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ACTION: Describe how the Association intends to identify and build relationships with partners, determining whether and how to create a self-identification process for interpretive sites and communities. *This is a high-priority cross-cutting activity to be deployed especially in support of the six first-phase strategies described at the end of this chapter.* 25

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ACTION: Consider developing a specific program to research and invest in marketing partnerships that meet two criteria: they offer high-value opportunities for raising unrestricted funding, and they build the capacity of all organizations involved to support the overall development of the heritage area. *Mid-term; steps toward this program can be built into the first-phase strategy to conduct marketing research.* 26

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ACTION: Use evaluation processes to monitor progress on and improve individual programs.
51

The following sidebars appear only as headings in the preceding text; their contents appear here:

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Chapter 11 • Management & Implementation

11.1 Approach to Management and Implementation

The Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area is enormous, making management a major challenge. Besides a large population, land area, and number of jurisdictions, perhaps even more significant is the multiplicity of interpretive and historic sites and stories. Decisions about how to manage the heritage area's programs and development over time will affect many parties – principally, the board and staff of the Crossroads Association, partners (sites, attractions, nonprofit and governmental resource stewards, etc.), and visitors.

The specialties in which heritage areas practice are demanding and complex – especially because a heritage area does not have a limiting focus as do such related programs as parks and recreation departments or historic preservation offices. Programming that addresses resource protection, access, and visitor experience in general requires many skills and strategies: advocacy, grants, technical assistance, planning, direct action (purchasing/managing land or buildings or other real-estate-related interventions), public outreach/education/events, and more. Good staff trained in these areas and sensitive to context can be endlessly inventive and helpful – the hard part is to maintain focus so that their efforts move the heritage area toward its goals.

Successful management of a heritage area begins with a clear vision and goals (see Part 1, Chapter 1) and a strong plan (Part 2). Together these will enable the Crossroads Association to maintain focus on priorities as various ideas for projects and funding opportunities arise.

As important as the individual programs are to the success of a heritage area, equally important is effective management of a heritage area as a whole. This chapter is designed to help the Crossroads Association and its partners evolve an effective program of communicating with and supporting one another, developing resources, and making decisions. It divides into three parts:

- Structuring the heritage area's management (Sections xxxxx);
- Business planning for the management entity, the Crossroads Association (Section xxxxx); and
- Strategies for implementing this management plan (Section xxxxx).

A structure for the heritage area's management is needed to provide a framework that will be effective in stimulating partnerships among the heritage area's many stakeholders, in order to serve the entire heritage area and implement the plan.

Business planning for the Crossroads Association includes marketing and communications (first addressed in Chapter 7, Crossroads Presentation, the section on heritage tourism and marketing); staffing; costs and fundraising; and organizational development (board membership/diversity, committees, etc.).

Implementation involves the setting of priorities, right-sizing the list of priorities in view of available labor and funding, and phasing.

Naturally enough these three topics are intertwined – stimulating partnerships is labor-intensive and focused around a variety of programs, for example, so knowing what is most important to accomplish

helps to determine staff size for business planning. And without business planning, it is difficult to have a valid prediction or set of assumptions about the resources available to fund implementation.

11.2 Management Structure

11.2.1 The Role and Values of the Crossroads Association

As the management entity designated in the heritage area's federal legislation, the Crossroads Association is the focal point in the structure for managing the heritage area – although by no means alone. The Association has two primary management concerns: keeping its own house in order, and providing leadership and performing tasks essential to building the capacity of partners. This section addresses the management of the Association itself in becoming the vehicle for managing all aspects of a heritage area.

Role

According to the authors of a study of the first 13 years of Cane River National Heritage Area of Louisiana, "Working successfully in multidimensional partnership environments requires a special kind of organizational culture and leadership philosophy." (Cane River, 48) Therefore, as the Association develops and grows its capacity, it is important for its staff and board to consider its roles and values and to be conscious of the special nature of a "management entity." (See sidebar, "What Makes Heritage Area Management Distinctive?") As the "partner-in-chief" for the heritage area, the Association provides coordination, consistency, and continuity for partners sharing the mission of developing the National Heritage Area. As it does so, the Association must develop and maintain many roles:

- "Keeper of the vision" and shared mission
- "Critical friend" providing outside expertise and perspective
- Steward and advocate
- Network manager
- Brand manager
- Investment and portfolio manager

Values

In pursuing these roles, the Association must consider the values by which it will operate. It may be useful to develop a specific statement of values as time proceeds and the board and staff gain experience. The Cane River study suggests several key values for a heritage-area coordinating organization, stating that it must:

- Represent in a balanced way the diversity of key interests associated with the heritage area (i.e., cultural, geographic, economic, organizational, governmental)...;
- Transcend organizational and political interests;
- Inspire respect in its dealings with heritage area partners, the general public, and those who make up its authorizing environment;
- Be perceived as having credibility and clout...; (Cane River, 55)
- [Operate] in a transparent, flexible, and adaptive manner; and
- [Interact] with partners in ways that help them develop a sense of common purpose and ownership of the heritage area initiative. (Cane River, 57)

A similar study of the Delaware & Lehigh Canal National Heritage Corridor offers an additional perspective: "A number of *key leadership characteristics are also necessary*, including creativity and "outside the box" thinking, entrepreneurialism and a willingness to take risks, patience, mentoring skills, integrity, and collaborative leadership skills." (D&L, 59, emphasis in the original)

ACTION: Define and affirm the values of the Crossroads Association in tandem with implementing the first phase of the management plan, possibly as the first full strategic plan is put in place.

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SIDEBAR: What Makes a Heritage Area Distinctive?
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11.2.2 Board of Directors

Functions

The critical functions for a heritage area's board are (1) to guide staff in selecting programs and activities that can be justified on the basis of the expected outcomes in the management plan, and (2) to ensure that the organization has the resources to pursue them. It must also manage staff, finances, and such governance issues as organizational policies and succession. Finally, it must advocate for the continued support of the heritage area, principally by the Congress and the National Park Service, but also by other federal agencies, and key state agencies.

Tools

Tools for the planning and oversight needed in program development include multi-year strategic plans and annual work plans (both discussed in a section further below). The board will gain information and experience over time about partners' and communities' needs, informal feedback about progress in building the heritage area, and formal evaluation (also discussed below). Building "resources" includes fundraising. Other valuable resources include clearly defined policies, public support, staffing, and relationships with partners. Along with a fundraising or development plan, a good communications plan is critical to building organizational resources and support (both are also discussed below).

Fairness

In seeking to implement and direct the heritage area, the board must work to be evenhanded, assuring that resources are spread across the heritage area as equally yet as strategically as possible. Variations will occur according to the enthusiasm, funding, and success of regional and local initiatives, but the board should keep an eye on the Association's impacts across the heritage area and make sure that the management plan is reflected in its decisions over the long term.

Board Make-up

The size of the board in heritage areas can be an issue, because of the need to represent a diversity of interests and be well-distributed geographically. In general, smaller boards (fewer than 20) are more functional than larger ones – quorums are more easily maintained, relationships are more easily built, "air time" in meetings is more available to each individual. Board size need not be used to provide "coverage" where staff and good communications can ensure that the organization will be seen as developing in the direction intended in the management plan. More important is ensuring that the board has critical relationships with or appreciation of key partners and that there are critical skills among its directors, including business management, fundraising, human resources, and finance as well as programmatic experience in interpretation, tourism, recreation, land conservation, historic preservation, etc.

Achieving diversity – listed among values in the preceding section – gains much for the organization. Diversity for this heritage area means not only ethnic diversity but also representatives of diverse population areas, especially the region's highly urbanized places. Critical to successful diversity is ensuring that new board members see people like themselves already on the board, or joining along with them. Tokenism is not acceptable. (For a sample of a simple strategic plan for enhancing diversity undertaken by the Newark Museum, see sidebar "Embracing Diversity – Why and How.")

Board members should have the organization as their first passion. It is difficult enough navigating the shoals of organizational development and partnership – especially the perennial problem of competing for

funds for “another mouth to feed” among partners. Leadership, attention, time, and expertise devoted to the organization by its directors must be wholehearted. A common pitfall among heritage areas is to seek directors among partners’ executive directors – naturally enough, since those are among the first to understand the heritage area’s importance and be able and willing to devote significant time to its development. While some of the most talented board members in the national heritage area community as a whole are indeed executive directors, there is an inherent conflict of interest in having board members whose first allegiance is their own organization. Board members of those same organizations may be better targets.

ACTION: Undertake an evaluation of current representation on the board of directors and develop plans for expanding diversity and skill sets to support management plan implementation and fundraising.

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SIDEBAR: Embracing Diversity – Why and How
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Board Culture

As the board emerges from the management planning phase, there are many immediate needs for its collective attention. Even so, directors should work at understanding where training, educational opportunities, retreats, and other group activities might benefit the development of strong corporate culture and decision-making. Such issues as board-staff relations, strategic planning, fundraising, financial management for nonprofits, and organizational leadership deserve time on the annual calendar and occasional meeting agendas. In addition, while the board may keep the implementation plan in mind and make strategic decisions to support the plan at every meeting, it is important on an annual basis to reserve special time for focus on the management plan and the organization’s activities relative to the annual budget and work plan, evaluation, the communications plan, and the fundraising plan.

ACTION: Undertake annual board training focusing on important issues where education and discussion will benefit the development of a sound corporate culture.

ACTION: Reserve at least one round of committee and board meetings each year to focus on the plan and its relationship to the strategic plan, annual budget and work plan, evaluation, the communications plan, and the fundraising plan.

11.2.3 Board Committees

Board oversight of projects should be top level, ongoing and focused how well each project supports strategic direction and uses resources. Committees should do the time-consuming work of program planning, staff interaction and evaluation, and exploring possibilities with free-ranging discussion. By using well-organized committees to get basic work done, the board is able to concentrate on policy and progress.

Action Committees

As the heritage area emerges from the management planning phase, action committees will be useful in enlisting the individual expertise of directors. Action committees based on the programmatic, partnership development, and grantmaking functions outlined above can help the board keep the myriad responsibilities of a heritage area straight and provide a forum for detailed discussions leading to innovation and leverage of ideas and resources. They can be devoted to specific, short-term projects, or on-going programs. They may include non-board members depending on the board’s need for added input and expertise from partner representatives or others.

The keys to successful action committees are to provide focus, avoid overloading any one committee with too many programs and projects, keep them small enough to work together effectively, and bring together individuals of like expertise and interests. There is no need to define these in the organization's bylaws. Rather than locking them in, the organization should be working to gain experience with "adaptive management," that is, changes to management structure based on the evolution of programs and the board's experience in oversight.

An alternative to the division of responsibilities into three or four committees would be to create flexible teams (call them "blue" and "red") that divide responsibilities roughly between interpretation/tourism and historic preservation/research/education/community planning. Grantmaking and partnership development must also be included. The strategic combination of activities divided between just two committees might be less taxing for the staff to support, but this ambition should be balanced with a realistic sense of the workload distribution, the benefits of focus, and the benefits of smaller, more autonomous groups.

One committee topic that does not fit clearly within the programming ordinarily associated with heritage areas, but which may be very important from time to time, is a committee to address advocacy or policy in the political arena. This may appropriately be retained within the executive committee (discussed below). The organization's board should participate at least through executive committee representation in decisions to communicate important policy and funding requests to state and federal officials. The entire board should understand where this responsibility lies, since on occasion it may be necessary for the organization to move quickly in response to changing governmental circumstances.

With a clear list of activities for both short-term and long-term pursuit (especially short-term), it should be possible to develop details of the likely activities that committees should address. This information can then provide the basis for discussion among the board to shape the final board committee structure.

ACTION: Form action committees to support implementation of the management plan.

Organizational Committees

Currently, the Association's board of directors operates with a slim portfolio of committees focused on governance – an executive committee (officers only [?]), a budget committee, an audit committee, and a nominations committee. This organizational committee structure should be reviewed and overhauled as needed to support implementation of the management plan and organizational growth. Two needed committees are:

Executive Committee: The composition and powers of this committee are typically spelled out in an organization's bylaws. Generally, this committee approves agendas, minutes, finance reports, and other documentation for all-board meetings and provides a forum for discussion of administrative issues between such meetings. It may also perform a strategic planning function in screening proposals for new programs or activities arising through the programmatic committees and shaping the necessary discussion by the entire board. Depending on bylaws and practice, this group may be the place where hiring decisions are made (in the case of the executive director) or aired (in the case of the executive director's hiring of the remainder of the staff). It may also provide a "kitchen cabinet" function to the president in helping with decisions on appointing directors to existing or *ad hoc* committees, including the annual *ad hoc* audit committee (comprising non-finance committee board members to work with the auditor). It may also provide a forum for approving contracts to be signed by the president and/or executive director.

Budget Committee: The budget or finance committee – typically headed by the treasurer in most nonprofits – works on annual budgets; provides oversight on spending, income, and reserves; and approves financial reports to be provided to the executive committee and board. Joint meetings of the executive committee and finance committee can help to minimize extra meetings, but there may be times

when the finance committee must buckle down to dealing with a level of detail for which others are not so dedicated.

Additional board committees to support the organization should include committees as described below, or at least committees addressing these functions but tailored to specific needs of the board:

Fundraising and Development: This is a critical function discussed in a separate section of this chapter. This committee provides leadership in involving the entire board in fundraising activities of all kinds, by creating and implementing a fundraising plan as described below. *Ad hoc* subcommittees might take on particular activities, such as an annual fundraising event. Membership of this committee sometimes includes non-board members if appropriate.

Advocacy: The function of this committee is described in detail in Chapter 9, Crossroads Preservation, as it is anticipated that the Association will pursue advocacy most intensively on behalf of preservation – especially but not exclusively with regard to interpretive attractions as well as Revolutionary Era historic sites and communities. It is also possible that the Association would wish to deploy its advocacy “bully pulpit” powers on behalf of landscape-related issues described in Chapter 10, and to address issues stemming from educational and research goals discussed in Chapter 8. Such a committee would usefully include a range of partners’ representatives with expertise to advise the Association. Aside from decisions on specific advocacy issues and how to approach them, however, direct board involvement is needed because the time required for advocacy will compete for valuable staff hours.

Governance, Board Development, and Strategic Planning: In essence, this committee takes the pulse of the organization and sees to board succession and development. Well beyond being simply a nominating committee – itself a critical function – this committee oversees board training and communications. It could also take on strategic planning instead of or as a supplement to the executive committee – monitoring progress on the management plan and effectiveness of action committees, and providing a first screen for adding new programs or activities arising through the programmatic committees.

Personnel and Administration: this committee works on personnel and bylaws and other organizational policies (e.g., insurance, offices, contracts for organizational services, etc.). As the organization begins to add staff, this committee can provide critical support to the executive director.

ACTION: Form a fundraising/development committee. This is a critical improvement to the board of directors needed immediately as an early action.

ACTION: Revise and improve the existing organizational committee structure to support implementation of the management plan and organizational growth.

