

Community Activation Partners Guide

Overview

The **FreedomWalk2026** is a national journey that retraces Underground Railroad routes and reclaims the spirit of liberation. Along the way, we'll host **Community Activations**—local gatherings where history, healing, and hope meet. The activations present valuable opportunities to support the walk and foster engagement with the local community.

Community partners play a vital role in shaping these activations. Whether your community is rooted in historical preservation, social justice, education, or healing, your work helps bring the spirit of freedom into the present.

This guide outlines how to collaborate, what we ask of partners, and the types of activities that align with our mission.

Roles & Responsibilities

CTTT & FreedomWalk2026 Team

- Provide orientation and toolkit to community partners.
- Offer guidance on mission, messaging, and logistics expectations.
- Approve proposed activations to ensure alignment with values.
- CTTT/FW2026 will provide guidance, templates, swipe copy, images to facilitate marketing.

Community Activation Partners

- Lead planning and implementation of the local event.
- Ensure events reflect core values: truth-telling, racial healing, and liberation.
- Collaborate with other groups in the same region (if multiple apply).
- Provide site logistics (venue, parking, permits if required).
- Provide local volunteers to run the event.
- Coordinate security and/or access to public streets and areas with local authorities or local law enforcement.
- Ensure first aid is available, ASL interpreter, and site locations are ADA accessible.
- Have a backup plan for inclement weather if the activation location is initially planned for an outdoor event.
- Provide AV technology and communication equipment for events.
- Establish a timeframe for events (short, long, or full-day event). Provide agendas/timelines for the event.

Activation Ideas

Events should honor the **past, present, and/or future**:

- **Past:** Highlight local Underground Railroad history, preserve cemeteries, support local restoration projects, and honor unsung heroes.
- **Present:** Showcase ongoing justice work (local activists, reparations efforts, preservation campaigns).
- **Future:** Engage youth in envisioning the next 250 years of freedom. Share information on any upcoming projects that align with the mission.

Examples:

- Guided history walks or museum tours.
- Cemetery clean-ups or preservation projects.
- Storytelling circles/community dialogues.
- School partnerships and youth forums.
- Performances (theatre, music, spoken word).
- Interfaith or spiritual gatherings.
- Service projects (food pantry, mutual aid).
- Recognition ceremonies for local freedom keepers.

Talking Points

- The Freedom Walk 2026 retraces the paths of liberation first walked in 1996, echoing the journeys of thousands of freedom seekers and paying homage to their self-determination.
- This is not a political campaign; it is a pilgrimage of history, healing, and liberation.
- Every stop is about **connection**: connecting people to history, to each other, and to a vision of freedom.

- Activations are opportunities for communities to showcase their own stories and ongoing work.

FAQs

Q: How do we apply to host an activation?

A: Complete the Community Activation Application Form (Google Form link provided).

Q: Can more than one group apply in the same city?

A: Yes. Groups will be asked to collaborate on one multifaceted event.

Q: What support will the national team provide?

A: Toolkit, branding materials, promotion via the FreedomWalk2026 website/newsletter, and consultation calls.

Q: Who covers event costs?

A: Local partners are responsible for site costs, volunteers, and programming. The national team may support select core needs (PA system, signage, etc.) on a case-by-case basis.

Q: When should we begin planning?

A: Applications open Fall 2025. Confirmations will be made on a rolling basis, with priority for *base station locations, which are:

1. Sandy Spring, MD
2. Baltimore, MD/Havre de Grace, MD
3. Philadelphia, PA
4. New York City, NY
5. Poughkeepsie, NY
6. Albany, NY
7. Utica, NY
8. Syracuse/Auburn, NY

9. Rochester, NY
10. Buffalo/Niagara Falls, NY
11. Ontario, Canada

*Base stations are locations that were important stops on the Underground Railroad. They will serve as places where the walk team will stay during #FreedomWalk2026 and where community activations will take place. If you have contacts in your area that could assist with food and lodging when we are in your area, please let us know.

Templates & Checklists

Core Criteria (every activation should include):

- Opportunity for the public to meet walkers & connect with the mission.
- Local history component (site, story, or preservation action).
- Recognition of present-day justice work.
- Youth engagement or visioning for the future.

Planning Checklist:

- Venue secured (with parking/transport solutions).
- Permits requested (if public land).
- Event duration set (2–6 hours).
- Sound system/podium arranged.
- Volunteer roles assigned (greeting, accessibility, tech support).
- Communication plan (flyers, social, press outreach).
- Safety and accessibility considerations.
- Provide liaison to communicate with the FreedomWalk2026 planning team.
Preferably, two points of contact are provided.

Application Form (sample fields):

When you are ready, go [here to complete the application](#). The fields below are provided to assist you in preparing your application.

- Organization name & contact.
- Location & proposed dates, which are subject to change.
 - Sandy Spring, MD Monday, May 4, 2026
 - Baltimore/Havre De Grace, MD Sunday, May 10, 2026
 - Philadelphia, PA Sunday, May 17, 2026
 - New York, NY Monday, May 25, 2026
 - Poughkeepsie, NY Sunday, May 31, 2026
 - Albany, NY Saturday, June 6, 2026
 - Syracuse, NY Sunday, June 14, 2026
 - Rochester, NY Sunday, June 21, 2026
 - Buffalo/Niagara, NY Wednesday, July 1, 2026
 - Ontario, Canada July 1-July 4, 2026
- Type of activation (history, service, performance, dialogue, etc.).
- Expected number of participants.
- Core resources available (venue, volunteers, partnerships).
- Support needed from the national team.