

## Navigator's Report October, 2012

### Criteria for Funding Heritage Projects

What is heritage? It's something of the past that is still alive. It has messages to give. It has ideas to give. It has forms and sounds to give.

The primary reason to preserve heritage is "who cares?". Who cares about the old building, boat or beach? How and why is the community involved with this heritage object? Not just the next-door neighbors, but the total spectrum of the community. Are they aware, are they involved with this heritage project?

Will this project become an asset to the community? How? Will it become a cultural or spiritual asset? Will there be skills transferred there? Technical skills, social skills. Will lives be changed by having it preserved? Will it be a hangout for kids? For seniors? Will it be a good place for a cheap date? It is not enough to save something simply because it is old or was always there.

Projects should be rated by their grassroots support.

Projects should be rated on their private/public partnerships. Have the resources of government and non-profits been cooperatively melded?

Is the project accessible for the able-bodied and the disabled, for the wealthy and the disadvantaged? Are the minority cultural elements of the community involved?

What is the organization's record on getting things done?

In what condition do they keep their collections?

What is their public-benefitting track record?

How sound is their financial plan for the project?

If it's a structure, what about its ongoing maintenance? How easy it is to raise money to build a tall ship replica. How hard it is to raise money to keep it sailing.

How will the project pass on its essential experience? Will we know how it was built, how it was used, how it related to its culture? For example, if the project is saving a tribal site, will the tribe use the site to preserve their ceremonies, chants, drumming? If it's an historic boatyard, will traditional boats be built there? Will people learn the old skills by doing them? Will there be the sound of a plane shaving a plank, the smell of cedar sawdust?

Preserving the experience is more challenging and longer-lasting than preserving the thing.

And about the phrase "long-lasting": is there a youth program involved in the project? It makes sense because it's cost-effective. Kids live longer than us.

Public money and private charitable resources are besieged by good causes needing support. Our instincts tell us to take care of the social needs first. Heritage projects can and should meet social needs. Through heritage collections, we can find examples of great art, fine craftsmanship, ingenious inventions created by the disadvantaged; we can learn of disadvantaged people who have accomplished deeds of courage and endurance that have left lasting human benefits.

Heritage can and should be a spiritually renewing, confidence giving, inspirational source that is a constant theme in our lives. Projects that acknowledge and embrace this theme should be supported. - **Dick Wagner**