



FOUNDING
forward



A Future Rooted in Liberty

Uniting Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge
& The Union League Legacy Foundation

7-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

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Executive Letter

Dear Founding Forward donors, chapters, partners, students, teachers, and community members –

Have Americans lost hope in America? Do they not see a brighter future for the next generation? Has the country become complacent about the democratic republic? In a recent poll, 78% of Americans said they were not confident that their children would be better off¹; and only 22% trust the government to do the right thing.² Another survey showed that 70% failed a basic civic literacy test.³ One in three could not identify the three branches of government.⁴ Moreover, the liberties and freedoms essential to our form of self-government seem to not be valued. Polls show that a majority believe the first amendment goes too far in protecting free speech.⁵

But, why? Perhaps because of the continuing decline in civic education and a lack of understanding of the moral and philosophical underpinnings of the American political tradition.

You cannot appreciate what you do not understand, and things you don't understand you often fear; ignorance leads to contempt. Thomas Jefferson reminded us, "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be." Founding Forward believes that education is the key to renewing faith in America and hope for the future.

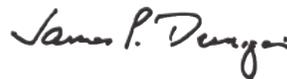
Through immersive civic education experiences, Founding Forward is leading the way with transformational, in-person programs for teachers, students, and the community. We want to fulfill the ideals of civic equality and give every citizen the tools to be a full participant.

The following strategic plan outlines the goals for the next seven years. It is an aggressive, ambitious

plan, consistent with the challenges facing our nation. We are a new organization, yet with a strong history and a solid footing from which to launch this growth.

When this plan is fully realized, we will reach millions across the country each year. Only then will Founding Forward begin to realize the vision of an America with renewed appreciation of the founding principles of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. This endeavor will require significant financial resources, and the investment of all who believe in the future of the great American experiment.

We hope you will join us in support of this effort – and help us achieve a future rooted in liberty.



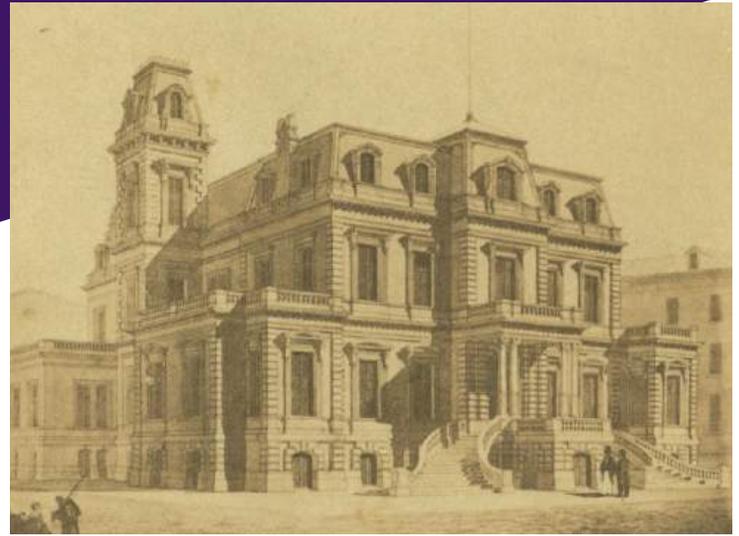
James P. Dunigan
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History and Merger

