The Diaspora Institute

Lanzarote Diaspora Strategy 2026-2029

Past, Present & Potential

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Author Kingsley Aikins

Executive Summary

Lanzarote's story is a diaspora story. Flows of people to and from the island have shaped its Past, Present & Potential. Through these networks of communities, a remarkable new dawn for Lanzarote can break. This ambitious strategy will allow for a re-imagining of Lanzarote - one that can look back at what the people of Lanzarote have done around the world over the centuries and one that can look forward with pride at Lanzarote as a small island at the centre of the world.

Lanzarote will no longer be a place tied to its location but rather part of a global tribe with a unique character. Taking this approach, Lanzarote's new geography can be one of the networked power of connected clusters of creative people linked by birth, heritage or heart. In unleashing the networks of ancestral and affinity-based belonging, Lanzarote can re-imagine its identity through its hidden asset, its diaspora, and can carve a new future. This future can bring economic diversification through access and penetration of new markets supported by its diaspora networks if a more structured and surgical approach is taken to diaspora engagement.

There is enormous cultural, business and community potential in leveraging and bringing together Lanzarote people and those with a love of the island. By building on previous initiatives these recommended diaspora engagement initiatives will generate benefits for years to come and position Lanzarote as a role model for other islands.

This strategy came about following the visit to Ireland of a delegation from the island in 2024 led by President of the Cabildo of Lanzarote Oswaldo Betancort and a presentation on that occasion by Kingsley Aikins of The Diaspora Institute in the Irish Management Institute. Interest was shown in what Ireland has achieved through engaging the Irish diaspora over many decades and a desire to learn what action Lanzarote could take to engage the Lanzarote diaspora and to learn from what other countries are doing and, especially, Ireland.

This strategy is supported by Lanzarote Ireland Network with Kilcullen Kapital and Lanzarote Investments.

Lanzarote's diaspora - estimated at tens of thousands of people with deep familial, cultural and emotional ties to the island - represents an underutilised asset capable of supporting economic development, cultural vitality, investment attraction and international visibility.



Lanzarote's Diaspora Capital for a Changed World

This Lanzarote Diaspora Engagement Strategy outlines a multi-year plan to identify, connect with, engage with and work with Lanzarote born and Lanzarote descended individuals and organisations worldwide. In addition it suggests that inclusion in this approach should include those non-natives of Lanzarote who have an interest in and affection for the island and a strong affinity for Lanzarote.

The strategy positions the diaspora as partners in the island's sustainability model, cultural and linguistic preservation and its future economic well being. This will mean continuing the historic links with, for example San Antonio, but also identifying where more recent diaspora members are located.

Because there are different types of Lanzarote diasporas this would suggest that there needs to be a network based approach targeting specific individuals and groups in key cities in Spain as well as international hubs like London, Paris, New York, Geneva and Sydney where there is less evidence of formal groups but more informal activities and linkages through micro groups and industry sector based entities such as financial services, consulting, professional services and healthcare. Artificial Intelligence (AI), social media and existing groups such as university alumni groups and sports groups can all help identify prospects.

It is perhaps worth mentioning at this stage that there is no one Lanzarote diaspora - there are many and they require different and tailored approaches. As with all countries there is no one monolith diaspora. For Lanzarote that means that engagement needs to be tailored to a number of distinct groups. The more organised heritage communities in the Americas can be approached on an institution-to-institution basis.

The more dispersed professionals in global economic hubs require an individual approach focused on adding value and building networks. And then there are those who have a great affinity for Lanzarote and who were not born on the island nor have any ancestry there but now live there or are regular visitors there.

In a world of VUCA – volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity - where global capital is retreating and traditional alliances are fraying, one resource remains resilient, loyal and often largely dormant – diasporas. The shifting sands of geopolitics have led to the realisation that countries can no longer rely on traditional international partners – neither politically nor economically.

In this new era of tanks, tariffs and turbulence, countries need to cultivate relationships to navigate a world of 'Black Swan' events. The Lebanese born financial writer and researcher Nassim Tabib described Black Swan events as being rare, unpredictable and unexpected and having massive socio economic impacts. Covid is a classic example. If you ask people if they expect more or fewer Black Swan events in the future most people think there will be more.

