

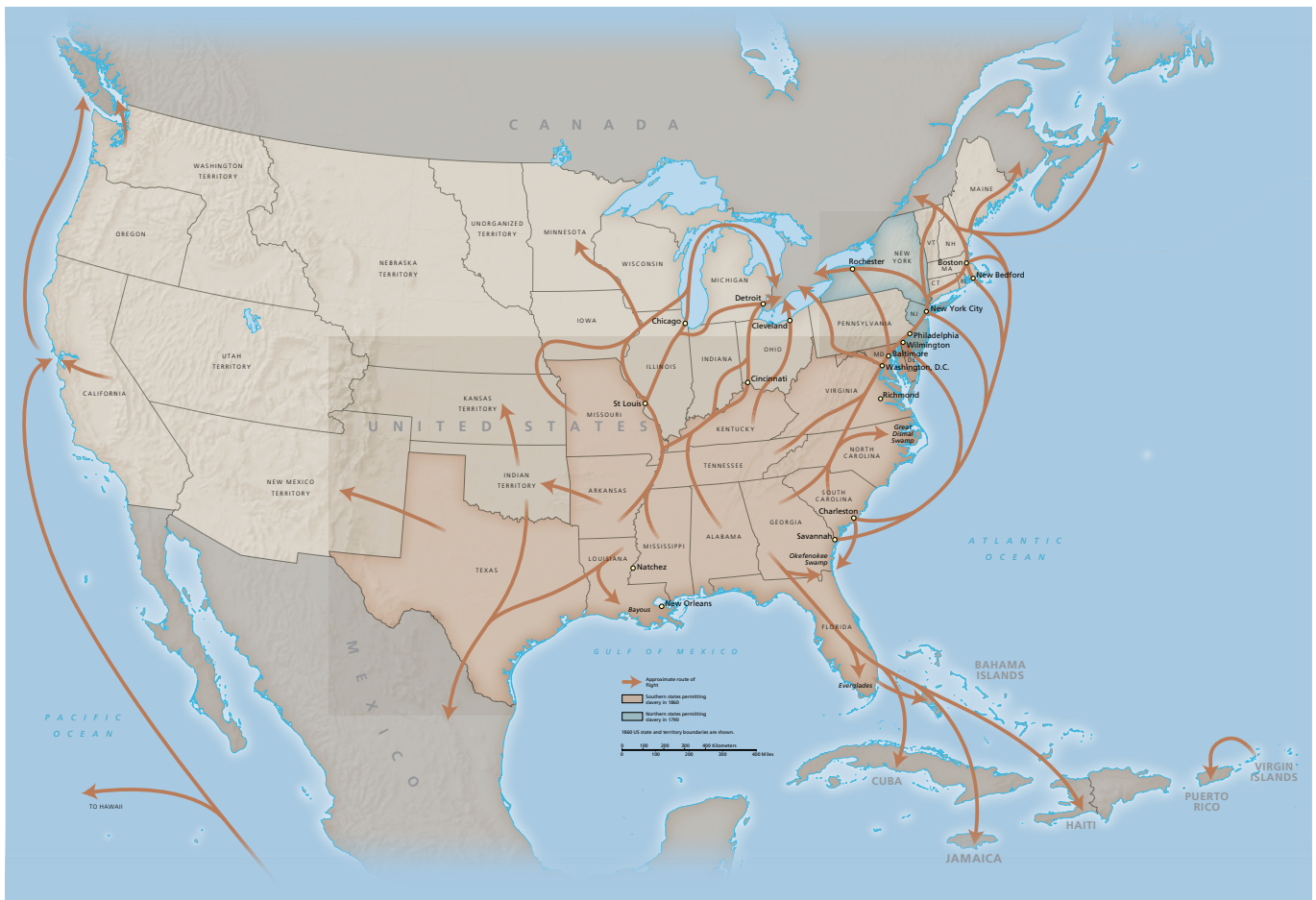


National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program Strategic Plan

November 2018

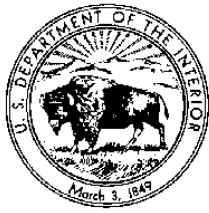


NATIONAL UNDERGROUND RAILROAD NETWORK TO FREEDOM



A Self-Emancipation Movement. No single site or route completely reflects and characterizes the Underground Railroad. The story and resources involve networks and regions rather than individual locations and trails.

On the cover: Great Dismal Swamp
National Wildlife Refuge, Virginia.
Provided by the United States Fish
and Wildlife Service.



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Northeast Region
1234 Market Street
20th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Dear Colleagues:

Established in 1998, the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom (NTF) Program (54 U.S.C. 308301 et seq.) coordinates and facilitates activities “to commemorate, honor, and interpret the history of the Underground Railroad, its significance as a crucial element in the evolution of the national civil rights movement, and its relevance in fostering the spirit of racial harmony and national reconciliation.” In the twenty years since its creation, the Program continues to impact communities across the country and beyond, bringing traditional National Park Service strengths in scholarship, historic preservation and interpretation to underserved constituents. Through the coordinated efforts of the National Park Service’s Northeast, National Capital, Midwest, and Southeast Regional Offices, the NTF has grown to more than 600 members in forty states, plus Washington DC and the US Virgin Islands.

