



Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network Town Hall Meeting

Notes for Discussion of the Next Steps in Developing a Network-wide Support Organization

Network-wide Conference Held November, 2003

November 2003

Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network Working Group

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A Statement of Need: Expanding Support for the Gateways Network Partnership

The Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network is a young and growing partnership among more than 120 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 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 by principles developed and refined through a series of work sessions over the past 18 months. The Working Group asked Gateways members for comments and advice and encouraged expression of Gateways concurrence or disagreement with the actions proposed. Across the Network, Gateways concurred with the steps proposed and asked that they receive information about the on-going development of a Network-wide support partner. Our Town Hall conversation is the first opportunity to address the next steps in developing a partner.

Background - The process to date

Discussions of the potential for a Gateways Network support partner have occurred over the past two years. These discussions were informed by workshops with Gateways, an on-line needs assessment completed by over 70% of Gateways and an extensive survey of support partner organizations around the nation. Points made during the workshops and assessment substantially influenced the approach to considering a support organization; key among these are:

1. Workshop participants strongly reaffirmed that the relationships with the National Park Service and the Chesapeake Bay Program (through the Gateways Network Working Group) provide significant value to the Network and to its members. They want these relationships and the leadership of the Working Group to remain in place.
2. Participants believed that a Network-wide support group could add value to the Network and to the NPS, but felt a deliberative process was required to fully consider the matter.
3. Participants advised that the partner focus on the mission of education, access and conservation of the Bay and improvement of the Gateways Network through activities that add value and cannot be undertaken by individual Gateways.

In 2002, the Gateways Network Working Group used these points and other information to draft an initial set of principles for guiding development of a Network support partner.

On May 15, 2003 over 25 Gateway members participated in a partnership workshop to consider the attached principles and the formation of a support partner organization for the Network as a whole. The workshop, advertised to all Gateways, substituted as well for the monthly Working Group meeting. At the end of a lively day, those attending agreed on the following:

1. To modify the principles as agreed in consensus discussions;
2. To ask the Working Group to move the process forward by sharing the results of the workshop and sending a written proposal with implementation steps to all Gateways Network members for their formal comment and possible concurrence; and
3. To use the November Gateways Network conference to confirm the implementation plan, should Gateways agree with the proposal.

Participants also made very concrete suggestions about implementation steps. Those were reflected in the next steps proposed by the workshop participants and the Working Group.

At the July 2003 meeting, Working Group members accepted these recommendations, and sent a proposal to all Gateways for comment, concurrence or disagreement. Gateways generally concur with the development of a partner along the lines outlined in the proposal, with an emphasis on three elements:

1. Continued communication as the process moves forward,
2. An inclusive approach to potential partners and sensitivity to Gateways' partners, and
3. A clear emphasis on the Network-wide benefits sought.

We bring the topic before the Town Hall at the November Network-wide Conference to kick off the next steps forward with your help.

Steps for Forming a Gateways Network Support Partner

As the Working Group and based upon your concurrence, we are prepared to move forward with creation of a Network-wide support organization, following the steps outlined in our proposal.

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.

To be carried out by the NPS in consultation with the Working Group and Gateways and be completed by January 2004.

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 request for statement of interest to all current Network members and to those organizations that may be suggested in response as possible homes to foster the support organization's growth.

The Working Group will form an *ad hoc partnership development committee* with Gateway membership to 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. **If you are interested in participating as an Ad Hoc Committee member, please indicate so on the attached questionnaire.**

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.

Carried out by the NPS in consultation with the Working Group and Gateways. Step 2 contracted by December 2003, and completed by June 2004.

Workshop participants agreed with earlier advice to concentrate on potential revenue opportunities, as opposed to philanthropic donations, for formation funding and operating capital. Brian O'Neill, the 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 program office will secure similar expertise to develop recommendations for resources that would generate initial working capital and an operating revenue stream.

Step 3: Consensus check within the Network on choice of fostering entity or independent creation for the support partner.

Carried out by the Working Group at the Gateways Network Conference in November 2003.

If you have advice not captured during the Town Hall or want to suggest a fostering entity, please note this on the attached questionnaire.

Step 4: Develop an agreement with the fostering entity, if this option is the chosen option.

