



# DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND BELONGING STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW REPORT



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## Introduction/Executive Summary:

In April 2022, Jessica Schmidt of *Orchestrate Inclusion* was engaged as an external consultant to guide the Walla Walla Symphony (WWS) in its process of assessing and aligning its internal imperatives around diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB). After the consultant's initial work via presence at a WWS board retreat, a stakeholder interview process was a first step in building understanding of internal culture and dynamics around DEIB at the WWS, also setting the stage for future strategic choices. The stakeholder interview process was focused on hearing directly from internal stakeholders at the WWS (staff, board, musicians) as well as external stakeholders (including funders and community members) about their ideas regarding the state of the WWS's DEIB efforts. Interviews provided a depth of information from across and outside the organization while inviting stakeholders to share their opinions and observations with an external third party at the start of the WWS's formal DEIB work. While gathering feedback and insight from internal and external stakeholders was the primary focus of the process, inviting WWS stakeholders to enter into deeper organizational conversation about DEIB was an additional goal.

**The intent of this document is to summarize key themes that surfaced across cross-functional stakeholder interviews, presenting a set of potential focus areas for action to the WWS. These options can then be considered and prioritized by the organization and a strategic DEIB plan for the WWS can be built upon the themes from this report, responding to the direct experience and feedback of WWS internal stakeholders.** Keeping in step with the internally focused nature of the stakeholder interview process, the consultant recommends that such a plan be focused on inward growth and serve as a means to build the practice of DEIB work necessary to the WWS's ability to advance healthy external relationships and to build additional accountability for DEIB action.

This report document summarizes the themes that repeatedly rose to the top of stakeholder interview conversations in the summer of 2022, framing them as potential focus areas for action and illustrating them with quotes from interviewed internal stakeholders. Each theme includes:

- *a summary from the perspective and professional opinion of the consultant*
- *a set of supporting stakeholder quotes from interviews*
- *a set of potential strategies for consideration to address the area of focus*

The words of stakeholders have been prioritized as the "heart" of the document. This prioritization is intended to allow stakeholders to see their contributions and experiences reflected in this step of the WWS's long-term DEIB work. Reflection of this type is key in supporting increased internal and external engagement around DEIB throughout the WWS.

The "strategies for consideration" listed under each emerging theme are meant to illustrate a small range of potential actions that could advance work in each theme area. They have been

left intentionally broad and minimal to leave space for the WWS to design and determine its own actions as focus areas are prioritized. With the intent of honoring WWS's finite human and financial capacity, the consultant has worked to name some strategy suggestions which would require little to no additional financial resources alongside ideas that would require greater financial and human resource investment.

The recommended areas for focus emerge from themes across stakeholder interviews and fall into six categories. Each is listed below (not in weighted order):

- 1. Share the WWS' DEIB Vision and Prioritize Shared Learning**
- 2. Standardize the WWS Audition Process, Build Transparency and Strengthen Orchestra Culture**
- 3. Expand Representation in Repertoire and Diversify Venue Locations**
- 4. Utilize WWS Programming to Spark Community Dialogue**
- 5. Share Word of Existing EDCE Work While Expanding the WWS' Role in the Community**
- 6. Activate the Strengths and Respond to the Challenges of Walla Walla**

**On a broader level spanning all areas of focus and beyond, the consultant believes that WWS has a crucial opportunity and obligation to become an organization that understands and is committed to dismantling oppression at all levels.** How the organization grows and continues to respond to the Walla Walla region as a community-based not for profit will impact its future viability at every level of organizational effort. The work of continuing to build internal understanding of the history and development of systems of oppression and committing to move forward in a direction that prioritizes equity, and specifically, racial equity, will be essential for the sustainability of the WWS's mission and ability to serve as a not-for-profit organization.

**Methodology:**

Seven focus groups/interviews involving a total of 27 internal and external stakeholders were conducted by the consultant between July 25 and August 3, 2022. All interviews were conducted via Zoom.

Group interviews were conducted with:

- WWS Board Members
- WWS Musicians (two sessions)
- WWS Staff
- BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) Staff, Musicians and Board Members
- Community Partners (current and potential)
- Funders (major donors, foundations and corporate partners)

*It is important to note that invitations to participate were made across all stakeholder groups and that participants self-selected into the stakeholder conversations. As such, the stakeholder interview report is not meant to serve as a quantitative or comprehensive survey. Rather, the*

act of opening an invitation to all stakeholders with the option to participate was meant to do three things:

- Begin to welcome stakeholders into WWS's DEIB conversation/work, empowering individuals from across the organization and community to begin to build ownership around the topic from their individual perspectives and lived experiences
- Identify a baseline of participation/interest from which to gauge a future increase in participation/interest as DEIB efforts continue at WWS
- Begin to gather input on a qualitative basis from within and outside of the organization

***Stakeholder interviews focused on the following lines of inquiry as related to DEIB:***

- *What do the words "diversity, equity and inclusion" currently mean to WWS?*
- *In regard to DEIB at WWS:*
  - *What is working well?*
  - *What would you like to see, moving forward?*

Using these questions as a guide, each conversation took a unique and natural flow. Within the following summary document, answers to the key questions from the interview process are illustrated directly via the words of the stakeholder interviewees with the desire of representing their experiences and ideas as directly as possible.

Interviewees were assured that their contributions would be included in this report on an anonymous basis. As such, quotes that would identify their speaker by content have been altered to allow for anonymity. In some cases, interviewee role has been included to provide essential perspective for the quote.