Through collaborating on Underground Railroad projects in their communities, diverse people work together to preserve and interpret their stories. For some, this is the first opportunity to work closely with someone from a different race. Finding common cause provides an opportunity to discuss the nation’s complex history around slavery. Collectively, the local stories that they are uncovering substantially enlarge a significant and crucial area of American historical scholarship. In 2015, the NTF was presented the inaugural Stanton-Horton Award for Excellence in National Park Service History in recognition of the Program’s contribution to legitimizing the Underground Railroad and establishing its existence with documented evidence.

As the NTF looks towards the future, National Park Service staff, key partners, and members of the Network have worked together to create a strategic plan. Affirming the mission and vision statements and identifying new program goals, this strategic plan charts the course for building on past success, while empowering a vibrant future for the program. We invite our NPS colleagues and community partners to collaborate with the NTF in advancing the priorities and goals set forth in the plan. The quest for freedom embodied in the stories of the Underground Railroad touch all parts of the United States, and has a universal relevance to our shared heritage as a nation.

We invite you to #FindYourHero!

Gay Vietzke
Regional Director



Fort Mose Historic State Park, St. Augustine, Florida. The site of the first, legally-sanctioned, free African settlement in what is now the United States. In 1738, the Spanish governor of Florida chartered the settlement of Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose, or Fort Mose for short, as a settlement for those fleeing slavery from the English colonies in the Carolinas.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This strategic plan sets the course for the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program by articulating the program’s mission, vision, key goals, and priorities for the next five years. The plan will guide annual work planning as well as major projects and initiatives for the program. The plan was developed in collaboration with the Network to Freedom Program staff, members, partners, affiliates, and other National Park Service staff.

Mission

The National Park Service National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program, through collaboration with local, state, and federal entities, as well as individuals and organizations, honors, preserves and promotes the history of resistance to enslavement through escape and flight, which continues to inspire people worldwide.

Through its mission, the Network to Freedom helps to advance the idea that all human beings embrace the right to self-determination and freedom from oppression.

Vision Statement

The Network to Freedom Program is a catalyst for innovation, partnerships, and scholarship that connects and shares the diverse legacy of the Underground Railroad across boundaries and generations.

Goals

- **Collaboration and Networking:** Through collaboration and networking, the Network to Freedom Program will engage and support Network to Freedom members, partners, and affiliates in such a way as to provide new expertise, build relationships, and foster long-term stewardship and sustainability.
- **Awareness and Understanding:** Increase awareness of the Underground Railroad so that the public understands this resistance movement as a significant part of the nation’s struggle for civil rights and appreciates the role that the Network to Freedom Program plays in honoring this history.
- **Stewardship and Scholarship:** By promoting best practices related to research, interpretation, education, and historic preservation, the Network to Freedom leverages its relationships to maintain the integrity of the scholarship of the Underground Railroad and to share that history.
- **Organizational Effectiveness:** Achieve organizational effectiveness by reimagining ways to meet the program mission and vision through efficient allocation of resources and a commitment to professional development, wellness, and life-work balance.
- **Significance and Alignment with Agency Goals:** The Network to Freedom Program will strive to elevate its profile within the National Park Service by increasing awareness of how the program fulfills agency goals of relevancy, diversity, and inclusion, including how the legacy of the Underground Railroad fosters the spirit of racial harmony and national reconciliation.

INTRODUCTION TO THE NETWORK TO FREEDOM PROGRAM

The National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom (NTF) Program connects a diverse mosaic of community, regional, and national stories about the historic Underground Railroad through partnership with local historical places, museums, and interpretive programs and coordinates both preservation and education efforts at a national level. The Network to Freedom was formally established by Congress as a program under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service through the passage of Public Law 105-203 in 1998.

There are three main components to the Network to Freedom Program. They include the following:

- Educating the public about the historical significance of the Underground Railroad
- Providing technical assistance to organizations that identify, document, preserve, and interpret sites, that approximate travel routes and landscapes related to the Underground Railroad, or that develop or operate interpretive or educational programs or facilities.
- Developing a network of sites, programs, and facilities with verifiable associations to the Underground Railroad, referred to as the “Network to Freedom” or the “Network.”

Historic sites, research and educational facilities, and educational or interpretive programs with verifiable associations to the historic Underground Railroad can apply to become a member of the Network to Freedom. After being approved and listed in the Network to Freedom, the member is eligible to use or display the program’s official logo, receive technical assistance from Network to Freedom Program staff, apply for Network to Freedom grants, and participate in Network to Freedom workshops. As of October 2018, 619 facilities, program, and sites in 40 states, the District of Columbia, and the US Virgin Islands are a part of the Network to Freedom.

