

CHAPTER SEVEN: PARTNERSHIP NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES



INTRODUCTION

The use of partnerships has been stressed throughout this document as a cornerstone upon which the BRNHA as an organization has been built and is to be maintained and upon which the successful execution of its programmatic strategies and actions depends. Without the support and participation of key partners, the potential that the Heritage Area designation holds for Western North Carolina will not materialize. It is the responsibility of the BRNHA Board and staff to identify the partners it needs for different management objectives, cultivate and sustain those relationships over the long term, build the teams it needs from among these partners, and coordinate concerted efforts toward fulfillment of the BRNHA mission. A number of these partnerships are already well established.

Chapter 2 set forth a preferred management approach. The goals and objectives described therein establish strategic intent. The listed strategies and actions provide statements of how those goals and objectives will be pursued. Chapter 7 describes prospective organizations that will be needed to help implement these activities. The information herein is provided with the caveat that it is impossible to reference at this point in time all organizations that may be needed to help the BRNHA accomplish its aims. Organizations listed in this chapter represent a starting point from which BRNHA may elect to expand over time as needs and opportunities present themselves. An organizational chart is presented in Figure 7-1 that graphically illustrates the relationships within the context of the BRNHA among some of the different partners described below.

BRNHA BOARD

It is expected that Board appointment responsibilities over the next 10 years will remain with those organizations listed in the authorizing legislation. They include the Governor of North Carolina, AdvantageWest Economic Development Group, Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians, Education and Research Consortium, and HandMade in America. As current members' terms expire, those holding the power of appointment will need to assess the distribution of Board membership to ensure that each of the preservation, interpretation, and development goals are well represented. In addition to having fiduciary responsibilities and exercising ultimate oversight of the BRNHA, Board members can expect to participate in various committees intended to support both organizational vision and management.

BRNHA STAFF

The BRNHA staff is currently comprised of four full time individuals, including an Executive Director, administrative assistant, director of programs, and volunteer coordinator. Various individuals assist as needed on a part-time basis and in sub-contract relationships. Over the next 10 years, it is expected that this framework will largely remain the same. However, the management approach charted in Chapter 2 will require a portion of someone's time to coordinate the Preservation Task Force and network with potential grant funders. While these tasks may in the immediacy be delegated to an existing staff member, the BRNHA may consider hiring another person to maximize the potential that the PTF could deliver.

Of critical importance is the central coordinating and facilitating role that BRNHA provides. The interactions between all of the different partners identified in this chapter would simply not occur and potential partnerships would not materialize without a competent Executive Director and Staff to gather and arrange all these moving parts such that effective action can occur.

NC DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE - DIVISION OF TOURISM, FILM, & SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

The partnership with NCDC-DTFSD is important on a variety of fronts and is expected to remain so. This partnership with the State of North Carolina has a financial value of over \$200,000 annually, which can often be used as a match to leverage federal funding and other private foundational dollars. NCDC brings much needed expertise and ideas on marketing and promotions. Additionally, the heritage tourism officers provide a dedicated conduit for interaction with local heritage councils, the three regional Host Groups, local governments, nonprofit organizations, and the general public. While the services of the tourism officers are directed by the State, the BRNHA does utilize 40% of their time on Western North Carolina heritage related activities guided by the BRNHA's Executive Director.

LOCAL HERITAGE COUNCILS

A local heritage council exists in each of the 25 counties and on the Qualla Boundary. Communication flows from the councils to the BRNHA and vice-versa. Communication flows through both heritage tourism officers described above and through interactions with various BRNHA staff. Each council has provided a heritage development plan that identifies important heritage resources in their local communities and local priorities for heritage based development. It is expected that these plans will inform the BRNHA of some projects to be undertaken over the next 10 years in support of the goals and objectives discussed in Chapter 2. The BRNHA will review these plans, identify potential projects, and at its discretion select those that best fit its management approach. While the organizational chart depicted in Figure 7-1 does not illustrate a direct connection between the councils and the Preservation Task Force (PTF), substantial communication exchange is expected. It is intended that the PTF would help local councils develop good proposals for heritage preservation.

