

# A HOME FOR BRAVE IDEAS



PRESIDENT  
LINCOLN'S COTTAGE

Strategic Plan: Investing in Our Future 2018-2022



*“This is a spiritual  
experience like none I’ve ever had.”*



## THE PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

President Lincoln’s Cottage is a home for brave ideas. This inspiring location in Washington, D.C. is where Abraham Lincoln crafted the Emancipation Proclamation and made crucial decisions about the Civil War. Today, the site offers an intimate, never-before-seen view of Abraham Lincoln’s presidency and private life through authentic experiences that inspire action. President Lincoln’s values of humility, justice, and freedom live on through every interaction at the Cottage.

As we reflect on our past and present, we are taking this opportunity to chart the next five years with an eye toward harnessing the power of President Abraham Lincoln’s sanctuary as a force for good in the world.

When President Lincoln’s Cottage opened to the public in 2008, we immediately established a reputation as a unique and innovative model for historic sites. Yet few could have predicted what we would become in only a decade. In the past year, President Lincoln’s Cottage became an independent 501(c)3 organization, gaining momentum and recognition for our efforts, including:

- Presidential Award for Excellence in Efforts to Combat Human Trafficking
- American Alliance of Museums Award for Innovation in Education
- Best Museum Off the Mall four years in a row
- 50 Best Places to Work in Washington, D.C.

The foresight and vision of our board, staff, and supporters have allowed us to repeatedly achieve our goals and exceed expectations. As a direct result of our successes, we are faced with higher-stakes opportunities and bigger expectations for our impact, which in turn places greater demands on our operation.

**This document serves as a guide to our board, staff, and supporters so we can best steward the future of this brave place together.**

*“The Cottage shows the humanity  
and responsibility we all have to fight  
for justice.”*



## OUR PROCESS

President Lincoln’s Cottage launched the Strategic Planning Task Force in mid-2016 to evaluate which concepts have the greatest mission and vision alignment, the greatest impact, and the best return on investment. It also evaluated what we as an organization can uniquely provide for the local community, the nation, and the world. After in-depth conversations with stakeholders including staff, board members, major donors, and key partners, and extensive workshops, the Task Force made difficult and necessary decisions about which strategies should be priorities over fiscal years 2018-2022. The Board of Directors formally adopted the Strategic Plan on May 18, 2017. The CEO reports on progress against the plan at Board Meetings and provided a comprehensive update to the plan in March 2020.

President Lincoln’s Cottage’s five-year Strategic Plan is divided into four tenets, three strategic streams, and three foundational streams:

- Tenets are beliefs we uphold throughout all aspects of our work.
- Strategic streams are activities we choose to prioritize to achieve our mission and vision in the most direct, unique, effective way possible. These streams play on the inherent tensions embodied in our organization and history of President Lincoln’s Cottage, such as the reality that our work is both timeless and urgent.
- Foundational streams are either activities required by ethical and legal obligation, or what we choose to prioritize to ensure we have the resources and talent to do our best work. If we don’t invest in these areas, we can do nothing else.



# VISION

Plant the seeds of Lincoln's brave ideas around the world so that all people, everywhere, can be free.

# MISSION

Reveal the true Lincoln and continue the fight for freedom.



*“This place reminded me of my  
responsibility as a citizen and keeper  
of my nation.”*



# TENETS

1. We live our mission. Lincoln's character guides the choices we make. It gives us the ability to determine what was and is right, as well as the moral courage to fight for freedom and justice.
2. We emphasize the value of understanding history in all we do.
3. We promote and engage in conscious reflection, which is necessary for effective action.
4. We strive to serve as many people as possible, but care most about the depth of our impact.

# STRATEGIC STREAM 1

# BEACON OF HOPE



## *Empower through Self-reflection*

Preserving this place requires perpetual vigilance and investment. A pilgrimage to this site is like no other pilgrimage, it combines authentic place and story with deep inquiry and dialogue. By revealing the complex truth of President Lincoln, we build trust and together seek answers to burning questions.

- S1.1 Preserve tangible connections to the past
  - FY21-22 Priorities- Cottage Vestibule Restoration; Cottage Woodwork and Paint Restoration; Cottage Mechanical Systems Upgrade
- S1.2 Create transformative experiences
  - FY21-22 Priorities- Special Exhibit on Grief & Child Loss; Landscape Mindfulness Tour
- S1.3 Establish new community connections
  - FY21-22 Priorities- Communities of Loss; City Collaborations

Completed Highlights FY18-20: Veranda Stairs; Historic Pathways; West Balcony; Visitor Impact Study and Publication; Community Program Gallery Redesign; Visitor Orientation Gallery Redesign; Print Collection Special Exhibit; Unity Project; and Collaborative programming with diverse networks and organizations including but not limited to DC Improv, Justice Arts Coalition, Petworth Arts Collaborative; and Constitutional Resource Project, etc.

