



Working Towards Racial Equity

A model for transformational change in outdoor
and environmental science education
organizations

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Prepared by:
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INTRODUCTION

Working Towards Racial Equity (**WTRE**) is a workshop series model that supports Outdoor Environmental Science and Education (**OESE**) organizations in fostering more inclusive, equitable, and just work environments. The model builds on previous work to address the underlying conditions preventing equitable access to participating in programs or obtaining organizational leadership positions for people of color in the OESE field.¹ WTRE's goal is to support organizations in making equity-focused internal changes (operational, cultural, relational) that will, in turn, bring about positive changes in their programming and within their communities. This evaluation report pertains to the 2020-23 National Science Foundation (**NSF**) three-year grant award (NSF Grant No. 2005829) to implement a two-year model of WTRE. The findings relate to program activity that took place during WTRE between the fall of 2021 and the fall of 2023 and collectively refer to the 2020-23 model and activities as **WTRE**. A new WTRE cohort will begin in early 2025 under a separate five-year NSF grant (2024-2029). This new cohort will feature a refined WTRE model with a new set of organizations.

The **WTRE program team**—a partnership between The Lawrence Hall of Science at UC Berkeley and Justice Outside²—drew from extensive research on field-tested leadership and capacity-building programs³ and a prior pilot program when designing the WTRE model. WTRE's design included elements of multiple theoretical frameworks, including the research-based BEETLES model⁴ that calls for intensive learning experiences, ongoing technical assistance support, and opportunities to participate in a community for ongoing professional learning. Alongside the WTRE program team, the research team from the Lawrence Hall of Science (**research team**) focused on understanding the process of institutional change and conditions that foster a sense of belonging for professionals of color. Informing Change (**evaluation team**), an Oakland, CA-based strategic learning firm, focused on evaluating the model design and the effectiveness of the project for participating organizations and individuals.

This report primarily covers WTRE participants' experience in and perception of WTRE and the changes and growth that resulted for individuals and their organizations approximately 18 months after participating in WTRE.

WTRE Model Background

The 2020-23 WTRE model supported two overlapping cohorts of ten organizations (20 total organizations). Each organization established an Organizational Systems Change (**OSC**) team to represent the organization and participate in WTRE. Each OSC team was a distributed, vertical leadership team comprising 3-7 individuals representing different leadership levels and organizational spheres of influence. Each organization was also invited and encouraged to recruit a Professionals of Color (**POC**) team, comprising individuals from the organization who identify as Black, Indigenous, or a Person of Color. Individuals could be part of both teams (**strands**) if desired so long as they met their organization's requirements to participate in that organization's OSC team and identified as a person of color. All but one participating organization recruited a POC team to join WTRE programming.

¹ Taylor, D. (2014). *The State of Diversity in Environmental Organizations*. Green 2.0. https://diversegreen.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/FullReport_Green2.0_FINAL.pdf

² Justice Outside is an Oakland, CA-based organization focused on advancing racial justice and equity in the outdoor and environmental movement.

³ Romero, V., Foreman, J., & Strang, C. (2019). *Examining Equitable and Inclusive Work Environments in Environmental Education: Perspectives from the Field and Implications for Organizations*. The Lawrence Hall of Science. <https://beetlesproject.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Examining-Equitable-and-Inclusive-Work-Environments-in-Environmental-Education.pdf>

⁴ Research and Evaluation. The BEETLES Project. <https://beetlesproject.org/about/evaluation-team/>

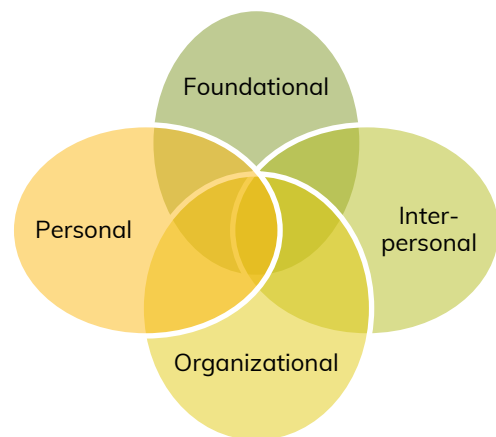
To apply for WTRE, each organization submitted an organization- and individual-level application for proposed OSC team members. Proposed OSC team members also participated in a group interview with the WTRE program team. Program team members reviewed applications using a rubric that assessed participants' and organizations' willingness and determination for change, openness to new perspectives, ability to recruit a POC team, and demonstrated commitment to and understanding of OESE-relevant equity and inclusion considerations as described in their application.

WTRE consisted of two distinct phases: the **intensive** and the **ongoing support** phase. WTRE provided approximately 50 hours of workshop time to each strand in each cohort during the intensive. The **intensive** consisted of a 3–5-month workshop series that included half- and full-day virtual workshops delivered to participants in two strands. Some workshops were designed for OSC teams (**OSC strand**), some for POC teams only (**POC strand**), and some for both OSC and POC teams (**Both strands**). POC strand members were invited to join OSC strand workshops, but POC strand workshops were limited to individuals who identified as professionals of color. The workshops dove into nuanced and complex topics and allowed participants to reflect deeply in small groups and individual settings. The intensive also included assigned readings and activities to be completed between the virtual workshop days.

During intensive sessions, WTRE exposed participants to many concepts, frameworks, and tools that fall into four domains based on their primary content (**Exhibit 1**). Both the OSC and POC strands included sessions that covered **foundational** frameworks and theories that form the basis on which WTRE builds knowledge and capacity and **interpersonal** tools and concepts that help navigate relationships. In addition, the OSC strand explicitly focused on tools and concepts related to **systems and organizational change**. For example, OSC workshops focused on developing a deep understanding of structures of White Supremacy Culture and systemic inequities that permeate the OESE field, elements of Nonviolent Communication⁵, distributed leadership, systems change frameworks (in particular, the Water of Systems Change⁶), implicit bias, and theory derived from bell hook's writing in *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*⁷. The POC strand centered joy and liberation, focusing on community, affinity, and professional development. POC strand sessions included topics more deeply relevant to **personal growth and healing**.

Following the intensive, WTRE participants entered the **ongoing support** phase. They spent approximately 18 months utilizing the knowledge gained during the intensive to develop and refine a problem statement that captured a specific racial equity-related challenge at their organizations and created an action plan to address it. WTRE participants discussed the problem statement with non-WTRE participants at their organization. During the ongoing support phase, the program team supported WTRE participants in developing their action plans by providing consultation, structuring opportunities for peer support, and facilitating monthly meetings for WTRE participants. The 2020 – 2023 WTRE program ended with a multi-day, in-person retreat during which participants celebrated their work and reflected on the process of organizational change in the service of equity. **Table 1** shows the complete set of activities in each phase of the 2020 – 2023 WTRE program.

EXHIBIT 1
WTRE Multidimensional Framework



⁵ Rosenberg, M. B. (2015). *Nonviolent communication: a language of life*. 3rd edition. Encinitas, CA, PuddleDancer Press.

