



Association of Writers & Writing Programs
STRATEGIC PLAN
2019–2024

Growing, Diversifying, and Invigorating the Literary Landscape.

AWP

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*Leading association supporting
creative writers throughout North
America, and beyond.*

Message from the Chair of the AWP Board of Trustees

Dear AWP Members,

With the intention of serving the community better, the Board of Trustees is sharing this new strategic plan with members and stakeholders. The year 2018 has been a time of change for AWP, and in April, the Board hired Interim Executive Director Chloe Schwenke to lead the organization. In August, AWP became an independent nonprofit so that the organization can direct its business more effectively. This fall we engaged ACG, an executive search firm, to assist us in hiring a permanent Executive Director. We have drafted this new five-year strategic plan that will guide us as the organization grows increasingly stronger, more responsive, and resilient.

The purpose of this plan is to take the needed steps so that AWP will contribute in more meaningful ways to its whole membership. We have identified numerous opportunities in the coming years to open our programs and services to practitioners and communities of contemporary literature, and to do this thoughtfully and with greater transparency.

In mythology, the god Janus peers into the past and the future at the same time. The Board and staff have worked together on this plan over a period of years, and we believe we have created a strategy that honors AWP's history, responds to our membership's current needs, and leads us to new opportunities for growth and service.

As writers, having a community strengthens and illuminates our work. We envision an AWP that provides exciting, diverse, and courageous opportunities for writers. A strategic plan is a "living" document, and the Board welcomes your feedback as we build together. Thank you for your commitment to a more equitable, inclusive, and benevolent literary community.

All my best,

Robin Reagler, PhD
Chair, AWP Board of Trustees





Message from the Interim Executive Director

The Association of Writers & Writing Programs (AWP) has experienced a number of significant changes in the past few years, including the relocation of our offices, many new staff members, and even new leadership. We have also transitioned away from being an association historically affiliated administratively with a university, in which we had been closely tied to a university's operational standards and practices. AWP's role as a membership organization, as a publisher of several online and hard copy publications, and as the coordinator of annual conferences that attract more than 12,000 participants are very different from the traditional operations of a university. It was clear that we needed a change in our operational status and a new "business model."

As of August 2018, AWP is now a fully independent association. This independence has brought new opportunities for organizational improvements, better standards of responsiveness to our membership, and revised strategic directions to pursue. As Interim Executive Director, it was apparent to me that there was no time to waste in charting our path ahead and taking full advantage of the autonomy and flexibility associated with our institutional independence, while simultaneously feeling the need to respect the valued legacy that AWP has generated over the past five decades. To begin such a process, however, required that we begin at the beginning—that we return to our roots and restate our mission, vision, and values.

Fortunately, over the past several years, AWP's Board of Trustees has been proactive in a number of interventions intended to examine and interrogate our evolving role as a leading association supporting creative writers throughout North America, and beyond. My challenge was to formulate a strategic planning process that would allow AWP to consolidate these insights from recent Board interventions, and then involve AWP's Board and Staff in building upon this base while thinking through the path ahead. With the help of an outstanding facilitator and strategic planning consultant, Dr. Kate Mangino, we have now accomplished this.

This Strategic Plan provides AWP with the clear direction we need for the coming five years. The Strategic Plan is the product of intense and carefully coordinated participation, thought, creativity, and energy. It honors AWP's commitment to core principles of diversity, inclusion, service, and commitment to quality outcomes, and it provides us with a vision for the future that is achievable, inspirational, and responsible. As such, it will guide our decision-making as we continue to strive to serve the creative writing community to the best of our abilities.

Chloe Schwenke, PhD
Interim Executive Director



AWP

Advances the Art of Writing



AWP fosters literary achievement, advances the art of writing as essential to a good education, and serves the makers, teachers, students, and readers of contemporary writing.



Introduction

The Association of Writers & Writing Programs (AWP) fosters literary achievement, advances the art of writing as essential to a good education, and serves the makers, teachers, students, and readers of contemporary writing. Established in 1967 as a 501(c)3 nonprofit by fifteen writers representing thirteen creative writing programs, AWP now provides support to nearly 50,000 writers, 550 creative writing programs, and 150 writers' conferences and centers. With a membership that brings together academic and nonacademic literary arts practitioners, AWP has cultivated and promoted an American literature as diverse as its peoples.