***“Especially during this time of unease and uncertainty of the future, these reflections are of the utmost importance.”***



# STRATEGIC STREAM 2

# PLACE OF GROWTH

## *Empower with Knowledge*

Meeting the dynamic needs of our growing audiences requires new platforms. The strength of our programming rests in valuing the human experience and seeking understanding, two things Lincoln demonstrated here. By developing responsive, scalable tools and capacity, we can position ourselves to better serve our communities' changing needs.

- S2.1 Serve more students with adaptable programs
  - FY21-22 Priorities- "Social Studies" PS-3 and PK-4 Pilot Program; Adapt curriculum for home/individualized use
- S2.2 Strengthen virtual engagement
  - FY21-22 Priorities- Q&Abe Podcast Seasons 3-6; Adapt Open Field Project virtual classroom program for virtual family use
- S2.3 Leverage position as conveners and leaders to influence field-wide outcomes
  - FY21-22 Priorities- Historical Empathy Workshops; Lead national and regional sessions and publish on best practices

Completed Highlights FY18-20: International NEH conversation on the cultural economy; Q&Abe Podcast Seasons 1 and 2; Open Fields Distance Learning Program Pilot and Kits; Collaborations including DC Public Schools; DC Collaborative; Civil War Washington Museum Consortium; Department of Education; Department of Health & Human Services; VA Tourism; and Destination DC; Diverse publications on exhibitions and social justice, transformative experiences, mission, digital minimalism, and creative practice, etc.



## STRATEGIC STREAM 3

# CRUCIBLE OF CHANGE

### *Empower to Action*

Understanding President Lincoln and what happened here is essential to understanding the state of our democracy and freedoms today. From day one, we have interrogated the historical narrative and its legacies. By promoting civic engagement on democracy, freedom, justice, and power today, we strive on to fight for a better future.

- S3.1 Build a network of change-makers
  - FY21-22 Priorities- Students Opposing Slavery Alumni Platform; Pilot Civic Hearing at the Cottage
- S3.2 Call communities to action
  - FY21-22 Priorities- Disseminate Calls to Action from Lincoln Ideas Forum, SOS International Summit; Action Resources in Exhibits
- S3.3 Explore the positive principles underlying Lincoln's change-making leadership
  - FY21-22 Priorities- "Center" for Historical Empathy Concept; Mission Advancement through Special Events Partnerships

Completed Highlights FY18-20: Annual Lincoln Ideas Forums focused on hate groups, voting rights, and presidential character; Annual Black History Month program in partnership with Armed Forces Retirement Home on voting rights, legacies of slavery, and civil rights; Collaborations with different organizations including CNN #MyFreedomDay, Department of State; Polaris; International Justice Mission, etc.