ACTION: Study existing bylaws and ensure that they support the revised organizational committee structure as appropriate.

11.3 Developing Effective Partnerships

11.3.1 Defining Partnership (and Other Useful Terms)

The use of partnerships is addressed or implied throughout this management plan. The very definition of a heritage area as a system comprised of parts seeking to become a greater whole expects a network of **partners** to grow.

A true partnership is a relationship among equals seeking to satisfy mutual goals and needs and working collaboratively to support one another. Planning and decision-making are shared. Responsibilities are divided by mutual agreement. Communication is frequent and clear. Inequalities and dominant roles are recognized and addressed by mutual agreement. Such relationships may or may not be carried out by written agreement or some kind of general resolution on the part of the partners, but they represent obligations to one another that should be clearly understood and accounted for in each partner's work planning.

Potential partners in the Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area are:

- Private and public owners and managers of **Revolutionary War historic sites**, who are interested in preserving their sites and interpreting them to wider audiences;
- Public and private environmental organizations and land preservation groups interested in preserving historic spaces and viewscapes;
- **Corporations** concerned about quality of life for their employees and their communities; and
- **Educational institutions** interested in telling New Jersey's history.

Other words used repeatedly in this chapter also deserve some explanation. **Stakeholders** are those groups that could be full partners but for whatever reason are not actively participating in a project (perhaps not yet). They nevertheless have a stake in the outcome. They may or may not know about a project (although it is incumbent on teams during their projects to find and inform stakeholders), but they will be affected by it. **Supporters** are like stakeholders except that they participate in a project at a lesser level than partners. **"Collaborators"** refers to a team of partners and supporters, and is interchangeable with **"working group."**

Constituents are found in a broad category of participants in the heritage area – interested parties, researchers, donors, community leaders, and others who have some reason for keeping track of what is going on. They are simply self-selected individuals or representatives of organizations who have either donated to the organization, or, at a lower threshold, have visited the web site and are interested enough to have registered. They represent a pool of potential resources and it is worthwhile for the Association to communicate with them on a regular basis. They are an audience that is already receptive to messages from Crossroads and will help keep down for "snail mailings" costs because they constitute a limited and accurate list. Constituents can also be the target of marketing, events, and other outreach that helps to develop a strong sense of "internal" identity for the heritage area.

Audience is the broadest possible category. It includes both visitors and residents, and comprises the end users of the heritage area – the target of most "external" marketing, and thus broadly speaking the heritage area's "market." Internal and external audiences are generally demographically categorizable groups existing at home (internal) and away (external, that is, potential visitors), as discussed in Chapter 7. In New Jersey, however, and in this heritage area, a sizeable portion of the audience, or market, has been determined to be New Jersey residents.

11.3.2 Structuring the Crossroads Partnership System

The Association and its Partners

The vision for the Crossroads Association as the heritage area's management entity is that it largely provides context, ideas, leadership, incentives, technical assistance, and financial support, but does not undertake "day to day" activities that support the heritage area. These are carried out by the heritage area's partners, individually and collectively. Local partners undertake local activities, regional and state partners undertake regional and state activities, working groups tackle special projects, etc. The

Association's role is to foster programs that stimulate partners to undertake projects and build the heritage area, independently, in collaboration with one another, or with the Association's participation and leadership.

Critical partners in structuring the partnership system are the National Park Service and state agencies, especially those New Jersey agencies owning historic sites that can be enhanced, interpreted, and marketed as gateway and regional sites.

The Role of the National Park Service

The role of the National Park Service is highly important to developing the stability and sustainability of the Crossroads partnership system. Federal recognition provides credibility and reinforces the long-term importance of the heritage area for partners and communities. The inclusion of Crossroads in federal marketing of the National Park System, affiliates, and heritage areas – including brochures, web sites, and the NPS's highly popular passport program – gives a head start to Crossroads marketing (and should propel product development by the Association and partners, to avoid disappointing visitors attracted in this way). Federal funding is seed funding that reduces the necessity of the Association's competing with partners for funding, and distinguishes the Association from other nonprofits without this advantage. The federal funding allocation allows the Association to present the heritage area as a unique way of leveraging state, local, and private funds.

The National Park Service offers three specific sources of assistance: Morristown National Park, the Northeast Regional Office of the National Park Service; and the national office of the National Park Service supporting heritage areas.

Morristown National Historical Park

Morristown National Historical Park is a major resource to the Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area, offering multiple benefits through a relationship defined in the federal legislation establishing the heritage area. The legislation directly states that one purpose of the heritage area is to strengthen the Park "as an asset to the State" and implicitly recognizes the worth of weaving the park into the fabric of an overall experience of the American Revolution across the heritage area by "(A) establishing a network of related historic resources, protected landscapes, educational opportunities, and events depicting the landscape of the State of New Jersey during the American Revolution; and "(B) establishing partnerships between Morristown National Historical Park and other public and privately owned resources in the Heritage Area that represent the strategic fulcrum of the American Revolution." (Public Law 109-338, 120 Stat. 1843, Sec. 297A(b)(4)) The legislation also specifically requires the managing entity to "maintain headquarters for the local coordinating entity at Morristown National Historical Park and in Mercer County." (297E(b)(6))

The Park's ability to provide leadership and expertise, especially in interpretation, directly or by enlisting help from other parts of the National Park Service, should be enlisted early, as the partnership system begins. The specific statutory language reads as follows: "Subject to the availability of appropriations, the Superintendent of Morristown National Historical Park may, on request, provide to public and private organizations in the Heritage Area, including the local coordinating entity, any operational assistance that is appropriate for the purpose of supporting the implementation of the management plan." (Section 297F(a)(3))

Additional National Park Service Support

The Northeast Regional Office is the other "guide" to National Park Service resources that is available to Crossroads. That office maintains a coordinator to work with heritage areas and provide liaison with the national office. The Northeast Regional Office, working with the national office as appropriate, specifically could offer:

- Regular meetings (at least annually) between Crossroads and NPS regional leaders;
- A sustained annual commitment by the regional office to provide technical assistance to specified Crossroads projects through relevant NPS programs (e.g., the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program and the Preservation Assistance Program). This could be accomplished through a collaboratively developed annual work plan that would specify the nature and extent of the regional office's support;
- Staff exchanges to help foster mutual understanding of each other's needs, skills, and opportunities;
- Establishment of a dedicated NPS "circuit rider," a relatively senior regional staff position assigned specifically to help the management entity and partners navigate the NPS system and access federal funding, specific expertise, and other support; and
- Collaborative exploration of opportunities to draw on the experience of heritage area participants in addressing challenges that are increasingly important for the NPS (such as working successfully through partnerships, achieving meaningful conservation in lived-in landscapes, and developing effective landscape-scale interpretive programs). (credit: D&L Corridor, p. 64, all points listed)

A unique contribution to the Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area is the recognition of the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route as a National Historic Trail. This program is also served by the NPS Northeast Region in the form of a superintendent working with all states possessing trail segments. The prospective development of a management plan for this newly recognized National Historic Trail is a major opportunity to gain additional resources plus insight into interpretive and preservation possibilities.

Similarly, the existence of National Heritage Areas and National Park Service sites and affiliates in eastern Pennsylvania and near New Jersey's border with New York (see Chapter 3 for a list) offers ways for the National Park Service to contribute to Crossroads, through collaborative interpretation and events and possibly also special marketing initiatives.

ACTION: Build a strong relationship with Morristown National Historical Park.

ACTION: Define the nature of the implied collaboration between Morristown National Historical Park and the Crossroads Association in fulfilling the intent of the legislation to provide operational assistance to public and private organizations seeking to implement the management plan "on request."

ACTION: Seek a strong, consistent relationship with the NPS Northeast Region.

ACTION: Pursue NPS interpretive and other support by request to Morristown National Historical Park according to statute, working with the Northeast Regional Office as appropriate.

ACTION: Participate in the planning for the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail.

ACTION: Seek ways to collaborate with National Park Service sites just outside New Jersey's borders.

ACTION: Use available tools broadly to convey the NPS affiliation and brand.

Other Federal Support

Other federal agencies can play important roles in project support and implementation. Federal transportation funding can be especially compatible with initiatives in heritage areas, through the Transportation Enhancement Program and scenic byway assistance. Other federal funds supporting recreational access, land protection, and brownfield cleanup are fairly commonly used in heritage areas. Less common sources are CDBG, HUD, EDI, and housing funds.¹

ACTION: Explore federal grants programs outside the National Park Service to support specific projects.

Partnerships with Related National and Regional Entities

In addition to the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route and nearby heritage areas, Crossroads has an opportunity to collaborate with nationally recognized Revolutionary War sites – such as Valley Forge – and organizations, such as the Mount Vernon Ladies Association (operator of George Washington’s Mount Vernon), which has already worked with the Association and Morristown NHP to offer teacher training.

ACTION: Explore the development of lasting relationships and collaborative programs among Revolutionary War sites and interested organizations wherever they may exist, focusing on New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.

State Support

State agencies in other states prior to the 2008 financial crash have poured critical funding into heritage areas. Pennsylvania has gone so far as to create a parallel state heritage-area program, which for many years has provided funds to the Schuylkill River National Heritage Area (which includes Philadelphia and the many American Revolutionary sites in that region) and the Delaware & Leigh Canal National Heritage Corridor (Washington’s Crossing State Park, PA), among others in the state system.

Unfortunately, the dire financial straits in which state and local governments now find themselves as a consequence of the 2008 downturn makes such direct financial support for Crossroads impossible in New Jersey, at least during the next several years. The most the Association can hope for is to compete for grants from existing programs, and that funding has been reduced considerably.

In fact, a white paper developed for New Jersey Governor Christie [check when – soon after his inauguration last year] has suggested the possibility of privatizing state parks. While few details are provided in this white paper, clearly such an idea presents both threat and opportunity for Crossroads. It is a threat because of the overwhelming nature of such change, which could distract state-owned sites from participating in the heritage area for a considerable time.

On the other hand, privatization of these important state-owned sites representing the American Revolution may be an opportunity for Crossroads to take the lead in finding new ways to support them. Perhaps a collaborative management structure could be created similar to that employed by the New York Historic House Trust. In that program, public agencies continue to own sites and be responsible for major maintenance but they contract with individual nonprofit “friends” groups devoted to individual sites to provide interpretation, curatorship, docents, and day-to-day management, maintenance, and public access. The Trust itself is an umbrella group that provides 22 sites across the five boroughs of New York City with services best developed in common, such as marketing, collections management, training, ties to the educational system, etc. For Crossroads, while federal funding cannot be expected to replace the funding

¹ Note: In the fall of 2010, the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor received a \$35,000 grant from the Northeast Region of the National Park Service to study sources of heritage-area funding and fundraising practices. The study should be available by the end of 2011.

the state would no longer be providing to such sites, that funding could be dedicated to enabling the Association to support another nonprofit created for this purpose. Or the Association itself could play a role similar to the Historic House Trust, or undertake even closer supervision of selected sites, perhaps contracting with concessionaire for-profit providers of some services. Positive intervention by the Crossroads Association in privatization schemes for state sites requires special study.

ACTION: Monitor trends and continue to explore opportunities for collaboration with the State of New Jersey and individual state agencies owning Revolutionary era interpretive sites.

ACTION: Be ready to respond to proposals for significant alterations in state ownership and management of critical Revolutionary era interpretive sites with a positive action program based on careful study.

11.3.3 Guiding the Local Partnership System

Mechanisms to guide the development of Crossroads partnerships and a common “heritage area culture” include the vision and goals described in Part 1 of this plan, and the entirety of Part 2, and more generally, the shared mission and sense of heritage derived from a compelling, nationally significant story.

The very definition of a heritage area assumes partnerships, because a key insight in the heritage-area concept is that by working with one another, sites can exceed limits experienced on an individual basis. Even the most successful single site in the Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area would have a hard time telling the larger “blockbuster” story of the Revolution in New Jersey alone. Just as museums rarely mount “blockbuster” exhibitions alone – they borrow from one another’s collections and arrange to share through traveling the exhibition – so do heritage areas require collaboration for their ultimate success.

Systematic cultivation of partnerships as a system, using it to stimulate development of a collaborative culture, is a key function of the Crossroads Association. In fact, the quality of partnering in Crossroads should be regarded as a key factor its ultimate success. The story and such physical linkages as driving tours bind the heritage area into a cohesive whole, true. Only through collaboration, however, can partners truly benefit from becoming a recognized National Heritage Area – by working together to *tell* the story, and *make* the linkages, and protect the common resources that make this entire heritage area so successful.

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SIDEBAR: What Stimulates Successful Collaboration?

The authors of a study of the first 17 years of the Delaware & Lehigh Canal National Heritage Corridor in Pennsylvania have this to say about factors that have enhanced partnerships there: “It is essential to establish collaborative processes that enhance...the partnership system. Such processes include:

- Meaningful community engagement on an ongoing basis;
- Continually *telling the story* and *promoting the vision* in ways that connect people and communities across the Corridor;
- Responsiveness to local needs and priorities;
- Operating with an *open, inclusive, collaborative approach*... [that] involves effective listening and communication; sincerity, honesty, respect, patience, and trust; shared responsibility and transparent and flexible operations; and a willingness to try new approaches....
- Partner organizations [that] redefine their goals and ways of working to *align with the Corridor goals and vision*; finally,

- *A commitment to learning and to implementing the learning* helps to hone the dynamic partnership system as it evolves and matures.

(D&L Corridor, p. 59; emphasis in the original, punctuation altered to create as a list.)

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SIDEBAR: Management Principles for Partnerships

It is not possible for board and staff to know with any appreciable degree of certainty all places and projects likely to demand attention, and when. Following are principles and guidance for the development of the partnership system.

Principles for Board & Staff

PRINCIPLE #1: The heritage area’s response to the needs of places and projects should be systematic and predictable, be seen as transparent and fair, and support strategies and priorities.

GUIDANCE: This suggests a **system of categorizing participants/partners – especially sites** – so that it is possible to know immediately where to start in responding to individual requests for aid.

PRINCIPLE #2: The Crossroads Association’s board and staff cannot be expected to respond to the breadth of the need directly, for given the heritage area’s size, the staff required makes “high touch” response not feasible.

GUIDANCE: This suggests the need for a means of **enlisting partners** – providing them with enough incentives and technical assistance to wish to do so – **in planning for their regions** and providing for mutual support, long-term. It also suggests the need for strong communications and information management systems.

PRINCIPLE #3: The heritage area should be seen as a clearly cohesive whole, and in no way should it contribute to fragmentation or competition among jurisdictions and/or various partners.

GUIDANCE: **The first phase of organization of the heritage area should NOT pursue regional segmentation.** Sites and partners should understand the “big picture” and the need to knit the heritage area together. They should be ready to **experiment with multi-jurisdictional collaboration** through developing selected projects as identified elsewhere in this plan. **They should also understand that affinity groupings are expected to evolve**, perhaps unevenly as partners and sites settle in for the long haul.