Carried out by the *ad hoc partnership development committee* and approved by the Working Group. Step 4 completed by March 2004.

Based upon the outcome of the November consensus check, we would propose to follow through immediately by putting into place an agreement based upon the ten guiding principles 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 5, the formation of a “founding board.”

Step 5: Formation of the founding board, selected to guide the earliest stages of the business plan and Network-wide agreements.

Negotiated with the fostering entity or carried out by the *ad hoc partnership development committee* and approved by the Working Group. Step 5 completed by June 2004.

We propose that no later than next June, a founding board will have assembled to form a business plan and build the support organization. A collaborative working relationship with the CBGN program 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 following principles. These principles arose from consultations with Gateways, deliberation within the Working Group and modification by the Partnership Workshop participants. Until the founding board develops a business plan, these principles will guide agreements and activities for the support partner’s formation.

What is a Partnership Support Organization? Questions and Answers

What is a Partnership?

A partnership refers to any voluntary collaboration among organizations working toward a common objective. Used to its full potential, a partnership builds synergistically on the time, talent, and support of all partners to mutual benefit and interest. The Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network is a unique partnership in the context of the National Park Service programs.

But that's very general; what specifically is a support partner?

Many institutions and public lands – from museums to historic homes to trails to local, state and national parks – develop a special relationship with a nonprofit organization or association to help the institution or agency reach mutual goals of conservation, education and visitor service. Sometimes these groups are called “friends”, as in the Friends of Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge. Sometimes they are called an “association”, as in the Parks and History Association that supports parks in the National Capital Region of the National Park Service. Sometimes they are called a “foundation” – the Accokeek Foundation, a Gateway member, actually operates much of Piscataway Park, a unit of the National Park System. Most recently one of the nation’s largest park support organizations renamed itself the Golden Gate Conservancy, recognizing the extensive support it offers over twenty national recreation area and park sites in and around San Francisco.

Support partners generally are 501[c](3) organizations with an independent board of directors and a master agreement with the institution or site they support. The 501[c](3) designation means that the donations given the organization are tax-deductible within IRS-imposed limits to the donors and also that the mission-related operations of the organization are not taxed.

Why would an institution or site want such a partner?

Large organizations and certainly public institutions and agencies answer to many rules, regulations and budget masters. The public resources that support an institution may be considerable, but their use may be prescribed and circumscribed. Dedicated support organizations often offer the flexibility and public stature of the non-profit world, particularly to governmental institutions. In September 2001 the Association of Partners for Public Lands surveyed 10 support partners around the nation representing many organizational models. Here are the key assets a support partner brings to an institution according to the executives interviewed:

- The nonprofit partner brings unique attributes to the institution, particularly the publicly funded one:
 - Ability to solicit people, funds, in-kind resources.
 - Ability to be entrepreneurial, flexible, enter into contracts for which public funding may not be available.
 - Ability to fund projects that are priorities for the institution but cannot compete within a public budget context.
 - Use of the stature of the nonprofit persona.
- The nonprofit partner can emphasize constituency building and even lobbying. Across all the models, every support partner had a specific focus on constituency building.

- The tourism industry is a difficult, intricate web for a single organization to traverse. Therefore many support partners emphasized collective identification or “branding”, marketing and communication programs using experienced and well-recognized successful consultants and contractors to raise public visibility and public support.

From the institutions with support partners, the list of key support areas that institutional leaders cite includes:

- Raising friends and funds.
- Developing public communications and raising the visibility of the institution.
- Developing and selling products (books, tours, etc.) that interpret the institution or site and educate visitors.
- Bringing many kinds of volunteers to help the institution.
- Speaking on the institution’s behalf to critical constituencies and funders.

Over the two years of discussion about the development of a Gateways Network support partner, the key benefits envisioned include communication, marketing and visibility, revenue generation, regional constituency building, and technical assistance to the Network’s members.

What comes with this special relationship?

A support partner organization usually includes the mission of its official partner in its own mission, or adopts the institution’s mission outright. The institution and the support partner develop a working agreement that includes the sharing of planning, goals, and projects. Support partners usually hold 501[c](3) status and provide dedicated volunteers and staff to extend the achievements and resources of the institution. The key to success rests with the trust built by planning and implementing projects and improvements to the institution together, as if one organization.

