



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Center for Media Services

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# NATIONAL PARK SERVICE STANDARD SPECIFICATIONS FOR AUDIO DESCRIPTION JUNE 2008



# **National Park Service STANDARD SPECIFICATIONS FOR AUDIO DESCRIPTION**

Harpers Ferry Center  
Harpers Ferry, West Virginia

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## **Section 1. DEFINITIONS**

**Audio Description:** Audio description describes the visual content of any program. It provides individuals who are visually impaired with information that further describes the visual content not provided in the primary audio track. Audio description is a separate audio track synchronized with the program's primary audio track.

**Audio Description Script:** A document which contains the program's audio description narration.

**Contracting Officer's Representative:** A Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) is the individual responsible for (1) monitoring the contractor's technical progress including the surveillance and assessment of performance and recommending to the Contracting Officer changes in requirements; (2) interpreting the scope of work; (3) performing technical evaluation as required; (4) performing technical inspections and acceptances required by this contract; and (5) assisting the Contracting Officer in the resolution of technical problems encountered during performance.

**Government-Furnished Property:** Property in the possession of, or directly acquired by, the Government and subsequently furnished to the Contractor for performance of a contract.

**Production Documents:** The phase of work where technical information including script are completed.

**Rough Cut:** A working draft of an audiovisual program which contains enough of the structure and content to evaluate the validity of the approach and to determine if changes or modifications are needed to meet the project objectives.

**Submittal:** All samples, documents (i.e., schedules, facsimiles), electronic files, and other materials that together represent the level of development of work at a given time.

**Universal Design:** The design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without assistance, adaptation or specialized design.

## **Section 2. PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The purpose of the following Project Management tasks are to insure that scheduling, coordination, overseeing, and managing is effectively accomplished for all work produced under this contract.

### **2.2 General Requirements**

The contractor shall assign a Project Manager to oversee the contract and shall also assign a Project Manager for each task order written under this contract.

### **2.3 Specific Requirements for Contract Project Management**

The Project Manager shall be the primary point of contact between the National Park Service (NPS) Contracting Officer and COR for the contract. The Project Manager shall perform the following work:

- A. Notify the Contracting Officer and COR of any changes to the contractor's business operations that affect work under this contract, including but not limited to:
  - 1. Changes to contractor's address, phone and other contact information.
  - 2. Proposed changes to key personnel.
  - 3. Workload or capacity issues affecting the ability of the contractor to accept additional work.
- B. Communicate with the Contracting Officer and COR regarding major or broad issues affecting task orders written under this contract, including but not limited to:
  - 1. Clarification of work processes that are acceptable or unacceptable to the government under this contract.
  - 2. Informing the Contracting Officer and COR of misunderstandings, inconsistencies, or conflicting instructions encountered when working with different parks and different task order CORs.
- C. Prepare and submit an electronic status report every six months to the COR with a copy to the Contracting Officer which lists all active task orders by number. It shall include, at a minimum, the name of the park and/or client, type of work being performed and results achieved during the reporting period. It shall also include an indication of any current problems that may impede performance, the proposed corrective action, and the completion date.

## **2.4 Specific Requirements for Task Order Project Management**

The Project Manager shall be the primary point of contact between the contractor and COR for individual task orders and shall perform the following work:

- A. The Project Manager shall have full authority to act for the contractor on all matters relating to a specific task order. The Project Manager shall maintain contact with the COR as necessary, and shall:
  - 1. Be available to take or respond to telephone calls or electronic mail messages during normal hours of operation (8:30 am - 5:00 pm local time). Local time is considered the time wherever the Contractor is performing the work for the National Park Service.
  - 2. Establish office procedures to ensure that messages are relayed to the Project Manager when out of the office or because of time zone differences.
  - 3. Respond to emergency messages from the COR on the same day they are received. All non-urgent messages from the COR shall be responded to in no less than two days.
- B. Provide quality control to ensure that all elements of project work meet the requirements of the contract specifications as follows:
  - 1. Provide routine inspections of ongoing work.
  - 2. Inform the COR of any issues that could affect work quality or schedule.
  - 3. Ensure that all work not acceptable or compliant with the specifications is corrected prior to review by the COR.
- C. Track work progress to ensure that the project is completed according to the schedule. Coordinate and confirm the dates for all submittals, meetings, and installation with the COR.
- D. Meet with the Contracting Officer and COR as specified in individual task orders.
- E. Receive, inspect, and inventory all GFP and ensure that this material is forwarded to the appropriate unit or person within the contractor's organization for use in the project. The Project Manager shall notify the COR within seven days after receipt if GFP is missing, incorrect, inadequate, or damaged for their intended purpose. The Project Manager shall notify the COR as soon as possible if GFP is lost or damaged while in the contractor's possession.

