

Transition of Project JAYBAGS to Project iWAVES: A Community-based Action Research on the Extension Program of College of Hospitality and Tourism Management of Gordon College – Olongapo City

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Abstract : *According to the Higher Education Modernization Act of 1997, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) one of its three functions includes community extension services. This paper represents the extension program of Gordon College – College of Hospitality and Tourism Management (GC-CHTM) in partnership with relevant government agencies. Specifically, the project aims to address the problems faced by the PWDs and provide them a source of living and offer diversity and inclusivity within the hospitality and tourism sector. The College of Hospitality and Tourism Management of Gordon College, together with the City Budget Office, City Tourism Office, and Persons with Disabilities Affairs Office, conducted a series of meetings and consultation to start the assessment and planning of the projects. During the launching, the timeline of the training was presented to the learners. There will be a total of 21 sessions which be held every Saturday of the month starting from March 1, 2025 and expected to end by last week of May 2025. It is evident on result of the study that 3 participants were unable to attend resulting to a total of 12 participants only during the said session. This could indicate potential issues in maintaining participants' engagement or attendance, which may necessitate tactics to address for increased consistency in attendance for future sessions. The Project iWAVES of GC-CHTM as a transition program from the Project JAYBAGS stayed true to its commitment to offer free training services to less fortunate members of the community.*

Keywords: *community extension, inclusivity, persons with disabilities, hospitality, tourism, higher education*

Introduction

According to the Higher Education Modernization Act of 1997, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) ensures high-quality college education through three functions: instruction, research, and community extension services. As a result, higher education stresses extension services alongside instruction and research (Montalbo 2016). According to CHED Memorandum Order No. 52, series of 2016, extension programs at higher education institutions help students develop real-world, evidence- and science-based solutions to the social, economic, and environmental challenges that their partner communities and individuals face. As organizations that develop information and ideas through research and innovation, this new extension strategy paves the path for bettering people's lives (De La Cruz et al., 2024).

Social inclusion in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is now widely discussed as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasize people's equitable rights and ensure that no one falls behind in the country's progress. This includes young people, particularly low-income and disadvantaged individuals, should be trained and put in employment that need adequate skills (Iqbal, 2024). This ideation includes Person with Disabilities (PWD) who are part of the vulnerable community. Persons with Disability (PWD), as defined by the Philippine Magna Carta for Disabled Persons, are people who have restrictions due to sensory, physical, or mental impairment that prevent them from performing activities that are typical for humans. More than a billion people, or around 15 percent of the world's population, are disabled. The National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA) of the Philippines reported a total of 2,008,233 registered persons with disabilities (NCDA, 2025). The 2020 Census of Population and Housing reported that the Region 3 or Central Luzon ranked second with the highest number of registered persons with functional difficulty, with 1,046,090. More females (55%) than males (44%) have at least one domain of functional difficulty. These figures resulted in a sex ratio of 80 males for every 100 females. Last June 08, 2024, there are already 1,638,588 persons with disabilities registered in the Philippines Registry

of Persons with Disabilities (PRPWD, 2024). Based on the Persons' with Disabilities Affairs Office of Olongapo City, there are 8,295 registered persons with disabilities as of 2024.

According to Džananović & Bajraktarević (2022), stakeholders such as educators and service providers should be taught to support people with disabilities. Considering the recommendation of Lazaro et al., (2024) where they assessed the Project JAYBAGS, it was recommended to provide training activities, discussions, and practical exercises that cater to all participants, regardless of educational attainment. By transitioning the **Project JAYBAGS** to Project iWAVES (Inclusivity Workforce Advancement Via Education and Skills), the CHTM will be offering free TESDA skills training for the Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). The effectiveness of Project JAYBAGS was demonstrated by its assessment, which found that the free training greatly contributed to the educational and skill development of attendance, notably in improving their understanding of hospitality and tourist industry operations (Lazaro et al., 2024).

Thus, the Project iWAVES aims to bridge the gap between the hospitality and tourism sector and persons with disabilities (PWDs), empowering them to gain meaningful employment and contribute to the industry's diversity and inclusivity. This initiative recognizes the untapped potential of PWDs as an invaluable workforce and aligns with both local and global efforts to promote inclusivity, equity, and sustainable development.