Principles for Sites & Other Partners

PRINCIPLE #4: Stakeholders need to have a clear sense that they are welcome to participate in Crossroads programs. They determine their own role within the heritage area. It is important for them to understand where they can expect to fit in the general scheme set out in the management plan and how they can advance their interests through the heritage area.

GUIDANCE: Allowing stakeholders to help set priorities or create work plans over time are possible activities to build into the management entity’s expected relationships with its stakeholders and partners.

PRINCIPLE #5: Sites and other partners should know what is expected of them, and be provided the earliest possible opportunity to make meaningful commitments to support the heritage area.

GUIDANCE: Expectations should be spelled out, as much as possible in the plan, and general understandings should be arrived at as much as possible as the plan is finalized or soon after. Not all details must be laid out in this plan, and in fact it is to the advantage of the long-term growth of collaborative work on the heritage area that the partners themselves are expected to take charge of more detailed planning. Longer term, all partners possible – sites especially – should be given an opportunity to “join” the heritage area by achieving some level of threshold requirements, which then gives other, richer opportunities for aid, yet simplifies the process of applying, for both applicant and Crossroads. Planning

requirements – site planning, program planning, etc., depending on the type of partner – should be fulfilled by applicants or members prior to their applying for other support.

PRINCIPLE #6: Partners should have peers and supporters to turn to beyond the Crossroads Association. **GUIDANCE:** Organizing partners on a “multi-lateral” basis to plan for their surroundings and provide for mutual support over the long term not only makes sense for the Crossroads Association in achieving coverage (Principle #2), but this approach also will support partners and build “sibling” relationships.

PRINCIPLE #7: A system supporting sites and partners should not ask for more than they are able to give – not too many meetings or projects, for example. The growth of their responsibilities over time in this new arrangement should reflect existing patterns and inclinations.

GUIDANCE: Follow existing pathways for collaboration insofar as possible, using incentives and programming to shape this approach. Precisely what the appropriate strategies might be should become apparent through conversations with counties and target groups and early experimentation as projects and working groups are established. Arrangements may vary from place to place but they should adhere to principles laid out here.

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11.3.4 Considerations in Formalizing Partnerships

An important consideration is whether or not, over the long term, the Crossroads Association should put into place a formal process for identifying partners. Why identify partners? Foremost, self-selection indicates interest and that the partner perceives a benefit in participating. The process carves out a more select audience with which to interact more intensively. Examples of partner programs among heritage areas are found in Iowa’s Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area, a long-standing effort, and New York’s Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, which modeled its program on the Silos and Smokestacks program in starting up in 2010.

Partners could obtain a range of benefits from participation in the National Heritage Area. At one end of the spectrum, simple access to the “inner sanctum” of the Crossroads web site is one possibility (minutes, bylaws, other organization deliberations, or the ability to edit information directly on the entry on the Crossroads web site that describes the partner’s role and calendar of events in the heritage area). Partners might make more dynamic use of the Crossroads web site, as well. For example, partners could maintain their “wish list” on the web site in a “donors’ catalogue,” as a way of identifying specific needs to the entire audience for the Crossroads web site. More exclusive use of the logo or sales of certain Crossroads products could be other benefits. At the far end of the spectrum, grants and technical assistance might be limited to partners.

The word “partner” implies a two-way street, and a certain kind of equality. In cultivating partner relationships and commitments, the Crossroads Association may choose to ask partners to participate in advisory bodies, or may organize partners for the inevitable task of lobbying for the heritage area’s annual federal appropriations. (Their names could be listed on special stationery, for example.) Such groups should feel empowered to advise the Association as equals, understanding that they share responsibility for the heritage area’s success.

The Association should also set standards or criteria for selecting partners, holding out some benefits for those partners that go to extra length to support the heritage area. Partners should be asked to apply formally by demonstrating (in an application) that they have met standards and are willing to make commitments. Any fear of unnecessarily excluding potential partners can be relieved by establishing a set of categories that can encompass all comers. Partners can then see that ultimately they may progress to the level allowing greatest participation, yet can gain a sense of teamwork and direction by being added to “preliminary” levels if they do not qualify for the full complement of partner benefits.

Management entities evolve their own answers to many questions inherent in partnering. Considerations include:

- How formal a relationship to build and how to recognize it;
- What to provide to partners (grants; training; technical assistance; marketing visibility – all depending on a given level of partner capability);
- What partner type to include – simply sites and attractions, versus a wider range of institutions, programs, or supporters that the Association would be able to serve and relate to (corporate partners, educational institutions, organizations closely aligned to the Revolutionary War as a theme but which do not own sites, etc.) – and how to tailor the program to each partner type;
- How to support partners in non-financial ways (with advocacy, intervention, collaboration, policy development, etc.);
- How to work collaboratively on such items as web site, community calendar, contests, or programs like “place matters” or “open doors”;
- What to expect from partners (commitments to self-improvement; commitments to project leadership; advocacy for the heritage area’s annual federal funding; fees?);
- How to maintain communications and monitor partners’ needs; and
- How much say to allow partners in the overall operation of the heritage area;
- How much to encourage partners to build “sibling” relationships without the “parent” management entity.

Two particular choices deserve a little more explanation. First, how to share benefits? For example, if a dedicated funding source should be developed, should a guaranteed share go to partners? Can partners and the management entity form a corporation, so to speak – or perhaps literally – for licensing, reproductions, etc.? Typically the “limiting factor” for attracting grant funds for local projects is the availability and size of a local match. When a management entity raises funds, should a portion be set aside for local funding, perhaps to enable more unrestricted local match funds?

And second, how to share credit? To a certain extent, the heritage area will support the success henceforth of its attractions. Those attractions should be willing to highlight the heritage area’s role as a way of supporting the heritage area’s visibility to potential donors. Yet, the attractions want to be able to show the impact of their own efforts – can they afford to be magnanimous?

For a grants program administered by the Association, a two-step process of self-selection may have several advantages. Step one would be for the partner to join the Crossroads Association, indicating a long-term interest in grants whether or not the partner is applying in a given round. Step two would be the application process, with only partners allowed to apply. Advantages:

- The audience for grants is identified up front – an element of identifying needs in the heritage area that can help to shape messages to funders and design the grant programs themselves;
- The first step allows Crossroads to gather some of the “up front” information about potential grantees, streamlining the process (certification of federal nonprofit status or “in good standing” assurances from the state, for example); and
- Crossroads can further limit some of its training and technical assistance for grant applications to the more selectively defined “partner audience.”

ACTION: Develop a formal program of recognition and inclusion for partners.

11.3.5 Structuring Local Partnerships in the Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area

A highly important reason in particular for the Association to pursue partnerships is they can amplify the staff's capability. Partnership projects can share such leadership tasks as organizing and communicating among a group and allow groups of multiple organizations to benefit from such Association services as technical assistance and training. Setting up multi-party projects through a partnership structure also should help to build stronger networks and collaborative "sibling" relationships among partners – who might gain support in many ways from nearby peers with or without the Association's direct involvement.

Challenges in Structuring Geographic Collaboration

One issue somewhat unique to large heritage areas such as Crossroads is whether and how to organize geographically. In this heritage area, this is an especially touchy issue. New Jersey possesses a woeful record of collaboration among jurisdictions (municipalities, townships, and counties), which harbor an especially deep distrust of efforts to "regionalize." This long-time tendency to pursue separate ends, if continued, is a force that works in opposition to the concept of a heritage area. Existing experience in cross-boundary efforts in New Jersey is minimal outside such special-resource regions as the Crossroads area, the Highlands, and the Pinelands.

Even "north, central, south" or "east, west" are somewhat confusing in New Jersey, although there is at least a recognition of the cultural difference of "South Jersey" and where it is (in this heritage area it is that portion found south of Trenton). Fewer than a third of the counties in the heritage area exist completely within the heritage area's boundary, four out of fourteen. Other cultural and geographic differences suggest that even some counties wholly within the heritage area are not uniform in the ability of their jurisdictions to work together. Counties also differ widely in their commitment of funds and staff to heritage resources and interpretation (of all kinds, never mind that segment related to the Revolutionary War).

Opportunities in Organizing Geographically

Why organize geographically? Geographic areas make for a readily understood system for identifying partners, attractions, and other elements of a heritage area. They help participating parties understand where they fit and help the management entity evaluate requests for aid. For example, it would not be fair to allow uneven geographic distribution of the heritage area's resources. A certain amount of geographic grouping would also help the management entity to simplify face to face communication by serving as a guide to locations for meetings with partners, stakeholders, and constituents. The description of "character areas" in Chapter 7 suggests one way to create such a system, if it is found to be desirable to do so.

Evolutionary Geographic Structuring of "Partner Groups"

As the heritage area begins to implement this management plan, it is best simply to set a general direction for the evolution of partnerships and partner groups. Feedback during the development of this plan clearly showed that dictating such arrangements up front, prior to solidifying more relationships and projects, is not appropriate in this heritage area. The Association, partners, and stakeholders are expected to work during their first years to gain experience, engage in dialogue, and build trust in order to evolve a workable system.²

Boundaries are not strictly necessary. It is better in New Jersey to think of groups within the heritage area as generating their own gravity, ultimately coalescing into planetary systems, so to speak, as collaborators

²The board of directors determined this approach at a special meeting on July 22, 2010 in addressing the topic of management and how the heritage area and the Association should be structured.

and stakeholders become used to working together. Organizing help from one or more central or stronger parties might help this process along. An example of this approach is the “clusters” that have evolved in Virginia’s Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District. The expectation in the Shenandoah Valley is that everyone participates; consortiums of partners conduct their own meetings and the management entity is a voting member. Five were predicted by the management plan; over time, they have taken on unique characteristics with considerable variation.

A further advantage of this approach is that it tolerates very well the idea (even if not quite true to the astronomical analogy) that some partners and stakeholders might find themselves drawn to multiple working groups, sequentially or at the same time, depending on project. This may be especially helpful in addressing the geographic overlaps found in the Crossroads interpretive themes.

Direction for Evolving a Management Structure to Support the Development of Local Partnerships

In order to make the idea of “partner groups” ultimately viable with some predictability, certain things are needed. The Association should identify and empower strong partners and match them to good projects. It should identify and support projects that are most likely to help to build partnerships, and devote staff time and resources not only to the projects, but to the activity of cultivating partners.

Measures of success should be the number of partners supporting the heritage area, applying for assistance, and adopting its programs and standards. Performance evaluation, for example, might be based on how many organizations exist in various categories (sites, communities, business organizations in legacy communities, etc.) and what percentage of those have chosen to join or support the Association in a meaningful way.

ACTION: Identify and empower strong partners which can help to organize, support, and lead geographic groupings.

ACTION: Set expectations among partners that over time they will develop relationships with one another based on their experience of working together, and that these interconnections could evolve into groupings to succeed any geographic outreach the Association may use initially. The size and scope of groups that share interests should be entirely up to them, as long lasting and fluid as they see fit.

ACTION: During in the heritage area’s early years, choose activities and projects that will cultivate the greatest experiences of partnership, dialogue, and trust-building.

ACTION: Dedicate staff time directly to partnership development.

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SIDEBAR: Time as an Ingredient of Sustained Success

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11.3.6 Providing Assistance to Partners – “Partner Development”

Partner development is so important – so fundamental to the heritage-area concept – that it is one of the most important pursuits for the Association to undertake. Like “development” as defined in a following section with regard to fundraising, “development” is a key word. Both uses imply the development of long-lasting relationships – such relationships are built through the various activities pursued by the heritage area. Relationships should be considered valuable results in their own right – the strength of such relationships long-term is highly likely to be indicators of the heritage area’s success.

The range of activities that make up the concept of “partner development” is considerable. Activities in partner development range from identifying partners and providing resources and services to them, to devising specific grant programs to achieve desired outcomes. The list ultimately should be well articulated and defined so that funders and partners understand the full universe of the heritage area’s and the Association’s assistance. Here are possibilities:

- Grantmaking (described in below);
- Use of the heritage area logo and other branding elements (discussed in Chapter 7, Crossroads Presentation);
- Ways the web site and communications strategy (discussed in the section below on communications) can reinforce partners’ programs, including recognition and awards;
- Forming marketing partnerships to share enterprise revenue (discussed below);
- Sponsorship of a partner’s event (e.g., purchase of advertising, provision of honorarium, staff assistance);
- Technical assistance for many kinds of projects – although the range is considerable, as suggested by Chapters 7 through 10, some examples might be exhibit enhancements, construction of trails, and byway or itinerary identification and planning;
- Technical assistance in fundraising and grant-writing;
- Grant reference letters;
- Technical assistance on administration, public outreach and communications, and project planning;
- Workshops, training, and conferences;
- Provision of Board and staff speakers for partners’ events.

In rounding out this concept of programming for partner development, The Association’s Board and staff ultimately should describe:

- Specific kinds of projects the Association expects to help;
- Threshold requirements, such as the requirement that interpretive sites undertake their own needs assessment prior to receiving heritage-area assistance (beyond technical and/or funding assistance provided by the Association to stimulate such needs assessment);
- The kinds and levels of aid to be made available;
- The application/decision-making process for soliciting requests for aid and/or deciding how to provide aid (at what level);
- When aid is to be provided to non-partners, and when it is to be provided only to partners;
- How to cultivate relationships with partners even when partners are not actively seeking or receiving assistance;
- Technical needs (e.g., specific changes to the web site to streamline the application process for staff or applicants, requirements for archival or promotional activities); and
- Ways to collect data readily as staff members proceed through their daily work, so that the program’s inputs and impacts can be monitored and the burden of reporting to funders is minimized.

ACTION: Describe how the Association intends to build and operate programs for partners as a defined “partner development” function shared by all staff, considering a wide range of elements of its work– all the ways that the Association’s staff can expect to boost the work of partners. *This is a high-priority cross-cutting activity to be deployed especially in support of the six first-phase strategies described at the end of this chapter.*

Formal Partner Identification

An important consideration is whether or not, over the long term, the Association will want to put into place a process for identifying an official group or groupings of “partners” from among its stakeholders (defined earlier in this chapter, section 11.3.1).

Identified partners could obtain multiple benefits from participation in the National Heritage Area in a significant way. Simple access to the “inner sanctum” of the Crossroads web site is one possibility (minutes, bylaws, other organization deliberations, or the ability to edit information directly on the entry on the Crossroads web site that describes the partner’s role in the heritage area). Partners might make more dynamic use of the Crossroads web site, as well. For example, partners could maintain their “wish list” on the web site in a “donors’ catalogue,” as a way of identifying specific needs to the entire audience for the Crossroads web site. At the far end of the spectrum of benefits, grants and technical assistance might be limited to partners.

Partners should expect to contribute to the work of the heritage area. For the most part, their pursuit of their own agenda can be assumed to contribute to the heritage area’s development, especially once well-aligned to the heritage area’s goals and strategies. But there are other ways that partners might provide much-needed leadership. For example, the Association may ask partners’ representatives to participate in advisory bodies or committees, or may organize partners in a special way for the task of educating New Jersey’s Congressional delegation about the heritage area’s activities and its needs for annual federal appropriations.

