IOWA BYWAYS
INTERPRETIVE MASTER PLANNING
SUMMARY REPORT

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Iowa DOT: Iowa Byways Program
800 Lincoln Way
Ames, Iowa 50010

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# Table of Contents

Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 2
The Planning Process ............................................................................................................. 5
Themes and Messages .......................................................................................................... 6
Wayfinding ........................................................................................................................... 8
Interpretive Media ................................................................................................................ 9
Unified Media Design Standards ......................................................................................... 10
  Color Palette ...................................................................................................................... 10
  Typography ........................................................................................................................ 12
  Repeating Graphic Elements ............................................................................................ 13
Interpretive Experience Hubs ............................................................................................... 15
  Experience Hub Design .................................................................................................... 15
  Experience Hub Panel Designs ......................................................................................... 18
  Experience Hub Content .................................................................................................. 21
Two-Panel Kiosks .................................................................................................................. 22
Wayside Exhibits ................................................................................................................... 23
  Wayside Exhibit Support Design ...................................................................................... 24
  Wayside Exhibit Panel Designs ......................................................................................... 26
  Wayside Exhibit Installation ............................................................................................. 28
  Multisensory Components .............................................................................................. 29
  Secondary Wayside Exhibits ............................................................................................. 29
Welcome/Visitor Center Exhibits ......................................................................................... 30
General Byway Brochures .................................................................................................... 32
Byway Interpretive Travel Guides ......................................................................................... 36
Unified Byway Websites ....................................................................................................... 40
Audiovisual Tours ................................................................................................................ 44
Byway Artwork .................................................................................................................... 46
  Sculptures ......................................................................................................................... 46
  Murals ............................................................................................................................... 48
Iowa Byways Junior Explorer Program ............................................................................... 50
Iowa Byways Passport Program ......................................................................................... 52
Media Cost Estimates .......................................................................................................... 54
Next Steps ............................................................................................................................. 55
Schmeeckle Reserve Interpreters, University of Wisconsin Stevens Point, developed interpretive master plans for ten Iowa Scenic Byways under a contractual agreement with Golden Hills RC&D. This summary describes the planning process for the development of these plans and documents the primary interpretive media recommended for each byway. Design standards are proposed to guide professional and volunteer staff as they develop interpretive media.

The planning team began its investigation of each byway as tourists, using existing guides, tear-sheets, and websites. Following this in-depth introduction to the byway, the team conducted a byway visioning meeting followed by interviews of key stakeholders, staff, and volunteers at primary attractions. Insights gathered through this process guided the development of media and wayfinding recommendations provided in each plan.

**Scope of Work**

In January 2012, Golden Hills RC&D, based in Oakland, Iowa, was awarded a Transportation Enhancement Grant through the Iowa Department of Transportation to complete interpretive master plans for ten Iowa byways. Additional funds were awarded for the Loess Hills National Scenic Byway plan and the Western Skies Scenic Byway plan through the Iowa West Foundation.

A request for proposals was issued in early 2013, seeking interest from firms to provide professional services to develop long-range interpretive master plans for Iowa’s byways. Four firms were interviewed in August 2013. In February 2014, a professional services agreement for the ten interpretive master plans was entered into between Golden Hills RC&D and Schmeeckle Reserve Interpreters, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point.

Schmeeckle Reserve Interpreters agreed to develop one interpretive master plan for each of the following scenic and historic Iowa Byways: Delaware Crossing, Driftless Area, Glacial Trail, Grant Wood, Historic Hills, Iowa Valley, Lincoln Highway, Loess Hills, River Bluffs, and Western Skies.

The work was divided into three phases:

- **Phase 1**: Loess Hills and Western Skies, delivered in 2015
- **Phase 2**: Driftless Area, River Bluffs, Grant Wood, Delaware Crossing, and Iowa Valley, delivered in 2016 and 2017
- **Phase 3**: Historic Hills, Glacial Trail, and Lincoln Highway, delivered in 2017 and 2018

Each interpretive master plan includes the following chapters:

**Chapter 1: Introduction**

The byway and its natural and cultural significance are described that led to its designation as an Iowa Scenic Byway. A discussion of Iowa’s scenic byway program from its inception in 1993 to the more recent efforts of the Iowa Byways Sustainability Project provides historical context for the plan. A narrative and graphic representation of the planning process provides a rationale for the organization of the plan.
Byway Interpretive Master Plan Covers

- **Loess Hills National Scenic Byway Interpretive Master Plan**
- **Western Skies Scenic Byway Interpretive Master Plan**
- **Driftless Area Scenic Byway Interpretive Master Plan**
- **River Bluffs Scenic Byway Interpretive Master Plan**
- **Grant Wood Scenic Byway Interpretive Master Plan**
- **Iowa Valley Scenic Byway Interpretive Master Plan**
- **Delaware Crossing Scenic Byway Interpretive Master Plan**
- **Historic Hills Scenic Byway Interpretive Master Plan**
- **Glacial Trail Scenic Byway Interpretive Master Plan**
- **Lincoln Highway Heritage Byway Interpretive Master Plan**
Chapter 2: Vision and Goals

Work on each plan began with a visioning meeting with byway staff and stakeholders. The input from these meetings supplemented with vision descriptions in byway newsletters and corridor management plans provided the basis for vision, mission, and goal statements. These statements will guide the future planning, management, and implementation efforts for interpretation on the byways.

Chapter 3: Byway Travelers

The fundamental question, “Who is the byway traveler and what are they seeking?” is addressed in several ways: This question was posed during the visioning meetings, and follow-up interviews were conducted with visitor center and primary attraction staff members. Data gathered at Iowa welcome centers and byway tourist centers and by Travel Iowa provided numerical data to support the anecdotal information.

Chapter 4: Interpretive Resources

An inventory documents the natural and cultural attractions along or near the byway, with a description and photo of each resource. The resources are categorized based on the six intrinsic qualities identified by the U.S. Department of Transportation Scenic Byways Program: scenic & natural, historic & archaeological, cultural, and recreational. The attractions are delineated by byway region and placed on a regional map.

Chapter 5: Themes and Messages

The interpretive themes and messages connect the tangible resources with their intangible meanings. Themes unify all of the stories of the byway and guide the development of media into a cohesive visitor experience. See pages 6–7 for a listing of all byway primary themes.

Chapter 6: Interpretive Media

These are the tools used to communicate messages to byway visitors. They guide visitors in their search for meanings in objects, places, and landscapes. Proposed design standards unify the design of all interpretive media, including experience hubs, wayside exhibits, publications, and digital media. Recommendations for specific media include fully developed examples from each media category. See pages 8–54 for a summary of media recommended for Iowa’s byways.
**The Planning Process**

**Interpretation** is a communication process that guides visitors in their search for meanings in objects, places, and landscapes. We adhere to the philosophy that interpretive planning is a process of consensus development—of achieving a shared perspective by all stakeholders of why interpretation is needed, who it will serve, and what significant stories it will tell. Effective planning answers the following questions, which can be illustrated by the Planning Triangle:

- **Why?**
  Confirm and/or further define the purpose, vision, and goals of developing a master plan for the byway.

- **Who?**
  Determine who the byway visitors are and the experiences they are seeking. This includes activities and visitor groups that are not currently being targeted.