***NOTE: information conveyed in the "stakeholder quotes" sections of the report represents personal perspectives and beliefs and as such, could include factual errors. Conflicting information shared during the interviews and included in this report should serve to inform WWS of areas of internal disagreement and/or misunderstanding. Quotes represent the perspectives of a sampling of self-selected stakeholders at one moment in time. They are not meant to represent the whole of experiences or opinions as connected to WWS. Rather, they are offered in this report as pieces of the larger puzzle of WWS's ongoing DEIB work and should be considered within the larger context of WWS's DEIB efforts.***

**“The Walla Walla Symphony delights and challenges our community by providing live orchestral performances and opportunities for learning about music.”**

*“This is not just about inclusion, it is about belonging.” -WWS Stakeholder*

# Stakeholder Interview Themes

## Share the WWS' DEIB Vision and Prioritize Shared Learning

During the interview process, stakeholders representing various roles described how the WWS's organizational journey and their personal DEIB journeys had progressed, noting that focus on representation had evolved to include a more holistic understanding of the intersections between diversity, oppression, equity, and justice. Interviewees were able to articulate specific learning needs in the current developmental moment of the WWS around DEIB. They expressed a desire for continued support around their own learning and examples of processes and best practices in equity work. Stakeholders also named the need for vision, goals and measures within equity work. What are best practices and how might the WWS begin to implement systems across the organization that acknowledge past challenges and model future change?

BIPOC stakeholders, in particular, articulated a desire for DEIB to include consideration of all identities (including and beyond race) and forms of oppression. These stakeholders also noted their deep wish for the WWS to be an organization that included humble learners. One BIPOC stakeholder acknowledged the natural tension between thoughtful forward movement and the need to act with urgency to acknowledge and respond to ongoing systemic oppression.

The WWS has an opportunity to name and share a specific vision for DEIB work- in a way that is "race explicit but not exclusive"- that is unique to the strengths and challenges of the Walla Walla region, then building learning opportunities that meet internal needs, also potentially open DEIB learning opportunities to neighbor organizations. Specificity and transparency around the vision, goals and pace of the WWS's change will serve as key supports of the organization's progress. Organizational centering of marginalized individuals (of all identities) and a focus on maintaining humility in learning will also be essential.

### Stakeholder Quotes:

- *"What is the symphony's goal? What are they trying to do with DEIB? Trying to be more inclusive in its performers? Locations? Trying to do that in its own world? Trying to affect change at the larger level? The WWS needs to be prepared to answer this."*
- *"The Symphony is a nonprofit leader. Would they be willing to share their (DEIB) process or outcome of their process? It may help to create a larger-scale change. The Sherwood Nonprofit Leader Conference might be a place for that to happen." -Funder*
- *"(We) have been talking about DEIB for years at the board level, but not so much at the orchestra level."*
- *"In 2020 the organization seemed to put DEIB at the forefront: inviting musicians to participate in discussions, book readings, a lot of communications with musicians. Prior*

to that, as a musician, I maybe would have only seen that commitment (to DEIB) through programming.”

- *“The summer of 2020 galvanized us to lead the charge. I have a 30+ year background as a musician. I was benefitting from my own privilege and I was being given the opportunity by the symphony to step outside of my circle.”*
- *“We could do a lot better job if we knew how to be inclusive.”*
- *“(We have a) need for gender equity.”*
- *“From my experience, this orchestra has been remarkably gender-inclusive. We had a female conductor back in the 1920’s who was one of the first women conductors in the country, and another one (a woman) since that time.”*
- *“I can’t remember a male concertmaster.”*
- *“I’ve always been very grateful and proud that the organization has been very cognizant of religious diversity.”*
- *“Five years ago, we were focusing on trying to bring diversity to our audience. We had an Audience Development Committee. This might be the origin of DEIB for us. Our efforts were centered around trying to make inroads to communities- bilingual advertising, advertising on Hispanic radio, etc. (We made) efforts in programming, as well. Our learnings were that we needed to direct work internally. Representation was not as top of mind as it should have been. It would have been helpful to have some non-white folks on the board.”*
- *“Diversity goes so far beyond skin color...I would feel better hearing more people speak in this way. It’s so refreshing for Brown People to hear you speak that way. It keeps the benchmark high and accountable and sincere. (DEIB) is ‘not the hottest trend this quarter.’ We can get there, but we have to think about it that way. Every conversation I’ve had at the symphony (about DEIB) has been sticking with skin color.” -BIPOC Stakeholder*
- *“In a perfect world, I’d love for all of (our/)my work to be built around the DEIB transformation of the symphony.”*
- *“If we don’t deal with (BIPOC board members leaving), we are in trouble.”*
- *“We lost Roger and Andrew (on the Board). The concern was that we weren’t listening enough. I thought I was listening, but maybe I wasn’t. They came in and we thought it would be great for this organization, and we didn’t think about how we needed to learn to listen.”*
- *“It’s so easy to reach out to someone for their perspective, and still be so unaware of their perspective.” -BIPOC Stakeholder*
- *“We have proven how quickly things can happen. (Yet,) giving up is fast. Getting things done is slow.” - BIPOC Stakeholder*
- *“(I wish for people to) know that they do not know; to have humility.” -BIPOC Stakeholder*
- *“Start off with learning. People with white privilege are the people who are talking; recognize how ignorant you are. (I wish for the) majority of the organization come to that. (I wish to have) learning partners; humble learning partners.”- BIPOC Stakeholder*

### Potential Strategies:

- Utilizing the WWS website, create a space for sharing vision, goals and updates on the WWS' DEIB actions
  - Share the vision statement for DEIB; what is the goal of this work at the WWS, who does it center, and why is it urgent?
- Include the WWS DEIB vision and goals in the Music Director search, building interview questions from the vision
- Include DEIB as a topic on all large board, musician and staff committee meeting agendas
- Continue to build organizational exploration and understanding of systems of oppression and how they manifest in orchestra environments; apply learnings to examine the WWS with an eye toward dismantling these systems with intention (addressing systems vs. symptoms)
- Capitalize on interest in DEI learning by crowd-sourcing topics for ongoing shared learning and development opportunities across the organization AND among community partners; create a “wish list” curriculum of DEI topics and presenters with the consultant and DEI Workgroup that could be opened to community partners to best utilize limited resources and enhance shared learning
  - Require learning opportunities across staff, board and musician constituent groups; begin to equalize positional power and to signal the priority of DEI work by requiring all WWS stakeholders to participate in learning around DEI
    - Provide implicit bias training opportunities for all current and incoming board members, musicians and administrative staff- including the Music Director
    - Provide anti-oppression learning opportunities for all current and incoming board members, musicians and administrative staff
    - Offer bystander intervention training to internal stakeholders to combat micro and macro-aggressions in various settings
  - Build an ongoing path and associated annual budget for internal stakeholder learning spanning a range of EDI topics
- With support from the consultant and additional teachers and trainers, practice identifying, naming and interrupting power dynamics during meetings or other gatherings that place board, staff and musicians (or a combination of any of these groups) together
- Build and offer continued learning opportunities around the topic of racial and ethnic identity, allowing the WWS to develop specificity and nuance when speaking about race
  - Build deep-dive learning experiences around the local experience of Latin/a/o/x individuals in the Walla Walla region
- Consider, over time, the creation and resourcing of employee affinity or resource groups, allowing individuals to self-identify into small groups of individuals who have similar identities and hold regular, supportive space together



