

PART 5. EXTERNAL EVALUATOR REPORT

Evaluated and prepared by Mark Vossen, 8 December 2011

Program Development:

- Before recruitment begins, goals for the program must be clearly defined, i.e. what specific roles will be available to volunteers, and at what organizations. By setting these objectives first will steer how the training will be conducted, what topics will be covered, how much time is needed, etc. Training is not the goal; it is only the means to a goal.
- In addition, the team must decide how the program will be run at the completion of the training. Will the volunteers function as an independent group? Or rely on the guidance of GTWHI and other heritage related organizations? This decision will help with the direction of the training.

Recruitment:

- Recruitment was successful in that 150 people applied. However, the majority of applicants were Chinese, which does not represent the diversity of George Town's communities. In order for Friends of George Town Heritage to prosper by reaching out to all communities, the base of volunteers needs to have at least a minimal representation from each group.
- Data from applications should be recorded and summarized for future recruitment efforts. Specifically, how each applicant heard about the program, so any future advertising expenses can be effectively utilized.
- During the application review session and interviews with candidates, special attention should be given to work schedules. Even the highest qualified candidates may not be ideal choices if their schedules will prevent them from fully participating in the training program and in volunteer roles. Also, each candidate should be asked what their specific goals are for joining Friends of George Town Heritage. Only candidates interested in volunteer work should be selected. Candidates merely interested in attending lectures to gain a better understanding of George Town's history will more than likely not take an active role in volunteering once training is complete.

Structure of Training Program

- The structure of the training program needs to be simplified. Instead of designating a general volunteer group and a specialized volunteer group, these two groups should be combined and provided with a basic heritage training course (one or two weekends). Then immediately be placed in active volunteer roles in George Town.
 - Ongoing required and elective trainings can be offered once a month to give volunteers the opportunity to continue to gain additional knowledge. Since the volunteers would have already been active in their volunteer roles in George Town, they will have a better understanding of what is being discussed during trainings, and they will be able to provide better input on what they would like to learn in future sessions.
- Only candidates selected for guide training should undergo an intensive training course.

Curriculum Design & Lesson Plan

- Ongoing training sessions for general volunteers:
 - Workshop-based sessions are effective like the interview role playing workshop and photography skills workshop from Part 1 training. These types of sessions not only help the volunteers with the core skills they will need in their volunteer roles, but they are also fun, which keeps the volunteers enthusiastic about Friends of George Town Heritage, and committed to the program.

- Invite more guest speakers to lead sessions, so volunteers are exposed to a wide base of knowledge on George Town.
- Have more 'behind the scenes' sessions like the Cheong Fatt Tze tour. These are very informative, and also give the volunteers feel a strong sense of being a part of the George Town heritage movement.
- Have periodic review sessions to reinforce important topics.
- Guide training for student walks:
 - Guides need to be given sufficient time to complete design of trails, i.e. at least a weekend off to prepare, and meet with their group. If pressured to complete tasks in an unreasonable amount of time, they will become disgruntled and lose enthusiasm for the training, and possibly even quit.
 - Because of teamwork issues in the Part 2 guide training, special attention needs to be given on how to select trail groups. For example, by work schedules, age, language ability, etc.
 - One or two sessions should be dedicated entirely on how to interact with children, and how to lead them on a tour. This can include the trainer(s) taking a small group of children on a heritage trail, to show the guides specific examples on how to appropriately lead a student walk.

Reception and Learning Impact to Participants

- Participants were pleased with the extensive knowledge of George Town they gained during the training.
- The participants were all enthusiastic at the beginning of the training since they were excited about joining the heritage movement in George Town. Sustaining this enthusiasm is therefore the key to a successful training, and ultimately a successful volunteer group.
 - Participants need more positive feedback and recognition from trainers during every session. Volunteers should be appreciated for the time they commit.
 - Critical feedback is important from the trainers, but not to the extent of feeling disrespected.
 - Consistent messages from the trainers throughout the training are crucial for the participants to be able to remain focused on their goals.
 - Participants should be encouraged to provide more input on what they are interested in learning.

Trainer/resource person/tour guide quality

- It is important to brief every tour guide/resource person, so they are clear on the objectives of the training.

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