



Skill Builders: Giving Direction To Story Development

The National Park Service is one of the country's foremost interpreters of our nation's natural, cultural and historic resources. Its training programs recommend a three-step process to clarify an interpretive effort:

1. Define the purpose
2. Define significance
3. Clarify the theme

Reflecting on the following questions can help give direction to development of your byway story.

1. Define The Purpose

Consider what you want the road to accomplish. Bring more travelers and increase tourism expenditures? Raise public awareness about an important cultural or environmental issue? Protect a landscape? Educate people about a little-known aspect of history? Refer back to your vision statement. Make sure everything aligns with the road's purpose and your broader goal(s).

2. Define Significance

What is the byway's significance? You may know when you start byway planning, or you may need to go through the inventory and evaluation process. No matter how you do it, you must be clear on why this byway is significant. What are its qualities that make it different, interesting and/or important? The story should support and align with the byway's underlying significance.

3. Clarify The Theme

Once the purpose of the road and its significance are clear, then you can review your thematic or story options. Most byways have a number of valid story threads to pursue; the hard decision is choosing one. Aligning the byway's purpose and significance is a good way to ensure that the story amplifies the most important aspects of the road and corridor.