



Chapter Leadership Zoom Call Strategic Plan Presentation

November 13, 2024 | 1 pm ET.

Link to Meeting Recording - <https://youtu.be/KwK7X6VKDkg>.

Chapters Represented –Chattanooga, Dallas, Greater Cincinnati, Los Angeles, Pensacola, Sacramento, San Diego, Tucson, Utah, and Valley Forge

Special Guests –John Meko, President; David Harmer, National Director; Sandy Cook, Board Member; Larry Brasher Chapters & Partners Committee Member

Welcome

Carolyn Santangelo, Sr. Director of Chapter & Partner Relations, welcomed everyone on the call and thanked participants for joining for this important presentation of the Founding Forward strategic plan.

Announcements

Carolyn offered several announcements:

- It's the end of the year and that means end of the year reporting. Fiscal year end reporting forms will be sent out via email and mail in the next couple of weeks to chapter presidents and treasurers. Please be on the lookout for these forms. All forms will be due by February 1, 2025.
- This time of year, has everyone looking to 2025. I am sure many chapters already have a few events scheduled for the new year. Please let Carolyn know of any upcoming events in 2025. David Harmer, National Director, will be traveling and would love to include your chapter event if possible. We would also like to update everyone's website pages with upcoming events.
- Chapter webpages need to always be current. You can help us with this process by sending in photos of previous events, copies of newsletters, updated officers' information and anything pertaining to students and teachers. All information for website updates can be sent to Carolyn.

Carolyn Santangelo turned over the meeting to President, John Meko, for the presentation of the Founding Forward Strategic Plan. John shared his screen with the presentation.

Please note all chapters will be provided with a copy of the strategic plan. The document will cover everything seen in today's PowerPoint Presentation.

Mr. Meko began the presentation by giving some background on the strategic planning process which began in February and took 8 months. This is a seven-year



plan and is still a living document. There is a growing crisis in civics education in our country. Though there is a growing awareness of the problem our approach as outlined in this plan is a strong response to the crisis.

The first part of the plan presented was Founding Forward's Mission:

Founding Forward informs and engages citizens through transformational educational experiences grounded in American history. These experiences enable students, teachers, and citizens to understand, appreciate, and practice the principles, rights, and responsibilities of American citizenship.

Our mission while not unique does differ from other civic organizations in that we are grounded in American history and American citizenship, not a general or global citizenship.

The second piece of the plan was Founding Forward's Vision:

We envision a renewed interest in American civics grounded in the founding principles of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, as articulated in the Declaration of Independence and in which current and future citizens participate in, uphold, and improve upon our system of self-government, as established in the United States Constitution.

Again, you see an emphasis on American civics and the founding documents.

Finally, we have our 6 Tenets:

- *Tenet 1: Founding Forward will be a national leader in transformational civic education.*
- *Tenet 2: Founding Forward will establish Philadelphia and Valley Forge as a center for civic education and engagement, rooted in the principles, values and responsibilities articulated in America's founding documents.*
- *Tenet 3: Founding Forward will cultivate a growing network of educators who share our understanding and love of America's founding principles.*
- *Tenet 4: Founding Forward will inspire students with a prestigious and pivotal civic, leadership, and character development experience.*
- *Tenet 5: Founding Forward will implement a national strategy that promotes unifying and shared experiences in civic education.*
- *Tenet 6: Founding Forward will be an important part of every Union League member's personal philanthropy and a valuable source of education for themselves and their families.*



A note on the tenets is though we are a national organization with a national reach we want Philadelphia and Valley Forge to be the heart of our programs and a place where all come for civic education. We want to shift focus from Washington DC.

We are also going to take our programs on the road. We have plans for Good Citizen Day to happen in locations across the country especially in chapters.

Tenet 6 is all about Union League Members because we need their money to make all of this happen.

Mr. Meko wanted to make a clear point that where Founding Forward has many programs it's the programs of Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge that will remain and will be strengthened to help us grow. The programs that chapters invested in for all those years will remain and will be the heart of our growth.

