

To receive email from Bethany Hawkins, add hawkins@aaslh.org to your [safe sender list](#)

[View as Web Page](#)

[Send to a History Lover](#)

[American Association for State and Local History](#)

American Association for State and Local History

Big Ideas for Small Museums

THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE AASLH SMALL MUSEUMS AFFINITY GROUP

Volume 3, April 2011

To view past issues, visit the [AASLH Small Museums](#) webpage.

You Can't Always Get What You Want?

By David Anderson, Executive Director, Creek Council House Museum

The bad boys of rock-n-roll, The Rolling Stones, touched on one of the most basic ways to analyze partnerships when they wrote, "You can't always get what you want, but if you try sometimes you might find, you get what you need."

Why should you analyze partnerships on a *needs vs. wants* model? Because the human drive to attain what we want can overshadow even our basic needs. Even to the point of becoming a threat to survival. A personal example is that I smoke. Some would suggest that my need to smoke is because of an addiction. Correctly identifying needs and wants are critical. My actual need is to quit smoking. Why do I still smoke? I smoke because I want to smoke. Thousands of people have quit. I can quit. Yet, I continue to smoke. It may even kill me. My want overrides my need.

When evaluating a potential partnership or in reviewing current partnerships, an organization's *needs* are the easier of the two to recognize. They are the basic issues related to an organization's survival and can be identified through financial statements -- are they financially sound enough to continue operation, and in the case of nonprofits through their long-range plans -- can they provide their defined services to the public. An organization's *wants* are not usually stated and are, most often, personality driven. Therefore, they require a more in-depth look into the culture and personalities operating the organization.

In 1997 the nonprofit museum association that employs me owned the collections and our city owned the historic building that housed the museum. The city employed the staff and the nonprofit tried to operate the museum with a staff that it didn't employ. The situation deteriorated until it was unworkable. Neither side would even talk to other. A few far-sighted board members decided to look at the needs and wants of both organizations. It became clear that the museum needed funding and wanted control of the museum's direction. The city needed to keep the museum open because of public support, but did not believe that a city should operate a museum. So, the museum proposed a management agreement whereby the city's involvement with the

Big Ideas for Small Museum is a quarterly email just for people who work in small museums. Through this publication, the AASLH Small Museums Committee shares resources that are pre-tested and approved by actual small museum professionals. The articles are brief and practical - giving you the shortcuts you need when don't have enough time, money, or people.

AASLH Resources

To sign up to receive Big Ideas for Small Museums, join the AASLH Small Museums Affinity Group. The Affinity Group is not a membership organization and there is no fee to join. Go to the [Small Museums](#) webpage and click on "Join the Small Museums Affinity Group" at the top.



museum would be to simply write a check each month. While this satisfied the museum's needs and wants, it only satisfied the city's need. Thirteen years later, the city sold the historic building that housed the museum to another entity that would continue to operate the museum. It finally satisfied its want.

You don't have to be a "Bad Boy" to understand that we have the need to survive and an even stronger desire to achieve what we want.

RESOURCES:

Wikipedia has an article under NEED. It discusses understanding needs and wants as an issue in the fields of [politics](#), [social science](#), and [philosophy](#). <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Need>

On the **Learning to Give** website is a paper entitled "Definition of Want vs. Need" by Lorren Clark. It details the role for-profit and not-for-profits play in delivering the "wants" and "needs" of the United States population as addressed from an economic theory perspective. <http://learningtogive.org/papers/paper19.html>

The **National Center on Nonprofit Enterprise** helps nonprofit organizations make wise economic decisions to efficiently and effectively pursue their social missions. www.nationalcne.org

Guidestar is place to get information about charities. The group is not a watchdog, but maintains a database of information on 1.7 million IRS-recognized nonprofits. You can search for a nonprofit at the site, find information, and even donate directly through GuideStar. www.guidestar.org

The **National Council of Nonprofits**, the nation's largest nonprofit network, works through its member state associations to amplify the voices of America's local community-based nonprofit organizations, help them engage in critical policy issues affecting the sector, manage and lead more effectively, collaborate and exchange solutions, and achieve greater impact in their communities www.councilofnonprofits.org

AAM Museum Assessment Program (MAP) is a peer review program designed to help museums assess their strengths and weaknesses, and plan for the future. The Leadership and Governance Assessment helps the museum leadership and governing authority examine their structure, roles, and responsibilities to enhance their ability to advance the museum's mission and planning. www.aam-us.org/museumresources/map/index.cfm

BoardSource is the primary source for information on nonprofit boards. It provides workshops, training, assessment tools, an extensive website, governance consultants, publications and CDs, and webinars. www.boardsource.org

-

About *Big Ideas for Small Museums*

Please feel free to forward this email to colleagues. For more Small Museum Committee resources, including the full Resource List, visit www.aaslh.org/SmallMuseums.htm.

To sign up to receive **Big Ideas for Small Museums**, join the AASLH Small Museums Affinity Group. **The Affinity Group is not a membership organization and there is no fee to join.** Go to www.aaslh.org/SmallMuseums.htm and click on "Join the Small Museums Affinity Group" link at the top of the page.



JOIN AASLH TODAY!

Not an **AASLH** member? Check out benefits that our members enjoy. **AASLH** is the ONLY national organization dedicated to the field of state and local history. It is a membership association - A home for institutions and people who work in the field of state and local history. AASLH provides leadership and support for its members who preserve and interpret state and local history in order to make the past more meaningful.

The **AASLH 2011 Annual Meeting** will held be in Richmond, VA September 14-17. Check out the 2011 [Annual Meeting](#) website for more information.

Need information on our workshops? Go to our [Professional Development Workshop Series](#) webpage to see what is coming to your area.



1717 Church Street, Nashville, TN 37203 - 2991 | 615-320-3203 | Fax: 615-327-9013
E-Mail: membership@aslh.org | ©2010 AASLH