Other organizations can become Network Partners by meeting the requirements that: 1) the organization must have some association to preserving, commemorating, or educating the public about the historic Underground Railroad, and 2) the organization’s actions are consistent with the spirit of the missions and practices of the Network to Freedom Program and the National Park Service. One of the principal objectives of the Network to Freedom Program is to validate the efforts of these local and regional organizations and make it easier for them to share expertise and communicate with the National Park Service and each other. The Network to Freedom Program also facilitates communication and networking opportunities between researchers and interested parties and aids in the development of statewide organizations for preserving and researching historic Underground Railroad sites.

Together, the Network to Freedom Program, members, partners, and affiliates tell the diverse stories of resistance against the institution of slavery in the United States through escape and flight (appendix A). These stories illustrate a basic founding principle of this Nation: that all human beings embrace the right to self-determination and freedom from oppression. Through the Network to Freedom Program, the National Park Service honors and recognizes the significance of the historic Underground Railroad not only in the eradication of slavery, but as a cornerstone of our national civil rights movement.



Independence National Historical Park, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Since the early 19th century, Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell have become symbols of liberty, freedom, and human rights.

THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

This strategic plan was developed through a collaborative process that involved National Park Service Network to Freedom Program staff, Network to Freedom members, partners, and affiliates, and other National Park Service staff. Because the Network to Freedom Program works closely with numerous stakeholders, engaging members, partners, and affiliates was a significant part of the strategic planning effort.

The development of this strategic plan began with the distribution of a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges (SWOC) assessment to all Network to Freedom Program staff, a sampling of members, and key program partners and affiliates. This assessment asked four key questions related to current strengths and weaknesses of the Network to Freedom Program as well as potential opportunities and challenges facing the Network to Freedom Program in the future. See appendix C for a summary of the results from the SWOC assessment.

The results of this SWOC assessment informed a two-hour listening session hosted by the Network to Freedom Program. This listening session and accompanying webinar introduced Network to Freedom members, partners, and affiliates to the overall strategic planning process. A discussion about the results of the SWOC assessment provided additional insights into the key strengths and opportunities for the Network to Freedom Program to consider and potential solutions to address what participants saw as the Network to Freedom Program's biggest weaknesses and pressing challenges.

Following this external scoping process, a two-day strategic planning workshop was held in May 2017 in Cambridge, Maryland, with National Park Service and Network to Freedom Program staff as well as key stakeholders. During the workshop, participants revised the mission statement and developed a vision statement. Program goals and accompanying sets of priorities for the next five years were identified. The workshop participants also discussed the Network to Freedom Program's internal structure and processes, the results of the SWOC assessment and listening session, and key issues and potential solutions. Through these discussions, consensus was built around each element of the strategic plan. The workshop encouraged participants to think about the Network to Freedom Program, rather than the Network to Freedom itself. See appendix B for a list of workshop participants and facilitators.

Based on the information collected from Network to Freedom Program staff, members, and key program partners as well as the outcomes of the workshop, the strategic plan was developed and further refined by National Park Service staff and subject matter experts. As this strategic plan is implemented, additional work will include the development of action items that support the identified priorities for each goal and that will help inform future annual work plans for the Network to Freedom Program.



Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park, Church Creek, Maryland.

MISSION

The *mission* articulates the purpose of the Network to Freedom Program, who it serves, and the benefits it creates.



The National Park Service National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program, through collaboration with local, state, and federal entities, as well as individuals and organizations, honors, preserves and promotes the history of resistance to enslavement through escape and flight, which continues to inspire people worldwide.

Through its mission, the Network to Freedom helps to advance the idea that all human beings embrace the right to self-determination and freedom from oppression.

VISION STATEMENT

The *vision statement* is an ideal description of the Network to Freedom Program in the future. It provides an inspiring future state for which the Network to Freedom Program to strive. This vision will be achieved if the program accomplishes its identified goals.



The Network to Freedom Program is a catalyst for innovation, partnerships, and scholarship that connects and shares the diverse legacy of the Underground Railroad across boundaries and generations.

PROGRAM GOALS AND PRIORITIES

Through the strategic planning process, the Network to Freedom Program identified goals and priorities for the next five years. Each of the five goals identified also includes priorities or key steps that the Network to Freedom Program plans to take to accomplish each goal (please note that the goals and priorities are not listed in order of importance).

Goals are long-term targets or aims that the Network to Freedom Program strives to achieve. The five goals broadly describe what the Network to Freedom Program wants to accomplish and become over the next five years to better realize its vision statement. These goals provide the basis for decisions about the nature, scope, and relative importance of future projects and activities.

Each priority is a measureable target that must be met on the way to attaining each goal. The priorities help to “operationalize” the goals and act as benchmarks for measuring progress towards the vision for the Network to Freedom Program. The priorities listed in this section represent key priorities—they articulate those areas where energy and resources should be focused to effect positive change. However, physical, natural, cultural, legal, and political conditions may change quickly, and, thus, other priorities may arise during the life of this plan. Continual evaluation should occur to ensure that priorities remain applicable to National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program needs.