Why would Crossroads wish to identify partners? First, it is convenient for much the same reason that it is common practice to have visitors register on a web site – self-selection indicates interest and that the partner perceives a benefit in participating. The Association may set goals for such participation by counting selected kinds of constituents and over the long term demonstrate how those goals are met. A measure of performance evaluation, for example, might be how many organizations exist that meet certain criteria (operator of an American Revolution interpretive attraction, say) and what percentage of those have chosen to join or support the organization in a meaningful way.

To help the Association determine how to allocate significant assistance and support among the many partners of the heritage area, a two-step process of self-selection may have several advantages. Step one would be for the partner to join the Crossroads Association, indicating a long-term interest in assistance and support whether or not the partner is applying in a given round, and step two would be the application process used for certain benefits, with only partners allowed to apply. Advantages:

The target audience is identified up front – an element of identifying need that can help to shape messages to funders and potential applicants;

The first step allows the Association to gather some standard information about potential grantees for its records, streamlining the later process of applying for help (certification of nonprofit status or “in good standing” assurances from the state, for example); and

The Association can tailor some of its offerings to more selectively defined groups of partners based on the in-depth knowledge of needs gathered through the partner identification process.

Other national heritage areas have made considerable use of this process, especially the Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area of northeastern Iowa, which has operated a partner program for well over a decade. The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor of upstate New York instituted a program modeled after the Iowa program in 2010. Both programs have specifically targeted interpretive partners, but Erie expects to expand the program to municipalities.

For Crossroads, potential groups to be identified in such a process are:

- Interpretive attractions (Chapter 7, Crossroads Presentation, suggests a procedure for self-assessment and self-identification for participation in the Crossroads interpretive system); and
- Communities, especially Legacy Communities and Visitor Service Communities (described in Chapter 7 and Chapter 9, Crossroads Preservation).

ACTION: Describe how the Association intends to identify and build relationships with partners, determining whether and how to create a self-identification process for interpretive sites and communities. This is a high-priority cross-cutting activity to be deployed especially in support of the six first-phase strategies described at the end of this chapter.

Grantmaking

Once all of the above considerations are separated from grantmaking, considerations for grantmaking alone are relatively straightforward. Even so, the grantmaking process itself can be demanding, needing both board and staff involvement. The process includes:

- Setting deadlines;
- Devising applications and criteria;
- Advertising for applicants;
- Selecting recipients and continuing relationships with those who are not selected;
- Approving grant agreements;
- Monitoring progress and closeouts; and
- Evaluating and reporting on results and any need for program adjustments.

In terms of those who are not selected, it is worth noting that often grant programs see even unsuccessful applicants grow in terms of capacity, self-knowledge, and ability to raise funds from other sources. The process of applying for funds imposes a certain organizational discipline and awareness that is a long-term benefit in the partner's development of its abilities and programs.

All other national heritage areas employ grants, utilizing federal heritage-area funding and other sources; their experience offers a trove of ideas available through the National Park Service's national office supporting heritage areas.

ACTION: Establish a program of matching grants to support partners' high-priority activities, projects, and programs as generally described in this plan. This is a critical action for the first phase of program development; the program should be expected to change and evolve with time and available funding.

Creating Marketing Partnerships

The logic of the definition of partnership as "shared risk, mutual interests" leads to the idea of creating marketing partnerships, between the Association and another partner, or among a group of partners that includes the Association, depending on the project.

The Association can bring to the table the heritage area's national visibility, national and regional audiences, and a recognized brand (once established) associated with a compelling story and a perceived level of quality. Its web site can maintain a level of sophistication and reach that are difficult to reach for smaller nonprofits; for example, it could offer a "catalogue" sales opportunity for partners to use. Moreover, the Association's federal status as the heritage area's local coordinating entity elevates it above many nonprofit organizations within the region in the minds of the public and funders, including potential investors. The Association may thus be able to raise investment funds for the right projects. Critically, the

Association could sponsor the necessary research that is the foundation of successful marketing – research that might be developed parallel to the marketing research planned to support the interpretive program.

Partners can bring to potential marketing partnerships their own compelling stories and needs, in-depth local audiences and supporters, a range of skills to add to those of the Association’s board and staff, and often a cadre of eager, well-organized volunteers whose labor can help to “underwrite” activities requiring intensive organizational time. Participating in a marketing partnership is a major way to advance the capabilities of a given organization and may lead it to participate in other kinds of collaboration that also help to build the heritage area overall.

The Association could develop and/or lead marketing partnerships to address a range of possibilities, from enterprise activities (sales of goods and services as discussed in a sidebar in the development section below) to fundraising activities – major events or festivals, for example. Development of products that help to extend the visibility and branding needed by the heritage area, and which can be sold by partners as well as the Association, should be a high priority.

ACTION: Consider developing a specific program to research and invest in marketing partnerships that meet two criteria: they offer high-value opportunities for raising unrestricted funding, and they build the capacity of all organizations involved to support the overall development of the heritage area. *Mid-term; steps toward this program can be built into the first-phase strategy to conduct marketing research.*

11.4 Toward a Strategic Crossroads Communications Plan

An organization’s vision is only as good as the organization’s ability and commitment to communicate it to those who need to know and understand it. Any organization should have a single, strong voice that is “on message” and engaged with the telling the public about its vision and goals. Good communications also express an organization’s core beliefs and values. The development and implementation of a complete strategic communications plan with a wide range of techniques will build a presence for the Crossroads National Heritage Area among its target audiences at the local, regional, state, and federal levels.

A strategic communications plan aims to ensure that every contact an organization makes with its audiences is an opportunity taken to communicate – to establish a strong, unified sense of its brand, as explained in Chapter 7. While most people unfamiliar with branding believe branding simply means a logo, a logo is only the tip of the iceberg in terms of an organization’s overall visual identity as conveyed through all communications. That identity development is best done through creation of a marketing plan.

A complete communications plan approaches every activity of the organization with communications in mind, holistically. A communications plan ensures that brochures, websites, press releases, invitations, and other communications efforts work in a synchronized way to help the organization meet its business goals and build its brand.

Various kinds of communications implement and support a range of activities identified in marketing and interpretive plans discussed in Chapter 7 and development planning discussed immediately below. The overall communications plan should embrace and coordinate these multiple communications needs and recommendations. This section will address communications with the New Jersey audiences described in Chapter 7 – and not marketing with the intent of attracting visitors beyond the state to the heritage area and its events. It is meant to support outreach to the heritage area’s partners, stakeholders, and other New Jersey audiences, including the public in general. While the purposes of these communications may vary, they can all have the effect of building the Association’s and the heritage area’s visibility.

11.4.1 Organizing for Good Communications

An effective communications plan is created with the help of an active board of directors. The ongoing demands of an effective communications program are such that a board is best served by a committee of board members focused intently on communications planning, implementation, and evaluation. Such a committee should meet regularly in order to ensure that the plan is being implemented and adjusted as needed.

In addition to ongoing board oversight and board committee involvement, staff (including volunteers acting as staff) generally meets day-to-day responsibilities for an organization's communications effort. Here is the ideal structure for an organization's entire "communications team," generally speaking (some roles can be taken on by a single person, and consultants are also possible where the regular staff and volunteers need help for special efforts):

Spokesperson: is well versed in the Association and the heritage area, its goals and mission, as well as its development effort; is the "official" voice of the Association for media.

Media Relations Manager: researches and maintains media contacts; drafts press releases for approval; sends final press releases, posts press releases to the website; monitors and reports on media coverage.

Communications Manager: oversees development, design, production, and dissemination of all print and electronic communications; maintains and implements communications plan; meets with the board's development committee to assess and meet their communications needs (see Section 11.5 below); approves all outgoing communications.

In addition, the Association should understand that one organizational activity in particular may be critical to maintaining communications among stakeholders and communicating specific messages to various audiences: the establishment of committees.

ACTION (combines specific actions in previous chapters): Establish committees with outside advisors to tend to and communicate key heritage-area interests. Plan for and implement the development of advisory bodies: a Heritage Tourism Management Committee and subcommittees on visitor gateways, marketing, visitor services, and evaluation (chapter/section 7.9.10); a Council of Scholars to advise on research (8.3.3); a Council of Educators to advise on issues related to primary and secondary education (8.5); a Preservation Committee to coordinate preservation initiatives (9.8.1); and an Advocacy Committee (9.8.2).

ACTION: Establish other committees that enable the Association to reach out to key stakeholders, especially those not associated with specific sites, such as re-enactors and legacy organizations.

11.4.2 Creating a Communications Plan

The creation of a written document endorsed and shared by the entire organization makes for an informed board, an accountable communications team, and an efficient, effective program. Unless good ideas are organized and written down with agreement on priorities, there is no real plan. A completed document serves as a foundation and ongoing reference for all communications implemented by the Association.

Creating such a plan first involves inventorying upcoming communications opportunities; identifying target audiences and messages; assessing ways for measuring success; gathering other background information. A "SWOT Analysis" (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) is a well-established planning exercise and can be an effective tool to elucidate information and ideas that provide a basis for the plan. It is an exercise that can help make sense of widely varied information and capture

important perceptions. Those participating in the planning process gather information and discuss their understandings of:

Strengths: how are the Association and the heritage area unique? What is its unique offering? What is its “brand DNA” (what is fundamental to how the Association should be perceived)?

Weaknesses: This may include lack of awareness of the Crossroads brand, a diverse region and/or a complex story that is hard to tell in small sound bites.

Opportunities: These may include events, milestones and anniversaries, facility openings, large donations (a chance to let others know and be inspired). What message or messages are ways to reinforce the Association in such settings?

Threats: This may include an analysis of other non-profits working to reach the same audience, staffing and resource issues, impending legislation that may negatively impact the Association, or localized issues that may impede the Association’s ability to positively engage the public.

With such background information, the next step is to identify goals, objectives, strategies, and tactics. This important step establishes a shared vision for the communications plan among board and staff and leads to consensus on programs and priorities.

Setting Goals

Higher organizational goals (those found in this management plan in Chapter 1) should guide all goals in the communications plan and for individual projects identified in the plan. Clearly articulated goals (that is, expected general outcomes) allow those who implement the plan to design the details of programs called for in the plan that are tailored to the Association’s needs.

Defining Objectives

Objectives are measurable. They are typically expressed as targets: to increase event participation; to increase donor participation; to establish a new function or program, and so on. These, too, aid in program design, first in enlarging on the goals, and second in providing guidance for how to evaluate a program’s impact.

Identifying Strategies

Strategies determine the shape and form of an organization’s communications effort. Strategies should focus on the overarching actions needed for success. They might specify particular audiences or focus on particular topics (or both). Here are examples often found in communications plans:

- Educate and encourage individual or corporate donors.
- Educate local, state, and federal leaders about the importance and role of the organization within their communities.
- Inform educators and schools of programs and capabilities
- Establish partnerships and opportunities for collaboration
- Educate residents of the Heritage Area and its story
- Attract tourists and cultural travelers of the Area and its story
- Increase awareness of the Association and its important work among all target audiences.

Designing Tactics

Tactics include the working list of tasks or programs that support the strategies. This is the “how” of the plan. Tactics for a communications plan may include:

- Press releases

- Brochures
- Annual report
- Signage or displays
- All material to support the development plan (see next section)
- Newsletters
- Event promotional material
- Advertising
- Development material
- Social media

At the tactical level the plan should include specific action items that can be assigned to staff and volunteers to implement. All action items should aim to connect the Association with its target audiences.

11.4.3 Audiences and Messages

Few organizations have the budget to do extensive advertising to reach the general public. To save time and money, it is more effective to determine how to reach ideal audiences more directly. Capture email addresses at events, partner with similar non-profits, be creative with outreach to entice additional media coverage.

In addition to the audiences enumerated in Chapter 7, consider specific groups in the Association's orbit that are critical to its success. These may include event participants, volunteers, residents of a particular community, or businesses lined up behind a favorite project. Legislators, grantors, donors, and partner organizations are highly important audiences to consider in any communications plan, along with the most "internal audiences" of all, the Board of Directors and other volunteers.

Many people, when thinking about the communications an organization must undertake, think first of media. The media should be regarded not as a true audience, however, but rather as a mechanism to *reach* audiences. Thus, maintaining relationships and educating reporters is a critical communications function.

Clarity in exactly what message to get out to each audience is critical. Unless, for example, the messages communicated to the press are defined very well, the news coverage that results may not support the organization's goals for its communications.

While there is certainly a need for unified messaging across the platform of the organization's entire communications effort, certain audiences need to hear different messages and information, varied from any standardized messaging to address their particular concerns or needs. For example, participants in regional events may need to hear a different message than corporate donors. Legislators may need to understand the impact on the heritage area's communities. Donors may need to see the organization as a striving, effective organization. This should be a part of the organization's analysis in the communications plan and whenever a communications activity is planned. A sample of audience and message planning may look like the chart found in Table 11.xxx.

Table 11.xxx Planning Messages for Specific Audiences

Audience	Messages
Residents	The story of the heritage area; positive impact on community and way of life; educational value
Local reporters and editors (all media)	All of the above plus: information about events; specific large donations (if appropriate); overarching organizational goals. Establish the Association as a credible, reliable source for important information in the area.

Donors	All of the above plus: sincere thanks; the positive impact of donations; the ongoing need for support.
Tourists	The value and features of the heritage area, the story of the Area; the benefits of membership
Board	Details of the development effort; the on-going need for their support; information about the progress of specific projects.

Make sure what is communicated through the Association's website and newsletter are of use to the expected audiences. Include helpful and useful information such as event and tourism information. Become a resource for these audiences rather than simply report on the Association's progress and interests. Allow for them to want to connect with the Association and to identify with it. Are they obtaining the tools they need to speak about the Association and the heritage area in a positive manner? Development communications should play a large part in the communications plan. Define which funder/donor audiences need to hear from the Association and when. Create communications specifically to help them understand where donor dollars go and include information about what inspires them to give.

11.4.4 Measurement

Public perceptions and the success of communications can be difficult to measure on a limited budget. Forms of measurement can include:

- Increases in visits to the website (unique and repeat);
- Increases of memberships and donations;
- Increases in newsletter readership;
- Use of social media;
- Participation at events; and
- Media coverage.

Organizations typically keep a "press book" year to year in order to record information about media exposure, including copies of any printed or web-based information. This can be helpful in looking back over several years and repeating the communications planning for a multi-year approach.

ACTION: Create a communications plan. This is an important early action and would be most effectively pursued in coordination with communications associated with interpretation, and heritage tourism (branding, marketing), and fundraising.

11.5 Funding and Development

Other critical structural ingredients [for the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor] include secure, stable funding from diverse sources and the ability to leverage funds, resources, and ideas. It is important to note that the ability to leverage derives primarily from the funding and participation of the two anchoring state and federal [partners]. (D&L Report, p. 59, emphasis in the original)

The design and implementation of a good development plan is essential to the success of any non-profit organization that depends on donations and grants for its fiscal stability.

