

Partner Site Criteria Questions Results

Between July 28 and August 17, 2008, partners were asked to answer questions concerning Partner Site Criteria. Questions from the survey and results follow.

1. If you represent a site that contributes to telling this region's nationally important story, what incentives do you think should be identified to help you provide the best possible experience at your site for visitors? Is the current benefits package at the bottom of page 1 of the 2006 Partner Site criteria compelling enough to balance the requirements and responsibilities outlined for FFNHA Partner Sites? If not, what benefits would you like to see added OR what requirements/responsibilities would you like to remove? (Note: the benefits currently listed include: "networking and marketing visitation within a regional and national program/audience; access to financial and technical resources; opportunities for interpretive and educational projects; participation in marketing plans and programs; and use of Freedom's Frontier Logo.")

- These are adequate in terms of providing benefits to participation by sites
- I think the current package is acceptable.
- Signage, technical resources to improve displays and archival treatment of items.
- We think the benefits package is sufficient at this time.
- All Key Benefits listed, to me, also serve as good indicators of requirements/responsibilities at, and in preparation of, FFNHA Partner Sites. We must keep in mind that not all partners have yet come on board. It is crucial to the sustainability of FFNHA that all participants become fully aware of the seriousness of committed participation. By attending meetings and participating in surveys, participants will learn how important being part of a National Heritage Area is.
- these work for us
- The benefits seem to be sufficient.
- People are always going to want more. The main incentive should be the desire to share the history/story of the site. I believe the benefits are adequate.
- I think "Opportunities for collaboration with other sites" and something like "Development of a body of knowledge on the freedom issues that played a significant role in this region" should be listed as benefit
- Benefits as listed in 06 are fine, but we should add an explicit possibility of at least guidance toward fund raising, if not grants from FFNHA itself, for signage, and we should PROVIDE the brochures and maps for the larger FFNHA area. As for requirements, I suggest we add individuals who own a site(s) of designated or evident broader historic interest (on the registry or OUGHT to be, in judgment of the management and governance of FFNHA)

2. Evaluating your site for visitor readiness addresses visitor comfort while establishing levels for the ways your site tells FFNHA stories. In looking at all criteria listed in the draft Partner Site Criteria, which ones do you feel are necessary (e.g. should be "required")? Are there any that you think are nice additions but not necessary (e.g. "recommended" rather than "required")?

- Authentic and engaging interpretation of the site. Accurate representation of visitor services. For example, correct open hours and facilities.
- Current standards are acceptable.
- Build understanding, generate excitement, expand local participation in the national heritage area, is sometimes difficult, so this might be a better recommended criteria rather than required.
- All site criteria are necessary.
- For all Levels - all stated criteria should be required but define "open" as some sites are accessible 24 hours a day with interpretive signage signage What does "other authorized linkages" mean? Define "interpretation"
- The hours of operation criteria needs to be reevaluated. A place can be open 8-5 M-F, which is 40 hours per week but yet not qualify for anything above point of interest because it does not have weekend hours.
- Is this where we leave "space" for sites outside the boundaries but with valid "stories?"
- I don't object to having required criteria. I do think there will be very few "full" partner sites due to the 40 hour requirement. Most Museums I know that are open a lot fall a little short

of 40 hours and I doubt that they would be able to expand hours any, but maybe I am wrong. I also think it is much better for a site to be open weekends year round rather than seasonally for 20 hours a week, as will be required to be even a part time or seasonal site. Even if a site were open 8 hours a day over the weekend, it would not be open 20 hours a week.

- We should drop the implication that all sites are expected eventually to move up the ladder toward level 1. Some are likely appropriately permanently only points of interest. Sites that can only operate effectively on a part time basis should not be scared off by an expectation they should be like levels "above" them.

