



2017-2020 Strategic Plan

Mission: Changing lives through the power of writing

Values: Respect - Writing - Community

Vision for 2017-2020: Invest in organizational infrastructure to ensure continuation of acclaimed programming and position and prepare Write Around Portland for growth beyond 2020

Context Statement

Since 1999, Write Around Portland has held more than 650 free 10-week writing workshops for more than 5,000 adults and youth in partnership with more than 200 hospitals, schools, social service agencies, homeless youth shelters, treatment facilities, prisons, low-income residencies and other agencies. These workshops have culminated in more than 200 community readings and the publication of more than 50 books. Every year, more than 275 people volunteer their time and energy to make these programs possible. We also offer fee-based writing workshops for new and seasoned writers, employers, businesses and other groups who want to participate in our workshops while supporting the communities we primarily serve.

In the summer of 2015, we launched a pilot season of workshops in Washington County as part of our 2013-2016 Strategic Plan to replicate our program model and explore possibilities for further geographic growth. The success of the project reaffirmed the need to continue bringing our writing workshops where our participants live and receive services, and in 2016 we adjusted the framework of our program model to better fit a wider geography based on what we learned as a result of this pilot expansion.

Additionally, in 2015 Write Around Portland was selected to be part of a pilot study developed by Public Interest Management Group (PIMG) to assess organizational success. The report described Write Around Portland as “an efficient, effective and successful organization” and noted “it is unusual for a relatively small organization to exhibit this degree of balanced strength in critical areas; this reflects, in part, solid management, leadership and governance.” While no clear weaknesses were identified, the report did note potential challenges including managing operational details related to growth, the strain of growth on staff and finances and the need to evaluate and optimize revenue.

The PIMG report confirmed what we learned from our 2015 Washington County pilot expansion experience: a robust infrastructure—including information technology systems, fundraising, competitive staff compensation, financial systems, outreach plans and other essential supports—is essential to ensuring the continuation of our acclaimed programming.

Based on our findings, this 2017-2020 strategic plan outlines our intention to invest in the essential supports and infrastructure that make our programming possible, to continue to be recognized as a premier writing and nonprofit organization and to lay the groundwork for our next phase as an organization.