Implementation and Methods

This paper represents the community extension program of Gordon College – College of Hospitality and Tourism Management (GC-CHTM), in partnership with the City Budget Office, City Tourism Office, and the Person with Disabilities Affairs Office (PDAO) of Olongapo City. Specifically, the project aims to address the problems faced by the PWDs and provide them a source of living and offer diversity and inclusivity within the hospitality and tourism sector.

The PDAO will be selecting qualified PWDs who will participate in the training sessions. These PWDs have certain disabilities including intellectual disability, deaf, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) (see table 1).

Table 1. Total number of Persons with disabilities learners

Disability	Frequency
Intellectual Disability	5
Deaf	5
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	2
Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	3
Total	15

Moreover, the City Budget Office of Olongapo City will fund the entire project through providing supplies, materials, and food for all the person involved during the training. In terms of the training sessions, the faculty members of the GC-CHTM will be the trainers of the PWDs with the assistance of GC-CHTM students. The GC-CHTM also included the students as part of the awareness of the need of the community, According to Llenares et al. (2018)Extension and community involvement is the key result area which makes the community feels the presence of the institution. There is an increasing appreciation of the impact of higher education extension in the teaching and learning process as students apply their disciplinary knowledge to help address real-world problems. This work may be of interest to higher education institutions (HEIs) which are designing community extension programs with optimized societal outcome.

The training will be conducted within the facilities and laboratories of the college. As seen on the conceptual process of the study adapted from Paguio et al. (2025), the phase 1 of the project will involve

collection of data through interviews towards involved stakeholders of the project which include the PWD learners, PDAO, City Budget Office, and City Tourism Office. The second phase of the project intends to plot the training sessions for the PWD learners, care of the CHTM department of Gordon College. Training of the facilitators in handling PWD learners is also part of this phase. For the third phase, implementation of the training sessions will be focused, while there will be a continuous monitoring and observation to gather feedback which will be part of the fourth phase. Finally, the last phase involved the overall evaluation of the program's implementation and assessment whether the expected output was achieved. Points for improvement of the project will also be identified during this last phase.

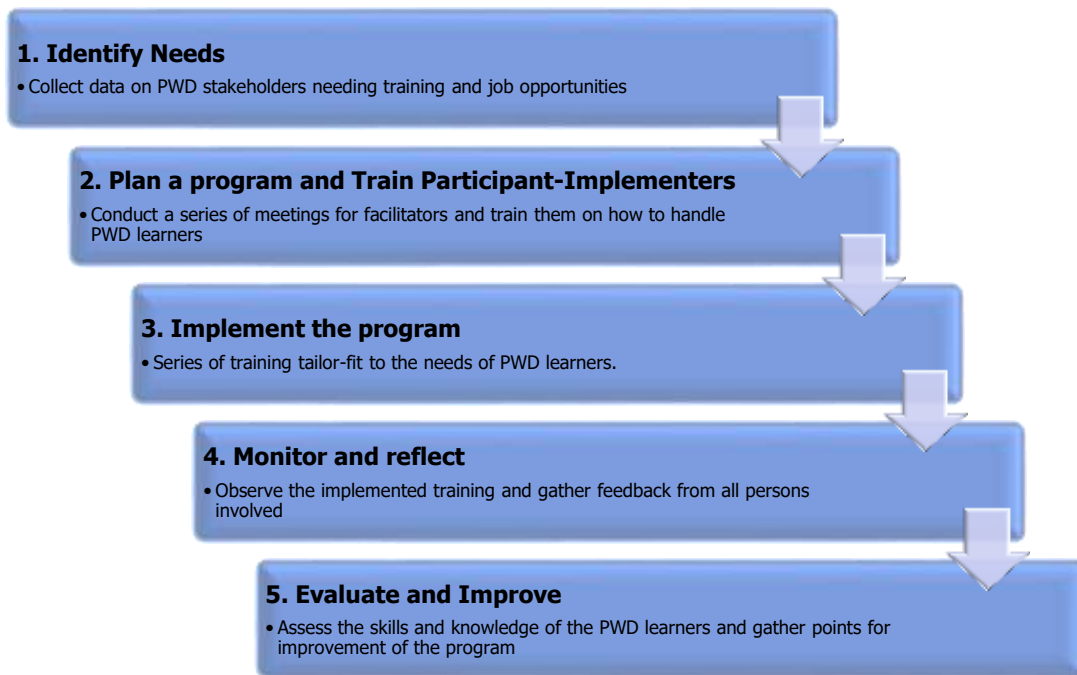


Figure 1. Conceptual Process of the Study (Paguio et al., 2025)

