

TEL Broadcast – Program Organization and Interpretive Themes
Interpretive Development Program
May 15, 2007 12:00-4:00 PM EDT
Participant Guide

(TEL POC's -- please make sure that participants at your site receive this information)

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Contents of this guide:

- **Pre-course assignment, reading and handouts**
- **Links to other helpful resources and references**

Your pre-session prep-time for this broadcast – approximately 1 hour

I. Pre-course assignments and handouts for use during the TEL broadcast -- please bring these with you to the broadcast:

- Pre-course assignment #1 – answer questions using *Interpretive Themes* essay (below)
- Pre-course assignment #2 – prep for writing an interpretive theme (below)
- Pre-course reading – *Goals and Objectives—Turning Vision Into Reality* (below)
- Handout – *Strategies for Program Organization* (below)

NOTE: All participants should have introductory grounding in foundational interpretive theory. For a review of these principles, you may wish to access the free, on-line course entitled “Foundations of Interpretation” at www.parktraining.org. Or you may wish to review this material in-depth in the workbook entitled “Meaningful Interpretation,” edited by David Larsen** (This material was formerly known as Module 101)

II. Links to other useful tools and references – explore on your own:

- Review the Interpretive Process Model
<http://www.nps.gov/idp/interp/101/processmodel.pdf>
- Developmental Worksheet – “Opportunities for Intellectual and Emotional Connections”
<http://www.nps.gov/idp/interp/101/ConnectionOps.doc>
- Developmental Worksheet – “Program Organization”
<http://www.nps.gov/idp/interp/101/progorgwksheet.pdf>
- On-line tutorial for the Interpretive Process Model
<http://www.nps.gov/interp/idp/eply/default.html>

**Additional copies of *Meaningful Interpretation* are available through Eastern National at (877) NAT-PARK or (877) 628-7275, or at eparks.com (by title search).

Pre-Course Assignment #1 – Interpretive Themes Essay

Read the essay on Interpretive Themes <http://home.nps.gov/idp/interp/101/themes.pdf> and answer the questions below. Bring your answers to the broadcast.

According to the essay, what are the *benefits* of using a well-crafted theme?

1. For the program or product?
2. For the interpreter?
3. For the audience?
4. For the park and NPS?

Pre-Course Assignment #2 – Prep for Writing an Interpretive Theme

Select one of the options below and answer the questions – bring your answers to the broadcast.

Option 1 -- For a *new* interpretive program or media product that you would like to develop...

Option 2 -- For a program/product you are just starting to develop...

Option 3 -- For an existing program/product that you would like to revise or improve...

1. What is your topic?
2. What is the venue (type of program or media product)?
3. Who is your intended audience?
4. What park interpretive themes does/will your program or media product address?
5. What park interpretive goals does/will your program or media product help accomplish?

Interpretive Goals and Objectives: Turning Vision into Reality

Capturing the Vision – Defining Goals

Every interpretive program or product should start with a mission-based purpose -- a clearly defined motivational force that helps accomplish park and NPS goals of resource preservation and memorable visitor experiences. Carefully defining these goals prior to developing the program or product can help the interpreter to understand and articulate *why* this particular program is important to the audience, to the resource, to the interpreter, and/or to the organization. This understanding can then be used to craft just the right theme to accomplish the desired goals.

Goals:

- Generally refer to things your program strives to accomplish in support of organization mission
- Describe broad desired outcomes
- Support management goals stated in the planning documents
- Provide a check on the connection of a program to site purpose and significance

A goal is a **target** you are aiming for.

Examples of goals:

- Visitors gain an appreciation for and understanding of the park by learning about the Missouri River's natural and cultural heritage (Missouri National Recreational River)
- Visitors learn about President Abraham Lincoln's time and the story of his life in southern Indiana (Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial)
- Visitors understand how the landscape affects human culture and how human culture affects the landscape (Hopewell Culture National Historical Park)
- Inspire visitors to draw strength from the achievement of goals in the face of great obstacles (Mount Rushmore National Memorial)
- Motivate visitors to protect archaeological sites
- Help the public understand and appreciate the complex issues surrounding elk management in Rocky Mountain National Park so that they can provide the best possible feedback regarding management policies.