3. Some FFNHA representatives would like to have the Partner Site criteria stick to easily measured "objective" criteria to make the review process simpler and more clear cut. For example, objective criteria would answer questions such as: What hours are you open? Do you offer restrooms? Do you offer drinking water? Others feel that "subjective" criteria, while more difficult to evaluate equally across all sites, include some of the most important interpretive criteria and thus should be included in addition to the objective criteria. Examples of subjective criteria include: Do to stories at the site connect to the FFNHA themes? Have the stories being told at the site been authenticated? Do you think the criteria should stick to objective criteria, or should subjective criteria be included as well?

- Objective criteria provides equal opportunities for all sites to become part of Freedom's Frontier. Some subject criteria should be included to help facilitate good interpretation of the sites.
- If we don't have a benchmark dealing with whether a site is telling the story or connecting with our themes we will lose any ability at "quality control" and make our branding meaningless. Without quality control we will have a much harder time providing a quality experience designed to encourage and insure repeat visits.
- Both criteria should be included. Our stories in Linn County, Ks. are very important to the FFNHA themes (all of them). We have very limited funding and staffing for the most part but try to be available as much as possible to visitors, by appointment, if sites are closed.
- Objective criteria are much easier to use in evaluating, however, some of the smaller sites might have difficulty meeting some of these criteria. Perhaps a combination of objective and subjective criteria might be more fairly used in certain circumstances
- If we rely upon "easily measured 'objective' criteria," we cannot demonstrate our uniqueness through our stories. Subjective criteria as well as objective criteria must be included.
- A blend would be best if a workable format can be established based on mutual trust that the authentication process will be fair.
- Objective
- Everything we do is subjective to some extent. Subjective criteria SHOULD be included.
- There must be both. We cannot assume to know what the visitor is looking for.
- I think some sort of evaluation concerning how well a site connects to the Freedom's Frontier themes is important and it is important have some sort of evaluation of the interpretation. I would like to see us work together in helping sites improve their interpretation of the Freedom's Frontier themes. I certainly know our sites do not have a level of interpretation that would be needed yet.
- We should include SUBJECTIVE criteria. We should try for including sites of SIGNIFICANCE both locally, and more generally through connecting with the broader themes and with stories that reflect the broader themes. However, a site might be an example of the larger story or broader regional or national significance, but not in itself such a larger story. An example might be a church founded by the escaped or liberated slaves.

4. One goal of the Partner Site program was to create a tiered structure where sites could move up as improvements and enhancements were made. The 2006 draft criteria call for five levels. One way to look at this could be as three levels with the top level including three levels—full-time, part-time and seasonal (SEE CHART BELOW). How many tiers or levels would be most helpful to you? Should the "emerging" and "point of interest" levels be used for sites that don't yet meet all of the criteria for one of the top three levels?

- This chart is very helpful. Having only three levels helps tremendously
- I can accept the diagram illustrated. The original concept, as I recall, was to use the "emerging" designation for a site which was not currently involved. Point of interest implied signage only with

the remaining designations for those sites which were staffed. Using i-pod tours and other technological innovations may help soften the distinctions.