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- F. The Project Manager shall coordinate and ensure that all specifications for submittals are in accordance with Section 4, Submittals and Reviews, and as specified in individual task orders.
- G. Inspect completed work prior to shipment or final inspection by the COR to ensure that the work meets the standards of quality specified in this contract. Ensure that all the elements of the project are complete and ready for the final inspection. The Project Manager shall notify the COR if any elements of the work will not be ready for final inspection as scheduled.
- H. Ensure that all work is delivered as scheduled. In the event that the COR reports problems during or after shipment, delivery, the Project Manager shall:
  - 1. Determine the nature of the reported problem, damage, or error and provide a proposal for resolution to the COR for review and approval.
  - 2. Ensure that approved corrections or repairs are made in a satisfactory manner and within the time scheduled by the COR.

### **Section 3. SUBMITTALS AND REVIEWS**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Submittals and reviews are the key communication points between the contractor and the COR that document a project's overall progress and any remedial actions necessary to produce complete and acceptable deliverables.

#### **3.2 General Requirements**

- A. The contractor shall coordinate all submittals and review them for legibility, accuracy, completeness, and compliance with contract requirements.
- B. The contractor shall cross-reference all details that occur multiple times in a single or in multiple documents for consistency and accuracy.
- C. The contractor shall ensure that all submittals are delivered to the COR as scheduled for review and approval. Submittals shall be accompanied by a transmittal form describing all contents.
- D. The contractor shall provide three hard copies of each document and two copies of all electronic files, unless otherwise specified in the individual task orders.
- E. The contractor shall receive all review comments from the COR and take appropriate action as stated below:
  - 1. Approved Submittals – The contractor shall ensure that all changes, revisions, additions, or omissions required by review comments are addressed and incorporated into future submittals.
  - 2. Rejected Submittals – When submittals are rejected, the COR will notify the contractor, in writing, identifying the reasons for rejection. The contractor shall ensure that the submittal is completed and/or revised as required and resubmitted within the time scheduled by the COR. Reasons for rejections include:
    - a. Incomplete Submittals – Approval of the submittal is delayed because required elements are missing. The contractor shall submit all missing elements. When all elements are received and accepted, the COR will approve the submittal.
    - b. Unacceptable Submittals – The submittal is rejected due to poor quality of work or work that does not otherwise meet the established project goals. The contractor shall submit new material.

## **Section 4. AUDIO DESCRIPTION**

### **4.1 General**

The National Park Service mandates that all training and information video productions which support the agency's mission, regardless of format, that contain visual information necessary for the comprehension of the content, shall be audio described.

Audio description helps to ensure that people who are blind or have low vision enjoy equal access to film, video, and multimedia programs by providing additional descriptive narration of key visual requirements.

For video programs in particular, audio description uses the natural pauses in the existing soundtrack to insert descriptions of essential visual elements such as actions, settings, appearance of characters, body language, costumes, lighting, on-screen text, etc., when such information is not offered in the existing soundtrack. This prerecorded narration is delivered on a separate audio track that is synchronized with the program's primary audio track.

In theater settings, audio description is typically played from a separate audio track or device and is not heard over the main loudspeaker(s). Visitors requesting audio description will typically receive a headset and a receiver. The audio description track is then transmitted to the headset via a radio frequency or infrared signal. Only those visitors with headsets will hear the audio description track. In exhibit settings, where video programs are often activated via pushbutton or motion sensor, the audio description soundtrack may also be activated via pushbutton or other visitor activated device. The playback method shall be specified in each individual task order.

All programs to be audio described under this contract will be Government-Furnished property, unless otherwise specified in the task order. The programs will typically be delivered to the contractor on DVD with visual NTSC time code. The Government will also furnish electronic Microsoft Word copies of existing scripts, unless otherwise specified in the task order. In some instances, the government may require the contractor to record the final approved audio description track onto the unused audio tracks of a Government-Furnished property pre-recorded master tape. These programs will typically be delivered to the Contractor on a professional videotape format such as Digital Betacam, and will contain pre-recorded video and stereo audio. The contractor shall, in these instances, record the approved audio description onto channel 4 of the pre-recorded master tape and lay back a mono mix of channels 1 and 2 onto channel 3, unless otherwise specified in the task order.

