



# WILMINGTON CHILDREN'S CHORUS

## Strategic Plan 2021-2025

*Empowering young people to change their  
world through music*





# Strategic Plan 2021-2025

## Our history

The Wilmington Children's Chorus (WCC) is dedicated to ensuring all children, regardless of their socioeconomic status, have access to high-quality musical education. The only tuition-free community children's chorus in the nation, *our mission is to empower young people to change their world through music*. Our instruction emphasizes music literacy, singing, culture, and history, and teaches youth and families about responsibility, leadership, and teamwork.

Founded in 2002, WCC has a rich history rooted in the City of Wilmington. WCC began when then-Mayor James M. Baker recommended that a community children's chorus be piloted in the city to offer high-quality musical training free of charge to all youth. Since that time, WCC has grown from a small pilot project of 20 singers to a thriving community institution serving over 400 children annually.

### All of WCC's programs are guided by our values of:

#### Access:

We believe that all children, regardless of their ability to pay, deserve access to high-quality musical instruction.

#### Excellence:

We believe that when you set high standards and give children the support and tools they need to succeed, they can accomplish incredible things.

#### Diversity & Inclusion:

We believe in intentionally fostering a diverse roster so that children and families from many different backgrounds, faiths, ethnicities, races, gender identities and expressions, sexual orientations, and family structures can learn from one another in an environment free from barriers to success.

**It is with these values on our minds and in our hearts that we prepare for the next chapter of WCC's future.**





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## Strategic Priorities

WCC's staff, board, and stakeholders identified four strategic priorities for the next five years. These four priorities detail the support and expansion for WCC's artistic programs, growth in management, marketing, and fundraising efforts, and highlight the importance of music as a tool for social change.

### 2021-2025 Strategic Priorities

**1) Become the leading name in the greater Wilmington region for musical education, performance, and instruction for children from birth to age eighteen.**

The Wilmington Children's Chorus will expand the services of our Performing Choirs, Neighborhood Choirs, and our summer programs to reach more children across the Greater Wilmington area. Through partnerships with afterschool sites, community centers, and student-serving organizations, WCC will reach more students than ever before. This growth in students served will be matched by a growth in audience, as WCC embarks on a concerted effort to engage a broad audience across the community.

In an effort to create a lifelong, musical pathway for children from birth to age eighteen, WCC will pilot our Early Learners Music Program and bring music education to young children, starting at birth. With an increased focus on facilitating connections between our programs, WCC will create pathways for children to learn and grow with us across the many programs we offer. We will connect students with a network of support and musical opportunities that stretches from the cradle to college or their chosen career pathway.



ACCESS



EXCELLENCE



DIVERSITY & INCLUSION



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## 2) Advance **social justice and equity** through **music** for **communities marginalized by racism.**

WCC will continue to advocate for social change. We will prioritize repertoire and concert themes that elevate the voice of communities marginalized by white supremacy and racism. Our staff and board will cultivate a welcoming, diverse, and inclusive community for students and families from all walks of life. This commitment requires a close examination of employment practices that present barriers for BIPOC individuals, the hiring of a staff that reflects the community we serve, and programs that reach across traditional cultural and social boundaries. By connecting youth from diverse backgrounds, WCC will empower our students to work together as a team to shape our community and future.



## 3) Help youth **succeed in life.**

WCC Choristers have gone on to study and work in a wide range of fields. From science to education, business, law, health care, and nonprofits, our students engage in the workforce across many sectors. We seek to instill attributes in our students that set them up for success in life. Lessons on leadership, grit, focus, teamwork, and social-emotional wellness will stay with them long after they graduate from WCC.

## 4) Establish and build upon a reputation of **excellence** in **management** and **fundraising.**

As WCC enters a period of organizational expansion, we anticipate growing our staff and budget to better serve the children of the Wilmington area. Through the addition of new staff members and continued professional development, we will create a team passionate about serving their community through the arts. WCC will establish and build upon a reputation for excellence in management, just as we are known for our excellence in programming. Best practices in fundraising, nonprofit management, and stakeholder engagement will result in increased support for the Wilmington Children's Chorus and long-term stability for the organization.