- **What?**
  Examine the significant tangible resources of the byway and describe their intangible meanings. Then, distill these tangibles and intangibles into unifying themes and messages that will serve as a framework for development and programming.

- **Where? When? How?**
  Based on the why, who, and what, develop a plan for interpretive facilities, media, and programs that best facilitate visitor-resource connections within the parameters of the mission and vision of the byway.
TheMES AND Messages

Chapter 5 of each Iowa Byway interpretive master plan lists themes and messages that are specific to the byway. Interpretive themes represent the major concepts, ideas, and messages that visitors will experience as they travel the byway. They create a framework for planning meaningful interactions between visitors and resources. Once these important concepts are identified, the most appropriate sites, resources, and stories are selected to illustrate them.

A theme statement, which is ideally stated in one succinct sentence, should contain universal concepts. Universal concepts are intangible meanings that are significant to everyone, such as life, death, family, parenthood, jealousy, loyalty, forgiveness—all of the emotions, challenges, and values that make us human.

Effective interpretive themes should connect tangible resources (objects or facts) to the interests of visitors. Interpretation is most successful when visitors can relate the themes and messages on a byway to something relevant in their own lives. A good theme will stir emotions and thoughts in a visitor, helping to create memorable experiences. Provocation is more significant than factual information. Inspiring people to relate the information to their own lives is a measure of success.

Organization of Themes and Messages

- **Primary theme** is the big idea of the byway. All interpretation along the corridor should relate to this overall theme
- **Subthemes** split the primary theme into several more specific and workable ideas.
- **Messages** break down the subthemes further into very specific stories that can be told through interpretive media and programs.

**Primary Themes**

Primary themes represent the main ideas that should be shared about each Iowa byway through interpretation. They represent what makes each byway unique. All media and programs along the byway should strive to reinforce this theme for visitors. The following is a list of primary themes developed for each byway. The byway-specific master plans break these down into more workable subthemes and messages.

**Delaware Crossing Scenic Byway**

“Delaware County embodies Iowa’s celebrated identity as a place where pioneer immigrants built strong communities based on shared religious values, commitment to education, and allegiance to their new country.”
Driftless Area Scenic Byway
“The scenic limestone bluffs and valleys of northeast Iowa, untouched by recent glaciers, are laced with caves, cool springs, and streams that support diverse plant communities and human lifestyles shaped by the landscape.”

Glacial Trail Scenic Byway
“Carved by glaciers, the prairie and oak savanna covered bluffs along the Little Sioux River have sustained native cultures and Euro-American settlers and are home to natural, historic, and archaeological treasures that offer an “old Iowa” experience.”

Grant Wood Scenic Byway
“Art and landscape overlap on the Grant Wood Scenic Byway, an 80-mile route that winds through scenery traversing three rivers that course past limestone bluffs, caves, wooded hillsides, and historic towns—a landscape that inspired artists such as Grant Wood and which continues to enchant artists and visitors.”

Historic Hills Scenic Byway
“The Black Hawk Purchase of 1833 opened a flood of settlement that surged up the Des Moines River and spread across the forest and prairie landscape of southeastern Iowa, where communities preserve their historic character and natural beauty.”

Iowa Valley Scenic Byway
“The rich natural resources of the Iowa River Valley between Montour and the Amana Colonies have brought together Meskwaki Native Americans, communal Amana Germans, Czech farmers, and other immigrants into a diverse cultural patchwork.”

Lincoln Highway Heritage Byway
“The development of the Lincoln Highway demonstrated the national desire to unite the country from coast-to-coast with an all-season road, giving Americans the freedom to travel independently and creating an automobile culture that significantly reshaped the landscape and the economy.”

Loess Hills National Scenic Byway
“The Loess Hills are a unique landform in the world, born of ice, water, and wind, and covered by a thin blanket of prairie and oak that nurtured ancient cultures, immigrant farmers, and settlements.”

River Bluffs Scenic Byway
“The Mississippi, Turkey, and Volga rivers and their tributaries carved deep valleys in the driftless landscape of the River Bluffs Scenic Byway, shaping the region’s history and lifestyles, and creating a scenic topography where residents can enjoy outdoor recreation and charming villages.”

Western Skies Scenic Byway
“The Western Skies Scenic Byway winds through a rural landscape of rolling hills and broad skies where European immigrants created a distinct sense of place as they shaped farming practices that have evolved into modern-day agriculture.”
WAYFINDING

It is essential that travelers are able to negotiate a byway route and find the significant attractions. Without effective wayfinding, visitors can’t access interpretive messages and may become frustrated with their experience.

While the Iowa byway routes are well marked with unified signs, finding significant byway attractions and resources can be challenging to first-time and serendipitous travelers. The following recommendations can help improve the wayfinding experience:

- **Official Byway Attraction Signs**: Work with the Iowa Department of Transportation to develop a system of “byway attraction signs” that guide travelers to primary byway resources, such as historic sites, experience hubs, wayside exhibits, information centers, and scenic overlooks. The signs can be developed with a slightly modified version of the established DOT “Destination/Guide Signs” standards. The addition of the Iowa Byways logo marks it as an official state byway sign and provides visual unity with byway route identification signs and media.

- **Off-Byway Direction Signs**: Work with municipalities and government entities to develop off-byway directional signs to primary interpretive locations.

- **Experience Hubs**: Place easily recognizable experience hubs in prominent locations along the corridor to serve as focal points that draw the attention of travelers and provide orientation to local interpretive resources and media.

- **Online Media**: Include directional information and interactive maps in all online media such as websites, mobile tour websites, and apps.

- **Travel Guide**: Develop an interpretive travel guide that includes detailed maps and directional information regarding byway attractions.

Official Byway Attraction Sign: Concept Design
**INTERPRETIVE MEDIA**

Heritage interpretation is a communication process that guides visitors in their search for meanings in objects, places, and landscapes. Media are non-personal forms of interpretation that connect visitors to the resources and stories of the byway. These include signs, exhibits, publications, audiovisual tours, overlooks, artwork, and other forms.

When interpretive media are well planned, they can open windows of understanding and revelation in visitors who are seeking connections and meanings of their own as they explore the byway and its resources. It is a rewarding experience for visitors to discover for themselves new and exciting places and to feel like they have grown emotionally and intellectually in the process.

Interpretive media connects visitors to tangible resources and intangible meanings (Green Circle Trail kiosk, Schmeeckle Reserve Interpreters design)
UNIFIED MEDIA DESIGN STANDARDS

The colors and design elements of a byway’s media graphics, the materials and construction of the supports, and even the typeface selected for interpretive inscriptions should reflect the personality of the byway and create a pleasing uniformity that reassures travelers. Unified design across all Iowa byways brands each piece of interpretive media as part of the state’s byway experience.

To provide a well-organized and cohesive travel experience, all media should be graphically unified. The repeated use of colors, typeface, logos, and design elements will group media into recognizable visual families on each byway. Consider the following recommendations when designing media.

Color Palette

A consistent family of colors helps organize media and makes words easier to read and understand. Color can also evoke feelings and set moods and attitudes.