Shattering Silence Monument at the State Capitol, Des Moines, Iowa. This sculpture commemorates the landmark 1839 Iowa Territorial Supreme Court ruling that prohibited Ralph Montgomery from being extradited back into slavery in Missouri.

GOAL 1: COLLABORATION AND NETWORKING

Through collaboration and networking, the Network to Freedom Program will engage and support Network to Freedom members, partners, and affiliates in such a way as to provide new expertise, build relationships, and foster long-term stewardship and sustainability.

Priorities That Help Achieve This Goal

- **Explore strategies for “friend-raising” for the Network to Freedom Program.**
This priority is intended to explore strategies for shared stewardship, advocacy, and sustainability that could be taken on by related non-profit organizations. Included in this priority would be determining the viability of a potential friends group for the Network to Freedom.
- **Develop tools for improving communication and collaboration between Network to Freedom members, partners, and affiliates.**
Opportunities to enhance internal communication between Network to Freedom program coordinators and network members were noted during the SWOC assessment and listening session. This priority would focus on delivering member-driven content through multiple platforms—for example, a Facebook group or an electronic mailing list and a newsletter.
- **Leverage the Underground Railroad crowdsourcing events and trainings as an opportunity for Network to Freedom Program staff, listed members, partners, and affiliates to meet in person, collaborate, and build relationships.**
Underground Railroad crowdsourcing events and trainings serve as an opportunity to connect site stewards, researchers, scholars, and other enthusiasts. Network to Freedom Program staff will strategize ways to make the conference more sustainable. Crowdsourcing is also a priority for the stewardship and scholarship goal because it provides a key opportunity to engage scholarship partners, stimulate research, and share new scholarship, projects, and best practices.



What we heard - *“The Network to Freedom would benefit from increased communication between NTF coordinators and members. E-mails of events, book releases, and tours would inform and help those of us researching or nominating sites.”*

GOAL 2: AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING

Increase awareness of the historic Underground Railroad so that the public understands this resistance movement as a significant part of the nation's struggle for civil rights and appreciates the role that the Network to Freedom Program plays in honoring this history.

Priorities That Help Achieve This Goal

- **Develop and share materials and products for anniversaries and special events related to the historic Underground Railroad.**

Anniversaries and special events, through increased publicity, provide ready-made opportunities for Network to Freedom members to capture public interest, media attention, and increase engagement. By developing and sharing materials with its members, the Network to Freedom Program can help its members capitalize on those opportunities.

- **Develop a marketing toolkit/media package for the Network to Freedom Program.**

A media package would contain a collection of information about the historic Underground Railroad and Network to Freedom Program that would be used to address inquiries from the media and the general public. This media package would help the program leverage mainstream special events and help promote its mission.

- **Catalog and provide access to high quality educational programs and curriculum materials for student and teacher audiences.**

By providing high quality teaching materials and educational content, the Network to Freedom Program helps educate K-12 students about the role that the historic Underground Railroad plays in our nation's history.

- **Develop and implement a communications plan with social media strategies to reach new audiences and increase the overall reach of the Network to Freedom Program.**

Using social media would allow the Network to Freedom Program to inform listed members, partners, affiliates, and the general public about Network to Freedom accomplishments and projects while reaching new audiences and raising awareness of the program.

- **Participate in regional meetings, scholars' round tables, and history conferences on topics related to the historic Underground Railroad.**

Through participation in these events, staff would help build support for and increase understanding of the Network to Freedom Program as a primary source of scholarship and resources on the historic Underground Railroad. In addition, staff would be exposed to and have opportunities to present on new scholarship, projects, and best practices. This participation would be based on overall program needs or assessed based on current and upcoming projects.



What we heard - *“Key opportunities include the rise in public interest in and awareness in the Underground Railroad with new references in popular culture, including television programs, movies, biopics, etc.”*

GOAL 3: STEWARDSHIP AND SCHOLARSHIP

By promoting best practices related to research, interpretation, education, and historic preservation, the Network to Freedom Program leverages its relationships to maintain the integrity of the scholarship of the historic Underground Railroad and to share that history.

Priorities That Help Achieve This Goal

- **Provide technical assistance to help preserve and protect remaining buildings, structures, landscapes, and archeological sites that bear witness to the historic Underground Railroad.**
By promoting the preservation of the physical resources associated with the historic Underground Railroad, the Network to Freedom Program connects the public with the places where this history unfolded.
- **Develop and share products and tools that promote best practices in research, interpretation, and education about the legacy of the historic Underground Railroad.**
As a standard bearer for scholarship about the historic Underground Railroad, the Network to Freedom provides guidance for research and documentation as well as the interpretation of the diverse stories about the people, places, and ideals of self-determination and freedom from oppression embodied in the Underground Railroad.
- **Support potential new applicants seeking listing in the Network to Freedom through the development and promotion of training materials and tools to aid in scholarship of new sites.**
Equipping applicants with accessible research tools and encouraging scholarly best practices in the identification and documentation of historic Underground Railroad resources is essential to ensuring the nomination of diverse sites, facilities, and programs and the continued growth of the Network to Freedom.
- **Develop a sustainable model to enhance Underground Railroad crowdsourcing opportunities and collaboration.**
Not only are crowdsourcing events and trainings valuable tools in encouraging collaboration and networking (Goal 1), they are also an important tool in fostering scholarship and promoting the stewardship of historic Underground Railroad-related sites and programs. To expand Underground Railroad crowdsourcing in the future, the Network to Freedom Program staff must think creatively and leverage its many stakeholders to ensure its long-term viability.



