



# PROFESSIONAL WRITERS ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

STRATEGIC PLAN 2013

**PWAC**



Professional  
Writers  
Association  
of Canada



**writers.ca**



## WHERE CANADIAN WRITERS CONNECT

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### We are here to:

*Provide a collective voice  
to promote the value of  
members' work*

*Foster an environment  
where professional non-fiction  
Canadian writers are respected  
for their skill and fairly  
compensated for their work*

*Support and promote members  
at all stages of their careers*

Design: BigGuyStudio.ca

Design Intern: Matthew Brackett



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# Introduction





**T**he following document outlines three broad overarching goals intended to guide PWAC as an organization for the next 3-5 years. Strategies form the specific shape and direction of each goal. Action steps with timelines and measurables/outcomes comprise each strategy. The plan delineates its goals so that we may achieve them by concrete and practical steps, given PWAC's current and anticipated future resources.

**T**hese three goals and their corresponding strategies, action steps, timelines and measurables/outcomes have emerged from discussions held over the past two years especially. The plan synthesizes discussions among diverse constituents: strategic plan consultants; PWAC board and staff; PWAC members (i.e., through surveys, chapter and annual general meetings and daily member feedback expressed to staff); and external stakeholders such as industry partners, government agencies, granting bodies and foundations and sister organizations.

**O**verall, this document not only captures the current status of the organization, but also represents its central foci and aspirations for the future.

# President's Message

**A** strategic plan, and the process that helps create it, offers an organization like PWAC the value of focus. We are a small but growing organization with a modest budget. Yet our members and our mission require that we punch above our weight and continue to grow our operations, services and influence.

To achieve this growth, we must identify the areas where we can best deliver value and achieve results.

This plan outlines where and how PWAC staff, board and volunteers will focus their energy and attention over the next 3–5 years. It represents two years of discussion, consultation and facilitation that took place in person, by phone and over email. During that time, PWAC has grown and evolved; so, too, has this plan adapted to reflect our priorities, achievements and challenges as an organization.

The result is a vision for PWAC that emphasizes collaboration

with partners and the industry, a dedication to continue demonstrating leadership in key areas, and a focus on delivering value for both our members and the wider Canadian writing and arts community.

This vision encourages PWAC to:

- Lead in areas where it has a strong voice and expertise
- Embrace the technological and economic changes affecting the publishing industry
- Connect professional non-fiction Canadian writers and clients

To achieve these goals we must deploy our resources—human, capital and more—in ways that maximize value for our members and community.

In particular, the document that follows outlines three key areas on which PWAC will focus its energies and resources in the next 3–5 years. By focusing on three specific areas, PWAC can better serve the interests of its members and community.

**They are:**

- 1. Promoting the value, rights and interests of professional non-fiction Canadian writers.** This means being a strong advocate for our members, and for the craft and profession. It also means that PWAC will continue to lead efforts for fair copyright, contracts and compensation.
- 2. Delivering resources and professional development to Canada's freelance writers, and providing a critical bridge to connect writers with clients.** All participants in the planning process recognize we must help



our members succeed in their business and professional craft. Part of this goal means helping connect our members to clients and opportunities.

**3. Strengthening Organizational Capacity.** In recent years PWAC changed its name, updated its constitution (now called the By-Law), and introduced the policy-board model of governance. It is imperative that we continue to build our organization, strengthen its structures and expand our funding.

The following strategic plan outlines how we will address these three areas, and how we as an organization will structure ourselves to ensure that members, staff and board work together to achieve our goals. As a living document, it will change and adapt as PWAC changes and grows.

I would like to thank our excellent facilitators, Diane Davy and Alan Kay of Castledale and Glasgow Group, and also recognize the hard work put in by PWAC staff Sandy Crawley and Margaret

DeRosia, and the members of recent PWAC boards.

We also are grateful to former PWAC Executive Director John Degen and PWAC Toronto Chapter President Jaclyn Law for participating in the process, and adding their valuable insights. We also acknowledge that this work began in partnership with the Writer's Union of Canada (TWUC).

PWAC also recognizes the generous support from the Ontario Arts Council COMPASS program, which provided the funding to make this work possible.

Finally, we hope this document inspires our members to get involved and help us deliver on our goals and mission, and that it encourages our partners and sister organizations to work with us.