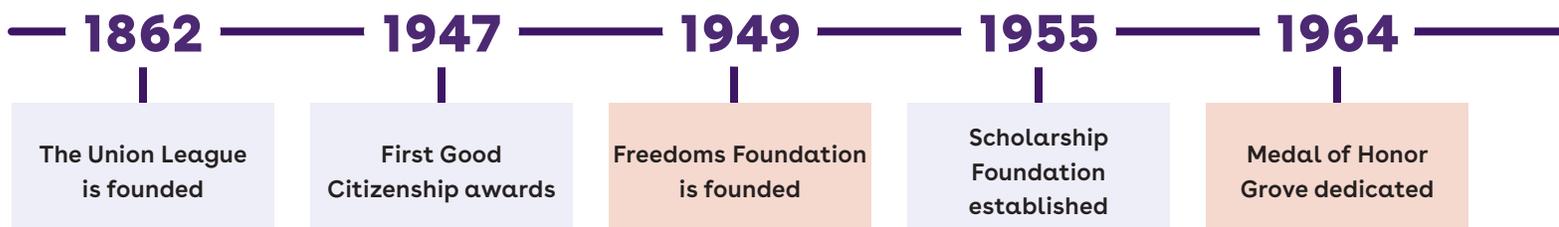


Founding Forward was formed through the merger of two long-standing American institutions: The Union League Legacy Foundation, founded in 1947 by The Union League of Philadelphia, and Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge, founded in 1949 by General Dwight D. Eisenhower and others. For generations, these two organizations have recognized Americans who uphold the foundations of our democratic system of government and educated future leaders to carry those founding principles forward. Based on their decades-long partnership, they united around a shared goal: to ensure a future rooted in liberty.

Founding Forward draws upon a deep archive of resources, programmatic content, and a 75-acre campus bordering Valley Forge National Historical Park, crucible of the Revolution. The mission of Founding Forward is more than teaching history; it is about equipping the current and next generation with the knowledge and tools to continue the great American experiment.

Directed by a newly formed Board of Trustees, which includes members from both the former Legacy Foundation and Freedoms Foundation boards, Founding Forward establishes itself as a powerful force in promoting the values of liberty, self-governance, and civic responsibility that the founders of the Union League and Eisenhower believed were so indispensable. By bringing together the strengths of both organizations, the collective impact Founding Forward will generate is greater than the sum of its parts.

Founding Forward is honoring the past, while charting a course forward. By fostering a deep understanding of our nation's founding through immersive in-person civic education, we are committed to shaping well-informed, actively engaged leaders who will contribute to a more perfect union.



Strategic Planning

Founding Forward’s strategic plan charts our growth for the next seven years by prioritizing efforts, effectively allocating resources, aligning stakeholders in shared goals, and ensuring that those goals are backed by data and sound reasoning. The strategic plan is an evolving tool that allows daily decisions to be guided by a larger vision.

We enlisted the help of Atlas Network as a third-party facilitator in this process. Atlas Network partners with a wide variety of organizations and has a broad reach in the philanthropic industry. They helped guide us to craft a shared vision and outline our aspirations for the future in relation to the world around us.

Our strategic planning committee was comprised of a group of dedicated volunteer leaders. They met monthly beginning in February 2024 and worked to create a unified mission, vision, and tenets to guide the newly formed organization. These sessions culminated in a two-day planning retreat with Founding Forward senior staff in

August, where three major focus areas were established, specific goals set, and resources and needs identified. We worked to honor the history of Freedoms Foundation and the Legacy Foundation as we created a unified larger organization.



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Mission, Vision, and Tenets



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.

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.

TENETS

- Founding Forward will be a national leader in transformational civic education.
- 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.
- Founding Forward will cultivate a growing network of educators who share our understanding and love of America's founding principles.
- Founding Forward will inspire students with a prestigious and pivotal civic, leadership, and character development experience.
- Founding Forward will implement a national strategy that promotes unifying and shared experiences in civic education.
- 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.

Our Commitment

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

This sentence lays the foundation for a nation that created wealth and happiness in ways that were unimaginable before 1776, and began a world-wide movement of freedom and liberty.

