



BCC's 2019-2024 Strategic Plan Key Pillars and Priorities

In February, 2019, a team of Boston Children's Chorus staff and board members, parents, and supporters convened to complete a five-year strategic plan. Key pillars of the plan include a revised mission statement, core values, a "competency framework" defining singer learning goals, and a means to plan, describe, and measure the experience and impact of BCC singers. This document outlines the salient features of BCC's Strategic Plan, and six priorities for implementation in 2020.

MISSION STATEMENT

Following in-depth internal and external analyses, the strategic planning committee revised BCC's mission statement. The new mission statement focuses the scope of BCC's promise to the community; highlighting connection, empathy, and critical dialogue. Social inquiry, specifically, was called out as a priority; this is the process of critical questioning and informed, open-minded dialogue in pursuit of social justice.

Boston Children's Chorus harnesses the power of music to connect our city's diverse communities, cultivate empathy, and inspire social inquiry.

Following on this refined mission, BCC's Strategic Plan sought to determine where the organization was best positioned to focus its efforts. What could BCC do well, and consistently, to advance justice for our communities through the power of music?

The strategic planning process led BCC to focus its efforts on ensuring *cultural equity* for Boston-area youth.





What is “Cultural Equity”?

According to Americans for the Arts:

Cultural equity embodies the values, policies, and practices that ensure that all people—including but not limited to those who have been historically underrepresented based on race/ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, socioeconomic status, geography, citizenship status, or religion—are represented in the development of arts policy; the support of artists; the nurturing of accessible, thriving venues for expression; and the fair distribution of programmatic, financial, and informational resources.

For BCC, this means that its programs will focus on issues of justice that pertain to advancing recognition, respect, and representation of the diverse cultures that characterize Boston’s landscape. This commitment will be expressed internally and externally.

- Internally, BCC will conduct itself according to a set of values pertaining to cultural equity. This will direct its hiring, pedagogy, curricula, performance venues, guest conductors and composers, marketing practices, pricing, board composition, and partnerships.
- Externally, BCC will espouse these values through its programming, as well as a commitment to deep partnership with organizations embedded within communities of color and underserved communities in Boston.
- Finally, BCC will speak out regarding cultural inequity as it affects its children, their families, and their communities.

VALUES & DEFINITIONS

Next, the planning process helped refine the values by which BCC would conduct itself and that would guide its decision-making. These values are:

Inquiry

We promote a culture of critical questioning and robust dialogue in order to deepen understanding and challenge assumptions.

Diversity

We ensure that a wide range of different voices are represented at the table.

Inclusion

We work to create an environment in which every singer belongs.

Empathy

We inherently value and seek to connect with the lived experience of others.

Artistry

Creativity, expression of meaning, and technical skill are critical to our music making process.



COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

Next, a “competency framework” was developed to define learning goals, or competencies, on which our teaching curriculum and pedagogy will focus. Further, each competency was broken down into three levels – from introductory to advanced. Moving forward, conductors and teaching fellows will use this framework to inform pedagogical practices, with the aim of empowering students to achieve proficiency at each level, in each competency over time.



	PERSONAL	ARTISTIC	PROFESSIONAL	CIVIC
LEVEL I	Recognize and value what makes you an individual	Engage with a variety of musical cultures, recognizing self and others as artists	Practice active listening	Recognize the similarities and differences between self and others
LEVEL II	Engage in self reflection, considering impact of behavior on others	Value individual contribution to the ensemble, demonstrating elementary musicianship	Practice confident communication in group setting	Acquire new perspectives through exploration of historical contexts
LEVEL III	Engage in rigorous and respectful dialogue	Communicate a diverse range of musical styles through proficient musicianship	Initiate thoughtful collaboration, communication, and action	Advocate for self and others, practicing cultural competency

AREAS OF IMPACT

Finally, the planning process sought to define the impact BCC seeks through its work. This is an active effort to envision, and then produce, positive change in the community. Through its programming, BCC seeks impact in the following three areas:

Experience

Our work rigorously explores the question of whose stories are heard, seen, and celebrated. Through our recruitment, staffing, repertoire, pedagogy, and performances, we honor the full diversity of our community.

Understanding

Through collaborative artistry and dialogue, we actively encourage our singers to inquire critically about issues impacting them, their families, and our communities. Over time, this regular practice of critical inquiry cultivates an empathetic, inclusive perspective, allowing our singers to understand what they believe, what they value, and how those affect others.