In 2010, the Iowa Department of Transportation Office of Media and Marketing developed logos and color palettes for all existing scenic byways and for a comprehensive Iowa Byways brand. Descriptions, policies, and regulations are addressed in the “Iowa Byways Brand Guidelines” document for each byway. The brand is ultimately the byway’s public identity, which is intended to create awareness of the program and its benefits and to encourage and enhance the traveler experience.

The interpretive media color palette developed for each byway is built from the individual logos. A family of varying shades based on the main logo colors provides flexibility and contrast for effective design. The color scheme should be repeated in the design of all media forms.

Visual Identity Through Design

- The colors that were selected for the byway logo should serve as the palette for other media.
- The byway logo should be replicated on all signs, publications, and online media for optimal exposure and recognition.
- Employ unified design standards for all signs, wayside exhibits, and interpretive hub supports and frames.
- Utilize consistent design elements for all media, such as font size and style, color palettes, and other artistic details.
Typography

The selection of typefaces and sizes creates a personality and determines the readability of the text on interpretive media. Each typeface expresses personality and sets a tone that reflects the organization or the message that is being interpreted.

Combinations of various styles can add an interesting hierarchy to the media design and help create specific personalities for each message. Fonts can appear lighthearted and fun, informal, businesslike, old-fashioned, rustic, or legalistic. Stylized fonts attract attention for titles and short headings but can be burdensome to read in longer texts.

**Cheltenham BT Bold** is the recommended font for main titles and headings on most byway media, evoking the timeless nature of the byway and creating consistency between media. On the Iowa Byways logo, the typeface for “IOWA” is a derivative of Cheltenham BT set in all caps. The original typeface was manipulated to blend with the abstract graphic representations of hills and valleys.

**BrushTip Travis** is an informal script font that provides contrast to the more formal fonts. It serves a similar purpose as the script font used alongside the curving line in the Iowa Byways official guide booklet. These types of fonts welcome viewers and invite them to explore interpretive media. BrushTip Travis is recommended for some titles and headings, such as on wayside exhibits, for subheadings, and to emulate handwriting. It can add an informal handwritten style to photographs or quotes.

**Garrison Sans** is recommended for the main text on byway media. Simple, familiar fonts work best for longer text that requires more reading. Garrison Sans is used in the Iowa Byways publication, and it is also similar to Gill Sans, which is the font used on the byway logos. It is a sans-serif font (no decorations on the end of strokes) that is easy to read. It also works well for photo captions and credits.

A **hierarchy of type sizes** is also important to emphasize the relative significance of various messages. Typically, a main title is the largest size, followed by subheadings, main text, captions, and credits. These varying sizes help create a logical visual sequence for readers to follow.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Recommended Typography</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cheltenham BT</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main titles and headings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**BrushTip Travis**

Headings and subheadings, handwriting (quotes, photos)

**Garrison Sans**

Main text

**Garrison Sans Italic**

Photo captions

**Garrison Sans Italic**

Photo credits
Repeating Graphic Elements

Another important factor that contributes to a unified design style is the use of repeating graphic elements. These artistic details, in combination with the color and typography schemes, develop a unique identity for the byway.

The statewide Iowa Byways logo and each byway’s unique logo are essential graphic elements that should be included on all byway media, from interpretive signs and publications to digital websites and apps. They provide a unified brand for the Iowa Byways program.

Other repeated graphic elements on future interpretive media will reinforce the already existing design identity. These include:

- Curving header bars with interwoven strands from the byway’s unique color palette. The curve is reminiscent of the wave pattern in the Iowa Byways logo.
- Faded light blue backgrounds with a gradient on interpretive media.
- White, snapshot-style borders for photos, tilted slightly, and set apart with drop shadows.
- Large focal point images and faded background graphics to draw attention.
- Byway website addresses and QR codes that link to the Iowa Byways website.
The Iowa Byways logo and individual byway logos are essential graphic elements to include on all media.
**INTERPRETIVE EXPERIENCE HUBS**

Experience hubs are prominent thematic kiosks that orient byway travelers to significant regional attractions and stories. To be effective, they must be placed where motorists will see them and in public locations where travelers expect to find them. Unlike staffed welcome centers, they are available at any hour of the day throughout all seasons and weather.

When placed at entry sites to a byway or at locations where visitors already gather, experience hubs can introduce impromptu travelers and even local residents to the attractions on the route. A well-designed experience hub attracts attention and makes readers aware of the potential adventures that can be experienced.

**Experience Hub Design**

Sign and kiosk structures present an opportunity to visually organize interpretive media into an artistic repetition that can be easily identified by travelers. A consistent, recognizable design reinforces the byway identity.

The Iowa byways experience hub designs incorporate timbers and powder-coated metal that complement cultural resources while blending appropriately with natural areas. The strong combination of wood and metal appears organic, while being vandal-resistant and low-maintenance.
Each experience hub structure should:

- Be highly visible to travelers, but not overpower existing entry signs.
- Appear rustic and durable in rural sites, but be formal enough to fit into urban settings.
- Appear elegant, but be economically produced.
- Be easily replaced, modified, or repaired.

**Supports**

The two-sided structures are supported by three 6”-by-6”, 8’-high timber posts. On some byways, a limestone base is recommended to tie in with the landscape and existing structures. Decorative brackets connect the posts to 42”- by-42”, 3/8”-thick metal plates for mounting the interpretive panels. Powder-coated steel is recommended for the kiosks over weathering steel, since weathering steel could cause rust to drip on the signs.

**Curved Metal Headers**

Curved 3/8”-thick powder-coated steel headers attached to the top of the structure add grace and flow to the hub. Thematic graphic cut-outs in the headers representing the natural and cultural history of the byway create an attractive sculptural component.
Experience Hub Panel Designs

Each experience hub would display four interpretive signs (two on the front and two on the back) designed to highlight the byway’s resources and attractions. The following are design recommendations:

- Panels must be large enough to command attention, even from a busy roadway. The designs in this plan are sized at 36”-by-36”.
- Construct out of ½”-thick high-pressure laminate, an affordable plastic material that allows for full-color, high-resolution images and is resistant to damage and vandalism. A 10-year warranty against fading and delaminating is standard.

- Installed on the metal mounting plates attached to the timbers.
- Follow unified design standards which include:
  - Replication of colors, font styles, curved headers, and other graphic elements
  - The specific byway logo and the Iowa Byways logo displayed prominently
  - Website address and QR code on the introductory panel to connect visitors to online content
  - Strong message hierarchy using focal point images and different sized text

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**Unified curved header** (colors unique to byway)

**Unified font styles and sizes** (all byways)

**Snapshot-style images of byway**

**Iowa Byways logos** (all byways)

**Byway logo**

**Focal point image**

**Byway map with “You are here”**

**Background image of byway**

**Iowa Byways website and QR codes** (all byways)
Byway Experience Hubs: Introductory Panel Concept Designs

DELHAISE CROSING Scenic Byway

Driftless Area Scenic Byway

GLACIAL TRAIL Scenic Byway

GRANT WOOD Scenic Byway

HISTORIC HILLS Scenic Byway

LINCOKM HIGHWAY Heritage Byway

Loess Hills National Scenic Byway

River Bluffs Scenic Byway

WESTERN SKIES Scenic Byway
On the back side, Full Byway Experience Hubs interpret cultural and natural resources along the entire byway route (Delaware Crossing)

On the back side, Regional Byway Experience Hubs describe natural and cultural resources found in a specific region along the byway (Loess Hills: Council Bluffs Region)
Experience Hub Content

Two types of experience hubs are recommended for the Iowa byways, based on the length of the byway and the location of the structure.