Often goals are already set by the mission of the agency, the legislative mandate, the Long Range Interpretive Plan, and/or resource needs. The following example shows how goals may be derived from established site mandates:

Sitka National Historical Park

A park **purpose statement** from the General Management Plan:

“Preserve and interpret the Russian Bishop’s House, an area that illustrates a part of the early history of what is now the United States by commemorating czarist Russia’s exploration and colonization of Alaska”

Interpretive program **goals** derived from the purpose statement:

- Visitors will recognize that American history and Russian history converge in Alaska.
- Visitors will appreciate lasting influences that the Russian presence had in Alaska and beyond.
- Visitors will compare and contrast similarities and differences in the Russian eastern frontier experience and the American western frontier experience.

A park **resource significance statement** from the Long Range Interpretive Plan:

“The convergence of the Indian River, the coastal rainforest, and the sea provides an inspiring, biologically-rich environment that is critical to understanding the events that took place here.”

Interpretive program **goals** derived from the resource significance statement:

- Visitors will experience and appreciate the biologic richness of the park.
- Visitors will gain a deeper understanding of the longstanding cultural ties between the Tlingit people and park area.
- Visitors will learn of the economic opportunities related to natural resources that drew the Russians to this area.
- Visitors will comprehend how the physiographic features of the Indian River Peninsula made it the ideal location for a Tlingit defensive fort.

Grounded in Reality – Developing Objectives

Sure, it’s important to establish goals and create a vision to aim for, but how do you know if you’ve actually hit your target? **Objectives** are statements of specific, short-term, measurable responses to be achieved by a particular program. Objectives allow interpreters to evaluate whether the program is effective in meeting the identified goal(s). They help interpreters to ask and answer the question: “Is the program doing what it needs to do?”

Objectives:

- Are specific, measurable outcomes that could be easily evaluated.
- Clearly describe what it is you hope the audience will be able to do, know or feel after the presentation
- Use action verbs such as “describe,” “list,” “explain,” or “identify.”
- Allow you to get a sense of whether your interpretive efforts are effective at working towards and achieving your goals.

In developing objectives for an interpretive program, ask yourself “How could the visitor demonstrate or show that the goal(s) of my program have been accomplished?”

Examples of Objectives:

- Visitors will be able to describe the various stages of Mount Rushmore's construction.
- Visitors will be able to explain how the fur trade represented an early step toward an inter-connected world economy.
- Visitors will be able to identify two ways that attitudes and perspectives about archeological sites and American Indian cultures have changed.

- Visitors will be able to name three ways that the completion of the transcontinental railroad hastened great changes to the lifestyles and cultures of American Indian tribes.
- Visitors will be able to describe two new insights or feelings related to the subject that they experienced during the interpretive presentation.
- The incidences of improper food storage in backcountry campsites will decrease by 66% once all backcountry users attend a required interpretive program.
- Visitors will express sympathy or empathy for Japanese-American families interned at Manzanar.
- Visitors will articulate a personal concern or sense of loss for declining numbers of nesting sea turtles.

Some objectives may be interpretive in nature and focus on determining whether visitors are forming their own connections to the meanings/significance of a resource. Other objectives, such as with curriculum-based education, may focus on what information, knowledge, or skills an audience is expected to learn. Other objectives may focus on desired outcomes in the resource. It is very likely that a given interpretive product may have objectives that target a range of desired outcomes.

In developing objectives, it is essential to pick measurable standards that directly support the stated goals of the program or product. For example:

Sitka National Historical Park

Goal: Visitors will learn of the economic opportunities related to natural resources that drew the Russians to this area.

Objective: Visitors will be able to name two natural resources that made Sitka desirable to the Russians.

Golden Spike National Historic Site

Goal: Visitors learn more about the history of the completion of the transcontinental railroad.

Objective: Visitors list some of the changes to social, cultural and economic patterns due to the transcontinental railroad's revolutionary impact on the movement of people, goods, and services.

