



# Canal Classrooms: Finding a pathway to the classroom through partnerships

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*Photo Courtesy of Mike Mitchell*

# Overview of the C&O Canal



# Finding a Pathway to the Classroom and the value of Strategic Planning



# 1) Look back to move forward

- Conduct an Education Needs Assessment
- Use findings to guide development of a strategy
- Foster support of park management, park staff and partners

## 2) Identify challenges and opportunities

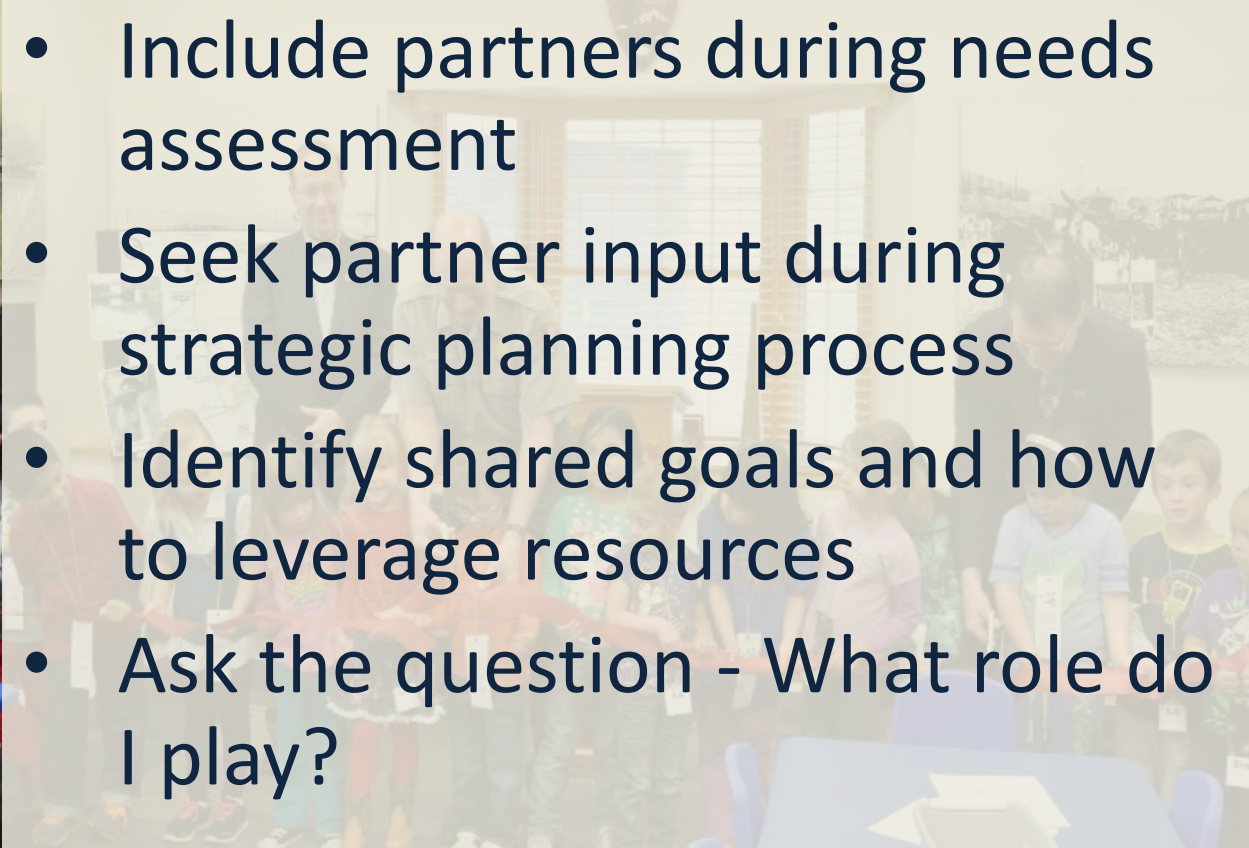
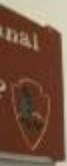
- Limited staffing
- Inconsistency
- Programs do not identify with curriculum standards
- Bus funding is BIG issue for schools
- Wide range of demographics
- LOTS of potential!!!

## 3) Create achievable goals

- Overall theme of strategy - Foster engagement, relevancy and stewardship with youth
- Develop a solution to the limited staffing challenge
- Identify partners and funding
- Create curriculum based programs with local schools
- Increase outreach 3x
- Build on larger NPS goals

# Once you have a plan – find support by growing partnerships

- Include partners during needs assessment
- Seek partner input during strategic planning process
- Identify shared goals and how to leverage resources
- Ask the question - What role do I play?



# 1) Think outside the box when identifying partners and leveraging resources



ALLEGANY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**WCPS** | Washington County Public Schools



**National Park Foundation**™

**AHEC**  
Eastern  
Area Health  
Education Center



**C&O Canal Association**



**Founded in 1954**



## 2) Don't underestimate the support partners bring to the table

- Funding
- 501c3 status
- Strengthens grant proposals
- Volunteers
- Contacts/Outreach in community
- Marketing
- Advocacy

# Bring it full circle – C&O Canal Classrooms Corps

- A group of local educators, retired teachers, and professionals, recruited and trained to deliver curriculum programs to schools visiting the park
- Great example of a partnership between the park, partners, schools and local community!