Results and Discussions

This community-based action research started as a result of Gordon College - College of Hospitality and Tourism Management's focused efforts to enhance social inclusion of people with disabilities in the community through suitable extension programs. Even though the paper follows the sequential framework depicted in Figure 1, it would include a presentation of the four processes, which include identifying needs, planning a program and training implementers, implementing the program, and monitoring and reflecting phases.

Identifying Needs

The College of Hospitality and Tourism Management of Gordon College, together with the City Budget Office, City Tourism Office, and Persons with Disabilities Affairs Office, conducted a series of meetings and consultation to start the assessment and planning of the projects. The coordination meeting was conducted last November 2024 (see figure 2) wherein the City Budget Office and PDAO presented their concern about creating a free skills training to PWDs of Olongapo City. The PDAO has outlined the many needs of the PWD in Olongapo City, with a particular emphasis on their difficulties in finding a source of income for them to be somehow "independent". This resulted to the proposal of creating a free training program to qualified PWDs where they can become employees of various hotels and even restaurants at

Olongapo City. Gutteman (2025) emphasized that it is crucial to encourage employment possibilities and career advancement for people with disabilities in the labor market, as well as support in finding, acquiring, retaining, and returning to work.



Figure 2. Initial meeting of CHTM, PDAO, City Budget Office, and City Tourism Office (Photo credit to Ms. Ma. Eleanor B. Francisco – PDAO Officer 1)

Plan a Program and Train Participant-Implementers

The preparation took some time to begin due to overlapping schedules or the unavailability of involved project stakeholders. But, the eagerness of all parties involved sparked the start of the project. Based on the conducted initial meeting as seen on figure 2, the CHTM will be providing the training to the selected PWD learners and the venue of the said training will be at the Gordon College.

The figure 3 below shows the letters of communication inviting the City Budget Office, City Tourism Office, and PDAO for the presentation of the content of the Project iWAVES. It was included on the letter the agenda of the meeting which includes the introduction and objectives of the project, division and designation of responsibilities of participating offices, funding and resource allocations, and the project launching and timeline.



Figure 3. Letters of Communication

Figure 4 displays the actual meeting held wherein the CHTM department presented the overall content and program flow of the project. As discussed during the meeting, Project iWAVES strives to close the gap between the hospitality and tourist sectors and people with disabilities (PWDs), allowing them to find meaningful work and contribute to the industry's diversity and inclusivity. This campaign recognizes

PWDs' unrealized potential as a vital workforce and complements local and worldwide initiatives to promote inclusivity, equity, and sustainable development.

Despite the numerous opportunities in hospitality and tourism, PWDs frequently face major impediments to employment. These include limited accessibility, workplace modifications, and negative attitudes toward their ability. By tackling these hurdles, Project iWAVES hopes to pave the way for people with disabilities to earn skills, confidence, and meaningful employment prospects in one of the world's fastest-growing industries. This project not only contributes to better workforce inclusion, but it also meets the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), namely SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). A number of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals ("SDGs") of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, endorsed by world leaders in September 2015 and enacted on January 1, 2016, have a significant impact on employees and the employment relationship (Gutterman, 2021). Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) is particularly pertinent, calling for the promotion of sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all, including those with disabilities (Gutterman, 2025).



Figure 4. Presentation of PROJECT IWAVES by the CHTM Dean, Dr. Mark Alvin Lazaro
(Photo credit to Ms. Jenny Mae Lagman)

Last February 20, 2025, the launching of the Project IWAVES was held at the Dining Laboratory of CHTM (see figure 4). During the launching, the timeline of the training was presented to the learners. There will be a total of 21 sessions which be held every Saturday of the month starting from March 1, 2025 and expected to end by last week of May 2025. The 21 sessions are tailored to the needs of PWDs learners focusing only on the Housekeeping Services.



