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West Virginia Interpretive Guide
Heritage Steward Training

Need for Interpretation Training

- A guide's ability to increase visitor understanding and connection depends on interpretive skill (McGrath, 2004).
- By providing accurate and compelling interpretation, guides can maximize positive impacts of tourism while minimizing negative (Powell & Ham, 2008; Sweeting, Bruner & Rosenfield, 1999).

National Certification Programs

- **Barriers to participation**
 - Cost
 - Travel
 - Time

WV Interpretive Guide Heritage Steward Training

- Low-cost (\$50)
- 5 online modules
- In-person skill assessment

Online modules

**Offered through WVU Extension Services'
Online Community Learning System
(extcommunity.wvu.edu)**

Topics covered include:

- Definitions, purpose, and history of interpretation
- Principles and techniques for effective interpretation
- Topic, theme, and sub-theme development
- How to research interpretive topics and apply brainstorming techniques
- How to develop, organize, and deliver effective interpretive talks

Online Modules

- Each module contains readings from excerpts from key textbooks on interp., supplemental readings, a presentation of key points, and an assessment.
- Feedback is given to each participant as they complete each module.
- Recorded talks are included to provide course participants with examples.
- Webinars are scheduled to answer questions, discuss assessments, and provide peer-to-peer feedback.

In-person Assessment

- Guides deliver a 10-minute interpretive talk (prepared during their online assignments)
- The workshops:
 - give guides experience in personal interpretation
 - provide a forum for guides to receive feedback
 - introduce guides to the interpretive evaluation process
- Participants receive feedback immediately after their talk, as well as written feedback from instructors and participants.



Recognition

Guides receive a certificate, pin & badge to be recognized as a West Virginia Interpretive Guide Heritage Steward



West Virginia Interpretive Guide Training: A Collaborative Effort

Abstract

West Virginia University's Extension Service partnered with the Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Resources Program to improve guide performance in West Virginia's tourism industry. The result of this partnership is a West Virginia Interpretive Guide Training program aimed at providing low-cost, widely available training to guides throughout the state. The course is divided into two components—a set of online modules and an in-person skill assessment workshop. We expect the benefits of completing the West Virginia Interpretive Guide Training to be similar to the benefits gained by completing national certification courses.

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Introduction

West Virginia University's (WVU) Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Resources Program (RPTR) and Extension Service Community Resources and Economic Development (CRED) formed a unique partnership to train interpretive guides in the West Virginia (WV) tourism industry. The collaborative team is offering an interpretive guide training program, built on the interpretation expertise of RPTR faculty and students, and the community engagement and training experience of CRED. Research on West Virginia tourism and interpretation outcomes, requests for training from local tour companies, and a recently developed Ten Year Tourism Plan for WV inspired the partnership and creation of the training program (AECOM, 2012).

Retrospective Post-then-Pre Survey

Outcome	Pretest		Posttest		n	t	df
	M	SD	M	SD			
I can deliver an interpretive talk.	3.00	.78	4.21	.80	14	-5.09*	13
I can list and explain key principles used in effective interpretation.	2.21	.97	4.21	.70	14	-8.53*	13
I know specific interpretive techniques to make a talk more enjoyable and relevant.	2.64	1.01	4.57	.65	14	-8.71*	13
I can write an effective theme and subthemes.	2.46	1.27	4.38	.65	13	-4.81*	12
I can tailor a talk to meet the needs of an audience.	3.36	1.15	4.64	.50	14	-3.99*	13
I can effectively organize an interpretive talk.	2.71	1.07	4.50	.76	14	-5.34*	13

*=p<.01; Measured on a 5-point scale from 1="not at all competent" to 5="extremely competent"

Learning Outcomes

- Open-ended question was used to assess the most important thing they learned.
- Responses were categorized, and the most frequently mentioned included:
 - how to develop a theme and subthemes (3)
 - the core principles of interpretation (3)
 - how to organize a talk (2)
 - time management (2)



Thank You!

West Virginia Interpretive Guide
Heritage Steward Training

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