What we heard - *“It would be great if NTF could create and publish a research guide to uncovering documentation for UGRR sites/people/activity - where to begin, where to look for sources, how to look, how to build your documentation, how to interpret, etc. I think that by providing this resource, interested but inexperienced researchers, as well as experienced researchers who are not familiar with Underground Railroad type sources, will have a road map of how to proceed.”*

GOAL 4: ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Achieve organizational effectiveness by reimagining ways to meet the Network to Freedom Program mission and vision through efficient allocation of resources and a commitment to professional development, wellness, and life-work balance.

Priorities That Help Achieve This Goal

- **Through collaboration between Network to Freedom Program staff, define yearly organizational priorities and capacity through the development of annual work plans.**

This strategic plan is an important tool that outlines organizational priorities, and it will be used to inform future annual work plans.

- **Prepare a position management plan for the Network to Freedom Program.**

A position management planning process would enable the program to outline how it will meet future program needs in terms of positions (duties necessary for managing a national program), skills and knowledge required by staff, and effective combination of the duties for efficient use of limited resources.

- **Develop and submit recommendations on the position and management structure of the Network to Freedom Program within the National Park Service as well as the program's relationship with Harriet Tubman National Historical Park.**

Clearly defining the relationships between the Network to Freedom Program and associated national park units like the Harriet Tubman National Historical Park would ensure organizational roles and responsibilities are both understood and achieved.

- **Identify and address staff development and training needs to cultivate the skills and professional development of Network to Freedom Program staff.**

A training needs assessment would determine what training opportunities are needed to help individuals and the program accomplish its mission. This would involve assessing employee and organizational knowledge, skills, and abilities to identify and gaps or areas of needs.

- **Explore strategies for broadening and diversifying potential funding sources and mechanisms for supporting the Network to Freedom Program.**

Adhering to sustainable business practices and continuing to cultivate program support is essential to the long-term viability and success of the Network to Freedom Program.



What we heard - *“The Network to Freedom Program needs to be a viable and visible part of the National Park Service.”*

GOAL 5: SIGNIFICANCE AND ALIGNMENT WITH AGENCY GOALS

The Network to Freedom Program will strive to elevate its profile within the National Park Service by increasing awareness of how the Network to Freedom fulfills agency goals of relevancy, diversity, and inclusion, including how the legacy of the Underground Railroad fosters the spirit of racial harmony and national reconciliation.

Priorities That Help Achieve This Goal

- **Continue to build relationships with other National Park Service programs and personnel who can be individual champions for the Network to Freedom Program.**
The Network to Freedom Program can seek opportunities to better coordinate with other professionals within the National Park Service with similar skills, goals, and objectives. Key divisions within the agency include Cultural Resources; Heritage Partnership Programs, Interpretation; Relevancy, Diversity, and Inclusion.
- **Develop a Network to Freedom Annual Report that communicates both internally and externally the successes of the program and its growing network of members and partner organizations.**
An annual report would provide a means of recording and sharing the Network to Freedom Program's accomplishments and how these are directly benefiting local sites, stakeholders, partners, and the public.
- **Create and promote the consistency of interpretation about the historic Underground Railroad throughout the National Park Service and at specific national park units that are listed on the Network to Freedom.**
The Network to Freedom Program is uniquely positioned to provide scholarship and technical support in the development of interpretive and educational programs throughout the agency.
- **Develop and implement communication strategies to raise awareness.**
The Network to Freedom Program can raise awareness by informing Congressional representatives about proposed new member sites in their districts as well as the ongoing work of the Network to Freedom Program and its current members and partners.



What we heard - *"The National Parks perennially enjoy widespread favor among the American public. How can the Network to Freedom strengthen its relationship with National Parks in order to get a share of the National Parks' sunshine?"*



The Network to Freedom collaborates with more than 600 members, partners, and affiliates in 39 states, the District of Columbia; and the US Virgin Islands. (Top Left) Educational programming at Frederick Douglass National Historic Site; (Top Right) African American Civil War Memorial dedication event, Spoke n' Revolution Bike Tour at the 2013 Underground Railroad conference, (Left) Exhibits at the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Visitor Center; (Right) Union Literary Institute tour, 2013 National Trust for Historic Preservation Conference; (Bottom Left) Bucktown Store - Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway, Tulsa State Fair Exhibit; (Bottom Right) Visitor overlooking Stewart's Canal, Maryland.

