

Strategic Plan (2026 – 2031) of the Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia (WFNS)

Adopted by the Board of Directors on October 20, 2025

This Strategic Plan was prepared by the 2024/25 WFNS Strategy & Policies Committee, with contributions from WFNS's Board, staff, and membership.

The 2024/25 Strategy & Policies Committee was composed of the following members:

- Becca Babcock (Committee Chair, January through June, 2025; Board Secretary)
- Kevin MacDonell (Director-at-Large)
- Carol Shillibeer (Board Treasurer)
- Sylvia Gunnery (Writers' Council Member)
- Oriana Duinker (Executive Director)
- Joe Britto (Committee Chair, June through December, 2024; Director-at-Large)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT THE WRITERS' FEDERATION OF NOVA SCOTIA	3
MISSION, VALUES, AND WHAT WE DO.....	3
BACKGROUND AND HISTORY	3
ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN: STATE OF THE SECTOR.....	4
STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES	6
ORGANIZATIONAL FLEXIBILITY AND CAPACITY	6
FINANCIAL STABILITY.....	7
INCLUSIVITY AND OUTREACH.....	7

About the Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia

Mission, Values, and What We Do

The **mission** of the Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia (WFNS) is to foster creative writing and the profession of writing in the Province of Nova Scotia; to provide advice and assistance to writers at all stages of their careers; to encourage greater public recognition of writers and their achievements; and to enhance the literary arts in our regional and national culture.

Our staff, board of directors, and membership work to maintain a supportive and vibrant writing community in Nova Scotia according to WFNS's **six core values**:

- We value **the diversity of writers** in all regions of Nova Scotia and strive to be inclusive of all backgrounds, abilities, and languages represented in the province. We value all genres of writing and aim to create a welcoming, accessible, and supportive atmosphere for all writers.
- We value **the practice of writing** and the importance of developing our skill and craft as writers.
- We value **writing as a profession and a creative pursuit**. We strive to support and represent the interests of all writers.
- We value **community building among writers**. We encourage writers to connect to readers, services, and resources. We have an appreciation for writing and a commitment to supporting its role in the life of Nova Scotians. We value the contributions of Nova Scotian writers regionally, nationally and internationally.
- We value **the inherent skills and resources of our community** and, where possible, will use the skills and resources of our membership and community at large.
- We value **professionalism** and conduct ourselves with a high level of integrity. We are resourceful and creative in how we manage our organization's operations.

Background and History

In 1975, a group of writers first envisioned the Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia as a shared office where they could work to support and promote the craft and profession of writing. On September 1, 1976, WFNS was incorporated as a not-for-profit organization with a one-person office. WFNS secured charitable status in 1990.

Since its inception, WFNS has been administered by an Executive Director and an Executive Committee. At present, WFNS's Board of Directors has between 8 and 12 directors, and WFNS has five staff members (Executive Director plus four support staff). Membership is open to anyone with an interest in creative writing, from Nova Scotia and beyond. In 2024, WFNS ended the year with 783 members.

WFNS's Writers' Council, originally conceived as a self-governing tier of membership, has been a significant feature of WFNS operations since the organization was founded. It is a special, permanent designation for members who have produced a professional body of work, and this designation enables members to be eligible for numerous competitively compensated opportunities through WFNS programs. Applications to the Writers' Council are accepted on a rolling basis and are considered by the Membership Committee.

Past successes from WFNS's history

Among the many successes that WFNS has celebrated in its nearly 50-year history, the following have represented some notable milestones:

- **1977:** Establishing the Evelyn Richardson Non-Fiction Award
- **1980s:** Establishing the Writers In the Schools (WITS) program, with funding from the Department of Education and Arts Nova Scotia
- **1991:** Establishing the Thomas Raddall Atlantic Fiction Award
- **1998:** Establishing the Atlantic Poetry Award (renamed the J.M. Abraham Atlantic Poetry Award in 2014)
- **2001:** Establishing the Alistair MacLeod Mentorship Program, with the support of Alistair MacLeod's donation of the protégé portion of his Portia White Prize
- **2019:** Receiving the stewardship of the Ann Connor Brimer Award for Atlantic Children's Literature
- **2020:** Establishing the Maxine Tynes Nova Scotia Poetry Award, with notable support from Dr. Afua Cooper's donation of the protégé portion of her Portia White Prize
- **2020:** Successfully pivoting to virtual workshop and event delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic (resulting in an increase in membership and workshop registrations)
- **2019-2023:** Administering the Poetry in Motion program
- **2021-2023:** Establishing three prizes for emerging writers: the Elizabeth Venart Prize (2021); the Charles R. Saunders Prize (2023); and the Senator Don Oliver Black Voices Prize (2023)
- **2022:** Acquiring Jampolis Cottage from the Jampolis Living Trust, and developing a year-round residency program in Avonport
- **2024:** Receiving the Community Impact Award at the Creative Nova Scotia Awards

Environmental Scan: State of the Sector

WFNS has been a vital part of Nova Scotia's vibrant cultural sector, as well as to the Canadian literary landscape, for the past 50 years.