REGIONAL HOST GROUPS

There are three public-private partnership organizations in Western North Carolina focused primarily on promoting tourism in the region. These organizations are known as the Blue Ridge, High Country, and Smoky Mountain host groups. Each organization contains tourism officers from the various counties in the BRNHA and representatives from private tourism based businesses and other tourism oriented organizations in the region. Members of the different host groups are expected to fulfill a vital role at the organizational level where they may contribute to strategic planning and program development, and at the operational level where they can help develop project ideas and implementation partners. While it would seem intuitive to expect host group contributions primarily on the heritage development goal, certain persons would also have valuable input pertaining to the interpretation and preservation goals as well.

PRESERVATION TASK FORCE

Table 2-12 provides a prospective list of organizations that would enhance the capabilities of a Preservation Task Force (PTF). An ideal PTF would be comprised of one state agency and one private organization member per heritage theme in addition to at-large members representing the National Park Service, National Forests in North Carolina, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and Natural Resources Conservation Service. These were identified because they have professionals on staff that are well acquainted with heritage preservation needs that cut across all heritage themes in Western North Carolina and are knowledgeable of government and private funding sources. Many of the organizations also have a strong presence in local communities throughout the Heritage Area. None of the organizations identified have committed to this role as of the publication date for this plan. In addition to these organizations, involvement would also be sought from at least one member of the Board and local heritage councils. The gold boxes and stars in Figure 7-1 show where BRNHA will recruit involvement. The coordination of the PTF is currently delegated to the Executive Director who, at his discretion, may delegate that role to someone else.

The purpose of the PTF is threefold: 1) identify and help construct strategies at the organizational level that address heritage preservation needs; 2) network and enable effective fundraising with agencies, state trust funds, and private foundations that support heritage preservation; and 3) communicate with local councils and other implementation partners to help build good heritage preservation projects that will fulfill the BRNHA mission and hold significant appeal to other funders that will be sought for matching contributions. Members of the PTF should be made aware of the responsibilities and time commitments that will be placed on them in this role - but also of the awesome possibilities before them to help in a very significant way to preserve important heritage resources in the region.

OTHER IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

Relationships will need to be developed with all levels of government (federal, state, local), non-profit organizations, private for-profit organizations, and even individuals on a strategic basis to help carry out the mission of the BRNHA through the execution of ground level actions. A number of potential local implementation partners exist in the heritage councils, in the PTF, and on the Board. Many others have been identified in Appendix 3. Still other possible partners remain undefined. It will be up to the Board and staff of the BRNHA to identify implementation partners best suited to successfully execute these and other action items. The Board and staff will seek input from local heritage councils, heritage tourism officers, and the PTF as they make these decisions.

OTHER SUPPORTERS

Other current and past supporters with financial or in-kind contributions to the BRNHA include:

- North Carolina General Assembly
- North Carolina Department of Transportation
- Cherokee Preservation Foundation

- Golden Leaf Foundation
- Z Smith Reynolds Foundation
- Progress Energy
- Western Carolina University
- McGill Associates
- Equinox Environmental
- New River Community Partners

It is the intention of this plan that relationships with these organizations be sustained.

INTERAGENCY COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS

A need exists to establish more formalized interagency cooperative agreements among some key partners. There are benefits to be gained from memoranda of understanding or other such formalized agreements. These establish longer term commitments with specified roles and responsibilities. They are essential in helping BRNHA understand what it can expect from certain partners as it plans and prepares for the next 10 years of effort. For example: the agreement with the NC Department of Commerce (NCDC) has been instrumental over the past three years in helping BRNHA on a number of fronts. BRNHA has been able to count on the heritage tourism officers for routine outreach with local councils and for sponsoring some programmatic initiatives such as the ‘marketing boot camps’. The expectation that they will continue to serve in this capacity into the foreseeable future provides a tremendous sense of relief to the management of the BRNHA. Such agreements should not necessarily be restricted to public agency cooperation, however. There are a number of private non-profit and for-profit corporations who also stand to benefit from the relationship with BRNHA and would consider entering into this type of agreement. Solidifying organizations’ membership into the PTF is one immediate activity that could benefit from cooperative agreements.

Figure 7-1:
Organizational Chart for BRNHA