Teachers

- Our goal is to increase the number of teachers that come to our programs. Chart showing growth was displayed. Our goal is 650 teachers in 2025 up from 314 in 2024.
- We have the capacity for dramatic growth at Liberty Hill. This year the teachers' experience was elevated, and the feedback has been very positive.
- We are creating different teacher programs including a 3-day weekend program for local and regional teachers.
- Our teacher programs are content heavy and immersive. That is what makes our programs stand out from all the others.
- In 2040 if we meet all our targets we should reach and impact 3 million students via our teacher programs.

Students

- Valley Forge Campus will be the center of the student programs.
- We will expand offerings to include summer programs.
- We will grow our student numbers slowly until 2027. The reason for the big jump in 2027 is that we plan to have the campus renovations and upgrades in place by then so we can accommodate more students and have the best facilities for them.
- Reference again made to Good Citizen Day on the Road. We plan to run two pilot programs in 2025, one in Sacramento with our Sacramento Chapter and another in Manhattan.

There was a slide showing all the states where students and teachers have come from in 2024. The only state without a participant is Wyoming. The Utah



Chapter will change that in 2025 with a student coming with them from Wyoming.

Community

- Community is a geographic area and anyone who is not a student or teacher.
- We want to have a lot of community patriotic activities on our Valley Forge Campus. The first such program will be Wreaths Across the Grove on December 14th.
- We want to have speaker programs on campus and concerts. We need to engage our neighbors.

Resources – Staffing and Campus

- We will need additional staff members.
- We hired a new operations manager to oversee all the work being done on the Valley Forge Campus.
- We are making an offer for a Business/Outreach Director who will be selling our programs and assisting us in getting the teachers and students to reach our goals.
- The Valley Forge Campus will be reimaged to include a grand entry way and new traffic patterns where general visitors can come on campus and park to explore the Medal of Honor Grove and participants can turn to go to a drop off area. We plan to close the road between Martha Washington and the first traffic circle to allow for only foot traffic.
- The Martha Washington Building will be gutted and redesigned to include all the program and food service space. MacArthur will become just a dormitory.
- We will have a recreation area that will include a Citizens Bank Whiffle Ball Park. The Phillies and Citizens Bank are on board with the project.
- We are working with Valley Forge National Park, local and state representatives and Conrail to make a trail from the Medal of Honor Grove to Washington's Headquarters in the park. All the parties are excited about the plan and are working together to make it happen. This will be a game changer for both visitors to the Grove and Valley Forge Park but also for our programs to be able to have direct access to Washington's Headquarters from our campus.

Fundraising

- We have started a 4-year campaign. We are in the silent phase right now and have already secured \$20 million.
- The public launch will be in 2026.



- We will need \$130 million. The most of which will be for operations and programs.
- We are looking at all sources including foundations, corporations, and individuals.

Mr. Meko concluded his presentation by thanking everyone for their support and looks forward to their help as we expand.

David Harmer added that things are already happening around campus and beyond. The Union League is already delivering on its promises.

John Meko mentioned to all that an upcoming program will be a chapters and partners conference/convention in 2026. It will be free for participants to attend. The only cost would be travel to get to Philadelphia. It will be educational and inspirational with fun activities and learning/working sessions.

The question was asked about how do chapters fit into this plan and what do chapters need to do? - Chapters need to continue what they are doing now and help us get more students and teachers. We also hope chapters will help us with Good Citizen Day programs in their areas.

Tucson Chapter brought up the impact of social media and how can we increase our footprint there. It's a great way to attract students, teachers, and the general public. Do we plan to do more in the future? The answer was yes, we need to do more in social media, and we will be hiring people that can help us nationally and on the chapter level. We need to increase our "cool" factor.

San Diego asked about reaching students through the schools especially in regard to a Good Citizen Day program. San Diego has found it more and more difficult to get students out of school for a one-day program. The answer was we need to find different ways and different approaches perhaps with other student organizations.

Larry Brasher asked about a student version of the Joshua Chamberlain League that is in place for teachers. This would be a way to engage students after they attend a program.

The meeting concluded with remarks of thanks from David Harmer, John Meko, and Carolyn Santangelo. They all thanked those on the call for their time and hard work. We greatly appreciate all your efforts.

The next call will be in early 2025 and updates will be sent as work continues.