⁶ Kania, J., Kramer, M., Senge, P. (2018). *The Water of Systems Change*. FSG. https://www.fsg.org/resource/water_of_systems_change/

⁷ hooks, b. (1984). *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.

TABLE 1
WTRE Program Activities

WORKSHOP INTENSIVE SERIES	ONGOING SUPPORT & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (TA)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content presentation by experienced facilitators (including readings, videos, and interactive workshops) Individual and group reflections Interactive activities Resources: readings, discussion guides, organizational change tools (rubrics and assessments) Open space conferences (self-organized discussion spaces) Ongoing feedback loops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monthly facilitated meetings In-person final workshop Accountability partner structure POC peer mentorship structure Custom support Book club Individual organization coaching and support, by request

Participating Organizations

Most of the 20 WTRE organizations are based in the coastal United States, with California housing the most (six organizations). One-third of organizations have 100 or more employees and one-third have fewer than 20 employees (**Exhibit 2**).

Most organizations (16/20) are non-profits, with a few based within larger institutions like universities or government agencies. All provide some type of educational opportunity for youth and the surrounding community.

About three-quarters (71%) of participants identify as female, 22% identify as male, and 7% identify as non-binary.⁸ Within strands, 11% of POC participants identify as male, compared to 26% in the OSC strand and 19% who participated in both strands.

A little more than half (56%) of participants identify as white and 16% identify as multi-racial. Within strands, 72% of OSC members identify as white (including those who participated in both strands). Overall, WTRE participants generally reflect the racial diversity of the US (**Exhibit 3**).⁹

WTRE participants come to the intensive with experience in the field and at their organizations. More than half have worked at their organization for four or more years, and over two-thirds have been in the field for four or more years. White participants have generally worked for longer at both their organizations and in the field of environmental education than participants of color.

EXHIBIT 2. WTRE ORGANIZATION LOCATION & STAFF SIZE (N=20)

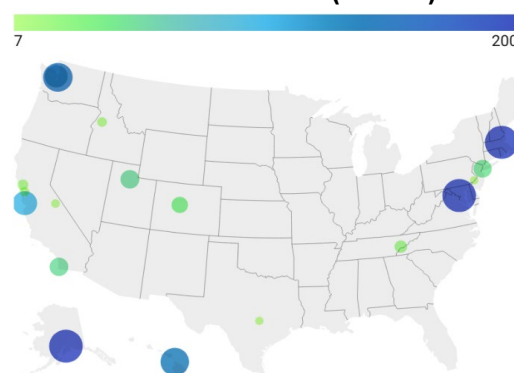
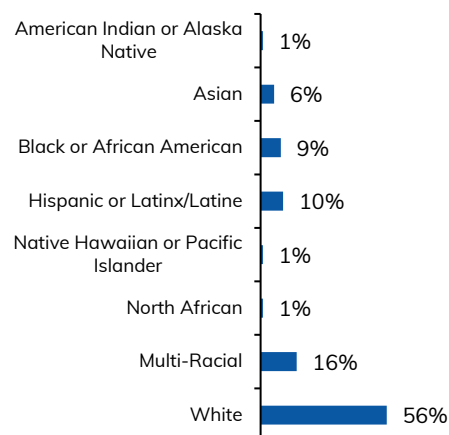


EXHIBIT 3. WTRE PARTICIPANT RACIAL IDENTITY (n=165)



⁸ This includes respondents who specifically identified as: non-binary, gender-queer, and gender-fluid.

⁹ Census Population Estimates, July 1, 2021. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045221>.

THE EVALUATION

Informing Change explored the experiences and changes associated with implementing and participating in the WTRE model. The evaluation supported programmatic changes, assessed the potential for WTRE to be applicable and useful in the wider OESE field, and illuminated insights about supporting equity-centered transformation among organizations. The evaluation explored the following questions:¹⁰

1. What are **participants' overall experiences** in WTRE and the Organizational Systems Change (OSC) and Professionals of Color (POC) strands?
2. How does the model **contribute to** building and strengthening equity, inclusion, and cultural relevance in the OESE field?
3. What is the **design and facilitation teams' experience** developing and delivering the WTRE model, and what changes are necessary to meet program objectives?
4. What are the model's **strengths and opportunities** for improvement? To what extent is the model useful for building shared vocabulary and understanding?

The evaluation sought to explore WTRE's contributions at three levels of field influence: the personal, the organizational, and the sector. Due to timeline and resource shifts, the evaluation could not deeply explore contributions to the broader sector (i.e., the “ripple effects” of participating individuals and organizations) for this final report.

This report discusses participants' reflections approximately 18 months after the intensive concluded. During this time, participants were asked to apply WTRE learnings to their organizations and begin the organizational change process. Their thoughts at this stage reflect the successes and challenges of “doing the work.”

Throughout the WTRE funding period, Informing Change led periodic reviews and discussions of near-time findings and learnings with the program team. These were intended to support continuous improvements and adaptations and were key to informing the newest iteration of WTRE (2024-2029), funded through NSF.

The research and evaluation teams recruited participants to form part of a Research and Evaluation Advisory Group (**REAG**) at two points during WTRE to support research and evaluation efforts. In the planning stages of WTRE, the REAG comprised individuals who participated in the pilot program and helped refine the evaluation and research design and early data collection instruments. Once WTRE participant-facing programming began, the REAG comprised 2020 – 2023 WTRE participants who helped refine additional data collection instruments and make sense of the emerging findings.

In 2022, Informing Change produced an initial assessment of WTRE's first year of programming, which drew on insights collected from all participants and focused primarily on their experience in the 3-5 month intensive in either 2021 or 2022. Our analysis centered primarily on pre- and post-intensive surveys completed by 170 participants across both cohorts and strands to gauge participants' reflections on their program experience and perspectives on equity, inclusion, sense of belonging, professional growth, and leadership within their organizations and the OESE field. To provide a comprehensive view of WTRE, the present report incorporates select findings from this earlier assessment. We also summarize additional relevant information from our data collection and discussions with the program team, participants, and the REAG.

Data collected for the present report focused primarily on participants' experiences *after* the intensive (i.e., during the ongoing support phase). Depending on the cohort and organization, this ranged between 14 – 18

¹⁰ Evaluation questions are restated here and in alignment with the evaluation questions as written in the NSF proposal. See Appendix A for the full text of the evaluation questions.

months post-intensive. In this round of data collection, we relied primarily on comprehensive **surveys of (1) WTRE participants and (2) staff from WTRE organizations who did not participate in WTRE (non-WTRE participant staff)**. We administered the surveys on the last day of the WTRE program and for several weeks after the program’s conclusion. **Table 2** shows the response rates for the WTRE participant surveys and the count of non-WTRE participant staff.

