NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE
Humanities

FEDERAL/STATE PARTNERSHIP

TIPS FOR PLANNING YOUR SITE VISIT IN 2016

Selecting Site Visitors

- At least one of the two site visitors should have a strong background in the humanities. Familiarity with public humanities programming is a must. The professions and professional experience of the humanities site visitor might include that of college or university professor; humanities based academic administration; local historian or independent scholar with a strong record of scholarship; or professional staff member of a humanities organization such as a museum, historical society, or library.
- The second site visitor might also be a scholar but should be someone familiar with the management and governance of a nonprofit organization. Examples include board members from other state councils, college and university administrators with a background in the humanities, public relations and development professionals with experience in public humanities, or people with experience in nonprofit organizations complementary to a state humanities council.
- At least one site visitor should be from another state or jurisdiction. In many cases, both site visitors will be from outside the state or jurisdiction. Familiarity with the state and jurisdiction, however, can be helpful.
- Current executive directors of state humanities councils will be site visitors only in very rare instances. Current officers of the board of the Federation of State Humanities Councils may **not** be site visitors.
- Directors should contact the nominees **before** submitting their names to NEH to be certain of their interest and availability for the full duration of the site visit and for the preparation of the site visitors' final report, due at NEH four weeks after the site visit.
- The nominees should not have a conflict of interest with the council or an appearance of conflict. That is, the person should not be a current council member or project director, or anyone receiving compensation from a council-supported project or involved in any partnership activities with the council. Judgments about length of time away from the council or a project are discretionary and should be made in consultation with a Federal/State staff member.
- A resume or CV for each candidate must be submitted along with the list of nominees.
- Federal/State Partnership staff are able to provide you with names of possible visitors, if that is useful. We are also happy to discuss possible site visitors with you.
- Site visitors will receive an honorarium of $250 for their work. In addition, NEH will provide compensation for travel to and from the site visit location, lodging during the

site visit, reasonable ground transportation expenses, and meals and incidentals in conformance with the prevailing Government per diem rate.

- Federal/State Partnership staff reserves the right to select at least one site visitor not referred by you to ensure broad representation and diversity.
- Site visitors must not be solicited, nominated to the board, or hired to work with or on behalf of the council until the council receives the final close-out letter.

Setting the Agenda

- The site visit generally lasts between two to three days. An initial day for the site team to travel and to have their first meeting with each other is required.
- The visit must open (1 - 1 ½ hour) and close (up to 1 hour) with meetings with the executive director. If schedules permit, this meeting may occur on the initial travel day.
- The team needs to meet with the following: 1) members of the board's executive committee, 2) a few additional board members, if available, 3) all staff members, 4) project directors, 5) scholars, 6) grantees, and 7) council partners or collaborators who play a major role in the council's activities. Staff and board members **do not** attend meetings between the team and other groups, although they may begin the meetings with introductions. These meetings should last at least an hour, but not more than an hour-and-a-half.
- Please ensure that all programs listed in the self-assessment report have at least one representative during the site visit meetings.
- The people with whom the site team meets should represent the kinds of people with whom the Council does business. The goal is to provide a 360-degree look at the Council's work.
- Group meetings should include a minimum of five people and be limited to ten to twelve people at most. Experience tells us that site visitors are able to conduct a more focused discussion when the group is not too large and when participants are well-informed. It is best when the meetings are composed of people with similar experiences with the Council (see above). We encourage you to distribute a copy of the narrative section of the self-assessment report to meeting participants well before they meet with the site team. You may wish to discuss the number and kinds of attendees with the Federal/State Partnership staff member who will accompany the site team.
- Some councils schedule the site visit to coincide with a board meeting. This is not required but may be an option when choosing your dates. If the site team meets with the full board, there should be time on the board's agenda dedicated to talking with the team and the team should be welcome as observers during other parts of the board meeting. If the site visit coincides with a board meeting, the team must meet separately with the executive committee.
- If the site visit does coincide with a board meeting, the site visitors must also have adequate time to meet separately with the various groups listed above.

- The executive director should determine whether travel within the state is important in consultation with Federal/State Partnership. Because of time constraints, it is usually best when the agenda includes little or no travel.
- If travel or outside events are planned, constituent meetings can be reduced. Please plan on nor more than three meetings per day if travel is required. Consult with your Federal/State representative whenever travel or events are included on an agenda.
- A copy of the site visit agenda, along with the names and affiliations of meeting attendees, should be distributed to the site visit team and the Federal/State staff member accompanying the team at least two weeks in advance of the site visit. It is understood that some of the details may be tentative as will be some of the attendees. The final version of the agenda may be given to the team at the start of the site visit.
- Please leave at least 15 minutes between meetings; a 20 - 30 minute break is ideal. This gives the site visitors time to consult with each other and to prepare for the next discussion. It also builds flexibility into the agenda.
- All meetings should start no earlier than 9 am, unless discussed with Federal/State Partnership first.
- It is difficult to conduct formal site visit meetings over meals. It can, however, be beneficial for the site team to share meals with people connected with the council, as this provides opportunities for informal conversations. These meals, however, are optional for site visitors.
- Attendance or participation in a council-funded program, event, or a more public gathering may take the place of one formal meeting with council constituents (grantees, partners). Such programs can provide complementary views of the council's work.
- Please limit the planned daily meetings with constituents to a maximum of 4 with no events, or a maximum of 3 with 1 event.
- The close out meeting with the executive director must end at least 2 hours before the first flight out for the site team. Please ensure the team has adequate time to get to the airport if traveling home that evening. Federal/State Partnership will provide you with flight times.

If you have any questions or concerns about arranging your site visit, please feel free to contact the staff of Federal/State Partnership. We are happy to assist you in your planning.

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