Give me an example of what a support partner has accomplished.

There are many examples, but given the nature of the Gateways Network, it is worth looking at the example of an organization that supports many sites or a whole system. At the May 2003 Network Partnership Workshop, Brian O’Neill, Superintendent of Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) and – at the time – NPS Acting Director for Partnerships, engaged the participants in a dialogue about the partnership he has with the Golden Gate Conservancy. The Conservancy is one among many partner organizations with an interest in helping the 20+ GGNRA sites, but it serves as an umbrella and support to the GGNRA overall and to its member-partners, from biking clubs to schools to gardeners. Here are achievements from the Conservancy’s most recent annual report for 2002, dated April 2003:

- \$4.3 million in support for projects and programs at GGNRA in 2002, from earned revenue and contributions.
- \$4.0 million in direct visitor and community program services in 2002.
- 12,000 members.
- 20,000 volunteers who contributed 377,000 hours through the Conservancy’s volunteer programs.
- Operation of visitor centers, Alcatraz, educational facilities for school children and trails.
- Special partnerships with organizations such as the Presidio Trust.

- Publication of educational materials, operation of bookstores and cafes, and provision of audio tours for Alcatraz and Fort Point.

The Conservancy is best known for two projects that could not have occurred without its help: the renovation of Crissy Field, a WWII airport and one of 9 military post-to-park conversions the Conservancy has made possible. The second is the widely recognized, national award winning marketing program of images for each site which, taken as a cohesive whole, have created a unity and visibility the sites lacked as individual small outposts. This program has, quite literally, put the GGNRA “on the map.”

What are some common elements of these partnerships that lead to success?

Shared agendas, joint decision-making and mutual benefit constitute a partnership; resources raised facilitate the projects. Senior level support lets a partnership operate easily within the rest of the organization and displays the organization’s commitment to other partners and to the general public. Most partnerships are proactive and involve action beyond what is required by regulation or policy.

The executives of the nonprofits interviewed in September 2001 listed the following key elements of success:

- Focus on a clear mission and message.
- Find the opportunities for earned revenue.
- Demonstrate early 2-3 substantive, completed improvements and programs.

What are some common benefits of these partnerships that come from success?

1. *Broadly Shared Achievements.* Broad-based participation can speed initial project accomplishments and build long-term support.
2. *Increased Resources.* Organizations can increase the usefulness of such resources as knowledge, skills, materials, and financial support by pooling them with others for greater impact.
3. *Innovative Solutions.* Partnerships can bring together people with a variety of experiences and perspectives; who, working together, can develop a wide range of options from which to select the best solutions.
4. *Increased Public Support.* Partnerships can provide agencies and others with stronger local support on legislative and regulatory issues, by increasing participant understanding of agency and organization goals and methods.

Principles for Guiding Formation of a Gateways Network Support Partner

No partnering entity or founding board would want a detailed business plan mandated for it, but at every step of the process Gateway members have asked for detailed information about the support partner's mission, relationships and activities. We developed these guiding principles to meet that need. The principles are presented in six headings that address the organizational components of a typical nonprofit organization.

1. MISSION, ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND FOUNDING DOCUMENTS.

Principle 1: *The support organization's mission would be to add value to the CBG Network in achieving its stated mission to help people:*

- *Understand the Chesapeake [watershed] through its special places and stories;*
- *Gain access to those places and resources; and*
- *Experience conservation stewardship and motivate future involvement.*

Therefore the institutional focus of the support organization's efforts would be to help sustain the Network of which it is a part rather than fashion an independent role. The organization would evolve over time, but its purposes would remain compatible with the Network and with the Gateway members.

As its programs develop through the business plan and beyond, the support organization would acquire resources to help the Network and the National Park Service (NPS) achieve the three Network goals or would support Gateways as they do so. The process to date gives guidance to this help, specifically emphasizing visibility and communication, interpretation and educational tools for Gateways, and publications. The business plan should specifically address the feasibility and cost of a comprehensive visibility program, addressing the Gateways Needs Assessment survey results. At its inception the organization should focus on 3-5 critical Network-wide needs. As the organization evolves over time, it should foster strategic planning that capitalizes on the diversity and experiences offered by Gateway members.

