The Interpretive Development Program

Professional Standards for Learning and Performance

The Interpretive Development Program (IDP) is the National Park Service's (NPS) competencies based training and peer review certification program. The IDP establishes, teaches, implements, and measures professional standards to provide developmental opportunities in interpretation for all employees and partners throughout the NPS.

Interpretive competencies define professional standards for NPS interpreters. A competency is a group of knowledge, skills, abilities and behaviors necessary to successfully complete a given task required by a particular job.

In 1995, more than 300 NPS field interpreters identified thirteen technical interpretive competencies. In 2003, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) conducted a scientific survey that validated all thirteen for training and development. Currently, OPM is conducting a series of subject matter expert focus groups to determine which of the competencies (they predict as many as ten) could be fully integrated into Human Resources.

The IDP uses these competencies to deliver approximately 120 classroom events around the country each year. Classroom training is coordinated and delivered locally, but based on a national curriculum that supports competency standards. In addition, 15 satellite interpretive training events are delivered to more than 200 downlinks each year. These efforts reach more than 3,000 participants annually. The IDP has also published a textbook *Meaningful Interpretation: How to Connect Hearts and Minds to Places, Objects, and Other Resources* and partners with Stephen F. Austin University to support a Masters Degree in Resource Interpretation based on NPS interpretive competencies.

The IDP also uses interpretive competencies for professional accountability by operating a peer review certification program. To date, more than 4,000 interpretive products have been assessed against competency standards.

In addition, the IDP is sponsoring three evaluation studies: 1) Indiana University is seeking to establish the relationship of NPS interpretation competencies to visitor outcomes; 2) Clemson University is seeking to determine the effectiveness of competencies training; and, 3) Stephen F. Austin University is seeking to understand visitor outcomes in terms of diversity and demographics.
National Park Service Interpretation Competencies
The Interpretive Development Program

Competencies Defined
- 13 Interpretation Ranger competencies defined by field
- All 13 competencies validated by Office of Personnel Management
- Directors Orders 6 determines interpretive standards are defined by the 13 competencies

Competencies Measured
- Peer Review Certification Program assesses more than 500 interpretive products annually
- Effectiveness of competencies currently being evaluated by three studies: Clemson, Indiana, and Stephen F. Austin Universities

Competencies Learned
- Approximately 120 annual classroom events
- Approximately 3,000 annual training participants
- Approximately 15 satellite annual satellite broadcasts
- Competencies-based Masters Degree offered by Stephen F. Austin University

Competencies Used
- Competencies used in coaching and performance standards
- Competencies used in Civic Engagement
- Partnerships competencies and training modeled after interpretation

Interpretation Competencies
- Knowledge of the Resource
- Knowledge of the Audience
- Knowledge of Appropriate Technique
- Informal Visitor Contacts
- The Interpretive Talk
- Conducted Activities
- Demonstrations and Other Illustrated Programs
- Interpretive Writing
- Curriculum-based Education Programs
- Planning Park Interpretation
- Coaching and Training
- Interpretive Media
- Interpretive Research and Resource Liaison

Interpretive Development Program Website: www.nps.gov/idp/interp
Training Manager for Interpretation: David Larsen, 304-535-6437
**Premise:** If the NPS offers high quality interpretative, curriculum-based, and informational programs to a diverse public, the public will have better quality of life and will be better equipped to help preserve and protect the National Park System for future generations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Inputs</strong></th>
<th><strong>Activities</strong></th>
<th><strong>Outputs</strong></th>
<th><strong>Outcomes</strong></th>
<th><strong>Impacts</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>Formal Interpretation (e.g. Interpretive Talks, Demonstrations, Tours)</td>
<td>People Participating (e.g. In each type of program/event, Internet hits)</td>
<td>Participants find personal (intellectual and emotional) meaning and relevance in National Park resources</td>
<td>The National Park System is preserved for future generations</td>
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<td>Informal Interpretation (e.g. Roving, Visitor Center Contact)</td>
<td>Interpretive Media Products (e.g. exhibits, websites, brochures)</td>
<td>Participants learn new information/concepts about the park or program topic</td>
<td>The Public finds personal meaning and shared heritage in the National Park System through its diversity of programs, which demonstrates a commitment to preserving and protecting its resources for future generations</td>
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<td>Interpretive Media (e.g. Publications, Exhibits, Web)</td>
<td>Programs/Services Offered (e.g. walks, talks, curriculum based programs, teacher workshops, public meetings, events, youth programs, internships)</td>
<td>Participants learn Civic Engagement skills (e.g. workshops, institutes)</td>
<td>The National Park System is preserved for future generations</td>
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<td>Curriculum-based Programs (e.g. Parks as Classrooms, Distance Learning)</td>
<td>Teacher Professional Development (e.g. Workshops, Institutes)</td>
<td>Participants Take action (volunteer, make a donation, etc.)</td>
<td>The National Park System is preserved for future generations</td>
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<td>Community Engagement (e.g. Public Meetings, Community Fairs, Events, Dialogs, Internships, Youth Programs)</td>
<td>Informational Products (e.g. magazines, TV programs, newsletters, fact sheets)</td>
<td>Improved teacher practice and enhanced student learning/motivation</td>
<td>The National Park System is preserved for future generations</td>
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<td>Information and Orientation (e.g. Maps, Marketing, Tourism, TV Programs, Magazines, Newsletters)</td>
<td>Parks are Welcoming and Accessible to All People</td>
<td>Park neighbors and community decision makers understand park resources and issues and are engaged in park and community preservation</td>
<td>The National Park System is preserved for future generations</td>
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<td>Standards/ Guiding Principles, Best Practices, Evaluation</td>
<td>Participants have Memorable Experiences</td>
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<td>The National Park System is preserved for future generations</td>
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