- Yes, point of interest sites should be included. Again, in small communities where all staffing is volunteer it is hard to be open even to the seasonal level although the site is accessible with signage and as stated above, by appointment.
- We feel there should be some designation whereby the State Historical Sites would be identified no matter which level they fall under. The state Historical Society dictates the hours and the months of operation.
- To answer this, I will give one of Humboldt's "sites" as an example: We offer a self-guided Civil War Tour which includes a Civil War Monument (a marble mural of summary etched pictures of Humboldt's Sept 8 Raid and October 14, 1861, Burning) on the city square and 12 separate monuments around town. Each bears a brief interpretive description and a pictorial identification. A brochure containing Humboldt's Territorial and Civil War history and a map locating the Civil War Monument and the 12 separate monuments (plus written interpretations for each monument) is available at two locations in town. One is a store on the square that is open M-Sat from 10 am - 5 pm. The other location is Johnson's General Store open 24 hours, every day. I keep both places supplied with brochures. The brochure indicates that free conducted group tours are available by advance appointment and gives my phone number. When they call, I let them know that my tour lasts 1 1/2 hours. I have had groups of 2 and groups of 32. Weather permitting, I am in 1861 complete and authentic day dress costume. We are advertised on the Travel Kansas website and will be listed in the 2009-10 Official Kansas Guide. We are also listed in Marci Penner's Kansas Guidebook for Explorers. I am attempting to get a state brown sign on 169 Hwy. This particular site is not, to my knowledge, listed on FFNHA Potential Tours. I only mention that because I'm not sure at what level it should be designated. I believe that when I applied for Visitor Readiness I gave it a "Point of Interest Level." Even though it is available at all times and has bathroom facilities and water available en route, I did not know if printed interpretation can be sufficient, even though personal interpretation is available by appointment on a conducted tour. Because of its self-guided nature, I see it at "Point of Interest Level" never rising to a higher level, even though it is available year-round and offers various levels of interpretation. Even though Camp Hunter Park is on the 12-site tour, it is listed as a separate site. We are working on a number of interpretive possibilities for Camp Hunter. To sum this up: I am conflicted by the fact that an assigned "Point of Interest" level suggests that a number of important criteria are not being met. Visitors seeing Humboldt's Self-Guided 12-site Civil War Tour might pass over it as unimportant and miss colorful stories with important connections to other sites. Do you have any suggestions?
- Would those at the "emerging" and "Point of interest" level still have access to all the benefit incentives defined above? Would they be included in tours, brochures, etc? Would they be able to use the FF logo? In other words, what would be their status?
- I believe the three tiers is sufficient, but maybe add a category on the third tier to account for the full time operations without weekend hours.
- The levels are fine but there needs to be a category for permanent points of interest. Some important sites are never going to have enough money or personnel to become even seasonal.
- Care must be taken not to inform the visitor that any level is less important than the top.
- I think of "point of interest" as a site without visitor services (such as a scenic look out or a privately owned site that has agreed to participate but is not open to the public.) I do not see it as a stop along the road of development necessarily. It seems to me we have two uses for the partnership designations - one is to inform visitors about what type of site they will be visiting (will it have bathrooms and be open more?) and a criteria that could be used for evaluating priorities for development, funding etc. I am not sure that these two criteria fit together very well.
- Yes, we should INCLUDE points of interests, especially, and have a process of considering emerging sites for possible inclusion later.

5. The current criteria for levels 1-3 (full-time, part-time and seasonal) are identical other than the requirements for hours of operation. In designating Partner Sites, does this make sense? Would you have higher expectations in terms of participation for full-time sites with paid staff than you would of smaller sites with more limited hours and staff?

- Yes, having a paid staff raises expectations
- The original idea was to insure that visitors would have an idea of availability of what was available when. Visitors expecting the full range of sites to be open year round, arriving and finding out the

site they wanted to visit was unavailable due to the time of year, would cause real PR nightmares and damage our credibility.

- Of course, sites with paid, full-time staff should be able to provide more services and possibly assist the smaller sites.
- These criteria for levels 1-3 are not identical in hours of operation, or months to be open. Level one sites are supposed to be open 12 months a year-40 hours a week. Part-time sites are to be open 9 months-20 hours or 4 days a week. Seasonal sites are to be open 5 months-20 hours or 3 days a week. This does make good sense. We would expect higher participation for full-time sites with paid staff. Smaller sites do not have the resources.
- Yes, I think I would. So would the majority of our visitors. This brings up an important truth: According to the NPS, FFNHA is supposed to be built on grass roots participation, which implies volunteerism. Are we now shifting to give greater honor or status to sites with paid staff and longer hours? Ideally, the number of volunteers will grow as FFNHA grows and sites can be staffed with an abundance of informed and passionate volunteers. Realistically, can we count on that?
- Of course, if they have more resources, one expects more.
- Yes. I would have higher expectations of a "full-time" operation.
- Yes. Perhaps annual budget could be part of the criteria.
- Yes, probably would.
- I am not sure what you mean by "participation."
- Yes -- my expectations would be higher for full-time sites with paid staff and I think the general public would also have higher expectations.
- Yes, I would have higher expectations of the higher levels. However, the sites open only part time, or with limited or no staff may not be able to provide on-sites guidance personnel. We should supply such sites with literature, allow self-guide aides, and make good use of advanced technology, such as the i-pod casts, to inform visitors to sites that lack staff on their own.