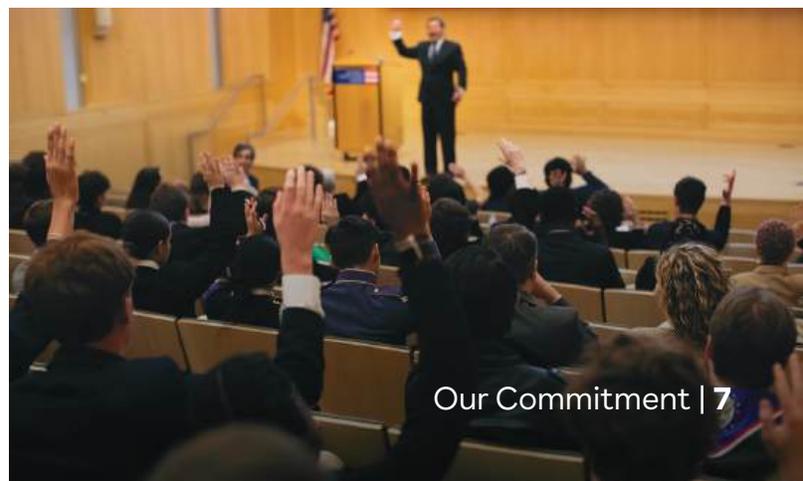
These words are a moral statement. They are a statement of equality. They are a statement of self-evident truths derived not from man, or government, but from a higher power that continues to guide our nation.

Just as the signers sought to define their guiding truths, we seek to define Founding Forward's guiding truths.

WE BELIEVE:

- The founding documents and principles expressed in them must be central to civic education.
- The most impactful way to renew American civic knowledge is through the rising generation.
- In-person face to face interactions are the best way to improve civic discourse.
- Immersive place-based learning is the most powerful tool for teaching an appreciation and understanding of American history.
- Scholarly content-rich programming is paramount to transformative educational experiences.
- Civic education is the responsibility of every American citizen.

This strategic plan outlines the next seven years, but our commitment is to generational transformation beyond our time. We look to create a future where Americans are empowered as engaged citizen leaders to uphold and cherish the founding ideals of self-governance.



Focus Area 1: Teachers

GOAL: Triple program attendance by 2027, with 20% annual growth through 2031

Teachers plant the seeds and nourish the growth of informed and responsible citizenship. Founding Forward's professional development programs will reach the next generation of young Americans by equipping and inspiring dedicated teachers. Beyond the pedagogical "how" on which many professional development courses focus, we emphasize the "what" - recognizing that a deeper understanding of the founding ideals begins with rich scholarly content. Founding Forward brings a diverse cross-section of teachers from around the country together in the places where history happened. There is no learning experience more powerful than walking in the footsteps of the very people you are studying.

WHERE WE'VE BEEN

Over 14,000 educators have participated in Founding Forward programs. 2024 graduate-level teacher programs provided:

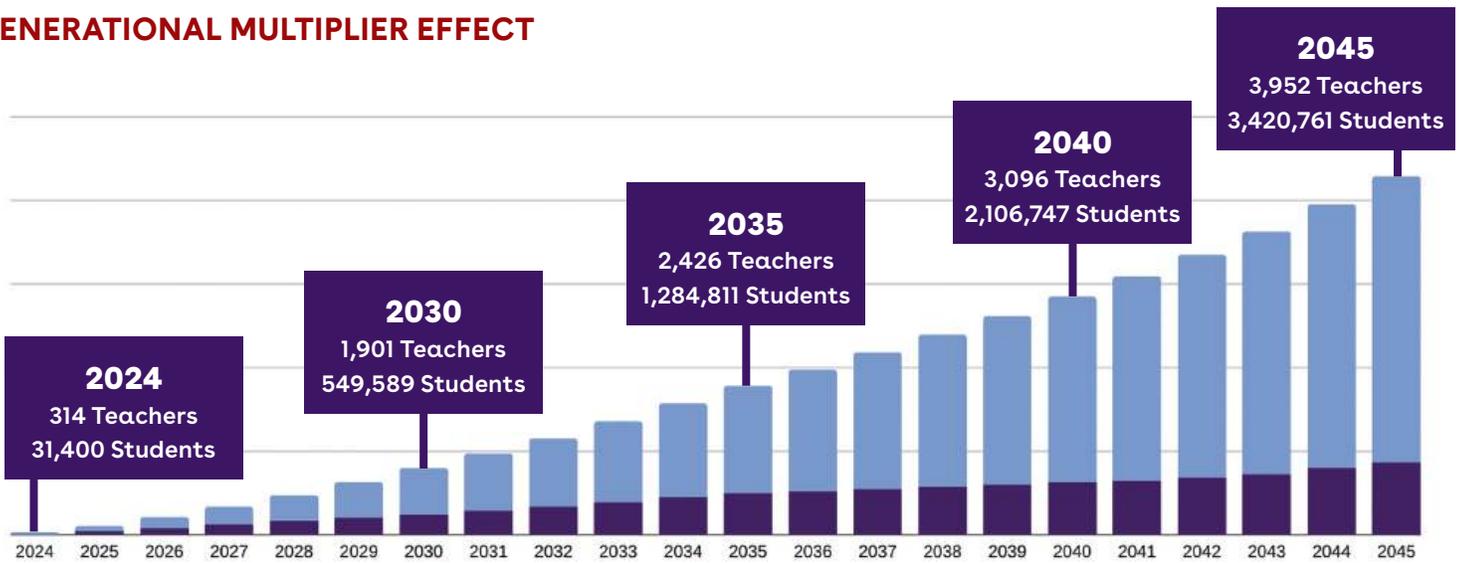
- More than 12,000 hours of content-rich education brought a wide-range of scholarly material and experience to share with teachers.
- 5 residential and 2 traveling programs attended by 314 teachers from 44 states.
- Residential programs moved from retreat-style Valley Forge property to conference-style Union League Liberty Hill property.

OUR IMPACT

- 98% of educators said that student learning in their classroom was positively affected by their participation in Founding Forward programs.
- 75% of educators said that their participation in Founding Forward programs renewed their passion for teaching.
- Teachers value these programs so much that over 90% of attendees opt to donate their registration deposits back to seed scholarships for the next year's programs. In 2024, these donations totaled \$44,000.



GENERATIONAL MULTIPLIER EFFECT



There is a national crisis in civic education that has happened over decades. Founding Forward is looking to right that ship, but it will not happen overnight. The average educator teaches 100 students each year – 3,000 over their career. With the growth in teacher programs, by 2045 having nearly 4,000 teachers attend our programs, we would impact 3,420,761 students annually. This number represents 20% of all high schoolers in the United States.

WHERE WE'RE GOING

Teacher programs are already an excellent product. The goal is to grow these programs immediately, including:

- Run multiple summer residential programs concurrently and increase number of traveling programs
- Add 3-day programs throughout the school year
- Expand to 20 summer programs by 2027, attracting 1,000 teacher attendees and providing 35,000 content hours
- 2028 - 2031: 20% annual growth to reach nearly 2,000 teachers each year by 2031



Focus Area 2: Students

GOAL: Double program attendance by 2027, with 20% annual growth through 2031

Founding Forward’s K-12 programs bring students from across the country to the Valley Forge campus. Students participate in transformative residential programs that allow them to experience history in the places where it happens, to learn and practice civil dialogue with their peers, and to understand their civic responsibilities.