**Craig Silverman, President**  
Professional Writers  
Association of Canada

# 1 Be the lead advocate in promoting the value, rights and interests of professional non-fiction Canadian writers

## Advocacy–Government Relations

*Enhance ongoing relationships with various levels of government to:*

### A. Represent the rights and interests of professional non-fiction Canadian writers.

#### Action Steps and Timeline

- Initiate a task force to develop an “Industry Profile,” one that will inform political leaders of the contribution to the digital economy made by the broader content-creator community (Year Two)

#### Measurables/Outcomes

- Independent writers and fellow content providers are recognized in both legislation and federal programs as indispensable to a successful digital economy

### B. Advance issues of common concern in collaboration with other content-creator organizations.

#### Action Steps and Timelines

- Target top 1-3 issues to address with government over next three years (Year One)
- Develop messaging about key issues and a government engagement plan that makes best use of member involvement (Year Two)

#### Measurables/Outcomes

- Key issues identified with action-implementation plan for next 1-3 years
- Messaging in place and engagement plan implemented



## Advocacy–Industry Relations

*Generate relationships with content-creator companies and organizations, as well as potential client companies and organizations in other sectors.*

### Action Steps and Timelines

- Identify top client companies and key sister organizations that can influence the industries on fair compensation (Year One)
- Survey members on existing standards, terms and conditions for working with corporate clients (Year One)
- Adapt Magazine Industry Best Practices Guide for fair compensation for both print and electronic media to serve as a standard for other target sectors (Year Two)
- Develop model contracts for application in target sectors (Year Two/Ongoing)

### Measurables/Outcomes

- Survey completed and results analyzed
- Guidelines and recommendations, including model contracts, are in place and available to members
- Contracts available online
- Members report improved earning capacity by Year Five
- Regular communication with other key organizations and clients taking place

## Professional Standards

*Develop and maintain high professional standards, both among members and within writer-client relationships.*

### Action Steps and Timelines

- Create a Best Practices Guide for writers, including a code of ethics, for working with others in the industry (Year Two)
- Explore ways of developing standards of proficiency for professional writing (e.g., core competency courses), preferably in partnership with other organizations (e.g., EAC, ACP), with an emphasis on digital formats (Year Two/Ongoing)

### Measurables/Outcomes

- Guide and standards in place and being used
- PWAC membership is seen as a mark of professionalism
- A better-informed and more ethical community of editors, publishers and writers



# 2 PWAC is the key organization for delivering resources and professional development to Canada's freelance writers, and for providing a critical bridge to connect writers with clients

## Communications

*Build awareness of PWAC's role with members and the community.*

### Action Steps and Timelines

- Identify resources to develop a communications plan with writers.ca as the focal point for communications with members, the sector and the public (Year Two)

### Measurables/Outcomes

- First phase of writers.ca is up and running after a one-year piloting phase that gathers feedback from users and implements suggestions where appropriate
- Resources have been secured to develop and deploy the communications plan

## Member Benefits

*Use the collective strength of the organization to generate enhanced benefits to members that they cannot access individually.*

### Action Steps and Timelines

- Proactively promote existing benefits to members (Year One/Ongoing)
- Membership Committee identifies potential new benefits that meet the needs of members (Year Two)

### Measurables/Outcomes

- Increase in uptake on existing membership benefits
- Enhanced benefits in place
- Increase in number of members

## Professional Development (PD) Resources

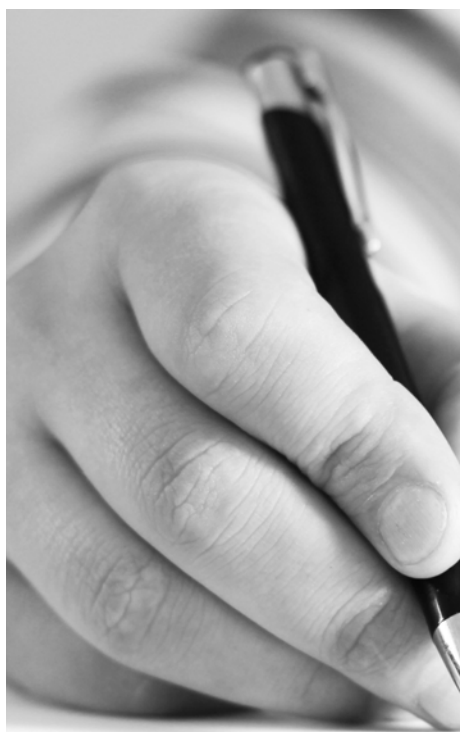
*Provide tools and services to help members access domestic markets, including corporate clients, and enter the global market for English-language writing services.*

### Action Steps/Timelines

- Explore new business models that allow members to take advantage of opportunities provided by digital transformation such as self-publishing (Year One/Ongoing)
- Publish the new Best Practices Guide for the magazine industry as a living document to be refined and improved in concert with industry partners (Year Two/Ongoing)
- Develop a PD opportunity linked to the Guide (Year Two)
- Work with the Professional Development Committee to build a program of targeted curricula, including face-to-face and online programs, perhaps in collaboration with others like TWUC, EAC and PWAC@MagNet (Year Two)
- Explore developing similar guides for other writing sectors such as corporate writing, web writing, SEO marketing, etc. (Year Two/Ongoing)
- Enhance website to include online training (Year Two)
- Assess MagNet partnership as an annual face-to-face networking opportunity for members (Ongoing)

### Measurables/Outcomes

- Offer at least one new PD opportunity to members each year
- Program of targeted curricula in place by Year Three, with Best Practices Guide-related PD opportunity
- Decision made on developing further guides and, if proceeding, priorities and plan in place
- Decision made on pursuing online training, as well as funding and revenue-generation opportunities identified