Strategy	Key Actions	Timeline/Deadline	Success Indicators
1) Prioritize diversity, equity and inclusion at all levels of the organization to address disparities in current delivery practices and build equitable access.	a) Contact individuals and agencies with knowledge and expertise in creating more inclusive organizations in order to seek out advice, gain support and acquire additional resources/tools	August 2017	Member of Oregon Arts Leaders for Inclusion Coalition; meeting with a representative of the Eliminating Disparities in Child & Youth Collaborative (Coalition of Communities of Color, All Hands Raised) to review the process for using <i>Tool for Organizational Self-Assessment Related to Racial Equity</i> ; a review of equity strategies and plans used by other organizations
	b) Gather data and information to identify barriers that prevent or exclude individuals from engaging with Write Around Portland	December 2017; ongoing	Demographic information compiled about our region, our participants and our Write Around Portland community (compiled for 2016 and then annually thereafter); completed organization self-assessment <i>Tool for Organizational Self-Assessment Related to Racial Equity</i> ; use of resources and tools from Oregon Arts Leaders for Inclusion Coalition
	c) Complete a summary/report with recommended actions for prioritizing equity and inclusion at Write Around Portland	March 2018	A report that summarizes findings (from Key Action 1b) and offers recommendations for next steps
	d) Create a plan to implement recommended action items in summary/report	June 2018	A plan that outlines action recommendations (from Key Action 1c); identifies individuals and teams for implementation; and includes a process for evaluation, making adjustments as needed and reporting on progress
	e) Convene Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) committee to support staff and leadership with implementing equity action items, conducting thoughtful outreach and respectfully engaging with diverse communities	January 2019	A committee comprised of leadership, staff, current and future volunteers, supporters and allies who are engaged in work to help increase diversity and equitable access throughout the organization
	f) Invite workshop participants and partners to volunteer with Write Around Portland and cultivate potential facilitators, staff and board candidates reflective of the communities we serve	Oct 2017, Mar 2018, Oct 2018, Mar 2019, Oct 2019, Mar 2020, Oct 2020	Workshop participants and partners actively and regularly engage in volunteer opportunities and attend Write Around Portland events; all levels of the organization reflect the full diversity of the communities we serve
	g) Board and staff engage in educational activities to increase personal and cultural awareness	Sep 17, Mar 18, Sep 18, Mar 19, Sep 19, Mar 20, Sep 20	Board and staff engage in at least 2 educational activities annually; demonstrate genuine interest and engagement from educational activities; and report on their experiences, expressed growth and increased perspective
2) Identify and integrate targeted development opportunities to ensure the right resource mix for organizational growth and long-term sustainability.	a) Conduct development/fundraising assessment to ensure maximum return on investment	Jun 2017	An internal or external analysis of our diversified revenue streams focused on opportunities for revenue growth
	b) Create and implement three-year development plan to complement strategic plan and update as needed to meet organizational needs	Jan 2017; review and update in Jul 2017 after audit is completed; ongoing	A comprehensive development plan—executed by the Board, Executive Director and Development Director—that maximizes efficiency; continues to diversify and increase funding from individual donors, corporate contributions, events revenue and fees for service; and includes targets and metrics for cultivating major donors and support from businesses
3) Strengthen risk management planning to ensure continued success and protect vital assets.	a) Review and analyze current and future risk management needs to ensure legal compliance and effective governance	Nov 2017	An understanding of the financial, insurance and administrative best practices of comparable organizations and industry standards
	b) Ensure implementation of financial, insurance and administrative best practices to manage current needs and prepare for future growth	Nov 2018	Implemented systems utilize best practices and adequately support current and future organizational needs
	c) Develop staff succession plans	Jul 2017; Jul 2018; Jul 2019; Jul 2020	A plan for retaining highly-skilled and highly-qualified staff, including a competitive compensation and benefits plan, offering professional development opportunities, equitable hiring practices and long-term and emergency planning to ensure continued success; reviewed and updated annually

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4) Build organization and information systems to support ongoing needs and goals.	a) Purchase and implement a file saving/sharing mechanism that backs-up the Write Around Portland network	Jan 2017	A cost-effective and usable system to ensure proper support, continuation and back-up of all electronic files and systems to support organizational needs and programming
	b) Complete inventory of organizational tech needs to ensure maximum efficiency and impact; assess current tech skills of staff and volunteers	Aug 2017	An understanding of our technology support needs as an organization to acquire the right mix of skills and support
	c) Acquire the requisite support to meet our organization and information systems needs	Feb 2018	Reliable information technology systems and supports are in place
	d) Implement ongoing technology assessments and upgrades	Aug 2018; Aug 2019; Aug 2020	A comprehensive, ongoing review and understanding of our technology resources and needs; reviewed and updated annually
5) Align staffing, board membership and volunteer resources to support current and future organizational needs.	a) Map current staffing structures, identify future staffing needs and develop plan to implement as needed and appropriate	Nov 2017; Nov 2019	A function-based staffing structure, a clear sense of who is doing what and an understanding of what staffing should look like to meet current and future needs
	b) Annually review staff compensation and benefits and implement a competitive compensation and benefits plan to help retain highly-skilled and highly-qualified staff	Nov 2017, Nov 2018, Nov 2019, Nov 2020	Funding in place to support competitive compensation and benefits plan
	c) Engage in education and growth opportunities to ensure board and staff have the training, skills and experience needed to fulfill our mission and execute our programming	2017-2020	A board and staff with the training, skills, professional development and organizational support needed to meet responsibilities
	d) Survey and evaluate volunteer skills and roles and identify how volunteer and other resources can meet organizational objectives	Jun 2017	A pool of effective, dedicated volunteers with the experience, skills, training, commitment and diversity to execute our programming and fulfill our mission
	e) Recruit board members with needed skill sets and reflective of the full diversity of the communities we serve to prepare for potential growth and sustain organizational success; ensure smooth transition of executive board positions	2017-2020	10-12 active and engaged board members with the diverse backgrounds, experience and skills necessary to fulfill fiduciary, fundraising and oversight responsibilities
6) Increase visibility and promote our role as a premier generative writing organization in the Portland Metro area.	a) Research and pursue opportunities to serve new populations, grow our programming and/or share our expertise more broadly while balancing the needs of our current programs	Jun 2017 – Dec 2019	20% of workshops are with new partners and/or populations; an understanding of future growth possibilities for Write Around Portland
	b) Identify existing and needed key industry and community leaders; identify specific next steps to leverage/build these relationships with leaders and other groups to earn support and grow awareness and influence	Jan 2018; ongoing	20 key community leaders who know of, are engaged with and help promote Write Around Portland
	c) Bring our writing workshops to employers, businesses and other groups for a fee	2017-2020	Hold at least 4 workshops each year; maintain a list of specific employers, businesses and other groups to contact for future workshop opportunities
	d) Promote Write Around Portland's successes and acclaimed programming during our 20 th anniversary year in 2019	Nov 2018 – Dec 2019	Acknowledgement of anniversary in books, at readings, in marketing materials and online content, in internal and external communications, at annual event and at other events as appropriate
	e) Increase Write Around Portland's presence at conferences, speaking engagements, literary events and other community events	2017-2020	Present or speak at 4 conferences, events, or speaking engagements each year that help increase visibility and promote our role as a premier writing organization
	f) Engage in education and training opportunities to increase staff expertise in outreach and marketing	Aug 2017; ongoing	Staff attend at least one training a year covering topics related to best practices in marketing and outreach