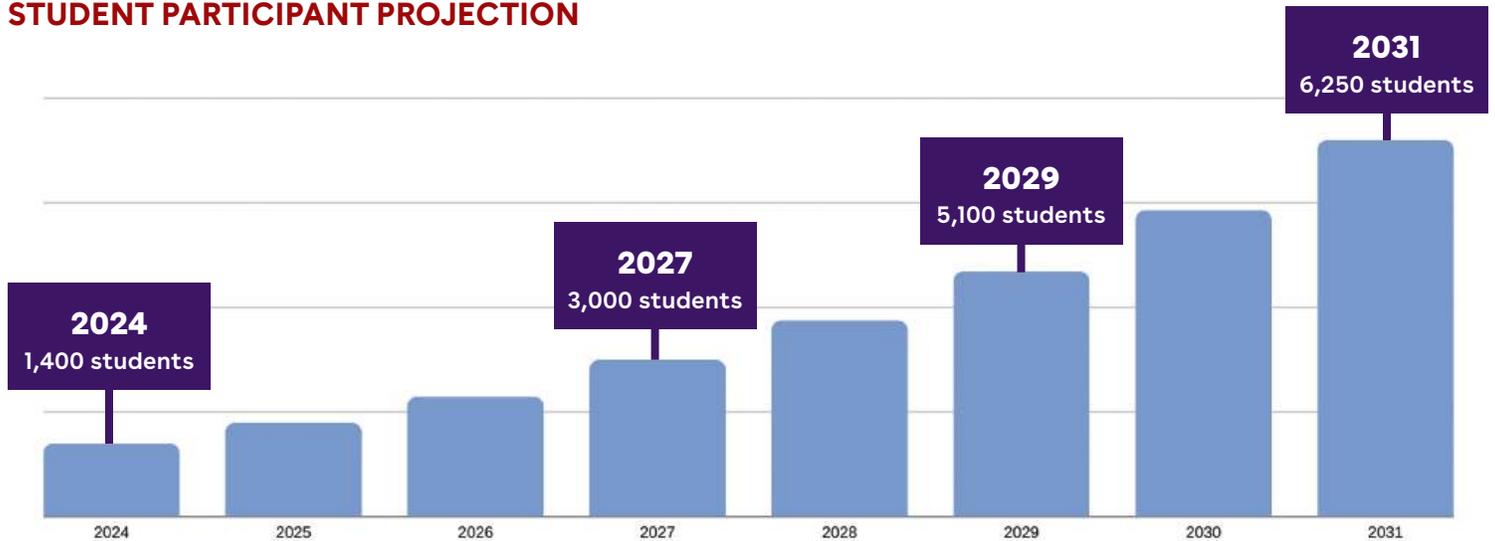
WHERE WE’VE BEEN

Student programs are the longest running education efforts of both previous organizations. Together, over the 75-year history, more than 125,000 students have been educated through these programs. In 2024, a variety of student programs served a total of 1,400 participants.

These programs are positioned for growth. Some have room to grow within their current format. Some are currently at maximum capacity, but could expand through additional locations. With teacher programs moved to Liberty Hill, there is room for new educational opportunities to be developed on the Valley Forge campus.



STUDENT PARTICIPANT PROJECTION



WHERE WE'RE GOING

2025:

- Goal of 1,800 student attendees
- Strengthen local recruitment in the Greater Philadelphia area, including with Union League member families, to bring Spirit of America attendance to full capacity
- Expand additional sessions of Spirit of America
- Pilot summer camp programs
- Pilot Good Citizen Day on-the-road

2026:

- Goal of 2,300 student attendees
- Broaden recruiting reach nationally
- Expand additional sessions of Spirit of America
- Expand additional summer camp programs
- Pilot 3-day programs during the school year

2027:

- Goal of 3,000 student attendees

2028- 2031:

- More than 20% annual growth to reach current full capacity of campus: 6,250 attendees



Focus Area 3: Community

GOAL: Serve as a center of community civic engagement by creating events consistent with our mission.

Founding Forward believes that good citizenship starts at home. To be a good citizen of the country means to be a good citizen in the local community. The Valley Forge campus provides an untapped opportunity to reach the local community, and be a more active civic partner.

WHERE WE'VE BEEN

Through a variety of initiatives - speaker programs, care and stewardship of historic collections and exhibits, and other special events - there is significant outreach to the Philadelphia community. Through these programs, Founding Forward is able to reach thousands of community members beyond students and teachers with these efforts.



WHERE WE'RE GOING

The Valley Forge campus is an inspiring place. It serves to bring the mission and work of Founding Forward to life for more than just the students who attend programs. Through the coming development of the campus, it will become an exciting space to engage the greater community through educational programs, special events, and other possibilities. The historic connection of the Valley Forge location can be further enhanced and celebrated, especially with the idea of directly connecting the campus (particularly the Medal of Honor Grove) with George Washington's Headquarters.



