

Humanities Washington Strategic Plan 2023-2027



Letter from Julie & Eric



Dear Friends and Partners,

Like so much in the last few years, the planning process for our 2023-27 Strategic Plan was unique and unusual. Pandemic recovery, profound and growing recognition of unfinished work to build equitable communities, and rapidly changing community needs caused us to dig deep and think creatively as to how the humanities can help drive positive community change.

We are grateful to each of the 300 partners and stakeholders who took the time to tell us what we do well, what we could do better, and what new avenues we should explore. After listening and deeply considering community feedback, a dedicated strategic planning committee engaged in deep discussion and ambitious visioning. This plan synthesizes these great ideas. Many thanks to Shandy Abrahamson (Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction), Andrew Chanse (Spokane Library), Betsy Godlewski (Northwest Museum of Art and Culture), David Powers (Seattle University), and Joshua Heim (Western Arts Alliance) for their work on this plan. We also thank our partners at [Future Work Design](#) for facilitating this process.

Our 2023-27 Strategic Plan builds upon the successes of the last five years and focuses on growing the opportunity explore our **human (i) ties**. We seek to *lead a statewide movement to broaden participation in the humanities, promote the exploration of ideas across perspectives, and keep the foundation of our organization strong*. In support of these objectives, we will innovate within our existing programs and introduce several new initiatives. We hope you will join us as an active participant in this journey!

With great appreciation,

Julie Ziegler

Julie Ziegler

CEO/Executive Director
Humanities Washington

Eric Davis

Eric Davis

Strategic Planning Committee Chair
Dean of Science, Bellevue College

“You bring the greater world to small and rural communities.”

Jane López-Santillana, Snohomish County

How we arrived at this strategy

This strategic plan was developed in 2022 as a collaboration between our **Board of Trustees** and **staff**, facilitated by **Future Work Design**. We grounded our work in four months of community and stakeholder consultation, including:

26 Current Humanities Washington partner organizations

245 Community members from across the state

10 Each of Washington's 10 Congressional Districts represented

The Strategic Plan was drafted in summer/fall 2022 and approved by the Humanities Washington Board of Trustees in February 2023.

Throughout this document you will see the  symbol to **emphasize goals and strategies focused on equity**. As we developed these strategies, Equity and Anti-Racism were central to the dialogue about where Humanities Washington should focus efforts in the future. You will see this focus woven throughout our strategies.



This listening effort produced a Listening Report in spring 2022. Key findings of this report were:

- Stakeholders overwhelmingly support our current mission, vision, and strategic pillars.
- Community stakeholders expressed that HW is on the right track.
- Need to articulate clear values so our communities know what we stand for.
- Stakeholders want HW to drive outcomes in many areas: reduced political polarization, diverse representation among program voices, increased diversity of participants and partners, relevance of topics, awareness of humanities, focus on rural communities, focus on youth and teens, virtual/hybrid participation, strengthening HW's organizational and financial health.
- HW's role in supporting civic engagement, democracy, and community was a particularly strong theme of feedback.

Community Feedback

“There has been increased antagonism and division among people over the past few years as well as the trend for people seeming to feel more comfortable in outwardly, publicly committing aggressions. There needs to be more support for creating cultural understanding, empathy and acceptance.”

Jane López-Santillana,
Snohomish County

“As a public librarian, my biggest concern is how to provide relevant programs that bridge the issues of racial/social justice, generational gaps, and economic inequality. I would love to have the opportunity to provide programming that transcends generational gaps and creates opportunities for everyone to learn from each other about important issues.”

Carlee Osburn,
Pierce County

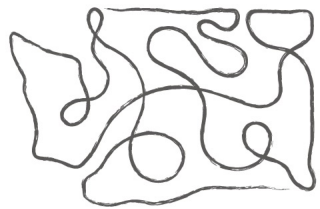
“I’d like to see a public shift about the value of the humanities-- this could be more people wanting to study it, attend events, more celebrated poets and artists, too much money donated that it becomes challenging to manage.”

Sergia Hay,
Tacoma

“(Humanities Washington makes) an effort to be inclusive, not exclusive.”