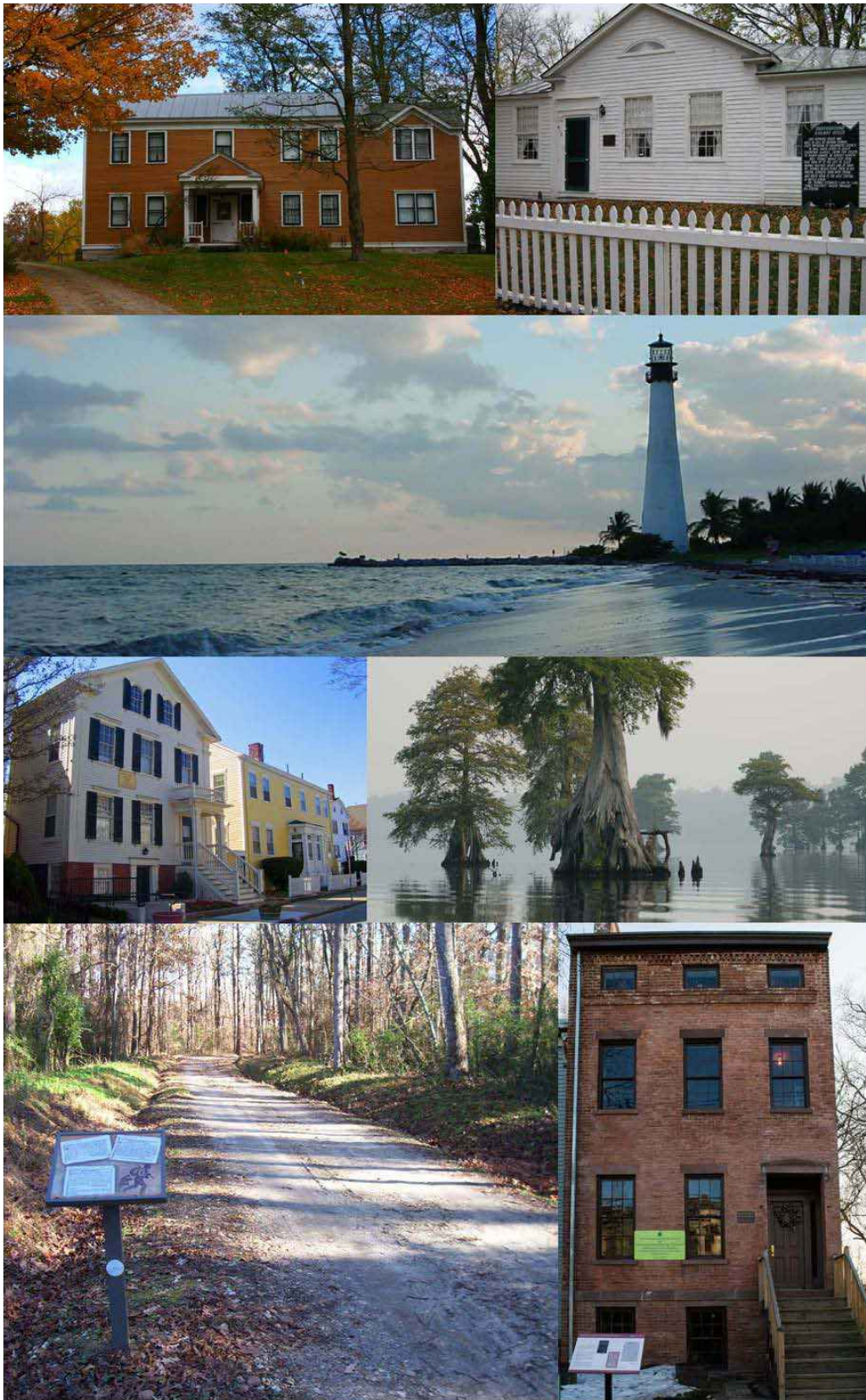
IMPLEMENTATION

Effective strategic planning should consider mechanisms for implementing the plan and monitoring progress toward achieving the goals and priorities identified within them. This section briefly describes how the Network to Freedom Program will take steps to implement the strategic plan and monitor its progress over the next five years.

- The identified goals and priorities outlined in this strategic plan will inform the creation of annual work plans for Network to Freedom Program staff beginning in 2019.
- Network to Freedom Program staff will identify champions for specific priorities. These champions will lead in the identification and development of key actions or steps related to accomplishing assigned priorities and achieving the goals of this strategic plan. As appropriate, other staff will collaborate in translating the goals and priorities into specific operational actions. These identified actions will be used in the annual work planning cycle for the Network to Freedom Program. See appendix D for an example action work table.
- Network to Freedom Program staff will periodically review the strategic plan to determine and record progress towards accomplishing priorities and achieving the goals outlined in this strategic plan.
- The sequencing of priorities and potential activities should be adjusted over time to align with new opportunities and staff capacity.