Principle 2: *The support organization would be a nonprofit 501[c](3) tax-exempt public charity, operating under the laws of one of the jurisdictions within the watershed and a formal agreement with the NPS (see principle 3).*

In order to add the greatest value and to grow with the Network in as creative, supportive and entrepreneurial a manner as possible, no limitations beyond those placed by the governing state and federal laws regarding nonprofit tax exempt entities should be placed in the charter of the organization.

The CBGN has five choices within this broad organizational structure. In brief, they include:

1. An existing organization within the Network could become the support organization, adopt the purposes of the support organization as its primary focus or develop a subsidiary wholly devoted to this purpose.

2. An existing organization could foster the early organization and board with the understanding that the entity would become independent when growth made that appropriate;
3. The support organization could become a subsidiary of a state or national foundation supporting organizations similar to Gateways, such as parks. As a variation, a regional or national organization not currently within the Network might become the support organization.
4. The support organization could charter itself as a new public charity, most probably in Maryland for the ease of co-location, but site could be determined on a different basis.
5. The support organization could be created through federal legislation as a 501[c](3) similar to the Boston Harbor Islands Alliance.

Participants at the May workshop urged that the option of nesting the support organization within another entity in its early years (option 2, above) receive strong consideration as an optimal implementation solution. They also suggested that a founding board charged with creating the organization might help bring the visibility, excitement and commitment needed at start-up. They further agreed that Congressional recognition (option 5) had very strong benefits, and was not mutually exclusive with any of the formation alternatives.

During the earlier workshops, several participants asked that existing organizations receive consideration as the support organization. Within the Network and within the broader regional area a number of existing organizations may have the interest and certainly have the institutional strength and expertise to take on the support task as outlined in this set of principles. Some process similar perhaps to a request for proposal could determine whether or not organizational candidates exist.

Further, at least one national partner of the NPS fosters support organizations by hiring the staff, providing the organizational home, and investing the direction for the effort in a board of trustees.¹ Beginning the support organization within such a framework has certain advantages institutionally, provided the Network is comfortable that it receives the full measure of effort it expects.

Finally, the legislation creating the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area contained within it the direction to establish an independent 501[c](3) Boston Harbor Alliance with a “seat at the table”. As one of 13 partners in the Partnership administering the Boston Harbor Islands NRA, the Island Alliance must raise private funds. Its initial programmatic efforts mirror the top choices of the Gateways – visibility, tours, educational and interpretive products and access.

In earlier research, leaders of other large support organizations emphasized in interviews that whatever institutional home may be selected, the commitment to the Network must become the primary – some would say sole – focus of the organization. This advice will guide the request for

¹ The Congressionally-chartered national partner of NPS, the National Park Foundation, houses within its organizational walls Outside Las Vegas (the friend’s group for multi-agency public lands around that city); the African-American Experience Fund, focusing on NPS sites with historic African American ties; the Fund for Greater Washington National Parks for the National Capital Region and several others.

statement of interest process. However, the business plan process will depend upon the choice, and thus an effort to determine interest by other organizations would precede plan development.

In conclusion, the support organization's founding documents – its charter, 501 [c] (3) status, etc. – should protect potential partners and donors to the fullest extent under the law, including protecting the anonymity of donors desiring that they be anonymous.

2. AGENCY-PARTNER ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND COMMUNICATIONS.

Principle 3: *Whatever operating entity is selected, the organization's activities would be integrated with the NPS CBGN Program, the CBGN Working Group and Gateways. The relationship between the organization, the Network, and the coordinating roles of the NPS CBGN Program and the CBGN Working Group would be established through a comprehensive cooperative agreement or some other mechanism.*

In early workshop discussions of a support entity, participants and Working Group members indicated that a support organization should have a clear derivation of purpose and program rooted in the Network's mission and developed in collaboration with the NPS, the CBGN Working Group and Network members. The NPS has the structures and agreements in place to assure the development of an organization focused full-time on the purposes of the specific agency program, called a cooperative agreement. However, there may be better and more creative models for an agreement. Alternatives to the NPS cooperative agreement should be explored before the final model is chosen. Whatever form of agreement between the NPS and the support group is chosen, that agreement would also define the relationship with the CBGN Working Group and with member Gateways.

