



## **Support Partner Organization Initiative**

**Coordinated by: CBGN Ad Hoc Partnership Development Committee**

The Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network is a young and growing partnership among 140 individual locations around the Chesapeake Bay watershed, many state and regional agencies and organizations and the National Park Service. Collectively, we are trying to break new ground in telling the Chesapeake story, helping people experience special places, and stimulating greater commitment to conservation stewardship. The opportunities are almost unlimited, the challenges are not to be underestimated, and the importance of the task is substantial. After all, the Chesapeake Bay is a national treasure.

This partnership is led by all of its members. But it is also intended to be greater than the sum of its parts. The Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network Working Group and the National Park Service work to facilitate, convene and coordinate the overall Network partnership, while also taking actions intended to benefit the Network as a whole and all of its members. The Working Group's member organizations and the National Park Service are committed to continuing these roles.

From the beginning, expanding the Network's value and effectiveness and ensuring its long-term sustainability has been an important goal of Gateways, the Working Group and the National Park Service. We work toward a specific goal of "enhancing the capacity for integrating, marketing and supporting the Network."

For some time, Gateways and Working Group members have anticipated that a nonprofit partner organization working with Gateways, the National Park Service (NPS) Chesapeake Bay office, and the agencies and organizations represented by the Working Group could add significant value to the Network. A partner organization could bring new revenue and matching resources, bring expertise to the table not currently in the mix, accomplish projects with Network-wide scope that no single Gateway would find achievable within its mission and resources, provide networking and capacity building for Gateways, and carry out region-wide communication regarding the Network, its Gateway members and the experience they offer visitors and residents alike.

In the fall of 2002 the Working Group adopted a set of 10 principles to guide development of a support partner organization. These principles arose from over 18 months of consultations with Gateways, deliberation within the Working Group and modification by the Partnership Workshop participants.

In September 2003 the Working Group circulated a proposal responding to the need and the opportunity for expanding support for the Network. The proposal reflected the recommendations

of a May 15, 2003 workshop involving over 25 Gateways and Working Group members, as well as the developed principles. The Working Group asked Gateways members for comments and advice and encouraged expression of Gateways concurrence or disagreement with the actions proposed. At the Town Hall held during the 2003 CBGN Conference, Gateways concurred with the steps proposed and asked that they receive information about the on-going development. This committee is formed to guide the next steps in forming a support organization.

## **COMMITTEE CHARGE**

**Step 1:** Determine if there is an organization within the Network or within the community of Bay-focused entities and/or state and National Park Service partners that would foster the growth of a support partner within its institutional boundaries.

In early discussions, Gateways encouraged a strategy of building within an already-established organization, and the partnership workshop participants confirmed support for that approach. Therefore, the initial step is clearly to determine whether that strategy will bear fruit. This will be done through a letter of inquiry to current Network members and to those organizations that may be suggested in response as possible homes to foster the support organization's growth.

The ad hoc partnership development committee should explore the advantages of those organizations that indicate a willingness and interest in fostering the formation of the support organization, with the full understanding that at some point in the future the support partner may become an independent entity. The ten principles will guide the discussions with such organizations, as will the advice to form a "founding board" to create the support partner.

The ad hoc committee will make a recommendation to the Network and its Working Group regarding the use and choice of fostering entity or creation of an independent entity.

**Step 2:** Engage a contractor to research and develop revenue opportunities that could support the formation and deliver operating capital for the Network support organization.

Workshop participants agreed with earlier advice to concentrate on potential revenue opportunities, as opposed to philanthropic donations, for funding and operating capital. Brian O'Neill, the May 2003 partnership workshop speaker and General Superintendent of Golden Gate National Recreation Area, outlined the revenue development help the Golden Gate partners have secured from business development experts. To jump-start the business planning, the National Park Service will secure similar expertise to develop recommendations for resources that would generate initial working capital and an operating revenue stream. The committee will work parallel to that effort and offer its guidance.

**Step 3:** Develop an agreement with the fostering entity, if this option is the chosen option.

If successful and approved by the Working Group and Gateways consultation, the committee would develop an agreement based upon the ten guiding principles developed by the Working Group for the creation of the support partner as a project within the fostering entity, with full recognition that the Network support partner may become independent at some future time. In

addition to the principles, the agreement would call for the creation of a “founding board” specifically to develop the support partner. Should no appropriate fostering entity emerge, we would propose to move forward with step 4.

**Step 4:** Formation of the founding board for new organization, selected to guide the earliest stages of the business plan and Network-wide agreements.

Should no existing institution be an appropriate fostering entity for the support partner, a founding board will be assembled to form a business plan and build the support organization. A collaborative working relationship with the NPS CBGN office, Working Group and Gateway members is key to the success of the founding board and, ultimately, the support organization. Therefore, the agreements with the fostering entity and/or the formative documents for an independent support organization will be grounded in the principles. Until the founding board develops a business plan, these principles will guide agreements and activities for the support partner’s formation.

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