## Standardize the WWS Audition Process, Build Transparency and Strengthen Orchestra Culture

Throughout interviews, internal stakeholders (especially musicians) named their desire for the WWS to continue to formalize, publicize and strengthen artistic processes and practices as a part of overall DEIB work. Specifically, this desire was articulated in four specific areas:

1. Audition Processes and Impact: Interviewees articulated the unknowns of the audition process at the WWS, past and present. They expressed desire for standardization and greater publicity around auditions and review processes (specifically, auditions for substitute musicians and an annual review process for the Music Director), understanding that this level of formalization will also help to lift the WWS into a new tier of public service and performance. Some stakeholders also expressed assumptions about who was interested in or willing to take a WWS audition. How might processes be standardized and publicized, also allowing incorrect assumptions about them to be debunked?
2. Musician Compensation: Similarly, interviewees expressed a wide range of understanding around past and current compensation practices for WWS musicians, especially since the organization originally involved volunteer players. How can facts about compensation and how decisions are made to invite players to perform be shared, widely?
3. Local Focus/Regional Pull: Stakeholders named the “push and pull” the WWS experiences between serving and representing the local community and advancing artistic depth/challenging peers by engaging musicians from outside of the region. Of importance in this conversation is the need to consider the need for expanded demographic representation onstage.
4. Orchestra Culture: Given the WWS’s role as an orchestra that gathers to rehearse and perform on a fairly infrequent basis, interviewees named a desire to find other ways to connect and build personal relationships, internal cohesion and culture. Musician stakeholders noted that they would like to know who will be playing in their sections for each concert in advance of gathering for rehearsal, so as to prepare to build a welcoming environment for all colleagues.

### Stakeholder Quotes:

#### Audition Processes and Impact:

- *“One thing that would really help is more transparency in hiring the musicians. I don’t really know how I was hired. There was no audition process; Yaki liked me, and he hired me. In general, I don’t think we have open auditions, even for substitute players. I don’t know the process for hiring substitute players. I would like to see a greater diversity of people onstage.”*
- *“(Hiring has been about) word of mouth from other players—‘incestuous hiring’-- hiring the people you know from the other players you know.”*

- *“(The WWS has) two different sets of musicians. (There are) professors who come in and don’t have to audition, and community players who had to audition. (There are) different dynamics going on; it’s tough to establish connections.”*
- *“Maybe we need to be more transparent (about auditions). (There might be an) opportunity to bring in a Black, Hispanic or African American professor from Washington State, Central Idaho or Washington University.”*
- *“Musicians of Color are not going to move here to play.”*
- *“I think I pretty much know everyone in town who can play in this orchestra. (There) Isn’t anyone who is even interested in this genre.”*
- *“I’d like to be sure that there is a wide dissemination of information about the audition/playing with the orchestra, without assuming about who might not want to play.”*
- *“We could get a lot of really good players from the region through annual sub auditions/some pre-determined scheduled of auditions. Especially if we are going to include local students; (we should) meet their academic year properly. This used to be the case. Auditions came shortly after Walla Walla College started their school year.”*
- *“With wide publicity of substitute musician auditions, we could potentially find future principal players. Right now, we are all set.”*
- *“(On my wish list is to) have the orchestra represent the community. To have a deep, local pipeline of talent that we are nurturing and supporting and putting on stage.”*
- *“(Would it be) possible also to ask in auditions, ‘what kind of music do you love, and what do you specialize in?’...’what do you bring as a musician in your collegiality/willingness to be a community member?’”*
- *“There hasn’t been an elaborate audition process because the WWS has been a community orchestra.”*
- *“Auditions have never been more than trying out the new college kids who are in town (or) maybe an adult new musician in the fall; (they have been) very casual.”*
- *“For the symphony, DEIB is very complicated. We want the music we perform to be inclusive and diverse and original and exciting, but the musicians on the stage is another aspect we have to consider. When I come to a symphony performance and no one on stage looks like me, then I know this place is not for me. The audience as well.”*
- *“How we deal with failure: what do we do when it’s obvious that we have made a mistake? How do we deal with (Music Directors)? What is the right way to handle (them)? What are our responsibilities? We have to have guidelines in place for how we deal with this.”*
- *“(We need to be able to have a) frank conversation with (a Music Director) and for (them) to not to turn on anyone, as a result.”*

#### Musician Compensation:

- *“It isn’t clear when certain people play and why. It might need to be clarified; it’s causing confusion.”*
- *“I’m not aware of any discrepancies in our pay model. Principals are paid the same.”*

- *"If we are going to have local people (play, we need to) maintain respect for them in the presence of other people who are seen as special. When students go up and see their music teacher (onstage), that's powerful. The assumption that no one can do it locally is false. We need to figure out how to be more welcoming to everyone-- not just students. If the pay scale were published and equal, it would support that idea."*
- *"I've always wondered if the students (who are WWS musicians) get paid."*
- *"If we do want to attract new and talented people, we need to consider equal pay for equal work."*
- *"(Musicians) were being paid different rates when I came on. (When) hiring a professor, they got paid several times more than others of us. (There were) all of these different fee structures. The Board went through a process last summer; Leah wanted to raise the (musician pay) rate. We added a service. Leah is wanting to show respect to the musicians."*
- *"(The musicians pay structure is) a little loosey-goosey. Some people are students, some people are donating their time. I'm not sure that it has been leveled, yet."*
- *"It's like we need equity and appropriate compensation, but retain that community/giving spirit before there was compensation at all."*