Arts and Culture in Nova Scotia

WFNS is a member of the Cultural Federations of Nova Scotia (CFNS), "a vital umbrella organization that strengthens and supports the province's cultural landscape," which also represents Craft Nova Scotia, Dance Nova Scotia, Theatre Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia Choral Federation, Association of Nova Scotia Museums, Visual Arts Nova Scotia, and Strategic Arts Management. This provincially-funded organization seeks to "champion cultural growth, ensuring accessibility and sustainability for artists, creators, and communities across Nova Scotia" (<https://culturens.ca/about/>). The eight member organizations share a physical office space at 1113 Marginal Road in Halifax, and collaborate on advocacy efforts, resource-sharing, and community-building activities throughout the province.

Sector Partnerships

WFNS is part of a larger literary landscape in Nova Scotia, and we partner with many other literary, educational, and community-based organizations to amplify our impact and reach new audiences. In

2024, WFNS co-presented events, received sponsorship from, and maintained partnerships with the following organizations:

- AfterWords Literary Festival
- Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
- Atlantic Book Awards Society
- Cabot Trail Literary Festival
- Canadian Freelance Guild
- Craig Foundation
- Crime Writers of Canada
- Dalhousie Libraries
- Dartmouth Book Awards Society
- Delmore “Buddy” Daye Learning Institute
- Funny Pages Festival
- Hackmatack Children’s Choice Book Award
- Halifax Public Libraries
- Halifax Regional Municipality
- Lunenburg School of the Arts
- MacPhee Centre for Creative Learning
- NSCAD University
- Open Heart Forgery
- Project Bookmark Canada
- Read by the Sea Literary Festival
- Robert Pope Foundation
- Society for the Nova Scotia Book Awards
- University of King’s College

Writing and Publishing Regionally, Nationally, and Globally

Publication is an important goal and activity for many of our members, especially the members of the Writers’ Council. Since 2021, WFNS has maintained a public index of Atlantic publishers and periodicals (writers.ns.ca/resources/atlantic-publishers-and-periodicals), which currently includes 46 regional publishers and 18 periodicals, though some appear to be defunct or on hiatus. This index is updated through information supplied by publishers and periodicals. However, WFNS members also publish their works on platforms—traditional, hybrid, digital, and independent—across Canada and around the world. Publishing in Canada is a vibrant sector.¹ Although the Canadian publishing industry as a whole has experienced a decline over the past decade, this downturn has been primarily driven by a decline in newspaper and periodical publications; Statistics Canada reports that book publishing has experienced a resurgence in recent years (www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-621-m/11-621-m2025002-eng.htm).

WFNS is a member of Access Copyright, “a collective voice of creators and publishers in Canada” representing “over 10,000 Canadian writers, visual artists and publishers, and their works,” as well as foreign creators and publishers through agreements with global partners. This organization licenses “the copying of this repertoire to educational institutions, businesses, governments and others. The proceeds gathered when content is copied, remixed and shared are passed along to the copyright-holders. These investments help to ensure the continued creation of new and innovative works” (www.accesscopyright.ca/about-us).

¹ Nationally, the Association of Canadian Publishers currently counts 112 members, 6 of which are in Nova Scotia (publishers.ca/our-members). In addition, many reputable publishers (including several Nova Scotia publishers such as Nimbus Publishing/Vagrant Press and Gaspereau Press, among others) are not members of this national organization. It would be difficult to estimate the total number of publishers in Canada (including traditional, hybrid, and self-publishing houses).

Strategies and Activities

Following our December, 2024, strategic visioning session—at which members of WFNS's Board, Writers' Council, General Membership, and staff were consulted about our vision for the future of this organization—we have identified key strategies to undertake between 2026 and 2031. These initiatives should be undertaken with intentionality and purpose, and with an eye to continually monitoring the needs and priorities of our members and partners.

Over the next five years, WFNS will focus on priority strategies that fall into three principal categories:

- **Organizational Flexibility and Capacity**
- **Financial Stability**
- **Inclusivity and Outreach**

We have further identified key activities that are essential to the success of each of these initiatives.

