

# The role of cooperating associations in accomplishing the interpretive mission of parks

*The Scope of Sales Statement — an opportunity for parks and cooperating associations to work together to achieve shared goals*

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## **Purpose and value of the *Scope of Sales Statement***

The *Scope of Sales Statement* is a cooperative planning document usually prepared by the association's executive director and the park's cooperating association coordinator (often the chief of interpretation). It is a strategic document critical to the development of a sales line that meets the needs of the public, the association, and the park.

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## **Components**

### **Statement of relationship**

This component states the relationship between the cooperating association and the National Park Service. It references the documents that govern the roles of the two partners (the Standard Agreement and Director's Orders 32: Cooperating Associations) and provides an opportunity for the association to state how its reasons-for-being connect with the park's reasons-for-being. It outlines the current sales operation and describes how that function relates to the interpretive function of the park.

### **Park significance statements**

These statements identify the significant resources and associated values that make the park special and capture the park's essence.

## Park purpose statements

These are the stated purposes (often indicated directly in the park’s enabling legislation) for which the park was established.

## Primary parkwide interpretive theme statements

These are the ideas about the park’s resources that are critical to public understanding of the park’s significance.

Park significance, purpose, and theme statements are part of a park’s *Comprehensive Interpretive Plan*, and are periodically updated as part of that planning process. Cooperating associations are integral partners in that process. By cooperating in the development of the basic assumptions that underlie the park’s interpretive program, and by analyzing its own operation based on those same assumptions, the association is best able to identify, influence, and facilitate park interpretive goals, as well as meet its own.

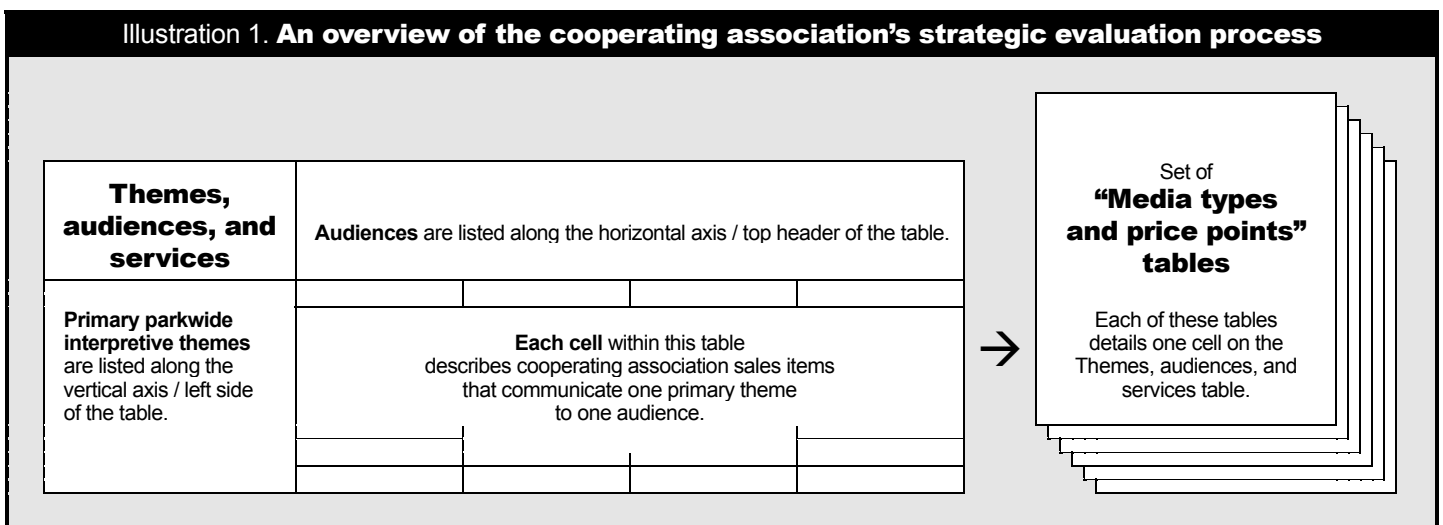
## Strategic evaluation of the sales line

A key component of a Scope of Sales should be an analysis of the current sales line and plans for evolving that sales line to better accomplish the mission of interpretation and education in the park while assuring a sustainable sales operation.

There is no required format for strategically evaluating the sales line. The actual process you develop will depend on the methods you use to track sales items and inventory. Most associations use some sort of spreadsheet or database software for this purpose. Such software can easily allow not only the necessary administrative tracking of sales items, but an analysis of how the entire sales line is performing and meeting the interpretive and educational needs of the park. In any case, the exact process you choose to use should be designed to require the minimal amount of additional work to allow for meaningful analysis and improvement of the sales line.

An example of a strategic evaluation process is the “two-layer” process illustrated below, enabling in-depth analysis and strategic improvement of an association’s sales line from an interpretive and educational perspective. The relationship of these two layers is shown in Illustration 1.