#### Local Focus/Regional Pull:

- *"Yaki wants (the WWS) to be regional (vs. local) and to play great music."*
- *"The elephant in the room is where Walla Walla is, geographically. We are extremely lucky to get the quality of players that we are able to get. We are in the middle of nowhere: three hours from Spokane, four to five hours from Seattle with no major metro areas close to us."*
- *"The Tri-cities is a different animal. There are great players coming in; they have transformed the orchestra into a very good regional orchestra."*
- *"I've been pleased to see a renewed effort to include more student players from around here...I hope we're working toward letting places that have students know that auditions are happening."*
- *"We should bring in local people as we can, and we want to have as professional quality a product as possible. It's a balancing act."*
- *"I auditioned for the WWS (flute); I have felt like I won't get the chance in Walla Walla because I'm local, not a professor at a local university; it's a bit strange that the wind players in town might not get a chance to play."*
- *"It's good to bring in ringers to increase the quality. They get far more money than we do; (to compensate for) all the travel and inconvenience for coming. For me, what has happened is that the bringing in of the ringers has caused me to grow as a musician. That's a positive thing."*
- *"It's the people coming in who bring the drive to be better. Folks who are always there are complacent."*

### Orchestra Culture:

- *"We don't have enough time within the orchestra to discuss diversity issues... Our job is to get the concert together in very short order. Once the concert is over, we disperse quickly."*
- *"We are a pretty tight-knit orchestra, considering the way it's set up."*
- *"We rehearse and disperse! There has to be a way to crack that nut."*
- *"I would like to know people from other sections."*
- *"Perhaps some type of social get together (would be helpful). We used to have dinners between rehearsals on Saturdays. The challenge is that a sizeable portion of orchestra does come from out of town."*
- *"There were days when the symphony had a double rehearsal and we had a meal onsite. Even though there were cliques and some continued into the meal, I got to know people."*
- *"(The orchestra) schedule isn't conducive to fostering an environment where you can develop relationships. I don't know everyone in the string section and I've been playing in it for seven years."*
- *"The very structure we have had-- the short rehearsal experience-- (means we are) not as bonded as a group."*
- *"There are people sitting there (onstage) who don't feel a connection to other people. Certain sections are really tight, others don't really know each other."*
- *"I got to know and bond with several musicians in town through chamber music. (It has gone the farthest in terms of making me feel connected to the musical community, here."*
- *"We often don't know who is coming (to play) until they walk into the rehearsal. Emails are often bcc'd out of necessity but on the other hand, we have no idea how to contact people."*
- *"(We need) respectful criticism and respectful listening. If someone isn't doing something well, let's learn how to handle that. Let's get to know students and mix them around so they meet other people"*

### Potential Strategies:

#### Audition Processes and Impact:

- Continue to refine, then share publicly via the WWS website, the WWS's audition procedures and timing
  - Create, via a small musician task force, a list of new musician "must have's" that objectively encompass (prior to interaction with candidates) the artistic and personal/professional skills that the WWS is seeking
  - Consider the creation of a referral system for new musician candidates that prioritizes the expansion of personal circles of connection and awareness
  - Within the task force, revisit formal musician entry procedures to the WWS with intent of standardization and transparency; how might artistic ability AND the whole of what a person brings to the WWS be considered during the deliberation process?

- Build a formal assessment process for all new players based on the “must-haves” list
- Build a feedback loop (via anonymous survey) for new musicians to offer insight into their experience throughout early interactions with the WWS
- Create peer support opportunities and regular check-in’s with existing WWS musicians for new WWS musicians
- Create and utilize an audition hiring matrix for all auditions
- Engage audition committees in bias training prior to auditions
- Name and prioritize the need for expanded racial representation in all WWS hiring processes (including musicians and Music Directors)
  - Using National Alliance for Audition Support (NAAS) orchestra audition demographic categories, collect self-reported demographics of current WWS musicians to build an accurate understanding of current demographic makeup and baseline for growth
  - Assess demographic data to fully understand where holes in representation lie, using the yet to be built organizational vision for DEIB as a guide
  - Set shared metrics for change over a period of 1-3 and 3-5 years at the WWS
  - Share demographic information publicly alongside the WWS DEIB vision to build understanding and accountability for care around broadening representation and the ongoing, multi-faceted effort required to do so
- Create and put into place a consistent evaluation system for the WWS Music Director/Artistic Director including space for feedback from staff, board and musicians

#### Musician Compensation:

- Post musician compensation rates in a shared space (whether online within a universal WWW musician database, backstage, etc.)
- Re-examine and re-share these rates on an annual basis

#### Local Focus/Regional Pull:

- Re-examine the WWS’ mission in the context of the new WWS’ DEIB vision
- In discussion with the new Music Director, Board leadership, staff leadership and musician leadership:
  - Consider articulating how an ideal “mix” of local and regional musicians might look
    - What percentage of musicians from outside of the area would be appropriate given the orchestra’s changing role in the local community?
    - What percentage of local musicians might be appropriate, considering the orchestra’s need to grow artistically while still serving the local area as a primary focus?
    - How can and will racial representation be named as a priority in regard to orchestra membership?

- Share intention around the “mix” of musicians in all audition materials and online to continue to build intentionality and transparency around the discussion and audition processes

#### Orchestra Culture:

- Offer quarterly cross-functional “town hall” meetings, allowing representatives from the board, musicians and administrative staff to communicate current work, needs and questions directly to each other
  - Include updates regarding season planning
  - Include peer-to-peer updates around DEIB work at each level of representation
- Build additional musician-led opportunities for informal, personal and cross-functional connection (i.e.: in-person gatherings of celebration at the start and end of each season, potentially in a community location)
- Engage a cross-functional team to create a set of shared community agreements for use amongst WWS Musicians, Board and Staff
- Post agreements widely (including backstage) and revisit them via a cross-functional team on an annual basis to edit/add/refine based on current need
- Release, via email, a roster sheet to the orchestra prior to rehearsals for any given performance

## Expand Representation in Repertoire and Diversify Venue Locations

Repertoire and venue choice are two specific levers for change directly tied to the mission of the WWS. Stakeholder interviews revealed a variety of perspectives, assumptions and ideas around each. A number of interviewees named the diversification of the WWS's repertoire choices in recent months as a visible sign of DEIB commitment and change. Specifically, recent concerts with the Villalobos Brothers were named as a strength in decision-making. Others stakeholders noted that while they had noticed some change, continued and deepened attention to repertoire expansion was necessary.

