

Visitor Studies Professional Competencies

Competency A. Principles and Practices of Visitor Studies

All professionals involved in the practice of visitor research and evaluation should be familiar with the history, terminology, past and current developments, key current and historic publications, and major contributions of the field. Visitor studies professionals should also be familiar with major areas that have relevance to visitor studies, including evaluation, educational theory, environmental design, developmental psychology, communication theory, leisure studies, and marketing research.

Competency B. Principles and Practices of Informal Learning Environments

All individuals who engage in visitor research and evaluation must understand the principles and practices of learning in informal environments, the characteristics that define informal learning settings, and an understanding of how learning occurs in informal settings. An understanding of the principles, practices, and processes by which these experiences are designed or created is required in order to make intelligent study interpretations and recommendations.

Competency C: Knowledge of and Practices with Social Science Research and Evaluation Methods and Analysis

Visitor studies professionals must not only understand but also demonstrate the appropriate practice of social science research and evaluation methods and analysis. These include:

- Research design
- Instrument/protocol design
- Measurement techniques
- Sampling
- Data analysis
- Data interpretation
- Report writing and oral communication
- Human subjects research ethics
- Research design, measurement, and analysis that shows sensitivity to diversity and diversity issues

Competency D: Business Practices, Project Planning, and Resource Management

Visitor studies professionals must possess appropriate skills for designing, conducting, and reporting visitor studies and evaluation research. Professionals should demonstrate their ability to conceptualize a visitor studies or evaluation research project in a context of informal learning institution management and administration (i.e., scheduling, budgeting, personnel, contracting).

Competency E: Professional Commitment

Visitor studies professionals should commit to the pursuit, dissemination, and critical assessment of theories, studies, activities, and approaches utilized in and relevant to visitor studies. Through conference attendance and presentations, board service, journals and publications, and other

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formal and informal forums of communication, visitor studies professionals should support the continued development of visitor research and evaluation.