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# CopenPay Whitepaper

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**“The more local  
successes we create,  
the closer we get to  
moving tourism in  
the right direction..”**

## Introduction

When we first launched CopenPay, we had no idea that just 16 months later we would be rolling it out globally, sharing it with destinations around the world to adopt, adapt, and implement within their own contexts.

But we quickly discovered that CopenPay resonated not only with our local attractions and visitors - it also struck a chord with destinations and partners around the world. At a time when destinations everywhere are welcoming more and more visitors, and with 1.8 billion international arrivals expected by 2030, the need for a more balanced tourism has never been greater.

As part of our “All Inclusive” strategy, we have a clear ambition: tourism should help make the world a better destination. By sharing CopenPay globally, we hope that -together- we can move one step closer to reshaping the role of tourism.

With this in mind, we have created this whitepaper as your step-by-step guide to developing your own CopenPay. In it, we share our concept, insights, and lessons learned - what worked, what didn't, and why - so you can adapt, innovate, and deliver a seamless visitor experience, ultimately shaping a model that works for your destination.

The more local successes we create, the closer we get to moving tourism in the right direction - and building a future where tourism supports both people and places in a more meaningful way.



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# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>PR, Communication &amp; Marketing</b>	<b>20</b>
		Tone of voice & wording	21
<b>Background</b>	<b>7</b>	Communications channels	23
About CopenPay	7	PR	23
		City dressing	23
<b>The Concept</b>	<b>8-9</b>	Partner communication & awareness	25
How to get satisfied participants	10-12	Digital platform	25
Case study: GoBoat	13		
		<b>Results &amp; Learnings</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Partner Model</b>	<b>14</b>	Data & insights	27
Roles & collaboration	15	Challenges	28
Working with partners - from onboarding to follow-up communication	15	Success stories	29
Step-by-step guide to how destinations can work with partners	16-17		
How to best communicate with partners	17	<b>How to Get Started with Your Own Model</b>	<b>30</b>
Guide to developing actions and rewards: The Do's and Don'ts	18-19		

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## Background

We believe it's time for a new kind of tourism - one where visitors actively contribute, engage, and experience destinations on local terms.

CopenPay was developed to bring this vision to life. It encourages guests to connect with the city in meaningful ways: by participating, giving back, and engaging with the place beyond traditional sightseeing.

Rather than simply consuming what a destination has to offer, visitors co-create their experience - unlocking authentic experiences that reflect the true character and culture of the place.

The timing couldn't be better. Travellers increasingly seek purpose-driven, meaningful encounters, and according to Booking.com, 7 out of 10 travellers want to leave a destination better than they found it.<sup>1</sup> We see this as a clear opportunity to reshape tourism, making it more responsible, inclusive, and rewarding for both visitors and locals.

By sharing our concept, insights, and lessons learned, we hope to inspire other destinations to join this pursuit and help shape a tourism landscape that contributes positively and makes the world a better destination.

## About CopenPay

We launched CopenPay in the summer of 2024 together with 26 local partners, ranging from museums and other cultural institutions to attractions, hotels, transport providers and other businesses in the local tourism industry. The overall aim was to create a new incentive for visitors to interact with Copenhagen and its locals.

The four-week pilot saw +5,100 people – visitors as well as locals - participate, reaffirming the need for further developing and scaling the scheme. When we launched CopenPay 2.0 in the summer of 2025, it was with 100+ local partners and over an extended period of 8 weeks.

We're currently in the process of preparing for our third season, which is expected to run from June 2026 as an all-year scheme with a different partner-set up, but with the same concept.



<sup>1</sup> <https://news.booking.com/bookingcoms-2025-research-reveals-growing-traveler-awareness-of-tourism-impact-on-communities-both-at-home-and-abroad/>

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# The Concept

The core of CopenPay is simple: **do something, get something.** Visitors engage in micro-actions that benefit the local community or environment, such as arriving by train, riding a bike, picking up trash, removing invasive plants, or participating in cultural or social activities. In return, they unlock unique experiences, discounts and other rewards.