Illustration 1. An overview of the cooperating association’s strategic evaluation process



## Themes, audiences, and services table (layer one)

Illustration 1 provides an overview of the sales line with each sales item placed according to the theme(s) it addresses and the audience(s) it serves. (A detailed example is shown in Illustration 2.)

**Themes.** These are the primary parkwide interpretive themes stated in the park’s *Comprehensive Interpretive Plan*. “Orientation and Safety Information” and “National Park System and National Park Service Mission” are also included as universal messages for all parks. Note that visitor convenience items, sold under a concession permit, are a separate class of sales items that are not related to a park’s interpretive themes and so are not part of this evaluation process.

**Illustration 2. Strategic evaluation process — themes, audiences, and services**

Mountainshore Natural History Association / Mountainshore National Park <sup>1</sup>

<b>PRIMARY PARKWIDE INTERPRETIVE THEMES</b>	<b>AUDIENCES</b>			
	1: General audience	2: Young adults	3: Non-English speaking audiences	4: Teachers and other educators
<b>Theme A</b> — Mountainshore National Park offers a rare opportunity to explore how humans have adapted to the wide variety of Pacific Northwest ecosystems.	(BK) <i>Indians and Mountain Men</i> (BK) <i>Pacific Northwest Ethnobotany</i> (GR) <i>Animals of the Mountains</i> (poster) (EL) <i>Sounds of the Forest</i> (audio tape) (EL) <i>Seashore Seasons</i> (captioned videotape) (TI) Fort Webfoot (replica) (TI) Miwok Fish Hook (replica)	Etc.	Etc.	Etc.
<b>Theme B</b> — Text...	Etc.	Etc.	Etc.	Etc.
<b>Theme C</b> — Text... (etc.)	Etc.	Etc.	Etc.	Etc.
<b>Orientation and Safety Information</b>	Etc.	Etc.	Etc.	Etc.
<b>National Park System and National Park Service Mission</b>	Etc.	Etc.	Etc.	Etc.

**Audiences.** These are the distinct audiences for interpretive messages identified in the park’s *Comprehensive Interpretive Plan*. Marketing considerations may suggest additional audiences. These may vary from park to park and could include groups such as:

- General audience
- Young adults
- Children (specific age-groups)
- Non-English speaking audiences
- Teachers and other educators
- Non-traditional park users or other special populations

**Services.** In the first and best sense, association sales items are really interpretive services that visitors to the park (and others in the case of mail order sales) can purchase, use in the park, and take home with them. Note that a given sales item can appear in more than one cell on the table if it interprets more than one theme and/or serves more than one audience. A table like this can easily be generated in a

<sup>1</sup> To make these tables more meaningful, a fictitious park (Mountainshore National Park) and its cooperating association (Mountainshore Natural History Association) are used as examples.

spreadsheet program already used to track sales items by sorting according to theme, then additionally sorting by audience.

### Media types and price points tables (layer two)

More detailed sortings of sales items can be used to expand and further analyze the contents of each cell generated in an overview table. This level of analysis allows strategic design/choice of products to appeal to the widest range of audiences by assuring a variety of product types and price points. An example expanded from the completed cell in the overview table (Illustration 2) is shown in Illustration 3. Again, sorts of an existing spreadsheet or database of sales items can generate this information as long as individual products are identified by price and type—standard fields used by almost all associations.

Illustration 3. <b>Strategic evaluation process — media types and price points</b> Mountainshore Natural History Association / Mountainshore National Park					
<b>THEME A</b> — Mountainshore National Park offers a rare opportunity to explore how humans have adapted to the wide variety of Pacific Northwest ecosystems.					
<b>AUDIENCE 1</b> — General audience					
MEDIA TYPES	PRICE POINTS				
	Less than \$2.00	\$2.00 to \$4.99	\$5.00 to \$9.99	\$10.00 to \$50.00	More than \$50.00
<b>Books (BK)</b>			<i>Indians and Mountain Men</i>	<i>Pacific Northwest Ethnobotany</i>	
<b>Graphic arts (GR)</b>		<i>Animals of the Mountains</i> (poster)			
<b>Electronic media (EL)</b>			<i>Sounds of the Forest</i> (audio tape) <i>Seashore Seasons</i> (captioned videotape)		
<b>Thematic items (TI)</b>	Miwok Fish Hook (replica)			Fort Webfoot (replica)	

**Media types.** A variety of media are offered for sale to accommodate different tastes and learning styles. The traditional types of media offered by cooperating associations are cited below. Other categories may evolve to expand this list.

- Books
- Graphic arts (posters, prints, note cards, etc.)
- Electronic media (CD-ROMs, DVDs, audio tapes, etc.)
- Thematic items (replicas, models, puzzles, etc.)