Simultaneously, stakeholders named the power of venue selection to convey the WWS' DEIB priorities. The power of using concert venues to send "intentional invitations" to specific communities was articulated. Of note was 1) the potential that a change to the final performance site for Rock Camp (from the current location of Washington Park to the location of the Walla Walla Youth Symphony's performance location) could make in creating equity for the families involved with Rock Camp and 2) a desire for the WWS to continue to build presence in Valle Lindo.

In consideration of both repertoire and venue, the WWS was reminded by its stakeholders that external change without sustained, deep internal work will render hollow. The organization and its internal stakeholders must take care to see all concertgoers as complex human beings with a wide variety of interests, expanding repertoire and venue while being careful not to lock expectations of behavior to one aspect of identity (such as race). In the words of one WWS BIPOC stakeholder:

*"You can bring a person of color to perform (with the WWS), but that won't make me see it. A lot of work that has to be done from the inside out to have a transformation that is sincere and powerful."*

### Stakeholder Quotes:

#### Repertoire:

- *"I've noticed an effort coming from leadership to diversify programming: the Native American piece; 'Banner', by a female African American composer; (the guest) trans singer."*
- *"I've been loving the diversity (in programming) and I love the piece we did with the Oregonian composer, Ethan. I loved that the mythology that the symphony was based on was local and from Trail of Tears. One thing the WWS needs to do is focus on our area. It speaks to how culturally illiterate we are that I had no idea it came from here."*
- *"A part of what we do is free family concerts and children's concerts. The audiences are more diverse than for any of our other concerts."*
- *I hope there is no bias in terms of gender when it comes to our petting zoo. It's amazing what kids are told."*

- *“(The) Villalobos Brothers concert was a turning point for us in looking at the repertoire we perform.”*
- *“Have a variety of types of music- (things that) sound like something I would enjoy. You can then break down barriers and build trust between the community and the institution.”*
- *“(I wish for) more diversity in programming; what we play and where we play. We have 5-6 concerts onstage in our main auditorium a year for a subscription audience. Yakima (Symphony) has a pops series-- four pops concerts sandwiched into the classical series-- and the concerts are packed. You really can build an audience and change an audience’s demographics by offering different kinds of pops programming.”*
- *“Bring not all white musicians.”*
- *“Would love to be sure that musicians who play now are really welcoming to a transgender tenor, a black violist, to everybody. We’ve had a few bumps in the road.”*
- *“Black people here aren’t included, yet. It seems to be that respect for the individuals who attend concerts, whoever they are, is key to make them comfortable at the concerts. I wonder if the choice of programming should be considered? What about the Hispanics?”*
- *“Programming (has been) inclusive and representational.”*
- *“Yaki brought lots of different groups in. (Diversified) repertoire is critical to the long-term vibrancy of the group.”*
- *“(Offer) ‘deliberate invitations’- as examples, include a Native American scholar a part of a larger piece of work- a part of symphonic music. Decenter traditional Bach and Beethoven and put the spotlight on people in our backyard. Highlight underrepresented composers, classes (i.e.- tap dancing!) and non-traditional approaches. Create intentional invitations; other folks deserve to be celebrated and highlighted, artistically and in terms of personnel.”*
- *“The group from Mexico-- the Villalobos Brothers-- (they made) sure people from all identities could participate. We were able to bring students, we identified it and were a part of it. (There was a) sense of feeling welcomed-- this is a place I want to go.”*
- *“I get the idea of having special programming, but sometimes we have special programs people come to but then people don’t come to anything other than those things.”*
- *“(There is a) difference in music. The Hispanic community (holds) difference from the kind of music we play, It is so different, and I don’t think it is transferrable. I went out to the farm labor camp and I heard one of the bands from there. It was highly entertaining, party time, great...(but it) doesn’t translate to performing in a symphony orchestra. It’s like asking your dentist to do heart surgery. To try to jam that into this orchestra? I don’t see how that can work.”*
- *“A major donor established a fund to be sure underrepresented voices are a part of the repertoire.”*
- *“I wish for more performances where POC/Composers of Color are featured. It is the symphony’s greatest power-- the greatest thing they can provide.” -Funder*



## Venue:

- *“My Mother-in-Law didn’t feel comfortable going to the symphony. If she didn’t, why? How would it feel to be a young music student and have to walk into Cordiner Hall? How do we make the whole going to participate in music a more comfortable, more approachable experience? The privilege, money, edifice aspects...if I were new, would I feel comfortable there? The spaces in which we offer music are really important. Having someone you know (there with you), having performances in different venues. Fund new ways to help people feel comfortable.”*
- *“Local players are pretty open to different venues. Wind players (who live) 2-3 hours away would be away (but) summer concert could happen.”*
- *“(I’d like for the WWS to explore) amphitheaters in the area and outdoor possibilities. If the weather worked and people knew about it, we could draw people we’d otherwise never see. Our chamber concerts happening in the parks tend to bring out the same people.”*
- *“My venue ‘dream locations?’ The Walla Walla Artescape, a baseball field, schools, the fairgrounds...”*
- *“Many people don’t feel comfortable at college campuses- Whitman, etc.”*
- *“(Go to) locations of quinceañeras. Freewater has different places to go; the community Center, etc.”*
- *“(The WWS could perform a) Latin program in a Latin American community.”*
- *“Rock Camp is a great program and is very diverse. We perform at Washington Park. That side of town is lower income; (many) families include people in prison. We do Rock Camp there because we care about the community and provide this thing. Here’s the problem with that—the Walla Walla Youth Orchestra performs on the other side of town where there are parks considered to be better. How do we fix that?”*
- *“Go where people are. (Continue to) go to the Labor Camps (Valle Lindo) where you invited the Banda and Folklorico for the first time. Feel their environment...lots of people were there. (This) gets us out of our stony edifices.”*