The aim is to raise awareness about the impact of our choices and encourage mindful behaviour among visitors and locals alike.

Launching CopenPay taught us three critical lessons:

### **1. Behavioural change starts small**

Micro-actions are powerful because they are easy, tangible and visible.

### **2. Authenticity matters**

Rewards must feel local and meaningful and be open to all – locals and visitors alike.

### **3. Communication is key**

Actions and rewards should be kept simple, easy to understand, and to engage with.



We've been working with three categories of actions:

### **1. Activities on the destination**

Join a clean-up, get around by bike, work on a biodiversity project, fight loneliness, etc.

### **2. Transportation to the destination**

Train instead of plane, travel by electric vehicles, purchase SAF (sustainable aviation fuel)

### **3. Staying longer**

Travel less but stay longer – and minimise your footprint.

In developing CopenPay, we've learned that offering a diverse mix of experiences is essential. These generally fall into two categories.

First, **unique, hands-on experiences** that people would not normally have access to. This can include working in a garden on a biodiversity project, sailing in the harbour to collect litter, or taking part in an art project using discarded materials. These initiatives are highly popular, meaningful, and engaging, but typically have limited capacity.

Second, **simple, scalable actions** that highlight desired behaviour. For example, arriving by bike or public transport and receiving a free cup of coffee, or visiting areas outside the city centre to unlock a discount. These actions reinforce our focus on sustainable transport and visitor dispersion. Importantly, they've no capacity constraints, allowing everyone to participate.

While rewards certainly play a role, we've found that for many participants, the action itself is the true incentive. People genuinely enjoy contributing - whether it's removing invasive plants or helping improve local environments. A free lunch is appreciated, but it's rarely the primary motivation.

Designing activities that attract and engage a large number of participants depends on several key factors, including:

- 1. Decodability:** Is it easy to understand the activity?
- 2. Price:** How much does it cost, including entrance fee?
- 3. Link between action and reward:** Is it easy for participants to understand the correlation between the action and the reward offered?
- 4. Visibility:** Is the activity highlighted on the website, SoMe or other channels?
- 5. Accessibility:** Is it easy to access? How often does it happen? And how many people can join?

## How to get satisfied participants



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**“At a time when destinations everywhere are welcoming more and more visitors, the need for a more balanced tourism has never been greater**

### Case study: GoBoat

GoBoat offers a boat service, where you can sail around the harbour and canals in Copenhagen in a solar powered boat. As part of CopenPay, GoBoat offered all their boats for free three days a week in the morning between 9 am and 10 am if in turn participants picked up litter from the water.

This activity was easy to understand, inexpensive, and clearly connected the action with the reward. It also received strong visibility, was easily accessible, and offered relatively high availability.



### Key learnings

- Micro-actions are powerful because they are easy, tangible and visible.
- Rewards must feel local and meaningful and be open to all – locals and visitors alike.
- Actions and rewards should be kept simple, easy to understand, and to engage with.
- Work with different types of actions such as specific actions on the destination, transportation to the destination and/or longer stays.
- When designing your activities consider decodability, price, link between action and reward, visibility and accessibility.
- Key is to not complicate an action and keep barriers to an absolute minimum.

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# Partner Model

## **Roles & collaboration**

The concept of CopenPay is built around local partners and a high level of collaboration. In fact, without the partners and the diverse mix of experiences and rewards that they bring to the table there is no CopenPay. As the facilitator of CopenPay, each destination is responsible for making participation simple and seamless for its partners.

The destination is responsible for ensuring:

- A smooth and seamless coordination of the project
- Overall visibility of the project
- General support for partners

By taking care of the overall logistics and administrative tasks, the destination can help their partners focus on delivering great experiences for visitors and locals.

