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## ***Foundational Competencies for All Interpreters (Legacy Version)*** -- March, 2007

(See the [current version](#) on the Common Learning Portal)

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### **Foundations of Interpretation** Competency Description

National Park Service interpretation directly supports the preservation mission. Interpretation is driven by a philosophy that charges interpreters to help audiences care *about* park resources so they might support the care *for* park resources. Interpretation establishes the value of preserving park resources by helping audiences discover the meanings and significance associated with those resources.

This competency requires interpreters at all levels to understand the core definition of interpretation, the professional standards for interpretation, the purpose of interpretation, how interpretation can be measured, and how successful interpretation works. These understandings continually evolve and increase in sophistication throughout an interpreter's career.

Entry level interpreters use this philosophy and best practices to create interpretive products. Full performance interpreters use these philosophies and best practices to refine interpretive products as well as to plan and deliver special events, interpretive media, and other interpretive activities. Supervisors and managers use these philosophies and best practices to articulate, apply, and measure interpretive choices and functions, and to support the work of resource management and preservation. All interpretive applications, evaluation, and training should incorporate the philosophies and best practices contained in Foundations of Interpretation.

### **Competency Standard**

#### **All Interpreters:**

- Understand their role to facilitate connections between resource meanings and audience interests.
- Understand, recognize, and create opportunities for audiences to make their own intellectual and emotional connections to resource meanings.
- Understand, recognize, and cohesively develop an idea or ideas in interpretive products and activities.
- Understand the roles and relationships of resource knowledge, audience knowledge, and interpretive techniques in interpretive products and activities.
- Purposefully reflect on interpretive philosophies and best practices, deepen their understandings, and apply these philosophies and best practices to all interpretive competencies.

## **Knowledge of the Resource**

### **Competency Description**

Interpretation relies on multi-disciplinary knowledge to provide different audiences with relevant and meaningful connections to park resources. Interpreters at all levels must have a thorough understanding of the underpinning research, tangible features, associated concepts, context, relationships, systems, processes, human values, and other meanings associated with the resource. Interpreters must also understand multiple points of view regarding the resource as well as the park's past and current conditions and possess the skills to interpret them for all visitors.

### **Competency Standard**

#### **All Interpreters:**

- Understand why research and knowledge related to the resource is important and why it should be current, accurate, and comprehensive
- Understand the ways that research supports the interpreter's ability to facilitate opportunities for audiences to make their own intellectual and emotional connections to the meanings and significance of the resource.
- Use the philosophies, methodologies, and assumptions of professional disciplines to conduct research and evaluate sources for their relevance and validity.

## **Knowledge of the Audience**

### **Competency Description**

Knowledge of the audience characteristics, interests, expectations, and multiple points of view including psychological, social, cultural, economic, political, religious, historical and philosophical influences and perspectives is necessary to develop interpretation that is relevant to a wide variety of audiences. Knowledge of life stages, including varied learning styles of audience members and developmental functioning among different audience members is important to fulfill varied expectations and interests of the audience. Understanding the many motivations for visiting a resource and being cognizant of the existing meanings, present interpretations, and current attitudes that visitors hold about a resource can be important components in making interpretation relevant to as many visitors as possible.

### **Competency Standard**

#### **All Interpreters:**

- Understand the importance of in-depth knowledge of the audience in providing opportunities for connections to resource meanings relevant to a wide variety of visitors.
- Understand how comprehensive knowledge of the audience can be used to facilitate opportunities for a diversity of individuals to make intellectual and emotional connections to the meanings and significance inherent in the resource.
- Use research and analytical skills to acquire comprehensive knowledge of the audience.
- Understand that visitor motivation is self-generated and whatever their perspective or interest, they are potential stewards of the resource.

## **Knowledge of Appropriate Techniques**

### **Competency Description**

Interpretation relies on the appropriate integration of a wide variety of techniques to foster opportunities for meaningful connections to the resource. The selection of techniques must always be based on specific program objectives and on knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of each technique. In addition, knowledge of both the audience and the resource is necessary to determine the appropriateness of the technique. Possessing and demonstrating the skills necessary to execute the chosen approach must also be considered.

### **Competency Standard**

#### **All Interpreters:**

- Understand the role of interpretive techniques in fostering an opportunity for an intellectual or emotional connection to the meanings/significance of the resource.
- Understand the strengths and weaknesses of the use of a particular technique.
- Recognize the appropriate use of a particular technique in relation to the resource, setting, and audience.
- Skillfully implement a variety of interpretive techniques in formal programs, media development, and informal contacts.