## Potential Strategies:

- To signal attention toward equity in venue, move Rock Camp’s final performance to the same location as concerts for the Walla Walla Youth Symphony
- Continue to expand WWS work and relationships in Valle Lindo
  - Consider a recurring “jam” or “exchange” session with musicians in Valle Lindo and WWS musicians, allowing for musical exchange on the ground between area residents and the WWS
- Consider programming an active element of representational change at the WWS; continue to build on the work being done to increase representation of identity within composer and guest artist choices
  - Quantify and document demographic representation in current programming; set a shared goal for additional representational change in the short and long-term, whether by season or as a through-line across seasons; build metrics for measurement of growth

- Continue to ensure that music written by underrepresented composers is included across WWS concert programs (vs. programming underrepresented voices or artists in a "one-off" or "stand alone" way)
    - Quantify the season through the lens of current guest artist/conductor choices in the same way, also setting shared goals for change over time
- With board and new Music Director leadership, create a clear line of responsibility for the work of creating, cultivating, and sustaining long-term, reciprocal relationships with people of marginalized identities who guest at the WWS
  - Center the experience of guest artists or composers from a wide range of lived experiences by asking for feedback at pre-determined points in the artistic process and allocating resources to follow-through with suggested changes in process and relationship
- Build deepened understanding of the intersectional nature of both identity and musical interest of individuals who come into contact with the WWS; interrupt generalizations and assumptions around the myth of "individual of X identity wants to hear an artist of the same identity" in order to honor nuance of identity and interest

## Utilize WWS Programming to Spark Community Dialogue

Interviewees spoke openly about the common perceptions surrounding the WWS and orchestras, in general. Descriptors such as “elite” and “sophisticated” were used, and interviewees noted the need for the WWS to continue to focus on creating and sustaining atmospheres of belonging for people of all backgrounds.

A key mechanism that stakeholders suggested to lower real or imagined barriers around the symphony experience was the use of the WWS as a catalyst for community conversation. Interviewees (especially external stakeholders) suggested that additional relevance and belonging could be sparked through the use of orchestral music in creating additional dialogue in the community about important social issues. Stakeholders noted their belief that the WWS could provide a unique and mission-connected service to the community while building deeper relevance by building opportunity for community members to engage around social issue topics that naturally stem from musical works. The consultant notes that this was an idea that was unique to the WWS stakeholder interview process, also reflecting the ability of community stakeholders in the WWS region to speak their interests and needs directly to the WWS and for the organization to be able to respond with flexibility and immediacy.

### Stakeholder Quotes:

Perception of “the symphony”/creating inclusion and belonging:

- *“I’m really interested in getting rid of the sense of elitism in classical music.”*
- *“I sense that (symphony) performances and programming would not be to everyone’s taste- formal and traditional. Folks who might be interested in live music concerts aren’t thinking ‘I’m going to check in on that; that might not be for me.’”*
- *“The symphony goers identify themselves as ‘symphony-goers.’ All symphonies probably deal with this perception.”*
- *“The whole ‘sophistication’ piece has to go! When someone is choosing how to spend their time, they will choose something that feels familiar and where they belong-- and also sounds like it will be fun. The symphony can be fun if you have some experience with what goes on there. If you don’t, it’s not as fun! It could be boring.”*
- *“What value do I get by going to the symphony? If it is not additive, then why (do I do it)? How does going to this space add to my life? Enjoyment or frustration?”*
- *“I’d never seen a symphony show because I didn’t feel like I belong.”*
- *“I’m excited for our community; I feel like the arts play an intrinsic role in building community and bringing community together. Whenever we look at institutionalized conversation about art and who it is for, I’m curious about that.”*
- *“I know how warm and inviting the WWS community can be. A lot of folks don’t know what they are or what they do.”*
- *“The progressive work that the WWS is doing is one of the big things the community sometimes doesn’t know. The WWS is seen as an elite group. It’s seen as elegant and for rich people; the message we have is that it is just for the elite.”*

- *“In respect to creating comfort, as a method of promoting inclusiveness, (there are) ways to make people feel comfortable attending performances that may be intimidating events for people who are not used to attending events.”*

#### Creating Community Dialogue Rooted in Music:

- *“What do I wish for? (I’m) not sure if the WWS ever convenes people for something other than a performance.”*
- *“I deeply want my children to understand difficult things. (The WWS could offer) resources for parents who want to introduce their children to these types of cultural experiences (through real-life topics). As a parent, I am looking for ways to use art to connect my kids to the issues I care about”*
- *“(Build and offer) culturally relevant conversations. West Side Story is an example. Expose kids to different activities, facilitate discussion, build exploration between pieces. Say ‘here’s what this is, this is who wrote it,’ and highlight a social issue. (Offer) learning growth.”*
- *“(Consider offering) ‘digestible conversations;’ Like a slice of pie, (you can) eat and digest, come back to the table and have more. Say to parents, ‘here is a bag of tools you can use inside of your own families connected to this topic.’ Offer a word bank for language.”*
- *“Talk about difficult things that people don’t always talk about. (For example,) with Don Giovanni, have a conversation about domestic violence. Doing the right thing is not always the easy thing. Have a panel discussion, offer community resources; you never know who you are helping out. (These are things) that an arts organization is structured to tackle. Invite those conversations and don’t shy away from real world (issues).”*
- *“(Consider the) role of art in society. The role of opera was to tackle situations...structure conversation to say that yes, we have differences of opinion, but we have critical thinking skills. Operas could keep us busy! As the YWCA, (we are an organization that exists to combat) sexual assault. We would be thrilled to be a part of this!” **(note- this community partner approved their quote being identified with their organization in the interview report)***

#### Potential Strategies:

- Prioritize multilingual communication in all WWS documents
  - Invest in an ongoing Spanish language translator for all WWS written and online materials
- Experiment with facilitated community conversations connected to concerts; use music to inspire shared learning and dialogue
  - Begin to consider potential topics for dialogue creation during the programming process
    - Engage the Music Director in the consideration of how social issues in the WWS area could come to life through programming connected to curated conversation