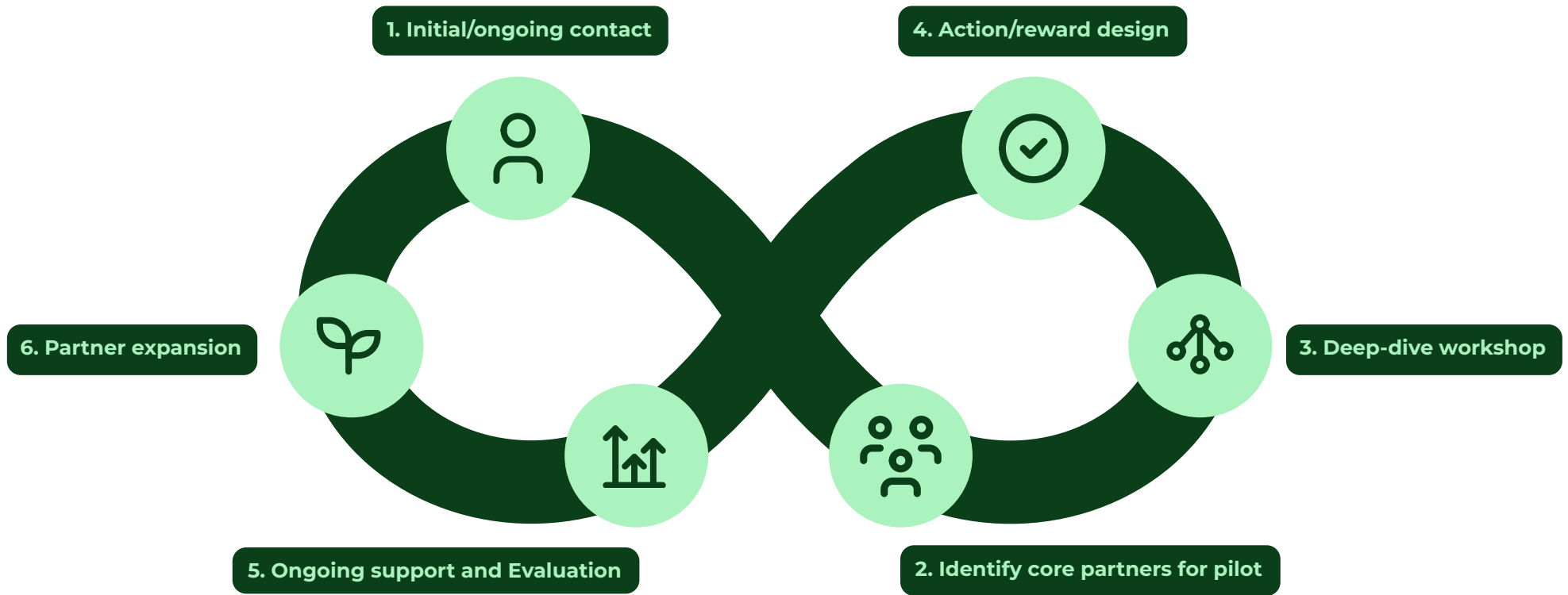
## **Working with partners - from onboarding to follow-up communications**

When starting out, it may be worthwhile for the destination to identify a smaller group of core partners that are considered essential to the scheme. This makes it easier to develop and run the project while also managing expectations.

To ensure strong alignment between a destination and its partners, the initial partner recruitment and subsequent onboarding process are absolutely essential. This is where expectations and visions are clarified, and ideas for actions, rewards, and potential collaborations between partners are explored.

Once a partner has been onboarded and an action and reward have been defined, it's important to maintain an ongoing dialogue with them and remain available to provide the support they need - whether it relates to developing their actions and rewards, refining communication, or something entirely different. Partners should be continuously informed about relevant updates, and the destination must actively involve its core partners in shaping the future development of the concept. This collaborative approach ensures transparency, responsiveness, and shared ownership of CopenPay's development.

**Step-by-step guide: How destinations can work with partners**



### 1. Initial/ongoing

- Contact initiated by the destination or by its partners.
- The destination provides its partners with a short introduction to the concept to align visions and expectations.

### 2. Identify core partners for pilot

- Identify and engage core partners that are essential to the concept.
- Run a small-scale pilot to test actions and rewards.
- Use learnings from the pilot to refine the approach.

