



2020-2024 Strategic Plan

PROCESS

In the fall of 2019, Seattle Arts & Lectures (SAL) worked with Angela Powell and Imago Consulting to create a new strategic plan. We began by deeply listening to the community through interviews, focus groups, and surveys. We worked to **gather feedback from a wide range of community members, including compensated focus groups for Black, Indigenous, and people of color communities and people with disabilities. Through this process, we received input from over 800 individuals.**

A working group of board and staff members collaborated on a planning process, culminating in an all-board-and-staff retreat in January 2020 to develop our new plan. The board ratified the new strategic plan in March 2020, and we were preparing to share the plan publicly when the pandemic hit. **We realized quickly that rather than a three-year plan, we actually needed a four-year plan, with the first year focusing on organizational stabilization and the pivot to online programming.**

LEARNING & FEEDBACK

Through this process, we heard SAL has many strengths as a treasured literary organization with **over 30 years of bringing the best writers and thinkers to Seattle stages, and over 25 years of employing local writers to inspire young people in public schools and at Seattle Children's Hospital.**

Assets: SAL has a talented team, a broad base of support, strong momentum, and respondents appreciated the work SAL has been doing to present and amplify Black, Indigenous, and writers of color, and convene conversations around issues of race and social justice.

Opportunities: At the same time, we also heard that the organization is perceived as historically focusing on white, wealthy, older, able-bodied audiences, and needs to do a better job ensuring it is a welcoming place for all, particularly for Black, Indigenous, and people of color, LGBTQ+ people, people with disabilities, and others who are marginalized due to oppression in our society.

In response to community feedback, and as part of our ongoing work to become an anti-racist organization, we developed a new mission, vision, and values, as well as three key strategies to guide our work in the coming years.

MISSION

SAL cultivates transformative experiences through story and language with readers and writers of all generations.

VALUE BELONGING

We believe access is core to belonging, and we bring an intersectional lens to breaking down historical and societal forces that create and enforce racial, economic, access, and geographic barriers. We strive to foster spaces where all community members feel valued, invited, and welcomed in a spirit of mutual inspiration and exchange.

VISION

SAL envisions a future in which story and language continuously and courageously revitalize equity, justice, and belonging.

VALUE RACIAL EQUITY

We bring an anti-racist lens to all of our programmatic and budgetary decisions to work against the historical and present-day effects of white supremacy. We prioritize, amplify, and celebrate the voices, stories, and lived experiences of writers and readers who identify as Black, Indigenous, and people of color in the community and beyond.

VALUE TRANSPARENCY & TRUST

We build trust through transparency in our processes, decision-making, follow-through, and accountability. We prioritize thoughtful, intentional action; responsiveness over reactivity; and regular, open, and honest communication centered on community feedback.

VALUE CURIOSITY

We cultivate curiosity—in our audiences, students, staff, and community members—by providing opportunities for wonder and learning that are rooted in humility and make visionary futures possible.

VALUE JOY

We value the joy forged through individual acts of reading and writing and the connection and community created through the sharing of stories.





STRATEGIES & 2021/22 TACTICS

Our 2020/21 season was a time of recovery, stabilization, and innovation. We learned to produce digital events, worked with schools online, and evolved our approach throughout the year. We implemented new economic justice initiatives including a “pay-what-you-can” ticketing system for online events, and we lowered our most accessible non-student ticket price from \$20 to \$10. Our strategies will remain constant through our next three years (2021-2024), and our tactics will be responsive and evolving—refined, developed, and shared annually as part of the launch of each new season.

STRATEGY ONE

Cultivate a sense of belonging that deepens current relationships and creates new ones

- **Support the curatorial power of Black, Indigenous, and people of color communities** through a new guest-curated literary series in our 2021/22 season. We will pay a guest curator of color to develop the format, theme, location, and name of the series, as well as curate the authors and be involved in the presentation of the events.
- **Increase opportunities for engagement and connection for participants around events and youth programming**, such as partnerships with local organizations to host book clubs around SAL authors, and race and equity professional development trainings to connect WITS writers, teachers, and youth poets.
- **Build and deepen relationships with community partners**, focusing on organizations and businesses led by and supporting Black, Indigenous, and people of color communities and public school partners serving students in historically underfunded neighborhoods.

STRATEGY TWO

Foster community-wide love of and joy in reading and writing

- **Expand the number of students WITS serves**, focusing on historically under-resourced schools with the least access to arts learning experiences and where a majority of students qualify for free and reduced-price meals.
- **Build on Summer Book Bingo, the SAL/on air podcast, our Community Access Tickets (CAT) program, and the Prowda Literary Champion Awards** to increase the number of people who have free access to, and are champions for, the power of reading and writing.
- **Explore new programming and pilot initiatives**, including opportunities for WITS students and teachers to access our public programs, cover events for our blog, and celebrate youth writing from both WITS and the Seattle Youth Poet Laureate (YPL) program in new ways.

STRATEGY THREE

Bolster SAL's organizational expertise and capacity to accomplish our work

- **Provide ongoing training and skill development** focused on equity and anti-racism for SAL's staff, board, WITS writers, interns, and volunteers.
- **Create and sustain greater diversity across SAL**, including staff, board, WITS writers, youth leadership, and volunteers. Invest in paid internships and apprenticeships as a strategy to support diversity at all levels.
- **Increase administrative capacity** by investing in our people, systems, and infrastructure so that we can more fully serve our community and fulfill our mission.