

Planning for Diverse Audiences

DRAFT Lesson Plan in support of the *Knowledge of Audience and Community Competency*
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Seasonal Training Session (outlined on MILT Model)
Length: 45 to 65 minutes

Training objective: Our topic today is planning—planning for interpretive contacts is how we get rid of those butterflies. Planning eliminates fear and increases our ability to create opportunities for stewardship.

Session objective: Participants will be able to use knowledge of diverse audiences to shape the development of an array of opportunities for audiences and visitors to connect with meanings.

Introduction (5-15 minutes)	<p><i>What do we know about our community?</i></p> <p>Session leader shares some demographic information about the community to prompt discussion. It is recommended to use a combination of “expected” data about race/class/gender, but also provocative data that provokes broader thinking about what constitutes community.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Housing growth in the 2000s was stronger than population growth. This reflects the attractiveness of the area to second home owners.• This county has a smaller percentage of minorities than for the state as a whole, and much smaller than for the nation.• Largest industries based in Grand County as of June, 2013, were <i>Accommodation and Food Services</i> (32.5 percent of all non-farm employment), <i>Government</i> (19.3 percent), and <i>Retail Trade</i> (14.6 percent). <p>Discussion: What else do we know (or think we know about our community)? <i>This part can be truncated or eliminated if this session is part of a broader training about knowing community and if preceding activities have delved into ideas about community.</i></p>
Objective (2 minute)	You will create interpretive products that use knowledge of diverse audiences to develop an array of opportunities for audiences to connect with meanings.
Content (5-10 minute)	Planning for diverse audiences means we are always prepared to talk to any of our diverse visitors.

<p>discussion)</p>	<p>When I say diversity, what comes to mind?</p> <p>Are we dealing with “Big D” or “little D” diversity here? => Yes!</p> <p>How might we expand our ideas about what diversity is?</p> <p>Who are some unexpected diverse visitors? (Examples: *Mexican national living in Moab *Someone who supports ATVs in parks, oil drilling near parks *Woman in heels from NYC)</p> <p>When you are planning your contacts, <i>very</i> first step is to think about your audience. Why plan for the audience even before your topic?</p> <p>You can employ multiple techniques to reach diverse audiences, even within the same contact.</p>
<p>Practice and Feedback (20 minutes)</p>	<p>Provide the training group a topic for the exercise (i.e. arch formation).</p> <p>Form groups of 3.</p> <p>Take five minutes as a group to think about how you might talk about your topic with these audiences (write on board).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth • International • Local • College Students • Seniors <p>Now, an activity:</p> <p>Interpreter 1 begins a contact, focusing on an adult visitor from the local community.</p> <p>When I say “switch,” Interpreter 2 starts talking and I will call out a new audience. Change the approach of your contact to address that new audience.</p> <p>Repeat “switches” until a range of diverse audiences are presented (including some for which they did not prepare, if the group is advanced.)</p> <p>Debrief in your small groups: What worked well? What techniques did your colleagues use that you particularly liked? What surprised you?</p>

	<p>Discuss in large group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you change your approach for different audiences? • How did it feel to change mid-stream like that? • Any good transitions? Perhaps you found yourself talking to two audiences at once? • Why is it important to use techniques that are appropriate for the audience?
<p>Skills Check (7-10 minutes)</p>	<p>We don't often do "bad" examples in this training, but I wanted to do just one. Watch this clip and write down the ways the interpreter failed to plan for her diverse audience.</p> <p>Show clip from Pee Wee at the Alamo (2 min 39 sec), with appropriate caveats.</p> <p>Discuss: What could this interpreter have done to develop opportunities for a diverse audience to connect to the meanings of the Alamo.</p>
<p>Summary (3-5 minutes)</p>	<p>Discuss: How do you think audiences feel when we plan for diversity?</p>
<p>Conclusion (1 minute)</p>	<p>This is the starting point for all programs. Who is your audience, not just what do I want to talk about?</p>
<p>Optional Activity or Self Study</p>	<p>Read the handout (below) on Informal Audience Research (basic techniques used by interpreters as part of their everyday activities to learn about audiences) – discuss ways to share and apply informal audience observations throughout the coming season.</p>

Knowledge of the Audience – Informal Audience Research

Excerpted/adapted from *Interpreting Climate Change: Knowledge of the Audience – Module 3 Learning Companion*. National Park Service, Interpretive Development Program and Climate Change Response Program; 2014.

Gaining audience knowledge relies on identifying what information is needed, choosing appropriate research techniques, conducting the research, and applying it to an interpretive product. Interpreters should be able to apply their findings to identify the interpretive strategies and techniques most appropriate for the intended audience, and to strengthen connections between that audience, the park, and the resources.

Within the NPS, formal research requires a peer-review process to ensure that DOI and NPS policies are followed and neither park resources nor humans are negatively impacted. Interpreters generally do not conduct formal research themselves but may benefit from data and assessments from academic, private, or other circles. On the other hand, interpreters may conduct audience research in a more informal way that still provides useful information and utilizes techniques from the social sciences or humanistic fields. Informal research includes techniques used by interpreters as part of their everyday activities to learn about audiences and can be both quantitative and qualitative in nature.

Informal Research

Before beginning an informal research project, interpreters should determine what they want to learn from visitors, their intended goals and outcomes, and who they will engage. They should define specific audiences: what are their common interests, needs, and behaviors?

Opportunities to conduct informal research exist with each visitor contact and everywhere the public interacts with a park's resources. Interpreters can gather information by using the informal research methods listed below:

A **conversation** provides interpreters with an opportunity to ask questions of the audience, be it in-person or over the phone. Interpreters may start an interpretive talk with casual conversation about where the audience is from, what they know (or think they know) about the site or topic, and their degree of involvement in park stewardship.

Observation is a technique to understand visitor-use patterns of behavior and movement. An interpreter watches audiences move through a park or an exhibit, or interact amongst themselves. It may help, for example, in answering questions about audience interest in exhibits or about the kind of discussions generated among families after a ranger talk.

Participant-observation involves joining an event as both audience and observer. (Because the NPS uniform calls attention to an individual, the interpreter might be able to wear street clothes with permission.)

Responses from interpretive or educational programs might also provide interpreters with information about their audience. Interpreters might gather generalized information

from materials submitted for a student art project, or from feedback in visitor comment books, etc.

Local newspapers may include journalistic articles or opinion pieces about the park or interpretive topics of interest within the community.

Engage with local communities to gather a greater understanding of local perspectives on climate change and park issues. Engaging with the local community shows that the park is invested in the health of the region and does not stand apart.

Social media provide another opportunity for qualitative research: Blogs: Search blogs or write a blog to gain a variety of perceptions in a public journal format. Check out the comments, as well, to see how people respond.

Collecting information about audiences using these methods may involve:

- Taking field notes
- Recording audiences' answers to questions
- Photographing visitor usage of spaces
- Drawing maps
- Reviewing visitor logs and response cards

Interpreters might apply informal research to a range of audiences, from one-time visitors to park website visitors to community residents who have had long-term engagement with the park.