The agreement would cover collaborative goals and activities, while specific undertakings of the CBGN support organization would be governed by a mutually developed business plan and more specific agreements. Any agreement should allow funds to flow in both directions between the support partner and the public partner (NPS) to increase the value and flexibility added to the Network by a support organization.

May workshop participants urged that the organization be viewed as a collaborative partner whose activities will evolve over time and in proactive consideration of the environment in which the Network is developing. Working Group members and Gateways have urged that the organization be flexible and value-added, without bureaucracy. In the choice of an agreement format, all those involved should place a premium value on clarity, flexibility, and ease of action. Other relationships that allow flexibility but also contain strong congruity of purposeful activities, such as public university foundations and museum friends groups, should be examined for the lessons they have to offer. The documents used by the Golden Gate Conservancy (formerly Golden Gate National Park Association) may offer the best model for this governance structure, as the GGC has proven to be solidly anchored within the NPS yet among the most entrepreneurial of the cooperating associations and friends groups supporting public lands.

Principle 4: *The governing agreements would be mirrored in an exchange of “board” seats and other means to foster communication.*

One key lesson learned/best practice cited over and over again by the executive directors and agency managers in our partnership research is that the partnership is only as strong as the mutual leadership that grows out of the formal relationship. To assure the cooperation and integration desired, the chief executive officer of the support group would join the CBGN Working Group and the NPS and the CBGN Working Group would both designate *ex officio* members to the support organization’s board. These would be working assignments that are respected for the communication and mutual purpose they represent. Similarly, Gateway members will have representation and influence through the board.

Principle 5: *The Gateways would have some means to participate in and comment on the strategic plans of the support group. The CBGN Working Group and the NPS would endorse the strategic plan(s) adopted by the Board of Directors of the support organization.*

Agreement on the development and use of resources is key to successful support of a Network as broad, diverse and with the potential to grow as CBGN. A formal opportunity to guide the organization through its planning process – perhaps built in to the by-laws of the organization as well as its operating agreement -- offers the best assurance that the goals and thus the expenditure of resources remain congruent with the CBGN. Gateway members need a clear, direct means to communicate the needs of their sites and the Network as a whole to the support organization’s board.

3. BOARD OF DIRECTORS COMPOSITION AND GOVERNANCE

Principle 6: *An independent, self-renewing board of directors would govern the CBGN support organization in collaboration with the NPS and the CBGN Working Group and Network members. The Founding Board would select its successor board based upon the ability to bring new resources to the Network table, organizational/business expertise and commitment to or expertise about the mission of the Network, with the expectation that as the Board renews itself these attributes would remain the preeminent qualifications for Board service.*

While the NPS and the CBGN Working Group have overseen the Network’s growth to date, neither can undertake the governance of the nonprofit. The organization would need a board of directors, and that need offers an excellent opportunity for the Network to attract significant community support and expertise. In the earlier discussions, Gateways pointed out the ability of the support organization to draw attention to the CBGN through its prominence and credibility.

The Gateways Needs Assessment survey found that 48 of 86 Gateways had no board of directors (about one half of respondents). Further, of those 48 Gateways without a board, 29 or 60% also did not have a friends group with a board. Thus a relatively high proportion of Gateways (approximately 30%) have no community link represented by a board of directors. Development of a CBGN support group may extend key “board” benefits to those Gateways.

May workshop participants emphasized careful recruiting, commitment to purpose, renewal through term limits for board members, geographic diversity, use of committees to foster involvement, and cross-pollination with Gateways' boards. A key proposal for implementation from the workshop conceives the use of a founding board of community leaders, a "start-up board," to enhance the ability of the organization to attract leadership and gain credibility early.

Consistent with the other principles, the board members should bring to their service the ability to raise funds, friends and other resources for the Network and to operate revenue-generating businesses. Board membership should also include representation of Gateways. While the board does not need extensive programmatic expertise, commitment and recognition of the Network goals will add to the board's credibility. Thus, past board members of Gateways may be fertile ground for board members for the support organization.

Bringing together the founding board members and investing them with the creation and growth of the organization within the principles agreed upon should precede any staffing. Clearly, identifying a board is contingent upon the choice of institutional home for a support organization. The organization is strengthened when the board itself hires the chief executive, but the process can be reversed. Depending upon that choice, the start-up business plan process should include the identification of 10-20 candidates for the board that meet the criteria, bring the ability to guide growth and exercise significant experience in philanthropy. The board should then take on the more detailed business development necessary to its role.

