



## **TIPS FOR PLANNING YOUR SITE VISIT IN 2012**

### **Selecting Site Visitors**

- At least one of the two site visitors should have a strong background in the humanities. 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 visitor should be familiar with public humanities programming.
- 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 programming, 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 so as 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 six 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 can be made in consultation with a Federal/State staff member.
- A resume of each candidate should 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.

## **Setting the Agenda**

- The site visit generally lasts two days. An initial day for the site team to travel and to have their first meeting with each other extends the time period of the site visit into three days.
- The visit should open (1- 1 ½ hour) and close (up to 1 hour) with meetings with the executive director.
- The team should also 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.
- Group meetings should be limited to ten to twelve people. 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 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, it is ideal if the team can also meet separately with the executive committee. When the site visit does not coincide with a board meeting, the site team **must** meet 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. Because of time constraints, though, it is usually best when the agenda includes little or no travel.
- 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. 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.

- It is difficult to conduct formal site visit meetings over meals. It can, of course, be beneficial for the site team to share meals with people connected with the council because this provides opportunities for informal conversation.
- Attendance or participation in a council-funded program, event, or a more public gathering should not take the place of formal meetings with designated participants (i.e., meetings with the executive committee, project directors, or others). Such programs, however, may provide complementary views of the council's work and may take place in addition to the formal meetings of the site visit.

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

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