COMING DEVELOPMENTS

Founding Forward aims to activate the campus through a variety of endeavors, including:

- Host several speaker programs annually on the Valley Forge campus
- Expand the existing Medal of Honor Grove programs, such as Veterans Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, and Wreaths Across the Grove
- Harness the unique opportunity presented by the sesquicentennial to commemorate the 250th anniversary of America, highlighting our nation's founding principles
- Develop a trail to directly connect the campus to Valley Forge National Historical Park, specifically to George Washington's Headquarters



Resources and Needs

To achieve these goals, Founding Forward will need many additional resources, including staffing, investments in marketing and recruiting, and physical improvements to the Valley Forge campus.

As of September 2024, the Founding Forward staff includes 19 dedicated, full-time staff, with approximately four additional full-time equivalents through part-time program staff. On the immediate horizon, there are several full-time positions needed in facilities, communications, and education. To reach these goals, there will need to be a major investment in marketing to attract the audiences outlined in this plan and create the demand for these programs.

WHERE WE'RE GOING

More than \$1 million has already been invested for upgrades and beautification of the Valley Forge campus since the merger. New roofs were installed in six of the seven buildings, windows replaced in the three dormitories, beautification to the landscape and entrances, and interior enhancements in the main building. With the relocation of teacher programs to Liberty Hill, the Valley Forge campus will be developed as a student-focused space. The goal is to increase capacity and make the campus an inviting and exciting place.

COMING DEVELOPMENTS

The team has engaged an architect to develop a master plan. Many aspirational projects have already been identified to invigorate the campus and improve the experience, including:

- Increase classroom and breakout room spaces to activate student-learning
- Improve dormitories
- Enhance food services and dining

Among other resources, perhaps most important is the investment in the Valley Forge campus. The goal is to build a campus that can help us broaden our impact with high quality programs.