### 3. Deep-dive workshop

- Deep-dive with core partners to align on vision, goals, and resources for the concept.
- Identify potential action types and reward models together with core partners.

### 4. Action/Reward design

- Support each partner in selecting the action/reward combination that fits their business model.
- Explore synergies with other partners to create added value.

### 5. Ongoing support & evaluation

- Provide guidance and materials for implementation.
- Follow up regularly and adjust as needed.

### 6. Partner expansion

- Gradually onboard additional partners based on pilot success.
- Host larger cross-sector workshops to spark collaboration and idea sharing.

### How to best communicate with partners

For partners it can be a big task and commitment to join an initiative like CopenPay. Many have limited resources, time and flexibility, which is something that should be acknowledged in your communication with them.

The destination should be able to answer questions such as “what’s in it for me” and be able to help partners with conceptualising an activity and reward that work for them and their business.

### Tip: What can you say about ‘what’s in it’ for partners

Partners gain visibility and attract guests in a way that aligns with their brand identity. By offering simple, low-effort rewards, they build stronger relationships, create goodwill, and contribute to the destination’s overall quality. In addition, for many partners in Copenhagen, joining CopenPay had a positive internal impact, bringing employees together to be part of something bigger while strengthening collaboration and organisational pride.

## **Guide to developing actions and rewards: The Do's and Don'ts**

This do's and don'ts guide is designed to help your partners develop CopenPay activities that are simple, authentic, and aligned with your destination's identity. The concept is straight-forward: **do something good – get something.** Activities should encourage responsible behaviour, be easy to understand, and require minimal resources. By following these principles, partners can create experiences that add value to visitors while supporting sustainability goals.

### **Do's**

- Build on what you already offer and adapt it to fit a “do something – get something” logic.
- Focus on your less busy periods or days as opportunities for activities.
- Keep it simple and resource-light – avoid heavy staffing or complex setups.
- Keep action and reward closely linked so it's easy for the user to understand.
- Pilot before scaling – start small to learn what works.
- Communicate clearly and visually so guests immediately understand the action and reward.
- Measure impact – track participation and feedback to improve and demonstrate value.

### **Don'ts**

- Avoid overly complex actions or rewards that require significant new infrastructure.
- Don't develop rewards that are too expensive for your organisation.
- Avoid activities disconnected from your core offering – there should be a clear link to your organisation or business.
- Don't overemphasise the reward – focus on the experience and positive action.
- Avoid rewards that undermine sustainability (e.g., plastic giveaways).
- Don't make it exclusive – ensure activities are accessible to both visitors and locals.



### Key learnings

- Partners and their actions and rewards are key to the success of CopenPay.
- Before recruiting, identify a small group of core partners essential to your pilot and start with them.
- When recruiting, make sure to manage partner expectations and align visions and ambitions.
- Organise partner workshops and other meetings to keep the partners engaged and inspired.
- Communication after partner onboarding is key to ensure partners feel supported and included in the process.
- Set clear deadlines and expectations to ensure that partners deliver on time.
- Acknowledge your partners' barriers and restrictions and communicate clearly what's in it for them.

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# PR, Communication & Marketing

## **Tone of voice & wording**

When communicating your version of CopenPay, use your own tone of voice to ensure authenticity and consistency with your brand. It's also crucial to carefully consider your wording to avoid any risk of greenwashing.

Focus on transparency and honesty - describe actions and rewards factually rather than making exaggerated claims. Use clear, inclusive language that emphasises genuine impact and shared responsibility, rather than overstating sustainability benefits.

To avoid greenwashing, stick to concrete examples of actions and rewards and avoid long phrases that suggest a larger effect or anything undocumented or unsubstantiated. Ultimately, requirements may vary depending on the rules and regulations in your country. We recommend consulting an attorney for guidance

### **Words we didn't use:**

- Eco-conscious
- Green
- Climate-friendly
- Sustainable
- Responsible
- Eco-friendly

And we also didn't use emojis such as green hearts or similar emojis that reflect the above.