TABLE 2
WTRE Participant Survey Response Rate & All-Staff Survey Responses Counts

WTRE PARTICIPANT SURVEYS (2021 – 2023)			
	PRE-INTENSIVE	POST-INTENSIVE	RETROSPECTIVE
Cohort 1	74/86 surveys (86%)	62/86 surveys (72%)	59/74 surveys (80%)
Cohort 2	78/95 surveys (82%)	79/95 surveys (83%)	64/90 surveys (71%)
NON-WTRE PARTICIPANT STAFF SURVEYS (2023)			
Non-WTRE Participant Staff	446 survey responses		

Other evidence-gathering activities included **workshop observations**, generative **discussions** with the WTRE program team, and **meaning-making and reflection sessions** with WTRE participants and the REAG to review and further reform our initial findings. In the following section, we present WTRE participants’ reflections on the WTRE model as a whole, including the intensive and ongoing support period.

PARTICIPANT PERCEPTIONS OF THE WTRE EXPERIENCE

Model Design & Curriculum

Our unpublished 2022 interim evaluation report covered participants’ reflections on the intensive and the WTRE curriculum. We summarize those findings below.

Model Design

WTRE participants gave high ratings to the program’s logistics and content delivery. They identified the WTRE program team—and their facilitation skills and compassion in particular—as essential components of the program. Participants appreciated the brave space the program team’s facilitation created. For many participants, the intensive workshops were long but rewarding. Many desired more time with their organization team to process the shared information.

In the OSC and POC strands, participants wanted more knowledge of what the other strand was doing. This led the program team to change the workshop model between cohorts 1 and 2 to increase transparency between strands. Additionally, participation in the OSC sessions was made optional for POC strand members. The POC strand remained limited to professionals of color.

Curriculum

The WTRE curriculum exposed participants to many concepts, frameworks, and tools that laid the foundation for a common understanding of the influence of inequity and systems of power and oppression on individuals and organizations. We categorized the sessions’ content domain types to create a basis for analysis. Both strands include sessions that cover **foundational frameworks and concepts** that form the basis on which WTRE builds knowledge and capacity and **interpersonal tools and concepts** that help navigate relationships. The POC strand also includes sessions that cover tools and concepts for **personal/internal** growth and healing. The OSC strand, with a greater focus on systems change, offers **organizational change** tools and concepts.

Although many participants were able to clearly articulate goals or challenges related to equity in their applications, many participants expressed unfamiliarity across many of WTRE’s curriculum content domains¹¹ at the beginning of the intensive. For example, only 53% of POC strand members and 60% of OSC strand members felt familiar with the foundational frameworks of WTRE at the start of the intensive. By the end of the intensive, over 90% of participants across both strands reported high familiarity with the content across all four domains of WTRE’s multidimensional framework (foundational frameworks, interpersonal tools and concepts, personal/internal growth and healing, and organizational change tools and concepts). **Exhibits 3 and 4** show POC and OSC strand participants’ familiarity with WTRE’s content domains at the start and end of the intensive.

EXHIBIT 3. POC Strand Members’ Familiarity with Session Domains (n=17–23)

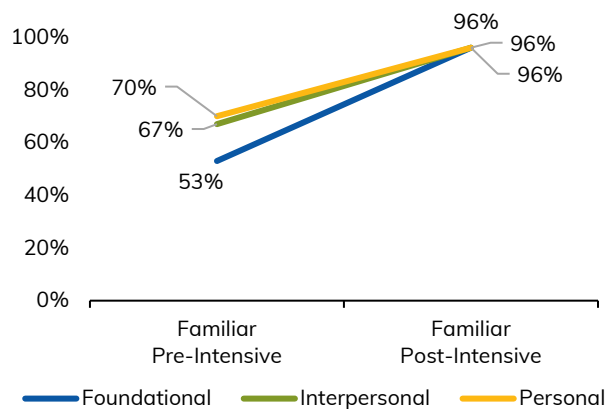
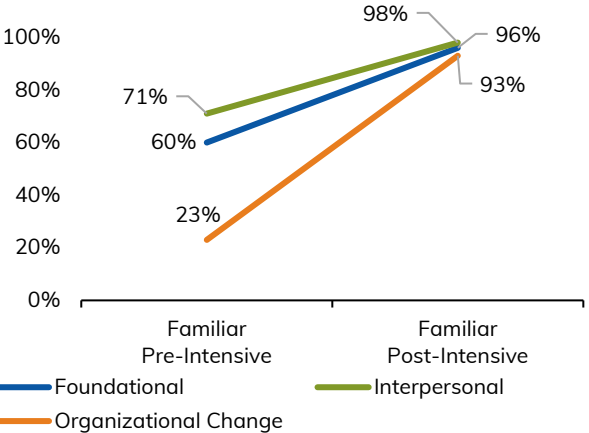


EXHIBIT 4. OSC Strand Members’ Familiarity with Session Domains (n=43–56)



Participants’ perceptions of the relevance of WTRE’s content also increased over the course of the intensive. Initially, only about half of the POC strand participants and fewer than half of the OSC strand participants rated WTRE’s content domains as “very relevant” to their work. By the end of the intensive, a majority of participants in both strands reported that the content domains were relevant to them. **Exhibits 5 and 6** show POC and OSC strand participants’ ratings of the relevance of the WTRE components at the start and end of the intensive.

¹¹ Many of the content domains address issues of equity at the organizational change at systemic, interpersonal, and personal level. For example, the **foundational** domain includes sessions on the history of environmental education through a BIPOC lens, power & privilege, and white supremacy culture among others.

EXHIBIT 5. Session Content Domain Relevance to POC Strand Members (n=15–23)

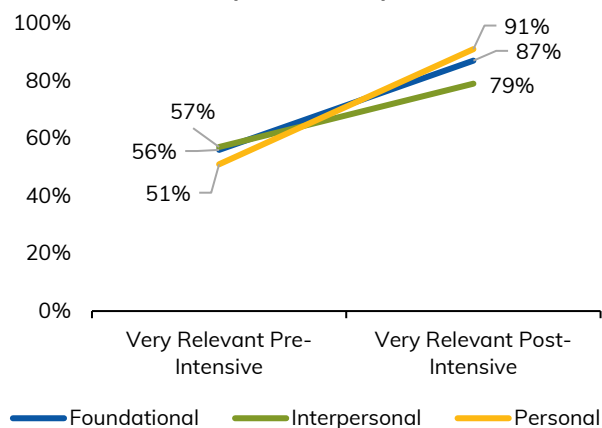
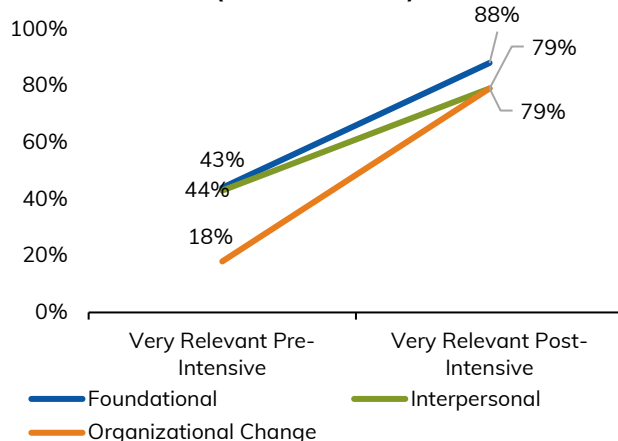


EXHIBIT 6. Session Content Domain Relevance to OSC Strand Members (n=101–107)



In early evaluation activities during the intensive, we heard from participants that the WTRE curriculum offered new, relevant frameworks, useful for both thinking about the history and manifestation of racial inequities and organizational processes to address issues of equity and inclusion in the field. As WTRE progressed after the intensive, participants sought ways to concretize some of the theory and knowledge they gained during the intensive and early ongoing support phase. One of the most common themes in post-intensive evaluation results regarding improvements to the model was a request for more “real-world” application examples, either through activities and exercises or through dedicated facilitation time. Some participants had trouble reconciling the academic nature of some of the concepts with the process of enacting change—slowly—within their organizations. This was particularly important where the process involved sharing learnings from the intensive with organization staff who didn’t participate in WTRE to move through the action plan.