**ACCESS**



**EXCELLENCE**



**DIVERSITY & INCLUSION**



# Strategic Plan 2021-2025

The Wilmington Children's Chorus has identified many goals and objectives related to our four strategic priorities. The purpose of these goals and objectives is to focus the work of WCC and chart our progress as we improve the lives of children across the Greater Wilmington area.

## Goals & Objectives

**Become the leading name in the greater Wilmington region for musical education, performance, and instruction for children from birth to age eighteen.**

- *Increase the number of youth served through our programs*
  - By 2025, WCC will establish 5 Neighborhood Choir sites serving an average of 40 youth at each site.
  - By 2025, WCC will provide music instruction to a minimum of 4 outside summer camps.
  - By 2025, WCC will expand Performing Choirs by 10% to reach 155 youth per year.
- *Create a cradle to college or career pathway in music education for children ages 0-18*
  - In our 2020-2021 season, WCC staff will investigate partnerships for the Early Learner Music Program
  - In the summer of 2021, WCC will hire a Program Coordinator to manage WCC's programs and increase program connections.
  - By 2026, WCC will have created a cradle to college/career programming pathway to serve children ages 0-18.
  - In our 2021-2022 season, WCC will bring members from one or more Neighborhood Choirs (NC) to sing in at least one major concert with the Performing Choirs.
  - Each year, WCC will recruit members of NC's to participate in summer camps.
  - By September 2022, all NC members who qualify by age and ability will be offered an audition with the Performing Choirs.
  - By September 2022, any NC member accepted into a Performing Choir will receive a staff liaison.
- *Connect with area professionals, educators, and new audience members to serve as a resource and share the work of WCC*
  - Each year, WCC will build a relationship with a minimum of 2 new schools, community centers, or youth outreach programs by offering a workshop, parent meeting, free performance tickets, on-site auditions, etc.
  - In the 2020-2021 season, WCC will circulate our Virtual Neighborhood Choir resources to 10 Delaware teachers
  - Share current research and best practices in aerosol mitigation related to singing and COVID-19 with regional interested parties (including singing-based non-profits, music educators, and the Dept. of Public Health)
  - By 2025, WCC Performing Choirs will engage in a minimum of 3 performances with arts organizations or guest artists that WCC has not performed with during the previous 5 years.





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- By 2025, a minimum of 30 non-family/friend audience members will attend WCC's holiday and spring concerts.
- Each year, WCC will offer discounted alumni tickets to encourage alumni participation in events.
- By the fall of 2021, WCC staff will have crafted a branded marketing plan, focused on recruitment and concert attendance.
- Each year, WCC will offer a free "community performance" and facilitate access to audience members from retirement communities, community centers, group residences, etc.
- WCC staff will complete a feasibility study considering a "subscription experience" where non-family audience goers can gain access to concerts and collaborating events through a single contribution vs. a la carte shopping.
  - In our 2021-2022 season, WCC will pilot providing access to WCC performances on a digital subscription platform.
- **Engage in research to stay abreast of best practices and establish a culture of continuous improvement**
  - During our 2020-2021 season, staff will continue to research and implement best practices in virtual instruction for singing and vocal development.
  - Each year, our staff will prioritize ensemble structures that facilitate the optimal development of a young singing musician.
  - Each year, WCC staff will evaluate ensemble structures and curricula and consider small and large-scale adaptations to facilitate the optimal development of a young singing musician.
  - Each year, we will provide staff training to ensure the organization's norms, values, and culture are preserved as the organization grows.
    - All new artistic staff will receive weekly training and mentoring for a minimum of their first year of employment. This will include a period of rehearsal observation and a gradual increase of responsibilities, if appropriate.

## **Advance social justice and equity through music for communities marginalized by racism.**

- Prioritize concert themes, repertoire, and programming that elevates the voices of marginalized communities and individuals.
  - In our 2020-2021 season, WCC choristers and staff will create and publish a documentary film addressing the twin pandemics of COVID-19 and racism, featuring music that speaks to the times.
  - WCC staff, board, and Chorister's Council will cultivate and nurture a diverse, inclusive, and welcoming community.
  - In 2021, WCC staff and board will examine employment practices and requirements to eliminate barriers of employment for BIPOC individuals.