Shenandoah National Park

Goal: Visitors will understand and support on-going park efforts to eradicate invasive, non-native vegetation.

Objective: Visitors can identify one native wildflower in Big Meadow and one invasive plant that threatens its survival; visitors express concern for the loss of native species due to encroachment by invasive species.

Reality Check:

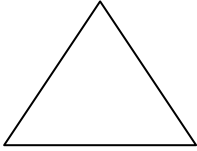
Sometimes the interpreter simply keeps the objectives in mind as they work with the public. Are they getting what I'm saying? Could they respond appropriately if asked? Sometimes, it is

valuable to actually work a test of objectives into the program presentation, at least occasionally. Consider asking your audience, perhaps during the conclusion or after the program is over, if they can demonstrate some of the objectives. This can be a very rewarding and/or eye opening exercise for informally evaluating the effectiveness of a program. Finally, formal evaluation techniques can be developed to determine whether objectives are being met. For example, scientific studies coordinated with educational institutions are exploring what kinds of impacts interpretive techniques have on achieving program goals and objectives. Such studies often rely on exit interviews and surveys to test audience experience and knowledge.



Interpretive Strategies for Program Organization

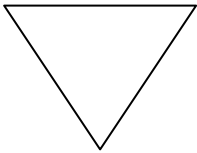
Consider how the following strategies for structuring an interpretive product could help to enhance access to the resource meanings being interpreted. See if you can identify any of these strategies being used in the presentations of your co-workers.



Specific to Broad

Individual example to broader encompassing idea

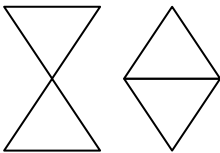
Example: specific acorn to oak tree to all trees to forest conservation



Broad to Specific

General encompassing idea to specific example

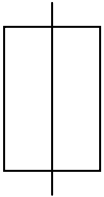
Example: reverse of above



Hourglass

Combination of the above ideas linked

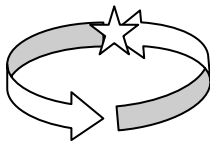
Begin with broad, general idea and narrow to specific example and then bring out to the general idea again.



Linear

A line of organization from point X to point Y, a segment of a larger construct

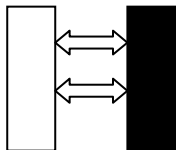
Organizing a program along a segment of time, space, or geography



Cyclic

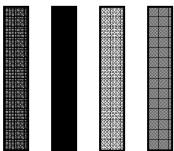
Circular sequence that may begin at any point and return to the origin points in the process

Examples: water cycle, cultural trend cycles, life cycle



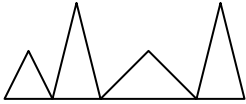
Parallel

Encourages judgment or decision within visitor



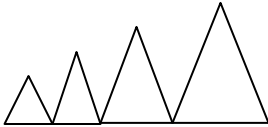
Multiple Points of View

Comparison of many ideas for decision making (or understanding sensitive issues)



Variations on a Theme

Seemingly random yet related ideas produce understanding of a larger meaning



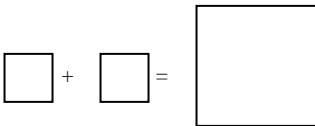
Progression

Sequence of events or ideas that logically flow or build upon the previous



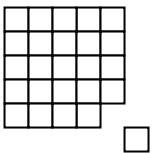
Debunking

Negating common myth



Sum of Parts

1+1+1 = more than you think!



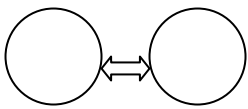
Puzzle

Revelation of larger meaning by examining how parts fit together



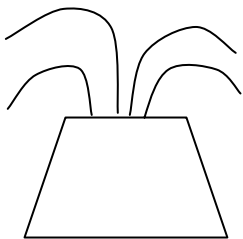
River/Watershed/Dendritic

Less structured convergence of related meanings



Wheel

Two main ideas are juxtaposed and the relationship between the two is presented



Volcano

Pull it all together at the conclusion for a big wow!

Space for Taking Notes