Program Components

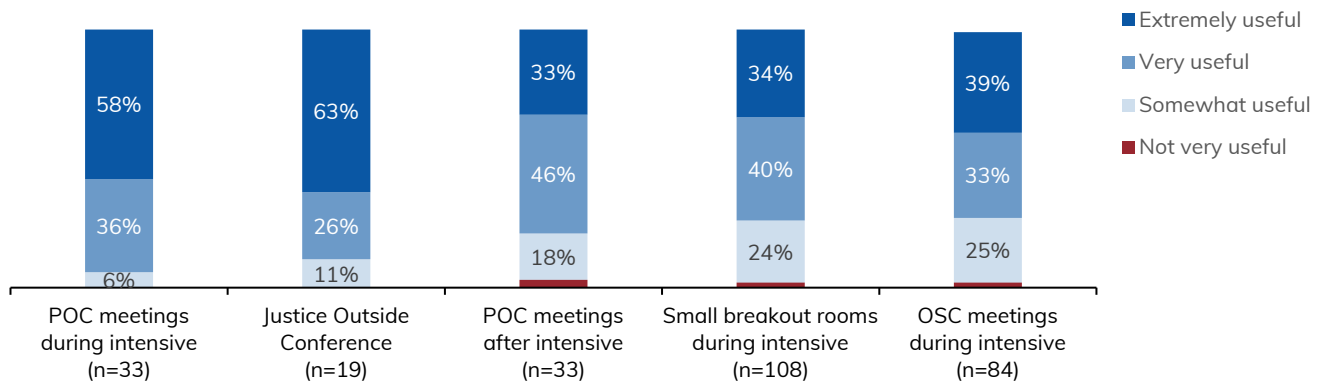
At the end of the two-year program, we asked participants to rate how useful WTRE program components from the intensive and ongoing support phase were to them. **Exhibit 7** shows the top five most useful components selected by participants. Respondents generally ranked program components during the intensive, especially smaller spaces that offered the opportunity to interact with a subset of participants, as the most useful components. Attendance at the intensive was mandatory, and most meetings were held with the full attendance of each strand. Ultimately, the intensive generated a lot of discussion and energy.

In contrast, supplemental offerings during the ongoing support period (e.g., book clubs, peer support spaces, cross-organizational sharing, and office hours) felt less useful to participants than the reflection spaces during the intensive. Supplemental offerings were optional, which may have contributed to fewer individuals accessing and benefiting from them. WTRE participants used the ongoing custom support available to their organizations selectively. WTRE participants used roughly 70% of the available custom support hours during the ongoing support phase.

Meetings designed for the POC strand were rated highly useful, with 58% of participants saying they were extremely useful during the intensive and 33% saying they were extremely useful after the intensive. The Justice Outside conference was an in-person event open to WTRE participants in addition to individuals not involved in WTRE. POC strand members who attended the conference rated it as extremely useful (63%). Taken together, POC strand member ratings emphasize the importance of opportunities specifically designed for individuals who identify as Black, Indigenous, or as a Person of Color to connect and reflect with each other.

EXHIBIT 7

Top 5 Most Useful Program Components (n=122)



These findings related to WTRE components’ utility align with initial findings reported in our interim assessment that describe the success of the intensive phase in meeting OSC and POC strand goals. An important goal of the POC strand was to center WTRE participants’ joy and healing while learning tools to claim agency and power in OESE spaces. During the preliminary assessment, we found that after the intensive, almost two-thirds (61%) of POC strand participants felt that WTRE helped them “very much” to accomplish those goals. The OSC strand focused on building foundational knowledge for organizational transformation. During the preliminary assessment, we found that roughly half of OSC participants felt that WTRE helped them prepare for the introspective portion of this work (52%), but fewer (22%) felt prepared to carry out the interpersonal aspects of organizational change.

Non-WTRE Staff Engagement & WTRE Team Composition

All participating WTRE organizations made progress in disseminating some information about WTRE to other staff members who did not participate in the program. At the time of the non-WTRE participant staff survey, 89% of respondents had some level of involvement in WTRE-related work or, at a minimum, knew about their organization’s participation in the program. Additionally, 22% of respondents, representing 15 of 18 organizations for which we have survey responses, participated in at least one WTRE-related meeting at their organization.

We asked WTRE participants to think back to the start of the program and reflect on what they could have done differently to ensure their organization maximized the WTRE experience. In open-ended responses, half of the participants (51%) reported that they would have changed something about their WTRE team composition to achieve this goal. Generally, these respondents shared that building their WTRE team to include greater representation across departments, roles, and levels of leadership—including board members—could have maximized their WTRE experience, and the exact change each respondent would make to their team varied depending on the organization’s size, structure, and current WTRE team.

WTRE is designed as a catalyst that equips participants with tools, structure, and knowledge to engage in organizational change efforts. Through our evaluation, we learned that each organization must manage those change processes intentionally and carefully, balancing flexibility and rigidity to adapt to changing contexts while maintaining momentum. This necessitates long-term commitment and buy-in across all levels of an organization, especially from those in leadership roles.

GROWTH, CHANGE, & TRANSFORMATION

In this section, we describe the growth, transformation, and changes individuals reported for themselves and their organizations as a result of participating in WTRE.