Levi and Catharine Coffin State Historic Site, Fountain City, Indiana. The Coffin house was known as “Grand Central Station” of the Underground Railroad.



Work to coordinate preservation and education efforts nationwide helps integrate local historic sites, museums, and interpretive programs associated with the Underground Railroad into a mosaic of community, regional, and national stories. (Top Left) Rokeby Museum; (Top Right) Dr. Nathan Thomas House, Bill Baggs Cape Florida State Park; (Left) Nathan and Polly Johnson House; (Right) Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge; (Bottom Left) Halifax Underground Railroad Trail; (Bottom Right) Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence.

APPENDIX A: NATIONAL UNDERGROUND RAILROAD NETWORK TO FREEDOM – A CHRONOLOGY

- 1990** Public Law 101-628, enacted in November 1990, directs the National Park Service to study alternatives for commemorating and interpreting the Underground Railroad.
- 1995** The National Park Service completes the *Underground Railroad Special Resource Study - Management Concepts / Environmental Assessment*.
- 1998** Public Law 105-203, the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Act of 1998, is passed by Congress on July 21.
- 2000** The National Park Service, together with the National Parks Conservation Association, debuts the Network to Freedom star logo and website and introduces the application process for inclusion in the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom program in October.
- The same month, the Omnibus Appropriations Act, Public Law 106-291, is passed by Congress. The legislation establishes the Network to Freedom Grants program to provide support for “preservation and related research” to members of the Network to Freedom. Funds for these matching grants are subsequently appropriated four times—fiscal years 2002, 2005, 2006, and 2008.
- The official National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom website went live, providing access to on-line content about the Network to Freedom Program.
- 2001** The first Network to Freedom application review meeting is held in Washington, DC, on April 4, adding 25 members during this inaugural round.
- Collaborated on the Borderlands Conference with the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center and Northern Kentucky University’s (NKU) Institute for Freedom Studies, focusing on the Middle Ohio River Valley from Marietta to Evansville, held at the NKU campus.
- 2002** Met legislated mandate to develop a graphic identity and program awareness through the creation of an original logo and accompanying graphic standards manual and specially commissioned official National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom lapel pins and posters.
- Collaborated on the Underground Railroad Activities on the Maritime Great Lakes Conference, with the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, Detroit, Michigan.
- Received appropriations funding allowing the Network to Freedom grants program to award 15 grants totaling \$500,000.
- 2003** Collaborated on the Passages to Freedom: The Underground Railroad in American History and Legend Conference, Community Tribute, and Cultural Fair with the Smithsonian Institution National Museum of American History, Behring Center Program in African American Culture and the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center.
- 2004** Collaborated on the Freedom in the Florida Territory; American and Caribbean Connections to the Underground Railroad Conference, with National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, the Florida Underground Railroad Project, hosted at the University of Miami, Miami, Florida.

- 2005** 244 listings, made up of 169 sites, 114 programs, and 68 facilities, are included in the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom.
- Received appropriations funding allowing the Network to Freedom grants program to award 18 grants totaling \$295,800.
- 2006** “The Underground Railroad Experience” exhibit at the Tulsa State Fair, featuring an exhibit of artifacts by Jerry Gore and photographic artwork by Stephen Marc, was on display from September 28–October 8.
- Received appropriations funding allowing the Network to Freedom grants program to award 21 grants totaling \$368,000.
- 2007** The first annual National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Conference is held in Georgetown, Kentucky, September 10-15.
- A National Underground Railroad Junior Ranger activity book and badge, “Discovering the Underground Railroad,” are introduced.
- Implemented the first National Park Service Junior Ranger program for the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom.
- 2008** The annual conference is held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, with the theme “On the Right Track,” celebrating 10 Years of the Network to Freedom, September 15-20.
- Received appropriations funding allowing the Network to Freedom grants program to award 27 grants totaling \$700,000.
- 2009** Freedom Trails at the Crossroads: Paths to Telling the Underground Railroad Story through History, Teaching, and Technology Conference held in Indianapolis, Indiana, September 16-19.
- 2010** Battleground for Freedom: The Underground Railroad on the Western Frontier Conference held in Topeka, Kansas, July 28-31.
- 425 listings, made up of 282 sites, 87 programs, and 56 facilities, are included in the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom.
- 2011** Pathways to Freedom: Presenting the Underground Railroad through Education, Interpretation, and Heritage Tourism Conference held in Clermont County, Ohio, (Cincinnati) June 15-18.
- 2012** Escaping to Destinations South: The Underground Railroad, Cultural Identity, and Freedom Along the Southern Borderlands Conference held in St. Augustine, Florida, June 20-24, bringing together descendants of Gullah and Black Seminoles from the Bahamas, South Carolina, Texas, Mexico, and Los Angeles for the first time in more than 150 years.
- 2013** The War for Freedom: The Underground Railroad During the Civil War Conference held in Little Rock, Arkansas, June 19-22.
- 2014** “I Resolved Never to be Conquered” themed Women and the Underground Railroad Conference held in Detroit, Michigan, July 16-20.
- 2015** The National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom relocates to the Northeast Region. Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park in Church Creek, Maryland, becomes the program’s headquarters.