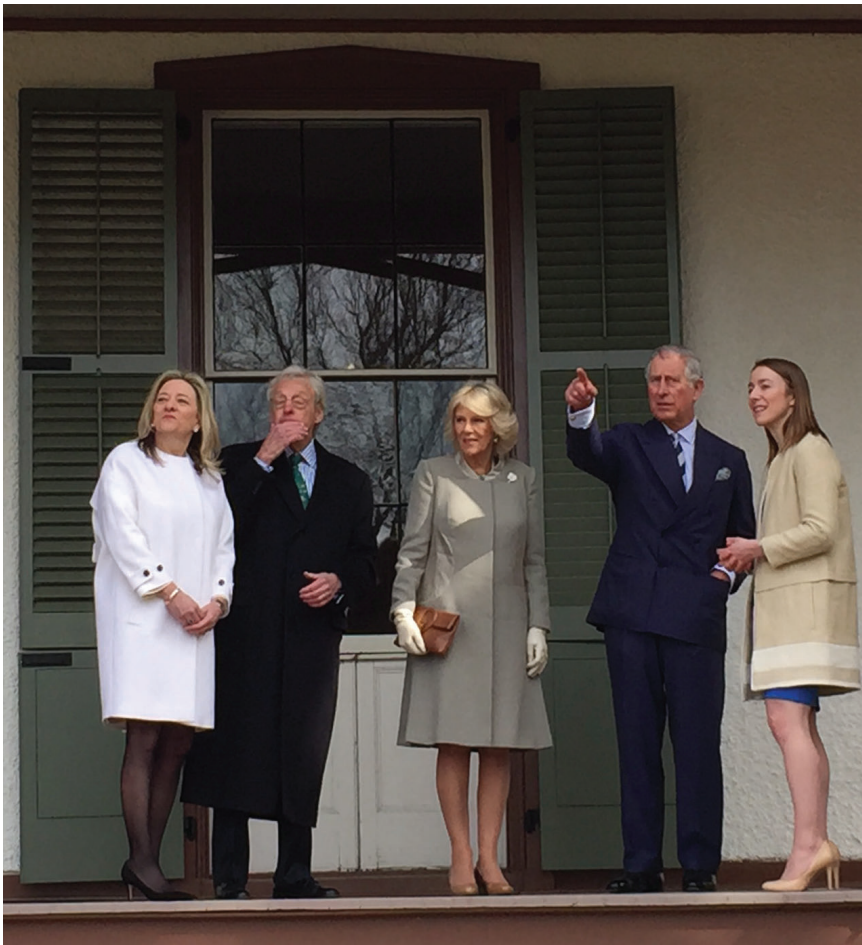




# FOUNDATIONAL STREAM 1

# FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

## *Building for the Future*



We need to grow dedicated resources if we want President Lincoln's Cottage to exist in the future. We are in a league of our own—the only National Monument without federal operating support, a recognized paradigm-shifter in our field. Our uniqueness can create a mismatch with traditional metrics and sources of support, but it also gives us the freedom to pursue our mission.

- F1.1 Broaden and diversify major donor and foundation support
  - FY21-22 Priorities- Board Donor Prospect Conversions; Lincoln Legacy Fund; New Gift Acceptance Policy; Re-Union event
- F1.2 Strengthen revenue streams
  - FY21-22 Priorities- Implement Strategic Marketing Plan recommendations targeted toward strengthening membership and visitation
- F1.3 Invest in marketing and communications
  - FY21-22 Priorities- Implement Strategic Marketing Plan recommendations targeted toward marketing and communications including growing subscribers, website redesign; and strengthening our present on YouTube and other platforms

Completed Highlights FY18-20: Increased donor base; Engaged Development Consultant; Generated over 100 prospects for Moves Management; Grant for Strategic Marketing Plan; Investment Policy Statement; Invested cash reserve; Increased End of Year Appeal Revenue; Added Grounds Pass; Increased Bourbon & Bluegrass Revenue; Accepted to Catalogue for Philanthropy; Secured PPP Loan; Secured DC COVID-19 microgrant, etc.

# FOUNDATIONAL STREAM 2

# OPERATIONAL INTEGRITY

## *License to Operate*



Maintaining the public trust requires we conduct ourselves with transparency, integrity, and accountability. Our Cooperative Agreement to steward the National Monument on behalf of the government requires us to maintain the property for public benefit. We regard exemplary stewardship of historical and financial assets and mindfulness of our environmental and community impact as a baseline.

- F2.1 Evaluate and regularly update controls
  - FY21 Priorities- PCI Compliance Evaluation; Approve and implement updated Financial Policies
- F2.2 Exercise care in how operations affect key stakeholders
  - FY21 Priorities- Data-driven, phased reopening that prioritizes the health and well-being of the team, community, and visitors
- F2.3 Promote transparency across our work
  - FY21 Priorities- Continued, segmented communication regarding the COVID-19 closure and its effect on our people, mission, and communities

Completed Highlights FY18-20: Clean audits all years of operation; no management recommendations past two audits; Full year of operating reserves as of December 2019; Updated Chart of Accounts; Updated Employee Handbook; Separation of duties; etc.

***“It’s a hidden treasure. I experienced an appreciation of our nation in one of the most inspiring but trying times in a way that no other place in DC can do.”***



# FOUNDATIONAL STREAM 3

# PEOPLE & CULTURE



## *Living our Mission*

Supporting our team of experts is essential if we want to continue our track record of delivering on innovative ideas and ambitious goals. People are at the heart of President Lincoln's Cottage. Our commitment to sharing the stories of people from the past is reflected in our investment in the people who carry out the mission today.

- F3.1 Cultivate a smart, healthy, and inclusive culture
  - FY21 Priorities- Retreat on Team Dynamics and Support; Stay Interviews Update
- F3.2 Develop board & staff pipelines
  - FY21 Priorities- Board Growth; Committee Engagement; updated Performance Evaluation tool; Professional Development
- F3.3 Provide top level resources to the team
  - FY21 Priorities- Update Technology and Training; Improve Engagement with Scholarly Advisors

Completed Highlights FY18-20: Annual board self-evaluation; Creation of Compensation Committee; Quarterly staff evaluations; Board growth and diversification; Staff promotions; Creating new policy for alternative work schedules; Stay interviews to deepen understanding of team needs and dynamics; Conscious & Unconscious Bias training; Annual raises and bonuses; Annual professional development for all staff; Annual retreats for all FT and PT staff; etc.



**LET'S BUILD THE FUTURE OF FREEDOM TOGETHER**

[WWW.LINCOLNCOTTAGE.ORG](http://WWW.LINCOLNCOTTAGE.ORG)  
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