AWP is perhaps best known for our Annual Conference and Bookfair, which provides an essential shared space for writers, teachers, students, editors, and publishers. Each year, more than 12,000 attendees join together for four days of insightful dialogue, learning, and networking. The conference features over 2,000 presenters and 550 readings, panels, and craft lectures. On average, the bookfair hosts over 800 presses, journals, and literary organizations from around the world.

AWP also offers other critical services and programs, *The Writers Chronicle*, our flagship publication, and nearly 600 pairs in the Writer-to-Writer Mentorship Program. AWP has established more than ten Hallmarks for Excellence in Creative Writing that set standards for academic creative writing programs. AWP's website is a rich archive and clearinghouse of resources that support best-practice pedagogy for teaching creative writing. The website also maintains an extensive listing of jobs to support members in their professional development.

Vibrant Change & Innovation



AWP has historically been housed within a university. However, in 2018, we made the exciting transition to becoming a fully autonomous nonprofit. This new independence gives AWP greater scope and freedom to respond to member needs and nurture, grow, and sustain an invigorated literary landscape.

A fresh strategic plan is a vital step in leading the organization into this bright new future. While AWP is committed to stabilizing the organization after the recent operating changes, we are also eager to begin new initiatives, reach out to potential donors, reinvigorate our legacy publications, and continually strengthen our commitment to diversity and inclusion. Proceeding intentionally and out of a shared vision and goals, the Board of Trustees and the seven staffed departments at AWP put forth a shared collaborative vision that unites Departments, Staff, Board, and Membership. This new strategic plan consolidates and preserves AWP's past successes while updating and positioning the organization to be a vital player in the 21st-century literary landscape. All who serve on the AWP Board of Trustees and on the AWP staff are passionate about creative writing, dedicated to serving our members, and committed to building an inclusive, diverse, and responsive association that puts forth a compelling vision for the writers, teachers, students, and literary practitioners whom we serve.

Strategic Plan Model

The 2019–2024 plan includes one goal statement, three objectives, and five to six activities under each objective. Each activity helps to meet its strategic objective, which in turn helps the Association as a whole to work together towards the overall goal.

Activities were kept succinct; too many activities spread financial and human resources too thin. This plan was also written with a contextual understanding of the significant changes that have taken place in the Association over the past twelve months, and the need for a balance between stabilization and innovation. The hope is that the resulting plan will challenge the Association while honoring and maintaining what is currently working well, provide adequate scope for incremental, vibrant change and innovation, and continue our efforts to strengthen inclusion and diversity.



Renewed Commitment



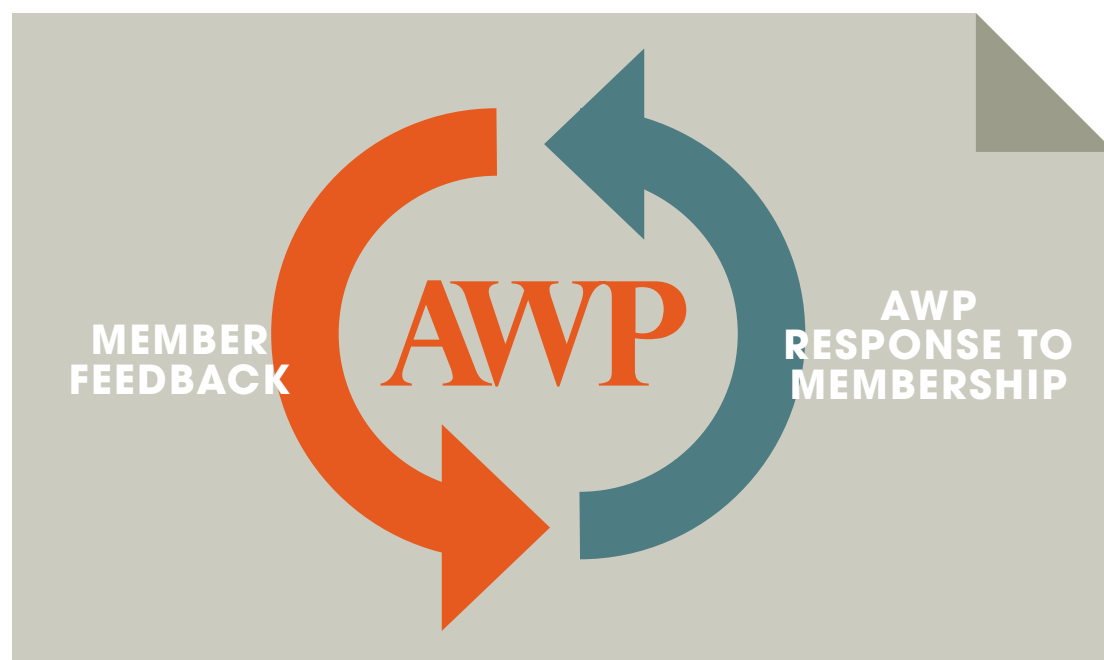
In the next five years, AWP will unite our foundational mission with renewed reflection to become a more **responsive**, **innovative**, and **relevant** Association serving all of our members and stakeholders.