- 2016** The National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom, in commemoration of the National Park Service’s centennial celebration, launches the Find Your Network to Freedom Site initiative, allowing program members to participate in the NPS Passport program.

Into the Light: Striving for Freedom and an “equal chance in the Battle of Life” Conference held in Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, June 13-16.

- 2017** On the Edge of Freedom: Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad in the Borderlands Conference held in Cambridge, Maryland, May 18-21, in celebration of the opening of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park Visitor Center.

A new National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom official National Park Service unigrid brochure.

- 2018** 619 listings, made up of 437 sites, 114 programs, and 68 facilities, are included in the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom. The 619 listings are spread out across 40 states, plus the District of Columbia and the US Virgin Islands.

The Network to Freedom program produced a 17.5-minute-long film entitled, “Fighting for Freedom: Lewis Hayden and the Underground Railroad.”

APPENDIX B: STRATEGIC PLAN CONTRIBUTORS AND WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

NPS National Underground Network to Freedom Program

Sheri Jackson, Southeast Regional Coordinator

Deanda Johnson, Midwest Regional Coordinator

Diane Miller, National Program Manager

NPS National Capital Region

Linda Lutz-Ryan, Regional Chief of Interpretation and Education

NPS Northeast Regional Office

Jonathan Meade, Associate Regional Director

Association for the Study of African American Life and History

Sylvia Cyrus, Executive Director

Maryland Office of Tourism Development

Marci Ross, Assistant Director

Organization of American Historians

Aidan Smith, Public History Manager

NPS Denver Service Center

Justin Henderson, Project Manager | Planner

Danielle Lehle, Project Specialist

Westby Mize, Project Specialist

APPENDIX C: STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND CHALLENGES ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Prior to development of the strategic plan, Network to Freedom listed members, partners, and affiliates participated in an exercise to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges (SWOC) facing the Network to Freedom Program. The strengths and weaknesses focused on internal factors, while opportunities and challenges focused on external factors. Overall, the SWOC analysis ensured that the planning process took into account the many stakeholders engaged with the Network to Freedom and that both internal and external factors were considered as the strategic plan was created.

The major themes that emerged during the SWOC assessment include the following.

Strengths

1. An extensive list of diverse sites, programs, and facilities
2. An appropriately thorough application process
3. A dedicated, knowledgeable staff
4. The collaborative nature of the network and its many members, partners, and stakeholders

Weaknesses

1. No social media presence
2. Inefficient internal communication within the Network
3. Lack of public awareness of the Network to Freedom's work
4. Limited ability to provide technical assistance because of staffing and funding constraints.

Opportunities

1. Capitalize on the recent popular culture offerings as well as upcoming anniversaries and celebrations
2. Emphasize connections with school-age children and other educational opportunities
3. Link sites that are in the same geographic area or have similar themes
4. Promote partnerships

Challenges

1. Limited funding and inadequate staffing
2. Changing visitor and audience demographics
3. Lack of support and awareness of the program within the agency
4. No central third-party organization to mobilize stakeholders and advocates

APPENDIX D: EXAMPLE ACTION WORK TABLE

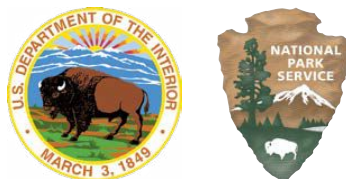
Description of the action or task:
How is it tied to the Strategic Plan?
What is the desired outcome of the action?
Champion (person identified to lead or be responsible for the effort):
Timeframe (start date and critical finish date, if applicable):
Prerequisite actions:
Key resource needs (specific people, equipment, funds, etc.):
Key steps to implement:
Measures of success (how will you evaluate the outcome?):
Major obstacles/challenges expected:
How to address obstacles/challenges:



Constitution Hall, Topeka, Kansas. Before and after a Network to Freedom grant-funded restoration project. It was at this location in 1855 that delegates from across the Kansas Territory banned slavery in the Topeka Constitution for Kansas statehood. Constitution Hall also served as the terminus for the famed Jim Lane Trail, an immigration route into the free state of Kansas used by the Underground Railroad.



A number of National Park Service units are recognized sites within the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom. (Top Left) Hampton National Historic Site; (Top Right) Fort Smith National Historic Site; (Left) Fort Jefferson-Dry Tortuga National Park; (Right) Fort Monroe National Monument, Monocacy National Battlefield; (Bottom left) Harpers Ferry National Historical Park; (Bottom Right) Frederick Douglass National Historic Site.



As the nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering sound use of our land and water resources; protecting our fish, wildlife, and biological diversity; preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historic places; and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to ensure that their development is in the best interests of all our people by encouraging stewardship and citizen participation in their care. The department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in island territories under U.S. administration.

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