## Communications channels

### PR

PR has been an essential part of our work with CopenPay for several reasons. First, we needed to build global awareness of the concept to ensure adoption. Second, as one of our core ambitions is to raise awareness about the consequences of the choices we make when we travel, PR and visibility have become objectives in their own right.

When building your own concept, consider the role of PR and develop your own PR strategy based on your needs and ambitions.

### City dressing

We designed CopenPay as an activation for tourists already in Copenhagen, not to attract more visitors. Our focus was on communicating to visitors while they were in Copenhagen and via various communication touchpoints. This included messaging in the airport upon arrival - guiding guests toward sustainable choices like public transport - along with placements in metro stations, at Copenhagen Central Station, and across key outdoor locations, and in hotels. The goal was to integrate the campaign seamlessly into the city experience, making it relevant and accessible.

Primary channels and formats used:

**Airport:** Digital screens, posters, and wayfinding signage promoting public transport.

**Metro stations:** Platform posters and digital panels.

**Copenhagen Central Station:** Large-format posters and digital screens.

**Outdoor locations:** Billboards and street-level signage in high-footfall tourist areas.

**Hotels:** Info screens in lobbies and posters in common areas.

Going forward, as CopenPay becomes a year-round initiative in Copenhagen, we will focus our marketing efforts on outdoor advertising and billboards as well as social media featuring the message “What’s on today with CopenPay”.



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[copenpay.com](https://copenpay.com)

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### **Partner communication & awareness**

A significant part of CopenPay's visibility and awareness is created through our partners, who play a crucial role in driving recognition of the initiative. To support this, we developed a comprehensive communication package that included inspiration for newsletter copy, social media posts, posters, and reception stands. These assets were shared with all CopenPay partners, but it was their responsibility to use them. The level of engagement varied greatly - while some partners made good use of the materials, others didn't end up using it.

We are exploring ways to strengthen physical visibility even further. One concrete idea is to introduce CopenPay A-boards that attractions can place at their entrances. In addition, we are considering creating a window emblem that partners can display on their front doors or windows, ensuring tourists can easily identify participating locations.

### **Digital platform**

All communication led to our specific [copenpay.com](https://copenpay.com) website, where participants could find everything they needed to get started: an overview of actions and rewards, practical guidance, and a map of all participating partners. The interactive map allowed guests to click on each partner to learn more about the partner's specific offers, creating a simple and engaging way to explore CopenPay.

### **Key learnings**

- Due to the innovative nature of the initiative, our press and PR efforts have been important in creating awareness about CopenPay and raising awareness about the impact of travel.
- Be present where the tourists are. Airport, metro, hotels, and outdoor spaces ensure high visibility and relevance.
- First touchpoint matters. Airport messaging influences sustainable choices early.
- Consistency builds trust. Unified tone and visuals across all channels strengthen recognition.
- Clear digital destination. Driving all traffic to a website like [copenpay.com](https://copenpay.com) simplifies engagement.
- Avoid greenwashing. Use transparent, factual language to maintain credibility.
- Extend reach through hotels. Info screens and posters keep the message alive during the stay.
- Interactive tools engage. A partner map makes actions and rewards tangible and more easy to explore.

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# Results & Learnings

## Data & insights

Implementing a “do something – get something” model over two years has resulted in clear evidence of impact - on guests, partners, and the city - and practical learnings for future iterations.

## Participation & satisfaction

Across 2024 and 2025, CopenPay engaged well over 30,000 participants. Satisfaction remained exceptionally high, with 98% reporting they were pleased with the experience and 98% saying they would recommend it to others. Importantly, 7 out of 10 participants said they were inspired to adjust their long-term habits - such as collecting litter, choosing more plant-forward meals, and cycling more- indicating that the model resonates with visitors' desire to contribute positively to the places they visit.

## Behavioural & usage signals

During the first CopenPay period, Copenhagen saw a 29% increase in bike rentals while there was a 59% increase in 2025, suggesting that simple, well-communicated actions and close-proximity rewards can nudge participation effectively.