AWP's Mission

The mission of the Association of Writers & Writing Programs (AWP) is to foster literary achievement, to advance the art of writing as essential to a good education, and to serve the makers, teachers, students, and readers of contemporary writing.

Strategic Focus for 2019–2024

Our current membership offers a variety of backgrounds, cultures, and voices to the literary world. AWP recognizes that this increasingly diverse membership has been and is changing our Association for the better, and we want to directly respond with reenergized support. Through this cycle, we recognize our organizational privilege and approach the future with renewed commitment as connector, listener, convener, and facilitator. AWP will create a thoughtful, intentional, and inclusive space where the larger literary community can gather for honest reflection, engaged deliberation, the sharing of wisdom on the art and craft of writing, and the celebration of vibrant creativity and accomplishment.



While recognizing the centrality of the needs, aspirations, and creativity of our members—be they institutions, individuals, subscribers, students, faculty, or conference attendees—AWP is also distinguished by our continuing strategic focus on achieving and sustaining the highest quality possible in the art and craft of creative writing. Our strategic focus, therefore, places great emphasis in the sustainable continuation and constant enhancement of this unique role as a supporting organization of writing pedagogy, to the benefit of creative writers and their readers everywhere.

2019–2024 Strategic Plan Overview

Goal Statement

The Association of Writers & Writing Programs creates and nurtures the environments that sustain and support a vibrant, collegial, and inclusive literary community.

Strategic Objectives

Three strategic objectives define how we are going to meet our goal, focusing on: individuals, groups, and year-round engagement.

A	B	C
Support individual members in their literary pursuits and engage them in opportunities to participate in the larger writing community.	Support creative writing programs and groups that build and sustain robust learning and professional environments.	Offer year-round support, services, and programming to our communities of creative writers.
INDIVIDUALS	GROUPS	YEAR ROUND

Measurable Actions

Aligned with the three Strategic Objectives, AWP commits to seventeen measurable actions to hold us accountable to our goal. A1–A5 directly relate to Objective A, B1–B6 directly relate to Objective B, and C1–C6 directly relate to Objective C.

Objective A

Objective B

Objective C

A1	Facilitate Opportunities for the Individual Writer	B1	Support and Advocacy for Academic Programs	C1	Update Institutional Values and Strengthen Diversity and Inclusion
A2	Engage Members Through Multiple Platforms	B2	Continue Annual Writing Awards	C2	Update and Redesign AWP's Website
A3	Survey Individual Members	B3	Outreach Beyond Academia	C3	Improve Accessibility to AWP's Web-based Resources
A4	Provide Relevant Career Services	B4	Review Hallmarks and Explore Accreditation	C4	Expand and Improve AWP's Social Media Presence
A5	Promote and Expand the Writer-to-Writer Program	B5	Continue Quality Assessment and Research Feasibility of Accreditation Service	C5	Improve our Annual Conference & Bookfair
		B6	Support and Advocacy for K-12 Programs	C6	Support Evolving Literary Community

Growing & Diversifying

Objective A

Support individual members in their literary pursuits and **engage** them in opportunities to **participate** in the larger writing community.