Action

Equipped with a diverse narrative, critical perspective, and empathy, our singers exercise their power to affect change. They become leaders in their homes, schools, workplaces, and communities, advocating for themselves and for others.



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

In addition to these discoveries and commitments, the strategic plan sought to support BCC's long-term artistic planning, marketing, fundraising, board development, human resource, and financial needs and opportunities. Practical strategies to support each of these areas were organized across a five-year period.

As BCC enters 2020, it commits to the following six strategic priorities:

- 1. Deepen BCC's commitment to the social and educational wellbeing of Boston-area youth through a long-term program plan advancing cultural equity through the power of music.** Through the planning process, BCC committed to several long-term programmatic initiatives, including the deepened use of annual "themes" that focus repertoire and conversation on key issues pertaining to cultural equity; the codification of its unique, culturally responsive choral curriculum and pedagogy; the development of major strategic partnerships with schools and other non-profits; and an expansion of performance and touring opportunities for singers. BCC is only as strong as the quality of its programs. And as such, a plan that commits to advancing cultural equity, social justice, mutual understanding, respect, inclusiveness, and artistic excellence through choral programming must, and will, remain a top priority.
- 2. Increase representation in all BCC choirs of historically under-served and/or under-capitalized communities in the greater Boston area.** While BCC's current choir composition maps closely to the racial and demographic composition of the city of Boston overall, it recognizes that more work can, and must, be done to further engage diverse communities currently under-represented in its choirs. This will include developing and distributing recruitment materials in relevant languages; nurturing robust, bi-directional partnerships with community leaders; seeking to identify and nurture leaders of color; and partnering with parents, alumni and volunteers that can help build new bridges within Boston's diverse communities.
- 3. Engage interested BCC Alumni in service to the BCC mission.** The strategic plan recognized the importance of continued engagement with BCC Alumni, who have gone on to serve their communities with distinction in all walks of life. BCC recognizes that this important group can help BCC advance its engagement, recruitment, and fundraising programs, and will work, specifically, to engage alumni as mentors to interested current singers in an effort to achieve and sustain high levels of retention in all choirs. To jumpstart this work, BCC will engage with the Alumni Council to establish a work-plan in these, and other, areas of service.






4. **Strengthen and support the BCC staff and Board, specifically in its efforts to recruit members that represent the full diversity of our city.** BCC has always prioritized an effort to identify, recruit, and motivate a staff and board that mirrors its mission commitment to cultural equity. It is proud of the staff and board it has built, each of whom shares this fundamental commitment. However, BCC also recognizes that in order to fulfill its mission, it must place additional, intentional emphasis on the continued recruitment of people of color. As such, it will employ the “Rooney Rule” throughout its hiring practices and take steps internally to ensure that organizational culture is not just diverse, but pro-actively inclusive and equitable. This will begin with an assertive search in 2020 to identify an Executive Director who can bring vision, leadership, and lived experience to the important discussions informing BCC’s commitment to cultural equity.
5. **Articulate the change it seeks in the world and measure its success thereupon.** BCC’s strategic plan identified cultural equity as its focus within the broader framework of social justice. It also identified a need to take additional steps to convey the change it seeks to produce in cultural equity through its work. As such, BCC programs will strive to deliver in the three key areas of impact described above. Moving forward, BCC will calibrate its program planning, measurement, and evaluation methodologies to support these goals.
6. **Build its financial resilience.** The plan strengthens BCC’s ongoing effort to build and sustain a financial structure that enables the participation of all families regardless of ability to pay. Additionally, it grapples with the realities of increased costs associated with operating an expanded physical site at 20 Old Colony; fundraising in an increasingly competitive environment; and a shifting landscape at the foundation, corporate and government levels in our City, which has left many non-profits with a greater need to develop earned income and donations from individuals. Its most recently-completed fiscal year (2018-19) illustrated the difficulty of this balance, as BCC activities incurred an operating deficit despite the extraordinary generosity of key donors. Moving forward, BCC will strengthen its fundraising efforts and call upon all BCC stakeholders to consider a constructive role in helping pave a sustainable path forward.

In each of these efforts, BCC will seek the ongoing support, engagement, and contributions of its family of students, parents, alumni, volunteers, board members, partners, and funders – in the pursuit of its mission to **harness the power of music to connect our city’s diverse communities, cultivate empathy, and inspire social inquiry.**

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