4. FINANCIAL ARCHITECTURE AND PERFORMANCE

Principle 7: *The CBGN support organization must be self-supporting, without reliance upon Gateways, organizations represented on the Working Group or NPS appropriations. It would achieve this, in part, by developing a revenue base from business ventures such as publications and products, tourist services, and the growth of the watershed's population. Philanthropy will become an important source of funding, but not the organization's base funding.*

To insure success, creation of the support organization would require an initial financing plan or strategy, including the formation of the board of directors. The board would create the more strategic, long-term business plan clearly tied to Network goals. This principle states that the start-up plan should focus on revenue generating businesses first. Such a plan should weigh the strategies and timing for business development, and for philanthropy, within the context of the Chesapeake region's economy. Indeed, workshop participants urged that the nascent product development and sales efforts already underway continue parallel to development of the organization. They encouraged the creation of a product committee composed of Gateway members.

For the long term, the successful models of other support organizations nationally demonstrate that the CBGN support organization needs this revenue base to support its operations and fuel growth of support for the Network. The support organization should not begin with the premise that contributions would support its efforts. While the specifics of that revenue base are the subject for the business plan, clearly the needs assessment survey results strongly supported

inclusion of Network-related publications and other products to interpret the Chesapeake Bay watershed's natural and cultural resources.

The business plan process would also need to scour all natural links to tours and tourism that may have revenue opportunities attached. For example, the growing cruise industry out of Baltimore may offer opportunities to both educate and develop packages with the cruise lines. Those links may also include corporate marketing relationships. The survey results indicated less than 25% of Gateways had any corporate philanthropy and almost none had corporate cause marketing relationships. The growth and diversification of the region's economy may allow a strong corporate program for both. The visibility program should enhance the attractiveness to corporate partners. The NPS does have solid protections and guidelines in accepting corporate relationships, and the Network offers a variety of recognition opportunities not usually available in national parks.

This principle does not rule out philanthropy as a fertile source for funding and support for the Network. Indeed, there are national and major regional foundations and other donors for whom the Network context is attractive where individual Gateways may not be. Ultimately, both business revenue and philanthropy will provide the diversity that a sound financial architecture demands. However, reliance for base funding on business revenue gives the greatest freedom and the most dependable unrestricted financial foundation to the support organization.

Principle 8: *The CBGN support organization would seek to the fullest extent possible to bring new resources to the Network's mission that are not readily available to the individual Gateways.*

The survey results indicated a narrow funding base for most Gateways, with heavy reliance upon two or three sources per Gateway among appropriations, government and foundation grants, memberships and individual donors, entrance and user fees, and sales. Thus to the extent possible, in both its start-up financing and long-term growth, the support organization should explore the many options for business development and philanthropy not included in that list. The two examples below, one for start-up and base funding and one for longer term programmatic support, have brought success to other cooperating associations and friends groups dedicated to public lands.

An earlier question of the Working Group asked what the start-up experience for a support group looks like, as opposed to the 'fat and happy' status of long-established organizations. Experiences certainly vary, but in general the most successful start-ups had a business plan that guaranteed between \$100,000 and \$250,000 per year for three years to sustain the new organization. The tourism industry may allow a unique opportunity for this start up as well as sustaining base funding to come through a "negative check off"² contribution through lodging, especially upper-end resorts and major destination hotels. Such agreements provided the base funding for the Grand Teton National Park Foundation and the Grand Canyon NP Foundation, among others. This resource is not currently used by Gateways to our knowledge – although that

² A negative check off places a contribution of \$1.00 per night on a guest's bill, with appropriate information in the room, on the inn's TV circuit, and at the desk about the check off. Guests may ask that the charge be removed at any time and without question. In appropriate settings, 20% or fewer of the guests ask that the charge be removed.

should be confirmed. Most important, this funding offers the tourism industry a means to increase its support for its own goals in a business where margins do not generate philanthropy per se. The business plan should explore the feasibility of putting together such collaboration with the lodging industry to provide this base support.

