

MIDWEST REGION GUIDELINES

FOR

INTERPRETIVE SKILLS TEAM

Recommended by: W. Eugene Cot
Regional Chief Interpreter

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Approved by **Acting** William W. Jentz
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Date 10/13/87

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FOR INTERPRETIVE SKILLS TEAM

In 1982, a program was initiated by Mather Training Center and the WASO Training Office to develop Regional teams of interpretive instructors. The Regional Interpretive Skills Teams proved very valuable in reducing the backlog of interpretive training needs, and the teams are now an important part of every Region's operation.

The teams coordinate and present workshops on Skills I, II, III, and IV levels and assist with special interpretive workshops and seasonal training. Members also provide suggestions and feedback about interpretive training to the Regional Office. Besides instructing interpretive workshops, team members may be asked to participate in interpretive planning projects and critiquing interpretive park operations.

Members of the Skills Team must be selected from among the finest Interpreters in the Region. They should be recognized by fellow Interpreters as outstanding professionals, experienced in the art and science of Interpretation. They may have been nominees or winners of the prestigious Freeman Tilden Award. They should reflect a wide range of interpretive ability from frontline Field Interpreters to Chief Interpreters in large parks.

Several Regions have experienced traumatic fluctuations in the size of their team as members transfer in and out of the Region. Midwest Region has lost three members and gained two members due to transfers. We have a total of five active members. That may sound more than sufficient, but in FY87, the Midwest Region conducted eight interpretive workshops. These demands stretch individual instructors to their limits, and place additional burdens on each member's home park. We probably should carry a team size of 8-10 if we develop this program to its fullest potential.

Mather Training Center has provided some guidelines and options for Regions to consider in expanding the team to meet the needs of the Region. These were weighed carefully in reaching these guidelines for the Midwest Region:

1. Four categories of interpretive instructors:

a. Active Skills Team Members are Interpreters who have attended the 2-week Instructor's Workshop, and have the written permission of their Superintendent to spend up to two weeks each year planning for, and instructing, Regional Interpretive Workshops.

b. Inactive Team Members are Interpreters who have attended the 2-week Instructor's Workshop but, by their choice or by that of their Superintendent, they are not currently available to participate on the team.

c. Apprentice Instructors are Interpreters who have applied to become Instructors, have their Superintendent's permission, and have been selected to help teach part of a workshop with active team members. They have not attended the 2-week formal Instructor Training Workshop, but will be required to complete the 8-lesson notebook "How to Teach Grownups," provided by the Midwest Region Training Office, before instructing at a workshop.

d. Guest Instructors will be invited to present certain sessions at workshops. These individuals represent a special skill knowledge and are selected by the Workshop Coordinator. They are not official members of the Skills Team, and might occasionally be participants attending the workshop.

2. Workshop Coordinators:

Each active member is expected to serve as a workshop coordinator, as needed. The Coordinator determines the course agenda, arranges for accommodations, selects specific instructors, provides all logistical support before, during, and after the course, and is responsible for planning and budgetary accountability.

3. Role of Superintendents:

Team members' first responsibility is to their duties in their park. Their involvement on the team must have the approval of their Superintendent. In the past, approval was required to join the team but, after that, approval was assumed to last for as long as the team member wished. When an Instructor transferred into a new park, the Superintendent was expected to automatically grant the same approval as the previous Superintendent had. Because Superintendents and Instructors move, a more flexible system is desirable.

Each active team member and apprentice is expected to contribute up to two weeks per year on planning and presenting interpretive training for the Region. The Superintendent's approval assures the Region that the member will be allowed to participate a minimum of 80 hours on behalf of the team. During that time, the individual park will pick up the employees regular salary, telephone expenses and clerical costs incidental to preparing for the workshop. Travel, per diem and special material expenses for the workshops will be borne by the Regional Training Office or other appropriate funds.

When an individual applies for the 2-week Instructor's Training Workshop, a letter from the Superintendent, approving in advance a 3-year period of active team membership, must accompany the application. The initial three years are important for the new Instructor to apply what has been learned and to render an adequate return to the Service for the investment made.

After the initial three years, an agreement may be signed each year. This will allow the Instructor and the Superintendent an annual option for the Instructor to become an "inactive team member" for one or more years. Both the Superintendent and the Instructor would have to sign the annual agreement, or the Instructor will lose his/her active status on the team.

After a period of inactive membership, an Instructor may submit the annual agreement, signed by himself and approved by the Superintendent, to the Regional Skills Team Coordinator. The Coordinator, after consulting with a majority of members, will recommend appropriate action to the Regional Chief Interpreter.

4. Regional Team Coordinator:

The Regional Team Coordinator will be designated by the Regional Chief Interpreter. The Regional Coordinator will determine the Regional interpretive training needs, arrange funding, schedule workshops, and select workshop coordinators. The Regional Coordinator will represent the team in contacts with the Regional Director, the training centers, and the Washington Office. The incumbent Interpreter should have training experience and assist in instructing sessions and aiding the workshop coordinators, as necessary.

5. Selection of Apprentice Instructors

The Regional Coordinator will decide when to add new team members and what particular talents or strengths are most needed for a balanced team.

Interpreters, with their Superintendents' permission, are invited to inform the Regional Coordinator of their interest in becoming an instructor, and to outline their particular qualifications. After reviewing the applications, the Coordinator and Regional Chief Interpreter will select new apprentices or may ask for assistance from the Training Office in the process.

Criteria for selection will include, but not be limited to:

- Recommendation from park Supervisor/Superintendent.
- Experience in at least two parks as an Interpreter.
- Has attended interpretive training workshops.
- Has planned and presented interpretive training in parks or on the Regional/national level and shown potential as an instructor.
- Is recognized as an outstanding Interpreter, with a variety of accomplishments, as evidenced by a Tilden Award nomination, having developed innovative interpretive programs, performance appraisals, special awards, Supervisor's recommendations, and other achievements.
- Superintendents' written approval of the candidate's mandatory 2-week commitment to the team.

Relying heavily upon input from others, the Coordinator will select new apprentices and notify them and their Superintendents of their new status as apprentices with the team. After serving as a satisfactory apprentice, the employee must apply and be accepted for the 2-week Mather course and have their Superintendent's approval for an initial 3-year term of service, in order to become an active member of the Skills Team.

6. Annual Team Meeting

An annual meeting of the active team members and the team coordinators should take place at the annual Chief Interpreters' Workshop, insofar as possible. Active team members should attend this workshop in order to be completely up to date on trends and new policies as they affect NPS Interpretation. While gathered in the same location for the Chief Interpreters' Workshop, team members should meet to discuss training needs, future schedules, review apprentice nominees, and plan team activities for the Region.

MIDWEST INTERPRETIVE SKILLS TEAM

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