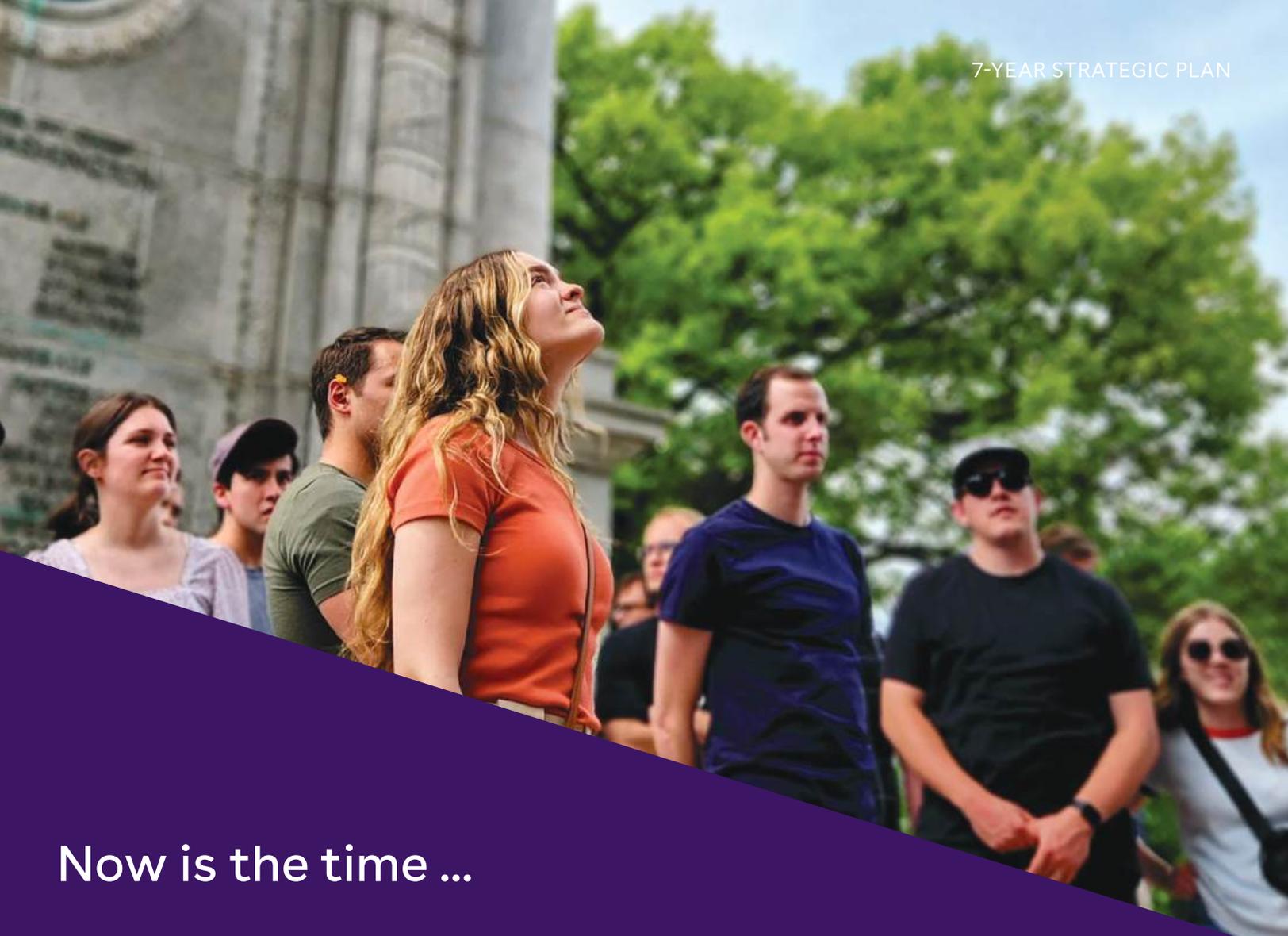
WHERE WE'VE BEEN

The Valley Forge campus was built in the 1960s by the Army Corps of Engineers. It is comprised of seven buildings - three dormitories, a chapel, an archives building, one residential property, and the main building which houses administration, classrooms, event & meeting space, and more. There has not been significant investment in the campus since it was built, and deferred maintenance needs to be addressed to enhance the current spaces.



- Develop multipurpose event spaces
- Construct recreational spaces, including a wiffle ball park
- Create a sense of arrival
- Build a trail to connect the campus to Valley Forge National Historical Park

Many of these ideas will also require infrastructure upgrades, including security, technology, green management, and more.



Now is the time ...

Founding Forward will leverage the deep connections of nationwide partnerships to attract a large and diverse group of teachers and students. The expansion of these programs and the marketing of them to underserved populations is a priority. As Founding Forward continues to broaden its reach, new programs will be added and existing ones will grow, including student and teacher residential programs, Good Citizen Day, scholarship programs, speaker programs, care and use of the historic collections, and more.

Founding Forward will become a national leader in transformational civic education, establish Philadelphia and Valley Forge as a center for civic education, and implement a national strategy that promotes unifying and shared experiences in civic education.

Just as the nation holds a debt of gratitude to those who forged it, Founding Forward believes there is also a profound moral obligation to those who will one day take in their hands the torch of liberty.

Young Americans who are taught to cherish the principles of the nation's founding will be more determined and prepared to defend and advance freedom.

Now is the time to act. The success of Founding Forward depends on continued leadership, excellent programming and educational resources, and donor support and generosity. It depends on individuals who share in Lincoln's belief that America was, and still is, the "last, best hope of Earth," and who believe that the preservation of the fundamental truths enshrined in America's founding will depend on revitalized civic education.

CITATIONS: 1. Wall Street Journal/NORC, 2023. 2. Pew Research Center, 2024. 3. U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 2023. 4. Annenberg School for Communication, 2022. 5. Foundation for Individual Rights & Expression, 2024.

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