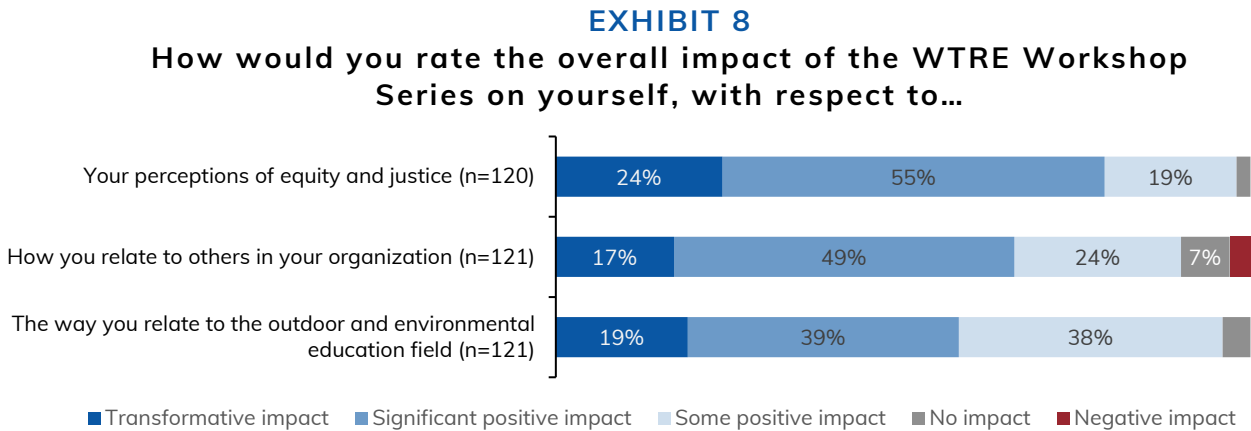
Personal Growth

Participants came to WTRE with various lived experiences and personal backgrounds. Some were keenly aware of the effects of racial inequities within their community, their work environment, the OESE field, or across many aspects of daily life within the US. Some entered WTRE with the language to describe these inequities and felt well-versed in the implications and associated outcomes of racial disparities. WTRE was designed to provide structure and content that encouraged growth in all individuals regardless of background.

We asked participants to report on three dimensions of personal growth:

- **Perceptions:** Changes in their perceptions of equity and justice
- **Relationships:** Changes in how they relate to others in their organization
- **Career:** Changes in how they relate to the OESE field

All participants reported growth in at least one of these three domains. In surveys, respondents rated the impact of WTRE on their perceptions of equity and justice more positively than changes in how they relate to colleagues or the field (**Exhibit 8**).



Over three-quarters of participants (79%) said WTRE had a “significant” or “transformative” impact on their perceptions of equity and justice. Roughly 66% of participants said WTRE had a significant or transformative impact on how they relate to others in their organization, and 58% noticed a significant or transformative change in how they relate to the OESE field.

While there were no notable differences between those in leadership and non-leadership positions with respect to the perceived impact of WTRE on their organization overall, almost one-third (32%) of those in non-leadership roles said WTRE had a transformative impact on their perceptions of equity and justice, compared to only 12% in leadership positions. Only a handful (14 out of 121) of participants felt WTRE had no more than a modest impact on their personal growth overall.¹² These individuals mostly felt the materials and session content did not meet their criteria for generating transformative or significant impact. Over half of these

¹² Fourteen total individuals said that WTRE had only “some positive impact,” “no impact,” or “a negative impact” across all three areas of personal change we asked about in the survey (**Exhibit 1**)

individuals (8) were in leadership positions (three in director-level positions and five in an executive director level or equivalent).

The survey did not define “transformative impact” or “significant impact,” and thus, respondents’ response selections could vary. Our qualitative approaches explored how participants conceptualized “transformation” and “significant” changes. We share three of the more common reactions below.

- Through its concepts, delivery, and curated structured reflection spaces, WTRE changed the way some participants understand the effects of systemic racism across aspects of their own lives. Some participants reflected on their personal biases and how their actions play into systems that perpetuate inequities. Others found strength and validation in their identity as professionals of color. One professional of color noted that WTRE had helped them recognize that *“I can show up authentically and hold space for myself among peers and feel like I hold some power and impact.”*
- The intensive structure of the workshops and the depth of topics covered provided a transformative experience of personal growth that involved witnessing growth in others. Although some individuals may have already felt degrees of affinity toward or understanding of the concepts discussed in WTRE, going through this process alongside colleagues and peers still benefited them. One participant remarked, *“My greatest takeaway and transformational experience is witnessing first-hand the individual and collective growth that myself and my colleagues have undergone. I am honored to be working with talented professionals who are also stronger now in their equity and justice language and understanding - and still much more to learn. I feel that as a collective group, we will continue to uphold our individual and collective learning.”*
- Participating in WTRE sharpened some participants’ understanding of the field’s relationship to racial equity and justice while fostering the feeling that real change is possible. WTRE’s crucial contribution was helping participants understand the broader context of the OESE field and participants’ role in perpetuating unjust systems and organizing a space where they can generate solutions. As one participant shared, *“The workshop opened my eyes to many aspects of racism in the history of my field. [It] empowered me to stop putting aside or rationalizing the current inequities and racism that I experience and witness others experiencing. I don't need to fit into this racist world; I can change it.”*

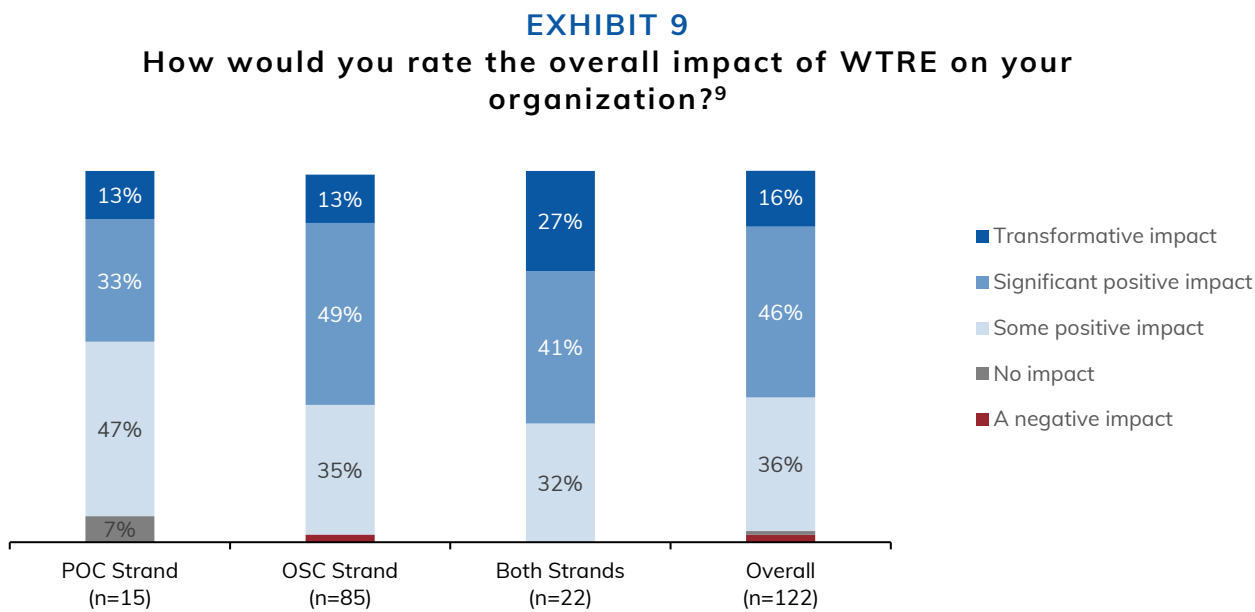
“Being part of WTRE really gave me a lot of hope and helped me believe change was actually possible. I've been in the nonprofit space for so long now (20+ years), and both the nonprofit and the environmental spaces, as [predominantly White institutions], have been so entrenched in White supremacy for so long, that it was really hard for me to believe that things would ever change. It was really hard for me to believe that people wanted to change. Before this, I made or participated in so many attempts to change things, make things more equitable. Most of the time there was too much resistance or not much willingness beyond lip service. This is the first time I've been in an organization and part of an initiative where I've seen people actually wanting to learn and wanting to change.”