All audio description performed under this contract shall conform to accepted industry standards and practices. While there is not a set of national or international guidelines, those produced by recognized professionals within the field shall be referred to for guidance, standards, and practices. All work must be in accordance with the most current Programmatic Accessibility Guidelines for National Park Service Interpretive Media. To learn more about accessibility and to confirm the latest version, go to: [www.nps.gov/hfc/accessibility](http://www.nps.gov/hfc/accessibility).

## **4.2 Specifications**

1. All audio description shall be written, narrated, and recorded by trained, professional audio description providers.
2. All digital audio shall be created at the sampling rate of 48 KHz unless otherwise specified in the task order.

## **4.3 Review, Approval and Deliverables**

1. Upon receipt of the government-furnished DVD, the contractor shall write an audio description script and provide an electronic Microsoft Word file of the proposed script for review and approval by the COR.

Each block of text in the script shall reference an NTSC time code number from the government-furnished DVD, along with the preceding line from the program's original narration track.

Upon the approval of the script, the contractor shall provide two DVD copies of a rough cut of the program with a temporary audio description narration track. One copy will be provided to the COR and one copy to the park for review and approval.

The rough cut shall be of sufficient quality to demonstrate the proposed placement of the audio description track within the program. The COR and/or park contact will evaluate the script and rough cut to determine whether the proposed audio description narration meets requirements for accuracy, pronunciation, appropriate terminology, and aesthetic considerations. The contractor shall not proceed with the final deliverables until the rough cut is approved by the COR, which may require additional submittals before final approval.

2. Upon approval of the rough cut, the contractor shall record the audio description soundtrack in a professional studio using a professional audio description narrator. The contractor shall then edit and lay back the narration on to the government-furnished master tape using the following track configuration, unless otherwise specified in the task order.
  - a. Channel 1 & 2: Stereo Audio
  - b. Channel 3: Mono mix of channels 1 & 2 (without audio description)
  - c. Channel 4: Audio description (narration only, unmixed).
3. All master tapes shall have continuous non-drop frame SMPTE time code.

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4. Upon final approval of the master tape by the COR, the contractor shall deliver a backup copy of the final approved audio description soundtrack on a CD as an MP-3 digital audio file and as a WAV or AIFF audio file. The contractor shall also deliver an electronic Microsoft Word file of the final approved audio description script.

**4.4 Labeling Requirements for Master Tapes, Discs, and Slates**

All tapes, discs, and slates produced under this contract shall be labeled as follows:

**National Park Service**

**TV-XXXX** (Note: this is a number that will be furnished with each task order)

**“Title of Program”**

**XX:XX** (total running time of the program)

**Audio Configuration** – label all tracks (mono, stereo, etc.)

**Captioning and/or Audio Description Information** (e.g. “Audio Description on Channel 4”)

**Production Company**

**Mastering Date**

## **Section 5. ACCESSIBILITY**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Park visitors who have physical, sensory, or cognitive disabilities have legally established civil rights to receive the same information and context that NPS interpretive media provide fellow citizens.

All work performed under this contract shall be in accordance with the Programmatic Accessibility Guidelines for NPS Interpretive Media, dated October 2007, and available at [www.nps.gov/hfc/accessibility](http://www.nps.gov/hfc/accessibility). The Guidelines combine laws, policies, and best practices to offer design and presentation solutions that are acceptable in most situations. Contractors are advised to understand that physical access is required for employees to operate and service equipment.

In addition to Universal Design principles, specific design requirements for accessibility are mandated by statute. Laws that apply to work performed under this contract include the Americans with Disabilities Act, for non-Federal buildings and facilities, the Architectural Barriers Act, for Federal Government buildings and facilities, and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, for electronic and information technology purchased by the Federal Government. Detailed information on these statutes may be found at [www.access-board.gov](http://www.access-board.gov).

**Section 6. COMPLETION**

1. All audio description provided under this contract shall be guaranteed for a period of one year from the date of acceptance by the COR.
2. Any aspects of the work which the contractor anticipates or foresees will cause any problems, setbacks, or other undesirable results in delivery, operation, or other aspects of the information described shall be brought to the attention of the COR.

## **Section 7. CLOSEOUT**

### **7.1 Introduction**

At the conclusion of work, the contractor shall return all Government–Furnished property and all other outstanding materials as specified in the individual task order. All material generated by the contractor in the process of completing a task order is the property of the government.