 for the list of project coordinators and their contact information.

Step Three: Complete your Welcoming Inventory

On page 7, you'll find the Welcoming Places Inventory, designed to help you assess your strengths and areas of improvement in the four welcoming domains. Review this inventory with the appropriate managers and/or staff of your business or organization. Using an honest assessment, your goal is to reach a score of at least 48 which represents an average score for all of the categories. Once you've met or exceeded this goal, send a signed copy of your inventory to one of the project coordinators.

Step Four: Post your certification emblem

Post your official WELCOMING PLACES emblem prominently at your place of business and be recognized in the community as a Welcoming Place. You are then encouraged to increase your score to the highest level possible and to sustain your recognition as a Welcoming Place.

Agreement to Participate North Lake Tahoe-Truckee Welcoming Places Initiative

I, the undersigned, as the owner, manager, or other authorized representative of the business or organization listed below, hereby formally approve our participation in the North Lake Tahoe-Truckee Welcoming Place Initiative. I have reviewed the Initiative Handbook, including the Four Easy Steps to Becoming a Welcoming Place and understand the process for participating.

name of business or organization

name

title

address

phone and email

Please submit this signed Agreement to Participate, in hard copy or electronic format, to:

Kym Fabel, Program Manager
North Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce
PO Box 884
Tahoe City, CA 96145
530-581-8764 or 581-6900
kym@PureTahoeNorth.com

You will receive written confirmation that your business/organization has been formally entered to participate in the North Lake Tahoe-Truckee Welcoming Places Initiative!



WELCOMING PLACES INVENTORY

Basic Training

- | | | | | | |
|---|-----------|--|------------|--|--|
| 1. At least one or more, of our business owners, managers, or senior staff has attended a workshop to learn the basics of Welcoming Places. | No | | Yes | | |
|---|-----------|--|------------|--|--|

Storefront and Interior

- | | | | | | |
|--|-----------|---|------------|---|---|
| 2. Signage in our office uses the word "welcome", "hello" or other inviting language. | No | | Yes | | |
| 3. We have artwork, plants, music or other additions to increase the "home" feeling of our business. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Our building is clean inside and out. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Community Engagement

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5. Our organizational or business plan has development items related to increasing our involvement in the community. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. We have identified methods to reach customers in all segments of our community as well as visitors. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. We allow employees time off (paid or unpaid) to participate in community events that our organization is promoting or believes in. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Our business advertising/literature specifically refers to us as a welcoming business. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Customer Interaction

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9. Our employees, as a group, have brainstormed ways our organization could be more welcoming. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. Our employees are never too busy to truly welcome a customer. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. Our employees have been trained in initial customer welcoming approaches and follow our procedures. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. Our employees have been trained in how to deal with difficult customers and follow our procedures. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Employee Support

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13. Job duties include a description of the employee's obligation to be welcoming. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. We have identified the talents and strengths of each employee and provide opportunities for them to contribute using these talents and strengths. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. We routinely ask employees for their ideas. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. We regularly celebrate the accomplishments of our organization and individual employees. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. We provide for employee training in Welcoming Places practices at least once a year. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Business _____ Name _____ Score

Training in Welcoming Places!

For information about Welcoming Places training classes that are available either before or after signing the Agreement to Participate, please contact Sarah Green at the Community Collaborative of Tahoe Truckee:

Sarah Green
Community Collaborative of Tahoe Truckee
PO Box 10832
Truckee, CA 96162
530-587-8322
sgreen@communitycollaborative.org

Contact Information

If you have any questions or need any additional information about the North Lake Tahoe-Truckee Welcoming Places Initiative, you are welcoming to contact one of the following representatives of our sponsoring organizations:

Kym Fabel
North Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce
PO Box 884
Tahoe City, CA 96145
530-581-8764 (direct) or 581-6900 (Chamber office main line)
kym@PureTahoeNorth.com

Sarah Green
Community Collaborative of Tahoe Truckee
PO Box 10932
Truckee, CA 96162
530-587-8322
sgreen@communitycollaborative.org

Ruth Geresy
Truckee Donner Chamber of Commerce
10065 Donner Pass Road
Truckee, CA 96161
530-587-2757
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