

## FREEDOM'S FRONTIER NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

### Strategic Plan: 2026–2029

August 12, 2026

#### MISSION

Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area (FFNHA) is dedicated to building awareness of the struggles for freedom in western Missouri and eastern Kansas. These diverse, interwoven, and nationally important stories grew from a unique physical and cultural landscape. FFNHA inspires respect for multiple perspectives and empowers residents to preserve and share these stories. We achieve our goals through interpretation, preservation, conservation, and education for all residents and visitors.

#### OUR GOALS

1. Build awareness of the struggles for freedom that took place within Freedom's Frontier for current and future generations.
2. Enhance, sustain, and preserve the unique cultural and historic assets within our nationally important landscape.
3. Inspire tolerance and respect for multiple perspectives.
4. Preserve and share our nationally important authentic stories in an engaging way.

#### OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. We will be tolerant and respectful of diverse stories from multiple perspectives.
2. We will respect property rights.
3. We will focus on authentic and engaging experiences.
4. We will honor the region's peoples, past and present.
5. We will appreciate unique cultural and historical assets within the nationally important landscape.
6. We will invest in community engagement, education, and empowerment.
7. We will sustain and grow a sense of pride.
8. We will value and protect the natural environment.
9. We will consider future generations in everything we do.

#### INTRODUCTION

This Strategic Plan outlines both continuing programs and new initiatives for FFNHA over the next three years. It focuses on better serving partner organizations, deepening collaboration, promoting history-related education and heritage tourism, and growing private resources for FFNHA and its partners.

The plan reflects strategic direction set by FFNHA's Board of Trustees. Staff will lead implementation with active Board support. Targeted operations are structured across three key areas: **Programming**, **Preservation & Conservation**, and **Administration**. New initiatives within each area are marked in *italics*. The Board of Trustees and staff will review this strategic plan annually.

## PROGRAMMING

### Grants

FFNHA will continue to support a robust grant program for partners. Existing Heritage Grants, Project Grants, Mini Grants, and Bus on Us Grants will continue based on the availability of federal funding. Other ad hoc grants will be considered as new needs and interests arise.

- **Heritage Grant Program:** Awards up to \$10,000 per grant.
- **Project Grant Program:** Awards up to \$3,000 per grant.
- **Mini Grant Program:** Awards up to \$1,000 per grant.
- **Bus on Us Grant Program:** Awards funding for transportation costs, classroom materials, and other education-based needs.

### Partner Support

Programs and initiatives that support partners who embrace FFNHA's mission and values will remain central to the organization's efforts. FFNHA will continue to administer partner meetings, award events, and trustee-directed special projects.

Key initiatives:

- *Create and implement an online communication and collaboration platform for partners.*
- *Launch a Partner Mentorship Program and Best Practice Sharing initiative to strengthen partner expertise and organizational capacity.*
- *Expand grant-writing support for partners through direct or indirect expertise, training, or grants, including both internal and external opportunities.*
- *Develop a grant calendar that informs partners of regional and national grant opportunities.*
- *Renew and update signage at partner sites.*
- *Explore a mission-based affiliate association program.*

### Education

FFNHA will expand its exhibit program to offer more exhibits that can be displayed at a wider variety of venues and will evaluate opportunities for topic-specific symposia. Additional educational opportunities will be assessed for implementation.

Key initiatives:

- *Develop an educator-focused section within the Monday Minute newsletter.*
- *Expand educational content on FFNHA's website, including curricula and course materials.*
- *Conduct outreach to universities, community colleges, and other academic institutions to promote professional development and grant opportunities.*
- *Deliver at least one symposium each year.*

## **PRESERVATION & CONSERVATION**

FFNHA achieves its mission through interpretation, preservation, conservation, and education. To advance these priorities, this plan focuses on strengthening the capacity of partner organizations to preserve historic resources, safeguard important stories, and support conservation efforts throughout the heritage area.

Key initiatives:

- *Strengthen partnerships with local and regional preservation organizations.*
- *Enhance FFNHA's capacity to identify and connect partners with funding opportunities.*
- *Develop a preservation expertise network to provide technical assistance and support for partner-led preservation initiatives.*

## **ADMINISTRATION**

The organization will undertake several initiatives to improve operations and strengthen its ability to support partners, including improvements to organizational accounting and continued efforts to maximize partner involvement in FFNHA programs and activities. The efforts defined here do not include the many day-to-day staff activities that do not require new initiatives.

### **Advocacy**

Board members, in cooperation with staff, will increase awareness of and support for FFNHA among local, city, county, state, and federal officials.

Key initiatives:

- *Increase awareness of FFNHA's grant awards among state and local officials.*
- *Strengthen local support for heritage tourism through targeted outreach led by trustees.*
- *Expand coalitions with state and local tourism organizations, including offering non-voting board seats to tourism officials.*

### **Resource Development**

FFNHA will continue to strengthen its long-term sustainability through strategic resource development and organizational capacity building.

Key initiatives:

- *Hire a resource development specialist to identify and secure funding opportunities that support and advance FFNHA's mission.*
- *Explore the development of a Freedom's Frontier heritage foundation.*
- *Identify and engage foundations and individuals with a demonstrated interest in historic preservation and philanthropy.*
- *Explore alternative government funding models and structures.*