

Visitor Studies Association

Evaluator Competencies for Professional Development



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Part I: Establish Your Professional Development Profile.

If you are unsure about where to start in determining your professional development plan, it will be helpful to understand your strengths and weaknesses with respect to the five basic competencies considered critical in the Visitor Studies field. Use the following table to gauge your current professional strengths and those areas that you would like to strengthen. Once you have an idea of your current professional profile, go to Part II and identify ways that you can strengthen your knowledge, skills, and abilities in the various VSA competencies.

Rate yourself in terms of high, medium, or low for your knowledge of each of the competencies, professional commitment, and ethics.

Competency	High I feel extremely knowledgeable about this	Medium I have some knowledge but would like more.	Low I know very little about this	None Does not apply to me
A. Principles and practices of visitor studies.				
B. Principles and practices of informal learning.				
C. Research & evaluation methods and practices in the social sciences.				
D. Project planning & resource management.				
E. Professional commitment.				

Part II: Establish a Professional Development Plan

- Step 1: Determine your learning goals. What is it that you want to learn in each of the competency areas? You can write your goals in what ever manner are the most helpful to you. What is important is that you do write them down.
- Step 2: What is your time frame to accomplish your goals? Again, you can write this as specifically as will be most helpful to you but do set a time goal in writing.
- Step 3: A variety of learning alternatives are presented to help you build strength in each of the competencies. Identify the method/s that will work best for you and write those in the Personal Plan column. This is a menu of options, it is not a check list and so it is not necessary to develop a personal plan for all of the competency categories. Also, in some cases, you can be very specific, for example, if you know of courses, readings, or experiences that are offered regularly and you can determine when you will be able to participate. In other cases, such as VSA workshops, you have to keep on the lookout for when such workshops may be offered. Your level of accomplishment is up to you. You can refer to the Reviewer’s Rubrics at the end to get an idea of the level of knowledge considered “excellent” and “competent” for each of the competencies, should a registration program is implemented.

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 (VSPs) should also be familiar with major areas that have relevance to visitor studies, including educational theory, environmental design, developmental psychology, communication theory, leisure studies, and marketing research.

Paths to Competencies	Personal Plan
<p style="text-align: center;">Independent Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bibliographies recommended by various senior visitor studies professionals to get different perspectives of the field. These could be online. • National Research Council Consensus Study on learning science in informal environments. • References annotated on www.informalscience.org web site. • Mentored reading (ask a senior member in the field to identify readings and activities.) <p style="text-align: center;">Courses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitor studies courses/ workshops. (www.vistorstudies.org) • On-line History of Visitor Studies (to be developed). • Certificate courses and/or programs www.informalscience.org • Degree courses and/or programs www.informalscience.org <p style="text-align: center;">Workshops</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VSA workshops on history and basic visitor studies. • Visitor Studies 101 (to be developed). • Workshops on contributions of other fields (AEA. AAM/CARE, Sociology, Anthropology, etc. <p style="text-align: center;">Internships/Work Experience/Volunteer Work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervised evaluation studies may provide practical knowledge of references and precedents, if the activity includes literature review. <p style="text-align: center;">Other</p> <p>Academic paper, thesis, or dissertation</p>	<p>My goals for this competency:</p> <p>My timeframe:</p> <p>My professional development activities:</p>

Competency C: Knowledge of and practices with social science research and evaluation methods and analysis in the social sciences

Visitor Studies Professionals must not only understand but 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

Paths to Competencies	Personal Plan
<p style="text-align: center;">Independent Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selected bibliographies <p style="text-align: center;">Courses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> College courses, continuing education courses, Evaluators Institute courses, etc. http://www.eval.org/ Certificate programs and/or courses http://www.eval.org/ Degree programs and/or courses http://www.eval.org/ <p style="text-align: center;">Workshops</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VSA, AEA, CARE, AAM, etc. <p style="text-align: center;">Internships/Work Experience/Volunteer Work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participating in the development and implementation of evaluation, research, or any of the other aspects of research and evaluation. <p style="text-align: center;">Certificates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Master Evaluator Certificate (The Evaluation Institute - TEI) www.evaluatorsinstitute.com/certificate_program_overview.php Certification in Evaluation Practice (TEI) www.evaluatorsinstitute.com/certificate_program_overview.php Certification in Advanced Evaluation Practices (TEI) www.evaluatorsinstitute.com/certificate_program_overview.php Certification in Quantitative Evaluation Methods (TEI) www.evaluatorsinstitute.com/certificate_program_overview.php <p style="text-align: center;">Other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dissertation or thesis, if it includes data collection and analysis. Mentorship or coaching from a senior VSA professional. 	<p>My goals for this competency:</p> <p>My timeframe:</p> <p>My professional development activities:</p>