6. The current draft includes general criteria as well as criteria directed to "Owners/Managers." According to members of the FFNHA Partnership Team who drafted the criteria in 2006, the primary reason for including criteria directed to owners and managers was to ensure that all entities responsible for a site had signed off on the responsibilities outlined for Partner Sites. A simplified alternative was suggested that would eliminate duplicate criteria and add in a signature page for the person completing the application, the site owner, and the site manager. Would a signature page for site owners and managers provide a simpler alternative that would still accomplish what FFNHA needs?

- Yes
- Yes, a sign off page can work.
- No opinion
- We feel a signature page would be sufficient for owner/manages.
- That will work as long as the site owners and managers agree to be responsible for the performance of workers and the knowledge and reliability of the interpreters. Most importantly, each site needs dedicated and knowledgeable people communicating with visitors.
- Simple should be better.
- The signature page would be preferred.
- I think so.
- I think the signature page would work.
- This alternative would work if there was the same type of "checks and balances" on this page as with other websites where opening (and presumably reading) the policies of FFNHA was a required link before a signature could be added to the "owners/managers" list. With this requirement there would be some guarantee that new owners/managers had at least read the policies rather than just 'opening and clicking' to fulfill a project on a list of projects that needed to be completed.
- I am not sure a signature page would be simpler. Owners should certainly be asked to sign on to the inclusion of the site in FFNHA. It may be confusing to require managers to sign (many sites will not have any) and obviously someone has to file the application, so should sign the form.

7. The current structure only addresses Partner Sites. Some stakeholders feel that other categories, such as "Partner Events" or "Partner Trails" should be included as well. If additional



categories are included, it is likely that they would be phased in over time. Would you like to see other categories besides "sites" should be included as official FFNHA partners?

- Yes, Partner Trails helps incorporate the designated scenic byways, natural trails and other trail opportunities.
- Partner Trails would be an excellent addition. These are less likely to rely on annual line item funding than are "partner events". The problem with "partner events" in these unsettled budgetary times is that things previously considered "standard and reliable" have suddenly come on the chopping block. It might be appropriate to include events sponsored by partners, but I am very cautious about including a category designated as "Partner
- Who would decide which events would qualify? WE all think our events are worthy. This would have to be looked at carefully. Could some other designation be given other than partners? Events"
- YES
- Absolutely "Yes." As I have stated on another survey, EVENTS and our natural resource, the Neosho River, are an integral part of our stories.
- I assume "trails" are different from "Tours" of common themes. Does this mean marked trails or what? I would like to see events, tours, trails or tours included.
- Yes - partner events.
- Yes.
- Yes
- I think that the more the merrier in this. There are lots of possibilities- what about performance groups or research libraries with significant holdings in the area that covers Freedom's Frontier?
- Links to other categories would be my preference over the broadening of the categories at this point in time. Eventually, once FFNHA has a track record established it may make sense to broaden the current structure to include other than partner sites.
- Yes, include other categories, especially "partner trails" that have already worked out sites and signage, and we should help them with appropriate self-guide aides. Events could be listed in the FFNHA website, as is already the practice. The staff should have some leeway of decision making here, and some simple and clear criteria met, especially to connect them to the themes of the FFNHA, and perhaps to particular official sites of the FFNHA.

8. Do you have any other comments or concerns regarding the FFNHA Partner Site criteria?

- None
- I am thankful for the opportunity to participate in this survey.
- no
- I still don't like the term "seasonal" because part time sites might be seasonal too. And again, it seems to me that open year round is much better than 5 months a year because different areas experience tourism at different times of the year.
- I encountered some problems using the website for the survey -- for example, not being able to get back to the questions on-line.