A word about language: "Development" has become the preferred word among fundraising professionals because it implies the large role in *organizational development* that fundraising plays, since it affects nearly every aspect of operations and operational planning. (Heritage areas sometimes engage in activities related development that in this sector of the nonprofit world is generally understood to mean *real estate development*. Therefore, Association leaders should make clear which they mean when they are talking about one or the other. In this section, of course, the word development is used interchangeably with

fundraising. Readers should bear in mind the broader meaning of “development” here and begin to consider the specific implications for the Association.

A solid development plan is an extension of a larger branding effort in which leadership works to build and nurture a relationship between the organization and its supporters. Those who know, understand, and relate to the Crossroads brand will be willing to put their hard-earned dollars behind it. They will feel a certain amount of ownership and involvement in the Association and the heritage area, which will inspire them to continue to support the organization financially and encourage friends and family to do the same. A development plan will allow opportunities for a donor to align with the brand’s core beliefs and values, thereby inspiring the generous contributions that are critical to success.

“Donors” may be individuals who make cash contributions small and large, present or future (through “planned giving” – bequests, etc.). Good branding, however, can also influence the perception of the organization by corporations, foundations, and governmental agencies. These are all sources to consider in creating a development plan.

11.5.1 Organizing for Development

Reaching generous donors and grantors who will align with the Association’s core values is the outcome of a solid development plan. Step one toward such a plan is creating a solid organization oriented to development that understands and communicates its core values and vision internally. Board members who internalize the Association’s values and vision become passionate advocates for the organization. They also share their enthusiasm with each other and the staff – who need the appreciation and the sense of teamwork.

The responsibility for creating a solid development plan lies with an active board and its development committee. The development committee is responsible for defining all elements of a fundraising effort, including goals, financial and other objectives, strategies, and priorities. In turn, the full board reviews the development plan and endorses it. The execution of the plan through specific tactics depends on board leadership and good staff work. Committee and board members can support the plan by actively seeking and recruiting donors and attending or hosting fundraising events.

The make-up of the board is a critical factor in fundraising success. Recruitment for the development committee in particular needs careful thought. In the spirit of collaboration, many heritage areas enlist leadership from other organizations who may have overlapping or mutual interests to serve on the board. This often occurs from the pattern laid down in the organizing of the heritage area – an effort typically led by leaders of other organizations. They come together to seek recognition of the area, so that their organizations will benefit along with creating a collaborative approach that will enable their organizations to achieve broader aims. Once an organization to manage the heritage area is created, however, this inherent, understandable conflict of interest has the potential to weaken the development effort. While partners may be critical to the success of the heritage area, always, representatives of competing nonprofit organizations, if they must serve on the board, should not serve on a development committee. That committee should consist of those who are able to put the Association first.

All members of the board should be made aware at the time of their recruitment that 100 percent participation in giving is expected. No one will want to give to an organization if those closest to its management do not also support it.

In addition to the development committee itself, the ideal development team consists of the following:

The **board president**, who serves on the development committee, attends all development committee meetings, and takes an active role in identifying and soliciting major donors. The board president also

serves as spokesperson for the development effort, attends high-level development functions, and participates, with other board members and the executive director, in legislative/municipal outreach.

The **executive director**, whose role mirrors that of the board president. In addition, the executive director engages the membership (if any) and volunteers working on the fundraising effort, conducts community outreach, and plans and manages financial stewardship.

The **director of development**, who also shares roles with the board president and effectively staffs the committee, working closely with the committee chair. In addition, the director of development manages grant applications and other forms of funding requests, supports the executive director in planning and managing financial stewardship, fulfills all mandatory paperwork and communications (letters, phone calls, receipts, etc.). The director of development must also be well-informed of and able to speak about forms of donations (tax implications, wills, etc.).

11.5.2 Creating a Development Plan

A development plan contains goals, objectives, strategies, and tactics and serves as the foundation for a long-term effort. The Association's board, volunteers working to support the Association's programs, and staff should work together as a group. They must ensure that all key participants understand, support, and rally around the development plan and its goals and understand their roles and expectations.

Setting Goals

A goal for the development plan is a simple expression of where the organization wants to go in its fundraising over time, such as "grow the organization's capacity to reach New Jersey-based corporations." Goals articulated in the development plan may also include higher organizational goals that support development, typically having to do with visibility and achievement, such as "establish the organization as a strong and important presence in heritage-area communities.

Defining Objectives

Objectives are financial. They should be reasonable, achievable, and based on a solid understanding of the potential for corporate and individual support within the region. Figure 11-xxx illustrates how one small organization might target its fundraising within several general categories of supporters. Objectives may also provide targets for staff time to be devoted to various categories, in essence also financial since this commits resources for which the organization must pay.

With a new brand and a new fundraising effort, the number of participants or members is as important as the amount raised. Donors will not likely donate large funds until they have developed a relationship with the Association. It is easier to keep or increase participation from a donor from year to year than it is to find new donors.

Figure 11-xxx also shows a hypothetical case that illustrates a key concept, which is that raising funds roughly follows Pareto's Rule, 80 percent of the funds raised come from 20 percent of the organization's total base of support. This illustration of the "giving pyramid" is a hoary but tried-and-true concept in fundraising, generally applied to raising funds from individuals and family foundations. It can also apply, however, to corporate and foundation support. Logically, from this illustration, it is apparent that spending much time pursuing major gifts and grants offers a larger payoff. However, the 20 percent often emerge from the 80 percent, which is why a communications strategy is so important in helping to bring potential givers within reach of additional messages (and why the reader still probably receives direct mail appeals despite the rise of the internet).

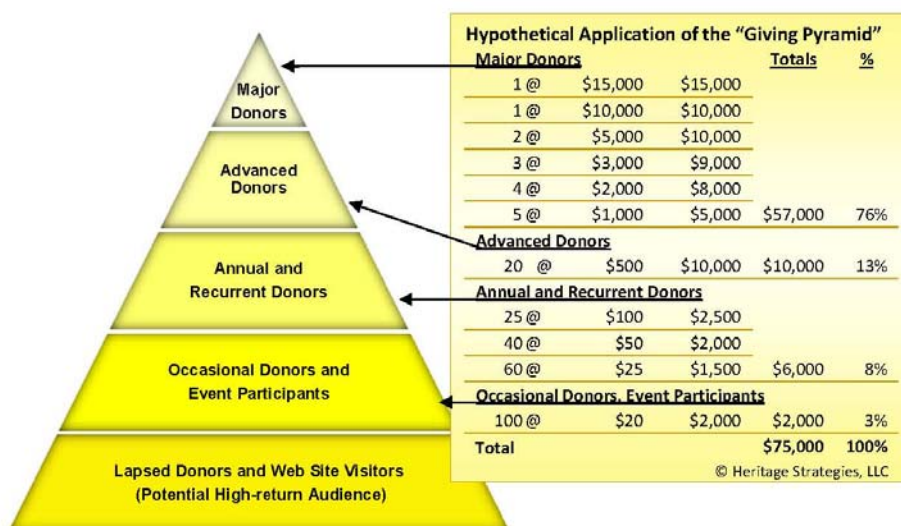


Figure 11-xxx The Giving Pyramid

Pictured: The "giving pyramid" is the traditional illustration of the concept that a few funders often provide the preponderance of support for a charity's budget. It is accompanied here with hypothetical numbers, objectives showing specific fundraising targets in relation to each kind of donor. Notice how the numbers in the left column increase, reflecting the pyramid – and how the targeted gift amount declines from top to bottom. In this hypothetical case, just 36 sources are assumed for 89% of the funds to be raised.

SIDEBAR: Raising Funds through Enterprise Activities

The concept of the "giving pyramid" touches only on the charitable-giving portion of an organization's fundraising strategy (donations, grants, sponsorships). There is a wide range of possibilities for the Association to engage in "enterprise activities," the generation of income through sales of goods and services. This idea goes hand in hand with the concept of "marketing partnerships," discussed in a preceding section.

As an illustration of "goods," the Association already has raised funds through sales of its guidebook. As an illustration of services, the Association might maintain an educational staff position through gaining compensation for that individual's time when supplementing sites' docent staffing for large groups (students, bus tours) difficult for under-staffed or non-staffed sites to handle. This individual could also act as a "step on guide" for bus tours, joining them for particular parts of their route in New Jersey. (In fact, content developed for such tours can be copyrighted and sold in much the same way musicians are paid whenever their songs are aired on the radio.)

While nonprofit organizations must be careful about using their tax status appropriately, nonprofit status is not a bar to generating income from many kinds of activities. A sound development plan should aim for a substantial percentage that grows over time. Enterprise activities can often take some time to develop a steady income stream, but every dollar raised in this way is unrestricted – the most difficult funding to raise.

Many heritage areas have engaged in enterprise activities, from collaborating with corporations to provide their employees with long-term programs providing wellness/recreation and volunteer opportunities to sales of branded products. There is even one heritage area selling electricity generated through

hydropower (from a water-powered mill it stepped in to purchase in order to save jobs), and another planning to drill for oil (the Oil Region National Heritage Area, which developed a partnership with a property owner who learned of the heritage area when it made a film about small oil-well operators; and the heritage area will be able to incorporate this particular enterprise activity directly into its interpretive programs).

Identifying Strategies

Strategies will determine the shape and form of the development effort. Strategies should focus on the overarching actions needed for success. They are founded on a strong understanding of the multiple audiences who can support the organization, what will motivate them to take action, and how to reach them. These audiences, described further in Table 11.xxx, include:

- Individual donors, large and small;
- Corporate donors, grants and sponsorships;
- Foundations, large and small;
- Local, state, and federal governmental leaders, grants, goodwill, and visibility; and
- Community leaders and residents in general, for goodwill and visibility.

Strategies provide general direction for how to reach these audiences, and how much to emphasize each. For example, after experiencing several years of receiving gifts from interested individuals, it may be time for the Association to carefully organize its approach to these donors to encourage them to increase their gifts (bearing in mind that it may take several years of increasing their gifts for many interested donors to reach their highest potential for giving). A strategy expressing this might be worded simply as “Focus on increasing gifts from major donors.” Or, it may *not* be time, until this strategy is fulfilled: “Build a larger donor base.”

As another example, to take the idea of enterprise activities described under the section on objectives, a strategy might be “Establish one income-generating activity per year.” Or the Association may determine a particular strategy related to kinds of giving – “Emphasize corporate sponsorships and donations,” for example.

Development of an endowment is another strategy. Interest income from the investment of endowment funds provides lasting, predictable income for the organization and is an important element of very long-range fundraising. The Association must be prepared to determine whether, when, and how to establish an endowment. Psychologically, it may be beneficial for the organization to begin a modest endowment fund even though demands for year-to-year funding are quite pressing for a startup heritage-area managing entity. The presence of an endowment on the balance sheet keeps it in front of the board of directors, and is immediately available if a major donor decides he or she wishes to donate to the endowment to help stabilize the organization’s long-term income stream. Typically, however, an organization undertakes a specific campaign to raise capital for its endowment, once the organization is well-established and following several years of research and planning.

The board may also establish restricted “special funds” to support critical elements of the Association’s programs (with naming rights given an appropriate size of donation). Restricted funding is not available for year-to-year operational needs and must be spent according to a donor’s wishes or promises made by the Association. Restricted funds on a nonprofit’s balance sheet usually apply to specific grants made to the Association by foundations and government agencies (who expect achievement of a promised program in return). The Association itself, however, can also establish one or more special funds. Like endowment funding, this strategy reduces flexibility in spending funds for operations, but could be used in special circumstances. Perhaps an individual makes a large gift or some kind of unexpected funding

Table 11.xxx Typical Funding Sources and Advantages/Disadvantages of Each

Source	Advantages	Disadvantages
Individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Largest source of giving · Ongoing source one can build · Once a giver, also an advocate · Volunteers are a good source of money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Costly to develop, small return per individual unit · Hard to generate unless broad-based direct service appeal · Risky for the inexperienced · Need significant assistance from the organization's board and volunteers
Large Family Foundations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Source of large sums of money · Accessible, professional staff · Clear guidelines, process · Most likely to research your request · Board volunteers can help, not always key 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Start-up funds only · Lengthy process · More difficult to access through personal influence · Proposals may be more lengthy
Community Foundations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Much like large-family foundations · Staff may be sufficient 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Host of foundations within foundations · Most money is earmarked, special funds
Small Family Foundations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · May fund ongoing operating expenses · Personal influence with board members helps · Guidelines often broad · Not very fussy about grant format 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Hard to access, no professional staff · Often not large sums of money · Without personal influence, may not be possible
Large Corporations / Corporate Foundations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Can be source of large sums of money · Smaller amounts of money may be ongoing · Often accessible, professional staff · May be tied to volunteer involvement · Business strategy may be clear · Source of cause-related marketing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Large sums of money aren't ongoing · Hard to get around staff · Must be within their guidelines · Not likely to contribute if not headquartered locally or have a public consumer base · Often want board representation
Small Corporations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Very informal approach · Money may be ongoing · Personal connections will suffice · Neighborhood focus will help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Small amounts of money · Narrow range of interest · Personal contacts are key
Federated Funds (United Ways, United Arts, Combined Health Appeal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Steady source of relatively large sums of money · Clear process · Professional staff, can be agency staff driven 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Generally can't be a start-up organization · Must be social service and fit priority focus · Very lengthy entry process · Very time consuming as must be part of yearly fund raising process, with periodic in-depth review
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Large sums of money possible · Process is set, clear · Political clout helps · May be source of ongoing money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Application procedures may be long, tedious · May only pay by unit of service, fluctuates · Unspent monies may be returned · Difficult record keeping

(Credit: Ellen M. Hatfield of the Twin Cities in Minnesota; cited in Crossroads Association's Business Plan by Rutgers)

arrives on the Association's doorstep. Perhaps restricted funds were raised in a consortium with partners. Partners might be more motivated to share in a fundraising effort if ultimately they might benefit from the program for which the restricted fund is set up.

Table 11.xxx provides a simple checklist for the topics that strategies are likely to address, with notes about key features or issues. The development committee should tailor strategies to the Association's opportunities, considering a five-year timeframe and covering the level of effort and priority to be given to each:

- Grant applications and requests for funding to foundations;
- Grant applications and requests for funding to government agencies;
- Grant applications and requests for funding and sponsorships to corporations;
- Membership programs – outreach to individuals understood to result in a lasting relationship between the organization and the donor, who perceives “benefits” in return, both real or altruistic
- in nature; in the Association's case, this refers to an informal, nonvoting relationship, but one that is nevertheless perceived as real in the member's mind;
- Systematic solicitation for an “annual fund” – understood by donors to be unrestricted dollars to support the organization in general and not to be confused with the end-of-year campaign; board members typically donate to the annual fund;
- Systematic solicitation for an “end-of-year gift” campaign;
- A program to solicit major donors;
- Events and other fundraising opportunities at the community level (sometimes called “grassroots” fundraising; consider gatherings, festivals, commemorative displays such as the Association's current Beacon Lighting, and much, much more);
- Endowment or other restricted funding;
- Fundraising activities shared with partners; and
- Enterprise activities.