Maria Allen,
Moses Lake

The humanities strengthen community by exploring the *human ties* that bring us together



Lead Statewide Movement to Broaden Participation in Humanities

Significantly grow cultural participation across programs

Spark lifelong love of Humanities among youth and teens

Advocate for the public humanities and the cultural sector

Promote the Exploration and Exchange of Ideas Across Perspectives



Feature and fund under-represented voices

Elevate diverse ideas to engage audiences across political and cultural differences

Optimize multi-modal digital program experience for participants

Mission

Humanities Washington opens minds and bridges divides by creating spaces to explore different perspectives.

Vision

We envision a state where all people seek a deeper understanding of others, themselves, and the human experience, in order to discern and promote the common good.



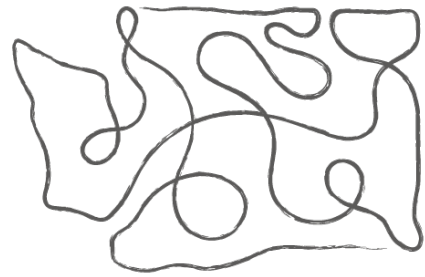
Strengthen Organizational Sustainability

Strengthen financial health and stability

Strengthen Humanities Washington's brand awareness

Support a diverse and talented staff

Ensure ongoing strength of Board of Trustees



STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Lead Statewide Movement to Broaden Participation in Humanities

OBJECTIVES

Significantly grow cultural participation across programs

- Offer programming in more languages
- Grow partnerships across the state with an emphasis on BIPOC-led organizations
- Continue to increase the diversity of scholars working in HW programs

Spark lifelong love of humanities among youth and teens

- Expand reach of current intergenerational programming and identify new opportunities to encourage multi-age programming
- Adapt a youth component to select current HW programs and develop new opportunities for youth engagement in the humanities.
- Involve youth in program development

Advocate for the public humanities and the cultural sector

- Showcase the value of the humanities to civic and public life
- Obtain increased state and federal funding for the humanities
- Actively partner with like-minded state-focused organizations such as ArtsWA, InspireWA, Washington Library Association, and Washington Museum Association



STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Promote the Exploration and Exchange of Ideas Across Perspectives

OBJECTIVES

Feature and fund underrepresented voices

- Develop and implement plan for responsive relationship building with Indigenous partners
- Prioritize needs of communities of color in grant program
- Involve people from a wide range of perspectives in program development.

Engage audiences across political and cultural differences

- Equip program leaders and participants with tools to foster respectful dialogue
- Strengthen data and insights about community interests
- Experiment with new programming models to attract and develop new audiences representing a wider range of perspectives and lived experiences

Optimize multi-modal digital program experience for participants

- Develop and implement multi-modal digital program strategy
- Identify and build creative partnerships to deliver best-in-class digital, hybrid and in-person experiences
- Employ creative uses of social media for program content (TikTok, Instagram Stories, etc.)



STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Strengthen Organizational Sustainability



OBJECTIVES

Strengthen financial health and stability

-  Re-evaluate and re-construct HW's fundraising program through a DEI lens
- Develop and implement an individual giving program
- Launch a major gifts campaign in support of 50th Anniversary

Strengthen Humanities Washington's brand awareness

- Implement brand-awareness campaign
- Leverage media, influencer, and organization partnerships
- Develop and resource an expanded digital communications strategy

