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Ten Tips for Docents for Visitor Referrals

1. **Know your own historic site well:** The best tour guide is one that knows their site inside and out and can respond to virtually any visitor question. This requires good knowledge of the site's history and visitor amenities.
2. **Encourage your visitors to see nearby historic sites.** Visitors are already out for the day and might be interested in knowing about other historic sites nearby that are open now. Docents need to be familiar with the other historic site open days and hours so they can enthusiastically encourage your visitors to see more history around the corner. This works best when historic sites agree to make reciprocal visitor referrals.
3. **Encourage nearby historic sites to send their docents to your site for a free "familiarization" tour each year.** Provide this tour at the start of the tour season for your site and make it free so that other historic site docents can learn about the great things being done by their neighbors. Offer this free tour for docents over a few weekends so that your docents and other docents can see a handful of local historic sites so they can become enthusiastic ambassadors for your site and others in the area.
4. **Offer nearby historic site brochures or create simple maps so visitors can find neighboring historic sites.** Exchange your general brochures and maps of your site, so that all of the nearby sites are recommending visitors go to see nearby history. If you have a simple rack card rack (buy from <https://www.displays2go.com/>) you can showcase these historic site brochures or rack cards from many different historic sites and organizations. You can also create a simple map for visitors showing major roads and highways to get visitors from one historic site to another. Be sure to include the address of each historic site on the map so people can find them with their GPS or phone.
5. **Consider offering shopping/dining brochures from local Chambers of Commerce, downtown organizations, business improvement districts or Main Street organizations at your historic site.** Having these brochures at your site, shows that you want your visitors to shop, eat and dine locally, thus keeping visitor spending close by. Display these brochures on your rack card rack or at your entrance desk. Consider taking a tour of your downtown to scope out good places to recommend for lunch or dinner, and learn where the nearest gas station is, or the closest ATM machine might be. Visitors need this information at any time of the year.
6. **Consider offering big events on adjacent weekends.** Through your ongoing relationships with other historic sites, you can encourage visitors to attend special events held at neighboring historic sites or offer their brochures promoting these large events. Docents that can talk about events held at a neighboring site are especially helpful to visitors.
7. **Encourage all sites to offer similar information on their visitor brochures.** Start with the name of the organization, address, where to park, and the visitor amenities you have. List when your site is open to the public: the days, months, and hours. List whether you have a gift shop, guided tours, demonstrations, special events, handicapped restrooms, handicapped accessibility (explain what is

accessible or not), handicapped parking spaces, or general brochures in languages other than English. Perhaps include a small map on your brochure showing how to get to your site from major highways.

8. **Consider creating an alliance of historic sites in your area or county to make visitor referrals easy.** If local historic sites understand that they can get more visitors by encouraging their visitors to see other sites, and vice versa, this is the start of a valuable cooperative relationship. Historic sites need all kinds of support and making visitor referrals from one historic site to another can reap benefits for each site.
9. **Consider promoting all historic site events in the region in one e-newsletter available quarterly or monthly.** For this to be effective, all historic sites would have to share their email lists to be placed in a common data base to be used only for joint promotions. This email list could generate thousands of new potential visitors. Each site would promote their events in the e-newsletter the month before and the month of their event. Mail Chimp offers a free newsletter template for organizations with daily limit of 2000 names on a mailing (learn more [Mailchimp Marketing Plan Comparisons | Mailchimp](#)). Constant Contact, Emma, Canva, and Send in Blue offer similar deals for e-newsletters.
10. **Create one or more thematic historic trails to link historic sites in your region.** Most historic sites offer several kind of tours or exhibits at their site related to historic themes. Learn about all of the historic sites in your region and develop a thematic tour that links historic sites together and tells a more comprehensive interpretive story. Common themes might be the Revolutionary War, Famous People, the Underground Railroad, Transportation routes or other themes unique to your region or county. Try to string at least four to eight sites together this way and create a brochure with a map to get visitors from place to place. You might also want to offer a special week or month to promote these history trails.