



## 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.

#### **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

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

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### 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 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

### Interpretation Competencies

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### 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 Used

- Competencies used in coaching and performance standards
- Some competencies adopted by Resource Management and Cultural Resource Management
- Competencies used in Civic Engagement
- Partnerships competencies and training modeled after interpretation

Interpretive Development Program Website: [www.nps.gov/idp/interp](http://www.nps.gov/idp/interp)

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## DRAFT National Park Service Interpretation and Education Program Logic Model

**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.