Support a diverse and talented staff

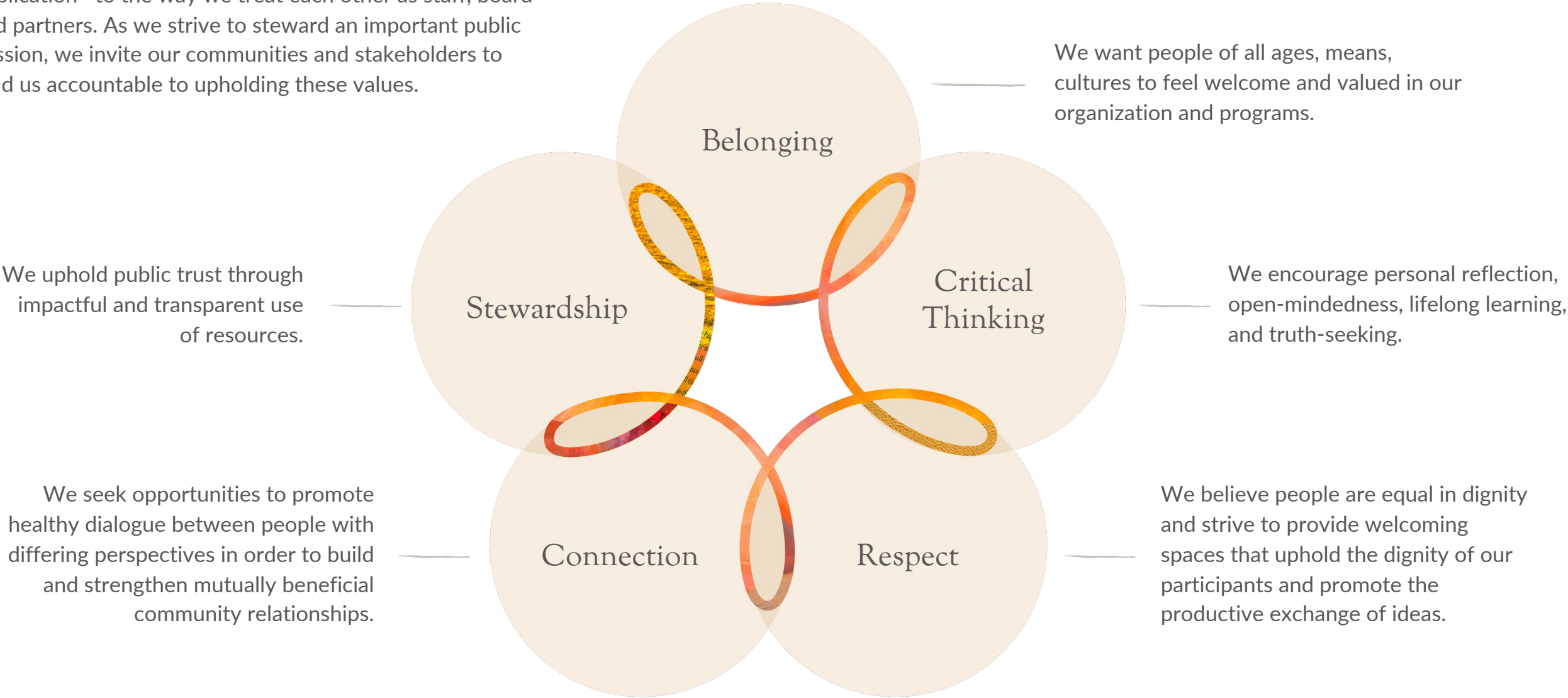
-  Build a supportive hybrid work environment where a diverse team belongs and thrives
- Resource all priorities with adequate staff
-  Create regular opportunities for ongoing education and reflection for equity and inclusion.

Ensure ongoing strength of Board of Trustees

-  Continue training in EDI principles and integration into board operations
- Continue skill building in finance, fundraising, and advocacy/ government relations
- Increase board connectivity to national humanities community
- Grow intra- and inter-community connectivity of trustees

Core Values

These values guide everything we do, from the experience we try to create through each HW program, event, or publication—to the way we treat each other as staff, board and partners. As we strive to steward an important public mission, we invite our communities and stakeholders to hold us accountable to upholding these values.



How we measure impact



How broad is participation in the humanities?

1. # individuals served by/through HW, disaggregated by age, race/ethnicity, and geography
2. # programs with partners, disaggregated by geography
3. # and types of organizational partners, including BIPOC-led and -serving
4. \$ obtained for HW and sector from state and federal sources
5. # of collaborative partnerships with other state-focused organizations



Are people engaging beyond their immediate circle?

1. #/\$ grant funding, disaggregated by age, race/ethnicity, and geography of grantee beneficiaries
2. Track breadth/diversity of topics and voices presented
3. # of new program formats
4. Growth in social media and other digital engagement
5. Program evaluations indicate:
 - Participants feel more confident in their ability to engage across difference
 - HW programs respond to a range of community interests
 - HW programs highlight/are respectful of a range of lived experiences



Does HW have the people and financial resources to support its mission?

1. Financial reserves at 4-6 months operating expenses
2. Growth in individual giving, disaggregated by age, race/ethnicity, and geography
3. General public is more familiar with HW and its programs
4. Organizational Health survey/score
5. Diversity of board, staff and scholars