– WTRE PARTICIPANT

WTRE's Impact on Participating Organizations

Just institutions are a necessary and moral good in society. Still, they can also have collateral benefits, such as attracting staff with a wide range of backgrounds and perspectives, generating programming that is relevant to its intended audience, and effectively engaging a wide range of communities in science and the environment. Just institutions also disrupt the dynamics that keep staff who identify as Black, Indigenous, or as a Person of Color in lower-level positions and underrepresented at the organization compared to the population the organization is trying to reach.

We asked WTRE participants how the program had impacted their organizations' transformation into more equitable, inclusive, and just institutions. By the end of the program, over half of WTRE participants (62%) felt that WTRE had a significant positive or transformative impact on their organization. **(Exhibit 9)**. A wide range of participants shared this sentiment across cohorts and strands, and we observed no significant differences in opinion by participants' tenure or job title.¹³



In total, 16% of respondents said WTRE had a transformative impact on their organization. These individuals represented 12 of 20 participating organizations. Within those 12 organizations, almost half (5) of the high ratings came from the person with the most authority (e.g., the organization's executive director or CEO). Despite feeling the impact of WTRE slightly less on their personal growth, organizational leaders remain optimistic about the potential impact of WTRE on their organization as a whole.

We also observed that participants in both strands rated the impact of WTRE as "transformative" at twice the rate of those who participated in just one of the two strands (27% compared to 13% in either the POC or OSC strand alone) **(Exhibit 9)**. The decision to participate in both strands was optional and involved a higher level of commitment because participants attended two sets of workshops and meetings. While individuals who opted into both strands may have been more motivated to engage with WTRE from the outset, the increased visibility of the strands' activities may have contributed to a richer understanding and appreciation of the intention

¹³We conducted chi-square tests of independence to assess the relationship between perceived program impact and both tenure and job title. No statistically significant associates were found (all p-values > 0.05)

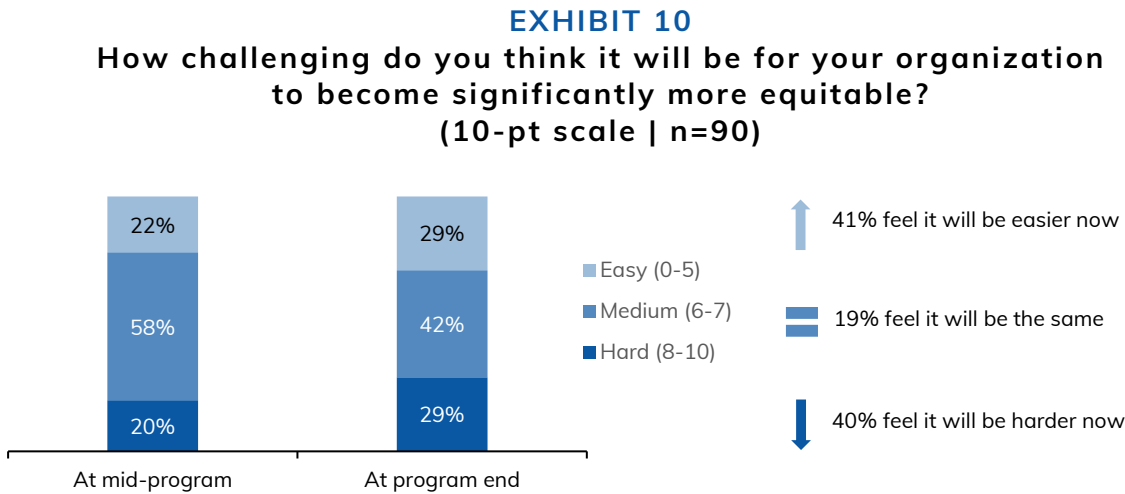
¹⁴Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

behind an organization’s WTRE work. Between Cohort 1 and Cohort 2, the program team made programmatic changes to increase the visibility of the OSC strand activities based on feedback from Cohort 1 participants.

We asked the same question about the overall impact of WTRE on participants’ organizations at the program’s midway point after the intensive. At that mid-point, 72% of participants felt that WTRE had had a significant positive or transformative impact on their organization, compared to 62% of participants after the full two years of WTRE programming. While participants did not give definitive reasons for this change in perspective, the post-intensive period (at the midway point) required organizations to focus on a specific problem and create a plan to address it. To do so successfully, organizations needed to “ground-truth” the problem, meaning they sought input and validation from a broader group of staff, especially those most impacted by the identified problem. Then, they created a detailed, specific, and time-bound plan to overcome the problem. Going through that process and encountering challenges may have dampened some earlier optimism about the ease with which change can be enacted.

WTRE’s benefits are perceived differently amongst WTRE participants and non-participants. Compared to WTRE participants, a smaller proportion of non-WTRE participants ranked WTRE’s benefit to their organization highly. While almost one-quarter (22%) of non-WTRE participants, including at least one person from every organization, said their organization benefitted “a lot” from participating in WTRE, most staff (56%) could not say whether WTRE had benefitted their organization.

Also, at WTRE’s midway point, nearly 60% of participants felt that it would be neither “hard” nor “easy” for their organizations to become significantly more equitable (i.e., participants reported a medium level of difficulty); this figure declined to 42% when the same question was asked at the program’s end (**Exhibit 10**).¹⁵ At the end of the program, the proportion of participants reporting that it would be “hard” for their organizations was equivalent to those reporting that it would be “easy” (29% for both “hard” and “easy” compared to 20% for “hard” and 22% for “easy” at the midway point). A challenge for some teams was making tangible progress that could be measured or observed in the short term. The data suggest that the WTRE program’s full duration helps fine-tune participants’ understanding of what would be needed for their organization to become more equitable.



¹⁵ We asked participants to rate on a 10-point scale how hard they think it would be for their organizations to become significantly more equitable. We converted the 10-point scale to a 3-point scale by creating three groups: “easy” (0-5), “medium” (6-7), and “hard” (8-10) using a combination of response distribution and open-ended response review.

Changes in Participating Organizations

Progress in Organizational Change Efforts

We asked WTRE participants about the progress they noticed in their organizations across 13 equity-related organizational practices since joining WTRE (Table 3). The evaluation team developed the list of organizational practices and grouped them into four domains (operations, documents, leadership, and programs and marketing) in consultation with the program team, research team, and REAG. Although WTRE organizations are quite diverse in size, operational processes, and ability to implement changes, they share some commonalities in the types of changes participants observed. Below, we describe some of the most salient changes in organizational change practice domains across all organizations. To facilitate data analysis about organizational change, we calculated a scale¹⁶ for each organizational change practice domain. Data reported in this section reflect the degree of changes observed on a three-point scale, ranging from “no/little progress” to “a lot of progress.”

Participants most often noticed changes in their organization’s operations practices, but fewer changes related to programs and marketing and to leadership. Almost half of the participants (45%) saw “a lot of progress” related to changes in the operational practices domain. In particular, the number one change participants noticed in their organization was the creation of an equity committee (52% saw “a lot of progress” in this area).