- Partner with facilitators from local non-profits to design and implement dialogue that builds additional relevance, connection and support to and from the WWS
- Build shared marketing efforts across dialogues/concerts and the WWS/local nonprofits
- Consider a focus on one issue and/or partner nonprofit per season (using programming as a guide) to call deep attention to a social need and allow the WWS to serve as a present partner to another organization
- Engage the Music Director in the implementation of dialogues of this type

## Share Word of Existing EDCE Work While Expanding the WWS' Role in the Community

Conversations with stakeholders revealed simultaneous pride in the WWS's existing education and community engagement (EDCE) work and lack of awareness of its depth. Some interviewees cited specific external program offerings and noted that they had observed these programs as being highly impactful in advancing the WWS's larger DEIB efforts. Others noted the types of programs they wished for the WWS to offer in the future.

Given its size and location, WWS has the unique ability to continue to be highly responsive and agile in hearing and responding to community strengths and needs. As a leading indicator of its ongoing commitment to belonging and equity, it can model and share its leading education and community engagement programs while also reiterating to its stakeholders—both internal and external-- that DEIB work is an ongoing journey, with audience change and retention representing one potential outcome of sustained, hard work over many years. Reciprocal vs. transactional WWS relationships with community can continue to be prioritized and serve as models for other types of relationships in the organization and community. The organization can also continue to emphasize a message of belonging for all, backing this message up via taking small actions (front of house welcome process, offerings program book orientation information, etc.) that build into larger culture change.

### Stakeholder Quotes:

- *"I don't know if a lot of musicians know (about) the outreach that the symphony does prior to concerts; having guest artists go into schools."*
- *"I have been really impressed with the outreach efforts of the orchestra, even before now."*
- *"I didn't know before I was a board member of the volume of (WWS) activity at the community level. I attribute that to Leah; it's a passion of hers and she has acted on it."*
- *"Our original (DEIB) wish list (focused on) diversification of our audience. I would like our broader community to feel included in our audience. Leah is doing a good job on that front. Symphony representatives are reaching out to Hispanic organizations; there are interactions with community."*
- *"Some people and some organizations work quietly; there is great power in the (WWS') education and youth programs for promoting DEIB. This is what creates the future musicians that show up on stage. It creates opportunity for those kids to enjoy symphonic music and new and challenging music. The WWS' programs are fabulous and could be expanded, perhaps." -Funder*
- *"Rock Camp, the lending library, hands-on experience (in the community)/people working together, personal connections (are all examples of current WWS EDCE work)."*
- *"Rock Camp is a success, outreach to community children is a success. I would like to commend the symphony for their educational programs. It would be really nice if the symphony could publicize and get the word out and take a bow. Do that while expanding the program."*

- *“Doing these programs (youth and education) for free is something that sets the WWS apart from other organizations, locally and nationally. (We have a) free instrument lending library for a year at a time. Earlier forms of access (build) class equity. (It is) all intermingled!”*

Expanded education and community engagement work:

- *“(I wish for) people to be able to go out and spend time communicating face-to-face with groups in the community. There are dozens more schools that we should be accessing: rural schools, kids who might not have transportation, Spanish-speaking schools...how can we get them involved? (I’d like) people who have more time and availability to do this (to do it); to have more advocates, more voices in the community communicating with people.”*
- *“The WWS’ education programs are key; they can also be taken out to venues. The Walla Walla Chamber Music Festival had a quartet that had the sole purpose of coming to play for kids and with kids. The response they got going to at least three grade schools was, ‘I want to play the violin.’ Bring people and performers to local venues; places where everyone is comfortable.”*
- *“As a parent, I don’t know how to get my kids involved, I don’t know what’s going on, I’m working two jobs. I would like bilingual communication.”*
- *“We have to be involved in the community. Not just ‘we have a concert to give to you,’ but do something WITH them. (We had a) trombone quartet performance in Jefferson Park. A Cuban man said, ‘I want to sing!’ (The musicians said) ‘Yes, after our performance.’ No. (It turns out that) he wants to sing **now**...”*
- *“I need quite a few free tickets. I have good buddies who work with foster care, Native American friends who I would love to bring to a symphony...(I’d like to) start listening to them and then sit back and listen. How do we build a program with these types of connections (and ask them to) give us their feedback? That’s how we learn.”*
- *“(For) Summer in the Parks, we wanted door hangers in the neighborhoods, but no one wanted to help out. When we come up with actionable steps, if people on a committee or board members are not willing to do it, it has to be something staff can do/are willing to do. Our staff is maxed-out.”*
- *“Have ambassadors out there for the WWS to (extend) a personal invitation.”- Funder*

Potential Strategies:

- Embrace the WWS’ role as a regional orchestra, strategizing how to invest the organization’s limited human and financial resources in specific area communities (i.e.- Valle Lindo)
  - Invest staff time and resources in a process of hearing (via formal and informal conversations) and assessing community need with depth vs. breadth and local engagement as priorities
  - After hearing need, develop a shared, written, multi-year strategy for community engagement that considers 1) depth vs. breadth of programming, and 2) geography of engagement; build a shared “why” for each choice, centering

community need throughout the process (allows program vision to guide resourcing decisions and to inspire new funding opportunities)

- Place resourcing focus on continued co-creation of programs in the community, working with community representatives to design and implement programs that highlight their assets and connect them deeply and personally to the WWS.
- Consider the creation of programs that highlight musical exchange with community members and WWS musicians, placing musical communication and connection at the center of the engagement
- Support and resource EDCE work through WWS board action
  - Request and/or require WWS board members to serve as ambassadors in the community, attending EDCE programming on a regular basis and actively serving to build new and deepened connections with individuals onsite at community locations
  - Create expectations of “on the ground” work for all board members, supporting staff efforts to expand and deepen community relationships
- Continue to shift power in the evaluating the success and efficacy of community programs to the community (vs. WWS internal stakeholders)
  - Create feedback loops for all programs by offering post-program evaluations for participants to complete
  - Budget for a third-party consultant to conduct interviews with partner/community members following community engagement interactions; build assessment of impact and need based on this feedback
- As an element of building long-term, reciprocal relationships with communities, ask external partners to hold the WWS accountable for specific culture change, goals, and DEI metrics
- Educate internal teams deeply regarding the need to engage with and speak about the community using asset-based (vs. deficit-based) language/an asset-based approach