Designing Tactics

Tactics are the critical ideas that appear on the working list of tasks that will support the strategies. Ultimately, every strategy and tactic in the development plan aims to connect Crossroads with its audience of supporters. Tactics tend to change on an annual basis, in part because of experience and in part because of the need for variety and growth in the fundraising program overall.

Research, research, research is a critical element of many tactics. Who is already giving to whom? The Foundation Center (<http://foundationcenter.org>) and many other web-based services make much research possible. Giving often comes through personal contact – whom does a board member know on a corporate board, foundation, or agency advisory body? What can those people suggest as best approach?

A critical tactic discussed further below is the creation of a case statement. Another important step overall is to create and maintain an organizational calendar where the variety of fundraising activities are coordinated and key deadlines are noted.

Each of the tactics developed to support the strategies should include a list of specific action items that can be assigned to volunteers and staff to implement. (In this heritage area management plan for Crossroads, “actions” blend the concept of strategies and tactics.) Table 11.xxx offers a simple checklist for the kinds of tactics the development plan may identify and guide.

11.5.3 Taking Action

Developing a Case Statement

A case statement is the cornerstone of the development plan and will serve as a foundation for the development effort. This is the organization's "pitch" – articulating the reasons the organization deserves support and motivating donors. It provides a simple, motivational picture of the organization. The organization's statements – mission, vision, values, and documented achievements – offer source material, but may not be reproduced depending on use. Typically, organizations maintain the basics of

Table 11.xxx Checklist for Development Tactics

Category of Strategy	Considering Tactics
Grant applications and requests for funding to foundations	Which sources are targets? What Association programs are they most likely to support? Who is to write and package the grants? What materials are needed to support the application?
Grant applications and requests for funding to government agencies	See above. In addition, is there a possibility of obtaining funding directly through legislators' support? Would municipalities add a token gift to the Association to their annual budget to become "members" to show their support and help generate visibility and support?
Grant applications and requests for funding and sponsorships to corporations	See above. Corporations want visibility in exchange for their support – how can the Association provide that?
Membership programs	A specific example of a tactic pertinent here: "Expand and maintain the Association's database of prospective donors and members using donor tracking software." How can social media and technology support outreach? What benefits should be offered to members? How will the Association correspond with members on a regular basis? How will the Association grow its list? (The Association already has a web link for web visitors to donate, a key way to collect data for use in building a relationship.) If the activity involves mailing paper communications, how with this be fulfilled? While a membership program rarely generates the funding required to meet a development goal, it can be extremely useful for building a donor base. Consider a campaign (see below).
Systematic solicitation for an "annual fund"	See above. For more information, see the campaign section, below.
A program to solicit major donors	See above. Develop elements of the program and map out its expected growth; consider a campaign (see below).
Events and other fundraising opportunities at the community level	The possibilities are endless. Two places to start: (1) what is the Association already doing with fundraising potential through sponsorship, advertising, etc.? And (2) is there a unique possibility or niche specific to the Association's mission or programs? How will the Association reach its very large, regional audience? If the activity involves mailing paper communications, how with this be fulfilled? Who is the market (audience) and how will the Association get its message out? What publicity and advertising are needed?
Endowment or other restricted funding	Consider policies on whether, when, and how to establish restricted funds or an endowment; at the appropriate time, establish the accounts that allow the organization to manage such funding;
Fundraising activities shared with partners	What are partners already doing – are there opportunities for shared efforts? What do they need? What would be an item in common to sell (as is already done with the Association's popular guidebook)?
Enterprise activities	Consider sales of both goods and services. What knowledge or experience does the Association have that audiences want and will pay for? How can social media and technology support product development or marketing?

their case statement over time, carefully tailoring it according to need, audience, and presentation. A successful case statement will communicate to the board, staff, donors, and other key audiences the justification for supporting Crossroads.

The case statement should include:

- A clearly expressed need within the heritage area, partnering organizations, and/or communities;
- A summary of how the Association is positioned to meet that need;
- Dramatic summary of the Association’s impact in meeting the need (or the impact it will have when funded);
- Detailed information on how to donate;
- Inspirational messaging; and
- Call to action and an appeal to donate.

Creating a Campaign

Successful fundraising is a year-round effort with many elements, and the specifics of the practice of fundraising can vary greatly from organization to organization. It is often more efficient to pursue specific strategies in combination (e.g., a gala fundraising event to kick off a campaign for a specific program), as a campaign. The shape of the campaign will depend on the organization’s needs and goals, its specific brand and programs, and the resources available. Many details must be coordinated, and the possibilities are endless. See the sidebar “Conducting a Campaign for the Annual Fund” for one of the most typical campaigns that nonprofit organizations can be expected to run.

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SIDEBAR: Conducting a Campaign for the Annual Fund

The campaign strategy chosen for illustration here is the annual fund, but many comments apply to other campaigns centering on events or membership.

An annual fund campaign has a yearly theme or project for which the organization is raising money. It has a yearly goal and begins and ends in synch with the organization’s fiscal year. Typically, an annual fund campaign entails three solicitations, including the end of calendar year. It also should include a number of fundraising events over the course of the year, active stewardship (donor outreach) based on an annual effort, and an annual report that summarizes the campaign and thanks donors.

Programs for community engagement are generally a part of the campaign. This could be a high-profile concept that is promoted to individuals and businesses to support a campaign. Many community-based organizations find low-cost and creative ways to raise awareness of their organization, such as unified downtown decoration efforts or theme-inspired events and promotions. While this approach requires planning and volunteer coordination, it can also work to earn media attention and increase local pride and a sense of connection with the organization.

A creative theme and a clearly delineated course toward the goal of sustainability will maximize ideas and help staff and volunteers stay focused and effective. Keeping a campaign alive over the course of a year requires keeping the theme and excitement up.

Fundraising depends a great deal on relationships. What fundraisers call “stewardship” is critical. (This is different from resource stewardship although the same basic idea of caretaking pertains.) The development plan and supporting communications plan should include specific tasks that speak directly to donors at various levels. Simple membership means a consistent newsletter. Larger donors should have

opportunities to be seen, at private and public events. It is amazing how many non-profits fail to say “thank you” in a sincere way. A phone call can make all the difference. Board members can be especially helpful in this task.

The campaign should also be designed to take advantage of rhythms and motivations over the year. For example, many individual donors are thinking about their charitable giving record for the year in December. As another example, some donors like to be white knights, and come in at the last minute to save the day – to help the organization meet its stated objective for funds to be raised. A well-designed campaign that includes active stewardship to reach out to major donors can provide those individuals that opportunity while at the same time encouraging many others to remain involved during the course of the campaign.

Once you have designed your campaign, you can begin to outline the materials and outreach you need to make it successful. Content for the material should be based on the messaging defined in the case statement. Among the materials to consider are:

- Brochures
- Cover letters
- E-solicitations
- Website updates
- Print solicitations
- Annual report (thanking donors)
- Newsletters (print or electronic)

A sample annual fund campaign calendar and tactics (based on a fiscal year corresponding with calendar year) looks like this:

August/September: The Preliminaries

- Design the campaign, identify key milestones (key question: two solicitations, or three? In this example, two are shown)
- Adjust organizational commitments to fit campaign obligations
- Adjust the case statement, design presentation materials for printing or web publication
- Refine the organization’s communications plan to support the campaign (see Communications Planning section)
- Identify grant opportunities associated with the campaign theme or project (this may have happened as long ago as a year earlier, timed so grants can be announced during the campaign)

September/October: The Start

- Recruit and educate volunteers and board members
- Name and promote a Chairperson (volunteer) or Regional Chairpersons
- Launch campaign – reveal its theme and purpose at a volunteer rally
- An initial solicitation (with content based on the case statement)

December: Action

- Year-end solicitation (on message)
- Year-end membership drive

January/February/March: Quiet Phase

- Events with donors, members, and prospective supporters

- Meetings with corporations (presentation of the case statement by a member of development committee and a staff person)

April/May/June: Action

- Spring solicitation (on message, with new information)
- Membership drive/ donor solicitation at programs

July/August/September: Winding Up

- End of campaign solicitation
- End of campaign celebration with results (opportunity to thank and recognize volunteers)
- Internal evaluation
- Begin planning for next annual fund campaign or next stage of a longer-term campaign
- Prepare for annual report

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11.5.4 Measurement

At its core, the success of a fundraising effort – whether plan, activity, or campaign – is measured by the amount of money raised. However, other factors can be used to determine whether a campaign was successful or measure progress:

- Participation in events, or increases in recurring events;
- The number of donors who increased their donations from one year to another;
- Increases in the donor base (the number of actual donors);
- Media coverage; and
- Increased traffic to the website.

While this section appears at the end of discussion of fundraising and development, in order of tasks pursued in raising funds, a good long-range development plan and the design of individual activities or campaigns should build specific measurements into expectations for execution. Ask, how will we know we met the goal or objective? How will we know one strategy is more successful than another? If these questions are met and measurements stated up front and communicated well to board, staff, and volunteers, those involved will “work to the test” – that is, look for opportunities to improve the stated measurements – and gather helpful information as the activity progresses.

ACTION: Create a fundraising plan. This is an important early action, especially urgent because the Association must have a sizeable amount of matching funds available to take full advantage of expected federal funding.

11.6 Running the Business of a Heritage-area Managing Entity

The operational side of running the Association is a large challenge, equal to the large challenge of having a heritage area at all in such a complicated historic and modern New Jersey landscape with many communities and rich and overlapping stories. Since the goal of all heritage areas, simply stated, is to increase the capacities of and connections among stakeholders, it is assumed that the Association will grow in ways that best accomplish this goal.

11.6.1 Staffing

In general, it is possible to combine the activities, projects, and programs to be pursued by the Association and described in the preceding chapters into the following four categories:

- **Heritage Product Development:** Management of attractions, interpretation, and heritage product development, including events (Chapter 7);
- **Marketing, Communications, and Business Outreach:** Management of heritage tourism marketing, development and implementation of the communications plan as described later in this chapter, and specifically managing business outreach (Chapter 7 and Chapter 11);
- **Historic Preservation, Education, and Research:** As suggested by the two chapters devoted specifically to these topics (Chapters 8 and 9), these are critical activities in this particular heritage area, where this may be the last generation able to identify and save 18th century historic sites that remain. Education and research can support historic preservation in particular, and will also play out in heritage product development.
- **Community Planning:** This includes the entire range of community planning activities outside historic preservation, including recreation, open space planning and land conservation, and byway planning (see Chapter 10), plus community planning to support activities related to legacy and visitor service communities as described in Chapter 9. An alternative is to combine this activity with historic preservation, education, and research.

The vision for the Crossroads Association as the heritage area's management entity is that it largely provides context, ideas, leadership, assistance, and incentives for partners, but does not undertake "day to day" activities that support the heritage area – the activities that are the warp and woof of the heritage area are the responsibility of the partners, as discussed previously. That said, there are two important aspects of day-to-day action to be considered by the Association.

First, the roles of "critical friend" and "network manager" can often be expected to place the organization front and center in project development as "lead collaborator." For example, the organization's energy, ideas, and time are likely to be critical ingredients in the formulation and execution of a plan for the gateway sites' product development and marketing – one of the first activities expected under this plan. In fact, it is unlikely such planning and many other projects would be successful without the participation of the Association as "partner in chief," especially in the beginning when partners themselves are just getting the hang of what a heritage area can be and how they can participate and contribute. Such close collaboration will allow the Association's staff and board many "high touch" learning opportunities by "getting close to the customer." It will be important to pay close attention to such factors as learning curve, partner needs, and innovations that could be spread to other partners.

Second, the organization need not always take a behind-the-scenes role, standing behind the partners. This is particularly true in communications – the organization should expect to operate its own web site, for example, which would be in service of partners and the partnership system, to be sure, but largely if not completely independent of partner involvement in its operation. Partners might contribute information and links, but the Association is in charge of design and function. Fundraising is another area where autonomous action should be expected.

Currently, the Association employs a full-time executive director whose work is supplemented by occasional contractors and interns, and who is assisted by a contractual bookkeeper. Implementation of this management plan will require more staff, who can provide hours and expertise needed to implement the fundraising and communications plans and provide technical assistance to support partners' projects and help them develop greater capacity. Such technical assistance might include "circuit rider" experts (staff or contractual) encouraging networks among partners. It might also include training workshops, circulation of such information as best practices, and maintenance of on-line "clearinghouse" collections of useful information.

The recommended minimum level of staffing for this national heritage area after three years follows. This assumes temporary use of consulting services, even for some of the positions described, and phased-in hiring and staff growth through hiring first part-time and then expanding the position to full-time:

- **A full-time executive director**, responsible for reporting to the board and staffing organizational committees; working with the board to provide leadership in fundraising and being responsive to major funders; partner outreach; supervising fulfillment of the Association's all-critical financial, communications, and fundraising functions; and hiring and supervising staff and contractors.
- **A part- or full-time administrator** devoted to the organization's finances (including bookkeeping or oversight thereof and registration of donations), management of and reporting on incoming grants, and communications support (including the web site and management of contacts). Whether this position is part- or full-time could depend in part on to what extent this individual can also run the Association's grantmaking (from technical assistance to processing of applications and funds, to supervising grant project completions), thus freeing the full-time program manager for the rest of the process of building the heritage area.
- **A full-time development and marketing director**, responsible for development of both the long-range fundraising plan and the communications plan (as discussed above, each supports the other), and their implementation, including grant-writing, development of corporate support, oversight of enterprise activities, generating visibility for the Association and Crossroads, and more.
- **A full-time program manager** devoted to partner development, grantmaking, programs, support for board action committees, and working with contractors as appropriate, focusing on supporting interpretation and a wide range of community planning (with emphasis on the former and reliance for the latter on experienced partners); and
- **Contractual assistance** on an initial, temporary or ongoing basis to cover such needs as bookkeeping, development and implementation of the communications plan (including graphic design and web site development), development and implementation of the fundraising plan, training programs for board and partners, and provision of special assistance to build partners' programs and capacity. Contractual staffing makes limited, targeted, flexible use of individuals with a higher level of skill and experience without burdening the organization's payroll.

ACTION: Develop a staffing plan and hire staff to support implementation of the management plan, phasing staff growth consistent with available funds and cash flow as discussed below. *This is a critical, immediate need to be addressed by early action.*

11.6.2 Management Operating Budget [see separate submission]

11.7 Strategic Planning and Implementation

This management plan is designed to provide guidance to the Crossroads Association and heritage-area partners for a minimum of ten years. Like this management plan, a strategic plan is designed to meet the heritage area's goals, although strategic focus at a given time may dictate that some goals receive more attention. Approximately every three years, the organization should engage in strategic planning – key elements of the plan on which it is most important to focus at that time linked to general statements of strategy. Strategic plans are designed for adaptability – exact time frame, level of organizational focus and staffing, and details of actions to carry out strategies are left for staff planning.

