



Terms of Reference: Integrated Interpretation Program for WMF Project Sites

Background and context

World Monuments Fund (WMF) is the leading independent organization devoted to safeguarding the world's most treasured places to enrich people's lives and build mutual understanding across cultures and communities. Since 1965, WMF's global team of experts has worked to preserve the world's diverse cultural heritage through field projects at more than 700 project sites, located in 112 countries. WMF now seeks to understand the potential for the development of an integrated interpretation program at a group of select project sites. Candidate sites are most likely to be drawn from the organization's portfolio of "Signature" projects, which are projects where WMF has made a sustained commitment, intended to address multiple conservation and other challenges, with a view to transformational impact at the level of the project site and beyond. WMF seeks to strike a balance between the development of state-of-the-art interpretation centers that will bring global visibility to Signature project sites and sensitivity to the local context and specificity of each place, project, and communities.

WMF is seeking a researcher to carry out a study of visitor centers at heritage places and provide recommendations for the development of an effective site interpretation program for WMF project sites. The study should be informed by a review of relevant literature, interviews with practitioners, and well-documented case studies.

Methodologies

- Literature review. The researcher may need access to the library of an academic or research institution.
- Practitioner interviews: interviews with 8-10 practitioners in interpretive planning, exhibition design, public history, visitor management, and other areas related to museum studies and public education. Interviewees will be identified by the researcher, in collaboration with WMF.
- Case study analysis: analysis of 2-3 cases of exemplary approaches to the interpretation of heritage places. Each case study should include an overview of the interpretation plan, a summary of the content of interpretation, photographs and drawings (as available), the assessed impact on awareness of the site for local and global audiences and if possible, an interview with the designer or current manager.
- Creative thinking. The researcher should deploy creative thinking to propose innovative approaches with the potential to fulfil WMF's goals and raise awareness locally and internationally about these particular heritage sites, the importance of heritage conservation in general, and WMF's work.

Objectives of the study and reporting format

The study should cover the topics listed below, and the study report should follow the specified structure. However, the researcher may make changes to the structure according to the findings and the researcher's judgment:

- 1) Executive Summary (1-page)
- 2) General Review of the Practice of Site Interpretation
 - Discuss the general purposes of visitor centers and broader interpretation programs (for education, entertainment/recreation, donor and partner recognition, others)
 - Discuss the recent evolution of site interpretation and outline specific directions in which site interpretation is currently headed, with reference to examples
 - Explain the importance of visitor centers and interpretation programs in light of WMF's [mission](#)
- 3) Audience of Interpretation
 - Identify the audience of interpretation for WMF sites including international/local audiences, experts/non-experts, domestic/international tourists, families, and school groups
 - Discuss how WMF can serve multiple audiences and consider their specific needs and interests, including accessibility requirements and language barriers
 - Recommend strategies to effectively communicate with various audiences
- 4) Site Selection Criteria
 - Identify criteria for selecting and prioritizing candidate sites for interpretation
- 5) Visitor Center Design
 - Explore the potential of setting up partnerships between internationally renowned designers/artists and local professionals to design visitor centers
 - Discuss how these international and local professionals could be identified and selected
- 6) Interpretation Content
 - Explain how WMF can strike a balance:
 - among multiple perspectives on a heritage place (artistic and historical, cultural, environmental, communal, individual/personal)?
 - between the need to provide multiple interpretations and understandings of a place, and the ability to tell a coherent, memorable story?
 - in the style of interpretation, between didactic approaches, focusing on expert values, and participatory approaches, focusing on non-expert/visitor values?
 - between telling a local story and maintaining global consistency among sites that allows for WMF's voice and brand to come through at all locations?
 - Specify what configuration of disciplines should be involved in the development of interpretive content
- 7) Narratives and Sensitive Issues in Interpretation
 - Discuss how WMF can ensure critical and responsible thinking around the cultural narratives that are promulgated at WMF visitor centers
 - Explain how interpretive content can address sensitive historical issues (Examples: colonialism and Empire, slavery and forced labor, intercommunal conflict and persecution, iconoclasm and destruction, other contentious political history).

8) Strategies for Communicating WMF's Core Values

- Discuss how visitor centers and interpretive content can embody and communicate WMF's [core values](#): 1) *A Sense of Wonder*, 2) *A People-First Approach*, and 3) *A Can-Do Attitude*
- Recommend strategies to effectively communicate WMF's values to visitors and local audiences and to bring international recognition and visibility to WMF's work

9) Local Collaboration

- Discuss how WMF can engage with local communities and involve local community members in the interpretation program alongside international professionals
- Recommend collaborative approaches that WMF can take to ensure community voices are heard, in line with WMF's core value of *A People-First Approach* (see also #8)
- Recommend ways to involve local designers, artists, and craftspeople in the interpretation program, including exhibition design and fabrication
- Recommend standards that WMF can set and internal rules that WMF can establish for itself in this regard

10) Visibility for WMF

- Discuss how WMF can provide appropriate visibility for itself in the interpretation process, including donor recognition, in order to continue to be able to bring material support to the conservation of irreplaceable heritage sites
- Recommend strategies for WMF to ensure that its brand and voice are consistent across all locations where interpretation is offered

11) Responsibilities of WMF and its Partners

- Discuss the responsibilities WMF takes on through the creation of visitor centers
- Discuss how WMF should manage visitor expectations around amenities and services to be offered at its visitor centers (bathrooms, WiFi, etc.)
- Recommend appropriate expectations for WMF to set of its governmental and other partners
- Recommend a set of key points for WMF to negotiate with partners regarding maintenance, staffing levels, provision of electric power, and security
- Recommend strategies for WMF to ensure long-term sustainability, given that WMF is not a site manager/operator

12) Risk

- Discuss potential downsides and unforeseen risks associated with interpretation
- Recommend ways for WMF to mitigate any of those risks

13) Core Principles

- Based on the study objectives and findings, propose 3-5 core principles to guide WMF's visitor center and site interpretation practice

14) Conclusion

- Summarize the study objectives, findings, and recommendations

- Discuss implications of the study for WMF's mission and future work in heritage conservation

15) Appendices

- Include supporting materials that provide additional information to support the recommendations made in the report.

Deliverables

The deliverables of this study will include:

- A report, covering the content and following the structure listed above (25 pages without illustrations).
- A supplemental, illustrated report, discussing 2-3 case studies and their approaches to site interpretation.
- References to published or otherwise publicly available interpretation plans.

Timeline

The study will be completed within four months of the signing of a consulting contract.

Remuneration

Total compensation of US \$15,000, for the researcher and any collaborators, to include any expenses related to research and report writing.

Expressions of Interest

To express your interest in carrying out this study, please send a letter and your professional qualifications to Yiannis Avramides, Senior Director of Programs (iavramides@wmf.org) by November 3, 2023. In your letter, please describe your proposed approach, relevant experience, and any specific requirements that you may have.