

# Three Learn Tourism Collaborators Named Finalists for Prestigious International Talent Development Award

*Destination tourism ambassador programs recognized by the Association for Talent Development for innovation and measurable impact*

PORTLAND, OR, UNITED STATES, August 5, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Learn Tourism](#), the nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing the tourism industry through science-based education and workforce development, is celebrating the recognition of three destination partners as finalists for the 2027

Association for Talent Development (ATD) Excellence in Practice Awards.

Travel Portland, Pocono Mountains Visitors Bureau, and Visit Tulsa have each been nominated for their innovative destination learning initiatives developed in collaboration with Learn Tourism. The awards recognize organizations worldwide that use learning and talent

development to solve business challenges, improve organizational performance, and create measurable results.

"These nominations are a testament to what happens when destination organizations invest in their people," said Stephen Ekstrom, CEO and Co-founder of Learn Tourism.

"Each of these teams embraced learning not as a one-time training event, but as a strategic investment in their workforce, their communities, and the visitor experience. We are honored to have partnered with them on this

journey."

The nominated programs were designed to address unique local priorities while sharing a common goal: equipping hospitality professionals, frontline employees, volunteers, and community members with the knowledge and confidence to create exceptional visitor



experiences.

Among the highlights:

Travel Portland developed a comprehensive destination learning program that prepares hospitality professionals and community partners to share Portland's story authentically and promote inclusive, welcoming visitor experiences.

Pocono Mountains Visitors Bureau launched a multilingual tourism ambassador initiative that has empowered residents, tourism employees, and local businesses to become knowledgeable advocates for the region while strengthening community pride.

Visit Tulsa created a workforce development program that combines destination knowledge, customer experience, and community engagement to support tourism professionals across the city.

Collectively, these initiatives have demonstrated the value of modern learning experiences by increasing learner engagement, improving destination knowledge, strengthening community pride, and providing destination leaders with meaningful analytics to measure participation and outcomes.

Presented annually by the Association for Talent Development, the Excellence in Practice Awards are considered among the highest honors in workplace learning. Finalists are selected based on innovation, implementation, measurable business impact, and the ability to demonstrate how learning contributed to organizational success.

As a nonprofit organization, Learn Tourism works with destinations, attractions, tourism organizations, and hospitality businesses worldwide to design customized learning experiences grounded in adult learning science, behavioral psychology, and instructional design. Revenue generated through its work supports scholarships, educational research, and professional development initiatives that benefit the global tourism industry.

"Tourism is powered by people," Ekstrom added. "When destinations invest in developing knowledgeable, confident, and engaged people, visitors notice, businesses benefit, and communities become stronger. These nominations recognize that commitment."

Award recipients will be announced during the ATD International Conference & EXPO.

Stephen Ekstrom

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