Change seems to be the only guaranteed constant of this century in a world becoming more protectionist, isolationist and transactional. Geopolitical upheaval and conflict, digital transformation, economic disruption and other outcomes of change are bringing new types of challenges. But they also bring opportunities. Challenging Lanzarote to perpetually re-imagine is a prerequisite for success in this changing world. Success in the past is no longer an indicator of success in the future - the strategies that got us here may not get us there. Countries, regions, cities and organisations need their friends around the world more than ever before and diasporas constitute such friends. This particularly applies to small countries and regions. They need the capitals of consistency such networks of belonging and friendship represent. Diasporas are primary examples of these networks operating at the global scale.

The purpose of this strategy is to set the framework for the strategic guidance of stakeholders in Lanzarote. The next task of the stakeholders is to establish an implementation framework based on the practical realities of local capacities and institutional relationships.

Recommended Actions of Strategy

The following 5 pillars provide the processes to build the fundamentals of a strategy for effective diaspora engagement for Lanzarote.

PILLAR 1

Leadership Development

Putting in place an effective ecosystem for diaspora engagement.

- 1.1 Lanzarote Leads - Global Diaspora Council
- 1.2 Lanzarote Learns - Diaspora Training Programme
- 1.3 Lanzarote Listens - Diaspora Research & Development Hub

PILLAR 2

Communications and Network Building

Building the story telling and data information.

- 2.1 Lanzarote Global Diaspora Forum & Network
- 2.2 Lanzarote Diaspora Media Partnership
- 2.3 Lanzarote Diaspora Distinguished Service Awards

PILLAR 3

Diaspora Capital Engagements

Unlocking diaspora capital for investment, philanthropy and tourism.

- 3.1 Lanzarote Diaspora Landing
- 3.2 Lanzarote Diaspora Philanthropy Fund
- 3.3 Lanzarote Diaspora Invests Initiative

PILLAR 4

Monitoring and Evaluation

Regular reporting on the strategy's implementation.

- 4.1 Annual Reports
- 4.2 Mid-term Assessment
- 4.3 Lanzarote Diaspora Strategy 2030 - 2035
- 4.4 Develop KPI's and Metrics

PILLAR 5

Implementation Phases and Sequencing

The successful rolling out of the recommended actions to be delivered through a phased approach.

- 5.1 Phase One - Socialisation and Stakeholder buy in.
- 5.2 Phase Two - Consolidation and Growth
- 5.3 Phase Three - Sustainability and Scale

1. Kennedy, L. (2022). Introduction. In: Kennedy, L (Ed), *Routledge International Handbook of Diaspora Diplomacy*. New York: Routledge.
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"There have emerged new geographies of connectivity...diasporas are actively engaging arenas of transnational commerce, communications and politics in ways that disrupt normative ideas and practices of global governance, reflecting the polylateral relationships of power in an increasingly networked world".[1]

Professor Liam Kennedy
Routledge International Handbook of Diaspora Diplomacy





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Author

Kingsley Aikins is a Dublin, Ireland native and Economics and Politics graduate of Trinity College Dublin. He previously represented the Irish Trade Board and IDA Ireland and was based in Sydney and was then appointed CEO of The Ireland Funds and was based in Boston from 1993 to 2010.

On his return to Ireland he established The Networking Institute (www.thenetworkinginstitute.com) and, more recently, he co-founded, with Dr. Martin Russell, The Diaspora Institute (www.thediasporainstitute.com).

About The Diaspora Institute (TDI)

TDI is a private limited company registered in Ireland. It was formed to collate over four decades of experience from the legacy work of the co-founders Kingsley Aikins and Dr. Martin Russell. Over this period they have worked, individually, and together with colleagues, in over 50 countries, regions and cities helping them connect and engage with their diasporas.

The mission of The Diaspora Institute is twofold – firstly, to be a global centre of training, research and solutions on diaspora engagement and, secondly, to position Ireland as the world leader in this space.

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