Figure 4. Photo showing the CHTM faculty members on the left and PWD learners on the right side.
(Photo courtesy from the Facebook page of CHTM Student Council)

Right after the launching of the Project iWaves, the afternoon session was held at the CHTM Dean's office for the training of CHTM faculty members who will be teaching the PWD learners (see figure 5). The training and workshop focused on familiarizing with the different disabilities, understanding their behaviors, and knowing how to handle PWD learners. The PDAO office facilitated this training to ensure that the CHTM faculty members will be equipped once the learning session will start.



Figure 5. A group photo showing the CHTM faculty members and PDAO representative right after the training session (Photo courtesy from the Facebook page of CHTM Student Council)

Implementation of the Program

The 1st training session was held last March 01, 2025 which was facilitated by 2 full time by BSHM department (see figure 6). The first part of the session involved the discussion of basic terminologies and fundamentals of housekeeping services in which the learners have participated well. During the discussion there is an interpreter for the deaf learners for them to understand the discussion. The second part of the session is a continuation of the introduction of housekeeping wherein the trainer discussed the different types of housekeeping, its scope, and understand the concept of institutionalized housekeeping. According to Lindsay et al. (2018), people with disabilities who participate in focused skill development programs are better prepared to handle employment expectations and exhibit higher levels of confidence and competence.

The two sessions have allotted 1 hour each to ensure that the PWD learners will be able to absorb and not overwhelmed by the topics discusses. Between these sessions, they were given free snacks as provided by the City Budget Office. Studies has shown that students learn better when they are well-nourished, and eating healthy meals has been related to higher grades, improved memory and attentiveness, and faster information processing (Options For Youth, 2025).



Figure 6. A group photo showing the learners with the facilitators right after the training session (Photo courtesy from the Facebook page of CHTM Student Council)

Monitor and Reflect

The monitoring phase entails checking the attendance of Project iWAVES learners to guarantee that only those who finished the program are evaluated during the final phase of this study. The table below illustrates the number of PWD learners of the Project iWAVES, as tracked by the PDAO:

Table 2. PWD learner’s attendance monitoring

Disability	Actual Number of Participant from 1 st Session (March 01, 2025)	Actual Number of Participant from 2 nd Session (March 08, 2025)
Intellectual Disability	5	5
Learning Disability	1	0
Deaf	4	3
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	2	2
Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	3	2
Total	15	12

Table 2 shows the actual number of participants during the first two sessions of the Project iWAVES. It is evident on the table that during the second session, 3 participants were unable to attend resulting to a total of 12 participants only during the said session. This could indicate potential issues in maintaining participants' engagement or attendance, which may necessitate tactics to address for increased consistency in attendance for future sessions.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Project iWAVES of GC-CHTM as a transition program from the Project JAYBAGS stayed true to its commitment to offer free training services to less fortunate members of the community. With the participation and contribution of the PDAO, City Budget Office, and City Tourism Office, the PWD learners will be able to find purpose within the spectrum of hospitality and tourism industry. The data presented

showed that the consistent number of attendees from each session showed their willingness to learn and take part of this commendable project.

In order to ensure the sustainability of the Project iWAVES, the organizers and implementers of this community extension program should consider the following strategies:

1. Immerse beneficiaries in the tourism sector which are resorts and hotels that they can familiarize the operation and path to employment.
2. Assess the strengths and challenges of Project iWAVES to identify what worked well and what needs improvement.
3. Become one of the best practices of the Extension Program of the College of Hospitality and Tourism Management of Gordon College – Olonngapo City and present to benchmark the project.
4. Conduct follow-ups for those students who are not consistent with the trainings.
5. Strengthening partnerships through long-term collaboration with PDAO, City Budget and City Tourism Office.
6. Find and enroll other PWD learners to different program such as baking, food and beverage, cookery and tour guiding for more opportunities.
7. Engage corporate sponsorships through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives from hospitality and tourism businesses.
8. Partner with local businesses to establish a job placement program for PWD learners and graduates.
9. Develop a feedback mechanism from participants, trainers, and industry partners to assess the effectiveness of the program.
10. Conduct advocacy campaigns to raise awareness on inclusivity in the workforce.

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