Full Byway Experience Hub
A full byway experience hub interprets the resources along the entire byway route. Sign panels typically include:

1. **Byway Overview**: Introduces the byway and explains what makes it unique—includes a map of the byway, photos, and brief text.
2. **Community/Regional Attractions**: Interprets the community or region where the hub is located—includes a map of the community, nearby resources, and photos
3. **Cultural Treasures**: Interprets the historic and cultural resource of the entire byway, with a map and photos
4. **Natural Wonders**: Describes the natural and recreational attractions of the entire byway, with a map and photos

Regional Byway Experience Hub
For longer byways where resources are more spread out, a regional byway experience hub divides the resources into regions by proximity. The hubs interpret those specific regions, focusing on attractions that are closer together. The panels typically include:

1. **Byway Overview**: Introduces the byway and explains what makes it unique.
2. **Community/Regional Attractions**: Interprets the community where the hub is located. If not in a community, this may interpret the region as a whole.
3. **Cultural Treasures**: Interprets the historic and cultural resource of that specific region.
4. **Natural Wonders**: Describes the natural and recreational attractions in that specific region.

Most experience hubs feature a Byway Overview panel and a Community/Regional Attractions panel on the front side (Grant Wood)
TWO-PANEL KIOSKS

Two-panel kiosks are recommended for secondary orientation sites on some Iowa byways. Constructed as a “half” version of an experience hub, they provide an attractive and economical means for displaying a more limited amount of information. The structures are more visually conspicuous than wayside exhibits. They are appropriate at sites where attracting attention is important, such as orienting travelers to a natural area or community.

Like experience hubs, the kiosks are constructed with wooden timbers, powder-coated steel headers with thematic cut-out figures, and 36” by-36” high-pressure laminate panels installed onto steel mounting plates. Limestone bases would be appropriate in selected landscapes and sites. They typically feature a Byway Overview panel on one side, and a community, site, or related resources panel on the other.

These designs are recommended as alternatives to the Site Orientation Signs that were included in plans for the Loess Hills and Driftless Area scenic byways, as they better match the unified design elements of the experience hubs and wayside exhibits.
WAYSIDE EXHIBITS

Wayside exhibits are interpretive panels placed along roads and trails that assist visitors in understanding the stories associated with resources and landscapes on the byway. Photos, illustrations, and concise messages attract and hold a visitor’s attention as they discover the significance of a site.

They are an effective way to communicate with visitors because they are always on the job regardless of weather or season. When properly placed near resources, they can quickly answer questions that visitors have about the resources. They are a direct and non-intrusive method to connect people with significant stories along the byway.

Wayside exhibits should tell site-specific stories that bring a resource to “life” and place it into context, connecting it to universal concepts that are relevant to everyone. The best wayside exhibits present messages that are visual, concise, active, and multisensory. See the “Creating an Effective Message” tint box below for best practices when designing signs.

Current technologies offer numerous possibilities for enhancing interpretive panels. They can be cut into innovative shapes. Push-button audio devices with digital recordings can tell captivating stories using firsthand accounts and sound effects. Tactile elements, such as models and textures, can be added to provide a touch experience. QR (quick response) codes can be incorporated for quick access to websites and multimedia content.

Creating an Effective Message

1. Communicate visually with photos and graphics.
2. Most visitors will look at an interpretive panel for only a few seconds. Apply the 3-30-3 Rule, a hierarchy that provides 3-second, 30-second, and 3-minute message levels.
3. Use simple words, concise sentences, and short paragraphs.
4. Describe with concrete nouns and active verbs. Avoid adverbs and adjectives.
5. Relate to the reader with familiar terms, personal pronouns, metaphors, and quotes.
6. Provide multisensory involvement with tactile and audio devices.
Wayside Exhibit Support Design

The exhibit supports should match the same style as the experience hubs so they are readily identified as part of the byway’s family of signs. This includes:

- Vertical base constructed of 3/8”-thick steel. Mount plate constructed with 1/4”-thick steel and installed at a 45-degree angle. Weathering steel rusts with a natural look that blends into the landscape over time. In some areas where rusting is less desirable, a black powder coat can be applied.

- Cut-out of the Iowa Byways logo on the vertical base to unify with existing wayside exhibits.

- Variable cut-out graphics on the top arch based on the theme of the sign.
Wayside Exhibit Panel Designs

Exhibit panels should also replicate features of the experience hubs. This includes:

- Replication of colors, font styles, and graphic elements.
- Iowa Byways logo and individual byway’s logo prominently displayed.
- Website address and QR code to connect visitors to online content.
- Constructed of ½”-thick high-pressure laminate (HPL) material, a durable plastic material that allows for full-color, high-quality images and text. They are resistant to graffiti and scratches, and come with a 10-year warranty against fading and delaminating. The panel is attached to the angled steel mount plate with bolts through the back.
- Large enough to be noticeable and easily read, but not too large that they detract from the landscape. A recommended size of 24”-by-36” replicates panels already installed along the byway.

**Stone City Art Colony**

Grant Wood dreamed of creating a summer art colony in Iowa where artists lived, learned, and collaborated with masters. His Stone City Art Colony began at the height of the Great Depression in 1932. Over 100 artists gathered here on the John Green Estate. While the colony produced many of Iowa’s prominent artists, it lasted only two years due to financial difficulties.

The colony attracted students and art lovers from around the country. Participants were encouraged to paint outdoors rather than in studios. Some residents, including Grant Wood, lived in ice wagons purchased from the Hubbard Ice Company in Cedar Rapids.
Byway Wayside Exhibit Panels: Concept Designs (more on next page)
Wayside Exhibit Installation

Wayside exhibit panels should be installed at a 45-degree angle to the vertical, which offers the best view to a standing or sitting person. They should be placed high enough above the ground, a minimum of 30 inches at the lowest edge, to allow a person in a wheelchair to get close.

A concrete base is suggested where appropriate to facilitate the installation of the exhibit (can be installed directly to the base surface), maximize accessibility (for people with mobility disabilities), and provide easier maintenance over time (snow removal, vegetation management).
Multisensory Components

Adding multisensory components to a wayside exhibit increases its attractiveness, makes it accessible to a wider audience and provides another way for visitors to experience the message. Push-button audio units are relatively inexpensive additions that can enhance interpretation. Authentic narration supported by sounds and music humanize a message better than written words ever could. Tactile components, such as textures or sculptures, encourage hands-on discovery.

Secondary Wayside Exhibits

Secondary wayside exhibits are smaller versions of interpretive panels that can complement the larger primary exhibits. With a smaller design, the signs can only tell a single brief message with one or two images. They may be appropriate, for example, along paths or trails where specific resources are being identified. They might also be used at sites where a larger sign would be inappropriate.

Since larger panels are better at attracting attention and provide more design flexibility, it is recommended that primary wayside exhibits be used wherever possible.

Support and Panel Design

The exhibits should be constructed out of the same material and in a similar design as the primary wayside exhibits.