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	g) Convene a committee of volunteers and stakeholders to assist staff with developing and implementing a marketing strategy that aligns with programming and development goals	Jan 2018; ongoing	A marketing committee comprised of staff, volunteers, supporters and allies to support staff in developing and implementing a marketing strategy (reviewed and updated annually); help promote Write Around Portland to the larger community; and help ensure we have the needed support and infrastructure to respond to increased interest in our work
7) Develop procedures to implement, monitor and make adjustments to the strategic plan.	a) Finalize strategic plan for internal and external use	Jan 2017	A final strategic plan to direct planning through 2020
	b) Rollout strategic plan with stakeholders	Feb 2017	Meaningfully engaged stakeholders (donors, volunteers, agency partners, allies, funders and ambassadors) who are motivated and committed to help us reach our goals
	c) Review Strategic Action Plan 2-4 times a year to assess progress toward goals	2017-2020	Board and staff are informed about progress toward strategic goals and are prepared to begin strategic planning for 2021+ in 2020
	d) Create and implement annual action plans	2017-2020	Annual action plans that all board and staff use to create individual work plans and to measure success; Executive Director reports on strategic plan goals and how they relate to day-to-day management
8) ONGOING CORE PROGRAMMING: Bring our program model to the places where people live, go to school and receive services.	a) Hold free, 10-week writing workshops in hospitals, prisons, schools and social service agencies	2017-2020	40 creative writing workshops for more than 425 participants throughout the Portland Metro (Multnomah, Washington and Clackamas Counties) with approximately 20 workshops on the East side of the Willamette river and 20 workshops on the West side of the Willamette river each year
	b) Publish participants' writing and share with broader community	2017-2020	Publish 2 books each year in May and December; print 350 copies of each book in order to distribute/sell anthologies to participants, partners, libraries, bookstores and the general public
	c) Host community readings to connect writers and audiences	2017-2020	Hold 4 readings each year with audiences averaging 125 people per reading; hold smaller readings, including those for populations who cannot attend community readings, reaching about 600 reading attendees per year
	d) Offer generative writing workshops for those who have the resources to pay for them	2017-2020	Continuation of sliding scale, fee-based workshops at HOTLIPS Pizza (twice monthly, drop-in); market-rate workshops at Powell's Books, Portland Art Museum, or other locations (at least four annually, 10 weeks); one-time workshops led by local authors (at least two annually); and other one-time writing workshops with businesses, organizations, or other groups (at least 12 annually)
	e) Recruit, train, engage and inspire volunteers	2017-2020	At least 275 people annually who dedicate the time (equivalent to 40% of our labor with a staff of 4.5 FTE) and skills needed to help us reach our program goals and serve our mission