# 1) Solved our biggest challenge – limited staffing

- How can we do less with more?
- Reduced FTE and limited seasonal positions
- Creates a flexible, scalable program to increase or decrease program delivery to meet school demands at various park locations

## 2) Immense benefits to local communities, park and program

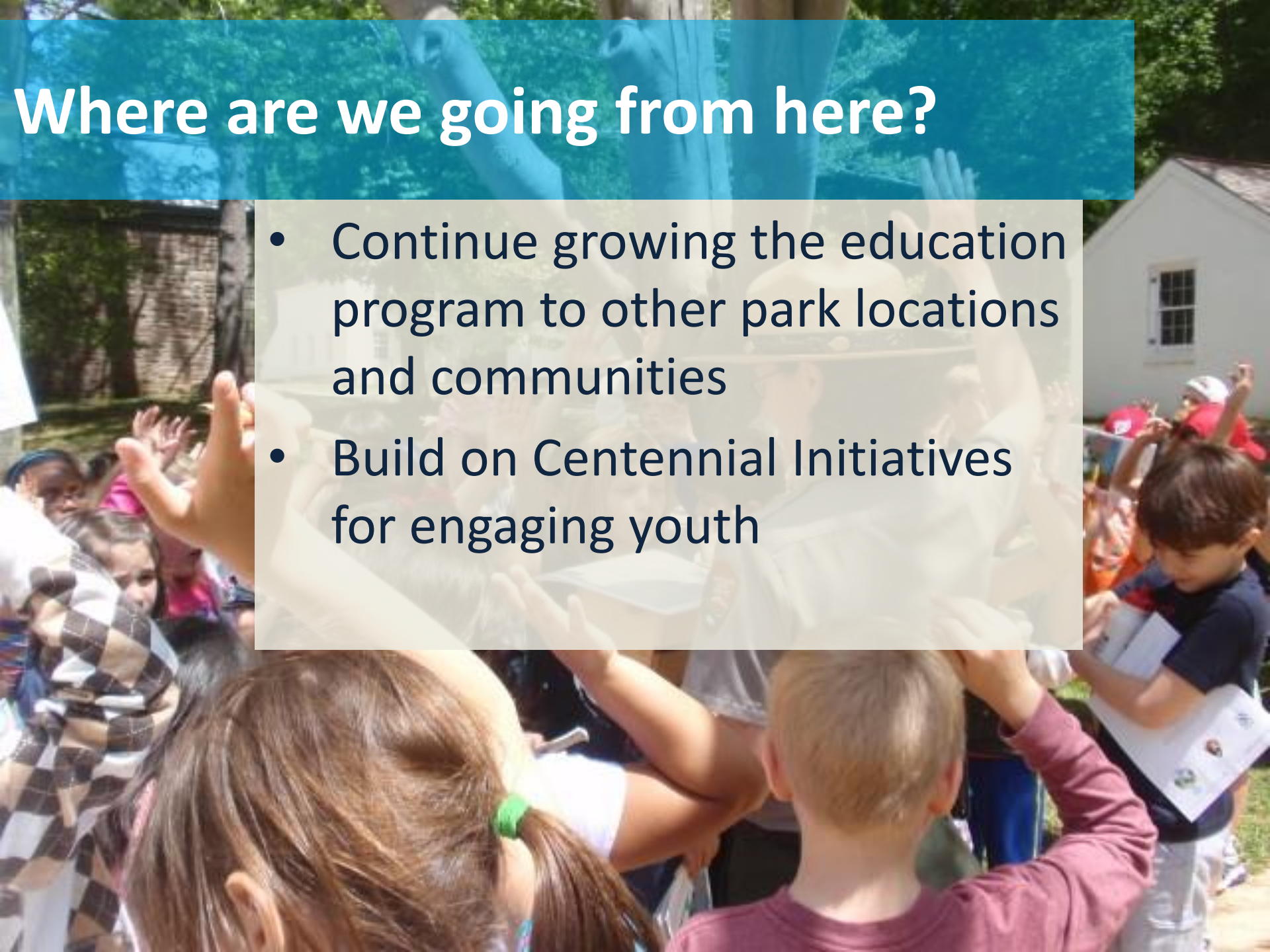
- Experts on curriculum, classroom management, learning techniques and much more
- Creates in-roads with local school system and community
- Advocacy

### 3) Cost efficient, flexible and scalable

- Long-term investment in training of Canal Classroom teachers vs. seasonal staff and interns that offer no guarantee of returning year to year
- Scalable to meet the demand as the program grows to various park locations

# Where are we going from here?

- Continue growing the education program to other park locations and communities
- Build on Centennial Initiatives for engaging youth



# As you go forward, keep in mind...

- Think outside of traditional partners
- Engage local school districts early
- Collaborate with other park staff or nearby parks (who may indirectly support the program)
- Education programs build community awareness and value of your site by engaging students, teachers, parents and families!

# Mapping Partnership Opportunities

1. Draw your park boundary or site.
2. Label important features of your site. (Museum, hiking trail, overlook...)
3. Think about the surrounding community and include key items on your map. (Public and Municipal Buildings, Geologic and Water features, Historic sites...)
4. Now think about a project you are hoping to accomplish. In what way can the surrounding community be a partner in leveraging resources to meet a common goal. (Possible themes – education programs, volunteer opportunities, service learning, digital media outreach...)





Thank you!  
Questions?