- Supports are constructed out of 3/8”-thick steel that is 15” wide. Instead of having a mount plate, the base itself is bent at a 45-degree angle about 30” from the ground for the panel mounting. The Iowa Byways logo cut-out is included in the base.
- Panels are made out of ½”-thick high-pressure laminate. They are designed at 11”-by-14” in size.
**Welcome/Visitor Center Exhibits**

Visitor information centers are important sites to display and share byway information. In addition to brochures and booklets, a touch-screen computer and associated exhibit can catch the attention of travelers and help them plan trips to byway attractions.

On byways with welcome/visitor centers, the purpose of this indoor exhibit is to make visitors aware of the byway and its attractions, while facilitating impromptu planning. The exhibit also introduces the “byway brand” through its logo and characteristic fonts and colors.

**Design Recommendations**

The exhibit will be designed small enough to fit inside welcome centers where space is limited, yet large enough to attract attention.

- The exhibit is topped with sculptural metalwork similar to the experience hub kiosks.
- A large map of the byway placed below the color header introduces the byway and its main attractions. The map panel will provide a short summary of the byway and show a “you are here” symbol. Iconic photos of landscapes and attractions encourage further discovery.
- A rack installed next to the map holds byway brochures and travel guide booklets.
- A durable easy-to-use touch-screen computer kiosk provides digital information about the byway. For a unique perspective, the byway route can be placed over an air photo, and users can press arrows to fly over the landscape and discover more about each attraction as it appears.
GENERAL BYWAY BROCHURES

Many travelers prefer to use publications to navigate the byway and discover attractions. They are not limited by spotty cell phone coverage or low batteries. They have take-home value and serve as keepsakes of an adventure. They are often shared with others and have a longer life than digital media that pass fleetingly over a screen.

Brochures are a cost-effective marketing tool because they reach casual travelers who are unaware of the byway. A basic byway brochure should stimulate people to access more in-depth information online or at welcome centers. It should be bold and concise with a simple, clean design that highlights significant attractions and other byway media.

Design Recommendations:

• **Size and folds:** an 11”-by-17” leaflet brochure with 6 panels per side (12 total) is an effective layout for introducing a byway and its resources. A different size was recommended for Iowa Valley (see below).

• **Design elements:** Colors, font styles, and graphic styles should be unified with other byway media.

• **Front Cover:** Needs to be designed to be noticed in a rack with other brochures. An obvious byway title should be visible above the rack holder. A dramatic focal-point photograph that represents the byway encourages readers to open the brochure. The byway logo unifies with other media.

• **Back Cover:** The back cover is an ideal place to include a map of Iowa showing the location of the byway and major roads. Directions and contact information are also important elements.

• **First Reveal:** When the brochure is first opened, another dramatic image draws the eye to a concise and active description of the byway experience.

• **Second Reveal (3 panels):** As the brochure is opened, three adjacent panels will highlight different regions of the byway, or different categories of resources (such as natural, historical, and cultural). A description of the significant byway attractions, complemented by engaging photos, will pique the visitor’s interest.

• **Full Reveal Inside (6 panels):** The inside of the brochure features a map with the entire byway route clearly marked. Major roads, communities, scenic byways, and other landmarks are identified. The map could also include a list of primary attractions with corresponding location numbers, similar to the tear-sheet byway maps.

In order to accommodate four regions, it was recommended that the Iowa Valley Scenic Byway brochure be a 14"-by-17" leaflet brochure with 8 panels per side (16 total)
Driftless Area Scenic Byway
Breathtaking Vistas

Front Cover

Byway name at top
Unified curved header

Focal point image
Complete byway logo and website

Back Cover

State locator map and access directions

Directions
Venture off the beaten path and take the Driftless Area Scenic Byway. The byway can be accessed from many entry points, including New Albin, Lansing, Waukon, Postville, and Decorah.

Contact information

First Reveal

Focal point image

State’s Most Scenic Byway

This 144-mile route is considered the most scenic state byway in Iowa. It travels a landscape like no other. While glaciers scoured most of the surrounding area, this region was left untouched. The Mississippi River flows through the heart of the Driftless Area. Here you can hike ridge-top trails, fish for abundant trout, and stroll old river towns.

An Area Without ‘Drift’

In this corner of northeastern Iowa, the landscape is made up of limestone bluffs, forested valleys, and winding river bottoms. Retreating glaciers left behind sand, gravel, and boulders called drift. While the most recent ice sheets scoured most of the surrounding area, this region was left as an island, causing it to be "driftless." Over the eons, water has carved through the limestone bedrock, creating bluffs and deep valleys laced with caves and fast-flowing streams.

For more information visit: iowabyways.org
Second Reveal

Yellow River Region
River Recreation and Small-Town Iowa

A trip through this region begins in Fort Totten, which offers itself as “Gateway to the World” because of its many immigrant residents. The route follows the Yellow River and Pattee Creek with their abundant canoe areas for paddling and fishing opportunities. Yellow River State Forest is a major attraction, with 14 miles of hiking trails and equestrian trails that wind through the Pattee Creek valley.

Upper Iowa Region
River Bluffs and Valleys

A leisurely drive from Waukon to Lansing provides sweeping views of wooded farm fields and forested ridges and valleys. Lansing is a charming river town. Don’t miss Mount Homeer, with its commanding views of the Mississippi and Blackhawk Bridge. Walk among the Fish Farm Native American mounds in New Albin. See the Iron Post that once marked the Iowa-Minnesota border. Watch wildlife at the Mississippi backwaters along Army Road. Then head west to follow the Upper Iowa River and its wide floodplains.

Decorah Region
Experiencing Many Cultures

A short trip to Decorah leads to Waterloo Creek, one of the most pristine cold-water trout streams in Iowa.

Full Reveal

Unified curved header

Different regions interpreted

Snapshot-style photos

List of primary byway attractions with location numbers (not shown)

Unified curved header

Full byway map

Byway logo and contact info
BYWAY INTERPRETIVE TRAVEL GUIDES

While the existing *Official Travel Guide to Iowa’s Byways* is well-designed and easy to use, its purpose is being a general guide to all of the state’s byways. An interpretive travel guide developed specifically for each byway would add greater depth to a traveler’s understanding of the byway and enhance wayfinding.

1. **Organize the guide by region and community:** Byway visitors may have limited time, with perhaps only a few hours or a day to explore the route. Organizing the byway guide by regions and major communities will allow visitors to quickly determine where to spend their time.

2. **Theme the attractions within the region:** Visitors often have specific interests. Byway attractions within each region can be identified with simple icons that represent the intrinsic qualities: Scenic and Natural; Historic and Archaeological; Cultural; and Recreational. Themed itineraries that address visitor interests would provide focus to their trip-planning.

3. **Include detailed maps of attractions within the region:** Each region and major community should have a map that shows the detailed location of the resources. This would require adding specific roads that lead to each attraction.

4. **Design the guide to be consistent with Iowa Byways design standards:** The design should use the logos, fonts, and colors consistent with those described in this plan and with other interpretive media.