This section provides strategic guidance for approximately the first 18 months to two years of implementation – up to mid-2013 – and provides the foundation for creating a strategic plan within that timeframe. The details of implementing actions in this plan, or strategies over time, are accomplished through annual work plans; the process of crafting and using work plans is also described below.

While maintaining focus on first-phase strategies and “big ideas,” the Association’s board and staff should also pursue many small steps toward a “visibility and service strategy” – achieving visibility and providing service to partners. Modest actions taken together can create “critical mass,” building interest on the part of partners, communities, and constituents that provides positive feedback in the process of building visibility and long-lasting relationships.

A word of caution: a heritage area and this management plan provide a broad canvas on which to “paint” many activities. There will be many demands on staff and Board time, attention, and funds that are not predicted here, yet easily could be justified by virtue of the broad goals and activities this plan describes. Use of strategic planning and work plans, and the careful establishment of criteria for partner development activities (technical and financial support, described in section 11.3.6) and for advocacy (described in section 11.2.3), are important ways to guard against being drawn into activities that take organizational resources away from programs that will achieve greatest impact (the greatest good for the greatest number of partners) and success over the long term.

11.7.1 Strategic Planning

There are six basic activities for the Association to pursue in startup: identity and branding; core interpretive activities; heritage tourism marketing; constituency communications and support; fundraising, development, and sustainability; and organizational strength. Each supports the other. For example, fundraising strengthens the organization (and vice versa); identity and branding are critical to marketing the heritage tourism experiences. Communications planning supports not only outreach to heritage-area constituents, but also fundraising, branding, and interpretation. Interpretation can benefit from such branding activities as consistent signage design – and so on.

Not only are these activities mutually self-supporting, but the order in which they are described here is somewhat arbitrary. Without a clear identity and well-designed interpretive experiences, marketing is not worth pursuing and fundraising will be difficult, nor will communications and outreach build needed visibility. Yet unless the organization raises funds and enhances its organizational capabilities (or rather, raises funds *so that* it can grow adequately), these other activities cannot be accomplished.

The order in which these strategies are presented, therefore, begins with two activities that are unique to the heritage-area concept, critical to the Crossroads mission, and critical for gaining public and funding support: region-wide identity and branding, and collaborative interpretation.

Strategy 1: Focus on Identity and Branding

Consistent visual identity and messaging comprise a “brand” that makes the Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area a known quantity – a “household word,” understood to possess qualities important to residents and visitors. These are critical steps affecting decisions about all manner of communications needed now – including public outreach and fundraising – and which later will guide development of a signage system called for in the next phase of the heritage area’s development:

- Develop a visual identity for consistent use throughout the heritage area.
- Develop a branding and messaging package to be adopted and used widely by all partners.

Strategy 2: Focus on Core Interpretive Activities

Story-telling through historic attractions and experiences, developed by virtue of many kinds of partnership, is the most critical activity of the heritage area as the public will experience it. Interpretation highlights the importance of historic resources, educates many audiences (including students), creates linkages that support community revitalization, and stirs community pride and interest. The National Park Service, which is authorized under the heritage area's federal legislation to provide support upon request, has been asked to provide interpretive support as a first priority. The most urgent and strategic activities to undertake in the first phase are these:

- With support from the Association and the National Park Service, form a working group of Crossroads interpretive sites to develop a collaborative plan for world class interpretation of New Jersey's Revolutionary War experience through their sites. This plan is called the "collaborative gateway interpretive plan," referring to primary participants, which are attractions that qualify as most-visitor ready (called "gateway interpretive sites") and which are either identified in Chapter 3 or are to be developed. Sites that are already identified should begin immediately; others can be added to this collaboration as they come on line. It is assumed that individual site development planning is a part of this effort. It is also assumed that the gateway interpretive sites will reach out to legacy communities and regional and local sites regardless of visitor readiness in order to build opportunities for deep exploration of regional stories.
- Be ready to respond to proposals for significant alterations in state ownership and management of critical Revolutionary era interpretive sites with a positive action program based on careful study.
- Identify a gateway interpretive site for the Lower Delaware River portion of the Crossroads Heritage Area.
- Improve individual websites for visitor gateway sites with information about the heritage area and links to the Crossroads website. (Also supports the heritage tourism marketing strategy below.)
- Create a memorandum of agreement between gateway interpretive sites for implementation of (1) the collaborative gateway interpretive plan and (2) individual development plans for their specific sites.
- Encourage self assessments of regional and local interpretive sites to determine how their individual site fits into the Crossroads interpretive presentation, ways in which site programming and operations can be coordinated with heritage area presentation, and ways that the heritage area can best promote and support site mission, programming, and operations. Self assessments of regional interpretive sites will also support planning for coordinating regional site interpretive presentation and visitor experience with that of Crossroads as a whole and with other regional partners.
- Establish a program of competitive matching grants to support partners' high priority activities, projects, and programs as generally described in this plan, including support of local interpretive sites and planning and implementation of storyline presentations.

Strategy 3: Prepare for Heritage Tourism Marketing

Until the "tourism product" envisioned under the interpretation strategy and the Crossroads brand/identity are further developed, Crossroads has little to market intensively to potential visitors beyond heritage area residents, who can be reached through the communications and outreach described next. During the first phase of implementation, while interpretive sites work toward the goal of creating a world class visitor experience, partners should take steps that will position them well for later development of a marketing plan and its implementation:

- Adopt a statement affirming the five principles of heritage tourism articulated by the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Heritage Tourism Program, tailored to the needs of Crossroads.
- Establish a Heritage Tourism Management Committee.
- Develop a comprehensive program of visitor research to support planning for interpretive presentations and marketing; design this program to include possibilities for marketing partnerships as described in section 11.3.6.
- Explore the opportunity to participate in "Visitors Count," a program managed by the American Association of State and Local History (AASLH).

Strategy 4: Build the Association's Communications and Outreach Capabilities; Build the Heritage Area's Presence through Visibility

Good communication is the companion to branding and excellent interpretation in the first phase of building a complete "Crossroads Presence." (Marketing, in the next phase, will reinforce these.) The Association, as the coordinating entity, must have a single, strong voice that is "on message" and engaged with the telling the public about its vision and goals:

- Develop and implement a comprehensive communications plan that anticipates, coordinates, and encompasses all of the heritage area's various communication needs. The development and implementation of a complete strategic communications plan with a wide range of techniques will build a presence for the Crossroads National Heritage Area among its target audiences at the local, regional, state, and federal levels.
- Establish committees with outside advisors to tend to key heritage-area interests. Plan for and implement the development of advisory bodies: a Heritage Tourism Management Committee and subcommittees on visitor gateways, marketing, visitor services, and evaluation (chapter/section 7.9.10); a Council of Scholars to advise on research (8.3.3); a Council of Educators to advise on issues related to primary and secondary education (8.5); a Preservation Committee to coordinate preservation initiatives (9.8.1); and an Advocacy Committee (9.8.2). Establish other committees that enable the Association to reach out to key stakeholders, especially those not associated with specific sites, such as re-enactors and legacy organizations.
- Through sponsorship and staff time, support highly visible partner activities related to the interpretation and commemoration of the American Revolution and its times, maintaining focus on the objective of building partnerships among multiple partners. In the first year, generate visibility in this way on a monthly basis, in combination with the Association's own activities.

Strategy 5: Build the Association's Sustainability through Fundraising and Development

The Association must raise the match for any federal support offered through the heritage area's authorizing legislation, and aims to leverage this base support with many times more that funding in investment made by partners or raised directly for the Association's use in furthering the development of the heritage area. "Development" is about building relationships, showing supporters year after year how the Association and heritage area can meet *supporters'* goals and deliver on their own:

- Form a fundraising/development committee.
- Create and implement a long-range development and fundraising plan. Establish and implement a development program to raise funds from federal, state, foundation, corporate, individual donor, and entrepreneurial sources. Pursue cooperative revenue-generating ventures with partners ("marketing partnerships").

Strategy 6: Build Organizational Strength to Lead Heritage Area Partners

Simply put, the Association's board and staff must grow to implement the management plan, in order to leverage the maximum advantage from the participation of many willing partners. From one full-time executive director and occasional contract assistance, as is the case now, the Association should grow its capabilities during the first phase to a point that it can provide the leadership implied in all preceding strategies, using the following steps:

- Undertake an evaluation of current representation on the board of directors and develop plans for expanding diversity and skill sets to support management plan implementation and fundraising.
- Revise and improve the existing organizational committee structure to support implementation of the management plan and organizational growth.
- Develop a staffing plan and hire staff to support implementation of the management plan, phasing staff growth to recognize available funds and cash flow.

11.7.2 Implementation

Implementation of the organization's selected programs requires yearly planning, based on the strategic plan, which is in turn based on the management plan. This section describes the tools and process for planning the organization's work.

Work Plan Elements

A short document (one to two pages) should be produced for each project or program as it is being planned. Such a document is a communications tool that enables discussion and decision-making as the project is created, and provides for all involved a baseline understanding of the project as it moves forward, to support later evaluation. The following list comprises elements of analysis needed in establishing specific programs.

- Project short title;
- Project description;
- Board committee responsible for oversight;
- Partner(s) and roles;
- Cost;
- Staff hours;
- Specific objective(s);
- How this project supports management plan goals and activities;
- Project steps and timeframe;
- Performance measures;
- Primary mission activity/ies;
- Supported mission activity/ies; and
- Related management plan goal(s).

An example of a convenient project-development form organizing these points appears in Figure 11.xxx.

Critical Questions for Executive Review

The following list provides critical questions that would be asked by the board of directors as a project is conceived and undertaken. (If a board committee for strategic planning is formed, that committee could provide preliminary review and lead discussion.)

- Is the project clearly defined and related to the core mission, vision, goals, and plan?
- Does the project fit with the core competencies of staff?
- Do the resources exist to support the project at the level it requires?

- Will the project effectively and efficiently achieve the goals and vision, and carry out the mission and the plan? (Project design.)
- Will the project advance or mesh well with other projects?
- Can a partner or other agency/organization do this project better?
- Is success well defined?
- What are the opportunity costs? (What are we not doing or what will we choose not to do because we are undertaking this project?)

Critical Questions for Committee Review

- For those board committees responsible for project approval and review, here are questions:
- Is the project well designed? (That is, are objectives, partners, partners' roles, steps, and performance measures clearly and effectively defined?)
- What level of board involvement and reporting to the board by the committee is required?
- What level of staff reporting to the committee is required?
- Can any board members undertake specific roles in support of this project?
- Can the committee support and lead discussion of this project before the board? (And before a committee responsible for strategic planning if so desired.)

Staff Involvement & Reporting

In general, staff designs a project and carries it out. This enables a committee and the board to review the project and be involved at agreed-upon levels. Staff should fully explain project development in seeking approval and be ready with answers to committee and board questions concerning

- Implementation and goals; and
- The project's relation to the strategic plan.

Staff are to be the administrators and executors. Within the confines of generally understood lines of authority (specifically negotiated project by project where needed), staff should be given free range to accomplish their work. Ordinary reporting should be confined to committee discussions and distributed in writing (digitally) to limit the amount of discussion time required in committee and board meetings. Board meetings can then focus on progress on the overall mission, vision, and goals.

11.7.3 Evaluation

As a keeper of public funding, the Crossroads Association must meet a high standard of public trust. A part of this responsibility is to explain not only how funds were spent, but the results of that spending. Careful evaluation is the standard. Evaluation is defined as "systematic determination of merit, worth, and significance of something or someone using criteria against a set of standards." It is a process familiar to many employees as a part of their "annual review" conducted by their supervisors. The key is not simply the review, but also the standards by which that review is conducted. The capability and standards for evaluation should be built into the Association's staffing and program design.

Annual reporting is required for heritage areas (see sidebar). The more rigorous concept of evaluation, however, is an evolving practice for coordinating entities. It is expected that periodic evaluation will become a routine part of heritage area managing entities' reporting, and indeed, 14 heritage areas designated or whose legislation was amended in 2009 had an evaluation requirement built into their legislation (see sidebar). Federal legislation establishing this evaluation requirement focuses on two standards in assessing progress, the purposes of the authorizing legislation, and the goals and objectives of the management plan. It asks for analysis of investment by various sources and the impact of that investment, and a review of the "management structure, partnership relationships, and funding" in order to identify "the critical components for sustainability of the Heritage Area." ("Sustainability," it should be

noted, is not defined anywhere in the 2009 law, for heritage areas or any other entities affected by that law.)

From current National Park Service practice (detailed more below), it is clear that the Association should prepare for evaluation by setting measurable objectives for its programs, monitoring progress in meeting those objectives, and periodically assembling documentation of program results. A general evaluation process established by the National Park Service can be expected to ask whether the heritage area and its managing entity have met the goals in this management plan (which in the case of this plan, are also correlated to the purposes in the legislation). Strategic planning, work planning, and performance evaluation should be keyed to this plan to ease the process of comparing intentions to results. The evaluation process for this heritage area should be applied using readily-understood performance standards and should be based on data that is simple to collect, using a monitoring process that does not add an undue burden to a small staff.

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SIDEBAR: Annual Reporting Required of National Heritage Areas and Crossroads

The typical language for the duties of the “local coordinating entity” for a national heritage area named in 2009 included the following description of an annual report:

- (B) submit an annual report to the Secretary for each fiscal year for which the local coordinating entity receives Federal funds under this section, specifying—
 - (i) the specific performance goals and accomplishments of the local coordinating entity;
 - (ii) the expenses and income of the local coordinating entity;
 - (iii) the amounts and sources of matching funds;
 - (iv) the amounts leveraged with Federal funds and sources of the leveraged funds; and
 - (v) grants made to any other entities during the fiscal year.

(From the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009, Title VIII, affecting 14 of the 49 nationally designated heritage areas)

This language is more likely to be the general standard set by the National Park Service’s national office serving national heritage areas than the language found in the 2006 law establishing the Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area (PL 109–338, 297E(b)), which should be considered the most basic requirement for Crossroads and reads as follows:

- (4) for any fiscal year for which Federal funds are received under this subtitle—
 - (A) submit to the Secretary a report that describes for the year—
 - (i) the accomplishments of the local coordinating entity;
 - (ii) the expenses and income of the local coordinating entity; and
 - (iii) each entity to which a grant was made.

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SIDEBAR: Typical Evaluation Language for a Heritage Area in 2009 Federal Legislation

- (d) EVALUATION; REPORT.—
 - (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 3 years before the date on which authority for Federal funding terminates for the Heritage Area under this section, the Secretary shall—
 - (A) conduct an evaluation of the accomplishments of the Heritage Area; and
 - (B) prepare a report in accordance with paragraph (3).
 - (2) EVALUATION.—An evaluation conducted under paragraph (1)(A) shall—
 - (A) assess the progress of the local coordinating entity with respect to—
 - (i) accomplishing the purposes of the authorizing legislation for the Heritage Area; and

- (ii) achieving the goals and objectives of the approved management plan for the Heritage Area;
 - (B) analyze the Federal, State, tribal, local, and private investments in the Heritage Area to determine the impact of the investments; and
 - (C) review the management structure, partnership relationships, and funding of the Heritage Area for purposes of identifying the critical components for sustainability of the Heritage Area.
- (3) REPORT.—Based on the evaluation conducted under paragraph (1)(A), the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate and the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives a report that includes recommendations for the future role of the National Park Service, if any, with respect to the Heritage Area.