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- In 2022, WCC will launch a teaching fellowship for BIPOC composers and conductors, in partnership with HBCU's and music institutions.
- When hiring, WCC's ED and the board will prioritize cultivating a staff that reflects the diversity of our community.
- **Support connections across traditional cultural boundaries, promote our values in the community, and speak out on issues of equity**
  - Each year, we will maintain our connections with cultural institutions through meaningful connections, joint advertisements, etc. (target: 4 per year).
  - Each year, we'll provide education and meaningful experiences for choristers, based upon repertoire, to continue fostering understanding between young people from different walks of life.
  - WCC will utilize restorative practices to manage conflicts, restore and improve relationships, and holistically manage behavior.
    - In 2021, WCC staff and Chorister's Council will undergo restorative practices training.

## Help youth succeed in life

- **Choristers enrolled in WCC activities will demonstrate increased achievement in the areas of focus, grit, leadership, teamwork, and social-emotional well-being.**
  - In 2022, WCC will spend >80% of instructional time engaged in values-embedded instruction.
  - By 2023, WCC will create and administer a developmentally appropriate self-assessment tool for measuring the development of desired qualities.
  - By 2025, WCC will have compiled two years of data on the chorister development of desired qualities.
  - WCC will implement trauma-informed practices into all programs in 2021 as a response to COVID-19, isolation, racism, and other traumatizing factors.
  - By 2022, WCC will standardize trauma-informed practices and incorporate them training for student-facing staff & teaching artists.
- **Foster understanding between choristers and families from diverse walks of life to inspire empathy and compassion.**
  - Each year, WCC will reach a diverse group of students.
    - Target demographics: 30% White, 30% Black, 25% Latinx, 5% Asian American 5% Indo-American, and 5% Multiracial or other.
  - Provide mentorship and leadership opportunities for our young people to expand their networks and marketable skill set.
    - In 2021, WCC will craft and pilot our Choristers Council curriculum.
    - In 2022, WCC will solicit feedback from council members and update the curriculum accordingly.
    - By 2025, WCC will have conducted a feasibility study into the creation of an alumni networking/mentoring program.





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## Establish and build upon a reputation of excellence in management and fundraising

- *Grow staff & budget to support the organization*
  - In 2021, WCC will hire and train a Program Coordinator
  - Each year, WCC will budget for professional development. Full-time staff members will engage in at least two meaningful PD experiences.
  - Each year, WCC staff members will conduct training with all teaching artists to ensure consistency of culture and instructional practices.
  - Evaluations will be conducted of all staff & teaching artists on a minimum annual basis to ensure quality & consistency of instruction.
- *Establish and grow relationships with area foundations, for-profit partners, and local philanthropists*
  - Each year, WCC will establish and/or grow relationships with 5 major contributors to arts in our area.
  - In 2021, All WCC leadership will receive training in language and talking points to use when engaging with donors and stakeholders.
    - Post-training, WCC leadership will be able to clearly articulate value to funders and donors resulting in gifts that sustain and grow the future of the organization
    - By 2022, All WCC staff members will self-evaluate as “very comfortable” with engaging with donors and encouraging gifts.
    - Staff members will be evaluated annually for competencies in soliciting/donor engagement.
  - WCC leadership will foster a reputation of responsible management and good outcomes with area foundations and private contributors.
  - In 2021, WCC will create a Major Gifts Plan which will include prospect research, donor cultivation, and retention plans.
  - Each year, WCC will engage with all donors a minimum of three times.
- *Meaningfully engage the WCC Alumni community through targeted communication and outreach*
  - WCC staff & volunteers will create an alumni database.
  - In 2021, an alumni coordinator volunteer will create and administer a survey targeted for alumni choristers and families to determine how they'd like to engage with WCC in the future.
  - In 2022, WCC will create a donor plan to solicit donations from young millennials and Gen Z.

In all of our efforts, we will seek the continued support of our board, WCC families, and community members as we work together to **empower children to change their world through music.**