In the travel guide, each region and major community can be developed in the following format:

- An introduction to the region or city that expresses its unique character
- Highlight visitor centers, experience hub kiosks, wayside exhibits, audiovisual tours, and other interpretive media
- Two or more pages (as many as needed) for maps and descriptions of that region’s resources
- Concise, lively descriptions of each attraction, with websites and/or phone numbers where visitors can find more information
- Icons that identify each resource’s theme or intrinsic quality—core byway experiences should be highlighted
- Strong, focal point photos of key attractions and informal snapshot-style photos of other resources
Belle Plaine Interpretive Exhibit

Belle Plaine is a French phrase that means “Beautiful Plain.” This rich land of tall prairie grasses was settled in the 1840s. In 1903, it became the terminus of the Clinton Division of the Chicago & North Western Railroad. The Lincoln Highway was routed through town in 1915 to avoid the hilly “Bohemian Alps” to the north. Roadside businesses blossomed. Today, the community continues to celebrate its rich connection to the coast-to-coast road.

Belle Plaine Attractions

- **Herring Hotel**: Built in 1900 along what would become the Lincoln Highway, the hotel served rail and highway travelers for many years. In 1915, a service station was added. Info: www.herringhotel.org
- **Sankot Motor Company Garage**: Located across from the museum, the garage served train and highway travelers for many years. In 1919, a service station was added. Info: 319-444-2228
- **Beautiful Plains Prairie Park**: Experience the original landscape of Benton County by walking through a restored prairie. A picnic shelter is available.
- **Old Station Loop**: This tour loop follows the 1915-1927 alignment of the Lincoln Highway past the site of the original Preston’s gas station built in 1920.
- **Lincoln Café**: One of the classic 1920s restaurants on the country’s first transcontinental highway. Info: 319-444-2228
- **Herring Hotel**: Built in 1906 along what would become the 8th St. Extension of the Lincoln Highway, the hotel served rail and highway travelers for many years. In 1915, a service station was added. It was home to the Lincoln Highway Grill Club, which maintained transitory businesses along the road. Info: www.herringhotel.org
- **Lincoln Highway Mural**: Located across from the museum, the mural celebrates the Lincoln Highway through town.
- **Chicago & North Western Depot**: Built in 1894, this privately owned depot can be viewed from the Belle Plaine Area Museum’s railroad viewing room.
- **Preston’s Station**: George Preston built this iconic station in 1928. George once appeared on The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson. A collage of old road signs decorates its walls. Info: bpiowahistory.com or 319-434-6093.
- **Beautiful Plains Prairie Park**: Experience the original landscape of Benton County by walking through a restored prairie. A picnic shelter is available.
- **Old Station Loop**: This tour loop follows the 1915-1927 alignment of the Lincoln Highway past the site of the original Preston’s gas station built in 1920.
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Interpretive Travel Guide: Inside Pages Concept Designs
Unified Byway Websites

Iowa byways have an online presence through the statewide byways website (iowabyways.org), which redirects to a Travel Iowa web page focused on the state’s scenic byways (www.traveliowa.com/getinspired/the-scenic-route/12/). While the byway web pages have a clean modern design with some good information, there are some limitations:

• They do not share the unified design standards established for the byways program that would give it a sense of identity (no byway logo or colors).
• Many of the byway attractions are not included in the Travel Iowa database.
• It does not provide links to byway-specific social media sites, such as Facebook.
• It does not provide byway-specific travel options, such as thematic itineraries.

The Iowa Byways website design should be updated to encourage discovery and reflect the unified design standards recommended in this plan. This would include:

• Unified font styles, colors, and graphic elements (like the curved header) that reinforce the visual identity of all byway media.
• Dramatic and engaging photographs of byway scenery and attractions.
• Banner images on the home page that change every few seconds to showcase the variety of byway resources during the seasons.
• Links to byway-specific social media options on each page to encourage sharing and interaction.
• Contact information on every page so visitors can ask questions.
• Other byway media, such as on-site experience hubs, wayside exhibits, audio tour sites, and brochures, to encourage further investigation.
• Responsive layout and design for viewing on smartphones and other mobile devices.

Website Navigation Recommendations

The website navigation should be specific to the byway and include links to pages that are most important to visitors planning their trip. Main navigation links could include:

• About
  ▪ Overview of Byway
  ▪ Byway History
  ▪ Byway Advisory Board
  ▪ Contact Information

• Explore the Byway
  ▪ Interactive Map
  ▪ Regions and Communities: Include interpretation for each region and community
  ▪ Core Attractions: Include interpretation for each attraction; allow users to add them to a custom itinerary
  ▪ Historic Attractions
  ▪ Cultural Attractions
  ▪ Natural and Recreational Attractions

• Plan Your Trip
  ▪ Interactive Map: Different icons show the location of attractions along the byway—when a user clicks on an icon,
they see a concise description and photo of the attraction, with a link to a more detailed description—these can be added to a custom itinerary

- **User Itinerary**: Based on selections from map or attractions
- **Suggested Itineraries**: Based on length of time and interests
- **Publications**: Include downloadable brochures, booklets, and maps

**Events**

- **Calendar of Events**: Can be updated by byway communities
- **Blog/News**: Keep this updated to show that the byway is actively supported

**Gallery**

- Links to various photo albums and videos showcasing the byway’s communities and attractions by category
Byway Website Concept Designs
Byway travelers are increasingly using mobile devices. Harnessing the power of smartphones and tablets, audiovisual tours combine sound, images, video, text, and interactive components to create rich interpretive experiences. They are ideally suited to byways, providing directions to nearby attractions and offering interpretation during long drives.

**Recommendations for Audiovisual Tours**

- **Set a clear theme for the tour:** This helps in collecting and organizing stories and interviews.

- **Edit the messages down to their essence:** Choose messages that highlight universal concepts, those powerful meanings that we can all relate to such as love, family, tragedy, survival, etc. These are the most compelling stories for visitors.

- **Keep the messages short:** Listeners are distracted by sun, wind, traffic, hunger, or their own travel companions. Short, intriguing stories will hold a visitor’s attention for more stops.

- **Record oral histories and interviews:** Authentic voices of people connected to the byway themes add credibility and interest to mobile tours.

- **Incorporate music and sounds that contribute to the ambiance:** Background music and sounds can create an emotional atmosphere that reinforces the authenticity.

- **Create a narrative storyline:** Narrators are able to tell a story in a succinct way and to connect various oral interviews and histories in seamless ways. Alternating between several narrators, like a man’s and a woman’s voice, reduces monotony and keeps the listener’s attention.

**Sharing the Audiovisual Tour**

A tour can be presented using many different methods. A combination will reach the broadest audience base.

- **Cell Phone Tour:** A relatively inexpensive option, travelers call into a central phone number, dial in a tour number, and listen to a message. Dynamic, quality audio messages that include concise narration, sound effects, and music should be prioritized.

- **Mobile Tour Website:** To maximize the audience base, a mobile tour website can be created for a relatively inexpensive cost. Web pages specific to each attraction can link to online audio messages (from the cell phone tour), images, and videos. For on-site travelers, a QR code can be added to special tour signs or existing media. As long as they have good cellular service, a user scans a QR code with their mobile device to stream online content or access a web page.

