



1717 Church Street
Nashville, TN 37203-2991
Phone: 615/320-3203
Fax: 615/327-9013
membership@aaslh.org
www.aaslh.org

WHY SHOULD OUR ORGANIZATIONS PROVIDE FIELD SERVICES? FIELD SERVICES ALLIANCE 2002 RETREAT Myrtle Beach, South Carolina February 18, 2002

As a part of the annual Field Services Alliance retreat at Myrtle Beach, we conducted a focus group during Session 5 on Monday, February 18, 2002. Our goal was to answer the question “why should our organizations provide field services” and determine among ourselves to determine how we justify our existence within our larger organizations—and how we could if we haven’t yet had to.

We can use these results to advocate for what we do as field services providers, train new colleagues, and provide perspectives on the relevance of what we do. Moreover, the answers to the questions below are a step in direction of articulating why we think our offices and our constituents are important in the cultural lives of our states and the communities within them, and why we think we and our constituents are important to our parent organizations. Answers to question #3 suggest what we could do (if we’re not already) to evaluate the effectiveness of the services we provide.

A note on method: we addressed three questions in turn and then voted on the responses. The questions and responses are listed below. The responses are listed in order according to the number of votes each received.

Questions and Answers

Answers ranked according to the number of votes each received

1) What use are we to our parent organizations?

- 30 Field services are the only presence that a parent organization has in a community and is also evidence of outreach to a state legislature.
- 26 Assuming education, collecting, and preservation are a part of our state organizations’ missions, we help local organizations meet the state organizations’ missions.
- 23 We’re [field services] an interface—we translate local needs to specialists at state organizations, and translate specialist information to local organizations.
- 14 PR function gets the parent organization’s name out in the state.
- 7 [Field services] help local organizations to see how they are a part of the bigger picture; therefore local organizations learn how they can advocate for our issues.
- 5 Serve as membership recruiters.

- 5 Field services help state organizations and local groups realize that they need to work together to preserve history.
- 2 Reinforces parent organizations commitment to communities.
- 2 Contribute to the state organization's strategic planning efforts.
- 1 We assist local organizations with problems and issues that they have.
- 0 We build interest in lifelong learning and education for children (learning can be fun!)

2) Why is it important for local historical organizations to exist?

- 30 Local history connects to people in a very personal way.
- 28 [Local history organizations] help to build the material record of the history of a state and increase access to that record.
- 19 Within a community, local history organizations raise the quality of life.
- 17 Local history informs the national narrative.
- 16 Local history organizations help build / create communities.
- 14 Local history organizations deliver services more cost effectively than state / national organizations.
- 0 Local history is democratic.

3) How can we measure the impact and effectiveness of field services to prove their worth to our parent organizations?

- 41 Use specific, valid performance indicators over time [to measure local historical organizations performance in a number of areas]
 For example, measure the increase in local historical organization's budgets over time, measure the amount of money local historical organizations receive from government over time, measure the increase in the number of organizations that have climate controlled storage areas, i.e. measure their improvement over time.
- 36 Track the participation of local history groups in our programs and their requests for our services.
- 29 Follow up—did they [the local history organization] do the things we recommended?
- 14 Memberships [of local groups in our state organizations], [local historical groups] advocacy on our behalf, [desire of members of local historical groups to] want to be on board, donations of money, attendance at programs.