

2022 Board Survey

Process: The survey was drafted by Cathy Cofell and Christina Kubasta and mailed to voting Board members (16 replies). Ronnie Hess reviewed the responses and prepared this document.

Recommendations:

Some of the issues have been discussed by the Board and membership before. In several cases (then and now), there has been no clear consensus. We recommend the following as priorities for discussion and action:

1. Promotion of Bramble to encourage higher profile state- and nationwide
2. Promotion of online poetry workshops and greater zoom opportunities
3. Underscore the nature of fellowship and a code of conduct that is respectful
4. Formation of a Museletter Review Committee to assess current product (weekly and quarterly) and improve upon it, making greater use of digital technology.
5. Improve outreach by regional vice presidents to their members, and between the Board and regional vice-presidents
6. Focus on recruitment of new “talent” through more direct action and techniques suggested by the survey results
7. Encourage more donations specifically tied to funds devoted to scholarships, conferences, and general-purpose expenses
8. Work with educational and other arts organizations to encourage cross-pollination, and mutual assistance and promotion.
9. Establish a Diversity Committee to explore ways of encouraging broader representation and participation within WFOP of Wisconsin’s Black, Hispanic, Hmong and Indigenous communities.

Survey Results: This is a poet’s not a pollster’s summary. In some cases, there were multiple opinions within one response; in some cases, there were no responses. I have parsed these as best I can.

- 1. Many members of our leadership have served in their roles for a long, long time and/or have served in multiple leadership roles. How can we involve other members in the leadership of the organization, including key volunteer positions?**

Recruit – target individuals; post opportunities in Museletter; print job descriptions; write printed articles on “why we serve” topics (8); Monetize key positions (1); Improve communications – issue minutes of Board meetings right away (1); appoint community ambassador (1); Establish Term limits (1); Some people join WFOP to enjoy poetry, not necessarily to serve (1)

- 2. How can we conduct board meetings that focus more on fellowship: meetings that create a space for all voices & ideas, that value each other’s contribution, and minimize interpersonal conflict?**

Consistently strong leadership and communication; stated goals; mutual respect; more time for meetings via zoom and in person; focus on issues and moving organization forward; reports by consent agenda to save time for important issues; don’t be afraid of conflict; what flame wars? Establish a code of conduct.

3. How can we better engage the membership in discussion and decision-making, beyond sharing minutes from board meetings and at the general meetings at conferences?

Better/more frequent communications; laid back "socials;" Vice Presidents to coordinate with President more, set up local meetings with members; 1x a year survey; establish subcommittees; devote part of conference to problem solving; ask for more input from members

4. As we evaluate people's time and energy investments, what factors should we consider for compensated positions or responsibilities?

Responses evenly divided between no compensation and some compensation, depending on the position. Yes, for special skills (web, editorial) or for top positions, not for others. Suggestions: determine how much time spent by each person; institute evaluations; survey other like organizations to find out what they do

5. How can we better use technology and digital communication strategies to broaden the reach of the WFOP?

Create a position for person in charge of all digital content; Museletter makeover; continue zoom; more social media engagement; beware of scammers; not sure

6. How can WFOP strengthen our profile in Wisconsin?

Advertise; coordinate with other arts organizations; attend/hold more events and festivals; connect with slam poets; appoint an outreach coordinator to network with schools, other arts organizations; create a database of poetry groups statewide, leaders; more local poet laureates; we already have a strong profile; why do we need to do this?

7. How can WFOP strengthen our profile BEYOND Wisconsin?

Why might we want/need to do this (5). Other comments: increase profile through anthologies, publications, video, social media, workshops; encourage expanding Bramble's profile (2); network with other national or state organizations, such as National Federation of State Poetry Societies (3) -- <http://www.nfsps.com/>

8. How can WFOP increase and diversify our membership?

Direct invitations (2); scholarships (1); target key groups/areas (urban; Hmong, First Nation) and broad appeal of conference content/location (4); Poetry in Schools program (1); more participation in arts events (1); collaboration with librarians (1); better communications (1)

9. We've recently received donations with requests to designate for scholarship. Do you think we should create a scholarship fund to provide opportunities to attend conferences or become members for those who could otherwise not afford to participate?

13 yes votes; 2 noes; one NA

10. What could that scholarship fund look like?

Diverse opinions but lots of input – from specifics, such as put an application on the website with terms of 1x 2 years, and creation of a review board to we're not ready yet (not enough members)/a lot of our events are already free/how would we establish need? There were different ideas on the purpose of the scholarship: for conferences but not membership or for promoting poetry locally; or awards for "emerging" poet.

11. The Calendar has been a long-standing WFOP publication. How do you see the Calendar's role in WFOP's future?

Change or discontinue – outdated product and format, no interest in it, make it an anthology (7); Keep – it's vital, if it ain't broke don't fix it; improve placement/content (7). No vote (1); equivocal (1)

12. The Museletter has also been a long-standing WFOP publication. How do you see the Museletter's role in WFOP's future?

Needs to change (8); no change (5). Comments: Need to have more interesting content and regular contributors – articles on craft, trends, residencies, market/contests. Several votes for having Museletter online only but one vote for mailed version.

13. The weekly Museletter emailing has been a more recent WFOP "publication." How do you see this weekly email's role in WFOP's future?

Useful publication (6); Change – online/every two weeks/updated (6); unsure (3); NA (1)

14. Sheltering with Poems: Community and Connection during Covid (a joint project of WFOP and Bent Paddle Press, 2021) ended up working well, and making a small profit (approx. \$700). How do you see anthologies fitting into WFOP's future?

Enthusiasm for anthologies (10); Unsure – case-by-case basis, not annually (2)

15. Bramble was founded in 2017 and provides a print/web literary magazine highlighting WI poets & poetry, alongside art and essays. How do you see Bramble's role in WFOP's future?

Publication aligns with WFOP's mission; should be promoted/encouraged (13); Who reads Bramble (1); more readings (1)

16. How can WFOP strengthen our contest programming (categories, timing, submissions process, new contests, etc.)?

Multiple answers – electronic submissions (3); reevaluate (1); okay as is (1); promote more (3); profile the judges (2); staid and stodgy (1); book seals for all entrants (1); unsure (1)

17. Are there other publications or special projects that WFOP should explore?

A variety of suggestions: broadsides, chapbooks, collections, anthologies; involvement in National Poetry Month; partnerships with museums in ekphrastic poetry; collaborative installations; mugs/tee-shirts/notepads branded with WFOP; focus on current initiatives