- **Mobile Tour App:** While more expensive to create and maintain, a native tour app allows a great deal of flexibility for presenting an interactive audiovisual tour. Once downloaded, travelers can use the app at any time, providing constant access even in areas with weak cellular service. The user interface can be developed to make full use of a mobile device’s features, such as easy swipe controls, maps linked to GPS locations, and automatic video and audio playing.
Byway Artwork

Art arouses our senses and appeals to our emotions in ways that words cannot. Thoughts and feelings can be conveyed to many ages and learning levels without the filter of language. Themes of the byway can be reinforced and embellished by creative artwork.

Sculptures

Since sculptures occupy space in much the same way as humans occupy space, we interact with them in a different way than with two-dimensional art. Sculptures are tactile—one can touch them and feel their various textures and forms. Looking at sculptures is a dynamic activity—the works change as the viewer moves around them or through different seasons and times of day.

Sculptural pieces can be realistic or abstract concepts that express a community’s sense of place. They can even be utilitarian, such as a viewing platform, bicycle rack, or drinking fountain.

Life-size human silhouettes made of weathering steel are unique sculptural elements that help personalize a landscape, attract the attention of motorists, and interpret the thematic stories of a byway.

Gas station attendant, Deep Rock Station, Jefferson

Flour mill worker, Motor Mill Historic Site, Elkader
Byway Silhouette Sculptures: Concept Designs

School children, Haven Country School

Waterman Prairie, Wilson Avenue entrance

John L. McCreery, McCreery Memorial Gardens, Delhi

Artist Colony Students, American Gothic House Replica, Stone City

Steamboat sculpture, Lansing

Earl Marshall Angus Bull, Harlan

Escaping slaves, Pearson House, Keota

Bucking bronco, Sidney Rodeo Arena
Murals

Murals are media presented on a roadside scale that can be appreciated by travelers even while driving. Effective paintings can capture a visitor’s attention, present ideas, and create moods. Murals can make the past come alive or give a visitor insight into a community’s personality.

Murals are a good method for focusing attention on events that most people may not be able to experience personally. Historic events such as a steam locomotive pulling into a station, the bustling activities at harvest time, or a prairie in bloom can be dramatically represented on a mural.

Many byway communities have buildings with rough, windowless walls that were exposed when an adjacent building was razed. These blank surfaces are the perfect canvas to create artistic expressions of the community’s sense of place and pride.

The Walldogs, an organization that began in Iowa, specializes in creating murals. A community can host a Walldog Festival, where artists converge and paint murals reflecting the town’s history.
Byway Murals: Concept Designs

Linn Grove, Iowa

Wyoming, Iowa

Bonaparte, Iowa

Chelsea, Iowa

Ames, Iowa

Elkader, Iowa
**IOWA BYWAYS JUNIOR EXPLORER PROGRAM**

Families and multi-generational groups are a significant potential audience for Iowa Byways. Activities that encourage adults and children to engage in meaningful experiences together can create lifelong memories. Similar to the Junior Ranger programs found in many parks, an Iowa Byways Junior Explorer program would be an activity-based experience with the purpose of encouraging families to explore the state’s scenic byways.

Each byway would develop a kid-friendly activity guide that reveals the stories and resources along its route. The activities would be completed while traveling the byway. The guides would be made available at key staffed locations along the byway, such as information centers and major attractions.

When children—with the help of parents or guardians—complete a certain number of activities, they return to a designated information center, where a representative would look over the activities and talk to the children about what they learned. The children would then take an oath, promising to continue exploring the state’s scenic byways, respect and protect the resources, and share their experience with others. The children would receive a unique patch (or other reward) declaring them an official Iowa Byways Junior Explorer for that byway.

The guides would be filled with fun games, puzzles, and coloring pages that entice families to discover the byway. Some ideas include:

- A scavenger hunt that encourages the family to get out of the car and explore a natural or historic site.
- Stories and artwork created by children who live along the byway that describe their daily experiences.
- Coloring pages depicting scenes along the byway.
- Crossword puzzle or word search with byway-specific terms.
- Dot-to-dot puzzles of resources
- Mazes that follow rivers, trails, roads, or other byway resources
Iowa Byways Passport Program

An Iowa Byways passport program encourages families and other traveler groups to explore resources along each byway. Adults and children alike are engaged in a scavenger hunt to fill up a passport booklet with unique stamps. The booklet has take-home value, as each stamp represents a memory from the trip.

Passport Stations

A unique stamp design developed for each attraction would reward travelers for their effort. Ideally, stamps would be located at attractions where staff or volunteers are available to watch over the stations and answer questions. However, self-service passport stations could also be developed for unstaffed areas or sites with limited hours. One durable option is to mount circle metal plaques with raised lines on outdoor panels. Travelers can put a booklet page or piece of paper over the plaque and use a crayon or pencil to make a unique rubbing.

Passport Booklets

A passport booklet can be developed for each byway that features the different passport station sites along the route. This serves as a unique interpretive opportunity. It would be written in concise, personal, family-friendly language that reveals the stories of byway attractions and resources. Each page would have a blank circular area for the stamp. The booklet should follow the same unified design standards as other media, although a more cost effective black-and-white version could be an option.
**MEDIA COST ESTIMATES**

These cost estimates were developed in 2018 based on quotes from multiple companies. They include research, design, and fabrication/printing. The estimates are listed as broad ranges and should be used only for the purposes of planning and fundraising. Actual prices will vary considerably based on the specifics of each project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media Type</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
<th>Cost Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experience hubs</td>
<td>Highly visible way to orient travelers to regional attractions. Cost-effective where attractions are not routinely staffed.</td>
<td>4 HPL panels, metalwork with cutouts, timbers $10,000–$15,000 each $15,000–$20,000 with limestone base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-panel kiosks</td>
<td>Half-version of experience hub: introduces travelers to the byway, a community or specific resources.</td>
<td>2 HPL panels, metalwork with cutouts, timbers $5,000–$6,000 each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wayside exhibits</td>
<td>Best way to communicate must-tell stories at significant sites along the byway where no other tools are available.</td>
<td>HPL panels, steel supports with cutouts Full-size (2’x3’ panel): $3,000–$3,500 each Secondary size (11”x14” panel): $1,000–$1,500 each Audio units: $1,500–$2,000 each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcome/visitor center touch-screen computer kiosk exhibits</td>
<td>Valuable in alerting travelers to the byway’s existence and for trip-planning; small size appropriate for existing centers.</td>
<td>Wall-mounted panel, metalwork, touchscreen computer, kiosk, programming: $15,000–$25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General byway brochure</td>
<td>Small publication that can be widely distributed to promote awareness of the byway.</td>
<td>$1,500–$2,000 per 10,000 copies (11”x17” size, full-color)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretive travel guide booklet</td>
<td>A physical method for visitors to navigate the byway and discover its stories; not dependent on cellular service.</td>
<td>$11,000–$15,000 per 10,000 booklets (92 pages, 8.5”x11” size, full-color)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unified byway websites</td>
<td>Essential planning tool that reaches a large audience; is easily updated.</td>
<td>$10,000–$25,000 for development plus monthly hosting/maintenance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audiovisual tours</td>
<td>Ideal tools for incorporating sound and visuals to make stories come alive; convenient, easy to use, and encourage interaction.</td>
<td>$8,000–$50,000 for development plus monthly hosting/maintenance ($200–$500/month)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byway artwork</td>
<td>Highly visible way to focus attention on a significant story or event on a roadside scale.</td>
<td>Highly variable based on type and artist Steel silhouette statue: $1,500/each average Wall mural: $10–$35/sq. ft. average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa Byways Junior Explorer booklets and patches</td>
<td>Keeps families engaged in the byway’s interpretive themes and encourages discovery.</td>
<td>Booklets: $5,000–$8,000 per 10,000 (30 pages, 8.5”x11” size, full-color) Patch: $250–$300 per 300 pieces (3”-diameter)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa Byways passport stations and booklets</td>
<td>Provides motivation to visit specific sites along the byway and has take-home value.</td>
<td>Metal Passport Plaques: $50–$75 each Panel (10”x7”) and metal support: $500–$700 each Booklet: $5,000–$8,000 per 10,000 booklets (40 pages, 6”x6” size, full-color)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These cost estimates were developed in 2018 based on quotes from multiple companies. They include research, design, and fabrication/printing. The estimates are listed as broad ranges and should be used only for the purposes of planning and fundraising. Actual prices will vary considerably based on the specifics of each project.
**Next Steps**