In contrast, only about one-quarter of participants (23%) reported seeing “a lot of progress” related to changes in the programs and marketing domain, and only 27% saw “a lot” of changes related to the leadership domain. Additionally, 37% of participants saw “a lot of progress” related to changes in the documents domain.

While each organization’s leadership had to agree to participate in WTRE, the organizational change process nevertheless leaned on creating distributed leadership structures and a “ground-truthing” exercise that required broader input from others at the organization. Even with organization-wide input, the leadership had to sign on to the proposed changes and direction the organization’s WTRE team proposed. In fact, there is a close relationship between a participant’s perception of WTRE’s impact on their organizations and the amount of progress they observed in securing leadership support for equity efforts: 59% of respondents who reported WTRE had a “transformative” impact on their organization also reported “a lot” of progress in securing leadership support for equity efforts. Changes in the documents domain (e.g., changing organizational guiding documents like an equity plan or mission statement) was not associated with a participant’s perception of

TABLE 3
Domains of Organizational Change Practices Measured via WTRE Evaluation

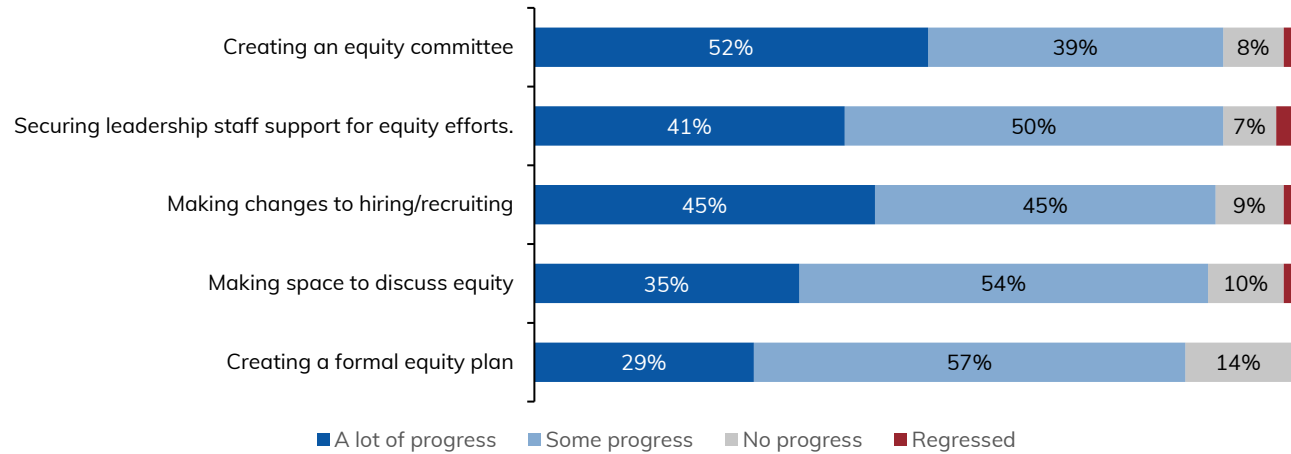
DOMAIN	ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICE
Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating an equity committee • Making space to discuss equity • Making changes to hiring/recruiting • Offering equity-related professional development
Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a formal equity plan • Changes to guiding documents
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for all staff to be involved in decisions and leadership • Securing leadership staff support for equity efforts • Securing board members' support for equity efforts
Programs & Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing communication materials to address equity • New partnerships to align with equity efforts • Changes to the program curriculum to address equity • Changes to how programs are delivered

¹⁶ Our survey used a 4-point scale of “no progress”, “little progress”, “some progress”, and “a lot of progress” with options to opt out of the question. We simplified this scale into a 3-point scale of “no/little progress”, “some progress”, and “a lot of progress” and calculated the average rating for each domain listed in Exhibit 5. We then categorized those averages into the same 3-point scales from “no/little progress” to “a lot of progress.”

organizational change. Organizations benefit from their leadership's active participation and involvement in WTRE-related work, but the work must be undertaken collectively rather than in a top-down approach.

WTRE emphasizes knowledge-building and organizational reflection before committing to changes directly affecting an organization's constituents. Participant data reflects this emphasis, with multiple changes in the organizational domain included in participants' list of the top five organizational practices in which they observed significant progress (**Exhibit 11**). Still, it is encouraging to note that the second-most common organizational change for which participants observed progress was in securing the support of leadership staff.

EXHIBIT 11
Top 5 Organizational Practices where Progress Was Most Noticed by WTRE Participants
(n=106-114)



Most Significant Organizational Changes

We also asked participants about the most significant change they observed in their organization via open-ended, write-in responses. In their answers, participants could respond any way they chose and were unlimited in their thinking. Most responses fell into one of two main categories: open discussion about equity and changes in operations. These results align with the survey results previously discussed related to operations. The responses do not necessarily indicate *where* an organization made the most progress but what types of change stand out most to respondents. Below, we provide more details about the two categories and share some quotes that illustrate the changes participants most notice.

Category 1: Open discussion about equity (56% of participants)

While the baseline comfort and ability to discuss equity organization-wide was different at each organization, almost one-quarter of WTRE participants now notice an **increase in the quantity and quality of equity conversations** within their organization. For some, this means more open discussions about equity that acknowledge an organization's "issues" when there had been reluctance before. For others, it meant strengthening the culture of understanding and dialogue among staff at all levels, including leadership.

- *"Seeing more conversations about issues of racial equity and, more specifically, during participation in our D&I committee (something also new to me), hearing more diverse voices in the conversation."*
- *"Recognizing and accepting the presence of systemic racism in our organization."*

Within these open discussions, participants observed **greater commitment to equity** expressed verbally in their interactions with colleagues, in documents produced at the organization, or via the allocation of resources. Some individuals mentioned commitment to equity work generally. Others have seen the commitment through a focus on equity in strategic plans, vision statements, stated strategies, and plans to address equity.

- “A non-negotiable commitment to creating an equitable organization, as the board approves/adopts a DEIJA roadmap with tangible metrics and a timetable that was created through an outside consulting survey, informational meetings/listening sessions, and input from all staff.”
- “Investment of time and resources, hiring a DEI lead facilitator, investing in paying extra for emotional labor, etc.”

Some individuals feel an increase in the **general awareness** of equity in their organization, while others feel that using **an equity lens** is now a common practice across multiple dimensions of the organization’s work. One participant noted that they see equity threaded through “high-value” meetings, while another noted that equity *“no longer seems like an ‘extra’ but that folks see it as central to their job.”*

- “Asking about equity and inclusion within more conversations - for example, when the conversation is about evaluation, or decision-making, or curriculum - we remember more often now to ask ourselves how the thing we’re doing does or does not promote our goals of equity and inclusion.”
- “We were finally able to recognize that we need to implement an ethos of equity in all aspects of our work, not just the outward facing.”

