



## Proposed Steps to Advance Cultural Heritage Tourism

During the Cultural Heritage Tourism Exchange on May 3, 2011 in Washington, DC, a closing session offered delegates an overview of the major points covered in the session groups. It also allowed the 100+ participants the chance to share additional ideas, reflect on discussions, offer opinions and suggest next steps.

A list of initial ideas was generated for voting by delegates to help identify priorities. These ideas represent the foundation for developing a more detailed roadmap for advancing cultural heritage tourism in the United States.

### Priorities (listed in order of importance)

1. Cultural/Heritage/Arts “campaign manager” to represent CHT organizations nationally. This manager or organization would need a budget for implementing activities on a national level. Regional partners serve as pipelines for information flow and stakeholder engagement/involvement; consider regional versions of Cultural Heritage Tourism Exchange to expand participation and discuss place-based issues. Design a national campaign to coordinate message and action plan.
2. Continue and expand conversations, communication, networking and meeting; maintain and expand web-based conversations, including the ability to share case studies and best practices.
3. Focus on developing/delivering consistent national, state, and local research – with particular emphasis on economic impact of cultural heritage tourism.
4. Expand and maintain a comprehensive “Resource Guide” for use by cultural heritage tourism providers, stakeholders, volunteers, industry.
5. Design and offer a comprehensive Technical Assistance Program to provide expert talent on all aspects of cultural heritage tourism research, development, marketing, management, policy. Need for training in social media was recognized.
6. Participate/influence the activities/policies of the Corporation for Travel Promotion. Also expand voice of cultural heritage tourism with the Tourism Policy Council.

7. Motivate members of Congress to participate in the Travel & Tourism Caucus. Help educate members about the importance of Cultural Heritage Tourism and the need/opportunity for participation in Arts & Preservation caucuses as well.
8. Adopt guidelines/criteria/principles for authentic, sustainable, integrity and understanding of Cultural Heritage Tourism, engaging and respecting diverse groups who contribute to the sector.

## Other Recommendations & Big Ideas From the Discussions

### Policy:

- Technical programs/assistance, not just grants, are needed from federal agencies to accelerate development and marketing. Provide funding that can build human capacity as well as develop product.
- Technology, especially for mobile applications. Education in application of technology/social media is needed to develop, interpret and market cultural heritage experiences to visitors. Also a networking and information platform for stakeholders. Identify models, especially from universities and foundations (with high tech centers), to use as templates, examples, and for development assistance.
- Improve communication and understanding of linkages between natural and cultural resources to achieve an integrated approach to asset-based economic development
- A U.S. Secretary of Culture, or some other national level voice for cultural heritage, is needed. There is no mutuality in cultural heritage, it is very segmented with no unity, and thus no central voice.
- Who leads and is responsible for a national marketing strategy. The U.S. has national products, international products – such as World Heritage Sites, National Park System Trails. No formal structure to recognize the arts as a major component/contributor to the tourism industry.
- Expand tribal communication and outreach at the national and local level to increase CHT participation and contribution. A number of national organizations carry the CHT portfolio.
- Create a “family tree” – a diagram to show how cultural and heritage entities are related; a communication tool to inform existing cultural heritage tourism networks about opportunities and foster participation in specific call to action.
- Stimulate capacity, through a mentor program as well as best practices in communication and education.
- Level the playing field and increase resources for rural, small destinations
- Identify how Partners in Tourism agencies and organizations can consistently join together to support/launch cohesive national marketing strategy (conference/trade shows, collateral materials, new media, promotions, public relations, etc.) and then enlist state, local, private sector participation to leverage resources and expand reach.
- Determine ways to expand diversity of organizations, groups in cultural heritage tourism (development, marketing, management).
- Hold Partner in Tourism agencies and national organizations accountable for distributing program outcome reports as examples of performance, measurement (as available).

**Research:**

- Identify and standardize some research categories for consistency and comparison.
- Consistent measurement—an effective return on investment (ROI) benchmark for cultural heritage tourism.
- Identify benchmarks for measuring the value tourism infrastructure—creative wayfinding, packaging, bike paths, etc.—and other features for visitors.
- Profiles of domestic and international visitors, what are the differences in—expectations, knowledge and the deliverables to meet America’s brand promise
- Yard stick is needed to measure optimum site capacity for fragile natural/cultural/heritage resources, so as to match the market, experience with the product.
- Provide a methodology of what to collect, how to collect it, and how to evaluate it.
- Identify potential funding sources – foundations, corporations – to sponsor or leverage resources for research projects.
- Create list of cultural research projects that can be mined to meet needs of multiple destinations, information or market categories. Investigate willingness of specific sites, destinations or entities to pool fiscal/human resources for larger impact studies.
- Expand access to case studies, specific research and baseline data for use in front end evaluation, economic impact analysis, competitive benchmarking and other uses (to justify development, marketing, opportunity, sustainability.)

**Practice (Product Development & Marketing):**

- Host a “Mayor’s Meeting” to engage local officials and educate about opportunities available through cultural heritage tourism
- Create a toolbox or campaign to educate (local, elected) officials about the opportunities and needs of sustainable tourism (natural, historic, cultural resources).
- Attain and make available more information about various market profiles to help destinations and attractions develop product more strategically.
- Identify specific campaigns to engage and educate local residents in all aspects of cultural heritage tourism (developing, managing, promoting, participating).
- Answer the questions: are we (or should we) create a product from the supply side or the demand side? (How are they different, complementary/conflicting?)
- Focus on a big idea – perhaps the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of U.S. – to provide a unifying hook, with each state designing its own campaign as a build up to the national celebration.
- Investigate how other industries pitch national agendas and spur a call to action.
- Use trails as a vehicle for linking cultural, historic and natural assets; they can also be a source of revenue generation.

**Resources:**

- Navigation aid is needed—there’s an abundance of online communication and resources, but no handy guide to search, find, and sort.
- Create a network for sharing case studies, best practices.
- Identify models of partnerships or rural, culturally diverse or cross borders (state, regional). Look to private sector – such as Google maps or Microsoft – to broaden reach.

- Solicit information for national white paper on cultural heritage tourism for broad distribution. Include both hard data and anecdotal stories (from visitors, residents, stakeholders, elected officials) for impact.
- Create list serv to distribute best practices, solicit information on other cultural heritage tourism research projects.

For a complete “CHT Exchange Recap Report” and “Analysis of Survey Responses”, please visit the resources section on [www.chtexchange.com](http://www.chtexchange.com).

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If you have questions or desire additional information, contact Exchange founder/organizer Cheryl Hargrove at 202-253-9207 or [info@chtexchange.com](mailto:info@chtexchange.com)