1. Develop official interpretive media design standards

The Iowa Byways program should work with a professional graphic design firm to develop an official set of design specifications for interpretive media. This ensures that media developed for each individual byway conforms to statewide standards, reinforcing the Iowa Byways branding. While general recommendations for unified colors, fonts, and design elements have been provided in this plan to serve as a foundation, a professional designer can create specific design guidelines and templates for each type of media (print and electronic) based on the needs of the byway program. Sample standards used to develop the concept wayside exhibit panels are included in the tint box to the right.

2. Determine interpretive media development and funding priorities

Iowa Byways should prioritize the recommended interpretive media developments, and determine which can be funded locally and which should be supported through the statewide program.

Each byway will have its own media development priorities based on funding opportunities, existing partnerships, and specific needs. Byway boards should use the plan as a basis to determine development priorities and plans of action. Each byway’s plan is designed to serve as a fundraising tool with full-color concept renderings, concise descriptions, and development justification.

From a statewide perspective, the Iowa Byways program should develop interpretive media priorities for the byways as a whole, providing

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**Concept Wayside Exhibit: Unified Design Standards**

The following specifications were used when designing concept wayside exhibit panels as part of the interpretive master planning project:

- **Header**: Curved header with byway-specific color palette; byway logo in upper-right
- **Title (in header)**: BrushTip Travis, 160 pt., white
- **Drop cap (main message)**: BrushTip Travis, 150 pt., byway-specific color
- **Main message**: Garrison Sans, 48 pt., black
- **Sub-headings**: BrushTip Travis, 52 pt., byway-specific color
- **Secondary messages**: Garrison Sans, 32 pt., black
- **Image captions**: Garrison Sans Italic, 24 pt., black
- **Quotes**: BrushTip Travis, 42 pt., byway-specific color
- **Background**: Light blue gradient with thematic image
- **Footer bar**: Byway-specific color palette; Iowa Byways logo in lower left; QR code and Iowa Byways website in lower right
support and funding to create a unified system. For example, the statewide program could provide base funding for the development and installation of one experience hub along each byway, with the idea that specific byways would find local funding to support additional hubs.

On October 11, 2017, Schmeeckle Reserve Interpreters presented a summary of the interpretive master planning project at the Iowa Byways Sustainability Team meeting in Ames, which included byway leaders from all of the state’s byways. As part of the presentation, the team facilitated a media prioritization activity. Participants used stickers to rank the various interpretive media options based on what they felt the priorities were for their individual byways and for the statewide byway program as a whole. The results were organized into priority lists below based on the number of sticker votes. This can be used as a starting point for discussion.

### Interpretive Media Priorities: October 11, 2017

#### Individual Byway Priorities
1. Experience Hubs (27 votes)
2. Wayside Exhibits (18 votes)
3. General Brochures (13 votes)
4. Scenic Overlooks/Development Sites (12 votes)
5. Audiovisual Tours (9 votes)
6. Byway Junior Explorer Program (9 votes)
7. Artwork: Sculptures (7 votes)
8. Welcome Center Exhibits (7 votes)
9. Travel Guides (6 votes)
10. Artwork: Murals (6 votes)
11. Passport Program (5 votes)
12. Thematic Play Areas (4 votes)
13. Other: Revenue (4 votes)
14. Unified Websites (3 votes)

#### Statewide Byway Priorities
1. Experience Hubs (23 votes)
2. Other: Photography (19 votes)
3. Travel Guides (17 votes)
4. Unified Websites (17 votes)
5. Wayside Exhibits (16 votes)
6. Byway Junior Explorer Program (8 votes)
7. Scenic Overlooks/Development Sites (7 votes)
8. General Brochures (7 votes)
9. Welcome Center Exhibits (6 votes)
10. Passport Program (3 votes)
11. Thematic Play Areas (2 votes)
12. Other: Revenue (2 votes)
13. Artwork: Murals (1 vote)
14. Artwork: Sculptures (1 vote)
15. Other: Design (1 vote)
16. Audiovisual Tours (0 votes)
3. Create a centralized process for coordinating and approving byway media designs

The Iowa Byways program should designate a central office with the responsibility of reviewing and approving byway media design prior to printing or fabrication. This would include any printed or digital media that uses the Iowa Byways branding.

Currently, a number of individual byways have started using the conceptual designs from the interpretive master plans to create wayside exhibits, publications, and other media. While this is definitely a step in the right direction, there is no current oversight of the designs to ensure consistency and uniformity. Each byway’s design is a bit different than the others, which results in a patchwork of styles that reduces the impact of the byways brand.

A designated office at the state level would ensure consistency among interpretive media design. All media that an individual byway develops would need to be submitted to the office for review prior to fabrication or publishing. In order to represent the Iowa Byways program and be eligible for state funding, the established media design standards must be followed. After reviewing the designs, the office would either approve the media for publishing or provide a list of changes. Variations to standardized media designs would need approval from the central office.

Iowa Byways leaders should determine the best means of developing a centralized review process that would ensure consistency while being efficient and supportive. One option is housing this process within Iowa DOT, which coordinates the statewide byway program. Another option is selecting one of the RC&D councils that may have specialization in graphic design to coordinate.

4. Identify a list of approved vendors for interpretive media fabrication

To streamline the process of interpretive media fabrication and printing, the Iowa Byways program should identify approved vendors that byways can work with. The vendors would be selected based on the durability of materials and the cost. By choosing the same vendor for multiple projects, costs can often be reduced. This also limits the point of contact for any issues that arise in the future.

The following vendors were recommended and used for the byway CIG wayside exhibits:

- **Metal supports and frames**
  Barking Dog Exhibits, Ruth Risler 715-214-5862
  www.bdexhibits.com

- **High-pressure laminate sign panels**
  iZone Imaging, Jennifer Muniz 888-464-9663
  www.izoneimaging.com

5. Market and promote byway interpretive media

As interpretive media opportunities are developed, they should be marketed and promoted along each individual byway and statewide. These are significant elements of a byway experience, and can be used to generate a great deal of interest in the region. They also highlight partnerships between the state, RC&D councils, communities, organizations, businesses, and others. Successful interpretive projects are often a catalyst to garnering support and resources for future projects.