A second interesting area to explore, in this case for program funding, comes from the building development and town growth that characterize the Bay surroundings. In many cases, development agreements may contain mitigation funds or settlements. In some cases, criminal plea agreements also call for fines directed to mitigation.³ The NPS has successfully attracted both types of funding, with Alaska, California and Florida as prime examples. A concerted approach to mitigation and settlement funds on behalf of the Gateways' programmatic goals may bring another source of revenue to match and enhance the grant program and to further the access and conservation goals.

These two examples are meant to pique interest and creativity, and are not offered as certainties for CBGN. As the initial funding plan and the strategic business plan develop, both should identify the successful ventures of other support organizations most applicable to the Network's purposes and resources.

5. PROGRAMMATIC WORK PLAN AND BUDGET

Principle 9: *In its early years, the CBGN support organization would concentrate its program activity on Network-wide visibility, communication with the public about the Network and its Gateways, interpretation and educational tools that support and extend Gateways' own efforts, and facilitating the Networking and capacity building among the Gateways through technical assistance. The organization would thus be concentrating its efforts on helping the public "experience the specific to understand the whole."*

The purpose of the support organization is to increase the resources for and the ability to accomplish Network-wide priorities and Gateways improvements. Both the seven goals of the CBGN strategic plan and the Gateway Needs Assessment survey results demonstrate general consensus on the Network-wide priorities, as listed in the principle above: visibility, public communication, improved interpretation and education, and Network and Gateway capacity-building. The *ends* – the value added by the support organization – are increased efforts and success in these core activities. The *means* – the effort added by the support organization – lies in its focus on raising resources and bringing added action flexibility to the NPS, Working Group and Network.

May workshop participants emphasized several points, chief among them that the work of the partner organization should achieve what no individual gateway can do on its own. Second, the organization should build a better Network, with the ultimate goal of increasing the public's appreciation of the Bay. They also envisioned a strong advocacy role for the organization. And

³ There are specific organizations able to accept such funds, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the National Park Foundation among them. Both organizations have done so in support of specific programs and geographic areas.

they believed the organization should foster better tools for Gateways and a sharing of expertise among Gateways.

After the discussion of financial architecture, CBGN members reading these principles might well ask if business and corporate partners and donors would in fact fund these activities. Ultimately, no resource acquisition is possible if the purposes of the partner or donor are not met. We believe the programs outlined in this principle are broad enough to meet a sufficient breadth of business and donor interests. Further, the programmatic emphasis is consistent with the results of successful associations and friends groups.

It is worth at this point to note the distinction between the support role and the operating role. Nonprofit organizations often gravitate to direct efforts such as conservation and preservation from ‘secondary’ or supporting roles. Also, business development may appear less exciting than hands-on action to improve the Bay. But the primary value offered by a support organization is the additional resources such a group can bring to the Network. For this reason, the business plan needs to address scope and substance of early programmatic efforts carefully to insure that the organization’s primary role – to increase the resources available to the Network – remains paramount.

6. STAFFING

Principle 10: *The CBGN support organization staff would concentrate on the task of bringing new resources to the Network. At least in its first three years, the organization would minimize its program-oriented staff and maximize its use of partnerships and contracts to achieve its programmatic goals.*

The fundamental expertise that a support organization brings to the Network is the ability to increase the net resources available to achieve the Network’s goals and enhance the visibility of the Network and experiences offered by its members. The support organization needs to know how to develop business revenue and raise funds, friends, volunteers, interest, and visibility. It may not itself interpret sites, offer access, or lead conservation efforts. Thus, from its inception, the staff of the organization must be clear that they are NOT program developers, or even grantors -- they are resource acquirers and business entrepreneurs. The staffing proposed by the business plan should be “lean and mean,” with an emphasis on collaboration. But the May workshop participants noted that the work would evolve over time.

On the other hand, technical assistance remains a primary need within the Network. The organization can extend the ability of the NPS to develop strong national and regional programmatic partners and to use outside expertise effectively. Such partnerships would build the overall capacity within the Network and could offer important joint funding opportunities to the Network. Thus the support organization should avoid staffing to a programmatic technical assistance role in its early years. Instead, if the support organization focuses on generating revenues, then the Network will have a number of options for how revenues can be applied to more cash awards or more capacity to provide technical assistance through the purchase of needed expertise.