(From the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009, Title VIII, affecting 14 of the 49 nationally designated heritage areas)

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The National Park Service Demonstration Evaluations

In recent years, the National Park Service has begun developing an evaluation procedure applicable to heritage areas, as the result of a request of the Congress for evaluation of nine national heritage areas reauthorized in 2008. As of this writing, the park service has not yet published the results of three demonstration evaluations of the Essex National Heritage Area (MA), the Augusta Canal National Heritage Area (GA), and the Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area (IA). It has, however, released basic information about evaluation approach and design.

The National Park Service's demonstration evaluations were designed to answer the following questions:

- Based on its authorizing legislation and general management plan, has the Heritage Area achieved its proposed accomplishments?
- What have been the impacts of investments made by Federal, State, Tribal and local government and private entities?
- How do the Heritage Areas management structure partnership relationships and current funding contribute to its sustainability?

The design for the demonstration evaluations relied on interviews (individual and group) with “key informants from the coordinating/management entity and partner organizations, and community stakeholders”; and in-depth data collection with comparisons to multiple sources (“triangulated”). The approach used a case study design, examining each heritage area individually to “ensure that it is relevant to all and is grounded in the local knowledge of the site as well as designed to meet legislative requirements.” The evaluator was not hired by the heritage area, but by the National Park Service, in order to avoid any appearance of bias, but “perspectives of CPM, the NPS Working Group, the NPS Expert Panel, the NPS Comptroller, the NPS liaison with each heritage area, and NHA leadership and community partners” are all valued as part of the evaluation.

The evaluation design also used a “logic model,” a visual representation of the:

- Overarching goal for a National Heritage Area (NHA);
- Resources and key partnerships available to help an NHA accomplish its goals;
- Activities and strategies that are being implemented to accomplish the NHA goal;
- Intended short and long -term outcomes; and
- The linkages among the activities, strategies, and outcomes.

If this evaluation procedure is applied in the future to other heritage areas, each heritage area will see a summary of these points organized into a chart.

Finally, the evaluation design called for an intensive analysis of sources to guide the gathering of information to answer the three basic evaluation questions, in the form of a matrix. The left-hand side of the matrix lists the key domains (topics) and measures, cross-walked with the potential data sources listed across the top (see Figure 11.xxx). The sources for data collection include: existing NHA documentation, including foundational and financial documents; interviews with NHA staff and key partners; and input from citizens in the NHA community. Review of “foundational” documents includes a review of:

- Legislation – all federal, state and/or local legislation that provides the legal framework for the NHA;
- Plans – all planning documents, including updates, developed by the coordinating entity and/or partners that are intended to deliver the legal mandates defined by Congress and/or other legislative bodies; and
- Legal documents – documents signed by the coordinating entity that allow it to conduct/produce routine NHA business.

Other documents that may provide information are:

- Guides – documents designed to define how NHA business operates;
- Annual financial statements and reports – includes audits, tax returns, budget activities and performance program reports;
- Annual reports - includes reports to Congress, to partners and to the NPS and others
- Organizational structure and operations – how the coordinating entity, board(s) and committees do NHA work, their roles and functions; and
- Key milestones – a timeline of major events that document the evolution of the NHA to include outside influences affecting your planning and implementation process.

(Source for this section: Westat (NPS contract evaluator), Augusta Canal and Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area Evaluation Methodology, distributed to national heritage areas in July of 2010.)

Baseline

Measuring impacts of a heritage area is a challenging process. While several procedures exist that may be helpful, none have proven completely satisfactory. It is difficult to separate the impacts of the heritage area from other influences in the region, economic or otherwise, and in general it is more difficult to measure multi-site regions than single sites. Data collection can also be challenging. As work plans are put in place with measures for progress, it would be helpful for Association staff to study the most recent of such “impact models” to see what data collection has proven useful and how it was done, especially those applied by heritage areas (both national and state) and scenic byways.³ It may be possible to collect some data (probably not all) on an ongoing basis, rather than the more expensive way, hiring consultants to perform specific studies.

³ The Alliance of National Heritage Areas and the National Park Service national office can assist in reviewing the most current models and the most recent experience in their application. A recent model offered by the National Scenic Byway program may be a helpful guide drawn from outside the NHA “family,” done in cooperation with the Minnesota Tourism Center, *Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway: Awareness, Impact on Quality of Life & Economy* (http://www.tourism.umn.edu/prod/groups/cfans/@pub/@cfans/@tourism/documents/asset/cfans_asset_290645.pdf)

In any case, it is helpful to start with baseline information – information about the status of conditions prior to the institution of the national heritage area. Two surveys specific to the heritage area exist. During management planning, the Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area conducted an in-depth survey of the needs and concerns of its interpretive attractions, using a computerized process developed, implemented, and analyzed by the Monmouth University Polling Institute. The institute later conducted a statewide survey of New Jersey residents' awareness of the American Revolution. Both of these surveys should provide helpful baseline data, and may also provide model questions to be repeated over time.

ACTION: Build the capability and standards for evaluation into the Association's program design and work planning, closely following evolving national standards for standards, measures, and data collection.

ACTION: Use the Crossroads work planning and annual report cycle as an opportunity to compile data and documentation on a routine basis.

ACTION: Use evaluation processes to monitor progress on and improve individual programs.

SIDEBAR: What Makes Heritage Area Management Distinctive?

Like land trusts, heritage area “management entities” (sometimes called “local coordinating entities”) are organizations that are evolving a special identity within the world of nongovernmental organizations (or quasi-governmental, in some cases). While in many respects they operate as do many nonprofit organizations, here are some of the distinctive features of these highly specialized organizations:

- **Board structure** generally reflects the diversity of a heritage area both geographically and demographically. Many heritage areas also establish specific ex officio “seats,” some with voting rights, for particular institutions (academic, governmental, interpretive, etc.).
- **Organizational structure** is often simply understood as nonprofit or governmental. Behind the scenes, however, it can be more complicated. The Delaware & Lehigh Canal National Heritage Corridor, for example, has actually been two organizations for many years constituted to take advantage of the federal status of its official commission, yet provide flexibility for operations through a companion nonprofit organization. Multiple organizations are not uncommon in the somewhat similar world of economic development, often to take advantage of different governmental funding programs – the same board generally serves all of the organizations. Separate “friends” and advocacy groups may provide additional support in some cases.
- **Staffing usually includes a direct relationship with the National Park Service**, which either provides staff (less common) or makes sure that one or more National Park System units provide support of various kinds. This can be everything from providing guided tours through the heritage area outside the park (Fort McHenry does this for Baltimore) to overseeing contracts.
- **A management plan provides a baseline** for developing work plans, budgets, evaluation protocols, and annual reports or “report cards” on management plan progress. Although similar to any nonprofit organization’s strategic plan, these plans are generally much more detailed about programs and responsibilities and provide guidance for periodic strategic planning.
- **The expectation of partnering.** Being an “institution serving institutions” calls for a different approach to many functions, from fundraising and sharing credit to involvement of partners on a regular basis in organizational programs. The expectation is that heritage area’s management plan is a plan for all parties, not simply the heritage area management entity. Therefore, it is incumbent on the organization to be a skillful manager of relationships with a wide variety of partners (and stakeholders), from all-volunteer interpretive sites to powerful state agencies.
- **Financial management can be crucial**; as with many nonprofits, grants management is a key skill. However, many **heritage areas pass a portion of their funds on to their partners** in the form of grants or cooperative agreements. This calls for an even higher order of administrative capacity in a specialized area.
- Management entity incorporation and/or bylaw documents according to state law need to reflect **certain specific powers** concerning:
 - Property ownership (land, buildings, easements);
 - Revolving property trust (buying buildings/land and re-selling to conservation owners);
 - Revolving loan funds; and
 - The ability to re-grant funds to others.
- Depending on the specific federal legislation applying to each National Heritage Area, the organization may also have one specific, quasi-governmental power, that of being a **consulting party or reviewer with power to affect or comment on federal actions that affect the heritage area** as identified in the management plan. This is designed to encourage federal actions to be congruent with a heritage area’s plan. This can be the

basis for intervention in controversial cases and can demand much staff time and board attention.

(Credit: A. Elizabeth Watson, AICP, Heritage Strategies, LLC; adapted from an article produced for the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor's 2010 strategic planning project)

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SIDEBAR: Embracing Diversity - Why and How

WHY:

- To fully develop the organization's response to the needs of its community as articulated in its mission and affirmed in its institutional plan.
- To identify creative opportunities for competitive positioning in a dynamic world with ever increasing community implication.
- To reach out, cultivate and develop a broader audience for continued relevancy and long-term sustainability.

HOW:

- Organizational Planning
- Affirm institutional mission and clarify the current vision.
- Who are your stakeholders, communities, or persons of interest?
- Articulate institutional priorities and plans.
- Do you have a strategic plan?
- Has the institutional plan been broadly communicated both internally and externally?
-
- Governance and Leadership
- What is the existing governance and institutional leadership structure?
- Is the board properly aligned with the mission and vision of the organization?
- Are there gaps between the organizational plans and the governance and leadership talents, skills and resources needed for implementation?
- Have you developed a plan of action to fill these gaps? Diversity Plan?
- Have you developed a communication strategy for this diversity plan?
- Have you developed a diversity management plan for ongoing monitoring your efforts and progress?
- Programs
- Is there staff awareness of institutional mission, vision, and commitment to your communities?
- Are programming objectives consistent with organizational plans and priorities?
- What are the challenges to accomplishing the stated programming objectives?
- Does the program development and/or implementation plan involve the community or end users in any way?
- Is there a mechanism for continuous program assessment?

CREDIT: Mrs. Meme Omogbai, Assistant Treasurer and Chief Operating Officer, Newark Museum; presented May 12, 2009, at the New Jersey Historic Preservation Annual Conference, Glassboro, NJ.

SIDEBAR: Time as a Critical Ingredient for Sustained Success in a National Heritage Area

“Passage of time influences the [John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor] system in several ways. First, it takes time to build a complex partnership system over a large, diverse region. It also takes time to create a strong, sustainable system because partner capacities vary and partner relationships rely upon trust and effective communication to carry out joint projects successfully. Second, in a partnership system such as the Blackstone National Heritage Corridor, there is a strategic sequencing to the projects, with early projects setting the stage for later work. Necessary first steps are education and raising awareness as well as building the “identity infrastructure” of signs and interpretive exhibitry, community visioning workshops, and special events and tours. Third, time is required to build partner capacity and secure the needed funding that will lead to sustainability. In such a system where time plays a critical role, patience and flexibility are also key to sustaining success.

“All of these are part of a maturation process in the partnership network—a growing sophistication and complexity that evolves over time. As accomplishments are achieved and the relationships in the system become more robust, the threshold for what is possible is raised and more challenging, complex efforts can be undertaken. A maturing partnership system, such as that of the Corridor, brings with it a need for increasing specialization, technical expertise, and capacity building in order to sustain the momentum and the partner energy. Maturation may also change the nature of the Commission-partner relationship, with partners taking on greater leadership over time. This can open the door to further learning and strengthening of the network.

“Thinking about the Corridor as a partnership system operating within the realities of a living landscape begins to redefine the Corridor effort—not as a set of projects, but as a frame of mind and a way of living and working that revolves around the nationally significant resources of the Blackstone Valley and the opportunities those resources present. This means that management concerns such as providing ongoing vision, leadership, and capacity building are critical to sustaining success in the Corridor. Thus, the sustainability of the Corridor’s partnership system in part requires a management entity that works in a process-oriented way, which is an important consideration for the management structure that will take the Corridor into the future.” (Blackstone, p. 61)

Jacquelyn L. Tuxill and Nora J. Mitchell, eds. *Reflecting on the Past, Looking to the Future: Sustainability Study Report for the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor. A Technical Assistance Report from the NPS Conservation Study Institute to the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission.* Woodstock, Vermont: Conservation Study Institute, 2005.

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FIGURE 11.xxx Crossroads Association Project Planning Sheet [Note: this form is intended for conversion to a computerized Microsoft Word form to be filled out in Word 2007; ideally, this is a two-page document printed front-and-back; use of a computerized form will make the length indeterminate, and possibly shorter]

Crossroads Association Project Planning Sheet, page 1 of __

Project short title:		Project description:	
Board committee responsible for oversight:	Staff hours (circle one: per year/per project):	Cost (circle one: per year/per project):	
Specific objective(s):			
How this project supports management plan goals and activities:			
Partner(s) & roles:			
Project steps & timeframe:		Performance measures:	Monitoring/progress notes:

Page __ of __

Project short title:		Project description:	
Primary mission activity/ies: [dropdown list – user will check]	Supported mission activity/ies: [dropdown list – user will check]	Related management plan goal(s): [dropdown list – user will check]	Notes

Continuation Sheet, page __ of __

Project short title:	Project description:	
Project steps & timeframe:		Notes

FIGURE 11.xxx Sample Protocol for Data Collection for NPS Evaluation of National Heritage Areas**Domain and Source Crosswalk**

Research Question, Domains, Measures	NHA Management Interviews	Partner Network Interviews	Community Input	Plans, Legal Documents	NHA Guides, Brochures, Websites, Other Documents	Financial Data Forms
Evaluation Q.1: Has the NHA coordinating entity accomplished the purposes of the authorizing legislation and achieved the goals and objectives of the management plan?						
Heritage Programming, Interpretation and Education – Activities and programs that foster public support and appreciation for the NHA site and tell the story of its natural, historical and cultural significance to our nation						
Nature of NHA activities						
Description of programming, interpretation and education activities	x	x		x	x	
Description of activities that were initially not intended	x	x		x	x	
Implementation of each activity						
Role of the coordinating entity	x	x		x	x	
Role of NHA administrative staff	x	x		x	x	
Role of the partnership network	x	x		x	x	
Role of the local community	x	x	x	x	x	
Impact of activities						
Engagement of residents and visitors (# served/involved/affected)	x	x	x			
Increased understanding, awareness and appreciation of NHA resources and stories		x	x			

1

Version 08/10/2010

Source: Westat (NPS contract evaluator), Augusta Canal and Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area Evaluation Methodology, July 2010.

FIGURE CAPTION: The “Domain and Source Crosswalk” (matrix) organizes an evaluation procedure applied to three national heritage areas by research question (dark blue, left column) and domain, or topic. The most general topic appears in the light blue row, with more specific topics and measures (where applicable) shown in the white portion of the left column. Sources of information to be gathered are shown in the dark blue row across the top. X’s indicate the expectation that the source will be able to provide data for the topics or measures.

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