Organizational Flexibility and Capacity

Strategically identifying key initiatives and ensuring our capacity to successfully undertake them by better leveraging our resources, including staff complement. In order to achieve this objective, we will pursue the following activities:

1. Make room within WFNS's administrative structure to better leverage volunteer skills and capacities, and to make the best use of staff skills and capacities.
 - a. Increase the staff complement by reassigning tasks and increasing the hours for the part-time and provisional staff positions.
 - b. Access consultancy services to enhance our capacity in key areas such as fundraising.
 - c. Expand volunteerism to support WFNS activities and initiatives:
 - i. Formalize the coordination of volunteers either as part of a staff member's duties or through a volunteer-based Volunteer Coordinator position.
 - ii. Draft a volunteer management policy to govern all volunteer activities, including supervision of volunteers and volunteer-run events.
 - iii. Identify the potential roles and activities to be delegated to volunteers.
 - iv. Regularly survey Writers' Council and General Membership on the skills and capacities that might be applied to key volunteer activities.
2. Investigate the feasibility of instituting two-year program plans, with the understanding that some of our current activities will run biennially rather than annually; identify the specific programs that would benefit from a biennial rather than annual implementation.
3. Enhance staff support and compensation:
 - a. Investigate staff compensation, including cost of living increases and opportunities for pension plans.
 - b. Investing in professional development activities for staff.

Financial Stability

Seeking out additional funding opportunities to ensure our long-term financial stability:

1. Enhance the capacity of staff and board to secure financial support from alternate (i.e., non-governmental) sources, whether through training, hiring consultants, or a combination; increase staff fundraising competencies as part of the initiative to increase the staff complement.
2. Assess our current revenue systems; undertake focused outreach to past donors; implement a donor management system to enhance donor communications.
3. Communicate the value of our programs and the significance of their contributions to programs; perform an environmental scan of similar organizations to compare the cost of the annual membership fee to inform future fees structures.
4. Investigate the feasibility of additional events-based fundraising.
5. Build upon existing endowments to support all flagship programs, awards, and prizes in perpetuity.

Inclusivity and Outreach

Ensuring that WFNS programming is accessible to all writers (inclusive of writers at all stages of their development, across genres, and across the province). Focusing our work to support Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility initiatives with the aim of removing barriers to participation and opportunities.

1. Support local and regional literary networks (including writing groups and member-led writing initiatives); provide resources to local groups to better connect with each other and with WFNS's office.
 - a. Offer further WFNS activities and events in communities outside of Halifax, with an eye to collaborating with local groups to reduce the administrative burden on WFNS staff and board.
 - b. Enhance technological capabilities to improve hybrid in-person and online resources and events.
 - c. Increase staff travel allowance in the annual budget to support collaborations across the province.
 - d. Develop a framework that allows WFNS members to apply for organizational funding to support local events and initiatives.
 - e. Establish an ambassador framework to increase organizational presence and support at writers' events across the province.
2. Pursue resources and activities that support and recognize the works of writers of a variety of genres, including those that may be under-resourced.
 - a. Investigate the interest in additional genre-writing workshops.
 - b. Pursue further outreach and collaborative activities with organizations such as HalCon and Romance Writers of Atlantic Canada.
 - c. Increase recognition opportunities for genre writing.

3. Increase resources and opportunities for writers at various stages of their development, and with various writing goals.
 - a. Improve access to workshops for novice and hobby/amateur writers, including offering shorter workshop series.
 - b. Improve resources for self-published/indie writers.
 - c. Recruit members with existing member-led platforms.
 - d. Promote membership options for people who are interested in writing, but who do not identify as writers.
 - e. Investigate the implementation of member resources, such as an emergency fund.
4. Identify and address potential barriers to participation by equity-deserving writers; ensure that our activities and resources are anti-ableist, anti-racist, feminist, anti-transphobic, and anti-homophobic.
 - a. Increase accessibility of our facilities to remove barriers for participants of all abilities; investigate accessibility of offsite event spaces to ensure that activities are hosted in accessible spaces; request an accessibility audit to identify existing barriers with the intention of removing or reducing these barriers.
 - b. Improve remote access options for WFNS meetings and activities; conduct an accessibility audit of WFNS website, social media, and remote meeting/workshop technology to identify existing barriers with the intention of removing or reducing these barriers.
 - c. Integrate the recommendations of WFNS's EDIA Committee in future programming and outreach.
5. Continue to improve mechanisms for collecting feedback on programming in order to identify and address barriers.
6. Develop a framework for organizational advocacy.
 - a. Engage in consultation on policies and strategies for non-partisan discussions on matters relating to our mission and purpose.
 - b. Solicit board membership in existing advocacy organizations.