Among one-third of organizations, many non-WTRE staff expressed mixed emotions about their organization’s equity work. They felt proud that their organization had taken steps to address equity and see potential in the WTRE work. However, they maintained reservations about the work. The major themes that cause reservations among staff included:

- WTRE work is not evenly distributed throughout the organization.
- Change takes time, and staff are unsure whether the changes they see now will become permanent.
- Progress is being made, but more could be done.

Category 2: Changes in operations (22% of participants)

The second most cited type of organizational change participants observed involved visible changes to the organization’s internal operations. These changes included modifying hiring practices and compensation structures, increasing pay transparency, and intentionally devoting more time and resources to equity-focused work. At some organizations, participants noted that the changes in hiring practices had resulted in more racially diverse representation at various job positions.

- “We have updated our hiring practices, which resulted in more racially diverse staff. We have restructured our staff meetings, project teams, onboarding process, etc., to be more inclusive. We have a team meeting regularly to identify and work on equity-related goals.”
- “Improved pay transparency - we post pay range for all job postings, we published the org-wide salary bands and all the jobs included in each band, and we have improved how we write job descriptions. We are working on improved interview and hiring practices.”

CONCLUSION

The WTRE model was designed with two interrelated goals: to (1) grow the capacity of OESE organizations to nurture equitable, inclusive, and just workplaces; and (2) support professionals of color working in OESE organizations. The underlying premise is multidimensional, asserting that change and equity work **within organizations** requires capacity-building and action which is strengthened and sustained by growth, healing, change, and preparation in **personal** and **interpersonal spaces**.

The WTRE evaluation found evidence that the model can effectively foster change within OESE organizations. We offer five key takeaways and learnings surfaced by the evaluation:

1. **Transformative impact is possible at the organizational level.** WTRE participants indicated that participation in WTRE had a significant or transformative impact on their organization (nearly two-thirds of respondents), and many described a shift in their organization's thinking post-program (half of respondents). Organizations and individuals must continue the momentum generated during WTRE, particularly from its intensive portion. The buy-in and participation of organization leaders are essential to advancing organizational change, and it is encouraging that WTRE participants identified leadership buy-in as an area of positive organizational change stemming from WTRE. We also observed that organizational leaders, who are ultimately responsible for signing off on organizational changes, felt optimistic about the impact of WTRE on their organizations. It is clear that participation in WTRE encouraged organizations to make visible operational changes and to discuss equity more openly and productively across a range of organizational practices and contexts.
2. **Participants confirmed the importance of WTRE's multidimensional framework and the relationships among these dimensions.** Over three-quarters of participants reported important changes in their own understanding of equity work, and two-thirds reported important changes in how they relate to others in their organization. WTRE's intensive components, particularly those designed for professionals of color, generated the most enthusiasm. Having a dedicated space for professionals of color that centered joy and healing without the expectation of leading organizational change was celebrated by POC strand participants. For organizations to make the most of WTRE, participants emphasized the importance of selecting the right individuals to participate in WTRE—including leadership and non-leadership staff—and understanding their organization's OSC team's work.
3. **The WTRE model's effectiveness and success are grounded in a facilitation approach that centers care and compassion and fosters participant learning and growth.** Participants felt the project team set the right tone during the intensive; the success of implementing this model depends on facilitators who understand the content and can create environments that hold many complicated or challenging components. Participants craved a similar level of support when applying learnings from WTRE to their organizations (e.g., through one-on-one coaching while addressing their WTRE workplans). However, the program was not designed to provide each participating organization with a dedicated organizational change coach. Instead, participating individuals developed their knowledge and confidence about equity issues and grappled with the complexities of organizational change within their highly specific organizational context and environment. While change is more sustainable when it is driven, designed, and held accountable internally, organizations could have benefited from ongoing coaching similar to what they received during the intensive.
4. **Juggling the goals of the OSC (organization-level) and POC (individual-level) strands is challenging in a time-limited setting.** In theory, many survey respondents wanted more opportunities for knowledge sharing between strands; in practice, this would likely require even more of a commitment from participants (when many have suggested shortening the sessions) and disproportionately increase the obligations and burdens on POC strand participants who often work in

isolating white-dominated environments. Still, offering opportunities for involvement without tokenization and with the proper organizational support is an important contributor to successful organizational change. The potential for greater program influence by making the OSC strand's work visible is supported by the finding that individuals who participated in both strands perceived a transformative organizational impact at twice the rate of those participating only in the OSC or POC strands, as discussed earlier.

5. **Implementing subsequent WTRE cohorts will likely require ongoing adaptation as political and organizational contexts shift, participants provide new feedback, and the WTRE research, evaluation, and program teams surface new insights.** Throughout WTRE, the program team shifted and adapted in response to feedback from Cohort 1 participants to provide a refined program to Cohort 2 participants. For example, based on Cohort 1 feedback, the program team streamlined their use of technology tools, added an introductory day with fewer topics and more opportunities for discussion, and provided greater facilitator support throughout the intensive. Ongoing evaluation and feedback were necessary to ensure the program met the cohorts' needs and adapted to the external contexts where participants' organizations operate. Ongoing evaluation and feedback will benefit future cohorts.

Looking Forward

The WTRE program team has incorporated these takeaways and other learnings that surfaced throughout formal and informal evaluation activities and further refined the WTRE model. With the next WTRE cohort set to begin in January 2025, some of the changes incorporated into the new model include: applying a greater emphasis on spreading WTRE learnings from WTRE participants throughout their organizations; building a stronger foundation of knowledge and skills across organizational representatives; and ensuring that WTRE participants and non-participants (ranging from staff, leadership, and board members) are prepared and ready for change before implementing change. The WTRE program team also eliminated the two-strand approach in favor of a phased approach that allows organizations to recruit WTRE participants at two times: first for a core group of participants who will be responsible for facilitating WTRE conversations at their organizations, and second for a group of participants who will eventually lead organizational change efforts.

WTRE will still include systems and structures to meaningfully engage professionals of color rather than burdening and tokening these professionals. The cohort will consist of fewer organizations, which allows for more focused support and more time to prepare organizational leaders and staff to lead organizational change. Informing Change is excited to continue rigorously evaluating WTRE in Cohort 3 and working with the research team to facilitate continuous program improvement and adaptation while capturing learnings for the OESE field at large.



Appendix: Evaluation Questions

The following four evaluation questions guided the evaluation. They were designed with input from the WTRE program and research team.

All evaluation activities were designed to be carried out alongside research activities. Data collected by each team was available to both teams to inform the respective but overlapping guiding questions.

Due to timeline and resource shifts, the evaluation could not deeply explore the broader field contribution (i.e., the “ripple effects” of participating individuals and organizations) for this final report.

- **Relevance:** What are the model’s strengths and opportunities for improvement? To what extent is the model useful for building shared vocabulary and understanding?
- **Experience:** What are the experiences of Organizational Systems Change (**OSC**) and Professionals of Color (**POC**) strand participants?
- **Implementation:** What is the Program Team's experience developing and delivering the WTRE model, and what changes are necessary to meet program objectives?
- **Field Contribution:** How does the model contribute to building and strengthening equity, inclusion, and cultural relevance in the OESE field?



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