At the start of 2019, AWP's membership includes 4,578 faculty, 4,971 students, 1,500 *Writer's Chronicle* readers, 199 mentors, and 199 mentees. But AWP is far more than the sum of our nearly 12,000 members. We are a growing and diversifying literary community committed to dialogue, scholarship, quality, inclusion, diversity, and social justice. We know that when our members are successful—we, the literary community of creative writers and poets, are successful.

The following five actions will focus our work and ensure that our members remain our priority within AWP.



A1

AWP will facilitate opportunities and pathways for the **individual writer** to engage in a dynamic literary landscape



A2

AWP will engage **our membership through multiple platforms**, including ongoing support for our legacy publications



A3

AWP will **survey individual members** about their experiences and writing needs.



A4

We will evaluate how AWP provides **relevant and valuable career services** for writers at all stages of their writing lives to identify best practices for future outreach.



A5

We will further promote and thoughtfully expand the successful **Writer-to-Writer Mentorship Program**.

Build, Maintain, Support

Objective B

Support creative writing programs and groups that **build** and **sustain** robust learning and professional environments.

AWP understands how critical it is to build, maintain, support, and elevate writing programs of all kinds throughout North America. In an era when the collective focus turns to business and STEM programs, we need to work together to ensure that academic creative writing programs flourish, and we need to continue to support the meaningful education of writers from K-12, and at the Associates, Bachelor, MA, and MFA, and PhD levels. In addition, we support the many community writing centers, independent writing workshops, conferences, and retreats that provide a wide range of programming and opportunities to writers outside traditional academic settings.

The following 6 actions will focus our work and ensure that writing programs and groups remain a top priority at AWP. This includes continuing to promote and improve the pedagogy of effective and inspired creative writing at all levels by offering valuable educational and experiential resources; a full exploration of our current assessment program; and a determination on whether or not AWP ought to offer a formal accreditation process.



B1

AWP will strive to cultivate, support, and advocate for creative literary arts within **academic programs** among students, staff, faculty, and administration.

B2

AWP will continue to award excellence through our **annual writing awards**, and strive to procure named gifts from donors to support these awards.

B3

AWP commits to expand our supportive outreach among the creative literary arts that are situated **outside of academia**, including community programs and writing centers, independent writing workshops, conferences, and retreats.

B4

AWP will **review Hallmarks** and identify appropriate **Individual Student Outcomes** (ISO) indicators to make necessary additions, updates, revisions, and adjustments.

B5

AWP will develop tools, templates, and methodologies for conducting **objective program assessments** at all levels, and explore the feasibility, costs, challenges, and benefits of shifting AWP to an accreditation organization.

B6

AWP will strive to cultivate, support, and advocate for creative literary arts within **K-12** settings among students, staff, faculty, and administration.

Year-round Support

Objective C

Offer **year-round support**, services, and programming to our communities of creative writers.

AWP is best known for the annual conference and bookfair that has recently attracted as many as 12,000 writers, readers, publishers, agents, faculty, and students. Conference attendees have nearly unlimited access to panel presentations, events featuring some of the best writers, caucus meetings, and networking opportunities. AWP is proud of our annual conference and bookfair, and intend to continue to provide our members with the highest quality service possible at this annual event. At the same time, we now also focus our attention to fostering twelve-month engagement to ensure conference attendees and all AWP members have access to meaningful resources year-round. This engagement will involve both increasing virtual engagement of members and facilitating more opportunities for face-to-face meetings and exchange.

The following 6 actions will focus our work to help us achieve this objective.



C1

AWP will revisit the organization's values and discern, delineate, and come to a deliberative consensus on an **updated set of institutional values** that aligns more closely with this new 2019–2024 strategic plan, while reinforcing our continuing commitment to diversity and inclusion. These values will help direct our communications strategy with members and the public.

C2

We will regularly **update and redesign AWP's website** so that it is progressively more accessible (on all popular devices), more user-friendly, and better serves the needs of our members

C3

Simultaneously, AWP will raise awareness and **improve the accessibility of our vast web-based resources** to better engage and support our members, with annual updates.

C4

We will build, expand and improve AWP's **social media presence** to sustain effective year-round engagement for both members and nonmembers.

C5

We will continually evaluate and improve our **annual conference & bookfair** to align with the 2019–2024 goal statement and to increase member engagement.

C6

AWP will foster community-building and advocacy to **nurture and support an engaged and evolving literary community**.





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