## Reach & reputation

Media interest has been strong across both years, with 7,500+ articles globally referencing the initiative. The coverage has helped position Copenhagen - and the broader model - as innovative.

## Event & experience moments

Programmed activities -such as plogging and food-waste dinners- created positive encounters between locals and visitors, strengthening community ties and adding depth to the guest experience.



## Challenges

### No-shows

Some partners experienced challenges with guests who didn't show up to the activities or rewards they had booked, essentially taking up a spot that others could have had. A solution to this could be a closer link between action and reward, reminder emails, and clearer on-site signposting.

### Complexity

When activities or rewards became too elaborate, participation dropped. Keeping mechanics simple (one clear action + one immediate reward and having them closely connected) consistently delivered higher conversion.



### Partner fit & consistency

Some partners initially struggled to see how the model matched their brand or operations. Providing short, concrete templates (action + reward), and showcasing success stories helped align expectations and reduce friction.

### Technology choices

Ensuring a smooth user journey was essential. Overly custom builds slowed deployment; low-friction solutions (QR + landingpage) proved more resilient and easier to maintain.

## Success stories

### High guest engagement

Thousands of visitors actively participated, often describing the experience as more meaningful because it connected them to the city's values and offered immediate, authentic experiences. It also created many positive encounters between locals and visitors that strengthened community ties and added depth to the experience.

### Stronger partner community

Many partners reported a positive internal impact from joining a broader citywide effort—greater pride, cross-organisation collaboration, and a sense of being part of something meaningful.

### Global headline & early demand

The initiative became a worldwide news story, generating significant attention before it was even live in the city. This led to pre-bookings and early sign-ups, creating strong demand from day one. The global spotlight didn't just amplify the launch—it sparked a broader movement, with interest from other cities and countries just as

it increased awareness about how we travel and consume as tourists. Importantly, this visibility also benefitted the most engaged partners: those who contributed to meaningful activities were prominently featured, earning substantial media coverage thanks to their own strong efforts and commitment.

### Real-world actions

Guests favoured activities that felt local and meaningful and were open to all – locals and visitors alike. Tangible activities with visible results were popular. These activities included plogging and local food-waste initiatives or activities where users could help remove invasive species.

## Key learnings

- Start small, keep it simple, and focus on authentic experiences delivered through clear action–reward mechanics.
- The model consistently creates a win–win–win: better for the city, better for visitors, and better for partners.

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# How to Get Started with Your Own Model

## How to Get Started with Your Own Model

This guide helps destinations take the first steps toward creating a “do something – get something” program that benefits the city, visitors, and partners.



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### **1. Define your purpose**

Why do you want to implement this model? Is it to improve visitor behaviour, spread visitor flows, or strengthen local engagement? Start small with a pilot and keep the concept simple.

### **2. Partner strategy**

Identify partners who share your values and can offer authentic rewards. Build a network where partners feel part of something bigger - doing good for the city while creating positive experiences for guests.

### **3. Platform & technology**

Choose how visitors will access the program. Options include QR codes, a landingpage and a calendar. Keep it user-friendly and easy to integrate with existing systems and with a big focus on communicating the actions and rewards in a clear and simple way.

### **4. Resources & budget**

You can start at any scale. If your budget is limited, begin with a small pilot focused on one theme and select 5-10 partners to test the concept. This approach allows you to learn and grow gradually. No matter what your budget size is, it's possible to launch a model that fits your resources.

### **5. Press**

Kick off with a press release. CopenPay and DestinationPay attract attention because they represent a new way of thinking about tourism. Media coverage can amplify your message and position your destination as a pioneer.

### **6. Communication**

Explain the concept clearly: one sentence for the action, one for the reward. Use visual storytelling and share through your own channels, partner networks, and visitor touchpoints.

### **7. Data collection & evaluation**

Track participation and feedback. Simple metrics - such as number of actions completed or rewards claimed - help you measure success and adjust for future editions. This data can also be used in a press release or any other media outreach.

### **Tip:**

Start small, learn what works, and scale gradually. The goal is to create a win-win-win: better for the city, better for visitors, and better for partners.

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