**Price points.** Ranges of price point categories also vary according to audiences. Likely categories include:

- Less than \$2.00
- \$2.00 to \$4.99
- \$5.00 to \$9.99
- \$10.00 to \$50.00
- More than \$50.00

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Such tables provide an easy, direct way to examine the degree to which the sales operation is conveying park themes to the widest range of audiences. It is important for both partners to remember that selection of specific sales items will also be influenced by the association's need to accommodate the realities of profitability, security, stock storage, and time criticality.

The actual tables and sorts, as well as a description of the methodology used to carry out the sales line evaluation, is often better placed in an appendix at the end of the *Scope*. The body of the document is best restricted to an overview of what the evaluation showed, and discussion of options to improve the sales line based on the analysis.

### **Selection process and criteria for specific sales items**

Parks and associations cooperate in suggesting and evaluating specific items proposed for sale. Some partners discuss the merits of specific items in face-to-face meetings, though most develop a simple evaluation and/or review form to expand and document the evaluation process. No standard evaluation form exists, but evaluation criteria can include:

- **Appropriateness:** How well does this product interpret park themes and serve audiences? Is this product sensitive to the culture(s) it represents or interprets?
- **Quality:** How well does the product capture the message? What is the level of craftsmanship or workmanship involved?
- **Accuracy:** Does the product reflect the best scholarship and knowledge?
- **Value:** Is the product a good buy for the customer at the suggested sales price?
- **Currency:** Is the product up-to-date?
- **Authenticity:** Special concerns regarding craft items are described in DO-32:

3.5.3d Craft items represented as being Indian-made shall be sold in accordance with the Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-644 [104 Stat. 4662], 11/29/90.)

Public Law 101-644, states that it is unlawful to offer or display for sale or sell any good, with or without a Government trademark, in a manner that falsely suggests it is Indian produced, an Indian product, or the product of a particular Indian or Indian tribe or Indian arts and crafts organization, resident within the United States. The law allows severe penalties for individuals or organizations found to be in violation of the law.

Associations offering a product for sale as American Indian artwork or handcraft should confirm that the person who made it is a member of an Indian tribe. Associations that deal directly with the producer could retain a copy of the tribal document which acknowledges their membership, or at least note the artisan's tribal enrollment number. Associations that deal with intermediaries would be wise to have the intermediary guarantee that the item was produced by a member of an Indian tribe.

Associations can request a copy of P.L. 101-644 from the: *Indian Arts and Crafts Board, Room 4004, Main Interior Building, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20240, telephone (202) 208-3773.*

- **Advertising:** This should be secondary or incidental to interpretive content and value.
- **Prohibition regarding sale of original objects:** Are replica items clearly labeled?
- **Origin:** Sale of items made in the USA is encouraged, but not mandatory.

- **Conflict:** Would selling this item conflict with a preferential right-of-sale held by a concessioner?

### **Action plan for upgrading the sales line**

This section is a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the current sales line as indicated by the strategic evaluation process. It describes a strategy and time-line for enhancing the sales line to plug holes and strengthen weaknesses so that the greatest diversity of audiences are provided with the greatest variety of effective products consistent with the association earning a favorable rate of return.

The result is essentially a long-range strategy for evolving the *Annual List of Approved Sales Items*. This is the yearly listing of all items the association is authorized to sell. It is produced by the association executive director, submitted to the park cooperating association coordinator, and approved by the superintendent. No item can be sold without this approval. (Note that specific items can be approved at any time, not just once a year.) The annual list is maintained on file by the park and the association, and offers a look at where the sales line stands in relation to the long-range goals cited in the action plan.

### **Appendices**

Other information helpful in developing an effective and successful sales line, and an effective sales operation, can be included in appendices to the *Scope of Sales Statement*. These may include:

- **Strategic Evaluation of the Sales Line (Details and Work Sheets):** A more detailed explanation of the process and analysis used to develop this section of the *Scope*, as well as examples of worksheets that provide specifics about the way this analysis was carried out.
- **SOPs Regarding Requests for Assistance from Authors and Publishers:** Standard operating procedures for handling inquiries asking the park and/or the association to provide assistance to prospective authors and publishers interested in developing sales items for the sales line.
- **Visitation and Sales Statistics:** Includes traditional on-site visitors as well as “visitors” to park and association Web pages.
- **Sources List:** References expert talent available to assist the partners in improving sales selection and operation: authors, artists, designers, publishers, marketing analysts, etc.

### **Periodic revision of the *Scope of Sales Statement***

The *Scope of Sales Statement* should be thought of as always subject to review and improvement. The executive director and cooperating association coordinator should work together to define a reasonable cycle for revisiting and updating the *Scope of Sales Statement*. It may be advantageous to synchronize its review with the major review of the park’s *Comprehensive Interpretive Plan*, which is expected to occur about every 5 years.