

Witness Stones Project

Strategic Plan Executive Summary

2021-2024



Founded in 2017 in Guilford, CT, to tell the truth of Northern slavery and to change the local historical narrative, the Witness Stones Project has since grown to serve 12 public and private schools with over 70 Witness Stones placed in CT, MA, and NH. With an increasing focus on racial reckoning, communities across the Northeast are requesting the Witness Stones Project and its curriculum and the organization is poised for its next phase. In 2020, the Witness Stones Project embarked on a strategic planning process to set forth a roadmap for organizational development over the next three years. Informing the strategic planning process was a stakeholder assessment, in which a dozen stakeholders including educators, researchers, and funders were interviewed. The 8-person board of directors, informed by the stakeholder analysis of WSP's strengths, challenges, and opportunities, participated in the strategic planning process.

In creating the Strategic Plan, the Executive Director, together with the Board of Directors of the Witness Stones Project, created: 1) Mission and Vision; 2) identified key pillars and goals; and 3) created an action plan specifying the actions needed (including an updated budget and fundraising targets) to address the critical issues.

Vision Statement: communities committed to learning their true history, dismantling current inequities, and building a just future.

Mission Statement: to restore the history and honor the humanity of the enslaved individuals who helped build our communities.

Through this strategic planning process, WSP's work is organized around four key pillars:

- 1) Expand and Diversify Student and School Projects
- 2) Strengthen Communications
- 3) Cultivate Network Engagement
- 4) Build Organizational Capacity



1. **Expand and Diversify Student and School Projects:** *Expand the number schools and standardize the building blocks of the curriculum to reach a broader group of students by age (elementary through high school), geographic region, and demographics.*
 - a. Expansion of curriculum with standardized elements for elementary through high school and throughout all regions of the Northeast
 - b. Teacher training and capacity building on WSP's five themes of slavery to make the curriculum accessible to all students.
 - c. Reach a broader group of students, especially in public and urban schools, and implement multi-school, multi-community projects. Goal of 12 new schools per year, with two being in public/urban majority minority schools to reach more students of color.
 - d. Increase community engagement and education through development and delivery of a Witness Stones Project workshop for adult learners.

2. **Strengthen Communications:** *Educate the community and supporters through lectures, presentations, workshops, and publishing.*
 - a. Strengthen brand, website, and internal/external communications
 - b. Increase media visibility for projects and installation ceremonies in communities.
 - c. Publish a book to break new ground in the history of New England slavery and gradual emancipation through a micro-edition which follows one enslaved family's heart wrenching journey from slavery to freedom in early New England.

3. **Cultivate network engagement:** *Build capacity of the WSP network of schools and research affiliates/partners.*
 - a. Create a virtual network and seminar for capacity building, communication, and best practice sharing for WSP's research partners and teachers.

4. **Build organizational capacity:** *Grow WSP into a sustainable organization with research and organizational capacity to meet the demand for its programs.*
 - a. Hire an Executive Director and Research Associate to enable Founding Executive Director to focus time as Education Director.
 - b. Grow and diversify board of directors and create an advisory council.
 - c. Build strategic research partnerships for capacity building and enable scaling of school engagement.
 - d. Launch fundraising campaign to engage individuals, foundations, and companies in supporting WSP's growth and organizational sustainability.