## Activate the Strengths and Respond to the Challenges of Walla Walla

*“Walla Walla is like a snow globe. There are lot of activities going on in the globe, but people on the outside aren’t aware. This could be good or bad. The good is that the community is self-sufficient. The bad is that it could be exclusionary.” -WWS Stakeholder*

Stakeholders spoke candidly about the Walla Walla area community, naming both specific opportunities (such as the depth and breadth of the Hispanic and Latin/a/o/X population in the region and the desire to explore the topic of racial equity at a cross-organizational level) and specific challenges. Some local interviewees named their own assumptions specifically about race and the Walla Walla region-- from stating that they “don’t see race” to naming beliefs about what types of music were and were not compatible with each other.

As with any community, the Walla Walla area has a depth of unique challenges and strengths that the WWS can use to lead its DEIB decision-making and action. The organization has the opportunity to help to lead regional DEIB progress by listening and responding to requests such as funder interest in the advancement of deep equity work. It also has the opportunity to lead the field in the exploration and modeling of DEIB work from the unique perspective of the Walla Walla area, including the process and outcome of its Music Director search.

Included in this work is the need to continue to place specific focus on the identification, cultivation and retention of BIPOC staff, board and musicians, centering the voices of internal and external BIPOC stakeholders and the experiences of other marginalized individuals in the WWS’ DEIB efforts. Vibrant representation across the WWS will be essential to continued perspective-building and organizational thinking. A number of the WWS’ current BIPOC stakeholders noted during interviews that regardless of the region’s idiosyncrasies, constant movement forward was a priority. By centering BIPOC stakeholders in DEIB work, the WWS can move quickly to activate small changes that respond to the direct needs of the region, adding up to larger, ongoing work and regional and national leadership.

### Stakeholder Quotes:

- *“There is a lot more talk about DEIB on the west side of the state than in Walla Walla.”*
- *“The nonprofit sector tends to be ‘out front’ on DEIB issues as connected (/compared) to the rest of the community.”*
- *“A lot of people that believe that, of course, we should have equity in what we do, and do it quietly. There is almost no organization here that is actively working on equity. We created a racial equity fund, and we can’t find people who use it. No one here actively working on it as their main goal”- Funder*
- *“Many of us tackle issues vs. racial equity as a focus. The point of our organization is to get people talking regardless of their backgrounds; to create the conversations.”- Funder*
- *“(An elected leader said) ‘there is no racism in this community.’”*

- *“How do we get people in our community to know it is a luxury to take as much time as they need before they take action? People of Color don’t have the luxury of talking. (I’m interested in) creating something that speaks to that- not making people feel rushed, but taking action. This is the only community I’ve lived in that has the luxury of talking; we talk about it for a year before doing any first step...we need to be mindful of that. At some point, the community gives up.” -BIPOC Stakeholder*
- *“(A Person of Color noted that there is) nowhere to get hair cut (in the area). These are the things we don’t think about. We don’t know what the barriers are. When we do know what they are, we try to fix them.”*
- *“There is a nonprofit confluence group that has monthly meetings.” -Funder*
- *“There is a small population of Black people in Walla Walla and a sizeable population of Hispanic people.”*
- *“I have no reservations at all about anyone’s color, race or gender. I don’t care. That’s none of my business. If someone is trans and can sing like that person (WWS guest artist)? Wow- that’s fantastic.”*
- *“We might spend lots of time and money on advertising, but we don’t have relationships, so they don’t come any way.”*
- *“I don’t think the people we are trying to reach (through free tickets to public schools) are the ones using it.”*
- *“How (should we) market the concerts, and how (should we) convey information to the Spanish speaking community?”*
- *“(I wish to) survey the Spanish-speaking population about perceptions; why they do and don’t come (to the WWS), what they’d like to see, etc.”*
- *“Finding childcare, having a person to go with- these can all can be barriers. How can we encourage people to come without adding a bunch of things to their plate?”*
- *“How can we be equitable in access to our concerts and still make money? (We have an attitude that people ‘won’t come unless it is free’; how can we balance the need for covering costs with access?”*

#### Potential Strategies:

- Place focus on developing new and deepened relationships with individuals who hold identities that are underrepresented within the WWS
  - Consider the creation of an advisory team comprised of local Latina/o/X residents, compensated for their ongoing input and engagement
- Gather self-reported board and staff demographics
  - Build clear metrics for change in demographic representation in the short and long-term
  - For the board: gather skill sets and professional experience to create a baseline understanding of board membership; create a board matrix from this information focus on strategically filling areas of need. Use the matrix to identify areas for growth and recruit specifically with multiple aspects of identity in mind
- Expand direct engagement with BIPOC professional membership organizations, locally and nationally (a list of potential organizations can be found here:

<https://humanresources.uchicago.edu/fpg/guides/diversity/professional.shtml>); charge current WWS board members with developing personal relationships

- Build and share transparent internal promotion requirements/paths; how might a staff member be encouraged to continue forward at the WWS, advancing within the organization?
- Develop a regular “check-in” process for new staff members to offer feedback to the WWS and an exit interview process for individuals leaving the staff
- Examine current board structures for barriers to access for people of various lived experiences (i.e.: meetings on one particular day or time, length of meeting, preference of in-person vs. virtual attendance)
- Focus on expansion of the board’s circle; require individual board members to move beyond their current social circles (consider assignment to each board member to serve as an ambassador to an area of the community with whom the WWS is developing a deeper relationship)
  - Host in-person board meetings at partner organization locations (ex: area school or nonprofit partner location) to introduce board members to new neighborhoods and community representatives
    - Create space at each board meeting for a presentation from the partner about their work and community
- Focus on development of relationships with/board recruitment of rising area leaders of color
- Consider term limits for all board members