## 3 Strengthen Organizational Capacity

### Revenue

*Stabilize and enhance revenue base.*

#### Action Steps and Timelines

- Develop and implement both fee-for-service and sponsorship models for aspects of the new writers.ca site (Year One/Ongoing)
- Work with the Membership Committee to develop a Member Recruitment and Retention Plan, with particular attention to attracting younger writers (Year Two/Ongoing)

#### Measurables/Outcomes

- Establish fee-for-service/ sponsorship revenue targets
- Establish clear membership growth targets





## Redefine PWAC as an organization in line with its new By-Law

*Allocate staff, board, chapter and member relations and resources to:*

### **A. Build a resource base to meet the needs of members in a changing environment and a growing, changing organization.**

#### **Action Steps and Timeline**

- Create a standing governance and nominating committee to take the lead on governance issues (Year One)
- Develop a staff and board succession plan (Year One/Ongoing)
- Plan for the hiring of at least one more part-time employee (PTE) as resources allow (Year One)
- Provide leadership training opportunities for staff and board (Year Two/Ongoing)

#### **Measurables/Outcomes**

- Governance and Nominating Committee in place with Terms of Reference
- Succession plan in place
- One new PTE in place
- Funds found for minimum of one training opportunity per year for staff and board

### **B. Define the core competencies of each contributor—staff, board, chapters, members—to produce and manage an organization that functions more as a web than a hierarchy. See Appendix: Organization Models**

#### **Action Steps and Timelines**

- Devote time annually to reflecting on the organization's capacity to utilize each contributor's core competencies (Year One/Ongoing)
- Review the standing committee structure. Consider implementing short-term taskforces instead of permanent committees to better harness the skills and input of members in a more dynamic, less taxing way for those who volunteer (Year Two/Ongoing)
- Engage chapters to make full use of members' volunteer resources (Year Two & Three)

#### **Measurables/Outcomes**

- Establish annual organizational capacity review beginning at the Fall 2014 board of directors meeting
- Committee structure reviewed and recommendations in place
- Organizational capacity review and communications plan both include recommendations on engaging chapters



**C. Increase engagement among members through participation in existing committees and taskforces that work closely with the staff on specific time-limited projects.**

***Action Steps and Timelines***

- Review Terms of Reference and goals for each standing committee (Year One/Ongoing)
- Ask for volunteers to participate in the standing committees (or taskforces) annually so each has an appropriate complement of people to accomplish assigned tasks (Year One/Ongoing)
- Identify and create appropriate taskforces to work closely with the staff on more defined and time-limited projects (Year One/Ongoing)

***Measurables/Outcomes***

- Terms of Reference for committees, as well as goals and timelines for taskforces, in place
- Committees and taskforces in place with a full complement of volunteers



## Changing Business Models of Members

*Continue working on changing organizational culture to meet the needs of a changing business environment.*

### **Action Steps and Timelines**

- Whenever possible, seek out collaborative partnerships with like-minded organizations to make best use of limited resources (Year One/Ongoing)

### **Measurables/Outcomes**

- One new collaboration in place per year
- The Standing PD and Membership Taskforces liaise regularly, both in virtual forums and face-to-face at PWAC@MagNet



## Appendix: Organizational Models

**T**raditional member-based associations have tended to be structured as either a top-down or grass-roots hierarchy. Whether grass-roots or top-down, these associations operate as a hierarchy because they produce and reproduce a relatively unidirectional flow of information between members and staff/board.

### Top-down hierarchy

In this organizational model, a board and/or staff, seeking to maintain member satisfaction but limit member involvement in organizational decision-making, largely dictate to members.

When present, the board, in turn, dictates to staff. Communication remains unidirectional between both groups.



### Grass-roots hierarchy

Many associations begin as grass-roots collectives, but grow to need staff and/or a board to manage certain functions. The organization's most active members, however, guide it on a day-to-day basis. As a result, it becomes a grass-roots hierarchy: it retains a unidirectional flow of communication, with board and/or staff responding to a real or perceived majority.





## New Organizational Model: The Web

PWAC began as a grass-roots association 36 years ago. It still has grass-roots strengths in terms of members' commitment, involvement and support—strengths that our strategic plan and vision for the future seek to value and encourage, not deplete and exhaust.

Yet the organization has grown considerably. It now relies heavily on its staff and board to both maintain and innovate member services, professional development and political and legal advocacy in a changing digital economy.

To meet these needs and goals, PWAC has become larger and more dynamic than either a top-down or grass-roots hierarchy can support. In daily practice at PWAC, all three groups communicate between and among each other—that is PWAC's strength as an organization. Thus, communication operates more often as a multidirectional web than a hierarchy. All three parties work with each other to make it a better organization for all its members. While no one group alone has exclusive decision-making power, the most central group remains its members.

